



Lily Bell



WORTHY OF LOVE

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This book is dedicated to my Oma,
whose heart is forever knitted to mine.
A woman of quiet strength and endless grace,
whose soft hands covered me in love.



Chapter 1

Silver Lining

Nestled inside a warm and cozy nest made of twigs and straw, tucked away in a weathered old pine tree, rested a frail, yet determined, dove named Lily Bell.

Lily Bell was simply beautiful. She had a silky, pearl-grey body adorned with black and white feathers. Her wings, with a hidden silver lining, captivated the soul. Lily Bell gracefully wore a garland of sunshine petals around her delicate neck, which reflected the beauty and splendor of her blue shadowed eyes.

Lily Bell spent much of her time perched in her nest, peering at the wondrous forest below. You see, Lily Bell was born with two broken wings and two broken legs. She could not fly. In fact, she could not do much at all without the help of others.



While resting her aching body, Lily Bell often dreamt about stretching her broken wings and flying to a faraway land. She imagined soaring above the clouds, twirling and looping, running and climbing, but most of all, she dreamt about finding a friend.

Oftentimes, the other animals chose not to play with her or invite her places because she was different from them. Some would point and ask, "What's wrong with her?" Some would awkwardly stare and loudly whisper. Some would just ignore her and pretend she was not even there. All of it hurt.



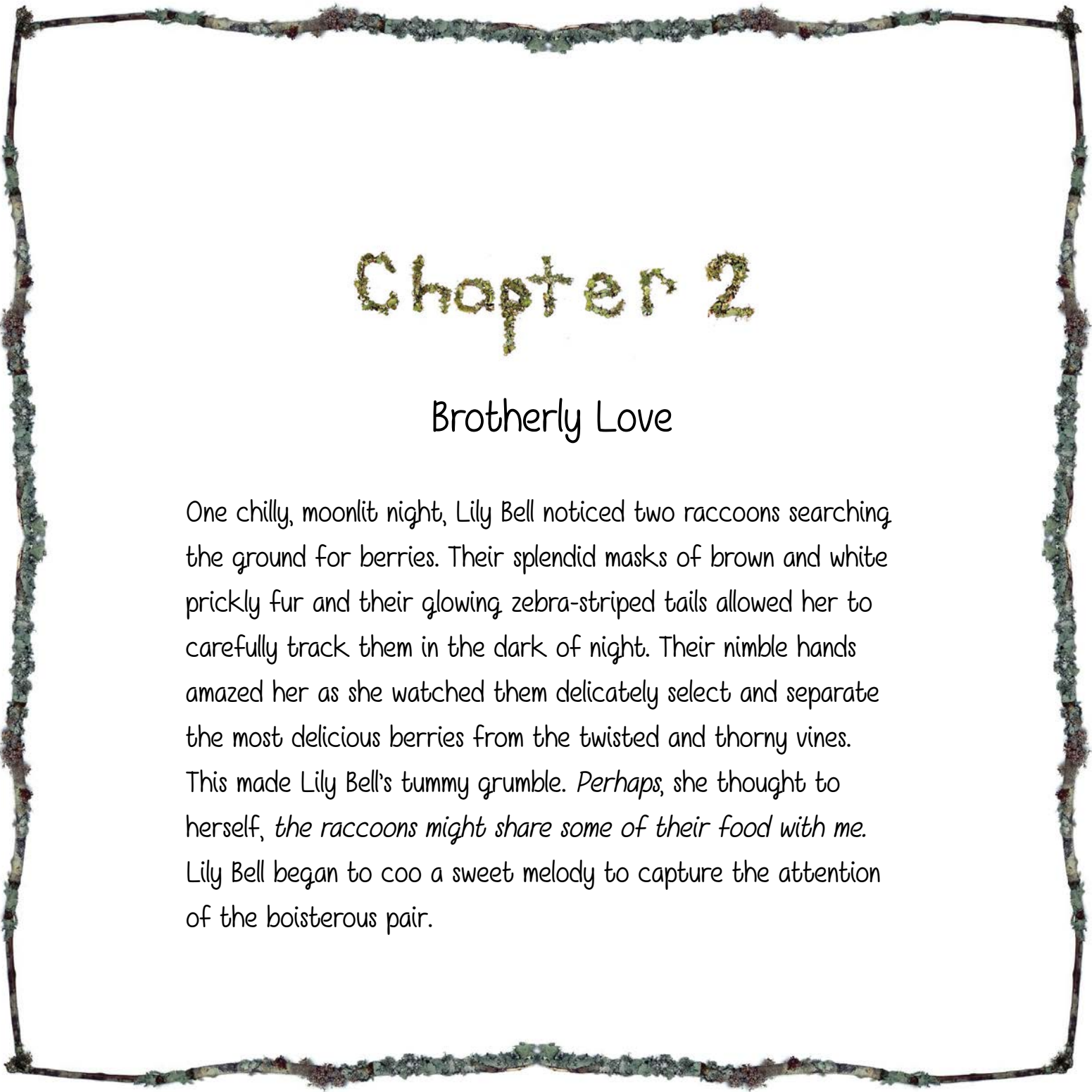
Lily Bell's mother and father loved her unconditionally and cared for her every need. Because Lily Bell could not fly or walk, she was not able to find food on her own, so she drank milk from her mother and ate crumbled seeds from inside her father's mouth.



Lily Bell's father was a kind and brave bird. He tried to protect her from the predators of the forest by shielding her under the shadows of his silver wings. Lily Bell cherished the warmth and love from her family, yet she sadly longed for more.







Chapter 2

Brotherly Love

One chilly, moonlit night, Lily Bell noticed two raccoons searching the ground for berries. Their splendid masks of brown and white prickly fur and their glowing zebra-striped tails allowed her to carefully track them in the dark of night. Their nimble hands amazed her as she watched them delicately select and separate the most delicious berries from the twisted and thorny vines. This made Lily Bell's tummy grumble. *Perhaps, she thought to herself, the raccoons might share some of their food with me.* Lily Bell began to coo a sweet melody to capture the attention of the boisterous pair.



The sweet sound made the raccoons' ears twitch. They traced the beautiful song to the weathered old pine tree above, where sat a magnificent silver dove.

