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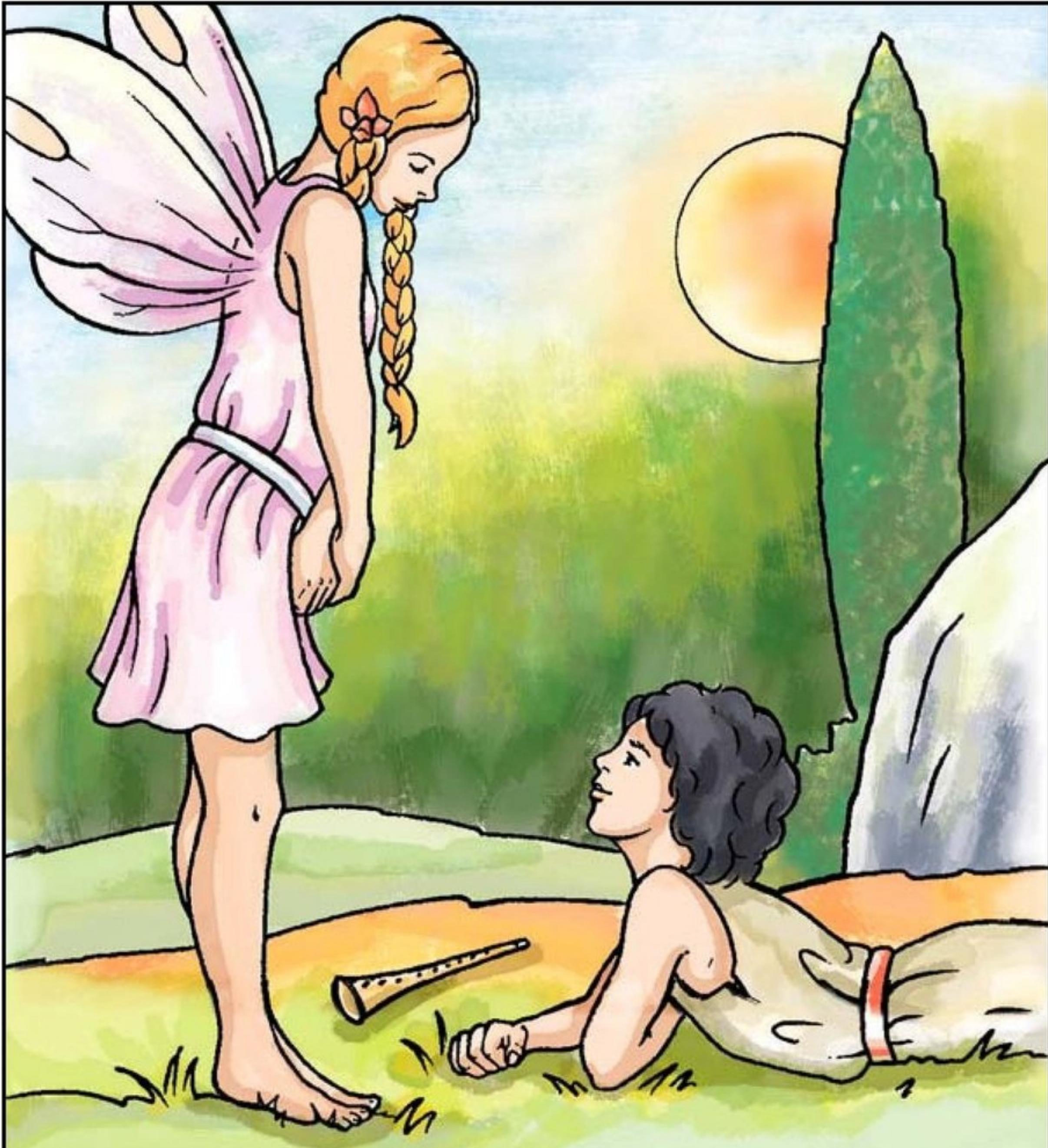


