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opening extract from

The Best of Times

written by

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illustrated by

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The Best of Times



By Michael Morpurgo

Illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark

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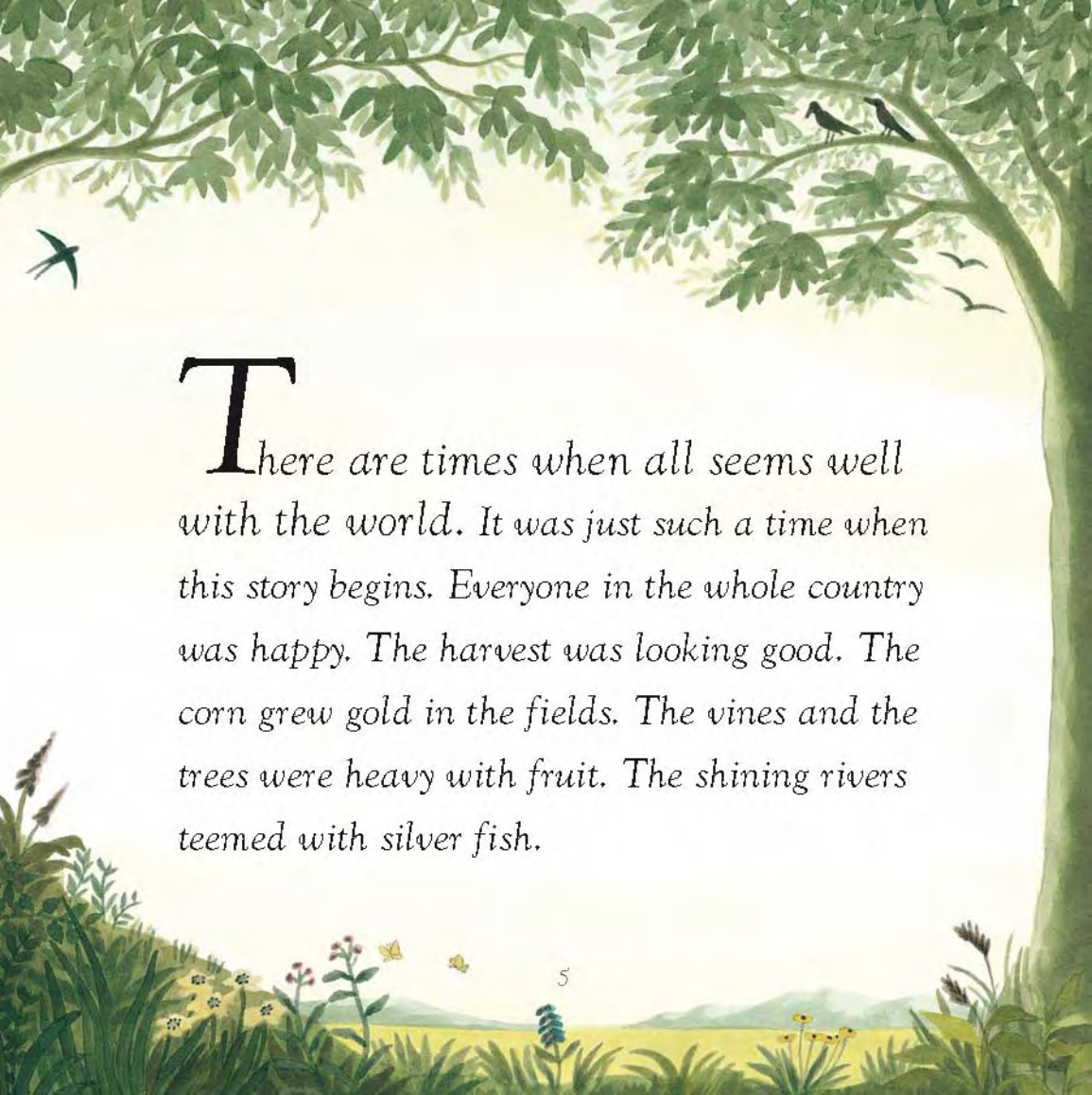
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To Basil and Adrian,
Puppeteers Supreme!
M.M.

