

LUFTING

Kyveli Papaioannou



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Illustration:

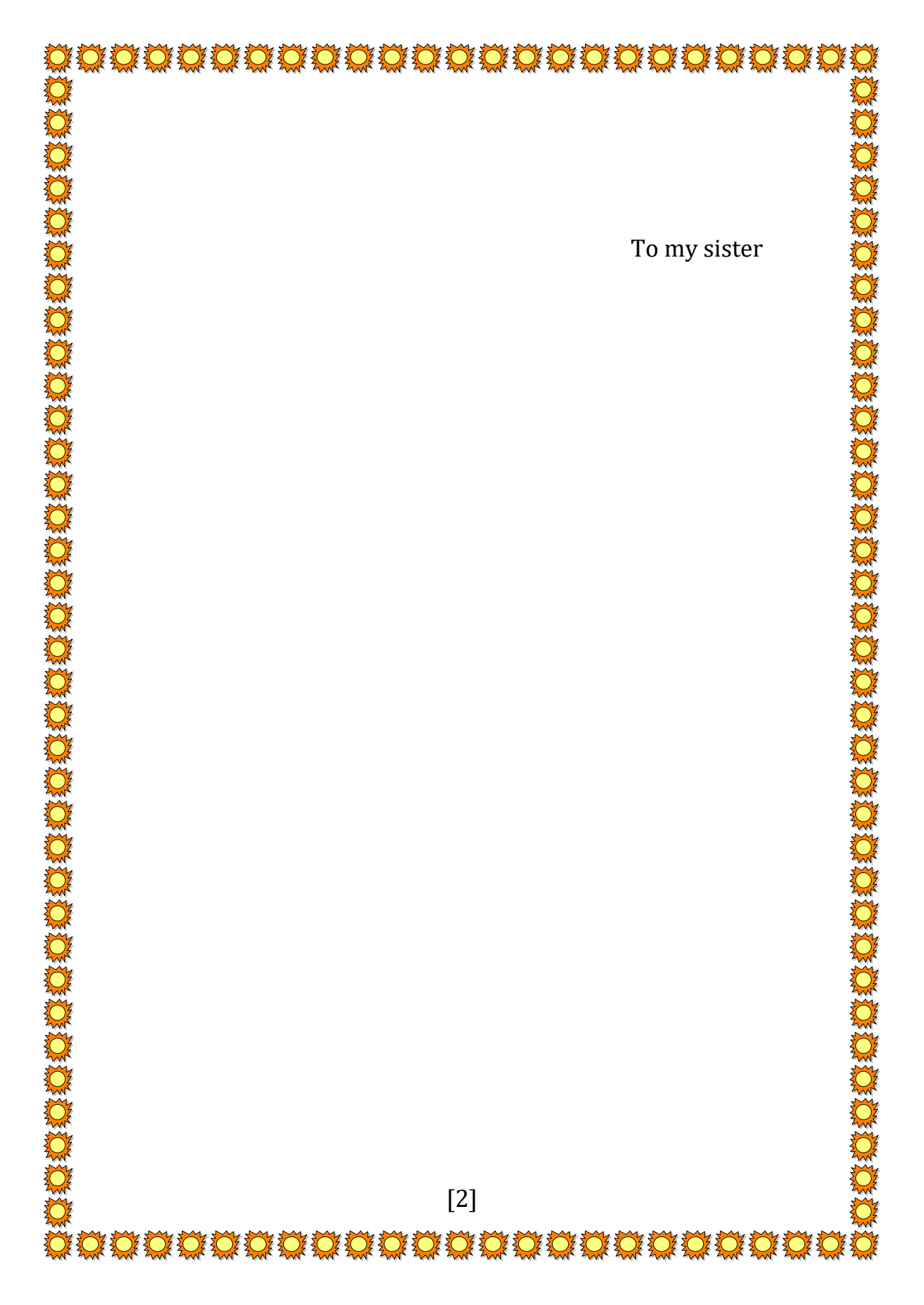
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[1]



To my sister



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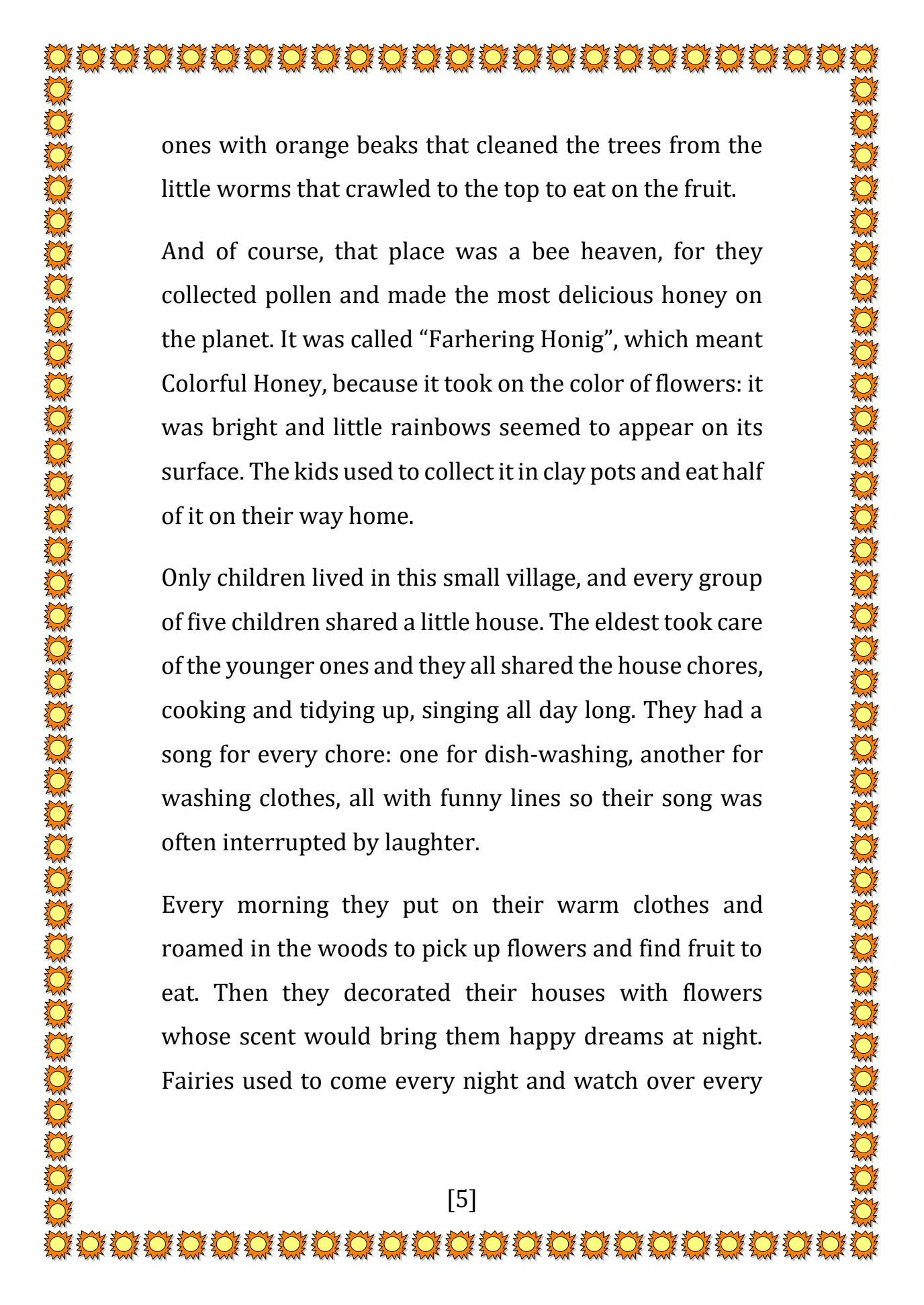
Wahr and Lufting

Once upon a time there was a small village far away from big cities, in a place called Wahr.

It was surrounded by trees whose branches were full of the most beautiful flowers glistening in the sun: there were pink and red and white and purple and lilac and orange and any color imaginable. Many of them had petals of different color. Sometimes three different buds would blossom from the same stem making a great bouquet while others would come out of the tree trunk to decorate this strong earthy foundation.

Some trunks were so thick it would take many children to form a circle around them and make a huge embrace. These were the trunks with the largest number of flowers. Every time the children ran to hug the trunk, trees were overwhelmed with joy and gave out a wonderful scent that filled the air.

But it wasn't just children who enjoyed the woods. Birds built nests and chirped happily feeding their little ones; there were big, colorful birds with bushy tails or smaller



ones with orange beaks that cleaned the trees from the little worms that crawled to the top to eat on the fruit.

And of course, that place was a bee heaven, for they collected pollen and made the most delicious honey on the planet. It was called “Farhering Honig”, which meant Colorful Honey, because it took on the color of flowers: it was bright and little rainbows seemed to appear on its surface. The kids used to collect it in clay pots and eat half of it on their way home.

Only children lived in this small village, and every group of five children shared a little house. The eldest took care of the younger ones and they all shared the house chores, cooking and tidying up, singing all day long. They had a song for every chore: one for dish-washing, another for washing clothes, all with funny lines so their song was often interrupted by laughter.

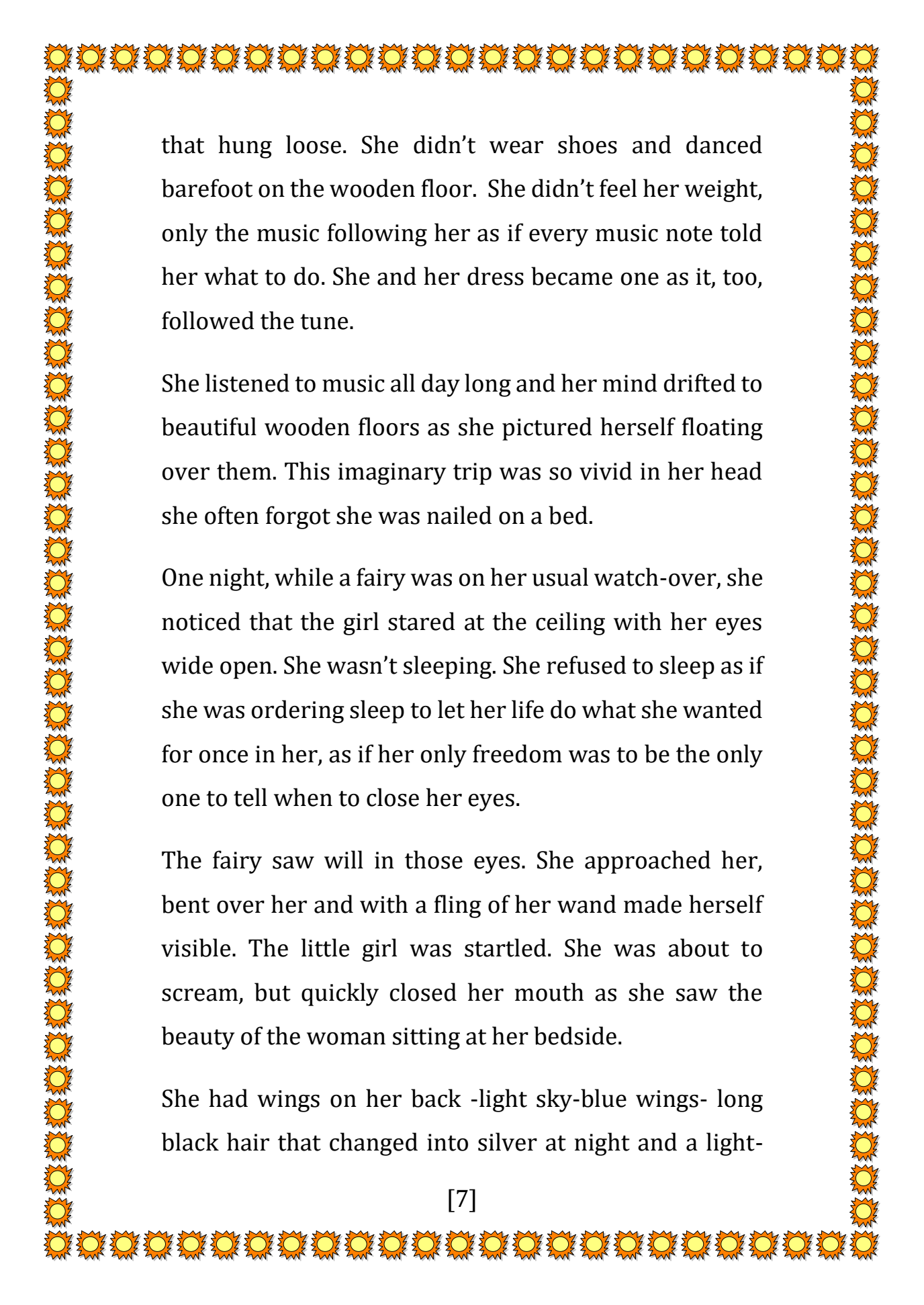
Every morning they put on their warm clothes and roamed in the woods to pick up flowers and find fruit to eat. Then they decorated their houses with flowers whose scent would bring them happy dreams at night. Fairies used to come every night and watch over every

bed to check that children were all tucked-in and smiled in their sleep.

In this village there was a little girl who couldn't walk or move her hands. She could only see, speak and move her head a little. She had beautiful curly hair which the rest of the children used to brush in plaits that swung right and left or stood braided around her head.



She wanted so much to run around with the other children, go to the woods and play with them or take care of the little ones. She wanted to get out of bed and dance. She often imagined she was a ballerina in a tulle green-blue dress with round, knitted neck and puffy, short sleeves. Her hair was tied back with a green-blue ribbon




that hung loose. She didn't wear shoes and danced barefoot on the wooden floor. She didn't feel her weight, only the music following her as if every music note told her what to do. She and her dress became one as it, too, followed the tune.

She listened to music all day long and her mind drifted to beautiful wooden floors as she pictured herself floating over them. This imaginary trip was so vivid in her head she often forgot she was nailed on a bed.

One night, while a fairy was on her usual watch-over, she noticed that the girl stared at the ceiling with her eyes wide open. She wasn't sleeping. She refused to sleep as if she was ordering sleep to let her life do what she wanted for once in her, as if her only freedom was to be the only one to tell when to close her eyes.

The fairy saw will in those eyes. She approached her, bent over her and with a fling of her wand made herself visible. The little girl was startled. She was about to scream, but quickly closed her mouth as she saw the beauty of the woman sitting at her bedside.

She had wings on her back -light sky-blue wings- long black hair that changed into silver at night and a light-



blue, plain but shiny dress without any ornaments that covered her slim silhouette.

“Would you like to talk?”

“Who are you?”

“I’m Leisjing” said the fairy. “What’s your name?”

“Lufting”, replied the girl.

“That’s a very beautiful name. Do you know what it means?”

“Airy”.

“Well-done. Airy it is” smiled the fairy. “Why aren’t you sleeping?”

“Because I don’t want to”.

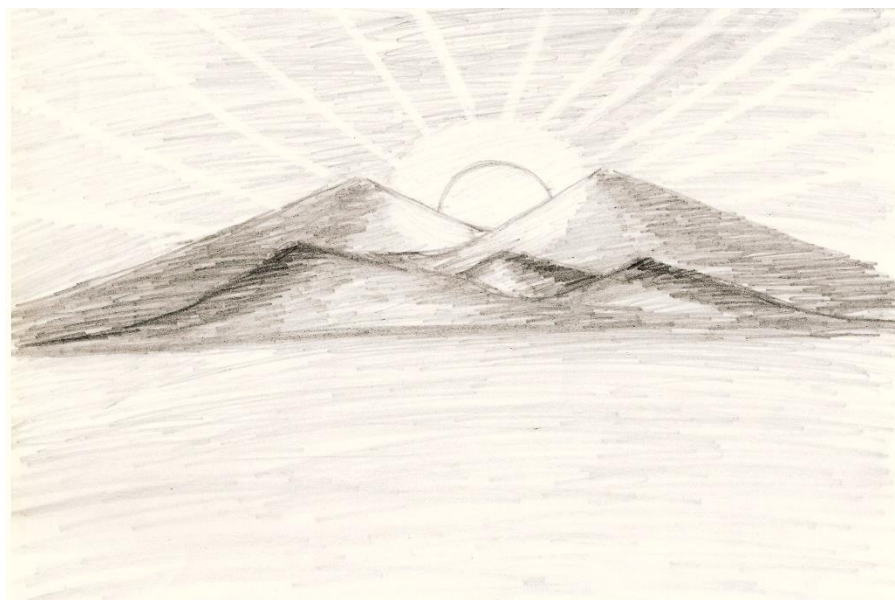
“Soon it’ll be dawn and I have to go. Would you like me to come tomorrow?”

“Yes” said Lufting, and for a split seconds her eyes sparkled.

“Good! Then I’ll come tomorrow and have a surprise for you. Now try to get some sleep because I want you to be

fresh tomorrow”, and on these words the fairy flanged her wand and disappeared.

The morning light entered dimly through the slots. Lufting turned her head to the window. The day was soon arriving, shiny and bright.



Fairy Leisjing

“

Lufting? I'm here!" a voice was heard and with a fling of her wand the fairy appeared sitting at the bedside of the little girl.

"I was waiting for you! I couldn't sleep, I was thinking of the surprise. What is it, ma'am?"

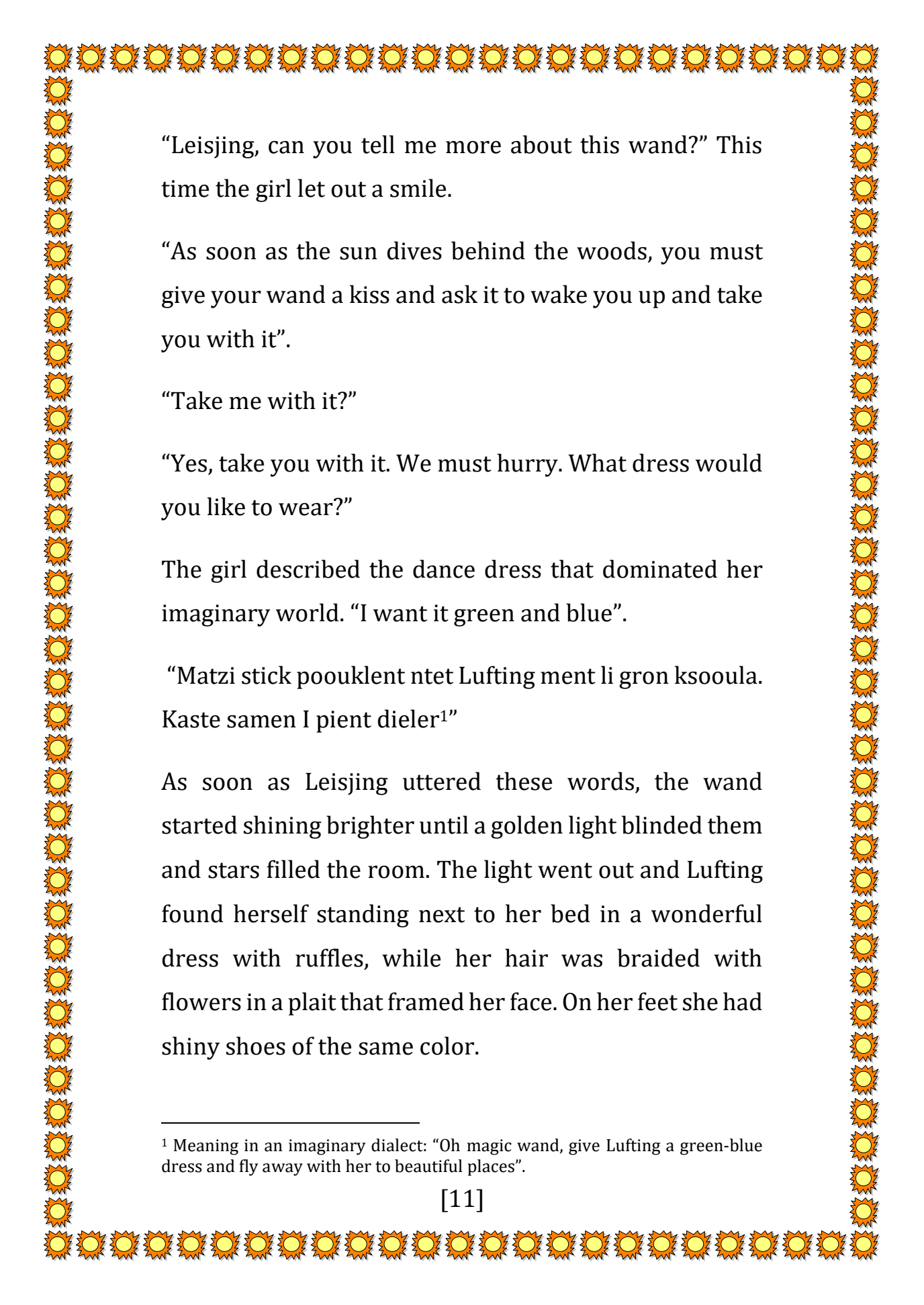
"From now on you will only call me by my name, deal?" smiled the fairy and took out a little wand. She placed it softly on Lufting's pillow.

"What is this?" asked the little girl and observed it with curiosity. It was carved in various shapes: hearts, eagles, flowers, rivers and tiny flying fairies. Believe it or not, all this was carved on this magic wand that beamed a golden light.

The fairy looked at her tenderly. "I asked you to get some rest, to get some sleep. Did you do it?"

The young girl lowered her eyes with guilt. "Could you tell me more about this wand ma'am?"

"Remember our deal?"



“Leisjing, can you tell me more about this wand?” This time the girl let out a smile.

“As soon as the sun dives behind the woods, you must give your wand a kiss and ask it to wake you up and take you with it”.

“Take me with it?”

