

**Ghost Stories of Greenland on Stamps**  
**A Presentation to the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County**  
**on October 23, 2024**  
**by Ron Breznay**



Snow and icy winds chill the desolate expanses of Greenland. But that is not all. Tales of ghosts and monsters also send shivers down the spines of Greenlanders.

Tusass, the postal administration of Greenland, issued four sets of two stamps each from 2020 through 2023 depicting the ghostly legends of the not-so-green land.

The early people of Greenland were very dependent on nature due to the harsh climate of the huge island. They would hunt and gather when the weather allowed, and then hunker down during the long, bitter winters.

Since nature was such a huge and decisive factor in the lives of Greenlanders, they had a tendency to personify it and make it alive. They developed taboos, spells, and amulets to deal with their challenging lives, which led to myths and stories to help understand their strategies.



The stories began as oral narratives, and it was quite some time before they were written down, usually by European explorers and missionaries.

All the designs on the stamps and the stories behind them are taken from this book, *Bestiarium Greenlandica*, which was published in 2018 by Milik Publishing. It was edited by Maria Bach Kreutzmann and illustrated by various artists.

The book contains stories about 67 Greenlandic ghosts, spirits, mythical creatures, and strange beings, as well as background information and reference material. The introduction discusses, among other things, the types of spirits in the land's mythology, such as helper spirits or scare spirits.





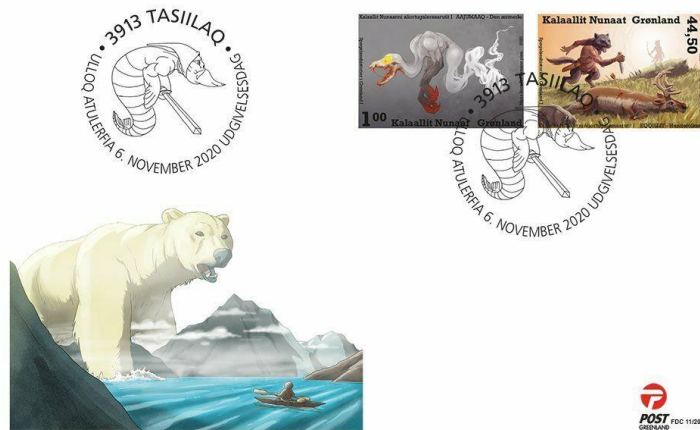
The first set of Greenland Ghost Stories stamps (Scott 852-53) was issued on November 6, 2020. Greenland's currency is the Danish krone, which is abbreviated DKK. Maria Bach Kreutzmann created the Danish krone 1.00 stamp, and Christian Fleischer Rex the Danish krone 44.50 stamp.



The Danish krone 1.00 stamp features *Aajumaaq* (you will have to bear with my pronunciation of Greenlandic words), or the Sleeved One, which lives in a tunnel in the ice cap. This creature has long, slender arms that are black from the elbows down, with each hand having only three fingers. The head resembles a bald or skeletal dog's head, with large, piercing eyes. The Sleeved One floats through the air, and when it touches anything, including a human, that thing soon rots away. *Aajumaaq* either speaks like a whispering ghost or shouts its arrival.



The Danish krone 44.50 stamp depicts *Eqqillit*, also known as the Dog People. These are half-dog, half-human creatures who live in packs on or near the ice cap. Sometimes they dwell in ordinary houses, but they prefer caves under big rocks. They move fast enough to outrun humans, and they have a great sense of smell. They are extremely aggressive and hostile and love to pick fights with humans. For weapons, they use bows and knives.

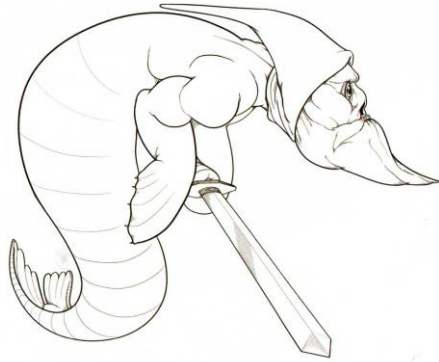


The official first day covers for all the issues have a cachet showing a creature different than the ones featured on the stamps. The cachet for the first day cover of the first set of stamps depicts *Immap Nanua*, or the Bear of the Sea.



