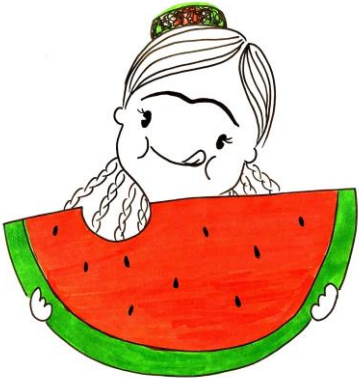


I AM FROM UZBEKISTAN

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by al.fergani

to be continued ;)



Over the years living and travelling around the world, I met countless people from all over the globe. Every time I would introduce myself as someone from Uzbekistan, I would hear the funniest reactions—almost everyone from almost everywhere didn't know where—or what—Uzbekistan was—what was this long cumbersome word that few people could pronounce... Many times I had to swear it is indeed a real country. And many times people would actually be interested to know more—“so what is it like, U-Z-B-E-K-I-S-T-A-N?”

Inspired by this, I have long wanted to create a simple doodle to introduce and share all the beautiful little things about my home. 1

After some thinking, I came up with a final character who would tell the story.

Meet al-fergani, the unibrow girl. Through a series of simple doodles, this little girl will take you on an adventure, and share what she thinks are the most beautiful things about our homeland.

Kseniya Tsoy (al.fergani) was born under the sunshine of Uzbekistan, but since 2008 is nomading the world, currently being based out of Canada.

She has a passion for storytelling and loves creating cute characters to bring her stories to life.

P.S. "al-fergani" means "from Fergana" - her little hometown.

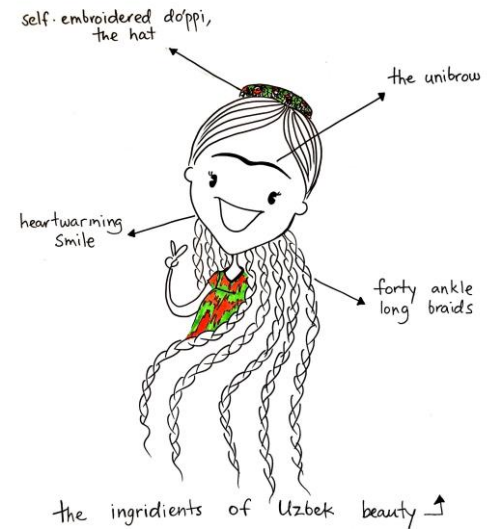


The Uzbek New Year, and the people's most cherished holiday—"Navruz"—, is celebrated on the 21st of March. Taking its roots in Zoroastrian tradition, it is celebrated on the night of the vernal equinox, to mark the time after which day will be longer than nights, and light will symbolically win over darkness.

Navruz means literally "New Day" and celebrates the coming of spring, reawakening of nature and new beginnings.

I think it is on this day every year that I miss home the most ...

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One of the most prominent symbols of Uzbekistan is an unusual fabric "Khan-Atlas" - light and airy as a cloud, cool like a pure mountain air and as iridescent as a rainbow. It is the country's natural landscapes, bright character and national artistic taste are woven in the pattern of this enchanting fabric.

The legend of Khan-Atlas says that its creation was inspired by the reflection of clouds and rainbows, lush meadows and colorful flowers, the blush of dawn, blue night sky and patches of sunlight in the lake water rippled by a light breeze that fused the colors into a mesmerizing pattern.

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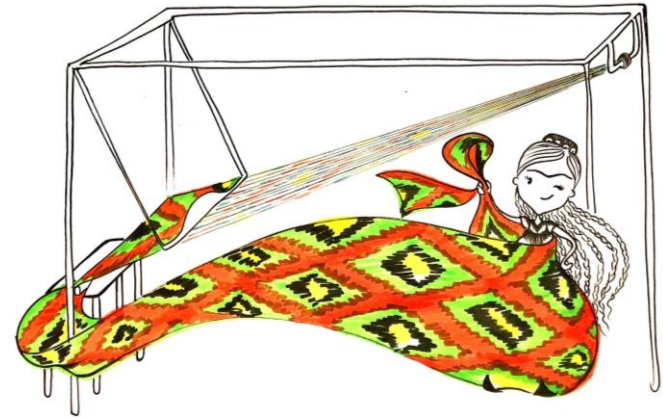
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In Uzbekistan, when we greet people we put our right hand over our heart and say “Assalomu Alaykum”? It literally means “peace be upon you”.

And we mean it wholeheartedly.

Let’s start?

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The legend of Uzbekistan tells that in the beginning of the time when God was dividing land to the people, the Uzbek modestly stood on the side and smilingly let everybody pass first. As he was the last in the line he came up to God to receive his piece of land and God exclaimed “Oh my child, I see you are indeed generous by heart! But what to do, I have no more land left! Well, I guess I’ll have to give you a piece of heaven”...

This “piece of heaven” lies in the very middle of the biggest continent, tucked in between Black Sand deserts and Heavenly mountains. The land of a thousand legends, with millenia of history and at the heart of the mystical Silk Road, Uzbekistan, is a land of extraordinary natural and architectural beauty.

