

Tinman and the Mystery Knight



Once upon a time, a long time ago, in a kingdom far away, lived a good king named, Hiram and his son, Alex. Alex was a good boy and very special to his father, whose wife had died many years ago. Thou, Hiram had no wife and Alex had no mother, they were okay because they had each other.



Then one day, a wild man came to the kingdom. He broke the windows in the bakery, scared the children, killed Granny Rose's chickens, and threw the town dog in the river. Then, he headed for the castle, trampling every flower and vegetable garden that he passed. The king called out his armies and they fought with the rouge knight. Many knights were inquired in the battle, but they, finally, captured the wild man.



They locked the wild man in a cage. They took to calling him, Tinman, because they couldn't get his helmet or his gloves off to see who was underneath. It was as if the tin armor was attached to him.

Alex, who was very curious about Tinman, hung around him far more often than he knew he should. His father told him to be very careful of the wild man and not to go around him. After a while though, Alex got to feeling sorry for the wild man, trapped in the cage. He hated to see any wild thing penned up.





One day, Alex got to feeling so sorry for the howling wild man that he snuck into his father's room and snatched the key to the cage. Then, he let Tinman out of his cage. He expected him to run away back to the forest. Instead, he grabbed the prince, covered his mouth so he couldn't scream, and carried him away.

Tinman took Alex deep into the woods where he lived. He told him to sit by his pond and make sure that nothing fell into the water.

Alex was curious about the golden ducks swimming in the water. “Are those ducks real gold?” he asked.

Tinman only grunted and growled. “Don’t let anything fall in the water.”





Alex sat there and watched the pond for a long time. He shooed bugs away. He caught leaves before they fell in... all day long.

The next day, he started to get very bored with his job. Midday, after catching another leaf, he looked left and then right. When he saw Tinman wasn't anywhere around, he dropped the leaf into the water to see what would happen. The leaf turned to gold.

Alex reached down to grab the leaf, but it flew up and blew into his hair. When it touched his hair, his hair turned gold. Just then, Tinman showed up. Alex tried to look like nothing had happened, even though he knew his hair was a dead give-a-way.

“You have failed!” Tinman bellowed. “You must leave the forest.”

“I can go home?” Alex asked.



“No,” Tinman answered. “You helped me. Now, you are cursed like me. If you return home before completing three great deeds of courage and strength, you, also, will turn to tin.”

“How do I find these deeds?” Alex asked, timidly.


“With a lot of luck,” Tin man growled. “I never have. Now leave!” He yelled, running at him. Alex ran from the forest.



