Gift from the Stars

By Azmom

Chapter 4

The crash site looked like the after math of a battle zone. Sporadic fires burned out of control and scorched metal and plastic was everywhere. But the worst were the bodies. Everywhere there were charred and shredded flesh, disembodies parts, and pools of blood. Some of the bodies were unrecognizable as human, much less Thundarian. And the smell was over powering; something between roasted and rotting meat permeated with the metallic smell of blood. It was like a living nightmare.

Linda's stomach churned at the sight and smell, but she willed herself to hold it in. “You can do this,” she told herself, “You can make it, don't think about it.” It seemed to be working, her belly was calming down, until she looked at one of the bodies and noticed that its eyes were looking at her. It appeared to be a man who had been horribly burned, half of his face was blackened like burned barbecue chicken. Then the poor thing moaned in pain and raised a disfigured arm towards her.

That was it! Linda ran to the nearest clump of rocks and emptied the contents of her stomach out on the ground. Bengali saw her running and rushed after her. The retching noise he heard let him know what was wrong. He went to rub her back, hoping to make her feel better, but as soon as he touched her, she shrugged him off.

“No!” she managed to get out before heaving again. So Bengali just stood back and waited for her to finish. After she was done, she rinsed out her mouth and faced her husband, still a little shaky. “Do me a favor babe,” she said, “While we are here, try not to touch me. I...I don't want to associate your touch with...this place.” She turned away from him, so he wouldn't see the despair in her eyes. “Please.”

Bengali understood her and even though he longed to hold and comfort her, he refrained, honoring her request. “Ok, I promise to keep my hands to myself for as long as we have to stay here.” he said, “but I want us to talk about it after this is all over, no holding anything in.”

She nodded and walked back to the poor man who had caused her discomfort. She bent down to take his pulse and found that she was too late, he had slipped away while she had been occupied. “May God be with you.” she said, a stray tear escaping down her face. She continued on, checking bodies for signs of life, offering aid to those who needed it, binding wounds and setting bones, and administer pain medication.. Sometimes the only thing she could do was hold someones hand and offer them comfort until they passed away. Bengali was always by her side, never saying more than was necessary, handing her instruments, bandages, and medication, and taking care not to touch her as she had requested.

With each patient Linda saw, her heart grew a little heavier and her resolve to endure the horrors around her grew more, until she found herself on automatic response several hours later. Bengali

called for a rest break when he saw her eyes glazing over. He made her sit down on some rocks and gave her some food and water. She refused the food, but gulped greedily at the water. She hadn't stopped for a break since she had attended her first patient and was extremely tired. Bengali looked back at the destroyed star ship. “I wonder what ship this was? It looks like one of the evacuation ships from Old Thundera. It could help to identify these people.”

Linda looked up and tried to remember the name she had seen on the side of the vessel before it had crashed. “It was Taur...Taur...Taur something. I'm sure the name will come to me later.” She let her head drop back down, exhaustion taking its toll on her.

“There were a few ships that started with that name. The Taurus, the Taurlan, The Taura Alta, and some others. My brother and his wife was on a ship with a Taur name. The Taurean, I think.” Linda's head snapped up at that one. The Taurean, that was the name she had seen! Oh dear God! This was the ship his family had boarded to escape Thundera. Linda began to rub her face and eyes, wondering how to tell him that this was his brother's ship. Somewhere among the wreckage was Bengali's brother Jonal and his wife Sabina.

“Hey, are you ok, love?” She peeked through her fingers and noticed the worry on his face. She decided that now was not the time to tell him. Later she would tell him, when they could be alone to express their sorrow. Right now they still had too many victims to see.

“I'm ok hun, just a bit tired. Just give me a minute.” She gave him a weak smile to back up her claim.

Bengali bent down in front of her, keeping his hands on his knees.”I have to tell you, I'm very proud of you. You are doing things here that would make most grown warriors faint. I don't think I've ever been more honored to be your mate than I am right now.”

She laughed a little. “If you tell me that your aroused, I'm demanding a divorce!”

Bengali laughed. “I can't even think about that now, especially with the way you look, no offense.” he said, observing her physical state. She was covered in dirt, soot, and biological gore. She almost looked like a crash victim herself.

“I wouldn't talk babe, you look just as bad.” she replied. He looked at himself and laughed. She was right, he looked like a victim as well.

A low moaning reached Bengali's ears; it sounded feminine and painful. Linda heard it too and stood up, ready to go back to work. They followed the moaning until they came upon a young woman who looked like she came from the White Tiger Clan. Her large round stomach announced that she was pregnant and it appeared that the baby had decided to make an appearance. Bengali stopped when he saw the woman's face and Linda knew in an instant who she was.

