

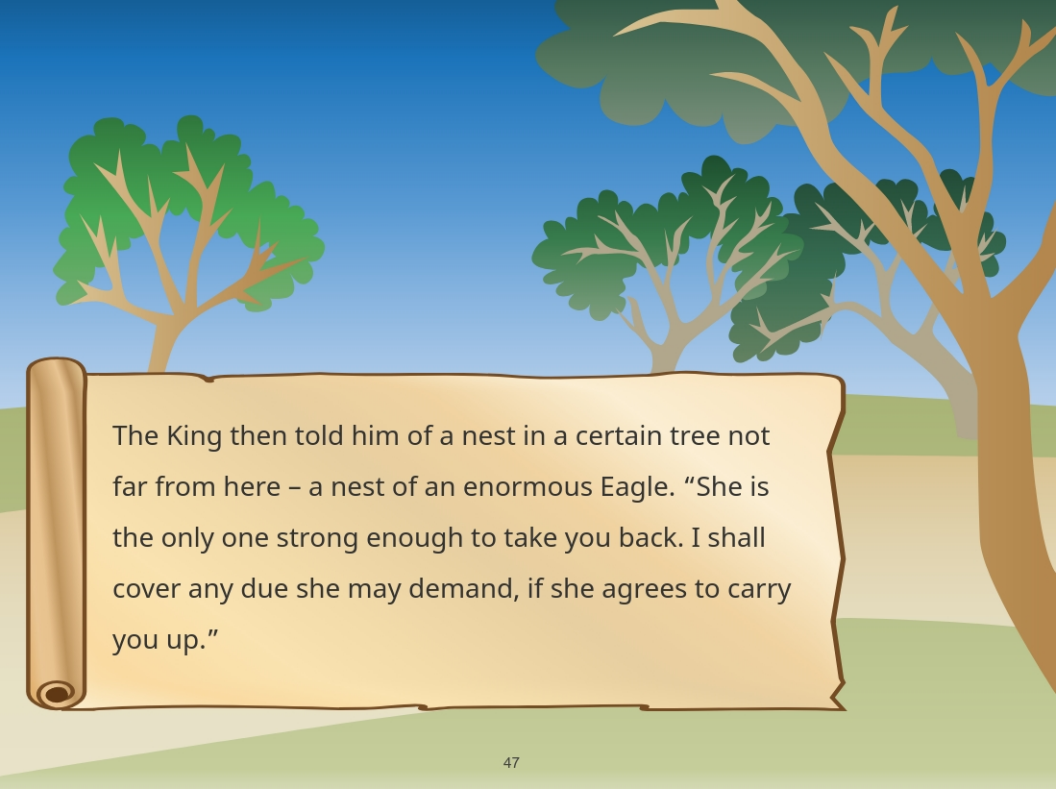


"No," the youth shook his head, resolute. "I must return home. I have a mother and brothers waiting for me there."

