

"So Hago"

By Maria Bolanz

"SO HAGO . . . SO HAGO . . . SO HAGO . . ."

"Return . . . Return . . . Return . . ."

(Continued from last week, the poignant story of a Tlingit woman, Chin Kley, separated from her infant son at his birth and dying from tuberculosis in a hospital far from the spruce forests and snow-capped mountains of her homeland. Her loneliness and homesickness impels her to write letters to her little son, telling him of the rich heritage of the Tlingit people.)

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In old times, it was only high-caste people who knew the story of the Raven, because only they had time to learn it.

The Raven was really a very great waves, which are still there. He sent an invitation to the Killer Whale chief, and he ate with them under the sea. He noted they seemed to live on hair

clever fellow, and he traveled all over the world in order to do these things. It is said that while traveling he rocked his canoe just outside of Sitka and caused

(Continued on Page 13)

● "So Hago"

(Continued from Page Two)

seal meat, fat and oil; and the chief was named Gonaquade't. He visited the fish people under the sea, the Land Otter People, the Goose People and the Porcupine People and learned many things from them. In his travels he met a sculpin who claimed to be older than Raven; so placed him in the sky where he is still known as Pleiades.

"He made the birds and he said to Robin, 'You will make people happy by letting them hear your song. You will sing well.'

"He said to Lukan, a bird that lives far out on the ocean, 'You will live far out on the ocean on the lonely rocks. You will seldom be seen ashore.'

"He came to the hummingbird and said, 'A person will enjoy seeing you. If he sees you but once he will want to see you again.'

"And to the eagle, he said,

'You will be very powerful and fly above other birds. Your eyesight will be without equal.' Then he put talons on the eagle.

"But the Raven was also a very sly fellow, and because of this he played many tricks on people as well as animals. He came once to an abandoned camp where a piece of jade lay on the ground. Far out in the sea he saw a large spring salmon jumping, and he wanted to catch it and eat it. The Raven called to the salmon and said, 'You know what this green stone is saying to you? It is saying, "You thing with the ugly back, you thing with the filthy gills, come ashore." And as the salmon came ashore to fight the stone, the Raven struck it and killed it with a stalk of wild celery. Because Raven made jade talk to salmon, people

have since made stone axes, picks and spears of it.

"Another time, Raven was hungry. He saw a sea gull fly onto the water and seize a large herring. The gull brought it back to the shore, but wouldn't give any to Raven. Raven saw a heron nearby, and went over to him and said, 'That sea gull is calling you bery bad names.' Then he went to the sea gull and told him that the heron was insulting him. He returned to the heron and told him he would help him thrash the gull. "You must kick him in the stomach. Do as I say, and you will win." The heron did just as he was told; he kicked the gull in the stomach and the large herring came out. The Raven quickly swallowed it, saying, 'Just for the Raven.'

"There was, because of some things that had been done to displease Nas-ca'Ki-yel, a great flood in all the world. The

water rose to cover most of the mountain tops, and the people and the animals fled upward to the last peaks. Raven hung onto a cloud until the waters receded. He knew for certain that the waters were going down when he flew over the sea and found a piece of kelp. Then animals and people started coming down; but of the people that remained, Raven turned them into stones.

"Raven made man again out of the leaves (needles) of a spruce tree, and Raven said to man, 'When the tide goes out, your food will be there, and when the tide comes in your food will be in the forest.'

"He made all races of man: Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit, but each with a different language. Again he went among all nations of Alaska, telling them what to do ... but Nas-ca'Ki-yel ... they never saw.

"It was after the flood that Raven's mother died, and he

said, 'My mother is dead. I am going to beat drums this And he gave a feast in her honor, and danced at this feast with the chilkat blanket owned by Gonaquade't.

"The people asked Raven about death, and he sent a woman into the other world to show her it existed. She went along the Spirit Trail and was ferried across the river to the Ghost Country. The spirits there told her they were very hungry and cold and thirsty, so when she returned she told the people to send the dead food, and to burn their bodies when they died."

It is said that when the Raven calls to you before the sun is up, it is the call of death. He beckons you to follow after him along the Spirit Trail and enter into the land of the Great Spirit.

It was Nas-ca'Ki-yel who said to Raven, "If you speak of your enemies in a nice way ... you will be able to stand alone."