

Tessa and the Lions' Den

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Tessa and the Lions' Den

by Deborah Brunt



Facing lions who tore other people apart before they hit the floor of the den, Daniel didn't quake in his sandals. He was serene as a woman stroking her cat.

Something has come over our finicky cat. She wants to cuddle. I still cannot hold her for more than 12 seconds. But the last couple of days, the feline that usually eats and exits can't seem to get enough of human touch.

The first night, she was lounging on her pillow when I sat down beside her and began stroking her silky fur. She started purring, low and throaty, like a motor on idle. Turning this way and that, she stretched luxuriously, extending first one paw, then another.

I figured our bonding would last roughly a minute. But Tessa didn't want me to stop ever. Eventually I did, and she left to cat around.

The next night, as I stood at the bathroom sink, she padded over, sat at my feet and looked up at me as if to say, "What are you waiting for?" Let me tell you: it's a trick to brush your teeth and wash your face and take off your eye makeup while stroking a cat with one foot. But, again, Tessa didn't want me to stop.

"Who are you and what have you done with our cat?" I asked her.

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Standing there, watching her stretch and listening to her motor running, I recalled a story I'd first heard as a kid. It's a true story of a man named Daniel who, as far as I know, had no cats. What Daniel did have was "an extraordinary spirit" and a bad habit of praying regularly.

Both got him in trouble. The guys around him, seeing that Daniel was about to get the promotion they all wanted, tried to find a way to discredit him. Unable to dig up even a tiny bit of dirt, they resorted to treachery.

At their urging, the king passed a law declaring (my paraphrase): "No praying to any deity or human except me, the king, for the next 30 days. Offenders will be thrown into the lions' den." Guess who got caught praying?

Now the king really liked Daniel. But he couldn't figure out a way to undo the irrevocable law he himself had signed. So, at sundown, he had Daniel thrown into the lions' den. But first the king cried, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you" (Dan. 6:16 NLT).

After a long night without food or sleep, the king hurried back to the lions' den with another cry: "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?" (Dan. 6:20).

When Daniel actually answered, the king realized: Something had come over his ferocious lions. Specifically, according to Daniel, "My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths" (Dan. 6:22).

I wonder: Did Daniel spend the night stroking those big cats and listening to them purr? Or did he spend the long hours from sunset to dawn sitting in the pitch darkness of that stone-capped den, heart pounding, ears straining to hear a feline footfall, expecting any moment to be pounced upon and eaten?

We might assume the latter. Yet the Bible speaks of Daniel's night as one, not of terror but of trust: "Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God" (Dan. 6:23).

Facing lions who tore other people apart before they hit the floor of the den, Daniel didn't quake in his sandals. He was serene as a woman stroking her cat.

You see, Daniel didn't have lions' den religion. In his darkest hour, he believed in the God he'd served all along.

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