“Sabina?!” he said, shocked, then threw himself down next to the woman. “Sabina! Open your eyes!”

The woman obeyed and looked at him. “Jonal?” she asked, then let out another moan.

“No, it's me, Bengali, do you remember?” Bengali cradled her head in his lap. Linda crouched next to Sabina and began to check her condition. Her pulse was thready, and her eyes dilated. It seemed that her breath was labored, but that could be because of the baby.

“Ben,” she said, gaining her husband's attention, “I need the Med scanner.” He quickly handed her the equipment then turned back to his sister-in-law.

“Where is Jonal?” asked the injured woman.

“I don't know, but we'll find him, I promise.” He began praying to the gods, even including Linda's god, that he would be able to find his brother alive and that his sister-in-law would pull through.

Sabina let out a scream and her stomach drew up tight, creating a perfect pear shape. Bengali drew back a little and looked to his wife, fear on his face.

“She's in active labor.” Linda explained to him. “Ben, I need you to find Pumyra or Tygra, I'm going to need help here.” She prayed that he would forget about the communicators. Right now he was more of a hindrance than a help and it would be best if he weren't here.

He nodded, gently laying down Sabina's head and ran toward the vehicles. When he was gone, she moved to put herself into the woman's eye sight.

“Hi Sabina, my name is Linda and I'm here to help you. I need to ask you a few questions, ok?” The woman nodded and Linda continued. “Can you tell me how many fingers I'm holding up?” She held up two fingers, which Sabina answered correctly. “Good, now I'm going to move my finger around and I need you to follow it with your eyes only.” Sabina obeyed, stopping once for a contraction. “Good, now I have to ask you if you understand what is going on right now?”

“I, I think so. I'm having the baby and I think I'm hallucinating.”

“Hallucinating? Why do you think that?”

“The man who was just here, he called himself Bengali, which is my mate's brother's name,” another contraction, then, “But Bengali was a boy when I last saw him.”

Linda smiled and explained, “You have been in suspended hibernation for 20 years. Bengali wasn't, so he grew while you slept.”

Sabina nodded, understanding this. “I also saw a Thundercat insignia, is he a Thundercat?” Linda nodded and Sabina smiled. “His brother will be so proud.” Then she grimaced as another contraction seized her. “Oh this hurts so much!” she cried. Linda grabbed her hand and urged Sabina to squeeze it during the pain.

“Sabina, I can't give you any pain medication, it would be harmful for the baby. I know that it hurts so I want you to scream if you want to and squeeze my hand if it helps. Don't worry about hurting me, I can take it.” Sabina quickly nodded as the contraction subsided.

“Are you a friend of Bengali's” she asked Linda.

Linda smiled. “A bit more than that actually, I'm his mate.”

Sabina smiled too. “I see that Bengali has done well for himself, a Thundercat and a good woman for a mate.” She panted as the pain hit her again.”Something is not right!” she screamed. Linda helped her through the pain. After it had passed, Sabina looked at her new family member.

“I need to know the truth, am I dying?” Linda looked at her sister-in-law, sighed and nodded her head. Sabina closed her eyes, accepting her fate, then looked back at Linda. “What about the baby?”

“The baby is fine, in fact, he should be joining us soon. He seems to be in a hurry to meet his momma.” Linda looked up and saw Tygra and Bengali running towards them and thanked God. She didn't want to do this alone.

“How is she?” asked Tygra

“She's in active labor, contractions becoming less than a minute apart. Baby's heartbeat is strong and normal. I've decided against pain medication due to internal injuries that she has sustained.”

Tygra looked at Linda. “Internal injuries? How bad?”

“Non operable. I've already told her.” she said, seeing Tygra's frown.

Tygra nodded, understanding. Linda looked at Bengali and saw that he had been crying. She looked back at Tygra, who was helping the pregnant woman through another contraction. Tygra mouthed the word “Jonal.” and shook his head. Unfortunately, Sabina saw this and began to cry. This was short lived as another contraction hit. “Bengali!” she screamed. Bengali ran over and knelt down next to her.

“Hey sis, I'm here. How can I help?”

“Take care of my child when I am gone. You and your mate will be the only family he has.”

“She's crowning!” yelled Linda

“We need to get her into a sitting position.” Tygra said, then addressed the laboring woman. “Sabina, the baby is trying to come out so we need to sit you up. Lean back against me for support and grab my hands to hold on.” Tygra kneeled behind her, offering the woman his chest as support. She nodded, but needed help to move. Once she was in position, Linda knelt down by her legs, bending them into position and prepared to catch the infant. However, Sabina was having problems keeping her knees up.

