

Gift from the Stars

By Azmom

Chapter 6

Lion-o interviewed everyone who had been at the Lair that day, Snarf by his side in case he spotted the unknown Thundarian man. The man was nowhere to be found, but two people remembered him running towards the forest during the battle with a few bundles in his arms. It was assumed that the intruder was in league with the Mutants. It was just too much of a coincidence for the children to go missing at the same time that the Mutants attacked.

"It would explain their abrupt departure," said Tygra. "They needed to draw our attention away from the kidnapper until he had completed his task."

"So what is our next step?" asked Linda.

"We need to see if anyone has spotted the Mutants," said Lion-o, "I think it would also be a good idea to check out Castle Plundarr. There is a slim chance that they may have taken the children there." Lion-o paced around for a minute, rubbing his chin in thought. He finally nodded to himself and began to issue orders.

"Cheetara, you go to the Berbil village and see if they have seen anything, then find Snowman and Snowmeow, they will be helpful in our search. Panthro, take the Thunder Tank to the Wollo village and do the same. Bengali, you go and visit the Unicorn Keepers. Ask them to talk to the unicorns, they might have seen something. Tygra, I need you and Oro to head to Castle Plundarr and check it out. The Thunderkittens and I will gather our countrymen to form search parties and begin looking. Lynx-o, I need you at the Tower of Omens to help coordinate the search. Pumyra, Linda, and Kylynne, stay here and contact Mandora, we'll need her help. Also, contact Tumagar; see if his people have seen anything. If you can think of anyone else to call, then do so. The more information we have, the better!"

Linda and Kylynne began to protest. They didn't want to stay behind while their children were in danger. However, Lion-o was in no mood for arguments.

"Rrooowwwrrrr!!!!" His bellow shook the room, silencing the two women. "You two will stay here and do as I asked, is that clear?!"

Lady Kylynne nodded her head meekly, however Linda glared at the leader. Lion-o walked over to her, meeting her face to face. "Is That Clear?" he asked again, his eyes cold. Linda held his stare for a moment, then looked away, sighing. "Fine." she said flatly.

"Good." He walked away from her and didn't notice a slight finger gesture she had directed towards him. Bengali had, and knowing what it meant, grabbed her hand and growled a warning.

"I want everyone to keep in constant communication, no exceptions." He directed this last part at the Thunderkittens, who tried to look innocent. "Check in once every hour. If you find anything, call in immediately, no heroics. There are two innocent lives at stake and I want both of them home safely." Everyone nodded, agreeing with the Lord of the Thundercats.

Lion-o stood in front of everyone and held up his arm in front of his midriff in salute.

"Thundercats, Ho!" Everyone but Linda mimicked their leader. She had never felt comfortable saying that word, it was a Thundercat battle cry and she wasn't a Thundercat. In one powerful voice, they answered, "HO!" and left to do their assigned tasks. Linda, Pumyra, and Kylynne moved to different terminals and began calling anyone and everyone that they could think of so see if they had seen the Mutants or the children.

"I am sorry, friend Pumyra. I have spoken to all of my people, and no one has spotted the Mutants in months. We will begin a search in our area. It is our hope that the small ones will be alright."

Pumyra, sighed. Everyone they had called had basically given the same answer. "Our thanks Turmagar." she said then ended the transmission.

"Well," she said to the other women, "That's it, we've called everyone that we know. I guess all we can do is wait."

Linda sat at one of the terminals, frustrated that she was stuck here. A red warning light went off, letting her know that they had company. She switched on the external cameras and saw Queen Willa and another Warrior Maiden. "Willa's here and she looks like she's in a hurry. Maybe she has something for us."

Lady Kylynne and Linda met the newcomers downstairs. "Queen Willa, we are honored by your presence. How may we help you?" Kylynne asked, hope in her eyes.

"Actually, I'm here to help you." Willa said. "One of my Maidens captured a Mutant, the one known as Monkian. We have tried to get him to talk, but he refuses. We thought that perhaps the Thundercats could be more successful."

"Where is he now?" asked Linda.

"He's in the nearby woods, guarded by some of my Maidens."

"I should go and contact Lion-o." said Kylynne, turning to mount the stairs.

"No!" shouted Linda. "No offense, but if the Warrior Maidens, known for their determination, were unable to make him talk, then the Thundercats won't be any more successful."

