

HIGH STREET
SAFARI

Dear Violet

A tale of Contentedness

Author's Note

Some believe that one strategy for obtaining a more contented life is to regularly imagine losing the things that you hold dearest to really appreciate them.

As a mindfulness exercise, before or after reading the book, you can go through and fill in the memory frames with your own drawings or photos.

Once you've done this, before reading, clear your mind and try to imagine that you have woken up without any memories - your mind is blank beyond the pages in front of you. As you reveal each of your own memories, simply enjoy the love that comes with remembering that they're in your life.

Dear Violet,

You're probably very confused right now. That's because we've made you forget everything (almost). Don't be upset, we've done this for your own good. We've given your memories to special guardians, you'll need to visit them all to remember...

See you again soon,

Yolonda



Violet woke up in a bed, but she wasn't sure if it was hers. The rest of the room was a spread of half lit shadows. She had found the note rolled up in her hand. It was right, she didn't remember anything at all, not even where she was. Looking for clues, she noticed a wardrobe nearby that had a faint glow slipping out from underneath its doors. She stepped off the bed and quietly tip-toed over to it.

The wardrobe door clicked open and a little red and yellow

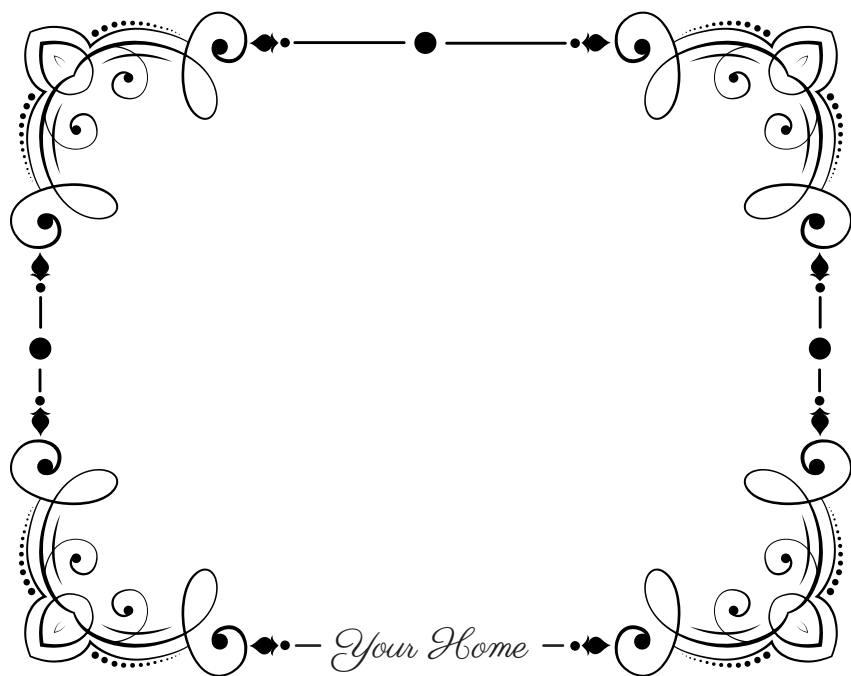
snout popped out. She wasn't afraid though, something told her that this was a friend. As she opened the door and smiled at the brightly coloured, softly glowing ball that lay there.

"Hola", she said to the ball. The ball answered with a muffed yelp. She laughed, "you can come out you know." The ball slowly uncurled and became an armadillo hopping to its feet. When the colourful armadillo spoke, it was with a gentle voice that floated through the air like a lullaby...

*“Being far away,
somewhere strange to stay,
when places are unknown,
nowhere feels as sweet as...”*

Violet finished the sentence "...home". As she did, the little armadillo smiled and turned solid, becoming a little statue, an Alebrije. The glow it had given off seemed to sparkle and float through the air toward her. As it reached her, it disappeared and she suddenly remembered something; this was her home,

this was her bedroom. The moonlight seemed to become a little stronger, giving her things around the room more shape. As the memory came back, she felt warm and safe just knowing it was her room, filled with her things, and she loved it all over again.



