

The Stone Statue

In the western part of Ukraine there is a beautiful wood at the edge of a small village. In it stands a statue of stone. It shows the perfect figure of a young girl holding a basket of berries in her hand.

The village people treat the statue with great respect and whitewash it several times a year. If you were to ask any of the villagers the story of the figure, this is what they would say:

“You must first understand that the people who lived here long ago were very pious and kept all the holy days. They were forbidden to work then and instead went to church to pray.

“Well, one day, many, many years ago a young maiden chanced to take a walk in the wood. She found a huge bed of wild strawberries. They were not quite so ripe so she did not pick them. She promised herself to come back in a few days when they would be ripe.

“Now it chanced that the day she planned to go berry picking was a holy day. When her mother heard of it she forbade her to go, saying she would surely meet with ill luck. The girl paid no attention to her mother’s words and set off.

“When she arrived, to her delight she found that the berries were unplucked and just waiting to be picked; a more luscious crop she had never seen. She set to work and soon her basket was full. She set off for home, but when she arrived at the edge of the wood she was turned to stone, and there she stands to this day—a warning and a reminder to all the villagers to keep the blessed holy days.”

This tale was told to me by an elderly neighbour who came from this village and had seen the statue.