Finally Found You

By Rangerkitty

Chapter 5

A few weeks later, plans were proceeding as intended, and to Tygra's and everyone's great delight, they were way ahead of schedule. Work had even begun on the farm, transplanting the tall trees to provide camouflage for the crops below. An added bonus is that people could tend to the crops without being seen from attackers above.

Tygra was inspecting some of the work on the rafters in each of the caves. He knew that the Maldesian people were skilled builders, but Tygra was meticulous and performed routine inspections out of habit. Everything was looking good so far.

He entered the cave that he knew Melonia was working in that day. He thought it would be nice to see her face, her smile and just to be near her for a few minutes. He was starting to feel that she was becoming attracted to him as well, based on the way she had been reacting to him. This idea made him very happy, as he could not get her out of his thoughts.

He continued down the corridor and stared to hear voices, like laughter. He could hear Melonia's voice and the voice of Moldun and some children as well. He approached them and smiled. Holding up his lamp, it became lighter in the cave. She looked up and her heart leapt at the sight of him.
"Well, hello tiger." She said seductively.

Tygra smiled as Moldun quietly fumed at her remark. The children looked up and started jumping up and down as Tygra smiled at them. Suddenly, dirt and rocks started falling from the ceiling of the cave. "What?" Tygra exclaimed as both Melonia and Moldun's faces gasped in horror.

Melonia tried to quiet the kids as Tygra held his lamp up high to inspect the rafters. Unlike all the other caves, these were clumsily built and not arranged properly. "This isn't right." He realized and turned quickly to the kids who were now screaming, as dirt and rocks continued to fall. "Quick! Get them out of here!"

Moldun grabbed 2 of the kids and ran past Tygra towards the entrance of the cave. Melonia tried to get the last child off the ground, who was screaming and thrashing uncontrollably. "Mona! Mona, come on!!" she shouted as Tygra looked up and realized the cave was about to give way.

Tygra looked part her where the other end of the cave has been blasted out and knew it was mostly rock, and would hold up while the rest of the cave was much more unstable. He shoved Melonia so that she hit the ground and rolled with the little girl as the rest of the cave gave way, covering Tygra in soil and rocks.

Melonia stood and gasped at the pile of rocks that barricaded her passage to the cave. She did not know if Tygra was just sealed off from her or if he had been buried in the cave-in. “Tygra! Tygra!” she screamed. Hearing nothing she tried to move some of the massive rocks that had fallen, but they would not budge. “Oh Tygra, please be ok!”

Moldun came running out the cave’s entrance with the 2 children as a gust of dirt and dust came flying out after them, along with the crumbling roar of rock and stone. Panthro looked up, horrified and ran up to him, accompanied by a large group of villagers.

“What happened???” Panthro exclaimed, reaching over to help Moldun to his feet. Moldun stood, coughing and dusting himself off.

“There was a cave-in. I grabbed 2 of the kids. I thought Melonia and Tygra were right behind me!”

“Melonia and Tygra were in there?!” Panthro roared.

“Yes, with little Mona, also… I thought they were right behind me!” Moldun lamented.

Panthro grabbed his nun chucks and radioed Cheetara. “Cheetara, come in!”

“I read you Panthro. Liono just saw it through the eye. We’re on our way.”

“Where is Tygra?” Panthro asked. “What did Lion-O see?”

“Melonia and the child were pushed out of the way. Tygra is buried in the rubble.” Cheetara answered nervously.

“Blast!” Panthro exclaimed. “I have to get him out of there before he completely runs out of air!” He looked over at Moldun who was starting at the ground, looking very nervous.

As angry as Panthro was, he knew he had to be smart about this. Time was of the essence. What would Tygra do? He thought as he looked down to the command post. An idea came to his mind and he ran down to Tygra’s pile of blueprints. Glad for once about how meticulous the tiger was, he studied the chart for cave number seven, and saw they had only made it approximately 50 feet into the cave, the other end stretched in almost 500 feet.

He climbed into the Thundertank as Lion-O and Cheetara arrived on the Feliner and landed, joining him in the tank.

“Thundercats, HO!!!” they shouted as Panthro drove up to the cave and plunged inside. The tank ate through the rock and soil until they were just shy of where the detectors showed Tygra’s body to be. Liono climbed out as the tank backed up a few feet, and started pushing the larger boulders out of the way. He moved one last rock to see Tygra’s outstretched arm, motionless and covered in dirt.

Cheetara jumped out to help Lion-O and together they pulled Tygra from beneath the pile of dirt and broken rafters. Lion-O lifted him into the Thundertank and Panthro carefully guided the tank out of the cave. Tygra was not moving, and Cheetara cleared his mouth and nose of as much dirt as she could before she started giving him rescue breaths.

Lion-O watched Tygra's chest rise with each breath the cheetah gave him, and he felt his own heart start to drop. He pounded on the tiger's chest a few times while Cheetara kept breathing for Tygra, until suddenly, the tiger started to cough. Lion-O and Cheetara rejoiced, and Panthro let out a cheer from the driver's seat as well.

Tygra coughed hard, gasped for air, and spit out dirt-filled sputum as his color started to return. He wiped his mouth and looked up at his friends.
"Thanks, guys." She said, hoarsely.

Cheetara helped Tygra sit up as Lion-O looked at his architect friend, confused. "Tygra, what happened in there? A cave-in? What caused that?"
Tygra shook his head. "Bad structural framework. Very unsteady. The rest of the caves were all perfectly assembled. This one almost looked like it was done wrong on purpose."

"You mean," Cheetara started "…sabotage?"

"Maybe, yes." Tygra answered "But why? These will be their homes."

"Maybe it was mutants." Lion-o offered.

"Or maybe it was set up for someone in particular". Cheetara surmised. Lion-O and Tygra looked at her incredulously. "Like who?" they asked together.

"Melonia!" Panthro exclaimed. "Did SHE make it out of that cave-in?"

Tygra gasped and looked at Lion-O who picked up the sword of omens. "Sword of Omens! Give me sight beyond sight!"

The sword curled at the hilt as Lion-O looked through it. He saw the young woman come out the other side of the cave, into the uncovered farm fields.

A little girl trailed behind her. As Lion-O was about to give Tygra the good news, he saw a disturbing image. Monkian had been circling in a skycutter above and had seen her. He swooped down and chased her as she ran from him, but he grabbed her with one arm and fl ew away with her struggling in his grasp.

Lion-O's eyes flashed as the vision ended and he looked at Tygra, who looked very worried. "She made it out of the cave, but she's been taken by the mutants!" he said.

Tygra slammed both his fists down on the floor of the Thundertank as he closed his eyes in agony. They had gotten to her after all.