

Shadow Legacy: Pilot

written by

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MONTAGE

A bright light appears over a radiant garden.

BAHATI (V.O.)
In the beginning, Ujesu created
animal-kind and their protectors,
Human-kind.

A tribe of humans sit alongside animals of the African
plains.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
For a while, things were peaceful.

The animals leave the humans as they start to dance around a
bonfire.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
As the humans started to turn away
from Ujesu, they stopped being able
to commune with their animal
brethren.

A short distance away a couple of humans with spears are
keeping a lion and lionesses at bay.

The world swirls showing a mangrove swamp with mandrills
huddled over stone tablet with illegible writing.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It wasn't long before the Seers
were ordained to watch over Ujesu's
Prophecies and withhold history's
secrets.

The world swirls again to show inhabitants of the Savanna
roaming the land.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Yet, all was not right with the
world.

The inhabitants scatter as two different groups of lions and
lionesses clash in battle.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
War broke out between the Prides of
the Sahara and those of the
Savanna.

Many fall in battle on both sides. Blood covers the land.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Many remember the war, but so many
 families were consigned to history.

The world fades and shows a battle between a Lion draped in shadow facing off against two other lions.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The war ended only after the leader
 of the Sahara Prides had been slain
 by two gallant brothers.

The shadow falls away and fades into the ground.

The world swirls and shows a semi-circle of lions formed around a human sitting cross legged.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 After the war, one of the wisest
 Tribesman, that could still talk to
 animal-kind, brought the remaining
 Kings together in a council that
 happens every full moon.

The world swirls to show a lone lion resting on a rise.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Though, this is not my story, it is
 the story of one family that I
 oversee in prophecy. One who I've
 come to call my friend, as they
 face a coming darkness that
 threatens to consume them.

SAVANNA - NIGHT

On a rain-soaked rise, a solitary BARBARY LION named SHUJAA lies motionless. His eyes, glowing red, betray the weight of his tormented existence. His matted fur bears witness to the recent downpour.

Above, the waning crescent moon struggles to pierce through rain-laden clouds, casting an eerie glow over the land.

BAHATI (V.O.)
 Though I bear the title of Seer, my
 Hyena heritage remains an
 unyielding barrier. The Mandrill
 Seers view me with disdain, an
 outsider within their sacred
 circle. But I am bound by duty,
 tasked with the solemn duty of
 being the watcher over Shujaa and
 his family.

UNDERBRUSH - CONTINUOUS

Inside the barren underbrush, LIONESS HASIRA cradles her two trembling CUBS. BAHATI, a black-furred HYENA, watches from a respectful distance, her gaze reflecting empathy.

Hasira's tears remain unshed as she buries her face in her paws, consumed by grief. Bahati's heart aches in solidarity. She nuzzles one of the cubs, sharing a wordless understanding.

BAHATI (V.O.)

Seers forbid involvement with those
bound by prophecy. Yet fate compels
me to defy that law.

With resolve, Bahati cradles the cub in her mouth, mindful not to disturb the delicate bond between Hasira and her remaining offspring. She departs, silently vowing to shield the innocent from destiny's grip.

SAVANNA - CONTINUOUS

Shujaa's gaze fixes upon Bahati as she emerges from the underbrush, her steps faltering. Clenched in her maw is the lifeless body of a cub. Shujaa's head sinks, a tear silently tracing its path through his fur.

BAHATI (V.O.)

The King's Cubs fell victim to the
relentless grasp of Mirazzi—a
disease that ravages its host,
depriving them of vital
nourishment.

Bahati turns, her silhouette growing smaller as she walks away.

BAHATI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Not only does King Shujaa contend
with the indwelt demon, the Shetani
—a tormentor that preys upon his
very being—but to lose a cub to
this affliction is a burden beyond
measure.

SAVANNA - CONTINUOUS

Bahati cautiously carries the cub through patches of wilting tall grass, glancing around intermittently.

Her eyes lock onto an EAST AFRICAN LION, MOHATU, basking in the moonlight.

Bahati gently sets the live cub down in front of him.

MOHATU

I didn't think you would make it.

BAHATI

I'm relieved you came, Mohatu. This must remain hidden from Shujaa.

MOHATU

I can't ignore the plea of a friend, especially after you aided me during the war.

Mohatu smiles, his gaze filled with mild curiosity as he looks down at the cub.

MOHATU (CONT'D)

Is this the child of Prophecy?

BAHATI

That's open to interpretation. For now, he must be separated from his brother.

MOHATU

Will he share the same fate?

BAHATI

Unfortunately, yes. But with your guidance, he can learn to live with it.

Mohatu closes his eyes, shaking his head slowly.

MOHATU

How unfortunate. I will do whatever I can to care for this cub. I won't let destiny befall him as it did my own child.

Mohatu takes the cub gently in his maw and begins to walk away.

Bahati watches with a mix of sadness and relief before quietly departing in the opposite direction.

SAVANNA - CONTINUOUS

Shujaa remains in a bowed position, his voice filled with anguish.

SHUJAA

Why must I endure this? Is it my
punishment?

He looks up at the stars, his voice filled with desperation.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Why take the life of an innocent?

Suddenly, Shujaa senses someone approaching. It's Bahati.

BAHATI

(sadly)

I'm sorry, your Majesty. I did my
best.

Shujaa pushes himself into a seated position and places a
massive paw on Bahati's shoulder, offering solace.

SHUJAA

(soothing)

You did everything you could for
those cubs. If only we had
discovered it sooner.

Bahati avoids Shujaa's gaze, attempting to look away.

BAHATI

Would it have changed anything?

Shujaa removes his paw and gazes down the rise.

SHUJAA

What will happen to the last cub?

BAHATI

He will survive, but his life hangs
by a thread. Thanks to the
knowledge of the medicine-man, I
managed to save him.

Shujaa looks at Bahati with a mix of sadness and surprise.

Bahati still avoids direct eye contact.

SHUJAA

We should be grateful for Ujesu's
blessing and the aid of the humans.

Shujaa's gaze lowers to the ground, while Bahati turns to
leave. Suddenly, Shujaa looks up and stands.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Bahati, please wait a moment.

Bahati pauses but doesn't face Shujaa directly.

BAHATI

I'm sorry, Shujaa, there is nothing more I can do for you.

SHUJAA

I challenge that belief.

(pause)

I know the other Seers don't view you favorably, but please, tell me... Will my cub grow into a great warrior?

BAHATI

You know I cannot provide that answer. The council may judge me for not being a Mandrill, but what makes you think I possess the ability to see his future?

Shujaa looks away with a sigh, stepping closer to Bahati's side.

SHUJAA

I apologize. You have a deeper understanding of our family than anyone else.

(pause)

Surely, there must be a prophecy that pertains to him.

Bahati closes her eyes, a small tear fading into her fur.

VISION OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO - NIGHT

A lone BARBARY LION, ADULT MALAIKA, lies battered and broken on a desolate path, overlooking a vast emptiness. His fur is drenched in blood, and he struggles for each breath

ADULT MALAIKA

(sorrowful)

I'm... sorry, Uzuri. I can't... keep my-

As the lion's body slumps, still and lifeless, a shadow emerges on the rise. Glowing red eyes pierce through the darkness.

SHIDA

It is done.

SAVANNA - NIGHT

Bahati takes a deep breath and begins to walk away.

BAHATI

I'm sorry, but the future remains uncertain.

She pauses for a moment but never looks back.

BAHATI (CONT'D)

Although I cannot see his destiny, seek me out later if you require further assistance.

Shujaa watches as Bahati fades into the tall grass. He scans his surroundings before limping down the rise, but suddenly halts.

HALI (V.O.)

Did you forget that I can hear your thoughts?

Shujaa looks around, then whispers to himself.

SHUJAA

Not now.

HALI (V.O.)

My, my, aren't we tense tonight? You know I can help you with that.

SHUJAA

Why would I ever allow you the chance to **help** me? If I recall correctly, it was you who attempted to kill my brother.

HALI (V.O.)

Humph, you're no fun. You need to loosen up before it consumes you.

Shujaa continues to limp down the rise.

SHUJAA

You would enjoy that, wouldn't you?

HALI (V.O.)

On the contrary, if you perish, I will likely return to Jahannamu. I am uncertain of what would befall you. Oh, but it would be a delightful spectacle if you followed me there.

SHUJAA

I wish you'd just leave me alone.

Shujaa pushes through a thick cluster of tall grass, making his way towards the Pride's Den.

PRIDE'S DEN - CONTINUOUS

The Den is scattered with slumbering LIONESSES. Most of the once-tall grass has been trampled under their weight.

Shujaa navigates through the sleeping lionesses, careful not to disturb them. He stops beside a drowsy LIONESS, MLINZI, who gazes up at him as his moonlit silhouette towers over her.