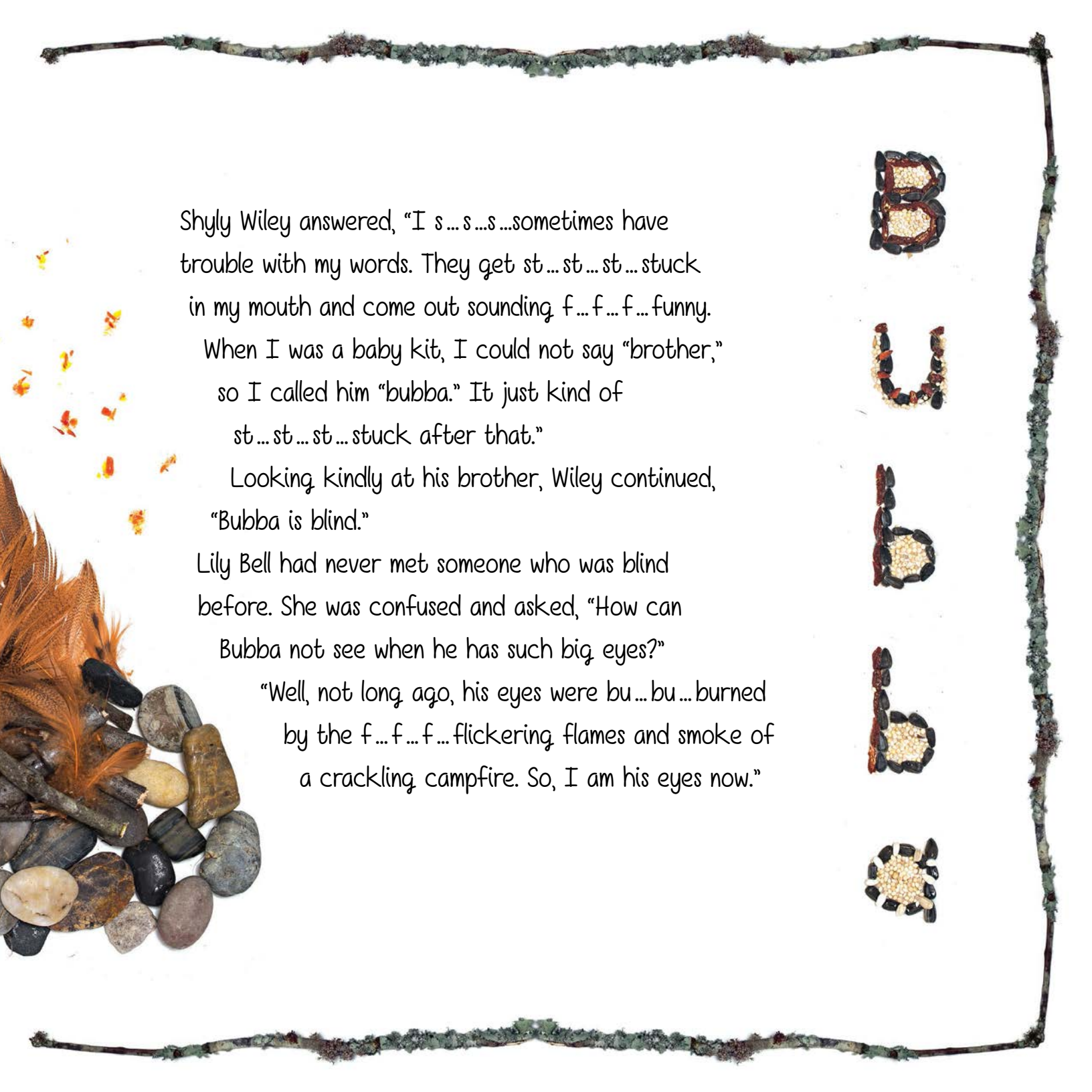
"H...h...h...h... hello there, little dove," whispered the young kit. The older raccoon seemed to just stare ahead.

"Hello, my name is Lily Bell," she replied in a soft voice so as to not wake up her parents. "What are your names?"

"They c...c...call me Wiley and this is my b...b...big brother, Bubba."

"Oh, that's a funny name, Bubba. How did he get that name?" asked Lily Bell.





Shly Wiley answered, "I s...s...s...sometimes have trouble with my words. They get st...st...st...stuck in my mouth and come out sounding f...f...f...funny. When I was a baby kit, I could not say "brother," so I called him "bubba." It just kind of st...st...st...stuck after that."

Looking kindly at his brother, Wiley continued, "Bubba is blind."

Lily Bell had never met someone who was blind before. She was confused and asked, "How can Bubba not see when he has such big eyes?"

"Well, not long ago, his eyes were bu...bu...burned by the f...f...f...flickering flames and smoke of a crackling campfire. So, I am his eyes now."



Lily Bell's heart was touched by their brotherly love. She did not have a brother or sister and often wondered what it would be like to laugh and play with someone else.

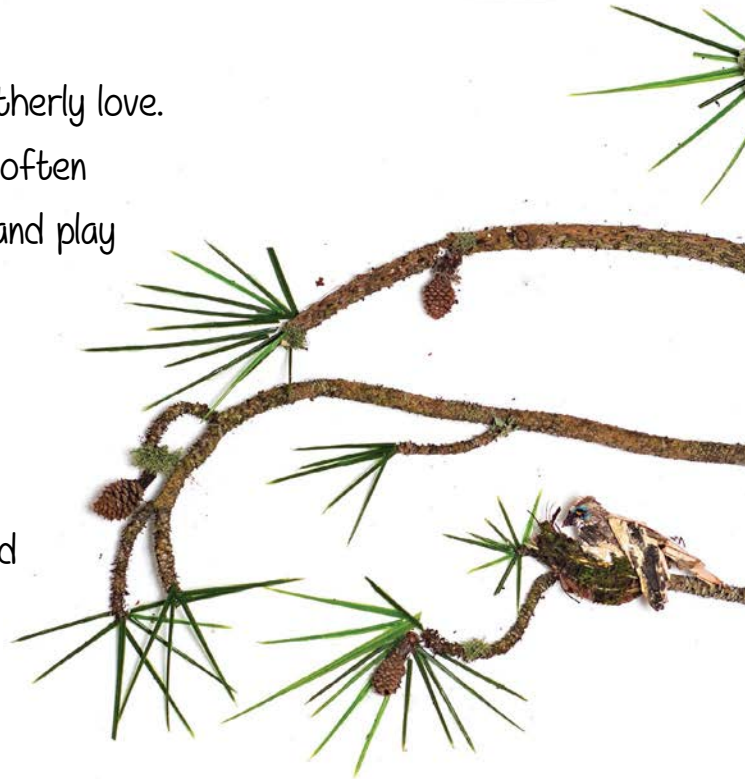
"Would you like to fly down and play with us?" invited Bubba.

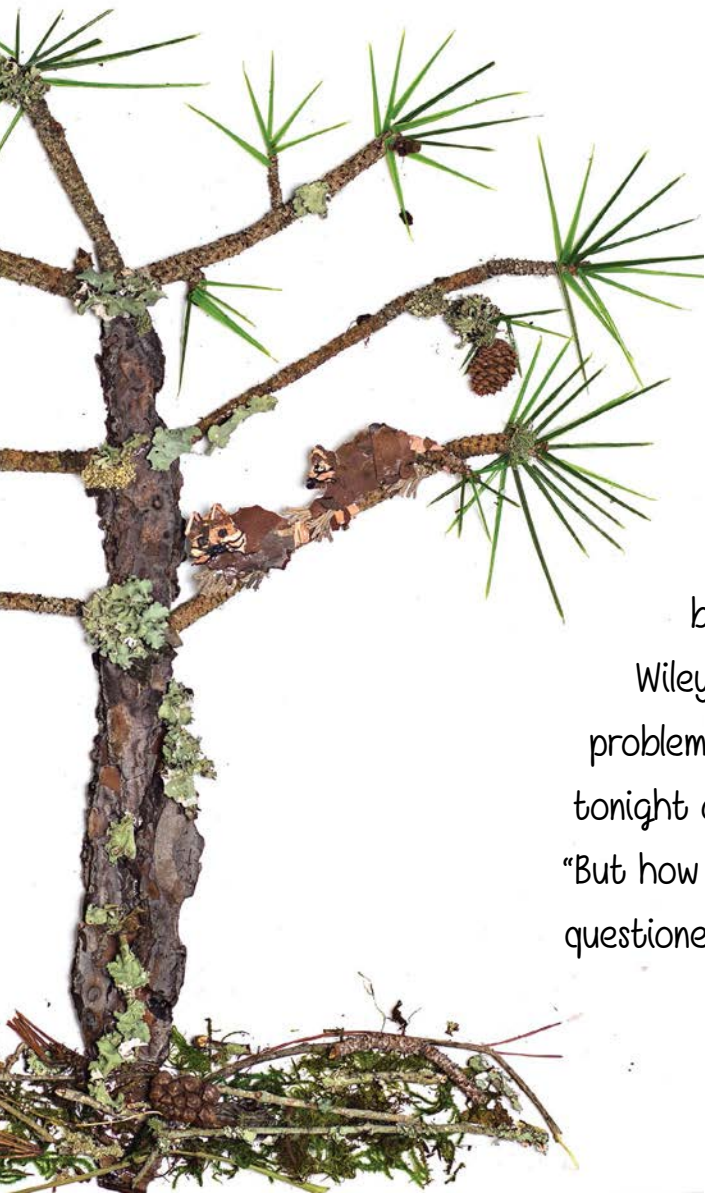
Lily Bell's eyes dimmed.

