



The Lodge That Crossed the Ice

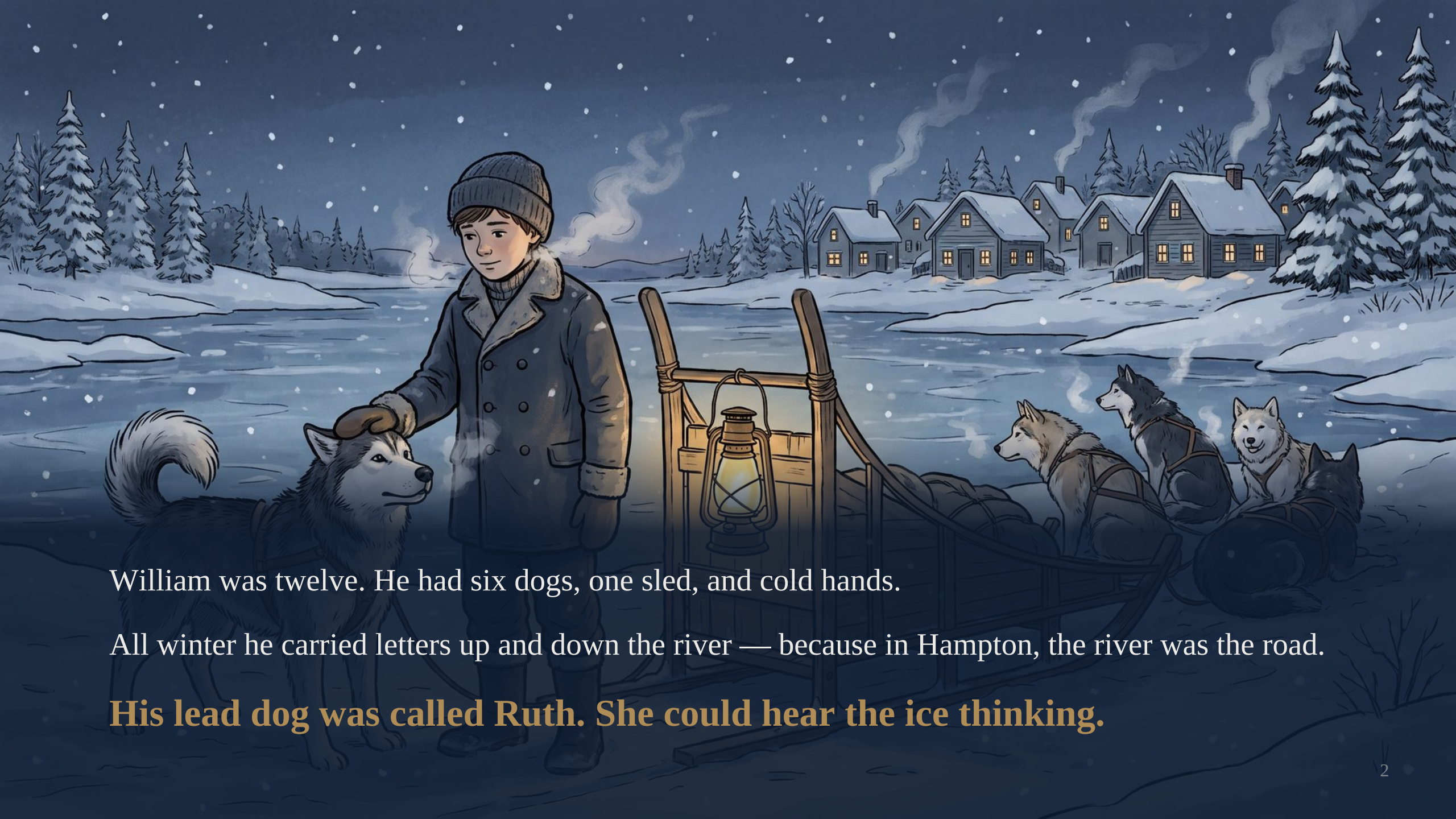
A Hampton story, told for young readers

Corinthian Lodge No. 13 · Hampton, New Brunswick



Long ago — before cars, before snowplows, before the light in your kitchen — winter came to Hampton and stayed.

Snow climbed the windows. The rivers turned to stone. And everybody waited, because winter was when the hard work got done.



William was twelve. He had six dogs, one sled, and cold hands.

All winter he carried letters up and down the river — because in Hampton, the river was the road.

His lead dog was called Ruth. She could hear the ice thinking.



In the middle of town stood a hall. Not a grand one. Wood, and a stove, and a good solid floor.

The men of Corinthian Lodge No. 13 met there. So did everybody else — for suppers, and meetings, and music on a Saturday.

