

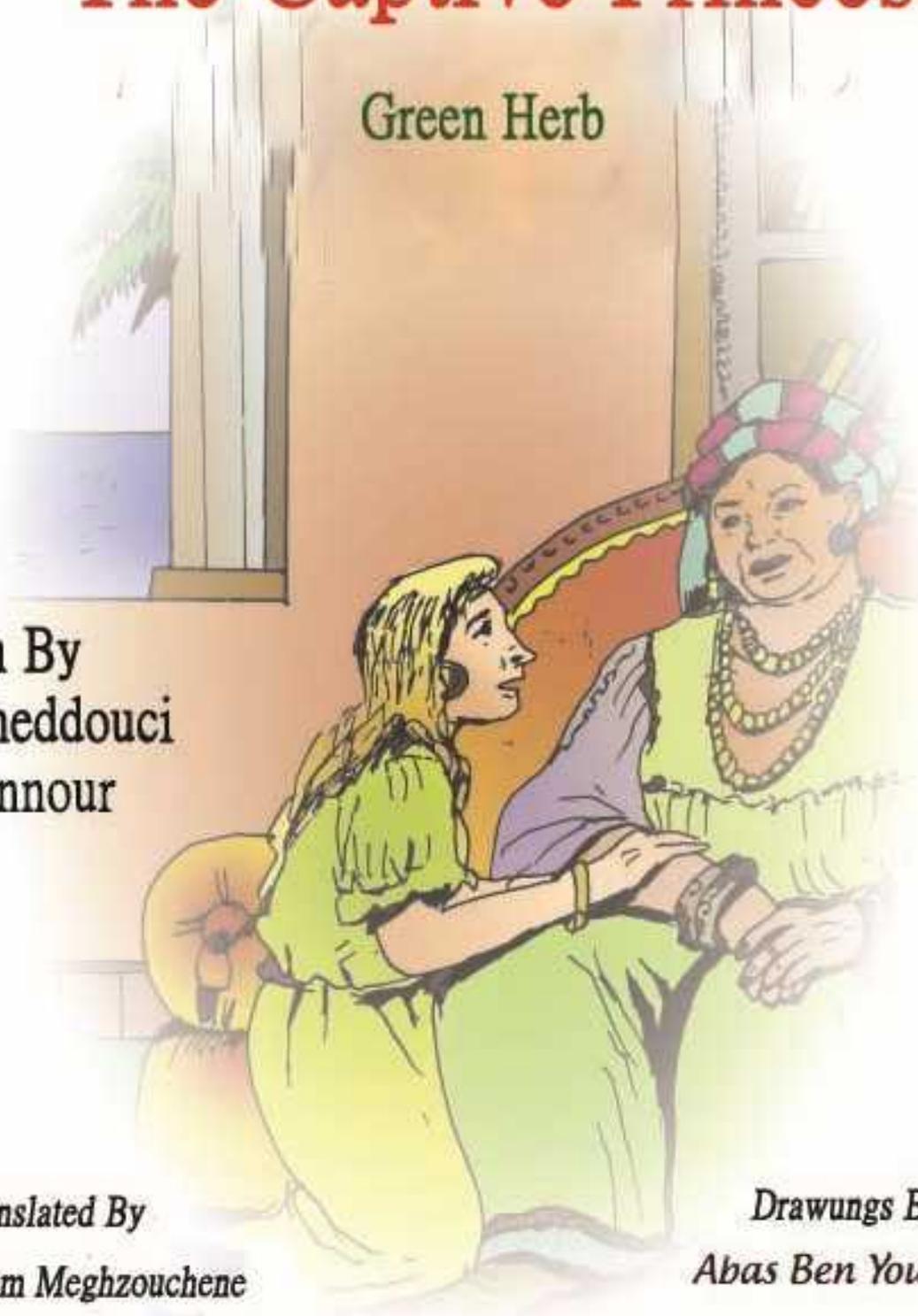
The Captive Princess

Green Herb

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It is a folk story of the Algerian heritage; it narrates the adventures of a lost queen. How did her incredible journey end up?

THE CAPTIVE PRINCESS

GREEN HERB

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful young girl, with long blond hair, named Green Herb.

