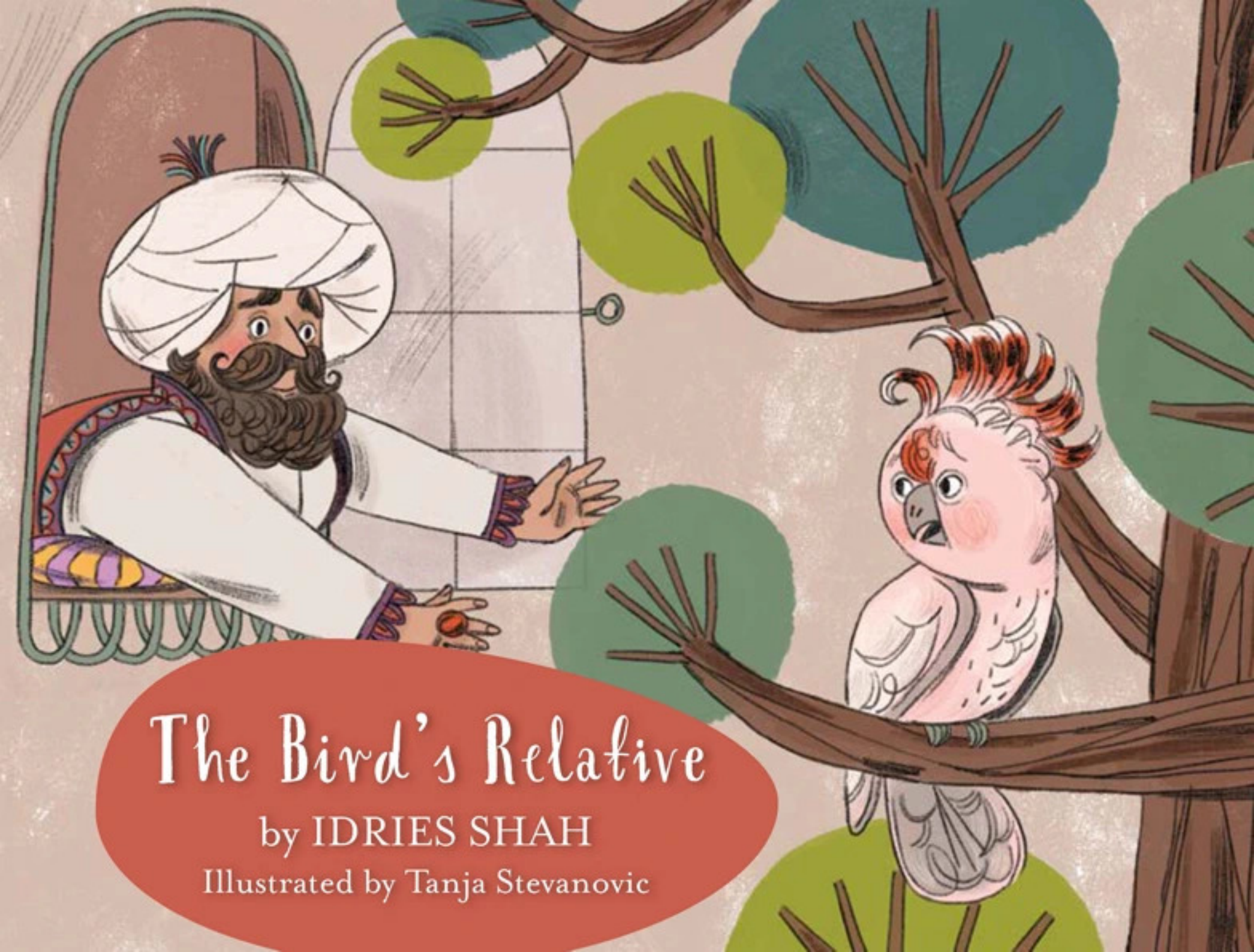


An illustration of a man with a large white turban and a dark beard, wearing a white robe with purple and gold trim, sitting on a green wicker chair. He is looking towards a cockatoo perched on a brown tree branch. The cockatoo has a pink body, a grey crest with orange and red feathers, and a grey beak. The background features stylized trees with green and blue foliage and a light beige wall with a small keyhole.

The Bird's Relative

by IDRIES SHAH

Illustrated by Tanja Stevanovic

There was once a rich merchant, whose prize possession was an extremely intelligent cockatoo.

The beautifully feathered bird occupied pride of place in the merchant's equally splendid house, where it was routinely shown off to guests of the highest social standing.