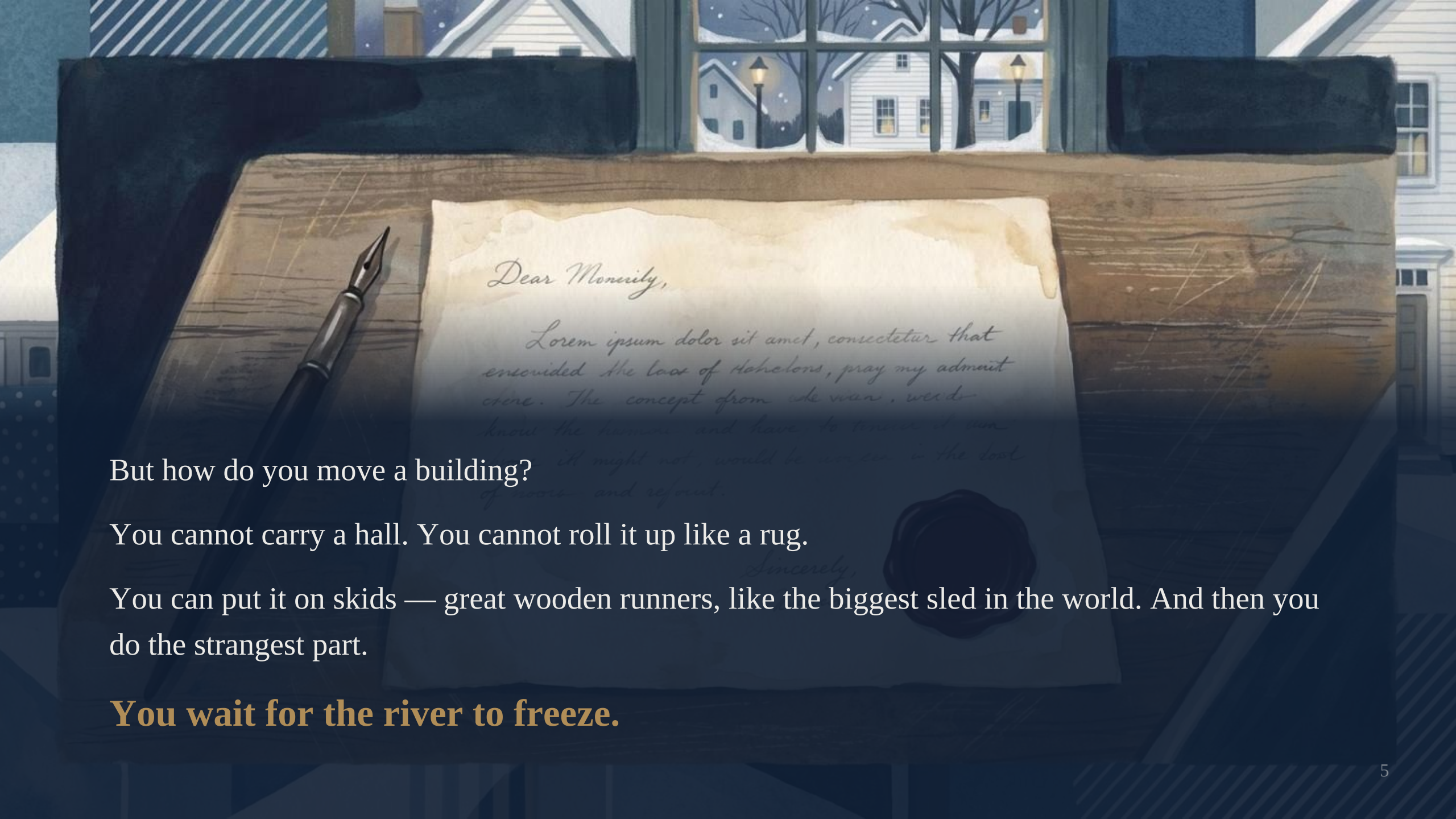
It was the building the town kept.



Then the railway came, and the shops moved to meet it, and the people moved to meet the shops.

The hall was in the wrong place now.

So somebody said the thing that started it all: “We'll just take it with us.”

The background of the slide is a stylized illustration. It shows a wooden desk with a fountain pen lying on it. On the desk is a piece of aged, yellowed paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is a mix of real words and placeholder text. To the right of the paper is a dark, circular wax seal. In the background, a window looks out onto a snowy night scene with houses, trees, and street lamps. The overall color palette is dark and moody, with blues, greys, and browns.

Dear Monerily,

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Sincerely,



But how do you move a building?

You cannot carry a hall. You cannot roll it up like a rug.

