

## The Lion Guard's Wisdom

by

*BlackJack16*

Lion Guard's Wisdom

Zazu Hornbill, son of Zuzu

Zazu: Peace and prosperity has finally returned to the Pride Lands after many desperate years of suffering through corruption of Royal power, long drought, excessive hunting, overgrazing, and overpopulation of rivers and waterways killing aquatic life. These were the hardest times for all animals and plants who respected the Circle of Life, and for those few that chose to stay in the Pride Lands and survived are admired for their will and determination, including their aid to those who needed it most in desperate times. Those that migrated to chose healthier and happy lives are not shunned for leaving, but are looked upon with hope by us that they found a home and built a family so that their part in the Circle may continue. Those that returned were always welcomed back whenever they desired and we are humbled to have them once again, including their extended families who always have our blessing.

But we also welcome the return of the team that protects the Pride Lands and defends the Circle of Life. Their existence was supposedly shunned after the dark Royal of Pride Rock destroyed them out of evil envy, and their absence has been felt as long as he was the so-called King. With him now passed on, the Lion Guard has formed once again and has continued the legacy in aiding the

inhabitants of the Pride Lands and foiling the dark ways of the violators of the delicate balance.

But this particular Guard is a first of its kind in producing animals other than lions and who are no older than adolescence.

This has made no difference as each animal has used their unique and natural abilities to prove both a worthy and mature team member that will not back down from anything and will take on any challenge that comes their way. So far, their tasks have been successfully completed and harmony has been safely restored.

This raises the point of never underestimating a particular youthful individual because they seem to be 'just kids' and are different from the others in terms of ability and/or capability. Everyone is unique in their own way and they should be respected for who they are. That goes for everyone in the Circle of Life.

Through their experience, the five members of the Lion Guard have learned valuable lessons on the run, and this has helped them to mature both as team members and individuals. They are even more valued as key partakers in the Circle as a result.

The Pride Land's Fiercest, Bravest, Fastest, Strongest, and Keenest of Sight are here today to share tales of their experience in the Guard and provide valuable wisdom, which they hope will be a fine example for others to follow:

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You were chosen because of your radar vision of almost everything within - dare I say it - a one hundred mile radius. But you are also like the intellectual nerd of the group who gives inside knowledge to both your team and anyone else who wants to learn more. As well as a defender, do you consider yourself an advisor with your abilities?

Ono: I never really stop to think about being a number-two animal, if you will. I just tend to go along with instruction and do whatever is asked of me. I am always happy to give intellectual lectures to anyone who needs it or is keen to learn, but I am not about to tell someone off or be harsh on them because they have made an honest mistake. That is not my nature.

I just think that it is only fair to leave them be to learn from their errors. Nobody learns without getting it wrong, and it is the very mistakes you make that only make you better and stronger in both mind and body if you are willing to learn from them. You can give all the advice you can, and others may and will take it in, but sometimes you have to learn the hard way to eventually succeed. If that is the way that it turned out in the end, then wonderful. If it didn't, then tough luck. But at the end of the day, it was the choice they made which made them who they were. It did not affect you and therefore you should not have to worry. You did all that you could to help and regardless of success or failure in the end, the effort that you put in is all that anyone can ask for.

In the case of The Lion Guard, I know they all work to the best of their abilities and I know that I can trust them to perform. Kion in particular is a fine leader because he trusts his instincts and understands everyone's needs, so therefore I let him do his job and only give advice when I really need to. He also trusts me to do what I need to do, otherwise he would never have chosen me to represent the Guard in the first place. That goes for the other members.

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You are the fastest in the Pride Lands, and that gives you the ability to catch your foes who try to escape or outrun them when they come after you. You even race to the aid of your allies when they need fast help. But some have said that you even show a bit of attitude, and therefore have labeled you as slightly arrogant. Would you consider this controversial label as gospel?