The Shepherd and the Fairy



A Corsican Folktale Retold by William Harryman
Illustrated by Sandra Pond

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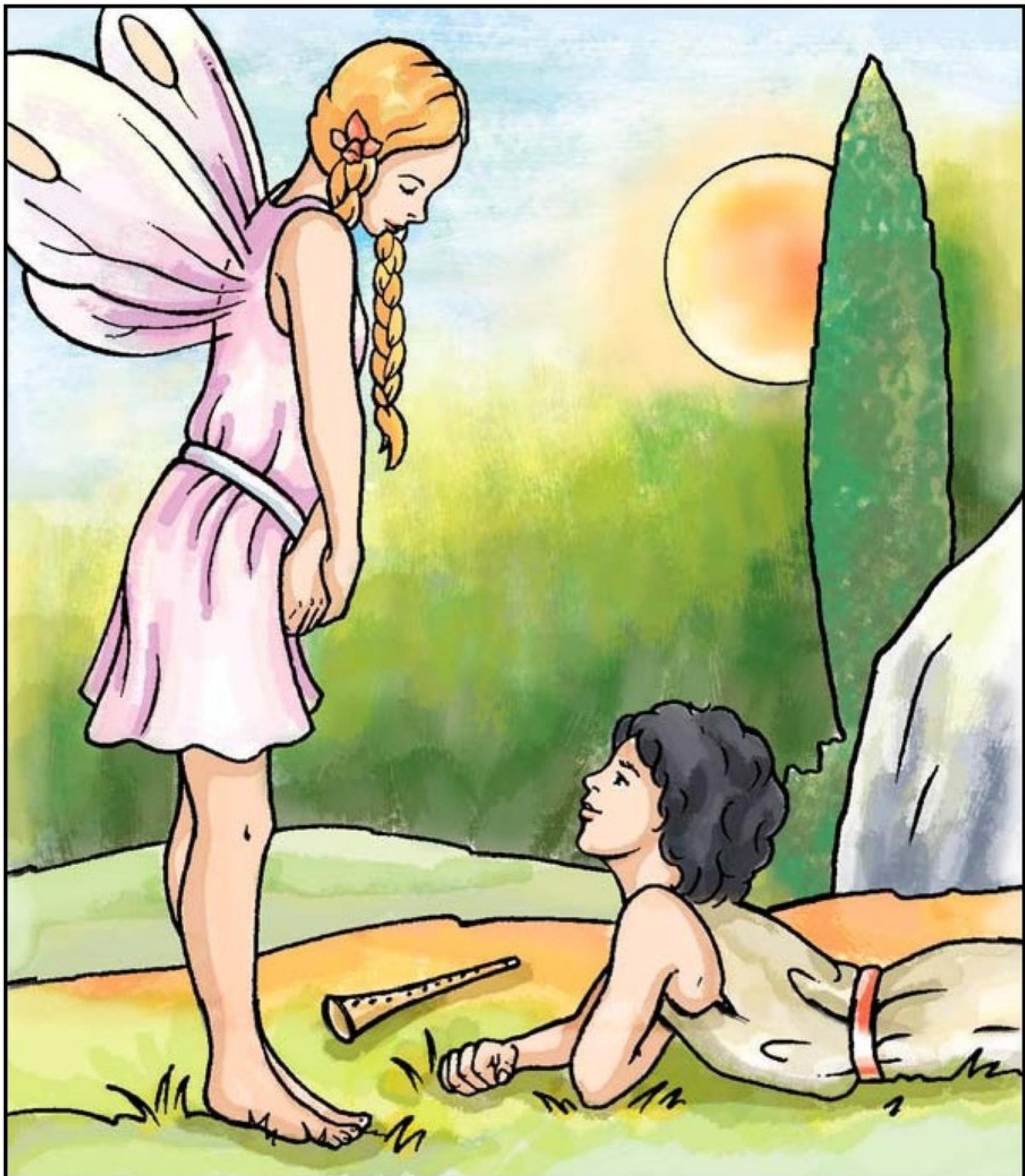
Once upon a time, in a deep dark cave, there lived a beautiful fairy. She was a clever fairy who could do all kinds of magic. But she could do magic on the condition that she did not leave the cave for more than three days at a time. The cave was in a faraway place in the mountains. Because of this, she was very lonely.



The fairy liked to go for walks in the hills and feel the fresh air. She also liked to smell the wildflowers. She enjoyed watching the birds fly. She could fly, too, but not as gracefully as a sparrow or a hummingbird.

One day when the fairy was out walking, she saw a young shepherd herding his sheep. He was quite plain, but he played a wooden flute and seemed quite merry. She watched him for a while. His joy made her heart sing. She fell in love with him.





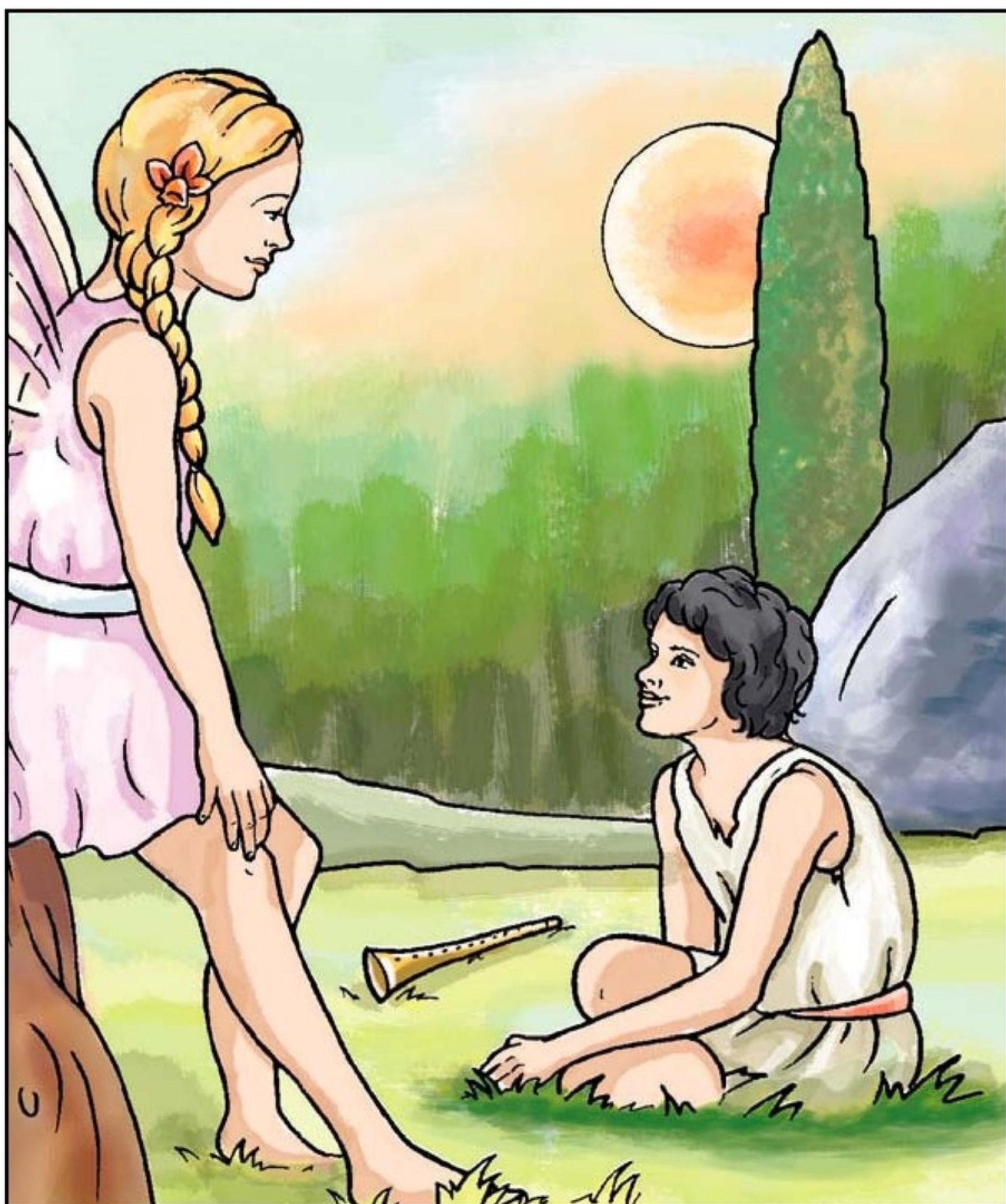
“Hello, Shepherd,” she said. “You look so happy. I really enjoyed your music.” The shepherd stopped playing his flute and smiled at her.

