



RACHEL A. QITSUALIK



Skraeling

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTE

I ASSUMED, IN SETTING OUT to write this story, that I would require some psychological time travel. I should have known better. One forces nothing upon the Arctic, it seems—not even in fiction.

It was an understandable error. After all, from 800 to 1200 AD, the world was warmer, drawing the dogsledding progenitors of Inuit (“Thule”) culture out of Alaska, overlapping the ancient habitations of their now-extinct cousins, the Tunit (“Dorset”). This story explores a possible meeting between these peoples, and one other, along Baffin Island’s eastern edge.

When I step out in early summer, however, I still step onto the same land. I walk in the same hills that newly arrived Inuit walked in. I see the same orange lichens, the same spectacular purple of flowers in bloom, the same fat black spiders racing through the moss. The persistence of this land forbids true time travel. Instead, I can only drift, ghostlike, between the worlds of then and now, whose differences lie far more in people than in the land itself. For if the Arctic regarded itself, it would recognize no change, and the peoples that have settled or passed over time would be no more noteworthy than the spiders in the moss.

This leaves only a familiar challenge, that of dealing with culture. You see, I'm already a bit of a time traveller, old enough to remember a crazy shaman who used to get stuck in trances (needing my dad to snap her out of it) and young enough to remain sore about my mother smashing my Rolling Stones records. I've never had trouble reconciling "then" and "now," so I've been happy to explain my culture—whether through fiction or exposition—to others.

Which is exactly why I'm *avoiding* doing so in this story.

Some of the characters in this tale are bound to be doing and believing things that are puzzling to non-Inuit readers. Good. We live in a time when critical thinking is not "hip," when we demand a thorough explanation of everything presented to us, preferably in easy-to-read, brochure form. While this facilitates speed, it is also the cognitive equivalent of living on marshmallows.

I could go into great, galloping detail on how Inuit hold individual freedom to be sacred, about how open displays of violence are forbidden, or how confrontation is traditionally avoided. I could include an "inside" look at shamanism, making it accessible. But is this truly charitable? No, my feeling is that if the reader wants to understand a people, he or she has to live with those people for a while. And a story is the ultimate magic by which this may occur. Let the reader puzzle out those alien behaviours, as children might among adults. Let the reader feel the uncertainty of living in a little-understood land, as newly arrived Inuit might. Let the reader not feel comfortable with unseen powers seething in the very air, but instead feel the trepidation, uncertainty, and outright horror that early peoples knew.

Welcome to the land before it was named.

Skraeling

Kannujaq stood atop a ridge, while ravens wheeled and cursed from violet slopes.

He was soaked with sweat, but a chill nevertheless ran through him. It was unusually cold for spring, true, but no cold could so disquiet him. It was what lay among the shallow, winding valleys. Upon the hills.

All around him were *inuksuit*—structures of rock, in the image of men. Kannujaq recalled his grandfather's tales of how these were made by the Tunit, the elusive people who had occupied the land long before Kannujaq's people arrived. This was the way in which the Tunit hunted. Every year, the caribou would take paths that avoided the *inuksuit*. And every year, the Tunit herded them into kill zones. Kannujaq's grandfather had seen one such site: there the Tunit had left piles of bones, piles that could have accumulated only after generations.

Who would live like this? Kannujaq thought.

Being unmarried, Kannujaq travelled alone. He had almost become complacent over this last winter, used to being in one place. It had been a sweet, rich autumn of good fishing, better seal hunting. He had lived under a shelter of interlocking whale ribs, found all over the rocky shores

of this area. There he had practised patience while living alongside the family of his hunting partner. Elders had spent all season telling him about the much harsher winters in the times of their forefathers. He had managed to escape around the time the ravens, those first nest builders of spring, began their nuptial dances in the sky. It had been a long winter.

(But, oh, how he and the others had brought in *tuugaaliit*, those small, dark whales with the spiralled tusks!)

For it was whales that drew Kannujaq, like everyone else, to this place, and ever eastward, deeper into the unknown lands, just as whales and walrus had lured his father, and his father before him. Kannujaq's father had not been much of a storyteller, but his grandfather had been an endless source of tales, most often of the lands their family and others had passed through, of how there probably was land and islands and hunting forever ahead.

Kannujaq could never know that his grandfather was wrong. What lay east of them was mostly a vast ocean. On its opposite side, there stood the Byzantine Empire at its strongest, the envy of lands Kannujaq would never know, places steeped in centuries of iron and bloodshed.

Kannujaq's grandfather also told of the trees back west, supposedly thicker and higher as one moved southward. Among these lived the *Iqqiliit*, tall and painted and fearsome. The old man could never have imagined that, even as he spoke his words to young Kannujaq, a Mayan king stood atop a pyramid temple engineered with advanced mathematics, sacrificing his sacred blood to bring victory in war.

Kannujaq would never know that, even as he recalled his grandfather's tales, another man, named Alhazen, who had been studying lenses in a land called Egypt, was pondering his findings on the nature of rainbows. Alhazen's young religion, called Islam, was only now losing momentum after sweeping across a world that, strangely, subsisted almost entirely upon grains.

In fact, if Kannujaq had known even one hundredth of what was occurring while he was staring across the amber hills, he would have been immensely grateful for his relative isolation.

He was spared the knowledge, for example, that the great lust of many peoples was for a substance called gold, which had just brought African Ghana to its peak. He had no idea that the world could hold so many people who would demand such trivialities. In a place eventually known as China, commerce was flourishing under the nascent Sung Dynasty, ruling over sixty million souls. Its emperor was even now troubled by distant, distant relations of both Kannujaq and the Tunit—called Mongols.

Kannujaq might have been even more confused by the place called Europe. There, the empire of Charlemagne had finally fragmented, its western portion becoming young France. France had been having a difficult time, having had to placate a force of Scandinavians, called Norsemen, by handing over Normandy to them.

These Scandinavians were not only a problem for France. Over the last few generations, Danes had taken over more than half of an island called England.

If Kannujaq had known anything at all about these Scandinavians, he would have been as terrified of them as the Europeans were. A tribe of them had already founded Russia. The Nordic kingdoms of Denmark and Norway were vying for supremacy. Scandinavians had already discovered Iceland, and completely dominated the Irish coastline. An exile called Eric had recently used Iceland to hop all the way across the ocean, founding a colony in a place he liked to think of as "Greenland."

Kannujaq would have been most startled to learn that these were the End Times. A Catholic church was telling all of its flock to expect judgment; for, by their calendar, it was 1000 AD.

And their world was in the grip of the Viking.