Fuli: That really depends on who is making the judgements. Everyone has their own way of interpreting certain so-called controversial individuals. Some opinions may be bluntly obtuse and some aim to look at the bigger picture. It is about the balance between pessimism and optimism, and it is always wiser to look at the positive side of things before jumping to conclusion on the negatives. Those few that justify the means with reasonable detail are able to explain what happens beyond what you see and show the individual on the inside as well as the outside. These are the

opinions that matter most. Otherwise it is about simply finding someone to pick on, or looking for an excuse to gain unanimous consent against the target audience.

You may think that I have a little attitude and that it seems arrogant, but a lot of individuals mistaken confidence for arrogance. I know that it is wrong to brag and I certainly do not like to, but when you are good at something, you have to show positive intent so that you can keep performing consistently. That, I believe, is one of the secrets towards success: It is not always about how good you are at something; it is about staying consistent. But in order to keep that consistency, you have to stay in a positive frame of mind. That is where confidence comes in. Skill plus optimism equals consistency, which in turn creates success. If you have the skill but lack the belief in yourself, you will only fall faster and never find that consistency again, which in turn will cause your skill to be lost forever.

It is important to have the brains and the willpower to succeed in life, but sometimes it doesn't show because some are too afraid to use them. They should not be. Everyone has it inside of them, but they must create the initiation to trigger it. Otherwise it will mean nothing.

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The incredible strength that you have shown landed you a place as a member of the Lion Guard. So far you have proved your worth by shifting the heaviest rocks, knocking over the toughest Acacia's in the Pride Lands, and making your enemies bounce off of you when you hit them. But you have also really explored the Pride Lands over time because you know just about everyone and every location. You are also considered the 'nice guy' of the Guard. Along with your strength, would you also consider your know-how and supposed kind nature as another valuable trait in aiding the Guard and setting an example to others?

Beshte: (Laughing shyly about the mentioning of his 'sweetness') Well, generally speaking, I definitely think that it helps. I know that I am certainly well-natured and nice, and I believe that is how the rest of the world should be. If you want to truly find your place in the Circle of Life, integrity is one of the most valuable traits. You have to try to be nice to everyone, and only then will you earn respect and gain friends. That includes earning the respect of your own family. Life is too short not to be friendly, and as a member of an important faction in The Lion Guard, I say that

showing the example of integrity will help to inspire others to follow suit. It is the heart inside that counts, not just the uniqueness that is seen on the outside. Others can call me sweet all they want, but I tend not to talk about it. I just go about it and hope that my example will help others who respect the Circle of Life.

But never underestimate me just because of my personality, because I get tough when it comes to facing enemies and that side of me turns into something more extreme than at first impression. That comes down to dual personality: By showing toughness as well as having an open heart, you attain a wide range of both physical and psychological skills, and therefore using them to the best of your abilities and proving them effective makes you even more unique as an individual. That, I believe, is the real thing that separates the 'normal' from the 'special'.

As for knowing the ropes of the Pride Lands, I believe that you really get valuable knowledge when you take your time to explore as many places and meet as many new faces as possible. This way, you learn about the history, values and even archives and artefacts of each location, and therefore you understand the uniqueness of the wonderful world that you are living in. I don't think that you can get a true appreciation of your living environment until you discover its many unique contents and gain a greater understanding of their value in nature. The same goes for the many animals that you meet and befriend. By taking your time to know and understand one another, you both gain an appreciation of your respective nature, therefore strengthening the important connection you all have in the Circle of Life.

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You are the bravest member of the Guard because you fear nothing and are not afraid to put yourself in harm's way to help others. You also have a lot of nerve using your courage when not necessary and that has put you in danger a lot of times. Did you ever think twice about the risks along the way and whether or not this was helping your contribution to the Guard?

Bunga: Yes, I guess I wasn't really thinking about my own safety as well as others when I went looking for trouble. I guess it comes down to natural instinct. But whatever that instinct may be, you really have to know when to use it. There will be times when you have to hold off or even seek an alternative option, such as going a more sensible and safe way rather than looking for the fast

and easy solution or the solution that you think may be best. It is important to ensure that you think before you act, because if you don't, it could spell disaster. Such can also put the health and safety of others at risk, and it would be shameful to have to carry that burden.

