

FICTION

*The Adventures of Anuk* is an ecological story of an Assisi Human on a quest to save the world.

**The First Leap**—Despite her curious appearance as an Assisi Human, Anuk had a normal childhood and was happy living with her adopted parents in a faraway land where three suns pass in the sky overhead. She loved collecting yamagoos berries in the fields and helping her mother run the kitchen at their inn. Then, on her sixteenth birthday, Anuk receives a summons by the messenger Aye who says it is time to return to faraway Roese Island. Though reluctant to leave her home and family, Anuk is assured by her parents that they always knew the time would come when she must leave and fulfill her destiny as an Assisi.

Two oddly unfamiliar-looking non-human beings, EagleOwl and Kinkajou, arrive to escort Aye and Anuk because the journey ahead will be arduous and fraught with danger. They will have to cross a great sea and pass through many partems, as the lands are called there. Some of these are barren regions of devastation and waste. Others are lush paradises that are not quite as they seem, for their spectacular beauty conceals lethal secrets. Anuk realizes that even if she should survive these hazards, she has no idea what awaits her at the end of the journey.

When young Anuk embarks on this enthralling adventure, she discovers the world beyond her parents' inn is far more fantastic and dangerous than she could have imagined.

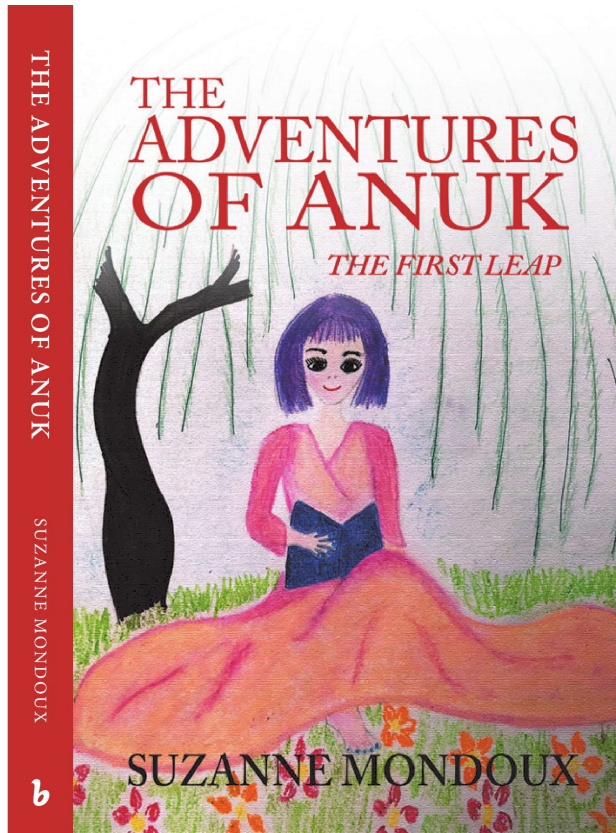
"5 Stars" (Readers' Favorite).

Suzanne Mondoux — *A VOICE FOR ANIMALS* (<http://suzannemondoux.com>) is the author of

- *I Believe* Series coloring and activity books (a journey of discovery and gratitude with amazing animal beings);
- *Tragedy of the Moth* (Felicity Moss is a starlet with a tragic past. Desperate to stay out of the judgmental gaze of the limelight, she disappears from public life.); and
- *How I Became a Dragon* (A deeply affecting work of fiction based on real-life experience by conservationist Heatha that charts the course of ivory trafficking from the fierce assault on the elephant to its ultimate destination as a carved piece of ivory).



Cover Art by  
Gaetanne Pelletier



## Chapter 1

### Book of Poems

On her sixteenth birthday, the Fossa came to tell Anuk she was ready for her education beyond the Inn. She had to return to her own home, Roese Island. She had lived her whole life with Julea and Lucca, learning all the tasks needed to run a hostelry and now they told her she must go. And when she asked why, they had exchanged fearful glances before Lucca said: It is your destiny. Then they had shoved a book of poems in her hands, as if that held all the answers to her questions. All it had done was confuse her.

