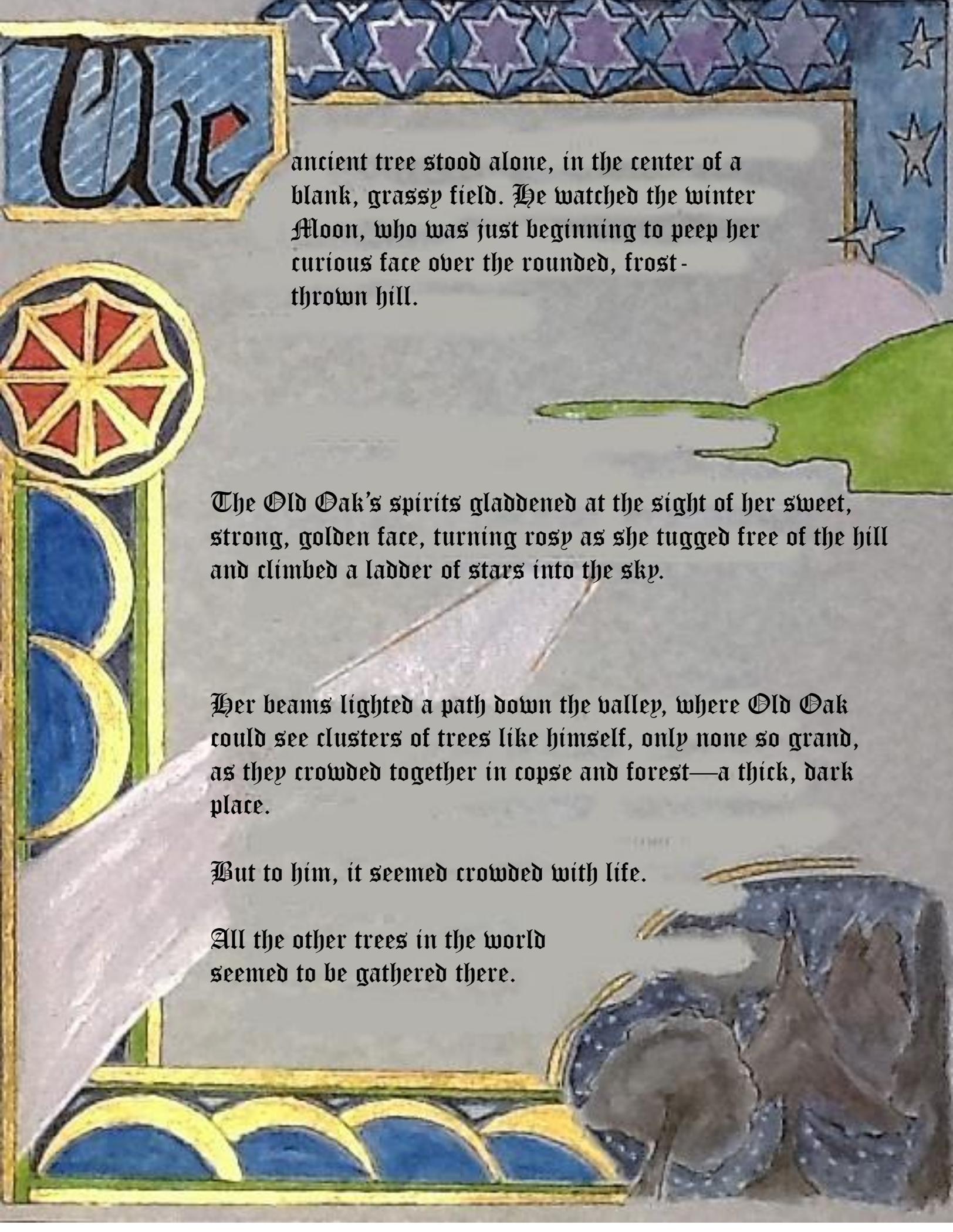




OAK, MOON, STAR
BAT

by
Lori Covington



Un ancient tree stood alone, in the center of a blank, grassy field. He watched the winter Moon, who was just beginning to peep her curious face over the rounded, frost-thrown hill.

The Old Oak's spirits gladdened at the sight of her sweet, strong, golden face, turning rosy as she tugged free of the hill and climbed a ladder of stars into the sky.

