

Tenderness

By Purrsia Kat

“Snarf...have you seen Felina around anywhere?” inquired Lion-O.

The snarf paused in his journey down the corridor to answer. “Last time I saw her, she was in Tygra’s room.”

Before Lion-O could comment on the information Snarf hurried down the hall, obviously on a mission. When the lion reached the thick steel door of Tygra’s bed chamber, he considered announcing himself. But a wave of some strange emotion washed over him. He decided to boldly enter without forewarning.

Felina sat in front of a wall full of books, with Bela curled at her feet. She was so engrossed in the old leather-bound volume she was reading that she didn’t notice Lion-O enter the room. Upon a thorough visual sweep of the chamber, Lion-O noted Tygra’s absence. With that revelation, his inexplicable jealousy was replaced by mild embarrassment at having barged into the room so rudely.

Felina lifted her gaze from the book. “Oh, good evening, my lord.”

Lion-O balked at the fact that she still insisted on addressing him in such a formal matter. He had an odd notion that she was doing it just to spite him. “Felina--you were supposed to be in the council chamber an hour ago. We called a meeting to go over the last-minute details of tomorrow’s ceremony...”

The lioness flushed slightly and sank back into the soft folds of the armchair. “Please forgive me...I truly didn’t mean to miss the meeting. I just got so wrapped up in this book about Thunderian history--”

Lion-O had no patience for her explanations. “I can’t help but have noticed your lack of enthusiasm about your own wedding. Granted, I’m not exactly thrilled about it either, but at least I’m trying to put in a little effort.”

“Believe me when I say my lackluster attitude has nothing to do with you personally,” Felina pleaded. “It’s just....it’s just so strange that a little more than a year ago we were both cubs on Thundera, and now we’re these awkward adults on a new planet...being thrown into a marriage...” She shook her head with disbelief.

The lion heaved a sigh and felt his mood lighten a bit. “Yes, we have all had to endure a lot of change. It doesn’t help that we’re both victims of the bizarre twist of fate that aged us so. But the more I think about the things Panthro and the others have said about preserving the Code of Thundera and honoring our time tested traditions, the more I’m just resigned to the fact that we can’t do anything about this wedding.”

Felina’s brow furrowed slightly, and thought, “Just what a girl wants to hear on the eve of her wedding...her husband-to-be is resigned to the fact that he’s to wed.” She was aware of Bela stirring about at her feet. Felina gave the snarf a nudge with her foot, hoping to quell any smart remarks she feared Bela was on the cusp of making. Felina was grateful when the snarf merely grumbled softly and remained silent.

Silence lapsed between the betrothed pair as Felina returned the book to its place on the shelf.

Her escape from harsh reality through reading was shattered by the conversation.

“So, what is to happen tomorrow?” the lioness asked with vague curiosity.

Lion-O shrugged. “The wedding ritual is supposed to take place around three in the afternoon. Afterwards, we’re hosting a feast inside the Lair. Mainly, the meeting consisted of Snarf freaking out about the menu and what not...you really didn’t miss much.” Lion-O chuckled at the memory of the stressed snarf’s antics. “As you can imagine, once Snarf started going off, we didn’t get much chance to address anything else.”

Felina could just imagine the chaotic scene in her mind and grinned broadly. “Well, perhaps fate did me a favor by distracting me long enough to miss that event.” During their light exchange, Felina noticed Lion-O’s burned hand was missing its protective wrapping, exposing the angry pink skin. The lioness clasped his hand and took to inspecting its healing palm. “You should still keep this hand wrapped. The skin is healing finally, but it remains vulnerable to infection.” She gently traced the surface of his large palm with the tip of her claw.

Lion-O jerked away slightly due to his damaged skin’s reaction to her touch. “It’s still pretty sensitive,” he agreed.

“Bela,” Felina called to the snarf, “go to my bedchamber and get my first aid kit please.”

Bela obediently left to retrieve the kit.

“I’ve got some ointment that will help speed up the healing and minimize scarring,” she explained.

He studied the delicate features of her face as if seeing her for the first time. She possessed the body and grace of a woman, yet her eyes still held a child-like innocence. “More exposure to the brutalities of war will smother that innocent light in her eyes,” he sadly thought. He had a wild, fleeting notion that he could shield her from such pain. But even in his short tenure as lord, he knew that wouldn’t be at all realistic. His own carefree spirit had already been compromised by their struggles. And because the ThunderCats numbered so few, the idea of protecting her from such ugly truths was indeed impossible.

