

## PAHUTE LEGENDS

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### How The Eagle Became Bald-headed

It sometimes happened in the long ago that some living thing went bad and became a source of trouble to all the others. Sometimes they wrought so much sorrow and destruction that a great cry of anguish and appeal went up from the sufferers to the Gods for relief.

Tobats and Shinaav intended on all the living things should always be friends and it filled them with anger when they learned that one had turned away to practice deceit and cruelty upon the others.

Once when such a cry was heard old Tobats sent Shinaav down at once to see about it. He said, "Go and stop that racket. Kill that fellow who is making all that trouble."

Shinaav came to the animals and the Indians who were crying on top of the big mountain. He said, "What are you crying about? What do you want now? Who are you? Who's making all this trouble here?"

They answered, "One has gone bad. He can whip us. We can't kill him. We want you to help us." Shinaav said, "You go out and bring in all the living things that can come and we will talk it over tomorrow. Call in the big animals and the little animals and the birds and snakes and all the living animals except that bad one. We will have a big council meeting about this trouble.

Everybody must come. Somebody can be found who can whip that big, that big bad fellow."

Shinaav sent the birds out to tell everyone to come to the council.

The birds went and told the bears to come. They told the buffalo to come. They told the cougars and the wildcats to come. They went to all the big and ferocious animals because they were the only ones who would be strong enough to fight the bad one. The next day when Shinaav came to the council he looked around and saw all the big animals there. They were making a big racket and were making big talk. The God said, "I told you to call all living things to the council. Where are the ants and the bugs? Where are the bees and the flies? And where are the snakes? None of these are here." The birds answered, "We did not tell them. They are too little to fight that bad one." Shinaav said, "You go out again and tell everybody to come here tomorrow for the council. I want the little ones and the big ones and everybody here tomorrow. Quanants," he continued, "you go along, too, and make everybody come in."

And so Quanants, the eagle, went out with the other birds to help bring the living things to the council. A long, long way out in the brush and hot sand they found To-wab, the rattlesnake and told him to come to the council. The snake said, "How can I go so far to the council meeting? I have no legs to walk and no wings to fly. How can I go to the council?" The eagle said, "You have got to be there. Shinaav said everyone must be there." The rattlesnake still declared he could not travel so far, and when Quanants still insisted he said, "If I go you will have to help me. You will have to carry me on your back, for you have both legs and wings."

So the snake climbed up and coiled himself around the eagle's neck and wings so he could not fall off. This tied Quanants wings so tight that he could not fly. He would have to walk all the way to the council meeting.

Now the eagle was not a good walker and it was fun to see him try. He was so dignified about it. He stepped so high and his head went walking backward and forward as much as his feet. To-wab rode with his head high for he wanted to see where they were going. His beady little eyes were shining and his forked tongue kept darting nervously in and out. When Quanants' head came back it struck the snake's head and every time the forked tongue of To-wab tipped off a feather.

When they reached the, eh, the council, the eagle's head was shaved clean and he looked a sight. He was bald-headed and there was not even a sign of the roots his feathers left. After a long time some very tiny feathers did grow back, but they were white and Quanants has appeared to be bald-headed ever since.

### **Why Paiutes Wear The Eagle Feather**

Narro-gwe-nap, the Piute storyteller, was reviewing the ancient legends of his people. He was talking in the tribal council convened one summer in the place they called I-oo-goone (Zion Canyon).

"Before the grandfathers of our grandfathers were born," he said, "our people came to this land from the land of the setting sun. They came out of a cave in the high mountains from the top of which they could see waters wider than their eyes could reach. Many long days they traveled across a wide desert where no animal or living thing was found to kill and eat, and there was no water to drink. Our old people died and the sick and the cripples. The babies and the little children died also because their mothers could not carry them. The mothers whose babies

were not yet born could not keep up and they were left behind and were never seen again. The bones of all these our people are buried in the desert sands."

"Did all our people leave the mother cave? Did all the Pahutes come to this country?" they asked. The Narro-gwe-nap answered, "Our stories do not tell."

Then spoke Chief Littlehead, "All this we should know. We must search for the cave our people came from. It may be that those mothers who were left went back to the cave and had their babies. It may be that many of our relations are in that country now."

