

The Brothers

Grimm

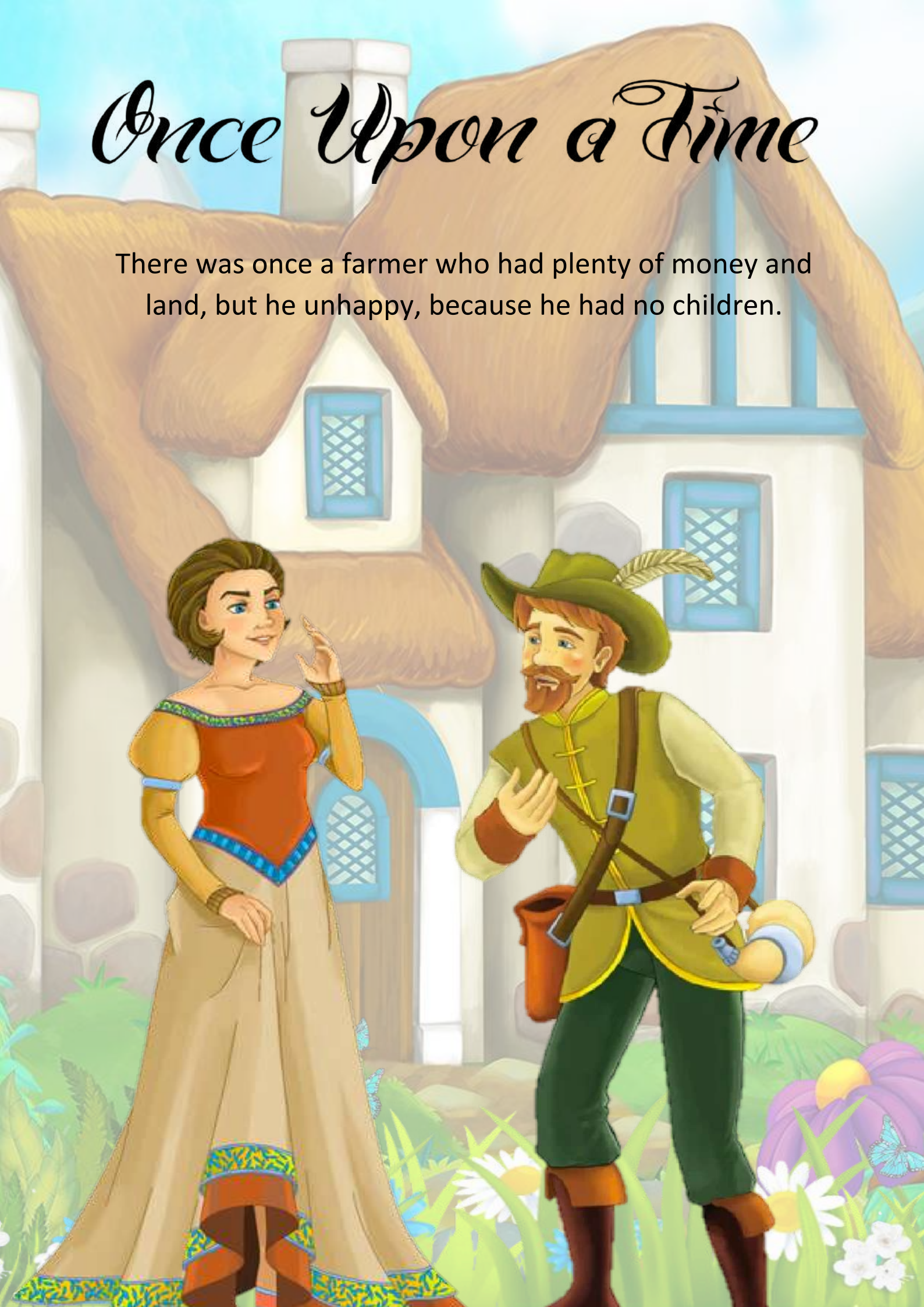
Hans the  
Hedgehog





# *Once Upon a Time*

There was once a farmer who had plenty of money and land, but he unhappy, because he had no children.





Once when he went to town, the other farmers  
mocked him ...