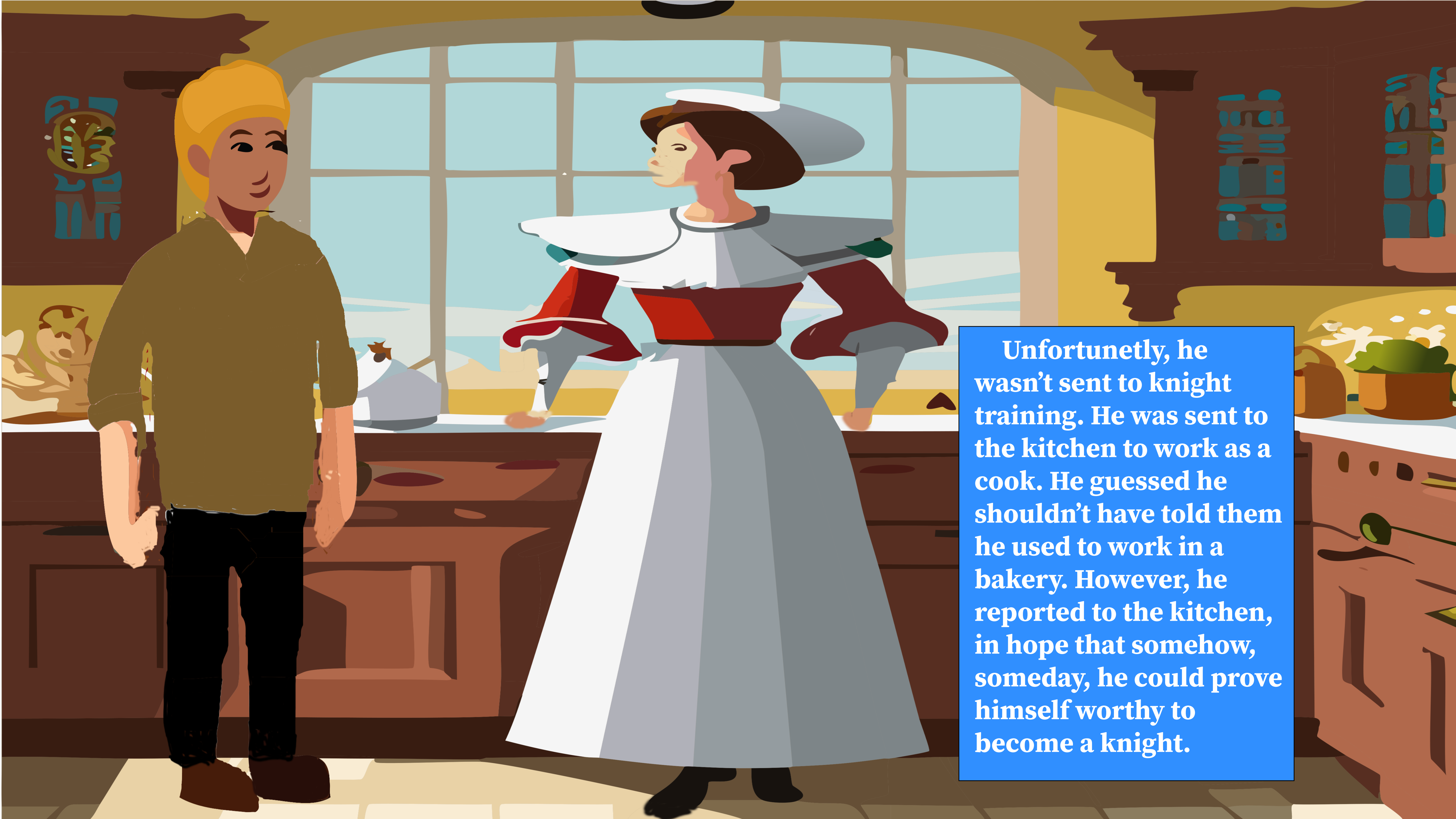


Alex stopped in the meadow outside the forest and tried to figure out what to do. He spent the night, but the next morning, Tinman showed up and yelled at him to leave. He told him if he ever needed anything important to come back to the forest and ask him, but he told him to leave.

Alex journeyed to another country, until finally, he found a small town, where he was able to get a job, despite his age. He grew up, working hard, but he never found an opportunity to accomplish a heroic act that would remove his curse.



One day, Alex heard that the castle, in his new country, was hiring. He figure if he could become a knight that maybe he would run across a task that could remove his curse. So, he walked to the castle to ask for work.

