

115. How a Man Mishandled Power Given By the Beavers
(Sa:ya:ch'apis)

An old man was fishing for Sockeye salmon, but he wasn't really old. It was not far from the end of the Sockeye² season. The man went out to get fresh fish for boiling. He left in a canoe very early, at night when it was not yet daybreak. It got to be just a little bit light but it was still the middle of the night. He arrived at 20:qtl'as,³ which was the name of the land. There were two young men standing there with ritual branches on their heads.

"Come ashore. Our Chief invites you," said the young men with the branches on their heads.

The man went ashore; his canoe was pulled up. They took the man along to a big house not far off. He went inside.

"Here he comes!" they said.

"Bring him here," said the Chief.

They put the man there at the rear of the house. He noticed that here inside was much blubber just like Humpback whale blubber. It had skin, the blubber, just like that of the Humpback.

"All right, you all cut up that blubber on the floor," said the Chief, "So the man sitting can have some."

The young men cut it up.

"Cut so there's lots," he said.

The women started boiling it; theirs was cooked up. There were lots of people in the house. The villagers were skilled at wood work. They were all adzing, always making all kinds of things: making bailers, making paddles. They were all wearing ritual branches on their heads.

"All right, call all the members of our household. Tell them to come and eat, Kw'a:lap'almi'e."⁴

He called everyone that going around inside the big house, "Kw'a:lap'almi'e:!" They all had one name, the name belonging to all of them. The villagers now came in as guests, sitting down starting from the rear and going right around the house.

"Let's not eat for a while yet; let's first sing a song," said the villagers. "Let's have that man sitting there listen to us."

The villagers began singing their song.⁵

"Ha:ya::: niwa::: ha:ʔaya:shiwa ... ʔaʔaʔa... Ho::wi
howʔe."

They sang⁶ their dinner song. Then the villagers stopped singing and started eating the blubber. The blubber was just like that of the Humpback whale; the oil was dripping like that of the Humpback whale.

"Give the man lots to eat!" said the Chief.

The man ate. The Kw'alap'almiʔa people ate. They finished eating. His leftovers were tied into a bundle as take-home-food.

"You people take it down the beach for him."

The young people took it down the beach. It was now evening at this time. The man went out of the house and set off in his canoe, going home. He landed at his house. He was the only one living there along with his wife and his little girl. The man went inside.

"Go and get my take-home-food from a feast. It's in the canoe."

The child went to get it. There was no blubber; the supposed blubber was not there. She hurried back.

"It's not here," she told her father.

"It's in the canoe," he said to his little girl.

She couldn't find it. There was only a bundle of wood in the bow of the canoe.

"Say! There is blubber in the canoe. Now you go get it," he said to his wife.

The wife went out. She could not find the blubber either; there was only the bundle of wood in the canoe. The wife took that and carried it inside the house. She was holding it like this, the bundle of wood.

"There's no blubber there. Only this alder wood."

The woman threw it down while she was at the middle of the floor. Alder appeared at the upper part of his body,⁷ the cheeks, the eyes, and the belly; thus the alder came sticking through at several places. It must have been a beaver lodge that he had entered. As it turned out the alder's "blubber" was their

food. The man did not get any Sockeye either.

"Call yourself an idiot, you fool, while you were at a house at 20:qtl'as, for there's no house there. You should be ashamed in your mind because there's no house there!"

The alder that he ate was sticking through because he went to⁸ his house when he came in, because he saw⁹ what his blubber take-home-food was, the blubber of the village where he had eaten. The alder sticks were coming through at different parts all over his body. He was the one who found out that alder was blubber to the beavers.

The man then started singing, making his wife listen. He sang the four songs¹⁰ that belonged to the beavers. Then after he had finished singing the man died, for there was nothing but alder sticks in his stomach, puncturing it. The woman set out in the canoe, taking her little child along. She went to where there many houses at Ho:choqtlis'ath.