

Tigerstripe The Frustrated Fanfic Critic

By Clare

This story is fiction, but it was inspired by real life. If you're a regular at www.cheezey.com, you may be aware of an individual who flamed the webmistress recently and, among other things, made some disparaging remarks about the standard of the stories in the site's fanfic section.

Think of this as a quick rebuttal to the idiot in question . . .

A young man sat at his computer, busily browsing through Thundercats fanfics as he sipped the bottle of Budweiser perched on his desk. He had fond memories of watching the show as a kid back in the eighties and his recent acquisition of an Internet connection had enabled him to get in touch with fellow fans, others who still remembered seeing Lion-O kick Mumm-Ra's ass as if it was yesterday. To those fans he was known simply by his screen-name - Tigerstripe, the name of the original character he had invented and who would star in the best Thundercats fanfic ever. Just as soon as he could get started on writing it . . .

Meanwhile, Tigerstripe had appointed himself head of Quality Control for the fanfic site he was currently browsing. He saw it as his God-given duty to rid the fandom of all second-rate fics until only the gems, the ones that were actually worth the effort of reading, remained. As a result, he had fast become infamous for what were, at best, scathing critical reviews, at worst, outright flames.

Flicking through the collection of stories, he swiftly sighted a likely target. This was a one-shot which, according to the author's blurb, featured "Cheetara and Tygra on a desert island". Tigerstripe frowned as he read this; he hoped it would be worth the effort of clicking on the link that led to the fic so he wouldn't have to be too critical in his review. It wasn't that he wanted to be rude about other people's work, but some authors - no, he corrected himself, wannabe authors - didn't seem to know the difference between brilliant and mediocre stories.

"It had better have a sex scene at least," he muttered as the story downloaded . . .

As Tigerstripe scrolled down the page, he found himself growing increasingly frustrated with the author's evident lack of writing skills.

"Yeah - like *that* could happen!" he muttered as he read a passage about Cheetara and Tygra exploring the island they had become stranded on. "Why don't they just build a boat and sail off it? And why haven't the other Thundercats come to rescue them?" This was not how it was supposed to work - every time a Thundercat got into difficulties in the tv series, the Sword of Omens would alert Lion-O and he would come to the rescue. So where was he here?

"Come on!" Tigerstripe swore as he scrolled further and further down the page with still no sign of the things he believed were essential ingredients in a Thundercats story. "Where the fuck are Mumm-Ra and all that mob?! Everyone knows you can't have a Thundercats fanfic without the bad guys!" For some reason, it had never occurred to him that some fanfic writers might want to think beyond the "battle the Mutants and/or Lunatacs" theme and explore other aspects of the Thundercats universe.

At last, he saw something that gave him hope that, maybe, this story was worth the effort of reading after all . . .

"Cheetara," Tygra whispered as the two Thundercats sat staring out to sea as the setting sun appeared to set the sky on fire.

Cheetara allowed her gaze to stray from the scenery and towards her companion. Slowly, their eyes locked and she reached out her hand towards him to rest it on his arm. As she did so, she became acutely aware of his firm muscles . . .

"Hmm!" Tigerstripe said to himself as he read this. "I like where this is going. Maybe there's hope for this fic yet . . ." He scrolled down to read some more.

"Yes, Tygra," Cheetara said in a throaty whisper as she felt herself drawn to him like a moth is drawn to a light.

"Cheetara," Tygra said again, "did I ever tell you that you look beautiful in the setting sun." With that, he reached out with his hand and began to gently caress her cheek. Then, he pulled her into his arms and, silhouetted against the setting sun, the two Thundercats began to kiss . . .

"Wow, Tygra!" Cheetara laughed as he gently lowered her onto the sand and held her close to him. "That was electric!" Indeed, even as she spoke, she could feel the tingling sensations his touch had triggered. She had known Tygra for years, even before the two of them were appointed Thundercats, but he had never mentioned wanting to kiss her before. How long, she asked herself, had those feelings, those desires, been simmering inside him?

"This gets better and better!" Tigerstripe said as, trembling with anticipation, he scrolled down. If the story ended with a bit of sex on the beach, he would willingly forgive the author for not using any of the other characters and, therefore, not producing what he saw as the best type of Thundercats fanfic. In fact, he might even add it to his Recommended Reading list, a privilege he had so far not granted to any fic because he didn't think they deserved it.

"There's more where that came from," said Tygra as he knelt between Cheetara's legs and ran his hands down the contours of her lithe and supple body. And, as the sun dipped below the horizon and crickets began to chirp nearby, he slowly lifted her arm and slid it out of her leotard strap . . .

