



# Kai & Friends





## Hello there Nature Lovers!

Welcome to the cub-hood! I'm Kai, a leopard cub and I'm so glad to meet you. Want to know more about me? Keep reading!

I have been lucky enough to be chosen as an ambassador for CapeNature Cubs Club. Pretty cool, right? I'm called Kai, which means fighter, warrior and protector of the Earth.

To get to know me, you first need to know who CapeNature is. If you love the outdoors as much as I do, you will love CapeNature! It's an amazing Entity that works hard to protect and take care of all the beautiful creatures, from tiny bugs to humongous whales and the incredible nature we have in the Western Cape Province of South Africa.

They make sure everything in nature is safe and sound, keeping the forests, mountains, rivers, and even the ocean healthy and happy. They look after 112 nature reserves and wilderness areas! Isn't that an awesome thing to do?

I bet you're wondering why they picked me to be their mascot? Well, leopards of the Cape are unique to the region and live in the rugged mountains and fynbos-covered valleys of the Cape region. We are known to be agile, clever and we adapt well to the environment.

Leopards in the Fynbos biome are smaller than those of the Savanna biome and we have much larger home ranges that we protect, but we are all African leopards (*Panthera pardus pardus*), one of eight subspecies of leopards around the world. As a cub, I am fluffy (and very cute) and have rosettes (spotted markings that looks a bit like a rose). Did you know that each leopard's rosette pattern is unique to that individual, almost like a fingerprint?

And by the way – I am different from all other leopard cubs! My left back foot is black and has no spots which makes me very special. So, if you have anything different about you, remember it makes you very unique and special too!

You might be thinking, "Hey, Kai, what do you actually do as the ambassador?" Well, my main job is to help spread the word about the importance of taking care of nature and all the creatures that live in it, especially to fellow youngsters like yourselves. We also need to make sure that future generations continue to appreciate and take care of our beautiful planet.

I'm so excited to share my adventures with you, so we can become warriors together to protect our environment while we learn about all sorts of cool subjects, like fire, water, energy, diversity and climate change. As a member of the CapeNature Cubs Club, you can do some really fun stuff, like attend one of our nature outings and get to meet me! You can also win prizes by taking part in action projects, either with your family or with your school. And you even get a discount on accommodation for your birthday!

On that high note, I have to skedaddle for a cubs' hunting lesson with mom.

Spot you soon and follow my tracks!

**Kai**








Scan the QR code  
to find out how  
you can become a  
part of Kai's circle  
of friends!




# Stories

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# All things bright and beautiful:

## KAI KISSES A FROG AND MAKES A NEW FRIEND

One day, just as the sun was rising, Kai, the leopard cub, and his brother and sister cubs came down to the river to drink.

Kai, who found his brother and sister very irritating, decided he needed some time out, so he asked his mom for permission to stay a bit longer. "Yes," replied his mom, "but make sure to return before the other animals come down to drink, and if there is any danger, mew very loudly."

Bearing that in mind, Kai ambled by the river, watching the dragonflies dance in the water, stopping every now and then as he caught a glimpse of his reflection in the river. He once

thought it was another cub, but his mom explained it was just a mirror effect.

As Kai was daydreaming, he picked up the wonderful scent of something sweet and powdery and slightly spicy. He followed his nose until he found the source of this wonderful fragrance.

On the river's edge, was a cluster of long-stemmed trumpet-like white flowers. He rubbed his nose against the waxy softness. Making sure no one was watching him (like his brother or sister who would tease him forever), he closed his eyes and kissed the flower, dizzy with the wondrous scent that floated up his nostrils.



“Oh my gosh!” came a high-pitched voice from the flower.

“A talking flower,” thought Kai, “how magical... maybe a new friend?”

As Kai opened his eyes and looked into the flower, a small head with big eyes popped out of the flower.

“Are you a frog?” asked Kai.

“Oh yes, one of the daintiest, smallest, and most beautiful of all frogs. I’m Asha, the Arum lily reed frog,” she quipped, waving her webbed foot and batting her very long eyelashes.

“Hello Asha,” said Kai, “the scent of the flower bewitched me. What a beautiful home you have!”

“Yes,” she agreed, “arum lilies are really beautiful and are often picked for weddings and funerals! Naughty, naughty! You need permission and sometimes even a permit to pick flowers or remove animals from nature! But, I have to make sure that I’m not at home when that happens. We lost our poor old uncle that way you know – the flower he was sheltering in was picked and he was never heard from again!”

“How scary!” exclaimed Kai. “What is that long yellow spike inside the flower?”

“It’s called a spadix and it’s the flower part of the arum lily that attracts pollinators like insects,” said Asha, as she rapidly stuck her tongue out to catch a small insect for breakfast.

She hopped out of the arum lily and landed next to Kai, close to the river. Kai told her about his home where he lived with his family and how it protected them from the weather and other predators.

“Oh, how different we all are!” exclaimed Asha, “but differences make for a good friendship. And you are such a handsome fellow with those bright blue eyes... I must admit, I’m a sucker for good looks.”

As Kai and Asha were chatting away, getting to know each other, a large butterfly fluttered down from the treetops. It was Bulumko, the wise forest emperor butterfly. His shiny blue wings glistened in the sunlight and Kai and Asha went silent, as he landed on a nearby reed.

“Greetings my beautiful young friends,” he said, his deep voice echoing across the river.

“Tat’omkhulu”, said both Kai and Asha, lowering their heads as a sign of respect.

“I’m pleased you have both met,” he said, “it’s important to understand our differences and the important role each one of us plays in the environment.”

“Where do you live?” asked Kai politely.

“Aah, I’m on my way home from a butterfly convention to one of the few bits of natural forest in the Western Cape, the Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve, home of the forest emperor butterfly. Did you know that it’s the only place where my species is found? So, it’s rare to see me here, as I’m a passer-by and don’t live in this area!”

“Tell us more about where you live,” said Asha, shyly lowering her eyelashes.



