

You Will Come Back to Me

The stories the jungle tells its children

Before we begin

My name is Lunita. But that name was given to me late, and I'll tell you about it.

I am old. Old as the water that sleeps in the dark, old as the roots that hold hands beneath the earth. I am a jungle, a green piece of the world looking out over the sea, in a land that men call Mexico and that I was already calling something, long before they arrived with their names.

I have decided to tell you a story. Or rather, many stories, which are really only one.

I do it for a reason, and I'll tell you straight away, with my heart in my hand, because grandmothers have no time to waste on roundabout words.

I do it because my children are going away.

Not far in body: they live close by, just steps from me. But in their hearts, yes. They have grown up looking the other way: toward the sea, toward the things that glitter, toward the noise of the big world. And they have almost forgotten

that behind their backs there is me. The jungle that watched them be born. The one who knows their true name.

I am not angry. Old things do not get angry: they wait. And I know something you do not know yet: that everything comes back. The tide that pulls away is already the same tide returning. Children come back too. Always. You only have to call them with the right voice.

This book is my voice.

I wrote it for the children of this land, so they remember who they are and where they come from, and come back to walk on me with bare feet.

And I wrote it for you, who come from far away, who cross the sea looking here for something you can no longer find at home. I want you, when you go back to your home, to carry a piece of me inside you. And to return. And to bring with you the people you love.

Because in the end, you see, this is what stories are for. To hold the hand of someone far away. To say, even from a great distance: I am here. I think of you. I am waiting for you.

Sit down, then. Make yourself comfortable. Take off your shoes, if you like -in fact, take them off for real, because the earth beneath bare feet is the oldest way to begin to listen to me.

I'll begin. You stay quiet and listen.

You will come back to me. I know it already.