She turned to Willa, "Take me to him," she said, a cold glint in her eyes, "I'll make him talk."

Willa studied the human woman, then nodded her head. "This way."

Monkian was furious. Of all the dumb things he could do, he had to be captured by a bunch of women. "You had better let me go if you know what's good for you, hoo, hoo!" he shouted at his guards. They just ignored him, waiting for their queen to arrive with the Thundercats. They were shocked when they saw Willa show up with only a human woman in Thundarian garb and the Lady Kylynne.

"Is the prisoner bound?" Willa asked the guards. The guards answered, "Yes, my lady." Willa nodded then cleared a path for Linda.

"My lady?" asked one of the guards. "May I ask what she is here for?"

Linda answered them. "I'm here to interrogate." The guards were confused, but kept their distance.

Kylynne stood to the side while Linda bent in front of the Mutant. "Fancy meeting you here."

Monkian spat at her. "What do you want, Thundercat whore?"

"I want to know where those kids are, and you're going to tell me, aren't you?" Kylynne noticed that Linda's voice was cold and emotionless. It sent a shiver up her spine.

Monkian laughed. "What makes you think I would tell you anything?"

"Well, if you don't," she said slowly, pulling a knife from a pocket of her robe, "You'll die right here." She looked straight into his eyes, and Monkian felt fear as he had never had before. Kylynne gasped, shocked at the turn of events.

"Wa, wait a minute! You can't do that! It's against your Code of Thundera. Thundercats aren't allowed!"

Linda leaned back, twirling the knife in her hand. "I may have married a Thundercat, but I am NOT a Thundercat. In fact, I never took the Oath, so the Code doesn't apply to me." She smiled cruelly at him. "Now tell me, where are the kids?"

The Mutant began to shake badly, but retorted, "You, you won't hurt me, your mate would get angry at you!"

Linda's arm flashed out, scoring a mark on the Mutant's arm. He screamed in pain and looked at her in shock. "It won't matter if my mate finds out, you'll be dead before then." She held up the knife and he saw his blood glisten on the blade.

"I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ARE, HOO, HOO!"

The knife struck again, causing the mutant to scream loudly. "Try again!"

Kylynne was horrified. She had never seen her friend like this. It was chilling the way she sat there like this was something she did everyday.

"I can do this all day Mutant." Linda said when Monkian refused to answer again. "One cut at a time, just like carving a roast." She moved in to use the knife again when Monkian screamed, "OK, OK, I'll tell you where they are! Just stop!"

Linda pulled the knife back. "I'm listening."

"They're under heavy guard at Fire Rock Mountain, deep inside the mountain itself."

"How many guards?"

"Thirty at most. There are two entrances. The main entrance is heavily guarded, you'll never get in." He couldn't believe he was blabbing everything, but this woman was vicious. She proved that she could and would kill him and he decided that no kid was worth that!

"What about the second entrance?" Linda asked.

"There are maybe two guards there. It's not as well guarded because it's impossible to get to, hoo, hoo."

"What is the layout of the mountain? Where would the children be kept?"

"Towards the center, down in the bowels. Look, I've told you everything I know, now turn me loose."

"Not yet. There is one last question you have to answer. Why?"

Monkian sighed, knowing that he wasn't going to get away easy. "It was Slythe's idea. We kidnap the Royal children and get Lion-o to disband the Universal Defense System. If he refused, then we would kill the boy and the baby."

"But something went wrong, didn't it?" Linda noticed Kylynne's normally gentle face grow white.

"Hoo, hoo, yeah, we kidnapped the wrong baby. We got someone else's brat, a White Tiger baby."

Linda nodded and stood up. "I guess you get to live. It's up to the Warrior women what happens to you now. Are you ready Kylynne?"

"Yes, I just need to do something first." She drew back her fist and slammed it into the Mutants face, knocking him out.

Linda looked at Kylynne respectfully. "What happened to the Code of Thundera?"

Kylynne rubbed her hand, trying to bring some feeling back. "I won't tell if you don't."

Linda laughed as they approached Willa. "So did you learn anything?"

"Yes," answered Linda, "They are keeping the children at Fire Rock Mountain. We will need to call the Thundercats and let them know, but I get this feeling that we have to get there as soon as possible."

"You'll need help." Willa motioned to one of the guards and the maiden who had arrived with her. "This is Melee and Ayan. They know a way to get you to the mountain quickly. They will also help you get inside."

