

## The Myth of Sedna I.

A girl would not have a husband, and at last her father in anger said that she would have his dog. One night then, the dog came in and took her to wife. When the girl became pregnant, the father isolated her on a small island, but the dog swam over to join her. It would swim in from time to time with the pack saddle to get meat from the father. The girl bore a litter – some dog children, some children in human form. Feeling sorry for her, the father one day loaded the dog with stones, concealed by meat on top. When the dog swam out, he sank and drowned. Then the father used to take the meat over to the island.

Next the angry daughter told her dog children to attack their grandfather's kayak, but he managed to escape back to the mainland. He dared not go to the island anymore. Now in want, the girl put her dog children in a boot sole setting three straws for masts, and they drifted out to sea to become the ancestors of the white men. She put her human form children in the additional outer sole of a boot and sent them drifting to the land to give rise to the Chipewyan Indians. Then she returned home to live with her parents once more.

One day while the father was away hunting, a kayak arrived and a fine big man called the girl out to go off with him; this she did. Stopping by an ice floe en route, the kayaker got out and removed his sun goggles, whereupon the girl burst into tears for the man was puny, having only been sitting tall on a high seat, and had ugly eyes, a northern fulmar in human form. They went on to the bird's sealskin tent where they lived together and had a child.

But her sorrowing father set out in a boat to look for her and arrived one day while the fulmar was out hunting. He took her away in his boat. The fulmar, in bird form, caught up and swooping close it raised such a storm with its wings that the boat nearly upset. In fear the father threw the girl overboard to her husband, but she clung to the gunwale. So he chopped off her first finger joints, and they bobbed up in the water as small seals. Again she grasped the boat's edge, so the father hacked off the next finger joints which became bearded seals. Still the girls hung on, and the last joints were cut off, forming the walrus. She sank then to become a spirit, the mother of the sea beasts. The father got home, but in remorse he lay down at the water's edge under a skin, and the tide swept him out to join his daughter and the dog in a house at the bottom of the sea.

## The Myth of Sedna II.

Once upon a time there lived on a solitary shore an Inung with his daughter Sedna. His wife had been dead for some time and the two led a quiet life. Sedna grew up to be a handsome girl and the youths came from all around to sue for her hand, but none of them could touch her proud heart. Finally, at the breaking up of the ice in the spring a fulmar flew from over the ice and wooed Sedna with enticing song. "Come to me," it said; "come into the land of the birds, where there is never hunger, where my tent is made of the most beautiful skins. You shall rest on soft bearskins. My fellows, the fulmars, shall bring you all your heart may desire; their feathers shall clothe you; your lamp shall always be filled with oil, your pot with meat." Sedna could not long resist such wooing and they went together over the vast sea. When at last they reached the country of the fulmar, after a long and hard journey, Sedna discovered that her spouse had shamefully deceived her. Her new home was not built of beautiful pelts, but was covered with wretched fishskins, full of holes, that gave free entrance to wind and snow. Instead of soft reindeer skins her bed was made of hard walrus hides and she had to live on miserable fish, which the birds brought her. Too soon she discovered that she had thrown away her opportunities when in her foolish pride she had rejected the Inuit youth. In her woe she sang: "Aja. O father, if you knew how wretched I am you would come to me and we would hurry away in your boat over the waters. The birds look unkindly upon me the stranger; cold winds roar about my bed; they give me but miserable food. O come and take me back home. Aja."

When a year had passed and the sea was again stirred by warmer winds, the father left his country to visit Sedna. His daughter greeted him joyfully and besought him to take her back home. The father hearing of the outrages wrought upon his daughter determined upon revenge. He killed the fulmar, took Sedna into his boat, and they quickly left the country which had brought so much sorrow to Sedna. When the other fulmars came home and found their companion dead and his wife gone, they all flew in search of the fugitives. They were very sad over the death of their poor murdered comrade and continue to mourn and cry until this day.

Having flown a short distance they discerned the boat and stirred up a heavy storm. The sea rose in immense waves that threatened the pair with destruction. In this mortal peril the father determined to offer Sedna to the birds and flung her overboard. She clung to the edge of the boat with a death grip. The cruel father then took a knife and cut off the first joints of her fingers. Falling into the sea they were transformed into whales, the nails into whalebone. Sedna holding on to the boat more tightly, the second finger joints fell under the

sharp knife and swam away as seals; when the father cut off the stumps of her fingers they became ground seals. Meantime the storm subsided, for the fulmars thought Sedna was drowned. The father then allowed her to come into the boat again. But from that time she cherished a deadly hatred against him and swore bitter revenge. After they got ashore, she called her dogs and let them gnaw off the feet and hands of her father while he was asleep. Upon this he cursed himself, his daughter and the dogs which had maimed him; whereupon the earth opened and swallowed the hut, the father, the daughter, and the dogs. They have since lived in the land of Adlivun, of which Sedna is the mistress.

