HOTEL INLANDER

HAZELTON, B. C.

February 27, 1968

Dear Wilson,

I have just returned from visiting Jonathan Johnson who is terminally ill...Cancer, I think. He is concerned about a record of Kispiox territorial rights that he thinks you have intended to put into writing. He feels that it is the only record in existence and wants to have a copy of it to leave with the Kispiox people. If you have a copy, can you send one to him. If not, the museum here could pay to have copies made. If the facts are in note form, maybe I could beat it into shape for him. I could pay him numerous short visits and get it all down again but he is very week and can talk only for a few minutes at a time. He might never finish his record. He is also concerned because the last copy which he had in his possession of his own story (as told to Hubert Evans) was loaned to someone a couple of years ago and Jonathan no longer has a copy. I believe, and so does Jonathan, that there is a copy safely in the archives in Victoria. Am I right? If so, it would ease Jonathan's mind to be reassured of its presence in the archives.

Rushed, and on my way to a meeting so no time to coreect before the mail. Hope this makes sense As ever, Kelly S

The Family History

-- of --

JONATHAN JOHNSON

As told to his friend
H.R.Evans, at Kispiox
in the winter of 1952-
1953

The Family History

-- Of --

JONATHAN JOHNSON (MOO-KAL-UKS-OO)
who is of Ghis-pa-yawks
and is Speaker in Wolf
Crest for Chief Klem-laha
(Frank Harris) Hazelton.

Like all the Gitkshan people, our family began in Dim-la-ham't. This was long before the Flood, when many thousands of our people lived in Dim-la-ham't. No other villages were known at that time and very little was known about the rest of this country. Our people had no need to travel because there, at the foot of S'tig-aw-den (Rocher de Boule) the life was rich and easy. Our great river, k'Shaen, brought a wealth of salmon past pur doors, mountain goats and groundhogs and other animals gave us our meat and clothing. And on those wide grass flats and lower hills, berries yielded harvests much larger than in this time.

We had no outside enemies and no fear of attack. Under wise chiefs our strength was very great. We believed that nothing could harm us and that our children would possess this land forever. We did not know that when suffering and the great sadness fell upon us, our own foolish one s would be the cause; we did not know that because of these, many innocent people would be brought to starvation and death. Our storehourses overflowed with food, the sickness of today were unknown, our many children were happy and full of health, our life was good. This was our paradise on earth, this was indeed our Golden Age.

The Flood began with unceasing months of rain. Under wise leadership our people prepared to meet this trial. Rafts were built which would carry many people and much food on each. As water flooded the valley we floated among the hills. When these were covered, we floated among the tops of the mountains until at last only the peak of S'tig-aw-den was left. Many, alas, were drowned, and many others died the slow death of hunger.

However, in time, the water dropped and our rafts floated lower against the side of the mountain, just as today, when fishing at the coast, we move our boats farther out when the tide is dropping. The sun gave us his face again, grass and trees sprang up, birds and animals returned, and at last our beloved Dim-la-ham't was free of water. We rebuilt our big houses and our salmon traps, and after some anxious years our life again was good. Many children were born to us, our wealth increased. Why shpuld we not believe that peace and plenty were to be ours forever?

I would not have you think that all our people grew proud and careless in their manner of living because the good times were with us once more. Many did not. But among the young men and maidens were some who thought lightly of their elders' teaching. These young ones went their own way and turned their backs on what had gone before. They had proud hearts and did not show respect. What happened next will show you what I mean.

One fine summer morning a group of our young men set out on a goat hunt. Goats were abundant on the sides of S'tig-aw-den and our young men were skilled hunters. They hunted with spears, and in this fashion:

As you yourselves know, goats climb at the first sign of

danger. When they are high they feel safe, so they seldom look up. As much as possible, they keep to certain trails along the ledges and around the cliffs. Our young hunters knew these trails so, before they showed themselves, two of the best spearsmen crept around the band of goats and hid themselves at either side of the trail the goats would follow. As the line of goats climbed past, these two killed many, for their spears were of the best and their eyes and arms were sure.

Imagine the feasting and rejoicing around the young hunters' camp that night. There were many stories told and there was much laughter. At the height of the fun, some of the young men forgot themselves. They dressed themselves in the heads and skins of the goats they had killed and put on a dance around the fire.

