

THE ENCHANTED FOREST

Once upon a time there was a huge and dense forest filled with amazing animals and miles and miles of trees as far as the eye could see. Near the forest was a small village. The villagers called the forest “The Enchanted Forest”. Here is the story of why the forest got that name:

In the village lived a nine-year-old boy named Aarush with his parents and a lot of pets. The house was at the edge of the forest. At that time the forest was just like any other forest. One day Aarush was playing outside his house in the front yard. While playing, he suddenly saw a pair of eyes staring at him from the forest. He was scared but also very curious. He always wanted to know what was inside the forest, since he loved animals, and this has gotten him even more excited.



He decided to go into the forest and follow whatever creature it was. Aarush jumped over his house fence and ran into the forest following the creature. As Aarush stepped into the forest he heard voices in the distance – the trees rustling, the winds blowing and the wolves howling. He ran as fast as he could and he could feel the voices getting closer and louder.

As he followed the creature, it suddenly climbed up a huge tree - it was so tall that he couldn't see the top of it. He decided to follow it and climb the tree. He found a comfortable spot between the branches and sat in it. He heard some leaves rustle and the same pair of eyes coming closer to him. As the creature came out of the leaves he discovered that it was nothing but a small black cat.



The cat had had glowing red eyes which gave Aarush a small fright. It first stared at Aarush feeling scared itself but once it realized Aarush was not harming it came and sat on Aarush's lap. He started petting the cat and smoothed out its fur to make the cat even more relaxed.

Suddenly he heard a voice saying "hello". He got scared and put the cat down unsure of where the voice came from. He realized that the voice had come from the cat, however he couldn't believe himself. "Don't be scared" said the cat again. Aarush shivered with fright knowing that none of the animals could talk like humans. He felt like running away and suddenly missed his parents. Gathering courage he asked the cat "Can you talk?". The cat replied "Yes and please don't be scared, I will not harm you".

Aarush was still not comfortable being around a cat that could talk and his shivering has still not stopped. "How can a cat like you talk? Since when have you been talking and how can you speak human language?" he asked the cat. The cat smiled at him and replied "This is no ordinary forest you have come into. This is a very special forest. The animals here can talk to humans but they don't talk to everyone. They only communicate to kind souls like you that are very kind to animals."

Aarush continued to be spellbound and started feeling less scared. "How do you know I am kind to animals?" he asked. "We know about all the people in the village and who has been kind to animals and who hasn't. I have been watching you for many days playing with your dogs and birds and taking care of them just like your family."

Aarush was now feeling very good about himself and totally at ease. Aarush asked the cat its name, however the cat replied that he didn't have any name and no one ever asked him about it. He decided to name the cat "Midnight" because it was as dark as the midnight sky. The cat loved the name and showed his pleasure by licking Aarush's hand which made him laugh since it felt ticklish.

After a few minutes they heard a gunshot and Midnight ran into the leaves as if trying to escape from a predator. Aarush looked around and saw a hunter approaching the tree. The hunter had seen Aarush play with the cat. He told Aarush "Step back little boy, that cat is very

rare and I am here to take it home. You should go to your house; this forest is not place for young kids like you.”

Aarush pleaded with the hunter "No! Please don't take away Midnight, he belongs in the forest". "Ha-ha!" the hunter laughed, "you have given the cat a name. I am a collector of rare animals and this cat will be a great addition to my collection. Run away otherwise I will have to harm you and you won't like that".

As the hunter started looking for Midnight, Aarush rushed to the place where Midnight was hidden and told him "let's run". The hunter started getting irritated and said "I'm giving the final warning, give me the cat or you could get hurt". Aarush took Midnight in his hands and said "No - this is my friend and I will not let you harm him". The cat smiled at Aarush and then stared at the hunter with his red magical glowing eyes, which froze the hunter in his place. However hard the hunter tried he couldn't move. Aarush took the cat and ran toward his house. "I will get you tomorrow. I will!" cried the hunter.

Aarush reached home panting badly from all the running with the cat in his arms. His father was out on work and his mother was in the kitchen cooking lunch. She heard Aarush and came out to see him holding the cat. "Where have you come from and who is this cute little cat?" "I found this cat at the edge of the forest and made friends with him, his name is Midnight", Aarush answered. His mother told him she was ok with him being friends with the cat but asked to never go into the forest alone. That night once the dad returned, the family played with the cat and fed it lots of milk.

The next day the hunter came to Aarush's house looking for the cat in the village. He had seen Aarush playing with the cat in the front yard. Seeing the hunter Aarush ran into the house with the cat and locked the door. The hunter knocked on the door and Aarush's mother opened the door and asked "Hello, how can I help you?"

The hunter acted ignorant and asked “You didn’t happen to see a cat with black fur and red glowing eyes, have you?” She was taken aback by the question “Who are you and why do ask”? He lied and said that “I am from the Institution for protection of rare animals, and yesterday a black cat escaped from our Institute and went towards the forest near your village. It is a very rare cat and unwell and needs our help. It is criminal for anyone to take the cat without our permission”.

