

The Mountain Lion Twins

of the Beartooth Mountains



A FICTIONAL STORY OF TWO MOUNTAIN
LIONS GROWING UP IN MONTANA



It is a warm day in May in the Beartooth Mountains of Montana. In a hole left by the roots of a fallen tree, a mountain lion mother gives birth to two kittens. They weigh less than one pound! The kittens are covered in dark spots with rings on their tails. They do not look much like their mother, who is all brown.



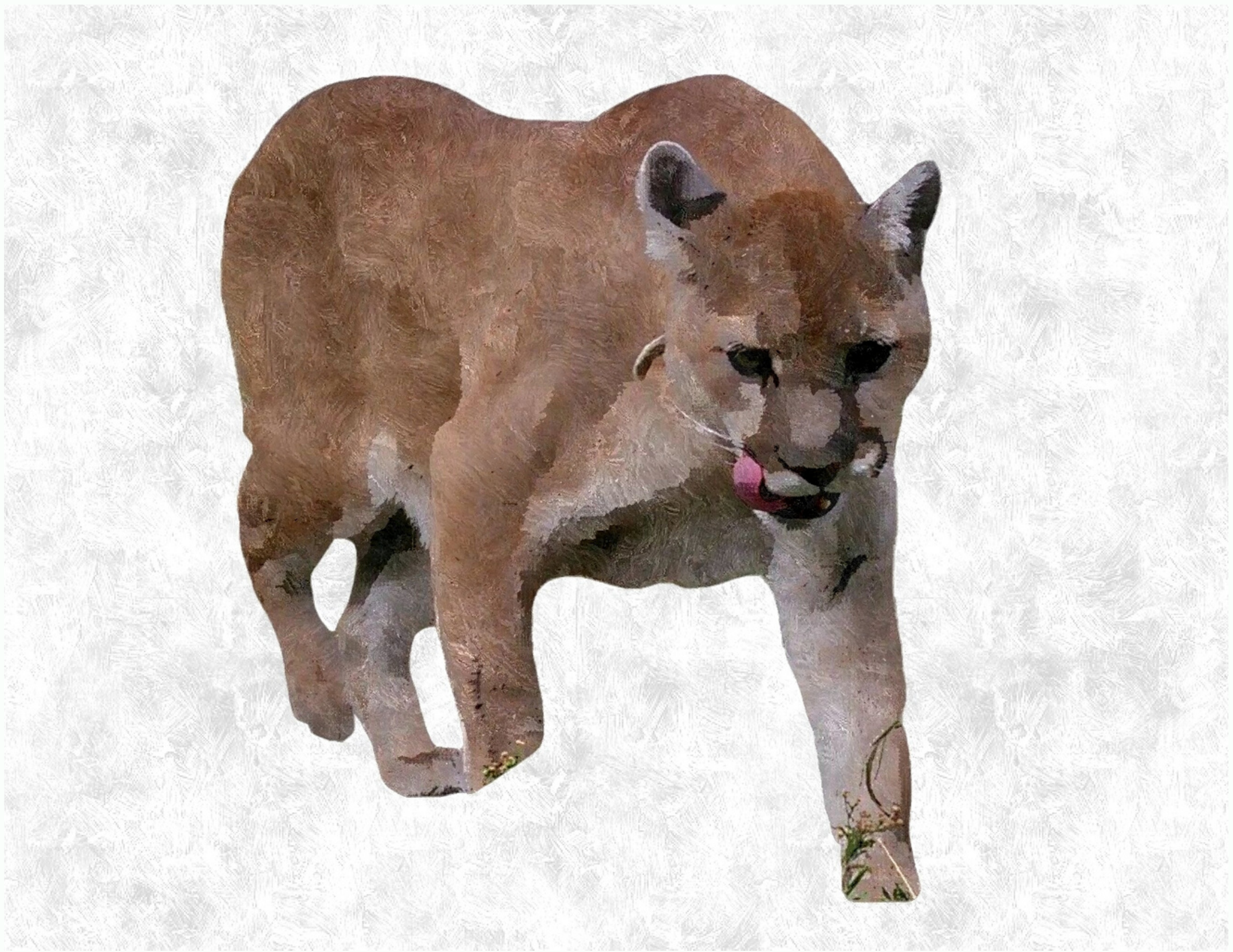
The kittens are now two weeks old and their eyes open for the first time. They have bright blue eyes! One day they will be carnivores, but for now they drink milk from their mother. She has to leave them to hunt for food. Mother makes sure not to travel too far from her den.

**Now 4 weeks old, the kittens
are getting their sharp canines!
Their bodies are getting ready
to hunt prey, just like mom!
Soon their molars will grow in.
These will help them to tear
meat when they are ready.**





At 7 weeks old, mother now carries her kittens to her kill sites. She moves them to several dens in their home range. A couple dens are in a cavity beneath a tree. Another den is in a rock crevice. Moving her kittens around protects them from predators. Moving around their home is an important lesson that the kittens learn from their mothers.



The kittens are now 3 months old!
Mother will leave them with her
kill while she hunts for more food.
Mother can now travel further
away from her kittens. She might
be gone for days! The kittens play.
They practice their natural
instincts of stalking, pouncing and
wrestling. Their spots camouflage
them from predators while mother
is away.



A few months pass. Now at 6 months old, the two kittens are able to catch and kill their own prey. They still need a lot of practice, so they stay with mom for a while longer. They still have a lot to learn from her.

As they travel with their mother, the two kittens learn how to bury their food so other animals like bears and wolves do not steal it. She also teaches them that different mountain lions will travel the same paths. Their mother shows them how to communicate with the other mountain lions by leaving scents behind.





One day, the kittens find an interesting critter with long spikes. It's a porcupine! The kittens are curious and think they can easily kill it. Mother stops them and the kittens learn that porcupine quills are dangerous. They learn from her not to eat porcupines and she teaches them which prey are better for mountain lions.

These lessons are important for the kittens. Mountain lions who do not become good hunters may begin to wander into places where people live to find easier food, like livestock or pets.



The twins are now 15 months old. They have completely lost their spots and blue eyes. They now have their mother's coat that will camouflage them as they stalk their prey. Mother is ready to have more kittens and so they leave her to find their own home range.



**This story is adapted from true
biological information about
the early life of mountain lions.**

**Photos are taken and edited by
the Yellowstone Wildlife
Sanctuary.**

**To learn more about mountain
lions and conservation efforts
to protect them, visit
mountainlion.org**