



THE FLAME TREE HERALD TRIBUNE


IN
THIS
EDITION

news, views,
reviews,
& off - grid
jungle intel

PANDAM DELIGHTS
A NEW RECKONING
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BETTER THAN REJUVENATION FACE CREAM

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flametreestate.com

A detailed illustration of a red lily flower. The petals are a vibrant red, with some showing a slight gradient to a darker red at the tips. The stamens are a deep blue, and the pistil is a pale yellow. Green leaves are visible at the base and along the stem. The background is a plain, light beige color.

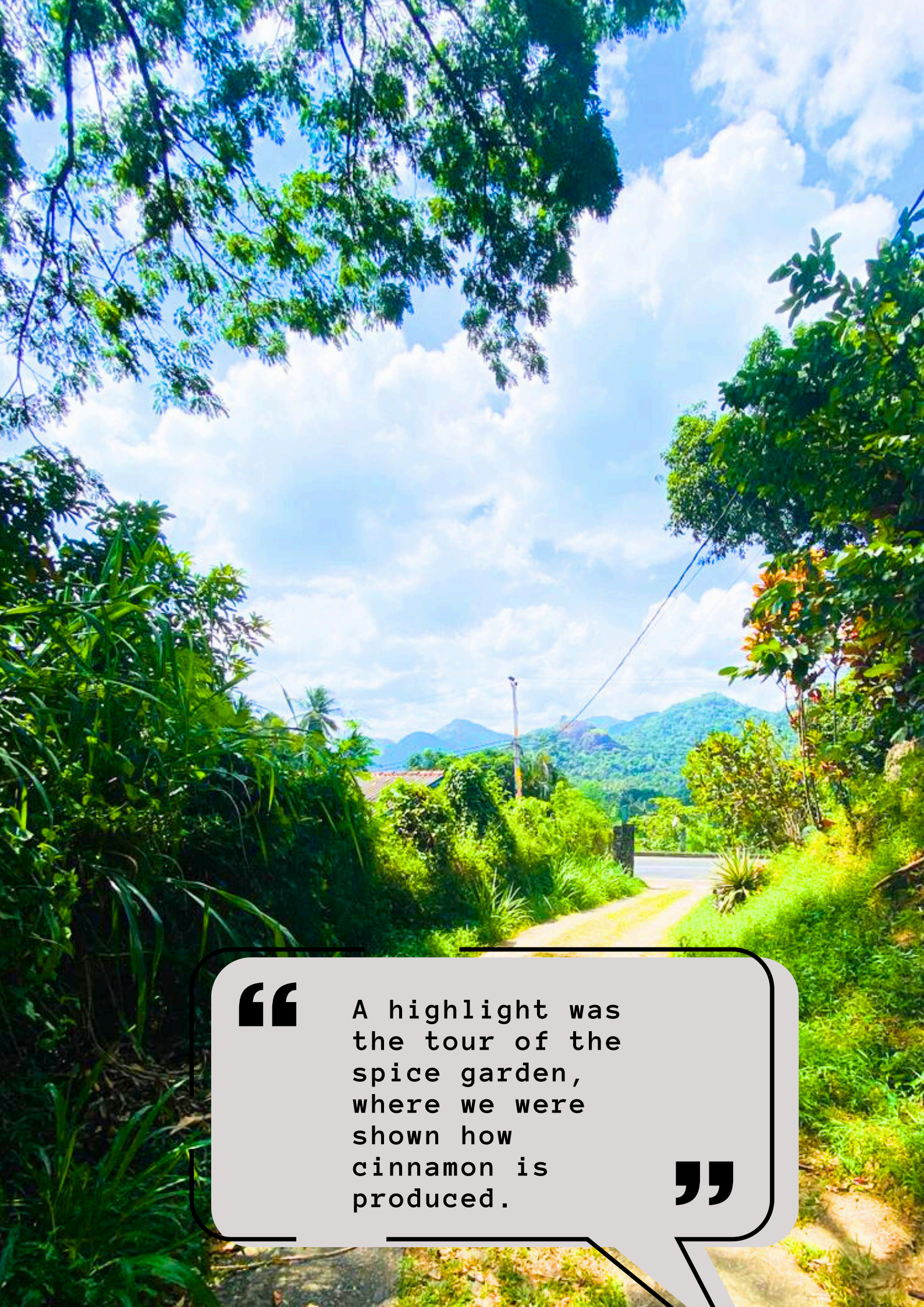
“ Everything
was
perfect. ”

ADIGAR



A Sinhala term for the chief officer in the Kandyan kingdom.

The official was referred to as the first adigar or mahadigar, and took precedence over all other chiefs in the kingdom.



“

A highlight was the tour of the spice garden, where we were shown how cinnamon is produced.

