



Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran,  
Bucharest - Romania

In the name of God

# Maria's Magical Journey to Persia

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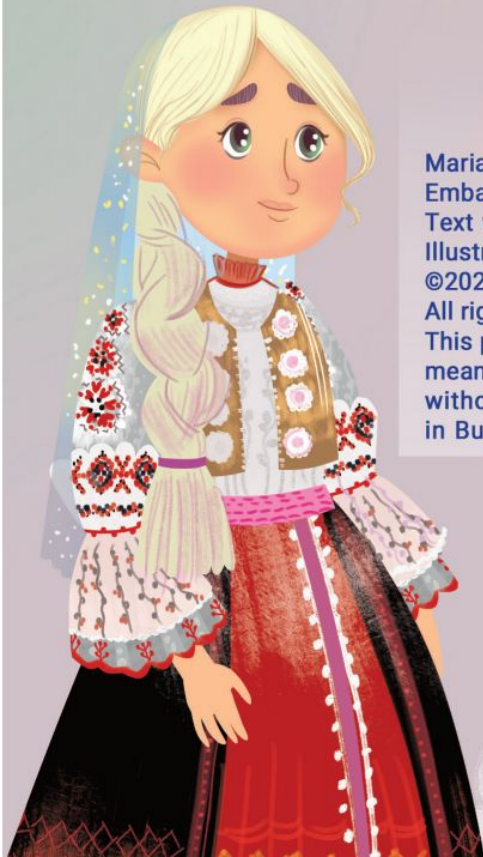
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### **Hi, dear curious friends!**

Get ready to embark on a magical journey to the enchanting land of Ancient Persia! Let's join Maria in a colorful world full of wonderful stories and captivating history!

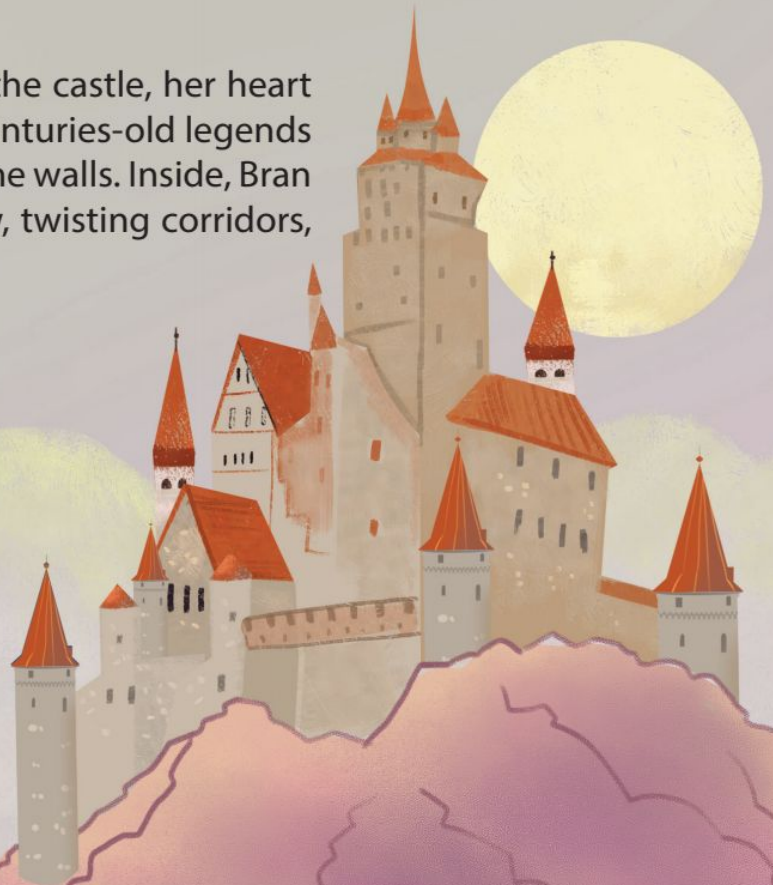
Once upon a time, in a little corner of Romania, there lived a 12-year-old girl named Maria. Maria was an incredibly curious girl, with golden hair like the sun, sparkling green eyes, and a smile that could light up even the darkest rooms. One sunny day, Maria set out on an unforgettable adventure with her parents to the famous Bran Castle—yes, that Bran Castle, home of Dracula! Perched high on a rocky hill in the heart of Transylvania, the castle stood proudly, with the Carpathian Mountains towering like legendary guardians behind it, protecting secrets hundreds of years old. Dressed in her traditional Romanian blouse, Maria became a little heroine, a keeper of ancestral traditions. As she wandered through every mysterious corner of the castle, Maria imagined herself as the princess from the stories she loved to read so passionately!




