

The Forest

By Ramona Frank and Maya von Ahnen

The Forest

Moon

Moon was smiling as *Imayamo* bled the last drops of this cycle into a recipient of clay. They were always grateful when Moon showed their face as they bled, for this meant that their cycle's climax would be accompanied by Moon's darkness. This soothed *Imayamo*. A few cycles ago, their ovulation had synced with Moon's open face, with their light and *Imayamo* felt so exposed, their own life energy oriented outward, going forward, so fast. It had drained them. So much information had made its way

into their mind and got stuck there. Their head had been loud, full of voices that weren't theirs and *Imayamo* had felt alienated, separated from their body and life energy. They had not yet felt such things; they had not yet developed tools to name these things; too little moon cycles, had *Imayamo* completed, to know these things; these things were strange to *Imayamo*.

They felt their hands around the clay bowl that contained their blood and sat with it in their lap. *Imayamo* closed their eyes. Soon, they would leave the smells of incense crawling up their nose and the moisture of the cave's clay walls. The walls were rounded, shaping it into a form resembling that of a calabash. The air was stuffy and warm, the light low, the flickering of the flames being the only sound to hear at times. At other moments, in the sweltering heat, the moist walls were alive with hasty moving shadows and the quiet flames would be overwhelmed by the sounding of those who were in pain. Some would breathe through the pain, some would dance through it. Some siblings, who did not experience pain in their uterus, painted figures and ornaments with their blood on the walls, their naked menstruating bodies dancing with the flickering of the flames. For some bleeding was painful, for some it was delightful.

Before *Imayamo* left, they would wish their bleeding siblings a pleasant cycle: "Sweet bleeding and fruitful seasons, siblings." They would thank the *Mamuds* for their care: for feeding Fire and brewing the thick honeyed milk. The elderly women would knead the sore thighs of those menstruating and prepare the balms that made it possible for those bleeding to appreciate the feeling of radiation through their aching organs. "Dear ones, this day I have melted together sisters alchemilla, milfoil, wormwood, rose, rosemary, and fused them with wax from our cousins the bees and oil from the olive." Yes, indeed, the balms did help.

After having walked for a while, the dark tunnel leading away from the womb in the soil grew larger. *Imayamo* could feel the moisture letting off, as they continued along the path upwards and out. Finally, they reached the opening. It was dark and old sibling Moon's smile

was very large. *Imayamo* breathed deeply, appreciating the crisp, clear air. The birches, oaks and beeches were dancing playfully with the wind, which came pouring into *Imayamos* lungs. They felt relieved, exhaling loudly, greeting their family above the earth's crust. As much as they enjoyed the comfort of the bleeding shelter, as much as they welcomed the proximity to the feminine energy of *Amrita*, of the soil, of their siblings, and their own – *Imayamo* was always grateful for the multiplicity of energies above the mud. They were quite an airy person after all, with many different energetic qualities being present in their being – all at the same time. Sometimes, some qualities were stronger and some were weaker. And then, when a new sun came, the order would shift and a new balance was found. Beyond the earth's crust, the fluidity of their experience of gender was easier to grasp. Above the mud, the genderless and the morphing bodies were strong. In the River, the wind, the rocks and the algae, the snail, and the spider, *Imayamo* witnessed constant transformation – and they felt akin.

They inhaled – a strong gust of cool air penetrating into their lungs; they exhaled, cleansing their body. They felt strengthened, ready for the coming seasons of their cycle. *Imayamo* pulled up the sleeves of their thick, scratchy cloak with their colorful teeth, wrapped their fingers firmly around the clay bowl containing their blood – and started walking home.

Care

She rambled around in her little kitchen. There were many gourds with a variety of spices and leaves in them. There were plenty of dried herbs, tied together to little bunches, hanging from her shelves and the branches of her roof. All her furniture looked like it was grown and harvested. Her house was a living tree. Inside many living trees that grew in a specific way together, so they could be inhabited. Did they grow or were they grown?

In this world, it didn't really seem to make a difference.

“*Habib*, you want some tea, my love? How are you feeling today?”

“A bit sad, really. I woke up with this tremendous sadness inside of me.”

