



CONTENTS

ONCE UPON TWO SUNS

> 4 <

ONCE UPON A SAVANNAH

> 44 <

ONCE BEYOND THE NORTH WIND

> 10 <

ONCE UPON AN ISLAND

> 50 <

ONCE UPON A SALT LAKE

> 17 <

ONCE UPON A REEF

> 56 <

ONCE UPON A MOUNTAIN

> 23 <

ONCE UPON THE TOP OF THE WORLD

> 62 <

ONCE UPON A FOREST

> 28 <

ONCE UPON A TUNDRA

> 68 <

ONCE UPON A PARADISE

> 36 <

ONCE UPON A RIVERBANK

> 75 <

ONCE UPON TWO SUNS

Once amidst three seas, on land shaped by a broad crater, there grew a forest. Above the forest hung twin suns. Their fierce, unrelenting rays surged across the land, tormenting all those that lived in the forest below.

Within the forest, there could be found an ensemble of six players. One had a toothy grin. That was Crocodile. The second had floppy hair. It was Orangutan. The third wore a permanent necklace of bold stripes. That was Civet. The fourth had a most memorable profile. That was Proboscis Monkey. The fifth snoozed so much in the sun that an orange crest appeared on their chest. Sun Bear, of course. The sixth, and last, was a tiny but deft hunter. The ever-artful

Leopard Cat.

THE SIX PLAYERS MADE UP THE CAST OF THE THEATRE OF THE FOREST.

The six players made up the cast of the Theatre of the Forest. The broad crater was their stage. Every day, the ensemble gathered to improvise, rehearse and dramatize. Their performances featured Sun Bear's feats of strength, Orangutan's dancing in the trees, Proboscis Monkey's comedic wit, and battle and chase scenes starring Civet and

Leopard Cat. But best of all was the waltz of the Crocodile, a rapturous solo dance.

Crocodile's star act was equal parts comedy and tragedy. They swayed mysteriously, lulling their audience, then shocked them with sharp teeth and giant jaws! Yet just when the audience gasped, Crocodile would disarm them with a warm grin and silly swagger. The act received a standing ovation every time. It was delight for nearly everyone.

Everyone except for Crocodile. It wasn't the spectre of stardom that made Crocodile weary. It was the hot burn of the twin suns. Each moment on stage meant a while longer out of the refreshing river waters. Slowly, day by day, Crocodile's tough exterior blistered and peeled. Their eyes grew dry and stung. In the theatrical duel between Crocodile and the tyrant suns, the celestial twins never ceased to prevail.

One day, the players arrived at the Theatre of the Forest to find they counted a member too few. Their principal player, Crocodile, had not come. Oh where, oh where was Crocodile?



The ensemble rushed to the riverbank and called out. They looked for Crocodile's tail among the muddy ripples of the water. But they found nothing.

Sun Bear searched the forest floor, its trails and tracks. Civet carried questions of the missing animal to the quiet corners of the crater. Proboscis Monkey and Orangutan called out for Crocodile from the heights of the canopy overhead. Leopard Cat raced messages to the fast-moving rats and snakes of the understory. Sun Bear affronted every animal they encountered with a booming voice, "Have you seen Crocodile? From the theatre?!"

With no sign of Crocodile anywhere, the ensemble returned to the banks of the river, and stared down at the waters. And there, in the sand, they noticed fresh claw marks. They were the

unmistakable shape of a crocodile claw. Hope alit their hearts! They followed the marks along the river's edge until they reached a pit of mud. Buried in the mud, crying quietly, they found Crocodile.

"I'M TOO HOT TO WALTZ. MY SKIN IS TOO SORE TO SWAGGER."

"Dearest Crocodile," the animals pleaded, "we need you!"

"The show must go on without me," moaned Crocodile. "The twin suns have stripped me of my sway. I'm too hot to waltz. My skin is too sore to swagger."

The animals sighed. Crocodile didn't have fur, or dark hooded eyes, or any kind of protection from the hot power of the twin suns.

"I am weary. My head aches and my eyes are so tired," Crocodile croaked, and slipped into the mud below. The five players sat, confounded, along the riverbank.

"What are we to do?" asked Sun Bear.

"Well, there is only one waltzing Crocodile," mused Civet.

"Yet there are two suns," sighed Leopard Cat.

"Indeed," pondered Proboscis Monkey.

"Here's something to consider..." said Orangutan. "What if there were just one sun? Surely that would help poor Crocodile."

The animals all looked at Orangutan.

"Civet and Leopard Cat, you are always pretending to battle," said Orangutan. "What if we entered a true battle... with the twin suns?"

Civet and Leopard Cat seized on the idea. "Yes, yes!" they cheered.

"But how can we reach them?" asked Proboscis Monkey.

Orangutan climbed high into a nearby tree and looked pensively at the twin suns. They sat

"WHAT IF THERE WAS JUST ONE SUN? SURELY THAT WOULD HELP POOR CROCODILE."

on a loop of vine, like a playground swing, their fluffy legs kicked back. Then, with an impromptu *Zip!*, Orangutan shot out of the vine swing and into the air.

"We'll launch something at the suns," Orangutan announced, "with a swinging vine!"

Sun Bear and Proboscis Monkey sought out the largest rock on the riverbank. They rolled it towards the trees. Orangutan lowered the strongest and springiest vines down to Leopard Cat and Civet. Together, they fitted the vines into a long rope with a section in the middle, like a seat, where they loaded the big rock.

Finally, the stage was set for their great ambush. Leopard Cat and Civet held the vines taut and Orangutan and Sun Bear pulled the rock in its seat as far away from the trees as they could. They formed a giant slingshot, bigger than any myth or legend had pronounced before.

Proboscis Monkey rose into the trees...

"You there, golden suns!" Proboscis Monkey called.

