

Why People Have Shrivelled Knuckles



WHY PEOPLE HAVE SHIVELLED KNUCKLES

Txamsem, the Giant, had been travelling for many days along the Nass River.

As usual, he was not much interested in the beautiful, wild scenery nor the plants and animals he saw as he passed. He was thinking about his stomach and where he would get his next meal. As he wandered along, thoughts of smoked salmon, fresh berries, roasted deer and tasty oolichan grease made his mouth water.

He was thinking so hard about all this wonderful food that he almost missed seeing a little house sitting in a clearing on top of a cliff high over the river. When he entered the house, he saw a young woman.

"I am very hungry, girl. Give me food," he said. She offered him some dried salmon from her own dish. He finished it off quickly and looked around hoping for something else. She obliged and offered him more.

When the bowl was empty, the young woman took it outside to the doorway. She stretched up her arms, held the bowl in both hands and cried out, "Miiys, miiys, miiys." To Txamsem's astonishment, salmon berries started to rain from the sky and soon the bowl was full. The juicy berries were a fine ending to the meal.

As soon as the the young woman was busy and not watching him, Txamsem grabbed the bowl and went to the doorway. He looked up to the sky

and repeated her words, "Miiys, miiys, miiys." When nothing happened, Txamsem was very angry and left.

Txamsem continued to travel down the Nass River. He was almost to his own home, when he came upon another house in a clearing overlooking the river.

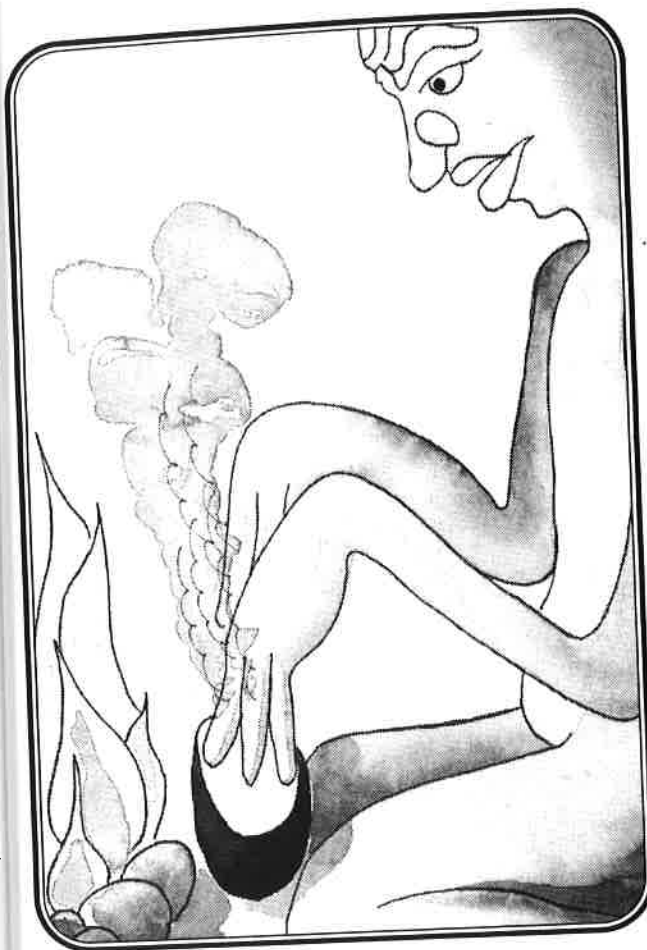
To the owner he said, "My brother, I am so hungry. Would you be so kind as to give me some food?"

The host took out dried salmon and roasted it over the fire. He set it out in front of the ravenous guest. Next, he took out a beautifully carved grease bowl. He placed this beside the fire. Then the most amazing thing happened.

The man placed his finger tips into the bowl. He faced the backs of his hands toward the fire. As his hands became warmed by the fire, grease began to melt from his finger tips. The bowl soon filled with grease. What a fine dish this was — dried salmon served with grease. Txamsem was very impressed and thanked his host many times before he set out on the short distance to his own house.

Because it is the custom of the people to repay others for their hospitality, Txamsem decided he would invite his kind host for a meal. He would, however, try to do even better than his neighbour. He would outdo him by preparing more food and offering gifts and entertainment.

Txamsem began to get ready. He placed his grease bowl near the fire. He then placed his finger tips into the bowl and faced the backs of his hands



toward the fire, just as the man had done. No grease came out. The fire was getting very hot. Still no grease came out. The fire was getting hotter. Txamsem held his hands in the grease bowl until he could no longer bear the heat. Still no grease poured out.

Finally he screamed in pain. He jumped away from the fire and fanned his burnt hands. After a while, he looked at them closely. The skin of his scorched fingers were now tightly wrinkled at the joints.

That is why people have shrivelled knuckles.

Trickster Stories

