I will tell you about the things of long ago that
the old people told me
2. They said that long ago there was a man and
his wife
3. And he had gone and married his wife from a
place that was really far away
4. Then he took his wife and settled her in his
own place
5. And one day that wife said, “Uh-uh! Today I
want to go, to go see my people”
6. And her husband agreed and they took food
and set out on the road
7. They just walked—there were none of these
things like trucks
8. And there were no donkeys: Ju/'hoansi just
walked
9. And as they walked and walked and walked,
the food they were carrying, they ate up
10. And when they finished it, they were still
only halfway along the road
11. And when they were halfway along the
road, that meant…
12. The distance they had walked was like the
distance they still were going
13. And they walked and walked, and the things
(animals) they saw
14. They just saw these animals of the bush,
carnivores (lions),
15. They walked along and they were dying of
hunger
16. And as they walked and walked and walked, the man almost...
17. Other people in fact had told him that the wife he married,
18. Could turn herself into a lion,
19. A little carnivore, a lion
20. And as they just walked and walked and walked
21. Nights, days, nights
22. And the man said, “Uh-uh! My wife! I long ago heard someone say
23. That you could turn yourself into a lion.
24. Why don’t you change yourself and go kill some meat for us to eat?
25. And the woman said “Yes, my husband,
26. If I change myself, you will later fear me.”
27. “You’ll see that if I am a lion, you’ll fear me and run away.”
28. But her husband said “Uh-uh, I’m really hungry”
29. “Won’t you just try it and we’ll both see what I’ll do?”
30. “I am a man!”
31. So his wife and her fingernails also began to change and change.
32. And she changed and he watched how her gait changed.
33. Her husband, as it looked to him, she was changing, changing.
34. Then the husband called, he called that his wife had just changed,
35. That she was a real carnivore, a lion.
36. And she went and killed an eland, killed a gemsbok.
37. She killed--she stalked them, she stalked like a carnivore,
38. Jumped and killed, and then called,
39. Called her husband who had gone up a tree and said,
40. My husband, come down, let’s eat meat”
41. But her husband said, “Uh-uh, I won’t come down.”
42. “Why should I come down, because you’re still a carnivore.”
43. “And if I come down and go (to where the meat is), you will eat me.”
44. She said, “Come down and let’s go eat meat.”

45. “So you’re going to come down.”
46. He refused. He said, “If you want me to come down, then change and be a woman.”
47. His wife changed and was that woman who looked like his wife.
48. So he came down and they went and ate meat and roasted it and ate it,
49. And roasted it, and cut some of it into strips.
50. And he said, “Hey! Have I in fact married a good wife?”
51. I would have died: as I’m standing here, hunger would have killed us along the road
52. If I had married another wife who was lazy that would not have been good,
53. And we would never have gotten home,
54. Hunger nearly killed us along the road.
55. So they carried the meat home and his old people ate it.
56. And people praised him. Saying “Yes, my son, you have married a real wife, you have married a good wife.”
57. That story is finished there.
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Tim Matthews, author and Colleen Cousins, illustrator, *Tales of the Secret Valley* (English)
*Ngano dze Mhute yeVaTonga* (Shona)
*Twaana twaMusena Usiiikide* (Tonga)
[There is also a Ndebele version]
