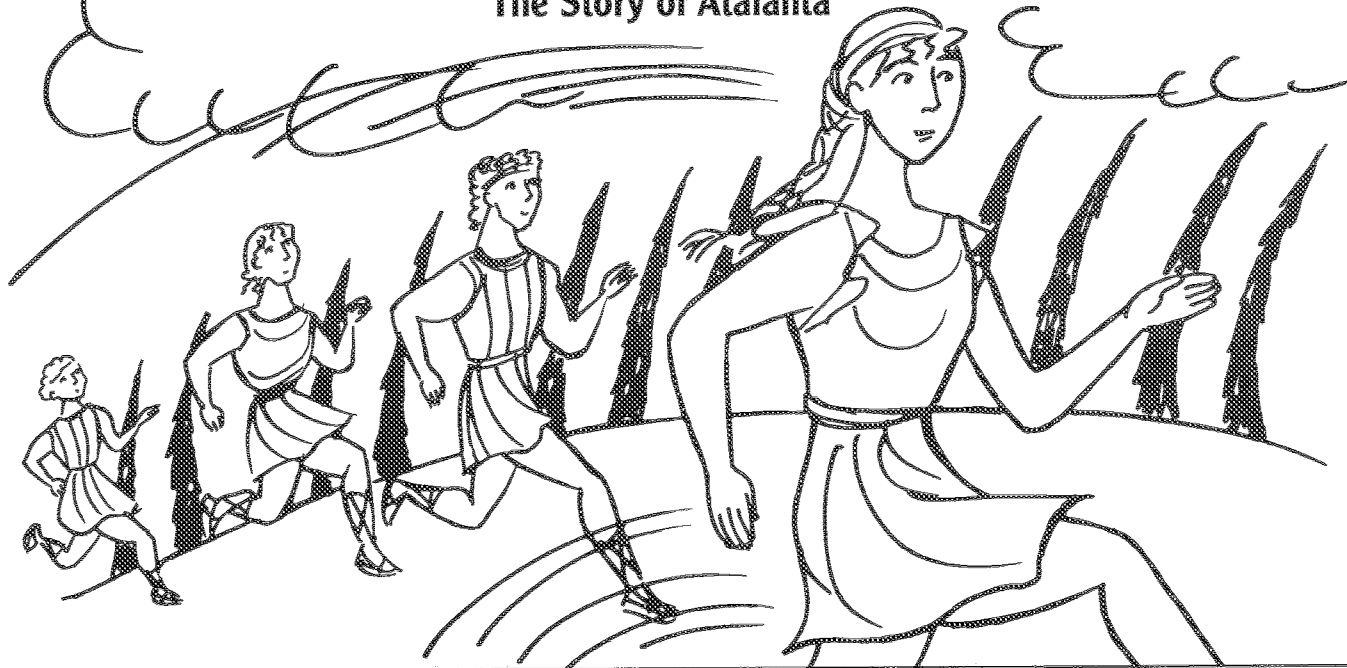


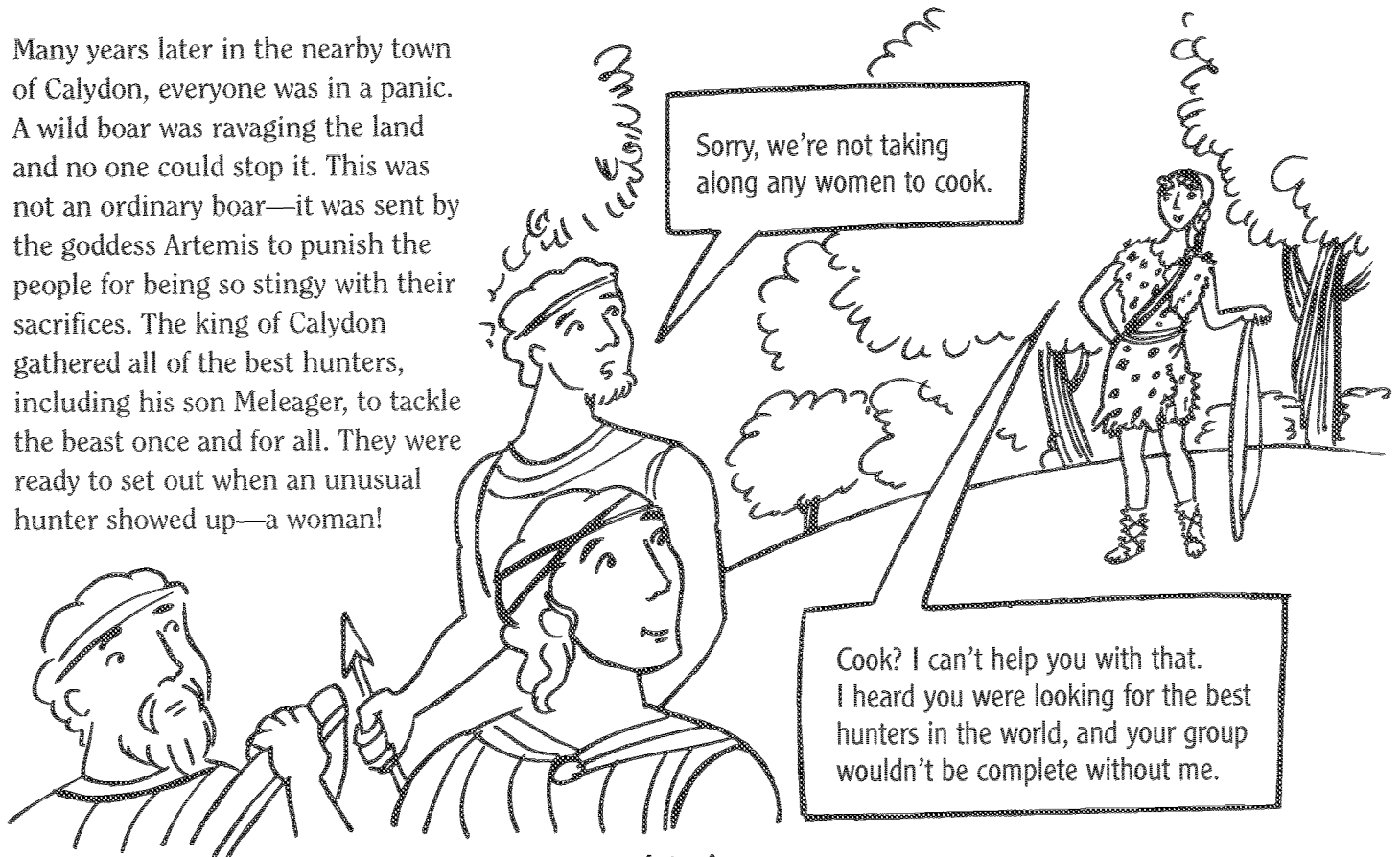
# THE RACE FOR LOVE

## The Story of Atalanta

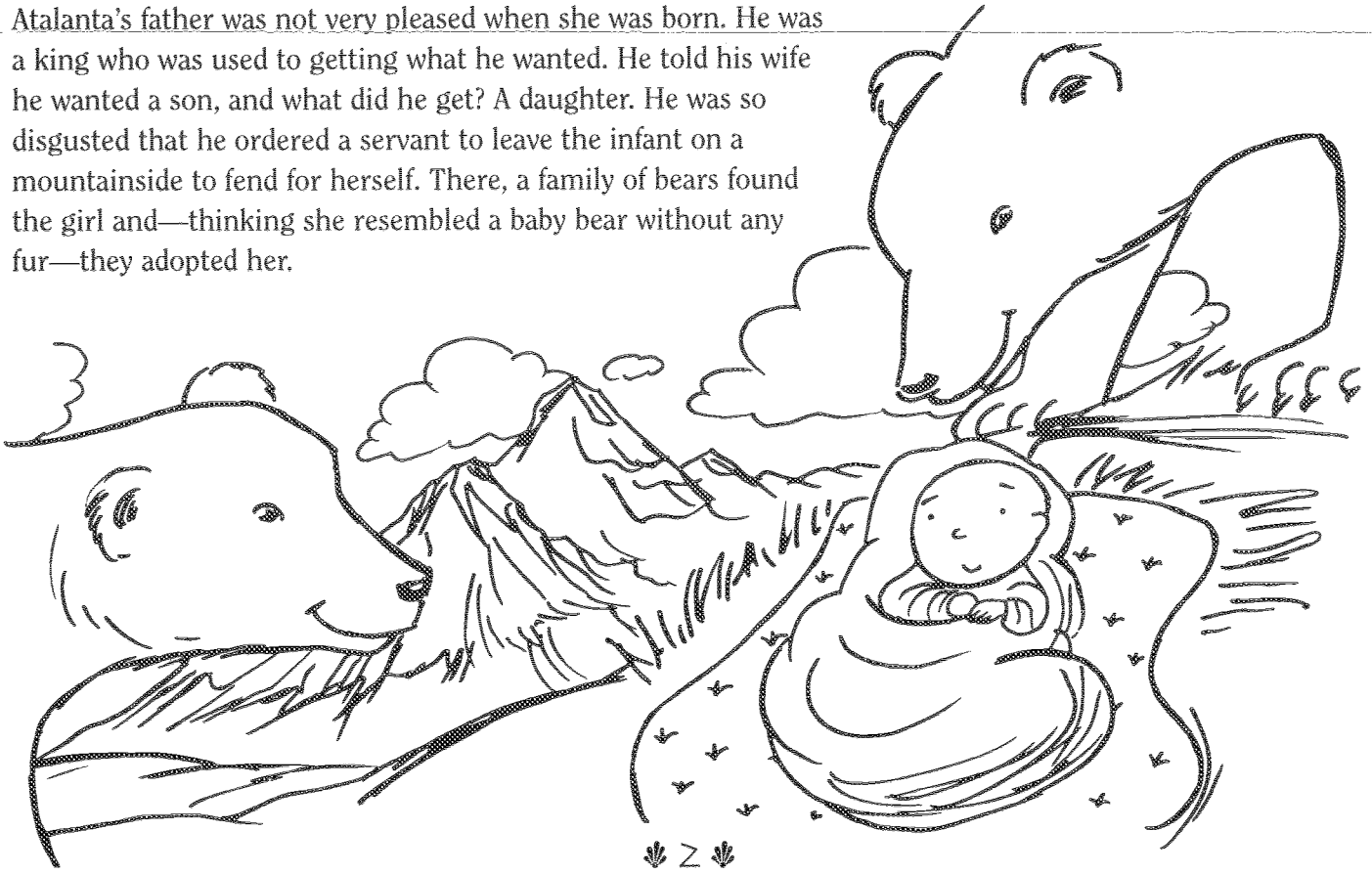


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Many years later in the nearby town of Calydon, everyone was in a panic. A wild boar was ravaging the land and no one could stop it. This was not an ordinary boar—it was sent by the goddess Artemis to punish the people for being so stingy with their sacrifices. The king of Calydon gathered all of the best hunters, including his son Meleager, to tackle the beast once and for all. They were ready to set out when an unusual hunter showed up—a woman!