“I can't feel my legs.” Sabina said.

“Ben,” Linda called to her husband, “I need you to help us. Hold her legs apart and don't let go, no matter what!”

He moved over and bent to take his place when a hand stopped him. Sabina looked in his eyes and asked, “Will you take care of my child?” Bengali held back tears and he nodded his head. She smiled in relief, then contorted her face as waves of pain exploded through her body.

“Push Sabina, you need to push.” Linda instructed her. “Good, I can see the head. Come on, you can do it, Push!” Sabina pushed with all her might, screaming in effort.

“The head's out!” Linda announced.

“Stop pushing for a minute, Sabina. She has to clean the mucus from the mouth and nose before you can continue.” Sabina was breathing hard, wanting it to end, but did as the older tiger asked.

“Ok, one more good push should do it.” Sabina bared down and was rewarded with the cry of her new born child. Linda quickly cut the umbilical cord and tied it, then laid the baby in Sabina's waiting arms. “Congratulations, it's a girl!” Sabina could barely see her new daughter through her tears. Linda found that she was also crying. It had been such a special moment. Then she looked down and noticed blood gushing from between Sabina's legs, more then there should be.

“Tygra, she's bleeding out!” Tygra gently laid the woman down and rushed to Linda's side.

“We need to stop the bleeding. What do you have to pack the canal?” Linda grabbed her pack and brought out all the bandages she had left and handed them to him. They both worked hard, but the bleeding continued.

Sabina felt a floating sensation and knew she didn't have much time. She looked at Bengali. “ Name her Jonalia, after her father.” Bengali swallowed hard and promised. Sabina smiled, grateful to know that her baby would be taken care of. She bent down and gently kissed her daughter's head. “I love you Jonalia, never forget that.” Then she closed her eyes and quietly slipped away. Her arms relaxed and Bengali reached out and picked up the baby before she could fall. The baby began to wail, missing the warmth of her mother. Bengali cradled Jonalia close and cried.

Tygra and Linda stopped what they were doing, knowing that they had lost. Linda scooted next to Bengali and wrapped her arms around him and the baby and cried with him. Even Tygra shed tears, frustrated over their wasted efforts.

There had been 317 people on board the Taurean when it crashed on Third Earth; from that count, only 78 had survived. Surprising, 8 people had walked away from the disaster without a scratch, their space capsules having fallen onto soft sand. It had taken two days to evacuate the survivors to Cats Lair and the Tower of Omens where they were treated and given a place to sleep. Then began the task of burying the dead.

The survivors who had minor injuries received the medical attention needed, then returned with the Thundercats to help bury their loved ones. Bengali himself dug the graves for his brother and sister in law, making sure that they would be together forever. After he had filled in the holes and placed a engraved stone to mark their resting place, he bent down in front of them, Linda joining him with the infant in her arms. “I promise to raise Jonalia as my own daughter, and I swear that she will never forget you.” He then took the baby from his mate and held her up to see the graves.

“Never forget Jonalia that your parents loved you and gave their lives so that you might live. It was their final act of love.” He pulled her back and laid her on his shoulder, whispering, “I'm not your father, but I'll try to be as good as he would have been. I hope you'll forgive me when I make mistakes.” He kissed the top of Jonalia's head. They stood up and walked where Lion-o and the other Thundarians were.

Lion-o stood in front of a large covered object and addressed the audience.

“My friends, we come here today to honor those who have pass on. We are saddened that so many of our countrymen who escaped Thudera's destruction had to die on the land that they were fleeing to. It is never easy to accept death, especially when it is on so grand a scale. I know that many here have lost loved one on the Taurean; mates, children, parents, sibling, and friends. But we must continue on and remember them as they were. In honor of the victims, we have erected a memorial so that they will always be remembered.”

The cloth was pulled down to reveal a massive statue of three Thundarian people; a man, woman, and child. The man was well muscled, his arm around the woman, who was slender and beautiful. Both of them had a hand on the shoulders of the child, who was smiling into the distance, his innocent face showing joy. On the base of the statue was a plaque which read, “You are always with us.” It also showed the date of the crash and a small planet which looked like Thundera beneath a bright star.

“I would like everyone to take a moment of silence to remember those we lost.” Lion-o bowed his head and one by one, everyone followed suit.

With his head bowed, Bengali sent a small prayer to his brother's spirit. “Help me to raise your daughter right, let me do right by her.”

Then the moment was over and people dispersed to either pay their respects, examine the memorial, or to just go home. Bengali gathered his family to leave, and looked one last time at the memorial, thinking how much the man and woman looked like Jonal and Sabina. He felt a warmth enter his heart and knew that he had been heard.