

## Jino and Mkali 2- The Theif

by

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### A Note From the Author

Hujambo, my friends! This month has been a very language-filled month for me; while I'm also still practising French (which the folks on the French side of TLK Source have been very helpful with!) there's also an awesome new thing starting on the English side; Lionobsession here on TLKS has started a competition every two weeks to either write a fanfic, draw a picture or make an image for a Swahili phrase or proverb

At the minute, it's not very popular but I trust in time (and with a bit of heavy advertising!) they'll be plenty of entries; check it out on the forums or on the rolling banner at the top!

I'll have to get into writing a fanfiction for one of the phrases! This one is unrelated, however but there are plenty of Swahili phrases that Lionobsession has been teaching us that I've been using :)

It's been half illustrated already, but there'll be plenty more pictures to come!

The last thing is some standard trigger warnings; in this story there is food multiple times, water, drought, famine and death is mentioned but not on-screen. There is also a description of minor injury

P.S. in my version of the story, Mega (as seen on the site) is called Leo as this is the design I assumed matched the name.

Now on with the show!

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Some Swahili Words

Zazu

Movement

Kuruka

Flight

Mwezi

Moon

Mufasa

King

Leo

Today

Ndiyo

Yes

Hapana

Oh no!

## Chapter 1- Blame Banzai

It was a hot day in the Pridelands of Africa. The ground was hard and dusty and the sky a deep and clear blue. It had not rained for some time, but the animals were coping since the watering hole had not yet dried up completely.

A young brown cub with a partial black mane lay on top of a rock, gazing through squinted eyes at the sky.

- "Air is dancing with ground." said a voice below him.

Jino rolled on to his belly and looked down. Underneath the slab of rock was his hyena friend; a creamy-brown striped hyena named Mkali.

Jino was used to Mkali's interesting way of speaking by now, and also his almost poetic descriptions about their African home. Jino followed Mkali's gaze into the distance where the hot air could be seen shimmering just above the earth.

- "It is," Jino agreed. He leant his head on the hot rock and looked down properly.

- "How's the shade down there?"

Mkali stretched out one paw and patted at a passing beetle.

- "Mkali thinks under rock is just as hot as top of rock..." he muttered.

Jino did not mind the sun as much as his friend. Mkali preferred dark and cool places as did most of his species but even Jino had to admit it was uncomfortably hot today, even for him.

He put his thoughts into words and Mkali smiled.

- "Jino will complain in wet season that there is too much rain, Jino will complain in dry season that there is too much sun..." he shook his head.

Jino shared his smile,

- "I know, I know, I'm never happy. Tell you what; let's go to the watering hole." he suggested,

- "That should cool us down."

Mkali agreed and they raced each other to their destination. The watering hole was a huge lake in the middle of the otherwise dry savannah. There were trees dotted around with many more growing closer to the water.

Rocks could be seen around the edge and there were normally always animals there having fun or drinking their share. However this time was different. As Jino and Mkali approached they found many more animals than usual crowded in a circle; their voices betrayed they were unhappy, maybe even angry about something although it couldn't be heard yet exactly what they were saying.

Mkali's long ears shot up in the air as the sound reached them.

- "What going on over there?" he wondered.

Jino slowed his pace to a trot and gazed over.

- "I'm not sure..." he said,

- "Come on, let's go find out!"

Jino and Mkali slipped in between the hooves, paws and thick legs of animals to get to the front of the group. They emerged to find a grey hyena cowering in front of The Lion King, Kovu.

Kovu and his mate Kiara ruled over the Pridelands now, with Kiara's parents Simba and Nala never too far away to give advice if it was needed.

Kovu looked angry as he gazed down from a rock that jutted out from the ground; his tail was whipping from side to side and his teeth were bared.

Mkali recognised the hyena; it was Banzai, one of a small group of hyenas that lived near the Outlands- a barren wasteland on the outskirts of the Pridelands.

- "I'm tellin' ya, I didn't steal anything!" Banzai complained. Although he seemed unnerved by Kovu and the presence of the other animals, his voice gave away that he was annoyed.

- "Food has gone missing," Kovu replied,
- "my lions claim they have seen you hanging around the store. Why should I believe you?"