She stopped weaseling around in the kitchen searching for things she misplaced, and looked at me with her brown, trustful eyes full of care, consideration and empathy, that resided in her wrinkly, old, brown, beautiful face. Her sulcate face was like a raisin, a bit dried out from sun and time. But the tremendous sweetness residing within, told stories of a life full of laughter, tears and surprises. Only looking at the landscapes of her face always gave me this feeling of comfort and being held. She scuffled over to me, still moving pretty fast for her age, but you could read in her slurry movements, that it was effortful for her to move that way. It seemed she just didn't stop moving in the velocity of her spirit, even though her body already had begun to decay.

“Oh, *habib*, there are days like these,” she said, while she bent over the chair I was sitting in, and embraced me in a long hearty hug. Entangled in her arms, my nose dived deep into her white, braided hair and her red woolen scarf that she wore – both, just hanging over her shoulders. I smelled smudged wormwood and sage, a bit of vegetable soup with lots of ginger, garlic and cumin and her specific smell of sweat. Sweet and spicy. That smell of a person who didn’t menstruate anymore, who passed through this cycle to become an elder, and share her experience with the younger ones. She smelled of wisdom and serenity.

Her strong, chubby arms comforted me like two solid trunks of a tree. They gave me the feeling I was held, so I couldn’t fall apart. But right in the second I perceived this feeling – I fell apart. I broke into small little pieces in her arms, knowing and trusting that she would hold them together. Tears started running out of my eyes, I was sniveling and sobbing and my tears and my snot poured out into her scarf and hair. Like little rivers. She twined her arms around me even more, squeezing me like a lemon.

“Don’t hold it, I hold you”, she whispered in my ear. I felt like I was melting into her arms and the soft pressure of her squeeze comforted me. I perceived her weight on me, combating my feeling of looseness, of abstraction, of not belonging to this Earth, of constantly having this airy feeling of flying away, to be better off somewhere else. Her weight and the feeling of her warm flesh grounded me, our energies intermingled, her earthy energy with my airy one. She started moving her left hand up and down on my back and withdrew her right hand putting it on the left side of my chest, moving it up and down, up and down in continuous movement.

“Cry it out, my little heart, just cry it out”, she susurrated and then she started humming a melody. After a while of humming and petting my chest, she started singing a song directed to my heart. Her voice was loaded with depth, sweetness and sincerity, and even though she sang in a language my mind didn’t understand or couldn’t translate, my heart understood in a mystical way and became filled with the harmony of the prayer. It was like a rainbowy stream of hope emanated from her lips, danced through the air and made its way into my broken heart, making it whole again.

My sobbing ebbed away, the rivers of my tears ran dry and this rainbowy, magical energy flow of hope sprawled out into every last bit of my body. My breath calmed down and my rib cage lifted and lowered rhythmically under her touch. Like waves of the ocean attracted and withdrawn by the magical powers of Moon, I listened to my breath, seeing and feeling those waves rolling up and being withdrawn. Being reborn. In her singing was the ocean, the beautiful ocean, where all life originated. I could feel the rough wind on my face, could hear the seagulls screech. I licked my lips. They tasted salty. I felt the wet sand under my bare feet, sticking between my toes. My eyes wide shut, I had traveled to the ocean on her song.

I felt her immense power, her mystery, her force that could give life and take it.

I heard *Mamud's* voice from a very distant place.

"I'll make you a nice hot tea with amber, bluebottle and yarrow, my dear *habib*. Those little sisters have the power to help make you feel good about yourself again." Still, I decided to stay for a while by the ocean, where her voice had taken me. Breathing in and breathing out. Feeling the healing powers of *Amrita*. Feeling good about myself again.

Pain

"So tell me, my little heart, what made you cry?" Mamud asked. *Mamud* was not her actual name. It was a title we attributed to elderly women and others who knew the art of teaching and comforting.

"Oh *Mamud*, I don't understand myself, we live in such a lush and abundant world and yet I feel so much pain."

"Don't fret yourself, *habib*. Of course there is pain. It's not like we're living in an absence of pain. Pain is one of the basic conditions of life. Without pain, there is no transformation. And you know the only certain thing on this planet is change. Surrender to change. Be the change. But change often brings along pain."