Even though Bubba could not see, he could sense that something troubled the little bird. "What is it Lily Bell?" Bubba gently asked.

"Well, I am unable to fly."

"How can you not fly when you have such magnificent wings?" questioned Wiley.





"My wings are broken," Lily Bell replied.

"Oh, then we must come up to you, my little friend," insisted Wiley.

With Bubba holding firmly to Wiley's tail, the two brothers carefully climbed to Lily Bell's nest at the top of the old pine tree.

"W...well, here we are. We made it!" Wiley exclaimed while kindly offering some berries to Lily Bell.

Wiley, who was full of ideas and constantly solving problems, suggested, "You must c...c...c...come with us tonight on our adventure through the f...f...f...forest." "But how can I? I cannot move from my nest," questioned Lily Bell.

"We can do it together. We can lead you through the darkness. I can carefully place you upon my bu...bu...brother's strong back, and you and Bubba can hold on to me as we c...c...c...climb down the tree. We will be your wings. We will fly for you."

Lily Bell did not want to leave her mother and father, but she knew in her heart she must find her own way. Frightened and excited, Lily Bell began her journey with the help of her two unexpected and unlikely friends to the faraway land.



Chapter 3

The Journey

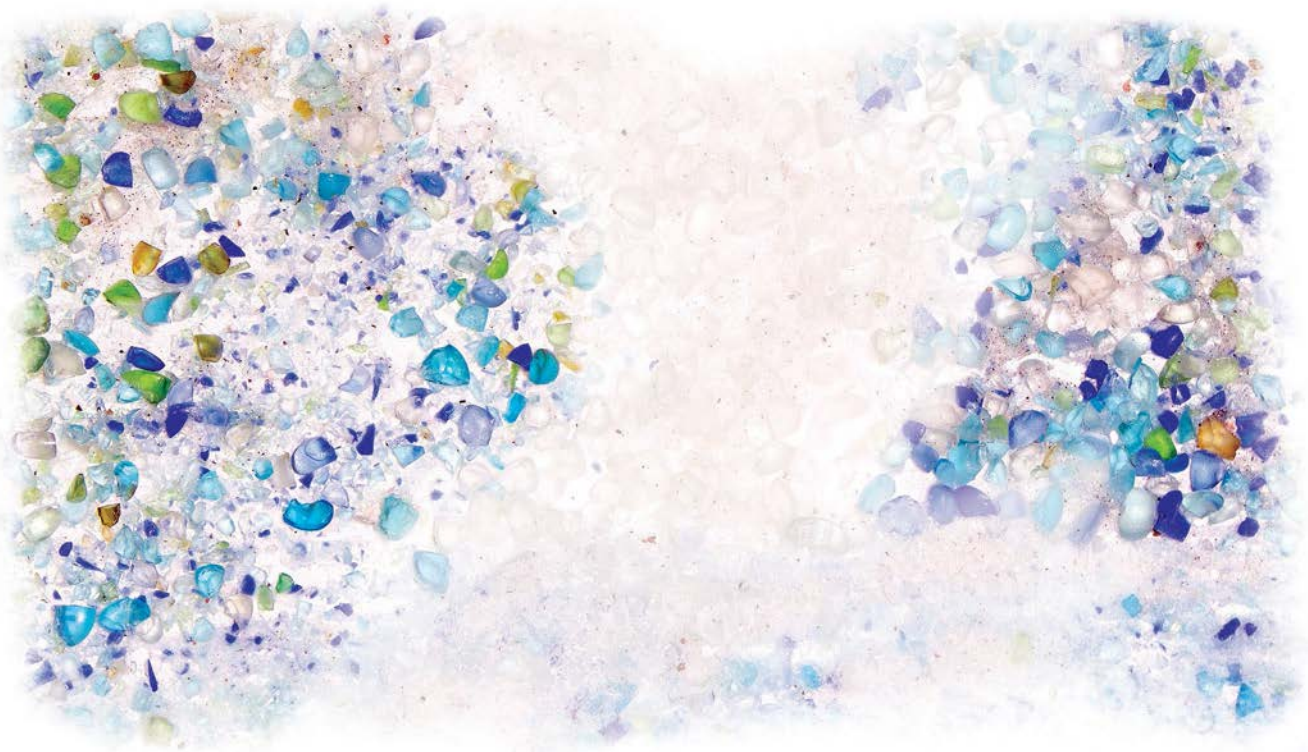
It was not easy. Lily Bell's wings had to stretch and move in ways that brought her newfound pain; however, she pressed on. At the base of the weathered old pine tree, Lily Bell looked up and felt proud. With the help of her new friends, she did it!

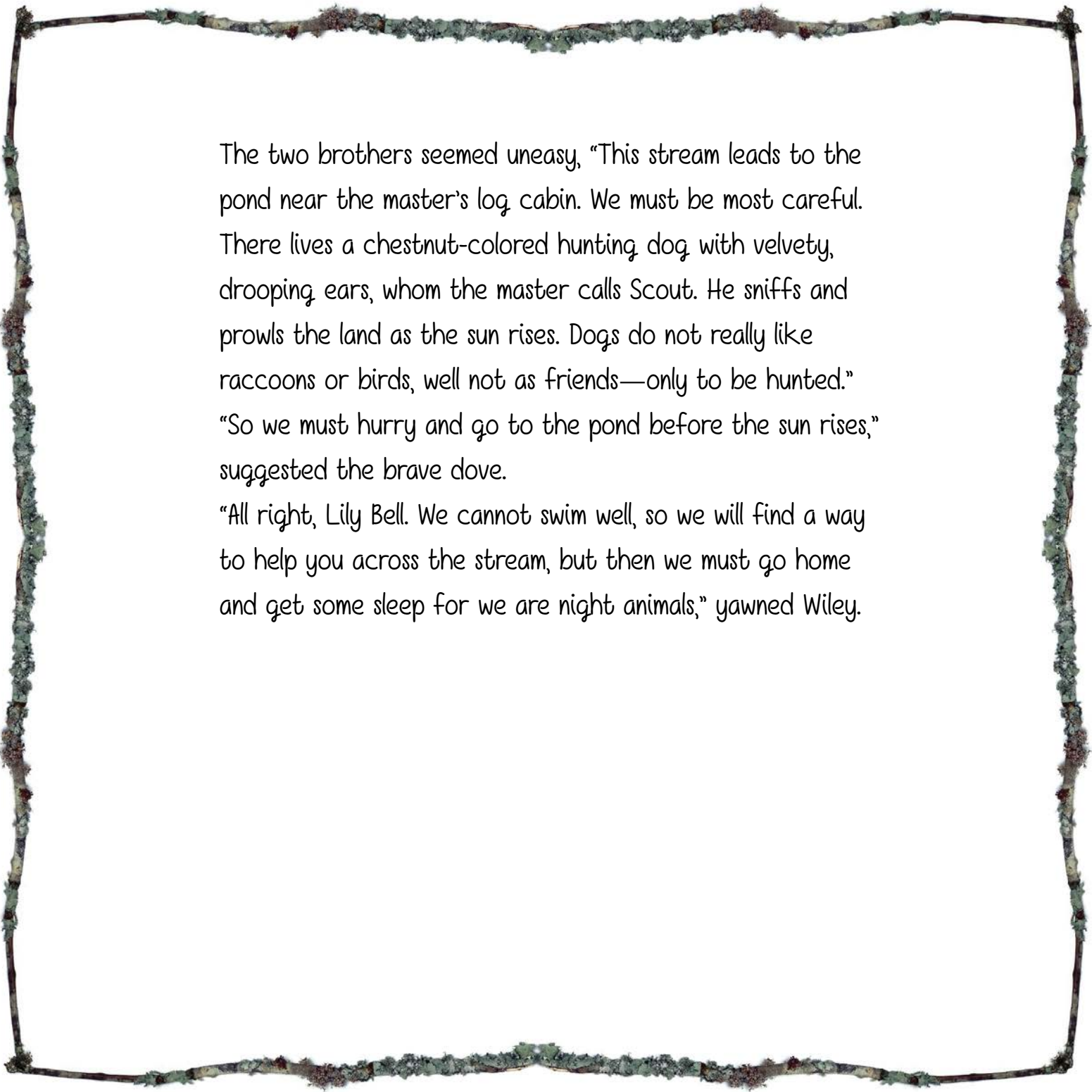
"Onward we must go!" she charged.