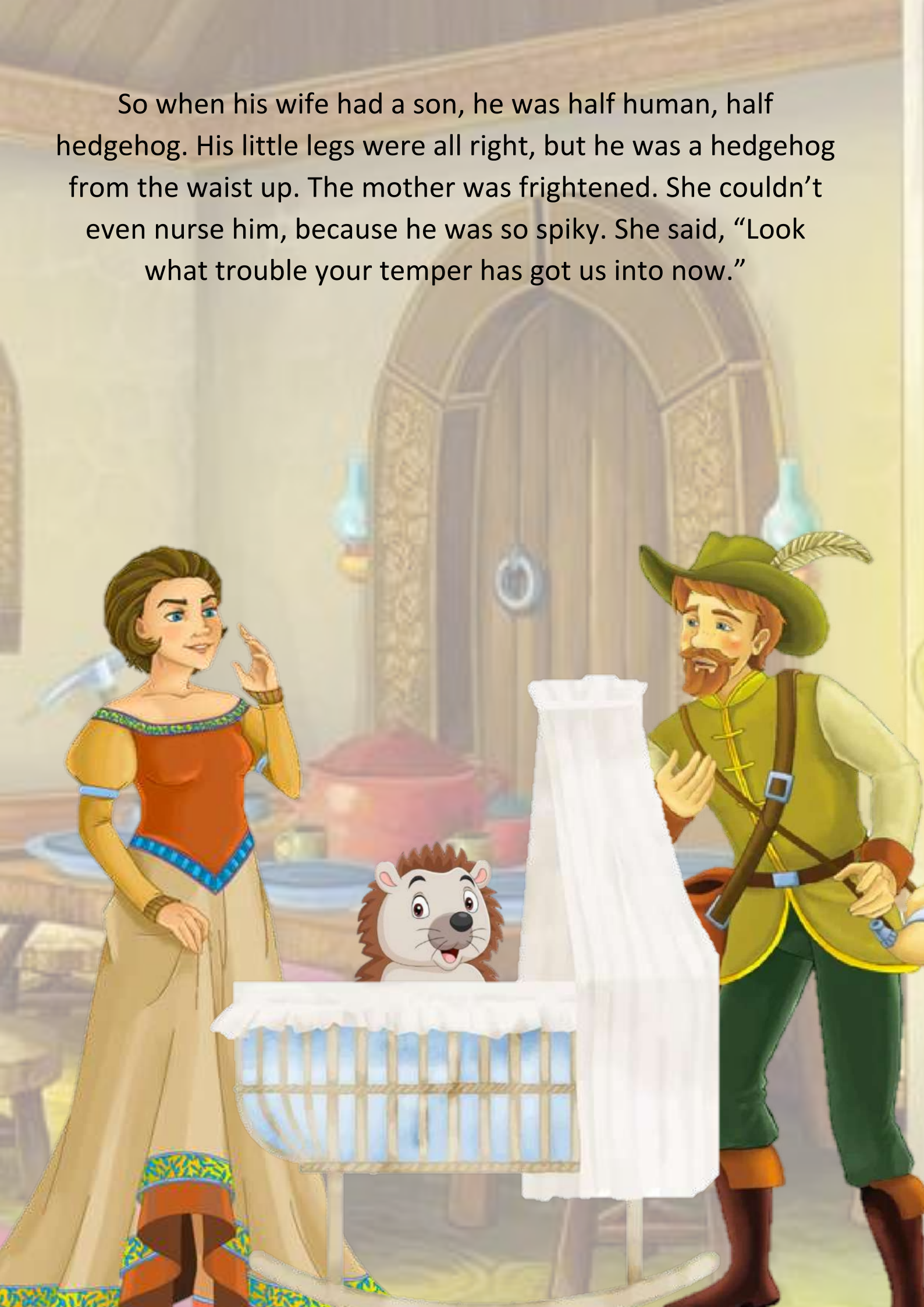


... so when he got home he said in a temper, "I must have a child, even if it's only a hedgehog."





So when his wife had a son, he was half human, half hedgehog. His little legs were all right, but he was a hedgehog from the waist up. The mother was frightened. She couldn't even nurse him, because he was so spiky. She said, "Look what trouble your temper has got us into now."





But the farmer said, “There’s no use crying over spilt milk.  
What shall we call the boy?”

And the wife said, “There’s only one name for him: Hans the  
Hedgehog.”

“Where shall he sleep?”

“We can’t put him in a proper bed, because of his quills.”



So they strewed some handfuls of straws behind the stove, and that was his bed for the next eight years.