Kion's father, King Simba, made one such mistake when he was a cub: His father Mufasa told him never to visit the Elephant Graveyard because it was too dangerous, but Simba was desperate to prove how brave he was, and therefore ventured there anyway. However, he almost got killed by hyenas as a result, and Mufasa, who had saved him, scolded him for being disobedient. He then told him, "I am only brave when I have to be. Being brave doesn't mean you go looking for trouble", and that said plenty. Simba then became more disciplined and wiser after that.

It is the errors that only make you stronger, smarter and wiser. I know that I have made a few too many, and sometimes I am just too confident and stubborn to listen to my conscience. But in no way do I want anyone to follow such a less than perfect example. As members of the Lion Guard, we are not just here to serve and protect, but also to set the good example to our fellow animals and our eventual successors. I have not always done so and, through my experience, I only hope that I have learned to play a little more sensibly. By all means, I want everyone else to do so.

Regardless, life is about challenging your fears and gaining the courage to try everything. Experience comes with challenge, and the more you challenge yourself, the more confident you will become as an individual. You will not necessarily succeed at every challenge that you come across, but having the determination to try only makes you psychologically stronger. Personally, I have never even stopped to ponder the meaning of the word 'fear'. I do not believe in it and I always keep it blocked from entering my mind. That should go for anyone seeking great courage and determination.

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This role of leader of the Lion Guard came upon you unexpectedly, and yet you did not hold back from accepting it. You then defied Royal tradition by assembling a first Lion Guard of its type and who were all young. But this particular Guard is special to you. What does it mean for you to lead this unique team of animals?

Kion: Well, these mix of animals are a lot more than just good and skilled teammates to me. Sure, I chose them for their natural instincts that aids in adapting to their roles, and they have all applied them well so far. But these four are also my good friends. I developed a relationship with them when I was younger and got to know them well. I very much admired their unique abilities that shone over the rest of the animals in the Pride Lands, and therefore I considered them special. That doesn't just go for their skills, but also their personalities: Bunga for his energetic spirit, Fuli for her stubborn confidence - I mean that in a nice way -, Ono for his intelligence, and Beshte for his kind nature. Such skills and personalities combined make, I believe, the perfect defence against enemies, and the vital aid required for all respected animals within the Circle of Life.

I also take note of the fact that we are all young, and for that reason it would be easy to underestimate us, for our enemies might believe they can get over us. But as long as you believe in your abilities and keep your mind totally focused when required, you can achieve anything at any stage in your life. That is where the maturing process comes in: Enjoy life for what it is and how you make it to be, but when duty calls, you have to get your mind set on your responsibilities. Otherwise, you will not be doing any favours for yourself, your family, or your allies. This is what keeps the Circle rotating.

Based on you experience at the helm, what are your beliefs on leadership?

It can be a very tough job being a leader, or captain, of your team - especially when you are young and lack experience. When it comes to working within a team environment, usually you start out working under a leader who gives you guidance and shows you all the tricks of the trade. At that point, you are a student of the game who is working with and learning from the experienced masters, who become your mentors. But those mentors must first set a good example by doing their hard work and showing integrity so that their allies can follow suit. So having the proper guidance is very important in learning how to be a good team player and, eventually, a good leader.

Dad was, and still is, a good enough mentor in that sense because he is the King of the Pride Lands and he knows how to be a good defender as well as a wise leader. He provided plenty of good advice and his gentle presence when even one has faulted is very inspiring. He also understands the Royal values and how one must show plenty of integrity when on Royal duty. So I certainly learned a lot from him growing up.

Then when I became leader of the Guard, my Grandfather Mufasa appeared to me in spirit and has since given wise advice when I have needed it. He has trusted me to use my instincts and do what is required to make the team perform well. He probably would not have done so if he did not believe in me, because I think that he saw a bit of himself in me. I guess there is a bit of genetic inheritance in there! But bottom line, the guidance from both father and grandfather has been of great help and advanced education.