As Maria approached the grand gates of the castle, her heart leapt with joy, as if she could feel all the centuries-old legends and secrets hidden within the massive stone walls. Inside, Bran Castle was like a giant labyrinth of narrow, twisting corridors, dimly lit chambers, and secret passages.


Her heart pounded fiercely in the castle's Great Hall, where flickering lamps cast mysterious shadows on the walls. The atmosphere was so thrilling that Maria could barely keep her composure. You could almost hear her heartbeat in the eerie silence of the castle's forgotten dungeons.

In her mind, brave knights and elegantly dressed ladies began to take shape. Then, from the dark shadows, creatures from stories she had never even read before began to emerge one by one.



A vibrant illustration of a young girl with blonde braided hair, wearing a traditional folk dress with a white blouse featuring red and black floral embroidery and a red skirt with a white floral pattern. She is lying on her back on the ground in a lush field of green plants and flowers, including a large yellow daisy and a pink flower. Her expression is one of surprise or concern. In the background, a large, imposing castle with multiple towers and red roofs sits atop a rocky hill. The sky is a mix of soft green and blue, with a large, pale moon or sun. The overall style is whimsical and storybook-like.

The beauty of the castle had an eerie yet fascinating aura! Maria couldn't stop exploring, growing more and more curious to uncover what was happening around her. Whispered tales of ghosts seemed to float through the air, sending a cold shiver down her spine.  
**\*Brrr!\***



In the enchanting gardens surrounding the castle, Maria's joyful laughter echoed as she chased a colorful butterfly. Suddenly—\*whoops!\*—a mischievous root tripped her, and Maria found herself falling into an ancient well, one that no one even knew existed.

\*Thud!\* the girl tumbled into darkness!

I don't want to give away any hints, but from here on, her adventure becomes even more thrilling!





When she woke up, Maria found herself in a dark cave, surrounded by mythical birds with dazzling plumage and impressive wings. It was a dazzling contest of colors!

Among them were the cunning griffin, Benu, the bird of creation, and Alkonost, whose enchanting melodies filled the cave with joy. The northern ravens, Hugin and Munin, were preparing a grand feast, while Yatagarasu, the three-legged crow, offered its assistance, sparking Maria's curiosity with its legendary presence.

Suddenly, a gentle and mysterious voice greeted her:  
"Welcome to the realm of mythical birds, Maria. We are the guardians of this sacred place."

The voice belonged to Simurgh, a majestic bird from Persian legends, embodying wisdom and healing. Staring wide-eyed, Maria suddenly felt as if the stories her grandmother used to tell were coming to life right before her eyes.

Simurgh smiled kindly at Maria, reassuring her that she had nothing to fear:  
"Do not worry! We have been waiting for you for a very long time!"







