

Chapter - 13

The Tiger in the Tunnel

Summary

Tembu, a twelve-year-old boy, and his family are central to the plot. He shared a home with his father, Baldeo, his mother, and his younger sister. Tembu's father, Baldeo, was a hardworking man who always made sure his family had enough to eat. They were impoverished and lived in the midst of a forest.

Baldeo was a watchman who worked as a watchman near a railway tunnel. Baldeo was in charge of keeping the signal lamp lit and the tunnel clear of any obstructions for the train passing through it. Baldeo was killed in the scuffle between him and the Tiger, and his body was later discovered by his son Tembu.

Tembu later took on the same responsibilities as his father after Baldeo's death, and he exhibited the same confidence and determination.

Important points from the text:

- Tembu, a twelve-year-old boy, and his family are central to the plot. He shared a home with his father, Baldeo, his mother, and his younger sister. They resided in an Indian tribal village on the outskirts of a jungle. They were poor, so Baldeo worked as a watchman near a railway tunnel to supplement his income.
- Baldeo's task was to keep the signal lamp burning while also ensuring that there were no obstructions in the tunnel and that the train could pass through.
- Villagers in Tembu's village regularly told and shared stories about a "man-eating" tiger that was frequently sighted near the tunnels.
- Baldeo was well aware of the terrible risks, but he was confident in his abilities to confront the wild.
- Tembu occasionally accompanied his father on his job, and slept inside the little hut. Not only was he familiar with the jungle, but he always carried a weapon.
- He was confident in his abilities, and he also knew how to use a tiny axe deftly and efficiently.
- Tembu awoke one night to see his father checking the signal bulb and decided to follow him. But Baldeo advised Tembu to stay in the hut for his own safety.
- Soon he found the ground shaking which was due to an oncoming train. As Baldeo looked in front, a tiger suddenly appeared at the entrance of the tunnel and approached toward Baldeo. When the tiger attacked, Baldeo stepped to the side and struck the tiger with his axe. Both of them battled tirelessly, but in the end, Baldeo succumbed to his injuries.
- Tembu discovered his father's shattered body in the tunnel. The sobbing youngster stayed with his father's lifeless body all night to keep scavenger animals like hyenas away from it.
- The family struggled with the loss for many days, and after mourning Tembu returned to the tunnel and continued his father's job. Devoted to his father's legacy, he ensured that the signal light was always lit and cleared all the hindrances in the tunnel. He also carried the same axe which was a tribute to his late father and as a commitment to protect his family. Tembu, became the new protector and breadwinner of his family.

Important words from the text:

- Occasionally: sometimes/ at irregular intervals
- Faint: indistinct/ vague
- Swallow: to eat
- Huddle: to gather together
- Drowsy: sleepy/dozy
- Eeriness: something strange or ghostly
- Fragile: easily breakable or damaged
- A Low Grunt: to make low rough noise
- Fearlessly: brave/lack for fear
- Marvelously: extraordinary/ amazing

Evaluate yourself:

1. “The station, a small shack backed by heavy jungle, was a station in name only.” Why?
2. What was Baldeo responsible for?
3. What weapon did Baldeo carry? Who had made it?
4. How did Baldeo die?
5. Why did Tembu take up his father’s job soon after his death?

Do you know?

The magnificent Sundarbans jungle is particularly well-known around the world for the amount of tiger attacks. Sundarbans is the world's biggest mangrove forest and home to approximately 500 Bengal tigers. The Sundarbans' Man-Eaters tigers frequently kill 50 or 60 people every year and dwell quite near to human communities. Between 2014 and 2019, tigers murdered 225 people in India, including 31 in Maharashtra alone in 2020.

Extend your horizons

“An 'intelligent' man-eating tiger has killed its 8 victims in an Indian forest and continues to evade the hunters who were sent to track it down”

Do your research and find out more information about on India the history of man eating tigers in India.