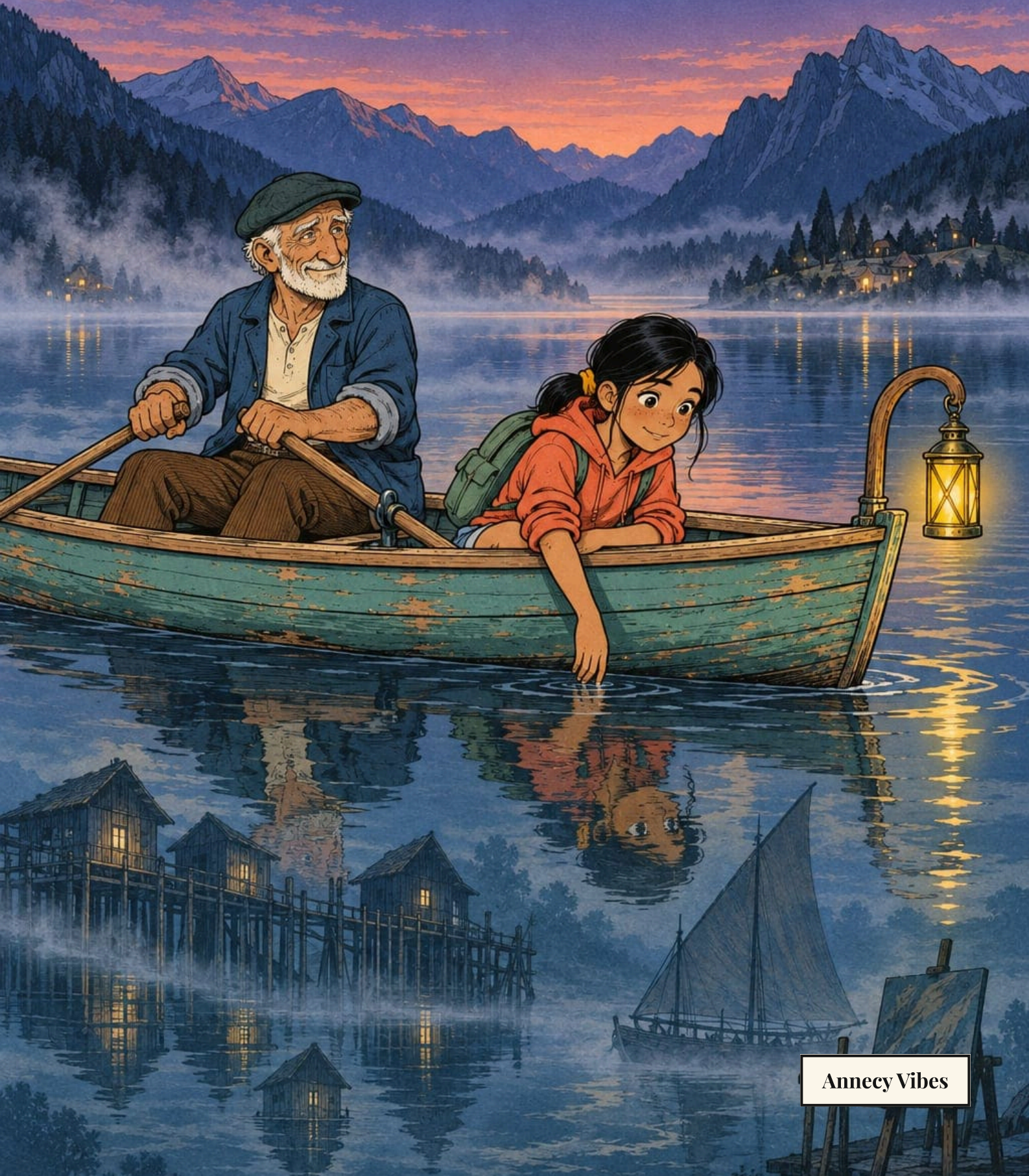


The Lake Ferryman

A journey through time on Lake Annecy



Annecy Vibes

The Lake Ferryman

A story from Annecy Vibes, the guide written by people who live by the lake.

Script, text and layout: the Annecy Vibes team.

Drawings generated by artificial intelligence, checked panel by panel by the team.

Ines and the ferryman are made-up characters, and the time travel is fiction. Everything else (the eras, the dates, the gestures) is checked: the sources are at the end of the album.

Free album. Not for sale. annecyvibes.com

THE LANTERN BOAT

A summer evening by Lake Annecy. Mum is reading on her bench. Me, I'm bored, and I'm very good at it.



Water laps in the reeds. It smells of warm grass.



What's that shiny thing?



Evening, little one. Looking for something?

No. And my mum's right over there, just so you know.

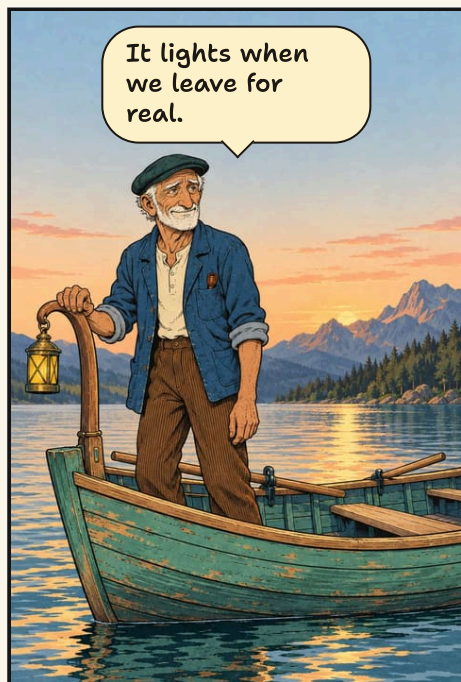
Quite right. Me, I take people across.



Shall I take you
back by water?
It's prettier.

What's your
lantern for? It's
not even lit.

It lights when
we leave for
real.

