ThunderCats

Bio-Booster Armor Guyver

One Last War to Fight

Episode Seven: Beaten, Not Defeated

By Knight Writer

Mumm-Ra was seldom surprised. When one lived for thousands of years, such words as that managed to escape one's vocabulary. This, however, was one of those times where that word came back in full force with a sadistic smile.

Yes, he had expected to root out the other Guyver.

Yes, he had expected it to do severe damage to the Mutant army.

But, he hadn't expected it to appear in the Berbil village, the area of weakest offense.

Nor had he expected it to be so powerful.

Lastly, he hadn't expected Guyver to be a human boy.

"Such power," he said as - in the depths of his couldron - the Guyver grabbed a Nosediver by its drill and swung it about like a club. The Mutant pilot had abandoned the vehicle as Guyver swung it in an arc that sent two more of the machines spiralling into meatfruit trees to explode gloriously. The Ancient Spirits of Evil had never shown him violence such as this! Mumm-Ra was impressed.

"Ancient Spirits of Evil... Transform this decayed form... to Mumm-Ra, the Ever Living!"

Perhaps he should face this creature himself...

The battle was lost. Lion-O knew this even as he shot down another Skycutter. The Treetop Kingdom was burning like a giant funeral pyre - the fireballs of Castle Plun-Darr having done the most damage - and the damnable Mutants were still dropping bombs and moving in for strafing runs of the trees.

Lion-O had never felt more powerless in all his life. The homeland of the ThunderCat's most staunch ally was destroyed despite his intervention. How many had died down there? Did he really want to know? Lion-O pushed such thoughts out of his mind as he focused on ridding this part of Third Earth of the new Mutant army. All that mattered then was survival.

"Something's coming!" WilyKit shouted. "It's huge!"

The viewscreen came to life, revealing the four-legged monstrosity stomping toward the lair. The sunlight gleamed off its brushed metal frame as trees snapped before its passing. Cheetara felt her nerves turn to ice at the sight of it.

"A Warbot!" Oh, no...

"This is Cat's Lair calling... No good!" WilyKat said, his voice cracking with fear. "The channels are jammed!"

"This was their plan the whole time," Cheetara snarled. "Ready the defenses!"

"Ballista online!"

"Laser turrets ready!"

She knew it wouldn't be enough. The Lair hadn't done well against the first Warbot that had been sent against it, and likely wouldn't do any better now, but be damned if she'd just give up Cat's Lair without a fight!

"FIRE!"

"The kitties are trying to fight the Warbot," Slythe said in a mocking tone from the Ravager's bridge. The ball of ignited fuel which had launched from the Ballista port in the Lair's left arm washed harmlessly against the machine's armor as it pressed closer to the ThunderCat's home. "How quaint. How useless!"
Brilliant shafts of ruby energy lanced from the eyes of the Lair's head, only to be deflected by the Warbot's shield. Slythe watched the display form the Warbot's visual sensors and his lips twisted in a sick grin while the energy of the Lair's lasers was converted and placed into the machine's spare power reserves.
"That's right," Primor grunted. "Give my Warbot more power to destroy your Lair with."

"By the Moons of Thundera..." Tygra gasped as their strange new ally - at least he hoped this Guyver was on their side - smashed a Nosediver's front with a single blow. Before the Mutant attack vehicle could crash or the Jackal pilot could escape, he had lifted it and sent it sailing into another group.
"C'mon, Tygra!" Panthro's voice shouted. "Let's give him a hand!"

(Do not fear.)
(Easy for you to say! What the hell is this?)
Sho leapt clear of another of the flying machines, and acted on pure instinct. It streaked below him just as a thin beam of emerald light burst from his head. The laser pierced the back of the pilot and the engines beneath him, sending both up in a roar of flame.
(And how the hell did I do that?)
(The knowledge is still within you,) that damned enigmatic voice replied. (Even if you do not realize it.)

(What...)

(Focus on the battle! You will understand!)

"I do like his style," Panthro said as he opened up with another round of autocannon fire. The Berbil village was ruined, treadmarks from the ThunderTank and flaming piles of wreckage which had once been Nosedivers and homes littered the landscape. How many Berbils had died from this battle? If those damn Mutants hadn't attacked...

"GUYVER!" roared a voice that set Panthro's blood to boiling. Of course Mumm-Ra had to be involved. What did he care of innocent lives?

Tygra saw the demon sail toward the battlezone and heard him shout. That wretched mummy had to have been the brains behind all this. The tiger turned toward the flying abomination, weapons ready. Mumm-Ra would pay for this!

"What?!" The blast of angry red energy covered the HoverCat for a brief moment before the instrument panel went dead and the vehicle plummeted to earth. Tygra braced himself as the bottom of the HoverCat dug a deep trench into the trampled earth of the former Berbil Village, sliding to a stop just outside their flaming crop of foodstuffs.