“Yes, ma’am, I’m very happy.”
The shepherd felt a little shy.

 “You’re quite content?” the fairy asked. “You don’t need anything at all?”

“Not a thing,” the shepherd replied.

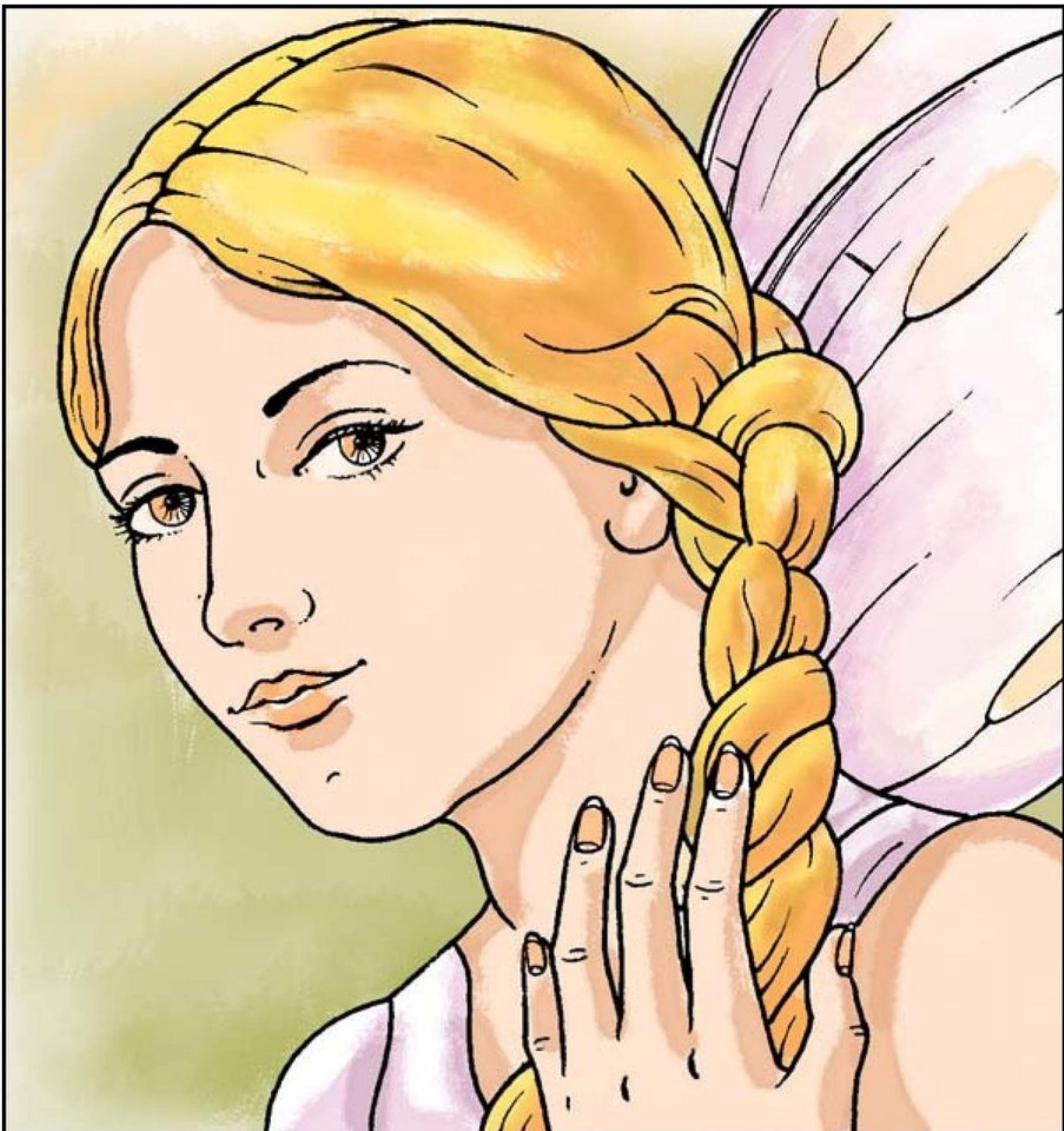
“You’re sure?” asked the fairy.



