

*The Nalujuk Players*  
*Amos Comenius Memorial School, Hopedale*

present

*"Asiulittuk"*

Cast

Sabina .....	Beverley Tuglavina
Lily .....	Pauline Jararuse
Emma .....	Bernice Lucy
Catherine .....	Connie Pijogge
Susan .....	Rachel Tuglavina
Donna .....	Jolyn Pijogge
Mary .....	Beverley Tuglavina
Teacher .....	Bernice Lucy

Teacher Director

Norma Denney

Student Director

Beverley Tuglavina

*This production centers around the struggle of an old Inuit woman, Sabina, who tries to instill in her granddaughter, Susan, the value and importance of preserving Inuit traditions and language. This play is written in both English and Inuktitut.*



Wilson Onalik, Amos Comenius Memorial School

"ASIULITTUK"  
("Fading Away"

SCENE ONE:

Two old women are sitting in rocking chairs watching television. They are in a nursing home.

Sabina: "I wonder what's on tonight? (She uses the remote to flick the channels). Same old thing, I don't why I bother. Ahh...watch ol' "Wheel of Fortune" I s'pose. Hey Lily your show is on. "Lily! Lily! LILY!"

Lily suddenly awakens. Very surprised.

Lily: "What are you trying to do, kill me? I've already had one heart attack. My poor ol' umatik(heart) can't take it anymore!

Sabina: "I was trying to wake you up to tell you "Wheel of Fortune" is on!"

Lily: "I wasn't asleep. I was just resting".

Sabina: "Well next time you rest try to be a little quieter".

Lily: "What?"

Sabina: "You were snoring so loud the ceiling was shaking!"

Lily: "I don't snore!"

Sabina: "You do snore issumakie!(silly). I've been in this place for three years and for two of them I've been sharing a room with you and during that time I've lost 40% of my hearing. Doesn't that tell you anything?"

Lily: "Your hearing aid needs stronger batteries!"

Sabina: "You old udjuk(square-flipper), watch the show!"

The two women watch the show.

Lily: "Pick an "E" you dummy!"

Sabina: "E is a vowel; you got to buy a vowel. Pick an R".

Lily: "He needs an "E" to solve it!"

Sabina: ""R""

Lily: ""E""

Sabina: "Aha! R!"

Lily: "Ahh...be quiet!"

Sabina: "Well, would you look over there. It's Amalia's daughter. She finally came to visit her mother".

Lily: "How shameful. Where's she been anyway?"

Sabina: "I heard she's been in Nfld. She married some man with a big job in St. John's. Rosie told me that she's got this big, big house with two bathrooms and five bedrooms".

Lily: "Ahhh...".

Sabina: "A housekeeper even".

Lily: "Ahhh...with all of them bedrooms you'd think she would find room for her poor mummy."

Sabina: "Ahh...look at her. You think she wants to look after her mummy? No! Put her in a home where she can get the care she needs. Out of sight out of mind."

Lily: "Look at her kids. They don't even know Amalia id their anansiak(grandmother). Proper little kablunaks. What do they know? Living in a big city. They'll never know their heritage. Who they really are!"

Sabina: "It's not only Amalia's daughter you know. Look at us. Look at our kids, we're here and they are out there with their own families. When was the last time your Amos came to see you? And what about Mary she doesn't visit you very often either. Oh Lily our world is so different now."

Lily: "I remember how it used to be back in Hebron, so simple. So good. Yes it was hard at times but we survived. Families pulled together. Everybody helped each other. Young and old. Why did things have to change Sabina?" Why did they change?"

Sabina: "Because we had to Lily. I remember them saying it would be best for us that we would all be better off. Better education for our children. Better food for our babies. A brighter future for all of us."

Lily: "Some future. Look at us. Our families. Our children. Our culture Sabina. Our culture is dying like us. The children are born. They know nothing about us. They don't know the old ways. They could

not survive like we did. We're like the dinosaurs. Once we die there will be nothing left. Our culture will die with us."

(INUK) I'm afraid to die. I want to teach my children the old ways, but they would not listen to me. How can I make them listen? I want them to know their heritage. To be proud of who they are and where they come from?"  
(Kappiasuvunga tokogiamik. Sogusikka ilinniatigumajakka plusigikattalauttatingnit, kita uvammik nalagunngalungimata. Kanuk tukisitigajataka? Kangusukalanginakit Kinakumangata).