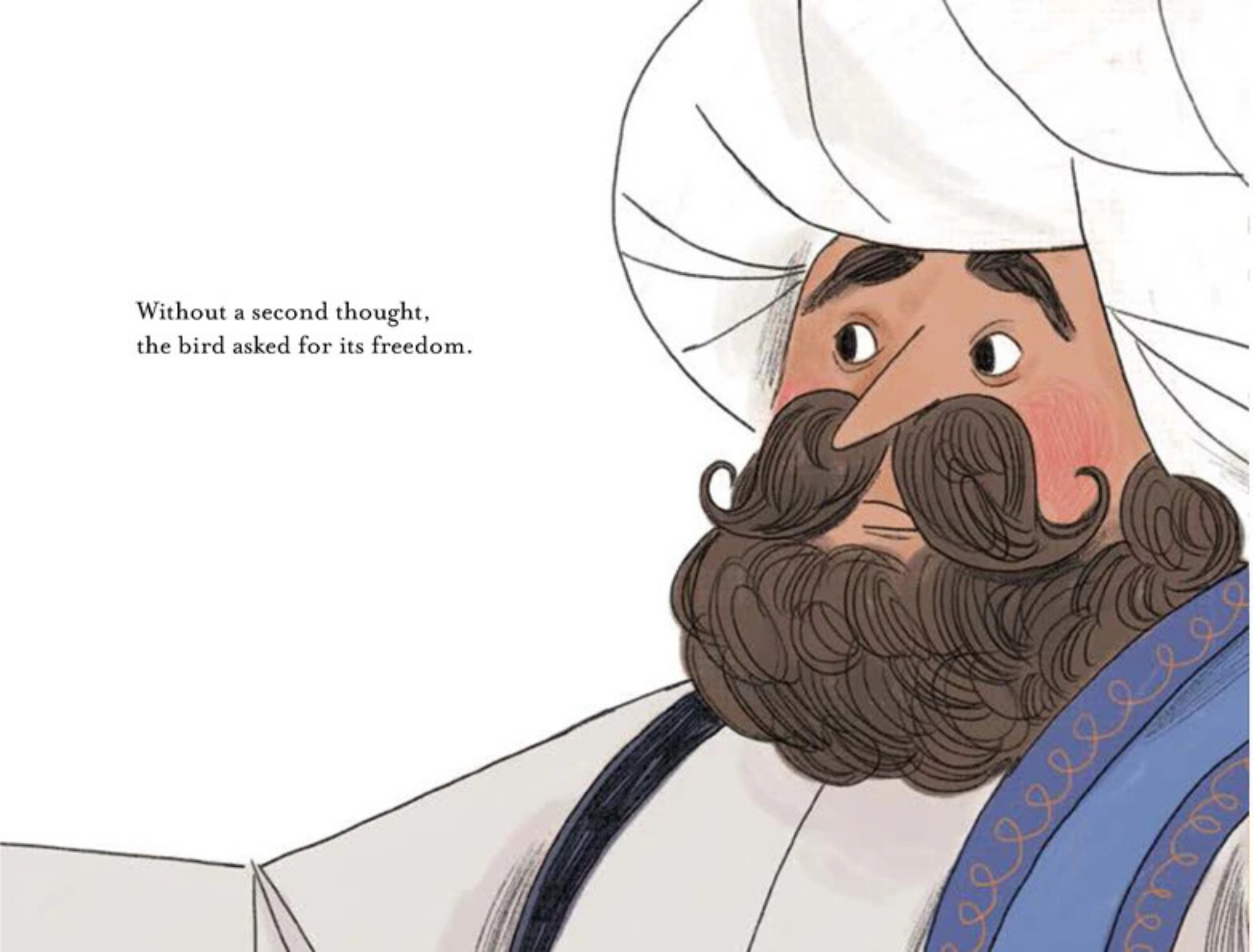


One day, when the man was about to embark
on an overseas trip, he said to the bird,