By that time his father was sick of him, and only wished he would die. But he didn't die, he just lay there behind the stove.





One day the farmer went to the fair and asked his wife what she would like him to buy her. “A joint of meat and some white bread rolls,” she said. Then he asked the servant, and she said, “A pair of slippers and some fancy stockings.” And finally he asked Hans the Hedgehog, and Hans answered, “Bring me some bagpipes, if you please.”





When he returned from the fair he gave his wife the meat and the rolls, and the servant the slippers and the stockings.





Lastly, he went to the stove and gave the bagpipes to Hans the Hedgehog. Then Hans said, "Father, please go to the forge and have the rooster shod. Then I'll ride away and never come back."





The father thought the loss of his rooster well worth it to get rid of Hans the Hedgehog, so he took it to the forge to be shod.





When it was done, Hans mounted the rooster and rode away, with his bagpipes under his arm. But he took all the farmer's pigs with him, which the farmer hadn't bargained on.





Hans the Hedgehog went to live in the forest and tend his herd of pigs, which soon grew very large.





The rooster sat on a branch of a tall tree, with Hans on its back, and Hans practiced his bagpipes until the music he got out of them was really beautiful. All this time, his father and mother had no idea what he was doing.





One day, the king got lost in the forest and heard the music. He sent a servant to find out what it was, and when the man returned he said, “Your Majesty, it is a hedgehog mounted on a rooster perched up a tall tree, playing the bagpipes.”





The king was very curious and went to see Hans for himself and ask if he knew the way to the palace. So Hans came down from the tree and said, “I will show you the way if you will give me the first living creature you meet when we reach the palace courtyard.”





The king took pen and paper and wrote something down and gave the paper to Hans, saying, "There, you have my written word on it." But he had written that Hans should not have the first thing he saw, for he thought, He's only a dumb hedgehog, and I can write what I like.





When he reached the palace, the first living creature the king saw was his daughter, running out to greet him. He told her what a joke it was that he had promised to give the first living creature he saw to the strange hedgehog who rode a rooster and played the bagpipes.





Meanwhile, Hans the Hedgehog lived happily in the forest, tending his pigs and playing his bagpipes.





It happened that another king got lost in the forest and made the same bargain with Hans in order to be shown the way home.





But this king was an honest man. When his only daughter came running to greet him, he told her, “I was lost in the forest, and in order to find the way home, I promised to give the first living creature I met when I got back to a strange creature, half man and half hedgehog, who was sitting on a rooster in a tall tree, playing the bagpipes. I’m sorry, my dear, but that first living creature is you.”





The brave girls said, “Never mind, Father. A promise is a promise, and I will go with him willingly if he comes to claim me.”





After a while, Hans the Hedgehog had so many pigs that there wasn't room for them all in the forest, so he decided to go home. He sent word to his father that he was coming, with enough pigs for everyone in the village to have one.





But his father wasn't pleased to see him, for he had hoped that Hans the Hedgehog had died years ago. So Hans said, "Father, take the rooster back to the forge and have him shod again, and I will ride away and never come back as long as I live." So his father took the rooster to be shod, and Hans rode away on him.





Hans rode to the kingdom of the first king. The king had given orders that if ever anyone came mounted on a rooster and playing the bagpipes, the army must kill him. So as soon as Hans appeared he was attacked from all sides.





But he spurred on the rooster, and it rose into the air, right over the palace gates, to the king's window, and landed on the window ledge.

“Give me what you promised,” said Hans the Hedgehog, “or I’ll kill you and your daughter too.”





The king was so frightened, he begged his daughter to save them by going out to Hans the Hedgehog.





So she packed her bags, and her father gave her a carriage with six horses and servants and a rich dowry.





She got into the carriage, and Hans the Hedgehog got in beside her with his rooster and his bagpipes, and they drove away.





The king thought he would never see his daughter again; but at least his own skin was safe.





They hadn't gone far when Hans the Hedgehog asked the princess, "Will you love me truly?"

"Yes," she said. But when he tried to kiss her, she turned away. His spikes caught her across the face and left a smear of blood.



