



THE  
MIDNIGHT  
PANTHER

Poonam Mistry



**This book belongs to:**

.....

.....







For everyone who was  
ever made to feel different.



A TEMPLAR BOOK

This edition published in the UK in 2024 by Templar Books.  
First published in the UK in 2022 by Templar Books,  
an imprint of Bonnier Books UK  
4th Floor, Victoria House,  
Bloomsbury Square, London WC1B 4DA  
Owned by Bonnier Books  
Sveavägen 56, Stockholm, Sweden  
[www.bonnierbooks.co.uk](http://www.bonnierbooks.co.uk)

Text and illustration copyright © 2022 by Poonam Mistry  
Design copyright © 2022 by Templar Books

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

All rights reserved

ISBN 978-1-78741-893-6

Edited by Alison Ritchie  
Designed by Genevieve Webster  
Production by Ché Creasey  
Printed in China



# THE MIDNIGHT PANTHER

Poonam Mistry



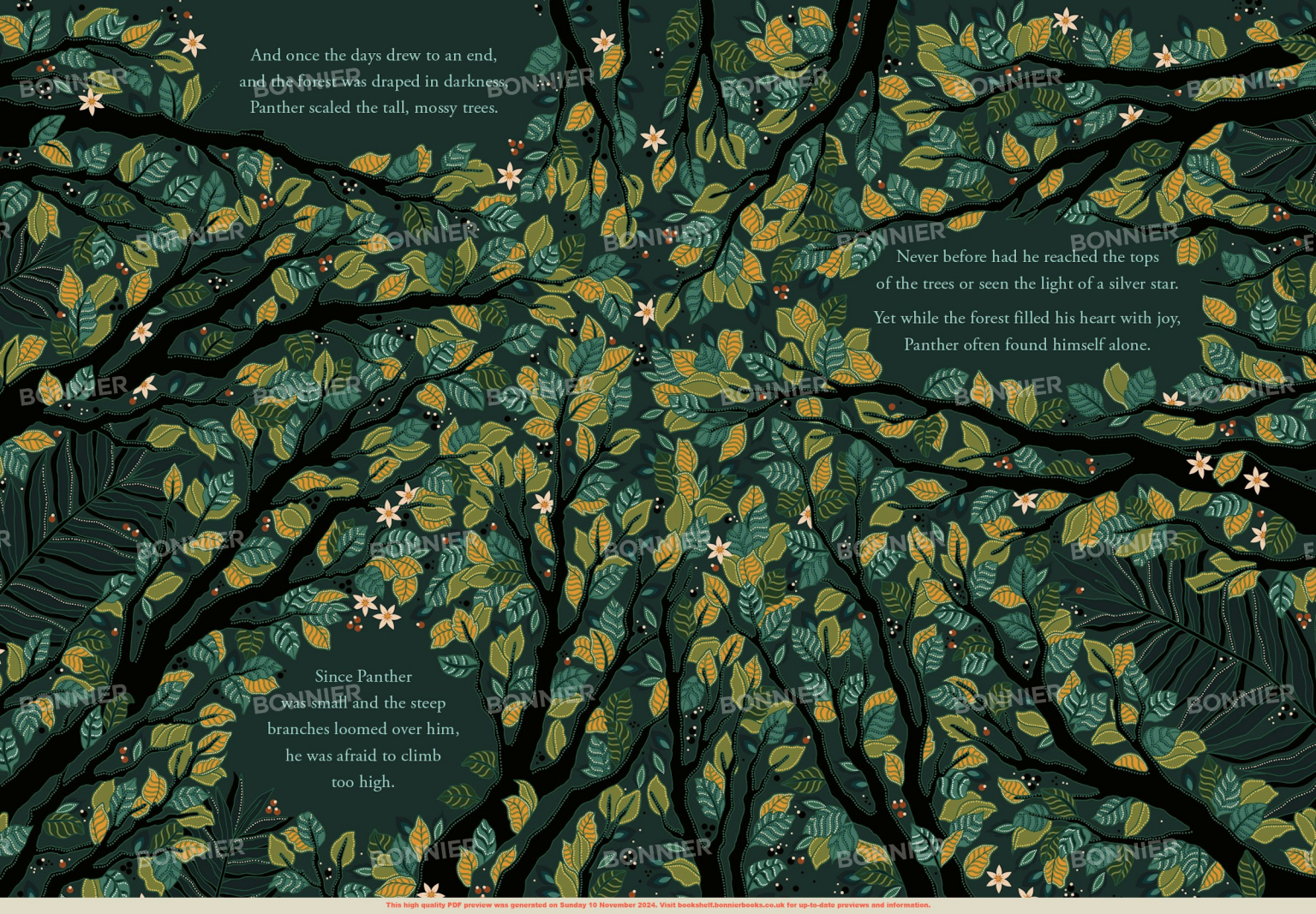




When the morning sun  
seeped through the leaves,  
Panther trailed after  
butterflies and  
insects . . .



