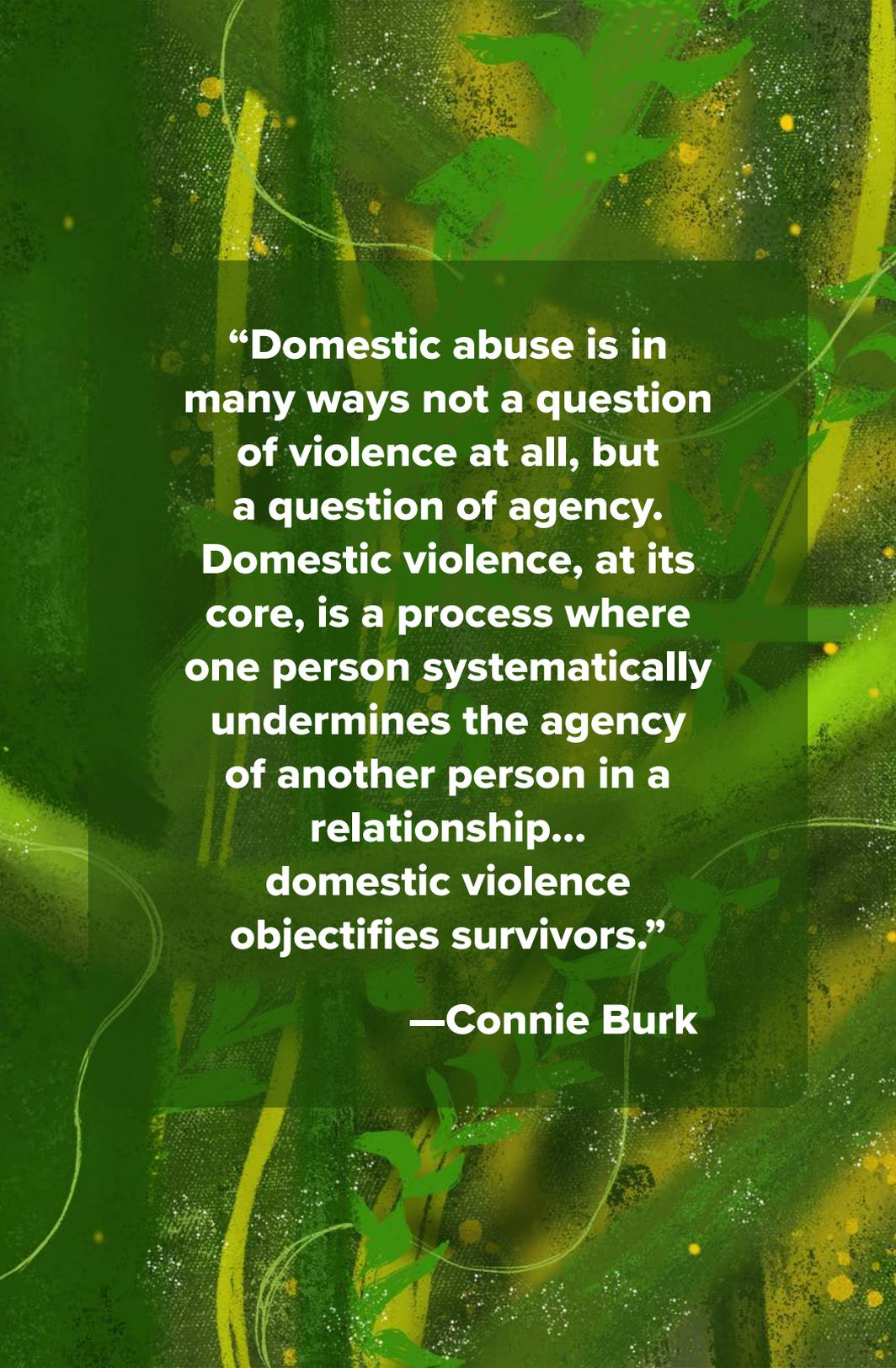


B E Y O N D

G O O D

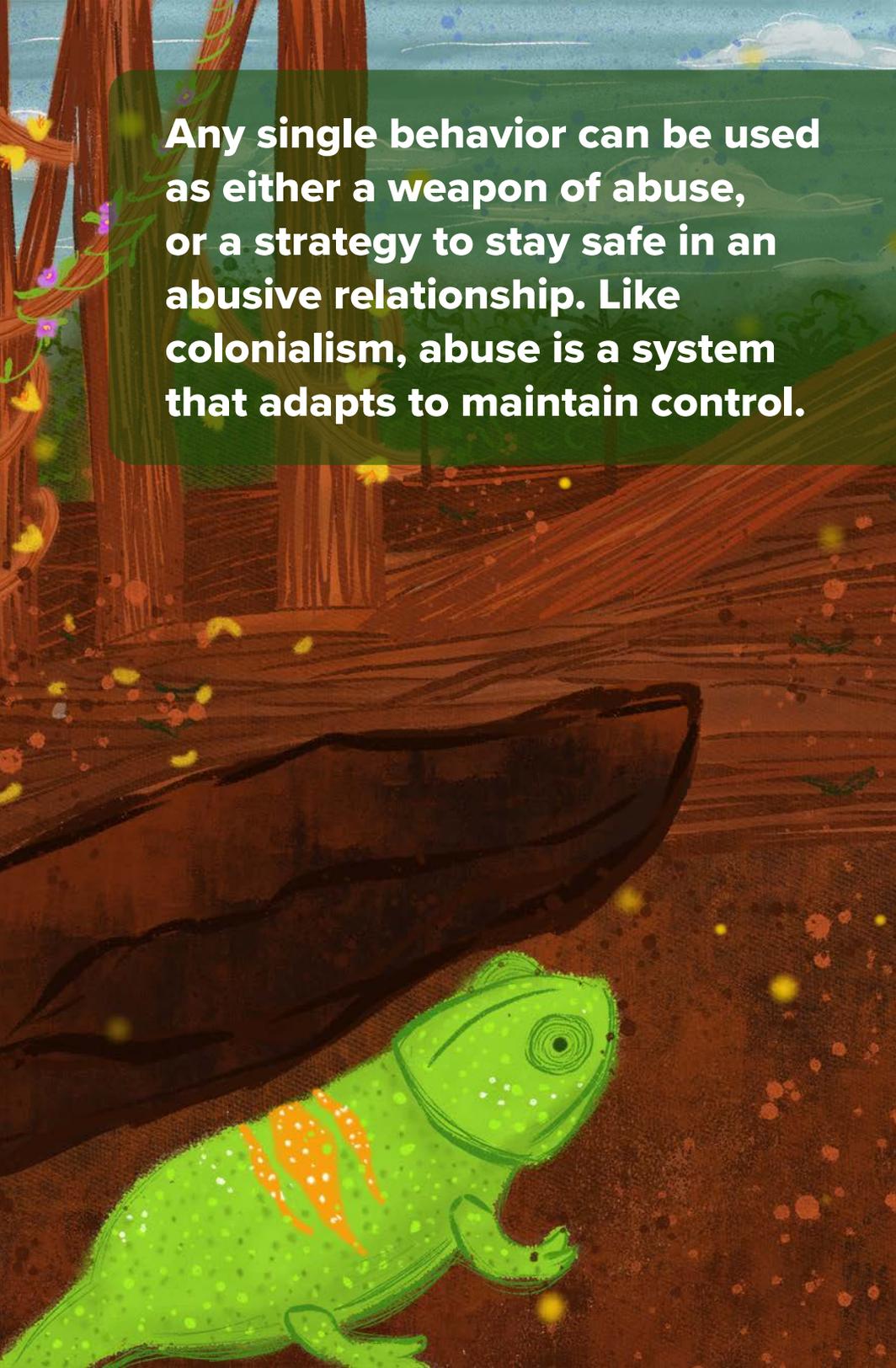
and

E V I L



“Domestic abuse is in many ways not a question of violence at all, but a question of agency. Domestic violence, at its core, is a process where one person systematically undermines the agency of another person in a relationship... domestic violence objectifies survivors.”

