

HARVESTING

First Nations Resource Centre



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the KSAN



GITKSAN and TSIMSHIAN LEGENDS

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TOLD BY THE ALUUGIGAT

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FIRST NATIONS
RESOURCE CENTRE

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1. THE PAINTED GOAT

The fine autumn sun shone on the mountain tops, as a small band of men climbed the slope. At last they saw a herd of mountain goats. The hunters crept closer, with their bows and spear ready. Before the goats could get away, the men had killed more of the animals than they needed for food. They had killed more than they could carry back down to their town. They liked killing the goats. Why should they care if they were breaking the old law.

The old law said, "You must kill no animal, unless you need its meat for food or its skin for clothes. You must waste no part of the animal. You must not chase and kill animals for sport. You must love all animals, because without them, you will die."

The sport was good. Killing made them feel strong and happy. When the goats ran, one kid got left behind. One of the hunters caught this kid.

Many dead goats were left on the mountain side, while the hunters climbed back down to the town with the kid.

When they reached Tamlahamid, the town, the man tied a rope round the kid's neck. He tied it to a stake by his house. Children came to watch the kid. They liked the way it tried to get free. They came closer and closer. First one and then another touched

the kid. They liked the way it tried to get free. They came closer and closer. First one and then another touched the kid. The kid was very afraid now. It stood still trembling. The children were not pleased. They wanted to see it trying to get away.

One boy unfastened the rope. He made the kid run and jump. It tried to get away, but it could not. Some older people came. They laughed too when they saw the kid. They went across the town to where a fire had been lit on the bank of the river. A spark fell on the kid and burnt its wool. The people laughed. A boy took a burning stick from the fire and put it on the kid's back. The kid was very frightened. It jumped high into the air. While it jumped, the boy pushed it and it fell into the fire. When it stumbled from the flames it was burnt and smoking. Everybody was delighted. Some of the children threw it into the river and held it under the water for a while. When they thought it was cold enough, they put it back in the fire.

The kid was almost dead when the chief's son, Duas, came by. He wanted to see what all the noise was about.

"What are you doing to the kid," he said. "Don't you know that you have broken the old law?"

The people were not pleased with Duas, but nobody tried to stop him when he took the poor kid. He put it

under his cloak and took it to his house. He rubbed grease and red ointment into its burnt skin.

When he thought that the kid was strong again, Duas took it up the mountain. He set the kid down. Before it walked away it looked back at Duas. It had a red ring around each eye, where he had put on the ointment.

A few days later, while most of the men were away fishing, three men came to Tamlahamid. They had long white cloaks. They covered their faces, even when they spoke.

"We have come from our village, high in the mountains," said one of the men. "We have come to invite all the men to a great feast."

The women said that the men would be very glad to go to the feast. The man said that he would come back next day to take the men to his village.

When he came back, the men were ready to go with him. Duas went beside his father. The trail led them up and up to the highest part of the mountains, where the trees could not grow. At last the village stood in front of them.

As the visitors came towards the village, the mountain chief danced towards them. He shook his rattle and led them into his house. As they went in through the door, they heard women singing and the beating of drums. The house was big but there was not enough room

for everyone to sit down. A young man with red circles round his eyes met Duas at the door. He led him to a quiet corner.

The feasting and singing went long into the night. Duas's new friend stayed with him. At midnight the mountain chief stood up. The singing stopped. Everything was quiet.

"Each of you will now go to the home of one of my people," he said.

The mountain chief went to Duas's father and led him from the house. One by one the mountain men followed, each with a visitor.

"Stay with me until everyone has gone," said the young man with the painted eyes.

As the last man went out through the door, the walls of the house melted and vanished. Duas shivered in the cold night air. He was now leaning on the hard stone of the mountainside. His feet were on the edge of a high cliff.

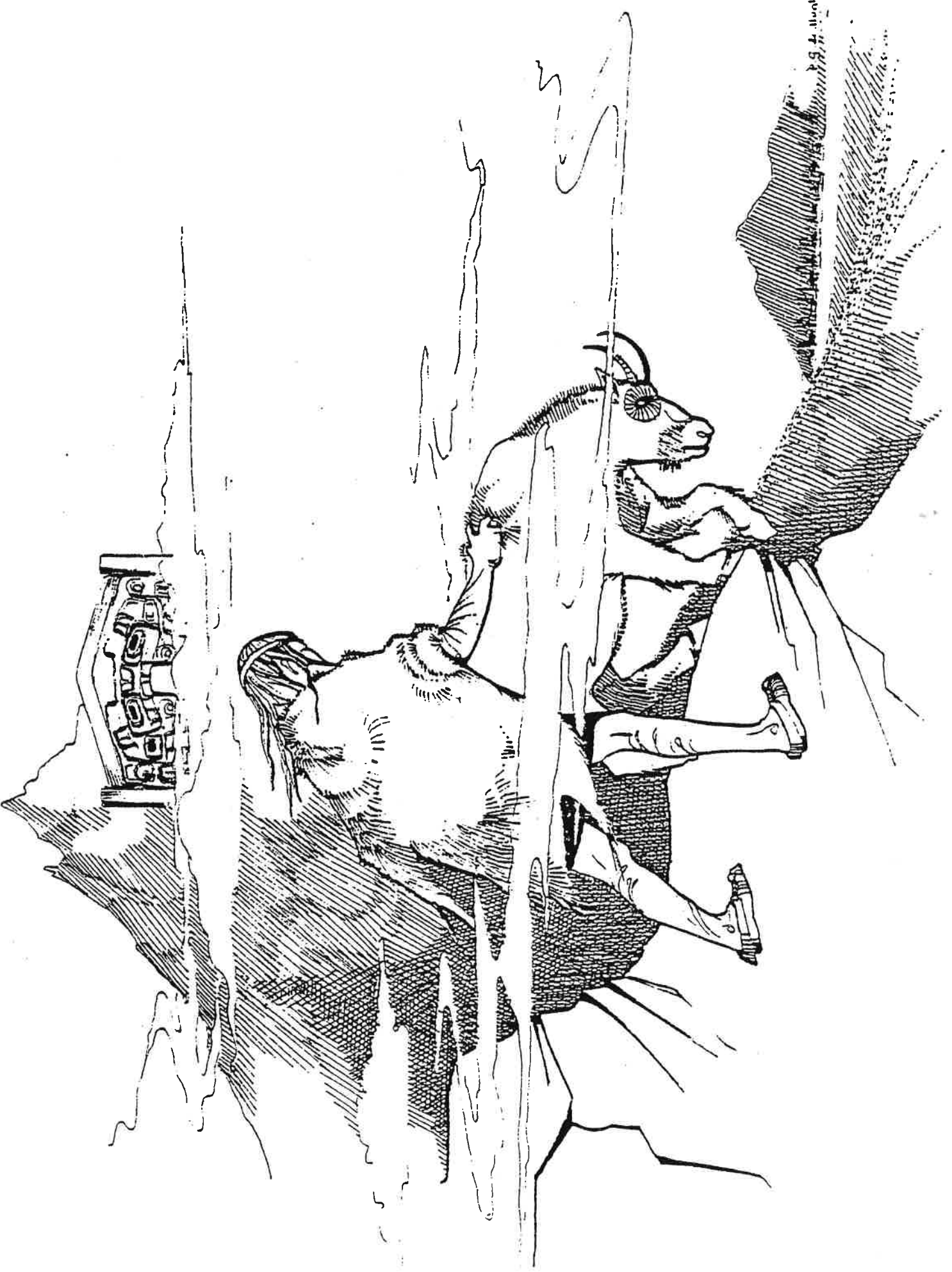
"Don't be afraid," said his friend's voice beside him.

Duas looked down and saw a kid beside him. Its eyes still had circles of red ointment.

"Yes," said the kid. "I am the same kid you saved. You took me safely home. I will take you home, too. Put your hand on my shoulder."

Duas put his hand on the kid's shoulder. He

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stepped out when the kid stepped out. He felt nothing under his foot. He pulled his foot back.

The kid saw that his friend was afraid. "Here, take my cloak," it said.

The kid unfastened its white cloak and gave it to Duas.

"My cloak will protect you," it said. "Say, 'Slope of sand.'"

"Slope of sand!"

At once Duas saw a long slope of sand. It reached from his feet to the bottom of the mountain. Down, down they went. The cloak steadied him, until at last they reached the bottom of the slope.

Duas took off the cloak and when the kid took it, the slope of sand vanished. Now Duas could see big rocks at the foot of the cliff. He could see large red stains on the rocks.

"Go closer," said the kid. "Then you will see what the red stains mean."

Duas went closer. He saw that the red stains were blood. He saw many broken bodies among the rocks.

"You are looking at your own people," said the kid. "There lie your father and your friends. You saw them go out last night, each with a goat man. As they left the house they fell onto those rocks. Only you are left. They died because they killed mountain goats

without a good reason. That is the law. You are still alive because you took pity on me. I have brought you home safely, just as you took me home."

