

SLAVE INDIAN LEGENDS

by

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I have been asked to write, by way of introduction, an account of how the foregoing folk-tales were collected.

I wintered at Fort Simpson, N.W.T., at the confluence of the Liard River with the MacKenzie, and worked in close association with the Slave Indians there.

Nearly all of them speak English, and many speak French, either as an inheritance from the early voyageurs and French-speaking traders, or through the teaching of the R.C. mission schools at Fort Providence and Fort Simpson. This is in addition to their native Slave - the use of which is markedly on the decline among the younger generation. Frequently, in normal conversation among themselves, they speak a loose mixture of the three languages, though English is more widely used for talk about work, trading and amusement, French for all these and religious matters too, and Slave for the more esoteric discussions of gossip, (often calumnious), hunting, and trapping, superstition, and the expression of their rather Lavatorial sense of humour.

Naturally, it was among those for whom the indigenous language is the most usual mode of communication that I found the first hints of any knowledge of original folklore. Allan Tosh, a young Scot who left the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company in order to study Agriculture, first told me of some of the Indians, whose confidence and approbation he had won, and whom he thought might know some folk-tales.

One of them brought a dead squirrel, and indicating its white-rimmed eyes, said that in "the olden times," the squirrel had wept in misery at its discomfort during "the long time of cold" so much so that all squirrels ever since have had this white rim on their eyelids. I asked him to tell me more, but he could only relate a few disconnected incidents

which I later found were part of the account of how the world began. I enquired widely among transient bush-dwelling Indians temporarily in the settlement, but found only a very few who had any vague knowledge of the old folk-tales.

I was at first tempted to believe that the lack of success in my enquiries was due mainly to a native reticence on the part of the Indians, together with a shy fear that their stories would arouse only ridicule among white people, but later became convinced that this was not so.

I talked with the Doctor's Interpreter (a man who, for twenty-five years has worked for the doctor attached to the district hospital situated in Fort Simpson) - but though he knows much about all the Indians living in an extensive area, he was not only unable to refer to any possibly fruitful source of folk-tales, but disclaimed any knowledge of their existence. This may have been an attempt on the part of the long acculturated metis to affect sophistication, but in the case of this particular individual, I think not.

I realized that knowledge of the original folk-tales is now limited to a very few Slave Indians.

I finally made the acquaintance of a man whose behavior varied between that of a recluse and occasional rather wistful gregariousness, who willingly visited my cabin, and in time told as many of the folk-tales as he could remember. (I later found, by comparison with the accounts given to me by a more reliable, much less acculturated source - an old bush-dwelling woman who spoke only Slave - that those of my visitor were in some cases gobbled and confused).

He it was, however, who led me to the source of the bulk of this incomplete collection. When his memory of the tales failed him, he offered to go with me to the dwelling of the previously mentioned old woman, who is the mother of his brother's wife.

We walked to the cabin, back-packing our sleeping and cooking equipment, and found the dwelling high on the south bank of the Liard.

There we stayed, and as I was extremely fortunate in winning the favour of the old woman and her daughter, was able to spend two days and a night, writing almost continuously, my guide and his sister-in-law taking turns to translate as the folk-tales were poured out.

The elderly widow is crippled and unable to use her legs, moving only by pulling herself along with her hands. Her daughter told me that it was her delight to gather the children around her, near the stove, on winter nights, and recount these stories of "the olden times."

She uses the same words and phraseology with each re-telling, of course, and performs the same motions and gestures at the relevant points in the story, such as the swaying of the body to lend cadence to a passage, a chopping motion as if with an axe, and a tensing gesture as if drawing a bow.

I have used the present tense when referring to the old woman, but at the time of writing, I am by no means certain of her continued survival. Though cheerful, she was advanced in years and decrepitude and may have died since I left the settlement.

I trust this is not so, as I feel sure that she knows more folk-tales than I was able to collect. Moreover, I had perforce to work through interpreters, whereby something is inevitably lost and was not able even, to make a word-by-word transcript of what she said in the original language.

Such photographs as I was able to take were with inadequate equipment, using daylight, vapour-lamp light, and guess-work.

The arrival from the trap-line of my absent host and his eldest son curtailed further collection work, the Indian family's attention now being turned to less academic pursuits.

Additions were made to the collection during the winter, but much remains to be done.

In addition to the Saga of Yampa Déja, the collector noted another culture-hero cycle which appears to record incidents in the early history of

the Slave Indians and its relationship with other tribes. As June Helm MacNeish has pointed out* the less sophisticated bush Indians even yet, go in some fear of somewhat vaguely specified enemies. The folk-tales described incidents in the warfare of the Slaves with other tribes and follow the careers of prominent leaders who rose amongst them. Since the Slave Indians have been under observation, they have never displayed any outstanding belligerent traits and though the Yampa Déja Saga seems to be purely legendary, it would appear that the guerilla warfare of the earlier Slaves, as described in the adventures of Ehtsontsia, must definitely have some basis of fact. The rather prolonged story of Ah Nontin describes a domestic intrigue of a triangular involvement not unfamiliar to readers of the literature of our western culture.

* Journal of American Folklore, vol. 67, no. 264, April-June, 1954, p. 185.

At the beginning of the world it was winter all the time. Always cold. Ashes falling like snow. The world burning all over it. People made caves in the ground and by lakes and lived there and cut as many young willows as they could and threw them into the water. Then when the fire passes, green trees. For everything was burned.