🔊 The shepherd thought for a moment. Was there anything he needed in his life? He had his sheep. He had his music.

After a few moments, he said, “Well, I have everything I need, except a wife.” He smiled. He felt a little embarrassed. “But I’m much too poor to think of marriage.”





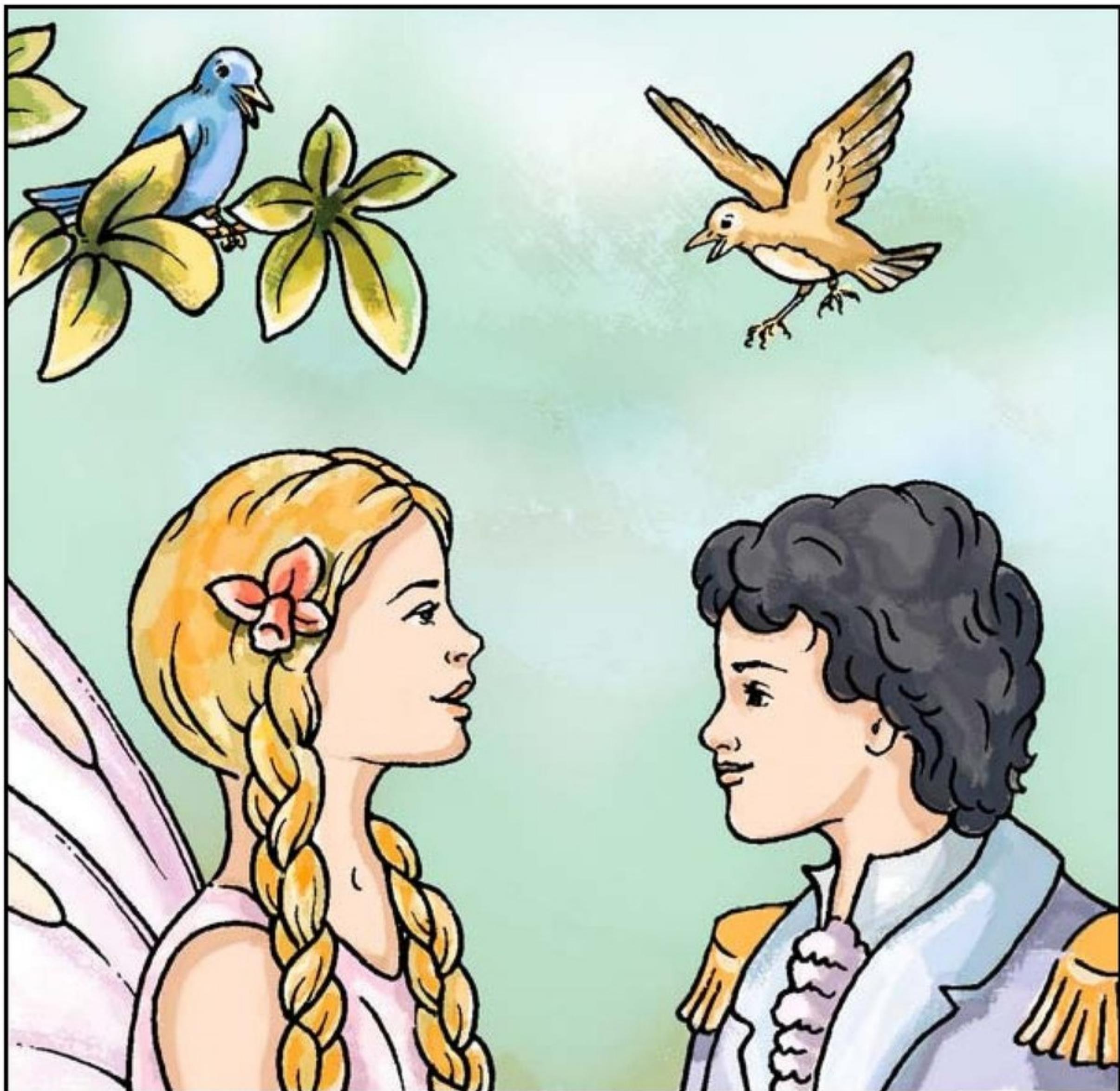
The fairy looked away and twisted her hair with her finger. “Will I do for a wife?” she asked.

The shepherd was so startled he almost dropped his flute. “Will you do?” he gasped. “Why, I’d be the happiest man alive.”

► The fairy removed a gold ring from her finger. “Here, put this ring on your finger and we will be married.” The ring shimmered in the sunlight. It was radiant.

The shepherd put the ring on his finger. Suddenly his shepherd’s smock turned into a beautiful suit fit for a prince. Instead of his sheep, a carriage drawn by six winged horses stood before him on the hillside.





