

Panda Reunion



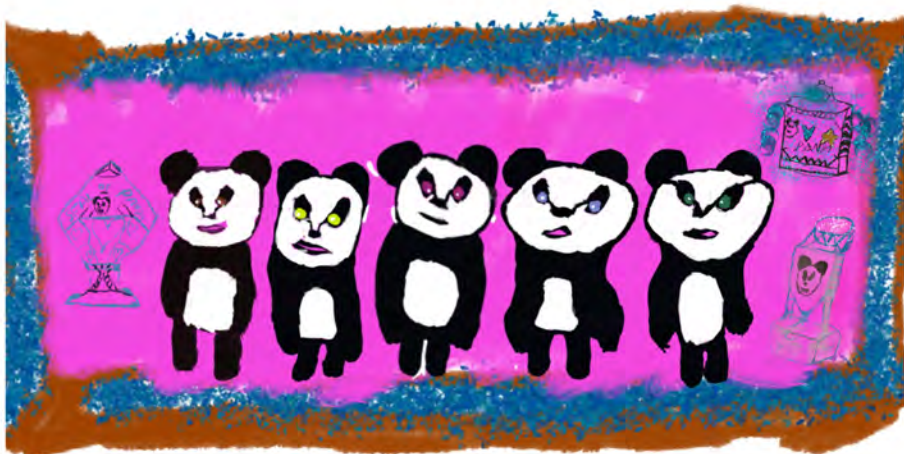
Michael Tam



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Panda Reunion

Michael Tam



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Introduction

This is Michael's first book. It has been bubbling away in his imagination for years. It began with story ideas hidden in his computer, and doodles of the characters and adventures he conjured in his mind. It was just Michael...

Michael's mother did not know he had been writing stories, until she suggested that a literacy tutor might help him maintain his literacy skills - and that is when the emergent 'collected works' emerged from hidden crevices. It was simply material to work with and from. The concept of a book had not yet been born.

Michael's tutor was Barbara Holroyd from Parkdale Read. It wasn't weeks or months. It was years. But Michael was relentless and kept on writing and editing.

Meanwhile, completely unrelated (sort of), Michael's mother Julie would spend Saturday mornings at the 'Garden Party' - gardening. Like all good gardeners, there was tea time where Julie came to understand that Jack (that's me) was focused on inclusion for people with disabilities. On a chance encounter at a book and movie launch, she found out that I am a publisher. She told me about Michael's 'book' which she had just read for the first time. She had just discovered, much to her shock, that it was indeed a book. She asked if I could take a look and see if it could be animated. Julie and Michael forwarded the manuscript. I had expected a short little booklet which we could 'publish' relatively easily. What we discovered was a beautiful script for a fictional movie. I showed it to two animators who agreed that it was a delightful 'children's movie' but that the animated version was a massive project requiring a large team and a huge budget.

I was all but dejected reporting back to Michael, because the animation project was well beyond my scope. As a consolation prize, I offered that we could publish a short run of his book - so there would be an outcome from all his work. And I thought Michael might be able to show it to others and thus explore the distant possibility of an animated movie.

In our first meeting about the manuscript, I suggested that it would be much stronger if there were some drawings/images to flesh out Michael's imaginative cast. He promptly pulled out an iPad and his sketchbook and showed the sketches he had already done. And so we began.

COVID intervened, but we discovered that we could have Zoom editing meetings, and little by little, Michael directed the layout of his book. He also upgraded to an iPad pro during the journey so the new drawings became more delightful and colourful.

And now, we have a beautiful tribute to creativity and resilience. It is 100% Michael and we hope it is only his first book. His imagination is vibrant. We hope for more.

Jack Pearpoint
Inclusion Press

Acknowledgements

This book has been a project over many months, many years, many dreams, many drawings.

This would not have been possible without the support of many people beginning with my mom, Julie Tang, and my sister Laurel.

Nancy Friday, from Families for Secure Future, helped me gain confidence in making decisions in my learning and projects.

Barbara Holroyd, my tutor, patiently guided me in my reading and writing. She and Mary Brehaut at Parkdale Project Read provided lots of support and encouragement.

Jack Pearpoint, of Inclusion Press, worked with me to turn my manuscript into this book. He also encouraged me to make my own drawings. And we had to invent a way to edit virtually because of the Covid Pandemic.

