

OUR A Place of Love, Life & Possibilities PARK

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The moral rights of the authors have been asserted.

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I DON'T HAVE WORDS GOOD ENOUGH TO EXPLAIN WHAT THIS PROJECT HAS DONE FOR ME.

I KNOW THAT AN EXCERPT SEED HAS BEEN PLANTED AND THERE IS NOW GOING BACK - THIS FRUIT WILL BE ENJOYED BY ALL.

GOD REALLY SENT HIS EARTHLY ANGELS TO REKINDLE HIS HOLY FIRE IN US AND THESE ANGELS DID IT WITH SUCH GREAT CARE, LOVE, SUPPORT

I like the involvement and collaborating with other like-minded people.

Creating and expanding the imagination that people take for granted.

This project is a chance to work creatively with a fantastic group of people and bring together our experiences. During a difficult year our meetings have been a weekly highlight & provided much welcome relief from the monotony of lockdown.

A sense of fulfilment
An open door of possibilities.

→ Brought about a bond that I have never imagined
→ It has been therapy.

The antidote to boredom during the lockdown.

This has been an opportunity to slow down, step back and experience the growth, development and creativity of this unique group of people. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable part of my working day - proof that the unknown, sometimes uncomfortable, can be fun! A learning journey!

Freedom from structure and routine.

Being in the present.

Experiencing the unexpected.
Learning something new.

A chance to praise the park
I love and present it to the wider world

This graphic novel was inspired by a 'Common Third' of residents, staff and students from Salford Loaves and Fishes and the University of Salford.

Common Thirds are shared activities, linking individuals, groups and communities; creating space for inclusion, participation, creativity, and discovery.

During lockdown, parks symbolised the importance of communal spaces and nature.

This book is a celebration of Peel Park in Salford, highlighting our relationships, memories, love and connection to nature. It accompanies our film about Peel Park with music, poetry, prose, art, photography and research, which you can find here: www.salfordcreativecommunity.org

OUR PARK

is a journey of discovery about Peel Park and about ourselves.

We hope it stirs emotions and meanings for you too.

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OUR PARK

A Place of Love, Life & Possibilities

I am **NANA**, the voice that sees and listens,
I am the essence of Peel Park.

I am the custodian of history and memories.
I am the place of hope, love and laughter.
I provide medicine to the soul,
and vigour to the body.
I am the birth place of many
who call me home.



Then tragedy struck and all went
cold like the winter season.

Many trees were cut, grasses pulled out, and
the river burst into tears. It was
humans changing me for their pleasure.
My pleasure became the treasure they desired.

But, although I lost my initial family and
friends, I have gained new ones.

I might have lost some parts of me,
but I have also gained many things - like
the children's play area, the flood marker,
the pathways and the railings.

I have seen the different
people who come to me because
of these things.

And they all add to my essence.

Let me tell you about me, about my family, and what I represent to the many
inhabitants and visitors that come to me. I provide fun and adventure,
and ease and calm from the hustle and bustle of life.
I want you to discover my beauty, know my
history and discover yourself in me.

branches on the trees could dap.
the ground all this
of thick green.



A rainbow of colours, with beautiful
flowers that adorned the space.

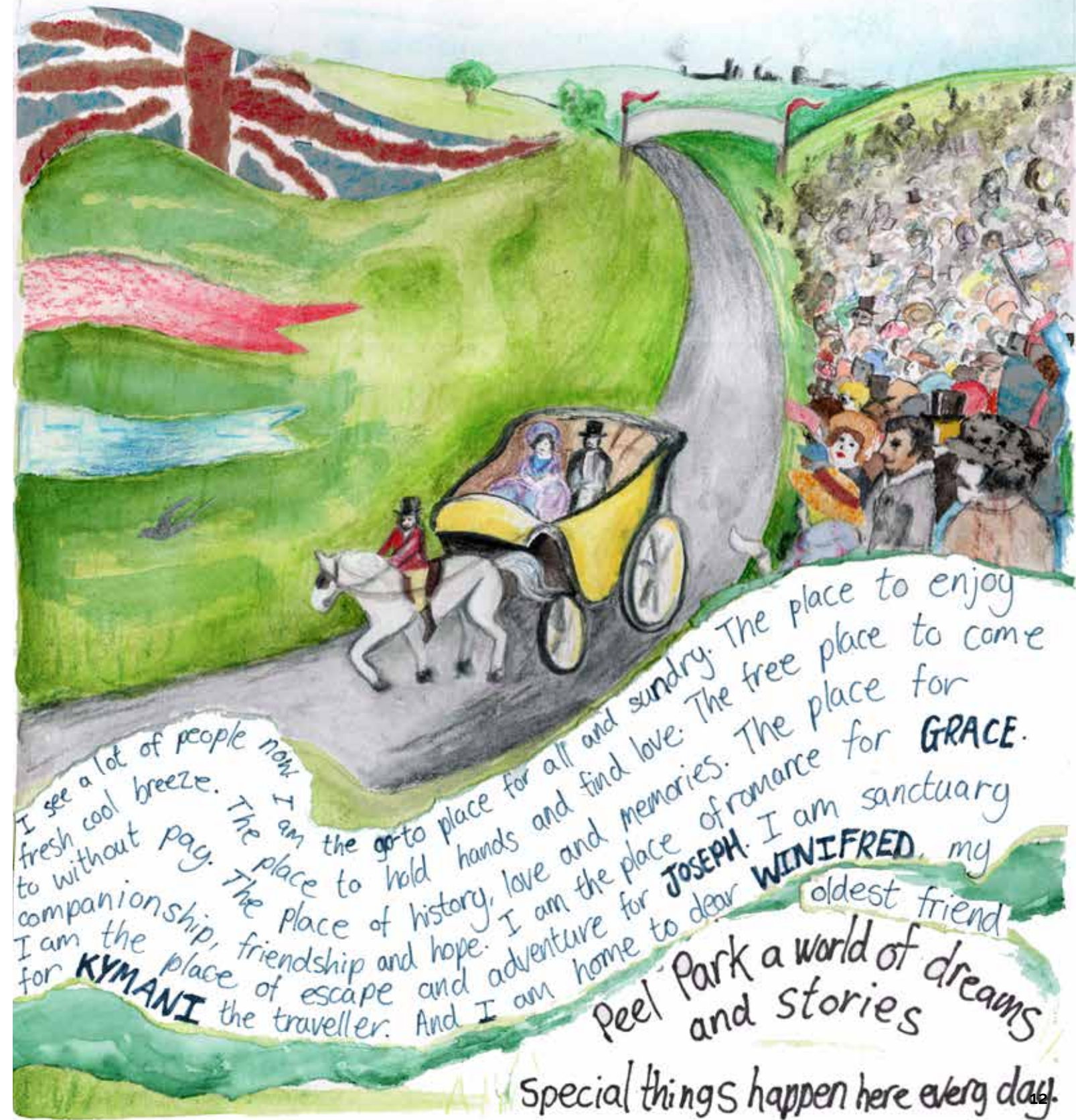
The river was so near and you could hear
the croaking frogs in call and response.
It was a time when birds sang
a sweet melody in harmony.