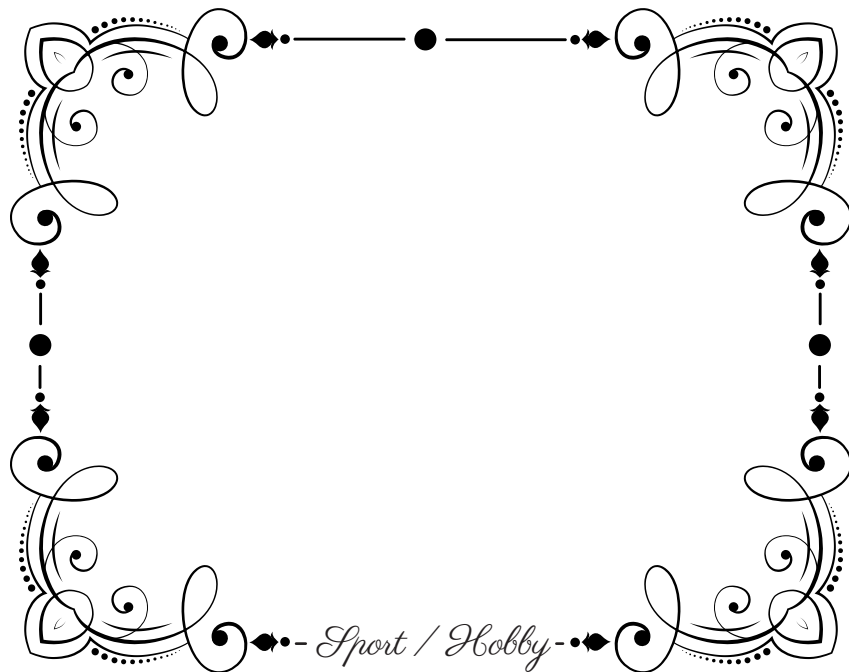


As Violet looked out of her large bedroom window, she noticed another glow just over the hill. Since her bedroom was on the ground floor, she decided to slip out the window to investigate.

The lake's edge bubbled when she arrived, and a strange looking turtle slowly heaved its way onto the shore. Even aside from the glow it gave off, this turtle was nothing like any she had seen before. "Are you another one of my memories, little turtle?" Its answer was another lullaby that drifted up to her...

*“Too much creates doubt,
but without is a drought,
many have sought her,
because you need to drink...”*

Violet looked up at the lake, “Of course... water!” The glow was released from the turtle, and floated up to her. It turned into a little Alebrije statue just as the armadillo had, which she also picked up. She suddenly remembered that she loved the water, she loved to swim. More than that, she was a swimmer, a very good one.





Walking onwards past the lake, it wasn't long before she came upon another glowing shape in the tall grass.

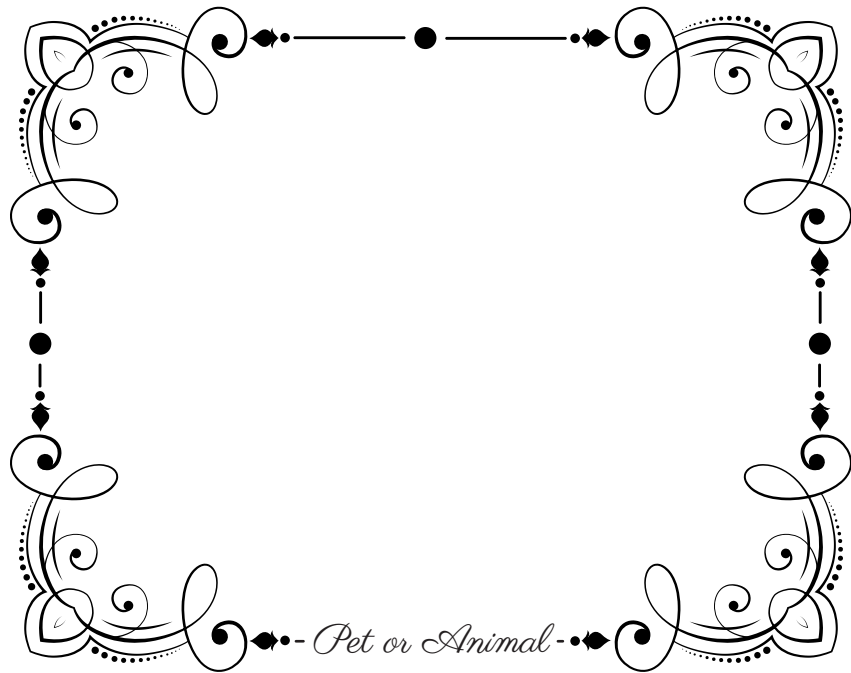
This fellow looked fierce, she thought, but something distant told her he was actually as sweet as honey.

“Well Mr. Grumpy, what do you have to say?”

Through fearsome teeth, a gruff voice came out...

