



THE FIRST STRAWBERRY

Long ago, the First Man and the First Woman appeared on the Earth. They got into a big argument, and the First Woman decided she had had enough of the First Man. So she started walking away as fast as she could go. The First Man thought, “I’ll let her go. I don’t need her around here anyway.”

But then he started thinking, “Well, I enjoyed talking with her, I enjoyed sitting with her and I enjoyed just being around her. Maybe I was wrong.”

So the First Man started walking after the First Woman. He walked all day long, and he could see her far ahead of him, a little dot on the distant horizon. The sun fell. The First Man walked on into the night after the First Woman. He walked all night long, and when the Sun rose the next morning in the east, he looked ahead and could just barely see the First Woman. She, too, had walked all night long, and she was still the same distance ahead of him. He kept walking--he had to catch her and tell her he had been wrong.

As the Sun rose into the sky, he looked down on the First Man and took pity on him. The Sun decided to help the First Man and he caused some huckleberries to grow up along the path the First Woman was taking. The First Woman walked past the huckleberries and didn’t pay any attention to them. The Sun tried again, this time making some blackberries grow up along the path she was taking. The First Woman walked past the blackberries and didn’t pay much attention to them either. The Sun tried again. He made a new fruit grow up in the field through which she was walking. The First Woman was walking through the fruit, crushing it under her feet and not paying any attention to it, so the Sun added a scent to the fruit. The scent started drifting up until finally it reached the woman’s nose.



The First Woman stopped and looked around to see from where that wonderful smell was coming. She looked behind her and saw where she had crushed the fruit. She bent down, picked up one of the fruits and smelled it. That was where the wonderful smell was coming from! She took a small bite and it was delicious. She took another bite and it was wonderful. She ate the rest of it and then she looked around and saw the entire field was filled with this new fruit. She thought, “My husband would enjoy this.”

She started gathering the new fruit. When she had finally gathered all that she could carry, she turned and started back to meet her husband. And that was how the First Man and the First Woman came back together again. The First Woman was coming back to share the delicious food with the First Man. Today, this food is red and it is in the shape of a heart because it brought the First Man and the First Woman back together again. We know this food as the strawberry.

This version of the First Strawberry is borrowed from *Long-Ago Stories of the Eastern Cherokee* by Lloyd Arneach (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians), which is available for purchase at the Museum of the Cherokee People.



Cornhusk doll titled "Legend of the Strawberries" made by Victoria "Nichole" Jones Efird (EBCI). Museum of the Cherokee People, object ID: 2025.0096.11.4.



"Strawberry pot" made by Tovah Welch (EBCI). Museum of the Cherokee People, object ID: 2022.0004.



Long-Ago Stories of the Eastern Cherokee written by Lloyd Arneach (EBCI).

