

## Good Enough

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# Good Enough

by [The\\_Aquarian](#)

## Summary

Lion-O never stopped wondering why his father ordered him to remain in the palace as Thundera came under attack. After another night sulking by the fire, Tygra tries to tell him, leaving Lion-O to believe his brother or their past.

One shot taking place before "The Pit," when the ThunderCats are reunited.

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Tygra and Lion-O sat by the dying fire, neither quite ready to sleep. It had been another exhausting day. After finding a pass over the snowy mountains, they'd traipsed back to Panthro, Cheetara, the Wily kittens, and the Thundertank. What had been a weeklong journey by foot either way took only a day for the tank. Now, safely out of the mountains, they'd been travelling from green plains into desert for the past week. The Book of Omens still annoyingly only indicated "up." It had been showing the same "up" destination for a few months now and everyone's nerves were wearing thin. Earlier, Cheetara had barely covered the kittens' ears fast enough to mute most of Panthro's curse-laden rant about following a stupid book that was likely broken, and Tygra had called a stop for the day mid-afternoon to shut him up. While Snarf, Cheetara, and the kittens had gone searching for food, Tygra, Lion-O, and Panthro argued about where to go next. The kittens had retired to bed a few hours ago, then Cheetara. After sharing his concerns about the area, Panthro had finally decided to sleep, too. The brothers now remained, a companionable silence having fallen between them.

Two of the moons above were waning crescents, while the third was all but gone in its new moon phase. The sky was so very black, the land around them so very dark. If it wasn't for the fire and a smattering of stars, Lion-O would've felt completely alone in the world. *Just like back in Thundera*, he thought sadly, his shoulders slumped even more. *Cats all around, but I still feel so alone.*

"You tired, little brother?" Tygra asked, not unkindly. Even though they argued frequently, the tiger cared for his lion brother. They were both now orphans and, had King Claudus not taken Tygra in several years before his birth, Lion-O would truly be alone and without family. An adopted brother was better than nothing, even if loneliness and doubt tailed him like a cloak.

"Nah, I'm fine. Just thinking about Father and home."

A couple twigs crackled in the fire as the bit of log beneath them collapsed into embers. Lion-O watched as a spark floated upwards, caught the breeze, and disappeared into the night. He'd always longed to do just that: float away on the wind to some place where he wouldn't be laughed at for liking tech, or mocked for not being his brother, or criticized for not acting more like a prince should act. Now it was just him out here, suddenly the kingly Lord of the ThunderCats, leading five remaining Thunderian cats into the larger world of Third Earth, depending on every one of them to help him through each day as they encountered more and more challenges, faced more and more obstacles, and met more and more friends.

"Everything you've done... He'd be proud of you."

The words broke his reverie. "D'you say something?"

"I said, Father would be proud of you." To make sure his brother heard, Tygra raised his voice some.

Lion-O laughed. A great derisive snorting laugh, more a snarl, devoid of any happiness. *Father 'proud of me!' What an oxymoron.* "The only son he was ever proud of was *you*,

brother, or have you forgotten our lives in Thundera so soon?"

*Oh, no, not this again.* Tygra shook his head. He knew Lion-O's thoughts were troubling him but hadn't realized they were spiraling toward darkness and self-pity. Again.

This wasn't the first night Lion-O had sat up around a campfire, hating himself and the world, angry with their past and unsure of himself. *When will it be enough?* Tygra asked himself every time. He'd told his little brother that the only reason they weren't cruelly slaughtered was because of Lion-O's tech knowledge. He had saved their father from an earlier death, saved many in Thundera from horrific fates at the hands of Mumm-Ra and Slithe, given who knew how many residents of their kingdom a chance to escape before the world everyone had known had collapsed around them. At the root of it all, though, Lion-O felt he was still a disappointment to their father, a king far too busy for an introverted, gentle son who needed attention more than sword lessons and military lectures. *Father died saying he was proud of us – of you! When will that be enough? When will you have enough faith in yourself to be the king we all know you can be?* Tygra wondered sadly.

A thought came to the tiger. He didn't know if the memory would help at all, but it wasn't as if he had a lot to lose.

"Do you know why Father told you to remain behind in the castle when the first alerts came that the Lizards were attacking? When I went with Grune and him to prepare our defenses?" Tygra's voice was soft, again, not unkind, but firm. He *had* to make sure his little brother understood at least this. Perhaps it would be what he needed to hear.

"Yeah, because he didn't trust me out on the battlefield. He left that to *you*."

Tygra sighed. He'd given up his rage at long last; why couldn't his brother? "No. That's not why. It's *part* of it but not the real reason."

"Then why? It's not like he needed me out there."

"That's right. He didn't."

Lion-O's gaze was icy, his blue eyes shooting daggers. "Oh, okay, great. Father didn't have a reason to keep me around as our world fell apart. Thanks, I really needed that." He made to stand but Tygra grabbed one of his calves before he could move away.

"That is *not* what I meant," the tiger growled. Lion-O wasn't the only one who could cast cruel glances. When he spoke again after a moment, his voice was level but steely. "Now sit back down, or I will make you."