Now this would have been proper enough had the young men kept their fun within limits, had they shown proper respect toward the spirits of the goats they had killed. But they did not. One excess led to another, until they were prancing and banging their heads together, the spiked horns clicking in time to their prancing, the skins flapping in a most life-like manner as they strutted and pranced. I tell you, the whole affair became a sorry mockery. They made the mountain goat seem a foolish creature, fit only to be laughed at. The young men around the fire rolled on the moss from laughter at the show the dancers were putting on.

But there was one who did not laugh. This young man, whose name was Back-taw-mix, had been well trained as a child. Although strong and free from fear, he knew the need to show respect toward the spirits of all animals, fish and birds whose flesh is eaten by humans. At first he warned his friends to stop, to consider

what they were doing. His advice was greeted with loud-mouthed laughter. He turned his back on the dancing, spread his robe beside the fire and went to sleep.

When he opened his eyes, the fun was over, the fire was low and the night wind went through the tree-tops with a low, sad sound. Then he heard another sound. It came from high cliffs behind the camp--a thin, crying sound, like the sobbing of a lost child. Bach-taw-mix knew it was the cry of a goat kid, lost and calling for its mother. No doubt its mother had been killed in the hunt. The rest of the goats had climbed far up the mountain. Without his help, the baby goat would die.

Bach-taw-mix did not sleep much for the rest of the night. His heart went out to the motherless young thing. And as the night mist lifted, he saw the small, white figure on a ledge hundreds of feet up. The dancers and their friends slept on, but Bach-taw-mix got up, for his heart told him he must help the little one.

But it would be a dangerous climb. If his foot slipped or his strength failed, he would be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. He strengthened himself with some of the freshly-killed meat, put a lump of the fat inside his shirt in case he tired and needed more food, then he began his climb.

Daylight was spreading over the valley of Dim-la-ham't far below, and the high snows had the first sunlight on them, by the time the brave young man reached the ledge. He put out his hand, and the little one trotted to him, licking his face and crying. He put it across his shoulder and climbed still higher, to the edge of the snowfield. His heart was touched by the

trusting way the little one nestled against him, resting its soft chin across his shoulder and making its helpless, baby-goat noises.

Bach-taw-mix's heart was heavy with pity. But it was happy too, for soon he saw the rest of the goats at the top of a snow-slide, looking down and watching him. He carried the little one to the bottom of the slide and set its feet on the trail. It felt cold, so he rubbed it with the fat. At his side lay a pile of loose rocks with red dust on them. An idea came to him.

"I will make you so we will know each other again," Bach-taw-mix said. "I will see your red coat, then I will know not to kill you, when your are big and I am hunting here for meat." He watched the little one climb toward the waiting goats, then with a light heart Bach-taw-mix started down.

The camp was awake when Bach-taw-mix returned to it, but he said nothing of where he had been. Late that day, the hunters packed their loads of meat into the village. All the people feasted that night. There were songs, dances and much story-telling, but Bach-taw-mix kept his story of the baby goat to himself. He was glad he had helped it. He did not suppose he would ever see it again, but if he did he would know it by its red coat. And so, in time, this hunt and the mocking of the spirits of the dead goats, was forgotten in Dim-la-ham't.

But high on the mountain were some who did not forget. Three or four years later, when the young hunters were men with wives and children, four strange visitors came to Dim-la-ham't. The time was the moon-month of Las-seh-we-hun, the month when k'Shaen is filling up with fish. Early one afternoon, while

most of the people rested in the shade after a busy morning at the salmon traps, four men in white robes were seen crossing the river by way of the salmon fence. They were met and shown to the chief's house.

"We are here to invite you and your important people to a great feast at our village," they explained.

Naturally the Dim-la-ham't chief felt honored. The four were seated among the leading chiefs and a feast of welcome was given in the big house. Smoked salmon, fat and berries, it was. Only a few people noticed that the four did not touch of the food placed before them. But these few who noticed were not among the important people. With the house crowded and much talk going on, one must have sharp eyes to notice that the offered food was not eaten. Also the strangers did this in such a way as not to draw attention to themselves, or give offence.

During the speeches which followed, the four strangers asked many questions about Dim-la-ham't and its people. They showed interest in everything, so much so that they were asked to remain for two days. They accepted this invitation. They were quiet men, they spoke but little, but certainly they let nothing escape their eyes.