Mlinzi casts a quick glance at two other LIONESSES sleeping nearby.

MLINZI

Wake up!

The two lionesses stir, sitting up and bowing their heads.

Mlinzi lowers her head.

MLINZI (CONT'D)

We await your orders, my King.

Shujaa regards Mlinzi with a hint of disdain.

SHUJAA

Scout the Northern border tonight.
I spotted smoke on the horizon.
Make contact with any humans who
may have encroached upon our lands.

Mlinzi and the lionesses rise, ready to depart.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Wait a moment, please.

Shujaa's gaze shifts between the two lionesses beside Mlinzi, but he avoids making direct eye contact with her.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Keep an eye out for my brother. I
suspect he has been "visiting"
lately.

Mlinzi flinches and averts her gaze, attempting to conceal her guilt. One of the lionesses, ZIADA, bows once again.

ZIADA
Understood, Your Majesty.

Mlinzi leads the two lionesses away, stealing a brief glance back at Shujaa.

Shujaa strides through the Den, lost in his thoughts.

HALI (V.O.)
What are you afraid of? Another
war?

Shujaa scans the den, his eyes falling upon the sleeping lionesses.

SHUJAA
(quietly exasperated)
Why won't you leave me alone?

HALI (V.O.)
I would be bored otherwise.

SHUJAA
Wouldn't that be a shame?

HALI (V.O.)
If not for me, you wouldn't have
won the war. Do you think you could
have killed Shida on your own?

Shujaa's expression shifts to one of horror as he is consumed by a sudden flashback.

FLASHBACK

Within the savanna's battleground, Shujaa engages in an intense clash with the embodiment of darkness, SHIDA. Nearby, another BARBARY LION lies unconscious, bearing witness to the ongoing struggle.

Shujaa is thrown onto his back, fear etched on his face as the overwhelming darkness of SHIDA looms. His eyes turn black, consumed by the Shetani.

PRIDE'S DEN - NIGHT

Shujaa roars, commanding silence.

SHUJAA
SILENCE!

The lionesses jump to their paws, ready to attack, but confusion fills their eyes as they scan the area.

Shujaa closes his eyes, shaking his head.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
Relax, there is no threat. I was
merely testing you, once again.

With some hesitation, the lionesses return to their slumber.

HALI (V.O.)
It seems they've grown accustomed
to your outbursts. Do you truly
believe they remain unaware of your
secret?
(pause)
Have you ever wondered what they
make of your incessant screaming?

SHUJAA
(agitated)
Never speak that name again.

HALI (V.O.)
If you insist. He cannot haunt you,
not like I can.

Shujaa walks towards the bushes seen earlier.

SHUJAA
I wonder if the Elder Council
Leader would consider performing an
exorcism.

HALI (V.O.)
Do you truly believe it would work?
Wouldn't it bring about your
demise?

SHUJAA
I'm willing to take that risk. I'm
not so sure about you.

Shujaa looks up, a sad smile on his face.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
That's what I thought.

Shujaa shifts his focus to the bush.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
Hasira?

HASIRA (O.S.)
Shujaa? Please reveal yourself.

Shujaa enters the bush.

UNDERBRUSH - CONTINUOUS

Shujaa approaches Hasira but settles down a short distance away.

Hasira is grooming the little cub resting between her paws.

The cub rolls over, mewling softly with closed eyes.

Hasira shifts her attention to Shujaa.

HASIRA
Did Bahati leave?

SHUJAA
(sigh)
Yes, she did.

Shujaa gazes down at the cub, a sad smile on his face.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
He still needs a name.

Hasira gazes up at the canopy of the tree, where moonlight softly filters through the leaves. She smiles.

HASIRA
I have already given him one. It carries a meaningful essence.

Hasira looks back at Shujaa.

HASIRA (CONT'D)
He name is Malaika.

SHUJAA
It suits him well. I only hope he turns out more like me and not like--

Shujaa digs his claws into the dirt.

HASIRA
Asikari was a diplomat, just like you. I know you still blame him for the war's start, but deep down, we both know it's not entirely true.

SHUJAA
(agitated)
Don't you remember?
(MORE)

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
Your father caught **him** getting too close to you.

Hasira sighs, casting a glance at Malaika before meeting Shujaa's gaze.

HASIRA
Have you spoken to him recently?

SHUJAA
(agitated)
No. And if I do see him, I fear what I might do.

HASIRA
You don't think Asikari--

SHUJAA
(abruptly)
Don't say his name!

Shujaa takes a deep breath, trying to compose himself.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
I can't prove anything yet. But I sense his presence at times. I catch hints of his scent in the wind, but I never find anything. If I didn't know any better, I'd say he's been secretly meeting with Mlinzi.

HASIRA
(reproachful)
Is that truly such a terrible thing? You should never have separated them after the war. Wouldn't it be better if he took her as his queen?

SHUJAA
Perhaps when she comes of age. I separated them out of spite for what he did to our mother.

SAVANNA - NIGHT

Mlinzi leads the two lionesses, sneaking glances back at a shadow following them.

They reach a hilltop, overlooking a village with half-built walls. Mlinzi's eyes dart around.

MLINZI

I need you both to meet with the village leader.

ZIADA

Respectfully, Captain, that's not protocol.

Mlinzi frowns, noticing the shadowy figure entering the moonlit shade.

MLINZI

You will do as commanded, or I'll assign you to nursemaid duty!

The lionesses grimace and bow their heads.

ZIADA

As you command.

Mlinzi waits for them to leave and sighs.

ASIKARI, a BARBARY LION with glowing red eyes, approaches Mlinzi.

ASIKARI

Took longer than expected.

Mlinzi smiles and nuzzles against Asikari, playfully licking his muzzle.

MLINZI

(laughing)

Shujaa never trusted you.

ASIKARI

Can't blame him. He's been distant since the accident with mother.

Suddenly, SHIDA's voice interrupts them.

SHIDA (O.S.)

What have we here?

Mlinzi and Asikari jump apart, ready to attack. They search for the source of the voice, when a dark shadow emerges.

Shida, a battle-scarred BARBARY LION, steps out of the shadows.

ASIKARI

(confused and scared)

You?

Asikari steps between Mlinzi and Shida.

SHIDA

A child of shadow and the orphan warrior. Seems I left some loose ends.

Shida reveals his true form, scars and missing fur evident.

ASIKARI

(angry)

You?

Asikari backs away, brushing against Mlinzi.

SHIDA

Surprised? Why not ask your brother? He knows the truth. You're not even supposed to be here.

ASIKARI

How about I do my brother a favor and--

Shida taunts Asikari, and a dark, oppressive feeling emanates from him, overpowering Asikari, who falls to the ground in pain.

Shida's eyes glow brighter with satisfaction.

SHIDA

Your bravado is admirable but misplaced. You and your brother have always been misguided. He harnessed the power of the Shetani. Do you think he could have killed me alone?

Shida looks at Mlinzi, who is shaken and baring her teeth.

MLINZI

Shujaa said you were dead. He brought back your tail as proof.

Mlinzi looks at Asikari and then back at Shida.

SHIDA

What makes you think I'm alive? Asikari was there, weren't you, little cub? Maybe you should tell her the truth.

Asikari gasps for breath, unable to respond, struggling against the dark influence of Shida.

SHIDA (CONT'D)

If you won't tell her, let me
remind you of what happened.

Asikari writhes on the ground, consumed by the growing darkness. Mlinzi, sensing the danger, tries to reach Asikari, but the darkness thickens around her as well.

Mlinzi collapses beside Asikari, gasping for breath, overwhelmed by the suffocating presence of the darkness. Shida's satisfied gaze lingers on them before he disappears into thin air.

As the darkness fades, two lionesses stand over Mlinzi and Asikari.

SAVANNA - LATER

Mlinzi is guarded by one lioness as Ziada leads them to the brush surrounding the Acacia tree near the Den.

ZIADA

Sire!

Shujaa pushes his way out from under the brush, his gaze shifting between Ziada and Mlinzi.

SHUJAA

(irritated)

Report.

ZIADA

We discovered a human settlement within our borders. Against protocol, we were ordered to make contact with their leader while Mlinzi remained behind alone.

Shujaa's eyes glow brighter as he looks at Mlinzi.

Mlinzi avoids Shujaa's gaze, her expression a mix of sadness and defiance.

SHUJAA

Is that so?

ZIADA

Indeed. However, our attempt to communicate with the humans quickly turned into a conflict. They attacked us on sight.

FLASHBACK

Ziada and her companion Lioness make their way down the rise towards the human settlement, where walls are still being constructed around the perimeter.

At the entrance of the village, two HUMAN WARRIORS stand, readying their spears as the Lionesses approach.

The humans shout in an unfamiliar language, causing others to grab spears and gather at the entrance.

Ziada slows her pace but continues to approach. The other Lioness stops and waits.

