

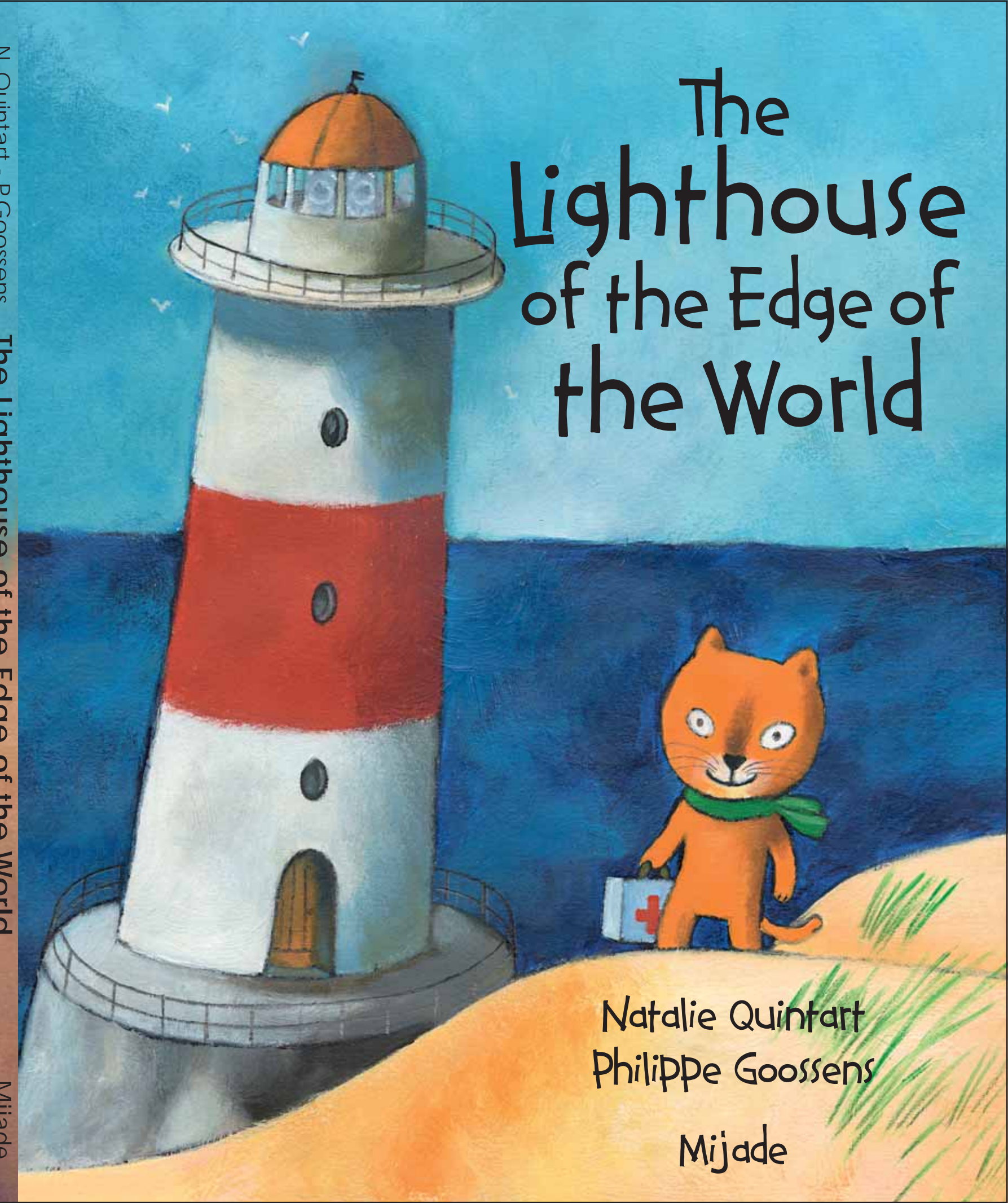
N. Quintart - P. Goossens

The Lighthouse of the Edge of the World

Mijade

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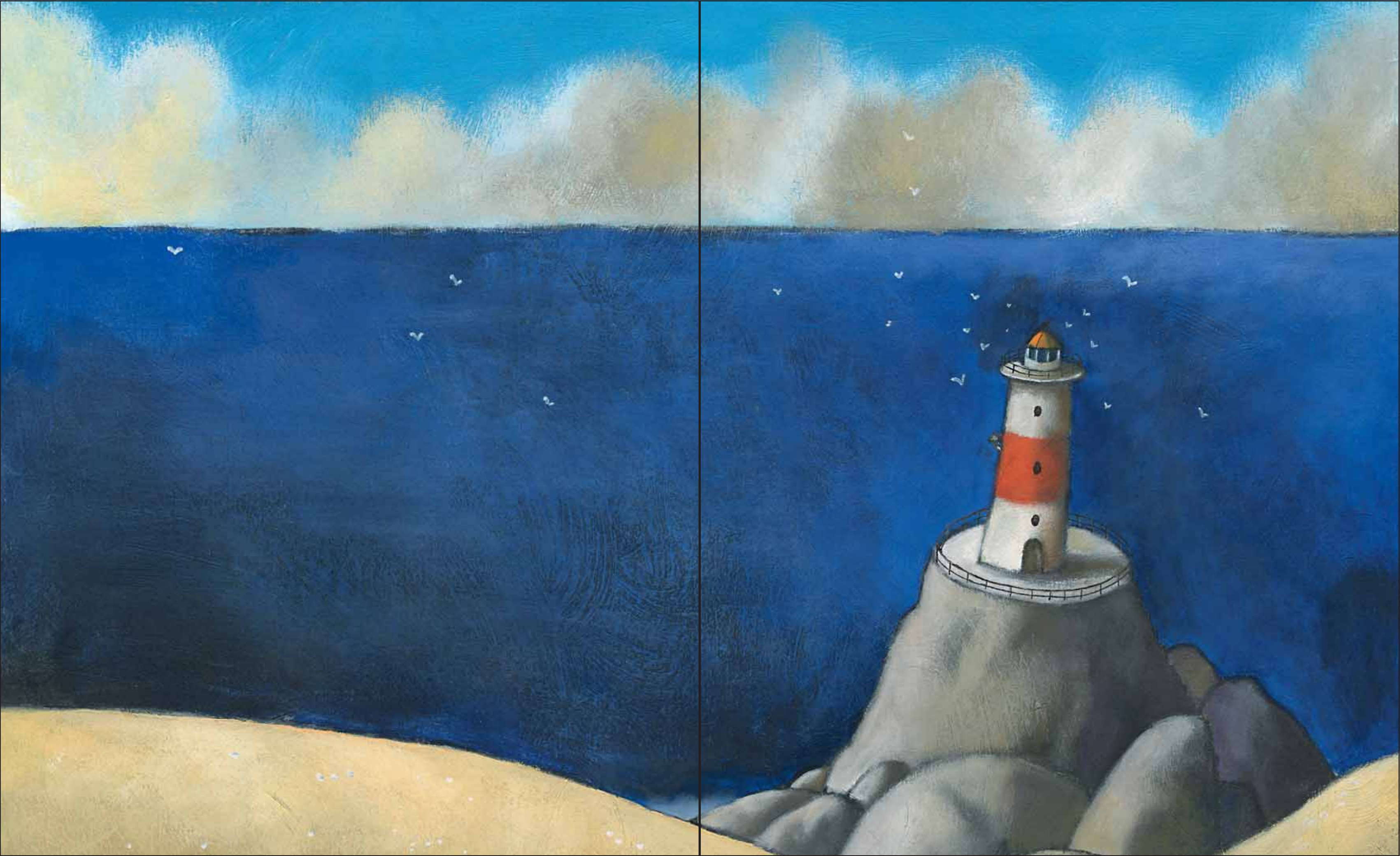