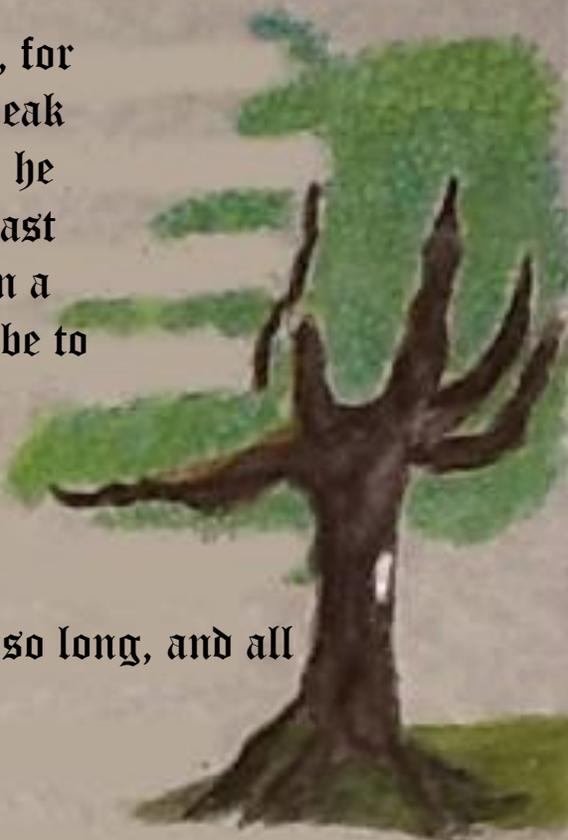
Her beams lighted a path down the valley, where Old Oak could see clusters of trees like himself, only none so grand, as they crowded together in copse and forest—a thick, dark place.

But to him, it seemed crowded with life.

All the other trees in the world seemed to be gathered there.



lonely,” he said to himself, for there was no one else to speak to. For hundreds of years, he had stood alone, since the last fairy had gone away, to join a circus, He’d heard, or maybe to work in Computers.