OUR Spring PARK

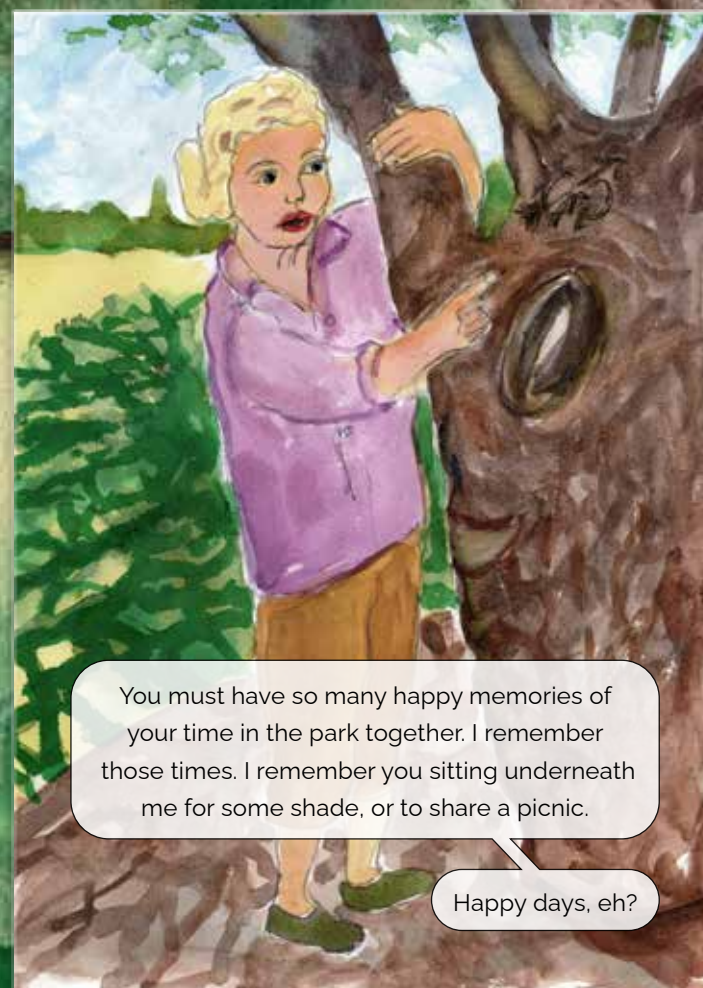
One day the Queen and hundreds of people came to visit me. That was the first time I saw hundreds of people on my turf. It was exciting and a memorable event. There were a lot of families, and children. The wealthy and the not so wealthy, the young and old were all here. Some dressed in beautiful apparels. The parents wandered round with their children through the park, holding their hands and showing them my beauty and majesty.

The Queen addressed the people gathered. This was historic as this was the first monarch to visit the region in over a century. I felt privileged that she chose to visit me. The Queen applauded the effort of the people in educational reforms. The visit closed the chasm between the rich and the working-class. I became a public park for all and not just for the rich. I provided the platform for different classes of people to meet. I became the melting point.



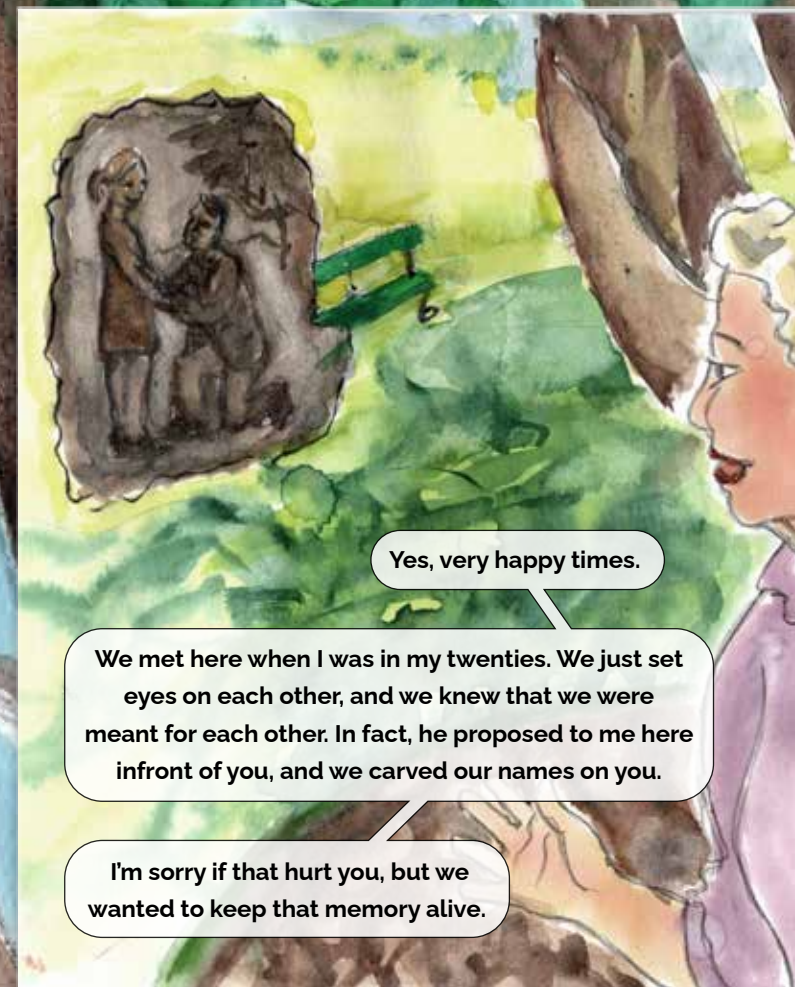
Hello Grace. How are you?
Come and rest awhile.
Spend a bit of time with me
and your memories.

Ah! As you know Winifred, I have been coming to this park for a long time. I used to come with my husband, when we were both younger. Gabriel is his name. To me he is an angel from God. But today it is just me



You must have so many happy memories of your time in the park together. I remember those times. I remember you sitting underneath me for some shade, or to share a picnic.

Happy days, eh?



Yes, very happy times.

We met here when I was in my twenties. We just set eyes on each other, and we knew that we were meant for each other. In fact, he proposed to me here in front of you, and we carved our names on you.

I'm sorry if that hurt you, but we wanted to keep that memory alive.

Ouch! Only kidding!

You have never hurt me Grace because you always care about this park and everything in it. I am proud to have been a small part of your life with Gabriel, and will always be your friend.