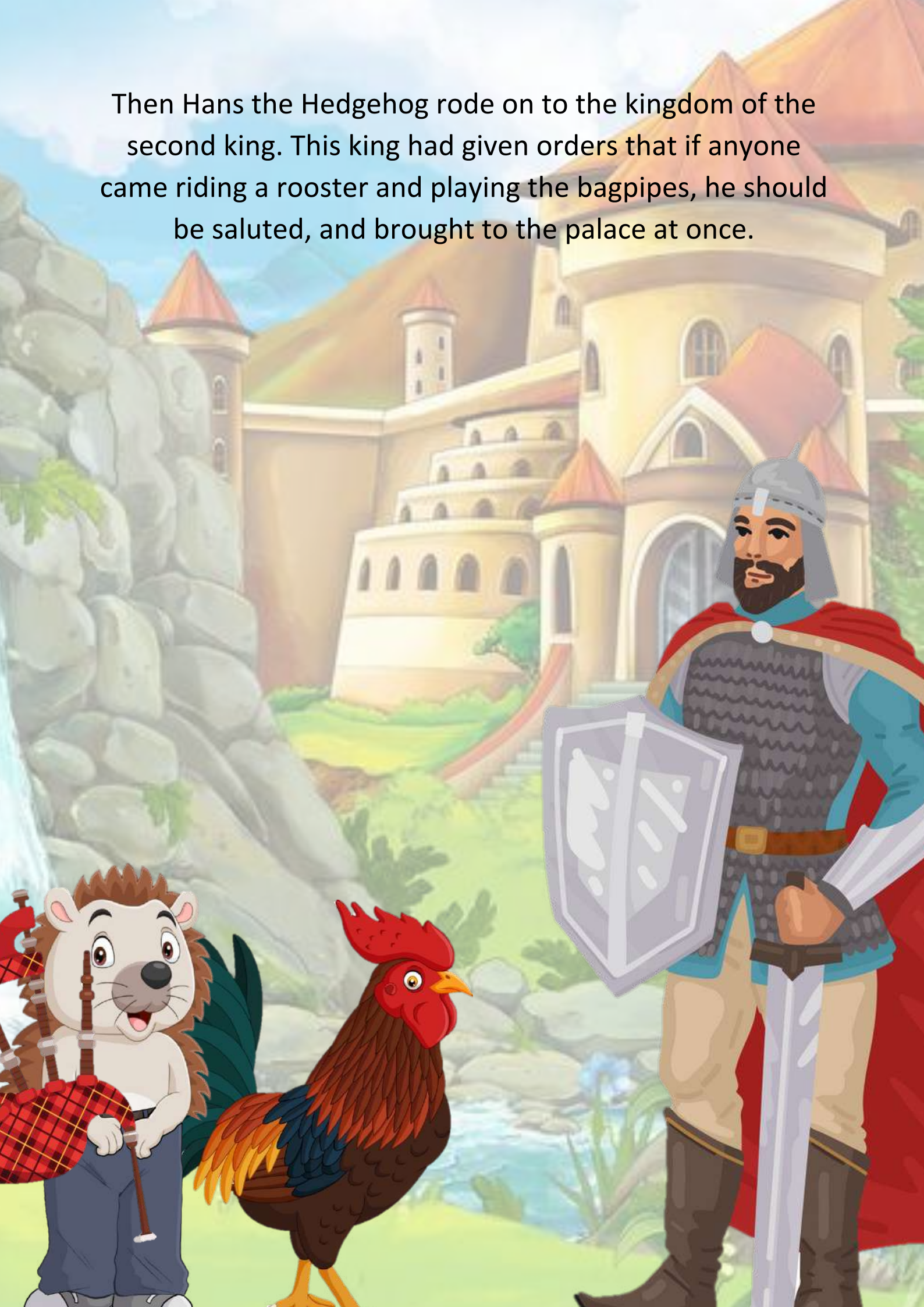


“You are false at heart,’ said Hans the Hedgehog. “Go home to your father, I don’t want you.” And no one else ever wanted her either.





Then Hans the Hedgehog rode on to the kingdom of the second king. This king had given orders that if anyone came riding a rooster and playing the bagpipes, he should be saluted, and brought to the palace at once.





When the king's daughter saw him she was frightened, for he did look very strange. But she told herself that it was wrong to judge people on appearances, and that anyway, a promise was a promise. So she welcomed Hans the Hedgehog with open arms, and they were married.





After the wedding feast, they went up to their room. She was still frightened, but Hans said, "Don't be afraid. I would never hurt you."





