

## It Will not Last Forever

by

*Simba Wiltz*

Time seemed to stand still. The browning rays of sun were beginning to make that seamless merge with the earth characteristic at the end of the day. Shadows stretched and waved their arms in warning; warning for the coming night's challenges. Through the great grasses of the savanna, she crept. Her steps were not silent, no... far from it. But somehow, they were soft enough to elude the ears of her unwitting quarry. The lioness froze like a chiseled statue of leonine perfection. Her eyes flared, and time seemed to stand still.

\*WHUMP\* <roll> AAAGH! \*FOOMF\* <giggle>

- "Kiara!"

- "Gotcha daddy." And just like that, time was moving again.

- "You're getting good at that," the lion chuckled, getting his paws under him again with the help of his daughter. The younger, though not as young as she used to be, joyously flicked her tail at her father's compliment.

- "Why, thank you, your majesty!" she giggled, looking over her shoulder,

- "Did you hear that mom?"

- "Mom?" Simba inquired aloud, briefly glancing to the opposing bushes before looking in the same direction as Kiara. Another leonine figure emerged from the grasses, an amused smile beset her muzzle.

- "That was very good, Kiara," Nala managed to say, using her most motherly voice. The small tinge of laughter echoed in the back of the lioness's throat, even if she didn't let it free. Simba smiled coyly at Nala.

- "Conspiring against me again, I see? What am I going to do with you two?"

Nala's aquamarine eyes flashed a doting expression,

- "I'll make it up to you, later." She padded forward and greeted him properly with a nuzzle. Time stood still again for an instant. Kiara rolled her eyes in a vertical arc before they fell back on her father.

- "Where's Kovu, daddy?" Simba disengaged leisurely from the nuzzle, eyes peeking at her from over Nala's buff-colored neck.

- "I'm sure he'll pop up any second now."

- "Pop up?" Kiara questioned him irritably,

- "Daddy, I thought you were keeping an eye on him for me? Now how am I supposed to-" her ears

alerted her to the sound a few moments too late, though each moment seemed long enough to live in.

\*WHUMP\* <roll> AAAGH! \*FOOMF\* <giggle>

- "Kovu!"

- "Hi dear," the lion grinned,

- "miss me?" From where they were observing, Simba and Nala erupted into hearty laughter.

- "Well played, Kovu!" Simba complimented him. Kiara squirmed under her mate's bulk.

- "Ermf," she muttered,

- "you're getting bigger."

- "And you're getting sneakier," Kovu replied, placing a kiss on her forehead. She purred to this, but he only smiled confidentially,

- "Now, what was all this about 'daddy', keeping an eye on me?"

- "Oooh, nothing love..." the pinned lioness returned, flashing her best 'I'm-too-innocent-and-cute-to-lie-to-you' smile. Nala noticed this from a distance, and whispered conspiratorially to Simba.

- "It's amazing how she's managed to keep that smile through the years."

- "Mm-hmm, but the reason they make such a good couple is that Kovu doesn't fall for it."

- "Oh, so you're going to hold out on me, eh?" the lion grinned down on her, poking his muzzle into her neck,

- "Are you sure?"

Kiara giggled,

- "Positive."

Kovu probed under her chin a little more,

- "Really?"

Kiara giggled a little more,

- "YES!" she pawed at him playfully,

- "Stop tickling me!"

- "What?" Kovu asked innocently,

- "you mean, like THIS?"

- "You know," Simba called in his daughter's direction,

- "lyin' to a lion doesn't pay. Ow!-" Nala had smacked him on his shoulder.

- "Err, or a lioness either!" The lioness giggled.

- "That's better," she watched Kiara and Kovu wrestled the short distance away,

- "somehow, I don't think she heard you."

Simba folded his ears, smiling,

- "The way she's laughing, I'm not surprised. If she keeps that up, every animal in the pridelands is going to be deaf."

- "Hmm, will that trick work with YOU when you get into one of your little fibbing moods?" Nala prodded his ribs playfully, causing him to shy away.

- "Noooo, thanks!" Simba laughed,

- "I'm learning my lesson right now." The queen smiled, licking him on the cheek.

- "It would seem that she has your ticklishness as well as your cuteness, my love." A suddenly coherent stream of words emitted from Kiara's muzzle, drawing the attention of the two elder lions.

- "I'LL TELL YOU! I'LL TELL YOU!"

- "See, that wasn't so hard." Kovu licked her face tenderly before settling down to listen. Kiara gulped air and smacked him gently.

- "If you ever do that again..." she gasped, though the playful lilt in her voice indicated she knew it was all in good fun. She squealed apprehensively as Kovu feinted a paw toward a ticklish spot.

- "Eek! Lemme catch my breath." Kovu settled down near her, smiling. He was looking much healthier these days. A tawny sheen settled into his mane and it was rare to find him not smiling. Seldom did the ends of his paws bear the dangerous claws his adoptive father once left exposed. The effects of acceptance permeated his whole body, and the lion radiated with a positive energy.

- "Well?" Kovu mrrred warmly. Kiara glanced to her father, who conveniently engaged in a hearty nuzzling session with Nala.

- "I heard about where you two were going, and I didn't want you to get hurt."

- "Hurt? Me? Nah..." Kovu smiled winningly,  
- "in fact, we hardly had to do anything, right Simba?"

- "That's right," the Lion King chuckled,  
- "Kovu gave a few roars and that was it."

- "Oh," Kiara said sheepishly,  
- "I guess sending spies to watch the ones you care about runs in the family, hmm daddy?"

- "Touché, dear. Touché."

- "So what are you doing out here now?" Kiara giggled, padding over to nuzzle her father once more.

- "I wanted to show Kovu this sunset." Simba replied, looking toward his mate,  
- "this is where I often come after the rounds. It's a good relaxing spot and the view is great."

- "You don't mind if we girls crash the party," Nala licked at his ear,  
- "do you love?"

- "Of course not," Kovu answered before Simba could reply. He leaned over and licked the top of Kiara's head,  
- "it just makes the sunset more romantic."

The four of them settled side by side a few meters from where the tall grasses stopped its advance. Ahead of the two couples, the shadows lengthened and swayed with the savanna breezes. The sound of moving air brushing through a nearby tree created a natural sighing sound that leaned two sets of heads to each other. As they touched, the sun began to make its final descent into the reddening horizon. The last rays reached forward in a desperate grasp to capture the last seconds of the day. For Kovu and Kiara, Simba and Nala, the herds and the flocks, and the trees and grasses; time seemed to stand still.