- "Cos your lions are liars..." Banzai muttered under his breath.

Kovu clearly heard him, for he snarled and pawed the rock with his claws. Banzai jumped visibly but he managed to stammer bravely,

- "W-well it's true! I was around the food store, but I was lookin' for scraps; rotting food that you wouldn't be eatin'."

- "Who are you accusing then, if not yourself?" Kovu growled.

- "Well, I don't know... One of your own lions probably!" retaliated Banzai.

This time Kovu openly roared,

- "My lions would never steal food!"

- "Maybe this is a one off then!" Banzai barked- his voice was high with fear.

Banzai looked around him for support but saw none. However when he laid eyes on Mkali he practically pounced on the younger hyena.

- "Tell them I'm tellin' the truth Mkali, old buddy, old friend!" he begged.

Jino looked at his friend as Banzai pawed at him.

- "You know this hyena?" he asked.

Mkali nodded,

- "Mkali often run into them when looking for food in Outlands." he frowned down at Banzai,

- "Banzai and others make fun of Mkali for being friends with lion."

Banzai laughed nervously,

- "T-that was a joke!" he whined,

- "Come on, you're not still mad about a little friendly teasing like that, are you?" Banzai lowered his voice,

- "Please help! These lions'll kill me otherwise; you wouldn't leave me to fend for myself, would you?"

Mkali sighed,

- "No, Mkali not other hyenas in that way." he looked up at Kovu,

- "Mkali think Banzai is telling truth."

The other animals looked surprised before talking amongst themselves. Jino looked at his friend,

- "Why do you think that?" he asked. He wasn't questioning his friend's decision but he wanted to know his reasons for coming to his conclusion.

Mkali replied but spoke to all the animals accumulated around them.

- "Banzai not have reason to lie about stealing food. Hyenas not care who they steal food from; why would Banzai lie now?"

Banzai nodded eagerly,

- "Right, I always tell the truth!"

- "Mkali did not say that..." Mkali muttered.

Kovu thought about what Mkali had said and frowned. Mkali went on,

- "This reminds Mkali of story that took place not that long ago." he said.

Kovu tipped his head in puzzlement before nodding.

- "Ah yes, Mkali I know the story you mean." However it appeared the animals around them were unfamiliar with the tale.

- "What story?" asked a zebra.

- "I don't know of it," said an egret.

Mkali waved his paw for silence.

- "Then Mkali tell you!" he said joyously.

## Chapter 2- Who's the Thief?

The hot weather had not let up in the Pridelands for some time. Many of the prey animals had left to find more of their own food and water and so the lions and other predators were getting less to eat.

Jino peered at his reflection in the diminishing watering hole. The water was getting closer to the

bottom and was beginning to turn a murky brown.

Jino didn't feel satisfied with what he had drunk and relayed his feelings to his friend.

Mkali shrugged,

- "Only fair that animals all drink less, so everyone get something. Kiara's law a good one,"

Jino nodded,

- "I don't disagree with her idea, but that doesn't help the weather." he said, looking around at the Pridelands; once lush and green it was now dry and barren. Jino sighed,

- "Hopefully it'll rain soon."

- "Bad weather never last." Mkali said wisely.

Jino patted the water with a paw before drawing it back over his face in an attempt to cool down.

- "Why don't we go to Pride Rock?" Jino suggested,

- "I'll bet it'll be cooler there. The place where the lions sleep is always a little less warm than outside."

Mkali flashed him a toothy grin.

- "Good idea! Mkali will race you!"

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Cub and hyena were working their way up the side of Pride Rock as the sun continued to beat down on them. Jino was ahead and Mkali was just behind him when suddenly something swooped

down and landed right in front of them!

- "Stop!" it barked in an authoritative voice. Jino jumped back in surprise, almost knocking Mkali off the edge of the grand rock structure.

In front of them stood Zazu, a blue hornbill and majordomo to King Kovu and Kiara. Zazu was getting on in years, having served Mufasa, Simba's father, Simba himself and now Kovu and Kiara but that did not stop him from doing his job efficiently.

Zazu looked up at the duo and sighed,

- "Oh it's just you, young Master Jino and Master Mkali."

