

Light shone down on the scene, a female lion looking up from her meal at a male who had joined her. "My territory, my kill, so it's *mine*, you bottom-feeding leech!" Ofenna snarled at Tolva, the other lion. His fur was less well kept than her own, and he dropped the haunch of antelope in his mouth with a contemptuous spit.

"You should be honoured I've even come to share these lands with you, not aggressive and antagonistic!" He said back, standing to his own full height. He was a newcomer to the area but had been reared to assume that any female would be smitten with him and so, when Ofenna had resisted his efforts time and time again, he'd seen it as a challenge to sway her. But she saw it as a different challenge, and thought of him only as someone trying to muscle in on her turf.

"Honoured?! All I see is a posturing male who can barely feed himself, nipping at my heels, taking my scraps, and spooking my prey. Go back to where you came from!" Her tail was flicking in irritation.

"I can't return there, the lands were already staked out by a full pride, but you, me, we could start our own, rule this land as far as the eye can see!" He tried, putting the most charm he could into his voice, unaware how slimy it made him sound. It wasn't the first time he'd proposed she be his mate.

"Oh that is *it!* I challenge you to a fight. Tomorrow evening we meet on the stone outcrop, if I beat you, you must leave this place and leave me alone for good." She said with a scowl.

"The stone? No, I'll meet your challenge, but it'll be in a place of my choosing, and if I win you will be my mate, and stay by my side!" He said in a counter offer. Ofenna rolled her eyes, the place didn't matter, as there was no way the scrawnier male could beat her. They agreed upon a clearing and instead to meet in three days.

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The weather had darkened the skies, thick clouds threatening to storm overhead, she considered it fittingly dramatic for her casting out of this interloper. He was there before her, though, which made her sneer derisively. "What, finally beat me somewhere? Are you that eager to move on?"

Tolva sat there, watching and yawning as he picked himself up and stretched, thick-clawed paws scoring the ground. Even though he was less experienced than Ofenna, he was still an adult lion and thus dangerous to not prepare for. "Let's get to it then." He said when his stretch finished.

Ofenna nodded grimly and stepped closer. Slow and wary of him, expecting him to try something underhanded and thus not intending to give him an opening before they had closed, when suddenly a rush of motion closed in all around her and from amongst the treetops. Vines, woven into a net pinned her arms down, the left was against her chest and the right struggling in a half caught tangle. "W-what the?!"

Monkeys swarmed from all angles to her, their hands and feet poking and prodding as those who weren't pulling the net from the boughs harassed her to keep her distracted, turning and trying to snap, getting further tangled in the netting. Tolva had calmly wandered up to her and raised his paw, swatting it once in a heavy bash to knock Ofenna senseless. "I win." He said with a smirk.

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Ofenna's head pounded as she started to stir again, but she was unable to move to any great lengths. The threatened storm had started and was raging outside of the cave she was in, but all she could see was the silhouettes moving around her of other smaller figures.

She was lying on her side, bent forward. Her ankles and wrists had been tied together in vines that had been woven securely to each limb. There was even pressure over her paws where they'd wrapped the vines multiple times to bundle the claws away where they'd not be able to cut through. Even though the vines themselves were sturdy enough to block that it showed her captors were not underestimating her. She couldn't even shout at them, as her muzzle was also coiled shut with a thread of the same plant fibres, and the muzzle was connected to yet another loop that ran along the top of her hips, forcing her to stay in that bent posture. Adding further restriction, multiple tethers ran off to the sides, one at her arms, legs, neck, and even a cinch around her chest, the far ends all tied around heavy boulders to ensure she couldn't move too far.

The scent of the monkeys lingered heavily enough to tell her she'd been taken back to their home, even before her vision had cleared enough to see three of them and the smiling form of Tolva, "So, you lost, kitten." He said to her when he was sure she was lucid.

"Grt nnnf" she mumbled back, able to barely even move her lips. His paw pushed gently on the bruise he'd left, but that made her see colours and growl again, straining the bindings.

"My my, such a temper. Well, it looks like I'm within my rights to declare you my mate, but since I'm feeling magnanimous I'll allow you to decide that you accept your defeat, and so." He chuckled. "Are you ready to be mine?"

She spat in anger, growling and trying to flex her claws, oh how she wanted to sink them into his cheating hide. Her answer was clear though, and he sighed, shaking his head. "Well that is a pity, but perhaps you'll reconsider, in the meantime, my new allies here have promised to take care of you. We made a deal, they look after you, and I'll offer them protection in turn,

think of them as your royal entourage!" He said chuckling. "Don't let me hold you all back though. I hope you get to know each other well!" His hips swayed arrogantly as he walked over to a bed made of soft mosses and leaves and lay down. He too was stuck in the cave until the storm passed, but that just meant he got to watch.

