Sun & Moon
A Khmer Journey
by Svang Tor and Dr. Richard Mollica
Adapted and Illustrated by Doug Anderson
All prisoners must report for farm duty! Get moving!

You there! You're holding up the line! What's the matter with her? Is she sick?

Sorry...my wife is a little tired, that's all...

Ohhhh! The baby is coming! We'll never make it!

Just a few meters more. Keep moving, my dear...

I am ready... Remember our plan... and whatever happens, don't look back.
Hey! Guards!
Hey you! I don't feel like working today!
I'm staying here!

And I want some food and some new shoes! What do you think of that?

Do you want to be shot? Get back in line!

He's gone crazy!

That's right! I'm crazy! Watch out - I might be dangerous!

We'd better lock him up for a while!

Hey! You! Come back!

Run!

It's a trick! She's getting away!
Stop her!
-kraak-
-zzzinnnggg!
-kraak-
-zzzinnnggg!
swappp-
No! Run!
Ouch! My arm!
Help!
Ooof!
Where'd she go!

She vanished... ...like magic!

No! Look at this...

See! It's blood. We must have wounded her. She's probably hiding nearby...

"...we'll keep looking until we find her..."

Whuh... Where am I? What is this place?

Huhh! Who's there...?
Snakes! I've never seen so many in one place! And so many kinds!

Where are they going? Maybe they will show me the way out of this place...

This must be an old temple...
It's so sleepy and quiet here... I must be the first person to enter this place in a hundred years, maybe even a thousand.

Ohhhh... the baby is starting to come. It's almost time...

I wish I were not in this place, with only snakes for company.

But what choice do I have?

Even if I could find a way out, the guards would catch me, I'm sure of it.

At least here, I can have my child in safety tonight.

And beyond tonight? I will worry about that tomorrow...
Twins! How beautiful they are...

You are like the Sun and the Moon to me... my Soriya and Chantrea.
What will we do, little ones? What will become of us now?

The guards!

I won't let them take you away - I won't!

Hush, babies!

Wahhh!

Huh? Who are you?

Where did you come from?
Where's the baby?

Go on! Answer him!

There is no baby. That was me you heard crying.

Liar! We're taking you back to camp. We'll make sure you won't escape again!

And as for your baby...you'd better hope we never find it!
You are safe now, little Soriya and Chantrea...
...wherever you are,
it must be a better place than this.
Here we are, babies, in my nice, dark hermit's cave! You will love it here!

These are some of my friends. They are very curious about you, I think!

The magic of my finger's touch will be your nourishment here, and I shall raise you to be good and strong.

Tomorrow, we shall visit a friend of mine, who will also help in your upbringing...
She is very old and very wise. You will learn much from her.

I hope she is at home today. She often travels far, helping people in need.
Snake Queen!

Good morning, Hermit Monk! How kind of you to visit me!

Who are those tiny creatures you have with you?

They are babies -- human children. I have pledged to care for them, and I came to ask you to share in their upbringing.

Babies, you say? Bring them closer, so I might see and smell them!

What beautiful children! I will be happy to help them!

But how did you come by them? Where are their parents?

Their land is not safe right now -- they were in danger. So I rescued them. What else could I do?
You only did what your heart told you to, I would have done the same, old friend.

We will raise them together, and teach them the ways of the forest.

And what of their mother and father? They may still be alive, in that terrible place.

"There will come a time when Soriya and Chantrea will wish to return to their own land -- when they desire to find their parents, and their destiny. Until then, we must wait."
Mother! Father!
We must speak with you!
We have both had the strangest dream...

"In it, we saw two people, very sad, reaching out towards us, as if they were searching for us. What does it mean?"

We too have had that dream. I believe it was your mother and father you saw.

Our mother and father?

Yes. That dream was a sign that it is time to return to the place of your birth, and seek for the parents who gave you life, fourteen years ago.
You see, you were born in a very bad time, but the **bad people** are gone now, and you have grown into strong young folk. The **time is right** for you to go.

