

He had been healing.

Slowly but surely his heart, body and mind had been healing from the trauma of losing his grandmother to the beastly shark. Weight began to rebuild onto his frame, he was eating meals again, he was interacting with the pride more. The sunny attitude he tried to maintain had returned. Kaseko felt free again.

Having seen the Shark Slayer in person made something in Kaseko click back. Realizing that his depression was eating him alive. Whatever that was, had possibly saved the lion's life. Though he could not just thank Mantus for all that had taken place.

No, he was most grateful to the company of Commodus, who had been there through Kaseko's recovery. They made things a little easier. Just easy enough for Kaseko to thrive.

---

The sun rose over Jioni and the soldier stepped outside the old broken down human structure he called home. His head rose as he took a deep breath in of crisp air than breathing out. "It's a beautiful day." he muttered smiling from ear to ear. Today he would spend some time on his own, but he felt able to take on the world. Kaseko quickly took off to some sunning rocks just beyond the structures, resting himself on the largest. As he began to settle, his ears twitched turning to the sound of a voice asking for him by name.

**"Kaseko?"**

A blank look sat on his face, who could that possibly be looking for him now? A second voice joined the first and he turned to find himself greeted by the familiar face of Balavan and Queen Rubi approaching the rocks.

The Lion sat up quickly bowing his head to them in a show of respect. Rubi seemed a bit tense, he knew the rumors, things had been rough for the pride. It must have been really hard on her. **"Good morning Queen Rubi, Balavan. What is it?"**

Carefully Kaseko climbed off the rocks. He swallowed a bit nervously as Bal seemed to stare him down, standing taller than he was. Was that good or bad? He wasn't really sure any more. Balavan always seemed to be a stern creature. Rubi spoke first, **"The Big Chungus, it is good to see you back among us."**

Kaseko gave a slightly nervous laugh. **"I am feeling more myself."**

Rubi nodded before continuing, **"I have an offer, more of a request really."**

**"Oh,"** Kaseko responded with curiosity. Balavan gave a quick huff still staring at the lion making Kaseko feel his skin crawl nervously. "I mean, I'm happy to be of service."

**"Excellent. As you know the pride is in need of a new lieutenant. I, or we have decided you are qualified."** Rubi continued putting a paw onto Kaseko's left shoulder. Balavan huffed again finally breaking his gaze from the lion to look over his right shoulder. Kaseko's jaw hung open a moment, his throat felt dry. Him? A lieutenant?

**“I... I’m honored b-”** he was cut off quickly as Balavan spoke. **“I am making it more of an order Kaseko.”**

The two felines stared at Kaseko, waiting for a reply. The lion blankly stared back, stuttering a bit as he tried to find the words. After a moment, that to him felt like eons, he spoke feeling unable to deny the order, or request. **“Of course I will.”** He said smiling from ear to ear hiding the doubt in his mind.

**“Good.”** The two said as they turned. **“Come now, we’ll introduce you to the trainees, get you started in training them.”** Rubi said as she walked back into the Jioni camp followed closely by her intimidating general.

**“Oh boy...”** Kaseko whispered with a sigh bowing his head respectfully again. Putting on his best smile he moved to follow. Today was going to be interesting.