(INUK) Sabina: I'm scared too Lily. When I die I want to make sure that my children will never forget who they are. I want to leave them the greatest gift that I can; my heritage.)"  
(Kappiasumejungale, Lily. Tokuguma sokusikka puigukungetakka. Kimaigumavunga plusigikattalauttatingnit.

Well the show's over Lily. I think I'll get a cup of tea. You want one Lily? Lily. Lily. (She looks at Lily sleeping). Oh no not again. At this rate I better start learning sign language.

LIGHTS FADE AWAY AS SHE WALKS OFF STAGE.

SCENE TWO: A women and her two daughters are in a kitchen. They are in a rush putting on jackets and coats.

Emma: "Would you girls hurry up. Visiting hours will be over before we get there!"  
"What am I going to do with those two? (Ukua sunialittaka?)

The sound of shouting is heard offstage.

Catherine: "That's mine! Gimme!"

Susan: "No you said I could use it and I am".

Catherine: "You had it too long and now I want to listen to it again."

Susan: "No! you can't have it so leave me alone!"

Catherine: "MOM, Susan won't give me my tape back."

Emma: "Susan do you have her tape?"

Susan: "She said I could use it mom."

Catherine: "Mom tell her to give it back."

Susan: "No mom let me listen to it!"

She takes the tape from Susan and puts it in her purse.

Emma: "Now! That's settled, no one will listen to the tape. Now get your clothes on before I lose my patience!"

Susan: "Do we have to go there? I don't want to go! Can I stay home?"

Emma: "No you can't stay home. Your grandmother looks forward to seeing you and your sister every week."

Catherine: "I like going to the home to see anansiak, it's fun. She gives me money and them big peppermint candy."

Susan: "That's the only good thing about going there; the money."

Emma: "Susan you mind your tongue! That's an awful thing to say. She's your grandmother! You should have more respect for her than that!"

Susan: "Oh man it's the same thing every time we go there. She tells us how big we are and then we have to listen to her boring stories about the old days."

Catherine: "It's not boring at the home. Mr. Winters takes out his false teeth and lets me play with them. He looks like Mr. Clean and Mr. Jacobs wears women's underpants outside his pants, and Mrs. Abel thinks she's a proper rich lady and wears her bedpan on her head for a hat."

Emma: "Catherine when we go up there tonight you're staying with me!"

Susan: "Come on mom, let me stay home."

Emma: "No, you're coming with us Susan. Your grandmother may not be with us that much longer. It's important that you spend time with her. She has so much to share with all of us. Those "old boring stories" she tells are stories of her life. Everyone of those stories has a lesson for us. Susan, she wants so much for you and Catherine to understand who she is. Please don't shut her out."

Susan: "Mom I know who anansiak is. I love her too. But this is the 1990's. None of that language and culture stuff means anything anymore. None of the

kids speak inuktitut. We all speak English and learn French in school. If I started talking Inuk all my friends would think I'm mental. It's not cool!"

Emma: "It's not a matter of being cool. It's you. It's who you are. Don't turn your back on your heritage. Enjoy it. Learn it. Be proud of it. When I was your age Susan I wasn't allowed to dress in the old way let alone talk Inuktitut."

Susan: "What do you mean mom?"

Emma: "Years ago we didn't have any highschoools on the coast. So we had to leave the coast and go outside to finish school."

Catherine: "We came out to Northwest River. We took grade nine to grade eleven. For all of us from the coast, it was hard. Most of us had never been outside the coast let alone go on a plane."

Catherine: "Must have been scary mom".

Emma: "It was. A lot of people didn't make it all the way through school and quit in grade nine or ten".

Susan: "So how did you make it mom?"

Emma: "I knew I wanted to be a nurse and the only way to do that was to stick it out in Northwest River."

Susan: "So what was school like?"

Emma: "Well we had classes like you do now. Math, English, Science and all that. The teachers, some of them were very nice and helped the kids from the coast alot. Others were very strict and mean. I remember seeing kids getting strapped for speaking Inuktitut."

Catherine: "Wow, teachers were allowed to strap you?"

Emma: "Oh yes and we all learned very fast not to speak Inuktitut. English was the only language we were allowed to use."

Susan: "But you use Inuk now. You didn't lose the language."

Emma: "If anything, I was more determined than ever to keep my language, especially after seeing my friends strapped. I wanted to make sure my children knew their heritage."

Susan: "Well, we know we're Inuk. You remind us of that everyday. So that means I don't have to go see anansiak. I'll stay here and you two can go."

Emma: "Oh no you don't young lady. We're all going to see anansiak. Now get your coat on and get in that car."