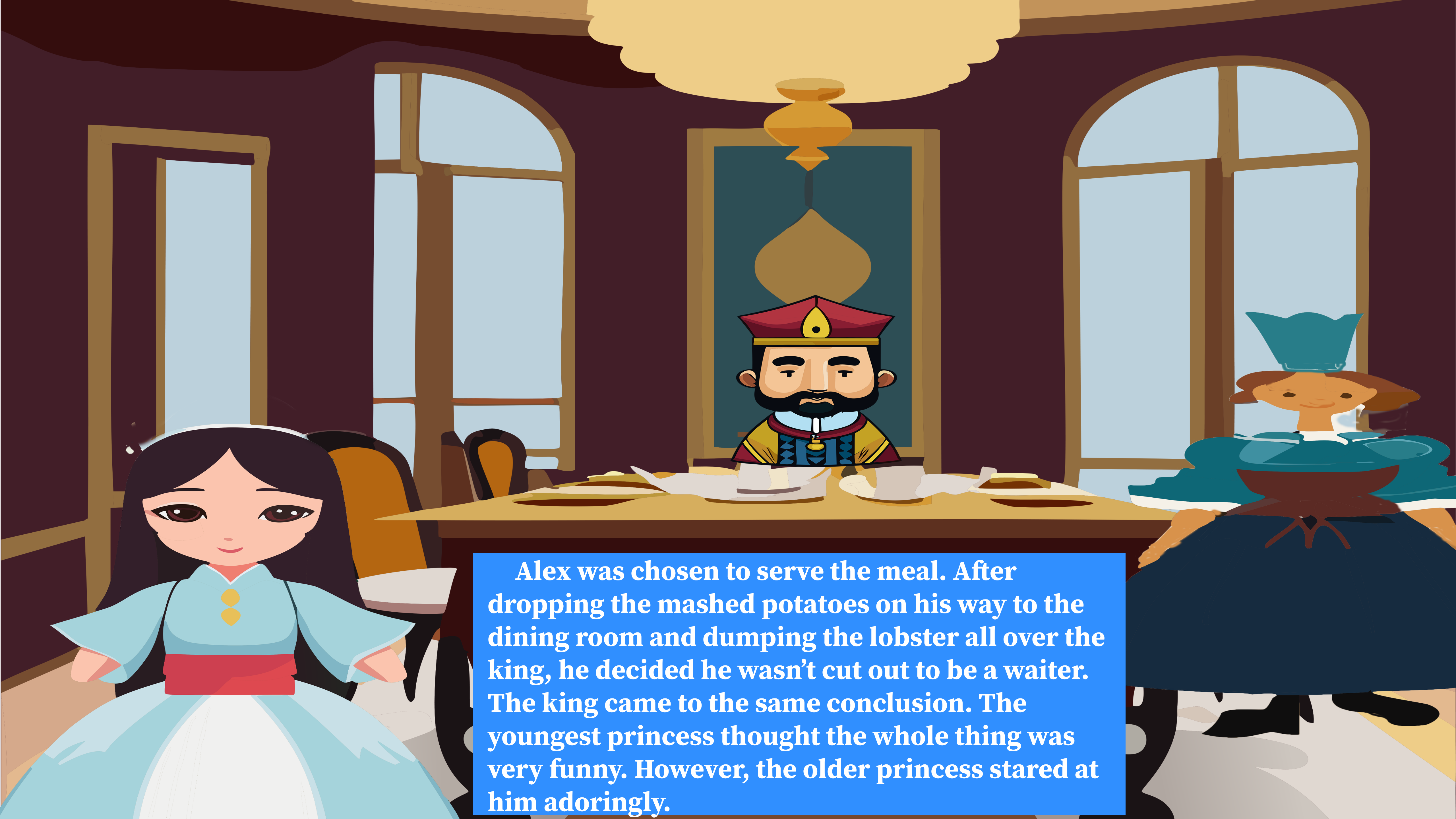


Unfortunately, he wasn't sent to knight training. He was sent to the kitchen to work as a cook. He guessed he shouldn't have told them he used to work in a bakery. However, he reported to the kitchen, in hope that somehow, someday, he could prove himself worthy to become a knight.