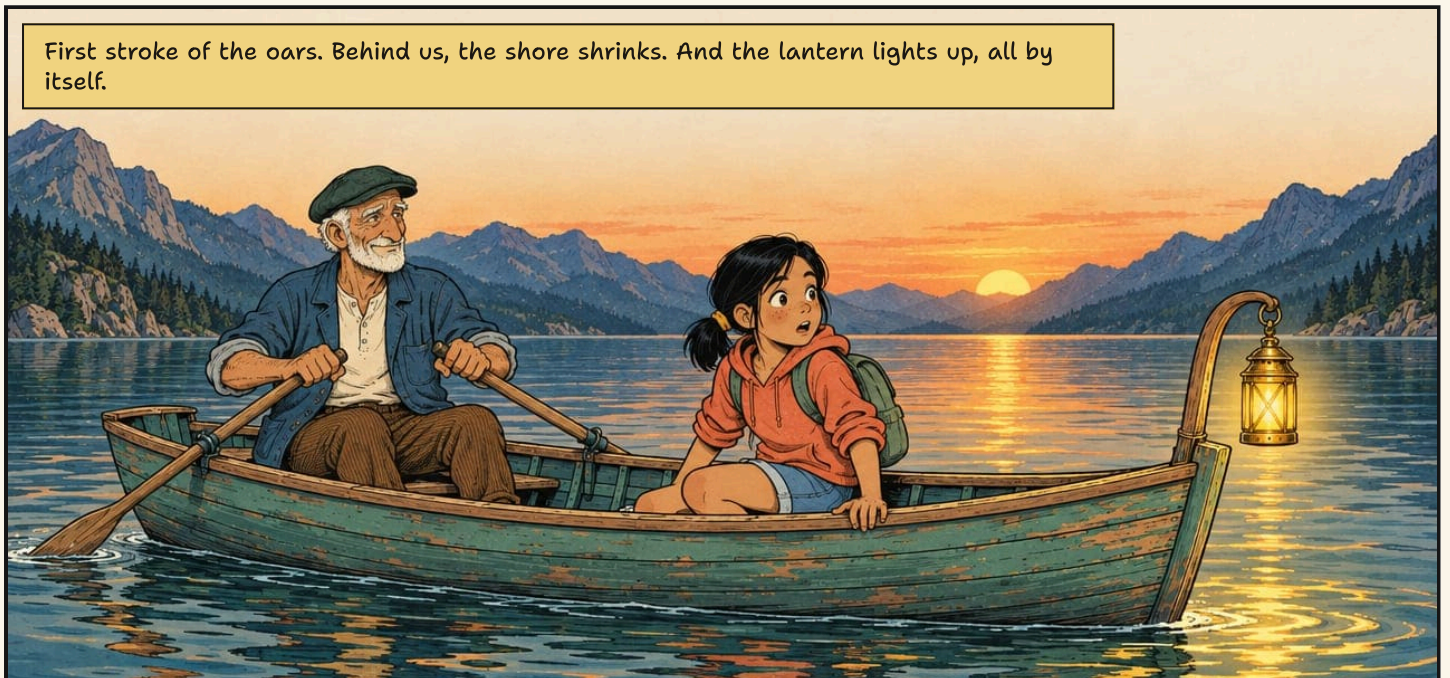




In the middle. And keep your sketchbook dry.



I wave to Mum, far off. She waves back without looking up from her book.



First stroke of the oars. Behind us, the shore shrinks. And the lantern lights up, all by itself.



Um... sir? Where did the shore go?



Hold on tight. And keep your eyes wide open.

THE VILLAGE ON THE WATER

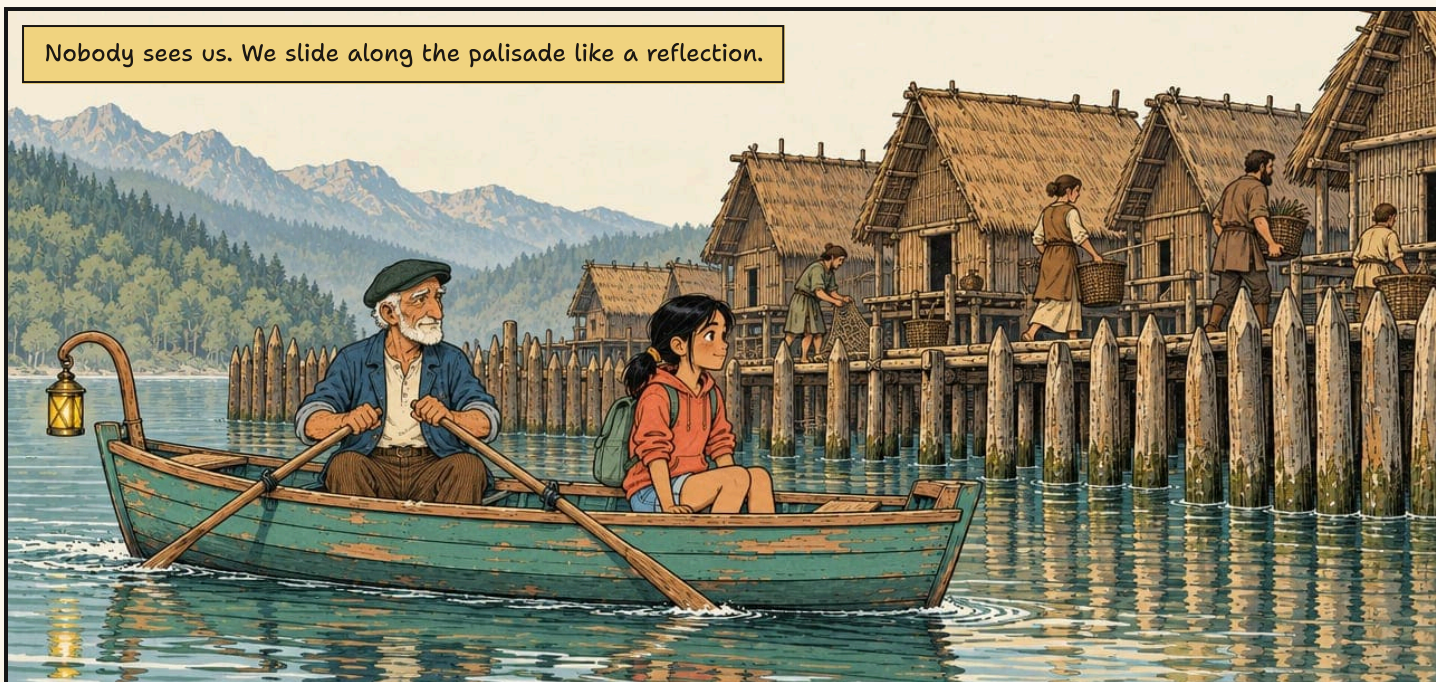
About 3,000 years ago. The mist parts over an island: wooden houses on piles, huddled behind a palisade.



Where are we?

Not where. When.

Nobody sees us. We slide along the palisade like a reflection.



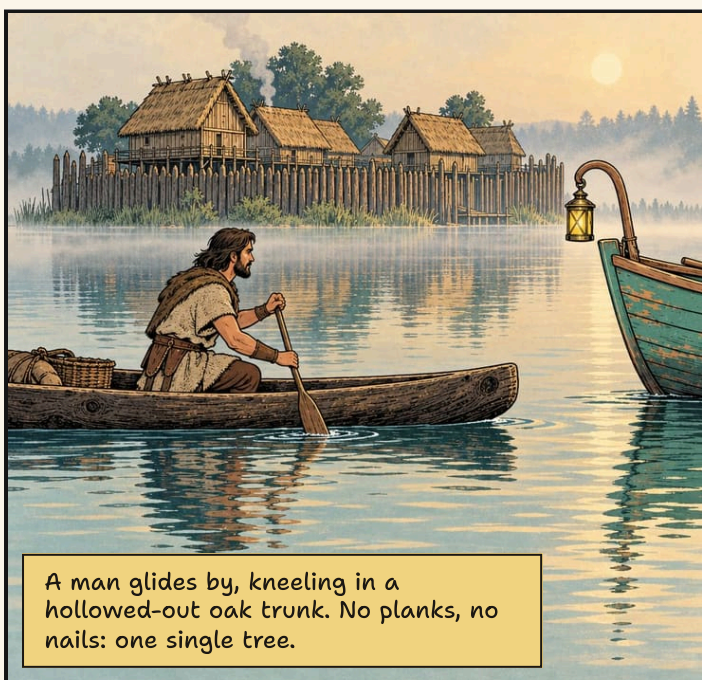
Hello? Hi! Nothing. Great, I'm invisible.



We look, we don't touch.



Quick, before the mist!



A man glides by, kneeling in a hollowed-out oak trunk. No planks, no nails: one single tree.





They've got metal bracelets?

Bronze. The knives too.



She's my age, I bet. I wonder what she's thinking about.