# The Lighthouse of the Edge of the World

Natalie Quintart  
Philippe Goossens

Mijade







*To Fabienne*  
N. Q.

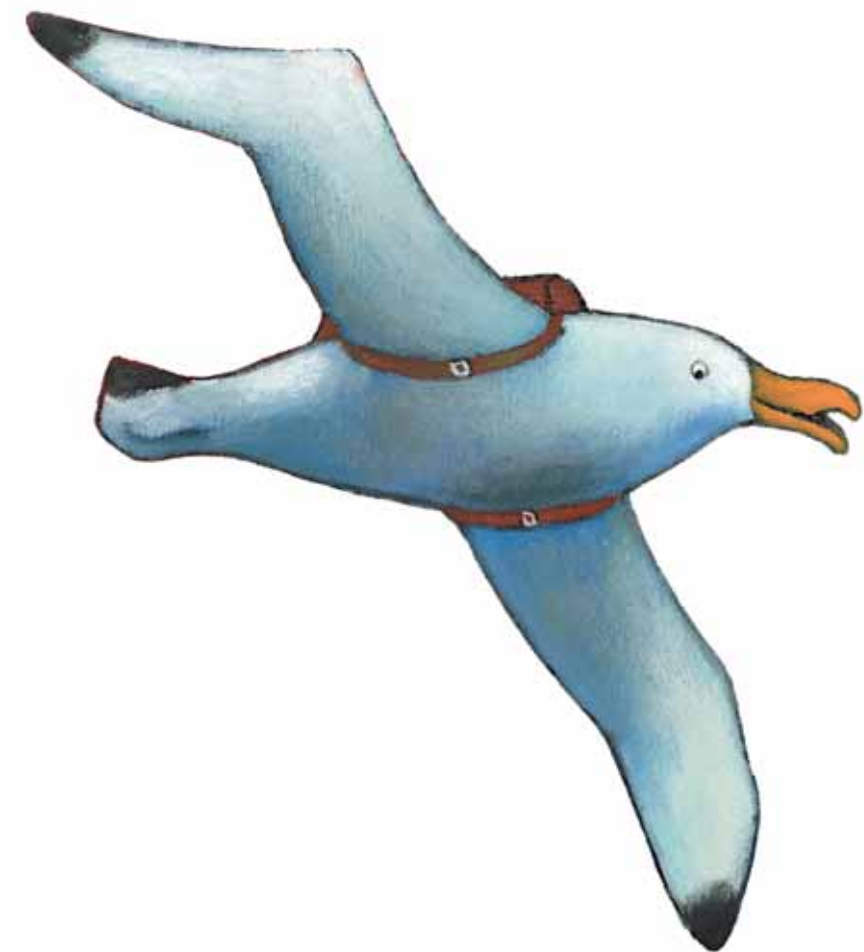
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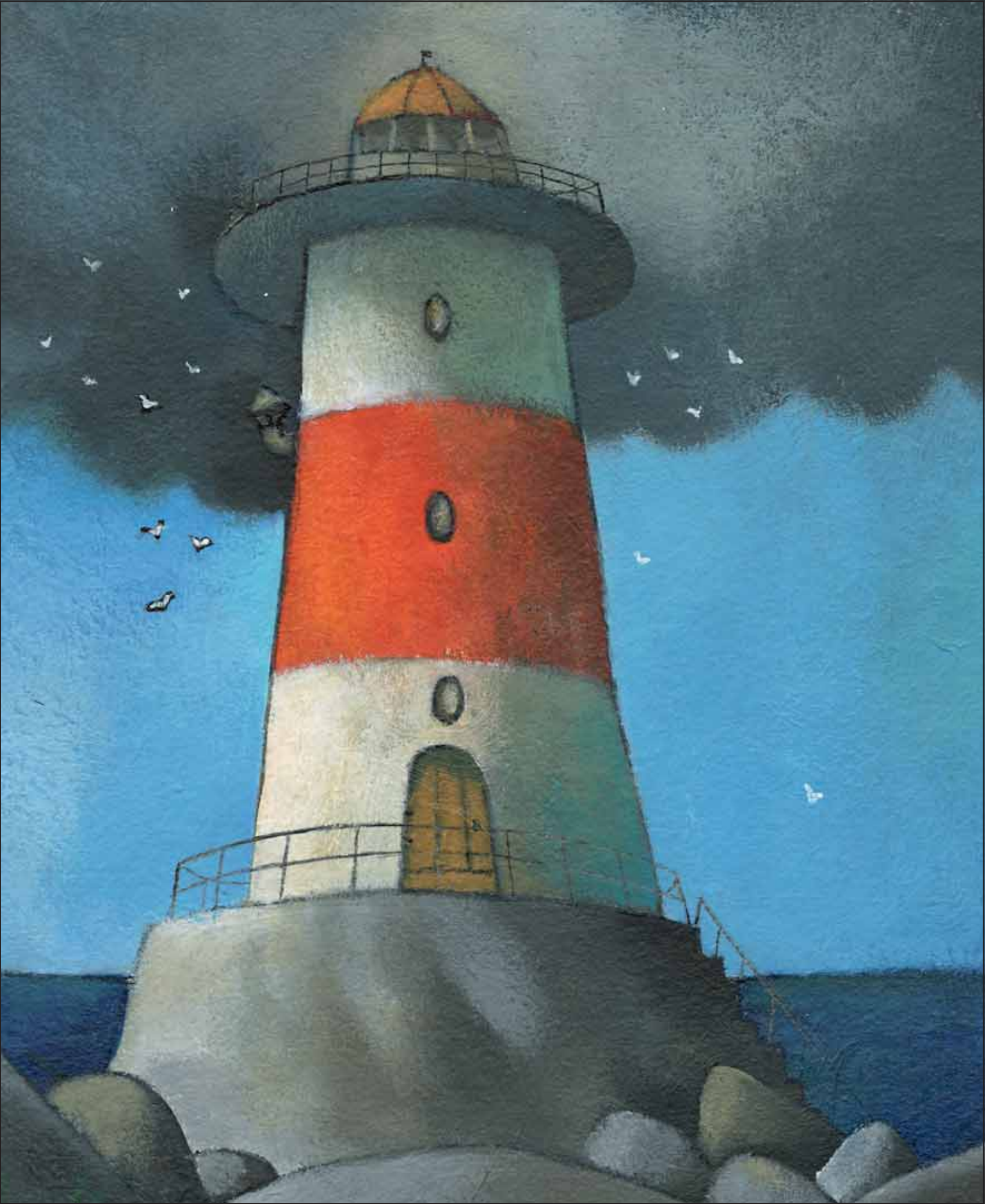
# The Lighthouse of the Edge of the World