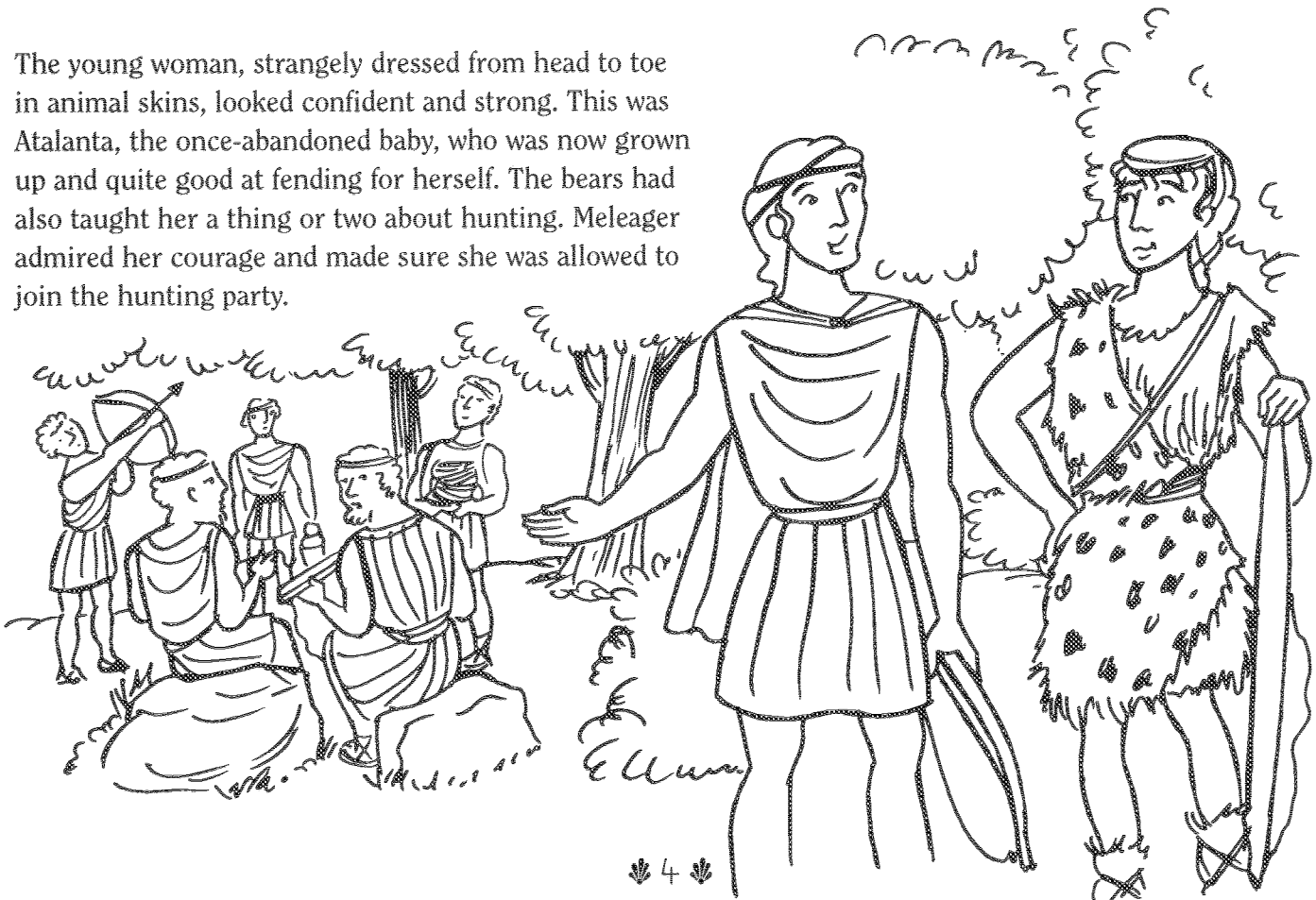


Atalanta's father was not very pleased when she was born. He was a king who was used to getting what he wanted. He told his wife he wanted a son, and what did he get? A daughter. He was so disgusted that he ordered a servant to leave the infant on a mountainside to fend for herself. There, a family of bears found the girl and—thinking she resembled a baby bear without any fur—they adopted her.



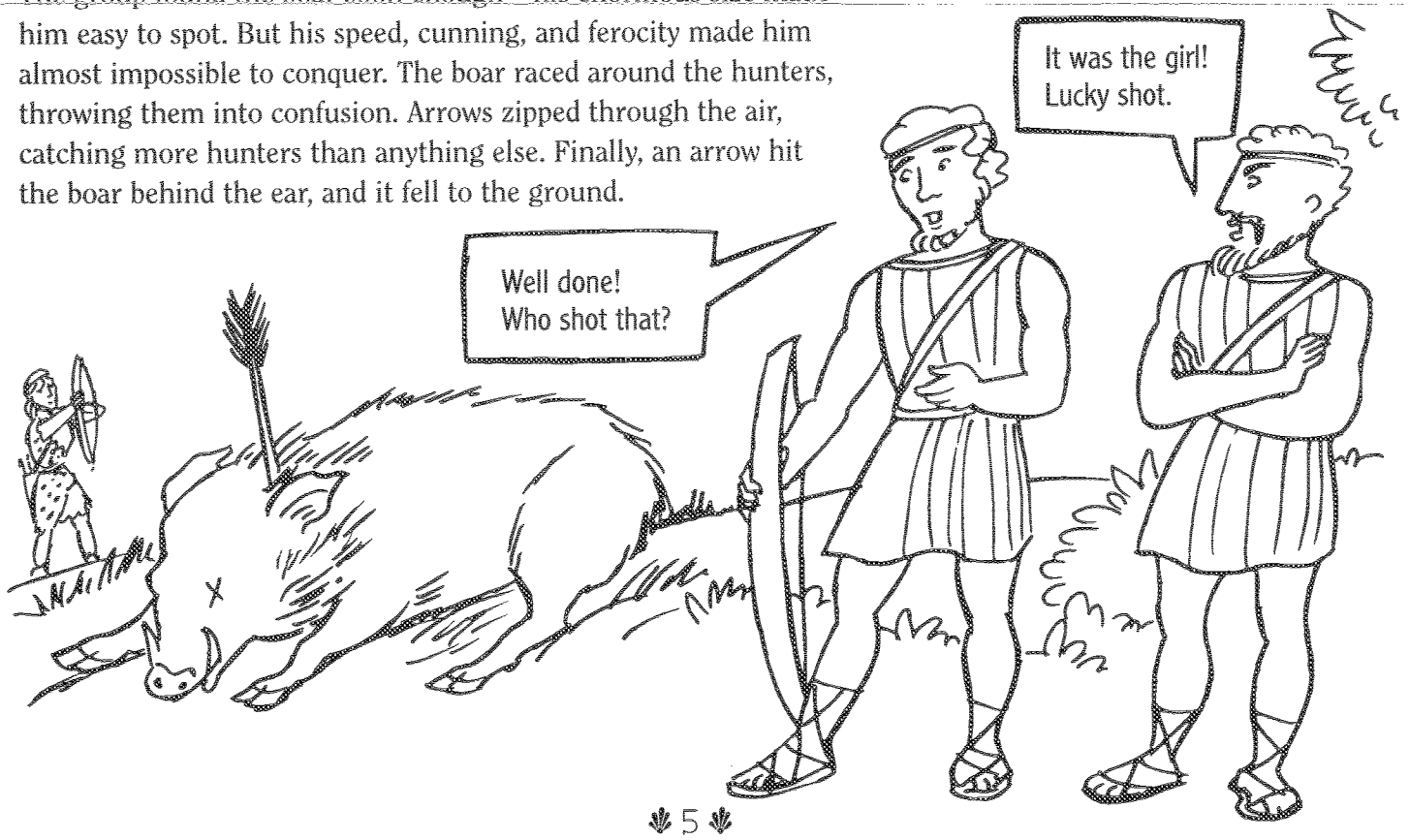
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The young woman, strangely dressed from head to toe in animal skins, looked confident and strong. This was Atalanta, the once-abandoned baby, who was now grown up and quite good at fending for herself. The bears had also taught her a thing or two about hunting. Meleager admired her courage and made sure she was allowed to join the hunting party.

