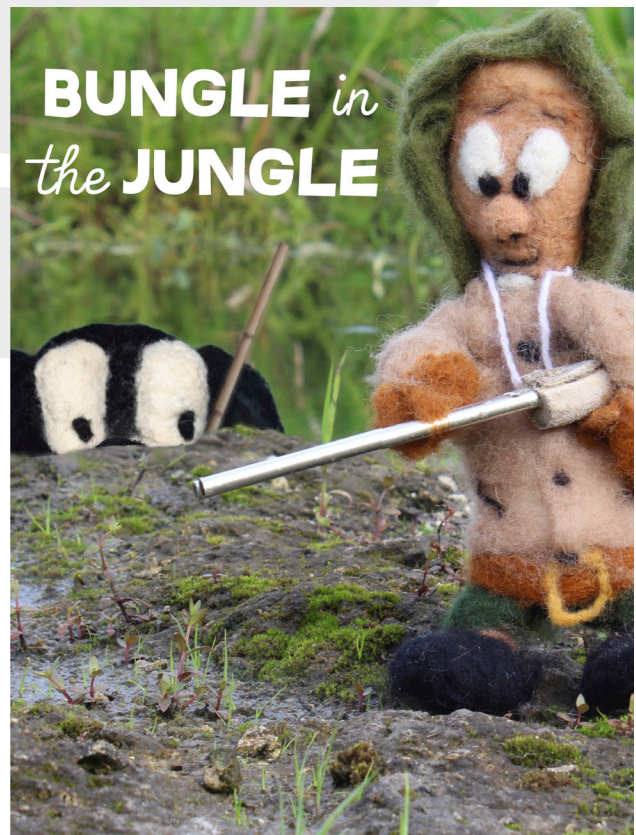


Notes on “Bungle in the Jungle”

Starring Moxie Mutt and Caribou Krubb

Kevin Cooley



Bungle in the Jungle is, of course, inspired by the great chase cartoons of the early days of animation. Cat chasing mouse, coyote chasing roadrunner, hunter chasing rabbit—all of these chase cartoons brought a levity to the somewhat grim notion of carnivorous pursuit, and most of these chase cartoons relied on the presumed safety of hunger as an excuse to explain the endless libidinal appetites that kept their male players locked in an endless chase with one another. If Tex Avery’s *Wolf*, after all, could pursue the titular *Red Hot Riding Hood* (1943), and audiences were immediately meant to understand the relationship was one of

predatory heterosexuality, then what was to stop the obvious sexuality of animalian hunger from coloring the way that Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd chased each other around, or the punch-clock warfare and evening romance of Warner Bros.' Sam and Ralph?

With drag performances, gendered games, and the ever-present possibility that hunter and hunted will get married for the sake of a gag, these cartoons—even with their punching down at the figure of the sissy—stirred something within many viewers who grappled with their own identities and were starved of images to help make sense of them.

The felt image allows the cartoon iconography of golden age animation to register as both eerily different and hauntingly familiar (like many will find the queer readings that it begs for). Drawing on Jan Švankmajer's notion of the "tactile imagination," this idea that the material image can confound the traditional separation between what is seen and what is touched, I use felt to capture the hands-on, kinesthetic eroticism of the cartoon chase trope (2014, 169). Readers may find that their eyes have always already begun to "feel" the obviously tactile felt of these semi-cartooned creatures, and in doing so, the desire to touch what is seen is immediately foregrounded at the moment of their photographic articulation. Sight compels touch; gaze compels action, and the image of an anthropomorphic animalian man on the horizon compels his dopey, confused, and longing pursuer to burst into pursuit.

In participating in this tactile imagination, readers may even tap into the process of shaping the wool itself. Working with wool in one's hands—feeling its simultaneous roughness and softness, its stray frays, firm clumps, soft surfaces, and secret agendas—demands the kind of loving, exhausting, and hands-on approach that an animated hunter has to put in to their wily prey.

