

A Hyena's Lesson

The blazing sun beamed down upon the vast African savanna. Graceful gazelles were treading across the dry lands, lions chased after zebras as they dashed away from their predators, and every animal had their own role to play. Even in the scorching heat, mischievous hyenas scouted around their territory, ensuring the safety of their clan.

Minit laid his head on his paws as he sunbathed beneath the warm rays. He would occasionally clean his muzzle and gnaw on his fur, frustrated by how irritating his recent wounds felt. Defending the clan was “proper behavior” and all, but it wasn’t exactly all fun and games when you fought fang and claw against rival clans. Hyenas rarely escaped their battles unscathed, and Minit felt more than lucky to survive in his recent one. He closed his eyes in a desperate attempt to rest, but his act was done in vain - The endless, untamed chatter of the clan constantly filled his ears, preventing him from going to sleep. As a result, Minit merely observed his fellow hyenas with watchful eyes, wondering what they were up to this time.

A male and a female were leaving to defend the territory. A trio was just returning with a slain gazelle to feed the baby cubs. Minit yawned as he watched the clan go about their daily duties. Every day was always the same as the last: Go hunt for the clan, go defend the territory, and try not to die. Minit believed this way of life was so *boring* and *predictable*, but he dared not to complain about it. That is, until a bushy-furred hyena chose to sit near him, making him the perfect listener for Minit’s thoughts.

“You know, I think clan life is cool and all, but it does get pretty stale after a while, he confessed. Minit rose to sit on his haunches, hoping to catch *some* sort of reaction from the other

hyena, but nothing changed. He was just overlooking the surprisingly controlled chaos of the clan, his expression stern and serious. However, Minit *was* going to bring out something from him, no matter what it was

“All we do is eat, sleep, and fight each and every day,” Minit continued. “If you think about it, it’s only us guys who do all the hard work. Sure, the girls do their own duties from time to time, but I like to think they only like living with us to boss us guys around.”

At last, Minit finally received a reaction from the other hyena. It may have been just an ear swivel in his direction, but he knew he was finally making some sort of impact on him. “Take my most recent clash, for example. I was out there in the wilds, surveying the land and all that, when bam! This random dude rushes straight into me and topples both of us into the ground! Don’t know why he did that, but I guess he was from a rival clan, because he started biting and clawing at me with everything he had.”

This was when things began to get interesting for Minit. The moment his serious pal finally turned his head and gave him his utmost attention, Minit paused for just a moment, relishing his success. He then swiftly returned to talking, not wanting to let go of his only audience.

“He gave me a couple of good scratches and stuff, but I would’ve been a *lot* worse if his partner was with him. By the way she looked while charging toward our little roughhouse, she nearly looked like some sort of savage leopard! She had spots, of course, but she looked more like a crazy beast than a hyena! Her pelt was splattered with dark stains and deep scars, and judging by the absolutely insane look on her face, I knew she was going to kill me. She even

looked like some sort of professional executioner or something. Anyway, I *didn't* want to try facing off against my death wish, so before she came, I decided to just escape the scene entirely."

Minit noticed an odd look appear on the other hyena's face. It was as if he couldn't believe the very words he was just told, and whatever came out of Minit's mouth was pure nonsense. Nonetheless, Minit merely took note of his expression change and continued with his tale.

"Yep, I just left the both of them out there on the dusty old savanna. I scampered out of that scene faster than a mouse being chased by a lion. It was a good thing I was fast, too - If I stayed put, I would've been mauled by that living threat of a girl for sure! Fortunately, she decided to check in on her beaten little buddy while I fled the heck away. At that point, I knew I was going to live." Minit puffed out his chest, boasting about his exciting escapade, but his pride proved to be short-lived when the other hyena finally opened his mouth.

"I think you did something you didn't mean to do, Minit," he said in a gruff yet firm voice. "Why did you run away?"

"Well, Dukke, to start off, I didn't think the male would be *too* tough of an opponent." Minit used a paw to uncover a patch of fur from his pelt, revealing a painful outline of a frightening bite mark. "Like I said, he got a couple of good hits on me. I *did* manage to beat him up a little and pin him down, but then I spotted the female coming straight at us. I automatically knew she was going to deliver her revenge to me, so I just ran the heck out of there. I didn't want to die, after all."

"So? You *knew* those two were from a different clan. Why didn't you try fighting the girl instead of running away like a coward?"

“If I did that, I would’ve been dead meat for *sure*. Plus, I wasn’t going to *kill* myself just because two pesky hyenas from a rival clan decided to trespass on our land. I’m sure you can see where I’m going with this, Dukke.”

