



# Kotura, Lord of the Winds



Long ago in Siberia lived a poor old Nenet man with three daughters that he could hardly afford to keep.

One day a ferocious storm blew up. The old man knew the storm would kill them all if it wasn't stopped. The only way to save the Nenet people was to send Kotura, Lord of the Winds, a wife.

He told his Eldest Daughter that she must go to Kotura and ask him to stop the wind and snow.

"Push your sled into the North Wind and follow where it leads. The wind will rip open the straps of your coat, the snow will fill your shoes but you mustn't stop until you reach the top of a steep hill. A little bird will land on your shoulder, be kind and stroke his feathers. Then jump on your sled and let it run down the hill to Kotura's choom. Sit patiently and wait, on his return do exactly as he says."

Eldest Daughter took her sled into the North wind, and despite her father's words she stopped to re-tie her coat and empty her shoes of snow.

When she finally reached the top of the steep hill she shoed away the little bird which circled above her three times and flew away. She rode down the hill to Kotura's choom and made herself at home. She found roast venison, lit a fire, warmed herself and cooked the meat gorging herself on strips of fat.

When Kotura entered his choom he demanded to know why she was there.

"My father sent me to be your wife", said Eldest Daughter.

Kotura handed her some meat and told her to cook it and split it into two portions. One portion he took and told her to take the other plate to his neighbour. "But", he said, "wait outside the choom. When an old lady appears give her the meat and wait outside for her to return the dish."

Eldest Daughter walked only a little way into the raging blizzard before she stopped and threw the meat into the snow and returned.

"Let me see what she has put into the dish", said Kotura. But there was nothing to see but an empty dish. He ate his meat and went to sleep without another word.

In the morning Kotura woke early and gave Eldest Daughter a pile of untanned deer skins and instructed her to make him a coat, shoes and mittens before he returned from hunting that evening. Eldest Daughter had only just begun to scrape the skins when an old lady appeared at the flap of the choom begging for a speck to be removed from her eye. But Eldest Daughter was too busy and sent her away.

When Kotura returned he looked at the clothes. They were so ill fitting and poorly made that he lost his temper. He lifted Eldest Daughter above his head and threw her far away into the snow where she froze to the very bone.

The wind became fiercer and the old Nenet man knew Eldest Daughter had failed. He called Second Daughter to him and gave her the same instructions.

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your shoulder, be kind and stroke his feathers. Then jump on your sled and let it run down the hill to Kotura's choom. Sit patiently and wait, on his return do exactly as he says."

But Second Daughter took her sled into the North wind, and despite her father's words stopped to re-tie her coat and empty her shoes of snow.

When she finally reached the top of the steep hill she shoed away the little bird which circled above her three times and flew away. She rode down the hill to Kotura's choom and made herself at home. She found roast venison, lit a fire, warmed herself and cooked the meat gorging herself on strips of fat.

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When Kotura returned he looked at the clothes. They were so ill fitting and poorly made that he lost his temper. He lifted Second Daughter above his head and threw her far away into the snow where she froze to the very bone.

The wind became fiercer and the old Nenet man knew Second Daughter had failed. Sadly, he called Youngest Daughter to him and gave her the same instructions.

"Push your sled into the North Wind and follow where it leads. The wind will rip open the straps of your coat, the snow will fill your shoes but you mustn't stop until you reach the top of a steep hill. A little bird will land on your shoulder, be kind and stroke his feathers. Then jump on your sled and let it run down the hill to Kotura's choom. Sit patiently and wait, on his return do exactly as he says."

Youngest Daughter took her sled into the North Wind and she didn't pause until she reached the top of the steep hill. While she was re-tying her coat straps and emptying her shoes of snow the little bird flew down and landed on her shoulder. She paused to pet it and spoke gently and kindly until it recovered its energy. As the little bird flew away she jumped on her sled and coasted down the hill right to the flap of Kotura's choom. She went in and patiently and quietly awaited Kotura's entry.

Soon Kotura opened the flap and seeing Youngest Daughter asked why she was there.

"My father told me to come and request you quieten the storm as our people will surely die if it goes on."

Kotura handed her some meat and told her to cook it and split it into two portions. One portion he took and told her to take the other plate to his neighbour. “But”, he said, “wait outside the choom. When an old lady appears give her the meat and wait outside for her to return the dish.”

Youngest Daughter walked into the snow with no idea where she should go, and just as she did down flew the little bird and led her on her way. The little bird took her to what was no more than a pile of snow with smoke drifting from the top. Youngest Daughter walked around the heap and knocked it with her foot. Suddenly an old woman puffing at a black pipe stuck her head out from a flap and asked in a croaky voice why she was there.

“I have meat for you from Kotura”, Youngest Daughter said. The old woman took the plate and disappeared. Youngest Daughter waited outside in the snow. She waited and she waited and finally the old head popped out of the flap and a wizened arm thrust the plate back into her hands and told her to go. Youngest Daughter tramped back to Kotura’s choom carefully holding the dish before her.

Kotura was waiting for her return and took the plate from her hands. Youngest Daughter could now see by the light of the choom. In the plate lay sharp knives, bone needles and scrapers. “These tools will serve you well”, said Kotura. “You were gone so long that the day is now new and I must hunt”.

He gave Youngest Daughter a pile of untanned deer skins and instructed her to make him a coat, shoes and mittens before he returned from hunting that evening. Youngest Daughter had only just begun to scrape the skins when the old lady of the snow choom appeared at the flap of the choom begging for a speck to be removed from her eye. Youngest Daughter dropped her scraper and gently cleaned the speck from the old lady’s eye.

“Ah, I can see clearly now”, said the old lady, “look into my ear Youngest Daughter and see what you will see”. To her amazement Youngest Daughter saw a snow maiden sitting in the old lady’s ear. And you can imagine her surprise when she called to her and not one but four snow maidens leapt from the old lady’s ear and set about those untanned deer hides with skill and expertise. They took the sharp knives, bone needles and scrapers in their hands and very soon there lay a coat, shoes and mittens on the floor of the choom. And no sooner were they done when the four snow maidens were back in the old lady’s ear and she was off into the snow.

When night fell Kotura returned to examine his new clothes and he was not disappointed. He smiled on Youngest Daughter and the wind ceased to howl, the snow no longer tumbled from the skies.

“You have pleased me Youngest Daughter, stay and be my wife.”

Youngest Daughter stayed and married Kotura and lived with him, his old mother and four sisters happily evermore. And an old Nenet man smiled knowing that his people would be safe thanks to his cherished Youngest Daughter.



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