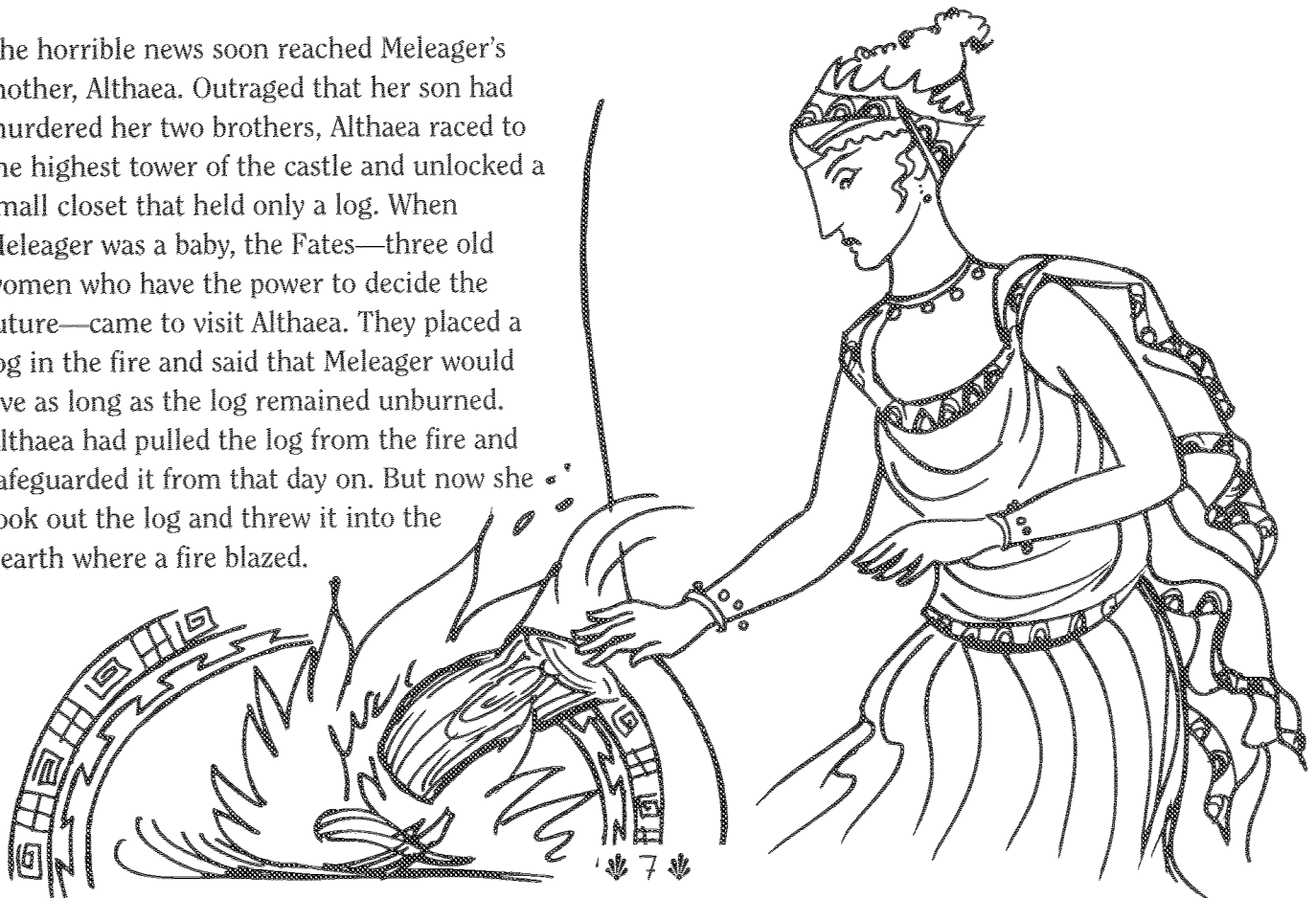


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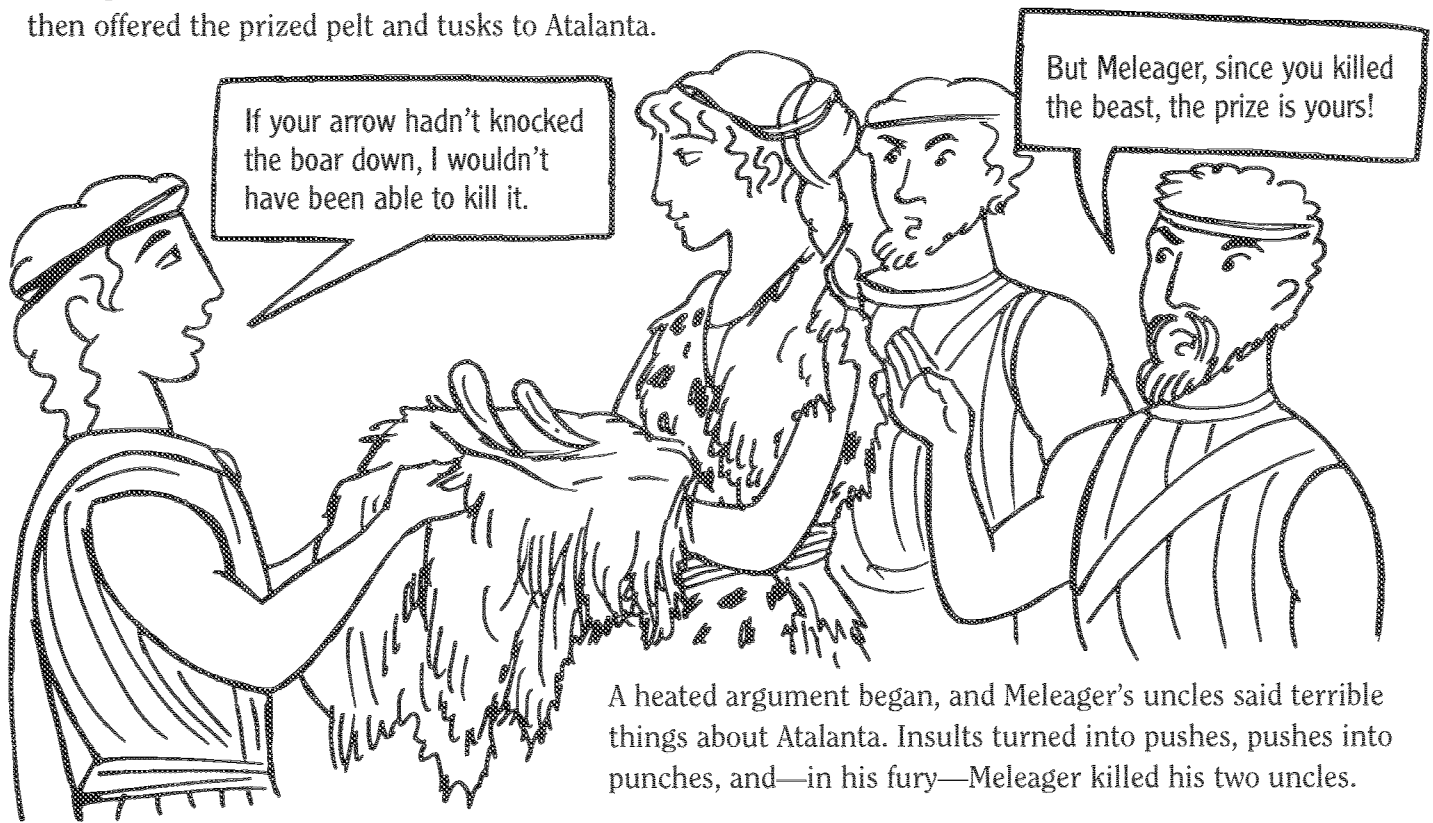
The group found the boar soon enough—his enormous size made him easy to spot. But his speed, cunning, and ferocity made him almost impossible to conquer. The boar raced around the hunters, throwing them into confusion. Arrows zipped through the air, catching more hunters than anything else. Finally, an arrow hit the boar behind the ear, and it fell to the ground.



