'Before and After'

By Spaced Angel

The warning siren had been wailing for several minutes before Panthro heard it. The satisfied purring of the Thundertank's engine, music to his ears, had at first muffled the insistent screech reverberating through Cat's Lair. Only when he pushed himself out from underneath it to get another spanner did he hear the noise and realise that something was wrong.

Every button light in the Control Room was flashing wildly by the time he got there. A quick glance told him that a vessel had landed near the Lair. He punched up the forward monitor and studied the scene. A bulky, awkward-looking ship sat near the ravine and from it now descended an army of assorted creatures, burdened down with boxes and crates and determinedly making their way across the drawbridge.

"Turn my back for a minute," he muttered, activating the communicator to warn the Tower of Omens that he had a possible invasion situation on his hands. The light blinked several times, but there was no response. The thought flashed across his mind that the Tower might have already fallen. Had he been similarly deaf to their calls for help? Cursing his ineptitude, he was halfway through the warm-up sequence for the weapons system when the front door bell rang. He hesitated, not quite believing his ears. If this were how invasions were being conducted these days, it was new to him. Usually, they just knocked the door in, or blew the top off the Lair, or tried to obliterate the place completely, but ringing the bell?

"Must be getting old," he said, shaking his head. "This can't be for real."

But now he took another look at the throng outside the Lair, the less threatening they actually seemed. Some were stood chatting, others eating and one fellow was thoroughly cleaning out his nose. If this was an elite invasion force, then they did a very good job at concealing it.

Curiosity finally got the better of him and he went to see what these people wanted. Mindful that this could well be a trap, he had his nunchucks to hand. After all, he was on his own and the Tower was out of contact. The other Thundercats had gone to New Thundera, leaving him to guard the Lair. *Fat lot of good I am*, he thought ruefully. *Can't be left on my own for a minute without Third Earth going to rack and ruin.* The doorbell rang again with a hint of impatience sounding in its tinny notes. Panthro took a deep breath and opened the door.

"Oh my, this is just *sooo* right."

A humanoid female in a tight-fitting jumpsuit strode straight past him and onwards into the main hall. She twirled, or rather twisted, for her legs *actually* wound round each other to save her the inconvenience of having to move her feet, to better take in her surroundings.

"Well, I am impressed," she purred. "Better than I expected. Oh my, just *wait* 'till Flock sees this! Okay, boys, we have a go! Move it!"

Before Panthro had a chance to recover from this initial onslaught, the throng outside pushed forward as one, all attempting to get through the door together. Boxes, bundles and body parts thumped into him with painful regularity until he took refuge against a wall. In a few seconds, the situation had gone from the bizarre to the farcical. Watching this group fill the hall with their assorted packages and relentless chatter, a strange feeling of helplessness came over him. The need to regain some sort of control pushed him from the wall and slowly through the noisy masses.

"Now wait just one darned minute," he said, finally getting to within striking distance of the strange woman in orange. "Just what d'you think you're doing?"

She stared at him, as if unable to comprehend his meaning. One eyebrow rose, then the other. "Do you seriously expect me to believe that you have no idea who I am?" she said.

"No. Who are you?"

She gave a small huff of displeasure and fluttered feathery eyelashes at him. "I, my dear, am Viola Violet." Her arm extended in his direction by some three foot, her perfectly manicured hand taking his and shaking it warmly. "Nice to meet you."

"And I'm Thundercat Panthro," he said, starting to feel a little wary of this strange being. "What do you want here, Miss Violet?"

"Viola, please, darling," she said, beaming at him. "We'll be getting to know a good deal about each other in the next few days, so we might as well start off as we mean to go on." She patted him on his cheek as though he was a naughty pet. "Are you trying to tell me that you *really* have no idea who I am?"

"No, I'm afraid ?"

There was a screech from behind him and he spun round, half-expecting to see the diminutive leader of the Lunatacs. On cue, the mob parted to reveal an insect-like alien standing on its hind legs in the doorway, mouth hanging open and hands clutching at his face. Its loud shirt clashed with short trousers in a shade best described as puce, while atop its shining head perched a thing passing itself off as a wig.

"Let me guess," said Panthro, "he's with you."