“First of all, let me tell you how special the Western Cape is,” said Bulumko.

“It’s home to the smallest but most diverse of the six floral kingdoms of the world. Half of the plant species in this province are endemic, meaning that they are found nowhere else in the world!”

“So, all of us animals live in a very special place! To answer your question, Asha – my forest is home to nearly 35 forest tree species, including red alder, ironwood, stinkwood, and yellowwood,” said Bulumko, fluttering his wings.

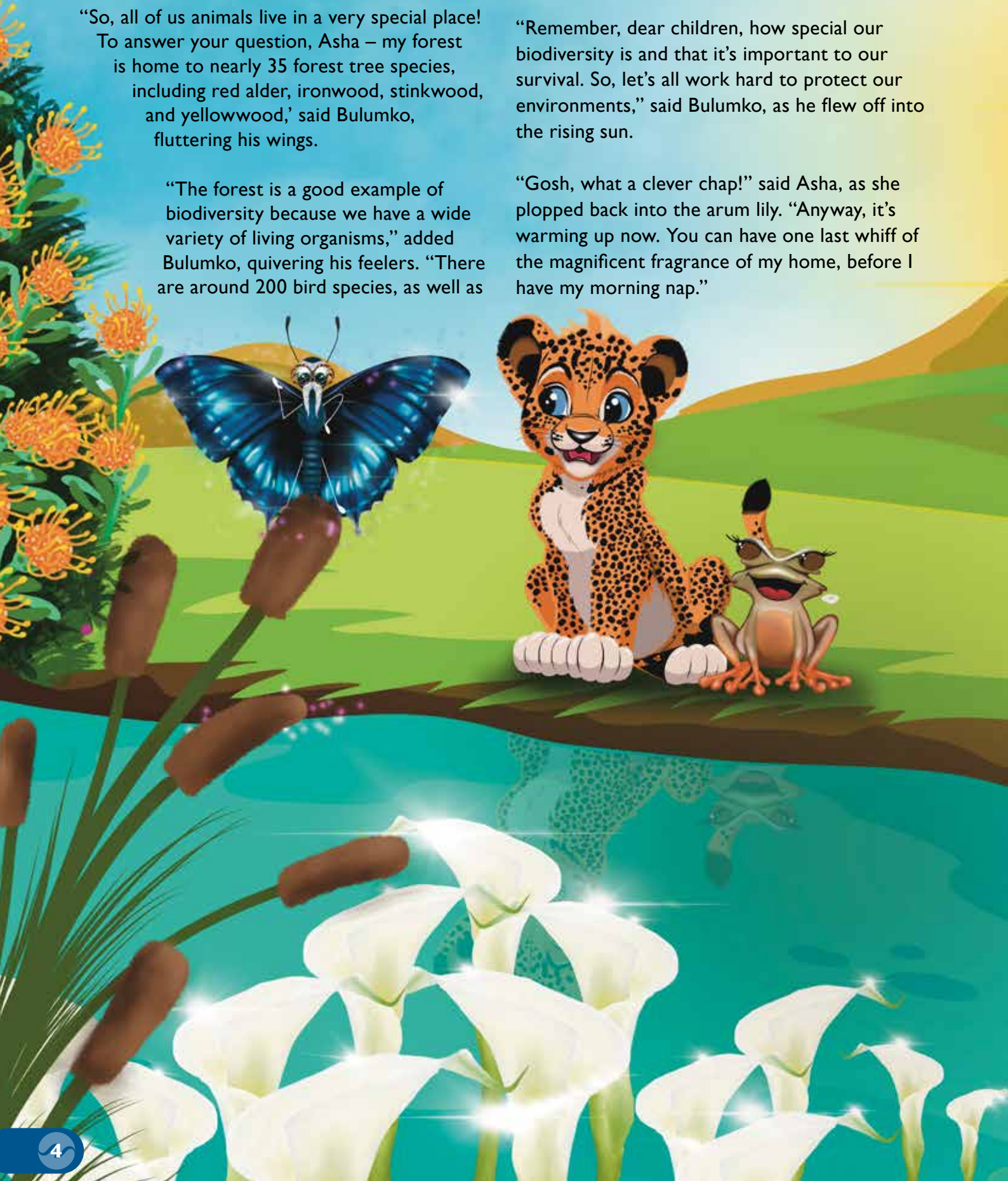
“The forest is a good example of biodiversity because we have a wide variety of living organisms,” added Bulumko, quivering his feelers. “There are around 200 bird species, as well as

bushbuck, baboons and other small mammals, not to mention the very rare ghost frog, which might interest you, Asha?”

“Well, it’s time to get going and fly home before the sun rises in the sky,” he said, hovering above Kai and Asha.

“Remember, dear children, how special our biodiversity is and that it’s important to our survival. So, let’s all work hard to protect our environments,” said Bulumko, as he flew off into the rising sun.

“Gosh, what a clever chap!” said Asha, as she plopped back into the arum lily. “Anyway, it’s warming up now. You can have one last whiff of the magnificent fragrance of my home, before I have my morning nap.”



Kai shut his eyes and inhaled the heady perfume of the arum lily before he pranced off towards home, singing, "All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful..."





## KAI AND HIS FRIEND

# help clean up the beach

One day, as Kai, the leopard cub, was lying on his back, warming his full tummy in the sun, he was thinking about the class he had attended with his mom, brother, and sister the previous day. It was about survival, the importance of helping your friends and caring for your environment. It all sounded a bit boring, far-fetched and un-adventurous! His mom had caught him dosing off in class.

“Wake up, Kai!” reprimanded his mom, “For homework, you can show us how helping a friend can help save the environment and our lives.”

Kai was not sure where to start. He decided that it would be best to talk to his clever friend, Curtis the ghost crab, who was quite brainy (as well as bossy), and always loved to come up with a good plan.





