

## The Story of the Zebra Mama

In several bereaved mothers support groups, Kate kept hearing of a *Zebra Mama* Folk Tale. After much searching, she could find no evidence of such a tale, so she wrote this one. We are honored that she has chosen *Guided by Grief* as the first publication of *The Story of the Zebra Mama*.

Once upon a time, there was a mother who cried and cried, because her baby died. She called out loud for her baby to return to her. She called and called, but her baby was gone and could only answer her with “signs,” like the sudden appearance of a flock of white doves flying overhead. Sometimes, her baby would come to her in a dream and bring messages of love and hope. Although the mama believed that her baby was at peace in the land beyond, she still had such an incredibly strong yearning in her heart to be with her child. This yearning, this pain only grew stronger and never went away; she knew it would remain until the day she was reunited with her baby. Since there were other Zebra Mamas who experienced this loss and pain before her, they taught her that – over time – she would become more acquainted with this deep pain and yearning. The newly “striped” Zebra Mama noticed that she received great comfort by being in the company of other Zebra Parents and Zebra Grandparents who had also lost their babies.

You see, before this Zebra Mama’s baby died, she looked like a horse. But, after the death of her child, she was changed forever. She was changed inside and outside. She became different from all the other horses – she now had stripes and now understood the reason she is provided such comfort by being with other parents who also lost their babies: zebras like being with other zebras.

And so it goes, once a horse is changed into a zebra, it can never be a horse again. Although, these zebras can still play in the world of horses: work, eat, swim, and even sometimes laugh, deep inside their heart, they long to be with others who have been changed from horse to zebra.

One day, while resting on the ground with other zebras grazing nearby, Zebra Mama dreamt of her baby. She hadn’t had a “sign” of her baby in some time now. She dreamt of the sound of her baby’s voice and her baby’s smell – oh, that glorious smell! She longed to feel a warm, soft, comforting hug from her baby. Suddenly, she heard a tinkling noise in the distance. All of the other zebras heard it too, and they all moved their big round ears toward the sound. It was lovely. It was beautiful. Slowly, the sound came closer and closer. Now, all of the zebras were looking toward the tinkling sound.

Off in the distance, way off in the distance, in a united message of love from all of their babies, each zebra was being greeted with their own unique “sign” of love from their baby. There were peacocks, doves, dragonflies, penguins, twinkling stars, blooming flowers, rainbows, white doves, hummingbirds, lightening bugs, eagles, lady bugs, hawks, yellow butterflies, and full moons. Looking into the distance at each of their “signs,” all of the zebras slowly raised up from the ground and gathered into a circle of love.

At that moment, they all knew that with the power of eternal love in their hearts, along with their connection to each other, these zebras would always be there for each other. They would also always be there for those who will, sadly, come to join their circle of love: zebra for zebra in this land of horses.