- "I never understand why he calls us that," Jino whispered to his friend.

- "Mkali does not understand either," Mkali muttered,

- "Perhaps is a hornbill thing?"

Jino simply shrugged in response.

- "Why are you here?" Zazu interrupted their chatter,

- "Are you going to tell stories in exchange for food again?"

Mkali shook his head.

- "Jino and Mkali hoped to get some shade here."

Zazu glanced back behind him and his normally squared shoulders hung down.

- "It's better you didn't for a while," he said, his voice low.

- "You see here at Pride Rock we've been having some... problems."

- "What sort of problems?" Jino asked curiously.

- "I don't have to tell you," Zazu snapped. He waved his wings,

- "Now go on, get going."

Jino and Mkali stayed put and Zazu sighed again.

- "You're not going to leave unless I tell you what's going on..." he guessed.

- "Fine." he stood up straight again,

- "Someone has been stealing food from here."

Jino and Mkali's eyes widened. They both knew how scarce food was in a time like this; lions could go for days without eating but that didn't mean they did not have to eat at all.

Jino blinked,

- "But we didn't do anything," he said,

- "so why can't we stay?"

- "Because," Zazu replied,

- "everyone is on edge. If someone sees you two hanging around they may get suspicious."

Jino opened his mouth to complain but Zazu quickly added,

- "I don't suspect you for a moment, young master, but with everyone hot and hungry they may think irrationally. Just be careful and stay away for a while till we can get this sorted out, alright?"

Jino and Mkali nodded obediently.

- "If you need shade and cool ground beneath your paws, might I suggest The Gorge? There are plenty of cracks and small caves to hide in around there." With that, Zazu flew off.

The two friends took the bird's advice and travelled the short distance from Pride Rock to The Gorge. Jino had heard the heart-breaking story of how Simba, as a cub, had been lured to this Gorge by his evil Uncle Scar.

Scar's hyena troops had created a stampede that had killed Mufasa when he had tried to save his son.

Jino had never seen Mufasa's final resting place but he had been told that a thick patch of grass had grown over where the great Lion King had fallen.

Jino and Mkali found a nice sheltered spot in a split in two great rocks at the edge of The Gorge. Jino and Mkali sat down to wash their sore, hot paws.

- "Who do you think stole the food?" Jino asked.

Mkali shrugged and he spoke in-between licks,

- "Mkali not sure. Could be other lions, could even be other hyenas. Vultures maybe; they known for stealing food,"

Jino had not thought of vultures. He knew they often picked clean carcasses left from hunts by other animals, but he did not realise they would also steal fresh meat.

They discussed some other likely culprits of the theft until Mkali decided to take a short nap. Generally, Mkali was more of a creature of the night rather than the day and technically so was Jino but Jino preferred the morning and Mkali had happily adopted this trait so he could keep up with his friend.

Today had been busy though and Jino decided to leave his friend in peace. Instead he walked off to stretch his legs and decided to try and find Mufasa's grave.

He found a surprising amount of patches of grass, but he couldn't tell which one was Mufasa's. Eventually Jino sat next to one patch which was near a small tree, broken in half by some long ago and mysterious accident. The tree was dead and had clearly been like that for some time.

Jino stretched his claws to the top of one half of the trunk and sharpened them, noticing with surprise that it appeared another lion had done the same thing further up.

He could tell by the size of the scratches that the lion was probably younger than him but was confused as to how such a small cub could reach up so high.

Before he could think any more into it he heard the flapping of wings and looked up; a vulture had landed on the top of the broken tree and was preening his wings.

He had smooth black feathers on his body and fluffier white feathers around his neck and chest. On his head was a thin and small amount of more black plumage, giving the bird a very regal look.

He glanced down at Jino.

- "You're not one of the Pridelanders, are you?" he said, looking down his beak at the young cub.

Jino shook his head.

- "I'm a loner- Jino's my name. Who're you?"

The vulture shook out his feathers before smoothening them down with one wing.

- "My name is Kuruka. And I'm glad to hear you're not one of those stuck-up Pridelanders. They chased me away just now from a perfectly good carcass; what does it matter to them? They were finished with it, after all."

