

READERS THEATRE

Book: A Promise is a Promise Authors: Robert Munsch and Michael Kusugak
Published by Annick Press, 1988 ISBN: 155037009X

Key: N=Narrator A=Allashua AN=Allashua's narrator M=mother F=father
C=children Q=Qallupilluit QN=Qallupilluits' narrator
*** = sound of snow blowing over the ice

A: I am Allashua.

M: I am Allashua's mother

F: I am Allashua's father

C: We are Allashua's brothers and sisters

N: I am the Narrator. I am in charge of telling the story.

AN: (mischievously): But I will tell you what Allashua does.

QN: And I will tell you what the Qallupilluit do.

Q: We are the Qallupilluit.

N: On the very first nice day of spring

A: Allashua said, "I'm going to go fishing. I'm going to go fishing in the ocean. I'm going to go fishing in the cracks in the ice.

M: Ah, ah, said her mother. Don't go fishing on the sea ice. Under the sea ice live Qallupilluit. They grab children who aren't with their parents. Don't go fishing in the ocean. Go fish in a lake.

A: Right. I promise to go fishing in the lake and not in the ocean, and a promise is a promise.

N: So Allashua set out like she was going to go to the lake near her house. When she got to the end of the street...

AN: (mischievously): She didn't go to the lake. She walked down the long snowy path that led to the ocean.

N: At the edge of the ocean were large cracks where the tide broke and jumbled the ice.

AN: Allashua looked very carefully and did not see any Qallupilluit.

A: On TV I have seen Santa Claus, Fairy Godmothers and the Tooth Fairy, but never any Qallupilluit. I think my mother is wrong.

N: Just in case her mother was right...

AN: Allashua stood beside the sea ice and yelled...

A: (loudly): Qallupilluit have dirty noses.

N: Nothing happened.

AN: Allashua yelled...

A: (loudly): Qallupilluit smell like a dead whale in the summer.

N: Nothing happened.

AN: Allashua walked right out onto the sea ice and yelled, as loud as she could...

A: (loudly): Qallupilluit, Qallupilluit can't catch me!

N: Nothing happened. The only thing Allashua heard was the sound of snow blowing over the ice ***

AN: So Allashua got out her line and her hook. She walked over to a large crack in the ice and started to fish. Right away a fish grabbed the hook and Allashua pulled it up. She caught six fish in a row. Allashua yelled...

A: (loudly): I am the best fisher in the world!

N: From behind her something said, with a voice that sounded like snow blowing over the ice...***

Q: The best you may be, but the smartest you are not.

AN: Allashua turned around.

AN/QN: There, between her and the shore were the Qallupilluit.

QN: They looked at her and said...

Q: Have you seen the child who said Qallupilluit have dirty noses?

- A: Oh, no Qallupilluit. I have seen no such child, and besides, your noses are very pretty.
- Q: Have you seen the child who said we smell like a dead whale in the summertime?
- A: Oh, no, Qallupilluit. I have seen no such child, and besides, you smell very nice, just like flowers in the summer.
- Q: Have you seen the child who yelled ‘Qallupilluit, Qallupilluit can’t catch me’?
- A: Oh, no, Qallupilluit. I have seen no such child, and besides my mother says that you can catch whatever you want to.
- Q: Right. We catch whatever we want to, and what we want to catch right now is you.
- QN: One grabbed Allashua by her feet and dragged her down, down, under the sea ice to where the Qallupilluit live. (Chant: Down, down, down....)
- N: The sea water stung Allashua’s face like fire.
- AN: Allashua held her breath.
- QN: Qallupilluit gathered around her and sang, with voices that sounded like snow blowing over the ice ***
- Q: Human child, human child
Ours to have, ours to hold.
Forget your mother, forget your brother,
Ours to hold under the ice.
- AN: Allashua let out her breath.
- A: My brothers and sisters, my brothers and sisters: I’ll bring them all to the sea ice.
- N: For a moment nothing happened.
- QN: Then the Qallupilluit threw Allashua up out of the sea *** into the cold wind of the ice.
- Q: A promise is a promise. Bring your brothers and sisters to the sea ice and we will let you go.
- AN: Allashua began to run up the long, snow-covered path that led to her home. As she ran her clothes started to freeze. She ran more and more slowly until she fell to the ground.

F: That is where Allashua's father found her, almost at the back door, frozen to the snow. He gave a great yell, picked up Allashua and carried her inside. He tore off Allashua's ice clothes and put her to bed. Then the father...

F&M: and mother got under the covers and

F/M/AN: hugged Allashua till she got warm.