Anuk was frightened and frustrated at the news of having to leave the Inn. This was her home. She argued with her parents that she could easily continue her education at the Inn. "What can I possibly learn out there that I cannot learn here or do not already know," thought Anuk.

Anuk was angry just at the thought of having to leave the beautiful kitchen where she spent her entire life mastering what she loved the most, the culinary arts. In her anger she pushed the chair back and balanced it on its hide legs and let the chair come crashing down hard and loud onto the floor. Tearful, she bit deep down into a yamagoos biscuit and pushed her chair back away from the table.

Anuk was an avid reader. Even though the book of poems signified her inevitable departure from the Inn, Anuk stayed up the entire night and read every poem. The book of poems was so grievously real and mysterious that Anuk felt deep into her core that each poem had been her Human yesterseasons. She had never written a poem or

imagined such poems could be written. She had never even come close to even imagining poems so beautifully written, and yet held such tragic and horrifying imagery, and despite her immediate future she indeed was relieved to know that she was an Assisi Human.

While without a doubt and grateful for her mother and father, the Fossa a most respected mammal Being that look like a cross between a Cat Being, Dog Being, and Mongoose Being, and with an exaggerated reputation for ferocity, she could not help feeling just a trifle curious about her real mother and father and what fulfilling her duty as an Assisi Human meant.

The book of poems made reference to a great Human Being known as Gandhi and what he said about the relationship between Human Beings and Animals Beings: *"The greatness of a nation can be judge by the way its animals are treated."* Being an Assisi Human meant responsibility for maintaining harmony between Animal Beings and Human Beings. The feeling frightened and excited her.

"Do not be silly, Anuk!" she said to herself, "thinking of leaving the Inn and the whimsical adventure of returning to Roese Island!" So she pulled her chair back to the table, and finished eating. She sipped on a little cup of tea, made from the silver flenin flowers, before helping Julea with the cooking. By then, the three suns were shining in all the windows, and the kitchen had a sweet aromatic scent of baked cakes drifting throughout the Inn. Anuk began to hum a tune she learned in a dream when she was five years. She was reaching for the basket on top of the shelf in the kitchen to go collect berries in the field, and to forget her silly ideas about what she read in the book of poems, what it meant to be an Assisi Human and especially about leaving the Inn, when in walked Aye, a most bizarre and most unusual Primate Being on the Orb no bigger than a large Rodent Being, and just a tinny bigger than Auk's hand.

"My dear Anuk," said Aye, "I am an Aye Aye Being and I have come to complete the promise I made to the woman in the boat the moment she put you in my arms. Are you ready to leave this evening? You have grown into the young woman she said you would be, a lifetime ago it seems! I can see in your eyes you read the book of poems. The woman in the boat told me you would read it on your sixteenth birthday."

Anuk's stared down at a thick slate greyish and white fleck fringe at the top of Aye's head. Aye's prominent yellowish-orange eyes glared upwards at Anuk's heart shaped face with quiet introspective features crowned with shoulder length plum colored hair. A long bright pink and gold silk robe draped Anuk's long slender horse-like body down to just above her ankles and revealed a thin hoof like clog beneath her foot and toes. Anuk was sixteen hands tall, with roseate tinted skin like a sherry blossom flower. The image fulfilled the expected description of an Assisi Human. The color of her rob was also a reflection of the color of the Horse Beings of Roese Island. The Horse Being were not your usual brown, black and white or grey but myriads of shades of the colors of a rainbow. In Anuk's enchanted voice, the Assisi trademark known to lure learners in being attentive to spoken words, "How could she know?" said Anuk confused. Anuk grasp the basket with her long slender hands with solid blue nails.