ZIADA

We have come to speak to your chief.

One of the humans steps forward and hurls his spear.

The spear lands in the ground in front of Ziada.

Ziada takes a step back, assessing the situation.

ZIADA (CONT'D)

We come in peace. We mean you no harm.

The humans exchange confused glances.

Ziada stands her ground, unwavering.

The SHAMAN, REJEA, steps forward.

REJEA

You're not welcome here. Leave now.

Ziada hesitates, trying to find the right words, and takes a step closer.

ZIADA

Please, forgive me, elder, but we have come to speak with you.

REJEA

We have no desire to speak with the likes of you. Depart from here.

The Shaman retreats, walking back through the group of humans.

Ziada tries to take another step forward, attempting to say something, but the humans rush towards her, spears flying through the air, and others brandishing their weapons.

Ziada swiftly turns and outpaces the spears thrown in her direction, fleeing alongside the other Lioness as the spears rain down behind them.

SAVANNA - NIGHT

Shujaa stands at the edge of the den. Moonlight bathes his regal form, casting long shadows across the grassy plains. His mind races with conflicting thoughts, and he clenches his jaw in frustration.

SHUJAA

(growl)

Is that all?

ZIADA

No sir, When we returned to give our report we found Mlinzi passed out next to your brother. We did chase him off, for the time being.

Shujaa looks over at Mlinzi in agitation, his fiery glowing eyes flickering with anger.

SHUJAA

Mlinzi! What have I told you about my brother? What made you think you could disobey me?

Mlinzi looks at Shujaa in defiance, her gaze unwavering.

MLINZI

I am not your cub!

Shujaa roars, his powerful voice reverberating through the night.

Mlinzi flinches, lowering her head in submission.

SHUJAA

You're not a cub, but you are also not of age for a courtship. If it weren't for Hasira, you wouldn't even be Captain of the Guard. Your lack of years, despite your abilities, makes you too immature to even hold such responsibility.

Mlinzi glances back at Shujaa with wavering defiance.

MLINZI

Weren't you my age when you and
Hasira were joined?

Shujaa's agitation intensifies, his voice tinged with
frustration.

SHUJAA

(agitated)

Our marriage was arranged long
before the war. If it hadn't been
for Asikari-

Shujaa stops abruptly, his anger subsiding as he takes a deep
breath. His red eyes dull as he licks the foam from around
his muzzle.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

You lost your noble status when I
took you into the Pride. I did as
your father asked and kept you from
harm, yet you think otherwise.

Mlinzi tries to say something, but the weight of Shujaa's
gaze causes her to back off.

Shujaa turns away and paces, attempting to regain his
composure. After a moment, he turns to look at Mlinzi again..

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

If you want to be with him so bad,
then so be it. I had planned on
joining you both when the time was
right. Until then, I hope to teach
you proper responsibility for your
actions.

Mlinzi drops her look of defiance, keeping her head bowed.

Ziada watches Shujaa in admiration, her eyes filled with
respect.

Shujaa glances at Ziada, acknowledging her presence.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

I will determine how to deal with
the humans. For now, return to your
post and let me speak privately
with Mlinzi.

Ziada and the other lioness bow, then leave, disappearing
into the night.

Shujaa watches them for a moment before turning his attention back to Mlinzi.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Even though you've not been a member of this Pride for long, your services have been invaluable. However, that does not give you leave to ignore my orders. I will make good on my promise to join you and my brother, just not until I'm satisfied you are ready.

Mlinzi looks up sullenly at Shujaa, her eyes reflecting a mix of emotions.

MLINZI

Why would you lead me to believe otherwise?

SHUJAA

I had hoped you would respect my authority. I thought you had, but clearly, I was mistaken. There have been times I've been cross with you since you remind me of him.

Shujaa turns to walk back into the brush, his frustration evident.

Mlinzi looks down for a moment, then a flicker of fear appears in her eyes. She gathers her courage and looks back up at Shujaa.

MLINZI

Shujaa, there is something you need to know.

Shujaa stops and looks at Mlinzi with saddened, weary eyes.

Mlinzi takes a step closer, causing Shujaa to instinctively step back.

SHUJAA

Enough, Mlinzi! Return to your post and-

Shujaa is forced to step back further as Mlinzi moves closer, her panic evident.

MLINZI

Just listen to me!

Shujaa turns to walk away from both Mlinzi and the bush, trying to distance himself from her.

MLINZI (CONT'D)

Shida has returned!

Shujaa's eyes immediately blacken with anger, and he swipes at Mlinzi's face with the back of his paw, unintentionally causing her harm.

Mlinzi is knocked away and lands on her side. Blood drips from her nose as she looks up at Shujaa in fear.

Shujaa pants heavily, his eyes returning to a glowing red. He looks down at Mlinzi and then at the blood on the back of his paw. Taking a few deep breaths, he regains control and looks sternly at Mlinzi.

SHUJAA

I don't want to hear another word.

(pause)

Rejoin the Pride in the den. I don't want you back on patrol, not tonight.

Mlinzi slowly stumbles to her paws, her eyes locked on Shujaa as she rushes away, tears streaming down her face.

Shujaa watches her with sadness, his heart heavy with conflicted emotions. He then sits down, looking around the savanna.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

We need to talk.

HALI (V.O.)

I thought you were never going to speak to me again.

SHUJAA

Call me paranoid, but did you really kill Shida?

HALI (V.O.)

You and I both know what happened that day. While you took all the credit I did all the work.

SHUJAA

That doesn't explain-

HALI (V.O.)

Look, if I hadn't killed him do you think you'd be able to live in peace? Not that it really matters to me what happens to you.

SHUJAA

Then why would Mlinzi claim to see him?

HALI (V.O.)

Are you just being paranoid? Instead of wondering if she was just trying to get out of her predicament you turn to me with accusations.

(pause)

You're in such a hurry to become your father though not nearly as old.

(pause)

Wasn't it you who felt that punishment was the cause of your children's death? I'm just certain being allied with me would be your crux in the matter.

SHUJAA

Now you're just projecting.

HALI (V.O.)

And you're not?

Shujaa looks at the blood on the back of his paw, his mind clouded with uncertainty.

SHUJAA

I wonder if I should seek out council elsewhere. I'm sure Bahati could provide some insight.

HALI (V.O.)

You don't trust me, yet you'll trust a Seer?

SHUJAA

I don't give her enough credit for all she's done for the Pride. She'd be more agreeable than you.

HALI (V.O.)

Fine, go see your precious Hyena. You never did give me credit for killing the very thing you fear.

Shujaa stands up and walks into the underbrush, his determination driving him forward.

UNDERBRUSH - CONTINUOUS

Shujaa lies down a short distance from Hasira, his mind filled with doubts.

Hasira looks over at him with a worried expression, sensing his inner turmoil.

HASIRA

I couldn't help hearing your conversation.

SHUJAA

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have...

Before Shujaa can finish his sentence, Hasira reaches her paw over and places it gently on his, offering comfort and support.

HASIRA

Bahati will reassure you that he's gone. She performed the last rites herself, ensuring that Shida's spirit has departed.

Shujaa's uncertainty lingers, his voice filled with a hint of doubt.

SHUJAA

I'm sure I'm just being paranoid.

HASIRA

You don't sound so confident, my love.

SHUJAA

Now who's being paranoid?

Hasira's expression darkens, and her voice takes on a tone of warning.

HASIRA

(growl)

Who do you think you are talking to? You'd do well to remember that every great king is held high by an even greater queen. Think before you make such comments, or next time you'll lose the ability to sire another heir.

Shujaa's eyes widen, and he slowly backs away, a mixture of fear and realization in his gaze.

SAVANNA - MORNING

Bahati, sits in deep meditation, her eyes flickering beneath her closed eyelids. Suddenly, she flinches and lashes out, attempting to swipe her claws at an unseen disturbance, but her target manages to evade her strike. It's Shujaa.

SHUJAA (O.S.)

Habari.

Bahati opens her eyes abruptly, startled, and leaps forward with her claws extended, aiming at Shujaa.

Shujaa quickly ducks, narrowly avoiding her attack. They share a knowing smile, tinged with a hint of mischief.

Bahati growls, frustrated, and swipes her paw across Shujaa's muzzle, leaving a shallow cut.

Shujaa stumbles backward, pawing at his bleeding muzzle with a pained expression.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Hayi suka, that hurt!

BAHATI

Of course, it did. It's always you who disrupts my meditation. I should have expected nothing less.

Despite the pain, Shujaa manages a sheepish smile. He takes a few cautious steps backward, warily gauging Bahati's response.

SHUJAA

(whimpered)

I must speak with you.

BAHATI

(scolding)

Couldn't this have waited?

SHUJAA

(urgently)

No, it couldn't!

