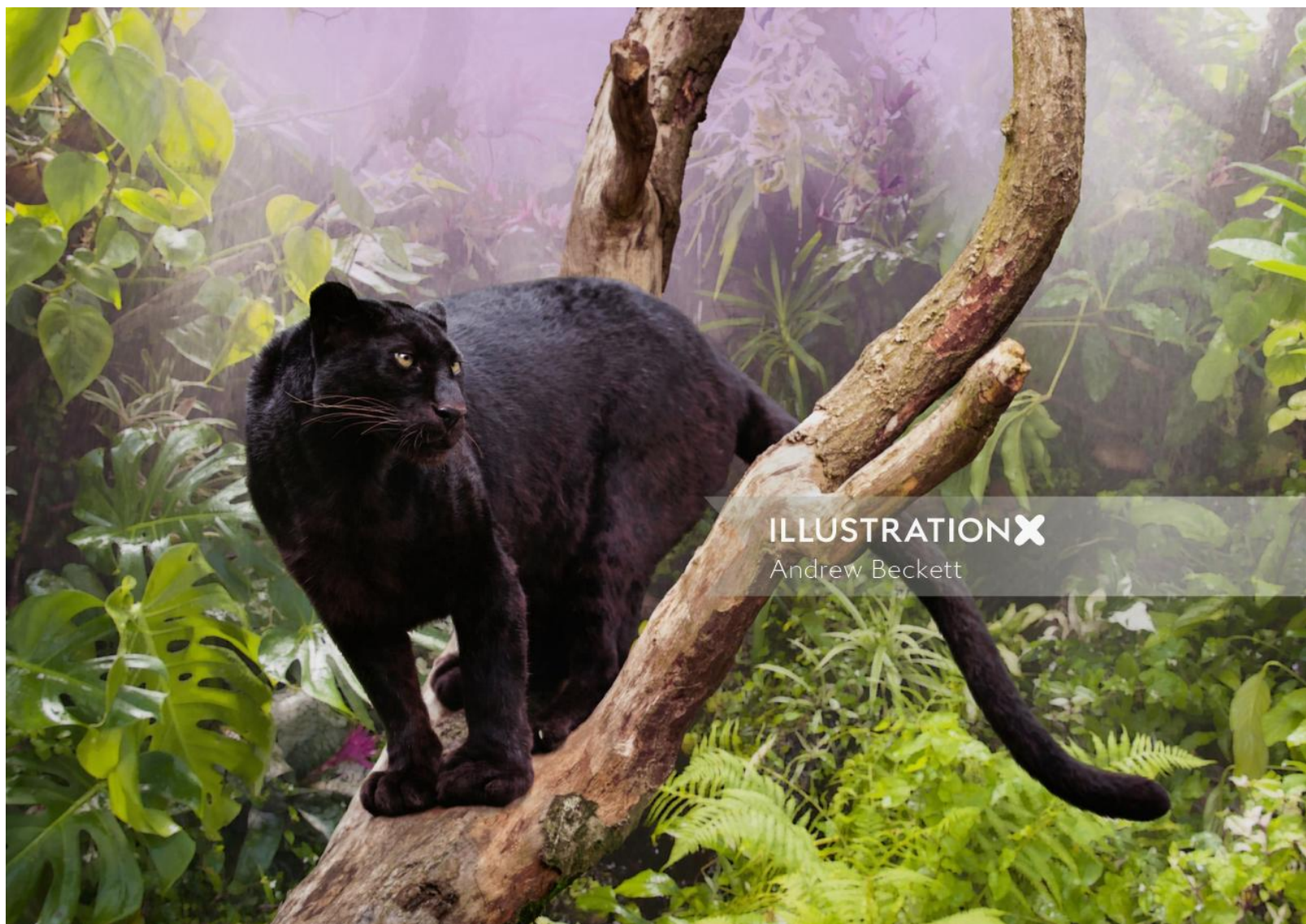


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134 life on earth • WETLANDS

50 per cent of all known fish species are found in freshwater habitats, as well as more than 10 per cent of all the world's animal species.