The mother replied “Oh. My son found a cat yesterday and brought it home, not sure if it’s the same one you are looking for”. She asked Aarush to come out with the cat. The hunter saw the cat and a cruel streak passed his eyes, “yes this is exactly the one we are looking for, it has black fur and glowing red eyes”. “We are so sorry. I would have given it before if I knew” replied Aarush’s mother.

Aarush was totally surprised and angry listening to the hunter lie through his nose. He screamed “No. This is a bad person and he is going to harm the cat and sell him. I will not give Midnight to him”. Meanwhile the hunter snatched the cat and put it in a cage he was carrying.

Just then Aarush's dad returned from work. Hearing all the noise he asked "What in the world is going on here?" Aarush said "Dad, he is a bad person and is taking the cat away." Aarush’s mother explained what was going on to his dad. Hearing everything Aarush's dad told the hunter “Pleased to meet you. I am Varun and sorry for my sons behavior. Thanks for coming and letting us know. We are happy the cat has found its rightful owner.”

“You’re welcome!” said the hunter “I will now need to head back as it’s already late”

He headed to his hideout which was safely hidden underwater a lake very near to the village. He entered a room which had nothing but a

small bed and a tub. He filled the tub with water and placed Midnight inside to clean him. As he cleaned hi, looking into Midnight’s magical eyes he got hypnotised. He started feeling sorry for what he had done to him. As the days passed he started developing a close bond and affection for Midnight just like Aarush.

On the other hand, after the episode with the hunter, Aarush became selfish and greedy and wanted to get Midnight for himself thinking it will make him rich. Everyday Aarush looked for the hunter and Midnight. Finally one day he found Midnight near the lake resting on a rock. The hunter had left Midnight there knowing it was wrong to sell or cage an enchanted animal like him.

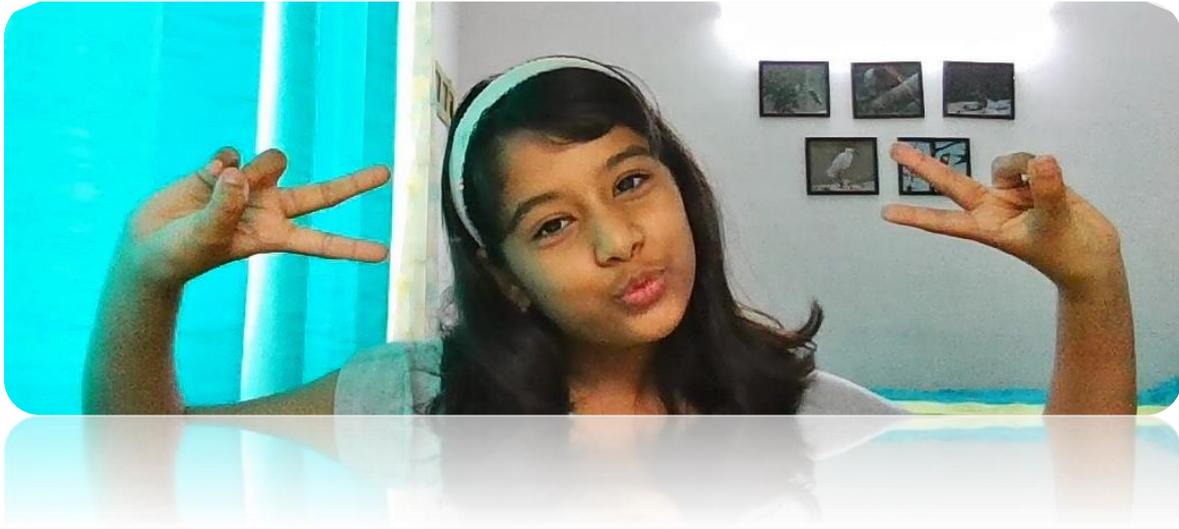
Aarush took the cat into his hands and said “Got you! Ha! You will sell for at least five lakh rupees and make us rich”. Midnight was very sad on hearing this; it had already sensed the greed in Aarush. Aarush sneaked Midnight into his room and hid him underneath the bed. Every time he looked at Midnight the greedier he got. One night when his parents were asleep he put up Midnight for sale on one of the parent’s phones.



The next day he saw about a hundred people inquired to buy the cat but only one person confirmed they would buy the cat for five lakh rupees. That person was actually the hunter who wanted to get Midnight back but Aarush didn't know it was him yet. Aarush told the hunter that he could have the cat.

Before Aarush could sell the cat, the cat told Aarush, "You have not only lost your 5 lakh but you have also lost a good friend for life hope you learn a good lesson from this". Midnight then ran away to the hunter, and they lived happily ever after.

THE END



About the author

Tanvi Bhargava was born in India, Madhya Pradesh, Indore. She was 9 years old when she started writing the book. She got the inspiration from a book written on rare animals and how they are becoming extinct. She loved animals and nature that's the reason she started writing the book. She loved adventures and would love to explore the world someday.

Blurb

This book is about an 8-year-old boy name Aarush. Who finds a mysterious creature near his village. He goes inside to find out about a whole new world. Then a hunter comes and ruins everything, but then something surprising happens...read the book to find out what happens next...