Shujaa shrinks back, feeling a sense of urgency.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

I had planned to come to you last night, but circumstances forced me to delay.

BAHATI

Then tell me why you're here or face my wrath.

SHUJAA

Yeesh, between your sharp claws and Hasira's fierce demeanor...

Bahati growls, her eyes narrowing.

Shujaa takes a step back, his expression filled with fear.

BAHATI

(refocusing)

Refrain from finishing that statement and tell me why you're here.

SHUJAA

(fearful)

Alright...

Shujaa takes a brief pause, collecting himself

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

My scouts discovered a human settlement within our lands. When they approached, they were viciously attacked.

Bahati's expression shifts, showing a mix of agitation and concern.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

(quickly)

But that's not the main issue.

Shujaa takes a deep breath, his gaze fixed on the ground as he gathers his thoughts.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

What troubles me is that my Captain of the Guard claims that Shida has returned.

Bahati's demeanor changes, and she becomes alert, scanning her surroundings before focusing on Shujaa.

BAHATI

Shujaa, listen to me carefully.
Take your family and run.

Shujaa looks at Bahati, confusion etched on his face.

SHUJAA

(angry)

Run? Because of a mere ghost? I
sought reassurance.

(pause)

You performed the last rites. Shida
is dead.

Shujaa's agitation intensifies, and he begins foaming at the
mouth.

Bahati avoids making eye contact with Shujaa, her gaze
shifting elsewhere.

BAHATI

I did, but-

Shujaa growls, staring Bahati down.

SHUJAA

Why did I think you would be of any
help? What, are we supposed to flee
to my brother?

(roars)

I won't be driven away by paranoia!

Bahati, with tears in her eyes, turns and runs away.

BAHATI

(yelling)

Then don't seek my guidance if you
won't listen!

Bahati races through the tall grass, her sobs echoing in the
distance. Eventually, she slows down and collapses in the
shade of an Acacia tree.

As Bahati buries her face in her forepaws, a soft light
illuminates the shade. AURORA, a small winged ARCTIC FOX,
emerges and gently places her paw on Bahati's shoulder.

AURORA

Oh, dear child, what have you done?

Bahati continues to cry, her face still hidden, as she
speaks.

BAHATI

I'm sorry. I defied the elders. I will accept whatever punishment awaits me.

Aurora looks puzzled by Bahati's assumption.

AURORA

What makes you think there will be punishment?

Bahati lifts her head, her tears fading, a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

BAHATI

But... why should I be spared?

Aurora's gaze is filled with compassion as she responds.

AURORA

It's simple, my child. Despite your defiance, Ujesu knows your heart. He understood that you were trying to help Shujaa.

(pause)

He said to me, "The worst punishment anyone can bear is to watch their friends and family perish."

Bahati's expression shifts, a mixture of relief and curiosity on her face.

BAHATI

What am I supposed to do now?

AURORA

Be strong, leave Shujaa to his fate, and remember the prophecy is far from over.

As Aurora's presence fades, Bahati wipes away her tears with the back of her paw.

Bahati gazes out toward the rising sun, her expression filled with renewed determination and strength, ready to face the challenges ahead.

SAVANNA - DAY

The Lion, Shujaa, walks behind a group of lionesses through tall grass. His attention is focused elsewhere as he looks down at the passing ground.

Hasira looks back at Shujaa and waits for him to catch up before nuzzling against his side.

HASIRA
Keep your focus on the hunt.

Shujaa looks to her and sighs.

SHUJAA
If there is anything left to hunt.

Hasira looks around before turning her attention back to Shujaa.

HASIRA
(half-whisper)
Are you still trying to figure out what to do with the humans?

SHUJAA
Indeed, yet I'm afraid to send another envoy. The last time we tried to communicate with them, they attacked the group.

Shujaa's expression turns grave.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
I'm worried, more so over the fact that they may have turned away from Ujesu's Teachings.

Shujaa suddenly stops and looks up in confusion at the lionesses gathered around something. He looks past one and sees a zebra.

The Lioness, Ziada, walks back to Shujaa and Hasira.

ZIADA
Sir, you need to see this.

Hasira and Shujaa look at each other in confusion. Shujaa walks past Ziada and sees the carcass of a zebra with a spear jutting out from its side. He moves closer and sniffs the spear before pulling away from it.

SHUJAA
We need to move. The humans will be here soon to claim their kill.

Shujaa walks around the side of the lionesses and shakes his head to Hasira.

A loud roar pierces the air. The lionesses part from each other, revealing Ziada on her side with a spear sticking from her flank.

Shujaa rushes to Ziada's side.

ZIADA

Leave me. I'll take care of this.

Ziada leans back and pulls at the spear with her maw. Shujaa leans in and helps pull the spear out. He drops it by Ziada's side.

SHUJAA

We don't leave family behind.

Another lioness falls over with a spear sticking between her ribs. Shujaa looks over to the lioness.

HASIRA

Shujaa!

Shujaa looks over at Hasira with a terrified look. Another spear falls next to Shujaa, causing him to look at it.

SHUJAA

Scatter!

Shujaa and Hasira run past the fleeing lionesses as spears rain down behind them. Both Shujaa and Hasira stop to look back. They are alone.

HASIRA

(afraid)

Were they waiting for us?

Shujaa trembles and holds himself back from lashing out. He looks up, and a realization washes over his face.

SHUJAA

Hasira...

Shujaa looks at Hasira, all fear has left him.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Run to Malaika. Take him to my brother.

Hasira looks at Shujaa in fear.

HASIRA

Wait, what are you-?

Shujaa races off back to where they'd been prior.

SHUJAA
 (yelling)
 Buying you time.

Shujaa dashes through the tall grass and slows to a stop.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)
 Hali, I need your help.

HALI (V.O.)
 I thought you'd never ask.

Shujaa falls over in pain. He grunts and tries to push himself back to standing. His muscles bulge as his fur darkens.

When Shujaa's eyes flash open, they are filled with determination, and he is ready to fulfil his destiny. He is now empowered by Hali.

Hali stalks through the tall grasses, stopping once he sees the fallen Lionesses of the pride.

HALI
 These aggressors need to understand their place. They were meant to coexist with us, protectors of the animal kingdom.

SHUJAA (V.O.)
 It's true. They have turned away from Ujesu's teachings. Mungu awasamehe.

HALI
 There is no forgiveness for their actions now, Shujaa.

Hali's ears swivel at the sound of moving grass. He growls and slinks through the clearing back into the tall grass.

A HUMAN WARRIOR looks among the fallen Lionesses, cautiously moving through the tall grass with his spear.

Hali leaps onto the human, clawing and swiping.

The human screams in pain and desperation, trying to fight back as blood splatters the ground.

Hali maintains his stance, asserting his dominance. He looks at the humans with a fierce glare.

HALI (CONT'D)

If you dare challenge me, come face me.

Hali readies himself, prepared for any further threats, and looks up, surveying the surroundings.

Spears rain down as Hali attempts to move.

While Hali is pinned to the ground, he looks around. His eyes fade away from black back to a red glow.

Shujaa regains control, his fear evident in his eyes. He cautiously tries to remove a spear.

The sky above gradually darkens as rain clouds move overhead.

Shujaa successfully removes one spear, his determination growing.

SHIDA (O.S.)

It's been too long, Shujaa.

Shujaa turns his head suddenly and sees Shida partially hidden by a cloud of darkness.

SHIDA (CONT'D)

If only your father had put up more resistance...

Humans emerge from the encircling darkness around Shujaa and Shida.

Shujaa, his wounds dripping blood, musters a weak laugh.

SHUJAA

You were always the coward.

Shujaa spits at Shida, defiant in the face of adversity.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Instead of taking action yourself, you ordered the Pride to kill my father.

Shida creeps forward along with the humans, their intentions unclear.

SHIDA

You seem so certain of that. The truth eludes you, and it always will.

Shida turns and walks away, disappearing into the darkness.

SHIDA (CONT'D)

Rest assured, I won't end your
life.

SHUJAA

Should I be grateful?

Shida vanishes into the shadows, leaving Shujaa puzzled.

SHIDA

My dear child, I only said that I
would not kill you.

Shujaa looks at the humans in horror.

The humans shamble closer, their eyes pitch black. In unison,
they raise their spears.

Shujaa roars in defiance, prepared to face his fate.

PRECIPICE ON MOUNT KILIMANJARO - CONTINUOUS

A LIONESS, VITA, watches the events unfold and hangs her
head, her expression filled with concern.

VITA

(sighs)

Asikari won't be pleased with this.

Vita turns her attention to two other LIONESSES nearby.

One LIONESS, ESELE, steps closer to Vita, her gaze mirroring
Vita's worry.

ESELE

We should inform him about what we
witnessed, Vita.

Vita nods and steps down from the rock formation, motioning
for the others to follow.

