Boas (F.)

TRADITIONS OF THE TS'ETS'Ā'UT.[1]

I.

In the winter of 1894–95 I visited Portland Inlet, a deep fjord which forms the boundary between Alaska and British Columbia. In this region were said to live the few remaining members of a tribe which had not heretofore been studied. The tribe is called Ts'ets'ā'ut by the Tsimshian and by the Nass River Indians. After a prolonged search I found a few members of the tribe, which proved to belong to the Tinneh stock. Such ethnological data as I have been able to obtain are given in the Tenth Report of the Committee on the Northwestern Tribes of Canada, under whose auspices I visited the tribe (B. A. A. S. 1895). In the following pages I give such traditions as I have been able to collect. As the tribe is reduced to twelve members, it is not likely that much more material will ever be obtained. The traditions resemble in character very much those recorded by E. Petitot from the Tinneh tribes of the Mackenzie Basin, but they evidently have been greatly influenced by Tlingit tales, as will be shown in accompanying notes.

1. BROTHER AND SISTER.

Once upon a time there were four brothers and a sister whose parents had died. One day they went up Tcū'nax River until they reached its headwaters, which are called xäga. There they stayed hunting the mountain goat. The eldest of the brothers had fallen in love with his sister, who returned his affection. Then the other brothers grew ashamed. They tied the two together with cedar-withes, so that the man's head was between the feet of the woman, while her head was between the man's feet, and thus left them. The eldest brother, however, was so strong that he tore apart his bonds, and liberated himself and his sister. He found a cave, which they used as a dwelling-place. After some time his sister gave birth to a boy. One day, when she left the house, she saw many mountain goats grazing on the hill opposite. She ran back into the cave, and called her brother: "Come and look at the mountain goats." He went out and looked at them. On this, they

[1] Indian words are to be pronounced as follows: —

The vowels have their continental sounds, namely: *a* as in *father*; *e* like *a* in *mate*; *i* as in *machine*; *o* as in *note*; *u* as in *rule*.

In addition the following are used: *ä*, *ö* as in German; â=*aw* in *law*; *ê* as in *tell*; *î* as in *hill*; *ô* as in German *voll*; E = *e* in *flower* (Lepsius's ę).

Among the consonants the following additional letters have been used: *q* velar k; *x* the German *ch* in *Bach*; *x*· the German *ch* in *ich*; X between *x* and *x*·; *c*=*sh* in *shore*; L an explosive, dorso-apical *l*; ' a pause.

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fell dead and rolled down the mountain towards the cave. He had attained supernatural powers. His gaze killed whomever and whatever he looked at. Then he said to his wife: "Go and gather stones, with which to skin the goats." She went down to the river, and gathered many thin pebbles. When she had brought them to the cave, her husband was not satisfied with them. He himself went to the river, and found many new stone knives and axes. These he carried to the cave, and he and his wife began to skin the goats. But they did not cut open their bellies and strip off the skin, as it is the custom to do; they cut the feet, and skinned them as we do martens. In this manner he skinned one buck, a she goat, and a kid, and father, mother, and son put on their skins.

Then the father said: "Now I will go down the river and build houses for our use." He started, and after he had gone some distance he made a natural bridge across the river, and many caves in the sides of the mountains. Then he said to his wife: "Now I will make the sea. The ocean shall be in the west, the land shall be in the east." Thus the sea was created. And he continued: "I will make a hole, so that the water of the sea may run down through it and come back again. Then there will be ebb-tide and flood-tide." But his wife asked him: "Do not make the hole here, for men are living near by, and the hole might swallow them. Make it far away in midocean."

Henceforth they lived under the bridge. One day many Ts'Ets'ā'ut went up the river to see what had become of the brother and sister who had been left. Among the travellers were the brothers of the couple. When they approached the headwaters of the river, they saw the natural bridge, and the caves which they had not seen before. The kid was frolicking under the bridge, and every one of its steps made a deep impression in the rock. It was scared when it saw the people and jumped back into the cave in which it was living. The people saw a glaring light coming forth from the cave. Then the mother came out, to see what had frightened the kid. She saw the people sitting on their knees, and wondering at the marvellous changes that had taken place on the river. She went back and told her husband what she had seen. He said: "Among these people are our brothers who bound us. Let us kill them!" His wife did not reply. Then he stepped out of the cave, and when he looked at the people they all died. One woman only had hidden herself. She was saved. The natural bridge where these events took place is called Tsênêniāgá.

