macnas

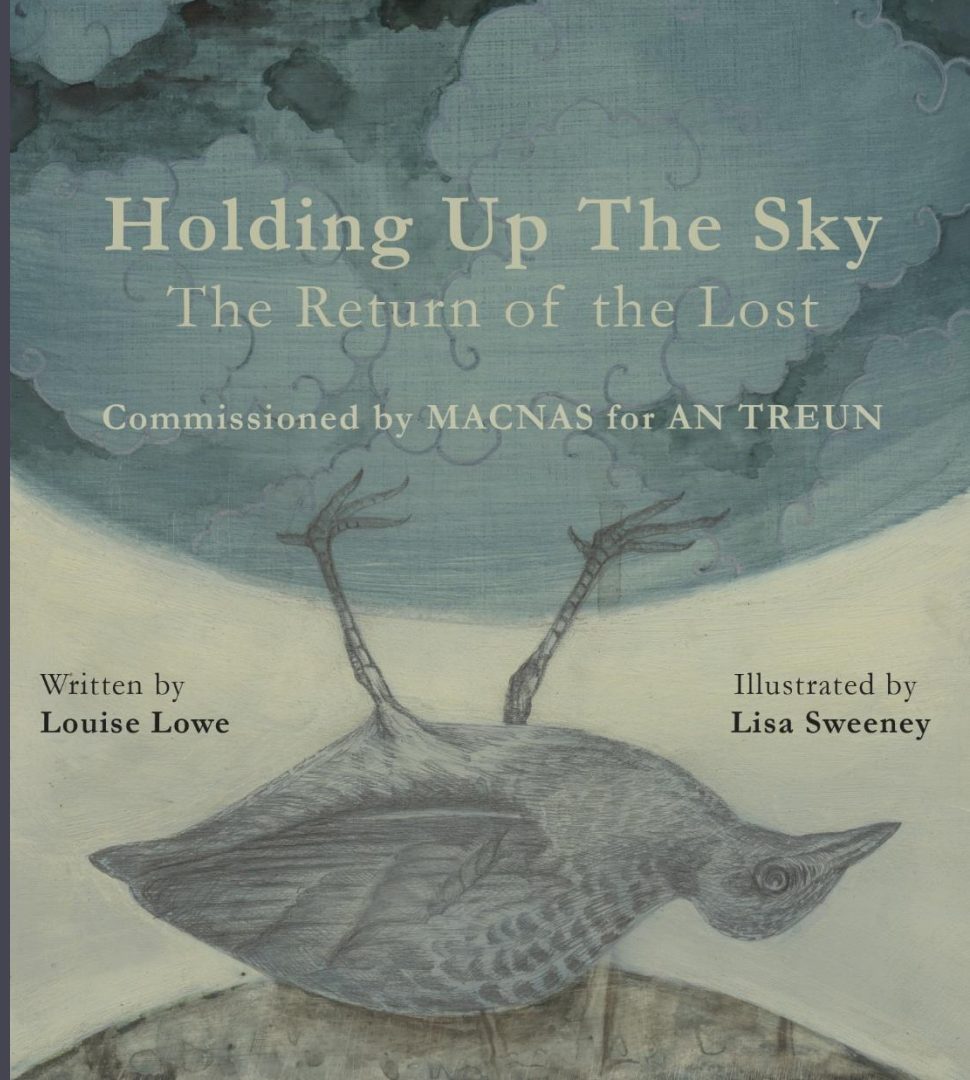# Holding Up The Sky
The Return of the Lost

Commissioned by MACNAS for AN TREUN

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Holding Up The Sky
The Return of the Lost

A long time ago, not too long, but long enough that nobody in your school can remember, the fields of Ireland were buzzing and rustling with the sound of a little brown bird called the Corncrake.

She wasn't flashy or pretty. She didn't soar like an eagle or sing like a lark… But oh, she had a call.

She'd lie on her back, her legs holding up the sky and she'd call out:

Crex-crex!
Crex-crex!