AN: After an hour Allashua asked for some hot tea. She drank ten cups of hot tea with lots of sugar.

A: I went to the cracks in the sea ice.

ALL: Ah, ah.

N: said her family

ALL: Not so smart.

A: I called the Qallupilluit nasty names.

ALL: Ah, ah

N: said her family

ALL: Dumber still

A: I promised to take my brothers and sisters to the cracks in the sea ice. I promised to take them all to the Qallupilluit.

ALL: Ah, ah

N: said her family

ALL: A promise is a promise.

M&F: Then her mother and father made some tea and they sat and drank it, and didn't say anything for a long time. (They turn and look at each other; long pause)

QN: From far down the snow-covered path that led to the sea the Qallupilluit began calling

Q: A promise is a promise. A promise is a promise. A promise is promise. (Distant voices)

N: The mother looked at her children

M: I have an idea. Do exactly as I say. When I start dancing, all of you follow Allashua to the cracks in the sea ice.

N: And the children all whispered to each other:

C: Ah, ah, why will our mother dance? This is not a happy time.

M: Allashua's mother went out the back door and yelled, Qallupilluit, Qallupilluit, come and talk with me.

QN: And they did come, right up out of the cracks in the sea ice. *** Up the long, snow-covered path to the sea they came, and stood by the back door.

N: It was a most strange thing, for never before had the Qallupilluit left the ocean.

M&F: The mother and father cried and yelled and asked for their children back...

N: but...

QN: the Qallupilluit said

Q: A promise is a promise

M&F: The mother and father begged and pleaded and asked for their children back...

N: but...

QN: The Qallupilluit said

Q: A promise is a promise.

N: Finally Alashua's mother said

M: Qallupilluit, you have hearts of ice; but a promise is a promise. Come and join us while we say goodbye to our children.

ALL: Everyone went inside.

N: First the mother gave her children some bread.

M: She said to the Qallupilluit, "This is not for you."

N: But...

QN: The Qallupilluit said

Q: We want some too.

N: The mother gave the Qallupilluit some bread

QN: They liked it a lot.

N: Then the mother gave each of her children a piece of candy.

M: She said to the Qallupilluit, "This is not for you."

N: But...

QN: The Qallupilluit said

Q: We want some too.

N: The mother gave the Qallupilluit some candy

QN: They liked it a lot.

N: Then the father started to dance.

F: He said to the Qallupilluit, This is not for you.

N: But...

QN: The Qallupilluit said

Q: We have never danced. We want to dance.

N&QN: And they all started to dance. First they danced slowly and then they danced fast and then they started to jump and yell and scream and dance a wild dance (slap thighs and stamp feet).

QN: The Qallupilluit liked the dancing so much that they forgot about children.

N: Finally the mother started to dance, and when the children saw their mother dancing they crawled out the back door and ran down the long, snowy path that led to the sea.

C: They came to the cracks in the sea ice and Allashua whispered:

A: Qallupilluit, Qallupilluit, here we are.

N: Nothing happened.

C: All the children said, Qallupilluit, Qallupilluit, here we are.

N: Nothing happened.

C: All the children yelled, as loud as they could, Qallupilluit, Qallupilluit here we are!

N: Nothing happened.

C: They all went back to the land and sat on a large rock by the beach.

QN: Two minutes later the Qallupilluit ran screaming down the path and jumped into their cracks in the ice. ***

AN: Allashua stood up on the rock and said

A: A promise is what you were given and a promise is what you got. I brought my brothers and sisters to the sea ice. But you were not here.

C: A promise is a promise.

QN: The Qallupilluit yelled and screamed and pounded the ice ***...

N: Till it broke

QN: The Qallupilluit begged and pleaded and asked to have the children ***

A: But Allashua said, "A promise is a promise."

QN: The Qallupilluit jumped down to the bottom of the sea and took their cracks with them

N: And the whole ocean of ice became perfectly smooth.

M: The mother...

M&F: and father came walking down the long, snowy path to the ocean. They hugged and kissed each one of their children.

ALL: even Allashua.

N: The father looked at the flat ocean.

F: We will go fishing here, for Qallupilluit have promised

Q: Never to catch children with their parents.

ALL: And a promise is a promise.

N: Then they all did go fishing, quite happily.

AN: Except for Allashua. She had been too close to the Qallupilluit and could still hear them singing

QN: With voices that sounded like blowing snow ***

ALL: Human child, human child
Ours to have, ours to hold
Forget your mother, forget your brother
Ours to hold under the ice

Handwritten notes:
get on the ice