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**ATUNGAQ
AND THE
HUNTERS**

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English
Kuujuuaq Theater Group



ATUNGAQ AND THE HUNTERS
Kuujjuaq Theater Group

Script for a theater play
English version

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ATUNGAQ AND THE HUNTERS

Characters:

- Itsaja – grandchild (his grandfather is trying to get his grandson to catch his first caribou)
- Suatti – Itsaja’s grandfather (long-time hunter)
- Tullaviina – a man from Nain, Labrador, gone caribou hunting in Nunavik
- Atungaq
- Aqiaruq – Atungaq’s wife
- Kataluk – Atungaq’s and Aqiaruq’s son
- Ikilluaq – Atungaq’s and Aqiaruq’s daughter
- Scary people
- Hospitable people
- Funny people
- Ikkutik (the big boss of an all-male camp)
- Nunivakkaq (a man from the all-male camp)
- A Dwarf

ATUNGAQ AND THE HUNTERS – THE SCRIPT

While the audience take their seat, they can hear two women throat-singing. On the screen upstage, we are seeing beautiful landscapes of the north and there are several caribou galloping free. There are also old hunting pictures.

Scene 1

On the radio, someone is playing a guitar and singing a familiar song in English. Itsaja is sitting on a couch. His grandfather, Suatti, enters and is startled because he thought there was nobody in the house.

Suatti

I thought there was nobody inside. What are you doing?

Itsaja

Nothing. I'm tired.

Suatti

Your'e tired?

Itsaja

I did not have a good night last night.

Both fall silent.

Suatti

What I find tiring is just sitting around watching television and doing absolutely nothing.

His grandson does not respond and doesn't seem to be listening.

Suatti

Someone told me a herd of caribou will be passing through, so if I do go inland to go hunt for them, I would appreciate it if I had a companion.

His grandson does not respond and one could sense that he has no desire to follow

Suatti

I was your age when I killed my first caribou. At that time, there were no caribou around, but when I caught my first one, we were saved. I would like for you to catch your first caribou too, you know.

Itsaja is still silent and only paying attention to the television and his Ipod. His grandfather is slowly packing his hunting gear and extra clothing and putting them in his backpack. He includes his teapot and food provisions and puts them all in a box. Before he exits, he then tells his grandson what to do.

Suatti

We have not eaten caribou meat for a very long time and our neighbors miss eating caribou. There is a lot of snow inland and if I should get stuck in the snow, for sure, I will need help getting out. You are a healthy strong man, and you would be of great help if you'd accompany me.

Itsaja does not seem to be influenced by his grandfather's words, but notices his grandfather was moving a lot slower than when he was younger. He then realizes that he had not gone inland since he was a very young boy and suddenly remembers how exhilarating it was to spend time inland. After being hesitant for a second, he decides to get up and get ready with his grandfather. He was fast to put on his hunting clothes and goes out to help his grandfather. His grandfather seemed to know his grandson's decision beforehand and started grinning to himself.

Suatti

Grandson, let's go try and meet with the migrating caribou. You will need to be armed, so pick the riffle up before we leave.

Itsaja has become very light in spirit from happiness and is now more enthusiastic. After he loads the provisions on the sled, he then goes to pick up the rifle. He searches for the bullets but does not find them right away in the backpack or the provision box. He becomes puzzled and asks his grandfather where they are.

Itsaja

Grandfather, where are the bullets?

Suatti

I put them in a *Katsipitaaq* (small sack) earlier. It is still on the porch, so go get it.

It is the very first time Itsaja hears of the word Katsipitaaq, and he does not understand what it means. He is too embarrassed to ask his grandfather what it means, so he just stands there.

Itsaja

Now, what in the world is Katsipitaaq?

Suatti

Oh dear! And he knows what he doesn't really need to know.

Both head towards their house and the radio station is playing. Before the grandfather grabs the sack, he puts on his big winter parka. He then takes the Katsipitaaq and gives it to his grandson. Itsaja is curiously looking at the sack and finds it strange that an ammunition sack would have beads sewn on it.

Suatti

I have had this katsipitaaq for a very long time now.
That is why there are only a few beads on it now.