Tigerstripe frowned - not only had the author completely demolished what he saw as *the* best way to write a Thundercats fanfic, she (he could tell it was probably a girl from the writing style and the fact that the screen-name was Catarina) had ended it just when a potential sex scene was getting interesting. There were only two types of Thundercats fic he considered to be worth reading - those based as closely as possible on the tv series or, failing that, those which involved two or more characters getting intimate with each other, although he drew the line at some of the worst excesses of PWP. This, however, had fulfilled neither requirement and he felt cheated.

"OK, Catarina," he muttered. "I'll show you what I think of your pathetic little story!" With that, he got straight on the story's Review page and typed out the following:

Dear talentless "author"

I have NEVER read a worse piece of drivel in my life! It FLAT OUT SUCKS ASS! Not only did you not use most of the characters, you ended it just as it was getting exciting! Why the hell did you stop before they even GOT THEIR CLOTHES OFF?! Are you one of these dumbass prudes who thinks it's still the nineteenth century?!

I make it my duty to rid the Thundercats fandom of all those who aren't WORTHY TO WRITE fics about this kickass tv show! And you are now high on the list! I will report you and get you BANNED FROM THIS SITE unless you shape yourself up! Here's what I want you to do:

- 1, Next time you start a sex scene, FINISH THE DAMNED THING!*
- 2, Use MORE CHARACTERS! Don't just have one or two cos it's BORING!*
- 3, Watch the cartoon more so you know how everything works!*
- 4, Delete this crap by the end of next week or I'll SEND YOU A COMPUTER VIRUS AND WRECK YOUR HARD-DRIVE!*

A furious, outraged and generally pissed off Tigerstripe!

He smiled to himself as he clicked on the Send button . . .

The next day, Tigerstripe went to check his email in the hope that Catarina had seen the error of her ways and sent him an email full of profuse apologies and promises never to write again. He smiled when he saw that she had indeed emailed him and immediately opened the message. But it wasn't a note of apology for insulting the Thundercats fandom with sub-standard fics - instead, it was a very terse counterflame.

To be honest, I don't know where you were coming from with those nasty comments about my story, but I can assure you that I have more talent than you ever will.

To start with, I am NOT a "dumbass prude" - I just don't like writing sex scenes so I build up towards them and break it off. Also, since you do not seem to have written any fics yourself, I can only assume that you are jealous of those who have. There is nothing in the rules that says I

MUST do things your way - thank goodness. And, since I haven't done anything wrong, there is no way I am going to get banned . . . talking of which, you might want to watch your step. I've already blocked you from reviewing me again.

As for your nasty little list, let me clarify some stuff:

- 1, I've already explained why I don't write complete sex scenes*
- 2, I can use as many - or as few - characters as I like. So get THAT through your thick skull*
- 3, I do watch the cartoon - I have several episodes downloaded onto my computer*
- 4, I will NOT delete my story just because a whining nobody doesn't like it. Nor will I allow myself to be blackmailed by your off-the-wall threats to send me a virus*

Needless to say, Tigerstripe was having none of it - in fact, it made him more determined than ever to root out those fics he felt shouldn't be on the site. So he set to work reading through as many entries as he could and sent all the authors the following "review":

This fic stinks of shit! You are a no-talent retard and you should be banned from writing anything again! It's obvious to me that you no next to nothing about Thundercats or you would have written a better story!

I'll review you more thoroughly later! See you, jackass!

During the course of the day, several authors with work on the site contacted the staff and declared unanimously that they were sick of Tigerstripe's overbearing attitude. Something had to be done, they all said - and fast or there would likely be a full-scale flame war to contend with. The staff agreed and, when Tigerstripe next checked his email, he found the following message:

You have been IP banned from posting on our site owing to your blatant disregard for the following rule:

#6: Please remember that there is a difference between constructive criticism and a flame. If you genuinely feel a story needs improving, explain WHY it needs improving. But don't go threatening authors and bashing their fics just because they are not to your taste - remember, everyone has their own idea of what constitutes a good story.

Tigerstripe was furious. Couldn't those idiots see that he was doing the site a favour by telling the authors of substandard work what he thought of them? And wasn't he entitled to his opinion? He moved his cursor over the Reply button and prepared to send the site's staff a long rant about how unfair they were being, not only because they had punished him for speaking his mind but because he would now never be able to post his kickass Thundercats story. But, before he could click on the button, his bedroom light suddenly went out . . .

Tigerstripe sat up and looked around at his surroundings. He had no idea where he was, but he certainly wasn't in his bedroom. Instead, he was in a long dark corridor lined with statues that looked eerily familiar as if he had seen them somewhere before. At the far end of the room stood what seemed to be a magic cauldron with a stone sarcophagus just beyond it . . . It was then that Tigerstripe realised to his horror what must have happened.

Somehow, he had been transported into the world of the Thundercats and was now trapped inside Mumm-Ra's Pyramid.