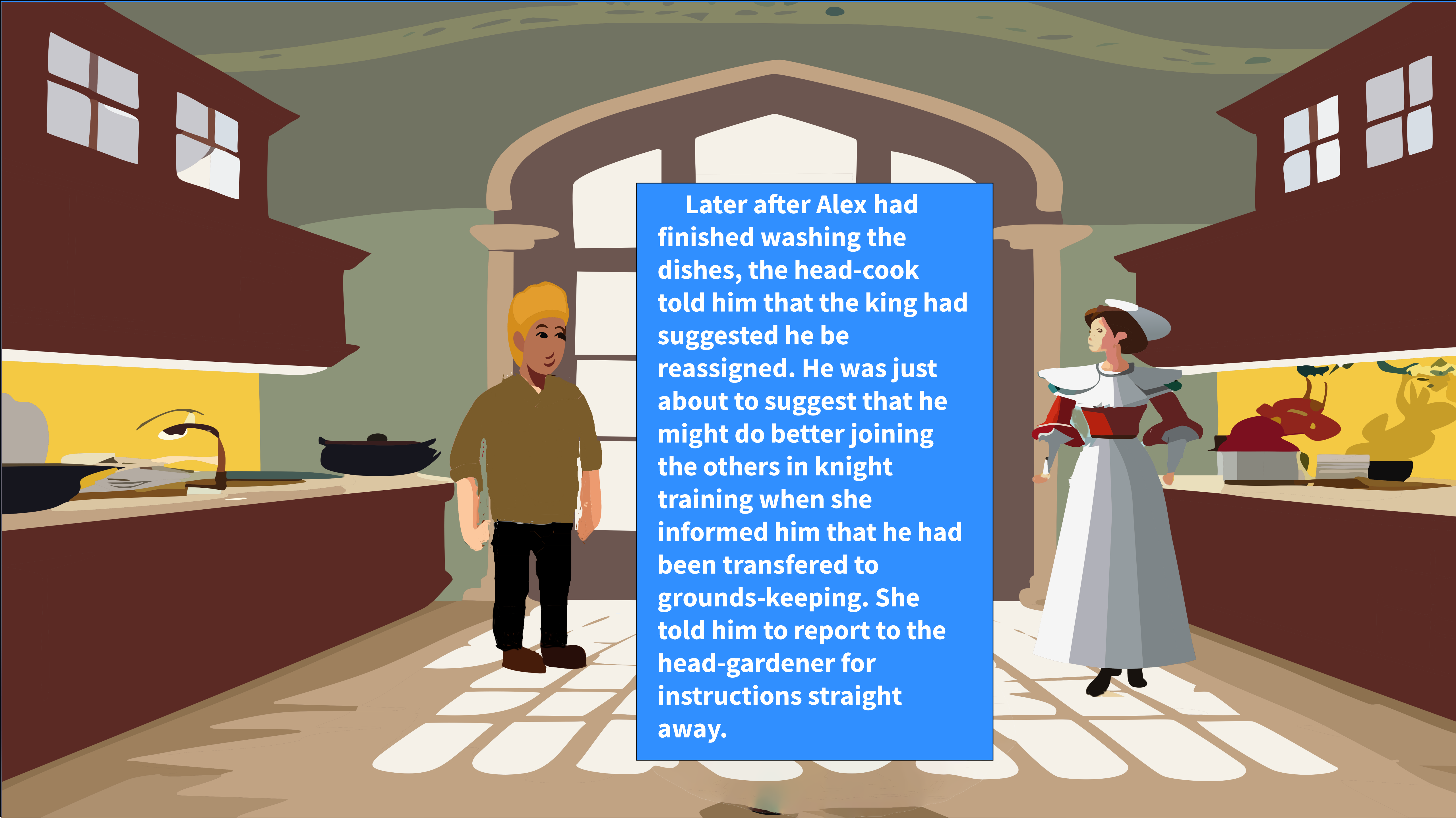
On his first day, he learned to cook more rich and expensive food than he knew even existed. He never could have imagined that someone could spend so much money on dinner. Then, he felt bad and a little homesick, knowing that he should understand these things, since, after all, he was a prince.

He, also, met the youngest princess, who seemed to get way to much enjoyment in making fun of his golden hair.





Alex was chosen to serve the meal. After dropping the mashed potatoes on his way to the dining room and dumping the lobster all over the king, he decided he wasn't cut out to be a waiter. The king came to the same conclusion. The youngest princess thought the whole thing was very funny. However, the older princess stared at him adoringly.

