

## THE LEGEND OF SEDNA - A SHADOW PLAY

A shadow puppetry act combining physical bodywork and puppetry showing a dramatised play of the Inuit legend Sedna, and how she went from a regular happy girl to the Goddess of the sea and the animals it holds within.

### Cast:

Aarnaq/Sedna: Aaju Lightfoot/Allison Rideout

Aarnaq's Ataata: Noah Jacque

The Stranger: Noah Jacque

The Fulmar/Shapeshifter: Elliott Jacque

Narration: Aaju Lightfoot, Allison Rideout, Noah Jacque, Elliott Jacque

### Introduction and Opening Remarks: (Ms.Flynn/students)

- introducing the cast/players
- introducing the story and its origins - where it comes from and why it is important.
- how the theme of REFLECTION is represented
  - 1) in the art of shadow theatre and its use of REFLECTED LIGHT. And
  - 2) how myths and legends REFLECT the culture and beliefs of the people

### Part One

#### Opening scene:

**Music and sound effects** > SOUNDS OF THE OCEAN - BIRD CALLS - MAYBE ANIMAL SOUNDS - WHALE CRIES...

#### PART ONE - major events:

- Aarnaq at home
- Her parents want her to marry
- She does not want this

- The stranger comes by kayak - he charms Aarnaq and the village
- Aarnaq falls in love with him. They marry.
- Aarnaq leaves with the stranger.

## DIALOGUE AND SHADOW PLAY DIRECTIONS:

**Narrator 1:** Long ago, in ancient times, there were no seals or walruses, no whales for Inuit to hunt. On the land there were caribou, bears and wolves. Birds flew in the air, but there were no animals in the sea.

**Narrator 2:** In those days, a girl called Aarnaq lived with her father and mother in a tent by the seashore. She loved her home and her parents and was very happy.

**Narrator 3:** As the years passed, she grew up to be a beautiful young woman. It was time for her to marry. But Aarnaq was happy where she was and did not want to leave. She was courted by many young men from her village, but none of them pleased her. Aarnaq was stubborn, and refused them all.

**Narrator 4:** After many months, a morning came when the sun shone high in the sky, the waves sparkled in its bright light, and the air rang with the calls of seabirds. The sound of their cries was so loud that it woke Aarnaq from a deep sleep.

**Aarnaq:** What is wrong? Why are the birds so loud this morning! I must go down to the shore and see what has disturbed them.

**Narrator 5:** Aarnaq quickly made her way down to the beach. When she got there, she forgot the sound of the seabirds. What did she see but a handsome stranger paddling his kajaq towards her on the shore.

**Narrator 6:** The handsome young hunter came from a far-off country, he said. He carried an ivory spear and his clothes were very fine. His voice was soft, and his manner was kind. Aarnaq was captivated by his beauty and his strangeness, and listened to the words he spoke as if she was under a magic spell.

**Stranger:** Aarnaq, beautiful Aarnaq, come with me. Come with me to the land of birds, where there is never any pain or cold, and where my tent is made of the softest and warmest of skins. You will rest on the finest bearskins, your qulliq will always be full of oil, and you will have delicious food in plenty. Come, Aarnaq, and be my wife.

**Aarnaq:** You are like no other man I have ever met. Yes, I will come with you and be your wife!

**Narrator 7:** Aarnaq married the strange hunter and he led her to his waiting kajaq. Aarnaq's father watched the boat grow smaller and smaller on the horizon, and said to himself:

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** There is something about that young man that makes me uneasy. I hope he is good to my dear Aarnaq. In one year's time, I will travel to visit her in her new home.

**Narrator:** The two in the kayak faded into the distance, and left Aarnaq's father to himself, all alone.

## **PART TWO -major events**

- The boat on the ocean, taking Aarnaq to the stranger's island
- They arrive at the island
- His terrifying home
- He SHAPE-SHIFTS - BECOMES THE FULMAR
- AARNAQ lives in fear and misery as his slave for ONE YEAR

### **DIALOGUE AND SHADOW PLAY DIRECTIONS:**

Sound —Noises - waves, calmly hitting against a wooden kayak and Wind.....