They took bark of willows to make fish nets with an awl. They travelled to where trees grew again out of the muskeg. That is how they came together, marten, fox, lynx, dogs and beaver. It started to snow again and the trees disappeared beneath the snow. They wondered if ever they would have summer again, for even the highest trees were covered. They sought a way to help each other. The squirrel said that he had an idea but there were other animals bigger than he and they would not listen. The squirrel began to cry incessantly, and to this day the squirrel has a white rim around his eyes caused by his tears. He was so cold that he slept close to the fire and scorched his back, so that all squirrels, even today, have that brown scorch-mark down the middle of their back. In the morning, the animals found him so pitiful and hungry, (for there were no nuts for him to eat), that they said, "Let us go and find a warmer world."

They began to travel.

At last, quite suddenly, they came up against a huge wall like rock, but it wasn't rock. They walked along it until they came to a hole. First the lynx rushed to get through but he bumped his face and that is why the lynx now has a flat face. Next the wolf said, "Let me go. I am cleverer. I won't flatten my nose." So he tried and he smashed his face, pushing up his lips in that permanent snarl which wolves still have, and his nose was pushed up, so that all wolves have turned-up noses today. Then the weasel tried to get through the hole, and he was successful. On the other side he called back and said, "Here on this side it is summer with trees and green leaves and flowers." He scratched at the wall and the animals on the cold side did the same. Then they all went through.

Keeping together, they travelled a long way, until at last they came to a big lake, with a group of large skin tents on its edge. They were timid and did not know how to approach, so first they went to the

beach and split halfway down, the paddles of the canoes so that they would break in the heat of the chase, and the paddlers would be stranded in the middle of the lake. Another of the group made a moose with the stump root of a windfall tree. It started to swim and the people from the tents saw it and shouted, "Go-lon, a moose!" The people from the tents started out after the moose leaving one fellow in the big tent. He was called "Go-T'thi-thon," which means "Stupid."

All the animals went into his tent while the other people were out on the lake. Inside, hanging down, were five big moosehide bags. ("Ama" -- the narrator, shows the number on her fingers. "Ama" means "Mother.") The group asked the guardian what these bags were. Go-T'thi-thon said, "This is the north wind, Chin K'eh. This is the northeast wind, Kamba t'son. (This is a bad wind, so they called it a bad name -- ptarmigan excreta.) Next he said, "This is the south wind, "Sa-Jin" - "from under the sun." Then there is Go-Ko, the fever wind -- it brings sickness. Finally they asked, "What is this bag?" "This," said Go-T'thi-thon, "is the warm wind, Kot T'eh, which brings the spring." They grabbed Go-Ko, and breaking it open, spilled it all over The Stupid One. He became sick and could not shout. They gave Kot T'eh to the swan but he sprained a calf muscle and could not go any farther. So the Hell Diver (duck) took it and they all ran to the hole, chasing him. Before the Other People got there he had climbed out on the cold side, untied the bag and sprinkled its contents around, and the summer came to the cold land. In the chase to the hole, the marten was the last man through, and the People of the Tents caught hold of his hind part, and his friends pulled on him from the other side. Finally, the animals pulled him through to them. But to this day the marten has a long body and his ribs are wide apart, as a result.

Now the snow melted until there was only water and sky to be seen. Again the animals were in a predicament and they cried again in their misery. The beaver said, "I'll dive down for land," and down he went. He disappeared for a long time and finally floated limply to the surface. He had a small piece of earth in his hand but, being unconscious, allowed the choppy water to wash it away. Next the muskrat dived for land. He came up with a small piece of earth and root, and they put it on the water. As it floated, it grew larger and larger until they could

all climb up on to it. Now the animals began to argue as to how long the seasons were to be. The beaver said that he wanted as many winter months as there were scales on his tail so that he could stay comfortably that time under the water. Finally the frog spoke up and said, "You all wish to have your way, but all of you have fur, and I am naked." All this time you have had your way. Now I'll have mine. I get very cold, so I say that we shall have only five months of cold weather, when I shall be asleep." The beaver was angry and cried out, "If you think that is to be, then all rocks will float and sticks will sink." The frog replied, "If you think that is so, try and you shall see." And the beaver flung a rock and a stick onto the water. The rock sank and the stick floated, and so it has been ever since.

The leader among these people was Yampa Déja,* who was very wise. He said that it was right that the seasons should be thus, because if there were as many months of winter as the beaver has scales on his tail the water would freeze right to the ground and then he would never survive the winter. He would die. The frog thought Yampa Déja spoke wisdom. Thus, he decreed it would be. (In this way, it was decided that the seasons would be as they are now.)

All this time the land was growing ever larger and Yampa Déja set out to walk around it. It took more and more days of travel to walk around, and from then on Yampa Déja was forever moving round and round the world.

* Yampa Déja means "always moving."

Once, long ago, at the mouth of the Nahanni River where it runs into the Liard, there was a family of giant beaver. There were two huge beavers and four smaller ones. They had a great lodge at this place, which is now called the Nahanni Butte (a large mountain), and on the Liard there is a long calm stretch, near the Little Butte, which was the feeding place of the giant beavers. They were so large that they were a danger to the people, the splash of their huge tails upsetting the canoes and many Indians were drowned. Once there were fifty warriors together in their canoe, for they were a war party, and they all were drowned with a single splash of a giant beaver's tail.

