

THE LAKE ON MOUNT RAINIER

When the grandfather of my grandmother was a young man, he climbed Takobed. He climbed to the top in search of spirit power.

Before he started, he made five wedges of elk horn. After he reached the snow line, he used the elk-horn wedges to cut steps in the snow and ice. When one wedge wore out, he threw it away and used another one. At the end of a day of climbing, when he reached the top of the mountain, the fifth wedge was worn out.

On the mountaintop he saw a small lake. He made camp beside it and stayed there all night. Next morning he swam and washed himself in the

lake. There he gained spirit power. He felt strong and brave and wise.

Then the mountain spoke to him. "Because you have stayed one night with me, I can talk to you. You will become an old, old man, because of your spirit power. When you are very old, moss will grow on your knees and on your elbows. Moss will grow on your head after your hair has fallen out. At last you will die of old age.

"At the time of your death, my head will burst open. The water from the lake here will flow down my sides into the valleys below. I, Takobed, have spoken. All things will come to pass even as I have prophesied."

When the mountain stopped talking, the young man picked up five shells and started home. Before he had gone far, snow began to fall.

"Oh, I have displeased Takobed. He does not wish me to carry shells away," the young man said.

He threw one shell down, then the other four, one at a time. The snowing stopped. With empty hands but with strong spirit power within him, he returned home.

Years passed. The man became old. When he was very old, everything happened just as Takobed had prophesied. His hair fell out. Moss grew on his knees, his elbows, his head. To his people he said, "When I die, look up at the mountain. Takobed's head will burst open. The water from the lake on top will spill down the mountainsides."

The old man died, and it was as he had said. Takobed's head burst open, the lake on top spilled out, and the water rushed down. It swept the trees from where Orting now is, and left the prairie covered with stones.

White people have never seen the lake on Takobed. My grandmother, who told me the story, remembered when the lake burst and spilled out.