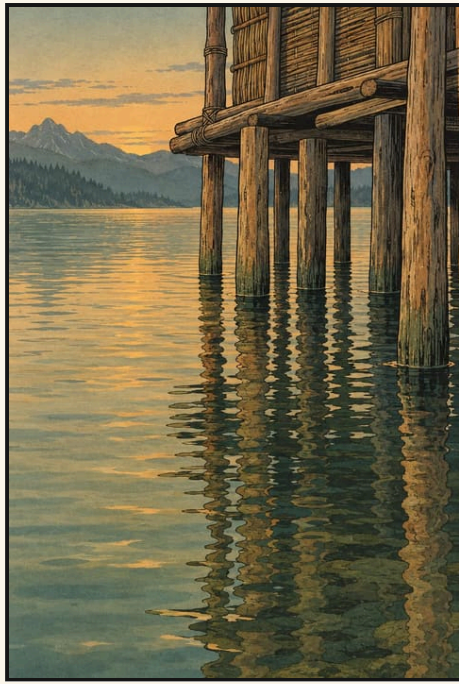
The lake kept their posts in the mud. It keeps everything, you know.



Even now? Can we see them?



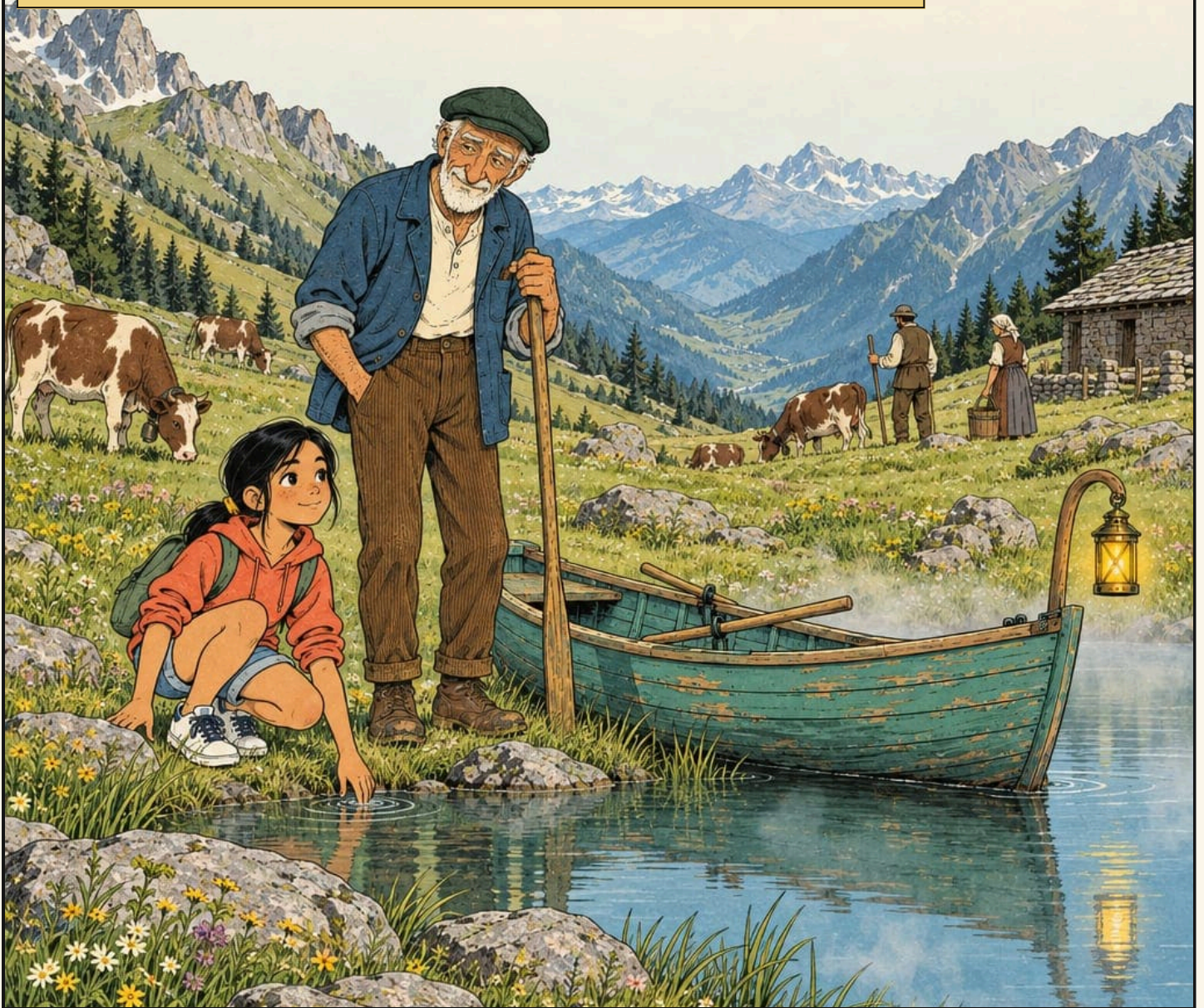
They sleep underwater, far from the shore. No touching: they're protected.



The lantern glows brighter. The village fades into the mist, gently, like a drawing being rubbed out.

THE SECOND MILKING

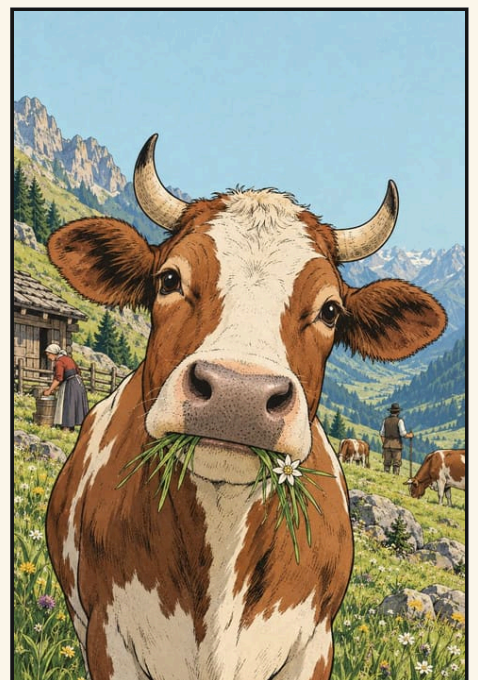
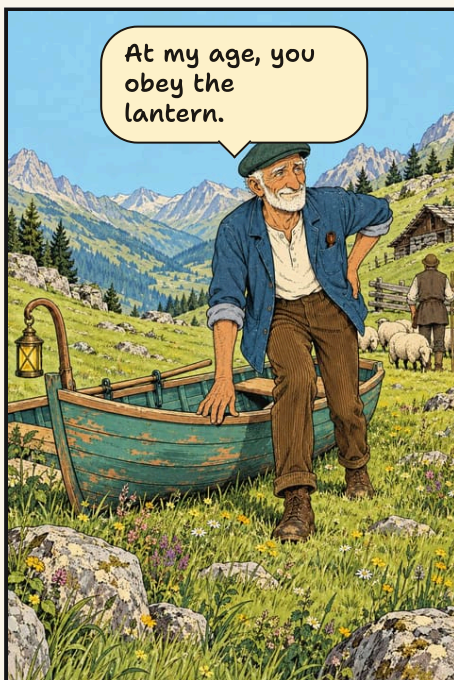
Centuries later. A pond, high up in a pasture in the Thônes valleys. It smells of wet grass and cow. Not a single engine anywhere.