But how will we **know** where to **find** our parents? Are they even alive?

That remains for you to **discover**, my children. Not even a **Snake Queen** can **predict** your destiny!

Here is some **gold**, **children**, and **armlets** to wear for good **luck**.

Thank you, Father!

Wait! We also have **gifts** for you that cannot be carried in the hand...
From me, you will gain the power to take the form of **great serpents**, merely by wishing it!

And as my wards, you shall have **Foresight**: the power to **glimpse** what tomorrow may hold for you. Keep in mind, though, that you may not always **like** what you see!

That way lies the place of your birth. As you journey, remember that **truth** is often disguised. **Be careful** not to assume that all you see is all there is!
But...how will we ever find our parents?

They could be anywhere!

Don’t lose hope! Your road will have many blind corners...but it also has an end!

Will we see them again, I wonder?

I don’t know, old friend. Let us pray for their success. May they find what they seek!
The forest is so dense here! I can hardly move!

I think we're lost!

Wait! There's a clearing ahead!

Wow! What is that place?

Where are the people? It looks deserted.
Is this where we were born? There must be some mistake. Where are all the people?

There must have been hundreds here once, but now...

Well, if our parents were ever really here, they’re long gone now. I was hoping at least to find someone who knew them.

Chantrea -- let’s go back to the forest. Perhaps the dream was not a true dream after all.

No! Remember what the Hermit Monk said: don’t lose hope. It is too soon to give up looking. This way!
I don't know if we'll ever find our parents, Soriya. But if we give up now, we surely won't. Someone, somewhere, must know something about them. Sooner or later, we will learn their fate.
Here you go! Last night's leftovers! Eat up! There's a whole bucketful--the inn was busy last night, you know...

What's wrong, girl? You look a little nervous today...

Huh! Who are you? Where'd you come from!

Oinkkkkk!

And don't you know that's garbage in there? You must be pretty hungry, huh?

I bet you slept out here last night, didn't you?

We're sorry, but we didn't think anyone would mind. We'll be going now anyway. Our apologies...
Wait! Don't be so hasty! As an innkeeper, I can't send two guests away on an empty stomach!

Come on! I'll fix you some proper food before you go!

Should we? It would be rude to say no. Besides... I'm so hungry!

Been travelling long, have you?

A few days. How did you know?

In my business, you learn to look for clues about your guests, like the dust in your hair, and the blisters on your feet.

No shoes, either. You are not well-prepared for a long journey.
It's our mother and father; we're on a quest to find them. We can't stay long...

Orphans, are you? I thought so. There are so many of you on the road these days.

It hurts me to think of it. I have two kids myself. They're all grown up now--they live in the city.

So it's just you and your wife now!

No. She died a few years ago. It's just me here.

Yes, I miss her dearly. It's a little like having her around again, talking to you...

It's a shame you have to be going again so soon.

Please wait--I have something for you two.

Is this her picture? How pretty she was!

Let's go, Chantrea. I left some money for what we ate.

But he's so sad. I wish there was some way we could help.
Look! I found some old clothes for you-- they were my kids' things. Please, take them for your journey!

Thanks! They're a perfect fit!

Well, I guess you'll be going now. The city is that way. Good luck!

Goodbye, children!

Poor guy... maybe we could stay overnight. We could use some rest, and he seems so lonely...

Okay-- just one night, and then we'll move on, right?

Yeah, just one night.

I wonder if there's any dinner left over...
Innkeeper! How about some more tea over here for me and my men? And make it fast!

Here we are! Will that be all for you tonight?

Trying to get rid of us, eh?

It's not as if you have any other guests tonight, except for those two kids!

I guess we scared everyone else away!

Who are they, your relatives?

No, they are orphans in search of their parents. They have been here a week now, taking a break from the road.

The boy is strong. We could use a kid like him to gather firewood and do our chores.

And the girl is quite a beauty, don't you think...?
Yeeooowcch! Hey! Watch where you're pouring!