2. THE DANCE OF THE FISH BONES

After many years only the old stories were left to remind the people of Tamlahamid of the mountain goats' revenge. For a long time people were careful to be kind to animals. Nobody killed animals for sport. Every part of an animal was used if it was possible. Any part which could not be used, even the smallest fish bone, was burnt or returned to the water. But slowly people began to forget the lesson of the story of the mountain goats.

One fine fall, when enough food had been gathered to last all winter, people relaxed in the warm sunshine. Some visited their friends. The children fished or hunted squirrels.

Some young girls crossed the Ksan and camped beside a small lake under the mountains. They fished in the lake and cooked the trout by their hut. They danced and sang.

One morning, one of the girls was sitting by the water. She thought about dancing and she remembered the headdresses of the chiefs, when they danced at feasts. She thought about the way the sea lion bristles moved.

She looked at a pile of fish bones by the doorway.

She picked up a whole backbone. The bone shook. It made her think of a new dance. She tucked the bone into her headband. She took another and another. She fastened them around her head until she had made a headdress of fish bones.

She bent over the water and looked at her reflection. She bobbed and swayed her head in time with her new dance. She was very pleased with her new headdress. She danced across to her friends.

"Look at what I have made!" she called. "Come and learn my new dance with me."

The other girls were so pleased with the headdress that they ran to the pile of bones and made headdresses for themselves.

When they thought that the dance was perfect, the girls went back to Tamlahamid. They showed the dance to the people there. The people were very pleased too. Nobody remembered that fish bones were not to be played with.

Many years passed. Nothing happened to remind people that they had done anything wrong.

A small creek ran from the little lake, where the girls had first danced the dance of the fish bones. It ran into the Ksan across from Tamlahamid. One day a man was looking out across the river. Suddenly he saw something very strange. Something was tearing up trees



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far up the little valley. He shouted and quickly a crowd gathered around him.

The trees flew into the air. They came closer. At last they saw a great bearlike being on the shore of the Ksan.

"Hagwelawkh," gasped the crowd. "It is the being of the lake."

The being stood a while, looking across the river. It took a last look at the town of the people who no longer cared about the old laws. It climbed down the bank and dived into the water with a great splash.

Everybody rushed for his weapons. When they were armed, they ran through the streets. They gathered around the chiefs at the waterside. They gripped their bows and spears, ready to fight. They knew that this was not an ordinary animal.

At last the great being rose from the water. It met a shower of arrows, but they fell from its skin. Even spears could not scratch it. Every man that hit it with his club was killed by a blow from its paw. The being moved quickly through the town. Dead men lay everywhere. When it came to the end of the town, there was nobody left. It looked back at all the dead men and the blood running down into the Ksan. Only the few men who had run away were still alive.

Later, the few men who were left came out of hiding. They crossed the river and followed the trail of broken trees. They saw that it began in the little lake under the mountain. Only then did they really know why the being of the lake had come down on the town.

3. SNOW IN SUMMER

It was fine and sunny. The fish traps had been placed in the Ksan and the people of Tamlahamid waited for the first of the salmon to come up the river.

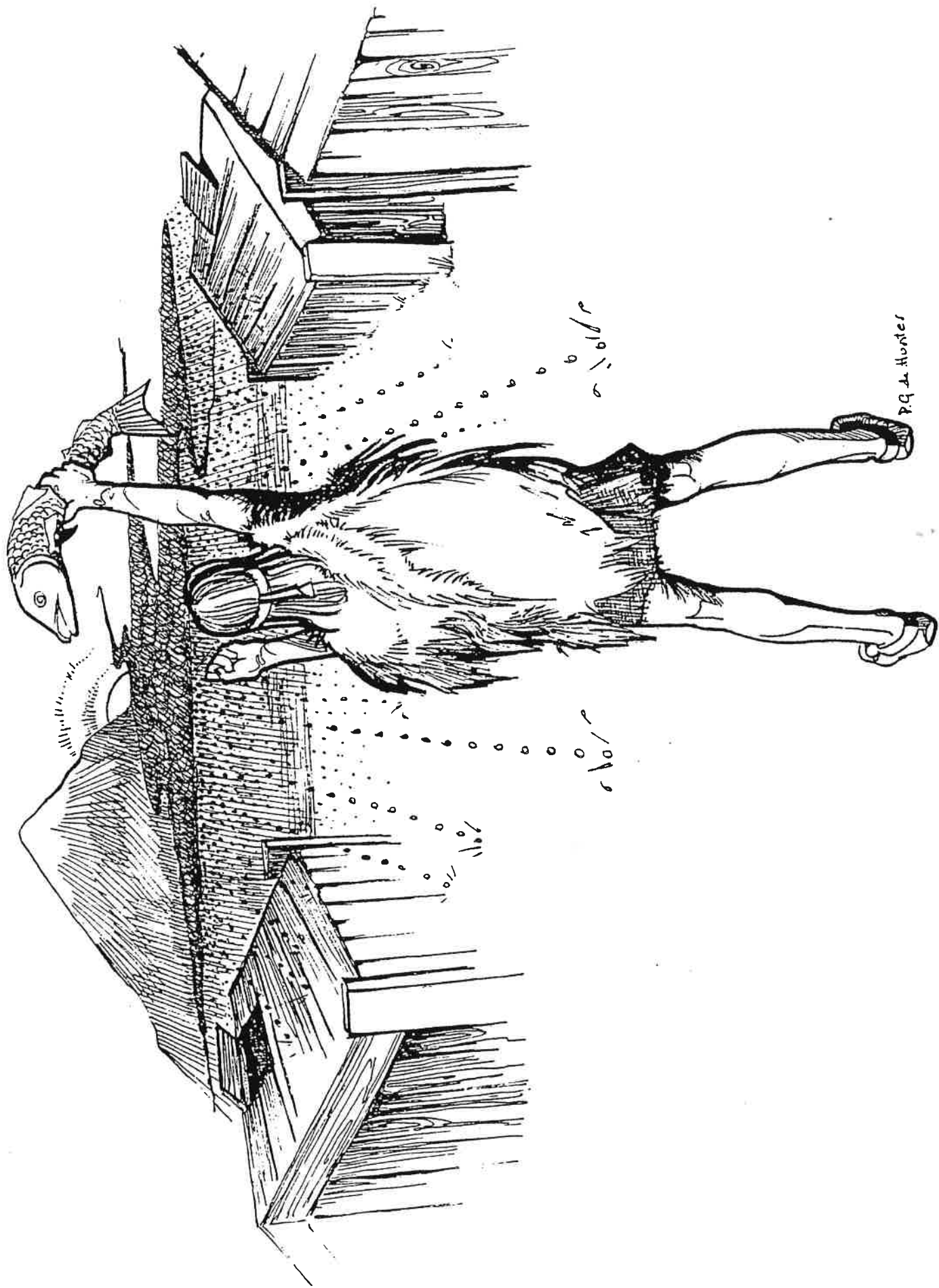
One morning, the first of the salmon--the chief of the salmon--was found in one of the traps. As was the custom, the first fish was taken to the high chief. But he had forgotten the old laws. He did not perform the special salmon ceremony. He simply cooked it and shared it out among the people.

They had forgotten the lesson of the mountain goats. They had forgotten about the being of the lake. The chief of the salmon had not been treated with respect.

As the high chief's family took pieces of the chief of the salmon to each house, there was a sudden shower of hail. One of the young chiefs was angry. He looked up at the sky. He held up the piece of fish he carried.

"What's the meaning of this? Hail in summer?" he said. "Look, the spring salmon are here."

The spine of the chief of the salmon was given to a lazy man called Gyakhen. It should have been burnt or put back in the river, but few people cared about the old laws now.



Gyakhen went out into the street and waved the spine angrily at the sun. "Look what the chiefs have given me," he said. "They have bowls full of the best food and this is all they could give me. What are you going to do about it, then?"

Almost at once thin clouds covered the sun and darkness began to settle on the mountain. White snow settled on the peaks.

"Snow!" shouted Gyakhen. "It's the wrong time of year. The seasons can't run backwards. Look! Here's the salmon's backbone to prove it."

He shook the backbone again at the sky.

When the people went down to the fish traps at dusk, they saw red squirrels crossing the dam. They knew that was a bad sign. They looked at the traps. There were no fish.

Night fell. It became colder. Before midnight, snow began to settle on the town. The wind rose and the snow drifted round the corners of the houses.

It was still dark in the morning. Snow still fell and ice crusted the edge of the river. Snow continued to fall during all the next days and there was no sign that summer would ever return.

As days ran into weeks, the snow still fell. Almost all the food was gone. There was little firewood to keep the people warm. Some died from lack of food.

Some froze to death beside their dead fires. Some tried to dig out through the snow and died in their tunnels.

At last only Tawiwilp, a young chief, Alulahl, his wife, and their little baby were still alive. They had a small store of salmon left. Every day Alulahl boiled a little piece. She shared the meat with her husband. She gave the broth to the baby. They broke wood from the house to keep the fire going. They boiled and ate the leather from clothing. There was less and less food and the baby died.

On the day when the baby died, a jay flew down to the smoke hole on their house. They saw with surprise that the bird was carrying a bunch of berries in its beak. Alulahl got up and lifted her hands towards the bird. It dropped the berries and she caught them.