A boat. In a meadow. Right. Totally normal.



At my age, you obey the lantern.



The ferryman tells me a story. They say that once a year, the owners of the pasture came to take their share of the milk.



One whole day's milk. It was called the "ociège".

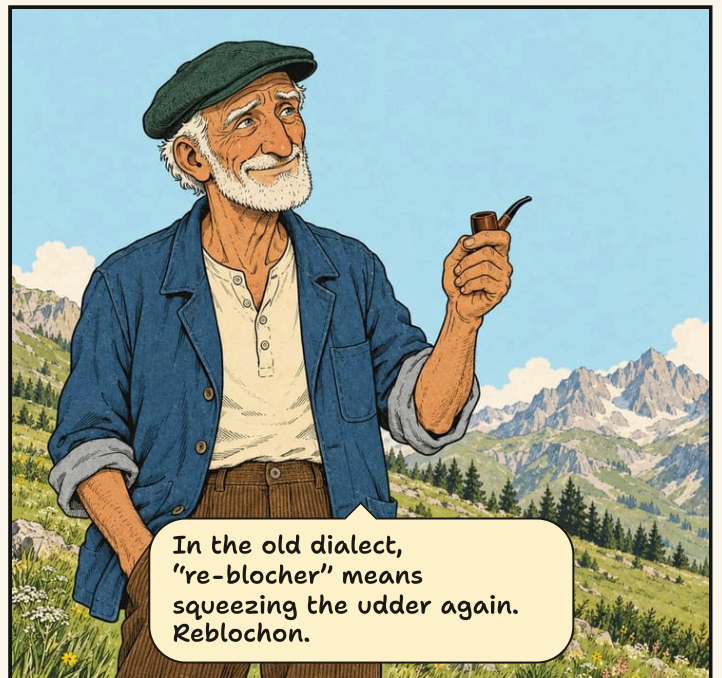
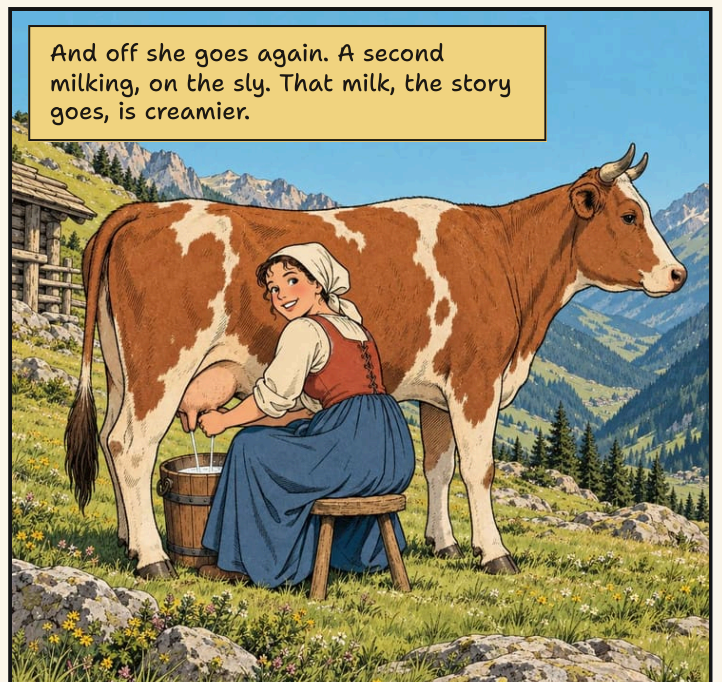
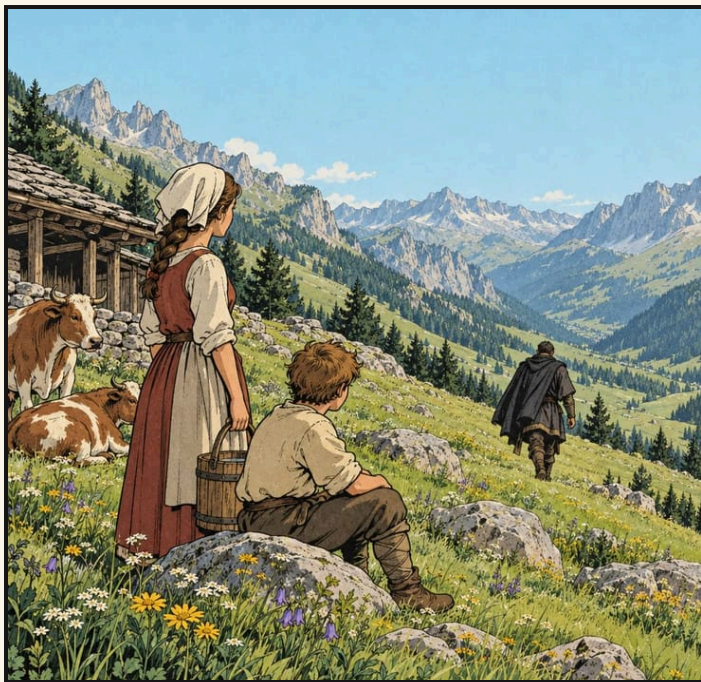


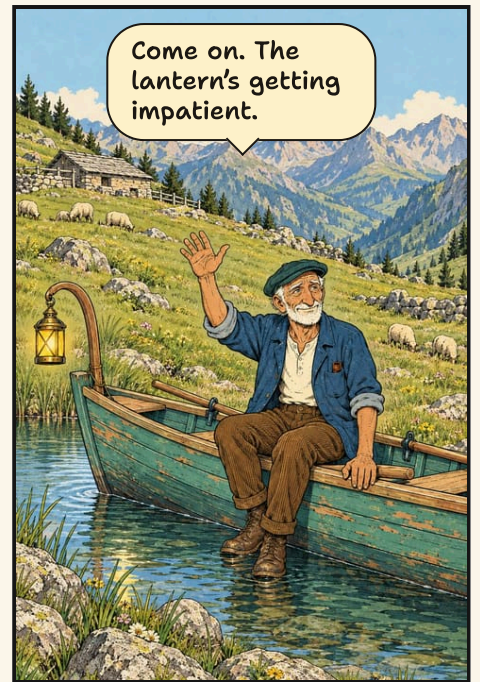
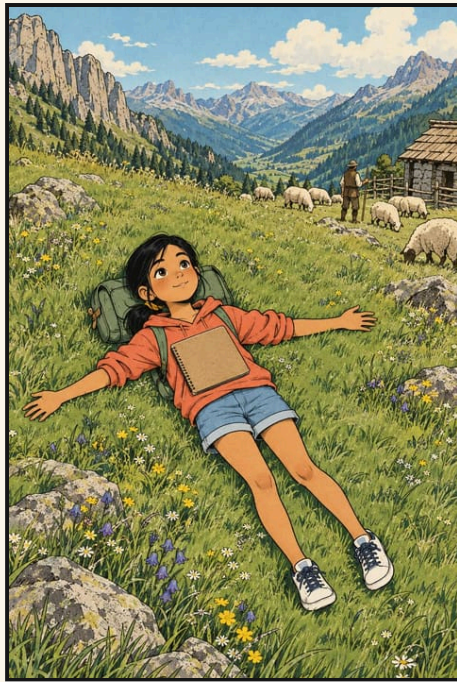
She's stopping halfway... Is she doing that on purpose?