VITA

You're right. He needs to know. But
why did he choose to remain passive
when he knew there might be
trouble?

ESELE

Perhaps it was because of his
brother, the tension between them.

Vita pauses, deep in thought, before meeting Esele's gaze.

VITA

No, there's more to it. Asikari isn't one to shy away from challenges, especially if it concerns his brother. Something else is at play here, something deeper.

With determination in her eyes, Vita leads the other Lionesses down the mountainside path, determined to uncover the truth behind Asikari's unexpected inaction.

SAVANNA - NIGHT

The Hyena, Bahati, walks among the fallen Pride members scattered about the clearing, her eyes scanning the ground for any sign of Shujaa. She moves cautiously, stepping over the bodies with a mixture of sorrow and determination.

As Bahati reaches the center of the clearing, a soft glow surrounds her. She turns around and sees Shujaa standing there in his angelic form, his presence radiating light and serenity.

SHUJAA

(softly)

I know you're grieving.

Bahati lowers her gaze, her voice filled with sadness.

BAHATI

I am, but I find solace in the belief that we will meet again in the World Beyond Dreams.

Shujaa approaches Bahati, his intention to comfort her evident, but his form passes through her, unable to make physical contact.

Bahati looks up at Shujaa, their eyes meeting in a bittersweet moment.

SHUJAA

I'm sorry for the pain I've caused.

BAHATI

No apologies are necessary. I believe deep down, you already understood.

SHUJAA

I had a feeling.

Shujaa remains standing while Bahati takes a step forward, distancing herself from the fallen bodies.

Shujaa continues to watch Bahati with a mix of love and admiration.

BAHATI

What do we do now?

(pause)

And what about Shida?

Shujaa settles himself, sitting down on the ground and clearing his throat.

SHUJAA

Aurora, the seraphim, has already informed me.

(pause)

When the time is right, Malaika will require guidance and mentoring.

Bahati turns her head to look back at Shujaa, her expression filled with hope.

BAHATI

Then let Ujesu guide you both on that journey.

SHUJAA

Indeed, my friend. Our paths will cross again. Farewell, for now.

Shujaa begins to fade away, his form blending with the darkness, leaving the area once again enveloped in night.

Bahati raises her head, gazing up at the sky as the green glowing specks rise from the bodies of the fallen, resembling ethereal fireflies.

BAHATI

(whisper)

Amani iwa kwenu.

HUMAN HUT - LATER

In the moonlit section of a darkened hut kneels a decrepit old HUMAN SHAWMAN, REJEA. He keeps his head bowed as he shakes.

REJEA

Is everything going according to plan, my lord?

SHIDA (O.S.)

The mother and her child live as I instructed. The child must not be harmed and will need to be brought to me when the time comes.

Rejea looks up slightly but keeps his head bowed.

REJEA

We must do something about the imbalance that lineage brings. Even the Tribe to the South should have done something.

SHIDA (O.S.)

They will be dealt with in time. The King is of no consequence while he hides his Shetani. But the child must be protected at all costs. He is vital to my plans.

REJEA

What of you, my lord? You were born to that line. Do you bear the same aberration the mortal lineage suggests?

SHIDA (O.S.)

I am the one true God cast out into this mortal form. You humans, once the protectors of animal kind, turned away from the rule of Ujesu and now serve me. Why question me now?

Shida steps out of the darkness. The moonlight filters over him.

Rejea takes a step back, apprehensive but still respectful.

SHIDA (CONT'D)

You will do as commanded and not cast doubt on me again, or your reckoning shall be swift and merciless.

Rejea lowers his gaze, his voice trembling.

REJEA

I beg your forgiveness, my lord. I shall serve you faithfully.

Shida looks back into the darkness.

SHIDA

Leave my sight. I don't want to see
you again until I call for you.

Rejea stumbles to his feet and quickly exits the half-covered doorway.

Shida walks into the darkness, which lightens to show a SEMI-ANGELIC form, OKUMBI.

OKUMBI

Control yourself, Shida. The humans
will bend to your will. Their
ignorance and weakness make them
pliable, but do not underestimate
them entirely.

SHIDA

Lord Okumbi, these humans need a
demonstration of our power,
something to make them more
accepting of my dominance.

OKUMBI

Then I will grant you that power,
but remember, Shida, their
redemption is not our concern. We
have our own plans to fulfill.

JUNGLE'S EDGE - NIGHT

Vita races through the tall grass, weaving through outcroppings of tree roots until she reaches Asikari.

Asikari turns away, leading Vita deeper into the jungle.

ASIKARI

Report.

JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Asikari gracefully leaps over roots torn from the ground and ducks under low hanging branches. Vita follows closely behind.

VITA

It's just as I said. The Pride has
been wiped out. We couldn't find
Hasira anywhere.

Asikari stops abruptly, his gaze fixed on the ground. He appears deep in thought.

FLASHBACK

Asikari sits with Mlinzi, his memories of her appearing faded. Mlinzi licks Asikari's muzzle. The scene fades away.

JUNGLE - NIGHT

Asikari winces, a pained expression crossing his face.

Vita tries to get Asikari's attention, speaking softly.

VITA
 (faded)
 Asikari...
 (normal)
 Asikari, did you hear me?

Asikari looks at Vita, appearing confused.

ASIKARI
 I'm sorry.

VITA
 We spotted a couple of lionesses on
 their way here. They're not far,
 but still about half a day's
 journey.

Asikari's face brightens, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

ASIKARI
 Perhaps not all is lost.
 (pause)
 Have one of your subordinates
 prepare a feast. They'll be hungry
 when they arrive.

Vita bows respectfully.

Asikari, looking visibly weakened, is supported by the lioness brushing up against him.

Asikari smiles at Vita.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)
 It's no wonder you'd make an
 excellent queen.

VITA
 (feigning modesty)
 I don't know about that.

Asikari leaves Vita and continues deeper into the jungle, his steps becoming more labored.

Vita watches him with a bemused expression, then heads off in the opposite direction.

JUNGLE'S EDGE - EVENING

Walking through the tall grass, Hasira leads the way with a solemn expression, followed by Mlinzi carrying the cub, Malaika, in her jaws. Mlinzi looks weary, stumbling as she walks.

The wind rustles past Hasira, causing her to pause and sniff the air. She wears a mix of bitterness and gratitude on her face. As they enter a clearing, Asikari is seen sitting with his tail wrapped around his paws, while Vita stands nearby.

ASIKARI

Hasira, it's good to see you.

Hasira stops, and Asikari rises to his paws, walking over to nuzzle her gently. Hasira returns the nuzzle with a bemused expression.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)

I'm afraid it's been too long.

Asikari steps back and sits down again. Hasira looks downcast and angry.

HASIRA

(agitated)

Save your platitudes.

Asikari flattens his ears against his head, sensing Hasira's anger.

ASIKARI

I'm sorry for your loss.

Hasira growls, and Asikari quickly backs up.

HASIRA

Show your brother a little more respect.

Asikari tries to calm the situation.

ASIKARI

Easy now. You're safe here.

Hasira sighs looking down and away from Asikari.

HASIRA

Forgive me. We're hungry and could use a place to sleep.

Vita steps closer, addressing Hasira.

VITA

We were expecting you, and so had a kill prepared for you both.

Asikari watches as Hasira walks over to Vita.

HASIRA

Thank you. You look familiar. Were you in the war?

VITA

I wasn't, no, but my parents were. I'm Vita, Asikari's General of the Guard.

Asikari's attention is drawn to Mlinzi, who is still carrying Malaika.

ASIKARI

It can't be, can it? Mlinzi?

Vita and Hasira look toward Asikari and Mlinzi, Vita attempting to hide her annoyance.

Mlinzi sets Malaika on the ground, barely able to stand.

MLINZI

Some king you turned out to be, whimpering like a wounded cub. It's unbecoming of you.

Asikari nuzzles Mlinzi with passion, showing his affection.

Mlinzi returns the nuzzle but collapses at Asikari's side.

Asikari looks distraught and places his paw on her, rubbing lightly.

ASIKARI

Mlinzi?

Vita clears her throat, changing her expression to one of compassion.

VITA

Asikari, allow me to care for her. She can't go any further.

Mlinzi tries to push herself up, but Asikari gently presses her back down.

MLINZI
I'm fine, Asikari.

Asikari shakes his head, concerned.

ASIKARI
You need to rest now.

Hasira steps closer, her voice filled with sympathy.

HASIRA
Poor child. Strong-willed and
defiant of her limits.

Hasira looks at Asikari, their eyes meeting.

HASIRA (CONT'D)
She wanted to see you badly.

Asikari nuzzles Mlinzi's cheek, comforting her.

Mlinzi ceases her efforts to get up and emits a soft chuff.

ASIKARI
You should sleep now, my love.