So, hearing of this, Yampa Déja cut down a birch tree and made a birch-bark canoe. He left his home at Virginia Falls on the Nahanni and paddled down-river to investigate. He climbed on to the top of the beaver lodge and thrust a huge pole down into it and broke it open. The beavers broke through the beaver dam, and that made the rapids on the Liard River. The big hole made by Yampa Déja's pole can still be seen on the summit of the Nahanni Butte. It is so deep that sometimes the Indians can drop down a stone and wait a very long time before they hear the splash.* Sometimes, however, they climb up and find it full of water. This augers good luck for the Indians and long life, success on his hunts, or victory for his war party.

The half of the mountain which he broke off when he poked the hole, Yampa Déja poled down-stream, pushing it with the current. That is how the Mackenzie Mountains were formed and it is why they run northwest.

* The narrator seriously averred that sometimes the splash of a falling rock would not be heard until an hour after it had been released at the mouth of the hole. I believe this to be purely a linguistic difficulty in expressing in English a very long time.

Yampa Déja pursued the beavers. Two of the younger ones he chased over Horn Mountain. A big lake is there, with an island which was the huge beaver lodge made by these two. It is called Sa Chon Kjin. In their travels the beavers went up to the mouth of the Mackenzie River. One flapped his tail and formed Beaver Lake. When they came down-stream towards the Horn River, the other flapped his tail and made Mills Lake. Two of the other beavers went north and Yampa Déja pursued them past what is now Camsell Bend. Its name is Theh t-th yn Teh -- The Clear Mountain. He caught up with them at Bear River. At the mouth of the river, opposite Fort Norman, is Bear Mountain. He caught them by their tails and threw them against the rock face and stretched out their skins. To this day the impression of the two beavers can be seen. (Sandstone outcrop in shape of two beavers, one smaller than the other on the rock face). (This was a place of many wars. There were so many bones that no trees grew).

While Yampa Déja was stretching out the beavers on the rock, he saw a female caribou and young crossing the Beaver River. He shot at them from the top of a rock. The huge logs which can be seen on the Beaver River are his arrows. They float up the Bear River against the stream.

In more recent times Indians with York boats tried to tow them away but failed. "They will always be there." Yampa Déja killed the other beavers by the river bank and one can see to this day where they slid into the water.¹ That evening, Yampa Déja was eating his meal at the river bank above Fort Norman when two Indians passed in a canoe and saw the smoke of his camp fire. He said to them that from then on any hunters who passed this place and saw the smoke,² would have a long and successful life, but if they did not see any smoke they would have bad luck -- and so it is to this day.

1. At La-Roche-Qui-Trempe-à-L'eau above Fort Norman a rock face falls steeply to the river bearing two shapes impressed in the rock face strongly reminiscent of the shape of two beavers sliding into the water, tail first.

2. This is the site of a carboniferous outcropping where occasionally fires caused by spontaneous combustion are seen. This superstition remains among the Indians of the Mackenzie though few know of its legendary origin.

The home of Yampa Déja is on the Nahanni River at the place called Nye Lean Cho (Virginia Falls.) Above the falls there is a valley known as Rabbit Kettle -- Karhon Tha, where there is a white rock which looks like a house with a door and windows. This is the place where Yampa Déja first came. To this day it is still very tidy and well arranged. Today still there are his dishes of different sizes.* At night one can hear someone walking on the rocks. Sometimes the rock dishes are full of water. If, however, they are empty, the traveller who passes them will not live long. If they are full, he is welcome to the home of Yampa Déja. Warriors on the warpath go there to see if their war is well-omened. If it is not, they become frightened and abandon their war party.

One of the war parties captured two girls. They came to Karhon Tha but there was no water in the dishes. Frustrated, the warriors became angry and threw sticks into the dishes. Those sticks to this day are still there in the form of rock. The war party was travelling down the Nahanni on rafts which were tied together. An eddy swung the whole group of rafts towards the bank but all the warriors were sleeping. The girls got up and quietly crept over the prone warriors and, once on the shore, poled the rafts away. The rafts shot over Virginia Falls and the men were drowned. The girls ran down to the foot of the falls and the warriors came to the surface in the form of animals. As they came near, the girls killed them and the bodies turned into the forms of animals which can swim, (ducks, fish, otter, beaver, etc.).

The girls then returned to their relations, for their natural parents were dead, but their captors who had ignored the augury of the empty bowls, had all been drowned.

* Large rocks with saucer-shaped indentations on the top.

YAMPA DÉJA SAGA - No. 3

After he had killed the giant beavers Yampa Déja abandoned his canoe and walked at the river side, looking for people in difficulties whom he might help. He kept on travelling down the Mackenzie River until he came to Sans Sault Rapids. On the right bank of the river there is a shape in the rock which looks like a wolverine with its back to the water. Before it was turned into a rock the wolverine had seen Yampa Déja walking along the shore and had taunted him. "You are not worthy of being called a Great Chief," he said. In reply Yampa Déja said, "Now you will be a rock as long as the world exists, and all will laugh at you." The wolverine became very angry. Yampa Déja repeated: "When I go on, you will turn into a rock on this spot and be a laughing stock forever." The wolverine turned his back to move away but looked around for Yampa Déja. In this position, with his head turned, the wolverine turned into stone.*

YAMPA DÉJA SAGA - No. 4.