And now, with all this support, I have a book. Enjoy.

Michael
August, 2020

Characters

Panda

Maya - Leader
Shun
Miki
Sleepy
Bao

Lions

Leo - Leader
Seth
Magma
Suki
Tau

Crabs

Craby - Leader
Lazy
Snappy
Jaws
Raymond

White Tigers

Stealth - Leader
Mira
Tigrerra
Claws
Snowy

Toucans

Sylvio
Aviary

Penguins

Icy
Aqua

Dragons

Shadow - Leader
Aquine
Abomino
Zoey

Snowy Owl

Ace

Woodpeckers

Woody
Pecky

Pythons

Alpha - Leader
Slyther

Wolf Pack

Lexi - Leader
Vicki
Vixxi
Sammi
Roxi
Mysty
Luna
Volpix

Hawks

Surge
Beauty

Boa Constrictors

Flex
Rex

Poisonous Spiders (Tarantulas)

Genie
Gemmie

Albatrosses

Aero
Anjie
Abbie



Maya



Shun



Miki



Bao



Sleepy



The Panda Seals

Chapter One

Traveling to Bamboo Haven

The day of the eclipse where the sun and moon came across each other, there was a dreadful silence all over the hillside. The lion pride disappeared in the shadows and the trees began to shake as another shadow cast over the hillside. The temperature dropped significantly over night. Everywhere was dark, scary and gloomy. What could have caused this and what happened to the sun? While pacing at the cave's entrance, the lion pack gathered for a meeting.

Meanwhile a nature preserve was collapsing on the other side of the forest. All the animals came up with a plan. They were to travel to Bamboo Haven at all costs to understand more about the eclipse and



how to bring back the light and the sun. The blowing wind on the next day caused problems to start the long journey to Bamboo Haven. Despite the conditions the lion pack started anyways.

All the other animals at the nature preserve decided to start their journey. They had contacted their friend

Shun, the Panda that they would be coming. The rain started to come down hard as the journey continued into the tunnels leading towards Bamboo Haven.

“We need to replenish and catch some sleep so we don't lose anyone,” said lion Leo, their leader, as a mysterious cave suddenly appeared in front of them.

All the animals came together at Bamboo Haven to find no one there. The place had caught fire.

A letter for Leo was placed at the half burning doorway. The letter from Maya, panda read, ‘Our Bamboo Haven was destroyed by Craby, crab. You need to find him fast before he destroys other kingdoms to call his own. Our current location cannot be revealed to prevent it falling into the wrong hands. I was writing this letter at the time of the crime. I



have provided a magic key only for those who can understand the secret script. As you may be aware everyone has made it out in time and I alone came back to drop the letter and uncover who might have caused this destruction.’ The letter was engulfed in flames and revealed a rusty key. The key had special markings and was only to be used to open special doors with the same script as was on the key.



“Now time to find where this secret will lead us to. Once we get the secret we will use it to destroy everything and make sure the eclipse stays. Oh...We must keep silent in case Craby sneaks up on us without warning.” exclaimed Leo.

They were all in a panic as parts of the ground beneath them shook violently. The eclipse was causing destruction. Water levels and many more of the things that rely on the sun and moon were disappearing. Many of the pathways were now crumbling making it harder to walk. With no warning the ground

beneath the lions began to crumble. Seth the lion dangled dangerously off the edge. ‘HELP!! HELP!!’, he yelled to the others. It was becoming extremely difficult to rescue Seth. Megma, strongest of the lion pack and Mira the White Tiger, who was the most agile, rushed to rescue Seth. Time wasn’t on their side as sparks and flares ignited rapidly. Fortunately, Mira and Megma pulled Seth to safety just as flying debris struck the area Seth had been hanging onto.

“If we don’t start moving, we will be squished like pancakes,” Mira told the others.

As Mira and Megma were pulling Seth to safety, more cracks gave way. Fire was beginning to come up through the cracks. Suddenly bursts of flames caught Megma’s attention.

“There seems to be no end to countless falling debris and giant bottomless pits,” Stealth yelled. “GIANT HOLE forming under you!!! GIANT HOLE! Get out of there. It’s become unstable and if you fall in, I’ll have to come after you,” he yelled again, but louder.

Everyone had not a clue as what a solar eclipse was or even seen one before. There was now a chill in the air. The surrounding area was pitch black.

