
Versions 1a and 1b, told by Jake Jackson

The Narrator

Jake Jackson was an old Inland Tlingit who was probably well in his seventies when he told this story. He died in 1952. He was the head man of the *decitan* sib in Teslin and had a strong personality. He openly stated that he was a shaman, and many people feared him, although some thought that his powers had begun to wane, because he was unable to prevent a series of tragedies in his own family and in other families. After the death of his first wife, who was an extremely old woman while he was a very young man, her sib tried to foist another even older spouse on him. Jake rebelled and defiantly married two sisters of another sib, raising a social storm which has not yet fully subsided.

As a young man, he had been a very successful hunter and he still fished and trapped when I lived in Teslin in 1950-51, but he found time to tell me ten rather long stories and to record a good many songs for me. After he started telling stories to me in 1951, he complained that he had been unable to sleep, for he was "thinking, thinking all the time about them." He sometimes spent a whole day telling stories, too, to one of his older sons.

Jake was quite verbal, but in spite of a season on a coastal fishing boat, his English was limited. For example, the first sentence of Version 1b as rendered verbatim is: "They told the women, 'They gonna kill me when they see me.' When they see it they gonna kill 'em, and they told him, the lady, 'For when they kill me, put it my hide away from the camp and hang up me my skin to the head against the sun.' "

Some of my informants alleged that

Jake was so old that he sometimes got his stories mixed up, but I had little way to judge this. It is particularly unfortunate that in his case I did not get full Tlingit as well as English texts.

Jake told Version 1a in our cabin on the afternoon of July 11, 1949, when Dorothy Ranier Libby and I were making our second short trip to Teslin. This was the second story he told us, and he wanted us both to write it down. He also had me read back what I had written. At his request I then typed the story into somewhat better English and gave him a copy for himself and his family.

Before beginning with the story itself, Jake explained how hard it was to find a short story to tell. Some stories require two or three full days, because they fit together like intertwined fingers (Jake demonstrated). Part way through his narration he informed us that he was cutting this story short so that he could finish it during the afternoon. At that, it is the longest of all of the versions. Finally, he said that the word for grizzly bear is *yAtsInEt*, which actually means 'strong sinewy one' (Tlingit) and is a circumlocution for *huts* or grizzly bear.

Jake offered Version 1b in the evening of April 10, 1951. We were alone in my cabin. He had arrived at about 9:45 p.m. and was still going strong at 1:30 a.m. when his daughter summoned him to meet a visitor from Lower Post. During the evening I offered Jake tea, but he impatiently turned down this interruption.

I had begun by inquiring into the method of stretching a bear hide, and he immediately launched into 1b, which he said should be added to 1a.

The Story

Some people had been staying one day at the mouth of the river, and they were putting up dry fish—salmon. Well, they finished. They dried the salmon and stored it, and they were ready to go off to get berries. The women, just about ten of them together, went out to get berries. One young girl goes with them. There are ten women, and she is young.

She fills up a basket that big [gesture]. She fills up two baskets. Fifty pounds she has. And she puts the baskets together, one on top of the other.

When they were coming down to the camp, it was all dark. The young woman was tired of packing so much, and after a while she slipped on something. She slipped down, and she spilled all the berries from the top basket. Then she wanted to know what it was she slipped on. That's where the bear goes out [i.e., defecates]. And the girl wants to know what was on her foot. It was where the bear goes out. You know, like down on the salt water where they [bears] eat berries and go [defecate]. It's big, that big [gesture]. That's what she slipped on.

She got mad at the bear. "Where this dirty bear went out, I fell on it myself!" And she called that bear bad names because of it. And maybe the bear heard it.

So she takes the berries again that she had spilled from her basket, and some of the other ladies helped her put them back in the basket. When they had finished, she packed [carried] the baskets again.

She goes along packing the baskets one on top of the other, and after a while the pack-strap across her shoulders broke, and both baskets fell onto the ground, and the berries spilled out.

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That was because the bear wished it.

But the ladies came in to help her put the berries back again. One was just about half empty, and the other is full again. And she was about half-crying. She put the berries back again, and all the ladies went again. It's dark. It's in the fall time. Everybody goes again.

They had gone only a little ways, and then the strap broke again on both sides. And then all the other older ladies were kind of cold. And it's raining—raining hard. And the old ladies are getting cold. So one old woman said,

"I'm going to go home now." And pretty soon all the other ladies want to go, and they left her alone to stay and pick up those berries all by herself. She had a husband at home, and when the last woman left her, she told her to tell her husband to come and meet her.

