

PRIYA and SAÑAS



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The book was made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of New York State Governor and the New York State Legislature.

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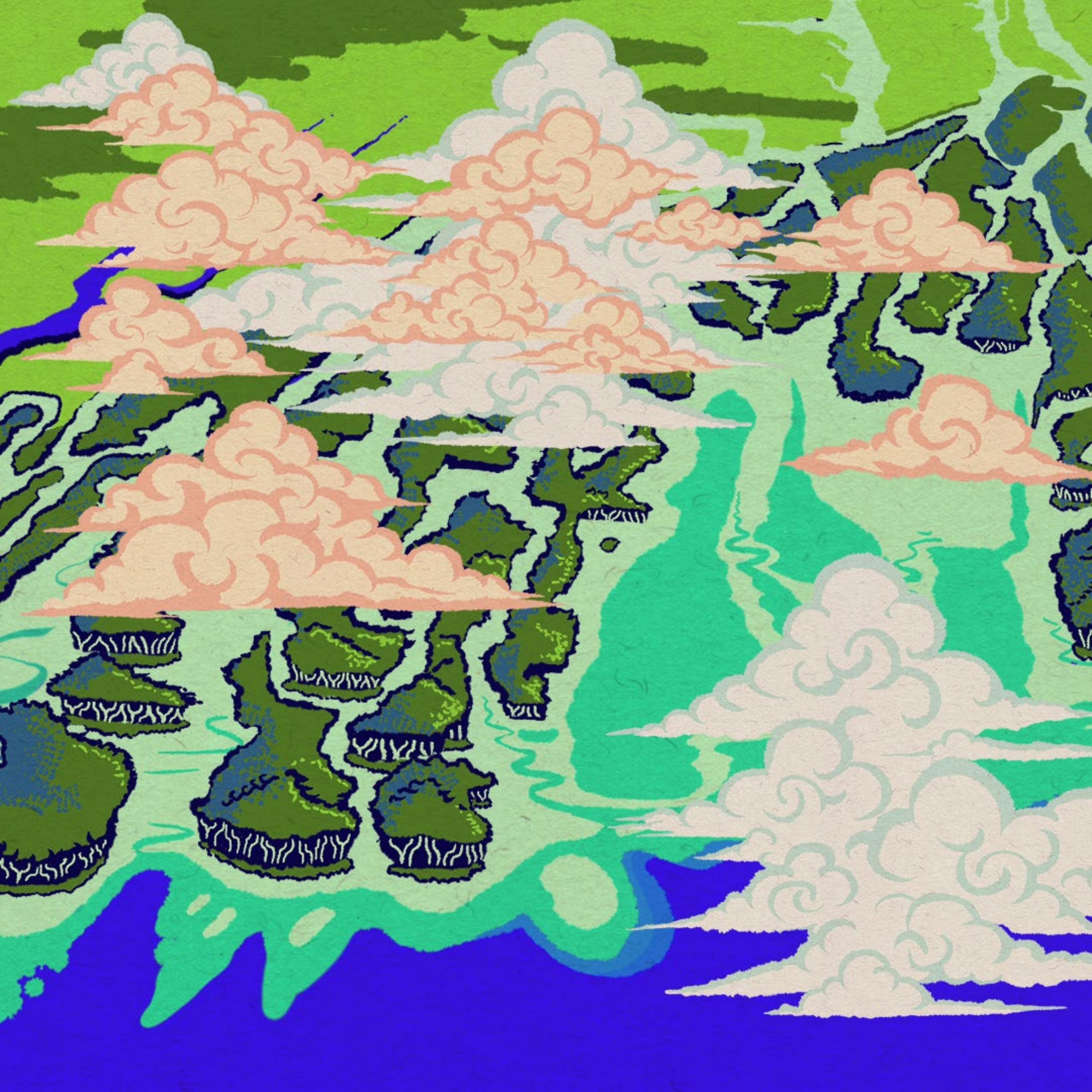
Special thanks to Jadav Payeng, Rituraj Phukan, Kuldeep Phukan, Munmuni Payeng, Indigenous People's Climate Justice Forum, Dr. Vandana Shiva, and Forest Man Foundation.



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In eastern India, amidst the delta that forms by the great rivers Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers is the largest mangrove expanse of the world and the forest called Sunderbans. This wonder of wilderness with two high tides and two low tides each day, is home to the Royal Bengal tigers.



Sunderbans is home to many, the osprey, olive ridley turtles who swim across many oceans to lay their eggs here in this delta in the Bay of Bengal, the tree-crabs crawl up the tree trunks on high tides and hide in mudflats when the water recedes.



And not too far the Chital herds visit the sweet water ponds. The Rhesus monkey can be seen washing its food in the water from which peeks out a smooth-coated Indian otter while the wild boar can be seen crossing the waters.

The king cobra is not a stranger to the land. And right up there in the trees are nests of Bayas that have carefully weaved two leaves together to make a home for their family.



Sahas grew up in the Sunderbans.
In the deep forests Sahas and her
family swam in the freshwater by the
mangroves. Jamini, Sahas's niece has not
yet learned to swim in the deeper end,
Sahas teaches her.