And so the council decided that a chief from each clan would go with Littlehead to the high mountains in the land of the setting sun. The best Medicine Man was to go with them, too, for there would be dangers and perhaps evil lurking in their way. They would go armed to fight if any on, if any enemies appeared to contest their march.

The long and hazardous journey was begun in Cang-am-o, last of the fall moons, for they wanted to cross the hot desert in the cool moons of winter. When they came to the edge of the desert they took a long rest. When they were ready to move again they filled their willow bottles with water and their food sacks with parched corn, pine nuts, and dried meat--strong foods on which they could travel a long way.

At the first glimpse of the morning sun they were ready to plunge into the desert. They traveled all day, and saw no living thing--no animal, no bird, no snake. They heard no sound but their own voices and they saw no tracks, only the ripples of the wind in the sands of the desert. When the sun set they stopped to sleep for the night.

Littlehead dropped his pack and sat down by a bush. He jumped up with a scream for he heard in that bush a warning rattle. "Kill him," yelled Littlehead. "Kill him," cried all the

chiefs. But Medicine Man said, "No, better not kill him. Maybe he is Shinaav." The snake then slithered off to the west.

Next morning when they were ready to start they were a little confused on directions, for there were no land marks on the desert. Some said, "We should go this way." Others said, "We should go that way." Medicine Man said, "Better go the way the snake went. Maybe he is Shinaav."

They listened to the Medicine Man. They traveled all day, but saw no living thing--no animal, no bird, no snake. They heard only the sounds of their own voices and saw only the tracks of the wind as it left ripples in the sand.

At sunset they threw down their bundles to rest. Littlehead sat by a bush, and when he peered into it he saw a bird sitting on a nest. "Kill it," he shouted. "Kill it," the chiefs answered. But the Medicine Man said, "No, better not kill it. Maybe he is Shinaav." The noise frightened the bird and it flew away to the west. The Indians looked into the, into the nest, but no eggs were there.

Next morning some said, "We should go this way." Others said, "We should go that way." Medicine Man said, "Better go the way the bird went. Maybe he is Shinaav."

They traveled all day again until sunset. They saw no living thing--no animal, no bird, no snake. They heard only the sounds of their own voices and they saw no tracks but the ripples in the sand.

When they made camp that night, Littlehead saw a coyote sitting behind a bush in the midst of their camp. Again he shouted, "Kill him," and the chiefs said, "Yes, kill him." But

again Medicine Man said, "No, better not kill him. Maybe he is Shinaav." The coyote went loping off toward the west.

Next morning they argued again which way they should go, but medicine stopped them and said, "Go the way Tear-a-sin-ab, the coyote, went. He knows the country better than we do and maybe he is Shinaav."

Thus it went day after day. Each night, Littlehead found some animal in the brush near their camp. Always it ran away to the west. When their water was all gone and they were almost perishing of thirst they came to the edge of the desert and to a stream of water. When they made camp Littlehead could find no animal in the brush when he sat down. They saw only a dim mountain looming high in the west in the sunset.

The Indians rested on the water and found seeds to eat. They marveled at the living things they had seen at their camps on the desert. They wondered why they always fled to the west. "Maybe," explained Medicine Man, "those living things were Shinaav. Maybe he was showing us the way to go so we would not die in the desert. Shinaav can take any shape he wants--sometimes animal, sometimes bird, sometimes snake--any kind he wants."

When they were rested Littlehead said, "Now we go to the mountain." Eagerly the march was started for they hoped to find in that high blue peak in the distance the cave of their fathers.

They saw many animals as they traveled along and killed some of them to eat. Sometimes they shot at one which their arrows would not hit. "Maybe that fellow is Shinaav," the Medicine Man always said.

The day came when they drew near to the mountain and they looked sharply to find the great cave. Shinaav, sitting upon a high rock, saw them coming. He turned himself into a large bullfrog and crawled into a hole in the side of the mountain.

As the Indians drew near, Shinaav began singing a Pahute song. Inside the mountain it echoed and rolled until the mountain seemed to be filled with Pahutes.

Littlehead heard the song and stopped the march. The chiefs all heard the song. The Medicine Man said, "We have found the place. The Indians inside this mountain sing our song. We must find the place to go in."

They hunted diligently but found no place to go in. They soon found the hole where the songs were coming out. Littlehead put his face to that hole and shouted, "Come out here all you fellows in there. We are Pahutes, too. Our fathers left this place in the long ago. We have come to visit our relations."