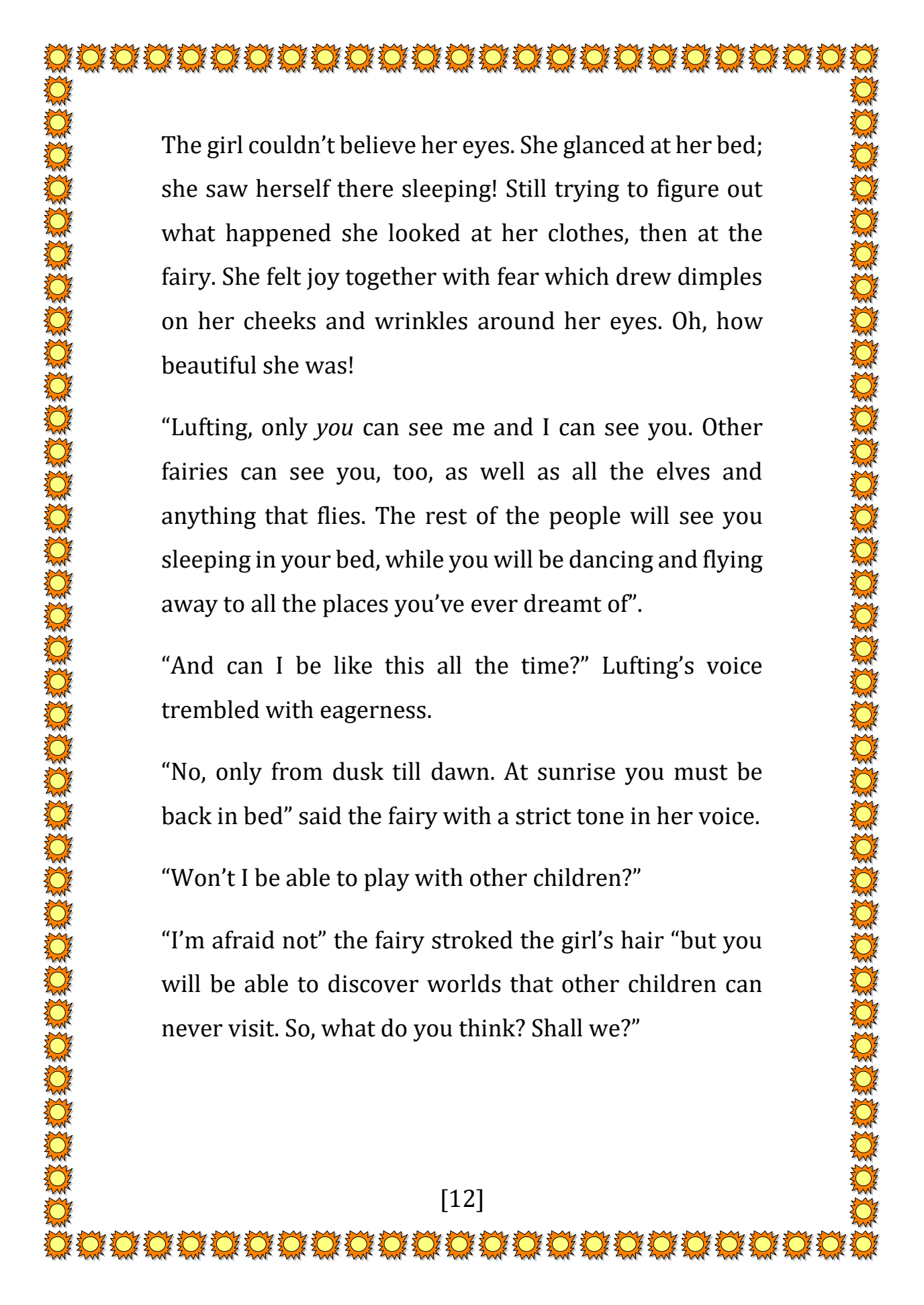
“Yes, take you with it. We must hurry. What dress would you like to wear?”

The girl described the dance dress that dominated her imaginary world. “I want it green and blue”.

“Matzi stick pouklient ntet Lufting ment li gron ksooula. Kaste samen I pient dieler¹”

As soon as Leisjing uttered these words, the wand started shining brighter until a golden light blinded them and stars filled the room. The light went out and Lufting found herself standing next to her bed in a wonderful dress with ruffles, while her hair was braided with flowers in a plait that framed her face. On her feet she had shiny shoes of the same color.

¹ Meaning in an imaginary dialect: “Oh magic wand, give Lufting a green-blue dress and fly away with her to beautiful places”.



The girl couldn't believe her eyes. She glanced at her bed; she saw herself there sleeping! Still trying to figure out what happened she looked at her clothes, then at the fairy. She felt joy together with fear which drew dimples on her cheeks and wrinkles around her eyes. Oh, how beautiful she was!

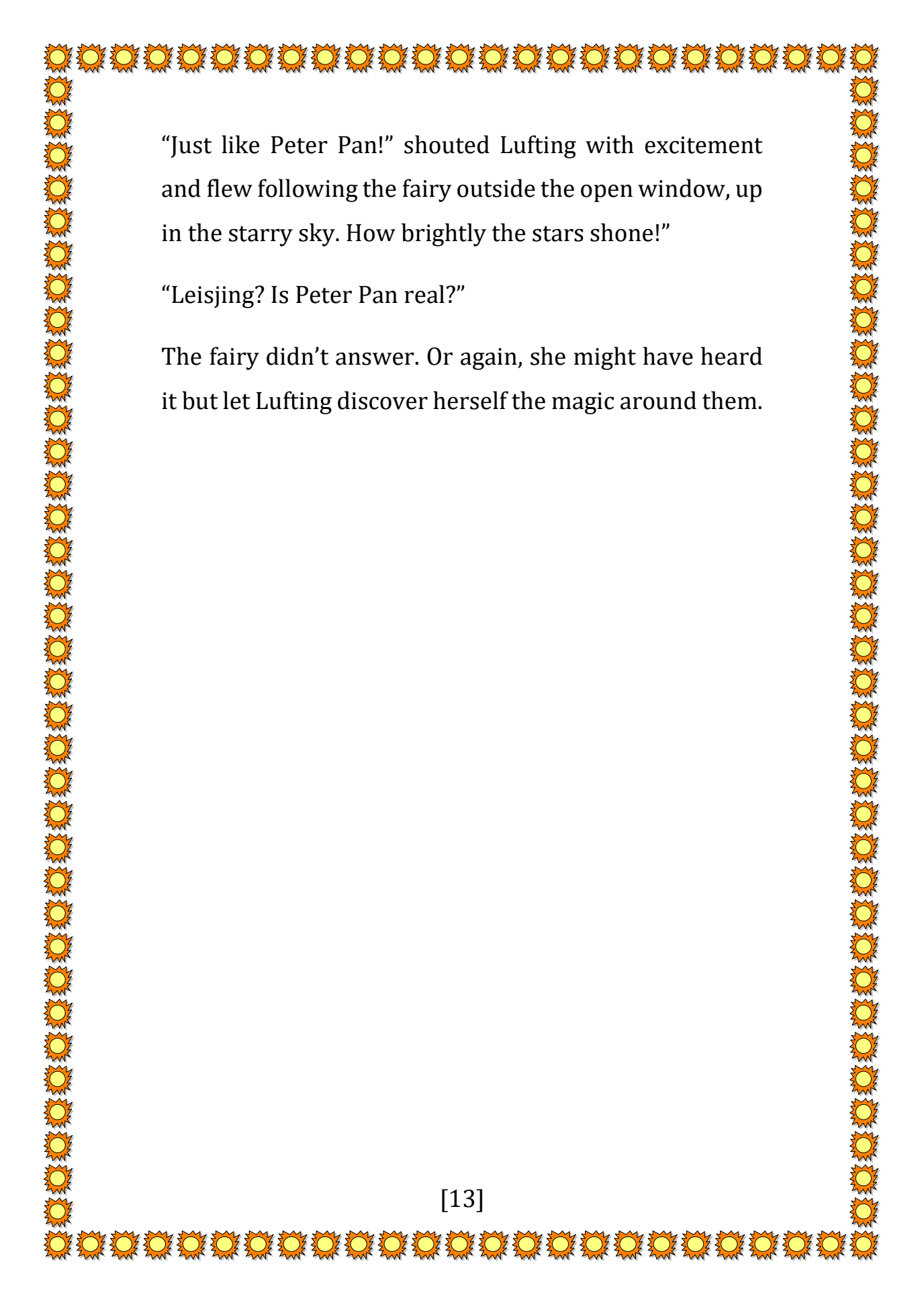
“Lufting, only *you* can see me and I can see you. Other fairies can see you, too, as well as all the elves and anything that flies. The rest of the people will see you sleeping in your bed, while you will be dancing and flying away to all the places you've ever dreamt of”.

“And can I be like this all the time?” Lufting's voice trembled with eagerness.

“No, only from dusk till dawn. At sunrise you must be back in bed” said the fairy with a strict tone in her voice.

“Won't I be able to play with other children?”

“I'm afraid not” the fairy stroked the girl's hair “but you will be able to discover worlds that other children can never visit. So, what do you think? Shall we?”



“Just like Peter Pan!” shouted Lufting with excitement and flew following the fairy outside the open window, up in the starry sky. How brightly the stars shone!”

“Leisjing? Is Peter Pan real?”

The fairy didn’t answer. Or again, she might have heard it but let Lufting discover herself the magic around them.



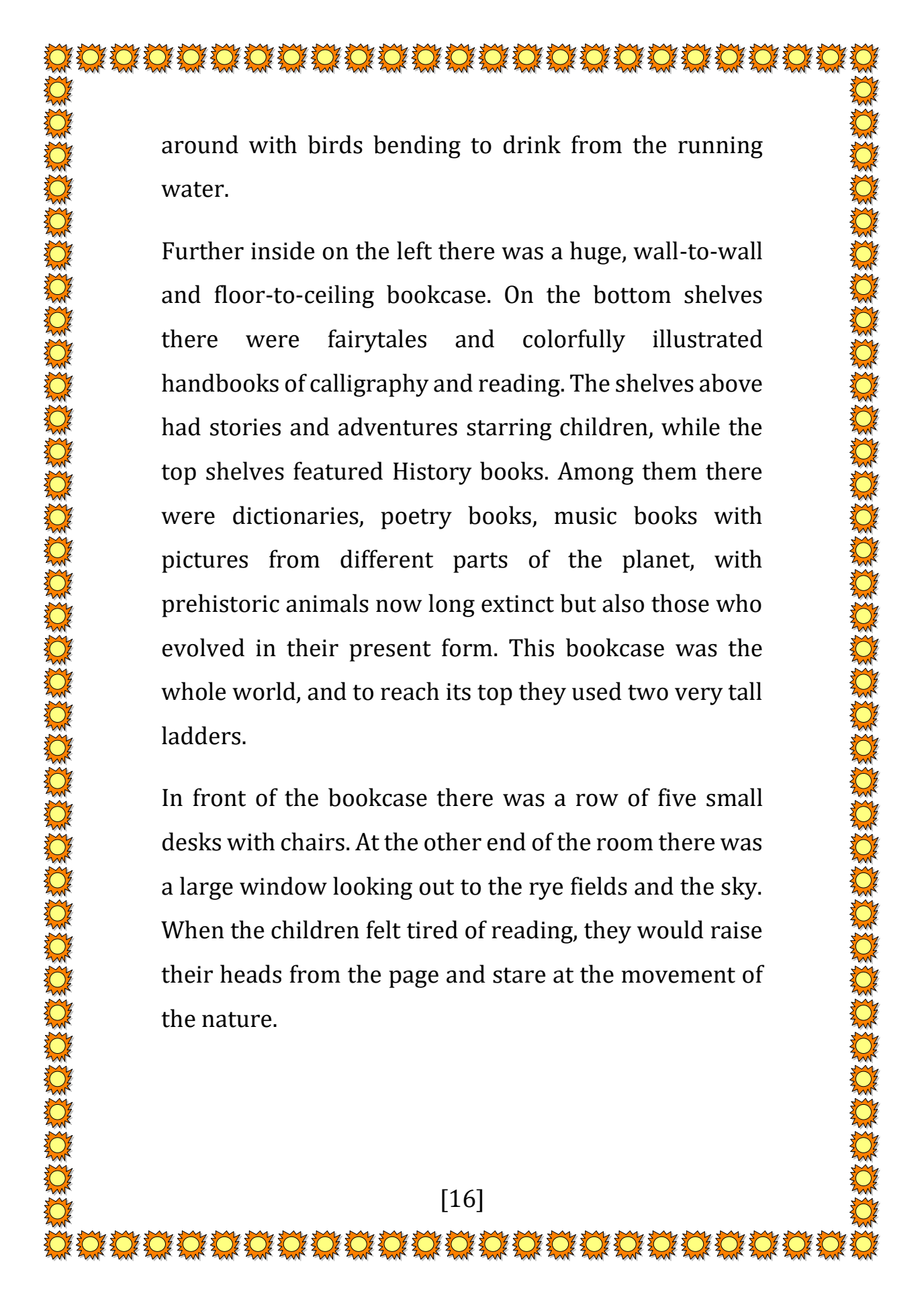


The Word Game

The children's houses were all small, wooden, with walls carved in various geometrical shapes. Their roofs were made of tree trunks tightly bound together with thick ropes that protected them from sun and rain.

Glistening cob fields that had just been sown surrounded the houses. In-between there were bushes with white lilies that bent down to the ground to talk to the fresh soil. Far away, there were basketball courts, a running track with dirt so that the children can race and do gymnastics as well as several climbing mounts. Thick columns with steps in various spots were joined with rope bridges that swung in every step. The bridges led to tree houses on the trunk arms. Tightly fastened ropes led to other thick branches and hung to the ground swinging in the wind.

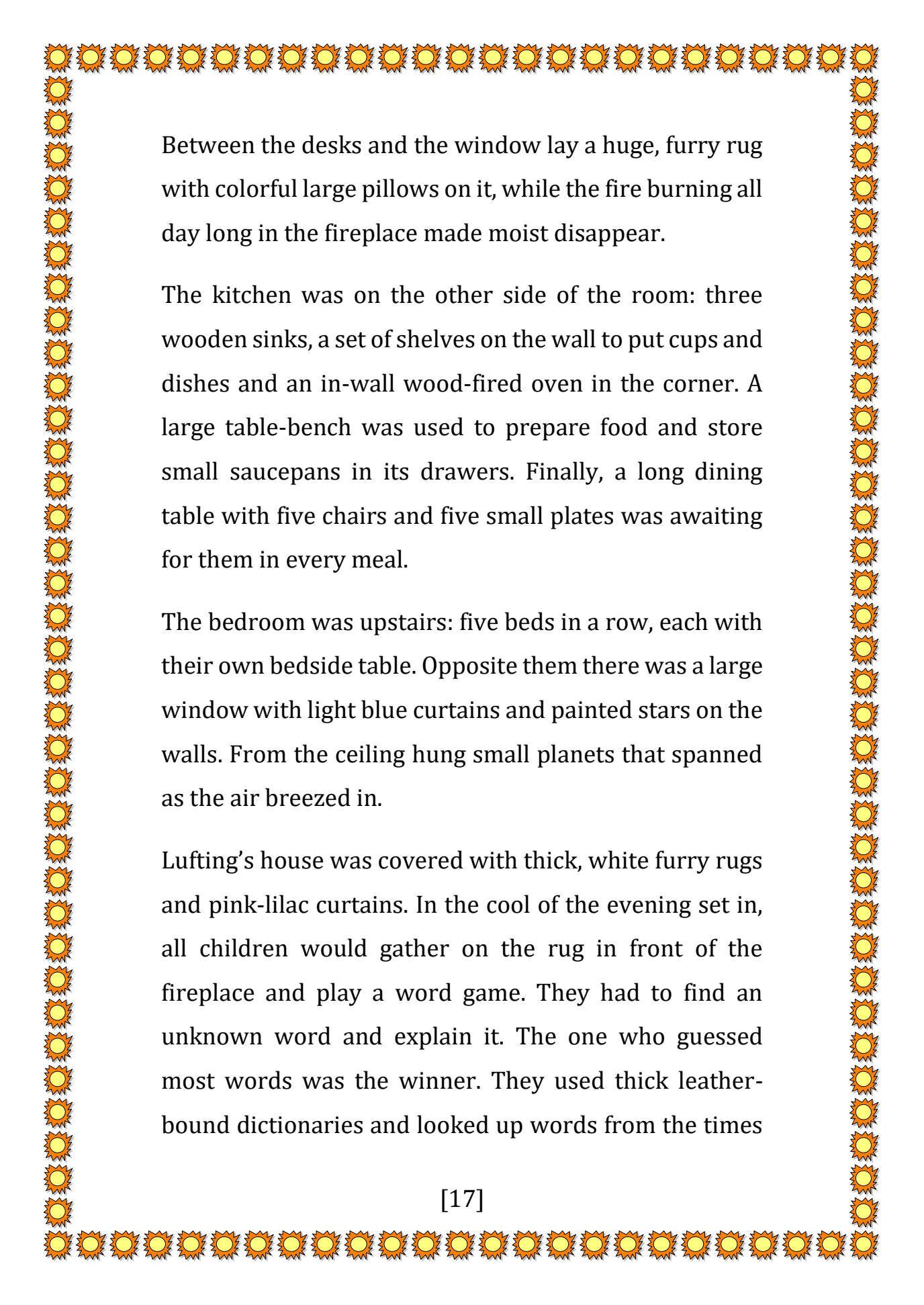
On the inside, houses were artistically designed. At the entrance there was a place where children washed their hands and took off their shoes and overcoats. The sink was wooden and stood on a large tin- box painted all



around with birds bending to drink from the running water.

Further inside on the left there was a huge, wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling bookcase. On the bottom shelves there were fairytales and colorfully illustrated handbooks of calligraphy and reading. The shelves above had stories and adventures starring children, while the top shelves featured History books. Among them there were dictionaries, poetry books, music books with pictures from different parts of the planet, with prehistoric animals now long extinct but also those who evolved in their present form. This bookcase was the whole world, and to reach its top they used two very tall ladders.

In front of the bookcase there was a row of five small desks with chairs. At the other end of the room there was a large window looking out to the rye fields and the sky. When the children felt tired of reading, they would raise their heads from the page and stare at the movement of the nature.

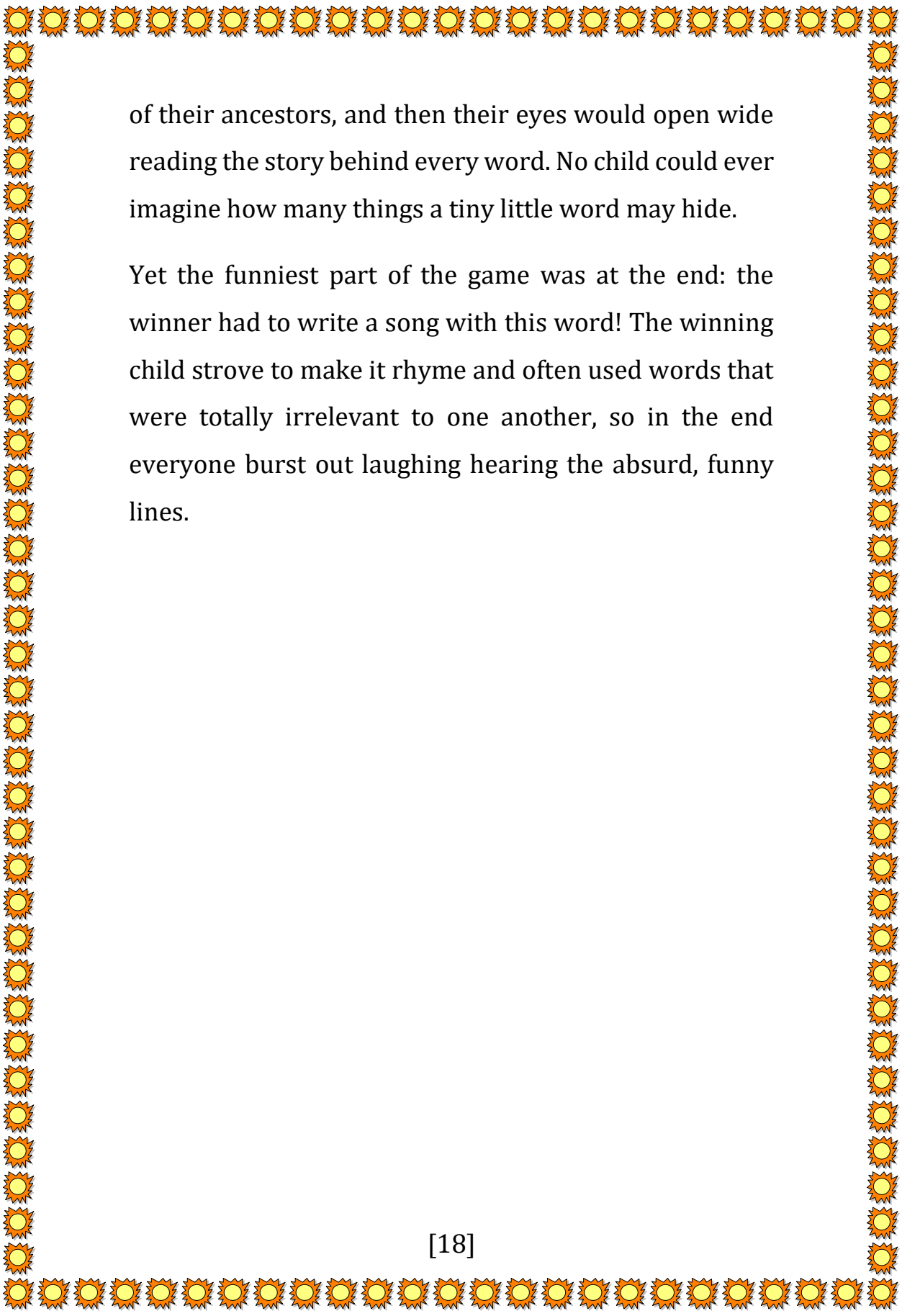


Between the desks and the window lay a huge, furry rug with colorful large pillows on it, while the fire burning all day long in the fireplace made moist disappear.