*“It takes a moment only,
to stop feeling sad or lonely,
when the unconditional love is met,
with the furry warmth of your loyal...”*

Violet smiles, “pet.” Then she remembered Hipolito, her dog. She remembered that he looked almost exactly like the Alebrije that she carefully picked up, although Hipolito was scruffer, and a little less blue!



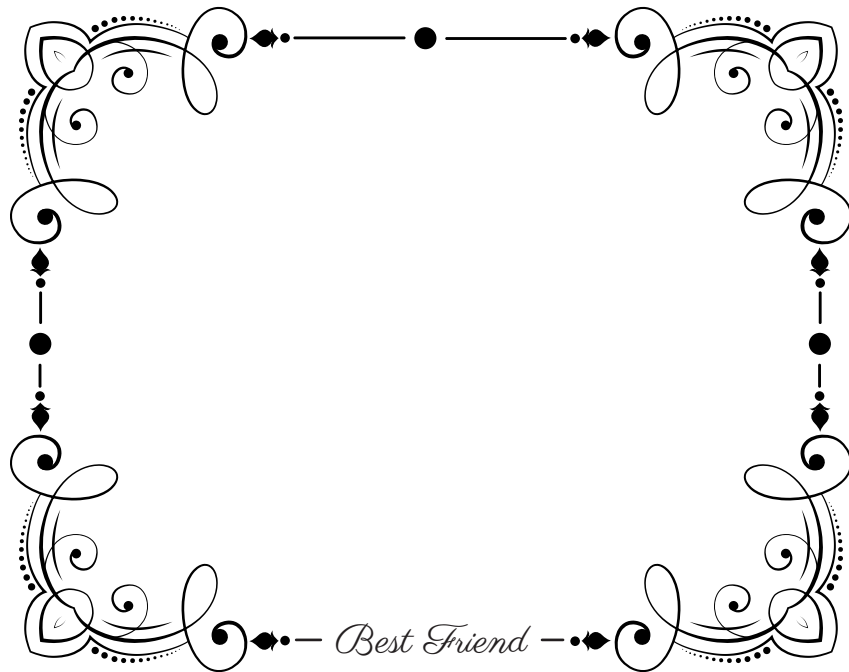


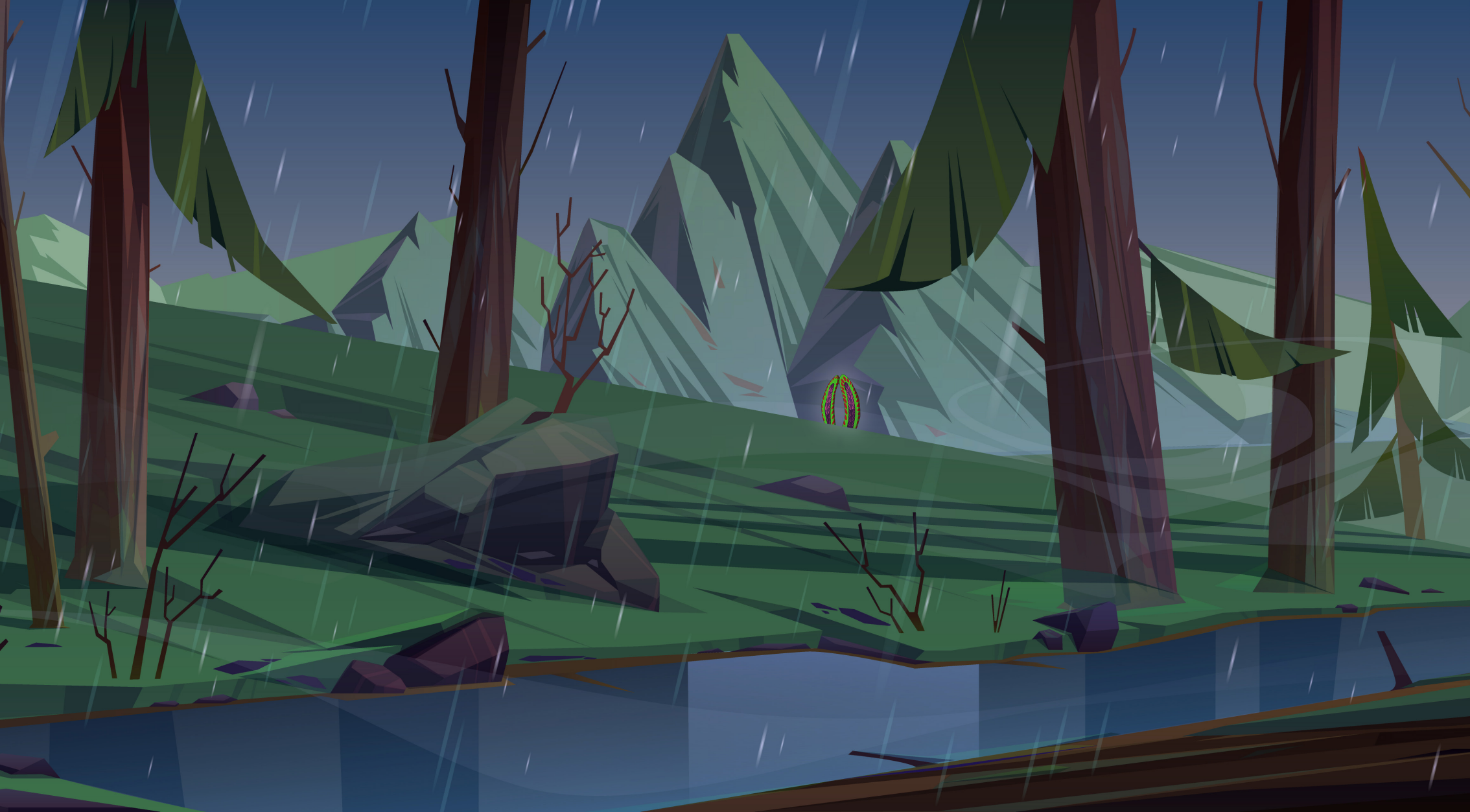
As Violet carried on into the forest she felt different somehow. It was as if the memories coming back to her were making her grow into something more, she felt taller, older even.