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In my country, there is an abandoned old lighthouse perched upon a cliff. In stormy days, the waves are so strong that they make it rock like a boat. I relit its fires, and soon after, it became the refuge of all the animals that escape the cruelty of mankind. Here, they regain their strength before having to continue their travel. This is how I became the guardian of the Lighthouse of the Edge of the World.







At the time, there were not so many animals at the lighthouse. There was Oscar the little elephant, Petrarca the bear, and Vigil the penguin. There are animals that pass by! I take care of them as much as I can, and above all, I listen to their stories. It is always the same story. They were separated from their families when they were very young, and had to leave their country. I have the feeling that telling their stories helps heal their wounds. As soon as they feel better, they want news from their families. That is always a good sign. So, I encourage them to write letters.





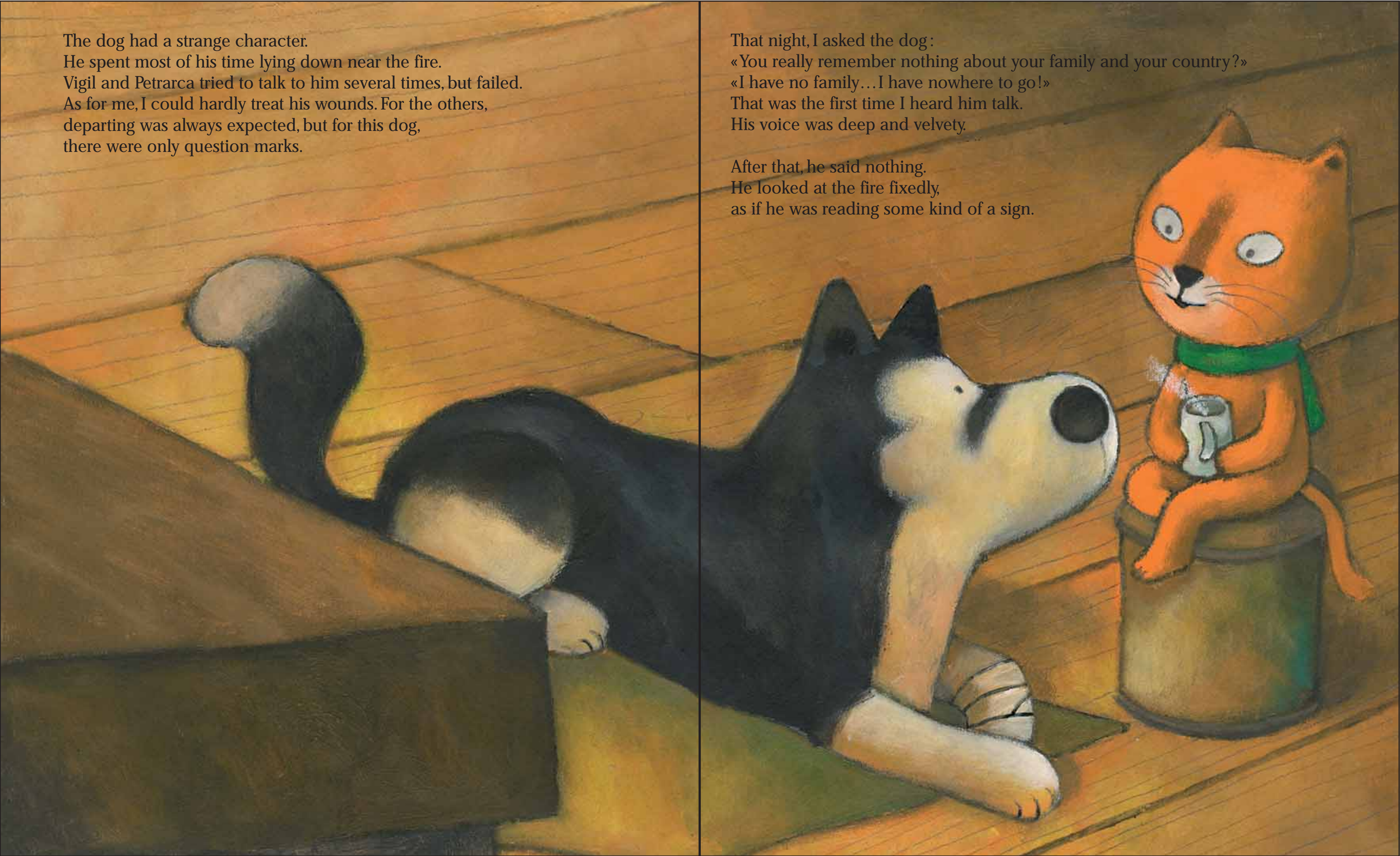
The story I will tell you today is about a dog.  
Why this one specifically?  
It might be because I have been thinking about it a lot these days.  
He arrived to the lighthouse in February on a stormy day.  
He was in a pitiful state. He limped of his left foot.



The dog had a strange character.  
He spent most of his time lying down near the fire.  
Vigil and Petrarca tried to talk to him several times, but failed.  
As for me, I could hardly treat his wounds. For the others,  
departing was always expected, but for this dog,  
there were only question marks.

That night, I asked the dog :  
«You really remember nothing about your family and your country?»  
«I have no family...I have nowhere to go!»  
That was the first time I heard him talk.  
His voice was deep and velvety.

After that, he said nothing.  
He looked at the fire fixedly,  
as if he was reading some kind of a sign.







Every Friday, Sir John kwikly, the fastest seagull of the coast, brings to the residents of the lighthouse mail from all over the world. That day, there was a postcard from Greenland for Petrarca, a package from Norway for Vigil, and a letter from Africa for Oscar.

