



Written by Arya Bansal

Illustrated by Tara and Arya Bansal

ROAR

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"A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle"
-Gloria Steinem

Profits from this book will be
donated towards education
of children in need across the
world and in the United States.



The meanings of character names in Hindi:

Raja (Raa-juh): king

Shakti (Shaak-tee): power

Usha (Oo-shaa): dawn/sunrise

Daku (Daa-koo): bandit (simplified)

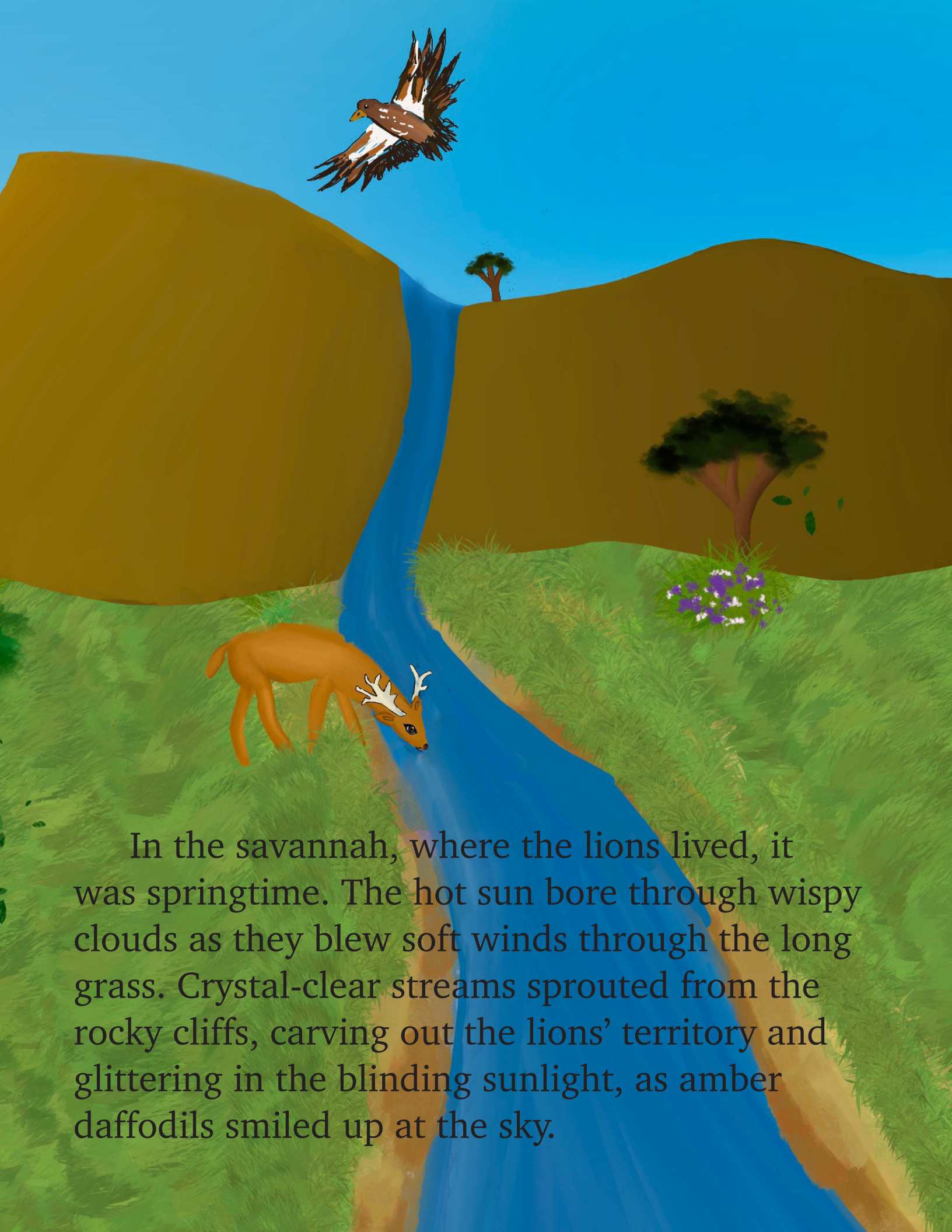
ROAR

Dedicated to all the lionesses out there—

Let us hear your roar.