“Thank you, Felina,” Lion-O said softly. “It’s nice to finally have a moment together like this. With all that has gone on since you rejoined us, we haven’t had much of a chance to get acquainted.” He instinctively reached out and swept a stray lock of the lioness’ hair from her face. She flushed and giggled self consciously at the sudden gesture.

“The way you laughed just then--it reminded me of when we were cubs on Thundera. Whenever you stayed at the Lair, all of us Thunderkittens would play snarf ball. And it never failed that you would end up giggling so hard you couldn’t finish playing.”

“Yes, those were good times,” Felina concurred. Reflecting on the happier times of her cubhood made the next day’s forced ceremony even more bittersweet. “I wonder---without this betrothal...if we would have fallen in love on our own,” she mused to herself.

Their congenial discussion was interrupted by Bela’s return. In a display of snarfly agility, Bela used her long tail to raise herself to twice her normal height. “One first aid kit, as requested, snarf snarf,” she announced while passing the dark leather pouch to Felina.

As Felina slathered ointment over the surface of his injured palm, she couldn’t help but notice how large Lion-O’s hands were; nearly twice the size of her own slight hands. She suddenly thought of what Amenita had said about the marriage bed. It was strange to imagine Lion-O’s mighty hands--hands that possess awesome, deadly power and strength in battle--gently caressing her. She hastily wrapped his hand with gauze, hoping he wouldn’t notice her ruddy cheeks brought about by her mind’s romantic wanderings. Felina was relieved to see Tygra make an entrance just as she finished her task. She feared if she had to look Lion-O in the eyes at that

moment, he would be able to read her thoughts. She regarded Tygra's timely presence as a gift from the fates.

"Tygra," she said airily, while making a concerted effort to avoid Lion-O's gaze.

"So this is where you were hiding out from the meeting," the tiger mirthfully spoke. "Soaking up more reading I assume."

She brushed past Lion-O, who regarded Felina with perplexed amusement at her skittish behavior. "Yes," she confirmed. "I was really wrapped up in that wonderful old volume you have regarding Thunderian history. It was fascinating to learn how the Mutants and the ThunderCats became mortal enemies."

"Ah yes, there are many theories about the origin of our mutual hostility, but I think that book has the most accurate account," observed Tygra.

As Lion-O witnessed their light banter, feelings of jealousy bubbled to the surface. He wasn't sure if those feelings stemmed from the intellectual bond Tygra and Felina shared, or merely the idea that she so obviously adored the elder cat. He struggled to figure out where exactly such an ugly emotion was coming from. After all, it's not as though he and Felina had any romantic ties. Yet ever since he discovered their betrothal, Lion-O had become increasingly protective of Felina. Amid a storm of conflicting emotions Lion-O silently left the room, unnoticed by the chatting pair of intellects.



Brilliant sunshine cascaded into Felina's bedchamber. The lioness sat on a plush stool, patiently waiting as Cheetara combed through her freshly washed brown hair. With the wedding merely hours away, Felina fought back rolling waves of nervousness. Not only was she anxious about the ceremony itself, but also about the mysteries of what would follow. She picked at the lint on her robe while she pondered a tactful way to broach the subject with Cheetara.

She concluded the only approach would be the direct one. "Cheetara..." she started hesitantly, "What is it like to know a man?"

Cheetara smiled gently at the raw innocence of the lioness' query. "You needn't worry, Felina. Lion-O will not force you to do anything before you're ready."

"Yes, but when the time comes, how will I know what to do? How will I be sure I can please him?"

The cheetah laughed good naturedly. "Luckily, making love comes quite naturally to both men and women. When the time arrives, I'm sure neither of you will be confused as to what to do. And as for pleasing a man," Cheetara added, "they are pleased simply by a willing female."

Their discussion was bluntly ended by WilyKit's boisterous entrance. The kitten eyed Felina's gown hanging on the closet door. "Aw gee, Felina. Your dress is beautiful!" The cub ran her fingers over the velvety, wine colored material.

"Thank you, Kit. I have Cheetara and Tygra to thank for such a lovely dress. That is their wedding gift to me," Felina replied.

WilyKit bounced onto the bed. "Where did you find such a thing of beauty?" she asked

Cheetara.

