

A Castle in her Mind

a story by Madeleine Guastavino and Mathilde Fortin



Every summer, Ann goes to the beach with her parents.
This year again, she went to Mirado beach.



While her parents were asleep, she came close to a strange looking seashell.
As she put it to her ear, a giant sand castle appeared before her.



She decided to enter it.

Instantly, her swimming suit changed into a beautiful dress, like that of a princess. The room where she found herself in was empty and spacious.

There were many doors on each wall, of different shapes, sizes and colors.



Ann chose a door.

It was made of clay, with beautiful hand carvings.



As she opened it, she found herself in a barren place.

Ann was surprised.

When her eyes adjusted to the lighting, she could distinguish numerous little houses made of clay with straw rooftops.



As she looked more closely, she saw there were even people there, wearing beautifully patterned tunics. They seemed very welcoming to her.

She walked through this delightful space, until another interesting door captivated her attention...



When Ann came through this door, the tunics she wore suddenly changed into a fur coat! She found herself facing a gigantic palace with golden mushroom-looking towers.



She walked in and saw a wonderful dance show. People whistled and jumped and sang. The room was filled with tables, each one holding a teapot or samovar. At the very back of this room, she recognized what seemed to be a deep red door ornamented with luscious black flowers, with a round frame at the top.



Once through this door, she perceived a chanting and rhythmic melody, which was very stirring and energizing. Rows of female dancers wearing long frilled black and red skirts were swaying to the sounds of guitars and castanets, heavily using their feet to mark the rhythms with the heels of the black shoes they wore.



Behind them, Ann noticed a bright shine coming from behind a tree.

As she came closer, she could distinguish a door, magnificently ornamented of lapis-lazuli and turquoise on which was settled a beautiful beetle.



Entering this new room, her clothes changed to a white drape-like gown, and she found herself riding a dromedary! She had never seen a dromedary from this close before. His back was warm and swayed gently from one side to the other as he walked through the desert land.



From camel-height, Ann noticed a little market settled under tarpaulins. There was much agitation. Vendors were selling culinary spices as well as jewelry. Under one of the tables, she took note of a miniature rice paper door of the size of a doll-house. With her delicate fingers, Ann pushed the door open...



She then found herself wearing a soft and silky flowered dress.

On the surrounding streets, people wore kimonos and were masked, proclaiming Nô.



She also saw stalls of delicately ornamental papers and origami.

Ann then tried pushing herself through one of the stalls, and fell through it.



She landed in a multicolored room, now wearing skirt-pants decorated with a multitude of shimmering medallions and a small top ornamented with tiny beads.



She saw musicians and dancers wearing bright satin saris.
She watched and listened to the soft melodies they played
while inhaling the many smells coming from the exotic fruits
laid in baskets all around her.



Ann walked away from this crowd, and swayed herself across a blue crystal door.

Her Indian clothes immediately vanished, and her bare feet were standing on the seashore's warm sand...

She then came to notice that she was wearing her swimming suit.



Ann then noticed that the sand castle was still there, and on it, lay a small bracelet, just the size of her wrist: it was a princess' bracelet.

When she tried to see the castle again, it had disappeared. Ann thought this had been a dream, but the bracelet was still at her wrist.

She promised herself to come back to this beach next summer...