It was early morning, and Kai pranced off down the hill all the way to the small beach. He knew that Curtis enjoyed snacking on the shoreline before all the visitors arrived. He looked around but Curtis was hard to spot as he was a pale colour, similar to the sand, and he loved burrowing away, hiding from predators and the sun.

“Hey Curtis,” yelled Kai, as he spotted him racing sideways across the beach. “What’s for breakfast?”

“Goodness, Kai, you nearly scared the shell off me”, grumbled Curtis. “Don’t practice your stalking techniques on me again! I’m having a delicious white mussel and sea lettuce sandwich. I couldn’t find any turtle eggs this morning.”

“Well, I’ve told you not to eat turtle eggs! They are very rare, although I know they’re a delicacy for you! Sorry I scared you, Curtis,” said Kai, as he put his head on his paws, “but I’m in trouble and need your help.”

Kai shared his story with Curtis, who scratched his shell with one pincer and completed a 360 degree swivel with his beady eyes that stood out on stalks.

“Well,” said Curtis, “there is a beach clean-up later during the day, which is part of a big campaign to keep our rivers, oceans, and beaches clean. See the posters in the parking lot that say

‘Don’t Be Trashy’. Not that you can read yet! See those clear plastic bags over there? They are for the beach clean-up.”

“Trashy as in rubbish?” asked Kai, “but how are we going to help?”

“Every time there is a beach clean-up, I like to play my part before it starts. I’m happy that I have a friend to share the load and fun with!” exclaimed Curtis.

“But this doesn’t sound like much fun to me? What’s in it for us?” asked Kai.

“If our environment is clean and there is no pollution, we all have safe, good quality water to swim in and drink,” explained Curtis. “And everything is connected; if there is pollution in the rivers where you live, it will have a ripple effect on the ocean because the pollution moves with the flowing freshwater, all the way from high up in the mountains through streams, rivers, and estuaries, and eventually lands up in the ocean with me.”

“Wow”, said Kai, “so if you pollute a river you will eventually be polluting the ocean?”

“Yes, well done, you’ve got it,” nodded Curtis.

“Anyway, let’s get started,” shouted Curtis. “And this is what we’ll do... you pick up all the big pieces of glass, paper, and plastic, and put it

in piles over here. I will collect all the tiny items, like the bottle caps, bits of glass, and plastic, and put it in separate piles so that it can be recycled later.”

“And the winner will be the one who collects the most number of items,” said Curtis, knowing that Kai was very competitive and loved a challenge.

Off raced Kai, tearing down the beach, collecting the bigger pieces of pollution in his jaws and dumping them in a pile.

Meanwhile, Curtis raced crabwise, proud of his skills as one of the fastest crabs due to his flat body and long legs, grabbing the small items with his pincers and complaining as he went along at the amount of pollution on the beach. He knew that his friends living in the ocean could get entangled in this plastic, or even worse, they could eat it thinking it was food.





“Does no one realise the damage these plastic bags do to the sea life,” he muttered, “...and these sharp pieces of glass and cigarette butts that can harm the sea and land creatures, and pollute the water... how inconsiderate and dumb!”

“I’m the winner! I’m the winner!” yelled Kai, as he pounced up to Curtis, stopping suddenly and showering him with sand.

Two eyes emerged, as Curtis dug his way out of the sand and went to the piles of collected items on the beach.

“Well done, Kai,” congratulated Curtis, “you are indeed the winner! As first prize, you can rush up

that sand-dune and roll down it as many times as you want. But you better be gone before all the people arrive. They won’t know who has done all this good work of collecting and sorting all the pollution on the beach. I can’t wait to see the expressions on their faces when they see this.”

Kai rushed off, eager for his reward and keen to get home to share his beach cleaning experience with his mom and siblings.

Curtis, the crab, continued scouting for his breakfast, proudly repeating to himself, “I might be small, but I am very important! By burrowing and scavenging in this inter-tidal area, I contribute to its health and diversity.”

## KAI AND HIS FRIENDS

# escape a wildfire

One day, early in the morning before sunrise, Kai, the leopard cub, was lounging around with his sister and brother cubs in their den of thick bushes. He was bored and irritated as his brother and sister were stalking and then pouncing on his tail. They were playing their favourite game of 'catch-Kai's tail-and-bite it'.

The cubs' mother had just returned from an evening hunt and was tired and about to fall asleep.

"Mom, can I go and play with my friends?" asked Kai. "Yes, Kai, but please be back at sunrise, and don't go far," cautioned his mom.

Kai flicked his tail at his siblings and bounded off in the direction of the nearby small fynbos hill, meowing and grunting as he went along to let his friends know that he was on his way for their favourite game of hide-and-seek.

As he reached a small tree, he leapt up to the first branch and waited for his friends to arrive. He saw two ears emerge from a nearby hole, one flopping down in a familiar way that he recognised.

"Hey Monty, come out! It's just me. Let's have a game of hide-and-seek!", he shouted. Monty, the riverine rabbit, jumped up and disappeared again down the hole.

"Gosh, yyyyy-ou gave me such a frrrrrr-ight," stuttered Monty as he emerged from his hole and hopped over to Kai, who was stalking and pouncing on a small stick at the base of the tree.

They heard scurrying through the nearby bushes and spotted stripy quills coming towards them. It was their good friend, Poki, the Cape porcupine, who had been foraging for roots and bulbs with his family.

"Halleo, Halleo," grunted Poki as he chewed a bit of bark from the tree. "Let's get to it, chaps, and start the game. It's my turn to go first. Now turn around, Kai and Monty. No peeping allowed! Count to ten - if you remember how - and then you can come and find me."

“One, two, three, four, six, seven...,” shouted Kai.

‘Nonsense, Kai, it’s one, ttt-two, three, ffff-four, five, six...,’ corrected Monty.

“Alright, whatever,” replied Kai, “we’re coming to get you, Poki!”