“Well, we sought the best Wolo seamstress in the village and she came up with that dress,” explained Cheetara as she swept Felina’s hair up behind her head.

“Wow,” WilyKit gushed. “You’re so lucky, Felina. You get to marry Lion-O in a gorgeous dress...it’s just like a fairy tale! I can’t wait to grow up and marry a handsome guy...”

“Be careful what you wish for, Kit,” Felina advised. “Your cubhood is something you should cherish while you can.”

WilyKit scoffed. “It stinks being twelve. Kat and I never get to do anything. We miss out on all the fun stuff like when you guys go to the bar....it’s not fair.”

Cheetara could sense Felina’s growing discontent with the current conversation. “Kit, is there a reason you dropped by?” Cheetara asked in her smooth alto voice.

“Oh yeah! I almost forgot....here.” The kitten presented Felina with a small black box. “It’s a gift from me and Kat.”

Felina was shocked to see a lovely golden necklace when she opened the box. The sparkling piece of jewelry was adorned with a red cat’s eye amulet. “It’s beautiful...thank you,” the lioness whispered.

“It was our mother’s,” WilyKit explained. “We wanted you to have it.”

“And that reminds me,” added Cheetara, while she put the finishing touches on Felina’s coif. She grabbed a box from the nearby dresser and removed its contents. “Your hair-do won’t be complete without this.” Cheetara placed a radiant golden tiara upon Felina’s head. “It’s tradition for the bride of the Lord of the ThunderCats to wear it. Lion-O’s mother, as well as those before her, wore this tiara.”

“What did I tell you?” WilyKit gloated. “It’s just like a fairy tale!”

Felina was speechless.

Cheetara noted the time on the wall clock ticking ever closer to three o’clock. “Come on, Kit. We best leave Felina to get dressed. Besides, we need to change as well.”

The lioness remained seated on the stool long after Cheetara and WilyKit left her. She seemed frozen in time as emotions of anxiety, excitement and sorrow fought inside her heart to prevail over this day---her wedding day.



It was now a quarter to three. Lion-O could hear the din of noisy chatter filter through his bedroom window from the crowd that had gathered outside to witness the ceremony. He was dressed in the finest dark blue suit. The metal shoulder guards made his chest seem broader than usual. The suit’s collar and cuffs, as well as the pinstripes along the side of his trousers, were trimmed in an intricate golden embroidery. His black boots were polished to an impeccable shine, thanks to Snarf’s attention to detail. He was the picture of regal handsomeness, if not for the scowl he wore which clashed smartly with his formal wear. As Lion-O paced about, his long red cape flowed behind him.

“You need to relax,” Tygra suggested from his position near the window. He, too, was

dressed similarly in a fine suit, though his was a lighter shade of blue. “After all, it’s not the end of the world.”

“I don’t expect you to understand,” Lion-O snapped. “I’m not ready for this....this added responsibility of a wife. And I’m certainly not ready to raise cubs. Unless of course there’s a Thunderian law that decrees when I am to become a father as well,” he added bitterly.

“It’s not as bad as all that, Lion-O,” responded Tygra. “Even though the two of you didn’t choose each other, you’re both young, vital cats and so there is a lot of time for love to grow between you. And as for cubs, as long as you avoid having relations during her fertile stage each month, there won’t be any surprises.”

None of his elder’s words of wisdom did anything to quell the firestorm of emotions fighting within Lion-O’s heart. “Last night I thought I had finally come to terms with this arrangement...but as the moment of reckoning nears I find myself so conflicted...” Lion-O’s voice trailed off, his mind reeling to find the words.

Tygra crossed the room to lay a sympathetic hand on Lion-O’s shoulder. “Even at such a young age, you continue to prove yourself a strong and able leader. You have come through wonderfully, given the weighty responsibilities laid upon you so early in life. I won’t pretend to imagine what it must be like to close your eyes a twelve year old cub and awaken a man with all the worries and duties that come with adulthood...” Tygra shook his head in amazement.

Lion-O nodded. “As much as I hate to regress to kittenhood, I have to say that it all seems so unfair.”

“If it’s any consolation, Felina feels similarly conflicted but she does desire to be a good wife to you,” Tygra confessed. “We had quite a talk about just this topic last night.”

Tygra’s comments struck a nerve with Lion-O as he recalled the tiger and lioness engaged in last evening’s chummy exchange. “That reminds me, I think as someone who is involved with a woman, it was highly inappropriate for you to have carried on a conversation with Felina alone in your bedchamber.”

