



Once Upon Our Planet

By Vitta Murrow

Once Upon Two Suns



Once amidst three seas, on land shaped by a broad crater,
there stood a forest. Above the forest hung two suns.
Their fierce, unrelenting rays shone 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 his 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 broad crater was their stage. Every day, the ensemble gathered to improvise, rehearse and dramatize.



Their performances features Sun Bear's
feats of strength ...



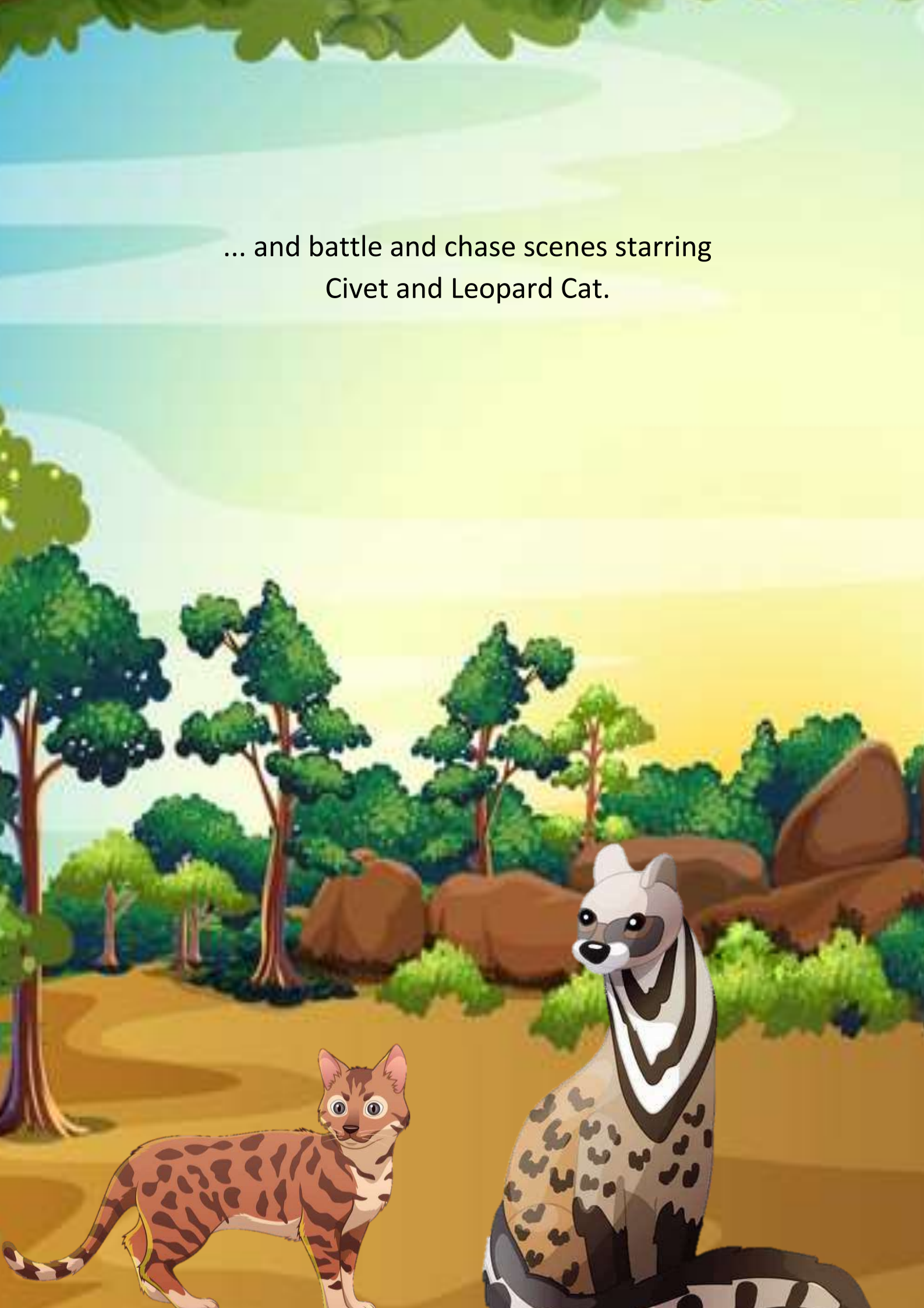
... Orangutan's dancing in
the trees ...



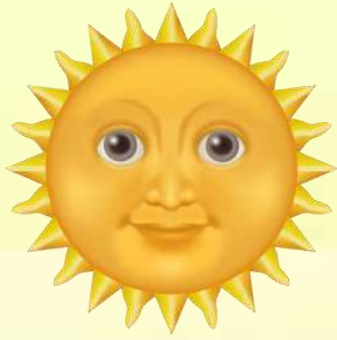
... Proboscis Monkey's
comedic wit ...



