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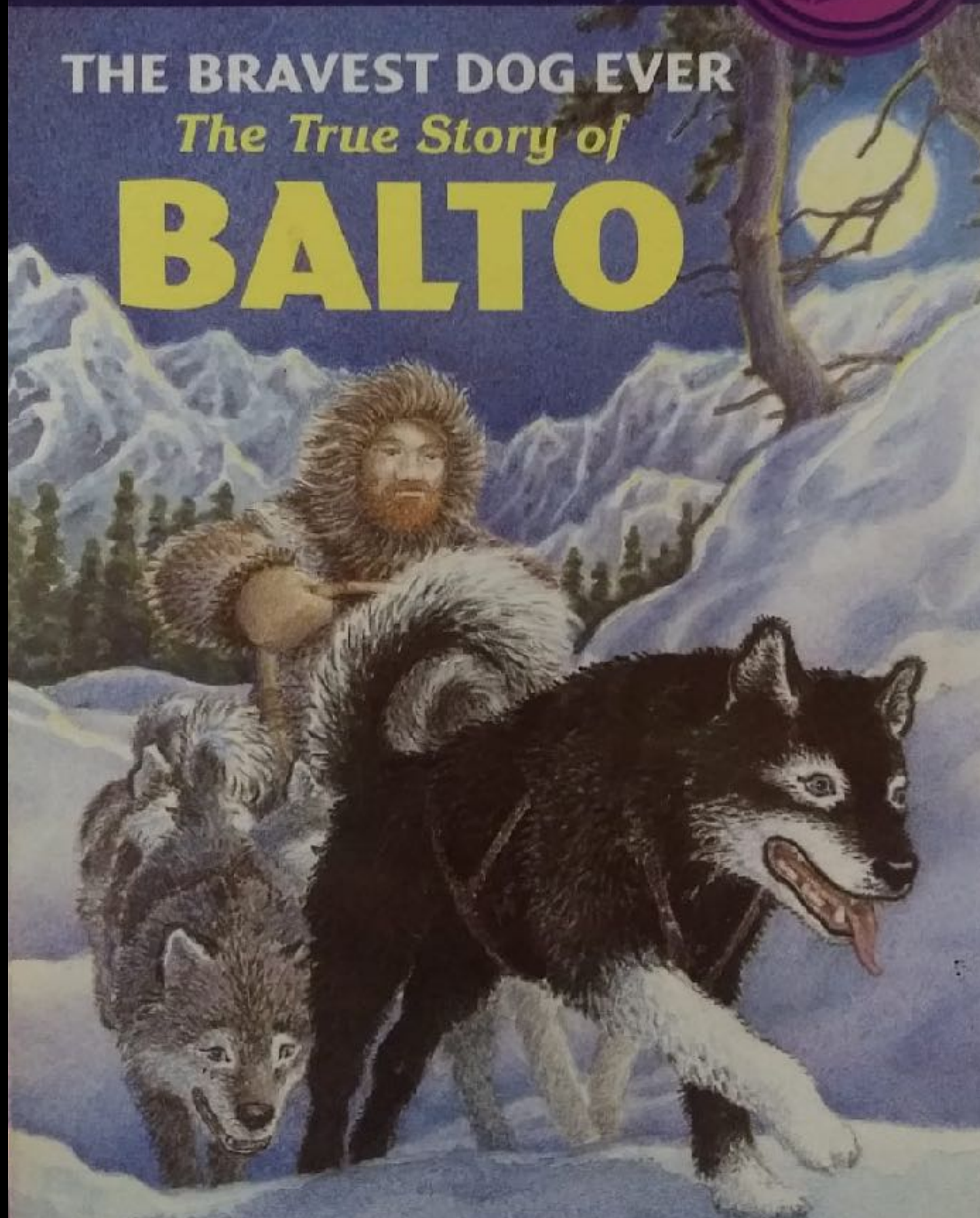
reading on your own

STEP  
3

THE BRAVEST DOG EVER

*The True Story of*

**BALTO**



By Natalie Standiford • Illustrated by Donald Cook



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## THE BRAVEST DOG EVER


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# BALTO

by Natalie Standiford

illustrated by Donald Cook



Random House  New York





This is a true story  
about a very brave dog.  
His name was Balto.  
The year was 1925.  
Balto lived in Nome, Alaska.  
Nome was a frontier town.  
Most of the year it was buried  
under ice and snow.





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In winter there was no way  
to travel through all that ice and snow.  
Not on planes or trains or boats or cars.  
The only way to travel in Alaska  
was by dog sled.





Balto was a sled dog.

He worked for a gold-mining company  
not far from Nome.

He helped carry food and tools  
to the miners.

It was a good life for a sled dog.





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not far from Nome.  
He helped carry food and tools  
to the miners.  
It was a good life for a sled dog.







Balto's driver was named Gunnar.  
Gunnar made Balto his lead dog.  
The lead dog runs in front  
of the team.  
He follows the trail.

All the other dogs do  
whatever the lead dog does.  
So the lead dog has to be  
the smartest and strongest dog of all.





One cold winter day  
a terrible thing happened in Nome.  
Two children got very sick.







Their parents called the doctor.  
He was the only doctor  
in the whole town.



When the doctor saw the children  
he was very worried.

The children had a terrible sickness.

It was called diphtheria (dif-THEER-ee-ah).

The doctor did not have  
the medicine he needed.

Without the medicine  
the children would die.

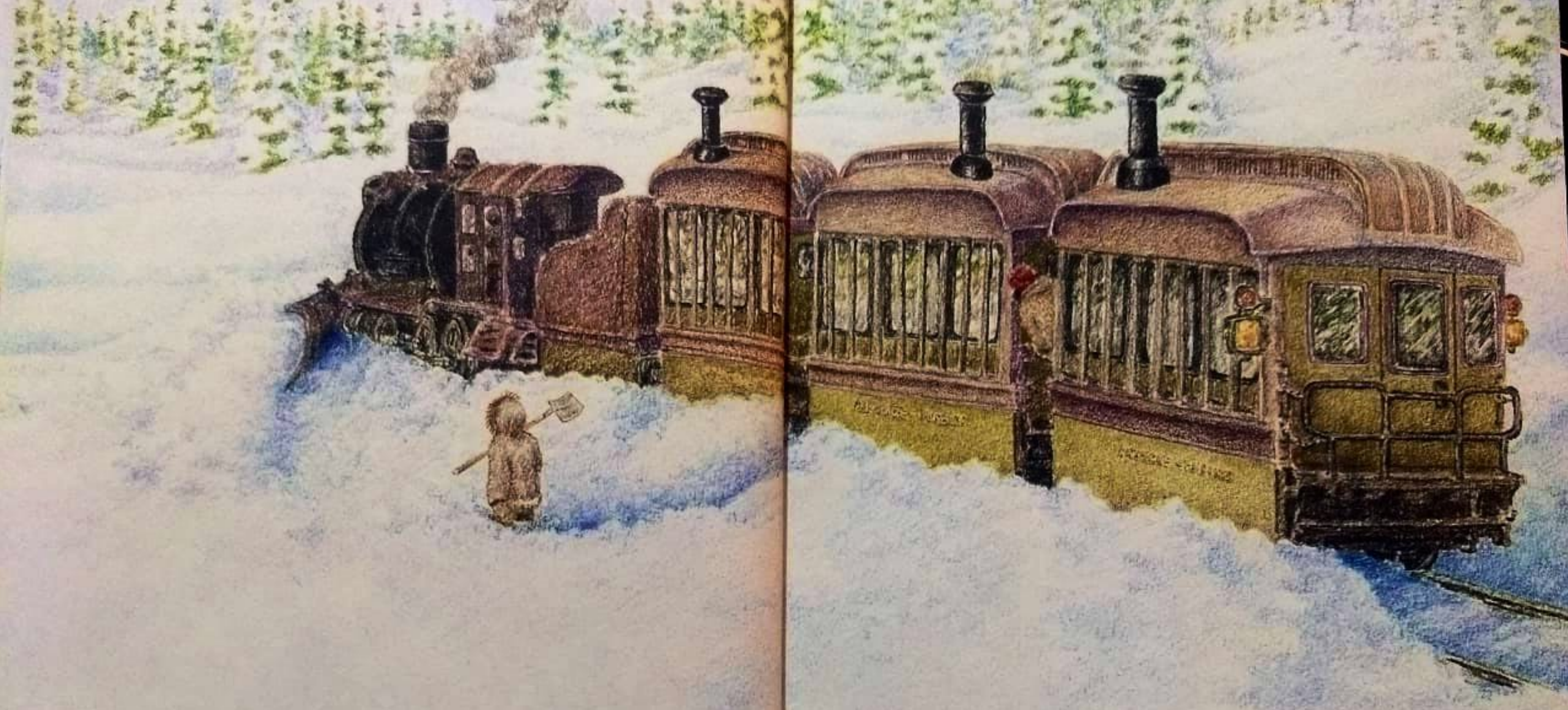
Without the medicine  
many other people in Nome  
would get diphtheria and die too.

The doctor knew  
he had to get some medicine—fast.









The hospital in Anchorage, Alaska,  
had the medicine.  
But Anchorage was 800 miles away.  
The doctors in Anchorage  
put the medicine on a train.

But soon the train got stuck  
in the deep snow.  
The train was still 700 miles  
from Nome!



The people of Nome held a meeting.

Everyone was very scared.

"What are we going to do?"

asked the doctor.

"We have to get that medicine."

At last someone said,

"What about a dog-sled relay?"

When one team of dogs gets tired,

a new team will be ready to take over."

The room buzzed with excitement.

