

## Fond Memories

by

*Simba Wiltz*

- "Childhood is precious, a childhood shared is priceless."

Few things in nature can compare to the awesome power wielded by lightning. Electrical arcs trace asymmetric patterns of majestic chaos through the sky, before coming to a crashing halt with the earth. And it only lasts a scant few seconds. Oh, did I mention that lightning always brings along a friend?

The rolling rumble of raucous thunder sweeps across the ground with an authority only Mother Nature could give. No structure is safe from its blanketing bass as it rolls along the ground. Lightning, for all its power, has a bark much smaller than it's bite. Its friend, thunder, speaks loudly and carries no stick... save the frightening realization that you were just missed by mom nature's spark.

Despite these phenomenal phenomena, the dangerous duo cannot appear without the perfect conditions. With the monsoon season full in gear, the conditions were ripe and ready. The early morning sky had been a bright shade of red, drawing the pride out to see its brilliance. But by the afternoon, ominous clouds raced in to fill the sky with puffy moisture. Shortly after, the dozing pride found themselves deluged by the quick wetness.

Simba raced into the main cavern with a loud splashing sound. His wet mane hung limply about his neck, like a rouge drape. It flowed over his eyes and shoulders, culminating in pointy drips at the end. His fur was matted, and his entire body was soaked to the bone. With a flick of the head, he flipped the furry blindfold from his face and looked about the near empty cavern. A lone giggle greeted him.

- "You look so silly." The Lion King smirked and walked in the direction of the giggler, still dripping wet.

- "Oh no you don't," the sonorous voice teased,

- "you wouldn't dare..." No sooner had he closed within the desired range did the lion give his body a massive shake, sending his wetness everywhere within a five foot radius. For his effort, he received a comical shriek.

- "Simba, you rat!" giggled the voice in a good-natured tone,

- "How dare you!"

- "What?" he asked innocently, pawing at his now puffy mane. Before he could clear his field of vision, Simba felt strong paws push on his chest and bear him to the ground with an audible thump. Moments later, the same paws were rapidly skirting about his body searching out and exploiting all his ticklish spots.

- "What's the big idea, comin' in here and making me wet like that?" chided a playful voice,

- "Apologize!" Simba laughed and blindly tried to fend off the tickling onslaught.

- "Okay! Okay! I'm sorry, Nala!" The lioness smiled down at her captive prey and gently licked his

muzzle.

- "You know, I could get used to your mane being all puffy like that." Simba's protruding muzzletip grinned.

- "But then I wouldn't be able to see?" He heard the sweet giggle once again.

- "And you'd be totally at my mercy." Simba made a melodramatic gasping noise.

- "But how could I live without being able to visually bask in your radiance?"

- "Flirt," Nala scolded playfully, leaning to lick his nose,

- "I swear, Simba, you say the sweetest things sometimes." She leaned closer, using her muzzle to help press down the frizzy lionmane. Simba purred happily at the warm nuzzle, smiling the whole time. Nala worked down the manefur just the way he liked it, and when his eyes were finally cleared of the mess, he looked up at her and mewled cubbishly.

- "Peek-a-boo." The lioness giggled and gave him another quick tickle before lying down in a dry spot. Simba smirked, getting up to join her,

- "You know, you should really take it easy now that we have a cub on the way."

- "But how could I live without being able to pounce you daily?" Nala pouted cutely. The lion laughed softly, echoing off the walls of the cavern.

- "Touché." The two lionines laid in the safety of the warm main cavern. Outside, the rain poured down with as much fervor as before, occasionally breaking the gentle patter with a mighty flash and roll of thunder. Nala pressed closer to the semi-damp lion.

- "It's really getting bad out there."

- "I know," Simba sighed,

- "I made sure that all the cubs and lionesses were safe in the other caverns of Pride Rock. But I didn't want you staying in here all by yourself, so&mdash;"

- "So you braved the storm and the rain, just to be with the one you loved," Nala sighed and nuzzled him,

- "Simba, you're a hopeless romantic." He quirked a brow, and twisted his ears aside slyly.

- "I can change that if you want?"

- "Don't even think about it lion!" responded the lioness, gently batting his forepaw. Simba smiled, leaning in close to press his head to hers. It didn't matter to him how bad the weather got. Being with Nala was like having a warm sunny day right next to him. Before long, he found himself singing a little tune aloud.

- "I've got sunshine... on a cloudy day..." Nala looked at him strangely.

- "Where'd you come up with that?" The lion giggled,

- "Ooh, let's just say I heard it through the grapevine."

- "Simba," Nala laughed,

- "sometimes you make me lose my mind."

- "Honey honey, yeah." The lion winked and the pair shared another laugh together. The sound of rain pattered about the room for a moment, broken only by the occasional purr from either Nala or Simba. After the brief pause, the former looked to the latter.