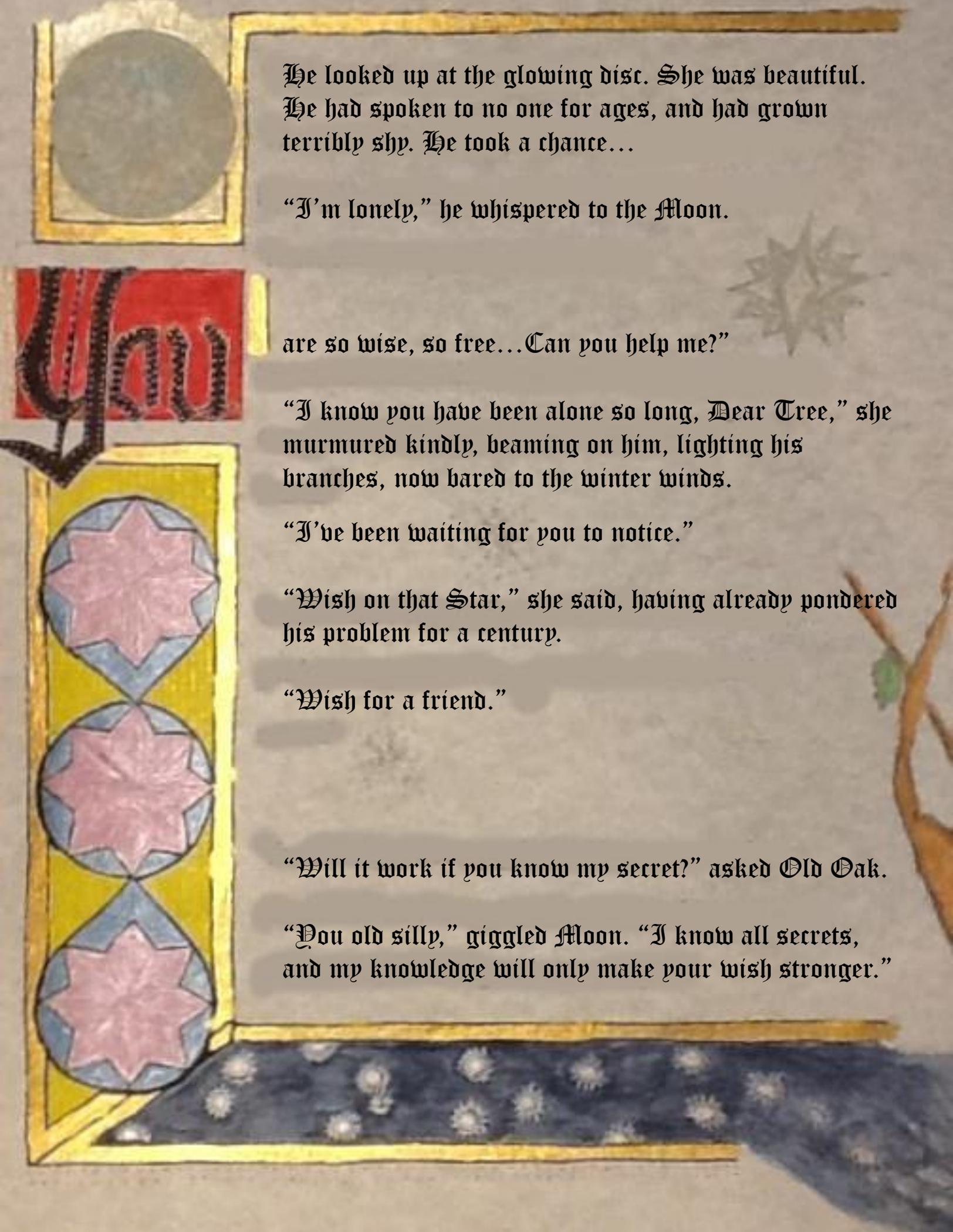


He had been standing alone for so long, and all he ever saw was the farmer and the horses with the plow and reaper at the change of season.

Nothing ever changed but the seasons, and they were all the same anyway, he thought gloomily. He felt very sorry for himself. A single leaf shook and fell to the ground, like dry a tear.

“I’m lonely,” he muttered to himself... He raised his limbs a little higher, and settled his roots a bit more deeply into the soft Earth.





He looked up at the glowing disc. She was beautiful. He had spoken to no one for ages, and had grown terribly shy. He took a chance...

"I'm lonely," he whispered to the Moon.

are so wise, so free... Can you help me?"

"I know you have been alone so long, Dear Tree," she murmured kindly, beaming on him, lighting his branches, now bared to the winter winds.

"I've been waiting for you to notice."

"Wish on that Star," she said, having already pondered his problem for a century.

"Wish for a friend."

"Will it work if you know my secret?" asked Old Oak.

"You old silly," giggled Moon. "I know all secrets, and my knowledge will only make your wish stronger."