140,000 sq km (54,000 sq miles) - the minimum estimated size of the Pantanal.

440 fish species or more migrate between ocean and freshwater habitats. 135


## Wetlands

Salty oceans are not the only watery environments on Earth. Rivers, lakes, ponds, and large waterlogged areas known as wetlands are all crucial freshwater habitats - home to more than 100,000 species of plants and animals.

Marshes, swamps, bogs, and fens are examples of wetlands - flooded areas covered in water plants that are incredibly biodiverse inland habitats. They typically form close to rivers that periodically flood, or at the edges of lakes and oceans. The Pantanal in South America is the world's largest freshwater wetland, but other wetlands can contain salty water, or a mixture of both salty and fresh.

**Pantanal**  
Fed by tributaries of the Paraguay River, the Pantanal has one of the highest concentrations of wildlife in South America. It is a seasonal wetland that largely dries out during the dry season, leaving pools and small lakes, and flooding again when rainfall resumes. Among its grasses, rushes, and other plant life, many animals make their home.

**Paradoxical frog**  
The tadpoles of the paradoxical frog start off very large, up to 27 cm (10.7 in) long, but shrink as they develop into adults. Fully grown frogs, which hide in the murky water, are smaller - only up to 7.5 cm (3 in) long.



**South American lungfish**  
This large air-breathing fish swims in floodwater. To survive in times of drought, it burrows in the mud and surrounds itself with a waterproof layer of mucus.

**Chiquitano cichlid**  
These small fish have special teeth in their throats that enable them to grind down the shells of snails.

**Spotfin hatchetfish**  
Strong fins allow these fish to jump above the water to catch prey such as insects.

**Humboldt catfish**  
Found in soft, sandy areas at the bottom of swamps, this fish burrows into the sediment for protection.


**Green anaconda**  
This gigantic, semi-aquatic snake crushes and swallows its prey whole, before slowly digesting it.

**Freshwater stingray**  
The eyes of this flat fish sit on the top of its body, with its mouth and gill slits underneath.


**Red-bellied piranha**  
Schools of 20 or more piranhas often swim together, using their razor-sharp teeth to hunt small fish and insects.

**Serpent tetra**  
These colourful, flame-coloured fish hide from predators in plants.


**Giant water lily**  
The largest member of the lily family, the giant water lily only opens its white, fragrant flowers at night. The flowers turn pink after being pollinated by beetles.




**Jabiru stork**  
This large bird with a long upturned black bill wades in shallow water.




**Giant lilypad**  
Stretching up to 3 m (9.8 ft) across, the lilypads of the giant water lily are strong enough to support a small child.




**Jaguar**  
These big cats are strong swimmers and often wade through the water hunting for prey to crush with their powerful jaws.




**Yacare caiman**  
Millions of this crocodilian species live in the Pantanal, snapping up snakes, armadillos, and fish such as piranhas for food.




**Roseate spoonbill**  
These birds use their spoon-shaped bills to forage under the water. They get their pink colour from the crustaceans they eat.




**Capybara**  
The world's largest rodent, the capybara is a semi-aquatic mammal that roots on land but sometimes holes in the water.




**Goby**  
Goby attaches itself to the rock.




**Climbing fish**  
The Nozaki rock-climbing goby lives in flood- and landslide-prone streams in Hawaii and on other volcanic islands. In order to travel upstream to breed, the goby has developed a special sucker that allows it to stick to the rocks behind waterfalls and propel its body upwards to reach the river beyond.



**Wattled jacana**  
This resourceful bird can carry its chicks tucked under its wings when crossing flooded areas. Its long toes allow it to perch on floating vegetation.



**Giant river otter**  
These sociable mammals are at home on land and in the water and can grow up to 1.8 m (6 ft) long.



