THE WILD ONES

WISDOM OF

AROUND THE WORLD IN

7 FOLK TALES...



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CREDITS & THANK YOUS ..... (3-4)

ABOUT THE PROJECT ..... (5-7)

1. TONKOTSU ..... (8-16)

2. TREE ISLAND ..... (17-28)

3. MILAGROSA ..... (29-36)

4. RIO ..... (37-46)

5. NILE ..... (47-57)

6. LITUANICA ..... (58-65)

7. DON FRANCISCO Y LA LUNA ..... (66-73)

CREDITS & THANK YOUS

BOOK ILLUSTRATION:

Rebecca Teague

COVER DESIGN:

Alisa Ruzavina & Rebecca Teague

STORY WRITERS & EDITORS:

Alisa Ruzavina
Meg Davies
Ruth Boon
Harrison Charles

SPECIAL STORY CREDITS:

1. The Crane Returns a Favour
Thank you to Ken Yamanda, the co-founder of Tonkotsu for his guidance towards the mighty bird.
Writing is interpreted based on the story by Chihiro Iwasaki.

2. The Enchanting Encounter of Doctor Bird and Hibiscus
Blessings and big gratitude to Anthony, the owner of Tree Island for great chats and a perfect introduction to Jamaica's national symbols Story interpretation has been rooted in The Legend of the Hibiscus, told by Kamsha R. Maharaj.

3. Si Malakas At Si Maganda
Infinite gratitude to the Ramos family, the owners of Milagrosa for being so enthusiastic and generous with their contribution to the project. Your authentic passion for sharing your cultural heritag with the world is truly inspiring. Thank you to Lourice Ramos for all the communications and a very special thank you to Lourdelyn Ramos for taking time to write the initial structure story and to record with us.

4. The Girl and The Twelve Months
Thank you to Irina, the manager of Rio for your warm welcome. Story shared here is based on the fairytale found in collection of writings Folk Tales and Fables From Bulgaria, translated by Diana Nikolova.

5. The Land of the Cedars
Thank you to Hanam and their partner, the owners of restaurant Nile, for sharing cedar's importance for the culture of Lebanon.The story is based on The Epic of Gilgamesh, the poem from Ancient Mesopotamia regarded as the earliest surviving notable literature.

6. The Wild Howls of the Iron Wolf
Big thank you to Yurata, Lituanica's manager who guided us towards this story. Writing is inspired by the medieval legend of how Vilnius was founded, first written in the Lithuanian Chronicles in the 16th
century.

7. The Garden of Health
Thank you to Margarita and her partner, the directors of Don Francisco y La Luna, for providing us with great starting points and being a total delight to work with .The Garden of Health is based on the story by Juan Munoz Escomez, found in Fairy Tales from Spain.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

WISDOM OF THE WILD ONES: AROUND THE WORLD IN 7 FOLK TALES is an art trail & storytelling experience, celebrating ECOLOGICAL FOLKLORE that can be found on Walthamstow High Street.

Local artist Alisa Ruzavina has worked with seven international businesses to highlight their diverse heritage by working with traditional ecologically-focused fables from their motherlands and creating window art installations and as a playful way to bring out nature onto the High Street.

The project celebrates the abundance of cultures that makes the High Street the unique and exciting destination that it is. Using folk stories as a way to invite the viewers to honour and learn from the wisdom of seasons, animals and plants, project's hope is to encourage more curiosity and care for the more-than-human world that surrounds us.

Wisdom of the Wild Ones can be found in the windows of Tonkotsu (Japan), Tree Island (Jamaica), Milagrosa (Philippines), Rio (Bulgaria), Nile (Lebanon), Lituanica (Lithuania) and Don Francisco Y La Luna (Spain), until 7th of January, 2022.

Artist-led Walks through the location with live performative storytelling, music and traditional food tasting take place on the 4th of December: 4-6:30 pm & 7-9:30 pm.

.

HIGH STREET ADVENTURES

Around the World in 7 Folk Tales was commissioned by **ARTILLERY** for High Street Adventures – an exciting evening of arts, performances, workshops and discovery along Walthamstow High Street as a way to celebrate local richness on a Small Business Saturday

ABOUT THE ARTIST

ALISA RUZAVINA is a multi-disciplinary artist and facilitator, passionate about designing accessible ecocentric experiences and tools that engage diverse communities with collective imagining of more joyful greener worlds. Using colour, print and sustainable making methods as her signature, she craft installations, workshops, objects, textiles, activities and games as avenues for hope-fuelled Earth-adoring storytelling. Her curiosity lies in conversing with people and inviting them into explorations of alternative forms of knowledge - cross-cultural, indigenous & interspecies ways of relating and being that cultivate and nourish the development of the ecological self. Find Alisa on Instagram @alisa.ruzavina, or stop by her studio near St James Park for a nice tea.

STORYTELLING & ART TRAIL MAP

TONKOTSU

1.



2. TREE ISLAND

3. MILAGROSA

4. RIO

5. NILE

6. LITUANICA

DON FRANCISCO

7. Y LA LUNA

TONKOTSU

TONKOTSU is a delicious Japanese ramen restaurant, that is on a mission to create the best bowl of ramen you can get in London! Their slogan is: "If you don't make your own noodles, you're just a soup shop". Starting out as a weekly pop up ran by two friends – Emma and Ken, Tonkotsu has now grown into a legendary sole destination for ramen, taking great care in making every noodle, curry, gyoza and broth from scratch. They can't wait to slurp with you soon!

Come for a visit Sun-Friday
Unit 4, 202 Hoe St, London E17 4BS.
Opening hours: 12-9:30

Scan the code to listen to the audio narration of the folk tale :

THE CRANE RETURNS A FAVOUR

JAPANESE

TALE ON THE VALUE OF CARE.

TSURU-NO-ONGAESHI

Long, long ago in a far away land there lived an old man. One day, he decided to venture through the snowy mountains of Japan to find some inner peace and clarity of mind. The man has been very poor for all of his life and that troubled him deeply. As he plunged his feet through the thick bright snow, he reflected on his life of hard work but a life filled with lots of love and good deeds nonetheless. All of a sudden a brilliant white crane came swooping down and crashed to the ground at the old man's feet. The crane shook her snow-glistened feathers and the man could see the bird was trembling in pain. The backdrop of the giant white mountains glowed behind them. Snowy peaks shone in the cold icey sun reflecting exuberant bright light, reflecting the shine of the crane's iridescent marvelous feathers. Indeed this was a very special magnificent creature of astounding beauty, but beyond the bird's obvious majesty there was a sharp profound sense of deep pain permeating crane's eyes. A sense of helplessness aching for protection and care in a very vulnerable moment.

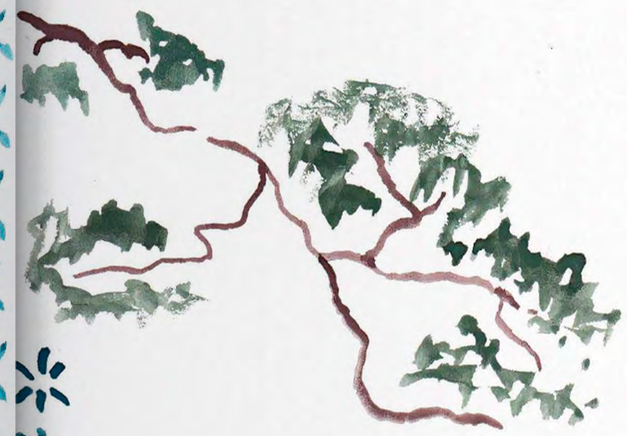
As the man inspected the bird further, he saw that an arrow had pierced through one of her wings. Droplets of red blood spilled out onto the snow like little scarred pearls. Taking pity on this fragile bird, the old man pulled out the arrow and cleaned the wound with some of the supplies he'd brought on his journey. Over a period of a few weeks, the old man cared for the crane. With every day their friendship grew more and more, and this phenomenal bird and the old man formed a loving bond. Every morning he spent in the mountain the man would wake to the beautiful song the crane would sing just for him . Thanks to the man's gentle care and attention, the crane was soon able to fly again.

On his way back home after a few weeks spent nursing and nurturing the bird in the mountains, the man saw the crane take off and fly right up to the skies, circle three times over the old man's head, letting out a loud gracious cry as if to say thank you, and fly away into the dusk.

That night as the darkness drew closer, the old man made his way home, coping with quite a bit of sadness, having to say goodbye to his new feathered friend sooner than he hoped. He truly grew to love this graceful and beguiling bird. When he got home he nestled with his wife by the fire and shared with her the story about this profound encounter. All of a sudden, the couple heard a quiet knock at the door. They were surprised to see a beautiful young woman on their doorstep. She explained she had lost her way in the dark and the snow and was looking for lodging. The couple, being kind at heart, took her in.t

The couple and the girl took a liking to one another and one day has passed without them noticing and then another- such a good time they were having together. The stay naturally prolonged and the young woman ended up staying to live with them. She would help around the house and around their garden, she cooked them meals and helped them with washing. It was wonderful - having this sweet new presence of this compassionate young lady in their lives but the couple worried, they didn't have much money and didn't know if they had enough food to feed three mouths. But their worries soon dissipated, as the young woman had with her a magical bag of rice that was always replenishing itself and never got empty, no matter how much they ate. Thanks to this, the three of them never went hungry.

The beautiful girl was kind and hardworking, and the couple began to love her like their daughter, the daughter they never had and always dreamed of.



Each day at night after doing all the house chores, the young woman locked herself away in her room and weaved on a loom that she asked the old man to build for her. Each night she produced the most beautiful cloth, the softest most luxurious and stunning fabric the old couple had ever seen. The softness melted away in their hands and the cloth shimmered in multi coloured spectrum when kissed by the sunrays. As the cloth shimmered, iridescent colours and patterns created a beauty that was heavenly to behold. Every time anyone saw the cloth, something about the softness, the delicate texture and beautiful colours attracted them to touch it, to take in its warmth. Each new piece of cloth was as charming as the last, without fail - every day.

Eventually, after much encouragement and convincing from the girl , the old man took the cloth to a nearby market, where everyone was rummaging around searching for something special and unique.

The old man waited patiently until, as he suspected, the cloth caught the eye of the many people exploring the market. He ended up selling the cloth for a very high price.

He continued to do this week in, week out and soon they became very rich as tales and rumours about the shimmering heavenly cloth spread to towns and villages far and wide. No-one could get enough of the hypnotising fabric. They earned more money than they could have ever imagined. They ate rich meals and celebrated their newly found long-dreamed of abundance.

However, there was one condition to this joy: the young woman said, "You must never look at me while I work, not even a tiny peak," as she closed herself in the small room day in and day out. Something about this worried the couple, seeing her work so hard, for such long hours and not knowing what exactly the process entailed. The other thing that worried them was that the more she worked, the more slender and ill-looking she became.

