Gift from the Stars

By Azmom

Chapter 3

Pumyra was fuming as she headed to her daughter's room. Once again Renee was going to make them late for another function. From down the hallway she could hear New Age Thundarian music blaring, which only added to her anger. She entered Renee's room and was appalled by what she saw. The room looked like it had exploded; there were clothes strewn everywhere, dirty dishes placed on any available surface, and the bed looked like it hadn't been made in weeks. Pumyra could see her daughter rummaging in her closet for something.

“Renee! Turn that blasted noise down RIGHT NOW!” Renee's head popped out of the closet and immediately turned down her music unit. “What on Third Earth happened here?!”

Renee looked around the room then back at her mother. “What?”

Pumyra massaged the bridge of her nose, knowing that if she started on this old debate again, they would be here for hours. Instead she took a quick breath and addressed her child. “Renee, we're going to be late for Lord Lion-o's birthday party. Are you ready?”

Renee let out an over dramatic sigh. “Hardly! I have no idea what I'm going to wear!”

“What's wrong with the outfit you have on?”

“Mother!” the girl wailed, “This outfit is so old and childish. I don't want to go there looking like some kind of baby, I mean, I'm 12 years old, for Jaga's sake!”

“Watch the language, young lady. As for your wardrobe, just pick something, Please!”

“How about this?” Renee asked as she pulled out an extremely short skirt and very low cut blouse. “I think this would look great on me.”

Pumyra started at the outfit, shocked. “I don't even think so! In fact, please hand them over.”

The girl's mouth dropped. “What? Why?!”

“Because these clothes are too revealing for a 12 year old child. You are not going to wear them; not now, not ever.”

“You are so unfair!” Renee yelled as she gave her mother the clothing. “Fine! I'll go to the party looking like a baby!” She stormed past Pumyra, muttering under her breath. “...ruining my life...”

Pumyra closed her eyes and sighed. “I'm not ready for puberty.”

“I thought you would be past that by now.” Linda laughed from behind her.

Pumyra turned and gave her friend a weary smile. “Not mine, hers.” she said , motioning toward the angry girl.

“Hmm, yeah, I heard you guys down the hall.” Linda hugged the puma. “Hey, just remember, all mothers go through this with their girls. I know I gave my mom hell, but she came through it pretty well. You'll do fine.”

“I hope so.” Pumyra sighed again over her daughter. “We better hurry, we're late as it is.”

Both of the ladies made their way to the Tower's garage. Along the way, Pumyra asked Linda about the adoption procedure. “Have you heard anything from the Adoption Agency Department?”

Linda shook her head. “No, not a thing and it's worrying me. The paperwork was sent in 4 months ago, we should have heard something by now.”

“Have you thought about calling them?”

Linda shook her head vigorously. “Oh no, I'm too afraid they'll tell me that we've been denied right there on the spot. I'll just wait!”

Pumyra laughed. “Coward!” she teased her friend.

“Yeah, yeah, I know. Just let me live with my hope a little longer.” Linda said as they neared the garage.

“Alright, but you know, you are probably worrying for nothing.”

Oro poked his head out of the door. “Come on ladies, you're making us late!”

“Us?!” Pumyra replied. “Talk to your daughter, she's the reason we're late.”

Bengali stepped next to Oro and laughingly shook his head. “Always blaming the kid. That's not very motherly of you, Pumyra.”

“Keep it up, Ben! One of these day I'm going to leave Renee with you, then let's see how motherly you can be!”

“Oh, come on 'Myra, you know I can't do that. I don't have the right anatomy.”

Pumyra looked at Linda, who laughed and made an “After you” gesture. “Thank you.” Pumyra said and smacked the back of Bengali's head as she walked past him.

“You deserved that one, Tiger.” Linda said as Bengali rubbed his injured head.

“Yeah, but did she have to do it so hard?”

The court yard of the Cats Lair was packed with Thundercats, their spouses and children, loyal Thundarians, and numerous friends all wishing Lord Lion-o a Happy Birthday. The scene was one of controlled chaos; children chasing each other around laughing and screaming, teenage boys trying to act nonchalant as they tried their best to get the young ladies attention (who in turn giggled at their attempts), the women gathered together to admire the newest baby or to complain teasingly about their spouses, the men discussing the latest technology or who was winning the Thunderball League Finals, and snarfs running in and out of the Lair with refreshments for everyone or chasing after wayward children.