”

BETTER THAN REJUVENATION FACE CREAM



Sri Lanka's glorious animal endemicity is best (if not most demurely) exemplified by the most modest and overlooked of all its creatures – the skinks. Of the 34 skink species found here a whopping 29 are endemic to the island. Twenty are now very rare indeed; a few have only recently been discovered.



A cross between a chameleon and a snake, they have the sort of shimmering velvety soft skin that beauty brands like La Prairie Platinum Rare Haute-Rejuvenation Face Cream seek, with little hope of achieving, to bestow on humans.

They glitter, live in rock faces such as those that surround the infinity pool of The Flame Tree Estate and Hotel and love basking in the sun. More than anything else their extreme modesty combined with their sleek and glittering beauty marks them out as classically Sri Lankan.



“

The food was
the best we
had in Sri
Lanka

”

SEARED COCONUT VINDALOO SWORDFISH



A NEW DISH OUR
CHEFS ARE TRAILLING

Swordfish; Salt; Vindaloo Spice Powder; Canola, Coconut Oil; Fresh
Ginger; Garlic; Cloves; Onion; Lime Juice; Dark Brown Sugar; Coconut
Milk; Chopped Cilantro Leaves

A tropical scene featuring a swimming pool in the foreground, with several tall palm trees and a lush green background under a blue sky with light clouds. The water in the pool is clear and reflects the surrounding environment.

