

The second part in a story series following the introduction of a wandering nomad settling down. Now with the assessment of bandits in the area, the tribal chief must work together with other warriors in keeping the territories safe.

Bandit Investigation

After overseeing June's safety with Amelia, La Stella, and Mabec, Juan grabs a dagger and a spear while bidding them farewell. Now the white lion chieftain is rushing to meet the hyena warriors in confronting the potential bandit risk.

Along the way, Juan lets out a powerful roar from his lungs to signal his approach and send a warning across the fields. But along the way, the muscular white lion slowly comes to a stop upon finding a bunch of tracks in the dirt. He kneels down to sniff these, which he recognizes instantly.

“Bandit tracks - I knew it! They must have struck earlier! And it appears they crossed through River territory.” High-pitched cackling and whooping noises draw Juan’s attention once more, prompting the white lion to get a move on in his quest to reach the fight site. Unexpectedly, the fight comes looking for him...

During his catch-up, the tribal white lion chieftain is suddenly intercepted by two leopard bandits - one of them drops from the trees, slamming into him from above. Stunned and caught off-guard, the white lion is ambushed by the duo with both leopard bandits subduing him, one of them pinning him with the other repeatedly kicking him in the stomach while he's down.

One hard kick from one of the bandits sends Juan sprawling free, yet with a surging pain coursing through his abdomen. Though the white lion is slightly winded, he still has plenty of fight left in him. And this he dishes out to the bandits.

“Alright cat, give us all you got and we'll be on our way!” One of the bandits demanded whatever Juan has on him, but the white lion counter-argues, “You nitwits could have just swiped my belongings while holding me down. But if it's a fight you're itching for, I will gladly send you packing.”

A searing pain suddenly explodes against Juan's left side, causing the lion to double over and clutch his side. This makes the white lion glare up at the leopard bandits, one of them now clutching a dagger in their right hand. Now the white lion chieftain is really ready for a fight...

(🎵 Techno - Chronos [The Need For Speed OST])

“Hmph, if it's all you want for a fight from me, I have no problem throwing scumbags like you out of my territory.” After making his declaration toward the leopard bandits, the two sides stare each other down in a locked stalemate, neither side making any moves yet. Instead, they're squaring and sizing up until one side makes the first move.

Though more furious squeaking and whooping noises in the distance from the hyenas occur in the background, the two leopard bandits are not disturbed. But a powerful roar from Juan's lungs unsettles the spotted cats where they dodge an initial charge from the white lion. Then they begin teaming up to attack the white lion.

A swift hook to the left side from one of the leopard bandits causes Juan to grumble out a sharp roar – this is his injured side! The white lion ends up clutching his side again to prevent further bleeding, only for the leopard bandits to double team him and send repeated, alternating kicks to his stomach. Being forced against a tree and pummeled, Juan is left powerless. Suddenly, the situation takes an unexpected turn.

“Do you give up yet, white cat? Or are we gonna have to beat the tar out of you further?!” One of the leopard bandits proclaimed towards the now-injured white lion chieftain. A powerful roar of rage emanates from Juan's lungs and a manic expression of intense rage fills his face. One of the leopard bandits even pees themselves from complete terror at the enraged lion. The tribal white lion then goes on the attack, roaring while charging and pouncing on his targets.

It doesn't take long for the white lion to make quick work of one of the bandits – the enraged white lion kills one of the leopard bandits and sets his sights on the second one. The second bandit, upon seeing his partner get mercilessly mauled, cowers and hightails it out of the white lion's sight. While the lone leopard bandit makes his escape, Juan is left reeling from his injuries and doubles over in pain, clutching his left side.

A sudden angry squeaking noise draws Juan to attention once more, but he soon relaxes upon recognizing the sound, as well as the figure dashing to meet him seconds later.

“Juan! Chief! Are you holding up??” The familiar voice and form of Bunny darting to meet him makes Juan relax. And the white lion merely nods his head silently, but his quivering mouth tells a different story. When Bunny begins inspecting his injuries,

Juan roars in pain. This leaves Bunny rubbing his head and concluding, "Man, Chief! You need to see your doctor. Those bruises on you look pretty serious."