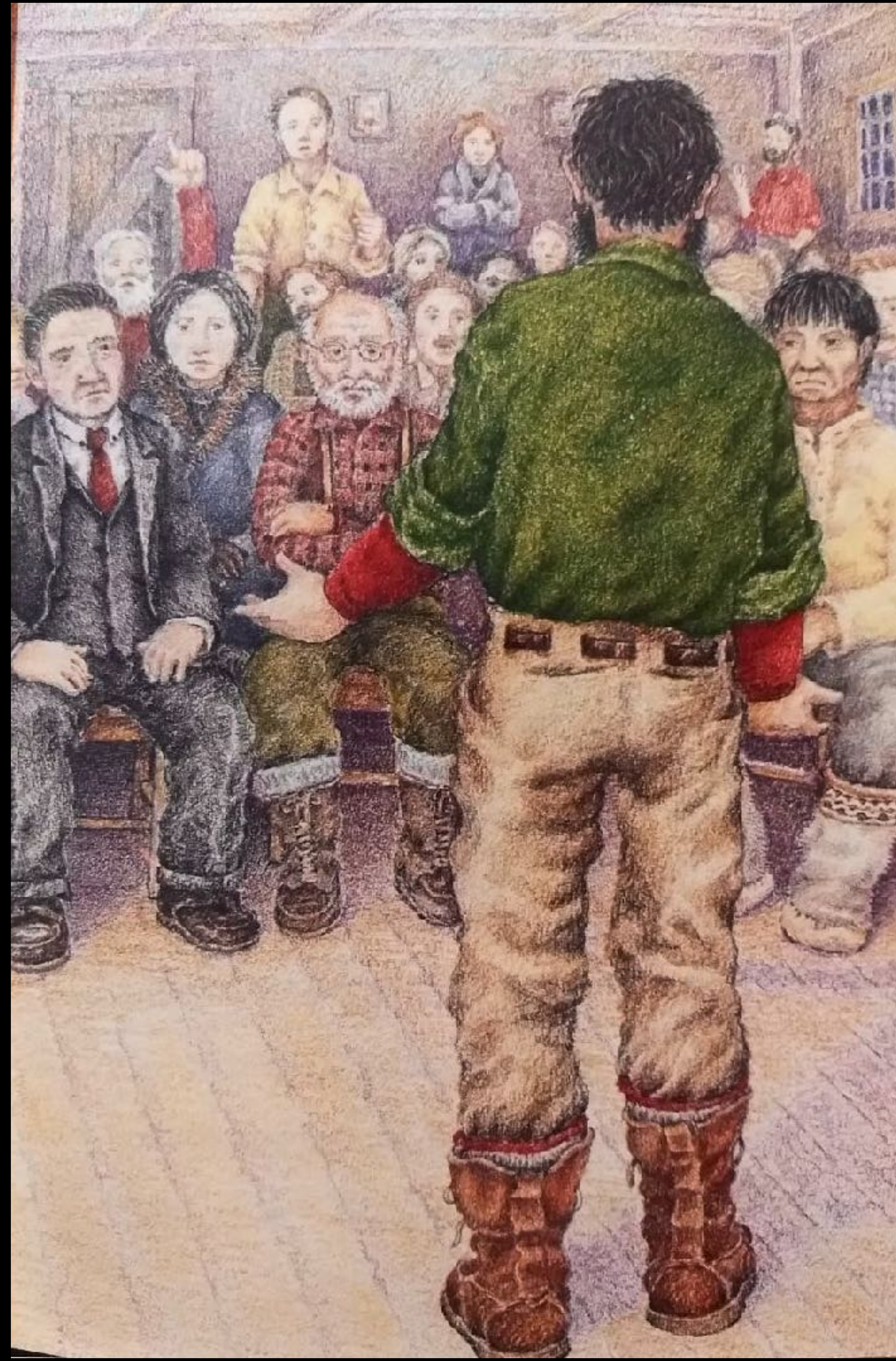
That did seem like the quickest way  
to get the medicine.

But the doctor frowned.

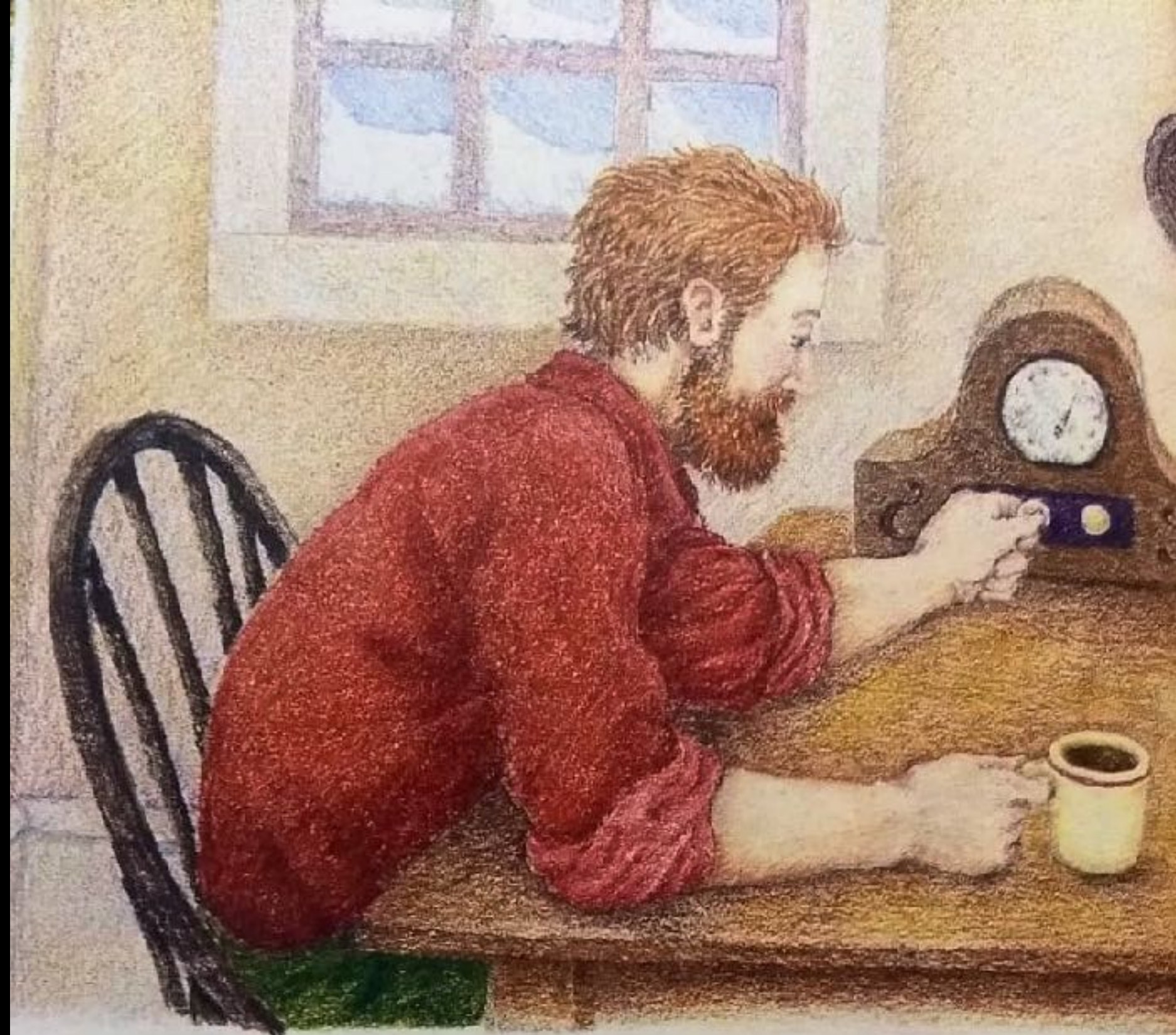
"It will still take about fifteen days.

That's a long time. Too long."









Maybe the doctor was right.

But there was no other choice.

So the mayor spoke over the radio.

"Please help!" he said.

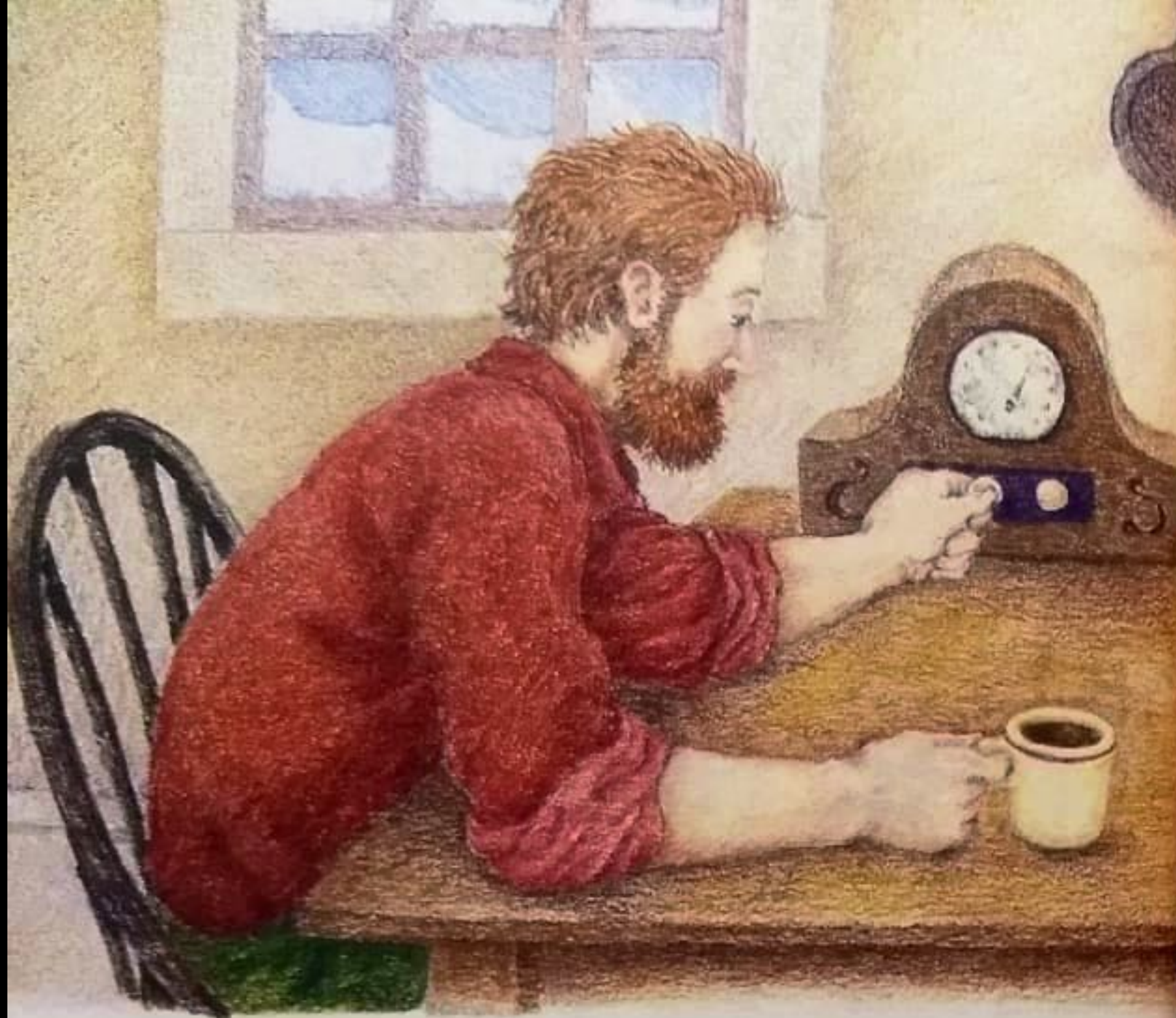
"We need the best drivers and dogs  
to help save our town!"





