

## Duos Lateribus (Two Sides) 1

by

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### Prologue

The king sat and sat and sat. That's all he'd been able to do for days. After he had banished Zira and her followers to the outlands he couldn't seem to do anything productive. Zira had killed Nala and his unborn cub while he was out scouting the pridelands, making sure the hyenas hadn't gained enough courage to return to his home, unfortunately the real enemy had been inside the borders.

His cub was to born that day, along with a handful of other cubs in the pride, but now there was no ceremony of a future king. There was only silence. An old baboon crept up beside the king; he had been a loyal follower of Mufassa, and now Simba, but what was to be if there was no heir on its way.

- "Simba" the baboon called.

The lion took his eyes of the sky and looked at Rafiki.

- "I know you're grieving but there are still cubs on their way Simba" the wise baboon said.

Simba looked down at his paws and then back at the cave entrance where the lionesses were resting.

- "I know but this has never happened in our history. What am I supposed to do?" Simba asked.

Rafiki hit him with the stick he carried around and Simba raised a paw to his head,

- "Ow!"

The old monkey chortled,

- "Sometimes I swear you're clueless" he joked.

Simba raised a brow as Rafiki continued with his explanation,

- "Those cubs being born are special and you can train them like your own cubs. You can show them the way to being a king and when the time comes you may choose a ruler to begin a new line of kings. A new history"

Simba looked at Rafiki, contemplating the idea, it seemed perplexing, yet it worked by most standards. Simba looked back at the den,

- "Would you tell Zazu to inform the pregnant lionesses of your plan?" he asked as Rafiki nodded and bowed.

He looked back at the skyline. It was done.

## Perseus's Point of View

### Part I

#### Dauntless Dare

- "I swear if we have to sit through one more class I'm going to claw someone" I growled, making my way along the tall grass, following a well-known zebra path.

Siri followed close behind,

- "You're just bitter because Simba's tougher on you"

I raised my head with a smirk,

- "Yeah I wish that old lion would leave me alone"

Siri hit my shoulder,

- "He's your king Percy"

I sighed,

- "Yeah I know..." I trailed off when I saw the overhang ahead. I trotted ahead as Siri kept her same pace, joining me on the edge of the rocky edge.

Suddenly two other lionesses pushed out of the tall grass,

- "You didn't slow down for us guys" Katy complained as Arturo just took her place beside Siri.

I laughed,

- "You should've kept up" I told her playfully.

Katy just rolled her eyes and walked up to me. She looked down at the rocky overhang which lead down into a dried river-bed where the antelope would drive when the rainy season came. If you crossed that area and climbed the other side you had made it to the swamps, the area where the outlands began. Siri pushed up beside me as I stood, overlooking the cliff with a grin,

- "What are you thinking Percy? I know that face" she said.

Arturo and Katy both looked at me with confident glares,

- "I bet you can't make it down to the riverbed" Arturo challenged.

I rolled my eyes,

- "Psst, that's too easy guys"

Siri pushed my shoulder with her paw,

- "Fine than go to the swamps"

My confidence left me as I stood gawking at the dark swamp in the distance; I bite my lip and look at the three cubs.

- "You scared?" Katy questioned.

- "No...but what if Simba catches me over there" I answered.

Siri smiles,

- "So you are scared?"

I raise my head and shake my head,

- "I'll be back soon" I said, leaping over the side of the rocks, slipping down the bottom swiftly where I landed on the dry earth beneath me, I looked back up at the three cubs who sat looking down at me with gazes that tested my next move. I trotted across the dry riverbed easily and then began clearing the other side.

Once I'd clawed to the top I looked back at the three cubs. Now they looked scared,

- "What, are you scared now?" I asked, yelling it across the overhang.

Arturo and Katy bent down in the grass and Siri stood in the same place with wide eyes,

- "Percy! Get out of there, I see something moving"

I raise a brow and look back behind me; sure enough I see the grass moving. I go to jump back into the river bed but I notice the way I'd climbed wasn't great for sliding down. Spiky rocks stood and there were dozens of holes in the surface of the dry sand, probably where dangerous snakes lay. Before I had time to think I looked back over the ridge,

- "Siri, hurry, get Arturo and Katy and hide. I'll be okay!"

