The Driving Lesson

By Leanna

Chapter 4

The next afternoon the two she-cats walked in silence down a path that led them through the burble fruit fields towards the burble village. “So did you enjoy yourself last night “Cheetara asked as they entered the fruit field.

“Yes,” The lioness smiled.

“And I take it you really liked the gift that Panthro made you too,” the Cheetah smirked.

“Oh my yes,” she answered looking down at the new weapons at her hips.

“see, he really thinks a lot of you,” Cheetara winked.

A mysterious grin crept across Leanna face as a the birds in the surrounding trees chirped as the two women passed, “did you know that your efforts are appreciated by every living thing here,” Leanna nodded and cocked her head to one side, “With out the Thundercats many of the animals would have had there homes destroyed”.

The cheetah looked at Leanna , “how do you know this, “she asked curiously.

“They told me,” Leanna said pointing up to the chirping birds, “They are very grateful”

“They told you,” cheetara said warily, “you can understand them”

“Well, yes when they choose to speak to me,” the lioness nodded, “I know it sounds crazy,” she shrugged.

“Oh no..not at all, do you realize this could be a great advantage…we could find out so many things about what going on , “The cheetah said excited, “we could keep a better eye on the mutants and lunatacks”.

“No..” Leanna protested, “no one must know of this especially the others, they’ll think I’m insane”.

“Leanna,” Cheetara said stopping, “we all have a special gift. This just happens to be yours. You denying this would be like me denying my ability to run or use my sixth sense”.

“Yeah but to speak and understand animals,” Leanna said shaking her head.

“Why is that a bad thing..Lion-o has control over all cats,” Cheetara answered.

“But can he hear them speak,” Leanna asked.

“No,” the cheetah answered the smiled.

As the two women neared the burble village Cheetara got the strange feeling they where being watched. “Ready yourself, “the cheetah said slowly reaching for her staff, “we’ll have company soon”.

Leanna nodded and placed her hands on her weapon. The two kept walking as if they weren’t aware they where being followed. The second a twig snapped behind them, Cheetara whipped out her Bo staff with lightening reflexes.

“Mutants…There’s four of them,” Leanna whispered as her eyes scanned the area around them.

“How’s your running legs,” The cheetah asked.

“Not as good as yours but fairly good,” The Lioness nodded.

The breeze picked up and shifted, “they have us surrounded…we have one of two choices…. we stand our ground and fight or try to get back to the lair,” Cheetara said quietly.

“Your faster…you can get back to the lair for help,” Leanna said unclipping her weapon.

“You think I would leave you behind…I don’t think so,” Cheetara said shaking her head, “we either fight together or leave together”.

“Well look who we have here,” came a hiss behind the two females.

“Slythe, you know how this is going to end, so why don’t you and your cronies just turn around and go back to castle plundar,” The cheetah hissed extending her staff.

The reptilian smirked and nodded to the others, “seems our Thundercat friends need to be taught a lesson, yesss,” Slythe hissed holding his axe at the ready. The other mutants jumped out and surrounded the two she-cats.

“You know something. If you were a smart as you are ugly…then you’d all be geniuses,” Leanna smirked looking at Monkian and Vultureman.

“This one has a smart mouth,” Jackelman said raising his club.

“Now now boys no need to be that way,” Cheetara said taking a swing at Jackleman with her staff.

Lion-O was on his way to the control room when the sword growled a warning. He reached down and unsheathed it and raised it to his face, “sword of omens, give me sight beyond sight,” he commanded. The sword growled and the crossbars curled.

“Mutants,” he growled as the sword showed the two she-cats in trouble. He quickly re-sheathed the sword and ran to the control room, “Panthro where’s Tygra,” Lion-O asked as he ran in.

“He’s over to the tower of omens,” the panther answered, “what’s going on,” he asked seeing the expression on the lion’s face.

“It’s just you and me then,” Lion-o said turned back to the door, “the mutants have Cheetara and Leanna trapped near the burble fruit fields’.

The panther growled and jumped to his feet and quickly followed the Lion.

After a few minutes of sparing the two women stood back to back, “I think I would rather take my chances driving the tank,” Leanna said as the mutants closed in around them, “then playing with these mutants”.

“Leanna,” cheetara whispered, “first chance you make a jump for the trees, Monkian and Vultureman will follow, I handle Jackleman and Slythe”.

The lioness nodded, “hey banana brains…. catch me if you can,” she taunted leaping up into a nearby tree.

“Come on Vultureman..Let’s go skin ourselves a cat,” Monkian hooted following the Lioness.

“Well looks like your friend left you all alone,” Slythe hissed swinging at the cheetah.