Viola smiled and scooted over to the newcomer. She put her arm around his thin shoulders and ushered him into the hall.

"Well, Flock, what do you think?"

"Do my poor eyes deceive me?" he gasped, stumbling about the hall as though intoxicated. "Empty bare walls, just crying out to be brought to life. Oh, Viola, can't you feel it?" He stopped with arms outstretched, and threw back his head, inhaling deeply, his slitted nostrils quivering from the great inrush of air. "Imagine this. Pastels. Spangles. Beads. Water. Billowing curtains." He started to sway and, with great drama, drew a handkerchief across his brow. "Oh, Viola, what have you done to me? It's too much."

"He all right?" asked Panthro.

Viola nodded. "Just getting his creative juices flowing." She turned to her entourage. "Right, guys, get the equipment set up. We've got lots to do."

At her words, a great flurry of activity seemed to engulf the Lair. People started running in every direction, cases flew open and leads, tons of leads, spewed across the floor. Panthro made his way through the throng to where Viola was directing the action, whilst having her make-up fixed.

"So, yes, we are going to need a sweep of this place and get your camera angles right this time. Yes, of course, upstairs and downstairs. All the rooms, darlings. Well, how should I know? Whatever Flock thinks is right. How's it coming, Flock?"

The alien was gazing around him, tearful and lost in deep contemplation. "I'm thinking it's a hot day and you come into this great, cool space, and you want light greens and ferns and water. Oooh, it's going to be fantastic!" He darted away with a speed that would have impressed Cheetara, vanishing from sight until another screech of delight spoke of his having found the Council Room. "Have you seen this?" he called. Viola hurried to join him, leaving Panthro trailing in her wake.

Flock was standing by the table, running his hands across its glassy surface. "How retro," he purred. "But just *soooo* right. Oh, you do need a sizeable room to carry off something this big."

"Colours, Flock, colours," urged Viola. "What are you getting?"

He seemed to quiver and his fingers started twitching. "Autumnal, browns and vibrant orange and gold leaf and drapes. Mmm, sump-*tu*-ous or my name isn't Flock Wallpaper!"

"Flock *who*?" spluttered Panthro. "Now look here. I've been patient with you people, but now I want to know what in the name of Thundera is going on here!"

"I'll leave it up to you, Flock darling," said Viola, completely ignoring this outburst. "I've got to set up. See you later, cheeky," she said, winking at Panthro as she scooted past him..

Annoyed, Panthro started after her, but then through the main door came Pumyra and Snarfer. They skidded to a halt as they took in the mayhem around them.

"What happened?" asked Pumyra, when Panthro joined them. "We saw that ship land and tried to contact you. Are you all right?"

"Who are all these people?" squeaked Snarfer.

Panthro shrugged helplessly. "I don't know. They barged in here and took over. I have no idea what they want or who they are or what they're doing here. Pumyra, *help*!"

She gave him a look of surprise. "Is it an invasion?"

"No, my dear, it's *'Before and After'*!" Viola's voice rang out across the hall and a path cleared as she scurried across the hall to join them. "And you are?" she asked imperiously, looking Pumyra up and down.

Pumyra's eyes widened in amazement. "*You're* Viola Violet?" she gasped. "Here, on Third Earth? Wow, I can't believe it!"

Viola beamed and softened at the praise. "So you *do* know me. This *naughty* boy here was pretending he had never heard of me." She waggled a finger at Panthro. "Anyway, *this* is going to be an *am-maz-ing* couple of days. I have never seen Flock so inspired."

"You're going to 'do' Cat's Lair?" asked Snarfer. "Do the other Thundercats know, snarfer, snarfer?"

Viola put one finger to her lips. "Hush-hush, big secret, just between you and me, pet. Understand?"

"No, I don't," said Panthro. "Who told you to come here?"

"We had a letter, although we gets loads of letters," she explained with a self-important sniff, "but this one stood out. I just knew this was the place we had to 'do' next!"

"'Do'? Just what are you going to 'do'?"

Voila laughed. "Ah-ah, naughty boy. Now, hurry along and let us get on with it. *Shoo*!"

Pumyra took him by the arm and guided him in the direction of the Control Room. "Come on, Panthro, let me explain."