And, to tell the truth, our great village was a sight worth seeing in those long-ago days. Not only the great houses, the riches of food and dress, the many salmon traps which in one day yielded food enough for hundreds of mouths. You know what a fine sight it is in summer, even today, around the place now known as Carnaby. Well, in those ancient times, it was still more beautiful. The flats were wider still, and greener;

berries and roots for eating grew everywhere. And at morning and evening when the smoke from many smoke-houses lay like a blue haze across the valley--

But to get on with my story. As I said, the four strangers had much to see in those two days. On the second day, in the afternoon, they strolled along the flats and lay down in the sun, near where a group of children were playing on the grass. One of these children, a little boy with eyes sharper than the rest, ran after a birchbark ball, and as he passed the four he noticed a curious thing. He did not stand and look, he saw it only from the corner of his eye, but it seemed to him that one of the strangers dropped his head when he thought no one saw him, and took a bite of grass.

Eating grass, when he will not eat our good food! the little boy thought. Now that is a very, very strange thing for any man to do. He threw back the ball then ran off, very excited, to tell his mother.

"What a way to talk!" his mother scolded. "Worst of all, about such important visitors. Let me hear no more of your nonsense. Don't repeat it to anyone. Now you run off and play."

So the little boy kept it to himself and returned to his play. Just the same, he would watch those four strangers more closely after this. However, the following morning the strangers said it was time they led the many people they had invited, away to their village. Not all the Dim-la-ham't people were going, of course, but most of the important people were. Those who were not thought how lucky their friends were to be invited.

The walk to the unknown village proved to be a long one but,

for some strange reason, no one felt tired. By the direction of the sun they seemed to travel toward S'tig-aw-den, and yet they never seemed to reach it. Instead, the feeling was that all day long they walked across a flat. A silver mist seemed to fill the air and they could not look far to get their bearings. Some were puzzled, but others thought little of it. In any case it was a pleasant walk.

About sun-down the long procession of Dim-la-ham't people came to a big flat. In the middle of the flat was only one house, but it was a very large one. This is all they saw--a big flat and a big house. Beyond, and to both sides, was emptiness. Yet the light was oddly clear and from a long way they saw people streaming from the door of the house and coming to welcome them.

Bach-taw-mix, fully grown now and a fine figure of a man, had walked all day behind the others. Now, over the heads of his friends, he saw people from the big house approaching. With these people he saw a young man whose skin was strangely red. This young man kept looking into the faces of the Dim-la-ham't people. He seemed to be looking for some special person.

Ahead, the people from the house took one after another of the Dim-la-ham't people by the arm and led them through the door. The red skinned young man spoke to no one until he saw Bach-taw-mix. Then he smiled and put his arm across Bach-taw-mix's shoulder.

"You are the one I have been waiting for," he said. "You are to be my guest."

By this time the great house was filled with people. "Come," the red skinned one said. "I have a special place for you." He

led Bach-taw-mix through the crowd, past the fire and to the back wall of the house. "This is to be your place, close to the wall. Remember--close to the wall."

After walking all day, it was to be expected that a feast would be set before the Dim-la-ham't people. Yet no food was in sight. Now, as evening deepened into night, was any brought out. Was it that the custom of this village differed from the custom of Dim-la-ham't? Surely a great feast would be made after they had rested. Whatever the reason, they were guests here and must now ask questions which might shame those who had invited them. So, after more waiting and still no sign of food, the Dim-la-ham't people spread their mats on the floor and settled themselves for sleep.

Bach-taw-mix was told to lie as close against the wall as he could get. "I will lie against you, on the outside," his new friend explained. "Whatever you do, like close against the wall."

Close to the wall. Why was this so important? Several times during the night this question came to Back-taw-mix. Why, the words sounded almost like a warning! Much as Bach-taw-mix trusted his friend, he could not make it out.

At midnight Back-taw-mix raised himself on his elbow. He saw a Dim-la-ham't man rise and go out. Before he returned, a second man stepped across the sleeping people and vanished through the doorway.

"Stay where you are, do not go out," his friend whispered in his ear.

Later during the night, Bach-taw-mix saw more people go out, yet none who went out came back in. However, the house was filled

with shadows, the fire was low, and these could have returned without him seeing.

At dawn Bach-taw-mix started to get up. His friend pushed him back. "Do not move," his friend whispered. "Remember my words--stay close to the wall."