“She was just distracting them until they arrived,” Cheetara nodded to Lion-O and Panthro a few yards away.

“Ah about time that whelp arrived,” Slythe hissed.

The Two male Thundercats ran with weapons drawn, “Slythe don’t you have anything better to do,” Lion-O said as the sword growled waiting for it’s masters command, “Haven’t you mutants gotten tired of loosing yet”.

“Not as long as you have the sword in your hands, “Slythe replied going after the lion.

“Panthro go ..Leanna may need your help,” Lion-o said glancing sideways, but the panther was already gone.

As Lion-O and cheetara spared with Slythe and Jackleman, Leanna was bolting through the trees with Monkian and Vultureman hot on her trail.

“You made a big mistake going through the trees kitty,” monkian hooted firing a shot at the lioness.

Leanna just managed to jump out of the way as the cannonball shattered the tree branch she was on. “Maybe….But are you fast enough to catch me,” she said leaping to another branch.

“She’s run out of room,” Vultureman cawed as the trees ended.

The lioness stopped and looked, on one side was a deep gorge, the other the two mutants, “oh crap,” she said looking down into the gorge; she froze with fear her claws digging deep into the bark.

“Looks like we did catch you. You’ll make a nice fur rug, that’s if you don’t spoil your pelt from the fall “ Vultureman laughed, “monkian shoot her now”.

Leanna leapt up and grabbed onto the branch over her head, just as her hands made contact she felt the wood shatter and saw nothing but sky as she started to fall backwards.

The lioness squeezed her eyes shut; the last thing she wanted to see was the ground coming up at her as she fell. The wind whistled in her ears as she plummeted towards the ground; then she felt something latch around her waist, she gasped as the grip tightened around her waist her eyes snapped open.

“Hold on tight,” Panthro shouted over the wind.

Leanna didn’t need to be told twice, she wrapped her arms around the panther’s neck as he turned over, with a twitch of his shoulders four of his spikes flew out and buried themselves in the wall of the gorge.

He had one hand on the cords as the other held the lioness. He tightened his grip as they came to a sudden halt. Panthro lifted his legs as they swung towards the rock wall, “you okay,” he asked as he lowered them down on a small ledge a few feet down.

Leanna let go and tried to stand, her knees were still a bit wobbly, “ Have you gone totally insane, “she asked looking up and the top of the gorge, “you could have killed yourself”.

“Would you rather of ended up a splat on the bottom of that,” Panthro said nodding to the bottom a few hundred feet down.

“Crazy Panther,” Leanna said shaking her head, “I’m just a Thundercat in training. You know expendable”.

“No one is expendable,” Panthro growled, “you scared me half to death woman,” he said pulling his spikes from the bedrock”

Leanna just looked at him and never said anything for a few minutes, “So how are we going to get off this ledge,” she asked sitting down and rubbing her hands over her face.

“Well we only have one choice,” he said looking up, “the ledge is too far up…so we go down”.

“Down, “the lioness gasped, “Did I ever mention I HATE heights”.

“Don’t worry you’ll be ok,” Panthro smiled, “look we’ll climb down slowly, once we reach bottom we can head home. It will take a bit longer but we’ll be ok”

“Can’t we just stay here, “Leanna cringed.

“Well we could, but that’s not a good idea. These ledges aren’t in the best shape one wrong move and we’ll make it to the bottom quicker then we want to, “The panther shrugged, then his communicator beeped.

”You guys alright,” lion-o asked peering over the edge.

“Yes, we’re ok,” Panthro answered, “How’s it going up there”

“They ran as usual,” Lion-o snorted, “you guys need a hand”.

“No. We’ll be alright, we going to climb down and make our way out of the gorge,” Panthro said as he looked up and waved.

“Ok, you two be careful. Cheetara and I are heading home..It’s going to be dark in a few hours,” lion-o said.

“I’m always careful,” Panthro snorted and cut the connection.

“Right Mr. hot-head,” Lion-o chuckled, “Let’s go home,” he said looking at Cheetara.

“Well you heard the man we better get going,” Panthro nodded, “it will be dark in a few hours”.

The lioness reluctantly got to her feet, “exactly how are both of us going to climb down,” she asked.

“I’ll be doing the climbing, you’ll be doing the holding on,” he smirked, “I swear I won’t let you fall,” he nodded standing in front of her, “just hold on tight and don’t look down”.

Leanna gulped as he drove his spikes into the bedrock and stepped back to the edge, the lioness wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist holding on as tight as she could.

Panthro took a small leap and they started down the rock wall, he couldn’t help but grinned a bit as he felt the Lioness shiver as she buried her face in his chest so she didn’t have to look down, “how you doing,” he asked as they made it to another ledge.