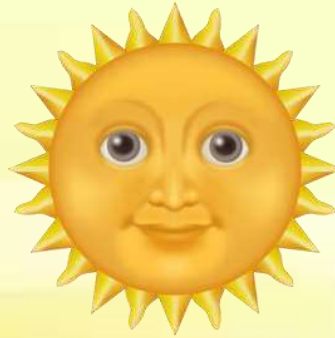
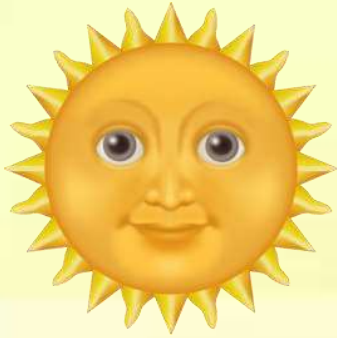
... and battle and chase scenes starring
Civet and Leopard Cat.



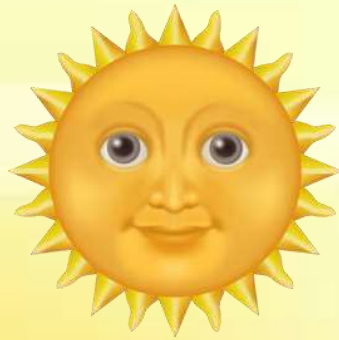
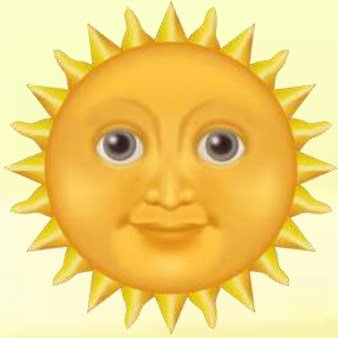
But best of all was the waltz of the
Crocodile, a rapturous solo dance.



Crocodile's star act was equal parts comedy and tragedy.
He swayed mysteriously, lulling his 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.



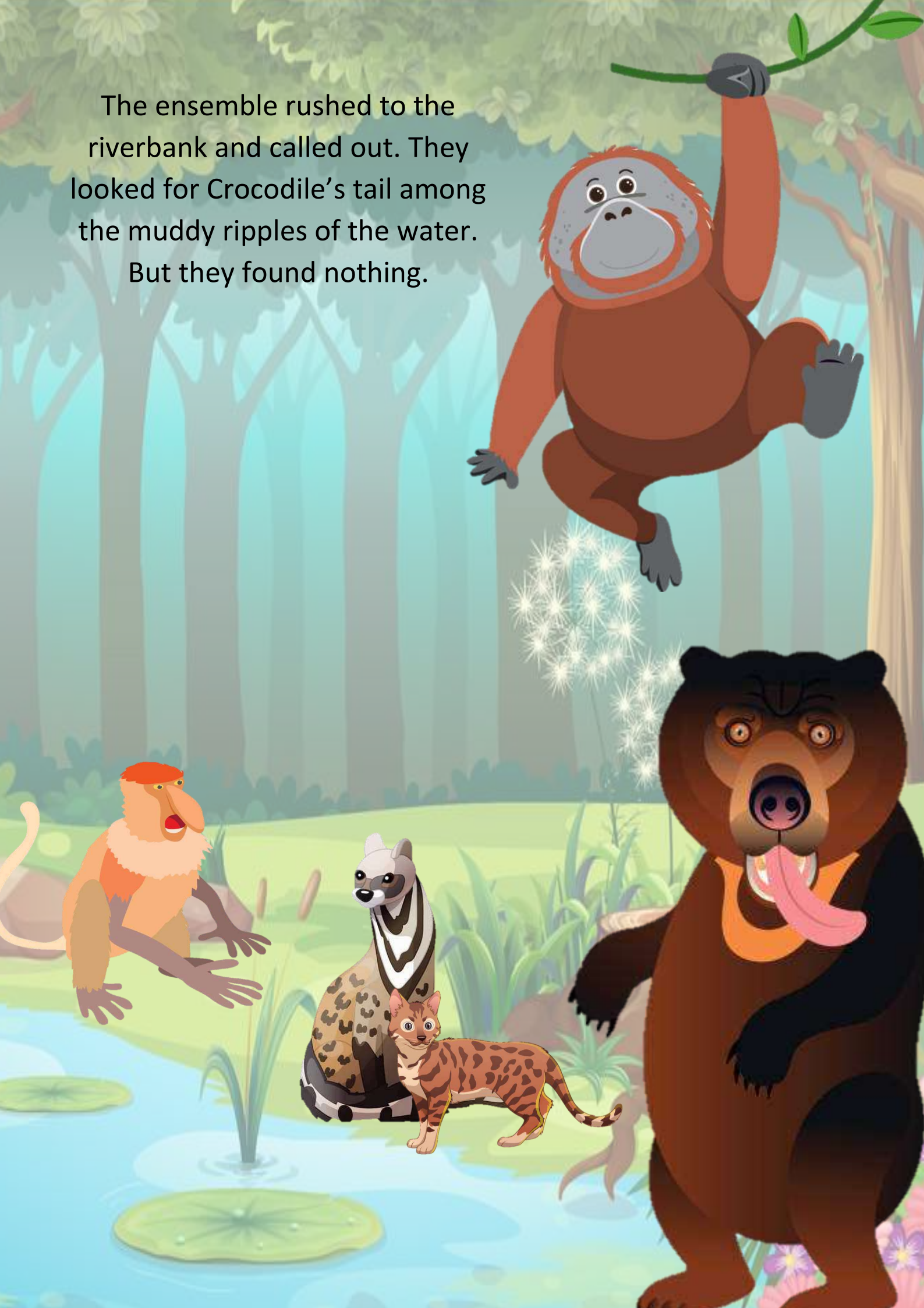
Slowly, day by day, Crocodile's tough exterior blistered and peeled. His eyes grew dry and stung. In the theatrical duel between Crocodile and the tyrant suns, the celestial twins never ceased to prevail.