It was still dark and the glow from the next guardian was clear, sitting on the base of a tree trunk. He sat happily waiting with winding, glowing horns and a large, bushy tail. He started to sing with a sweet, gentle voice...

*“Your secrets to confide,
no thoughts needing to hide,
not to break but sometimes bend
the special bond of a best...”*

“Oh!” said Violet. “That’s right, my best friend! How could I forget dear Ramon!” The memory of her best friend flooded back. The years they grew up together, the laughter and camaraderie. A huge goofy smile took over her face with the happy childhood memories.



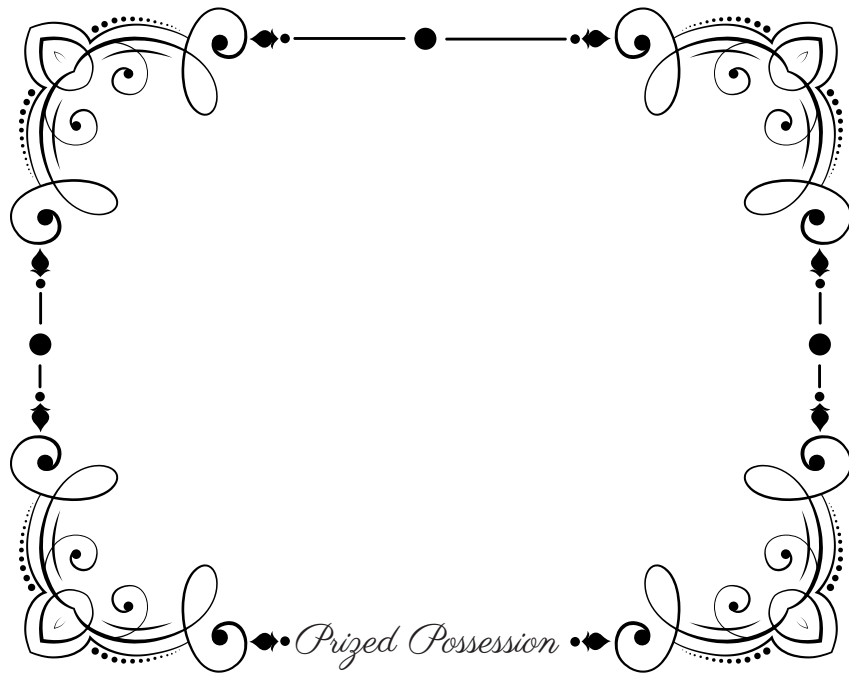


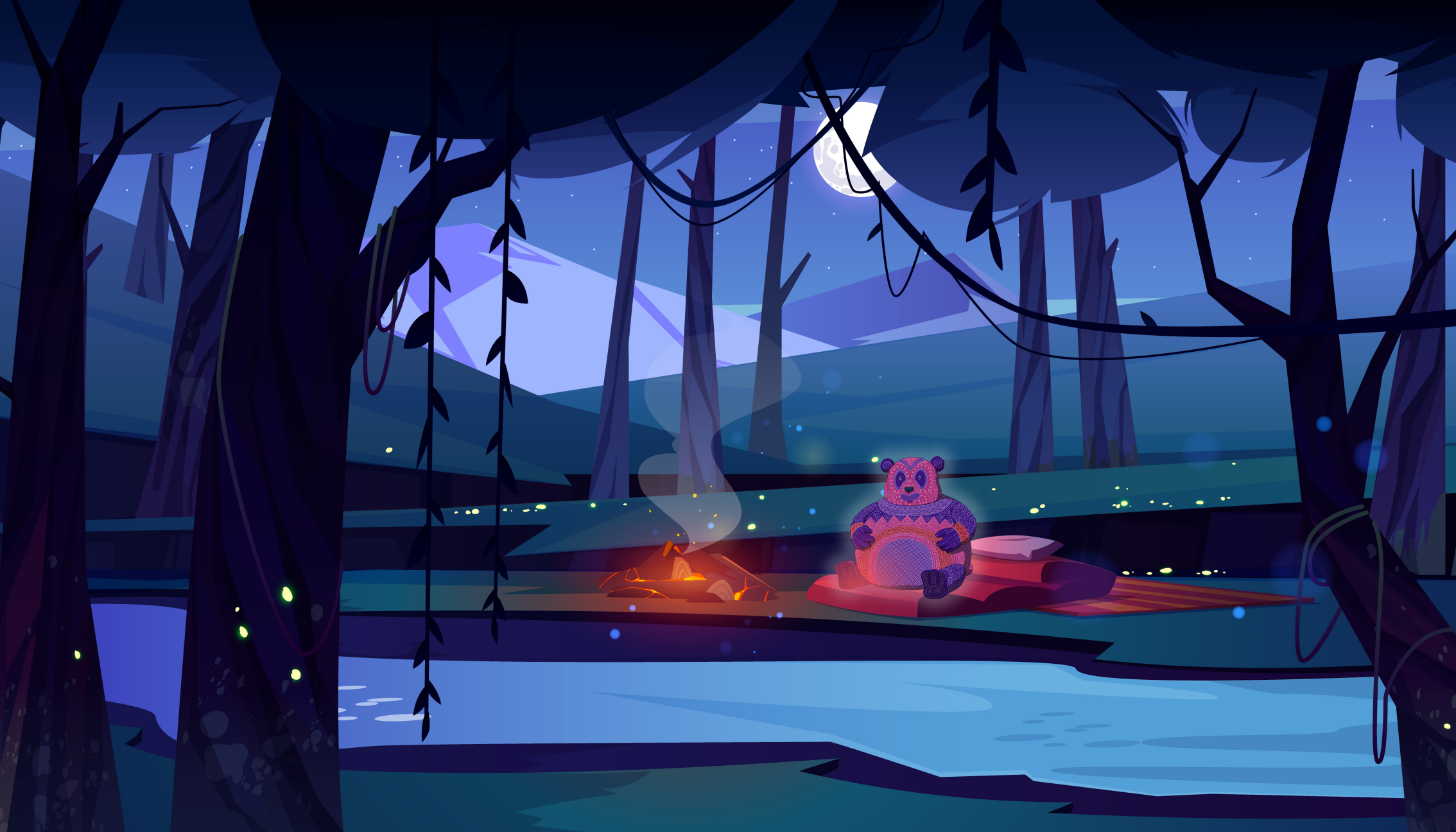
Raindrops began to patter on the leaves above, but Violet was determined to recover everything that she had lost. She felt more confident now, even as she travelled further into the unknown forest.

Two glowing ears protruded from a hole in the ground nearby and, as she approached, the rest of the animal hopped up to greet her. Its ears flickered up and down as it quickly spoke to her...

*“When you’re homeward bound,
or just need to zip around,
for a short trip or a hike
you’ll need your trusty...”*

Red wheels span into her memory. Juan Carlos the third, she called it, because of the brand name and the fact that she had grown out of her previous two. She wished she had her sturdy bike with her at that moment but the love of it warmed her anyway. How could a person love a bike so much? When it was their only way to get around, she answered and laughed to herself.