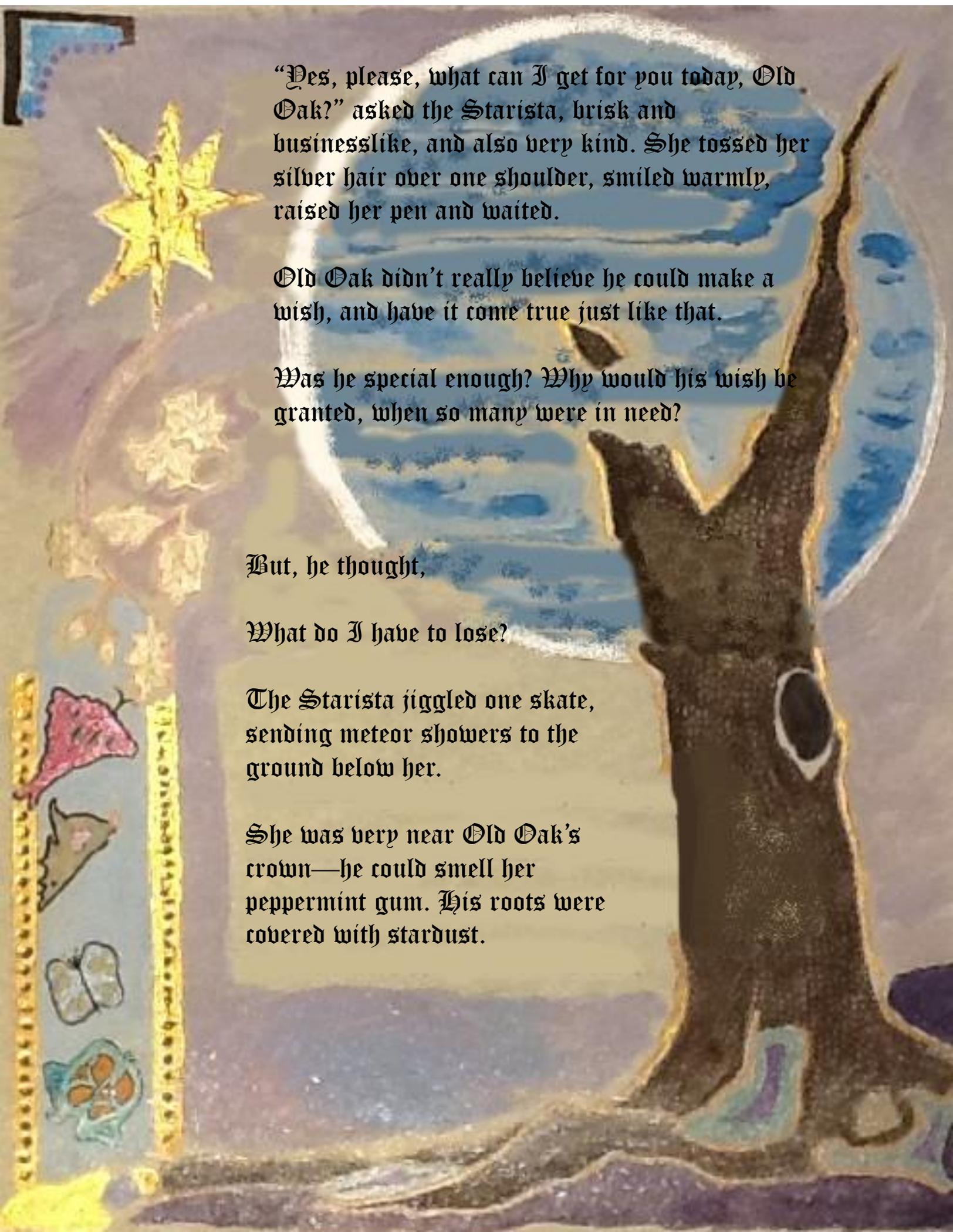
“Star! Star!” she called.
Will you please come help
Old Oak make his wish?”

“I must be away now, dear Oak, but
I will wink at you from the Trundle in
a few hours.”

S Moon rose higher and became smaller
in the sky, she turned from rose to silver,
like a bright coin, shined by loving hands.
Old Oak watched her rise.

Old Oak stood patiently, but with his
heartwood beating fast, as the sparkling
star skated her way through the sky and at
last stood in front of him, a pad of paper in
her hands.





“Yes, please, what can I get for you today, Old Oak?” asked the Starista, brisk and businesslike, and also very kind. She tossed her silver hair over one shoulder, smiled warmly, raised her pen and waited.

Old Oak didn’t really believe he could make a wish, and have it come true just like that.

Was he special enough? Why would his wish be granted, when so many were in need?

But, he thought,

What do I have to lose?

The Starista jiggled one skate, sending meteor showers to the ground below her.

She was very near Old Oak’s crown—he could smell her peppermint gum. His roots were covered with stardust.

"I'd like," he stopped to clear his throat,
"ahem, a...friend."

He was embarrassed to say it aloud, but she
only nodded and smiled an encouraging
smile.

"We're having a two-for-one special today,"
she told him, "So why don't you wish for two
friends and I can get you four. Four is such
a comfortable number."

