

The Raven was angered. Perched on a high spruce tree, he again called out to the ghost people, "You shall all perish when I burst the light ball." Disbelieving the Raven, they called back, "You expect to frighten us, but we know you as a liar. You have no light ball." When he saw that they were not going to give him any oolichans, the Raven burst open the daylight ball. Everything became bright, and the ghost people disappeared. Thus Raven brought daylight into a dark world, as well as doing away with the ghost tribe. This is why 'Iyayhl to the Haida people is a very important being.

### THE BALL OF LIGHT<sup>1</sup>

*(Recorded by William Beynon, among the Tsimsyan, in 1953.) (A third version of the same myth of Creation.)*

At one time the world remained in semi-darkness, there being no sun, and the days were much the same as the nights—just as when dusk comes before nightfall. The people had a great deal of hardship in travelling about to gather food. Near this place stood a large village whose chief had a very bright son. The youth would always go away, travelling about in his little canoe, sometimes with his companions, sometimes alone, trying to get game birds with his bow and arrows. One day he went out, and his companions followed in another canoe. The young hunter stood up in his canoe to shoot at a duck on the water, and his canoe capsized. The young prince sank into the water, never to rise to the surface.

The prince's companions returned very sadly, telling the parents what had happened. There was great mourning in the village, and every day the chief and his wife would come to this point, where they mourned the loss of their son. They did this for a long time, staying until they were both exhausted. Then they would return to their village.

One morning, they set out to do as they always did, and as they came to the point, the chief's slave, who always accompanied them, saw in the semi-darkness what appeared to be two children playing on a thick kelp patch some distance from the shore. So he said "My master, look at the kelp patch. There seem to be two small children playing on it."—"Go and bring them to me here! This may be our son who has pitied us and is returning to us, bringing with him a brother." The slave went to the kelp-covered reef, and behold there were two small children playing and romping on the kelp! The slave took them aboard. They were both boys, and he brought them to his master. "Chief, cease your weeping! Your son has been returned to you, and he has brought a brother with him." The chief and his wife were very happy. They

<sup>1</sup>The place where, according to Tsimsyan narratives, Thraymsem and his brother Laræbulæ originated, is Welkselarhlarh. *Wel*: where; *kse*: out; *larhlarh*: fell, plural, meaning "where born."

went back at once to their village. The chief gave a great feast and showed the two children to all his tribe. "See, my son has pitied us and returned to us. He has brought back his brother with him."

The two boys grew rapidly, and both were large of stature. The elder was very clever. One day he asked the chief, "Why is it that we are always in darkness?" The chief answered, "The daylight and sun are controlled by a tyrant, the Chief of the Skies, who has his home away up at the headwaters of the Nass River. He took this move in anger because the people would not let him rest. They had kept making a noise so that he could not sleep. For their punishment he made the world dark, and he keeps the daylight and sun in a ball, which he holds in his house."

The young boy, who was fast growing into manhood, said to his brother, "I am going to get that ball. Then I will restore light to the world." He began to inquire as to where the abode of the Sky Chief was, and always the people pointed to the head of the Nass River. One day while the brothers were walking along the shore, the elder saw a huge raven. He took his bow and arrow and shot it, then skinned it. When the skin dried, he put on the raven hide, and, behold, he was a raven, and he flew about. Each day, he would go a little farther away, and on his return he would put away the Raven garment and be himself again. He practised every day until he now thought he was strong enough for a long flight.

One morning he said to his people, "I am going after the ball of light. The people have suffered long enough, and the Ghost people might soon control the world. So he went off to where he had hid his Raven garment. Putting it on, he at once flew into the direction of the Nass River. He flew many days and finally came to a very high mountain, which was too high to fly over. He rested. Soon he saw that a passageway through this mountain opened and closed alternately. He watched it for a long while, and looking through the passage he saw that it was very bright at the far end. He now planned to fly through the passage the next time it opened. As soon as the passageway opened, the Raven flew through it, and just as he got through the passage closed. He kept on flying until he came to a very bright country. So bright was it that it almost blinded him. There he beheld a large house, which had a bright housefront painting of the sun. He sat down on a large tree right above the water-hole, as he wanted to see the people and see how he could enter this house to try and get the daylight ball which he had heard was kept there.

While he was thinking, a very beautiful woman came out of the house and stepped down to the water-hole to draw water. He at once took off his Raven garment and changed his form into a spruce needle, which drifted onto the water as the Princess stood in front of the water-hole. As she was thirsty,

she reached down with her drinking vessel to get a drink. The spruce needle went into the cup. The young woman tried to blow it to one side, but it would jump back to the other. So being very thirsty and impatient, she drank the water and the spruce needle with it. Very soon after, she became pregnant, even though she remained a virgin. She gave birth to a son, and the Great Chief of the Skies was very happy.

Every day the Sky Chief would take his grandson and stretch him, so that in a short while the child was able to crawl about the house. Now that he knew where the daylight ball was kept, he began to cry and kept on crying, saying one thing only "Mæ". The Chief began to get worried. So he called together his wise men, and said, "I want you to tell me what ails my grandson? Why does he cry as he does? There must be something the boy wants. We must pacify him." One by one the wise men endeavoured to know what ailed the child, until finally a very aged man said, "The child must want the light ball to play with, as he is always calling "Mæ" (ball). Give him the ball, and see whether it pacifies him." So the Chief of the Skies took down the ball from the box and gave it to the child, who at once stopped crying. After rolling it about for a while, he abandoned it, and it was put away again. The next day, before the child began crying, the Chief gave his grandson the light ball, and the child played with it for a while; then he left it.

Soon the people became accustomed to the child playing with the ball, and no one paid any attention to him. Then one day, the boy rolled the ball to the entrance, and as no one was watching him, he suddenly rolled it outside. Going to where his Raven cloak was hidden, he put it on and flew away with the ball. He came to the opening of the mountain at the moment when it opened, and he flew through it. He now reached the headwaters of the Nass, and as he flew down this river, he saw people in the dusk who were gathering oolichans. Flying right over them, he (Thraymse) called out, "Give me some of your oolichans, my friends!"—"Why should we gather oolichans for you? Come and gather oolichans, yourself." This angered the Raven, who again called out, "Give me some oolichans or I'll burst the daylight ball. Then all of you Ghost people shall disappear." The Ghost people laughed and called out, "Listen to the boastful one! Where will he get the daylight ball?"

The Raven (Thraymse) was very angry. He took the daylight ball and burst it open. Immediately a great light spread upon the whole world. It originated from the Nass River. That is why now, in the names connected with light, all point to the Nass as the source. Thraymse, having now accomplished what he set out to do, started for the village at Metlakatla, where he had come from. Then he started on a series of adventures in many lands.