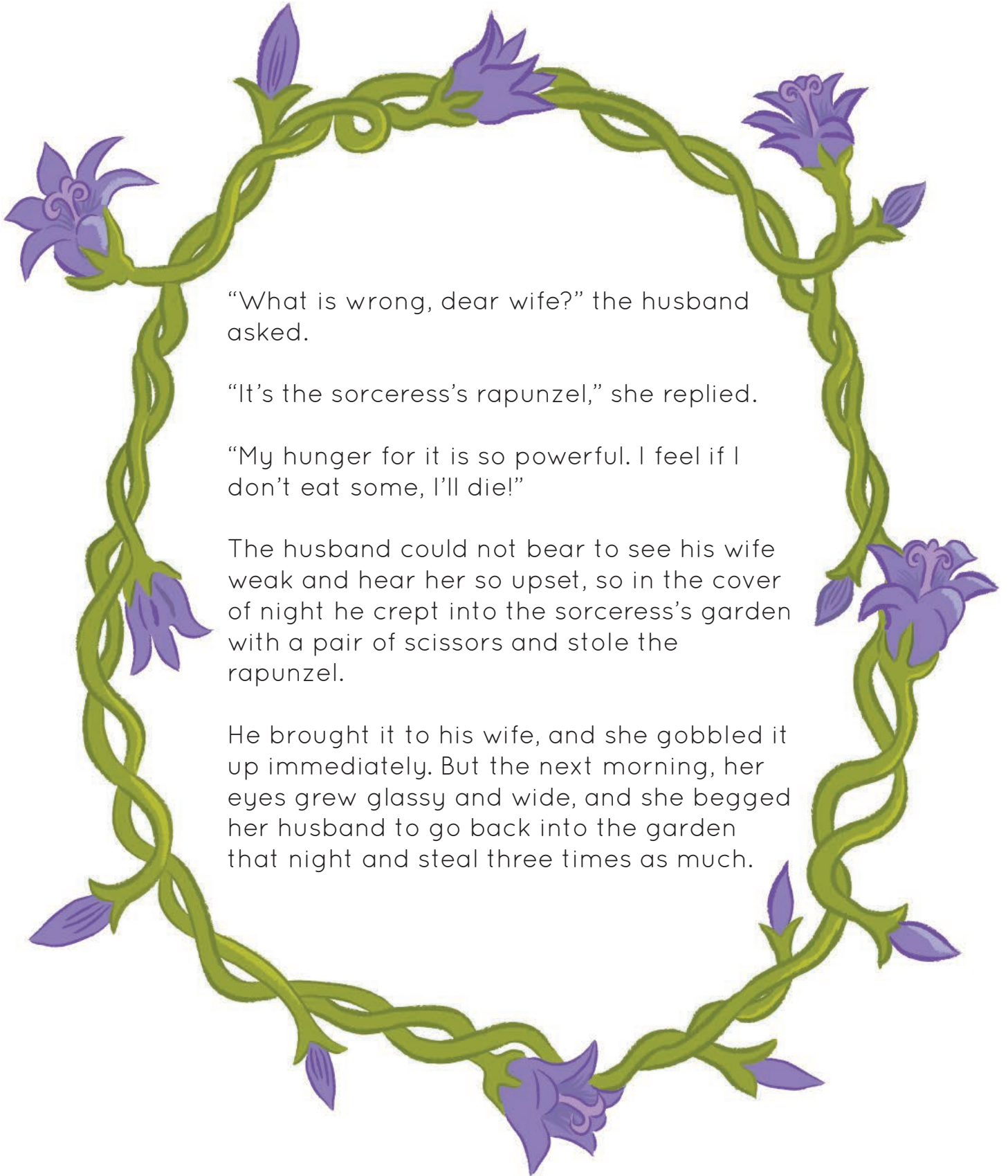


Once there was a husband and a wife who wanted, more than anything, to have a baby. After many years the wife became pregnant, and they were overcome with joy.

They lived near a garden with beautiful smelling flowers and herbs, but they could not go into the garden because it belonged to a powerful sorceress. Even before she was pregnant the wife had hungered for the delicious leafy greens growing in the sorceress's garden, especially the soft and earthy tasting rapunzel. However, now that she was pregnant, she longed for it even more. Her cravings were mysteriously strong, and it was as though nothing else could satisfy her. She grew weak and tired.





“What is wrong, dear wife?” the husband asked.

“It’s the sorceress’s rapunzel,” she replied.

“My hunger for it is so powerful. I feel if I don’t eat some, I’ll die!”

The husband could not bear to see his wife weak and hear her so upset, so in the cover of night he crept into the sorceress’s garden with a pair of scissors and stole the rapunzel.

He brought it to his wife, and she gobbled it up immediately. But the next morning, her eyes grew glassy and wide, and she begged her husband to go back into the garden that night and steal three times as much.

The husband yet again was driven to the garden to steal in fear of his wife's condition, but this time the sorceress was waiting for him. "How dare you steal my precious rapunzell!" she shouted.



