



Animal Sidekicks

The Tortoise and the Beetle



This North American tortoise is lucky enough to have a live-in cleaner. A little beetle resides in the gopher tortoise's den and eats its poo! Sounds strange, but it's a great deal for both parties: the gopher tortoise doesn't have to worry about sleeping in its own poo or parasites living in the old dung. Meanwhile the beetle gets a delicious meal (well it thinks so.) While these two animals have a special relationship, it isn't entirely unique – the gopher tortoise also benefits hundreds of other species thanks to its impressive den.



One can find many species in the tortoise's burrow, but perhaps none as frequently as the beetle.



It's named the gopher tortoise copris beetle because of their tight bond.





Though gopher tortoises rarely measure over 30cm (1ft), they can dig holes 4.5m (15 ft) long!



Welcome to the Inn

Because the gopher tortoise digs such awesome burrows, animals of all kinds want to move in. This tortoise has been found living with hundreds of species, including snakes, skunks, frogs, and even owls!



Cricket



Gopher Frog



**Florida
Burrowing Owl**



Wolf Spider

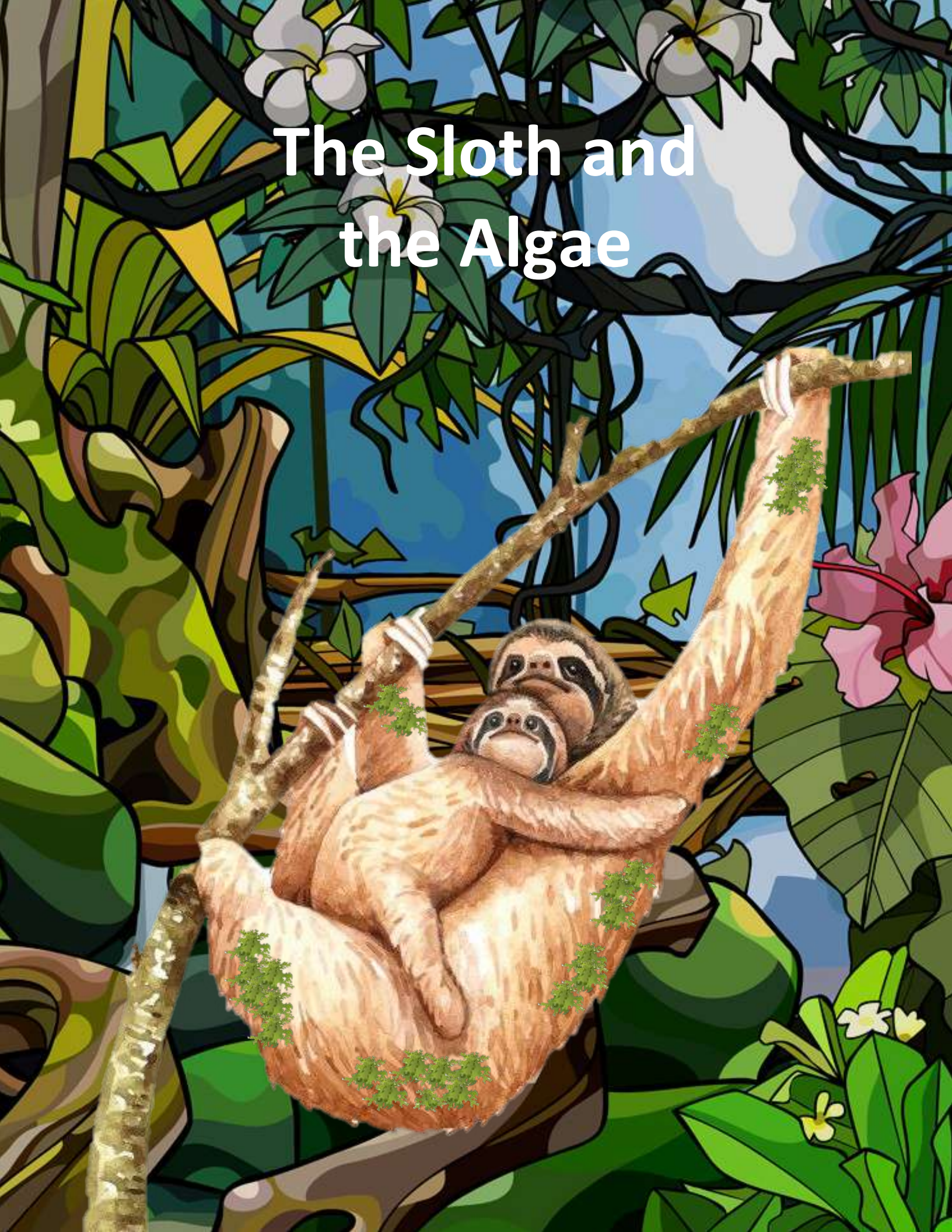


Indigo Snake



Skunk

The Sloth and the Algae



The sloth on the right may look like it's dyed its hair green, but really, it's just covered in tiny parts known as algae. The sloth's fur is sheltered, warm, moist and full of nutrients, making it an ideal greenhouse in which the algae can grow.



And there's a benefit for the sloth, too – algae provide awesome camouflage, helping the furry mammal to blend into the trees and stay safe from predators.