He could've pulled rank, or wrenched his leg from Tygra's hand, or done a dozen other things. But something inside Lion-O opened, a cavern of curiosity. He *had* to know why, after wondering about it for months. Even if the reason hurt, he had to know what their father was thinking. So the lion sat down again, his shoulders more slumped than ever, his face so sad that it made the tiger's heart ache.

"You didn't spend a lot of time studying military strategy or succession rules or how kingdoms operate during wartime, and that is *not* a criticism of you." Tygra cut off Lion-O

before he could open his mouth with some rude comment. “All I mean is that you didn’t know what I’m able to say back then. When Father went off to battle, he needed someone with that knowledge to be at this side, yes. That’s why Grune and I left with him. He did *not* take you not because you didn’t know those things, but because, if he died out there, he needed to make sure his heir was safe in the palace. If he died, he had to know that someone of his blood, someone he loved and trusted and believed capable of leading Thundera, was left alive and protected. He always knew you would do great things. Call it blind faith if you want, but Father died clinging to it. So he didn’t need you on the battlefield. He needed you back at the palace, the seat of our power, safe and sound and well-guarded, where you could assume the throne if something went wrong.

“You see, I’m expendable,” Tygra continued. He turned from Lion-O to look into the fire, his mind going back to their kingdom. “I’ve always been expendable. Yes, I was there in the palace before you, but, with your birth, you became the crown prince, and I became expendable.” Tygra lifted his amber eyes, meeting Lion-O’s shocked blue eyes. “I may have been an experienced warrior and leader for our army, but, even as I watched Grune raise his staff to our father, I was expendable, little brother. If *I* died protecting Father, it was an acceptable loss, because he would live. And if I was dead, and he died the next moment, *our kingdom would live on through you*. You have never been expendable, Lion-O. You were the most important thing Father had. He only wanted you to be safe, even if it meant you were angry with him. When you started sneaking out of the palace without telling anyone and without a guard, he finally asked Jaga to help protect you, and that’s when Cheetara began shadowing you. We had to keep you safe, from enemies and sometimes from yourself, like when you defended those lizards in the stockades.

“And that is why you weren’t needed on the battlefield that day, Lion-O. That’s why Father left you behind. It wasn’t because he was disappointed in you or felt you couldn’t handle a fight or didn’t believe in you. When the Sword of Omens bonded with you only days before our world crumbled, Father knew that, inside you, the legacy and power of the ThunderCats would live on when he died. He placed such faith in you, brother. We *all* did – all *do*. You think some adopted cub of the king could have inspired such loyalty across our world?” Tygra waved his hand at the sleeping forms of their friends and allies, indicating them and much larger world they were still exploring. “I’m a tiger, brother, not a lion. As you know, our clans were vastly different.” It hurt him to use the past tense when thinking of his people, of the father he had known for only minutes, who even then was already dead. “Tigers were loyal to Mumm-Ra, so no one trusted them. The lions, however, defeated him and inspired confidence and greatness.

“I couldn’t have done what you have, Lion-O. Jaga saw that light in you. Father saw it, too. And Cheetara does. It’s why she chose to follow you in the first place, before the Fall of Thundera. Panthro sees it. Kit and Kat, too. By now, if you think *I* don’t see it and that I don’t see a reason to follow you through the fires of hell, even when I haven’t liked what you did, then you’re the greatest fool this world has ever produced.” A rare warm smile graced Tygra’s face, one of brotherly love and compassion. “You weren’t needed in a battle that could be lost, Lion-O, because you had to lead the cats so we could win a bigger war that might come. Sometimes you have to lose a great deal before you can become the whole of what you’re supposed to be.”

For a long time, neither of them said anything. Lion-O stared at the fire, thinking on his brother's words. He wanted desperately to believe what Tygra said. The idea of their father not needing him by his side had always hurt, but he'd seen Claudus turn away from him time and time again in favor of doing this or that with Tygra. *Was there some deeper meaning?* he wondered.

The night air grew chilly. The campfire had burned away to embers. Eventually Tygra stretched and stood. "I'm going to get some sleep. We have another long day ahead of us tomorrow. Panthro's been through this place a few times and wants us on our A-game." A frown settled over Tygra's face as he remembered. "Lots of military scouts and expeditions have come through here with bad results. Most never made it back. Now go get some rest. We need you at your best." He placed a hand on his brother's shoulder before moving away. Lion-O's voice stopped him before he had moved too far.

"Is it true?"

Tygra turned back. "Yeah. Few years back, we lost eight men in a skir--"

"Not that." The young king's blue eyes were clouded. Tygra crossed his arms as he waited. "I... What you said, about Father. About that day."

"Yes, all of it," Tygra said as he fought back a yawn. "If it wasn't, do you think I would've made it up just to make you feel better? Besides, what kind of ending would it have been for Father and me if you hadn't arrived with your *deus ex machina* of learning those disks were bombs?"

