

*“What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as  
sweet”*

**William Shakespeare**

In Inuit culture names are an important part of life. They align the rest of your life. They define the kind of person you will be, and the kind of person you will not. They are a sign of respect to those who are named after. They are a way to pass on tradition and family, they can make a crying and sickly at peace and healthy, and most of all they sound terrifying when your mother shouts them.

When I was born my parents took care in naming me Terrie Magdylan Arnakuluk Akpaliapik Kusugak. I could speak forever on any of those names, but I'll spare you the saga and tell for you my favorite story.

My Anaanatsiaq, my father's mother, was born in 1926 to Pujjuut and Tuunngaq in the days before Inuit had last names. She was meant to have the name that is mine, Terrie, however the church thought Theresa was a “proper” Catholic name and from there forth a Christian woman she would be. She was raised around what is now Repulse Bay, right at the cusp of the new Eastern religions being introduced to Inuit. Her family was quick to adopt Christianity and a book with words taken too literally. Her grandparents were faithful to The Church and heeded the demands of the priest.

When my Anaanatsiaq reached the age where young women could no longer be single she was set to have an arranged marriage, this was one command she would not follow. She fought tooth and nail. She made up her mind, Theresa Kukik Arnakuluk would not be married to the man named Kupak.

When her grandparents heard of her defiance they screamed at her. How dare she refuse tradition? How dare she disagree with the leader of the camp? Her own grandmother, Haakuluk! Didn't she know this was God's will? Christianity was so deep in their brains that surely the priest, a man of God, knew more than they, and if he could interpret the word of God then anything that came out of his mouth was truth and law. The priest could have said the sky was green and the sun rises in the West and my great-grandparents would have clutched onto these words to their grave. That is why when he agreed that she be married to Kupak, an orphan man, Arnakuluk would be made to follow.

“No!” She said to her own grandmother. “I will not marry him!”

“Kupak has a big igloo with fresh meat that he hunts daily. If you deny him, then you deny yourself a bed and food. No longer shall fresh meat or bannock touch your lips, and

no longer shall you rest your head on a bed. You see that sack of flour by the igloo porch? That is your new mattress!” Haakuluk ordered. Stubborn as heartache, Arnakuluk, with her jaw set in defiance, rested on a burlap sack of flour.

When I was growing up my Anaanatsiaq would tell me that her parents were wonderful and sweet, and although they wanted to help her, they couldn’t. Haakuluk was the boss of the camp, she was old and knowledgeable and no matter how much her parents loved her, they could only stand helpless against the leader of the camp. They helped her in the small ways that they could. Arnakuluk was only allowed to drink tea and eat old, sometimes rotten, meat. Her mother Tuunngaq would stir her tea, slipping in pieces of bannock and scraps of meat as she did and when Arnakuluk drank tea she could hide the food she was forbidden to eat.

It was not long before Haakuluk grew tired of Arnakuluk’s rebellion and dragged her to the church and stood her before the priest and the man that was made to be her husband. Arnakuluk sobbed wretched cries, the kind that spills from the darkest place in your soul. Eyes shut and a mixture of fear, sadness and rage escaped her lips as the priest asked her:

“Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?”

“NO!” she said, opening her eyes.

“You all see she opened her eyes, that was consent for marriage.” The priest said, and they forced a ring on her finger.

“I said no! I don’t want to marry Kupak!” She screamed.

But all she said fell on deaf ears and in the eyes of the church Arnakuluk was now a married woman. Arnakuluk stepped out of the church, took the ring off her finger and threw it into the lake. As that ring sank to the lake floor she felt the rebellion that lives in all teenagers coursing through her veins. The fight was not over.

That night the priest and his men threw Kupak and Arnakuluk in a shack, and as Arnakuluk pounded the door with her fists, men with muscles and clear orders nailed the door shut. In the room there was a bed, and nothing else. Arnakuluk closed her eyes, tears dripping down her face. She did the only thing there was left to do. She prayed. She prayed as hard as she could, that Kupak leave her alone. She lay on the bed, cried and prayed until she fell asleep. In the morning she opened her eyes and saw Kupak lying next to her, fully clothed and facing the other way. She breathed a sigh of relief. She had always said she was thankful that Kupak never forced himself upon her, even though rape was not uncommon back then.

She left the shack and went back to the burlap sack waiting for her at her grandmother's igloo. Haakuluk and The Church scolded Arnakuluk everyday, telling her she would go to hell for her disobedience. She went to the church, and met the priest in his office. With her shoulders square, and her head held high she yelled at him, something never done before. "You keep telling me that if I don't marry him I'm going to hell, well guess what? I'd rather go to hell 1000 times before I be with him." As much as Arnakuluk wanted to keep face, she began crying anyway. They were the kind of tears that fall when you want to hide them the most. "I don't want to go to hell but if that is my only other choice I will choose hell everyday over marrying that man!"

The priest was unprepared and he too began to cry. He broke down, tired of holding up this act. "No, I'm sorry. You are not going to hell. I am going to hell for lying to you. I'm sorry." he begged. Arnakuluk wanted to laugh in his face, and instead she walked out of the church.

Arnakuluk's favourite uncle told a priest in Chesterfield Inlet how she was being treated and the priest came up with a plan. It was his job to deliver the mail around the North by dog team. On his trip to Repulse Bay he gave her a sleeping bag and told Haakuluk that Arnakuluk was the only one to be able to use it and that no one else may share in her sleeping bag. Haakuluk could not protest, a priest's word was law. On his way back he took Arnakuluk onto his sled and took her away to Chesterfield Inlet where she became a nun. Nuns, after all, cannot have husbands.

So the religion that held her captive also set her free, and she died a Christian woman. On March 28, 1994 when I was born, stubbornly 3 months early, my parents knew that my name would be Arnakuluk.