Jino frowned,

- "Those 'stuck up' lions are my friends, you know."

- "Then I suggest you make better friends," Kuruka replied.

Jino's fur bristled.

- "They are good friends!" he insisted,

- "They're just going through some rough times right now, that's all."

Kuruka snorted,

- "And they think that makes them special? We all have bad times to go through, lion cub, that doesn't give us the excuse to throw our weight around. What has them so bothered anyway?"

Jino opened his mouth to respond but Kuruka answered his own question.

- "Ahh, I'd wager it's the food thefts, am I correct?"

Jino bared his teeth.

- "How did you know about that?!" he spat.

- "I can fly," Kuruka didn't seem fazed by Jino's angry display and he continued talking in a calm and posh voice.

- "I see all around the Pridelands every day. I even know who stole the food."

- "It was you, I'll bet!" Jino growled.

- "How else would you know about the problem in the first place?"

- "How did you know?" Kuruka countered.

- "Zazu told me," Jino said, unsheathing his claws.

Kuruka drew his beak over a feather casually.

- "I only have your word for that. But regardless, I do know it wasn't you, Jino."

- "Then who was it, if you're so smart?" Jino's ears had been flat against his head but they now perked a little with interest for what the vulture had to say.

- "Mwezi," replied Kuruka.

- "A cheetah who lives just behind Pride Rock; he just moved here from the Outlands. Yes, Mwezi is to blame."

### Chapter 3- A Horrible Mistake

Jino spat angrily, the fur on the back of his neck standing on end.

- "No way! Why would a cheetah steal food?"

Kuruka shook his head.

- "Just like the other lions; you only see things through tunnel-vision, cat. I'm telling you, Mwezi is the culprit and if you don't believe me, that's your loss."

Jino clawed the ground, thinking of pouncing up and batting some manners into the bird.

- "Why would I believe you?" Jino shot back,

- "Vultures are known for being thieves and liars."

- "So it is with hyenas." Kuruka said flatly. Jino blinked in surprise.

- "You're friends with a hyena, despite what others told you about them." Kuruka went on, now he realised he had Jino's attention,

- "Oh yes, I've heard the tale of you and Rangi; without you trusting your hyena friend that little bird would have drowned in the floods."

Jino looked at the ground and said nothing.

Kuruka flapped his wings and took to the sky.

- "Trust my information, or let the Pridelands suffer." he said simply and flew away.

Jino looked at patch of grass below his paws. He knew Kuruka was right; he closed his eyes and made a decision.

Quick as his paws would carry him he ran back to Mkali and woke his friend up.

- "We have to go and see the King and Queen," he said.

- "What, why...?" Mkali replied sleepily.

- "Just trust me; I'll explain on the way!" Jino took off and Mkali quickly followed behind.

- "Mkali does trust Jino!" Mkali called behind him,

- "That what friends do!"

Jino smiled back at him.

- "And sometimes, you gotta trust what a stranger says too!"

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As they approached Pride Rock for a second time that day the sun was beginning to set and finally the atmosphere began to cool down.

- "Is Jino sure Kuruka is telling the truth?" Mkali panted.

Jino nodded,

- "My instincts are telling me he was. I have to trust them; if I thought for even a second he was lying I wouldn't be on my way to tell Kovu and Kiara."

Mkali nodded.

- "It good to trust instincts; listen to what Jino tells himself, not what someone else says."

Jino twitched his whiskers,

- "Ndiyo! We're nearly there now,"

Jino and Mkali charged up the rocks, panting heavily. Jino quickly called out,

- "Kiara! Kovu! Anyone about?"

Kiara was sunning herself on some of the rocks ahead. There were other lionesses with her, and both Jino and Mkali noticed how tense they looked at their approach.

Kiara stood up, giving a warning glance at her friends in case they were thinking of trying anything unreasonable.

- "Hello, Jino, Mkali," she said,

- "How are you?"

- "Fine!" replied Jino impatiently.

- "Jino and Mkali have important news about food thefts," And Mkali explained.

Throughout his quick telling of who they suspected, Kiara's eyes grew wide.