Then I disappeared into the darker green grass of the swamps. I crawl through the mud until I reach another drop off. I stand up and look around, there's a log that stretches out over a muddy waterhole, which ends on a muddy island in the middle of the murky water. There was a huge rock

sitting in the waterhole and I guessed if I could reach it than I could climb to another pathway which would lead me home.

I got onto the limb and began walking over when it began shaking, I clawed onto it, screaming as I looked over my shoulder. It wasn't me shaking the branch. It was another lion cub. He saw my eyes on him and backed off, eyeing me, amused, "What are you doing pridelander?"

"Running" I answered sarcastically as I balanced on the limb which was now even more flimsy than before.

"You should be, if Zira caught you here you'd be done for" the cub returned.

I twisted my body on the limb, gazing at the cub, "Well I'm trying to get home. It isn't like I want to be here" I snapped.

The cub sat on his hunches, licking his paw before answering, "Well than I'd be going in another direction pridelander because you're headed straight for the lioness patrol heading this way" he growled.

I swallowed hard and shook my head, my tuft of fur becoming messier than before, and I climbed back up the limb where the cub was waiting, growling, "What are you doing?" he asked again.

I pushed passed him, "Isn't it obvious" I snapped back, pushing passed him as I trotted back into the grass.

That's when a scent caught my nose and I fell back on my stomach, scared, the fur on my back stood on end. It was Zira or her followers. I knew that stench, whatever it was it wasn't good. I leaned down further into the grass just as a huge paw, claws sheathed, lands by my nose.

"Hold on I smell something" the lioness snarled, sniffing the air.

I cringed at her voice, when suddenly I hear another, muffled call coming from the distance, "Percy! Where are you?"

It was Siri, my stomach dropped as the lioness roared in her direction, "This way ladies!" she cried as she dashed off, followed by a few other outlander lionesses. I jumped out of my hiding place though, hitting one in the leg.

"Hey! This way!" I shouted as the lionesses stopped and glared back at me. I smirked and then raced off in another direction. This was it! I was going to die.

I ran as fast as my cub legs could carry me but I could practically feel the lionesses' claws hitting my tail behind me. My panting became a rhythm and my throat throbbed, then a shadow passed over me and landed between me and the lionesses. Simba.

He roared as the lioness halted, still growling though, as Simba stood as a barrier. Simba clawed one lioness as she roared in pain as another one came in her place, each receiving a bloody wound reminding them that they were female and he was male. Eventually they all disappeared back into the swamp just as Siri trotted into view. Her head down and tail low as Simba glared at her, then back at me, "Where's Arturo and Katy?" he commanded.

Siri swallowed, "Back across the ridge"

Simba growled, pacing back and forth, his anger radiated like the sun's heat. It burned. "Get back to priderock immediatley. I'll get Arturo and Katy. We'll talk when I return" he growled as Siri crept passed him to where I stood.

That's when Simba caught my eye, his eyes might have radiated furiousness, but deep down I saw the real feeling, disappointment. I lowered my head and led Siri back across the borders to the

pridelands as Simba disappeared to find Arturo and Katy.

Siri and I walked in silence, which I was thankful for, finally I saw the peak of priderock, where a number of lionesses sat waiting for us and Simba. I sighed and lifted my head as high as I could manage through my sadness.

Sure enough Simba returned with the two other cubs. He ordered the lionesses to go hunting while he had a talk with the four of us. We sat at the edge of priderock now with Simba offering us mild gazes of anger.

"What were you thinking? What did I clearly state after your lesson this morning?" He demanded.

"Not to leave the pridelands" Katy managed quietly, the only one brave enough to speak at that moment, sitting under Simba's wrath.

"Exactly but you thought it was a good idea to leave the pridelands than, what could make you think that?" he roared.

Siri looked up at him, "We were playing...we got carried away"

Simba turned towards her, "You of all the four should know where the boundaries end. You should know very well Siri" he growled. She looked away and then I raised my voice, "It was my fault"

"What?" Simba now faced me and I found myself the most scared I'd ever been. He was huge

and strong with eyes that seemed red when he was upset.