****

"Lords of Thundera!"

"Here, drink this, it might help," said Pumyra, offering him a glass of berry ale.

"Oh, no," he said, getting to his feet and starting to pace uneasily. "I want to be stone-cold sober for this one." He halted for a moment, blinked and shook his head slowly. "Are you seriously trying to tell me that mob out there are going to re-decorate the Lair?"

Pumyra nodded. "But don't worry. They'll be finished by the time the others get back."

"And may the Ancients spare us when they do," he muttered. "How comes you know about all this, Pumyra?"

She squirmed slightly. "Well, sometimes, when we're running long-range scans, we pick up these programmes and? well, you know, it passes the time."

"You love it!" squeaked Snarfer. "We watch *'Before and After'* every week, yes sir!"

"Is this true?" asked Panthro. "Have we really been wasting Thundrillium on this nonsense?"

"It's not nonsense," Pumyra replied, a touch defensively. "It's a fascinating insight into the workings of the universe!"

"Re-decorating people's homes?"

"Yes, because it's interesting to see their reactions."

"And they aren't all happy," Snarfer chirped with obvious glee.

"No, I can understand that," said Panthro. "I can think of someone who isn't going to be over the moon when he sees what they've done to his creation." He thought for a moment about Tygra's likely reaction and inwardly groaned. Heads would roll for this one. "I think I will have that drink." He took the glass and downed the contents. "Better," he said. "But I'm still conscious."

The door flew open and Flock bustled in, trailed by an attendant with armfuls of fabric and another busily writing on a clipboard. He stopped in the centre of the room and looked about with dismay.

"Oh dear, has someone been *over-heavy* with the technical look or is it just me? Now, write this down. What we need is lots, and I mean lots, of material in natural hues."

"Not in here you don't," growled Panthro, rising up to his full height to tower above the little alien.

Flock visibly quailed. "Well, perhaps not in here, no. This is a 'practical' sort of room, isn't it."

Panthro nodded. "Best left as it is. Agreed?"

"Oh my," said Flock. His gaze wandered past Panthro and fell on Pumyra. "Now here's a new face," he beamed and scuttled over to her. "Like the dress, *lurve* the cut. It's just *so* right. Viola would look gor-*ge*-ous in something like that."

Pumyra blushed. "Oh, this is just an old thing."

"Beautiful *and* modest, what a combination," crooned Flock. "Now, tell me, sweetie, which is your room?"

"I don't live here."

"So whose is the girly room I'm doing upstairs?"

"Um, that would be Cheetara's," said Snarfer.

"Does she like all frilly and lacy, or is she more of a clear surfaces sort of girl?" asked Flock, tapping his chin with his finger.

"Clear surfaces, definitely," said Pumyra.

"Ooh, you're a great help," he cooed, gratefully patting her arm. "Half the time, I just *wing* it. Well, must get on. Cheerie-bye!" With a flamboyant wave, he scurried from the room, with his attendants dutifully in tow.

"'Frilly and lacy'?" said Panthro, when the door had closed. "Pumyra, what is going on around here?"

She shrugged. "This is what usually happens."

Panthro groaned again. "All we need now is for Mumm-ra to come calling and advise us on curtains!"

The Lair suddenly shook, as some great force smashed into its outside walls. Panthro was jolted out of his chair onto the floor and he had to scrabble for support to pull himself up as the Lair took another hit.

"Famous last words," he muttered, powering up the weapons. But the controls were sluggish and a quick check told him that the systems had suffered a direct hit. "Blast!" he growled. "Now we're sitting cats! Pumyra, see if you can get the communicator to work."

While she fiddled with the channel, Panthro turned his attention to the main monitor. A few crossed wires and several large impacts later, an image flickered on the screen, showing two Skycutters and the Nosediver wheeling around the Lair.

"Mutants," hissed Panthro. "Brilliant!"

"Cat's Lair to New Thundera," said Pumyra into the communicator. "Come in, please." There was a brief crackle of static, and then they heard Snarf's broken voice.

"Hi there, Pumyra, are you all right?"

"No, Snarf, we've got big problems!" She broke off abruptly as the communicator flashed fired and died in a flurry of sparks. "What now?" she said, turning to Panthro.

