

# QALUPALIK

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

- KALLIK** A hot-headed, hormone-driven, young Inuit man, interested in romance only in so far as it leads to sex, and hungry to feed his ego.
- AMKA** A shy young Inuit woman, timid from a practical, reserved nature. She is insightful and supportive, which results in a deceptive appearance of weakness.
- QALUPALIK** A creature of the sea taking the form of an old woman. She gives the appearance of being kind and feeble to mask a sly and selfish nature.

## SETTING

The shore of a sea in Alaska.

SCENE

*(It is a seashore, with the gentle sound of waves in the background. Shortly after the lights come up, Kallik enters boldly, walking right up to the edge of the stage to look out over the water.)*

KALLIK

Come on, Amka. The sunset won't wait for you!

AMKA (OFF)

I'm coming, I'm coming.

*(Amka enters, and immediately sees that Kallik is very close to the water. She's suddenly worried.)*

AMKA

Kallik! Come away from the water! Have you lost all sense?

KALLIK

Oh please. You don't really believe all that nonsense, do you?

AMKA

I...

KALLIK

She isn't real, Amka. Qalupalik's a made-up monster that parents use to keep their children—

AMKA

Hush, Kallik. Hush. Don't speak her name. Not so close to the water's edge.

*(Kallik shakes his head at Amka.)*

Please just come away from there. We can watch the sunset from over here just as easily—

KALLIK

I can't believe you still hold on to those little girl fears. It's just water. Here.

*(Kallik turns and reaches out.)*

I'll show y—

AMKA

No!

*(He stops, turns back.)*

Just come back.

KALLIK

Come here.

AMKA

If you want more than a cold shoulder to watch the sunset, then *you* come *here*.

*(He stares at her, defiance giving way to hormones. He walks back to her.)*

KALLIK

Honestly, Amka, we're not children anymore.

AMKA

No? *(Amorous now that the fear is gone.)* Show me.

*(They begin to kiss, but after a moment, an old woman enters. Amka notices, pulls away, and hides behind Kallik. He turns to see her. Fear rises in him, but he quickly suppresses it.)*

KALLIK

Who are you? What are you doing here?

QALUPALIK

The shore belongs to no one. We all have the same right to be here. I might ask you the same question.

KALLIK

We're here to watch the sunset.

AMKA

We should go.

KALLIK

No. As she said, the shore belongs to no one. If we want to stay, then we can stay.

AMKA

We can watch the sunset from anywhere, Kallik, We should—

QALUPALIK

Kallik, is it? I've heard of you. Come, let me see your face. These eyes are not what they once were.

*(Kallik studies the old woman, suspicious. Amka tries to pull him back, but he pushes her hands away.)*

Come now. What do you have to fear from an old woman?

KALLIK

I am not afraid you.

*(He steps towards Qalupalik, who hobbles over to him, studies him.)*

AMKA

Who *are* you?

*(Qalupalik looks over at her, assessing, then...)*

QALUPALIK

My name is... Qalupalik...

*(Amka jumps backwards, terrified, and even Kallik starts to take a step back.)*

But I am not what you think! I am no monster, no stealer of children. Just an old woman who lives by the shore.

KALLIK

You lie. I've walked this beach for miles upon miles. I've never seen a dwelling.

QALUPALIK

It is no lie. I live in the sea. I paddle to shore in the evenings to fish. And to stretch my legs, for my island is not large. *(She sees that he does not believe her.)* My umiak is just over the rise *(she points the way she came)*. Come see it if you do not believe me.

KALLIK

It makes no difference whether you live in the sea, on the shore, or even in the sky. I am not afraid of you.

*(Qalupalik finished studying him and takes a step back.)*

QALUPALIK

Nor should you be, a strong young man such as yourself. Kallik, indeed. Your name means—

KALLIK

Lightning. I know what it means.

QALUPALIK

It is no coincidence, your name. I wonder if your parents even knew.

KALLIK

Knew what?

AMKA

Come, Kallik. I'm frightened. Let's leave. I don't want to see the sunset anymore.

KALLIK

In a moment. *(Turning back to Qalupalik.)* What did you mean? What did my parents know?

QALUPALIK

I would say it is no matter, for you are clearly in a rush to leave, but I wouldn't lie to you. It is something you should know, but... it is also something that can wait for a better time. For when you have leisure to listen and consider.

AMKA

Kallik, please! I'm scared.

KALLIK

She won't harm you. I won't let her. *(Back to Qalupalik again.)* Tell me.

QALUPALIK

I merely wondered if your parents even knew that you were a...

KALLIK

A what?

AMKA  
Don't listen, Kallik!

KALLIK  
*A what?*

QALUPALIK  
*A tautsekannik, a changeling.*

AMKA  
Kallik!

KALLIK  
*(Laughing...)*  
A changeling. I'm no such thing.

QALUPALIK  
But you are. I can see the touch of Kweetoo upon your brow. *(An assertion, not a question:)* You know of Kweetoo, don't you.

*(He gives her a suspicious look.)*

Kweetoo and Kadlu and Ignirtoq. The sisters of the storm... That is why your parents named you Kallik. They had no choice but to recognize the lightning trapped within you.