"I wanted to cross the ridge" I answered quickly.

Simba just shook his head with a long, exasperated sigh, "You four are the only cubs this pride has left to carry it. Our future leaders, yet you're shaping out to be pretty bad rulers. As a king, if you made a false decision you'd put your entire pride in danger, " he made sure he glared at each one of us and then finished, "Tomorrow your lesson will be from sunrise to sunset, going back over the basics of the territory"

We all complained but Simba's snarl hushed us, "Don't complain, you obviously need more help in that area"

Part 2

A Grateful Visitor

The morning after our day long lesson made me sore and unhappy to get up, yet I knew if I wanted to have any fun I'd need to get up. Luckily Simba had given us one day off due to our very long lesson and he admitted he needed to calm down after our little adventure to the outlands. I opened my eyes and stood up, yawning, I looked around to see if any of my friends were awake. They were all asleep so I decided to go ahead and sneak out. Besides me waking up first, that never happened.

I trotted out onto pride rock where Simba sat at the edge, speaking to Zazu, I sat there attempting to listen for a moment but I couldn't catch anything they said. Finally I just gave up and decided to leave so he wouldn't spot me. I tip-toed down the staircase of rocks until I reached the end where I dove down into the tall grass, creeping along the dirt until I reached the waterhole.

It was empty now, most of the early-risers had already had their share and the later animals had yet to come for their taste, so now I took my own sip of the cool water and sat by the edge, staring out over the horizon. I could see the tip of the land where the grass and landscape got darker, the outlands, I looked away out of shame and looked at my reflection.

Same brown eyes, messy mane, and big ears that didn't seem worthy enough of anything, especially being king. Then the water ripples, I look up and see a small shadow, a cub like me. Except his scent is different. He appears in full light and I see he's the cub from yesterday, he eyes me wearily as I just gaze at him with one eyebrow raised.

He bent down as if preparing to run or growl but I intercept his decision, "I'm not going to do anything" I admitted, meeting his green eyes.

He sat down on his hunches and watched me for a moment, my front paws in the water, the back two resting on land, "Sorry about yesterday, I was probably a little rude" I told him and I cursed myself for being so open with an outsider.

The cub finally smiled than, "Don't worry about it, I can only imagine how scared you were. That was very brave...you know, coming to the outlands" he said.

I smiled, "Not really...it was stupid. Not brave"

The cub laughed and made his way around the waterhole as I watched him, "So why are you here anyway?" I asked as he kept walking closer to me.

"Truth is I'm too afraid to drink the water in the outlands. It's dark and murky and last time we were drinking it a lioness got attacked by a crocodile" he admitted.

"That's a good reason than" I replied with a warm grin.

He'd gotten close to me now, so close that he sat down beside me and our back legs touched, "Why are you here? There's that river that runs closer to pride rock. Why not drink there?" he questions.

I smirk, "Things always taste better when they're forbidden"

"Why do you say that?" he asks, eyeing me with a slight look of amusement in his green eyes.

"Simba hates when I wonder off, he hates when I get so close to the outlands, " I look up again so I could see the tip of the outland territory, "And everytime he tells me he hates when I do this, I have such a strange feeling, like I have to" I answer.

The cub nods, "Me too, Zira has so many rules, she's so strict and I can't stand it"

"I guess leaders are too power crazy...I don't think I'd want to be one" I said, feeling slightly off as the words left my mouth.

"So what's your name pridelander?" he asked.

"Perseus but everyone calls me Percy," I replied, "And you?"

"Melvin but I go by Mel" he answers.

"Well it's nice to meet you Mel" I told him as he laughed and did the same to me.

I looked back at the sky, the sun was creeping over the landscape now so the heat hit my back, "I should probably get going" I said as Mel nodded.

"Me too, " he went to leave but stopped, "Hey Percy?"

"Yeah" I turned to face him as I was in the middle of leaving as well.

"Tomorrow? Same time?" he asks.

I grin, "You bet!"

Everyday we met at that waterhole. We shared stories about our troubles with our leaders and our pride. The more we talked the more trustworthy we became of the other and the more we noted that we weren't that different.

