

Assiniboin

The Woman Married to a Horse

It was springtime, and the dried meat in the rawhide cases was almost all eaten. Everyone needed fresh meat, but the buffalo herds had not yet returned. The elders told two young men, known to be reliable, to climb a distant butte, and to look for the herds.

The young men did not see any buffalo, but far off in the distance, they were greatly surprised to see what appeared to be a person running with a herd of wild horses. As they watched, they saw that it was a woman with long hair streaming out behind her as she ran. "This is very strange," one said to the other. "We must go back and tell the elders."

They described what they had seen, and asked whether a woman had ever been missing. "Yes," answered an old man. "I remember years ago, not so far from here, a man lost his young wife. She was never found. This must be her. We must bring her home."

The men caught their fastest horses and rode out to surround the wild horses. The woman was as wild as the horses and difficult to catch, but they roped her by an arm and a leg. To stop her struggles they picketed her together with the other wild horses.





That night a young man left his tipi and laid down beside her. She spoke to him: "Listen to me, young man, for I tell you the truth: it was many years ago when the village was moving. I was lagging behind everyone a little, when I saw a beautiful black stallion with a rope on him. I thought he must belong to someone in the village. When I had hold of his rope, he suddenly spoke to me: 'Jump on my back.' He took me away. He is my husband," she said, pointing to a black stallion picketed close by. "And those are my seven children," she said, pointing them out. "I cannot go back to this village life now. I have become a horse. Let me and my children go. If you help me, then I will help you: tie a bell to your horse, you will always be lucky at catching wild horses."

The young man told the elders what the woman had told him. After considering among themselves, the elders cried out to the people to set free the woman and the wild horses.

They say this happened in the long-ago times, when all things were possible.