Mamud continued: "Me too, I feel a lot of pain. All my life, I felt a lot of pain: I felt pain when my dear brother *Baru* was leaving for a distant place. I felt pain when I was excluded, thrown out, when I was chased out of the wolf pack. Being an outcast, a misfit. Not belonging to the collective anymore. To a certain collective. Because to the big Earth collective, you will never cease to belong. Because you belong. Always, you will be entangled in this world with your kin. Since the day you are born. You are part of this earthly society with all beings that constitute your very reasons to live.

I felt pain when we had to sacrifice my dear relative Deer Head, because we needed to eat. I felt pain, when my child died, little poison ivy, because it wasn't raining enough, so she didn't have enough water to drink. So she dried out and ceased to live. It's like the breathing in and breathing out of *Amrita* – drought and wetness. Breathing in can be painful, because it might signify the end of some life, some cycle, but the dying of something always means the creation of something new, it sacrifices itself, so something else can be born, can live.

I felt pain, when my dear grandfather Oaktree, that I had been coming to, asking for help and advice all my life, suddenly was hit by a lightning, his beautiful solid trunk that had gifted me so much hold all my life, being parted by this powerful energy. I shed many tears above his beautiful, empty dead trunk, not feeling the presence of his beautiful spirit anymore, that had been my companion spirit, my guidance for many decades, since I was a young one, until I became an old one. He had been giving me good advice, that you can only get when you speak 'oaktree' and his ancient accent."

Language

Mamud's storytelling was like her gardening: One story-plant grew into another story-plant and sometimes ranked away into another direction. But always sprouting towards the sunlight. I leaned back and the images of her story started arising in front of my inner eye.

"It takes much time and dedication to learn these languages. Not many manage to speak more than three in a lifetime.

You sit next to a being and you observe. Not with your eyes. To learn a language you must keep your eyes shut. You don't decide which language you will learn. A voice inside of you chooses. It's *Amrita's* voice telling you. She chooses. Not you. You can hear her deep from your guts. She doesn't speak a language though. You can only feel her. Feeling: this is how you perceive her. She's the web of communication under the earth. She's like a spider weaving all beings together. She's that invisible texture connecting us all, making us one big breathing organism. Making us kin. We call her *Amrita*: the power of destruction and creation. She's the mycelium running under the earth connecting each and every being. She's crawling up when the earth takes a creature back, decomposing her, splitting her up into her finest parts to create something new from them.

So this is what happened to grandfather Oaktree. He was dissolved by these little helpers we venerate for their earthly corrosive powers. They came to compost him, to hollow out his trunk, to cave out his spirit. I came every day to watch his spirit go, to witness his decay. This helped me a whole lot to let go. Watching *Amrita* taking back his body to the Earth. Watching the myriads of fungal beings crawling up onto him, observing the tiniest beings repopulating his trunk in waves. I watched bark-beetles writing their poetry in his remains. And heard bees filling the bark-beetle's tunnels with their humming and their brood. I watched salamanders and lizards hibernating in his warm humid muggy ambience.

I carefully observed those creational powers, writing stories of life in his remnants. Those stories touched me deep inside. Always coming back to his beautiful grave, reading those stories, making them into songs, singing songs in 'oaktree' to let his spirit know what an enrichment for so many, his body had become. Bringing seeds to honor his grave, watching them grow into beautiful flowers and herbs, commemorating his spirit, honoring him.

One day, when his spirit had already been gone for a long time, I witnessed how a young fox lady moved into the hollow trunk, how she met another fox, how they got babies in the trunk. And later, I witnessed how the fox couple separated, and the fox lady fell in love with another fox lady and how these freshly born love-allies brought up the fox babies together, always protected against the rain and weathers by the big old beautiful trunk castle, that grandfather Oaktrees' soul left behind, before he started traveling to another realm and transform into

another being. He might be still around, sometimes I feel like the birds who were inhabiting his crown are singing songs for him. Honoring his soul with their singing. But I'm not quite sure what they sing, as I never learnt 'bird'. I just have a feeling they sing songs in honor and commemoration of him. So I was taught that one's pain might be another family's castle."

Ritual

They sat in a circle around the Fire. *Imayamo* tasted the earthy, woodsy taste of *Amrita*, of the little helpers, of their teachers from the earthly realms.