Kannujaq was regretting having taken this detour. It had led him away from the coast, and his dog team was having a rough time among the rocks.

He sighed and started back down to his sled as a low howl began to make its way over the wind. In a moment, it was joined by another, then

several more, until there was a mad cacophony rising and falling among the hills.

Not wolves, he thought. Tunit. Driving the caribou by imitating wolves.

The Tunit were hunting here. He tried to suppress the creeping nausea that ran through him at their howls, comforting himself with the thought that the Tunit—while immensely strong—were supposedly cowards, running whenever they saw real people. They might resemble humans, albeit shorter, more squat, but they were little more than beasts.

Kannujaq decided not to bother them, slipping and sliding his way back down to where his dogs awaited.

Soon the sled was again making its tortuous way back toward the coast, rushing ahead on the occasional patch of snow, sticking, rushing ahead, sticking again.

Despite the tongues lolling from their heads with overexertion, Kannujaq began to notice that his dogs were growing excited, and it took him a moment to realize that this meant they were smelling a community ahead—a potential source of food. Kannujaq was fond of the idea as well.

The timing was perfect, for a storm was moving in and the light snowfall interfered with his distance vision. Fortunately, the days were growing long, so there was still enough light for Kannujaq to spot twisting lines of smoke in the distance, where the ground levelled out.

Kannujaq grinned as several figures came into sight. Camp dwellers. He began to urge his dogs forward, but paused. Something bothered him about this place.

Where are the dogs? he wondered.

Then he spotted one loose dog out of the corner of his eye, and felt a bit better.

Where is that thing running to? he thought. It disappeared into the haze of thickening snowfall.

He was startled by an odd noise, a thin cry. He turned back toward the approaching figures and realized they were running at him.

There was no time to reach his bow. He could think only to fumble about for his spear. But the figures did not attack. Instead, they turned out

to be a mixed group of Tunit men, women, and children, dark faces twisted up in fear. Some were carrying babies, awkwardly, in their arms. The men and women among them were marked by odd hairstyles. Both had great lengths of it twisted up tightly, but the men wore theirs in a peculiar ball atop their heads, while the women wore clusters over each temple. All they shared was their shabby, sooty tops, their bear-fur pants, and their short, squat frames.

No wonder there are so few dogs here, Kannujaq thought. *I've stumbled into a Tunit camp.* He, like his dogs, no doubt, had assumed that this was a human encampment. What a mistake. Now he would be ripped apart by Tunit.

Yet the Tunit did not attack. They caught sight of Kannujaq and ground to a halt. Then they turned and ran in a different direction.

Not attacking. Running. From what?

Only a single boy, hooded and not quite of proper hunting age, did not run. Instead, he paused, seemingly mesmerized by Kannujaq's dog team. Kannujaq went forward with raised arms, to show that he meant no harm.

The boy began to speak excitedly, but Kannujaq had some difficulty understanding the words. It was almost normal language, but different—a Tunit dialect. Strangely, the boy was grinning from the depths of his vast hood, which mostly concealed a sooty face.

The boy kept pointing at him. In a few moments, Kannujaq seemed to grasp what he was saying: he was glad Kannujaq had come, and . . . he was late? The boy had expected him? Also . . . *they* were here. Them. They had come. There were other words as well, words Kannujaq couldn't quite make out. And there was one word that the boy kept repeating, but it was no use—Kannujaq simply couldn't penetrate the weird dialect.

He did, however, realize that the boy was not pointing at him. He was rambling on about the necklace around Kannujaq's neck. Upon it were strung claws from Kannujaq's first bear, along with a special bauble his grandfather had given him. There a tiny piece of his namesake was strung, a reddish loop of *kannujaq*. It was all that remained of his grandmother's

awl acquired back in the west, where people sometimes melted the stuff from rocks. It was hard and cold and pretty; but, annoyingly, if not constantly polished, the reddish *kannujaq* turned green.

The boy seemed fixated upon it.

With gentle touches at his arm, the boy began to lead Kannujaq into the Tunit camp. There was something desperate about the boy, something that compelled Kannujaq to indulge him. As they went, the boy's grin faded, and his pronunciations became impossible to understand. Increasingly, his voice became wrung by emotion. Stiffly, Kannujaq forced one foot in front of the other, somehow feeling more childlike than the one he followed.

I am in a dream, he thought. Yes, that's it. These are not real Tunit. I'm asleep.

Yet the weather would not let him remain convinced that this was fantasy. It was worsening, and quick, sharp gusts were whipping crystalline particles about like sand. Whenever they relented for a moment, Kannujaq could see a squat figure or two in frantic flight, as before. Sometimes he stiffened upon hearing a scream.

In a few moments, he spotted a row of seven glowing fires—the peculiar way in which Tunit kept their cook-fires—lined up outside an enclosure of flat rocks, about waist-high. The boy led him around it, slightly downhill, toward the shore. When the snow was not stinging his eyes, he could see the corners and walls of other stone dwellings, as well as . . .

Bodies?

Upon the ground lay several dark heaps. The boy led Kannujaq, stumbling, past the dead, who lay like so many seals dragged up from the shore. The Tunit site was all bare stones, devoid of old snow or ice, but wherever Kannujaq's eyes were allowed to rest for longer than a heartbeat, he could see new, wind-driven particles becoming caught upon rocks, sticky with dark vital fluid already freezing. The boy began to lead him quickly. Other details were lost to him, but he had spotted enough for his brain to begin whispering: *This is a place of murder . . .*

No! He should have turned back as soon as he saw that this was a Tunit encampment. If they were involved in a feud with another community, he wanted no part in it. He wheeled, looking for his dogs.

The boy's hand clamped down upon his wrist. Kannujaq froze in shock, momentarily forgetting his panic. No one had ever dared behave so aggressively toward him. Among his own kind, physical aggression occurred only between the most dire enemies—and never openly. Otherwise, it was a symptom of madness.

Yet these are not people, but Tunit, he thought.

He could hear shouting near the beach, much of it the unintelligible roars of men. Kannujaq realized that living Tunit were now passing him and the boy. Some were staggering about dazedly, barely noticing them. Most were kneeling on the ground, weeping over the dead.

As though suddenly realizing how aggressive he was being, the boy released Kannujaq. Then he spoke that odd word again, the one Kannujaq had had trouble understanding before.

He's saying "Help," Kannujaq suddenly realized. It's "Help."

The boy repeated "Help" one more time, pointed toward the beach, then raced to the side of a staggering Tunik.

Kannujaq was alone now. He could easily disappear, forget about this place. But he had been jarred out of his panic; it had been replaced with a kind of . . . curiosity.