As their worry grew, their curiosity grew too. What could she possibly be doing to be creating such extraordinary fabric? How was it possible? Where was she getting the magnificent iridescent thread from? Soon the old man couldn't stand it any longer. He couldn't resist the temptation and desperate to know the young woman's secret, he peeked into the room. But what a sight he saw, oh dear! It made him gasp out loud while he stood frozen in shock at the sight! It was not the woman but the beautiful white crane sitting at the loom, plucking out her own feathers using them for thread. Startled by the unexpected disturbance, the crane spoke:

"I am that crane that you once rescued in the snowy mountains. I wanted to repay you so I came to you in the form of a woman, to weave you beautiful cloth from my feathers so that you could be well and prosperous. This has been a way for me to thank you for your kind heart. But now you have seen me in my true form, I can stay here no longer."

With her delicate wing, she handed the man the final cloth. "I leave you this to remember me by." The crane then flapped her huge, elegant wings and flew out the door and away into the deep blue sky.

After this special encounter, the old couple lived their last decades in ultimate wellness and abundance. They never wanted nor needed anything ever again as they indeed had all they needed, and more. For as they knew, cranes bring the blessings of longevity and good fortune. And the old man was content, knowing that his favour was gracefully returned. Every day until the end of their days the couple woke with deep gratitude for the generosity and kindness their crane friend blessed them with. And a slight sadness for their winged friend leaving so soon.



GRAINS OF WISDOM FROM THE WILD ONES

Ah! Isn't it wonderful to know that the world operates in these reciprocal ways? The more you care for this wild world – the more it cares for you. We all know - when a kind heart radiates its kindness outwards – only good things can come its way. There is something to be said about the mysterious flows of energies and networks that connect and interlink all beings alive on this Earth. We are in this subtle exchange together, so synchronicities might not be so accidental after all. We are entangled in this web of responsibility and care with not just humans, but with our wild neighbouring creatures as well.The story of friendship shared here is a fine example of nature nurturing and supporting us in return when we take time out of our busy life to do our part, to care for other beings.

We live in an interesting time in history – some call it the age of the Anthropocene, the era of the human at the centre stage of shaping our geological time. Being quite possessed by our strive for development and conquest, humanity forgot to give back to the ground we stand on, to the soil we owe all our food to, to the trees and plants we owe our fresh breaths to. Nature keeps on giving and giving, providing for us, her children to no end. But just like the crane getting more slender with each feather plucked, no-one can give forever without getting much back.

Can we remember to step back into the flow of regular exchange of giving and taking? If we step into these life-long cycles of responsibility in front of other beings, how would our lives change? Would you start tending to a garden? Or maybe doing regular trash clearouts in the local forest? Or helping out in a nature sactuary? Or maybe just getting a bird feeder for winter? Nature is abundant at its core but we cannot be just taking from her without giving anything back. How can you contribute to regeneration of this world? Can you keep to the promise you have made to the wild world when you were born – that you will do your part and never take without giving something back?



TREE ISLAND

Searching for a bit of a cheerful lift? Look no further! This, my dear friends, is the epicentre of the most glorious good vibes. Coloured in bright greens and yellows, with doors always wide open welcoming all in with a smile, Tree Island have always got that good Jamaican music playing, with swarms of returning customers all dancing to the sweet tunes while waiting in the queue. Tree Island is a veteran business, they have been on the High Street for over 15 years and shall stay forever more, which is no small feat. Orchestrated by a talented chef and charismatic owner Anthony, this place is the one you'll be drawn to come back to over and over, like a good friend's house, especially on those extra gloomy days. Inside here, the sun is always shining, the bellies are always content and full and the cheer goes on come rain or shine.

Come visit every day 9 am- 7 pm
10, Palace Parade, High St, London E17 7BU

Scan the code to listen to the audio narration of the folk tale :

The enchanting encounter of DOCTOR BIRD & HIBISCUS



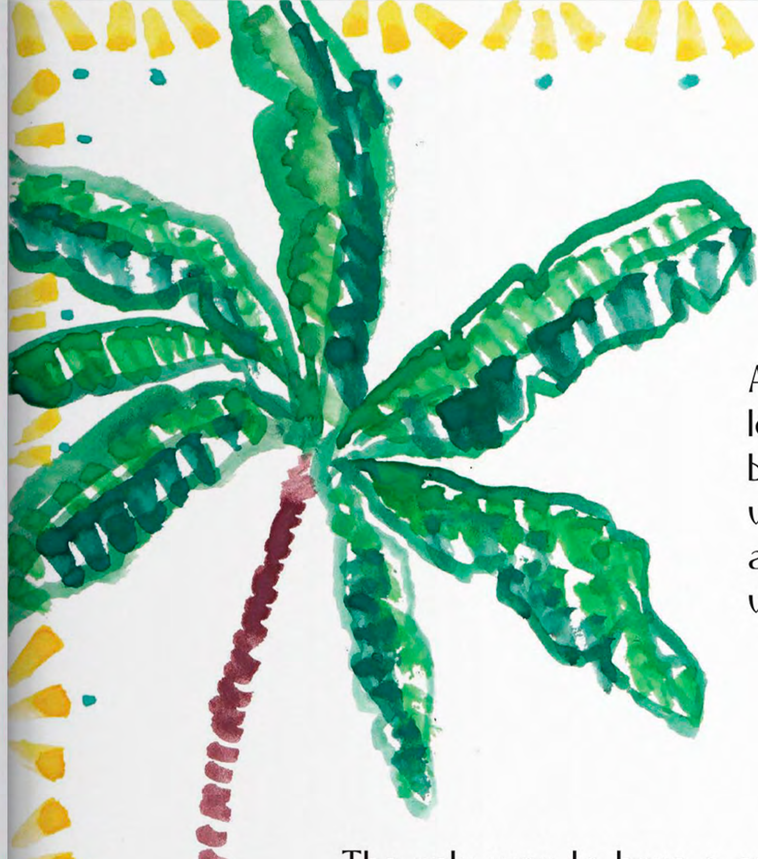
THE GREATEST LOVE AFFAIR OF...

JAMAICA

If you've ever seen a hummingbird, you might have an idea of Doctor Bird's good looks. But Doctor Bird is a special kind of hummingbird, he can only be found on the island of Jamaica. In fact, Doctor Bird is the national bird! He has shiny, fluorescent green wings, a bright red bill, and two long thin tail feathers - a very elegant bird indeed. But many wonder, why on earth is this scissor-tailed hummingbird called a doctor? Let us tell you the legend, a little story about love at first sight.

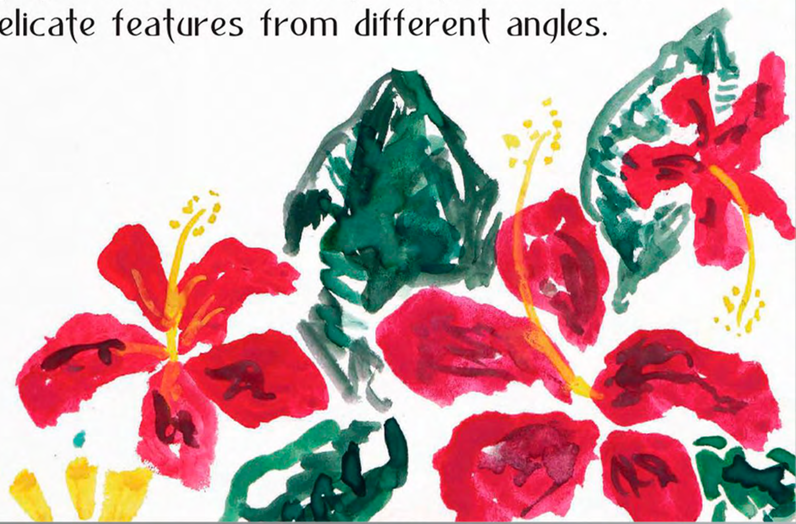
Once upon a time, deep in the enchanted forests of Jamaica, there was a beautiful flower named Hibiscus.
Hibiscus had wide colourful leaves that faded from pink to a deep orange in the centre. She had a beautiful pistil that reached from the centre of herself in dainty fashion. The flower was heavenly and because all creatures, creatures of day and creatures of night, admired its beauty with great praise and regard, the flower began to fall in love with itself. She became so infatuated with herself that she started to shout loud for all to hear, 'Oh, how beautiful I am! There is no other more beautiful than me!" Hibiscus told every forest native she met, from the doves and the deer to the bees and the trees.

A tiny green bird fell in love with the flower's beauty. However, he wanted to be able to gaze at Hibiscus without interruption. The only way to have a good view of the
beautiful flower was to visit her at night so as to watch her sleeping in peace. The impeccable beauty of the flower was even more radiant while the flower relaxed and slept. Oh how gentle and lovely the flower was when it was humbled by sleep and preoccupied by dreams.



A tiny green bird fell in love with the flower's beauty. However, he wanted to be able to gaze at Hibiscus
without interruption.

The only way to have a good view of the beautiful flower was to visit her at night so as to watch her sleeping in peace. The impeccable beauty of the flower was even more radiant while the flower relaxed and slept. Oh how gentle and lovely the flower was when it was humbled by sleep and pre-occupied by dreams. Its beauty was so much more delicate, gentle and true. The little bird would sit on a nearby tree branch and stay very quiet so as not to wake up the flower and continue to admire her beautiful delicate features from different angles.



However, with sunrise, the flower would be back to its boasting self! Ah, and it was quite tiresome for all. She'd continue waking all the other creatures up with her self-loving praise as if like a cockerel signing to the morning sun. Hibiscus was so loud that even Mother Nature herself heard Hibiscus's obsessive cries and became wary of her indelicate manner, arrogance, and constant boasting. She travelled down to the jungle and sought her out to teach her a lesson. Mother Nature told Hibiscus, "I did not make you so beautiful to be obsessed with yourself, I made you that way so that you could be humbled by the power your beauty has. I wanted you to remind others of the delicacy of beauty in this world. For your vanity, your beauty will only last one day. From sun-up, you will be at your best. But when the sun goes down, your beauty will fade as the dusk approaches.""

As the dusk approached the green bird snuck as usual to watch his beautiful flower in peace and silence but what he saw was the horror of his much loved flower perishing, turning into ashes, losing its beauty into the darkness. He fell into complete panic and shock that soon transformed into determination to save his sweetheart. His little heart pounded with the power of great love and the bird decided to heal the flower from perishing, no matter what the cost And you see, back in the old days, in the days when this story was written, doctors used to dress up very smart with a top hat and tailcoat.

So the bird thought he should do the same. He dressed himself up in a smart doctor's outfit hoping it would take him closer to acquiring the wisdom and knowledge a doctor would need. So the green bird got his friends the hardworking bees to sew him a little coat with long tails, two streams of shiny black that with time would merge as one with his feathers.

His long scissor-tail feathers signified to him and all the creatures of the earth that he was smartly dressed and ready to see his patients.