Shh. Wait till that one turns his back.

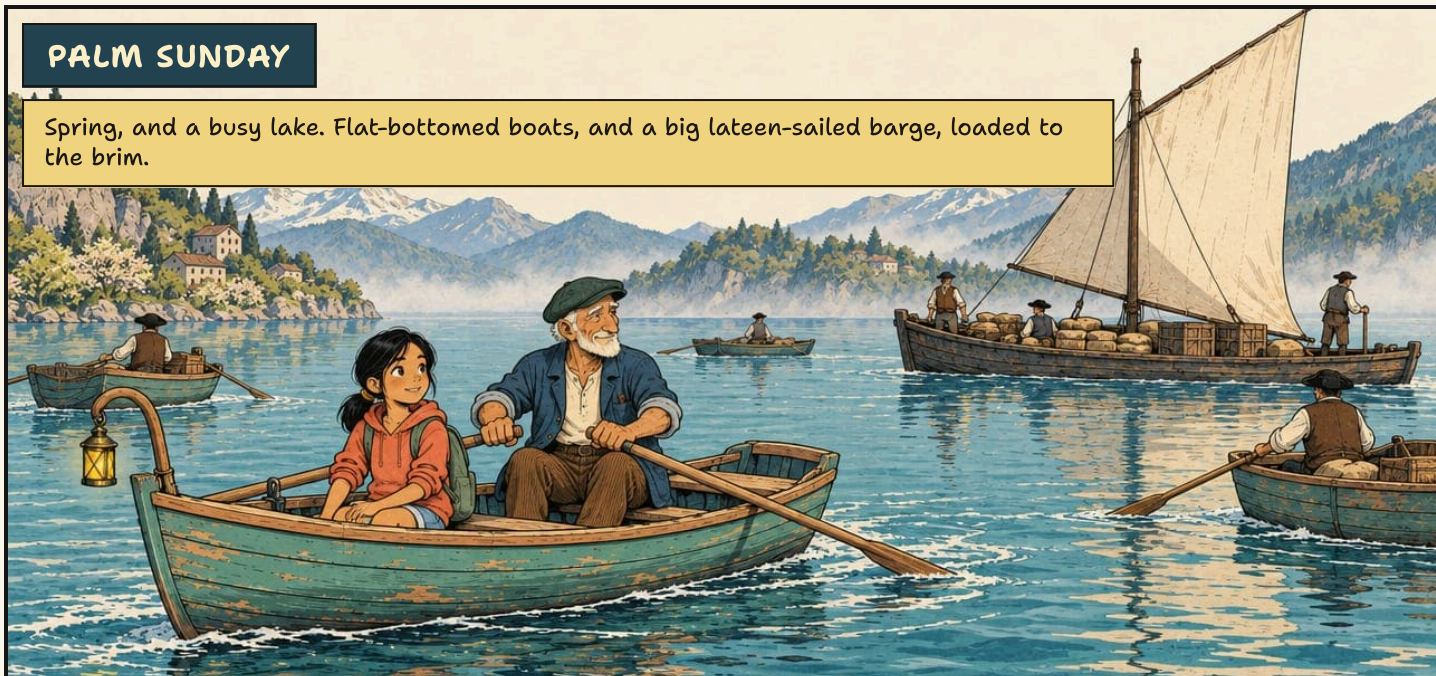




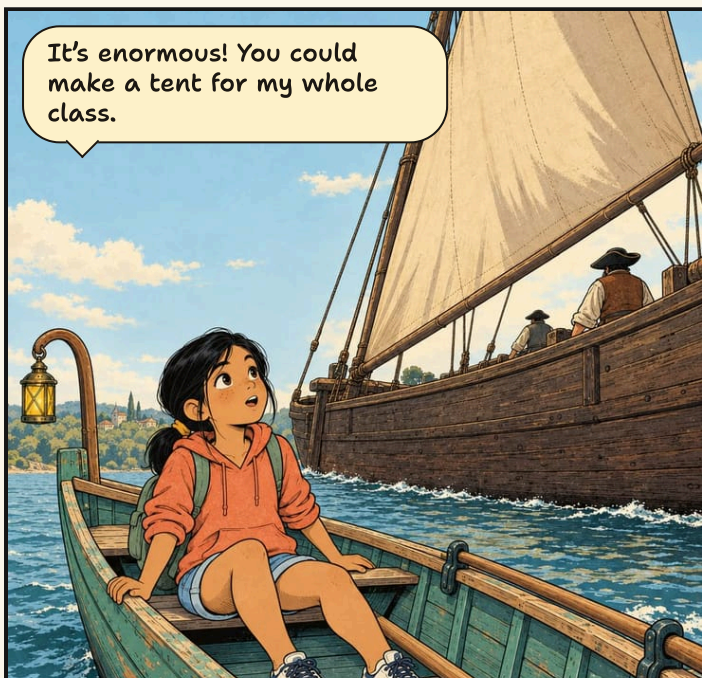


PALM SUNDAY

Spring, and a busy lake. Flat-bottomed boats, and a big lateen-sailed barge, loaded to the brim.



It's enormous! You could make a tent for my whole class.



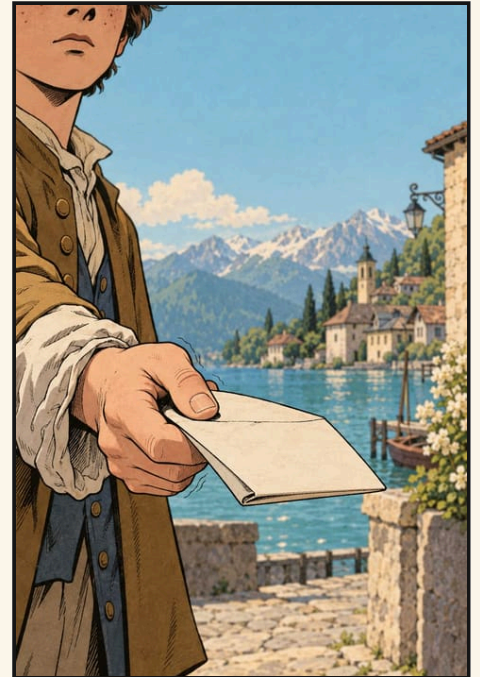
Salt, wheat, iron... The lake was the road.



It's Palm Sunday, in the year 1728.

Watch that boy over there.



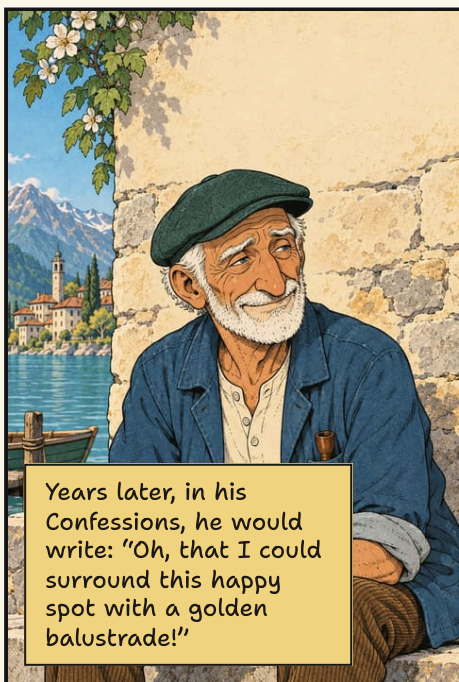




Madame, the service is about to begin.



