

# THE QUEENDOM OF MOTHES

*A Story by Giovanna Peel*

Once upon a space there was a little queendom. It was lovely and small and had meadows and rivers, valleys and clouds and pink flamingoes, both of the flying and front yard variety. It was inhabited by women only and was ruled by a very wise old queen named Mothes. The women had never seen the world of Men and were naturally very curious about the Men's ways and wanted to learn about that unknown but fascinating world. So, after lengthy deliberations between the queen and her women it was decided that the Queen's youngest daughter, a mere child of nine by the name of Ette, would be sent to the Land of Men to see and to tell of their strange ways.

Ette left with the blessings of her mother, one fine day in the season of the Bright Clouds and Soft Winds. She was gone for a long time, the blossoms she left withered and fell, and the Queen grew apprehensive and restless. She kept looking in the direction of the land of Men, over the Eastern Mountains where Ette had disappeared, and kept wishing she had never let the girl go.

But one day, at about the end of the season of the Chill Winds, Ette was seen by one of her sisters coming over the foot of the Mountains and all the women gathered together in great excitement around the girl to hear the tales of the Land of Men.

A great silence fell upon the audience and the girl started to speak of her journey. "I have seen many wonderful things in the Land of Men, and sometimes I was stunned by the beauty of their art and the cleverness of their devices." "But sometimes," she continued, "I could not understand their actions."

The audience grew attentive. The expectation was such that one could hear the bees dancing in the sun and the river polishing the stones down in the valley.

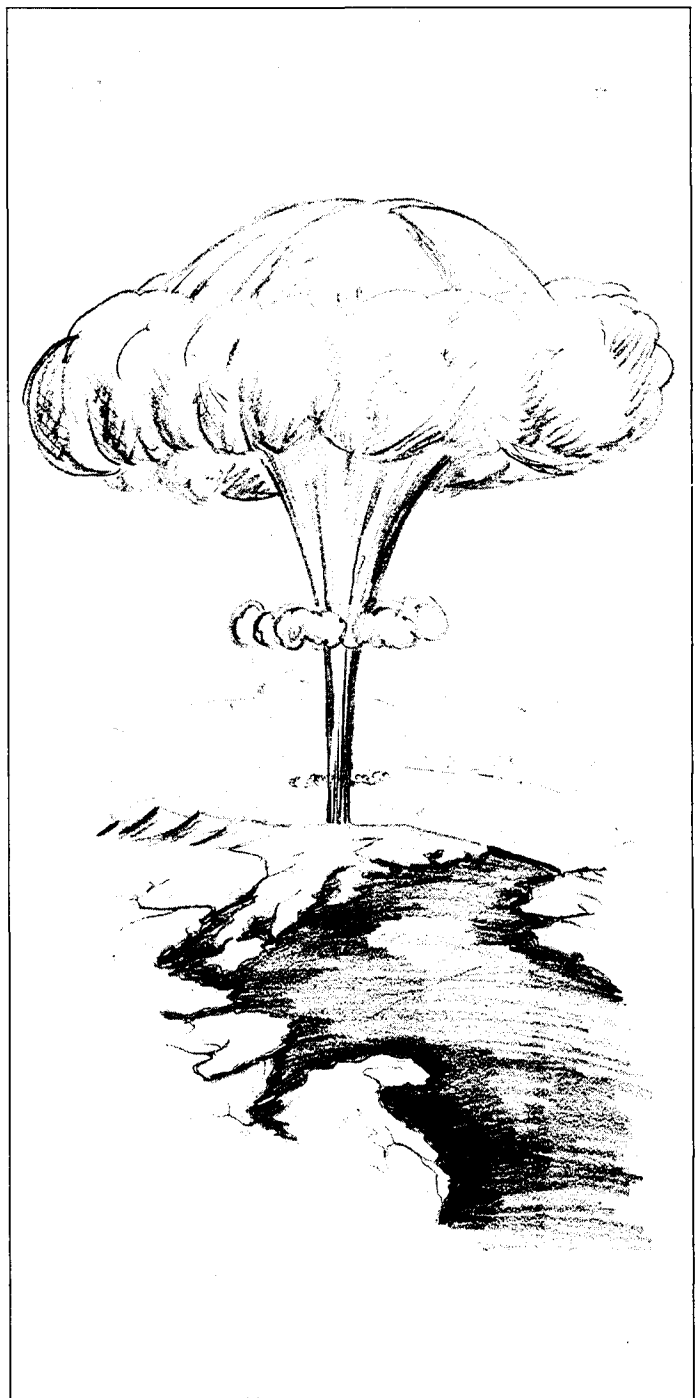
Ette went on. "Sometimes a great number of them gather together in an immense basin with seats with a little field in the center. In this field two groups of men fight strenuously for a long time to take possession of a little brown ball."