"Look!" she cried. "Berries. See how fresh they are. Summer is not far from here."

They ate the berries. They put on their warmest clothes and their snowshoes. They dug their way from the house. It was still snowing and only a few roofs could be seen. The sky was black and full of snow. They were weak from hunger, but they managed to walk down the valley. They walked for a day and a night. They only rested when they could walk no more.

In the morning there was a difference in the air. The snow was soggy. It stuck to their snowshoes. They

struggled on. The snow turned to rain. The sun began to shine and bare ground was beneath their feet at last.

Tawiwilp fell onto the grass. He could walk no further. He rested while Alulahl looked for food. He looked up the valley. Snow was still falling on Tamlahamid.

Alulahl came back and said, "There are trout in the creek down there. If only I could catch them..."

"Bring me some cedar sticks and some spruce roots," said Tawiwilp.

It took him a long time to make a small fish trap. When it was finished, Alulahl set it in the creek. Soon they had fish to eat. They ate fish, roots and berries.

As he became stronger, Tawiwilp made bigger traps in time for the salmon run. He made a smoke house and soon they had a good store of fish. Before winter, Tawiwilp built a house.

Now they were safe. They could start a family again and maybe move on to a new village. They would tell their children and the people they met how disaster had fallen on their people. They would tell them always to obey the old laws.

4. THE FROG'S REVENGE

Early one morning three young men left the village of Tsigwa. They paddled their canoe up a small river, until they reached a little lake.

There they fished very well for some time. Asdihlda, the chief's son, stood in the bow. He wore his cormorant hat. He was very proud of this special prince's hat.

Asdihlda's arrow had brought in many spotted trout. Now he was again peering down into the water. He saw another beautiful trout. He drew his bow-string. At that moment his hat slipped and fell. The fish darted away. Asdihlda was very angry. He snatched the hat from the water and put it back on his head.

At last he saw another fish. Again he drew his bow. Again his hat fell and frightened away the trout. Asdihlda grabbed the hat. He ripped off the three feast rings and threw them out into the lake. He crushed the hat and threw it into the water.

The canoe was headed for the shore. The young men felt hungry. They lit a fire on the beach, where the river flowed into the lake. Asdihlda was still angry. He looked across the fire at his friends who were cooking the fish. One of his friends got some skunk cabbage leaves from a bog. He took a small cooked trout and put

it on a leaf to cool.

Asdihlda was beginning to feel very hungry now. He went to the fish. He saw a frog sitting on the leaf beside the fish. The frog was eating it. Asdihlda threw the frog, the fish and the leaf far out into the lake.

He took another fish from the fire. He put it on a fresh leaf to cool. When he came back another frog--or was it the same one--was sitting by the fish. Again he threw the frog, the fish and the leaf into the water.

Asdihlda thought that must be the end. He took out a third fish to cool. As soon as he thought the fish would be cool enough to eat, he came back. He gasped when he saw a frog again, eating the fish. It was just like the other two.

He was so angry that he grabbed the frog.

"A curse on all frogs!" he yelled.

With that he flung the frog as hard as he could into the fire. There it burst in the heat. The others were very shocked. They looked around, expecting the spirits of the frog people to take their revenge at once.

Somehow the day had changed. A cloud passed over the sun. They put out the fire and climbed into their canoe.

The air was cold and a wind sighed through the

trees. Wisps of mist rose from the lake. The men paddled away quickly. The mist swirled around them until they could not see the shore. A voice seemed to rise with the mist.

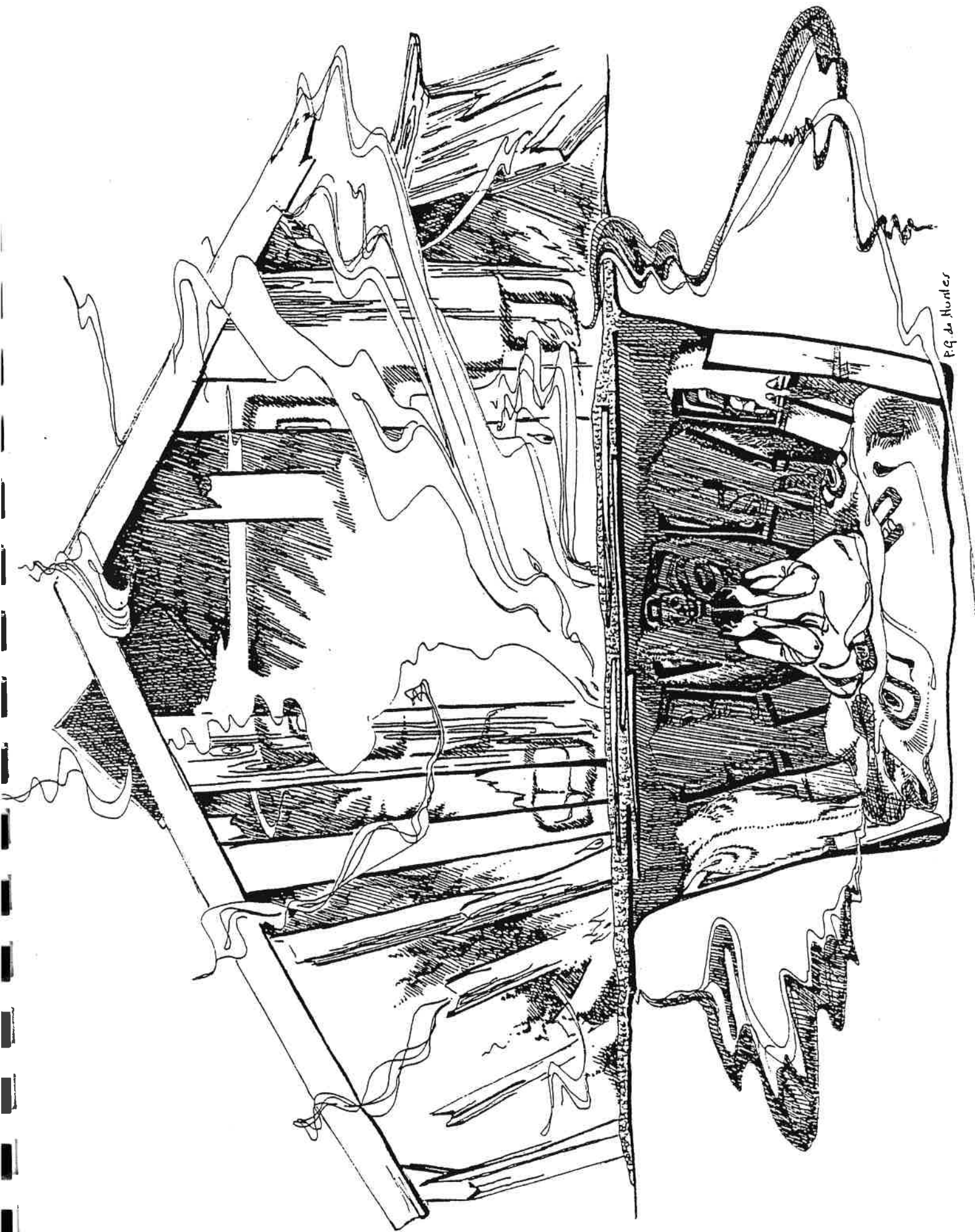
"My son...you took away my son...my only son..." The voice paused. "Soon after I finish speaking, the man at the front of the canoe will die. Between here and home, the next will follow. The last, the one who killed the frog, will reach home. He will not be safe. He will tell the people what happened, then he will die, too. Only your lives and the lives of all your people will pay me for my son's death."

Almost as soon as the voice stopped speaking, the first man fell dead into the bottom of the canoe. The other two paddled wildly, but before they reached home the second man was dead.

When Asdihlda reached the village the people crowded round. They wanted to know why the two men were dead. For a long time Asdihlda said nothing. He knew that he would die when he told the story. At last he told the tale and, when it was finished, he fell dead to the ground.

An old lame woman came forward and faced the chief.

"Last night I had a dream," she said. "You have lost your son, Asdihlda. Do you want to lose your daughter, Deeks, also?"



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"Tell me your dream," cried the chief.

In my dream I saw a pit dug beneath the chief's house. The pit was deep. It was lined with copper shields. Soft furs were on the floor. I saw Deeks go down into the pit. I saw the pit closed over with more coppers. Do you not remember the meaning of your daughter's name? It is Warning. The frog was killed by fire. Let the chief beware of fire."

When the three dead men had been laid to rest, the chief had a pit dug beneath his house. Its walls were lined with coppers. The floor was thickly spread with furs. Deeks sat on the soft furs, while a roof was built above her head.

Night came. The people slept. Only Deeks stayed awake under the ground. In the middle of the night a huge mass of fire fell upon the village. It burst with a roar and every house was burnt with the people inside. Only Deeks lived, protected under the ground. She heard the roar as the fire hit the village. She dared not leave her pit for a long time.

At last she lifted up the corner of the roof and crept out. Nothing was left of the village but smoking ashes. She walked down to the river. She looked back at the smoking village. She saw something move beyond the smoke.