"Where can we take you?" asked the kindhearted brothers.



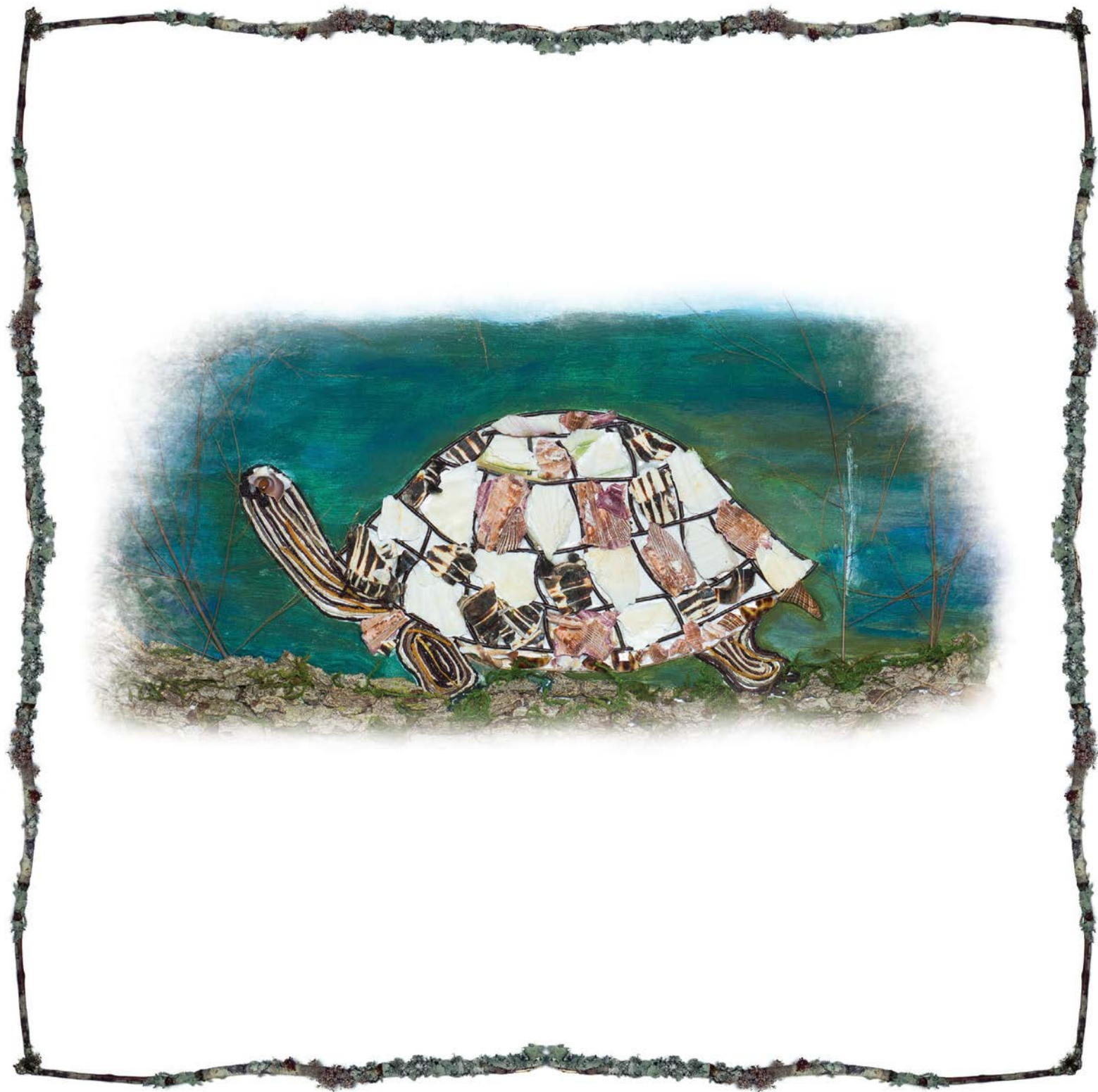
"My mother tells me that when she forages for food while flying high above the blue skies of the forest, she sees her reflection in the glistening pond below. She says the brilliant sunbeams bounce off the water and shine like diamonds, and in the streams there are frolicking fish swimming in the perfect rhythm of a symphony. I have often dreamt about seeing these wonders with my very own eyes."

