

THE SLAYING OF THE MONSTERS (An Apache Legend)

Apache mythology describes the adventures of ancient gods, humans and animals to help describe the Creation of the World, and how it operates. Although each Apache tribe has its own unique stories, three cultural heroes are common to all Apache mythology: White-painted Woman, Killer of Enemies and Child of the Water.

One myth explains how, long ago, Child of the Water made the earth safe by killing four (4) monsters who preyed on human beings. In the beginning, White-painted Woman and Killer of Enemies, who was either her brother or son, lived together on the earth. They were tormented by cruel monsters, especially by Owl-man Giant, who stole the deer meat shot with bow and arrow by Killer of Enemies. One day when White-painted Woman was praying for the monsters to leave them alone, the spirit known as Life Giver came to her in the form of rain and lightning. Life Giver told her she would have a child, who would be called Child of the Water. Life Giver warned White-painted-Woman that she must protect the child from Owl-man Giant. Through her skill and cunning, White-painted Woman kept the child safe.

One day, while he was still a boy, Child of the Water told his mother that he was ready to leave her to kill the monsters. White-painted Woman fashioned him a wooden bow and grama-grass arrows. She let him venture out to hunt deer with trusted Killer of Enemies. After they had killed their first deer, Owl-man Giant came to steal the meat away. But, Child of the Water refused to give it up! The opponents agreed to a duel. Each would be allowed to shoot four arrows. Owl-man Giant was to shoot first. But before he began, magical lightning flashed all around them. A brilliant blue rock appeared at the feet of Child of the Water. The blue rock spoke, saying that Child of the Water should pick it up, and use it as a protective charm. Child of the Water did and waited for Owl-man Giant to shoot his four dangerous arrows. They were made of sharp, large pointed logs. The first arrow flew over Child of the Water's head. The second landed at his feet. The third and fourth arrow missed him on each side. He was still ALIVE!

Now, it was Child of the Waters turn! Owl-man Giant wore four coats of flintstone to protect his chest. He also picked up a rock, to try to deflect the arrows, like Child of the Water had done. But, the first three arrows that Child of the Water shot, knocked off the coat of protective flint. The fourth, and fatal, arrow pierced Owlman Giant's evil heart. The child warrior was victor!

Killer of Enemies and Child of the Water returned victoriously to White-painted Woman, who danced and sang with happiness. Child of the Water went out again on further hunts. He killed the Buffalo Monster. Then, the Eagle Monster. And, finally, the Antelope Monster. The earth was now SAFE! The human population began to grow and prosper. Thus, the Apache regard Child of the Water, with his blue stone (turquoise), as their divine ancestor.

Contributed by:
Cisco Lopez, B-02