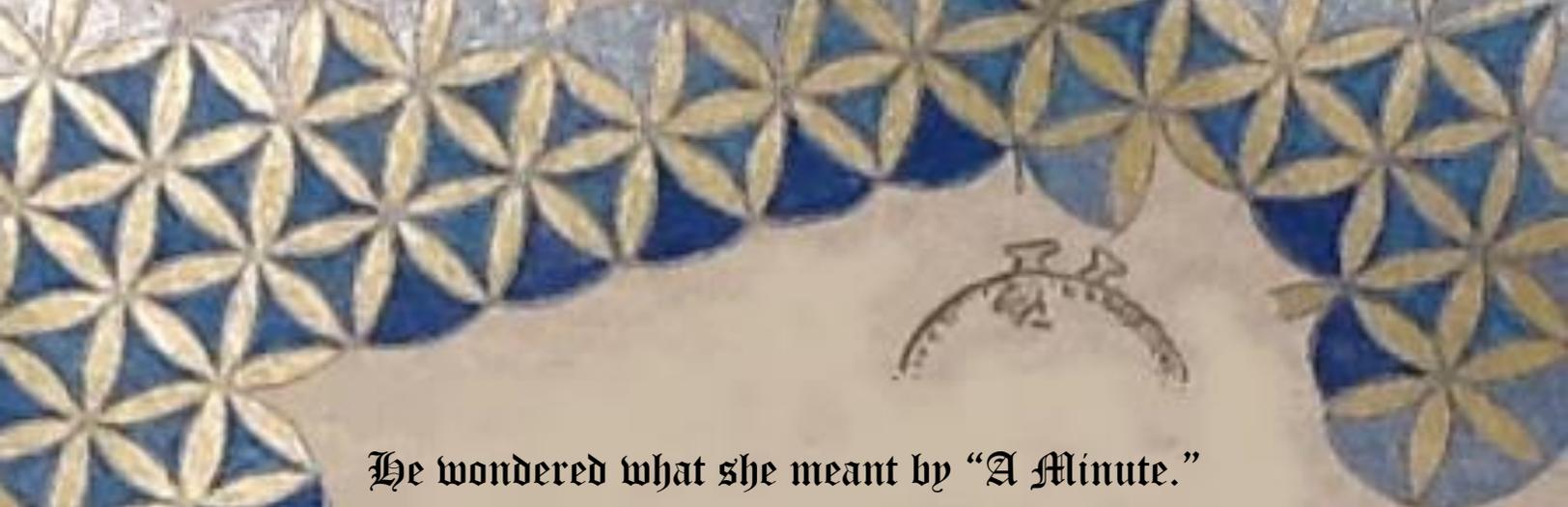
"Thank you," Old Oak said gratefully.

"Give it a minute," she said,
sweeping away on her
skates and tossing her shining
hair over both shoulders at
once.

He wondered what she meant by a Minute...

Minute...
Hour...
Day...
Week...
Month...
Year...





He wondered what she meant by “A Minute.”

Stars are night creatures and know so little about time, but compared to trees, they are as quick as bats, he thought.

And just as he thought the word ‘bat’, something small and furry, fast-moving and clawed flew into his branches and crouched, gasping, on one strong limb.

“Did you see that?!” breathed the Bat. A large, winged shape, black in the night sky, swept silently past and a single, high-pitched cry rang out and echoed over the valley.







“That great, huge, terrible thing nearly et me! It even pulled out some fur!” he cried, inspecting the back of one small leg. “If you hadn’t been out here, I’d have been a goner... You saved my life, Old Oak,” cried the bat, leaning against his rough, warm bark.



“I’m glad I could help,” answered Old Oak, rather formally. They had not met before, and he was, after hundreds of years alone, truly bashful.



“Look—do you mind if I hang around here awhile?” asked Bat nervously. “You know—get myself together for a bit?”



Old Oak was touched. “Please stay as long as you like, Bat,” he replied. He felt sorry for the frightened creature and was happy he could protect and shelter him. It felt good to help someone.





LD Oak could feel Bat's feet, sharp at the ends of tiny toes and cold with shock. The very whiskers at the end of his pink nose still trembled.

"I would be glad to have your company," added Old Oak.

"Thank you," said Bat, smiling shakily and smoothing a frazzled wing with his talon.

"Tell me—if it isn't too personal, of course—why are you the only Tree in this whole field?"

Doesn't it get a bit lonesome? Like one little bat in a big, empty cave?

