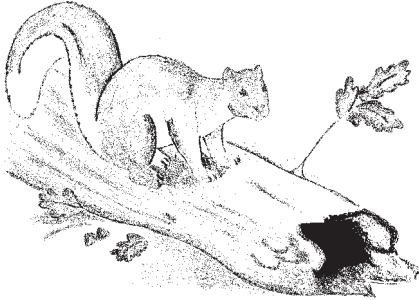


# SUNSHINE COUNTRY



By Kristina Roy

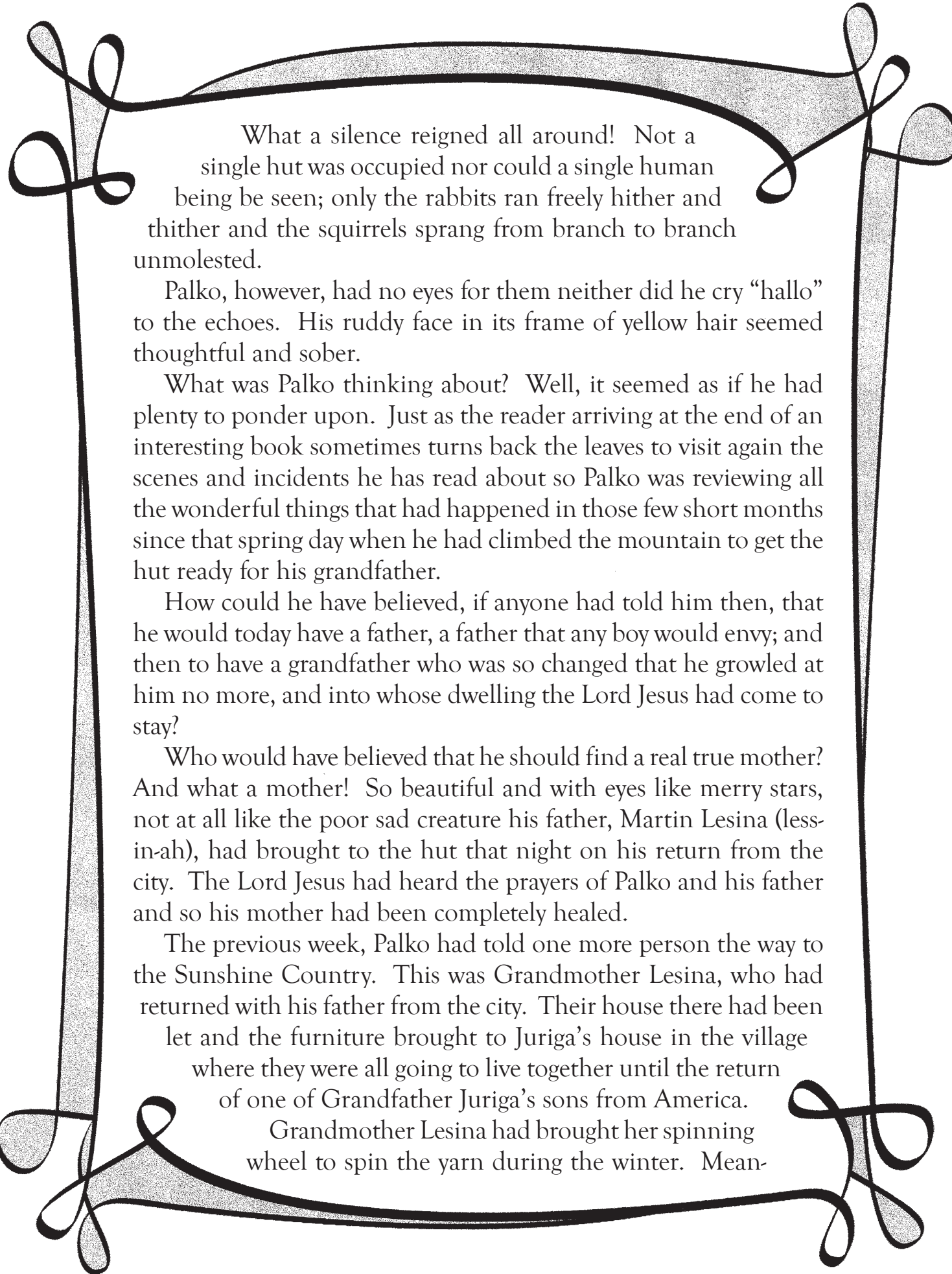
## Chapter 19

### The Door of Heaven Opens

Autumn had made its appearance much earlier than was expected. An early frost had killed the last summer flowers and the song of the birds had ceased; the swallows had flown far away to a warmer climate taking with them the last trace of summer and the wild geese had borne them company. On the mountainside, stripped of its gay green finery, nothing was heard but the hoarse cawing of the crows beginning to gather in great companies and preparing to descend upon the crops now ready for the autumn harvest. Some of the trees were still adorned with golden leaves, but many more stood naked on the windswept mountain, while at their feet lay a carpet of rich colors in the fallen leaves.

