

The Cow of El Panecillo

Ecuador
South America



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There once was a woman who lived in Quito, a city that sat up in the Andean foothills. While the people of Quito sold goods or had jobs to make a living, this woman only had a cow and a pot. She had nothing more to bring her comfort.

As she loved this cow, she sought to feed it. She did not even have a paddock for this cow. The only place was to climb El Panecillo itself, which was steep yet had luscious grass.

On one of these days of climbing to El Panecillo, the woman collected some firewood and left her cow and the pot alone. She searched everywhere for hours and hours.

The woman, while calling for her cow, tripped on her pot. As she picked up the pot and looked up, before her was a palace. She had been on El Panecillo many times and never remembered a palace. She heard what she thought was the sound of her cow within the palace. The raggedly-dressed woman saw a princess dressed in finery and so sat on an ornamental throne at the top of the steps.

The princess stood from her throne and asked, "Why are you here?" The woman, embarrassed to be so poorly dressed, still answered, "I have lost my cow." Then, the woman sobbed. The princess stepped closer to the woman and gave her a corn cob with plump kernels and a brick of gold. The princess told the woman that her cow was safe. "Return home. You will find your cow."

The woman, still in a daze, headed home. When she got back, there was her cow. All was good.