The song, the song stopped, and all was silent. Presently the great frog appeared, his body filling the hole. Littlehead saw the great ugly face protruding from the rock and yelled his old cry, "Kill him." The Indians drew their bows to shoot but Medicine Man said, "No, better not shoot. Maybe he is Shinaav."

The big, the big frog laughed with a croak that shook the rocks. He said, "Look over there," and they turned quickly to look. When they turned back, the frog had changed and they saw that he was Shinaav. He said to them in mock surprise, "Well, you boys look like my boys. Where have you been?

I thought all you people died in the desert or were killed a long time ago. Where were you going? How did you find this place anyhow?"

Littlehead was frightened but he answered, "We are hunting the cave our fathers came from in the long ago. We want to see if we have relations living there yet. We want to visit our relations so we can tell our people all about them when we go home.

Shinaav said, "You, you heard your relations singing, but you can't see them because you cannot come in the mountain. Look at that high rock on top of that peak over there. What does it look like?" "It looks like an Indian head," they answered. "What do you see on top of it?" Shinaav answered. "A hand is standing up behind like an eagle feather in that Indian's hair," they said. Shinaav, pointing up, pointed up and said, "The place to go in the cave of your fathers is up by that hand. You cannot climb up to it for the rocks are too high. That hand is waving now and telling you to go back to your home."

"Whose hand is that?" the Medicine Man asked. "It is the hand of Tobats, the elder god." Shinaav answered. "You have seen Tobats' hand."

Then Shinaav called the Indians close to him. As they came he put an eagle feather in the back of every man's head and told him to wear it home. It would be good luck. It would be like the hand of Tobatsover them. "Tell your people that you talked with Shinaav and that you saw Tobats' hand.

Tell them to wear one eagle feather bent forward like the hand of Tobats' in the back of their hair."

And so the Pahutes wears a lone eagle feather, not the war bonnet of many feathers, to call down the protection of the great spirit upon him. He does not kill wantonly, but only for food and clothing, for Shinaav might be one of the animals he tries to shoot. When an animal or

a bird or a snake appears unexpectedly in his camp, or when one is hard to hit he says, "Better let him go. Maybe he is Shinaav."

### **How the Seasons Were Set**

When he made winter, Tobats, the elder god, was angry. He sent it down upon Tu-weap, the earth, because the grumblings and complainings of the living things greatly annoyed him. He thought he would give them something to complain about.

Before that time there had been only summer. The living things knew nothing but summer and when Tobats poured snow down upon them they sent up a great cry of fear and distress.

Now they had both winter and summer but no time limit had been set on either. Sometimes when winter came it remained with them for a long time. Then when summer's turn came, the weather was hot for a long time. When either of them came they never seemed to know when to go away. Sometimes it was hot for just a little while and then the cold would come for a long time. Sometimes the cold weather was short and then it was hot for a long time.

Winter and summer seemed to be fighting each other all the time. It was not good that way.

The Indians and the animals talked about this condition in So-pa-ro-ie-van, the council meeting. They wondered what could be done about it. They wondered how it could be changed. They wondered why, why Weather Man acted that way.

Mo-se-va-cut, the owl, said, "I can see in the night, and I can see in the daytime, too. My eyes are always open."

"What have you seen?" asked Kumo, the jack rabbit. "I have seen many things," answered the owl. "I have seen that that fellow that makes the weather goes backward and forward on a long, straight trail. His home is at the middle of it."

"How can that make Tu-weap go cold and hot?" asked Cho-ink, the talkative bluejay. "I don't believe it does." said Quampie, the spider.

"Well," said Mo-se-va-cut, "When Weather Man goes north it is always cold. Tom, the winter, travels with him. If Weather Man goes only a little way and then turns back, it is a short cold. When he goes to the end of the trail, that makes it a full winter. But Tom, the winter, stays with Weather Man until he gets back home. That makes the cold very long, like two winters coming together." "That is too much winter," said Skoots, the squirrel, "my nuts do not last that long."

"When Weather Man goes south," the owl explained, "it is the same way, only Tats, the summer, travels with him instead of Tom, the winter."

