Gaining Perspective

By Lyngard

Tygra

It had been a long time since I had visited the storage closet deep inside the Lair. I had only come into this room once before to retrieve the time capsule and give it to Lion-O so he might remember what Thundera was like. I was charged to be the Lord of the ThunderCats advisor and mentor. I was also charged to be the second in command if something were to happen to that leader. Thank Jaga, Lion-O had grown into his new adult body quickly. It wasn't an easy task to jump more than a decade in mind and spirit to keep up with one's body. I was proud to see his accomplishments; it made me feel like I had done my duty, kept my word. While I am still Lion-O's trusted advisor, I am much more now; we are friends, brothers not in the sense of clanship but in the spirit of Thundera.

Ah ha! There they are. I pulled out three ruby colored disks from one of the bins at the bottom of a pile of items we had rescued from the flagship after crash landing on this planet. Jaga had entrusted these emblems to Lion-O and being that I was his primary guardian at the time, me. I had been skeptical about the disks. Seeing our fleet attacked by the mutants destroying ship after ship, I had feared that we would never need them. I guess, if we were to have offspring, they would need recognition of their heritage, but six of us, three mere children at the time, carrying on the legacy of an entire race was too much for my scientific mind to accept as possible. The inbreeding would be our downfall – how could a race survive on so few?

I could feel a satisfied smile playing on my face. It would not come to that. There were Thunderians who had survived the massacre. Yes, we were scattered, but we were not the last of our kind. Finally, I held more than a diminishing hope. The faint threads of intuition that my clansmen, my family away from the ThunderCats, had survived blossomed into full-fledged knowledge that not only was it more than a possibility it was more likely a reality. These small red circles in my hand were more than symbolic recognition of fellow ThunderCats; they were the promise that a society would rise again from the ashes of tragedy.

I heard a soft click as the door to my storage room opened and the soft footfall of someone entering. I didn't need to even turn around to recognize who it was. "Hello, Cheetara," I greeted her. One didn't spend years in cramped quarters and not recognize scents and nuances of gait in others.

"Tygra," Cheetara answered with what sounded like surprise in her voice. Did she not realize that I was here? She of all of the others would be the last to be caught off guard. "I'm glad I caught you."

I turned and regarded my companion of so many years. For the longest time, she had been the only female among us. I'm sure Wily Kit would take offense to that thought. But, Cheetara was the only adult female; Kit, though growing older, was still a kitten. For a while, Cheetara was the

only chance that we would be able to repopulate our people. Panthro and I had never acted upon the orders of Jaga to continue our race partly because we never had the chance. Ever since we crashed on this world, we had been fighting for our very survival – food, shelter, safety – survival of generations to come had always been an afterthought. Of course, if I were honest with myself, I would acknowledge that there were other reasons. Rather than dwell on those, however, I chose to investigate why the cheetah had sought me out. "What's up?" I asked seeing her stare at the three ruby saucers I was still holding in my hands.

The cheetah blinked at me a look crossing her lovely features before being driven away with a carefully contrived neutral expression. "I want to volunteer for watch during the inaugurations."

Even for one so swift on her feet, the words tumbled quickly from her lips as if speed would make them more acceptable. I looked at her long and hard trying to decide what was really going on. On a hunch, I asked, "Did you have a vision?"

Cheetara's eyes widened for a moment in surprise at what I had said before she denied my observation. "No, no, nothing like that. I just thought that with all the festivities we'd be a little shorthanded. I wanted to let you know that if the shift was still open, I could take it."

"Nonsense," I replied placing the inactivated emblems in a pouch I had brought with me to store them until the ceremony. "Snarfer has agreed to monitor the system during the anointment ritual and reception following. You won't have to volunteer your services until the two am shift," I finished with a wink.

"Ah, Lion-O," I greeted catching sight of the young lion glancing through the doorway.

"Tygra, am I glad to find you."

"Seems that I've been lost by several of you in the past few hours," I smiled looking back at Cheetara who still wore an expression on her face that I had not identified. Unfortunately, I was late and did not have time to coax out what was bothering her.

"Can we talk on the way over? I've got to help Panthro with the sound system."

"Uh, well, sure, I guess. I just wanted to go over my toast with someone."

For all of Lion-O's presence, I still found it amusing that he would worry over public speaking. Hiding a grin behind a pseudo-cough, I glanced back at Cheetara. She still looked like she needed to talk to someone. Deciding to solve two problems at once, I slid by the lion and started out of the room. "Then, I think, Cheetara is the perfect person to use as a sounding board."

The night was glorious all of the little touches had been completed to make the appointment of new ThunderCats perfect. Even the weather that had been threatening a summer thunderstorm had apparently agreed not to ruin the festivities. In my mind, I had been silently counting the lull between lightning and the low rumbling of thunder to calculate the distance of the storm to the Lair. The storm was definitely headed away from us. No rain, instead, we would have the treat of a rain-cooled breeze to staunch the extreme heat that we had been having of late.