When the young woman started for home, she had just gone a short little way when she saw somebody coming. He had a little bearskin on his back. It was a man. She thought it was her husband. He used to wear a bearskin on his back when it was raining. And she kept crying. And when he was coming, he said,

"What's this crying for? I'm here." He wiped her eyes. "Quit crying. Let's go now! "

The husband was packing the berries. And they kept on going and going. That is a bear taking her away now.

They go and they go, and after a while he tells that young woman to walk quick. "It's getting dark on us! "

And after a while she sees a big windfall about five feet high. You know, down on the coast there are big trees. He goes under it. That's really a mountain. The lady thinks it's a windfall, but that bear knows it's a mountain, and he goes under. And then they

go and go, and after a while they go under again. She thought it was another windfall. And they go under again.

And after a while they go on the side of a mountain, and they camp there.

"We're lost," he says. "We go the wrong way," he tells the lady.

Next morning she wakes up. She sleeps all right, but in the morning early, just before the man wakes up, she wakes up, and she knows it [i.e., what has happened]. She is sleeping on the ground, but in the evening she had thought she was in a house, her own house. But in the morning when she wakes up and opens her eyes, she knows it's a camp around her. And that morning she sees bear claws on her neck.

Then after a while the bear wakes up, and that lady shuts her eyes. She doesn't want to move. When the bear gets up, she looks at him, and it looks like her husband walking around. And he makes a fire and cooks. And when he finishes cooking, she gets up and eats. She doesn't see it [i.e., the cooking?]. Lunch too. But all the same, the man cooks. She doesn't see where he does it.

In the morning after they have their breakfast, the man says, "I am going to hunt for groundhog. You stay home and make fire," he tells her. He goes.

In the evening time he comes back home. He packs a big sack full of groundhogs and gophers. He cooks it, and when they are going to leave, he packs it.

When he comes back in the evening, they go to bed again. And in the night the lady wakes up again and wants to know for good what's wrong here. Then she knows it's a grizzly bear that sleeps with her. And then she is quiet again and goes to sleep.

Next morning she wakes up again. In the evening time he had packed home what he had gotten—groundhogs—but there is nothing left. They are all gone.

And she doesn't say anything. She doesn't see anything around, but all the same the man is cooking something. And when he puts it down, it is groundhog that is cooked already. And she takes it and eats it again. [There was an interruption in the story here. Jake stopped to discuss a point in native trading.]

When they are through eating in the morning, he told her to stay home again and get lots of wood. "I'm going to kill groundhogs." And when he came back in the evening he had a big pack again full of groundhog and gophers and things like that. And he did the cooking in the same way.

And they stayed there about a month and did things that way. And they didn't save anything at all. In the fall, late in the fall, the man says,

"We are going to be late in having a winter camp, a winter home. Let's go look now for where we are going to stay in the winter time to make a home."

And then they go, and they have a big pack with dry groundhogs. She never sees it when they stop, and she never sees him drying them at all, but when they walk off from the camp, her husband has a big pack of dried groundhog just the same.

They camp in four camps in four days. They were on a high mountain. It's near a big river on the Alaska side at Chilkat. It's called *tsu.m*. It's the highest one.

You see where the mud comes down from the mountain, that's the place the bear found on the mountain, where all the rocks wash down and spread out in the valley below. That's where the bear dug a hole. As soon as he finished digging the hole, he told his wife to get boughs.

"Don't get them where the wind blows the boughs and the brush," he told her, "Get them down low."

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So the girl goes out to get the brush, and she breaks the trees up high. She breaks the boughs off way up high . . . She brings the brush back and throws it down by her husband. The bear comes out and smells that brush and tells his wife,

“Why did you break the brush up high? Somebody is going to find us!” he said. She breaks off the brush too high, so they are going to see it. Bears break their brush over and under their arms. People break brush by turning it down.

Then he is mad. The man gets mad and slaps his wife. And he goes himself to get the brush . . . And he gets the brush and something just like roots for putting on the ground. He brings the brush and everything together for the ground. The ground is icy, and he throws roots and brush into the hole and breaks it up. That way he finishes the hole.

When he comes in the evening time, he wants to eat. He cooks something. It's groundhog meat and gopher, but the woman never sees the groundhog. All the same, the man cooks some.

Then they camp three nights. It seems as though it is three nights, but really it is three months . . . The man told her, “Feel outside how soft the snow is!”

