



# Mythical Monsters of Greenland

A Survival Guide

By Maria Bach Kreutzmann

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Inhabit Media Inc.



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To my very own lovely sea monster, Sebastian.  
Thank you for helping me chase  
dreams and monsters,  
and believing in me and supporting me,  
when I thought both were impossible to catch.

I could not have gone hunting without you.

“The star of paganism has lost its shine,  
but it won’t be extinguished  
as long as the northern lights dance in the sky,  
as long as storms rage and the swell beats the bedrock,  
as long as the wind, the current and the torch of the sun  
send the icebergs drifting.”

**Jens Rosing**



Intro

# On Creatures and Spirits

(and other other-worldly things)

## **Dear explorer,**

If this is your first encounter with Greenland's mythical creatures, you may naturally ask the question: *Why?*

*Why* did these creatures exist for the early Inuit?

*Why* on earth did people interact with them?

*Why* are almost all of them so creepy?

As you may already have gathered, none of our creatures have a very high cuddle factor, nor do they seem to be particularly friendly towards humans. Most of them seem to work actively towards leading foolish travellers astray or simply killing them (well, really mostly just the latter. . .). The answer is really rather simple — because nature dictates it.

When referring to nature, often represented as Mother Nature, there is a big difference between the Eurocentric perception of her and the Arctic idea of who she is. To people in the Arctic, Mother Nature is not a dainty woodland fairy with beautiful flowery hair, frolicking in the meadows. Instead, she is what Shakespeare might refer to as “a dissembling harlot” (his words—that makes it academic!), or to put it more plainly: a ravenous beast who not only wants to kill you, but thrives on doing so. You see, nature in the Arctic is all-powerful, however unbelievably beautiful she appears.

Even today with all our modern technology, people in



the Arctic must still submit to the powers of nature. During the winter, whole towns are sometimes completely cut off because the weather is too dangerous to venture into. Even in the summer, the weather can turn in the space of a few minutes. Beautiful, calm, warm(-ish) weather can all of a sudden turn into a blizzard.

And it's not just the weather (though the weather *does* play a very central role in Arctic life). It's everything!

The landscape twists and turns, forming steep cliffs and huge mountains. Only rarely can you find even a small stretch of land where you can walk unhindered across soft grassy knolls and where there is room to settle.

The water is obviously ice cold, and treacherous currents flow around every bay and fjord. The life will be squeezed out of anyone who falls into one in a matter of minutes.

Bearing all that in mind, try to imagine life in the olden days when there were no modern, well-built houses and vehicles where you could keep warm and safe. Most of the time, there was nothing but tanned pieces of leather standing between you and the elements—whether you were in a boat, wearing an anorak, or in a tent, they were all just made of animal hide. And to make matters worse: there was no escaping the elements—people *had* to face them every single day in order to survive.

Every day hunters had to fight their way through often appalling weather and navigate icy seas to provide food, animal skins, and other materials for their families. Every day they would risk their lives hunting at the mercy of the elements.

Death was—and is—always lurking round the corner.

So would it not be wonderful if you could communicate with all these mighty and terrible elements—even just a little bit?

And would it not be natural to assume that the personification of these elements would also be—well—rather terrible? If not in mood then in appearance?

And of course it naturally follows that any other creature inhabiting this element-filled universe would also be terrible and dangerous. We are but minions to our greater and more evil overlords, if you will.

This is how nature became inhabited by all these odd spirits and creatures—so that the early Inuit could enter into a dialogue with nature and gain some agency over the harsh conditions they lived under.

Looking out over the ice-filled fjords, outsiders might just see a cold and desolate landscape, but the early Inuit knew that this was a place filled with wildlife, often invisible to the naked eye, but which could be a plentiful source of food and other resources. This was for them the land of opportunity.

Because of the adverse conditions that people lived in, it was naturally assumed that most spirits and creatures were either irritable or angry. It was therefore of utmost importance that you didn't anger or offend these beings. There were rules to be followed and taboos to be observed in every aspect of life, so as not to offend the spirits or attract vengeful creatures. Everyone had to abide by the rules: men had to perform certain rituals during and after hunting, and women had their entire life dictated by these rules.

Women were thought to be particularly close to the spirits,



due to their ability to create new life, so almost all aspects of their adult life were subject to taboos. Everything from sewing and cooking, to menstrual cycles, childbirth, and death had its own set of rules that *had* to be obeyed to keep evil creatures away or to ensure the goodwill of helper spirits. Doing the wrong thing, or even not doing the right thing, could have calamitous consequences if it angered malevolent spirits or called up terrifying creatures. Oh, and by the way, these rules differed from family to family and from area to area, so it wasn't that easy! Because these creatures were fairly elusive, they created a worldview sort of based on user experience, so it was up to every family to understand the will and whims of these creatures in their own way. However, through storytelling, we can see that there were some common conceptions of what these creatures were like and how they wanted humans to behave.

Of course, it wasn't just *doing* the right thing that ensured you kept these creatures at bay. A more practical way of communicating with them was by wearing masses of amulets. Made out of almost anything found close at hand, these amulets could be worn as jewelry, carried in boats, or be sewn into the hem of clothing. In addition, women tattooed their bodies with traditional markings that could communicate different messages to the spirits. Some markings would be to honour certain creatures, other markings would create entrance and exit points for spirits to freely pass through, and others still would pray for good helper spirits during childbirth or to improve fertility or general health.

If everything fell apart, you could always consult an *angakkuq* (a shaman). *Angakkuit* were found in all shapes, sexes, and sizes. There were wise women who knew a lot about herbs and curing small ailments, and there were powerful animal tamers, who could venture into the spirit realm and not only speak to, but also tame, some of the spirits and use them as helper spirits. All *angakkuit* were chosen either at birth or by a sitting *angakkuiq*, and their ability to communicate with and understand the spirits and mythical creatures made them both valued and feared in their communities.

So, to sum up—mythical creatures found in nature should at all times be left to their own devices, unless you are a mighty *angakkuq*. When you wander out into the Arctic wilderness, make sure you have a few amulets with you. And if you happen upon something weird and mysterious, my best advice is: run!

By Ujammiugaq Engell / Historian

# Dear Explorer!

Back in 2018 I went on an epic journey into our past, where I caught 67 known and (somewhat) unknown creatures from our mythology, for the book *Bestiarium Groenlandica*. I chose to capture the creatures in the stories that had already been written down by explorers past, because it's in the stories of the past that we find the root of our culture. But roots aren't always enough, and afterwards I was still fascinated by the stories that now started to emerge; about creatures that had stood the test of time, and whose presence still emerges in our stories to this day.

So I chose to go exploring yet again. Not in dusty books this time, but in the memories of friends and family (and social media!) to see just how much the creatures of our mythology have bent and stretched and changed from the time of our ancestors, when knowledge of these creatures was imperative to survival in the Arctic.

We are a culture of storytellers. We spellbind our audience, none the least with our ability to shock even ourselves with our grand nature, and take phenomena that might seem endlessly frightening and use it for wisdom and learning, and not least; entertainment!

I have chosen 15 creatures (and 6 honourable mentions) that still sometimes inhabit our culture in this day and age. Some have shown themselves a lot, others have merely peeped their heads out, but I hope the ones I have chosen to give warnings about in this book will help keep most explorers safe!

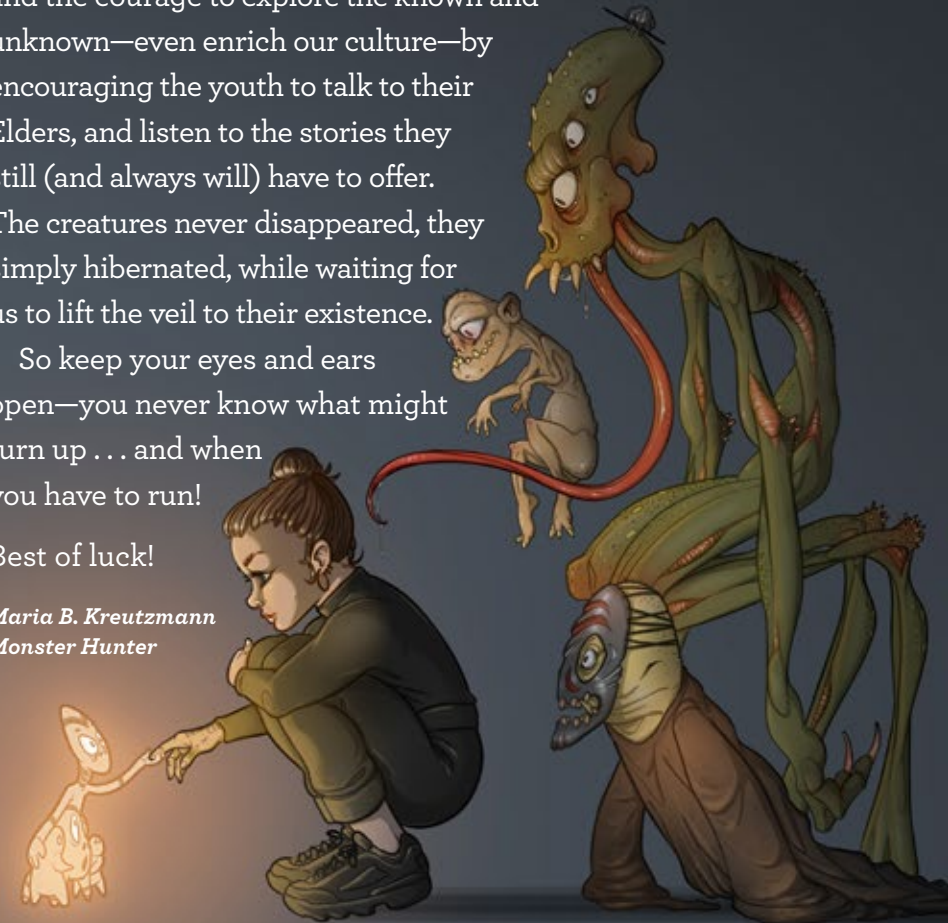
The images in this book are how my co-artist Coco and I have seen the creatures emerge from the stories, and we have tried to visualize them as best we could. You might see them a bit differently, as they tend to change their appearance depending on who's looking. If you are lucky enough, you might even catch their fleeting presence in an image of your own making, giving the creatures life and breath and continued existence.