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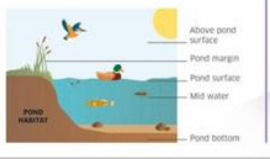
**Above pond surface**

**Pond margin**

**Pond surface**

**Mid water**

**Pond bottom**



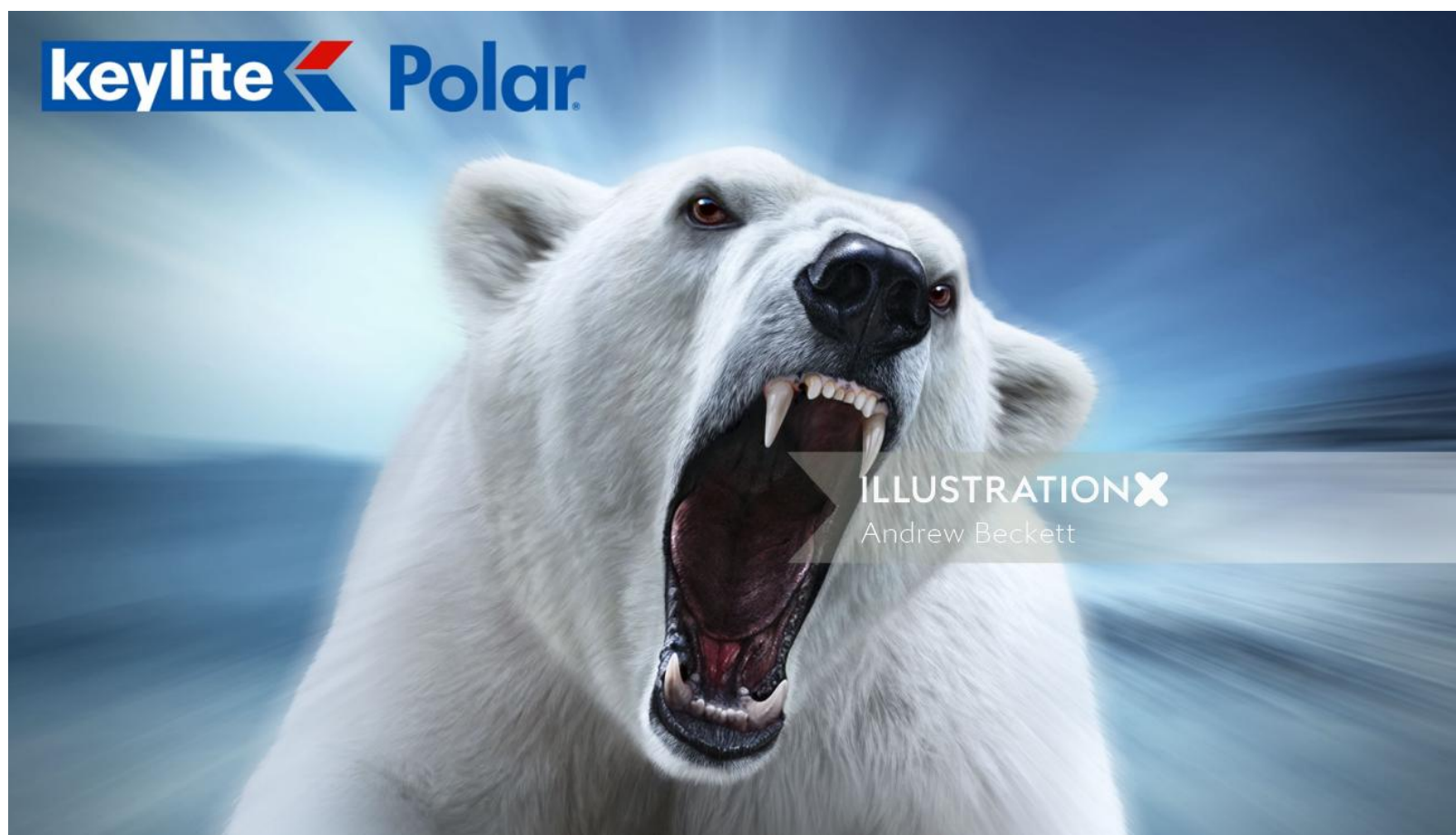