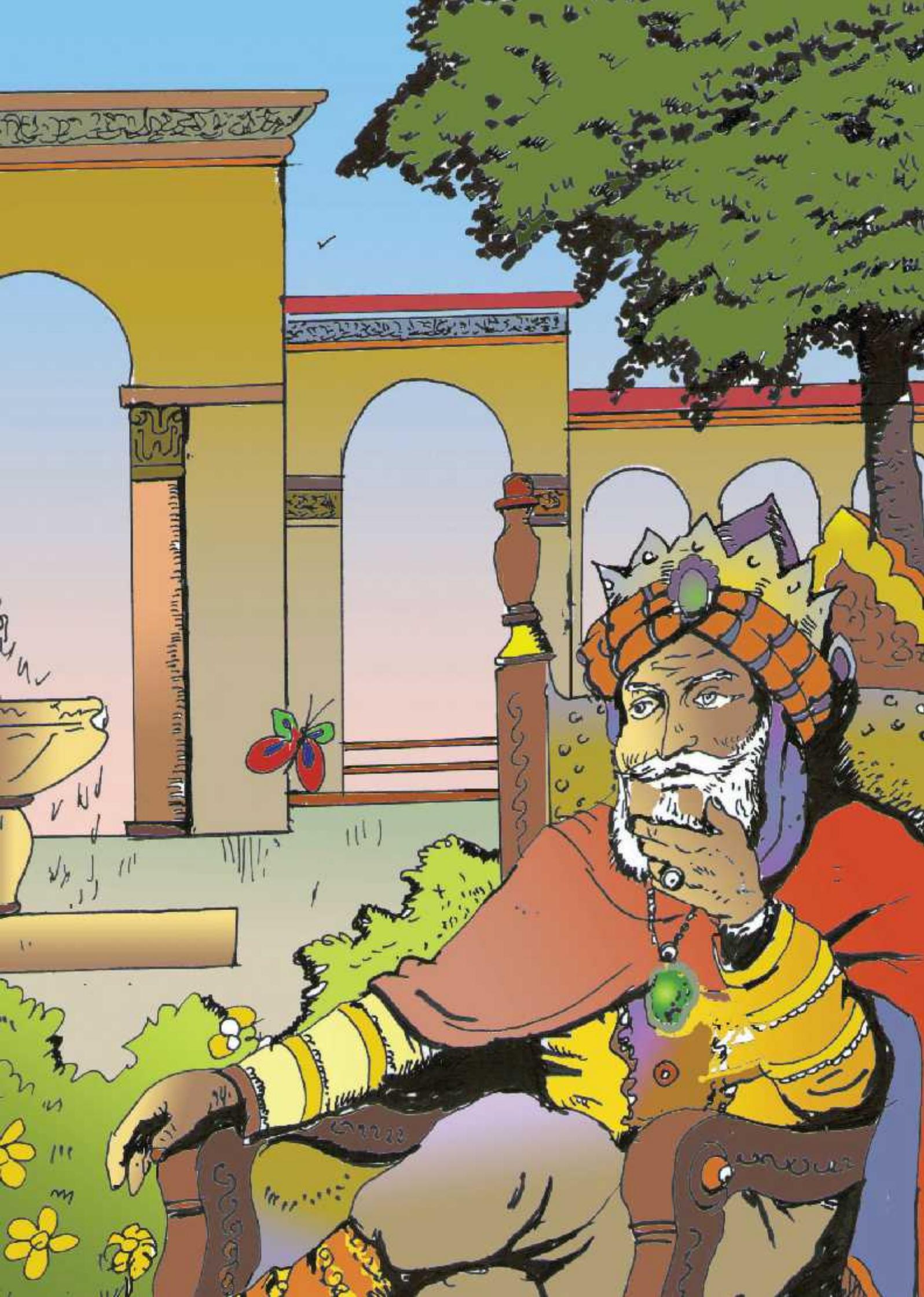
Her father the king was a white-bearded man with an elongated mustache. He used to wear a burnoose and leather shoes ornamented with different patterns. He also put a necklace and a ring glittering like a flash of a lightning when it the sun shone on his kingdom.

She was the only child following the death of her mother the queen. In a viridescent island, they lived in castle above which white seagulls hovered. As the morning sunlight seeped into the room of Green Herb, it made her blond hair glint like a rainbow.

The king would sit down under a large shade tree, thinking over the matters of his kingdom.

One dazzling morning, Green Herb asked her father the king to let her to go for a stroll in the woods in the company of girls of her age for picking flowers. At first, her father said no, fearing for her safety. But when she insisted on him, he acquiesced to her desire should she came back home by sunset.