Yampa Déja continued his travels walking along the bank of the Great River. One day he came upon a trail and suddenly was faced by a big black dog tied near the cliff edge. The dog barked, but Yampa Déja swiftly signalled him to keep quiet. Yampa Déja came near to the river and found huge spears thrust into the ground with their points directed up the trail. Yampa Déja considered how he should thwart the man who made this trap. He scratched his nose to make blood, smearing it on the end of a spear which he passed through his clothes, hanging limply as if impaled. The purpose of the dog was to frighten people into falling down the steep slope, at the bottom of which, this trap was planted. While Yampa Déja was hanging on the spear a wolverine came down the trail talking to himself: "I knew I was going to be lucky," he said, "I heard my dog barking." He talked of the human as a moose. "I am sure his belly is getting rotten now,"

* The rock is the same size as a wolverine but recently someone shot at it and the head is now tilted.

he said, and he threw Yampa Déja, who was pretending to be dead, into his pack-sack.

As he was carrying Yampa Déja across a bridge, Yampa Déja hooked a finger on to an overhanging willow and the wolverine missed his step and fell into the water. Yampa Déja hung on to the bridge. The wolverine floated down the river. Finally he got out, wet, but chuckling to himself, "I am lucky that I have not lost my moose," he said, going back to where Yampa Déja still lay inert. Yampa Déja continued his pretence because he wished to observe the ways of the wolverine. The wolverine carried Yampa Déja to his home where there were many of his children. He put the pack down and the children tried to pick out the eyes of Yampa Déja who was still pretending to be dead. They opened his eyelids and touched his eyeballs roughly. This hurt, so Yampa Déja made big eyes at them. The children told their father, "The moose is making eyes at us." The wolverine said, "If you had hung on a spear as long as he has, you would have big eyes too."

Yampa Déja watched everything. The wolverine knelt down and looked and then said, "Yes, he is dead." He started to chew on Yampa Déja's head. Then he said, "Mother is not well, so I will cut up this moose." (Cutting up meat is woman's work). Yampa Déja opened his eyelids quickly and noticed the wolverine with a bundle of human heads which the creature started to chew on. Yampa Déja sprang up and took a burning log from the fire and killed all the wolverine family, except the mother who was pregnant. She had climbed a tree. "Don't kill me," she pleaded, "I will clean hides for your moccasins." Yampa Déja replied, "I have no need of you. You have killed enough people." He hit her fingers so that she fell out of the tree and then he clubbed her to death.

YAMPA DEJA SAGA - No. 5.

Yampa Déja, whose name means "the everlasting traveller," continued his journeys, always looking for trouble. One day he heard in the distance a dog barking, and stopped to listen. Soon he met a creature half-man, half-dog. He was rolling a willow hoop down a slope and barking as he chased it. "This is curious," thought Yampa Déja, and went out to speak to the creature.

Kle Deh Ho, which means "half-man, half-dog" turned and said to Yampa Déja, "I saw you first." Yampa Déja replied, "I have been watching you for a long time." Kle Deh Ho said, "If you saw me first, then I will give you one of my arrows. Hand me the quiver of arrows over there." They lay right on the edge of the cliff and Yampa Déja was very wary as he reached for them. The dog tried to kick him over the cliff, from the bottom of which rose a cloud of smoke. Yampa Déja broke both the creature's legs and threw him down the hill.

Yampa Déja could hear a pounding sound down below. He found a way down to the bottom and, seeing a camp, walked round and approached it from a direction opposite to that taken by the trail from the top of the cliff. He surprised an old woman. "Sé zha," (Little One,) she cried, "How did you come down here?" Yampa Déja replied, "The old man used to be very clever. Now he is sick and makes no noise." The old lady cried, "Who threw the old man down the hill? He lies very sick in his bed over there."

Yampa Déja, who was very observant, saw a vessel containing human grease. He realized that the practice of these creatures was to entice people by the childish game of rolling a hoop, then to ask the victim to hand over the arrows and so to push him over the cliff. After this they ate their victim.

The old lady tried to distract the attention of Yampa Déja in order that she might kill him. "Look," she cried, "look at the beautiful eagle flying above us." She repeated this twice. Yampa Déja wisely realized that even she planned to kill him, so he tried the same trick. "There is a weasel stealing from your vessel of human grease," he shouted. The old lady turned round to see, and Yampa Déja grabbed the stone axe which she had concealed beneath her knees, and killed her. He did this because this was a group of cannibals. He took the old lady and Kle Deh Ho and the human grease and all the accoutrements of the camp, smashed them, piled wood on them, and set fire to the whole thing.

There arose a huge pall of black smoke. Yampa Déja said, "Let this become all the dark heavy clouds which will form rain to put out the great fires in the world, (for this was the time when much of the world was yet on fire). That is how rain clouds are formed and why you see huge black rolling clouds

like smoke when heavy rain comes. So Yampa Déja walked on, looking for fierce animals who ate people.*

YAMPA DEJA SAGA - No. 6.

Yampa Déja was always travelling and hunting, and when tired he camped by the side of a creek. Always he was alert and, when resting, still half awake.

While he was travelling, Yampa Déja came upon an old woman. She was a widow and lived alone. She warned Yampa Déja that ahead of him lived an evil family, and gave him much advice as to how to deal with them.