Her only answer was a nod of her head, “we’ll be at the bottom soon,” he said repelling down a bit further.

Leanna squealed as the panther lost his footing for a seconded, her grip tightened to the point she nearly cut off his air.

“Leanna,” he said quietly, “Ease up, your crushing me,” he said half breathless.

“Sorry,” she whispered relaxing her hold a bit.

“That’s ok,” he smiled, “just don’t choke me until we get to the bottom”.

”I’ll try not too,” she said raising her head enough to look at him.

It wasn’t long before his feet touched solid ground, “we made it to the bottom, see I told you you’d be ok”.

“I hope I never have to do that again for a very long time,” she said letting go, she breath a sigh of relief as her feet touched the earth, “so how do we get out of here”.

“There’s a pathway a few miles ahead,” Panthro nodded and pointed north.

“Do we have to do anymore mountain climbing,” she asked hoping he would say no.

Panthro looked at her and shook his head “no, the path leads to a small trail that will take us up to the top”.

“Ok,” she nodded,” lead the way”.

The panther nodded and the two headed north, they found the path and start going along, then Panthro stopped, “this isn’t good,” he said running his hand over his head.

“What,” Leanna asked peering around him.

“The path is completely blocked off, we’re going to have to find another way around,” he said looking at the huge pile of rock that blocked their way.

“Can’t we just go over them,” Leanna asked.

“No, it might cause a rock slide. We’ll have to go back and go further up,” he said turning around.

“Maybe you should have let me go splat,” she joked, “at least you’d be home for supper”.

“That’s not even remotely funny,” he said walking past her.

“I was only joking geeze,” she said rolling her eyes, “you take everything to serious”.

Panthro stopped and spun around “And you don’t take things seriously enough. Do you realize you could have died,” he growled looking at her.

“I wasn’t the one crazy enough to dive off a cliff. You could have died too,” she spat stomping past the panther.

The panther just scowled, “women,” he snorted and followed the lioness back down the path.

The pair walked a few more miles in silence, “We’re not going to make it out of here before dark,” Panthro said looking up at the darkening sky, “looks like it’s going to rain too. We’ll have to find shelter”.

“Great. Next time that cheetah suggest a walk I’m saying no,” the lioness grumbled walking ahead.

Just as dark approached Panthro spotted a cave a few feet up on the cliff face, “we can camp out there,” he said pointing up.

Leanna looked up and nodded,” hope no one is home,” she said.

“Only one way to find out,” Panthro said as he made his way up to the cave.

The lioness waited at the bottom. “All clear,” He shouted and came back down, “We’ll find some fire wood”.

As the two looked around and gathered firewood it started to pour, “Grab what you can and get back to the cave,” Panthro said grabbing a few more large branches. By the time the two made it to the cave, they were soaked to the bone,” when it rains here it rains,” Leanna said putting down her armload of wood.

“It’s the rainy season that’s why,” Panthro nodded and started preparing a fire.

“Let’s hope what ever lived here don’t come back,” Leanna said nodding to a pile of small twigs and grass that once served as some type of nest.

“No I think this place hasn’t been used for a while,” Panthro said as he threw a few sticks of wood on the now blazing fire.

Panthro watched as Leanna walked over and dragged some of the nesting material over closer to the fire, she sat down and loosened her long mane and began to wring the water out of it.

“I’ll umm, go and see if I can find us some food,” Panthro said getting to his feet.

“Be careful,” Leanna nodded as the panther headed to the cave entrance.

“I won’t be long,” he nodded going out in the rain.

Leanna shook her head, “could have waited until morning, “she said to herself as she drew up her knees and wrapped her arms around her legs to conserve what body heat she had, ”stubborn man”.

Panthro returned an hour later with two small rabbits,” Just need to clean these then we’ll have supper”.

Leanna reached over and picked up one of her Kama’s, “the blade on this should be sharp enough,” she nodded reaching for the two rabbits, “you warm yourself up and I’ll take care of these”.

“Thanks,” Panthro smiled and went over by the fire and sat down.

The panther watched Leanna as she began cleaning and skinning their supper, then out of the blue a thought popped in his, he chuckled and shook his head. Leanna turned her head, “what”.

“Nothing,” he said quickly looking at the fire.

“Now too bad we didn’t have any of Snarf’s spices,” Leanna said putting the two rabbits on a spit.

“I’m glad we don’t,” he said,” we’ll actually get to see what real meat tastes like,” he laughed.

Leanna chuckled, “poor snarf, he’s always over spicing something, I don’t think he has any taste buds”.