"Welcome Aye," said Julea and Lucca walking into the kitchen in their plantigrade gait.

Anuk dropped the basket onto the ground and ran to her parents. "She asked if I was ready to leave this evening!" She nestled into Julea's mongoose like slender-body.

“We must travel tonight!” said Aye, “Julea and Lucca, you helped fulfill a promise, and you prepared her well!”

“I don’t understand why I have to go with her! Who will help you with the baking, there’s always so much to do?”

“My darling, we always knew one day you would have to leave us. We do not want you to go anywhere but stay here with us, we loved you as our own from the moment you came into our home. That will never change. But you have your own destiny to fulfill, to be your best self, to achieve your greatest conquest. Part of that is for you to return home, to Roese Island. Aye will take you there and guide you through all your struggles,” Lucca held Anuk tightly in his arms.

“What struggles?” she hid behind her parents.

“If you believe in what you read about Babirsua in the book of poems, you would find the courage inside you to complete this journey,” said Aye, rummaging through her travel sac. “When I left you with the Fossa’s, I left you with the book of poems, but I was also asked to keep a letter for you until this day. The letter comes from the woman in the boat,” Aye removed the letter from her sac and handed it to Anuk.

Anuk remained hidden behind her parents. Lucca took the letter from Aye’s long thin fingers. “Anuk, accept this letter and say thank you to Aye,” Lucca wielded his lanky tail to draw Anuk out from behind them.

Anuk took the letter from her father’s hand and thanked Aye. Anuk looked down at the letter enveloped in a thin green leaf with an onyx seal at its center. She pressed her fingers down onto the seal. The seal cracked and crumbled to the ground and the enveloped revealed a silver leaf. Anuk’s gently opened the letter and read it out loud. The letter was written in exquisite calligraphy.

The letter read:

*Beings and Humans to Anuk of Roese Island*

*Hollow halls*

*Empty passages*

*Wavering ways*

*The stars align*

*Your journey in sight*

*We thank you -*

*Beings are the greatness of Humans.*

*Humans can be greater in its progress.*

*We honor your return*

*Animal Being*

*Babirusa*



“That leaves you until the suns set. You will have to prepare for a long journey,” said Aye.

“But I do not understand. This letter was written and signed by Babirusa. This symbol, one sun resting on the moon crest is not for many seasons from now,” exclaimed Anuk.

“We must depart this evening. We cannot delay our journey,” said Aye.

“Is this part of my Assisi duty as an Assisi Human?” Anuk sat in her rocking chair waving the letter in the air.

“No time to fuss about that. Eat and rest before this evening,” Aye placed her empty travel bag on the kitchen table.

Anuk had never ventured far from the Inn without her parents; or spent a day not baking in the kitchen and doing her lessons. She dawdled in her room doing this and that. Anuk stomped her hooved feet across her bedroom floor. She stomped so hard the dishes rattled on the shelves in the kitchen just below her bedroom.

Anuk eventually joined her parents at the kitchen table knowing deep down in her heart it would be their last meal together. Aye sat across from Anuk. The silence at the table mounted above the clink and clank of the knives and forks against the plates. Aye thanked her host for the meal and excused herself. She donned her travel bag stuffed with vegetables, nuts, fruits and yamagoos biscuits and waited by the side door for Anuk.

Very teary-eyed Anuk joined Aye outside. Anuk remembered she had forgotten her pocket size recipe book that she wrote and kept all of her culinary secrets tips! Anuk quickly ran back into the kitchen to fetch her recipe book and slowly walked back outside.

“Welcome!” said Aye watching the suns dip behind the edge of the sea, illuminating the Inn.

Just then two other Beings emerged above the hilltop in flight and on foot to join Anuk on her journey to Roese Island. EagleOwl, the largest Owl Being on the Orb and easily recognizable by its huge size and wingspan glided over Kinkajou, a golden-brown furry mammal Being about the size of the house Cat Being that lived at the Inn, and landed on Kinkajou long prehensile tail.

