

## The Dark Side of the Room

By Saoly Nguyen

Little Red's fur is stained in mud as he runs towards the sun to play with his orange sister. The emanating rays give the jungle a verdant green glow. Young birds chirp to their mothers, the tiger leads her pups to hunt and the camouflaged chameleons devour insects with their sticky tongues. Fish slice through waters, running away from the hungry bear cubs and crickets chirp, playing their songs. Blossoming flowers season the land with their nectar and their bees at work. The jungle is alive, where there is a sound in almost every nook and cranny. Mother Orangutan sits in her tree, her piercing eyes watching her Red and Orange together. She smiles as she squints at the blazing ball in the sky, adjusting to morning before slicing and popping the rambutan into her mouth from the nearby tree. The sweet flavours explode on her tongue. Suddenly, a loud, ferocious noise echoes throughout the jungle, causing her ears to sharpen. Her tree shakes as the king of the jungle ploughs her home. It slices the canopy of trees using its gnawing teeth and beaming eyes showing no mercy as it crushes the green. Her beloved children yelp helplessly. She reaches for them, but a sharp pang shoots her side before pitch-blackness consumes her.

Mother Orangutan wakes in enclosed fences made out of a grey, robust and shiny material. The walls of the cage are suffocating and her beating heart hammers against her chest. Other animals accompany her. A ring-tailed lemur jumps aggressively, scratching the sides and deer frantically move to escape the razor-sharp claws of the pumas. Mother Orangutan turns aggressively searching for her missing children but she is surrounded by shadow. Twinkling lights dazzle the sky. Two tall creatures stand before her; they look similar but she wonders why they have no fur. They hand cases of coloured sheets of paper. Grey clouds with thunder yell above her eyes before Mother Orangutan is moved swiftly into a steel bird. She searches again and the fear of the other animals resonate strongly. With every blink, tears well up in Mother Orangutan's eyes. Silence fills the space and her weeping is audible only to herself.

Strikes of lightning are a looming threat. BANG! BANG! BANG! Rain pelts down harshly and the trembles terrorise her. Suddenly, the vibrations become stronger. A guttural roar escapes her lips as the cage wobbles. An awkward pit in her stomach causes agitation as she catches glimpses of her children in the last few flashes of light. Adrenaline kicks in with the banging of her cage.

Blood boils with her vision turning into a red, reckless rage. Fists clench until knuckles turn white. Breaths louder than the roaring of the plane's engines. She calls for them, but there is no answer. She calls again. No answer. It isn't till the next beam that lifeless eyes return to her. Bodies slumped with scarlet tears dripping the corners of their lips. Mother Orangutan hangs her fatigued head low. She has failed to protect them. She has no more time to sulk as another strike echoes. Orange, hot dancers swirl through the small window, eating away the left wing where it leaves behind black charcoal. They say run before death arrives.

The other animals are panicking and different noises invade her ears. Mother Orangutan can smell their fear. Then she is shoved to the right brutally. As the floor moves, parts of her broken rib cage shatter in her mind. Her lungs feel blocked, causing her to wheeze. She places a gentle hand on her side, tasting a metallic flavour on her tongue. She wants to escape desperately, but there is no hope. The steel bird draws closer like a magnet placed on the floor. Closer. Closer and closer. It hits the ground and the booms make her head spin. Glass shatters, steel breaks and the tail bends like a piece of metallic art. A siren shrieks loudly and some animals manage to escape through the vast slash on the side. The cage is bent, asking her to leave. It is her time to escape, but she is frozen. Her arm is trapped under a fallen crate that

even her muscular arms are incapable of moving. Smoke seeps into the walls from the crackling noises of the. She will not make it. She will face the same fate as her children. Sorrow cuts her veins and she closes her eyes. 'I am so - ' are her last words.

Voices speak before her. Rattles are heard as a cage door is opened and she is gently lifted into soft, mellow arms. She catches a glimpse of a stretch of greenery before she slips into a dark world.