Snarf surveyed everything with a smile of satisfaction; he might complain to the Thundercats that they piled so much on him and his fellow snarfs, but in truth, they were in their element right now. A snarf took pride in his or her work and felt that a job well done was more fulfilling than any compliment, although they liked getting those too.

An outsider who saw this party might think that the snarfs were nothing more than a slave class, but they just didn't understand the unique Thundarian/Snarf relationships at all. Most Thundarians who had a snarf living in their homes counted themselves lucky. They relished the companionship and intelligent (and often witty) conversation that a snarf provided and they truly appreciated the work that they did. In return, a snarf in a Thundarian household enjoyed feeling productive, wanted and loved. They felt that they were part of a family, as did the Thundarians they lived with.

Snarf turned to see his cousins Egbert and Oswald carrying the Birthday cake out on a floating platform and began to direct them as to where it was to go and warning them to be careful. The cake was a work of art that Snarf had made himself, as he didn't trust anyone else to do it. It was a three tiered cake with brilliant blue roses and red and black Thundercat insignias all around with fluffy white piping on the edges.

The children stopped their play to gaze longingly at the creamy confection and many a tongue licked at lips in anticipation of eating the delicious cake. One bold little boy tried to swipe at the icing near the bottom, but had his hand smacked smartly by Snarf. “Snarf, snarf, you kids need to wait until Lord Lion-o cuts the cake before you can have any. Brrr! The next one who tries a stunt like that will find themselves without a single crumb, you hear me?” This threat was sufficient enough to keep even the most daring child away from the cake. No one wanted to miss getting a piece of the yummy treat.

The appearance of the cake was a signal to the people to gather around. They all formed a circle around the Lord of the Thundercats and began to sing “Happy Birthday” to him, ending with applause and best wishes for the next year. Lion-o beamed a smile at the crowd. “Thank you all for being here today to help me celebrate the anniversary of my birth. Your show of support and loyalty is very warming to my heart.”

“Hey, I just came for the free cake!” yelled someone, causing the multitude to laugh.

Lino-o laughed as well. “I'll take what I can get.” he said then began slicing the cake and passing out plates.

“So Lion-o,” called out Linda, “Exactly how old are you anyway?”

Lion-o glanced at her and noticed her mischievous smile. He grinned back at her. “Old enough to know that I better not answer that question.”

Everyone was having fun and savoring the wonderful cake when Oro noticed a worried Tygra coming out of Cats Lair. He walked up to Lion-o and spoke to him quietly. “I think something is wrong.” he said, nodding in the tiger's direction. Lion-o looked in Tygra's direction and noticed his friend's look of concern. He sought out Lady Kylynne, who had also seen the tiger and had hurried to take her husband's place at the cake.

“Go, my dear, and find out what's going on. I'll take care of things here.” Lion-o kissed his wife in appreciation and hurried with Oro over to talk to Tygra.

Bengali, Panthro, Pumyra, and WilyKat had noticed the exchange and excused themselves to join the group. WilyKit walked up to Linda, a look of concern on her face. “What's happening over there?”

“I'm not sure,” Linda answered the young Thundercat.

WilyKit took a hesitant step forward and asked, “Do you think I should join them?”

Linda shook her head. “No, stay here. They'll let us know what's going on after they finish talking. If all the Thundercats are seen together looking like that,” she indicated the concerned faces, “it might start a panic.” Linda saw that some of the guest were looking at the congregation of Thundercats with worry on their faces.

“What we need to do right now is mingle with the crowd and let them know that things are under control.”

WilyKit nodded her agreement and headed toward the nearest group of people, a bright smile on her face. Linda saw that Lady Kylynne had come to the same conclusion and was talking pleasantly to those around her. She seemed to be doing an excellent job, many people left her side with a relieved smile.

“Madam Linda?” She turned to the speaker, a middle aged Thundarian man.

“Yes sir, How can I help you?” she said, smiling at the gentleman.

