

The Epic of Sundiata- The Lion King

Once there was a powerful King of the Mandinka Empire in Africa. His name was Konate.

One day two hunters come before the King and tell him of a vision they had. They explained that if Konate marries an ugly woman he will have a son that will become the most powerful king of all time. Konate was already married, but could not resist the idea that a son of his could be so powerful, so he marries again. This time he marries the ugliest woman he finds. Her name is Sogolon (which means buffalo woman).

Sogolon and Konate soon have a son, and name him Sundiata. Sundiata is born deformed, and is unable to walk. The first wife and son of King Konate are very jealous of Sogolon and Sundiata and make fun of the boy, calling him names and telling others to be scared of him. Even though he is disabled, King Konate tells everyone that Sundiata will be a great king. The King even gives Sundiata a griot (a storyteller) named Balla. Only great leaders have their own griots. Everyone admires Sundiata because he practices walking every day. Once he learns to walk, Sundiata earns the nickname "Lion Heart" for his tenacity.

When King Konate dies his first son takes the throne even though it was against his father's wishes. Sogolon and Sundiata are forced to flee the kingdom out of fear of the new King. For the next seven years Sogolon and Sundiata live far away in the Kingdom of Mema. Sundiata becomes a great hunter and is so favored by the King of Mema that he becomes second in line to the throne of Mema.

Meanwhile the Kingdom of Mandinka is overthrown by the Kingdom of Soso. Sundiata hears of the great suffering of the Mandinka people, but doesn't believe the news. Balla, the griot, decides to sneak back to Mandinka to see if the news is true. He steals the balafon (a musical instrument) belonging to King Kante of the Soso Kingdom, but is captured. When Sundiata hears the news of the capture of his precious griot Balla, he wages war on King Kante and wins back the Kingdom of Mandinka. Sundiata's people are so happy that they renamed him Mansa (which means greatest King) and is often referred to as the Lion King.

Sundiata was the first king in the line of Mansa's in Ancient Africa and is known for his strength, fairness, and tenacity.