Long ago, before humans inhabited the earth, mighty male lions ruled the world. The entire world was composed of serene blue oceans, lush green grasslands, sweeping emerald jungles, and mountainous cocoa colored caves.





In the savannah, where the lions lived, it was springtime. The hot sun bore through wispy clouds as they blew soft winds through the long grass. Crystal-clear streams sprouted from the rocky cliffs, carving out the lions' territory and glittering in the blinding sunlight, as amber daffodils smiled up at the sky.

Overlooking this beautiful savanna, on top of the steep mountains, were the lions' dens. The lions would spend their days hanging out on the cliffs, their sturdy earthen figures watching over the kingdom.



To maintain order throughout the kingdom, the lions had chosen one king to represent them all. This king wasn't chosen by brute strength, intellect, or even looks. The king was chosen solely based on the power of his roar, which was determined at an all-male roaring competition.

The louder the roar, the higher status that lion was given. Societal jobs were given in descending order of the loudness.

The lion with the loudest roar became king, the next few would get jobs such as royal advisors, hunters, and then came the scribes. The lions with softer roars would not be given any respectable jobs, and would end up as servants to the others.

As of now, the lion with the loudest roar was Raja, whose prideful bellow gave him a throne in the seat of his fur. When he roared every single animal's heart palpitated, and every creature bowed down in awe with shivers down its spine.

In this primitive society, all the lionesses were forbidden not only from competing, but also from the simple act of roaring, an act punishable by law that could result in exile.



They were only meant to display their beauty and femininity. Resultingly, they spent most of their time lazing around in the shade, talking to each other, and timidly taking care of their cubs.

Most lionesses were content with this lazy lifestyle, as the male lions hunted for food and brought home dinner.

Therefore, the male lions controlled the society, and frowned upon any lioness that even spoke loudly, let alone roar. Most lionesses thought it was absurd for them to even suggest competing in the roaring competition.

However, Raja had a beautiful, intelligent, strong and sharp-witted wife named Shakti who loved to read and dreamt about a different society in which all lions were equal.

She often spent her days in deep contemplation, thinking of ways to improve the lion kingdom. She often mused to herself, “Wouldn’t it be nice if the roaring competition would also include an intelligence and benevolence component that would be available to all, lion and lioness alike?”

Her favorite part of the day was secretly teaching her baby girl cub, Usha, and Usha’s friends how to become mentally and physically strong. She would tell them with a twinkle in her eye, “Let me show you what real fun is!” and lead them on fun adventures, letting them roll in the dirt and tackle each other like the boy lions--all while Raja and the other male lions were away hunting.

She would then sit them down and tell them stories of fearless warriors. Encouraged by these stories, the little cubs would come up with their own adventurous pranks to play on their mothers.

One day, when Shakti walked in on them planning, she chuckled and exclaimed, “That’s not the type of adventure I had in mind. I was thinking about ROARING!” They all scurried back to their mothers, screaming in fear of this forbidden endeavor... all except Usha, whose wide innocent eyes stared up at Shakti with eager anticipation. Shakti’s heart swelled with pride at her daughter’s curiosity, but then sank just as fast as she remembered the rules of the society.

Many of her lioness friends disapproved of this, as they saw no need to educate female lions to be free and strong when the lionesses were content with their menial role in society. The few that agreed with her views were too scared of being made fun of to support her.

However, Shakti stayed strong to her beliefs, knowing that one day her efforts would be put to good use.

Shakti had never even heard the sound of her own roar, let alone the power of it. Because she was an ambitious and inquisitive lioness, she frequently wondered how loud her roar might be and begged her husband to let her try just once, so she would know she was powerful and that she could do more than just nurture her cubs. But, as she feared, he adamantly refused by saying, “You, of all people, should be the last one to even think about roaring. Since you are my wife, my subjects look up to you, and it is important for you to uphold this kingdom’s paradigm.”

Once, she asked him in frustration “Why can only males compete in the roaring competition? the competition should be fair game and the loudest roar regardless of gender should be allowed to rule and protect the kingdom!”

To this Raja nonchalantly responded, “Male lions are meant to be the lions in power and this has always been our tradition.”



