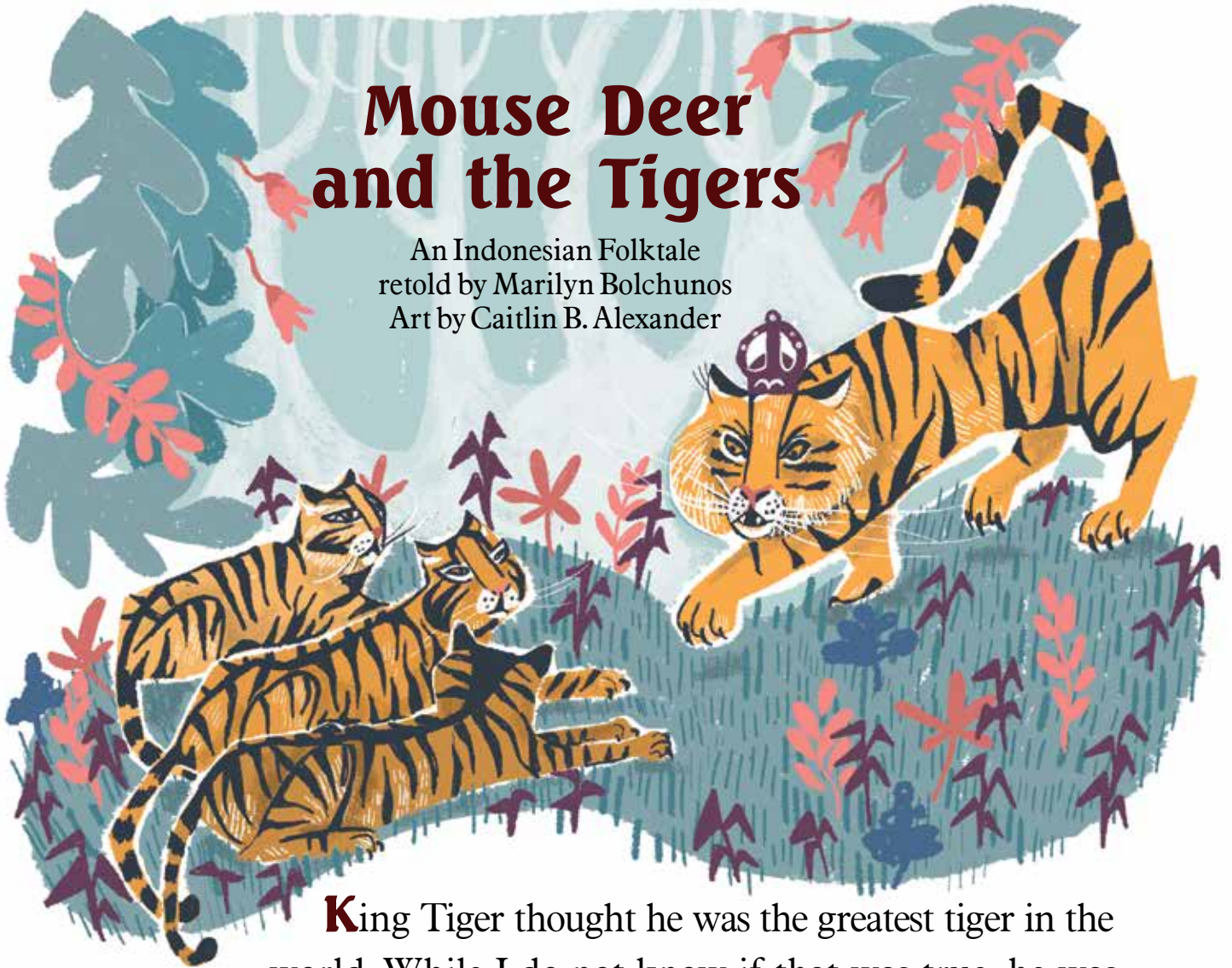


# Mouse Deer and the Tigers

An Indonesian Folktale  
retold by Marilyn Bolchunos  
Art by Caitlin B. Alexander



**K**ing Tiger thought he was the greatest tiger in the world. While I do not know if that was true, he was certainly the greediest. One day he said to himself, “I wonder if there is tasty food nearby on the Island of Borneo.”

He called three of his strongest tigers and said to them, “I have a job for you. You must swim to Borneo and ask their tiger king for food. Tell them the King of All Tigers demands it. If they don’t agree, we will attack.”

The King pulled out one of his large whiskers. “Show him this and he will see what kind of tiger he is dealing with.”

The three tigers swam over to Borneo, roaring all the way. Now, there were no tigers on Borneo, but all the animals hid when they heard the strange sounds and splashes. All except for Mouse Deer. He didn’t hear them coming because he was busy eating his lunch of tender grass. Suddenly he looked up and saw three pairs of golden eyes staring at him.

“Brave little morsel, isn’t he?” said one of the tigers. “We have a message for your tiger king. Where is he?”







Mouse Deer thought, We have no tiger king. We have no tigers. But if I tell them that, I will be lunch for these tigers. I must think fast or, or . . . I *will* be lunch for these tigers.

He thought fast.

“I can take your message to our tiger king,” he said. “But you look tired. Rest in the shade, and I will get him.”

“Good idea,” said the biggest tiger. “Tell him that he must give us food, or we will attack. Show him King Tiger’s whisker.”