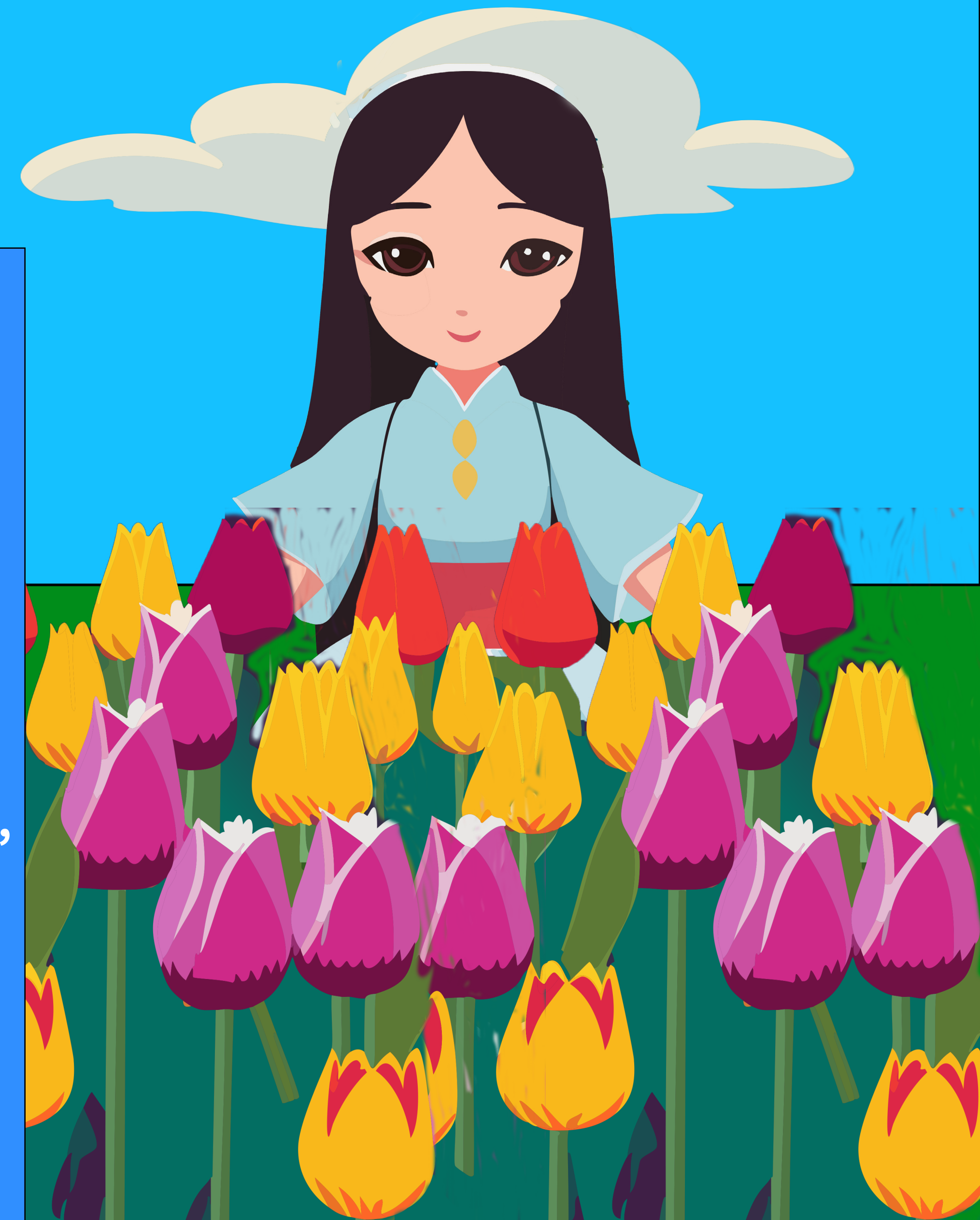


Later after Alex had finished washing the dishes, the head-cook told him that the king had suggested he be reassigned. He was just about to suggest that he might do better joining the others in knight training when she informed him that he had been transferred to grounds-keeping. She told him to report to the head-gardener for instructions straight away.



Sometimes when he was out in the garden, Princess Ariana would come out and talk with him. She told him that she loved flowers and that she thought he was doing a wonderful job, taking care of them.

One day, after they had been talking for many days, Alex asked her if she might ask her father if he might transfer him to knight training with the other knights. She said that she would ask him.