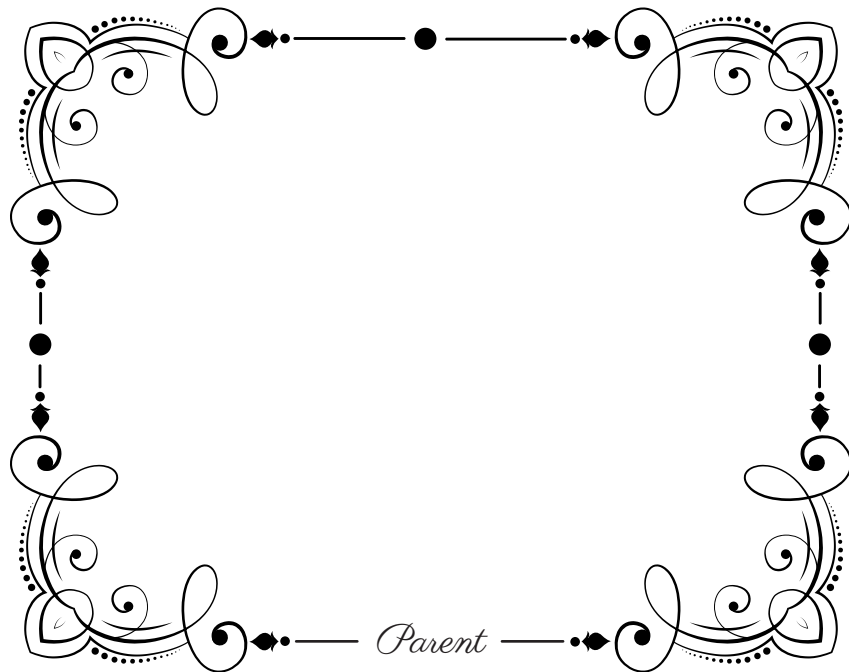


The rain was already starting to clear up when she noticed a different light ahead. It was a neatly made campfire and sat next to it was a big-bellied, purple panda. She sat down beside

him. The flicker of the fire danced around his glowing form. He patted his belly like a drum and it wobbled up and down. The song echoed out from him to the beat of the drumming...

*“Always when you need,
to sleep, play or feed,
someone never errant,
the safe hug of a loving...”*

“Parent. Oh yes, how could I forget Papa!” His face immediately came back to her and she could feel his big, warm hugs all over again. She remembered his face, gentle eyes and greying hair. It was this that made her realise she wasn’t a little girl any more. Was she even Violet anymore? She picked up the panda statue and walked on.





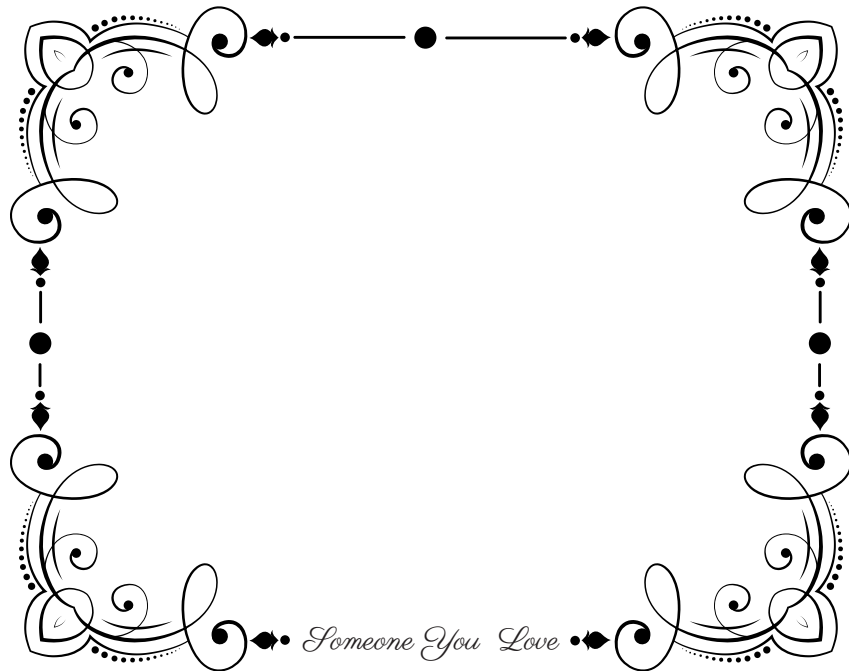
The sky was lit up with magical auroras that flittered and waved, she felt like it was reflecting her own excitement at discoveries still to be found. The path led up a steep hillside and she could see the stars beaming beyond. She felt heavier now but also stronger as she walked up the path. Nestled on

a rock, at the top of the hill, was a beautiful lion Alebrije. He appeared to be sleeping but slowly drooped one eye open as she approached. His wings suddenly uncurled and spread out, radiant with light. He knelt before her and spoke a soft verse...