Oscar was so happy.  
He has been waiting for weeks for news from his family.  
This is what the letter said :

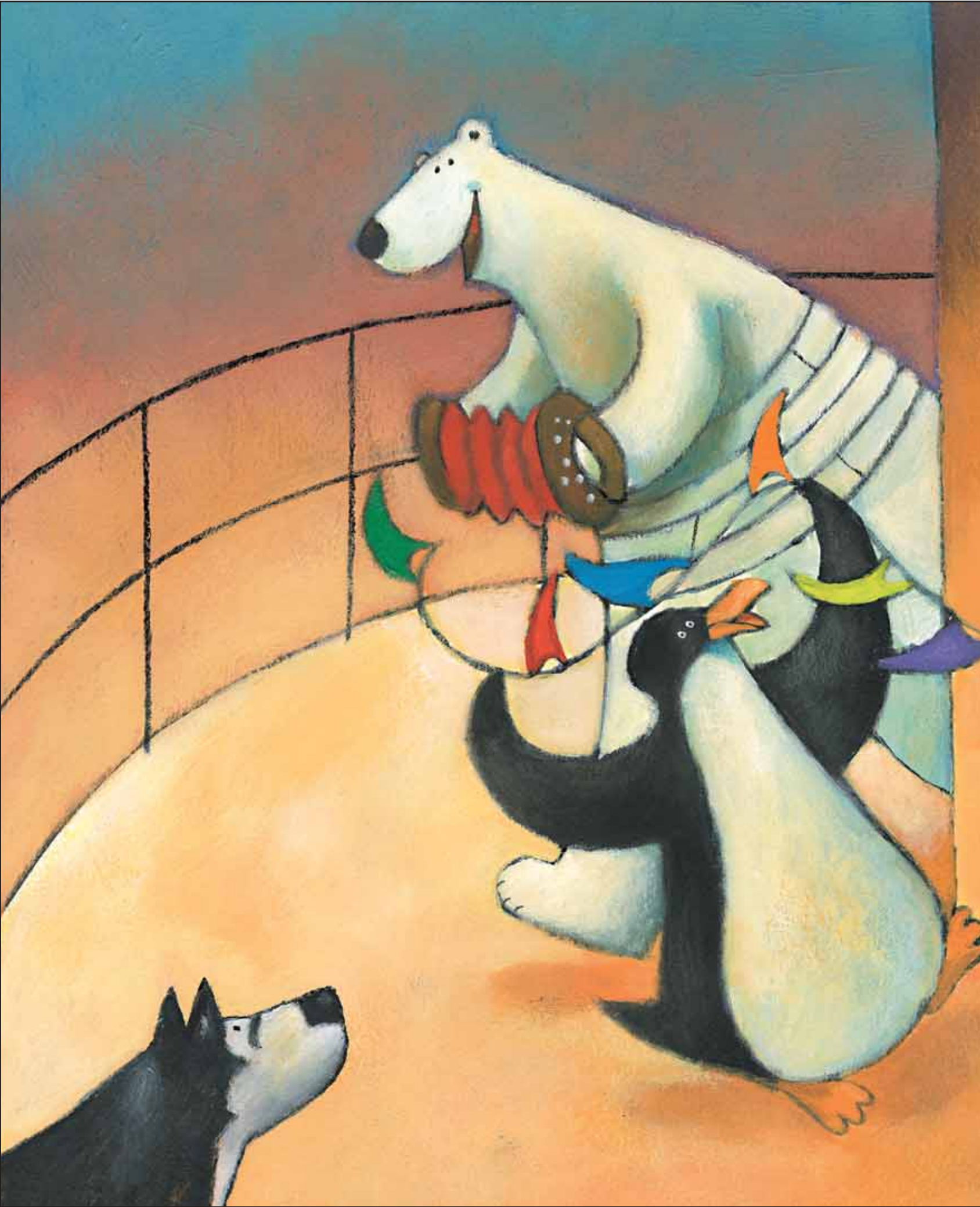
*My little Oscar,  
What a joy! You are alive!  
It was a terrible day  
when we heard they captured you!  
Come back home quickly, my little Oscar!*

*Daddy, Mummy, Aunt Louisa, Zaza, Phill*

*PS: In your letter there is a word we do not know:  
CAGE... Is it some sort of a tree?*