When he met her he had been travelling for two or three days after leaving the campsite of Kle Deh Ho. He came upon a camp, consisting of a small family. There was an old man and an old woman, and a girl, their daughter. They showed great surprise at seeing him, but welcomed him and said that Yampa Déja could become their son-in-law. They instructed the daughter to make a separate fire and she and Yampa Déja were to live together as married people. She took his blankets and put them by the fire and sat nearby. Yampa Déja sat by the daughter during the evening and passed the night with her.

Unknown to Yampa Déja, a stranger came into the camp during the night. In the morning, Yampa Déja was surprised to see him. Also the daughter, when she saw him, ran back to her mother. When she returned to Yampa Déja she was crying. Yampa Déja, being very wise, sat and reasoned with himself. He thought it queer that the old people should be so anxious to marry off their daughter and that she should be so upset by the appearance of the stranger, who was bearing meat.

When she returned in tears from her mother she sat on the other side of the fire opposite him.

* At this point the narrator broke off to affirm that the purpose of the stories is not only to entertain but to point an impressive moral. "They mean something serious," she said.

Yampa Déja asked her, "Why are you crying? Do you not like me?" The girl replied, "No, it is not that. My brother, who has returned from the hunt, has torn his moccasins and I have jabbed my finger with the awl. I cry because it hurts." They went to bed.

The next day they packed up their meat and belongings and travelled. All the time the girl did not even glance at the stranger, (who was actually her husband). Though the girl was married, the old people always offered her to any passing stranger, instructing her to pretend that her husband was her brother. She promised not to allow any of the strangers the full privileges of a husband. The purpose of this deception was always to kill the traveller. (The old people always used to tell the strangers how lonely they were, having no prospect of marriage for their daughter).

On the second night of Yampa Déja's stay with this family, they became short of meat. Next day the old man came over to Yampa Déja's fire place with a big bundle of snares made out of sinew. "My son-in-law," he said, "there used to be a good many ducks over there." -- and he pointed vaguely in a general direction. "Go out and set these snares. My daughter is very skilful in tanning moosehide with the brains of ducks." All this time the husband was becoming more jealous. The old man consoled him saying that they would soon be rid of Yampa Déja. Thus it was that he cajoled Yampa Déja to go a day and a night's journey, in order that the husband might spend some time with the daughter. As soon as Yampa Déja had gone, the husband went to his wife and they stayed together.

Meanwhile Yampa Déja was searching for the lake where the ducks lived in such profusion. All he found was a wide expanse of deep muskeg and was puzzled that he saw no ducks. He was sinking knee-deep into the muskeg but finally found a suitable spot to camp right in the middle of this area. Here he intended to stay and to keep a sharp look-out. He set his fire place so that he could watch the trail upon which he had just travelled, because he did not trust the old man. He did not go to bed because he had a premonition that he was in danger. He took a big log and covered it with his beaver skin blanket. He was suspicious of the stranger and felt that he could not be the girl's brother because of her strange behavior, in the way that she avoided him. He surrounded his fire

place with a wall of branches and crouched behind it.

The husband was sure that Yampa Déja had gone on the Death Trail. Inflamed with jealousy, he followed Yampa Déja's trail. Wishing to test the husband, Yampa Déja hid behind his wall of branches in a place where he could watch the dummy beneath his blankets. Yampa Déja had his arrows ready and waited for a long time.

Finally, he heard the sucking noise made by someone plodding through the muskeg on his trail. Yampa Déja thought, "My suspicion was right and was justified." Darkness had come but Yampa Déja could see the husband with his moose-hide hat trimmed with woodpecker's feathers. He was creeping slowly forward following Yampa Déja's trail, his arrows ready. He came near the fire place, lit only by the dying embers. He put an arrow through the network of the spruce wall and shot at the dummy. Yampa Déja jumped up and said, "And here am I to return the compliment." Yampa Déja shot the jealous husband through the heart with an arrow. Yampa Déja reflected that his suspicion had been aroused very early, when he first arrived at the camp of the old people, because he knew they could not possibly live alone and would need someone to hunt for them.

He dragged the dead husband to very soft muskeg and pushed him underneath.

He slept in this place and next morning returned to the old people. Yampa Déja thought that he should not go back empty-handed and, going to the water's edge where the ducks feed, snared a great many of them. Back at the camp he took the food to the girl. She showed no gratitude, but was quite cool. She did not attend to the ducks, but ran off with some of them to her mother. A whispered conversation then took place between the old man and the girl, which Yampa Déja overheard. The old man then approached Yampa Déja and asked, "My son-in-law, did you not meet anyone while you were out hunting?" He was anxious for news of the girl's husband. Yampa Déja, however, said that he met no one. The girl whispered to her father, knowing that all previous victims had taken that same trail to the duck pond, "I'm sure Yampa Déja did not miss my husband. Something must have happened to him. He never missed his chances before, and now I am worried."

In the old times there were no rocks in the land except those by rivers and creeks.

The old man looked very displeased, because he had believed that far from returning with the ducks, Yampa Déja should have been killed. He expected the husband to return. No previous victims had been as clever as Yampa Déja. Therefore, he tried another trick. He again went to Yampa Déja and said that he wanted to make some arrows for himself. His present supply being almost exhausted, because no hunter must reclaim an arrow from his prey. In the old times the people always used Saskatoon canes for their arrows as they are hard and straight. A patch of Saskatoon canes was always carefully nurtured as a precious treasure. Yampa Déja asked the old man if he knew of any place where there were Saskatoon canes. The old man said he did, and indicated the trail he should follow.