"You heard your king. Play to your heart's content." One monkey said to his peers, the pale washed-out colours of his fur and slower motions declaring him the elder. At the given permission a rush of the brown-furred primates scampered over, poking her, stroking her fur, even toying with the vines. She snarled and struggled until her headache flared again, but lashed up so tightly she was powerless, not able to prevent their pestering touch at all. Tolva merely laughed as they scurried, the monkeys all delighting in having a soft, warm thing to annoy or just rest on. Indeed, once she stopped growling at every poke the more boisterous monkeys left off getting bored that simply and pulling away. Others buried in against her belly or along her back and sides, weighing her down more. She tried to growl out Tolva's name in challenge once more, but he pretended to simply not hear it, curling down for his own evening's nap.

She shuddered when one of the monkey's poked at a sensitive spot in her side, eyes widening as he continued. The scratching was questing for such a spot, and as she suddenly thrashed again, uncontrollably in response to the ticklish touch, the finder called to his peers saying "Hey, she's ticklish! Try over here, it's adorable!" they started shouting at each other in their growing excitements. Her further motions had jostled the relaxing monkeys, and her evident ticklishness had enticed the mischievous ones. More and more hands joined in, the monkeys near her all looking for ways to tickle her and so many of them trying that they found every spot. The poor feline laughing into the snaring fibres over her muzzle, her head spinning from the ache, too.

She was so distracted and subdued by it all that she hadn't noticed her paws being unwrapped until they too were suddenly assailed by probing fingers, finding weak and sensitive spots between the pads and along the heel, Ofenna was squirming so much at the constant attack, tears forming in her eyes from the unrelenting laughter, her chest unable to draw a full breath until, finally, Tolva's voice cut through the air. "That's enough!" He rose up, padding back over to her side. "You see, these are your choices, let me take you as my mate, and then these monkeys have promised they will serve you too, or, keep refusing and you get to serve *them*." She tossed her head, mewling weakly. Even exhausted as she was, she wasn't going to accept any such bargain. He shrugged his shoulders in response. "Fine then..." Was all he offered as he went back to sleep, and the monkeys returned, eager to make their new toy wiggle and dance once more.

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They'd kept going until Ofenna had passed out from exhaustion, at which point the calmer ones had claimed her as a resting spot again while the bindings were adjusted and

tightened again. When she woke in the morning the strips around her muzzle were loosened just enough to feed her a slimy paste, made of fruits, grubs and other plant matter. It was nothing like the fresh meat she'd adapted to, but she had no choice, having to eat it all or choke as they pushed it into her mouth.

When they'd finished feeding her she was left alone for a moment, the eyes of the boisterous monkeys glittered with wanton mischief, but they were all holding back. Waiting for Tolva, she soon discovered. The male had been out hunting and he sauntered into the cave a while later, he gave a curt nod and some of them shuffled closer to her at the symbol toying with the strands near her paws. She felt some motion in the vines there and soon they'd removed the strips that held her legs to her arms. Her instincts wanted to scratch and lash at the monkeys but she was stilled when Tolva's heavy paw planted against her neck. "Don't think about it, stay still." He said, and the tips of his claws made the threat real enough. The monkeys removed the leashing vines from the boulders, and while her four paws were separate they were still twined in the vines.

A large log produced a dull, hollow but heavy sound as it was dragged closer, and Ofenna growled when the vines started to grow taut, not able to see what they were doing but getting a worrisome idea. Claws pricked her neck to keep her considerate of her position, and the monkeys worked to lash her paws in a different arrangement, the front paws being tied to the back on the same side, and then connected vines were looped around the log.

Tolva brought his claws away and then stepped back, all of the monkeys also gave Ofenna a wide berth as she struggled onto her feet. She realised quickly how hobbled she was, only allowed a few inches of room to move her legs, and the log made sure even those steps were a strain. She growled as a sharp poke dug into her hindquarters, the source was one monkey bearing a long pointed stick. Her automatic reaction, trying to turn around and claw, only caused her to get tangled and fall over. The stick prodded again, cajoling her into walking, and with a grunt she did so while being followed by a small clump of the simians and the lion.

The monkeys were wary of her, and even Tolva kept an eye on her once she started to get accustomed to the strange set up. She still tripped or stumbled when the log caught on a rock or root, but she was hobbled well enough to be unable to try and pounce or claw. They walked laps through the jungle, looping back to the cave a few times. Ofenna presumed they were just walking her for exercise, and was glad that no other animals saw her disgraced like this, at least no animals beyond her captors.