I hope this book will spark curiosity, and give insight and the courage to explore the known and unknown—even enrich our culture—by encouraging the youth to talk to their Elders, and listen to the stories they still (and always will) have to offer. The creatures never disappeared, they simply hibernated, while waiting for us to lift the veil to their existence.

So keep your eyes and ears open—you never know what might turn up . . . and when you have to run!

Best of luck!

Maria B. Kreutzmann  
*Monster Hunter*





# The Monsters



# Qivittuq

The Mountain-Walker

Imminent Danger



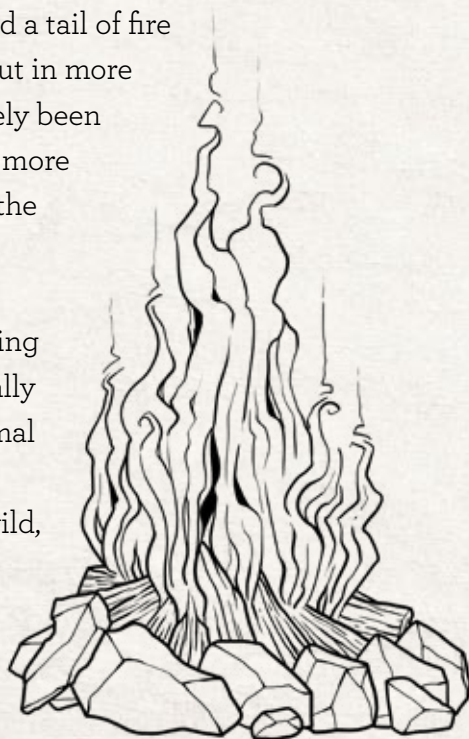
## Qivittuq (The Mountain-Walker)

The *qivittuq* is a fearsome being found all over Greenland, and stories have been told about it since time immemorial.

A *qivittuq* comes into existence when a person decides to leave a settlement, village, or town because of some great shame or because something has roused them to extreme anger. Then the person will flee into the wilderness and, after undergoing a number of supernatural trials, will cease to live, turning instead into a *qivittuq*.

In olden days, they could be spotted flying across the sky with both arms and one leg bound behind their back—a ploy to make it easier to steer—and a tail of fire shooting out behind them. But in more modern times, they have rarely been seen like this; today they are more likely to be roaming around the fjords with both feet firmly on the ground.

They are described as having long limbs and/or an unusually large head, often clad in animal skins and leather straps, and with red, burning eyes and wild, matted hair. In more recent stories, they are sometimes described as wearing the clothes of whatever era



they decided to leave behind, yet with a fashionable touch of fur and skin garments.

In some rare cases, *qivittut* have been known to show a benevolent streak and guide lost travellers back to civilization—but it's important to remember that you should always be very wary of the *qivittuq*, since more often than not its intentions will be anything but benign.

There is also the occasional tale of a *qivittuq* returning to their family after a period alone in the wild, before they succumb to the elements and transform fully.

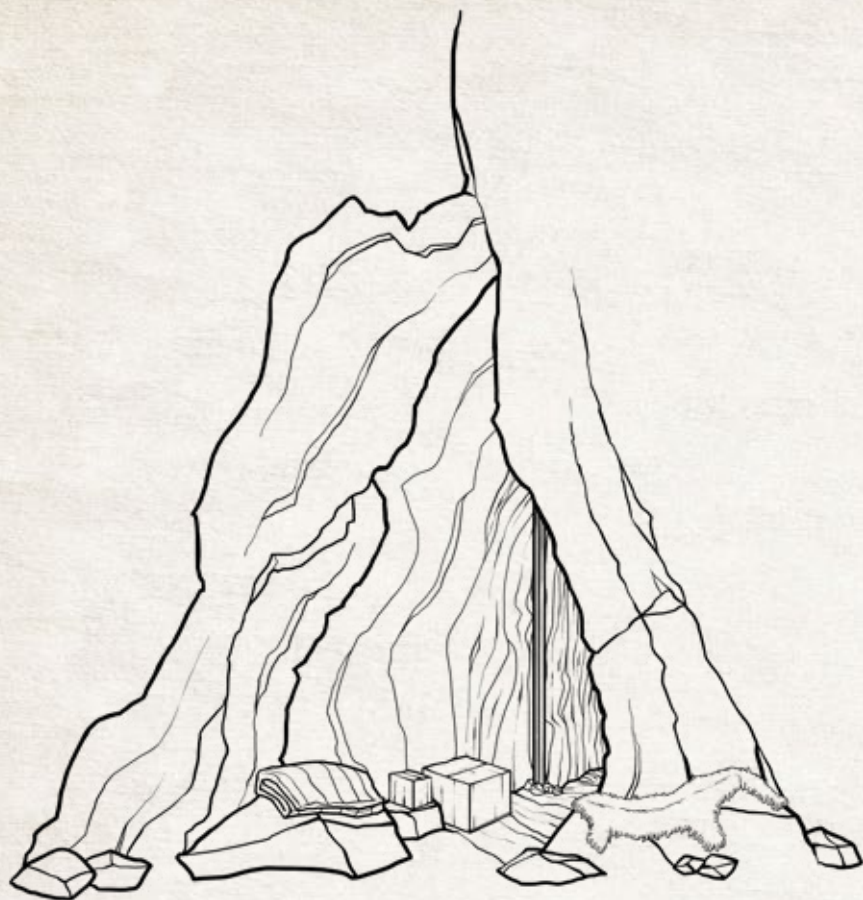
### Habitat

*Qivittut* can be found all over Greenland, usually deep in the fjords.

Although mainly found far away from humans, they have been known to roam the outskirts of villages, where they scavenge for food and useful items of equipment that might be stored outside. In rare cases, they might chase someone who is out wandering alone and snatch them away, so always have a companion with you when walking in unfamiliar surroundings—in fact, whenever you're walking in the Arctic generally.







## Encounters

Although not always a threat, qivittut should be approached with caution. In some cases, hunters have been known to “trade” with them, in the sense that they will leave food and weapons out for qivittut to take. In return, the qivittut will hopefully lead them to good hunting grounds.

When encountered in a fjord, some qivittut are known to give warning signs of their presence, often by throwing rocks

or other hard objects from a distance, to warn humans to stay away from a particular area. If this happens, it is best to leave them well alone and just retreat to a safe distance, preferably somewhere where you can report it to the proper authorities. Qivittut will usually stay well clear of humans and only attack if they feel their territory is threatened. But if one does decide to chase you, your best bet is to try to outrun it. At the same time, it’s a good idea to throw food behind you for the qivittut to stop and pick up, and so increase the distance between you and it.

For the very brave, it is said that running backwards is a surefire way to confuse a qivittut and will make it retreat in the other direction. But this is not encouraged for the inexperienced runner.

## Author’s note:

The qivittut is mostly seen as a solitary creature, but they do sometimes travel in groups, not only walking in the mountains, but also across the winter ice in northwest and eastern Greenland. Some stories even tell of a large group of qivittut wandering in the mountains and fjords of the Greenland National Park, which is located in northeast Greenland.





# Naligatiq

The Entrails-Eater

Imminent Danger



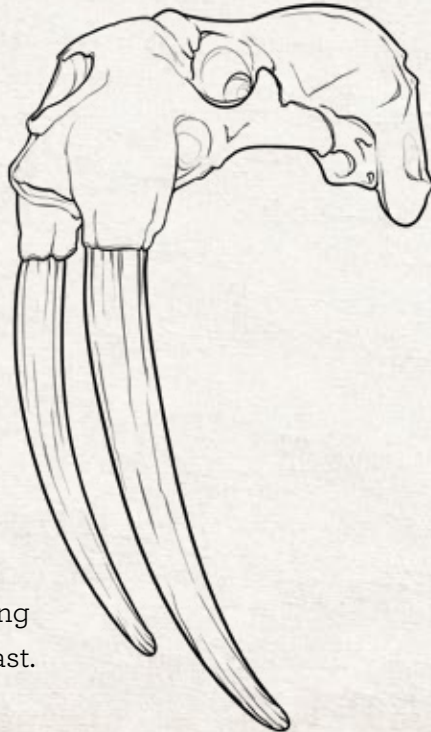
## Naligatiq (The Entrails-Eater)

Also known as *Irraviiqsiniuq*, the *Naligatiq* is a truly fearsome woman, whom the intrepid explorer might encounter in the Greenlandic fjords. Where some creatures might help you find your way if you're lost out in the wild, the *Naligatiq* is pure malevolence. She has one aim and one aim only: to eat your entrails.

