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The TALE of the TIGER SLIPPERS

My first encounter with a wild tiger was in India, in Bandhavgarh National Park. The tiger was larger, louder and more beautiful than I imagined.



Cutting for Stone, by Abraham Verghese is a novel with a story embedded in it. Abu Kaseems Slippers tells of a Baghdad merchant who can't run away from his old slippers. They keep finding him. Funny on one level, it is full of symbolic ideas on another.

I made the tale into a children's story with tiger characters, set in the Mughal Courts of India, a melting pot of Persian, Indian and Mongol artistic cultures. I read the tale again in *Eaters of the Dead* by Michael Crichton, making my head spin. Stories do have a life of their own.



I was astonished to see wild peafowl in the forests of India, trembling their tails, dazzling in the sun. Mughal Court art has a gesture that illustrates the way I felt. A subject bites his finger to prove to himself, he is not dreaming!



Tigers have become endangered from loss of habitat and death by poaching. Indians employ skilled protectors who guard the jungle (forest) by elephant, as seen in our photograph from Bandhavgarh. The elephant's rider and caretaker is called a mahout. The mahout we met had been with their elephants since they were boys. They guide the elephant with signals from their ever-beating feet. It is dangerous work, not from tigers, but from ruthless human poaching.



Every tiger can be identified by its unique facial markings.



Bandhavgarh National Park in Magyar Pradesh (province) in India is a tiger sanctuary. We saw spectacular mammals and birds for three days. Then, when the langur monkeys and chital deer vocalized a warning, we became aware. A hair raising roar heralded a proud male tiger who stepped into view, sharpening his claws on a tree!



As an art student at Boston Museum School, I was captivated by Indian miniatures of the Mughal Court. I pretended I lived back in the 1500's when I wrote *The Tale of The Tiger Slippers*. On our trip to India, we saw many of the animals I recognized from the miniatures. The art tells a story, just like illustrations do today. Maybe all those years ago, looking at them gave me the idea of borders around my illustrations! Go to an art museum and see what inspires you!