"What can we do about this? There is too much winter, and there is too much summer," asked many of the living things in chorus. One said, "Let us go and shorten that trail. Send gopher and prairie dog to build piles of earth up on each end. That will make Weather Man stumble and come back." Medicine Man said, "We better talk with Shinaav about this. Maybe he made it like it is."

Now Pan-ah-wich, the night bird, sat on the ground and listened to all this talk. He thought much but said little. He had an idea. He wanted to be sure about Weather Man's going back and forth over that long, straight trail. He, too, could see in the night, so he decided to sit in the same tree with Mo-se-va-cut and see what he could see. He went home with the owl and

there he sat and saw that Mo-se-va-cut was right. Together they watched Weather Man make his uncertain trips.

The living things called loudly for Shinaav to come to so-pa-ro-ie-van, the council meeting. When he came, they told him the trouble Weather Man was making for them.

"What do you want?" asked Shinaav. "You are never satisfied. You've grumbled about, you've grumbled about everything. First Tats, the summer and all the time and you cried it was too hot. Now you have half Tats and half Tom and it is too much of both. What do you want?"

Mo-se-va-cut said, "We wish you would cut a piece off each end of the weather trail." "No," said Shinaav, "that would never do. That would make the year too short. Tats has six moons for his time and Tom has six moons for his time. That keeps time all straight on Tu-weap."

The council still said it was not good, it was too much hot and it was too much cold. Shinaav lost his patience and said, "Well, that is the way it is, and if anybody can think of a better way he can try it if all the living things are willing and will not trouble me anymore."

Promptly Pan-ah-wich, the night bird, hopped down from his perch in the tree and said, "I have a better way."

"What is your way?" asked Shinaav.

"Make two more seasons, so there will be one for each corner of Tu-weap," answered Pan-ah-wich. "Then," he continued, "make the weather, trail round instead of straight."

"What good will that do?" asked Shinaav with some irritation for he thought it was impudent for the night bird to tell him how to, how things should be.

"Let the weather trail go around, by each corner of the earth," repeated Pan-ah-wich. "Put one of the new seasons between winter and summer on one side, and put the other new season between winter and summer on the other side. Call the four seasons, Taman (spring), Tats (summer), U-wan (fall), and Tom (winter). Weather Man can go around that circle always in the same direction. He will not have to go back and forth as he does now. Always the seasons will be the same length, and they will follow each other always in the same order."

Tobats, the elder god, laughed out loud and said, "Pan-ah-wich's plan is better than Shinaav's." The living things agreed also. They said, "we like four seasons and a round trail best." This concurring made Shinaav a little jealous and he tried to think of a way to upset the plan. He said, "Yes, this is a good way. We will give each season twelve moons."

"Oh, no, not that much," cried all the living things. "That would be worse than the straight trail. That would spoil everything. We would die before Weather Man could get all the way around. We must have shorter seasons than that."

While Shinaav insisted on twelve months for each season and the council was pleading for less, old Tobats, who was, who was enjoying Shinaav's discomfort, spoke up. He said to Shinaav, "You promised that everyone who had a, anyone who had a better way could try it out if the living things were willing. This is Pan-ah-wich's plan. Let him say how many moons for each season." The night bird called out quickly, "Three moons for Taman, three moons for Tats, three moons for U-wan, three moons for Tom." He flew hastily away for Shinaav was hunting a rock to throw at him.

Old Tobats and the council accepted the night bird's plan. They broke up Weather Man's straight trail and made him a good smooth new one that went around by, by all the four corners

of Tu-weap. From that day to this he has traveled around and around that circle trail. He never turns back as he did on that straight path and each and each three months brings him to another corner of Tu-weap and to the beginning of another season. The living things have never complained since about the weather, and the seasons follow each other in regular order, spring, summer, fall winter.

The jealous, younger man wanted to kill Pan-ah-wich and followed him out of the council meeting for that purpose. The wise bird, knowing his intentions, led him off into into bushes that were loaded with luscious ripe berries. Shinaav tasted and, forgetting his anger, remained to eat. The night bird's plan for the seasons has worked so well that no one wants to change it anymore. Pan-ah-wich is honored and respected by all the living things and Tu-weap, the earth, but he still is nervous and fearful and does most of his flying about at night. He is not sure that Shinaav's anger is entirely dead, and he would not like to meet the god in the daylight when he could see to throw straight.

(End)