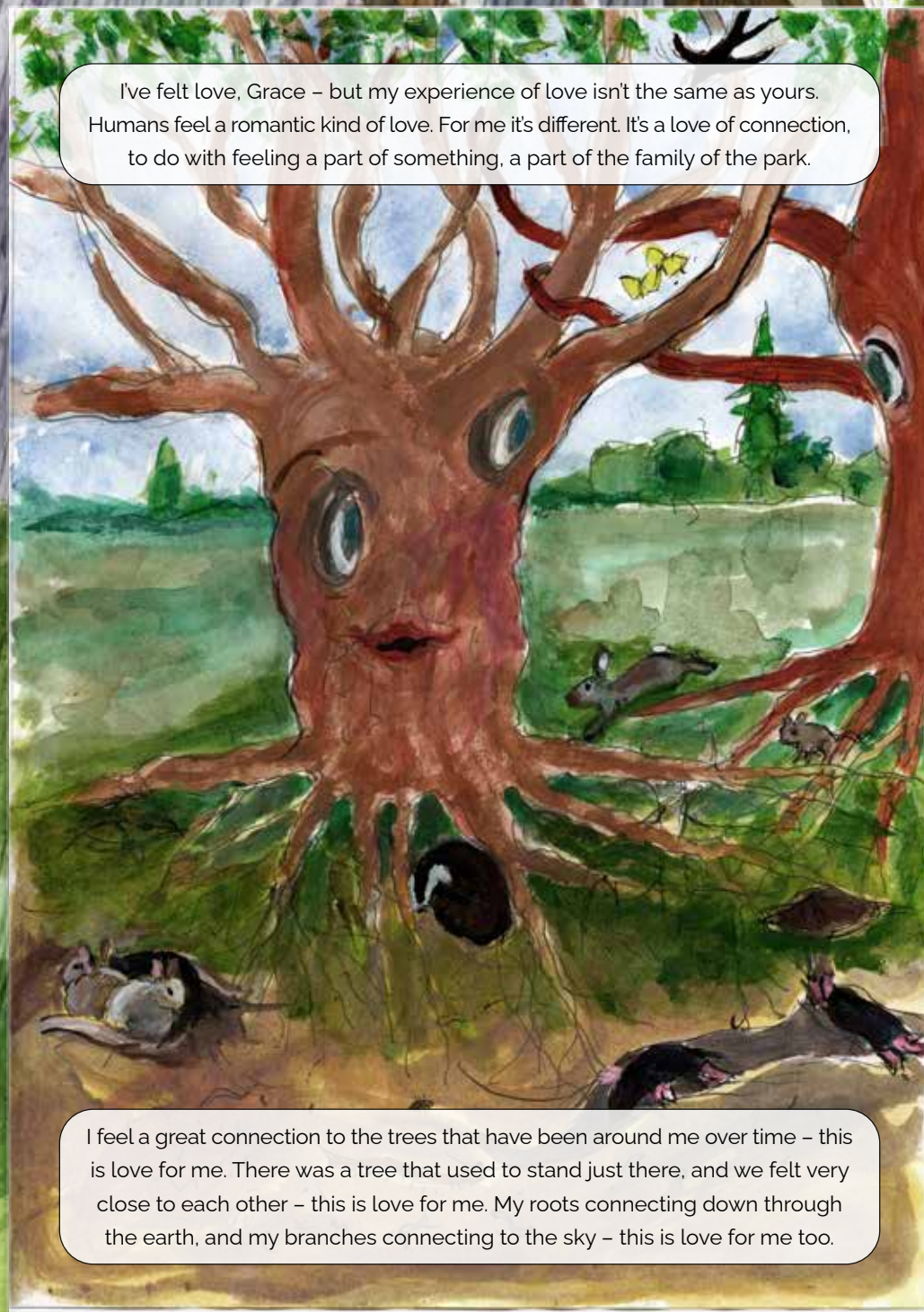


Thank you, Winifred. Did I tell you we also got married here? I remember Gabriel making daisy chain flowers for my crown and also the necklace.

It was the most beautiful summer ever sent to planet Earth.

Your honeymoon place. More than just a special place – this is park of love and magic.

Yes. Each time we come down here it is like falling in love again. Sometimes we take long prayer walks, and in the evenings we walk just for leisure – holding hands and looking into each others eyes, hugging sometimes very tightly. We feel very close to God here. There is something special in this Peel Park garden... That's why we call it the Love Park. Have you ever been in love, Winifred?



I've felt love, Grace – but my experience of love isn't the same as yours. Humans feel a romantic kind of love. For me it's different. It's a love of connection, to do with feeling a part of something, a part of the family of the park.

I feel a great connection to the trees that have been around me over time – this is love for me. There was a tree that used to stand just there, and we felt very close to each other – this is love for me. My roots connecting down through the earth, and my branches connecting to the sky – this is love for me too.

Over the years there are dips and times of loneliness... but new trees grow, new flowers and elements come along, and I feel connected to it all. This is my experience of love – the love of my family, and the love for friends like you who come to the park and care for that family.

It is an experience of love that connects us, Grace, even though we are different.

That is a very good way to perceive love. You seem so contented in every way. You never complain, Winifred – not like the human kind. But I suppose you were here on earth long before human kind.



It's been a long time – a long time, Grace.



I've been here for a long time and sometimes I'm sad that I can't see more or do more. But then I'm also lucky to have shared so much with people like you who come to see me and spend time with me, and care for the nature in the park.



I suppose, without your leaves, you are like a human kind, but inside out. All your little branches are like veins that carry blood around your body.

And your roots in the ground emulate the same shape as your branches above. Oh! The wonders of you! What wonderful stories you must have to tell.

Stories, you say? Oh yes, for so many years I've stood here in the wind, the rain... Seen the beauty of the seasons come and go year after year... But each time is like a new experience – new life in the park, new people, new friends. Most of the time.

In some ways it feels like forever I've been here, but in others it feels like just yesterday. Oh, I do sound like a wise old tree! Don't you think?





Ha, yes! There are so many questions I would like to ask you. Like how do you transpire? And how do your leaves turn such beautiful colours? Oh Winifred, you are so caring to human kind, and indeed to other creations like the animals. Look! I can count ten of your wonders right now...

You are constant, you are so giving to everybody and all other creations.

Even though you cannot move, you are stronger than all those who move around you.

You are both mum and dad at the same time, because your roots bring up shoots, and your branches just keep on budding and multiplying.

You provide the clean air in our environment, by the oxygen you give off.

You are able to extract your food from the sunshine by means of photosynthesis.

Even when you are not living, you are still providing great services to the world such as shelters and furniture.

Your leaves are food for animals.

Your bark is used for clothing.

Lots of your other parts, such as fruits and seeds, are used as medicines.

You have stood the test of time.

Thank you so much for your kind words, Grace. It means so much to an old tree to hear such beautiful words.

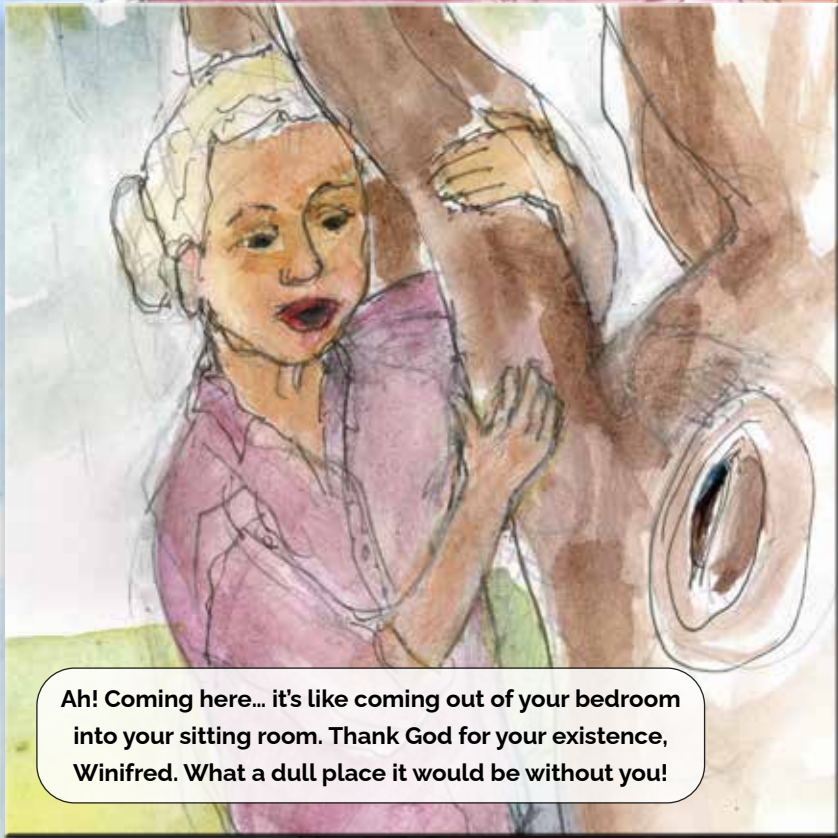
Do you know, I think we have a lot in common. You've been growing as a person as I've been here through that test of time. And it's been my privilege as your friend to see you grow, and become such a powerful woman in the community.

We've both gone through physical changes, and now we are two old friends that can sit and reminisce about happy memories, and also look forward to the future.



Thank you for that, Winifred. I just feel different when I am in this park. Like I am surrounded by love. Gabriel and I call this place our Love Park because of the love we feel for each other whenever we were here. It holds such magic for me. You hold such magic, Winifred! It is incomprehensible.

