ThunderCats

Bio-Booster Armor Guyver

One Last War to Fight

Episode Fourteen: Long Night

By Knight Writer

"Suction," Pumyra ordered, ignoring the fact that the innards she was attempting to repair were those of the Lord of the ThunderCats.

"Suction." Tygra moved the small nozzle about Pumyra's gloved fingers as it drained away the puddling blood and fluids.

"Vitals."

"Blood pressure is eighty over thirty," Tygra replied after casting a quick glance to the monitor above the surgical table.

Too damn low! Pumyra hurriedly stitched the blood vessel closed and moved to the next. Even without the gas, he wouldn't respond to any of this! "Blood pack."

"Half full. We'll have to change it soon." For the second time.

"I've never lost a patient before," Pumyra said as she sutured another vein. "Be damned if Lion-O is going to be my first." She did not, could not, allow herself to feel the sick horror of what she was seeing. She could not acknowledge that the man on the table was a ThunderCat, her leader, and one day would be her king. Lion-O was a patient, a life.

A life that seemed determined to slip away despite their greatest efforts.

Panthro took a deep, if not calming, breath. He placed a hand, no more reassuring as his own intake of air, on Cheetara's slightly trembling shoulder. She was holding together as best she was able, yet he knew what terrible thoughts were whirling about behind her eyes. He had pushed the ThunderTank to its limits keeping up with Cheetara as she split the air itself in twain coming back to the Tower of Omens. Even though the emergency boost system he had recently designed had worked, the ride would have been far too rough for the wounded Lion-O to survive.

"What's wrong with Lion-O?" WilyKit demanded. Panthro mustered his resolve and wished the girl wasn't so intuitive sometimes. They were both growing up so fast...

"I knew this was about him, Snarrrf!" Snarf wailed. "That boy's gone and done something..."

"SNARF!" Panthro glared daggers at Lion-O's one-time nursemaid. Snarf cringed, tail wrapped protectively around himself. Panthro gathered what few shreds of patience he had left before launching into his account.

"Lion-O has been severely wounded," he began measuring every word so as not to let his rage burst forth. "We were ambushed by Grune..."

"GRUNE?!" the twins exclaimed in unison.

"Mumm-Ra has somehow revived him. As Lion-O was calling the ThunderCats..." He hesitated for a brief moment, not wanting the kittens to hear the brutal details. No, they had to hear it. They had to accept the horrors of life along with its wonders. "Grune threw a knife into Lion-O's chest." Each ThunderCat gasped aloud at the announcement. Cheetara let out a strangled sob. Bengali stared at him in shock. Snarf wailed aloud, and was held by his nephew. But, the kittens...

WilyKit and WilyKat stared at him in total disbelief, hands joined together as though physically sharing each other's pain. Though it had to be said, Panthro hated himself for inflicting such horrors on the two. Other ThunderCats, younger than these two, had faced similar atrocities, but that knowledge didn't make their tear-filled eyes any easier to take.

"Lion-O's... gonna be okay, right?" WilyKat asked, his voice shaking.

"He can't die," WilyKit affirmed. "Not him. Not him, too!"

"Kit..."

"No. No more people are gonna die. NO MORE!" WilyKit tore away from her brother before she charged out of the control chamber.

"WilyKit!" Bengali shouted as the hysterical girl sped away.

"I shall tend to her," Lynx-O said, following WilyKit.

"Sho, can't you do something?" WilyKat asked, desperate.

"If I could heal him," Sho said from his spot on the far wall of the control chamber, "I would have done it in a hot second."

"Until Pumyra and Tygra are done," Panthro said as he gazed at the setting sun, "we can't make any assumptions. Much as I hate it, we just have to wait and see."

"Mumm-Ra's back, isn't he?"

"I said that, Sho."

"Then maybe there *is* something this armor can do." Sho stomped to the door which led into the main corridor. "Mumm-Rana lives in a White Pyramid. Can I assume Mumm-Ra rots in a black one?"

"Yeah... no, Sho..."