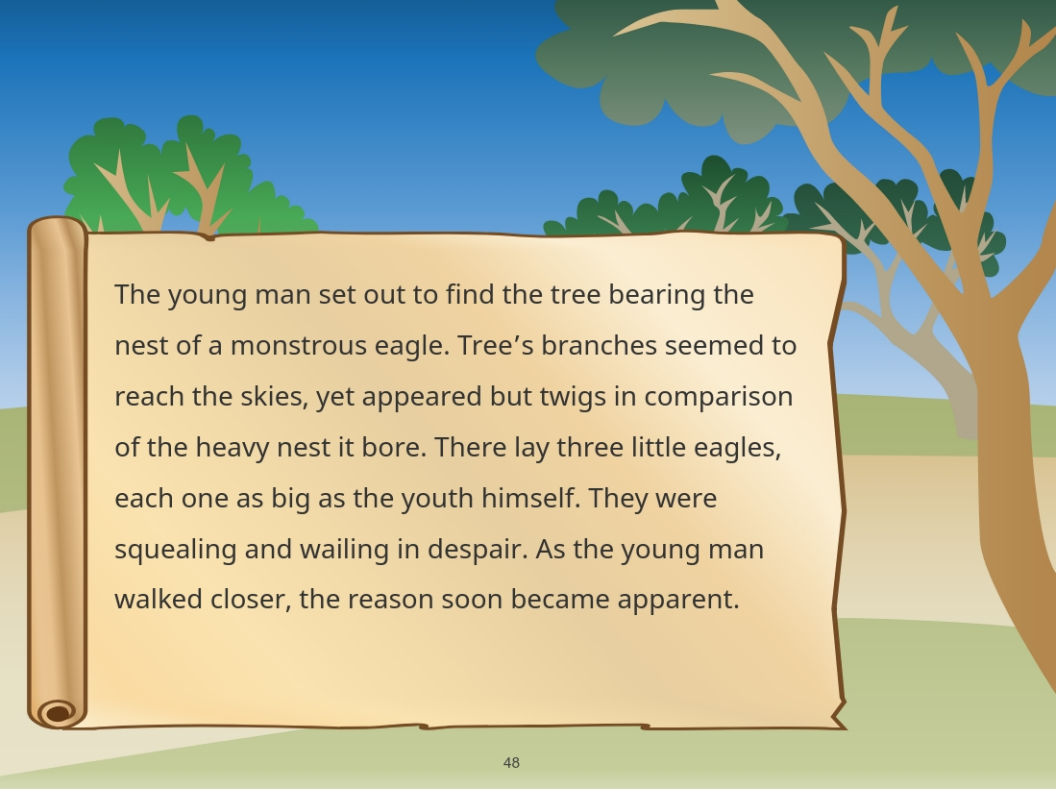
The King finally admitted,

"I do not know how to return you to the world above.
No human has ever gone, and no beast will be willing to take you."

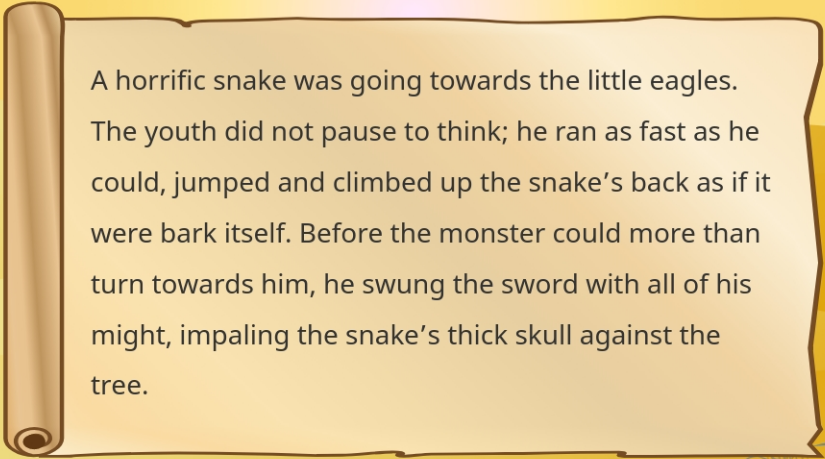




The King then told him of a nest in a certain tree not far from here – a nest of an enormous Eagle. “She is the only one strong enough to take you back. I shall cover any due she may demand, if she agrees to carry you up.”




The young man set out to find the tree bearing the nest of a monstrous eagle. Tree's branches seemed to reach the skies, yet appeared but twigs in comparison of the heavy nest it bore. There lay three little eagles, each one as big as the youth himself. They were squealing and wailing in despair. As the young man walked closer, the reason soon became apparent.

A scroll with a brown border and a rolled-up end on the left. The text is written in a dark grey, sans-serif font. The background is a bright yellow with some darker yellow wavy lines at the bottom right.

A horrific snake was going towards the little eagles.
The youth did not pause to think; he ran as fast as he could, jumped and climbed up the snake's back as if it were bark itself. Before the monster could more than turn towards him, he swung the sword with all of his might, impaling the snake's thick skull against the tree.