She comes in two forms: one is as an old, wrinkled crone, sometimes with a walrus skull either for a head or as a piece of fancy headgear. The other is as a beautiful young woman. Both incarnations might wear a dog pelt or a couple of sculpins hanging from their waist, which they swing from side to side to try to catch your eye.

### Habitat

The *Naligatiq* dwells in a small, cozy house, which can be found in one of two ways: firstly, by getting lost and stumbling across her house “by accident”—meaning she will do what she can to lure you towards her house. Alternatively, you might be on an *ilimmarniq* (spiritual journey) and accidentally come across her house by going west of the moon instead of east.



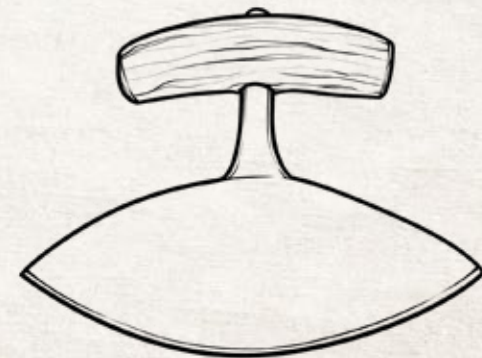
She possesses a very sharp *ulu* (an oval knife with a handle above the blade) and a large chopping board, which skips into the room when she calls it so it is within easy reach for her to cut up your delicious guts on.

### Encounters

Don't enter her house—and if you are foolish enough to enter, make sure you don't smile or laugh. She will try to make you do so by moving her pelvis in a comical or alluring fashion, and by making faces at you. If you do smile or laugh, this means your guard is down, leaving you open to attack! At the merest hint of a smile, she will grab her *ulu*, slice your stomach open, and proceed to rip out your intestines and place them on her chopping board.

But don't worry, there is a way to survive this diabolical procedure: you have to eat your guts again as soon as she turns her back, and then run from her house (while holding your guts in). If you are quick enough and not queasy, you can survive long enough for a skilled *angakkuq* to put you back together again.

You might want to stick to soft foods for a while afterwards though.







# Tupilak

The Vengeful Spirit

Imminent Danger



## Tupilak (The Vengeful Spirit)

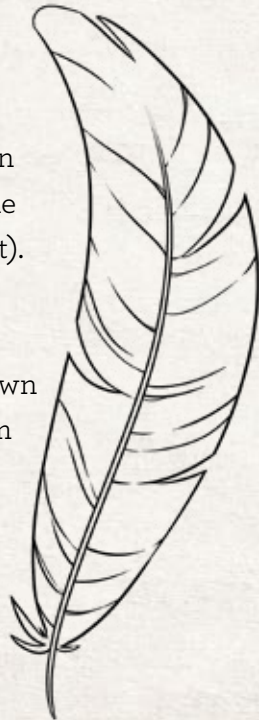
Just like *Kassuma* (the mother of the sea), the *tupilak* has changed somewhat in Greenlandic folklore over the last century.

Originally, the tupilak was a frightening creature whose sole purpose in life was to wreak revenge upon an angakkuq's enemy. They were brought to life by a powerful angakkuq, who would gather together various human and animal body parts and keep them for 3-5 days, letting the nascent tupilak "suckle" to give it life, before sending it off down a river to seek out its unsuspecting victim.

What powers a tupilak possessed came down to what body parts had been used in its creation, but human body parts—and especially those from the graves of children—were most sought after, since they had the greatest *qaumaniq* (spiritual power or light).

### Habitat

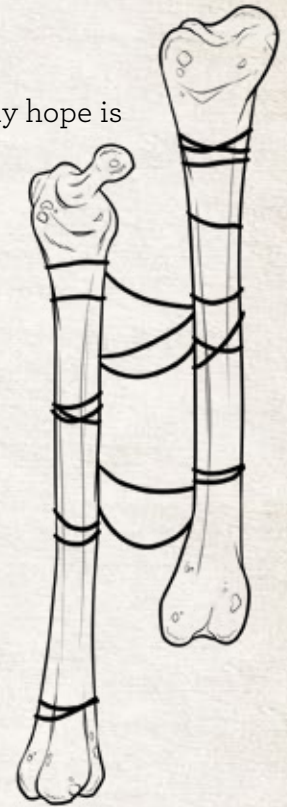
Since the tupilak takes its first journey down a river, it's probably best to stay away from rivers if you know a tupilak is coming for you! Aside from its proficiency at swimming, the tupilak's powers are drawn from whatever animals went into its making. So whether it be from land,



sea or air, the tupilak could attack from just about anywhere!

### Encounters

If a tupilak is sent to get you, your only hope is that you are more powerful than the angakkuq who sent it—if you are, you can send it back to attack its maker. Otherwise, you're in trouble, as there is really no way of staving off a vindictive tupilak once it gets going.



### Author's note:

When sailors and merchants first started to encounter Inuit, they were intrigued by the stories of the fabled tupilak, a creature known and feared all over Greenland. To give these sailors and merchants an idea of what the tupilak looked like, Inuit carved its likeness in wood—later more commonly in bone, since wood was a precious resource—and used the figurines for trading, thus giving rise to the carved figures which are the more well-known, modern-day version of the tupilak.


These carved *tupilak* are often given as gifts to be used as ornaments for the home, and the artistry and craftsmanship that go into the intricate carvings are highly respected. So don't be afraid to give or receive a tupilak, since these days, they are not used in a malicious way at all.





# Aqsarniit

The Northern Lights

 Spirits of the Dead



## Aqsarniit (The Northern Lights)

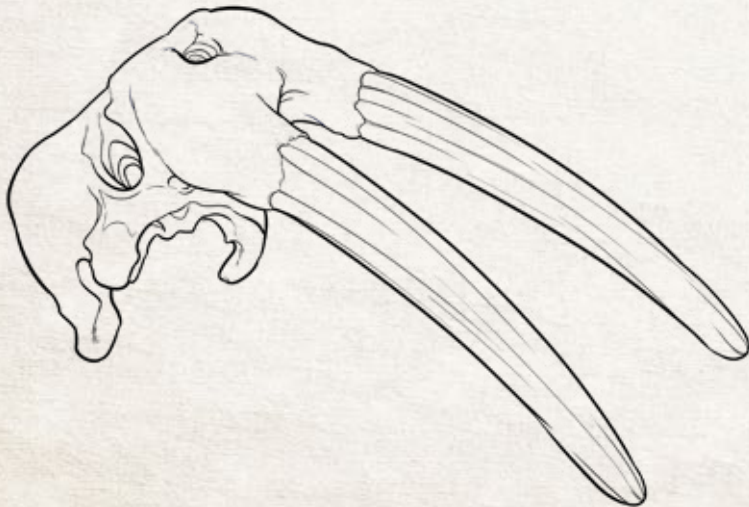
Although the *aqsarniit* is not a creature per se but more of a phenomenon, the cautious explorer would do well to follow certain rules when admiring this beautiful nighttime light show.

The *aqsarniit*, better known as the northern lights or aurora borealis, is the highway of the dead, and they dance and run across the skies on it on their way to the afterlife. Along the way, they kick a walrus skull around in a playful game of football.

### Habitat

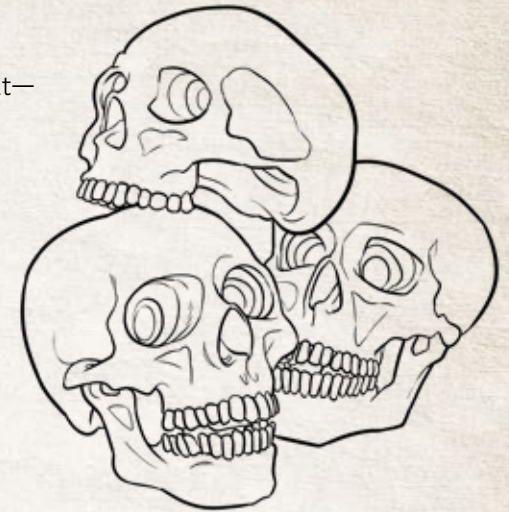
The *aqsarniit* can be found all over Greenland on clear late fall, winter, and early spring nights. Unfortunately, there are no schedules in the afterlife, so there is no set time when you can see it.

Your best bet is to keep a watchful eye on the sky and wait for a show—it will be well worth it!



## Encounters

Just stand back and admire it—that's all. But despite how beautiful it might be, do not be tempted to wolf-whistle at it. If whistled at, the dead will descend to earth and rip your head off, and then continue their game with your skull!



So don't whistle. Just don't.

### Author's note:


Some say that children conceived under the *aqsarniit* are especially gifted.