**“ Loved
every
moment. ”**

A NEW RECKONING

MICHAEL ONDAATJE

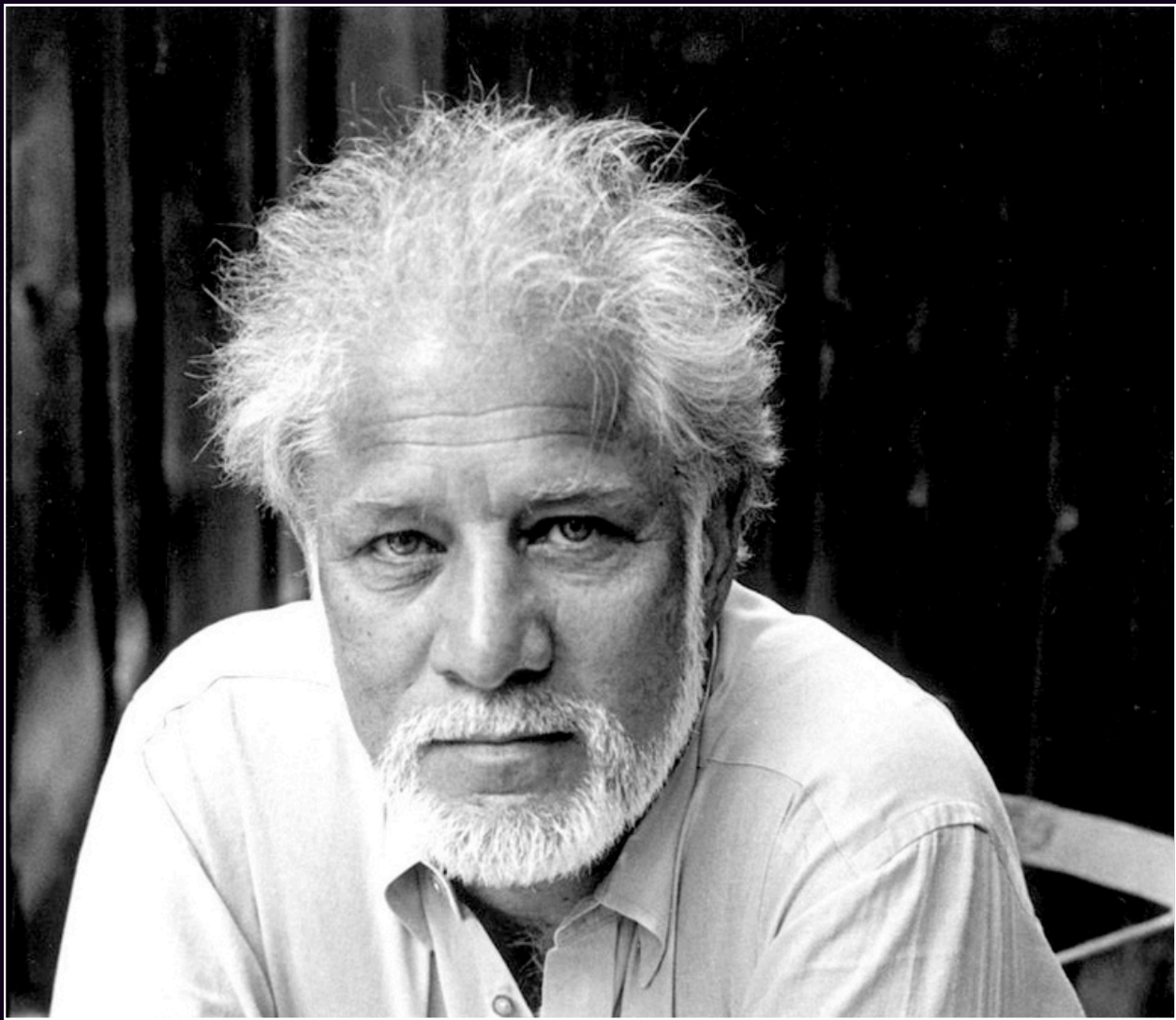


THIS
MONTH'S
READ

"Michael Ondaatje is a poet
of marvelous concreteness
and clarity."

—*Los Angeles Times*

From around the late 1960s to the early 1970s a profoundly trenchant new sensibility shaped Sri Lanka's fiction, with a band of new writers emerging for whom nothing was any longer out of bounds - from the incipient civil war, belief, ethnicity, and feminism to gender, and, of course, the perennial themes of the island: family, love, the jungle, loss, and living. You touched / your belly to my hands / in the dry air and said / I am the cinnamon / Peeler's wife. Smell me."