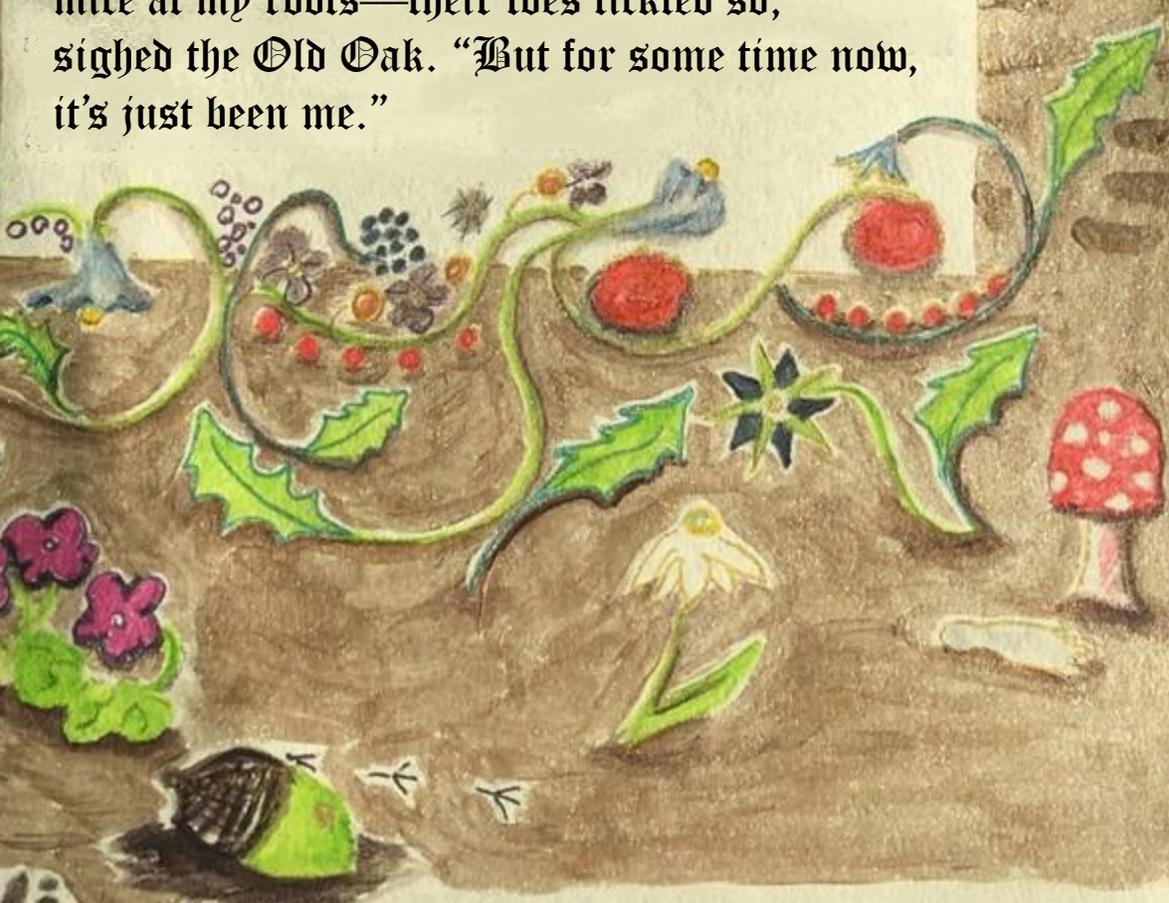


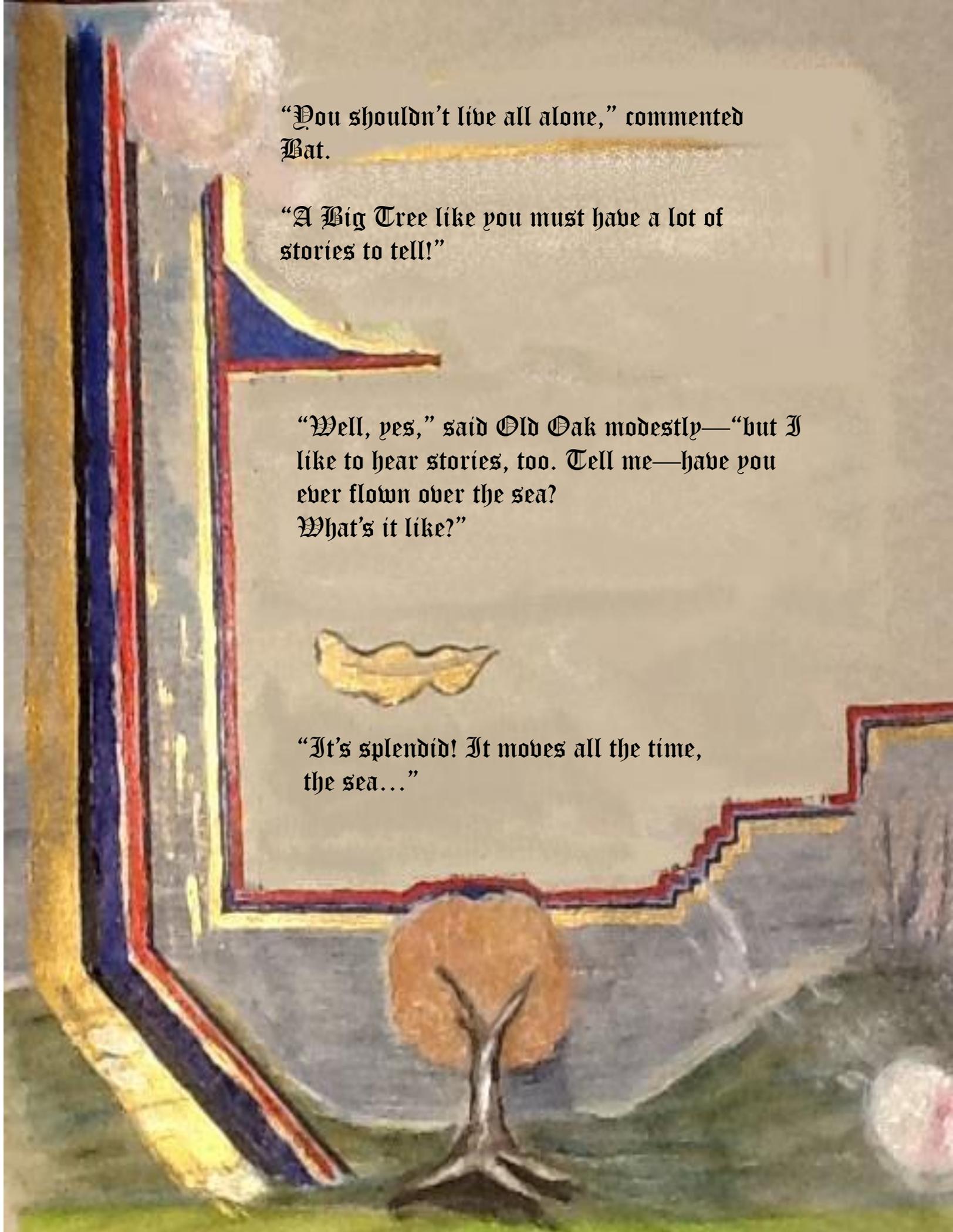
Bat's squeaky little voice held sadness: Oak knew he understood. He sighed. "It does get too quiet sometimes," he admitted. "A lot of the time, in fact."



My life has been quiet, too. It's not easy, flying at night and all alone," answered Bat. "Tell me—is there no one living in your branches these days?"

"There once were fairies and squirrels—and mice at my roots—their toes tickled so," sighed the Old Oak. "But for some time now, it's just been me."





“You shouldn’t live all alone,” commented
Bat.

“A Big Tree like you must have a lot of
stories to tell!”

“Well, yes,” said Old Oak modestly—“but I
like to hear stories, too. Tell me—have you
ever flown over the sea?
What’s it like?”



“It’s splendid! It moves all the time,
the sea...”





And the two new friends talked through the night, while the Starista, from her heavenly perch, tossed her hair, polished her nails and texted her friends.

S Moon passed by the hill called the Trundle, she winked at Old Oak.