# Qarlimaatsuq

The Graveyard Ghoul

 Spirits of the Dead



## Qarlimaatsuq (The Graveyard Ghoul)

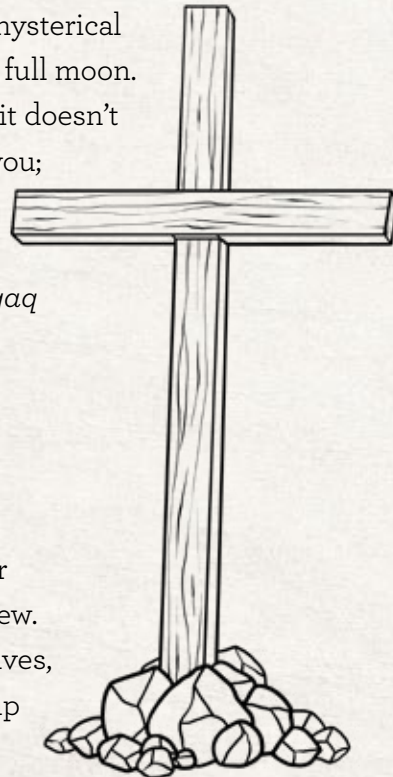
Greenland's many beautiful graveyards are quiet, somber places for thought and reflection, and they are usually situated so as to give a spectacular view of the ocean, so that the deceased can gaze upon the sea and the fjords from their final resting place.

But take heed if you decide to visit them: the grave of a lost loved one is not only a place for family of the deceased to visit; it may also be home to the *qarlimaatsuq*.

The *qarlimaatsuq* is a frightening, dried-up ghoul, whose home is easily recognized by the faint buzzing sound coming from the grave or, more frightening, hysterical screaming during clear nights of the full moon. Unlike the *ikusik* (the elbow-walker), it doesn't rise up out of the grave to try to kill you; this is because it is more like a representation of powerful ancestral forces, used by angakkuit as a *tuurngaq* (helper spirit). However, it may still attack and hurt you if you disturb its peace.

### Habitat

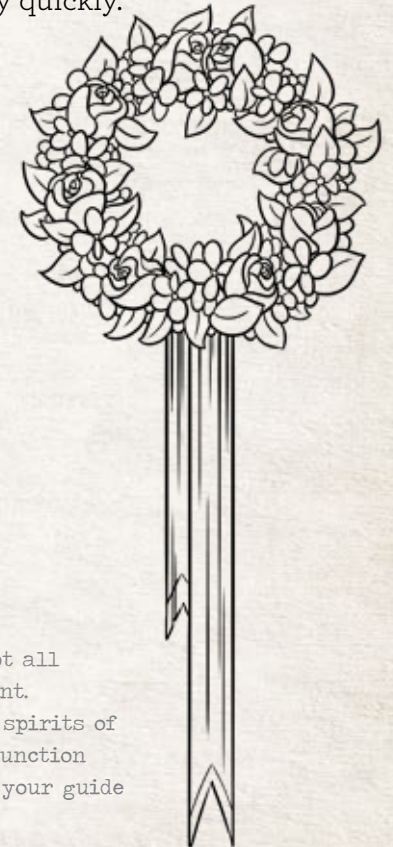
The *qarlimaatsuq* can be found in or near all graveyards, be they old or new. When they choose to leave their graves, they either crawl out slowly or rise up suddenly like the *aqarniit*.



Remember that should you choose to visit such a graveyard, you should treat it with the utmost respect! Meddling with the graves of other people's loved ones will not only earn you raised eyebrows and angry comments—you also run the risk of being haunted by a *qarlimaatsuq*.

### Encounters

Unless you are an angakkuq acolyte or a descendent of the dead resting in their grave, take a step back and apologize profusely for disturbing the *qarlimaatsuq*'s peace. If you don't, it may turn malevolent very quickly.



### Author's note:

It's important to remember that not all *aliuqtukkat* (ghosts) are malevolent. As scary as a ghost may seem, the spirits of those who came before can often function as a sort of *tuurngaq* and act as your guide and/or protector.





# Ikusik

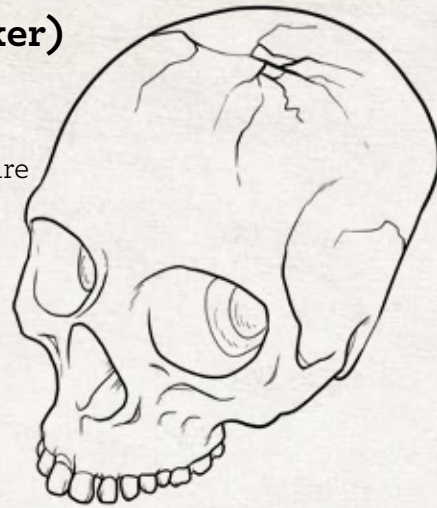
The Elbow-Walker

 Spirits of the Dead



## Ikusik (The Elbow-Walker)

The ikusik is a zombie-like creature and the subject of countless modern urban myths, especially around mid-west Greenland. For many Greenlanders, it is truly the stuff of nightmares, standing the test of time and continuing to scare both children and adults even today.



The ikusik crawls along on its elbows, dragging the rest of its putrid remains behind it. Despite its limbs having almost all rotted away, this creature is surprisingly agile and swift and can even outrun a fast adult. In one particularly gruesome story, an ikusik crawls around after having lost its lower jaw, finally ending up as a tasty snack for some hungry foxes.

It appears if its final resting place has been desecrated with malicious intent, leaving it no choice but to rise up and hunt down whoever is responsible.

In some stories, *ikusiit* come into being not from having their graves desecrated, but because they died in a shameful manner and so left this world filled with rage.

### Habitat

Ikusiit are most often found in caves and tunnels, residing in the darkest corners and crevices. Occasionally, they will wander across open spaces, but they are more prone to

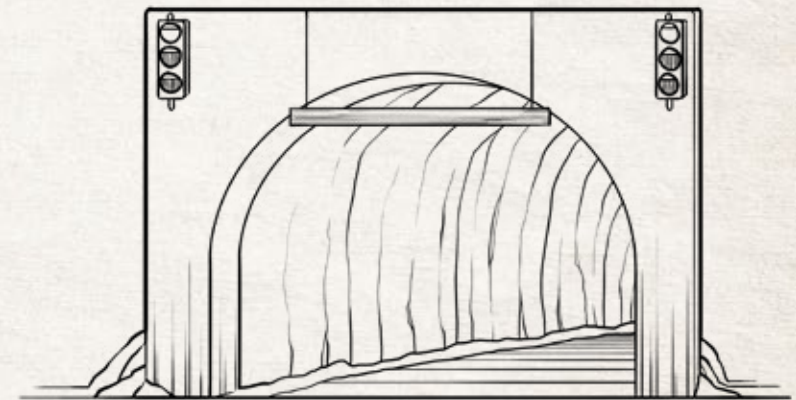
hiding and lying in wait for unsuspecting victims.

They can be found in the wild as well as in urban areas, making them a frightening, unpredictable monster indeed!

### Encounters

Since its moral compass is somewhat compromised by anger, the ikusik will not distinguish between a suspected grave-desecrator and an innocent bystander, so don't assume it won't go for you if you meet it!

If you are in an urban area, you should try to reach some sacred ground before the ikusik catches up with you, as this will work as protection against most malevolent beings of a magical nature. If you encounter it in the wild, your best bet is to run as fast as you can, without looking back!








# Ijiqqat

The Odd-Eyed Tumblers

 Small Dangers



## Ijqqat (The Odd-Eyed Tumblers)

“Cute” creatures in Greenlandic mythology are very few and far between. But while most creatures are rather horrifying, the *ijqqat* are something of an exception. They are quite small, their eyes sit longwise on their small faces and, despite freezing temperatures, they are usually completely naked!

These small and easily frightened creatures will do their best to avoid humans, as they rely on stealing food from humans to survive. But they have been known to show themselves to children, as they don't see other small beings as a threat and adore the sound of children's laughter.



### Habitat

The *ijqqat* dwell in cracks in rocks and mountains, as well as in the walls of houses, living hidden right alongside humans. The most likely place to encounter them is probably the kitchen, since they survive by stealing food. They only eat soft foods, so don't leave your favourite soft or mushy snack out in the open.

The stories about them are most prevalent in southern Greenland, especially Naqsaq, Naqsaqsuaq, and Qaquqtuq, but that doesn't mean they can't be found in other places too.



### Encounters


Since they pose no apparent threat, it is best to just quietly observe *ijqqat* and leave them be—unless you want to stop them emptying your pantry. If you do, merely making your presence known will be a sure way to scare them off, so there is no need to go chasing after them. If caught, they are liable to die of fright; but if they manage to keep their composure, the braver ones can inflate themselves to the size of a human as a way of scaring off would-be predators and attackers.





# Inniqsuit

The Fire People

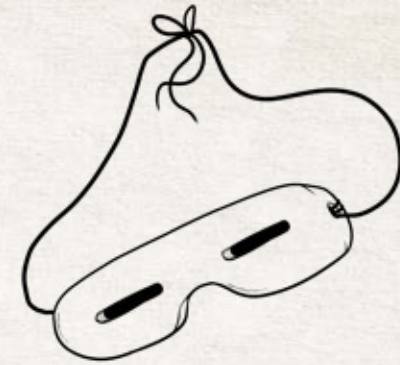
 Small Dangers

## Inniqsuit (The Fire People)

The *inniqsuit* are small humanoid creatures with very small noses or sometimes no nose at all. Their eyes are extremely pale, and at times they glow in the dark during the long, Arctic winter nights, making them easy to spot for the nighttime explorer.