“The crew, we will not be traveling alone! They volunteered to accompany us,” said Aye.

“I am sorry Aye!” said Anuk, “but I fear I know nothing. What are they?”

“They are other Animal Beings,” said Aye. “There are many different kinds of them, in all sorts of sizes and shapes, but you will come to know each and every one of them very well. EagleOwl and Kinkajou have come from faraway places to accompany us on our journey.”

“Come, let us greet our travel companions,” said Aye. Aye signaled to Anuk to follow her up the grassy hill.

“Welcome my friends,” said Aye. “Allow me to introduce you to Anuk, Assisi Human. Anuk, it is my pleasure to introduce you to two of the greatest philosophers, EagleOwl and Kinkajou. EagleOwl is no doubt very handsome with his bright pink eyelids, and Kinkajou our arboreal fruit-eating friend has a sweet tooth; he’s very fond of nectar. Some name him the honey bear.

That was how Anuk’s journey back to Roese Island came to a start, parading off into the unknown with unknown Beings and a guardian, who a long time ago made a promise to keep her safe and bring her back home to Roese Island.

The Beings were curious and looked a little odd to her, and she thought she must look rather comical to them as well. “I wonder what my grandparents and Babirusa would say to me now,” she thought.

For the last time, Anuk stood on the hilltop looking back at the Inn, carved into the white stony embankment at the end of a narrow path. A grand golden door, with a green knob at its center, and a silver wind chime dangled above the door. The chimes glittered and jingled at the arrival of each new guest. This vantage point brought into mind a different home she had only read about.

The Inn was a far cry from where the great Babirusa grew up. Babirusa, daughter of the Suidae family, the pig family Beings nick named, deer-pig, because of its barrel-shaped body balanced on delicate, deer-like legs, while they are also notably known for their long upper canines in the males, and reduced or absent in the females, lived in Helithia’s swamps and rainforest many seasons before the birth of Robin Jeen, Anuk’s grandfather. The partem was in the mist of a tumultuous transformation. Babirusa grew up playing in the highest point of the rainforest where she admired Helithia. But she did not look out onto a natural treasure, the once exquisite prevalent landscape of the partem. Instead, she looked out everyday at the horrors, the desecration of the hills, grasslands, ravaged forest, and scattered skeletons of marine and land Beings along the seashore. Helithia bore the scars and scabs inflicted by the barons of the partem, the Seres. But ten seasons before Babirusa was born, Helithia, despite the odds, conquered the Seresians.

Anuk and her new friends had walked to the furthest edge of the hills, when the moon was at its highest point in the sky. Aye removed her bag stuffed with delightful treats, and spread the feast on a flat rock. They ate, and the Beings exchanged stories of their adventures, except for Anuk. These wild tales of adventure did not mean anything to her, but still she listened in on every story, even those that seemed a bit exaggerated or just too unreal to be remotely true, especially the tales of partems, a term coined by the Beings from when the Orb was raped and pillaged and segmented into productive and non productive pieces. As she chewed on her yamagoos biscuit she began to develop a slight taste for such adventures.

After the feast and comical conversations they walked on following the moons lit path. At first when they reached the end of the hills they passed through amphibious and avian Beings bogs, peaceful and friendly partems seldom encountered away from the Inn. The air vibrated with bulbous lyrics, and tips and taps of clapping feet. The crew skipped along flowery bridges, crawled through tunnels, and now and then encountered Beings popping in and out of the water or flying above collecting berries. Then further ahead passed the edge of the forest they came to a partem where there were no Beings, and only sounds Anuk had never heard before. Now they had gone into the desolate partems, where there were no Beings, no lyrics of any sorts, no flowery bridges, and the paths grew bigger with no trees, ferns, or any plants. Not far ahead were dilapidated superstructures, spreading east to west, murky with grey clouds. Some of the superstructures were cathedrals with hanging creatures with punitive glares from their four eyes across what looked like a forehead. The pungent and steaming hot air lingered in this desolate partem where they had no choice but to take shelter and rest.

