

The Brothers

Grimm

The Peasant's Wise Daughter



Once Upon a Time

There was once a poor peasant who had no land, just a little hut and an only daughter.



One day the daughter said, “We ought to ask the king for a piece of newly cleared land.”



When the king heard how poor they were, he gave them a piece of land, which the girl and her father dug over, meaning to sow it with corn and wheat.



When they had turned over nearly the whole field, they dug up a mortar made of pure gold. “Look here,” said the father. “As the king was so kind as to give us this field, we ought to give him the golden mortar in return.”



The daughter was dead against it. “Father,” she said, “if we give the king the golden mortar, he will then demand a golden pestle to go with it, and then what shall we do?”

But the old man wouldn't listen.



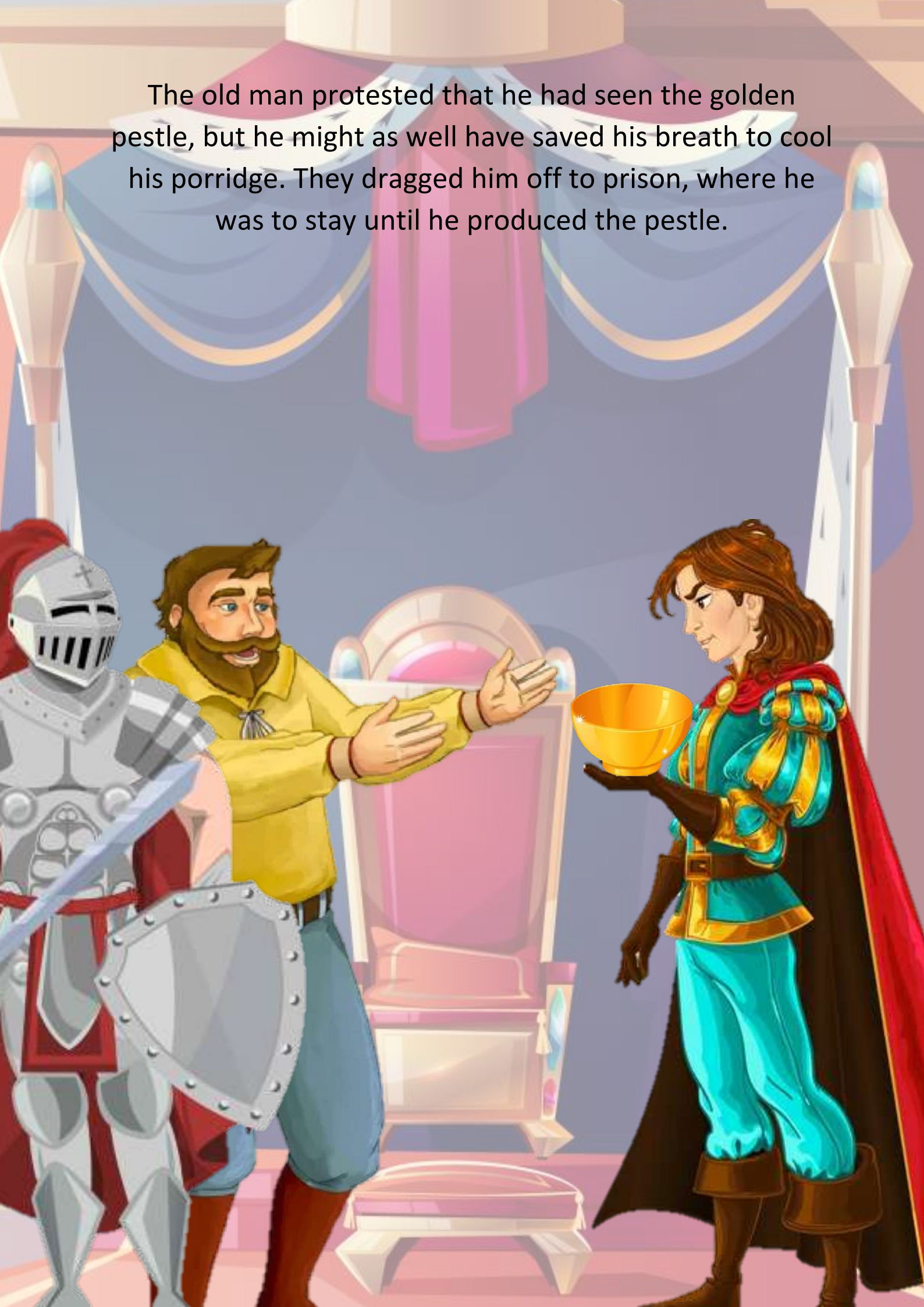
He took the mortar and presented it to the king. But instead of saying thank you, the king just said, “Are you sure that’s all you found?”