The woman is going to put up on the door place [*? sic*], because she is getting used to staying with the bear. The woman has begun to carry a baby. It seemed like it was only three months [since she had been with the bear], but the baby seemed like six months. She feels the baby already. That's because the bear has babies quicker than people. She has a big body showing she is having a baby.

After a while, when she is going to feel the snow outside, first she feels her husband all around his body like she is

loving him. She hugged her husband and stroked his hair all over.

Then she moved outdoors and felt the snow. Then it's soft. She makes a big snowball with her hands, and she knows the snowball will slide down. She knows that the den is high above a snowslide. She throws the ball down to the bottom of the hill to the creek.

The girl has four brothers staying at the mouth of the river.

After a while, in April when the fourth month comes, the girl feels sick because she is going to have a baby. In the middle of the night which was really half a month, two little baby boys are born to her. In three and a half months she has babies. When they are born, the palms of their hands are like a person's [indicates smooth], but the backs are all hairy. It is all hairy on their backs too, but their stomachs are like humans'. Their feet were the same way.

In April when there first began to be a crust on the snow is the time that the brothers would want to go hunting bear with their dogs. The oldest brother has two dogs, bear dogs—big dogs—good hunting dogs.

For a long time her brothers and all the townspeople had known that the girl was really taken by the bear when she was out berrying. The four brothers went out together. The youngest one was only a kid. The other three have wives.

The oldest brother tries first, but he never gets any bear. Next time the second oldest one tries to get the bear. He comes back home in the evening, and he has got nothing. The next day, the third one tries it. He doesn't get anything.

The youngest kid is always sleeping. When the oldest brother comes back and his kid brother is sleeping yet, he says,

“You're no good! Do you think you

are going to get your sister? "

Well, he just wished to himself that he would try it; he knows he is going to get his sister.

So the third one tries. And the next day that youngest boy never sleeps. After a while he puts his moccasins on. And he goes, and keeps on straight to the high mountain. He keeps on to where they used to go in the summer, and he has those two dogs with him.

After a while, he sees that snowball. And the dogs get into the place and smell the bear. And he follows them to where the snowball came down. And the two dogs run up the mountain. And after a while he hears the dogs barking up there. And he walks up and up. And after a while he sees there is a bear. He sees the hole, and the dogs are in it. He sees the two dog tails in it. They are barking and barking.

He has no way to hit the bear. He has a bow and arrow, but he has no way to shoot it, because the dogs are in the way. He tries to pull them out. And after a while he hears somebody talking inside that hole. The voice was talking to the dogs. One dog's name was *całsq^{wa}* [?, Tlingit]. The other's name was *kusadago ic* [*kucda^{k'u}ic*, little otter, father, Tlingit?]. The person said,

"You ought to keep quiet now! You can never quit barking! "

She knew her brother's dogs. She is inside. And then the dogs go out.

And the man told his wife, "Those are your brothers. They are going to kill me, but when they do kill me, see that you get my skull! Get my whole head. You go get it. When they stretch my skin, make a fire right along where they are stretching it, and put my head in the fire and burn it up."

That day when the brother came to kill him, he did not fight back. He never threw him down the creek. He never

rolled down. He just lay there quietly. The three brothers below came to meet the fourth one, because they heard the dogs barking up on the mountain. They went to meet the youngest brother.

When they were skinning the bear, the oldest brother told the youngest one to go into the cave and get the arrow he had shot in there. When he went into the bear hole the girl was way in the back holding her two babies—one on each side. She tells her brother,

"You skin the bear good. That's your brother-in-law, *i kani!* [your brother-in-law, Tlingit] Treat him good. It's good to use to eat," she said.

When they skinned him, they cut one side of the ribs out to roast it. When they finish, the sister is sitting on the bear nest.

[At this point Jake declared that the story was too long to tell in full, "so we can change it. Wrong here,"—i.e., he was going to condense it.]

When the youngest brother saw his sister inside the den, he came out. He tells his oldest brother,

"I see my sister in the bear hole."

And they don't believe him. "You're no good! You're no good to your sister [*sic*]."

"I know I see her good! She has two babies. On both sides she has a baby. I see it!"

So the oldest brother says, "Let's go look at them! All right, go ahead."

Then they go fast. The first thing, the oldest [*sic*] brother looks in the back of the bear hole. And then he starts to cry when he sees his sister. He cries and cries, and his sister keeps still. Then she says,

"Keep quiet, brother! I'm not going to be lost much longer! "

Then the man stops crying, and the girl says to him, "When you go back home, brother, *ik* [younger brother, Tlingit], tell my mother to come meet

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me and bring snowshoes for me."

