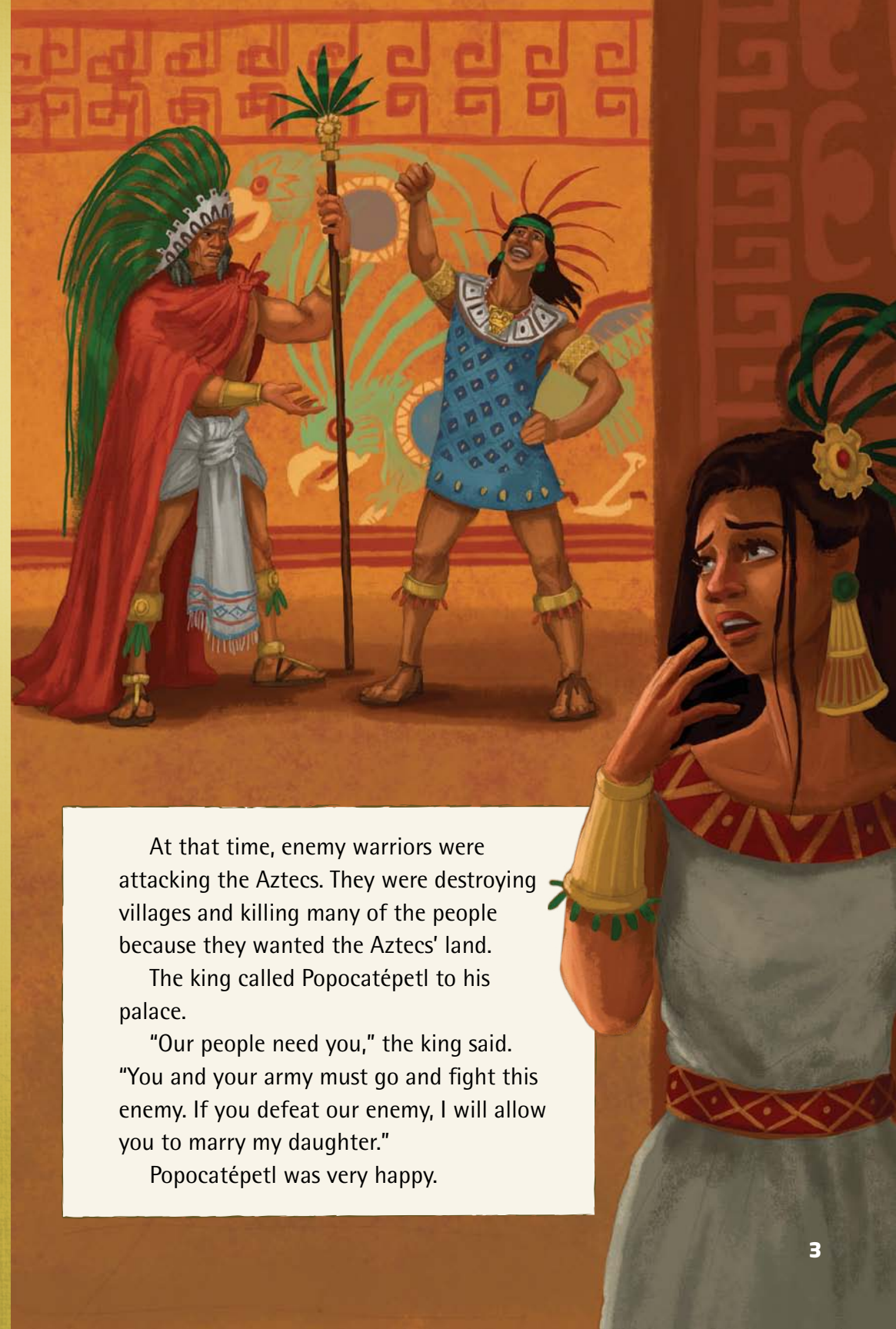


Long ago in Mexico, a great Aztec king had a daughter named Iztaccíhuatl. Iztaccíhuatl was a wonderful young woman. She was smart, kind, and very beautiful. All the greatest Aztec warriors wanted to marry her.

But Iztaccíhuatl loved only one warrior. His name was Popocatépetl.

Popocatépetl was the greatest of all the Aztec warriors and the leader of the king's army.

Popocatépetl loved Iztaccíhuatl, too.



At that time, enemy warriors were attacking the Aztecs. They were destroying villages and killing many of the people because they wanted the Aztecs' land.

The king called Popocatépetl to his palace.

"Our people need you," the king said. "You and your army must go and fight this enemy. If you defeat our enemy, I will allow you to marry my daughter."

Popocatépetl was very happy.

Facts About Volcanoes

A volcano is an opening in the Earth's crust through which gas, ash, and hot, melted rock explode. A volcano starts to develop deep beneath the Earth's surface where it is very hot. The heat melts the rock inside the earth. This rock, or magma, rises and blasts out of the ground where it is then called lava. The lava and ash form a mountain around the opening.

A Powerful Force

Volcanoes are one of Earth's most powerful forces. They can shoot lava over 15 meters (about 50 feet) into the air. Lava can reach 1,250 degrees Celsius (2,000 degrees Fahrenheit) and can burn everything in its path, destroying forests and burying cities. But volcanoes can also create new land, and their ash helps keep soil healthy.



Famous Volcanoes

Today about 1,500 volcanoes on Earth are considered active. Each year about 70 eruptions occur around the world.

Mauna Loa in Hawaii is the world's largest active volcano. More than 97 kilometers (60 miles) wide, it has erupted many times over the past 170 years and could begin to roar again any minute.

Kilauea, also in Hawaii, may be the world's most active volcano. It has been erupting nonstop since January 3, 1983.

Krakatau in Indonesia had one of the biggest and loudest eruptions in history in 1883. It has been quiet for years, but no one knows if it will explode again.