Both Maidens bowed to the women, although Ayan hoped that the human woman, Linda wouldn't recognize her name. Five years ago, Ayan had tried to seduce Bengali. Even though he had been a free man then, she didn't think his wife would care.

Kylynne bowed to Willa. "Thank you, we are in your debt."

The four women left, slowing a little when Pumyra called on Linda's communicator.

"Cats Lair calling Linda, come in."

"Go ahead Cats Lair."

:What on Third Earth is taking you so long?" yelled Pumyra. "You should have returned to the Lair by now."

"I'm sorry about that, Myra, but we got some good information and decided to act on it. Can you patch me through to Lion-o? It's important."

Pumyra wondered what Linda was up to, so she had the frequency open to hear the conversation. "Go ahead."

"Linda calling Lion-o, come in please."

"This is Lion-o. Have you found something?"

"We discovered that the kids are being held at Fire Rock Mountain." She could see the mountain looming ahead, perhaps half a mile away.

Lion-o sounded excited when he answered. "That's good. Contact the other Thundercats and tell them to meet us there. We'll contact you when the children are safe. Lion-o out." He ended the connection before she could say anything else.

"Myra, I know you're there." she said into the communicator, "Can you call the others? Kylynne and are almost at the mountain."

"What in the hells do you think you are doing?!" asked the puma.

"Saving our kids." Linda said then cut the transmission.

The four women slowed down and quietly crept forward. Before them they could see a natural rock bridge leading up to a heavily guarded hole in the mountain. Linda looked around for the other entrance. She spotted it on the far left. Monkian had been right, there were only two guards there. The two entrances were far enough away from each other that the guards at the front wouldn't be able to see what was happening at the side.

She also understood why there were so few guards. No bridge reached over the massive gap that shielded it. The only possible way to reach it without detection would be to use something to jump over the gap, if the guards were distracted long enough to slip in. Linda looked around and noticed a stand of young saplings which could be used as a pole vault. She quietly bent one of the saplings, intending to break it and explained her plan to the others.

Kylynne went to get a sapling as well. "I'm coming with you."

"No." said the Maiden named Ayan. "The volcano is surrounded by Thundranium. You won't be able to approach the gap, let alone jump it." Kylynne knew that Ayan was right, but it didn't make her feel any better. "Melee, stay here with Lady Kylynne. I'll go with Madam Linda." Melee nodded

"We're going to need a distraction. Any ideas?"

Kylynne's ears perked up. "I think your distraction is on the way. There are a few vehicles headed toward us, probably ours. You better go now and get into position." Kylynne hugged Linda. "Be careful." she whispered to the human woman.

Linda and Ayan disappeared into the darkness, making their way toward the second entrance with their poles. They sat, waiting for the guards to move. They didn't have long to wait. Overhead the Feliner shot forward and began to circle the mountain. As predicted, the guards ran toward the main entrance. The two women ran forward quickly and vaulted over the gap,

pushing off at the last second. They made it and ran inside before the guards returned. The poles they had used fell into the pit and burst instantly into flames.

Inside, the women crept forward, listening for any sign of the Mutants. Linda led the way, but it was Ayan who kept them from being discovered. She heard voices coming towards them and grabbed Linda, pulling them into a large crack in the wall. They stayed silent as the Mutants passed by, then continued their search.

"Looks like this is the second time that I owe you my gratitude." Linda said, looking out for more Mutants.

Ayan was confused. "Second time? When was the first?"

Linda looked back and smiled at her. "When you told Bengali to listen to himself. If you hadn't we might never have gotten together."

Ayan smiled back, relieved that the other woman wasn't mad. "It was the right thing to do."

Silently, Linda and Ayan moved further in and down, finally coming to the dungeons. Linda stopped and held up her hand. From down the corridor she could hear a boy crying. Ayan stepped in front, slowly making her way toward the sound, Linda bringing up the rear. Just as they were about to reach the door where the sound was coming from, a Mutant walked around the corner and spotted them.

"Halt!" he called out, pointing a laser rifle. He advanced on them as the women raised their hands in the air, but collapsed when a large object was smashed over his head. Behind him was an older monkian woman.

"You are here for the children?" she asked. Linda nodded, wary of the newcomer. "They are in here." She gestured toward one of the dungeon doors.

"You must hurry. When he doesn't check in," she indicated the unconscious jackalman, "They will come to investigate. You need to be away by then."

