



Fable

Cloud the White Tiger

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**[For oration:
Listen well
And I will tell
The tale of Cloud the White Tiger...]**

A white tiger was born on a day so overcast that the sky was white with snow, so she was called Cloud. Cloud was a tiger, and Cloud knew she was a tiger; she was proud to be a tiger. But, besides her and her mother, there weren't many other tigers around. Whenever she went off exploring the mountains, there were wolves. The wolves were different. Most of them were nice enough but some of them reminded her she was a tiger and she didn't know how to hunt in a pack. They were a minority, and they were easy to avoid, so she did.

Cloud learned so much from the wolves. She could play with them, learned to hunt with them in a pack, and learned to sing the song they sang to the moon at night. She learned about lone wolves and pack leaders, what it meant to be a wolf. She knew she was a tiger but she understood the wolves and their way of life equally.

Then there came a day when Cloud was out playing with the wolves, and suddenly found herself all alone. Setting off in search of her friends, she wondered where they had gotten off to. There was movement in the snow and Cloud thought she had found them. But it wasn't the wolves: it was a group of snow tigers! Cloud was excited

to meet them, and they were excited to meet Cloud, so they played together until the moon rose high in the night sky. Giddy with joy, Cloud showed the other tigers how to howl like a wolf. The tigers exchanged looks amongst themselves. When Cloud asked what was wrong, they said that she howled at the moon, and only wolves howled at the moon.



Figure 1: Artwork by Ugomsinachi Agu @Gomsin_Artz (Instagram) created based on the article

As the night deepened, the tigers' stomachs began to

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rumble; they were in need of something to eat. Cloud jumped at the chance, suggesting they go and hunt together as a pack the way the wolves do. After all, if they worked together, there would be plenty to share. So the tigers fanned out through the forest and stalked their prey as one. But they stumbled over each other and made far too much noise, scaring away their prey every time they tried. Between growling stomachs, Cloud overheard the other tigers whispering amongst themselves as they trudged home. When she asked them what they were saying, they told her it was her fault they would be sleeping hungry. They told her she wasn't a real tiger. She liked to hunt in a pack, and only wolves liked to hunt in a pack. That night was the first and last time she played with those tigers.

For the next few days, Cloud still played with the wolves but felt strange when she howled, like she was doing something wrong. More and more, whenever they asked her to come hunting with the pack, she made her excuses and left them to it. Things weren't the same anymore.

Then one morning came, a morning when Cloud was avoiding the wolves. She overheard them playing in the snow but hid among the trees to watch instead of joining them. What she saw stunned her. Cloud watched the wolves at play with some white tigers. The wolves growled like tigers and the tigers howled like wolves. A keen-eyed tiger spotted Cloud in the trees and called her over. Excited, she joined the others, and together they showed the wolves how tigers prowled through the forest and hid using their stripes. That night, the tigers and the wolves went hunting as a pack, hiding in the trees, and when the time came they howled and growled, heralding the moon with a new song.

Moral

Cloud's is a story about what it means to belong to a social group. Before we're even born, we have labels attached to us (e.g., Black, African, female), which come with unspoken expectations. Not meeting those expectations, or daring to transcend the barriers they impose, can lead to rejection. That rejection might make you question yourself, like Cloud, just because you like different music, hobbies, and clothes from people who belong to the same social categories as you. You might even hesitate before you speak because, if you don't master the art of code switching (Koch et al., 2001), people might not want to get to know you.

The story reflects the fact that there will be people who think you have to act a certain way because you carry a certain label. But then there will also be white tigers that like to howl at the moon. With this piece, I was given the opportunity to turn the ramblings of my creative mind into

knowledge, and for that I am very grateful. This fable was inspired by Twumasi (2022).

References

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Figure 2: Art work by Natasha Katashila created based on the story