

## **Chapter V - Princess Sakareen**

"SAY, play us a tune," said Chubbins to the king. His Majesty didn't seem to like being addressed so bluntly, but he was very fond of playing the fiddle, so he graciously obeyed the request and played a pretty and pathetic ballad upon the spun sugar strings. Then, begging to be excused for a few minutes while the chariot was being made ready, the king left them and went into another room.

This gave the children a chance to talk freely with the sugar people, and Chubbins said to one man, who looked very smooth on the outside:

"I s'pose you're one of the big men of this place, aren't you?"

The man looked frightened for a moment, and then took the boy's arm and led him into a corner of the room.

"You ask me an embarrassing question," he whispered, looking around to make sure that no one overheard. "Although I pose as one of the nobility, I am, as a matter of fact, a great fraud!"

"How's that?" asked Chubbins.

"Have you noticed how smooth I am?" inquired the sugar man.

"Yes," replied the boy. "Why is it?"

"Why, I'm frosted, that's the reason. No one here suspects it, and I'm considered very respectable; but the truth is, I'm just coated over with frosting, and not solid sugar at all."

"What's inside you?" asked Chubbins.

"That," answered the man, "I do not know. I've never dared to find out. For if I broke my frosting to see what I'm stuffed with, every one else would see too, and I would be disgraced and ruined."

"Perhaps you're cake," suggested the boy.

"Perhaps so," answered the man, sadly. "Please keep my secret, for only those who are solid loaf-sugar are of any account in this country, and at present I am received in the best society, as you see."

"Oh, I won't tell," said Chubbins.

During this time Twinkle had been talking with a sugar lady, in another part of the room. This lady seemed to be of the purest loaf-sugar, for she sparkled most beautifully, and Twinkle thought she was quite the prettiest person to look at that she had yet seen.

"Are you related to the king?" she asked.

"No, indeed," answered the sugar lady, "although I'm considered one of the very highest quality. But I'll tell you a secret, my dear." She took Twinkle's hand and led her across to a sugar sofa, where they both sat down.

"No one," resumed the sugar lady, "has ever suspected the truth; but I'm only a sham, and it worries me dreadfully."

"I don't understand what you mean," said Twinkle. "Your sugar seems as pure and sparkling as that of the king."

"Things are not always what they seem," sighed the sugar lady. "What you see of me, on the outside, is all right; but the fact is, I'm hollow!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Twinkle, in surprise. "How do you know it?"

"I can feel it," answered the lady, impressively. "If you weighed me you'd find I'm not as heavy as the solid ones, and for a long time I've realized the bitter truth that I'm hollow. It makes me very unhappy, but I don't dare confide my secret to anyone here, because it would disgrace me forever."

"I wouldn't worry," said the child. "They'll never know the difference."

"Not unless I should break," replied the sugar lady. "But if that happened, all the world could see that I'm hollow, and instead of being welcomed in good society I'd become an outcast. It's even more respectable to be made of brown sugar, than to be hollow; don't you think so?"

"I'm a stranger here," said Twinkle; "so I can't judge. But if I were you, I wouldn't worry unless I got broke; and you may be wrong, after all, and as sound as a brick!"