Look at him. The world just changed colour.



Years later, in his Confessions, he would write: "Oh, that I could surround this happy spot with a golden balustrade!"

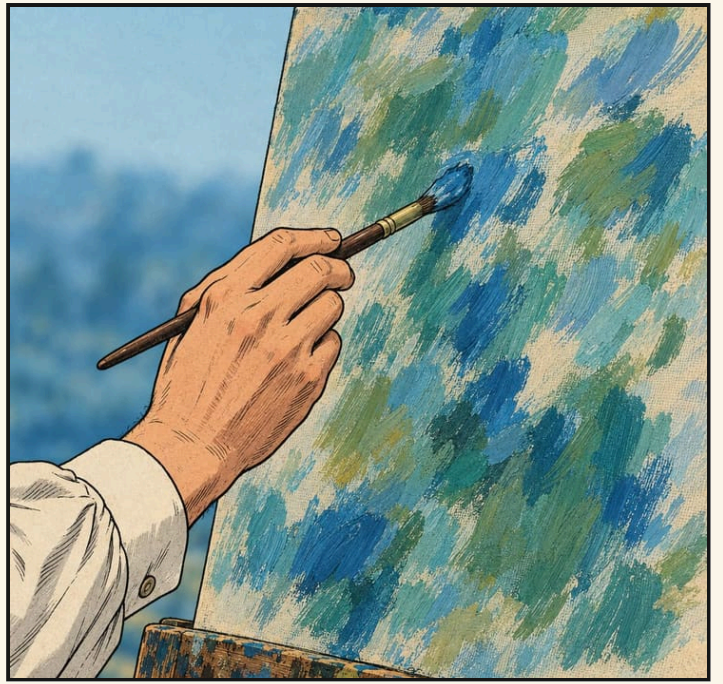


Two hundred years later, he got his golden balustrade: a fountain in Annecy.

THE MORNING PAINTER

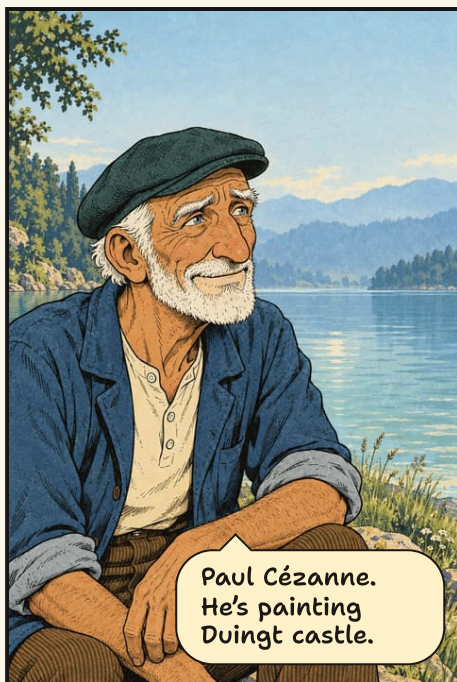
Summer 1896. It's early. On the shore at Talloires, a painter is already at work. The morning sun sets the far shore alight.







He didn't even see us. Who was that?

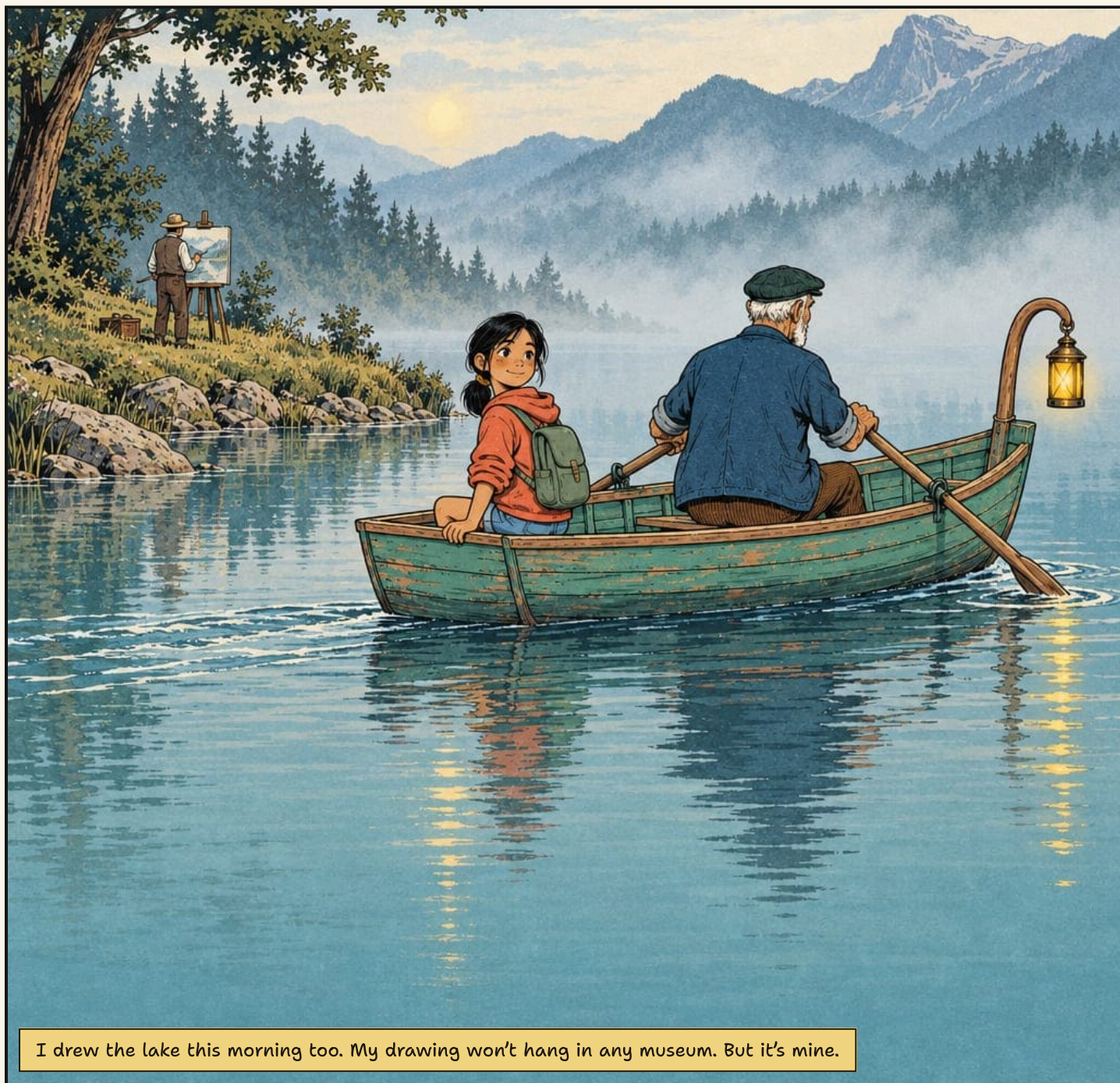


Paul Cézanne.
He's painting
Duingt castle.



And where does his painting end up?

In London, at
the Courtauld
Gallery.