When full light came and Bach-taw-mix could see all clearly, his heart jumped. He was in a terrifying place. The wall against which he lay was not a house wall at all. It was a wall of rock. He and his friend lay on a narrow ledge. Below them the cliff dropped straight down for hundreds of feet. The house was gone, all the Dim-la-ham't people were gone. Bach-taw-mix and his friend were alone on the face of the great mountain.

The red skinned young man stood and faced Bach-taw-mix. "You saved my life," he said solemnly. "Now, after many years, I will save yours."

Bach-taw-mix caught his breath. In the clear morning light he saw that his friend's hands were not hands at all. They were hoofs-- black, split hoofs of a mountain goat. He looked at his friend's feet. They had shoes on them, but the shoes were strange shoes indeed. They were shaped like the hind hoofs of a mountain goat.

"Wear these," the friend said, taking them off and putting them on Bach-taw-mix's feet. "Without them you will fall and be killed."

The friend then drew Back-taw-mix up beside him on that narrow shelf of rock. He pointed at a ledge below them. "I will jump down there and you must follow me. I will not let you fall.

my heart is strong for you. Do not be afraid. Are you ready?" With that the friend sprang down easily to the narrow place in the cliff.

"Jump!" he called up. Bach-taw-mix saw him brace himself. Bach-taw-mix jumped. His feet slipped a little but his friend was on the outside and kept him from falling.

Time after time the friend jumped, each time telling Bach-taw-mix where to place his feet and saving him each time he slipped. When at last they came to the bottom of the cliff, Bach-taw-mix could not believe that any human could have come down that high cliff alive.

Shoulder to shoulder, the two of them walked down the slope and into the edge of the timber. Far below they saw the smoke of Dim-la-ham't cooking fires drifting in the morning air. The time had come to say goodbye.

Bach-taw-mix never saw his mountain friend again. He lived to a great age and became a leader in the long-ago village of Dim-la-ham't. Often when stories were told around the fire, he told how his act of pity had been re-paid.

P A R T T W O

--: A Young Man Mocks :--

It was mockery of the worst kind which ended, for all time to come, the good life which was ours in Dim-la-ham't.

Many years had passed since the story I have just told you. Back-taw-mix had died and many chiefs walked behind his body to the place of burning. But the wisdom and honest lives of all these leaders kept the village strong.

The mockery which drove us forth, scattering us to far places along the banks and side valleys of k'Shaen, began with one young man. A small thing, you might say, and out of all keeping with the punishment it brought. The story is this:

That spring, and the summer which came after it, was a time of easy living. Game animals were many, the berries promised a heavy harvest, and people looked forward to a big run of salmon. As soon as the freshet passed, the salmon traps and fences were carried down, and the stakes driven into the river bottom by means of heavy flat stones in the hands of the young men. (At our old smoke-house lies such a stone today; but what man now living has the strength to swing it for hours on end?)

Soon the Dim-la-ham't traps were in place. And the morning the first of the returning spring salmon was caught, all hearts were happy in the houses. No fish could equal a fat spring salmon in its prime.

According to unbroken custom, this first salmon must be honored by being shared by all. The slices were cut and placed between the roasting sticks, and a loud-mouthed young man, Gow-gan, was appointed to march from house to house and give the slices to everyone.

Picture Gow-gan, swelled by his importance on this morning of rejoicing. See him with the slices of salmon held high on a large wooden dish, and feeling proud as he gave each person his or her share. He comes from one house with his chest stuck out, a troop of children at his heels. I am Gow-gan, he tells himself, all eyes follow me this day. People look up to me. You would have thought that he alone had caught the salmon; that he--and not the Great Chief Above--had created it.

On his way to the next house, he chanced to look up. A cloud hid the peak of S'tig-aw-den. Away up there snow was falling. This happens sometimes in our time when the summer is a cool one. We give no special meaning to it. But Gow-gan, puffed up with pride, took it on himself to rebuke the snow.

"You are stupid," he shouted, "don't you see it is summer time? Can't you see the salmon I carry, can't you see the berries ripening? If you had sense you would not show yourself in summer. Go away!"

Punishment for this mockery was swift. That night people wakened with cold and found great piles of snow under the smoke holes where, only a few hours ago, fires had burned brightly. The walls of the houses cracked with the cold. The song of k'Shaen was stilled. People waded through the snow to find their salmon traps locked in solid ice. Truly , a terrible thing had happened.

