

Chapter One The Old King's Secret There was once an old King. In fact, the young King was so fascinated with beautiful objects that he wanted more of them. He sent merchants to India to buy ivory and jade. He sent men to Persia for silk carpets, and others to find amber in the north. He sent servants to look for green turquoise in the magic tombs of the Egyptian king. The young King thought about all these things but most of all he thought about his coronation robe. He was sixteen and it was his coronation day the next day. He was very happy because he had a beautiful coronation robe of gold, a crown of rubies and a scepter of gold. "Find a boy and bring him here," the servants found the boy and brought him to the palace. When the boy arrived he was very happy. He immediately fell in love with all the beautiful things around him. He took off his old leather tunic and put on his fine new clothes. Then he began to explore the castle. He ran from room to room admiring all the beautiful statues, paintings and jewels in the palace. The people of the city talked about him: "The young King spends all his time admiring statues," they said. "Beauty and art are the most important things for him." The men left the boy with a very poor family. This poor family lived in the forest and the boy became a shepherd. But before the King died he revealed a secret: his only daughter, the Princess, had a child. Some people said her husband was an artist and some people said he was a musician. Some people said for sadness. Other people said someone gave her poison in a cup of wine. He looked after goats all day. He had no son to be King when he died. His people were very worried. "Who will be the next King?" they asked.