This bear is so big that it can wade through fjords, and when it puts its front paws on the shore and cranes its neck, it can lick the highest mountaintops. However, despite its size, it is silent and easily sneaks up on people. When it inhales, it can suck in a boat complete with occupants, and when exhaling, it tips all paddlers out of the boats.





The first-day cancellation for all issues has a drawing of *Umiarissat*, who are warriors with bushy beards, big hats, and shiny weapons. They disguise themselves as seals, and when they reach shore, they turn into human-like creatures to attack settlements and butcher the people.



Greenland Ghost Stories stamps series II (Scott 879-80) was issued on September 17, 2021. The Danish krone 0.50 stamp was designed by Maja-Lisa Kehlet, and the Danish krone 33.50 by Jonatan Brüsich.



The lower-denomination stamp features the *Qivittoq*, or Mountain Wanderer. The *Qivittut* (which is the plural form) are created when people leave their settlement in shame, anger, or grief. They wander across the mountains or the ice cap in order to isolate themselves from all other people. Their garments consist of hare or fox skins and their boots are made from twigs, roots, or leather straps. They have red eyes, matted hair, and very dark skin. It is said that the touch of a *Qivittoq* can cause infected wounds. A creature cannot fully transform into a *Qivittoq* until it loses all its humanity. A fully transformed *Qivittoq* can often be seen floating across the mountains and breathing out fire or having a tail of fire.



The *Qivittoq* was the antagonist in the Greenlandic horror movie *Qaqqat Alanngui*, which was released in 2011. The movie has the English title *In Shadows in the Mountains*. It tells of six young students as they celebrate their graduation by taking a trip to a family-owned cabin in the mountains of Greenland. Of course, the cabin lies outside cell phone coverage. The festive young people are not as alone as they think in the desolate landscape when they see signs of the territorial, avenging spirit known as *Qivittoq*. The weekend turns into a bloodbath.





The higher-denomination stamp has the image of the *Anngiaq*, or The Secret. It is a spirit of a baby or a fetus who was born in secret and then killed. The spirit lives on, looking for the love of which it was deprived. The spirit finds the skull of a dog, which it uses as a boat, and searches out relatives of its mother. It will drown them or shoot them with arrows as punishment for their crime. It can crawl into siblings born after it and kill them by causing internal bleeding. The only way the *Anngiaq* can be stopped is for the secret to be revealed.



This is the first day cover of the second issue of the stamps.



The cachet for the first day cover of the second set depicts *Kiiappa*, also known as the Big Mask. This creature is a giant mask with arms and legs but no head or body. It can frighten people to death, or possess them, making them sick and stealing their souls. The body of a possessed person is covered with huge bruises, and he or she suffers terrible fits. When a possessed person dies, the corpse might wake up with a scream and jump around.





The third set of stamps (Scott 892-93) was issued on May 31, 2022. The Danish krone 2.00 stamp was designed by Carina Lillegaard Løvgreen, and the Danish krone 27.00 by Coco Apunnguaq Lyngø.



The Danish krone 2.00 stamp shows *Amu*, which is a helper spirit. An *Amu* helps a shaman's soul leave his body in order to go on a spirit journey to locate malevolent spirits causing harm to the settlement. During this ritual, *Amu* keeps the audience alive and protects them from other spirits. *Amu* has a small, almost withered body, two extremely long arms, three fingers on each hand, and a big head with large eyes. The creature continually screams "*Amuuu!*"





The other stamp depicts *Qarlimaatsq*, also known as the Ghoul or the Dead One. This creature has a black face and a desiccated body, and it usually lives in a grave. A person walking by the grave might hear a buzzing sound. *Qarlimaatsq* will sometimes lie screaming in the grave during a full moon. When it rises from its burial, it looks like the northern lights. *Qarlimaatsq* is a helper spirit for a shaman.



This is the first day cover for the third set of stamps.