"Yes. I'm gonna ram my armored foot so far up Mumm-Ra's ass, the tip of it's gonna break his teeth!"

"Have you learned nothing?" Cheetara asked. "I told you that vengeance is forbidden by the Code of Thundera!"

"This isn't about vengeance, Cheetara..."

"Yes it is!" she shouted. "I want to string up Mumm-Ra, Grune, the Mutants, everyone who's *ever* inflicted pain on us! The Code of Thundera is why I don't. We don't seek revenge!" Her eyes burned into his own, betraying cataclysmic agony in their depths. "While you are here, you are to learn our ways. To seek retribution as you would is to cast aside all you told me you wish to embrace!"

"Look. I know I haven't exchanged more than a few words with Lion-O, but I count him as a friend! I won't let these bastards go around thinking they can..."

"Those are thoughts of vengeance," Bengali said. "I know you're mad as hell, we all are, but actively seeking to slaughter our enemies makes us no better than them."

"He's right," Panthro said. "I want to take that mummy bastard out just as much as you do, but ThunderCats don't go around seeking revenge at every turn. If we did that," Panthro said, recalling his old Code of Thundera professor, "then we might as well discard the rest of the Code." Sho halted, his face a mask of tension and frustration.

"It's not easy on you, being ThunderCats, is it?" he asked, souding drained.

"It never has been," Cheetara answered. "And perhaps it never will be."

WilyKit sat atop the Tower of Omens and gazed at the night sky as the tears flowed freely down her cheeks and the memories wracked her soul with waves of agony. Willa. Nayda. Now, possibly Lion-O. Dead. The end of life was something she couldn't understand beyond the abstract, a vague notion that hardly required contemplation. Even knowing that Jaga would die as

he piloted their damaged spacecraft across the stars to Third Earth had been a distant thing in her mind, especially since his spirit still appeared to Lion-O from time to time. Jaga was dead, but not gone. Not truly Dead.

Where was Willa? Where was Nayda? If Jaga could still offer counsel, why couldn't they?

"It's not fair," she said, her voice a choked sob. "It's just not fair..."

"You are correct, WilyKit. It is not fair." WilyKit gave a startled jump at the sound of Lynx-O's voice. "May I sit with you a while?"

"S...sure, Lynx-O," she said. "Plenty of room." The old Lynx sat easily beside her, crossing his legs over one another as his eternally-closed eyes stared sightless across the darkened vista of the desert. "And, I'm not crying, by the way."

"Of course you are not," the wizened man said, giving no indication that he knew otherwise. "But, I recommend you do. Tears release the poisons of the soul."

"How are you so calm?" WilyKit asked, amazed and repulsed. "How can you be so calm?!"

"I am, because I must be."

"What?"

"I am old, WilyKit. I have seen much, more than you would believe."

"So, none of this bothers you?!" she exclaimed, anger burning away the fog of despair and pain.

"It does. The thought that the Lord of the ThunderCats may die this night troubles me greatly. Lion-O is far too young to face the end of his life."

"But he still is!" WilyKit shouted. "What if he dies?"

"What about when Willa died?" Lynx-O asked. "Or Nayda? They were both too young, too vital to leave this mortal coil. But, they still did. Death is a part of life, young one."

"So, if Lion-O dies, you just go 'Oh, well, life goes on' and forget about it?!"

"No. Should he perish, I will mourn him deeply. As will many on Third Earth."

"He'll still be dead! Don't you even care?!"

"Lion-O is not dead yet," Lynx-O said. "He may yet live. Pumyra is a superb healer, and Tygra's medical knowledge is not far behind hers. You mustn't assume the worst."

"So many are dead," WilyKit retorted, some of her anger fading. "So many..."

"And you fear that you may join them." WilyKit paused, staring at Lynx-O with undisguised shock. "You fear leaving your friends and family, and them leaving you."

"Mother, Father," she began. The words tumbled out of her mouth, refusing to be halted. "They... they died on me! They went on a mission to scout a Mutant landing force... They never came back. THEY NEVER CAME *BACK*!!"

Lynx-O remained silent and let the young girl vent. The root of the matter had finally been reached.