So the boy wants my help, he thought. Against what?

He approached the shore.

In moments, he could almost see the beach past the snow. There were fires down there, figures moving about. Perhaps two or three? He realized that they were running toward the water. In a moment, he realized that they were not Tunit.

Giants. There were giants down there. Manlike. Hulking. Monstrous. Giants.

Then the snowfall somewhat abated, and Kannujaq almost fell back at the colossal thing revealed by the water's edge. The giants were nothing in comparison.

Impossible, he thought. A bird. A loon. No . . . not a loon. Not truly.

It was akin to a loon, a great, dark, majestic shape, larger than any creature or structure that Kannujaq could conceive of, larger than his sled, larger than any *iglu* he had seen before. Upon its back danced several swirling flames, and among these fires there strode a single, manlike being: the master of the giants. As the giants scrambled up onto the back of the loon-thing, this being turned toward Kannujaq, revealing a face that shone like the sun. Its flat features glowed like daylight upon waves.

One of the giants approached this Shining One, and an argument ensued. The giant pointed to the sky, saying something like "Elulang" or "Helulan." A word for weather?

The Shining One began to holler at the giant, pointing to the sky. Then he shoved him backward, as one who cannot control his temper might kick a dog. The other giants had clambered onto the loon—which was looking less like a loon and more like a boat with each passing moment. They were using long oars to push off from the beach.

The realization that he was looking at a kind of boat snapped Kannujaq's mind out of its terrified fugue. This was a boat, after all. Just a boat, although it was the largest he had ever seen, great enough to hold several torches along its gunwales. It was long and streamlined, with an overextended, stylized prow that had given it a loon-like appearance. In fact, Kannujaq could now see that the prow was not bird-like at all but had been deliberately fashioned to resemble some kind of beast, perhaps a wolf.

Nor were its crew truly giants, but simply large men, given the appearance of even greater size by ambiguous layers of fur and tools strapped to every part of their bodies. Even so, they were peculiar men. What little of their skin that could be seen seemed pale, cadaverous. At first, Kannujaq had assumed that the lower halves of their faces sported coverings of dog fur. He could now see that these were beards of surreal proportions, the colour of Kannujaq's dogs.

With fear overpowered by amazement, Kannujaq stepped closer as the boat left the shore, the men at the oars turning it about as though they were used to commanding the water. Kannujaq studied the Shining One,

who did not row like the others but stood over them like a man over his dogs. Before that monstrous boat was at last obscured by the haze of snowfall, the shining face once more turned back toward Kannujaq. And while he thought it unlikely that the master of the boat could see him, Kannujaq could not help feeling as though the wide, dark eyes within that visage were fixed upon his own. It dawned on him then that this, too, was simply another man, one whose head was covered in *kannujaq* fashioned to look like a face.

A mask, he thought. A leader who wears a mask.

The realization did little to comfort him. The owl-like appearance of that mask was raising the hair on the back of his neck. The ptarmigan was Kannujaq's animal; but the owl was his traditional enemy.

The boy had misplaced his faith, Kannujaq realized. He was unsure of what, or who, these men were, but he had a feeling there was no helping anyone against them. Unless it was to advise flight.

Where is that boy?

Kannujaq found him nearby, weeping over a fallen Tunik, a youngster who had perhaps been a friend. A dead person was not very much like a seal, after all. The blood was much darker, blending with the colour of the stones beneath. Somewhat nauseated, refusing to look toward the sounds of other Tunit weeping around him, Kannujaq stood over the boy, who no longer seemed to register his presence. None of the other Tunit even seemed to realize that Kannujaq was there. Respectfully, he tried to keep his eyes averted from the dead.

Instead, he regarded the weeping boy for some time, watching soot-laden tears dropping steadily from his chin. He was seeing the boy in a new light. The boy was somehow more real, not at all a sort of character from a dream, as he had at first seemed. Kannujaq's eyes followed sooty trails of tears down the sides of the boy's neck, where lay a partially covered necklace of raven skulls. Among his own kind, it was something an *angakoq*—a master of the Hidden world—might wear; but here, it might simply be a boy's eccentric ornamentation. After all, the Tunit were strange.

But they are human, after all, he thought. They are.

He hunkered down next to the lad, and as he watched this mourning boy, who had so vainly hoped for his help against the Shining One, he felt tears well in his own eyes. He had not even bothered to ask the boy's name.

Who would murder like this? he thought. Who would do this to these people?

"What is your name?" he asked.

Instead of answering, the lad wiped his face against the back of his sleeve and turned to Kannujaq as though noticing him for the first time. He removed his hood.

A chill ran through Kannujaq.

Blue. They're blue . . .

The boy's eyes were like twin shards of ice, the coldest blue of frigid depths.

Kannujaq understood then. The raven skulls. The obsession with his grandfather's *kannujaq*. Those unearthly eyes, one of any number of unusual features that mark the Half Hidden. This boy was an *angakoq*.

A shaman.

Unsurprisingly, the boy's name turned out to be Siku ("ice"), and he was indeed the resident *angakoq* in this camp. The boy himself didn't seem to make much of this but simply walked Kannujaq to a nearby shelter. Kannujaq had heard that an *angakoq* was an *angakoq*, that his kind and the Tunit were the same in this respect. If so, was he endangering himself by openly befriending the boy? It would depend entirely upon the boy's personal reputation. All the Half Hidden were feared. Some, however, were able to make their powers of use to the community. Others were so terrible or mad as to warrant exile, perhaps even death. Every *angakoq* was eccentric, without exception, and the community was lucky if its *angakoq* was content to hunt and rear a family in peace. Fortunately, it was a good bet that there was only Siku here—the Half Hidden were jealous and did not

like to share territory with one another. Siku was probably powerful. It was rare to find a child *angakoq*, and his eyes were a very strong sign. Who had tutored him?

The Shining One and his men had left quite a mess. There were bodies to gather up, homes to restore, people to comfort. Kannujaq was led past an old man who knelt alongside one of the rectangular Tunit homes. He was piling the stones of its low walls back together, but doing so dazedly, haphazardly. When Kannujaq saw his face, it was carved with agony, glistening with rheum. The eyes were wide and mad, as though gazing off at nothing in particular. Kannujaq barely tore his gaze away from the old creature in time to avoid stepping over two women who were literally lying atop a dead man, their hands clawing and gripping spastically. Their faces were hidden, but their long, despairing wails seemed to merge into a single voice.

