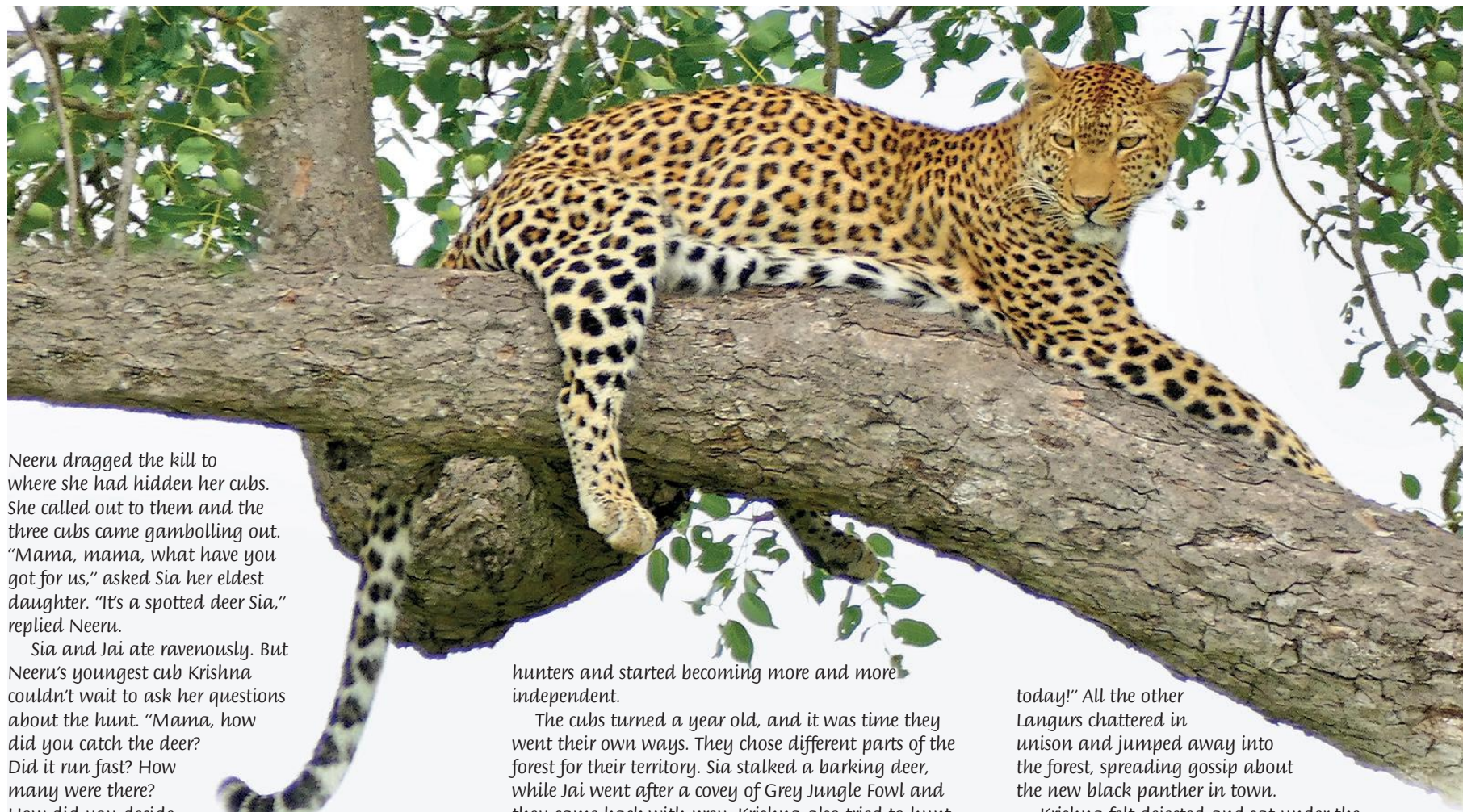


Krishna - Shadow of the Night

Neeru was worried about Krishna, who was different from her two other cubs Jai and Sia. Find out how Krishna discovered his real identity through this fascinating story...