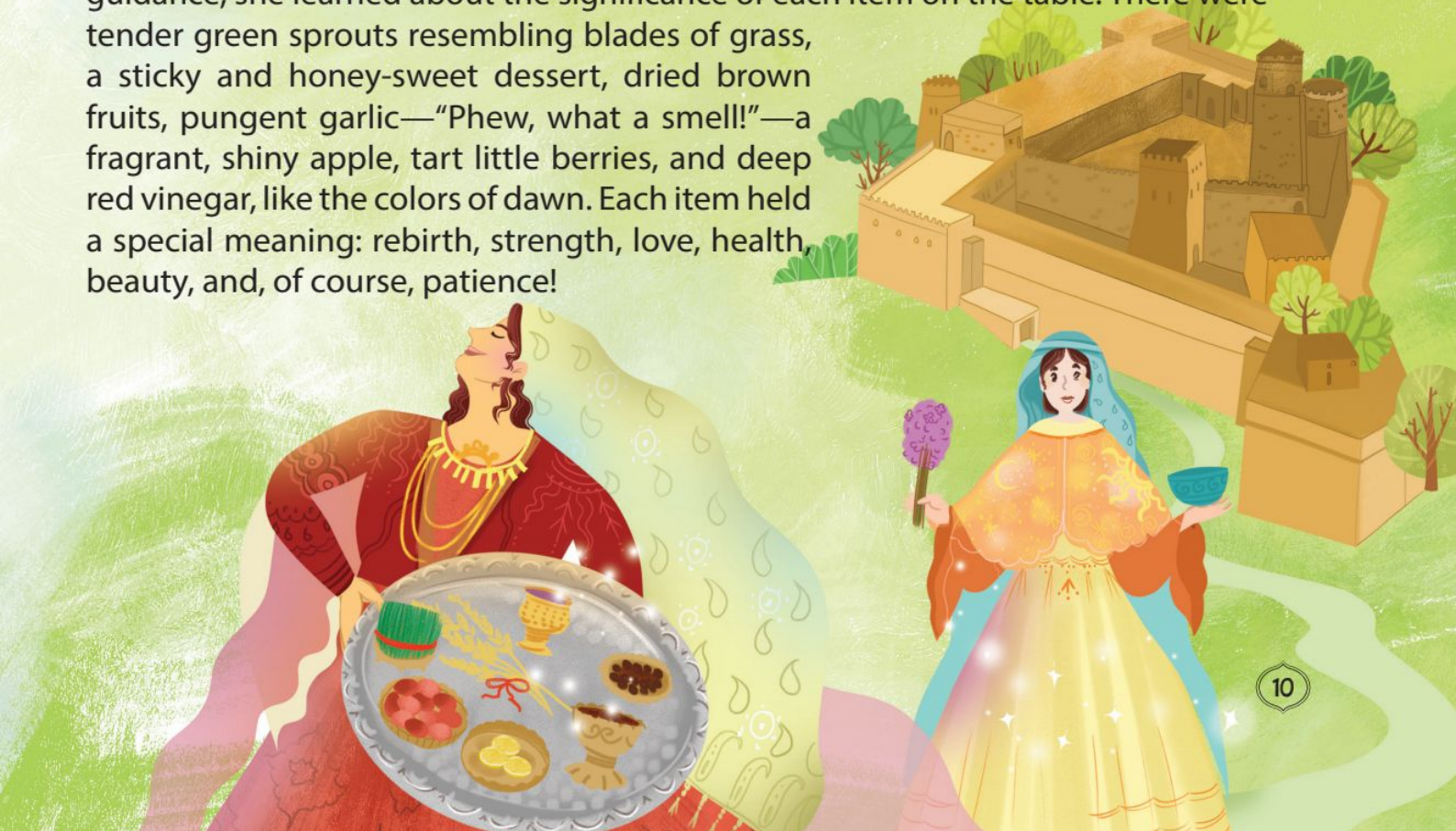



Overwhelmed with excitement, Maria reached out and touched the silky feathers of a nearby bird, feeling as though her adventure was just beginning. Simurgh approached her, gazing deeply into her eyes, and made an unexpected proposal: the chance to travel back in time to the origins of the great Persian Empire.

Summoning her courage, Maria climbed onto the majestic Simurgh's back, ready to embark on an adventure beyond time and space.

Holding tightly to Simurgh's grand feathers, Maria felt time flowing like an invisible river, leaving the present—and Bran Castle—far behind. Everything transformed into a kaleidoscope of colors and lights, and in an instant, her surroundings changed completely: she found herself in ancient Susa, on the first day of Nowruz, the Persian New Year.

