

LEVELED BOOK • P

A Golden Tragedy



An ancient Greek myth retold by Robin King
Illustrated by Joel Snyder

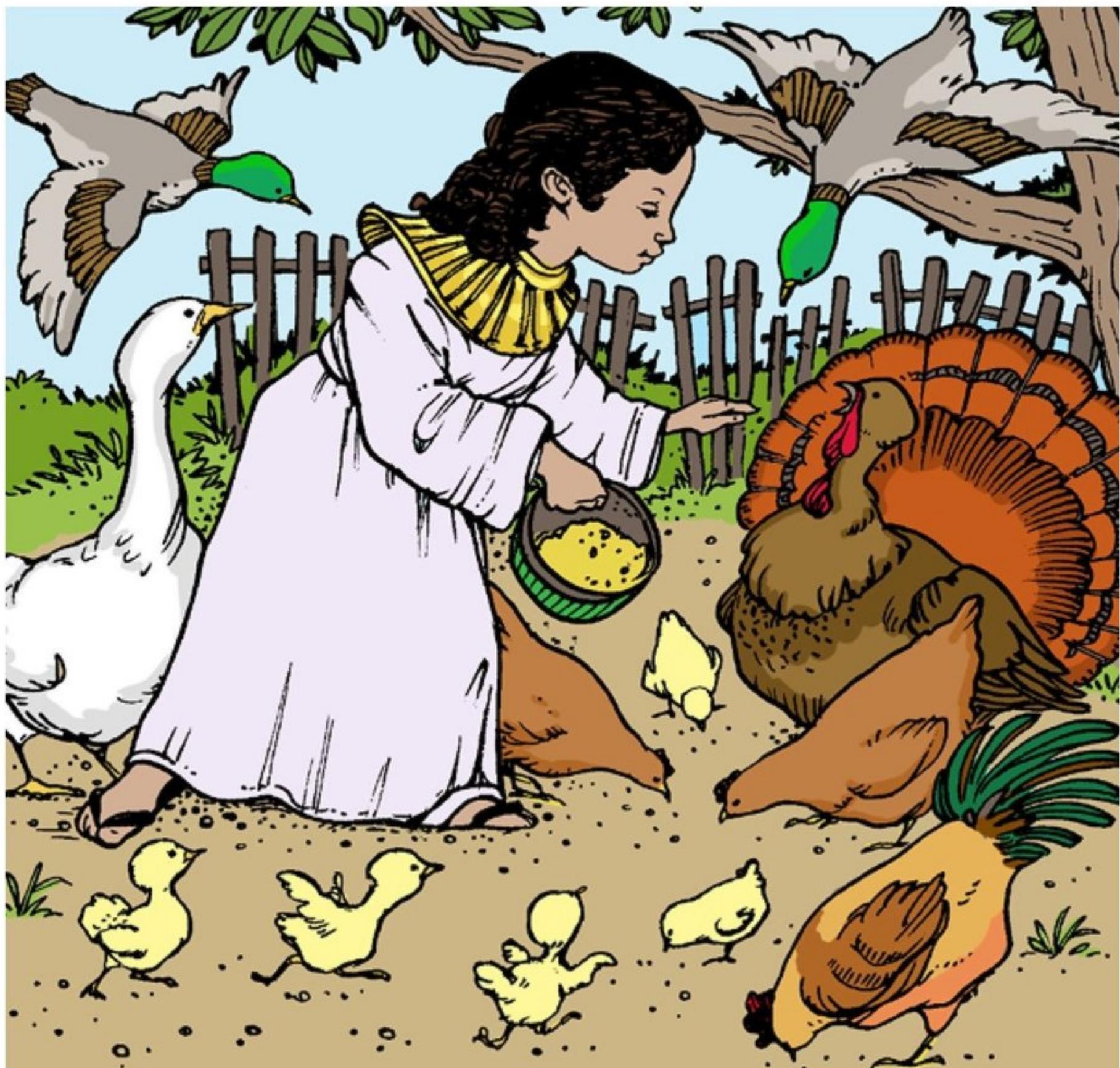
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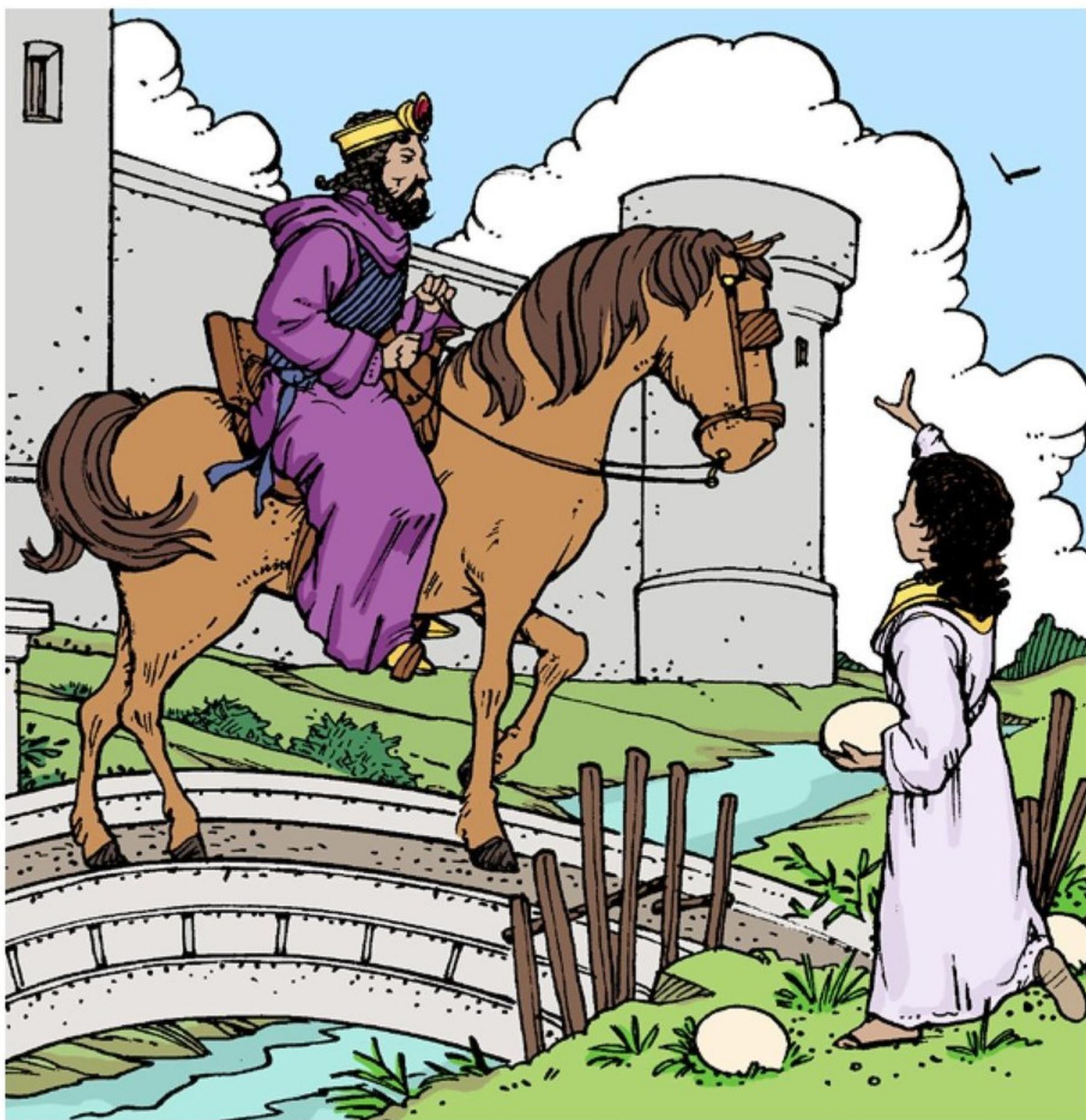
Long, long ago in a far-off land, there lived a very **wealthy** and kind king. King Midas had everything anyone could hope for. He had immense wealth, a peaceful kingdom, and a beautiful daughter, whom he loved dearly. Yet despite his good fortune, the king had one weakness. He wanted more. Most of all, he wanted to please his devoted daughter Penelope.



