
A NAVRITTO STORY
The Resolutions Found *in the Snow.*

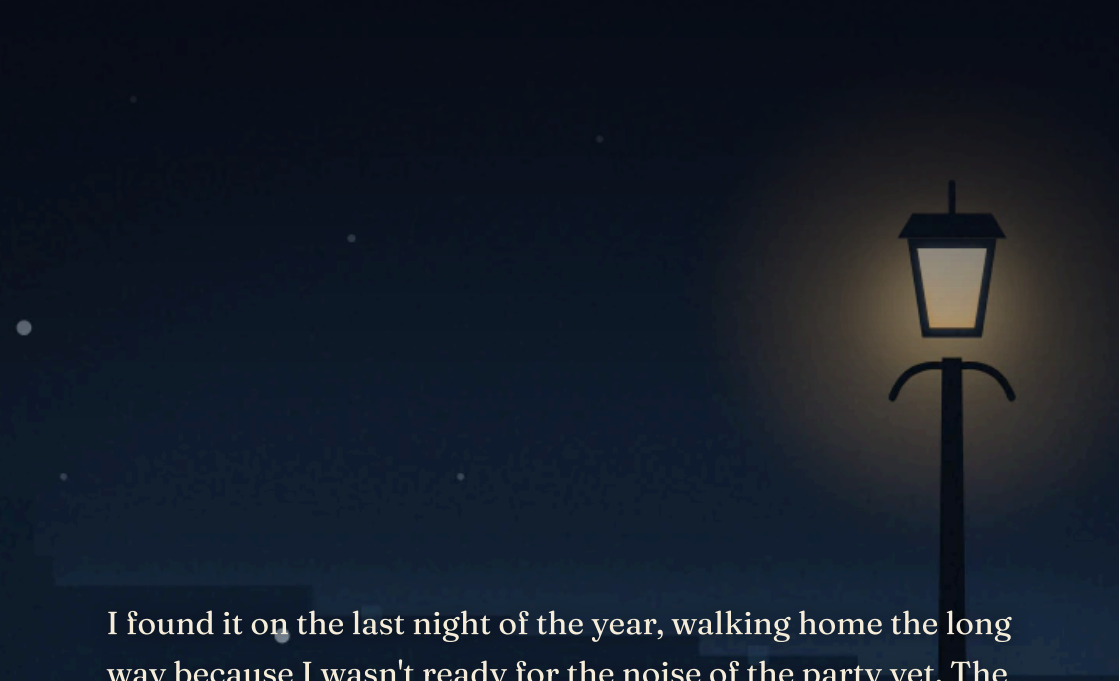
✦ NAVRITTO STORIES · THRILLERS & SUSPENSE

The Resolutions Found in the Snow

Written & illustrated by Navritto.

