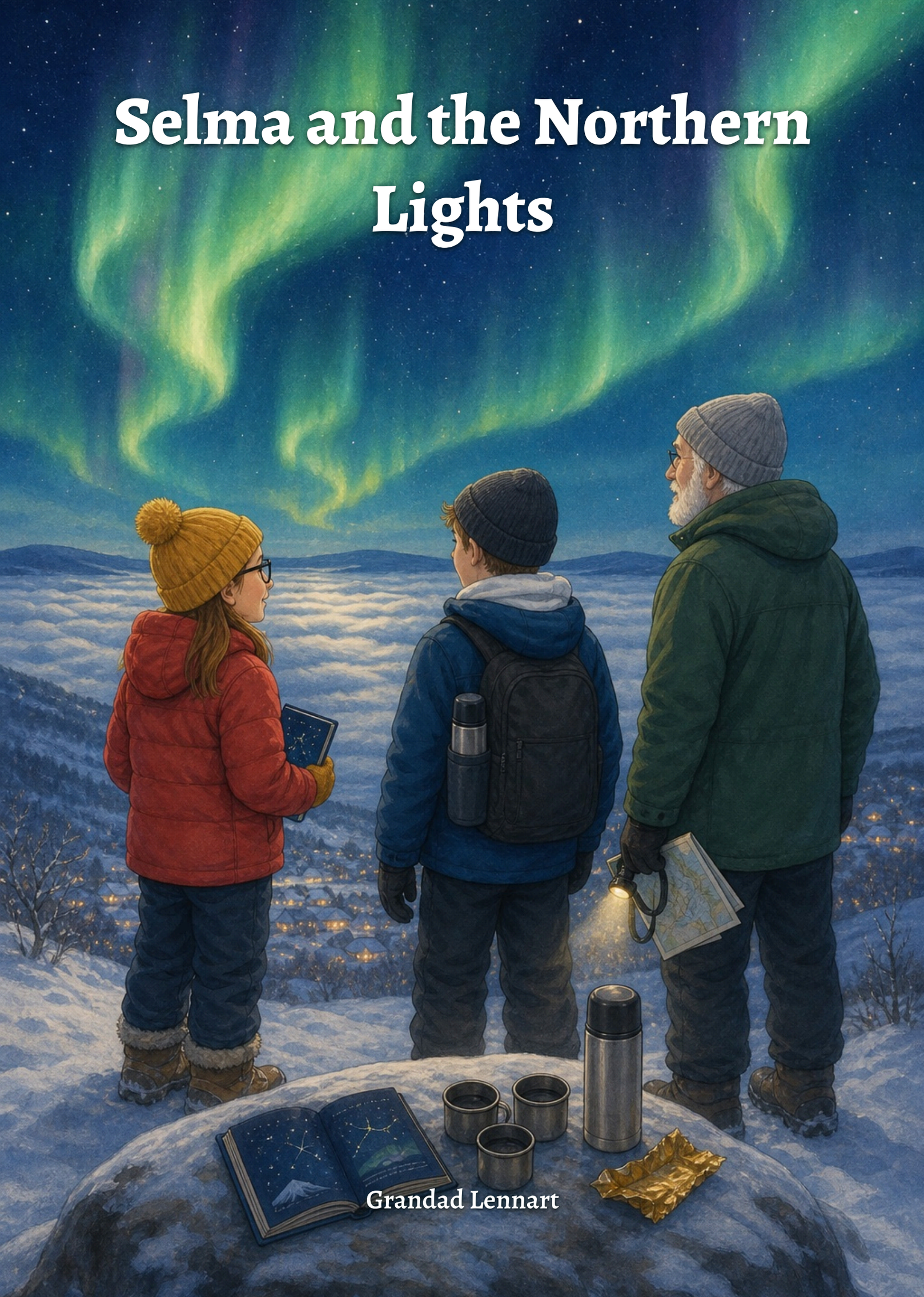
Selma and the Northern Lights



Grandad Lennart

This book belongs to

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Welcome to this sample book! It's made just like your own will be, from the photos and choices shown alongside, and shows what a story from Saga to you can look like. Flick through, read, and imagine your child as the hero of their very own tale.

Selma had read about the Northern Lights in nearly every book she could find. In one book, green ribbons danced across a black sky. In another, it said you had to wait, wait, wait. Now she stood on the platform with her star book in her hand, and the night train puffed white clouds beside her.

