



Takannaaluk

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Takannaaluk



By Herve Paniaq • Illustrated by Germaine Arnaktauyok

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This is a story about Nuliajuk, who is known by many names in different communities. Amitturmiut, people from the Igloolik area, know her as Takannaaluk or Kannaaluk.

She was her father and mother's only daughter. As she was growing up, her strict father wanted her to marry. He would gain a man to help him if she married. But she never wanted to marry, so she was known as Uinigumasuittuq, the one who never wanted to marry. Even though men came to ask her, she would never agree. Nobody could win her.



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One day, along came a man with hair cut straight across his forehead. As it happens, this man was a bearded seal transformed into a person. He had come to try to take Uinigumasuittuq as a wife. He was refused. She did not accept him.



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Then along came more men who tried to marry her. Her parents would approve them, but she would not accept them, so she remained unmarried.

One day, along came a man with antlers growing from his forehead like a caribou. As it happens, this man was a caribou transformed into a person. He was also refused.



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More people came who tried to marry her. But she would not agree, even though her father and mother always accepted them.

One very calm day, when the water was very still, a *qajaq* approached from the south of their camp. The person was tall, even while seated, and dressed in sealskins. His clothing was very smooth and very beautiful. As he landed his qajaq, he remained sitting in it. He yelled, "Uinigumasuittuq, come down!"



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The girl who never wanted to marry said to her mother, "You think that's me?"

Her mother told her, "You are the only Uinigumasuittuq." When she said that, Uinigumasuittuq quickly started packing. She took her only belongings, her needle, and her sewing tools.

Uinigumasuittuq walked down to him. The handsome man who had come for her remained seated in his qajaq wearing his snow goggles.



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Uinigumasuittuq hopped onto the back of the qajaq behind the man, lying on her stomach. They paddled toward the open ocean. As they were travelling on the ocean, they started seeing thin ice, old ice that had become smooth over time.

The man had never left his qajaq during this time. Now, he said he had to relieve himself, so they stopped at a large piece of ice. Uinigumasuittuq stood on the ice, and the man, too, got out of the qajaq and came onto the ice.

He had very short legs. Uinigumasuittuq saw that he had been sitting on a stool in his qajaq so he would look taller. He asked her, "Did you see my stool? Ia'aaa, ia'aaa." The sound he made sounded just like a bird.

As it happens, he was a fulmar, a type of seabird, transformed into a man.



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Uinigumasuittuq started crying. She did not like this strange man. After he relieved himself, he lifted up his snow goggles, and she saw that he had horrible red eyes.

"You see my eyes?" he said. As she cried, he kept repeating that he would not allow her to go back to her mother and father.



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When he got back in his qajaq, they continued to travel. Uinigumasuittuq kept crying at first because she could not do anything else. When she realized she was not going to go back home, she stopped crying.

They kept paddling in the same direction, and soon they came to a land and travelled along the coast.

The man told Uinigumasuittuq that when they came to his land, there would be tents. His tent would be the one on the edge made only from the skin of young seals. When they landed and she reached the tent, she saw that it was indeed wide and made only of the skins of young seals.



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Soon, the man who now became Uinigumasuittuq's husband went hunting. He came back with young seals. She learned how to clean skins, something she had not known how to do before she was married. She had plenty of skins to clean and she had plenty of food.

They were like any husband and wife. He would go hunting and come back with plenty of young seals for her to clean. But each time he set out in his qajaq, he sat on his stool and wore his snow goggles to hide his red eyes.



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But Uinigumasuittuq's strict father was yearning for his daughter, even after forcing her to marry. He wanted to bring her back. As he had a small boat, he travelled to Uinigumasuittuq's camp to bring her back.

He arrived while her husband was out hunting and forced his daughter to start packing her things. She told her strict father that she wanted to wait until her husband came back.

Not wanting her to have a lousy husband, her father became very angry. Uinigumasuittuq was intimidated by his anger and started packing so they could leave together in his boat. The water was very calm, so they took their time.