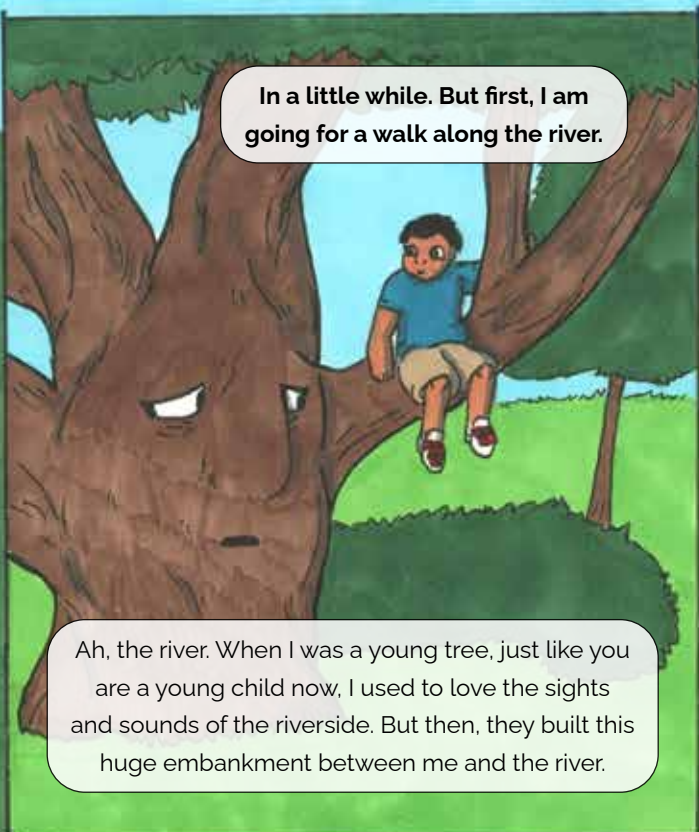
Well Grace, I think when you speak it makes us sound like family. It's so good for me to have you as a friend for so many years, and it just shows how humans and nature can work together.



Ah! Coming here... it's like coming out of your bedroom into your sitting room. Thank God for your existence, Winifred. What a dull place it would be without you!

OUR Summer PARK





In a little while. But first, I am going for a walk along the river.

Ah, the river. When I was a young tree, just like you are a young child now, I used to love the sights and sounds of the riverside. But then, they built this huge embankment between me and the river.



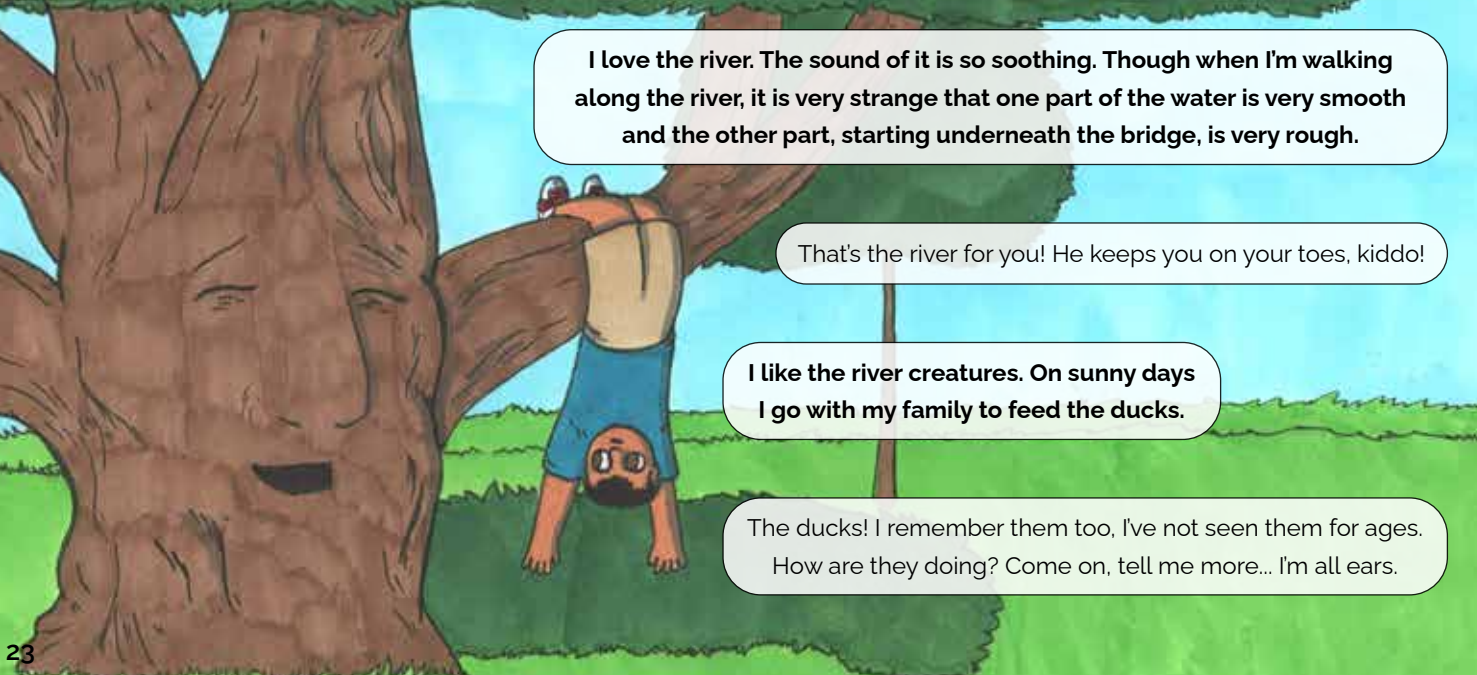
And now, even from my highest branches, I can't see or even hear a thing of what goes on there. I miss my old friend the river, we used to have a good old natter before we were separated.



Oh, how sad. I'm sorry, Winnie. Is there anything I can do for you?

Hmm. Actually yes.

There is one thing you could do for me, child. Be my eyes. Be my ears. And tell me a story about the river.

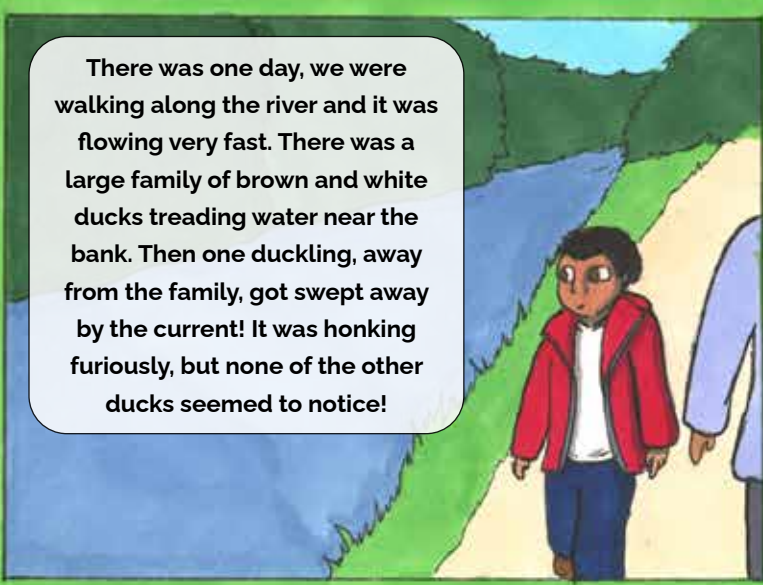


I love the river. The sound of it is so soothing. Though when I'm walking along the river, it is very strange that one part of the water is very smooth and the other part, starting underneath the bridge, is very rough.

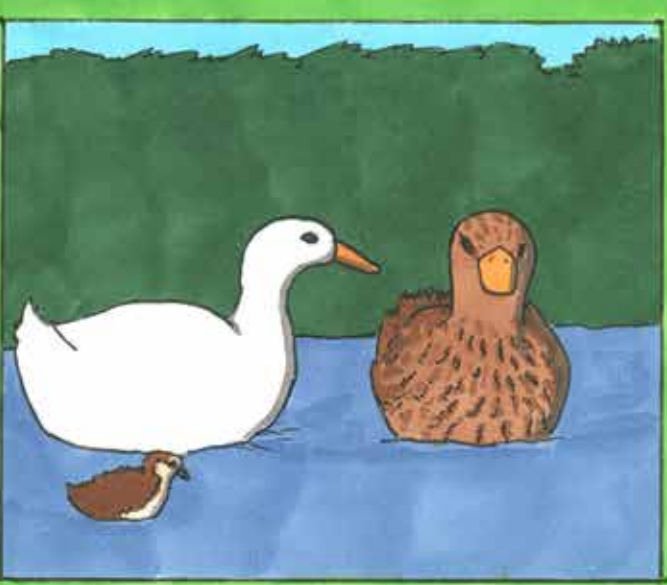
That's the river for you! He keeps you on your toes, kiddo!