Then the husband and his wife separated. She went up the river. When she arrived at its source, she made a rock resembling her in shape. It may be seen up to this day. It looks like a woman

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carrying a babe on her back. She went on to the headwaters of Nass River, where she continues to live on the bank of a lake up to this day.

The man went down the river, and wherever he camped he made rocks of curious shape as marks of his presence. Now his name was Qā, the raven. The Tlingit call him YĒL. Among others he made two rocks which look like men with arms. One of these has fallen over, while the other one is still standing. Its name is SäqL (the same in Tlingit). He wandered all through the world. Finally he travelled westward.

At that time the sea was always high. In the middle of the world he discovered a rock in the sea. He built a house under the rock, made a hole through the earth, and a lid which fitted it. He put a man in charge of the hole, who opened the lid twice a day and twice a day closed it. When the hole is open, the water rushes down through it into the depth, and it is ebb; when the lid is put on, the water rises again, and it is flood. Tä'êL, a Tlingit chief, when hunting sea otters, was taken out to the rock by the tide. The current was so strong that there was no possibility of escape. When he was drawn towards the rock, he saw a few small trees growing on it. He managed to throw his canoe-line over one of the trees and thus succeeded in escaping from the whirlpool. After some time he heard a noise which was produced by the closing of the hole. Then the water began to rise, and he paddled away as fast as he could. Before the ebb began, he pulled his canoe on to a rock, and when the flood set in again continued his homeward journey. Finally he reached his home in safety.

The preceding tale is related to two distinct Tlingit traditions: The tale of the origin of the earthquake (see Krause, "Die Tlingit Indianer," p. 270), which tells of a brother and sister who fell in love with one another and became supernatural beings, and the Raven Legend, particularly the last part; the origin of the tides is taken bodily from the tales of YĒL and Qanuk (see Krause, *l. c.* p. 259, and Boas, "Sagen der Indianer der Nordpacifischen Küste Amerikas," p. 313).

2. THE ORIGIN OF MOUNTAINS.

A woman had two sons. She died, and her sister took charge of the boys. When they had grown up, they built their huts next to that of their aunt. One day the latter saw that each of the young men had a wife. She did not know whence they had come. I suppose the women were animals who had taken the shape of men. Once upon a time, the men went hunting. When going up the hill,

they saw a large bag hanging from the branch of a tree. They cut it open. A large man fell out of it, whom the men killed with their clubs. He had an immense *membrum virile*, which they cut off and took home. Then they chopped it, mixed it with caribou meat, and boiled it. The women had gone up the mountains to bring home meat that their husbands had hidden in a cache. When they came home, their husbands gave them of the dish they had boiled. The women ate heartily. After a while the men took a stomach of a caribou, left their home, and when they had gone a short distance they shouted: "Our wives have eaten the *membrum virile* of their sweetheart." When the women heard this, they ran to look after the bag in which the man had been hidden. When they found the mutilated body, they took their clubs and pursued their husbands. When they drew near, the men threw part of the contents of the caribou stomach over their shoulders. It was transformed into valleys and cañons, which obstructed the progress of the women. While fleeing from their wives, the men came to the monster adEdá, which looks like a bear with huge claws and horns. They said: "Please, protect us. We are fleeing from our large wives." The adEdá asked them to stand behind it, but when the women reached it they killed it with their clubs. The brothers ran on, and continued to throw parts of the caribou stomach in the way of the women. After some time they reached another horned monster. They said: "Please, protect us! We are fleeing from our large wives." The monster replied: "Hide behind my body." Soon the women approached laughing. They struck the monster with their clubs between its horns, and they had almost killed it. But finally it gave a jump, gored the women, and threw them about until they were dead. The head of the monster was full of blood, which the brothers washed off. They returned home, but it took them a long time to cross all the mountains and valleys that had originated from the contents of the caribou stomach.