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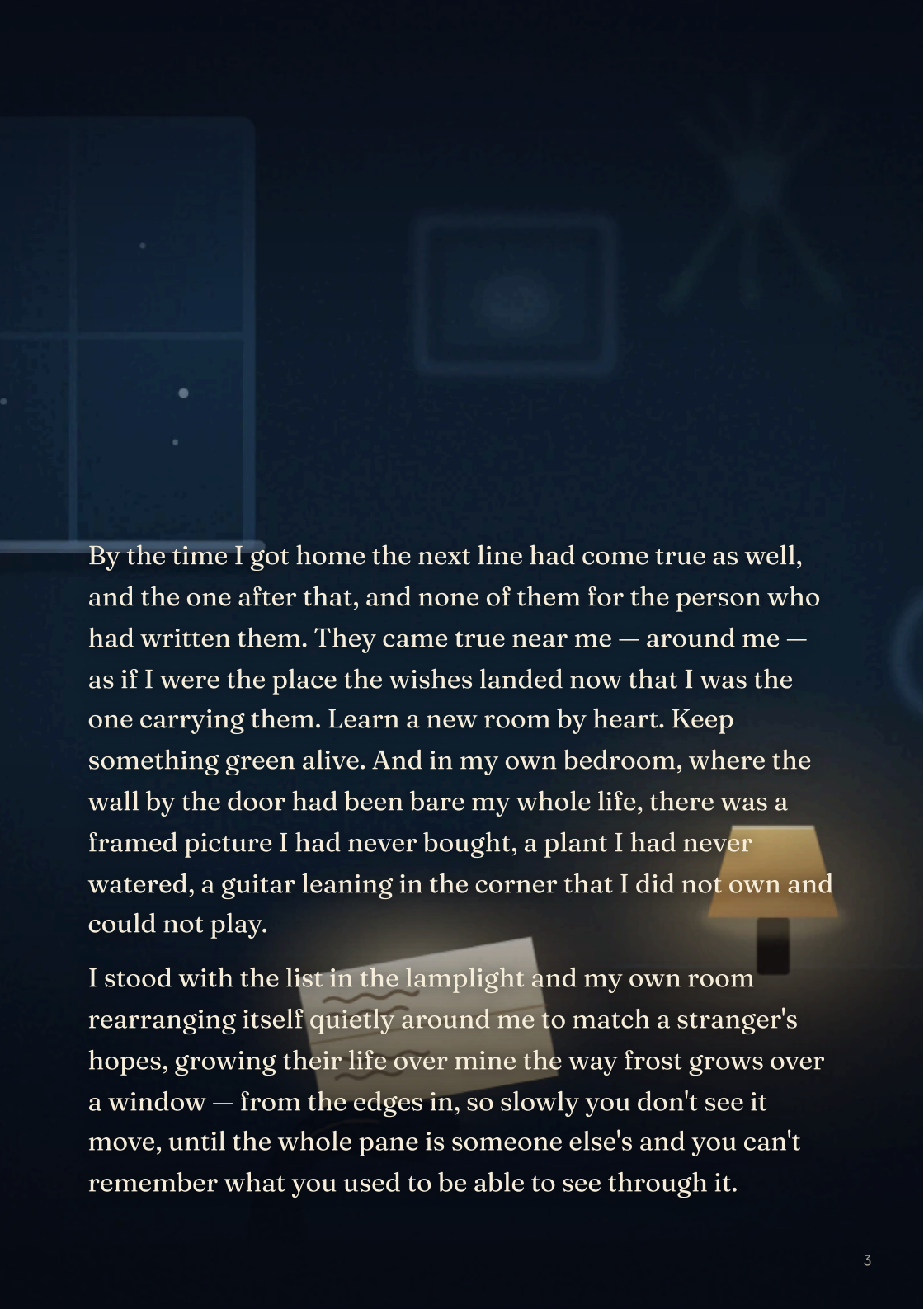
I found it on the last night of the year, walking home the long way because I wasn't ready for the noise of the party yet. The snow had come down all evening and smoothed the street into one unbroken page, lit here and there by the streetlamps, and under the one lamp still burning on the corner there was a single dark mark in all that white — a folded square of paper, sitting in the snow as if it had been set down rather than dropped.

A line of footprints led away from it into the dark, already filling in. I know what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to leave it; a thing abandoned in the snow at midnight is not a thing you want. But it was so cold, and the paper was the only warm-coloured thing for a hundred yards, catching the lamplight like it was lit from inside. I picked it up. I unfolded it. It was a list of New Year's resolutions, numbered down the page in a quick, slanting hand that was not mine.