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When Uinigumasuittuq's husband arrived home, he was told that her father had come to take her away. He started following them in his qajaq. As they were travelling slowly, he gained on them and quickly caught up.

"Let me see my wife," the man demanded.

His father-in-law responded, "Why should someone who needs a stool to sit on have a wife?"

Then the man said, "Let me see her precious hands!"

His father-in-law responded, "Why should someone who needs snow goggles to see have a wife with precious hands?"



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The man was so mad at being ridiculed that he stopped there in the water. Gradually, they got farther away from him. As it was a very calm day, they were not rushing. Soon, the man was out of sight of Uinigumasuittuq and her father. They did not see as he transformed into a fulmar.

And then the fulmar was following the trail of Uinigumasuittuq and her father. The fulmar would dip low and then sway from side to side. It circled them and swayed from side to side, and when that happened, the wind picked up. The wind kept picking up until it became very windy, and her father yelled, "Here, see your wife! Here, see your wife!"



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The fulmar and the wind made Uinigumasuittuq's father angry. It became so windy that he decided to toss his daughter out of the boat by pushing her. Hanging onto the boat, she did not fall in right away.

Uinigumasuittuq grabbed onto the boat. Her father tried to get her to release her grasp, but she was gripping too tightly. He chopped at one of her hands with his knife, and her fingers came off and fell into the water. Seals immediately came swimming up where her fingers had fallen.



Uinigumasuittuq's father tried releasing her other hand from its grasp, and again, he had to chop it off. Her fingers came off and fell into the water. Immediately, bearded seals came swimming up where her fingers had fallen.



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Uinigumasuittuq was unable to hold onto the boat with no fingers, so her father just left her floating in the water. Perhaps she died, but he did not know, for he had left her behind.



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Uinigumasuittuq's father kept going home in his boat. When he reached home, the tide was very low and he parked his boat there. He went to his tent, then took a bear hide and walked back to his boat. He laid himself on the tidal line and covered himself with the skin.



As the tide was coming in, he moved himself higher at first, but then just laid himself down again. As the tide came in again, he did not move, but lay there full of guilt and remorse. When the water came up, he died.

Uinigumasuittuq become known as Takannaaluk, "the one down there," because she lived in the ocean with the bearded seals and other sea creatures. Some people called her Nuliajuk or Kannaaluk, names that meant the same thing. Now that they had Takannaaluk, the people could go and seek food from her and the creatures she had created with her fingers.



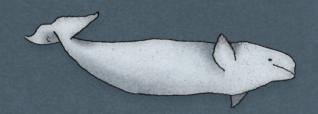


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Herve Paniaq is an elder who was born around the area of Igloolik, Nunavut. His adopted children are Melanie, Itani, Cindy, Moses, Agnes, and Catherine. He likes to record traditional stories and legends, and he likes to tell stories. When his sisters were young, Herve would grab a comic book and tell stories about what he thought the pictures were saying. His siblings who were able to read in English would come around to listen to him, and he would tell them to go away as they knew how to read in English. They enjoyed his versions better as they were more interesting.



Germaine Arnaktauyok is an Inuit artist and illustrator, best known for her prints and etchings depicting Inuit myths and traditional ways of life. In 1999, she designed the special-edition two-dollar coin commemorating the founding of the territory of Nunavut. She is the co-author, with Gyu Oh, of My Name Is Arnaktauyok: The Life and Art of Germaine Arnaktauyok and illustrator of several children's books on Inuit myths. She lives in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

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Takannaaluk

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"Takannaaluk" means "the one down there"—a term used in Canada's High Arctic to refer to the most important being in Inuit mythology. Also known by Sedna, Nuliajuk, and many other names, Takannaaluk came to be both feared and respected as the mother of the sea mammals. But her story begins with a betrayal.

As a young woman, Takannaaluk is tricked into marrying a sea bird posing as a man and then abandoned by her family. In this unique picture book, her story is brought to vivid life by respected elder Herve Paniaq and renowned artist Germaine Arnaktauyok.