3. THE ORIGIN OF THE SEASONS AND OF THE MOUNTAINS.

In the beginning there were no mountains. The earth was level, and covered with grass and shrubs. There was no rain, no snow, and no wind. The sun was shining all the time. Men and animals were not distinct yet. They were in dire distress. They had little to eat, and nothing to drink. Once upon a time a man made a bow for his son, who was asleep. When the child awoke it cried for thirst, but his father was unable to give him any water. He offered his son grease to drink, but he refused it. Then the father gave him the bow in order to quiet him, but the boy continued to cry. Now the father took the bow, and shot the arrow into a small mound of

dirt that was next to the fire. When the arrow entered it a spring of water came forth, and the boy drank. From it sprang all the rivers of the world.

But there was no rain and no snow. The animals held a council, and considered how to procure them. They resolved to go to the end of the world, to make a hole through the sky, and to climb up through it. They did so. When they reached the end of the world all the animals tried to tear the sky, but they were unable to do so. All had tried except two ermines. One of them jumped up, struck the sky, and tore it. The other ran through the hole, and then all the animals helped to enlarge it. They climbed up through it, but when all had passed the hole closed again. They were on a large, beautiful prairie, and walked on. After they had gone some time, they saw a lodge in the far distance. They reached it and entered. There were many bags in the house. One contained the rain, another one the snow, a third one the fog, and still others the gales and the four winds. The men sat down and debated what to do. Only a woman was in the house. Her name was Xa txaná (goose woman). They said to her: "It is dry and hot on earth. We have nothing to eat, and nothing to drink. Give us what we need, for you are keeping it in your house." The goose woman replied: "All that you need is in these bags: rain and snow, the winds, the gale, and the fog. If you tear them, it will be winter. The North wind will blow. It will be cold, and the ground will be covered with snow. Then the snow will melt, the West wind will blow, and trees and shrubs will bloom and bear fruit. Then another season of snows and cold will follow."

Now the people tore the bags, and it happened as the woman had predicted. Clouds began to gather, and snow was falling. At the same time the level ground changed its form, and mountains arose.

Then the animals went back. Again the ermine tore the sky, and all went down. Then the animals ran into the woods and separated from man.

See Petitot, "Traditions indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest," p. 375. A legend of the Chippewayan, who tell of the heat, rain, gales, and cold being kept in bags in the sky.

4. THE THUNDERBIRD.

Once upon a time a dog barked while it was thundering. This frightened the thunderbird so badly that it fell down dead near a village. The people went to see it, and observed that its skin was similar in appearance to that of a frog. It carried three large bags, one between its legs and one in each armpit. They were full of water. Its view made the people sick. When the thunderbird

opens its eyes, there is a flash of lightning. Its voice is the thunder. When it presses the bags it begins to rain. It is as large as a house.

5. THE FLOOD.

Once upon a time a man, his wife, and his mother-in-law went up the mountains to hunt marmots. When they had reached the higher parts of a hill, they saw the waters rising. They climbed higher and higher, but the waters rose steadily. All the people fled up the mountains. Finally, when the water was about to reach them, they resolved to inclose their children in hollow trees, hoping that there they might be safe until the waters would retreat. They hollowed out two trees, in one of which they placed the children of the eagle clan, while in the other one they placed the children of the wolf clan. They gave them an ample supply of food, and then closed up the trees with wooden covers, which they caulked with pitch. The water continued to rise, and all the people were drowned. The children who were inclosed in the trees heard the waves breaking in the branches and felt the swaying of the trees. Finally, the trees were entirely covered by water. After a few days the water began to retreat. Again the trees were swaying. The children heard the waves breaking, first in the highest branches, then farther down, and finally everything was quiet. They went to sleep, and when they awoke one of the boys opened the hole. They saw that the water had disappeared, but the branches were still dripping. The ground was wet and soggy, and everything was covered with seaweeds. Then the children came forth from the trees, but the ground was so wet that they were unable to start a fire, so that many died of cold. Finally the ground dried up. They made a fire, which they fed with their supplies of mountain-goat tallow. They married, and became the ancestors of the Ts'ĔTs'ā'ut.

6. THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRE.

The grizzly bear used the fire-stones (pyrites) as ear ornaments. Therefore he was the only one to have fire. A small bird (ts'ōx'ē') desired to have the fire, and flew to the house of the grizzly bear. When the latter discovered him, he spoke to him: "Please, come here and louse me." The bird complied with his request. He alighted on the crown of his head, and began to pick off the lice. In doing so he came nearer and nearer the ears of the bear. Finally he bit through the thread from which the ear ornaments were suspended, and took them away unobserved. Then he flew away. When the grizzly bear noticed his loss he grew angry, extinguished his fire, and tried to catch the bird. The latter teased him, saying: "Henceforth you will live in the dark. You will not have any fire."