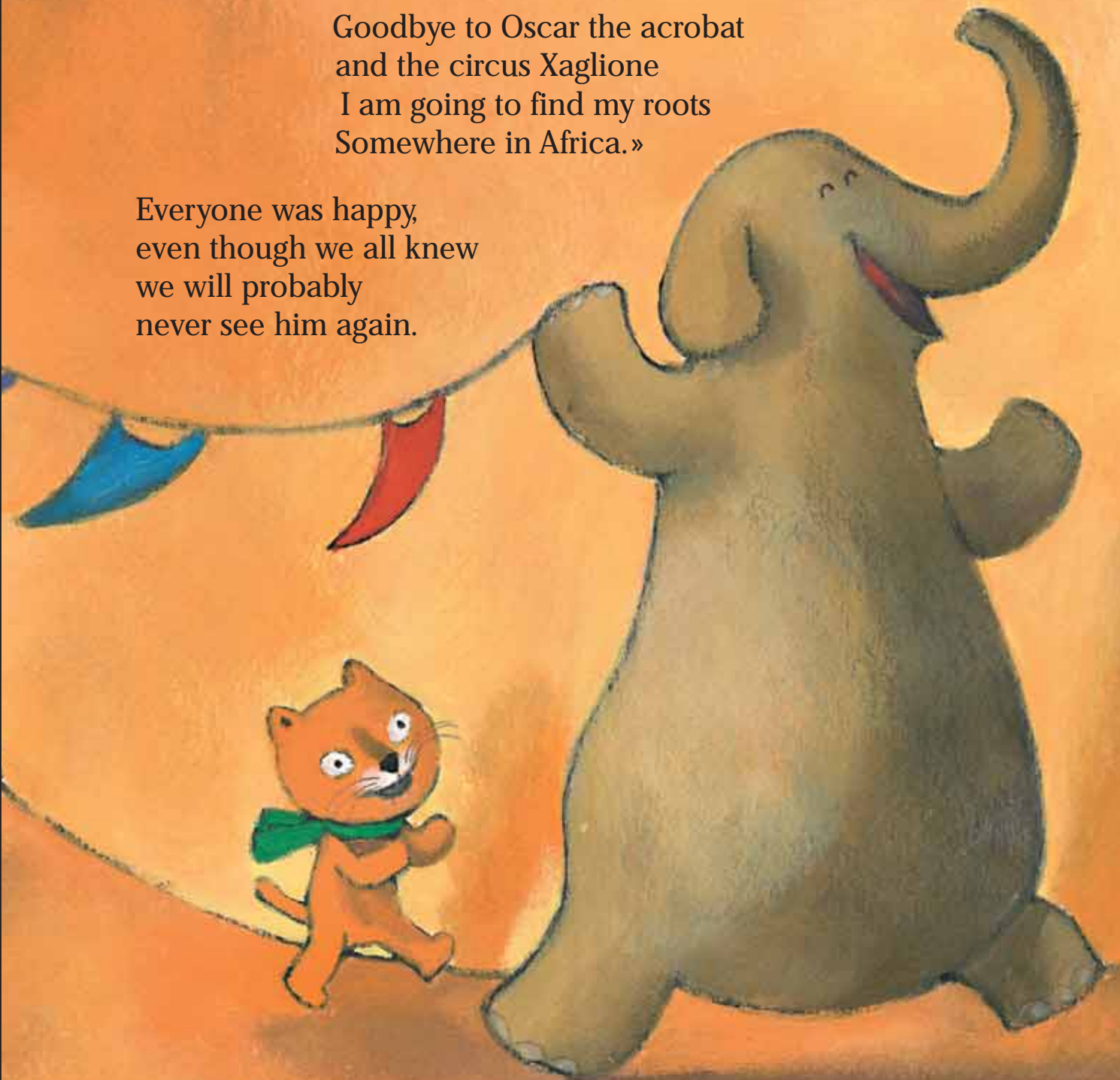




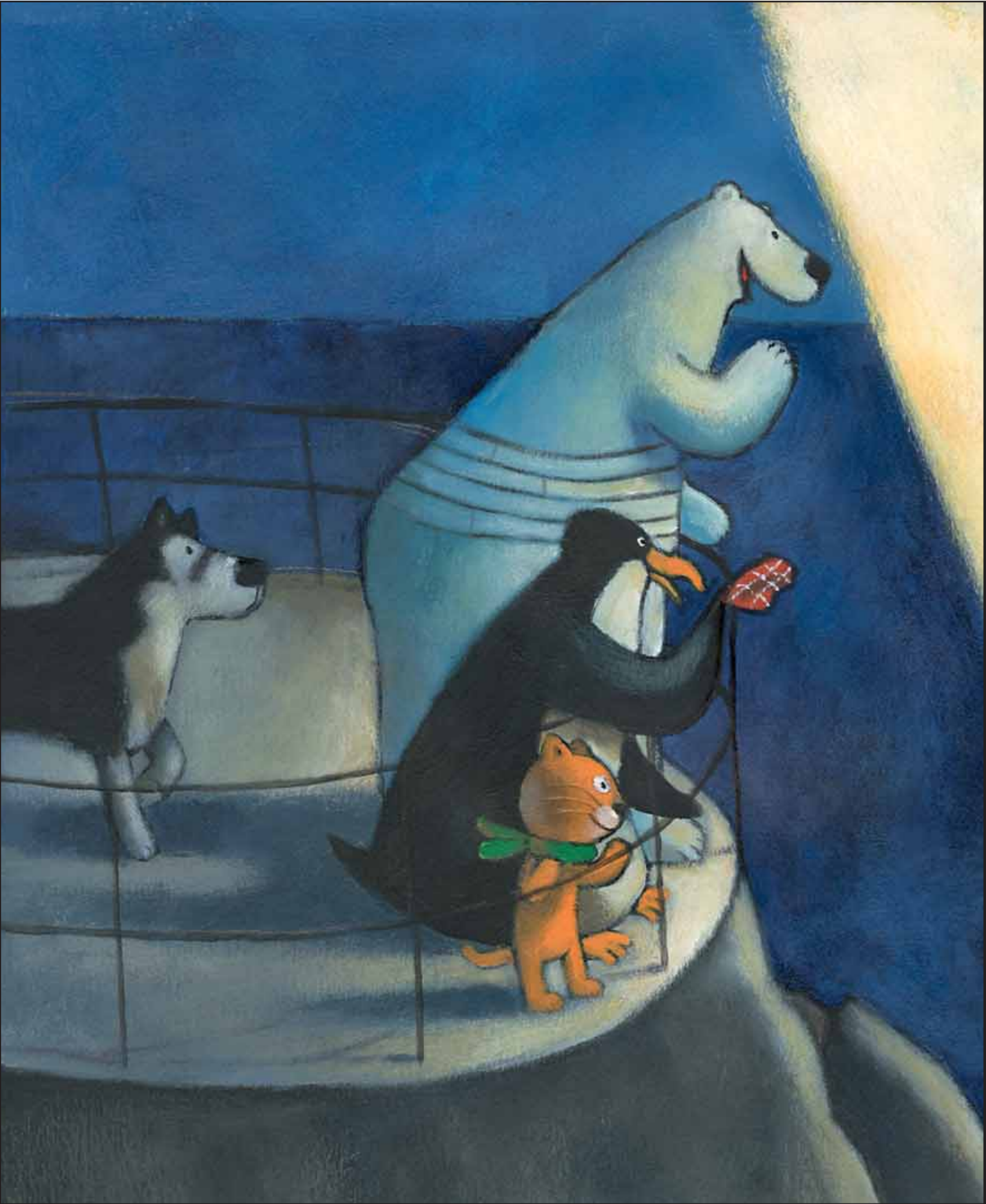
A few days later, we had a big goodbye party for Oscar.  
He was going back to Africa.  
The atmosphere at the lighthouse was fabulous:  
a mix of music, laughter, and stories...  
Oscar sang for his friends in the lighthouse for the last time!

«We are all born somewhere  
Somewhere in the world  
Like a tree, I have my roots  
Somewhere in Africa  
Goodbye to Oscar the acrobat  
and the circus Xaglione  
I am going to find my roots  
Somewhere in Africa.»

Everyone was happy,  
even though we all knew  
we will probably  
never see him again.

