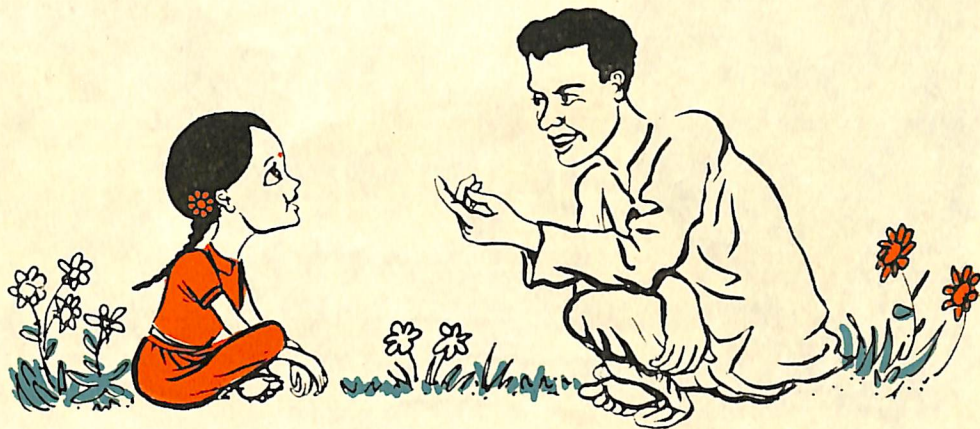


No 1

Vibha and the Tiger

by Anasuya Paithankar illustrated by David Bygott





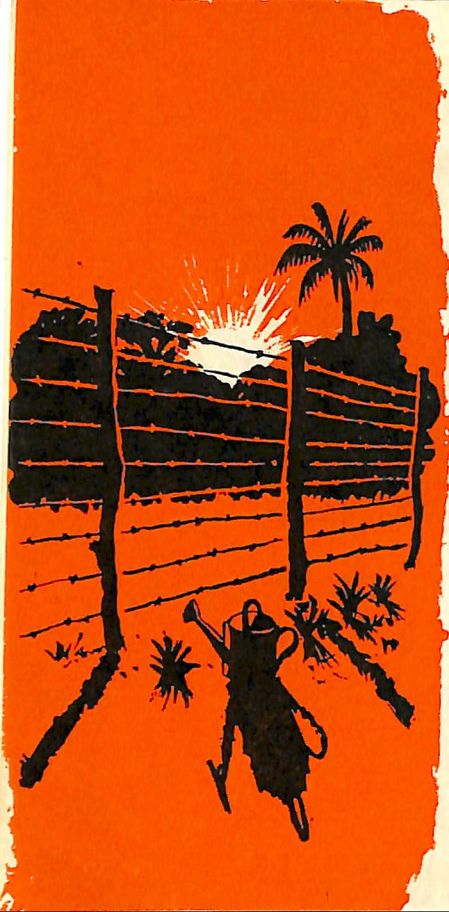
ONCE there was a little girl called Vibha. She had a red dress, which she loved wearing. Often she would put a flower in her hair and then she looked very pretty. Vibha's father was kind and loving. She used to ask him many questions, and his answers would always satisfy her.



Their home was quite a long way from their village. In front of the house they had made a beautiful garden, which had guava and banana trees, vegetables and flowers in it. There was a strong barbed-wire fence all around the house and garden.



A little distance to the north of their house was the beginning of a deep forest, in which many wild animals lived. There was one tiger there who would come out of the forest during daytime and wander around near the fence.



One evening Vibha's father was relaxing in a chair in the garden. Vibha was watering the marigolds. Her father called her, so she put the watering can on the ground and ran over to where he was sitting. Her father put his hand on her shoulder and said,

"Look here, child. Don't go too near that fence. I've seen a tiger wandering around here. Do be careful."

Vibha looked at him and said,

"Yes, Father."

Her father smiled and said,

"There's a good girl. Now go on with your work, and soon you will see beautiful flowers growing over there."

So Vibha went back to her work.





Some days went by. Vibha often used to see the tiger. He didn't look very dangerous—he would come up to the fence and look at the garden and at Vibha as if he were calling her. Vibha would continue her work without paying any attention to the tiger. Then the tiger would turn around and go away. Gradually this became a daily habit.

Then one day Vibha thought, "Is this tiger really so dangerous? I think he likes our garden: perhaps he wants to make friends with me. I wonder what he would do if I went near the fence?"

Then she remembered what her father had said, "Child, don't go too near the fence."

She stopped thinking about the tiger and started doing her work.



