Trials

Chapter 3

By Aria Moonsinger

“In case you missed it Panthro; I did, you got wounded when you fell over the edge. I'm not leaving you out here to fend for yourself. End of discussion; I have spoken.” she said and he saw the determination on her face. “Right; okay future Lady of the Thundercats, how do we get down?” he inquired. “Well; you're much too heavy for me to carry and we have to immoblize your leg, it could be broken.” she said and looked around for anything to use for a splint. She found a few branches and chose two of the longest ones; then she used a thorn from another one to make a tear in her skirt and was able to get two strips to tie the splint to his leg. She checked to make sure she didn't have to reset it, then put the two branches on either side of his leg. She found that one of the two strips was enough to fasten the branches. “You took to much from your skirt. You wasted material.” he said. “Did I? I don't think so. I may not be able to carry your full weight, but I can act as a mobile crutch as we climb down.” she said. She used the other strip to form a type of strap that she sercured around her arms.

Sliding down some over the edge; she looked at Panthro, “Let's go.” she said. They climbed down about two feet, then three; the plateau was about the same height as a four story building. Finally they reached the bottom; she took the strap off her shoulders, then off the splint itself. “I still say you wasted material.” He said. Jolene looked around and found a branch that was 'Y' shaped, but it was too long for Panthro to use as a crutch. So with a well placed kick; she snapped it in two, then took the extra strip and wrapped it around the 'y' area to create a cushion. “Still think I wasted material?” she asked. Panthro smiled at her and thought, 'What a resourceful woman.' “I stand corrected again.” he replied. “I'd see you back to the palace...” she started to say, but he finished, “But you would be late to the checkpoint. I'd say you have about three hours to get there. By the way; here.” he handed her his insignia. She took it from him; back at the palace, in the sword chamber: the sword showed that she had past the first trial. Lion-O smiled and thought, 'She did it; just four more trials Blue eyes, then we can plan our wedding.'

Jolene had left Panthro and headed for the Valley of the Snarfs. When she arrived the sun was just starting to set. She saw Snarf Oswald and the tent which was the checkpoint. “Welcome Jolene, snarf,

snarf just step inside." he said as he greeted her. "Hello Oswald and thank you." Jolene replied as she entered the tent. She found inside a table set for two and off to the side was a full size bed. Oswald came in and handed her a note. "This came by messenger; it's from Lion-O." he said. She opened the note; it read: 'Congradulations Blue eyes for getting through the first day. I was hoping to be there when you arrived; but I can't get away just now. I hope to see you after the second day. Good luck my love. Lion-O P.S. Tomorrow you'll have to choose who to race between Cheetara and Pumyra.'

Jolene closed the note and wiped at a stray tear. She ate her dinner; dressed in the night gown that was left and got under the covers. A few hours later; Lion-O arrived at the checkpoint, he had hoped she would still be awake. He found her fast asleep; she had claimed the middle of the bed, he looked down at her sleeping form. Some strains of hair fell over her face and he brushed them away; then caressed her cheek with the back of his fingers. This caused her to stir in her sleep; but she didn't wake up. As he gazed upon her; he felt that familiar tug in his lower region, it would be so easy to slip under the covers and lay down next to her. Maybe even wake her up and finally make love; but he promised her he would wait for their wedding night. He needed to be near her though and if he couldn't lay next to her under the covers; then by Jaga, he would on top of the them. He took the coverlet at the foot of the bed and covered himself with it as he layed next to her; with only the sheets and bedspread separating them.

Before he fell asleep; Jolene turned over to face him, even though she was sleeping she felt his warmth and snuggled against him. He smiled tenderly at her and placed his left arm over her; coaxing her to snuggle closer to him. He kissed her forehead; then drifted off to sleep as well. An hour and a half before dawn; Snarf Oswald entered the tent, "My king, you are needed at the palace." Oswald said softly. "Thank you Oswald; can you bring me a pen and paper please." Lion-O replied as quietly as possible, he didn't want to wake Jolene before her breakfast was ready. Oswald brought the items to Lion-O and he wrote a quick note to her and placed it on the table. Before he left; he bent down and kissed her cheek.

At day break; Jolene woke with breakfast on the table and another note. It read; 'I managed to get away just after sundown. When I arrived I saw that you were fast asleep. I stayed with you until an hour before dawn. I hope to see you at the next checkpoint. All my love, Lion-O.'
She ate a light breakfast; since her tan tank dress had the torn skirt, she chose the salmon colored dress that was altered just for her. "The dual split skirt will be perfect for today's trial of speed." she said aloud, then she headed towards the Churning Rocks where she would meet up with Cheetara and

Pumyra. After an hour; she looked at her map, 'Damn I have to go through the ruined capital city where ole Mumms pyramid is. I'll have to stick to the shadows to get by without being seen.' Jolene thought. After an hour and a half; Jolene reached the edge of the ruined city, as she had planned she kept to the shadows. The pyramid was located in the center of the once great capital; she saw an ugly bull dog fast asleep outside the pyramid, taking great care not to make a noise and staying down wind of the creature she slipped past him and his master's pyramid. Once she was out of earshot and on the other side of the ruins; she said to herself, “Talk about owners and pets looking alike. Sheesh!”

It was past eleven in the morning by the time she reached the Churning Rocks. She saw the two she-cats and called, “Cheetara, Pumyra Ho!” They called back “Jolene Ho!” She approached them and said, “I know I have to choose one of you to race, but I wasn't told where to.” Cheetara answered her, “Whomever you choose to race, you'll have to beat them to the fountain in the center of the Gardens of Thundera. There you will find two bottles; the racer that returns to me first with their bottle filled with the fountains waters, wins the day.” “So whom do you choose to race?” asked Pumyra. Jolene looked at her two friends and weighed her options; 'If I chose Cheetara; she would have too much of an advantage on me, if I chose Pumyra I just might have a chance.

“I choose Pumyra to race.” she said. Cheetara smiled at her choice; and then asked, “There are two ways to get around the Churning Rocks; which do you choose?” Jolene had studied her map; the right was longer, but easier to navigate through. While the left was shorter; but more dangerous, there was a ravine that she would have to cross should she choose the left. She wasn't sure; but she thought she remembered seeing a bridge icon on the map, “I choose the left.” she said. “But that way is dangerous....” said Pumyra, “But shorter.” Jolene answered. Cheetara remembered a simular conversation with Lion-O during his trial with her. “Well then; you've made your choices...” Cheetara said, Jolene nodded 'yes' “Get ready” Cheetara instructed as both women took their stances to run “GO!” yelled Cheetara and both women took off in opposite directions to get around the Churning Rocks.

An hour into the race; Jolene came to the ravine, she saw the land-bridge. “It's really narrow; I'm going to have to crawl to get across, I got to remember not to look down.” she said to herself. She climbed up on the base and wished she had claws like Lion-O or any of the others had. As she moved up; it started to level out, “It looks even smaller up close, I hope this thing can support my weight.” she said as she

carefully moved across it. It took her an hour and a half to get across; once she was across, Jolene took off for the Gardens of Thundera. Pumyra had faired somewhat better than Jolene; she simply sprinted across the land, trying not to be tempted to use her full speed.