They stopped when Ofenna was beginning to stagger again, heading into the cave. Practice had succumbed to exhaustion from having to drag the log around, and as she was pressured back into the cave some of those who stayed behind chattered in excitement. Already a group were swarming close and asking if they could play with their new pet or toy, depending on the speaker, and so she was subjected to their dubious affections...

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They treated her well enough, outside of the bindings, keeping her fed and exercised. Even adjusting and lessening her restraints as time went by to stop there being any damage to her fur. After the first days Tolva stopped thinking it necessary to always follow her, trusting the hobbles and restraints to hold her. Every time he did come around, he asked if she was ready to accept her defeat, and every time she snapped back a spirited denial. She tried one time to make an escape, and for the alleged crime, she was dragged back to the cave and tied in the air, her arms stretched out and legs lashed together in a Y pose, and then, to further degrade her, she was used as a hammock by some of her handlers.

Despite the expected outbursts, soon they started feeling that they could trust her a bit more. They were contented with keeping her in just a vine harness that was tethered to a boulder, enough room on the lead that she had free roam of half of the cave. Even with her hatred for Tolva kindled to a strong burn, she couldn't bring herself to get violent with the monkeys, and not just because of the risks attached if she hurt some of them and then was subdued anyway.

A week or so later, Tolva came by, smug as usual and just upon seeing him Ofenna's tail rose and her fur stood on end. "Well, Ofenna. Are you ready to admit defeat and accept our bargain?" She'd been left unmuzzled and so for once was able to speak with the full venom she felt.

"Never, Tolva, and weakened as I am by your cohorts I could destroy you in a fair fight. In fact, I'm dreaming of the day I get to rip into you and send you running for the lands you came from." The ferocity and surety in her voice made him take an involuntary step back before he regained his composure, sniffing haughtily.

He gestured with his head to the leader of the monkeys and together the two went out of the cave as the small pack of monkeys brought Ofenna her customary meal. When he was outside of her earshot the lion turned to the monkey. "I suppose that's long enough, even though she's behaving around you and your clan, she remains defiant to me."

"Then you want us to try the last of the taming measures we discussed?" The old monkey asked, glancing over his shoulder at the lioness. She still didn't wish to be their captive, that much was certain, but given the experience wasn't as terrible as it could have been she'd been relaxing around them, enough that this might well work to subdue her to her new king.

"Yes. I'll be back in a few days." Tolva said, loping off into the jungle. He already felt it wasn't likely to work, but he had to let the monkeys try, she was certainly a desirable queen if only he could turn that ferocity onto his side.

The elder, meanwhile walked back and spoke to the other monkeys, and they slunk into the deeper parts of the cave to make preparations...

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After the several meals they'd let her eat on her own, she'd managed to get used to the diet, though she still dreamt of hunting for proper meat. Ofenna could have figured out something was wrong when the evening of Tolva's departure her food was brought to her by hand. Two monkeys had sat by her, one at each shoulder, stroking softly and lowering her guard, for, as soon as the last mouthful of food went in, a thick stick lashed with vines was shoved roughly into her jaw.

She reared up instinctively, thrashing her neck only to find that they'd slipped vines about her paws again without her noticing. When had they found the time? Many hands pulled as the monkeys all pulled, spreading her out against the floor. When a few of the monkeys had guilty looks on their faces, she knew something else was coming. A few of them jumped onto her back and she felt tugs on the vine-harness, followed by a weight just behind the shoulders.

The bit in her mouth, coupled with the weight and positioning of the mass told her it was a saddle, and she tried to squirm as more monkeys brought tough shapes made of carved wood that fit over her toes, trapping her claws. All at once she was as feisty and rebellious as she had ever been, thrashing and tugging as they secured the stick in her mouth with vines around her head. There were even blinders made of stiff bark woven into the muzzle-crossing strands, denying her peripheral vision.

Her chances of bucking the ensemble shrank as the log-hobble came out once again, and within minutes she was geared up. Several small forms ranged along her back to add to the weight as they slowly let the paw-tethers grow slack. Her instincts wanted to lash out, and a part of her was unnerved and quivering at the implications of the outfit, especially when the bit in her mouth was tugged on to the left and a braided vine lashed across her left flank.

She roared into the bit, which earned her another, heftier, lash and she was too weighted down to struggle or buck. They drove her out of the cave and kept lashing her until she learnt to turn immediately. Lashing her a few more times to make sure the lesson stuck.

