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ANNUAL



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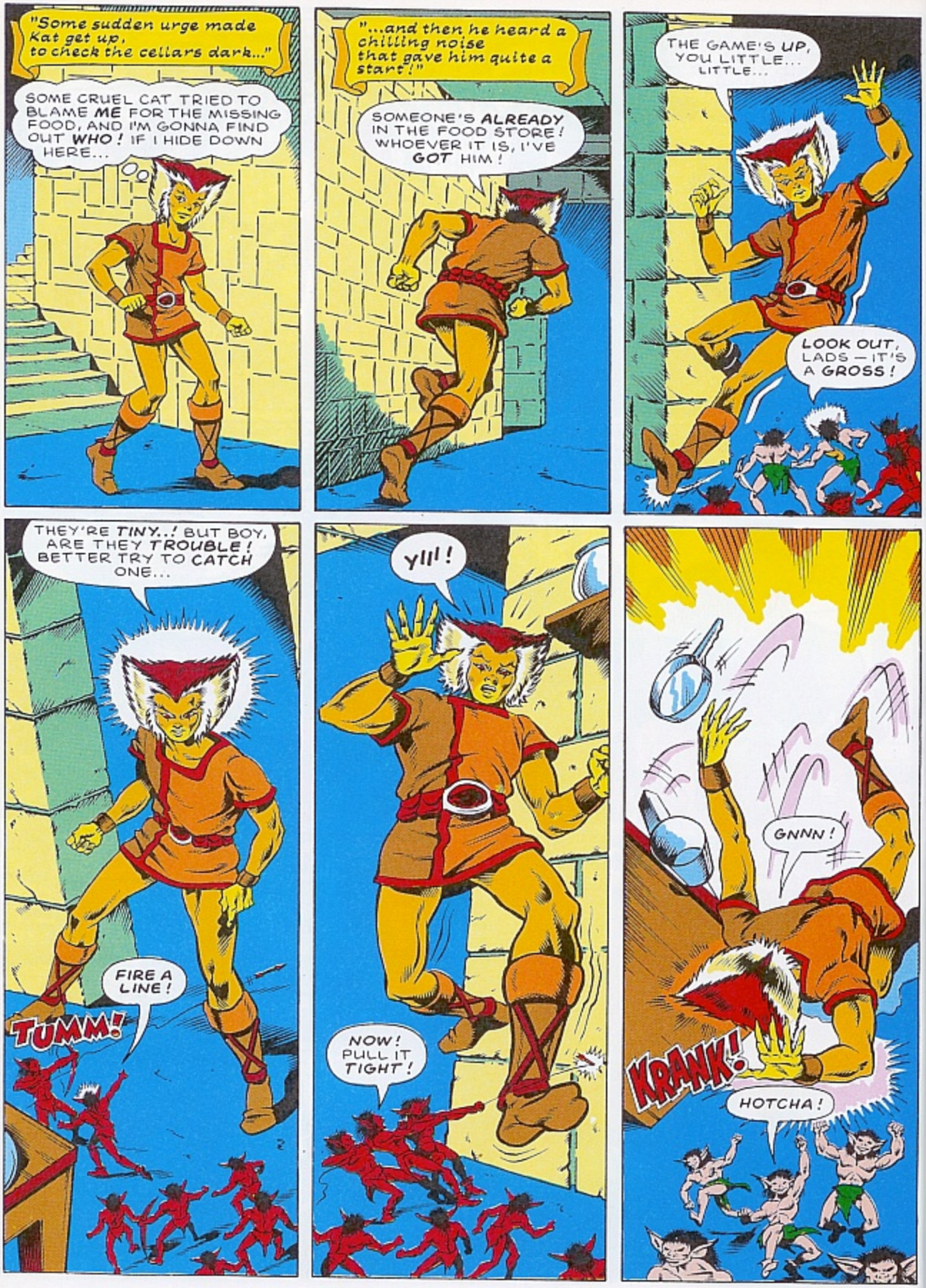
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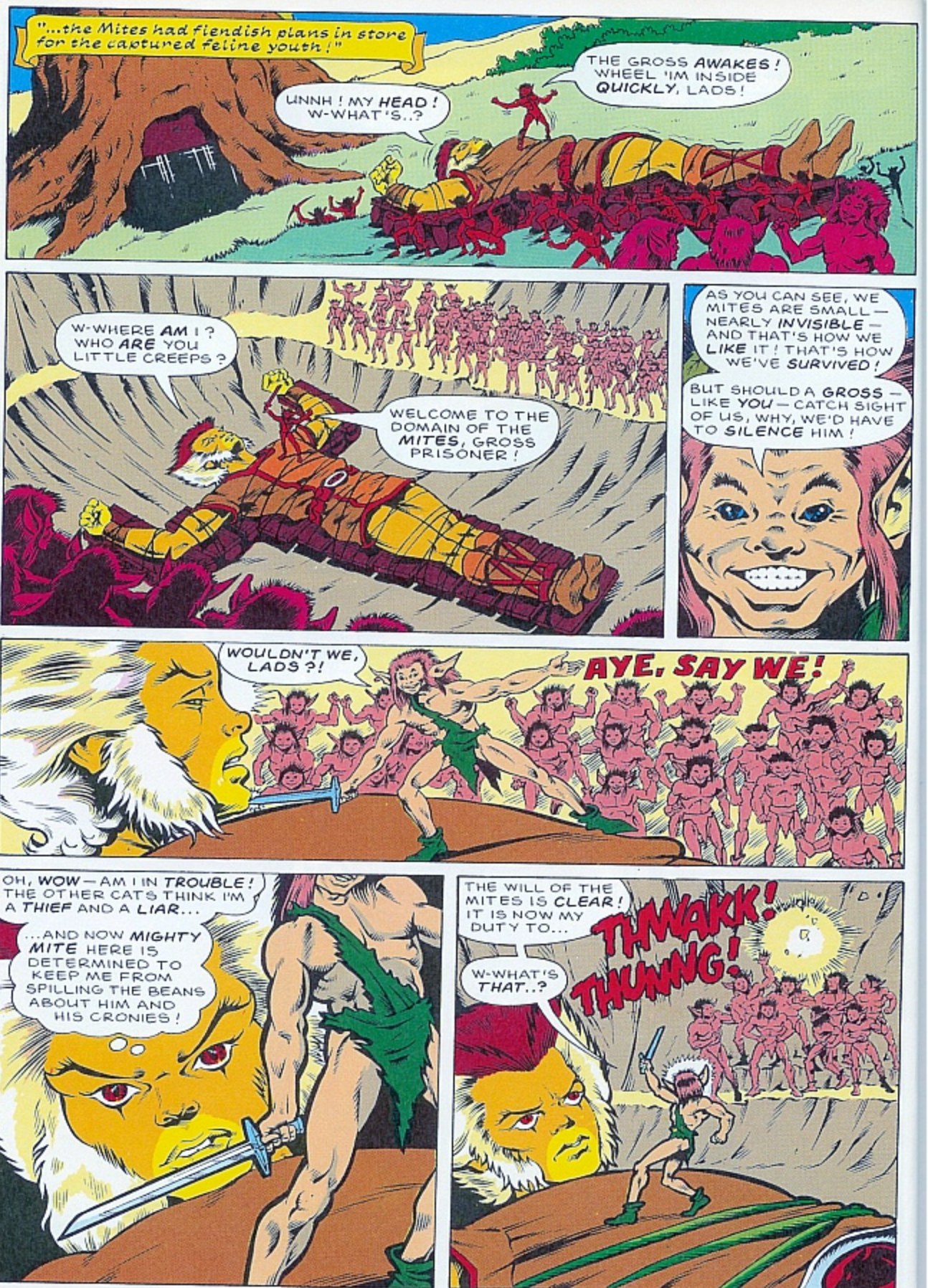