Another jolt sent plaster raining down on them. Through the mist of dust, the door opened and a dishevelled Viola appeared, with a camera operator following closely behind.

"Now what's happening here? Poor Flock is crying into his ferns out there and frankly I don't much care for it," she said, trying to push her limp hair back into position.

"Just a few problems," muttered Panthro, indicating the scene on the forward monitor with a jerk of his head while he tried to get the weapons systems operational.

"Oh, is that all?" said Viola. She took a small radio out of her handbag and spoke into it. "Pondix? Wake up, you idle fool. Three rounds rapid, quick as you can."

On cue, the ship outside the Lair suddenly spat energy bolts at the circling Mutants. A random shot sent a Skycutter tumbling out of the sky to collide with Slithe's Nosediver. Several well placed shots later and the Mutants were scurrying away, dragging their damaged ships behind them.

Panthro, Pumyra and Snarfer stared at the screen, then at each other in surprise and disbelief.

"How??" began Panthro.

"The places we go, darling, we have to have a little protection. Always having trouble with the neighbours like you wouldn't imagine. Jealousy every time." She reactivated the channel and waited impatiently for a response. "Yes, well done, Pondix. You can go back to sleep now. Thank you, there's a love." She slipped the radio back into her handbag and dusted a few lingering specks of plaster off her suit. "Well, that's set us back somewhat. Never mind, we'll get there. Onwards!" With a cursory wave, her feet obligingly rotated and carried her on her way.

Panthro watched her go with something like admiration on his face. "I think I could get used to this," he said.

****

Even before the Feliner had touched down in the Cat's Paw, Panthro had already chewed his claws down to the quick. The others had rushed home following the aborted distress signal, cutting their trip short by several days. Flock had nearly had an apoplexy, but Viola had taken the news with her usual unflustered professionalism and mustered the amassed troops to press on without delay. In record time for the team, apparently, the Lair was finished, redecorated from

top to bottom. Now all they could do was wait for the reaction from the other Thundercats. And Panthro could guess what that was going to be.

Lion-O was the first out. "What's happened? Is everyone all right?" he asked, hurrying over to where Panthro stood.

"Yeah, sure we are," said Panthro, his outward composure betraying his inner nervousness. "A few, er, problems with the Mutants. Nothing we couldn't deal with."

"Well, your message sounded pretty worrying," said Snarf, as the others now came over to join them.

"What sort of problems?" asked Cheetara. "Something's up, I can tell. Your face is a picture."

"Really?" said Panthro, assuming an air of innocence. "I don't know why. It's been quite uneventful."

"I detect a strange smell," said Lynx-O, his nostrils quivering as he delicately sniffed the air. "A curious mixture of? let me see, plants, perfume and?"

"Paint," Tygra finished for him. "Panthro, what's going on?"

Panthro started to back away, holding up his hands in defence. "Look, you have to understand. It all happened so quickly. We were just swept along. There was nothing we could do about it."

Even before he finished speaking, the others had raced out of the door. A moment later he heard their collective gasp, somewhere between horror and surprise. The thought that now was perhaps a good time to make himself scarce flashed through his mind, but instead he took a deep breath and wandered out to face the music.

He found them in the entrance hall, looking around in amazement at the transformation that had taken place. Even Panthro had to grudgingly admit it was impressive, although whether he liked it was another matter. The overall impression was green. Green walls, picked out here and there with stencilled foliage in deeper shades of green. Trailing plants draped themselves down the stairs, leading the eye to the centrepiece of the whole design, a magnificent gushing fountain, bubbling over green-coloured glass and stones.

"Quite something, isn't it?" ventured Panthro.

It was a few seconds before Lion-O shook himself out of his stupor and slowly turned to face him. "When you said there was trouble? Panthro, what happened? What did you do to the Lair?"

"Nothing to do with me," he said quickly.

"Surprise!"

From the doorway opposite exploded Viola, resplendent in co-ordinated green jumpsuit, dripping in plant motif accessories. Flock followed, cooing and clapping his hands. Behind them, several attendants carrying cameras followed.

"You must be the Thundercats," purred Viola.

"Yes," said Lion-O, shaking her offered hand. "Who are you? What's happened here?"