I like the river creatures. On sunny days I go with my family to feed the ducks.

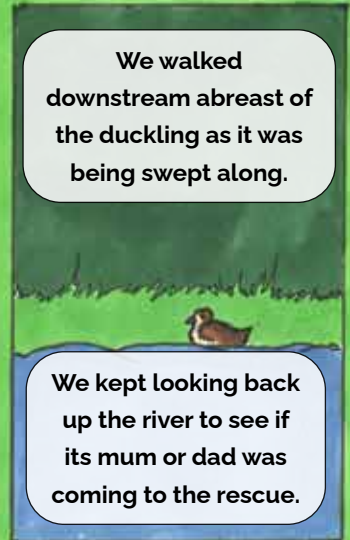
The ducks! I remember them too. I've not seen them for ages. How are they doing? Come on, tell me more... I'm all ears.



There was one day, we were walking along the river and it was flowing very fast. There was a large family of brown and white ducks treading water near the bank. Then one duckling, away from the family, got swept away by the current! It was honking furiously, but none of the other ducks seemed to notice!



Oh my goodness! Poor little duckling!



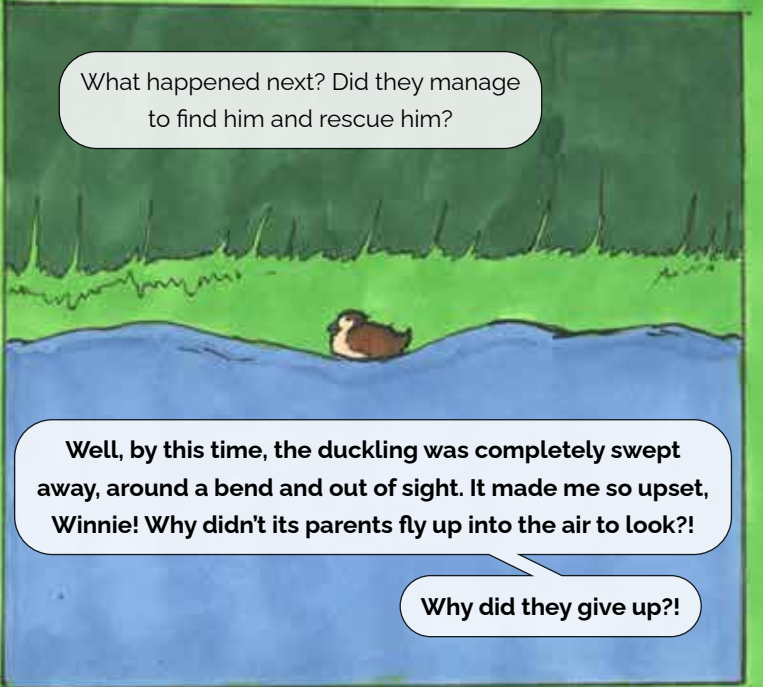
We walked downstream abreast of the duckling as it was being swept along.



We saw them looking, but they couldn't find it!

We kept looking back up the river to see if its mum or dad was coming to the rescue.

They paddled out, away from the bank to the centre of the river to get a better view, but in vain!



What happened next? Did they manage to find him and rescue him?

Well, by this time, the duckling was completely swept away, around a bend and out of sight. It made me so upset, Winnie! Why didn't its parents fly up into the air to look?!

Why did they give up?!



So many questions! Tell me more...

As we walked on we came to a calmer, sheltered stretch of the river, and saw another family of ducks, with black necks and green heads.

And guess what, Winnie? There was a brown and white duckling with them! And two more brown and white ducklings as well!

Phew!

think that our duckling in distress was rescued by the second family! And it gained a new brother and sister too.

That's wonderful. What a happy ending after all that drama!

Yes. It certainly made me feel a whole lot happier anyway. And to think that the family of different ducks must have rescued and taken in not just one but three ducklings that weren't even their own breed!

Our river and the wider world can be scary places. But they are also full of kindness.

You know, you have brought the river to life today for me, Joseph. I had forgotten how much can happen there.

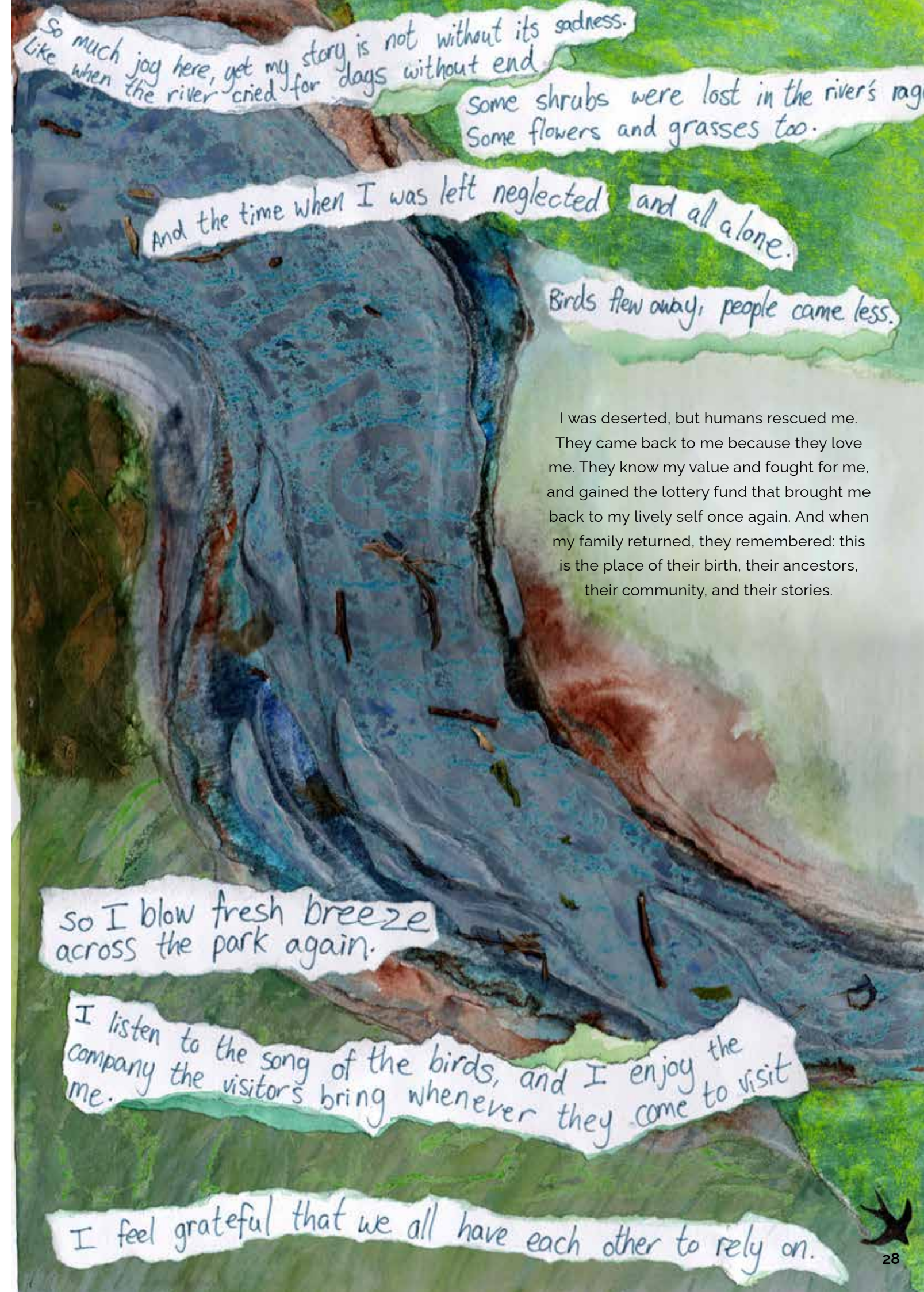
You are a great storyteller young man, that's for sure and you have certainly brightened up the day of this old tree today!