Gunnar heard the mayor on the radio.  
Gunnar knew he had the best dog team  
and the best lead dog.  
Balto would come to the rescue.





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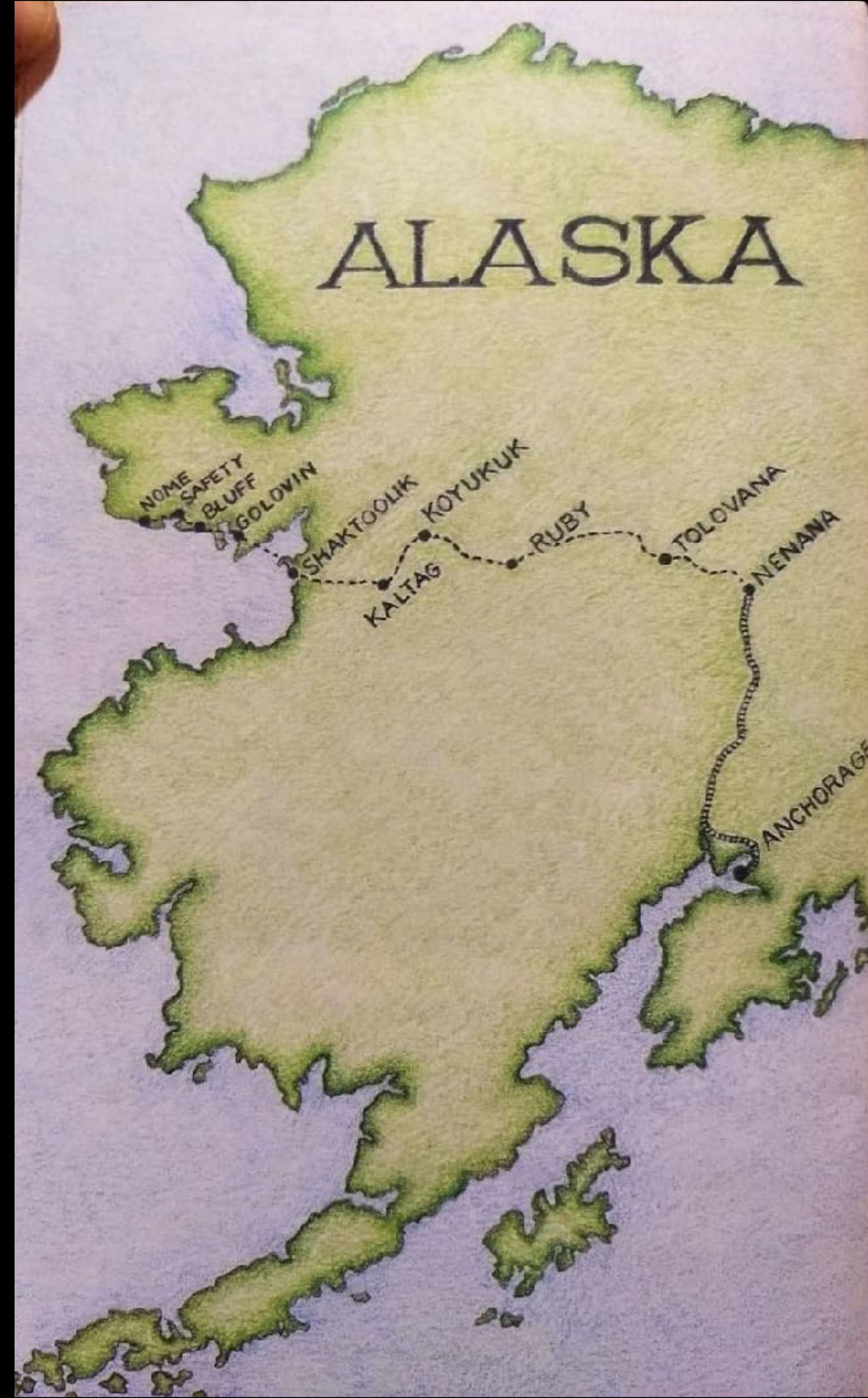
On January 27, 1925,  
the race to Nome began.

Twenty-one dog teams  
were in the relay.

Each team waited at a different stop.

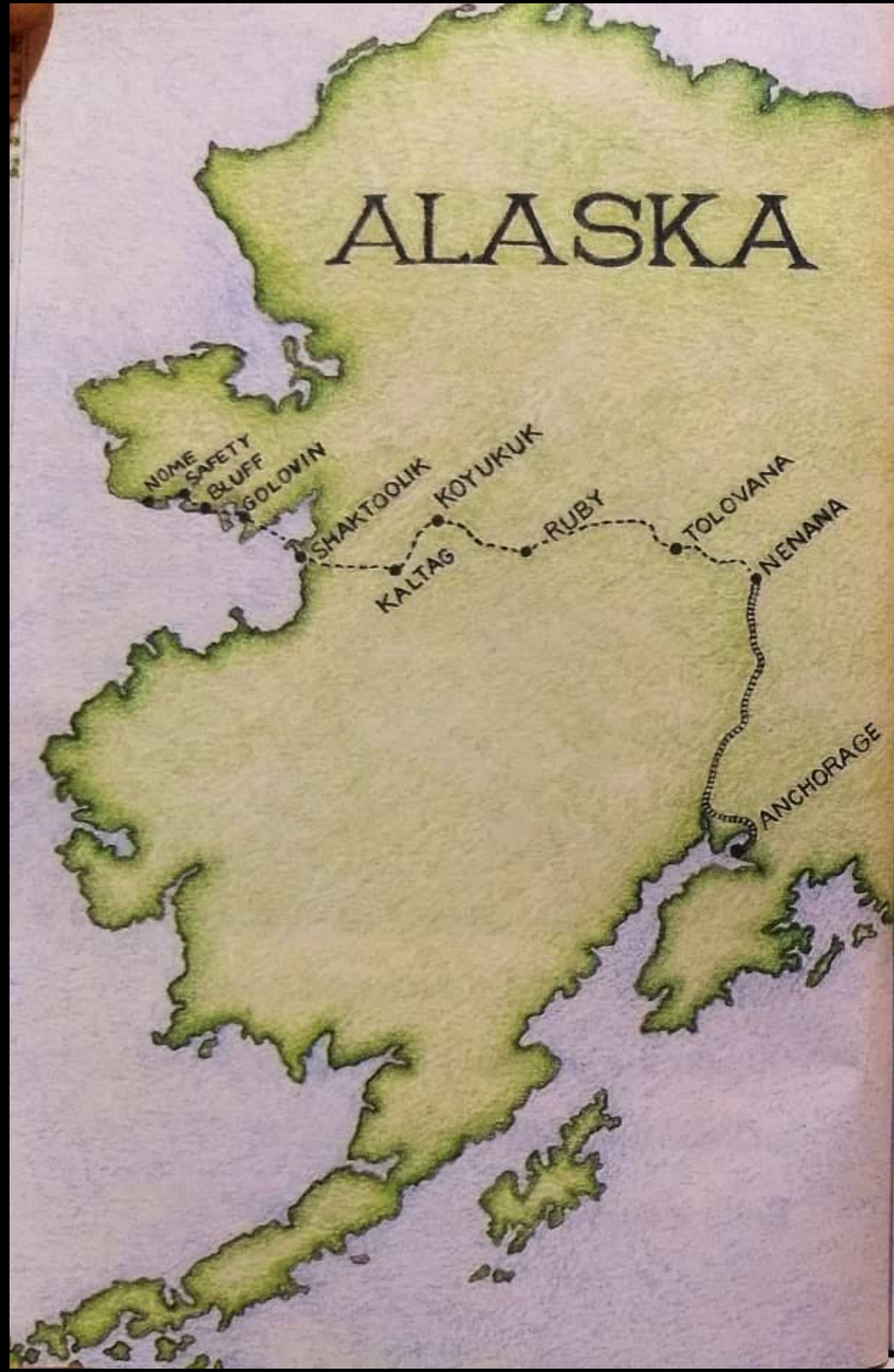








# ALASKA



On January 27, 1925,  
the race to Nome began.

Twenty-one dog teams  
were in the relay.

