

Mo'at breathed a fervent prayer as she watched her daughter and son in law depart for Ikinmaya. When mealtime arrived that evening, she stood up after everyone had gathered to make it obvious to the clan that she had something to say. Respectful silence quickly fell.

"Omaticaya, Jake and Neytiri have left to spend two hands of days together. As a newly mated pair, they need time alone together to learn each other. Since we are all moved into our new Hometree, I told them to go."

Murmurs of approval and understanding came from the crowd, and she continued. "I ask you to think of something while they are gone. It is something that is not pleasant," she warned. "Omaticaya, we owe Jakesully a great debt. He came to us openly to learn our ways. We in return ridiculed him. We mocked him. We called him skxwang. When the Great Sorrow came, we called him betrayer. Liar. Traitor. We closed our eyes and ears to him, even though he passed every test we demanded of him. We did not See that Eywa had changed his heart. We bound him, and almost killed him. We cast him out."

Guilt was appearing on most of the faces in her audience. She continued firmly "In return, he saved us from the insane ones. The great Toruk chose him. He spoke to Eywa – he, a dreamwalker, spoke to Eywa! – on our behalf. And she heard him! He pleaded with Eywa to save **us** – not the Sky People. He destroyed the great flying machine that would have killed the Tree of Souls. He, Toruk Makto, whom we had outcast, risked everything to save us, knowing that his own Sky People would kill him as a traitor if they could."

Mo'at's voice was stern and intimidating. Outright shame was visible across the gathering-place now. "Omaticaya, we owe Jakesully such a debt as no Na'vi has ever owed another. It falls on each of us to See what part of that debt is ours to repay. I ask you to consider how you can repay your part of that debt, as I will be doing." The matriarch sat down, concluding her speech.

The gathering-circle was quiet for a long time.

When Jake and Neytiri returned to the new Hometree from their honeymoon, they received an unexpected surprise. They'd left their new quarters nearly bare, just some spare jewelry and an extra loincloth or two to mark the place as theirs. They'd been so flat-out getting the clan moved into their new home that they hadn't had time to do anything but sleep and run.

What they returned to was a fully furnished living space. Decorations hung on the "walls", a large and beautiful embroidered woven cloth separated the sleeping-space from the rest of the "room," and beautifully woven grass baskets now properly held belongings. They were both amazed. Jake and Neytiri rooted around the room, exclaiming in pleasure at all the thoughtful gifts the Omaticaya had provided.

Neytiri gave a small cry of delight when she opened a small woven basket and found it full of new clay hair pipes and beads. She picked up several and held them up in the light to admire them, wondering where the clay had come from. Jake made a puzzled sound behind her, and she turned to see what he had found.

He was examining a small bag with a beautifully embroidered atokirina pattern on the front. It had shoulder-straps attached to it. Jake was muttering to himself. "A backpack? Pretty small. And it has holes." He opened it to look inside. "It doesn't even have a bottom! Just two straps." He looked up to Neytiri to ask what it was – and found her face flushed a deep embarrassed blue as she watched him. "What? What is it? Did I say something wrong?"

Neytiri was smiling, pleased as well as embarrassed. She walked over to her mate and extended her arms for the bag. "Here. I'll show you." Jake was confused when she put the shoulder-straps on with the odd bag facing forward. It sat awfully low for a backpack. He noted that the top of the bag came up to just under her breasts....

Then he flushed. Hard. He was so embarrassed that his tail whipped back and forth for a moment. Neytiri had to work to keep her smile under control – the phosphorescent spots on Jake's face were almost incandescent. She took refuge in a short Na'vi language lesson to keep herself from laughing out loud. "It is iveh k'nivi s'di n – for a woman to carry a child in. This way she can have her hands free while the child sleeps, or nurses."

