

ZAHARA'S ROSE



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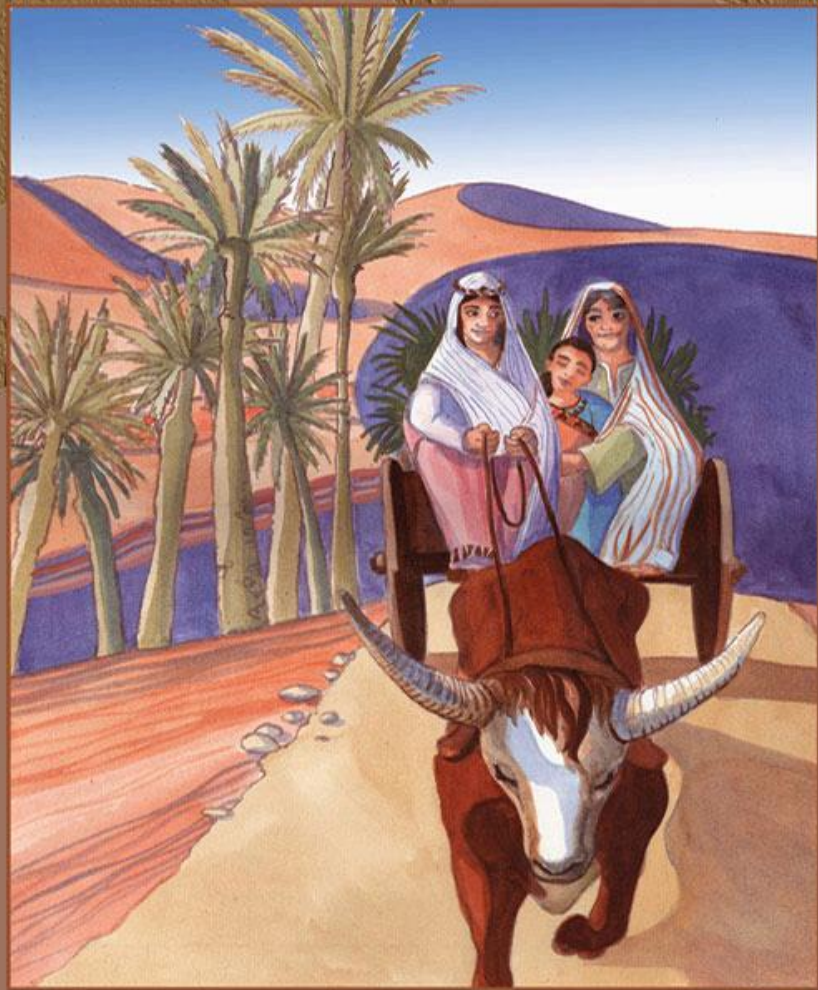
CHAPTER 1



The day they went to the palace, Zahara fell asleep sitting between her mother and her grandmother on the oxcart.

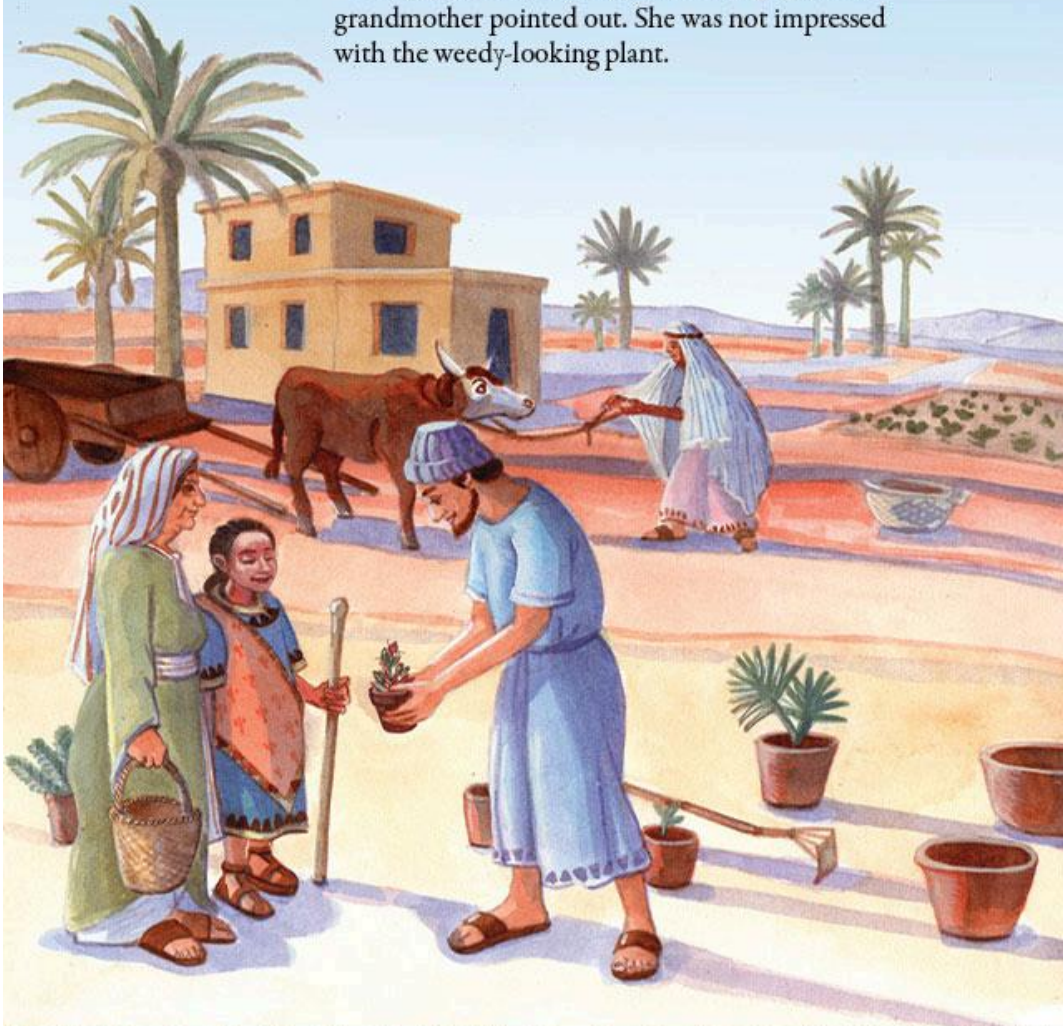
She dreamed of a flower. The strange spiky little flower her father called the Most Beautiful Under the Sun.

Her father had shown them a tiny pot with a straggly stem and one tight bud, when he'd come home from his travels the day before.



'They call this flower the Most Beautiful Under the Sun. And they also call it the Most Ravishing in all the World.'

'Which means one and the same thing,' Zahara's grandmother pointed out. She was not impressed with the weedy-looking plant.



'When this bud opens you'll see, mother of mine,' her father said. 'So will you, Zahara. This is a perfect flower. You'll touch it and smell it and smell it again and know I speak the truth. Everyone will want one. And from this one, I'm going to grow many more.'

Her father was a gardener so Zahara thought he should know.

She took the pot with the straggly stem to try to smell the poor little tight-fisted bud.

She didn't like to say that she couldn't smell a thing!

'When it blooms, maybe tomorrow, it's the perfume of paradise. Honey, musk, cinnamon. Only sweeter. The Flower of Heaven. You'll see.'

'Muh!' her grandma muttered, which meant she didn't really believe him. 'Poor thing looks half dead – like it's on its way to heaven right now!'



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