Linda and Ayan ran into the room and saw the children. They picked up them up and headed back the way they came.

"No, not that way!" said the monkian. "You'll never get out that way. Follow me, I know a safer passage."

"Why should we trust you?" asked Ayan.

"Because I want the children safe. Not all of Plundarr's people are evil."

"What is your name?" Linda asked.

"Maya. I'm a slave of the Mutant overlords, but I have no love or loyalty to them."

Linda decided to take a leap of faith. "Show us the way Maya."

Maya led them through a maze of twist and turns, bringing them to an obscure crack in the rock. Linda called to the Thundercats on the communicator. "Linda to Lion-o, come in."

Bengali answered, sounding very upset. "Where on Third Earth are you?"

"On the back side of the mountain. We need a pick up."

Over the communicator, Linda could hear her mate cursing to the ancient Thundarian gods, including her name once or twice.

"Look, you wanna cuss at me, then do it later! Right now we need to get this kids to a safer place. The fumes are getting to them!" Claudus was looking sick and Jonalia lay weakly in her arms.

"We're on our way." he answered curtly.

Linda looked at Maya. "I can't thank you enough. These children mean so much to us, especially my Jonalia here." Linda nuzzled the weakened baby.

Maya smiled. "I was a mother once myself, so I completely understand." The Thunder Strike came around the corner and spotted them. The side door opened, revealing a concerned Lion-o, as the vehicle lowered itself down to reach them. They handed the children to him first, then Ayan climbed in.

Linda turned to the Plundarrian slave. "Come with us Maya, you don't need to be a slave any more."

Maya glanced over her shoulder, hearing shouts. She smiled sadly. "I thank you for your offer, but I would never be able to live anywhere without fearing that the Mutants will find me. Besides, I have one more act to perform to secure your escape." She turned and ran down the passage. The sound of shouting followed by laser fire and a scream told Linda that Maya was no more.

"Linda! Let's go!" yelled Lion-o, holding out his arm. She grabbed on and was swung into the Thunder Strike. They took off just as several Mutants appeared and shot at them.

Inside, Lion-o looked his son over while Bengali piloted the ship. Linda knew she was in for it. He wasn't even looking at her, his mouth pressed so tightly that it appeared to be a straight line. Ayan handed Jonalia to Linda, whispering, "Wait until we're on the ground before say anything. I'd like to land safely." and stepped back. Linda smiled at her and sat down to check her daughter over.

Bengali didn't land until they had reached Cats Lair. Lady Kylynnne was waiting for them, having been sent back when her husband had discovered her. As soon as everyone had jumped out, she ran to her husband and son, laughing and crying at the same time. She hugged her son and kissed him repeatedly. Bengali helped his wife and child down and called for Snarf.

"Snarf, snarf! I'm so glad that you got the kids back. I'm never taking my eyes off them again!"

Bengali took Jonalia out of Linda's arms and gently gave her to Snarf. "Can you watch her for a few minutes? My mate and I need some time alone."

He watched Snarf take the baby inside, then dragged his errant wife to a quiet, out of the way spot. He then dropped her arm and began to pace, running his hand through his hair. It seemed as if he were trying to think of what to say to her.

Linda made the mistake of talking. "Ben, I'm sorry, but I had to do it. I..."

Bengali exploded, "Do you have any idea what you put me through?! You could have been hurt or killed, or even worse! Did you even think about maybe letting us figure something out? No! You just decided to do things your own way and forget anything and everyone else!"

"Was it any better when Lion-o made me stay at the Lair?" Linda stepped in front of her husband, making him look at her. "Look, I may not be a Thundercat, but I'm not helpless! I'm sorry that I hurt you, but I'm not sorry for what I did. Our daughter is safe now, as is little Claudus, can't you forgive me?"

Bengali looked at her, his love for her waging war with his anger. Finally he sat down on a tree stump and rubbed his face.

"What am I going to do with you?"

Linda knelt down in front of him, placing her hands on his thighs. "Well," she said, smiling a little, "You could ground me, put me on bread and water, or even take away my books! You know how much I would hate that!" she smiled a little more when he looked at her, trying to fight back a smile of his own.

"Just promise never to pull a stunt like that again."

Linda frowned. "I can't. If something like this happens again, I'll do the same thing."

"Then at least let me know what you are going to do before you do it. I'd rather we worked together then wonder if you are alive or not!"

