

# The Lion and the Zebra

A Dark Seam Story

It was late afternoon in the savannas of Africa, and the sun was beginning to set. The elephants began searching for a place to sleep, weary from their day of eating leaves, and the mother birds were checking their nests to make sure all the eggs were there. The snakes were looking for one last meal before slithering back into their holes and the hippos were wading in the river as usual.

A pack of zebras were feasting on some high grass, completely unaware that a young lion was watching them, camouflaged by the yellow stems. Suddenly, the lion pounced, and the zebras immediately responded by running away. Since the lion was young and inexperienced in these things, he missed his target and tumbled upon the ground. He recovered quickly and looked around to see which zebra was closest. He wasn't about to go hungry tonight.

The lion noticed a zebra to his left that seemed closer than the rest, and launched himself in that direction. As the lion closed in on the zebra, the other zebras ran off in the other direction. The zebra suddenly realized he was being chased and began running faster. He matched the speed of the lion, but the lion wasn't ready to give up. They ran across the grasses for a long time, and over time slowed down, until finally they both stopped.

"I can't go on," the zebra said.

"Neither can I," said the lion.

The zebra looked around and noticed that they had stopped right next to a water hole. He made his way over to the water and began to drink. The lion followed his example and did the same. They then laid down next to each other.

"Why were you chasing me?" the zebra asked.

"I plan on eating you," the lion replied.

"Why would you want to eat me?" the zebra asked.

"Because that's what lions eat," the lion replied. "You eat the grass, and I eat you. That's the way it is."

"Why don't you eat the grass? It's all over the place and it doesn't run away."

"I can't eat the grass," the lion said. "I'm a carnivore. I have to eat meat. You're lucky that you get to eat grass. If I could eat the grass, I would, but I can't."

"I'm lucky?" the zebra asked, widening its eyes. "I'm out there in the grass were any number of things wanting to eat me could be hiding, and you think I'm lucky?"

"You don't have to work for your food," the lion said. "If I don't catch food, I'll die."

"But if you do catch your food, something else dies."

"I can't think of it that way," the lion replied. "It's just the way I am. I have to survive"

A man passing by overheard part of this conversation and approached the two. "What are you two talking about?" he asked.

"We're talking about how the lion is lucky because he doesn't have to fear for his life all day long," the lion replied.

“Actually, we’re talking about how lucky the zebra is because he doesn’t need to work for his food, knowing that if he’s too slow or too weak he’ll die,” the lion replied.

“Too slow or too weak?” the zebra asked. “If I’m too slow or too weak, you’ll catch me and eat me.”

“Yes, thus preventing my own demise.” The lion then turned to the man. “What do you eat?” he asked.

The man pondered this question for a moment. He then drew the shotgun from off his back, shot the lion and the zebra, skinned their carcasses, and walked off with the furs.

A breeze gently caressed the tall grasses around the water hole. Some leaves from a few nearby trees drifted with the air, carrying with it the scent of lives just passed. A small cloud passed between the sun and the earth, and all became calm once more. As the cloud passed beyond the sun, three shadows of birds appeared on the ground around the water hole, and at this very moment, a hyena was creeping up slowly on the carcasses.

One of the vultures circling overhead landed on the zebra and tore into its flesh. Another one landed on the lion. Just then, the hyena popped its head out from the grasses. “Hey, there,” he said. “That’s my food you’re perched on.”

“You should have gotten here first, then,” one of the vultures replied.

“Look,” the hyena said. “You can have the lion, and I’ll take the zebra. There’s more than enough for the three of us.”

“That’s good enough for me,” the vulture on the zebra said. He then moved onto the lion.

“Now,” said the hyena, “I’ve got you both!” He then pounced on the vultures, which jumped into the air and began vomiting at the hyena. The hyena managed to grab one by the neck and shook it back and forth. The other vulture began clawing at the hyena’s eyes. The hyena dropped its catch and lunged for the other vulture. Unfortunately, it caught him by the feet, and the vulture managed to slice open the back of the hyena’s throat before it was viciously shook back and forth. The hyena cried in pain, and went over to the water hole to attempt to heal its wound, but it was too late, and the hyena choked on its blood, passing out from lack of both oxygen and blood before dying.

Still, one shadow circled over the ground. The breeze died down and another cloud passed between sun and earth, where it stayed for quite some time. The shadow faded from existence, and the third vulture descended. “I think I’ll live here for a while,” the vulture said to himself, and he began to feast.