The horrible news soon reached Meleager's mother, Althaea. Outraged that her son had murdered her two brothers, Althaea raced to the highest tower of the castle and unlocked a small closet that held only a log. When Meleager was a baby, the Fates—three old women who have the power to decide the future—came to visit Althaea. They placed a log in the fire and said that Meleager would live as long as the log remained unburned. Althaea had pulled the log from the fire and safeguarded it from that day on. But now she took out the log and threw it into the hearth where a fire blazed.



Meleager finished the boar off with his sword and then offered the prized pelt and tusks to Atalanta.

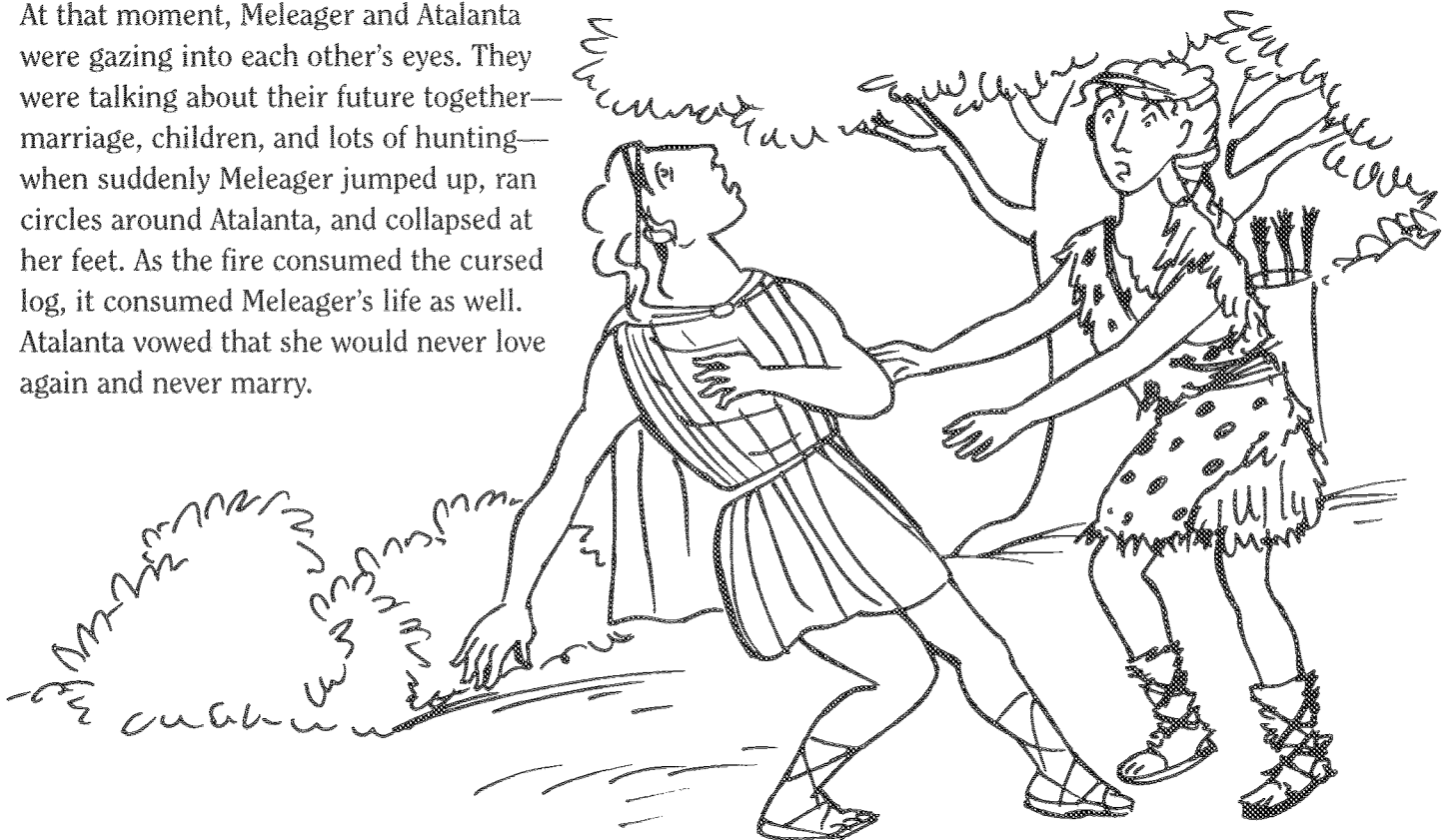


A heated argument began, and Meleager's uncles said terrible things about Atalanta. Insults turned into pushes, pushes into punches, and—in his fury—Meleager killed his two uncles.