“If he don’t we won’t have any left by the time he gets done,” Panthro laughed.

“Oh I know, he put way to much salt in the stew the other night, I had to drink at least six glasses of water to wash it down,” Leanna giggled.

“I know. But he means well,” Panthro shrugged, “we may end up with no taste buds but he means well”.

“Taste buds, we’ll end up pickled,” Leanna said nearly falling over with laughter.

“Be careful Lioness. You’ll burn our dinner,” Panthro winked.

Leanna smiled and turned her attention to their dinner “Sorry,” she chuckled, “that was mean of me picking on poor ol Snarf”.

“No. You weren’t picking on him. It’s true,” Panthro smiled.

The lioness stood and went over to the entrance to clean her weapon in the small spring the flowed down just outside the cave wall when she was done she stood and looked out as

lightening lit the sky and the rain came down heavier, she rubbed her arms trying to shake off the chill.

“The rain is getting worse,” The panther said as he stood behind her.

“Yes, I hope there isn’t a flash flood,” the lioness nodded.

“Your half frozen,” Panthro said putting his hands on her arms.

“Just a little chilled,” she said turning around looking up at the big cat.

She was shivering, but not from the cold, it was from the realization that she could have died, “I’m sorry about earlier.. I’m very grateful you saved my life, “she said wrapping her arms around his waist and laying her head on his chest hugging him tightly, “thank-you”.

“Well you were right about one thing, we both could have been killed,” Panthro said returning her embrace, “I tried to get to you but by the time I got there I saw Monkian shoot that branch and without a second thought I jumped after you,” he shrugged, “if I hadn’t of tried and you died. I would have never forgiven myself”.

“I guess you being a Thundercat for so long, it was an automatic reflex to do your duty.” Leanna said lifting her head.

“It had nothing to do with being a Thundercat or duty,” he said as he reached up and gently moved a strand of hair off her cheek.

Leanna just looked up at him, she wanted so badly to tell him how she felt, but the last time she spoke her feelings to someone, she was ridiculed and insulted, so she knew it was better to remain silent then be hurt again.

As Panthro looked into her dark green eyes, his mind was a jumble of thoughts, like his jumping off a cliff without a second thought of his own safety, it wasn’t duty that drove him, it was a protective instinct, a male protecting his potential mate. If he actually had of thought for a second he could have attached his back spikes to the trunk of the tree then went after her.

But that was the problem he didn’t think, only acted, the only thought at the time was that she was in danger and he needed to save her and if she were to die that he would willingly give his life trying to save her. What he done was not only dangerous but also stupid, but in those few short seconds he didn’t care. He put his hand on her cheek and leaned down to place a kiss on her lips, he was only a fraction of an inch away from her when his communicator beeped. The panther tried to ignore it but he knew he had to answer it, he sighed and pulled away giving Leanna a sympathetic look as he pulled the communicator out of his belt, the lioness smiled and went back over to the fire and sat down.

“That was Lion-o, I swear he’s as bad as Snarf sometimes, a worry wart,” Panthro said going back over to the fire, “He wanted to check in to see what our situation was…he said that Tygra

was still at the tower and couldn't make it back in this storm. And that someone will be here as soon as he gets back in the morning because the Hovercat is still out of order".

The lioness just nodded as Panthro sat down beside her, "Hungry," Leanna asked passing the big panther a piece of the rabbit meat. "But it's nice to have someone worry about you," the lioness replied as she ate.

The two ate in silence, The chirping of a bird that flew into the cave broke the silence. "What in Thundera," Panthro said as the bird landed beside the lioness.

Leanna looked down at the brightly colored parrot and allowed the bird to hop on her arm, "We have to get out of here…. Now," she said as the bird quickly flew back out the cave entrance.

Panthro gave her a strange look, "why".

"There's a large wave on it's way here," she said quickly getting to her feet and grabbing her weapons, "we have to go. It's going to flood the cave".

"Go. Go where, the gorge floor is nothing but a raging river," Panthro said following her.

"Then," she said hooking the straps of her Kama's over her wrists, "We go up…. There is a small over hang on a ledge a few feet up".

"Wait a minute," he said gently grabbing her arm, "How do you know this," he asked.

"Just trust me," she nodded and went out on the lip of the cave opening.

The panther just shook his head, just as he was starting to get dry he had to go get wet again, "woman you better be right," he said as he followed her the few feet up the rock wall.

The pair could hardly see as the rain beat down on their faces, Panthro caught sight of the over hang as the lightening lit the sky, he tapped the lioness's shoulder and pointed to their right. The pair made their way over and climbed up on the ledge just as a large wave came down the river at a fast pace. Panthro looked over the edge and saw the cave was now underwater. He leaned back out of the rain, "Care to explain to me exactly how you knew that was going to happen," he asked wiping the water from his face.