“What if they start dancing while we’re asleep?” said Selma.
“Then you’ll have to wake me,” said her older brother Oliver, tugging at his backpack. Grandad Lennart held up the tickets.
“First, we find our compartment.” Selma stepped onto the train. One more night, she thought. Soon it’ll be here.



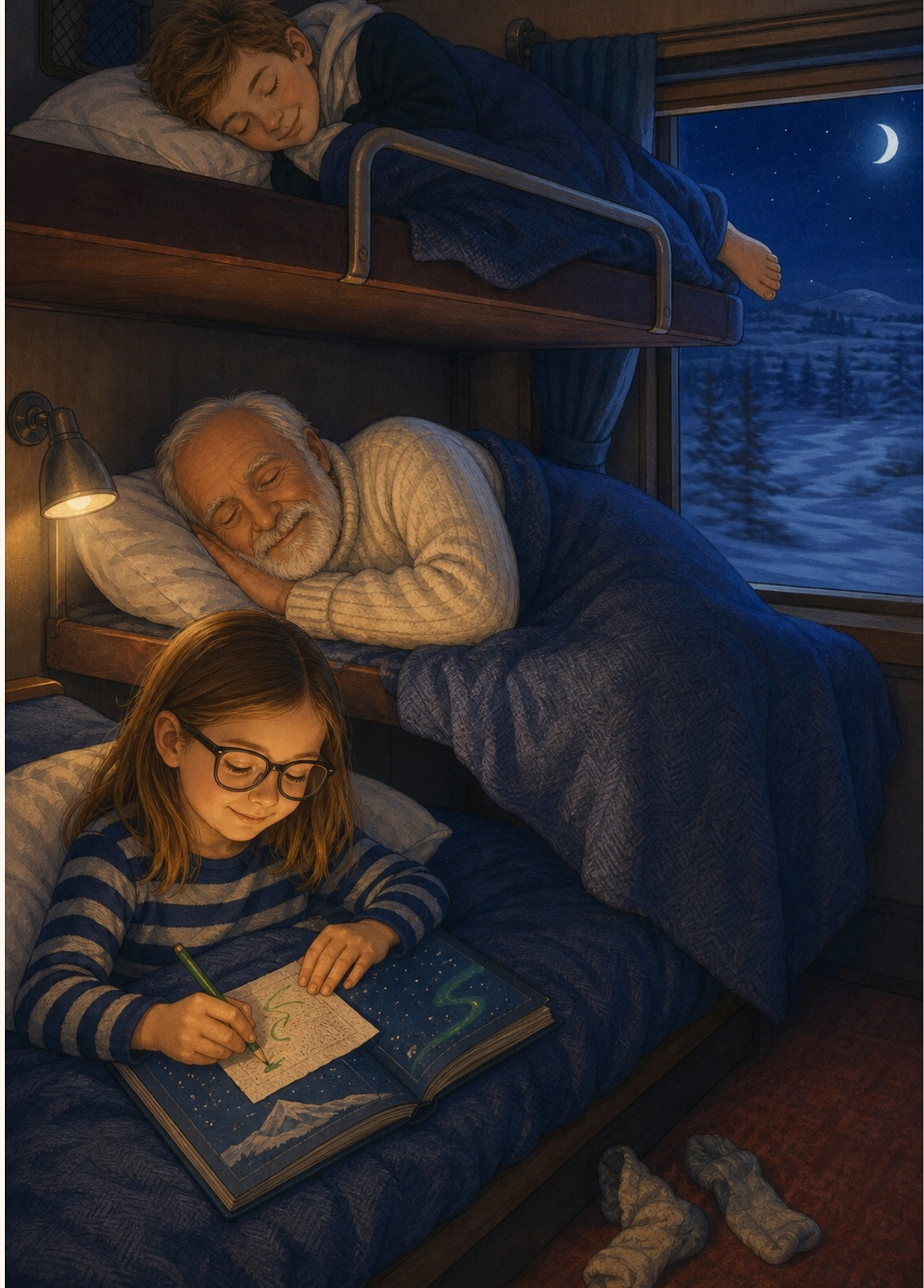


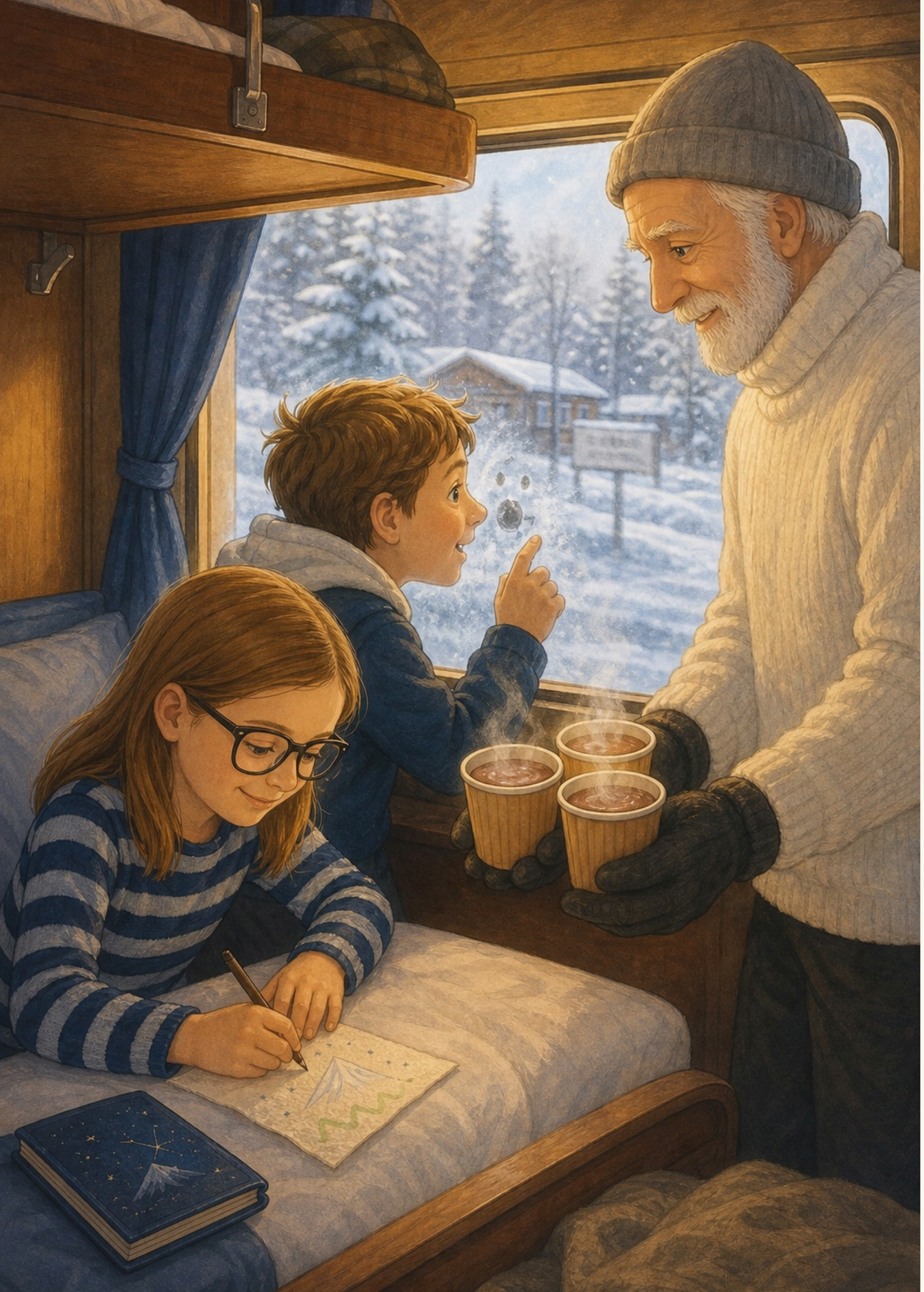
The dining carriage swayed gently as the train travelled north. Selma ate meatballs with lingonberries and peeped between the curtain and the window. Outside, the fir trees sped past like black brushstrokes.

“Can you see any stars?” Oliver asked, with a potato on his fork. “Three,” said Selma. “No, four. That little one too.” Grandad Lennart leaned forward. “You can see the little ones best if you look for a long time.” Selma took a napkin and made four dots with her pen. Oliver drew a fifth, though he said it was only an accidental dot. The train rolled on and on and on.

In the compartment, the bunks were stacked up like a little pile. Oliver took the top one straight away. Grandad got the middle one. Selma climbed into the bottom bunk and found Oliver's socks on the floor, two sad sausages that had lost their feet.

When the ceiling light went off, Selma switched on her little reading lamp. In the star book was a picture of people, tiny beneath green swirls. Selma drew a green squiggle beside the dots on the napkin. The rails went clack-clack, clack-clack beneath her. One more night, thought Selma, holding the napkin flat against the book.





When Selma woke up, the world outside the window was white. White fir trees. White hills. White heaps on the roofs at little stations. Even the sky was pale, like a blank sheet of paper.

