

## The Himalayan Farmer by Sora Rai

The sun's blazing embrace creates moist dew on the farmer's brow. His burnt, calloused hands sweep the soil as the warm wind ripples through his cotton shirt, whispering a balm into his stifled heart. Wrinkles- that sprawl across his forehead like spider legs- bent and creased a thousand times remain as a mark. A symbol of trouble and misery that haunts him still. Lingered in his mind are the days in which the sun had reigned with voracious tyranny; a burning inferno, it dried the land under its gleaming glare as the crops laid waste in the crumbling mud. In an anguished frenzy, his wife prayed endlessly - mumbling the words behind cracked lips - to her ancestors, to the spirits that lived within nature, to God, to any God that would hear the cries of her hungry children and split apart the heavens. She would have sooner slit her own throat if blood could seep into the roots and water the withering crops. And then the rain came. But it was too late.

Emanating the might of an imminent tsunami, tears flooded the earth as his wife's despair drowned her. But the clothes had to be mended and fields needed tending. So she folded her heart into a flower, buried it deep into the ground, along with her child.

Yet, gone are those days. Now, verdant valleys spill out onto the landscape; like a river, the rolling hills flow in oscillating waves as they trickle down to the grassy terrain. Lush vegetation embellishes the curve of her bodice - fecund fields adorn her gown as Mother Nature rests her fragrant head on the soles of the Himalayas. Sweet mango bursting with ripeness perfumes the air, its aroma intertwining with the scent of freesia. The evening primrose that blooms in shafts of silver moonlight peeks through her milky petals, enviously marvelling at the coruscating colours that dye the roses in hues of crimson, azure and violet. The honey that their nectar bores seals into a glass jar. The farmer dips his fingers in the honey, the golden colour oozing as he lifts it to taste. Cloying sweetness melts into his mouth as he savours the heavenly ambrosia.

Under the gentle tenebrosity of the sunset, birds swoon low, their mellifluous melody resonating through the village as they perch upon branches, seeking cover. Their feathers - painted with strokes of ruby and sapphire - a masterpiece on oil canvas designed by a gentle creator.

The farmer gazes up, the fading sun veiled by grey clouds that sigh in serenity. The monsoon should soon arrive.

The first rain falls. Like a tear, it caresses the farmer's face, cascading down his nose, rolling onto the tip of his tongue.

Spilling into a crescendo, the undulating rain implodes in spirals on the ground, its icy kisses eliciting relief as it splashes onto feverish skin. The farmer falls onto his knees, closes his eyes, presses his forehead onto the earth in reverence to Mother Nature.