As Deeks watched, she saw a beautiful woman come out from among the trees. She was singing a sad song. She wore a Haida hat with a frog crest on it. Her staff had human faces on the shaft and a live frog sat on the knob. The woman stopped in front of Deeks.

"Did you know that Asdihlda threw my son into the fire?" she asked. She pointed to the burnt village. "There is the frogs' revenge."

She turned and walked slowly away, singing sadly. Deeks went down to the sea. As she went she sang a sad song of her own.

When she reached the shore, she saw a canoe. Three men, a Haida chief and his friends, stepped out. The chief looked at the village.

He turned to Deeks and said, "We were hunting. We saw the fire from afar off. Is nobody alive but you?"

"Nobody."

"Then you must come home with me. You seem very like the daughter I lost long ago. You shall be my new daughter."

They crossed a wide stretch of sea, until they reached Lakh Haida. Deeks lived there as the chief's daughter. After some time, she married the chief's nephew.

Deeks had two sons. She called the first

Asdihlda, after her dead brother. The second was Gamagun. Years passed. The chief died and Deeks' husband became chief in his place. He spent a lot of time with his sons and taught them how to hunt and fish well.

Many people were jealous of the boys, because their mother had come from far away. They remembered the story of how she had been found in the burnt village. They thought that she had no living relations.

One day the village boys were throwing stones out into the sea. Asdihlda was last to throw. His stone went much farther than the next best shot.

"Bah," said the boy, whose stone he had beaten. "They think they are better than we are. But they are nothing but foreigners and they have no uncles."

Asdihlda went to his mother. "Who are my uncles," he asked.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because the boys said that we were foreigners and had no uncles."

"I have never told you all my story," said Deeks. "I wanted to forget."

She told the two boys about that night, long ago, when the village was burnt.

"Only I was left alive," she said when she had finished the story. However, we do have other relations

on the banks of the Ksan. Your uncle is the chief of a village there. We shall go to him. Then nobody will be able to say that you are without uncles."

When the chief came in he found Deeks weeping.

"What is wrong?" he asked.

"Today your sons - the sons of whom you are so proud - were called foreigners and without uncles. The boys do have an uncle. He still lives on the banks of the Ksan, where he is chief. We shall go to him."

When the people learned that the boys had an uncle and that he was a chief, they were ashamed. It was too late. Deeks and her two sons climbed into a canoe.

Deeks' husband leaned over and spoke to his wife. "Good-bye, my dear wife. Sail north until you reach a long spit of sand. Wait there until the wind blows towards the sunrise. Follow that wind. You will see some islands. Do not stop. The people are not friendly there. Keep south of the islands and you will come to the mouth of the Ksan River."

When they reached the sandspit, they made a camp. They waited until the wind changed. They set out towards the rising sun. As they went the sun faded. A fog grew about them. They did not see the islands. They sailed on through the foggy night. When morning came, the sun melted the fog. They found that they were sailing into the mouth of a wide river. After they had

rested on the shore, they sailed up the river until they found a village. They thought that they had arrived at their journey's end. The people there told them that they were on the Nass River. They stayed there a while and when they were rested, they sailed upstream before going overland and home to the Ksan.

5. THE SALMON

The winter had been long and cold. There was very little food left. The river was still thickly covered with ice, except where it ran quickly through the canyon.

On each side of the canyon stood a town. In one of them lived Dawk, the chief's son. Like all the people he was very hungry.

One day he stood by the fire with his little slave boy. He was cold and hungry, but he knew that he was not more hungry than anybody else. All food was shared equally.

The slave boy started crying. "Oh, I'm so hungry," he moaned.

Dawk looked around the room. There was nobody there. He went to a box. He opened it and unfolded the fish which was inside. He took a piece from the tail and shut the box quickly. He was about to pass the piece of fish to the boy, when his mother came into the house.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" she said. She took the fish from him and put it back in the box. "You are the chief's son and here you are taking more than your share."

Dawk said nothing. His mother went to the box to return the fish. Dawk was so ashamed that he crept from the house.

He went up the river a little way to where the water rushed with no ice on it. He did not know how long he sat looking at the water. He was cold, because he had not waited to take his warm fur cloak with him. Suddenly he heard strange sounds, sounds of a canoe being poled up the river by many men. Still Dawk did not look up.

Back at the house the slave boy was very upset.

"What's the matter," asked the chief, who had just come in.

"He did it for me," said the boy. "He would never have eaten it himself. Now he's run away."

"Let's go and look for him at once," said the chief. Dawk was still staring into the fast water.

"There he is," said a voice. "That's the one."

Dawk heard a bump. He looked up. He saw that a large canoe had hit the rock at the edge of the pool. It was a strange canoe. It shone pale and silvery in the fading light. Four men sat very still in the canoe. Only their silver cloaks moved in the wind.

One of the men stood up. "Come," he said. "Come down into the boat."

Dawk still sat.

"Come down," said the man again.

This time Dawk climbed down the bank and climbed into the boat. He looked back towards the village and

saw many lights moving among the trees. He heard someone call his name. He sat down. He saw that there were no paddles in the canoe. The canoe glided out into the river by itself. As the boat moved, the sides grew upwards, until they joined above his head. It dipped down and dived under the ice, like a great salmon.

At last the canoe came to the surface. The side came down. It was light now and there was no ice on the river. Dawk saw a village on the river bank. The houses had beautiful salmon crests on them. Many people came from the houses.

As the canoe passed they waved and called, "Have you found the one you were looking for?"

"Yes, we have," replied one of the men.

They passed other villages on their way to the sea. The houses were painted with the crests of different salmon. At each village the same question was asked and the man gave the same reply.

The canoe passed into the sea and crossed it quickly. At last they came to an island. There were many other canoes like it on the beach. The men took Dawk up to a large house. There was a spring salmon painted on the front.

As he went in, Dawk was met by a tiny woman dressed in grey fur.

"I am Uwantseets, the mouse woman," she said.

"Do you know where you are?"

"No," said Dawk.

"First give me the wool ornaments from your ears."

Dawk took them off and handed them to Uwantseets. She threw them into the fire. She watched them as they burned. Suddenly she raked the charred wool from the flames and ate it.

"Now," she said. "The spring salmon have brought you to their village."

"Why?" asked Dawk.

Uwantseets pointed to an old man who sat at the back of the house. "He is the chief of the salmon," she said. "He has been lame for a long time, because of the careless way the salmon was put in your mother's box. When you took the fish out and straightened it, you straightened his leg. Now he wants to thank you. Now I am going to tell you something. Do not eat any of the food that is given to you here. It is food only for the dead. Tomorrow, when you go out, you will see some children playing. Club one on the head and eat it. When you have finished your meal, burn all that is left."

Dawk ate nothing in the salmon's house. Next morning he was very hungry. He went down to the beach. There he saw the children playing on the sand. He could not bring himself to kill one and so he went away hungry.

He became more and more hungry. At last he was so hungry that he grabbed a little boy and hit him on the head with a club. The boy fell to the ground, now a small silver salmon. Dawk grabbed the fish and went to the edge of the forest. He lit a fire and cooked the salmon. As soon as he had finished, he gathered all the little bones and pieces and threw them on the fire. He went happily back to the chief's house. As he went in he heard a child screaming. It was a little boy, who was covering one eye with his hand. Dawk went closer and saw that it was the little boy he had hit with the club.

"You forgot to burn one eye of the fish you ate," said Uwantseets.

Dawk ran back to the fireside. He looked around for a while, until he found the eye under a dead leaf. He threw it into the fire. When he got back to the house, the little boy was playing happily on the floor.

Dawk stayed among the salmon people for a long time. He never ate the food which was offered to him in the chief's house. Each day he killed one of the beautiful children. Each day, after he had eaten, he gathered all the tiniest fish bones and threw them into the fire. Now he knew why there were so many lame people in the salmon village. Someone, somewhere, had not been careful to burn the last little bone.

One morning the chief of the salmon said to his nephew, "Go and see if the cottonwoods are budding on the Ksan."

The chief's nephew went. When he came back he told his uncle that the trees were still bare. The chief sent him out again.

When he came back he said, "The cottonwoods are green beside the Ksan."

"Tomorrow we shall leave," said the chief.

Before the sun rose, they were ready. The chief gave Dawk a silver salmon cloak and a small white pebble. He got into one of the canoes and they set out to sea. When the canoes reached the mouth of the Ksan, they stopped. The people put on their silver cloaks and dived into the sea as shining fish. Dawk stood up too and put on his cloak. He dived into the water. Quickly he joined his friends, the salmon, as they raced towards the river. As they went up the river, some of the fish went up the smaller streams. He stayed with the salmon which went up the main river. Soon they reached the bottom of the canyon.

Back at Dawk's village, the chief was very sad. When he could not find his son, he called all the halayts. Not one of them could tell him what had happened to Dawk. At last the chief sent for Neswayetk, a halayt who lived by himself among the woods.

He came into the chief's house. In one hand he carried a rattle and in the other the white feathers from an eagle's tail. He danced near the fire. He sang three songs of power. When he had finished, he stood in front of the chief.

