

# The Last Leaf - O' Henry

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Assistant Prof. Samina Khan



◆ **Real name- William Sidney Porter**

◆ **Pen name- O'Henry**

◆ **1862-1910**

◆ **American Short Story Writer**

◆ **Works**

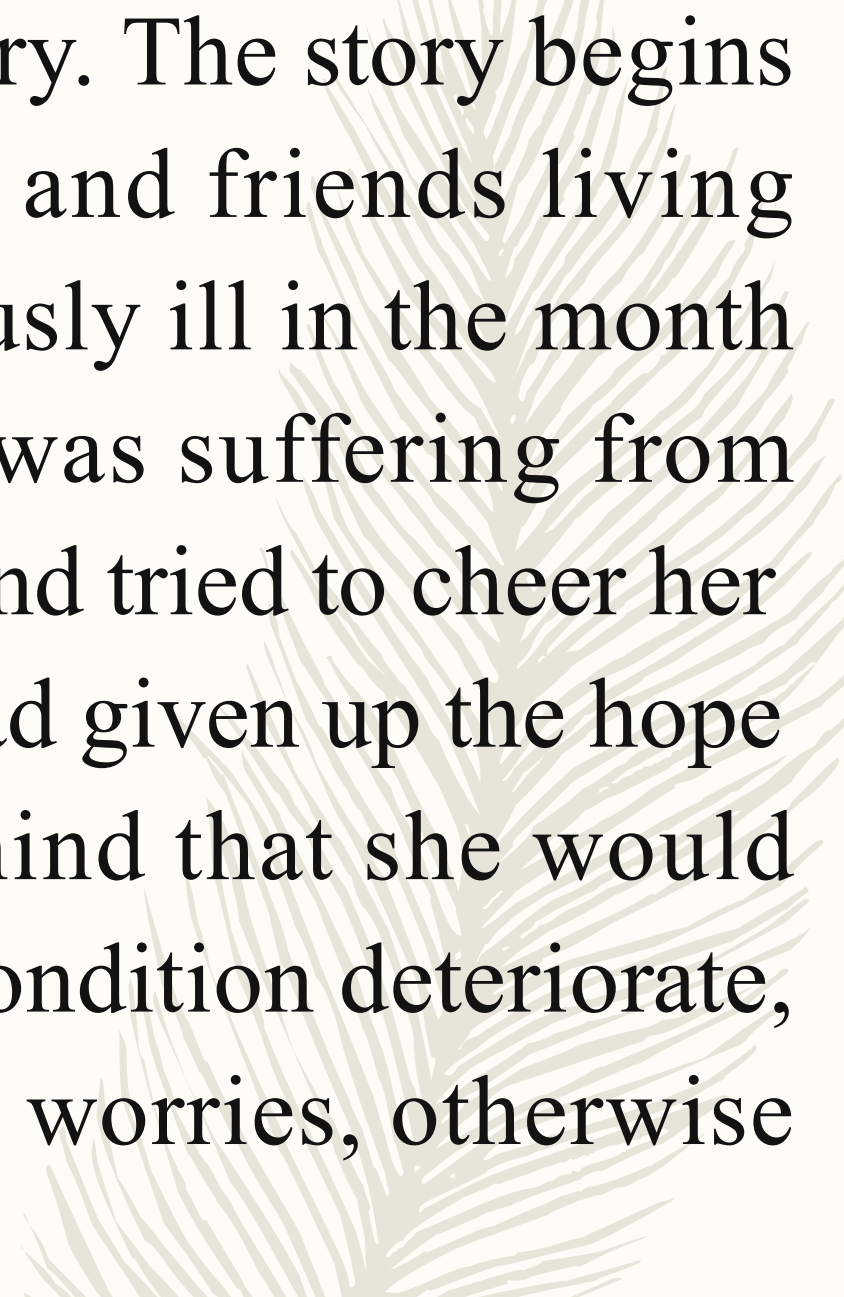
1. **The Gift of Magi**

2. **The Duplicity of Hargraves**

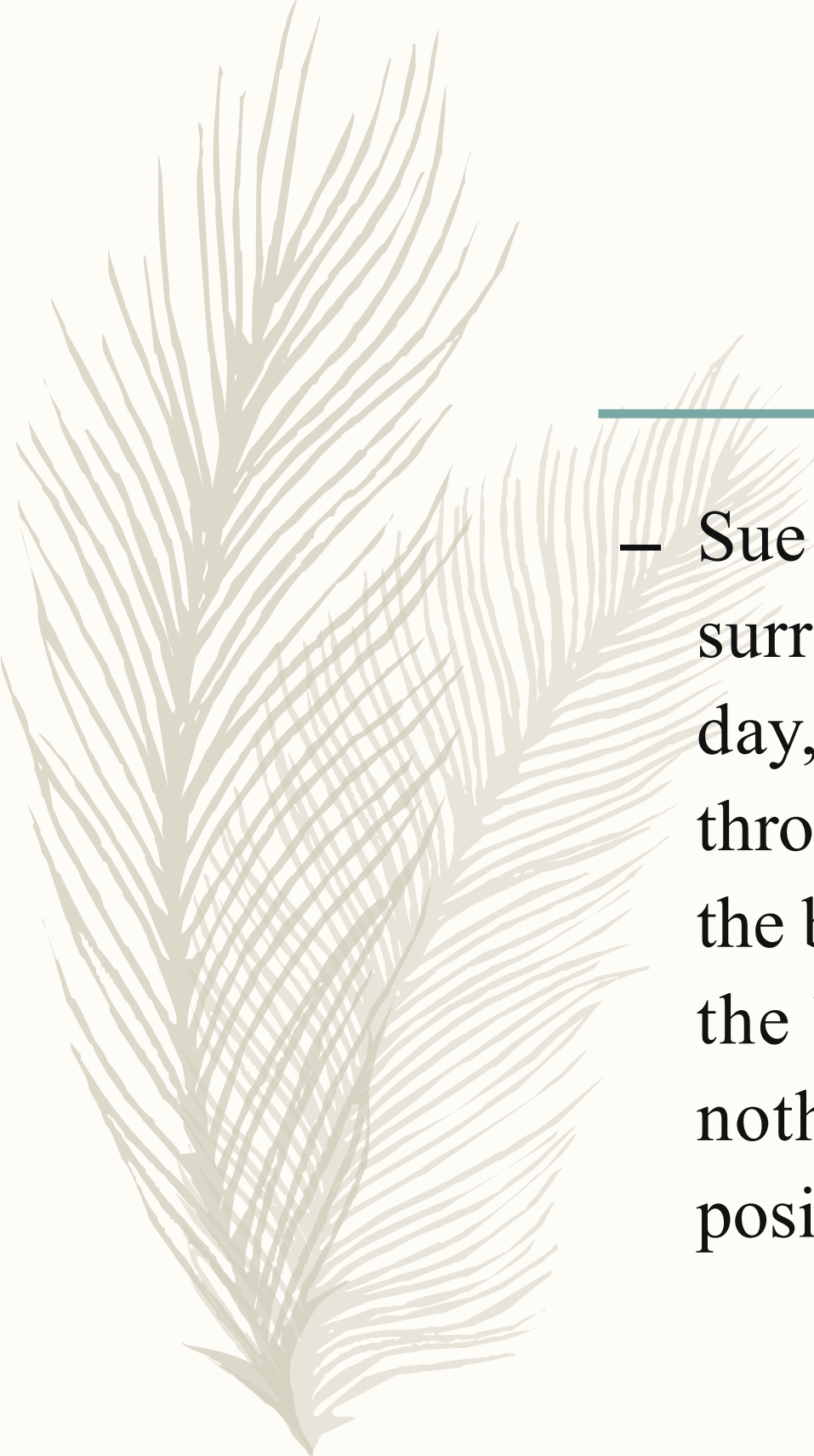
3. **The Ransom of Red Chief**



The Last Leaf is a short story written by O. Henry. The story begins with Johnsy and Sue who were young artists and friends living together in a small flat. Once, Johnsy fell seriously ill in the month of November. The doctor diagnosed that she was suffering from pneumonia. Her friend, Sue was really worried and tried to cheer her up so that she would recover soon. But Johnsy had given up the hope of survival. She had somehow made up her mind that she would never recover and would die soon. Seeing her condition deteriorate, the doctor asked Sue to relieve Johnsy from all worries, otherwise her medicines wouldn't respond to her illness.