“To think these partems exist!” screeched Kinkajou, as his tail gripped a metallic rod ahead of the others to avoid walking in the filth. Anuk thought the same thing. Her voice remained silent in fear of being seen as meek, as not fit for the journey. It was after

their brief rest; it was getting increasingly warmer, and had worsened as the night went on; Kinkajou's long skinny tongue usually moist from honey was parched; his gold woolly fur itched insensibly with sweat; the others stepped lightly with tired feet. Through the dense air they tip toed through the muck. EagleOwl unable to fly in the heavy warm and filthy air, he held his wing tips way high off the ground as he walked along. Anuk hoisted her clean hooves along the detritus. She had never seen her feet so filthy.

"And I am sure we have not seen the last of these desolate partems," thought Kinkajou. "I could be sucking nectar and curling up in a nice hollow tree! This recurring fantasy occupied his thoughts.

"Can I endure this journey?" Anuk was in deep pondering thoughts. Withal the crew carried on, never looking back or down, but kept eyes forward.

Amidst the dark grey clouds the three suns must have peaked through, for it began to get a bit lighter as they went down into a large tunnel with metal tracks along its bottom. The air cooled, and water dripped along the walls. Fortunately the tunnel carried on to the far edges of the desolate partem, for the daylight, radiating with heat waves, came blaring down from the sky.

It was early morning when they had crossed through the tunnel. The three suns warmed their faces, and a breeze drifted along the stream through the shrubs. They paused to inhale a breath of fresh air, and Kinkajou squeaked that it was time for breakfast, and jumped over to Anuk. EagleOwl turned his conspicuous ear tufts towards the songbirds nesting in the shrubs, "shall we sit over there?"

They had not noticed that Aye was already by the shrubs, with a picnic already spread out on the grass. So far she had guided them this far, never announced her comfort or discomfort. She had fed them, listened to their tales, and laughed at their jokes. Anuk mimicked her. "Julea foresaw the need for a generous supply of rations. And we will never go hungry with what is available to us right here," Aye's bear curved claw-like nails poked through the thorny shrub, where tiny yellow berries dropped to the ground.

The crew set up camp near the stream, under a lone tall bushy tree. They seldom had need of a fire. The days were usually warm enough, and the evenings were sometimes cool but not cool enough to warrant fire heat.

EagleOwl melted into the tree, rubbing his head against the tree. Kinkajou joined him. Then EagleOwl took flight over the stream and landed a bit further afield in the stream. He had not seen a stream such as this in a very long time and Kinkajou followed right behind him. Of course it was inevitable for Aye and Anuk to follow suits into the stream, even if just to soak their feet. The grim lifted off their skin, fur, and feathers as the water flowed over their bodies.

Anuk was reflecting on the last couple days, when she was first given the book of poems bound in beautifully decorated mauve silk, Babirusa's story, leaving her parents and her own story, when EagleOwl perched on the tree canopy, said: "There is a mist over there!" There was a dark sandy beach lining the coast, with pockets of swirling smoke. Out from the milky layered mist and smoke he could see white bird Beings circling about the mist.

Anuk wondered if a similar mist and smoky clouds lingered over Helithia. Was the succession of the recent grim partem to this tranquil stream similar to when the Helithians reveled in the successions of the regenerated natural world, in what some

called the Helithian miracle, the emerald age. The minds of the Helithians were now flooded with new ideas and new beliefs. The key ideologies for Babirusa amongst all the new ideas and beliefs were the power of all Beings. This meant that all Beings would not be preyed upon within the system; they would be stewards of the system.