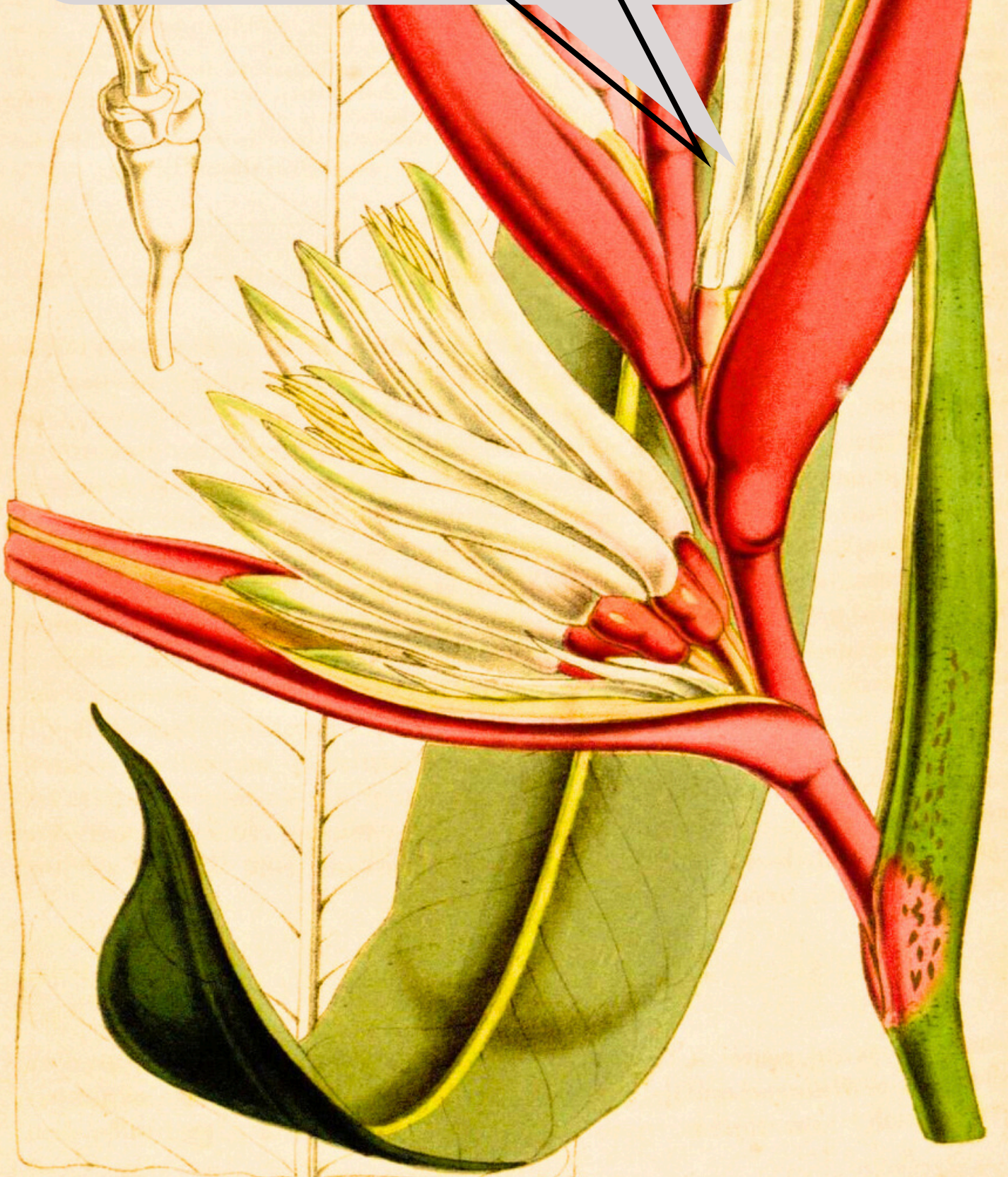


In a field of exceptional talent, Michael Ondaatje, stands out, a multiple award-winning novelist and poet whose novel "The English Patient" catapulted him to global recognition. Despite being seen as a Sri Lankan-born Canadian writer, The Guardian presciently observed that "the more you look, the more dizzyingly kaleidoscopic he seems to become: a Canadian citizen who remains profoundly Sri Lankan."

The 1992 publication and later film of "The English Patient," put him squarely on the world's literary stage, the novel populated by characters haunted by the enigma of a nameless burned man lying in a room of an Italian villa at the end of World War Two.

In 2000 "Anil's Ghost" came out, one of his most impressive works, a cornerstone for his tremendous reputation, a mystery set in Sri Lanka and riven with love and fear, identity, and antiquity. Other books of his to read include "The Collected Works of Billy the Kid," "Coming Through Slaughter," "In the Skin of a Lion," "Divisadero," "The Cat's Table," and "Warlight."

“ It was like
being invited to
stay at a long
lost family
member's Sri
Lankan estate. ”



SIVASUBRAMANIAM KAJENDRAN



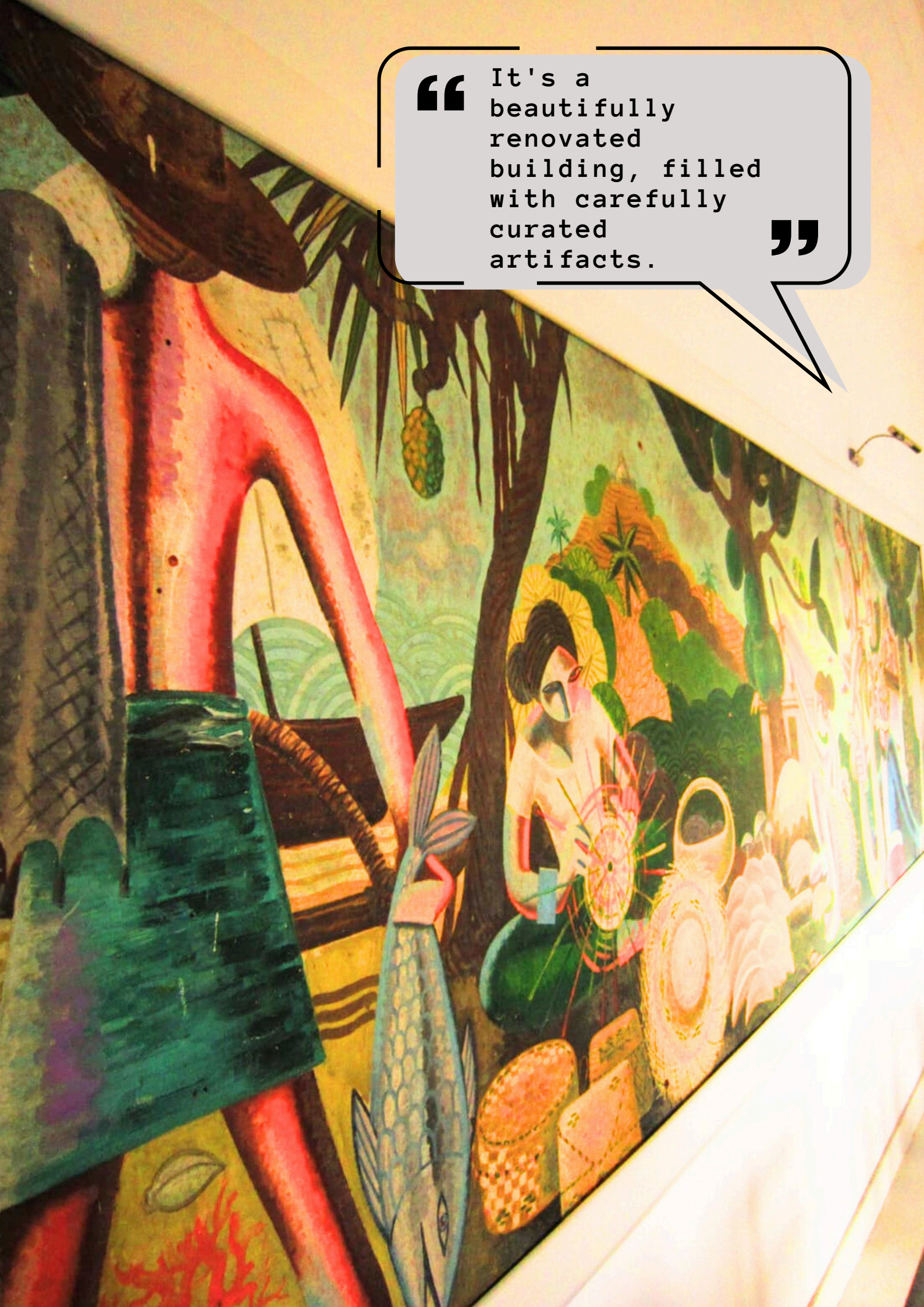
Born in 1988, Sivasubramaniam Kajendran, one of the country's leading contemporary artists, has a style, command of colour and absolute focus on people that makes his work instantly recognizable. His paintings edit out all but the most pertinent and intimate of human associations as if someone had thrown the lights on at long last to bring into your private world, the electrically transparent worlds of other people, passed by long ago, forgotten, misjudged, misread and misconstrued .



