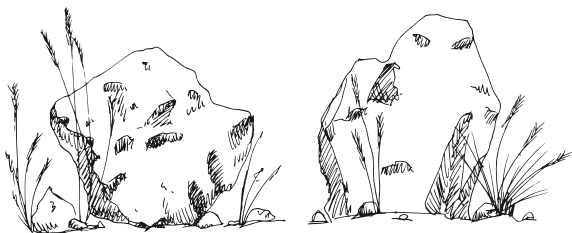


Talking Stones



by Andrea Mineo

Morning

On a quiet morning, in a sunlit clearing nestled deep within a timeless dry steppe, two ancient stones lay side by side, their rough surfaces bathed in light. These stones, shaped by millennia of wind, rain, and earth's ceaseless shifts, held secrets and wisdom far beyond the reach of human knowledge. They had witnessed the birth and growth of forests, the rise and fall of civilizations, and the delicate dance of nature's balance.

As the world around them changed, the stones remained steadfast, silent sentinels of the earth's history. Yet, today was different. A peculiar energy filled the air, a

silent hum that seemed to awaken something within them. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the stones began to stir, their ancient consciousness flickering to life.

“Can you feel it?” whispered the first stone, its voice resonating with the deep timbre of ages past.

“Indeed,” replied the second stone, its tone thoughtful and measured. “The world is changing more swiftly now than it ever has.”

The first stone sighed, making a sound like the rustling of leaves. “The balance is tipping. The heat grows more and more intense, and the waters rise. The forests we have known are retreating and with them, the creatures they shelter.”

The second stone echoed the sentiment.
“Yes, the rhythm we have known for centuries is disrupted. The humans, in their quest for progress, have forgotten the delicate symbiosis that sustains all life.”

For a moment, they were silent, each contemplating the vast span of time they had endured and the stark transformations they had witnessed. Then, the first stone spoke again.

“But there is hope,” it said softly.
“Solutions lie within the very essence of nature. The humans have the capacity for change and innovation. They need to remember the old ways, the wisdom of harmony with the earth.”

The second stone nodded in agreement.

“True. They must learn to listen once more to the rhythms of the earth, to use their knowledge not to dominate, but nurture and restore. We, who have stood through the ages, know that resilience and renewal are possible.

Evening

As the evening sun dipped lower in the sky, casting long shadows across the clearing, the stones continued their conversation, their voices blending with the whispers of the wind and the murmurs of the steppe. They spoke of the intricate web of life, of the delicate balance that sustained it, and of the profound changes needed to heal the planet.

Their words, carried by the warm summer breeze, seemed to imbue the steppe with a renewed sense of purpose. For in their timeless wisdom, the stones held a message, a reminder that even the smallest efforts towards harmony could create

ripples of change, echoing through the ages.

As the stones continued their dialogue, their voices grew more fervent, fueled by the urgency of their message.

“The humans must learn to see the world not as a resource to be exploited but as a partner to be respected,” the first stone declared. “They need to embrace sustainable practices—renewable energy, reforestation, and conservation of water.”

The second stone chimed in, “Indeed. They must understand that their survival is intricately linked to the health of the planet. Every tree they plant, every river they protect, contributes to the restoration of balance.”

They paused, allowing the profound silence of the steppe to envelop them. Birds flitted overhead, their songs a testament to the life that still thrived despite the changing climate. The stones drew strength from these signs of resilience.

“There are stories of hope,” the first stone continued, its voice carrying the weight of ancient knowledge. “Communities coming together to restore degraded lands, scientists developing innovative technologies to clean the air and water, and children educating their elders about the importance of protecting the environment.”

The second stone added, “Yes, and there are movements growing, people awakening to the reality that they can no longer afford to

ignore. The young ones, especially, are leading the charge with a fervour that is inspiring.”

Night

As dusk began to fall, casting a golden hue over the clearing, the stones' conversation turned towards solutions. They spoke of permaculture, a system that mimics natural ecosystems to create sustainable agricultural practices. They discussed the importance of giving back to nature, not just taking from it—observing, maintaining, and supporting its dynamics instead of opposing them. They talked about reducing waste, recycling, composting, and the significance of rebalancing resources between urban and rural areas. They emphasized the need to inspire new communities to embrace off-grid, self-sufficient lifestyles that promote

decentralization. They also spoke about the importance of providing spaces for artistic practices that can inspire broader perspectives.

“The answers are within their reach,” the first stone asserted. “They need only to look to nature for inspiration. The earth has always provided for those who respect its cycles.”

The second stone agreed, “And they must learn to act collectively, to see beyond borders and politics.”

As the last rays of sunlight faded, the stones fell silent once more, their conversation lingering in the air like an echo of wisdom. The clearing, now bathed in the soft glow of twilight, seemed to hold its breath,

absorbing the profound truths spoken by these ancient sentinels.

In the quiet that followed, a sense of determination settled over the steppe. The stones had shared their wisdom, and now it was up to those who walked on two legs to heed their call. The journey ahead was fraught with challenges, but the path to healing and restoration was clear.

With a final whisper, barely audible above the gentle rustling of the leaves, the first stone spoke, “We are but stones, yet even we know the power of change lies in the hands of those who dare to dream and to act.”

And the second stone concluded, “May their hearts be as steadfast as ours, and their resolve as enduring.”

As night descended, the forest embraced the message of the talking stones, carrying it on the wind, through the rustling leaves and into the hearts of all who were willing to listen.

Elara

The stars began to twinkle overhead, their light casting a gentle glow on the ancient stones. The steppe, now shrouded in the tranquility of night, seemed to hold its breath, as if in reverence for the conversation that had taken place.

As the stones settled into silence, their final words resonated deeply within the heart of the steppe. Animals paused in their nightly routines, and the leaves whispered softly as the wind carried the stones' message far and wide.

On a warm summer night in a nearby village, a young girl named Elara, ventured out into the dry steppe in search of a quiet

and cool place to lay and observe the stars. Drawn by an inexplicable feeling, she approached the carved rock where the stones lay. As she ran her fingers over the engravings she felt a connection, a sense of purpose, stirring within her.

Elara sat down beside the stones, the cool earth grounding her as she listened to the echoes of their conversation. She closed her eyes, imagining the dialogue between the stones, their wisdom, and their hope for the future. She understood the weight of their words and the wisdom of their words.

Inspired, Elara rose and hurried back to her village, her heart filled with determination. She gathered her friends and family, sharing the tale of the talking stones and their message of hope and responsibility.

Motivated by Elara's passion, the village began to change. They implemented sustainable practices and restored the health of their land. Word of their efforts spread reaching neighbouring villages and, eventually, distant cities. People from all walks of life came together, united by a common purpose: to heal the earth and safeguard its future.

Over time, the impact of their collective actions became evident. The steppe became a flourished forest, rivers ran clear and the air grew cleaner. Communities bonded over their shared mission, forging stronger connections with each other and with nature.

Back in the forest clearing, the stones remained, silent witnesses to the

transformation unfolding around them. The once parched earth now supported vibrant life, a testament to the power of human resolve and the enduring wisdom of nature.

Years passed and Elara, now an elder, often returned to the clearing. She would sit beside the stones, her heart swelling with gratitude and pride. She knew that the story of the talking stones was not just a tale but a living truth that had sparked a global movement.

One evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon, Elara placed her hand on the carved rock and whispered, “Thank you.” She felt a gentle warmth beneath her palm as if the stones were acknowledging her gratitude.

The talking stones had spoken and humanity had listened. Through their words, the world had found its way back to balance, proving that even the smallest voice could inspire great change.

In the quiet of the night, the stones continued their eternal vigil.

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