

## Storytelling – forest immersion

### **Boulder:**

*Sit down on the ground and familiarize yourself with the sturdiness of the boulder beneath you. Feel how strong it is and place yourself in the same position by wrapping your arms around your knees. Think of yourself as a boulder as well: strong, sturdy, ancient and solid.*

I travel, situated in the centre of cold blue ice, always moving. I've been traveling for a while now, only seeing glints of sunlight through layers and layers of the ice. I wonder how long we've been moving. And for how long we will move still. I was picked up in the far north, a land of ice and green dancing lights. Sometimes I still miss the green dancing lights, but then I can talk to my siblings who remind me of the exciting places we still have to discover. I think our time is coming soon: I can feel the intensity of the sun, something I have never felt before on my cold stone surface, and can hear the plink, plink, plink of water dripping down the sides of my ice enclosure. The stiffness of the enclosure is easing, and I can feel the air and wind and water sliding between us. I've moved far; even on the coldest day, the sun peaks above the ground. With every movement of the ice surrounding me, I roll closer to freedom. Parts of myself have dropped off along the journey, as the ice melts. We have ample time for goodbyes, the ice moves slowly. I feel the ice beneath my base has thinned, and the sand underneath has begun to rub against me, slower now, as my momentum also brings me to a stop. I have been deposited in my new home, and sense that some of my siblings have also settled down around me. I am grateful for their presence in this new and unfamiliar place. My siblings and I sit forever, living patiently together in our new home. Together, we experience the seasons: the lengthening and shortening of the sun's rays on my exposed surface. The steady rhythm of the sun's seasons is comforting; the warmth of summer melting the snow settled atop me and reaching through to my very core, and then winter snowfall again, reminding me of my glacial days. Moisture collects on the divots of my surface, etched by waters before. I am accustomed to the feeling of rain and snow water running over me, and pooling together at my flat peak. There is a new feeling though. Someone reaching steadily up and around me, following the path of moisture. Excitement bubbles through me, like the stream nearby who giggles and babbles after each rainfall. I offer myself to my new friend, who blankets me in green. I offer them the waters and nutrients that I've collected after years and years of waiting. I give myself to them fully, allowing them to break down my hard surface, weathering my body into a liveable surface, inviting more to join them, and, in turn, me. *Thank you for living with me.* I tell them. *Thank you for providing a life for me to live.* They say back.

### **Moss:**

*Place your hands down onto the moss around you and allow your fingers to brush the moss' soft surface. Extend your fingers and gently sink them into the cushion of the moss. Think of yourself as the moss: soft, expanding, nurturing, and resilient.*

The wind carries me away from my peers and settles me gently onto a large boulder. To my delight, the Boulder, my new home standing grand and proud, holds wetness for me to absorb. I multiply myself and anchor my rhizoids firmly into their rocky exterior. The Boulder tells me that they've been waiting for me. That I am welcome here. I tell them that I welcome the feeling of their sturdiness underneath me, and the feeling of finding a home. I set out to explore. The water-eroded patterns in the stone guide me in my expansion, and the etchings lead me with promises of a water-rich environment plateaued at the Boulder's head. Here, I breathe with the Boulder: swelling in vivid greens after rainfall, then sinking back to a dark crackling hue in periods of drought, only to vibrantly rise once more after a dewy morning. The Boulder and I

become intertwined in this way, and in other ways. I've begun my duty of weathering their stony surface by releasing acids to break down the Boulder into usable nutrients, making our rough home habitable for more. I realize that this is my way of paying forward what the Boulder has given to me: a home. Excitement rushes through me at this thought, like the wind who rustles the leaves on the surrounding trees. I wait, breaking down more nutrients and collecting more water, until one day I feel it: a plop of someone gently dropping down into my soft cushion. I embrace them, drawing them downward into my spongy cradle. *I too know what it's like to leave my family, to drop from the sky, to enter the unfamiliar.* I tell them. *But I will protect you and nourish you, like the Boulder did for me.* I feel a great sense of pride and purpose now, as I spend the days and nights nesting my seed. The seed cuddles deeper into me, and extends their small roots through me. They explore the same way I explored when I first arrived on the Boulder, feeling out patterns and grasping for stability. I feel them start to grow strong and tall, nourished with the nutrients I provide, nutrients which the Boulder provided to me. I watch her spread her branches and sprout leaves that lap up sunny days. I cover her exposed roots, grown strong now, that weave their way around the Boulder. We grow together now. I provided them with a place to grow, and now they offer their roots to me. *Thank you for living with me.* I tell them. *Thank you for providing a life for me to live.* They say back.