It was late afternoon when the grandfather and his grandson finally left their home, put the sack on the sled and took off.

Scene 2

The same song is still playing on the radio except it is a bit louder now. The two hunters pick up speed. The landscape behind them gets smaller very fast. They go through rivers, creeks and mountains. They try to go fast but their snowmobile gets stuck. They try to get it out but the machine keeps sinking deeper into the snow. As they try to shovel the snowmobile out, they hear rumbling and look towards it. They see a very fast snowmobile coming. The driver must have seen them and starts driving towards them.

Tullaviina

Hello, you guys need help? I got stuck there too, but luckily, I managed to free my snowmobile.

Itsaja

Yes, this darn ski-doo does not want to budge at all.

Tullaviina

It is a very nice ski-doo. When did you get it?

Itsaja

It is from last year, and it does not use up a lot of fuel.

Suatti

Are you from Labrador?

Tullaviina

Yes. But, my father's mother used to say she was originally from here. Apparently, when she was a young girl, she moved to Labrador.

Suatti

I can tell your accent is from Labrador. My ancestors used to trek very long distances to buy some ammunition and hunt for caribou because there were no more caribou around and the Inuit were going through famine.

The grandson, Itsaja, is now really listening to the newcomer because he finds his accent very pleasant to hear.

Itsaja

So, what happened to the hungry people?

Suatti

There were fish and sea mammals around, so they survived from those. Also, people from Labrador gave them shares of their catch, such as sea mammals and fish. My ancestors never forgot the time they were fed when they were hungry. It was as if the food they were given would never run out again because they were so appreciative for being saved that time.

Tullaviina

Helping each other is good. Now, let's pull out this ski-doo.

Tullaviina then gets a rope from his sled and ties it around the ski-doo's ski and starts his own snowmobile. He tries to harden the soft snow and Suatti ties the rope around the stuck ski-doo and the grandfather and his grandson try to push the ski-doo. When the running ski-doo picks up speed, the stuck ski-doo moves a little. Not long after, Suatti's ski-doo is pulled out of the snow.

Itsaja

I'm exhausted! When are we going to take a break?
I want to rest!

Suatti

Maybe we can drink some tea before we head out?

Suatti then takes his provision box and grabs a teapot and an axe. He goes out to look for firewood while Itsaja is still at his ski-doo. The grandfather finishes preparing the fire and lights it. And since Tullaviina always went ahead with things without reservation, he grabbed the teapot and fetches some snow to be melted into water.

While Suatti is taking cups and some bannock out of the provision box, some of his personal stuff falls out. As Tullaviina is getting a frozen arctic char, right away, he goes to help Suatti pick up the fallen items.

The three men finally settled down by the fire, and Tullaviina started chopping the frozen fish with the axe.

Tullaviina

The little sack that fell, what is it called? I remember my uncle had the same one long time ago.

Suatti

Here, we call it katsipitaaq. A very long time ago, Inuit used to make their katsipitaaq out of fish skin. I remember when we were going through famine and there were no caribou around, we had no choice but to eat our katsipitaaq. That was all there was.

Scene 3

The lights change. The three men are having tea before they take off. As the wood has been burning a while, they start making cracking noises.

Suatti

We would've been still tried to free the ski-doo from the deep snow. Luckily, you came. I will never forget this, Tullaviina. I am so happy we shared some arctic char.

Itsaja

I am so full, I don't even want to move. I wish I could sleep for a while.

Suatti

That is not nice to hear.

Tullaviina

Your sack is full of beads, eh?

Suatti

My mother-in-law gave it to me a very long time ago because she found me very conservative. I find it well sewn because the beads have managed to stay on all these years. My late mother-in-law used to be really into beads like that Atungaq couple.

Tullaviina

Like the Atungaq couple in the legend?

Itsaja

What legend?

Tullaviina and the grandson want to hear about the legend. The grandfather looks at the beads and tries to remember the Atungaq legend.

Scene 4

Suatti

Now, listen carefully, my grandson. Atungaq had a wife, and they had a son and a daughter. When the sibling, were no longer babies and were able to do things on their own, Atungaq and his wife planned to go away, so they decided to pack up their belongings.