But as much as you can learn and be taught, the real learning experience comes from practical on-the-job training. You learn better by actually seeing how things get done rather than hearing about it, and therefore it sticks in your head more easily. As a fresh team, we still had plenty to learn to better succeed at our duty, and the only way we could do that was to get that practical experience.

That includes one or several mistakes that we made along the way that did us plenty of good. One example was when Mum and Dad left the Pride Lands for a few days to attend a funeral for a fallen local hero, and my older sister Kiara was left in charge as queen. She gave us an official decree to assist a herd of eland away from beehives and ensure that they would not get hurt. The idea of being told what to do by my sister agitated me, and I selfishly decided to do it my way and move the bees instead, only to get myself and the whole team stung multiple times and angering the eland when they crashed into us. Kiara was very displeased after that, and, out of spite, she considered negotiating with the enemy when they were setting up a trap for her. Had the Guard and I not intervened, goodness knows what could have happened to her, if not the worst case scenario - perish the thought.

So after that incident, I realised that I let personal issues get in the way of my duty and it led to complete disaster. Big mistake. As a leader, you have to stay composed and try to understand the extent of the issue and attempt to solve it before you jump to conclusions. It is no different if it comes from your own camp. Not every team, or family, is perfect and there will be differences and disagreements sometimes, but by taking the time to reason with them, you may just be able to work something out for the better and overcome those issues so that you will be able to function more efficiently as a team. At the end of the day, it enhances the culture within and makes the team work.

As much as mishaps in the line of duty can hurt, you learn a lot from them and they only make you stronger. Nobody learns without getting it wrong. You have to get it wrong to get it right. You have to lose to win. You have to suffer failure to taste success. These days, It really is the best way to learn if you have the willpower to understand how it is supposed to work.

The most important thing for a leader is to gain the respect of his teammates, and, again, that comes from leading by example. You have to show them why you are at the helm by performing all the necessary duties required of a leader. It also comes down to a vote of confidence within your camp, where they show belief in you and that you truly belong at the helm. But you must first show confidence within yourself before your team will show that confidence in you, because they will see that you have that belief and therefore they will return it.

It is also just as important to create comfortable camaraderie among your teammates. That requires spending as much time as possible with them in both the good and bad times, whether on or off duty. They may also require help to sort out their working or personal problems, and that is where your moral support as a leader becomes most valued. Once your teammates recognises that friendly culture you create, it becomes more than just a working environment: It is a place to truly belong. To me, that is what makes a real team.

And as I said, you can learn while on the job, and that can sometimes come from your own camp. Five heads are always better than one and you never know where your next good idea is going to come from. You can all learn something from each other and it is only appropriate to allow your teammates to be open to you and allow them to come up with their own suggestions. And that is why I encourage all of them to show leadership skills and prove why they deserve to be on the team.

If it was just a matter of, "Shut up, I am in charge here! You cannot tell me what to do! What I say goes" and even a bit of, "Do this right or you are punished or fired", it would create a very uncomfortable team culture and you would be viewed as an obnoxious, self-centred, egotistical jerk and no one would ever like to work under you, let alone be friends with you. That sort of attitude is not in the spirit of either the Royal protocols nor the Circle of Life. It can also inhibit mental focus on your tasks and make you fall faster.

It is also vital to manage your team's workload wisely and ensure that they never work too hard. On certain occasions outside of duty, I head specific training exercises for the team to ensure that we stay warm and technically stable enough to perform our tasks effectively and efficiently. That only comes in every second or third day, though, because almost every day something comes up and we have to attend to our duty. So because we are constantly working, we do not get much time to rest, and when we do get that time, I ensure that we make the most of it with long breaks, recreational activities, and spending time with family. This helps the team to take their minds off their workload and refresh both physically and mentally so that they can keep performing consistently. Otherwise, the fatigue factor would only wear them down faster and they would not be able to do their duty.

Bottom line is, we all need to assist each other both performance-wise and thought-wise, and by doing so, we maintain that sense of camaraderie and function even better as a team.

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Being a part of a team that has traditionally consisted of only lions would normally have disqualified you from taking place in the Guard, yet here you stand. What does it feel like to be a part of the first Lion Guard to be made of various species?