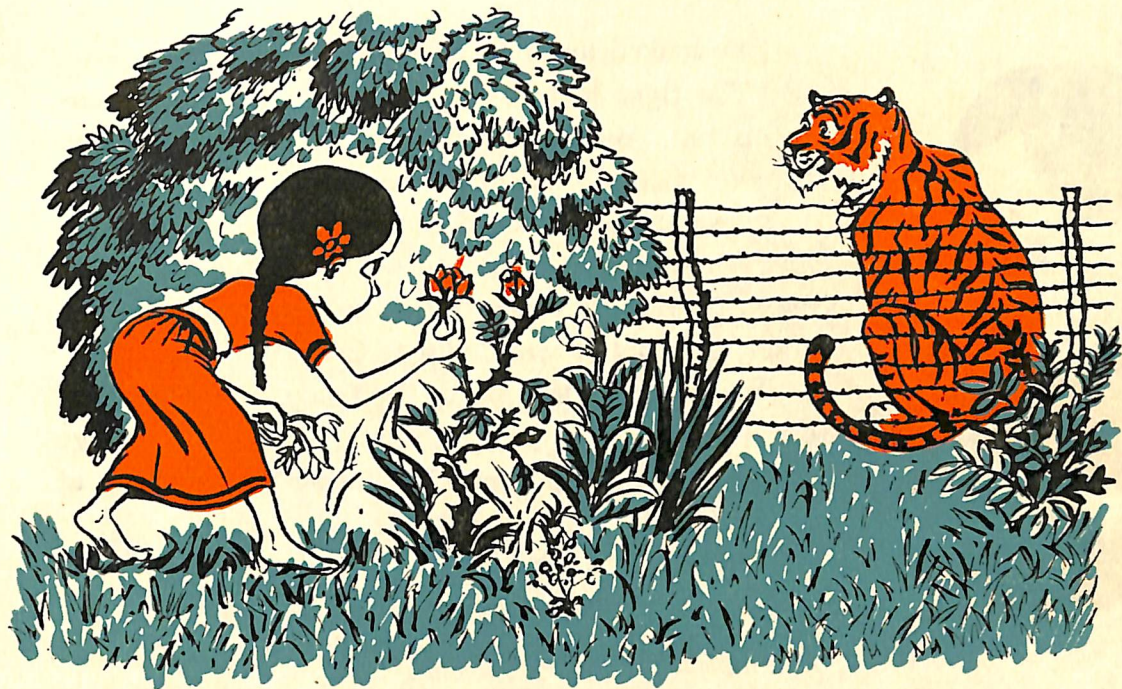
The next day, Vibha and her father were going to visit their sick friend in the village. He was very ill and Vibha's father had some good medicine for him. He asked Vibha to pick some flowers while he got ready.

She ran to the doorway, and stopped there in surprise. The tiger was right next to the fence. She wondered why he had come so early today. She ran down the steps into the garden, picked two lovely roses, and then she looked at the tiger.

He was sitting down, looking sideways at her and wagging his tail. She'd never seen a tiger do that. She said to herself,

"This tiger is quite friendly. What will happen if I go up behind him and quickly touch his tail to see what it is like? He has never roared at me. I don't know why my father told me not to go near the fence."

She picked more flowers and looked at the colourful bunch she had collected. But the idea of touching the tiger's tail would not leave her.





She looked around and thought,

“The tiger looks as if he won’t mind my touching his tail. And if I do it now, Father won’t know. He takes a long time to get ready.”

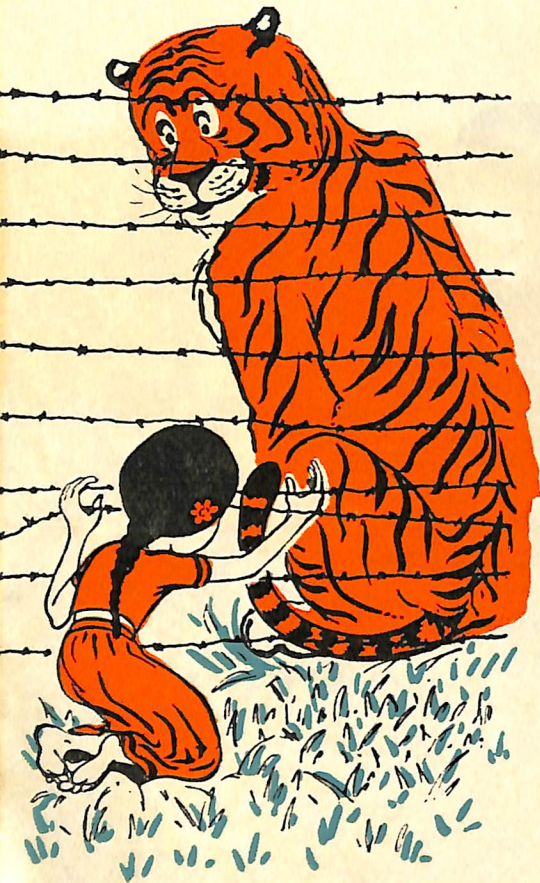
She put the bunch of flowers on the ground and slowly and silently began to walk towards the fence. She knew that by doing this she was not obeying her father, and didn’t want him to know.