Shakti tried to say something, but he quickly interrupted her, continuing, “Never once, has there been a queen to rule the kingdom. Only male lions are feared, and are able to rule and protect the jungle. And you have to uphold the tradition till death since you are the queen and role model to all.”

Shakti stifled her comeback, knowing her duties as the king’s wife. Although Raja’s thoughts about women were outdated, he had never been cruel to her and remained a loyal husband.

However, she could almost hear the hearty roar burning in her heart, struggling to free itself from its cage. It had sat there for years, ever since she was a little cub, but she made a promise that she would remain a loyal queen and never use it in her lifetime.

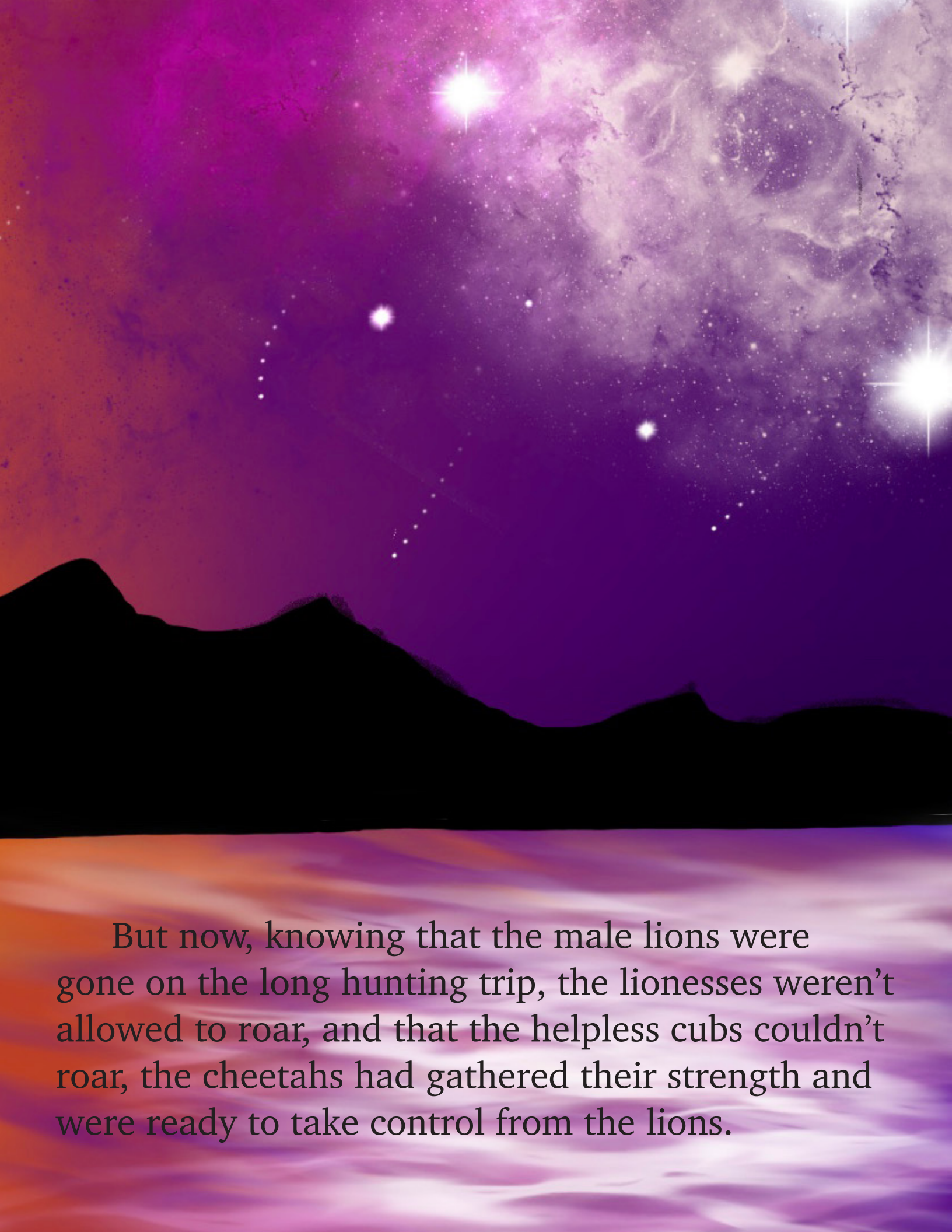
The lion society was flourishing but had become wasteful, much to Shanti's dismay. The lions hunted too much and ended up wasting food, causing the supply near their dens to dwindle. The hunting grounds, though still plentiful, were moving further away.