KALLIK  
It is just a name.

QALUPALIK  
No. For someone else, perhaps, but not for you. Can you truly claim that you never saw that you were different from the others? That there was something... greater... lying beneath?

KALLIK  
I...

QALUPALIK  
Your parents must have hidden this, and they were right to do so. They did not want you to feel... different. An outsider. But you are.

AMKA  
Kallik! She is lying! Listen to me! We should go home now!

KALLIK

*(To Amka, angry...)*

Just... Just a moment! *(Turning back to Qalupalik...)* Let us say that this was true.

AMKA

Don't listen—

*(She is cut off from an angry glare from Kallik.)*

KALLIK

I don't believe you, but if it *were* true...

QALUPALIK

Yes?

KALLIK

How is it that you could know this about me? I've never seen you before.

QALUPALIK

Before my village was destroyed, I was their angakkuq, and to be a healer one must learn to see the true nature of things. Once I needed to use the smoke to see the truth, but after so many years, my eyes have changed. Your true nature is as plain to me as the sea and clouds.

AMKA

She lies!

KALLIK

It is easy to claim something that none can refute. Why would I believe you?

QALUPALIK

You should not believe me, but can you deny that you sense the truth in my words? If you want proof, here and now, well, then there is nothing more to say.

*(She walks up to Kallik again, studies him closely, and then...)*

It is possible that in time your powers will manifest on their own. Our history speaks of some tanniks able to harness their powers without training. You could such a one.

*(She turns and starts hobbling back the way she came.)*

Each person must decide what path is right for them.

*(Just as she reaches the edge of the stage...)*

KALLIK

Wait.

*(She stops, but does not turn around.)*

You said that there is something that might show the truth or falsehood of what you claim. This... smoke.

QALUPALIK

A mixture of certain flower petals, dried mushrooms, and other ingredients. But I do not carry any with me, for I no longer need it. I do not even have a pipe. I'm sorry.

*(She starts to take a step, but stops at...)*

KALLIK

But do you have any on your island?

AMKA

Kallik, no!

QALUPALIK

I do.

KALLIK

Then you could bring it here.

QALUPALIK

I am old. My arms do not have the strength to make the journey there and back twice in so short a time.

KALLIK

But you could bring it tomorrow.

QALUPALIK

I do not come to this shore every day. Fear not. If you were meant to realize your powers, then fate will carry you to that meeting in time.

KALLIK

Suppose I were to paddle you back to your island, and use the smoke to see if what you say is true?

AMKA

No! You mustn't!

QALUPALIK

Your friend is wise. Would not your family miss you, even for one night?

KALLIK

I could paddle to your island, use the smoke, and then paddle us back this same evening. Then you can return, having expended no more energy than you would otherwise.

*(Qalupalik turns, her face somber, contemplative.)*

QALUPALIK

Yes. If you desire, I would let you use my smoke to see the truth. And further, there is a horn that I keep, a gift from Álluanguak. It has Power, and would help you harness the lightning within you. It is yours, if you wish it.

*(Kallik thinks for a moment, then turns to Amka.)*

KALLIK

Tell my parents that I am delayed, but will return... How long will it take to reach your island? Is it close enough that I could return this night?

*(Qalupalik nods.)*

Tell them I will return before dawn.

AMKA

No! Kallik! Don't do this!

KALLIK

There is no risk. I will be safe, my Tatik. And I will return regardless of whether she has spoken the truth or not.

AMKA

If you won't listen to me, then I will go with you.

QALUPALIK

My umiak is modest. Even with two it will sit low in the water. Three it could not hold.

KALLIK

Don't worry, Amka.

QALUPALIK

Amka. Amka. *(She smiles.)* Friendly spirit. Fear not, Amka. He will be a great hunter for your village once he comes into his nature. He will make you proud.

KALLIK

Let us be off. The sun sets, and I would be back without delay.

*(Kallik exits the way Qalupalik came, and she turns to follow. Before she can, she is stopped by...)*

AMKA

I will see him again, yes? He will return tonight?

**NO SEQUEL ENDING:**

*(Qalupalik turns back to face Amka, a broad, evil grin on her face as she shakes her head side to side. With sudden vigor and grace, Qalupalik exits.)*

*(After she is gone, Amka collapses to the ground in tears. Lights out.)*

**SEQUEL ENDING:**

*(Qalupalik turns back to face Amka, a broad, evil grin on her face as she shakes her head side to side. With sudden vigor and grace, Qalupalik exits. Amka looks utterly lost and hopeless. Just as we think she is going to collapse in tears, an iron resolve erupts from within.)*

AMKA

*(Growing in vehemence and resolution.)*

No. NO. NO!!!

*(Amka storms off after them. Lights out.)*

**ALTERNATE ENDING: Kallik is a changeling, and Qualupalik is a kind shaman**

*(Qalupalik turns back to face Amka, a kind, genuine smile on her face. She nods and says in a comforting voice...)*

QALUPALIK

Yes. Changed with new purpose, perhaps, but I am sure you will see him again.

*(Lights out)*