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Inuit



Arctic Regions

## Sedna, the Woman Under the Sea

**L**ong ago an Inung man and his daughter, Sedna, lived together along the ocean.

Their life was not easy, for the fishing was often not good and the hunting was often poor. Still, Sedna grew up to be a strong and handsome young woman and many Inung men came to ask her to marry. No one, though, was good enough for her. She was too proud to accept any of them. One day, just at the time when the long days were beginning and the ice was breaking for spring, a handsome man came to Sedna. He wore clothing of grey and white and Sedna could see that he was not like other men. He was a sea-bird, the fulmar, taking the shape of a man to woo her and he sang to her this song:

Come with me, come with me  
to the land of the birds  
where there never is hunger,  
you shall rest on soft bearskins.

Come with me, come with me  
to my beautiful tent,  
my fellow birds will bring you  
all that your heart desires.



*Sedna,  
the Woman  
Under the Sea*

Come with me, come with me  
and our feathers will clothe you,  
your lamp will be filled with oil,  
your pot will be filled with meat.

His song was so lovely and his promises so enticing that Sedna could not resist him. She agreed to go with him, off across the wide sea. Their journey to his land was a long and hard one. When they reached the place where the fulmar lived, Sedna saw that he had deceived her. His tent was not beautiful and covered with soft skins. It was made of fishskins and full of holes so that wind and snow blew in. Her bed was not made of soft bearskins, but of hard walrus hide. There was no oil for her lamp, for there were no lamps at all, and her food was nothing but raw fish. Too late, Sedna realized the mistake she had made and she sang this song:

Aja, my father, if only you knew  
how wretched I am, you would come to me.  
Aja, my father, we would hurry away  
in your boat across the wide sea.

The birds do not look kindly  
on me, for I am a stranger.  
Cold winds blow about my bed  
and I have little food.

Aja, my father, come and take me back home.

So she sang each day as a year passed. Now the ice broke again and Aja decided he would go and visit his daughter. In his swift boat he crossed the wide sea and came to the fulmar's country. He found his daughter, cold and hungry, in a small tent made only of fishskins. She greeted him with joy, begging him to take her back home. Just then, the fulmar returned from fishing. Aja was so angry that he struck the fulmar with his knife and killed him.





Then he placed Sedna in his boat and began to paddle swiftly back across the sea.

Soon the other fulmars came back from fishing. They found the body of Sedna's husband and they began to cry. To this day you can still hear the fulmars mourning and crying as they fly over the sea. They decided to find the one who had killed their brother and they began to fly in great circles over the sea, searching him out.

Before long, they saw the boat of Aja. They saw Sedna was with him and knew that he was the one who was the murderer. Then, using their magical powers, the fulmars made a great storm begin. The waves lifted high above the small boat and Aja became very afraid. He had seen the birds and knew that they were causing the storm to punish him for the death of Sedna's husband.

"You fulmars," he cried, "look! I give you back this girl. Do not kill me." Then he pushed his daughter out of the boat. But Sedna grasped the side of the boat.

"Let go," Aja shouted at her. "The fulmars will kill me if I do not give you to the sea." But Sedna still held on to the side of the boat. Then, taking his sharp knife, Aja cut off the tips of her fingers. The ends of her fingers fell into the water and became the whales. Sedna still grasped the side of the boat and now her father cut off the middle joints of her fingers. Those, too, fell into the water and were transformed into seals.

*The waves lifted high above the small boat and Aja became very afraid.*

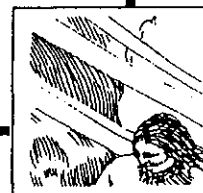
*Sedna,  
the Woman  
Under the Sea*

The fulmars, who saw what Aja did, thought it certain that Sedna would drown. They were satisfied and flew away. As soon as they departed, the storm ended and Aja pulled his daughter back into the boat.

Now, though, Sedna hated her father. When they had reached shore and her father had gone to sleep in his tent, she called to her dogs, who would do whatever she said. "Gnaw off the hands and feet of my father," she said. And the dogs did as she said. When this happened, Aja cursed his daughter. The Earth opened beneath them and all of them fell deep down to the land of Adivun, which is beneath the land and the sea.

