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Version 2, told by Tommy Peters

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The Narrator

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Tommy Peters is an Inland Tlingit, who is now in his seventies. He is of the same sib as Jake Jackson, and although he is somewhat milder in character than was Jake, he is now the local head of the *decitan* sib and has inherited Jake's ceremonial dress. When I knew him best, in 1951, he was far less interested than Jake in his group's ties to the coastal Tlingit, but he had closer relationships than did Jake with the Athabascans of the Pelly River, especially those of Ross River with whom he stayed for several years (see Denniston 1966).

Tommy told me the bear story on February 9, 1951. I was paying a first visit to his house, and although he and his wife were on the point of going out, they welcomed me warmly and kept thanking me for the visit, and Tommy proceeded to tell stories for about three hours. His wife and one of his older daughters remained in the front room of the house with us, while a number of young children sky-larked about in the

next room. Tommy selected this story as his first choice.

In the summer of 1952, Tommy took me up the Nisutlin River on a short archaeological reconnaissance. During the trip he told me a good deal about the ritual accorded to certain plants and animals, and he agreed to record the two songs that hunters should sing to bears. He finally did this on August 11 in the old Anglican schoolhouse at Teslin. We were alone when he sang these songs, though some young men joined us for additional recordings.

Tommy has had a fair amount of contact with whites, especially during the construction of the Alaska Highway, and his English is moderately good. He acts as a fishing guide at Teslin.

Tommy prefaced his story by saying that *huts* is the real term for grizzly, but one speaks of him as *yAtsinEt*, which he did not translate, but which means "strong sinewy one," as earlier noted.

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The Story

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Old timers say the bear feels good about being called *huts* [grizzly bear, Tlingit].

A woman stayed with a bear for one year.

One woman walked out and stepped on bear manure. And she was the one who never spoke the right way. People used to be pretty strict about never saying anything against animals. And she just walked right away from where she had stepped on that stuff.

And then she met a young man. And the young man asked her to go with him. And so she did. And they just went a little ways, and then they stepped over a windfall. They went right over two

places, and they were mountains. But the woman never knew it. They seemed just like windfalls to her.

And [when they had gone over] the third one, that's where he makes his den. They come to a place where people are living. And she never knows that they are bears. These people seemed to look like [real] people to her when she looks at them.

And they were making a place to dry fish the way people used to. And finally one morning she pulled off her blanket under which she had been sleeping. It was early in the morning, and she looked at the people there. And there

were some people sleeping right across the fire there in one place. Her husband had told her not to ever try to get up in the morning at any time. So when she looked across at the people, she saw that there was nothing but bears lying all around that fire.

As soon as morning came—early, just when the day breaks—the real head man in the camp hollered to the young fellows, you know. He told the young folk to get up and make fire. So when they got up, the woman started to get up too. And then when she looked all around, all those bears had turned to humans.

Finally they went up in the mountains where they were going to put a den. And this bear was making a den, you know. And this woman is supposed to be the wife of that bear. So he tells his wife there to go get brush. And so this woman goes down to get the brush. And this bear tells her,

“If you break brush, get that under the balsams, close to the ground.”

And so this woman goes out and breaks this brush way up high, so somebody might find her some time.

And then this bear takes the brush and holds it out. He looks at it and says,

“You put a mark on us,” he says. And so they move out of that place again.

And they are not very far from there, and they make another den. And so that man himself, he goes out to get the brush. And then they have a place to stay. And when he starts to dig out the den, it seems to this woman like a real place, like a house in which to live.

They have all kinds of grub, just like real people—groundhogs, gophers, black berries.

And then this woman has a piece of rock about this big—two of them. And she starts in March when it begins to turn to spring. Whenever she eats, she

rubs her food around on these rocks, you know. She greases them. And she keeps on doing that way at every meal.

And so that woman has four brothers. And these four boys start making *kayani* [i.e., employing magical leaves]. And if a person makes that thing and he has a wife, he should stay by himself for one month [i.e., be continent].

And all the four boys had wives, the youngest brother [too]. All four make leaves. They were going to try to hunt bear. They had seen that a woman was travelling with a bear.

So when the time comes, the oldest brother goes first. He takes his dogs, but he gets nothing. *calsq<sup>Wa</sup>* [? Tlingit] is the dog's name.

And the last one to go is the youngest brother.

And so when springtime comes, the bear puts his hand out and feels outside there to see if the snow is starting to thaw where the sun hits it. And when there starts to be a crust on the snow, this woman comes out there. And she has the two rocks in her hands—the ones she had put grease around. And she rolls them down from the mountain. And there used to be a snowslide in there. And those rocks went way down, pretty near down to the bottom.

Way before that, the bear saw what his brothers-in-law were doing and what the first one, his oldest brother-in-law, has.

Before he [the brother-in-law?] starts out, the bear tells his wife,

“Your oldest brother is coming after us!” The bear knows when he leaves home. And when the brother was coming closer, he has something in his mind just like a flashlight. And the bear just gets ahold of it and he shoves that thing out. He did that with three of those boys. *qatugu* is the mind of a person [also the Tlingit word for ‘chickadee,’

see McClellan n.d. b: Chapter 4].