Moxie Mutt lives out the figure of the archetypal cartoon trickster, drag performances and all. Caribou Krubb wishes he was as bristly and ornery as Yosemite Sam, but deep down, is as bashful, tender, and confused as Elmer Fudd. I wanted the archetypal relationship between these two characters to be as flimsy as possible to foreground the artifice of the chase—why, after all, would a big game hunter fit for the Savannah be chasing down a...dog? If he even is a dog, that is...

The only person who might answer that question is the mysterious G-Man known only as "Ralph," however, who shatters the easy and infinite cycle of the chase. He is nothing like Offissa Pupp of George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, easily subsumed into the libidinal economy of the queer antics of kat and mouse. Ralph's very existence poses a threat to the cycle itself, and it forces Caribou to reconcile with the small voice inside his head that says "you know what? If I never catch this critter, then I never have to stop these shenanigans." This narrative experiment is a chance to challenge the Elmer Fudd-figure to admit to himself, even if only silently, that there is a raw longing lurking within his gimmicks, and to wonder how far he will go to preserve it.

References

Švankmajer, Jan. 2014. *Touching and Imagining: An Introduction to Tactile Art*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.

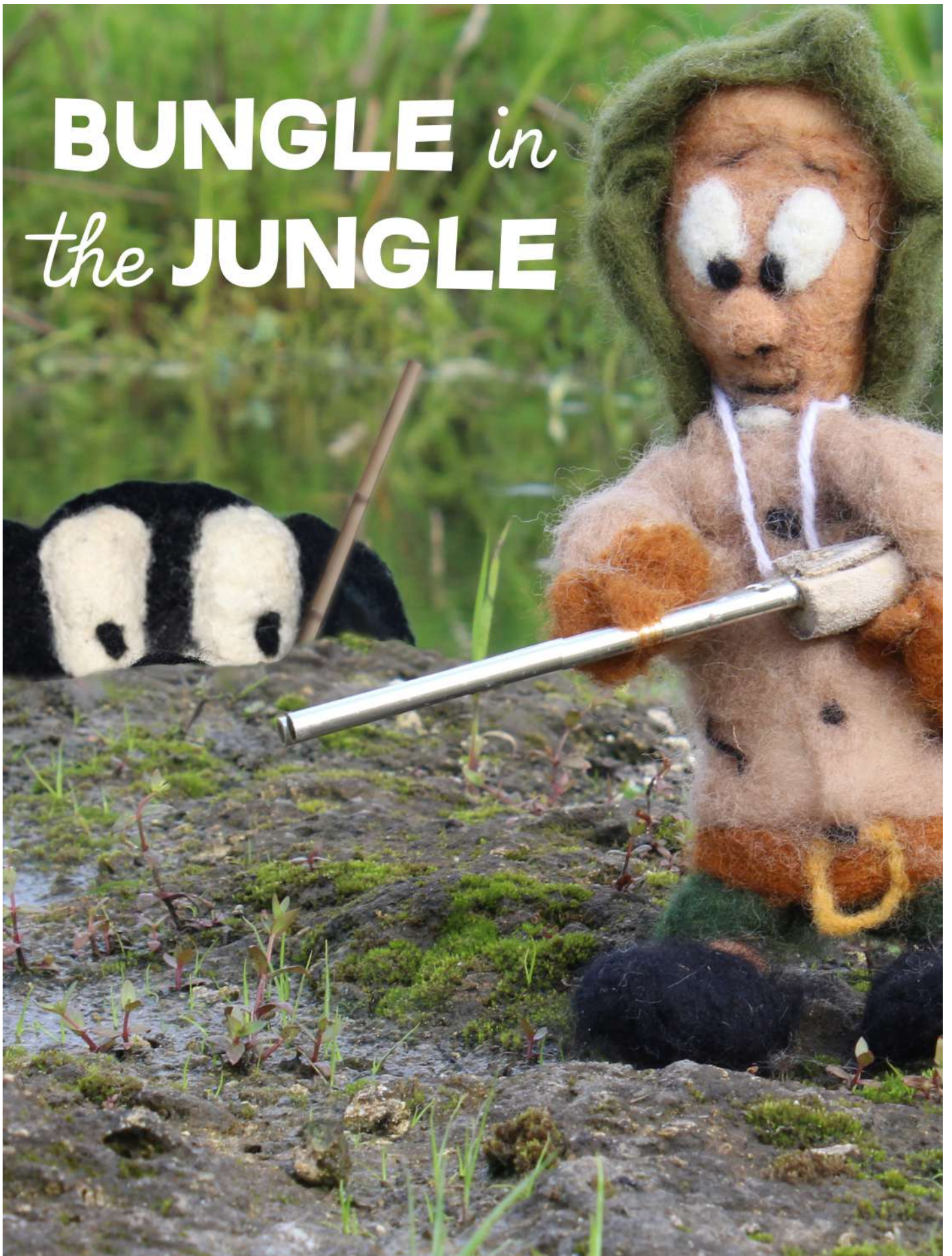
MOXIE MUTT

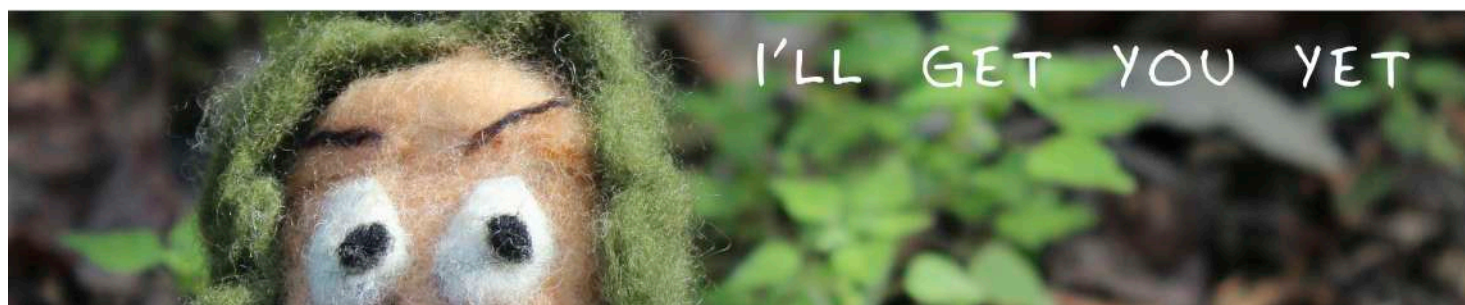


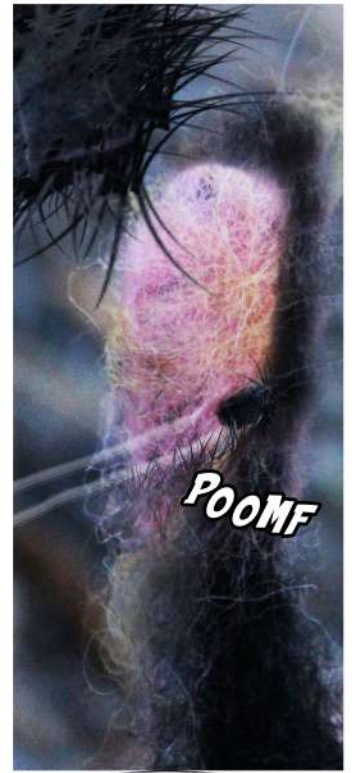
(and Caribou Krulles)

