



Why the Sea Moans

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Brazilian

Intermediate

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Once upon a time there was a little princess who lived in a magnificent royal palace. All around the palace there was a beautiful garden full of lovely flowers and rare shrubs and trees. The part of the garden which the princess liked most of all was a corner of it which ran down to the sea. She was a very lonely little princess and she loved to sit and watch the changing beauty of the sea. The name of the little princess was Dionysia and it often seemed to her that the sea said, as it rushed against the shore, “Di-o-ny-si-a, Di-o-ny-si-a.”

One day when the little princess was sitting all alone by the sea she said to herself, “O! I am so lonely. I do so wish that I had somebody to play with. When I ride out in the royal chariot I see little girls who have other little boys and girls to play with them. Because I am the royal princess I never have anybody to play with me. If I have to be the royal princess and not play with other children I do think I might have some sort of live thing to play with me.”

Then a most remarkable thing happened. The sea said very slowly and distinctly and over and over again so there couldn't be any mistake about it, “Di-o-ny-si-a, Di-o-ny-si-a.”

The little princess walked up close to the sea, just as close as she dared to go without danger of getting her royal shoes and stockings wet. Straight out of the biggest wave of all there came a sea serpent to meet her. She knew that it was a sea serpent from the pictures in her royal story books even though she had never seen a sea

serpent before, but somehow this sea serpent looked different than the pictures. Instead of being a fierce monster it looked kind and gentle and good. She held out her arms to it right away.

“Come play with me,” said Dionysia.

“I am Labismena and I have come to play with you,” replied the sea serpent.

After that the little princess was very much happier. The sea serpent came out of the sea to play with her every day when she was alone. If any one else came near Labismena would disappear into the sea so no one but Dionysia ever saw her.

The years passed rapidly and each year the little princess grew to be a larger and larger princess. At last she was sixteen years old and a very grown-up princess indeed. She still enjoyed her old playmate, Labismena, and they were often together on the seashore.

One day when they were walking up and down together beside the sea the sea serpent looked at Dionysia with sad eyes and said, “I too have been growing older all these years, dear Dionysia. Now the time has come that we can no longer play together. I shall never come out of the sea to play with you any more, but I shall never forget you and I shall always be your friend. I hope that you will never have any trouble, but if you ever should, call my name and I will come to help you.” Then the sea serpent disappeared into the sea.

About this time the wife of a neighbouring king died and as she lay upon her death bed she gave the king a jewelled ring. “When the time comes when you wish to wed again,” she said, “I ask you to marry a princess upon whose finger this ring shall be neither too tight nor too loose.”

After a while the king began to look about for a princess to be his bride. He visited many royal palaces and tried the ring upon the finger of many royal princesses. Upon some the ring was too tight and upon others it was too loose. There was no princess whose finger it fitted perfectly.

At last in his search the king came to the royal palace where the princess Dionysia lived. The princess had dreams of her own of a young and charming prince who would some day come to wed her, so she was not pleased at all. The king was old and no longer handsome, and when he tried the ring upon Dionysia’s finger she hoped with all her heart that it would not fit. It fitted perfectly.

The princess Dionysia was frightened nearly to death. “Will I really have to marry him?” she asked her royal

father. Her father told her what a very wealthy king he was with a great kingdom and a wonderful royal palace ever so much more wonderful and grand than the palace the princess Dionysia had always had for her home. Her father had no patience at all with her for not being happy about it. "You ought to consider yourself the most fortunate princess in all the world," he said.

Dionysia spent her days and nights weeping. Her father was afraid that she would grow so thin that the ring would no longer fit her finger, so he hastened the plans for the wedding.

One day Dionysia walked up and down beside the sea, crying as if her heart would break. All at once she stopped crying. "How stupid I have been," she said. "My old playmate Labismena told me that if ever I was in trouble she would come back and help me. With all my silly crying I had forgotten about it."

Dionysia walked up close to the sea and called softly, "Labismena, Labismena." Out of the sea came the sea serpent just as she used to come. The princess told the sea serpent all about the dreadful trouble which was threatening to spoil her life.

"Have no fear," said Labismena, "tell your father that you will marry the king when the king presents you with a dress the colour of the fields and all their flowers and that you will not marry him until he gives it to you." Then the sea serpent disappeared again into the sea.

Dionysia sent word through her father to her royal suitor that she would wed him only when he procured her a dress the colour of the fields and all their flowers. The king was very much in love with Dionysia, so he was secretly filled with joy at this request. He searched everywhere for a dress the colour of the fields and all their flowers. It was a very difficult thing to find but at last he procured one. He sent it to Dionysia at once.

When Dionysia saw that the king had really found the dress for her she was filled with grief. She thought that there was no escape and that she would have to marry the king after all. As soon as she could get away from the palace without being noticed she ran down to the sea and again called, "Labismena, Labismena."

The sea serpent at once came out of the sea. "Do not fear," she said to Dionysia. "Go back and say that you will not wed the king until he gives you a dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes."

When the king heard this new request of Dionysia's he was rather discouraged. However he searched for the dress and, at last, after expending a great sum of money, he procured such a gown.

When Dionysia saw that a dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes had been found for her she again went to seek counsel from her old playmate. "Do not be afraid," Labismena again said to her. "This time you must ask the king to get you a dress the colour of the sky and all its stars. You may also tell him that this is the last present you will ask him to make you."

When the king heard about the demand for a dress the colour of the sky and all its stars he was completely disheartened, but when he heard that Dionysia had promised that this would be the last present she would ask he decided that it might be a good investment after all. He set out to procure the dress with all possible speed. At last he found one.