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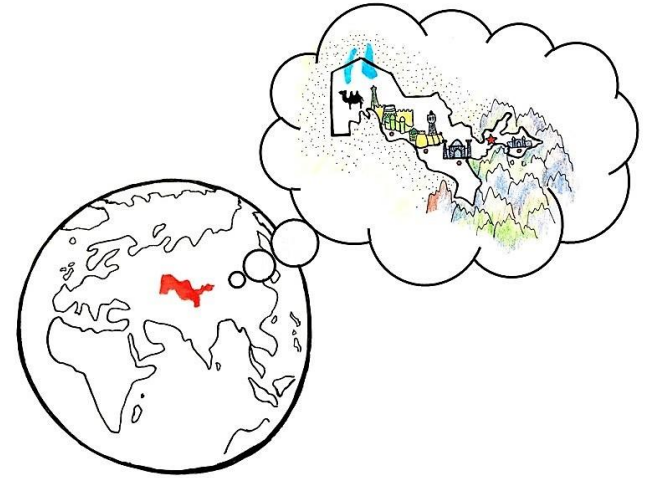
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Did you know that “do’ppi”—the traditional Uzbek headdress is one of the symbols of Uzbekistan and an important part of our artistic heritage?

Hand-embroidered do’ppi is not only a beautiful ornament, but also is a powerful amulet that protects its wearer and brings luck.

And not only! It is the source of important information: one could judge the owner’s social status, age and hometown by the form, patterns and colors of the headdress :)

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Did you know that the blood of an Uzbek person consists of 95% watermelon juice? ;)

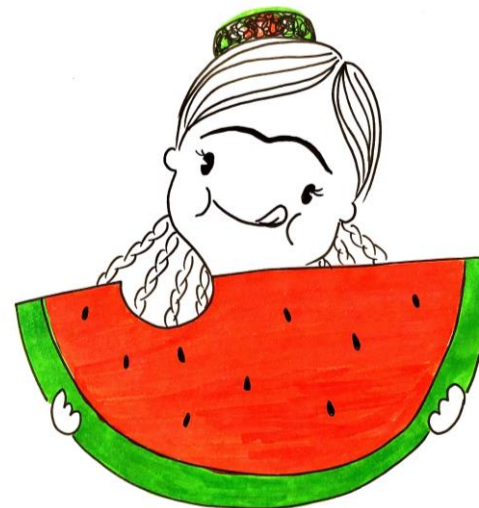


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These picturesque ancient cities and exquisitely patterned mosaics are the cherished heritage of Central Asian Medieval Renaissance. The blue-tiled domes of fairy-tale-like buildings is an image close to the heart of every Uzbek, and a reminder of the beautiful blue skies that unites us all together.

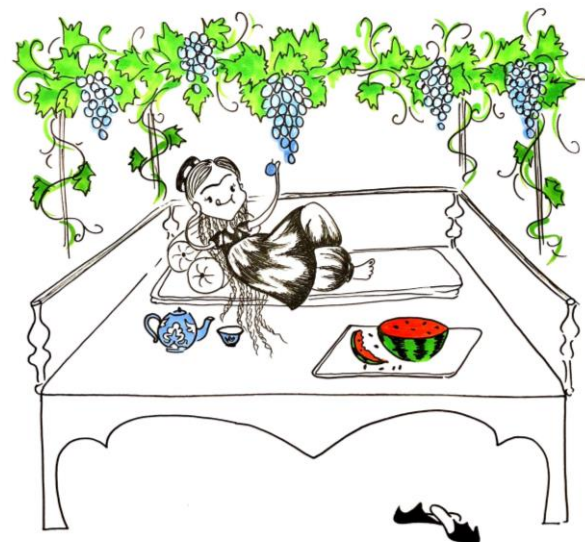
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If you are lucky to ever visit Central Asia, it is the green lush meadows, white cotton-like clouds and blue peaceful skies of Uzbekistan's modestly pure nature that will linger in your memory long after you leave. You probably would not have guessed that it is these beautiful landscapes that symbolically make up the country's flag.

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Uzbekistan is a unique country farthest away from any ocean. Labeled “double-land-locked” by geography books, it is indeed at least two countries away from any sea in all four directions. This distinct climate condition makes for extreme temperature fluctuations throughout the year, and even over a day. It is due to this temperature difference that makes our fruits incredibly sweet and delicious. It is here that you will try melons with a taste and fragrance that you will never forget...

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When in Uzbekistan, don't miss trying “non”—a divine miracle of crisp odorous flesh of yeast with crumbs of flavourful sesame. It is baked in special clay ovens—tandir -, which is integral to making it. Since ancient times, Uzbek bread was cooked in a round shape, which had a hidden meaning.

The circular disk symbolized the sun, because without bread, as well as without the sun, there is no life on the earth.

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But still it is the people that make this place a heaven on Earth. The extraordinary hospitality of Uzbeks is what truly wins one's heart. We love inviting new friends into our hearts and homes, and we make sure one doesn't leave without a proper taste of "dastarkhan"—the Central Asian dining ritual of enjoying abundant culinary pleasures in the company of friends and family. Dastarkhan is not dastarkhan without green tea, "plov", "non", fresh seasonal fruits and savoury sweets.

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Did you know that tea plays a very important role in our culture, and is the embodiment of Uzbek hospitality? Almost everyone you meet will invite you "to have tea" in their home, and you really should never say no. It is so much more than tea: Uzbek "tea" is spiced with friendship, served with warm smiles, and packed with good memories.

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