

Under The Southern Cross

**Adventures of a
young girl and her dog on an exotic island.**

Greg Prasher





The year was 1962. Against the lush tropical backdrop of the island of Java, Alex Palmer, an eleven-year old American girl, arrives by plane to experience the beauty and mystery of an exotic land. This is a story of adventure and humor and the love of a girl for her dog. It is a coming of age in a foreign land full of life, beauty and adventure against a background of political turmoil.

Under the Southern Cross

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6564.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

Copyright © 2012 Gregory Prasher

ISBN 978-1-62141-825-2

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

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

Booklocker.com, Inc.
2012

First Edition

HUJAN (Rain)

I sat on the front porch. I stared intently at the volcano, *Gunung Gede*, visible just east of our house. Above the last row of rice paddies around the base of *Gunung Gede*, forests of red and green trees grew towards its summit. A wide band of ashen rubble and rocks stretched from the edge of the forests to the volcano's flat smoking peak.

"Someday, you, me and Emong are going to climb that volcano," I said to Mr. Jackson, panting on the stone floor beside me. We'll find out how high it is and see what the lava inside looks like."

I imagined braving swamps, snakes, leopards and baboons on the way to the top.

"You'll have to catch us some food, Mr. Jackson. Maybe a bird or lizard or a stray chicken," I said.

Mr. Jackson's tail wagged furiously at the sound of the word "chicken".

"Water might be scarce on the steep sides of the volcano, and you'll have to find it for us."

"Maybe, Emong and I will climb coconut trees, knock down the coconuts, hack the thick green husks off and crack the hard brown nut inside for that sweet coconut milk. There will be danger and adventure everywhere!" I patted Mr. Jackson on the head.

My journey was rudely interrupted by Emong's yell from the street.

"Come on, Alex. Let's go! We're playing *FUTBOL*!" Both Emong and I were popular futbol players, Emong because he was so adept with his feet and me because I was so fast. So we were headed to the park to join the afternoon *futbol* game between all the neighbor kids.

Mr. Jackson cocked his head and looked at me, anxious and ready to go along.

“No, Mr. Jackson. Emong and I are going to play soccer,” said I to Mr. Jackson, “You stay here this time.” I opened the back door and put Mr. Jackson in the back yard.

I ran down the street with Emong, leaving Mr. Jackson sprawled, bored and sulking, on the smooth tile of the back porch for an afternoon nap. When I closed the door his tongue lolled out on the cold tile and he softly snored.

The air was hot, heavy and humid. Then, after a while, the air stirred. Bougainvillea, perfumed and thick with vibrant red purple flowers, rustled softly on the eave above Mr. Jackson and then settled, quiet again.

A *cecak*, a small gray insect-eating lizard, clung to the wall on the outside of the house basking in the bright sizzling sun. Mr. Jackson opened one sleepy eye and looked at it, but did not move. The humid air rippled across Mr. Jackson’s wet black nose again. He raised his head and sniffed. Something was coming. The *cecak* scurried for cover. The wind gusted and grew stronger.

Thick dark clouds crowded the sky above. Mr. Jackson watched as large black clumps of clouds rolled and twisted in the wind above the backyard wall.

“Booomm! Booommm!”

Peals of thunder resonated in the distance, coming closer. The wind gusted sharper and stronger. The sky darkened.

Suddenly, the sky exploded!

CRAAACK! BOOOOOMM! CRAACK!

Jagged blades of lightning flashed sharply across the sky, jabbing towards the backyard banana trees. A solid curtain of rain swept towards the house, driven by the strong bursts of wind. The rain crashed and roared against the red tile roof above Mr. Jackson, drowning all other sounds.

Under the Southern Cross

It was October and the fast moving storm and rain signaled the beginning of the end of Java's dry season. Monsoon or the wet season was coming much to Mr. Jackson's delight.

His short stubby ears cupped forward, intent. The rain flooded hiding places in the backyard and drove the animals out. Mr. Jackson watched for them, because they always came.

The storm passed quickly leaving damp cool air behind. Distant, retreating rumbles of thunder heralded the appearance of the hidden animals.

"Plup, plup, plup," the last of the raindrops dripped off the roof and trees. Mr. Jackson did not have to wait long.

Mr. Jackson saw it! It moved. It hopped. As quick as an eye blink, it hopped again. Right here in his backyard a wonderful creature jumped along the wall. Mr. Jackson sprang up to investigate.