As they were exploring every nook and cranny looking for Poki, the sun peaked over the eastern horizon, and they felt a strong wind stir the fynbos. Monty looked up and saw dark clouds of smoke billowing in the distance. Monty and Kai felt the wind blow hot against their fur as a bitter burning smell hit their nostrils.

“Wh-wh-what’s happening?” Monty asked, his long ears twitching with worry.

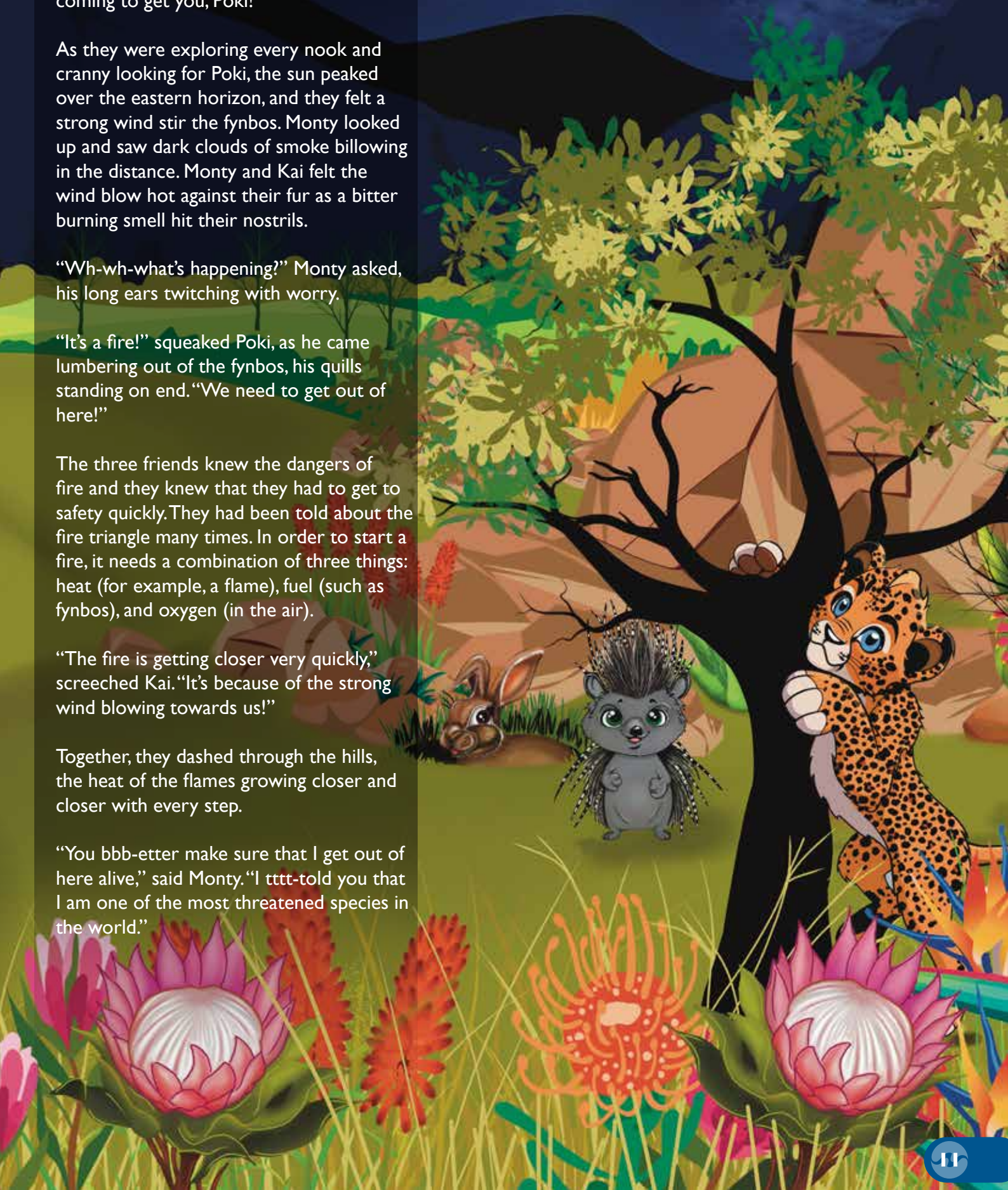
“It’s a fire!” squeaked Poki, as he came lumbering out of the fynbos, his quills standing on end. “We need to get out of here!”

The three friends knew the dangers of fire and they knew that they had to get to safety quickly. They had been told about the fire triangle many times. In order to start a fire, it needs a combination of three things: heat (for example, a flame), fuel (such as fynbos), and oxygen (in the air).

“The fire is getting closer very quickly,” screeched Kai. “It’s because of the strong wind blowing towards us!”

Together, they dashed through the hills, the heat of the flames growing closer and closer with every step.

“You bbb-etter make sure that I get out of here alive,” said Monty. “I tttt-told you that I am one of the most threatened species in the world.”



“And I’m the largest porcupine and rodent in Africa,” quipped Poki.

“Tell that to my mom,” yelled Kai, “...and she might eat you alive if we don’t all make it!”

But as they ran, Kai suddenly yelped in pain and stumbled. He had stepped on some burning cinders that the wind had blown into their path.

“My paw! It’s burning!” Kai cried, cradling his injured paw.

Monty and Poki rushed to Kai’s side, their hearts pounding with fear. “W-w- we have to keep moving, Kai,” Monty urged, his nose twitching with urgency.

“It hurts,” Kai whimpered, tears welling up in his blue eyes. “I can’t run.” Poki pondered for a moment, then said, “Old chap, we’ll help you! We’ll all stick together and we won’t leave anyone behind.”

Monty and Poki came up with a quick plan. Monty wrapped Kai’s injured paw in a leaf and hopped under it, helping him to walk, while Poki, who moved surprisingly fast, used his quills to clear a path through the thick underbrush. They moved slowly but steadily, each friend supporting the other.

As the fire roared closer, Poki was tiring, and Monty was sobbing from fear, while bravely hopping along, supporting Kai’s injured paw. Kai was trying to be brave and live up to the meaning of his name: fighter, warrior, and protector of the earth.