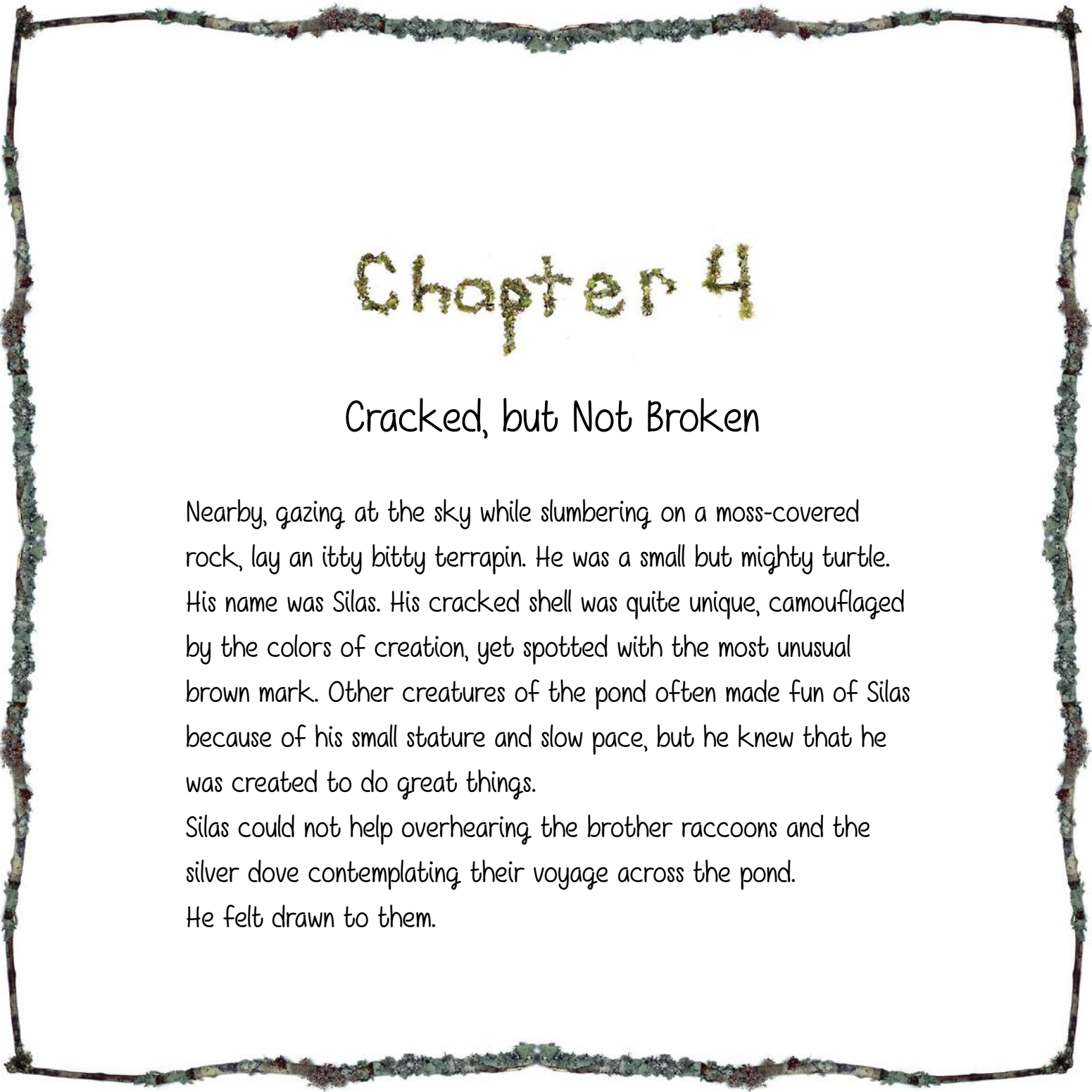




The two brothers seemed uneasy, "This stream leads to the pond near the master's log cabin. We must be most careful. There lives a chestnut-colored hunting dog with velvety, drooping ears, whom the master calls Scout. He sniffs and prowls the land as the sun rises. Dogs do not really like raccoons or birds, well not as friends—only to be hunted." "So we must hurry and go to the pond before the sun rises," suggested the brave dove.

"All right, Lily Bell. We cannot swim well, so we will find a way to help you across the stream, but then we must go home and get some sleep for we are night animals," yawned Wiley.





Chapter 4

Cracked, but Not Broken

Nearby, gazing at the sky while slumbering on a moss-covered rock, lay an itty bitty terrapin. He was a small but mighty turtle. His name was Silas. His cracked shell was quite unique, camouflaged by the colors of creation, yet spotted with the most unusual brown mark. Other creatures of the pond often made fun of Silas because of his small stature and slow pace, but he knew that he was created to do great things.

Silas could not help overhearing the brother raccoons and the silver dove contemplating their voyage across the pond. He felt drawn to them.



Sliding from his slippery slope, Silas quietly approached the trio. "Allow me to help you on your journey. My name is Silas. I can carry the beautiful bird upon my shell, swim down the stream, and cross the pond. I may be small but I am strong. My shell may be cracked and broken from the bite of a hungry bird, but I am not afraid of THIS beautiful bird. She has kind eyes. I give you my word that I will bring no harm to her," promised Silas.

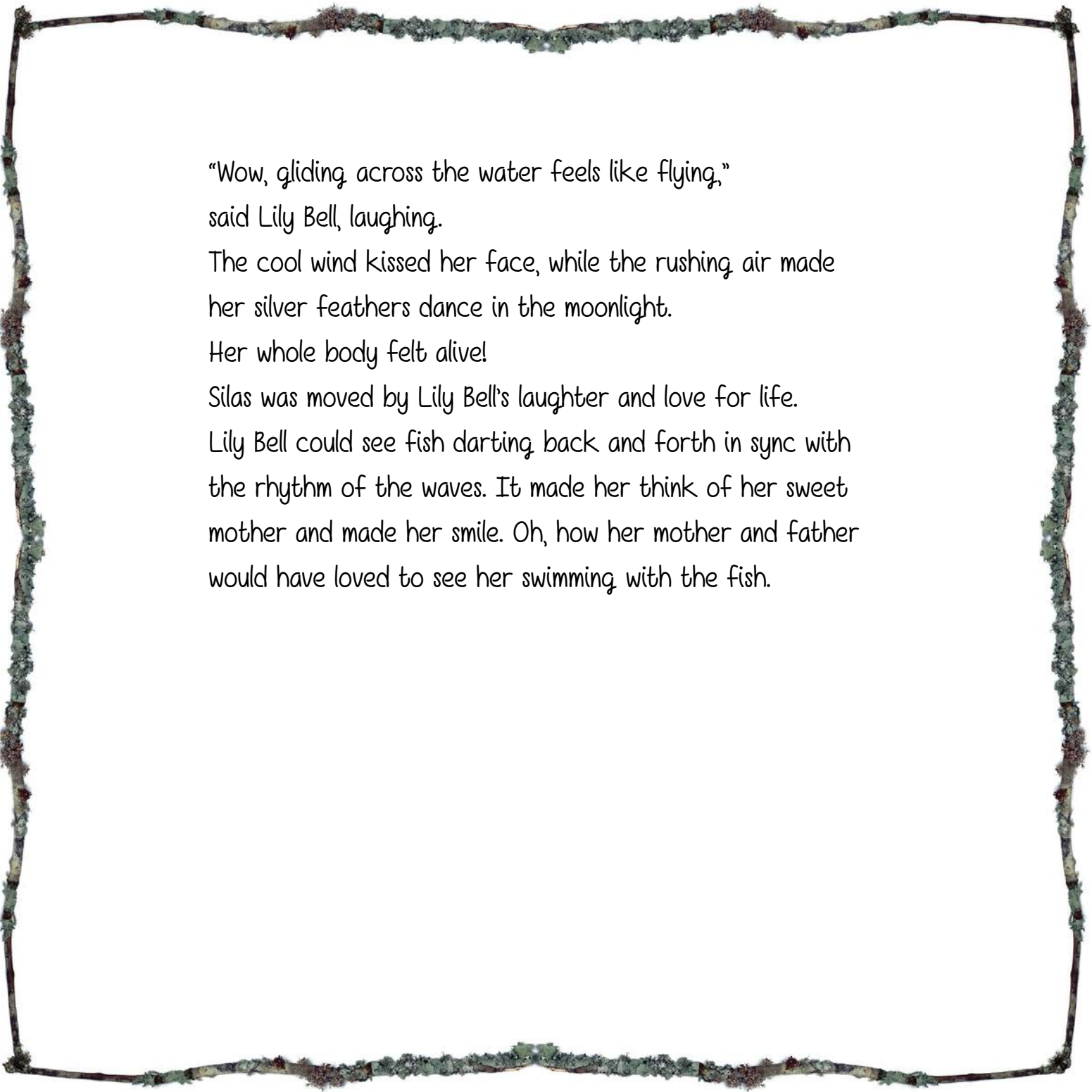
Lily Bell's heart was moved by his courage and kindness.

"Thank you, Silas. I trust you to help me."

With an approving nod from Lily Bell, Bubba and Wiley gently set the little dove safely upon the terrapin's shell. They knitted Silas and Lily Bell together with reeds from the pond and gave them a gentle push off the shallow shore and a friendly farewell wave. It felt good to help.

Off they went, slow and steady, peacefully floating through the cool crisp water. For the first time, Lily Bell caught a reflection of herself in the clear water. Her mother and father often told her how beautiful and special she was, but she doubted it. That night, something changed. Lily Bell saw herself through clearer eyes and a more open heart. She realized that she truly WAS beautifully and wonderfully made.





"Wow, gliding across the water feels like flying,"
said Lily Bell, laughing.

The cool wind kissed her face, while the rushing air made
her silver feathers dance in the moonlight.

Her whole body felt alive!

Silas was moved by Lily Bell's laughter and love for life.

