

The Lifting

By Purrsia Kat

Felina sat at the round council table, absentmindedly twirling a strand of her light brown mane. She hardly heard Tygra as he went over routine matters of the day, the butterflies in her stomach siphoning her concentration. Finally the dreaded moment arrived.

"I understand Felina would like to address the council," announced Tygra. "You may proceed."

She glanced across the table at Cheetara, who gave a nod of encouragement.

"I...uh, would like to ask the council's permission to return to the my home in the Emite village," the lioness simply stated. A short silence followed as the ThunderCats exchanged questioning glances.

"We didn't want to tell you this way, but..." Tygra began awkwardly, "...you won't be able to leave the Lair permanently. In just a few short months, you will be required to take a position ordained upon your birth." The tiger paused as if searching for the proper phrasing. "It would be wise if you remained here in the meantime and got to know Lion-O a little better."

Felina cast Lion-O a quizzical look, only to receive a shrug in reply.

Seeing Tygra was having difficulty getting to the point, Cheetara interjected, "At that time, you and Lion-O are to be married."

"What?" The stunned pair cried in unison.

"It's a tradition going back for generations," Cheetara gently explained. "The Lord of the ThunderCats rewards his closest and most trusted advisor with the betrothal of his first-born son to the advisor's first born daughter. In the case of Claudis, Lion-O's father, his closest advisor was Jaga..." Cheetara trailed off, letting the obvious implication sink in.

When Felina finally found her voice again, she asked, "But why so soon? We---we hardly know each other given we lost the latter parts of our childhoods in suspension..."

"Thunderian law requires the marriage to take place in the eighth month of the Lord's twentieth year. That's only two months away," Tygra said.

"You mean there can't be an exception made in this case?" Lion-O spoke with some measure of annoyance. A storm of emotions were swirling inside the youthful lord.

Tygra heaved a sigh and replied, "No. The law is very clear. There are no exceptions."

Lion-O could contain his frustration no longer. He felt any control he had left over his own destiny slipping away. "Then it's a stupid law!" he shouted.

"That's it!" Panthro stunned the council when he bolted from his chair and glared at Lion-O. "I'm tired of hearing you question the laws and codes we live by. First, you didn't like how the Anointment Trials are done, and now you have the nerve to complain about marrying a beautiful woman. The code of Thundera and its accompanying laws have served our kind well for thousands of years." The panther's amber eyes glistened with tears as he continued his outburst. "Some of us have sacrificed everything because our faith in Thunderian law is so strong. If you don't feel that way, maybe you don't have what it takes to be a ThunderCat!"

Cheetara gasped in disbelief. Lion-O's expression remained even, rendering it impossible to

tell how the elder cat's words affected him.

Panthro then turned his anger on Felina. "And you....we welcome you here, go to the trouble to save your ass from Mumm-Ra and this is the thanks we get? As far as I'm concerned, you can get the hell out!"

"That's enough, Panthro!" Tygra leapt to his feet. "You've got to control your temper. We can't be fighting amongst ourselves like this."

"Bah!" Panthro gave his council chair a hefty kick across the room. He stormed out, mumbling about the selfishness of the younger generation.

Felina sat numbly in her chair, not knowing what to say or do.

Snarf rushed into the council room, the noisy argument piquing his concern. "What happened in here?"

"Uh..." a shocked WilyKat replied, "I'm not sure but I think I need a fresh pair of shorts."



Felina looked at the dark clouds building to the south as she stood at the base of the drawbridge.

"Are you sure this is wise?" asked Cheetara.

The lioness adjusted her backpack and tried to avoid Bela's impatient stare. "Just tell the others where I'm going, in case I'm needed. Despite what Panthro may say, I am serious about the Code of Thundera. I will return after a short stay at the Emite village to wed Lion-O."

Cheetara placed her hand gently upon Felina's shoulder. "But perhaps, as Tygra suggested, your time would be better spent getting to know Lion-O."

Felina shook her head. "You know as well as I do, we're not going to miraculously fall in love in two months, especially with this awkward arrangement hanging over us. I really feel I can better prepare myself for what the fates have in store by a little solitude."

"Take this communicator with you." Cheetara pressed the small metal device into Felina's palm. "And stop by the Unicorn Forest on your way. I'm sure the Unicorn Keeper will let you ride one of the steeds, as you have quite a journey ahead of you."

Felina was surprised when the cheetah embraced her. The deep sympathy that shone in her eyes made Felina sense Cheetara could actually feel her alienation and heartbreak. She offered Cheetara a weak smile before she and Bela started across the bridge.