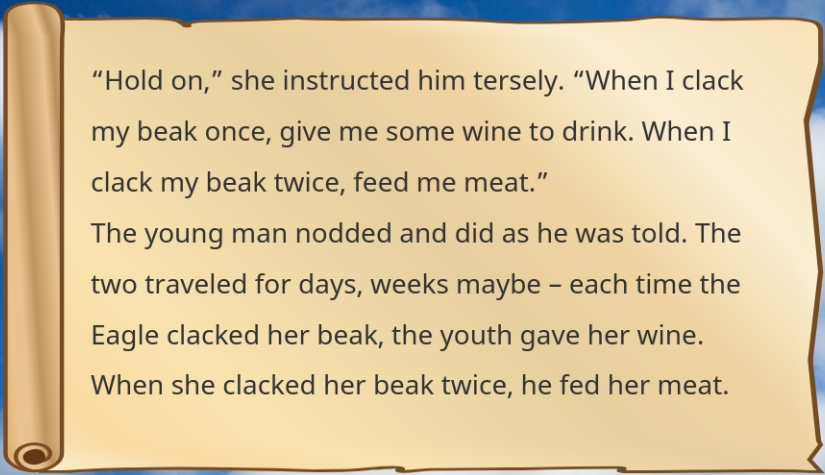
The chicks clustered about
him with happy peeps



"I will take you home"



Manos
Foukox
Anastasi
Dalipi
Manos
A

A yellow scroll with a brown border and a rolled-up end on the left, set against a blue sky with white clouds. The scroll contains two paragraphs of text.

“Hold on,” she instructed him tersely. “When I clack my beak once, give me some wine to drink. When I clack my beak twice, feed me meat.”

The young man nodded and did as he was told. The two traveled for days, weeks maybe – each time the Eagle clacked her beak, the youth gave her wine. When she clacked her beak twice, he fed her meat.



They were almost to the surface; but one kingdom remained. Wine remained aplenty, but the cases were all empty of meat. Yet, the Eagle clacked her beak twice.

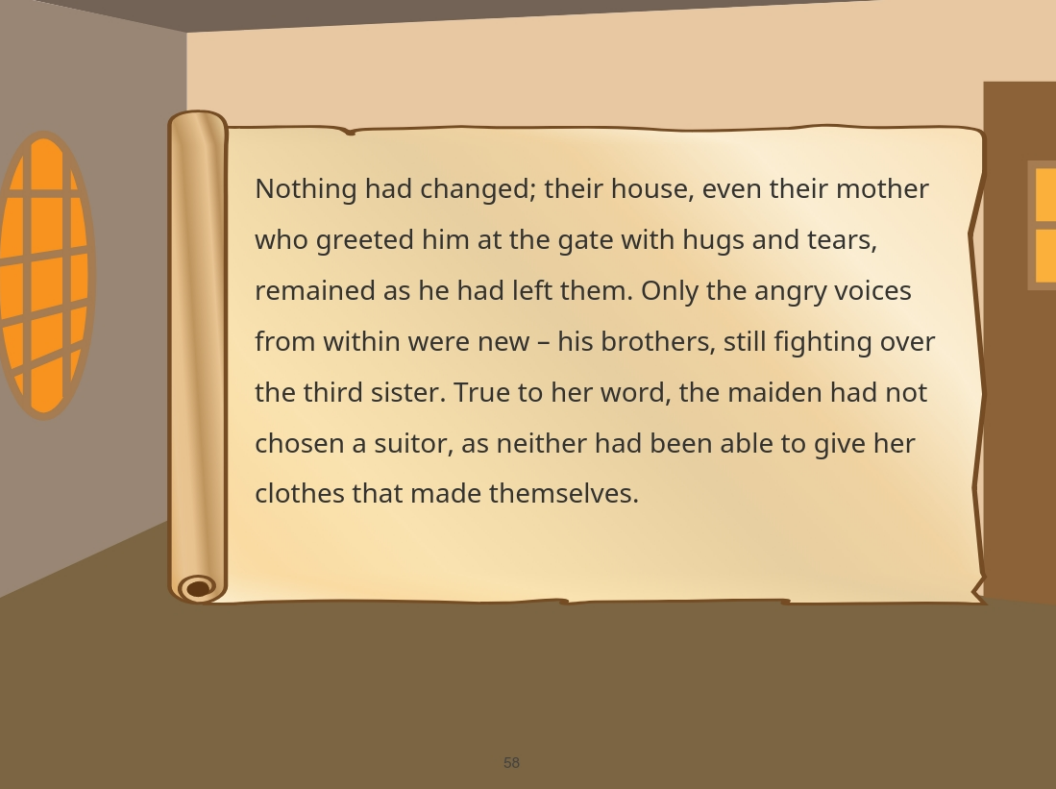
There was no more meat to be had. The youth looked to and fro, despairing, and the clacking came again. He could not fail this close to home; clenching his teeth, he took out a knife and cut off a little flesh from his arm and fed it to the Eagle.