And finally the bear tells his wife,

"The younger of your brothers is going to go this morning, and it looks as if he is going to get us," he said.

And so then this woman tells her husband, she says,

"Be good to your brothers-in-law! " she says. "Don't hurt any of them! "

And the bear says, he tells his wife, "I'm going to play with my brothers-in-law! " he says.

And he has a spear—*sagat*—in there up on the roof. And that thing there is [really] the teeth of the bear that he has up there.

And not very long after that, that man's mind comes. The bear shoves the young man's mind out [of the cave]. But not very long after, it comes again.

He tries it three times, and he can't make it. The third [*sic*] time that mind comes inside that place there, the bear never shoves that person's mind out.

That's the time that bear takes that *sagat* out of there. And that woman talks good to her husband about her brothers, that he shouldn't hurt them any.

And not very long after that, those dogs come to that snowslide place. Those dogs there smell the rocks at the place where the woman rolled them down, you know. And they started to follow [the scent].

Then way up there they heard the dogs barking.

When they came up there, they got around the den. And that man gets on top of it. He sees that the bear has his paw out of the den. Finally the bear gets hold of one of the dogs and throws it to his wife back there.

And that bear wouldn't come out. The man just sees his hand every once in a while. He throws everything down right in front of the den. His mittens. And at last he throws his hat over there.

The bear catches everything. He gets ahold of it in front of his den, and he always throws it back to his wife. And just one dog is barking at the bear.

And finally the bear tells his wife, "Well, I'm going to go! "

And he starts to run out of the den. And as soon as he runs out, they [i.e., the younger brother?] kill the bear.

And finally that dog keeps barking inside of the den. And finally a person is talking inside of the den and telling the dog,

"I wonder if you are going to get tired of barking! "

And then he sees his sister come out of there with two kids. And they have hair just right on top of their hands there, right from here [wrists].

Then she starts to talk to her brother. "Well, brother," she tells him, "Work good on your brother-in-law's body," she tells him. "And give me his skin."

This brother takes her right home from there. And she takes her husband's skin and keeps it.

That's the time the bear had told his wife how to treat bears. If anybody kills a bear, put a pole up between [*sic*] the skin. And leave the head. Put it where the sun goes down facing west. Even black bear. And get a point of willows and put it on top of the bear, the butt ends pointed out to mark where the sun goes down.

And sing two songs that this woman learned from her husband. When you kill the bear you have to sing them, and the bear feels good about it.

Then they went home.

This is the song. [Tommy later sang the song on my recording machine; see below.]

The second song is about how the brothers-in-law are going to hunt the bear with leaves.

And that woman stays with her

mother and father. And in the fall time, if anybody goes up in the mountains, they say that this woman goes, too, to get gophers. The brothers always go with their wives, you know. And as soon as that woman starts to go from camp, you see, she puts a bearskin on, and she just shakes herself there and turns into a bear. Those two kids do it too.

And the same day, they say, they went out to the place where they were eating berries on the side of the mountain. She did that all the time. As soon as she left camp, she would put a bearskin on, and those two kids did the same. And one time those four brothers told their mother,

"Well, mother," they said, "tell our sister to go up on the side of the mountain just the way a bear does all of the time, so we can have fun with her! "

And they had bows and arrows, you know. And right on the arrows they put some kind of stick. They never used iron, so she won't get hurt.

And they tell her so many times. And that woman tells her mother,

"Tell my brothers not to tell me to do like that all the time. I'm nearly turning to a bear for good myself! "

And so one day, they say, they tell their mother again. They tell her two or three different times. And so this woman tells her mother, "Well," she says, "I am going to go! "

And she puts that bearskin on herself and on the two kids. And as soon as she started to walk from her home, she looked different altogether. And when they started to go, the youngest brother took a real bow and arrow, but the other three never do it. They think they are going to play for fun. And those four brothers start to go after her. And when they come close, she doesn't look good to the youngest brother. She acts different.

And they just come right close to

her, and they hit her with that bow and arrow. Then she just turns around and gets after her brothers. And she had a real fight with those brothers of hers. Even the woman's sons fight. They are as big as their mother.

They killed all the three brothers. The youngest one though, he's saved. He hit her with that bow and arrow, but he never killed that bear. That woman starts to go up in the mountains from that place where she fights her brothers. They all come to be grizzly bears for good.

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[Tommy recorded the two bear songs on Reel 2, Summer 1952, No. 1.]

This is the song about the *kayani* [magic leaves, Tlingit]. The woman sings. . . . And the first brother can't get him. . . .

"I went through every one of those young people,

And the last brother—

I know he did the right thing! "

(This is Tommy's translation. I did not get a Tlingit text. After he had sung the song, Tommy talked about the fasting and sexual continence which is necessary for those who use *kayani*. He explained that *kayani* is dangerous, and only the younger brother observed the proper ritual.) [Tommy went on:]

And that's the reason why when you kill a bear, you use this song, and the bear feels good. Whoever kills the bear—he should point it north [*sic*], and get willows and spruce and point them north. And whoever kills the bear sings this, and the bear feels good.

The second part [song] is

"I dreamed about it,

That they were going after him [*sic* me?]."

And he dreams that the last one is going to get him. So he can't help it. When he finds him, he comes right out and gives himself up.