

## The Good Lion, Ernest Hemingway

### The Good Lion

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A LION that lived in Africa with all the other lions. The other lions were all bad lions and every day they ate zebras and wildebeests and every kind of antelope. Sometimes the bad lions ate people too. They ate Swahilis, Umbulus and Wandorobos and they especially liked to eat Hindu traders. All Hindu traders are very fat and delicious to a lion.

But this lion, that we love because he was so good, had wings on his back. Because he had wings on his back the other lions all made fun of him.

"Look at him with the wings on his back," they would say and then they would all roar with laughter.

"Look at what he eats," they would say because the good lion only ate pasta and scampi because he was so good.

The bad lions would roar with laughter and eat another Hindu trader and their wives would drink his blood, going lap, lap, lap with their tongues like big cats. They only stopped to growl with laughter or to roar with laughter at the good lion and to snarl at his wings. They were very bad and wicked lions indeed.

But the good lion would sit and fold his wings back and ask politely if he might have a Negroni or an Americano and he always drank that instead of the blood of the Hindu traders. One day he refused to eat eight Masai cattle and only ate some tagliatelli and drank a glass of pomodoro.

This made the wicked lions very angry and one of the lionesses, who was the wickedest of them all and could never get the blood of Hindu traders off her whiskers even when she rubbed her face in the grass, said, "Who are you that you think you are so much better than we are? Where do you come from, you pasta-eating lion? What are you doing here anyway?" She growled at him and they all roared without laughter.

"My father lives in a city where he stands under the clock tower and looks down on a thousand pigeons, all of whom are his subjects. When they fly they make a noise like a rushing river. There are more palaces in my father's city than in all of Africa and there are four great bronze horses that face him and they all have one foot in the air because they fear him.

"In my father's city men go on foot or in boats and no real horse would enter the city for fear of my father."

"Your father was a griffon," the wicked lioness said, licking her whiskers.

"You are a liar," one of the wicked lions said. "There is no such city."

"Pass me a piece of Hindu trader," another very wicked lion said. "This Masai cattle is too newly killed."

"You are a worthless liar and the son of a griffon," the wickedest of all the lionesses said. "And now I think I shall kill you and eat you, wings and all."

This frightened the good lion very much because he could see her yellow eyes and her tail going up and down and the blood caked on her whiskers and he smelled her breath which was very bad because she never brushed her teeth ever. Also she had old pieces of Hindu trader under her claws.

"Don't kill me," the good lion said. "My father is a noble lion and always has been respected and everything is true as I said." Just then the wicked lioness sprang at him. But he rose into the air on his wings and circled the group of wicked lions once, with them all roaring and looking at him. He looked down and thought, "What savages these lions are."

He circled them once more to make them roar more loudly. Then he swooped low so he could look at the eyes of the wicked lioness who rose on her hind legs to try and catch him. But she missed him with her claws. "Adios," he said, for he spoke beautiful Spanish, being a lion of culture. "Au revoir," he called to them in his exemplary French. They all roared and growled in African lion dialect.

Then the good lion circled higher and higher and set his course for Venice. He alighted in the Piazza and everyone was delighted to see him. He flew up for a moment and kissed his father on both cheeks and saw the horses still had their feet up and the Basilica looked more beautiful than a soap bubble. The Campanile was in place and the pigeons were going to their nests for the evening.

"How was Africa?" his father said.  
"Very savage, father," the good lion replied.  
"We have night lighting here now," his father said.  
"So I see," the good lion answered like a dutiful son.  
"It bothers my eyes a little," his father confided to him. "Where are you going now, my son?"  
"To Harry's Bar," the good lion said.

"Remember me to Cipriani and tell him I will be in some day soon to see about my bill," said his father.  
"Yes, father," said the good lion and he flew down lightly and walked to Harry's Bar on his own four paws.  
In Cipriani's nothing was changed. All of his friends were there. But he was a little changed himself from being in Africa.  
"A Negroni, Signor Barone?" asked Mr. Cipriani.

But the good lion had flown all the way from Africa and Africa had changed him.

"Do you have any Hindu trader sandwiches?" he asked Cipriani.  
"No, but I can get some."

"While you are sending for them, make me a very dry martini." He added, "With Gordon's gin."

"Very good," said Cipriani. "Very good indeed."

Now the lion looked about him at the faces of all the nice people and he knew that he was at home but that he had also traveled. He was very happy.

The End