



# *The Baby Eskimo*

A Treasury Of Eskimo Tales

North American

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*Intermediate*  
*2 min read*

The little Eskimo away up in the northern part of British America has a pretty hard time of it, as you may know when you think how cold it is there.

He is born in a snow hut, and when he is but a few hours old he is carried on his mother's back out upon the ice, and around and around in circles and after a while through deep snow back to the hut. If that does not kill him, the names he gets are enough to do it; for he is given the names of all the people who have died in the village since the last baby was born. He sometimes has a string of names long enough to weigh any baby down. Worse than that, if one of his relatives dies before he is four years old, that name is added to the rest and is the one by which he is called.

Worse still, if he falls sick he is given a dog's name, so that the goddess Sedna will look kindly upon him. Then, all his life, he must wear a dog's harness over his inner jacket. If he should die, his mother must rush out of the house with him at once. If she does not do so, everything in the house must be thrown away or destroyed, just as is done when a grown person dies in a furnished house.

For a whole year his mother must wear a cap if she steps outside her door, and she must carry his boots about with her. After three days she goes to his tomb and walks around it three times, going around to the left, because that is the way the sun travels. While she walks, she talks to the dead child and promises to bring him

food. A year after his death she must do this again, and she must do the same thing whenever she happens to pass near the grave.

Now we shall tell you some of the tales which the Eskimo mothers relate to their children. The first one is about Kiviung, the Rip Van Winkle of the Eskimos.

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