Ono: For most of us, I believe that it really came as a surprise. None of us, Kion included, were expecting to be much more than free-roaming animals in the beautiful and peaceful place that is the Pride Lands. I was certainly aware of my skills in intellect and radar vision, but when this recruitment for the Guard came up, it made me realise that they really are more useful than what I thought. It just goes to show that, when you get given the chance, you can achieve great things when you make the most of your special abilities.

Fuli: Honestly, I did like the idea initially, but was a little cynical about being commanded by a lion as they are always "lording over the Pride Lands" - that is how I put it. I even doubted Kion's ability at first when he could not even deliver the Roar of the Elders properly. But again, I was just being a little stubborn, because that is just my nature. The truth is, the fact that Kion was being so open in his selection of team members because he needed the very best made me realise that he meant well. He showed plenty of loyalty when considering the special abilities and vital aid of other

animals as well as lions, and this resulting change in Lion Guard tradition is a perfect example of what the Circle of Life is all about.

Besthe: I never would have even considered being a part of something bigger than the normal life I had lived. However, I was more than happy to take on the duty as I would be working with my best friends who I knew that I could trust, and therefore guarantee functioning well to get the job done. This new type of Guard, I believe, proved how efficiently both predator and prey can work in unison and express the importance of coexistence.

Bunga: It feels completely un-Bunga-lieveable! I always wanted a chance to enhance my fearless skills in parkour, facing up to enemies, and seeking justice, and being in the Lion Guard has allowed me to accomplish all of that and more. But being a part of this important - I repeat, important - team has also taught me to be a little more responsible and know when to play it cool. I know that I was excessively enthusiastic and lacked a little control during my early days in the Guard, and often that got both me and the others in trouble. I was always a little complacent in my own comfort zone, and the reality is, you have to be able to adapt outside of your comfort zone when circumstances demand it. I really have tried to go easier and there will be more to learn, but I am pleased that I am progressing well and I hope to continue to impress as time goes on.

Kion: I know that I made this new Guard how it turned out to be and that it certainly raised a few eyebrows, but I always knew for sure who the very best were for the task. At no point was I ever playing a game when making these decisions. Once assigned as new leader of the Guard, I took note of the fact that it was a serious responsibility. So I was always going to treat it that way, otherwise I would have never been trusted to be the leader. The thing is, it is only fair to be egalitarian to our fellow allies. Just having lions as defenders may give an impression of exclusion or favouritism. To me, that is unethical. Every animal who respects the Circle of Life has the right to defend it, and all have their unique individual skills to accomplish that. That deserves to be respected.

There are a few enemies that you have come across multiple times during your time in the Guard. That includes encounters with Janja and the hyenas, Rairai and Goigoi the jackals, Makuu the crocodile the name a few. What strategies do use to get the best of your common enemy?

Ono: It may seem as simple as tracking the enemy down and beating them into submission, and on some occasions it has been that way. But some animals can be a little more cunning than others and will often come up with a plan to get what they want, and that is why we have to counter-attack with our own plan to beat them to the punch. As leader, Kion always comes up with the strategies and we ensure that we listen to his instruction before springing into action. In my case, it will often involve using my keen eyesight to seek out the enemy. Furthermore, I use it in combat by commanding the Guard who is where when they can't see for themselves and who to attack, then they can take it from there.

Fuli: When you have speed, you have to use it to your advantage by outrunning and stranding your enemies right where you want them. If the opposition is trying to chase and capture their targeted prey, or if they are trying to runaway, I use my speed to catch up and block their path. Then if they try to run to various directions, I ensure that I block each path of attempted travel and trap them so they are stranded in the middle, where the rest of the Guard and I can then handle them.

Besthe: You have to use your strength to attack the opposition and weaken them to the point where they have no strength left of their own and will be forced to submit. But you have to ensure that you can indeed out-power them, and if you can't - not much of that against me thus far - you have to use defence and counter-attack manoeuvres to outsmart your opponent before you finish them off with brute strength. It is a very wise way to conserve your energy, otherwise you will be the one that goes down.

