

Almond Snow

A Portuguese Legend Retold by Ona Sîporin

MANY YEARS AGO, there lived a young Moorish king. His palace stood on a hilltop in a land called the Algarve, in the country we know as Portugal. One day, the king decided to visit the Northland. He traveled many days until he came to the country of Sweden. There, he was received by the king and queen and their beautiful daughter. The instant the young princess saw the Moorish king, she loved him, and he, in turn, loved her. That very day, the Moorish king asked for her hand in marriage. She happily accepted, and a magnificent wedding feast was prepared in the palace ballroom.



Let's try it again from the top.



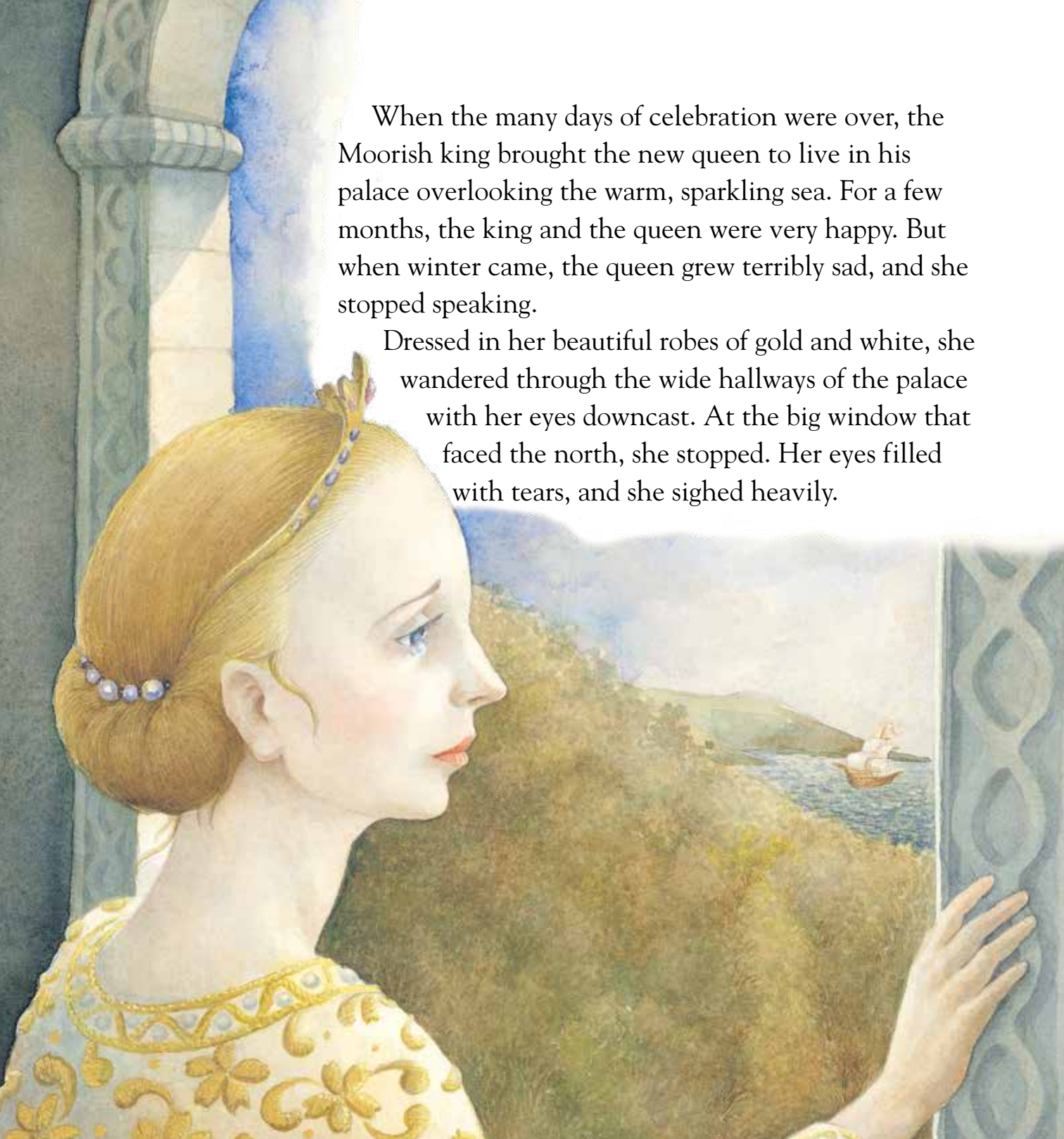
Uhh, sure . . . but which way is up?