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



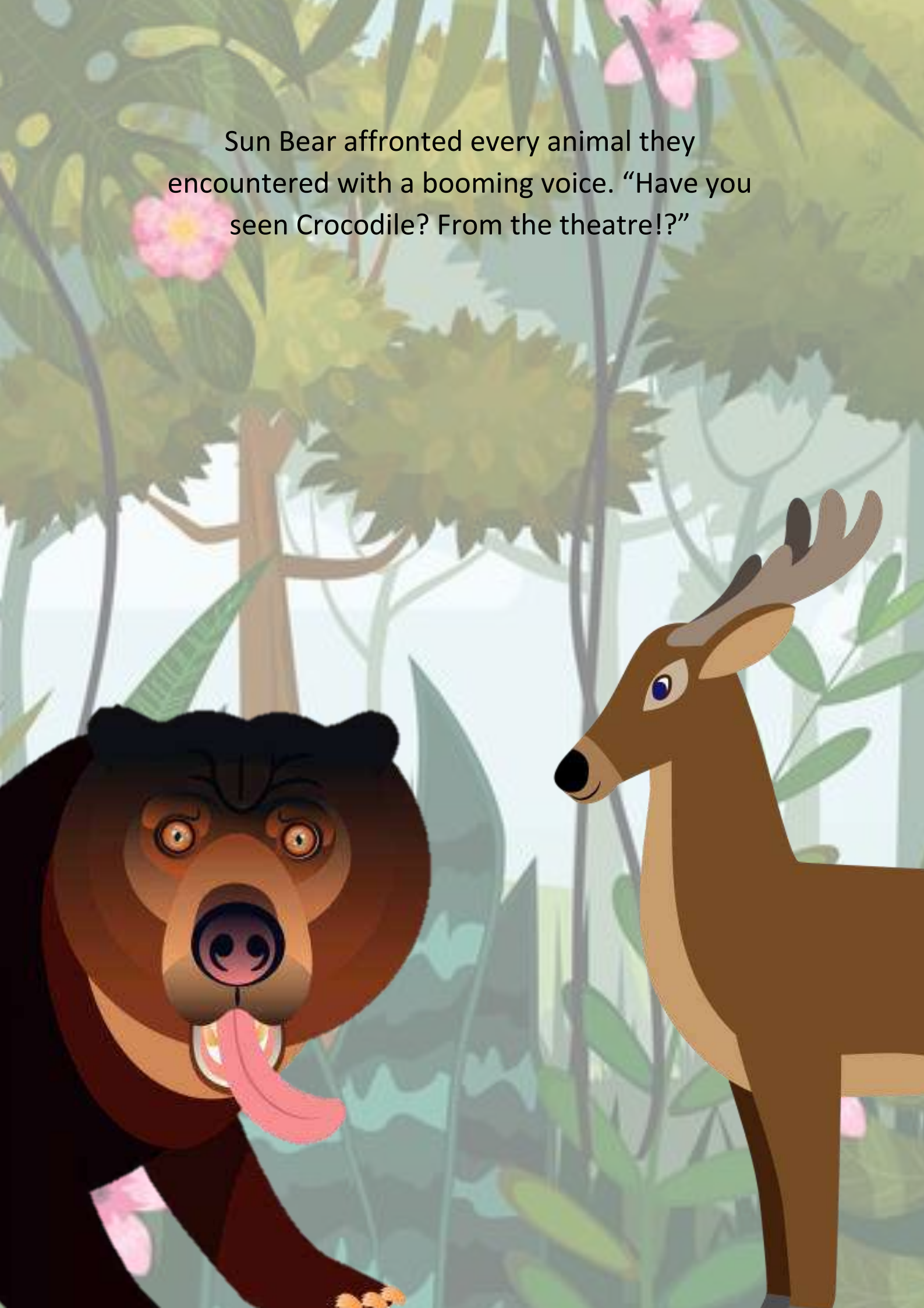
Proboscis Monkey and Orangutan called out for Crocodile from the heights of the canopy overhead.