As they missioned on, they heard overhead the high-pitched warning call of their friend, Siya, the orange-breasted sunbird.

“Eet-eet eet-eet dzeeu dueeu,” he warbled, warning all his friends of the danger of the fire, and bidding them to follow him. Siya kept looping back, encouraging Kai and his friends to hurry up and stay close behind him.



With their eyes watering from the heat and soot, they finally reached a clearing. There was a sand road ahead of them, next to a burnt area of fynbos.

“Stay here, it’s safe as there is no fuel for the fire to burn,” shouted Siya, as he flew off to warn and guide the other animals.

“W-w-we made it!” Monty exclaimed with relief.

Kai’s paw throbbed, but he nodded bravely. “We need to help Siya warn other animals about the fire. We can’t let anyone else get hurt,” he said, determination shining in his eyes.

The three friends gathered their strength and began calling out to the other animals across the landscape, warning them of the approaching wildfire. The air echoed with their cries, and soon, other creatures joined in the effort to spread the word to move to a place of safety. As the fire raged through the fynbos, everyone huddled together on the sand road, comforting one another in the face of the danger.

After what felt like an eternity, the crackling of the flames grew faint, and the air cleared of smoke. The once vibrant green hills were charred and blackened, but the animals were safe.

Kai, Monty, and Poki looked around at the devastation, and all of their hearts ached for home. “The fire may be gone, but the damage it caused will take time to heal,” said Poki solemnly.

Monty nodded in agreement, his one ear flopping down. “W-w-we must remember today and the dangers of fire. We have to be c-c-careful and work together to stay safe.”

Kai thanked his friends for rescuing him. They all walked slowly home, thinking about how lucky they were to escape the wildfire. They had a great adventure to share with their families. For the first time they had experienced a real wildfire. They had learnt some valuable lessons about its dangers, as well as the strength of friendship.



# and has a narrow escape with Curtis

One day, Kai, the adventurous leopard cub was exploring the rocky beach close to Stony Point in Betty's Bay. He was in the middle of a hide-and-seek game with his special friend, Curtis, the ghost crab, who was scuttling along the beach, clicking his pincers and shouting "Come and find me!"

As Kai leapt off a large boulder to look for Curtis, he stopped dead still in his tracks and thought he was perhaps dreaming. There, swimming up to and jumping onto the outcrop of rocks, was a group of waddling birds with black and white feathers.

"Curtis! Help! We're being invaded by a navy of the oddest creatures. They look like birds with stiff wings, but they don't seem to be able to fly," he said, in a low voice so that the birds couldn't hear him.

"They're African Penguins," muttered Curtis, "they won't harm you, but I'm hiding in the sand, as they love to snack on crabs."

Kai watched in awe as the penguins dived into the sea and swam with such grace and ease through the water.