Imayamo was carrying a clear intention as a prayer: To heal their aching heart. They sat in a lotus seat, straightening their spinal column, how they had been taught since they were a little one: to sit straight to serve as a channel between the heavenly and the earthly realms – just like the stems of the plants. The fresh nightly air was loaded with clouds of smudged galipot, wormwood and archangel. There was an altar with beautiful white lilies looming into the sky, lit by small candles made from beeswax evaporating a sweet subtle smell of honey into the atmosphere. Only very sensitive noses could sense these smells amongst the surges of smoke ascending from the glowing coles in the three-legged, round-bellied smudging pots. The only noise that could be heard was Fire and the little flames of the candles shivering and dancing in the wind, blowing softly from the northeast. The sky was only lit by the stars, as Moon had dived into darkness, to rest before starting a new cycle. It was New Moon. *Imayamo* was ovulating. They could feel the fiery warmth and lust of their uterus.

Imayamo closed their eyes, breathing deep, centering themselves. They sat in darkness, even though they could still see the dancing flames through their closed lids. The only sounds they could perceive was the crackling of Fire and the distant screeching of a tawny owl from time to time. The wind blew songs through the leaves of the Forest and made *Imayamo* shiver as it became stronger. They had an uneasy, nauseous feeling in their stomach. Tiredness started creaking up their bones and made them yawn delightfully. The sudden filling of their lungs with this big portion of fresh, nightly air, seemed to change the chemical composition of their body, charging it with pure life.

At this moment the *Mamuds* started their singing: first it was a subtle humming, like the one from the bees, then it swole to a big polyphonic harmony, where all of their voices weaved themselves together into one enchantment of a song. Colorful patterns arose in front of *Imayamo's* inner eye that started swirling and interfusing in endless motion. They felt how *Amrita* was flooding their body, every single cell of their body, they felt like they were falling apart, that their body was decomposing – as if a very magical substance was engulfing their materiality, fusing them with the earth in a very liquifying way. And all of a sudden they

found themselves expanding, gliding, growing, twining – weaving a thin web through the earth. They were mycelium running. They felt all the information of the Forest pumping through their veins – that weren't veins anymore – but fibers. They felt the language of oak, beech, and birch, they felt the language of the nettle, they felt the language of the moss communicating through them, through the roots they were encompassing, whispering to each other in different languages of the greening green. They were amazed by this bodily feeling in their non-existent organs, that had melted together to be one big sentient mass running through the underground. Their uterus was neither pulsating, nor aching anymore. It had ceased to exist. They didn't feel the multiplicity of spirits inhabiting them anymore. Those many spirits had melted into oneness, into genderlessness, into something indescribable beyond any binary.

They felt how their body – which was not human anymore, but composed of countless hyphae – was running through the fertile, wet earth of the Forest. They were sliding through this porous system of organic and mineral particles, earthlings, roots, air and water. They were overflowed with the feeling of oneness, of deep interconnectedness with all beings, of functioning as one big breathing organism. They felt all the powers of creation in their abdomen – which was not their abdomen any longer – and the whole coming and passing of the world seemed to be residing within it. They felt their body quivering and twitching with lust and ecstasy. They heard their soft voice sougning with delight, as their experience of oneness culminated in an excessive orgasming into the cosmos – like an opening flower exploding into asteroid showers. They felt the precious juice of their ejaculation dripping and seeping into the Earth.

Death

I fished a mushroom out of the steaming soup *Mamud* had put in front of me. I was lost in thought, my dreams' visions and emotions still present before my inner eye. I ate a spoonful of broth. It was mushy and warmed my throat and tasted good. *Mamud* poured tea.

“I had a dream, *Mamud*”, I started, my voice hesitant.

“What did you dream, *habib*?” she asked – as always.

“I had a dream about death, *Mamud*”, I answered, internally preparing myself for the teaching I would receive. This is how the transmission of knowledge was done: a younger one dreams, an older one puts that dream into the context of the collective experience of all living beings on this planet, starting many many many moon cycles ago.

For *Mamud*, this meant going within, cupping her hands to carry the water from the source – *Amrita's* source – to my mouth, making me drink liquid knowledge so it could circulate

through my body and envelop my heart. Like Rivers always do, *Mamud* would start flowing now, streams and torrents of words pouring out of her heart to share *Amita's* wisdom.

“What did you see?”

“Our dear friend Deer Head walked into the Forest and never returned. I was desperate, looking for him, looking for him all over the Forest, but never got to see him again. I feel like he went to die.”