To this day, that is where Sedna lives. Because the whales and the seals were made from her fingers, she can call them and tell them where to go. So it is that when the people wish to hunt, they have their *angakok*, the shaman, descend in his dream-trance to the land under the sea where Sedna lives.

He combs out Sedna's long, tangled hair, for without fingers she is unable to do it herself. Then he can ask her to send the whales and seals back to the places where the people can hunt them. Thanks to the blessings of Sedna, who is always generous to those who remember to ask her help in the right way, the people no longer go hungry.



The judge looks aghast. She feels her own emotion rising, contemplates quitting herself of the case, but a voice whispers from within that the jury, not she, would be pronouncing the verdict on Emma. She remains riveted to her throne. She counsels the jury that she must resolve some legal questions before they can retire to decide Emma's fate, and she buys time for her own troubled soul.

In the week that follows, the congregation remains vigilant. There is a hubbub of discussion about the possibilities that lay ahead for woman and earth should Emma win. Joy hangs in the air, visible as Thoreau's lily. Even the old woman next me, grim-faced most of the time, chuckles now and then.

*What is your name?*

'Emily.'

*Carr, the artist?*

'Hmph.'

*I am honoured, I pule.*

'I would rather you be enjoyed.'

The week draws to a close and the judge counsels the jury. 'The defendant takes precedence over her own counsel. Indeed, according to Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and the "defender of the constitution", Daniel Webster, the founding fathers of this United States of America intended the values of this country to reflect those of the New Testament. The jury is to decide the fate of Emma in accordance with the book of Revelations and the word of Jesus. There is no doubt that Emma slew her second husband, but the law governing America and finally Emma, is the law of Christ.'

The jury retires, armed with twelve New Testaments. And the heavenly congregation replies in blessed song:

Praise her soul, she saw the light  
The truth of this sojourner,  
has been seen at last.  
Praise her soul, she saw the light.

## Alootook Ipellie b. 1951

INUIT

### Summit With Sedna, the Mother of Sea Beasts

As a shaman, I had many occasions to visit Sedna, the Mother of Sea Beasts. Making spirit journeys to her home at the bottom of the sea was often perilous. But these journeys were done out of great sense of duty to my people when hard times beset them.

One winter, a great famine was affecting a number of camps in our region of the Arctic. I was curious to know if other regions were having the same problem. So I made a spirit journey in order to contact all my fellow shamans. Indeed, the great famine was not restricted to our area.

A decision was immediately made what we, as a collective of shamans, could do to reverse our bad fortune. This was before I found out that our respective shamanic powers had greatly diminished in recent months. Sedna, in her moodiness, was directing her vengeance toward all shamans by not granting their pleas to release the sea beasts. I began to question my fellow shamans about the type of encounters they recently had with the Goddess of the Sea.

Unbelievably, what I found out from my peers could well go down in history as a 'sexual misconduct' that had the potential to wipe out the Inuit nation from the face of the earth. It was the kind of news I could not have fathomed in my lifetime.

From the beginning of winter, Sedna had apparently been making sexual advances to the visiting spirits of the shamans. Although she was well-acquainted with certain sea animals she controlled, she had never been able to have an orgasm no matter how hard she tried. In her last act of desperation, she had begun to solicit for sexual favours before she could release the sea beasts to the Inuit living in the natural world.

My peers didn't really have any choice but to feel obliged to fulfil her requests fearing that their failure to convince Sedna to release the sea beasts might brand them incapable in the eyes of their people. Being seen as a weak shaman would not only diminish their economic well-being, but most certainly wipe out their prestige among their fellow Inuit. As hard as they tried to use their sexual experience to their advantage, they had all failed the ultimate test.

Sedna, feeling miserable and sexually bankrupt, had decided to withhold all the sea beasts until a shaman, any old shaman, succeeded in releasing her sexual tensions.

After having heard this unbelievable story, I spent some time trying to figure out a way to break the impasse. Our people's predicament became a desperate situation calling for once-in-a-lifetime encounter with the Goddess of the Sea.



Being one of the most powerful shamans living in the Arctic, I was selected by my peers to prepare a summit with Sedna.

It took me a week to go back and study all of my shamanic rituals and taboos that had worked before. Then I had to come up with a new technique which might change the course of our misfortune.