Still Nosedivers around, he said as the whip encircled his body and the light bent about him. If he could get to the ThunderTank, he would have a far better chance of survivng this debacle.

"YAAAAAAAH!" WIlyKat screamed as the control console erupted into flames a scant second before he leapt clear. The stone of the Lair rocked with another blast of energy as sparks showered from the

ruined machines of the Control Chamber. Cheetara held her balance, staff at the ready. Cracks were beginning to snake their way up the walls as the Warbot continued pounding against the walls of their home. If anything, this one seemed stronger than the one from before.

"We just lost the Ballista!" WilyKit shouted over the din.

"SHNEYAF! The lasers are out, too! We're done for!"

The floor rumbled as another blast rocked the Lair, sending clouds of pulverized stone drifting toward the floor amid lengths of severed cable. Cheetara knew what had to be done, much as it galled her.

"We have to go! Quickly!"

"Best news I've heard all day, shnarf snarf!"

"How are we gonna get the Feliner past that Warbot?" WilyKit asked.

"We may have to run for it."

"But..."

"MOVE!"

"It iss time," Slythe said as the Warbot's arms slammed into the chest of the Lair a final time. The stonework crumbled into ruin, leaving a gaping hole in the cat-shaped structure. Slythe found the image rather pleasing.

"Very well," Primor said, then over the intercom, "Skycutters! GO!"

From beneath the ship, a large section of the armored hull split apart and slid slowly into recesses hidden in the structure. At the very moment the doors opened wide enough, a horde of Mutant Skycutters - piloted by Primor's own guard force - swarmed into the smoke-blackened day.

"What the hell is that?" Sho asked as the... thing... descended in front of him. It was huge, taller than him, and covered in bulging muscle that stretched gray, mottled flesh. On its chest was emblazoned a pair of snakes in a blood-red circle, strips of bangages waving in the wind. From its hideous face beamed a pair of cruel, glowing eyes above a mouth lined with wicked-looking fangs.

(Be careful, Sho.)

(What...)

(That is Mumm-Ra. Do not underestimate him.)

"Guyver," it cackled. "So nice to finally meet you!"

"You!" Sho shouted as the realization clicked. "You're responsible for this!"

"What if I am?" Mumm-Ra taunted. "You should feel honored, Guyver. After all, I went through so much trouble just to smoke you out. You should be thanking me!"

"Thanking you?!" Sho's heart pounded in his chest, his nerves aflame with terrible rage. This demon, this Mumm-Ra, had sacrificed so many innocent lives to...

"Kronos..."

"What?"

Kronos. That name sent chills of fear and spikes of fury through him all at once. Mumm-Ra. Kronos.

What...

"I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!"

Mumm-Ra roared with laughter, making Sho even angrier.

"You? Kill me? It cannot be done, boy! But, you are welcome to try!"

Sho replied with a lunging punch, aimed at Mumm-Ra's head. The hideous creature twisted to evade at the last second, delivering a blow to Sho's back that he hardly felt.

"You'll have to do better than that, boy!"

"So will you!" Sho twisted about, leg extended in a sweeping roundhouse that Mumm-Ra also avoided.

Sho pressed the attack, launching blow after blow that never managed to slam home. Whatever this Mumm-Ra was, he was certainly agile!

"I'm growing tired of this game, Guyver!" Mumm-Ra said after avoiding another punch. "Time to play by MY rules!"

Sho had no time to react as the beam of crimson energy rammed into his stomach. The air was forced from his lungs as the blast hurtled him backward over the burning remains of the Berbil Village and through one of the few standing walls that remained.

"Cat's Lair! Come in, Cat's Lair!" Lion-O shouted, to the reply of static. He saw the plume of smoke rising from its direction, yet staying ahead of the Skycutters that still filled the sky took every ounce of piloting skill he posessed.

No time to use the Sword, he thought, spiralling down to evade a Skycutter which had gained a firing position on him. And I can't get free of these damn Mutants!

They'll be okay. They just have to be.

Jaga, please let them be okay...

The blast had knocked Cheetara off her feet as the daylight poured into the once-closed hallway. She tried to rise just as a net closed around her.

"Lemme go!"

"Hey!"

"Shnaaaarf!"

Cheetara struggled against the threads of the snare, even as her strength fled her. Thundrainium... had to be...

She felt herself dragged across sharp rubble, out the gaping wound in the Lair's chest, and dangling above the ground.

"No...."

The Warbot held them aloft as a group of Skycutters circled above, firing bursts of energy into the very heart of the Lair itself. Cheetara shut her eyes to the sight of it.

"Like our re-decorating?" boomed Slythe's hateful voice. "Don't worry, you can room at Castle Plun-Darr for awhile. That is, until we get tired of you. Then you'll be feeding the maggots!"