The Shining One's giant men had killed without purpose, seemingly laying into whoever had made themselves most available. It was an angry, insane sort of thing, and even accounts Kannujaq had heard of vendetta attacks between families had not seemed as awful as this. Where people had not been available for murder, the giants had scattered cook-fires and kicked in the feeble little walls that made up the Tunit homes.

Kannujaq felt awkward as Tunit grieved and pitifully restored order all around him, and he began to stare downward, not wanting to take in any more of it. He passed only one person who seemed to notice that he was not a Tunit, a young mother who clutched her baby tighter at the sight of him. But Siku led Kannujaq along even faster, quickly bringing him to his own little Tunit-style place: a sunken, square-walled hovel strewn with odd carvings, bones, and bags stuffed with undisclosed materials—probably shamanic bric-a-brac. Kannujaq wasn't sure whether he was witnessing an *angakoq* lifestyle or simply a boy's tendency to collect things.

While Kannujaq picked up and chewed some dried meat, as was any guest's right, the boy stuffed fistfuls of heather into a near-dead fire. This place was a miniature version of the typical Tunit home. The flagstone floor

was a shallow pit, given the illusion of greater height by the rectangle of short stone walls around them. The ceiling was tent-like. Kannujaq didn't have time to study it closely, since he was nearly overwhelmed by smoke billowing from the fire. He began to cough, but Siku just grinned at him from a cloud of fumes, seemingly unbothered.

I can see why the Tunit are all sooty, he thought. It was as he had heard. The Tunit did not use lamps.

There was a peculiar smell that accompanied the smoke, acrid but not entirely unpleasant. Soon Kannujaq began to relax, and he very much felt like talking.

"Perhaps you should tell me, now, why I am here," he said. "Did you think I could do something against those giants?"

So, as winds rasped at the outside world, the two of them talked. For how long, Kannujaq wasn't sure. But he quickly learned that this was not the first time the "sea monsters," as Siku often called them, had attacked. Further, there had been rumours going around that other Tunit camps had been attacked. It was said that they wiped out whole communities, always attacking men and women first. Some Tunit escaped them by fleeing inland. More died under their gigantic, whirling knives. Always, they laughed and shouted "Siaraili!" as they killed. In fact, that was a common name for them: the Siaraili.

There was peace over this past winter, during which time they heard nothing of the Siaraili. But just last month, the monsters appeared at the shore, savagely assaulting this camp.

Because the ice is breaking up, Kannujaq thought. *Their boat couldn't get through over the winter. The Tunit probably haven't realized that this means they travel only by water.*

Siku's belief was that the Siaraili had followed Angula, the camp's current boss, to this place. He claimed, with a scowl, that Angula was the cause of all this. Angula was a Tunit who had bought himself into power here by lending tools to others. Not just any tools, but special ones. Angula possessed a fabulous, secret store of tools, and it was this, the boy claimed, that helped him buy his way to power.

Kannujaq then learned why the boy had so fixated upon his *kannujaq* necklace. Every one of these "special tools" that Angula held so dear was made of *kannujaq*. Further, it was Siku's belief that Angula had somehow stolen these *kannujaq* things from the Shining One himself, who was now seeking vengeance and the return of his property.

Angula, however, had an altogether insane take on things. Increasingly, he claimed that spirits were giving him his *kannujaq* implements. He had begun to claim that he had special powers.

Madness, Kannujaq thought. *Weird tools can't give one powers.*

It was Siku's thought that Angula wanted to think of himself as an *angakoq*, perhaps even as something beyond an *angakoq*. And these were strange times. With raids by the Siaraili, people weren't sure what to believe. Many Tunit simply wanted to leave, despite the love of their homes, but Angula would not let anyone go.

Love of home? Kannujaq wondered at the foreign concept. *Home is but a place where one stops moving for a while.*

Angula's latest absurdity had been to tell the community that the Siaraili were under his direction. Their attacks, he claimed, were punishment for the people disobeying him. According to him, the Siaraili attacks would stop as soon as people stopped trying to leave and demonstrated complete submission to his will.

Kannujaq was scandalized. No mind, no *isuma*, must ever force anything upon another! But, he supposed, the Tunit were a shy people. Perhaps they were scared of this Angula.

Kannujaq's reverie was broken as Siku tossed something. It landed with a heavy clunk upon one of the flagstones.

He noted the weight of the peculiar object as soon as he picked it up. Heavier than it ought to be. Obviously some kind of knife.

Tunit could not have made this thing. Their craftsmanship was said to be ridiculously poor. And while Siku's clothes were well made, the rest of these people were dressed in what to Kannujaq's kind might have been rags. The few tools Kannujaq had seen here were no better. Not even any lamps. No dogsleds, either. Kannujaq wasn't sure how the Tunit managed to survive.

Yet this knife was of excellent make. What really caught his attention was the colour, the dark red of a *kannujaq* blade, which was cold, like stone. It was almost as long as his forearm, having only a single, straight edge. The dull side was oddly curved, and along it ran mysterious etchings.

Kannujaq scratched at it with his fingernail. Rust, as found on rocks, came away. Under it was a grey, cold, hard stuff like *kannujaq*, but more dense. Rock could leave scratches on his own sample of *kannujaq*, but when he tried scraping a piece of flint on this, there was no scoring. He clamped his teeth upon it, but knew that it would break his teeth before it gave way.

His heart began to beat faster. The boy had made a mistake. This was not *kannujaq* but something far better. The things one could do with a good supply of this stuff . . .

The boy explained that this knife was one that Angula was lending him in return for various services. His face, however, betrayed the fact that he had stolen it.

Kannujaq sat up, opening his mouth to tell the boy that the Tunit must leave this place, must get away from this Angula and from the shore . . .

He didn't get a chance. A voice, deep, as though from a chest more bear than man, suddenly called from outside,

"I wonder why the *angakoq* hides a dogsledder in our camp!"

Siku went rigid, and one look from him told Kannujaq that this voice belonged to Angula.

"I wonder," bellowed Angula again, "what a dogsledder wants from us Tunit!"

Kannujaq stepped outside to face the owner of that voice. There he saw before him the fattest imaginable Tunit man, chest adorned with set upon set of clumsily arranged bear-tooth amulets. Rather than dangle, they seemed to rest upon his middle-aged paunch. As a Tunit, he was already rather short and squat. The added weight simply enhanced the boulder-like appearance that all Tunit men possessed.

So this is the great Angula.

Angula stood flanked by three younger men, who eyed Kannujaq uneasily. Cronies, no doubt, their allegiance bought with Angula's treasures. Fortunately, there were no weapons being brandished at the moment. Kannujaq could see several other Tunit men, women, and children milling around behind Angula. Nervous glances everywhere.