"Snow!" said Selma, though nobody could possibly have missed it. Oliver pressed his nose to the window. "Someone's spilled flour all over the country." Grandad Lennart came back with hot chocolate in paper cups. Selma drew a white peak on her napkin, beside the dots and the green squiggle. A sign slid past between the trees. Soon they would get off.

The village lay still between snowy fir trees and gentle mountain slopes. When evening came, Selma put on her hat, gloves and thick coat. Oliver came outside too, though he said he mostly wanted to try out his boots. Grandad took his head torch, but left it switched off.

They looked up. Grey clouds covered everything, from the chimney smoke to the edge of the mountains. Not one star peeped out. “First obstacle,” said Selma, and wrote CLOUDS on the napkin. Oliver pulled his scarf over his nose. “That obstacle has the whole sky in it.” One more night, thought Selma. Tomorrow, maybe the clouds will have moved away.





The next evening, the clouds were thinner. Selma saw a pale dot high up, perhaps a star, perhaps a little gap. But the village lights shone along the road, in the windows and by the ski track. Above the roofs, the sky was brownish-grey.

“Second obstacle,” said Selma. “Lights.” On the napkin, CLOUDS was joined by LIGHTS. The dots, the green squiggle and the white peak were now all crowded together on the same little piece of paper. Oliver looked out and shook his head. “Nothing’s ever going to happen.” Grandad Lennart unfolded a map of the mountain. Selma saw the round contour lines. One more night, she thought.

On the third evening, Selma packed for everything. The star book. The napkin. An extra scarf. A chocolate bar. Gloves that really were hers, not Oliver's. Grandad filled the flask, and Oliver got to carry it. "Bigger shoulders," he said, puffing out his chest so much that he nearly lost his hat.

Outside the door, the clouds lay low over the village, like a blanket that had slipped down from the sky. Selma put the map on top of her things. Then the book, the scarf and the napkin slid down onto the floor. The chocolate bar slipped under the bench. "Third obstacle," said Oliver. Selma sat in the middle of the mess. Now she had to look more carefully.





Selma gathered up her things and smoothed the napkin out on the floor. First the dots. Then the green squiggle. The white peak. CLOUDS. LIGHTS. It was all there. She opened the star book at the picture of people far away from the city lights.

At the edge was a little mountain above the mist. Selma put her finger on the white peak and then on Grandad's map. "If we walk up there," she said, "the lights will be below us. And if the clouds are low too." Grandad Lennart studied the map for a while. "Calm weather and a marked trail. We can do it." Oliver held out the chocolate. "I'll carry the flask." One more night, thought Selma. Tonight.

On the last evening, snow crunched beneath three pairs of boots. Selma walked first along the marked trail, counting red crosses on the posts. One, two, three. Behind her, Grandad's head torch shone a warm circle onto the snow. Oliver carried the flask so carefully that he walked as if it were made of glass.

"Are we nearly there?" he asked after five crosses. "Not yet," said Selma. "But look. The lights are smaller." The village twinkled far below, and clouds crept along the slope. Selma pulled her zip right up to her chin. One more night, she thought, except now it only meant a few more steps.