Get out! I'll have no rude talk like that in my inn! Go on, all of you!

Well, if you wanted her all to yourself, why didn't you say so? Ha! Come on, boys...

But remember, innkeeper-- we're fierce bandits and we do as we please.

I'll remember! I promise!

If you want to stay in business, you better think of a way to keep us happy!
Innkeeper? Are you okay? Who are those men?

Go to sleep, children...

Tomorrow, Chantrea and I will go to market, and it's a long walk to town. You must rest...

We've been here for a whole week now. We really should be going!

I know. But the innkeeper has been so kind to us. And I'm afraid it will break his heart when we leave again.

I'll tell him tomorrow, on the way to market. I promise, Soriya.

Chantrea, wake up! I must talk to you, alone!

Hmmm? Soriya?
Now, Soriya, I'm leaving you in charge of the inn while we're away. Do a good job, and I'll bring you back a treat!

Innkeeper... I must speak with you.

I know... I overheard you and your brother last night. He wants the two of you to leave soon.

I understand, though I will miss having you around.

Your brother's desire to find your parents is honorable... But I wonder if he has your best interests at heart.

What do you mean?

It's a tough life on the road for two kids like you. There are bandits and swindlers... It's a big world, and you may never find what you seek...
If your brother really cared for you, he would not be so anxious to endanger your life this way.

But what else can we do? Give up our search?

No. But you can do the sensible thing, and wait until you are a little older. I would be happy to let you stay with me, as long as you like!

But my brother would never agree to that!

Then he would be welcome to continue the journey...alone.

As for me, I care too much for you to let you continue on such a dangerous quest...

Well, here we are at the market! Now, what would you like? A pretty dress? A scarf? Maybe some jewelry...
Brother! We're back!

Look at the dress I bought! And a stuffed animal...and there's some candy for you, too!

Chantrea, perhaps you should put your dress away before it gets dirty-- you look so pretty in it!

Okay, "Dad"?

Soriya, let me help you finish your chores. You are a good worker!

Why did she call you "Dad"?

Just a kindness to an old man! Don't worry about it! Have you ever seen your sister so happy?

No... Innkeeper, did she mention anything to you about leaving?
Yes-- she told me how brave you were, and how badly you wanted to keep looking for your parents.

Good. Then I guess we'd better get going...

Wait-- I'd like to give you a little advice from someone with a bit more experience in life...

Advice?

Yes. Let's talk in private, while we gather the wood.

Your sister thinks very highly of you. She doesn't want to disappoint you, but...

What I mean, is, be careful of putting your own interests ahead of hers.

Chantrea doesn't want us to leave?

She would never say so to your face. She loves you too much. I probably shouldn't have mentioned it, but I knew you would want to know the truth.

What should I do, then?

You must do what you think best. As for me, I can't imagine anything more important than Chantrea's happiness and safety...

Go back to the inn, Soriya. I must rest a moment.
You did well with the boy, Innkeeper. He will go, and leave his sister behind.

His love for her is strong...

You can grab the boy on the road. His sister must never know what happened to him. He is carrying gold coins—you are welcome to them.

But what about the girl?

She will stay with me. The boy and the gold should be enough for you... Please...

Later...

Goodbye, Chantrea. I wish I could be sure I was doing the right thing by leaving you...

Wait! That’s it! I can use the Foresight that my dear Lok Ta gave me to see how Chantrea will feel about being left behind!
But how does it work? Maybe if I sit still and meditate...

Hmmm... try to clear my mind...

Ohhh! It's working!

Chantrea... She's crying... She's packing her things... Is she coming after me?

The Innkeeper doesn't want her to go... He's telling her to forget about me! He's a bad man! A liar!

Look out! He's trying to grab her! She's shouting but no one can hear her! No! I can't watch any more!
I've got to get back before it's too late!

Chantrea! Wake up!

Soriya!

We've got to get out of here!

I know. Life is easy here, but something feels wrong. It's too easy. I don't trust that innkeeper...

