



5 June 2010 - JAGAM organised a 1-day trip to visit Agarwood Farm in Tampin where 12 participants took part. One of them is Yoshie Sasagawa, 13 year old daughter of JAGAM member, Madam Jeannette Teow. This young writer drew inspiration from the trip to contribute a mystical story of her own for this edition of *Tayori*. Thank you, Yoshie-chan!

The Agarwood

by Yoshie Sasagawa, 7th June 2010

Alona, meaning "oak tree" was named by her grandmother, Myrthe. Like all the other villagers in Akchuah, they were all named after plants. Alona was a girl full of curiosity and determination with a pleasant personality, until one day it all changed.

"Mother, mother, can I go out and play?" Alona asked. Her mother was busy and gave her a quick nod and said, "Be back before night falls." Off she went skipping down the dusty lane of the village. Wild primroses were everywhere with butterflies dancing around. She smiled to herself and said, "What a beautiful weather." Suddenly, Alona's skipping stopped abruptly. "That's strange," she said to herself. She bent down and saw a white rose with red stains on it. "Blood," she whispered. Alona looked around, but no one was to be seen. Roses were not grown in Akchuah and it was believed to be a bad luck sign if they see one.

A gust of wind blew past her. "Alona, Alona, help me, save me, please Alona, please" someone whispered. But no one was around. Alona closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "It's coming sooner than I thought," she said. From the day Alona was born, she was the chosen one to face something tragic in order to save the village from some tragedy. Something was horribly wrong, she felt it. Immediately, Alona got up and rushed back home. She was just in time to see it. "No, no, no" Please don't, please" No," she thought. Her hand covering her mouth. Alona's mother's back was facing her and the man who had killed her disappeared. White roses appeared everywhere mysteriously. Blood was everywhere on the floor and roses. The roses were painted in red. With blood. Her mother was still standing. With her last strength, she turned and smiled at Alona, "It's okay" Alona, everything will be" fine," she whispered. She dropped to the ground with Alona still staring at her. Tears were flowing but no sobs came out.

Alona ran and ran, she screamed and shouted, "I can't do it! I can't face it!" Deeper into the woods she ran until she

was exhausted. She was lost, hungry, scared and most of all, tired. Alona collapsed and cried herself to sleep. Alona was in the middle of an Aquilara forest. The smell of Aquilara woods woke her. "Aquilara wood," she whispered. A gust of wind blew and Alona closed her eyes. Whispers, singing and happiness were heard and a whisper followed. "I will guard you and you will protect my trees in return, stay here and you will be safe," the voice said.

For 23 years Alona stayed. She was happy and protected and took care of the trees that guarded her. The Aquilara wood helped her in healing some wounds and sooth her nerves. Agar wood comes from the tree called Aquilara Tree. It calms the nervous system, expels negative energies, brings alertness, relieves anxiety, and eases obsessive behavior. Agar wood is formed when the tree is frequently infected with parasite, fungus or molds. The tree will then produce a liquid called resin to respond to the attack. The fungus and decomposition continue to generate a very rich and dark resin forming within the heartwood. This process might take over a hundred years to develop.

When people found out about this piece of precious wood, they began fighting for it. For years Alona guarded the trees until one day, people came in and destroyed all the trees Alona planted. A group of men came and started chopping down the trees.

"Stop it, stop!" Alona cried, but it was useless. People will do anything to get their hands on the Agar wood. They took out a gun and shot her. It was suddenly raining white roses. The trees were mourning for their beloved guardian and one by one, they slowly died and wilted. The men were angry and cursed Alona.

The men suddenly heard a crying sound and Alona said, "You do not deserve to earn that much of money, it is only money you see and you don't appreciate the trees and therefore you shall be cursed for life!" The men were frightened and ran away. Till this day, Alona continues to haunt people who don't appreciate plants and animals and kill them just for money. I hope you aren't one, are you?