Bunga: They will always try and get into your head by playing mind games so that they think they are better than you and that you are afraid of them. But you have to physically show them that you are not going to back down from anything and that you can indeed beat them. You can talk back with your own war of words all you want, but that will mean nothing in physical combat. Furthermore, if you let the mind games get to you, it can be a big distraction and then put you off your game, which will lead to defeat. As long as you block the psychological warfare from your mind and focus on the task at hand, including strategising how you can better them, you will usually stay on the giving end of the fight.

Kion: Getting the best of your opposition is never an easy task when you attempt and full on assault without strategy. It is even harder when you face either a new opponent who you have not met, or a species of animal that you are not familiar with. Therefore you have no idea of their own strategies

or natural instincts that can fall to their advantage. That is why it is important to know and understand your enemy before you prevail against them. By doing so, you gain further knowledge and create new advanced strategies in how you can overcome them. Furthermore, once you face them more than once, you gain greater confidence in knowing that you understand their instincts and desires to enforce a higher likely chance of victory.

But there are other supposed 'enemies' out there who may not be as bad at first impression if you really get to know them. Just because they may seem suspicious doesn't always mean they are plotting something evil. You always have to know for sure before you act, otherwise it creates unwanted conflict and therefore distrust among fellow allies.

There are two instances where we made this mistake. One was where I got misplaced in the Outlands and had to find my way back into the Pride Lands, only to run into a lone female hyena along the way. I preached at her because I thought she would cause trouble - like Janja's clan usually did to us Pridelanders - but she actually helped me to get out of the Outlands and taught me about the true common instincts among hyenas and how we actually do have certain traits in common. She added how Janja and his clan were different because they were greedy and ate more than their share. From that point, I realised that most hyenas actually do respect the Circle of Life and that they should only be judged within and not by their spots, or physical appearance.

The other instance was when we thought a clan of hyenas had invaded aardvarks' dens in the night and I used the Roar of the Elders to get them to leave. Within some days later, the Pride Lands became overpopulated with termites, and when we consulted with Dad about this, he told us that aardwolves control termite infestation and that they look like hyenas. He also said that aardwolves like to hang around aardvark dens. That explained it all, and so we went after them in the Outlands, told them the situation, and brought them back into the Pride Lands. After I realised that we made a mistake by observation failure and not understanding their instincts.

So it is important to understand the natural instincts and desires of both the opposition and your allies so that you can plan ahead how you will aid or combat them efficiently. Besthe and Ono are particularly helpful in this area, where The Keenest of Sight uses his wide knowledge to inform and advise us, and The Strongest has the know of almost the entire Pride Lands population. Therefore we know our allies from our enemies.

You all began as friends before you joined the Guard, and now you work alongside each other as colleagues. Did you believe that you could make this work and do you think, in your honest opinion, there are existing differences between a professional relationship and friendship?

Ono: It certainly is not easy to co-exist when friends have their kinship put to the test when going in to business together. Working in a team environment means that you have to come to finalised agreements on decisions and actions through unanimous consent, and not everybody will necessarily agree due to conflicting ideologies or theoretical frameworks. However, once there is a majority vote on a decision, the motion will pass and it must go ahead. Even so, the one or few who opposed may protest to the point where bad arguments may arise and then either the team may decide to let that one or couple of individuals go or they quit because neither can co-exist as either colleagues or friends, or even both. Otherwise, they may feel in their heart that their friendship with the others is safer when not working together because of certain differences between each other.

The thing is, as a team, you have to learn to accept certain decisions and go ahead with them. If that particular decision is the smartest and wisest option, then it must be done in order to achieve the best outcome possible. You may not always like it at first, but if it brings promising results in the end, you will be thankful for it. That is also where the importance of patience comes in: By anticipating the ongoing progress of a decision, you will see the ongoing positive or negative effects that it presents, and therefore acknowledge for certain whether or not that initial decision was the right one to make in the end.

