

The Tattooed Men

Mabel Cook Cole

Philippine

Intermediate

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Once there were two young men, very good friends, who were unhappy because neither of them had been tattooed. They felt that they were not as beautiful as their friends.

One day they agreed to tattoo each other. One marked the breast and back of the other, his arms and legs, and even his face. And when he had finished, he took soot off the bottom of a cooking-pot and rubbed it into all the marks; and he was tattooed beautifully.

The one who had done the work said to the other:

“Now, my friend, you are very beautiful, and you must tattoo me.”

Then the tattooed one scraped a great pile of black soot off the cooking-pots, and before the other knew what he was about, he had rubbed it all over him from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet; and he was very black and greasy. The one who was covered with soot became very angry and cried:

“Why do you treat me so when I tattooed you so carefully?”

They began to fight, but suddenly the beautifully tattooed one became a great lizard which ran away and hid in the tall grass, while the sooty one became a crow and flew away over the village.

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