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Neeru dragged the kill to where she had hidden her cubs. She called out to them and the three cubs came gambolling out. "Mama, mama, what have you got for us," asked Sia her eldest daughter. "It's a spotted deer Sia," replied Neeru.

Sia and Jai ate ravenously. But Neeru's youngest cub Krishna couldn't wait to ask her questions about the hunt. "Mama, how did you catch the deer? Did it run fast? How many were there? How did you decide which one to catch," he asked excitedly. "I'll answer all your questions Krishna, but why don't you eat up first," asked Neeru. Later, Neeru would explain how she hunted to Sia, Jai and Krishna. How she had stalked the Spotted Deer herd, how she had chosen the weakest of the herd to chase and how during the actual hunt she had first made sure she had got as close to the prey as possible before the rest of the herd knew she was around and started running from her. The three cubs listened attentively and couldn't wait till the day when they themselves would chase prey. But Neeru was worried about Krishna because he was very different from Sai and Jai. While Sai and Jai had a yellow-orange coat of fur with dark rosettes all over, Krishna had jet black fur on his body. She worried about his future when he would have to hunt on his own.

As the cubs grew older, they grew feistier and stronger. They started accompanying their mother on her hunting trips. Many times Neeru would catch prey but not kill it; she would bring it to her cubs alive so they could practise hunting. The cubs became expert

hunters and started becoming more and more independent.

The cubs turned a year old, and it was time they went their own ways. They chose different parts of the forest for their territory. Sia stalked a barking deer, while Jai went after a covey of Grey Jungle Fowl and they came back with prey. Krishna also tried to hunt, he stalked Spotted Deer for hours, but returned tired and empty handed in the evening.

Krishna nimbly climbed a tree. Leopards are expert tree climbers and this differentiates them from other cats. He was going to have to sleep on an empty stomach. He awoke early in the morning to the sound of chatter. A troupe of Langurs were feeding on the tree he was sleeping on. He became alert to their movements, this was an excellent opportunity to get some easy breakfast. Leopards have excellent night vision and even in the little light he could see the Langurs creating a ruckus. They were eating the flowers and buds and also throwing a lot of uneaten food on the forest floor. He remembered his mother's words about how to hunt Langurs and looked for the Langur nearest to him. Having done that he slowly got up and crept closer and closer and was about to catch the Langur when the whole troupe started chattering loudly and jumped to safety. The leader of the troupe looked at Krishna and started laughing, "Ha ha ha, you thought you could catch us! We can see your dark fur very easily leopard-y! You are not going to catch us

today!" All the other Langurs chattered in unison and jumped away into the forest, spreading gossip about the new black panther in town.

Krishna felt dejected and sat under the same tree. Dark thoughts clouded his mind which brought him further down. He felt disappointed and sad and started crying. Big tears ran down his face and he said to himself, "Oh, I am no good! I can't even hunt a Langur, they were all laughing on me. Why am I so dark! Boo hoo!" As he was wallowing in self pity, a gruff voice called out to him from the other side of the trunk against which he was leaning. "Why are you crying? Can I help," asked the voice. Krishna repeated his woes to him. "Hmm, yes, not being able to hunt can be a problem. I have only one thing to say to you, you are nocturnal, become a shadow of the night." Saying so, the voice stopped. and Krishna saw a dark form melt into the shadows. "Was it another black panther like him?" he wondered. He took the advice to heart and that night he hunted in the dark. He used the cover of darkness to stalk a Spotted Deer herd and successfully caught one. He became silent, quick and perfect in his hunting techniques. He realised that he had all the strength and ability to overcome any challenges in life. And soon the forest called him "Shadow of the Night".

Activities

Read the story carefully a couple of times before you attempt these activities

Activity 1

- 1) Draw patterns of five big cats of India: 1.Asian Lion
- 2.Bengal Tiger
- 3.Common Leopard
- 4.Clouded Leopard
- 5.Snow Leopard

Activity 2

What is your opinion about diversity of physical appearance in your class?

Activity 3

Answer these questions:

1. Why are some leopards black in colour?
2. What differentiates a leopard in the cat family?
3. Are they diurnal or nocturnal?
4. Why could Krishna hunt at night?
5. When do they start hunting on their own?