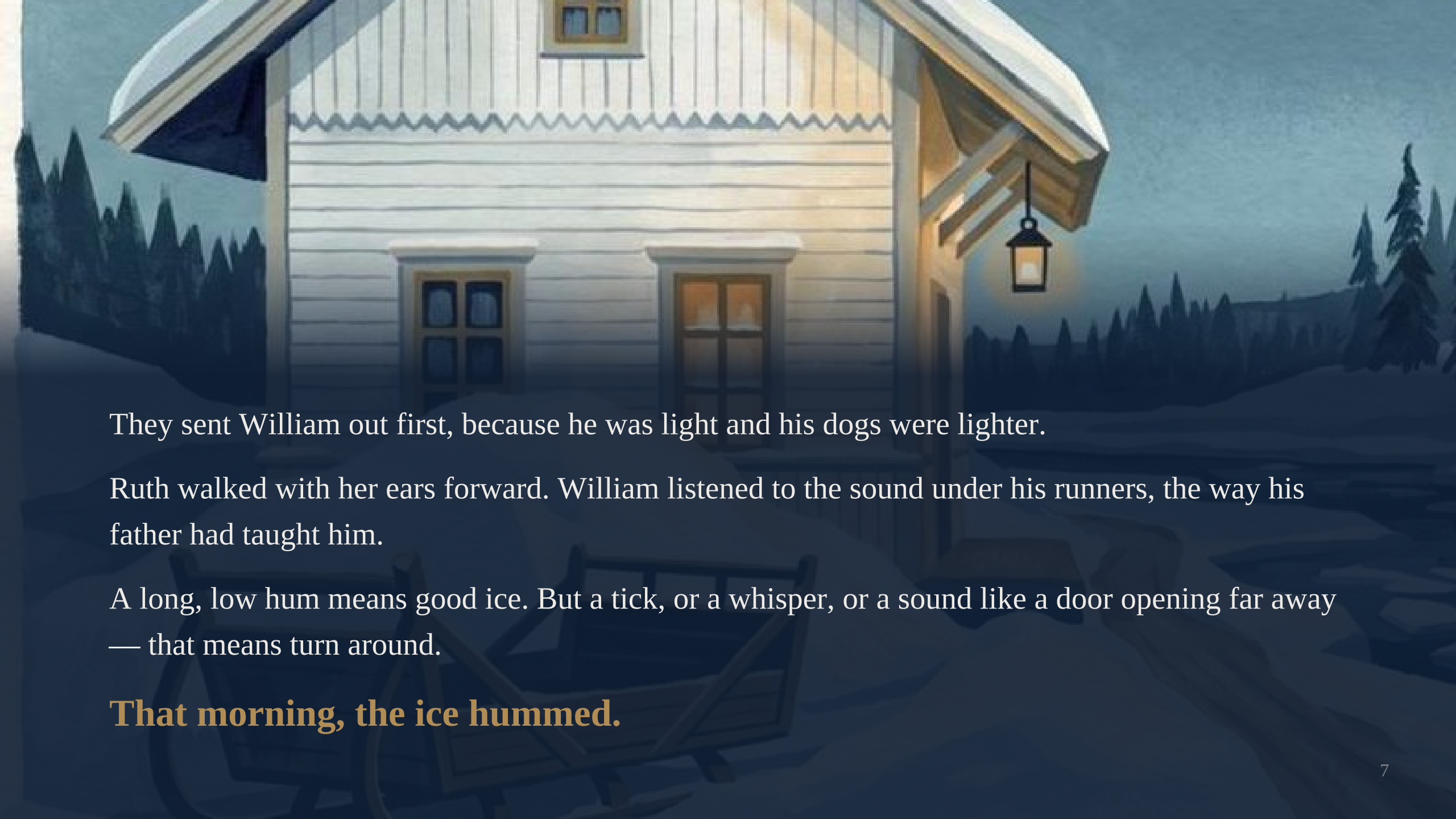
You can put it on skids — great wooden runners, like the biggest sled in the world. And then you do the strangest part.

You wait for the river to freeze.



By January the ice was thick enough to hold a horse. By February, thick enough to hold a house.

Ice was not a danger to the people of Hampton. Ice was a gift. It was flat, and it was free, and it went where no road went.