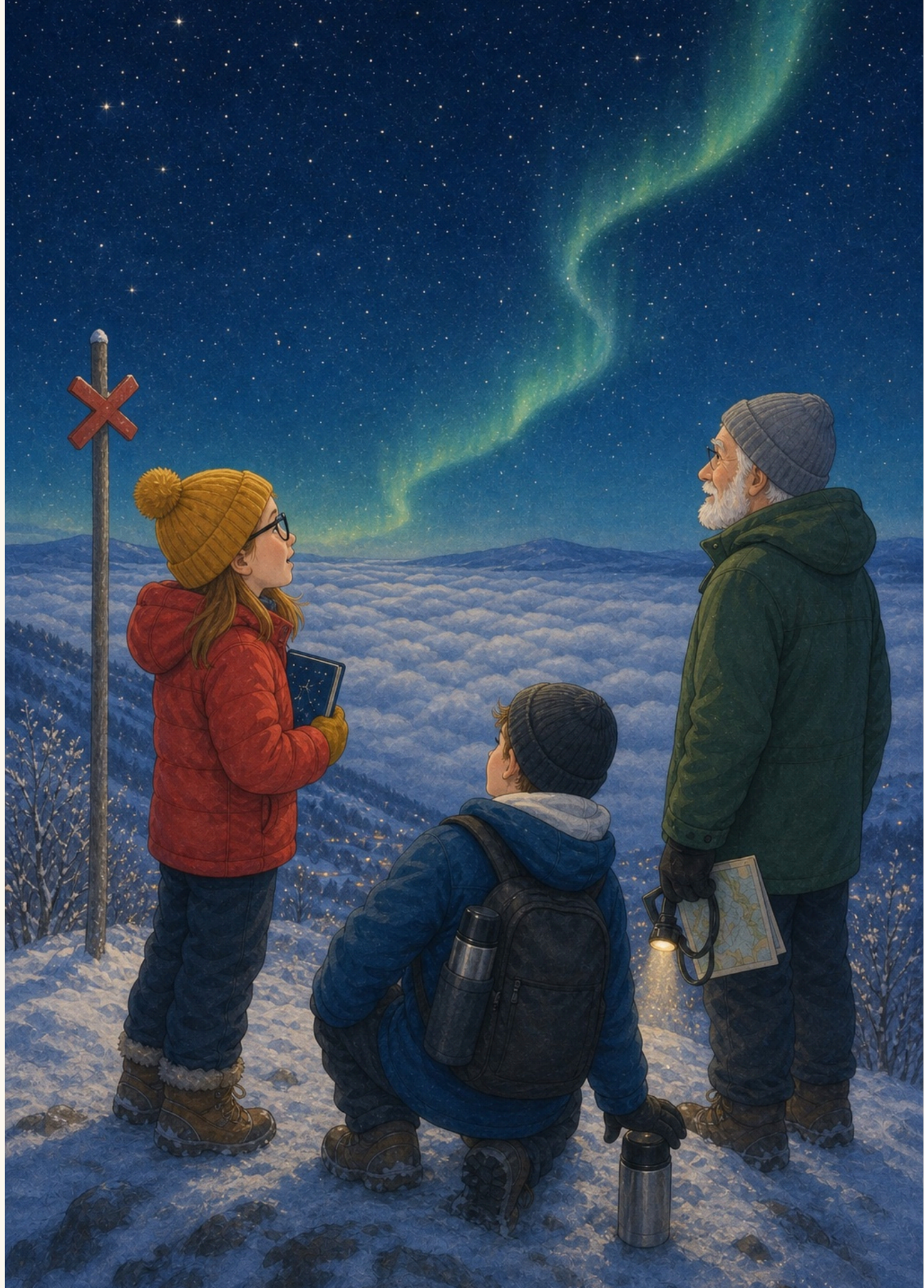


The trees grew shorter and thinner, and then they ended. Before them lay the open mountain, lit by the head torch. The wind tugged at Selma's hood and tried to sniff her ears. She took three steps, then three more.

Oliver stopped beside a rock sticking out of the snow. "I told you nothing was ever going to happen." But he didn't put down the flask. Grandad pointed towards the next gentle ridge of the mountain. "From there, we can see over the cloud cover." Selma didn't look back at the long way behind them. She pointed to the next red cross. "There first," she said. "Then the next one."

At the last post, it suddenly became quieter. The clouds stayed down below, soft and thick over the village. Above Selma were stars, more than the dots on her napkin and much brighter.

Grandad switched off his head torch. Oliver set down the flask without a clunk. “Well then,” he whispered. Selma held her breath. At first, she could see only the stars. Then a pale green streak appeared behind the mountain’s edge, thin as a line from her pen. It curved. It grew. “Oliver,” said Selma. “Look now.”





The green line became a ribbon. The ribbon folded and fluttered, as if the sky were shaking out a long silk scarf. Another ribbon lit up. Then green danced across the whole sky, high above the clouds and the lights.

Nobody said anything at first. Oliver took off one glove and immediately put it back on. “It’s real,” he whispered. Grandad poured hot chocolate into three little cups. Selma stood between them and followed the green arches until her neck got tired. Above them, the Northern Lights folded over once more, stretching even farther across the stars.

The chocolate bar grew smaller and smaller. First the corners disappeared, then the last squares. Oliver found a crumb in his glove and ate that too. The flask grew lighter, while green light continued to curl across the dark sky.

Selma took out the napkin. There were the dots, the squiggle, the white peak, CLOUDS and LIGHTS. She drew three little figures on a mountain and a big green ribbon above them. “Can I draw one more star?” Oliver asked. Selma handed him the pen.





Selma and the Northern Lights

Selma, her older brother Oliver and Grandad Lennart take a night train to the mountains to see the Northern Lights. Clouds, lights and a growing mess get in the way, until Selma reads her own little clues in a new way.

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