“

It's a beautifully renovated building, filled with carefully curated artifacts.

”



KING OF THE MONTH

AMANDAGAMANI ABHAYA, KING OF ANURADHAPURA

The thirty eighth monarch of the Vijayan Period (543 BCE - 66 CE), the dates of his reign being 21 CE – 30 CE. Succeeding to the Anuradhapuran throne on the death of his brother, Mahadatika Mahanaga, King Amandagamani Abhaya's rule ended abruptly when he was murdered by his brother, Kanirajanu Tissa.

This seems - in retrospect - to be the tipping point for the Vijayan dynasty. The regicide unleashed a murderous plenitude of competing ambitious amongst other family members, and within the wider nobility around the throne.

Thereafter, murdering the sitting king because something of a dynastic craze. It was to take a further 29 years of feuding, assassination, and civil war for the once great dynasty to finally unseat themselves.



A tropical landscape at sunset. In the foreground, there's a wooden deck with a railing. A tall palm tree stands prominently in the center. To the right, a modern building with a white facade and a balcony is visible. The background shows a hazy mountain range under a warm, orange sky. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

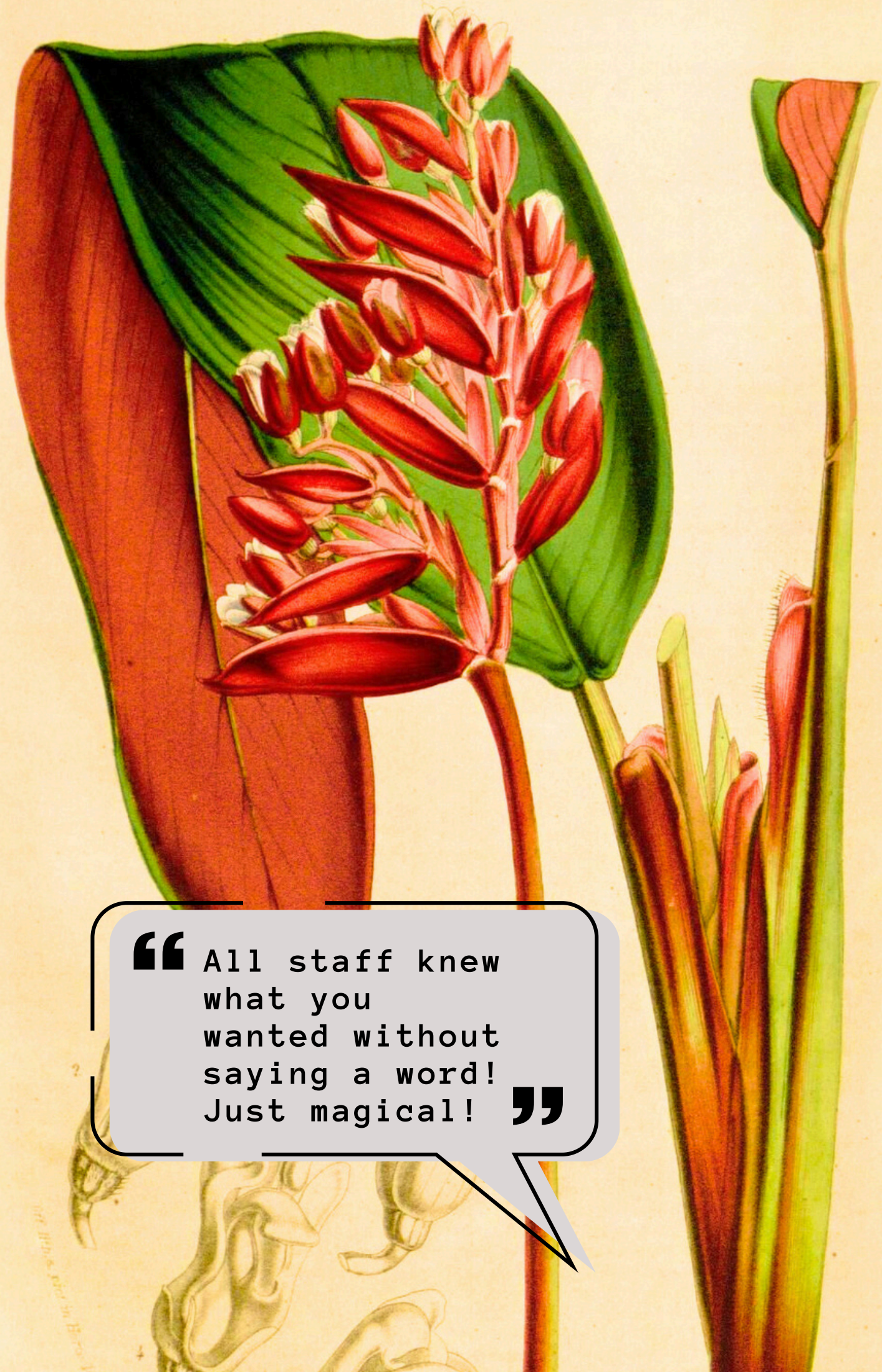
**“ Unlike
anywhere else
we've ever
stayed. ”**