Lion-O returned his gaze to the embers, not distracted by his brother's teasing words. *Yes*, he thought. His big brother had changed so much after the last few months. No – Cheetara had changed him, made him softer and kinder. As much as Lion-O had thought he loved her, he was grateful for her effect on Tygra and how Tygra, in turn, was a better cat for loving her.

A startled breath made Lion-O look up. "That is what you think! That I'm making it up!" Tygra yelled. He was exasperated. "Little brother, I don't know what to do with you anymore. You can either believe me or talk yourself out of it. I can't make your mind up for you. But I have no reason to lie to you, Lion-O. You can either accept the truth – all of I said – or you can keep doubting yourself and whether or not you can stop Mumm-Ra and rebuild our kingdom. It's your choice. Every second you spend down in the dumps like this is one more second that damned monster gets to scheme against us. And *I* am sick and tired of giving him anything." With that, Tygra walked away to where Cheetara was nestled under a blanket, his own bedroll unfurled beside him, and nestled his body against hers.

There would be no rest for Lion-O that night. Tygra's words weren't quite the balm the tiger intended them to be; instead they stoked the king's curiosity. With the last light of the dying fire, he looked at the five sleeping cats who had followed him blindly into the unknown of Third Earth.

As much as he wanted to believe Claudus had left him behind to carry on their kingdom instead of punishment, Lion-O found a part of himself unable to. When General Lynx-O had sounded the alarm, Claudus had lamented that it was only hours after he had pardoned two

lizards – lizards Lion-O had defended and asked him to free. As the king had stormed off with Grune and Tygra that day, ordering his heir to remain behind, Lion-O hadn't felt hope; he'd felt the distinct lack of faith his father had in him.

Hours had passed between that moment and when he next saw his father, moments before Mumm-Ra stabbed Claudus in the back, literally. "No matter what happens, you've made me proud today," he'd said to his two sons as he died. If he'd been proud of Lion-O, surely he had faith in him. Claudus had kept his heir safe to guarantee someone could lead their people.

Lion-O had the Sword of Omens, too. Jaga had even bonded it and the gauntlet to Lion-O before being captured by Mumm-Ra's forces. Cheetara had immediately gone with the new king, as had Tygra. Whatever personal responsibility they felt to each other in being mates, Lion-O knew they would lay down their lives for the king. Panthro had given up his arms to defeat Grune – a personal victory as well as the end of perhaps their most dangerous enemy, aside from Mumm-Ra; would it be so difficult, then, to die for Lion-O? When the hut holding the Spirit Stone was under attack, Kat had stood beside Cheetara and declared he would defend the hut with his life. Even little Kit had vowed to protect Lion-O, fighting alongside her Elephant friends. Those kittens had led Lizard troop after troop into an ambush, the entire time facing the possibility of a stray laser shot hurting them, but they never protested. It was only when he'd sent away due to danger that they'd argued.

*They all believe in me*, Lion-O realized. It was like a slap of sobriety had broken through his mind drunk on sadness and self-pity for not being quite the prince his kingly father had wanted. *I may not have been exactly what he wanted, but he believed in me enough to know I could lead our people.*

When he had looked at Jaga that horrible day, he remembered saying he didn't know what to do or where to go, that he didn't have anything he needed to do whatever it was that he was supposed to do. Tygra and Cheetara, though, had stood by him then, from the beginning. In the darkness of his doubts that first day, they'd guided him. Then Kit and Kat had decided to follow them, though safety and protection weren't offered. When Panthro, stalwart Panthro, had appeared out of nowhere to save all five of them from Slithe and the Lizard Army, it had taken a while to earn his respect, but the young king had. *With them, I can do anything. They trusted me enough to follow me this far, and they'll keep going because of that.* Lion-O smiled to himself. *I am not my father, but I have done things he never dreamed possible. Nothing stands a chance against me as long as I have my friends – no, my family. They've all become my family.*

A warm feeling blossomed within Lion-O's chest. Suddenly he believed Tygra. He believed everything the tiger had said, not because their father had said or believed it, but because his big brother did. That was an important thing: Tygra believed *in* him. That faith Tygra had spoken of, the blind faith placed in the king when no one knew what the future held, how Claudus had left behind his son in hopes of ending a war if the battle turned against them, Lion-O had seen demonstrated by so many other races and species and creatures. He had shown them that a new world was possible, one of peace and co-existence where they helped and defended each other.

With that, he finally cast away the last shreds of doubt and self-pity that clung to him. Lion-O felt a bit of himself reborn. He was stronger than ever and could do whatever it took to forge a new life for everyone in their world – because, even in the moments when he didn't think he could, everyone else knew that he *would*. He may not always have confidence in himself or his plans, but everyone else did.

And that was good enough for him.



## End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! I hope you liked it. There are so many reasons Lion-O was told to stay behind, but I always thought Lion-O's safety was an underlying thought of Claudus'. In the ThunderCats timeline, I'd place this story before "The Pit" and after "Native Son"/"Survival of the Fittest." Please let me know what you think: like, hate, it's okay, anything at all. Again, thanks for reading!

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