Leading men, such as my ancestor Tzee-aye, and Yahl-- a strong, heavy man with a quick temper-- met to talk over what could be done. All knew the people would starve and die if winter did not go away from Dim-la-ham't. Salmon lay under the ice, but who could catch them? Berries had formed on the bushes, but who could find and pick them? As the leading men talked thus on that dark morning, a man ran in with the news that Gow-gan was dead--frozen in his sleep. He had paid for his mockery with his life.

Day after day the snow kept falling. The houses were cold for want of firewood, food of all kinds was low. Hope died with the fires. Mothers wailed , and with their voices rose the hunger

cries of their children. Strong men sat helpless, none knowing what to do.

The chief, sitting in his darkened house, drew his robe closer around him. The long-ago story of the Flood came to his mind, but this was worse than any flood. He felt that he and his people were caught in some great trap, from which there was no escape. Looking up, he saw that the smoke hole was nearly closed with snow. And still the snow--the white death--came down.

A lump of snow broke from the edge of the hole and fell at his feet. Were his eyes playing tricks on him, or was that a blue jay perched on the edge of the smoke hole? Was he so weak from hunger that he saw things which were not there? He rubbed his eyes and looked closer. Yes, it was true! More wonderful still, the jay held a twig in its beak--and on the twig were green leaves and berries. Service berries, Saskatoons, they were, and nearly ripe. At the top of his voice he shouted for Tzee-aye, Yahl and the other leading men.

His hand trembled as he pointed up at the bird. "Is it true, or do I see a vision?" he asked them.

"It is true!" they cried out all together. Others, both men and women, crowded around with their starved faces lifted to the bird. The green twig was a message of hope, brought to them long after they had ceased to hope. For all knew jays do not travel far, that jays do not fly far south in winter. All knew that winter had not locked all the world in snow, only at Dim-la-ham't had winter come. Somewhere close, the summer sun shone, woods and grass were green, salmon were crowding home

from sea.

In the dark, cold house, plans of escape were quickly made. Young men were sent to dig out the canoes, packs were made up, family possessions gathered.

"I and mine will follow k'Shaen to the northward," Yahl declared. "Up there is my country, and I will keep it mine. I warn you not to follow."

"I and my family will follow the river downward," Tzee-aye said.

Other leading men decided to do the same. They would look for summer down the river. It was whispered that Yahl had a Secret Place, but many feared him because of his strength and quick temper. Years ago, after Yahl had killed a man in a quarrel, he had fled northward to this Secret Place. His Place-of-Hiding he called it, and where it was remained Yahl's secret.

And so, as each man made his plans, a feeling of hope returned. That hope was like fire in their hearts, it helped the people forget the bitter cold. The last good byes were said and, as they went their different ways, sorrow mingled with hope. For all knew that they were never to return. The great Dim-la-ham't, the place of beginning for all Gitkshan people, would be no more.

So it was that Gitkshan villages as far down river as Kitselas began. Some of the families went no farther than where the stream, flowing from the great Seguekla peak, mixed its milky water with the water of k'Shaen. Even there, they had put the snow and cold behind them. Others remained at what is now Kitwanga, while Tzee-aye and his family followed a smaller river to the north.

These last made the village of Kitwancool. So, along the big river and up its side valleys, the people of Dim-la-ham't made new homes. Their villages grew strong and multiplied. That was many,many thousands of years ago , yet even today, Dim-la-ham't stays in our minds like the memory of an old dream. Dim-la-ham't was our root, from which all grew. Even yet , its memory holds all Gitkshan people . When good times come, we rejoice together. In dark times, when our hearts are in a steep place, we share each other' sorrow.

P A R T T H R E E

--: New Country :--

In many ways, life was good in Kitwancool. Cedars, such as we had never found at Dim-la-ham't, grew along that valley, salmon came in plenty up the small river flowing from the lake, and bears--both black and grizzly--came to feast on them. Goats and groundhogs were on the mountains, and the valley was rich in fur.

Late one summer, Tzee-aye set out on a hunting trip. He went alone, for woods and mountains held no fears for him. He hunted eastward, for in that direction lay his hunting grounds. That night he made his camp high in the timber. The weather was good, the country pleasant and on the morrow he went farther to see what lay beyond the mountains.