One day, the male lions went hunting in the distant forest on the far side of the river, leaving the females to take care of the cubs. The female lions jubilantly sat together and chatted during the beautiful summer day, while the cubs played.

Dinner was still plentiful and after a hearty meal, the mothers and their cubs went to their dens to sleep, expecting their husbands to return by next afternoon. Night fell, and the stars slowly joined the moon weeping silver light over their peaceful sleeping bodies, with only the chirping of the crickets occasionally breaking the silence.

The lionesses were oblivious to what was lurking ahead. The stillness of the night was interrupted by soft crunching of something stepping on the dry leaves nearby. Tiptoeing towards the den were the spiteful cheetahs from the nearby forest. For a long time, the cheetahs had been forced to eat and survive under the lions, and could not fight back as they were unable to roar.



The background of the entire page is a night sky with a purple and orange gradient. A bright star with a four-pointed flare is in the upper center. A comet with a long, faint tail is visible on the left side. A silhouette of a mountain range is at the bottom. The text is in a black serif font, centered in the lower half of the image.

But now, knowing that the male lions were gone on the long hunting trip, the lionesses weren't allowed to roar, and that the helpless cubs couldn't roar, the cheetahs had gathered their strength and were ready to take control from the lions.



The cheetah king, Daku, snuck in first, his sharp mean red eyes maliciously seeking out Shakti's den, as killing the ruling family ensured success. As he sneakily stepped over other sleeping lionesses and their cubs in the grass, and entered Shakti's cave, he immediately found what he was looking for.

In the dark, a small silhouette of Shakti curled around her only cub, Usha, was apparent, a silhouette which reminded Daku of a strong mother protecting her cub even in her sleep and made him uneasy for a split second.

However, looking at them sleeping peacefully, breathing evenly and appearing incognizant of the upcoming threat, he shook off his instinct and tiptoed towards them.

Daku extended his unkempt sharp talon towards Usha's little snout, but accidentally scraped Shakti's soft fur instead.

Instantly, Shakti was on her paws, snarling with wide golden eyes at the threat, not in fear, but in newfound confusion about what was happening and how she could defend her cub and her entire tribe. Shakti knew that she could not roar and abandon the tribal law that had been around for centuries. She was the queen after all and had to uphold the tradition.

Daku's red eyes gleamed at her in the dark, knowing he had Shakti right where he wanted her. His lips curled back to reveal his bloody yellow teeth as he licked his lips in sadistic glee.

“I know you won’t roar,” he chuckled, “you are just another weak, afraid and stupid lioness. Just like this one is going to be, useless for anything.” He leaped up in the air, his talon reaching right towards little Usha’s furry small face.

Stifling a gasp, Shakti leaped in front of Usha, who was now wide awake, her little body trembling in fear. Daku’s gleaming talon sliced Shakti’s right paw, tracing a thin stream of blood gushing towards the cold stone floor as Shakti snarled in anger, revealing her sparkling white fangs previously hidden behind her furry muzzle.

“If you lay one finger on Usha,” she growled, “you will be sorry you came here.”

“Awww, poor baby! Are you scared, honey?” he taunted at Usha. Shakti remembered how she had always taught the cubs to be strong and to never show fear. She also recalled how her books had taught her to always do the right thing, whatever the consequences.

She narrowed her eyes. “No, but I am scared for you.” Laughing, he responded,

“Oh! This is going to be fun. A queen who can’t roar, a cub who is too little to fight and all the fashionistas sleeping outside without any males to protect them” And, quick as a cheetah, he jumped up and slashed poor Usha’s face, leaving a thin line of blood along her snout.

A pain deeper than one she had ever felt stabbed Shakti’s soul, tearing her inhibitions and vibrating in her voice box, finally freeing the roar from its cage.