Each team waited at a different stop.





The first driver took the medicine  
from the train.

He wrapped it in fur  
to keep it from freezing.

Then he drove his dogs  
as fast as he could to the second stop.  
He made his run in good time.







But soon the wind began to blow hard.

The air grew colder.

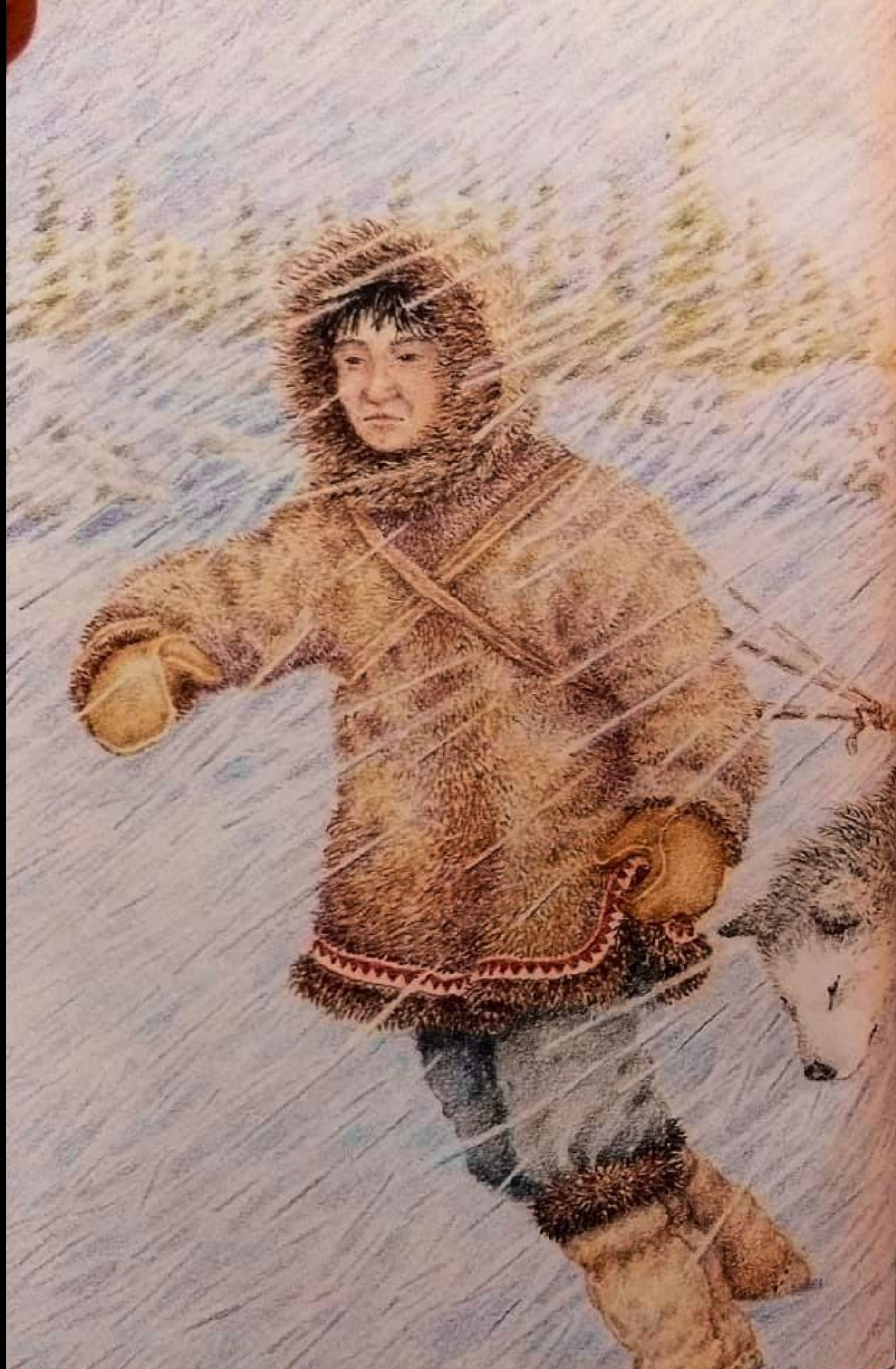
A blizzard was coming!

It was one of the worst storms ever.

Still the race went on.

Somehow each dog team made it  
to the next stop.





In one team, two dogs froze to death.  
So the driver hitched himself  
to the sled.  
He helped the rest of his dogs  
pull through the storm.





Gunnar and Balto waited  
at their stop in Bluff.

They were going to run 31 miles  
from Bluff to Point Safety.

That was the second-to-last part  
of the race.

But the storm had slowed things down.

Gunnar had been waiting for two days.

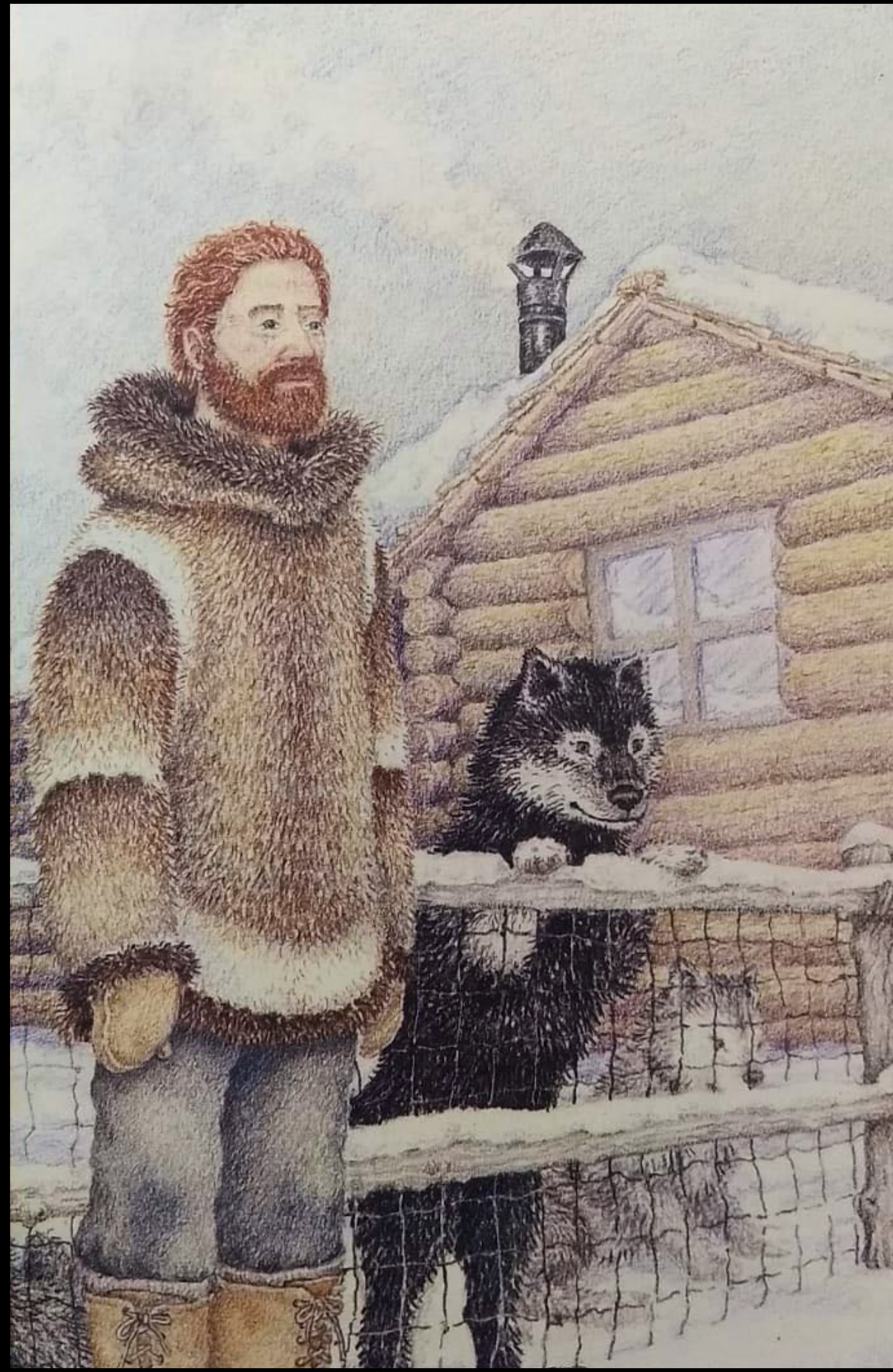
He did not sleep.

He wanted to be ready to go

as soon as the medicine arrived.









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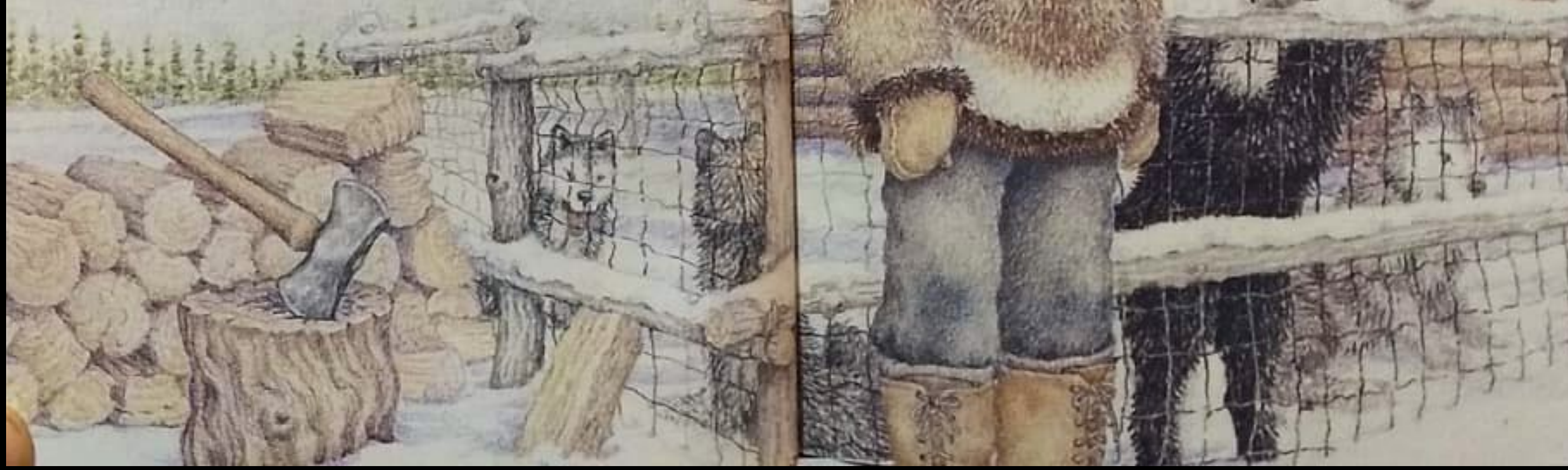
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But the storm had slowed things down.