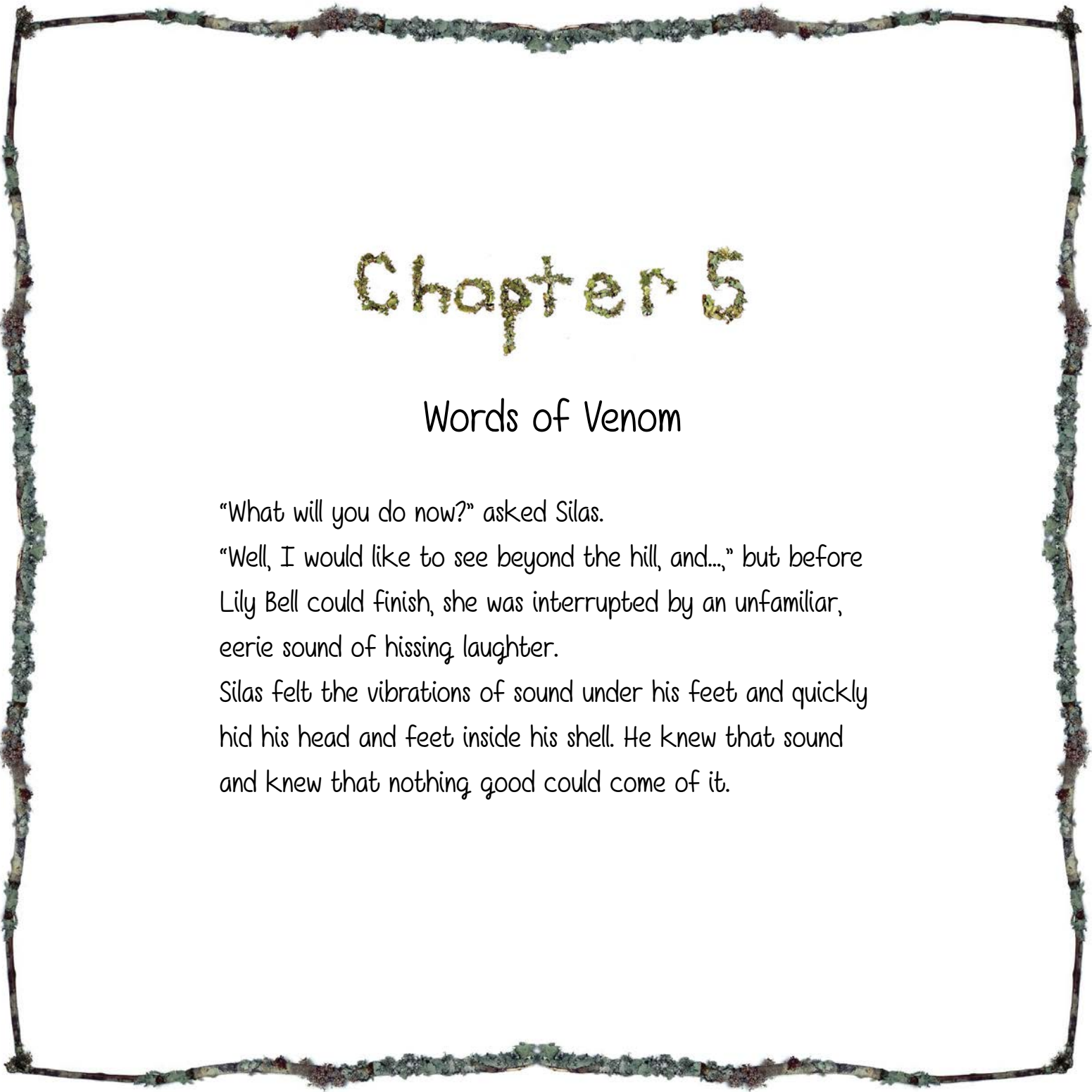
Lily Bell could see fish darting back and forth in sync with
the rhythm of the waves. It made her think of her sweet
mother and made her smile. Oh, how her mother and father
would have loved to see her swimming with the fish.

When they safely landed on the bank, Silas wriggled his body, loosening the reeds that bound them together. Lily Bell carefully shuffled down Silas's shell and onto dry ground.

"Safe and sound, my beautiful friend," said Silas, proudly. It felt good to help.







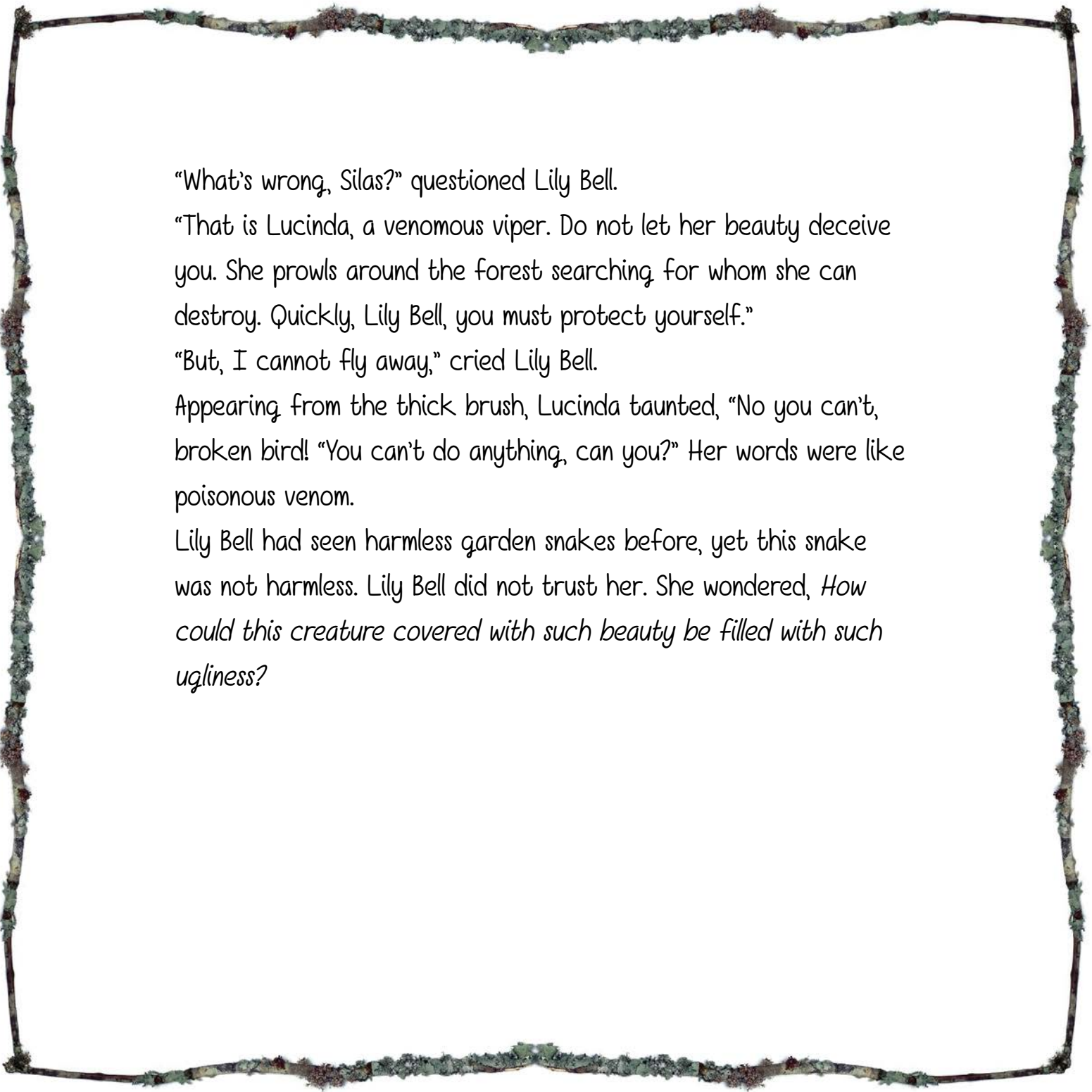
Chapter 5

Words of Venom

"What will you do now?" asked Silas.

"Well, I would like to see beyond the hill, and..." but before Lily Bell could finish, she was interrupted by an unfamiliar, eerie sound of hissing laughter.

Silas felt the vibrations of sound under his feet and quickly hid his head and feet inside his shell. He knew that sound and knew that nothing good could come of it.



"What's wrong, Silas?" questioned Lily Bell.