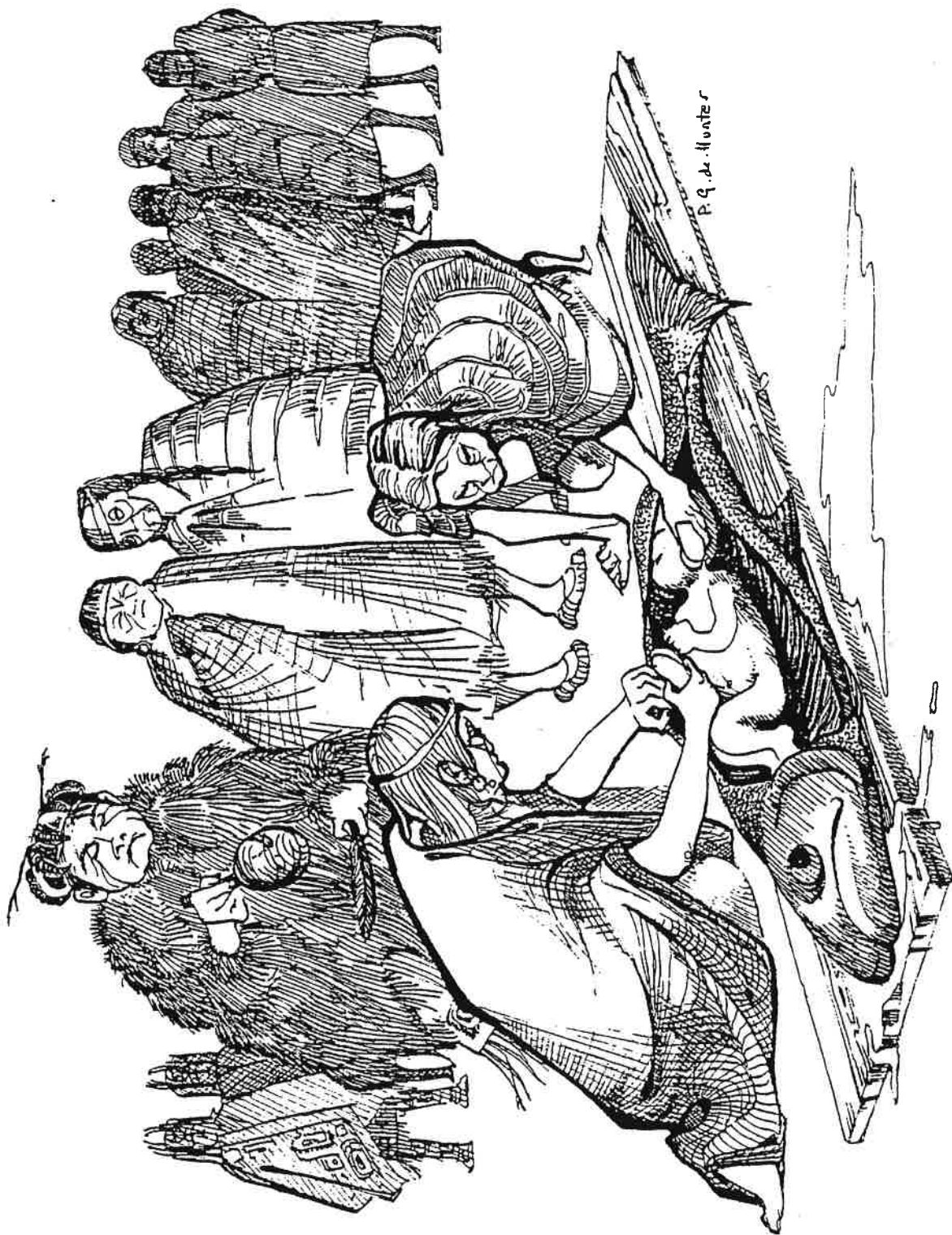
"Your son is not dead," he said.

The chief looked a little happier. The halayt went back to the fire. He began to sing and dance again. At the end of the third song of power, he came to the chief.

"Your son is with the salmon people," he said. "The chief's fish form is in your wife's box. Eat that fish at once, or you will not see your son again." When the fish had been eaten, the halayt said, "Let everybody get ready for the salmon run."

The young men mended the fishing platforms while the chief and the halayt prepared their gaffing poles. All was ready when the first fish reached the mouth of the canyon. The chief had soon speared many salmon, but the halayt waited.

Suddenly the halayt thrust his gaff towards a fish. He pulled it up onto the platform. He had caught the biggest fish he had ever seen. He knew that the chief's son was in that salmon. He clubbed it, but gently. He laid the salmon on a cedar mat.



"Let four halayts come down from the village," called Neswayetk.

Each halayt took a corner of the mat. They carried it up to the chief's house. Only the old people were allowed to stay. They laid the salmon on a plank in the middle of the house. The halayts began to sing and dance around the salmon four times. When the singing was over, two wise women stepped forward. Each had a knife in her hand. They slit the salmon's stomach. Inside was a tiny baby.

One of the women took the baby into her arms. Neswayetk sang loudly. The baby began to grow quickly. The baby became a boy. The boy became a young man-- Dawk himself, just as he had been when he left the house.

Dawk stood in the middle of the house and told his story. "...And so we must remember," he said, when his story was finished, "that no fish must be kept as long as two years in our boxes. Salmon must be folded very carefully and when we have eaten, the last tiny bone must be burnt."

6. THE NET

The winter sun shone little and the people were cold and hungry. The food boxes were empty. There was nothing to eat but roots and lichens.

One by one the stronger families left the village. They hoped to find a better life somewhere else. They left the weak behind to fend for themselves. Many of these died from hunger, until only a poor widow and her daughter were left.

They were still alive when the sun melted the snow and the first flowers came. They ate bark and roots and leaves, but Neetawts, the girl lay sick and weak in her sleeping place.

Her mother built a little hut where a creek ran into the Ksan. It was some way from the village. Each day she went down to the river to see what she could find. Sometimes she found a dead fish, sometimes a shell. They were not good food, but they helped to keep them alive.

One day the widow saw salmon in the river. But how could she catch them? She found a driftwood club. A club was the only way the people knew of killing fish in those days. She waded into the water, but the water was too deep and the fish were out of reach.

"Perhaps the salmon will soon come into the shallow creek," she thought. "Then I will be able to club them."

Next morning, Neetawts looked very sick. Her mother thought she would soon be dead, unless she could catch

some fish. She went down to the river. The salmon were still in the deep water. She sat down on a rock and wept.

While her mother was at the river side, Neetawts dozed in the hut. A handsome young man came in.

"I have come to marry you, Neetawts," he said.

"Wait till mother comes back," she said. "Then you can tell her."

"She will not come back till night. I cannot wait that long. Tell me now that you will marry me."

"Yes, I will marry you," said Neetawts.

"Good," said the young man. "I will come back tonight."

The sun had set when Neetawts' mother came sadly home. She was surprised to see her daughter smiling. She boiled a few roots in a cedar box. When they had drunk the soup, they went to bed. Neetawts' mother did not go to sleep. In the middle of the night she saw the dark shape of the young man as he came in.

In the morning she got up and lit the fire.

"Why are you staying in this place?" asked the young man.

"Because mother is waiting to catch the salmon when they come into the shallow water," said Neetawts.

"Then we will have plenty of food."

"Why wait so long?" he asked. "There are better ways of catching fish. Tell your mother to bring me as

many nettles as she can find."

Neetawts' mother went out. When she came back, she brought a big bunch of nettles. She was about to go out for more nettles, but the young man stopped her.

"You can bring more nettles later," he said.
"Now watch everything I do."

He took some hard wood and made it into a knife. He took the leaves of the nettles. He split the stems with his knife. He put the nettles out in the sun to dry. When they were dry, he peeled off the outside until only the fibres were left.

"Now watch closely," he said, "and I will show you how to spin these fibres into strong thread."

He spread some fibres on his leg. He held one end of the fibres with his left hand. With his other hand he rolled them against his leg. As the fibres twisted, he added more to them. Soon he had a long thread. Soon Neetawts' began to spin, and the young man began to make a net. They worked without stopping until they had made a large net. While the mother made a rope from cedar bark, the young man made floats from dry cedar wood.

The net was ready. The young man went down to the river with his wife. They put the net into the young man's canoe. They paddled up the river until they reached a place where the bank fell steeply into the water. Here they set the net.



In the morning it was full of shining fish. They put the salmon into the canoe and set the net again. The mother was pleased with the fish. She split them and hung them to smoke while the young people slept.

It was not long before the two women were strong and well. When the young man was not fishing, he built a beautiful house with a smoke house behind it. Soon the smoke house was full of salmon. He built a second and a third smoke house.

One night the young man said to Neetawts, "Now I am going back to my own people. I saw that you were hungry. I felt sorry for you. That is why I married you. Now you have all the food you need."

"Let me come with you," begged Neetawts. "I am your wife. My mother can stay here and join her own people again."

"Very well," he said. "We will take one bundle of fish. Your mother can keep the rest."

When fall came, the people who had not died of hunger came back to their village. They cleaned up the houses and took up their old life there. The widow went back to live in the village. Because Neetawts was not with her, the people thought that she must have died. Her mother would say nothing about her daughter.