Gunnar had been waiting for two days.

He did not sleep.

He wanted to be ready to go  
as soon as the medicine arrived.







At last Gunnar heard dogs barking.  
The medicine was here!  
He put it on the sled  
with a small stove and a little food.  
Then he hitched up his dogs.  
Balto stood proudly in the lead.

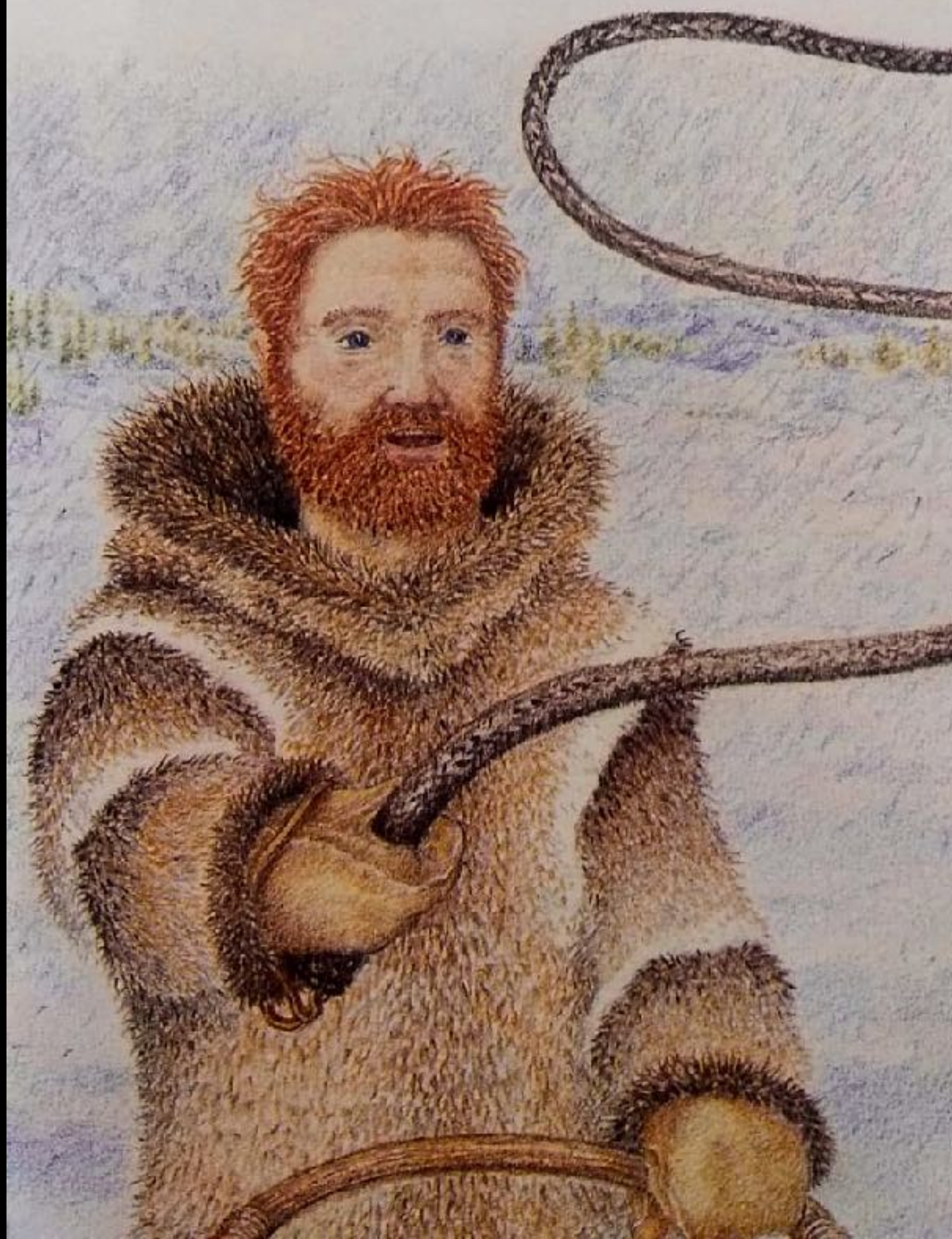


Gunnar cracked his whip.

"Mush!" he cried.

That meant "go."

The team ran out into the snowy night.





At first the team made good time.

But soon snowdrifts blocked the trail.

The dogs sank up to their necks  
in snow.

They could not move.

Some began to panic.

But not Balto.

He stayed calm.

That helped the other dogs  
while Gunnar dug them out  
of the snow.

At last the team was on its way again.









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At last the team was on its way again.





Then the team crossed a frozen river,  
The dogs and the sled  
slipped and skidded on the ice.  
Oh, no! Over went the sled.  
Gunnar got it up again.  
But the medicine was gone!







Wildly Gunnar dug for the medicine.  
He could not see  
through the heavy snow.  
But at last he felt the package.  
He put it back on the sled.





The team kept going  
across the river.

Suddenly Balto stopped short.

"Mush, Balto!" shouted Gunnar.

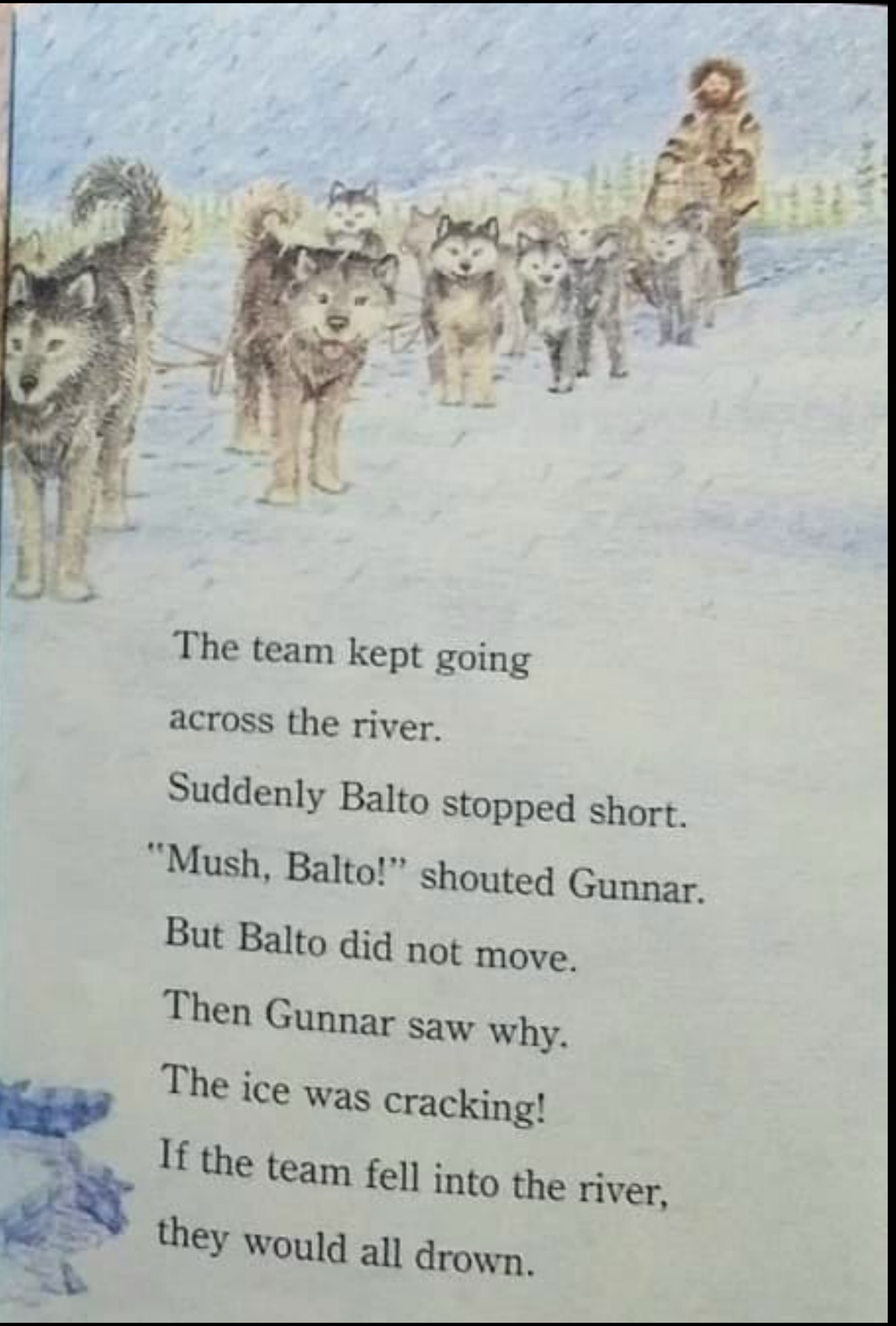
But Balto did not move.