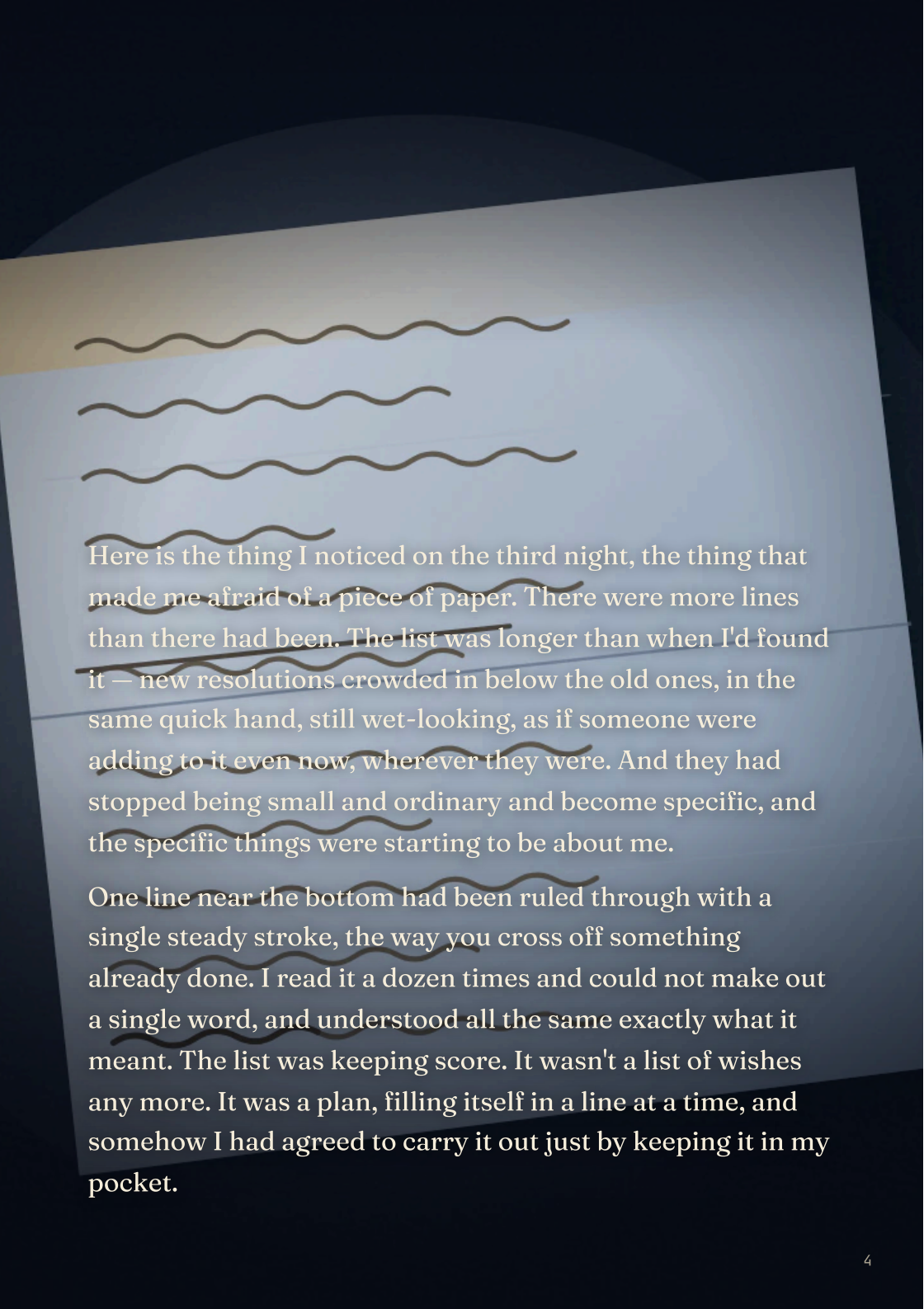
The first one was small and ordinary. Learn to play again, it said — I couldn't read the rest, the hand was too quick — and I thought nothing of it, the way you think nothing of a stranger's shopping receipt. I put the list in my coat pocket and kept walking. It was only when I passed the tall dark house across the street, the one that had stood empty and shuttered for as long as I'd been alive, that I stopped.

A window on its second floor was lit. Warm and gold, the only warm window on the street, and behind the glass someone was sitting at an upright piano I would have sworn had not been there a week ago, and the notes came down through the snow soft and sure. Someone, somewhere, had learned to play again. It was a lovely thing. It should have been a lovely thing. I took the list back out and read it under the lamp, and I felt the cold go a little further into me.