Toward sun-down he made a great discovery. The small creek he had followed westward joined a river somewhat larger than the

river from the lake at Kitwancool, and in it were more salmon than he had seen in any one place before. At the mouth of this new creek, the river looked solid with them. They almost crowded one another out of the water. Tzee-aye named the creek Dhis-nee-din because so many fish made him think of fat food boiling in a pot. (White men now call this creek McCully creek).

Tzee-aye speared some fish and made ready to stay the night. Tomorrow he would discover more of this fine new country. He gathered some dry wood and was starting to make fire when he looked up and saw a man rushing at him along the narrow bar of gravel. The man was big, and strong, and angry. Tzee-aye knew he must fight for his life. He took up his club and charged the stranger.

The two were evenly matched. As the stranger raised his club, Tzee-aye grabbed his arm and held it. The stranger could not hit him. Nor could Tzee-aye hit the stranger because his arm was also being held. Then began a mighty wrestling match, each struggling to pull free and strike down the other. Back and forth over the gravel they strained and pulled, until at last the stranger grunted, "I know you. Are you not Tzee-aye, my neighbor in the days of Dim-la-ham't?"

Tzee-aye's eyes opened wide. "You are Yahl?"

"I am Yahl. This is my valley, my Hiding Place. But let us drop our clubs and talk this over."

They did so, but keeping their weapons close to hand because the feeling was still not altogether good between them.

"I do not know how you found Ghis-ba-yawks, my Hiding Place," Yahl said. "I want it all to myself, but since we are both strong men, nothing will be gained by going to war over it."

So Yahl made a bargain with Tyzee-aye, and this is the way of it. Tzee-aye was to hold the river on both sides, from Dhis-nee-din to An-ga-get'hn, which is today Seventeen Mile at the head of the canyon. (In this canyon Yahl had a winter fishing place. Because , as he lay on the ice, he dropped mouthfuls of chewed dry salmon to bring the fish, he named that place An-ga-get'hn.) Tzee-aye's grounds went all across the valley, mountain to mountain. Yahl held the river from the canyon to its mouth.

While all this was being settled, Yahl, a big-hearted man in many ways, confessed to being lonely all these years. He said it would be good to have a neighbor, and one he had always held in respect. The two camped together for a number of days. Tzee-aye gave Yahl news of other familes the deep snow had driven away from Dim-la-ham't. Yahl told of rich hunting and fishing to be had here. It was plain that Ghis-ba-yawks was a valley of plenty.

At the end of their days together, Tzee-aye went back over the hills to Kitwancool and brought his large family back with him. This valley has been our home ever since.

P A R T F O U R

--: Lost Princess :--

It is thousands of years ago since Tzee-aye and Yahl made this bargain. That bargain has been kept. Our family has lived in this valley so long that it has become a part of us, and we

feel we are a part of it. When we are away from it for long, we feel an emptiness. It draws us back. I know that after a summer's fishing at the coast, I feel younger and happy in my heart when I see Kispiox again. If you also have this feeling, you will understand the sadness and the courage of the story I am now going to pass on to you.

Our family had lived here for many hundreds of years. Mothers and fathers grew old, became grandparents, died; more children were born and grew up and the story of our family went on and on. Kispiox and other Gitkshan villages grew larger, canoes traveled the river and out into the sea. Tshimshean people came from the coast to trade with us. But sometimes they also came with evil in their hearts.

At the time of this story Gish-pa-lowits was a Tshimshean village near the mouth of this river. (Not far from what is now Tyee). The head chief of that village led a war party up river and attacked us. Among those this chief took prisoner was a young girl of our family. She was not yet old enough to have been given her grown-up name. But because she had the rank of princess she wore the head band, "tzee-hoo", which told her rank. Instead of killing her as he did some other prisoners, the Gish-pa-lowits chief told his men to treat her well. A princess, and a pretty one, would be worth a lot in trade.

After the fighting down in front of the houses at the slough was over, and after the war canoes had gone, our people came back and mourned. They believed they would never see their little girl again. Perhaps she was already dead. The sorrow of our people was deep.

The girl was a prisoner at Gish-pa-yowlits for two years, and very often her heart was heavy for her people. There, among strangers, she learned to speak the Tsimpshean language, and came to forget much of her own. The people were not unkind to her but at times she felt lonely and sad. When by herself she sometimes made up little-girl songs about her lost home, and sang them softly to herself. Always, at the back of her mind, was a longing to escape and be with her family again.

