

Wait a Second, Little Leopard

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It's early in the morning.

"Wait for me," says Mommy.

"Be quiet. Stay between the bushes and wait for me!"

Then Mommy leaves. She crawls between the branches.

Her long body disappears and then the tip of her tail is gone as well.

I'm all alone and I wait.

Now the sun is high in the sky and I'm still waiting.

I slept a little and I played with a bug.

I'm thirsty, but I wait.

Between the branches I see the vast plain.

There isn't much to see. It's quiet and warm.

A rabbit passes by. Zebras graze and
giraffes eat from the trees. An eagle circles in the sky.

He can't see me, because I'm hidden in the bushes.

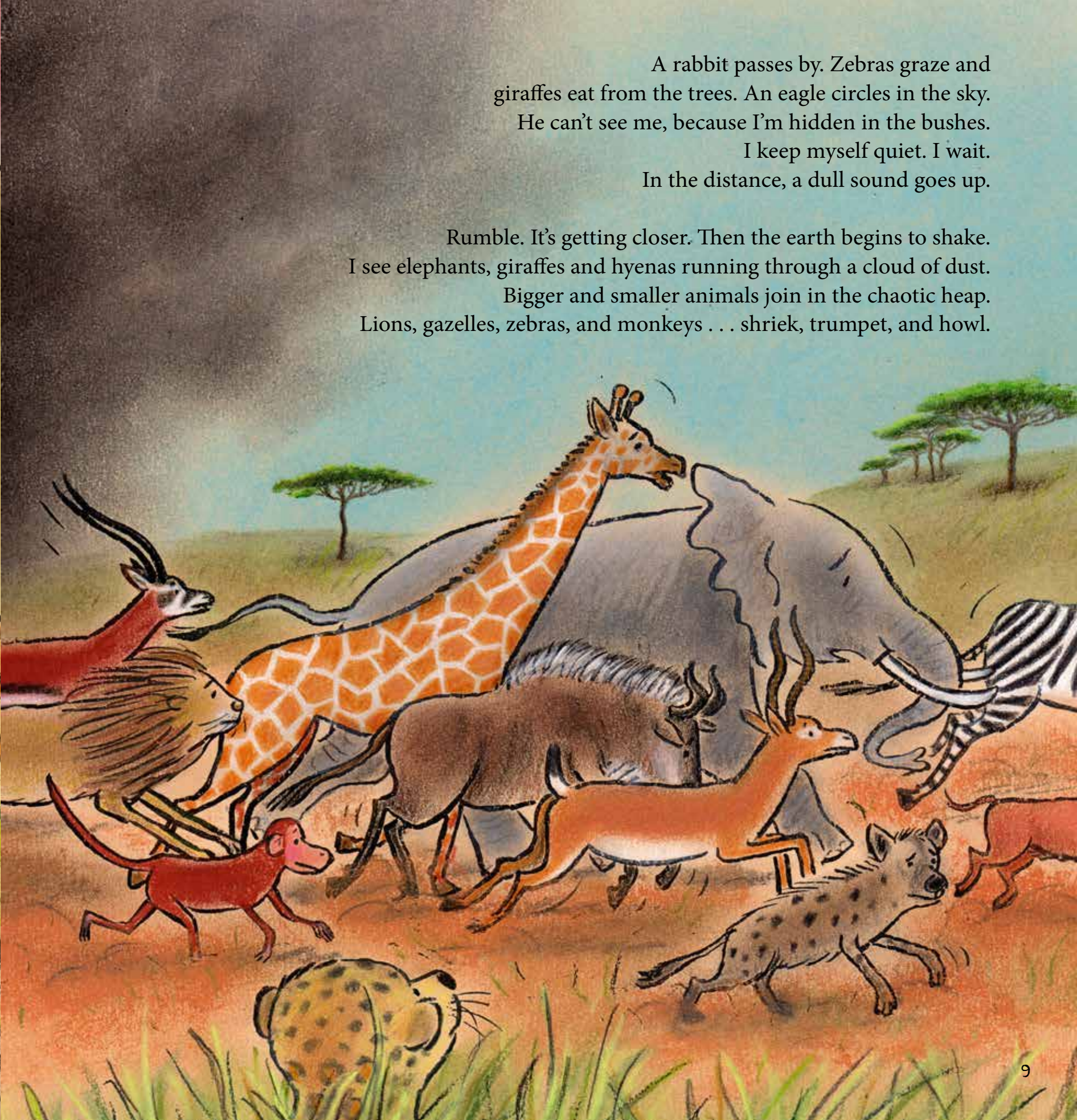
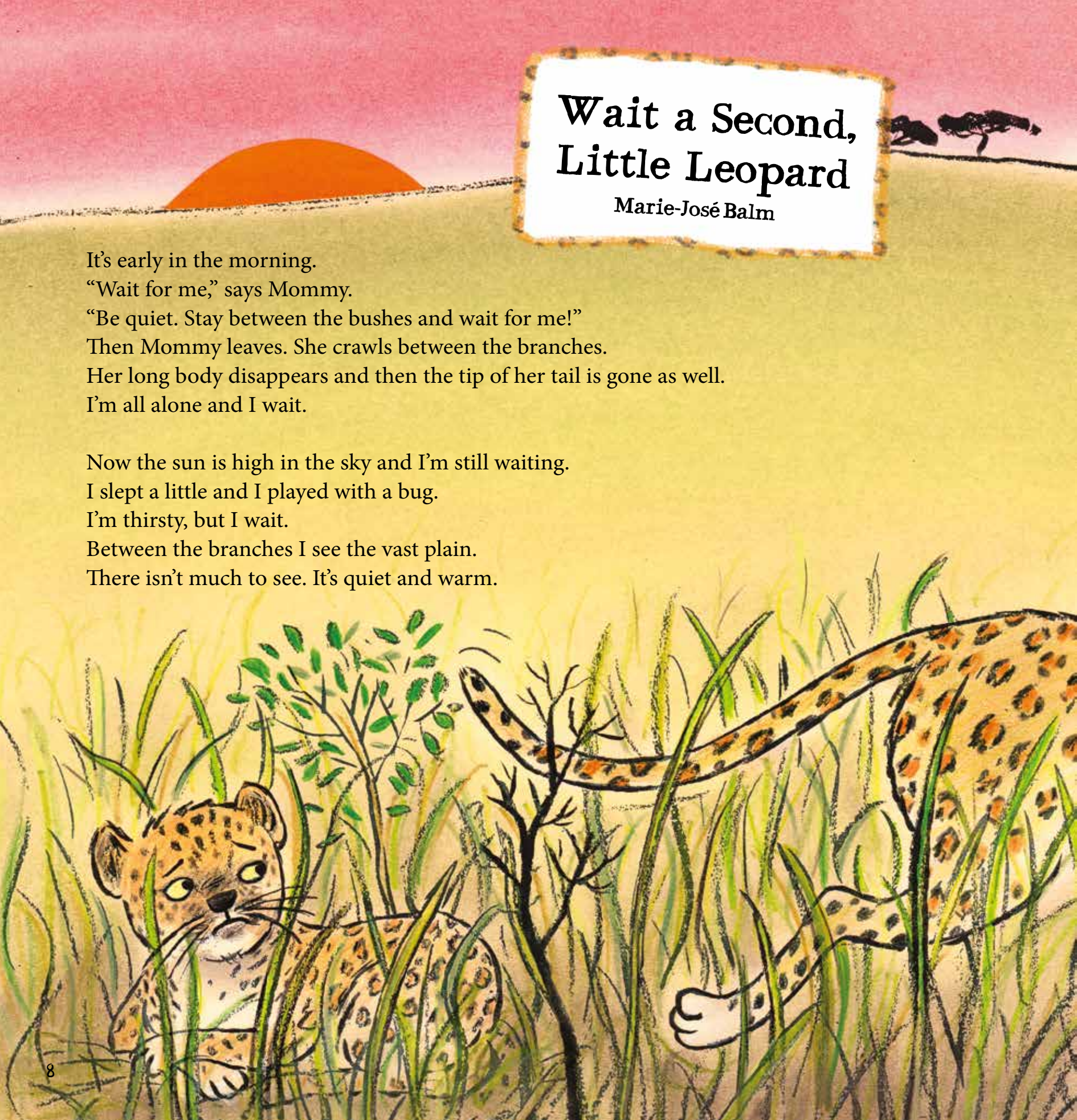
I keep myself quiet. I wait.