*“Stitches us together,
rides out every weather,
stars shine stronger above,
happiness is when you’re in...”*

“Love!” She looked at her finger where the silver ring circled, only noticing it now or perhaps it wasn’t there before? Of course, she was in love, not only that but she had been married for many years. Her chest tightened and suddenly she was flooded with beautiful memories of her husband, Carlo. It was now that she remembered another name of hers, she wasn’t just

Violet anymore, that was her father’s nickname for her. She was also Yolonda, that was her real name, that’s what her husband called her. The sky seemed to brighten with her revelation and the sun crept up behind her. She ran down the hill, not wanting to wait for the next memory to come.





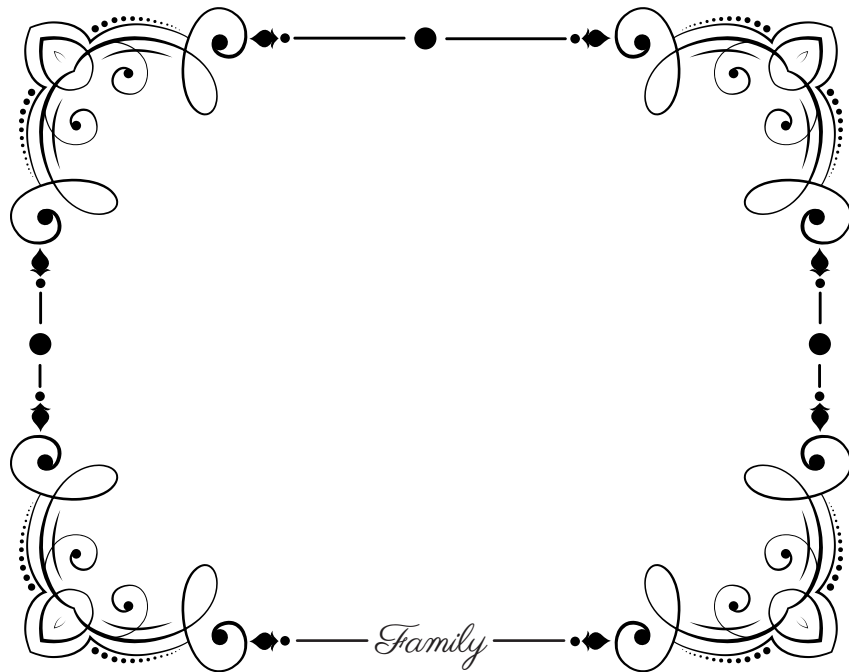
At the other foot of the hill she found a little glowing monkey hopping from one branch to another, not staying still for a moment.

“Well you’re a busy little one, aren’t you? Do you have something for me?”

In answer, it threw a handful of leaves up in the air around them. She laughed as they fluttered down and landed in her hair. Pulling them out she said, “Well I’m not sure what that means exactly but it’s not what I expected.” She put out her hand and the monkey jumped onto it, finally stopping, and sang with a jolly look in its eye...

*“Increasing your age,
devouring your wage,
always doing what one forbids,
all forgotten for the joy of having...”*

As the memory floated over to her, tears of happiness welled up in her eyes. Kids... the largest love, the strongest memories all came back as she remembered her two cheeky boys, Arturo and Alfredo. She now remembered another, beautiful name that was hers... mama.





