

The Smile

BY MARIN



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A STORY ABOUT AN INUIT GIRL, HER PARENTS, HER DOG, AND HER NECKLACE

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On top of the endless polar darkness,
there was bad weather in Kingaq for months.
The wind only went to rest from time to time,
bringing a nasty blizzard
that buried everything under deep snow.



Only the top of Ahnah's igloo
was visible in the mountain of white flakes.
The Arctic birds stopped flying.
The land animals disappeared.
The pond ice grew so thick
that no one could break it in order to fish.
The howling wind even destroyed
the inunnguaq on the hill.



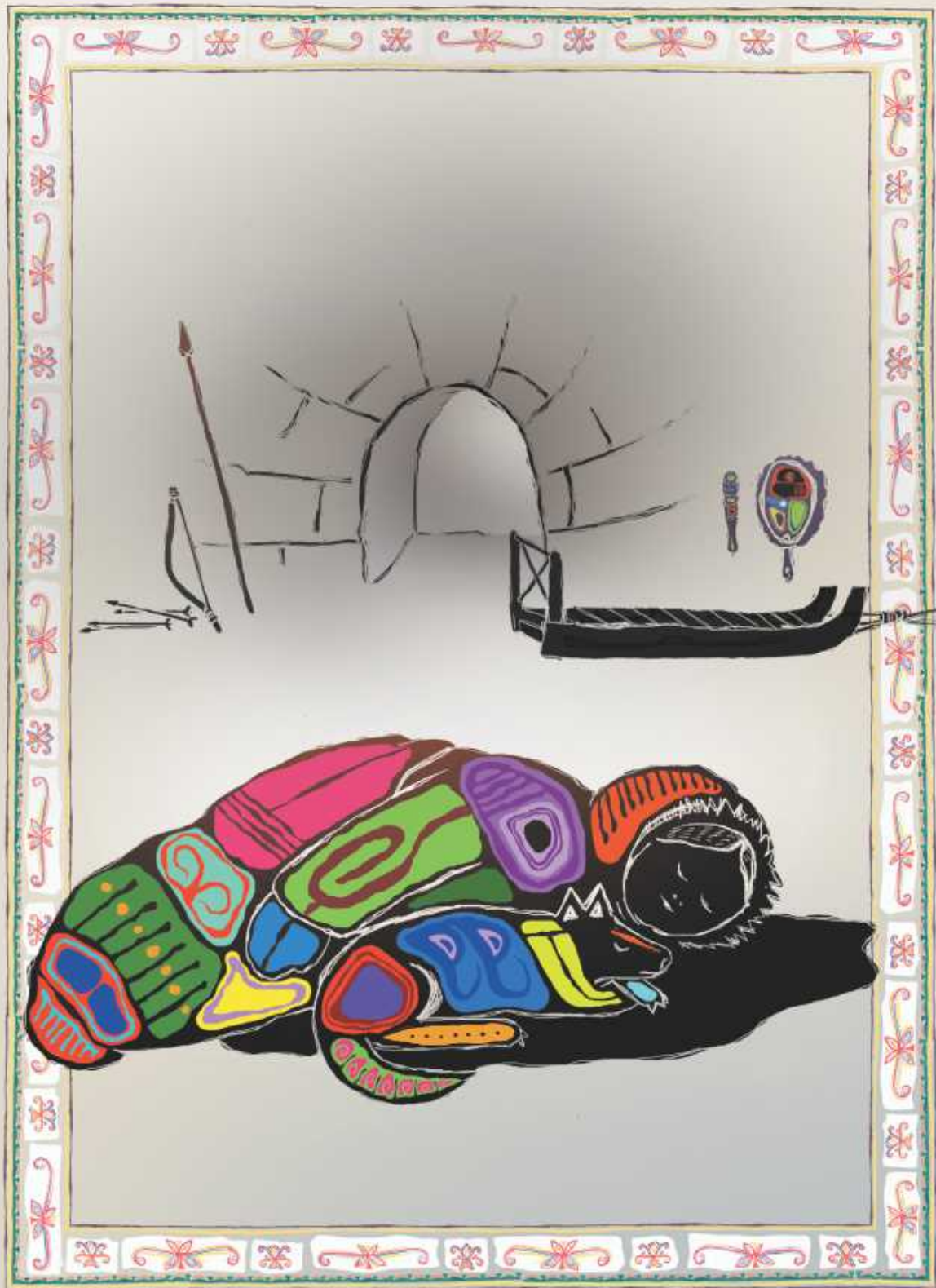
All dogs except
Ahnah's favourite husky, Akiak, died,
so the puppy was allowed
to live in the igloo.