“Yes, Your Majesty,” said the peasant.

“I don’t believe you,” said the king. “If you found a golden mortar, you must have found a golden pestle. Bring it to me, or you shall regret it.”



The old man protested that he had seen the golden pestle, but he might as well have saved his breath to cool his porridge. They dragged him off to prison, where he was to stay until he produced the pestle.



The guards who brought him his bread and water couldn't persuade him to eat or drink. All he did was wail, "if only I had listened to my daughter!"



They reported this to the king and the king had the peasant brought before him.

“What do you mean, ‘If only I had listened to my daughter’?” asked the king.

“She told me not to give you the mortar, as you would only ask for the pestle as well.”

“If you have such a wise daughter, send her to me.”

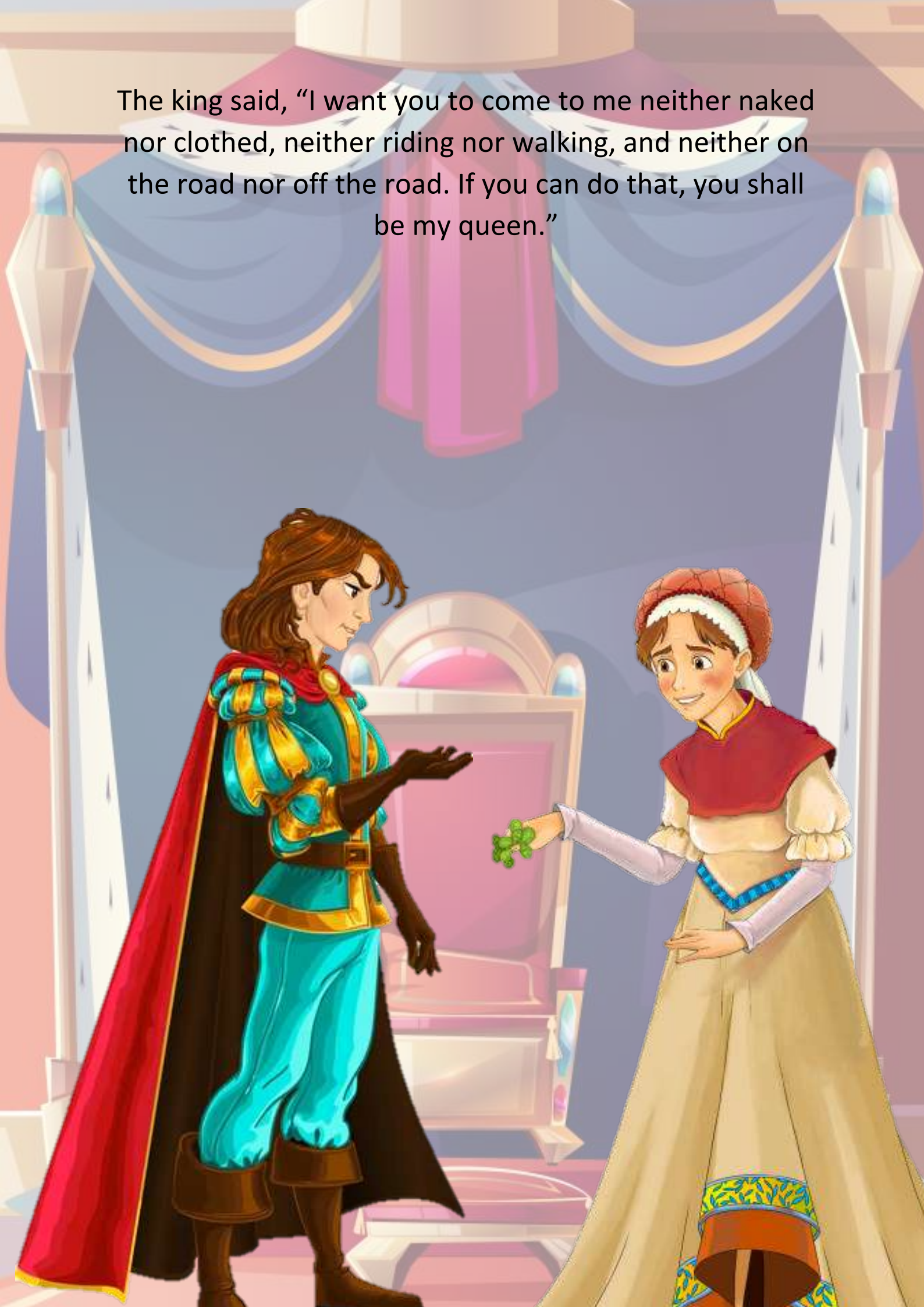


So the peasant's daughter had to appear before the king. He said, "If you are as wise as you seem, I shall marry you. But first you must solve a riddle."

"I will try," said the girl.



The king said, "I want you to come to me neither naked nor clothed, neither riding nor walking, and neither on the road nor off the road. If you can do that, you shall be my queen."



The peasant girl went home and took off all her clothes. Then she wrapped herself in a fishing net, so that she was not naked.



Then she hired a donkey and tied the fishing net to the donkey's tail, so that it could pull her along, which was neither riding nor walking. As the donkey pulled her along, it dragged her through the wagon ruts, with only her big toe touching the road. So she was neither on the road nor off the road.



When the king saw the clever way in which she had solved his riddle, he released her father from prison, took her as his wife, and put her in charge of his household.



Some years passed, and then one day as the king was inspecting his troops it happened that two peasants who had been selling wood stopped their wagons outside the palace.



One wagon was drawn by two oxen, and the other by two horses. One of the horses had a young foal with it, and this foal ran off and lay down between the oxen.



When the foal's owner asked for it back, the other peasant refused, and the two came to blows.



The king wanted to know what the matter was, and the peasants argued their case in front of him. “The foal is mine,” said the peasant with the horses. “Nonsense,” said the other. “The foal is mine. See how happy it is, lying down between its parents.”

And the king, who knew nothing about animals, said, “The creature seems happy where its, so that’s where it should stay.”



