tended family designated himself to die, and he was killed. "Someone must survive," she said, "and someone must die." After the event, the women in the group cut off their long braids, a symbol for all others that they had been obliged to sacrifice their kin.

Fear of going native, of succumbing to such impulses, blinded the British to the genius of the Inuit. In dismissing them as savages, they failed to grasp that there could be no better measure of intelligence than the ability to thrive in the Arctic with a technology limited to what could be made with ivory and bone, antler, soapstone, slate, animal skins, and bits of driftwood that were as precious as gold. The Inuit did not endure the cold; they took advantage of it. Three Arctic char placed end to end, wrapped and frozen in hide, the bottom greased by the stomach contents of a caribou and coated with a thin film of ice, became the runner of a sled. A sled could be made from the carcass of a caribou, a knife from human excrement. There is a well-known account of an old man who refused to move into a settlement. Over the objections of his family, he made plans to stay on the ice. To stop him, they took away all of his tools. So in the midst of a winter gale, he stepped out of their igloo, defecated, and honed the feces into a frozen blade, which he sharpened with a spray of saliva. With the knife he killed a dog. Using its rib cage as a sled and its hide to harness another dog, he disappeared into the darkness.

Sitting with Ipeelie by his tent early one morning, I thought about the Inuit's ability to adapt. His gear was scattered about, some of it draped over the cross of the young mother who had died. He was cleaning the motor of his snowmobile with the feather of an ivory gull. Earlier that day on the ice his clutch had failed, and he had needed to drill a hole in a piece of steel he intended to use as a replacement. Placing the metal on the ice, bracing it with his feet, he took his rifle and casually blew a circle in the steel.