"We woke up, they were there. The next day, they weren't!" Her words were becoming lost among the wrenching cries as both fought to escape her throat. "Just... GONE! Why did they have to go away?!" WilyKit felt an arm encircle her and she let herself be pulled against Lynx-O's side. His other hand began to stroke her hair, much like her own mother would do... "Why were they taken from me?"

"Such answers are not for us to know," Lynx-O replied sagely as she cried out years of sadness and pain. Nearly fourteen, he thought. Far too young to know such loss. "So long as you remember all who have gone before you, they are not truly gone. A small part of them remains with you for the rest of your days. Just as those who know and love you will carry a part of you with them, when you leave this life." WilyKit continued to sob into his chest. "Do not think upon death, little one. Think upon life, and making the most of it. That, WilyKit, is how we are truly alive."

The two sat under the stars long into the night, Lynx-O's chest soaking up the tears which contained so much pain.

"You're thinking about him," Panthro said after the rest had cleared out of the control room and left Cheetara alone with him.

"Of course I am," Cheetara replied in a thick voice.

"Not Lion-O. You're thinking of Cougrix."

"I... I suppose I am, a little." Cheetara sighed heavily as she allowed those painful memories to resurface. Even after so many years, the sharp and sanguine agony of it was still fresh. "He was so young, so vital. The nights we spent together... the love we felt..." She felt the tears come again, and did not fight them. Only Panthro had seen her like this before. "Just two short months together before we were captured." The words felt as mollasses in her throat. Cheetara forced them clear as she revisited memories she had kept bottled up in the back of her mind. "For the longest time, I could still feel his hands on me, the way he would carress me as we made love. How he made me feel so alive. And then, I watched him die. Ratar-O made me watch him die!" Panthro stood aside as Cheetara gave in to a fit of sobbing, her body shaking with the pain she

was feeling. Cougrix had been a ThunderCat only a year, as Cheetara had been, before the two fell hopelessly in love. Then, they had drawn that fateful spying mission. Panthro had only been a ThunderCat for five years then, yet still had known how Jaga and Lord Claudis had grieved. Queen Lionessa had been just a month pregnant with Lion-O at the time, and had done all she could for the young Cheetah.

"Lion-O's gonna be okay," Panthro said as gently as he was able.

"Not even twelve hours," Cheetara replied, bitterness mixing with the suffering in her voice. "Not even a whole damn *day*! I felt guilty at first, feeling the way I do for Lion-O. I felt like I was betraying Cougrix's memory. It took months before I could get past that. Then over a year until I knew Lion-O was ready. Now, look at him!"

"Cheetara..."

"What have *I* done? Is every man I fall in love with doomed to die?"

"That's nonsense, Cheetara, and you know it," Panthro said, forcefully. "You don't know if Lion-O will die. With Tygra and Pumyra tending to him, I'd lay good odds that he'll make it."

"You'd better be right," Cheetara replied as she wiped her eyes. "I can't lose another love. I just can't."

"We've done all we can," Pumyra said. "Let's close." Tygra held the flaps of the wound together while she threaded them shut. "The rest is up to him."

"He'll pull through," Tygra said with more confidence than he felt as he doffed the bloodstained gloves. He gazed down at his king, so still and pale beneath that sheet. Lion-O's chest barely rose with each breath, his exhalations leaving a fast fading mist on the plastic oxygen mask as they slowly slid him onto a rolling bed.

"Until he recovers," Pumyra said, keeping her thoughts as positive as possible, "you'll lead the ThunderCats."

"I know." Tygra eyed the Sword of Omens, which rested alongside the claw shield atop an empty shelf, with trepidation. "I've hoped never to have to assume those duties." He strode over to the Sword and reached out. His hand paused for a moment, shaking, before he grasped the hilt. The ancient powers of the Eye coursed through him, the blade assuming battle length and the crossbars curling on their own.

"Jaga was able to wield the Sword of Omens, as well," Pumyra pointed out. Tygra merely shook his head as he trod over to Lion-O's resting body. He knew what such a reaction from the Sword could portend.