Viola pulled Flock to her and both beamed in triumph. "You saw it 'before' and now you see it 'after'. Give you any clues?"

"'*Before and After*'?" gasped Bengali. "Here on Third Earth? Wow! We're going to be famous!"

"You like it?" inquired Flock.

"Like it?" he echoed, gazing around him. "It's different, I give you that."

Flock flushed with pride. "I took my inspiration from the natural splendours of this wonderful planet. So much material to draw on. Mmm, this whole experience has been *so* enriching."

"Come, you must see what else we've done," Viola declared.

"There's more?" Lion-O whispered to Panthro. "Tygra looks like he's going to have a fit."

Tygra had not moved since entering the hall. Shook had rooted him to the spot, left him open-mouthed and speechless, and drained the colour from his cheeks. Viola noticed this and sidled over to him, slipping her arm through his.

"Now, now, what's the matter? You're not a happy bunny, are you? Tell Auntie Viola all about it."

"It's *green*," he uttered.

"Of course it is, silly boy. We wanted it to be in keeping with the natural environment, following themes of 'King of the Jungle' and all that."

Tygra shot her an unimpressed look. "Madam, we do *not* live in a jungle."

"Hmm, we know," she purred, snuggling up to him a little closer. "But all these great walls just cried out for life and paint."

"They were white."

"Sterile."

"Practical."

"*Boring*." She sniffed a little self-importantly. "You know, I'm willing to bet that whoever designed this place and the d?cor to match was really very boring too."

"For your information, *I* designed this place," Tygra said icily.

She was rendered speechless for a few seconds, then recovered magnificently. With a carefree wave of her hand, she shrugged off the embarrassment and carried on regardless. "Then, what a clever boy you are. Think of what we've done here as simply building on your vision." Moving from his side, she clapped her hands, making her bracelets jangle, to attract all their attention and her face took on an imperious expression. "Come now, people, let's show you what we've done upstairs," she said, indicating for them to follow her as she strode up the stairway.

"I can hardly wait," Lion-O said, as the twins led the charge up the stairs, closely followed by a crowd of camera operators.

"Oh, I don't know," Cheetara said with a smile. "It might be worth it just to see Tygra blow his top."

"You aren't funny," Tygra muttered. "Just you wait, Panthro!"

****

From along the hall came whoops of joy as the twins discovered what had been done to their rooms.

"Maybe it won't be so bad," said Lion-O. He came to his door and looked in, only to draw back with his face turning crimson. "Or perhaps it is."

"What is it?" asked Cheetara.

"It's a bit? well, just a little too?"

"Let me see," she said, trying to push past him.

"No!" he vainly protested as she slipped under his arm. A gasp of surprise later and she was back out again, desperately trying to keep a straight face.

"I think the word you're looking for is 'masculine'," she said cheekily. "Where did they get that statue?"

Lion-O rolled his eyes. "Who knows? But what am I supposed to do with it?"

"Perhaps you could hang your towel on it," she giggled, unable to control herself any more.

At that moment, Bengali strolled out of the twin's room and came over to where they stood. "They're really pleased," he said. "And I have to say they made a good job of it. Shame they only

did the Lair. Perhaps they would do something with the Tower if we asked them. What about your rooms?"

Cheetara bit her lip to contain her laughter and excused herself to see what had been done to her room. Lion-O maintained his position in his doorway and tried to avoid Bengali's inquiring gaze.

"Well? Aren't you going to let me see?" the tiger asked.

"No. Go away."

"Fine." Bengali turned to leave, then quickly doubled back and dodged past him. "Oh my gods," he gasped. "What is *that*?"

Lion-O sighed. "Yes, I know. Do me a favour. Get rid of it."

Bengali gave a firm shake of his head. "No way. I am not running through the Lair with that! It's *hideous*. What's it supposed to be anyway?"

"That is a priceless primitive from the Lesser Moon of Aminota," came Viola's voice from behind them. "A fertility god, to *inspire* you to greater things, yes?" she added with a cheeky wink. Slipping in between them and extending her arm around her shoulders, she forced them into the room, before swinging them round to face the camera. "Well, Lord of the Thundercats, what do you think of your domain?"