I am glad that you enjoyed my story, Winifred, and that I can tell you about the river given that the high flood defences the grown-ups have built mean that you can no longer see and hear it yourself.

Making you happy that way is the least I can do in return for all the pleasure you have given me climbing up into and exploring your branches.

Hop off when you're ready and wave to me before you leave the park - I'll wave back with my branches!

O U R Autumn P A R K



So much joy here, yet my story is not without its sadness.
Like when the river cried for days without end.

Some shrubs were lost in the river's rage.
Some flowers and grasses too.

And the time when I was left neglected and all alone.

Birds flew away, people came less.

I was deserted, but humans rescued me.
They came back to me because they love me. They know my value and fought for me, and gained the lottery fund that brought me back to my lively self once again. And when my family returned, they remembered: this is the place of their birth, their ancestors, their community, and their stories.

so I blow fresh breeze
across the park again.

I listen to the song of the birds, and I enjoy the
company the visitors bring whenever they come to visit
me.

I feel grateful that we all have each other to rely on.



Hello there, Kymani my lovely!
Come and settle for a while.
Rest your feathers. How's things?

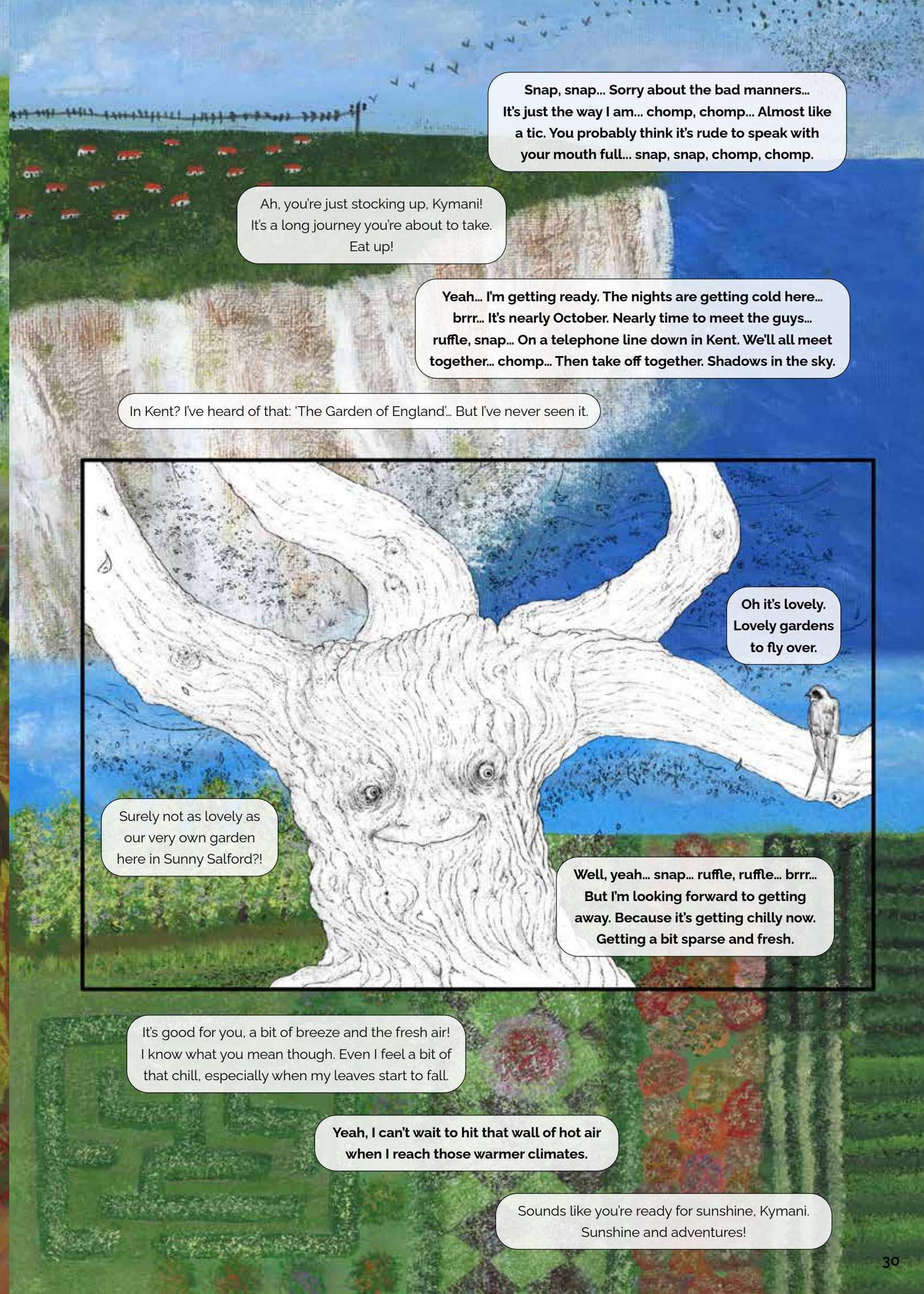
Well... ruffle, ruffle... I'm feeling very tense...
ruffle... I need to get ready to migrate.

So you're leaving us again?

Yeah... It's time. I'm going away for my
usual six months... brrr... It's getting cold
here now. I'm getting flustered...

ruffle, ruffle... Getting fidgety.

Blimey! You certainly are! Make the most of
your last few minutes here at home. Soon you'll
be far away and our little park will be a distant
memory. We'll miss you.