"Percy!"

"Percy would you pay attention?"

I shake my head and give Siri a sideways glance, she frowns as she looks down at me, I'm laying down on the cool rockbed that was the tip of pride rock. She sits down, "Where have you been going?" she questioned.

I shrugged, laying my head on my paws, "Nowhere. Just the waterhole" I admit, not telling a complete lie.

She sits down beside me, "Simba was furious this morning" she comments, off subject.

I perk up, "What, why?" I ask.

She looks at me, "I'm surprised you didn't hear. He smelled an outlander near the end of the border, " she pauses, realizing something, "...near the waterhole" she murmured.

She glares at me, as if expecting me to be something that I'm not, and I shake my head. "I'm more surprised that I didn't smell them" I lied, Siri raises a brow.

"I guess you're right. It probably smelled you and run off" she concluded. I nodded my head without really meaning to.

Suddenly Arturo jumps onto my back. I laugh as she rolls off and lands on her back, looking up at the sky. Katy trots in behind her. Arturo jumps back to her feet and looks down upon me, "Did you hear Percy?" she asked.

I nodded, "Yeah"

She frowned, "I don't get why Simba's so mad about it though"

Katy intercepts her, "It's an outlander. They killed our queen"

Arturo nods as if she understands but still doesn't seem convinced. I catch Siri's eyes, she looks different, like the comment struck her like lightning on the barren ground. I realize then that she was originally an outlander. Then I picture Mel, handsome, misunderstood Mel.

"That's just Zira. All outlanders aren't murderers" I snapped.

Katy just looked away, her curly hair moving along with her head. Siri gives me a thankful glance as if she knew what I was doing for her. Arturo lays beside me now, we all stare out at the noon sun now, that's when it hits me for the first time.

My mane was getting longer, I was growing bigger, so were my friends. We were the only cubs in the pridelands as of now. After Simba's generation we were all they had left, and there, the four of us sitting on the rock overlooking the pridelands. We were no longer cubs. We were growing up. I felt a new pang of pride for what I was becoming and I smirked, laying my head back on my paws, Simba couldn't tell me what to do anymore. That was my job. Our job.

The noon sun was still high and hot when Simba interrupted our sitting, "You ready for your lesson?" he asked, his voice rougher than usual.

We all nodded, standing up from our resting places. Simba started walking off, "Follow me"

We followed him in a line with me at the lead, pacing myself behind Simba's slower, more

refined, walk. He leads us off priderock, passed a group of lionesses, I even spot my mother in the group. Simba leads us into the grass and we continue the walk I take every morning to go see Mel.

He leads us passed the waterhole though and stops at the edge of the ridge where I'd crossed a few weeks ago. It felt like ages ago now. There's an old tree sitting at the edge of the territory. It's decaying, the green of its leaves turning dull, I could've sworn there were old paintings on the bark as well. Of lions before and after our time. The tree was covered in history, apparently more than I let on.

Simba walked towards the tree and sat down. His eyes seemed red now, "Do you know what happened here?" he questioned.

No one answered, we all sat, in quiet only our eyes on Simba. He sighed, "Zira killed Nala here. She had help too, it was a team murder, and I couldn't save her" he murmured.

He looked back up at the tree, "Rafiki used to use this tree as a memorial of some type. To show the growing of princes and princesses as they journeyed to the throne. But after the accident he abandoned this tree" Simba explained as my eye caught red dye painting a lioness on the tree.

I saw a lion painted beside her, his mane a red color, his eyes just the same. It was Simba, standing beside his dead queen and unborn cub.

Simba looks at the tree, "Or I thought Rafiki abandoned it..." he trails off as he walks closer to it, me right at his heels.

There's five more pictures there. Three lionesses and two lions, or soon to be lions, manes hadn't been painted on them yet. I recognized them as Katy, Arturo, Siri, and Me. Simba put his paw on the last cub, "This was my child"

He swipes his paw and the image fades to nothing but a dot of dye and tree bark. "You're all I

have left" he whispers.

