

"For anyone in need of a little magic in their lives." *The Times*

MAGGIE O'FARRELL

WHERE SNOW ANGELS GO

illustrated by

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*For Iris Zelda,
with love – M.O’F.*

*To my family, original and acquired, for all their practical and
emotional support. To my son Mio, for making me feel in love,
every day. And especially to Edith, for posing so patiently
for my Sylvie and letting me drag her whole
family into it, too. – D.J.T.*

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Have you ever woken suddenly, in the middle of the night, without knowing why?

Once, and not too long ago, this happened to a girl. Her eyes sprang open, without warning, and she looked around her.

The walls of her room were pulsing with a strange, glimmering light. The curtains were moving, ever so slightly, as if something – or someone – had recently passed through them. And was it the girl’s imagination or was the room colder than normal? Could that be a line of frost along the mantelpiece, across the bookshelf? Then the girl, whose name was Sylvie, saw something that made the blood freeze in her veins, made her heart leap like a fish in her chest.

There could be no mistake.

Someone was tiptoeing across the floor.

His outline shimmered with a moon-like glow, his skin a strange blue-white. Most incredible by far was what extended from his back: a pair of wings, enormous in size, and made of the softest snow-white feathers imaginable.

He was picking his way through her room, muttering to himself, wings wafting behind him.

“First, save the person,” Sylvie could hear him say, “then fly down ... no, that’s not right... Find the... No, hang on ... first, fly down. Second, find the person.




Third...” He shook his head, muddled, shutting his eyes, as if for inspiration. “Now, what comes third? I’ve forgotten and I really—”

Sylvie drew in a breath. She let it out. She drew in another and said, in a hoarse voice, “Excuse me.”

The visitor whipped round, letting out a shriek, as if he’d accidentally trodden on something sharp.

“Heavens,” he said, clutching at his chest, “you scared me. I was just...” He stopped and took a sideways step closer to the end of her bed. There was a short pause.





He stared at her with big, frightened eyes.

“You can see me?” he whispered, incredulous.

Sylvie nodded, looking up at him, holding the covers very tightly.