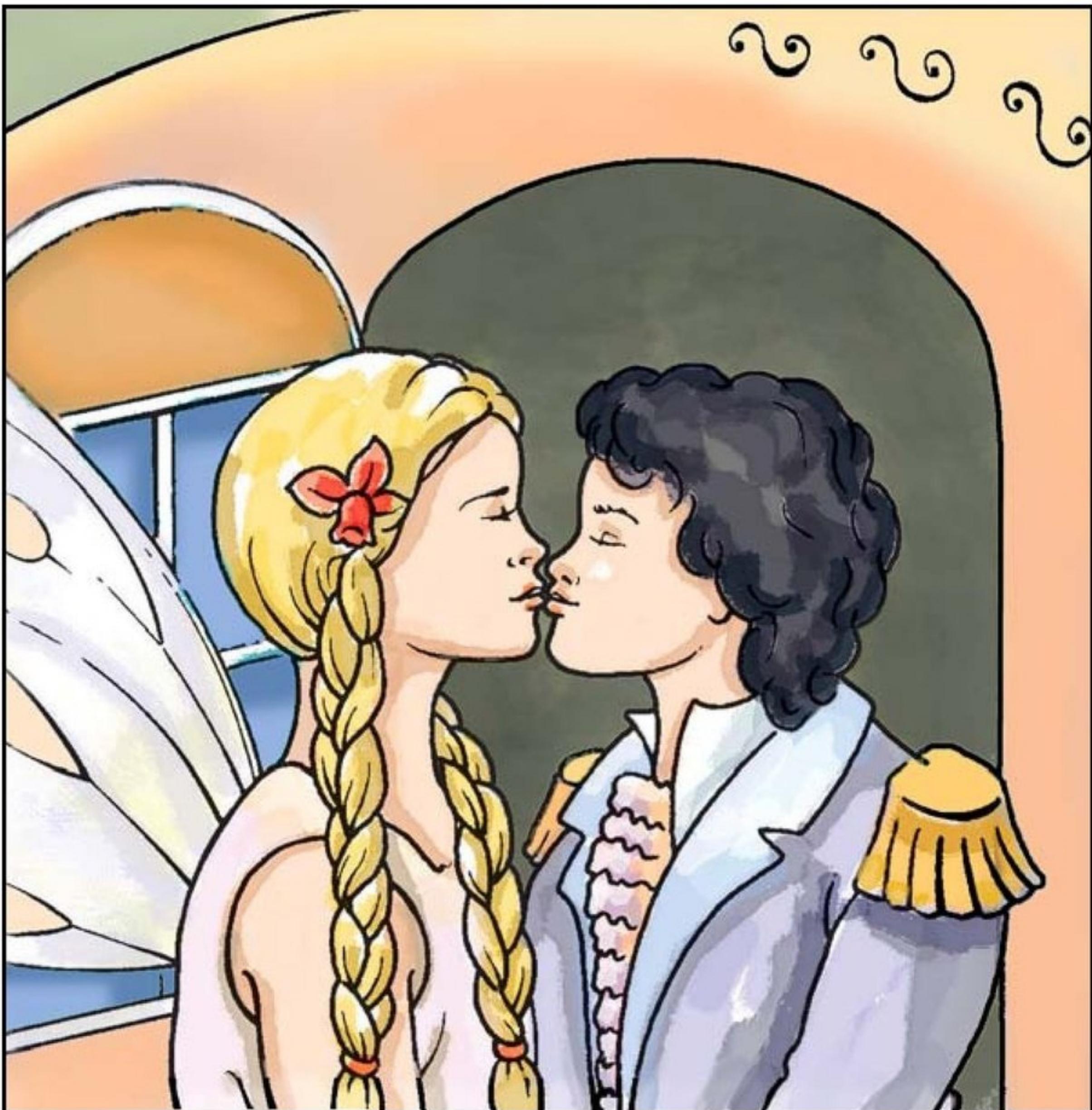
The wind stopped blowing. Even the birds stopped flying to watch. It was as though the shepherd and the fairy were the only people on Earth.

“Now we are ready,” said the fairy.
“Climb into the carriage. We must return to my home. We have a long way to travel.”

► The shepherd hesitated. “I must say goodbye to my mother first,” he said. “She would be very worried if she didn’t know where I had gone.”