The kitchen was on the other side of the room: three wooden sinks, a set of shelves on the wall to put cups and dishes and an in-wall wood-fired oven in the corner. A large table-bench was used to prepare food and store small saucepans in its drawers. Finally, a long dining table with five chairs and five small plates was awaiting for them in every meal.

The bedroom was upstairs: five beds in a row, each with their own bedside table. Opposite them there was a large window with light blue curtains and painted stars on the walls. From the ceiling hung small planets that spanned as the air breezed in.

Lufting's house was covered with thick, white furry rugs and pink-lilac curtains. In the cool of the evening set in, all children would gather on the rug in front of the fireplace and play a word game. They had to find an unknown word and explain it. The one who guessed most words was the winner. They used thick leather-bound dictionaries and looked up words from the times



of their ancestors, and then their eyes would open wide reading the story behind every word. No child could ever imagine how many things a tiny little word may hide.

Yet the funniest part of the game was at the end: the winner had to write a song with this word! The winning child strove to make it rhyme and often used words that were totally irrelevant to one another, so in the end everyone burst out laughing hearing the absurd, funny lines.





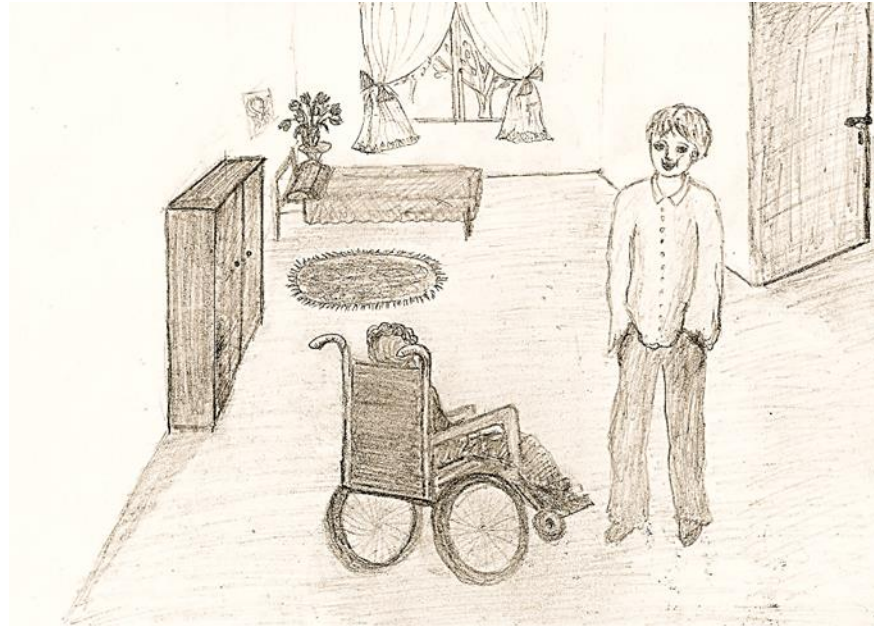
Ashwald

Lufting woke up in the morning; she was trying to figure out if last night was real or just a dream. She stretched her neck to look at herself and then saw the wand on her pillow. In the morning light it looked like a plain piece of wood chopped off a tree.

The rest of the children had woken up earlier and the room was empty.

“Ashwald?” shouted Lufting. She repeated his name several times until she heard the stairs creaking and Ashwald’s brisk steps.

“Good-morning!” a cheerful, tall and slim boy with loose clothes danced into the room. He was brown-haired with big green eyes with intense eyelashes. He was taller than the rest and it was his responsibility to take care of Lufting.



“Ashwald? Why don’t you have your clothes on?”

“They’re not dry yet! Don’t I look good in this?”

Lufting laughed.

Ashwald went on undaunted. “Can I help you get out of bed? What is this?” and raised the wand to take a closer look.

“Don’t take it away, please leave it right here” she said softly.

Ashwald obeyed, although he was very curious to solve the mystery of the wand.

He picked her up like a feather and proposed to her laughing. "You are my princess! Will you marry me, Lady Lufting?"

"Every morning you ask me the same question, and every morning I give you the same answer –go take a bath, your



armpits stink!"

Their loud laughter filled the room. The wand glowed a little, as if it was listening, and a spark of light shone around.

The first journey

Her joy was indescribable! She was flying over the woods! Flying for the first time! Every now and then she would lower and sit on the branches, touch their blossoms, then suddenly lose height, then up again...The little girl couldn't understand –she was so excited that her eyes were double as open as usual to make it in time and see everything.

Leisjing observed her smiling without taking her eyes off her not for a single moment!

They flew over houses in nearby villages where grown-ups also lived. It was the first time Lufting had ever seen grown-ups. Indeed, in one village there lived elderly people who behaved like children. She saw them laugh, tell jokes and hop on music tunes she had never heard before.

“What’s the name of this village, Leisjing?”

“Eldre”, replied the fairy and kept flying.

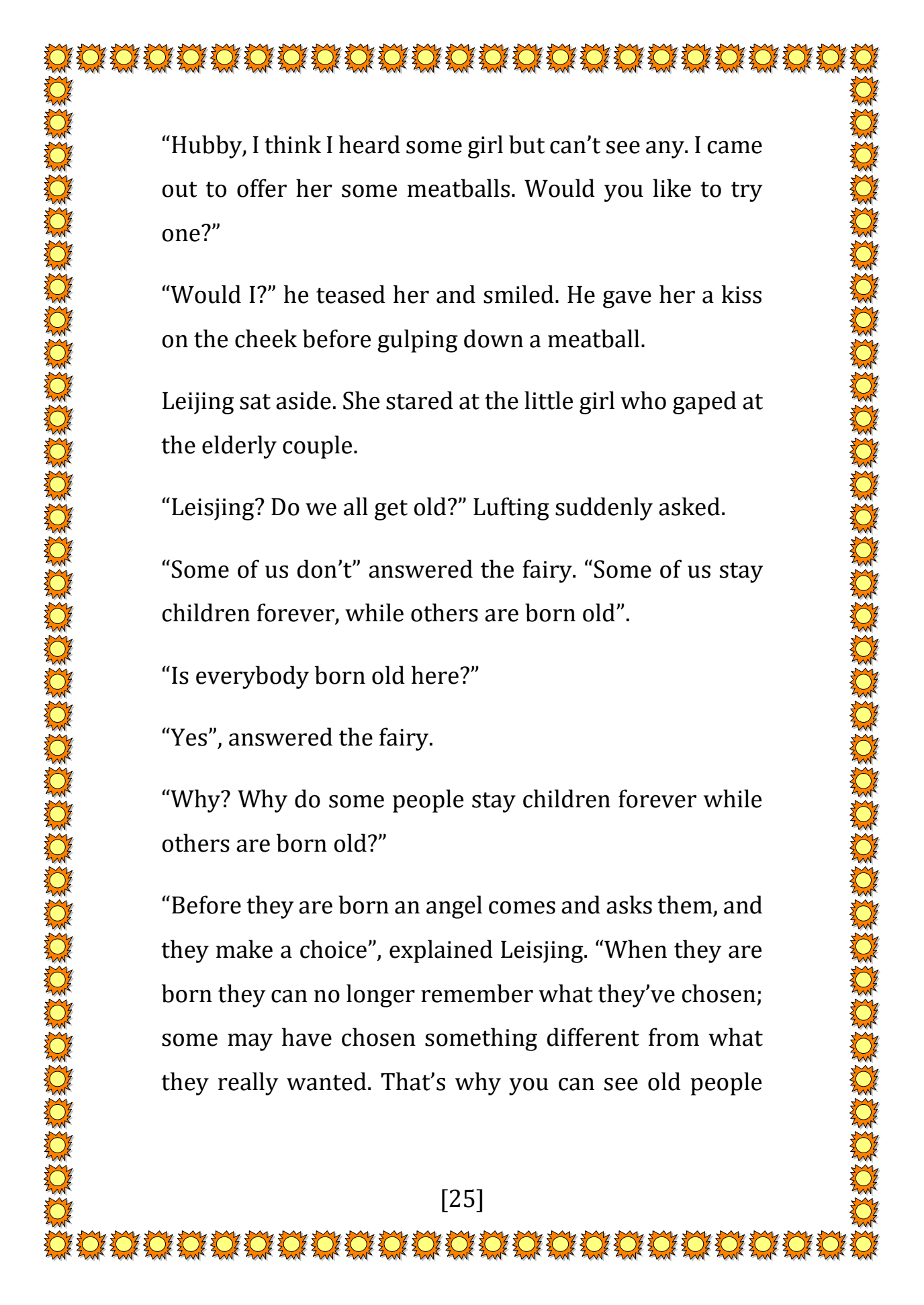
“Can we go down to take a closer look?”

“Of course. Just remember they can’t see us. Only *we* can see and hear them.”

Hardly had she finished her sentence when Lufting dove down to Eldre. She sat flashed on a stone next to a house, all painted white, with a big pot with Geranium. She liked that smell, but it also smelt of something else –they were frying something in the house. Before she had the time to think, an elderly woman wearing a headscarf and an apron stained with flour came out carrying a platter full of meatballs.



“What are you doing there, Anthi?” asked an elderly man and approached her. The way he talked made Lufting think they lived together, and he knew each other well.



“Hubby, I think I heard some girl but can’t see any. I came out to offer her some meatballs. Would you like to try one?”

“Would I?” he teased her and smiled. He gave her a kiss on the cheek before gulping down a meatball.

Leijing sat aside. She stared at the little girl who gaped at the elderly couple.

“Leisjing? Do we all get old?” Lufting suddenly asked.

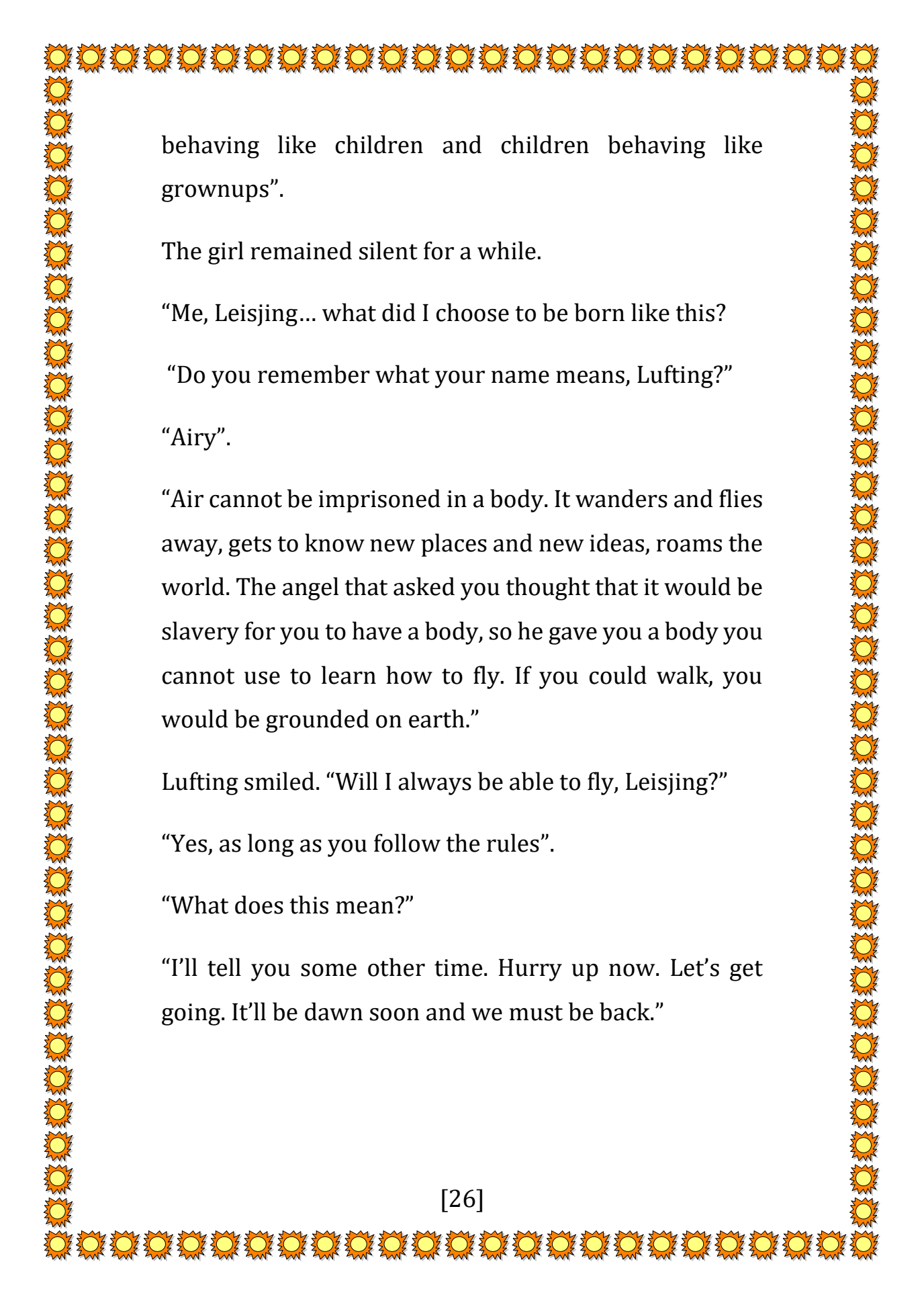
“Some of us don’t” answered the fairy. “Some of us stay children forever, while others are born old”.

“Is everybody born old here?”

“Yes”, answered the fairy.

“Why? Why do some people stay children forever while others are born old?”

“Before they are born an angel comes and asks them, and they make a choice”, explained Leisjing. “When they are born they can no longer remember what they’ve chosen; some may have chosen something different from what they really wanted. That’s why you can see old people



behaving like children and children behaving like grownups”.

The girl remained silent for a while.

“Me, Leisjing... what did I choose to be born like this?”

“Do you remember what your name means, Lufting?”

“Airy”.

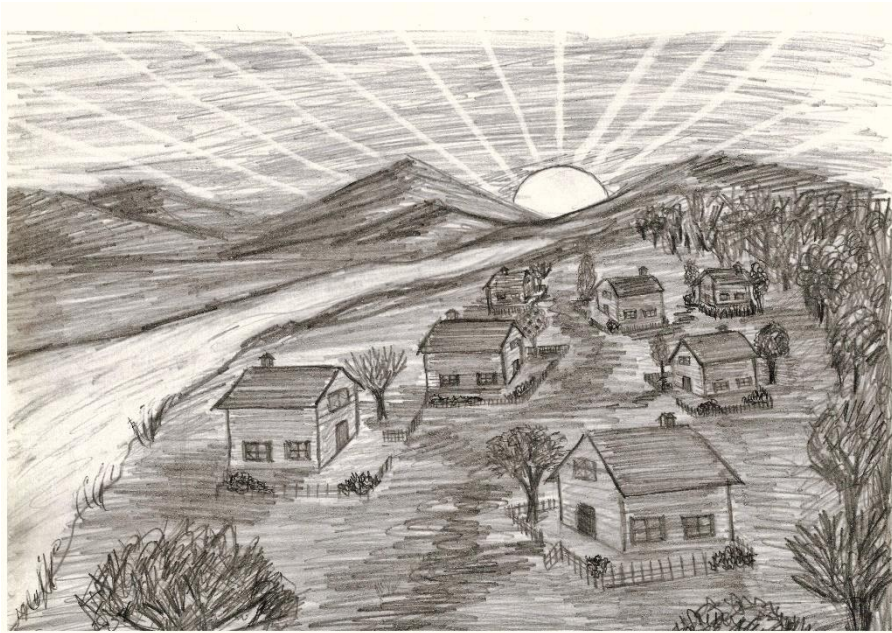
“Air cannot be imprisoned in a body. It wanders and flies away, gets to know new places and new ideas, roams the world. The angel that asked you thought that it would be slavery for you to have a body, so he gave you a body you cannot use to learn how to fly. If you could walk, you would be grounded on earth.”

Lufting smiled. “Will I always be able to fly, Leisjing?”

“Yes, as long as you follow the rules”.

“What does this mean?”

“I’ll tell you some other time. Hurry up now. Let’s get going. It’ll be dawn soon and we must be back.”





Cowk

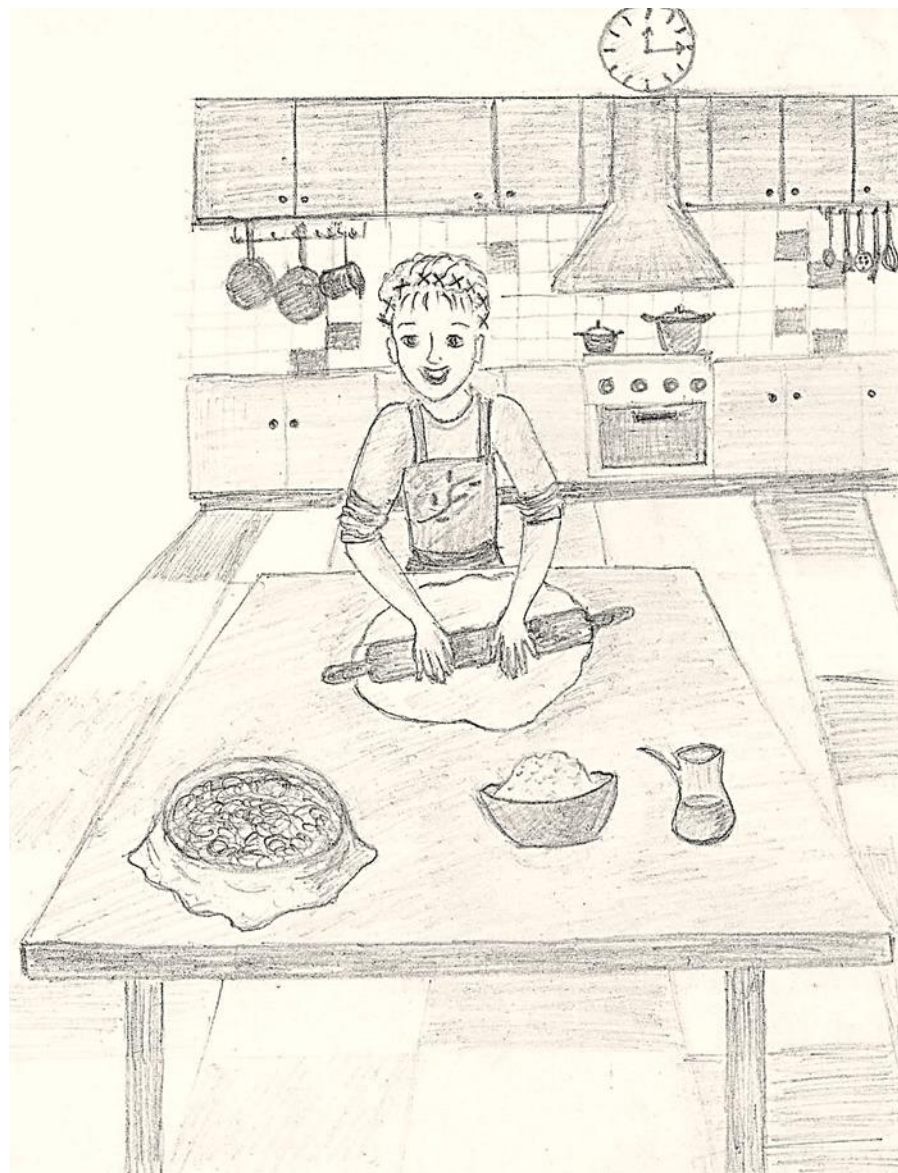
They all sat around the table. Ashwald put Lufting on a specially-designed chair with colorful belts that kept her slim body upright.

The table was full of fruit, cheese, butter, honey, nuts and almonds, raisins and freshly-baked bread. Cowk was everyone's favorite. She had short blond hair pulled back on each side with light-green bobby pins -full of bows. She had straight hair that often fell on her eyes and then you could see bobby pins all around the crown of her head.