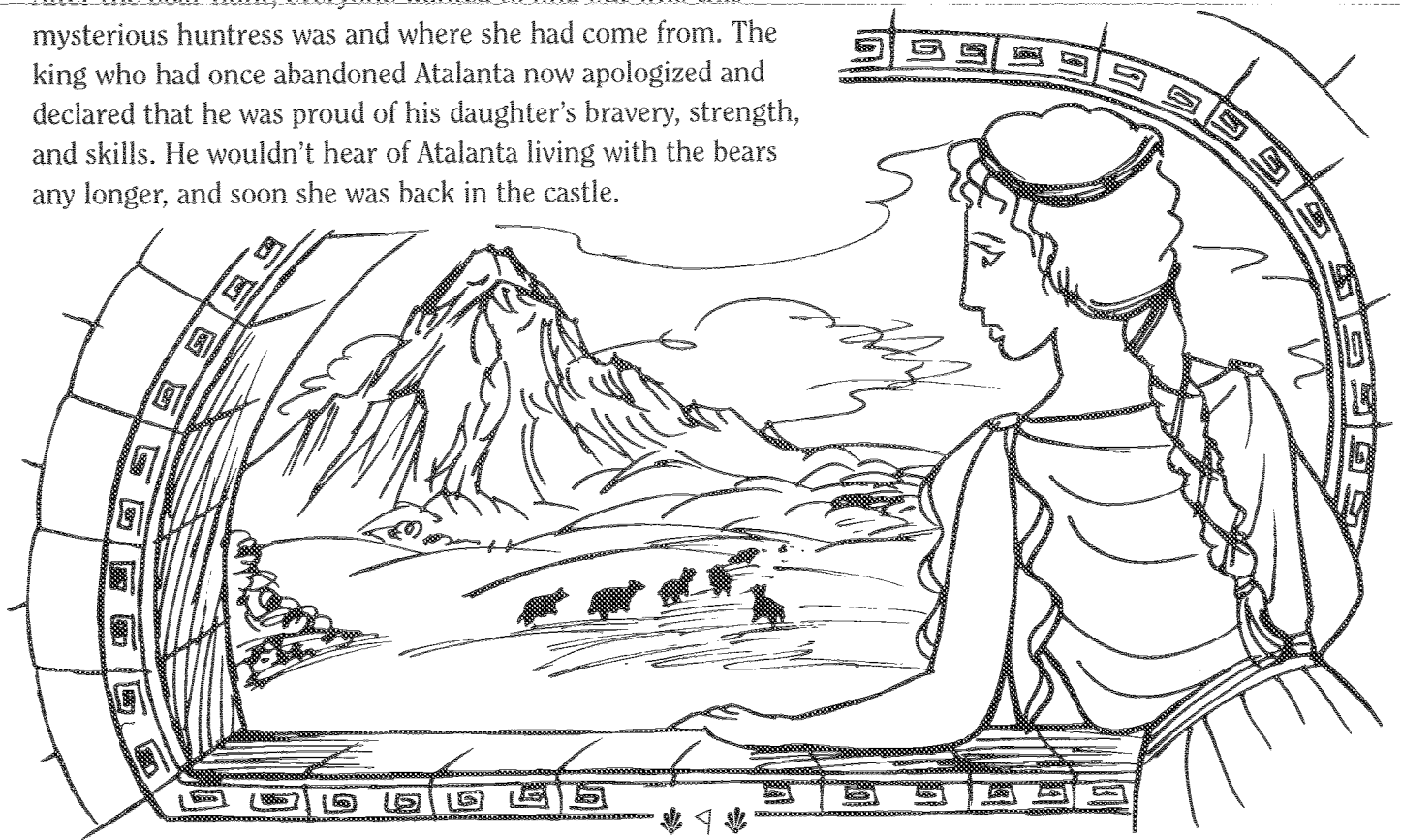


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At that moment, Meleager and Atalanta were gazing into each other's eyes. They were talking about their future together—marriage, children, and lots of hunting—when suddenly Meleager jumped up, ran circles around Atalanta, and collapsed at her feet. As the fire consumed the cursed log, it consumed Meleager's life as well. Atalanta vowed that she would never love again and never marry.