"Never in this pride's history have they been forced to train cubs they didn't have a king's blood," Simba looks back at us then, "But the pride overlooked something very important...very deep. The great kings have each made a place within you, thus everyone of you has a chance to take the throne, yet everyone has their disadvantages."

Simba suddenly looks back towards the outland's territory, the place where the grass grows dark and the ground is barren or mud. I raise my chin as Simba lets out a low growl, "I want you to swear to me you'll protect my home from them. Never let a murderer back on these lands. Scar and Zira need to be a mere memory, nothing more, when you take your places as rulers"

I'd never heard Simba so angry before, not even when he found us on the outlander territory, now there was something darker in his tone. Revenge perhaps. Or just pity for himself and his deceased family. Then he roars and it echoes across the lands, like a king's should.

That's when the grass on the other side of the ravine moves until a group of skinny lionesses pile into view. I recognized the one at the lead. It was Zira. She roared back. Simba glared at her, she did the same to him, both their gazes were that of hate and rage.

This was no longer a fight for territory. This was a full out war. Simba brought us out here to show us what we were. We were the soldiers. The generation that was thrown into a war that was now in our blood. And with so much pressure, like the clouds in rainy season, there was no stopping what was coming. Simba dug his claws into the dirt and then growled, turning back around as Arturo, Siri, and Katy quickly followed him. But I stood in my place, feeling cub-like as Zira's gaze turned me to stone, and I caught Mel's fearful eyes in the background of the lionesses, behind who I guess is his mother's, leg.

I nod my head to him, so no one else will notice, and I turn my back on the outlanders and trot back into the tall grass which would lead me home. To priderock.

## Part 3

### A King's Message

That night as I slept I had the strangest dream. I woke up in the den, yet their were names calling me out. I trotted towards them to answer their calls. I make it out of the den to a dark night, where only the stars provide any hope to see in the blackness. I can cleary see four pale lions though. They all look musclaur, powerful, except for one lanky one standing beside a golden lion with Simba's mane.

The largest one waits for me, just a few pawsteps ahead, his eyes are gleaming pale, like the stars. I walk to his side and he leads me down to join the other three lions. Once I'm sitting with them at the edge of the rock I look them over.

Their names echo in my mind as if they were there the entire time, but I know they weren't. Mohatu. Ahadi. Mufassa. And Scar...the lankiest lion looks over at me, his pale star-green eyes meeting mine, as if he knew I was challenged by his name.

Mohatu the kind. Ahadi the strong. Mufassa the brave. Scar the intelligent. Four great kings each with their own pasts which gave to either positive, or negative, outcomes. Each of them had failed somehow, despite their great leadership, each of them had a fatal flaw. If a king were to have all four traits he could rule easily with no problems.

Suddenly the scene of the stars above me shifted to Simba, who paced around at the bottom of pride rock. Every few moments his eyes would dart to the outlands and then turn back to his own paws as he marched back and forth among a dusty line that now grew under him.

Simba was a great king. He was strong, brave, and intelligent. But he lacked one thing: kindness. Now don't get me wrong, he was a kind king who offered everything he could to help another, yet he lacked it for the enemies he had made in the outlands pride. He lacked intelligence when it came to being so rash about starting a war. He lacked strength after Nala's death. He lacked no bravery though.

"Like you young cub"

The voice echoes through my head. Simba and I were so alike, therefore we tended to argue, we were both brave, lacking what insight we really needed to lead a kingdom. I hear Simba's voice from earlier that day, "great kings live inside you"

I look around, at the two kings at my left, and the other two at my right. They all merge and dance back into the starry sky, the image has shifted back to darkness and I wake up, gasping. I had a plan now.

I raced among the grass, so fast that the blades hit me like claws, and I didn't stop until I

splashed into the waterhole while skidding to a stop, "Mel!" I call, looking around the waterhole.

A lanky body pushes into view, "I shouldn't be here Percy...after yesterday" I cut him off, racing to the other side of the waterhole to join him. He gives me a questionable look as I pant, eyes gleaming.

"I can stop this Mel" I said.