With his tail swinging about, Juan brushes off the concern, insisting, "I've dealt with worse. I'll be fine."

"Fine, huh?" Turning to face Juan directly, Bunny tests the lion's theory - the striped hyena places his hand on Juan's chest and begins sliding downward along his abs. Upon reaching a sensitive spot where there is bruising, Juan recoils away. Bunny folds his arms and remarks, "Sure you're fine now, but what will everyone else think? Most of all, what will your wife think?"

This time, Juan turns pouty and surrenders, giving the striped hyena a dirty glare. "Fine, you win. I guess I'll go see a healer."

"Well you ain't going alone, big guy! Come here!" Bunny attempts to offer his assistance to the resistant white lion chieftain, who eventually accepts his help.

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"Are they gone? Please tell me they're gone! That has to be the last of them!" Initially scared, June was able to demonstrate his own fighting ability in fending off a mix of bandits alongside Amelia and her assigned crew. While these were easily dispatched, Juan's enraged roaring was heard during the ensuing defense. And even June is left surprised with himself. Now, everyone is left staring at an approaching injured lion being assisted by a striped hyena warrior. No one is more worried than Amelia.

"Juan!!!" Amelia immediately darts to her injured husband and inspects him over, taking in every inch of his battered body. Juan only chuckles and assures her, "Amelia, I'm okay. As I told Bunny earlier, we've dealt with worse stuff than this."

"That doesn't matter! You're injured!" Amelia protested, her tail lashing furiously. She grabs her husband, proceeding to drape his arm around her. She later thanks Bunny for his help and dismisses the other hyena warriors before dragging her husband away. Towards Juan, she hisses, "You're going to the healer's tent right now, Mister!"

"Yes Mother." Juan sarcastically jokes towards his wife. He lets his wife pull him along until they reach the healer's den, to which they are welcomed by a brown lion who immediately assesses Juan's injuries.

The brown lion healer is left scratching his head at the white lion chieftain upon inspecting his injuries, prompting Juan to assert, "Well Benito? Is it that bad?"

"From the massive pummeling you received, I'd say pretty bad. Judging from the bruising throughout your body, you have some burnt ribs -" seeing the annoyed expression on Juan's face, Benito clarifies, "They're either bruised or fractured. I see purple bruises on your abs, so there's that possibility. I could take you to an icehouse for treatment to reverse the swelling but as for the cuts on you? I can use an herbal mix to reverse the bleeding and swelling. Are you feeling lightheaded at all, chief?"

"Nope, just pure red pain." Juan grumbled out. After his diagnosis, the white lion slowly stands up with Benito leading the way out and Amelia assisting her husband once more.

The lion trio just make it out of the tent when they notice June looking lost. Amelia's suspicion heightens again upon noticing the lone nomadic lion, "June? What are you doing out here? We told you to stay put!"

"Remember when I was able to hold my own with you guys during that little bandit fiasco?" June recalled, drawing their attention fully.

"I actually swiped this off of one of the bandits. It's some kind of tonic or something. I don't know what this is." Here, June holds up an orange bottle with some kind of light pink liquid inside. Immediately, Benito inspects it and opens the small yellow cap to sniff the contents of it when he perks up in recollection, "I remember these things! These are supposed to be solutions to different sicknesses that can be cured! Not sure about injuries, though..."

Both Juan and Amelia frown at Benito's apologetic stare. June, on the other hand, was much more confident. He claims, "It could help ease Juan's pain! Try it out!"

Juan is immediately suspicious and alarmed at being presented with the strange cocktail. He rejects it, making a stinky face with his tongue out. Amelia even does the same. This draws June's ire where he groans, "Just try it out, guys!"

Amelia and Juan sit down next to each other where Juan refuses to try the cocktail, reminding June, "FYI, you swiped that thing off of a bandit, remember? And they carry all kinds of dangers! What if that is a deadly poison you're goading me to drink??"