- "Hapana," she whispered. She spoke louder to the two friends,
- "Kovu thought it was the vultures and has gone to confront them!"

Jino and Mkali exchanged a horrified glance.

- "We have to stop him!" cried Jino.

- "Zazu will lead you there; I'm sorry, but I'm exhausted- we were hunting earlier." Kiara gave an apologetic look and glanced back at her friends.

She called for Zazu who flew off to lead them to Kovu.

- "Mkali hopes we not too late!" Mkali fretted.

- "Whatever happens, we can't let him falsely accuse the vultures!" Jino agreed,

- "Fly like the storm winds, Zazu; we're counting on you!"

Zazu nodded,

- "I will, young masters."

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As they approached a large tree, they heard the angry roar of Kovu. Tired though they were Jino and Mkali picked up their paces till they were both a blur of brown fur running across the savannah.

They leapt over a fallen log to find Kovu with his huge paws placed on the trunk of the tree.

Kuruka and some other vultures sat in its branches. Kuruka was speaking,  
- "You have the wrong animals, Kovu. The one you're looking for is..."

Kovu roared again and cut him off.  
- "I know who I'm looking for; you!"

- "No wait!" Mkali jumped in-between Kovu and the vultures, causing Kovu to jump back.

Jino followed behind,  
- "They're telling the truth!"

Kovu flicked his ear.  
- "What do you know about this?" he asked, not impolitely.

Jino and Mkali looked at each other then explained.

Kovu listened carefully and his claws sheathed. He looked up at Kuruka and said,  
- "I'm unfamiliar with Mwezi's den. Please, show it to me and we'll see what he has to say about

these accusations."

Kuruka nodded,

- "What a miracle; a lion listening to reason!" he muttered and took to the air.

The two lions, Mkali and Zazu followed as Kuruka led them to Mwezi's place. Mwezi's den was a small underground hole which Kovu now bent down at.

- "Mwezi," he called,

- "Are you there?"

A cheetah popped his head out from the tunnel entrance. He was lanky, like most cheetahs, with a wide nose and one tufted ear.

His fur was spiky and he had one large spot between his eyes that stood out from the others around it.

- "Why, King Kovu," Mwezi bowed almost awkwardly down,

- "this is a pleasant surprise. How can I help you?"

Kovu nodded in return and kept his voice level as he spoke.

- "Kuruka here," he gestured to the vulture with a flick of his head,

- "claims you are the one who has been stealing food from Pride Rock."

Mwezi looked shocked.

- "Me? No way! W-why would I?"

Mkali leant forward to try and sniff at the den entry but Mwezi quickly flicked his tail at Mkali's nose, sending the poor hyena jolting backwards. Mwezi sat down, keeping one leg tucked under him, blocking the entrance.

Kovu frowned but a voice from above caught his attention.

- "I don't know what's stranger, Mwezi..." Kuruka had flown to a nearby tree and had pulled back the branches to reveal a young elephant carcass.

- "The fact that you are eating food that lions normally eat, or the way you hid it up here like a leopard. Questioning your species, are you?"

Mwezi's eyes went wide and he glanced between Kovu and Kuruka, stammering as he searched for an answer.

Finally he hung his head and sighed.

- "You got me... That's not my hunt; it belongs to the Pridelanders."

Kovu flicked his tail but he looked ashamed himself. He glanced apologetically at Kuruka before saying,

- "So you were the thief all along?" Mwezi nodded.

- "Why?" Kovu asked, puzzled.

Mwezi sighed.

- "It wasn't out of selfishness; you see it was because of them..."

He moved away from the entrance and gestured with his long tail for someone inside to come out.

From inside the den two young cubs poked their heads out. One was pale and looked a little nervous. The other was darker in colour and flicked her ears in an uninterested way.

An older cub followed behind and he stood protectively in front of his two younger sisters.

- "But..." Kovu blinked,

- "Male cheetahs don't normally look after their cubs."

- "That's because these cubs aren't mine," Mwezi replied,

- "These are my sister's. My sister..." he swallowed and then went on, sadness etched into his voice,

- "my sister drowned in the floods a year ago and left her children without anyone to take care of them."

