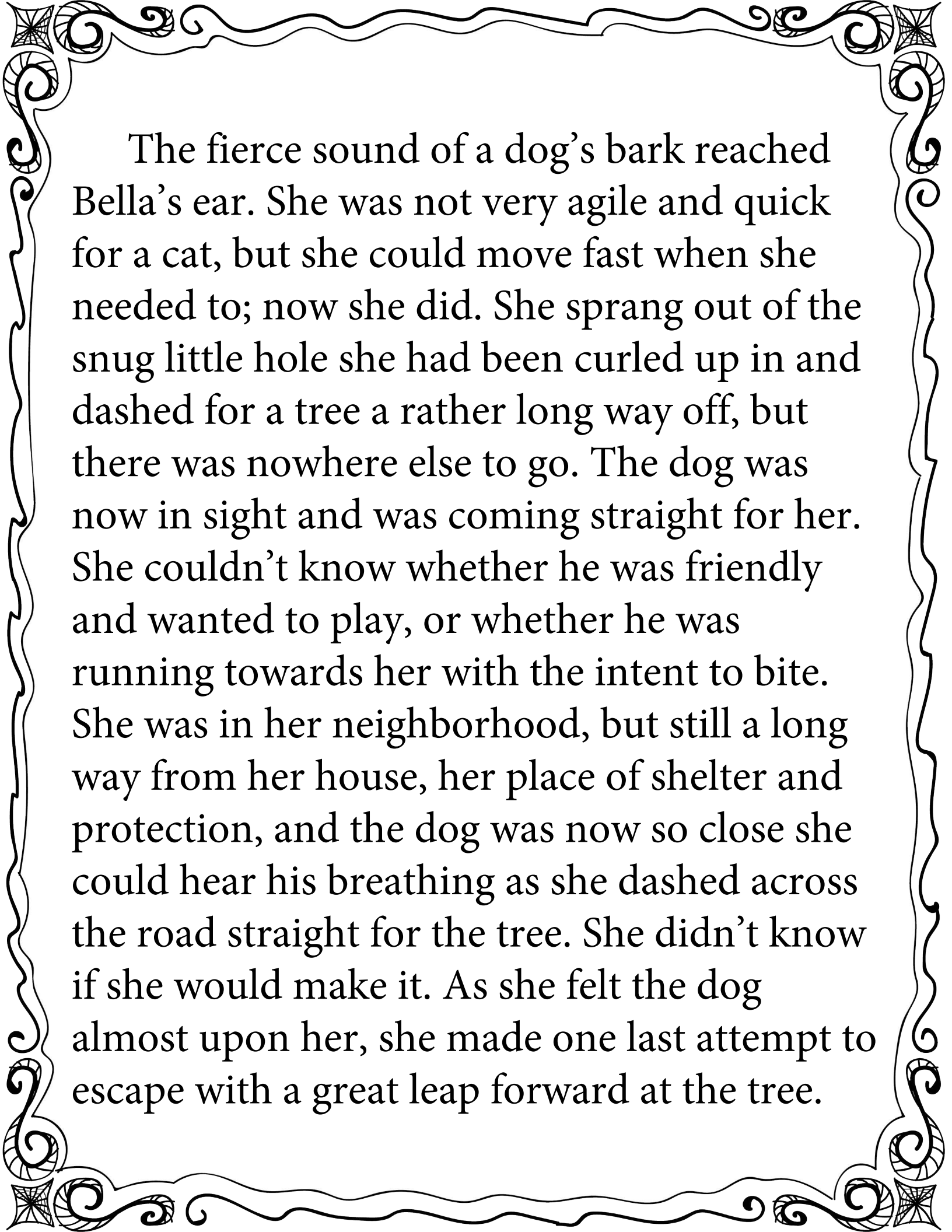




The fierce sound of a dog's bark reached Bella's ear. She was not very agile and quick for a cat, but she could move fast when she needed to; now she did. She sprang out of the snug little hole she had been curled up in and dashed for a tree a rather long way off, but there was nowhere else to go. The dog was now in sight and was coming straight for her. She couldn't know whether he was friendly and wanted to play, or whether he was running towards her with the intent to bite. She was in her neighborhood, but still a long way from her house, her place of shelter and protection, and the dog was now so close she could hear his breathing as she dashed across the road straight for the tree. She didn't know if she would make it. As she felt the dog almost upon her, she made one last attempt to escape with a great leap forward at the tree.