

LEGENDS OF
LOTUS ISLAND
THE GUARDIAN TEST

BY CHRISTINA SOONTORNVAT
ILLUSTRATED BY KEVIN HONG

Scholastic Inc.

If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as “unsold and destroyed” to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this “stripped book.”

Text copyright © 2024 by Christina Soontornvat
Interior Illustrations copyright © 2024 by Kevin Hong

This book was originally published in hardcover by Scholastic Press in 2023.

All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920*. SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

The publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher.

For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

ISBN 978-1-339-04103-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 24 25 26 27 28
Printed in the U.S.A. 40

This edition first printing 2024
Book design by Cassy Price

CHAPTER

1



Worms always think they know everything. “Come on, friends, not there by the squash. You want to be over here by these chai-melons, trust me.” I scooped the worms out of the dark, fluffy soil and set them down near the chai-melon vine. “There. Now make that dirt good and soft, because I want to eat some big, fat melons this summer.”

I stood up and walked around our garden. The egg-plant and crisp-cumbers were doing great this year. And of course our chili plants and snake beans were growing wild, as always. But my main concern was our fruit trees. This year I was determined that we would have *everything*: jack-fruit, mangoes, tea fruit, rose apples, even stinky durian.

I heard a rustling in the mango leaves. “Oh, sorry to wake you,” I whispered to the family of fox bats that hung upside down, sleeping. “Now, don’t forget what we agreed. You get the mangoes up top and leave the low stuff for us, okay?”

The mama fox bat yawned and shut her eyes again. A couple of years ago they nibbled bites out of every mango on our tree. But now that I’d convinced Grandpa to take down the nets, they only took the fruit that was too high for us to reach.

In a couple of weeks it would all start getting ripe. I could practically taste the feast in my mouth. The only fruit we could never seem to grow was—

“Plum!”

I turned around to see Grandma shuffling down the hill toward me. “Over here in the orchard, Grandma!”

“Plum,” she huffed, “come on up to the house, dear.”

“Is everything okay?”

“Of course it is!” she said, but I saw the corner of her mouth twitch. She always did that when she wasn’t telling me the whole story.

I wondered what was going on, but I knew better than to pester her.

I let her lean on my shoulder as we walked slowly back up the hill to our house. The cool evening breeze felt so good

after a long, sweaty day working in the garden. As always, we paused in the one spot where we could see the entire island. Our little wooden house and barn stood at the top of the hill. The garden and orchard were down below, near the freshwater spring. On the other side, Grandpa's rice fields sloped down to the coconut grove. And all around, the blue ocean sparkled.

The sun was starting to set. The fox bats were waking up, and the swallows were already swooping overhead. I imagined them calling out to us: *Day is done! Day is done! Time for night!*



“Good night!” I called up to them. “Don’t forget our deal about the mangoes!”

Out on the water, I spotted the little blue postal boat zip-ping back toward Big Crab Island. My stomach did a flip. We almost never got mail. I glanced at Grandma for some hint as to what was going on, but her face was like a stone.

Before we got to the house, Grandma patted my hand. “Oh, and tomorrow, remind me that I need your help with the wheelbarrow. The chai-melon bed is full of rocks, and we’ve got to move them so the worms can get in.”

I looked back at the garden and shook my head. Those worms were never going to let me hear the end of this.