They will sometimes be referred to as *qulliit* (the ones above) or *alliit* (the ones below). The *qulliit* are smaller, while the *alliit* are bigger and a bit more hostile.

Angakkuik will often seek them out to use as helper spirits, as the *inniqsuit* possess great spiritual powers. They can, in turn, even acquire their own helper spirits, giving an *angakkuq* several layers of protection against spiritual foes.



### Habitat

The *inniqsuit* live on the shore, building their houses under rocks and boulders in the sand. They keep their homes absolutely immaculate and take pride in showing (welcome) guests their clean and tidy houses and other possessions.

They can also sometimes be encountered on the water, as the *alliit* are expert *qajaq* (kayak) users and spend much of their time sailing around the fjords.

### Encounters

Even if you are not looking for a helper spirit, the *inniqsuit* will usually be more than happy not only to talk to you, but also trade with you, and even lead you back to your people if you are lost in the fjord. Their (normally) friendly demeanor means they are curious rather than aggressive. If they feel threatened, they can make themselves completely invisible and disappear.


But take care: while the *qulliit* might be friendly, the *alliit* will actively try to kidnap humans and even cut their noses off to turn them into one of their own kind. So stay alert and always be ready to run!





# Tuurngat

Helper Spirits

 Small Dangers

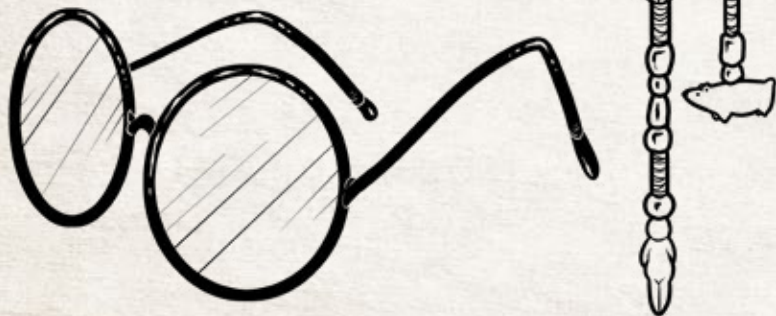


## Tuurngat (Helper Spirits)

These bodyguards from the spirit world take on many shapes and sizes and can manifest themselves as small curious beings, as ancestors who have come to guide you, or as “scare spirits” who might originally have been malevolent, but are now powerful defenders against other evil spirits. They can be big or small, beautiful and scary at the same time, and they have an assortment of different weapons and tools at their disposal.

The *tuurngat* will do their best to defend you, primarily helping the *angakkuq* when they are on an *ilimmarniq* or seeking out malevolent creatures such as the *tupilak*.

The more *tuurngat* a person acquires, the more powerful they become.



## Habitat

Tuurngat are often said to live deep in the fjords, as they do their best to remain somewhat elusive. Some live in caves, some dwell under the sea, and others reside in graveyards like the *qarlimaatsuq*.

The *tuurngat* can also live in the land of the dead, as they are able to lift the veil between this world and the next, gliding effortlessly between both.

## Encounters

Unless you are a monster and the *tuurngat* are being used against you, it's not a bad thing to encounter these spirit beings—but be warned: they will not agree to act as your protectors until you have proven your worth! Some *tuurngat* may set you a number of tests, while others may be tamed simply by repeatedly calling their name. Whichever method they choose, you should not take these tests lightly, as they are just as likely to kill you as make you stronger.

But once you have proved your worth, they will follow you and become your fierce and loyal allies against any evil encounters you might have!





# Amaruq

The Giant Wolf

 Animalistic Creatures



## Amaruq (The Giant Wolf)

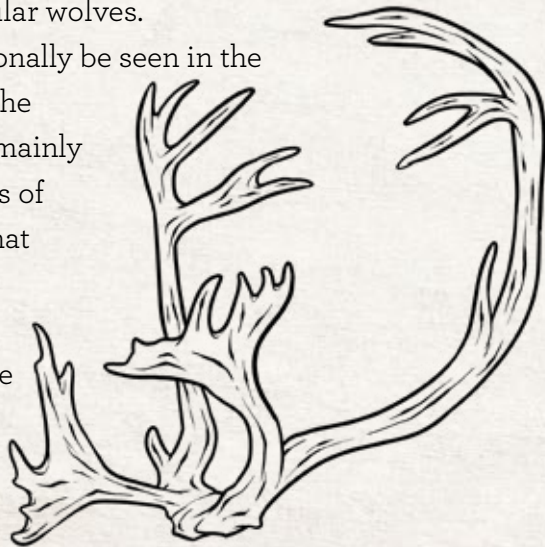
The *amaruq* (sometimes known as *amaruqsuaq*) is a giant wolf that roams the edge of the inland ice, hunting mostly for reindeer, but of course other prey as well. It is large enough to carry a whole reindeer in its mouth and can outrun just about any quarry it might set its sights on.

The *amaqqut* have much in common with the *iqqillit* (dog-people), and like them can transform into other creatures—but unlike their canine cousins, they do not possess humanoid limbs in their usual form, being much more animal-like in nature.

### Habitat

The *amaruq* mainly inhabits areas close to the inland ice, where it dwells in caves and crevices, living and hunting in packs, just like regular wolves.

It can also occasionally be seen in the fjords surrounding the inland ice, where it mainly hunts for large herds of reindeer. It is said that if an area suddenly loses its reindeer, it's probably because an *amaruq* is on the prowl there, so be wary of areas

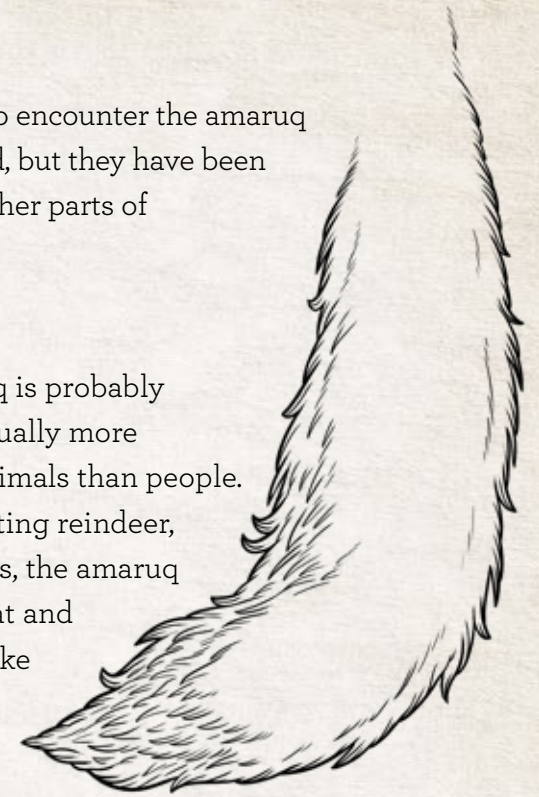


with no reindeer!

You are most likely to encounter the *amaruq* in northwest Greenland, but they have been known to roam most other parts of Greenland as well.

### Encounters

Outrunning an *amaruq* is probably your best bet, as it's usually more interested in eating animals than people. But if you are also hunting reindeer, whose meat is delicious, the *amaruq* will view you as a threat and attack you! It doesn't like to share and prefers to have this particular prey all to itself. Even though it is a fearsome creature and can (and most likely will) attack unsuspecting explorers, the *amaruq* is not always aggressive. It can show a more spiritual side, especially the older and wiser ones, and may even guide a lost or injured hunter back to a settlement or village.



### Author's note:

If they do transform into humans, it is said that *amaqqut* make the best and most skilled reindeer hunters, inspiring awe in other humans with their uncanny ability to unfailingly track and kill their prey.





# Inurruit

The Shape-Shifters

 Animalistic Creatures



## Inurruit (The Shape-Shifters)

Just like the iqqillit and the amaruq, the *inurruit* are animals who can transform into humans; but unlike those other creatures, the *inurruit* are not limited to taking the form of just one type of animal. “Inurruit” is more of an umbrella term, as many animals can be *inurruit*, giving them the ability to look like humans, yet retaining many of their animal characteristics.

For example, if a raven is an *inurruuq*, its human form will have dark clothes and blue or black hair, and display raven-like tendencies.

This applies to all animals who might be *inurruit*, from dogs to hares to ptarmigans.

### Habitat

Aside from roaming the fjords, you will often find the *inurruit* among humans, as they like to mingle with us, studying us closely so as to be able to blend into our society unnoticed.

They are most common around northern Greenland, especially in areas with large populations of sled dogs. If a dog has a tendency to get up on its hind legs a lot and seems to display an oddly human-like nature, it is said to be almost certainly an *inurruuq*.



## Encounters

Having a deep knowledge of animals and their behavior is key, as this will help you spot an *inurruuq* in human form.

If you get lost while roaming the Arctic wilderness, an *inurruuq* might lead you back to your settlement or camp, probably feeling a bit sorry for you at the same time.