Then Gunnar saw why.

The ice was cracking!

If the team fell into the river,  
they would all drown.





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across the river.

Suddenly Balto stopped short.

"Mush, Balto!" shouted Gunnar.

But Balto did not move.

Then Gunnar saw why.

The ice was cracking!

If the team fell into the river,  
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Balto had stopped just in time.

"Smart dog!" Gunnar told him.

Then he saw that Balto's feet were wet.

If they froze,

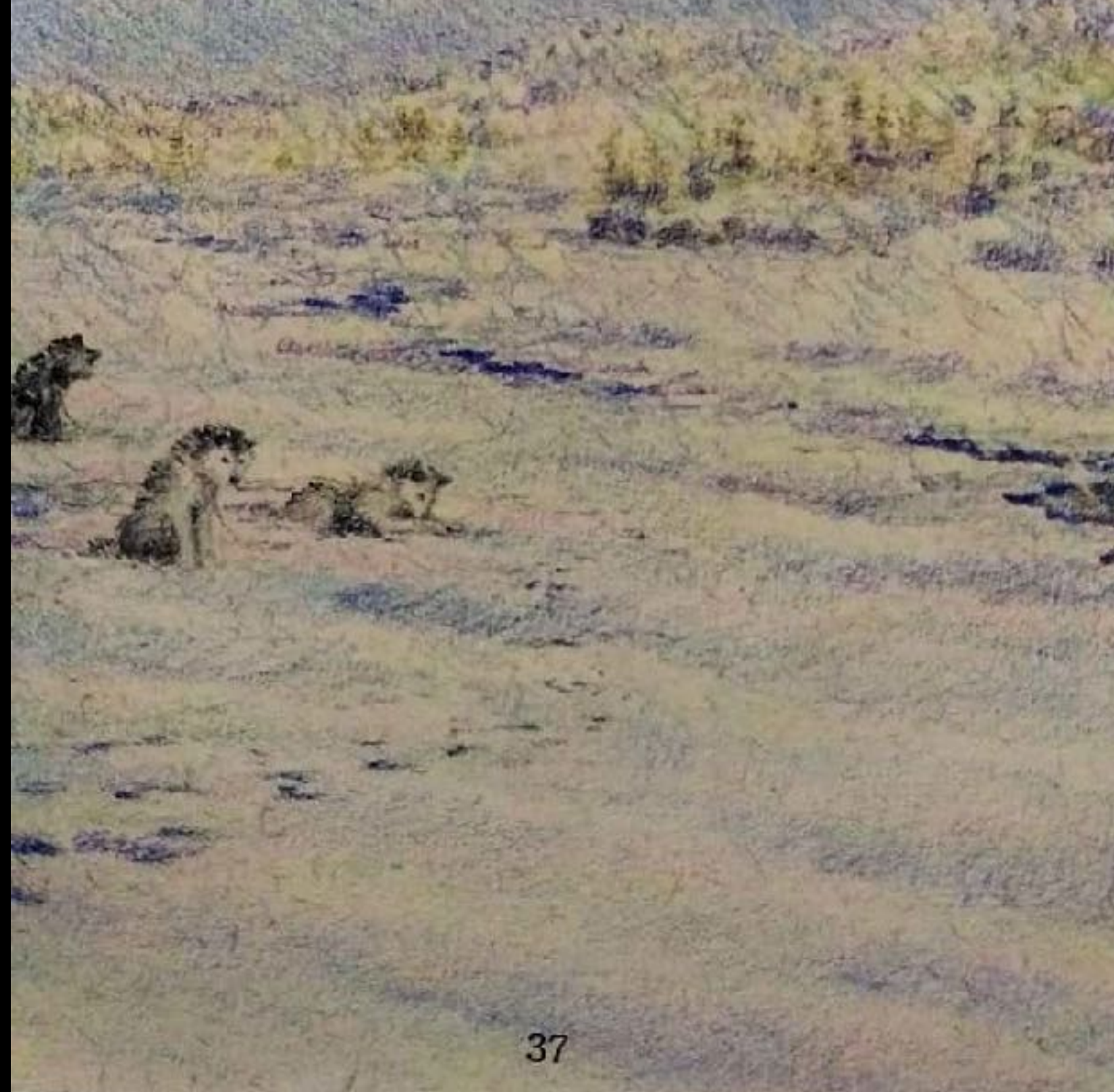
Balto would never walk again.

Quickly Gunnar unhitched Balto  
from the sled.





He led the dog  
to a patch of powdery snow.  
Gunnar rubbed Balto's paws  
in the powder.  
Soon they were dry.  
Balto was ready to go once more.









Balto led the team  
around the cracking ice.

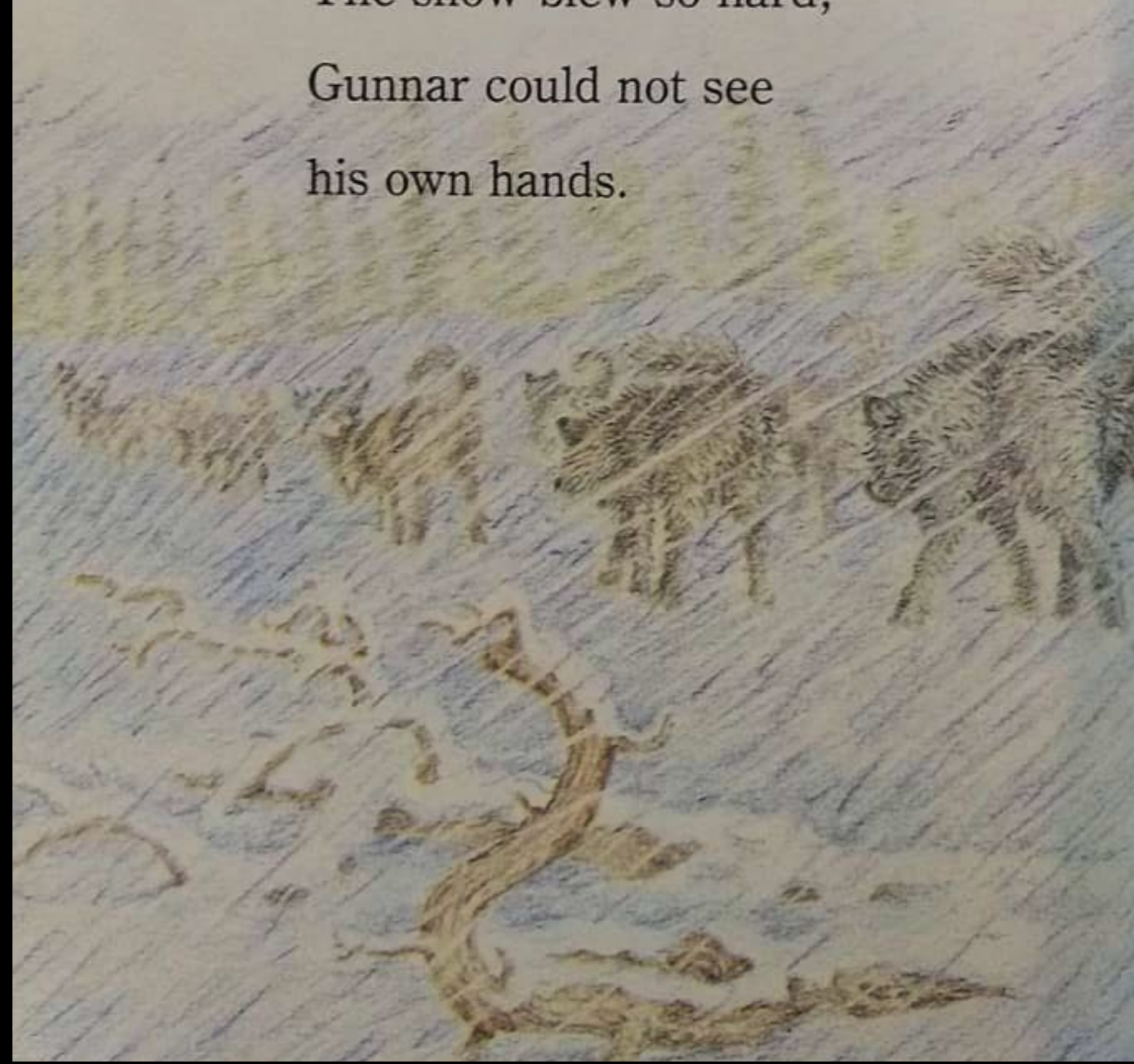
At last they reached  
solid land again.

Were they still on the trail?