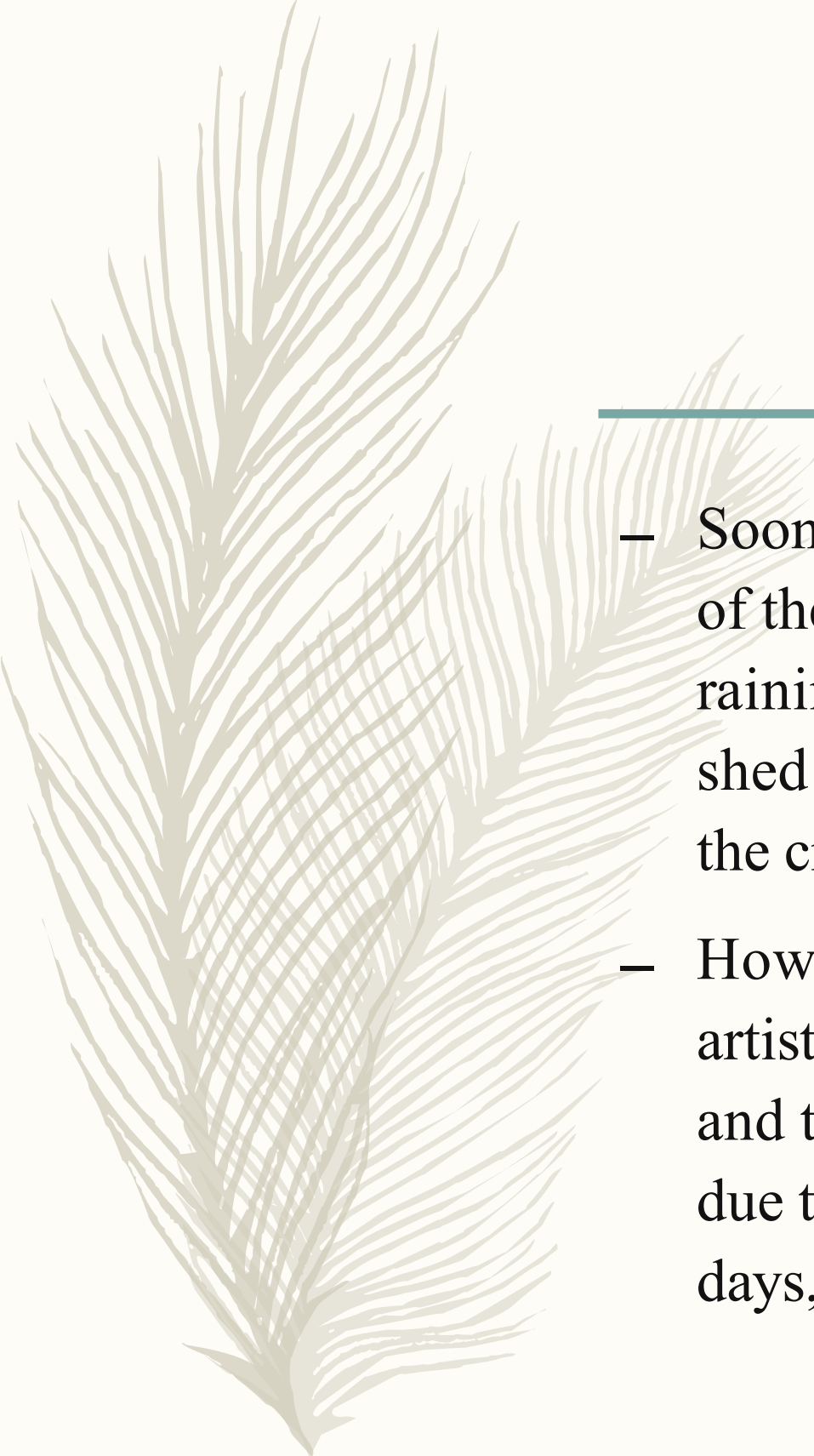


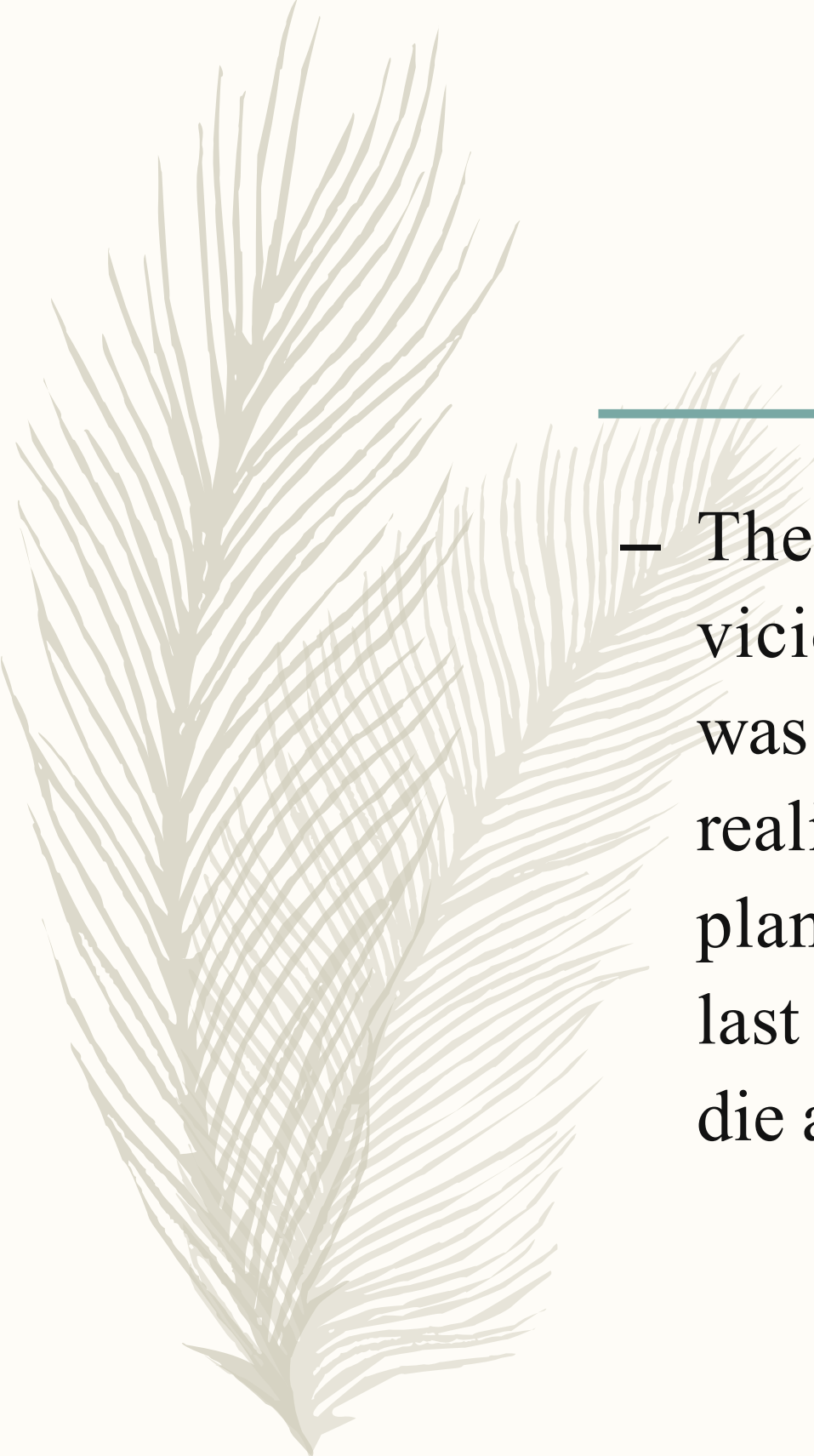


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- Sue tried her best to cheer up Johnsy, but she took no interest in the surroundings. She was non-responsive to any of Sue's efforts. One day, while Johnsy was lying on her bed, she noticed an ivy plant through the window that was gradually losing all its leaves. Seeing the bare condition of the tree, Johnsy said that she would die the day the last leaf would fall off the plant. Although the ivy plant had nothing to do with her illness, Johnsy was too depressed to think positively about her own recovery.