"That is Lucinda, a venomous viper. Do not let her beauty deceive you. She prowls around the forest searching for whom she can destroy. Quickly, Lily Bell, you must protect yourself."

"But, I cannot fly away," cried Lily Bell.

Appearing from the thick brush, Lucinda taunted, "No you can't, broken bird! "You can't do anything, can you?" Her words were like poisonous venom.

Lily Bell had seen harmless garden snakes before, yet this snake was not harmless. Lily Bell did not trust her. She wondered, *How could this creature covered with such beauty be filled with such ugliness?*

Lucinda swayed her sleek and smooth body across the damp and murky ground. "I have been following you, that blind raccoon, the one who stutters, and that odd little turtle with a cracked shell. All broken. All weak. All worthless."



WORTHY

Lily Bell felt wounded by Lucinda's mean words, but she knew in her heart that Lucinda did not speak the truth. Surprisingly, she was not afraid. A brave confidence rose up inside of Lily Bell. She faced the accusing viper, fixed her eyes on Lucinda, and declared, "It is true our bodies are broken, our eyes blinded, and our tongues tied, but our hearts can love deeply, our eyes can see true beauty, our words can speak kindly, and our bodies can carry the burdens of others. We ARE worthy, Lucinda, worthy of love."



OF LOVE

These words deeply angered the accuser, and she hissed loudly at Lily Bell. She wanted to frighten and embarrass the young bird, but instead Lily Bell pitied her. "Lucinda, how can you not love when you have been given a heart? You have allowed your heart to turn to stone, your words to turn to poison, and your love to turn to hate. You are angry and alone. There is a better way. Let us help you."



These words pierced Lucinda like a sharp arrow. "Help me?
You are helpless! I AM better than everyone. Look at me!
I am more beautiful, stronger, tougher, smarter, and faster.
I don't need ANYONE or ANYTHING. You just watch!" And with that
she charged toward Lily Bell, but was unexpectedly startled by a
ground-shaking, bellowing bark.



Suddenly, standing protectively over the frail little dove was a growling, copper-faced dog. His tail alert, front paw pointed, and hazel eyes focused directly on the bullying serpent. Lucinda had bitten many unsuspecting hunting dogs in the forest before. This dog was not going to stop her! The serpent coiled and positioned herself to attack. Full of pride. Full of poison. Full of herself.



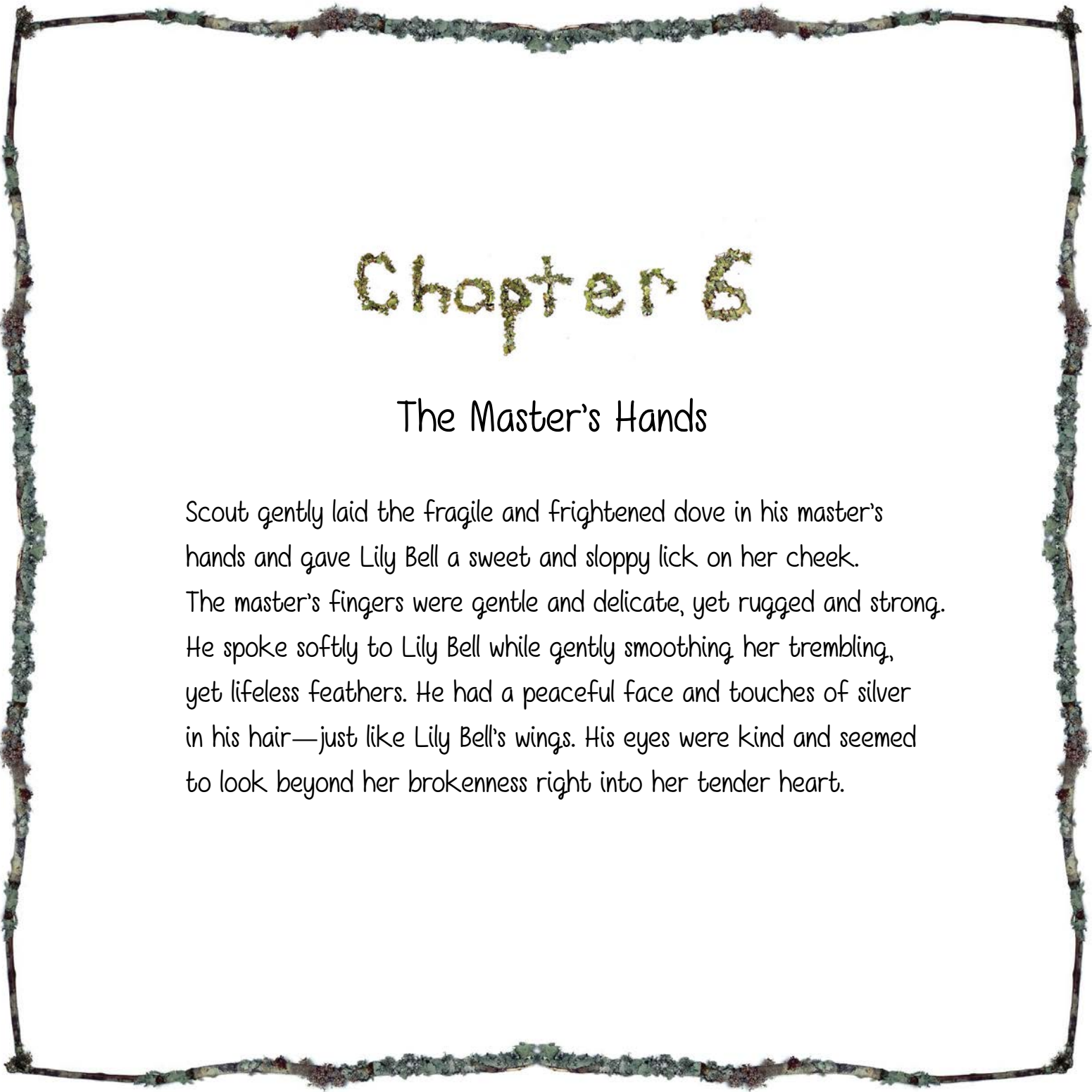
Lily Bell wondered if this could be Scout, the master's hunting dog, who Wiley and Bubba had warned her about. Again, Scout snarled angrily and flashed his jagged teeth at the menacing snake. However, as Lucinda lunged toward them to strike, she accidentally fell between the rocks. Without delay, Scout trampled upon the serpent and swiftly scooped up Lily Bell gently in his mouth and ran as fast as his legs could carry him up the narrow path.



Lily Bell was afraid. What would happen next? Why was this hunting dog risking his own life to help her? Her limp body was jostled up and down as Scout ran through the field. She could feel that his teeth were sharp, yet, surprisingly, they were carefully and ever so gently wrapped around her wings, so as to not harm her. Scout pushed his way through the heavy brush until they finally made it to the top of the hill, where stood his master on the covered porch of the log cabin.







Chapter 6

The Master's Hands

Scout gently laid the fragile and frightened dove in his master's hands and gave Lily Bell a sweet and sloppy lick on her cheek. The master's fingers were gentle and delicate, yet rugged and strong. He spoke softly to Lily Bell while gently smoothing her trembling, yet lifeless feathers. He had a peaceful face and touches of silver in his hair—just like Lily Bell's wings. His eyes were kind and seemed to look beyond her brokenness right into her tender heart.