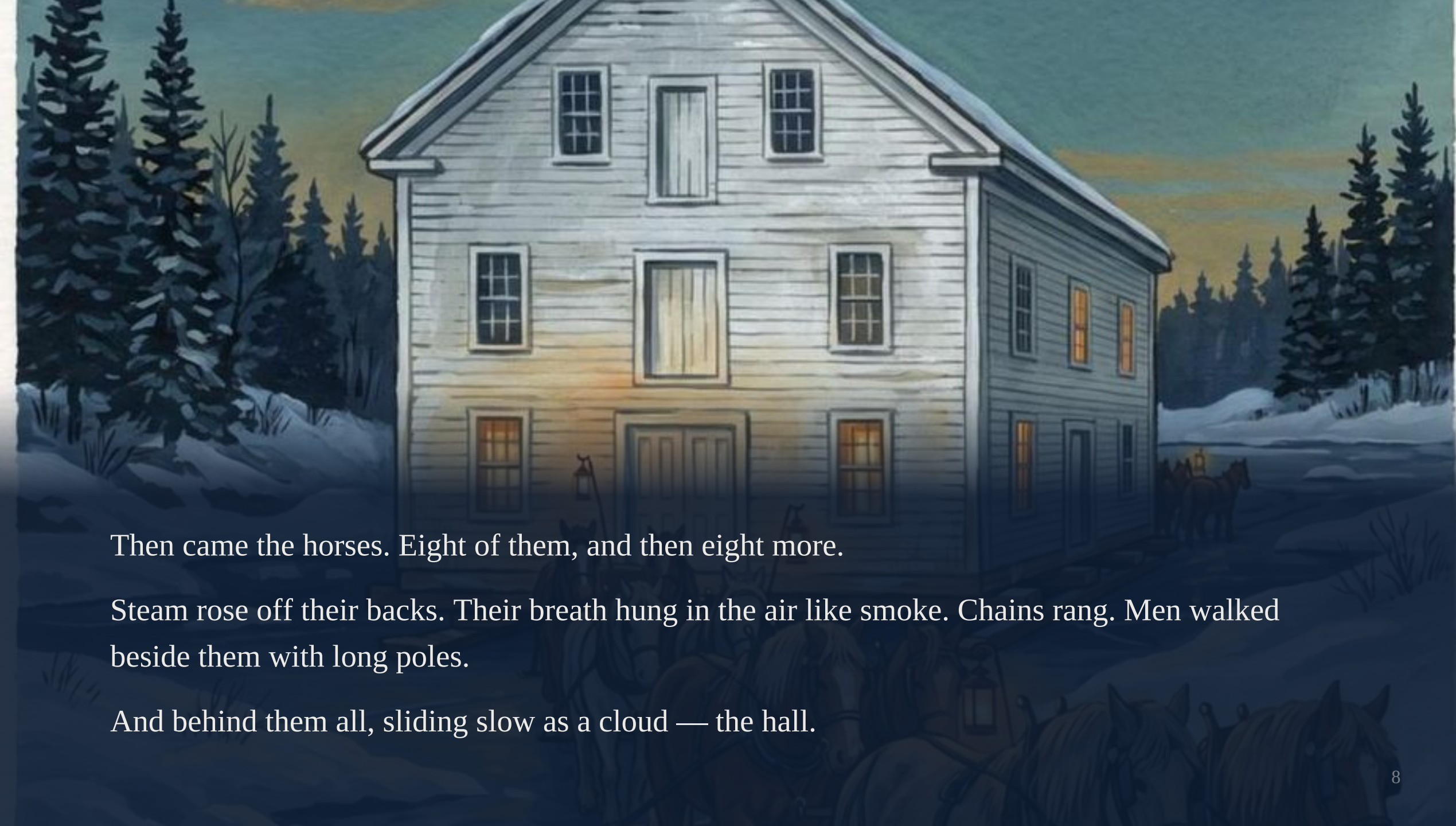


They sent William out first, because he was light and his dogs were lighter.

Ruth walked with her ears forward. William listened to the sound under his runners, the way his father had taught him.

A long, low hum means good ice. But a tick, or a whisper, or a sound like a door opening far away — that means turn around.

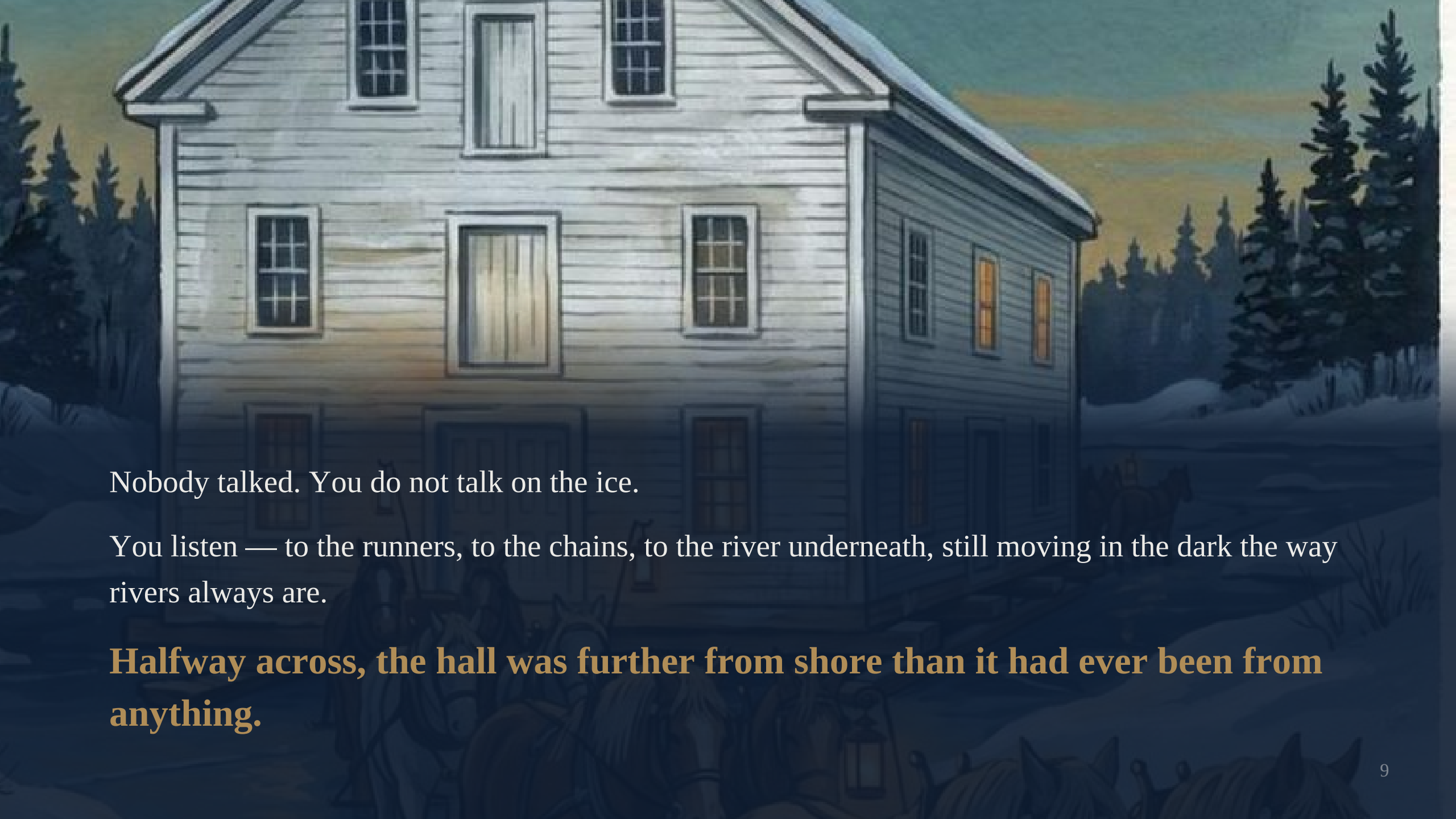
That morning, the ice hummed.