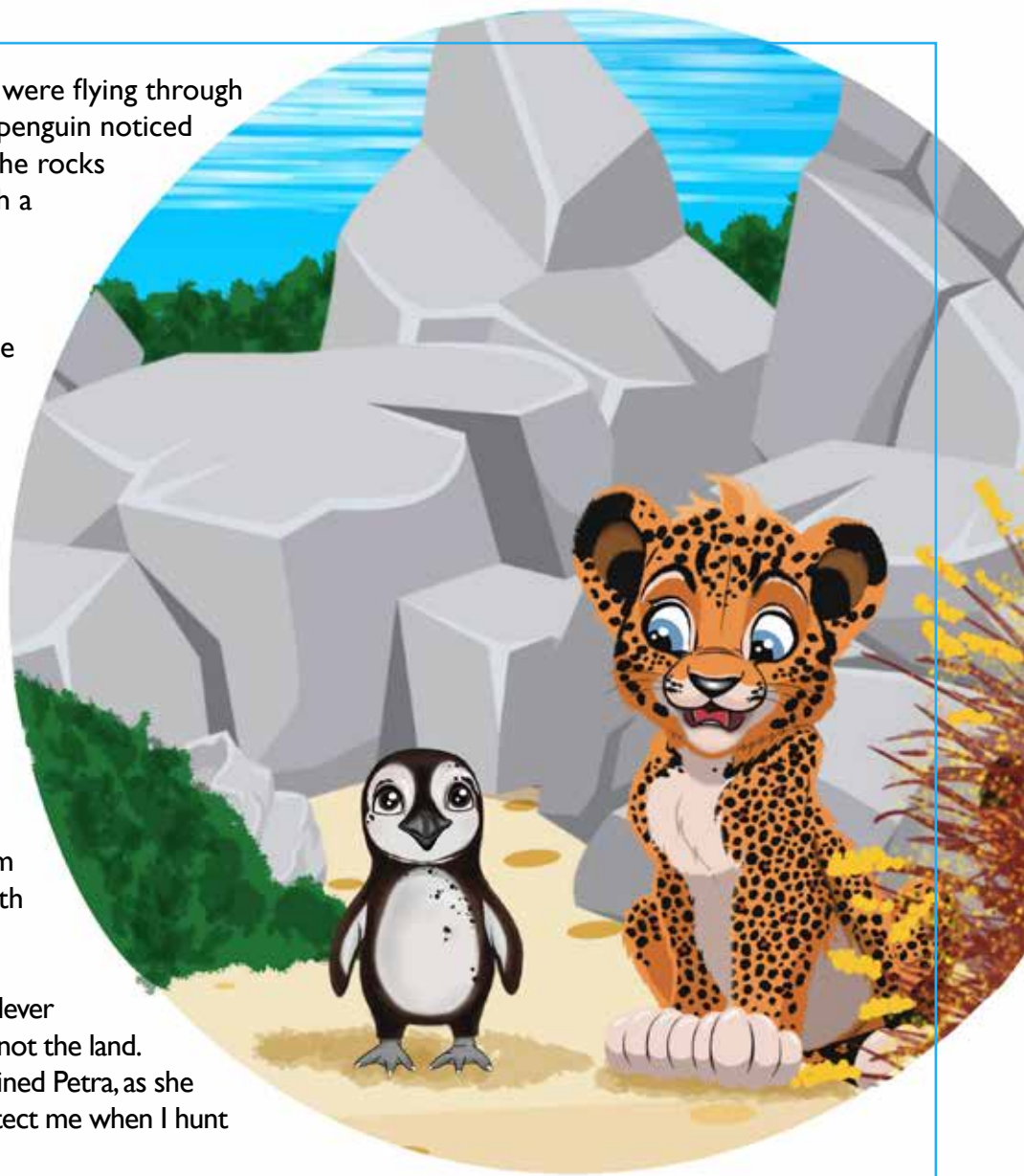


They actually looked like they were flying through the water. Suddenly, a smaller penguin noticed him and came waddling over the rocks towards him, greeting him with a friendly trill and honk.

“Hello, there, young leopard cub,” she brayed. “I’m Petra, the African Penguin. We’ve just returned from a successful foraging trip for sardines and a few anchovies, although they seem much harder to catch these days! What’s your name?”

“Hello Petra. I’m Kai, and it’s the first time I’ve met a penguin. Wow, I love your black and white colouring, it’s so cool. When I grow up, I will have real rosettes like my mom and will be able to blend in with the fynbos,” he said.

“Well, like you, I also have very clever camouflage, but for the sea, and not the land. It’s called countershading,” explained Petra, as she waddled over to Kai. “It’s to protect me when I hunt for fish!”



“Have a look – my white tummy protects me from predators like sharks and Cape fur seals, who can’t see me if they look upwards, and my dark back protects me when predators are looking down into the dark water,” she said, pointing to her back with her flipper.

“Gosh, how clever! Do you know that my blue eyes will turn green when I’m older?” responded Kai, as he pointed to his one eye with his paw. “Why do you have pink patches above your eyes? Are you a girl?”

“Haw! Haw!” brayed Petra, “Yes, I am a girl, and you can tell because I’m smaller than the boy penguins, and have a smaller beak. But the pink marking above my eyes are glands, which are used for thermo-regulation...”





“Thermo-what?” asked Kai.

“Regulation,” she replied. “The hotter we get, the more blood is sent to these glands so that it can be cooled by the air, which makes them pinker. It helps cool us on very hot days. But I must admit, I think they’re very pretty!”

“That’s interesting,” said Kai, starting to feel a bit bored with the overload of information. He was ready for some action.

“Want to play catches-on-the rocks?” shouted Kai, above the sound of the waves. The next thing, Petra was gone. Kai looked around but couldn’t find her.

He dashed from rock to rock, looking around for his new friend.

All of a sudden, he saw Petra emerging from the sea and chasing something on the beach with a fast rolling waddle. Kai bounded after Petra, realising that she was after his friend Curtis, who was side-sprinting for his life to escape.

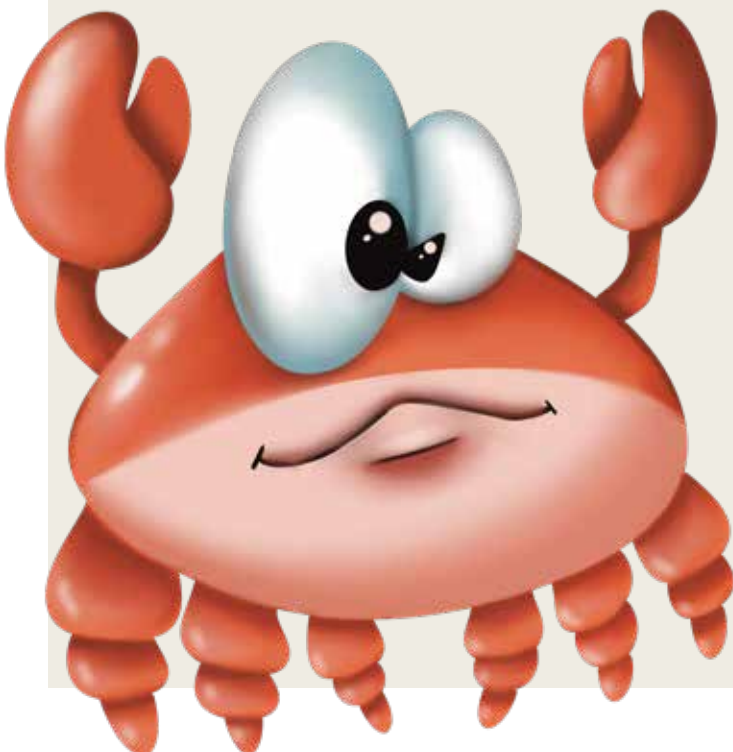
Kai pounced on Petra, pinning her to the sand, while he growled, "Petra, Curtis the ghost crab is one of my best friends, so you can't eat him."

Curtis meanwhile burrowed into the sand, muttering, "I wish these silly birds would pick on someone their own size and not be such bullies. I'm hardly a snack!".

Kai let Petra go, while she dusted off her feathers and stamped her webbed black and grey feet in the sand.

"Kai, I apologise but do be careful! I have just finished moulting and have all these lovely new feathers, which I don't want to ruffle too much! And don't pounce on me again, after all, I am critically endangered, so do take more care! That's why we live at the Betty's Bay colony, so we are protected."

Curtis slowly protruded his two eyes from the sand, grumbling, "Well, promise both Kai and I that you won't attack me ever again and then we can all be friends."



You can even help us clean the beach and protect our habitat, so that there is plenty of food for all of us!"

The penguins on the rocks were braying and honking for Petra to join them, because they were returning to the sea. She waved goodbye with her flipper to her new friends, Kai and Curtis, who were tearing down the beach, continuing their game of hide-and-seek.