. . . and frolicked in the clear waters  
of the stream.



And once the days drew to an end,  
and the forest was draped in darkness,  
Panther scaled the tall, mossy trees.

Never before had he reached the tops  
of the trees or seen the light of a silver star.  
Yet while the forest filled his heart with joy,  
Panther often found himself alone.

Since Panther  
was small and the steep  
branches loomed over him,  
he was afraid to climb  
too high.

He was different to the other cats,  
and they did not like it.



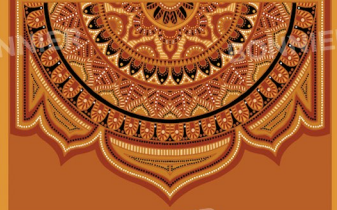
“My stripes are bold  
and fearless,” said Tiger.



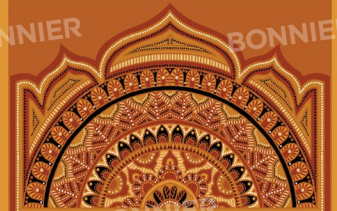
“My golden mane blazes  
as bright as the sun,” said Lion.



“My spots dazzle all  
that see them,” said Leopard.



Each day they taunted  
him and over time  
Panther grew a little less  
brave, until one day  
he could take no more.  
And so he set off,  
hoping to change  
his fortune.









Panther crept over and under the tangled vines and weeds.  
Soon he reached a dense cluster of trees.

Up in their branches was a rainbow as far as the eye could see.



Across the earth  
lay feathers of all  
shapes and sizes.  
Panther placed them  
one by one onto his head.  
A wreath of colours  
stretched out into  
the sky.

“Now I blaze as bright as the sun, just like Lion,” he said.



High above the treetops,  
Wind watched. He let out a big, loud  
sigh and blew hard and strong.

"You don't need those," Wind moaned, and the feathers drifted off with his breath.





Confused, Panther raced through  
the long, tickling grass to the river.



There, ginger flowers grew,  
filled with sticky golden pollen.





Panther painted thick stripes all over his dark coat.

“Now I am just as bold and fearless as Tiger,” he said.



Just then Rain arrived. She looked sadly at Panther and let go of her large tears. Down the heavy raindrops streamed.

“You don’t need those, dear one,” Rain sobbed, as Panther’s stripes began to wash away.

Disappointed, Panther stumbled upon a patch  
of sheltering bushes.



There  
he found  
a pile of leaves.  
The leaves nestled  
gently into Panther's  
soft fur.





“I am just as dazzling  
as Leopard,” he said.





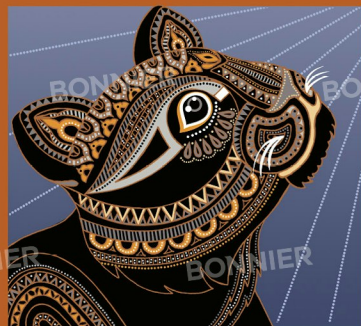
From behind the clouds,  
Sun shone down, flooding the  
forest with her warmth.

She beamed down  
brightly onto Panther. ER  
“That’s better,” Sun smiled  
as the dry leaves fell.



Shadow engulfed  
the forest.  
Panther sank into  
the soft earth.  
“I don’t belong anywhere,”  
he said.

Darkness began to fall, and Moon's soft glow filled the sky.  
Curious, Panther looked up and began to climb.



Higher and higher  
he went.  
So enchanted was he  
by Moon, that he forgot  
he was afraid.



As he climbed,  
Panther looked down  
at the forest.  
He trembled at the sight  
below him and collapsed  
onto a branch.





Panther wept as he gazed longingly at Moon.  
"I wish I shone as bright as you," he cried.  
"Keep going. You are so close,"  
echoed a voice in the darkness.


Moon gently stretched her light  
down onto the trees.



“Hello, little one,” she whispered.  
“Oh, how beautiful you are!  
Look at your wonderful, velvet fur.”



What a special gift you have to be the colour of night.  
I see the beauty in you, for I only appear when darkness  
falls upon the Earth and the stars only sparkle when  
night-time arrives. You and the night are one.”



Panther's amber eyes lit up and began to glow.  
Guided by Moon's light, he sped upwards  
where the branches of the tallest trees  
touched the sky.

He gasped at the sight of the starry  
tapestry above him.



There he stood, tall and proud  
next to the dark sky.  
And as he closed his eyes,  
he felt the cool breeze  
against his skin.

In the light of the  
brightest stars,  
Panther's coat began to  
sparkle, shimmering  
like jewels.

"I and the  
night are one!"  
he said.



He dashed through the canopy,  
Leaping fearlessly between the branches.

"I don't need to blaze like the sun as lion does, or be bold and  
fearless like tiger. And I don't need to dazzle like Leopard.  
I am a Midnight Panther!"

Beneath the speckled sky,  
Panther danced with the stars  
until dawn . . .



for now he knew that  
he gleamed brightest  
in the dark.



THE  
END