It is just as on that spring day when our story opened that we find Palko Juriga (yoor-ig-uh) (as everybody still continued to call him in spite of now knowing his true name and origin) climbing the mountainside.

The week before, at the sudden arrival of the cold weather, the woodcutters had left their frail breezy huts and moved to the village. In moving, Grandfather Juriga had left behind his big auger so Palko had returned to the hut to look for it.



What a silence reigned all around! Not a single hut was occupied nor could a single human being be seen; only the rabbits ran freely hither and thither and the squirrels sprang from branch to branch unmolested.

Palko, however, had no eyes for them neither did he cry “hallo” to the echoes. His ruddy face in its frame of yellow hair seemed thoughtful and sober.

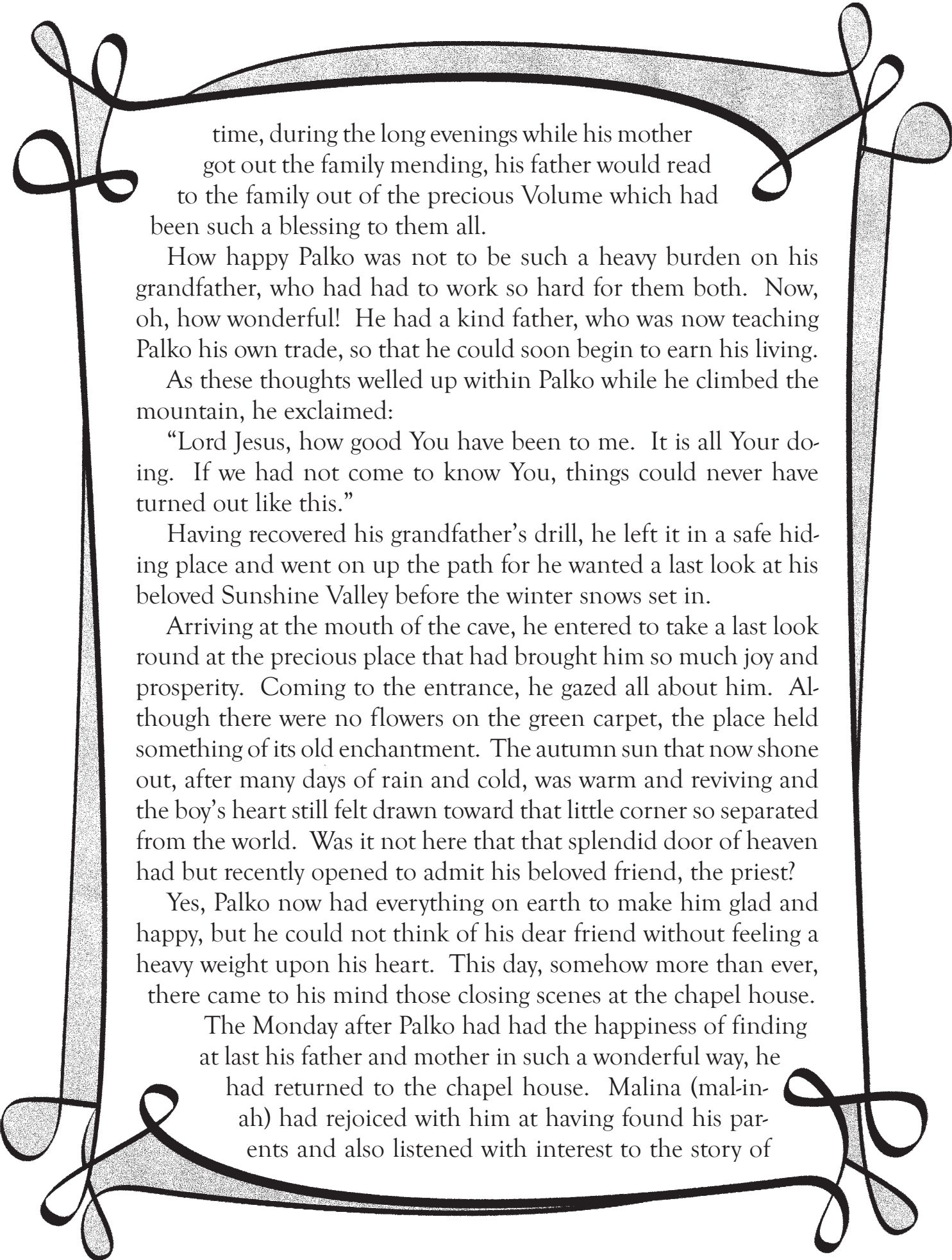
What was Palko thinking about? Well, it seemed as if he had plenty to ponder upon. Just as the reader arriving at the end of an interesting book sometimes turns back the leaves to visit again the scenes and incidents he has read about so Palko was reviewing all the wonderful things that had happened in those few short months since that spring day when he had climbed the mountain to get the hut ready for his grandfather.

