

The Tiger and the Artist

Grandfather was saying goodnight to the grandchildren who had come to stay the night with him and grandmother. They got to talking about all the interesting animals they each had seen in their lives.

Grandfather was a wildlife specialist and did his best to learn about as many local creatures as he could. He was also a great artist and had painted an array of all kinds animals—from colourful butterflies, to pets, to even what he thought dinosaurs could have looked like.

Some of these reptilian creatures were reported to have existed in this area many, many years before. Natives had stories passed down to them, and some had also preserved records of their animal sightings by making pictures on rock.

“Did you ever see a tiger?” his young granddaughter asked him.

“Well, yes I did. I’m sure you’ve heard the story,” he said.

They all giggled. They knew it well, but they liked to hear it again and again. The way Grandfather could tell of even simple events, and make them sound interesting, was all the more amplified when he told of more dramatic and surprising happenings.

“Guess what?” he announced to the children. “Your uncle has just written a new chapter in his book about the history of this village. He gave it to me to look over. I happen to have it with me today.

“This chapter includes a written account of my tiger sighting. Would you like to hear it?”

The children nodded.

“But first, now, where are my glasses? Oh, there they are. Okay, let me sit over here by this lamp and read it to you, while you sit back and try to imagine it.”

Grandfather sat over in the arm chair, took a sip of water and cleared his throat. He began to read:

The tiger crept every so silently around the hut in its native land. However, those inside slept peacefully under their mosquito nets.

Though they knew there was possible danger in all parts of this jungle, they trusted in God to protect them. That evening, before going to bed, they did what they knew best to preserve and keep them, while living in these wild and unpredictable areas.

After their evening meal of cooked rice, bananas and papaya, as was their custom, they huddled together by the light of a single lantern.

While insects, attracted by the light zoomed and fluttered around, the family prayed and committed their safe keeping to the One that formed the jungle and all manner of creatures and plants there in.

Though the night was hot and muggy, and the buzz of eager mosquitoes was often heard, there was something else on the mind of these daring ones; something that gave them the bravery to endure these tropical conditions.

This was a team of artists, and their goal was to draw, right from seeing things in the wild, the most vivid and realistic pictures of God's Creation that they could.

There was no electricity coming to their abode, neither was there running water. Water had to be fetched carefully from the stream—making sure no other water seekers of the troublesome type were there to share it at the same time.

Near the hut was a large tall tree. The tree went straight up until a good height. This was the perfect type to adopt as a tree house watch tower. A lot could be seen from up there. Birds from the trees around could be seen up close. A good view of the landscape all around was seen up there.

The bugs that seemed to enjoy living close to the ground and near water sources didn't bother to come up there. Of course there was the risk of falling, or of having to stay up there for a long while, should they be "treed" by an unwanted prowler.

The team built this place and added to it a rope-and-branch ladder. They would take turns drawing, painting and observing from up there.

The others on the ground level would find beautiful tropical flowers to sketch, right as they were growing.

Some plants that would take more time to draw, or if a special little plant was discovered late in the day, these could be dug up and placed in a pot and brought back to the hut to be sketched then.

For three months this team lived there, ate there, explored there, and drew and painted as many gorgeous pictures as they could. When at last they returned to their home village

again, they had many stories to tell along with the pictures they showed.

The team of artists took turns showing their works of art and telling the story and situation behind each picture. It was all so fascinating to those in the little village.

The one that perhaps attracted the most interest and questions was the painting of a tiger.

When that picture was shown, everyone got very quiet wanted to hear the full, complete and detailed story. They knew it would be interesting.

The artist, who is my father, took a breath and began to give the detailed account of that memorable event. He said:

“Ever since I was a young lad, tigers fascinated me. I liked them at a distance, only, of course. But I always wished there was a friendly type.

“I wanted a tiger that could be like a family pet for us—like a very large cat. It could keep the rats away, and chase away other wild creatures that were troublesome, yet a tiger that ate fruits and drank milk from a plate. A gentle one.

“I knew that this didn’t exist, but still I always wished such a thing would.

“Well, one night while going to sleep I heard some creeping around our hut. Now, there are always nocturnal animals doing what they must do at night.

“I can’t say it was something I got used to, because you never could quite see what was going on around you. Besides praying for safe keeping in the night, you couldn’t give yourself the visual satisfaction that all was fine and good.

“You just had to sleep and trust that all would be. Anyway, the sounds around our hut that night were a little bit different; there was a sound I hadn’t heard before.

“It was a very quiet creeping, like something was trying to be as unnoticed as possible.

“Just then something amazing happened. I looked out the window, hoping that some glimmer of moonlight would give me a clue as to what was going on in the night scene—perhaps even give me something to remember and draw the next day.

“All of a sudden a flash of lightning lit up my view, and there, half behind a bush was a large, striped and creeping tiger!

“At first I was stunned, in a way, thinking, ‘What were they going to do? Why were they there? Do they see me?’

“Well, the next flash of lightning, accompanied by a loud crack of thunder, and soon pouring rain, seemed to make it take off deep into the jungle, for that is what I saw when the third lightning struck.

“I lay down again, glad that the tiger was on its way elsewhere, yet after a few moments I smiled. I was glad, too, that it had been there; glad that I got to see it so very close, and still be safe and unharmed.

This was only a few days before we left, so I didn’t have a chance to see it again. But the flash of the lightning acted like flash of a camera to my eyes as I peered out into that dark jungle all around.

That made the image stick to my mind. I spent the next two days drawing and painting this picture.

“As you can see the scene around show very dark, nearly

black green colouring, then you have the silvery blue reflection on a few wet plant leaves of lightning flashing.

“Then you see in the picture the orange and black tiger half-way out from behind the bush, beginning to run. Of, course in that lighting that night I didn’t see it in all its full colour, but since I know well the colouring, to make the picture show good contrast, I painted it in this way.”

Everyone clapped. They were glad to have these brave artist safely back home again, and glad to get a closer look at some of the wonders in the jungle that they had never ventured into.

Much of the art was when placed in picture frames and displayed in the central meeting venue for the community.

These pictures showed how amazingly designed and beautiful nature is, and also declared the stories of protection when in a challenging situation. The pictures gave hope to others to take steps of courage to do what they felt was needed and good.

The chapter portion ended, and Grandfather tucked it back away in his bag. “Good night my dears,” he said. “Perhaps tomorrow I can give you some artistic pointers and tips for drawing. Would you like that?”

The children were glad, and went to sleep looking forward to their art class with Grandfather the next day.

Perhaps they hoped too that one day he would take them out deeper into the jungle to explore and even discover the hidden living treasures there.