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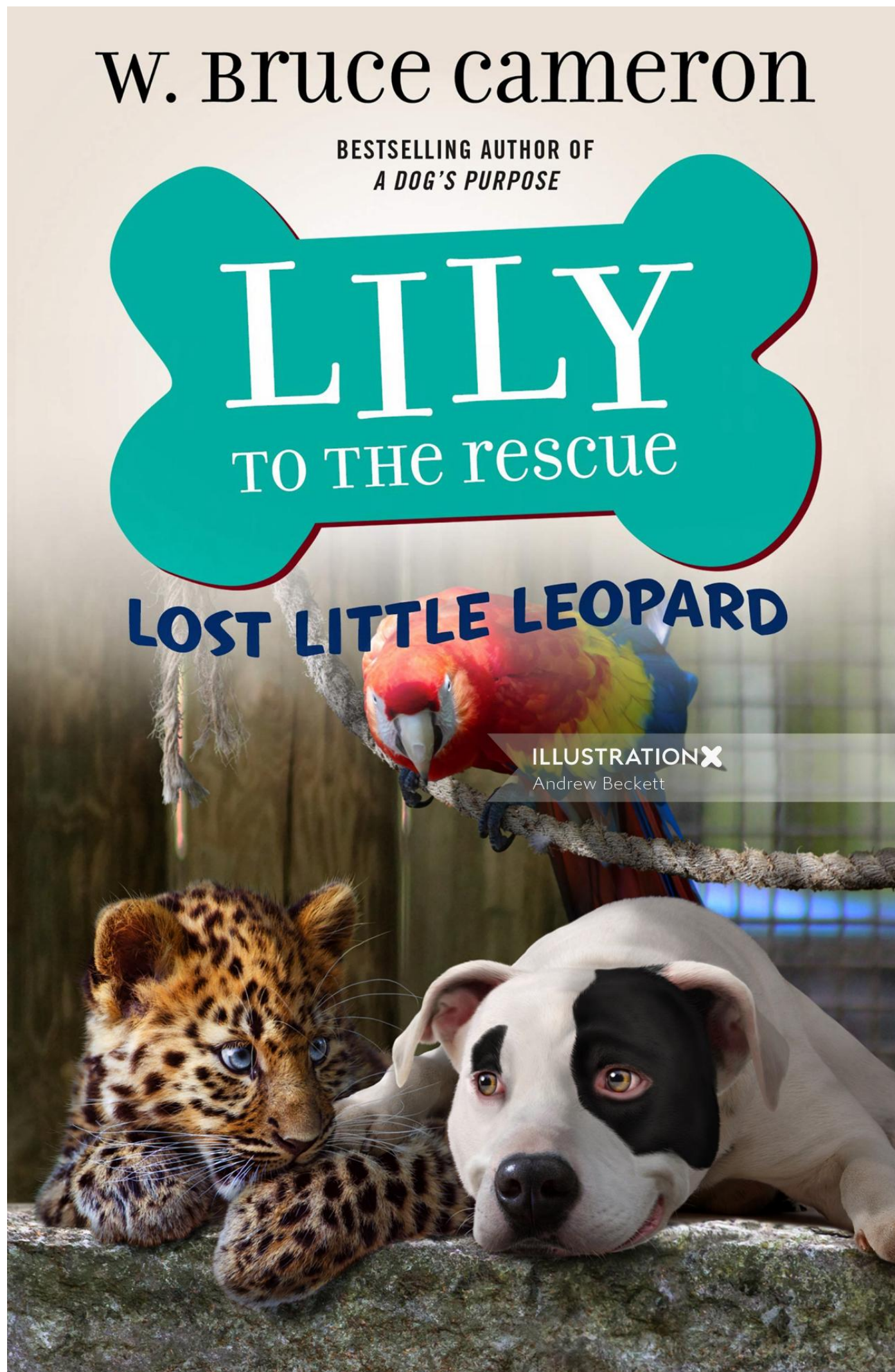
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