“Sure, we die my love, sure we die.

Death is just part of life. Without death no life. Everything goes in circles, so does life. One's ending might be the start of something new. Look at grandfather Oaktree's death. Sure thing he died, he was parted by a lightning, a strong force from the heavenly realms. Unpredictable death is. You never know when she hits you. There is this sudden kind of death.

But there also is death coming from age. A natural cycle going to an end. Some are afraid of it, when they feel death is coming, they go look for these powerful plants that help you walk into the light with no long suffering. You will know which plant to eat. She will call you. For each and everyone there is a plant that suits you to help you go over to the other side. To become one with *Amrita*. For some it might be the lily of the valley, for some it might be the deadly nightshade, for some it might be the angel's trumpet, for others it might be the autumn crocus. Some, who have felt a lot of love for the mountains all their life and want to sacrifice themselves to the mountain beings, might also go on a pilgrimage to the higher realms and look for Venus' Chariot.

That's what they do, my love: They help us live, but they also help us die. They cure us, but sometimes the last cure is simply accepting that we're all going to die.

Others fast themselves to death. When they feel she's coming, that she's coming close, they go salute her in the forest. First they stop eating, then they stop drinking. They help her to breathe in, by drying themselves out, just like our planty teachers do, when there's no water to drink. They make space for the drought. The eternal change of breathing in and breathing out of *Amrita* – drought and wetness. They offer their carnal being to her. You need a lot of self discipline for that. But of course only the self-disciplined choose this way. This is what they do: They choose to return themselves to the Forest, to give themselves as an offering to the great powers of creation and destruction – to become one with *Amrita* and her little helpers again. So new life can be created.”

Mamud stopped talking. Her gaze was cloudy as if she had traveled to another space, while sharing her stories with me.

“Thank you for the teaching, *Mamud*.”

She nodded absent-minded, her gaze still blurry. Sometimes, when she was teaching, I felt like it wasn't her teaching, but the voices of those, who had walked before us, passed through her lips.

I finished the mushroom broth and drank a sip from the warm steaming potion that *Mamud* had poured earlier. It smelled and tasted of flowers.

Dream

This place is empty.

Imayamo breathes in – and breathes out.

The place is so large, they can almost only see dark gray sky. *Imayamo* is in the sky. But they're not flying – they are the sky. Their vision strives for wideness and farness. Along the horizon, they observe the clouds churning up what feels like a storm. The body of clouds are morphing into different shapes every moment. They are twirling around, changing their color from the clearest whites to the darkest grays and the deepest purples. It feels as if they are uneasy, writhing in strong discomfort; like they need to expulse poison from their non-existent physicality; like when your body is purging with the help of *Amrita's* medicine.

Imayamo looks down. The plains of the place look yellowish gold. They see human bodies on the plains. The rhythmicity of the movement they are making does not resemble dancing. Many many many figures, in straight lines, in many lines are moving to a strange rhythm. Their bodies are making shapes that are not inspired by free movement. Their backs are crooked, bending over the soil, penetrating it with sharp tools. Many crooked backs, many sharp tools; more than they could count. The plain reaches from horizon to horizon, the many strangely moving bodies, looking like oneness – but feeling separated. They are plowing the soil as if to prepare it for sowing. However, the air seems devoid of the usual pleasure and joy *Imayamo* knows from cultivation of gardens. There is a sense of lack. As if *Amrita* had never been born in this cosmos. Why could *Imayamo* not feel their life energy? These many beings appear alienated from their physical form. They are strangers in their bodies. The uneasiness now infiltrates *Imayamo's* own body. The sight of this false oneness makes them frown.

Imayamo looks over to the Forest. Can their family feel them? They see the top of birches, beeches and oaks. They are not dancing. They are still. Through the thick canopy, *Imayamo's* vision extends down to the ground: nettle and moss are silent, too. *Imayamo* tries to speak to them – to connect. After having invited *Amrita's* fungi into their gut, *Imayamo* had started to comprehend even more of the languages of these fellow forest dwellers. But now they are still. Are they just resting? *Imayamo* reaches out again. From their place above the crown of the Forest, *Imayamo* screams at them, with all the might they can muster. Why did they feel

so un-alive? How could they exist in those physical bodies and not be with life? *Imayamo* closes their eyes and tries again to connect. They try to extend their life energy out of their body, seeking entanglement with brother oak, brother beech, brother birch, with nettle and moss.