But for many, many years that chance did not come. After she grew to womanhood she was traded to a chief of Old Masset, who carried her across the sea and took her for his wife. Her Haida husband gave her a Haida name, "Tzin-jans." More years passed, during which Tzin-jans gave birth to three fine sons. her first-born she named Guyum-bugh, which is Tsimpshean for a killer whale spouting. The second she named "Am-se-nekt", also Tsimpshean and meaning to put a new fin on the back. The third son was "La-ah-yowk" which has the meaning of a long floating end-up in the water and turning back and forth with the tide.

Just here I should tell you how our women dressed in those times. Tzin-jans, being a woman of rank, would wear her hair long, with a head band rather low across her brow. These head bands were beautifully woven of goat wool or fine cedar bark, with the design worked into them in threads of white caribou skin. Very pretty designs were worked into the weaving. Her cloak, or cape, would be of marten, nicely trimmed with ermine or contrasting fur. Beneath the cloak she would wear a short dress, belted at the waist and without sleeves.

So picture her, a grown woman in a Queen Charlotte village,

mother of three strong sons and with her household about her. Her husband was respected in the village and treated her well. Was she homesick at times, even after so many years? I think so. Because after her husband died her thoughts turned strongly toward this place and her people.

We have reason to believe she was a gentle woman, kind in all things. For an unkind person can seldom win the affection of a wild creature. We know that she had tamed an eagle and that it liked her and trusted her. It had its own perch inside her house. It was free to go and come. By day it flew along the beaches looking for food, but at night it flew home to her. Sometimes it brought her a salmon it had caught. She talked to the eagle as she would to a human, and she believed the eagle understood her.

"Oh, for my homeland!" she whispered to the eagle one day. "I am no longer young. It is far, far away, across the sea. Could you help me find it?"

The eagle's bright eyes showed that it understood her. It nodded its head.

"All I can remember of my village is that it lies a great way off, across many miles of water. Can you fly that far?"

Again Eagle nodded.

Tzin-jans stroked its white head. "Across the water, toward the rising sun, two great rivers run between high mountains to the sea. As you fly, k'Shaen, my home river, will like below you on your right. Up this river is a canyon with high totem poles. The river runs strong through this canyon. I was a prisoner the day I saw that village, our war party did not land there. But I have always remembered the high poles and the canyon.

Can you find out where that canyon is?"

Eagle nodded.

"My home is up the river from the canyon. How far up I do not know, because I lay in the bottom of a war canoe, tied hand and foot, and could see little of the way they brought me. But if only I can get to the canyon, I will search until I see my home once more."

Eagle was Tzin-jan's only hope, yet she knew she was putting him in danger. "Fly high above the reach of arrows," Tzin-jans told him. "Your eyes see far, so keep to the mountain tops. No enemy can kill you there."

Early next morning Eagle's perch was empty. Tzin-jan watched for him day after day. Her heart was in a steep place because of what she had done, then late one afternoon she saw him sailing in on his strong wings. He settled on the roof and hopped down to the ground beside her.

"Did you find the canyon?" she asked quickly.

Eagle nodded.

Tzin-jans fed her pet well that night and from then on her plans were all of home.

Much food was needed for the journey, and her three willing sons were of great help in this. With their help she dried seaweed and halibut, cockles, clams and abalone. A new sail was woven of cedar bark, a broad ~~cedar~~ steering paddle made, big cedar packing boxes packed with the dried food and their lids lashed with cedar rope to keep them dry at sea. Her dead husband's coppers, which stood for wealth and high rank in those times, were also to be taken.

The day of leaving came. Friends and relatives helped to carry the big sea-going canoe down the beach to the water. The boxes and all the belongings of Tzin-jans and her sons were stowed aboard. The last goodbyes were said and soon our princess and her three sons were sailing toward Rose Spit with a strong breeze behind them.

Where was Eagle? you ask. He was on his perch in the high bow, acting as their pilot. As each long, following sea lifted the canoe, he looked miles ahead. Now and then a salmon jumped , and once a gull sailed overhead, screaming at him, but not once did he take his eyes from the course the canoe must follow. In those times we had no compasses, but Eagle's yellow beak was as good as any compass. If the canoe got off course, his beak pointed to the right direction and then the steering paddle brought the canoe into line. By night-fall the land was out of sight astern, and no land showed ahead. But Tzin-jans trusted Eagle and told her sons to sail on through the night.