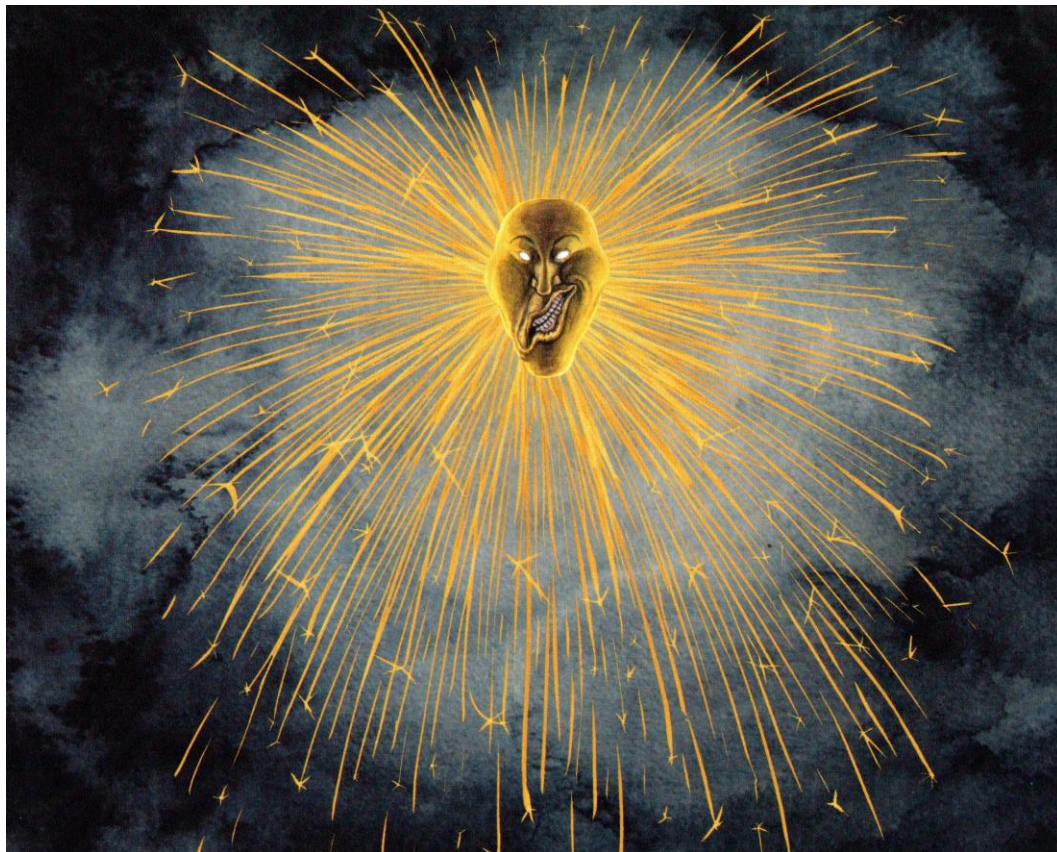


The cachet for the first day cover for the third set of stamps depicts *Pissaap Inua*, the Lord of Strength. This is a large creature resembling a fox or dog with a very long tail and a human face. This is a benign creature that is wise and strong, and people seek it out to give them strength.





The fourth set of stamps (Scott 921-922) was issued on February 27, 2023. The Danish krone 13.00 stamp was designed by Martin Brandt Hansen, and the Danish krone 39.00 by Ágúst Kristinsson.



On the Danish krone 13.00 stamp is *Equngasooq*, the One with the Crooked Mouth. The creature has a big, crooked mouth placed vertically across its face, and it becomes angry when asked about that facial feature. It lives on the outermost reefs, and it will leave its perch only when the waves are very high. It is a spirit that will assist humans during storms. When a human calls upon *Equngasooq*, it appears in a shower of sparks.