Green Herb was very happy. She hugged her father the king and then she bid him farewell.



She then went out with the other girls, singing their joyfulness in unison. In the forest they played hide-and-seek.

In the midst of joy and merriment, Green Herb got busy with untangling the strands of her long hair from the thistle. The other girls had looked for her during hours, but they failed to find her. They then strolled back home, all teary-eyed.

Green Herb remained lonely in the woods. She called out to the girls and her father; to no avail. She was lost in the thick forest. The hoot of owls and the croak of frogs scared her a lot.





She crouched down by a pond weeping. A rabbit heard her and then jumped closer to her, helping her get rid of the thistle.

Green Herb sauntered on alone in the gloomy forest, gazing left and right, in hope of finding her way back to the castle. She made out a dim light in the far. Burdened by hunger, thirst and tiredness, she headed for the spot of the flickering light.

She arrived at the source of the faint light; it was coming out from an old hut. When she peeped inside it, she was astonished to see a giant woman with thick hair, kneading wheat and barley. Green Herb stepped back but the giant woman saw her and rushed out, collared her, dragged her inside the hut, and then locked the door. The giant woman soon held Princess Green Herb in her arms and breast-fed her, quenching her thirst and hunger before the girl fell asleep.

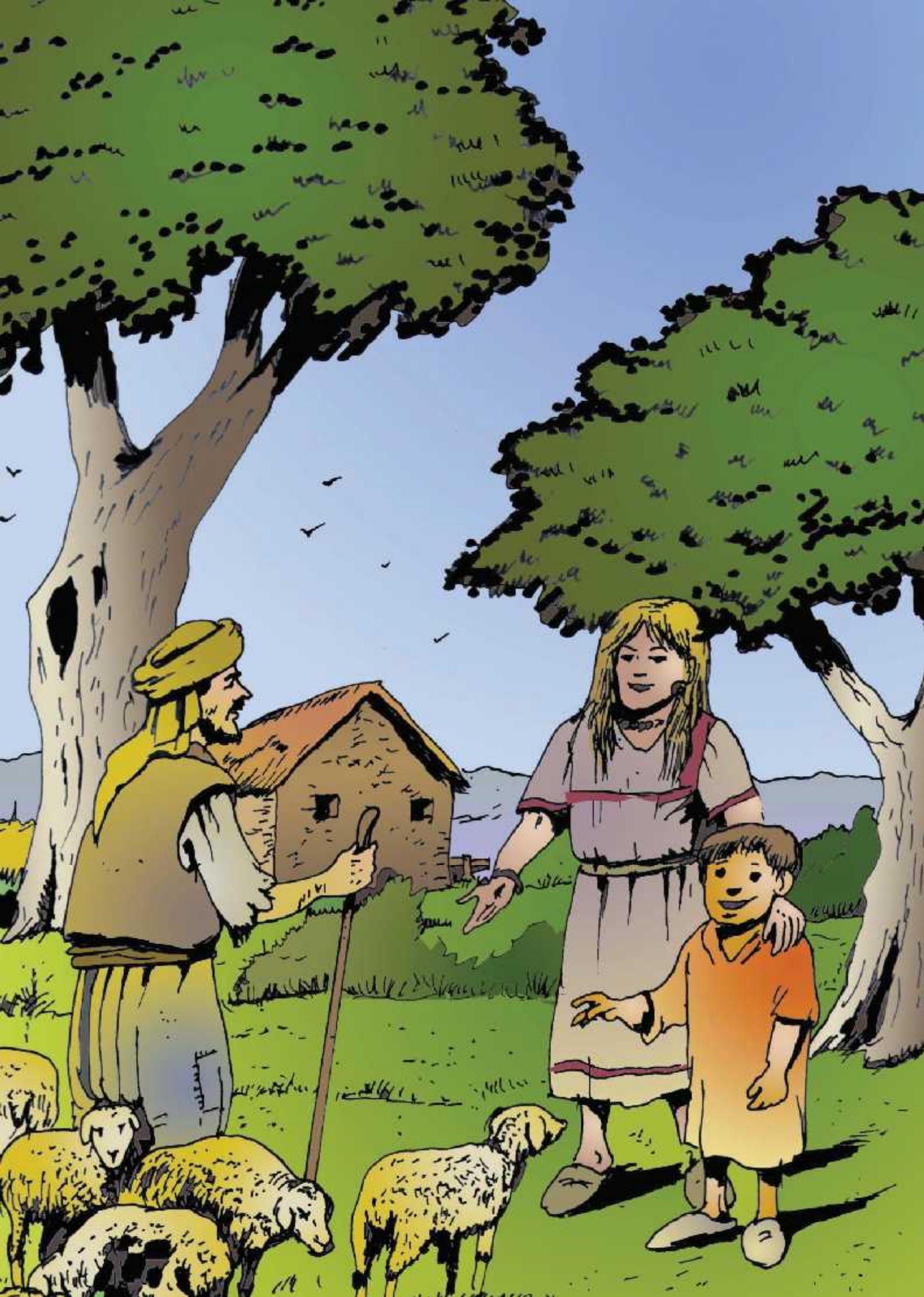
When the princess woke up she was dumbfounded to her condition, even tried to run away again, but the giant woman snapped her, warning her:

- If you hadn't been breast-fed by me, I would have let you go out as prey for wolves and lions, craving to devour your meat and suck your blood. You're my captive. Don't attempt to flee a second time.

Upon the return of the two sons of the giant woman, Makos and his young brother Manos, they were surprised by finding out a strange girl with their mother. The girl's long blond hair reaching down her elfin body had fascinated them a lot.

So, Princess Green Herb remained locked up almost manacled. She shed tears abundantly, for she barely bore up living far from her noble family. She pondered over evading, but she feared to lose her way. She felt confused as to the right exit to her open jail.





The king was so sad about the absence of his only daughter. He even felt sadder as his soldiers failed to find his vanished daughter; they came back disappointed, just holding in their hands locks of her hair which they had discovered in the woods.

After much quiet meditation, the king called on his people to help him out in the search of his daughter. He produced from his pocket tufts of her hair and he handed out each tribe a hair, making them a promise:

- Whoever will bring my daughter back home, sound and safe, he will be appointed my right-hand man, and will even marry her.

Therefore, the boosted youth set about the search operation, day and night. Unluckily, the king's daughter was nowhere to be located.

One day, a shepherd walked beside the hut and remarked Green Herb squatting down at the doorstep. He did not know who she was. She beamed at him and asked him to fetch a pony for the practice of Manos, the son of the giant woman.

He replied:

- Since Green Herb went missing, it had not rained, the earth had turned barren, and the mares had not given birth to any pony. So, I'm sorry for your little brother.

She then remembered and wept. It started to rain at once. When she smiled, the sun shone again.

The shepherd became aware that she was Green Herb. He rushed back to the village thunderstruck. He did not believe whom he had clapped eyes on. He kept to himself the time being.

After several days, he visited her again by the hut, to make sure the girl was really Green Herb, the daughter of the king. He found her entertaining the little boy, and she asked him again to bring a pony for him.

He responded to her:

- Since Green Herb went missing, it had not rained, the mares had not given birth to ponies, and the cows delivered no bulls.

She laughed, for she knew she was truly Green Herb, the king's daughter the shepherd was hinting at.

The news spread over the city; everybody boasted of knowing the exact location of Green Herb, dreaming of deserving the king's promised reward. No sooner had the king got wind of the gossip from the mouth of the shepherd, than he dashed to the green forest to find out the truth by himself. He showed up there with an army of guards. He was shocked upon meeting again the daughter he had lost for a couple of years. Green Herb was thrilled at hugging once more her father so enthusiastically. Before she walked back to the castle, she said:

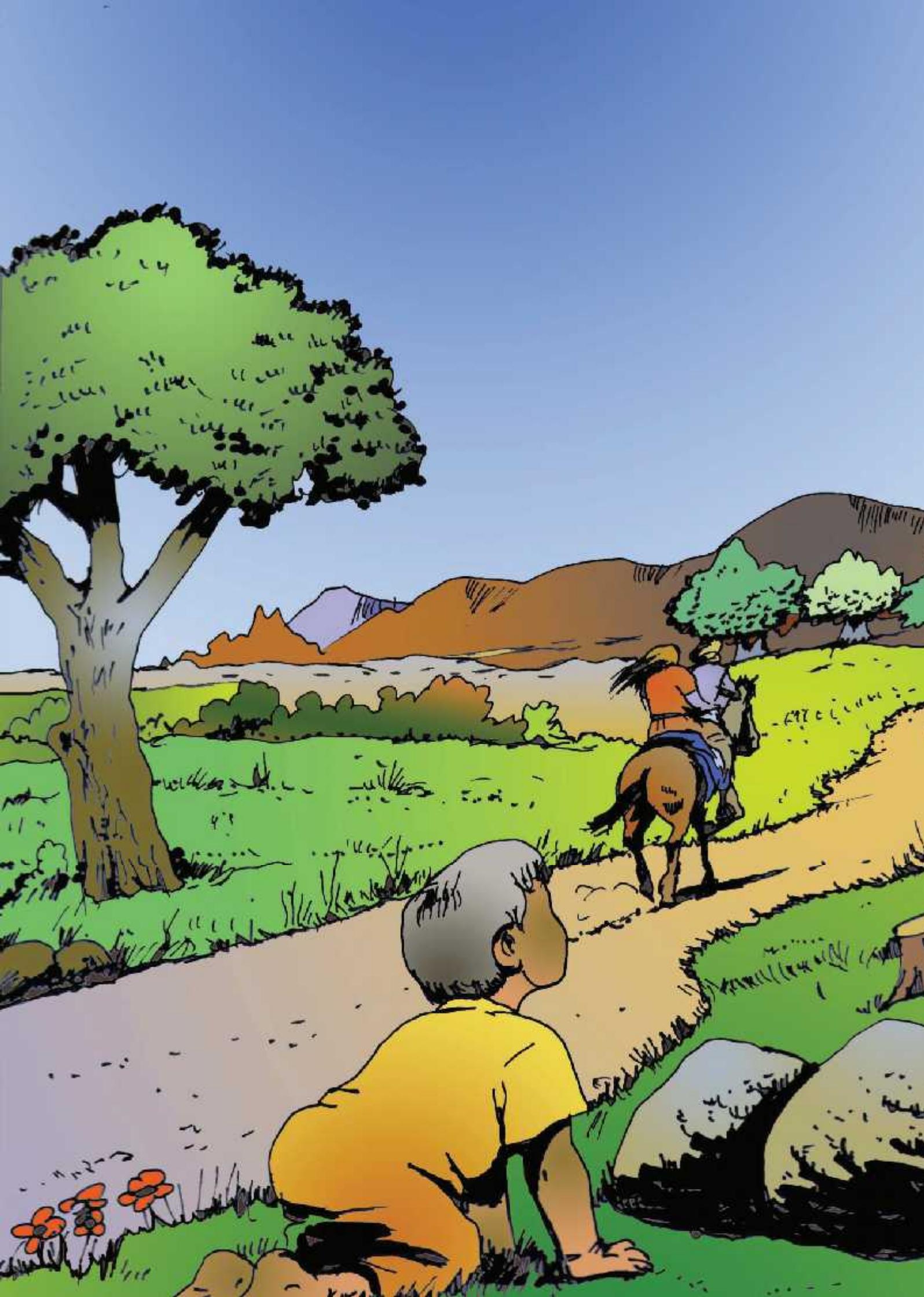
- Father, this little boy's mother is away, I can't leave him alone.

- We ought to take him with us, my daughter!

The king mounted his horse, Green Herb and Manos seated stuck to his back. Manos wondered where he was heading.

In the middle of the road, the king put his feet down for some rest. The little boy Manos stepped away on the sly and hid between the trees unobserved.

Once Green Herb felt his absence, she informed her father, who sent out guards to look for him; to no avail.





The giant woman got back to the hut to see for herself that both her son Manos and the captive Green Herb were missing. She looked out for them steadfastly till she fell into despair. She felt so sad for the disappearance of Manos, and she thought that Green Herb had kidnapped him and ran away with him. She resolved to take revenge on her. She then resumed searching for them, each time disguising herself as a given animal.

Once, she disguised herself as a female camel and headed for the *Seagulls Castle*, in pursuit of her younger son and Green Herb.

All of a sudden, Green Herb came up to the magic camel. As Green Herb was poised to mount her, a big storm raged on before it turned into a sandstorm, filling in the air with dust, making the whereabouts dusky and consequently bedimming the visibility. Shortly afterwards, the storm softened, the sky swept its dust away, and there arose a great wonder!

All the onlookers perceived a ghost closing in on them so fast. The features grew clearer. He was the giant woman's son. He had been wandering around for many years.