Sho rose from the wreckage in time to see Mumm-Ra send a blast of energy toward the white cat-like tank which was being driven by a dark-skinned man who - if he hadn't known better - looked a lot like a human panther. The tank swerved clear, the crimson bolt sending a plume of dirt into the air where it hit.

Now's my chance! he thought, commanding the green laser in his forehead to fire again. The light streaked to Mumm-Ra's hideous head merely to be deflected by an invisible wall of force.

"Gyeh heh heh... So, you thought to get the drop on Mumm-Ra, the Ever Living?"

"Damn you!"

"Damn YOU, boy!" the demonic creature roared. His left hand shot out, sending another blast of red energy. Sho dodged right and sprung forward over the remaining distance.

"Not so fast, whelp!" Mumm-Ra teased as he sailed upward. Another blast landed at Sho's feet,

launching him backward. He righted himself quickly, landing on his feet well away from the smoking crater.

This is too easy, Mumm-Ra thought as another beam from the ThunderTank washed against his shield. I had thought Guyver to be far more powerful than this! Could it be that I was mistaken?
It didn't matter. At least the ThunderCats were getting the hell beat out of them. That alone made this a real red letter day in his book. Now, to take care of things here and get back to the sarcophagus before his power ran out.

"This looks bad, Panthro."
"You're telling me?" the panther replied as he swung the ThunderTank about for another pass. "We gotta take that bone-bag out! Re-route the auxilliary batteries to the cat blaster!"
"Got it!"

(Get up there!)
(Uh-huh. Care to tell me how?)
(The orb at your waist acts as a gravity controller. It will allow you to fight in the air.)
Sho glanced down at it.
(It also acts as a weapon. It may be powerful enough to get past Mumm-Ra's shield. Focus on it.)
(How...)
(You will know! The Guyver will show you!)
(Okay. Here goes...)

"Give it up, ThunderCats!" Mumm-Ra shouted as he floated above the burning village. "By now, your

puny Lair has been sacked- Gya hah! - by the rest of the Mutant Army! I shudder to think what Slythe has in store for the ones you left behind!"

"NO!" Panthro roared as he aimed the cat blaster at Mumm-Ra's floating corpse.

"Almost there, Panthro!" Tygra shouted. "Just a few more connnections, and we'll have it!"

"Why bother? Just give in to the.. the... WHAAAAT?!"

"You think you're the only one who can fly around here?" Sho snarled as he hovered in front of the gloating monster. "And don't think that shield will save you, either! It's payback time!"

I can't believe I'm doing this! he thought excitedly as he sailed toward Mumm-Ra. What else can this thing do?

"NOOOO! I will not be beaten... YAAAAAAAGHHH!"

"Looks like you already are!" the panther below shouted as the torrent of brillaint blue energy slammed into Mumm-Ra's shield. Sho saw the conflicting powers as the barrier began to give way. Just a little closer and...

Images appeared in his mind of the orb which granted him flight, of the weapon that voice had mentioned. Sho focused on them, heard the thoughts of the Guyver, and understood. This would do the trick!

He cupped his hands before him and pictured it forming. The power came easily, its touch through his nerves as familiar as that of a lover. He watched Mumm-Ra struggle against the weapon below as the crackling sphere of black energy formed in his hands. Just a little more... and...

The words came naturally enough. Sho knew, somehow, that they were unimportant yet they burst from his lips like a battle cry.

"PRESSURE.... CANNON!"

Tygra watched as the Guyver cried out and the orb burst from his hands. He couldn't look away as the energy sphere shattered Mumm-Ra's weakened shield and...

"Holy Jaga," Panthro gasped. The orb entered the mummy's chest, exploding violently out the other side amid chunks of dead flesh and lifeless blood. Mumm-Ra immediately fell to earth, bandages wrapping about his body as he screamed in horrible agony.

"By... the... Ancient..." the demon mage gasped, collapsing to his knees. "This... cannot... be...."

"It is, Mumm-Ra," Panthro said as he leapt out of the ThunderTank. "Your days are done on Third Earth!"

"Not... quite yet.... Panther..." Mumm-Ra wheezed. "I... am not called... the Ever Living... for nothing..."

Panthro readied his nunchaku just as Mumm-Ra faded from view and vanished entirely. The Guyver, for his part, drifted down to earth. His breath came in great gasps, his shoulders slumped and his legs bent. The armor shrank, then leapt clear of the boy's body. Within moments, the armor had grown translucent and disappeared itself just before the boy collapsed.

"Who is he?" Tygra asked while Berbils began to emerge from hiding places they had prepared for just such an attack.

"Don't know," Panthro replied. "Maybe these guys have a clue?"

"Well, now. That was impressive."

"No kidding, Alluro. What was it?"

"I wish I knew," TugMug said. "But I could have sworn that thing used a gravity weapon."

"Looks like he's all tuckered out," Chilla added. "Poor baby."