The bear replied: "That does not matter to me. I can scent my food, but you will be unable to see, and must obtain your food in the daytime, when it is light. From now on it shall be dark." It grew dark, but the bird remained sitting quietly on a tree until it grew daylight again. Then it flew all over the world. It dropped here and there a fragment of the stones. Then it flew to the birds, and gave them parts of the stones. Finally it flew to where the Ts'ETS'ā'UT were staying, and threw the stones down. They were tied together by twos. The people struck them, and caught the sparks on tinder, and thus started the first fire.

7. THE MARMOT WOMAN.

Once upon a time there was a widower who had a son. He had built his lodge near the upper end of a valley which abounded in marmots. Every day they went hunting, but he was unsuccessful. It so happened that one day the boy caught a young marmot. He did not kill it, but took it home. Its mother saw what had happened, and followed the boy to his lodge. There she took off her skin, and was at once transformed into a stout woman. She stepped up to the entrance of the lodge, and said to the men: "Give me my child." They were surprised, for they did not know who she was, but the father invited her to enter. She said: "No, your lodge is not clean." Then he arose, gathered some grass, which he spread on the floor for her to sit on. She entered and sat down. The boy gave her the young marmot, which she at once proceeded to suckle. Then the woman asked for eagle's down. After she had received this, she said to the hunter: "You are unsuccessful in hunting because you are unclean. I will cleanse you." She wiped the inside of his mouth and removed a vast quantity of phlegm. Now he was clean. She became his wife. Before he again went out hunting she ordered him to seek the solitude of the mountains, and to fast for three days. He went, and on his return the woman gave him a small stick with which to kill marmots.

The first day he went out hunting he saw numerous marmots, and killed twenty. He carried them home, and his wife at once began to skin and carve them. She hung up the meat to dry. While her husband had been away, she had gathered a vast quantity of salmon berries, and they lived on berries and on meat. On the following day the man again went hunting, and killed fifty marmots. The lodge was full of meat.

Often while he was out hunting he noticed that one marmot was following him all the time. It was tame, and played around him. Therefore he did not kill it. One day, however, when there were no other marmots to be seen, he killed it and carried it home. When

his wife opened the pouch and pulled out the game, she began to cry and to wail: "You have killed my brother! you have killed my brother!" She put down the body, and laid all the other marmots that her husband had procured around it. Then she sang: "Brother, arise!" (*qōxdē kusē khek!* This is said to be Tlingit). When she had sung a little while, the body began to move. The dried meat began to assume shape. She threw on it the skins, and all the marmots returned to life and ran up the hills.

She followed them, crying. Her husband was frightened, but followed her, accompanied by his son. After they had gone some distance, they saw her disappearing in a fissure of the rocks, which opened and let her in. When they reached the fissure, the father told his son to stay outside while he himself tried to enter. The fissure opened, and on entering he found himself in a lodge. His brother-in-law had taken off his skin, which was hanging from the roof. He was sitting in the rear of the lodge. The women were seated in the middle of the floor, and were weaving baskets and hats. The chief spoke: "Spread a mat for my brother-in-law." The people obeyed, and he sat down next to his wife. The chief ordered to be brought a cloak of marmot skins. When he put it on, he was transformed into a marmot. He was given a hole to live in, and a rock on which he was to sit and whistle as the marmots are in the habit of doing. The son saw all that had happened, and returned home in great distress.

Two years after these events, the brothers of the man who had been transformed into a marmot went hunting. They pitched their camp at the same place where their brother had lived. After having cleaned their bodies and fasted for four days, they set their traps. They were very successful. One day one of the brothers saw a marmot jumping into a crack of the rocks. He set his trap at the entrance of the fissure, and when he came back in the evening he found the animal in his trap. He put it into his pouch with the rest of his game, and went home. His wife began to skin the marmots, and to dress the meat. She took up this particular animal last. When she cut the skin around the forepaws she saw a bracelet under the skin, and her nephew, who was staying with them, recognized it as that of his father. Then she put the animal aside. At midnight it threw off its skin, and resumed the shape of a man. On the following morning they recognized their brother who had been lost for two years. He told them of all that had happened since the time when he had left his son at the fissure of the rock, how he had become a marmot, and how he had lived as one of their race.