And then Kannujaq saw the first beautiful thing that he had seen since coming here. It was a woman, one with eyes like dark stones beneath sunlit water. But the lines of her face bespoke frowning more than smiling. Her hair was worn in normal braids, rather than in the crazy Tunit way, and her clothes were of unusually high quality . . .

This was no Tunit! This was a woman of his own kind.

Kannujaq greeted Angula in a friendly manner, but the creature only made a *chuff* noise, like a bear. Again he began to wonder aloud why there was a stranger hiding in his camp. While he did so, his cronies snickered next to him, but their eyes—like those of the other Tunit here—betrayed the fact that they were uncomfortable with Angula's behaviour.

Angula obviously had a problem with Kannujaq's kind. He spoke more as a show of dominance, for the sake of the onlookers, rather than directly to Kannujaq. He constantly looked Kannujaq up and down, sometimes pursing his lips in disgust.

"It is obvious," Angula said, "that this is why the Siaraili have attacked yet again! This is a camp full of disobedience. I have been defied once more, for now someone has tried to hide one of the foreign dogsledders among us."

Then he saw the knife, still in Kannujaq's hand.

"What is this?" he exploded, coming eye to eye with some of the people. They seemed to wither before him.

"A dogsledder comes among us to steal!" he railed. "It is bad enough that their dogsledding kind ever soil our traditional lands! But now the trespassers steal from us!"

Kannujaq noticed that Angula liked the term "dogsledder." It seemed to epitomize his detestation of Kannujaq's people.

Then Angula wheeled and pointed at Kannujaq, saying, "You are jealous! That's why you have come to steal! You dogsledding foreigners always think you have better things than Tunit! But now a Tunit has better things than you, and you can't stand it, can you?"

Kannujaq remained shocked into silence throughout the tirade. But Angula's shameful spectacle was not allowed to continue. A youthful voice suddenly barked at Angula from Kannujaq's rear.

"Angula!"

Siku had emerged. His blue eyes had paled even further with rage, blazing out at Angula. While all stood, dumbstruck, he uncurled the fingers of one hand to reveal his helper.

Kannujaq had one glimpse at a tiny, skeletal figure in the boy's palm—a carved figurine that symbolized the helper—before he looked away in horror. There were gasps all around, and the boy began to speak at Angula in an oddly spidery voice.

Kannujaq quickly realized that it was the helper, who announced himself as He Who Carries Beneath, speaking through the boy. An *angakoq* could have many helpers, whether monstrous spirits ritually tethered or the souls of animals or ancestors. No one would see He Who Carries Beneath, but the boy was revealing him through the figurine he had carved, a representation of the helper. If necessary, he could also arm him with invisible weapons, similar carvings of little knives or spears.

Yet it seemed that, for now, the helper was messenger only. Speaking through Siku, He Who Carries Beneath told Angula, "You are no longer leader of this camp. It is the dogsledder who must become the camp's headman for a time. It is the *kannujaq* he wears about his neck that is a sign of this. He will drive away the Siaraili."

The helper then addressed the people, saying, "It is Angula's sins that have brought the Siaraili among you. You will all perish if you continue to have Angula as leader. This I know by Hidden knowledge. If you doubt, simply look at the dogsledder's necklace to see that his people have power to match that of the Siaraili."

But they don't, Kannujaq thought. *I don't*. It made Kannujaq wonder if it was really the helper or Siku doing the talking here.

One way or another, the helper did not finish the message. There was a roar, and Angula rushed forward, knocking the boy down.

All the onlookers, including Kannujaq, stood paralyzed with shock. It was not that Angula had attacked an *angakoq*. It was not even that he had attacked a boy. It was that he had done it *openly*, in front of everyone. Open violence was forbidden.

Mad . . . thought Kannujaq. He's mad . . .

The mysterious, non-Tunit woman was by Siku's side in an instant, but the young *angakoq* was already up again. His gaze was fixed upon Angula. Kannujaq had never seen such sheer murder in a boy's eyes before.

Angula was panting, more with stress than with exertion, and he quickly whirled about, pointing at Kannujaq.

"This is exactly what I was afraid of!" he bellowed. "Look what you made me do! You are obviously a powerful *angakoq*, manipulating us all!"

But his eyes shifted about furtively, uncertain.

"I will forgive Siku!" Angula huffed. "He is merely under your control! But you will leave now! Try to stay, and you die!"

Angula glanced at his cronies, but they looked uncertain.

"No one," Angula yelled at the onlookers, "is to follow this dogsledder or listen to his lies! Anyone who does will die!"

For a time, the only motion was windblown snow. The only sound was the mourning of distant dogs.

At last, Kannujaq threw down Angula's knife and walked away. His eyes met the boy's, fleetingly. The pale blue shards held mingled confusion and despair at Kannujaq's flight.

Kannujaq went to his dogs. There were sounds behind him as he left—Angula making more proclamations, no doubt—but he ignored them. In a short time, he left the sounds and the Tunit madness behind him, and there were his dogs. He had never realized before how much he loved

these mutts. He had never realized what a treasure he possessed in his simple sled.

He only had scraps of dried meat to throw for the dogs, but it would keep them going. The storm had pretty much passed, leaving a bit of snow behind, and it was an ideal time for departure. He went to see if everything was lashed down properly, then he went to relieve himself.

A footstep, and there was the sudden flutter of wings. White appeared out of nowhere: a male ptarmigan hidden in an old snow patch. The potential food item nearly flew straight over his head, and Kannujaq desperately looked around for a rock to wing it with.

Then he saw them.

There were four, one of them grossly fat. Kannujaq knew that one was Angula. So he had decided not to let Kannujaq live, after all. They were coming on fast, carrying obscenely long knives, much larger than the one Siku had shown him.

Angula has dipped into his treasures, Kannujaq thought.

And bows. This was not about fighting, but straight-out murder. They would cripple him with arrows, finish him with blades.

Kannujaq raced to the sled and frantically pulled away lashing, retrieving his own bow. His heart was pounding by the time he found arrows and stepped away from the dogs. He wanted no stray shots falling among them.

The Tunit saw this and froze. He could see the cronies darting questioning looks at Angula, probably trying to convince him that this was a bad idea. Angula only nocked an arrow and drew, aiming high for a good arc.

Kannujaq backed up and the arrow fell short.

Angula tried again. This time, his cronies joined in. Several arrows came at Kannujaq, but again he backed up, and they fell short. This happened twice more, and with every failed volley, Kannujaq's smile grew broader.

