



CHAPTER 3

Stars, Constellations, and Planets



STARS

While some stars were traditionally perceived as small apertures in the celestial sphere and others as mythic transformations of earthly humans and animals, in parts of the Canadian Eastern Arctic and Greenland they were considered to be the eyes of spirits looking down from the sky, their twinkling appearance "due to the winking of an eyelid" (Fleming 1965:153). In Kotzebue, Alaska, it was thought that numerous small, round lakes in the sky shone at night to make the stars (Nelson 1899:515). A more physical explanation of the stars' formation, albeit from mythic beginnings, is found in both Lucien Turner's (Northern Quebec) and Gustav Holm's (East Greenland) versions of the ubiquitous Sun-Moon legend. Here stars are created as a result of the Moon-Brother's desperate attempt to relight his smouldering torch during the skyward pursuit of his Sun-Sister: "When the Moon's lighted stick is about to go out, he blows on it, so that sparks fly out in all directions; it is these that turn into stars" (Holm 1911, *in* Thalbitzer 1914, part 1:253).

ILIARJUGAARJUK

TOLD BY HERVÉ PANIAQ

The theme of this legend is identical to the previous one, but involves a different set of stars. Here, the narrative's cast, Ningiuraaluk, the old woman, Uttuqalualuk, the old man, and Iliarjugaarjuk, the little orphan boy, are transformed, respectively, into the stars Vega, Arcturus, and Muphrid. The choice of these three stars to illustrate this legend is particularly fitting; their spacing in the sky and relative size reflect the narrative precisely. Occasionally, the legendary names are used when referring to them, but, more commonly, as Paniaq points out, Vega is termed Kingullialuk, "the big one behind," while Arcturus and its companion star, Muphrid, are, together called Sivulliik, "the two in front."

The three stars are known by other names. In the legend, Kingullialuk, is known as Ningiuq (or Ningiuraaluk) "the old woman." Of the Sivulliik stars, the smaller one is known as Iliarjugaarjuk ("the little orphan") and the bigger one as Uttuqalualuk. These names are given to the stars when telling the legend.



Uttuqalualuk, when he was a young man, had murdered his brother-in-law and kept it a secret. He grew old with this secret. Iliarjugaarjuk, who had lost both parents, was now living with his grandmother. Whenever Iliarjugaarjuk visited Uttuqalualuk the old man would taunt him, chanting: "*Iliarjugaarjuup katuma arnavit pamiallua ailugu kikkaruk, pamaa!*"—"Orphan, go and get your mother's tailbone and eat the meat from it, pamaa!"

For some time Iliarjugaarjuk did not tell his grandmother about the old man's insults. When he eventually did, his grandmother told him to reply to Uttuqalualuk thus: "*Uttuqalualuup piksuma sakialli angialli qungnikut sallikut kivi-tipiuk, pamaa!*"—"Uttuqalualuk, your brother-in-law is your secret. On the crack at the further pressure ridge you did sink him, pamaa!"

Iliarjugaarjuk's grandmother taught him these lines.

For some time the orphan was anxious and uncertain and would not risk to say these words to the old man even though Uttuqalualuk continued to taunt him as before. His grandmother, however, kept asking if he had yet responded to Uttuqalualuk in the manner she had taught him, adding that if the old man became aggressive on hearing these words she would come to Iliarjugaarjuk's rescue.