It was a curious animal. The animal was purple-green with big gnarly warts all over it. Mr. Jackson looked at it closely, cocking his head. It hopped again, and he jumped back, startled. Then Mr. Jackson's curiosity took control, and he moved closer and sniffed. The animal did not smell like anything he had smelled before, and it made no sound. It did not look like anything he had seen before. So, he decided to taste the little fellow. Tentatively, Mr. Jackson's tongue slid out slowly and flicked the unsuspecting critter, flipping it over sideways.

It was a toad.

When the toad scrambled upright, Mr. Jackson licked it again--then, again. What a wonderful game! Each time he licked it, the toad rolled over then popped up again. With his tail wiggling away, Mr. Jackson slurped the toad with renewed delight.

SLURP, SLURP!

Greg Prasher

Then, excited, Mr. Jackson made a big mistake. He scooped the toad up in his mouth. What he intended to do with the toad will never be known because, suddenly, it tasted awful!

“EEOOWWWW!”

The toad’s poison glands protected it from toad enemies and worked quite well. As fast as it could the toad secreted bitter and bad-tasting poison mucous into Mr. Jackson’s mouth. Mr. Jackson flipped his head and spit the awful-tasting toad out. The purple and green toad somersaulted high in the air.

Confused, Mr. Jackson snatched the toad up with his mouth again and stood there, triumphant with the toad’s back legs wiggling out of his mouth. That was his second mistake!

The toad filled Mr. Jackson’s mouth with toad poison, coating his tongue with sticky foul mucous.

Mr. Jackson gasped and snorted and shook his head wildly. His mouth flew open.

PATOOOIE! YUCK! GAAK!

He shook the nasty toad out of his mouth and it jumped towards the bushes along the back wall. Mr. Jackson’s tongue, covered with foam and bubbles, curled out of his mouth and over his black nose. He shook his head and began rolling on the ground, groaning and rubbing his foam flecked muzzle in the grass. Streaks of foam smeared the grass.

“AH-OOOOOO!” he howled.

Mr. Jackson ran to his water bowl and tried to wash the terrible taste out of his mouth. The water made it worse! Mr. Jackson’s mouth and muzzle bubbled and foamed. The thick foam covered his face and dripped in long slimy strings from his chin.

As Mr. Jackson pawed at his face, Emong and I returned, dripping wet from the rain. I saw Mr. Jackson, his face covered in sticky foam with forlorn droopy eyes standing in a puddle of toad foam bubbles

“Mr. Jackson!” I cried, concerned, “what did you do?”

Mr. Jackson whimpered, moaning pitifully and looking at us with mournful foam-ringed eyes and a bubbling mouth.

“Look there, Alex,” Emong exclaimed, pointing at the toad hopping away trailing foam and saliva.

“I think a Javanese toad just taught Mr. Jackson a lesson. Stay away foam toads!” punned Emong. Then he said, “I’ll bet Mr. Jackson won’t foam-ent any more trouble with toads.” He started to sputter with laughter.

I started laughing too. The sight of Mr. Jackson’s face covered with a blanket of toad foam was too much. The pathetic look on Mr. Jackson’s face made it funnier. We laughed so hard our sides hurt. Mr. Jackson looked sadder and sadder. Finally he looked so pathetic we stopped laughing and just shook our heads.

“Come on big guy,” I said, still chuckling, “Let’s get you cleaned up.”

I washed Mr. Jackson’s mouth out with milk and salt water until the bubbling stopped. Mr. Jackson shook himself, splattering us with flecks of foam. Then he gratefully plopped down on the tiled porch next to me and Emong. Then he looked up.

I followed his eyes and watched dark clouds of giant fruit bats with clawed wings five feet across swirl over the backyard in the purpling sky. The bats were heading for their night meal in the jungle beyond. Every night these flying foxes gathered and across flew into the jungle to feast on the beautiful and abundant fruits of Java. In the early morning they would return, gorged from their nightly plunder, signaling the start of a new day.



The year was 1962. Against the lush tropical backdrop of the island of Java, Alex Palmer, an eleven-year old American girl, arrives by plane to experience the beauty and mystery of an exotic land. This is a story of adventure and humor and the love of a girl for her dog. It is a coming of age in a foreign land full of life, beauty and adventure against a background of political turmoil.

Under the Southern Cross

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6564.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**