The call for food came twice more after that. Each time, the young man would cut into his own body – his thigh, his calf



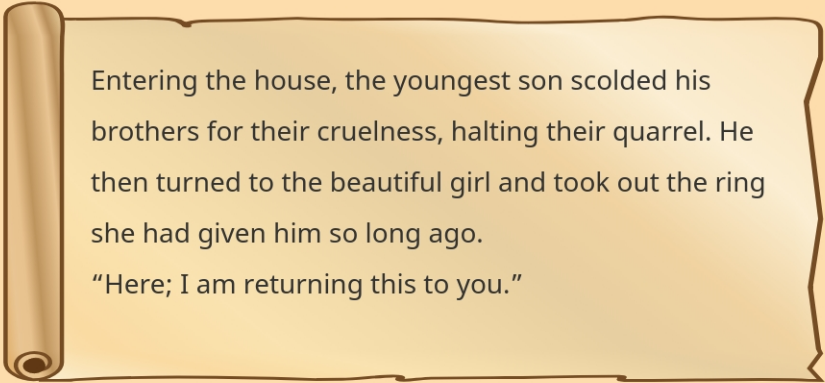
Finally, they were at the surface – at the hole through which he had entered seemingly so long ago. There, the Eagle let him off. He tried to hide his wounds but she stopped him, a shrewd look in her eyes.

“I know you fed me flesh of your own. The taste was so much better than that of the other meats – I could tell. It lent me power to make it up here and for that, I shall return it to you.” That said, she spit out the three pieces of his flesh she had swallowed, and laid them against their respective wounds. They healed in an instant.

The background is a stylized illustration of a room. On the left, there is a grey wall with a yellow oval window featuring a brown grid pattern. On the right, there is a brown wall with a yellow rectangular window. The floor is a solid brown color. In the center, a light yellow scroll with a brown border and a rolled-up end on the left contains the text.

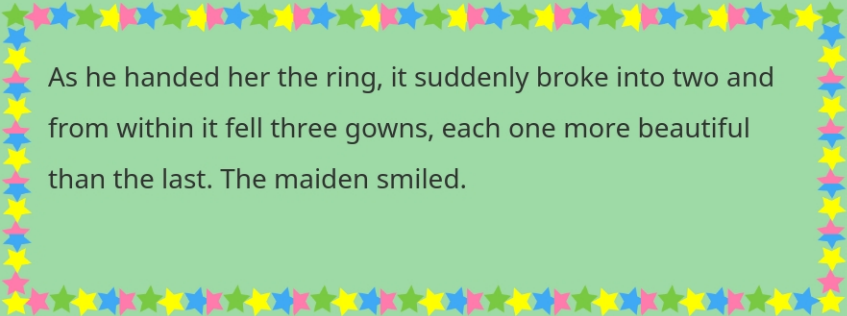
Nothing had changed; their house, even their mother who greeted him at the gate with hugs and tears, remained as he had left them. Only the angry voices from within were new – his brothers, still fighting over the third sister. True to her word, the maiden had not chosen a suitor, as neither had been able to give her clothes that made themselves.



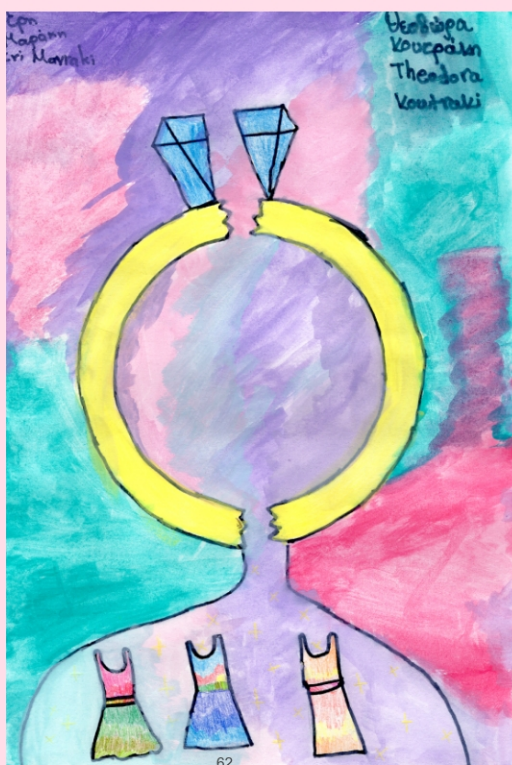
A scroll with a brown border and a light beige background. The scroll is partially unrolled, showing the text. The text is in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