The husband sank down to his knees and begged for forgiveness. "You will pay for what you've done," the sorceress said, "but not with your life. Instead, I will take your child. When she is born, I will appear."

The husband was left to weep in the darkness of the garden, wondering why the sorceress was so sure his child would be a girl.

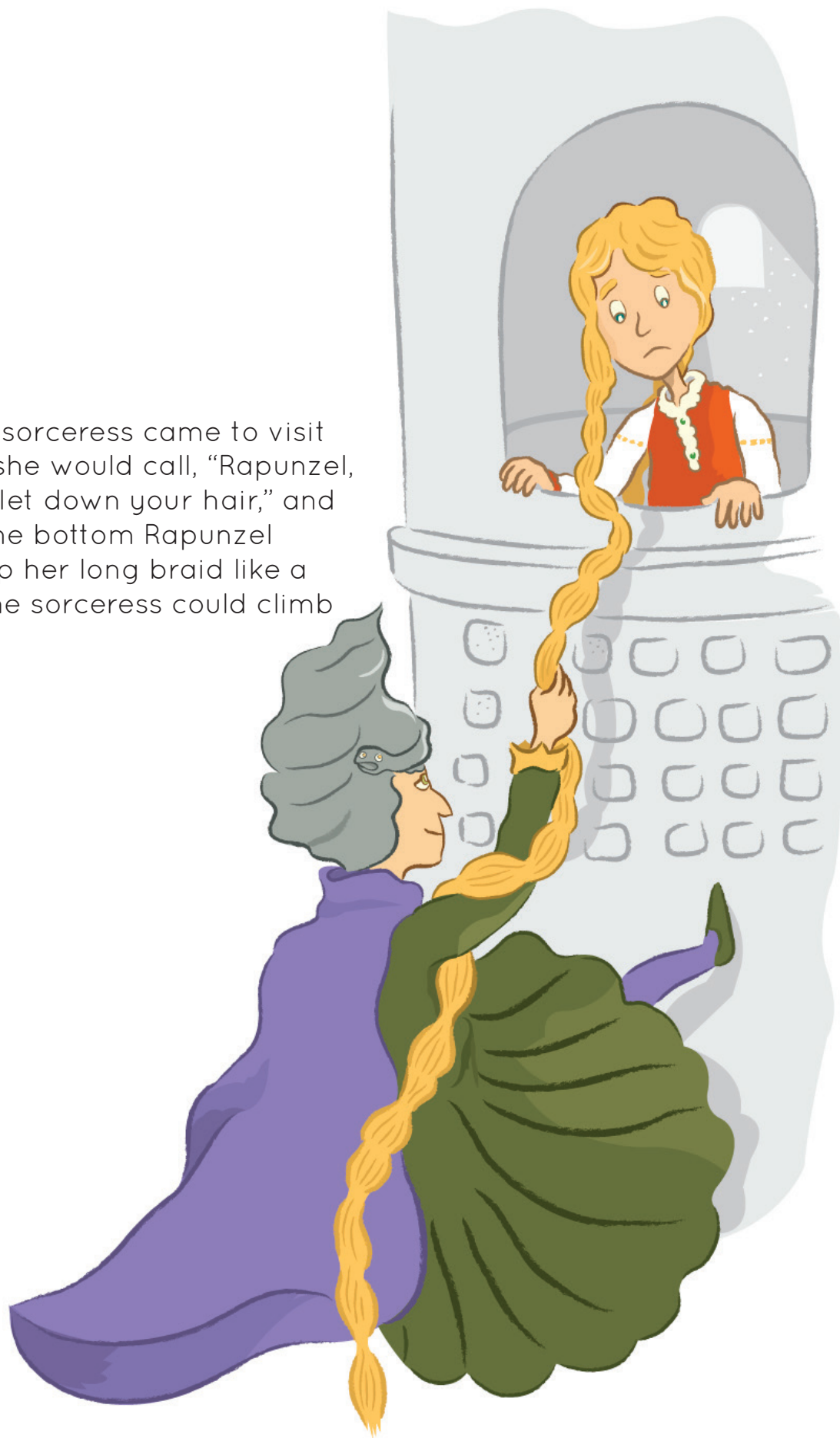
True to her word, the sorceress appeared the very moment the baby girl arrived in this world. "I shall call her Rapunzel," she said. And before her parents could even lay eyes on her, the sorceress wrapped the baby up and took her deep into the forest.





Rapunzel grew into a beautiful girl with a voice like a bell and a long mane of hair that was soft, yet strong. Her beauty so frightened the sorceress that she locked Rapunzel in a high tower with no stairs or doors. The only opening in the tower was a small window at the top.

When the sorceress came to visit Rapunzel she would call, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair," and down to the bottom Rapunzel would drop her long braid like a rope, so the sorceress could climb to the top.