The thunderstorm raged outside the Lair. Cheetara stared out her bedroom window in the direction of the Berbil village for any sign of the Thunderkittens. She hoped they had the wits to

wait out the storm with the Berbils. Something about this particular storm had Cheetara's senses on alert.

"So much for hoping the twins would exercise some common sense," thought the she-cat, spying WilyKat and WilyKit flying through the driving rain on their spaceboards. Just as they were crossing the moat in front of the Lair, lightning struck less than twenty feet away. The force of the strike sent both kittens tumbling off their boards and plummeting toward the murky moat waters below. Cheetara was off with a flash, passing Tygra in the hall.

Cheetara knelt at the edge of the gorge, hail and rain stinging her golden skin. The storm clouds were so thick, they made the afternoon appear like dusk. She had some difficulty locating the twins in the dim light, until another flash of lightning revealed the pair hanging perilously to a ledge some ten feet down.

"Hold on, kids!" she shouted above the din of the storm.

Tygra finally caught up with the swift cheetah. "What's going on?"

"The Thunderkittens are down there," she informed him.

Tygra drew his bolo whip. "Stand back," he warned. He cracked the whip, sending it flying down to the kittens. The cubs grabbed onto it, and Cheetara and Tygra easily pulled them to safety.

"What are you two doing out in this weather?" Tygra demanded.

"Well..." began WilyKat, giving his sister a nervous glance. "It was just starting to rain when we left the Berbils and we thought--"

"Save the explanation for later. Let's get inside," interrupted Cheetara, feeling a sudden urgency for the safety of the Lair. As the group turned to go, Cheetara felt a strange tingle throughout her body. Before she had time to analyze the sensation, a bolt of lightning descended from the heavens, striking her squarely in the chest.

Everyone was knocked across the courtyard. Tygra and the Thunderkittens scrambled to Cheetara's side. She remained lying motionless on the soaked ground, her eyes unblinking and staring into the sky. As Tygra took her gently into his arms, her eyes took on an eerie yellow glow. When he couldn't conger a reaction from her, Tygra rushed her inside.



Hours had passed since Cheetara had been stricken, and the ThunderCats still couldn't elicit a response from her. Her glowing yellow eyes remained fixed at the ceiling. Tygra had tried every medication and potion that came to mind. Snarf offered every folk cure he knew to no avail. Panthro and Lion-O looked on helplessly as Tygra again checked her vital signs.

"Her heart rate is falling--" Tygra's voice cracked with emotion. "I...I think she's dying."

"Let me try the Sword, Tygra," Lion-O suddenly suggested.

The teary eyed tiger agreed. "It certainly can't hurt."

Lion-O made haste to the Sword chamber. The Thunder Twins gingerly ducked into the chamber behind their leader.

"H-how is she, Lion-O?" WilyKat asked hesitantly.

Lion-O closed his eyes, searching for the right words. "Whatever happens, the two of you cannot blame yourselves. These things just...happen sometimes."

"What are you saying?" WilyKit demanded. "Is she dying?"

Lion-O paused a moment. "It...it doesn't look good."

The twins exchanged fearful looks. "Well, we want to see her then!" asserted WilyKat.

"No. That is no place for kids. You two are to stay with Snarf, understand?"

"But--" WilyKit began to protest.

Lion-O rushed past them. "Don't argue, Kit. Just stay with Snarf in the control room."

Once again at Cheetara's bedside, Lion-O raised the Sword and awakened its powers. The ThunderCat signal roared above the ailing cheetah. Tygra's heart sank as not even the source of the ThunderCats' power evoked a response in his love. He would surely lose her in a matter of hours, or possibly minutes.

Nobody noticed the Thunderkittens creep into the room until WilyKat spoke. "We just wanted to suggest--"

"I thought I told the two of you to stay out of here," scolded Lion-O.

"We just wanted to say maybe you should call Felina. Perhaps she, or one of the Emites, might know of an herbal remedy," said WilyKit.

"Bah!" objected Panthro. "If the Sword of Omens can't bring Cheetara out of this, a damn plant isn't going to help."

"We have to try everything Panthro," Tygra desperately cried. "I won't give up until she takes her last breath."

"Go call Felina," Lion-O ordered the twins.



Felina and Bela rode into the Emite village just as the rain began to pour. Amenita waddled across the road to meet Felina as she dismounted the unicorn.

"Ah, what brings ya back dis way?" The Emite's pointed ears twitched, signaling her curiosity.

Felina lead the unicorn to a nearby pavilion where it could eat and drink out of the weather. "I was hoping Bela and I could stay here a few weeks..."

"O'course ya can," Amenita said. "Let's get back to my hut an' outta dis rain. I have some hot tea in th' kettle..."