LIGHTS FADE AWAY AND CHARACTERS LEAVE STAGE

SCENE THREE: Nursing home. Two old women are sitting in their rocking chairs watching television. Lily is sleeping. Emma, Catherine and Susan enter.

Sabina: "Ahh...come on you pick an "R". Dummy man, you need an "R"."

Girls enter from off stage.

Catherine: "Anansiak!" (She runs to hug her grandmother).

Sabina: "How are you my little ookalik?"

Catherine: "Good anansiak!"

Emma: "(Hi mom, how are you? you look well)" Anannagal. Kanuivin? Kanuitajangilatit.

Sabina: "(I'm very well my daughter. It's so good to see you). Kanuingimagikkunga, panik. Takutlamegakkit pluujuk. I feel like I'm 20 as usual.

Susan: "Hi anansiak."

Sabina: "Susan! My how big you are getting (You are such a pretty girl). Inikunattupanguvutit.

Sabina: "Oh Susan...".

Emma: "She's saying that you are pretty"

Susan: "Thanks anansiak."

Sabina: "No Susan say nakomek."

Susan: "O.K. O.K. Nakomek."

Sabina: "You children. What will become of you. You know nothing of our language."

Catherine: "Anansiak can I go see if Mr. Jacobs wears his underwear on his pants? He's funny!"

Emma: "Oh no you don't young lady you're staying right here with us."

Susan: "Hey anansiak, what's that noise? It's like a chainsaw."

Sabina: "Not again. Just a minute, Lily wake up, Lily!  
LILY!"

Lily: "Wha? Wha? What's wrong. Is there a fire?"

Sabina: "You were snoring again. Susan thought you were a chainsaw!"

Lily: "Oh Emma, children how nice to see you again."

Emma: "Hi Mrs. Tuglavina. You look well."

Lily: "Well look at the girls. How they've grown! And you little Catherine. How would you like to come with me to get some treats?"

Catherine: "Can I mom?"

Emma: "I guess so, as long as Mrs. Tuglavina is with you."

Lily: "Come on little one".

Lily and Catherine leave the stage.

Susan: "Can I go too mom?"

Sabina: "Susan why do you want to go?"

Susan: "So you and mom can talk. I'm gonna go wait in the car."

Sabina: "No Susan stay. It's time you and I have a talk."

Susan: "A talk? What about?"

Sabina: "Susan, I am an old women. My life here is coming to a close and before I die I want you to know about your heritage. I want you to know about your ancestors and their struggles."

Susan: "Ah anansiak, there's lots of time for me to know about that stuff. Besides mom told me all about it before. I know about Uncle Joe and Uncle Amos and how they helped out the people in Hebron. And she told me how you delivered 14 babies one winter."

Emma: "Susan listen to your grandmother please."

Sabina: "Oh Susan, it hurts me greatly to know that you are losing your culture."



Susan: "What? You're upset because I didn't know how to say thank-you in Inuk? Anansiak it's no big deal. Besides this is the 1990's, Inuk has no place in the modern world!"

Sabina: "Oh Susan how can you say that. Inuktitut does have a place. (She touches Susan's heart). In here. It's you Susan. It's your blood; your heart; your soul. You are Inuit Susan! Don't be ashamed of it! Don't turn your back on who you are!"

Susan: "God, anansiak! Don't get so upset over one little ol' word!"

Emma: "It's not one word! It's your culture. Your grandmother is not asking you to start wearing skin boots and change your language; she just wants you to never forget wher you come from. Be proud of your ancestry."

Susan: "Gees, I never realized you felt this way anansiak."

Sabina: "I realize you live in a modern world where things are so fast and changing everyday. And I am so proud of you, my inngutak for the things you have accomplished. You are a bright and beautiful young women and the whole world is yours to discover. What I am asking is that as you go through your life remember that you are the last of a brave and courageous people. The survival of our culture depends on you and your generation, let us all not die in vain."

Catherine runs back in.

Catherine: "Mom! Mom guess what I just saw?"

Emma: "I don't know Catherine. I'm afraid to ask."

Catherine: "Gall Stones!"

All: "GALLSTONES!"

Catherine: "Yeah neat eh! Mrs. Tuglavina keeps them in a bottle in her room, next to her teeth. She even got names on them!"

Emma: "Oh no!"

LIGHTS FADE. CHARACTERS LEAVE STAGE.

SCENE FOUR: CLASSROOM: Three girls are chatting. A teacher enters.

Donna: "Hey Mary, What did you do last night?"

Mary: "Nothing really. I just went over to Connie's house and listened to some music, pretty boring. What about you?"

