



The quiet ones.

A shadow play story written and created by
Leith Hogan [Drawingtolearn] for the Luang
Prabang Library.



Early on a quiet morning in the misty and cloudy forests of the Annamite mountains, a Saola was quietly minding his own business. He was in the shadows of the giant undergrowth, eating leafy plants, fig leaves, and forest berries amongst the ferns , stems and leaf litter at the edge of a little river.

He was a beautiful animal, often called the Asian Unicornalmost 33 inches or 2.5 cms tall. He has two parallel long, straight, pointed horns that were almost 20 inches high (50 cm), twice the size of his head. He has short, silky, dark chestnut brown fur with distinctive white markings above his eyes, like an eyebrow, beside his nose and along his jaw line. just above his hooves and on his chest the fur was a lighter cream colour.

His short tail is coloured by three stripes, brown at the top, cream in the middle and the fluffy end is black.

Despite being so beautiful, he is rarely seen.

His ears pricked up and he immediately became still and looked up.

He had heard something, he wasn't sure what it was.

It was coming from the other side of the river, in a little forest clearing not far from the base of the mountain.



It was the sound of rustling leaves and bushes and boots crunching on sticks and pebbles, moving closer and closer towards him.

The noise was getting louder and louder.

He saw a line of men carrying sticks, snares and ropes, marching up the track towards him.

What were they doing?

Where were they going?

What were they looking for?

The Saola moved quickly back into the shadows of the dark forest undergrowth and looked, listened and watched as the men approached.

He stayed completely still. He did not move. He just watched and listened. He could not be seen by anyone.



Whilst he sheltered amongst the shadows of the bushes and trees he heard quiet little movements in the undergrowth nearby.

He looked down and just near him he could make out a group of animals in the shadows that had heard the same sounds that he was hearing.

They were all still.
No one was moving.





There was an Annamite flying
frog hiding behind the rocks
nearby making not one sound.
Make him hide



