

The Origin Of The Ajaunti People:

Back when the world was new and all men were still as one, a young wife bore two beautiful children, a daughter and a son, as like as could be and blessed in all things.

The woman was very proud of her children and sang often their praises. One morning as she built the fire for breakfast, the young woman said to her mother, "my little daughter is as clever as a cat, and my son is as strong as a little ox!"

"Speak not so!" said her mother. "For the Ancestors will hear your bragging. She who sings before breakfast eats sorrows for supper."

But the woman heard not her mother's wisdom. The next morning she declared, "my little son is as handsome as the sun above, and my daughter shines more brightly than the moon."

"Speak not so!" said her mother. "For the Ancestors will hear your bragging. She who sings before breakfast eats sorrows for supper."

But still the woman heard not her mother's wisdom. On the third morning she declared, "my children learn to speak and their mouths are full of wisdom. They shall be wiser than the Ancestors themselves!"

"Speak not so!" said her mother. "For the Ancestors have heard your bragging and it shall bring sorrow upon yourself and your children also."

Then the old mother went her way and the proud young woman took her children to bathe in the stream. She had bathed herself and her little son when she heard a whispering of many voices passing through the trees towards her. Then the woman was full of shame, for she saw that truly the Ancestors had come to see these children equal to themselves, but her daughter was unclean and not fit to be presented.

Quick as thought, the young woman turned her little daughter into a hare and threw her by her long ears into the briar, saying, "Shame me not, child! Run far and fast, for I would not have my kin behold you." Then the little daughter did as her mother said, and ran from her home as far and as fast as she could.

But the Ancestors heard all that the proud mother said. They followed the little rabbit and when she began to tire of running, they turned her back to a child, and clothed her in brightly coloured silks and soft satins. They put silver rings on her fingers and slippers on her feet. Then they tucked the sleepy child into a cozy tent beside a fire.

At last, the Ancestors returned to the proud young woman. "Where are your children?" they asked her.

She said, "here is my son. Does not he fill your hearts with pride?"

But the Old Ones said, "woman, where is your daughter?"

And the woman said, "I do not know. She wanders so that I can never find her. Take pride in my son and mind her not."

Then the Ancestors became angry and said to the proud woman, "you have sung before breakfast and so you shall eat sorrows for supper.

Forever more your daughter and all her children shall do as you have said: they shall be shamed and shunned of other men, they shall be governed by the words of their mothers and they shall travel long miles all their lives. But they shall be blessed in the eyes of their Ancestors and so, though shamed and shunned, their travels shall always be happy."

Then the Ancestors turned the woman into a tortoise with a great shell upon her back, as heavy as a great stone. They spoke again and said, "your daughters shall never more have homes, and so your home shall weigh heavy upon your heart and you shall not escape it no matter how it may grieve you. Your sons shall live and die for their homes, never venturing to find the joys beyond their walls. As their mother was so unwise, they shall be ruled always by fathers and know not the voices of their Ancestors. Yet their hearts will not forget the passion and joy and wandering that is in their blood, and so your son's sons shall long for your daughter's daughters and many a wife of the builders shall shed bitter tears when your daughters pass through their towns and cause their men to stray. So shall it be."

Then the Ancestors were gone. The son grew to a man and founded a lovely village by that river, but the daughter became the first mother to the first clan of the Ajaunti people.

And always our travels have been happy.