All too soon,
Ahnah's mother was dividing
the very last piece of fish between
her child and the puppy.
There was no more food.



Finally, the wind hid away for a while,
so Ahnah's parents put on their snowshoes
and went to forage in a faraway place
where dwarf willow clumps
slumbered beneath the snow.
They told Ahnah they would be back soon.



The first time she went to sleep after her parents left,
Ahnah had a dream about the inunnguaq.

*The sky was cloudless and quiet.
The full moon shone through a blueish veil.
Ahnah and Akiak melted the snow on the hill with their breath.
They blew the heavy boulders on top of each other
and rebuilt the inunnguaq.
The happy human-shaped sculpture
smiled as wide as a sleigh.*



When she awoke,
Ahnah shared her dream with Akiak.
It was an idea worth following.
They started digging a tunnel
toward the top of the hill.
Ahnah and Akiak shoveled the snow with kayak paddles.
They dug with wooden utensils.
They scooped with bone tools.
They clawed with bare hands and paws.
The dog and the girl worked tirelessly
despite their hunger and thirst.



Many, many hours later,
they reached the top of the hill.
Ahnah and Akiak dug out the heavy boulders
and rebuilt the cairn.
Ahnah put her favourite necklace
on the inunnguaq's neck.



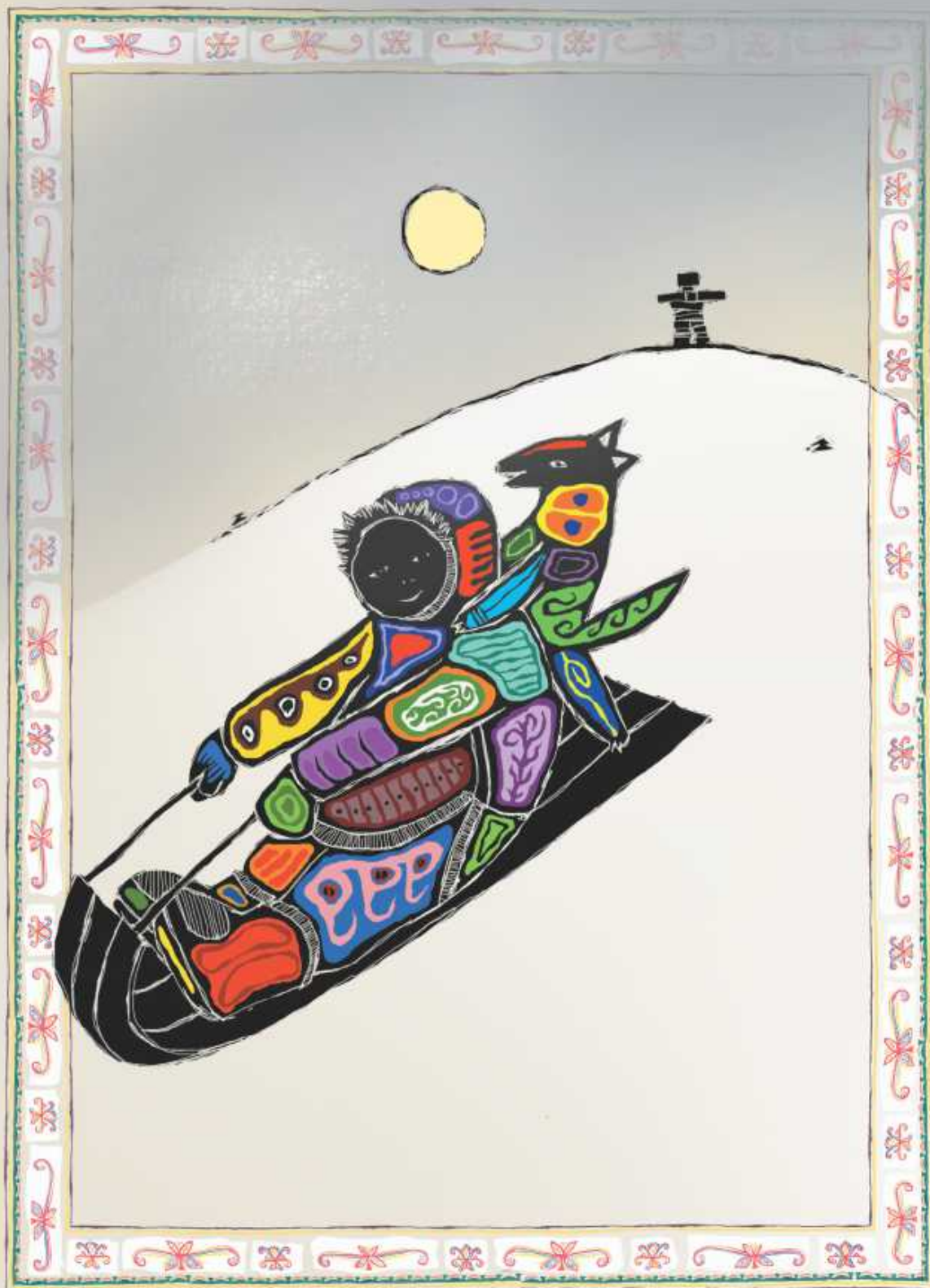


The girl and the dog flattened the snow on the hill
and made the landmark visible from miles away.

They stopped to admire
their work for just a moment.

Then they went back to the snow house.
Both of them were tired and fell asleep as soon
as they closed their eyes.





While they slept, the inunnguaq flew
through the darkness to the igloo.
It silently filled the family sleigh
with meat and fish,
then returned to stand as a landmark
at the top of the hill, its smile wide.





Ahnah awoke to the sound
of her parents returning.
They had not gathered any food,
but they were delighted to be back home
and to see the family sleigh
full of edibles.