Kannujaq had realized something: his was not a Tunit bow. It was made from composite pieces of whalebone, with a stronger recurve than the Tunit style, and better lashing. Its range was greater.

Kannujaq carefully nocked his arrow and took his time in the draw. Breath suspended, he made sure of his stance and loosed.

There was dread elegance in the arrow's flight. Then it came down, finding a home in Angula's chest. There it quivered, before Angula fell to one knee. His cry was long, a wail more of despair than of pain. He fell and lay still.

Kannujaq was nocking another arrow when the cronies at last tore their eyes away and fled like rabbits.

Kannujaq walked over to the dead Angula, frowning, more angry at Angula's corpse than he had been at the living man.

The fool, he thought. Making me kill him. The damn fool.

He put his bow away and began to leave, but paused.

He actually found himself concerned about the Tunit. How would they fare once the Siaraili returned? Perhaps better, with Angula gone. But now they had no one to lead them. Would they have the wits to flee, or would they sit confused, waiting to be slaughtered? And where would they go? As long as they lived by a coast, that Siaraili vessel could find them.

It could find his own people, too.

He looked back toward the Tunit camp, now leaderless. The ptarmigan. His animal. If it had not taken flight, Angula and his cronies would have ambushed him. A sign?

"Probably not," he grumbled.

Well, there was no point in making away so quickly. He might as well tell Siku what had happened. Siku, young as he was, was somewhat respected. He might point the Tunit to a new leader.

As long as it wasn't Kannujaq.

He gave the dogs the rest of his dried meat reserves.

As Kannujaq had anticipated, the boy was overjoyed at his return. In his *angakoq* way, he saw Angula's death as assurance of exactly what Kannujaq refused to accept: that he was here to save the Tunit.

At least Angula's tether on the community had been cut. People actually smiled, however shyly, at Kannujaq. Enough people offered him food that he had to start refusing it.

One of the first things Siku did was to introduce him to his mother, Siaq, who greeted him coolly. This was the lovely woman whom Kannujaq had spotted earlier. He was still certain that she was not Tunit. What was she doing here, then? There was no chance to ask, since Siku had something of great importance to show him.

The only other person in the community who had ever lived like Siku—alone, that is—was Angula. Siaq had served him, but not as wife. Angula had taken many wives, never keeping any. Siaq, however, had always been only one thing: Angula's slave.

Angula's empty home was left untouched, as though it were a haunted place. So there was no one there to greet them as Siku led Kannujaq into it. It was large, not as big as most communal Tunit dwellings, but large enough for a family. There was something grave-like about it, now that it was abandoned.

The fire, Kannujaq thought. It's dead, like Angula.

Siku did not pause for a moment, leading Kannujaq to the rear of the place, where there was a kind of adjoining chamber meant for storage. There was nothing of value in here, merely old, ragged caribou hides, but Kannujaq already suspected what he was about to see.

Sure enough, Siku pulled the garbage aside to reveal overly large flagstones. With some effort, he heaved one aside.

Here were Angula's treasures, the things the Shining One so desperately sought. Kannujaq had felt that nothing could further impress him, but he was quite wrong.

The pit was crammed with treasures.

These were nothing like Siku's rusted knife. Here was a polished blade as long as his leg, shining like a fish belly, handle decorated with yellow-hued kannujaq. Its home was a sheath of fine leather, wood, and wolf fur.

Kannujaq was even more impressed with the other tools. The majority of them were great, curving crescents—like a woman's *ulu*, but over a

handspan in length—attached to the sturdiest wooden hafts that Kannujaq had ever felt.

These, he thought, could back through anything.

There were other things as well, spearheads and knives, everything of enormous proportions. It took Kannujaq some time to figure out that some items were belts. Other things he recognized as the bowls worn on the heads of the giants. There was cloth made out of tiny, tiny rings. There were curved plates with no apparent function, and some items that were obviously jewellery.

Kannujaq was excited, but saddened. This was further evidence that Angula had been mad. A sane man would have shared these with friends and family, making life easier for all.

Mostly, he felt panic. He understood why the Shining One wanted all of this back. How had Angula managed to steal it?

They replaced the items, and Siku took Kannujaq back to his dwelling. Siaq was already there, but as Kannujaq sat down, Siku departed, leaving the two of them alone.

A planned meeting, Kannujaq thought.

There was silence for a time. Finally, when Kannujaq could stand it no more, he asked Siaq why she lived among Tunit—especially as a slave.

She sighed, as though having dreaded the possibility of discussing such things. Then she placed something in the fire. There was thick smoke, the acrid smell Kannujaq now recognized. He began to relax. He realized, then, that she was burning something that had a calming effect on people, made them want to talk, and that she also possessed some *angakoq* knowledge.

"I had a husband once," she said.

It was so good to hear his own dialect again!

"But a time came," Siaq continued, "when he did not come home. I was alone, and I began to starve, eating my clothing in order to survive.

"In this state was I found by the Tunit. The Tunit were led by Angula. He took me in as a slave, since I could do waterproof stitching. The Tunit cannot. The Tunit do not like slaves, but Angula always had his

way through bullying. And a slave's life among Tunit is better than death."

Barely, Kannujaq thought, but he did not speak. One must not interrupt a story.

"Angula attracts strange beings," Siaz sighed. "One spring, the Tunit discovered a great boat, wood instead of skin, lying gutted along the shore. There were beast-men there, Siaraili, covered in furs and hard shells. They had got wet. They lay frozen, dead, stuck to the ground. Only one among them had not quite died."

The Shining One?

"Angula dragged him to camp," Siaz said. "I was made to care for him. He was huge. Hair like a dog's. Pale, pale skin. He recovered quickly.

"This one was the Shining One, the one who hates us now. But back then, he was grateful only to Angula. He repaid Angula by intimidating others in the camp for him. Angula enjoyed it. It was like having a bear as a pet. In time, Angula made me teach the Shining One some of the way Tunit speak.

"More than anything else, Angula's pet wanted to get home, which he said was across the sea. What he could not know was that great boats were spotted now and again, probably searching for him. Cunning Angula always found ways to keep the Shining One out of sight of these boats, unaware of their presence. He kept him distracted with . . . games, and hunting. With me.

"Eventually, I was given to the Shining One, like a gift, and the stranger accepted readily. The giving over of slaves, I later learned, was common where he came from, a place called Gronland. His kind called the worthless Tunit lands Heluland, or Place of Flat Stones."

She broke off to wipe at her eyes, which were tearing. Kannujaq remained respectfully silent.