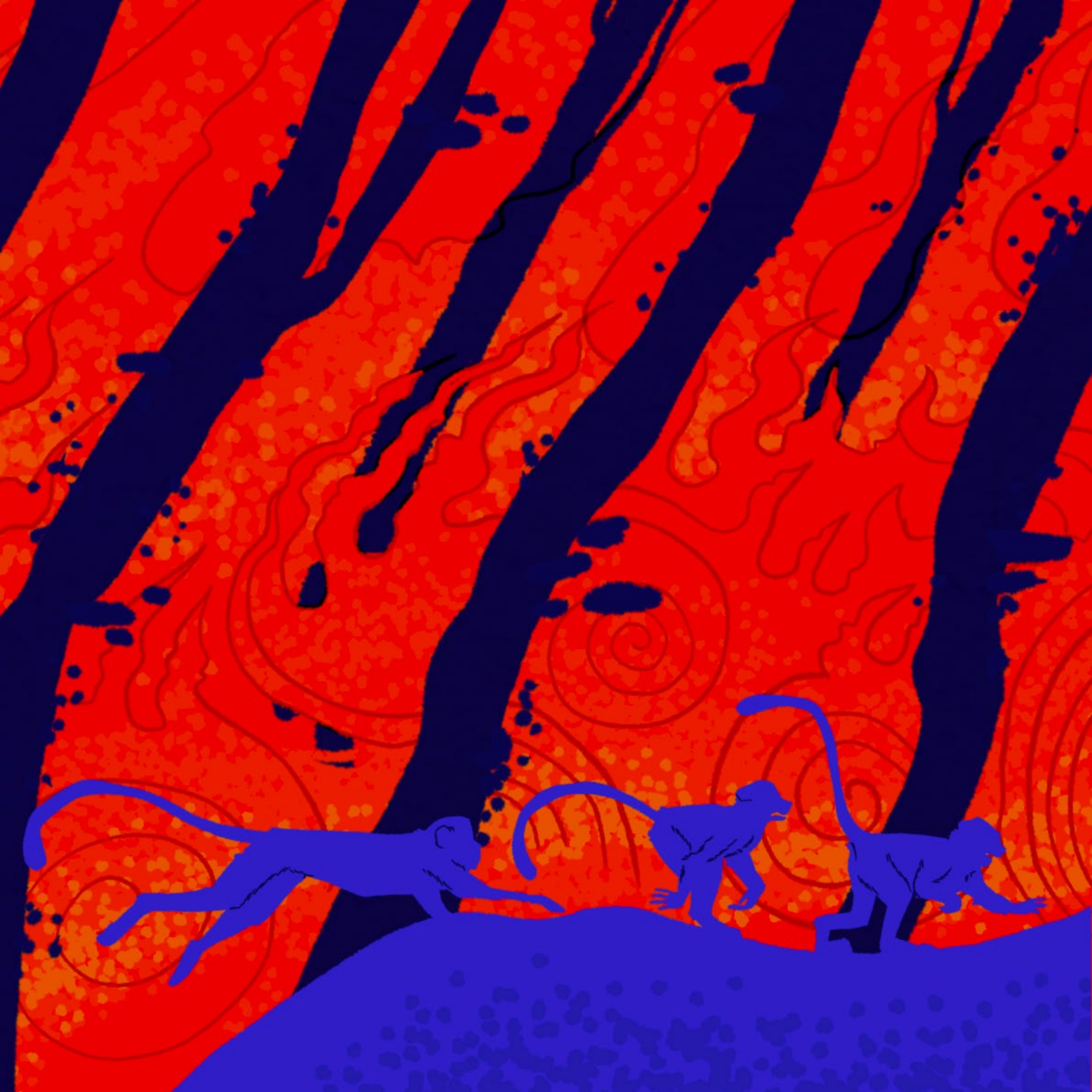
The change in climate brings change in the rhythm of tides that everyone here lives by. Two high tides and two low tides has been the rhythm of Sunderbans. Now the changing tides threaten the mangroves and the freshwater, the sea level has been increasing and the temperature brings more salt to the mudflats, cyclones, the big sea storms are also becoming frequent and now this fire.



The forest is a sight to behold with the full bloom of Golpata flowers all around. Amongst all is Bonbibibi resting with her fellow Goddesses protecting them all, through the changes that the forest endures, through the fires.



Where will the crabs, turtles, snakes, civet, deer go if the mangrove keeps burning? This is their home, burning. Even the birds in the trees fly in fear as the fire comes close to their nests.



Suddenly, the Rhesus monkey can be seen running in panic when a fire breaks out!



The leader, Sahas must come to the rescue. She gathers everyone, she has to help her family across to safety.

But Jamini is nowhere to be found. Sahas's niece is too young to be out there alone.



The flames are getting bigger as Jamini tries to move away from the fire in the trees around her, she is moving towards the mangroves, she keeps getting closer to the water. Too young to wade the water, her paws tremble as she is forced closer and closer to the water.



Bonbibibi's moves and points to the direction of Jamini. As the fire is getting closer Jamini has no choice but to slide into the water from the mudflat. As a branch on fire falls next to her she shudders and back steps into the water.



Sahas thinks of Bonbibi when she jumps into the water and swims to grab Jamini.

Bonbibi protects both of them by clearing a path through the raging fire.



Sahas helps by guiding animals across from the burning land to the safer lake-side. She and her family carry some animals on their backs across the water and smaller ones in her mouth to get them across. She is able to get them all across.



The people must realize that they
have taken too much from the forest,
giving back is long overdue.



The seeds we plant today will give shade tomorrow, they will be homes where the bayas make her nests and sing songs, where the deer find food, from whose shades the great leader of the jungle watches over the forest.



This story is inspired by Jadav Payeng,
The Forest Man of India.

And Dr. Vandana Shiva.