(krek-krek)

Crex-crex!
Crex-crex!

Crex-crex!
Crex-crex!

Odd. Unmistakable.

And once upon a time… her call was everywhere.

It echoed through meadows, danced through hedgerows and whispered up to the moon.

Callie the little corncrake lived in a field full of wildflowers and she loved to hide under cow parsley and beneath foxglove stalks.

But one summer,
the tall grasses stopped growing.
Big machines started buzzing;
flowers got cut down.

The calling stopped.

And when Callie woke one morning, she was alone.

"*Crex?*" she tried.
No answer.

"*Crex-crex?*"

Still nothing.

"*Crex-crex?*"

Gone.

The others had flown. Or vanished.

Or maybe chased away by something bigger, faster, noisier.

Callie was one of the last little Corncrakes.

And so, she wept.

She left behind all she knew and went in search of others like her.

That night, under a purple sky, Callie flew to the edge of the city. There, by a playground lit by the last blush of sunset, she met a little girl with a gap in her grin.

Her name was JoJo.

When Callie told her about the vanishing meadows and the lost corncrakes, JoJo didn't laugh. She didn't even blink.

She sprinted straight into her kitchen and came back with an empty fizzy bottle and a wooden spoon,

She scraped it with glee.

"Crex-crex!"

Callie froze.

Her feathers rustled.

"That's me! That's my voice!"

JoJo nodded fiercely…

"This is a Güiro, a musical instrument and it can make the sound of your voice…

And now imagine a hundred of us. Or a thousand…

What if we all brought güiros to the parade?

What if we call your family home?"

For the first time in an age, Callie's heart lifted.

She was not alone.

Word spread like birdsong. Soon, every child in Jojo's school had made their own güiro - some from bottles, others from tin cans or ridged tubes. They decorated them, gave them names.

They practised every day.

When the parade began, the streets of Galway and Dublin filled with mist and mystery. The moon drifted above the rooftops.

Lights pulsed and drummers drummed.

From the crowds came the sound…

Hundreds of children. Scraping, calling, conjuring. Bright-painted bottles, wooden spoons, rattling cans.

The sound rose up and wrapped around the parade.

And then... from deep in the crowd:

"*Crex-crex!*"

Crex -Crex!

Crex-crex!

Crex-crex!

A sound Callie knew. Another corncrake!

The sky seemed to breathe again.

The stars blinked brighter.

Callie's wings stretched wide. She was found.

High above the glowing floats, among rustling grasses Callie saw
something extraordinary:

Children blowing dandelion seeds and planting wildflowers:
Nettles. Cow parsley. Meadowsweet.