Asikari moves to stand with Hasira, casting a final look at Vita.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)
I leave her in your capable paws.
Ensure that the cub and Mlinzi
remain undisturbed.

Vita bows respectfully.

VITA
By your orders.

Asikari leads Hasira away, and Vita watches them leave. Her smile fades, replaced by a burning rage. She glances back at Mlinzi, repressing her anger, before leaping onto a nearby boulder to rest.

SAVANNA - CONTINUOUS

Asikari walks silently beside Hasira, both keeping their gaze straight ahead without looking at each other.

HASIRA
Some things never change.

ASIKARI

I don't know what you're talking about.

HASIRA

So, you're saying I'm mistaken for noticing your affection for Mlinzi?

(pause)

You know, Shujaa had plans for you both when the time was right.

ASIKARI

Were they his plans or your own?

HASIRA

Think of it what you will. Your brother still cared about you, even if he didn't always show it.

ASIKARI

Quite the way to show affection for one's family.

HASIRA

(slightly agitated)

Watch your tone. He still cared about you in the end. He even knew about your encounters with Mlinzi.

ASIKARI

Was it just once, or...?

HASIRA

He suspected you had been entering the Pride for a while, but I know the truth. That's why I never tried to stop you.

They reach a clearing where lionesses are spread out around the perimeter, and a zebra carcass lies in the middle.

Hasira stops in her tracks, looking at the zebra in shock.

FLASHBACK

Hasira stands at the back of the Pride, watching Shujaa approach her, shaking his head.

A roar echoes through the air, and Asikari races to the lionesses' side.

In the next instant, Hasira sees Shujaa and, just above him, a spear landing nearby.

HASIRA

Shujaa!

Shujaa yells, urging them to scatter.

SHUJAA

Scatter!

In the next moment, Hasira watches Shujaa rush off.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Buying you time!

Then Hasira is running, tears streaming down her face. She stops at the sound of a loud roar, nearly collapsing as she cries even harder before forcing herself to run again.

CLEARING - NIGHT

Hasira shakes her head, a tear fading into her fur. Asikari moves to sit on the opposite side of the kill.

Hasira steps up and takes a few bites. Blood drips from her maw as she sits up and looks at Asikari.

ASIKARI

Aside from Mlinzi's future, what are your intentions with the cub?

Hasira pauses, contemplating her answer. She wipes her muzzle with her paw before responding.

HASIRA

He'll need your guidance, just as you and Shujaa once did.

Asikari looks around the clearing, taking in the surroundings. With a sigh, he leans in closer to Hasira.

ASIKARI

(whisper)

I never shared much about myself with the Pride. I suspect Shujaa was the same way.

HASIRA

I understand.

Asikari sits back, giving Hasira some space. Hasira tries to look at Asikari, but her vision blurs, seeing two images trying to form one lion. She falters and struggles to stay seated.

Asikari shows concern, leaning in closer to her.

ASIKARI
Are you alright?

HASIRA
I just need some rest.

Hasira stumbles to her paws and walks past the carcass and Asikari. Asikari watches her with a worried expression, attempting to help by pressing against her.

Hasira growls and snaps at him with a bite, indicating she wants to be left alone. Asikari backs off, his ears flattened against his head.

Hasira stumbles off through the tall grass, seeking solitude and rest.

SAVANNA - CONTINUOUS

The half moon waxes, casting a gentle light upon the land, leaving a shadow beneath Hasira. She stumbles as she walks before falling to the ground in tears. The wind rustles the tall grasses, as if carrying a whisper of comfort.

Suddenly, the ghostly form of Shujaa emerges from the darkness. He walks up to Hasira's side, his presence both soothing and ethereal. Hasira looks up at Shujaa through tear-filled eyes, unable to move or speak.

SHUJAA
Rest now, my love.

Hasira fights to move, to reach out to him, but she is bound by her grief and weakness. With a final gust of wind, Shujaa fades away, disappearing into the night.

SHUJAA (V.O.)
(faded)
I'm never far away.

Hasira's cries mix with the sound of the wind, her voice filled with longing and desperation.

HASIRA
(crying and weak)
Shujaa, please come back!

Her strength wanes, and she closes her eyes, surrendering to exhaustion.

HASIRA (CONT'D)
 (fading whisper)
 Shujaa!

SAVANNA - LATER

Asikari walks along a path, periodically glancing behind him. His ears perk up, and he refocuses his attention ahead.

MLINZI (O.S.)
 (yawn)
 Malaika, you need to rest. You'll
 just have to wait.

Asikari enters a small clearing where Mlinzi is lying down, and Malaika is bounding around energetically.

MALAIKA
 Where's mom and dad?

Mlinzi looks down sadly as Asikari approaches.

ASIKARI
 (sad)
 They won't be coming.

Malaika looks up at Asikari and quickly runs behind Mlinzi, seeking comfort.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)
 Don't be afraid.

MALAIKA
 I... I'm not afraid.

Mlinzi looks over to Asikari with a tired smile.

MLINZI
 Now that you're here, why not tell
 him a story?

ASIKARI
 The only story I know is about the
 foolish King. Are you sure he's
 ready to hear it?

MLINZI
 I don't see why not.
 (teasing)
 If that is the only story you know.

Asikari looks at Mlinzi, then at Malaika. He sighs and lies down beside Mlinzi.

ASIKARI

Then I'll tell you the story. It was passed down to me by the humans. I hope you can learn something from this tale.

Malaika slowly settles down in front of Asikari, ready to listen.

MALAIKA

What's a tale?

ASIKARI

(whispering)

Ujesu, give me patience.

(normal voice)

A tale is a story that teaches a lesson. It helps you learn and understand certain aspects of life.

Malaika, seated in front of Asikari, tilts his head, showing confusion.

Asikari looks down at Malaika with a frown.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)

How do these stories usually begin?

MALAIKA

Mlinzi always starts her stories with "Once upon a time."

ASIKARI

So, once upon a time...

Malaika smiles and nods eagerly.

Asikari shakes his head and then looks into Malaika's eyes, noticing specks of red.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)

King Leeuw was a great king to his cubs, though he had a quick temper. One unusual day, his patience and emotions would be put to the test...

A shadowy figure of a hyena watches from behind an Acacia tree with mild curiosity.

STORY SAVANNA - MORNING

Among trampled tall grass hidden in the shade of an acacia tree rested an East African lion named Leeuw, along with two lion cubs.

Leeuw watches the cubs with a smile and leans over them.

LEEUEW

Now, pay close attention. My roar
is the fiercest in the land.

He takes a deep breath, leans back, and lets out a powerful roar.

The cubs watch in amazement, but their attention is drawn to another roar echoing in the distance.

CUB #1

(curious)

Is that Volstrius? Is he trying to
mimic our father again?

Cub #2 giggles and jumps to his paws.

CUB #2

Yes, it is! His roar is indeed
fierce, just like ours!

Leeuw scowls and stands in slight annoyance.

LEEUEW

Such mimicry. I shall not be amused
by it.

Leeuw leads the cubs away from the shade of the acacia..

The cubs excitedly bound behind the king as they follow.

They enter a clearing where an OSTRICH named VOLSTRIUS is grinning mischievously and dancing.

The cubs stop and look up in awe at the ostrich's performance.

Leeuw steps closer, a mixture of curiosity and annoyance on his face.

LEEUEW (CONT'D)

(angry)

You dare mock your King?

Volstrius, still grinning, laughs and spreads his wings while continuing to dance.

LEEUEW (CONT'D)

(growl)

A challenge then. We'll see which of us is Bwana. Please, entertain us with your roar.

Volstrius stretches his neck and lets out a roar.

Leeuw takes a deep breath and roars alongside him.

The cubs watch with excitement, trying to determine whose roar was louder.

CUB #1

Who was louder? It's hard to tell, they were both fierce.

Leeuw, slightly taken aback, glares at Volstrius.

LEEUEW

(agitated)

Our voices are indeed alike, I must admit. In roaring, you have matched me. Let it be so. You shall be recognized as the king of the birds, while I remain the king of the beasts.

With a haughty nod, Leeuw continues.

LEEUEW (CONT'D)

Come, let us hunt together. In our hunt, we shall see who truly holds the title of Bwana.

Leeuw looks over at a herd of antelope grazing nearby, a sly smile playing on his lips. He beckons Volstrius to follow with a nod.

Volstrius looks at the herd and smiles, lowering his head in agreement. The two predators split up, heading in different directions.

Leeuw stealthily approaches a lone buck. He leaps out of the tall grass, digs his claws into the antelope, and bites its neck until it becomes still. With pride, he looks up at Volstrius, his smile fading.

Meanwhile, Volstrius is kicking out at the passing antelope, leaving gashes in their sides as they fall one after another.

Leeuw leaves his kill behind and stalks over to Volstrius.