Lion-O gulped several times and cast a nervous glance around what used to be his bedroom. Pieces of what he hoped were driftwood were scattered haphazardly across the floor or pinned to sienna walls. Above, on the black ceiling, small fragments of broken glass winked back at him like stars in the night's sky. And everywhere, heavy drapes in earth colours, all pulled together in a giant knot above the headboard of his bed and topped with a final finishing touch of a small gold crown.

"Words fail me," he said at last. "Honestly, they really do."

"Excellent," beamed Viola. "Stunned you into silence. The sort of response we love!" She released them and began to speak directly to the camera. Lion-O and Bengali exchanged looks of relief until their eyes fell on the little statue standing proudly and impertinently in the gap between them. They closed up just in time as Viola turned back to them.

"Now, Lord of the Thundercats," she said with a coy smile as she sidled up to him. "Oooh, you're a big lad, aren't you? Will you give me just a *little* interview?"

Lion-O jumped slightly as she pinched his behind. "Of course," he said, forcing his best smile and giving Bengali a pleading look

Bengali nodded in understanding and reached behind him for the statue before backing surreptitiously out of the room. Lion-O sighed with relief, only to be dragged over to the bed by Viola, who sat him down and ran her hand appreciatively down his thigh.

"Now, about this interview?" she purred.

****

"Now, don't forget, we air in two weeks," said Viola. "Usual slot, I'm sure you know the time." A smile tweaked the corners of her lips and she waggled a finger at them. "Don't you dare miss it. And you," she continued, tapping Tygra on the shoulder, "don't forget my offer. A talented architect like yourself? well, I'm thinking major new show here. Redesigning people's homes from scratch. Yes, I think it's got great potential."

"Oh, I can see it now," said Tygra. "Knock down someone's home and surprise them with a whole new one. Should go down a treat."

Viola missed the irony in his voice for she shrieked with joy. "That's it, that's it! A wonderful idea. Can I count you in?"

"Unfortunately, other duties keep me here," said Tygra graciously. "But thank you anyway."

"Sad," she said. "But never mind. If ever you find yourself with time on your hands, get in touch. We could work *wonders*." She fluttered her eyelashes at him and gave his arm a hearty squeeze. Somewhere in the background, Flock started to make agitated noises. "Don't worry, dear," Viola said, turning to him. "I not thinking of dissolving our little partnership yet. Not while the ratings are this high."

"That's what you told your last partner," Flock muttered. "And look what happened to him! Graveyard shift on Pluto."

"Which is where we'll be if we don't get to our next assignment," she snapped. "Letters!"

A small fellow rushed forward from her entourage clutching a folder. Viola took it and pulled a handful of envelopes from it. "And today the lucky winner is?" she said, casually selecting one at random.

"Is that how you picked us?" asked Lion-O.

She nodded. "We had a letter. Most impressed we were by it too. So straight to the top it went."

"Do you still have it?"

"Of course," she said, clicking her fingers at the attendant, who delved into his inside pocket and brought out an envelope, which he handed to Lion-O.

As he read it, he started to laugh. "Listen to this," he said to the others. "'*Dear 'Before and After', we would like to recommend some friends of ours who have a place that could do with your magical touch. They are on Third Earth and they are the Thundercats and they would be really pleased to see you. Yours, a well-wisher*'." Lion-O gave a snort of laughter. "If I didn't know who sent this, it wouldn't be too hard to guess."

"You know?" said WilyKit. "Who was it?"

"Slithe," said Lion-O. "And I know because he added at the bottom, *'PS, we love your show. Could we have a signed photo, love, the Mutants, c/o Castle Plun-darr, Third Earth*'." A wry smile crossed his lips. "Viola, as the Mutants are such big fans of yours, why don't you give them the *'Before and After'* treatment? I bet they would love it."

"Castle Plun-darr," said Viola thoughtfully. "Sounds like a challenge. Think you could work your magic, Flock?"

But the little alien was already in raptures of ecstasy. "Ooh, a castle! Think of the potential. Letting light into those dark, creepy corners. All that space. A big, blank canvas just waiting for someone to bring it to life! Oooh, Viola, it's going to be our greatest project ever!"

"And we keep our travelling costs down," she added. "Hmm, very well then. Team, let's go to it!"

