



What Happened to the Lone Woman of St. Michael

A Treasury Of Eskimo Tales
North American

*Intermediate
2 min read*

The women south of St. Michael are poor seamstresses but fine dancers, while those to the north are expert needlewomen but poor dancers; and this is the way the Eskimo explain it.

Very long ago there were many men living in the northland, but there was no woman among them. Far away in the southland a single woman was known to live. At last the shrewdest young man of the northland started and traveled southward till he came to the woman's house, where he stopped and became her husband.

He was very proud of himself for getting ahead of the other young men in the north. One day he sat in the house thinking of his former home, and he said, "Ah, I have a wife, while even the son of the Headman has none."

Meanwhile, the Headman's son had also set out to journey toward the south, and while the husband was talking thus to himself, the son stood in the entrance to the house and heard what he said. It angered the son to hear the husband gloating over him. He hid in the passage and waited until the people inside were asleep, when he crept into the house and, seizing the woman by the shoulders, began dragging her away.

Just as he reached the doorway he was overtaken by the husband who caught the woman by her feet. The two held on like grim death and tugged and pulled until it ended in the woman being torn in two. The thief carried the upper half of the body away, while the husband was left with the lower portion of his wife.

Each man set to work to replace the missing parts from carved wood. After these parts were fitted on they came to life; and thus two women were made from the halves of one.

Owing to the clumsiness of her wooden fingers, the woman of the south was a poor needlewoman, but was a fine dancer. The woman of the north was very expert in needlework, but her wooden legs made her a poor dancer. Each of these women gave these traits to her daughters, so that to the present time the same difference is noted between the women of the north and those of the south, "thus showing that the story is true."

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