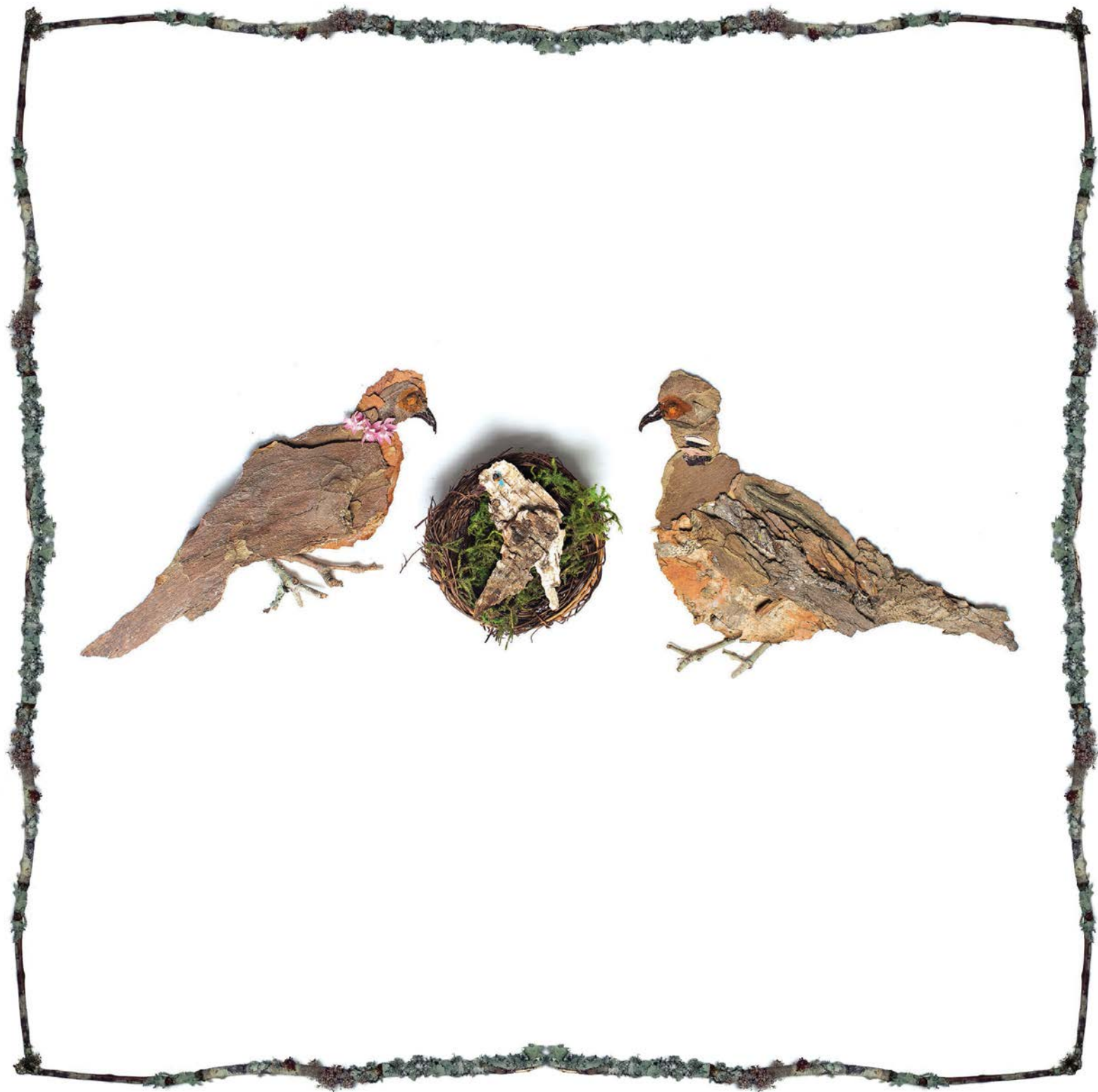
The master's touch felt as if warm honey was being poured all over her. She had never felt so at peace. This was the feeling she had been searching for all of her life. In his hands, she felt safe, she felt loved, and she felt unbroken.

The master carefully carried Lily Bell inside the log cabin and held her close to his heart near the warmth of the fire until morning had broken. As the sun's warmth began to kiss the ground, the master fed her seeds and berries from the garden. With each touch of his healing hands, Lily Bell felt refreshed and restored. With each tender word he whispered, she found comfort and rest for her soul.

Her longing for friendship and adventure had been fulfilled, yet now she longed for the familiar comfort of her own nest shared with her family. Somehow, the master keenly knew this. Without hesitation, he glanced at his clumsy copper-colored hound sitting faithfully at his feet and gave him a commanding whistle.

Scout delicately sniffed the little squab to collect her scent, and with that the threesome forged ahead. Leaving the log cabin behind, they paddled across the pond, waded up the stream, and walked through the woods until they halted at the base of a weathered old pine tree. Finally, Scout looked up at his master and barked with complete certainty.





Chapter 7

Home

"Well done, my good and faithful friend," said the master as he proudly patted Scout on the head. It felt good to help. The master carefully climbed the old pine tree, keeping Lily Bell close to his heart inside the warmth of his coat. There sat her mother and father faithfully perched in their nest awaiting their daughter's safe return. The master gently lifted Lily Bell's head, gazed deeply into her blue shadowed eyes, and said, "You are a masterpiece." He then carefully set Lily Bell down by her parents and smiled. Strangely, Lily Bell's parents did not seem surprised or afraid. They seemed to already know the master and trust him.

At last, Lily Bell was back home. It had been a wearisome journey, and her body longed for the stillness and warmth of her nest. Although tired, she also felt stronger, healthier, and hoping to do more on her own. She was thankful for the master's love and protection and her new friends. Lily Bell realized that it felt good to help and that she COULD do all of the things her friends could do after all, just in a different way.



She could climb, swim, fly, dance, run, and stand brave WITH the help of friends and family. Lily Bell had found what she was searching for on her journey. She had found her worth. Lily Bell now knew deep inside her heart that she was created for an important purpose and there was a special plan for her life. By overcoming her own struggles and fears, she could help others overcome. Through love and kindness, the weak hearted could be made strong and the lost could be found. This gave Lily Bell hope for her future. At peace, Lily Bell finally drifted off to sleep cuddled under the shadow of her father's wings.

H O P E

They
are



Lily Bell: Worthy of Love is timeless fable written for children yet touches the heart of all ages, especially those with special needs who long to be included. It is a story of a frail yet determined dove named Lily Bell who is unable to fly. With the help of her family and some unlikely friends, she journeys through the forest to finally find what she has been searching for: her purpose and worth. Lily Bell realizes that she can do all of the things she had hoped for, just in a different way.

We are all wonderfully made with a unique purpose and plan for our lives. Through our brokenness or "imperfections," we are able to help others. With the "perfect" self-image being projected on to today's generation, the story of *Lily Bell: Worthy of Love* is a heart-warming, uplifting, and relevant change that delivers a strong message of acceptance, friendship, and courage in a way that children will understand and adults will appreciate: we are all worthy of love.



AMANDA M. THACKERAY, PH.D., Author - was born and raised in Great Britain and spent each summer with her grandparents in the Netherlands. Her family later moved to the United States, where she became an early childhood educator while earning a masters and doctoral degree in Child Development and Family Relations. Amanda spent many years researching children's relationships with God, and later founded and directed a faith-based elementary school. After the arrival of her third son, Amanda was called back to the nest to homeschool her three little eggs. She is now teaching her little biddies to stretch their wings and fly as they embark on their own journey away from their nest.

Amanda and her husband, Dr. Jason Thackeray, live in Destin, Florida, with their three sons Houston "Bubba," Cade "Wiley," and Silas; their two dogs, Molly and Scout; and rabbit, Bambi.



MAIJA S. CAMPBELL, Illustrator - is a native of Kotka, Finland. Her rich Scandinavian heritage is found in her love for nature and creation. As an inquisitive child, Maija spent hours with her brother exploring the wonders of the woods, picking wild berries, and using sticks and stones to build make-believe houses. Maija continues to uncover newfound purpose for what is often overlooked or thrown away, finding beauty for ashes.

Maija currently teaches and directs a faith-based preschool program in Destin, Florida.



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