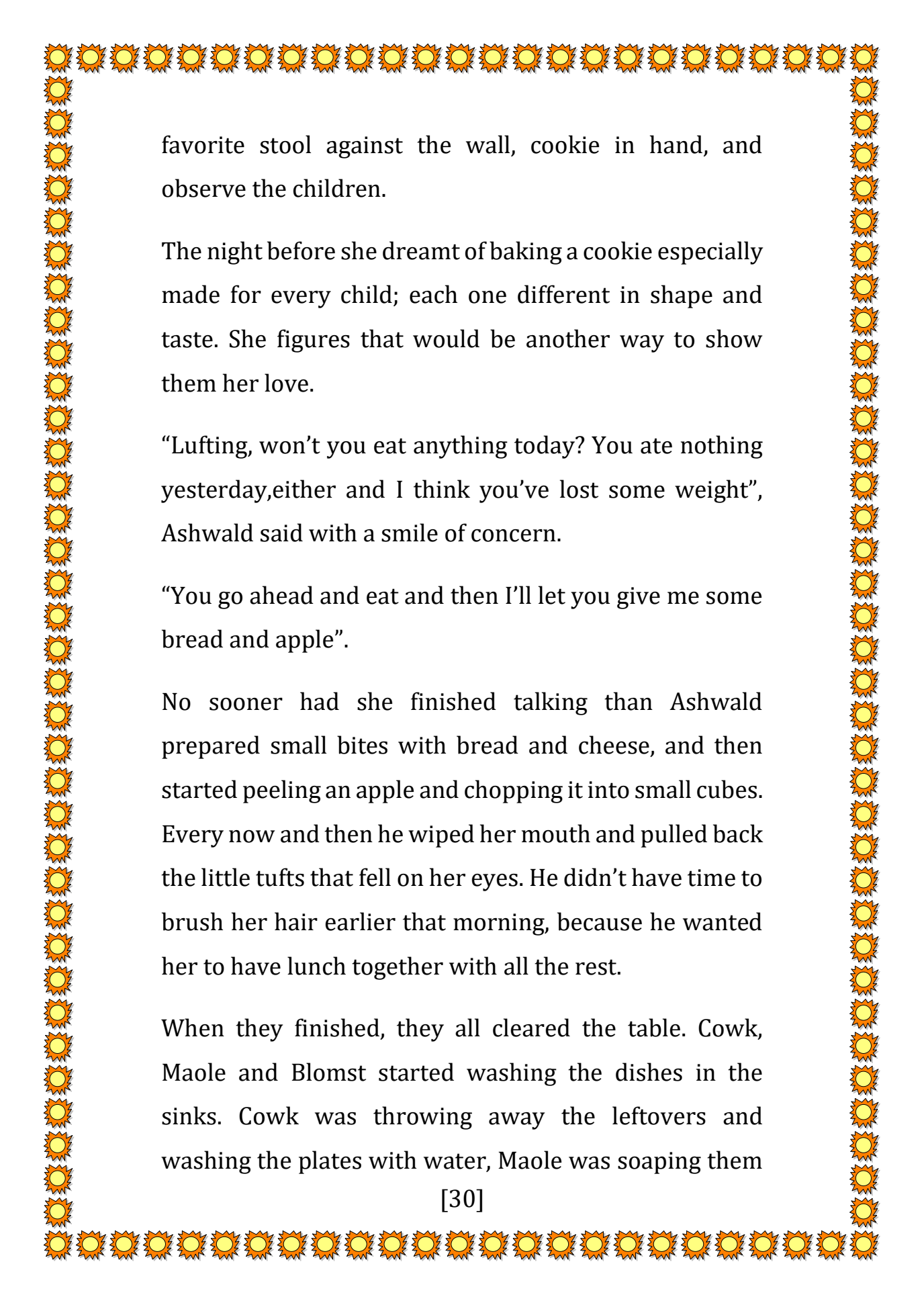
She used to wear a light blue dress with a green ribbon that ended in a large bow at the back. Over the dress she had a yellow apron with painted flowers in various colors that wrote: "I cook more than I talk". Indeed, she was often silent around the table, but her meals were full of love.

She prepared delicious dishes, pies and cookies, tarts and cakes -whatever she thought of the night before, she

would put on her bench the morning after, work her little magic and turn it into an unforgettable dish.



Her cookies were famous all over Wahr. The village children often gathered outside her house talking and munching her delicious cookies. She would sit on her



favorite stool against the wall, cookie in hand, and observe the children.

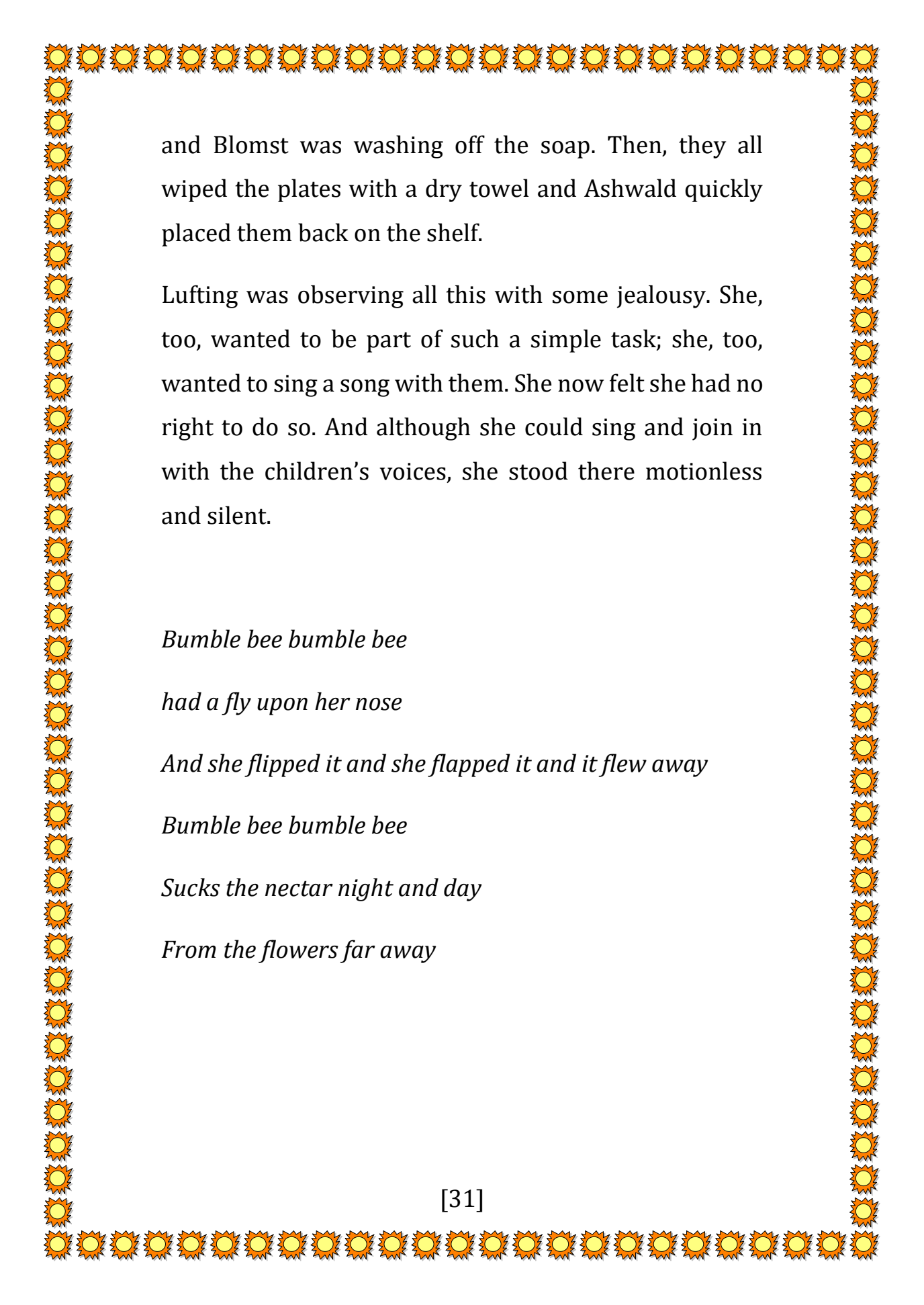
The night before she dreamt of baking a cookie especially made for every child; each one different in shape and taste. She figures that would be another way to show them her love.

“Lufting, won’t you eat anything today? You ate nothing yesterday, either and I think you’ve lost some weight”, Ashwald said with a smile of concern.

“You go ahead and eat and then I’ll let you give me some bread and apple”.

No sooner had she finished talking than Ashwald prepared small bites with bread and cheese, and then started peeling an apple and chopping it into small cubes. Every now and then he wiped her mouth and pulled back the little tufts that fell on her eyes. He didn’t have time to brush her hair earlier that morning, because he wanted her to have lunch together with all the rest.

When they finished, they all cleared the table. Cowk, Maole and Blomst started washing the dishes in the sinks. Cowk was throwing away the leftovers and washing the plates with water, Maole was soaping them



and Blomst was washing off the soap. Then, they all wiped the plates with a dry towel and Ashwald quickly placed them back on the shelf.

Lufting was observing all this with some jealousy. She, too, wanted to be part of such a simple task; she, too, wanted to sing a song with them. She now felt she had no right to do so. And although she could sing and join in with the children's voices, she stood there motionless and silent.

Bumble bee bumble bee

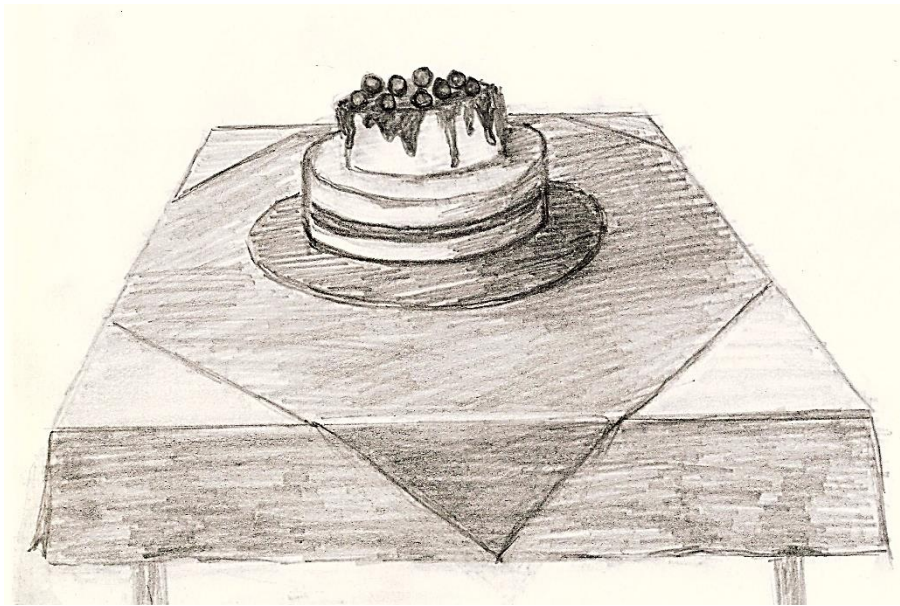
had a fly upon her nose

And she flipped it and she flapped it and it flew away

Bumble bee bumble bee

Sucks the nectar night and day

From the flowers far away



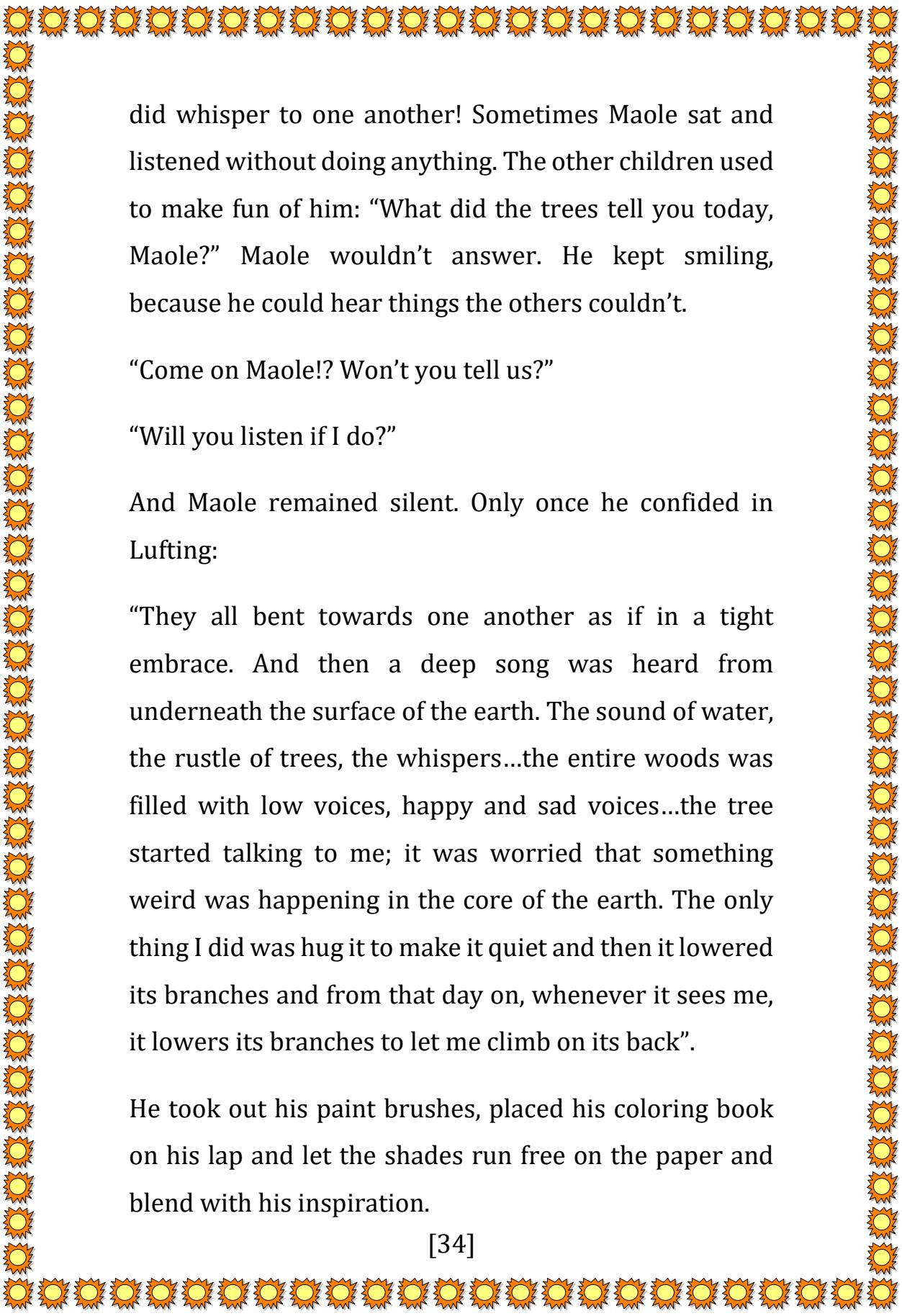
Maole

With his rucksack on, Maole climbed his favorite tree.

It was a weird tree, one must say. In the course of years the branches had bent down and blended with the branches of the neighboring trees. You could hardly tell which was which; the flowers and the leaves made such an intricate pattern that if you walked underneath you had the impression that you were entering a secret gate.



When he wanted to paint, Maole always came here. It was quiet and the only thing you could hear was the chirping of birds and the whispering of trees. Oh yes, they



did whisper to one another! Sometimes Maole sat and listened without doing anything. The other children used to make fun of him: “What did the trees tell you today, Maole?” Maole wouldn’t answer. He kept smiling, because he could hear things the others couldn’t.

“Come on Maole!? Won’t you tell us?”

“Will you listen if I do?”

And Maole remained silent. Only once he confided in Lufting:

“They all bent towards one another as if in a tight embrace. And then a deep song was heard from underneath the surface of the earth. The sound of water, the rustle of trees, the whispers...the entire woods was filled with low voices, happy and sad voices...the tree started talking to me; it was worried that something weird was happening in the core of the earth. The only thing I did was hug it to make it quiet and then it lowered its branches and from that day on, whenever it sees me, it lowers its branches to let me climb on its back”.

He took out his paint brushes, placed his coloring book on his lap and let the shades run free on the paper and blend with his inspiration.





The journey beyond the light

Lufting and the fairy flew over a sunny village bathed in light. Right beside it stretched the deepest darkness man could lay eyes on. It was impossible for light to penetrate it.

Lufting started her descent towards it.

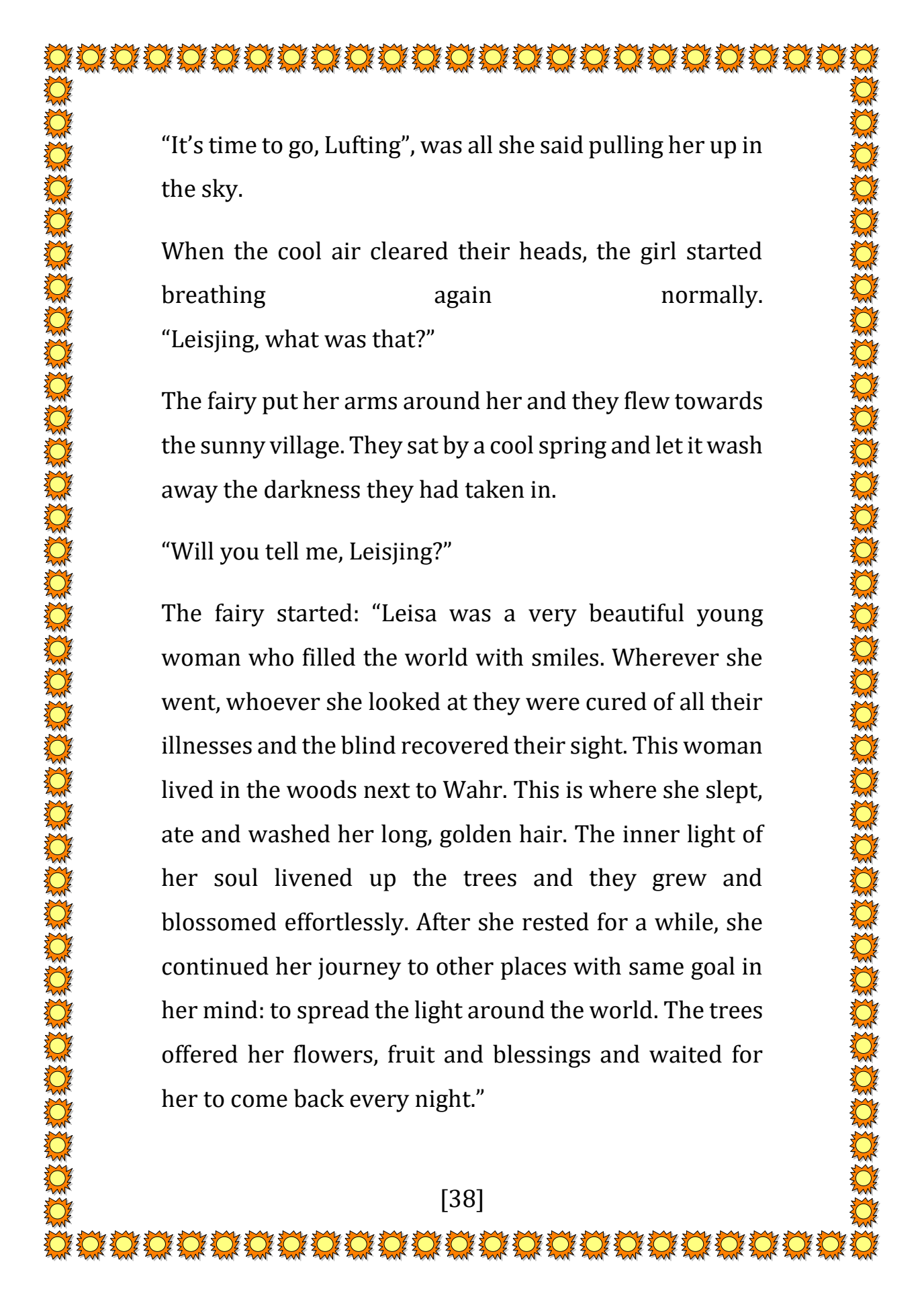
“Lufting, stay away!” shouted the fairy.

But Lufting didn't listen. Something was drawing her closer into the darkness. As she approached she saw human figures working non-stop at a military pace. From above she saw muddy children carrying sacks on their backs and walking in line. They were bending under the weight but kept on with their head bent down and their eyes fixed on the barren land.



They were digging a large hole into making it deeper and deeper. Lufting could hear the sound of shovels banging on the rocky surface. Children emerged from the depths of the earth loaded with sacks; they emptied them farther away and then returned and disappeared into the dark hole to carry on with their work.

While watching them Lufting felt she couldn't breathe. There was no air. She came closer to the hole. It was impossible to see anything; darkness covered it all. She felt a sudden urge to jump into the hole –and at that moment the fairy clasped tight onto her and pulled her back.



“It’s time to go, Lufting”, was all she said pulling her up in the sky.

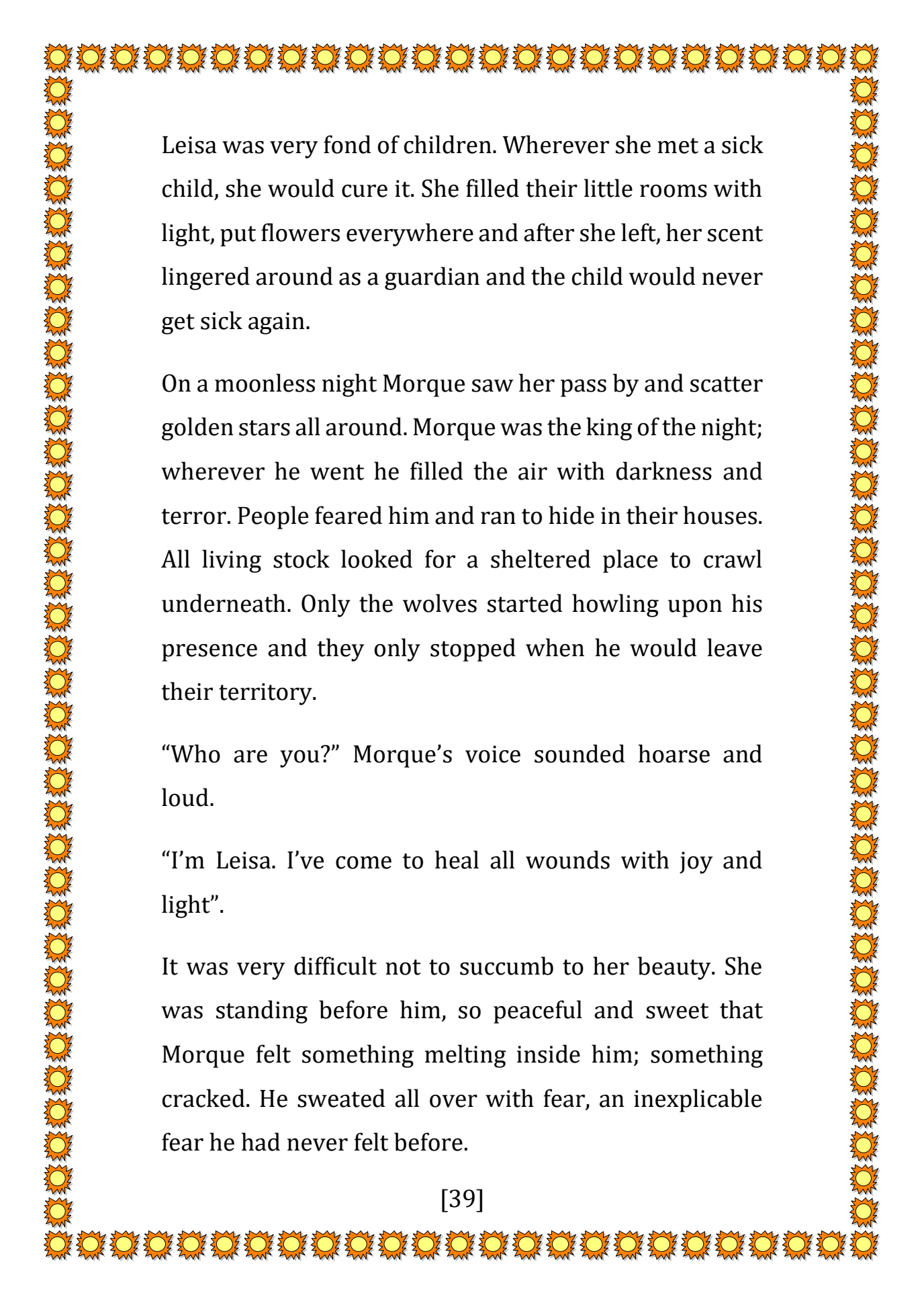
When the cool air cleared their heads, the girl started breathing again normally.