She walked right up to the fence. She was about to put her hand through it, when she had a strange feeling. She felt perhaps her father was looking at her. But then she told herself,

“Now that I am so near, I must do it. Father won’t be ready so soon.”

She lifted the barbed-wire with one hand, and

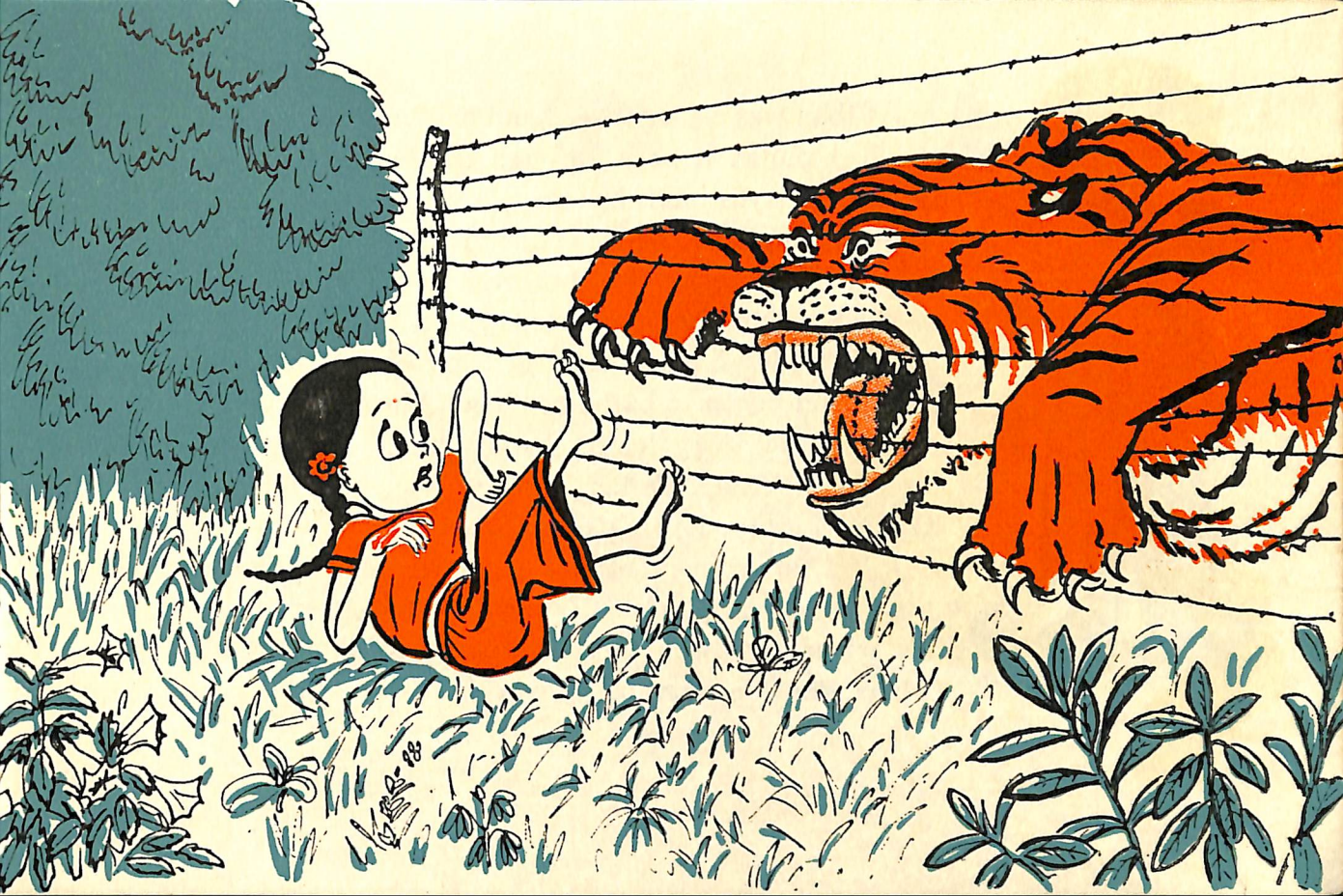




put the other through the hole. As soon as she put out her hand, the tiger turned. He opened his mouth, bared his teeth fiercely and pounced. Before he could touch Vibha she pulled her hand back and cried, "Father!"