“HEAD FOR COVER!! HEAD FOR COVER!!”, screamed everyone as large chunks of flaming debris and massive holes opened in the ground.

“Grab the KEY. It’s the clue and KEEP it safe!!” yelled Leo to his pack or to whomever was closest to the key.

The key was invisible and would appear near twilight hour. Then it would disappear again like magic. It was really not easy to track the key with the disappearing script.

Mira overheard screams and cries from Leo about a key. “There is something unusual about what Leo is shouting. Something about a key? Important? Special? And keep it safe? W-what?”

“I better tell Stealth,” she said while dashing to avoid a falling object.

“You’re too late,” whispered a voice in Mira’s ear. “You’ll never beat Leo, ha.” Mira was frightened by that voice. Then threatening echoes said, “I’ve come to take your life and spirit.’ Not knowing what to expect, Mira answered back fiercely.

“Come out!! Face your WORST NIGHTMARE. I’m ready for you. COME OUT!!!”

Mira was the most agile and fearsome member of the White Tigers. As twilight approached, she caught sight of the key and sped to retrieve it. Other members of the white tiger pack and lions were busy protecting everyone else and guiding them to safety. One of the members of the lion pack decided he would help Mira, the agile white tiger, to retrieve that key. Seth raced towards Mira, who was going for a leaping grab, then collided with her. Seth and Mira had both leaped at the same time, but unfortunately Mira got the worst of the impact. She struggled to get up.

“Why are you doing this? I also want to know if you were the voice that I was hearing. I don’t know if you were the one saying all those threats or if it someone else. YOU MESSED WITH THE WRONG WHITE TIGER!!” growled Mira as she looked at Seth for more explanation. Seth however, said nothing and was pleased with what he’d done. Not knowing Mira was injured, he went to see Leo very happily.

Mira yelled for Stealth as she lay on the ground motionless. Stealth came over to aid Mira. She told Stealth that Seth deliberately came over to injure her to take the key.

“We will force the Lions out, but for now I need you to rest and al-



low your wounds to heal. I will send Sylvio and Aviary, our trusted toucans, to find Leo and the rest of the Lions,” said Stealth as he wiped Mira’s injuries. Mira replied softly, “I’m afraid I won’t be able to travel for a few days. You should hurry to find Leo

and his pack as they move fast and, if you help me here, you won't catch them."

Sylvio and Aviary returned to Stealth exhausted and told him the lions were taking the key to Craby. All the animals, except Mira and Tigrerra, started to chase after the Lions who were almost two days ahead of them.

"Now where were we? Uh... Sylvio and Aviary, please follow Leo and his pack as we track them from the ground," instructed Stealth.

The eclipse had gotten worse and global networks were failing. Mira still wasn't well enough to travel.

"Tigrerra watch over your sister and, when she is ready to travel, follow the tracking lights on the special landmark," directed Stealth as he prepared to leave.



Chapter Two

The Key to a Surprise

The key shone in front of Leo and the pack. Everyone followed closely to the floating key. They were careful not to get lost or left behind. The animals carried the cubs in the wagons and struggled to keep sight of the pack and the key. There were a lot of corners, steps leading downward and upward, narrow tunnels, doors to be opened by the special key. The key stopped and revealed a concealed archway which looked ancient. The key disappeared from sight, then the archway started to glow, but there was a problem up ahead. Craby had cracked open the sealed archway before they reached it. It was a horrible sight. The door was removed from its place and taken away to be burned with the rest of the rubble.

“I need this area protected and searched immediately, plus I don’t want anyone coming or going from this site. We need to cover every



square inch and recover what was lost here. There will be no sleep until we will find Craby and prevent his unlawful actions,” said Leo.

Nothing was found and no trail markings were leading away from the crime scene. The search took days and came to a standstill with no leads.

“Where can I find somebody to help in the search?” Leo cried out as he looked around.

Stealth had the stamina to catch the lions. The lions were going to get a big surprise. Stealth, Claws and Snowy almost gave Leo a heart attack, seeming to appear out of nowhere.

Leo was shocked to see Stealth but was glad he showed up. “How did you?” “Whe... Where did you all come from,” stuttered Leo to Stealth. “Did you know all three of you almost gave me a heart attack!!? How do you walk with no noise?”