"But I was laughing at him inside, all the time," Siaz said, "because I knew that he was just Angula's slave, like me. Seasons went by, and I became sickened with it all. I started to tease Angula. I told him, sometimes, that I would tell the Shining One how Angula was keeping him from being rescued. Angula beat me terribly for this, threatened to kill me.

He was scared. Not only was he keeping the Shining One captive, but he had also stripped the bodies of the Shining One's dead companions. He had told the Shining One that they and their *kannujaq* implements had been lost to the sea. But he had actually kept the *kannujaq* tools, hiding them away safely.

"In time, the Shining One grew into the Tunit community. He even began to treat me kindly. But I was always tempted to tell him the truth about Angula.

"Then a night came when the Shining One and I were quarrelling. All of my hate came out somehow, made my mouth move on its own. I told him the truth. I told him everything. Everything."

Siaz went silent for some time.

"He never spoke after that," she said. "He never looked at me. Not at Angula. Not at the Tunit. Angula became scared. But he was relieved when the Shining One slipped away one day. No one saw him go. Maybe he sighted one of the ships of his people.

"It wasn't long before Angula started showing his *kannujaq* treasures around, claiming that spirits had given them to him, that he had special powers. He had learned that wealth can buy people. He began to lend his treasures out, in return for loyalty. In this way did he enslave everyone.

"But Angula had made a mistake, for the Shining One was no normal man. He was a leader among his own kind. Angula had only a few years to enjoy his power before the Shining One returned. And he brought the Siaraili. He sent out his giants to punish the Tunit shore encampments, laughing, killing, always searching for Angula and his stolen artifacts. Others died, but Angula escaped every time. Angula became mad, paranoid, trying to hold onto his waning power. He claimed that the sea raiders were punishing the community for disobeying him.

"In time, every Tunit in that camp was killed or scattered. Angula survived, fleeing to a new Tunit community—this one. I and Siku, who was smaller then, came with him. Here, over the next few years, it was easy for Angula to buy himself authority with his stolen artifacts. And the whole thing started again."

Siaq was weeping openly by the time she finished her tale; what from, exactly, Kannujaq could not tell. But there was lots to weep about. He suddenly understood how little her son truly knew of his mother. She had told Siku bits and pieces of truth, but he had interpreted everything through the eye of an *angakoq* (as well as that of a boy). To Siku, as to the other Tunit here, this was a battle against sea monsters. The Siaraili were *tuurngait*—evil spirits. In Siku's world, there were signs and portents all around him, but his mother's burden was truth. Only she and Angula had known what the Siaraili really were.

Kannujaq returned truth with truth.

"If all of us do not leave this place," he said, "we die."

Siaq sniffed and agreed.

"I can't leave the Tunit, though," she said. "I've been with them too long. They are friends, family. Life has more meaning among them, now, than it does among your . . . I mean, our kind."

She has become a Tunik, Kannujaq thought.

"And the Tunit are not like our people," she said, "always travelling, always sledding. The Tunit like their homes. Their homes are part of them."

Kannujaq could not understand why anyone would be attached to a home, but he said, "No time for this, Siaq. No time. The Siaraili left last time only because they were worried about the storm. But once they feel safe again, they'll finish this camp. If the Tunit do not move, because of love of their homes, then there is only one other thing they can do. They must fight."

He was surprised to find her laughing, a dry, mirthless, bitter sort of laughter.

"I told you how I taught the Shining One our language," she said. "But I learned some of his, too. The Tunit call the giants Siaraili because that is what they shout as they attack. The Tunit think that this is what the giants call themselves. But shall I tell you what they are really shouting? They shout 'Skraeling!' because they are calling to the Tunit, in mockery. It is their word for 'weakling.' They call the Tunit Skraelings,

because they never fight, but simply run, and run, and run. As well they should. For the Shining One's people have spent generations at war. They have grown fond of it. How could a community of Tunit contend with even a few of those born of conflict, armed with materials harder than stone? This is why the giants run through the camp playfully, kicking walls in, slashing at everything blades can reach. This is fun for them. Afterward, they gorge themselves on whatever they find in camp, washing it down with a harsh tea they are fond of."

Kannujaq was silent. Siaq was right. There would be no standing against the giants, not even with their own artifacts. These were the men whose ship prow was carved like a beast, like a wolf. And that was how they attacked. The Tunit were like caribou. They were all caribou. And the sea raiders were wolves.

Wolves. Siaq was stuffing more heather into the fire when Kannujaq asked her, "How does a Tunik hunt a wolf?"

"They don't," she said. "Wolf pelts, among the Tunit, are rare and valuable, because it is almost impossible to get near enough to a wolf to kill it."

But Kannujaq knew how his own people hunted them.

You did not catch a wolf by running it down, nor by ambushing it. The creatures were too wily. They could sense humans, evading them every time. Instead, you used a wolf's habits against it. The wolf was like a dog. If it found food lying about, it would stuff itself with as much as its gut could carry, eating faster than it could think. So what Kannujaq's people did was this: Soften some sharpened antler. Bend and tie it. Freeze it into the centre of a piece of meat or fat. Invariably, the wolf would swallow it down. The meat and ties would melt and digest inside the wolf. The sharpened antler would spring open. Dead wolf.

Siku walked in while Kannujaq was trying to explain this to Siaq. He seemed to grasp immediately what Kannujaq was implying and began to rummage through his bags. In a few moments, he had retrieved a handful of dried, ugly, greyish lumps.

"Is that what you burn in the fire to make people sleepy?" Kannujaq asked.

"That's a mushroom," Siaz said grimly, "that is very dangerous. It can make one permanently stupid—even kill, if used improperly. But an *angakoq*, like myself or Siku, can prepare small amounts of it properly."

"But if we made a solution of the stuff," Siku grinned, "it would be very deadly, indeed."

"Is there enough to saturate some meat with?" Kannujaq asked.

"I have three bags here," said Siku.

Siaz ran off to retrieve her own stores.

It took a little over a day to ready everything, and the Tunit needed a great deal of convincing. Kannujaq was adamant about securing their promise that they would help out. Everyone's movements were orchestrated and rehearsed. The homes nearest the beach were left abandoned, storage areas full of meat. As many Tunit as possible would share homes nearest the hills, allowing them a head start if the raiders were sighted. They were not to move far, but only to take cover near the base of the hills.

Kannujaq alone would creep back to the camp to see if the Shining One's men took the bait. If so, he would signal.

There was no back-up plan.

The days were long now, so it was late evening when the Shining One returned in creeping dusk.

One by one, the great boat's torches sprang to life as it reached the shore, to harsh cries of, "Skraeling!"