Then came the horses. Eight of them, and then eight more.

Steam rose off their backs. Their breath hung in the air like smoke. Chains rang. Men walked beside them with long poles.

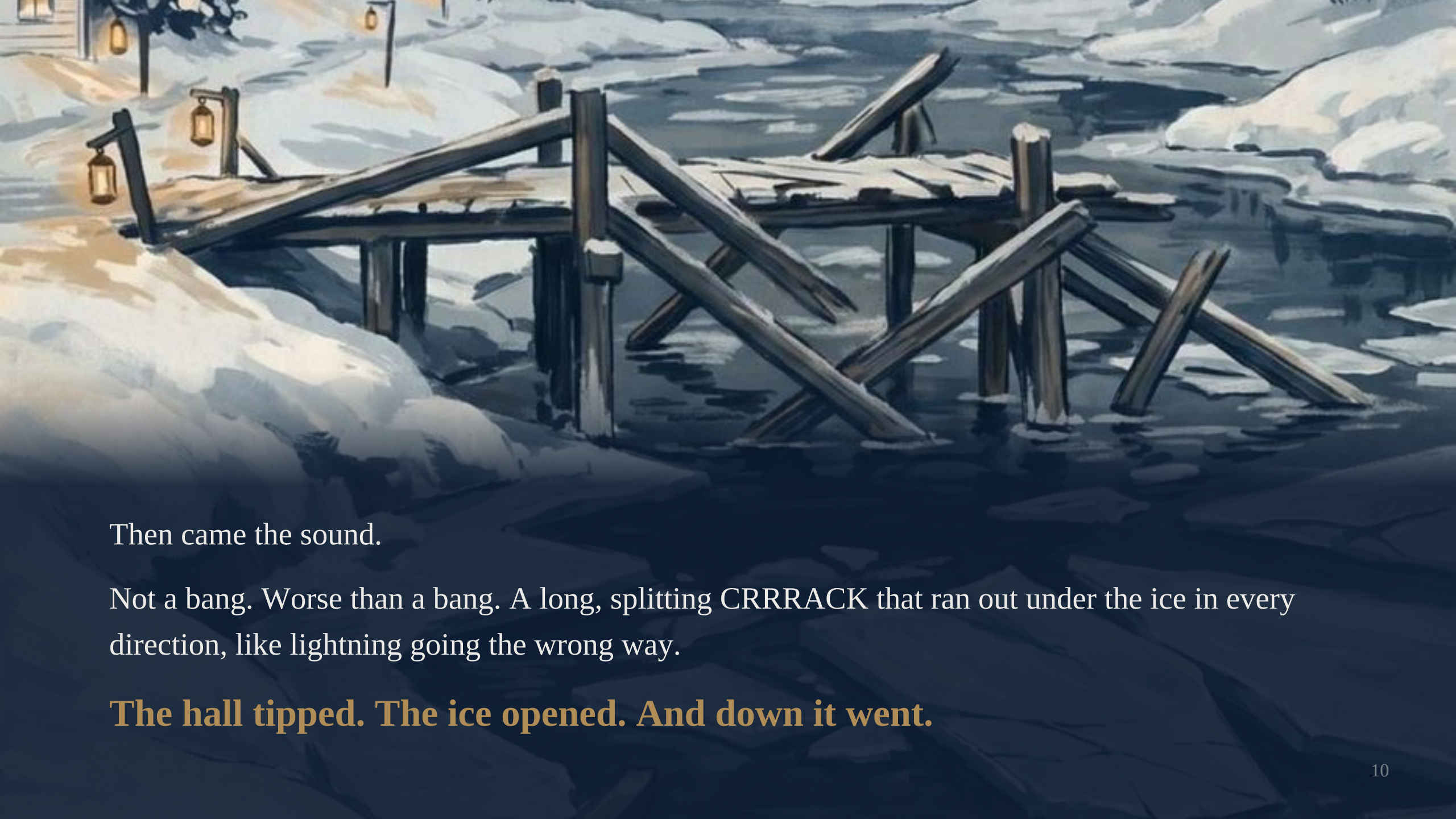
And behind them all, sliding slow as a cloud — the hall.



Nobody talked. You do not talk on the ice.

You listen — to the runners, to the chains, to the river underneath, still moving in the dark the way rivers always are.

