

THE CHEROKEE LEGEND OF THE FIRST STRAWBERRY

At the dawn of time, the first man and the first woman set up their home together by the side of a great broad river. They had everything they needed for a blissful life: Fruit, berries, meat and fish, plenty of wood and fresh water and, of course, each other. They lived as happily as any man and woman have ever lived together, until their first quarrel. It started with a small thing. First man said, "Why didn't you cook this?" and then, first woman said, "Why didn't you bring in the wood for the fire?" Pretty soon it got worse, with first man saying, "Why didn't you tidy that?", and first woman saying, "Why are you so messy?" Pretty soon, both the insults, and a few wooden plates and bowls, began to fly.

The first woman was so upset that she decided to leave the first man. At the break of day, while he was still asleep, she set off down the valley, heading towards the rising sun. She walked and walked, always looking straight ahead of her, and not once turning back. When the first man woke up and saw that she was gone, he waited for her to come back, but she did not come back. He found her tracks along the valley, but she had a long head start on him, as she did not stop or look around.

The sun was now high in the great blue sky. It looked down upon the first man as he followed after the first woman, and it saw that there was sadness on the face of an otherwise pristine and perfect world and all his surroundings. The sun asked the man if he was still angry with his wife. He said that he was not angry with her. The sun asked if he would like to have her back. He said that he would like to have her back. And the sun took pity on the first man and decided to help him. His gentle rays touched the ground along the woman's path, and a huckleberry bush sprang up. Its fruit was shiny and enticing, but as she passed, her eyes remained fixed on the distance, and she did not see the berries.

So the sun shone again on the ground up ahead of the woman. He caused a clump of blackberries to grow up beside her path. She refused to even glance at them.

Then the sun thought that he must create something entirely new; something so vivid, so fragrant, and so delicious, that even the first woman could not fail to take notice of them in her resolute and unhappy mood.

He blessed the ground again with his rays, and the first patch of strawberries spread over the ground. Their sweet scent filled the woman's senses, and her

mood became lighter. She began to look around her, and she saw the bright red fruit hiding beneath the leaves. It looked so enticing that she picked one and tried it. She tasted the strawberry on her tongue, and she began to remember the happiness she knew when she first set up home with her husband. She looked at the half-eaten strawberry in her hand and saw a bright red heart. She found she no longer felt the pressing desire to leave him. She sat down on the ground and wondered what she must do. By the time she had eaten a few more strawberries, first man had caught up to her and sat down quietly and smiled. She gave him a strawberry to eat.

They both then realized how much they cared for one another and walked back home together taking a few strawberry plants with them to plant at their home so they would not forget this lesson. Do nothing in haste, consider all things thoroughly and always forgive one another of your faults.