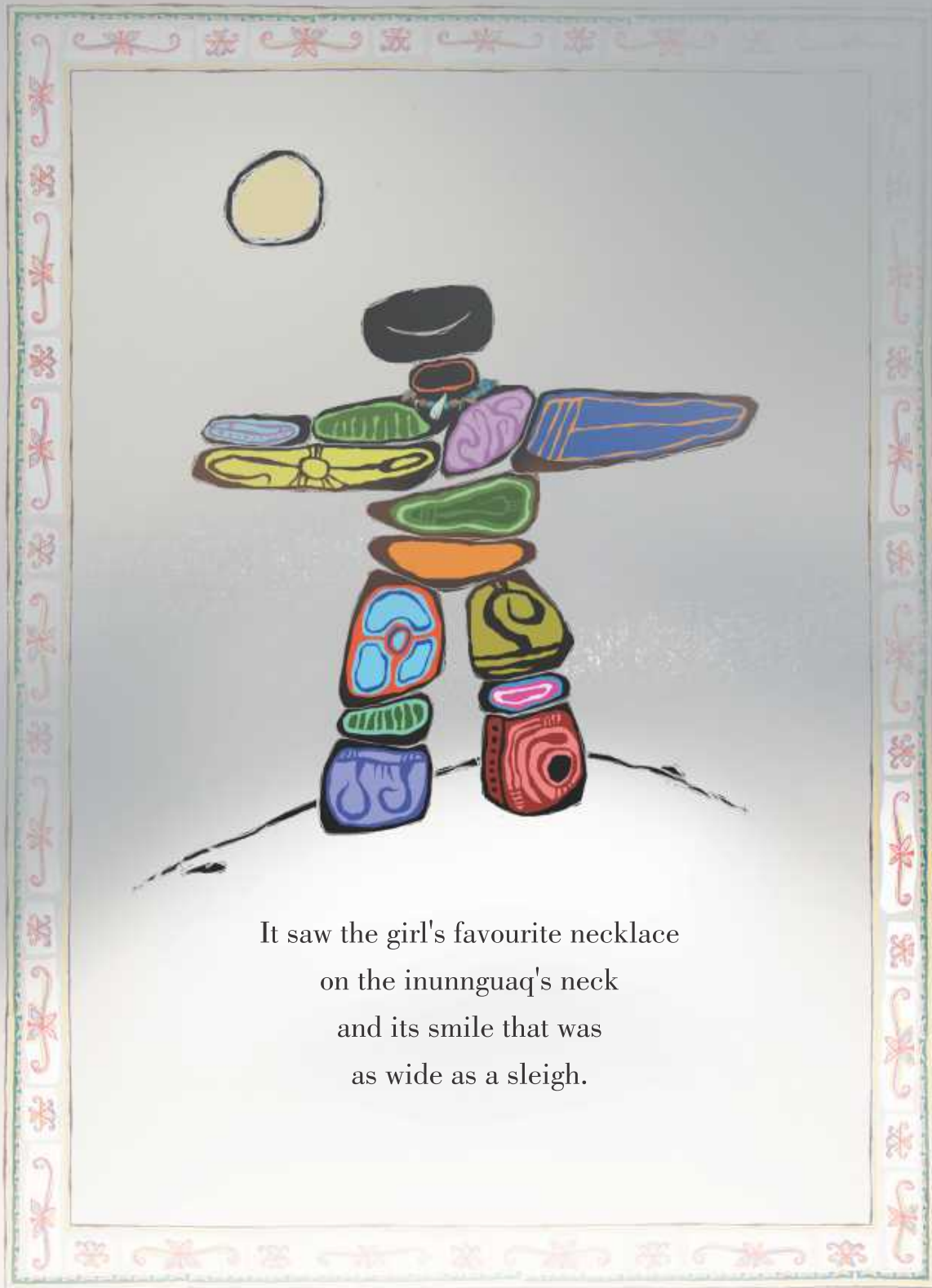


Ahnah's mother believed the animal spirits
had delivered the food.
Her father thought the little dog
had brought the meat.
The girl was sure her parents
had come back with the meals.
Even Akiak was puzzled.

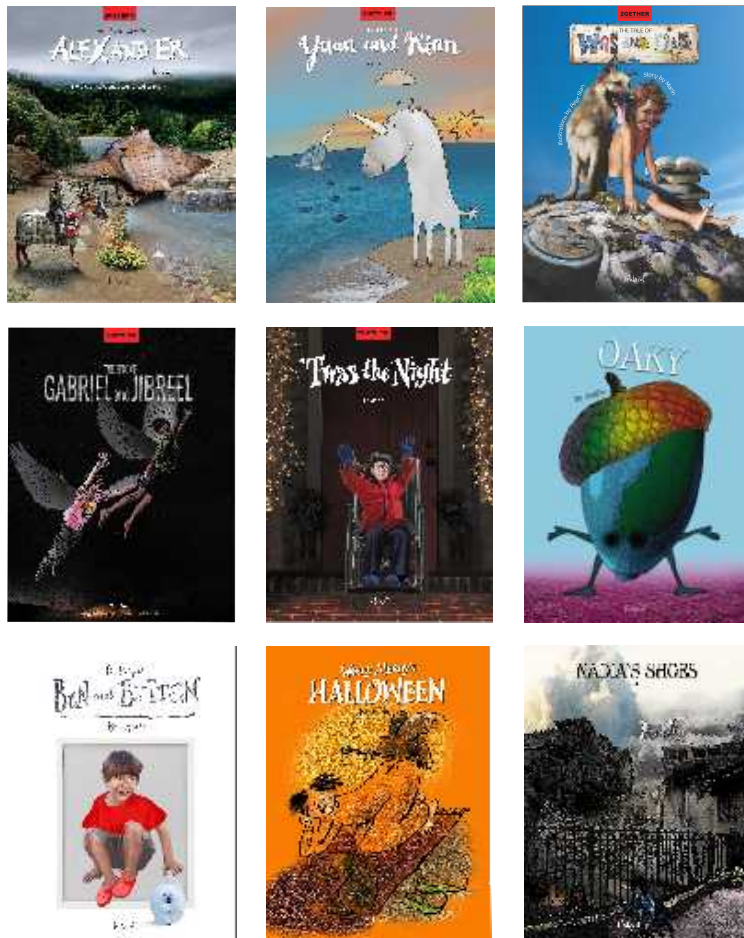




Only the moon knew the truth.
It had witnessed the flight of the rocky cairn.
It watched the landmark waving its hands to guide
Ahnah's parents home.



It saw the girl's favourite necklace
on the inunnguaq's neck
and its smile that was
as wide as a sleigh.



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Marin Darmonkow
lives with his family in Canada.
THE SMILE is his tenth published book.
The author is all ears. Tree leaves
whisper stories all the time and he will share
some of them with you in his future publications.



In a land where there is six months night
and six months day,
where the wind rarely rests, and food is scarce,
a girl and her family struggle to survive.
When mother and father leave to find food,
Ahnah and her favourite dog, Akiak,
must endure on their own,
but by following a dream, they may bring
a smile to more than one face.

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Thank you in advance,
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