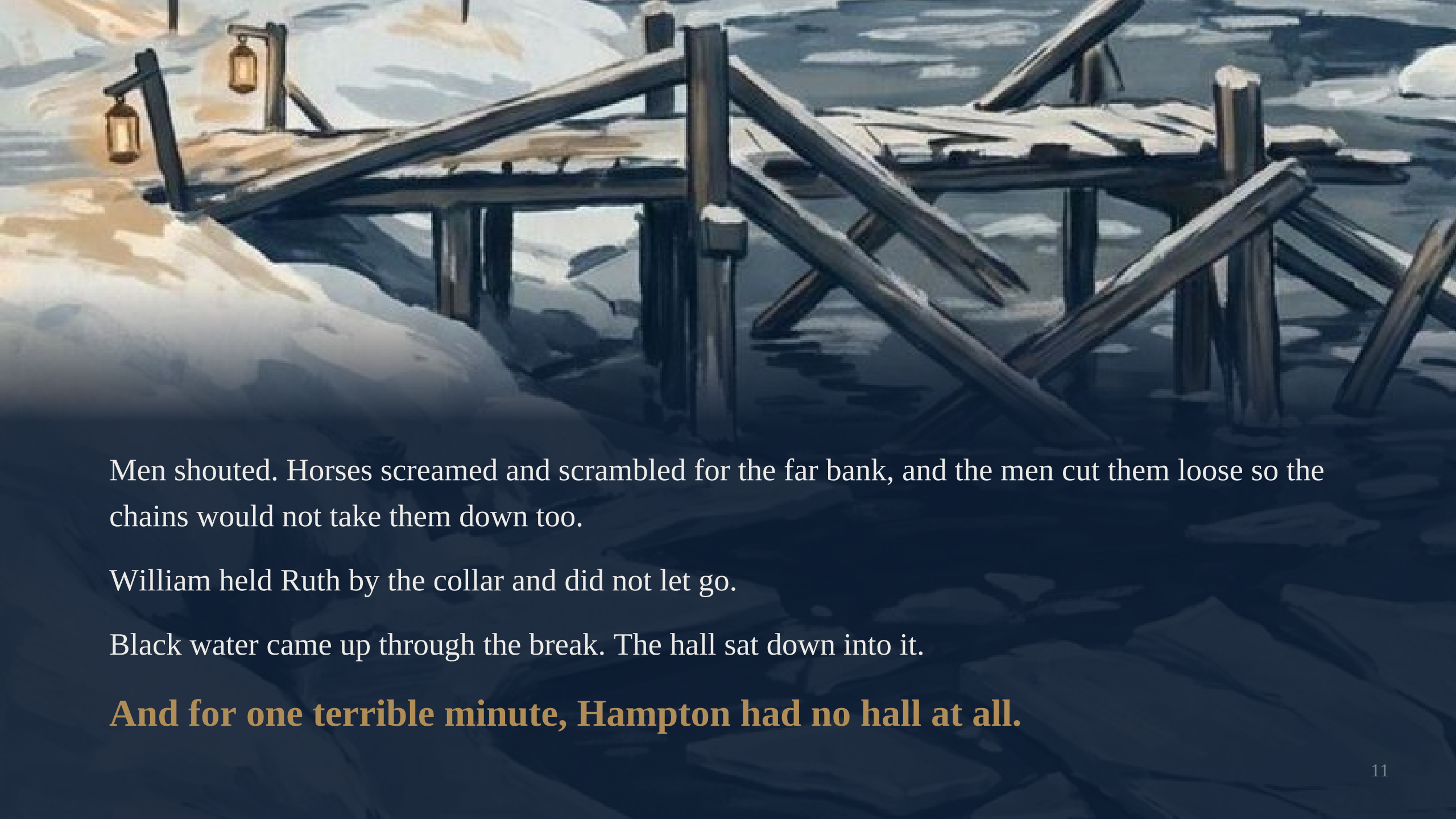
Halfway across, the hall was further from shore than it had ever been from anything.



Then came the sound.

Not a bang. Worse than a bang. A long, splitting CRRRACK that ran out under the ice in every direction, like lightning going the wrong way.

The hall tipped. The ice opened. And down it went.