“Is everything alright?” He motioned toward the Thundercats in the distance. “It looks serious.”

Linda noticed that several guest around them were listening to the conversation. “I'm not sure what is happening, sir, but I can assure you that everything is fine. We will probably find out what is happening as soon as Lord Lion-o and the other nobles are done. Until then, try to enjoy yourself. After all, this is a party.” Linda smiled sweetly at everyone, which did the trick. People walked away feeling better, but inside Linda was worried. She wish she knew what the Thundercats were discussing

Shortly there after, WilyKat walked over to Lady Kylynne while the other Thundercats filed inside the Lair. He spoke with her for a minute, then they moved toward the center of the courtyard.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” she said loudly, gaining everyone's attention. “If I could get everyone to quiet down I would like to make an announcement.” In less than a minute, the courtyard was silent. “Thank you. I'm afraid that we will have to cut the party short. It appears that we have an emergency and we are going to need some volunteers. I will now ask the young Noble WilyKat to explain.”

WilyKat stood up straighter as he began to speak. “Our space satellites have spotted a Thundarian starship headed towards Third Earth, but we are unable to communicate with the ship and it is coming in too fast and steep.” People began scanning the sky, looking for the ship. WilyKat continued, “The other Thundercats are at this moment preparing to meet the ship and we are hopeful that we can slow the ship down and bring it in safely. But in the unfortunate case that we cannot, we are going to need volunteers for triage and search and rescue parties. Any of you wishing to volunteer, please speak to Lady Kylynne, Lady WilyKit, or myself. Are there any questions?”

“Where will the ship land?” someone asked.

“We have determined that the ship will touchdown near the Sinking Sands, which is fortunate as it is an uninhabited area.” WilyKat pointed to a raised hand.

“Do you know how many people are on the ship?”

“As was said earlier, we are unable to communicate with the starship, so we don't know how many if any might be on it, but it is estimated that the ship's capacity is about 300.” The crowd began to talk excitedly. Those with young ones gathered their children and left, but many more stayed behind to volunteer. Linda walked over to WilyKat.

“I noticed that you left me out. What should I do?”

“Because of the medical training you received from Tygra and Pumyra,Lion-o wants you to go with them to the crash site for on-the-spot triage.” Quietly he told her, “It's not good. There is no way for us to slow down the craft. If there are people on that ship, not many will survive.”

Linda nodded her head, understanding immediately what the young man was saying. “I better go find Pumyra. Good luck here Kat.” She gave him a quick hug and went inside the Lair and prayed hard for those on the doomed starship.

Pumyra and Linda were driving the Thunder Tank on the ground while listening to Lion-o in the Feliner communicating with Cats Lair. “Feliner to Cats Lair. Where is the ship now?”

“Cats Lair to Feliner,” came WilyKat's voice over the intercom. “The ship is just now entering our atmosphere. Estimated time to impact, 12 minutes. You should be seeing it soon.”

Lion-o scanned the skies, trying to catch a glimpse of the poor ship. In the Feliner with him were Panthro and Cheetara. “We should get higher.” Panthro nodded and brought the vehicle up to 10,000 feet.

In the Thunder Strike Bengali and Oro also searched for the ship while Lynx-o used his braille board to fly to the estimated crash site. When they saw the Feliner climb, they followed suit. They were just entering the Sinking Sands area, but there was still no sign of the star craft. Bengali called Cats Lair. “We don't see anything yet Kat, are you sure?”

“It should be right on top of you.” WilyKat answered.

Linda looked up and saw what the others could not. “Oh Shit!” she said quietly when she saw the ship. It was enormous and headed right for the two flying Thundercat vehicles.

“Thunder Tank to Feliner and Thunder Strike, drop your altitude immediately.” To Pumyra she said, “Stop the Tank.” Pumyra looked up and gasped, slamming on the brakes, then put it in reverse as fast as she could.

Bengali heard the concern in his wife's voice. “Bring her down, Lynx-o.” The lynx nodded and began to bring the Thunder Strike closer to the ground. The Feliner however had not made a move. It still hovered high up.

“Tank to Feliner, I repeat, drop your altitude immediately! You have incoming bearing at 3 o'clock.”