ROAR!! Her roar shook the earth and the stars above it. The mountain cracked, the streams stopped flowing, boulders rolled down the clifftops, the winds paused, shooting stars froze in awe and the forest trees turned around and bent their heads in respect. The lionesses, the cheetahs, the buzzing insects and the previously chirping crickets- all stood shocked in silence as the morning sun peeked its head up from the horizon, bringing a beautiful new dawn with it.

Daku felt paralyzed in shock until his own cold sweat brought him back to reality. He quickly backed away in fear, scampering off with his tribe into the sweeping shadows, never to be seen again.

The male lions, who were in another forest many miles away, were shocked. Never before had they heard such a powerful roar! They cried out in realization of their primitive beliefs, false pride, and ignorance. The elephants lowered their trunks and bowed down and the entire forest lowered its branches in respect...



The jungle had found its true queen. Before, she was just the king's wife, a mere toy placed next to the throne. But now she was her own radiant goddess, her golden aura spilling onto the prairie like the sun at dawn, making animals miles and miles away step back in awe.

After the male lions returned from their hunt, Raja sheepishly bowed down to Shakti in admiration of her earth shattering roar, stunned into the realization that his beautiful and strong queen did not need any king to protect her or the kingdom for that matter. She sat on her throne, every bit of it which she deserved. Now that the jungle had heard her voice, it was about to hear a lot more of it. His eyes lowered along with his head, his apology and respect swirling around the air and through his subjects.

Starting with Raja, lines of animals bowed their heads like a wave rushing over a sandy beach. They respectfully awaited her first order and Shakti knew exactly what she had in mind.



FUTURE FRONT

PAST PLAZA

From then on, according to Shakti's implementations, all the lionesses were allowed to unleash their roar, and it was no surprise that many of them had powerful roars and got different jobs in society! All the cubs were inspired and excited to follow in their strong mothers' footsteps. The entire lion kingdom's mindset had been changed for the better!

It became a new tradition in lion society that everyone would compete in the roaring competition regardless of their gender. The lioness would go along with the lions to hunt, and the lions would help in taking care of the cubs. The new society would be more fun and inclusive with everyone playing their best role according to their capability, not according to predefined gender roles.

Just a single lioness had brought new hope and dreams to the animal kingdom. She was the new role model--powerful and unstoppable.

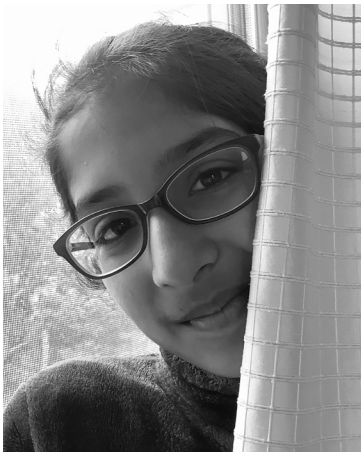


The lionesses were free and ruthless.
They could do anything. All they
needed to do was **roar**.

About the Authors



Arya Bansal authored, designed, and illustrated Roar. She was inspired to write this based on the women's struggle for power in the society, along with the feminist fighters that shaped our world today. Outside of school, she plays field hockey, does robotics and yoga, is a black belt in tae-kwon-do, dances, and plays the piano. In her free time, she likes to read, travel, watch movies, and play with her beloved dog Yoda.



Tara Bansal was the primary illustrator of Roar. In her freetime she keeps herself busy with several activities such as science olympiad, field hockey, musical theater, and art especially. She plays two instruments; the cello and piano and earned her black belt in Tae Kwon Do 2nd grade. Following the steps of her elder sister, she also loves to write to express her thoughts and hopes one day she, too, can inspire change for others.



Yoda Bansal is a dog who encouraged us with his loving enthusiasm. Even though he did not play any role in writing the book, we think he deserves to be recognized because of his awesomeness :)

Also a big thank you to our parents, without whom this book would have not been possible.

“They could do anything. All they needed to do was roar.”

Roar is a picture book centered around women's struggle for independence and freedom continuing to this day. This book spreads awareness about gender inequality while also encouraging girls all over the world to speak up and believe in themselves. Shakti, a lioness, is striving to unleash her roar, but struggles against societal norms inflicted upon her both because of her gender and her loyalty to tradition. Read this empowering novel for women and girls all over the world to see how she overcomes her inhibitions and changes the lion order forever.



“When the whole world is silent, even one voice is powerful”

-Malala