Tygra was taken aback. “Don’t be ridiculous! You know I’m totally devoted to Cheetara. And I can assure you Felina feels nothing for me other than perhaps a fatherly reverence.”

“Still,” Lion-O insisted, “after this day, I do not want Felina in your bedchamber as it’s not proper behavior for a married woman. If she must read your books, she can do so elsewhere.”

“By Jaga, the stress is getting to you,” noted Tygra. The tiger walked back to the window, a strained silence lapsing between the two mighty cats.

Amid a glowing blue fog, the spirit of Jaga appeared to Lion-O. “Ah young Lord of the ThunderCats,” the wise old jaguar began. “Your difficulty with the hard life has dealt you is understandable. But you must try not to take out your frustrations on your friends, or let jealousy get the best of you.”

“Yes, Jaga, I know,” Lion-O mumbled, his eyes cast to the floor.

“It brings me great joy to know my daughter survived the destruction of Thundera and has returned to fulfill her destiny as your bride,” continued Jaga. “Felina was a gift from the fates late in my life and though I could not be with her often, she was the apple of my eye. I know you will protect her and treat her well; I cannot think of a better Thunderian with whom she could spend her life with. Though your heart is heavy now, in time love will grow between you.”

Before Lion-O had a chance to respond, his mentor vanished back into the depths of the Astral World.

“The time has come,” Tygra announced. “I’ll see you outside.” His statement hung more like a question, as though he wondered whether the lion’s cold feet would overwhelm him.

“Go then,” Lion-O replied gruffly while he secured the claw shield and the Sword of Omens to his hip. “I’ll follow shortly.”



Tygra made his way toward the central hall of the Lair. There, he found the rest of the ThunderCats gathered.

“Not that you’ll need this today,” Panthro said as he approached Felina. “Hopefully those damn Mutants are still smarting from the beating they took from Ergus.” He presented Felina with a shiny steel bow. “This is made from titanium steel. I’d like to see a Trollog try to smash it to bits.”

Felina took the finely crafted bow from Panthro’s mighty paws. She couldn’t get over how stately the panther looked out of his warrior garb. It struck her as odd to see the gruff old cat dressed in finery.

“Thank you so much,” she sincerely told Panthro.

“Leave it to Panthro to give the most unromantic wedding gift in Thunderian history,” Cheetara interjected with a laugh and roll of her eyes. The cheetah truly looked stunning in her golden, floor length cocktail dress. The spaghetti-strapped garment flowed over the she-cat’s toned body like a sparkling river.

“I’m just practical,” Panthro insisted. “Romance is for dreamers.”

Bela took the bow and carried it to the weapons room as Felina turned to greet Tygra.

“You look lovely,” Tygra assured the visibly nervous lioness. She looked every bit the mature elegant woman. The wine hued dress complimented her jade eyes, it’s short sleeves hanging off her delicate shoulders. The gown’s full-length skirt, with its thigh-high slit, revealed one of her long tawny legs. “Lion-O is a lucky man this day,” he continued while lightly kissing the top her hand. Felina blushed furiously.

“Speaking of Lion-O, where is he, snaaaaarf snarf! The ceremony is supposed to be starting right now,” fretted the old snarf.

“Easy, Snarf,” Tygra said. “He was right behind me.”

“Well, we better go take our positions outside,” suggested Panthro. “Soon as Lion-O comes down here, the two of you come on out and we’ll get this show started,” he added to Felina.

Shortly after the other ThunderCats disappeared through the main door of the Lair, Lion-O entered the central hall. Felina was struck by how genuinely handsome he appeared.

“My lord, you truly look handsome this day,” Felina said breathlessly.

The lioness studied his stern expression. Lion-O stared past her at the main doors, his jaw clenched.

“Let’s just get this over with,” he stated curtly.

Felina had never felt more foreign and out of place in the history of her existence. She numbly followed Lion-O out the great steal doors of the Lair’s entrance. She squinted when the bright afternoon sun glared into her eyes. Felina concentrated on looking out among the crowd that had gathered--Berbils, Wolos, Balkans, Tuskas, Warrior Maidens, and many other

ThunderCat allies and friends--anything to take her mind from the resentment that radiated off of Lion-O like heat. She never imagined feeling this awful on her wedding day.

