

Skadi

Foster & Cummings

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While Iduna's friends were still crowding about her, all joyful and glad at getting her home again, they spied some one afar off, coming toward Asgard.

As the figure drew nearer, they saw it was Skadi, the tall daughter of the frost giant Thiassi, who had chased Iduna; she was dressed all in white fur, and carried a shining hunting-spear and arrows. Slung over her shoulder were snowshoes and skates, for Skadi had come from her mountain home in the icy north. Very angry about the loss of her father, she had come to ask the Æsir why they had been so cruel to him.

Father Odin spoke kindly to her, saying, "We will do honor to your father by putting his eyes in the sky, where they will always shine as two bright stars, and the people in Midgard will remember Thiassi whenever they look up at night and see the two twinkling lights. Besides this, we will also give you gold and silver." But Skadi, thinking money could never repay her for the loss of her father, was still angry.

Loki looked at her stern face, and he said to himself, "If we can only make Skadi laugh, she will be more ready to agree to the plan," and he began to think of some way to amuse her. Taking a long cord he tied it to a goat; it was an invisible cord, which no one could see, and Loki himself held the other end of it. Then he began to dance and caper about, and the goat had to do just what Loki did. It really was such a funny sight, that all the gods shouted with laughter, and even poor, sorrowful Skadi had to smile.

When the Æsir saw this, they proposed another plan: Skadi might choose one of the gods for her husband, but she must choose, from seeing only his bare feet. The giantess looked at them all, as they stood before her, and when she saw the bright face of Baldur, more beautiful than all the rest, she agreed to their plan, saying to herself, "It might be that I should choose him, and then I should surely be happy."

The gods then stood in a row behind a curtain, so that Skadi could see nothing but their bare feet. She looked carefully at them all, and at last chose the pair of feet which seemed to her the whitest, and of the finest shape, thinking those must be Baldur's; but when the curtain was taken away, she was surprised and sorry to find she had chosen Niörd, the god of the seashore.

The wedding took place at Asgard, and when the feasting was over, Skadi and Niörd went to dwell in his home by the sea. At first they were very happy, for Niörd was kind to his giant bride; but how could you expect one of the Æsir to live happily very long with a frost giantess for his wife?

Skadi did not like the roar of the waves, and hated the cries of the sea-gulls and the murmur of gentle summer winds. She longed for her frozen home, far away in the north, amid ice and snow.

And so they finally agreed that, for nine months of the year, Niörd should live with Skadi among her snowy mountains, where she found happiness in hunting over the white hills and valleys on her snowshoes, with her hunting dogs at her side, or skating on the ice-bound rivers and lakes. Then for the three short months of summer Skadi must live with Niörd in his palace by the sea, while he calmed the stormy ocean waves, and helped the busy fishermen to have good sailing for their boats.

Niörd loved to wander along the shore, his jacket trimmed with a fringe of lovely seaweeds and his belt made of the prettiest shells on the beach, with the friendly little sandpipers running before him, and beautiful gulls and other sea birds sailing in the air above his head. Sometimes he loved to sit on the rocks by the shore, watching

the seals play in the sunshine, or feeding the beautiful swans, his favorite birds.

There is a kind of sponge, which the people in the north still call Niörd's glove, in memory of this old Norse god.

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