

# **Odamin or The Heart Berry Story**

**Illustrated by Cory Fontaine**

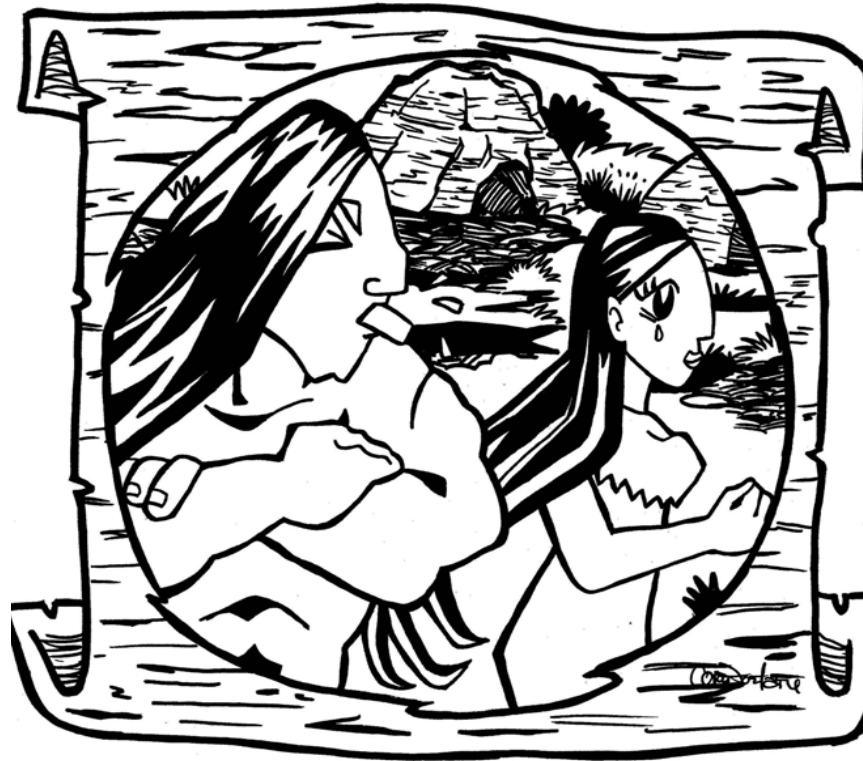


Kay, Flo, and Sara are cousins. Today they have a snow day from school and can spend the day at Grandma's house. The girls played well together all morning. After lunch, they did not agree on what to play. They started quarreling.



Grandma said, "Let's take a break. Kay, Please go and get a package of strawberries out of the freezer and put it on the counter to thaw. When you come back, I will tell you all a story." The girls liked Grandma's stories. They gathered close and listened quietly. This is the story Grandma told.

Long ago when the world was new, a husband and wife lived together happily. Then one day, they started to quarrel and soon they were quarreling all the time. Their life together was all out of balance. As this went on, the man said mean things that hurt the woman's feelings.