"What I'm interested in," Luna said, "is how it dealt with Mumm-Ra. I've NEVER seen that bastard

wounded so badly!"

"Nor have I," Alluro's condescending voice replied. "But I must admit, I rather liked the sight of it."

"Prepare SkyTomb!" Luna shouted. "Make sure all our systems are at peak effeciency! I have a feeling that this is only just beginning!"

Mumm-Ra staggered back toward his sarcophagus, the gaping wound in his chest sending waves of torment throughout his undead being. Never. NEVER had he been injured so badly at the hands of anyone. Not even his masters in ancient Egypt, when his name had been Ka-Tet, had ever delivered such pain as this!

"Almost... dead..." Mumm-Ra managed as the stone coffin drew ever nearer. "Not... much... time..."

The cold stone of the sarcophagus greeted him, encomapssed him as the energies of the Ancient Spirits of Evil filled his decayed frame. This would take time to heal. A lot of time. But, Mumm-Ra was not dead. Mumm-Ra could never die.

"There will be a reckoning for this, Guyver," he muttered as the lid closed over him. "Both you and the ThunderCats will rue this day."

"No..."

It was impossible. Inconceivable. But it still was.

"By Thundera," Bengali said from just behind.

Lion-O stared blankly at the smoking rubble which had once been Cat's Lair. The smoldering heap of

debris covered the paws of the former stone fortress, a testament to defeat. Cheetara, WilyKit, WilyKat, Snarf, all...

"Sword of Omens! Give me sight beyond sight!" They had to have made it out!

"What do you see?"

"Oh, no..." The Eye's vision became his own, and Lion-O saw it. Cheetara and the others left in the Lair.... all in chains... all captured... "This was their plan all along..."

"Lion-O!" Panthro's voice shouted as the ThunderTank - much the worse for wear - pulled up. He lowered the sword and looked to his comrades. "What happened..."

"The mutants have our friends," Lion-O growled. "We have to rescue them!"

"I agree," Lynx-O said, "But first..."

"But nothing! I will NOT let our fellow ThunderCats stay in the hands of the Mutants!"

"Lynx-O is right..."

Lion-O was silenced as the ephemeral image of Jaga appeared before him.

"I know you are angry, Lion-O, and I know how desperately you want to rescue your friends. But, have patience. The Mutants are far stronger now than they were before."

"Their weapons don't frighten me!"

"I know that, but to charge headlong into their new forces is suicide. How can you rescue the other ThunderCats, if you are dead?"

"You're... right, Jaga." That still didn't make it any easier to take.

"Don't lose heart, Lion-O. You will find a way. Listen to the others, and regroup."

"We need a plan," Lion-O said. "We'll regroup at the Tower of Omens. We have to find a way around the new Mutant army."

"I have a feeling Mumm-Ra is behind all this," Pumyra spat. "We'll have to deal with his interference too."

"Not anytime soon, we won't."

"What are you talking about, Tygra?"

"Short version," Panthro began, "Those legends about Guyver are true. And he doesn't like Mumm-Ra one bit. Not that I blame him, mind. The kid's sacked out in the ThunderTank now."

"Kid?" Bengali asked.

"Panthro and Tygra can explain everything when we get to the Tower of Omens," Lion-O said. "We need a plan, and we need one fast."

Lion-O took another look at the ruined Cat's Lair before departing for the ThunderTank. Fury burned brightly within him, rage that strained against bonds that barely contained it. The Mutants would pay for this. Oh, yes. They would pay dearly.

"Damn."

Agito emerged from the cave in which he had rested the night before, suddenly worried. He had not expected Sho to need the Guyver so soon, nor had he expected Mumm-Ra to stage such an assault. That ancient bandage freak was far more clever than Agito had guessed. But, at least that battle would keep him out of action for a while.

The ThunderCats would need Sho's help, and Sho would likely give it. Guyver One was far too kind for his own good. He would discover more of the power he had at his disposal, which wasn't necessarily a good thing. Agito could feel his chance slipping away. How could he find the twelve Zoacrystals - the organic jewels which had been the sign of the ancient Zoalords - without the knowledge still locked in Sho's amnesiac mind? Worse, what if Mumm-Ra learned of them, and managed to find even one?

"Another war has begun," Agito said as he breathed deep the clean air of Third Earth. "And this could

likely be the last this world sees. One way or the other."

In the Next Episode

Cheetara, the twins, and Snarf are held captive in Castle Plun-Darr as Slythe and Primor begin to move their combined forces to their home base and plot to terrorize Third Earth while the Lunataks begin making their own plans. In the Tower of Omens, the ThunderCats remaining go over what they know, and launch a desperate rescue operation. Will it succeed? Will Sho aid them, or go on his way to follow the voice of the mysterious Agito?

All this and more in the next episode of One Last War to Fight.