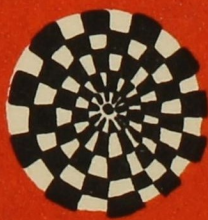


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Fairy Tales
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of the North



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The Tiger and the Boy

An Ulchi Fairy Tale



It all happened long, long ago. Out hunting in the forest one day were a man and his son. The son was still a child and could not hunt well, but he helped his father by brewing tea and chopping wood.

Night came, they went to sleep, and the father saw a dream. In the dream a tiger appeared before him and said:

“Leave your son to me. If you don’t, I won’t let you go home but will kill both of you.”

The father rose while the son was still asleep.

“What shall I do?” he asked himself. “Am I to save my life at the cost of my child’s? Yet, if I don’t leave him to the tiger, both of us will die. This is what I shall do. I will go home and stay there a little while and then come back here again to see how my son has fared.”

This settled, the father went home, leaving his son asleep in the forest.

The boy slept on. When at last he woke he looked round for his father, and, not seeing him anywhere, told himself that he must have gone hunting. Throwing on his clothes, he came out of the tent just to see if his father was anywhere near. He looked to all sides of him, and lo!—there, running toward him, was a tiger. Terrified, the boy rushed to a tree and climbed to its very top. It had large, twisting branches that met and interlocked, and when the tiger tried to climb after him he was caught fast and could not move.

Evening arrived, but the father did not come, and the boy, who felt very comfortable in the top of the tree, went to sleep. He slept very soundly and soon found himself dreaming, and in his dream he saw the tiger who wept and sobbed and promised to shower him with all sorts of gifts if only he would rescue him.

The boy woke, and, seeing that the tiger's plight was indeed a sorry one, leapt to the top of another tree and then climbed down to the ground. He brewed some tea, prepared a meal for his father and sat down to wait for him.

Morning came, and the boy took an axe and spent the day chopping the tree which held the tiger prisoner. The tree came down at last, and the tiger, free now, gave three loud roars and stole away into the deep of the forest.

Night came round again, and the boy saw another dream in which the tiger said to him:

"Get up early, set the traps and draw a circle round them."

The boy did as the tiger told him, and on the next day he inspected the traps and saw that there was a sable in each. And this went on for several days on end, the boy setting the traps and getting a rich return for his trouble.

Some time passed, and the father, who had been living at home, decided to see how his son was faring. He came to the forest, and when he neared the tent and saw smoke coiling over it, knew at once that his son was alive. He opened the door, and there, sitting in the tent, was the boy, with sable skins piled all about him!

The father threw his arms round him and kissed him over and over again. They sat down and ate and went to bed, and in the morning set out for home, taking all the sable skins with them.

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