

The town was on a yellow-sand beach. Beautiful wooden canoes lay across the beach, painted blue and white. Early in the morning, Kino and Juana came slowly down the beach to Kino's canoe. It was the only thing worth money that Kino owned. It was very old. Kino's grandfather bought it, and then he gave it to Kino's father. And Kino's father gave it to Kino. The canoes were very important to the fishermen. A man with a boat can be sure of pearls to sell, and food. Juana put Coyotito in the canoe. He was quiet, but his shoulder and face were still red. Juana went to the water and walked in. She picked some plants from the sea and placed them on the baby's red shoulder. This was her people's usual way with scorpion bites, and it was probably as good as the doctor's medicine. But the plants were simple and did not cost anything. Juana prayed for a pearl to pay the doctor. Now Kino and Juana pushed the canoe down the beach to the water. Juana climbed in. Kino pushed it into deeper water and then got in, too. The other pearlers were already at work. Kino could see them. Their canoes were far out in the sea, above the oyster bed. A pearl begins as one piece of sand. If the sand is caught in an oyster, it will, in time, change into a pearl. Some pearls are small and worth little money, but a few are large and beautiful and white and expensive. For hundreds of years, men have searched the sea for pearls. But success is luck, a gift from God. Kino had two ropes. One was tied to a heavy rock, the other to a bag. He took off his shirt and pants and put his hat in the bottom of the canoe. He took the rock in one hand and his bag in the other, then he jumped into the sea. The rock carried him to the bottom. Kino moved slowly because he wanted the water to stay clear. But his hands worked quickly. He pulled the oysters from the ocean floor and put them into his bag