“Come to think of it, it is true.” Benito plays with his mane while acknowledging this predicament. “Sometimes even the brightly colored liquids are poisonous, just like some of the animals in the animal kingdom.”

Seeing the River tribe lions’ refusal to accept the strange liquid, June shrugs, “Oh well, just another bottle for me to start a collection with...”

“Are you really a nomad, June? Or are you just another intruder?” Juan immediately turns suspicious again after hearing June speak, but the brown lion reassures the white lion chieftain, “I am not a bandit, I can tell you that. I’ll admit, I’ve collected a few things while traveling, but I threw them away – they were of no value to me.”

“Then explain that orange bottle.” Juan simply requested an explanation for how June acquired that orange bottle he showed them. And June gladly obliged.

“I explained to you all earlier that I swiped this off of one of the bandits. I don't intend on doing anything illegal with it but I'm just trying to help you guys out in any way I can.” June explained once more.

Juan hums in thought for a moment. Then he decides, “Keep it. It's yours since you swiped it off of them, so keep it. What else have they taken?”

“These thugs were on some kind of rush and making some sort of concoction for some type of energy drink or antidote.” Even June is unsure, but he has a possible inference on the motive, “I don't know really, but they had a lot of herbs on them – medicinal herbs or something. I think they were trying to make an antidote.”

“I don't believe you.” Amelia rejects June's claim and counters, “If you have some proof to show for that, maybe we’d be more inclined to believe you.”

Immediately, the doubtful lions receive their answer when June pulls some lavender and other medicinal herbs from his sash, displaying them for the River tribe lions to see. It is here that Juan finally makes up his mind on that orange bottle and liquid.

Though still suspicious, Juan informs June, “As much as I hate it, I want to take it – see what it’ll do. But I fear it may do more harm than good.”

“Wait!” Benito immediately interjects Juan's statement, objecting to the proposal. Having a sudden epiphany, the lion healer claims, “Chief, that could be an antidote for

snake bites. Why didn't I think of that before!? It's either that or that bottle could still be a deadly poison.”

Intrigued by Benito's sudden revelation, Amelia suggests, “Just bury it instead of keeping it. Or just dispose of it safely? Injuries don't heal immediately from taking potions or elixirs.” Hearing her husband grumble at her words, Amelia jabs her elbow into his side, making him jump.

June wastes no time in making second decisions, “Eh, I'll just dump it anyways. Lessens the chances of thievery or bandit attacks, am I right?”

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(🎵 The Miami Drift – Paul Hashlinger [Need For Speed: Undercover OST])

Following June's disposal of the orange bottle, it was later discovered to be a deadly poison, which was extremely lethal if ingested. Had Juan accepted the liquid, he would have died on the spot. But thanks to Benito's insight, the lion healer saved his chieftain from instant death, though everyone was unaware at the time.

A later search of the bodies reveals more strange liquids but more stolen materials and herbs. It is unknown what the bandits were planning to do or what they were making. Coincidentally, there was a bandit camp located two miles west between the River and Loren tribe territories. With special permission from Juan himself, messengers sent from the Loren tribe gave the green light for a raid on the camp and its subsequent destruction. After the camp was burned to the ground, a secret passageway was revealed to hold an underground chamber where a mixture of different liquids were in development. It is unsure what the leopard bandits were planning but the raid permanently retired all their plans – including world domination.

Juan himself made a full recovery of his injuries a few days later and a ceremony was held in Benito's honor, granting him a promotion to his new status as lead healer of the tribe. Although initially flushed at the entire event, Benito warmly welcomed the new status.

Juan and Amelia later settled down in their own tent together for some private time after Juan's recovery, leading to some cuddle time between the two married lions. They were well rested in the morning where they resumed their duties as tribal chiefs.

June himself was later integrated as a new member of the River tribe for his heroic actions in the bandit battle and touching off the final moments of the leopard bandits faction that was situated away from their territory. The brown lion is more than happy to be part of a new community he can call home where he will later learn basics to fighting, medicine, and other tribal matters both inside and outside the community.