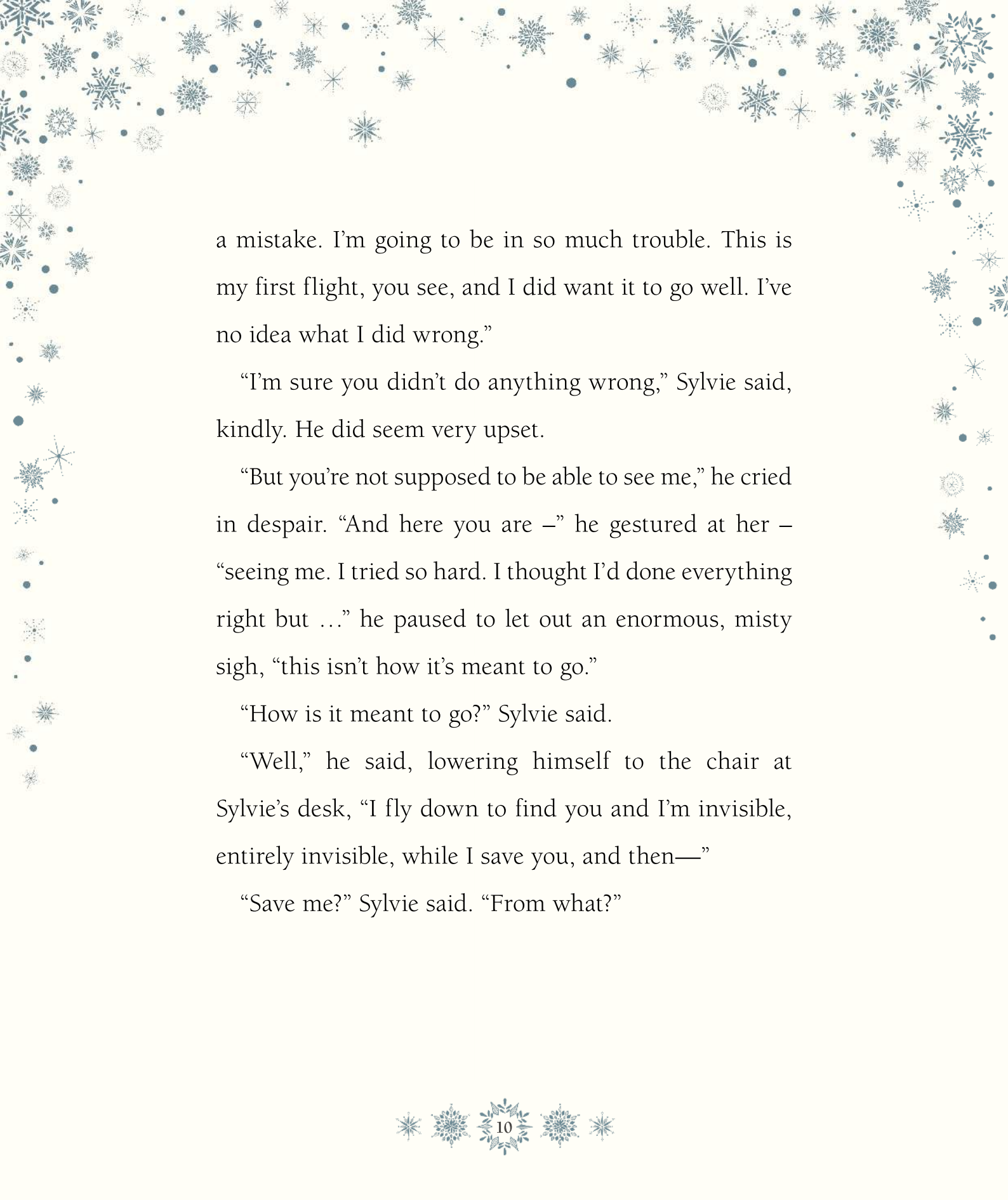
The visitor seemed utterly confused. He opened his mouth, as if he might speak, then he shut it again. He waved a hand up and down in front of his face, watching it so closely he looked cross-eyed for a moment. “Are you sure? I mean, *I* can see me. Can you?”

Sylvie laughed. She couldn’t help herself. “Of course I can. I’m talking to you, aren’t I?”

He let his hands fall to his sides. “Oh dear,” he said, in the saddest voice Sylvie had ever heard, his head hanging down dejectedly. “Oh no. I must have made





A decorative border of various snowflake patterns and small dots in shades of blue and grey surrounds the text on the page.

a mistake. I'm going to be in so much trouble. This is my first flight, you see, and I did want it to go well. I've no idea what I did wrong."