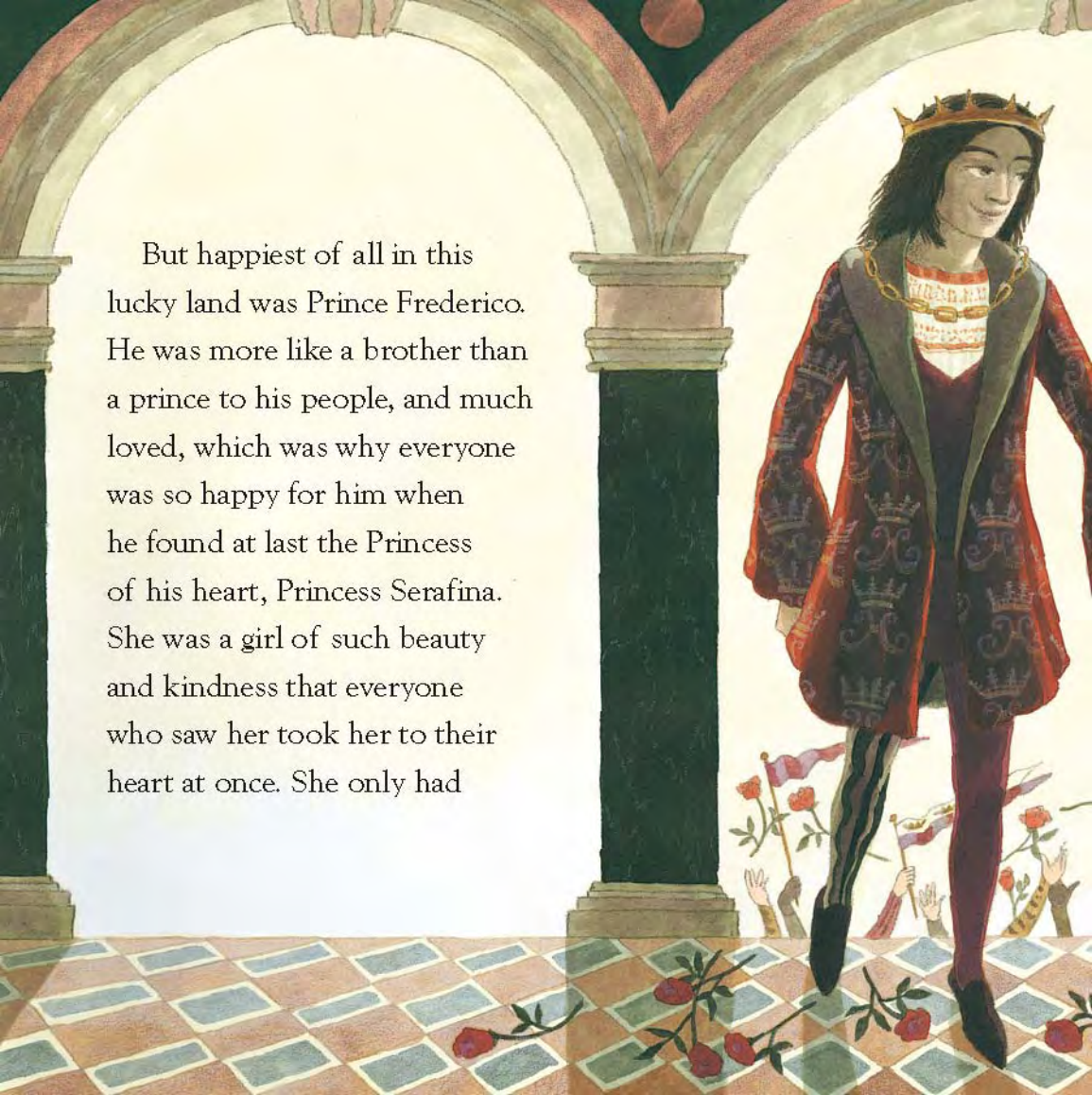


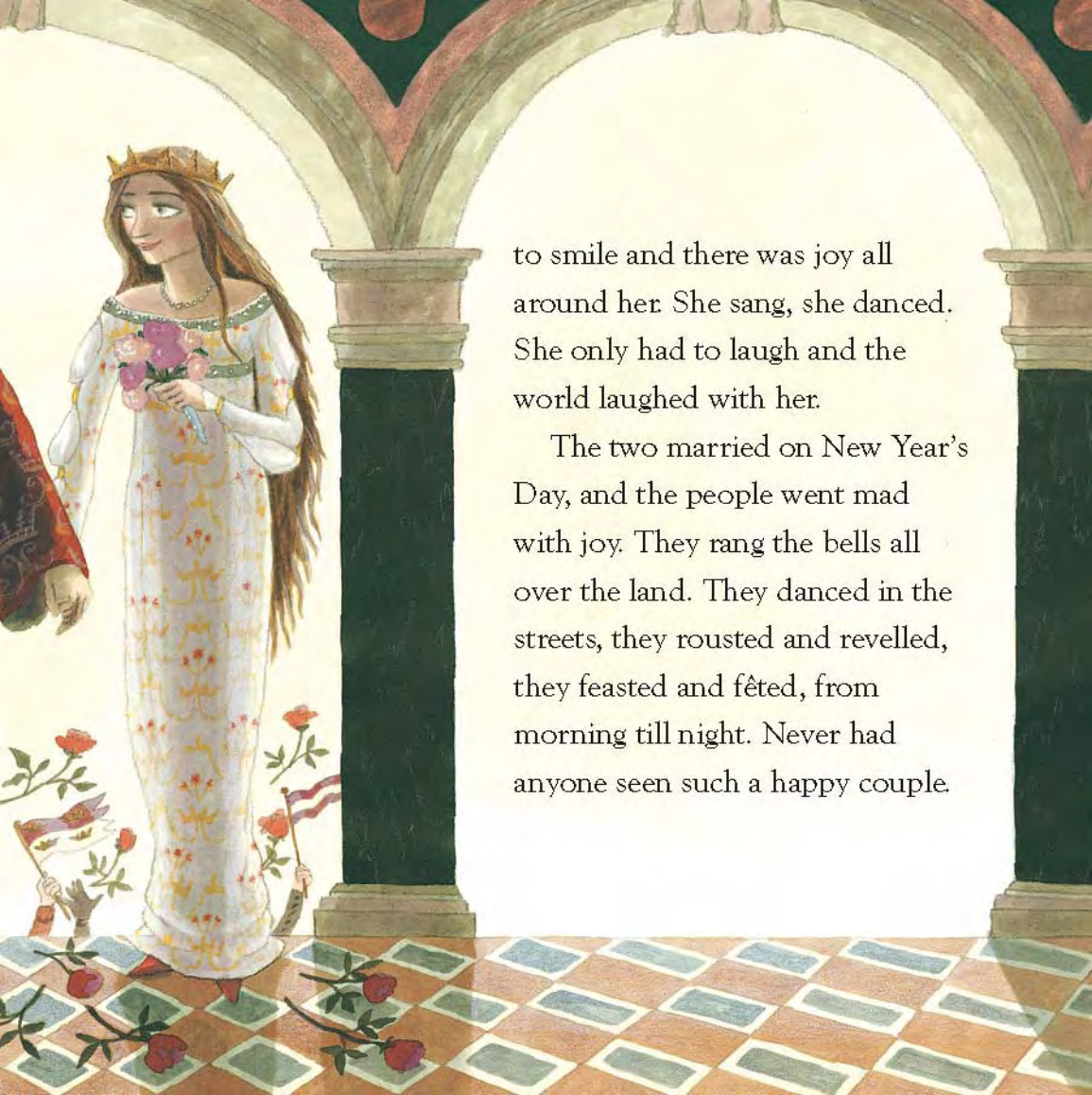




There are times when all seems well with the world. It was just such a time when this story begins. Everyone in the whole country was happy. The harvest was looking good. The corn grew gold in the fields. The vines and the trees were heavy with fruit. The shining rivers teemed with silver fish.

But happiest of all in this lucky land was Prince Frederico. He was more like a brother than a prince to his people, and much loved, which was why everyone was so happy for him when he found at last the Princess of his heart, Princess Serafina. She was a girl of such beauty and kindness that everyone who saw her took her to their heart at once. She only had





to smile and there was joy all around her. She sang, she danced. She only had to laugh and the world laughed with her.

The two married on New Year's Day, and the people went mad with joy. They rang the bells all over the land. They danced in the streets, they rousted and revelled, they feasted and fêted, from morning till night. Never had anyone seen such a happy couple.