The Princess' Choice

By Francisco Ruesta

This tale I am about to tell you is a love story that happened some time ago in a great kingdom. In this kingdom, there was a castle with really high towers, knights with swords and spears, a couple of dragons, some jesters and jugglers to entertain the crowds on Saturdays, a witch who lived deep in the woods, a very wise king, and his beautiful daughter, the princess.

The king had ruled for many years and lived many incredible adventures: like that time he defeated the dangerous giant by hitting him three times over the head with a pillow, or when he had his bathtub filled with strawberry jelly so that he could savour it every time he went under to rinse the soap on his head.

As I said, this king was very wise, and he knew that soon he would be too old to rule. It was time for his daughter to take over the throne, and ideally, she should have somebody to accompany her in that hard task.

The trouble was, the princess was very shy and it was hard for her to talk to strangers; so, meeting a partner would not be easy at all.

They thought of searching on the Internet but, apparently, it had not been invented yet. So, they decided to do it the way it was customary back then: from the top of a tall tower, up on a little stool, microphone in hand, the king proclaimed that whoever won his daughter's heart would inherit the whole kingdom — obviously, with the exception of his wooden toys collection, which was, together with his daughter, his most cherished treasure.

And overnight the kingdom was crowded with princes and knights who had travelled from the oddest places, such as the Prince of Caracatchoo, who always

introduced himself only to be told "Bless you!", or the Prince Wilfred of Broccoli, who was said to smell bad but have great taste.

Suitors came and went, but the princess refused them over and over again. They all seemed to her to be very boring and only interested in her father's inheritance.

Ching Choo Chuang presented her with the most beautiful fabrics brought from China; Lionel De Richie, with a white piano covered in black chocolate; and there was even a suitor who gave her a vanilla ice-cream cone, which was worth millions at that time of night.

At last, one day, a young maiden came in front of the princess and sang to her in sweet rhymes:

"Dearest princess of worthy lineage,

From far I have come bearing this message,

I care not for your kingdom, or its worth in gold,

I just offer my shoulder, my heart and my soul."

When she heard this song, the princess fell helplessly in love with such tender words, and she knew at once that the maiden would make her very happy.

As soon as she could get away from the rest of the suitors, she went to her father and told him that the search was over: her chosen partner was the maiden. But the king was not so comfortable with her decision:

"My dear daughter, what will people say? How could it be, a kingdom with two queens? You will be the talk of the town. Are you willing to put up with it all?"

The princess looked at the king and remained silent for a few moments.