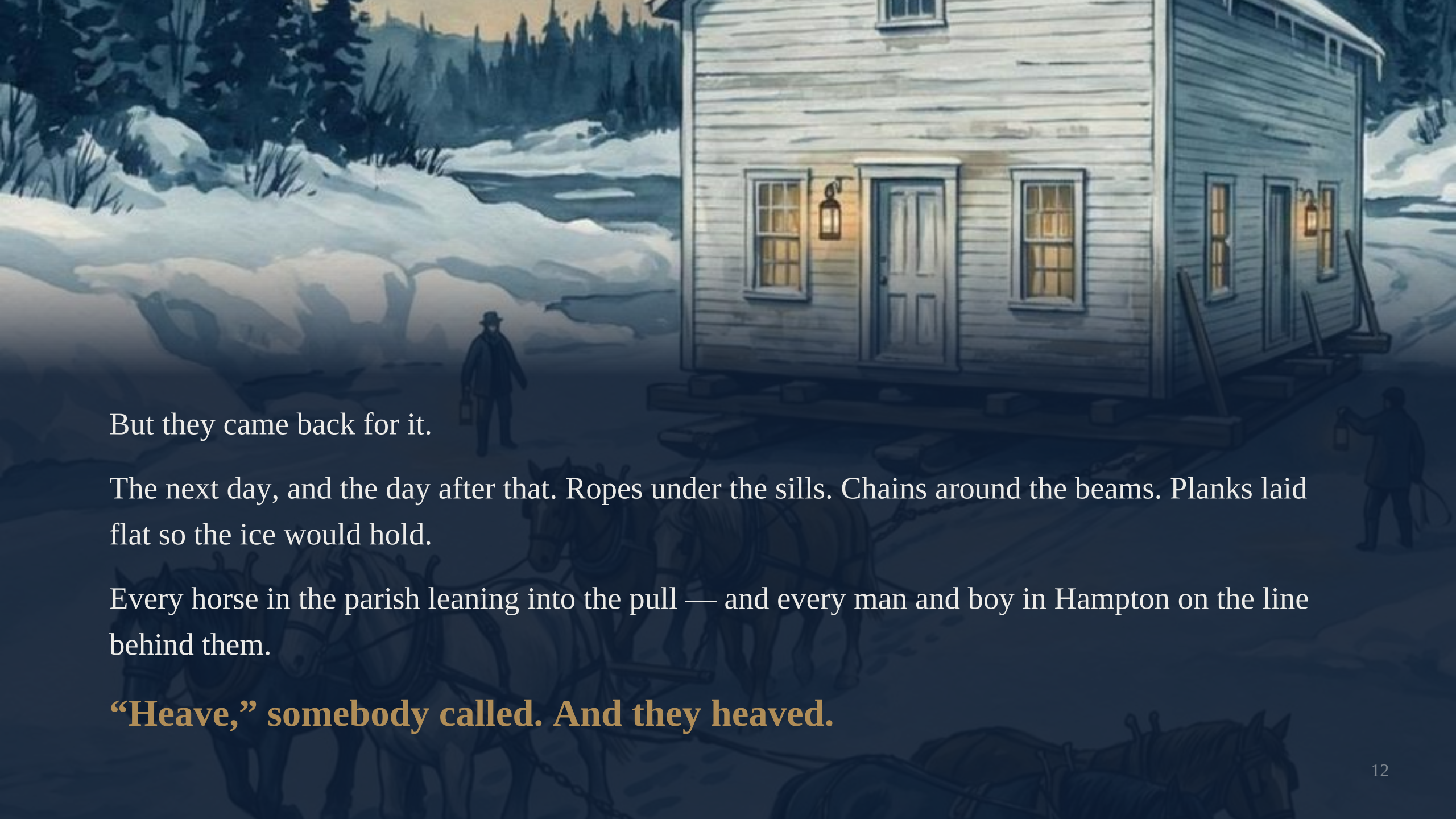


Men shouted. Horses screamed and scrambled for the far bank, and the men cut them loose so the chains would not take them down too.

William held Ruth by the collar and did not let go.

Black water came up through the break. The hall sat down into it.

And for one terrible minute, Hampton had no hall at all.

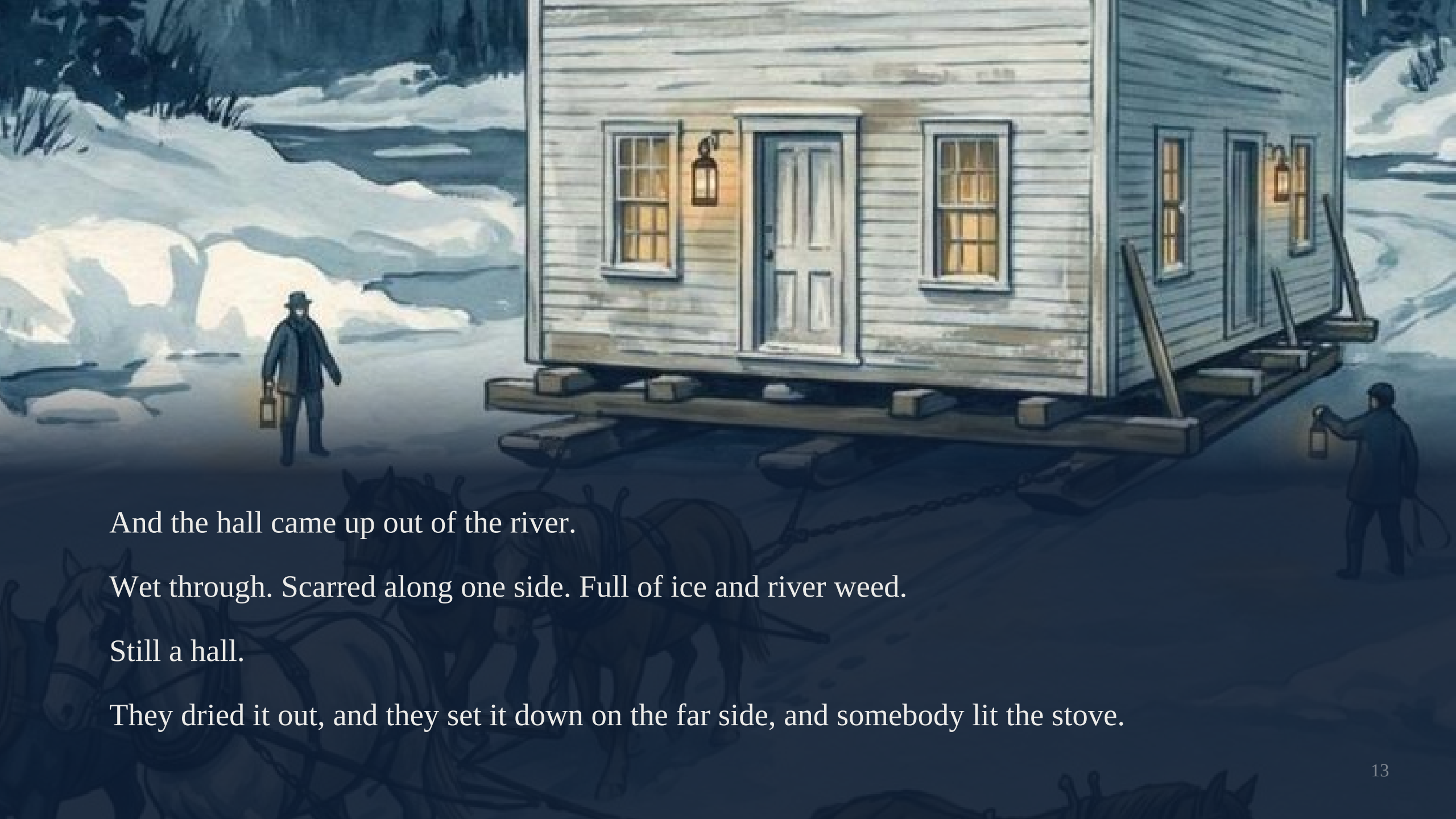


But they came back for it.

