



THE MIDNIGHT PANTHER

Poonam Mistry



This book belongs to:

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For everyone who was
ever made to feel different.



A TEMPLAR BOOK

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In the depths of the
rainforest there once
lived a little panther.

The forest was full
of life and wonder
and its beauty
was like no other.






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.







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.



“Now 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.
“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.





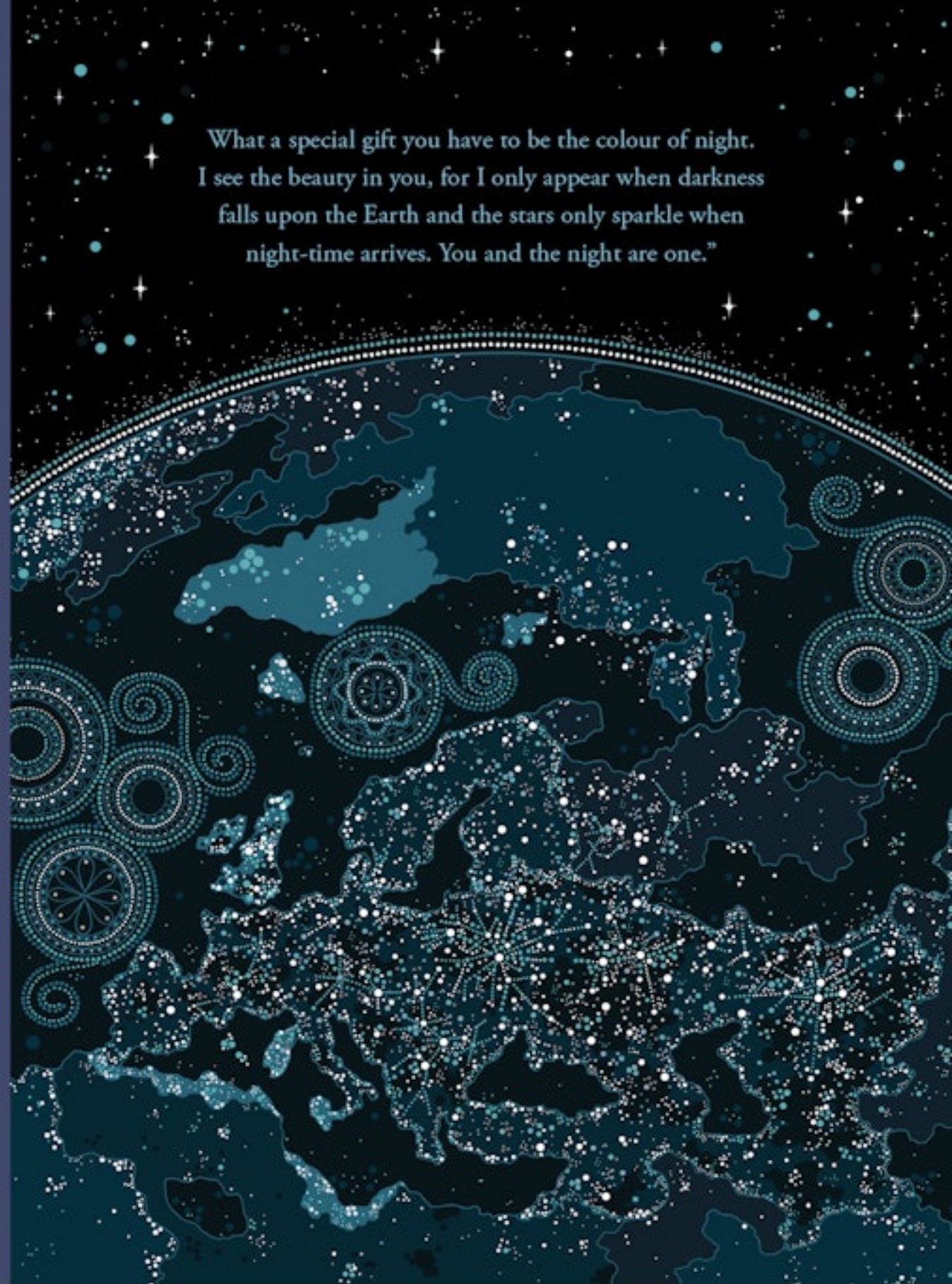
Panther wept as he gazed longingly at Moon.
“I wish I shone as bright as you,” he cried.
“Keep going. You are so close,”
echoed a voice in the darkness.


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



