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The Tiger and the Cat

Once there was a tiger. He was the cat's uncle. One day the tiger left the forest and went to town. At the outskirts of the town he saw a cat. He said, "We are animals of the same family.

Look at me. You are only one tenth or one twentieth of my size."

The cat replied, "It is because of the human being. Have you ever seen a man or suffered from authority?"

"No, I have not," the tiger said, "What does he look like? Show me one. Tell me about him."

Then the cat said, "If you happen to get close to a man, he will stroke you from head to tail. This will cause you to become seven times smaller than your actual size."

"That is strange," the tiger said, "but tell me more about man."

"A woman, on the other hand," continued the cat, "is also powerful in her own way. When a woman is displeased with someone, she can throw the bread she is baking seven times."¹

¹This is the literal translation. It makes no sense as it is. What is the figure of speech being used here? Is this a metaphor? For what?

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The tiger asked the cat to show him a man. The cat said, "All right. Follow me."

On their way they saw a donkey. The tiger asked, "Is this man?"

"No," the cat replied, "This is one of man's means of transporta-

Man rides him. Compared to man, this animal is of no importance."

Next they saw camels on their way. The tiger asked, "Are these men?"

The cat answered, "No, Man uses several of these animals each time to carry loads for him."

"What kind of a being is man, then?" the tiger asked. Then they came across a horse. The tiger asked hopefully, "Is this man?"

"No, this is another of man's servants. Man rides him when he wants to go places fast."

Finally they reached a valley and heard sounds of an ax cutting wood. The cat said, "If I am not mistaken, you will soon see a man."

followed the sound and saw a woodsman cutting timber.

The tiger went up to the man and challenged him: "I want to wrestle with you. I understand you are very powerful. You have oppressed my relatives, the cats. Can you win over me?"

The man replied, "You claim to be powerful. Prove your power to me by cutting this wood. I've almost finished cutting it, anyway."

"It is a simple thing to do," the tiger said, "I can certainly do it." The tiger hit the tree trunk with his strong paw, but his

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claw got stuck in the wood, and he could not move.²

In the meantime the cat had climbed a tree, and he shouted at the tiger, "Are you finally convinced of man's superiority?"

"Yes, I am," the tiger answered. "I only wish he would let me live. Then I would be satisfied to be as small as you are." The man took out his sword and killed the helpless tiger.³

²This is a most unlikely turn of events. Usually in this tale the large cat is incapacitated by having his claws wedged in a log. The man is splitting a log with axe and wedges. He asks the tiger to help hold the partially split log apart. Then he removes the wedges and the lion's (or tiger's) claws are caught in this vise. With his axe the woodman then kills the animal.

³Again there is a follow-up moral tag--something which the ex-school-teacher could not seem to resist. He comments, after the tale is over, that it points up the fact that man's intelligence is superior to the greater physical strength of animals.