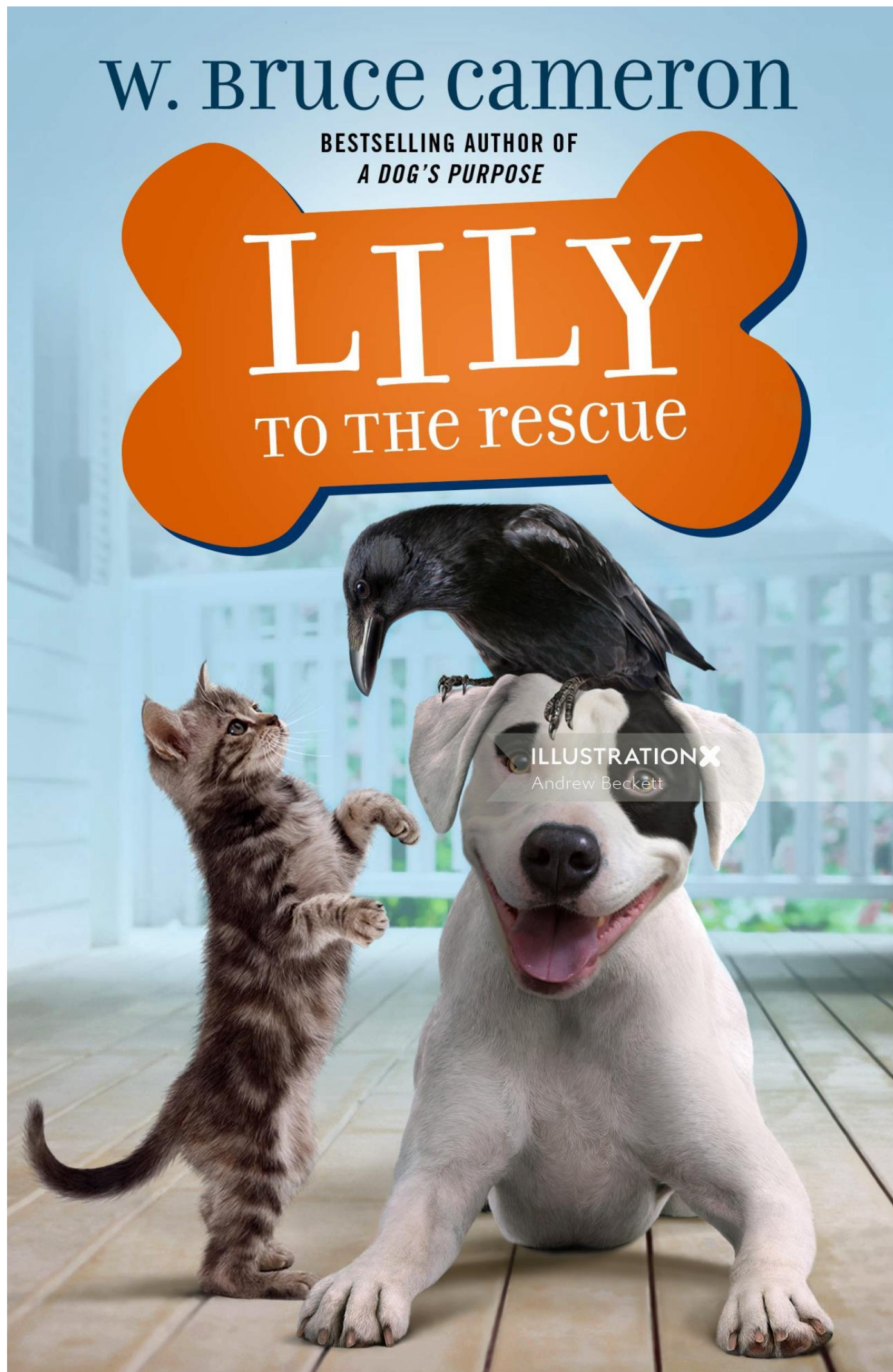
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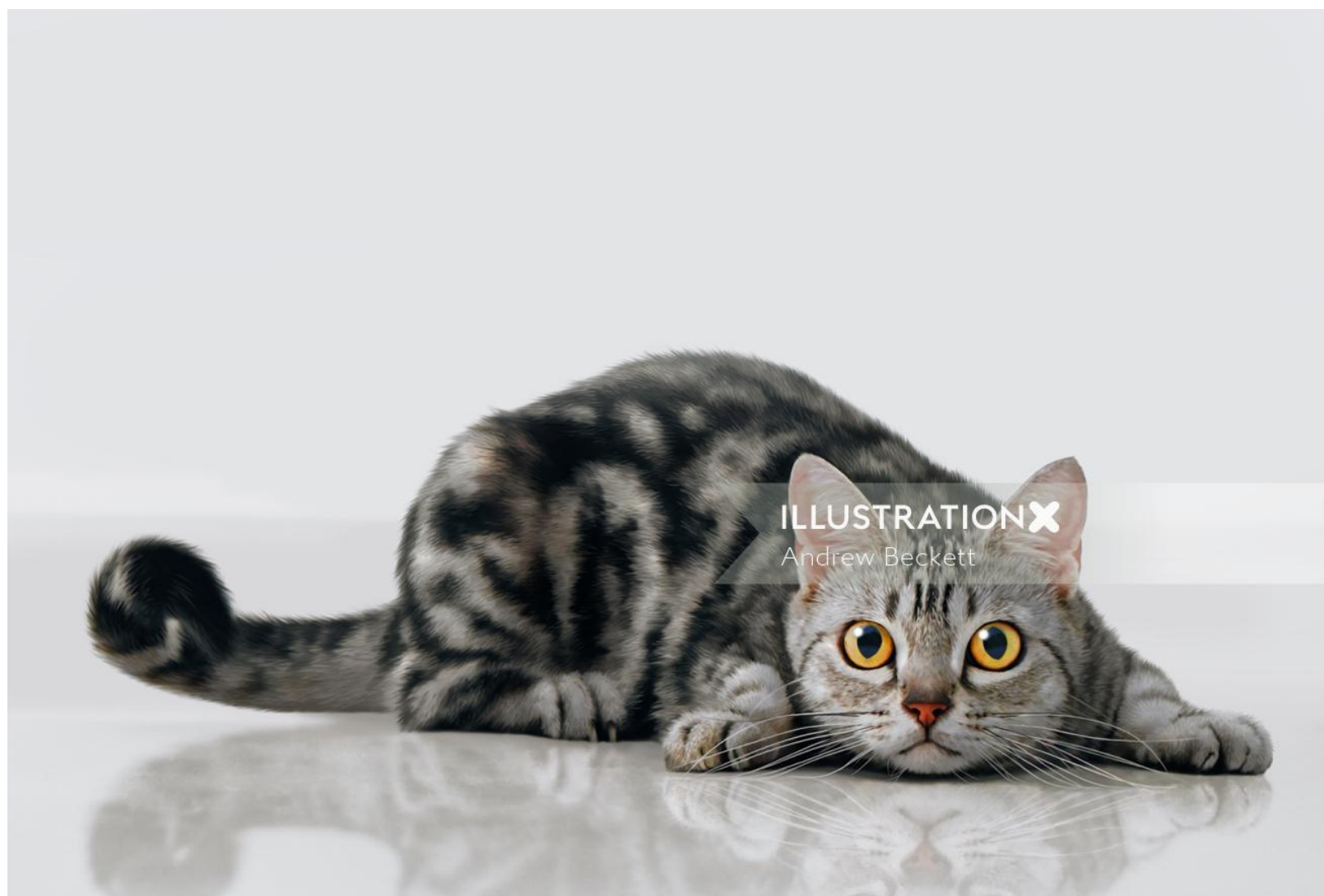