Art by Yoshiko Z. Jaeggi

When the many days of celebration were over, the Moorish king brought the new queen to live in his palace overlooking the warm, sparkling sea. For a few months, the king and the queen were very happy. But when winter came, the queen grew terribly sad, and she stopped speaking.

Dressed in her beautiful robes of gold and white, she wandered through the wide hallways of the palace with her eyes downcast. At the big window that faced the north, she stopped. Her eyes filled with tears, and she sighed heavily.



STOP!!! ALL OF YOU! Listen to me.
This piece of music is beyond beautiful!



One day, the king came upon her as she gazed out the north window. When he saw the tears glistening in her eyes, he grasped the hilt of his sword and bellowed, “My queen, who dares make you unhappy?”

“Oh, my lord, do not be angry. No person has made me unhappy,” the queen answered. “Everyone is kind and loving to me, and I have more than even a queen can ask.”

“But what causes your tears?” the king asked, gently taking the queen’s hands in his own.

“It is the snow.”

“The snow? But there is no snow here, my queen. It is much too warm in the Algarve for snow.”

“My lord, I love you with all my heart. But I did not realize I would miss my own country so much. I miss the snows of Sweden. It is winter, and there is no snow here.” Her tears dropped onto his hands. The king gathered her in his arms and stroked her hair.

“Let me think about this, my love.”

The next day, the king summoned all the wise men of the Algarve and presented them with the problem.

One suggested they send a ship to bring snow from Sweden. Another pointed out that the snow would melt, and the queen would see nothing but an empty ship.

Another wise man suggested that the queen be sent back to Sweden each year for the winter. But at this suggestion, a great clamor arose among the other wise men. The Algarve could not be without the queen for so many months.

Every ounce of your musical energy must be summoned — called forth. It must be performed to the hilt!



To the hilt? Does she mean like a sword handle?



Maybe she means go all out?



Sonya wants us to fight with swords?



Dude, this is gonna get ugly.

A peasant who was tilling the ground nearby listened quietly while the wise men spoke. When there was a lull in the discussion, he said, “Almond trees.”

“What? What was that?” one of the wise men asked him.

“Almond trees,” the peasant said once more.

Now all the wise men turned toward him. “Almond trees?” they asked.

“Yes,” the man said. “Almond trees.”

When the wise men understood, they all smiled. “Yes! Yes! Almond trees!”

So the king ordered hundreds of almond trees to be planted on the hills. For miles around the castle, workmen dug holes and tenderly placed the young trees in them.

When the trees were planted, the king went to the queen and said to her, “In a few seasons’ time, my love, it will snow for you. I promise.”

Encouraged by the king’s promise and by her love for him, the young queen waited patiently. After six winters, she asked, “Will it snow soon, my lord?”

“Soon,” the king answered, smiling.

The following year, as the queen looked out the north window one day in late January, she saw that the hillside was covered in white. She ran from window to window. In every direction, the hills were



I need everybuggy on board.....

