



**When I was a little girl, my grandmother used to tell me and my cousins' stories about a gypsy wanderer named Tarankuku.** Tarankuku very conveniently used my grandma's pantry as a passageway and occasionally came by to steal and eat children. The pantry was a dark and mysterious place for us children, full of weird, smelly items and forgotten kitchen gadgets, and whenever there was a sound in the house (or whenever my grandmother wanted us to calm down), she would tell us that Tarankuku was about to come by to steal us and we should better behave! And it worked. Of course, there was an age limit of maybe 7-8 years old and by then we all knew the trick and even started using it on our younger cousins.

**As we are embarking on yet another week of the quarantine life, I am discovering the Tarankukus in my mind's pantry,** the dusty kitchen gadgets, forgotten jams, and a ton of other interesting stuff. I am realizing that each day is another choice. I can believe that what is in and around me is only darkness and I

can stay scared. Or I have the choice to know that there are good things in and all around us and that I can at any moment reach for the spices, tasty pickles, and the home-made aromatic jams to enjoy, savor and make more beautiful things (and so can you).

**I believed in Tarankuku for a long time** (longer than I'd like to admit), even now I find it hard to sleep with my closet doors open. The last time I was in my grandmother's house, I went into that pantry. It has been a while since she is gone but it still smells like her, a scent I can't describe but I know it's of her. It makes me cry every time I think of it since I'm reminded of how much I miss her. I'd like to think that she is watching me, and being proud of the work I do and maybe occasionally having a chat with Tarankuku over tea in her pantry.

With love, light, and gratitude,

Damla