Penelope cared for the plumpest, most beautiful birds in all the land. She left little doubt that she liked feathered creatures such as chickens, turkeys, ducks, and geese best of all the animals on earth. Their feathers **glistened** in the bright sunshine and the cluckers, gobblers, quackers, and honkers clucked, gobbled, quacked, and honked musical notes with golden tones.

Every day but Tuesday, each bird laid three eggs that seemed bigger than melons. But that was not good enough for Penelope. She wanted her fowl to lay golden eggs, too.

Since the king never wanted to disappoint his daughter, he set off to visit a wise wizard to **enlist** his help.



King Midas asked the wizard for one wish.

"And what is your wish?" the wizard asked.

Without thinking of the consequences, which was his usual way, King Midas stated, "I would like the power to turn anything I touch into gold."

The wizard, **bewildered** by the request, said, "But you are already the wealthiest man in any kingdom. What could you possibly do with more gold?"

King Midas simply said, "It is more important that I keep my daughter happy."

"Someday you will regret this," the wizard warned before casting the spell.

The king fixed his thoughts on delighting his daughter. He didn't even bother to inquire why the wizard thought he would later regret his wish.

This would prove to be a **tragic** mistake.



The king traveled the road back to the palace, testing his new power. His path became littered with golden rocks and bordered by glistening flowers and trees with leaves of gold. The King saw only the golden hue of everything around him. He failed to notice that his kingdom turned stiff and still in his **wake**.





Excited, he entered the palace and ordered the chef to prepare a feast. From there he walked to the royal barnyard. He went from nest to nest turning each egg to gold.

The royal dinner bell rang calling the king to his feast. He sat down and instantly his chair became a golden throne. When he picked up his fork, it too turned to gold, along with his bite of roasted **pheasant**. He picked up his goblet and—presto!—it changed from silver to gold. As the liquid inside touched his lips it became solid gold.



“What is this!” exclaimed the king.
“What have I done? What ever shall
I drink or eat?”

Just then Penelope came running
into the room, dancing about in great
excitement.

“Father, Father,” she shouted with glee.
“Look what I found in the barnyard
nests! Golden eggs!”

She threw her arms around her father’s
neck and gave him a huge hug.

As one might expect, a tragedy occurred. Penelope froze in her loving **embrace**, stiff as a statue.

"Oh my, what have I done," King Midas cried. "My daughter will never speak loving words to me again. She will never wrap her soft arms around me. What ever will I do?"





King Midas worked himself into a **frenzied** panic. He paced in circles. He **dithered** and **fretted**. Then it struck him. He had to return to the wizard and ask for another wish.

Hurriedly the king mounted his horse, but before it took two steps it hardened into gold. The troubled king marched double-time to the wizard's cottage on the edge of his kingdom.

When he arrived, he rushed to the door and rapped furiously.

“Let me in, let me in,” his voice quivered and quaked.

The wizard magically opened his now golden door, and King Midas bolted in.

“You must grant me another wish,” the King demanded. “I have made a terrible mistake. Please,” he begged, “turn all that I have touched back to what it was.”





“The only way I can do that is to take away ALL the gold and glitter that surrounds you,” warned the wizard.

“Even that which you had before this greedy golden touch overtook you. Only then can the spell be reversed. Do you understand?”

“Do what you must, but do it quickly,” urged the king wildly.

With a flick of his wrist, the wizard removed the power that had become the King's curse.

King Midas's clothes became drab and common. His palace shrank into a **humble** house. The King lost all that made him wealthy, but gained something far more **precious**—his daughter. He learned that there was much more to life than glitter and gold.



Glossary

bewildered (<i>adj.</i>)	uncertain, confused (p. 6)
dithered (<i>v.</i>)	acted nervously (p. 12)
embrace (<i>n.</i>)	a hug (p. 11)
enlist (<i>v.</i>)	to gain the help of (p. 5)
frenzied (<i>adj.</i>)	very excited and upset (p. 12)
fretted (<i>v.</i>)	worried (p. 12)
furiously (<i>adv.</i>)	very angrily (p. 13)
glistened (<i>v.</i>)	shined with a soft light (p. 4)
humble (<i>adj.</i>)	not expensive, not proud (p. 15)
pheasant (<i>n.</i>)	a large game bird with long tail that is related to the chicken (p. 9)
precious (<i>adj.</i>)	very valuable, greatly loved (p. 15)
tragic (<i>adj.</i>)	very unfortunate, relating to tragedy (p. 6)
wake (<i>n.</i>)	the track or mark left behind by something moving (p. 8)
wealthy (<i>adj.</i>)	having a large amount of money or possessions (p. 3)

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