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The Miao man and the seven brothers of the tiger family hold a contest of strength.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a Miao man who went climbing up through the forest, where he chanced to meet a tiger. The tiger said to him, "Miao man, how many brothers have you?" The Miao man replied, "I have seven brothers". Old man tiger said, "You have seven brothers, I too have seven brothers, so that on both sides the numbers of brothers are equal. Let us then have a contest together to see which side is the stronger. If you are the stronger you shall eat us, if we are the stronger we will eat you". The Miao man said, "That will be fine, but which day shall we have the contest?" Old man tiger replied, "When seven days are past, let us on both sides take our brothers up there to the big pass. We will come and determine which side is greater and which side is less". When they had finished speaking, the Miao man and old man tiger each went his own way.

Seven days were done and the eighth day was rising. This was the day that they must fight together. Now the Miao man had no brothers. His mother and father had him alone, an only child. Thus he had no one to go with him. So he took a broody hen in front of him, and his crossbow on his back. He was the first to go up to the pass and wait. When he arrived, the tigers having not yet come, he climbed up a large tree and hid himself well.

He saw the seven tiger brothers arrive, but the tigers did not see him, they only heard the broody hen clucking, "gho-gho-gho". The seven tiger brothers said, "The seven Miao brothers are coming but what a noise they are making!" The eldest tiger said, "You watch me and I will show you! If the seven Miao brothers come we will jump like this, and like this!" The eldest tiger went and jumped up and jumped down. The Miao man up in the tree above loosed a shot at the eldest tiger and hit him in the armpit. The eldest tiger said, this armpit of mine is very painful. Let me lie down here. If the seven Miao brothers come, you will call me, won't you?"

Now of the tigers there were only six left. Then the Miao man's hen clucked again, "gho-gho-gho". The second eldest tiger said, "The seven Miao brothers are making a lot of noise as they come. Eldest brother is lying down so if they come we shall do this and this!" The second tiger ran out and jumped up and jumped down. The Miao man loosed a shot and hit the second tiger in the small of the back. The second tiger said, "This back of mine is very painful, so I will lie down here. If the seven Miao brothers come, you will call me, won't you?"

The Miao man's hen clucked again, "gho-gho-gho". The five tiger brothers heard it, and the third one said, "Eldest brother and middle brother have both got a pain and are lying down, so we five remain. If the seven Miao brothers come we must do this and this!" The third tiger went and jumped up and jumped down. The Miao man up above in the tree loosed a shot and hit the third tiger's forepaw. The third tiger said, "This forepaw of mine is rather painful, so I will lie down here for a while. If the seven Miao brothers come, you call us".

Then the Miao man's hen clucked again. "gho-gho-gho". The four tiger brothers said. "This time the seven Miao brothers are coming for certain. Those three older ones are all lying down, there are only the four of us left!" The fourth tiger said, "Don't be afraid, if the seven Miao brothers come we will do this and this!" The fourth tiger ran out and jumped up and jumped down, but the Miao man let loose another shot and hit the fourth tiger in the head. The fourth tiger said, "My head is rather painful, so I will lie down here. If the seven Miao brothers come, you call us".

The Miao man's hen clucked, "gho-gho-gho". The fifth tiger said to the sixth and seventh tigers, "The seven Miao brothers are coming for certain. Those four older ones are all not well and are lying down, so there are only we three left. If they come we will do this and this". The fifth tiger ran out and jumped up and jumped down, but the Miao man let loose another shot and hit the fifth tiger in the back. The fifth tiger said, "This back of mine is very painful, so I will lie down here for a while. If the seven Miao brothers come, you call us".

Now again the Miao man's hen clucked, "gho-gho-gho". The sixth tiger and the seventh tiger heard it. The sixth tiger said, "Those five older brothers are all not well and are lying down. Now only the two of us are well. If the seven Miao brothers come we will do this and this". The sixth tiger ran out and jumped up and jumped down. The Miao man loosed a shot and hit the sixth tiger in the thigh. The sixth tiger said, "This thigh of mine is painful. I will lie down here for a short while. If the seven Miao brothers come, you call us".

The Miao man's hen clucked again, "gho-gho-gho". The seventh tiger looked upwards and looked downwards, and then he said, "Of us seven brothers those six have all been taken ill and are lying down. If the seven Miao brothers come, I don't know what I shall do!" When the seventh tiger had finished speaking, the Miao man came, climbing from above down the branch of the tree. When the seventh tiger saw him he got up and ran away, while the Miao man ran in pursuit.

As the seventh tiger was running he saw that ahead of him there was a man ploughing. He said to the ploughman, "Old Man, we seven brothers and the seven Miao brothers were to have a contest together, when the other six were all taken ill. Now the seven Miao brothers are coming, chasing me. So I want to ask you if I can go into the thorn scrub on the edge of your land. But if the seven Miao brothers should come chasing here, you won't tell them will you?" The ploughman said, "All right, you go in there and hide". The seventh tiger went in and hid away. When the Miao man came chasing along he saw the ploughman. The Miao man said, "Friend, while you have been ploughing here, have you seen whether a tiger has passed by?" The ploughman said, "While I have been ploughing there has been no tiger past here". The Miao man said, "In that case, let me rest here and have a smoke". When he had rested he wanted to go over to the foot of the cliff. As he reached the edge, at the foot of the cliff the seventh tiger saw where he was going and got up and ran.

As the tiger ran he saw a man threshing oats. The seventh tiger said to the man threshing oats, "Old man, may I trouble you? The seven Miao brothers and we seven brothers were having a contest together when my six older brothers were all taken ill and had to lie down. Now the Miao men are coming, chasing me. If I hide in your straw and the Miao men come chasing here, you won't tell them, will you?" The man who was threshing oats said, "All right, you get in and lie down". Then the Miao man arrived. He said, "My friend threshing oats, have you seen a tiger go past here?" The

man who was threshing oats said, “While I have been here no tiger has passed”. The man who was chasing the tiger said, “In that case I will sit down here on your straw and rest for a while, then I will go on in search”. The Miao man sat down right on top of the tiger, who got up and ran. He ran on into the great forest, so the Miao man gave up the chase. He returned and, from those six tigers he had shot and killed, he made food for eating.

Nowadays tigers are very scarce, because the Miao man and the seven tiger brothers determined together who was the greater and who was the less, and the Miao man shot six, leaving only one.