Soon winter came. The people thought that they would starve again, for there was very little food in

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Soon winter came. The people thought that they would starve again, for there was very little food in

the boxes. Only then did the widow call together some of the young men.

"Come with me," she said.

They took two canoes and paddled up the river. When the young men saw the widow's store of salmon they were very surprised. They wanted to know how she had caught so much fish, but she would not tell them.

Day after day they brought boatloads of dried salmon down to the village. Now the widow invited everybody to come to her. She gave a bundle of fish to every chief. She gave a bundle to be divided between each man and woman.

Soon people began to come to her from other villages. She sold fish to them and became very rich, but she would not tell how she had caught the fish.

Neetawts and her husband went through a wild land until they reached his village. The houses were beside a swift river. They went into the largest of the houses.

Neetawts sat down at the side of the house, while her husband talked to the chiefs. She felt something tug on her dress. She looked down and saw a tiny woman standing beside her.

"I am Uwantseets, the mouse woman," she said.

"Quickly! Take the woollen ornaments from your ears. Throw them in the fire."

Neetawts did as she was told. Uwantseets watched

the flames lick the wool. When they were black, she raked them from the fire and put them in a pouch on her belt.

"Do you know whom you have married?" she asked.

"No," replied Neetawts.

"Your husband is Gadalay, the spider. Who else could spin and make nets so well? You must only eat the food which you brought with you. If you eat any of the spider's food, you will become a spider."

Neetawts stayed with her husband through the winter. She never forgot what Uwantseets had told her. During those months she learned how to make many kinds of nets. In the spring she went back to her village. There she taught her people how to spin and make nets to catch fish.

7. THE DEVIL'S CLUB

It was early in the year and the ice was beginning to flow down the Nass River. The people of Metlakahtla set out for the oolichan fishing. With them went a poor widow and her daughter, Tgahaast. The wind blew strong and cold down the valley. Even the young men found it hard to paddle into the wind. Tgahaast and her mother paddled as hard as they could, but they were left further and further behind. When night fell they were alone.

They stopped by a rocky cliff. Here they made a rough shelter against the rock. They slept, one at each side of the smoking fire. The wind grew stronger. It shook their shelter. Thunder rolled across the mountains.

In the middle of the night Tgahaast woke. She looked up to see a young man standing beside her.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "I have come to ask you to marry me."

Tgahaast said, "Yes." She knew that it was not easy for the daughter of a poor widow to find a good husband.

When her new husband came close to her, Tgahaast had a strange, itchy feeling. It was as though she had brushed against a devil's club plant. Before

morning came, the young man left. Tgahaast had not been able to see his face clearly.

Each day the weather became worse. Each night the young man came back to visit his wife. Every time he came close to her, Tgahaast felt that same prickly feeling on her skin. In the mornings, when she went out to fetch water, she found a grouse laid by the door. Always there was enough firewood for the whole day.

One night the young man came in as usual. "This will be the last time I shall see you for a long time," he said. "You are going to have a son. He will grow up to be a great hunter. Nobody will be as good a hunter as he, because I will always be with him."

Next morning the weather was good. They set out on the smooth water. They arrived at the fishing camp on the very day the oolichan came. When the fishing was over they went back home until it was time for the salmon run on the Ksan.

In winter, Tgahaast had a beautiful baby boy. One day in the summer, she went into the forest to gather fire wood. Suddenly she saw a young man standing among the trees. Only when he spoke did Tgahaast know it was her husband.

"I have come to see you and my son," he said. How has he been?"

"Very well," said Tgahaast, holding up the baby.

The man touched his son gently. "Yes, he is fine and strong," he said. "When he grows up, do not give him too much to eat. Let him chew the inner bark of the devil's club. When he has chewed it, let him spit on his hands. Then he can rub himself with the juice. Do not go past the place where we met. He will be a very good hunter, because I will be with him. I will teach him to hunt and trap. Do not let him marry while he is young."

The boy, Wudsint, grew up quickly. Soon he was as good a hunter as any of the older men. One day he went to the mouth of the Nass River with four of his friends. They made their camp at the foot of that rock where his mother had camped so many years ago. While his friends were lighting a fire, Wudsint wandered into the forest. By a pool he saw a tall man.

"My son," said the man. "Yes, I am your father. I have come here to talk to you."

"I am listening, father."

"First I will teach you to catch valuable animals easily."

He showed Wudsint how to make a deadfall trap. He showed him how the bait should be set. He showed him how to make snares from cords and thongs.

"A good hunter does not only know about trapping," said the man. "He also knows how long to fast and how to wash himself so that he will please the spirits of

the forest. You must eat the inner bark of the devil's club. At night, after the fourth day, you must wash yourself by a stream. Then you must dive in. After that, you may not wash for a whole year. At the end of that year you must dive into the stream twelve times. Then you shall have everything you could want. But do not get married while you are young. I will see you once more."

Next morning the young men went hunting in the forest. Wudsint killed a great number of animals. He did exactly what his father had said. He was very lucky from the first day. He set traps and they were never empty.

When the twelve months were over, he went to look at his traps. Nothing was in them. He spent days mending and setting them. Still he could catch nothing.

He went into the forest to look for devil's club. He looked all day, but he could find none. He went home and washed himself in the stream. He went back up the hill. It was becoming dark now. At the top of the little hill he saw a big tree which he had not seen before. He walked towards it slowly. As he came close a man came out to meet him. Wudsint saw that the man, the being, glowed in the dusk.

"Come here again tomorrow, my son," said the being. Wudsint knew for the first time that he was the son of a spirit. "Tomorrow you will fell this tree. It will



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last you through all your life."

Early next morning, Wudsint went back up the hill. The big tree was there. It was a huge devil's club. He felled the tree with his stone axe. When it lay on the ground, he peeled off the spiny outer bark. He scraped away the softer inner bark. It took him many journeys to carry the inner bark down to the village. He stored it behind his house.

At once he began to wash himself with the bark's juice. He ate some. He did this for forty days. At the end of this time he set out for his trapline again. It took him four days to mend and reset his many traps.

When he came back to the traps, each one had caught an animal. From that day Wudsint was the most successful of hunters.

8. THE PORCUPINE HUNTER

Ksaweal was a great hunter of porcupines. Early in the fall he would set out. He visited four valleys and he had a hut in each. There he could dry the meat of the porcupines he caught. He found their dens and made a smoky fire. When the porcupines stumbled out, Ksaweal would club them. The porcupine people began to think that soon he would kill the last of the porcupines. However, Ksaweal became very rich.

One year Ksaweal set out earlier than usual. He thought he would have a good catch of porcupines and so he took his wife with him to help with the meat. Hunting was very good in the first three valleys. Ksaweal felt that this year would make him richer than ever.

When he reached his fourth valley, he climbed onto a high rock. For a while he saw nothing moving. It was hot and he was about to go back to his cabin when he saw a very large porcupine. Ksaweal jumped down from the rock. He was just in time to see the porcupine go through a doorway in the rock. Ksaweal stared. The door opened into a big house. A bright fire burned in the middle.

The big porcupine turned round and said, "Please come in."

Ksawéal went in. The chief of the porcupines went to the back of the house and sat in his seat.

"Go and fetch the women," he said. "Tell them to come. I want to dance for my guest."

Some of the young men left. After they had returned with the women, the song leader began to sing, "Pronounce my name. Pronounce my name. Strike! Strike!"

The porcupine chief danced around the fire. The flames burned higher. When he had sung a few times, he turned to Ksawéal.

"Say my name, brother," he said. "Tell me what my name is."

Ksawéal did not know what to say. At last he said, "Your name is Little Porcupine."

"Yes, that is my name."

The chief of the porcupines lashed him in the face with his tail. The quills stuck from his cheek.

