

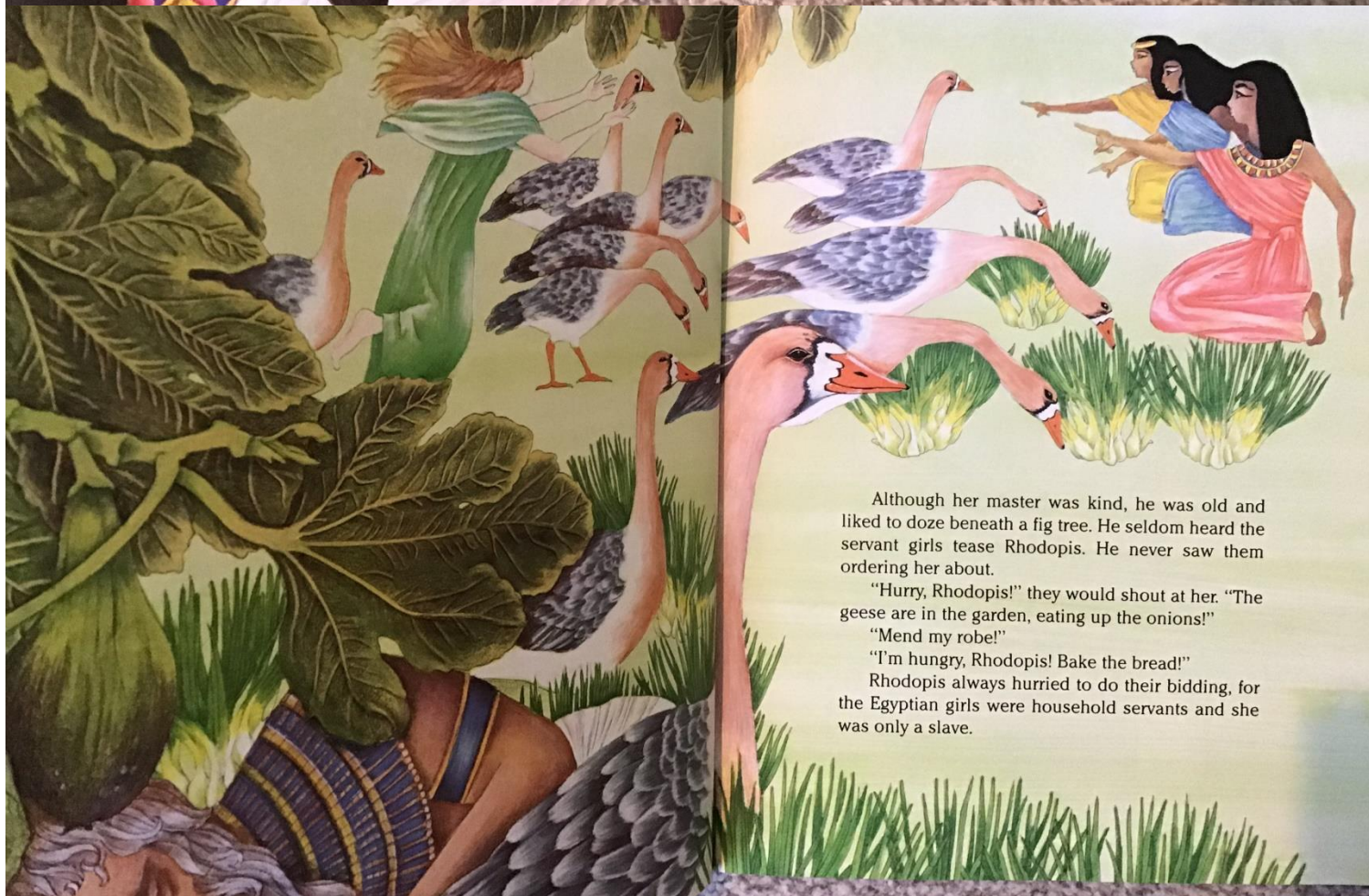
Long ago, in the land of Egypt, where the green Nile River widens to meet the blue sea, there lived a maiden called Rhodopis. When she was still a small child, Rhodopis had been stolen by pirates. She was snatched from her home in Greece, taken across the sea to Egypt, and there sold as a slave.



Like the Egyptian servant girls, Rhodopis went to the water's edge each day to wash clothes or to gather the reeds that grew along the riverbank. But Rhodopis looked different from the Egyptian girls. Their eyes were brown and hers were green. Their hair hung straight to their shoulders, while the breeze blew hers into tangles. Their skin glowed like copper, but her pale skin burned red beneath the sun. That was how she got her name, for Rhodopis meant "rosy-cheeked" in Greek.

"Rosy Rhodopis!" scoffed the servant girls, hissing her name between their teeth.

Rhodopis pretended not to hear, but she blushed rosier than ever.



Although her master was kind, he was old and liked to doze beneath a fig tree. He seldom heard the servant girls tease Rhodopis. He never saw them ordering her about.

"Hurry, Rhodopis!" they would shout at her. "The geese are in the garden, eating up the onions!"

"Mend my robe!"

"I'm hungry, Rhodopis! Bake the bread!"

Rhodopis always hurried to do their bidding, for the Egyptian girls were household servants and she was only a slave.



Rhodapis found friends among the animals instead. Birds ate crumbs from her hands. She coaxed a monkey to sit upon her shoulder and charmed a hippopotamus with her songs. It would raise its huge head from the muddy water and prick its small ears to listen.

Sometimes, when her chores were done and the day had cooled, Rhodapis would dance for her animal companions. She twirled so lightly that her tiny bare feet scarcely touched the ground. One evening her master awakened to see her dance.

"No goddess is more nimble!" he called out. "Such a gift deserves reward." He tugged his chin whiskers, thinking, and then declared, "You shall go barefoot no longer."