“Oh, I see where you’re going with it, but I *definitely* don’t agree with it.” A growl began to sound in Dukke’s throat as his irritation grew. “Do you have any idea how much of a *fool* you are to run away from a fight like that? Do you really believe saving your tiny little life is more important than saving the entire *clan*?”

“Why not?” Despite hearing Dukke’s growl transform into a full-grown snarl, Minit continued to defend his ways. “If the clan needs to stay stable, every hyena needs to stay safe and *alive*, right?”

“Giving your life is life to the clan is more important than wasting it!” Dukke snapped with a sudden ferocity. “Maybe if you actually used that dumb brain of yours, you’d realize your dead body could’ve been found and reported to the higher-ups. They would’ve been able to make things right, but no, you decided to be a yellow-bellied wimp and run away like the loser you are.”

“Look, say all you want about me and my mindset, but I really think I’m in the right here.” Minit continued to speak even as Dukke rose up on his paws, an annoyed look plastered on his face. “I’d rather stay alive and be a *useful* part of the clan than get killed and be a *useless* stain on it.”

“You’re already a useless stain, Minit...” At that moment, Dukke decided to abandon the conversation. He shook his bushy fur and padded away into the crowd that was the clan, shaking his head in disappointment.

Minit would've said more, but it was no use - The other hyena had already left, his pelt having merged with the brown and black of every other hyena. However, he wasn't fazed by his loss too much. Minit allowed the event to slip out of his mind like it never really happened, then returned to his previous position. Since he was now alone, he thought he might as well continue relaxing and sunbathing in the comfortable heat. That would help him ponder about some things.

However, to his dismay, Minit's time for relaxation did not last long. The sun's rays were blocked by some sort of figure, and upon opening his eyes, fear rushed through his body faster than a cheetah dashing across the savanna. Minit scrambled to his feet as the hyena before him watched him with a glare. Her ragged pelt wore an uncountable number of battle scars, and her honed gaze sliced through Minit's very soul. He knew she was no doubt the strongest in all the clan, and he knew better than to disrespect her authority.

"Lyndara," he stated, "is there anything I may help you with?"

"I would like to speak with you privately, Minit," Lyndara replied, her voice booming compared to Minit's weak, pitiful one. "Come with me."

"Of course."

Minit stood up, his stature greatly lacking compared to the female's, and followed her. The pair cut through the clan's constant ruckus, a flurry of brown and black accompanied by a medley of barks, yelps, and the occasional giggle. Despite the many hyenas going to-and-fro, Lyndara and Minit had traversed through them, and soon enough, they had arrived at a dimmed den hidden from the rest of the clan. Its interior was darker than a starless night, while even its entrance gave off an intimidating aura. Minit raised a shaking paw, hoping to enter the den and face Lyndara in there, but her solemn tone stopped him from moving any further.

“Minit,” Lyndara said, turning her grim expression toward the coward before her, “I have received word from one of our crew that you did something... irresponsible. Is it true you fought against a rival clan?”

“Y-Yes,” answered Minit, his voice stuttering under her very presence.

“And is it true you abandoned the battle instead of fighting for your life?”

“Y-Yes, but they were formidable opponents, Lyndara. If I did not run away-”

“I’m going to have to stop you right there.” Lyndara glared at Minit, her gaze chaining him to the conversation. “Minit, do you have any idea how *important* the clan is?”

“Y-Yes.”

“And do you have any idea how important our pride and status is?”

“Y-Yes.”

Lyndara watched Minit with her needle-sharp gaze for only a moment longer before suddenly howling into the air. The sound didn’t last more than a few seconds, but she knew it would be enough. A wicked grin grew on her face as her eyes locked onto the trembling, cowering hyena before her.

“You see, Minit, invaders are tolerable, but us hyenas do *not* take cowards lightly.”

The sound of pawsteps and laughter was coming closer and closer, and Minit knew there was no escape. No matter where he fled off to, Lyndara would be there, ready to engage him to his inevitable doom. Frozen in pure fear, Minit could only watch as rabid hyenas circled around him, ready to do whatever they were told. There was no fleeing their thorn-sharp fangs and crazed eyes, and Lyndara’s command contained the last two words Minit would hear ever again.

“Kill him.”

Lyndara watched in satisfaction as her hyenas pounced atop their prey and tore him to scraps. Bits and pieces of fur flew in the air as a puddle of crimson began to pool below the clash. Minit's yelps and whimpers could be heard beyond his struggle, but to the leader, it was nothing but music to her ears. Lyndara knew she was in control of all of them, and if they didn't comply with her rules, she knew exactly how to make them pay.