

The Red Skeleton

A Treasury Of Eskimo Tales

North American

Easy
2 min read

In a village on Cape Prince of Wales, very long ago, there was a poor orphan boy who had no one to take his part and who was treated badly by everyone, being made to run here and there at the bidding of all the villagers.

One snowy night he was told to go out of the kashim to see if the weather was getting worse. He had no skin boots, and it was so cold that he did not wish to go, but he was driven out. When he came back he said, "It has stopped snowing, but it is as cold as ever."

Just to plague him, the men kept sending him out every little while, until at last he came in saying:

"I saw a ball of fire like the moon coming over the hill to the north."

The men laughed at him and asked, "Why do you tell us a yarn like that? Go out again and see if there is not a whale coming over the hill. You are always seeing things."

He went out, and came in again quickly, saying in agitation, "The red thing has come nearer and is close to the house."

The men laughed, but the boy hid himself. Almost immediately after this the men in the kashim saw a fiery figure dancing on the gut-skin covering over the roof hole, and an instant after a human skeleton came

crawling into the room through the passageway, creeping on its knees and elbows.

When the skeleton was in the room it made a motion toward the people which caused them all to fall on their knees and elbows in the same position as it had. Then, turning about, it crawled out as it had come, followed by the people, who were forced to go with it. Outside, the skeleton crept through the snow toward the edge of the village, followed by all the men, and in a short time every one of them was dead and the skeleton had vanished.

Some of the villagers had been absent when the spook came, and when they returned they found dead people lying all about on the cold ground. Entering the kashim, they found the orphan boy, who told them how the people had been killed.

They followed the tracks of the skeleton through the snow, and were led up the side of the mountain till they came to an ancient grave, where the tracks ended.

It was the grave of the boy's father.

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