Jake flushed even harder. "Very nice" he managed in a strangled tone, and turned to keep examining the room. Neytiri chuckled to herself and took pity on him, taking the carrier off and folding it carefully to put it away in a basket. She couldn't help but brush a hand over the atokirina-embroidery lovingly, knowing the hand that had put it there as well as she knew her own. *Thank you, ma'sa'nok.*

They found some beautiful feathers, some fresh fruits, new leather cords, colorful river stones, new clay cups, and even new loincloths for each of them. They were absolutely overwhelmed by their clan's generosity. Then Neytiri found something that went far beyond the category of 'gift.'

"Jake, come here" she called in a strange tone of voice. He hurried to her side to see what had caught her attention just as she lifted up an oiled leather sheet.

The bow was magnificent. Over two meters long, as much a fighting staff as a ranged weapon. Scarlet, orange, black, and royal blue. "Toruk's colors" Neytiri murmured in amazement. She picked up an arrow with fletching colored to match the bow. The shaft could have come off of a lathe, it was so straight and perfect.

She gasped in recognition and held the arrow out to Jake for his inspection “Toruk’s teeth!” she exclaimed.

Jake looked; sure enough, the arrowheads were the very teeth from the old Leonopteryx skull from the fallen Hometree. The ancient and fragile skull had surely been shattered into pieces, but someone had gone to great lengths to reclaim these. Both of them were incredibly touched. “This is the work of Ral’ai” Neytiri said quietly. “He is the best bow-maker the Omaticaya have had for many generations.” Jake nodded and hefted the bow; it felt perfect in his hand.

That evening Jake walked into the gathering-circle as the clan assembled for the evening meal proudly carrying the new bow. Murmurs arose across the cavernous space as people saw him and his weapon. He walked across the circle at a slow, formal pace and approached Mo’at, who stood up when he stopped before her. The whispered conversations quickly ceased as everyone wanted to hear what he would say.

“Tсахик Mo’at” he said clearly “would you ask Eywa to give her blessing to my new bow and arrows? I promise that they will always be used in Her service, and in the service of the People.”

Mo’at was very proud of her son in law. *He learns the ways of the Na’vi quickly* she thought to herself. She glanced to Jake’s side, a smile on her face as she briefly locked eyes with Neytiri. *No doubt you have a great deal to do with that, my daughter.*

The Tсахик returned her attention to the Olo’eyctan and held her hands out over the bow that he offered on outstretched palms. “Eywa, we ask that You grant Your blessing to this bow, these arrows – and the man that bears them. Keep them strong for war and for peace, to nurture and protect Your children always.”

The crowd quietly echoed the sentiment as Jake nodded his thanks and held the bow upright again. He turned around; Neytiri touched his arm and gestured with her chin across the cavern. He looked in the indicated direction and saw an older Omaticaya man proudly beaming at him.

Jake walked over to the man and greeted him respectfully. “Ral’ai, I do not have enough words to thank you for such a wonderful bow.” Neytiri quietly interpreted for him to make sure his still-rudimentary Na’vi was not misunderstood.

The bow-maker’s voice was full of satisfaction. “A man who waits until he needs to shoot something to start making a bow is a man who starves – or dies. This bow has been waiting for you for several moons. It whispered to me for a long time, telling me that the arrows it needed were not ready, that the man it was meant for was not here yet. Only when I saw you dismount from Toruk’s back did I know who it was waiting for.” He gestured at the bow “I brought it with me when

Old Hometree fell.” A thought crossed Ral’ai’s mind and he was momentarily concerned. “It is made from the wood of Old Hometree. I could make you one from this Hometree, if you would prefer....”

Jake held up his hand and made the Na’vi gesture of negation, shaking his head also to reinforce it. His voice was a bit thick as he replied “Old Hometree is where I became Omaticaya; it is even more precious to me because of that.” Neytiri’s voice softened and filled with quiet pleasure and pride as she repeated her mate’s words. Ral’ai beamed.

The Olo’eyctan gestured an invitation to sit and asked “Please, tell me the story of my bow. I would very much like to hear it.” The normal crowd-sounds of a contented people slowly rose around them and a number of Omaticaya came over to join them and listen as the bow-maker gladly began the tale.