



High above the now-silent stage,
What? was descending, dropping,
hurtling down toward the scene.

He put his best feet forward
and, *poof!*, stuck the landing.

He shook and looked around.

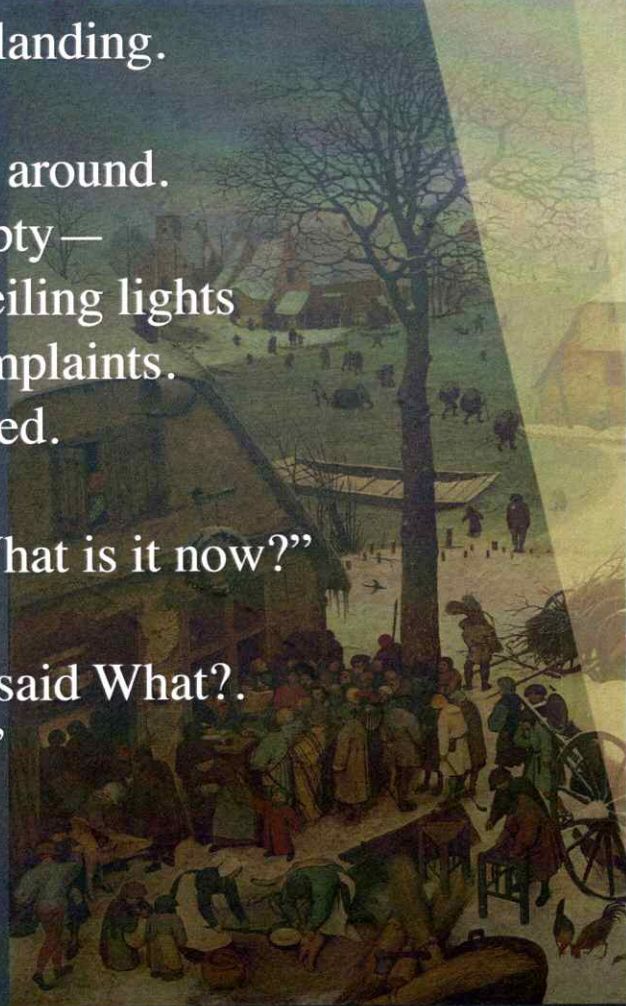
The place was empty —
silent except for those ceiling lights
and their constant complaints.

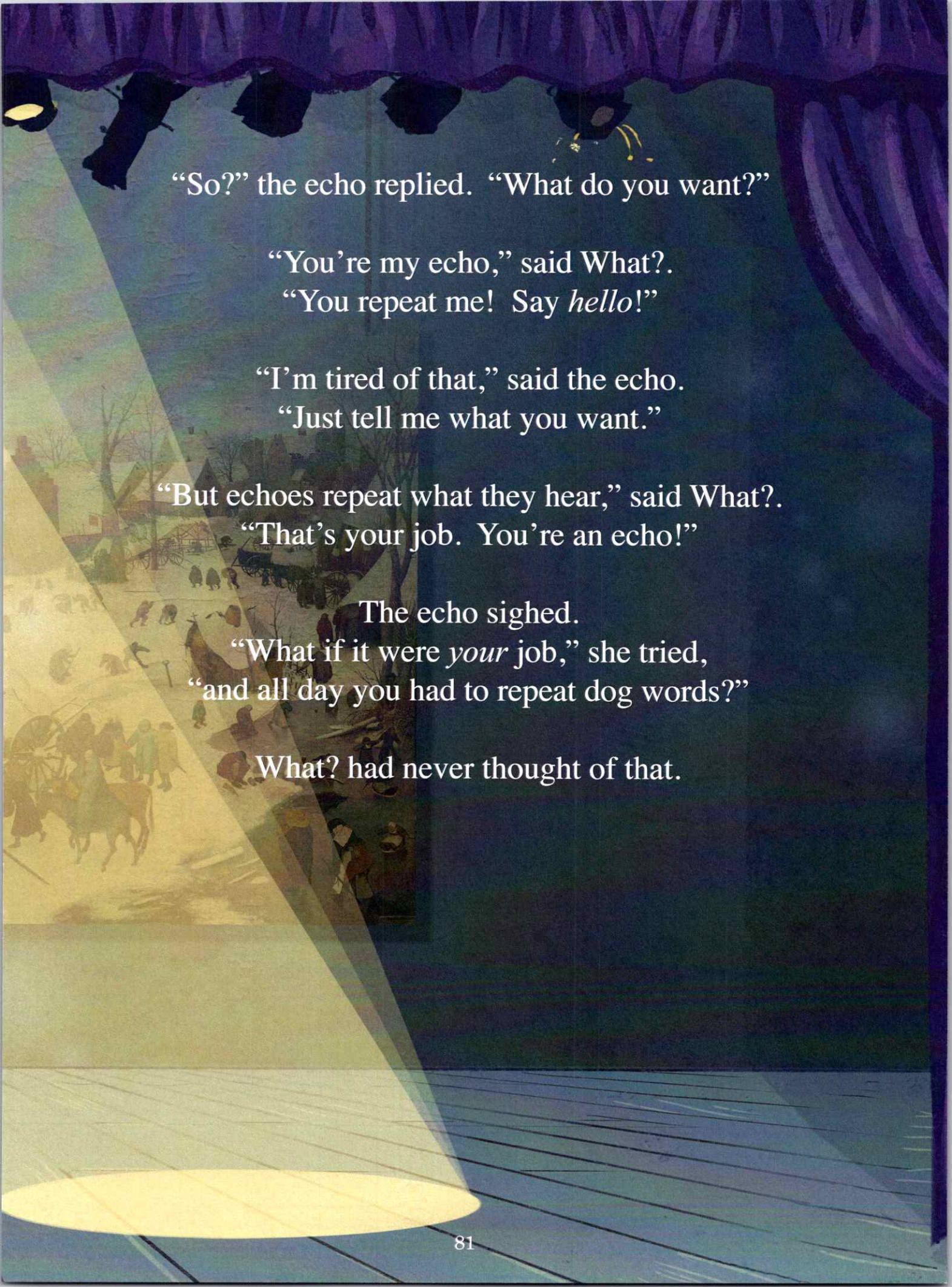
“Hello?” he called.

“What?” came an echo. “What is it now?”

“That isn’t what I said,” said What?.

“I said *hello.*”





“So?” the echo replied. “What do you want?”

“You’re my echo,” said What?.

“You repeat me! Say *hello!*”

“I’m tired of that,” said the echo.

“Just tell me what you want.”

“But echoes repeat what they hear,” said What?.

“That’s your job. You’re an echo!”

The echo sighed.

“What if it were *your* job,” she tried,
“and all day you had to repeat dog words?”

What? had never thought of that.



“Look,” said What?,
“was that you in the Van Gogh,
adding *f*’s to everything?”

“You mean like *thisffff*?”

“Yes.”

“No, that was my colleague,” said the echo.
“He’s an artist—so creative.
I’m independent. I’m me. I say what I want.”

“Then you’re not an echo,” said What?.

“Of course I’m an echo,” said the echo.
“Do you see me?”

“Well, no.”

“Well, no. Exactly. I echo when I want.”