Tygra stood a few steps below the couple and summoned the crowd to silence before he began the rites of marriage. The remaining ThunderCats were gathered in a semi-circle around the couple upon the Lair's threshold.

"By order of Thunderian Law and in the spirit of great tradition," the tiger's baritone boomed through the courtyard, "we shall witness the joining of the house of Claudis and the house of Jaga in the sacred covenant of marriage."

Tygra signaled for the pair to join hands. They did so awkwardly, neither daring to look the other in the eyes.

The tiger pressed on. "By participating in this most honored of rites, the two of you swear not only to uphold the Code of Thundera--Justice, Truth, Honor, and Loyalty. But, also, to carry on Thunderian tradition by keeping the passing of the Lordship pure and unadulterated. So swear you?"

Lion-O and Felina nodded.

"So be it, then. Draw the Sword of Omens and you shall seal the oath with the Eye of Thundera," Tygra instructed.

Lord Lion-O drew the mystic blade. The Eye sprang to life, causing the weapon's blade to grow to twice its normal length. He held the Sword out before him and allowed Felina to place her hand upon the hilt just above his own.

Tygra proceeded to utter the final rites. "In honor of the great Lord Claudis, and by the grace of wise Jaga, the beautiful Lady Felina and the mighty Lord Lion-O are now as one."

The Sword of Omens reacted with a roar and a furious display of raw power. Both lions felt the Sword's warm energy shoot down their arm and soak into the depths of their bodies.

The assembly let loose with a thunderous cheer. Snarf and Bela both wiped away tears. Cheetara caught Tygra's eye and they shared a soft moment. No such sentiment existed between the freshly married couple, however. Felina kept her gaze fixed on the jubilant crowd in the courtyard, while Lion-O stared off into the horizon.



"Wow, we're going to get to drink a glass of wine!" WilyKit whispered into her brother's ear. The kittens were rarely allowed to indulge in alcohol, but this special occasion would be one of the exceptions. WilyKit squirmed with anticipation as Snarf made his way around the banquet table with the wine flask.

WilyKat inhaled deeply, taking in the wonderful aroma of the feast. "Snarf really outdid himself this time! Look at all this food!"

His sister giggled. "Leave it to your one-track mind to be focused on food."

As soon as the wine was doled out, the cats began to pass each delicious dish around the table. All the wedding guests were seated at surrounding tables, their conversations animated while they ate their fill. WilyKit found it hard to believe that amid the joyful atmosphere, the couple of honor seemed anything but joyful. She studied the newlyweds sitting together at the

head of the table. "How could anyone be miserable on their wedding day?" wondered the naive kitten.

She turned to get her brother's take on the subject, only to catch him guzzling his goblet of wine. "WilyKat! You're supposed to *sip* the wine." WilyKit gave him a sharp slap on the shoulder, causing him to spill the last swallow of red alcohol down his formal robes.

"Aw, that's just great, Kit. Now I have to listen to Snarf gripe about how he won't be able to get this stain out....grrrrrr."

"Maybe next time, you won't behave like such a mannerless oaf and then I won't have to correct you," taunted WilyKit. With that, the kittens were off and running, dodging around the guests that had already finished their meals.

After the feast, Lion-O felt his mood begin to lighten as he mingled with the guests. Just a few glasses of wine and some good Mutant jokes had him feeling relaxed again.

Felina likewise found comfort in wine and conversation. She spent most of the evening chatting with Warrior Maidens, with whom she got along exceptionally well.

On her way back to fill her wine glass yet again, she noted with amusement Snarf passed out under one of the banquet tables. Most people might assume the old snarf drank too much, but Felina knew the poor creature had most likely collapsed from exhaustion. She reached out for the wine flask only to find it was no longer there. Felina swore she heard WilyKit's distinctive giggle and looked about her in confusion. "I must be imagining things...perhaps the wine has gone to my head," she thought. Noting the late hour and detecting a faint pounding in her head, Felina decided to give up on wine and turn in.

As WilyKit drank with her brother beneath one of the tables, she suddenly recalled the dejected look Felina wore for most of the evening. Impulsively, the tipsy kitten decided to seek out Lion-O and berate him for his shabby treatment of his bride. WilyKat just shrugged and continued to drain the wine flask while he watched his sister push her way through the masses.

WilyKit was caught off guard when she collided into Lion-O's hard chest. "Whoa! Slow down, Kit," Lion-O said with a chuckle.