Linda held in her laugh, not wanting to make him mad again. "I promise." She bent up and kissed him. He squeezed her tightly for a moment, then pulled her to her feet. "Well, now that I'm done with you, it's time for Lion-o's judgment."

"What do you mean?" Linda asked, confused.

"You and Lady Kylynne were ordered to stay at the Lair, and you disobeyed." Bengali smiled slightly at her.

"Now wait a minute! I did what I thought was right, besides, I never took an oath!"

"Yes, about that, Melee told Lion-o about your treatment of Monkian. She was very impressed with you brutality."

Linda's faced paled at that. "Aw shit!" she muttered under her breath as they got closer to the Lair.

Bengali gave a brief chuckle. "That's one way to put it. We were shocked to hear that our sweet little Linda could be so evil."

Linda's mouth gaped open. "I wasn't being evil, just determined. I wasn't going to kill him. I knew he would crack, he just needed an incentive."

Bengali laughed loudly at this and had to drag his mate the last few feet into the courtyard where all the Thundercats had gathered. Lion-o stood in the center, his hands on his hips. "Linda, Lady Kylynne! Stand before me now!"

The two women stepped forward, placing themselves in front of the Thundarian Lord, heads hung low. "Were you not told to stay at the Lair?"

The women nodded. "And did you do as you were told?" They shook their heads.

"No, you didn't." Lion-o stared at the two women. "It was with good reason that I ordered you to stay at the Lair. I could not concentrate on the search for the children if I had to worry about your safety and well being. I'm sure that Bengali agrees." He looked toward the white tiger, who nodded his head in agreement.

"I do not give out my orders lightly and I expect them to be obeyed. What you did was dangerous and fool hardy. He folded his arms across his chest. I will say that we would probably have not gotten the children back if you hadn't done what you did." Linda and Kylynne began to hope that they would get off easy, but Lion-o's next words shattered that hope. "But that is no excuse! For the next three months, you are both restricted to the compounds. No day trips, no shopping at the villages, no visiting friends. Disobey again, and you will be locked in your quarters for a year! Am I understood?"

Linda and Kylynne nodded, grateful that their punishment wasn't worse. But Lion-o wasn't finished with Linda yet. "The Code of Thundera is one of our most sacred laws. The ideals of Truth, Honor, Justice, and Loyalty has led Thundarians peacefully for thousands of years. When a Thundarian reaches a certain age, they are required to take the oath, insuring that those ideals survive. But we now have a dilemma."

He moved in front of the human woman. "Linda, you are human, but you have taken a Thundarian mate, are raising a Thundarian child, and living a Thundarian life. I understand that you have your own ideals and beliefs and I respect that, but if you are to live as one of us, then you must obey our laws. Are you prepared to do that?"

Linda nodded her head, knowing that Lion-o was right. She looked up at him and said, "I'm ready."

Lion-o pulled out the Sword of Omens, grasping it by the blade, and held it out to her. She placed her hand on the hilt.

"Do you swear to obey all Thudarian laws, barring those that deal with religion?" Lion-o knew she would never abandon her god, and truthfully, he didn't want her to. "This includes any orders that I might issue in the future." She nodded. "I swear."

"Do you swear to uphold the ideals of Truth, Honor, Justice, and Loyalty, knowing that to ignore these ideals could bring about chaos?"

"Yes, I swear." The Eye of Thundera opened wide and growled, shooting a beam at her chest. When she looked down, she saw a Thundercat insignia form on the front of her robe. Her eyes grew wide. "Cool!" was all she could say.

Lion-o was amazed. It was not what he had expected, but he knew that the Eye of Thundera had its reasons. "Well, it appears that we have a new Thundercat in the family." Everyone clapped and cheered. Lion-o held up the Sword, yelling, "Thundercats..." Everyone, including Linda, shouted, "HO!"

Lion-o replaced the sword and pulled his wife close. "As much as I would like for us to celebrate, I'm afraid that it is time to go."

Quickly everyone said their good byes and the Thunder Strike took off, headed for New Thundera. Linda and Bengali waved until the vessel disappeared from sight. Then Linda turned to her husband. "Let's get our baby and go home."

Bengali kissed her and grinned. "Are you that eager to start your punishment?"

"Did you have to bring that up?" They both laughed and went to collect Jonalia, their gift from the stars.