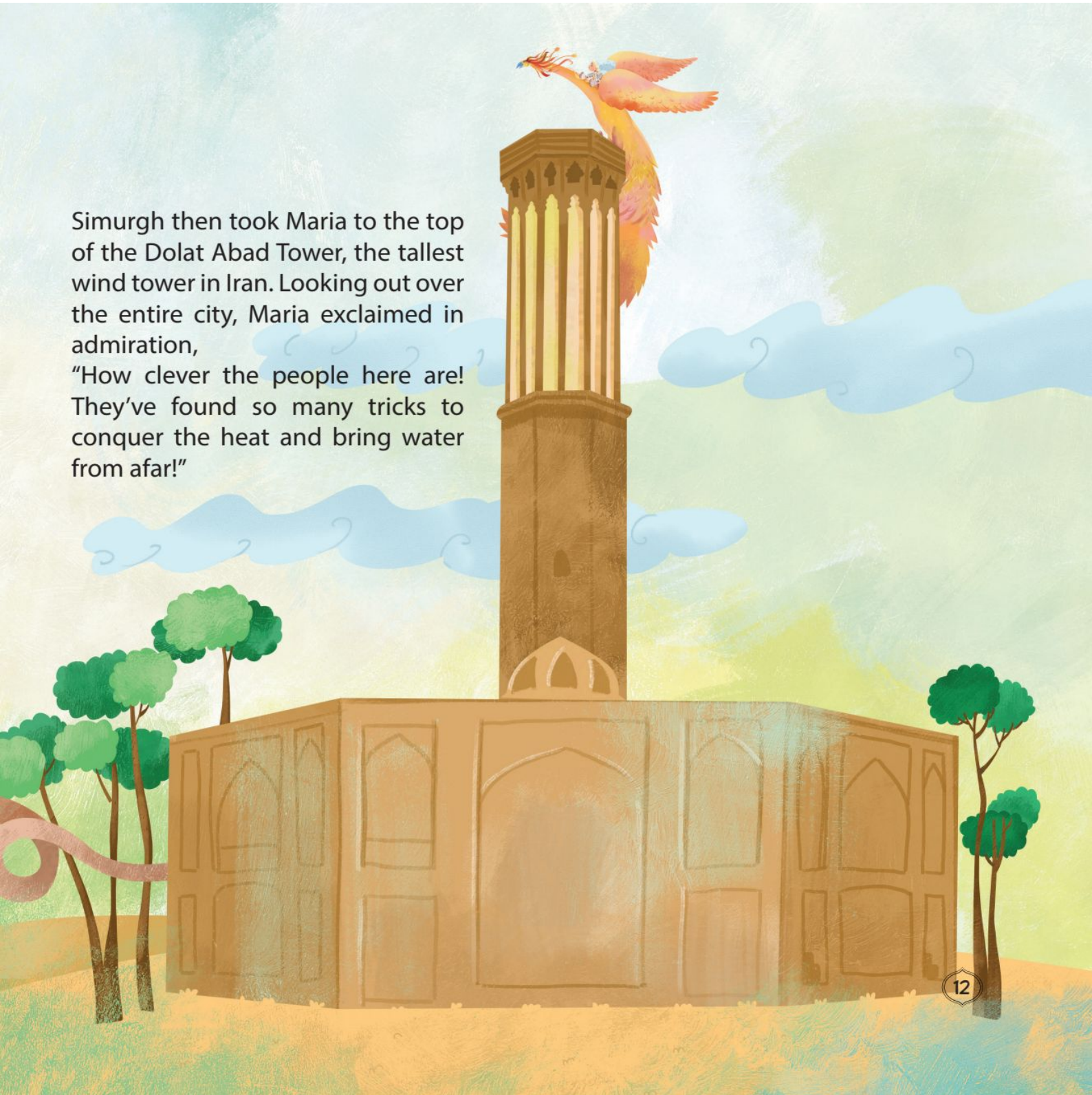
The city buzzed with joy, and Maria, overwhelmed by the beauty stretching before her, watched as entire families gathered, preparing for the arrival of spring. They embraced friends and exchanged symbolic gifts. Simurgh spread its wings wide, as if offering a gentle hug, and spoke to Maria in a warm voice: "This is Susa, Maria, an ancient city where merchants from distant lands once arrived after long journeys along the Silk Road." Simurgh told Maria about the ancient Persian solar calendar, patiently explaining how it marked the precise beginning of spring and the celebration of Nowruz. "This is the time when everything is reborn, dear child," said the bird, "and people begin the year with hope and joy." Caught up in the festive cheer, Maria joined in decorating the Haft-Sin table. Under Simurgh's guidance, she learned about the significance of each item on the table. There were tender green sprouts resembling blades of grass, a sticky and honey-sweet dessert, dried brown fruits, pungent garlic—"Phew, what a smell!"—a fragrant, shiny apple, tart little berries, and deep red vinegar, like the colors of dawn. Each item held a special meaning: rebirth, strength, love, health, beauty, and, of course, patience!