"You *will* hold this blade again, Lion-O," Tygra said as he speared the floor at the foot of the bed to which they had moved him. "May the Eye protect you, and bring you back to us. Let's wash up," Tygra said as he turned to face Pumyra. "I won't face the others with Lion-O's blood on me."

"It appears as though Lion-O may yet live," Mumm-Ra groused as he stared into the cauldron along with Dyme. Grune had been sent back to oversee the construction of the new Castle Plun-Darr, well out of his way. The Thunderian had a brutal streak which the ancient one could not help but admire, but a temper that was too hot for him to want to put up with in person. Constantly putting someone in their place could get tedious, eventually ending in said someone being put to their death. With the Mutant Army, Grune had plenty of subordinates and slaves to take out his rage on. "Even with your help, Dyme."

"I went only to subdue that Panthro, Master," Dyme replied. "Which I did quite well. Grune's failure to bash Lion-O's head is entirely his fault."

"I notice," Mumm-Ra began, his voice carrying a note of challenge, "that you insisted on retreating once the cub had managed to call the other ThunderCats."

"It wasn't the ThunderCats, Master. Why have you go through so much trouble to bring us back into the world merely to have Guyver One take us back out of it postehaste?"

Stroke my ego a little more, why don't you? Mumm-Ra thought in disgust. "It does not matter. Even should the cub live, it shall be quite some time before he can recover enough to lead the ThunderCats once more. Phase one is complete, regardless."

"That is so, Master.

"I recall you saying Guyver One was not as ruthless as Guyver Three," Mumm-Ra said. "Tell me, what of Guyver Two?"

"Ah. His name was Oswald Lisker, Master," Dyme answered. "He was an operative of Kronos."

"Go on."

"When the defective Zoanoid prototype stole the three existing Guyver Units from the main Japan branch of Kronos, he stole also a small explosive. Soon after our agents cornered him, Malmott detonated the bomb, which scattered the three units among the forest of Mount Narisawa. Sho discovered one, a Kronos betrayer recovered the third, and our agents recovered the second."

"And then activated it?" Mumm-Ra turned to fully face the kneeling Dyme.

"Ah, no, Master. Oswald Lisker was an inspector for the main headquarters of Kronos. While inspecting the unit, it activated and bonded with him. He then decided that only he could retrieve the other two units, and arranged for one of Sho's friends, who had been present at the Mount Narisawa incident, to be brought before him at an empty construction site. Sho accompanied him. Lisker soon found out that Sho had the Guyver Unit, by way of using him to make his friend cooperate, and their battle ensued."

"With Sho the obvious winner," Mumm-Ra said.

"By luck, Master."

Oh, really? "Explain!"

"Master, Sho was a boy, and Lisker was a highly trained fighter. He was not a Zoanoid, but their battle had leaned heavily in his favor. Guyver One won that fight simply because Lisker's control medal had been severely damaged from the bomb used at Mount Narisawa."

"Damaged?" This had potential!

"Master, the control medal is the vital core of the Guyver. Destroy it, destroy him. But," he began before Mumm-Ra could begin to cackle, "it is not easy. Nearly impossible. If that explosion had not damaged Guyver Two's control medal before it had bonded with him, then Guyver One would have stood no chance."

"And why is that?"

"Master, each of the three Guyver Units bestowed the same abilities, aside from some cosmetic differences, on each of the three who had equipped them. The advantage in a battle between Guyvers would go to the better trained fighter."

"I see. I simply need to damage Sho's control medal, and he shall fall."

"I hate to say so, Master, but that is not possible now."

"And why not?" Mumm-Ra's voice became low and dangerous.

"Once bonded with a host, the control medal defends itself. It does not need any conscious command from the host to do so. That is why I said it is nearly impossible to destroy a Guyver's control medal."

"Hmmmm..." Damn. Mumm-Ra paced about the tomb chamber for several moments before adding, "I must find a way to destroy Guyver before Lion-O can recover. Any ideas, Dyme?"

"One, Master."

"Then do not keep me in suspence."

