

CHAPTER VII: THE PALACE OF SOLITUDE

THEY suffered much from hunger and thirst this time, for they sailed a whole week without making land; but at the end of that time they came in sight of a high island, with a large and very splendid house on the beach near the water's edge. There were two doors one turned inland, and the other facing the sea; and the door that looked towards the sea was closed with a great flat stone. In this stone was an opening, through which the waves, as they beat against the door every day, threw numbers of salmon into the house.

The voyagers landed, and went through the whole house without meeting any one. But they saw in one large room an ornamented couch, intended for the head of the house, and in each of the other rooms was a larger one for three members of the family: and there was a cup of crystal on a little table before each couch. They found abundance of food and ale, and they ate and drank till they were satisfied, thanking God for having relieved them from hunger and thirst.

Aloft, high towering o'er the ocean's foam,
The spacious mansion rears its glittering dome.
Each day the billows, through the marble door,
Shoot living salmon floundering on the floor.
Couches that lure the sailors to recline,
Abundant food, brown ale, and sparkling wine;
Tables and chairs in order duly placed,
With crystal cups and golden goblets graced.
But not a living soul the wanderers found;
'Twas silence all and solitude profound.
They eat and drink, give thanks, then hoist their sail,
And skim the deep once more, obedient to the gale.

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