“Leisjing, what was that?”

The fairy put her arms around her and they flew towards the sunny village. They sat by a cool spring and let it wash away the darkness they had taken in.

“Will you tell me, Leisjing?”

The fairy started: “Leisa was a very beautiful young woman who filled the world with smiles. Wherever she went, whoever she looked at they were cured of all their illnesses and the blind recovered their sight. This woman lived in the woods next to Wahr. This is where she slept, ate and washed her long, golden hair. The inner light of her soul livened up the trees and they grew and blossomed effortlessly. After she rested for a while, she continued her journey to other places with same goal in her mind: to spread the light around the world. The trees offered her flowers, fruit and blessings and waited for her to come back every night.”



Leisa was very fond of children. Wherever she met a sick child, she would cure it. She filled their little rooms with light, put flowers everywhere and after she left, her scent lingered around as a guardian and the child would never get sick again.

On a moonless night Morque saw her pass by and scatter golden stars all around. Morque was the king of the night; wherever he went he filled the air with darkness and terror. People feared him and ran to hide in their houses. All living stock looked for a sheltered place to crawl underneath. Only the wolves started howling upon his presence and they only stopped when he would leave their territory.

“Who are you?” Morque’s voice sounded hoarse and loud.

“I’m Leisa. I’ve come to heal all wounds with joy and light”.

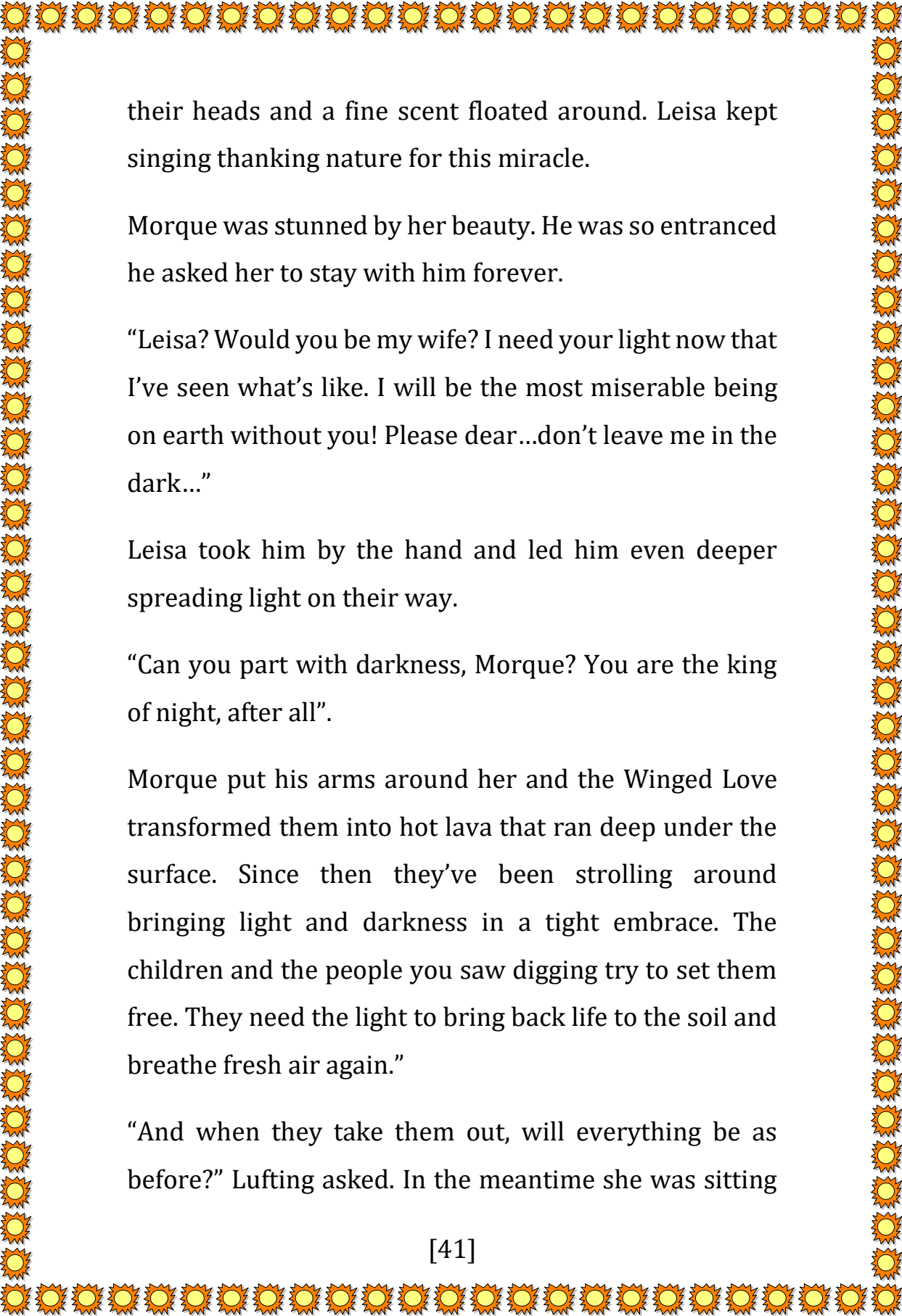
It was very difficult not to succumb to her beauty. She was standing before him, so peaceful and sweet that Morque felt something melting inside him; something cracked. He sweated all over with fear, an inexplicable fear he had never felt before.

Leisa turned to leave, but Morque shouted:

“Wait! I want you to come with me and light up a place where no light has ever lived”.



Leisa followed him. They walked deep into the center of the Earth. It was pitch dark -the most solid darkness she had ever seen. With a movement of her hands she filled the place with fireflies that flew in like rivulets flowing from above. When the place lightened up a bit, Leisa started singing; a beautiful song that called upon all Nature powers to blossom, the stone to grow softer and the soil to fill with oxygen for the new sprouts. And little by little, the place changed. The young flowers raised



their heads and a fine scent floated around. Leisa kept singing thanking nature for this miracle.

Morque was stunned by her beauty. He was so entranced he asked her to stay with him forever.

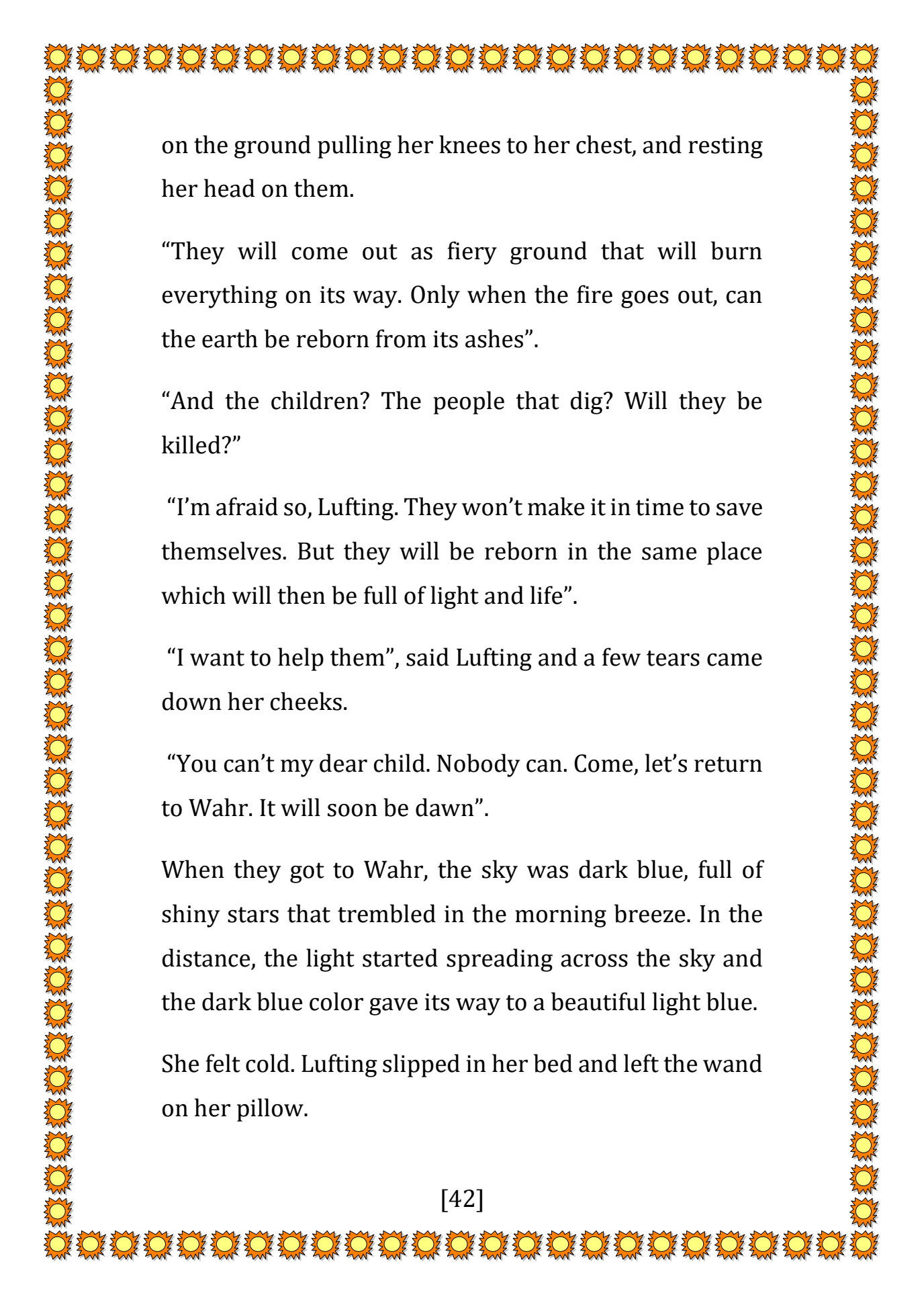
“Leisa? Would you be my wife? I need your light now that I’ve seen what’s like. I will be the most miserable being on earth without you! Please dear...don’t leave me in the dark...”

Leisa took him by the hand and led him even deeper spreading light on their way.

“Can you part with darkness, Morque? You are the king of night, after all”.

Morque put his arms around her and the Winged Love transformed them into hot lava that ran deep under the surface. Since then they’ve been strolling around bringing light and darkness in a tight embrace. The children and the people you saw digging try to set them free. They need the light to bring back life to the soil and breathe fresh air again.”

“And when they take them out, will everything be as before?” Lufting asked. In the meantime she was sitting



on the ground pulling her knees to her chest, and resting her head on them.

“They will come out as fiery ground that will burn everything on its way. Only when the fire goes out, can the earth be reborn from its ashes”.

“And the children? The people that dig? Will they be killed?”

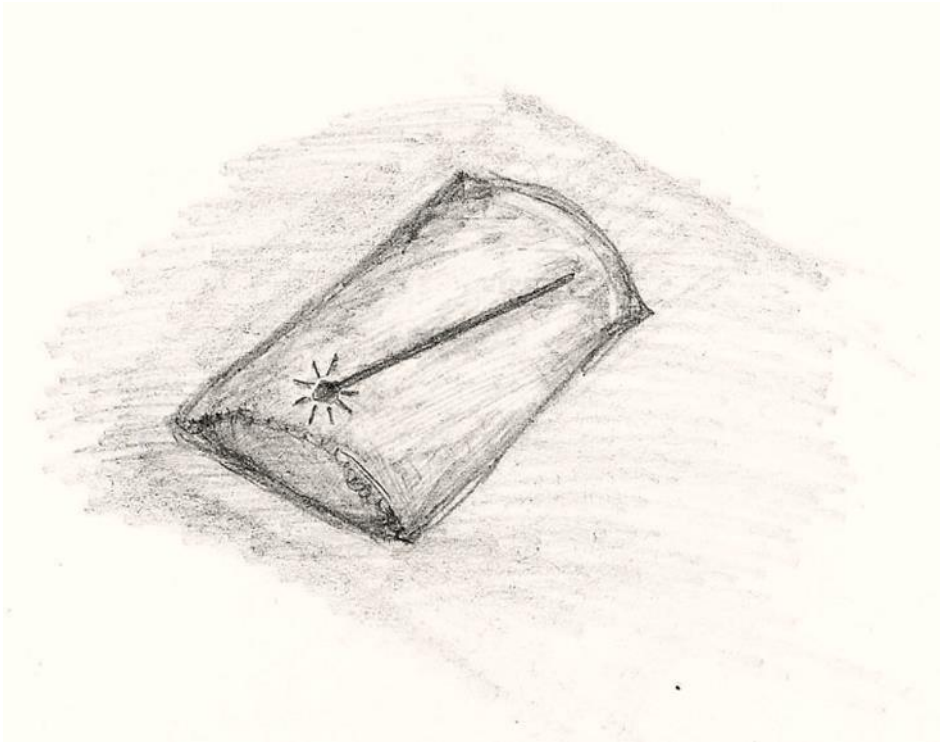
“I’m afraid so, Lufting. They won’t make it in time to save themselves. But they will be reborn in the same place which will then be full of light and life”.

“I want to help them”, said Lufting and a few tears came down her cheeks.

“You can’t my dear child. Nobody can. Come, let’s return to Wahr. It will soon be dawn”.

When they got to Wahr, the sky was dark blue, full of shiny stars that trembled in the morning breeze. In the distance, the light started spreading across the sky and the dark blue color gave its way to a beautiful light blue.

She felt cold. Lufting slipped in her bed and left the wand on her pillow.





Blomst

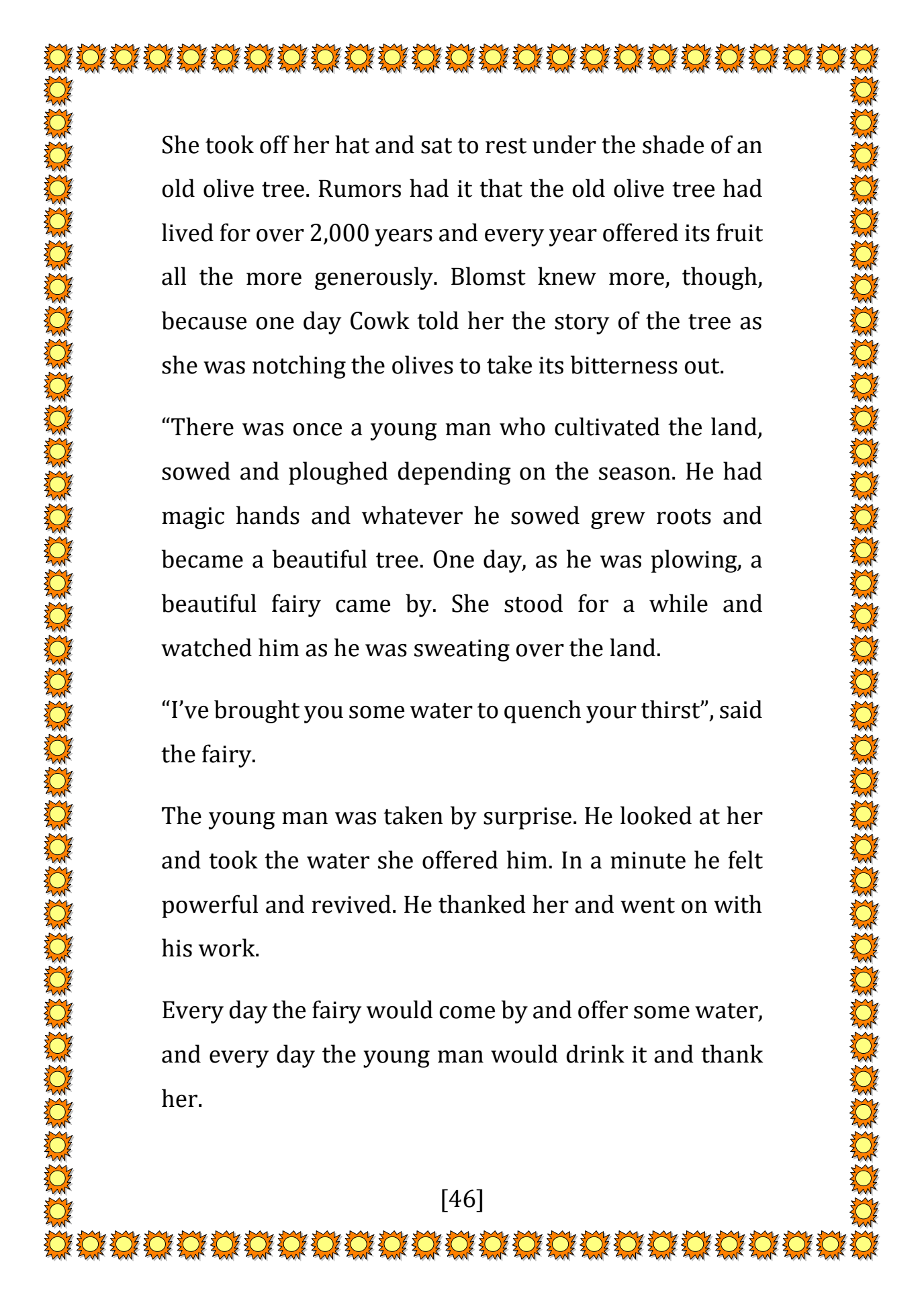
“

There's something wrong with my flowers today; I talk to them and they don't feel like talking. They don't seem very lively. I'll look it up in my book, lest I forget something". Blomst was talking to herself while watering her flowers. There was something she didn't like; something she couldn't put her finger on. Only she could see the difference; everyone else thought they looked the same like every other day.

Blomst had fair, shoulder-length hair pulled back in a ponytail. She usually wore a straw hat with a pink ribbon that swirled in the wind along with her ponytail. She mainly wore trousers –skirts or dresses were not her favorite- in many colors.



She was quite busy today. It was the time of year she planted seeds for chrysanthemums, violets and pansies. She took the shovel and the weeder and started working. She dug small holes in the ground, threw in a couple of seeds and went on until they all finished. She pressed the soil with her hands and watered every seed well to help it grow roots.



She took off her hat and sat to rest under the shade of an old olive tree. Rumors had it that the old olive tree had lived for over 2,000 years and every year offered its fruit all the more generously. Blomst knew more, though, because one day Cowk told her the story of the tree as she was notching the olives to take its bitterness out.

“There was once a young man who cultivated the land, sowed and ploughed depending on the season. He had magic hands and whatever he sowed grew roots and became a beautiful tree. One day, as he was plowing, a beautiful fairy came by. She stood for a while and watched him as he was sweating over the land.

“I’ve brought you some water to quench your thirst”, said the fairy.

The young man was taken by surprise. He looked at her and took the water she offered him. In a minute he felt powerful and revived. He thanked her and went on with his work.

Every day the fairy would come by and offer some water, and every day the young man would drink it and thank her.

One day he told her: "You come by every day and give me water to drink, quench my thirst and gain strength. Tell me, what can I give you in return?"

The fairy asked for a tree whose fruit would give the most nutritious juice that would cure everything. The young man promised so and planted an olive tree that gives its golden juice every year.

They say that when the young man grew old and died, the fairy took him under the olive tree and buried him in its shade".



Blomst suddenly sensed the ground moving under her feet and a hollow sound filled the air. The birds got scared and flew up and away while clouds filled the sky.

She got up and started running towards the house.