The women listened on, waiting for some kind of explanation. "Well," the Queen said, "maybe the little ball had some kind of special power or was made of a very precious material."

"No, no," said the girl, "I thought so too, so that when they finished their battle I went down in the field and asked to be shown the little ball. They gave it to me and nobody seemed to care much about it. They didn't even asked for it back."

"That's strange indeed," said the Queen. "What else did you see?"

"I saw something even stranger," continued Ette. "Sometimes they put two men together on a little elevated platform surrounded by ropes. Then one of the men starts to punch the other



*Illustration: Tony Venditello*

in the face and on his chest. The other man does the same, and nobody tries to stop them. All the onlookers grow very excited and incite them to go on. When one of the man finally faints in pain nobody helps him but rather they cheer the guilty one, and proclaim him the winner. They actually give him no punishment, and treat him like a hero."

The women were starting to disbelieve what they were hearing. They grew tense and perplexed.

"They also," said Ette quickly now, because she sensed she was starting to lose credibility, "go to places where nobody should want to go, deserted, lonely and terribly cold. They almost die of cold and hunger, and some of them sometimes do die, so that they can put a little flag in the middle of these God-forsaken places. They have to do it very fast before another group arrives there first and puts a different little flag in the same place. They like to put little flags in difficult places, on top of mountains, on deserts, on islands – the more difficult the place is to reach the more they struggle to put little flags on it."

The girl paused with some satisfaction. She knew she had succeeded in stunning her audience, that the women were a bit incredulous. But she also knew that the strangeness of her tale had the flavor of truth.

The queen knew that her favourite daughter was speaking the truth and urged her on.

So Ette went on. "Sometimes they gather in great numbers and dress all the same. Then a man shouts some inaudible orders and everyone starts to walk in little steps. When the man bellows right everyone turns right and when he bellows left everybody turns left, and then they all stop."

"Where do they go in little steps?" asked the Queen.

"Nowhere, mother, nowhere," said the girl.

The women were silent for a while and then noiselessly gathered around Ette. They slowly started to whisper comments and suggestions and ideas and the whisper grew more decisive and loud.

Finally the eldest of the Queen's daughters rose and said: "We think that it is necessary that we go to the land of Men and teach them wisdom and peace and show them the way to be happy with each other as we are in our land."

The Queen saw that this had to be done without delay and allowed the women to prepare for departure. She on her part was too old to travel and would remain in the queendom for their return.

So the women of Mothes left one bright morning in the season of Scents and Ripeness and disappeared over the Eastern mountains in the direction of the Land of Men. The Queen looked on with trepidation but she was also happy that her women would spread wisdom and peace in another land.

A long time passed and when the women of Mothes were not back the Queen grew restless and preoccupied. She was three-hundred years old and she knew that she had to die soon. She wanted to see her beloved daughters happy and safe back in the Queendom. So she waited and waited.

But one day, over the Western mountains in the direction of the Land of Men, she saw something very beautiful and reassuring. A marvellous immense cloud appeared, as big as the highest mountain, and covering most of the sky. It was in the shape of a mushroom.

So the queen knew, because of the beauty of that mushroom cloud, that her daughters had found happiness in the Land of Men.

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