



Looking Out for a Friend

This book is part of the Inuutsiarniq Reading Series, developed by the Department of Health in Nunavut. The Inuutsiarniq Reading Series is a unique, Nunavut-developed literacy initiative that infuses Northern values of healthy living and self-care into a culturally appropriate reading program.

The Inuutsiarniq Reading Series was developed to support the reading level guidelines outlined in the Department of Education's Inuktitut reading program, Uqalimaariuqsaniq. Uqalimaariuqsaniq is a sequential and progressive Inuktitut reading program that supports students in their development as readers.

Healthy students are better learners and become healthy adults. For more information, visit www.gov.nu.ca/health and your local Health Centre.

Book details

- Level:** 13
- Text type:** Fiction, realistic
- Subject/themes:** The health risks of solvent abuse; what to do in a health emergency; peer pressure; how to help a friend or family member
- Key features:** 32 pages, past tense, dialogue, third-person point of view

Looking Out for a Friend



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One Saturday afternoon, Aapak decided to walk to his friend Manu's house to see if he wanted to go sliding. The best sliding hill in town was right behind Manu's house.

At the foot of the stairs outside, Aapak stopped to pet Manu's dog, Mia. Mia was a big black dog. She wagged her tail and licked Aapak's hand as he reached to pet her. Then, he climbed the steps to Manu's door.

When Aapak knocked and no one answered, he knew that Manu might be in his room with his headphones on listening to music.





Aapak opened the door and walked inside to look for Manu.

But Manu wasn't there.

Aapak thought that Manu might be behind the house, watching his dad work on the family's new snowmobile. Aapak walked around the side of the house, but no one was there either.

Then, Aapak saw that the door to the shed was open. He figured that Manu was probably inside helping his father pack for a hunt. So Aapak walked toward the shed. He heard Manu talking to someone as he approached the shed. When he stepped inside, Aapak saw Manu and two older boys from their school.

Aapak recognized the boys, Peterloosie and Iola. They played on the soccer team with Manu.

“Hi, Manu!” Aapak said cheerfully. He looked at Peterloosie and Iola. “Do you guys all want to come sliding?” Aapak asked them.

The two older boys looked at each other and smirked. Manu smiled uneasily.

“Uh, hey, Aapak,” he said quietly. He shuffled to the side. It looked like he was trying to hide something behind him. “I don’t feel like going sliding.”





Aapak was confused. He and Manu went sliding on the hill behind Manu's house almost every weekend.

"What do you mean, you don't feel like it?" Aapak asked. "You love sliding! Remember last weekend? You slid down the whole hill in one try!"

Manu laughed nervously. "Whatever, Aapak," he said, then he straightened up. "It was no big deal."

"What do you want, kid?" Iola interrupted them.

Aapak was confused. Why was Iola calling him a kid? Iola was only two years older than him.

"What are you guys doing in here, anyway?" Aapak asked, looking around.

Aapak noticed there was something strange about Iola. He was looking in Aapak's direction, but it seemed like Iola couldn't keep his eyes focused for very long. He was swaying slowly from side to side, as if he couldn't keep his balance.

"What's wrong with Iola?" Aapak asked slowly.

"It's none of your business!" Peterloosie said rudely.

"Unless you want some?" Iola said. He narrowed his eyes, and then he pulled a small jerry can out from behind Manu's feet.

"What do you mean?" Aapak asked. Then he realized what the boys had been doing. "Manu, are you going to sniff gas?" Aapak was shocked. Manu's dad would be so upset with Manu if he knew what he was doing.





“Relax, Aapak,” Manu said, looking at the ground. “If you don’t want to, just get out of here.”

Aapak was so upset. His friend had never talked to him like this before. He took a deep breath and tried not to lose his temper.

But just as he was about to say something, he saw Manu grab the can from Iola and lift it to his face.

Aapak couldn’t believe Manu was going to sniff gas. He didn’t know what to do to stop Manu, so he ran out of the shed.

As he was running around the side of Manu's house, he crashed into someone and fell to the ground.

"Whoa, slow down, Aapak!" It was Hannah, Manu's older sister. She was in the same grade as Peterloosie and Iola.

"Sorry, Hannah," he said, flustered.

"Are you okay, Aapak?" Hannah asked him as she helped him to his feet.

Aapak didn't know what to say. He didn't know if he should tell her what Manu was doing.

"Where's Manu?" Hannah asked. "I thought you guys would be going sliding."