Mel rolled his eyes, "There's no doubt in my mind that you couldn't do it Percy, but it's not only you. Plus Zira had a ceremony last night, speaking of war, she named the new king of the outlands"

"King?" I question, I didn't know the outlands had a surplus of male lions.

"Her son Nuka" Mel answers.

"Her son?" I questioned again.

Mel nods, "Scar's only son" he clears out for me.

Then I remembered Scar from my dream. He didn't seem evil there, but Nuka was going to help stop the war. "Well is he a good king?" I asked.

"Don't know, he just became king yesterday, but Zira practically trained him to be a lethal attacker" Mel said.

I don't speak for a second, "I had a dream last night Mel, all the kings of the pridelands were there. I learned you can't just be one kind of king, but I still don't know exactly what

they're trying to say"

Suddenly a clap of thunder roared over the land like a great lion. I lead Mel under the cover of the tree Simba had showed me yesterday. We dry off and then lay down in the roots. I have my back to the tree, while Mel sits in front of me with his eyes towards it.

"Is that me?" he asked.

I raised a brow and turned around, the place where Simba wiped his son off, had been replaced with another red-colored cub with green eyes. It was Mel. Mel's eyes find me beside him, "And that's you"

I nod, "Some tree, eh?"

He laughed, "It's like it has a mind of its own"

Then I hear the grass moving despite the rain, I perk up, heart racing. Simba and a few other lionesses race into view at least a hundred yards away from the tree. Simba raises his nose, "I can smell it" he roars.

Mel cowers and I race to cover his scent with my body. I lay in front of him, "I have to run Percy" he mutters.

"No you don't, just stay behind me, I'll protect you" I said, and my voice seemed stronger, Mel didn't move, "I trust you" he whispers.

The roots of the tree cover up the lower half of Mel's body and I cover up the remaining top. Simba pushes into view, he looks like he's going to attack, but then he recognizes me, "Perseus?"

"Oh hey" I said innocently.

"Did you see anyone pass through here?" he asked.

I looked back up at the tree, at Mel's picture, "Yeah, only Rafiki, he smelled funny today" I answered.

Simba looked back at the other lionesses, his hair was soaked, "What are you doing out here?" he commanded.

"I was intrigued by this tree" I replied.

Simba lowers his head and I raise my chin, we were both testing each other, but I was going to win. "Get home, this storm is dangerous" he finally growls before leaving with the other lionesses.

I stand up and Mel pounces me into an embrace, "Percy! Thanks" he exclaims.

I wink at him, "Only for you"

We both grin and another roar of thunder erupts from the dark sky along with some lightning, "You should get home" I told him.

Mel nodded, "I hope to see you tomorrow Perseus"

"Don't call me that Melvin" I snapped back playfully as we both dashed back out into the rain, heading separate ways.

When I returned my three friends were waiting at the mouth of the cave. They all ran to see me when I approached with a smile, "Where'd you go Percy?" Katy questioned.

"We were so worried" Siri said.

"We thought you ran off" Arturo says.

I shake my hair and soak the other three lionesses as they make disgusted sounds as I laugh, "No, just went for a walk"

"Like you strangely do everyday?" Arturo asked.

"It's not strange" I correct here as we all walk in a line back into the den.

Luckily when the four of us were younger and weren't able to leave the cave we had discovered a secret passage heading away from the main den. This is where we had decided to go if we were ever stuck inside during a storm. I crawled in first.

The passage was tight at first, and since we were growing it was becoming quite a struggle, but once you passed the first few feet, it opened up to a larger chamber. It was at least Simba's height and opened up on the width scale quite well. At least six Simbas could fit there.

I took my place furthest away from the chamber's entrance as everyone else filed in after me. We sat in silence for a long time, listening to the constant patter of rain on the rocky side, and the crash of thunder. Then Katy sat up, "What if we all had our own prides?" she asked.

I raised a brow at her but Arturo beat me to my question, "What?"

"Like if there was a pridelands, and outlands, and three other lands. We could all lead our own families, and we'd be so powerful" she answered.

I smirked, imagining all of us as adults, leading our own number of followers into battle. It wasn't a bad idea. We were the next generation anyways. Why couldn't we change the way of the lions here forever? It was our destiny.