On the way to the Saskatoon canes Yampa Déja came upon a pile of rocks as high as a mountain. He had never before seen such a thing, as rocks were always to be found only by streams. It was the old man's practice to tell his victims to go and collect the material for arrows for him. To Yampa Déja the pile of rocks appeared almost as if it were alive. The rocks rose up. In an appropriate gesture Yampa Déja told them to be still. The rocks subsided back into the pile. He felt the rocks with his coat in his hand. Then he filled his coat with the rocks and flung them away saying to the rocks, "Now fill every creek." They flew in all directions and that is why rocks are found in every creek, and deep in the bush.

Next Yampa Déja cut down a good pile of hard, pliant Saskatoon canes for arrows. As soon as he returned to the camp the girl, who was spying on Yampa Déja, ran to the old people and told them that he had returned. They were surprised, because the rocks usually flew out and killed their victims and then returned to their former place. The evil family were puzzled that Yampa Déja always foiled their wicked plans.

The old man next sent Yampa Déja for feathers to serve as flights for the arrows. He said that they should be obtained from an eagle and showed him where to go. Yampa Déja went up to the huge nest of the eagle -- En Da Cho. In the nest he found two young eagles, one male and one female. They could talk.

Yampa Déja asked them, "Where are your father and mother?" The boy eagle said, "They are hunting human people." The girl eagle was angry with him and said she would tell her mother about Yampa Déja. The boy eagle said to Yampa Déja, "I will not tell her about you, because she always gives the best parts of the prey to my sister. My father also brings food all the time. He brings men and boys, but I get all the poor flesh. I am tired of being fed that way." He promised that he will assist Yampa Déja if he in turn helped the boy eagle. Yampa Déja asked the girl eagle not to tell her parents about his presence, but she said she would.

He was sitting in the nest with them. He crushed her skull with a moose-horn club and threw her out of the nest, which was at the top of a tree. Yampa Déja asked how he would know when the parent eagles are approaching. The boy eagle said, "Heavy hail means that my mother is coming and it rains when my father is returning." Then it began to hail. Yampa Déja turned himself into a piece of hay in the nest.

The mother returned, bringing a fresh human female breast. She asked the son, "Where is your sister?" The boy eagle said, "My sister has a headache. She rests in the shade below." The mother was surprised for her children were never sick. Next she asked, "Where can I smell a human being?" Before he made himself into a piece of hay, Yampa Déja told the boy eagle that if his mother asked where she could smell a human, to tell her to take a walk around the nest. Yampa Déja had made thin the bottom of the nest so that the mother would fall through. She walked around, and went through at the thin part. Yampa Déja caught her leg and clubbed her. He threw her down to the ground.

It began to rain heavily. The father returned with a buttock of a boy. The boy eagle was alone in the nest. The father asked for the mother. The boy eagle said, "My mother saw smoke close by and she went to hunt for meat that she had previously passed on her way home." The father did not believe this and was angry. He said, "Your mother used to be luckier than I in the hunt. It is clear that she is not here. I do not believe your story. Where is your sister and mother?" The boy eagle, according to plan, suggested his father take a walk around the nest. He, too, fell through Yampa Déja's trap. Yampa Déja grabbed him by the leg, pulled him through, and clubbed him. Afterwards, he

threw him to the ground.

Yampa Déja carried the boy eagle down the tree as he was still too young to fly. He had a heavy body and soft feathers. Yampa Déja made the young eagle promise never again to eat human flesh. Yampa Déja pitied him and took him down to the bank of the creek. He carved a little Jackfish from a small piece of wood and put it into the clear water. The carving turned into a real fish. He told the boy eagle to look into the creek and see if he could find the fish. The boy eagle could see nothing. Yampa Déja stirred up the water to make it muddy, then again he told the boy eagle to look. The boy eagle could just discern it. Yampa Déja made the water more muddy and then the young eagle could see the fish clearly. Yampa Déja said, "Dive into the water and grab it." The young eagle did this with his claw. Yampa Déja said, "Eat the fish." The boy eagle did, but he didn't like it. Yampa Déja said, "From now on the fish will be your food, never human flesh."

He made a Sucker fish with a stick and told the boy eagle to grab it. He did, and Yampa Déja commanded him to eat it. He asked him, "What does it taste like?" The young eagle said that it was better than Jackfish. Yampa Déja said the eagle should always have that to eat from then on. Yampa Déja gave the eagle a long list of things he could eat, such as rabbits, fish, marten, foxes and so on. "But, he said, "if you stop this and begin eating humans again, I shall be on hand, as I am the great chief of the world. Thus I shall kill you." He commanded the young eagle to fly and he spread his wings and flew away.

Yampa Déja went back to the old nest where he had killed the other eagles. He took a bunch of the eagle feathers -- all he needed. Then he returned to the evil family. The girl ran to the old people to report. The old man was very angry and surprised because the eagles had always before devoured any humans that came near.

Next, sinew was needed to tie the feathers on to the arrows. The old man indicated to Yampa Déja where the sinew may be obtained. Yampa Déja did not quite understand what to do when he set out so he back-tracked to the old widow and asked her advice. She told him that there was great danger in the place where they were sending him. There was a huge monster.

This family had killed the old widow's husband. They refused to kill her but kept her prisoner.