They are usually not regarded as being threatening towards humans, but as with all other-worldly creatures, you should always exercise some caution, especially when dealing with sled dogs who might be *inurruit*. No matter how friendly they might seem, chained or unchained, you should never—*never*—approach a sled dog without getting proper permission from the musher and without their close supervision. They will know better than anybody whether or not their dog is likely to be an *inurruuq*, and whether or not it is approachable.







# Iqqillit

The Dog-People

 Animalistic Creatures



## Iqqillit (The Dog-People)

The iqqillit are a dog/human hybrid, not to be confused with the European lican or werewolf. Unlike lycans, the iqqillit are not humans who change form, nor are they subject to the whims of the moon—they are after all *dog*-people, not *wolf*-people.

Iqqillit do possess a certain ability to transform themselves into other creatures, but this is generally used for hunting or as a last resort to escape an enemy.

They are expert hunters and are famed for their weapon-making skills, especially bows and arrows, and their knives and *uluit* are legendary amongst human weapon-makers.

### Habitat

The iqqillit are found near or on the inland ice, where they reside in caves and cracks in the ice, living in large packs.

Sometimes they can be found in the fjords close to the inland ice, where they might stray when hunting, living in large tents made of animal hide, but they generally prefer caves as their main dwelling place.

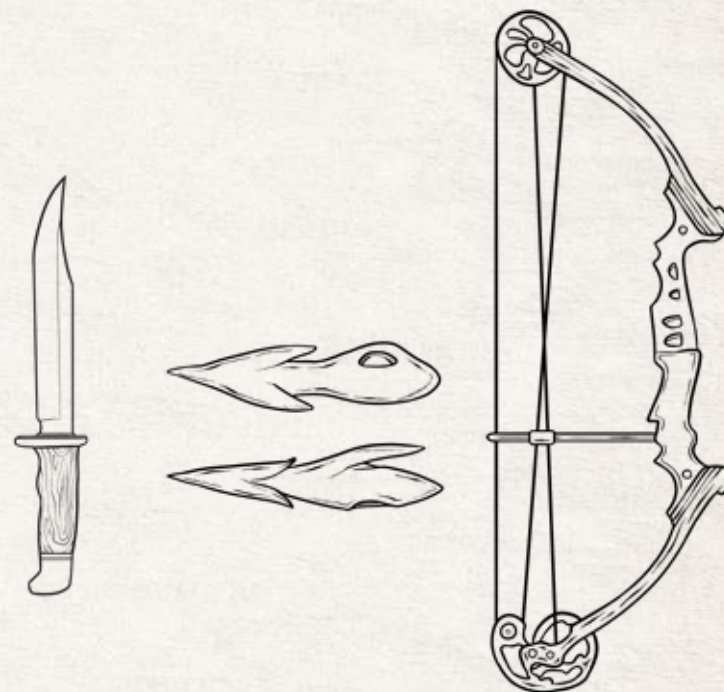
### Encounters

The iqqillit are known to be hostile and aggressive towards outsiders, but they can also be curious and willing to trade. It all depends on the mood they're in when you encounter them.

They have been known to kidnap humans and are

especially interested in taking human women as their wives, so women should be wary of foraging alone near the inland ice!

The craftsmanship involved in making bows and knives is of particular interest to the iqqillit, so trying to barter your way out of a fight by offering them one of these tools is always worth a try. Anything hunting-related might be enough to save you, so always be sure to carry something that you can spare in an emergency.



### Author's note:

The Greenlandic sled dog apparently terrifies them, so dogsled mushers and dog walkers have nothing to fear.





# Kassuma

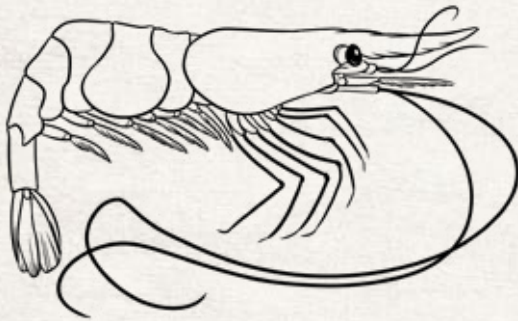
Mother of the Sea

 Masters & Giants



## Kassuma (Mother of the Sea)

Kassuma is the single most famous of all the mythical beings in Greenland, and references to her can be traced all across the Arctic, where she is also known as *Kanna*. She is not a god or a goddess, but rather an entity who represents and resides in the ocean; indeed some believe she *is* the ocean. She is a woman of many names and countless stories, which (mostly) all have one thing in common: she is the *inua* (the soul or essence of an object, animal, or human) of the sea; the mother, creator, and protector of all the creatures that dwell beneath the waves. She is therefore the arbiter of whether or not a human hunter is deserving enough to successfully hunt her children.



Kassuma is a giant not only in power, but also literally, as she is more than three times the size of any human who might dare to enter her home. She has long, black, flowing hair, in which all the creatures of the sea live—but they can

only swim free when her hair is silky and smooth.

If humans break any of her taboo rules, the violation will cause mud and filth to get caught in her hair, preventing her from releasing any creatures for humans to hunt. Even if she could release them, in her rage, she would still stop them from swimming free as an act of revenge upon the perpetrator. This might lead to a serious shortage of food, and if this happens, people send an angakkuq off on a spiritual journey to make amends for the violation and plead with Kassuma on their behalf. The angakkuq ventures down to her to beg for forgiveness and to comb her hair free of the mud and filth that has collected in it.

### Habitat

While the stories about the origins of Kassuma may vary, many of them include a reference to her fingers being sliced off and subsequently turned into the creatures of the sea. After this ordeal, she herself is said to have sunk to the bottom of the Greenlandic sea, where she now resides in its deepest and darkest regions, in a peat house lit by a large *qulliq* (oil lamp) and guarded by a giant dog. A small freshwater stream runs through the entrance to the house, and this acts as a gateway for the creatures she chooses to send out for humans to hunt. However, if any of her taboo rules are broken, this freshwater stream will become polluted and foul.

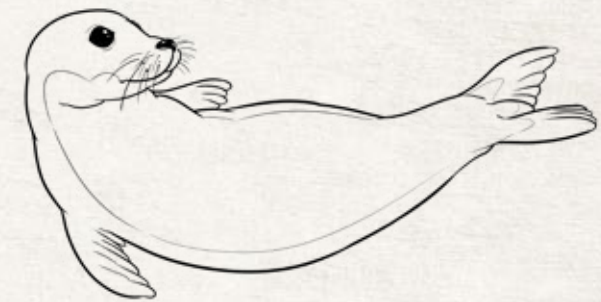
### Encounters

Unless you are an angakkuq, you only have a slim chance



of running into Kassuma directly—but you would be wise to respect and even fear her, even if you don't ever meet her. Overfishing, overhunting and, even worse, polluting the environment are examples of modern-day violations of Kassuma's taboo rules, which she will punish so that bad luck will follow you wherever and whenever you hunt—and indeed in your life generally.

That said, she can sometimes be very easy to please: simply show respect for and take care of her home. Don't dump your trash just anywhere and always pick up any garbage you find that other less respectful people might have left behind. If you treat the sea and the environment with the respect they deserve, you will receive Kassuma's bounty many times over.



#### Author's note:

Beliefs about Kassuma have changed greatly over time, but she has lost none of her importance. Although most people no longer associate her with the taboo rules of the past, she has nevertheless become a powerful symbol for combatting pollution of the sea and global warming and for protecting the environment.

("Taboo rules" are a set of unwritten religious and spiritual rules that are followed to ensure the survival of Inuit and preserve their way of life.)





# Immap Nanua

The Giant Polar Bear

 Masters & Giants



## Immap Nanua (The Giant Polar Bear)

The *immap nanua* is a giant—GIANT—polar bear. “Giant” might even be something of an understatement, since it can lick the tops of mountains if it stretches up a bit. It is so huge that it can suck in an unsuspecting qajaq-rower or small boat through its nostrils when its head is above water.

### Habitat

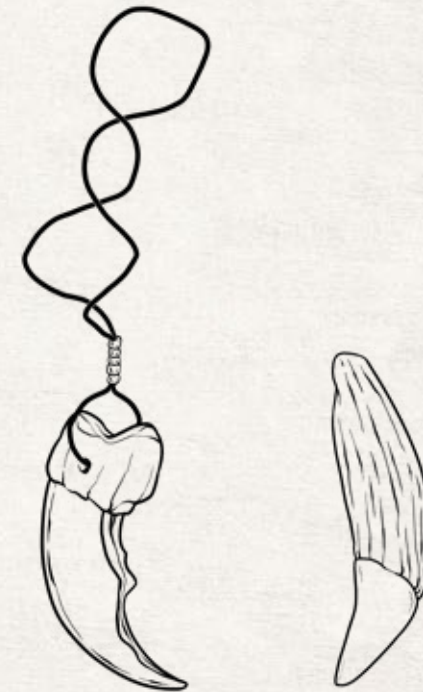
Taking its monstrous size into account, you’d think it would be easy to spot from afar. But this absolute tank of a creature tends to sneak up on humans and suddenly appear out of nowhere. Be it appearing from behind a mountain or emerging from underwater, the *immap nanua*’s size does not make it any less stealthy.

