
Version 10, told by Mary Jaquot

The Narrator

Mary is a striking middle-aged woman from Burwash Landing, the furthest northwest of the Southern Tutchone settlements. She is the widow of Louis Jaquot, from Alsace-Lorraine, who built up Burwash Landing and dominated it for many years. Like Eddy Isaac, Mary was raised as a 'Favoured Child' which may help to account for her proud bearing and manners.

Mary's mother was evidently a Tagish woman of the *dagf'awedi* sib of the Wolf moiety, but her father was a son of the famous Copper Chief, an Indian from either the White or the Copper River who moved into the Tutchone area during the 19th century, and who, as his name suggests, controlled the native copper trade.

Although I had first met Mary at Burwash Landing in the summer of 1948, she told this story in the summer of 1966 when she was visiting her older sister at Canyon, some distance further south on the Alaska Highway. Another sister, Jessie, had also come for the visit. The three women and some younger children were sitting outside the older

sister's house visiting with me and Anne Shinkwin Powers, a graduate student who was working with me.

Mary completely dominated the scene. She told us the story of the first flood, described the old annual cycle, (almost identically as she had done it in 1948), and gave a long account of how a bear had destroyed a lot of caches in the White River area and finally had killed a man. In the end the Indians hunted down the bear and killed him with their copper spears. They cut the bear's throat, slashed his body and cut off his legs, but they did not eat the meat since they found a strand of human hair in its teeth. Because the bear had eaten an Indian, nobody would touch his flesh. I then asked if oldtimers treated bears' heads in any special way. Mary said she did not know, but immediately launched on the story of the girl who married the bear. Upon finishing it, she turned us over authoritatively to her younger sister, Jessie, who then told us a story about how bears and humans once held a peace ceremony.

The Story

In the old old times they did all kinds of stuff to the bear [i.e., observed a ritual].

A young girl like you [points to younger anthropologist] always kicks the bear manure. She jumps over it and says,

"Oh you dirty thing in the trail! "

They tell her, "Don't! Don't do that! Don't do that! "

And then something happened. They go after berries—that's what they said. So pretty soon this girl is gone. Nobody knew where she went. A bear had

turned into a man and had gotten this girl. That's what was the matter.

They go around camping. The girl thinks she is with a nice-looking man. They camp, and they hunt. He is a good hunting man.

They went some place and were camping, and then—I don't know—then finally, she is going to have some babies.

It was fall. They were camping. And finally her husband puts his hand like that [pantomimes laying it on the girl's breasts] when she was sleeping. He puts his hand there. And she looks and sees

bear claws. And pretty soon she is scared.

This bear asks her, "What's the matter with you? Why are you scared of me now?"

She says nothing. She is scared.

He says, "Why did you laugh at me all the time? You are getting it this time!"

She doesn't know what to do. She has nothing in the den. It is just like a house to her. She starts to change herself [i.e., to become bear-like]. She gives up. She can't do anything. She is going to have babies too.

The bear says, "Well, we had better make a home for winter."

She wants to go [away from the bear]. She says, "I'm going to show you where we'll stay. I'm going to stay there. I am going to show you where I want to stay for winter."

She knows where her brothers always used to hunt sheep near a creek.

The bear says, "Well, O.K. then, we'll go in there."

So he makes a house down in the rocks. He makes a den.

And he asks her, he says, "Why do you want to stay in here? You know that everybody comes in here all the time! I don't like to stay here. But just the same I'll make a house too."

So springtime comes, March. It's sunny. She knows her brothers are coming. She takes snow, and she takes some of her nest, and she makes a ball. The nest smells of her. She throws the ball, and it rolls right down the creek where her brothers have their hunting dogs.

That bear there, he wakes up in the night time.

"Gee! Somebody has found us. I'll get killed," he says.

She has three little cubs. So then he says, "I'll get killed, but you all won't."

Q. How did he know that?

A. I don't know. He dreams it, I guess. He dreams he'll be killed.

Then, sure enough, the dogs find that snowball that rolled down. And they follow up the creek and bark in front of the den door.

"Didn't I tell you?"

The bear has all kinds of stuff there in that den to kill with. He has those teeth, the best teeth. He puts in his teeth.

She looks [out] for her brothers. "Don't take those ones! They are all your brothers-in-law!" she told the bear. [Mary actually said "brothers."]

O.K. He throws his teeth back. He goes out there. And the brothers had lots of bows and arrows. The bear rolls and yells like anything [when they shoot him].

They don't think anything of it. They skin him. The brothers skin the bear. And they tell the youngest brother,

"Go back up for the arrows."

So she had picked up all the arrows you know, and tied them up together. And she put them right in front of the cave door. And the boy ran up there, and he was kind of scared. Gee! He saw the bows and arrows tied up together. And he grabbed them. He wanted to run back. She started to call her brother.

"My brother! I'm the one who disappeared. There are little kids in here. You know, the one you just killed is your brother-in-law! Just the same, you get his head. And fix it up and put it away good. You tell mama to make clothes, a dress, for the kids and me!"

The boy went back down to his brothers. He ran.

"Gee whiz!" he told his brothers, "I'm going to tell you something surprising! Yes! Our sister said that's our brother-in-law we killed! She said, 'Use him up, but not the head. Fix the head up good!'"

The Girl Who Married the Bear

So afterwards the older brother said, "Let's go back and get rid of her! "

He got kind of mad.

The younger brother said, "Sometimes she might be handy, a woman like that. Don't talk like that! "

So they went home, and they told their mother what had happened.

And she started sewing, sewing.

The girl didn't like to stay too close to a human person. She had hair on the back of her hands and arms and on her back. And the kids too. So she dressed them all up. The mother went out and dressed the kids and the girl and took them all home. She gave them all the stuff, but they stayed out in camp.

The girl said, "It will take a long time before you can come close. The Indians stink like anything! "

She doesn't want to smell them. Well, she was just like a moose, I guess [i.e., wild]. But finally, she comes close.

Gee! She used to point,

"There's a woman over there. Somebody is camped over there in the bear den. Go ahead and kill them! "

In the spring time she said, "Some time I might turn into a bear. You must be careful of me, not tease me or I will turn into a bear."

So her kids are like that. [Mary points to a niece, who is about seven years old.] They go out hunting gophers.

And her brothers make little bows and arrows.

The oldest one of the brothers says, "Make yourself into a bear, and we will shoot you. We'll just play! "

And she says, "Don't don't bother me! Remember, I might turn into a real bear! "

Finally she got mad, and she went up the hill a little ways, and she put on a fur coat. And I don't know where she got it. She threw everything away. And

then she tore them all up. She killed her brothers too, except one. He's away, I guess. Her brothers had teased her, "Come on. Make yourself into a bear for us! "

And nobody ever saw her any more again.

That's why people are careful with bear skulls and put them away. They told us, too, that if there is a little baby in camp, don't bring the bearskin into camp. It will make the kids cranky.