



**HUNTING
WITH GRANDDAD**



In winter the streams in China's Greater Khingan Mountains freeze over. The ice is very thick. The ground and the roofs of the houses are blanketed in feathery snow.

Nayan, an Olunchun child, was having a snow fight with his friends. They were rolling in the snow, laughing and shouting.

Suddenly he heard his grandad calling him. "Nayan, come quickly! I'll take you out hunting with me."



Nayan hurried home, changed into a suit of roe skin, with boots and cap to match. On his cap a pair of roe antlers had been sewn, and when he wore it he looked like a small roe himself. The old hunter was also dressed in fur. With his gun on his shoulder and his hunting dog beside him, he mounted his black horse.



Nayan rode his chestnut pony and, with his own little hunting dog, followed Grandad.

Deep snow lay over the forest and ice crystals hung from the trees, as though they were covered with apricot blossoms. Grandad and Nayan rode far into the forest, their horses' hooves going *scrunch scrunch* in the snow.





Suddenly Grandad stopped, dismounted and carefully began to examine the snow. As Nayan drew up, pointing to tracks in the snow, Grandad said: "Look at these! There's a lynx near by."

The dogs sniffed about in the snow and ran into the shrubs ahead. Nayan followed them on his pony and not far away saw a lynx baring its fangs and claws, ready to spring on one of the dogs.



Soon the little dog ran back with its tail between its legs, blood dripping from its neck. Nayan was so angry to see his dear little dog bitten so badly that he cried.

Grandad turned back the hair on the dog's neck and looked at its wound. "That's not bad," he said, "it's only skin deep. He'll be all right. Let's go after that lynx!" Grandad's dog seemed to understand what he meant and dashed forward along the tracks of the lynx.

Grandad and Nayan followed the dog till they saw it stop at the foot of a pine. It barked towards the tree top and scratched at the trunk in an effort to climb up.





Nayan and Grandad looked up, and there in the tree was the lynx, with ears cocked and eyes blazing at them. Nayan levelled his gun and shouted at the lynx: "I'll get you this time, you brute!" "But let's shoot together," Grandad said. Two shots rang out, and that big lynx dropped out of the tree.

Grandad patted Nayan on the shoulder and said to him: "You got this lynx, my boy; there's no doubt about that!" Nayan looked for bullet holes in the animal's skin for a long time but when he could find only one, rather shyly he said to his grandfather: "It was you who got him, Grandad." His grandfather chuckled as he replied: "All right then, we'll just say we both shot it!"





Around them was a dense pine forest. Grandad picked up a dead branch and rubbed it against a tree trunk, making a grating sound. Suddenly a silver grey squirrel with black beady eyes and a dark bushy tail jumped out and leapt nimbly from one branch to another.