Yampa Déja set off toward the place where the monster was. (The narrator said the monster was "like a hippopotamus"). "It stays in the swamps," she said, "and rolls in the mud." Yampa Déja came upon the monster -- 'T-they Goo K'Kee' -- on the trail facing him, expecting new victims to be sent by the old man. He had short massive horns. Birds had nested in them. One was the nest of a plover which gave swift warning. On the other horn was a hawk's nest. The plover called warning to the monster. Yampa Déja signalled him to silence. The monster asked the plover, which had keen eyes, "What is moving?" The plover said, "I was mistaken, it was only the wind moving the grass." The grass was high here.

Yampa Déja wished for a little mouse. He had to lie flat in the grass with mud plastered in his hair. The mouse came to Yampa Déja and he told him to chew the grasses to form an arch for him to crawl through. "Make your little trail," he said, "and listen for the monster's heart beats. Then, clear the hair on the monster away with your teeth to make a passage for my arrow. If the monster asks you why you are doing that, tell it that you need the hair for a nest for your young ones." The mouse did that and then returned through his trail and told Yampa Déja that everything was ready. So Yampa Déja crawled through the tunnel so made that he did not need to move any of the grasses.

He came close enough to hear the monster's heart beating. Then with his bow he shot it with three arrows, one on top of the other. The monster fell dead on its chin. The plover and the hawk flew high into the air. That is why hawks and plovers always fly high and sound an alarm when anything approaches them, thus often helping hunters in the bush.

Yampa Déja butchered the monster and cut out the sinew. He took it back to the camp of the evil old people.

The girl ran to her parents. In consternation they cried, "This man is killing all our animals and destroying our traps for victims, devices that we have kept so well and secretly for so long." The old man, Go T'Sieh, said, "Wait a while and we'll surprise him."

You play bear with him." Yampa Déja was very proud of bringing home the fresh sinew. Now he had the Saskatoon canes, the feathers, and everything needed for his new arrows. While the girl was speaking with her parents, Yampa Déja was making the arrows. When he had finished, the old man said, "My daughter is going to play Grizzly Bear with you.

The next day they looked for a clearing and brought Yampa Déja and the daughter there. The old man told Yampa Déja, "She is ready." Yampa Déja had flint-tipped arrows. The old man took them from him and replaced the sharp heads with small pieces of spruce bark. "This is the sharpest arrow tip for grizzly," he said. The old man threw the flint tips over his head, and out of the corner of his eye Yampa Déja saw one as it fell and picked it up. He faced the Grizzly Bear, which was the daughter transformed. The old man intended the girl in the form of the Grizzly Bear to kill Yampa Déja. She was lying down in the shadow of a tree. She jumped up to greet him as he came and chased him all over the clearing. The old man ran to his fire place while Yampa Déja was playing with the bear. It was summer time and Yampa Déja started to sweat and became tired.

Finally, with the Grizzly Bear still chasing him, Yampa Déja cried out to the old man "Eh T'sieu"* --"the bear still chases me and I am tired. Call him off." The old man sat by his fire place. "I am sorry I can't help you, my feet are all tangled in my shirt." Yampa Déja was angry. He shot with the soft spruce arrowheads. Then, while he was running, he placed the flint tip on the arrow. The bear came closer, its mouth open to eat Yampa Déja's head. Yampa Déja turned around and shot her in the chest. The girl cried out, "Father, he kills me also."

The old people were very angry and chased Yampa Déja, each with a stone axe. Finally, Yampa Déja became very weary. He found a big lake, threw himself in, and swam across. The old people ran around the lake. They made a plan, saying "Let us throw the nets from our caribou-hide packsacks," (which they had hidden away) "and catch Yampa Déja with them."

* Eh T'sieu -- Father-in-law; uncle; grandfather.

Under the surface of the water he threw huge rocks into the nets teasing them. As soon as they saw the floats sink, they were sure that they had caught him and pulled the nets in. The old man said, "He must have turned himself into a rock." And he pounded the rocks into small pieces.

Two big pelicans were passing by. They called them "Ton Cha -- come and drain the water from the lake for us. In the lake there is one who is ruining us and has killed our daughter." The pelicans sat together and dipped their bills into the lake and drained out all the water.

Yampa Déja became a tiny Jackfish and hid under a stump in a puddle. He was sure that he would be caught. And then a plover came along eating tiny shells at the water's edge. Yampa Déja greeted him. "Don et tin, An da Cl'Airseh -- Hello, clear eyes. Please go to the pelicans who are now swollen with water. Approach them pretending to be hunting shells. Peck a hole in their big swollen water bags." Clear Eyes did just as Yampa Déja told him. The water flowed out of the holes and filled up the lake again. That is how all pelicans have a small hole in the bottom of their fish bags.

Yampa Déja swam out in the form of a large beaver. (While the plover was doing his job, the old people were in the middle of the empty lake, ankle deep in mud, wildly smashing everything in the hope that it might be Yampa Déja.) Thus when the water poured back they were covered neck deep in water. They saw the big beaver, which was Yampa Déja, and, as he swam by, he flapped his tail. They asked him not to do this and he swam closer and flapped his tail again. The force of the splash was so great that it broke them up into little pieces.

YAMPA DEJA SAGA - No. 7.