It mostly lives in deep water, silently swimming around in the fjords and can sometimes be mistaken for a massive iceberg. If you see this “iceberg” suddenly disappear underwater without turning over (calving), it is almost certainly an *immap nanua*.

### Encounters

There is not much you can do if the *immap nanua* spots you first. You cannot hope to outrun it, so your best bet is to try and hide—but take care: polar bears have an incredibly strong sense of smell, so unless you hide somewhere with a strong odour to throw it off the scent, it’s still going to sniff you out.

In an absolute worst-case scenario, let the *immap nanua* swallow you whole, and then proceed to cut it open from the inside out. Some stories tell of brave young people doing just that, not only to save their own lives, but also to provide meat and skin for their village during hard times. But this is only advisable if you are carrying a tool for cutting *and* if you are not afraid of risking being chewed to bits before reaching the *immap nanua*’s stomach.







# Pisitiup Inua

The Master of Strength

Masters & Giants



## Pisitiup Inua (The Master of Strength)

The *pisitiup inua* is known best through the story of Kassaassuk, which is about a young orphaned boy who is continually teased and bullied by the other people in his village. His old foster mother encourages him to seek out the *pisitiup inua*, which is said to be able to give great strength to those who seek it out. Kassaassuk follows her advice, seeks out the *pisitiup inua*, and ends up becoming strong and powerful enough to take his revenge on the people in his village.

The *pisitiup inua* is a majestic creature with a fox- or dog-like body and the face of a wise and ancient human. It has a long tail that it uses to wrap around humans who come to visit it and throw them high into the air.

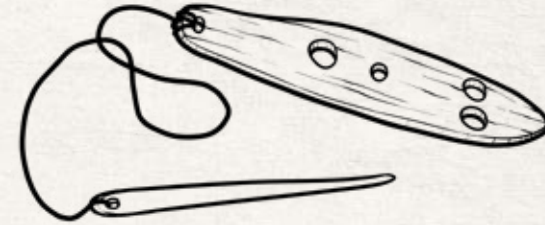
In the original story, it uses its long tail to take hold of the orphan boy Kaassassuk and shake him violently, as if to shake off his childishness—physically relieving him of his toys and other childish possessions in the process—so that he can grow up and become a man.



### Habitat

The *pisitiup inua* usually dwells between the peaks of two tall mountains, from where it will materialize when called upon. There are many stories describing exactly where you

can find the *pisitiup inua*, but one of the most frequently mentioned places is around Quuqqut in the Nuvuk Fjord.

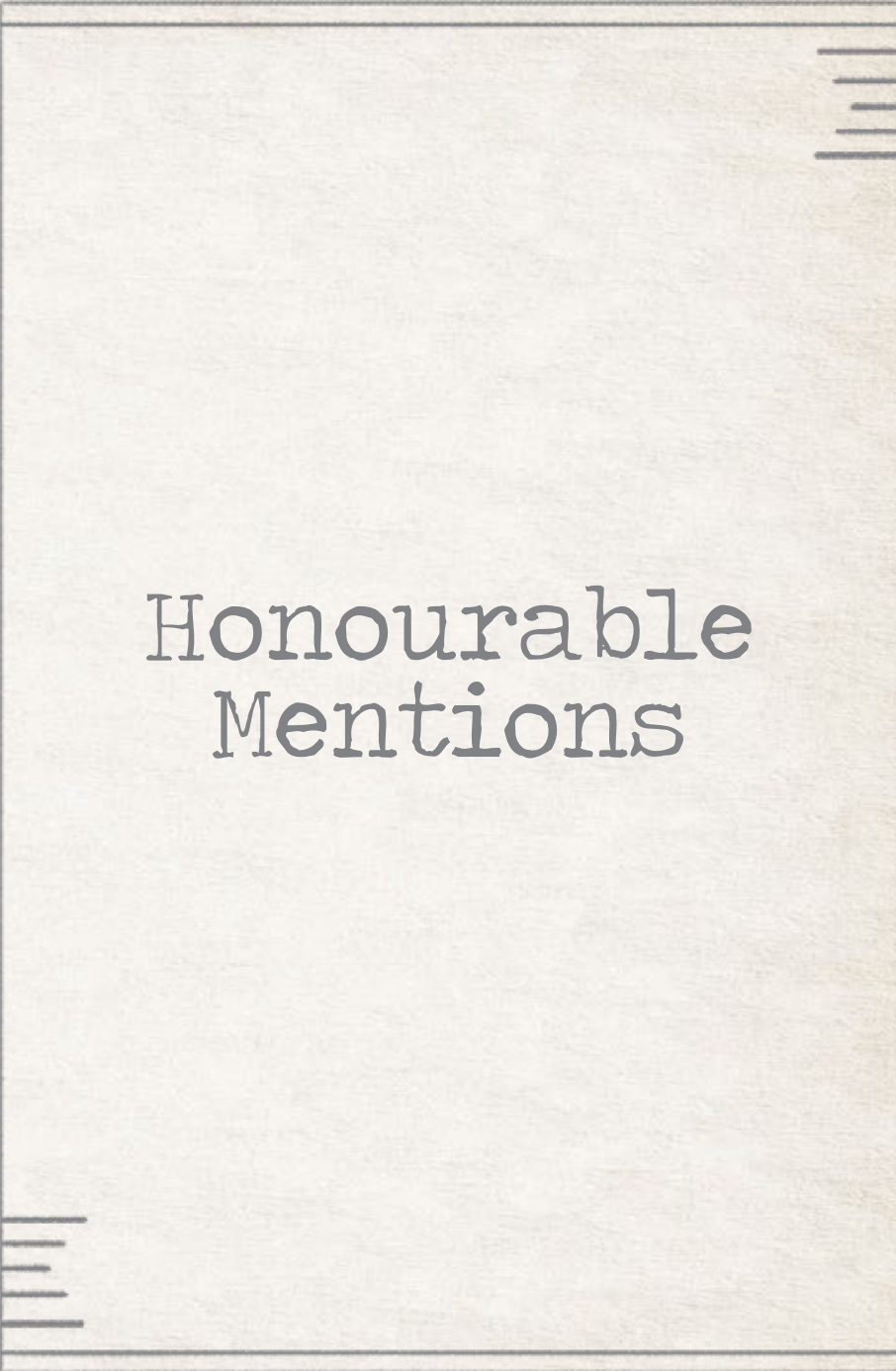


### Encounters

The *pisitiup inua* doesn't show itself unless called upon. However, you must have a good reason to call it, as it might punish you if it feels your quest is not noble or worthy. Its time is not to be wasted.

If you do decide to call upon the *pisitiup inua* for help with some noble quest, make sure you know what you are asking for because the trial it will put you through will leave you battered and bruised, and you will have to endure this trial three times in order to gain the strength and power you seek. But if you are lucky enough to have the gift of strength bestowed upon you, it should always be respected—not only by others, but also by yourself.



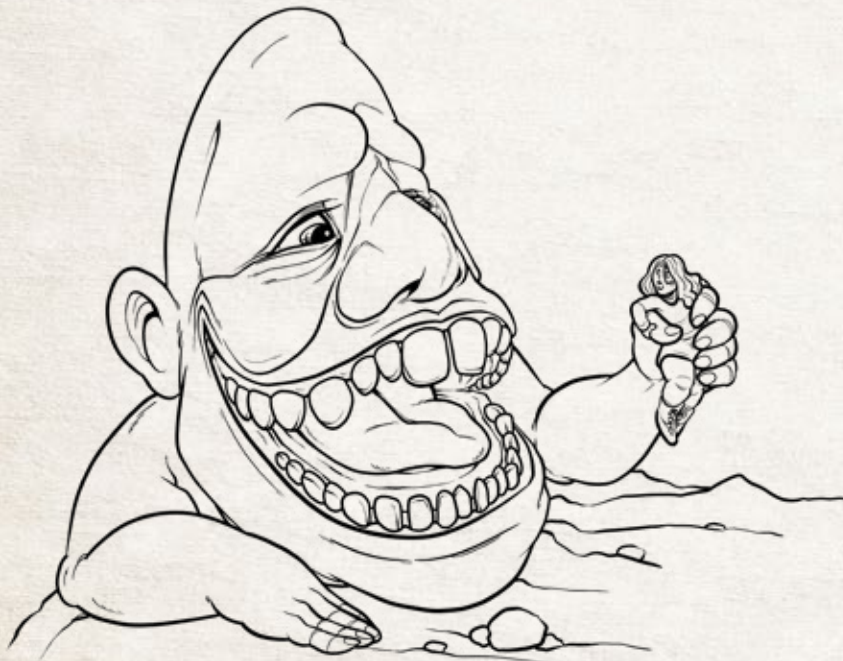


# Honourable Mentions



## Tunit (The Giants)

The *tunit* are giants who live close to or on the inland ice, taking up residence on the *nunatak* (the jagged pieces of mountains), presumably for the excellent views. They can be extremely aggressive, and there are many stories of them capturing humans—either to marry them or eat them. However, if you encounter one on a particularly good day, they might trade with you instead of snacking on you. They speak in a childlike manner and can sometimes conjure up storms like *Asiaq*.