It took the Thunderkitten a moment to catch her bearings. "You---you're the worst husband ever! Your poor wife looks like she'd rather be dead than be here. For shame!" WilyKit accused in a loud, slightly slurred voice.

"Are you drunk, Kit??" Lion-O asked incredulously.

The kitten's eyes widened. "Can he tell??" she thought wildly. "You can't prove anything," she blurted out before narrowly escaping the lion's grasp.

Panthro burst into laughter at the rascally cub's antics. Lion-O shook his head, marveling at the mischievous twin. Her words did strike a chord with him, however. Recalling what Jaga had said to him earlier, Lion-O decided to seek out Felina and at least apologize for taking his frustration out on her. After a fruitless search of the banquet hall, he started toward the corridor that lead to the bedchambers.

When he caught up with the lioness she was standing in the hall, peering into an antechamber with a wistful look upon her face. He understood why when he got a view of what she was staring at so longingly. It was Cheetara and Tygra, sharing a tender embrace that radiated their love like warm rays of sunshine. The couple were so wrapped up in each other, they never noticed Felina's presence. Felina abruptly continued on to bed, knowing a pair of loving arms would not await her there.

"Felina." The lioness heard Lion-O speak her name and jumped. She turned to face her newly acquired husband. She noticed he had taken off his heavy jacket, leaving his chiseled chest

covered only by a white tank top. Felina wasn't sure if it was just the wine's dizzying effects, but she inexplicably found herself drawn to him physically.

Lion-O was shocked when the lioness walked unsteadily toward him and proceeded to press her body against his. He was speechless as he watched her pull the pins out of her hair, allowing it to fall gracefully around her shoulders. They stared into each other's eyes, their lips mere inches apart. Lion-O abruptly stopped her when she moved in for a kiss.

"Please," Lion-O said softly. "I don't want you to do anything you'll regret in the morning." He couldn't see taking advantage of the clearly drunken lioness.

Felina lost her balance when she tried to step away from him. Lion-O skillfully caught her and scooped her up into his arms. "Perhaps it would be safer if I carried you to bed," he joked.

Felina wrapped her arms around his neck. "Who turned the Lair into a spinning top?" she cried. Felina buried her face in his shoulder, hoping she could hide from the fierce spinning.

Lion-O gently laid Felina on her bed and clicked on the lamp upon the nightstand. "How much wine did you have?"

"I'm...I'm not sure," confessed the lioness. "My guess is too much."

Lion-O smiled knowingly. "I wanted to tell you that I'm sorry about how I acted earlier. Really, you're a fine woman. I haven't got an issue with you personally. It's the situation I'm angry at."

"Mmm, yes." Felina agreed as she struggled to a sitting position. "We have to try to make this work. You know, the marriage. It's...it's important...I think." She fumbled with the buttons on the back of her gown.

"Let me help you with that," he offered. His nimble fingers easily unfastened the delicate buttons. Felina was not expecting him to free her so quickly from her velvety confines. She failed to catch the front of her dress before it slid down too far, exposing nearly all of the ivory swell of her breasts. Lion-O knew he should do the gentlemanly thing and look away, but his actions contradicted his thoughts. Felina quickly gathered the material and covered herself again.

"I think I can handle it from here," Felina said hastily, her face aflame.

Lion-O snapped out of his trance. "Oh, yes...you get dressed while I get a glass of water." He tossed her nightgown to her on his way to the adjoining washroom.

She disrobed and donned the nightgown as fast as her intoxicated body could manage. Lion-O soon returned with the water and a few tablets of aspirin. He was amused to note that Felina had put her gown on backwards as well as inside out.

"What's the aspirin for?" Felina curiously asked.

"Might help you avoid the dreaded hangover...and you may also need this," he said as he placed a trash can next to the bed. "Throwing up is often a consequence of overindulgence."

Felina swallowed the aspirin hard, nearly choking. "No one told me about this 'fun' part of drinking."

Lion-O leaned over and lightly kissed her forehead before turning off the light. She lay back onto her pillow, listening to the sound of her blood pounding in her ears.

"Sleep well," he said on his way out the door. The sentiment went unanswered, as Felina had already passed out into oblivion.

*Seems without tenderness there's something missing
Where is the tenderness?
I don't know where I am but I know I don't like it
I open my mouth and out pops something spiteful
Words are so cheap, but they can turn out expensive
Words like conviction can turn into a sentence
---Tenderness, General Public*