## KAI HELPS RESCUE POKI FROM A NASTY SNARE


# with the help of a friend

One day, in Autumn, after the first rains in the Cape Renosterveld, Kai, the leopard cub, was playing near a big puddle of water. He had completed a tough hunting lesson with his mom. Kai and his brother and sister cubs were learning the art of 'stealth', which means lying very still in the grass – pretending you are not there - and then mock charging full speed. He was exhausted and lay down in the grass while his family returned to the den for a rest and breakfast.

As he started to doze off, dreaming of a milky meaty snack while flicking the flies away with his tail, an urgent but familiar voice called out, "Help me, help me! I'm trapped!"

"Am I dreaming?" thought Kai. But the voice persisted, "Help, help, I can't move!" Kai's stood on his forepaws and looked around. There, tangled in a wire snare, was his friend Poki, the Cape porcupine, with his quills sticking through the wire mesh.





“Goodness, Poki, you have walked into a snare! I’ll try and rescue you! It’ll be hard with all those quills, but don’t worry,” assured Kai.

As Kai tried to free Poki from the snare, he heard a soft voice behind him. It was Gugu, the geometric tortoise.

“I could help,” said Gugu, who was very shy and kept poking her head in and out of her shell.

“Goodness”, thought Kai, “Gugu is one of the smallest tortoises in the world. She’s no bigger than my paw! Not sure if she’ll be much help.”

“Sure, Gugs,” said Kai. “Thanks for offering to help.” Kai and Gugu worked slowly to untangle the wire snare. But Poki’s quills and spines were sticking out everywhere, so it was very hard to get him out.

“Now that I’ve calmed down, chaps,” said Poki, “Let me apply my intelligence to the problem. You are not going to get me through the wire mesh due to my armour of quills, but I am a superior digger, so let’s see what I can do. Come on chaps, use your paws or whatever and help dig me out of this horrid trap.”



“Sure, Poki, you are clever,” said Gugu, “...but please stop throwing sand in my eyes and then I’ll help you dig a tunnel. Try and remember to be careful, as I am the most threatened tortoise species in the world.”

“Fine time to remind us,” muttered Poki under this breath.

Kai started digging a tunnel with his paws and watched Gugu’s bright yellow starred shell disappear into the sand.

“This is not really what my paws are used to, but I’ll give it my best shot,” said Kai to himself.

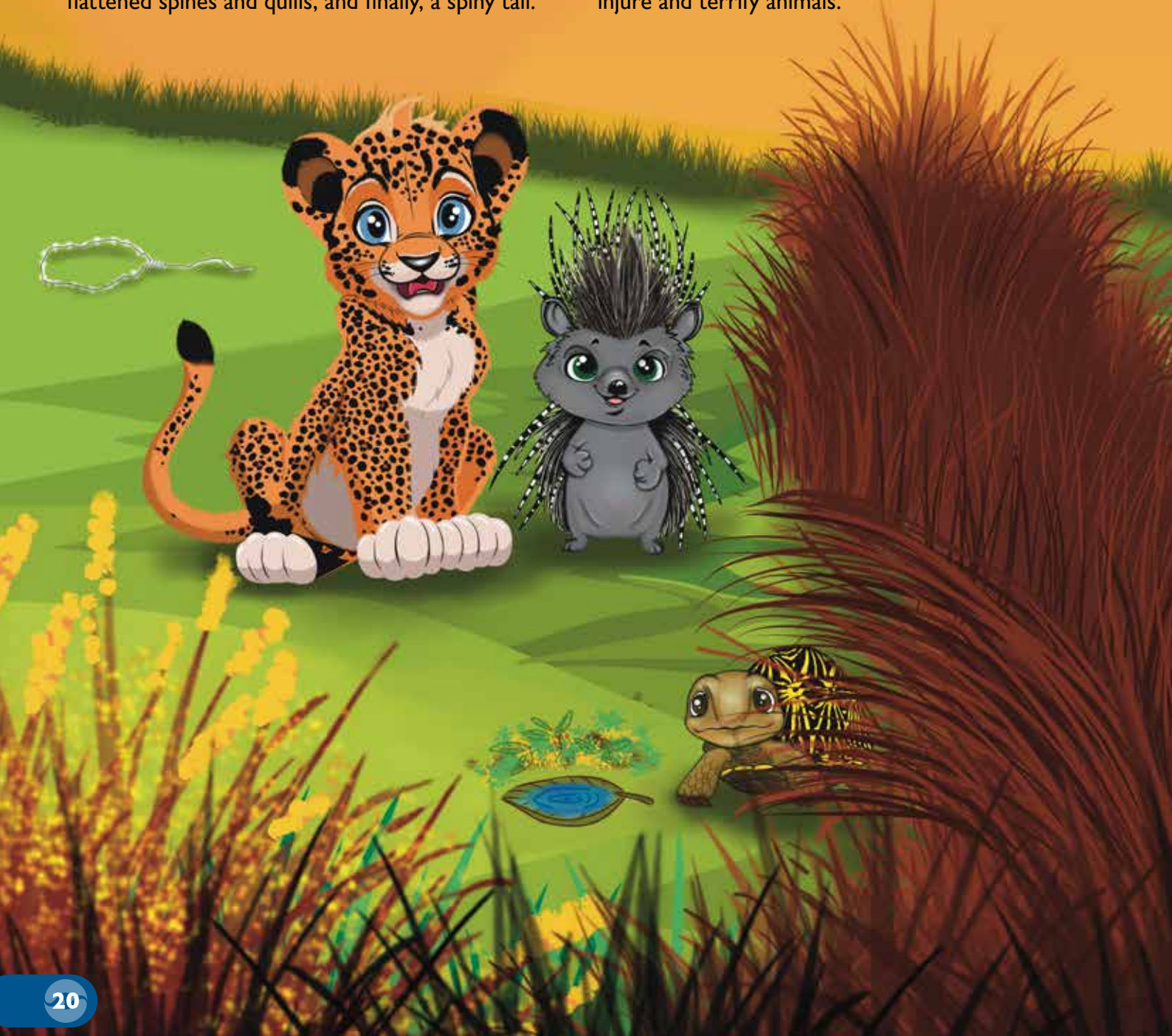
Suddenly, Gugu reversed out of the hole, followed by whiskery hairs, a greyish-brown bristled face, flattened spines and quills, and finally, a spiny tail.

