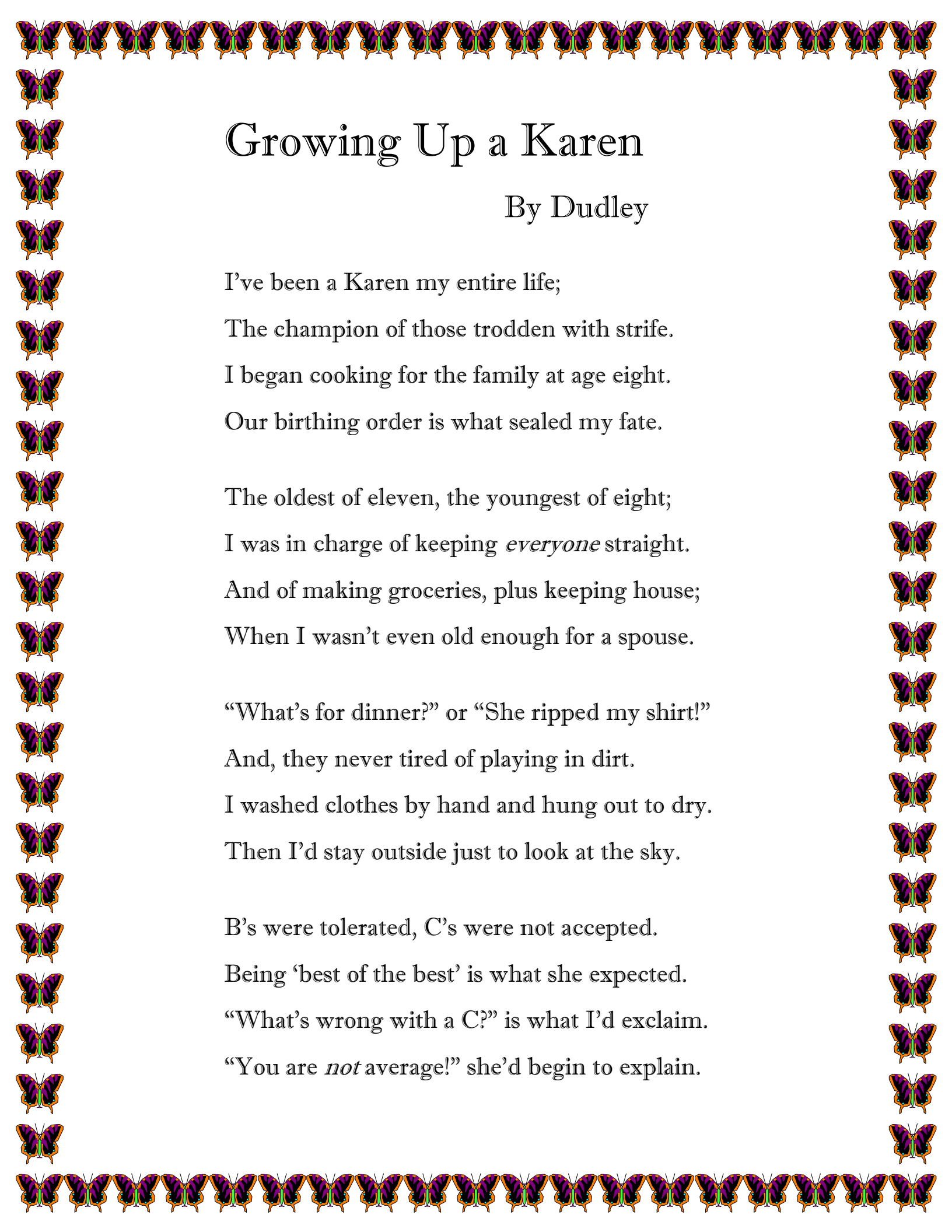




Growing Up a Karen

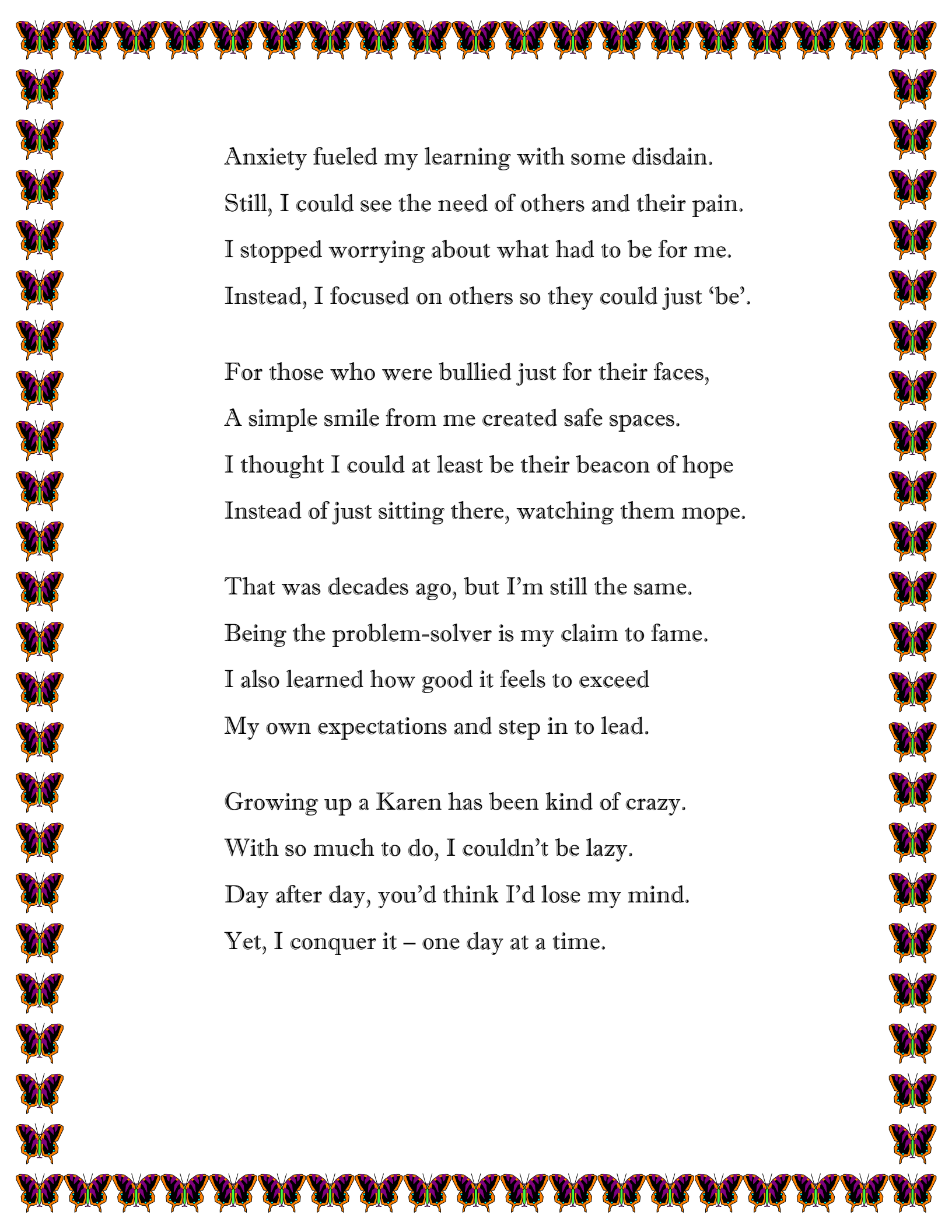
By Dudley

I've been a Karen my entire life;
The champion of those trodden with strife.
I began cooking for the family at age eight.
Our birthing order is what sealed my fate.

The oldest of eleven, the youngest of eight;
I was in charge of keeping *everyone* straight.
And of making groceries, plus keeping house;
When I wasn't even old enough for a spouse.

"What's for dinner?" or "She ripped my shirt!"
And, they never tired of playing in dirt.
I washed clothes by hand and hung out to dry.
Then I'd stay outside just to look at the sky.

B's were tolerated, C's were not accepted.
Being 'best of the best' is what she expected.
"What's wrong with a C?" is what I'd exclaim.
"You are *not* average!" she'd begin to explain.



Anxiety fueled my learning with some disdain.
Still, I could see the need of others and their pain.
I stopped worrying about what had to be for me.
Instead, I focused on others so they could just 'be'.

For those who were bullied just for their faces,
A simple smile from me created safe spaces.
I thought I could at least be their beacon of hope
Instead of just sitting there, watching them mope.

That was decades ago, but I'm still the same.
Being the problem-solver is my claim to fame.
I also learned how good it feels to exceed
My own expectations and step in to lead.

Growing up a Karen has been kind of crazy.
With so much to do, I couldn't be lazy.
Day after day, you'd think I'd lose my mind.
Yet, I conquer it – one day at a time.