~IN~

BUNGLE *in* *the* **JUNGLE**

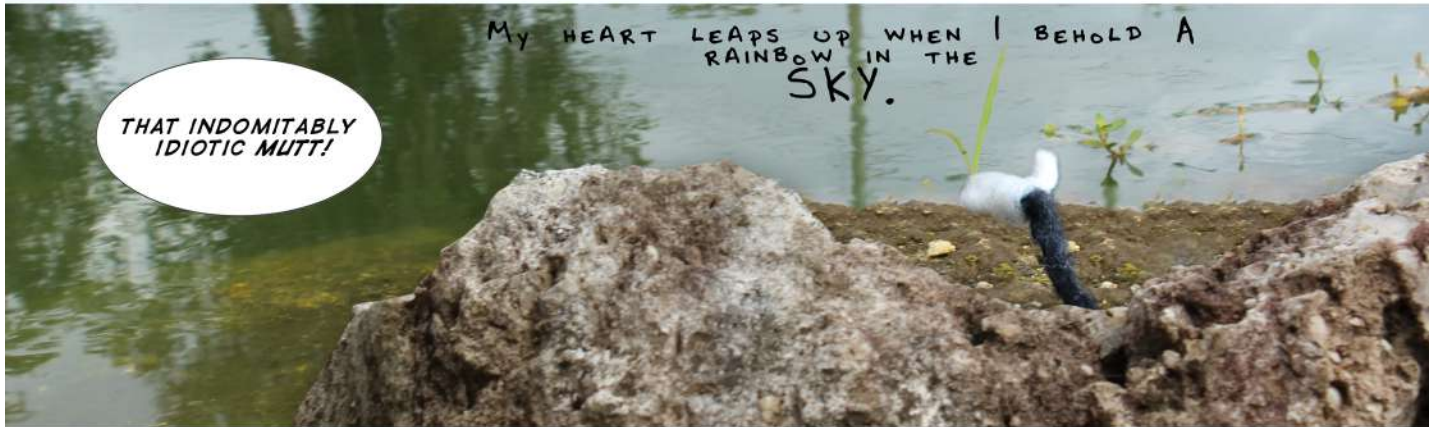








YIKES ALMIGHTY!
LOOKS LIKE ITS TIME
FOR FOXY OLD MOXIE TO
SKEE-DADDLE!







HEY THAIR,
SHWEETIE. DON-
TCHA KNOW A
ANGEL NEEDSA
HANDSIM FELLA
LIKE YASELF TO
WRAIP 'ER AWM
'ROUND SO SHE
DON'T GO FLYIN'
OFFTA HEAVEN?



I DON'T KNOW
WHERE MY EYES
ARE AND GOD
IT FEELS
SO GOOD.

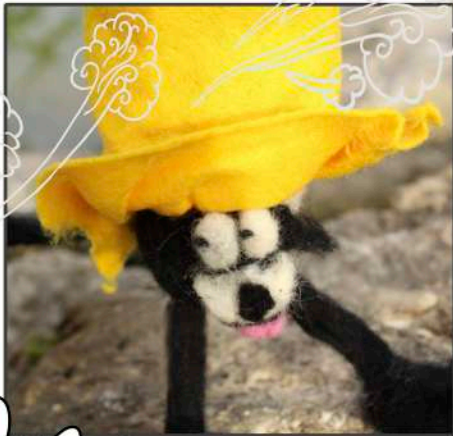
UM, OH, UH, MY...DEAR MISS,
PLEASE EXCUSE MY INTRUSION
ON YOUR SACCHARINELY SAC-
ROSANCT SAINTLY STATE OF
MODESTY, I DARESAY I, UH...



FWOOOOOSH!



EHhhh...YOU THINK I
SHOULDs...YOU THINK I
SHOULDs HAVE A DOCTOR
LOOK AT THAT CHIEF, OR
NO?



FWOOOSHHEWVFWW!!



PLEASE, NO:
NEVER.

WHADDID I SAY,
WHADDID I SAY?

HYE HYAH! I
CAN'T HELP IT,
FOLKS, I'M
TWO-FACED!