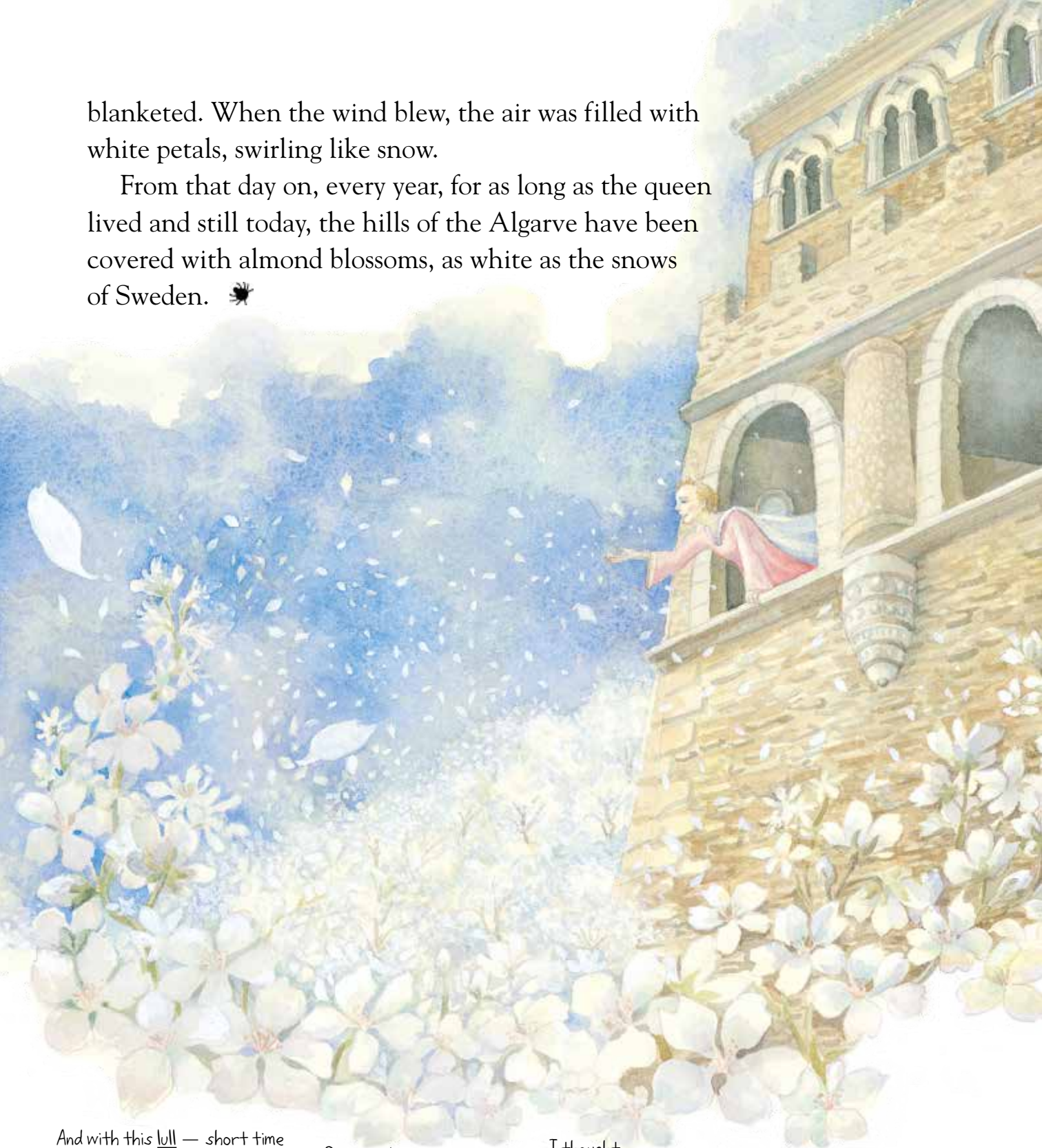


We're on board, Sonya. We'll fight hard with swords for you, like singing pirates.



blanketed. When the wind blew, the air was filled with white petals, swirling like snow.

From that day on, every year, for as long as the queen lived and still today, the hills of the Algarve have been covered with almond blossoms, as white as the snows of Sweden. 🌸



And with this lull — short time that's quiet, not busy — I'm gonna beat Araña's high score.



Sonya is losing it... Who ever heard of pirates in a winter chorus concert?



I thought we were just singing.



I ain't got no sword.



And I still 'ave no 'ands.