“Feliner to Thunder Tank, could you repeat?”

“Drop Down, God Damn It!” she yelled into the communicator. “On Your Right!”

Panthro looked to the right and saw the ship coming at them. “By Thundera!” He grabbed the yoke and shot the Feliner down just seconds before the ship would have hit them.

“Everyone to a safe distance!” Lion-o called over the communicator. “Impact imminent!” The two Flying vehicles raced to get away from the expected explosion, so they didn't see what happened next, but Pumyra had gotten the Thunder Tank back far enough, so the ladies had a good view. They stood up to get a better look.

Linda watched the ship coming down and noticed a name on the side, “Taurean” and filed it away in her mind for later. The ship seemed to glide through the air for a while, then the bottom side hit a large rocky outcrop, causing the front to come up a bit and twist. Debris began to fly everywhere. Some of the debris looked like silvery elongated space boards. These strange objects fell and smashed on the sharp rocky ground far below. Linda heard Pumyra cry out. “By Jaga! Those are Space Capsules!”

Linda was about to ask what a Space Capsule was when she saw one smash to pieces, throwing a humanoid body high into the air. “Oh my God!” she gasped, realizing too late that there were people in those things! She and Pumyra could only watch in horror as more capsules and their occupants met the same fate. Finally the ship slammed nose first into a near by plateau. It began to fold like an accordion before erupting in a large ball of fire. The blaze was so bright that Linda and Pumyra had to throw their arms up in front of their eyes to keep from being blinded. After a while they removed their arms and stared at the fiery devastation.

“Oh dear God,” Linda prayed, “I hope that if anyone was on that ship when it blew, that they went quick and painlessly.”

“Amen” second Pumyra silently, tears running freely down her face.

“Feliner to Thunder Strike and Thunder Tank, come in. What is your status?”

“Thunder Strike to Feliner, we're fine here.” said Oro. “Pumyra, are you ok?”

Pumyra picked up the communicator and answered. “ Yes, we're ok here, but Oro... by the goddess!” She couldn't finish. She dropped the communicator and cried. Linda answered for her. “We witnessed the entire crash, Feliner. The ship is in flames and there are Space Capsules everywhere, occupied Space Capsules. I don't think we'll find many still intact.”

There was silence for a while, then Lion-o spoke again. “Understood Thunder Tank. Give us your coordinates, we'll rendezvous at your location.” She gave them information, then tried to comfort Pumyra until the others could join them. Linda felt ashamed that she couldn't feel much more than sorrow for the victims of the crash. She thought it might be because she didn't know the victims, but then she remembered an incident that had happened in her old time.

On September 11th, 2001 A.D., two planes had crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City, another at the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and one more in a field in Pennsylvania. It had been a dark time for the American people, a terrorist plot to hit at the financial and military heart of America. Linda hadn't know those victims either, but for years after every time she thought of that day, she cried. Why was this time different?

The Feliner was the first to reach them, followed shortly by the Thunder Strike. Pumyra ran to Oro when he jumped out and he held her as she cried and shook. Bengali went to his own mate. “You ok?” he asked her, folding her in his arms.

She nodded, then whispered, “Ben, I don't feel anything for these people. I mean, I feel sad for what has happened, but that's it. Why?”

He sighed, “That's because you saw it from a far, it's not completely real to you yet. Once we go down there and see it up close, it will hit you then. Let me know when that happens.” She nodded and saw Lion-o coming towards them.

Lion-o sighed, “We're going to let Pumyra stay here with the vehicles while the rest of us go down and see if we can find any survivors. I've called Cats Lair and asked WilyKat to send the Search and Rescue teams. Once they get here, Pumyra will join us. Are you up for this Linda?”

“No, but I don't have a choice.” she said, “Someone down there will probably need medical attention and until Pumyra is feeling better, only Tygra and I can help them medically.”

“Ok, but let me know if you need to take a break or leave, understood? Ben, stay with her, she may need help with patients. Both of you keep your communicators close. Use them only if you have to.” Linda and Bengali nodded.

Lion-o called out to the others. “Ok, Thundercats, let's go.” Slowly they made their way to the wreckage.