I watched the inauguration of the Thunderians with interest and more than a little pride. Lion-O's speech had been very fitting, and it was obvious that the audience had approved not only of his words but also of our new allies. I did notice that Cheetara had been more reserved than usual and wondered for a moment whether Lion-O had managed to find out what was troubling her. I clinked my glass with hers, but she avoided my questioning gaze. I would have to talk with her after the ceremony.

"Let's get this party started." I heard Lion-O say and music started immediately. Taking Pumyra as his first dance partner was a stroke of genius on the lion's part. I couldn't think of a better way to solidify the bond of partnership among us. I turned to talk to Cheetara, but she had already moved away it appeared to help Snarf with the refreshments. I contemplated following when a soft, human hand on my shoulder stopped me.

"Hi, Tygra." A soft lilting voice called my name.

Looking into the beaming face of Nayda, all thoughts of Cheetara vanished from my mind. The warrior woman looked amazing. Well, she always looked fantastic, but tonight she was wearing a dress. I can already hear Kit correcting me in my head, *gown, Tygra.* Not the cumbersome formalwear that would look like some kind of royal vestiges, although given her title, that would have been just as appropriate, but a form fitting black dress with a slit up the side that would make Snarfer blush. Realizing that I hadn't said anything in a few minutes but was staring like an idiot, I finally answered. "Nayda, so good of you to come."

She laughed softly and continued, "For a moment, I wondered if you had forgotten me."

"Impossible," I replied more quickly and adamantly than I should have. Covering, I chose to initiate opening a conversation. "So what do you think?"

"Amazing. I haven't had the opportunity to be in the Lair's courtyard before. The Treetop Kingdom is pretty far away from here – and we certainly haven't had much time for a social calendar."

"Have you met Lynx-O and Bengali?"

"Not yet, will you introduce me?"

"Certainly." My feelings for Nayda were complicated. Of all of the people and creatures on Third Earth, I feel that I have gotten to know her the best. Kit and Kat had asked me if I would pursue a relationship with her after the whole invisibility fiasco. I am certainly charmed by her.

And, there is a very real physical attraction, but that is all there is to it. That is, all I can let be to it. “Panthro, why don’t you bring Willa, and we can introduce Lynx-O and Bengali to the Warrior Maidens.

“Lynx-O, Bengali, may I present you with Willa, Queen of the Warrior Maidens and her sister Nayda.”

“It is an honor to meet you.” Lynx-O said with a small bow taking the queen’s hand in the two of his.

“The honor is ours. Today is indeed a great day for Third Earth,” replied the queen. Was it my imagination or did Willa actually look comfortable with a male holding her hand?

“Have you had the opportunity to visit the Treetop Kingdom?” Nayda asked Bengali. I felt a slight stirring of jealously which I had no right to feel at the interest Nayda was paying to my cousin.

“We’ve been rather limited in our treks on Third Earth,” answered Bengali. I glanced at Nayda who didn’t even flinch at the roughness in the white tiger’s voice.

I stopped listening to the conversation, which sounded like Nayda was inviting Bengali for a personal tour of her home and took a few minutes to enjoy the merriment surrounding me. Remembering the lack of enthusiasm Cheeetara had expressed for the party, I scanned the area for her and found her standing with Lion-O and Pumyra. Lion-O was serving drinks apparently for another more private toast.

I saw an incongruous frown darken Cheetara’s face. She slammed her glass down onto the tabletop sloshing the contents into a large red stain on the white tablecloth.

“Uh oh,” I breathed quickly and excused myself from my group. I was on a mission to diffuse the cheetah or at least redirect her, but as with everything involving Cheetara, I was too slow.

“She is not and never will be my sister!” came the snarl from the spotted one as she pivoted on one heel and stormed out of the party, brushing by me.

“Cheetara.” I called as she blew past me looking for some kind of hesitation and finding none.

I glanced back to Pumyra who had taken the brunt of the cheetah’s unexplained outburst. She stood very still with her hand fingering a gold band around her neck that before tonight I had never seen. Bengali had approached her from behind and offered a gentle arm across her shoulder. The puma accepted the comfort from her friend and appeared to be weathering the altercation better than I would have expected.

Lion-O, on the other hand, looked both stunned with concern and angry at the scene of which he had unwittingly been a part. Suddenly, he was on the move following the angry path that Cheetara had taken. I stepped in front of his path to stop him.

“I’m going after her,” he told me the quietness in his voice a contrast to the emotions playing vividly across his face.

“I think it would be for the best if I went.”

“This concerns me too.”

He did have a point. He had been the one to set Cheetara off, and I didn’t think that he would sit back and let me handle it completely. I still wasn’t sure that two against one was the best course of action, though. Going against my better judgment, I acquiesced, “Let’s go!”