



Silence.

Except that two lights disagreed above the stage.
Snap. Crackle. Pop. Lights never get along.

Finally, a muffled *grrff* came
from somewhere, and What?—of all dogs—
wandered, weaving, onto the stage,
his doggy feet making little pats, one to four.
He was groggy. His brain was soggy
from his nap behind the curtain.

“Where is everyone?” he yawned, uncertain.

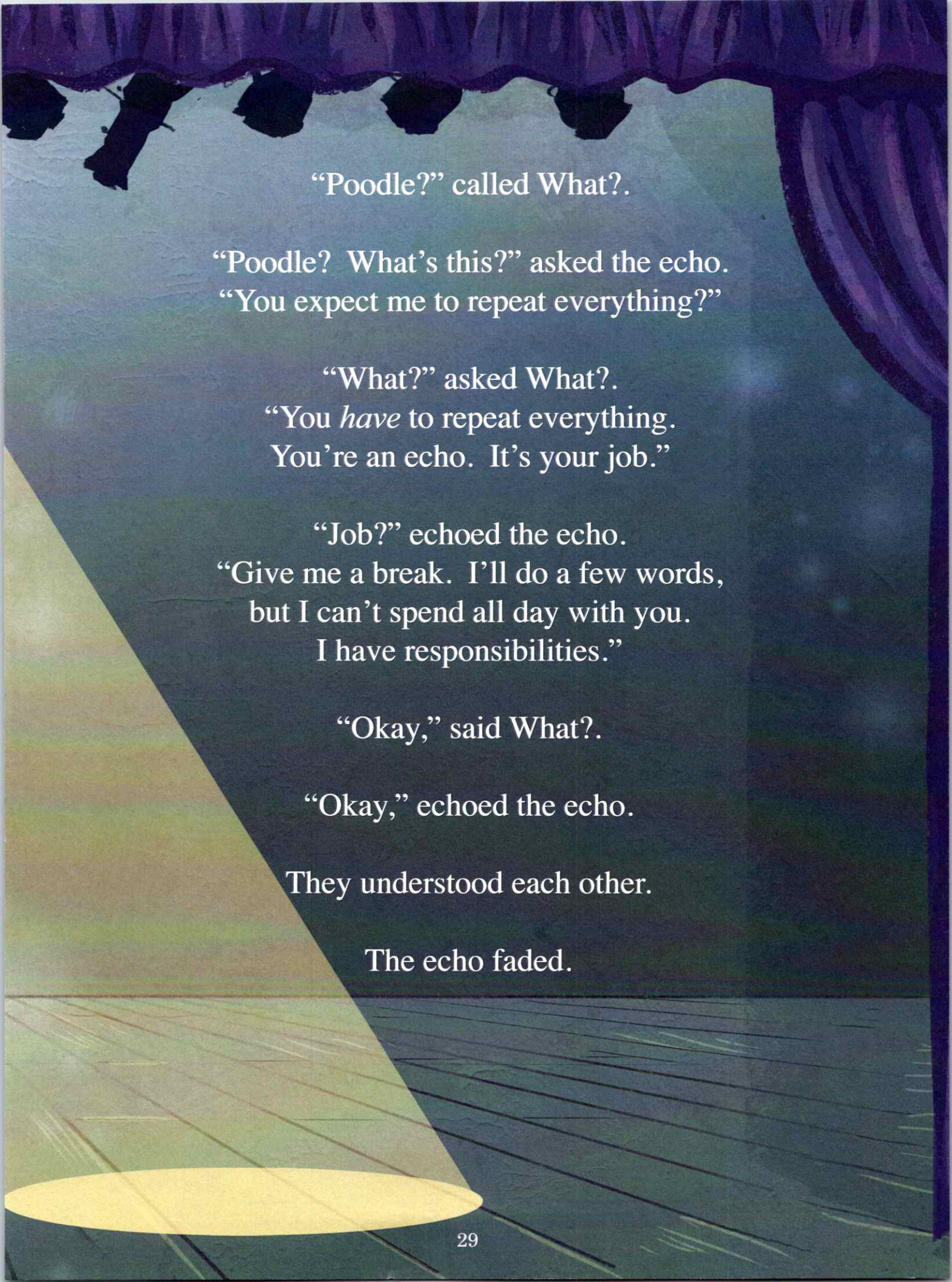
“Hello?” he called.

“Hello?” came an echo from the shadow.

“Is anyone there?” What? called again.

“There?” asked the echo.





“Poodle?” called What?.

“Poodle? What’s this?” asked the echo.
“You expect me to repeat everything?”

“What?” asked What?.
“You *have* to repeat everything.
You’re an echo. It’s your job.”

“Job?” echoed the echo.
“Give me a break. I’ll do a few words,
but I can’t spend all day with you.
I have responsibilities.”

“Okay,” said What?.

“Okay,” echoed the echo.

They understood each other.

The echo faded.



What? looked around.

The stage was now so silent,
except for the grumpy lights above,
and What? realized that his friends had left.

He knew what they'd done.

They'd jumped.

He'd catch them.

He padded over to the right margin,
peeked over the edge of the page
to see what was down there
(Nothing. He saw nothing.),
and jumped into the void.

Sometimes, he knew, you have to trust the author.
(The author wrote that.)

On the silent stage,
only What?'s blue whiz marks remained;
then they jumped too.

They weren't going to hang around.