And just like that with his new beautiful coat this humble creature of the sky emerged into their new role of the Doctor Bird. Flattering from flower to flower in search of his perishing, beloved Hibiscus. With his long red bill, as if injecting whispers of sweet nothings directly to the flowers' core, he tried to rescue his lover before the dusk would set over the earth. Yet his lover has many look-alikes and every day he found more and more! Doctor Bird got so busy visiting all his flower patients that even his wing muscles had developed to beat to the tune of his heart's longing which was to care and help all flowers in need, a haze of desperate loving motion. He was now able to hover in the air, wings beating so fast they would turn into a blur.



This made sure he was able to move fast to be able pollinate all the flowers in need so that they could live and survive into the future.

Doctor Bird flies so fast that his wisdom has developed too, to keep up with this new speed. Now, he's impossible to catch. There is even a song about how clever he is...

(In Patois:)

Doctor Bud a Cunny Bud,
Hard Bud Fi Dead,
Lick im down him get up,
Hard Bud Fi Dead,
Shoot im down im fly away,
Hard Bud Fi Dead,
Doctor Bud a Cunny Bud,
Build im nest a low limb,

To be the most precise surgeon a bird can be, the Doctor bird developed a way to move back and forth, humming a joyous hum as he rapidly flattered his wings. That's how Doctor Bird became the hummingbird. Moving from flower to flower in search of his sweetheart
hibiscus and, more often than not, getting lost in sweet scents of other flowering ones longing for help of this hard-working pollinator.

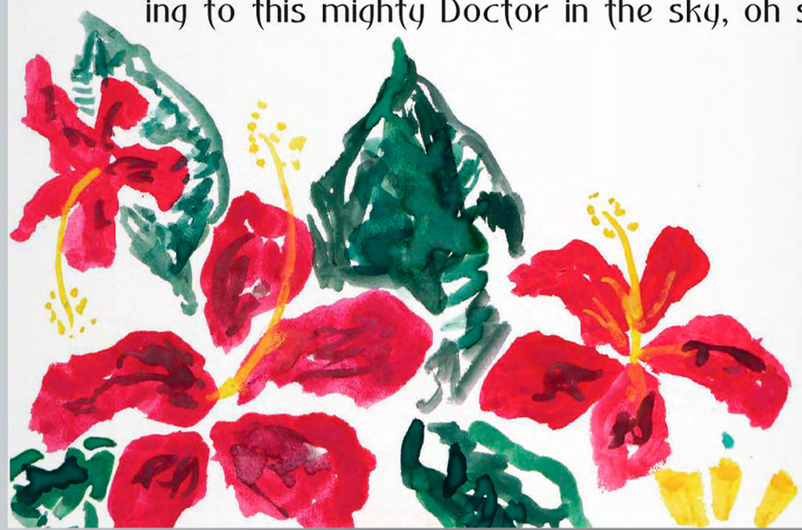
Grateful for his visits and whispers of sweet support and encouragement, flowers of the land pay him back with lots of sweet nectar to drink. The flowers are so generous with him, Doctor Bird often drinks up to two times his body weight in one day. But as he moves from plant to plant, he carries pollen, helping more and more flowers to come to life.

Doctor Bird is on a mission and therefore he's always in motion, always on the go; never stopping during the day, trying to pollinate as many hibiscuses and other flower friends as he can find. This precious bird only ever rests at night, while dreaming of his love staying alive all the way into the night, like in the sweet fading memories of the past. Although he never really manages to get even one hibiscus blooming past the sunset, he powers on and on by obeying discreetly to the pounding of his small heart that contains this big vast love, propelling him to move forward into each day with a fresh tingling sliver of new hope.

For his hard work and commitment to the wellness of all flowers, as well as in honour of his benevolent spirit and impeccable beauty, many humans started noticing, adoring and respecting this special Bird and soon he became a Jamaican national symbol, a character to aspire to and to learn from.



And ah, how the sweet Doctor Bird can feel,how he is loved and celebrated all around this beautiful joyous country of Jamaica. Doctor Bird is always grateful for his human friends who learnt to love hibiscus just as much as he does - as a way to honour and celebrate the force that propels the world forward, a force that is love. Humans drink Sorrel in his honour, the wondrous brew of deep red made of hibiscus, a national drink that tastes like nothing you've ever tasted before; sweet and sour to the lips all at once. The humans celebrate the power of true love and good spirit, toasting to this mighty Doctor in the sky, oh so very often!



In case you want to taste a sip of love in liquid form for yourself, please feel free to alchemise it in your kitchen!

Here is a precious Sorrel recipe past down from one grandmother to another.

INGREDIENTS:

Dried hibiscus – grated fresh ginger- all spice berries – cinnamon sticks - cloves- orange peel – sugar

THE PROCESS:

1 -Boil water in a saucepan.
2 - Add in hibiscus, ginger, berries, cloves, and orange peel.
3 - Let mixture steep for about an hour in the pan.
4 - Meanwhile, make the simple syrup by adding 1 cup sugar and 1 cup of water to a saucepan, and cook on low heat, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. As soon as sugar is dissolved, remove from heat and let it cool and set aside.
5 - Strain sorrel juice into a pitcher and sweeten with the made syrup, to taste.
6 - Serve over ice and garnish with orange and lime wedges.
7 – Don't forget to raise a glass to Jamaica's greatest love story, to the love of Doctor Bird for the tasty hibiscus, a passion that keeps all flowers pollinated and in bloom!



GRAINS OF WISDOM FROM THE WILD ONES

Once considered impossible, we now know that so much of nature is built on symbiosis. Symbiosis can be defined in simple terms as a mutually beneficial relationship between two organisms that are of a different kind. So many nature beings have co-evolved with each other, paving a particular mutually-corresponding path for their evolution, while developing and adapting to and with each other. Have the flowers evolved their anatomy in perfect accordance to the shape of the bees or the bills of the hummingbirds, or have the hummingbirds developed their beaks because of the structures of the flowers? Can we, humans, also find ways to develop patterns of symbiosis with the living and learn to adapt and live together with our surrounding ecology, rather than pretend we are apart from it? What benevolent function can we provide to the natural ecosystem around us, that only we, humans, can serve? Could it possibly be the gift of your creativity and imagination or your gift of care and planting? What other ways can you think of to become an aspiring nature symbiont?

You see, true symbiosis requires deep listening to the needs of the other. Have you ever tried listening, really listening to a tree? Have you ever attempted to truly hear the song of the blue tit? If the bluebells had something to say to you, what would they share? The answers might not be straight-forward, and you might be left wondering in the vague unknown, left with just a faint call of your intuition. If that is so, I would like to congratulate you, first step towards getting closer to the way of deep listening is complete – letting go of prescribed answers and ways, connecting to nature beings with all your senses rather than trying to rationalise and explain with your brain.

A brilliant gift of an approach here from the precious Doctor Bird is to treat the world as somebody (not some thing) that you love - deeply and profusely. Can we become nature's lovers? How would you treat the earth differently if you acknowledged the unstoppable pounding heart in your chest filled with of commitment for the great love of nature running through your veins? What if this ecological relationship became your priority?

And let's recall an important lesson from the hibiscus to add a certain urgency to the matter– beauty is not everlasting and neither is our time on this precious planet. No matter what your age, next day for us is never guaranteed. Can we live in passionate love, celebration and service to the Earth as if this day is our last day, making sure to enjoy Mother Nature's gifts to the fullest but also giving back in plenty



MILAGROSA

If Alice in Wonderland was set in Asia, it would for sure take place in Milagrosa. Stepping into this phenomenal shop feels like being five years old again and entering the candy shop of your dreams, only this time there not just your sweet tooth will be satisfied but all your needs for sour, pungent, bitter, unexpected flavours will be definitely fulfilled.

Ran by the Ramos family with Lourice and Lloyd at the forfront, a hip, creative and kind-hearted sister-brother power duo from the Phillipines, this shop is stocked up with fun treats to the brim. Filled with colorful wrappers on every corner, Mllagrosa import delicacies, snacks and grains from all corners of East Asia including the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Japan, and many more. Come explore and I bet you'll find something unusual you've never tasted before!

Visit every day 10 am - 6 pm,
Sunday 11 am - 5 pm
148, 146 High St, London E17 7JS

Scan the code to listen to the audio narration of the folk tale :

Si Malakas AT Si Maganda

CREATION MYTH FROM THE PHILIPPINES

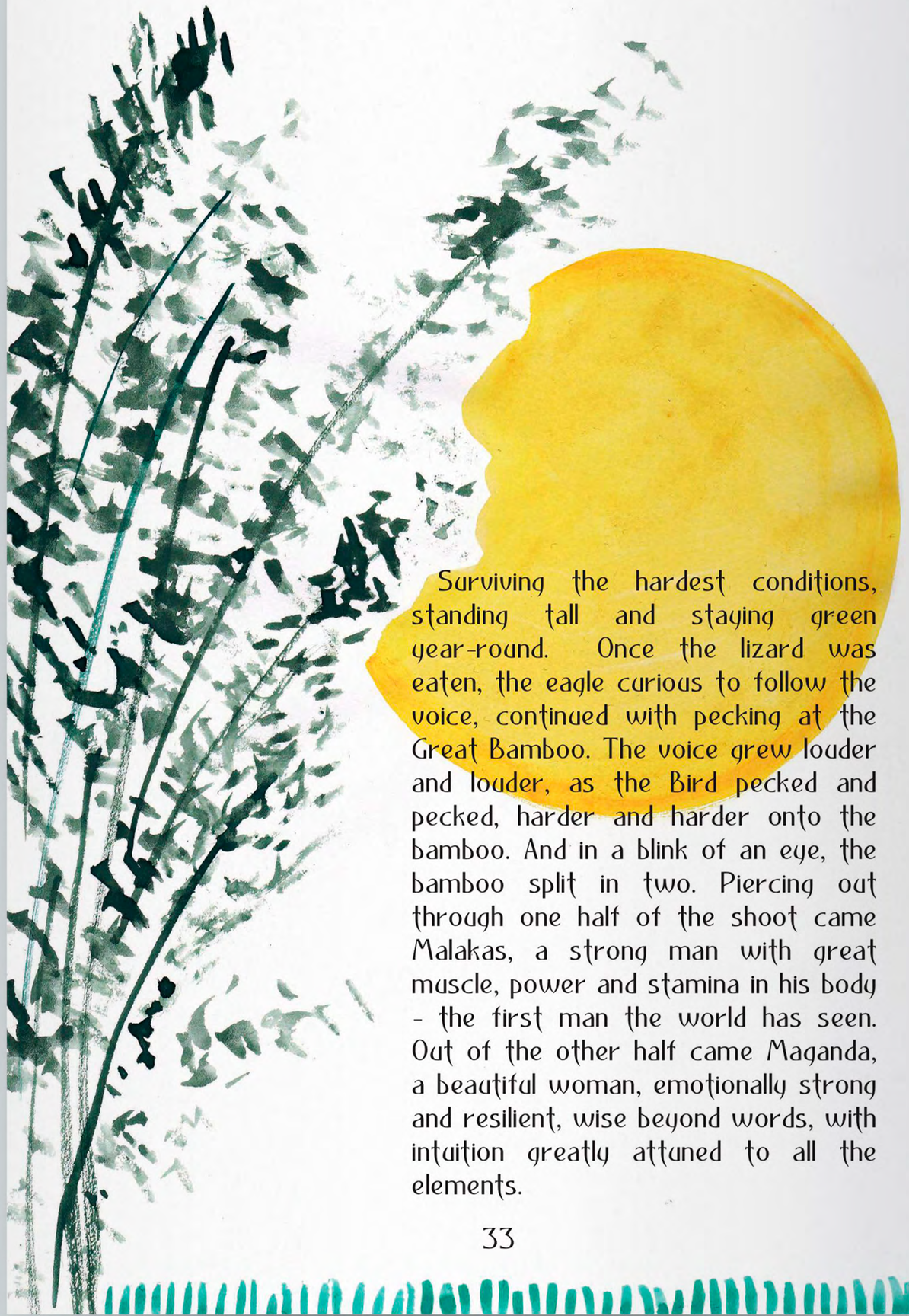
It was told that once upon a time, there was only the SKY. And then there was the SEA. A vast expanse over the earth, a great mirror to the sky. In between the sky and sea, there was a huge bird. This grand bird of prey was the King of Birds, the Great Eagle, hovering over the infinite stretch of the horizon. His sandy kaleidoscope of feathers created grand wings casting the only shadow over the sea. One day the great God became sad and alone. He was bored because he could not see or hear anything but the flapping of the bird's wings, the whistling of the wind and the slow movement of water. The sun rose, bright as a gold and the heavens were embellished with clear blue skies. In a distance the full moon peeked amidst the darkness with thousands of sparkling and twinkling stars.