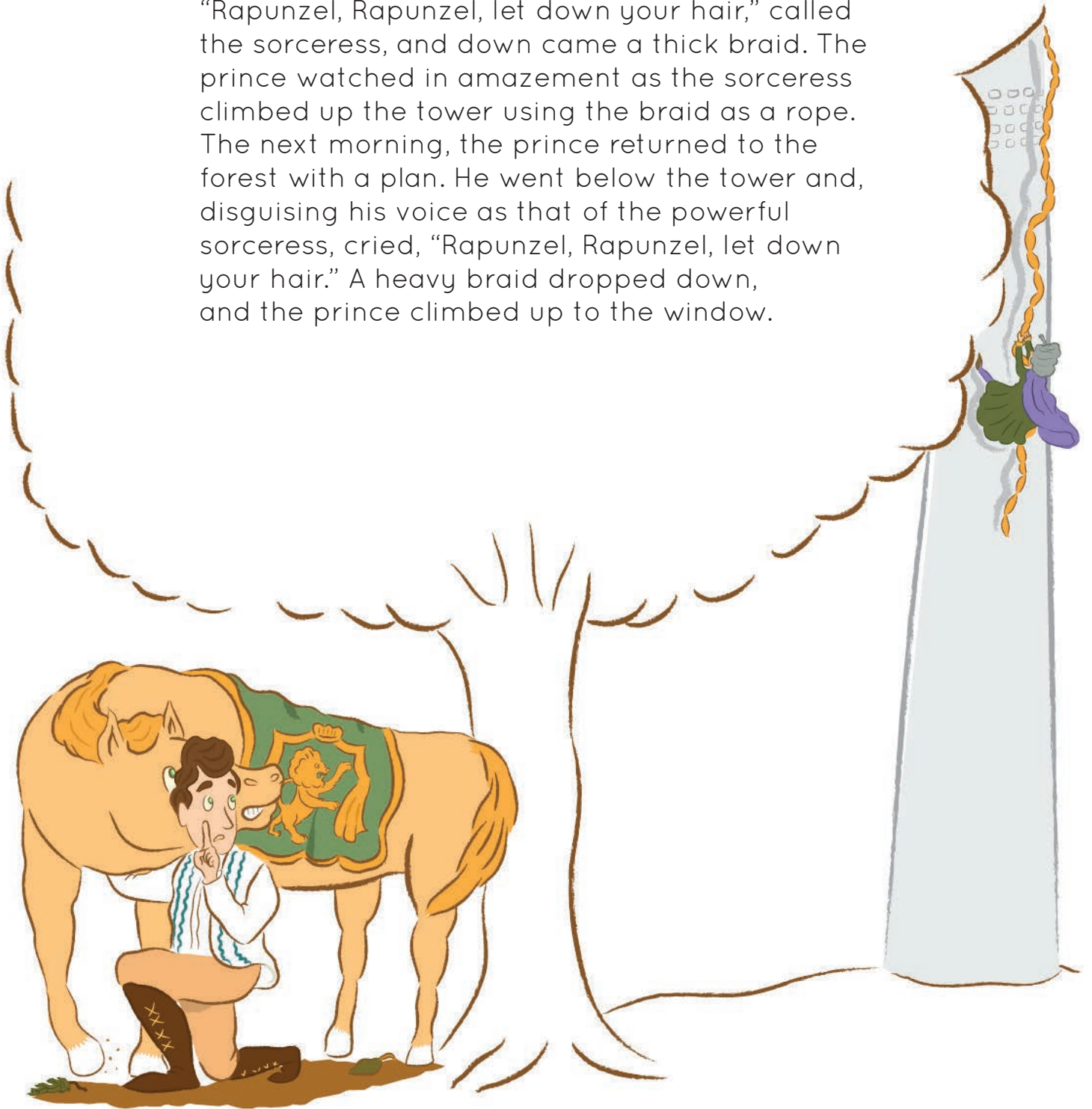


One spring morning, a young prince riding his horse through the woods passed a tall tower that he thought was empty until he heard a beautiful song coming from a small window near the top. He paused to listen before continuing his ride home.

He stayed in that forest for weeks and returned every morning to hear the woman's song. He wanted to knock on the door and meet her, but finding no door, was left to wonder. "She must be beautiful," the prince said, "because she sounds beautiful."



He was turning to head home one morning when he saw the sorceress approach the tower. He and his horse hid behind an old oak tree. "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair," called the sorceress, and down came a thick braid. The prince watched in amazement as the sorceress climbed up the tower using the braid as a rope. The next morning, the prince returned to the forest with a plan. He went below the tower and, disguising his voice as that of the powerful sorceress, cried, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair." A heavy braid dropped down, and the prince climbed up to the window.





It was unclear who was more surprised: Rapunzel, who knew only the sorceress, or the prince, who was greeted at the window by the most beautiful person he had ever seen. Rapunzel's initial fear turned to curiosity, as she listened to the prince explain himself. "I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to trick you, but I wanted to meet you and this was the only way."

The prince told Rapunzel about the outside world, and she saw that he was good. Once she began to tell the prince about her life in the tower she couldn't stop. Her words tumbled out like her braid out the window, and the prince loved her more.