The lights change and the grandfather starts telling the story. The audience is sensing something from the past and using their imagination to fully understand the story.

Atungaq

Daughter and son, please come here. Your mother and I have good news for you.

Kataluk

What? I wanted to go hunt for ptarmigan for our lunch. What are you doing?

Aqiaruq

We won't talk long, so please listen. Your father and I have wanted to travel and see different lands. Therefore, tomorrow we want to go around the world by walking. We were waiting for you two to grow up and do things on your own. This has been our plan since the very beginning.

Ikilluaq

So, you are going away and leaving us behind?

Atungaq

We are not deserting you. You can do things on your own now. We will not worry about you two.

Ikilluaq

Are you serious? What exactly do you want to see? What is out there? What do you want to do? So, you are really going tomorrow?

Aqiaruq

Do not worry. We will be back in a short time. You won't even have time to miss us.

Aqiaruq

Do not be mad, daughter. Your father is right. I will bring you something you like. I'll bring you beads from other lands.

Ikilluaq

Wow! Beads! That's great. I will sew them onto my amautik (parka for carrying a baby on the back).

Aqiaruq

We really want to travel around the world. We will return after we have been satisfied.

Ikilluaq

So, we have no choice but to consent.

Atungaq

We love you. We will return in a very short time.

Scene 5

Suatti

As expected, the next morning, the couple started their long-distance trek. They never got tired and brought all their personal belongings in their sleds. They had realized their dream. As expected, they were meeting up with all kinds of different races with different backgrounds and different languages. Some were hospitable.

The couple is invited to visit people who live in a very long tent with multiple poles. There is a fire going in the middle of the floor. The tent inhabitants all have very long hair and are each wearing beaded necklaces and earrings. The eider duck they were cooking over the fire is spinning and simmering slowly. It smells really good.

Hospitable resident

Are you two hungry? Have some food here and rest a bit.

Another hospitable resident

Let's all eat together. It is so exhilarating to eat with other races.

Hospitable resident

Have a good rest in here because it looks like you've come a long way.

After Atungaq and his wife have a good rest, they tell the residents where they've come from. The next day, the couple starts packing their belongings. The hospitable residents don't want them to leave, so they give the couple some blubber and a piece of fur.

The other hospital resident

I wonder if you need anything? Here, have these beads. They're not being used for nothing.

Aqiaruq

They are beautiful. I will bring them to my daughter since she always wanted some.

Suatti

Atungaq and his wife traveled on all kinds of different lands. When they met up with different people, they usually traded different items. They were mostly given beads in return. Next, they arrived to a small town. The residents were not hospitable at all.

Scary person

What are they doing here? Get out of here! Go away!

Unhospitable person

Get out of here. People here regularly see a phantom around here.

Another scary person

Just get out of here. What are you looking for?

Atungaq

We are passing through and we want to trade.

Another scary person

What are you hauling? What is that in your pocket?

Scary person

Your knife is so sharp, eh? Look at this sharp knife, people. Get out of here!

Tirilluk

They walked all over the place. They even circled the earth.

Scene 6

The song of Atungaq

We didn't know the earth was round
We didn't know the earth was round
We walk so hard
We walk so long
When will we be back home?

We saw the highest mountains
We saw the most beautiful skies
We saw the never-ending oceans
We saw many weird animals

We didn't know the earth was round
We didn't know the earth was round
We walk so hard
We walk so long
When will we be back home?

We saw a lot of magic landscapes
We saw many kind on people
We learned many new things
It really opened our mind

We didn't know the earth was round
We didn't know the earth was round
We walk so hard
We walk so long
When will we be back home?

Scene 7

Suatti

The couple then arrived to an all-male camp. One of the men started to bully the couple and tries to scare them, and he looks weird. He was creepy looking and scared the couple.

Ikkuti

Look! A woman!

Nunivakkaq

I have not seen a woman for the longest time.

Ikkuti

What is your name, you, beautiful woman?

The bad man Nunivakkaq gets closer to Atungaq's wife, and that scares Aqiaruq, so she responds by screaming.

Aqiaruq

Aw! Get away from me!

Ikkuti

What's wrong with you, you're beautiful?

Atungaq

Leave us alone. We are just passing through.