The Bird flew endlessly until finally he got thirsty, hungry, tired and bored. The sky was above him, but he could not reach it. Below him was the sea and he could not land on it. The Bird became frustrated and discontented at the sea for being so useless and not having a single cliff to rest on. The sea sensing the Birds' anger got agitated and weary in return, splashing massive waves from side to side. Seeing the hassle and disturbance created by the Bird for he had no place to rest, God took pity on the tired creature and made the sea throw rocks up into the sky. The sky turned dark, stormy and fiery. It poured, and poured, and poured it down with the darkest of dark waters. Then the sky showered massive rocks down upon the sea, until the point the stones gathered momentum and as if having a mind of their own, magnetised to each other and formed the shape of a very special archipelago. These became the islands of the Philippines. Thousands of islands gathered under one name. 7 640 islands to be precise!

But the storm did not end here. Thunder and lightning kissed passionately, spreading electricity into the tortured sky and throwing more and more water onto the newfound earth. The bird was horrified and flew as fast as he could. He flew quick onto one of the newly created islands with lush freshly watered bountiful forest all around. He flew so fast, he almost crashed into the Giant Bamboo bending in the wind. Slowing down now after the frenzy commotion of the storm of creation, the Bird opened his eyes and gazed at the colours he'd never seen or dreampt of before, a vibrance of nature wildly expanding his imagination,
previously bound solely to the infinite stream of the sky and the sea. The new land was indeed a living organism
breathing life into itself, creating, propagating, growing by the hour. Oh, what a lush sight it was! The eagle decided to stop and rest here, right amidst the Great Bamboo, taking in the beauty of his surroundings, trying to comprehend what life is present here, on this newfound Earth. And maybe, just maybe, what is it he can have for lunch on these newly created territories...

"Knock! Knock! Knock!", all of a sudden the Bird felt a resounding sound coming from the bamboo. He was sure he heard a voice! "Set me free, o, loyal king of birds!", was the plead. "Peck at the bamboo! We can't breathe!"

"It might be a trap!", the bird thought. He then saw an attractive bright lizard crawling over the plant. The starving bird tried to grab the lizard perching on the bamboo, so gracefully bending in the wind. The bamboo was so strong, so flexible and resilient. So tall and slender. "This plant could keep anyone safe through the worst of weather thrown onto the earth by God", thought the Eagle.



Surviving the hardest conditions, standing tall and staying green year-round. Once the lizard was eaten, the eagle curious to follow the voice, continued with pecking at the Great Bamboo. The voice grew louder and louder, as the Bird pecked and pecked, harder and harder onto the bamboo. And in a blink of an eye, the bamboo split in two. Piercing out through one half of the shoot came Malakas, a strong man with great muscle, power and stamina in his body - the first man the world has seen. Out of the other half came Maganda, a beautiful woman, emotionally strong and resilient, wise beyond words, with intuition greatly attuned to all the elements.

Malakas exclaimed – "You freed us, O, King of the birds! You must live with us forever!" But the Bird politely refused. He was a bird after all - "I can't", replied the Eagle. "I am but one bird and my home is the immense blue skies. I travel with the wind. My wings were intended for flight." So instead the `treat Eagle let the two live together by themselves. Malakas and Maganda understood this and walked away hand in hand. They became the first human parents of the land.

The appearance of the human beings puzzled the Bird. To see a faint notion that his pecking had made living flesh was uncanny. He was so perplexed by this he almost forgot he was thirsty. Coming back to his senses after this strange encounter, he swiftly returned to the sky looking out for some newly formed springs of fresh water. The Bird so startled by the grand bang of all creation hardly realized that he met the very first human beings and that he indeed had a primary role in their creation.

Malakas and Maganda lived happily together forever more, always grateful for the Philippine Eagle for starting their life on the beautiful islands of Philippines. The couple had many children, from whom eventually came all the different races of people. Each newborn was unique in his features and as the Malakas and Maganda's children travelled and settled across the earth, the abundance and diversity of life and cultures grew, enriching the beauty and wonder of all creation present of this beautiful planet made up of SKY, SEA¬ and ROCKS.

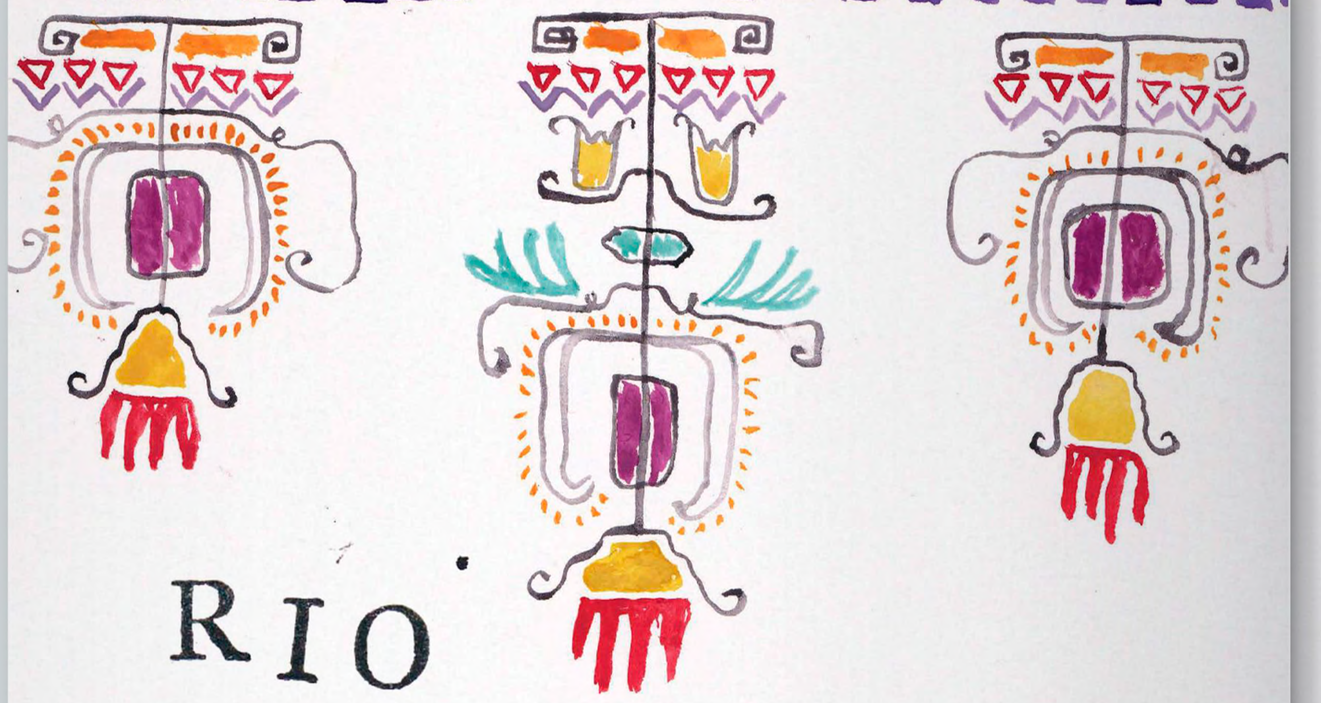
GRAINS OF WISDOM FROM THE WILD ONES

Oh, isn't it so comforting to find that we truly belong here on this Earth. Maybe, just maybe we did not come from heavens but maybe, just maybe, we came from Mother Nature herself. Hidden in the Great Bamboo our ancestors gathered their power, preparing for the birthing of the vast and diverse human race. Doesn't it make so much sense that if we return to the soil when we pass, that it must be that we must have come from the earthly forces as well? What a thought of great comfort that after all, we are not separate from the great web of life. We humans, even with our modern cars and planes, are not apart from but are a part of nature. Let us never forget, we owe our whole existence to the natural world. Let us then live in such way where we acknowledge this in our daily life. Can you find ways to remind yourself that you are part of nature?



Remembering that we owe our liberation to the Great Big Bird, do you treat other beings that are not human – the diverse plants, animals, fungi and insects, with the same respect you would your relatives? Can you start greeting the butterfly, the slug, the squirrel as your kin, acknowledging their presence and ravelling in your interconnection? Let's honour other nature beings as equals. They are all important in their own ways. Remember, intelligence exists in multiplicity of ways. The tree's dispersed intelligence placed in in the chemical signals of its leaves and the nutrient information in the mycorrhizal underground networks should never be compared to the intelligence of our centralised brain. We are different and brilliant in our uniqueness. The worm has the capacity to regenerate half of its body with ease, something you and I will never be to accomplish!

Living in awe of and in relatedness with the natural world makes existence so much more worthwhile. Next time you see a bird flying over your head - remember, this is the great great great ancestor of the bird who liberated our human ancestors, long time ago, trapped in bamboo. Birds wisdom might be different to ours, why not ponder and admire how different yet how interlinked we are?



RIO

Rio Cafe and Bar is the family hub where you can browse authentic Bulgarian food such as liver, beef tongue and home-made rakia from their long detailed menu. Their tasty dishes are served in a cosy space with wooden framing and warm light, a great place to get a sense of an authentic Bulgarian culture. Rio has a real community feel with lovely staff, who will take pride in serving you the best Balkan delicacies to make you feel truly at home.