He stood, almost losing his balance and continued,

- "I took them in but I was hunting a few weeks ago and injured my leg,"

The leg that had previously been hidden under the cheetah he now showed openly; there was a bad gash around the ankle and Mwezi was clearly having trouble standing on it as he hovered it above the ground.

- "And as I'm sure you know, a cheetah who can't run, can't hunt. This is why I stole the food, to feed me and my family," Mwezi hung his head in shame.

Kovu glanced at the group behind him then turned back to Mwezi and shook his head.

- "You need not be sorry," he said kindly. Mwezi looked up in surprise.

- "All you needed to do was ask for help; the lions at Pride Rock would have been happy to assist- this time of year is hard for all of us, so the only solution for us all to survive is to share what little we do have." Kovu smiled.

Mwezi sighed in relief,

- "I'm sorry... I didn't think to ask. I thought you would say no; in these difficult times I assumed it would be every animal for himself."

Kovu shook his head,

- "Perhaps in your old home, but not in the Pridelands." he said,

- "Anytime you need food, Mwezi, come to Pride Rock and ask."

Mwezi glanced back at his leg,

- "It may be hard for me to get there- my leg's been getting worse- but I'll try."

Kuruka cleared his throat.

- "I'd be happy to inform one of your lions when Mwezi needs food and then they could deliver it for him."

Kovu nodded,

- "An excellent idea, Kuruka." he turned back to Mwezi,

- "There's a friend of Kiara's family too; a mandrill named Rafiki. He is very skilled with healing herbs and I'm sure could fix your leg right up, if you want?"

Mwezi looked delighted,

- "Why yes; thank you Kovu! I-I mean," he bowed respectfully,

- "Your Majesty."

- "Kovu is fine." Kovu chuckled. He looked up at Kuruka,
- "Now, I believe I owe you a great apology, Kuruka. I almost made a very big mistake accusing the wrong animal."

Kuruka shrugged,

- "Think nothing of it, my King."

- "I will be sure to leave you and your friends in peace from now on," Kovu said,

- "And I apologise again."

- "Hakuna Matata," Kuruka replied,

- "No worries!"

#### Chapter 4- The End of Two Mysteries

- "All droughts have to end eventually," Mkali was saying as his story drew to a close,
- "and the rains soon fell, returning the Pridelands to their former glory and food was once again plentiful."

Kovu had lain down on his rock and the other animals had leant in eagerly as the story had gone on. Even Banzai had shown some interest.

Kovu nodded when the story was complete and said,

- "I almost made a horrible mistake back then." he sighed before smiling,

- "I won't do it again."

Banzai stood nervously,

- "So I can go?"

- "You can," Kovu replied.

Banzai didn't wait for Kovu to change his mind and quickly ran off laughing.

- "But if it wasn't the hyena," called a zebra from the crowd,

- "Who was it?"

A cough came from somewhere nearby. An old lion with a full mane stepped out; his name was Leo.

- "I'm afraid that would be me," he said. The group of animals around him gasped.

Leo looked down but still held his head up. He was ashamed of what he had done, but not scared to admit the truth.

- "Unlike Mwezi in the story, I did not steal food for a good reason; I was merely being lazy in these warm months. I would rather have slept in the sun than gone hunting for myself, when I'm still perfectly capable to do so."

Kovu looked surprised and was about to say something but Leo interrupted him,

- "Now, now, don't say anything my King. I know what I did was wrong; I'll go now and replace the food I stole."

He nodded nobly and turned to walk away.

- "Hey, Leo; I'll come with you!" called Jino.

Leo turned,

- "Why thank you," he said.

- "Just like Leo," the zebra muttered to an elephant beside him,

- "he pretends to be stoic but all he wants is company."

- "But I'll only come if you tell me one of your cool stories!" Jino said cheekily.

Leo grinned,

- "It's a deal!"

- "If there is story, Mkali is coming too!" Mkali quickly ran after the two lions.

Leo and Jino waited for him to catch up before Leo continued,

- "Did I ever tell you about the time my great-grandfather chased a herd of elephants?"

- "You have," laughed Jino,

- "but tell it again, I love that story!"

Leo chuckled and began his story as the three animals disappeared into the setting sun.

Fin!