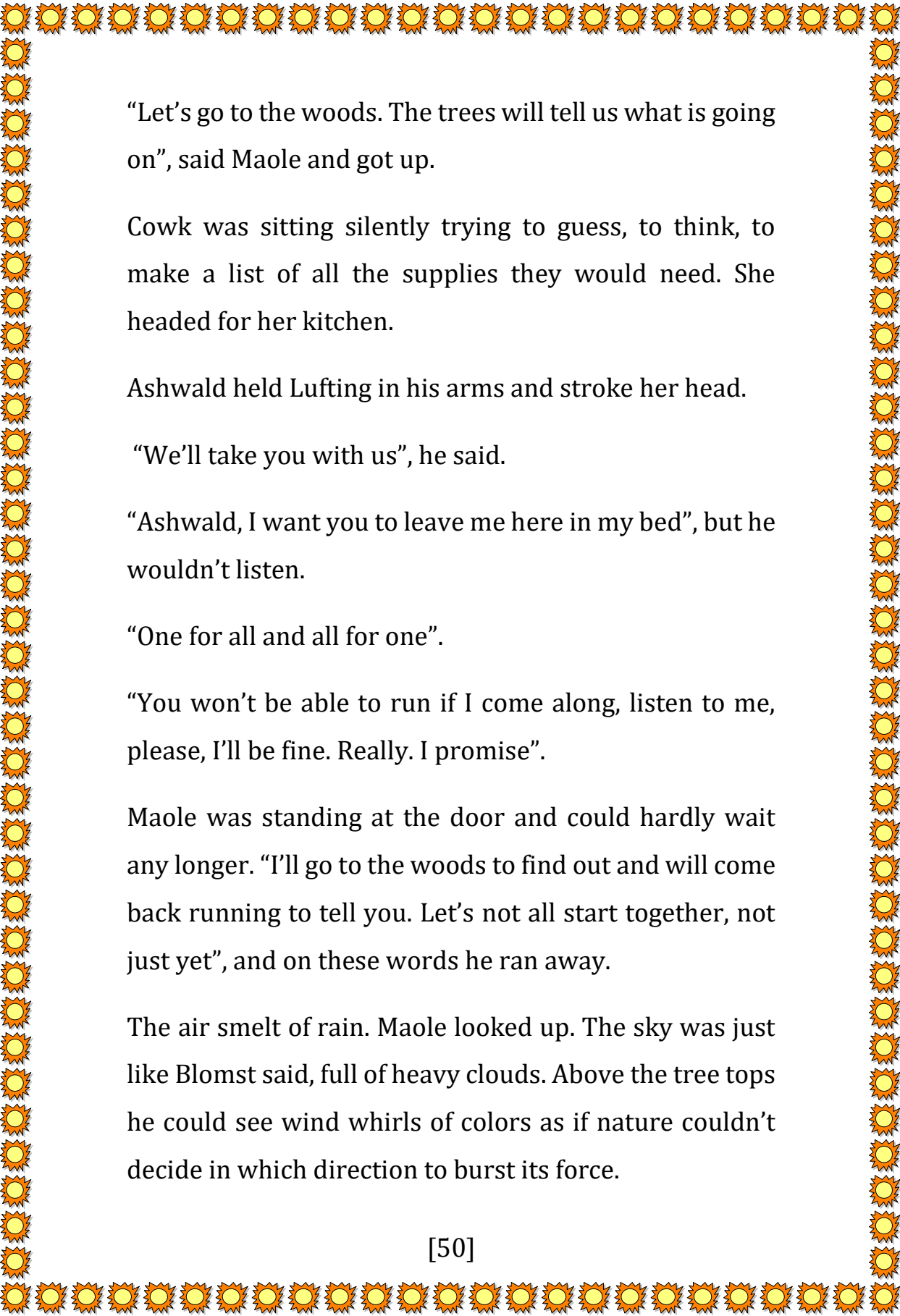
The big decision

Darkness covered nature. Trees took on a human form and called each other for help. Rain clouds gathered and a strong wind started blowing spreading the tree words all over Wahr.



When she reached home breathless, Blomst saw everyone sitting in front of the fireplace.

“What is going on outside?” asked Lufting. Blomst joined them. “It’s getting dark and a strong wind is blowing. I heard the trees whisper...I think rain is coming...”



“Let’s go to the woods. The trees will tell us what is going on”, said Maole and got up.

Cowk was sitting silently trying to guess, to think, to make a list of all the supplies they would need. She headed for her kitchen.

Ashwald held Lufting in his arms and stroke her head.

“We’ll take you with us”, he said.

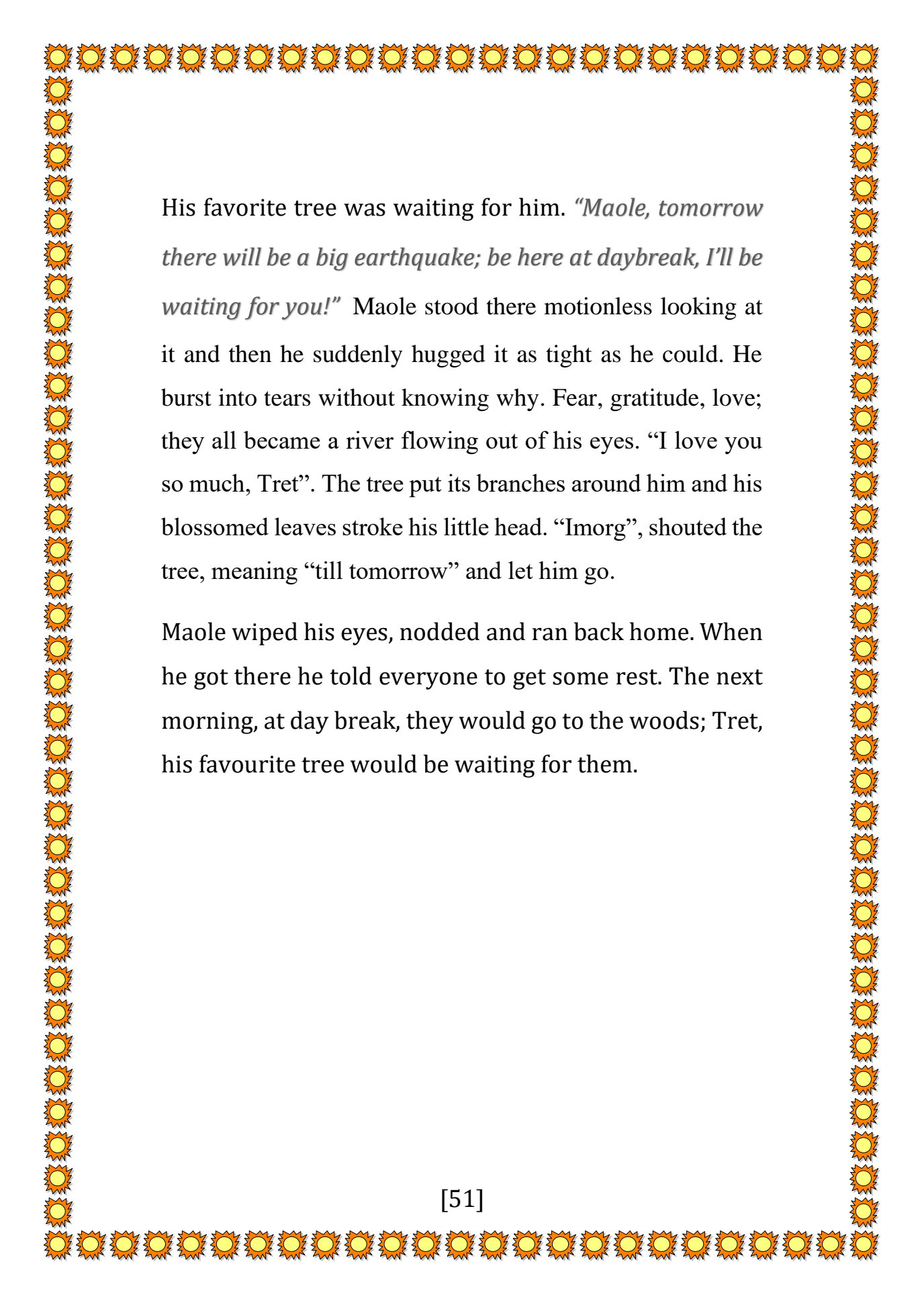
“Ashwald, I want you to leave me here in my bed”, but he wouldn’t listen.

“One for all and all for one”.

“You won’t be able to run if I come along, listen to me, please, I’ll be fine. Really. I promise”.

Maole was standing at the door and could hardly wait any longer. “I’ll go to the woods to find out and will come back running to tell you. Let’s not all start together, not just yet”, and on these words he ran away.

The air smelt of rain. Maole looked up. The sky was just like Blomst said, full of heavy clouds. Above the tree tops he could see wind whirls of colors as if nature couldn’t decide in which direction to burst its force.



His favorite tree was waiting for him. *“Maole, tomorrow there will be a big earthquake; be here at daybreak, I’ll be waiting for you!”* Maole stood there motionless looking at it and then he suddenly hugged it as tight as he could. He burst into tears without knowing why. Fear, gratitude, love; they all became a river flowing out of his eyes. “I love you so much, Tret”. The tree put its branches around him and his blossomed leaves stroke his little head. “Imorg”, shouted the tree, meaning “till tomorrow” and let him go.

Maole wiped his eyes, nodded and ran back home. When he got there he told everyone to get some rest. The next morning, at day break, they would go to the woods; Tret, his favourite tree would be waiting for them.



Lufting's new dress

“

Today I don't want us to fly away. I want us to talk”.

Lufting was lying on her bed looking at the fairy who was sitting by at her bedside.


“Leisjing? What will happen if I don't get back at dawn?”

The fairy was prepared for this question, because she knew that this was the last day the children would be safely tucked in their beds.

“You won't be able to wake up in this body again. Your friends won't be able to see you and you won't be able to talk to them. You need to learn to protect yourself from all flying creatures, always look for a safe place to spend the night, but yes, you'll be able to fly forever”.

“But I'll still be able to help, right Leisjing? I'll still be able to warn them, guard their way, right? Will I?”

“Of course you will, Lufting”, the fairy replied with a bittersweet smile. “There are many things you have to learn, but yes, you'll still be able to help.”



Lufting smiled broadly. A new life in the air was awaiting for her.

“You know what? Today I want to wear a rainbow-like dress so that at any given moment I’ll be able to choose which color I want to see. Can we change my dress?” She laughed and her eyes ran over the faces of all her friends in their beds; then she spoke to her magic wand.

“Today will be the last day, magic wand, that I’ll be asking for your help. I want you to help me break free of this body and then become a guardian angel for these children. Thank you so much for everything you’ve done for me!”

The wand lit up and upon a wonderful rainbow glow a new dress was waiting for Lufting at her bedside.

“How beautiful! Thank you” and before she could finish her sentence, a bright light filled the room and there she was, standing in her bright new dress.

“Ready?” smiled Leisjing.

Lufting smiled back, looked around, looked at herself sleeping and with a nod of her head they set off on their journey.





Farewell

“

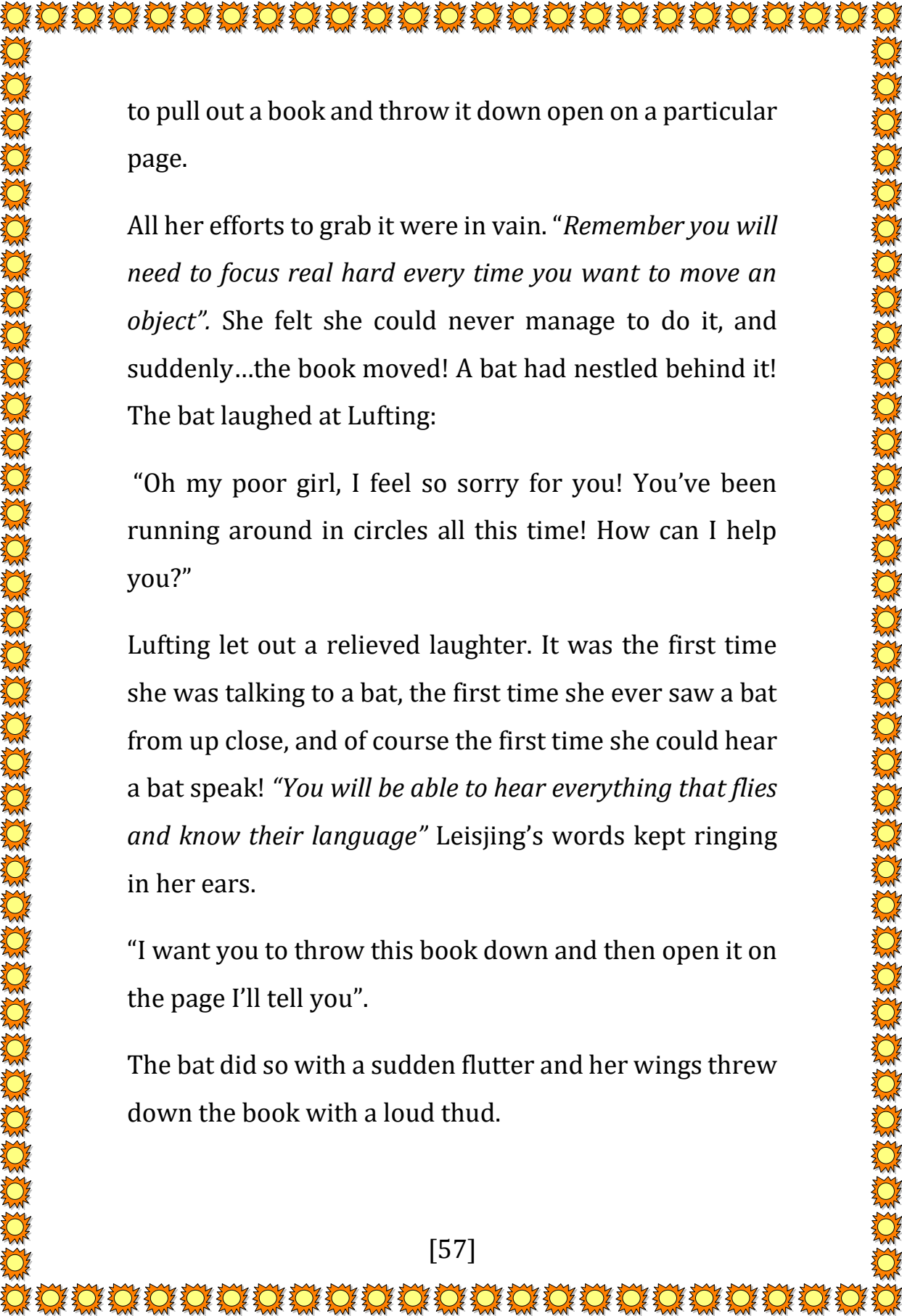
Lufting wake up! Wake up! What’s wrong with you?”

Ashwald was shaking her hard to make her open her eyes but she was lying there like a wax doll with a faint smile on her lips.

Tears started running down his eyes. He looked at her and couldn’t bear the sight. All children gathered around them. Ashwald kneeled by her bed and kept sobbing “I love you Lufting, wake up, please, do it for me!”

Lufting sat beside her body. She could see her friends and wanted to tell them that she’s absolutely fine, that they shouldn’t cry, that she loves them and that now she’s better than ever, that she’s free, she will always be by their side and look after them. She wanted to say much but she couldn’t. And she couldn’t bear to see them like that.

Then she came up with an idea. She walked through the door, ran down the stairs without making a single sound and flew to the top shelf of the bookcase. She tried hard



to pull out a book and throw it down open on a particular page.

All her efforts to grab it were in vain. *“Remember you will need to focus real hard every time you want to move an object”*. She felt she could never manage to do it, and suddenly...the book moved! A bat had nestled behind it! The bat laughed at Lufting:

“Oh my poor girl, I feel so sorry for you! You’ve been running around in circles all this time! How can I help you?”

Lufting let out a relieved laughter. It was the first time she was talking to a bat, the first time she ever saw a bat from up close, and of course the first time she could hear a bat speak! *“You will be able to hear everything that flies and know their language”* Leisjing’s words kept ringing in her ears.

“I want you to throw this book down and then open it on the page I’ll tell you”.

The bat did so with a sudden flutter and her wings threw down the book with a loud thud.

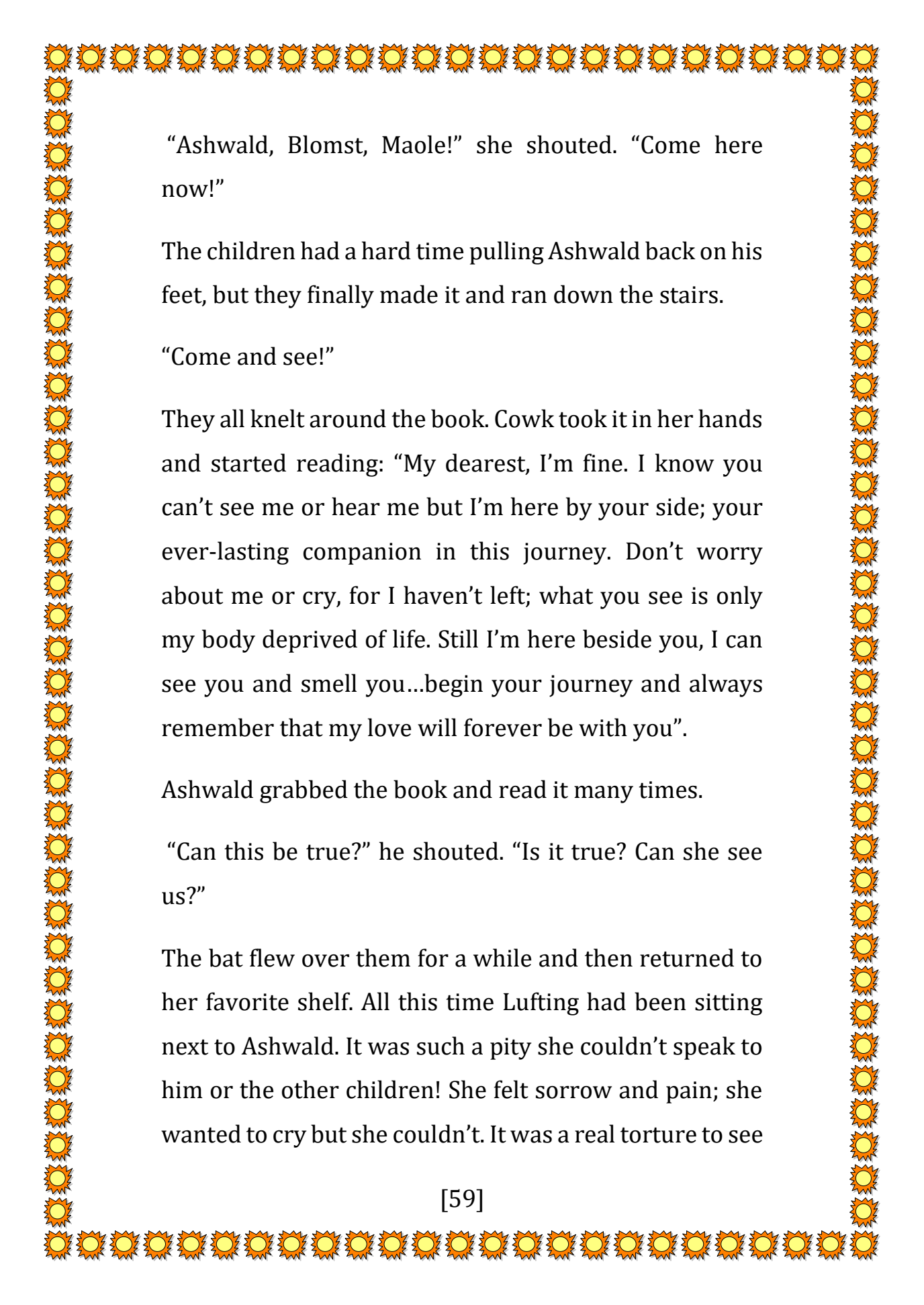
“Quick! Find page 26. Hurry up, they’re coming!”



The sound made the children jump. Cowk ran down to see what it was. That moment the bat found Lufting’s page...page number 26.

Cowk stood motionless looking at the book and the bat flied back onto the shelf. Lufting was holding her breath; she was afraid Cowk might close the book without reading it!

Yet Cowk took a step forward and knelt to pick up the book. It was open on a page featuring the painting of a fairy in a beautiful light- blue dress.



“Ashwald, Blomst, Maole!” she shouted. “Come here now!”

The children had a hard time pulling Ashwald back on his feet, but they finally made it and ran down the stairs.

