

## [David Lance POV]

I stared at Bakaara, trying to think how to beat him before he charged at me once again. Lowering my body, a bit, I got into a defensive stance, which allowed me a sliver of time to parry his first blow with my arm, breaking it.

I dodged his follow-up, jumping a few steps back, where I took a brief second to look at my arm.

Once again, he had managed to overpower me, but it wasn't because he was getting stronger; no, that wasn't the case here. He was just as strong as he had been all fight.

I had broken a knuckle trying to hit him during my first attempt.

This was just like that, but with him; being the one on the offensive this time.

"Come on! FIGHT!" Bakaara shouted, slamming one of his hooves on the ground with enough strength to crack the ground.

Bracing in on another stable defensive stance, I took a step forward and exhaled. I had no doubts I could beat this annoying insect with normal strength, without the use of the ring or my voice, but as it was right now, with my powers being severely limited, he was a challenge.

One that I intended to win.

It wasn't an impossible task.

Someway somehow, I had managed to hurt him before. Not a lot, not even something worth mentioning, but I had managed to muster strength I didn't have to push him off me before he could kill me.

I had to replicate that.

I would replicate that. Failing was simply not an option.

Taking a deep breath, I turned to Bakaara and got into position. My eyes telling him, come.

As Bakaara watched me prepare to step back into battle, his mouth stretched into a broad smile, and with a joyful stomp of his hooves on the ground, he tipped his head toward the sky and roared.



Wioska had said one of my main weaknesses was my ever-present hesitation. In that case, I would show no hesitation.

Abandoning my sense of self-preservation, I took on the offensive, attacking him relentlessly with everything I had without a care for the possible injuries I could sustain during this, all while I continued to dodge his attacks, weaving my pace through the battlefield.

Bakaara, seeing this, smiled, easily tanking each and every single attack I threw at him as he continued to push his advance on me harder and harder. To the point I could hear his fists screaming through the air like whistles of imminent death.

But for me, at this very moment. None of that mattered.

I refused to die.

Not here.

Not today.

And it wasn't because I wanted to kill Superman that I didn't want to die. It was because I still had a lot to live for, and that was a fact that, even through my rage, I could clearly see.

So, through the pain, I continued pushing forward with my assault, raining on Bakaara with a barrage of attacks, each set even stronger than the last, until eventually, my hits started to have an actual effect on him.

"Not bad," Wioska said, nodding her head in approval as she watched our clash.

I paid her words no heed, continuing with my assault like this fight was the only thing that mattered in the whole universe, my hits starting to overwhelm Bakaara, who, under my onslaught of attacks, had begun a slow retreat backward, finding no halt to the incoming blows.

With each successful strike, I landed, my fists hurt, crying out in pain. But at the same time, they felt numb.

I knew I was damaging my body with each strike I dared to throw, just like I knew that more than eighty percent of the blood flying around was mine, if not more than that. But I would not relent, even if I had to destroy my hands in the process.

The beast would yield.

"Enough!" Bakaara roared, slamming his hooves on the ground, but I didn't stop. Instead, I pummeled my fist against his face with all my might, pushing him into the ground with enough

force to create a small crater around him. In shock, blood spurted out of his mouth as he groaned in pain.

I smiled at him, my hands bleeding heavily, showing massive tears of my flesh and the broken bones of them protruding in a ghastly display of gore. I couldn't help but wonder in almost masochist delight if they were still even hands with how they looked.

I didn't think I could make a fist with how broken they were.

Not that it mattered.

I would win this fight even if I had to destroy every part of my body. I would bite, kick, tear, and punch. I would do anything to bring him down permanently.

Bakaara stared at me, almost as if he was looking for something, before eventually shaking his head and letting out a tired sigh. "Alright then, I yield," he said, slowly getting up from the crater as he looked at me with an unreadable expression.

I stayed silent, blood running down my hands. I felt... cheated.

This was no victory.

I was starting to win!

This Zootopia wannabe side character was robbing me out of my victory!

"Already?" Wioska scoffed in what looked to be disappointment as she stared at Bakaara.

"I know when I'm beaten, and I was beaten," Bakaara said, bowing his head in a show of respect that I found both amusing and idiotic. "I could've prolonged the fight a few moments, but why would I do that? You hired me to fight him, not to die at his hands, and I would've died had I not surrendered."

I see so that's why Rhino here came to kick my ass.

Wioska smiled. "Very well then, in that case, your job here is done. You can go now."

"What about my fee?" Bakaara asked, to which Wioska simply waved her hand dismissively.

"You'll get it," Wioska replied before turning her attention to me. "Now, as for you."

I stared at her silently, waiting for her to continue talking.

"I'm impressed," Wioska said, a small smile on her face. "You managed to overcome a clear struggle without using the ring and while having your powers sealed."

I nodded before giving my hands a hesitant look.

They would take some time to heal, even with my healing factor.... fuck, I just remembered she sealed my powers to the absolute minimum.

Great, I might be a cripple now.

"Let's take care of that, shall we?" Wioska said, moving out of sight before reappearing in front of me, where she proceeded to look at my hands with a smile.

I followed her gaze and saw that my hands had stopped bleeding, and the wounds I had received were starting to close up at an accelerated rate, one much faster than my own healing factor, with my wounds disappearing within seconds as if they were never there in the first place.

I looked at her in surprise, flexing my fingers a few times to confirm that they were healed.

"Before Darkseid, I used to train New Gods, and in order to do that effectively, I had to heal them. Daily," Wioska said, almost as if reading my mind. "You can't forge a warrior out of a broken body. The only thing you need to break is their spirit."



That felt like a foreshadowing of some kind.

"Besides, I can't continue your training with your hands in a bad state," Wioska chuckled as she patted my shoulders. "I mean... You will sustain enough injuries these last coming days; there's no need to suffer more than necessary."

"What's next?" I asked, using the ring to do the one thing she had allowed me to, to speak.

"I think your kind calls it... Chi, or is it Ki? I haven't updated my human knowledge in a while," Wioska said as she walked around me in a circle, hands behind her back.

Ki? That shit was real?! What is this Dragon Ba....

I just realized how stupid it is to question the existence of that when in these last few months alone, I traveled to a different reality, and a transdimensional demon possessed me. I mean, why did I even question that?!

I'm alive, and I have no heart! And I didn't mean that in a sappy way. I literally have no heart, thanks to the ring.

My blood and heart were replaced by something that looked like lava, but it was way hotter than that. Talking about which, if my hands were bleeding, why was the ground ok, and why

was Bakaara okay? He was bathed in my blood at the end of the fight.

He should've died.

"You are wondering why your blood didn't kill Bakaara, right?" Wioska asked, snapping me out of my train of thought.

How the hell did she know I was thinking about that?

"Chi."

I deadpanned at that. Of course, that's the answer.