Open every day, 8am - 11pm
85 High St, London E17 7DB

Scan the code to listen to the audio narration of the folk tale :

THE GIRL & THE TWELVE MONTHS

Bulgarian

FOLK TALE CELEBRATING THE 12 SEASONS

Once upon a time there was a woman who had two daughters. One daughter was her own, the other, a stepdaughter. Out of the two she loved her own child much more. She would regularly shout at her stepdaughter for no reason and was always very unfair to the girl. However, the girl grew up beautiful and compassionate while her own daughter grew pale, sick and malevolent. The mother pondered over this and became bitter. She wondered day and night at how she would get rid of her stepdaughter.

"I hope they take my stepdaughter away, I don't want to set my eyes on her ever again, her health and kindness is turning my daughter rotten" thought the stepmother. Finally, she decided to send the stepdaughter to fetch water from a spring miles away from their home. It was told to her that the spring was flourishing with birds and fauna and that there stood a grand majestic ancient tree. Like an old wise man the tree looked over the spring, it glistened and creaked, spreading its knowledge through the roots under the earth. Yet in the village the people told uncanny stories of dangerous ghosts and witches gathering at night at that very spot, right by this ancient tree. The stepdaughter obeyed her mothers' commandments to go to this mysterious place to fetch her some water, and with nothing but a large copper pot she began her journey just as the church bells struck midnight.

When the girl approached the eerie location, she saw the old, gnarled tree bending down over the water, and under the tree sat eleven men and one old woman aligned in a perfect circle. The men were all very different, some of them old, others young, some short, some tall. Some with great beards, some with the faces of children. The women looked moody and sulky.

The girl didn't know it, but she had come upon the twelve months of the year resting at the spring. The old woman was Baba Marta, the month of March, known to be the most unpredictable month of the year. She had a kind mouth that grew mischievous when she smiled, earlobes drooping with wickedness, rosy cheeks of innocence and eyes that could command sunshine or thunder in a blink. The eleven men made up the other months, with the shortest man of all being February.

The girl was overwhelmed to see the gathering, but she mastered up some courage and said: 'Good evening, dear gentlemen, dear lady, how are you?'
They answered, surprised, 'We are very well, little girl! What are you doing alone here at this time of the night? Aren't you afraid of the local shadows and ghosts?'
'What could I do? My stepmother made me come for water and I couldn't disobey her.'
The woman said, 'Listen, I want to ask you a question! Which months of the year are the good ones and which are the bad ones?'

'Oh, dear grandmother, I believe that all months of the year are good, I can't think of one bad month! The summer months are filled with celebration and joy. The Autumn Months allow us to gather the harvest, the fruits of the earth. The winter months bring the purity of white snow and time to reflect in the warmth of my family home.

The Springtime months bring the blossoming of nature, a chance to seek new beginnings. Oh! And of course what I enjoy greatly is Baba Marta's day on the 1st of march where I make Martenitsas for all my friends. The red and white yarn adorn our hopes and propel us forward. The white is a sign of beauty; it symbolizes purity, innocence and joy. The red is the color of vitality, health and love; it's the light of a rising or setting sun and it's the sun that gives vitality to every creature. I love Spring for this too. All in all, there is plenty of goodness in all the months of the year!'

'Go with peace, lovely girl', the months said, 'May God foreverbless you. May every time you speak a pearl drop from your lips!' The girl filled the coppers with water and went back home. When her stepmother saw the girl return alive and well, she flew into a rage! She asked the girl how she had survived the dangerous journey and when the girl spoke, pearls started dropping from her lips. The stepmother became even more furious. 'Who put this spell on you? How come these pearls drop from your lips? Tell me everything or I'll kick you out of the house.' The poor girl told her the whole story.

The next day, the stepmother prepared her very own daughter to go to the spring. She hoped that the months would bless her child and pearls would be dropping from her daughter's lips just the same. At midnight, the daughter went to the spring; she greeted the men and the old woman, sitting quietly under the tree.



They said, 'What are you doing alone here at this time of the night? Aren't you afraid?'
'Oh, well, my mother made me come for water and I couldn't disobey her.'

The woman asked again, 'Well, little girl, which months of the year are the good ones and which are the bad ones?' And the daughter answered, 'Don't you know which months are good and which are not? Even children know that! January and February are the worst months and Baba Marta is unpredictable and nasty! These are the worst months. Not that the other ones are any better but what can we do? We have no choice but to put up with them and their nasty temperament.'

The months were very offended by her words. The old woman said, 'May snakes and lizards fall from your mouth every time you speak!'
And one by one they said,

'I am April, I bring the first raspberries ripening!
'I am May, I bring the wild strawberries to eat from the stem!
'I am June, when the herbs are harvested and the roses are at their peak!
'I am July, I bring the barley!
'I am August, I bring the wheat!
'I am September, I bring the grapes to make into wine!
'I am October, I bring the sunflowers!
'I am November, I bring the persimmons!
'I am December, I bring the stuffed cabbage leaves!
'I am January, I bring the preserves!'

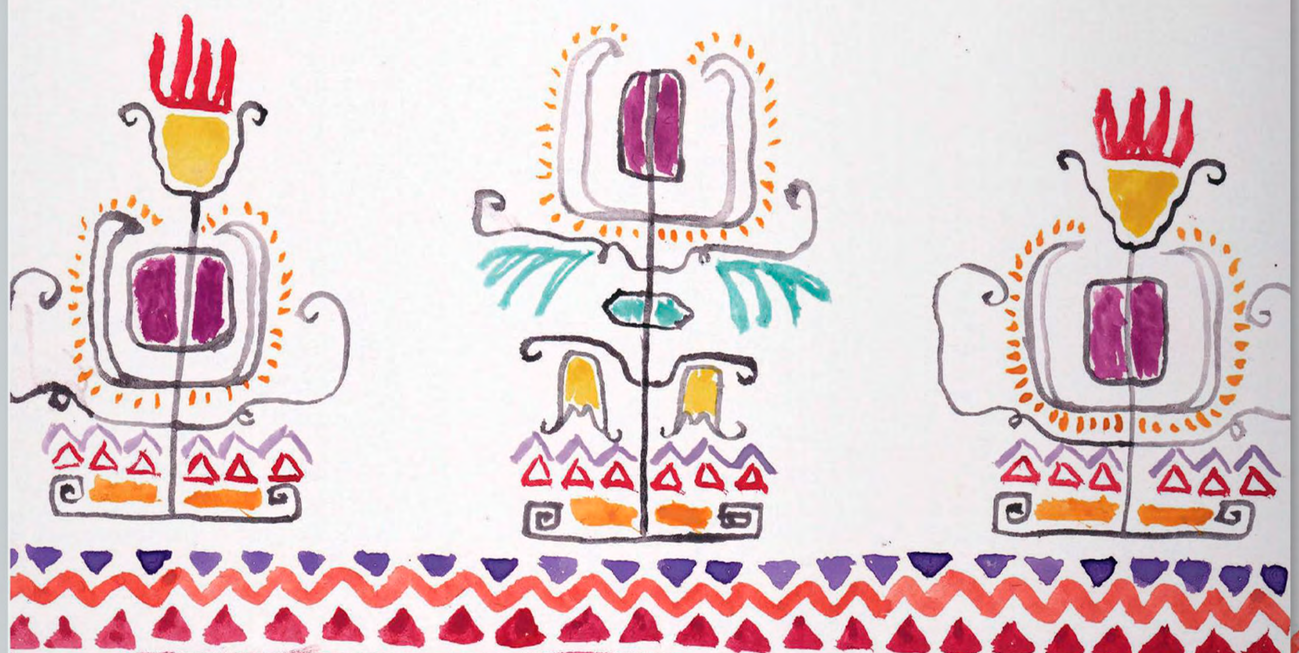
Finally the shortest man of all spoke,
'I am February, when you should plant the onions and potatoes for a good harvest!'

Then the old woman said, 'I am Baba Marta, who brings the end of the cold winter! You celebrate me on March 1st and wear red and white on your wrist to bring health and happiness. Ungrateful child, who are you to not appreciate each month for what it has to offer?'

The daughter went back home without even filling her pot with water. When she opened her mouth to tell her mother what had happened, a snake slid from within onto the floor! 'My child, what happened to you? I sent you there to be blessed with pearls falling from your lips, just like my stepdaughter and look what happened!' The stepmother hated her stepdaughter even more, but the girl was blessed by the months, and the truth was on her side.

Some weeks later the father of the good daughter came back from work abroad and when he found out how badly his wife had treated his child, he wisely said: 'If you dig a grave for somebody else, you shall inevitably fall in it yourself!'

He unmarried the mother and raised his daughter with love and care and pearls of goodness, delight and blessings followed their every step.



GRAINS OF WISDOM FROM THE WILD ONES

Oh, how utterly blessed we are that we get to encounter ourselves and all of the living world through the colourful and diverse prism of the seasons. Each season gives us a chance to experience a different ecological pace, a new approach to existing on this planet. Although we in cities like to pretend that we can be productive non-stop all year round, it's undeniable that seasons and the surrounding them ecological shifts in conditions and weather have a direct impact on our health, wellbeing and our ways of relating, feeling and thinking. If you want to feel more connected to nature and her flow of life, the first place to start is to begin tuning into the shifts each season invites us into.

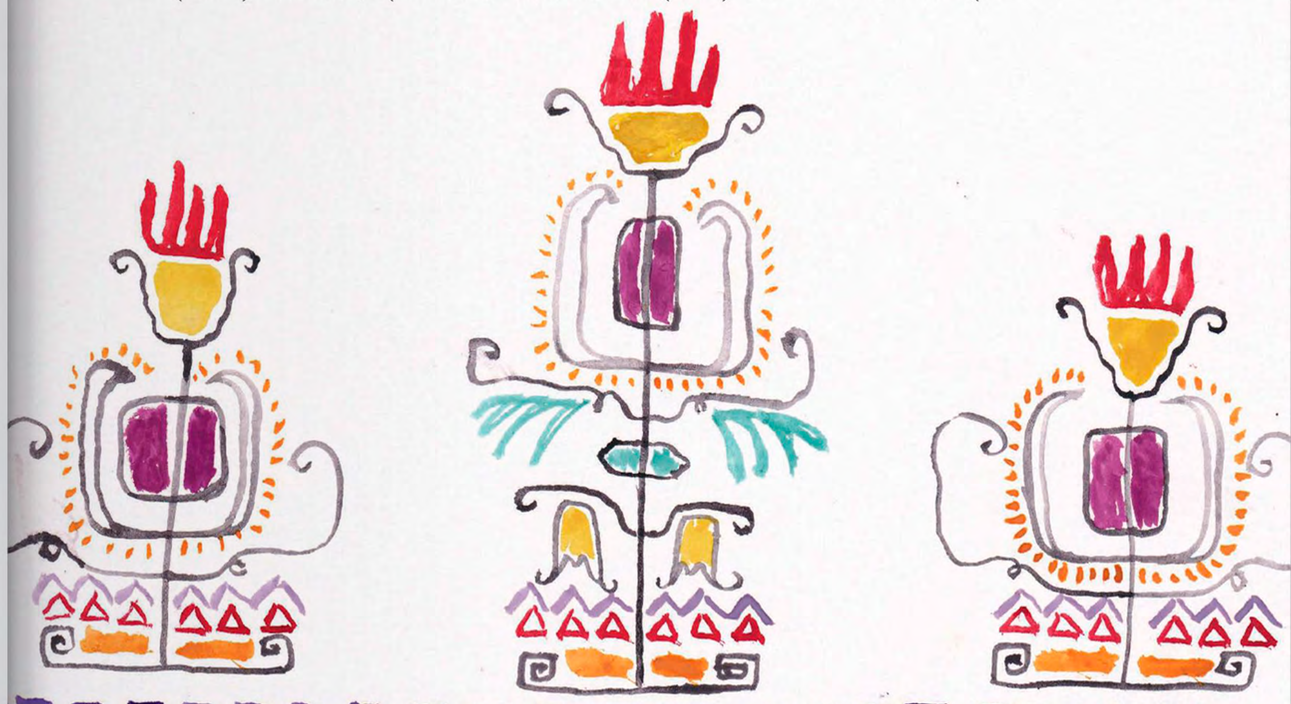
In summer, when life is boasting in full bloom, with plants pulsating with life in their prime, with the sun at its highest most radiant peak, notice that you too, just like the flowers, want to shine bright in joy and aliveness. Often summers bring us a sense of expansiveness, productivity, filled with community, conversation, motion and exchange. It's the time of year when we feel fresh, capable, alert, and in constant process of learning an action.