Suatti

The men were very mischievous. The couple wanted to leave but the men still harass Aqiaruq. For that, Atungaq is getting very angry. The northern lights get bigger and start moving faster. It was as if the lights were suspicious of something

The couple are surrounded by the men. They do not have time to do anything because when Atungaq tries to grab his wife, one of the men takes her away from him. Right away, he could not move from being restrained. He is hit with a stick and knocked unconscious.

Aqiaruq

Screaming her lungs out because she is scared.

“Atungaq! Atungaq! Help me!”

She is trying to fight back the men by kicking them, but the men find her very light. One of the men just picks her up and ties her down to the sled.

Scene 8

Suatti

The next morning, Atungaq goes to look for his wife. He is trying not to be afraid and will try to be brave. He finds out which tent Aqiaruq is in. She has been hidden in a tent and made to butcher a seal carcass. Atungaq looks through the vent of the tent and tries to get his wife's attention by whispering to her.

Aqiaruq

I don't think my husband will ever find me again.

Atungaq

(Whisper to herself)

Wife, wife, I'm here!

Suatti

Aqiaruq does not hear her husband. One night, Atungaq purposely waits for nightfall, and starts breaking the men's sleds because he was so full of rage and he had never been this angry before. He starts cutting all the ropes of the crossbars of the sleds with his one and only knife. It is very dark outside because there are no stars or northern lights. Atungaq creeps around the sleeping men and manages to get to his wife and they start fleeing right away. They run very fast. They are still scared they might be caught sneaking away even though it is very dark. They manage to reach the sea ice floe's edge. They trudge through soft snow. Ikkuti is heading towards Aqiaruq.

Ikkuti

Where's the woman? Where's the woman? Wake up! The woman is gone!

The men gather up fast and become many. They frantically start searching for the woman.

Nunivakkaq

I see footprints!

Ikkuti

Oh no! The ropes of the crossbars of the sleds have been cut. Get the woman back. I desire her. Let's look for her!

Nunivakkaq

There they are! Down there trudging on soft snow! Aaaah! They're down there! They're getting away!

As the bad men get closer to the couple, they stop because they are not used to running on soft snow. The couple pick up speed because the men are getting closer. Aqiaruq panics and falls down, but her husband grabs her right away. The bad men start firing their bow and arrows. Atungaq is almost hit by one of the arrows because it zings past his ear and lands on Atungaq's sack. Atungaq was saved by all those beads that were sewn onto the sack. Ikkuti does not want the woman hit. The bad men are screaming for the woman to return to them.

Scene 9

Suatti

After a few days have passed, Atungaq and Aqiaruq are finally arriving to a familiar land. On their way to a place where they normally pitch their tent, they see two old people, an old man and an old woman. The two old people are hauling a dead seal and climbing up a hill when Atungaq and his wife catch up with them.

Atungaq

Hello! Who are your parents?

Ikilluaq

I don't think you knew our parents. Our father was Atungaq.

Atungaq and Aqiaruq look at each other and don't believe what they've heard. They are studying the old couple and recognize them by their voices, their eyes and their movements. They are sure they are their children, and no wonder they are totally shocked. The children they had all those years ago had become old before their parents become old. Atungaq and his wife don't know what to say or do but they are still in shock. Their children recognize their parents and everybody starts weeping and hugging each other. The children keep kissing their parents and do not want to let them go. After everybody had settled down, they all had a lot to talk about. The father consoled his children and started telling his story.

Atungaq

A long time ago, we said we would return, and now we are here. We saw so many beautiful lands and very nice people from different backgrounds. Their foods were delicious and some of them just tasted awful and not very desirable. Their clothing was well sewn and some women had straw dresses. There were great dancers and singers, even though we could not understand them. On the other hand, some songs were so awful, they put us to sleep.

Aqiaruq

The most recent place we were had only men living there. It was a very scary place. I was held prisoner at the all-male village. My dear children, I was so sure I would never return home that time. We managed to run away because I had collected all those beads that eventually saved our lives.

Atungaq and his wife started taking the presents out of their sack.

Atungaq

I am very certain now that home is the best place to be and that our land is very important to us. Out of all the different places we've been, Inuit food is the most delicious. We have missed you two. What about you two? What did you do?