8. THE CLOUD WOMAN.

Two brothers, with their mother, went up the mountains to hunt marmots. They built a lodge, and the younger brother and the mother stayed at home while the elder one went into a neighboring valley to hunt. While the younger brother was very successful, the elder one was almost starving. One day, however, a cloud came to his lodge and married him. From that time on he caught great numbers of marmots. After some time he went to visit his mother. He brought her two marmots. It was clear weather, and his mother noticed with surprise that at the time of his arrival he was quite wet. On the following morning he again departed, and stayed away for a long time, so that his mother and brother began to worry about him. Finally his younger brother started to look for him. He crossed the mountain, and reached a beautiful valley. At some distance he discovered a lodge. He thought: "This must be my brother's lodge," and went down to it. When he had reached it he entered, but did not see a soul. The lodge was built of bark. It was full of meat. Now he heard somebody laughing and speaking, but he did not understand what was said. He looked around everywhere, but he did not see any one. Finally he discovered a small cloud of mist which was moving about in the house. He entered and sat down. He saw the mist moving towards a small basket, which was then taken to a large basket and filled with berries. Then the mist moved to a spit, which was lying near the fire. It was lifted, covered with a slice of meat, and put close to the fire. When the meat was done, the mist enveloped a dish and a knife, and moved to the spit. Then the meat was put into the dish, and the mist carried it to the young man, who began to eat. When he had finished, the mist brought a basket filled with water, and the young man drank. Next came a dish filled with salmon berries mixed with bear grease. The mist enveloped a spoon, which began to stir the mixture, and then stayed in front of the young man. While he was still eating, his elder brother entered the lodge. Again he heard the laughing of women. The young man said: "Both mother and myself thought you were dead, and I came to search for you." Then the mist gave to the elder brother a basket filled with berries, and left the house. It reappeared, carrying a basket filled with water. It took up the elder brother's pouch. It opened, and marmots fell out of it. Then the mist lay over the marmots, and the young man saw that they were being skinned and dressed. Soon the mist left the lodge, carrying the skins. The elder brother spoke: "That cloud of mist is my wife. Do not ever mention the word 'cloud' in her presence, else she will leave me."

In the evening the elder brother gave a skin blanket to his visitor and they went to sleep. The mist settled at the side of the elder brother. On the following morning, after they had taken breakfast, the young man prepared to return to his mother. He was going to tell her that his lost brother had been found, and to invite her to come and stay with him. He started, and when he had reached his lodge he told his mother that her eldest son had married a cloud, and that he desired them to stay with him. The old woman packed her belongings and they started to cross the mountains. When they approached the lodge, the cloud woman was engaged in drying marmot skins. When the young man, who had gone in advance, reached the house, his elder brother sent his wife to meet his mother, and to help her carry her load. Swiftly the cloud moved up to the old woman, and flew around her, emitting a hissing noise, which frightened the woman. Then the cloud returned to the lodge. Her husband asked: "Did you bring the load?" She replied: "Your mother declined to give it to me." Then the man sent her back, and asked her to take the load. She obeyed. When she reached the old woman, she found her resting her load on a rock. She took it from her back, and carried it home. Before the old woman had been able to reach the lodge, the cloud had left again to pick berries. Soon she returned. She put stones into the fire and boiled meat for her guests.

The man's mother and brother continued to live with them. After some time, they saw the toes and the fingers of a woman protruding from the cloud of mist. Gradually arms and legs and the body began to appear, and finally they were able to see her face. She was very beautiful. One morning when they awoke the last trace of the mist had disappeared, and they saw a beautiful woman in its place. The younger brother said to her: "Why did you never speak to me?" She replied: "I spoke to you, but you did not understand me."

She was with child, and after some time she gave birth to a boy. He had red hair. And after some time she gave birth to a girl. The children grew up.