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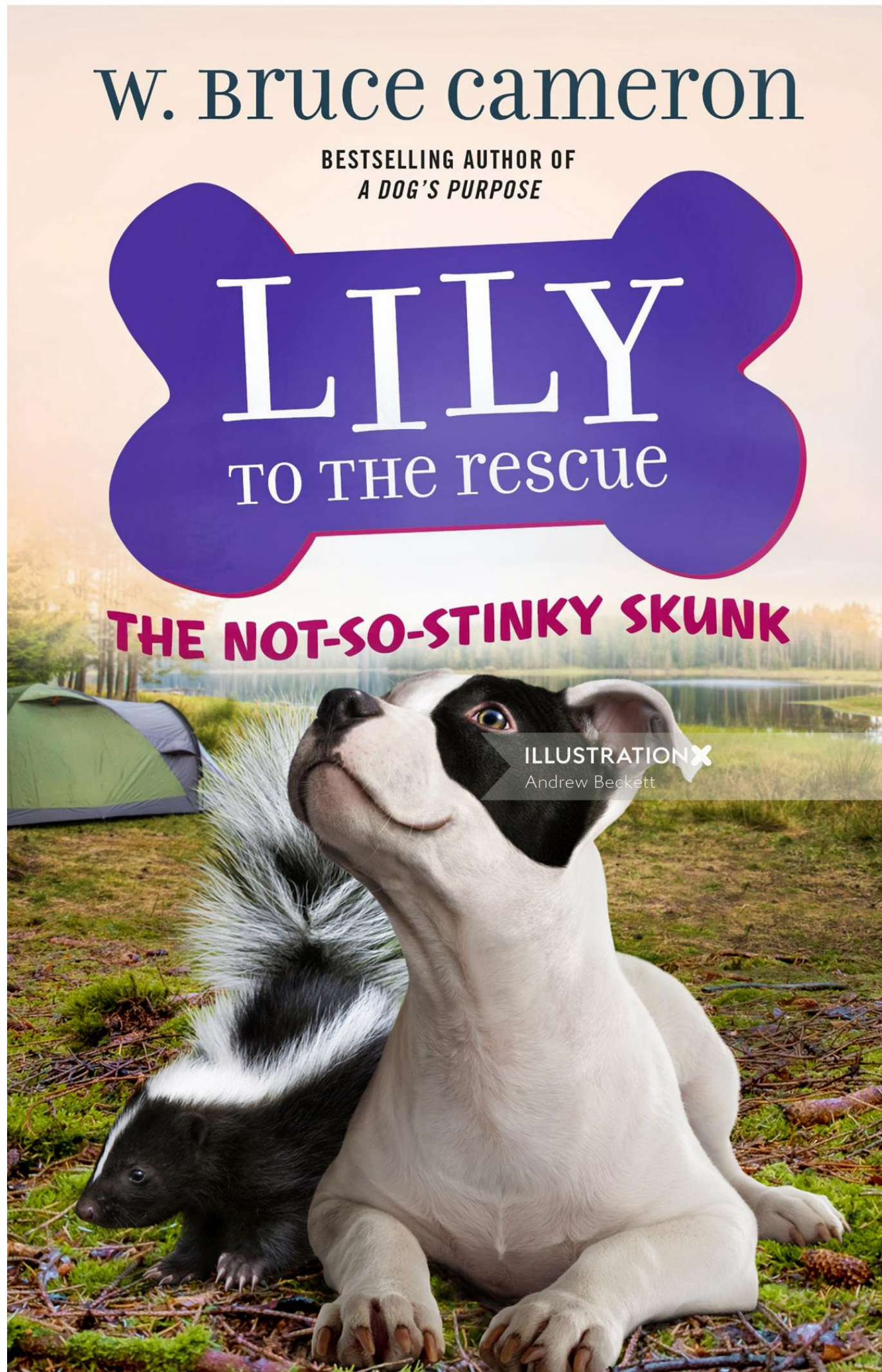