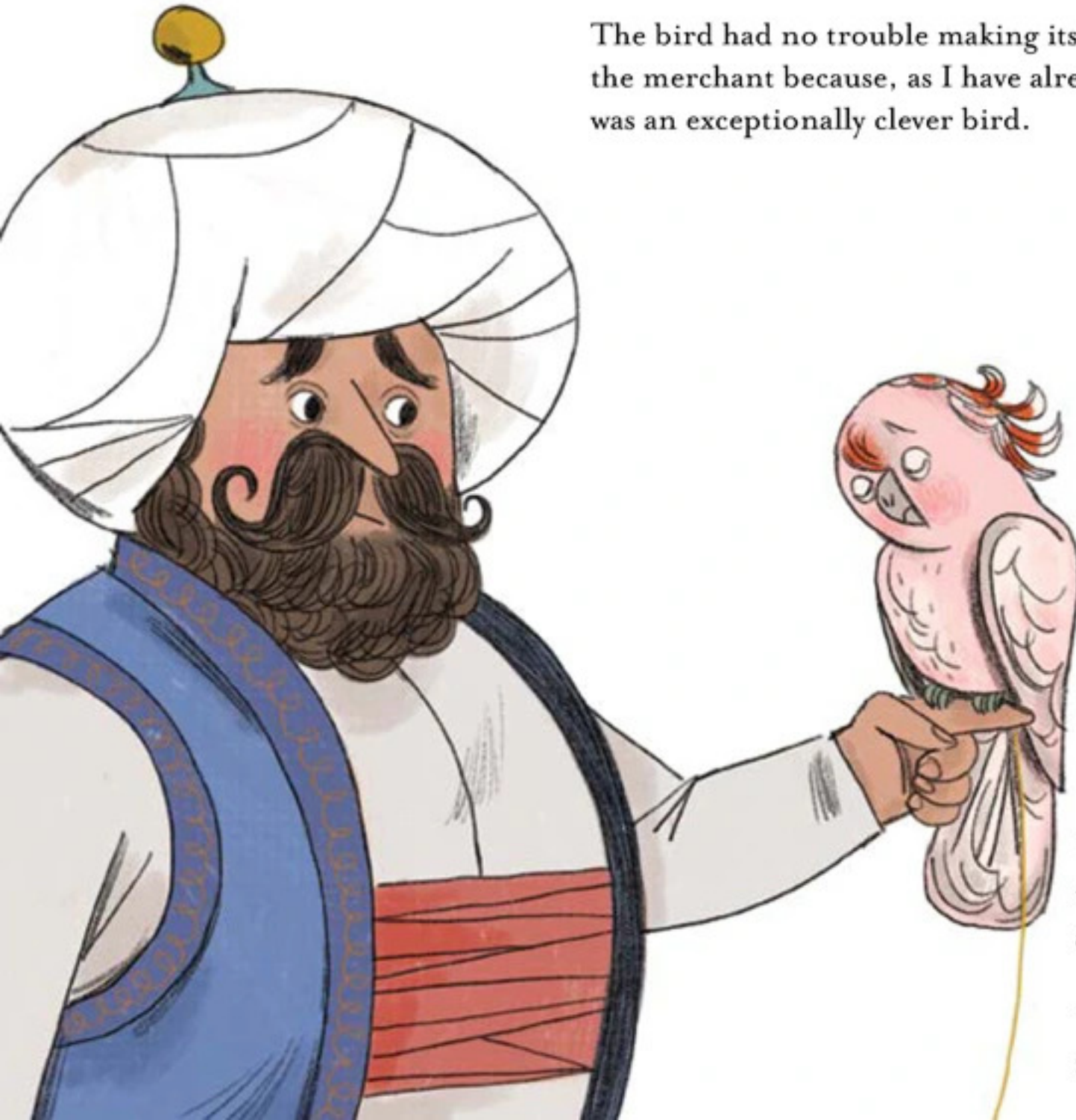
"In this upcoming voyage I will be visiting your
hometown. Is there anything that I can bring
back for you?"



Without a second thought,
the bird asked for its freedom.



The bird had no trouble making itself understood to the merchant because, as I have already explained, it was an exceptionally clever bird.



"I simply couldn't bear to live without you," said the merchant.