The peasant who had lost his foal didn't dare argue with the king, but he had heard that the queen was kind-hearted and came from a peasant family herself, so he took his troubles to her.



“Please help me,” he begged.

“I will,” she said, “if you promise never to betray me. This is what you must do. Tomorrow morning, when the king goes out to inspect the guard, you must stand in the middle of the road with a fishing net and pretend to be fishing in the dust. Every now and then give the net a shake as if it were full, and then carry on.” And she also told him what to say when the king spoke to him.



Next day, the king asked him what he thought he was up to.

“I’m fishing,” he replied.

“How can you catch fish on dry land?” asked the king.

“There’s just as much chance of my catching fish on dry land as there is of oxen having a foal.”



“You didn’t fetch that answer out of your own head,” said the king. “Who told you what to say?” But the peasant, because he had promised the queen, would not betray her.



. The king had him dragged off to prison and beaten and starved until at last he confessed that it was the queen who had advised him what to do and say.



When the king got home, he said to his wife, “You have made me a laughing stock. I won’t have you for my wife anymore. You can go back to the peasant’s hut you came from.” He only granted her one mercy – that she could take with her whatever was dearest to her as a farewell gift.



The queen replied with downcast eyes, “Of course, my husband, if that is your will.” She threw her arms around him and kissed him and begged him to drink one last drink with her. The king didn’t know that his drink contained a strong sleeping potion. No sooner had he drunk it than he was fast asleep.



The queen took a fine white sheet and wrapped the king in it, and carried him out to a carriage. Then she drove to the old hut that belonged to her father and laid the king in her own old bed.



The king slept a whole day and night without walking. When he finally came to, he had no idea where he was or what had happened. He called for his servants, but there were no servants. At last his wife came to his side. She said, “My husband, you told me I could take from the palace whatever was dearest to me than the whole world.”



The king's eyes filled with tears. "My dearest wife," he said. "You are as wise as ever. You shall be mine, and I shall be yours."



And he took her back to the palace, and never parted from her again.

The End





THINK

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