Donna: "Me and Lisa went for a walk. We played some pool and went to the hall and listened to some music. Although I heard some people a "slower" evening."

Mary: "Slow? What do you mean?"

Donna: "My sister Martha works at the old people's home and she told me that she saw Susan and her mom there last night."

Mary: "Susan at the old people's home? What was she doing there?"

Donna: "Maybe she was looking for a boyfriend."

The girls start to laugh as the teacher enters. Susan continues to read through her papers.

Teacher" "O.K. students, settle down. (Pause) Now when everyone's ready, that's when I'll begin. Today we're going to continue with the presentation of your essays. Remember your essay had to be about the person who has the greatest impact on your life; in other words your personal hero. In this class we will hear from Mary and Susan. So Mary, when you're ready we'll hear from you first."

Mary: "My personal hero is Madonna. She is my hero because she is rich and has a good body. She doesn't care what she wears and says the F-word a lot. So I figure if she can wear black lacy underwear and swear and money at it, so can I. The end."

Teacher: "Mary that's it? That's your essay?"

Mary: "Yes Miss. So do I get an A?"

Teacher: "See me after school Mary. Well Donna your next."

Donna: "Well, my essay is about my personal hero, Dolly Parton. Yeah Dolly Parton! She's rich, famous and has these great big boobs. She's the only person I know of who can take the biggest part of her body and turn it into money and make people laugh at the same time. She's so big that she's got an amusement park

named after her! I bet they run the roller coaster over her chest!"

CLASS LAUGHS

That's Dolly Parton. A small lady with a big heart and a chest to match. The end.

Susan: "My personal hero is my grandmother, or as it is called in Inuktitut; anansiak."

(DONNA & MARY LAUGH)

Teacher: "Girls be quiet or you'll pay a visit to the principal. Continue Susan please."

Susan: "My anansiak was born in Hebron in 1912 on the north coast of Labrador. At a very early age she learned the value of hard work. As the oldest of 10 children she helped her mother with the chores of raising her brothers and sisters and housework. This was made even harder when her father, my atatsiak died. He froze to death on a seal hunt when my anansiak was 11 years old. On cold winter mornings she would have to go outside, chop wood and light the stove so that when the rest of the family woke up, the house would be warm. Then she would have to help her mother get breakfast for the kids and send them off to school. My anansiak didn't go to school because she had to stay at home and help with the family. Despite her lack of formal education, she has the sharpest mind of any person I know, young or old. My grandmother's life was a constant struggle, one which I'm sure none of us could ever survive. Chopping wood, hauling water, cleaning seal skins, making boots and clothing, doing house work and raising children were part of her everyday life. Quite a task for a 12 year old. At 13 she married my grandfather or atatsiak and when she was 14 she had the first of 15 children. Two of them died because of a Spanish Flu outbreak. The last child she had, she did it all by herself without a doctor or midwife. It was a blizzard and when my anansiak thought it was time for the baby to be born, she sent my atatsiak to get the midwife. The midwife didn't get there in time and when they did get back my grandmother already had the baby and the umbilical cord cut with 13 kids watching. When people around the village heard that they started to call on her to born babies. One winter she borned 14 babies all by herself. Soon she was alone again when my atatsiak died of a heart attack. The family was in Saglek when he died. There was no doctor and no minister back then so when he died she dug the grave and buried him by herself. The grave is still

there today. It was after that she left Hebron and moved her family to Hopedale. She starting working at the mission house there, doing odd jobs to support her family. She stayed in Hopedale up until 3 years ago when she came to the old people's home. For a women who spent her whole life working, convincing her to go to the home was a real struggle. If there is anything that my anansiak and her life has taught me is that we should be proud of who we are and where we come from, and that has been the hardest lesson for me to learn, I'm sorry to say.

People like my anansiak serve a very important purpose to us young people today. Their stories remind us of a time when life was hard and there was no such thing as earning a comfortable living. But they also remind us of how far, we the Inuit have come. No longer are we considered the blubber-eating, igloo-dwelling people that many people believe. But today we are doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers and community leaders. We have come far but not without a price. We have lost our culture and our language in our quest to succeed. How many of us can make a proper komatik or make a proper pair of skin boots? Better yet can we sit down and carry on a fluent conversation in Inuktitut with one another? The answer is no, unfortunately. My anansiak's friend says we are like the dinosaurs. Once we die our culture and heritage will be lost forever. But if we as young people, learn the language and sit down with our elders more often, their legacy will endure forever.

LIGHTS FADE: THE END.