Autumn, on the other hand, can be recognised by the dramatic release of leaves providing soil with a nutritious carpet to decompose. Autumn is when the baskets are full of rich harvest, the drops in temperature and shift in weather are at last arriving, and it's when forest creatures beginning to stock and prepare for the darker months. Autumns often feel like a time in transition, filled with moments of slowing down, release, letting go and getting organised. You see, we are not that different from the forest beings in our behaviour!

Winter then comes in a blink of an eye and brings stillness, slowness and pause for us all. With natural world slowing down, with the days getting shorter, with birds heading south, this of course is the best time for deep rest, for spending time on our own processes of brewing, processing, and reflecting on our accumulated visions and thoughts.

And of course, when Spring comes, there comes a time for new beginnings. With tree buds appearing, new leaves growing, birds returning and the natural world waking up, this special time of year feels like emergence, hope and adventure. As life sprouts forward in spring, we are also propelled to learn new skills, develop new ideas and create new visions.

Connecting to the moods, shifts and characters of the seasons is a way to honour that we are part of this ecosystem, that we are co-dependent, and that we have co-evolve with seasons through all our human history, that we are also a part of this yearly cycle of environmental evolution. What new doors of perception and understanding might open up for you once you embrace your interconnection to the ecological seasons in full trust and curiosity? As the girl said, there is no such thing as a bad month!



NILE

A shining new addition to the High Street, Nile is a true family business run by a lovely husband and wife duo. He has worked as a chef internationally for over 25 years, building his name as a successful asian cuisine master chef in Dubai before making a cosy home here in Walthamstow, serving delicious Lebanese cuisine at amazing prices. Try their Shawarma and their Lamb, cooked to perfection, and enjoy the welcoming feeling and friendly service of this newly opened gem!

Make sure to get a taste of the Nile before December 13th, when they'll close for Christmas until January 5th.

Open every day 12pm - 9 pm
63 High St, London E17 7AD

Scan the code to listen to the audio narration of the folk tale :

The Land of THE Cedars ON THE SACREDNESS OF TREES IN ANCIENT LEBANON

In the land of ancient Mesopotamia, Gilgamesh was a powerful king of Uruk, two-thirds god and one third human. The gods blessed him with strength, courage and beauty, and he ruled over the city of Uruk which was surrounded by strong brick walls. He had a dear friend, Enkidu, who was to him like his own brother. Enkidu was a good, wise friend who deeply cared about his friend and was just as strong as Gilgamesh.

One of Gilgamesh's greatest faults though was that he was struck with the desire to impress others, he longed to hear the 'Oohs and Ahhs' of appraisal and acclaim. Deep inside him sat the nagging urge to do something heroic in order to be forever more admired by those around him. One day, Gilgamesh complained, "Enkidu, I'm bored with our peaceful life in Uruk. I haven't made an everlasting name for myself as my destiny has promised. My name must be written alongside all the famous names from the past. I must do some big great deed, so let us go to the land of cedars, cut down the trees, and kill the evil monster who guards the forest."

Enkidu sighed, "My friend, that is a sacred land! The forest stretches for ten thousand leagues in every direction, and those cedars were planted by the gods themselves, so we should not harm them. And you know very well that the guardian of the forest is the mighty Humbaba, a great and powerful giant, the scariest and strongest of them all. His roar is like the most petrifying of storms and he breathes hell fire! Remember, the gods have given you kingship but not the eternal life, and if you go there you will most certainly be killed." But Gilgamesh did not listen. Neither Enkidu, nor the council of Uruk, nor his own mother, could stop him from going on this pompous quest, no matter how hard they tried.

Gilgamesh was dreaming up of his soon-to-be acquired fame so frequently that his perverted vision grew bigger and bigger and soon it was way too strong to be banished. "Think of those tall and strong cedars that cover the mountains.", he tried to convince Enkidu. "If we cut them down we could build even stronger walls for the city of Uruk. Their wood is of such high precious quality, we could make new grandiose gleaming gates to the city and build magnificent tall pillars for the temples to honour each one of our goddesses. Listen, I will go first into the forest and if I die there, at least people will say 'Mighty Gilgamesh died fighting the ferocious Humbaba.'" Slowly, Gilgamesh was persuading Enkidu.

Oh, how Gilgamesh wanted triumph and oh, how he longed to know the taste of great fame! This desire was so strong this it had completely blinded his reason. He was so consumed with the desire for glory that he could not, for the love of gods, see anything else! You see, as a child, Gilgamesh used to play in the depths of the forest, hiding behind old trees that have been there for centuries. The sacred forest was his favourite place, a place he went to feel truly safe and whole throughout all of his childhood. He used to have so much love for every bug, every leaf, every snail that lived in that forest. But his craving for fame and his desire for conquest have frozen his heart and turned it into icicle. He's forgotten all the love he had for the forest, all he wanted now was to destroy and to conquer.

"If you insist on going," Enkidu said, "then go to Shamash the Sun God first and ask for his help. I will come with you, but only because you are a great friend to me."

So, Gilgamesh prayed. "Oh god Shamash," he cried, clasping his hands together, "I'm going to the Land of the Cedars, I ask you to grant me protection so that I may return to Uruk safely. If I return, I will make a great offering to you, I promise." Shamash showed mercy on Gilgamesh and his tears. He appointed the God of the Great Winds, the icy, the scorching, the whirlwind and the sweeping gales to be the allies for Gilgamesh. The wild winds whistled and whirled with a great unparalleled force behind him, ready to be released when the time was right.

Along with this, Gilgamesh commissioned the smiths to make great armour, heavy axes and swords for himself and Enkidu. These were so massive that only men with the strength equal to the strength of Enkidu and Gilgamesh could wield them properly.

So the two friends ventured out for the cedar forest. They walked for twenty leagues before they stopped to eat. After their food they walked another thirty leagues before stopping for the night. They did this for seven days and six nights and walked as far as ordinary people do in six weeks.

But something about their journey felt a bit strange. Every night when the moon was high, Gilgamesh woke up in a state of complete paralysis and fear. The dreams that he saw were savage dreams of destruction. Enkidu, however, said they were actually dreams of their victory. "The fierce powers you see in those dreams are ours," he said, "and those of our protector, the Sun God Shamash."

Eventually, after a long time of walking, they have finally reached the forest. They gazed in awe at the beautiful cedar trees. The trees shot outwards and upwards with their sharp and exquisite green thistles.



Thorns and flowers grew around the base of the trunks and eagles circled above, watching these bold and bashful intruders. As they circled, they squawked and screeched to one another, as if warning the rest of the forest creatures about these mean-meaning guests. Goats grazed here and there, and the trees stretched endlessly into the infinite horizon all around them. Gilgamesh's visions of the fine gates and temples that could be cut out of the majestic trees came into his mind, all those grand creations they would make for his city. With these images permeating his ming, he took his heavy axe into his massive hand and held it behind his head, trying to find the best angle to start this brutal carnage with. But there he froze, just for a moment, as if in frozen by momentary doubt, as if he had heard for a second the horrified shrieks of himself as a five year old - "Don't cut these trees, you know I love them so dearly!", said Gilgamesh's inner child. But he shrugged it off dismissing it as if it was some silly ghost and wacked the axe with a huge thump into the giant trunk. The assault of the heavy clunky axe upon the slender sacred tree caused the birds to screech in a frightened loud manner and scatter into the air. With the penetrating mark cut into the sacred tree, the smell of the pungent healing cedar found its way up the nostrils of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, releasing its aromas from the tree's inner depths, as if some of the tree's own precious soul was getting released into the ether.

With this release, they heard far off in the distance a scary shout , it was indeed the giant Humbaba roaring. Gilgamesh trembled, both with great fear and excitement. "I am ready to fight this creature, whatever he may be," he cried.

Humbaba came out of the cedar trees with his eyes flashing, red and demonic. "Onward then!" Enkidu cried and these words gave both Gilgamesh and Enkidu courage. "Go forward now, before he has time to fully arm himself." Enkidu commanded and flung his arms in front of him. Humbaba looked down on Gilgamesh with the eye of death. Gilgamesh cried out to the Sun God, "O Shamash, where is the aid that you promised us? We need it this very minute." And suddenly, a great swooping sound flung from the sky and Shamash unleashed the great winds, the icy, the scorching, the whirlwind and the sweeping gale, and they blew in Humbaba's eyes and held him in place so he couldn't move. Humbaba stood unable to even blink.

Gilgamesh felled the first cedar and Humbaba's eyes blazed with rage, but he could not move. The sound of the tree falling and thudding to the ground was a painful sight to witness, a rich echo of life interrupted, turned into lifelessness. Creatures that lived in the tree ran for shelter away from their home, terrified of what more cruelty and carnage was to come.

Gilgamesh cut the second cedar. Again, Humbaba trembled with rage. Seven cedars were cut and each time Humbaba raged with anger so deep and with his sadness so bottomless. Now Gilgamesh and Enkidu had reached Humbaba. He tried to move but he was no match for the winds that assailed him. The great demon turned pale and tears came into his eyes. He told Gilgamesh, "I was born from the mountain and cradled by the storm, God Enlil made me the guardian of this forest. If you let me go, I will be your servant. I will even cut trees for you and build you a palace."