Felina drank her first cup of tea in silence, even though she could tell Amenita's desire to know all the details was driving her crazy. As the Emite poured her a second cup of tea, the lioness stared into the warm fire and finally spoke.

"Would you believe," she began, "I'm going to be married in a matter of months?"

"Ah," chuckled Amenita, "so that strappin' young lord turned out ta be the man o' yer dreams, eh?"

The lioness managed a giggle in spite of herself. "Well, it is he that I will wed, but as for my dreams of perfect romance, they're as dead as a wilted rose I'm afraid...this marriage is of the

arranged variety.”

Amenita raised a brow. “Even so, ya gotta admit, ya got yerself quite a catch in that han’some fella. Whatcha may lack in romance, he’ll more than make up for--”

“Wait right there, old girl,” Felina exclaimed, as hot blood colored her cheeks.

“Ah child, ya are a little wet behind the ears as of yet, but once ya’ve enjoyed yer marriage bed, you’ll be thinkin’ about this in a diff’rent way altogether.”

The lioness felt her face burning hotter. Bela stretched by the fire and emitted a huge yawn.

“All I know,” said Bela, “I’m glad I’m getting a break from that grouchy old Snarf.”

Felina was clearly amused by that remark. “Well, the way I hear it, the feeling is mutual.”

Bela’s drooping ears perked to attention. “Ha! He was lucky to have me there, snarf snarf! That snarf runs the most disorganized household I’ve ever seen. Without me, he’d still be wallowing in that mess.”

The storm was reaching a crescendo outside. “Sounds like we got here just in time,” noted Felina. “I’d hate to travel in such nasty weather.”

Her attention was diverted to the shrill alarm of the communicator that was still in her backpack. Bela quickly snatched the device and delivered it to the lioness.

“Felina here,” she spoke into the communicator.

WilyKat’s voice cracked over the speaker, “Come back to the Lair fast! Cheetara has been hit by lightning and nothing we do seems to help. See if any of your Emite friends know how to help.”

“I’m on my way,” she replied. “Looks like I’ll be riding in the storm after all,” she told her comrades.

“And get struck by lightning yourself, snarf snarf...” complained Bela.

Felina wrapped herself in her cloak and grabbed her backpack. “I’ll have to take that chance, Bela. You stay here. I can make better time without extra bodies on the horse.”

“Here...” Amenita retrieved a small flask from a nearby shelf. “Have yer friend drink a bit o’ dis. It’s been known to bring folks outta such a shock.”

Felina tied the small bottle securely around her waist. “Thank you. I’ll be back soon,” she assured them before she ran out the door.



Tygra paced at Cheetara’s bedside. “Where is that girl?” he growled impatiently.

“Take it easy, Tygra. She’ll be here,” assured Lion-O.

Panthro snorted. “I don’t know. She seems to have issues with the loyalty part of the Code.”

The room fell into an awkward silence, until at last the door opened and a thoroughly soaked young lioness stepped through. Without a word, she shucked her waterlogged cloak and went to Cheetara’s side. What the Thunderkittens had told her of the cheetah’s condition upon her arrival hadn’t prepared Felina for what she saw. The eerie glow of the eyes that marked Cheetara’s catatonic state gave Felina a most unsettling feeling.

“This is a remedy Amenita told me to give Cheetara,” she informed the group.

Without further delay, Felina gently tilted Cheetara's head back and poured a drink of the green liquid into her mouth. The seconds that followed seemed to last hours as Cheetara seemed unaffected. Without warning, the slender cheetah began to shake and convulse, her breathing labored.

Tygra gave Felina a rough shove, sending her against the wall. "What have you done?" he demanded angrily. "You're killing her!" The flask dropped from Felina's hand and shattered on the floor.

Without looking at the others, Felina brushed past Tygra and hastily exited the room. She rested her head against a pillar at the end of the hall.

Her mind whirled. "What could have gone wrong? Had Amenita given me the wrong medication? If she dies now, Tygra will never forgive me." The sound of voices around the corner brought Felina's mind back into focus.

"It's like Cheetara sensed there was going to be a disaster from this storm," lamented WilyKat. "And she ignored her sixth sense to save us. I just feel so guilty, Kit."

As WilyKat's words drifted to Felina, a burst of inspiration overtook her.

"That's it!" she inwardly exclaimed. "I remember reading about this in the Book of Omens...the cheetah race of ThunderCats possess a sixth sense. The electric charge from the lightening must have somehow affected her extra sensory abilities."

Felina jumped as Lion-O spoke to her. "You know, Tygra didn't mean you any harm. He's just upset..."