When EagleOwl came down the tree and gave them the approximate distance from their camp to the beach and the campfires on the beach, they discussed the journey ahead towards the campfires that indicated Beings were presents in the region and cooking food. Kinkajou said, "it could not be, and Aye said, "it might be". They agreed to go have a closer look, even if it meant less sleep.

Kinkajou and EagleOwl talked amongst themselves: "These partems can be fraught with mystery, confusion, doubt, and are near the sea. Beings seldom venture this far of the partem near the sea. The guideposts are destroyed, safe passage along the cliffs to the beach no longer exist. Few of us have seen or know much about the Humans in this partem of the Orb, and less you question, the better off you are."

Anuk listened attentively to the debate between her sage companions, learning everything she could as her thoughts reached deep into Babirusa's key ideologies, the Helithian miracle - where once Beings were preyed upon and exploited for thousands of seasons, then held equivalent seats within the Helithian nation and Orb. "What changed? What had happened to this emerald age," she wondered.

EagleOwl said "we have an Human with us." Anuk looked surprised when they all looked at her. "And an Assisi Human. The Assisi are renowned patronage of Beings and the natural world. They are considered by both Humans and Beings the most venerated of the Human bloodline, not only because of their Assisi lineage, but because they never denied a learner and remained true and steady to their quest for knowledge.

We must proceed with caution," piped Aye. Anuk remained silent. They all set off, EagleOwl leading the way. They came to a grassy field and were soon nearing the tall thick forest before the opening out onto the beach. Into the forest they went; but the dense foliage, leading towards the cliff, obstructed their long distant vision; they quietly scrambled as best they could through the wall of branches and foliage.

Suddenly the mist lingered into the edge of the forest.

"This might be the time Anuk leads the way," EagleOwl stepped aside. "Assisi Humans have excellent vision day or night and even in the fog and mist. Nothing is known to obstruct their impeccable sight.

Anuk, head high, stepped to the front of the line with Aye's nodding approval. "You must be cautious, do not ask questions of the Beings you encounter on the beach, remember you know nothing, and seek only their guidance, it is the only partem from which we can get off the island and cross the sea," guided Aye. "Now remember what you have learned and be off, and return to us quickly, once the conversation with the Beings reveals our safe passage. If not, return to us when appropriate to thank them for their time and to excuse yourself, if they release you! If you cannot return, rotate the medallions around your neck towards your back and let them dangle there until we can join you. That will be your signaled to us that you are in danger." Anuk looked down at the Roesse Coat of Arms hung from strands of golden-coiled ribbons around her neck.

The medallions once belonged to her grandmother Amid Anuk Roesse from Nenn and her grandfather Robin. They were left with the Fosse on the night Aye brought Anuk to the Inn.

Anuk's finger followed the etched lines on her grandmother's Roese Coat of Arms, a sky blue sea cradling a golden sun, with a bright pink rose in the center of the sea, and a crisp orange full moon to the east, south, and west of the sea, down to the bottom right of the medallion over a silver upside down maple leaf that marked the eve of the winter of the three full moons. The winter of the three full moons was the three hundred wedding union of Grandmother Amid and Grandfather Robin. The second medallion belonging to Grandfather Robin was etched with a more simple illustration; three white lions facing a bronze sun embossed in the center of the medallion.

Anuk's thoughts rushed through her mind, "what if I fail at whatever it is I am meant to do?" She grunted silently, perspired secretly, and toiled internally until her gut hurt.

The crew watched closely at how the Assisi Human would tackle this challenge. "What would be her strategy, what was she thinking and feeling," they wondered.

Confronted with a real life challenge that did not involve cooking elaborate meals or baking, Anuk marched forward with authority, before she could argue a different option even if she had never been in a life and death situation before. But recent lessons from the book of poems would be put into practice, and Assisi Humans were respected amongst most Humans. Assisi Humans took pride in their history and reputation, and Anuk had read many poems, as many as the different dishes and cakes she prepared. So, humbly, she walked onto the beach and let herself be seen by the Humans.

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