At her command, the throng hurried out of the Lair, dragging their equipment after them. Minutes later, the huge ship took off and set course for the Mutants' stronghold.

"Do you think they'll be all right?" asked Bengali, as the ship vanished over the horizon.

"Who? The Mutants or Viola?" said WilyKat.

Panthro grunted. "I'd like to see Slithe try to stop Viola. She's worse than Mumm-ra."

"Serves them right," Lion-O chuckled, finally unable to keep his amusement in check.

"You know, they really had to be desperate to pull a stunt like that," said Panthro, wiping tears of laughter from his cheeks. "They thought they could attack us while the film crew were here, but Viola sent them packing."

"And now she's descended on Castle Plun-darr!" giggled WilyKit. "They won't know what hit them!"

"At least it should give us some time to get the Lair back into shape," said Tygra. "Unless you want to live in a jungle?"

"Well, I'm leaving my room exactly as it is," said Cheetara. "I don't think I ever been so organised."

"Yeah, ours is great too," enthused WilyKat. "I don't want to go back to boring old? sorry, Tygra."

"I do," said Lion-O. "Boring is just fine by me any day. I am not sleeping in my bed until that glass is off the ceiling. I wouldn't get a wink of sleep worrying in case it falls on me. Not to mention that other *thing*. Did you get rid of it, Bengali?" The tiger hesitated just that little bit too long. "Why not?"

Bengali looked sheepish. "Viola did say it was priceless and she's usually right, isn't she, Lynx-O?"

The old lynx jumped slightly and colour rose to his cheeks.

"You know, I'm starting to get the impression that a good deal of time-wasting goes on at the Tower," said Tygra. "We think they're all busy working, when actually they're watching these transmissions. Remind me next time I'm there to cut the Thundrillium allowance."

"Don't be a sourpuss, Tygra," retorted Bengali. "It's entertaining. We don't *all* want to be locked away in our rooms every night studying."

"Would that be my purple and yellow striped room you're referring to, because I'm thinking of giving it up myself. Mind if I come over and join you?"

Valiantly trying to suppress his giggles, Lion-O stepped into the affray. "Right, we'd better get started. With a bit of luck, we should be finished by dinner time."

"Hmph, you'll be lucky," muttered Snarf. "That lot ate us out of house and home. Someone's going to have to come with me to get some supplies. I can't carry it all on my own, snarf, snarf!"

"I think Pumyra and Snarfer should have that honour," said Lion-O, with a knowing wink to the others. Snarf's shopping trips were invariably long-winded and tedious affairs, full of wearisome repetition. A couple of hours spent looking for Snarf's incredible vanishing shopping list and constantly reassuring him that yes, he did have enough sugar beet to last until the end of the century was sure to teach them a lesson.

"And now that your partners in crime have been dealt with," said Tygra with a pointed look at Panthro, "what about you?"

Panthro held up his hands in defence. "Don't blame me. You saw them. I couldn't stop her. I did try, honestly."

"And now we have a water feature," said Tygra, clearly unmoved by these entreaties. "Well, that should be very useful next time Mumm-ra comes up with some devious plan to be rid of us. Panthro, you are hopeless."

"True," he conceded, with a sly grin. "But not boring."

Tygra arched one eyebrow. "Yes, I've been thinking about that," he said. "Perhaps I have become stale. There's nothing wrong with change. Why not update our image? And I know just where to start."

"Tygra," Panthro growled, "just what are you planning?"

"Well, I thought? go-faster stripes for the Thundertank!"

"You leave my baby alone!" yelled Panthro.

Both Thundercats broke into a run and a mad dash ensued to reach the hangar first. From the sounds of laughter that drifted back down the corridor, it sounded as though the Thundertank had lived to fight another day... without its stripes!

The End

THUNDERCATS, characters, names and related indicia are trademarks of ? Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. and Ted Wolf. All rights reserved. Stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this work are entirely fictional. Characters, names, etc. are used without permission and the above story has no official endorsement. This is a work of fan fiction, for entertainment purposes only and certainly not for profit. No infringement of rights is intended nor any harm meant by its creation and existence. May you enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed writing it. Thundercats Forever! Ho!