

Luna Cariad

Cougars, Unicorns and Starry-eyed Innocence

"Marie?" Kayla's voice came from the dark.

"Yeah?" Marie asked.

"Tell me a scary story."

"I don't know any scary stories." She claimed.

"Fine," said Kayla, "I'll tell you a scary story. Once upon a time--"

"No," Marie said. "Make it a happy story. Make it a story about what's happening around us. Don't you hear the wolves? And the crickets? And if we stick our heads outside the tents, I bet the sky is full of stars."

"Okay," Kayla giggled. "Fine. Then *once upon a time*," she said, emphasizing where Marie had cut her off. "There was a...cougar who was born in the mountains. She was a Princess cougar and all the other cougars loved her. No, they worshiped her." Kayla laughed again, with glee. "This cougar Princess was named Candy."

"Candy?!" Marie laughed. "What kind of name is that?"

"It's a great name!" Kayla sounded insulted. "Her name was Princess Candy! And she made friends with all the animals. She liked the fish, the squirrels, the trees, and rabbits."

"Of course, she liked the rabbits," commented Marie. "She liked to EAT them."

"No!" cried Kayla, in shock. "No, she didn't. She..well, she was a vegetarian cougar. The Great Vegetarian Cougar, Princess Candy. And when she grew up and became queen, she taught the other cougars to be vegetarian. She didn't want death or pain. She wanted friendship and happiness. She wanted life."

"Uh huh," murmured Marie, amused. "And then what?"

"And then," Kayla sounded sleepy now. "Um, and then.. oh! And then Princess Candy met her best friend, Unicorn Cindy--"

"Unicorn Cindy?!" Marie laughed so hard she couldn't stop for several minutes until her stomach was too sore to continue. "Oh, my stomach."

"If you're *done*," Kayla said pointedly and then waited a moment. "Princess Candy and Unicorn Cindy were best friends. Every night they laid out under the stars and sang 'twinkle twinkle little star' together. And they knew they'd always be best friends. Forever."

"Forever," Marie agreed. "Goodnight, Kayla."

"Goodnight, Marie."