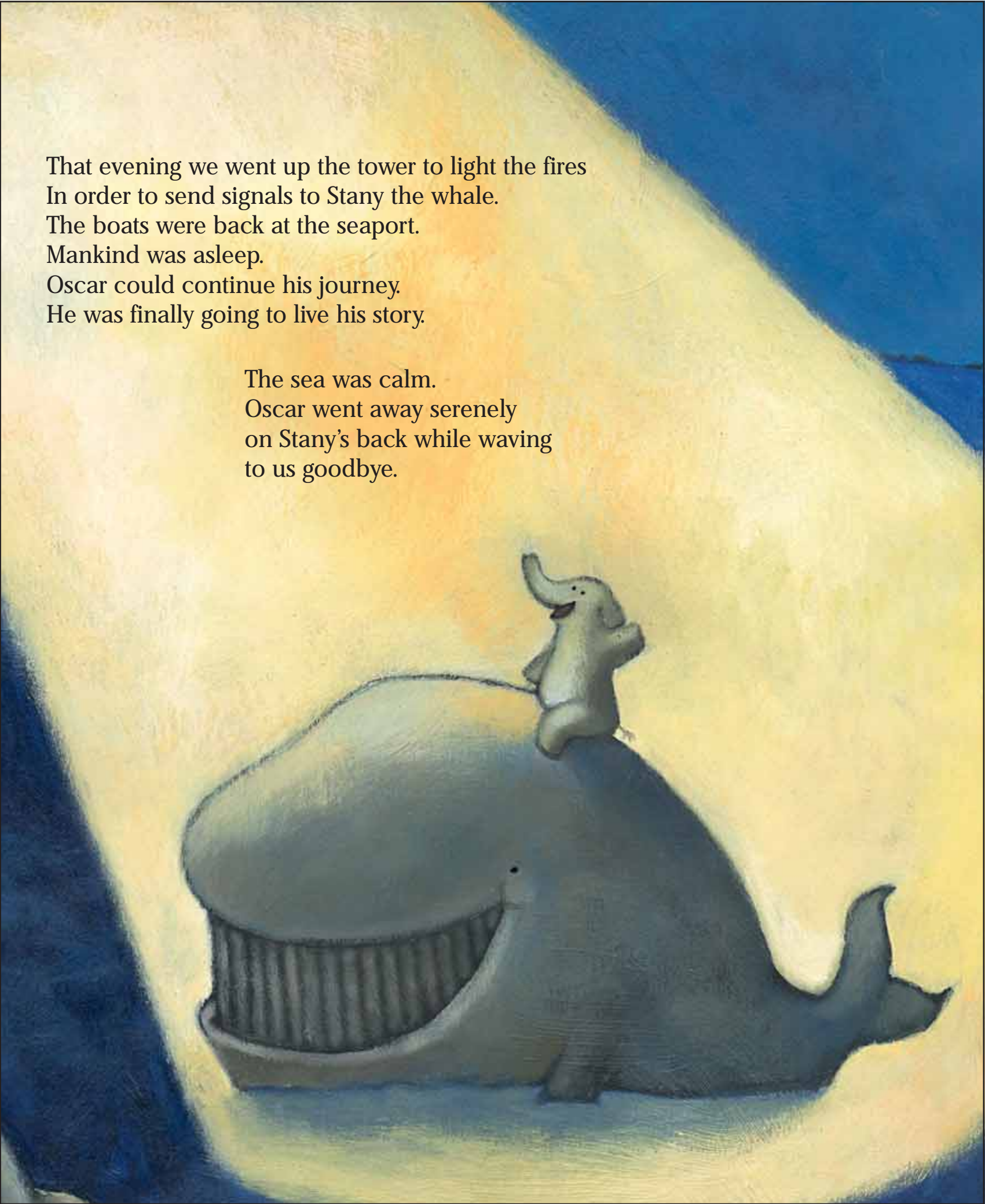






That evening we went up the tower to light the fires  
In order to send signals to Stany the whale.  
The boats were back at the seaport.  
Mankind was asleep.  
Oscar could continue his journey.  
He was finally going to live his story.

The sea was calm.  
Oscar went away serenely  
on Stany's back while waving  
to us goodbye.







That night, the dog woke us all up.  
He had climbed to the top of the tower,  
and started howling to the moon.

«Where is my family? Where is my country?  
Why can't I remember anything?»

We had to be very patient and calm  
to be able to get him to come down!  
We were very worried he would throw himself in the ocean.



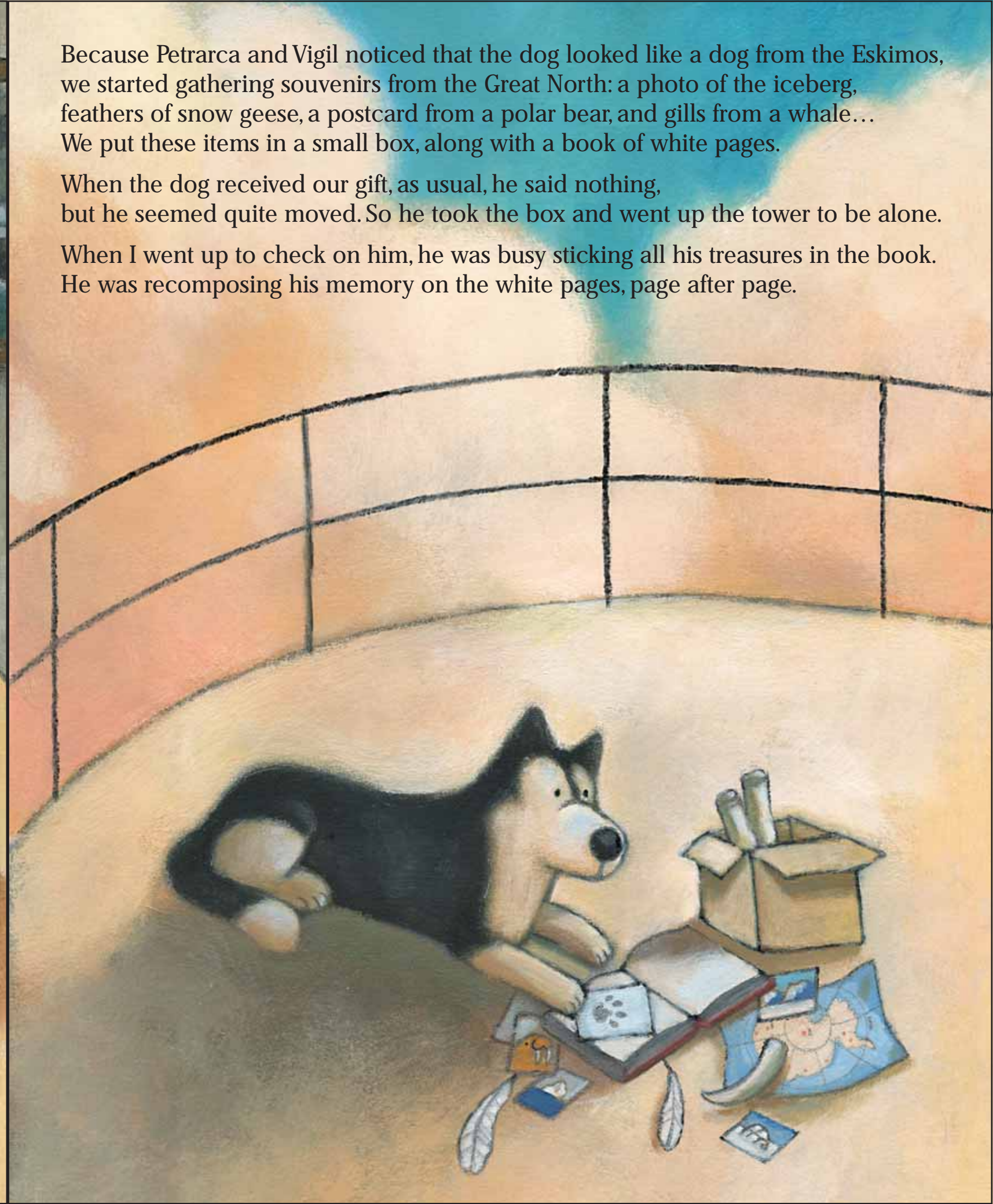


The dog needed his memory in order to be cured. That is why the next morning I decided to share my secret with Vigil and Petrarca. I showed them the chest where I preciously keep the memory of the lighthouse. We pulled out hundreds of letters, postcards, photos, and many other treasures that animals who passed by my lighthouse had sent me.