When the sky ahead grew light, Tzin-jans was heartened to see the peaks of mountains against the eastern sky. The south-west breeze picked up , and the long canoe tore through the water, leaving a wake of foam behind it.

Steadily the line of shore drew near. Eagle turned his head and they changed course to southward, then east again, along the shore of a low island. This was what we now call Dundas island. It had a village , and as the canoe drew abeam of it, the people ran down, waving their arms and shouting.

"Where are you from?" they shouted again and again. They wanted the canoe to land, but wise Eagle did not turn his head ×

Late that day the wind dropped, the tide was against them and they paddled to a small bay behind an island to wait. For anchor they used one of the heavy coppers, let down on a cedar bark rope. After eating and resting, Tzin-jans said it was time they went on. But Guyum-bugh could not lift the anchor. He pulled until it seemed the rope must break, and the precious copper lost.

Tzin-jans drew a mat over her head and put her face close to the water. "A big devil fish has its arms around our copper!" she cried. "What are we to do? It will be a sad loss to cut the rope and go on without it."

Guyum-bugh stood up. "The copper is ours. No devil fish will rob us of it." Holding his knife in his teeth, he dived over the side of the canoe. Deeper and deeper he swam until the others lost sight of him. Suddenly the anchor came free . Guyum-bugh's head broke water. The devil fish was dead. Guyum-bugh had cut it to pieces.

As darkness fell it was plain they were well inside the river mouth. "But is this my river, is this k'Shaen?" Tzin-jans wondered. After so many long years away, she could not be sure.

Eagle nodded, and they rested that night at Ky-axe, near Tyee.

The Ky-axe chief made them comfortable in his house and there Tzin-jans heard Tsimpshean spoken by everyone. Tsimpshean was not the same as her own language, nor was Ky-axe at all like her home village, but her heart was glad. She was sure now that Eagle had brought her in the right way, and that night she sang

her song for the first time. This is the song that has come down to us—my family's song, and now my song.

From Ky-axe the river was strong against them, in places so strong that the canoe must be lined along the bank of the river. Two of the sons pulled on the rope, Tzin-jans steered, and her third son fended off the bow as they worked their way along the steep rocks.

Days later, as they worked the canoe past an island and up a riffle, Tzin-jan noticed Eagle's eyes. They were fixed on something too far ahead for human eye to see. But in an eddy above the riffle, while all rested, Tzin-jan stood, shaded her eyes with her hand and looked ahead.

"I see tall totem poles against a canyon wall!" she told her sons. "This is the place." Her voice trembled and tears filled her eyes and wet her tired face. Eagle, her true friend, had set her feet on the way toward her homeland!

An hour or so later, they got the canoe through the small passage on the south side of Little Canyon. The shore in front of Kitselas village was lined with people. Soon Tzin-jans and her sons stepped ashore and were made welcome by Chief Nee-anda-ook, (the late Walter Skulsh's ancestor.)

That night, around the fire, Tzin-jans told her story in song. Her song has lived in our hearts ever since. The deep feelings of the heart are in it--sorrow and gladness, fear and hope, despair and ~~courage~~ struggle, loneliness and courage.

"Stay with us, be of our people here," the great Chief, Nee-anda-ook, pleaded. Like all around the fire, his heart was touched by the sad beauty of the song.

Tzin-jans thanked him but shook her head. "My years are many," she answered gently. "I have the heart-hunger for my homeland, and I must go."

When, after days of work, they came to Kitwanga, Chief Ga-wk (a distant relative of ours) gave a feast in honor of Tzin-jans and her sons.

Although an old woman by now, and very tired, Tzin-jans voice remained clear and sweet. At Kispiox , when she sang her song, the eyes of many who mourned her for dead, flooded with tears. They never forgot the sweetness of her voice, nor the sorrow and dangers which its singer had come through.

And so, at last, little Tzin-jans was home. The waiting and the long dream were ended. Her three fine sons married into our village, and Eagle had an honored place among us.

Tzin-jans did not live long after her return. By the time of next year's leaves, her spirit was at rest. Her life had been well lived and at the last she was glad her time had come to go. She wants us to remember her song forever. And to sing it as I will sing it to you now.

-- The End --