

The Tiger and the Persimmon

Deep in the mountains, there was a small, quiet village, and on the mountain behind this village lived an enormous tiger, a terrible beast whose roar would make every creature tremble for miles around. One snowy winter evening, the tiger was hungry and he crept down into the village to get something to eat.

By and by, the tiger came to a house and paused outside the window where a baby was crying inside. "Aaang! Aaang! Aaang!" The child sounded exhausted, as if he had been crying for a long time, and yet he went on and on without pause.

"What an annoying brat," thought the tiger. "By eating him, I'll put an end to this racket." He had a quick peek into the room, and he was just about to leap inside when he heard the baby's mother.

"Look! A fox!" she said. "Stop crying or he'll hear you and come eat you up!"

The baby was hardly distracted—he cried just as loudly. The mother tried to comfort the child, then to cajole him, but he would not stop. So she tried again. "Look! It's a bear! He's opening his huge jaws to eat you up!"

But the baby wasn't frightened at all. He kept right on crying without even the smallest interruption.

Crouching outside the window, the tiger pondered this. "What sort of baby is not afraid of foxes or bears?" he thought. "Surely, this is a brave child." He was full of admiration, but then the rumble in his belly reminded him why he had come down into the village, and he prepared to pounce into the room.

"Look!" cried the mother, "The big tiger from the mountain is here, right outside the window!"

At that, the tiger paused. "Let's see how terrified he is before I eat him," he thought, and he peeked into the room to gloat. But the baby was still crying without the slightest sign of fear.

The tiger had never, in his long years, come across a human or an animal that did not fear him. Even the trees and stones trembled at his approach. But this boy—what manner of child was he that he did not fear a tiger? The tiger was troubled by this question, but in the end he was a tiger, and he decided to resolve the issue by eating the child.

But just as he was about to pounce, the mother cried, "Look! A persimmon!" and the baby stopped in mid-cry. Just like that! Not a peep.

In the sudden silence, a terrible idea occurred to the tiger. "A Persimmon!" he thought. "More fearsome than a fox or a bear! Even more terrible than me! What a horrible monster it must be!" He quickly glanced left and right, his heart pounding with fear. "I'm done for if the Persimmon sees me," he thought, and in a single leap he left the village and ran away back up into the mountain.