

Tales

SAMPLE

From The

Brink



**Mother And Son:
A Bengal Tiger Story**

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Mother And Son: A Bengal Tiger Story

By Neil Harwood

In the dark depths of an Indian forest, two Bengal tigers were prowling through the night in search of prey.

The first was an adult female. Despite her considerable size, she moved silently through the undergrowth.

Close behind her was a young male. Not yet twelve months old, he was almost as big as his mother. From her he had learned the importance of stealth. Together they made no sound.

The tigress's name was Shreya. She was four years old, and had spent all of her life in this part of the forest. The younger tiger's name was Darpan.

Darpan's father, Talat, lived nearby. He had a large territory, which included that of Shreya and several other tigresses. He had other children besides Darpan, but it is not a male tiger's job to help with the raising of his young. Weeks would go by without Darpan seeing his father.

Suddenly, Shreya stopped and crouched down in the grass. Without needing to be told, Darpan did the same. Shreya had heard another creature approaching. Her orange eyes studied the vegetation for movement.

A large animal was moving in the darkness ahead of them. It was walking carefully, and would occasionally stop to smell the air before continuing. It was wary, and quiet. But not quiet enough.

Sambar, thought Shreya.

Darpan too had identified the approaching creature. The large deer were numerous in the forest, and were a common meal for the tigers.

Shreya caught sight of the sambar through the trees. Even in the darkness she could see that it was a full-grown male. Its large antlers were silhouetted against the night sky. It would not be an easy meal, but they had to eat.

Then the sambar itself paused. It sniffed the air and looked around. The animal had sensed something.

The tigers knew they were still hidden. The breeze was blowing towards them; it was unlikely that the deer could have smelled them.

Shreya wondered what the sambar had sensed.

‘What is it doing?’ whispered Darpan.

Shreya hushed him.

Then, a noise came from beyond the sambar. Another animal was approaching. The new creature moved clumsily through the forest, pushing through the undergrowth and slipping and stumbling as it came. The sambar had heard enough. It turned and fled into the trees, crashing through the foliage as it went. The drumming of its hooves faded into the night.

The tigers waited. They were unsure about this other creature, this intruder. The clumsy animal must surely be a predator like them; only a dangerous animal could afford to be so careless. But the cats were hungry. They could not turn down the chance of a meal.

Darpan shuffled up to his mother’s side. Shreya felt motherly pride in her son. No longer was he a burden to her. He was now ready to help with the hunt. Even to take the lead. One day he would be as strong as his father, whom the younger tiger idolised. But he still had to learn caution.

‘Wait,’ she said.

Both cats watched as the strange creature came into view. Neither of the tigers had ever seen anything like it before. It was like a monkey, but bigger. It stood on two legs, and had dark green skin. It didn’t have a tail. In its hands was a long black stick, which it would occasionally point into the darkness.

End of sample.
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