Visuals — Waves, close up of boat, Aarnaq and the stranger

**Aarnaq:** I can't wait to see how beautiful your tent and island are! As you say they are...

**Stranger (N):** Soon. You will see.

**Aarnaq:** Tell me more. Will your family come to greet us?

**Stranger:** (Silence.....)

**Aarnaq:** Is something wrong, husband? You are so quiet now...

**Stranger:** (Silence...)

**Narrator:** Aarnaq began to notice that her once charming husband was slowly growing distant from her for some odd reason. As the hours passed, he barely spoke, and there was only the sound of the wind and the waves to answer her questions.

**Aarnaq:** Do you like your island? Do you wish you had more? If so, what would you want?

**Husband:** (Silence...)

**Aarnaq:** Husband, what is wrong with you?.....(beat) Why aren't you answering my questions?....(beat) Are you angry at me?

**Stranger (N):** There it is. My island. Your home.

**Narrator:** As Aarnaq turned her gaze from her husband's face to the island behind him, she was surprised to see a small tent, not much more than a pile of bones and filth. Ugly, gross, with all the bad and disgusting things you can imagine. Aarnaq was shocked. Were those all lies that he told her? She turned her gaze back to her husband. What she saw filled her with fear. He was changing! He was no longer the man she had chosen. His shoulders and legs were becoming thicker....and the air was filled with feathers!

**Aarnaq:** You lied?! How dare you lie to a woman like me! You lied about your beautiful tent and island! How are you growing so fast? What is that on your face? How di-

**Narrator:** As Aarnaq spoke, her husband transformed into a bird-like figure and a beak slowly came out of his hood.

(As all this happens, her husband starts chuckling to himself. His chuckles turn into laughing which sounds like bird squawking.)

**Shapeshifter (E):** You fool! NOW you see what I truly am! NOW your suffering BEGINS!!

**Aarnaq:** (bewildered by her husband's transformation) What are you?

**Shapeshifter (E):** (Shrieking and cawing) I am your master, The FULMAR!

YOU BELIEVED MY LIES AND NOW YOU MUST PAY THE PRICE!!

YOU WILL LIVE YOUR LIFE TO SERVE ME ON THIS ISLAND FOREVER!!!!

AND IF YOU EVER DARE TO ESCAPE, I WILL CAPTURE YOU ONCE AGAIN!!!!

**Aarnaq:** Nooo! Please - this can't be true, this can't be real!!

(The Fulmar laughs and shrieks; the sound of gulls/fulmar rise to a high pitch as Aarnaq weeps.)

### **PART THREE - major events**

- AARNAQ'S SONG...

- Her father comes to find her - he has had no news
- They talk, Aarnaq tells him who her husband really is
- They escape by kayak...

### DIALOGUE AND SHADOW PLAY DIRECTIONS:

**Narrator:** For a year, Aarnaq lived the life of a slave, following the orders of the shapeshifter, working day and night and eating nothing but the scraps he threw her. She longed for her home, her parents and the happy life she had left behind. One day when the Fulmar flew off to search for fish, Aarnaq went to the shore, and thought about the happy life that the Fulmar stole from her.

**Aarnaq stands on the shore alone, singing a lonely song.**

**Aarnaq's song:** 🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵

**Narrator:** In the distance a figure in a kayak emerges from the fog. It was Aarnaq's ataata!

**Aarnaq:** Father! Father, please help me!

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** Aarnaq, my daughter! Is that you? How you have changed!

**Aarnaq:** Help me, father!

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** What has happened to you? Where is your husband? Where is your home?

**Aarnaq:** Father, this horrible place is my home! My husband is no husband, not even a human being. He is a shape-shifter. He is a fulmar, and I am his slave.

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** How can this be true?

**Aarnaq:** There is no time! Please help me father, MY HUSBAND IS EVIL!!!!

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** Aarnaq, my dear daughter, we have to get you away from this terrible place. Quickly, get into the kayak. I will take you home!

**Aarnaq:** Thank you, father. We must leave now, before he returns. Let's go!!!!

**Narrator:** Aarnaq and her father paddled as fast as they could, but the sky was darkened by wings of a thousand fulmar, and the sounds of their cries filled their ears.