SANJEEWA KUMAR

History, myth, drama, the natural world, plants, philosophy, elephants, water – all are drawn into the mesmerising landscapes created by Sanjeeva Kumar, one of the country's leading contemporary artists who was born in 1971. His is a crowded, mysterious, beguiling, magnetic world of magical realism, each painting unexpectedly different; and each a rare and beautiful thing.





“ All staff knew what you wanted without saying a word! Just magical! ”





PANDAM LEAVES



Pandam leaves are Asia's secret spice. It transforms dishes with its grassy green vanilla like flavour. Growing to about three feet in height, it is known colloquially as screw pine for the spiralling arrangement of its leaves. It is an easy plant to grow, requiring little attention but for water and a splash of shade. It hit the botanical headlines as late as 1813 when it was described by Scottish botanist William

Roxburgh. His famous catalogue of Calcutta Royal Botanic Garden's plant species noted that the plant had been donated in 1798 from the island of Ambon, in Indonesia. It is especially loved for desserts such as Thailand's khanom thuai or Filipino Buko Pandan – not just for its sweet flavour but also for the shocking green colour it imparts. Nor it is a stranger to curries, soups, and salads. Home remedies incorporate it to treat headaches, joint pain, skin issues, and dandruff. Modern scientific research has been slow to catch up and is only now just beginning to identify its ability to combat various chronic diseases, arthritis, glucose level regulation, and skin disorders. It is however a spice to put your money on. Investors are piling in and the market, currently at just around 300 million dollars is said to double in just a few years.

and
is
madding
Flame Tree Estate
is the place

“

A colonial house
renovated and cared
for in every detail.
The smells, the
decor, the pool, the
food, the large,
welcoming room.

”

THE FIRST WONDER

Despite their iconic status, the original seven wonders of the ancient world come up short when compared to the seven wonders of ancient Lanka.

The world's first Seven Wonders comprised a garden, two tombs, two statues, a temple, and a lighthouse. It featured the Pyramids of Giza, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes, and the Lighthouse of Alexandria. Sri Lanka's list, though, is not all architecture with a nod to gardens – it is comprehensive, including as it does a painting, a monastery, a book, a piece of revolutionary new technology that enabled a treasured dish, a shrine, a tree, and a lake.

Its first wonder was created somewhere between 504 to 474 BCE: almost nine hundred and ninety-nine years earlier. At a place called Panda Wewa, thirty kilometres from Chilaw and the soft salty waters of the Laccadive lagoons – the first wonder of ancient Sri Lanka.

"There will," stated Stephen King deferentially, "be water if God wills it." But as any ancient Sri Lankan would have told him, this is only half the truth of the matter. Water, uncollected, undistributed, unpurified, is all but useless however much the good Lord has allowed.

And water was what the island needed - especially in those areas first settled by migrants; for despite abundant monsoons, the water, uncollected, soon vanishes.

THE 7 WONDERS OF ANCIENT LANKA





Ancient Sri Lanka was settled by its later migrants mostly from the north to the south - and the north and central part of the island is dry. Often, even, waterless. Which is why almost the first thing the new settlers did was to assemble around this most precious of resources every possible innovation, and resource, from tanks and reservoirs, dams and canals, sluice gates and the planting of different types of vegetation to promote purification or reduce evaporation.