An illustration of a woman in traditional Middle Eastern attire, including a yellow patterned dress and an orange headscarf. She is holding a stringed instrument (possibly a sazes) in her right hand and a small cup on a saucer in her left. She stands on a hill with a pomegranate, a lit candle, and a blue bowl nearby. In the background, there are several tall, cylindrical wind towers (malqas) and a domed building, set against a soft, hazy sky.

Their journey continued to the city of Yazd, a place full of wonders and ancient inventions. Simurgh showed Maria how people of old had come up with clever solutions to stay cool during the hot summer days. They had built tall wind towers that captured the air and directed it into homes, creating a natural air-conditioning system. They also dug tunnels underground, called qanats, through which they brought cool mountain water to the heart of the city.

Simurgh then took Maria to the top of the Dolat Abad Tower, the tallest wind tower in Iran. Looking out over the entire city, Maria exclaimed in admiration, "How clever the people here are! They've found so many tricks to conquer the heat and bring water from afar!"



Arriving in the city of Isfahan, Maria and Simurgh joined the artisans in Naqsh-e Jahan Square. Maria carefully picked up a Mina bowl from the counter and gazed at it with wide eyes full of wonder.

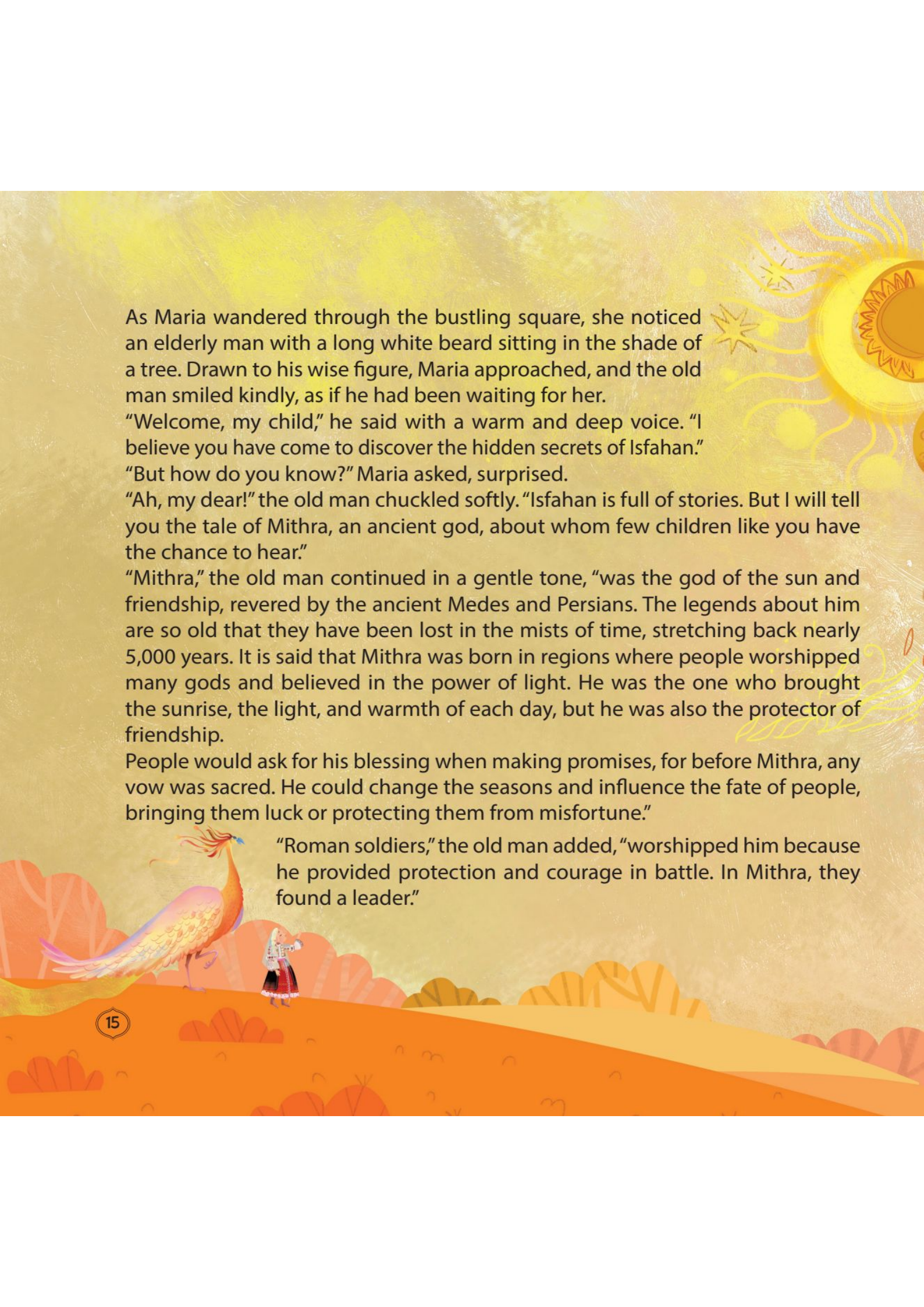
"Do you see?" Simurgh whispered gently, its feathers shining in the sunlight. "Here, the sky is crowned by the hands of the artisans. Each bowl is like a window to paradise."