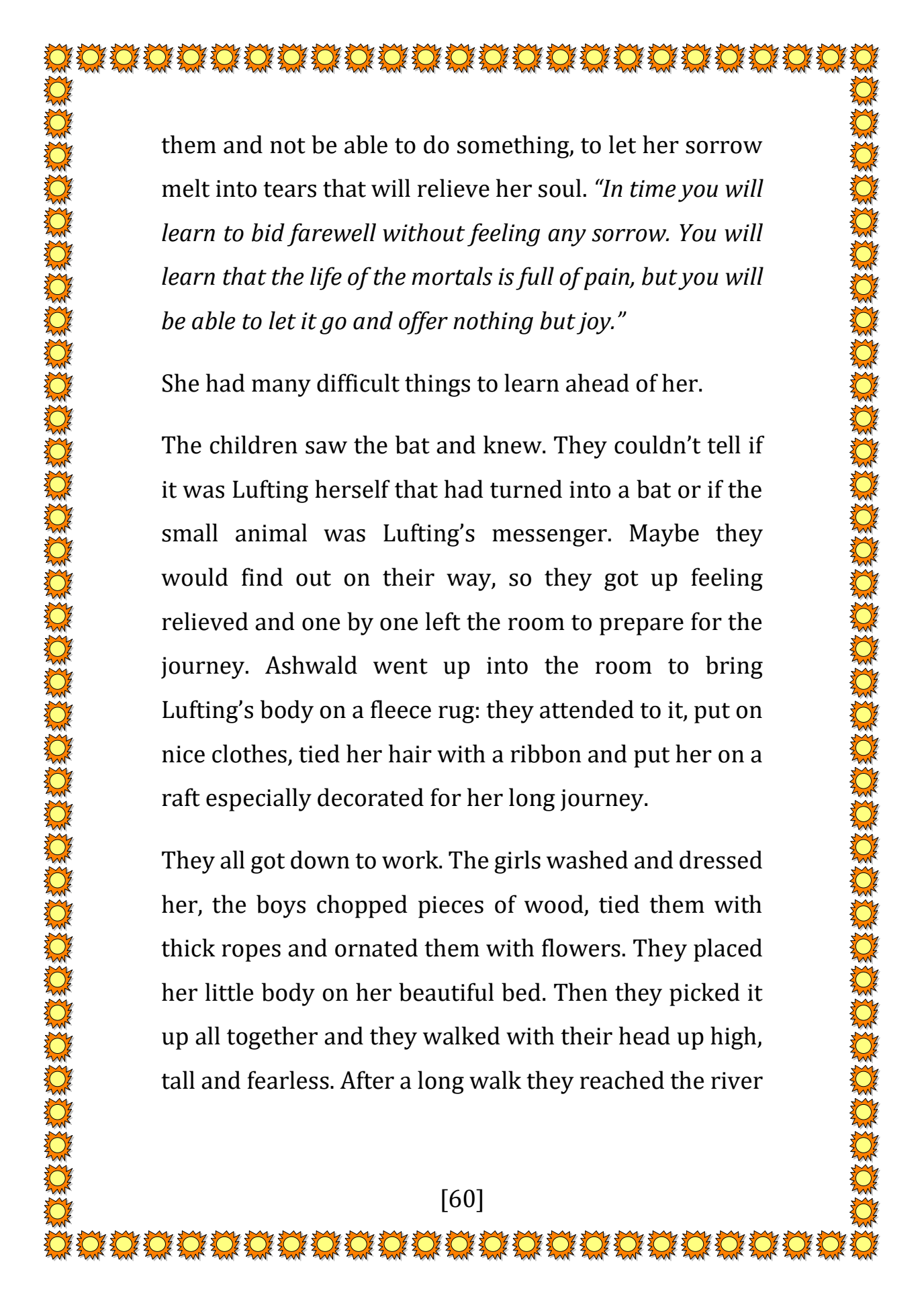
“Come and see!”

They all knelt around the book. Cowk took it in her hands and started reading: “My dearest, I’m fine. I know you can’t see me or hear me but I’m here by your side; your ever-lasting companion in this journey. Don’t worry about me or cry, for I haven’t left; what you see is only my body deprived of life. Still I’m here beside you, I can see you and smell you...begin your journey and always remember that my love will forever be with you”.

Ashwald grabbed the book and read it many times.

“Can this be true?” he shouted. “Is it true? Can she see us?”

The bat flew over them for a while and then returned to her favorite shelf. All this time Lufting had been sitting next to Ashwald. It was such a pity she couldn’t speak to him or the other children! She felt sorrow and pain; she wanted to cry but she couldn’t. It was a real torture to see

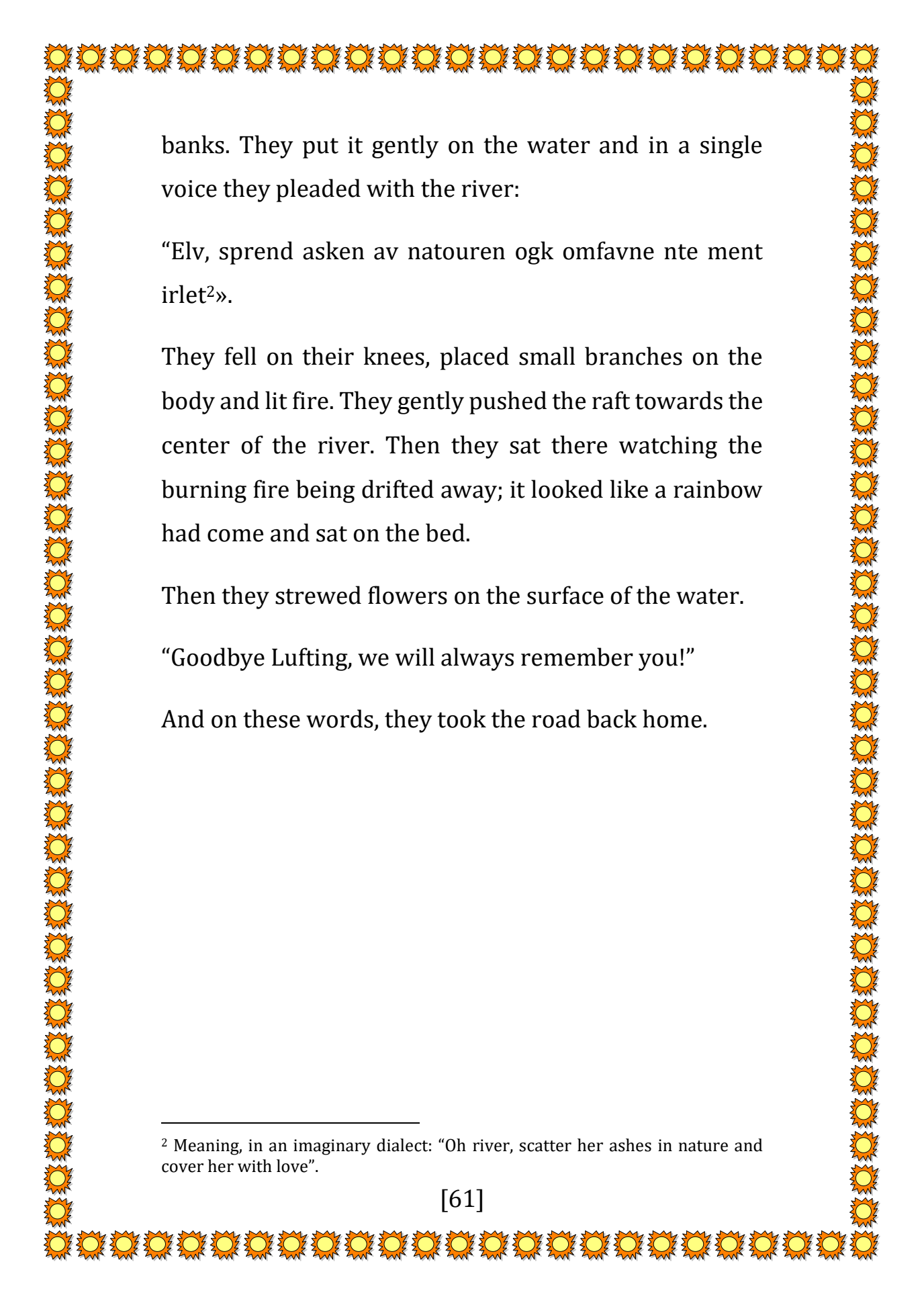
A decorative border of sunflowers surrounds the text. The sunflowers are arranged in a rectangular frame, with a row of sunflowers along the top, bottom, and sides. Each sunflower has a yellow center and orange petals.

them and not be able to do something, to let her sorrow melt into tears that will relieve her soul. *“In time you will learn to bid farewell without feeling any sorrow. You will learn that the life of the mortals is full of pain, but you will be able to let it go and offer nothing but joy.”*

She had many difficult things to learn ahead of her.

The children saw the bat and knew. They couldn't tell if it was Lufting herself that had turned into a bat or if the small animal was Lufting's messenger. Maybe they would find out on their way, so they got up feeling relieved and one by one left the room to prepare for the journey. Ashwald went up into the room to bring Lufting's body on a fleece rug: they attended to it, put on nice clothes, tied her hair with a ribbon and put her on a raft especially decorated for her long journey.

They all got down to work. The girls washed and dressed her, the boys chopped pieces of wood, tied them with thick ropes and ornated them with flowers. They placed her little body on her beautiful bed. Then they picked it up all together and they walked with their head up high, tall and fearless. After a long walk they reached the river



banks. They put it gently on the water and in a single voice they pleaded with the river:

“Elv, spreid asken av natouren ogk omfavne nte ment irlet²».

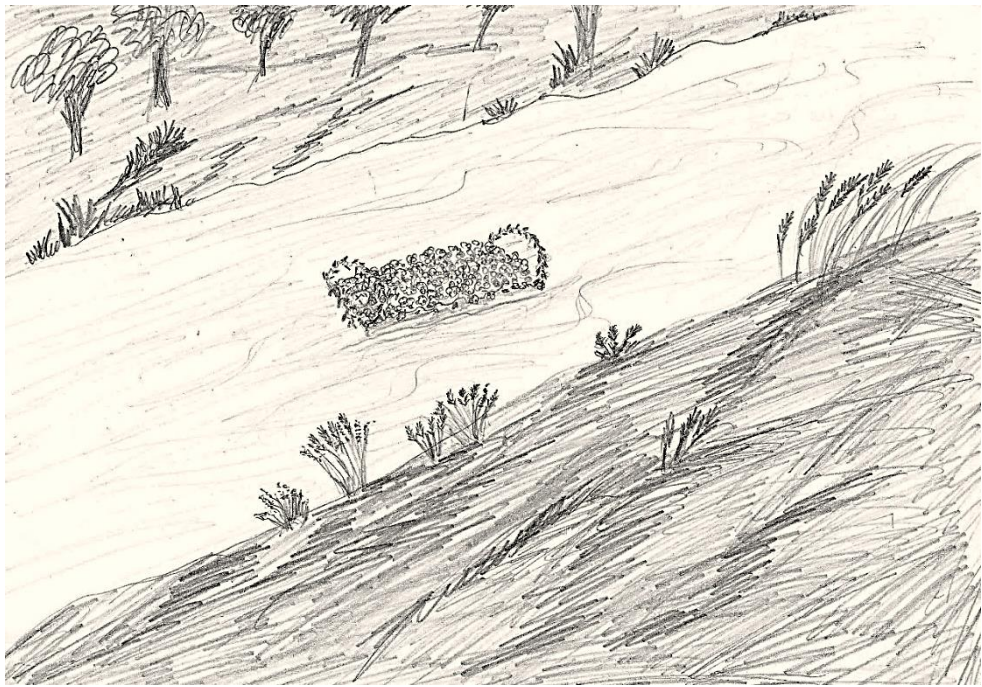
They fell on their knees, placed small branches on the body and lit fire. They gently pushed the raft towards the center of the river. Then they sat there watching the burning fire being drifted away; it looked like a rainbow had come and sat on the bed.

Then they strewed flowers on the surface of the water.

“Goodbye Lufting, we will always remember you!”

And on these words, they took the road back home.

² Meaning, in an imaginary dialect: “Oh river, scatter her ashes in nature and cover her with love”.





Bright Yellow


Lufting was sitting at the river bank looking at the flames rising from the raft as it was drifted away. After a while it looked like a tiny little light looming in the horizon.

She felt confused. It was so strange to look at her body burning, her friends feeling sad and, on the other hand, she felt free. She should be feeling happy, but instead she felt like crying, but then again she knew she couldn't...She clasped her arms around her legs and bent down to look at herself in the water. No reflection; her image was nowhere to be seen! Suddenly she felt this strong need to look at herself; she was afraid she didn't exist, she was afraid that it was all a dream and that she was dead!

This thought scared her. She tried to splash her hands into the river, but in vain. The water remained still.

"I'll scream to see if anyone can hear me", she thought.

"Leisjing, Leisjing where are you? Can anybody hear me?" she screamed again and again at the top of her voice




until she got tired. She couldn't bear her own weight, as if she wore her old body again, the one that used to be a burden in the past but now didn't exist anymore. Loneliness took hold of her.

"Why aren't you happy? You can fly, you can do whatever you want, well, get up and do it!" the voice inside her said loudly full of anger for seeing her so sad.

"I don't know. I suddenly feel there is no one here, I'm all alone. I don't know who to trust, no one can see me, I don't even know if I exist...How do we know we exist if others can't see us? No one can see me, I can't even see myself when I look into the river. If it wasn't for that bat...", she was thinking out loud and suddenly she came up with an idea.

She got up, tossed her dress, saw the colors and started laughing. She laughed out loud and freely, she burst into laughter so much that she rolled on the ground laughing. And when she finally stopped, she took another look at her skirt with all the colors of the rainbow.

"How silly of me! If I can see me, that will do! Yes, I *can* see me!" she shouted full of excitement and picked the color she would give herself that day. "Today I'll pick



yellow, the brightest yellow in the world” and on these words she flew towards the house smiling from ear to ear.

She thought someone might be waiting for her.



Leaving Wahr

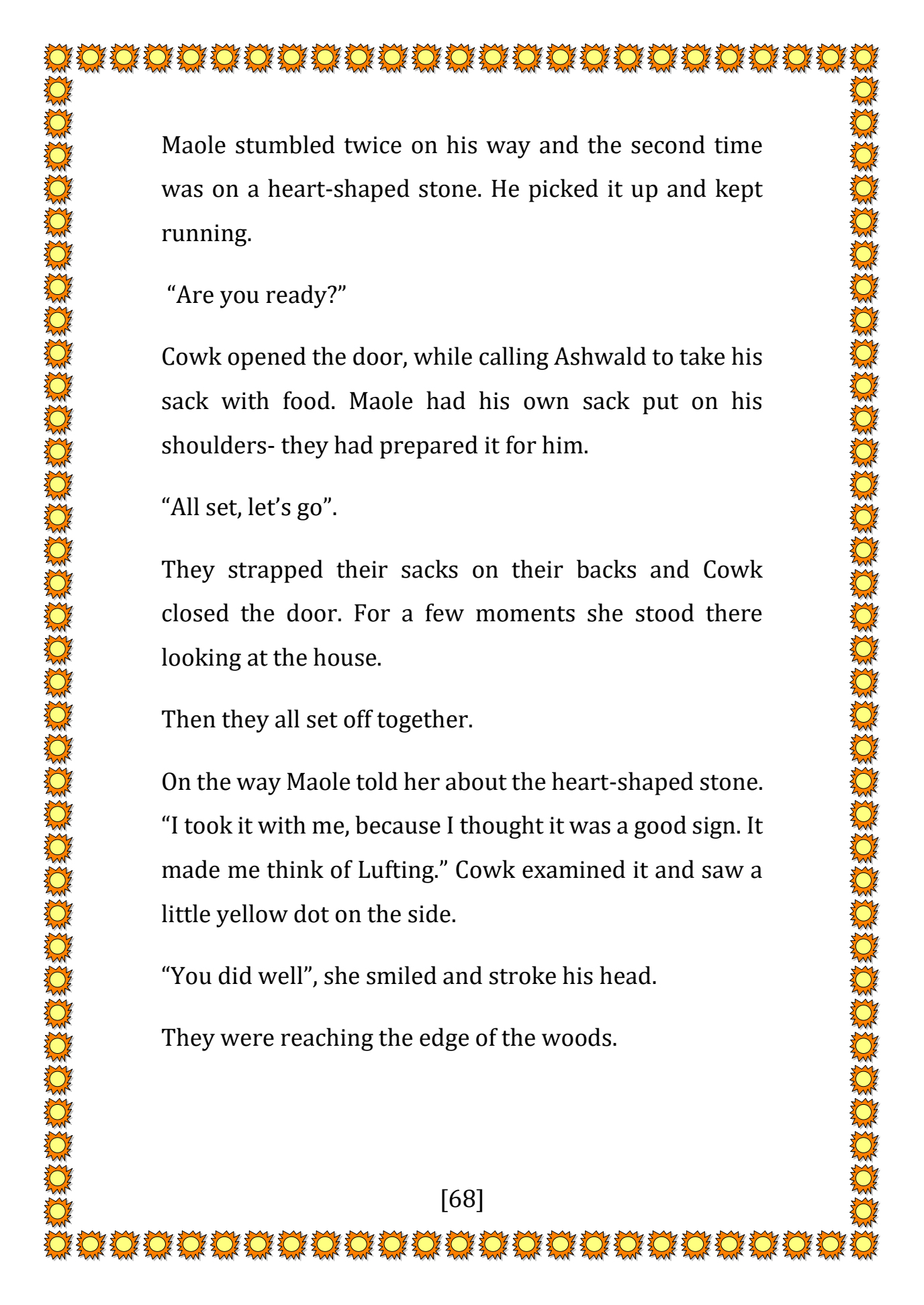
The children were getting ready real fast. Maole rushed to Tret to find out if there was any news and let the tree know about their delay. His favorite tree was waiting for them since dawn and the sun was already mid sky and was burning hot.

“Why are you so late?”

“Tret, Lufting’s dead. Or maybe she’s not. Her soul may still be alive but we saw her frozen in her bed this morning. She wasn’t moving...” and went on about how they prepared her last bed and decorated it with flowers, how they dressed her until the moment they saw the flames floating on the river.

Tret hugged him and a tear seemed to be flowing down its trunk. He felt the child’s fear, his pain of loss, his agony for the unknown.

“Leisa and Morque want to be set free, hurry up”, and on these words he let him go, pushed him gently and sent him off to bring the others.



Maole stumbled twice on his way and the second time was on a heart-shaped stone. He picked it up and kept running.

“Are you ready?”

Cowk opened the door, while calling Ashwald to take his sack with food. Maole had his own sack put on his shoulders- they had prepared it for him.

“All set, let’s go”.

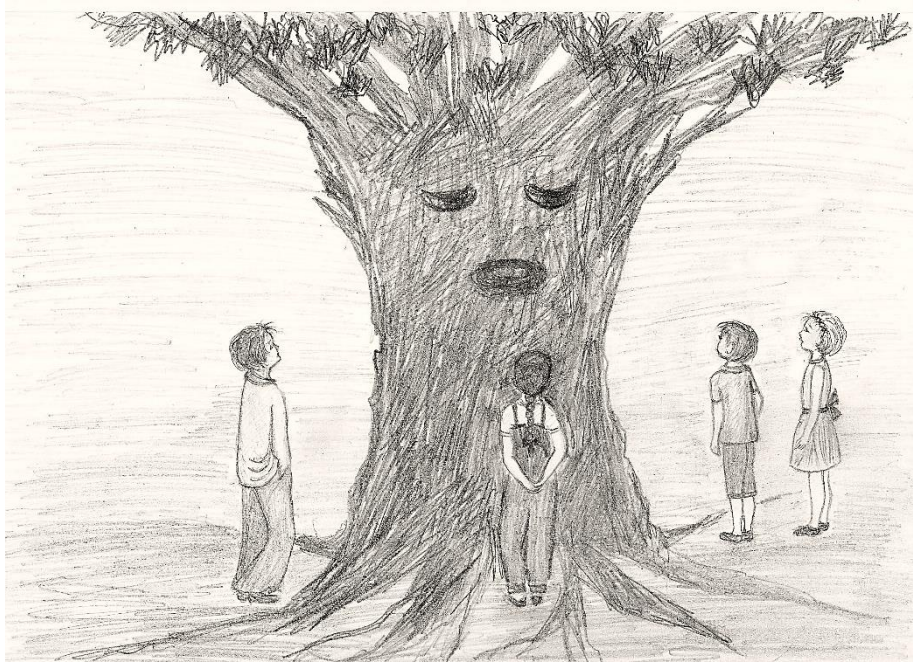
They strapped their sacks on their backs and Cowk closed the door. For a few moments she stood there looking at the house.

Then they all set off together.

On the way Maole told her about the heart-shaped stone. “I took it with me, because I thought it was a good sign. It made me think of Lufting.” Cowk examined it and saw a little yellow dot on the side.

“You did well”, she smiled and stroke his head.

They were reaching the edge of the woods.



Lufting learns to talk

“

Please, come with me, I need your help!”

“I’m fine here. Now that the children are gone, I can fly freely”.

“And you’ll be locked up in here? Come on, it’s important, you’re the only one who can see me and you can show them what I want to tell them”.

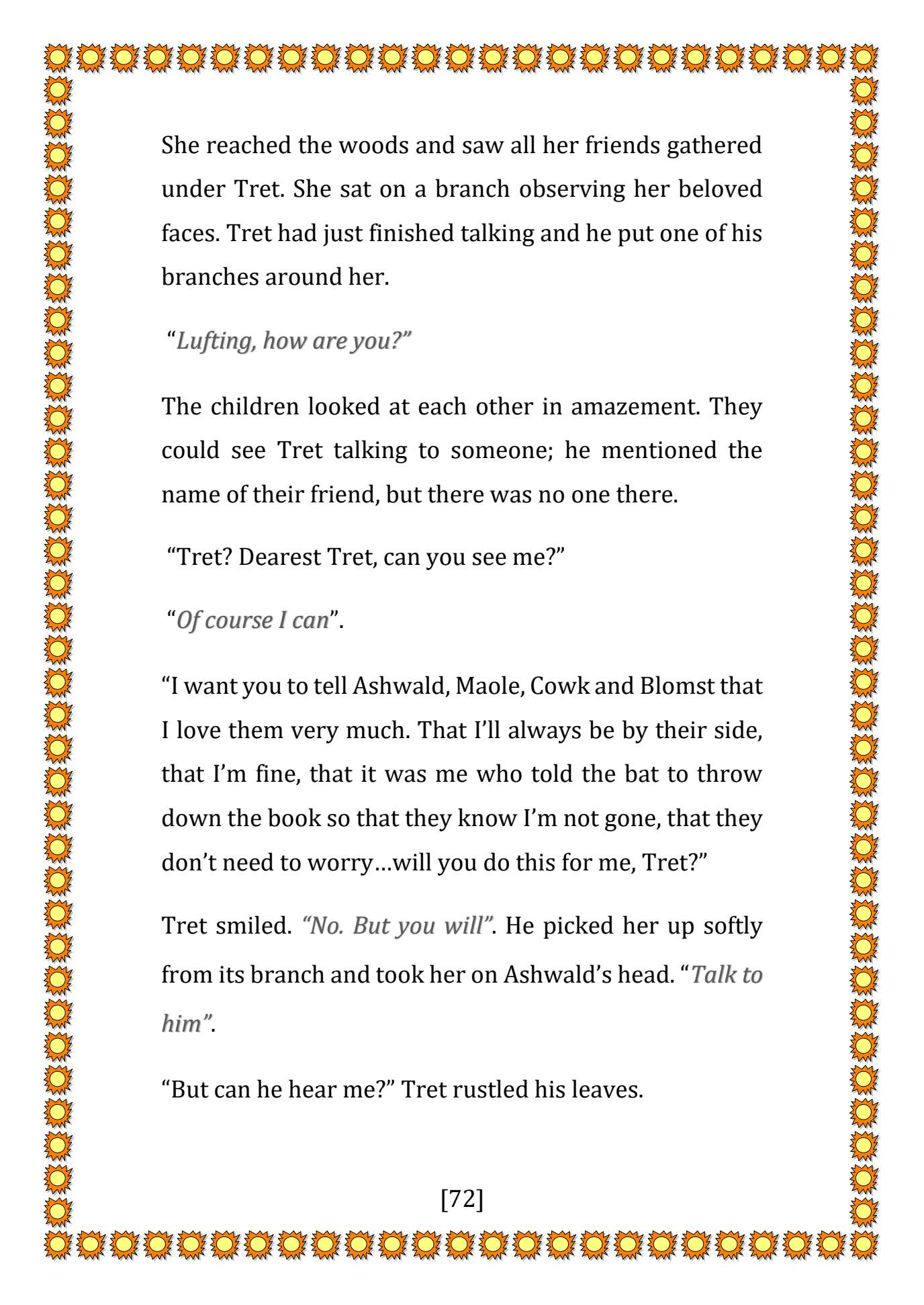
“Excuse me, are you telling me that you’ll always be needing someone to help you?”