In our case, as the team leader, Kion makes all the decisions and we all agree and follow his order. We will give him assistance in decision-making when he requests it or needs it, but he is mature enough to be a good leader. We trust him because he thinks quickly and always knows the smartest options to take, and so our tasks get completed well. King Simba would not have deemed Kion fit to lead if he didn't believe his son could handle the pressure of the responsibility. He [Kion] also understands our needs and instincts, and always offers a help in hand whenever we need it. He is and always has been a good friend and leader, and we could not be happier to work under him.

Fuli: I think we have shown that friendships and working relationships can indeed work together if you really try to put the effort in to brainstorming how you can function your actions and decisions fairly without conflicting debate. That includes appreciating each other's respective ideologies

and acknowledging their efforts even when their proposals were rejected over more favoured ones. By reasoning with each other over both accepted and rejected decisions in a civilised manner, everyone understands the care factor within the group and that there is a comfortable camaraderie to be able to make the unit work.

Beshte: Considering that we were already friends for a few years before we united as a team and we understood and appreciated each other well, we all became like extended family. Sure, different animals have individual instincts, intentions, ideas, physical abilities, biological components, genetic efficiencies or deficiencies, defence mechanisms, etcetera. But the fact is, we are all special in our own way and we can learn from one another so as to strengthen the unity that all animals within the Circle of Life hold dear. Therefore, by coming closer and working together, we gain a chance to hone our separate skills and educate each other about respect, courage, honour, trust, effective teamwork, and the importance of life. I personally believe that our friendship has strengthened since we became the Lion Guard, and no matter what happens, I will always consider these unique animals my brothers and sister in arms.

Bunga: I never doubted, or even thought, that our friendships were challenged when we joined together. We all go a long way back, and because we were going to be together more often, it was going to be an even more enjoyable experience for us in helping our allies and fighting for justice. Serving and protecting is doing good and it makes you feel even greater at heart. It really brings out the best of a true animal.

Kion: It was probably true when Rafiki acknowledged that our Lion Guard was different to the others in more than being the first one to consist of animals other than Lions. He said that it was different because we were all friends. Well, that may be, but is that somehow saying that the previous Lion Guards were only considered as colleagues and not friends? I don't know the entire history of the Lion Guard, but I very much doubt they had been able to function well as working colleagues if they could not put their respective differences aside and learn to co-operate to the point of developing an important friendship. I say "important" because if you do not get along and work together to understand and appreciate each other's differences and values, the team will be worth nothing in the end.

The late Scar's Lion Guard is the perfect example. Scar only cared about himself and made orders on his team members to perform evil deeds, only to get his members to refuse and therefore

get killed by their leader out of anger of their disobedience. Scar then lost the power of the Roar of the Elders, and since then, the Guard became nonexistent for years. And when he usurped the throne after Mufasa passed away and my dad was exiled, there was no one to stop the hardships and sufferings that the Pride Lands and its inhabitants were forced to endure for a long time under Scar's dark reign.

That example of corruption shows that not only can a dysfunctional team cause a bad ending, but can also initiate a worse outcome.

When you enter into a team environment, both building and maintaining friendships can work either way. Either you are existing friends and you know each other well enough to trust them to perform their duty, or you meet for the first time when coming together and learn about each other on the run. This way, you understand each other's strengths and weaknesses as well as their values and persona. Therefore you attain a better idea of how you can make the team function efficiently, and how to create a friendly and comfortable culture so that they can feel at home.

I believe that a team will never be defined as a winning group, but as something that you have to earn and belong to. It is a place where you come together as one and build a sense of loyalty and trust among each individual to then creating a kinship - thus finding your true belonging in the world. A team can either make or break a friendship, but it is a matter of setting your mind in gear and educating each other on how to make it work. A true team always consists of hardworking and loyal friends who set out to do what is right and find their place in the Circle of Life.

Are you enjoying your duty as defenders and do you have any idea how long you want to continue doing this job?