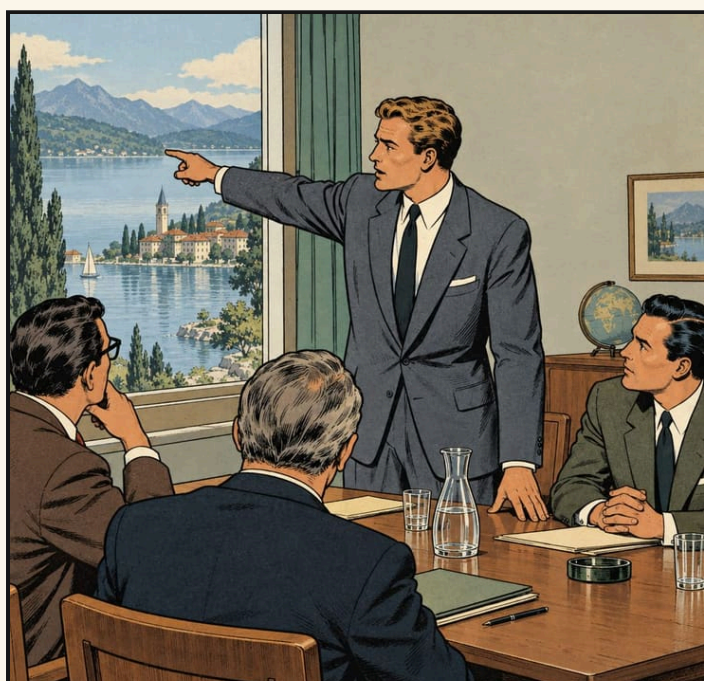
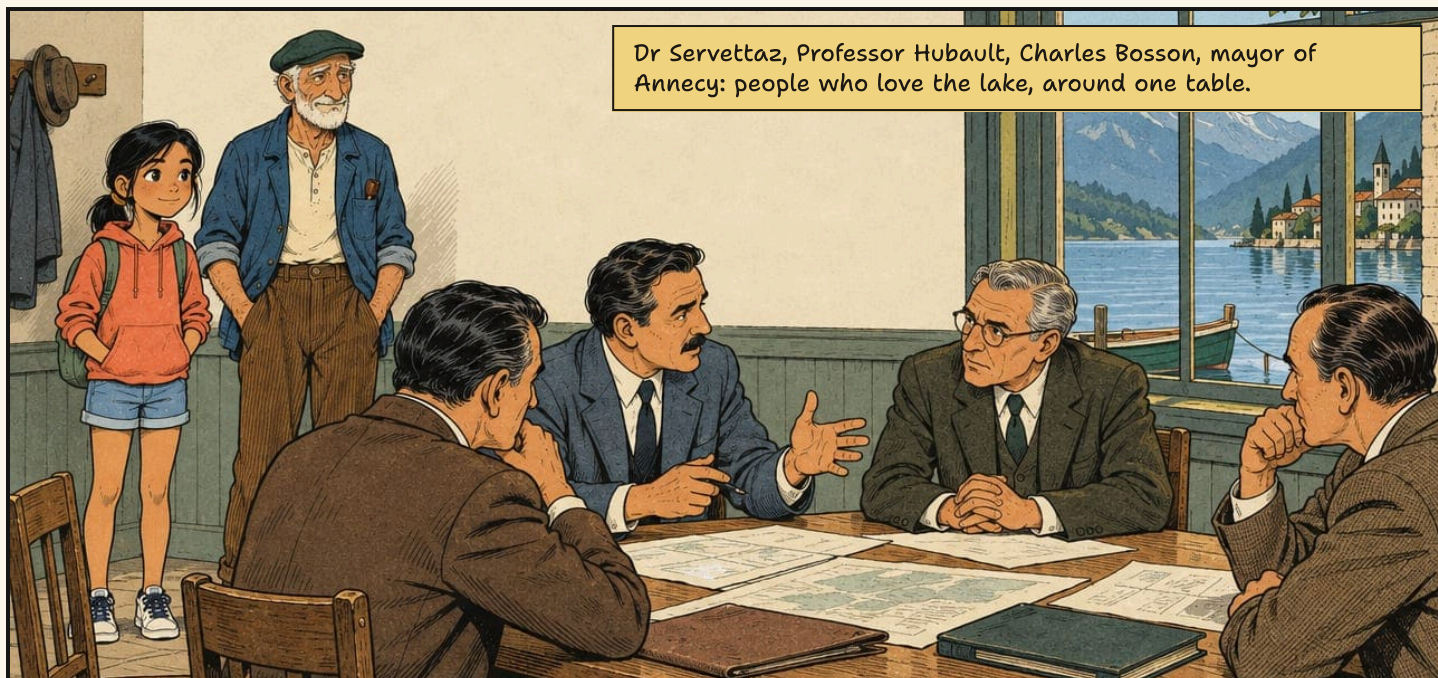
I drew the lake this morning too. My drawing won't hang in any museum. But it's mine.

THE AILING LAKE

The 1950s. The water looks tired. For the first time, the ferryman isn't smiling.

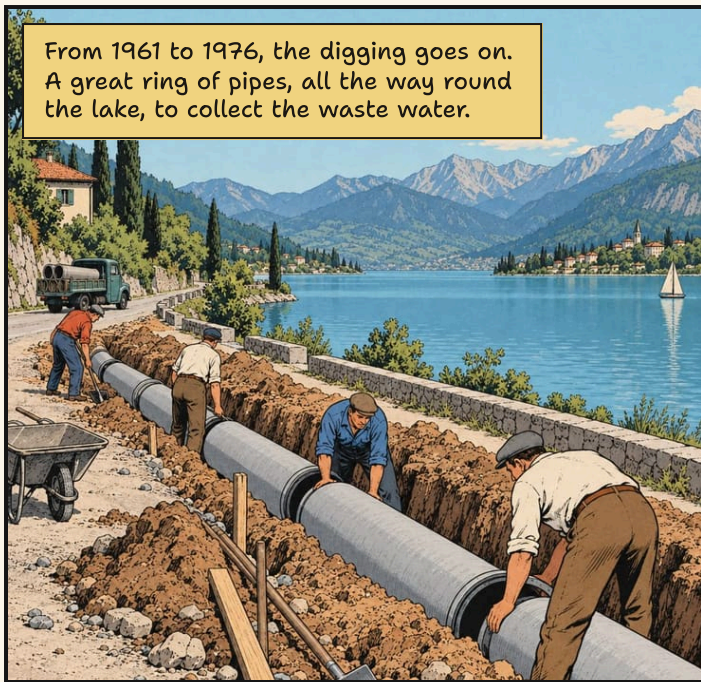


Dr Servettaz, Professor Hubault, Charles Bosson, mayor of Annecy: people who love the lake, around one table.

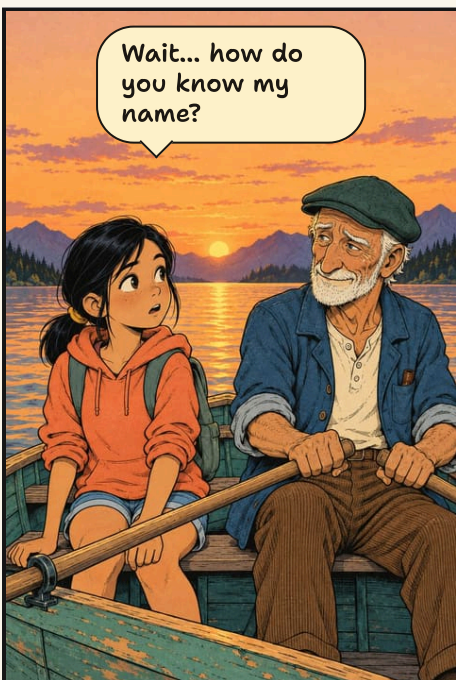


On 15 July 1957, eight towns and villages join forces to protect the lake.