### **Tree:**

*Sit up tall and ground down through your seat. Imagine your spine straightening, growing upwards like a trunk, while your hips sink down into the ground beneath you. With each inhale your crown grows taller, and with each exhale ground downwards. Think of yourself as a tree, feel how your roots attach themselves to the ground, and at the same time your extremities become ever growing branches, an ever growing tree.*

I remember dropping from the sky as a baby, carried far from my mother tree in the beak of a bird. I was afraid of the fall, but my fall was cushioned by the soft belly of the moss who embraced me and promised to care for me as one of their own. They protected me and fed me in an otherwise harsh environment until I could stand on my own. The moss guided me as my roots grew, leading me to find my own path around the boulder. They collected the cool rain water that would have slid off the boulder's surface for me and regulated the cold winters and long days of sunlight creating the perfect nursery for my youth. Under the moss' care not only did my roots grow stronger, but my crown grew taller reaching upwards towards the sun and the sky. As I grew tall I realized that there was an entire world beyond my mossy childhood. I saw for the first time other trees like me, carrying insects, feeding squirrels, and housing birds. I knew then that I too wanted to make a house for the insects, squirrels, and birds. Just like the moss did for me. As time went on I grew taller and taller, when suddenly in the springtime I sprouted buds at the tips of my new branches. They unfurled into beautiful green needles and I felt pride burst through me. My new needles glowed emerald all summer long attracting so many new friends, but I was still too small to give them a home. Then one cold day, I noticed my bird friends gathering on my mossy boulder. In a dramatic gust they all took off, singing of travels to warmer lands. I panicked at the thought of my friends leaving before I was able to grow big enough to provide them with a home. But the trees around me console me: *Don't worry child. It's just temporary. The bird-folk will return with the sun.* Throughout the long winter when I am unsure and cold, the moss provided me and my remaining friends a shelter. The moss reminded me that they were always there; I still felt their softness covering my roots. They told me that the needles I dropped were gifts that I could give them to help them survive through the winter. They told me that the winter was a time of rest, to conserve my energy for the spring to come. And spring came again, just as promised. My branches had multiplied and my needles sprouted even more beautiful and plentiful than ever before. I felt strong again, and

my neighbors and friends felt my strength as well. My friends returned, just as promised. One of them, a young bird, began bringing me gifts: twigs and sticks, feathers and fur. They wove the neatest little nest cradled in my strongest branch. I burst with pride, and rushed through my roots to tell the moss what I'd achieved. I can finally give the gift of a home, just like the moss did for me and just like the boulder did for the moss. One late spring day I heard the chirping of their chicks and felt the joy of company, and of being a part of renewing life. *Thank you for living with me.* I tell them. *Thank you for providing a life for me to live.* They say back.

**Bird:**

*Rock around on your seat, loosening your roots beneath you. Feel light and free in your body. Extend your fingertips and spread them into the air in front of you. Feel the wind blowing underneath your fingers, lifting you as it lifts the bird through the sky. Think of yourself like a bird, floating effortlessly through the air.*

I sail through the sky, riding the heat pockets in the air upwards and diving downwards towards the forest beneath me. I'm looking for one tree in this forest, searching for the home of my ancestors. My mother's grandparents told her stories of a tree with beautiful emerald leaves that stood tall and strong atop a boulder. They told her tales of their falls being cushioned by soft mosses when they first jumped out of their nests while learning to fly. It was the tree that I was born in, but I spent my youth traveling the world over the winter months. Now that the spring has come I have returned, ready to settle down in the tree where my mother, her mother, and I were raised. The wind is strong, but I've learned not to fight it. I let myself be carried, turning my body slightly to let it guide me where I need to go. I scan beneath me, searching for the mossy boulder and emerald leaves. I begin to recognize where I am. There is the circle of trees where my siblings and I played in our youth. There, in the circle of trees, my ancestors told stories of finding a home here. It was in this circle of trees that we all gathered for our winter journey south. Now I have returned. I tilt my body forwards and dive downwards. I watch my home get closer and closer until I land, righting myself at just the right moment, on the branch of my fabled tree. The tree looks even stronger than I remembered. Its leaves are fuller and brighter, its trunk is taller, and its roots extend longer. I bring the tree gifts, just as my ancestors: twigs and sticks, feathers and fur. *I am going to build a home here, just like my mother and her mother before me.* I tell the tree. *I remember.* The tree tells me back. I will teach my children to spread your seeds far and to drop nutrients to your roots below. *Thank you for living with me.* I tell them. *Thank you for providing a life for me to live.* They say back.

As I sail through the sky again, carrying the seed of my home, I see a group of humans below me telling stories in the circle of trees, just like my ancestors have for generations. I am happy that our traditions have carried and extended to more. They, too, will learn of the gifts that we have given to each other. That we exist only because we give life to each other. We are all connected in this way. I tilt my wings upwards and fly away, carrying the seed, excited to drop it and begin a new cycle for more to enjoy.