The whisker was so big it made Mouse Deer tremble. But he bravely hurried away with it in his mouth.

If I promise them food, they may eat me, he thought. What should I do?

He bounded on. Finally he had an idea. He found his friend Porcupine. “Friend, the King of All Tigers wants to attack Borneo,” he said. “He says we won’t be able to fight him. Would you please let me have one of your quills?”

“Gladly,” said Porcupine.

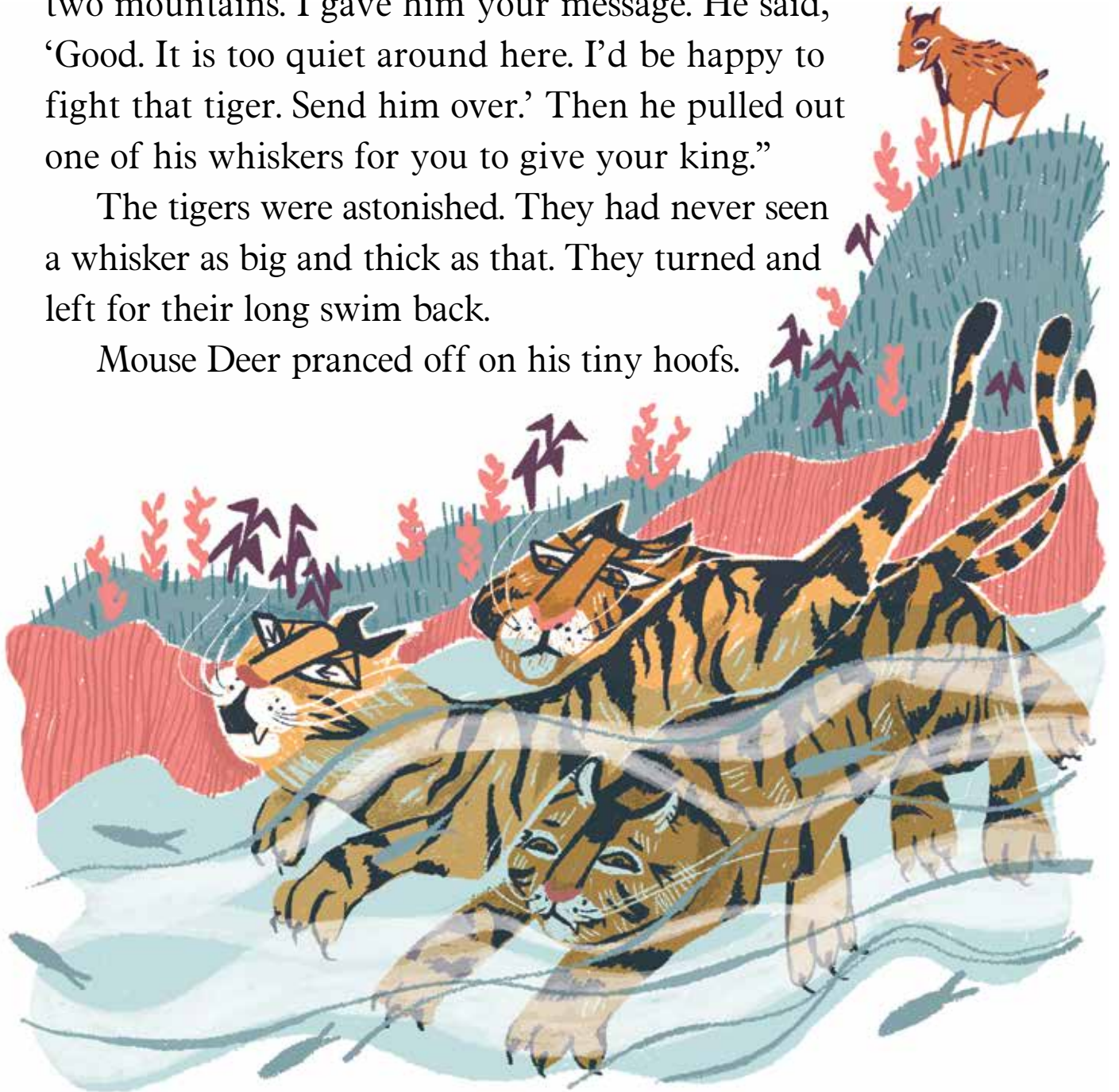


Mouse Deer waited awhile so that the tigers would think he had traveled far. When he came back they said, “Well?”

“O, Great Tigers,” said Mouse Deer, “when I reached our king he was sharpening his claws between two mountains. I gave him your message. He said, ‘Good. It is too quiet around here. I’d be happy to fight that tiger. Send him over.’ Then he pulled out one of his whiskers for you to give your king.”

The tigers were astonished. They had never seen a whisker as big and thick as that. They turned and left for their long swim back.

Mouse Deer pranced off on his tiny hoofs.





As soon as the tigers reached their island, they went to the King of All Tigers.

“What took you so long?” he roared.

“Well,” one tiger said, “the King of Borneo looks forward to fighting the King of All Tigers. He sends his whisker.”

The King stared at it for a while. Then he spoke, “I have been thinking while you were gone. We will dictate that the Island of the Elephants should give us food, instead of the Island of Borneo.”

And that is why, even today, there are no tigers on Borneo. There are plenty of mouse deer, but no tigers.