Kataluk

We've been sleeping the whole time. We were so tired of waiting for you to return and we missed so much.

Aqiaruq

I was going to bring you some beautiful beads. Some of them were very expensive and others were very beautiful. I wanted to buy them, but they were too expensive. My dear daughter, these are for you.

Ikilluaq

starts singing because she is very happy

Beads, what are they for, what are they for?
Beads, what are they for, what are they for?
Beads, what are they for, what are they for?
I am a very old woman. I don't think I need beads!

Suatti

Their children were teenagers when their parents started trekking. When they were left alone, they did absolutely nothing and just slept the whole time while they waited for their parents to return home. That was how they got old fast. They slept all the time, even in the middle of day. They were lazy and did not do anything at all, so their minds and bodies aged very fast. They shriveled from not exercising enough. That would not have happened if they had been awake and alert the whole time. The parents did not age at all because they had clear minds, moved all the time and did not sleep all day everyday. They slept only when they had to, when they were exhausted. As soon as they woke up the next day, they would start trekking again. That was how it was. They were healthy because they lived life.

Music starts playing.

Scene 10

They are listening to the story-teller, and everybody comes back to reality. The fire dies out.

Itsaja

So, what happened to those old children? Did they die before their parents ?

Suatti

I have no idea. That is how the story ends.

Tullaviina

And so your wife's mother was collecting beads as Atungak's wife ?

Suatti

Yes, and she did a lot of beautiful beading with it. That Katsipitaak is a good example.

Itsaja

Is she Atungak's wife?

Suatti

No, don't be stupid, Atungak is a legendary figure! He's long gone! Instead of saying things like that, keep focused on getting your first caribou. We will start hunting soon.

Tullaviina

Is that real? You're here to get your first caribou? It is a really important step in life.

Itsaja

Oh, I don't know.

Tullaviina

Yes it is! I will always remember mine.

Suatti

Do you have any advice for us to track a caribou?

Tullaviina

Everybody is saying the herd is near, but I've been here a few days, and I haven't seen any.

Suatti

That is not good news.

Silence

Tullaviina

Can I hunt with you guys? I enjoy your vibe, I'll help you to get your first caribou.

Suatti

For sure. Do you agree grandson?

Itsaja

Yes I do, why not.

Suatti

Ok, let's go

Tullaviina

Good! Let's go.

There is silence as the hunters slowly search for caribou, their headlights are turned off so not to scare any away. The rolling hills both act as blinds and look-out points. Every so often, they stop to strategize.

There is silence as they slowly travel on the tundra.

Music plays.

Scene 11

The three hunters are walking slowly, paying attention to every detail.

Tullaviina

There is nothing around here. I told you. Sadly, caribou is so rare now. It wil always be harder and harder to hunt.

There is silence as they keep walking.

Itsaja

Grandpa, what's that?

Suatti

What?

Itsaja

Oh, it disappeared.

Suatti

What?

Itsaja

I don't know. It was small, and running fast.

Tullaviina

Maybe you saw a dwarf?

Suatti

Don't say things like that. It's impossible.

Itsaja

Oh, I saw it again! Just over there.

Suatti

Maybe it's a fox or another small animal.

Itsaja

Oh It's there!

Itsaja starts running to get the small thing.

Suatti

Wait for us !

Tullaviina

Come back !

Scene 12

After running for a long time, the grandson is now far from the others. He is tracking the small thing. At one moment, he stops and notices that he is alone and lost.

The dwarf

Are you looking for me ?

Itsaja is scared.

The dwarf

You're really lost now. You know ?

Itsaja

Who are you ?

The dwarf

I don't have a name.

Itsaja

What do you want?

The dwarf

I know what you are searching for.

Itsaja

Oh yeah?

The dwarf

You are here to get your first one. But sadly, even as the rumor says, there is no caribou around.

Itsaja

How do you know?