Aapak didn't want to tell on his friend, but he was so worried about Manu. Aapak knew that it was really bad to sniff gas. In school, he had learned how dangerous it could be to sniff gas. He didn't understand why Manu wanted to hang out with the older boys instead of him, and he really didn't get why he wanted to get high.

Aapak suddenly felt very angry with his friend.

"Manu is in the shed with some older boys," Aapak said. "They had a jerry can with them. I think they were sniffing gas, but I left before Manu did it."

"What?" Hannah cried angrily. She marched toward the shed.

Manu and Peterloosie came running out. They looked worried.

“Hannah!” Manu cried when he saw his sister. “You have to help us! Iola is really sick. He passed out and then he threw up everywhere!”

Hannah ran into the shed. Aapak stood at the door with Manu and Peterloosie.

Iola was slumped in the corner and could not hold his head up straight.

Hannah talked to him softly until he slowly started to open his eyes a little bit. His eyes were red and watery.

“Iola, it’s Hannah,” Hannah said. “We need to take you to the health centre!”





Manu shifted on his feet nervously. “Are we going to have to tell Ataata?” he whispered.

“Of course, Manu,” Hannah said. “This is serious!”

Manu and Peterloosie helped walk Iola into the house. Iola seemed very dizzy. They led him to the couch and laid him down on his side. Hannah brought him a glass of water and a wet towel to place on his forehead.

Manu’s dad walked into the living room. “What is going on here?” Manu’s dad said, concerned. “Is everyone all right?”

“Ataata, we need to take Iola to the health centre right away,” she said. “He was sniffing gas and now he’s sick.”

“Let’s go,” Manu’s dad said. He helped Iola off the couch and out the door. Everyone in the car was silent for the entire drive.

At the health centre, Manu’s dad explained to a nurse what had happened. The nurse took Iola into a separate room.

Manu, Hannah, Aapak, and Peterloosie sat down in the waiting room. Manu’s dad paced the room.





“Manu and Aapak, were you sniffing gas too?” Manu’s dad asked.

“No!” Manu said quickly. “I mean, I almost did. But then Iola got sick. Aapak wasn’t even there. He found us after.”

“Thank you for being honest, Manu,” Manu’s dad said. “I’m still very disappointed. You should know better. You are lucky that Aapak and Hannah were there to help.”

Aapak looked over at Manu, but Manu looked down at the floor. Aapak felt his stomach tighten. He knew that Manu must be really mad at him for telling on him.

“Now, where did you get the gas?” Manu’s dad asked. “I know it wasn’t mine. I lent my extra jerry cans to Uncle Moshi.”

Peterloosie shuffled nervously. “Iola brought it,” he said. “He found an old jerry can down by the shore.”

Manu’s dad sighed and frowned. “Boys, that is so dangerous,” he said. “Gas is a poison. That’s why it made Iola sick when he sniffed it. Not only can it make you nauseous or dizzy, but it can also make you extremely sick. It could even kill you.”





Manu's dad looked at the boys. "Do you understand?" he asked.

Manu and Peterloosie raised their eyebrows.

"You might think that getting high is fun and cool, but sniffing gas is not something to fool around with," Manu's dad said. "Peterloosie, I've seen you play soccer with Manu," he continued. "If you keep messing with this stuff, it will affect your lungs. If you can't breathe well, you can't play soccer, you know."

Everyone was quiet for a moment.

“And Manu, you’re such a good student. Sniffing gas can give you brain damage. It can affect your memory and the way you think,” Manu’s dad said. “Is it really worth it?”

Manu scrunched his nose. “No, Ataata,” Manu said. “I’m really sorry.”

“I know you are, Manu,” Manu’s dad said. He knelt down to give Manu a hug. “And I’m glad you’re okay.”

“Now,” Manu’s dad continued, as he stood up. “I’m going to call Iola’s mom to let her know what has happened. Peterloosie, come with me. I’m calling your father next.” Peterloosie followed Manu’s dad into the hall.



Aapak stared at the floor. A few minutes passed in silence. He didn't think Manu would want to be his friend or even talk to him anymore.

"Hey, Aapak," Manu said quietly. "I'm sorry I acted like a jerk. I shouldn't have messed with that stuff. I just wanted Peterloosie and Iola to think I was cool."

Aapak gave his friend a big hug.

"Thanks, Manu," Aapak said, relieved. "I'm so glad you're okay."



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