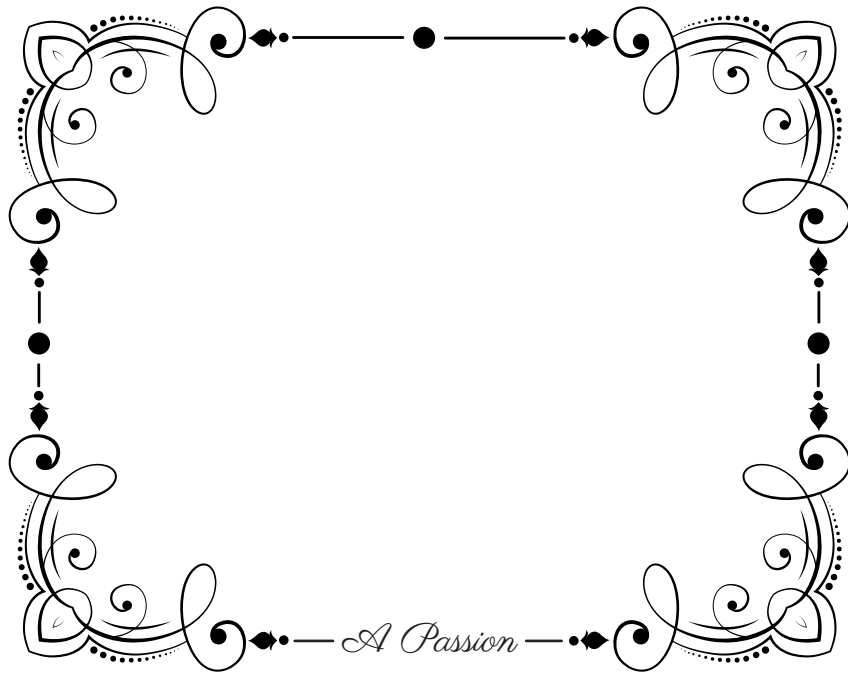
Now that the sun was waking up the land around her, she could see that she had almost arrived back where she began, at her house. She approached the house and peered in through a door. A quiet art studio sat peacefully inside. Even through the sunlight she could see a glow coming from one corner. She

stepped inside and found a delicate elephant Alebrije waiting for her. She carefully picked it up and spoke to it softly, so as not to disturb the house.

The elephant returned the favour and quietly sang its song...

*“Ideas given shape,
beauty from escape,
to fingers from heart,
putting all in your...”*

“Oh!” she exclaimed as she realised what it meant. The little elephant turned back into the Alebrije statue that it came from. It was hers, they all were. All the Alebrije that she’d discovered along the way were her creations, her art. She was an artist, and this was her studio!





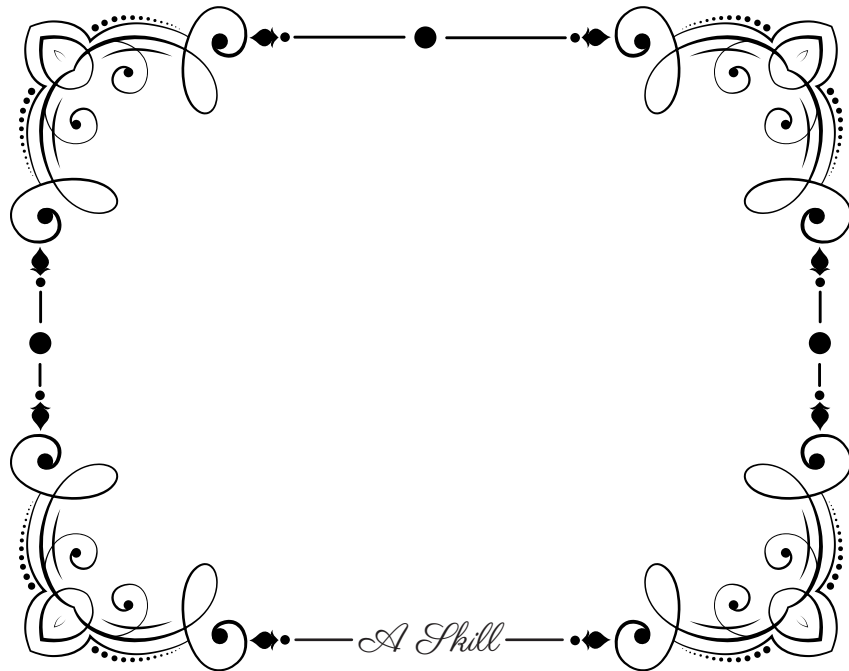
She crept down the hallway quietly, remembering not to disturb the boys in their bedroom. She sensed that there was one more Alebrije to discover before her journey ended.

She opened the last door in the hall and found the sloth sitting at a desk covered in strange bottles, powders and apparatus. He beamed a smile at her and slowly held out a hand. She took it and he climbed up onto her shoulder. In her ear, he gently whispered the last verse of the Alebrije's song...

*“Not of this world,
energy twisted and curled,
to live without it tragic,
as we are born from your...”*

“Magic,” she said, as the last of the enchanted Alebrije sparkled with her memories and turned back into wood. Ah, that’s right. She remembered it all, at last. Her spell was complete for another year. There was so much to love about her life but sometimes it was all too easy to take it for granted. How better to remind herself than to forget, if only temporarily.

She placed all the Alebrije statues on her desk and turned to go and wake the children and kiss her husband good morning. She was sure it was going to be a great day, a great birthday.



The End

But not necessarily. Don't forget to go back and fill in the frames with your own memories, if you haven't already.