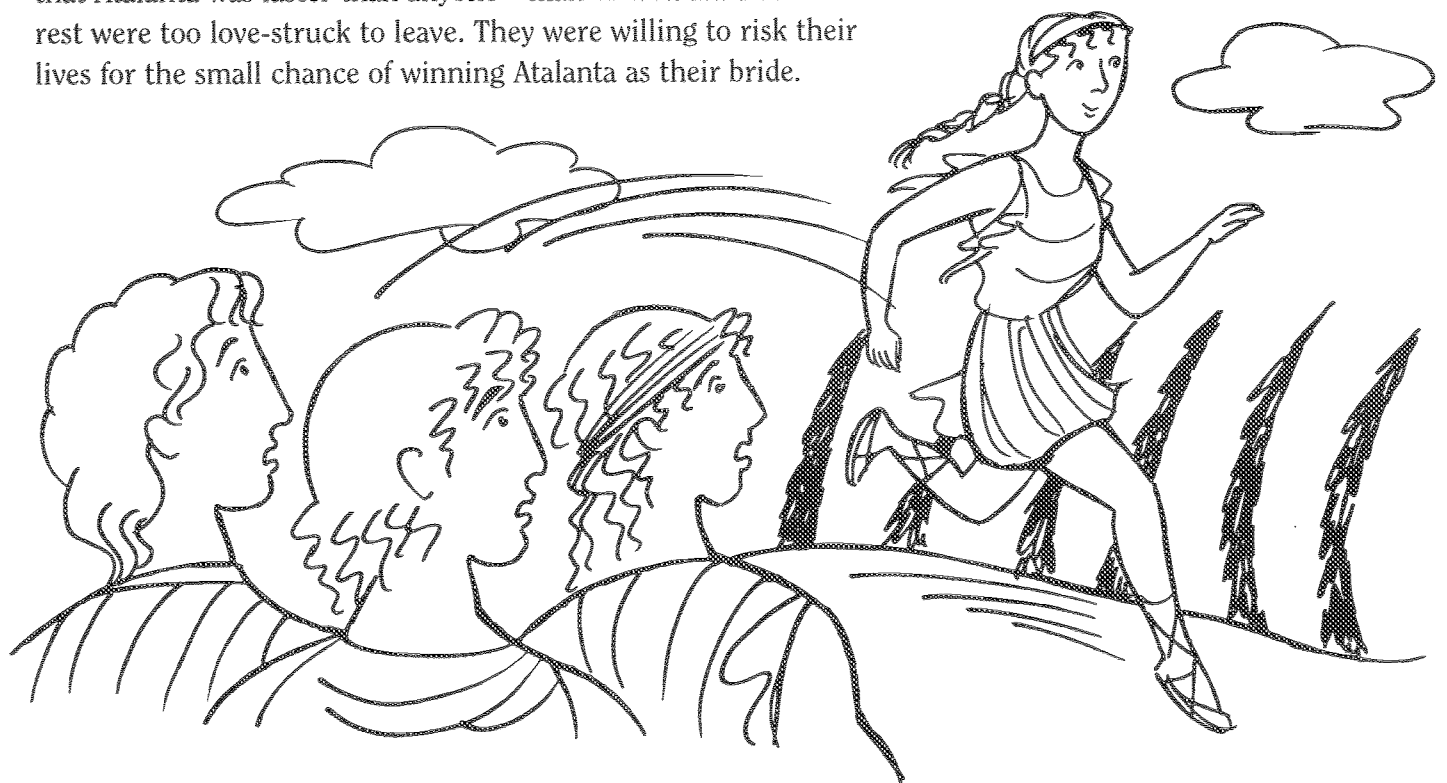


After the boar hunt, everyone wanted to find out who this mysterious huntress was and where she had come from. The king who had once abandoned Atalanta now apologized and declared that he was proud of his daughter's bravery, strength, and skills. He wouldn't hear of Atalanta living with the bears any longer, and soon she was back in the castle.

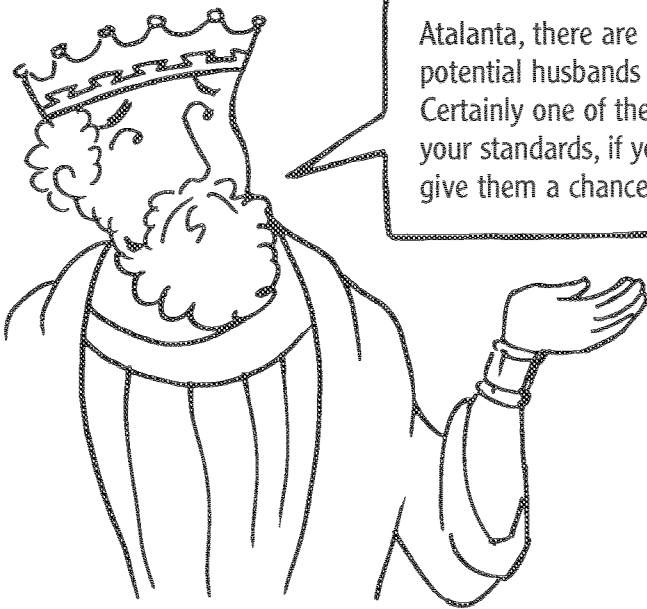


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When the suitors heard this, many of them gave up. They knew that Atalanta was faster than anyone—man or woman. But the rest were too love-struck to leave. They were willing to risk their lives for the small chance of winning Atalanta as their bride.



Now that she was a princess (and one whose bravery and skill won many admirers), Atalanta had suitors lining up outside the castle. But she would not even let them in the door—she had not forgotten her vow. The king was getting frustrated with his daughter's stubborn ways and had a word with her.



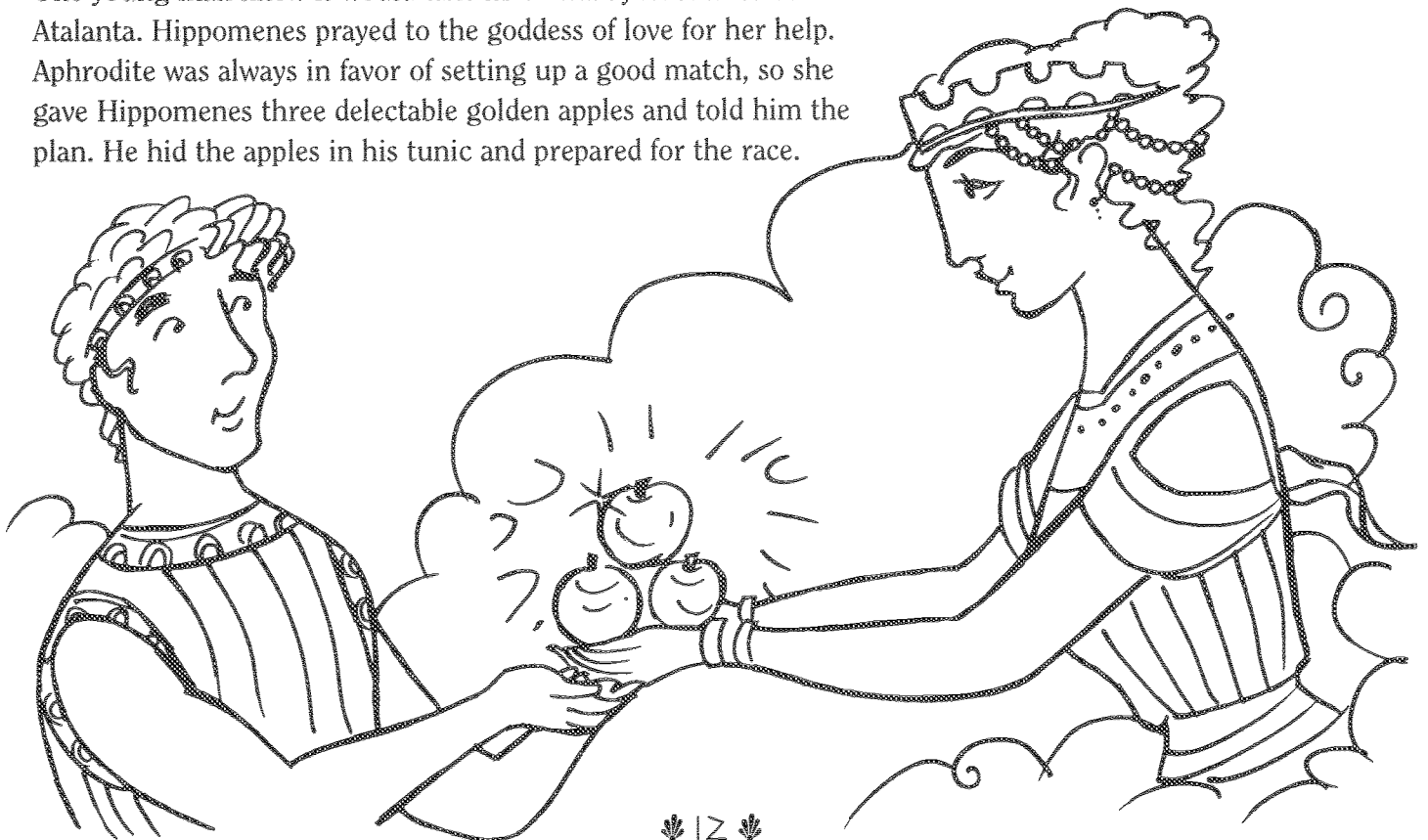
Atalanta, there are perfectly good potential husbands out there! Certainly one of them would meet your standards, if you would just give them a chance.

