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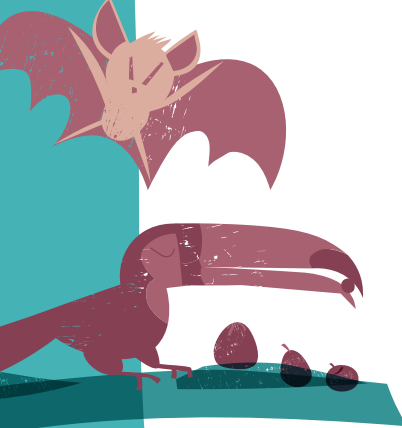
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網開一面
To give someone
a break

成湯





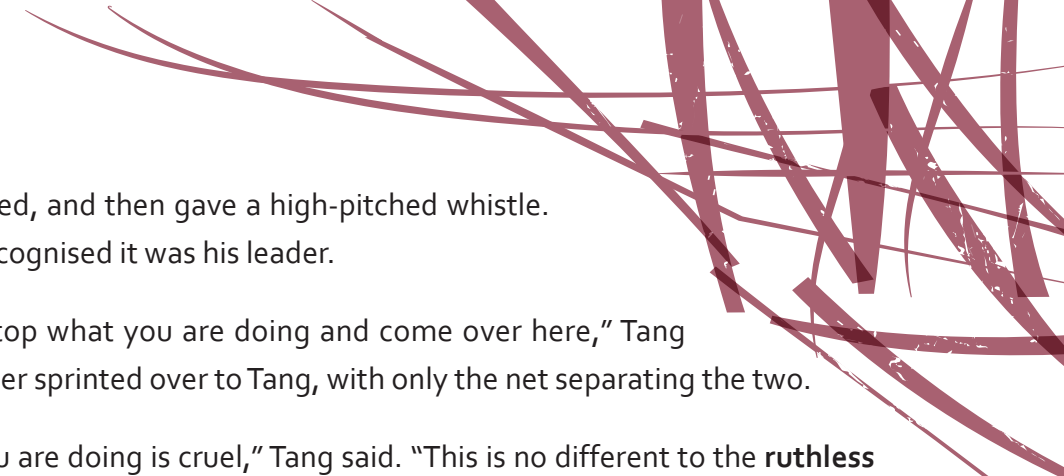
When Jie, the last king of the Xia Dynasty, was defeated at the Battle of Mingtiao, there was great relief among citizens. He was an evil **tyrant** who was widely hated. His victorious rival, Cheng Tang of Shang state, was the complete opposite: kind towards all living beings.

One such story about “Tang the perfect” became a legend. Tang was taking a walk in a forest when he heard the cry of an eagle and turned his head back to look for the bird. But when he turned his head to face forward, he was caught unaware and was bounced back, falling to the ground on his backside.

He was confused. He then looked up and saw a tall net **erected** like a fence to form an enclosed space. It stretched along the **perimeter** of a rectangle and was held up by trees.

He went up close to the net and spotted a man with a self-satisfied grin, holding a club in one hand and a cloth bag in the other. The hunter began thrashing the bushes and tall grass, startling the rabbits and forcing birds to fly in all directions.

“Aiyaah!” the hunter exclaimed. “Why bother trying to flee? You are all trapped and cannot break past my net.”



Tang sighed, and then gave a high-pitched whistle. The hunter recognised it was his leader.

“Please stop what you are doing and come over here,” Tang said. The hunter sprinted over to Tang, with only the net separating the two.

“What you are doing is cruel,” Tang said. “This is no different to the **ruthless** and merciless ways of Jie, who kills people with no remorse.” The **hunter’s face fell**; he did not take his eyes off his boots.

Tang continued: “Your job is to hunt, but you must act kindly, and give these forest animals the option to escape.”

“Forgive me, my liege,” the hunter said. “I will take down the net.”

Tang smiled and said: “No need for that. Just leave one side of the net open to allow the animals a chance to escape and not be killed needlessly.”

The hunter was **moved to tears** by his leader’s words. The next day he told his friends about his encounter with Tang.

“If Tang can be so caring towards forest animals,” one of the hunter’s friends said, “he must be even kinder to his people.”

This story spread to the chiefs of neighbouring tribes. They understood Tang would be a kind king, so they pledged their support to him. With their help, Tang overthrew Jie to become the king of the Shang Dynasty, kick-starting an era that advanced the development of Chinese civilization.

網開一面

Literal meaning

a net opened on one side

Figurative meaning

being lenient and compassionate to those who make mistakes

Similar phrase in English

to give someone a break

[e.g.] Mr Wang knew Ben was having trouble at home, so he **gave him a break** and did not punish him for being late.

Learn about words

1. **tyrant** **[n.]** : a cruel ruler who treats his people harshly
2. **erect** **[v.]** : to set up something in an upright position
3. **perimeter** **[n.]** : the outer edge of an area
4. **ruthless** **[adj.]** : having or showing no pity

Learn some phrases

1. someone's face falls

when your face shows you are unhappy or disappointed

[e.g.] When Betty heard she was not picked to play Cinderella, **her face fell**.

2. moved to tears

made to cry because you were emotionally affected

[e.g.] Ivy was **moved to tears** when she saw a homeless man beg for food.

卧薪嘗膽 No pain, no gain