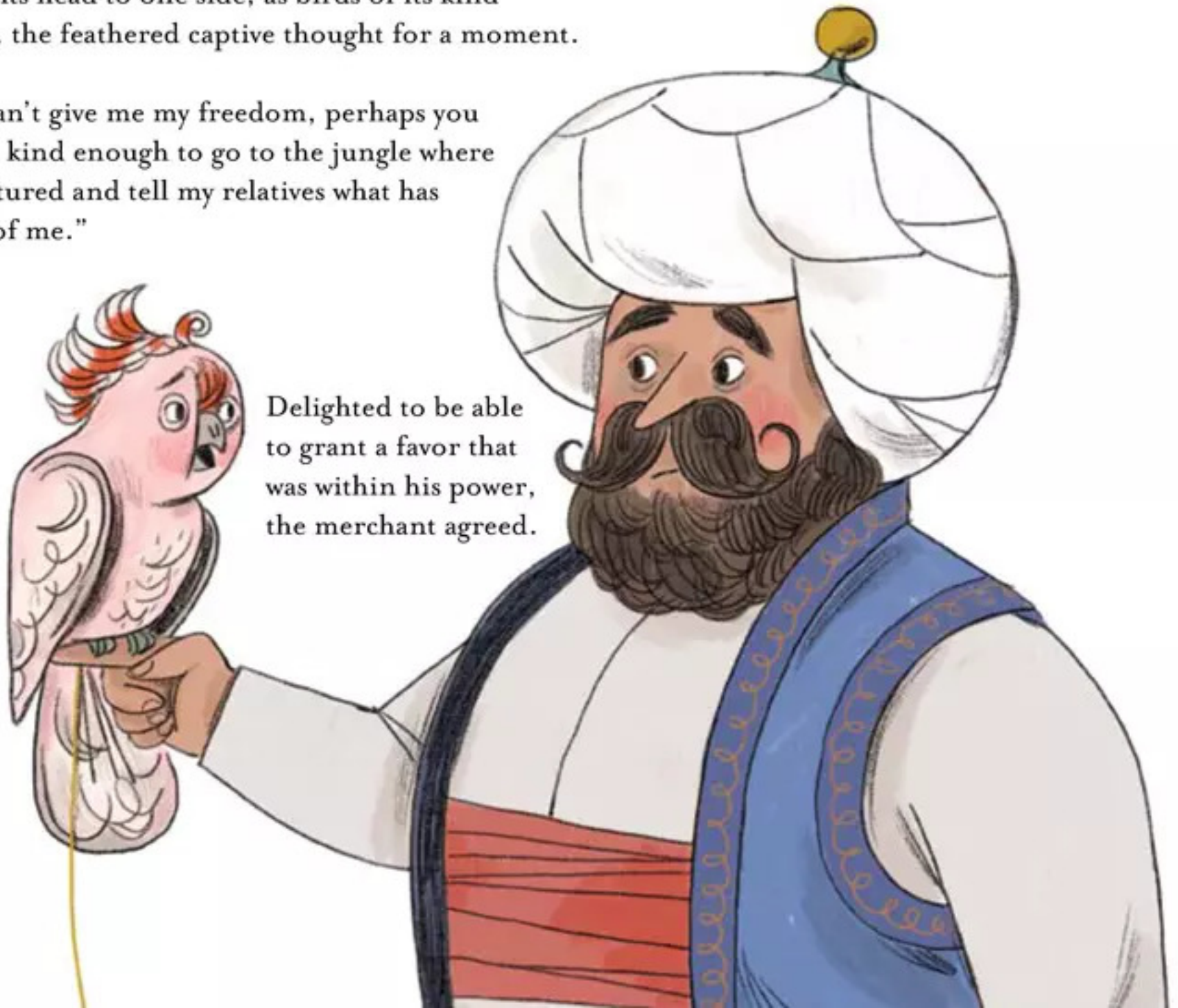
"So please ask me for another favor.

Cocking its head to one side, as birds of its kind often do, the feathered captive thought for a moment.

"If you can't give me my freedom, perhaps you would be kind enough to go to the jungle where I was captured and tell my relatives what has become of me."



Delighted to be able to grant a favor that was within his power, the merchant agreed.





And sure enough, after a lengthy sea voyage . . .







A wealthy merchant's prize possession is a beautiful bird. Believing that he loves the exotic creature too much to set it free, the merchant discovers that animals are sometimes better at learning by example than humans.

This is one of a series of illustrated books for the young written by the Afghan philosopher and educator Idries Shah, whose collections of narratives and teaching stories have captivated the hearts and minds of people from all walks of life. It belongs to a rich storytelling tradition from Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Middle East that is more than 1000 years old.

These tales are more than entertaining; they are designed specifically to foster thinking skills and perception. They suggest in their structure and in the movement of their characters ways of looking at difficulties that can help solve problems. Children will learn that it is good to observe others in order to learn and that sometimes the actions of others are not all that they first seem to be.

"A child may simply enjoy hearing them; an adult may analyze them in a more sophisticated way. Both may eventually benefit from the lessons within."

All Things Considered, NPR News, Washington.