Stealth, Claws, and Snowy just kept walking without even looking at Leo. Then Leo remembered something and called out to Stealth, “I’ve got a problem that needs solving. You see we were at an archway and Craby found this place ahead of us. I don’t know how he’s able to beat us to the places we need to go. It is really strange unless something or someone has been sending messages to inform him.”

“The three of us will help in any way we can,” Stealth replied as he gave the signal to Claws and Snowy to start searching.

Now that the white tigers had come, the lions could put their second evil plan to work again. It was going to require another rescue and to cause another white tiger’s injury.

“Megma, follow the white tigers closely. They may be on to me, seeing how furious Stealth was when he noticed Mira was injured by one of our members. We will all need to watch what we do as I’m now a suspect of Stealth. I want to know what sort of movements and developments are occurring around the area. Please keep out of sight as I don’t want you to cause any headaches for me,” Seth explained the caution step to Megma.

Meanwhile, a member of the tigers found something unusual. The area where he was standing had a slightly different sound and a very

small crack that was leading to somewhere else. He started to dig a hole in the ground to a completely new location. He sent out a special signal to let all members know he found a new lead. There lying near a big glass box was a map of the Bamboo Haven. In the letter, the map was not mentioned but was the most valuable clue - the key to reforming the Bamboo Haven. It could only be unlocked by Maya, panda.

Mira and Tigrerra slowly made their way to Stealth. Mira was still limping. Her front right leg and right side of her body was swollen. They avoided any detection as they saw Stealth in the distance.

“There is one way we could find the pandas and have them crack the code. Travel to find them, but we need to cross several areas of land. We will use this map to guide us along the way. Once we have the code cracked we will betray the pandas and take them prisoner,” laughed the cunning Lions.

Mira overheard their plot to make prisoners of her friends. She whispered something to Stealth – White Tiger leader. They decided to steal the note from Leo then take off on another route to find the pandas themselves.

One foggy night Claws skillfully tracked his way to where Leo was sleeping and seized the letter and map, replacing them with realistic fake ones.

Stealth carefully instructed Aqua and Icy, penguins, with the important task of delivering their message to Maya, panda, requesting assistance. The time to leave was now and they split up in three groups. There was a well planned surprise if the lions and Craby did catch up. They would not know what hit them. There was a trap planned and if anyone got caught, their life will be lost. The idea was to make more confusion to throw off the lions searching for where the pandas might be hiding.

Mira and Stealth led the way out at dawn. Once the lions finally woke up, everyone was gone and nowhere to be found. The three groups were making progress as they made their way through thick forests, deserts, and icy lands. They stopped every now and then for a short time to rest and take in food and water.

The route that Aqua was taking led straight to the pandas' hideout area. After travelling for miles and days Aqua reached the destination of a discreet area well hidden in the rocks. There was a camouflaged doorway that led towards a lit tunnel, guest area, great room, and more. He was led to an office where he was greeted warmly by Maya.

"I've got a message for you from Stealth. He is also on his way here," said Aqua.

After delivering the message, Aqua left the Panda hideout careful not to give away where it might be. He went through the hidden back door to rejoin Stealth.

Meanwhile the lion pack was furious to see everyone had gone. They were reckless and began their walk in search of the white tigers. Everywhere they searched was a dead end. The white tigers had disappeared far into the forests. There was no time to lose as all lions ran through the dense forest trees. The white tigers were at an ice crossing which had frozen over. One by one everyone made it across. The wind blew and icicles formed, but they had to carry onward.

Back in the forest the laidback lions got lost and hadn't a clue of which way to go. A dangerous cliff lay ahead in the path of the lions. The slippery surface made it almost impossible to cross over.

Craby popped out suddenly and was determined to make it to the other side with a move of walking sideways. He reached the other side safely, and then waved his one claw to the lions. Easy as it may have looked for Craby, the lions held an emergency huddle. The lions split into two packs and went around the main pathway. They met up moments later with Craby to plan a strategic way to outsmart the white tigers.

Down at the Bamboo Haven the pandas were making adjustments in case their building fell to ruins again.

Icy got a little tired of all the walking and decided instead of walking he'd slide on the ice. "The map is leading us straight to Bamboo Haven. We are getting closer. Just across the icy surface towards the leading edge of the Rocky Mountains, we will see our destination," exclaimed Mira cheerfully.