THE SKETCH



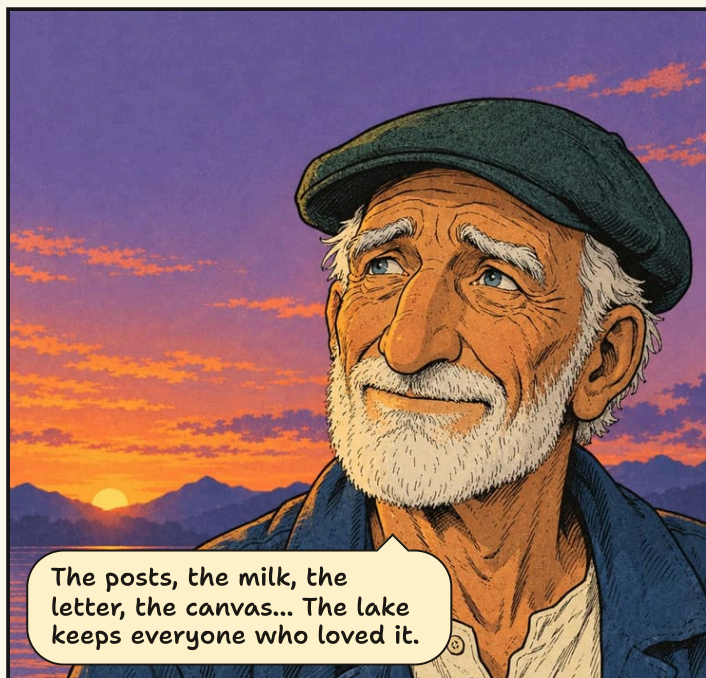
We don't talk. The water taps softly against the hull. Some silences feel like home.



You know, Ines...



The posts, the milk, the letter, the canvas... The lake keeps everyone who loved it.

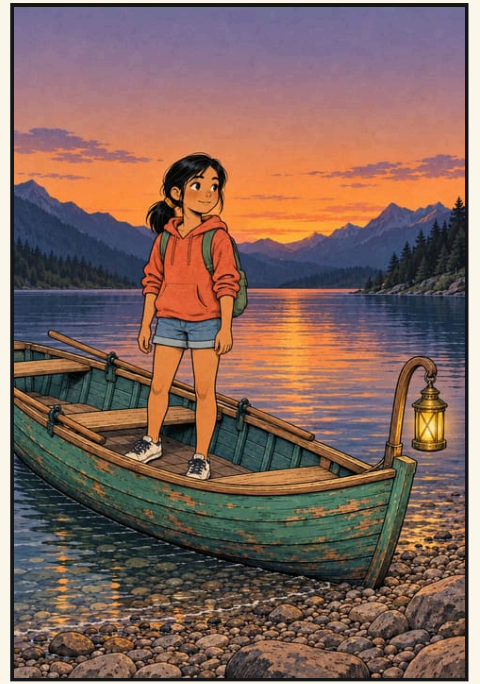
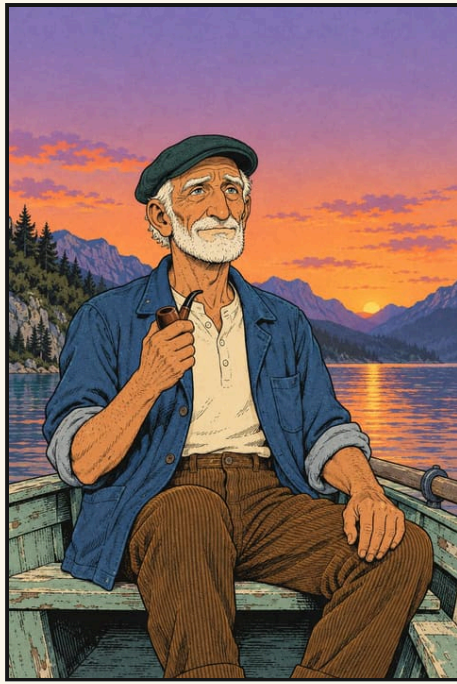
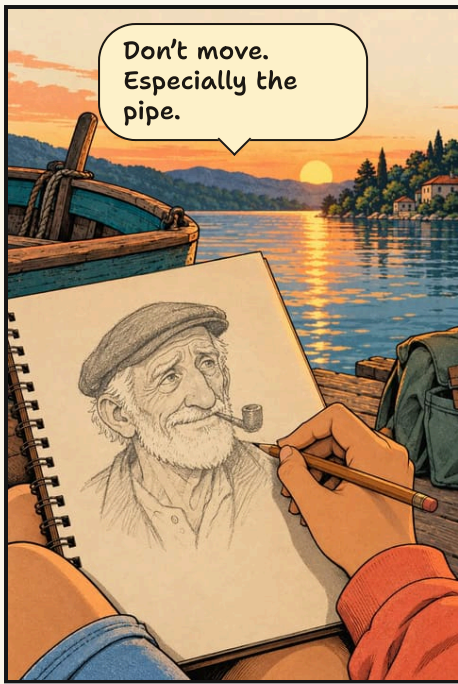


And you? Since when?



Too long. Draw me, quick.





The boat is empty. In my sketchbook, there's his face, and the pipe he never lit. Mum's coming. I think I'll ask her to stay a while. To look at the lake with me.



What is true in this story

Ines and the ferryman are made up, and no boat travels through time. The rest is true:

The stilt villages

Since 2011, three sites on Lake Annecy have been on the UNESCO World Heritage list, with the other “prehistoric pile dwellings around the Alps”. At Le Crêt de Châtillon, in Sévrier, a Late Bronze Age village stood on an island behind a palisade. Bronze knives and bracelets, grinding stones and a dugout canoe carved from a single oak trunk were found there; the canoe is still underwater. The sites are protected: no anchoring above them.

Reblochon

The cheese makers’ association traces its birth to the 13th century, in the mountain pastures of the Thônes valleys. Its name is said to come from the local word “re-blocher”, to milk a second time. The story goes that farmers held back some milk on the day the landowner took his due, the “ociège”, then milked again for a creamier milk. Today, farm reblochon is still made by hand, twice a day, right after milking, from the raw milk of Abondance, Montbéliarde or Tarine cows.

Rousseau in Annecy

In Book II of his Confessions, Jean-Jacques Rousseau tells how he met Madame de Warens in Annecy on Palm Sunday 1728, “in the middle of [his] sixteenth year”: he was fifteen. He hands her a letter in a passage between a stream and a wall leading to the Cordeliers church. In 1928, Annecy unveiled the Balustre d’or fountain on rue Jean-Jacques-Rousseau.

Cézanne by the lake

In the summer of 1896, Paul Cézanne stayed in Talloires and painted “Lac d’Annecy”, with the Château de Duingt on the far shore. The painting is in the Courtauld Gallery in London.

The lake saved

In the 1950s, waste water from the lakeside towns threatened the lake. Alerted by scientists, among them Professor Hubault and Dr Servettaz, and with Annecy’s mayor Charles Bosson, eight towns created what would become SILA on 15 July 1957. From 1961 to 1976, sewers were built all the way round the lake. Scientific monitoring began in 1966.

Sources

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