This didn't stop Gilgamesh. Enkidu reminded him, "You can't trust him. Remember, you came for a glorious deed." So Gilgamesh gathered all his power and struck Humbaba in the neck with his sword. Then Enkidu hit him with his heavy axe. Gilgamesh struck him again and Humbaba went down. Now the cedars shivered with fear, the eagles cried and the mountains shook because their guardian protector was now dead. An unforgivable eerie silence filled the land and managed to spread chills even down Gilgamesh and Enkidu's spines, but they were indeed determined to continue. The winds continued to whirl and beat on the fallen trees.

Gilgamesh cut another huge cedar tree and Enkidu floated it down the river so that it could become the door of their palace. After this, they covered Humbaba with a huge shroud and set Humbaba's head before the gods. When Enlil the Storm god saw it, his face flashed in the brightest of red and he yelled with great anger: "Why have you done this? You fool, Shamash, what greed they have! And you, helping inflame the egos of these little humans!" Shamash, the Sun god, heard this and shrugged.

When Gilgamesh and Enkidu returned to Uruk, Gilgamesh had a feast in the palace. Dancing women sang his praises in beautiful tones and all were joyous celebrating the grandeur of Gilgamesh's victory. But not all was cheer and joy, something strange has happened to Enkidu, he saw something very frightful in a dream as he laid his head down that night. In the morning he said to his friend, "I dreamt a telling dream where something horrible happened. I dreamt that there was a council of the gods and they said that because we killed Humbaba, and cut the cedars, that one of us must die. The gods argued, but in the end, they decided to take me from you, so that you suffer and grieve as punishment till the day you die. I will never see my dear friend, my brother, ever again."

As these words poured out of Enkidu's mouth, he became very frightened. Tears swam from his heart right into his eyes. And as the dream has foreshadowed, he suddenly felt a grave sickness come over him, with his heart pounding furiously inside his chest at the great injustice of it all. He tried to calm his breathing but found that he could not breathe anymore, not a single gulp of air. And just like that, Enkidu collapsed dead in front of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh in disbelief yelled and yelled, raising a fist to the heavens. ' Oh Noooo! My dear precious friend, why is it you had to abandon me?'

Gilgamesh was so full of grief and sorrow for his friend that he refused to leave Enkidu's side, or to allow his corpse to be buried, until six days and seven nights after his death when the maggots began to squirm inside his eyeballs. The foolish decision to cut the cedars and the death of Enkidu and Humbaba tormented Gilgamesh forevermore. The pain of the guilt was unimaginable and the only thing that could soothe it, even a little, was remembering his way back to loving nature. As a way to reconnect to this childhood love for green, he began planting gardens all over Mesopotamia. Filling the land with incredible rich flora and fauna as a repentance of the damage he has caused. The colours of the flowers complemented the textures of the leaves like big beautiful paintings and Gilgamesh, enchanted by this, could not stop planting shrubbery, bushes and trees. He became so obsessed with making up for his terrible deeds that he, himself soon became the guardian of the forest, taking Humbaba's place, leaving the city of Uruk behind along with all of his riches, and dedicating his life to protecting the forest he loved so much in his childhood.

GRAINS OF WISDOM FROM THE WILD ONES

This story speaks to many of us, modern humans, so obsessed with climbing up career ladders, structuring our lives around our ambitions, in search for further and further acquisitions of power and signs of societal recognition. So blinded we can get by the modern-day success chase that we sometimes can leave the most important aspects of life out of the picture. When our eyes are settled solely on the prize, all our energy and resources get poured into winning the race at all costs. Under such circumstances, the first thing we do is cut out time for care, appreciation, relationships, and love. When we are in a frenzy of doing and proving, there is often no space or time to stop and remind ourselves what is it we actually care about, what is at the core of our values, what is it we actually most long for. We forget to be gentle with ourselves and we forget to be caring towards the world around us. We can become so obsessed with the goal of reaching our next achievement that we often become very selfish.

But who is it that has convinced us that we absolutely have to be climbing towards our next achievement? Maybe, just maybe we are actually okay, enough and worthy just the way we are at this very moment, without further accomplishments and medals of honour as proofs of our worthiness?

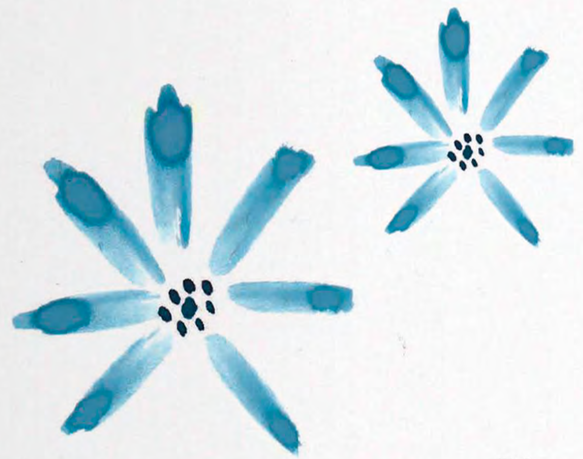
How have you been blinded by ambition? How have you personally been hypnotised by the glistening all-encompassing chase? Is there a way for you to slow down and connect to your surroundings a bit more? As an experiment, mark out intentional time in your life for some activity that is not productive, neither is it based in you consuming something or acquiring another prize, stage, or goal. It might take a while to think of what it could be but it's most likely will be time spent in nature, or time spent relating and enjoying others' company, or it might turn out to be a creative endeavour.. These are the greatest joys in life. Can we create more space for these in our lives, so that our existence is valued not by the sheer number of our accomplishments but by the depth and quality of our relationships?



LITUANICA

This modern sleek shop is a true treasure chest of Eastern European wonders, bringing memories of tradition and nostalgia to the dining tables of London. Here you will find delicacies from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria,Moldova and Ukraine. Starting out as a family business, this particular shop has been on the High Street for over 10 years, staying strong by feeding its community with delicious tastes of faraway homelands. Lituanica is not joking around, they mean real flavour - besides from running a number of shops, they are also the largest importer and distributor of Eastern European Food in the UK. There is a bistro café too, for which fresh salads and meats are cooked daily in their own kitchen. No need to fly East! Just take a trip to Lituanica for some authentic Eastern European experience, powered by a quick a feast on dumplings and Ketir.

Visit all days 10 am-7pm, except Sunday
29-31 High St, London E17 7AD



Scan the code to listen to the audio narration of the folk tale :

The Wild Howls of the Iron Wolf



How Lithuania's Capital Was Born

A long, long time ago in Lithuania, the Grand Duke Gediminas was out on a hunting trip. He moved quietly through the forest, tracking an auroch. But wait, what kind of beast that is, you might ask? Now, none of you have ever seen an auroch, for the last one was hunted to extinction almost four hundred years ago. They're like an ox but six feet tall; covered in the shiny coat of deep black fur with the elegance of the sunrise and the strength of an earthquake with every step imprinting firmly on the ground. At one time they roamed across Europe freely moving with confidence over their land like the true kings of the pastures that they were. Alas, not anymore!

So, finally, on a beautiful hill on the shore of the Vilnia river, the Grand Duke Gediminas, after tracking an auroch for hours on end, fired out the carefully calculated determinative bullet and shot the huge beast right into the head. Gediminas was exhausted after endlessly tracking the auroch all day long. The night was taking over the day and the stars started settling into their bright shiny night light, so he decided to make camp in the sacred valley of Šventaragis and stay there overnight. This was where the rivers Neris and Vilnia met, mingling their robust waters and flowing their wide streams towards the great Baltic Sea. The rivers, no doubt, had an ancient magnetic power to them, their streams running with great vigour, knocking the rocks of the earth into smooth jewels and laying out routes through the land with the sheer force of water needing to meet the greatest expanse of them all – the vast and wild ocean.

Here, too, a sacred ancient temple stood strikingly in the moonlight. This old sanctuary was dedicated to Perkūnas, the god of thunder, and many powerful Lithuanian Dukes had been cremated in the forest nearby. A territory for the gentry, a place where the luxury of earth's great gifts was in great abundance. One new with every breath taken here that this was a potent and sacred land.

Gediminas lay down to sleep, wrapping his cloak around him tightly and drifted off to sleep in peace after a victorious day. As he lay in the forest, the moon began to rise. It was full like a plate, bright like a giant lamp and powerful as the spell of 28 witches. This luminary piece of gold in the sky shone majestically, nestled in the buttery stars as the wind made music passing through the bristles of the pine trees lulling him deeper into the night's sleep. The moon climbed higher into the sky and Gediminas began to dream a big wild dream..

He dreamt that he looked up at the hill where he had killed the aurochs that day. The moonlight struck the hill as if it was a centre stage, and the trees had an eerie, purple hue. Suddenly a huge wolf leapt out of the trees, coming to a standstill at the top of the hill. The wolf threw back his head and howled at the moon. Gediminas sat up startled and fearful, admittedly he lost his breath while catching the glisten of the wolf's silver coat. It reflected the sharp glare of the moon into his eyes, blinding him just for a moment. This was the moment he realised, with a gasp, that this phenomenal animal was made completely

out of iron! How could that be? Like a suit of armour, instead of fur, the wolf's flanks were plated with dark, heavy metal.

The howling continued, getting louder and louder, making Gediminas's head ache with the volume of a hundred wolves at once. As the creature howled, the moon shone brighter and the water of the two rivers leapt and splashed in attunement to this great force.

I t seemed as though the whole earth heard the cry of the wolf and rose to meet it, obeying to the force of this great beast. There was an eeire sense that this iron creature was dancing a mysterious dance with all of nature, commanding the moon to pull water away from the shores through the power of this piercing howl, bouncing this wild call back from the moon's pocked surface and sending even the normally disobedient powerful waters into a complete state of trance.

Gediminas woke from this hypnotising spell of a dream at the first signs of dawn. Or maybe, just maybe, that was not a dream at all, after all? Regardless, this wild night vision was as clear as the new day in his mind and he knew that he must ask the High Priest, Lizdeika, to interpret its meaning. As soon as he returned to the city, he consulted the wise High Priest who told him that he must build a city at the foot of the hill where he had dreamt of the wolf. This city would be the future capital of Lithuania. The howling of the wolf meant that the fame of this city would spread far and wide and that the city's foundations would be in tandem and balance with the mighty elements of the sacred land.

The Grand Duke Gediminas nodded in wonder and awe and did exactly as his dream decreed. He went on to build the city Vilnius, named after the beautiful river Vilnia whose banks it graciously rested on. So, when the moonlight shines on the water, people sometimes hear that echoes of that mighty wolf's howl echoing through the forests, coming through into the present from hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

Since the city of Vilnius was built, its people started a sacred tradition, where hundreds of them gathered together every full moon to pause and to soak in the power of the land. Collectively they feel into how when we open ourselves to what the land, the elements and the moon have to say, harmony and deep knowing of all the truths opens up to us in return.