In vain. *Imayamo* opens their eyes. A sand-and-stone temple stands erect. The temple is far away; *Imayamo* is far up. Down below, there are many many many human bodies running across this place, streaming out of the Forest and escaping the twirls of the clouds. They are frantically and quickly moving towards the temple, a massive formation of rock, the same shade of yellow as the abused soil of the plains.

There is a man in the sky. His torso is long and growing out of the top of the temple. His two arms extend along the horizon, his large hands reaching toward the edge of the world. Then, he brings his flat palms together in front of his chest, like in prayer. He hollows out the space between his hands as if he was forming something round between them – the tips of the fingers of one hand, circling along the edge of the other and back again. He is brewing something.

It feels as if *Imayamo* has been trapped here for a long, long time.

Ubiquity

She rambled around in her little kitchen. There were many gourds with a variety of spices and herbs in them. There were plenty of dried herbs, tied together to little bunches, hanging from the shelves and the branches of the roof. All her furniture looked like it was grown and harvested. Her house was a living tree, gently grown inside other living trees, that grew together in a specific way, so they could be inhabited.

“*Habib*, you want some tea, my love? How are you feeling today?”

“A bit sad, really. I woke up with this tremendous sadness inside of me.”

She stopped weaseling around in the kitchen and looked at me with her brown, trustful eyes full of care, consideration and empathy, that resided in her wrinkly, old, brown, beautiful face.

“Oh, *habib*, there are days like these”, she said, while she bent over the chair I was sitting in, and embraced me in a long hearty hug. After a moment, she moved back, sensing something.

She looked into my eyes with a curious glance, standing to face me.

“Today, I think I know”, I declared firmly.

“What do you think you *know*, *Imayamo*?”

“I think I know why sadness is inside of me.” *Mamuds* eyes did not move. She kept them focused on mine, her pupils wide.

“Do you know why sadness will be and has been inside of you, dear one?”

“Because we are one”, I recited, remembering the teachings I had learnt repeatedly, during the many dozens moon cycles of my physical existence.

“I had a dream, *Mamud*.”

“What did you dream, *habib*?” I had heard this question many many times before. That’s what we do, we sit and talk about our dreams. But this time I perceived a shivering in her voice, as if she was afraid of what I would tell her.

So I told her about the massive, sad, simple plains I saw, the towers of clouds that seemed to be purging, those subjugated bodies moving in bizarre, mechanic ways, the strange man above the clouds and – what scared me most – this harrowing feeling of alienation: My desperation that the beings in the Forest didn’t answer my calling.

Mamud sat there nodding, listening carefully to every little detail I was revealing. When I had finished, she sighed profoundly. She stood up, grabbed a bundle of wormwood, hanging from a branch above us and lit it in the candle that was standing on the table. She started mumbling words I didn’t understand in some ancient language and directed the smudging bundle to my heart, afterwards tapping it softly first on my left, then on my right shoulder and finally painting symbols with it into the air above my head.

“Many of us dreamt this dream before, my love. And we will keep on dreaming it. It reminds us of the shared mutual pain our Forest society is grounded on:

A story of oppression. What you’ve witnessed, *habib*, is what happened, just before Revolution started. Revolution is what our society is grounded on. It could only flourish from revolutionary soils. And Revolution goes on, every day and every night in our hearts and our dreams, to remind us of what we never want to return to again. Thanks to *Amrita*, Revolution started, because she kept on reminding us that we are the Forest and can’t be separated from it. And when I say ‘us’, I’m talking about us now, but also about our mothers, our fathers, our grandmothers, our grandfathers, our great grandmothers, our great grandfathers and so forth – I talk about all those who walked and fought before us, so we could become what we are today: Forest dwellers.

So this is what they tried to do to us – and when I say ‘they’, I mean the men who served the man in the sky –: Many, many cycles ago in a far, far place, they forced us to construct a huge building from sand and stone to venerate a strange being, no one had ever seen before. They told us there was a man sitting up in the clouds and that he was in power of everything – and that he had power over every being. That it was him being in control of our fate. And that his power could only be understood by a few who would bring his word. They wanted us to build a huge tower up to the sky, higher than every tree in the Forest – they said we needed it to stay connected to him, that for his veneration we needed walls and towers. In order to do this many many had to come together. But those many also had to be nourished, so they made us clear

and cultivate huge fields of wheat and other grains, so the massive amounts of people could have the strength for the labor that was necessary to build this strange thing they called temple.