#### **PART FOUR - major events**

- The fulmars tell her husband that Aarnaq has escaped
- He chases them and attacks the boat
- With the beating of his wings, he creates a violent storm
  - > HERE SLOW DRUMS BEATS GROW IN VOLUME AND INTENSITY AS THE STORM GROWS AND THE FULMAR CLOSES IN
- In his fear and desperation, Aarnaq's father pushes her off the boat.
- She clings on but he cuts her fingers off
- She sinks to the bottom of the ocean deeps.
- Her fingers become, seals, walruses, whales - all the animals of the sea (mammals)

(Note: in some versions he cuts the tips off first and they become one kind of animal, then at the next join. The rest of the fingers become a second kind of animal.

#### **DIALOGUE AND SHADOW PLAY DIRECTIONS:**

The Fulmars squall, switching from circling the kayak to flying high over the icy blue waters; swooping down to the island and speaking in crowded voices.

**Fulmars:** MASTER! MASTER! YOUR WIFE HAS BETRAYED YOU! SHE FLEES OVER THE WATER! YOU MUST STOP THEM FROM ESCAPING!!

(The shapeshifter's face contorts from a content smile to a horrific frown, a rumble of anger echoes through the background before he shoots up; wings spread as feathers fall and the scene cuts out along with the music.

Then the scene bursts back in with thunderous music, Aarnaq and her father are in their kayak, but horrible squaws start to sound with subtle thumping of drums. The scene

switches again, to a close up shot of Aarnaq and her father in the kayak. The shapeshifter flies overhead, as Aarnaq and her father get deeply scared due to the water getting so severely rough.)

**Shapeshifter:** AARNAQ! WIFE OF MINE, YOU WILL RETURN TO ME ON THE ISLAND OF FULMARS!

**Aarnaq:** Atâtak, I'm scared!

(Aarnaq's father does not respond, the drumming gets louder and louder as the waves get more fierce from the intensity of the shapeshifter's wings flapping)

**Narrator:** As the sea gets rougher the Ataata's fear grew and grew. He was panicking and completely terrified. He made a decision he would regret forever.....

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** Aarnaq get out the boat!

**Aarnaq:** What? Ataata, no!

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** He won't stop until you're gone. I should *never* have tried to rescue you!

**Aarnaq:** What are you saying..?!

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** I am afraid, Aarnaq, I'm sorry!!

**Narrator:** Aarnaq's Ataata was so taken over by terror that he pushed her into the water, but Aarnaq desperately hung on to the side of the boat.

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** Aarnaq! let go of the boat.

**Aarnaq:** But I will *drown!*

**Aarnaq's Ataata:** Let go now!

**Aarnaq:** No! Please, Ataata! I don't know how to swim!

**Narrator:** Fear and anger took hold of the Ataata's mind. He pulled out his knife and cut off all of her fingers. As she sank to the bottom of the icy ocean, thoughts started to come through her head.

**Aarnaq's thoughts:** Why would he do this to me? I thought he loved me. I was his daughter.

**Narrator:** And then an astonishing thing happened!

**Aarnaq's thoughts:** As I sank deeper and deeper into the dark waters, the blood that flowed from my hands congealed in the arctic ocean. First a seal emerged.

Then, from all the fingers of my hands grew the bodies of the animals that live below the waves: the seals, the walruses, dolphins, and whales - all sea animals were born as I gave my life to the sea that day. And I became --- Sedna, Spirit of the Sea.

**(as this happens, slow almost ethereal drum beats with the calls of sea animals play, ending with the final hard beat of the drum- cutting to black then returning with a simple cutout of Sedna standing on the screen while narration begins.)**

**Narrator:** Nâla, listen to what we say carefully. Now as she rests deep in the arctic waters, Sedna watches all. To the hunters or fishers we have in the audience today, you must remember this legend of our culture. Respect the animals you hunt, always thank the animal for allowing you to be fed from it. For if you don't, Sedna shall bring upon her furious wrath; the oceans bare of game for you to hunt, and the waves relentlessly violent. Have respect for the animals, for the sea, and for the spirits above and below. Always keep this in your heart and mind, our ancestors are watching just as Sedna is.