So just as though it's nothing, they go back home without packing anything. They want to get home quick.

Just as soon as they see the camp, they holler out, "We got our *dIUK* [sister, Tlingit]!"

Nobody believes them. They tell their mother, "ax *dIUK* [my sister], she calls for you to come with snowshoes." Their mother doesn't believe them either. When they say that, she too doesn't believe them. All the same, she puts on her moccasins and goes, and she packs an extra pair of snowshoes. And she walks and goes to where her daughter is.

When the girl starts to walk out from the hole, she starts to cry and cry to be back at home. She tells them,

"Someone can fix a camp for me, out of the way, way out from where the townspeople stay."

She wants to camp alone.

And they fixed the camp there already. She came home and stayed in there.

That same spring she tells her youngest brother who got her that she wants to have a good time bear hunting. She tells her brother,

"I see smoke, *ik* [younger brother, Tlingit], bear smoke." [Jake explained as an aside: "The bear has a camp in winter time. But the bear lives just like a person. He has a fire, and it smokes right in his den."]

"Where?" her brother asks.

"Out there. You see that tree standing up? Right there. You go there and look for it." He goes and he sees a bear right there every time she says that. Anytime when he is lonesome he asks his sister,

"Can you see any bear smoke?"

"Wait," she says. "I'll see some!" Then she looks across at the hill, and after a while she sees some. And she

tells her brother, "There's a bear there!" She can tell how many bears there are too. Just the woman can see the smoke. Nobody else can see it. She tells them to look by the tree.

After a while it is summer again, and they fish again. And after a while in the fall, they go to get berries again. And they hunt bear again in the fall time. They see three grizzly bears coming out of the side of the mountain. A family. There is a female with two cubs about a year and a half old. She sees them first, and she tells her brother,

"There are more bears up there," she says. "There are three of them. First thing when you clean them up [kill them], don't fool with them," she tells him. If you fool with them when you kill them, they are going to take me away," she said.

And then they go up there, and they kill the bears—all three of them. And they skin them, and they bring the feet and the skin. And they eat some in the evening. Before the sun goes down they finish their eating somewhere.

Then they tell their mama,

"Mama, can you tell our sister? Let's play with her. We want her to put on the big bear skin, and the cub skins are for our sister's sons!"

And the mother starts crying and crying. And they keep on telling her they want to play with their sister. After a while the mother goes to the daughter and tells her,

"Your brothers tell me they want to play with you. You put on that bearskin and walk just like a bear coming out on the side of the mountain."

And the girl starts to cry. And she gets mad and sore, and she says, "How can they talk that way? I am going to be a bear forever now!," she says.

And the girl is crying and crying. And after a while the men folk come themselves. They tell her.

“*diUk* [sister, Tlingit], we want to play with you. We want you to put this bearskin on. And these here are for our nephews.”

“What for do you say that? I used to tell you not to fool with those bears! Now I am going to put the skin on. You come quick and see us in the mountain!”

She takes the bear skins with her. And she takes the little one, and she shakes it on the child. She turns the little kid around this way and puts the bear skin on the baby’s back. She puts it on four times that way, and then it fits right on. She grabs the other kid and does the same way again. And a real bear comes out again. Then she picks up the big skin and puts it on herself that way and walks out. She’s a bear.

The oldest brother told his sister, “*diUk* [sister, Tlingit], we are going to shoot our bow and arrows, but we are going to use spruce bark for the arrow heads instead of iron points.”

When the brothers were sneaking up to where their sister was eating berries like a bear, the youngest brother looked

at her, and it didn’t look like a person, but just like a bear. When he saw that his sister looked just like a bear, he took off the spruce and put a bone [*sic*]point on. A strong one too. When he saw her, the oldest brother hit her first. She goes right behind a tree. The other two watch. The youngest brother has a good arrow. When they shot their bows and arrows, the bear turned around and just grabbed the three brothers. And those young bears come behind and just tear them up, the three brothers.

The younger brother that is behind, he hits the bear sister good—right in the throat. He does it because his sister has turned into a bear. The arrow goes through and stays in the bear’s collar bone—just as big as a finger. That is where the younger brother shot the bear.

Then the bears went away from their home forever. They never came back to the camp any more. They had killed the three brothers. Only the youngest brother was left. He was all right. This is the end of the story.

The Story

...The bear told the woman,
“They are going to kill me when they see me!”

When he saw that they were going to kill him, he told her,

“When they kill me, keep my hide away from the camp, and hang up my skin so the head faces the sun. Hang it on a place with the head towards the sun. And put feathers on my head between the ears.”