Ofenna was lead out into the jungle, dressed up and mounted by a gaggle of monkeys who shouted noisily. She balked, trying to stop as she reached the limit of their land, but another round of swats on her raw rump made her choose humiliation over pain. They were displaying her to the lands around the monkeys' own! Prey and predator alike laughing when they caught sight and somehow word spread, multiple creatures coming to stare and jeer.

Not one of them knew the context, only that the top predator had vanished for a while and was here walking in seemingly docile captivity. Her head hung heavy at the taunts and lack of pity, to them it was just a big joke.

She was taken on a slow tour of her former hunting grounds over the course of a few days, tethered to the base of the tree the monkeys slept in during the nights then they pressed on, exploring every corner until the whole land knew of her fall from being number one. When she escaped or was let loose, the damage to her reputation would take time and work to repair. The tarnishing of her pride was all just another part of Tolva's misguided attempts to make Ofenna give him her attentions.

They returned to the monkeys territory and she groaned upon seeing they'd made further changes to the decor, a cavity within the main cave had been lined with a lattice of tough branches, using most of the boulders she'd been tethered to on that first day as the foundations, she was lead through an opening into it and told in no uncertain terms to sit.

Even though she'd avoided the lash of the branch for the last day, her rump was still just tender enough to not risk their further ire, plus given they were detaching the log and loosening the vines, she hoped that obedience would earn lighter treatment.

The monkeys even directed her with gesture instead of force over to a softly padded pallet of moss and leaves, but they left the muffling bit in place, reminding her of her new status. They drew slatted branches shut on their way out, leaving only a small opening that they could fit through but was beyond what she could get through. She worried at the head harness with her wood-sheathed claws, but it was set well enough that she couldn't shift it. With a sigh, she settled down, trying to sleep.

As time passed, she was taken for further walks with less hobbling and less monkeys guarding her, slowly persuaded into accepting their directions just to make her life easier. It was only on returning to the cave again some time later that she realised she'd had a decent chance to make a getaway and had simply just accepted her lot. It was a chilling thought and simply underlined that she had to do something soon.

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Ofenna looked up from her makeshift stable as she caught Tolva's scent several days later. She was ready to submit, and if not to agree to such a union as he proposed, she could try to negotiate herself as the one who moved on. Brought to desperation in fearing that if she had to endure this for much longer she'd be broken for real. Her stomach caught when her nose detected another lion's scent, a *female* at that. She saw her striding with Tolva, even nuzzling against him warmly.

Tolva didn't even glance her way, walking instead to the monkey chief and speaking in low whispers. The female gave him one last lick before sauntering over to the walls that

separated Ofenna from the rest of the cavern. “My my, you look pathetic, Tolva was interested in *you*? I guess his tales were all exaggerated.” She scoffed, looking at Ofenna’s body with disdain. The tone rankled Ofenna, she’d seen better days and had been more fit, but she was still a match for Tolva... “Well we’re just stopping by because I wanted to have a look at you, to weigh my rival, and honestly? All my fears have vanished.”

“Hhhn?” Ofenna started, following by trying to ask what she meant and bringing her paws up to the gateway. But the other lioness was already walking away. “Please, I’m to be a queen, I don’t have time to waste on the unimportant hassles of commoners.” She said, before she was back at Tolva’s side. Ofenna stared wide-eyed as the pair walked away out of the cave and away into the daylight, already some of the monkeys were walking over to her with a different look in their eyes. Impossible to translate their intent, but as Ofenna would soon discover, the monkeys had just become owners instead of mere caretakers.

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King Tolva soon dominated the area, thanks in no part to the workings of his new queen, Sota. Together they soon reached a point where they didn’t need to strike any further bargains, their joint power enough to quell their would be subjects. Despite this power, Tolva never forgot the debt of gratitude owed to the tribe of monkeys that helped him climb from outsider to monarch. That said, they never received any trouble. All those who encroached upon the monkeys’ home in the caves and trees quickly thought better when they saw the chief riding upon his lioness mount. A gift formally bestowed upon the monkey clans by the magnanimous king.

For him it dealt with two problems at once, even though he’d found a new love he still couldn’t bring himself to ‘get rid of’ Ofenna with finality, and even just the rumour that the monkeys had tamed a lion to the point it was a beast of burden kept all threats at bay, sparing him from having to watch over them too closely. Plus, while Tolva didn’t convince Ofenna to be his mate, at least he kept her by his side in a manner of speaking as the monkey chief often came to advise and discuss with Tolva, and was never seen without his precious mount.