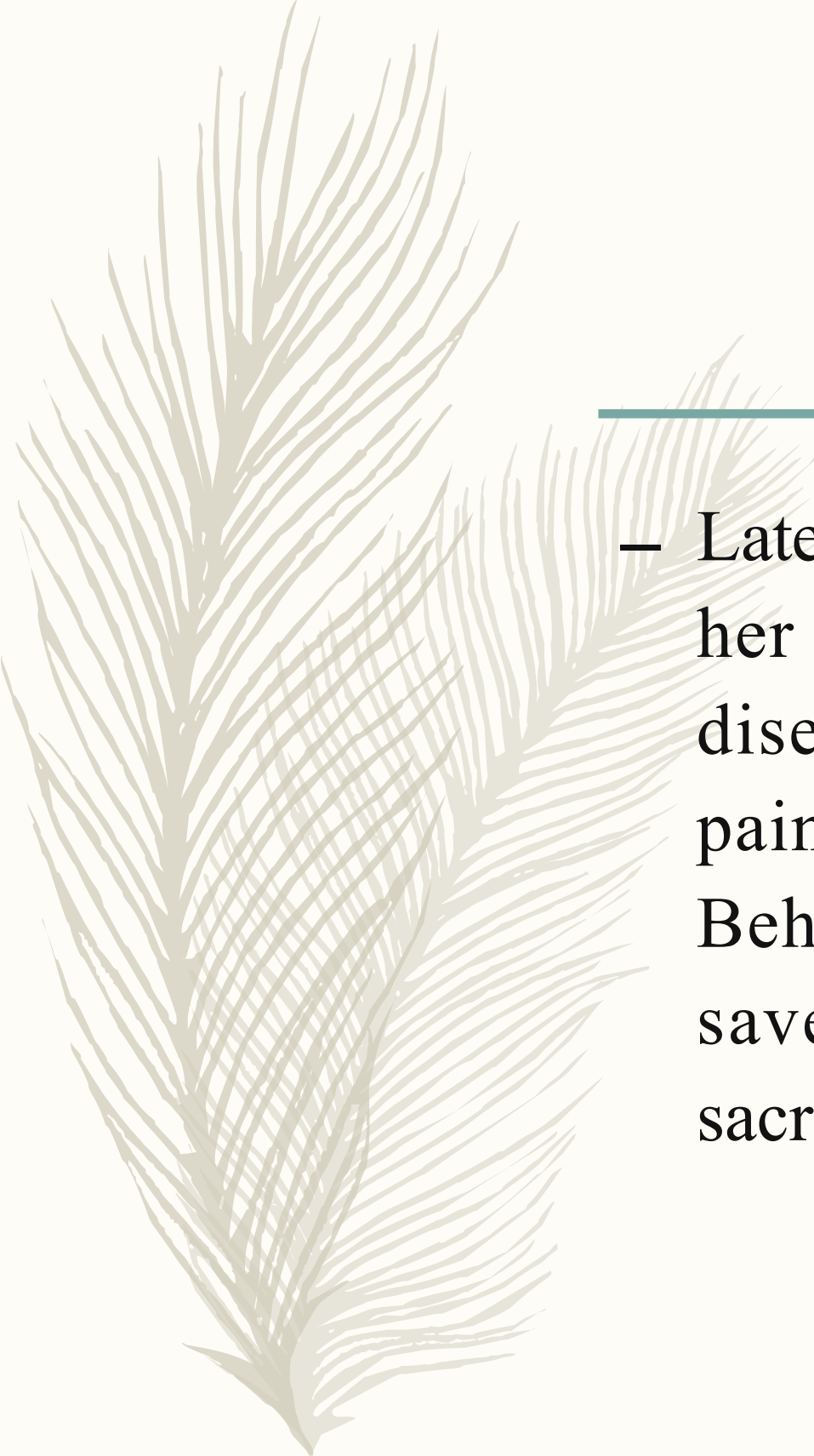
Meanwhile, Sue continued convincing Johnsy that she would recover from her illness soon and she should not pin her journey of survival on the last leaf of the ivy plant. As days passed, Johnsy kept counting the remaining leaves of the plant every day. Unable to bear the pain of her dear friend, Sue approached Behrman, an aged artist who lived downstairs and explained about Johnsy's mental state. She told him how her friend had pinned her survival on the last leaf of the ivy plant.



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- Soon, Behrman came to visit Johnsy but found her asleep. Sue pulled the curtains of the window of her room and they went to sit in the other room. That day, it was raining heavily along with a storm and she felt the leaves of the ivy plant would shed off soon. She hesitantly peeped out of the window and saw only one leaf on the creeper which might fall off the plant anytime.
  - However, Behrman said no word and returned to his room. That night, the old artist decided to do something for Johnsy. He painted a similar leaf of an ivy plant and tied it on the creeper while Johnsy was asleep. But while doing so, he fell ill due to the exposure to freezing cold weather and heavy rainfall outside. After two days, he died of pneumonia.

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- The following morning, Johnsy looked out of the window after a vicious storm the previous night and saw there was a last leaf that was still clinging to the ivy plant. This gave her the hope to live. She realised that she was foolish to pin her survival on the last leaf of a plant. She understood that there must be a definite reason why the last leaf remained in the creeper and it was sinful of her to want to die at such a young age. Soon, Johnsy recovered from her illness.



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- Later, when Johnsy recovered from illness completely, Sue informed her that Behrman had died of pneumonia. He had contracted the disease while being out in the cold and wet weather and he had painted the last leaf to give Johnsy the hope of survival. Finally, Behrman had successfully painted his masterpiece--the leaf that saved Johnsy's life and gave her hope to live longer, while he sacrificed his own life in the process.





# Conclusion of 'The Last Leaf'

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The chapter - The Last Leaf teaches students that they should not lose hope on anything so easily. They need to face tough times courageously and support people who need their help on time.



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**Thank You.**