"Doctor Valkus had the idea to turn Guyver One's father into a specially designed Anti-Guyver zoanoid, which would be used to end his life. I knew of the plan, but I had been killed before it could bear fruit."

"His own father?" Mumm-Ra smiled. "Anti-Guyver zoanoid?"

"Yes, Master, Enzyme Mark Two. The premise was that if it had been made from Guyver One's father, he would be unable to fight back."

"Yes. Yes! Ancient Spirits of Evil!"

"What do you seek from us, Mumm-Ra?" the voices from the statues replied.

"Search the mists of time. Seek out the battle between Sho and his own father."

"We shall do this, Mumm-Ra."

"Dyme, join Grune. Wait with him until I summon you again."

"At once, Master." Dyme rose from the floor and turned about to leave.

Mumm-Ra shuffled back to the sarcophagus, an evil rictus on his face and malevolent glee in his black heart. Finally, a way to deal with that damn boy!

A potential way, he reminded himself. If this does not pan out, then my options will be indeed limited.

Having dealt Lion-O a, hopefully, mortal blow had been only part of the plan. Mumm-Ra would never admit it, but he had come to realize that the strategy he had relied on for dealing with the ThunderCats and seizing the Eye of Thundera would never work. Turning them against each other, luring them into traps, every evil scheme he dreamt up had been defeated by them and that fucking sword. There came a time when one had to realize when something just wasn't going to work. Then came time to change tactics.

He could not destroy the Eye of Thundera. Much as he hated the thought, he hadn't the magics to do so outright. Over a span of centuries, yes, but not all at once. The assault on Lion-O, outcome regardless, had taken care of that. Tygra would wield the blade until the Lion's recovery, and could not possibly use it with the same skill. Now he had to remove the ThunderCats' other big gun, and their downfall was assured. Mumm-Ra had already decided to simply slaughter them afterward. Enslaving them, capturing them, torturing them, forget it. Best to kill them and be done with it all.

Cheetara looked up sharply, her exhaustion nearly forgotten, as Tygra and Pumyra entered the control chamber. Snarf and Snarfer walked in just behind them, carrying trays laden with mugs

of steaming coffee. She looked up at their tired faces, expectant. Anxious. Terrified. Sho stumbled into the room, followed by Bengali and Lynx-O. Cheetara could not spare them any attention. The kittens, who had returned first, embraced each other in preparation for whatever news the two adults had to give.

"Lion-O came through the surgery." As one, everyone in the spacious control room exhaled in relief at Pumyra's statement. She raised her hand to still the flood of questions, and Cheetara obliged grudgingly. There had to be more, she knew it.

"The next twenty-four hours will be critical," Tygra said next. "If Lion-O can hold on until those hours are past, then he stands a good chance of making a full recovery."

A day, Cheetara thought, bitterness and hope mingling in her mind. Just one day, and he would survive. She clung to that one shining thread as a drowning woman and fought the currents of despair within her mind.

"As we all know," Panthro said, exhausted like everyone else, "until Lion-O recovers, you are Acting Lord of the ThunderCats, Tygra."

"I know," the Tyger said as he sipped wearily at the coffee.

"My stores of herbal medicines are beginning to get low," Pumyra said after a sip from her own cup. "Should Lion-O develop a post-operative infection, my stock won't be able to handle it. We must replenish them."

"We'll do so after we all get some rest," Tygra announced. "Right now, sleep is what's needed. Once rested, we will begin to scrounge up new herbal supplies."

"The Western Berbils contacted us earlier," Panthro said. "They're going to ride through the night to get here by late morning with our food. I tried to talk them out of it, but they're determined. Said one of the Unicorn Keepers had heard what happened from the animals."

"How long ago was this?"

"Just ten minutes ago. They've been waiting on us."

"I'll escort them," Sho said. "I'm still good to go." He had caught a quick nap earlier.

"Are you sure?"

"I need something to do. Unless you order me not to, Tygra, I'm gone."

"Guard them well, Sho."