GRAINS OF WISDOM FROM THE WILD ONES

Oh, the strange emptiness of the modern industrialised world! With all our ticking clocks, factory fumes, cars and planes, with the great engine of production machine turning, we forgot how to listen to the song of our lands. Each piece of earth has its own story to tell, ready to share its guidance and wisdom. Oh, how would the world be if we allowed ourselves some moments to pause, stop and listen to what the living world has to share with us? Would we build so much, rush as much or consume as much as we do now? Remember, remember, you are first and foremost an Earthling. You think you walk this earth but really it's the reverse, flip the script, it is you that is being held, with your toes tickled and soles of your feet kissed by the living breathing earth. Great mysteries happen when we remember that the land is alive and is full of magic. Yes, even in the city, even right now beneath your feet.

There are some ancient clues left here and there in the names of streets, wells and parks. The names that sing a song of love for all nature. Can we remember this song again? Can we learn to sing this forgotten chorus of praise together to drown own the increasing rumbles of the motors?

One needs to start small on this journey, because hey, we all got to start somewhere. Choose a place in nature, even if that means a single tree in a car park or a little bush on your doorstep, and go visit it regularly. This is your very special place. Notice how it changes through seasons, how life permeates it on every inch upon closer inspection. This is your place to pause and connect to the all living. Listen carefully to the faint notes of an old song that might appear to you any moment. You might catch first notes in the call of a robin or sparrow, or maybe in the buzz of fly, or a rustle of a leaf.

Second sacred instruction is to start paying attention to the cycles of the moon. Ancient rituals have been soaked in moonlight for centuries and that's for a good reason. Moon pulls with its gravitational force on water. Don't forget you, yes you are 60% water too. Tune into the lunar phases and see how far it takes you towards the nature's great mystery and your part in this great unfolding.



DON FRANCISCO Y LA LUNA

Welcome to the sweetest and cosiest corner of Walthamstow High Street. Mysterious and enchanting, lit up by dimmed candlelight, surrounded by deep wooden tones and the richness of burgundy colours, Don Francisco Y La Luna is the most perfect setting for your special romantic date. Ran by a passionate couple who spend lots of their time in Asturias in the north of Spain, they bring real care and love into the wide selection of authentic Spanish tapas they make from scratch, along with other lesser known Spanish recipes. And of course the feasts in this casa are accompanied by a flow of really good wine - to warm up your belly, and possibly your heart, with some of that true Spanish feistiness. And hey, no worries if you don't have a date to share your cheese plate with, how about bringing your pawed friend to keep you company? This is a dog-friendly paw-loving spot.

Come visit: Tue-Thu 6 pm -11 pm, Fri-Sat 12 pm -11 pm, Sun 12 pm -6 pm
18 High St, London E17 7LD

Scan the code to listen to the audio narration of the folk tale :

THE GARDEN OF HEALTH



Spanish

TALE OF THE HEALING POWERS OF PLANTS

Some time ago in Spain, a young boy named Enrique was taking a long walk on the outskirts of his village. He was kicking the floor miserably. You see, his little sister was ill and the doctors were saying she was nearing her death. The doctors had tried every chemical under the sun to help her - injections, pills, syrups, steroids, antibiotics, all inventions, old and new – but alas, no chemical procedures seemed to work. Everything was hopeless, a little girl was destined to die. The cold ache of knowing his beautiful sister was in such pain and that she was destined to such horror so early on in her life was insufferable for Enrique's poor heart.

"Poor Luisa!" exclaimed Enrique, sobbing. "To leave this world so soon!" He sat down on some stones and broke down into tears, unable to hold the sorrow inside any longer, weeping so loud, praying for his dear sister's life.

A little billy goat so sweet and snow-white was grazing calmly in the nearby grass. The goat heard the pitiful sound, came up to the boy and said right into his ear: "Calm yourself, boy. I know what can help to save Luisa."

"Oh, but how on earth will that happen, dear goatie?" asked Enrique, startled to hear this innocent little animal speak.

"Look there, in that spring, and you will see a ring which was left there and forgotten by the magician Agrajes. Put it on and ask to go to the Garden of Health, and immediately it will take you there. When you are there, as for the Blue Ivy whose juice will cure your sister in a blink of an eye. But if they deny it to you, use the ring and you will see..."

"Ay, little goat. Will you tell me who you are?"

"Well, can't you see: a baby goat with little horns and all."

"But goats don't speak, and you do, and so eloquently!"

"That is because I am a well-bred, intelligent and compassionate kid. I felt I had to help you out upon hearing your loud heart-breaking sobs. Don't waste time and do what I tell you."



And true to the goat's word, Enrique saw a gold ring engraved with mysterious signs at the edge of the spring. He put the shining ring on the ring finger of his left hand and said in a loud voice: "To the Garden of Health!" As soon as he spoke these words, a big cloud descended upon him and carried him through the air at a speed of lighting. In a few minutes he found himself at the gates of a beautiful garden surrounded by a silver fence. At the gate there were two maidens. One had a fresh and smiling face; the other was sad and gloomy. The former carried an apple in her hand, the latter bore a scythe.

"Who are you, strange maidens?" asked Enrique.
"I am Life," said the first joyously .
"I am Death," replied the second in a dismal tone.
"What have you come here for?" they asked the boy in union.
"I have come for a branch of Blue Ivy to cure my little sister with."
"I shall not permit such a bold foolish request, because Luisa, your sister, belongs to me and me only. She is a prize which I will not be giving up," growled Death angrily. "You shall not enter alive," she shouted, brandishing her scythe.
"Oh, yes, he will, if he is quick," said Life. "Do not meddle with this boy, he is not yours just yet."
As Enrique jumped over the garden gate, Death dealt him a terrible blow with her scythe, but just as quickly Life made him smell the apple she held, which immediately cured and restored him.

So Enrique passed between Life and Death into the Garden of Health and kept on going in his quest to find the famous Blue Ivy. The garden was beautiful, and full of incredible shapes, forms and hues of red, yellow, purple and green, that were so full of vibrancy, his eyes could barely handle such divine exuberance. But for now, he needed to find one and only Blue Ivy. The magical Blue Ivy was known to cure any sickness in the lungs or chest, it was also known to reduce inflammation, eliminate congestion, improve the

oxygenation of the body, soothe the stomach and heal people faster than anything else that existed on earth. What a true royal healer of a plant! An old legend says that even one of the most ancient goddesses of youth named Hebe would always have Ivy next to her to help her thrive. Ivy was used to breathe a vital force of new life into decaying bodies, and that was exactly what Enrique wanted for his sister. He was determined to find the plant – it's either he finds the Blue Ivy or his sister will die. Once he would find the Blue Ivy he would treasure it until he could safely bring it to his dying sister. But there were so many different exciting plants in the garden, and each was as living medicine for a particular illness. As he wandered through the lush garden, the plants began to call to him.

"I am the Celery, that cures all chest diseases and prevents blood from clotting!" said a highly colourful and stripey celery plant bowing to Enrique. The celery stood tall and bowed once more in respect to Enrique's determination as he passed by.

"And I am the Spanish Onion, that cures the kidneys and wards away all illness and demons," said a humble onion in a low and wise voice.

"And I am the Red Valerian, that cures the nerves and brings you peace," said the red valerian whose roots breathed a soothing hum into the soil below Enrique's feet.
"And I this... and I.. the other!" cried many plants and trees.

Although the other plants were tempting with their gifts, Enrique new he had to focus on his mission.
"Now, that's enough!" shouted Enrique, "otherwise you will drive me mad."

" And I cure madness," cried a shrub from the bottom of the garden cheekily.
"All I want is the Blue Ivy!" exclaimed the boy, desperate to help his little sister and unable to laugh at the shrub's joke.

"Here I am," sang the plant, "but I am kept closely guarded." Enrique searched everywhere for the precious plant, always hearing Ivy's voice in different places. It felt to Enrique as if he was being fooled around with by some dark forces, following a forever entangled mysterious ribbon.

"Who keeps you so hidden?" said Enrique, stopping still for a moment, realising somebody is playing a cruel game with him.

"Death hides me so that you may not find me. You have passed near and have not seen me. Your sister will die a painful death if you cannot find me." Enrique now did not know what to do, until he remembered his magic ring. "Ring of Agrajes, I want to see the Blue Ivy," he exclaimed. Instantly he saw, within reach of his hand, a lovely ivy that, clinging to an oak, displayed beautiful leaves with a special blue tint. The blue reminded him of the veins on his and his sisters forearms and how, when they were younger, they used to compare these trails. "Do not cut me now," cried the Ivy, "because your sister is going to die, and you will not arrive in time. Death is now close to her bedside."

"Ring of Agrajes," exclaimed Enrique at once, "bring Death to me tied up.

" He had hardly finished saying it before Death appeared quite dishevelled, without her scythe, her arms tied together tight. All the health-giving plants began to applaud, cheering at her misfortune.

"Bravo, bravo!" they cried.

"Don't spare her; she is our enemy!" shouted some.

"We work so hard with our healing gifts to ward death off for all of humanity!"

"Don't let her go and the world will be grateful to you!" said others.

"What have you done to my sister?!" said Enrique, angrily.

"Nothing yet, but as soon as you let me go you will see," answered Death.

"Well, I will leave you tied up, and it will take you so long to be free that my sister is sure to die of old age."
Then Enrique cut a sprig of the Blue Ivy and said to the ring, "Take me to my sister's side." Immediately he found himself at the bedside, where all the family were weeping over the approaching death of the girl. "Here is Blue Ivy that will cure her," said the boy. And drawing near, he squeezed into her mouth the juice of the fresh ivy he had plucked in the Garden of Health.

The girl at once opened her eyes, called her mother, and, amidst the general surprise, asked to be dressed. She lived a long life, and as hard as Death tried, she did not break free from the ropes of life, until almost one hundred years later. It was then that Enrique's sister died happily as an old, old woman who'd had a beautiful life which she enjoyed greatly. Luisa and Enrique dedicated their time to the cultivation of their own community Garden of Health for their village, where they grew all the healing plants Enrique could remember from his visit to the magical source of health. Luisa grew the plants in gratitude for her saved life and she saved many other people's lives in return. They never forgot how mighty plants are and spread plant's wisdom and knowledge about their healing properties far and wide into the kingdom of Spain.

GRAINS OF WISDOM FROM THE WILD ONES

Before modern medicine was invented, humans always had plants to rely on. Recipes, secrets and discoveries passed down from generation to generation. And even now, under the disguise of the pill boxes and neat packaging, plants still manage to inconspicuously make their way to the pharmacy counter. Did you know that most of modern day chemical medication comes from compounds isolated from plants? Aspirin is made from willow bark, morphine comes from poppies, lots of antibiotics are synthesised from fungi and lichen species. Even with all our modern progress and our obsession with clinical science, maybe we have not stepped too far away from nature after all? Is there a way to reconnect back to the old tried and tested knowledges about the resourcefulness of our plant allies? Wouldn't it be wonderful, if we were taught in schools how to make our own herbal remedies? If we had lessons on what plant helps from which malaise and how to grow our own effective first aid kits? Pills are expensive and not very easy to access when in need, but for herbs all you need is a seed, a bit of water and soil, and of course a bit of love and care, and there you will have it – your own harvest of life-sustaining and soul-enriching healing medicine.