Ono: It is never easy to say whether you enjoy your duty or not because it can be a very committed job and you will find that you will have to do certain tasks that you do not necessarily enjoy, put yourself at risk when needed, and work overtime just to make ends meet. Just because you are good at something does not always mean that you enjoy everything that comes with it. But once you have your mind set on a task, your focus on performing well to complete it just allows you to just eliminate the hate or love of duty altogether. That psychological focus on the most important priority doesn't allow you to think about other things of a lesser priority, and so it keeps you on your

toes, or claws. Then once you see the results of your hard work, you can feel satisfied for what you have achieved, and therefore, in a way, your duty can be enjoyable in that sense.

I am more than happy to continue my line of duty for as long as possible, until either I cannot do it anymore or when it is time for the next successor to take my place. I do enjoy what I do because I care about preservation and conservation as well as all the animals who respect the Circle of Life, and I want to keep helping them for as long as it takes.

Fuli: To be totally honest, I do enjoy my duty because I like a good battle against the common enemy and it does feel good to help your allies. They have done a lot to help me and keep me in good stead, and this is my return favour. Until it is the right time to cut the speed down by half or stop sharpening those claws as hard, or even bite just a little more gently, I am more than happy to keep going with this unique team.

Besthe: When you are working with a fine bunch of individuals in one team who are also your good friends, and when you have many more outside of that, it really makes the job more enjoyable. I love what I am doing and I will only stop until my eventual successor out-powers me in shifting those big rocks!

Bunga: I was born for this sort of stuff! Work and danger is exactly what I live for and there is no way that I am giving up on this anytime soon. As long as I remain fearless, nothing is going to stop me even as I grow older. Until my last breath, I am sticking to my duty as the Bravest in the Pride Lands.

Kion: When you are working together in a healthy, fit and friendly team environment that is very committed and builds and reveals character, you really have to enjoy what you are doing. If you did not enjoy your job, then perhaps you do not belong there. Alternatively, by showing a willingness to learn and giving it a chance, the time that you spend within the working environment allows you to adapt to it and therefore a chance to enjoy it.

We all have plenty of years left in us and we could possibly break the record one of these days for being the longest reigning Lion Guard in the history of the Pride Lands. We already have broken it

for being the youngest ever and the first of its kind to not feature all lions, so to have that third record would be a nice achievement. But I am not interested in that. I am more concerned about continuing our duty for however long it takes. When the times comes when we are physically or mentally incapable of further performing our work, that is when we will call it quits. In the meantime, nothing and nobody is going to stop us and nothing and nobody ever will. We are the Lion Guard, and we are here to serve and protect.

What facets do you believe you have gained working in the Lion Guard?

Ono: I think it has definitely helped to build a sense of trust between both predator and prey. We have two predators and three pray in our team, and the two races combined and working together allow other animals to see how this connection works and bring out the true meaning of the delicate balance of life.

Fuli: A chance to go beyond your level of expectation when others think negatively about you or do not think that you can be better than who you are. It includes getting smarter, stronger, faster, and even wiser. Staying composed under pressure and defying the critics feels very good, and you can gain further respect that way, too.

Besthe: A chance to really get around the Pride Lands and meet and befriend new animals, especially newcomers or rare species that you would not find in most other places, such as Okapi's and Black Rhino's. You can also assist them in thriving so that their numbers can be preserved.

Bunga: More opportunities for adventure and chances to challenge yourself against all the things that nature throws your way so that you can gain greater appreciation of the world you are living in and enjoy life a lot more.

Kion: Above most, I would say the coming-of-age experience in being smarter and wiser. You always start out innocent, playful and adventurous, but once you reach a certain age, things start to change and you have to become a little more responsible to benefit the lives of others as well as your own. If you want to keep enjoying life, you have to earn it. You have to go out into the great

world, love everyone and try to make everyone happy, and this requires solid work, compassion and integrity. You must aid in bringing peace everywhere you go and never backing down from anything in times of great need to maintain that peace. Your help to the world will bring a return favour and therefore a sense of unity, which makes life more enjoyable for what it is. That is what the Circle of Life is all about.

So remember, &#39;till the Pride Lands&#39; end...

ALL: LION GUARD DEFEND!!!

END

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