"I'll be back." Sho then charged to the nearest open viewport in the control room and flung himself out. The familiar explosion slammed into the air at his shouted "GUYVER!" before the armored human flew off into the distance.

"Let's get what sleep we can," Tygra said. "We're going to need it."

"I'll stay with Lion-O," Cheetara stated simply. No one argued, there would have been no point.

"There's a spare bed in the infirmary," Pumyra said around a yawn. "Use it." Cheetara responded with a nod before walking out of the control room. Each ThunderCat left of their own accord. Bengali supported an exhausted Pumyra on his right shoulder before lifting her in his arms and carrying the Puma to their quaters. Pumyra merely rested her head on his muscular chest, light snoring purrs already coming through her nose.

"C'mon, Kat," WilyKit said, draping a sisterly arm around his shoulders and leading the boy back to their room. Lynx-O left with a respectful bow.

"I assume Mumm-Ra is involved in this?' Tygra asked as he and Panthro left the control room.

"You know it," the Panther replied darkly. "He went through the trouble of reviving Grune and recruiting some dirt monster named Dyme."

"Does anyone else know?"

"Haven't had time to tell them, yet. I'll give a full report first thing tomorrow."

"We must gether the herbs we need. They grow in the Unicorn Forest. We'll..." Tygra gave a mighty yawn. "... take the ThunderClaw..."

"Get some sleep, Tygra," Panthro said gently. "We'll cross those bridges when we get to them."

There they are, Sho thought as his enhanced eyes spotted the tiny pinpricks of light in the distance. Sho focused harder, and could make out several Berbils walking around a wooden cart loaded down with parcels intended for the Tower of Omens. To the left and right rode two small humanoid beings atop horned horses, unicorns, each bearing staves with crescent shapes at their tips. A few unfamiliar creatures rode miniature burros among them, along with two human females atop their own unicorn mounts.

Analee, he thought as he spied the elder human who rode beside another he recognized. Analee and Brie, Sho thought as he began his descent. Dawn had yet to break in the hour since his departure from the Tower, and he knew they could not see him. Sho landed gracefully, his arms raised in a gestrue of peace, as he drew closer to the caravan.

"I come in peace," Sho said, not bothering to wonder where those words had come from. The convoy came to a sudden, nervous halt as he emerged into the flickering light of the torches. The wild glow of the fires cast their wary faces in undulating glares as the cool desert wind blew them about.

"Is that you, Sho?" a synthetic voice asked. Sho glanced at the small robot which called itself RobearBill.

"It's me, RobearBill," Sho replied as he slowly stepped forward. "How have you been?" He was grateful that they couldn't see his grimace at the stupid question.

"We have been well, considering," the Berbil replied.

"My word, what is that?" the strange woman with the crescent staff asked the man beside her. Her husband, maybe? Sho thought.

"No idea," the man replied, stroking his beard. "I've heard the animals speak of a strangely armored man helping the ThunderCats. Pray tell, sir, would that be you?" He spoke the last louder than the rest.

"That would be me," Sho replied. "I'm here to make sure no one catches any of you with an ambush."

"Sho?" He turned to face Analee, who was staring at him in surprise. Brie had her bow drawn and an arrow notched, yet aimed at the ground.

"Yes, Elder," Sho answered. He fought down the waves of guilt he felt at seeing her. The Warrior Maidens had suffered far more than any other on Third Earth, yet two of the survivors had joined this morbid caravan. "Analee, I'm..."

"Do not apologize," the old woman said, smiling. Brie replaced her arrow in the quiver on her back and holstered her bow across a shoulder. "Tell me, have you any word on Lion-O's condition?"

"He's alive." The relieved gasps would have been audible even without the enhanced hearing the Guyver gave him. "He has to hold on for twenty-four hours. After that, it should be smooth sailing." Sho hated the fact that he'd put it so bluntly. Tact, it seemed, was not one of his strong suits. "Well, best we get moving. I'll take point." Sho turned and marched back toward the Tower of Omens. "I didn't see anyone waiting on the way here, but keep sharp." Sho focused all of his senses around the slowly-moving group and found himself answering questions at each step.