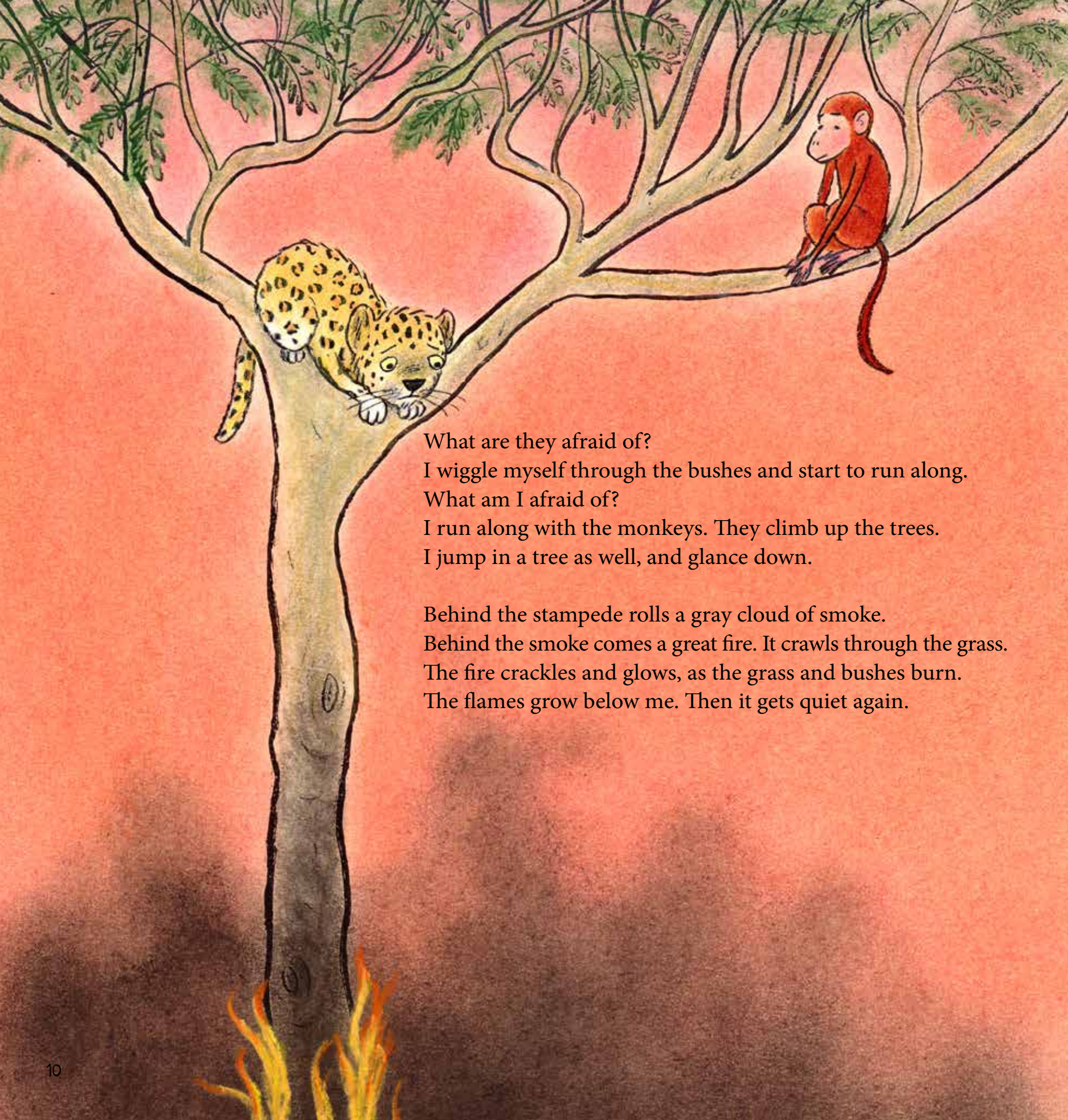
In the distance, a dull sound goes up.