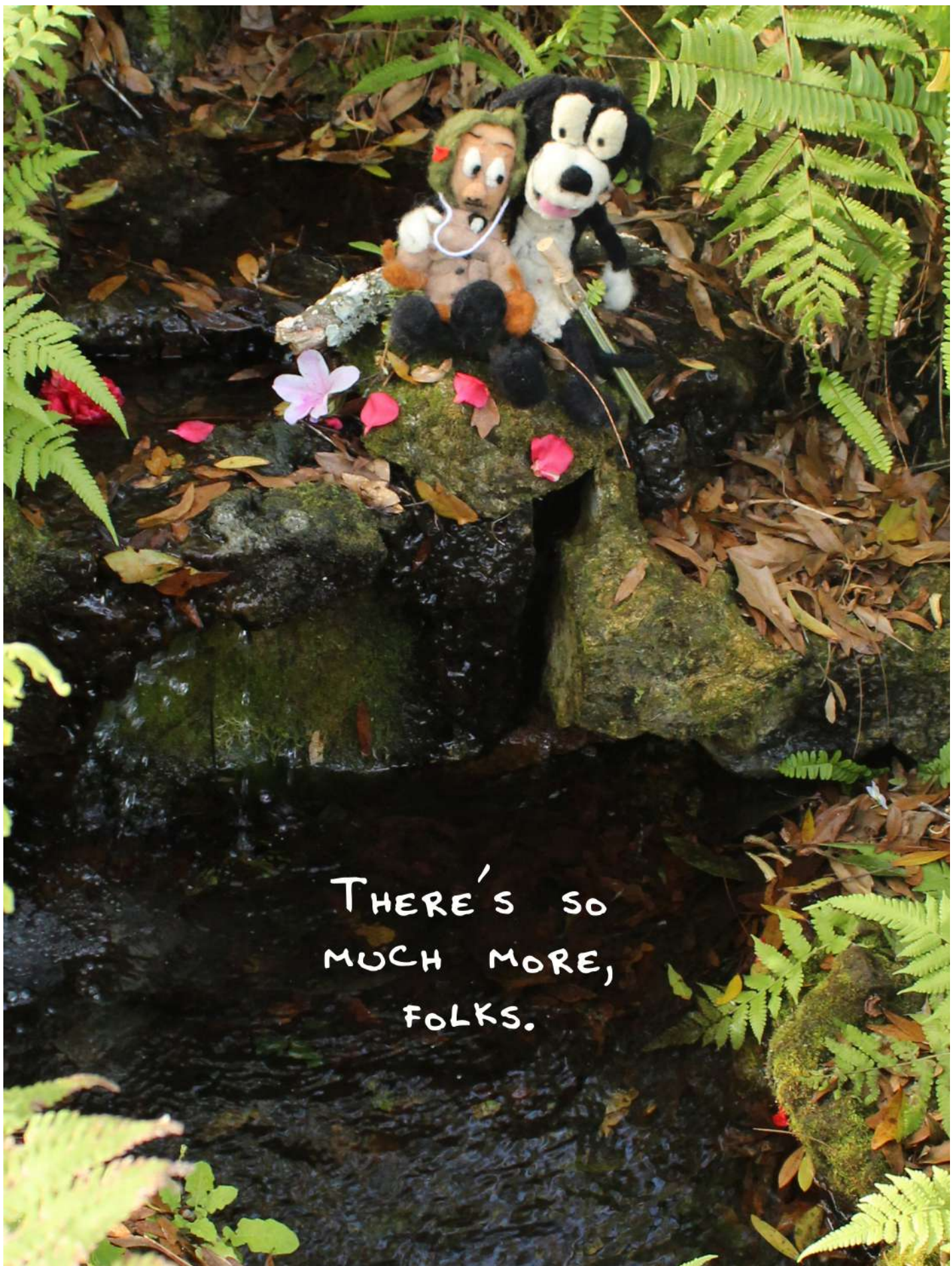






I'LL GET YOU YET.





THERE'S SO
MUCH MORE,
FOLKS.