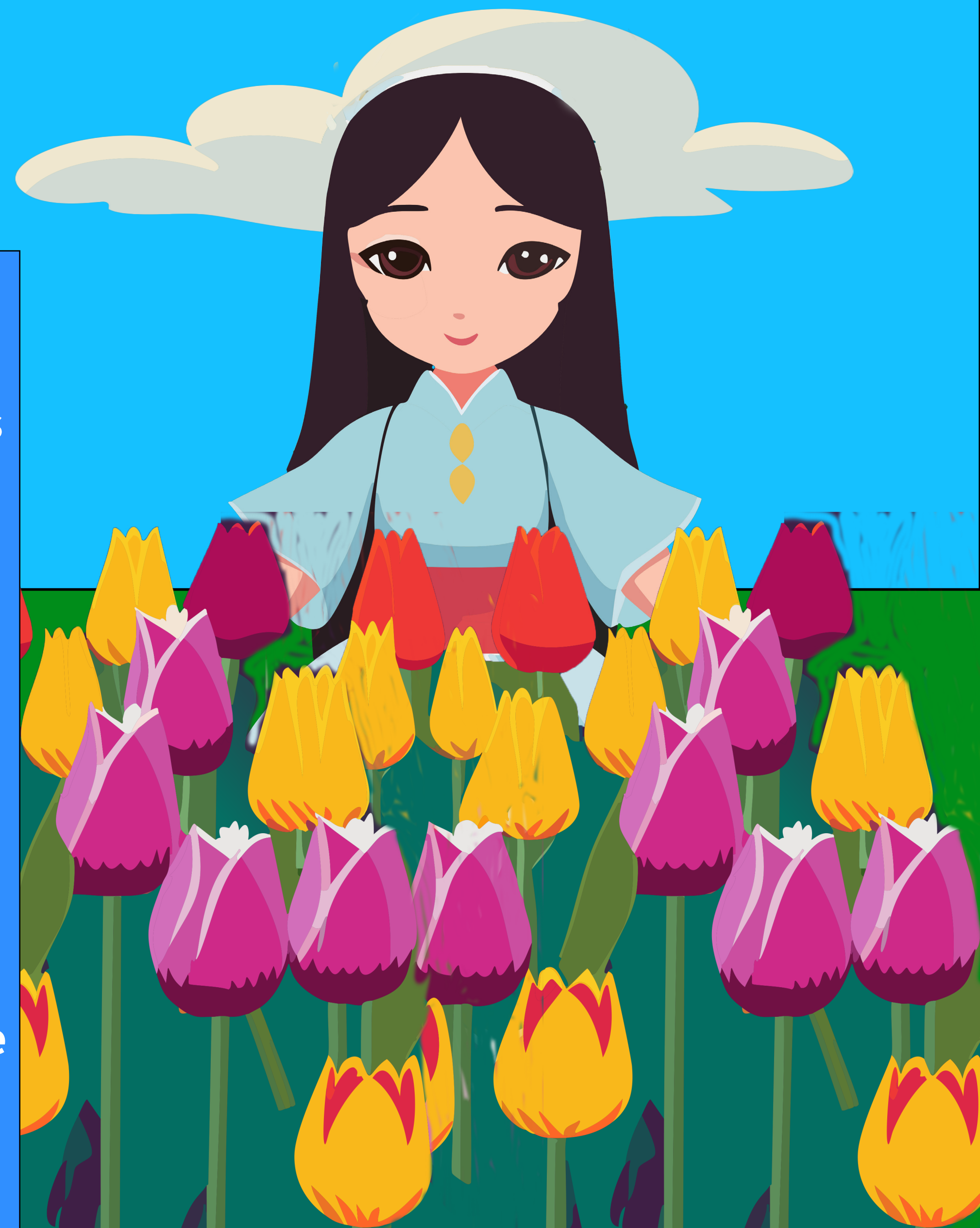
The next day she came back and told him her father's answer. She said he had laughed and said, "That clumsy fool? He'd probably get his horse stuck in a bog the first day." She said she was sorry and that maybe she could ask again when her father was in a better mood. She said that he had a lot on his mind right now, because everyone was preparing to go to war to with the dreaded kingdom of Woe.





Day after day, she came back to talk. Alex enjoyed talking with her and always asked her about the battles. She told him how their kingdom was doing. She told him of the many knights that had been killed and injured.

As the days went on, her reports came back sounding worse and worse for their kingdom until one day she came crying that he father, too, had been badly injured.





Alex felt very bad for the princess, for the knights, and even for her father. He felt afraid for their kingdom, but he didn't know what he could do. Then, he remembered Tinman. He remembered how he said that if he needed any help he should come and ask him. He didn't know how Tinman could actually help, but he decided that night he would sneak away and try to find him. If they could figure out something to do, maybe they could break the curse for both of them.