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!?"



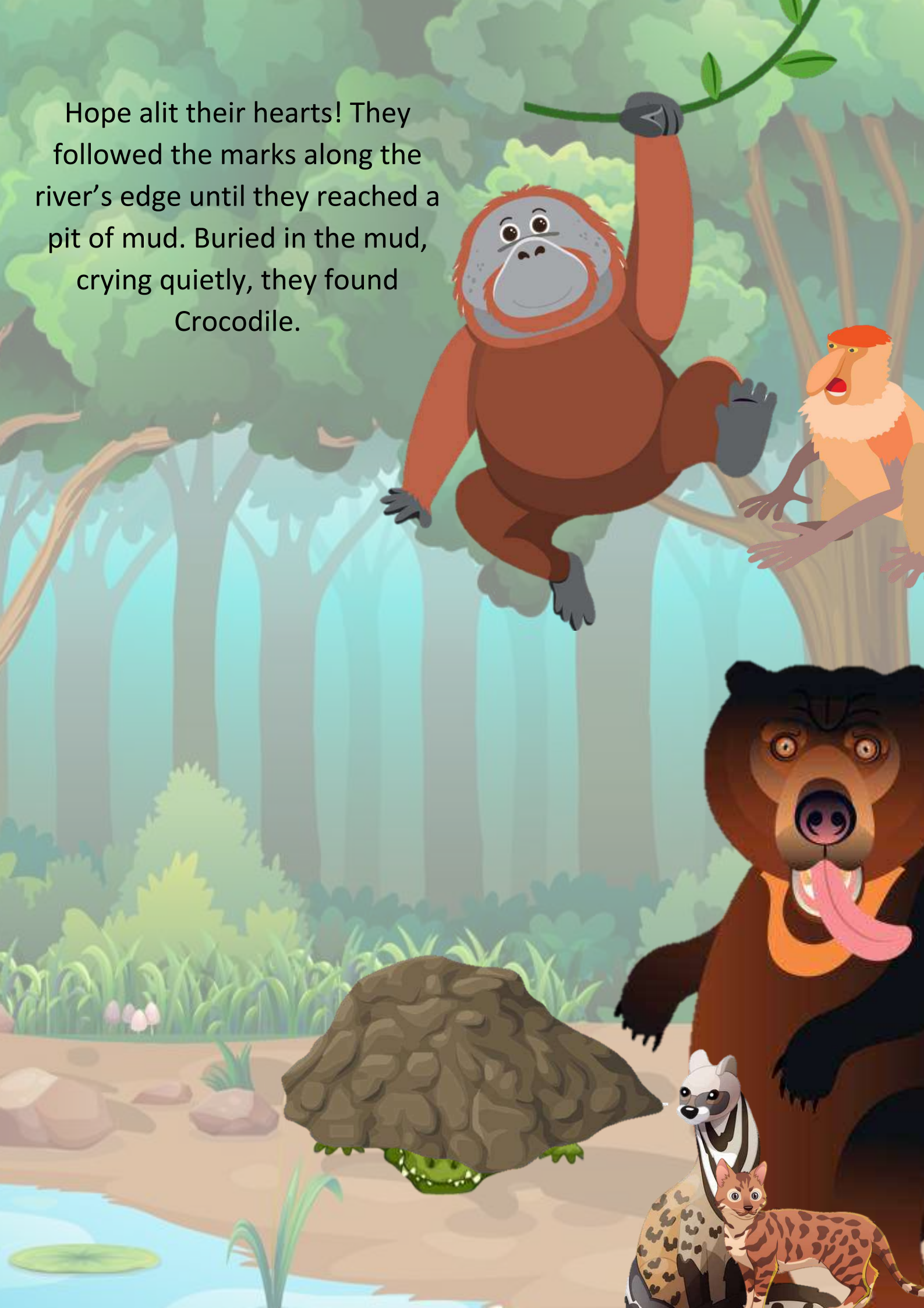
With no sign of Crocodile anywhere, the ensemble returned to the banks of the river, and stared down at the waters.



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.





THINK

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