



Our Big Orange Tiger

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Fable

A big orange tiger once roamed the countryside, hunting and eating whatever he could catch. But it was hard work, with lots of chasing and catching and there were times he couldn't find enough to keep from going hungry. Then one day he had an idea.

The big orange tiger wandered into a village and saw an opportunity for one such as he. "I am hungry!" he announced with a roar.

The anxious villagers hid in their homes.

The big orange tiger showed a toothy grin, and added: "If you will find food for me I will let you ride on my back and you will be safe. Believe me. I am very big and orange, the biggest and orangest tiger in all the land. But I am also the nicest tiger, too, who only eats things that deserve eating."

Some of the villagers were assured by this and knew people in a nearby village who they were sure deserved to be eaten. "They are not as good as us because they speak funny." They led the tiger to this village and watched with delighted surprise as the big orange tiger gobbled up the people who spoke funny just as they had asked.

With his belly full to bursting, the big orange tiger curled up for a nap. The villagers went into the empty homes of the neighboring villagers and took whatever they wanted because the people who were eaten certainly didn't need it anymore.

"Now you may ride on my back," the big orange tiger said after he awoke. "It will be so much fun." So some of

the villagers climbed upon his broad back and laughed at their interesting change in fortune.

Before too long, the big orange tiger roared again, this time louder. "I am hungry! Find me more to eat!"

The villagers found they liked riding the tiger. They felt so powerful! More of them climbed on. "He only eats the people we tell him too," they whispered to each other.

"There is another village that deserves to be eaten because we are sure we work harder than they do," they told the big orange tiger. "Eat them!" And so the tiger did as they suggested. He ate everyone in this other village and again laid down to sleep.

The villagers riding the tiger were pleased by this, and they took all they could carry from the empty homes of the recently eaten people. They assured each other they could climb down from the tiger's back whenever they wanted. "And look how peaceful he is when he sleeps! He is just a big orange kitten!" Now the whole village climbed aboard. Some of them painted themselves orange to show the tiger they were just like him.

The villagers had a meeting on the back of the big orange sleeping tiger. "We will have him eat the people who think they are smarter than us!" one said. "They definitely deserve to be eaten!" They voted and everyone agreed.

This time, the big orange tiger did not even have to roar when he woke up. The villagers had already rounded up the people who they believed thought they were smarter than them. The tiger promptly ate his fill as the villagers cheered his every bite.

Now the villagers had everything they wanted, with no strange-speaking or lazy people, or people who they believed thought they were smarter to worry about. "Now all will be as good as it never was before! Even better!" they said.

A village leader stood up on the big orange tiger's back. "Now we can ask the tiger to leave," he said. "There is no one left to eat." They took a vote and everyone agreed.

The tiger woke up and yawned. The village leader leaned over his shoulder and spoke in his ear. "Thank you very much, oh great orange tiger. Now you may leave, for we have fed you all we can. Now we would like to get down and return to our homes."

The big orange tiger calmly licked his paws. "You can come down," he said.

"You will not eat us, right?" a villager asked.

"I am not hungry at the moment, thanks to you," the tiger said.

"And you will leave now, right?" the villagers said.

"Why would I do that?" the tiger answered.

"There is no one left to eat!" the villagers cried.

The big orange tiger stood up and gave a little shake, the villagers clutching his fur. "You are welcome to stay on my back," he said with a purr, "for as long as you can."

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