Lufting was shocked; this was a painful truth. It was Ashwald who helped her before, when she couldn’t move her body, and now she was asking the help of a bat to communicate with her friends.

She lowered her eyes and started to leave. No sooner had she flown out of the window than she turned back: “Baltre³, thank you for the book”, and with a single movement she flew up in the air.

³ Baltre= bat





She reached the woods and saw all her friends gathered under Tret. She sat on a branch observing her beloved faces. Tret had just finished talking and he put one of his branches around her.

“Lufting, how are you?”

The children looked at each other in amazement. They could see Tret talking to someone; he mentioned the name of their friend, but there was no one there.

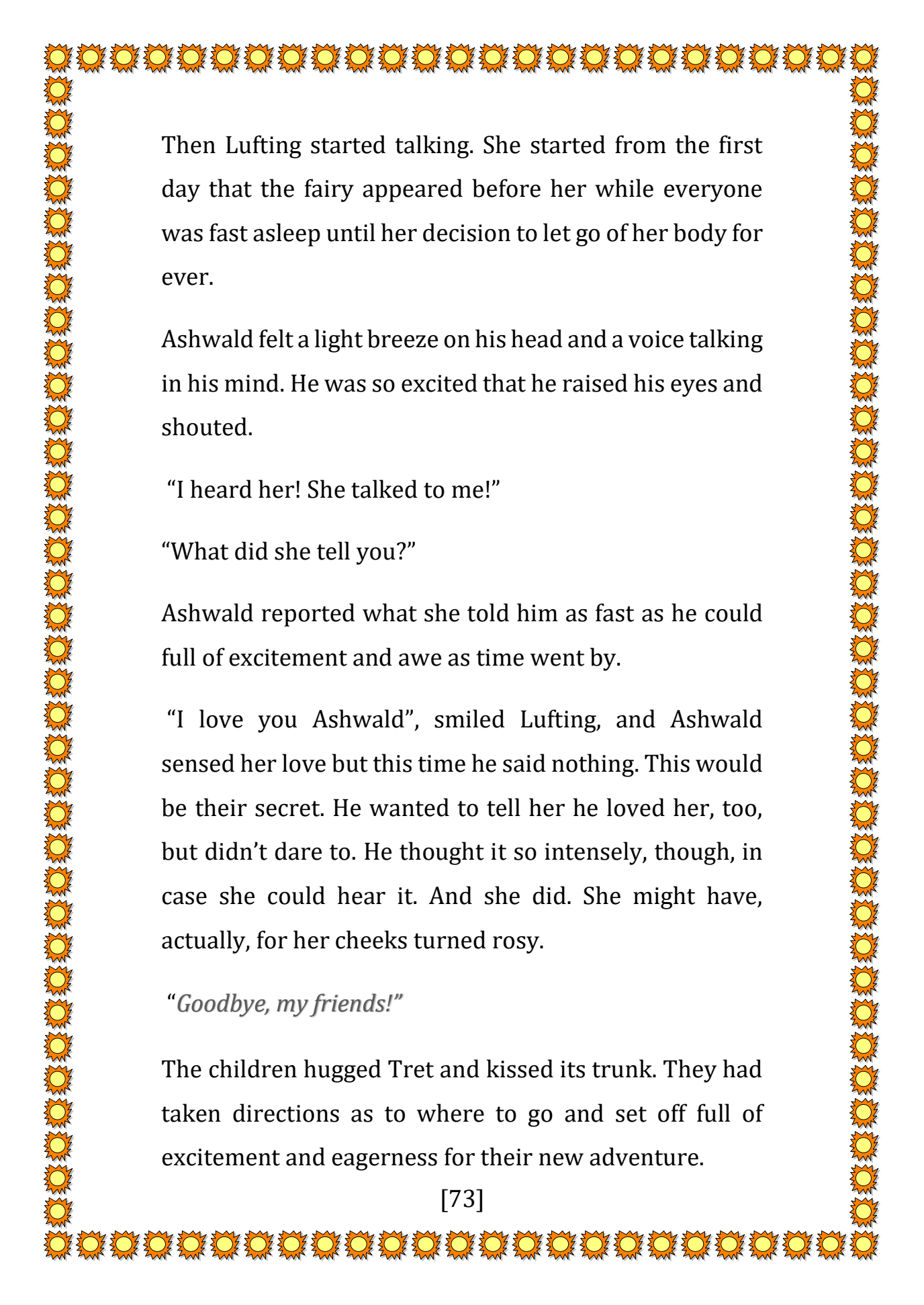
“Tret? Dearest Tret, can you see me?”

“Of course I can”.

“I want you to tell Ashwald, Maole, Cowk and Blomst that I love them very much. That I’ll always be by their side, that I’m fine, that it was me who told the bat to throw down the book so that they know I’m not gone, that they don’t need to worry...will you do this for me, Tret?”

Tret smiled. *“No. But you will”*. He picked her up softly from its branch and took her on Ashwald’s head. *“Talk to him”*.

“But can he hear me?” Tret rustled his leaves.



Then Lufting started talking. She started from the first day that the fairy appeared before her while everyone was fast asleep until her decision to let go of her body for ever.

Ashwald felt a light breeze on his head and a voice talking in his mind. He was so excited that he raised his eyes and shouted.

“I heard her! She talked to me!”

“What did she tell you?”

Ashwald reported what she told him as fast as he could full of excitement and awe as time went by.

“I love you Ashwald”, smiled Lufting, and Ashwald sensed her love but this time he said nothing. This would be their secret. He wanted to tell her he loved her, too, but didn’t dare to. He thought it so intensely, though, in case she could hear it. And she did. She might have, actually, for her cheeks turned rosy.

“Goodbye, my friends!”

The children hugged Tret and kissed its trunk. They had taken directions as to where to go and set off full of excitement and eagerness for their new adventure.



A decorative border of small, stylized suns with yellow centers and orange rays, arranged in a continuous line around the perimeter of the page.

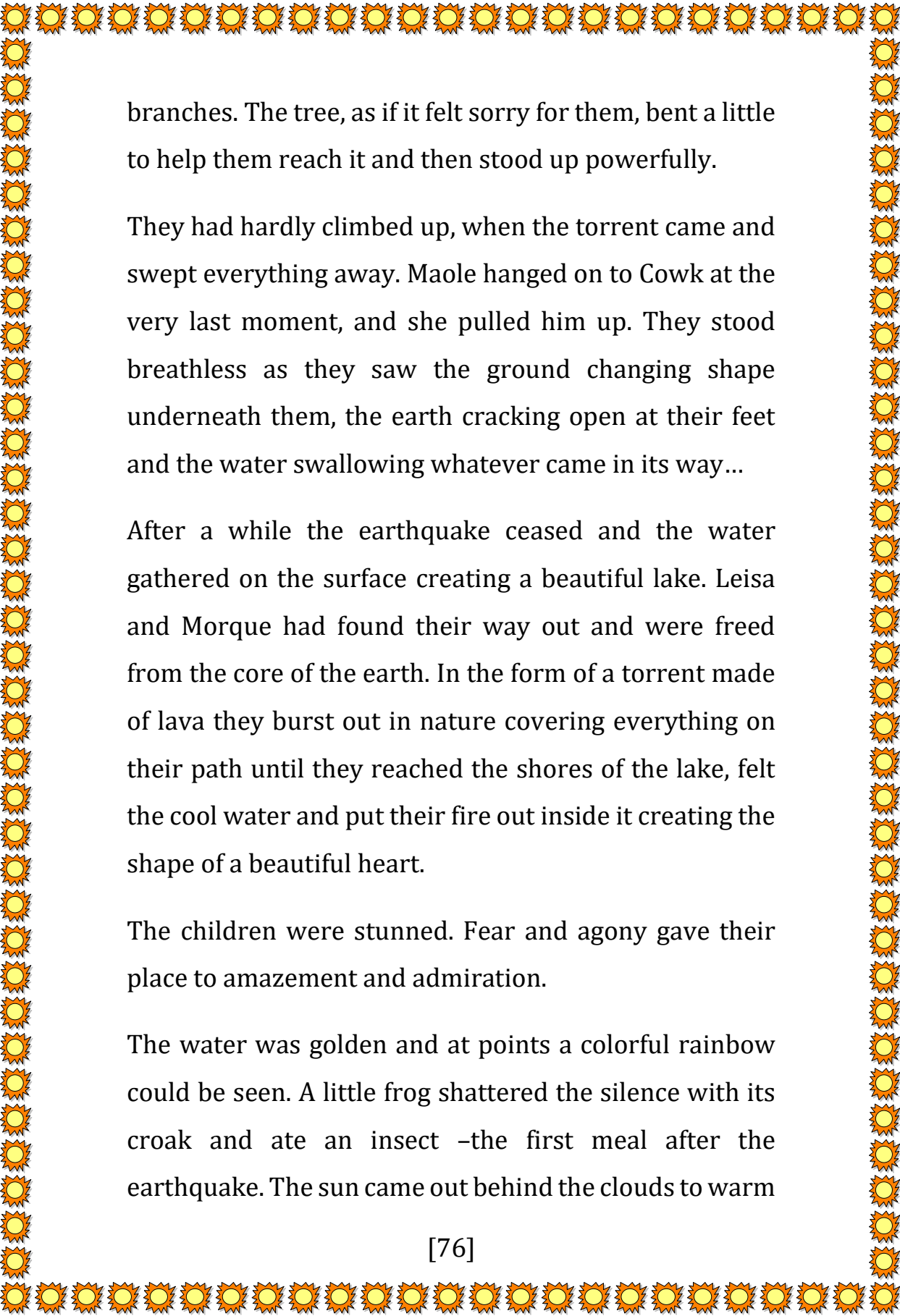
Heart of Lake

The woods were trembling under their feet. They felt the frozen wind on their faces but tried to stand still waiting for the earthquake to cease.

Suddenly, the ground cracked open in many spots in front of them real fast. "This way!" shouted Ashwald and took them away from the path and near the tree trunks. They clenched onto the trunks for as long as the earth was shaking. They saw bushes disappear, rocks and stones tumbling down from afar uprooted by an evil fury.

Lufting flew higher up to see what was happening farther away. The mountain was angry and started shedding off all its burden: bushes, uprooted trunks, stones, all started rolling down as if racing each other until they met the swollen waters of the river that carried them away.

She flew lower to take a better look and saw the water flowing towards the woods. She was scared and rushed to Ashwald. "Quick, climb on the tree as high as you can!" Ashwald heard her and sensed the danger. He told the rest and they all started climbing on the highest



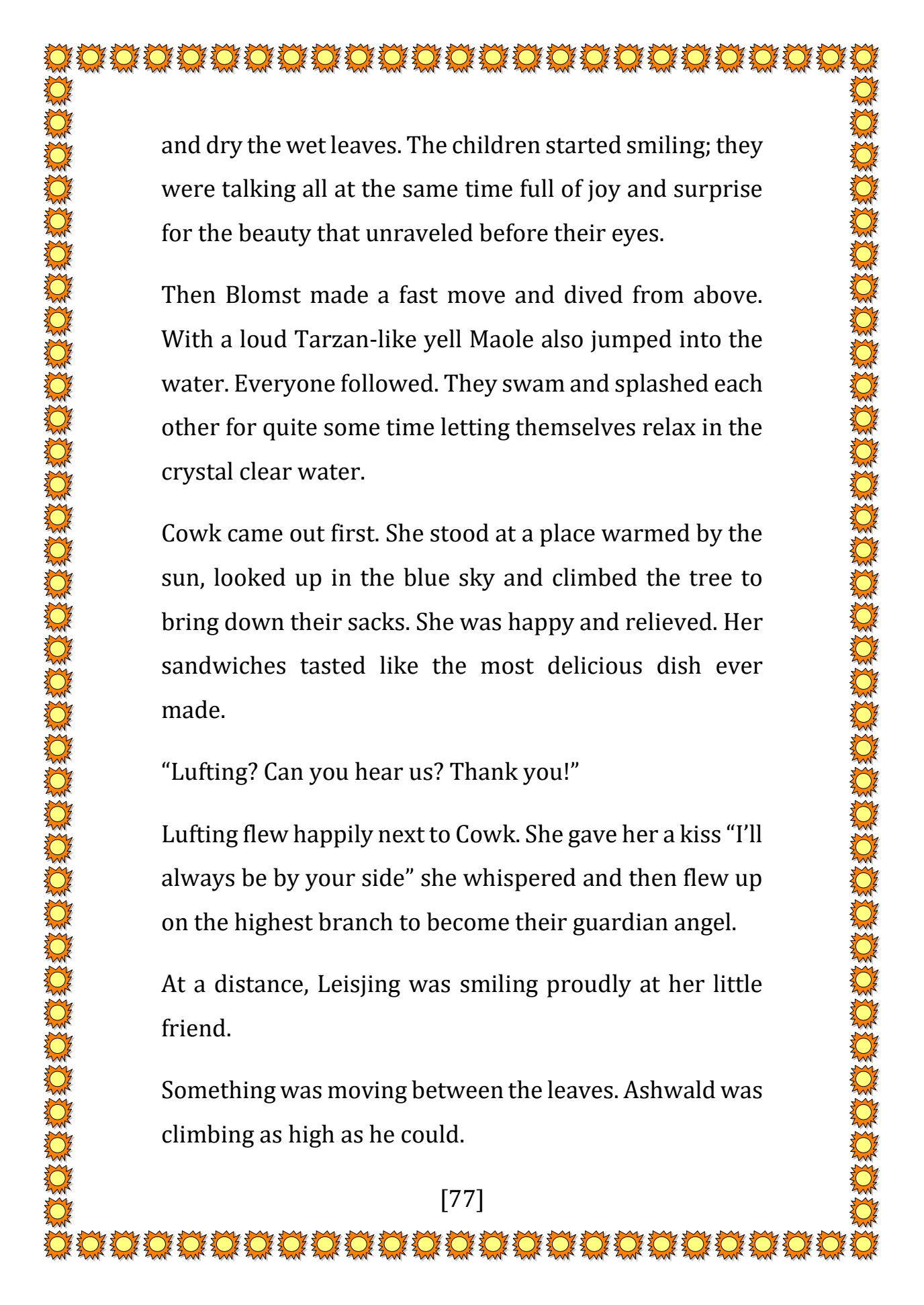
branches. The tree, as if it felt sorry for them, bent a little to help them reach it and then stood up powerfully.

They had hardly climbed up, when the torrent came and swept everything away. Maole hanged on to Cowk at the very last moment, and she pulled him up. They stood breathless as they saw the ground changing shape underneath them, the earth cracking open at their feet and the water swallowing whatever came in its way...

After a while the earthquake ceased and the water gathered on the surface creating a beautiful lake. Leisa and Morque had found their way out and were freed from the core of the earth. In the form of a torrent made of lava they burst out in nature covering everything on their path until they reached the shores of the lake, felt the cool water and put their fire out inside it creating the shape of a beautiful heart.

The children were stunned. Fear and agony gave their place to amazement and admiration.

The water was golden and at points a colorful rainbow could be seen. A little frog shattered the silence with its croak and ate an insect –the first meal after the earthquake. The sun came out behind the clouds to warm



and dry the wet leaves. The children started smiling; they were talking all at the same time full of joy and surprise for the beauty that unraveled before their eyes.

Then Blomst made a fast move and dived from above. With a loud Tarzan-like yell Maole also jumped into the water. Everyone followed. They swam and splashed each other for quite some time letting themselves relax in the crystal clear water.

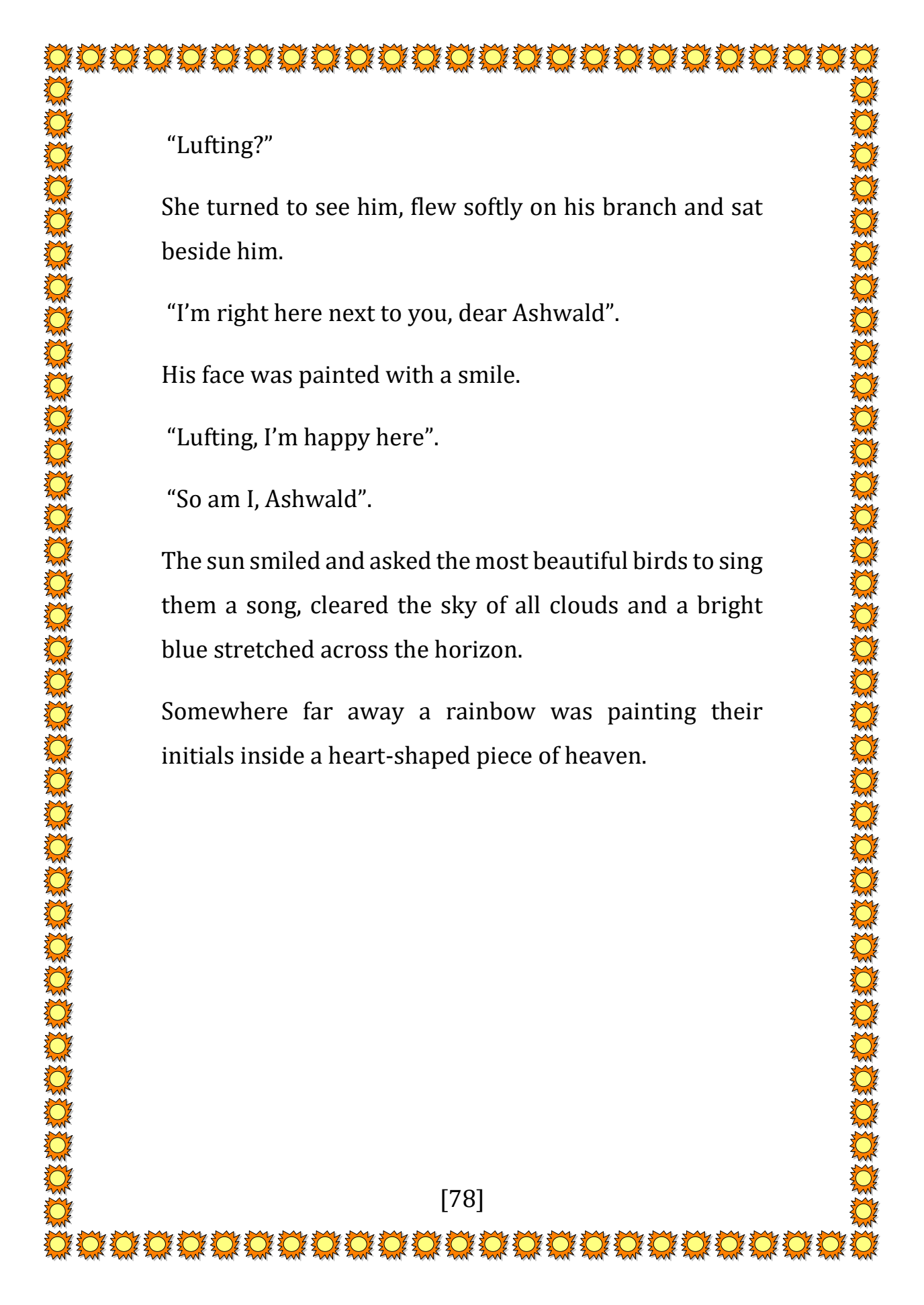
Cowk came out first. She stood at a place warmed by the sun, looked up in the blue sky and climbed the tree to bring down their sacks. She was happy and relieved. Her sandwiches tasted like the most delicious dish ever made.

“Lufting? Can you hear us? Thank you!”

Lufting flew happily next to Cowk. She gave her a kiss “I’ll always be by your side” she whispered and then flew up on the highest branch to become their guardian angel.

At a distance, Leisjing was smiling proudly at her little friend.

Something was moving between the leaves. Ashwald was climbing as high as he could.



“Lufting?”

She turned to see him, flew softly on his branch and sat beside him.

“I’m right here next to you, dear Ashwald”.

His face was painted with a smile.

“Lufting, I’m happy here”.

“So am I, Ashwald”.

The sun smiled and asked the most beautiful birds to sing them a song, cleared the sky of all clouds and a bright blue stretched across the horizon.

Somewhere far away a rainbow was painting their initials inside a heart-shaped piece of heaven.



∞ END ∞