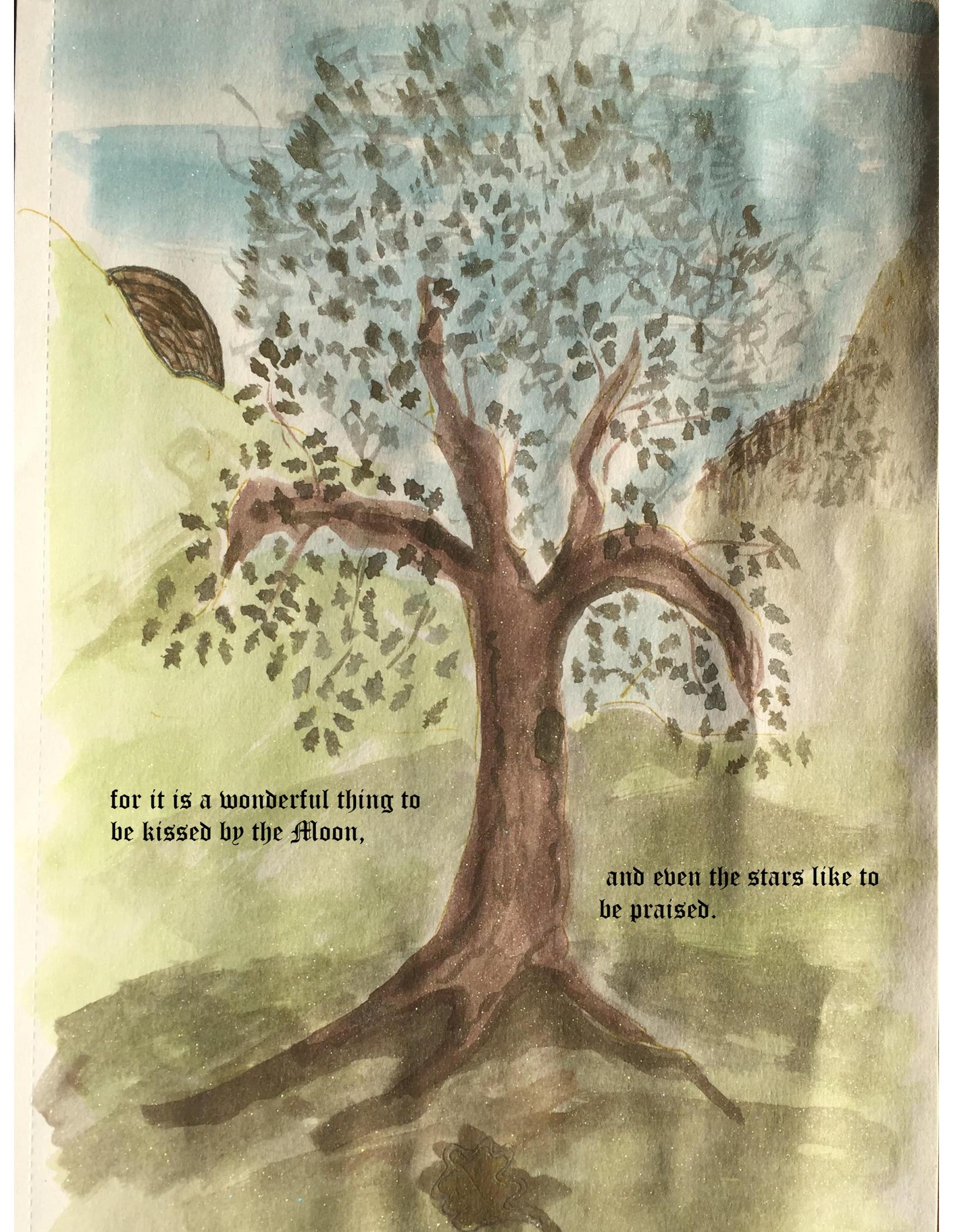
He raised a limb in thanks. Already, she noted, he stood straighter, and the wind that had earlier groaned and sighed, sang happily in his branches.

She asked the Starista, "Did you fulfill Old Oak's wish?" and Star answered respectfully, "Yes Ma'am, and the rest will be here soon."

"We did the right thing," smiled Moon, "making you Manager of Wishes."

"Thank you, Ma'am," said the Starista, blushing;





for it is a wonderful thing to
be kissed by the Moon,

and even the stars like to
be praised.

Let's Talk about Oak, Moon, Star, Bat...

- 1. How do you think Old Oak feels about Moon? Does he trust her?**
- 2. If you were Old Oak, how would you feel seeing all the other trees so far away from you?**
- 3. Why does Old Oak tell the Moon he is lonely? Why was it hard for him to speak?**
- 4. Do you worry if you tell your secret wishes, they might not come true?**
- 5. What would you do if someone told you they were lonely? How could you help?**
- 6. Do you ever feel lonely? What do you do when that happens?**
- 7. Why do you think Moon is glad to help Old Oak?**
- 8. Why is Old Oak shy about telling the Starista what he hopes for?**
- 9. Do you think someone has to be very special to deserve to have a friend?**
- 10. What is it like to be friendly to someone? How does it feel to be friends?**

- 11. If you feel bad about something, who could you talk to?**
- 12. Can you name three feelings that feel good and three feelings that feel bad?**
- 13. How are trees different from stars? How are they alike?**
- 14. How are bats different from trees? How are they the same?**
- 15. Why does Bat fly into Old Oak? What is he feeling then?**
- 16. If you're afraid, what do you do to feel better?**
- 17. Bats often live in groups, like people do. Why is it good to live with friends or family around?**
- 18. Why does Bat want to stay with Old Oak?**
- 19. What are some things friends like to do together?**
- 20. When you first meet someone, what are some good ways to start becoming friends?**
- 21. When you care about someone, how can you show it? How do you know when someone cares about you?**