"What makes you say that?" Siri asked Katy.

"Well, I had this dream last night" Katy admitted.

I perked up, feeling tense, feeling as if we both got the same message. "What was it about?" I say, lifting my ears to get every word.

"I don't know exactly but Nala came to me. She showed me how the world seperated into different kingdoms and prides. She acted like it would help" Katy summarized.

Siri nodded, "I had a dream like that too, except mine had Uru in it. You know, one of the earlier queens? She showed me us when we're older, and we were all happy, we all had our own families. There was no war though, we had made peace for some reason, that wasn't clear" Siri added.

Then we all looked towards Arturo, "Me as well. Sarabi had come to me, she showed me what

would happen if we started a war, and it was awful. There were so many of us dead, " he eyes hover on mine for a second, "But then she showed me what it be like if there was no war. I saw a handsome lion from the outlands though too"

After Arturo finished Siri pressed her side into mine as we laid, "What about you Percy?" she asked.

"I did too but I had four kings before us in mine. They showed me that you can't just be one kind of king. You can't be just brave, or strong, or kind, or even intelligent. You have to have a heart for all of it" I explained.

Katy raised a brow, "It must have been interesting"

I nod, " I want to be a king" I admitted, feeling selfish, but I couldn't see myself any other way. I couldn't follow orders and much less from another male. I just...I had to.

"You'd make a great king Percy" Siri said, embarassed as she looked away, but I offered her a warm smile.

"Thank you" I say so she can hear the gratitude in my voice.

The next morning the rain had left the ground wet and sticky, almost like clay, but I still managed to escape the prideland's watchful eye. I was so intent on seeing Mel again that I didn't even notice my pursuiers. That is until they all jumped on cue and pinned me, "Ouch, what the heck?" I exclaimed as I stood back up. My fur was now dirtier than it was before.

Katy gave me a defiant gaze, "We came to see where you go every morning" she concludes.

I frown, I couldn't let them discover my relationship with Mel, and I try to come up with a lie, "It's dangerous"

"More the reason for us to come"

"It's scary and dark"

"You're just making it sound more appealing"

I roll my eyes, "You guys are hopeless" I murmur.

I looked back over my shoulder, towards the waterhole, I bet Mel was already there, waiting for me. I sigh in exasperation, "Look you can't come. If Simba caught us you'd be in a lot of trouble"

"Aw, are you trying to protect us almighty king?" Arturo teased as I rolled my eyes again.

Siri just pushed Arturo's shoulder, "Just listen to him"

"If you came along you couldn't tell anyone. And you have to promise not to...I don't know attack him when you meet him, " I looked at Katy when I said that part, "Promise?"

They all nodded and I turned back to walk down the path, "Alright, follow me"

I walked onto the bank of the waterhole, finding Mel already there, he beamed when he saw me. Then he saw the grass part for my friends as he took a step back, growling slightly.

Then he saw Siri, "Mel?" she questioned.

He nodded and she took a step forward to get a better look at him, "I can't believe that's you" she exclaimed.

Arturo and Katy exchanged glances, "What just happened?" Katy asked.

Siri turns back on her, "Mel was my only cub friend in the outlands. Until we left that is" she corrects.

I smile and pounce onto Mel and pin him as we both laugh, "Well he's my best friend" I say.

Arturo raises a brow, "I was wondering why you were becoming more manly. Is it because you finally got another male to be your friend?" she teased.

I stuck my tongue out at her and gave her a smart comment back, "At least I can make a male friend"

She just rolled her eyes but kept her mouth shut. I finally got off Mel and we sat in a very awkward silence, all five of us, then I pushed Mel back into the mud, "Tag!"

He laughed and jumped up, racing after me as I run around childishly. Eventually we all begin playing and we have so much fun we forget that that entire meeting was forbidden, and everyone wants to return the next day. And they did. We met in secret for weeks.

We played and gave opinions on our lives and the way we saw our future. All the while Simba trained us for war and Nuka trained Mel for hatred. We all had our own plan though.