That night he snuck away, but it wasn't until the next morning that he found Tinman. He told Tinman what had happened and asked if knew anything they could do.

Tinman bellowed that he did, and he told Alex to wait there while he went to round up some friends to help. Alex was a little afraid to see who Tinman's friends were. He imagined meeting an army of monsters when they all returned. Still, he waited.



Tinman returned with a beautiful brown horse, a coat of armor, and an army of misfits and woodsmen, dressed as knights. He told Alex to lead the men to battle and break the curse for both of them.

Alex didn't know how to feel. This is what he wanted... what he'd been waiting for... for years. He only hoped the king's assessment of him wasn't right.

With a deep breath, he yelled, "Charge!" And they were all off to the battle.

When they got to the battle field. Alex saw the king and his knights in the distance. Instead of joining them, they went around to the other side and fought long and hard all day. They won a great victory that day!





When Alex went back to his job the next day, Princess Ariana came out to see him. She told him of the battle and the mysterious army that came that came and won the battle for them. She asked him where he had been yesterday, but he didn't answer her.

Then, the next day, she came back crying again, saying that they had lost the battle and that cook's husband had been killed.



Alex went back to Tinman that night and told him what happened. Tinman brought his army back, gave Alex a black horse and coat of armor, and told him to be brave and go out and fight again.



Alex took his men and bravely fought all day and night. The battle was hard. He lost three men and was speared in his shoulder.





The next day, Princess Ariana came running out to Alex all excited. She told him of the mysterious knight and his army and how they had won a great battle again! Then, with a tear in her eye, she told how her father had said that the great knight had been wounded by a spear and how no one knew who he was and if he was okay.

Alex wanted to tell her that the great knight wasn't okay and ask her to help him carry the buckets of water to water the flowers, but he was afraid she wouldn't believe him.





A couple of days later, she ran out to him crying. She said that her father had been wounded in the battle. She said that all the knights were tired and getting hurt. She said she wished the mystery knight would come back and win another battle for them. She said she was afraid they might lose their kingdom.

Alex just listened and tried to tell her everything would be okay but he wasn't sure himself. What he did know was that he had to go back to battle and try again, tomorrow... even though he and his woodsmen were also injured.



Tinman gave Alex a mighty white horse and an even bigger army. This time, he told him to stay out and fight until the war was over.




On the last day of battle, when it was evident that they were going to defeat the kingdom of woe, the king rode over to congratulate the mysterious great knight and his men. No one was ever so surprised as that king when he discovered the great knight was his gardener's boy, Alex.





After apologizing to Alex for greatly underestimating him, the king made Alex his head-knight, in charge of all the other knights, and he moved him out of the old gardener's shack to a fancy, beautiful room inside the castle.

An illustration of two characters on horseback in a forest. On the left, a man in a blue suit and white shirt (Alex) rides a white horse. On the right, a knight in full plate armor with a red cape (Tinman) rides a dark horse. The background features stylized green trees and a blue sky with a yellow sun and a bird.

Alex rode out to tell Tinman everything that had happened, but when he arrived at the forest he met up with a proper English gentleman. “I can’t believe you’re Tinman!” Alex exclaimed.

“It’s hard for me to believe that you are the little boy that once let me out of your father’s cage, too,” Tinman replied. “You’ve grown up to be quite a warrior... a warrior that broke the unbreakable curse. Thank you.”

“No, thank you. I couldn’t have done it without you and your army of woodsmen.”



Alex went home to visit his father, but he didn't stay. The pull to resume his role as prince in his father's kingdom wasn't as strong as the pull to be friends with princess Ariana.

One day, when they were talking in the garden, Alex asked Ariana if they could be more than friends. He asked her if she would marry him.

Looking at him with a big smile and adoring eyes she nodded and said, "Of course! I love you, Great Knight."



So, they were married. Everyone came to the wedding, Ariana's friends and family, Alex's family, the people he'd grown up working for in town, the cooks and the gardeners and the knights, and of course, Tinman.

Then, Prince Alex and Princess Ariana lived at peace in their castle happily ever after.