LEEUEW (CONT'D)

(seething)

You have killed more than me. As the victor, you shall have your fill. Tear one open, and we shall feast in your honor.

VOLSTRIUS

(surprised)

Oh, no! You have cubs with you. You and your cubs should share. I will content myself with drinking the blood.

Leeuw grows in both anger and admiration before nodding and guiding his cubs to his kill.

STORY SAVANNA - LATER

As the sun sets on the savanna, casting long shadows, Leeuw, the cubs, and Volstrius find themselves seeking respite beneath the shade of an acacia tree. The cubs playfully wrestle with each other, their energy contagious.

Leeuw and Volstrius rest nearby, each in their own way. Leeuw lies with his eyes closed, while Volstrius lowers his head, his beak touching the ground, as if lost in thought.

Cub #1, with a mischievous glint in his eyes, observes Volstrius.

CUB #1

Look at old three-sticks sleeping with his mouth open. Do you think he even has teeth?

Cub #2, intrigued, gets up and approaches Volstrius, peering into his open mouth.

CUB #2

(startled)

Wait! He has no teeth!

Leeuw wakes with a roaring yawn, sensing something amiss.

LEEUEW

(slightly annoyed)

What is the meaning of this? Why have you disturbed my rest?

Cub #1 looks at Leeuw with a mixture of concern and excitement.

CUB #1
 Father, look! Volstrius has no
 teeth!

Leeuw's confusion quickly turns into anger as he walks over to Volstrius, his expression fierce.

LEE UW
 (angry)
 You dare claim to be **my** equal, yet
 you have no teeth?

Without hesitation, Leeuw slashes Volstrius across the face.

LEE UW (CONT'D)
 (furious)
 You insult me with your toothless
 claims!

Volstrius, unfazed by the attack, stands up tall, towering over Leeuw.

VOLSTRIUS
 (taunting)
 Teeth or no teeth, I have proven
 myself to be more successful than
 you, my lord.

A challenging glint appears in Volstrius' eyes as he continues.

VOLSTRIUS (CONT'D)
 Come, let us settle this through a
 friendly contest. Do you see that
 ant heap over there in the
 distance?

Leeuw, cautious but intrigued, follows Volstrius' gaze toward the ant column.

LEE UW
 (warily)
 What are you suggesting?

VOLSTRIUS
 Let us each take a side of the ant
 heap and attempt to knock it over.
 Afterward, we shall come together
 for a fair contest of strength.

LEE UW
 (boasting)
 Very well.

(MORE)

LEEUEW (CONT'D)

But know that I am heavier and
stronger than you. This contest
will be brief.

The group makes their way to the ant heap, positioning themselves on opposite sides.

Leeuw gathers his strength, running toward the ant heap and forcefully lunging at it, trying to bring it down. He repeats the action, determined to triumph.

Volstrius, however, laughs as he uses his strong legs to strike at the ant heap repeatedly.

Leeuw, caught off guard, receives a face full of dirt as the ant heap remains steadfast.

Undeterred, Volstrius continues his assault, kicking the ant heap with precision.

Leeuw is knocked off balance and buried beneath the dirt, struggling to regain his footing.

The cubs rush to Leeuw's side, their worried cries filling the air.

CUB #2

Father, please get up!

Leeuw, bruised but determined, manages to rise to his paws.

LEEUEW

(angry)

Enough! Nyoka ya hila!

Volstrius, undeterred by Leeuw's fury, delivers one final kick to the ant heap before gracefully stepping away.

Leeuw dodges the debris, his eyes locked on Volstrius.

With a surge of adrenaline, Leeuw lunges at the ostrich, ready to engage in a fierce battle.

The ostrich, agile and evasive, skillfully avoids Leeuw's attacks, occasionally retaliating with well-placed kicks.

During the intense skirmish, Leeuw receives a gash from one of Volstrius' kicks, but he remains steadfast.

In a surprising twist, the ostrich gains the upper hand, landing a decisive blow that incapacitates Leeuw.

Leeuw, wounded and unable to continue, lies on the ground, his strength fading.

Volstrius, covered in sweat but triumphant, looks at Leeuw with a mix of victory and respect.

The cubs, witnessing their father's defeat, approach him, their voices filled with concern and sadness.

SAVANNA - LATER

Mlinzi lies sleeping next to Asikari, who watches over Malaika as his eyes droop.

ASIKARI

Since Leeuw allowed his anger to control his actions, he paid the ultimate price.

Malaika looks at Asikari with a puzzled expression.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)

When we let our strong emotions take over, we lose control of ourselves.

Asikari lets out a sigh as Malaika yawns.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)

By mastering our emotions, we can maintain our composure and make rational choices

MALAIKA

(yawn)

I still don't understand.

Asikari sighs, bringing his paw to his face. He then clears his throat and speaks.

ASIKARI

You'll understand one day, my dear. But for now, it's time for you to get some sleep.

Malaika stumbles over to Mlinzi's side, curls up, and quickly falls asleep.

Asikari's ears perk up as he hears the sound of grass rustling. He looks around cautiously, keeping an eye on Mlinzi and Malaika. The grass rustles again, drawing his attention to a nearby tree.

BAHATI (O.S.)

Are you alone?

Asikari's face twists with annoyance.

ASIKARI

I was alone. Just reveal yourself already.

Bahati steps out from behind the tree, approaches Asikari, and slashes him across the muzzle. Asikari recoils, pawing at his wounded muzzle.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)

(painful roar)

Mungi kusitisha! What was that for?

BAHATI

(agitated)

Clearly, you need a reminder. I don't visit often unless it's important.

(pause)

If you continue with your insolence, I'll make sure to leave fresh scratches each time to adjust your attitude.

ASIKARI

You don't need to harm me for that.

BAHATI

Then mind your tone. Assume I have a purpose here and stop behaving like a cub.

ASIKARI

Were you this violent with Shujaa?

Bahati growls and slashes at Asikari from the opposite side, causing blood to drip from both sides of Asikari's muzzle.

BAHATI

Stay quiet and follow me. Before you ask any questions, reflect on whether your words warranted my anger.

Asikari slowly backs away, keeping a cautious distance from Bahati. Bahati leads Asikari away from the clearing, their destination shrouded in mystery.

SAVANNA - LATER

Asikari looked around with furrowed brows, his glowing red eyes filled with confusion.

ASIKARI

Why have you brought me out here?

Bahati stood still, her gaze fixed on a lioness partially hidden by the tall grass.

BAHATI

She's dying.

Asikari's expression shifted to one of sadness and recognition as he approached Hasira. He knelt down beside her, his voice filled with concern.

ASIKARI

Is there anything I can do?

Bahati slowly shook her head, her voice filled with a touch of resignation.

BAHATI

I've done all that can be done, at least for now. It's all in Ujesu's paws.

Asikari let out a heavy sigh, his heart heavy with the weight of the situation. He stood up and turned away, his voice filled with a sense of faith.

ASIKARI

Please, Bahati, keep watch over her. Ujesu may have a plan for her.

With those words, Asikari began to walk away, his steps carrying a mix of sadness and hope.

Bahati remained by Hasira's side, her vigilant gaze never leaving the dying lioness.

WORLD BEYOND DREAMS - EVENING

An ever-setting sun is frozen on the horizon, casting a surreal glow over the ethereal landscape.

Hasira sits with her eyes closed, deep in silent contemplation. The absence of any sound from the surrounding creatures unnerves her.

SHUJAA (O.S.)

You're safer here, my love.

Startled, Hasira's shoulders slump, and a tear trickles down her fur.

HASIRA

Why did you leave me?

Shujaa materializes next to Hasira and sits beside her, his presence comforting.

SHUJAA

Would you have wanted me to stay,
even if my time had come to an end?

Hasira, lost in her grief, doesn't immediately register Shujaa's presence. With a half-smile tinged with sadness, she opens her eyes.

HASIRA

Why didn't you tell me?

SHUJAA

Bahati had already tried to
intervene once. Do you think it
would have changed anything?

Shujaa nuzzles into Hasira, and though tears well in her eyes, she returns the gesture with a mix of longing and frustration.

HASIRA

Did you ever find out why the
humans attacked? Did they truly
abandon Ujesu's teachings?

SHUJAA

Some truths are best left unspoken,
for their revelation carries
consequences.

Shujaa gazes into Hasira's eyes, his expression filled with love and regret.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

To reveal those secrets now would
be to jolt you awake from a
fleeting dream. You would remember
nothing of our meeting. Some have
likened it to waking from a
nightmare.

HASIRA

I don't care. I feel that my time
is drawing near, just as yours did.

Shujaa looks out over the savanna, his gaze fixed on the ever-setting sun.

SHUJAA

Ujesu, please forgive my sins...

A gentle breeze caresses Shujaa's mane, whispering softly in his ear.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

I understand.