Then he said to the king, “Tell four men to watch outside the bedroom door: When I go to bed I shall tear off my hedgehog’s skin and cast it to the floor. They must rush in and throw it onto the fire, and watch until it is utterly devoured by the flames. Then I shall be free from the enchantment of my birth.”





The men did as they were told, and when the skin was quite burnt up, Hans lay in the bed in human form, as shapely and handsome as could be.





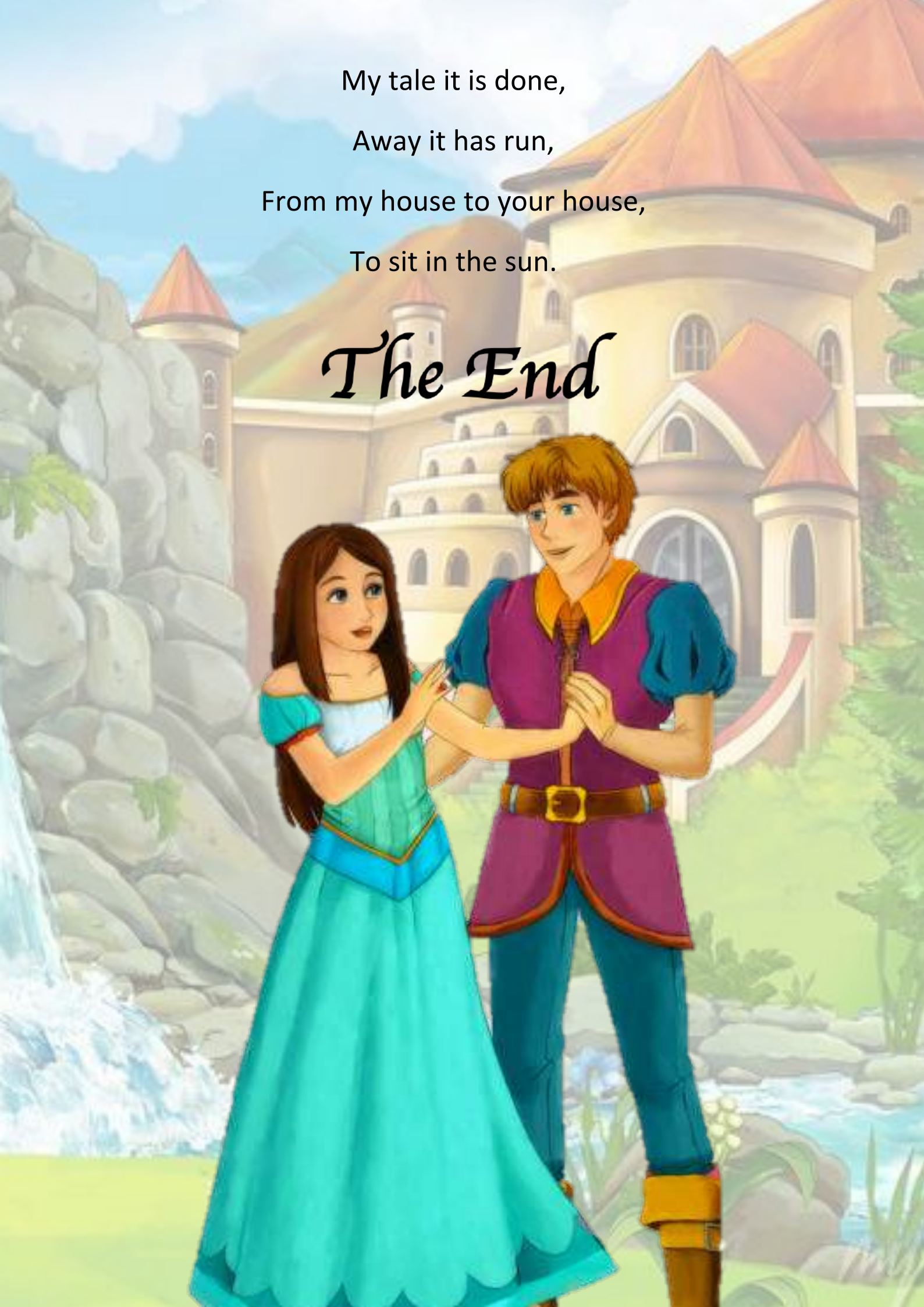
The king's daughter loved him truly, and the king  
named him his heir.





My tale it is done,  
Away it has run,  
From my house to your house,  
To sit in the sun.

*The End*







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