"I'm going to need your Sword of Omens, my lord."

Lion-O looked puzzled for a moment. "Oh, we already tried to use the Sword on Cheetara. It-it didn't work I'm afraid."

"Yes, but you didn't try it in conjunction with the Book of Omens. Let's go, we've no time to lose," Felina said.

The pair of lions burst into Cheetara's bed chamber. Felina retrieved the Book of Omens from her backpack and approached the bed, with Lion-O following her lead. Tygra stepped defensively between them and Cheetara.

"Just what are you going to do to her now?" he demanded. Felina could hear the cheetah's breathing coming in ragged gasps and knew time was short.

"There's not a lot of time to explain," she began. "But I believe the lightning strike has affected Cheetara's sixth sense. You see, she gets her ESP powers from spirits in the astral world that exist between the realm of the living and the dead. I think she was tuned into her sixth sense at the moment the lightning struck and it trapped her soul in that in-between realm. Only with the Book and the Sword together can we get through to Cheetara and get her come back to the realm of the living."

"I'm not sure--" Tygra hesitated, still not moving out of the way. "It seems dangerous and I don't think you know what you're doing."

"I won't lie to you, Tygra. I've never performed a Lifting before. In fact, I've never put any of the powers of the Book of Omens into practice. And yes, there are risks. If we cannot get her to lift her soul through the Eye of Thundera at the right time, she will cross over to the realm of the dead and she will be lost to us." Felina stared into the worried tiger's eyes, hoping to see a flicker of trust.

"I--I don't know..." Tygra stammered.

Finally, Panthro gently took Tygra by the arm and led him to the foot of the bed. "She's going to die for sure if you don't let them try."

Felina stood next to the bed and opened the Book of Omens. "Give me the Sword," she requested of Lion-O. The lioness placed the Sword across the open Book and held them out over Cheetara's body. She then recited a passage from the Book in the old Thunderian tongue. When Felina removed her hands from beneath the Book, it remained levitating above Cheetara. The Book started spinning until it became merely a blur of white light. The Sword of Omens righted itself above the spinning Book, the Eye coming to life with a roar. Cheetara cried out in pain.

"Now, Cheetara! Lift your soul through the Eye," Felina begged of her suffering friend. To her horror, Cheetara continued to writhe in pain.

Tygra escaped from Panthro's clutches and grabbed Felina roughly by the arms. "You stop this right now! You're torturing her!"

"I can't stop it now," Felina admitted. "Her only chance is you. You must call out to her and tell her to come through the Eye. She may respond to your voice."

Felina was incredulous when Tygra hesitated. "Do it now Tygra before it's too late!"



Cheetara felt a searing heat course through her body as she was thrown across the courtyard. Her eyes seemed transfixed on the dark clouds above. The cloud's angry facade gave way when they began to shimmer with images from her past, as if someone was projecting her life onto the heavens. Suddenly, she felt light as a feather, the wind whistling in her ears while she seemed to rise above the earth. She hurtled toward a break a in the clouds, voices calling to her from the patch of blue sky.

Cheetara floated about in the viscous blue space, the air weighing more like water on her limbs. So many images of unknown creatures and places filled her mind, she couldn't sort any of it out. It was as though her sixth sense was on overdrive. She no longer had the control to filter out these unsolicited messages. It seemed as though every spirit in the universe was trying to channel their energies through her at once. She had to get a handle on things and clear her mind, before the bombardment destroyed her.

Just when it seemed as though she would lose the battle for her mind, she was sucked out of the vacuous blue area and into deep space. She found herself surrounded by blinding white light. It sounded as if she were in the midst of a hurricane, yet she could feel not so much as a breeze. Cheetara suddenly realized why she didn't have any physical sensation. She lacked a physique altogether. She was just a mass of consciousness, wandering through time and space.

"Could I be dead?" she bluntly asked herself. The memories of her life that had only recently passed before her were quickly fading as she became hypnotized by soft voices calling to her from within the abyss of space. It was liberating for Cheetara to have the weight of all her traumatic experiences and heartaches lifted from her mind. She became pleasantly numb and willingly drifted to the edges of space, the soothing angels' voice beckoning like a siren's song.

One flicker of a memory caused Cheetara a moment of hesitation before she gave herself to the heavens. It was the image of a handsome orange tiger, his amber eyes shining with a gentle love and affection. She could almost feel his lips brushing against hers, his burly arms wrapped

tight around her body.

Suddenly, red points of light cut through her consciousness like a thousand daggers, a deafening roar filling every corner of her mind. Through her pain, Cheetara saw a growling red cat's eye looming above her. She could hardly make out a female voice that seemed to be desperately pleading with her. However, the pain was so intense, Cheetara wanted nothing more than to escape into the serenity the abyss of silent space offered. Cheetara mustered all her mental strength, desperately wishing to continue her journey toward peaceful nothingness.

