

Last

Ascent

By Emilia L

An alternate ending of a popular Korean myth

Brother and Sister Who Became the Sun and Moon, a popular children's folk tale follows the story of two children escaping a murderous tiger. The children escape to heaven on an iron rope, while the tiger is impure and evil and receives a rotten rope instead. The tiger falls, and his blood dyes the sorghum below red. This story shows the consequences of evil and how lying never leads you to a good place. The version I have written manages to keep the theme of the original while also providing a piece of myself. Enjoy!

"Please, Hwanin, save us!" the little children up above me cry.

I am climbing this lanky pine they chose as sanctuary, readying myself to pounce and devour them. Their mother was as foolish and naive as them. So children shouldn't be too much of a problem. I imagine their soft, fatty flesh and my mouth salivates. It's been too long since I've feasted like this.

But my dreams are dashed away when their prayers are received. What? A rope from the heavens comes out, and the little twerps start to climb it. No, no, no. This can't be happening. I try to catch up, to go faster, but even my strong tiger muscles have reached their end. I growl, vowing to get my revenge.

And then, an idea strikes. Pray like them. Channeling my inner goody-two-shoes, I climb to the top of the tree, put my paws together, and ask for a rope to the world above. I can finally treat myself, it looks like. A sly grin is plastered on my face. I just can't help it.

Suddenly, light flashes before me, and the rope of my dreams comes to life. It leads to Heaven. The gods have answered my prayer. Climbing and climbing, I reach a cloudy land. Mist is everywhere, and many people and creatures alike roam around. But no children, nor god in sight. I clear my throat and shout again. If I can get the great Hwawin's attention, maybe I'll be able to find those nifty kids.

"Please, Hwanin! I am a good soul!" I beg, groveling on my knees. But the god isn't listening. Nothing happens. Perhaps he's just somewhere else?

"Hwanin! Help me!" I cry, while running in this vast cloud world. And this time, someone talks back.

"Welcome, tiger!" The world starts to glow, and the friendly god pops up. "While your life on earth might have been nice, heaven is a lot nicer!"

"That's great and all, but two kids came here and I'm looking for them."

The immortal pushes me in the right direction, and I quickly reach the kids I've been looking for this whole time. But as I creep up on them, ready to deliver the quick bite of my fangs, I feel...repulsed. Like I don't want to eat them.

"Ah, Tiger! As you can see, in these heavens, you always feel satisfied, so no more human substances for your little stomach!" the god cries. He had been following me this whole time?

No. This can't be. I'll never be able to eat the foods I love and cherish now. The god pokes my fur, and I'm being blown down, down, down, into a different world.

"Welcome." A lady stands in front of me. Bari, the goddess of the underworld.