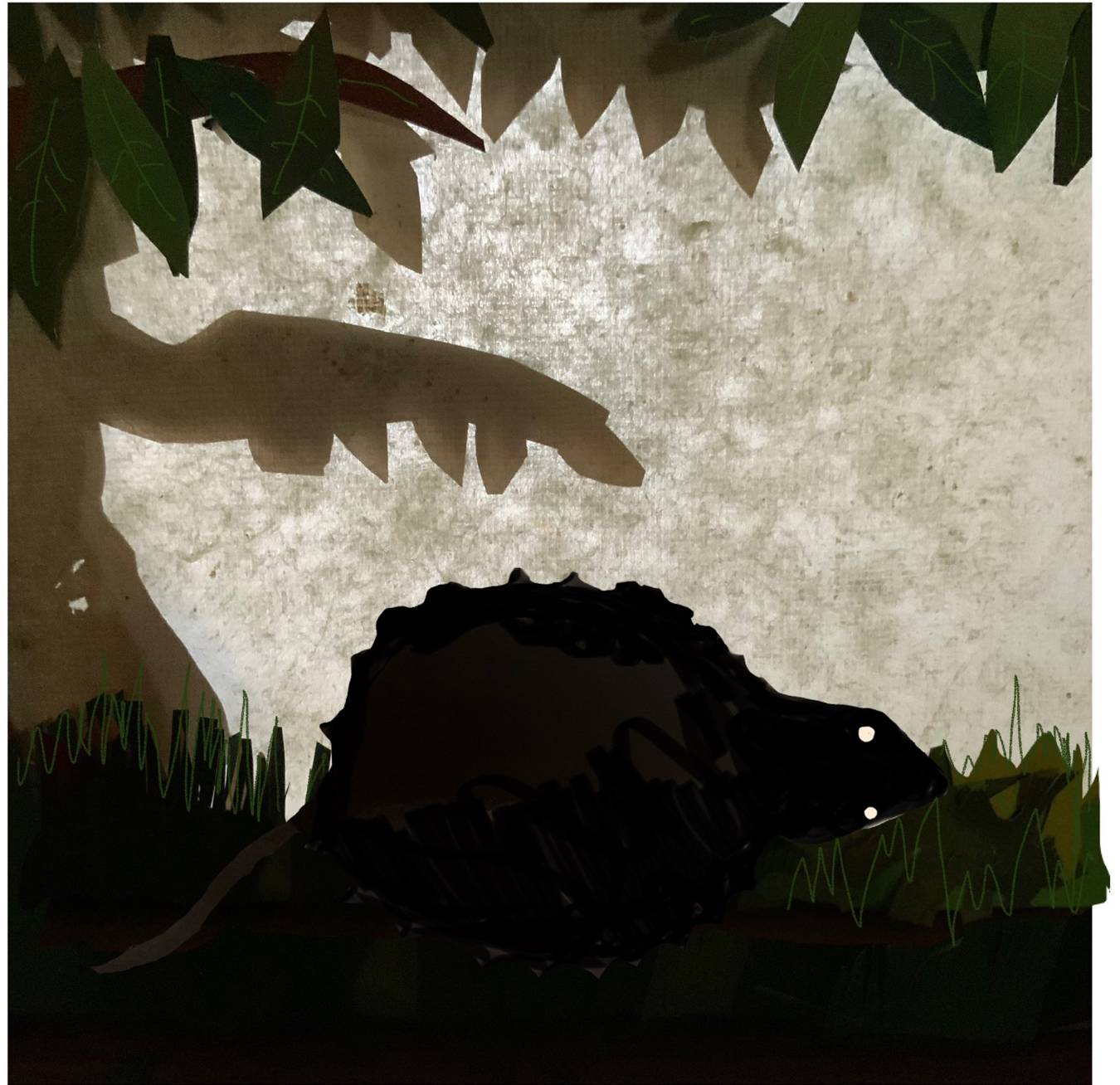


There was an Annamite striped rabbit crouched under a nearby bush, watching and waiting.

There was a marbled cat that
blended into the undergrowth as
still as a statue.



A big headed turtle stayed
silent, like a stone in the river
bank sand.



There was a Slow Loris with his big eyes watching, hiding in the branch of the tree, above the Saola.





Further up the tree were a Hodgsons frog mouth owl and a Tawny Fish owl silently watching them all.
No one moved...not one little part of themselves. They held their breath and watched and listened.

They were all quiet ...watching,
looking and listening.
They knew how to do this.
They were good at being quiet ones
in the forest.

They all asked themselves: "What
were these men doing?
What were they looking for?"



The men's footsteps moved closer and closer to the path across the river where the quiet ones were huddled in the dappled light of the thick undergrowth.

The men were looking carefully into the dense forest as they marched through. What were they looking for? What did they want?



The Saola signalled to the quiet ones with a twitch of his spindle horns to stay as still as stone.

No one moved.
They scarcely breathed.
They were all frightened.

Something about the noise of the marching men made them fearful.

The animals listened and watched the men march past them with their snares, ropes and sticks as they began to climb the mountain track into the deeper forests of the Annamite mountains.



They left behind them dust and a faint echo of plodding sounds as they moved higher and higher up the mountain track further and further way from the quiet ones.

The quiet ones did not move until they could no longer hear the sounds of the men's feet crunching on the track.



The Saola who was the tallest, signalled to them all that they could begin breathing quietly again and they were free to move about and twitch and turn and quietly whisper to each other.

'What was that?' he asked.

'What did they want?' said the Marbled cat

'What are they looking for?' said the Big headed turtle,

'Do you think they are they looking for us?' said the Slow loris???

'Are they coming to capture us?' said the Annamite flying frog

'Why are they doing this?' they all asked

'We have lived here together in this forest for such a long, long time

Why do they want us?

What are they planning to do to us?

They began to whisper fearfully, together.

They had heard other forest animals talking about men with snares, ropes and sticks coming through the mountains and how they needed to be very, very careful to avoid capture.

They knew that they had to protect themselves and they had to be on alert. They understood.



The wise Saola suggested that they make some agreements for the Quiet ones so that they would all be protected when they heard the sounds of the men with ropes and sticks and snares moving through their jungle and sensed danger.

Every one of the animals thought that this was a wonderful idea. They grouped themselves together in the shadows and began to create some agreements for the quiet ones. These could protect all of the quiet ones of the forest. They all joined in to give suggestions to the Saola.



The Annamite flying frog suggested that they move to safety the minute that they heard a strange noise.

The Marbled cat suggested that they find a camouflage space in the undergrowth where they couldn't be seen.

The Annam striped rabbit just said to watch....everything and everywhere.

The Hodgsons frogmouth owl suggested that they always look carefully.

The Deer suggested that they listen and smell what's approaching.

The Tawny fish owl suggested that they wait hidden in the undergrowth for as long as they needed to feel safe after the men have moved on.

The Slow Loris suggested that they stay still and silent and not move.

The Big headed turtle suggested that they stay calm.



The Saola suggested that IF they really felt that the men were too close they should escape to the river immediately and hide in the water behind the undergrowth.

'Our safest place is close to the waters edge.'

The Saola's message was exactly what they all thought.

Every animal agreed with the suggested agreements for the Quiet ones. They would all keep each other safe.



They would all live their quiet lives this way so that they and their fellow animals in the mountains were protected.

So this is what they did.

They are still living quietly in the Annamite mountains as they have done for thousands of years following the agreements living in peace and harmony.



No one knows how many of them live there.

No one knows how they live in the mountains and what they do.

No one knows much about any of them.

That is just how the quiet ones want it and how it should be.

The quiet ones will protect themselves so they can live their quiet lives in the mountains safely and free from fear for as long as they possibly can and we need to be the WISE ones who help them to do that.