How could he have believed, if anyone had told him then, that he would today have a father, a father that any boy would envy; and then to have a grandfather who was so changed that he growled at him no more, and into whose dwelling the Lord Jesus had come to stay?

Who would have believed that he should find a real true mother? And what a mother! So beautiful and with eyes like merry stars, not at all like the poor sad creature his father, Martin Lesina (less-in-ah), had brought to the hut that night on his return from the city. The Lord Jesus had heard the prayers of Palko and his father and so his mother had been completely healed.

The previous week, Palko had told one more person the way to the Sunshine Country. This was Grandmother Lesina, who had returned with his father from the city. Their house there had been let and the furniture brought to Juriga’s house in the village where they were all going to live together until the return of one of Grandfather Juriga’s sons from America.

Grandmother Lesina had brought her spinning wheel to spin the yarn during the winter. Mean-



time, during the long evenings while his mother got out the family mending, his father would read to the family out of the precious Volume which had been such a blessing to them all.

How happy Palko was not to be such a heavy burden on his grandfather, who had had to work so hard for them both. Now, oh, how wonderful! He had a kind father, who was now teaching Palko his own trade, so that he could soon begin to earn his living.

As these thoughts welled up within Palko while he climbed the mountain, he exclaimed:

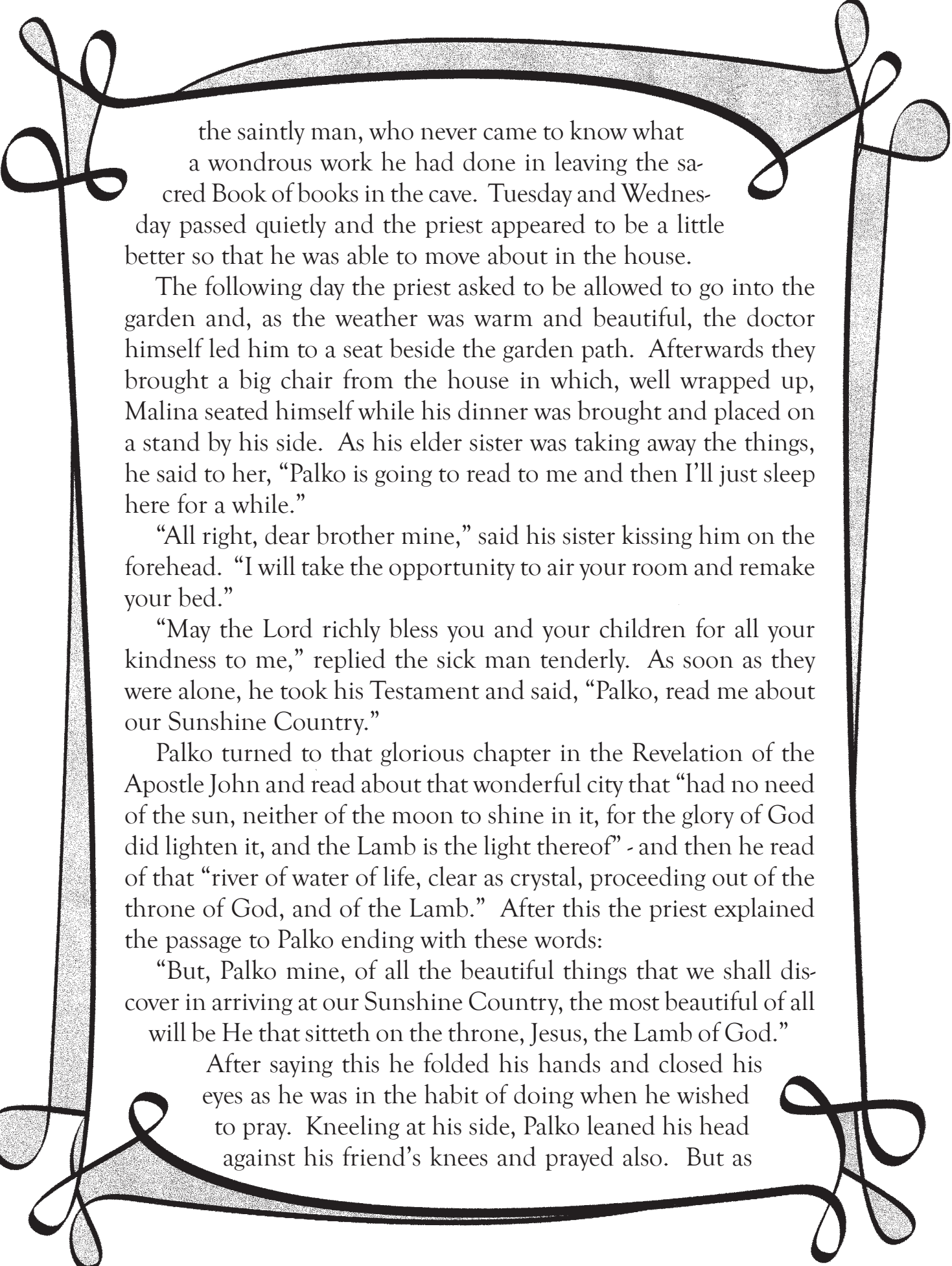
“Lord Jesus, how good You have been to me. It is all Your doing. If we had not come to know You, things could never have turned out like this.”