All this started when, within 39 years of the arrival of Prince Vijaya, the founding father of the Sinhala nation, its third - and still modest - king, Panduvasdeva, created the first notable man-made reservoir on the island: Panda Wewa. Indeed, if historians and pundits are to be believed, Panduvasdeva's tank was one of the world's most notable man-made reservoirs. Unlike any of Diodorus's wonders, its importance lay not simply in its pleasing visual beauty, but in the fact that it, quite literally, gave life to the land. Without it, there would have been few if any other later wonders, structural or otherwise, to commend.

What mattered was not whether Panda Wewa was earth's first man made reservoir - but what it represented; and what it enabled. Hydrologists and historians, who have studied the remote and subdued landscape around it, believe that the king dammed a small river, the Kolamunu Oya, to create the reservoir, at one end of which he had situated his nascent capital, not far from present day Chilaw.

Unlike all other ancient reservoirs, not least the great pharaonic ones, this one was not created by simply filling a natural hollow with water - but by forming a dam to hold the water in and regulate its distribution. To get to this point, the industrial and engineering expertise possessed by the kingdom would have had to have been considerable. A capability to make bricks and cut stones would have been essential; and the understanding of how then to use these things to create a sluice to regulate the flow of water to the city and the paddy lands. Construction, engineering, hydrology, mathematics, agriculture, project management: all would have had to fuse with seamless genius.



Spanning one and a half miles at a height of 24 feet, the dam is cunningly part-made by utilising the natural rock to reduce the amount of stones and bricks required to hold back what was, for the time, a colossal amount of water - 416 million cubic feet within an area of 1,360 acres. Its slopes were protected by stones to minimise erosion, and the overall structure was sufficiently robust to withstand and release the immense quantities of water that gathered during monsoon times; its ability to absorb pressure cleverly maximised by the design of an unusual twisting embankment that skirted low ground.

The tank was to last for over 2,300 years before finally being breached by monsoon rains in 1805. Parts of its structure can still be seen today as you travel from Bingiriya to Wariyapola. Just past the Detiyamulla Sri Jettathissa Rajamaha Viharaya you come across a lane paved with concrete blocks, known as Gota Keta; and here are found the partial remains of the ancient embankment, disappearing into the jungle.

Many far greater tanks, with much more advanced sluices, subtle canals and structural designs that engaged the most brilliant attributes of engineering were to be built across the island in the hundreds of years that followed. But this was the first one, the mother tank, the one that ignited Sri Lanka's aqua power – a faculty that today not only still waters the land but also powers almost 60% of the country's energy needs.



“ A special mention goes to Angelo for his kindness and professionalism and to Erah who pampered us and accompanied us with her stories. ”



THE GAL OYA



At one hundred and eight kilometres, the Gal Oya is the country's sixteenth longest river, collecting its waters in the mountains around Badulla, a town built on tea. The town is also home to two of the country's most notable shrines: Muthiyangana temple, one of the sixteen places on the island that Buddhists believe to have been visited by the Lord Buddha himself; and the remarkable Badulla Kataragama Devalaya, a shrine dedicated to Kataragama, a Tamil goddess who transitioned into Buddhism. The river flows out into the Indian Ocean near the Eastern Province town of Kalmunai, a place noted for its Muslim community. The river's journey is as fine a meander through the country's varied religious traditions as it is possible to have. Not that it gets to flow out immediately for in 1948 the river was dammed to create the Senanayake Samudra — a large reservoir and part of the Gal Oya scheme. This colossal water resource grew to one hundred thousand acres, and though it is now an essential part of the region's agriculture, the resettlement of Tamils and Sinhalese at the time provoked some of the earliest ethnic riots in the country.

A tropical sunset scene with palm trees and a body of water reflecting the sky. The sky is filled with soft, orange and pink clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The palm trees are silhouetted against the bright sky, and their reflections are visible in the calm water below. A speech bubble is overlaid on the upper part of the image, containing a quote.

“ A magical
experience
that left me
speechless **”**

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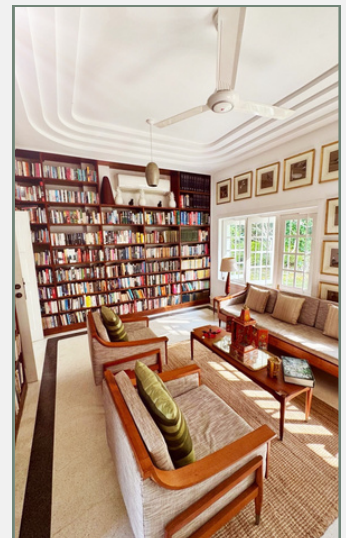
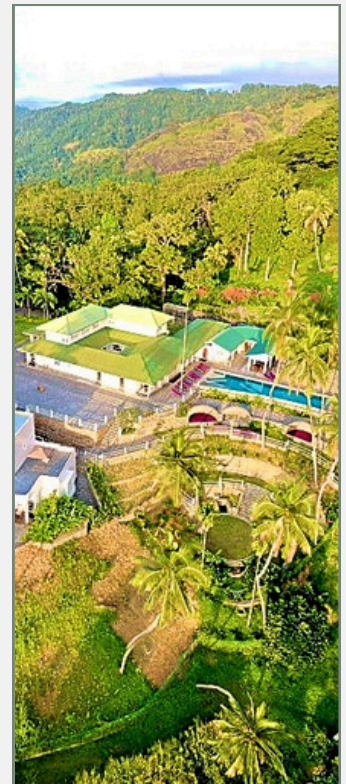