"A feathered lizard told me," the female Unicorn Keeper said as they marched to the Tower, "that a monster now inhabits the very earth."

"Really?" What the hell...?

"Yes. It told me that this creature calls itself Dyme."

DYME!

Dyme?

Where had he heard that name before?

"I haven't gotten the full report on what happened," Sho replied. That name, though... it was familiar. *Damn* familiar. But why?

The march took on a pleasant cadence despite the troubling presence of the name of Dyme. Sho's heightened senses detected the first traces of the dawn before any of the other beings behind him. He had never seen a sunrise through the eyes of the Guyver, or at least none that he could rememeber, and felt a sense of awe as the first direct rays of the sun impacted against the atmosphere of Third Earth. For reasons Sho could not divine, the sunlight was not as harsh as he felt it could be. There was a story behind that, he knew, but he chose to ignore it as the caravan drew ever closer to the Tower of Omens.

Ten damn miles, Sho thought even though his legs showed no signs of weakening. Who knew that distance could take all damn night. The shadowed arcology of the Tower had drawn nearer at a snail's pace, Sho could have sworn once or twice that the damn thing had seemed to be moving *away* rather than close.

Monster that lives in the earth itself.

Dyme. Sho focused on the ground, yet found no trace of any kind of malicious life. Whatever that Dyme monster was, Sho could not sense him anywhere around.

"Not only Grune," Agito said, "but Dyme as well." This, in spite of his mantra, was *not* part of the plan. "To think that Mumm-Ra would use such tactics so soon," he muttered. Agito felt his chance slipping rapidly away.

Dyme knows much of Second Earth, Agito thought as he breathed in the clean scent of the dawn air, and of Kronos.

That thought was disturbing. Very disturbing. Whether he knew it or not, Mumm-Ra was one step closer to finding the zoacrystals that had survived Second Earth. The thought that the most ancient, and powerful, of those things was safely ensconced in the Korath Mountains was of little comfort. Mumm-Ra could not get to it, yet neither could he.

Eight of the crystals were destroyed with their bearers. Minus Alkanphel's, that leaves three. Sho had to know where they were. Agito cast deep into his memory while he re-stoked the small fire and prepared the rabbit he had caught just an hour before.

General Randall West, he recalled, Commandant of Sandalwood Main Defence Base had not trusted him. He had to have trusted Sho, but enough to tell him where the research facilities had been hidden? The area where the Mojave Desert had once been was now at the bottom of what was once the Pacific Ocean, and the subterrainian base along with it. The R&D labs which the American government had set up to analyze any and all Kronos technology and bio-forms had been more secret than even the organization dedicated to combating them. It hadn't made sense, but the Americans had never made sense to him in the first place.

Agito finished cleaning his meal and placed it on a spit over the crackling fire. How, he thought, did Mumm-Ra even *know* about Dyme, much less be able to restore him! He'd heard one of the cats mention that name while passively listening in via his link with Sho, and his heart nearly stopped. If Mumm-Ra could restore Dyme, then what about the other two Lost Numbers, Somlum and Aptom? Somlum - joke that he was - would still be bad news, but *Aptom*! Third Earth couldn't handle him. Both he and Sho together had barely managed it.

"At least," Agito said, "there aren't many humans left for him to make zoanoids from." Not many of the races which had cropped up since Second Earth's demise had the inherent aggression and instinct to kill as humans claimed not to have. Trollogs, perhaps, maybe even Giantors, but a Wollo would not a zoanoid make.

He hoped.

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In the next episode:

Sho arrives with the caravan bearing foodstuffs for the ThunderCats. Tygra, along with WilyKat and WilyKit, head to the Unicorn Forest to gather herbs necessary for medications to prevent a post-op infection in Lion-O. Grune and Dyme oversee the construction of the new Castle Plun-Darr and time passes while the Ancient Spirits of Evil search the mists of the forgotten past for a means to neutralize the Guyver. Will they succeed? And what of Agito? Is his mysterious plan derailed, or will his scheme bear fruit? All this and more in the next episode of One Last War to Fight.