It was a violent act of separation: Separating us from the spirits dwelling in the Forest, separating us from the multiplicity we always had been cultivating in our gardens, separating us from the rich gardens of the Forest, that always had been nourishing us in a sufficient way. We were confused, our hearts aching – they wanted us to lock up all creational powers into a cold stone building: those we were venerating in the Forest should be withdrawn from there. We were devastated when they told us, we should stop singing our songs to the beings in our gardens and the Forest, that the only songs we should sing should be directed to him, to this strange man above the clouds, no one had ever seen or felt before. They tried to separate the world by introducing words like ‘sacred’ and ‘not sacred’ – words that didn’t make sense to us, as the creational powers of life had always been vivifying all our world – so what then, was ‘not sacred’?

So those who were oppressed revolted. First, it wasn’t a bloody revolution though. What we did was a huge strike: we refused to do construction work, we refused to take care of the crops, we refused to cook, and we refused to physically please the men. This seemed to be a very fruitful strategy first, but then they hit back, they started raping us, trying to violently subjugate the rebellious bodies who refused to please them any longer – causing a huge collective trauma we all still carry in our wombs and bodies. Sometimes I think the pain, some feel when they’re menstruating, is the pain from back then.”

A lonely tear ran from her eye as she told this part of the story. I felt an uneasiness in my abdomen and shivered.

“So we had to change our strategy”, she continued. “We withdrew ourselves to the Forest and learned to fight. We learned how to channel our anger, how to transform our anger into aggression and how to sublimate our aggression into physical power, so that we could create an overwhelming response to the violence they were exhibiting and the oppressive system they wanted to impose on us. For many cycles we hid in the forest, learning from those who dwelled within it: they taught us how to hide, how to sidle, how to climb, how to bushwhack, how to attack and how to defend ourselves. They tried to find us, to attack us many times, but we had learnt how to move through the forest without making any noise, how to be still, so the untrained eye could not perceive us.

Many cycles we lived in the underwood of the Forest, eating fungi, asking *Amrita* for help, learning how to relate with all the little ones in the soil. We got to know the Forest and they got to know us and after a while, a magical synergy seemed to arise between us and the other forest dwellers and they became part of our guerilla. With all of those myriads of beings

backing us up, one day we felt strong enough to attack. And strong was our attack. We hit back all those who aimed to exercise power over other beings. You know *habib*, we don't want to have power over anything. We simply surrender to the greater powers. Because we learnt that the mere aim to exercise power over some being will always end up in the destruction or at least mutilation of the very being. Its reduction to something smaller.

But we want every little being to grow wild and free. Wildness and Freedom are the roots of what our Forest society is grounded on. And thanks to Revolution, the exploitation and oppression by those who sought to separate us from life itself, was impeded.

These are the roots of the Forest.”

“So *Mamud*, you are trying to make me understand that what I've dreamt, is a very important moment of our past?”

“Yes, *Imayamo*. But Revolution is also taking place now, in this very moment, my love. And tomorrow, as the sun shows itself again, Revolution will take place again.”

“How do we know this?”

“The things we know, we know thanks to our connection with *Amrita*. Our spirits can meet in the Rivers of *Amrita*, where we can have conversations to know the things we need to know. Our eternal energetic selves understand *Amrita*, listen to the movement of *Amrita*. She is the power which receives, creates, expands, endows, yields and destroys. She has no beginning, and no end. There is no past, no present and no future in the Rivers of *Amrita*. There is no cause and no consequence.

Spirals, circles, curves, cycles, waves – these shapes are pervasive in the cosmos. What there is: there is space and this space is filled with time. And this space and this time are ever-present, independent from our earthly abilities of perception. It is the shapes of *Amrita* that allow us to grasp another perception: one that understands synchronous eternity. In our dwelling in the flowing spaces of *Amrita*, we know. We know that everything that is, was and will be, is ubiquitous.”

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WP 5: Internship or Practice Seminar

Environmental Studies Certificate Program

for

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