Shujaa turns to Hasira and lets out a weary sigh.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

Before I say anything further, know that I love you and I don't want to see you hurt.

HASIRA

Please, tell me. I can handle it.

SHUJAA

The humans were deceived into defying Ujesu's Law. Strange men with white skin arrived from a distant land and preached to them. When the humans turned to worship their newfound deity, Darkness intervened, manipulating their perception.

Hasira recoils, shaking her head in denial.

HASIRA

No! Please tell me it isn't true.

SHUJAA

I'm afraid it is. The one we believed to be long dead is alive, and the humans now worship him.

HASIRA

But how? How could they be so easily deceived?

SHUJAA

I... I've said too much.

Hasira's anger intensifies, and the world around her trembles. Cracks form, and winds whip up, mirroring her growing fury. Her eyes blaze with a fiery red glow.

Shujaa looks around in horror, attempting to yell over the roaring wind, his voice barely audible.

SHUJAA (CONT'D)

(barely audible)

Hasira, Stop!

SAVANNA - NIGHT

Bahati grieves over Hasira, but suddenly looks up and runs away.

Hasira stirs and growls as she rises from her slumber.

Bahati stops a short distance away, glancing back at Hasira, who appears ready to attack.

BAHATI

Hasira, think about your actions.
Don't be reckless.

Hasira contorts her face and falters.

HASIRA

(growls)
If you value your life then don't
try to stop me.

Hasira races off into the night.

Bahati drops to the ground, trembling.

BAHATI

Hapana, tafadhali hakuna mungu.

SHUJAA (O.S.)

What have I done?

Bahati stands and turns to see the ghostly form of Shujaa.

BAHATI

You can't blame yourself. It was
inevitable she learned the truth.

SHUJAA

I shouldn't have told her anything.
The World Beyond Dreams is in
Disarray.

BAHATI

I know. She may not remember what
you said, but the truth will still
be revealed. She may not be a
direct subject of the prophecy, but
she still has a part to play.

SHUJAA

What will become of her?

BAHATI

You know the answer to that. You just fear it would change her entirely.

(pause)

Remember, Shujaa. There are few who seldom see where their paths may lead them.

SAVANNA - MORNING

The sun rises in the sky, casting a gentle light that wakes Asikari from his slumber. He sits up and scans his surroundings, realizing that he is alone.

ASIKARI

Iwele?

IWELE (V.O.)

You sound hopeful that I'd be gone. Though your thoughts betray you.

(pause)

Why have you called upon me, considering you refuse to acknowledge me any other time?

ASIKARI

I must admit that I'm troubled. Considering my impatience with the cub, can he be taught to control his Shetani?

IWELE (V.O.)

How do you expect him to accomplish what you, yourself, cannot? You couldn't even surpass your own father.

ASIKARI

What about balancing his emotions?

IWELE (V.O.)

He's but a mere child and you haven't even conquered your own emotions. I have to sit and listen to your thoughts every time you think about **her**. You'd think it was mating season.

(pause)

I guess you could be hopeful with the cub. Just raise him like the father he deserves. I know you want to sire cubs with Mlinzi, so use this as a stepping stone.

(MORE)

IWELE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(pause)

On second thought it won't matter in the end. You'll just end up like your father and brother and your dreams will be nothing but dust.

ASIKARI

(sighs)

I don't know what I was thinking, trying to talk to you. You're nothing but the remnant of a selfish ancestor.

IWELE (V.O.)

You think I like being here? I was bored during your little war. If you'd have let me, I would have ended it before it even started.

(pause)

You've ignored me for so long and have the gall to ask me about what to do. You're a riot. You already know the answers; you just seem to be a glutton for punishment.

ASIKARI

I would give my life to be rid of you. However, I'm needed to guide a youth who may never understand why.

IWELE (V.O.)

I'll keep watch in silent judgment while trying my hardest not to laugh at you.

The tall grass rattles, causing Asikari to become alert to his surroundings. He looks around, his ears swiveling, trying to pinpoint the source of the noise.

Bahati stumbles out of the grass and runs into Asikari. She quickly backs up, shaking her head.

BAHATI

(mumbles)

Asikari? I'm sorry, I shouldn't have intruded. I swear I didn't hear anything.

ASIKARI

It wouldn't matter if you did. You're the only one I currently trust. I don't know if I'll ever tell Mlinzi the truth.

(pause)

(MORE)

ASIKARI (CONT'D)
Never mind my woes, what's wrong
with you?

Bahati looks away, sadness evident in her expression. Asikari looks up behind her, his eyes filled with understanding and sorrow.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)
I wish there'd been something we
could have done to save her.

BAHATI
Hasira isn't dead. I just fear
she'll seek retribution against the
humans. She would have attacked me
if she didn't have some willpower.

ASIKARI
What did she say?

Bahati keeps her gaze averted, unwilling to share the details. Asikari looks down, closing his eyes in a moment of realization.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)
Oh Hasira, Una Kichaa. She's going
to get herself killed.

Asikari attempts to walk past Bahati, but she stops him. He tries again, but each time he is blocked.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)
Bahati, what aren't you telling me?

BAHATI
Her path is set, and you have other
matters to attend to. What troubles
me is that I can no longer see the
future. There is a growing darkness
that has blinded me. I can't even
enter the World Beyond Dreams
without some evil darkness
searching for me.

Asikari sits down, his expression bewildered.

ASIKARI
Perhaps if you stayed with us. I'm
sure you can help me guide the
child.

Bahati looks down, a sense of defeat weighing on her.

ASIKARI (CONT'D)

Hey, you once told me amani iwe
kwenu, seek peace above all else.

Bahati presses her head into Asikari's mane and cries, seeking solace in his presence. Asikari soothes her by rubbing a paw along her back, offering comfort in return.

VILLAGE - NIGHT

TRIBESMEN dance joyously around a massive bonfire, their silhouettes flickering in the warm glow of the waxing half-moon.

In the midst of the celebration, Bahati's voiceover adds a somber tone.

BAHATI (V.O.)

There was something I couldn't tell
Asikari about the growing darkness.
I tried to interfere once already.
Was I prepared for what was to
come? No, but nothing would prepare
the King, nor the cub, for the
truth.

HUMAN HUT - CONTINUOUS

The evening light barely shines on the village elder, REJEA, as he kneels before the darkness, trembling from old age or the presence of the former King, SHIDA. Shida, with disdain in his voice, growls at Rejea.

SHIDA

Speak, child. You'd better not be
here to waste my time.

Rejea gathers his courage and asks a question that has been plaguing him.

REJEA

I have been wondering, my lord. Why
do you take such interest in this
one cub?

Shida, having asked the same question to the Lord of Darkness, refuses to provide an answer to the human.

SHIDA

Your job is to get me that cub, not
ask questions. If you kill the
King, I'm afraid the child may
resent you and make it harder to
gain his trust.

(MORE)

SHIDA (CONT'D)

We need a reason to meet with them,
some way to coerce the cub into
meeting with us alone.

Rejea, still seeking clarity, presses further.

REJEA

Then what shall become of their
King? Does he not possess the
Shetani as well? Is he not marked
for death?

Shida growls, revealing his plan.

SHIDA

I want you to keep your distance,
let him train the child, and await
my orders.

Shida roars, causing Rejea to collapse in fright and cower on
the floor. Shida, hoping the human would die, notices the
broken man shivering in fear.

SHIDA (CONT'D)

Perhaps it's time I presented a
gift to help elevate you back to
being the warrior you once were.

From the darkness, Shida's green eyes glow, emitting energy
that encompasses Rejea. The elder's skin stretches and
muscles grow as he is lifted into the air. When the
transformation is complete, Rejea stands, astounded.

REJEA

What... What did you do to me? To
be honored by such a gift.

Shida collapses into the darkness, unnoticed by Rejea.

SHIDA

This mortal form is limited. I have
rejuvenated you with what power I
could, and now I must rest. Go and
spread the message of my miracle
and remind those who still cling to
Ujesu's teachings that they will be
put to death as heretics if they
don't obey my commands.

Rejea, in awe, prays before leaving the hut. Hidden in the
darkness, Shida is unable to move, feeling the weakness that
Okumbi warned him about. Suddenly, Okumbi appears, looming
over Shida, feathers revealing his true identity.

OKUMBI

I warned you that using that
ability would drain you. Let's hope
the humans don't kill the child. I
want him alive.

Shida contemplates Okumbi's unexpected concern for him, but quickly dismisses it, knowing Okumbi's true nature.

SHIDA

Could your brother let you have
him? I'm certain he will interfere.

Okumbi, irritated, walks toward the door, peering out at the humans.

OKUMBI

If you don't wish to lose your
tongue next, you'd do well to curb
your insolence.

Shida tries to move but realizes he is feeble, realizing the extent of Okumbi's power over him.

SHIDA

Forgive me...