## Qungasaraittuq (The Smiling Merman)

This apparently happy, smiley chap is evidence of why you should never judge a book by its cover. Despite his friendly appearance, he is concealing a large knife under the water, which he will use to slash you if you accidentally smile back at him. If you can keep your cool and give him a gift instead of returning his eerie smile, he will leave you alone or even give you a gift in return. He is sometimes known to crawl up on land, mostly to visit and impregnate childless women—but he only visits those who truly want him to come.





## Kilivvak (The Giant Scraper)

This monster can be mistaken for its smaller and friendlier cousin, the mammoth. But it's easy to tell them apart as the *kilivvak* has 6 to 10 legs, an elongated body, and sometimes a snow-white pelt. It lives on or close to the inland ice, where it wanders around and scrapes the ice for food, sometimes venturing down into the fjords for more feeding opportunities. If you encounter one though, be warned! It might look like a big, lumbering creature, but its extra legs enable this monster to outrun even the fastest snowmobile.



## Aassik (The Giant Worm)

This creepy-crawly is occasionally seen with a human face, although this is not common. It lives in the ground, close to the pens of sled dogs, as it enjoys catching and eating puppies and young dogs. Some say that when the earth rumbles where humans are building, it's because the *aassik* is moving about underground—maybe planning an attack.





## Asiaq (The Mistress of Weather)

This woman of the wind might just be the reason you're stuck in an airport or a harbour, as her mood is somewhat fickle and unpredictable. Her eyes, nose, and mouth sit on her face at weird angles, and she has a husband that she carries around like a baby. Her mood swings cause hurricane-force winds, heavy rains, and howling blizzards. The only person who can still her is an angakkuq, who can go on an ilimmarniq to her house to try and calm her down.



## Akuiqqutit (The Bad Influence)

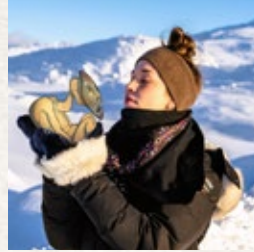
Have you ever felt the urge to do something you know you shouldn't? If so, it was probably an akuiqqutit whispering in your ear. These malevolent creatures are evil incarnate, although since they only feast on evil deeds, they have no flesh on their bodies, as evil feeds no one. They sneak around trying to find people who are already down on their luck. They will then attach themselves to their unfortunate victims and try to push them into doing bad or evil deeds.





A little about

## Maria Bach Kreutzmann



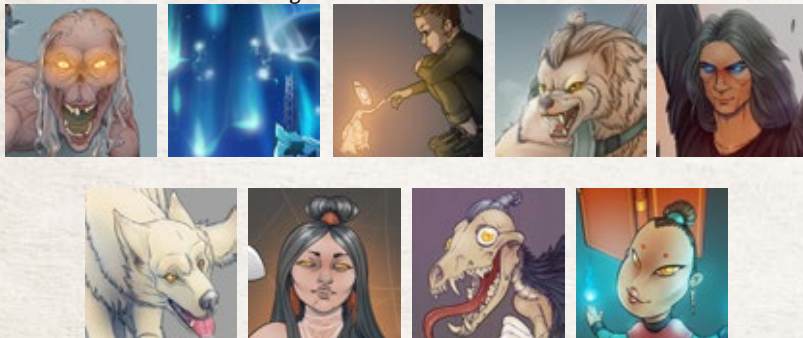
Maria was born and raised in Greenland, where she spent her childhood years chasing monsters in the capital of Nuvuk.

She has since lived, studied, and worked in the United States, England, and Denmark, and completed her BAC in Computer Graphic Arts at The Animation Workshop in Viborg, Denmark, in 2012.

She moved back to Greenland in 2017, where she completed the book *The Bestiarium Greenlandica: A Compendium of the Mythical Creatures, Spirits, and Strange Beings of Greenland* that was published by Milik Publishing in 2018.

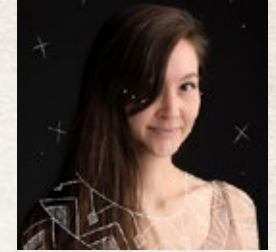
She now works full-time disseminating Greenlandic mythology to curious souls, working with more books, workshops, talks, and illustrations, through her company Glaciem House.

Maria illustrated the vignettes of the book and:



A little about

## Coco Apunnguaq Lynge



Coco was born in Nuvuk, Greenland. At the age of 5 she was brought to Denmark and raised in the northern Aarhus area.

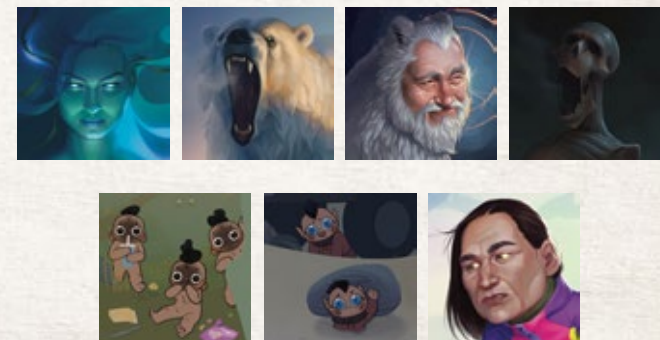
She has an AP degree in Multimedia Design and studied Fashion Design before she got her BAC in Computer Graphic Arts from The Animation Workshop in Viborg, Denmark.

Coco has had her art exhibited at different museums and Greenlandic houses both in Denmark and Greenland. Her art has been featured on a Greenlandic postal stamp. She has illustrated books such as *Bestarium Groenlandica*, *Ukatakut Kussuk*, *Ukatakut Qimaaneq*, and *Natsinnguaq Apataqut*.

Most recently she authored and illustrated her own children's book, *Counting Arctic Animals*.

In 2022 she started working as a junior concept artist at Mood Visuals, Denmark.

Coco illustrated:





## Glossary of Inuktitut Words

The glossary is intended to support non-Inuktitut speakers in their reading of Inuktitut words.

For more resources on how to pronounce Inuktitut words, visit [inhabitmedia.com/inuitnipingit](http://inhabitmedia.com/inuitnipingit).

WORD	DEFINITION
aassik	giant worm
akuiqqutit	bad influence
aliuqtukkat	ghosts (a ghost or spirit of a deceased person. A ghost can be benevolent or malevolent, depending on who the person was when they died and the manner in which they died. They can sometimes become a helper spirit to family members or close relations, acting as a guide from the afterlife)
alliit	the ones below
amaqqut	giant wolves (plural)
amaruq	giant wolf (singular)
amaruqsuaq	giant wolf (singular)
angakkuut	shamans (plural)
angakkuq	shaman (singular) (Mage, magician, judge, doctor, and more: an angakkuq can take on one or many of these roles, depending on their spiritual powers, authority, and general knowledge of medicine and the human body. Some angakkuut may choose only to be spiritual advisors, while others might be the head of a village or specialize in healing)

aqsarniit	the northern lights
Asiaq	mistress of weather
ijiqqat	odd-eyed tumblers
ikusiiit	elbow walkers (plural)
ikusik	elbow-walker (singular)
ilimmarniq	spiritual journey (a journey that is undertaken by an angakkuq, where their soul leaves their body and flies out either to appease powerful spirits or to hunt down malevolent spirits)
immap nanua	giant polar bear
inniqsuit	fire people
inua	the soul or essence of an object, animal, or human (all things have inua, and if the inua is out of balance or damaged in some way, this could be the reason why something gets broken or why a person gets sick. Inua can also refer to the spirit or master of a certain thing, like Kassuma is the inua of the sea)
inurruit	shape-shifters (plural)
inurruuq	shape-shifter (singular)
iqqillit	dog-people (plural)
irraviiqsiniuiq	another term for Naligatiq
Kanna	mother of the sea
Kassaassuk	name
Kassuma	mother of the sea
kilivvak	giant scraper
Naligatiq	entrails-eater
Naqsaq	place name
Naqsaqsuaq	place name



nunatak	the jagged pieces of mountain sticking up from the inland ice or from a glacier
Nuvuk	place name
pisitiup inua	master of strenght
qajaq	kayak (a one-person mode of transport for hunting on water)
Qaquqtuq	place name
qarlimaatsuq	graveyard ghoul
qaumaniq	spiritual power or light (most people possess a certain amount of qaumaniq, but those who have a particularly strong light will most likely have enough spiritual power to become an angakkuq)
qivittuq	mountain-walker (singular)
qivittut	mountain-walkers (plural)
qulliit	the ones above
qulliq	soapstone lamp (this provided light during the long, dark winter nights in the Arctic, and it was a much-prized possession. The wick was made of peat and moss, while blubber or other animal fat was used as the fuel for the flame)
qungasaraittuq	smiling merman
Quuqqut	place
sakkut	eastern Greenlandic term for "ulu"
tunit	giants

tupilak	vengeful spirit (singular)
tupilat	vengeful spirits (plural)
tuurngaq	helper spirit (singular)
tuurngat	helper spirits (plural)
ulu	an oval knife with a handle above the blade (singular) (used for carving and flensing. It comes with either one to two grips and is known as a <i>sakkuut</i> in eastern Greenland)
uluit	oval knives with handles above the blades (plural)