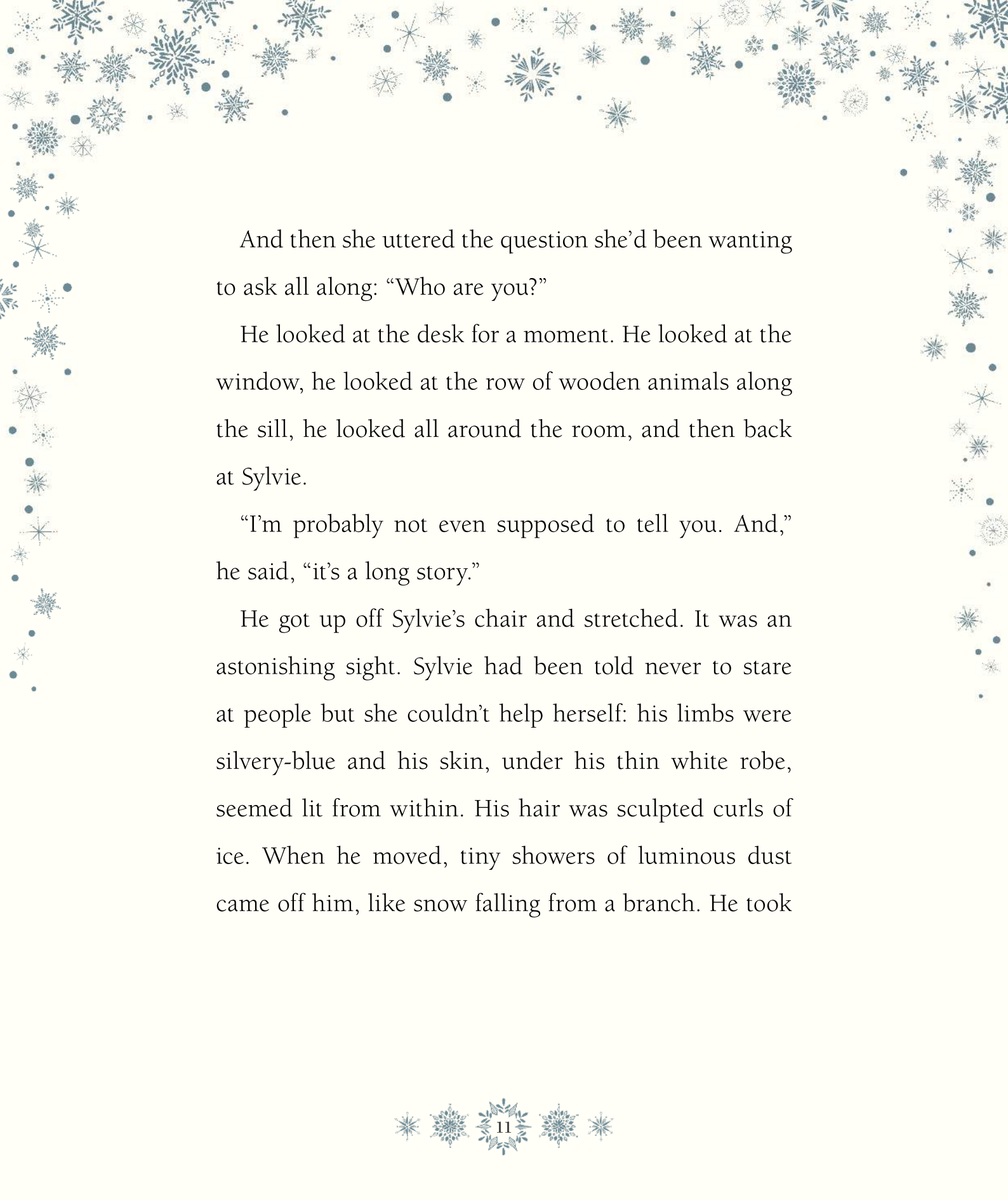
"I'm sure you didn't do anything wrong," Sylvie said, kindly. He did seem very upset.

"But you're not supposed to be able to see me," he cried in despair. "And here you are —" he gestured at her — "seeing me. I tried so hard. I thought I'd done everything right but ..." he paused to let out an enormous, misty sigh, "this isn't how it's meant to go."

"How is it meant to go?" Sylvie said.

"Well," he said, lowering himself to the chair at Sylvie's desk, "I fly down to find you and I'm invisible, entirely invisible, while I save you, and then—"

"Save me?" Sylvie said. "From what?"