“Well done, team,” said Poki, rattling his spines and dusting himself off as he freed himself from the trap. “Thanks so much for your sterling effort!”

“Poki, I noticed that you left some spines in the snare,” observed Gugu. “Yes,” replied Poki, “when I was first trapped, I released some spines to protect myself, as I wasn’t sure what was happening. But don’t worry, my spines are like hair - they will grow again.”

“That’s a relief,” laughed Kai, “you wouldn’t be the same without your spines, Poki, and you wouldn’t be able to protect yourself.”

“Quite right old chap! I am starving,” said Poki, scouting around for some bulbs and roots. “My mom warned me about animal snares and traps. She said they are illegal and not allowed because they injure and terrify animals.”



“It makes my very cross,” added Gugu indignantly. “Imagine if you hadn’t escaped, Poki. Maybe you would land up as porcupine soup!”

“Haha,” replied Poki, “That’s not even funny! My dad said that there are so many different animals that are trapped every day in snares. But there are some kind humans who report these illegal activities and a few animals are rescued.”

“I wish more humans would report these horrible snares. We need to be very careful not to walk into another one! Imagine one of my paws caught in these traps?”, said Kai, shuddering and looking at his paw.





**KAI ENJOYS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN NATURE**

# with his friend, Siya

One day, as Kai was darting through the bushes, he heard the melodious call of his dear friend, Siya, the Orange-Breasted Sunbird. Siya was flitting from flower to flower, his vibrant feathers shimmering in the sunlight. They had been friends since they were both very young and shared a special bond that was built on trust and kindness.

“Morning, Kai!” trilled Siya. “I have something wonderful to show you today.”

Intrigued, Kai bounded over to where Siya was perched on a protea flower. “What is it, Siya? What’s so special today?”

Siya chirped happily, “Today, I want to show you the beautiful display of fynbos flowers that have burst into a vibrant display after our winter rains in the Western Cape, signalling the arrival of spring. It’s a special preview treat for you my friend, before all the visitors arrive.”





Kai's blue eyes sparkled with excitement. "I love that idea, Siya! I've never seen the flowers after the rains. My mom says the colours are beautiful, so I can't wait. But can we play our favourite game of follow-the-leader, as I have to practice my listening skills, which are important for hunting."

"Great idea!", chattered Siya, "while you practice your hunting skills, I'll practice my musical courtship displays, which I will need when I'm grown up to attract a wife! Let's go!"

Siya performed an elaborate vocal and visual acrobatic display, creating a symphony of sounds and fluttering movements, showing off his brilliant plumage of orange, green, and blue feathers that shimmered in the sunlight. Kai closed his eyes and followed the sweet, melodious bird songs that filled the air with cheerful tunes.

"Be careful not to lead me over the cliff edge or across a road," interrupted Kai.

"Don't worry," chirped Siya, "friendship is all about trust, so relax, listen and follow!"

Kai followed his friend blindly, listening to his song and giggling as he felt the grass tickle his underbelly. "This is fun! Are we nearly there?" asked Kai, impatient as usual.

"You can stop now, Kai. We have arrived," trilled Siya, "but don't open your eyes yet! Just breathe deeply."

Kai followed his friend's instructions and inhaled deeply. The air was filled with an aromatic scent, a sweet and earthy fragrance.

"You can open your eyes now! Can you smell the fynbos?"

Kai opened his eyes, feeling rather heady from the perfume. The landscape was filled with beautiful colours.

Siya circled above Kai telling him about the world of fynbos that is famous for its diversity, the unusual composition of its plant species, many of which are unique to the area, and the exquisite beauty of many of its wildflowers.



“Those red and pink flowers are called Ericas, and they are among the first to bloom after the rains,” he said, pointing with his long and delicately curved bill.

“Next up is the Babiana species with a striking range of purple, blue and white flowers,” added Siya, darting from flower to flower with remarkable precision.

“And what are these?” asked Kai, prancing excitedly around bushes with cream flowers.

“Aah, those are one of the *Metalasia* species,” replied Siya, swooping down and snipping off a small flower to show Kai.

“We are so lucky to live in this beautiful place,” said Siya, hovering above Kai. “It’s so good for the soul to spend time in nature. Look how happy we both are!”

Kai laughed, enjoying the wonderful new experience with his friend, basking in the warmth of their friendship, and the beauty of nature.

“Eet-eet eet-eet dzeeu dueeu,” Siya warbled, swooping down to draw Kai’s attention to vivid shades of red, purple, and yellow flowers. “These are the early-blooming orchid species that add a touch of exotic beauty to the fynbos floral kingdom.”

Siya landed on a Protea flower, the light catching the vivid orange of his chest. “You are a very handsome bird,” said Kai, looking up at Siya, “I love your elongated tail feathers that make you so graceful, much like a leopard.”

“Thanks for your compliment and kindness, Kai,” trilled Siya, “but more important than my good looks, is the role that I play in the ecosystem. My job is to pollinate the many fynbos plants on which I feed, and in return I get a delicious meal of nectar.”

“Gosh, what a wonderful and happy job you have,” said Kai, his tummy rumbling, “and you get to eat at the same time!”

“Yes, am I not a lucky bird? It’s time to go home – you must be hungry! So let’s play follow-the-leader again. We’ll come back in a few weeks’ time, and you will see some new later-blooming fynbos species. Now close your eyes...”

Kai followed his friend’s beautiful bird song, feeling content and happy, repeating quietly to himself, “fynbos, Ericas, happiness, nectar, fynbos, Ericas, happiness nectar... breakfast time...”