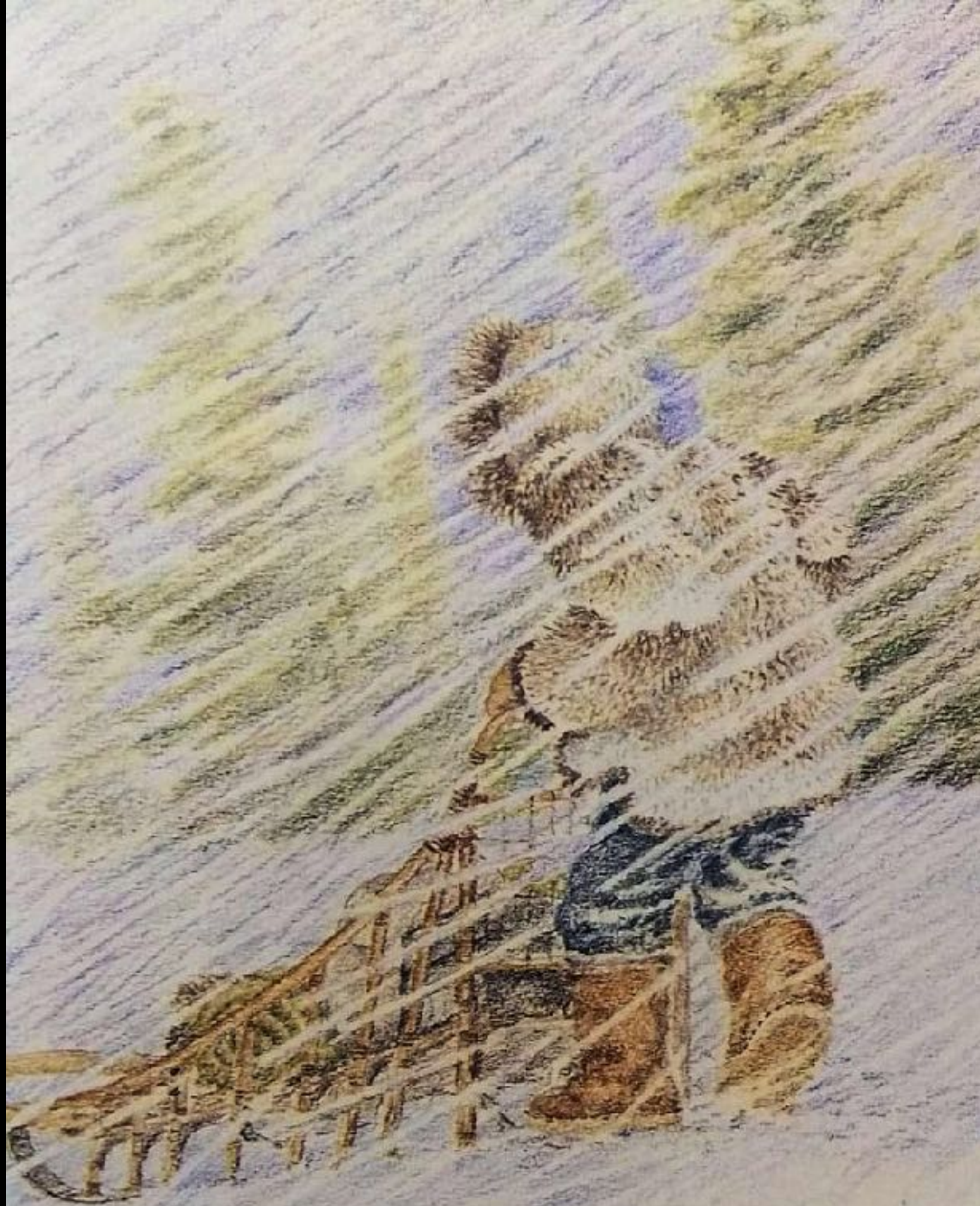
Gunnar had no idea.

The snow blew so hard,

Gunnar could not see  
his own hands.







But Balto had run this trail  
many times before.  
Now it was all up to him.



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around the cracking ice.  
At last they reached  
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Gunnar had no idea.  
The snow blew so hard,  
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But Balto had run this trail  
many times before.  
Now it was all up to him.



Finally the storm died down.

Gunnar saw Point Safety just ahead.

"Balto did it!" thought Gunnar.

He couldn't wait to warm his hands  
by a cozy fire.

But all the lights were out  
at Point Safety.

Was the next driver there?

Gunnar did not know.

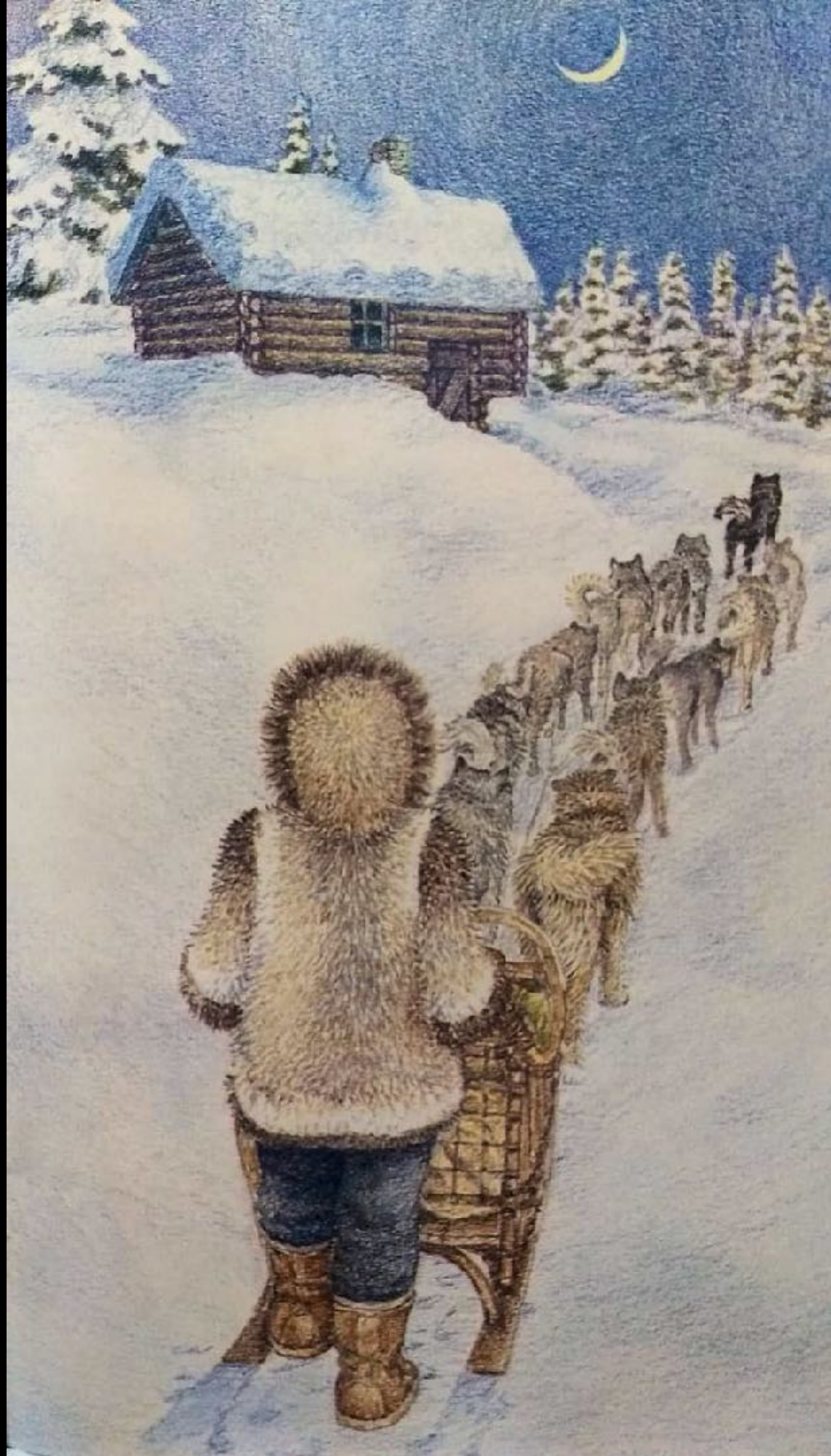
And there was no time to find out.

So Gunnar and Balto did not stop.

They had never been so tired.

But they raced on through the night  
toward Nome.





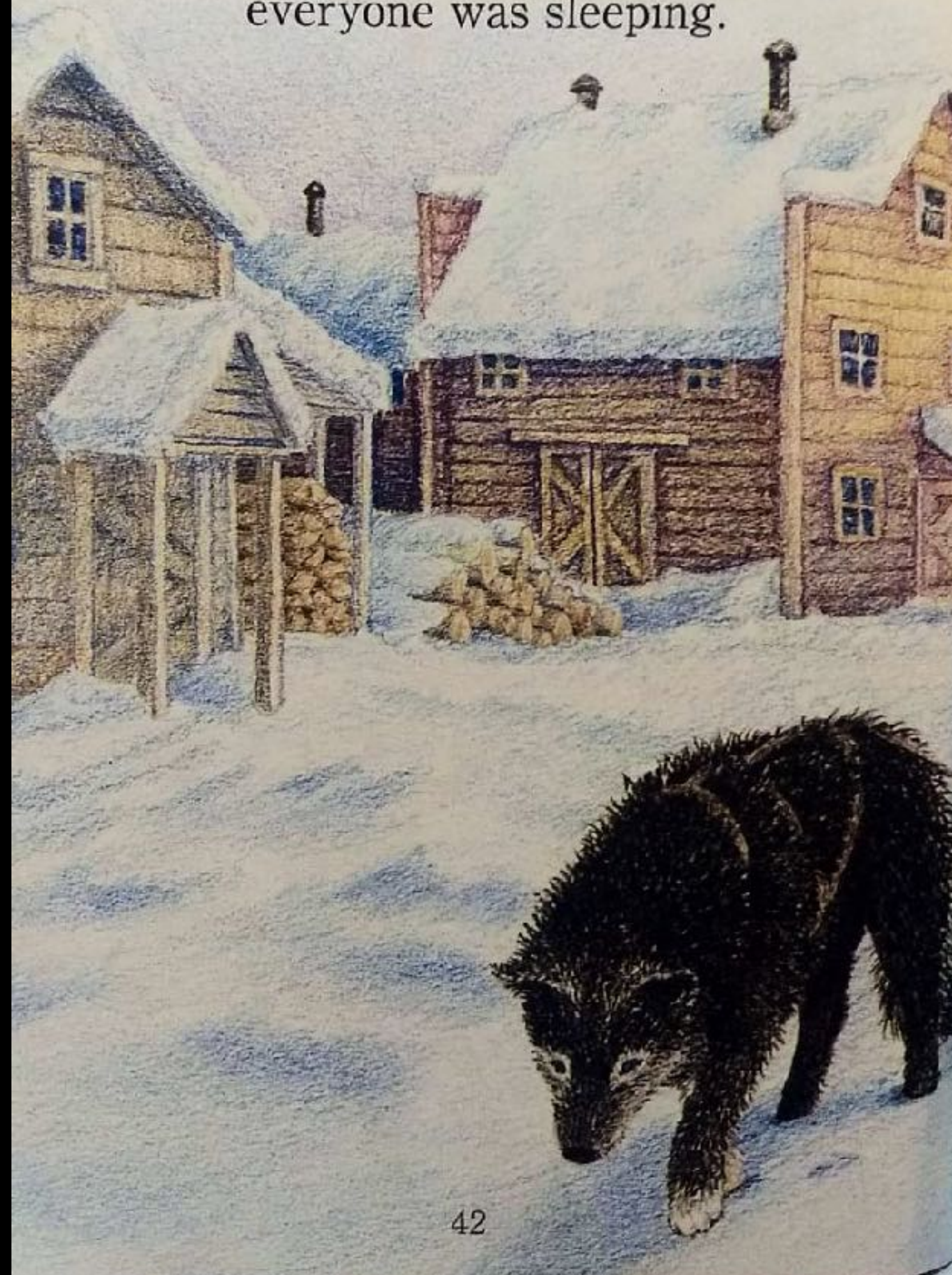


It was just before dawn.