The Danish krone 39.00 stamp pictures *Sermilissuaq*, also known as the Ice-Covered Bear. This creature is a giant polar bear that was formed by an underwater ice mountain and is completely covered in ice. *Sermilissuaq* is dangerous to people as it feeds on human flesh. It wanders in from under the ice when the ice melts or from hollows in the mountains when the sun comes out. Its breath covers the entire landscape in an icy fog. One story tells of a hunter who escaped from a *Sermilissuaq* by plunging a chisel into its eyes, killing the creature.



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This is the first day cover for the fourth issue.



The cachet for the first day cover for the fourth set of stamps depicts *Igalilik*, or the Pot Creature, which wanders around with a big pot of hot rocks on its back, and it picks up fish or birds to boil in the pot.



With this rich treasury of scary creatures, perhaps Tusass will issue more sets of stamps in the future. There are illustrations of 48 more monsters in the book. However...



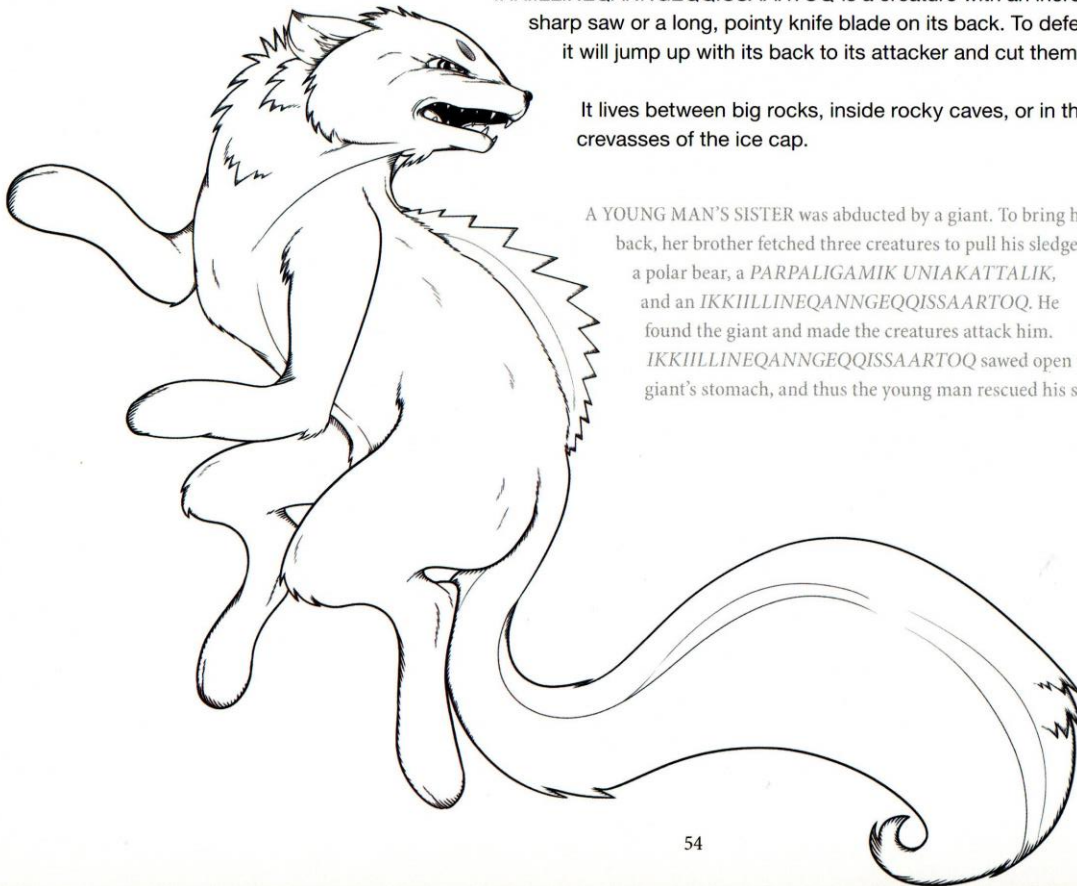
# IKKIILLINEQANNGEQQISSAARTOQ

[ˈik ˈkiːt ɬi nɜ ˈqan ˈŋɜq ˈqis ˈsɑːt tɔq#] The one that never gets blunt

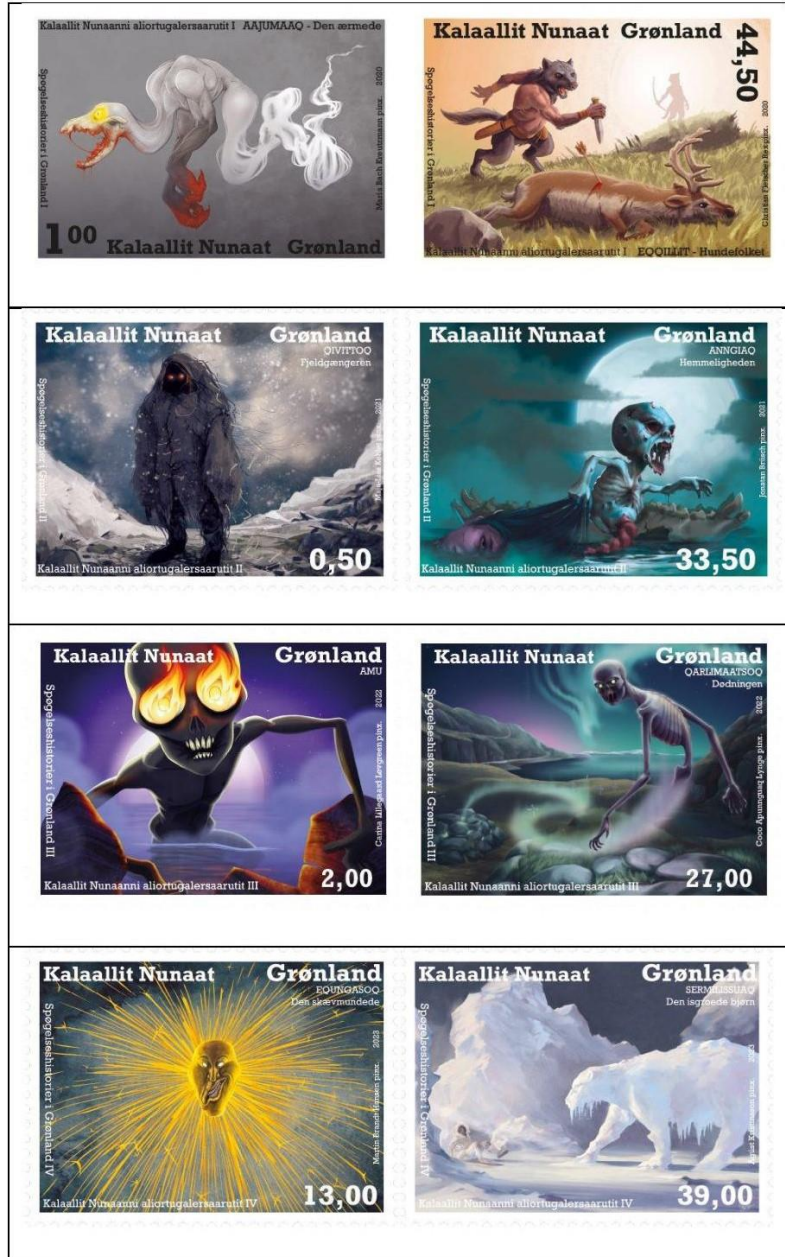
*IKKIILLINEQANNGEQQISSAARTOQ* is a creature with an incredibly sharp saw or a long, pointy knife blade on its back. To defend itself, it will jump up with its back to its attacker and cut them.

It lives between big rocks, inside rocky caves, or in the deep crevasses of the ice cap.

A YOUNG MAN'S SISTER was abducted by a giant. To bring her back, her brother fetched three creatures to pull his sledge: a polar bear, a *PARPALIGAMIK UNIAKATTALIK*, and an *IKKIILLINEQANNGEQQISSAARTOQ*. He found the giant and made the creatures attack him. *IKKIILLINEQANNGEQQISSAARTOQ* sawed open the giant's stomach, and thus the young man rescued his sister.



...I hope they don't use this one as I have no idea how to pronounce that name.



Thank you. Any questions?