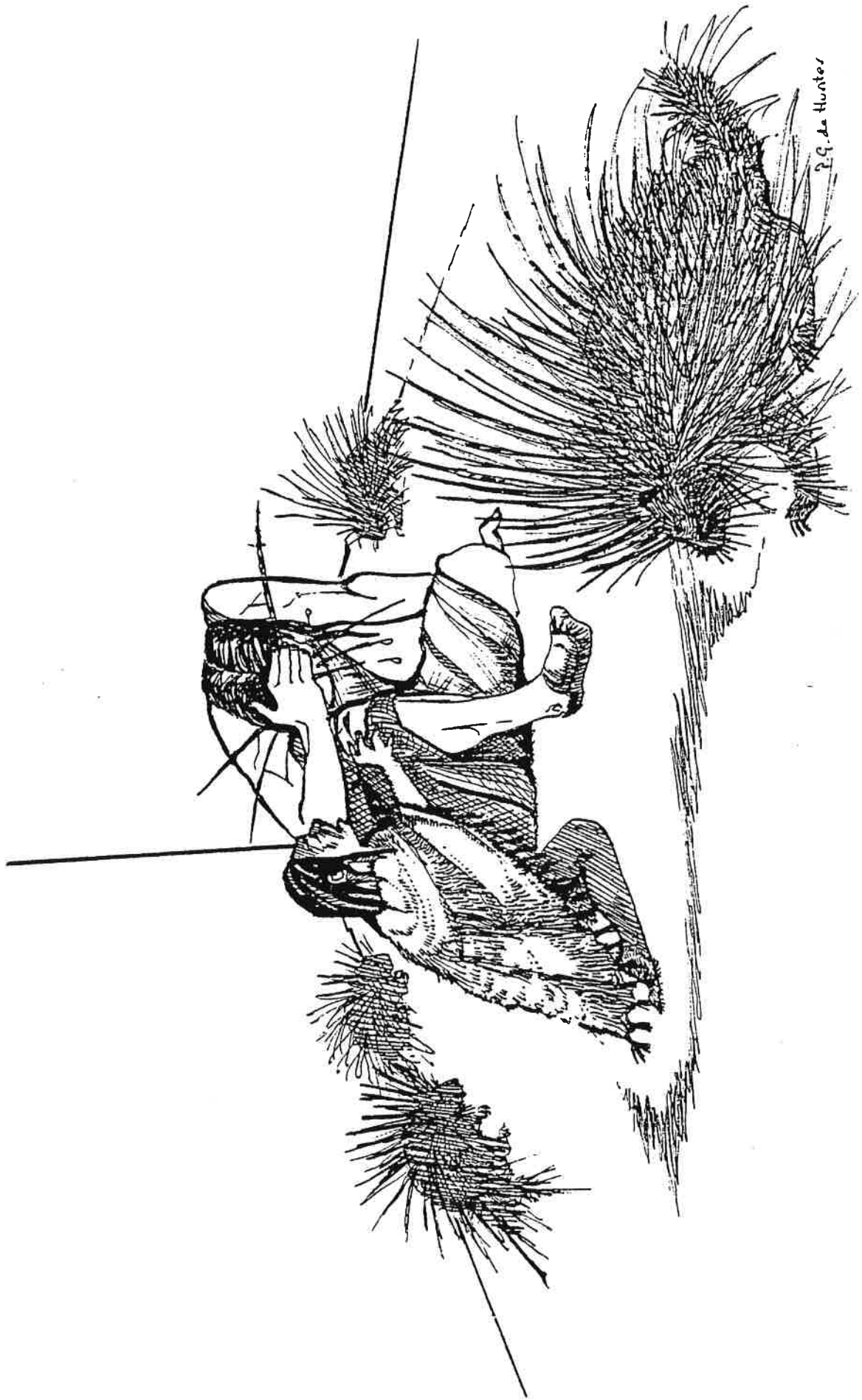
The chief danced and sang again. "Pronounce my name. Pronounce my name. Strike! Strike!"

He stood in front of Ksawéal. "Well, brother, what is my name?"

"Your name is Ugly Little Porcupine."

"Yes, that is my name, too," said the chief. He struck Ksawéal on the other cheek.

The chief danced a third time. A third time he faced Ksawéal. "Brother," he said softly. "What is my



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name?"

"Your name is Little Burnt One," said Ksaweal.

"That is my name, too," said the chief. He struck him so his nose was full of quills.

The chief danced and sang again. Again he asked the same question.

"Your name is Little Lean Fellow," said Ksaweal.

"You are right," said the chief, hitting him again.

This time Ksaweal's eyes were closed by the quills. The singing began again. Ksaweal felt very sick. He could hardly stand. Suddenly he felt something touch his knee.

"It is I," said a voice. "Uwantseets, the mouse woman. Do you know why the chief of the porcupines is doing this to you?"

"No."

The chief wants to punish you because you have killed so many of his people. This is the last time the song will be sung. If you cannot tell the chief his true name, every porcupine in the house will strike you. You will die with quills in every part of your body." The song was beginning to end. Uwantseets whispered, "His name is Sea Otter on the Green Mountain."

The chief faced Ksaweal. The other porcupines came close.

"Now what is my name?" he asked.

"Your name is Sea Otter on the Green Mountain," said Ksaweal.

The porcupines sighed.

"Wash his face," said the chief.

They washed his face. They took the green contents out of the stomach of the chief's first wife. This was carefully rubbed on Ksaweal's face. As they were touched, some of the quills fell from his face. The contents of the second wife's stomach were rubbed in. More quills fell out. After the third rubbing, very few quills were left. The fourth time took out the last of the quills.

The chief chewed some green leaves. He spat them out onto his hands. He rubbed them on Ksaweal's face and the skin became like that of a baby.

When Ksaweal had eaten, the chief said, "We are now friends, you and I. I led you to my house because I wanted to kill you. However, you knew my real name. Now you can go. My people are very sad because you have killed so many of them. I am going to ask you only to kill a porcupine when you need its food. Do not smoke them out of their dens. Smoke the meat over a fire and be sure that it is all eaten before the cold weather comes. That will mean that my people will not be sick during the winter. Also you must throw all the bones into the fire and do not let young people eat porcupine heads. Then they will not forget this lesson."

Ksaweal went straight to his hut. There he found his wife crying by the fire.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "You have been away so long that I thought I had lost you."

"I have learned many things in the house of the porcupines," he said. He told her all that had happened. "...And finally I learned that the contents of a porcupine's stomach will take out quills."

When the porcupines which Ksaweal had killed had been taken down to the village, he shared them with all the people. He also shared the lesson he had learned in the house of the chief of the porcupines.

9. THE MEETING

Long, long ago when Tamlahamid stood on the banks of the Ksan, the animals of the forests, streams and mountains were very unhappy. The people of Tamlahamid were such good hunters. The animals began to think that soon none of them would be left.

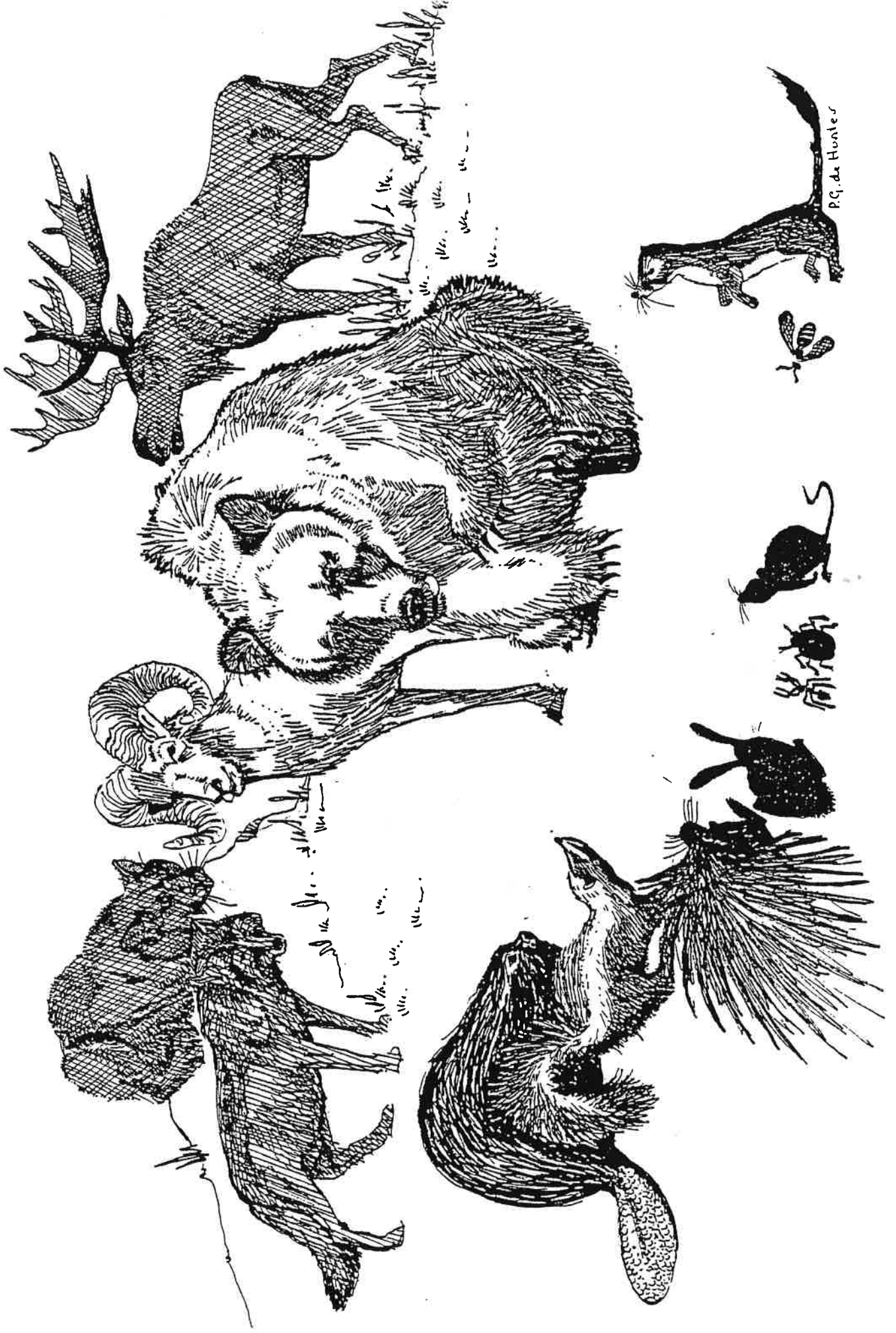
Grizzly Bear called all the big animals to a meeting at his house.