Rumble. It's getting closer. Then the earth begins to shake.
I see elephants, giraffes and hyenas running through a cloud of dust.

Bigger and smaller animals join in the chaotic heap.

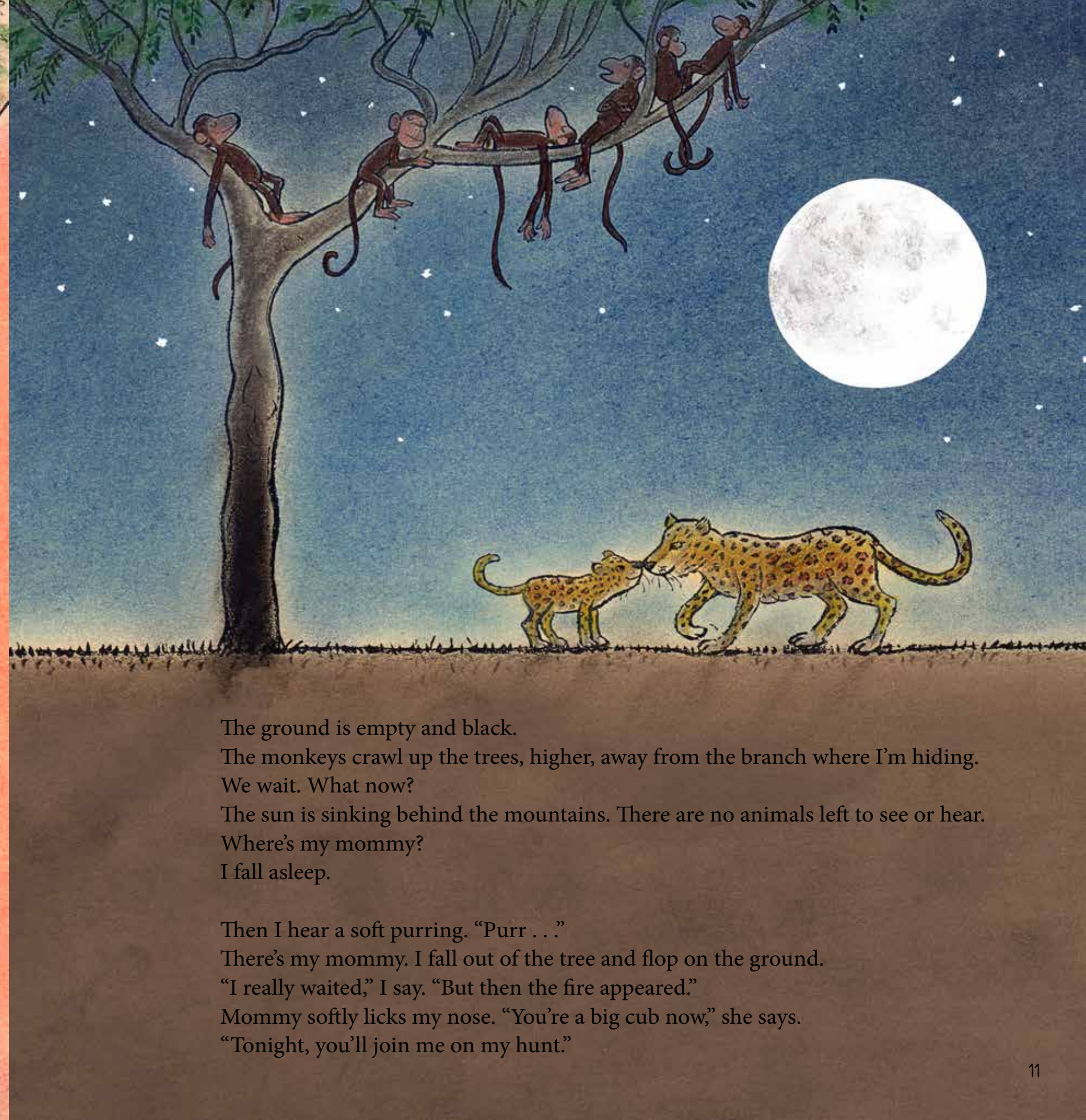
Lions, gazelles, zebras, and monkeys . . . shriek, trumpet, and howl.





What are they afraid of?
I wiggle myself through the bushes and start to run along.
What am I afraid of?
I run along with the monkeys. They climb up the trees.
I jump in a tree as well, and glance down.

Behind the stampede rolls a gray cloud of smoke.
Behind the smoke comes a great fire. It crawls through the grass.
The fire crackles and glows, as the grass and bushes burn.
The flames grow below me. Then it gets quiet again.



The ground is empty and black.
The monkeys crawl up the trees, higher, away from the branch where I'm hiding.
We wait. What now?
The sun is sinking behind the mountains. There are no animals left to see or hear.
Where's my mommy?
I fall asleep.

Then I hear a soft purring. "Purr . . ."
There's my mommy. I fall out of the tree and flop on the ground.
"I really waited," I say. "But then the fire appeared."
Mommy softly licks my nose. "You're a big cub now," she says.
"Tonight, you'll join me on my hunt."

The Leopard

Funny fact

Leopard and panther are different names for the same animal. Leopards that have completely dark coats are known as black panthers. On the African savanna he's always called leopard, and in the Asian forest he's always called panther.

Passport

Habitat: **on the African savanna**

Weight: **up to 198 pounds**

Height: **from head to bottom between 35 and 75 inches**

Favorite food: **gazelles and other hoofed mammals. He also likes birds, bugs, and lizards.**

Special: **he can carry prey, some even heavier than him, up trees.**



The leopard can easily crawl into a tree with his sharp claws. He likes to sleep on a big branch.

The leopard is familiar to cats. Just like the lion, the tiger, and the cheetah.



The leopard isn't as fast as gazelles. But when he sneaks up on them, he can quickly grab them with his teeth.

If he must, the leopard can live a month without drinking. There's enough water in his food.