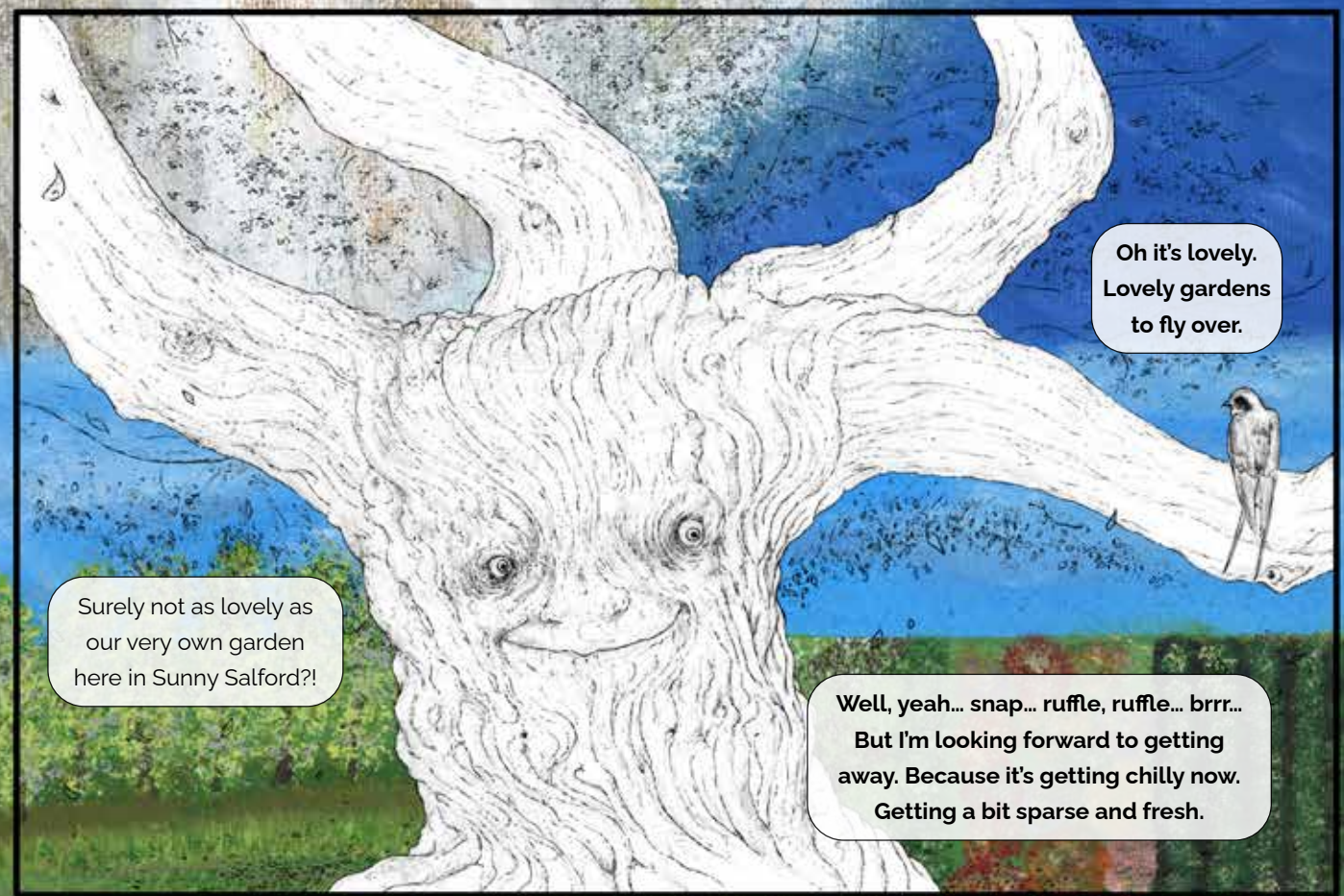


Snap, snap... Sorry about the bad manners...
It's just the way I am... chomp, chomp... Almost like
a tic. You probably think it's rude to speak with
your mouth full... snap, snap, chomp, chomp.

Ah, you're just stocking up, Kymani!
It's a long journey you're about to take.
Eat up!

Yeah... I'm getting ready. The nights are getting cold here...
brrr... It's nearly October. Nearly time to meet the guys...
ruffle, snap... On a telephone line down in Kent. We'll all meet
together... chomp... Then take off together. Shadows in the sky.

In Kent? I've heard of that: 'The Garden of England'... But I've never seen it.



Oh it's lovely.
Lovely gardens
to fly over.

Surely not as lovely as
our very own garden
here in Sunny Salford?!

Well, yeah... snap... ruffle, ruffle... brrr...
But I'm looking forward to getting
away. Because it's getting chilly now.
Getting a bit sparse and fresh.

It's good for you, a bit of breeze and the fresh air!
I know what you mean though. Even I feel a bit of
that chill, especially when my leaves start to fall.

Yeah, I can't wait to hit that wall of hot air
when I reach those warmer climates.

Sounds like you're ready for sunshine, Kymani.
Sunshine and adventures!

Exactly, yeah... snap, snap. I'm going to meet the other guys on the telephone wire. Then we'll go across to France... ruffle... spend a few days there, then carry on through eastern Spain to Morocco...

Goodness me! These are places I've only heard of, but will never see.

After that we'll fly over the Sahara Desert... ruffle... It's a long stretch... snap, snap... I've got to feed up before that one... chomp... And drink plenty of water.

Water! My favourite – we all need that, wherever we are in the world.

Yeah, because then we go through the Congo rainforest. A lovely place where I can rest up for a few nights. High in the trees

Oh, I see. High trees, is it? Don't forget your old friend Winifred when you're living it up in those high trees!

Yeah, high to avoid the wild monkeys and... brrr... hopefully avoid the snakes... ruffle, ruffle.

I sleep with one eye open and one eye shut.

It all sounds a bit scary to me! Maybe I'm better off here at home in Peel Park, safe in the ground.

It is, it is. But it's worth it because it's hot... snap... It's nice, it's a lovely place. Me and the guys, high up in the trees, we can see all the wildlife... chomp... All the wild things going on.

Wild you say? Kymani you really are off on an adventure!

From the rainforest we'll head for South Africa and Namibia ... which is an eye-opener. A real eye-opener... ruffle, snap, chomp.

All the way on the other side of the world.

Kymani the traveller!

That's right. And all the animals we see. Elephants drinking from a water hole. The babies spraying mud on their backs... snap... It's wonderful!

But sometimes I see the animals killing each other. And I don't like that.

Lions and lionesses... ruffle... I know they have to eat... brrr... But those poor wildebeasts. Ripped apart.

You're getting scary again! Not my cup of tea, all that.

Ah, well. There are better tasting insects.

Better than Salford insects? I don't believe you! Never!

Ha... snap, snap... they're a little bit small and bland here, because they don't get so much sun.

Ah, I see. They're more exotic over there! You know a lot about these things, Kymani.

I'm a connoisseur of insects!

Because... snap, snap, chomp... it's all I eat!



I'm jealous. I'd love some more of that sunshine.

I'll bring you some back.

Well, we'll miss you, Kymani. And don't you worry about us in the dark winter nights and cold snow!

Ah, it's just a shame you haven't got a pair of wings... ruffle... and you can't release your roots... snap, chomp... so you can go to these wonderful places.

At least I get to hear about them.

Yeah, you get the pleasure of hearing everything. Everybody's story.

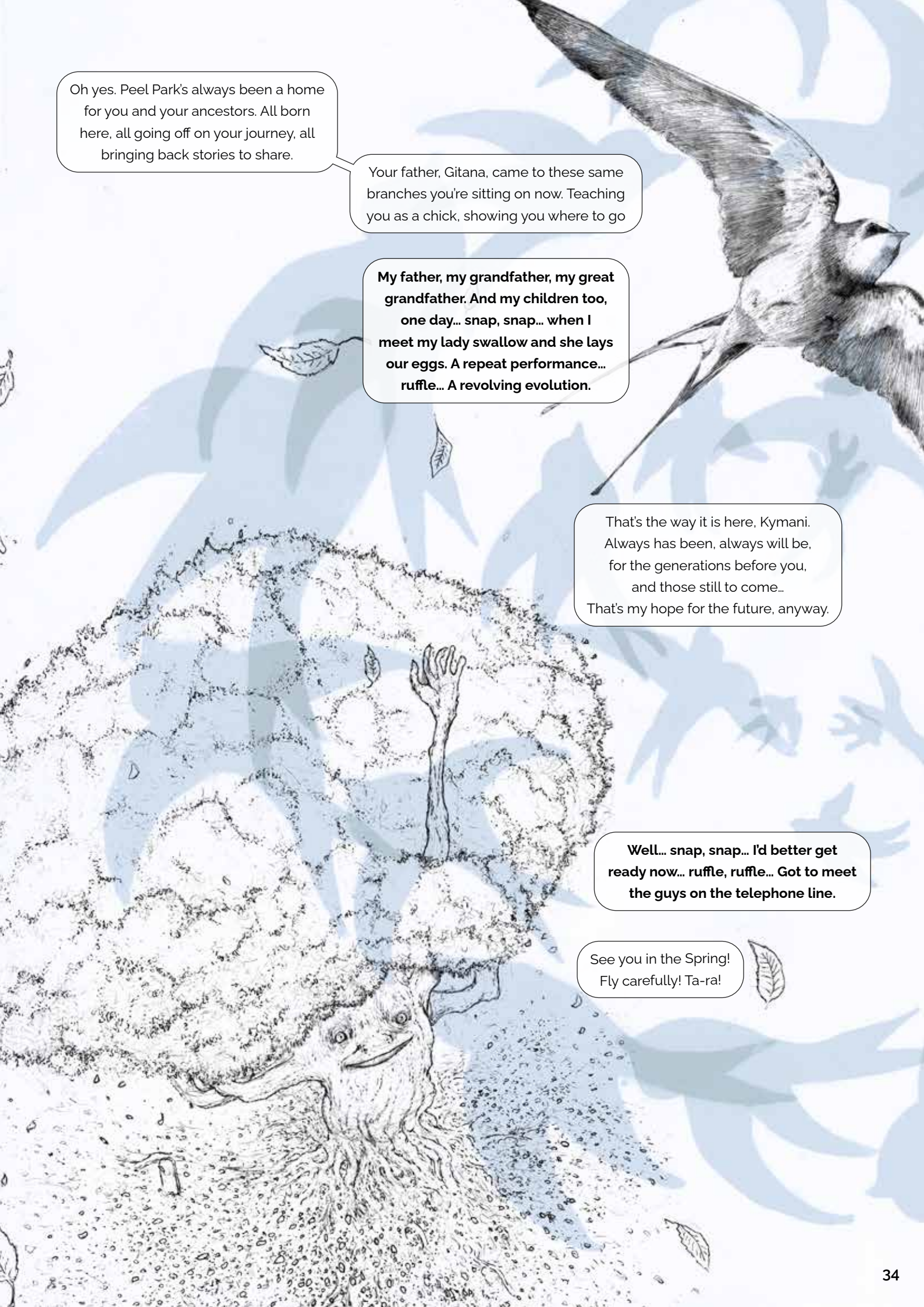
To keep me going through the winter. Till you bring back more stories in the spring.

