

# Echoes of the Arctic

DECEMBER 2022

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Lauren was a Canadian young woman with conservative views on many subjects. One day she was coming back home after a long day at work when she casually bumped into a street protest of a group of Inuit activists.

“There’s something about indigenous people I can’t really stand! - she murmured - They tend to blame us for their troubles they have now for something that happened hundreds of years ago! It’s ridiculous, can’t they see they are the origin of their own problems?”.

Then she added, in a louder tone: “You guys need to understand that world doesn’t revolve around you! Just go get a job!”

An Inuit old woman heard these comments and understood the kind of person Lauren really was. She closed her eyes and breathed slowly to calm down her rage. Something had to be done to teach a lesson to the young lady. Something that would make her feel a deeper connection to the land her people were inhabiting and to the cultures that originated there. She summoned the spirits of her ancestors and cast a spell on the young lady.

Lauren barely noticed the old lady and at first, nothing really happened, but then her blonde hair gradually darkened to a full brown color, and also grew longer.

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When she bumped into a friend of her, Lauren noticed an expression of surprise in her friend's face as she saw her.

"What's the matter, Jane? Everything ok?"

"Oh, I was just surprised you decided to dye your hair! Don't get me wrong, it looks great in you but you have always been the blonde one, so it's unusual to see you as a brunette!"

"What do you mean, I dyed my hair? What..." - as she said so, Lauren grabbed a streak of hair and to her shock the color seemed indeed much darker than it was just a few minutes before, when she checked herself in her apartment.

"Uh, weird, it must be the light, I definitely haven't dyed my hair darker, way would I do something like that?". Her friend kindly nodded, without understanding the reason behind the apparent lie. That was definitely not her natural hair - she thought - maybe it's a bet or something like that and she doesn't feel like talking about it...

The two friends separated and Lauren forgot about the whole thing.

In the meanwhile, the progress of Lauren's change was speeding up, with her hair turning dark brown and her face being affected too, her green eyes becoming brown and her facial features shifting to a different person's.

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When Lauren arrived back home, she began getting ready for a tinder date she had been looking forward to for the whole day when she froze doing her makeup. Her reflection was completely off! After all, it wasn't just the lighting, her hair had indeed turned brown! To complete the look, her eyes had also changed color as she was now sporting two doe brown eyes.

"What happened to my hair? And my eyes!"

She was still processing what was going on, her mind racing, searching for a possible explanation, when she suddenly remembered the old Inuit lady.

"The old hag! She must have done something to me! Oh my Lord, no! Please, forgive me, I'll donate in support of your people, I'll do anything to stop this!" - she said, trying to somehow change the old Inuit lady's mind.

Nothing happened. She still looked the same: an attractive brown-eyed brunette. "I don't really get the meaning of this, I miss my blonde hair but I could always dye my hair lighter, and wear color contacts to cover these dark eyes she gave me..." as Lauren was thinking this, a sudden headache made it clear to her that the changes weren't over. The headache quickly spread to her forehead, eye sockets and nose.

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"My face... It's shifting into a different shape!" - she screamed, anticipating what was stored for her next.

Her skull began to change shape, giving her a broad, flat face and beautiful slanted eyes. On top of that, her hair darkened further to a jet black color and got longer and wavy. Her skin tone got slightly more tanned and slightly yellowish in hue.

When she finally checked herself in the mirror one last time, she whispered in disbelief: "They... They turned me into one of them!".

As she saw this, the mirror suddenly vanished, as did her entire apartment, replaced by a simple tent made of caribou skin. "Tupiq" - she inexplicably murmured, without knowing how did she know the correct word for that sort of tent.

"Qanuq uqausiq atuqtauva?" - What language is this?- she asked out loud, freaking out at her apparently inability to speak English, or French, or any other language she had ever studied. Her tongue and brain were betraying her. Inuktitut seemed to be the only option available to her. She left the tent to breathe some fresh air and as she did, her outfit changed into a traditional Inuit woman's festive attire, full with earrings and a necklace.

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The landscape around her had changed too, going from the modern city she used to live in to a snow-covered tundra. Other tents similar to the one close to her could be spotted in the distance with her suddenly sharp vision. It looked too beautiful and well-preserved to be any present-day Inuit community. As incredible as it seemed, this was not the year 2023 anymore, but the 19th century at the latest, with little or no way to find that out exactly anyway. On the other hand, after having seen her own body turn into that of an Inuit young woman, she could now believe in anything.

As the mental changes sped up, Lauren felt a deep connection to the land, sea, and ice her ancestors had been inhabiting for thousands of years. She recalled the stories of the old people from her village and the close-knit community living there, with the elders teaching all sorts of traditions to the youngsters.

The name Atiqtalik gradually replaced hers in her altered memory as the last sign of her lost identity vanished from her mind.

A handsome young Inuit man suddenly appeared from the bushes. That sight made her smile in anticipation of her big day coming ahead. Everything clicked in that moment, she was going to start her happy new life as a married woman and she couldn't ask for anything more from life!