When Dionysia saw the dress the colour of the sky and all its stars she thought that this time there was no escape from marrying the king. She called the sea serpent with an anxious heart for she was afraid that now even Labismena could do nothing to help her.

Labismena came out of the sea in answer to her call.

"Go home to the palace and get your dress the colour of the field and all its flowers," said the sea serpent, "and your dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes, and your dress the colour of the sky and all its stars. Then hurry back here to the sea for I have been preparing a surprise for you."

All the time the king had been procuring the wonderful gowns for Dionysia the sea serpent had been building a ship for her. When Dionysia returned from the royal palace with her lovely dresses all carefully packed in a box there was a queer little boat awaiting her. It was not at all like any other boat she had ever seen and she was almost afraid to get into it when Labismena asked her to try it. "This little ship which I have built for you," said Labismena, "will carry you far away over the sea to the kingdom of a prince who is the most charming prince in all the world. When you see him you will want to marry him above all others."

"O, Labismena! How can I ever thank you for all you have done for me?" cried Dionysia.

"You can do the greatest thing in the world for me," said Labismena; "though I have never told you and I do not believe that you have ever suspected it, I am really an enchanted princess. I shall have to remain in the form of a sea serpent until the happiest maiden in all the world, at the hour of her greatest happiness, calls my name three times. You will be the very happiest girl in all the world on the day of your marriage, and if you will remember to call my name three times then you will break my enchantment and I shall once more be a lovely

princess instead of a sea serpent.”

Dionysia promised her friend that she would remember to do this. The sea serpent asked her to promise three times to make sure. When Dionysia had promised three times and again embraced her old playmate and thanked her for all that she had done she sailed away in the little ship. The sea serpent disappeared into the sea.

Dionysia sailed and sailed in the little ship and at last it bore her to a lovely island. She thought that she had reached her destination, so she stepped out of the boat not forgetting to take her box of dresses with her. As soon as she was out of the boat it sailed away. “Now what shall I ever do?” said Dionysia. “The ship has gone away and left me and how shall I ever earn my living? I have never done anything useful in all my life.”

Dionysia surely had to do something to earn her living immediately, so she at once set out to see what she could find to do. She went from house to house asking for food and work. At last she came to the royal palace. Here at the royal palace they told her that they had great need of a maid to take care of the hens. Dionysia thought that this was something which she could do, so she accepted the position at once. It was, of course, very different work from being a princess in a royal palace but it provided her with food and shelter, and when Dionysia thought of having to marry the old king she was never sorry that she had left home.

Time passed and at last there was a great festa day celebrated in the city. Everybody in the palace went except the little maid who minded the hens. After everybody had gone away Dionysia decided that she would go to the festa too. She combed her hair and put on her gown which was the colour of the fields and all their flowers. In this wonderful gown she was sure nobody would ever guess that she was the little maid who had been left at home to mind the hens. She did want to go to the festa! She hurried there as fast as she could and arrived just in time for the dances.

Everybody at the festa noticed the beautiful maiden in her gown the colour of the fields and all their flowers. The prince fell madly in love with her. Nobody had ever seen her before and nobody could find out who the beautiful stranger was or where she came from. Before the festa was over Dionysia slipped away, and, when the rest of the royal household returned home there was the little maid minding the hens just as they had left her.

The second day of the festa everybody went early except the little maid who looked after the hens. When the others had gone she put on her dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes and went to the festa. She attracted even more attention than she had the day before.

When the festa was over and the royal household had returned to the royal palace, the prince remarked to his mother, "Don't you think that the beautiful stranger at the festa looks like the little maid who minds our hens?"

"What nonsense," replied his mother. "How could the little maid who minds our hens ever get such wonderful gowns to wear?" Just to make sure, however, the prince told the royal councillor to find out if the little maid who minds the royal hens had been to the festa. All the servants told about leaving her at home with the hens and coming back and finding her just as they had left her.

"Whoever the beautiful stranger at the festa may be," said the prince, "she is the one above all others whom I want for my wife. I shall find her some way."

The third day of the festa Dionysia went attired in her gown the colour of the sky and all its stars. The prince fell more madly in love with her than ever. He could not get her to tell him who she was or where she lived but he gave her a beautiful jewel.

When the prince returned home he would not eat any food. He grew thin and pale. Every one around the palace tried his best to invent some dish which would tempt the prince's appetite.

Finally the little maid who took care of the hens said that she thought she could prepare a dish which the prince would eat.

Accordingly she made a dish of broth for the prince and in the bottom of the dish she dropped the jewel which the prince had given her.

When the broth was set before the prince he was about to send it away untouched, just as he did everything else, but the sparkling jewel attracted his attention.

"Who made this dish of broth?" he asked as soon as he could speak.

"It was made by the little maid who minds the hens," replied his mother.

"Send for the little maid to come to me at once," cried the prince. "I knew that the beautiful stranger at the

festa looked like our little maid who minds the hens.”

The prince married Dionysia the very next day and Dionysia was the very happiest girl in all the world, for from the first moment that she had seen the prince, she had known that he was the one above all others whom she wished to marry.

Alas! In Dionysia’s excitement she forgot all about calling the name of her old playmate, Labismena, at the hour of her marriage as she had promised to do. She thought of nothing but the prince.

There was no escape for Labismena. She had to remain in the form of a sea serpent because of Dionysia’s neglect. She had lost her chance to come out of the sea and become a lovely princess herself and find a charming prince of her own. For this reason her sad moan is heard in the sea until this very day. Perhaps you have noticed it.

You will often hear the call come from the sea as it breaks against the shore, “Dionysia, Di-o-ny-si-a.” No wonder that the sea moans. It is enough to make a sea serpent sad to be forgotten by the very person one has done most to help.

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