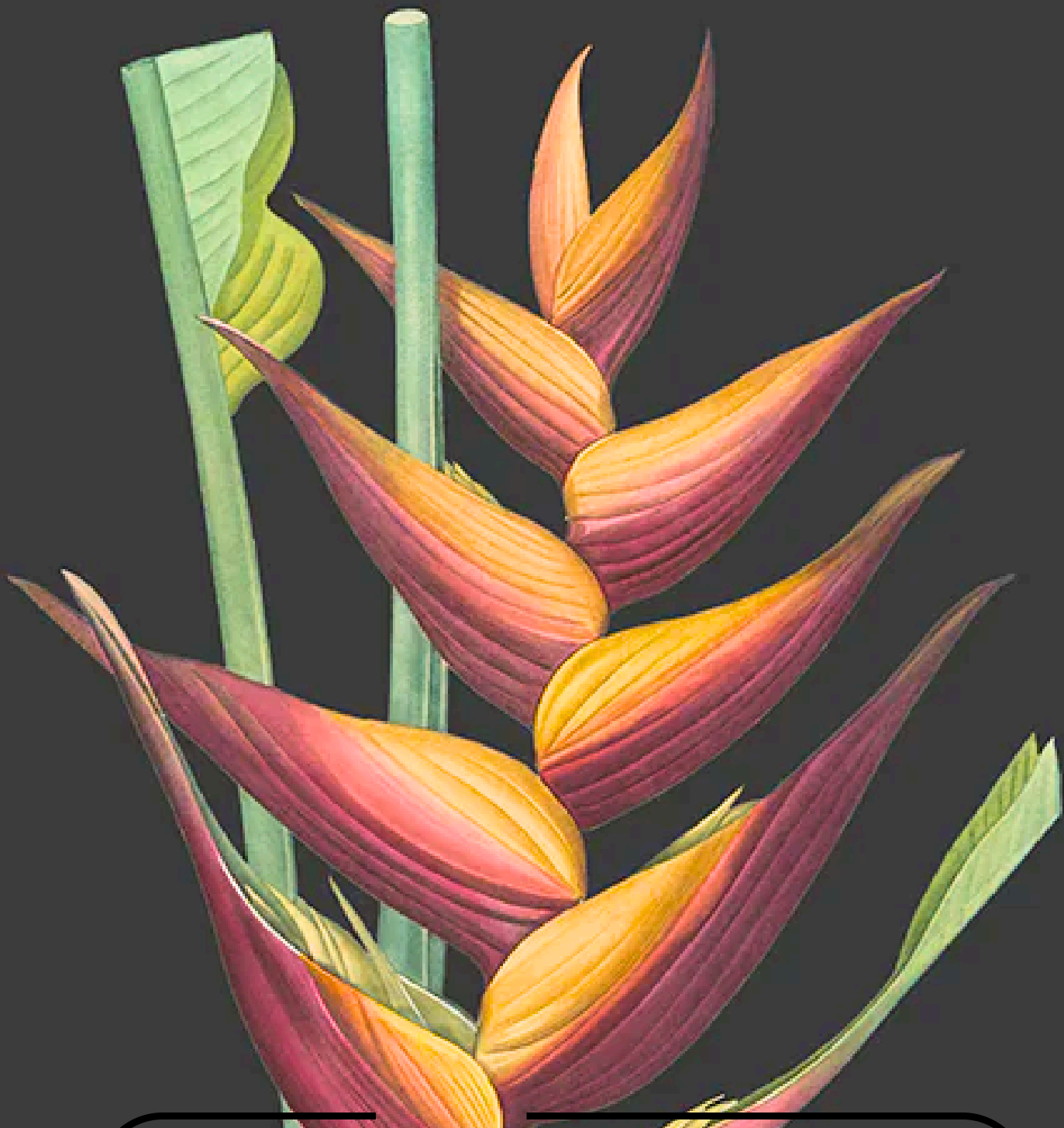
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“

A true luxury retreat
nestled in the jungle,
with breathtaking
views that make you
feel like you're in a
world apart

”