My plan called for all shamans of the Arctic Kingdom to get together for a combined spirit journey to the bottom of the sea. Each shaman was asked to invite their respective spirit helpers which would be collectively molded to create a giant malevolent creature, a hundred times larger than a normal human being. This new creature would also possess spiritual powers equivalent to a hundred spirit souls.

From the very beginning, I knew it was quite unusual planning to confront Sedna in such an unorthodox manner. We had never before gone out of our way to try to make her submit to our demands. Our fool-proof method was always to plead with her to release the animals. So it was with some apprehension that we proceeded to try our luck.

Moments after darkness descended over our camp, the ecstatic journey began. I started with a song which I had constructed for this particular journey in order to evoke my spirit helpers as well as those of my peers. It was one of the most complicated seances I had yet tried.

Finally, after having expended a vast amount of emotional energy through my songs and chants, I was successful in summoning all the spirit helpers to one spot. The next step was to make the earth move open so that we could enter it and proceed to find our way to Sedna's abode. Before we ever got close to its vicinity, we had to pass through abysses, fire, and ice, and then face Sedna's Sea Dogs which always guard the entrance to her home.

Moments after successfully passing the Sea Dogs, we got a glimpse of Sedna swimming into her huge bedroom. I motioned my helpers to wait behind as planned so that I could confront Sedna one on one and try to find my bearings with her.

She lay there on her bed, which was well covered with seaweed. Her long, unkempt hair had become quite dirty. By the look of her distraught eyes and downturned mouth, I had the inkling she was still quite sexually frustrated.

As was always the case in my past encounters with her, I immediately started to comb and braid her hair while pleading with her to release the sea beasts. She was perfectly willing to—under one condition. I wanted to know what it was. What I then heard was a long, drawn-out preamble to her life-long sexual history, or lack of it.

It had all started when she was still a little girl living in the natural world a few years before she became a Goddess of the Sea. Her father had sexually abused her many times, and when they occurred, they lasted for hours on end. Because of this prolonged abuse that she became emotionally, mentally, and physically doomed to sexual impotency—unable to ever again have an intimate relationship, no matter how hard or what method she tried.

In a last-ditch effort to turn her misfortune around, she had begun to relegate her best hopes to the visiting spirits of the shamans from the entire Arctic Kingdom. When an attempted bribe failed with each spirit, she would try again with another. This sordid affair continued for the whole winter. And now, she was asking me to do the unthinkable. I was perverted by her desperate words.

It was at this moment that I turned and left the bedroom as if I had given up and was returning to the natural world. Sedna started to sob like a little, trembling child. I understood that nothing would make her more sad than another opportunity lost for sexual fulfillment.

My only alternative was to release our version of 'Frankenstein' to confront Sedna. Frankenstein crawled into Sedna's bedroom. Sensing the presence of unusual energy around her, Sedna sat up, moving like a cobra, and turned her head to look over her shoulder.

What she saw in front of her was a giant of a monster, more fearsome than any creature she had ever encountered at the bottom of the sea. Frankenstein stood up and towered over the tiny body of Sedna. Sedna shrieked the hell out of her lungs. She begged the monster to stand back, extending her webbed hands toward the monster's eyes which were streaked with crimson and glowing like gold.

Frankenstein started a special chant I had composed for him. It was designed to put Sedna under a trance. This would allow her to have an ecstatic dream—a sensual trip she had never taken in her lifetime. After all, Sedna had become, over the passing of many years, an almost senseless soul, unable to express intimacy in light of her impotency.

During her forced-sensual dream, Sedna finally met her match. It was her male equivalent, Andes, a God of the Sea, who presided over all the sea beasts on the other side of the universe. In her dream of dreams, Sedna finally had a sexual encounter measurable in ecstatic terms only attainable in the world of Gods and Goddesses.

In her state of heightened sexual ecstasy, Sedna released a perpetual explosion of orgasmic juices. In the same instance, during her virgin joy, she released all the sea beasts who immediately proceeded to travel with impunity to the hungry Arctic world.

It was beautiful to see the lovely beasts, swimming torpedo-like, toward the breathing holes on the sea ice. It was wonderful to experience the same excitement as the unleashing of bottled tension Sedna was going through for the first time in her long vocation.

It was also the first time in the history of the Arctic Kingdom that all of its shamans had worked together to avert an almost certain threat of extinction of its people from the face of the earth. From this day on, the Inuit were assured survival as a vibrant force in what was often times an inhospitable Arctic world.

And, perhaps more importantly for me, in the eyes of my people, my reputation as a powerful shaman, remained perfectly intact.