Having recovered his grandfather’s drill, he left it in a safe hiding place and went on up the path for he wanted a last look at his beloved Sunshine Valley before the winter snows set in.

Arriving at the mouth of the cave, he entered to take a last look round at the precious place that had brought him so much joy and prosperity. Coming to the entrance, he gazed all about him. Although there were no flowers on the green carpet, the place held something of its old enchantment. The autumn sun that now shone out, after many days of rain and cold, was warm and reviving and the boy’s heart still felt drawn toward that little corner so separated from the world. Was it not here that that splendid door of heaven had but recently opened to admit his beloved friend, the priest?

Yes, Palko now had everything on earth to make him glad and happy, but he could not think of his dear friend without feeling a heavy weight upon his heart. This day, somehow more than ever, there came to his mind those closing scenes at the chapel house.

The Monday after Palko had had the happiness of finding at last his father and mother in such a wonderful way, he had returned to the chapel house. Malina (mal-in-ah) had rejoiced with him at having found his parents and also listened with interest to the story of



the saintly man, who never came to know what a wondrous work he had done in leaving the sacred Book of books in the cave. Tuesday and Wednesday passed quietly and the priest appeared to be a little better so that he was able to move about in the house.

The following day the priest asked to be allowed to go into the garden and, as the weather was warm and beautiful, the doctor himself led him to a seat beside the garden path. Afterwards they brought a big chair from the house in which, well wrapped up, Malina seated himself while his dinner was brought and placed on a stand by his side. As his elder sister was taking away the things, he said to her, "Palko is going to read to me and then I'll just sleep here for a while."

"All right, dear brother mine," said his sister kissing him on the forehead. "I will take the opportunity to air your room and remake your bed."

"May the Lord richly bless you and your children for all your kindness to me," replied the sick man tenderly. As soon as they were alone, he took his Testament and said, "Palko, read me about our Sunshine Country."

Palko turned to that glorious chapter in the Revelation of the Apostle John and read about that wonderful city that "had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" - and then he read of that "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." After this the priest explained the passage to Palko ending with these words:

"But, Palko mine, of all the beautiful things that we shall discover in arriving at our Sunshine Country, the most beautiful of all will be He that sitteth on the throne, Jesus, the Lamb of God."

After saying this he folded his hands and closed his eyes as he was in the habit of doing when he wished to pray. Kneeling at his side, Palko leaned his head against his friend's knees and prayed also. But as

the prayer seemed to be a great deal longer than usual, Palko at last raised his eyes to his friend's face. The sick man, with his head leaning against the side of the great chair, was sleeping, but from time to time he breathed much more heavily than usual.

An indescribable feeling, solemn and strange, seemed to fill the heart of the young boy as he watched his sleeping friend. He hardly dared to breathe so careful was he not to disturb him for now his friend had become perfectly still. Over his face, which hitherto had worn a look of sadness, there had now come a decided change, as if the sleeper was lost in some wonderful dream, for to the pale countenance had come a smile of perfect happiness.

Hearing steps near him, Palko looked up and seeing the young priest, he made him a sign to come more quietly. The young priest drew nearer noiselessly, but, as he bent over his friend, he gave a cry that rang through the garden. Malina had gone, at last, where he had desired to go - to that country where the sun never, never goes down!

Up in the Sunshine Valley, as Palko remembered that last scene, his eyes began to fill with tears. All those closing moments, especially his friend's last words, were engraved in his memory, and would never be effaced.

"Why should I cry?" said Palko. "He is so happy up there! It was the Lord Jesus that came and took him to His Father's house. Now he has seen all and he has seen Him that sitteth on the throne of God and of the Lamb. He has met the kind stranger, who left the Book in the cave and who wrote those words in it, and he has thanked him heartily for me; so I am content, for some day the Lord Jesus will come to take me, too - but in the meantime, dear Lord, keep me faithful that I may show many more the way to the SUNSHINE COUNTRY."

**The End.**

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