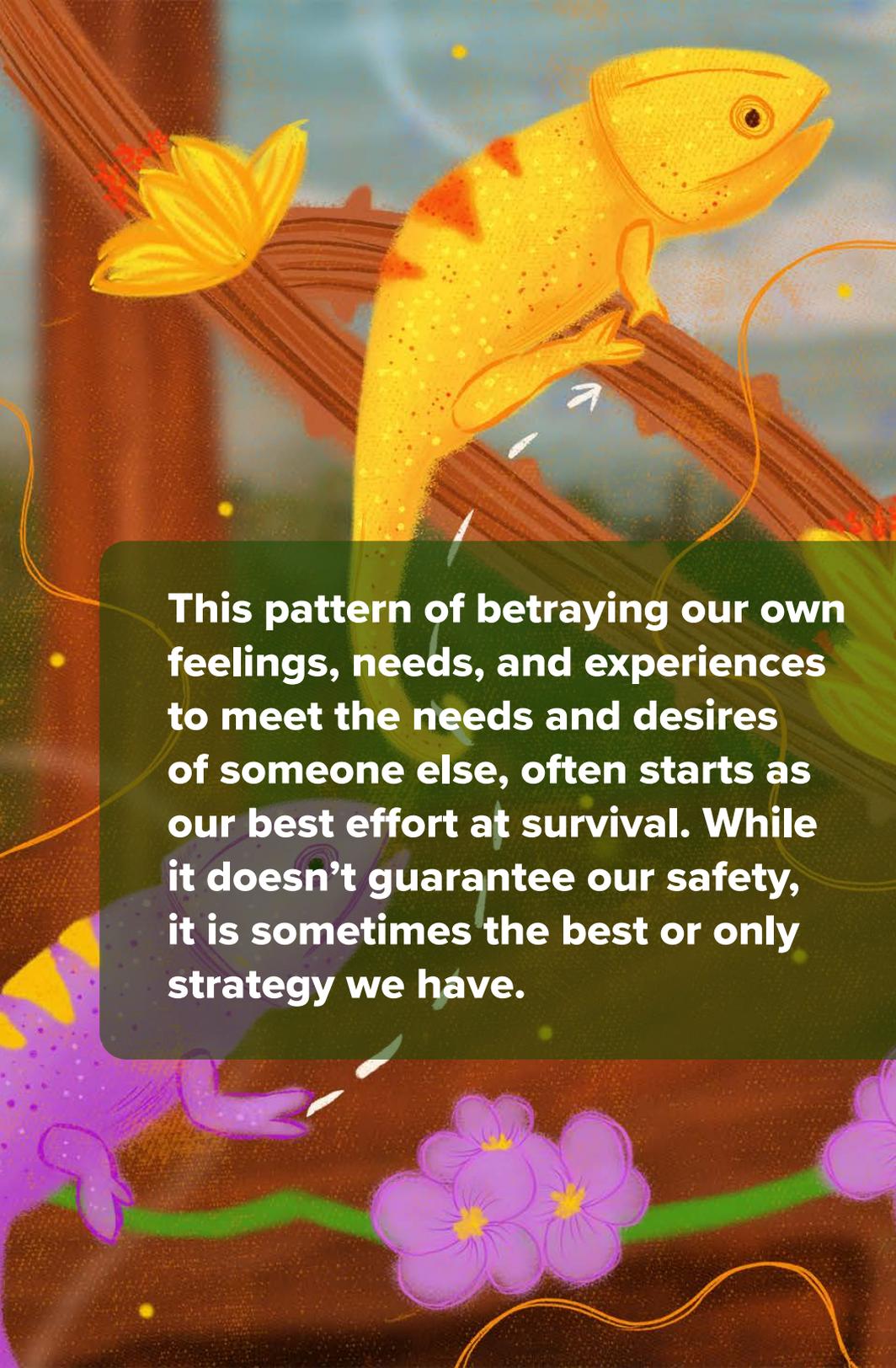
—Connie Burk



Any single behavior can be used as either a weapon of abuse, or a strategy to stay safe in an abusive relationship. Like colonialism, abuse is a system that adapts to maintain control.



Abuse survivors adapt, too. To identify who is being abused in a relationship, we have to pay attention to the pattern over time and ask ourselves: “Who is adapting and changing to meet the other person’s needs?”*