I will, I will. And when I come back... snap... and feel the cool wall of freshness, I'll be full of mixed emotions... ruffle, ruffle.

I'll miss Africa and its wildness, and I'll be exhausted from my journey, but I'll be glad... chomp... Relieved to see my old friends again... snap, ruffle... Relieved to relax and enjoy social chit-chat with you. Yeah, I'll be glad to rest up

Just like your father. And his father before him.

Yeah?



Oh yes. Peel Park's always been a home for you and your ancestors. All born here, all going off on your journey, all bringing back stories to share.

Your father, Gitana, came to these same branches you're sitting on now. Teaching you as a chick, showing you where to go

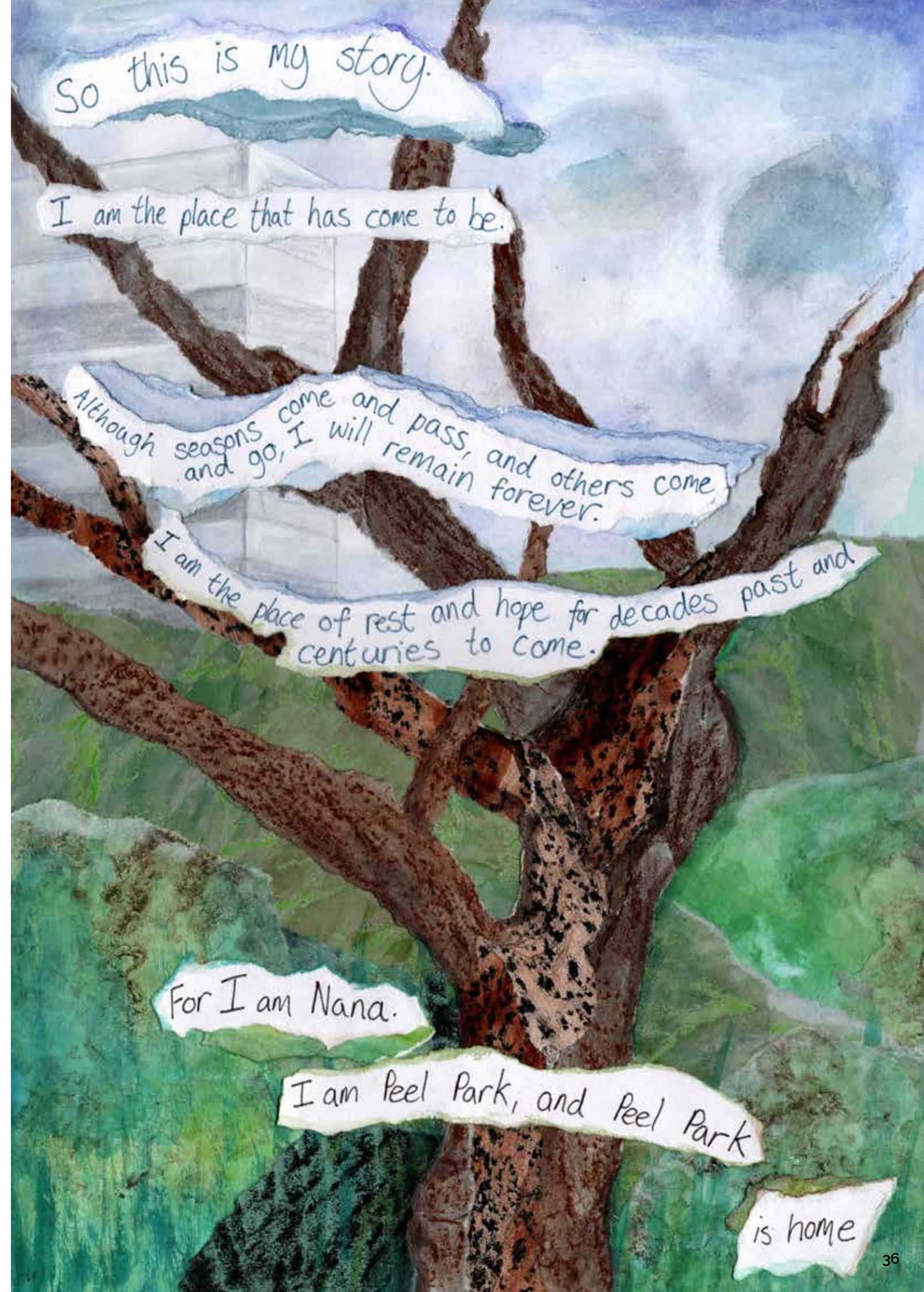
My father, my grandfather, my great grandfather. And my children too, one day... snap, snap... when I meet my lady swallow and she lays our eggs. A repeat performance... ruffle... A revolving evolution.

That's the way it is here, Kymani. Always has been, always will be, for the generations before you, and those still to come... That's my hope for the future, anyway.

Well... snap, snap... I'd better get ready now... ruffle, ruffle... Got to meet the guys on the telephone line.

See you in the Spring! Fly carefully! Ta-ra!

OUR Winter PARK





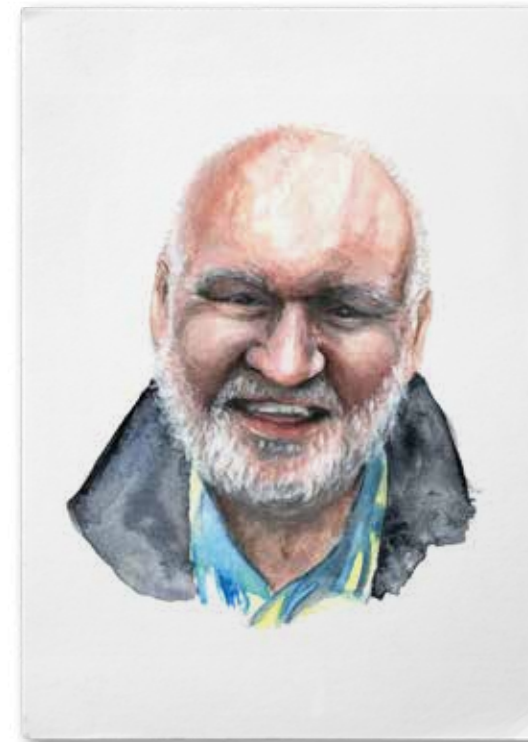
Dorothy



Helen



Jameel



Séamus



Tony



Tracy



Vashti



Ursula



Ravi

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