

Animals Revolt Against Men and Women for the First Time A Folktale from South Sudan

ONCE upon a time, men, women, and all the animals of the forest were living together in harmony. Cats and dogs were the closest friends and messengers to the men and women. The cats and dogs understood human language better than the other animals.

The men and women preferred to have the cats and dogs close to them because of their loyalty.



Among the animals, the hyena was very active. She got up early in the morning to hunt other animals in secret to provide extra food for her family. Because the hyena also gave some bones and a small amount of meat to the cats and dogs, they appreciated the hyena's attitude toward them. They liked the hyena but didn't tell this to the other animals.

One time after returning from hunting, the hyena asked the cats and dogs to tell her what the men and women were saying when they sat together. "Usually when they are talking they point to the animals and birds. I try hard to read their faces, but I still don't know what they are saying," the hyena said. "Please tell me what they are talking about since you understand the language better."

The cats and dogs looked at each other but did not reply to the hyena because they heard all the human's plans and were advised not to tell the other animals anything.

That silence made the hyena suspicious that something was wrong. She became serious and said, "I will no longer bring you the meat and bones as before unless you reveal to me the secret you know and why you have refused to tell it to me."

But still, the cats and dogs did not answer. Again, the hyena warned them, "Unless you tell me about the meetings of the men and women, I will not give you your share of the bones and meat."

Because the cats and dogs were hungry and needed food for their families, they told the hyena about the people's secret plot against the animals. All animals that are not loyal to the men and women are to be dealt with as follows:

1. No longer can any animal come near to their table while they are eating. Now the men and women will put a distance between themselves and all the animals.
2. Some animals will be slaughtered to be food for the men and women.
3. The big animals will be tied down for the use of the men and women.
4. There will be no freedom for the animals to come and go on their own.
5. Some strong animals will provide transportation.
6. Other animal groups will bring water and some will be used for milk and cultivation.
7. The animals will be given only a limited time to eat.
8. Some animals will be used for protection.

The cats and dogs told the hyena that the humans had agreed to use the animals in these ways for their entire lives. The men and women had also agreed to start tying down the aggressive and strong animals that very night to begin this new era.

If any animals resisted, they and their leaders were to be immediately killed. The men and women believed this would bring stability and forever establish a difference between animals and human beings.

Furthermore, according to the cats and dogs, the hyena was specifically mentioned by name at the meetings as one of the notorious animals that proclaimed animal rights and wanted to make animals equal to men and women.

The hyena was worried as she heard this agenda and quickly gave the bones and meat to the dogs and cats. Then she ran to mobilize all the animals to come to an emergency meeting that evening.

During the meeting the hyena explained the situation to the leaders of all the different kinds of animals. The hyena told them that the men and women will put an end to animal development and freedom, and this will be the worst thing ever to happen in animal history.

The animals understood everything very clearly. Then the hyena said, "We animals must be out of here now, away from the men and women, before they begin to implement their plan. Remember, the big and strong animals are to protect the smaller ones. The lions and elephants are to threaten the men and women, so everyone will have time to escape to freedom, safety, and happiness."

At the end of the meeting the lion said he would let out a loud roar at the time of the evacuation. All the other animals yelled that they would cry out to confuse the men and women. The zebra added, "My stripes will confuse them even more." The elephant promised

to destroy the fence so all the animals, big and small, could escape. "We big animals have to open the way for all the animals," the elephant said.

When the time came, the animals put the revolution into action, trampling over the destroyed fence that lay on the ground. The men and women were confused by all the shouting, the destruction of the fence, and the big tree limbs lying everywhere that the giraffe had pulled down. They did not know what was happening until morning when some of the animals came back to be loyal to the men and women.

After three days, the hyena took some strong animals as her body guards and returned to see if any of the animals that had come back wanted to escape now. It was worse than the hyena had thought. She discovered that the men and women had already implemented their plan. Most of the animals were tied up inside the barn and could not come out.

When the hyena saw this, she spoke to them, "My brothers and sisters, I told you, but you did not listen. I tried to free you from slavery, but it seems you enjoy being slaves to these men and women. Even though you decided to come back, you are still welcome to the everlasting freedom in the forest. But if you enjoy it here then stay." With that the hyena left.

A month later the hyena came back again to check on the captive animals. The donkey cried out from inside the fence, "I want to escape, but I cannot because of this strong fence. Tell my friends that live with you in freedom that I have to take water to the homes of all the men and women, but they have yet to pay me for this hard work."

The hyena said, "Thank you for telling me what your life is like in captivity. Enjoy what you deserve." Then she returned to the forest and did not come back again. This is why, today, some animals are wild and free while others still live with men and women and do whatever they are told to do by their human masters.