The camp, and especially Kannujaq himself, had been nervous and watchful. All was set, and cries of alarm spread faster than flame among the Tunit, who were soon running. Kannujaq ran alongside them, desperately hoping that the Tunit would be able to summon their courage when the time came.

His greatest fear was that the raiders would not behave as planned. Siku and Siaz had prepared a kind of rancid-smelling tea out of their

mushrooms, assuring Kannujaq that it would be undetectable on meat saturated with it. They were wrong. Kannujaq himself had sampled some of it. No peculiar scent, but its flavour was off. His stomach had begun to lurch soon afterward.

Maybe the raiders are less observant, he hoped.

They reached the hills, and could see commotion down by the beach, most likely the raiders kicking in the short Tunit walls, ripping tops off homes, stamping through cook-fires. Kannujaq gave them time, letting the reddish grey of evening come on. After the amount of time it might have taken for someone to boil up soup, he began to creep back down.

Lucky my clothes have become sooty, like the Tunit.

It seemed to take forever to get down there, but at last he was at the edge of the community. Fortunately, there were large rocks about, enough for him to move among cover.

The Shining One was easy to spot. There was that gleaming face by torchlight, the man who never seemed to stray far from his boat. As before, he was arguing with one of his own. He was frustrated by something. At last, he tore off the gleaming shell upon his head and face and cast it upon the stones of the beach.

His giant servant watched him climb back into the boat, retrieving something near its stern. Then the Shining One stretched himself out, drinking something in hand.

The servant shook his head and left his leader there, joining the other raiders at a fire they had constructed. For fuel, they were burning what precious few tools the Tunit had made, from driftwood, over generations.

Yet they are eating, Kannujaq noted. They had found the meat, but the poison would take some time to work. He needed patience, as in hunting a seal.

It was a sudden thing when it happened. They were still laughing, but their movements were becoming syrupy, disjointed. Whenever one arose, he teetered dangerously.

Then one of them vomited. The others laughed at this, crazily, before they did the same. The mad pitch of their laughter increased, until

they fell—first to knees, then fully upon the ground. Many began gesturing, calling out at empty air.

Soon the dozen of them were down, some convulsing. One lay still. Others were laughing or weeping uncontrollably.

Kannujaq unravelled the bull-roarer in his hand. He whirled the noise-maker round and round, calling the Tunit.

Where are they, Kannujaq thought. Now! Now! I can't do it alone!

Finally, Tunit men appeared next to him, long bear spears in hand. They stood stunned by what they saw, and Kannujaq roared at them to get moving.

He did not watch as they stabbed the giants. His objective was the boat. He ordered several Tunit men to join him and do as he did.

Kannujaq threw himself against the bow of the boat, and the Tunit men did likewise. Together they began to shove it backward, away from the shore, trying to get it out into the water.

Kannujaq's one concern was the Shining One himself. He had assumed that the man would join his fellows in feasting, but he had been wrong. Instead, the man seemed to have gone to sleep in the stern, after guzzling tea all evening.

They didn't get the boat out in time.

There was a dry, rasping sound—that of a weapon being drawn—and the Shining One appeared with a bellow. Kannujaq barely fell away from the boat as a great blade bit into the gunwale nearest his face.

But the Tunit had managed to push the vessel out. There, in the water, the great loon-thing rocked, and Kannujaq knew that the Shining One could not man it by himself.

The Tunit had finished the giants, and many were standing along the beach now, watching the helpless leader of the raiders drift ever further outward. Kannujaq opened his mouth to tell the Tunit to fetch bows, but one glance told him that they were already sickened with murder.

As was he.

So they all watched, stared as a current tugged at the vessel, lazily turning it away from the coast. There stood the Shining One, no longer

shining, but staring back at Kannujaq. It was a strange thing that there was no hatred in those ice-blue eyes, but only despair, and resignation.

In that moment, Kannujaq recognized the colour of those eyes and knew. The Shining One had never come here for plunder. Siau had kept a secret from all.

The sea raiders had always had enough weapons and tools to spare. The objects Angula had stolen meant nothing to them. As with Kannujaq, what most mattered was kin. Kannujaq was looking at a fellow stranger in these lands, a newcomer, one who has known that dread of the unknown against him. Perhaps his people were not faring well here.

This was a man with nothing left, whose greatest fear—as with all men—was that he would fade away, leaving no trace of his passing. And it was such desperation that had driven his attempts to retrieve his only lasting legacy.

His son.

It was telling that there was no real celebrating over the defeat of the raiders. The Tunit simply wanted to put it all behind them, returning to their shy Tunit ways.

Kannujaq never spoke about what he knew of Siau, that she had once had a husband from beyond the sea. Nor did he ever speak of what he knew of Siku, whose *angakoq* eyes had come from his father.

Kannujaq offered to bring Siau and Siku away with him. Yet, just as he knew he could never live like a Tunit, so Siau said that she was no longer comfortable among her own.

Siku, however, took up Kannujaq's offer eagerly. The blue-eyed *angakoq*, it seemed, had never felt comfortable among the Tunit. And he seemed to like the idea of sledding.

So it was that, in the early evening, when the scant remaining snow was cooling, Kannujaq and Siku made ready to depart. And as Siku watched Kannujaq tighten the lashings on his sled, the boy asked him, somewhat haltingly, "What . . . am I to say my mother is, if not a Tunit? What are we?"

"I don't know," Kannujaq replied. But he thought about a word his grandfather had used. "Perhaps we are *Inuit*."

Siku's look was blank. He had grown up with the Tunit dialect, and the word was a foreign one.

"It means something like 'those living here now,'" Kannujaq said with a grin.

But Kannujaq was troubled by his last memory of the Shining One, his boat swept away on odd currents. Was this the destiny of all strangers in this land? Was it the destiny of his kind?

Perhaps the Tunit would eventually speak of his people only in legend.

Kannujaq had no way of knowing that, while the Viking colony in Greenland would fade from existence, his own descendants would travel freely over the next three centuries, settling not only in Greenland but over all the old Tunit lands. The world would grow much colder, as in the time of his ancestors, and his kind would be the only survivors here. And they would speak of Tunit only in their own legends.

But Kannujaq's mind never strayed far from the present. His musings were eclipsed by annoyance that Siku had disposed of the raider artifacts. The *angakoq* had felt they were evil and was convinced that the sea should have them.

Kannujaq wondered how long they could travel before Siku noticed everything lashed to the sled. The boy had forgotten about Angula's knife, which Kannujaq had snuck back and retrieved. It would be ideal for *iglu* building in the winter.

Like his people, Kannujaq remained, above all else, practical.

