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THE TIGER AND THE MONK  
A Korean Folk Tale

Long, long ago, when animals could talk, a Buddhist monk was walking through the forest.

Suddenly he heard a shout. "Help, help! Somebody help me!" came the cry.

The monk looked all over, but he didn't see anyone.

"Where are you?" he shouted, "I don't see you."

"Look down," "I'm in a hole in the ground."

The monk found a pit dug in the ground and there in the pit cowered a huge tiger.

"Well, I'm really sorry for you," replied the monk, but I know that all tigers have a very fierce nature, so if I get you out, you will undoubtedly eat me. No, sorry, I can't help you."

The tiger, said, "I swear to you that I will not eat you. I will be forever grateful. Help me, please!"

Now the softhearted monk thought of how the Buddha taught never to hurt any animal and this animal was certainly being hurt, so he decided to help him. He found a large branch and put it in a hole so that the tiger could climb out.

Now, tigers being what they are, no sooner was the tiger out when he forgot his promise.

"I'm starved," said the tiger. "What do I care about a promise when I haven't eaten in two days?" And he advanced toward the monk.

"Wait" cried the monk. "Let's get some other opinions on this."

"Well, all right," said the tiger, "But hurry up about it!"

The monk and the tiger found an ox at work in a field nearby.

"Listen, Ox," said the monk, "I saved this tiger's life. He was in a pit and couldn't get out. He would surely have died if I hadn't helped him. He promised not to eat me, but now he wants to back on his promise and he insists on eating me. What do you think about this?"

The ox said, "Well, people make us oxen work very hard every day and when we can't work any more they eat us, so I say a human deserves the same. Let the tiger go ahead and eat you."

"Wait," cried the monk. "This is only one opinion. Let's ask that tree."

"Well," said the tree, "You people just cut us down for wood when we don't hurt you. I don't see why you shouldn't be destroyed too. I say, let the tiger go ahead and eat you."

"There said the tiger gleefully, "You heard him. Now I will eat you."

By now the monk was really worried. "No, no," he cried, "Let's get one more opinion."

"Alright, growled the tiger, but only one more.

Just then they spied a rabbit hopping by.

They told their story to the rabbit, who listened intently, looking first at the tiger and then at the monk.

Hmmm, said the rabbit. I'd really like to understand this better. Let's go back to where this happened."

So the monk, the tiger and the rabbit went back to the pit.

"Now," said the rabbit, "What happened first?"

"I was trapped in that hole," said the tiger.  
"But this branch wasn't there then."

The rabbit peered into the pit.

"I can't imagine it just be hearing about it." He said. "Why don't you show me how it was?"

So the tiger jumped into the pit.

"I was caught like this in the pit and I couldn't get out, so I called for help." he said.

"Yes said the monk, "and he would surely have died if I hadn't helped him so, I put that branch in for him to climb out on. He promised not to eat me if I helped him."

"Oh, I see," said the rabbit. "Now it's very clear. You saved this tiger's life. He was in the pit and couldn't get out. He would surely have died if you hadn't helped him. He promised not to eat you but now he wants to go back on his promise and insists on eating you. I say, **we should just leave him here!**"

So, the tiger went hungry that day, the monk went on his way and the rabbit hopped home to his family.