

## 119. The Youth Who Followed a Shag (Sa:ya:ch'apis)

A youth was out shooting. He wounded a shag and was chasing the creature with his arrow stuck in it. He came to the river at Ho:choqtlis. The shag went up the river with the arrow in it and into the lake. It reached the creek coming into the lake at the other end. The youth was shooting along the way but kept missing. It went upstream again, up the headwater creek. He was following it, the youth, actually two in the canoe with his younger brother. They went up the headstream and got to a bluff. The shag jumped onto the rocky bank and went into a bunch of bracken ferns. The youth close behind jumped out, too. He parted the ferns and saw a way off down there a beautiful land! The youth went in. His arrow was thrown away. He saw that there were many winter Spring salmon in many small creeks<sup>2</sup> there. The tree branches were bent down to the ground from the many eagles.<sup>3</sup> There were many deer, many bears, many martins, many minks, many river otters, many raccoons, and many elk. The youth returned home to his house, saying to the brother,

"You'll not tell our father and mother, will you?"

He had a sister, the youth.

"I've seen a beautiful land. We'll go there," he said.

The youth took his sister along with him that night while the whole village was still asleep. The father didn't know where they went. No one saw them; the brother and sister were lost. They got two children, boys. They were gone a long time; four winters they were away.

"All right! You two will go and visit your Grandfather! He has lots of dried winter Spring salmon: 'Dried' it's called," said the young man. "Say, 'We are looking for our Grandfather that we heard about. We are the children of the one who was lost a long time ago'."

The boys went downstream, paddling through the lake.<sup>4</sup> They arrived at the village just as night fell. The children went up the beach and started looking around, peeking in from house to house. There at the doorway they would be. Then along came a young man who took them and asked,

"Who are you?"

"We are the children of the one who was lost a long time ago. Our Father has us looking for our Grandfather that we heard about."

"Then come with me," said the young man, "So you can get to it;

his house is way over there."

He took the children along.

"These children are looking for you. They say their father is the one who was lost long ago."

The old people got all excited.

"Come here, come here, come here!" said the old folks.

They took them onto their laps. The woman took the children, their grandchildren.

"We've brought lots of dried Spring salmon. You folks come and get what's in the canoe."

"They say there's lots of dried Spring salmon!" said the old folks.

They started to pack the salmon into the house, lots of dried winter Spring salmon. They invited the whole village, all of them. The Ho:choqtlis<sup>2</sup>ath became guests; all were guests. The whole village now ate! The village was satiated. Night came, another night, and all the people went to sleep. The children left in their canoe. No one was aware of what they were doing, not even the grandparents. When daylight came the children were gone. Far away again, they remained absent a long time. They were gone two years.

Then they came downstream again, this time the one who was lost long ago, together with his sister as a couple. He had bear meat and lots of bearskins. They were tied down in the canoe with a rope.<sup>5</sup> They landed at the village with the many people. The young man went up the beach, the husband first and the woman in the rear. One of the women from the many houses spoke:

"Step lively . . .," she called out, "You who had your own brother . . ., the one walking there on the beach . . ."

The woman sang back to the one by whom she was addressed:

I've got two hundred bearskins on my feet'  
That's why I'm stepping lively.<sup>6</sup>

The old man gave a feast again. The young woman became ashamed. Night came, and all the people went to sleep. The young man went off in his canoe. Again no one saw them go as they left that night. They both went home, the young woman and young man as a couple. They got lost for good, never returning.