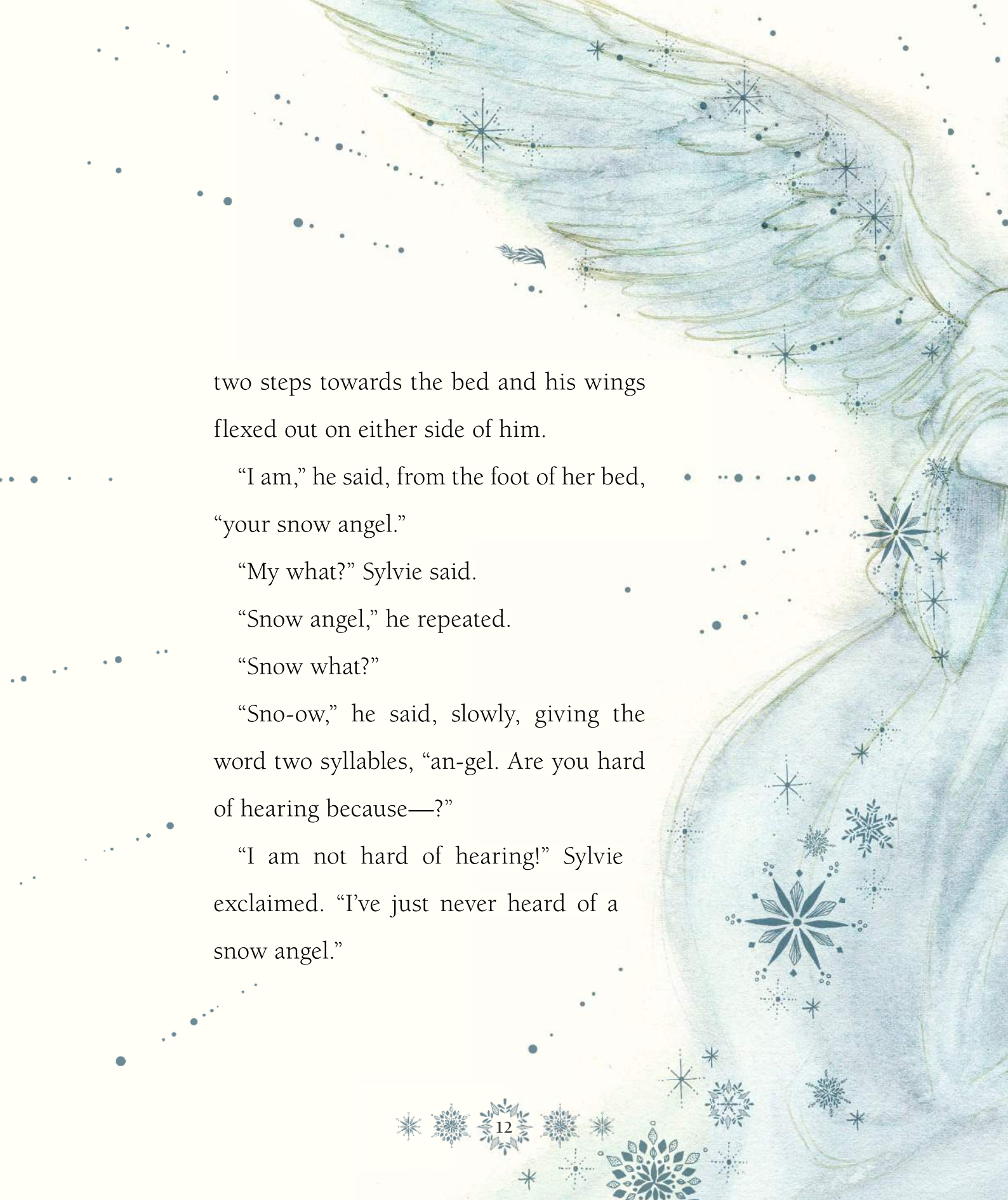


And then she uttered the question she'd been wanting to ask all along: "Who are you?"

He looked at the desk for a moment. He looked at the window, he looked at the row of wooden animals along the sill, he looked all around the room, and then back at Sylvie.

"I'm probably not even supposed to tell you. And," he said, "it's a long story."

He got up off Sylvie's chair and stretched. It was an astonishing sight. Sylvie had been told never to stare at people but she couldn't help herself: his limbs were silvery-blue and his skin, under his thin white robe, seemed lit from within. His hair was sculpted curls of ice. When he moved, tiny showers of luminous dust came off him, like snow falling from a branch. He took



two steps towards the bed and his wings flexed out on either side of him.

“I am,” he said, from the foot of her bed, “your snow angel.”