It seemed as though every curved line, every shade of Persian blue, came to life under their brushstrokes.



"I love it here, Simurgh!"  
Maria exclaimed, enchanted by the  
magic of the place. "Now I understand  
why everyone says Isfahan is like half  
of the world."





As Maria wandered through the bustling square, she noticed an elderly man with a long white beard sitting in the shade of a tree. Drawn to his wise figure, Maria approached, and the old man smiled kindly, as if he had been waiting for her.

"Welcome, my child," he said with a warm and deep voice. "I believe you have come to discover the hidden secrets of Isfahan."

"But how do you know?" Maria asked, surprised.

"Ah, my dear!" the old man chuckled softly. "Isfahan is full of stories. But I will tell you the tale of Mithra, an ancient god, about whom few children like you have the chance to hear."

"Mithra," the old man continued in a gentle tone, "was the god of the sun and friendship, revered by the ancient Medes and Persians. The legends about him are so old that they have been lost in the mists of time, stretching back nearly 5,000 years. It is said that Mithra was born in regions where people worshipped many gods and believed in the power of light. He was the one who brought the sunrise, the light, and warmth of each day, but he was also the protector of friendship.

People would ask for his blessing when making promises, for before Mithra, any vow was sacred. He could change the seasons and influence the fate of people, bringing them luck or protecting them from misfortune."


"Roman soldiers," the old man added, "worshipped him because he provided protection and courage in battle. In Mithra, they found a leader."





He would appear in their dreams, riding a chariot drawn by white horses, armed with a silver spear and a bow with golden arrows. He was not only a powerful warrior, but also a god of justice, who punished traitors and protected his trusted friends."

Maria turned her gaze toward Simurgh, who seemed to understand every word. "What a beautiful story," she said softly, "and what a noble god Mithra must have been." Thus, Maria received a valuable lesson about friendship and loyalty, learning that the ancient gods, though perhaps forgotten by many, had left their marks on the souls of those who cherished these values.