All right, Father. Let them race me. He who wins, wins my hand in marriage. He who loses, dies.

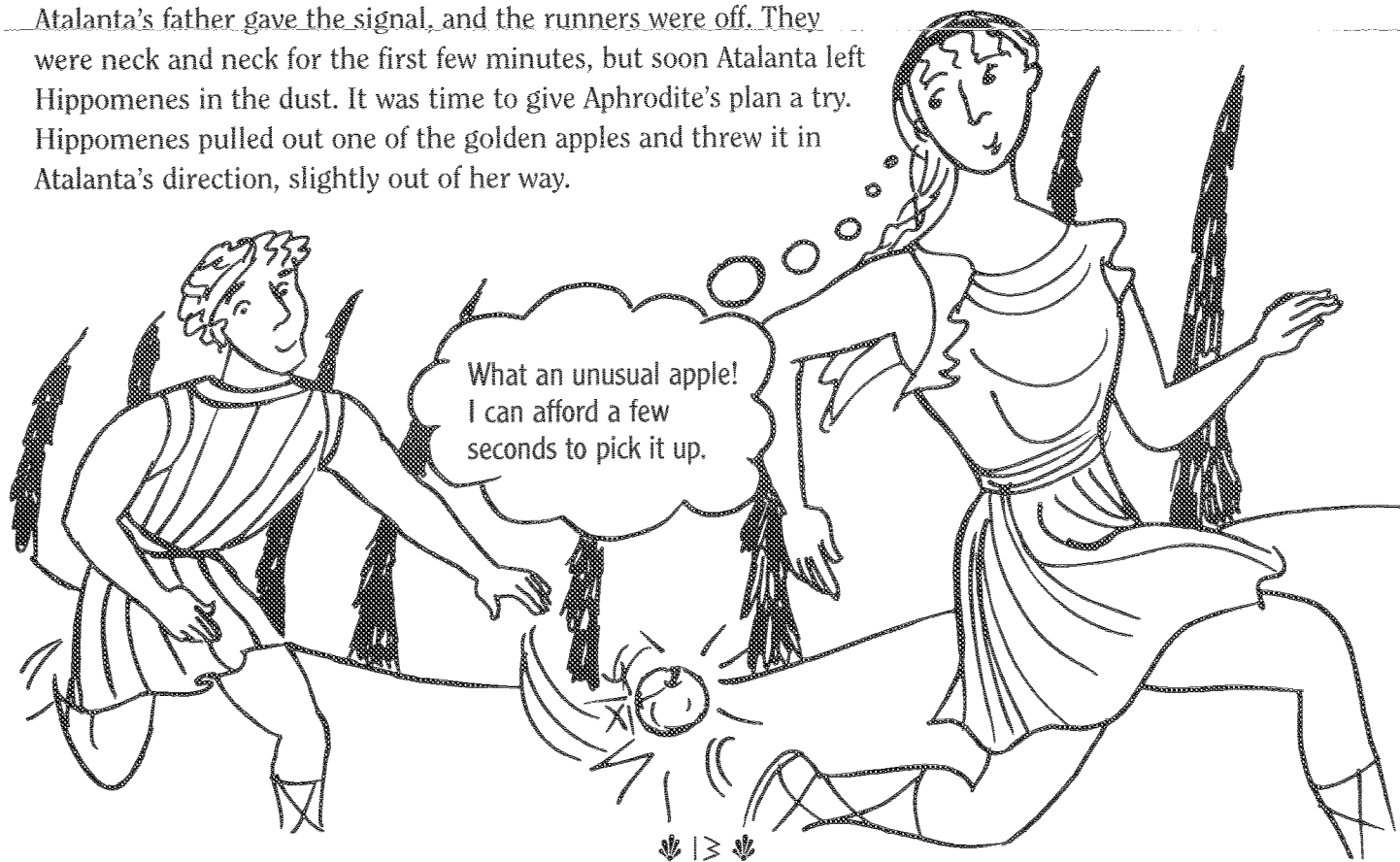


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One young man knew it would take more than just luck to outrun Atalanta. Hippomenes prayed to the goddess of love for her help. Aphrodite was always in favor of setting up a good match, so she gave Hippomenes three delectable golden apples and told him the plan. He hid the apples in his tunic and prepared for the race.



Atalanta's father gave the signal, and the runners were off. They were neck and neck for the first few minutes, but soon Atalanta left Hippomenes in the dust. It was time to give Aphrodite's plan a try. Hippomenes pulled out one of the golden apples and threw it in Atalanta's direction, slightly out of her way.



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Atalanta quickly caught up to him and dashed toward the finish line. Hippomenes took out the third and final apple—his only chance to win the race and save his life. Confident that she would win, as always, Atalanta thought nothing of stopping for one last apple. But Hippomenes had thrown the apple far off the track, and Atalanta misjudged how long it would take her to reach it. Hippomenes won the race by a few steps, and he also won the fastest bride in Greece.

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Hippomenes caught up, but Atalanta again sped ahead.  
Hippomenes threw the second apple farther off to the side.  
Atalanta could not resist the second apple either, and she  
darted after it. Hippomenes burst into the lead!