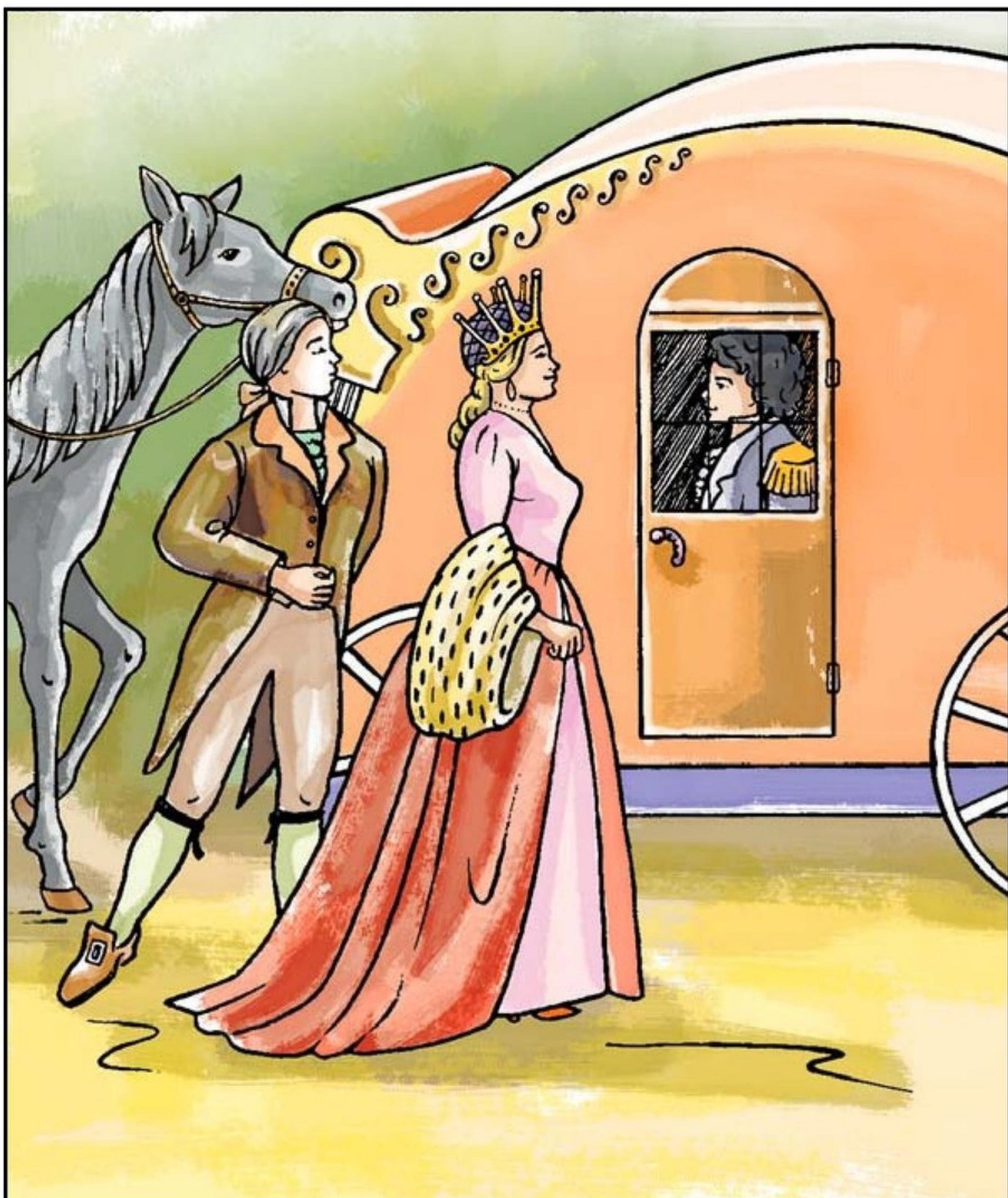
“All right,” said the fairy. “I’ll leave the carriage with you and go on ahead. But please come to me before three days are up. The horses will take you safely to my palace.”