The dwarf

One day, during the summer, a man was caribou hunting. As he searched the tundra, he saw something moving. He decided to hide in front of it as he wanted to check what it was. Not so long afterward, the man realized that what he was looking at was me. We eyed each other, and I stopped. We slowly approached each other. I said, "I left a lot of meat over there. Follow my footprints and you'll find it." The hunter did as he was advised. What I had left behind was the head with its tongue intact and legs and ribs. The animal had been rich with tunnuq. Thanks to the me, the hunter has been able to have meat to tie him over during a hungry time. I never saw him afterwards.

Itsaja

Ok...

The dwarf

You must go back this way to reach your grandfather. After you reach him, walk during two hours, following the sun. You'll find something.

Itsaja

Ok, I don't know why, but even if you are spooky, I trust you.

The dwarf

Don't forget to set a bullet in the Katsipitaak.

Itsaja go back in a rush to join his hunting partners.

Scene 13

Reaching his hunting partners.

Itsaja

Hey hey. I don't have time to tell you. But let's go that way.

Suatti

Where were you?

Itsaja

I'll tell you later. Hurry up!

Itsaja

Grandfather, look at those caribou up there!

Everybody stands and look towards the caribou. They grab their rifles and sacks and go to their snowmobiles to go after the caribou. The families start their ski-doo's. Tullaviina turns to the left and everybody splits up. When Suatti and his partner get closer to the caribou, they stop their ski-doo's. They quietly prepare their firearms and grab bullets from the sack. Itsaja sees the beads and smiled to himself.

Suatti

Grandson, do not rush. Slowly aim at the caribou and pull the trigger.

The grandfather is going to teach his son how to shoot a caribou. His first shot does not reach the caribou and misses. When he fires the second shot, the caribou topples over. The grandfather also kills two caribou. The grandfather and the grandson are going to butcher the caribou.

Suatti

Grandson, since you have killed your first caribou, you are going to watch me butcher and make shares for other people. After that, you will do the same with your catch.

Black

Morning comes. Suatti and Tullaviina are awake and having breakfast. Itsaja gets up too because he knows his grandfather will want to pack up right away and take down the tent right away. After everybody has eaten, they start packing up right away and put their belongings in the sled.

Itsaja

Grandfather, I thought I would not know how to make shares for other Inuit. I found it kind of strange because I actually butchered the caribou quite fast. And I thought I would be really exhausted from it.

Suatti

When I got very tired, I just had to think of those beads and the story I heard earlier, and that made me stronger and more awake. Also, because you are with me, I was a lot faster doing the things I did.

Itsaja

I was like that too. (They start laughing). I guess the man from Labrador caught caribou too?

Suatti

I wish he came again. We would have some heart with him.

Not long after, they hear the rumbling of a ski-doo, and Itsaja looks out the window right away. He waves at Tullaviina and Tullaviina enters the tent.

Suatti

Luckily, you came. I really wanted to eat some heart with you.

Itsaja

Did you catch caribou? Me, I killed my first caribou.

Tullaviina

I caught five caribou and luckily finished butchering them. When I was getting tired, I just had to think of your story and my tiredness just vanished.

The grandfather and the grandson look at each other and start laughing.

Suatti

Tullaviina, are you going to Kangiqsualujjuaq first?

Tullaviina

Yes. If I arrive before nightfall, I want to bring something to my daughter.

Itsaja

Probably beads, eh? *(Everybody starts laughing)*

After they had a good laugh, they start saying their goodbyes and shaking hands.

Suatti

Safe travels.

Black

When the grandfather and the grandson reaches home, they unpacked their belongings, brought them into the shed, and then entered their home. After they settled down, the grandfather takes the sack and gives it to his grandchild.

Suatti

It has been a long time since I've wanted to give away my sack to one of you. I will try to respect my mother-in-law and give it to someone who is not lazy. Last night, I made a decision to give it to you since you will be caribou hunting. This sack used to wake me up and make me stronger. It will do the same thing for you, so I want you to have it.

Suatti

Be proud of yourself. How did you know there were caribou there?

Itsaja

A feeling.

Suatti

Now, I hope you know that you can realize
everything you want.

*Itsaja is touched by the gesture and thanks his grandfather for he practically raised him.
He takes the sack and is so proud.*

*The feast is going on.
A couple of young girls do the katajjaq.*

Hardly noticeable is a dwarf walking by on stage.

THE END.