

Tales from the Stormthrower
Lala, The Colossus' Organ

I

She was out of her own here. Too young to be of influence. Too old to be regarded as cute and mischievous. The storm season did not scare her much, still the elders would not let her travel on. So without family, far from home, she could do nothing but hone her skills in fishing.

The underground pool system was riddled with overhanging rocks and ledges, cresting the entire pool. Getting on them however sometimes needed her to climb through half the complex, she was now living in.

Busy finding out the route onto the only lookout point of a newly discovered pool, she found herself in a narrow tunnel, when the alarms were bellowed. Being drilled extensively on such a eventuality, she wiggled herself back up the tunnel, until she found the flat bit she passed earlier. Lay down and tried to figure out where the cave in would have taken place.

The voices differed from the usual noises. Arguing, cursing and shouting, like they had done, so many moons ago on the mountain, near the waterfall, she missed so much. Still keeping dead still she planned a route through the system, then started to crawl again down the tunnel. Stared into the dark cave of the pool and only when she was certain of no foreign noises or smells, jumped. Splashed through the shallow edge of the water, reaching the plateau she was aiming for. Climbed on it and immediately disappeared into the tunnel behind it.

Not long after the voices started again, coming nearer. This tunnel was big enough for her to walk in, meaning she had to hurry. Pawing at all the loose rocks she passed, she hoped the two legged creatures would lose a lot of time investigating it.

Higher up in a small cave she took time shaking off excess water, soaking the floor, walls and ceiling. Licked her paws dry, then jumped in the tunnel in the ceiling, praying the gap would hold, and the dust would be absorbed by the water she just spread out.

The first bit she had to crawl, but soon she could move faster. Racing through the sand of this former water channel. Bringing her out behind the waterfall, where she stayed in the dark, a few jumps from the edge of the tunnel. Close enough however to be able to look through the veil of the falling water.

A distorted image of the main hall revealed what she had feared to be the truth. Small cages were stacked. One pile with small balls of fur. The other pile with empty cages. She had been in one. Knew outside were bigger cages for any adults being captured. These small ones at least she could break, if she had enough speed.

Growling and snarling from close by, but from within the system was enough of an opportunity. Maybe the only one she would get. She jumped through the falling water, pawing under water after the splash, to the far side of the underground lake. Trusting on the darkness, she hugged the wall, gaining speed, flashing past the shins of a two legged, and bowling into the pile of cages. Smashing the closest two. Spreading out the others through her speed. In

one bite she snatched two cubs out of the rubble, and jumped on, speeding up again, warning the two in pictures what was going to happen.

The two legged guards closed in trying to trap her between the lake and their sticks. Just a little bit more. She jumped up, just before one of the guard had reached her and splashed into the water. Pawed at the water to go deeper, finally finding the underwater tunnel. Clawing at the edges to get in, and then spreading all fours to propel herself through the water logged tunnel until she broke the surface.

She let the small ones swim a little to gasp for air, then picked up one, climbing to the top of the narrow vertical drop. Picked up the other one. Pushed herself against the ceiling to get in front of them, and left them eventually in one of the narrowest tunnels. Too narrow for her to climb through, also meant too narrow for those cursed two legged horrors to reach them.

Jumping through the system she finally found the tunnel ending up on the ledge over the entrance. Looking only through the narrowest slit between her eyelids, so not to reveal herself she saw the guards race through the main hall, to get hold of the fleeing mountain cats. She counted less than before, but still even one caged kitten was too much.

The wind brought in a familiar smell making her retreat back into the tunnel, and out the other end, high above the valley floor. Only ten jumps left of the complexes entrance. With a huge jump she made it into the foliage, sneaked through it without any noise, until she found the ledge she was looking for. Pawing at the rubble she took a risk, and soon yelling informed her she had been spotted. She waited until they came close enough, then hit the loose rubble with another rock she had found a bit higher. It broke causing the yelling below to turn into cursing for a moment in time.

Two images she sent to the old cat below. One of the rock. The other of the kittens inside. "He'd better understand the meaning", she thought when she jumped up the boulder, making it wobble already. Slowly she wedged her hind paws into the gap between the valley walls and the boulder, stretching out as violently as she could. As it started to move, a picture popped up, telling her to go for it.

Thumps and a crack meant she struck home. The roar after it, with an even louder crack, revealing the mountain cat below was free. She raced back in, reaching the ledge over the entrance just after the old mountain cat. Making use of her speed, she jumped from ledge to ledge, down to the floor, crisscrossing the space, slashing at legs when she could reach them. Hoping to buy the old cat some more time.

She had to give the old geezer some credit. He was tough, snaking through the sticks and nets, to reach the cages. Easily breaking all of them with a few mighty blows. The kittens scurried over the floor, spreading out as they had been taught. One almost tripped her, as he was aiming for the chute. She jumped over him, claws out, making the guard pause one moment too long. The high whistle indicating the kittens ride down to a lower level.

Her paws were paying the toll of running over the stones of the caves, and she had to sit quiet for a while, snarling, threatening with her claws, hoping to cause some effect on the two legged attackers surrounding her. Nets ruling out another mad dash. Further and further into the darker side of the main hall she retreated. Eyeing for weak spots on the guards, not willing to surrender without drawing blood.

A thump from the left. Hardly noticeable. Seconds later the two legged on that side was bowled over. She was already racing down the floor, keeping low. Jumped, putting her claws in the legs of the grounded guard, making him scream some more, and then was out. Flying through the darkness, following the scent of the adult cat in front of her.

It took a long time before the two legged attackers left the complex. In the end a passing militia speeding up their departure, and all mountain cats could pay their respect to the brave old cat giving his life to rescue all of the captured kittens. She shrugged off the praise. Just did not want the tiny fur balls to go through the ordeal she had gone through. The last honor, however she could not refuse.

Pushed by some of the adult cats she removed some boulders, slowly fanning up the draft through the complex, until it was strong enough, and the wind could play on the many tunnels and pipes in the complex. Playing a sad song in tribute of the fallen hero.

The end.