Maria and Simurgh continued their journey, enriched not only with stories and life lessons but also with unique aromas and flavors. At each stop, the locals greeted them with delicious dishes that enchanted Maria. She tasted jukeh kebab, tender and aromatic, borani, and kuku-bademjan. But among them all, the dish that impressed her the most was sholezard, a sweet saffron pudding decorated with almonds and cinnamon, glowing like the sun revered by the ancient Persians. After a few hours of travel, they arrived at Pasargadae, the ancient capital of the Persian Empire. Maria felt as though she had stepped onto a sacred land, where every stone and column seemed to carry the weight and glory of a heroic past. Here, in the midst of this ancient capital, stood the magnificent statue of Cyrus the Great, the first king of Persia, seen as a true hero and liberator of his people.





Maria gazed in admiration at the imposing statue of the king. "Cyrus the Great..." she whispered, as though summoning an ancient spirit. "He was a great leader, wasn't he?" Simurgh nodded with a wise look in his eyes. "Cyrus the Great was not just a king, he was a man of peace," he said. "He liberated nations and created an empire where all could live together in harmony. In his heart, he was a leader who believed that every person deserves respect, whether Persian or foreign." Simurgh gently unfurled his wings and gazed dreamily into the distance, where the sky met the earth, beyond the ancient city of Pasargadae. "You know, Maria, Cyrus, the great Persian king, left behind a precious cylinder on which he carefully wrote his wish that every person should be free to believe what they wish. In that message, he promised that all, even those from distant lands, could follow their traditions, preserve their stories, and always remain free in their beliefs."



The background of the page is a soft, painterly illustration. On the right side, a large stone column is depicted with a carved figure of a bearded man wearing a crown. To the right of the column, a large, vibrant orange and red Simurgh-like bird is partially visible. The scene is set against a light green and yellow background, suggesting an outdoor setting. Pink petals are scattered at the base of the column.


Simurgh led Maria onward, toward Persepolis, the famous city built by Darius the Great, a legendary place that had once been the cultural and spiritual center of the Persian Empire.

Maria was enchanted by the grandeur of the site and the intricate artistry of the sculptures that adorned every column and wall.

"This is the Gate of All Nations," Simurgh explained with a solemn voice. "Through here, envoys and ambassadors from all over the world entered, bringing gifts to the Persian king."

Maria, her eyes shining with emotion and her heart full of gratitude, knew that this experience would stay with her forever.

The memories of the city, with its ancient walls and the secrets carved into stone, filled her soul with new ideals, inspiring her to view the world with an open heart and to respect the richness of every culture.



Alongside Simurg, she was ready to discover other places full of history, but she knew that a part of her soul would always remain here, in Persepolis.

But just before returning home, Maria strongly wished to take with her a special memento from this wonderful country. "I would like a Persian carpet," she said to Simurg. "One that will always remind me of all our adventures." Simurg smiled, and with a gentle flap of his wings, the majestic bird signaled her to follow him on one last journey. Together, they arrived at a vibrant, colorful bazaar. In the midst of the crowd, Maria's gaze stopped on a glowing carpet, which seemed to come to life under the sun's rays. "Maria, this is a flying carpet!" Simurg whispered. Without hesitation, Maria sat on the carpet, holding tightly to its edges. The carpet gently lifted off the ground, and, to the astonished gazes of the bazaar vendors, Maria set off toward home. Floating above the bazaar, Maria shouted to Simurg and her new friends, "I promise I will return one day with my family!"



Back at Bran Castle, Maria looked at her family, wondering how to tell them about all her adventures. How could she describe the legendary bird that had become her friend, the mysteries of Persepolis, and the enchanted carpet that had carried her in flight? She knew that to them it would all seem like a story, but in her heart, it was more than that. As dusk began to cast its gentle shadows over the castle, Maria went out into the garden, hoping to catch a glimpse of Simurg. But all she found was the wind gently rustling through the trees, as if carrying echoes from the distant Persian land. Although she felt a void in her heart, she looked up at the starry sky and thanked it for all the adventures she had lived. In the quiet of the evening, Maria promised herself that, even though she could no longer see Simurg, his spirit would always guide her. Maria's story wasn't over. Every night, the magic carpet and the spirit of Simurg would carry her in dreams to unknown worlds, on fantastic journeys beyond time and space.



See You in Iran!