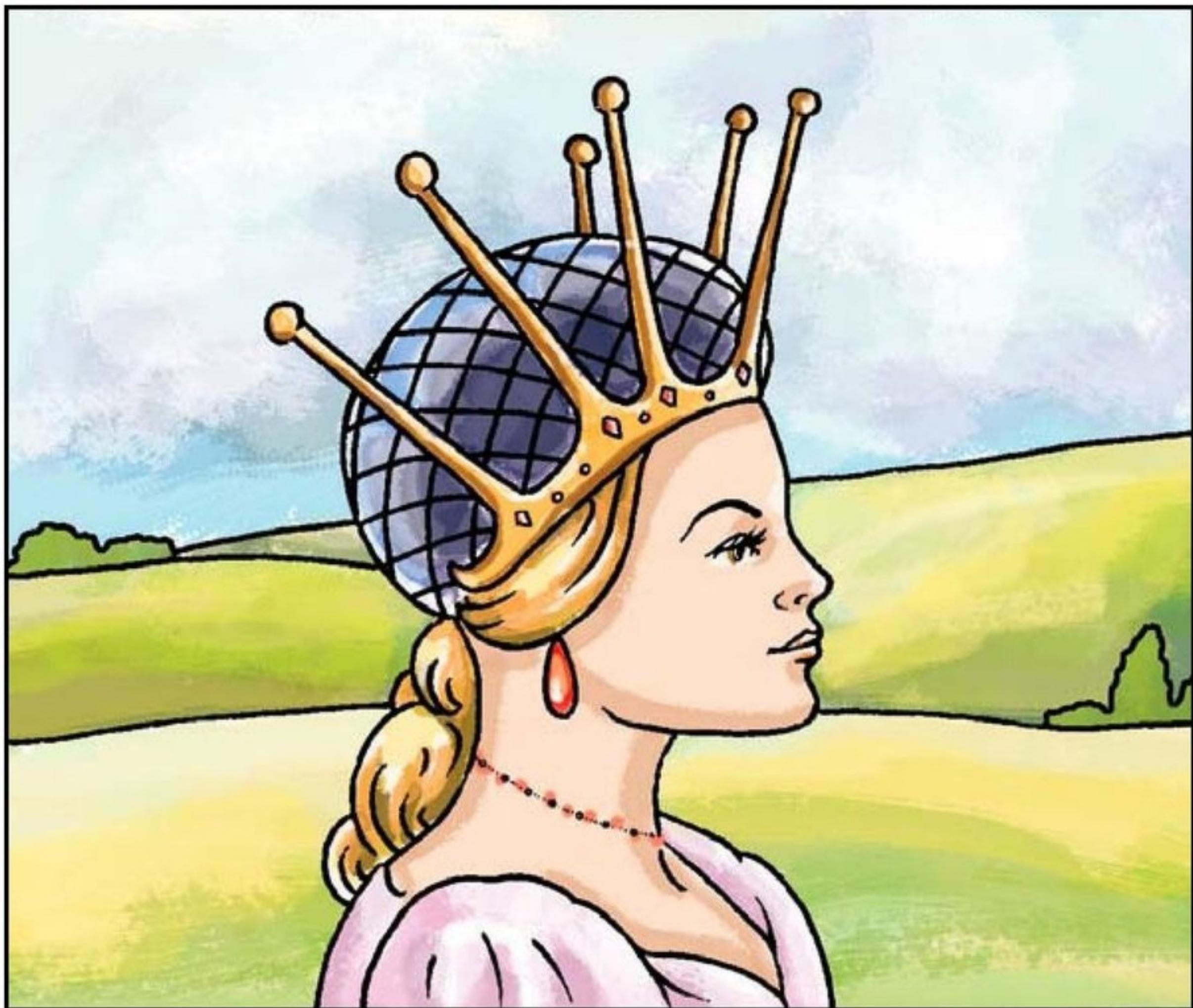




Then she kissed the shepherd and vanished. He stood there for a moment, amazed by his clothing. He could still feel the touch of her lips on his cheek. Finally, the shepherd climbed into the carriage and drove off toward the village where his mother lived.

► The shepherd had not traveled far when he met the queen of the country. She was out for a ride with her assistants. She took one look at the handsome young man in the carriage and fell in love with him.



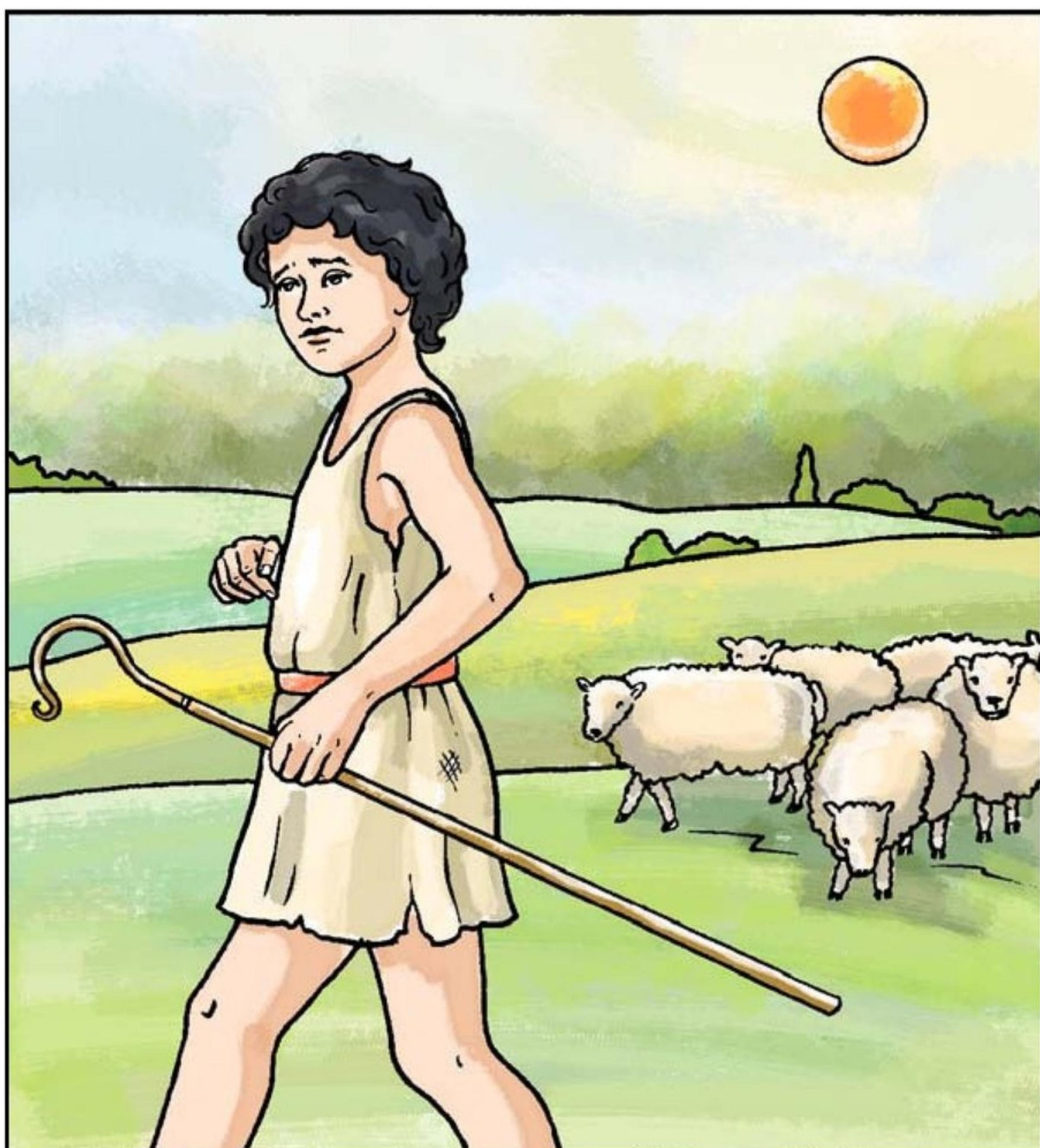


“Hello, Prince,” the queen called, reining in her horse. “I have been looking everywhere for someone like you. Since my husband died, this country has been in ruin. Will you marry me and be my king?” She was not coy at all. She expected him to say yes and be grateful for her offer. After all, she was the queen.