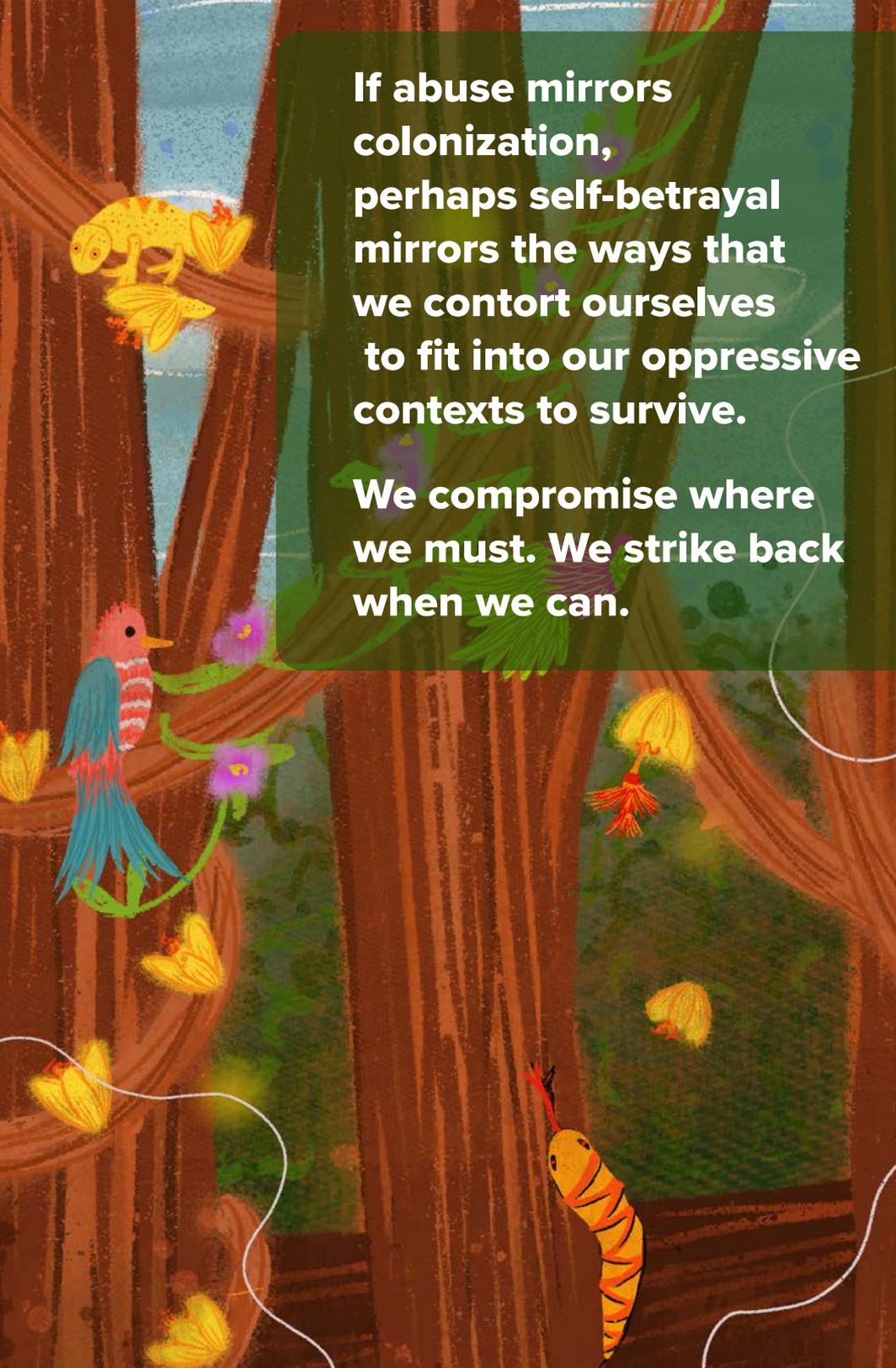


This pattern of betraying our own feelings, needs, and experiences to meet the needs and desires of someone else, often starts as our best effort at survival. While it doesn't guarantee our safety, it is sometimes the best or only strategy we have.

Patterns of behavior are difficult to change, especially when we're experiencing immediate benefits from a behavior that is destructive in the long term.

Some people learned to diminish others as a way to get their needs met. Some of us learned that our sense of self is the cost of entry into relationships, housing, and work.

Systems of oppression like patriarchy and white supremacy reward behaviors that align with those systems and punish behaviors that resist oppression.



**If abuse mirrors
colonization,
perhaps self-betrayal
mirrors the ways that
we contort ourselves
to fit into our oppressive
contexts to survive.**

**We compromise where
we must. We strike back
when we can.**

When we fall into the trap of telling our stories in a way that inadvertently reinforces the binary between good and evil, we obfuscate our own role in participating in oppressive systems, and it becomes difficult to learn from the complicated and imperfect ways that we've survived.

**Our work is to align our actions
with our values —and transform
the systems that created and
enabled oppressive dynamics in
the first place.**