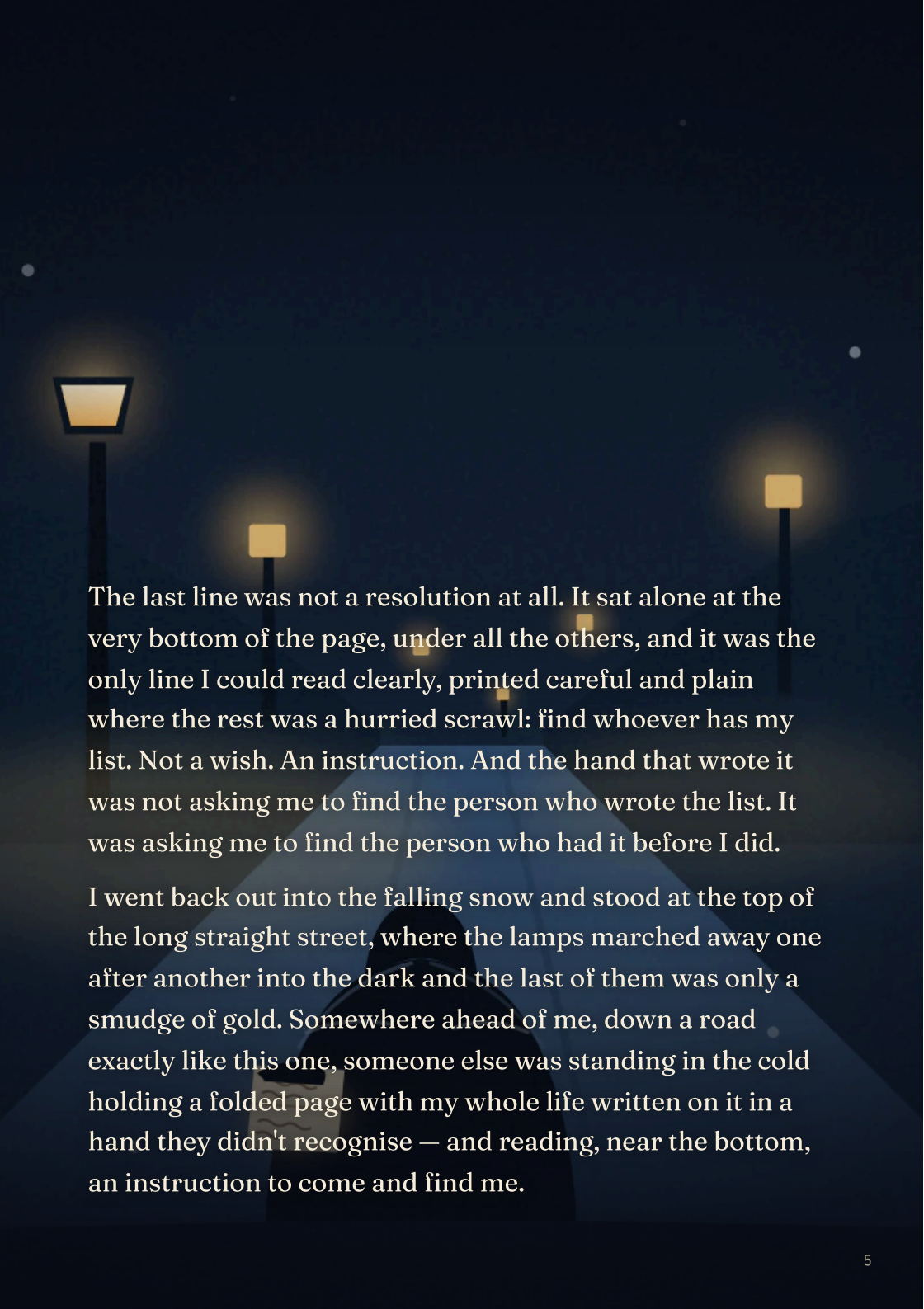
By the time I got home the next line had come true as well, and the one after that, and none of them for the person who had written them. They came true near me — around me — as if I were the place the wishes landed now that I was the one carrying them. Learn a new room by heart. Keep something green alive. And in my own bedroom, where the wall by the door had been bare my whole life, there was a framed picture I had never bought, a plant I had never watered, a guitar leaning in the corner that I did not own and could not play.

I stood with the list in the lamplight and my own room rearranging itself quietly around me to match a stranger's hopes, growing their life over mine the way frost grows over a window — from the edges in, so slowly you don't see it move, until the whole pane is someone else's and you can't remember what you used to be able to see through it.



