

The following story is from the book
The Central Figures

Bahá'u'lláh

Volume Three



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Mysterious Words

Written by Lily Ayman
Illustrated by Omid and Majid Nolley

The room was quiet. The flickering light of the candles illuminated the faces of the mother and her children. The younger ones snuggled around her. They were all listening intently as she read to them from the Bahá'í Writings: "O mystic nightingale!" The mother's melodious voice was reading, "Abide not but in the rose-garden of the spirit. O messenger of the Solomon of love! Seek thou no shelter except in the Sheba of the well-beloved, and O immortal phoenix! dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal."

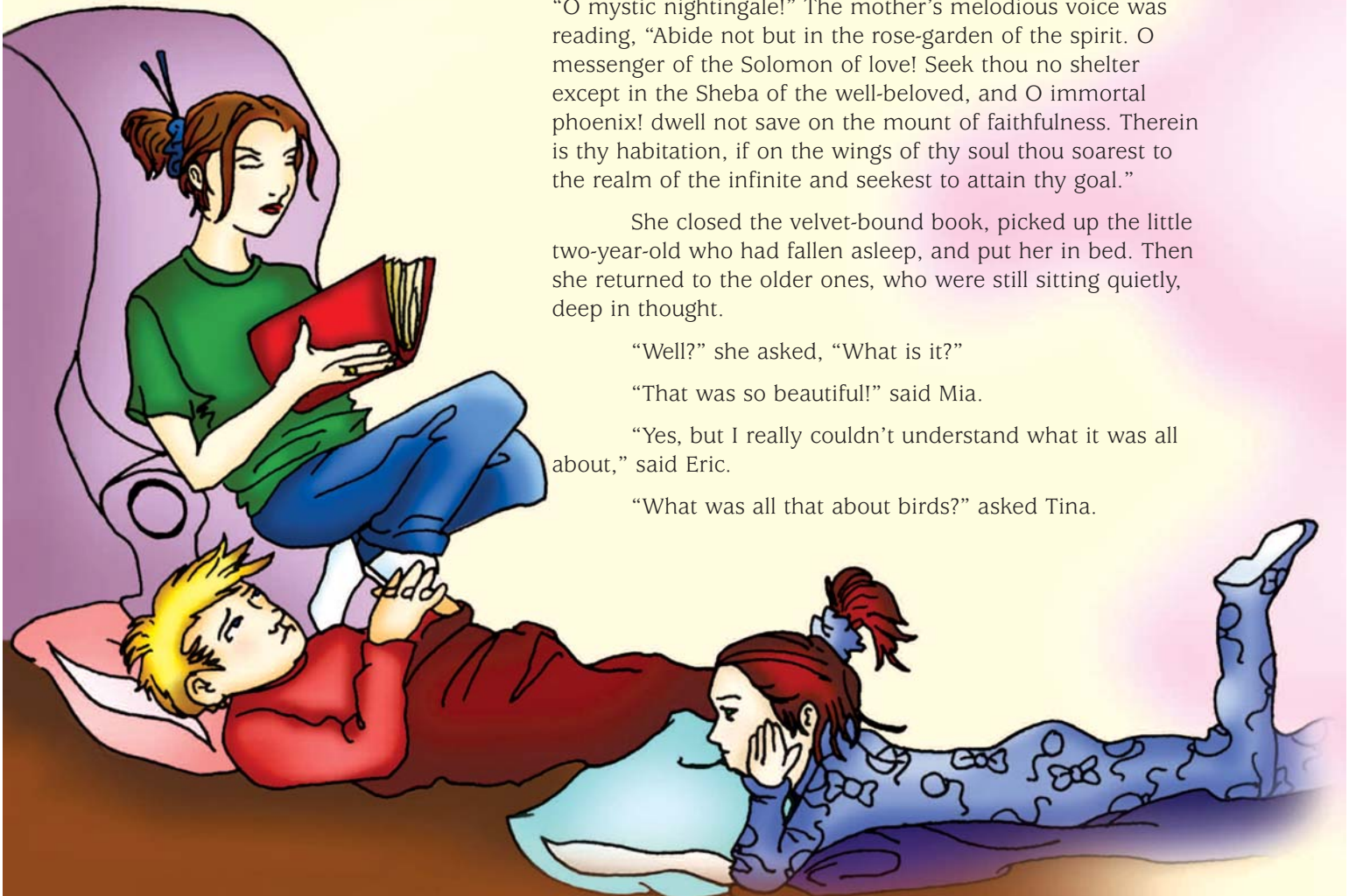
She closed the velvet-bound book, picked up the little two-year-old who had fallen asleep, and put her in bed. Then she returned to the older ones, who were still sitting quietly, deep in thought.

"Well?" she asked, "What is it?"

"That was so beautiful!" said Mia.

"Yes, but I really couldn't understand what it was all about," said Eric.

"What was all that about birds?" asked Tina.



“This is why this book is called The Hidden Words,” said Gary, who was the oldest of the children.