"Cheetara!" Tygra's baritone echoed clearly through her mind. "Lift yourself through the Eye of Thundera...please, Cheetara," her lover pleaded. "Come back to me."

"Tygra! The Eye of Thundera!" Cheetara channeled all her gathered strength in the direction of the shimmering cat's eye. She found herself being consumed by its power; the Eye drawing her up and out from the edge of death in a frighteningly violent manner.



The ThunderCats stood in stunned silence, the Sword and Book of Omens clattering to the floor the only disturbance. They watched the motionless cheetah for any sign of life. The only thing that had noticeably changed of her condition was a pair of closed eyes.

Tygra let out a jagged sigh. "By Jaga, she's gone."

Without warning, Cheetara's eyes fluttered open. She looked around the room in momentary confusion until her eyes caught those of her lover's, who knelt beside the bed.

"Tygra," she whispered. "I've come back to you."

With that, Cheetara found herself the subject of hugs and kisses from her relieved friends. However, Felina quietly gathered her things and left the room.

"What happened?" Cheetara asked.

"Well," Lion-O began, "you were struck by lightning and nothing we could think of was helping."

Tygra continued, "That is until Felina came through with the Book of Omens." With a quick visual search of the room, he noticed the young lioness was nowhere to be seen.

"Hey, we just heard Cheetara pulled through!" WilyKat exclaimed by way of entrance, his sister not far behind.

"Have you two seen Felina?" inquired Tygra.

"Well, yeah," answered WilyKit. "She told us Cheetara was o.k. as she was leaving the Lair."

"I need to catch her before she leaves," Tygra said. "I have an apology to make."

"I'll go with you," Lion-O announced. "I need to talk to her as well."

The pair caught up with Felina in the foyer as she readied her gear for her journey. Tygra approached first.

"Felina," he started. "I just wanted to say how sorry I am for the way I acted while Cheetara was ill. I had no right to get rough with you."

"Apology accepted," she replied with a smile. "I can't imagine what it must be like to nearly lose someone you have such a bond with," she added with a touch of sorrow.

"A kind of bond I fear I'll never know," she thought.

“Can’t you at least stay overnight?” asked Tygra.

Felina sighed. “I don’t think so. I really need some R & R.”

“Well, at least take something to eat with you. I’ll go grab something from the kitchen.”

The lioness nodded her approval. “Can’t argue with a growling stomach.”

As Tygra set off to fetch the food, Lion-O addressed Felina. “I can’t thank you enough for saving Cheetara’s life. That is an amazing Book you have. I knew it contained a lot of Thunderian history, but I had no idea it could be so powerful.”

“Yes, especially when coupled with your Sword of Omens, the Book can do some remarkable things. Tonight was actually the first time I have personally witnessed its powers unleashed.”

Lord Lion-O nodded. “I’d hate to think of what could happen if that Book fell into the wrong hands...maybe you should consider leaving the Book of Omens at the Lair while you stay with the Emites.”

Felina was stricken. “No disrespect my lord, but it is my sacred duty to guard the Book. Where I go, it goes.”

“Moons of Thundera, woman. Are you going to call me ‘my lord’ even after you become my wife?” Lion-O’s remark caught Felina off guard. She blushed and cast her gaze to the floor. Until now, she had been unaware that she has never referred to him by his name. On top of that, his reference to their pending union made her feel suddenly awkward. “Anyway,” continued Lion-O when she hadn’t answered, “I strongly recommend you leave the Book here. You’ve admitted yourself that your skills as a warrior are not exactly polished. What if you’re ambushed by Mutants out there tonight?”

Tygra rejoined the group just in time to witness Felina stepping up to Lion-O with fiery determination in her jade eyes. “Are you ordering me, as Lord of the ThunderCats, to leave the Book of Omens?” she demanded. “Because if you’re merely asking me to, the answer is a resounding no.”

Lion-O held her steely gaze for a moment before relenting. “No, I’m not ordering you to do anything...”

Felina took the bundle of food Tygra had prepared for her. “Then I bid you good night, my lord.” Without another word, she turned and walked out the door into the night. The pair of male cats shook their heads as they watched her exit.

“Women!” they sighed in unison.

*You’ve said the air was singing
It’s calling you / you don’t believe
These things you’ve never seen, never heard, never dreamed*

*Once you had a dream
Of oceans and sunken cities
Memories of things you’ve never known
And you have never known*

--The Lifting, R.E.M.