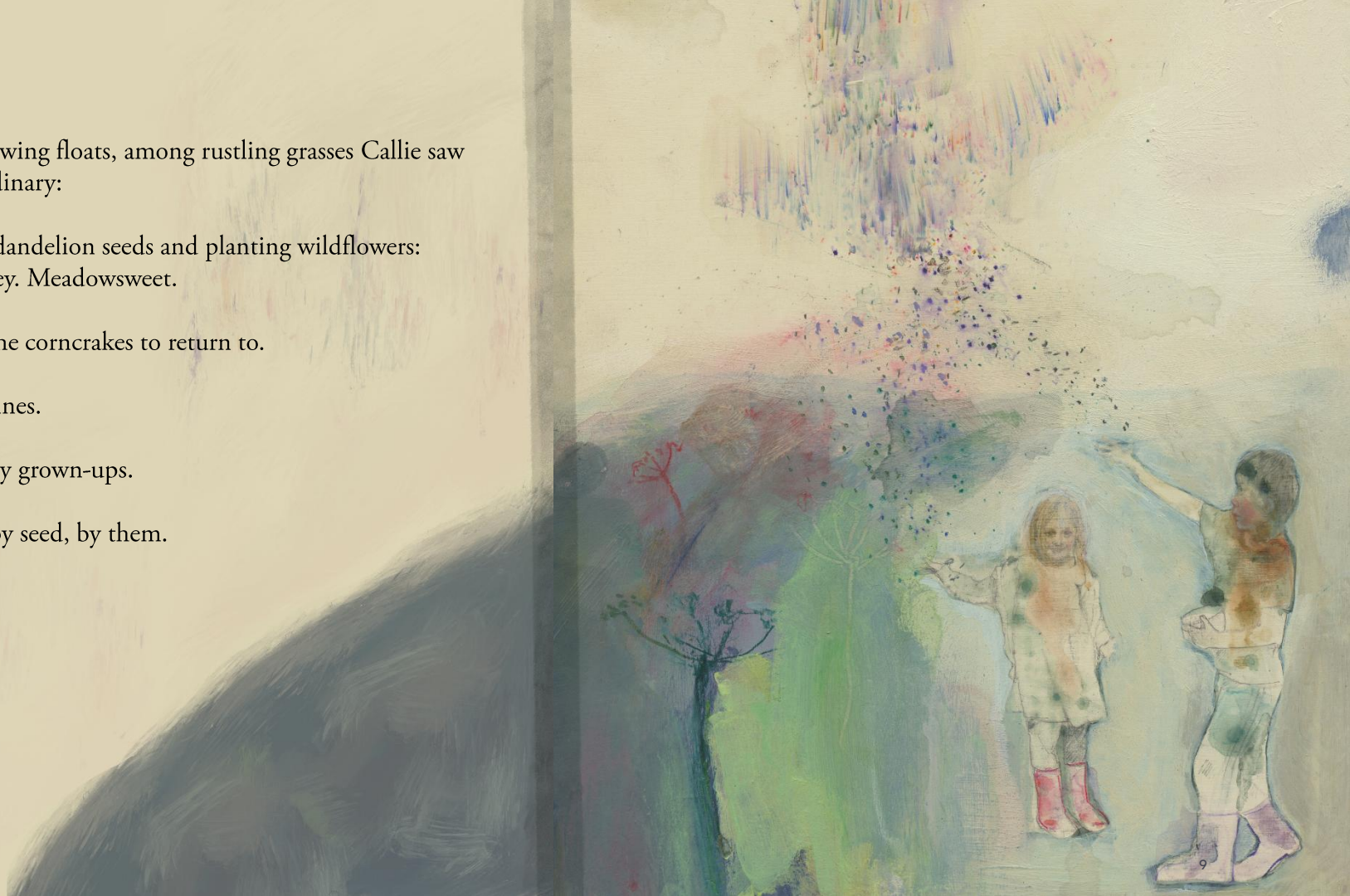A home… for all the corncrakes to return to.

Not built by machines.

Not commanded by grown-ups.

But planted, seed by seed, by them.

The small ones.

The wild ones.

The ones that knew they could help to hold up the sky!

You can help Callie
hold up the sky!

Gather your empty bottles, your tin
cans, your ridged tubes and your
imagination.

Experiment with the wild sound
and joy of creating your very own
güiro to bring to the parade, calling
Callie's family and friends to return
to Ireland!

What *is* a Güiro?

A güiro (GHEE-roh) is a percussion instrument, or, an instrument that produces sound when it's struck, shaken, or scraped. These instruments provide the rhythm and energy in songs.

A güiro is usually made from wood. It comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, most often a hollow cylinder with ridges all over the sides of the instrument. It is played by rhythmically rubbing a stick along the side of the güiro.

crex-crex!

They also happen to be an easy instrument to make at home and school from recycled materials!

Making a Güiro

You will need:

- empty ridged drinks bottle, or a tin can
- stick, wooden spoon, or pencil
- water-based paint
- PVA glue
- paint brush
- bowl (to mix paint & glue

Mix PVA glue with your choice of paint colour and paint directly onto the bottle or tin can.

One coat will be streaky; you will need another layer of your paint & glue mixture to fully cover the instrument.

Decorate and allow to dry overnight

When dry, drag your stick, spoon, or pencil along the ridges to create sounds.

Experiment with the rhythm!