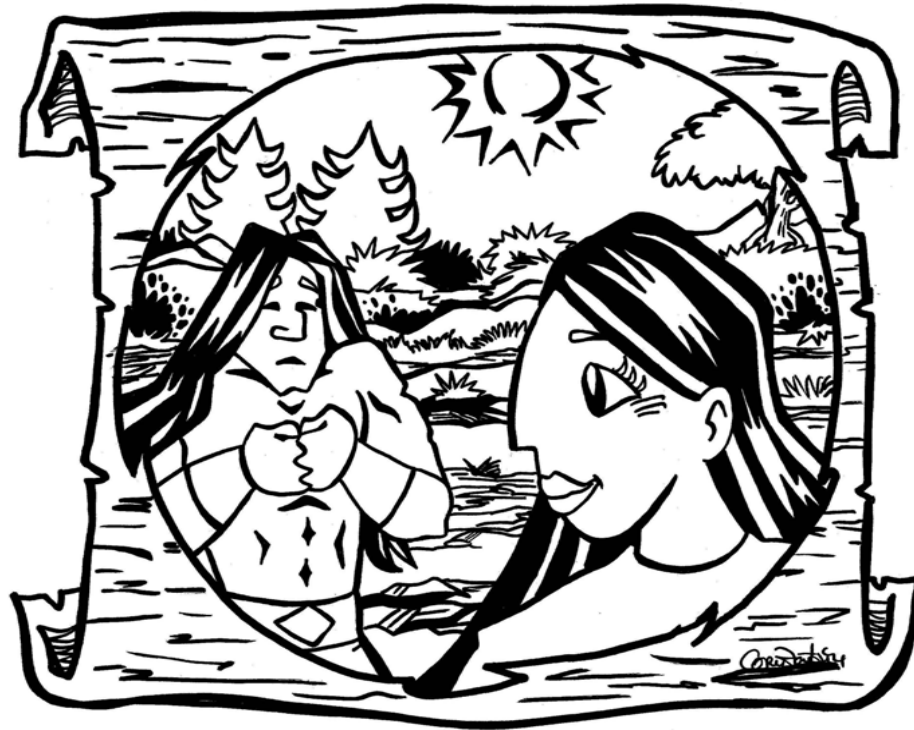


She was so sad that she left their home and walked away through the woods. At first the man said, "Good! It will be nice and quiet here, and I can do what I please."

But after awhile, it was too quiet. Nothing the man did was any fun. He was lonely.



Finally, he just sat and thought about what had happened. Now he felt sorry that he kept on quarreling and said mean things. He prayed, "O, Creator, please bring her back! From now on, I will always treat her kindly."



Creator told him, "You must go after her and tell her that you are sorry. Tell her that you will be kind. If you do that and if you will keep your promise, I will help you."

So, the man hurried after his wife, but she had a big head start. Could he catch up? Would she listen to him?



Far down the path, the woman was walking slowly with her head bowed down. Creator knew that she had often enjoyed picking berries and sharing them with her husband. Berries might make her stay here for awhile. She would stop crying and remember happy times. Her husband could catch up with her.

Creator put a cherry tree full of cherries right in front of her, but her head was bowed, so she did not see it. Creator set a bush with big, juicy blueberries right by the path. Her eyes were full of tears, so she did not see them. She didn't see or stop for blackberries, raspberries, or cranberries.





Now the world was new then and had room for new plants. Creator put a new berry plant, the best berry ever, right on the path in front of the woman. It was a bright red berry shaped like a heart that tasted sweet and tangy and smelled so good. The woman stopped to taste one, and started to remember good, sweet times with her husband. She tried another one and started to cheer up. She stayed and picked more berries.



The man caught up with the woman at the patch of new berries. He said he was sorry and would be kind from now on. The woman said she was sorry for quarreling, too. She gave him some of the berries. They enjoyed the berries together and remembered their happy times. They remembered that they loved each other. Now their lives were getting back in balance.



The husband and wife went back home together. Now they knew they could get back in balance if they quarreled. They lived together the rest of their lives and had many more happy times over the years.

Every year when the heart-shaped berries ripened, they remembered how they almost lost each other. The berries reminded them to be kind to the people they love and keep their lives in balance.

That is why the Anishnaabe call strawberries Odamin, which means heart berry.



"Now, girls," said Grandma, "Let's see if our strawberries are ready to eat. Do you remember the day we picked them?"

"Yes," said Sara. "It was warm and sunny, the birds were singing, and flowers were all around."

"Yes," said Flo. "All of us picked and picked berries, but it was fun. We helped the littler ones."

"Yes," said Kay. "We all worked together. We talked and smiled and laughed."

Grandma looked at the girls.

Kay said, "Well, Flo and I did quarrel a little about who could start picking in the sunny spot, but then we shared it."

"So," said Grandma. "You learned how to get back in balance with each other, too. How did you feel in your hearts when you did that?"

"Happy," said Flo.

"Balanced," said Kay.

"I feel hungry in my tummy, Grandma," said Sara.

Then the girls and Grandma ate their strawberry snack. They remembered good times, and being kind, and keeping their hearts in balance.