Entering the house, the youngest son scolded his brothers for their cruelty, halting their quarrel. He then turned to the beautiful girl and took out the ring she had given him so long ago.

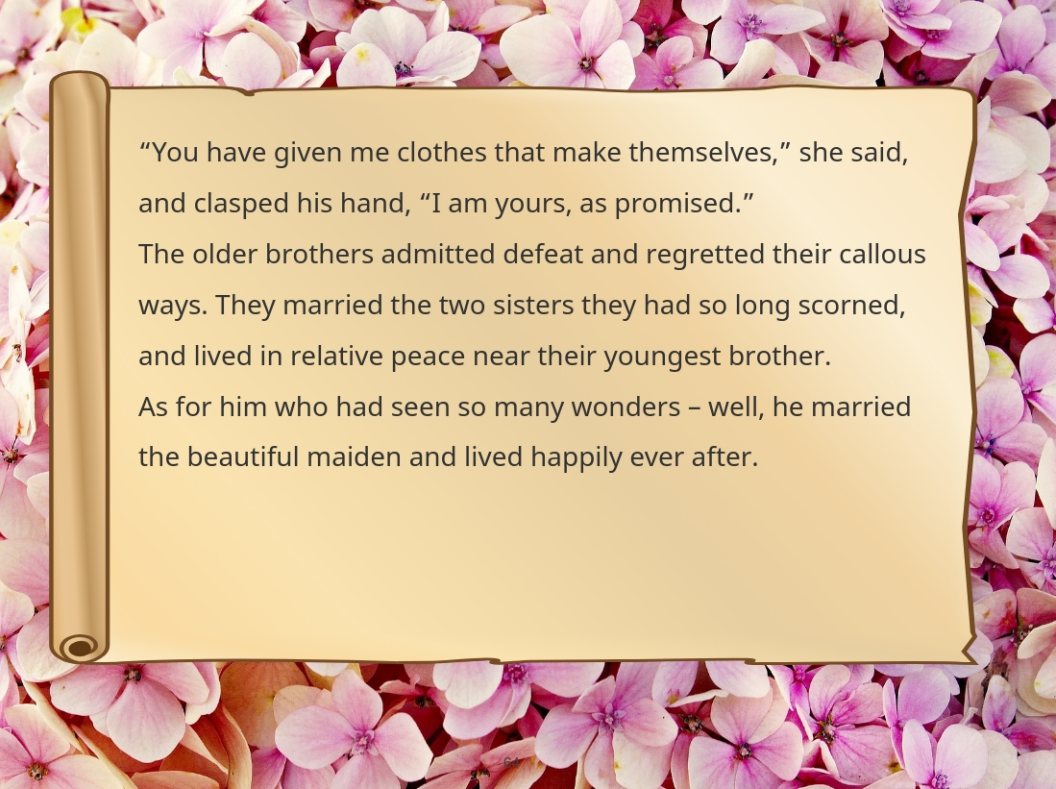
"Here; I am returning this to you."



As he handed her the ring, it suddenly broke into two and from within it fell three gowns, each one more beautiful than the last. The maiden smiled.





The background of the entire image is a dense, vibrant field of pink cherry blossoms. The petals are in various stages of bloom, with some showing darker pink centers and others a lighter, almost white-pink hue. The overall effect is a soft, romantic, and textured floral pattern.

"You have given me clothes that make themselves," she said, and clasped his hand, "I am yours, as promised."

The older brothers admitted defeat and regretted their callous ways. They married the two sisters they had so long scorned, and lived in relative peace near their youngest brother.

As for him who had seen so many wonders – well, he married the beautiful maiden and lived happily ever after.



The End



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