The mother smiled and said, “You are right, my dear, every word of these particular Writings of Bahá’u’lláh has many meanings hidden in it. Let’s see if we can figure some of them out. Who does Bahá’u’lláh call ‘mystic nightingale?’

“A true believer?” came the doubtful voice of Gary. “But what does He mean by the ‘rose-garden of the spirit?’”

“I think he means that the spiritual life is like a rose garden,” said Tina.

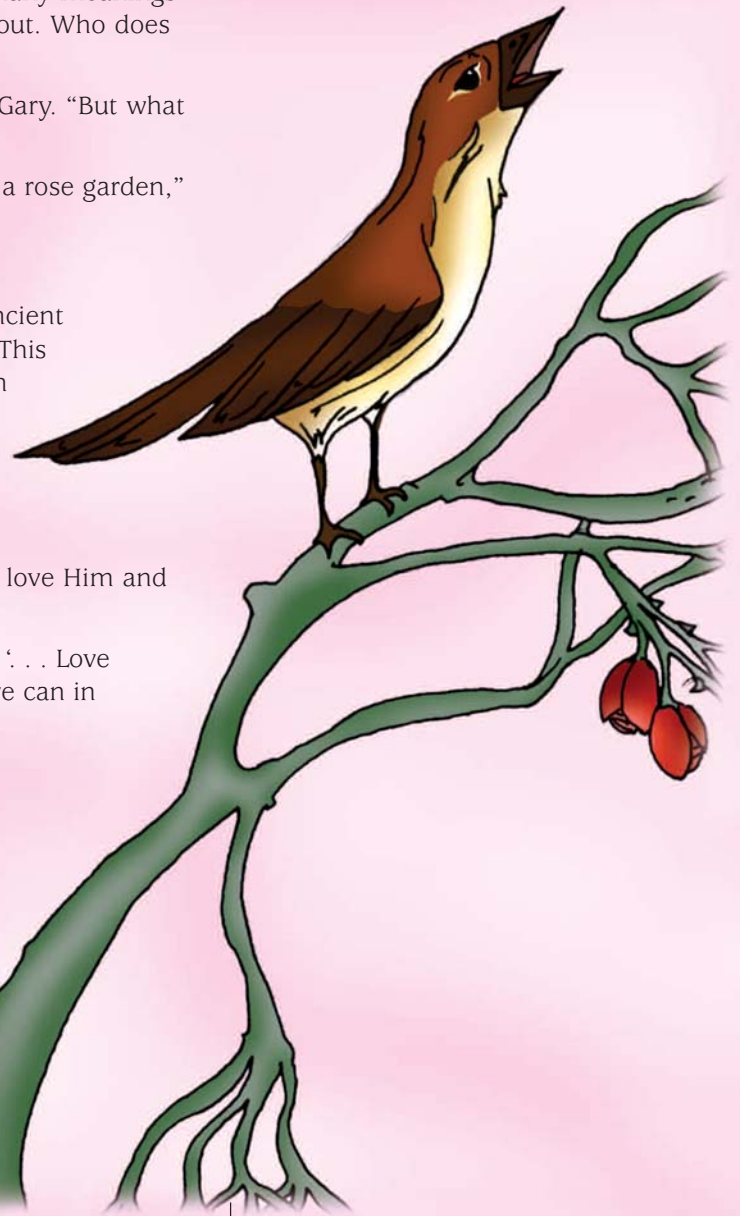
“Who is Solomon?” asked Mia, shyly.