## Part 4

### A War

The days had passed into months and now we were no longer small cubs, but growing into teenagers, my messy hair had grown just a bit. I couldn't call it a mane yet, or even the start of one. I was making my usual walk to the waterhole the morning it began. I pushed through the grass and saw Mel already waiting, green eyes bright, "Morning Perce"

"Back at you" I replied, sitting down as he trotted over to take his place beside me.

"Look I've been meaning to tell you, " he trails off and takes a deep breath, "Nuka's been planning an attack. He's waiting for Simba to grow older and weaker" he admits.

He looked very upset and troubled by it but I just rolled my eyes, "Don't worry about it Mel. We'll be ready to end it before it even starts"

Mel looks up at me, "I guess you're right. But more cubs are coming Percy, to both our prides, and that means more mouths to feed and more warriors to train. I can't describe it but our generation feels different" he says.

I nod because I completely agree. I lean forward and look at my reflection in the water and then press my paw into it just as the grass in front of me parted. A skinny lioness with red eyes roared, I hopped up and Mel pressed down into the dirt. She was Zira.

"So this is where you've been going lately, " she croons, pacing back and forth on the opposite side of the waterhole, "You little traitor"

Mel glares at him but remains close to the ground, more lioness part the grass and stalk into view. I take a step in front of Mel, but Mel gets up off the ground and joins me at my shoulder. He growls and gazes at Zira, "We don't have to fight you know?" he said.

Zira raised her chin, "Poor cub, doesn't know the difference between an enemy and a friend"

Mel looks up at me as I keep my eyes steadily aimed at Zira, my heart pounding. Zira just shakes her head, pretending to be upset for Mel, "Look at him Melvin...what do you see?" Zira questions.

Mel takes a moment to answer but he finally looks at me, "My friend"

I smirk as the words leave his lips but Zira just growls in protest, "No that's a pridelander. Those are the people that make us live where we do. The reason we go hungry and die young, have you ever seen that in him Melvin? Does he look the same, knowing he's the reason your stomach aches" Zira snaps.

Mel takes a deep breath and looks back over at me, his green eyes dark, and I look down at him, "She's lying Mel..."

"Lying! You know it's true! The reason we're dying is you!" Zira yells.

I turn back to her, "Well yeah it's true..but--"

She cuts him off, "But what? You're different, " she smiles, "That's the biggest lie I've heard all day"

I sigh and take a step back as Mel keeps his eyes on me, "I'm sorry Mel...I didn't know what the pridelanders did to you" I whisper as Zira just roars with laughter.

"You didn't know yet Simba reminds you every day" she adds.

I shake my head just as Siri, Katy, and Arturo run into the clearing. Siri presses against my side, Arturo watches on fearfully, and Katy growls at Zira and her followers, "Leave! Simba's coming!" she snapped.

Zira takes a step into the water, moving towards us, "I don't listen to cubs"

Suddenly Simba leaps into view and Mel is startled into my side as well. Simba roars so loud the buzzards in the plains go to flight, "Get off the pridelands!"

"Keep your cubs away from my warriors" she replied harshly.

Simba looks confused at first but then turns to face me: to face me and Mel who still stands at my side. Simba's expression turns to a dark storm, "Perseus"

I lower my head in shame as Mel quickly races back to his side of the war. Zira is waiting for him with a quick growl and claw as he disappears into the grass on the other side. I watch him leave as Siri nuzzles my side. Suddenly another lion appears beside Zira...Nuka.

"Simba you obviously don't understand what a war is. A war is long. A battle is short. Many battles make up a war, and many deaths make up a battle" Nuka croons.

Some pridelander lionesses all arrived with snapping jaws and angry eyes, but Nuka just roars, "This is the first battle"

He races forward and he and Simba collide in a ball of angry growling and fur. All the lionesses from both sides clash into one line, blood falls into the waterhole. Zazu lands at my feet, "Hurry cubs! Come with me"

He flies off as Siri, Katy, and Arturo go to follow him but my feet are firmly planted. Zazu stops and screams my name but I can't help feeling guilty. What have I done? Then a mouth comes around me and lifts me off the ground, leading me back to pride rock. I could do nothing but think of Mel...many battles make up a war...many deaths make up a battle...