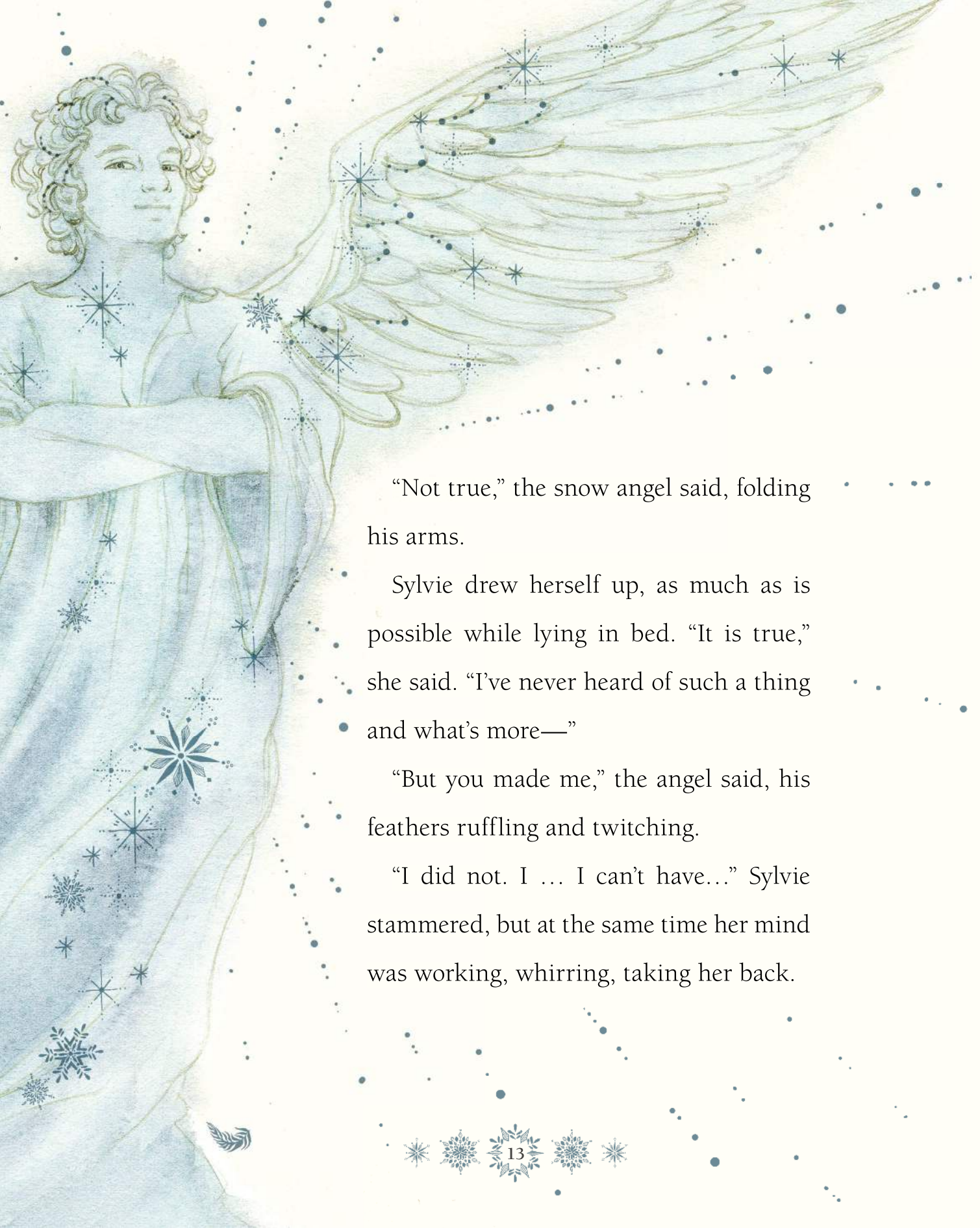
“My what?” Sylvie said.

“Snow angel,” he repeated.

“Snow what?”

“Sno-ow,” he said, slowly, giving the word two syllables, “an-gel. Are you hard of hearing because—?”

“I am not hard of hearing!” Sylvie exclaimed. “I’ve just never heard of a snow angel.”



“Not true,” the snow angel said, folding his arms.

Sylvie drew herself up, as much as is possible while lying in bed. “It is true,” she said. “I’ve never heard of such a thing and what’s more—”

“But you made me,” the angel said, his feathers ruffling and twitching.

“I did not. I ... I can’t have...” Sylvie stammered, but at the same time her mind was working, whirring, taking her back.