And then he said, “When they stretch my skin, put charcoal between the shoulder blades. And on my back—put a cross on the skin side.” [I asked Jake if this was also done for mountain goat, as another informant had told me. He denied it, saying that the mark was

Version 1b

only put on grizzly bear hides.

And when he had finished these words, then he told his wife again,

“When your brothers kill me, you call for my knee bones. And when my kids are hungry for something to eat, you put my knee bones into the fire. And my knee bones are going to show you where the bears are, where their homes are. They are going to point it out to you, so then you are going to tell your brothers where to go to kill the bears. My kids are going to be hungry sometimes after I leave you, and you are going to keep those knee bones for any time that you are hungry. And if someone from your sib is going to kill you, and if you wish it, I am going to give

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you something to even up with them because of the way they have fooled you." [Literally: and something gonna be come out to youse bunch to be killed you. And if you was wish that way, and I gonna give you what's the thing you even up with the way they fool you.]

So the bear takes out one of his teeth, the right one [i.e., indicates the bear's right canine]. And the kids each took one out of the left side behind his big teeth. Those two each took one tooth [from behind the canine—gesture]. And afterwards they gave them to their mother. And the bear told his wife,

"If you are ever in danger, if you ever want to get even with them, you are going to put my teeth into your kids' mouths. And after you do that, you are going to take my big tooth—that big one—and put it into your own mouth," he told his wife.

And when her brothers had killed her husband, as soon as they got her, she told them,

"There was just one thing he told me—'You look after the skin good, put it out good. When you hang it, put the head meeting where the sun comes out. And when you stretch the skin, put a charcoal cross on the back between the shoulders.' "

And after that, when she had told them everything [about how to treat the bear's corpse], their sister told them what else her husband had told her to tell them, "Tell your brothers not to tease me. Tell them to be good to me. No laughing; nothing foolish."

And after that in the fall, they saw a bear with a family. There were three of them. They got them, and when they brought them down to the house, they hung the skins up.

About the next day those boys told their mother, they said,

"Mama, can you tell our sister to let

us play with her? That big bear we killed, we want our sister to put the skin on her back. And the other two [skins], we want to put them on our nephews; we want to put the two little black ones on our nephews. And let them walk over where the black bears were on the hill. When we see them, we are going to change our bows and arrows. We are going to put spruce bark on our arrows, and that is what we are going to hit them with."

And as soon as her mother told her daughter, her daughter started to cry. She cried and cried and cried—pretty near all day. And after a while they [the boys?] saw her and the two kids walking around. The two kids were all hairy on the tops of their hands, although the palms were just like a person's. Their faces were good [i.e., human?], but they had long eyebrows.

When they were going to put on the skins, the woman called her brothers to her. When her brothers came to her she said,

"Now, I never thought you were going to tell me to do this way. What are you thinking of? " She said, "It's no good the way you told me. I am going to go for good. I am going to be a bear for good after you finish your playing with me."

That's the time she packed [carried] the bearskins up and put them on. When she was going, she called to her mother and said,

"Good-bye!"—but they [i.e., people] never said "good-bye" that time [i.e., they didn't use the English word]. "Good-bye mama. It was supposed to be a bear who took me away from you. Now I am going to go forever, and you are not going to see me! "

Then she went.

When they got to the hill where the bears were, a bear came out feeding on berries. And those four brothers went

Appendix: The Story and the Narrators

after it. And first they put spruce bark points on their arrows. And the youngest of the brothers looked, and it didn't look like his sister. Every place there were [real] bears walking. They never put those bearskins on their backs. The younger brother sees that they are full bears.

He told his oldest brother, "That's not our sister! Can't you see it? It's different from our sister. That is a grown bear. Watch out! "

So they walked close to it, and after a while the oldest brother shot his bow and arrow. And just as soon as she heard the bow and arrow make a noise like that, she jumped on the boys.

When she jumped, the youngest brother had a good arrow, and he hit his sister right in the throat here. And that's the bone that the bear has right here in his throat today. It is just inside the meat, nothing holds it (i.e., it isn't attached to another bone). That's because of the youngest brother's arrow.

That big bear holds up two people and bites this way—and its teeth are just like bear's teeth. Their father gave them to [the children], you know. And they were what they were using that time. And in just a minute the bears had killed all the brothers.

And when she had killed her brothers, she walked out just the way the sun goes. She walked on out north [and clockwise—Jake motions the way she went].