Vibha's father had shut the door and was just about to lock it when he heard his daughter's cry. He dropped the key and rushed over to her, lifting her away from the fence.

The tiger tried to get through the barbed-wire, but it was too strong and cut his mouth. Vibha's father took the gun, which he kept hidden in the garden, and lifted it to his shoulder. The tiger saw the gun pointed at him and ran swiftly back into the jungle.



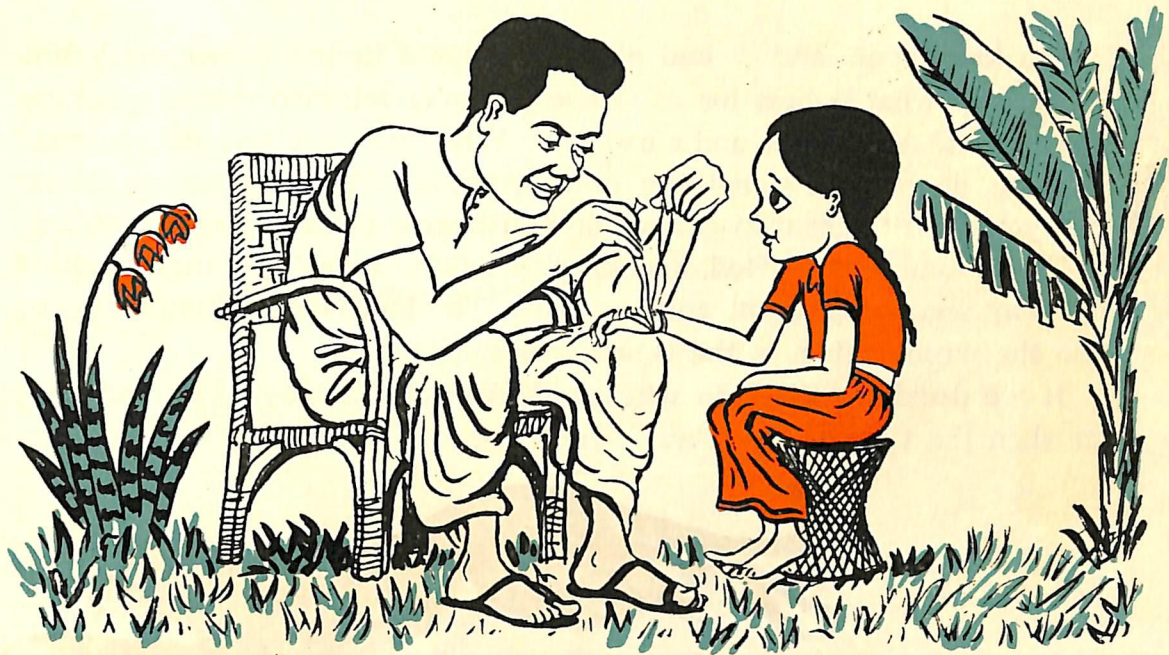


Vibha was crying—her hand had been badly cut when she had pulled it back through the barbed-wire. Tears filled her eyes and brimmed over down her cheeks. Knowing that her hand was hurting a lot, her father held it tenderly. He took her over to the doorstep, picked up his medicine bag and sat down on his garden chair.

He pulled a small stool in front of him for Vibha to sit on, and began to bathe her hand. She was crying while she felt very sorry for disobeying him.

She sobbed, "Father, I knew I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry. I won't do it again."

Her father put ointment on her hand, tied the knot of the bandage and took out a handkerchief from his pocket. He wiped the little girl's tears and sat her on his lap, where she was soon fast asleep.



You know, you and I and all of us have a loving father, as Vibha had. He does what is best for us. Have you ever felt two voices speaking in your heart? A good one and a bad one? When you are tempted to steal something, do you feel something in your heart telling you not to do it? When you want to cheat in exams, do you hear a voice saying, "Don't do it"? That is our father, God, speaking to us. He sees the danger behind what may seem so pleasant and tempting. The bad voice, which tells you to do the wrong thing, is the tiger's voice.

If we decide to listen to what our father has to say to us and obey him, then the tiger will run away from us.



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To be published shortly

3 THE RING WITH THE RED STONE by Anasuya Paithankar

4 THE MAGIC BALLOONS by Linda Pierce

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