Because Petrarca and Vigil noticed that the dog looked like a dog from the Eskimos, we started gathering souvenirs from the Great North: a photo of the iceberg, feathers of snow geese, a postcard from a polar bear, and gills from a whale... We put these items in a small box, along with a book of white pages.

When the dog received our gift, as usual, he said nothing, but he seemed quite moved. So he took the box and went up the tower to be alone.

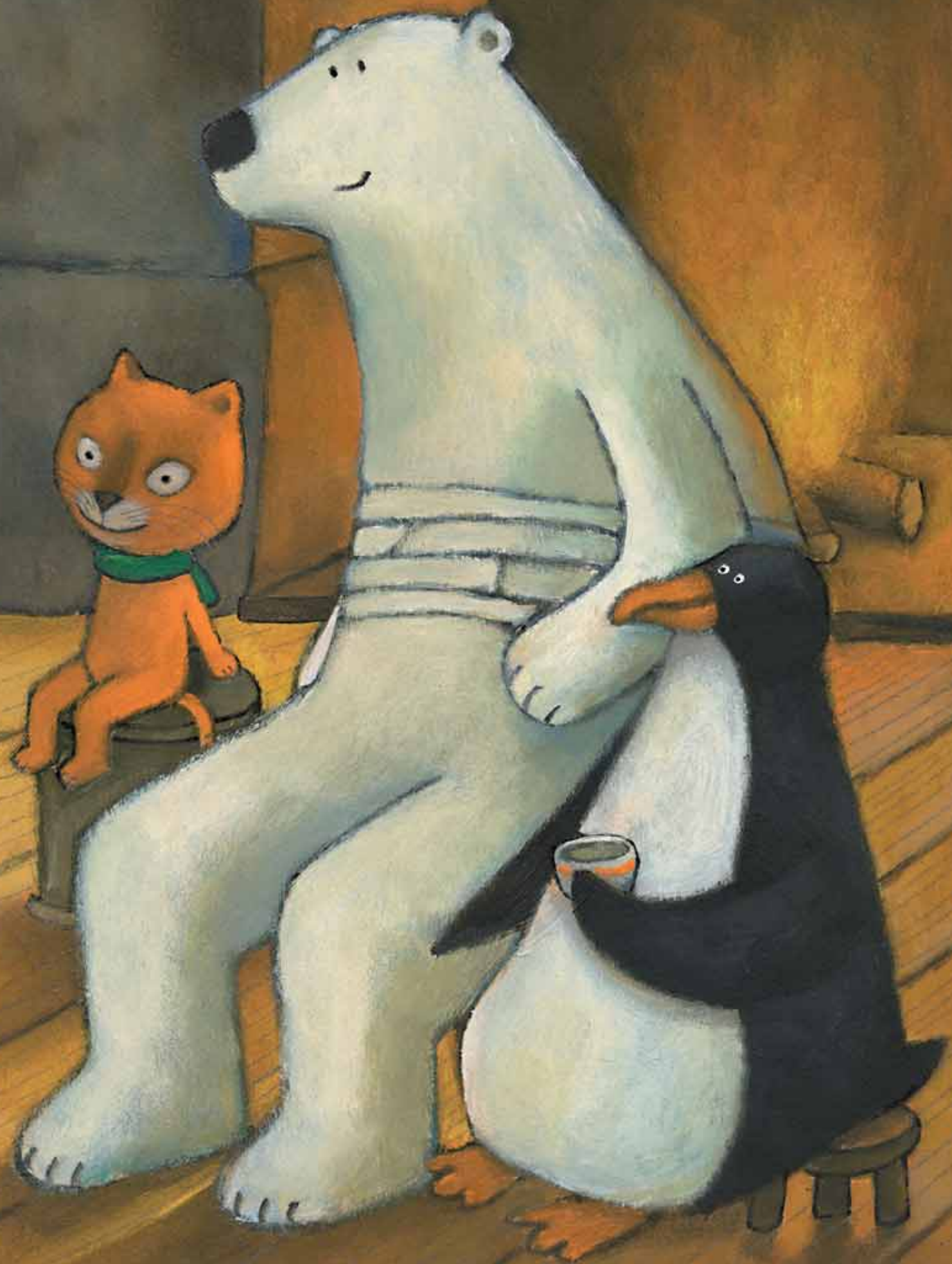
When I went up to check on him, he was busy sticking all his treasures in the book. He was recomposing his memory on the white pages, page after page.





That same evening, we listened to what the dog had to say.  
It seemed he could go on talking forever.  
«Now I understand why I could not bear that apartment.  
It suffocated me! Always alone! It is the pack that I missed!