One day, while the brothers were out hunting, the children were playing in front of the lodge. Their mother was putting on her moccasins, preparing to pick berries in the woods. Then the boy said: "O mother! see the cloud on that mountain." At once the woman began to vanish, she took her daughter in her arms, a hissing sound was heard, the house burst, and she was transformed into a cloud. The grandmother held the little boy in her arms, while the cloud carried away the girl. The mountains were covered with clouds, and it began to rain in torrents. The brothers heard the

cries of the girl in the clouds and saw her being wafted from place to place. The "cloud woman" was not seen any more. Later on the elder brother was lost while hunting. I suppose his wife took him with her.

For a similar legend see Petitot, *l. c.* p. 120, Legends of the Hare Indians.

THE VISIT TO THE SKY.

Once upon a time there was a man who had a large family. One morning his wife and children, upon awaking, were unable to find him. He had disappeared.

When he awoke he found himself in a strange lodge among strange people. The house stood on a vast open prairie. A young girl was lying at his side. It was very beautiful there. Now he heard the chief speaking. He looked around, but he did not see a soul. The girl said to him: "You are in the sky. My father is going to make you clean and strong." Then he heard the chief saying: "Build a large fire and put stones on top of it." A giant arose, who built a fire and put on stones. After a while the chief asked: "Are the stones red hot?" The giant replied: "They are hot." Then the wood was taken away, the red hot stones were piled up, and, after the man had been placed on top, a blanket was spread over him. Then the ashes were placed on top of the blanket, and a new fire was built over the whole pile. This was kept burning for a whole day. In the evening the chief said to the giant: "I think he is done." The fire and the ashes were removed, and the man was found to be red hot, but not steamed. He was taken from the pile of stones with wooden tongs and placed on a plank, which was supported at each end.

The girl was crying all day, because she believed him dead. Early the next morning the chief sent the giant to see if the visitor was still alive. He lifted the blanket which had been spread over the red hot body. Then the plank, which had been burned by contact with the body of the stranger, gave way, and he fell down. But he arose at once hale and well. Then the chief had a mat spread for him in the rear of the house and said: "I burned you in order to make your body as hard as stone. Sit down with my daughter. She shall be your wife." He married her, and the young woman was glad. The chief said: "If you so desire, you may take her down to the earth. She shall see what the people are doing." The chief's lodge was full of many kinds of food, which, however, were not known to the visitor.

When they prepared to descend to the earth, the chief gave his daughter a pot and a black tube, through which she drank of the liquid contained in the pot. Nobody except herself was allowed to

use these, and she herself did not partake of any other kind of food. The chief ordered the giant to open the road that led to the earth. He opened a hole in the ground, took the rainbow at its one end, and placed the other end on the earth. Before they parted the chief forbade the man ever to tell where he had been and what he had seen and to talk to any woman except his present wife.

They departed, and reached the earth not far away from the village where the man had formerly lived. He did not recognize the country, but his wife showed him the way and told him that they would reach the village in the evening. When they approached the camp the people recognized him. All assembled and asked him where he came from. He told them that he had been in the sky, and that his new wife was a daughter of the chief of the sky. He was invited to return to his former wife and to his children, but he did not go. He built a lodge outside the camp. He took a girl into his lodge to be a servant to his wife. Every day he himself had to fetch water for his wife in the pot which her father had given to her. This she drank through her tube. The latter had the property of swimming on the water as long as her husband was true to her. It went down when he had spoken to any other woman but her.

One day when he returned bringing the water his young wife asked him if he would like to talk to his former wife. He did not reply, thus intimating that he did not care for her. But when the young woman placed the tube into the water it sank. She knew at once that her husband had spoken to his former wife. Then she said: "I came to take pity on you and on your friends; but since you do not obey my father's commands I must go back." She wept, and embracing her servant she said: "Hide in the woods under the roots of a large tree where the rays of the sun will not strike you, else you will perish with all the rest of the people." The girl did as she was bidden. Then the rainbow appeared. She climbed up and disappeared from view.

On the following day the man went hunting. Then the sun began to shine hotter and hotter. There was no cloud in the sky. The camp grew quiet, even the dogs ceased to howl. The rays of the sun had burned the whole camp. Only the man and the servant girl had escaped destruction. The man, when the sun was shining so fiercely, had cooled himself with the snow and the water of the mountains, while the servant girl was protected by the roots of the tree. When the sun set the fire went out and the girl returned to her friends, to whom she told what had happened. Nobody knows about the further fate of the man.

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