

# "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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As I lie here resting I so often wonder how it all began and why. And so shall you, probably, some day do the same. I can only tell you as it was told to me . . . my son . . . told to all of us.

It was in those mysterious times when the brave young Raven Itca'k still walked among man, using the cunning of his mind and the cleverness of his Spirit to bring good for man and animals by strange and undiscernible ways. He was the grandson of Great-One-Who-Lived-at-the-Head-of-the-Nass, Nas-ca'Ki-yel. He, Itca'k, had already made the world and man. At that time all the people lived at the Nass River. But the world was still in darkness and Raven wanted light for his people.

There was a chief who, it was said, had a box containing the light, and so Raven planned to get that box. The chief had a young daughter, and one day

Raven turned himself into a pine needle and floated on the water in a creek, and when the daughter came to drink she swallowed the pine needle and she became pregnant. When her time was completed she bore her child; and because the chief loved his daughter, he loved the grandchild and would do all to please him and make him happy.

One day the child was crawling over the grizzly bear-skins in the corner of the room when he spied the box containing light. He cried for it, and he cried so long and so hard that the chief could not deprive him of it, so he gave him the box to play with. Immediately Raven seized the box and started to fly out through the hole in the top of the roof. But the chief seized Raven by his white tail feather (up to this time he had been white) and held onto him, for an instant, in the smoke of the fire. It was in that moment that the Raven was turned black.

But at last the Raven pulled away, crying "Ga." And as he flew he opened the box, and the sun and the moon and the stars fell out and went into place in the sky.

There was a man named Ganuk who was the keeper of all the fresh water. Now Raven formed a certain plan, and he went to visit Ganuk. They were talking, and Ganuk asked Raven, "Where were you born?" and Raven said, "I was born before the world was known." This puzzled Ganuk greatly, so Raven sent him out to ponder over it. While he was gone, Raven stole the fresh water. He carried it off in his mouth, and he made the Stikine, Taku, Chilkat, Alsek and Copper rivers, and also all other large rivers. The small drops of water that fell from his mouth became the salmon creeks, and these he filled with the eggs of salmon and trout; and he placed a woman at the head of all salmon creeks. That

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is why the salmon go up the creeks.

He put the tides in order by placing a woman in charge of their rising and falling and he gave her her servant, the mink. He also made the world as it now stands on the strong foreleg of a beaver. The old woman underneath attends to this, and when she is hungry she shakes it, and the people must put grease in the fire for her. Raven tried many things to hold up the world, but he found the foreleg of the beaver best.

"Raven appointed a hollow tree eastward of Sitka as the place where the sun was to turn back north. He made the west wind, and he said to it, 'You shall be my son's daughter, for no matter how hard you shall blow you shall hurt no one.' And he made the north wind, and a house for it with the sides all hanging with ice, and placed both the wind and the house on top of a high mountain in the

north. And the soft south wind and the wind of the east that carries rain, he also made.

"And Raven took red cedar bark and some white stones which are found on the beaches, and he put fire into them so that there could be forever afterwards fire all over the world.

He made all animals, and sometimes changed their shapes, like the dog, which was once human but was too quick, and Raven pushed him down by the neck and said, "You shall have four legs." He made vermin and gnats and mosquitoes. He said to the land otter, "You will live in the water as well as on land, and whenever a canoe capsizes with people in it, you will save them and make them one of your people." Thus it is when people who have been taken away by the land otters return home, they become shamans; therefore it was through the land otter that shamans were first known. It is said that shamans can see each other by means of the Land Otter Spirit, whereas ordinary people cannot."