

How the Leopard got its Spots

A long time ago, before there were people, there was no hunting or fighting between species, and everyone liked to play together. And every single animal's coat was either soft and smooth or hard and ragged and everyone was happy with his or her appearance, except for one person, Leopard.

One day Leopard was out walking in the jungle when he looked at his stripes in disgrace." Why oh why" he thought to himself sadly, " Why do I have to have such vulgar stripes?" Poor Leopard hated his stripes, and wanted something different; but he didn't know what.

Despairingly he slowly trudged along on his aching paws past hundreds of booming trees and bushes, and a few dainty little flowerbeds, until he reached the end of the jungle. Now Leopard was out in the open grasslands, the home of Elephant, the latter's worst nightmare. Elephant had teased discouraged Leopard since they met, about his unfortunate stripes. Leopard unwillingly paced slowly along the dry grassland, hoping with all his heart that he would not to bump into cruel Elephant. Leopard sighed a huge sigh, and said repeatedly"" I am happy." But he knew he was lying to himself really, and knew what Elephant was going to say if he met him.

It was a very hot day that day, and everywhere it was dry, even the river had nearly dried up! This made Leopard feel worse about himself, see when it was hot, the stripes got really itchy and sweaty, which made the poor thing a laughing stock to all his friends. At this time, embarrassed Leopard was sweating heavily, and decided to rest at the old palm tree, which was especially good for hot days, for its huge big, glowing leaves covered you from the sun, whichever position the sun was in. Sitting down was hard for struggling Leopard, because of the stiffness of his body. Hitting his head against the rigid trunk of the tree, Leopard noticed something in the distance, it looked like some sort of illusion, but no, it was real enough.

Squinting his eyes, Leopard stared, focusing on a small black and white smudge in the distance. As it became clearer, Leopard could just make out some form of, beautiful mammal; he had never seen anything like, ever in his life!

Rising back on all fours, Leopard noticed that the animal had stopped, and slowly edged towards it. The other animal saw him too, and did likewise. They met in the middle of the grassland, and finally saw each other's appearances. " Hello, I'm Zebra, " said the mammal, "I think your stripes are gorgeous!"

"Well I love your gorgeous spots." Replied blushing Leopard. They completely adored each other's fur, and discussed how they hate it when people skit at them.

The animal gods, Pretifur and Woofmiaw, were watching above, and noticed how much Zebra and Leopard wanted to swap furs, so they spoke to Tushibea (the God of Gods) about the issue. Being a kind soul, Tushibea allowed the gods to swap the animal's fur.

So, the next day, in their hammocks, Zebra woke up with the stripes she longed for, and Leopard woke up with the spots that he longed for. And they were never ever teased or picked on again!

By Niamh M