The next day, and the day after that. Ropes under the sills. Chains around the beams. Planks laid flat so the ice would hold.

Every horse in the parish leaning into the pull — and every man and boy in Hampton on the line behind them.

“Heave,” somebody called. And they heaved.

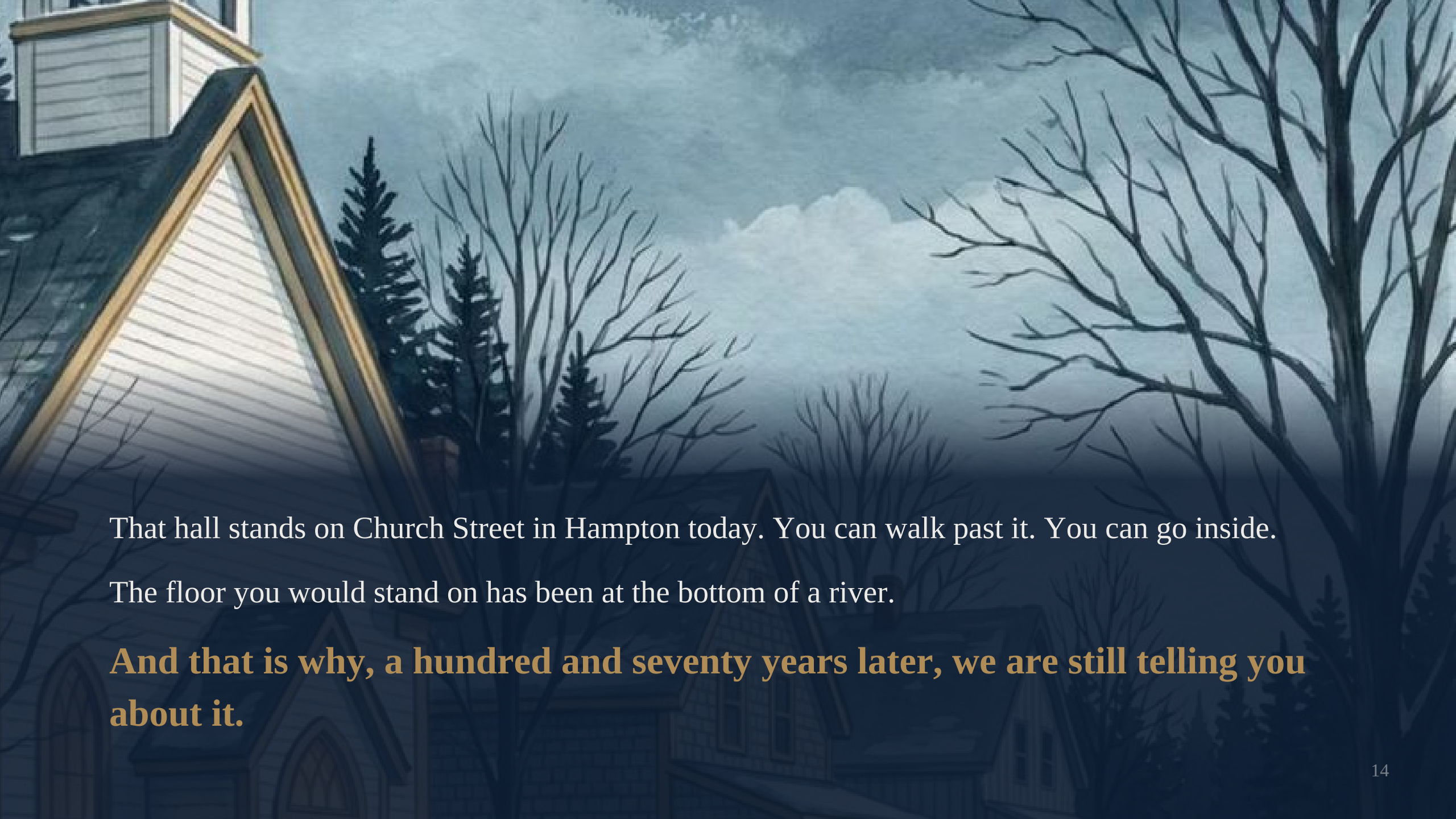


And the hall came up out of the river.

Wet through. Scarred along one side. Full of ice and river weed.

Still a hall.

They dried it out, and they set it down on the far side, and somebody lit the stove.



That hall stands on Church Street in Hampton today. You can walk past it. You can go inside.

The floor you would stand on has been at the bottom of a river.

And that is why, a hundred and seventy years later, we are still telling you about it.



The hall is still there

Corinthian Lodge No. 13 has been part of Hampton since 1854, and the hall on Church Street is still in use today.

If your family remembers more of this story — a photograph, a letter, a name, a winter nobody wrote down — the lodge would love to hear it.