"Would you believe the parrot told me," she shrugged, "she saw the light from our fire and wanted to warn us".

Panthro just looked at her, "I know it sounds crazy," she said, "but it's true".

"You speak to animals," The panther finally said.

"I can… and also see what they see," she answered, "she showed me the wave".

“Well,” he smiled, “that’s impressive”.

“I guess we’re in a bind now,” Leanna said, “We have no fire and little shelter. At least it won’t rain on us,” she said looking up at the jutting rock over their heads.

“The rain is starting to let up,” Panthro said, “that’s one thing on our side”.

The lioness nodded and tried to control the shivering, “wish we had a fire, heck I’d settle for a warm blanket,” she said drawing up her legs.

“But we don’t… We only have each other,” he said removing his shoulder spikes and leaned back against the wall, putting his arm around Leanna, drawing her against his body, “we should try and get some sleep,” he said resting his chin on the top of her head. The lioness nodded and curled her body as close as she could to Panthro. The panther wrapped both arms around her and tried to go to sleep. He wasn’t sure if it was the lightening or something else that kept him awake most of the night, he did know that Leanna stopped shaking and was comfortably nestled against his body sleeping soundly. She did stir a few times only to move closer to him. The top half of her body was sprawled across his chest, her now dried waist length hair draped across his arms and half his shoulder providing a bit of warmth.

It was just after first light when the sound of an engine woke Panthro, he didn’t remember when he finally fell asleep.

“You two okay,” Cheetara asked from the Thunderclaw that hovered a few feet away from the cliff face.

The panther’s eyes flew open and he sat up quickly wakening Leanna with a start.

“Umm, yeah we’re ok,” Panthro answered awkwardly.

“Sorry I’m late,” she smirked, “but Tygra just got back with this and the hovercat is still not operational ”.

“Better late then never,” the panther nodded, “you take Leanna up first and come back and get me”.

“Ok,” Cheetara smiled, “Come on Leanna”.

The lioness stood and climb on behind the cheetah, “I see you two were quite comfortable,” the cheetah giggled.

“We were half froze and soaked to the bone. It’s called body heat,” the lioness snorted.

Cheetara just smirked, “yeah sure”.

The lioness shook her head and climbed off and waited for the cheetah to retrieve Panthro.

“Here,” Lion-O said coming up behind Leanna and offering a cup of hot apple cider from a thermos, “This will warm you”. The lioness nodded and sipped the hot beverage, thankful for something warm in her stomach.

“I’m glad you two survived the night,” Lion-o said as Cheetara landed the Thunderclaw.

”It wasn’t dull, it was alright until our shelter got flooded,” Panthro said jumping off the back of the vehicle.

“I’m just happy you two are in one piece,” Lion-O said passing the panther a drink of the hot cider.

“Do you two want to take the Thunderclaw or the Thundertank back to the lair,” Lion-o asked.

“Cheetara and I will take the Thunderclaw back,” Leanna nodded passing the cup back to Lion-o

“Well Panther you heard the lady…I guess it’s just you and me then,” Lion-o smirked mischievously.

Panthro knew that look the lion had in his eye, “Great,” he snorted heading to the tank.

“You know something Panthro,” Lion-o hopping into the tank, “what you done yesterday was either the bravest thing you every done or the dumbest…jumping off a cliff,” Lion-o chuckled shaking his head.

The panther didn’t answer as he started up the tank.

“So umm, when I called in last night. You sounded a bit irritated,” the lion said watching for a reaction. “Did I interrupt something”, He asked innocently.

Lion-O smirked when he seen the panther’s jaw clench. “No,” Panthro said keeping his eyes forward.

“So would you jump off a cliff and save me,” the lion grinned.

“No…. I’d let you fall,” Panthro grumbled.

“HA…you finally are giving in,” Lion-o smiled.

The panther shot a warning glare at Lion-O.

“Are you done yet,’ Panthro said as they crossed the draw bridge and entered the hanger.

“Far from it my friend…. far from it,” Lion-o chuckled jumping out.

“Maybe I’ll go ask Leanna what happened last night,” Lion-o said.

“You leave her be,” Panthro growled.

“Okay okay,” Lion-o said holding up his hands, “still a little touchy on the subject”

“There is no subject to be touchy about,” the panther growled and stormed off.

“Me thinks thou does protest to much Panther,” Lion-o chuckled watching Panthro storm out the door. He knew just by Panthro reaction that something did happen.