Yampa Déja was travelling as usual, but now it was in the fall. He came upon a narrow trail, so narrow that it could not be made by humans. It was narrower than a rabbit's trail. He saw grass built up like a fence and nearby sinew snares tied to a bunch of grass. In one there was a young rabbit caught and choked. Yampa Déja thought this was curious and asked

himself, "Who are the people who do this?" He was very big and all this looked very miniature to him. He walked on and in the evening he came upon the camp fires of a tiny people who had squeaky little voices. They were very frightened and ran together squeaking. They were the T'si T'son Kia Deneh -- the Chickadee people.* Yampa Déja put his bed-roll down near a fire and went to see them. They were like tiny dolls. They gazed up and said, "Ha Ton." (A stranger). Yampa Déja sat down by their fire just for fun, to see what they would do. Over the fire was a tiny pole made from a twig with a meat hook hanging from it. The Chickadee people said, "Ha Ton, you are welcome. We will feed you." Yampa Déja thought, "How can these tiny people satisfy me?" They gave him flesh from a rabbit's rib -- cooked and still smoking. It was placed in a tiny birch pan. He ate it in one gulp. The Chickadees were amazed and wide-eyed. They said aloud, "He must have a huge stomach to be able to eat a moose rib in one gulp." A father Chickadee spoke to his wife, quite frightened, "He will eat all we have. Cook for him two rabbits with the brisket." She did so and Yampa Déja ate it. Yampa Déja found it intriguing. Yampa Déja said he was going to make his fire place nearby. The parent Chickadees offered him their daughter and he replied that she was too small. "I am always travelling," he said, and I don't need her." But they insisted, so he took her in his hand. The old man -- T'si T'son Kian -- asked him, "Did you see anything peculiar on your way here?" Yampa Déja said, "Yes, I saw a young rabbit and a large rabbit caught in snares." All the Chickadees shouted together when they heard this, "We have two moose, a calf and a cow." Yampa Déja thought this very funny. They set off, each with a little pack-sack and he followed them. When they came to the rabbits they could not turn them over and he pushed one over with his finger. They cut it up in small pieces and brought it home.

The meat was sliced up and suspended on thick grasses which were used as horizontal poles and placed over a fire, the ends of the poles resting in tiny forks. His little girl was busy cooking the meat. Yampa Déja also cooked and dried a whole rabbit for himself.

* The Chickadee is a tiny northern bird which lives under a leaf.

The Chickadees were very impressed. When he went to bed, he put the little Chickadee girl inside his mit some way off for fear of smashing her.

Later they told him that they were going to organize a moose hunt. He was to go with them. He was instructed to stand in one place while they drove the moose "towards him." The Chickadees ran up the spruce trees and cried out that they could smell fresh tracks up on the tree tops. Yampa Déja took his stance and watched. By this time the winter had come. After some time, he had seen nothing except two owls which had flown by. When the Chickadees returned, the old man asked Yampa Déja if he had seen anything. Yampa Déja said, "No. Only two owls." The old man was angry. "You say they were owls! They are our moose, you creature of big boots. To hunt them was the reason that I brought along your sisters and brothers-in-law. You idiot," he cried, "because of your foolishness your brothers and sisters are hungry." Then the Chickadee people went home. This provoked Yampa Déja, and seeing the two owls, he hunted them, killed them, cleaned them, put them in his pack-sack and followed the little people home. He took out the owls and threw them down. He said to the girl, "Your father was angry. He called me Bushy Head. Here is your owl." She ran to her father and they yelled "Marci Cho -- Thank you very much." And they trooped off in long lines to retrieve the owls. One had become stuck in a fork when he flung it down. The little people could not dislodge it, so he picked it up and threw it aside for them. They carried it home and dried the meat.

Yampa Déja was annoyed with the Chickadee people because they were never satisfied. He went off to hunt his own moose -- the real thing. He shot one with an arrow and then returned to the Chickadee camp carrying a piece for himself. He gave them tiny pieces and satisfied them. Next day they said, "Let us go to the place where you have your moose." The old man was very excited at the idea of seeing the big moose and thanked Yampa Déja continually. He called to his wife, "Mon, Mon, I'm frightened of this huge monster. Bring me my blanket." He averted his eyes from the moose. Yampa Déja placed the tiny blanket between the eyes of the moose and that is why to this day the moose still has a small lighter patch between the eyes.

The little people climbed up on to the moose to get a better look at the creature, because they had

never before seen anything so large. Yampa Déja took enough meat for himself and also he cut off the moose's head -- (he was very strong). He hung it over the fire and roasted it in the same way as the Chickadees roasted their meat. When it was cooked, he called the little old man and invited him to eat with him. The old man in turn called his wife and said, "The head is made up completely of bones and has no meat. I shall not fill my stomach with that. Save for me the shoulder." Then he told his wife to hang over the fire for him a tiny piece of owl meat. The little old man climbed up on the moose head and then suddenly disappeared. Yampa Déja continued eating and did not notice. After a while, he heard the old man calling, "Mon, take down the meat. I am full." He had crawled into the socket of the eye and had filled himself with the fat inside. Satisfied, he went over to his own fire place. The old man said to Yampa Déja, "Now we will have meat for many winters. I knew that this was going to happen. That is why I gave you my daughter." She had now grown to the height of three feet since being with Yampa Déja.

Yampa Déja had learned all he wished to know of the Chickadee people so on the following day he told them that he was leaving because the world had many troubles for him to set right.

The old man begged Yampa Déja to give back the daughter and to take the old woman and to make her grow to the daughter's size. Yampa Déja said that he could not. "I have to travel now. You can have the girl. She's too small for me and I must be always on the move." So he left. To this day the Chickadee birds always pick the eyes of dead animals.