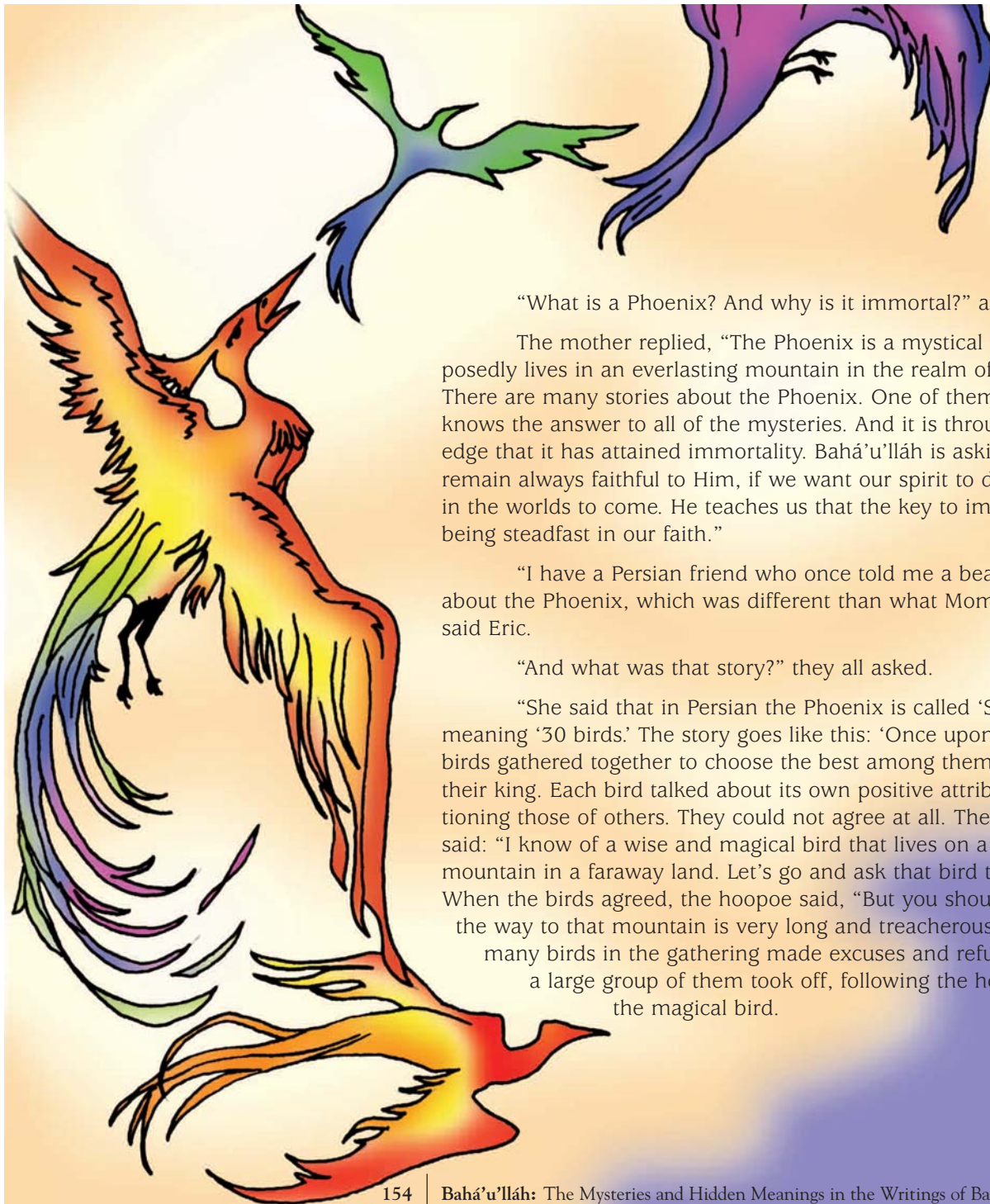
The mother answered, “He was a wise and ancient biblical king. He had a hoopoe bird for a messenger. This bird took King Solomon’s letters to his beloved Queen of Sheba.”

Eric cut in, saying, “So, is Bahá’u’lláh calling us ‘the messenger of the Solomon of love?’”

“I think so,” said the mother. “He wants us to love Him and the whole of mankind.”

“That’s right,” said Gary. “Doesn’t He say ‘. . . Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee?’”





“What is a Phoenix? And why is it immortal?” asked Tina.

The mother replied, “The Phoenix is a mystical bird that supposedly lives in an everlasting mountain in the realm of the spirit. There are many stories about the Phoenix. One of them is that it knows the answer to all of the mysteries. And it is through this knowledge that it has attained immortality. Bahá’u’lláh is asking us to remain always faithful to Him, if we want our spirit to develop further in the worlds to come. He teaches us that the key to immortality is being steadfast in our faith.”

“I have a Persian friend who once told me a beautiful story about the Phoenix, which was different than what Mom just told us,” said Eric.

“And what was that story?” they all asked.

“She said that in Persian the Phoenix is called ‘*Sí-Morgh*,’ meaning ‘30 birds.’ The story goes like this: ‘Once upon a time all the birds gathered together to choose the best among themselves to be their king. Each bird talked about its own positive attributes, not mentioning those of others. They could not agree at all. Then the hoopoe said: “I know of a wise and magical bird that lives on a very high mountain in a faraway land. Let’s go and ask that bird to be our king.” When the birds agreed, the hoopoe said, “But you should know that the way to that mountain is very long and treacherous.” Hearing this, many birds in the gathering made excuses and refused to go. Still, a large group of them took off, following the hoopoe to find the magical bird.’”

“After many days of flight, some of the birds got tired, and turned back. The rest pressed on. More days and nights went by. They were flying over a hot desert. Food and water were very scarce. The birds were very tired and ready to give up. So another group of birds excused themselves and turned back. Finally, encouraged by the hoopoe, a group of 30 birds, who had forgotten all but their goal, attained the high mountain where Sí-Morgh was supposed to live.

“Famished and exhausted, they looked around. There was no other bird there except them. Then the hoopoe pointed out to the group and said, “We are 30 birds, Sí-Morgh, united in achieving our goal.” It was then that the birds understood that united, they stood as one, and that unity should be their goal. It is from that time that Sí-Morgh, or the Phoenix, stands as a symbol of unity and steadfastness.”

“Wow! That was lovely!” said the others in unison.

Then the mother said, “Well my dear ones, it is getting late. Off to bed. With all these beautiful thoughts in your heads, I hope you will have sweet dreams,” and she blew out the candles. ★