"Brothers and sisters," began Grizzly Bear, "we need a plan to save us from the people of Tamlahamid. They kill us in the valleys. They kill us in the forests. They chase us up the mountains and even to our dens. We are safe nowhere. I say we should ask the Great Spirit to make a season of cold and snow. That would make it hard for them to follow us."

Mountain Lion, Caribou, Moose, Elk, Black Bear, Wolverine and Mule Deer all agreed. Only Wolf spoke out.

"Your plan sounds good," said Wolf, "but I think we should call all the small animals, even the mice and insects. If we don't let them have their say, they might speak against our plan. Then everything might come to nothing."

On the next day, the large animals gathered on a wide plain. All the small animals came too, even the mice and insects. The large animals sat down, facing the small ones.



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Grizzly Bear stood up. "Friends," he said. "You know we are being hunted to death by the people of Tamlahamid. Unless we do something about it, not one of us will be left. So we need to make a plan. I think we should ask the Great Spirit to give us very cold snowy winters, so that the people cannot chase us--and you--to our dens.

"I agree," said Mountain Lion.

Grizzly Bear turned to the small animals. "Have you anything to say?" he said.

"What you say is all very well," said Porcupine. "You have thick fur. You can keep warm on the coldest days. Look at my friend Beetle, here. What about Fly and Salamander? How are they going to keep warm? How are the other tiny beings going to find food and shelter in this hard winter you are going to ask for? I beg you not to ask for the greatest cold."

"Well," replied Grizzly Bear. "There's no need to take any notice of what friend Porcupine has said. We big animals have agreed, so that is that."

"Yes," said Moose.

"Hear, hear!"

"We don't care about Porcupine anyway."

"Now look here," shouted Porcupine angrily. "Tell me this then. Where are you going to get your food from during this long cold winter? All the roots will

be frozen. The leaves will be dead and the berries will be under the snow. Hunger is what you'll get. We little ones will be all right. We can live on bark. The smallest insects can find shelter and food under the ground."

Porcupine was really angry now. He stuck his thumb into his mouth and bit it off. "Confound it!" he cried. He spat his thumb out. He nodded and sat down, still glaring at Grizzly Bear.

The big animals said nothing for some time. With a sigh Grizzly Bear got up.

"You are quite right," he said. "I say we make Porcupine our halayt."

"This is what we shall ask for. In winter we shall have ice and snow. Spring shall be full of showers and green growth. Summer shall be a warm time, when the fish run up the rivers. In autumn the leaves shall fall from the trees. Then rain shall fall and the rivers shall overflow. This will warn the animals to get ready for winter."

Most of the animals agreed with Porcupine's plan. One or two big animals did not. Porcupine was angry and hit them with his tail. He left his quills in their flesh. The rest of the animals went home;

And so it was. Winter came after the rain and falling leaves of autumn. Each animal found a hidden place for himself. And if you want proof that this is

so, you may see Porcupine walking through the forest in winter. He is out and about on his thumbless paws. He is visiting the other animals in their dens.

10. WEEGET ASKS FOR THE TIDES

Long ago, the tides did not rise and fall as often as they do today. The tide stayed high for many days and did not go out until the new moon rose.

Weeget loved shellfish more than any other food. This long wait for the sea to go out upset him very much.

"Why should I have to wait so long for a feast of clams?" he grumbled as he pulled on his raven cloak. "Oh, how I would like a few crabs to eat."

He rose into the air and flew out across the sea. When he reached a rocky shore, he landed. He folded his raven cloak and hid it under a big stone.

Close to the tide line was a small house. Weeget went in through the low door. He saw an old and bent woman sitting in the house. She had a hood over her head. Her thin fingers twisted a rope of seaweed.

"What is that?" asked Weeget, sitting down in front of the old woman.

"That is the tide line," she whispered. "I must hold it day and night. If I let go of it, the sea would run out before its proper time."

"Well," replied Weeget, rubbing his stomach. "There's no hurry. I have had as much seafood today as I can eat."

"What?" hissed the woman. She stared at Weeget.

"That can't be true. I have held the line firmly."

"If you don't believe me, look at my stomach," said Weeget. He gave it another pat.

The old woman bent closer. Weeget gave her a push. She fell on her back. As she lay there, Weeget threw dust into her eyes and mouth. She let go of the tide line and covered her face with her hands.

The sea ran back until the water was very low. Beds of seaweed waved in the shallow water. Weeget ran from the house. He wandered for a long time among the wet rocks and weeds. He ate many clams and crabs.

The tide was still low when he had eaten as much as he could. He went back to the old woman's house.

When she heard him come in, she cried, "Weeget, please wipe the dust from my eyes. I cannot see. I cannot find the tide line."

"I will wipe the dust from your eyes if you will promise me one thing," replied Weeget.

"I will promise, but please be quick. My eyes sting so."

"Will you promise to slacken the tideline twice every day? Then I will be able to find all the seafood I want."

"Yes, yes. I will do that. Please hurry. Clean my eyes quickly."

Weeget cleaned the dust from the old woman's eyes and that is why the tides rise and fall twice every day.

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11. WEEGET GAMBLES WITH GULL

One day Weeget stood on the shore. He saw a gull flying above him. He watched the bird for some time.

"Hey, Gull!" called Weeget.

The gull took no notice of Weeget. It hung quite still in the soft breeze.

Weeget was angry because the gull took no notice of him. He found some scraps of driftwood on the tide line. He sat on a rock with them. As he began to carve the wood, the gull came closer. When it saw that Weeget was making a set of gambling sticks, it landed on the sand beside him.

Soon the gambling sticks were finished. Weeget and Gull began to play. It was not long before a squabble started.

"That is my gambling stick," shouted Weeget.

"It is not," replied Gull. "It is mine."

Weeget was very angry with Gull. He knocked him over and trod on his stomach. Gull was sick. Out of his stomach came a small fish. Weeget snatched up the fish, and Gull flew away.



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It was a bright cold day. Weeget paddled down the Nass River in his canoe. The ice was beginning to break up and it tinkled against his craft. He was beginning to feel tired and hungry when he saw a large house.

Weeget pulled his canoe from the water below the house. He took a box of oolichan eggs from under a mat. He scattered the eggs all over the inside of his canoe. He stepped into the cold water and splashed himself from head to toe.

He went up the river bank and into the house. A man dressed in grey came to meet him.

"I am Kuwask," he said. "Welcome to my house. Welcome to the village of the oolichan."

Weeget looked at the floor. Water ran from his clothes and made a pool. "I am wet because we were working all night," he said. "My people caught two and three boat loads of fish."

"That cannot be true!" cried Kuwask. "The oolichan will not run for more than four months."

"You are a liar," said another man.

"If you don't believe me," replied Weeget, "go down to my canoe. You will find oolichan eggs in it."

Two young men went down to Weeget's canoe. They looked in. Sure enough they saw many eggs in the canoe.

One of the men lifted up the bark mat. He found a fish tail under it. They took the tail back to the house.

"It is true," they said. They showed Kuwask the tail.

Kuwask frowned. "Perhaps the foolish young oolichans have gone up the river before their time," he said. "Go and speak to the other chiefs in the village. See what they have to say."

Soon the young men came back. They said that the chiefs thought that the young fish had gone up the river. Kuwask told four men to break the boards at the corners of the house. When the boards were broken, the people ran out and down to the river. Here, as little silver fish, they jumped into the river.

Weeget ran down to the river after them. He waded out into the cold water. "Swim up the river," he called to the fish.

He jumped into his canoe and paddled along with the fish. He raked the fish into his boat until it floated low in the water.

From that day to this, the fish that Weeget tricked have run up the Nass River in the very early spring.

■ 4 ■. WEEGET AND THE GULLS

While Weeget was still camping beside the Nass River, a gull flew down. It floated around the big man's head.

Weeget looked up and smiled. "I shall call you Little Gull," he said.

A second gull joined Little Gull.

"How shall I roast my oolichan?" asked Weeget.

The birds landed beside Weeget. They cut down an elder bush and trimmed the branches. From the branches they made a frame. They laid the fish on the frame.

"Put on your spruce root mat," they told Weeget. "Put your bark cloak about your shoulders. Put on your gloves. Wrap your blanket about your knees. Start a fire under the frame and sit here. Keep the fire going until the fish are cooked on one side. When you turn the fish over, say, 'Lawa.' When the heat makes a fish burst open, say, 'Oh, more oolichan are coming up.'"

Weeget dressed as the gulls said. He started a fire and sat down until the fish should be cooked.

Before the fish were half cooked, the two gulls swooped down and began to eat up the fish. Other gulls joined them in their feast.

All the fish were gone from the frame before

Weeget could get out of his heavy clothing. Weeget was both sad and angry. He caught the gulls and threw them in the fire. When the gulls flew from the fire, their wings were tipped with black.

"Well," thought Weeget. "At least I've learned how to roast my fish."



19. da Hunter