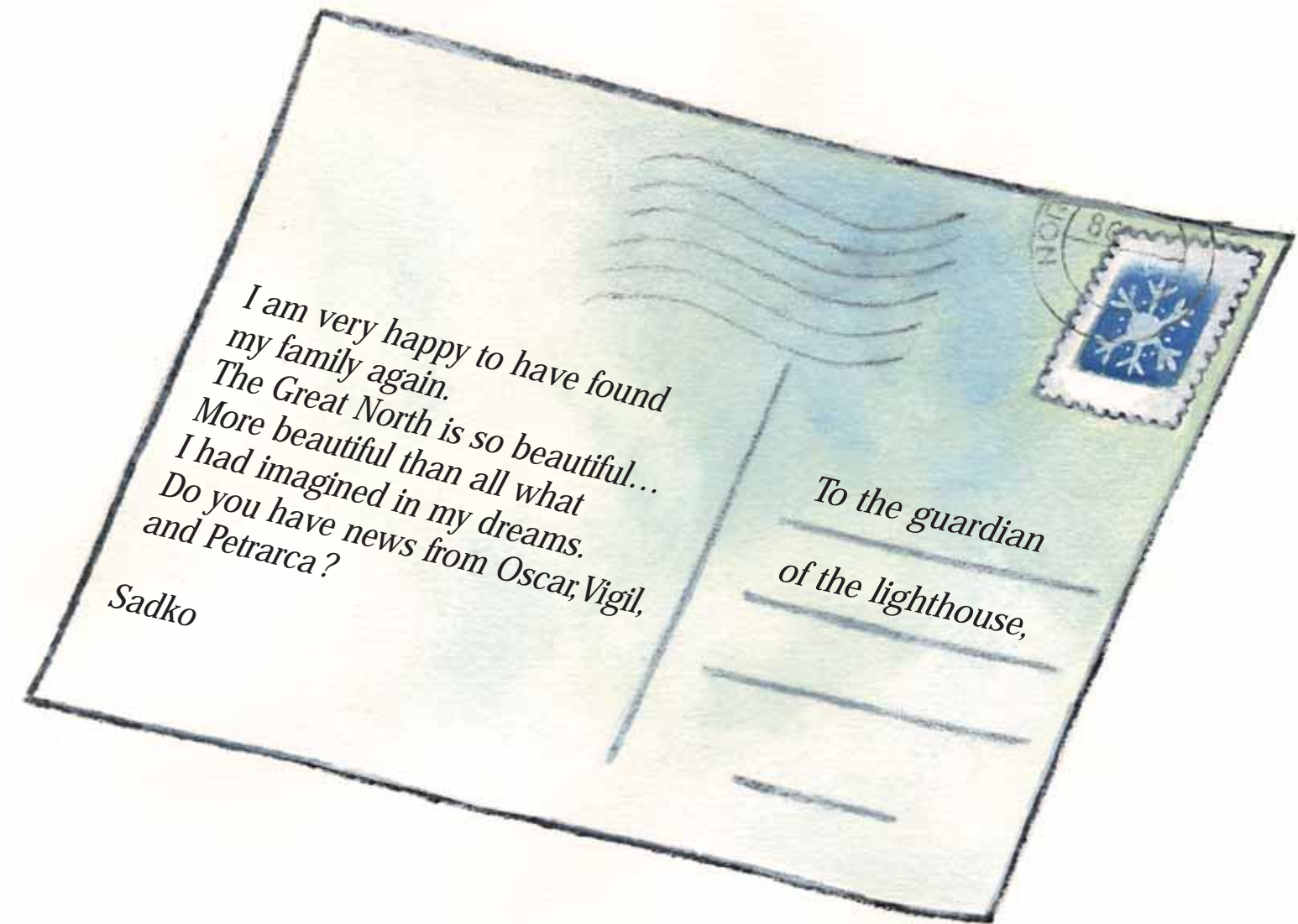
Last night I dreamt of my mother. She was standing up, ears on guard,  
and she was looking at me... now I remember. Her name is Miska.  
It means a star in Eskimo. My mother is fast like a shooting star...  
I want to see the ice field again! I want to run towards the endless horizon!»



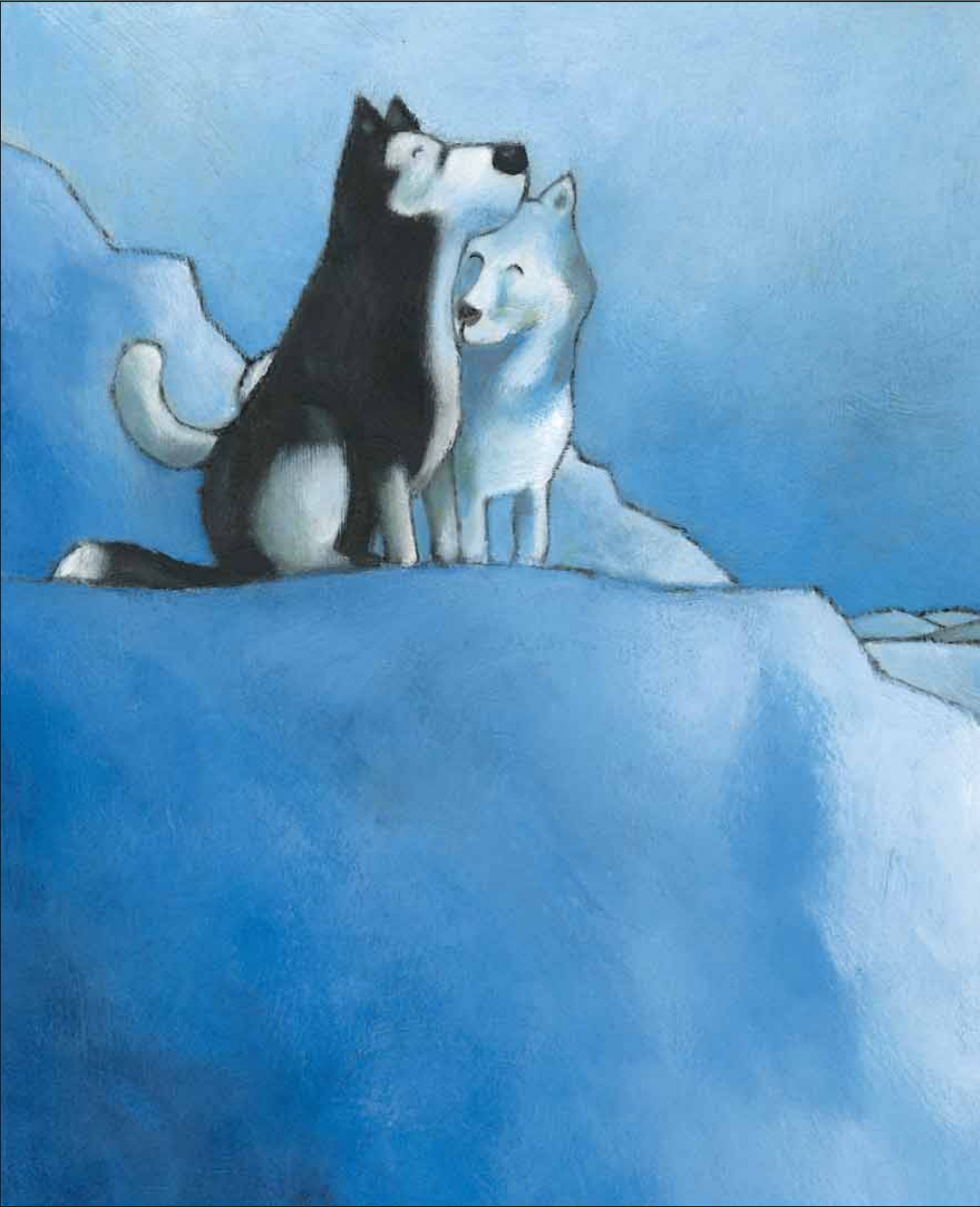




One week later, the dog was gone.  
I waited for the longest time to hear from him again.  
Until, one summer evening... the sea was calm, the sun had just gone down,  
Sir John Kwikly landed on the foot of the lighthouse. He had a postcard for me.







I was happy to know that he was called Sadko.