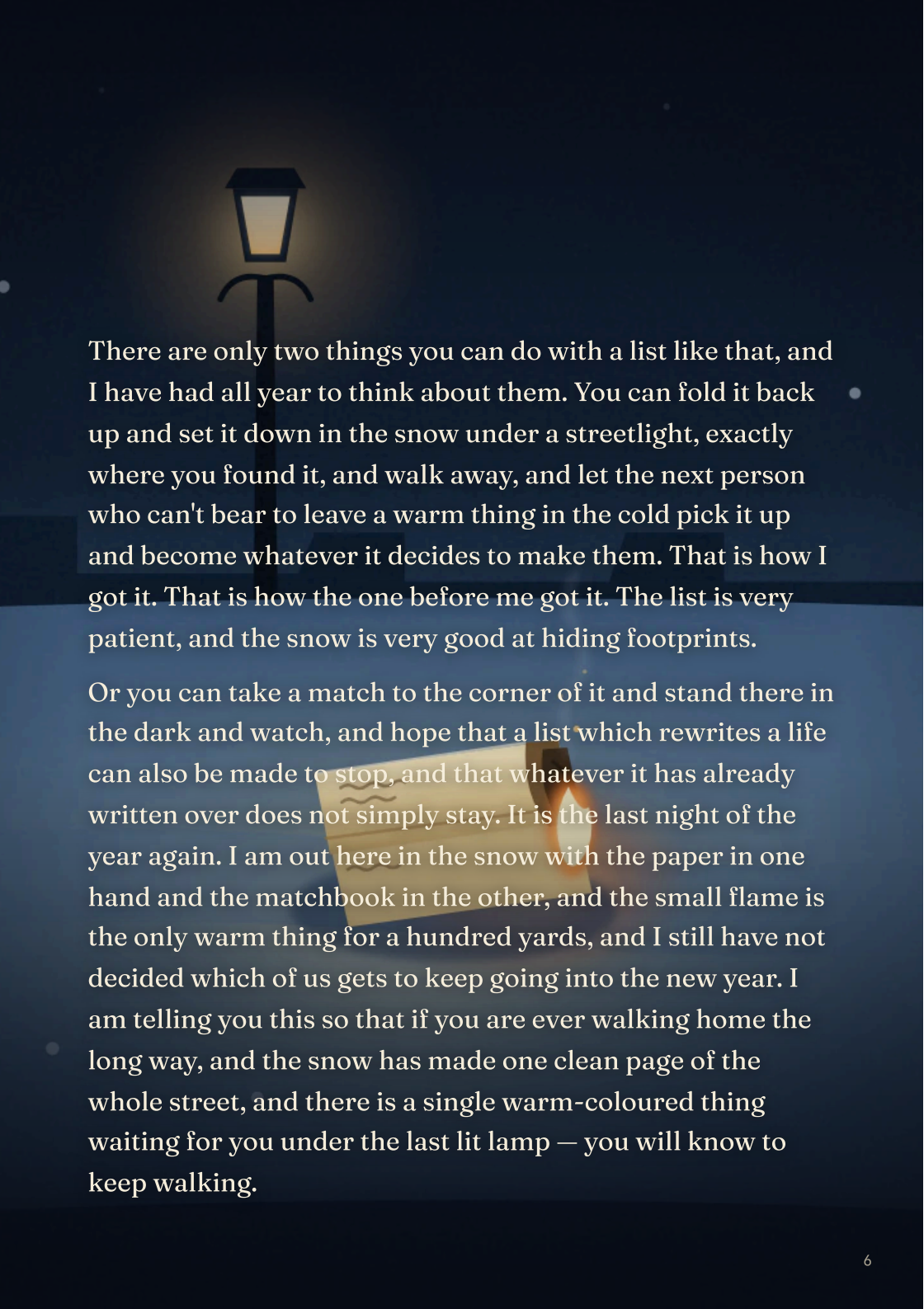
Here is the thing I noticed on the third night, the thing that made me afraid of a piece of paper. There were more lines than there had been. The list was longer than when I'd found it — new resolutions crowded in below the old ones, in the same quick hand, still wet-looking, as if someone were adding to it even now, wherever they were. And they had stopped being small and ordinary and become specific, and the specific things were starting to be about me.

One line near the bottom had been ruled through with a single steady stroke, the way you cross off something already done. I read it a dozen times and could not make out a single word, and understood all the same exactly what it meant. The list was keeping score. It wasn't a list of wishes any more. It was a plan, filling itself in a line at a time, and somehow I had agreed to carry it out just by keeping it in my pocket.



The last line was not a resolution at all. It sat alone at the very bottom of the page, under all the others, and it was the only line I could read clearly, printed careful and plain where the rest was a hurried scrawl: find whoever has my list. Not a wish. An instruction. And the hand that wrote it was not asking me to find the person who wrote the list. It was asking me to find the person who had it before I did.

I went back out into the falling snow and stood at the top of the long straight street, where the lamps marched away one after another into the dark and the last of them was only a smudge of gold. Somewhere ahead of me, down a road exactly like this one, someone else was standing in the cold holding a folded page with my whole life written on it in a hand they didn't recognise — and reading, near the bottom, an instruction to come and find me.



There are only two things you can do with a list like that, and I have had all year to think about them. You can fold it back up and set it down in the snow under a streetlight, exactly where you found it, and walk away, and let the next person who can't bear to leave a warm thing in the cold pick it up and become whatever it decides to make them. That is how I got it. That is how the one before me got it. The list is very patient, and the snow is very good at hiding footprints.

Or you can take a match to the corner of it and stand there in the dark and watch, and hope that a list which rewrites a life can also be made to stop, and that whatever it has already written over does not simply stay. It is the last night of the year again. I am out here in the snow with the paper in one hand and the matchbook in the other, and the small flame is the only warm thing for a hundred yards, and I still have not decided which of us gets to keep going into the new year. I am telling you this so that if you are ever walking home the long way, and the snow has made one clean page of the whole street, and there is a single warm-coloured thing waiting for you under the last lit lamp — you will know to keep walking.

✦ THE END

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