- "Hey, do you remember way back when we were still cubs during our first rains?"

- "Hmm," Simba mused,

- "you mean that one where you got stuck in the mud and&mdash;"

- "EEK!" Nala squealed, flopping onto him,

- "Don't remind me!" The lion giggled and rolled with her.

- "&mdash;and you couldn't get out and&mdash;"

- "Simba!"

- "&mdash;and your mother came and called you&mdash;"

- "SIMBA! If you ever say that name again I swear I'll..."

- "Okay, okay," he tried to keep from laughing,

- "but kings above, that was soooooo funny!" he hardly finished his words before dissolving into giggles. Nala gently batted his side.

- "Keep it up and I'll give you something to laugh about..." she threatened, playfully,

- "I was thinking more along the lines of the game we used to play when we were in this cavern." Simba's eyes brightened.

- "Oh that!!" he exclaimed,

- "of course I remember that! The one where we picked someone and saw who could make them laugh first?"

- "That's the one!" giggled his mate, before lapsing into a gentle sigh,

- "we had so much fun with that."

- "And got into so much trouble too." Simba reminded her, righting himself to an upright position. Nala grinned back.

- "Well, if you hadn't tickled Scar&mdash;"

- "Ah-ah-aaah!" the lion mrrred,

- "don't remind me. I didn't think that a guy like him would BE ticklish." Despite herself, Nala giggled.

- "We had some other fun adventures. My mom and Sarabi were easy to make laugh."

- "Nala," Simba giggled,

- "with that face you used to make, ANYone would have laughed."

- "Are you saying I looked funny, lion?" she chided, pawing him. The king quickly rolled over in submission.

- "Hey! I know better than that." He grinned,

- "I'd like to sleep inside the cavern tonight."

- "That's more like it."

- "What about that time that we held each other's tail in our mouths and raced around in a circle until we were dizzy?" Nala laughed at this.

- "Oh! That even got Msala laughing when she was in here."

- "Actually, I think it was when I staggered over to Hamare and asked her if she was my mom in a slurred voice..." Simba snickered,

- "that sent the whole cavern over the edge."

- "Except for your dad," Nala reminded him, licking his slightly wet ear a bit,

- "he was one of the hardest to make laugh, all because you wouldn't try to tickle him&mdash;"

- "Hey!" Simba exclaimed,

- "the last time I tried that, he got me back tenfold!"

- "Still," the lioness insisted,

- "I wouldn't have minded watching you writhe on the floor trying to get away, and calling every name in the pride for help again. That would have been hilarious!" She fell on her side, putting a paw on her chest as she laughed. Simba blushed mildly before suddenly perking his ears.

- "Do you remember what did get him to laugh eventually?" His voice came softly, intimate. Nala glanced over her shoulder to him with a curious gaze,

- "No, I can't remember..." she mentioned,

- "what was it?"



- "Well," and Simba smiled fondly,  
- "after we had tried our best act and he had only smiled at us, I asked him why he hadn't laughed. And he said that he knew our game too well to give up that easily, and that he hoped that when we were married in the future that we'd be just as happy together&mdash;"

- "&mdash;and we both," Nala chimed in, remembering,  
- "jumped away from each other, and yelled YUCK! in as high pitched a voice as we could&mdash;"

- "And he laughed," Simba finished, giggling,  
- "harder than I'd ever seen him laugh before." Nala smiled,

- "And you know what the funniest part is?" she scooted back to Simba's side, pressed warmly against his leonine body,  
- "we are happy."

- "I see nothing funny about that," the lion said, a smile on his face and his voice low,  
- "it'd be impossible for me to not be happy with you around."

- "Simba," the lioness said, her voice equally as low and intimate,  
- "you say the sweetest things sometimes." The two locked eyes, smiling.

It was ironic, you might think, that a massive flash of lightning illuminated the rainy sky, followed by a tremendous crack of thunder. Amid it all, the two lovers had created a protective shield with their connection of hearts at that moment. Neither moved or startled, completely lost in the depth of their collective souls.

Just then, Nala jumped, hard enough to surprise the lion next to her. She uttered a soft 'ooh!' of surprise, and looked at her burgeoning belly. Simba blinked and looked to see what had happened.

- "Nala?"

- "The cub kicked me!" she giggled with glee. The lion smiled proudly.

- "Soon, we'll be parents and can pass on our stories to our cub, male or female." Nala sighed mildly.

- "I was thinking of names just the other day, what do you think about Tanabi or Chaka if it is a male, or Aisha or Kiara if it's a girl?"

- "I know a name that would work for either," Simba grinned,

- "Muddy-buns." It took a little while, and a lot of convincing; but, for three suns of consistent grooming, a few nights off of the hunt, and enduring a playful tickling, Simba managed not to have to sleep in the rain that night.