A sloth's natural colour stands out more among branches and leaves.



As well as algae, a type of moth sometimes lives in sloth fur. It feeds on the algae, and its young eat sloth poo.

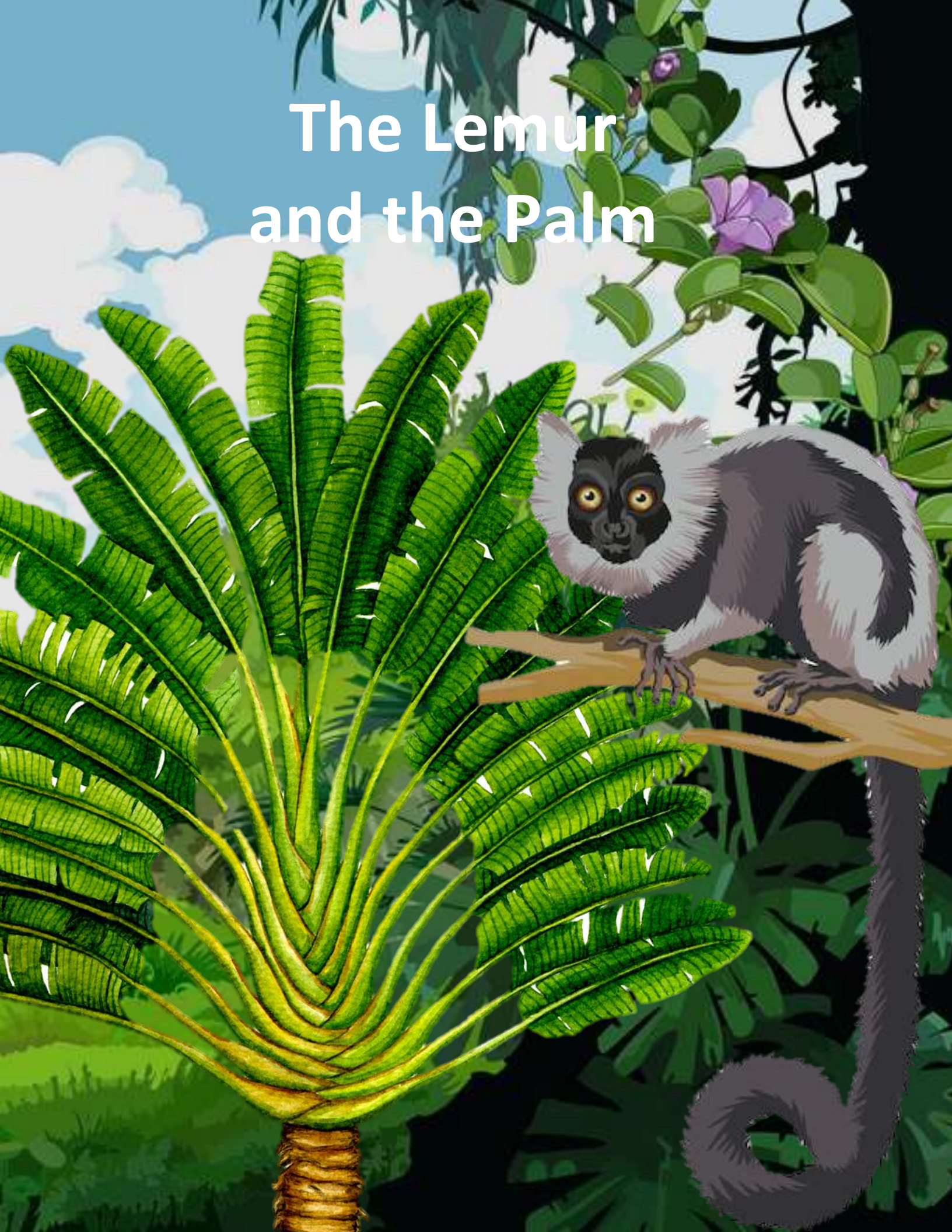


Tasty Snack

Algae might be the world's only edible disguise. Any time an algae-covered sloth gets hungry, it can pick some out of its fur and throw it down the hatch. This means the algae help the sloth eat and avoid being eaten.



The Lemur and the Palm



A big plant needs a big pollinator, and at 1.2 m (4 ft) long. The black and white ruffed lemur is the largest pollinator in the world. It scales the massive traveller's palm, opens its flowers, and drinks the sweet nectar inside. While it feeds, the lemur's long fur mops up plenty of pollen. It takes this to the next palm, fertilizing its seeds and allowing more palms to grow.





The traveller's palm can grow taller than an Olympic diving board.

Breaking...

Forget the dainty flowers you're used to – these flowers are fortresses. This lemur is the only pollinator capable of getting to the nectar inside them.



... and Entering

Once it's managed to push its way in, the lemur sticks its face straight into the plant, lapping up as much nectar as it can get.



Messy Eater

While it drinks, the lemur picks up a whole lot of pollen on its face. Its dense fur makes it an excellent pollinator – a bit like a massive bumblebee.



Blue Seeds

As if the traveller's palm wasn't already absurd looking enough, its seeds are bright blue! This may help the plant attract lemurs, who can only see blues and greens.





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