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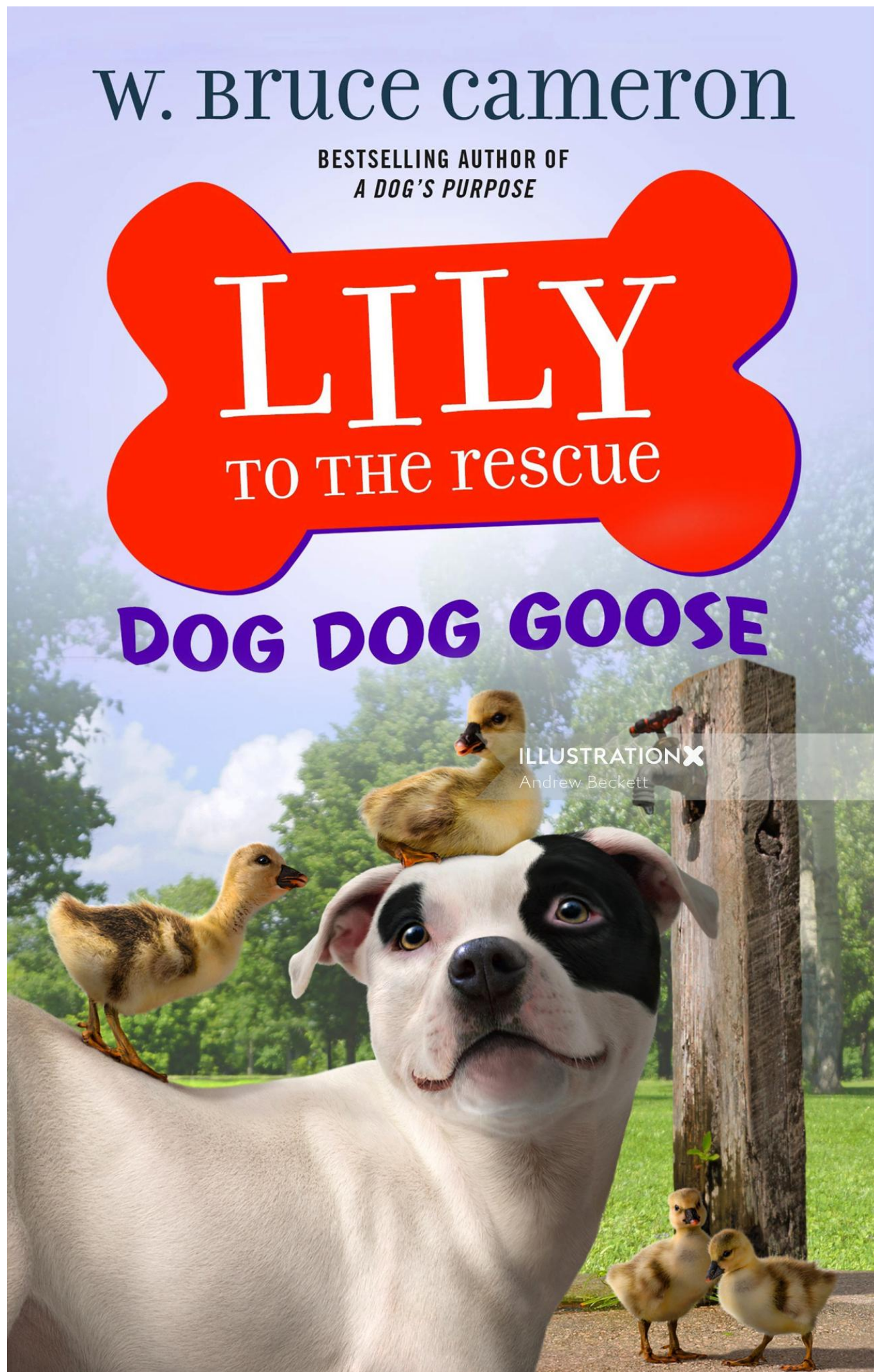
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