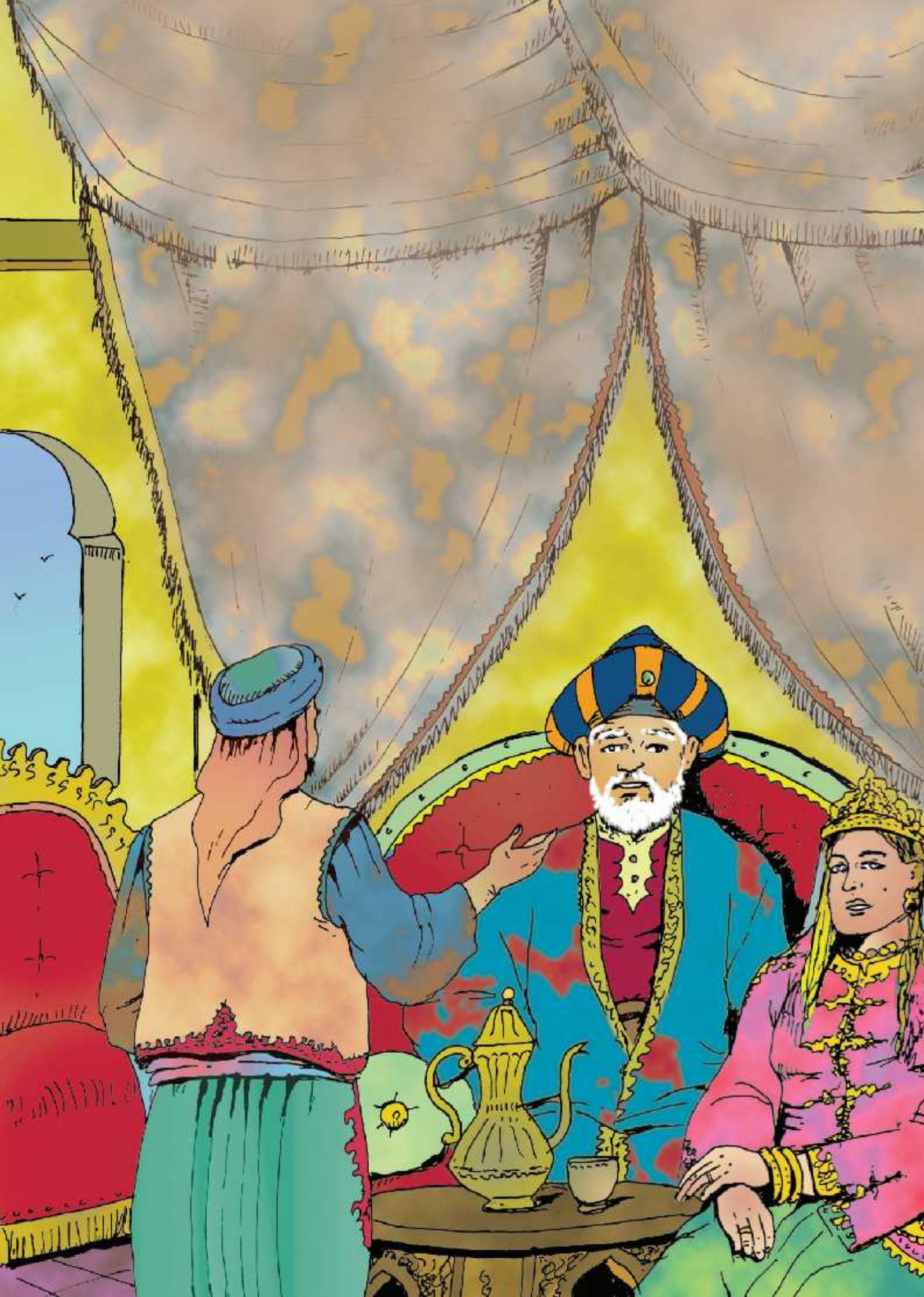
The long-lost son came back as a young man. The giant woman got rid of the camel camouflage and regained her natural shape.

The son saw again his mother gratifyingly. She then hurled him on her back. They stared at the people for a few seconds before slipping away to the woods in a hurry.

Green Herb did not believe her eyes; she was traumatized. When she regained her consciousness, she sprinted to the royal palace.

Many days later, the shepherd showed up in the castle to meet the king, who had once vowed to recompense the savior of his daughter.

Will the king hold his promise of making the shepherd his associate in wealth and marrying him Princess Green Herb?



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