

CINDY CITRUS

part seven

Citrusa
Goddess of the River

Celebrating citrus in Ethiopia

Natty Mark Samuels
Illustration by Nadine Williams

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DEDICATION

TO

TO CATHY TALBOT

A FUNDRAISING MANAGER
FOR CANCER RESEARCH

FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY
TO DELIVER
MY FIRST HERBAL MEDICINE WORKSHOP
TO ADULTS
IN 2018.



African Cherry Orange

Nadine Williams

CITRUSA

Goddess of the River

At the request of another story, on another evening of babysitting for her nephew, Cindy Citrus gave him the following, set in Ethiopia...

An eleven year old boy, a sickly one, not able to join in the games of tag and hide and seek, removes himself from the area of play and wanders down to the nearby river. He searched for and began skimming stones, but even that effort brought moments of pain.

So he sits down, with his back against a fig tree and watches life on the water. The bobbing head of the pied kingfisher; the assembly of pelicans; the regal stance of the Goliath heron. Feeling relaxed, he soon fell asleep and in his peaceful state, he dreamt...

Two balls come floating towards him, one yellow, the other green. As they get closer, he sees they are a lemon and a lime. As he reaches out to touch them, he hears a voice saying

Take them, young man,
A presentation to you,
Your blessings of the day.
I have seen your wanderings,
That you are not with the others,
Immersed in the joy of play.

Enjoy colour and aroma,
I hope you feel better:
The potential of lemon and lime.

Take them young man,
These gifts citrus give us,
Selected just for you.
I have sensed your deep sadness,
You universe of loneliness,
Eating a solitary stew.

Enjoy colour and aroma,
I hope you feel better:
The potential of lemon and lime.

The boy was astounded! He'd heard of ghosts, witches and spirits. Seeing his apprehensiveness, the voice said, "Do not be afraid, young man. You cannot see me, because I am spirit. Like your local Wogesha of wide renown, I come to soothe and heal: I am Citrusa, the Goddess of the River."

Feeling assured, the boy began to relax - and inquisitiveness began to replace apprehension.

The Boy

Have you ever been human, Citrusa?

Citrusa

No, young man, I have always been spirit: I can help more people that way. I've been here since the late thirties of the last century. Because of you, today I am resident in this part of Meki River, but I permeate all the tributaries of this river and those of River Ketur also. I am the receiver of worries and ailments, the giver of citrus and goodness. In time to come no doubt, you will also throw lemons during the ceremonies of Timkat and of marriage: throwing lemons at the one you are attracted to: hoping she will catch it, or pick it up in positive response. It gladdens me to know that they have chosen a citrus fruit, as the emblem of love. It has been the beginning, of many a relationship and marriage. And lime! Surely, salsa is a blessing, when it consists of coconut, ginger, coriander, cucumber - and the juice from a lime. How many people have thanked God and the chefs, for their time in the preparation of pleasure? Amongst its other uses, is as a treatment for skin complaints, such as acne.

The Boy

My uncle tells me there is a very popular restaurant in Addis Ababa called The Lime Tree.

Citrusa

Yes, I have heard it mentioned in conversation, while people are sitting here.

The Boy

My uncle says he likes to go there, to drink a lime and ginger iced tea.

Citrusa

And so he should! As well as taste, young man, together those two are a great health tonic. When you get further in your science education, you'll find out about properties and chemicals, but let me just say that both lime and ginger contain anti-oxidant qualities; all the citrus fruits have these qualities within them: from ancestor citron to hybrid lemonquat.

The anti-oxidants are the champions of your internal systems – The Black Knights in Shining Armour - fighting the enemies of it, the dark and doom-laden Free Radicals. There's so much in those two little balls of fruit to help keep you healthy. Come and see me every day young man, for your medicine of yellow and green.

The Boy

So, just to come and sit here!

Citrusa

Precisely that, young man. Just come and sit and I shall see you.

The Boy

Wow! I feel blessed.

Citrusa

You are. And to be living here in the Central Rift Valley, where much of the citrus is grown. You remind me of them young man, for I know you shall overcome all adversities, as the trees in the orchards, have had to deal with *Citrus leaf* and *fruit spot*. These are the diseases that attack and kill the fruit, although the ones in this region are less affected. Not just the lemon and the lime, but the mandarin and orange also. The orchards here continue to send blessings to neighbouring Djibouti and across the waters to the Middle East and into Europe. If you haven't tried it yet, I shall see that you try a salad of cucumber, wheat, lentils, fava beans and avocado, topped with an embellishment of sunflower seeds, onions and our personal favourite, lemon juice.

The Boy

So we are lucky then, living here in the Upper Awash Valley?

Cirtusa

Yes you are.

The Boy

And those living in Melkassa too

Citrusa

Yes, and those in the south-east too.

Others are calling, so I must go now, but I look forward to seeing you tomorrow. It's been good to talk with you. Remember, each person or thing has its own value. In this short time here, I've noticed you have good listening skills, that your mind is healthily inquisitive – that you are eager to learn; these attributes will mark you as an intelligent man. I look forward to conversing with you tomorrow.

The Boy

Thank you very, very much, for the fruit and the kind words. I'll run here tomorrow, after homework and chores are done!

Citrusa

No need to run young man: the blessings of lemon and lime, mandarin and orange, will always be here for you....

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