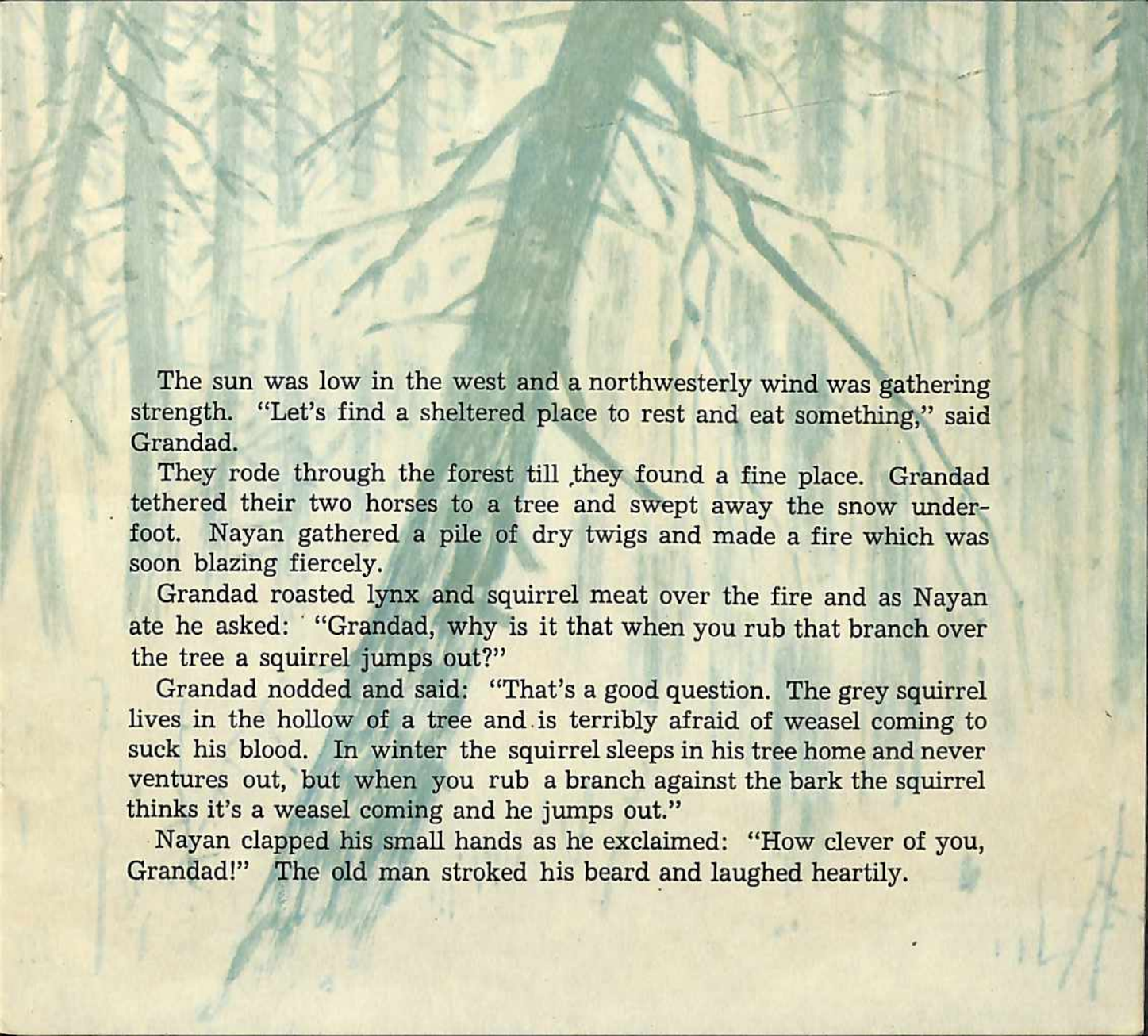


Grandad raised his gun and took aim. Ping went his gun and the squirrel fell to the ground. When Nayan picked it up and examined it he saw it had been shot right in the eye.

Grandad explained to Nayan: "The fur of the grey squirrel is very valuable if it's undamaged, so always aim at the head."



Nayan asked Grandad to get more grey squirrels. So the old man rubbed his branch over the bark of several trees. Whenever a squirrel jumped out he shot it and Nayan picked it up. Soon they had ten.



The sun was low in the west and a northwesterly wind was gathering strength. "Let's find a sheltered place to rest and eat something," said Grandad.

They rode through the forest till they found a fine place. Grandad tethered their two horses to a tree and swept away the snow underfoot. Nayan gathered a pile of dry twigs and made a fire which was soon blazing fiercely.

Grandad roasted lynx and squirrel meat over the fire and as Nayan ate he asked: "Grandad, why is it that when you rub that branch over the tree a squirrel jumps out?"

Grandad nodded and said: "That's a good question. The grey squirrel lives in the hollow of a tree and is terribly afraid of weasel coming to suck his blood. In winter the squirrel sleeps in his tree home and never ventures out, but when you rub a branch against the bark the squirrel thinks it's a weasel coming and he jumps out."

Nayan clapped his small hands as he exclaimed: "How clever of you, Grandad!" The old man stroked his beard and laughed heartily.



Suddenly both dogs began to make a fuss around a huge old tree. Grandad took his gun in hand at once and ran to the spot. He noticed a hollow at the bottom of the frost-covered tree and a lot of animal droppings all around. Grandad beckoned to Nayan and when the boy drew near he whispered to him: "Now there's a bear inside. We must think of a way to get it!"



Grandad found a stout branch and, with Nayan behind him, thrust it into the hollow. "Don't be afraid if a bear comes out," Grandad cautioned. "Just aim and fire." Nayan said yes, though he was a little frightened.



Suddenly a black bear shuffled headlong out of the hollow tree. Nayan was too excited to aim accurately and twice he missed. Grandad followed quickly with one shot, which knocked the animal down.



But the bear scrambled up and turned on Grandad who, unable to aim with his gun, again in time drew his gleaming hunting knife.



Nayan was so excited he ran at the bear with his gun and the bear turned its head as though to attack the boy. He aimed and fired, hitting it right in the breast, and Granddad finished it off with two more bullets.



“Fine work!” Grandad laughed heartily. “You’re a worthy son of our Olunchun hunters!”

They looped a strong cord around the bear’s neck and fastened the other end to Grandad’s saddle. Happily they went home, the black bear in tow.







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