The sky began to glow.

In the town of Nome

everyone was sleeping.





Gunnar and his team pulled into town.

They had made it!

Balto was too tired to bark.

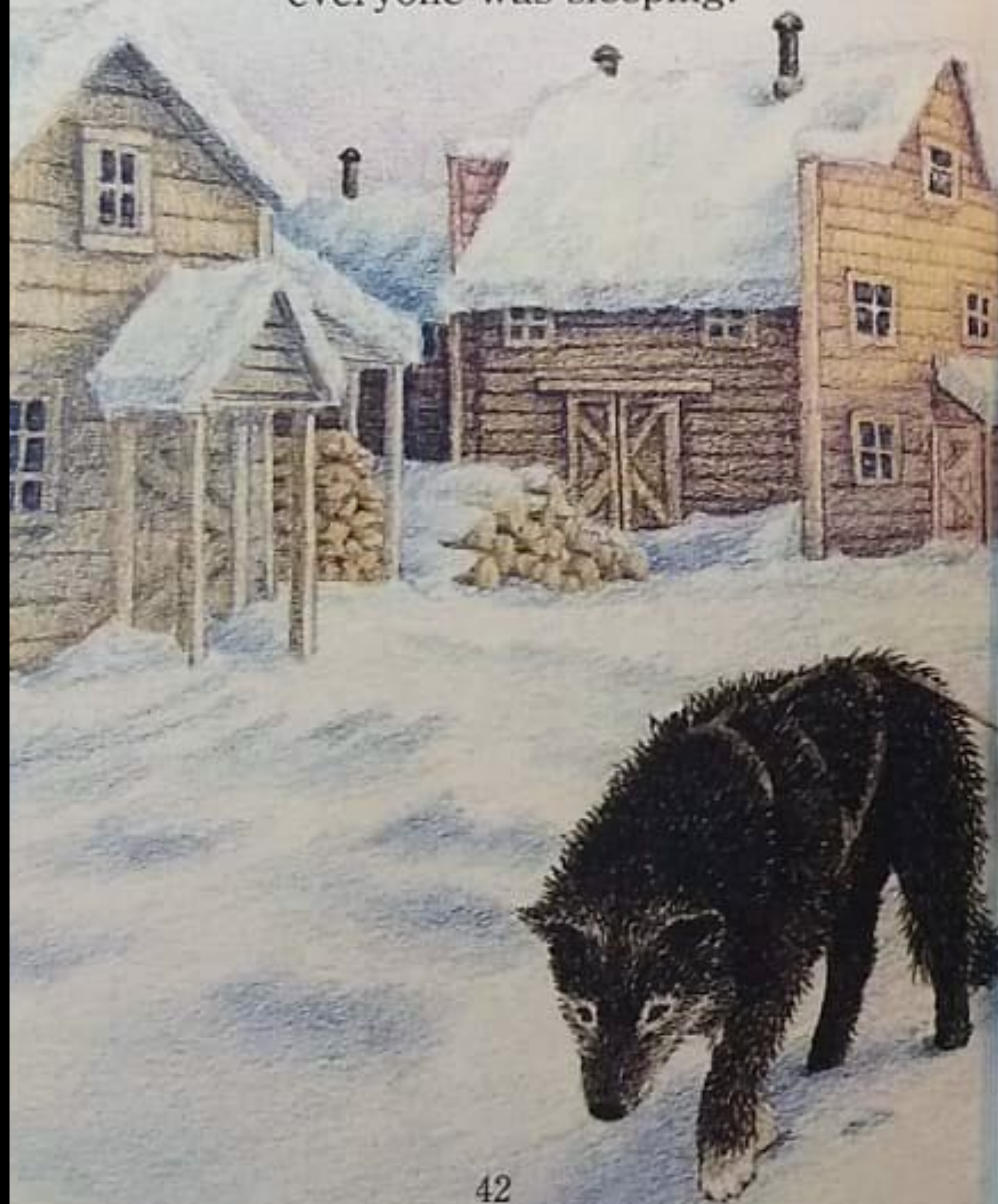
They had been on the trail  
for 20 hours straight.

They had driven 53 miles!





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Gunnar and his team pulled into town.  
They had made it!  
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Gunnar took the medicine to the doctor.

The doctor was surprised.

He thought it would take 15 days  
to get the medicine.

But Gunnar delivered it  
after only five and a half days!

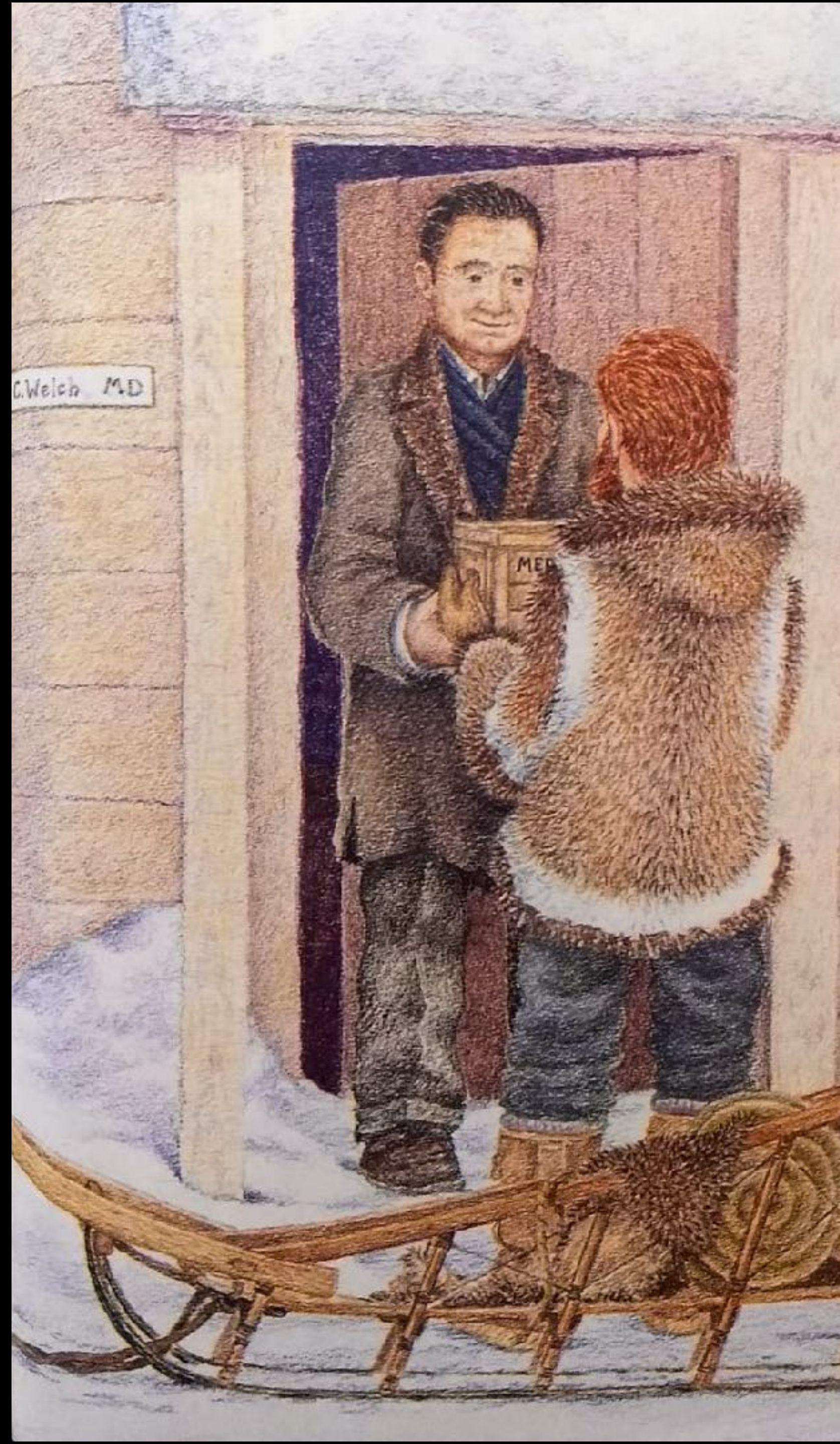
"Thank you, Gunnar!" said the doctor.

"You are a hero!"

"Balto is the hero," said Gunnar.

"I could not have done it without him."







The doctor went right to work.

He gave the medicine

to all the sick people.

In a few days they would be well.

The town of Nome was saved.







All over America  
people cheered for Balto.  
They read about his bravery  
in the newspaper.  
Balto was the most famous dog  
in the world.



A year later  
the people of New York City  
put up a statue of Balto.  
It still stands in Central Park.  
Lots of children play on the statue.  
They remember Balto,  
the bravest dog ever!