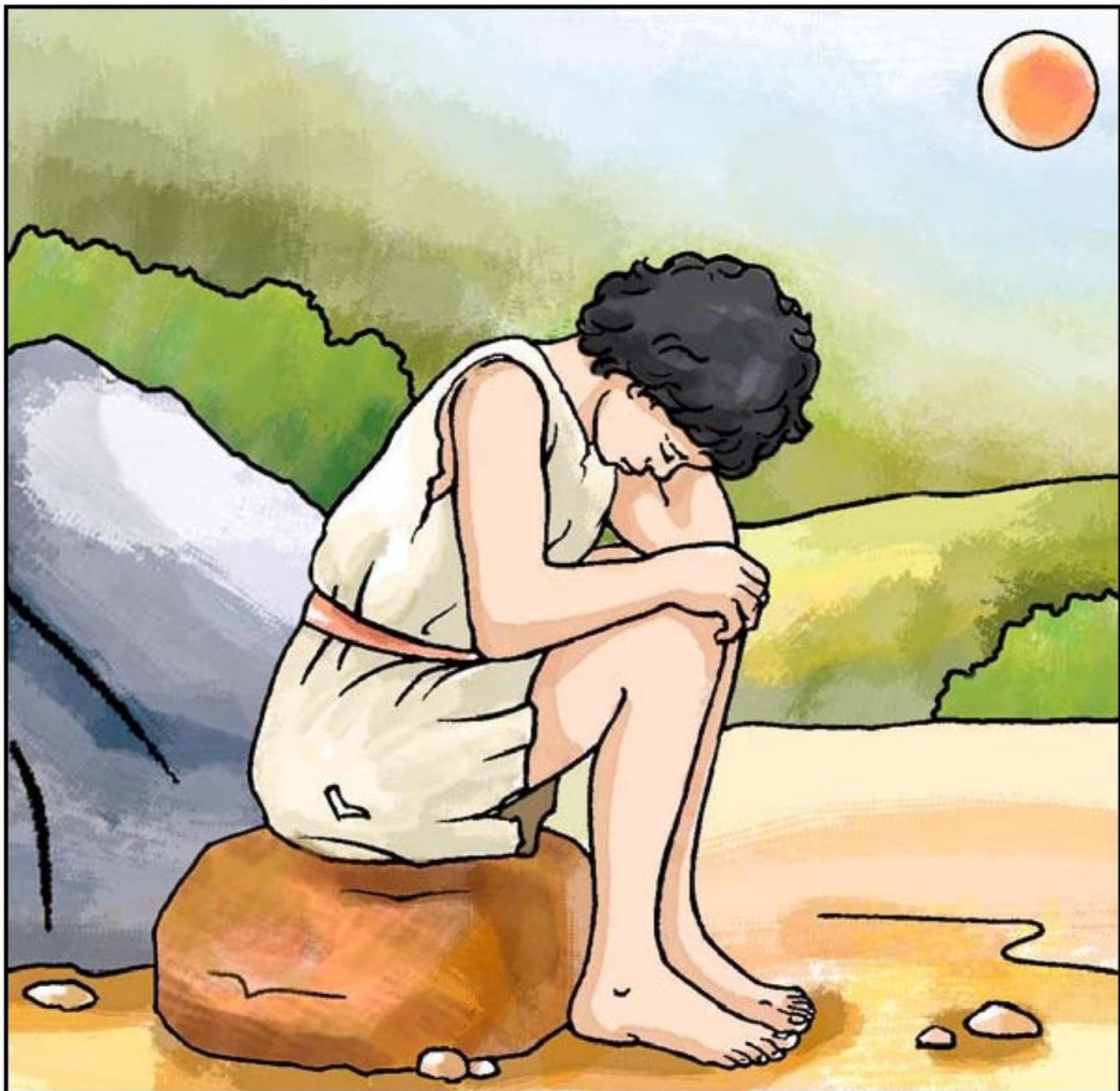
The shepherd was a practical man. It did not take him long to make up his mind. He decided that he would rather be king of his own country than live with the beautiful fairy a long way away. So he bowed very low. “Yes, ma’am. I would be honored to be your king.”

► The moment he said the words, his fine clothes vanished and his carriage disappeared as well. He stood there in his old threadbare smock, surrounded by sheep. The assistants laughed at his clothes and his sheep.



► The queen could hardly believe her eyes. “And who is this?” she asked scornfully. She was embarrassed to think that she had asked such a humble man to be her husband. She ordered her assistants to chase him and his sheep away. Then she rode off with her nose in the air.





The shepherd was ashamed. And he was out of breath. When he went to round up his sheep, he could not find them anywhere. They had all run away. He sat down on the ground and looked at his old clothes.

“What have I done?” he asked himself. “I am such a fool.”



From that day forward he traveled widely, playing his flute and begging for crusts of bread. He never found his sheep. He searched everywhere for the beautiful fairy, but he never found her again, either.

He never again felt any of the happiness he knew before that day.

This story is a retelling of a Corsican folktale. Corsica, an island in the Mediterranean that is currently a territory of France, has had cultural influences from France, ancient Rome, Britain, Italy, and Greece.

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Level N Leveled Book
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