

ENGLISH

A TIGER IN THE ZOO

~Summary~

-by Leslie Norris

Stanza- 1

He stalks in his vivid stripes
The few steps of his cage,
On pads of velvet quiet,
In his quiet rage.

Explanation: The poet sees a tiger locked in a concrete cell in the zoo. It is a very small cage. The tiger can hardly take a few steps along the length of the cage. He looks majestic as he slowly moves up and down in his cage. The sharp and clear stripes on his body are of strong bright colour. His pads are velvet soft. In spite of all his strength, he now lies imprisoned behind the bars. The caged tiger is angry. He is full of rage, but is quiet because he knows that he is helpless here.

Stanza- 2

He should be lurking in shadow,
Sliding through long grass
Near the water hole
Where plump deer pass.

Explanation: Looking at the imprisoned tiger, the poet is filled with pity. He says that the poor tiger should have been in his natural habitat i.e. in the jungle, hunting and resting. Then, at this hour of the night, he would have been lying in the shadows of trees and sliding quietly through the long grass. He would, then, near the water hole, wait for some fat and healthy deer to pass that way. Thus, he would be lying there in expectation of a heavy feast.

Stanza- 3

He should be snarling around houses
At the jungle's edge,
Baring his white fangs, his claws,
Terrorising the village!

Explanation: In these lines, the poet imagines, what the tiger would be doing in case he failed to find any prey in his natural habitat. He says that the tiger would be angrily moving around the houses in a nearby village. He would be growling at the edge of the jungle near some village. He would be showing his white fangs and terrible claws while moving here and there. He would, thus, become a cause of terror for the villagers.

The poet here gives a hint that if we continue to destroy the forest cover and the natural habitat of the tigers, they will be forced to turn to our towns and villages to find their food.

Stanza- 4

But he's locked in a concrete cell,
His strength behind bars,
Stalking the length of his cage,
Ignoring visitors.

Explanation: The poet sees the tiger is locked in a concrete cell in the zoo. In spite of all his strength, he now lies imprisoned behind the bars. Very slowly and silently, the tiger moves up and down along the length of the cage. He moves in an angry and threatening manner. He takes no note of the visitors, who had come to the zoo to have a look at him. He completely ignores them as none of them thinks of releasing him from his prison. Moreover, due to their presence, he hardly gets any rest during the day.

Stanza- 5

He hears the last voice at night,
The patrolling cars,
And stares with his brilliant eyes
At the brilliant stars.

Explanation: Due to the visitors, the tiger gets no rest during the day. Even at night, he remains disturbed due to the noise that comes from the patrolling cars. The tiger has, thus, lost all hope and feels very helpless. He, thus, stares at the brilliant stars shining brightly in the sky. It seems that he is looking for some sort of comfort and hope in these stars. His brilliant eyes show that he still hopes for the day when he would be able to run free in the forest and live in natural surroundings.

Conclusion of A Tiger in the Zoo

In this poem, the poet is conveying an important message that wild animals should be in their natural habitat.