It's worse than you know. We'll pack our things and sneak away before sunrise. Oh, Chantrea, I feel ashamed! We have wasted so much time already!

Come on!

Wait. There is something we must do before we go...
Good morning, children... Huh! They're gone!

Their things are missing!

But what's this?

A letter, and some gold coins!

---

"Dear Innkeeper,
Thank you for your generosity, but we have decided not to stay any longer. We also thought it was best that we go before you had a chance to do something you might regret."

--Chantrea and Soriya

How did they know? What have I done?

Forgive me, children, forgive me... forgive...me...
We've been running for hours-- I don't think we have to worry about being followed anymore...

Agreed! I'm tired of running, anyway...

Oh, Chantrea, I'm sorry I tried to leave you. How could I have ever doubted your courage to go on?

And did you really believe I could ever leave you behind? That innkeeper had us both fooled, I think...

Look, a snake! How beautiful she is!

Like our foster mother, Snake Queen. I miss her so much!
Do you remember how she used to curl up around us to keep us safe when we bathed in the river?

And how she would splash us with her tail? !

What's wrong?

Listen... The forest has grown very quiet. There is danger here.

I sense it too. Let's get out of here!

Do you think we are being followed?

I don't see anyone behind us... Maybe we're out of danger!
Help! Bandits!

Run!

It's the kids from the inn! Get them!

No!! Let me go!

We got 'em, boss!

Good! Search their bags for the gold!

Then, we'll finish them off!
We got their gold, Boss!

Good! Now, prepare to die!

Please, Mister Bandit, before you kill us, would you at least let us pray?

Hmmm... Very well, but make it quick!

Brother, remember our foster mother's parting gift!

It's our only chance! It may scare these men away!

By the power of the Snake Queen...

...we wish to take the form of Serpents!
Monsters! Let's get out of here!

Cowards! Are you afraid of a few snakes? Attack!

Hellllp!

Soriya! It's not working! Try to restrain them in your coils to tire them out!

Stop! We don't mean to harm you! Owww! He's hurting me! Chantrea!

Die, demon!
Soriya! No!

It's gone mad! Aarrgh! Help me!!

I've been poisoned! Run! Save yourselves...

Aaaaagh!

You've... killed them, brother!

Sister, what have I done? The snake part of me seemed to take control...

I'm so tired...
The effort of changing has sapped our strength.
I think. I cannot...stay...awake...
The Sun and Moon story, like many others before it, celebrates the spirit of two heroes who overcome a difficult past and persevere. The twins are able to use their cultural history in powerful ways to create good in spite of the horrors of their past.

If you or your parents or teachers are interested in other works dealing with these issues, there are many texts and even several comic books that have addressed these difficult topics.

- In the popular tradition of Japanese *manga*, Keiji Nakazawa wrote an autobiographical comic called *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, which was translated into English in 1976. In it he deals with the trauma of a city and a people on whom the atomic bomb was dropped during World War II.

- More recently, Art Spiegelman won a Pulitzer prize in 1992 for his treatment of the Jewish Holocaust in *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, and then its sequel *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began*. Using cats to represent Nazis and mice to represent Jews, Spiegelman tells the story of his father Vladek, a survivor of the concentration camps.

- Even now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, major conflicts continue in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia. Joe Sacco's *Safe Area Gorazde* presents a vivid portrayal of the genocide, sometimes termed "ethnic cleansing," in Eastern Bosnia. As a reporter, he befriended Muslims whose lives were transformed as their home turned into a war zone.

Although these books are all in comic form, their content is very serious. Comic books in the United States have long been used to entertain, but around the world they often convey very adult messages.

The authors of this comic book work at the Harvard Program for Refugee Trauma with victims of human rights abuses. Despite the violence they have encountered, the vast majority of survivors continue their life journeys full of hope for the future. Soriya and Chantrea are examples of such survivors, who come to terms with their past in order to create and enjoy a brighter tomorrow.

Susan Frick
Harvard Graduate School of Education