

# Cousins or Friends? Lion King Secrets

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King of the jungle? Some people think they live in the jungle, but that is just not true. Savannas, scrubland, grasslands, and rocky hills, yes. You might know them for their beautiful long manes, or their loud roar, or their presence in the food chain. Some may call it a giant house cat. This special animal is a lion. Have you wondered if lions would mate with their cousins or sisters? Lions live in both eastern and southern parts of Africa, with prides that could reach up to forty lions. This specific lion has a yellow body, red mane — Simba. Although Simba did live in a jungle area for most of his teenage and adult life, it was not where he was born. In the *Lion King* movie, they show that it is okay to date and have a child with your cousin!

There is always the rusty link in the chain—most families that have an inbred history start off with a wacky or unstable line of relatives. There were many kings that ruled the Pride Lands throughout its time. The first king of Pride Rock was Simba's great grandfather Muhatu, mentioned in a storybook outside of the two *Lion King* movie series called "The Brightest Star" (Vinitsky). This short book was released in 1994 and written by Wendy Baker Vinitsky. In it, we learn that Muhatu had a child named Ahadi. Meanwhile, in another short story called "A Tale Of Two Brothers," written by Alex Simmons and released in 1994, we learn that Ahadi was the king and had two children which we all know as Mufasa and Scar (Simmons). Because he wasn't getting enough attention, being the second born, Scar had gained some daddy issues and always tried to undermine Mufasa. In "A Tale Of Two Brothers," Scar had planned to murder Mufasa when they were just teenagers. His plan failed. When Mufasa was having a sleepover with Rafiki, a snake fell down from a rock and almost bit Mufasa! After Rafiki safely spoke to the snake, it did not bite either of them, although Rafiki had suspicions that the snake falling was a

set up. Rafiki decided to not tell Mufasa about his suspicions that it was Scar, even if Rafiki had picked up his scent (Simmons 24). This failure to embarrass Mufasa occurred when Scar tried to get Mufasa trampled by an angry buffalo, but failed due to Mufasa outsmarting him (Simmons 49-50). Traumatized and jealous people can do some pretty unusual things if they are unusual enough.

The relationships of the past had shaped the future generation. When Mufasa and Scar were teenagers, they met two lionesses, Sarabi and Sarafina. Sarafina is Nala's mother and Sarabi is Simba's mother. Nala's father is unknown in the movie and outside books. Her father was mentioned once in the *Lion King* series called *The Lion Guard* (Riley). This series aired throughout 2015-2019. In this episode called "Paintings and Predictions," the funny monkey AKA Rafiki mentions Nala's father falling off of a tree branch and being saved by the lion guard of his day (Riley). This is all of the information that was given from the *Lion King* series about Nala's father. Sarabi and Mufasa had a cub—Simba—and Nala was also born around the same time. When Nala and Simba grew up, Nala was still at Pride Rock, and Simba was living in the jungle. Nala had left Pride Rock, claiming that she was looking for help. However, that wasn't the real reason she had left Pride Rock. The directors cut out a scene in the movie because they thought it would be too disturbing for a young audience. Nala came to Scar concerned about overhunting, but Scar disregarded her complaint and instead complimented her on how she looked and sang a song called "The Madness Of King Scar" (Quintana). His song was basically about him wanting Nala to become his queen and wanting her to give him an heir. Nala refused him and he threatened to banish her if she said no. Nala then ran away from Pride Rock to find help and found Simba (Quintana). Nala rejecting Scar affected how the movie played out.

Nala and Simba could be cousins and not even know it. In the wild, the male lion in a pride has mating rights to all of the females in their pride. Looking at this movie with a factual lens, Mufasa could have fathered more cubs that Simba does not even know about. Nala and Simba were best friends when they were growing up on Pride Rock. In the movie, Zazoo tells the two little cubs that they are betrothed to be married when they are older. Watching this now that I know the family history, it makes me uneasy. Nala's father still has no name or face, but this question was brought up in an interview with the writers and directors. The directors announced that Nala's father was most likely Scar or Mufasa (Carlson). This statement shows that Nala and Simba could potentially be either brother and sister or first cousins!

Given all of the above, in *The Lion King* movie, they show the audience that it's fine to have children with your cousins! Due to the fact that Simba's family tree is a little messed up, with Scar wanting to get with Nala and all of the messed up things he has done, why not add to the list of marrying your potential cousin — or possibly sister? And have three cubs with her! To add more to this incestuous family tree, Kovu was almost Kiara's second cousin. Thankfully, they realized this and scrapped that idea.

This is potentially the truth about *The Lion King* family tree and its unsettling actions and assumptions.

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