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"And so the tiny culprit at last was brought to book— And at Cats' Lair he faced the wrath of an angry Thunder-cook!"

YOU SURE PACK AWAY A LOT OF **FOOD** FOR A LITTLE FELLA, **SNARF! SNARF!**

YOU MITES MUST BE THE **SMALLEST** RACE ON THIRD EARTH!

AND THE **GREEDIEST!** WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE **POINT** OF OUR LITTLE TALK, POGG...

IN FUTURE, IF YOU **WANT** FOOD, **ASK** US, AND WE'LL SHARE WHAT WE HAVE WITH YOU...

...BUT IF YOU OR YOUR MINISCULE MINIONS START INVADING ON THE SLY AGAIN, THERE'LL BE **TROUBLE!**

POGG **UNDERSTANDS** YOU, FEARSOME GROSS. I WILL **TELL** MY PEOPLE...

MEANTIME, I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO TELL **MY** PEOPLE. WILYKAT IS OWED A **FULL APOLOGY** FROM US **ALL.**

WE LOOKED AT THE EVIDENCE **AGAINST** HIM, WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE EVIDENCE **FOR** HIM— NAMELY, THAT HE'S **ONE** OF US.

BUT FROM THAT WRONG, LET US LEARN **NEVER AGAIN** TO LET ANYTHING, GREAT OR SMALL, DESTROY THAT **SPECIAL TRUST** WHICH MAKES US...

...THE **THUNDERCATS!**

HO!

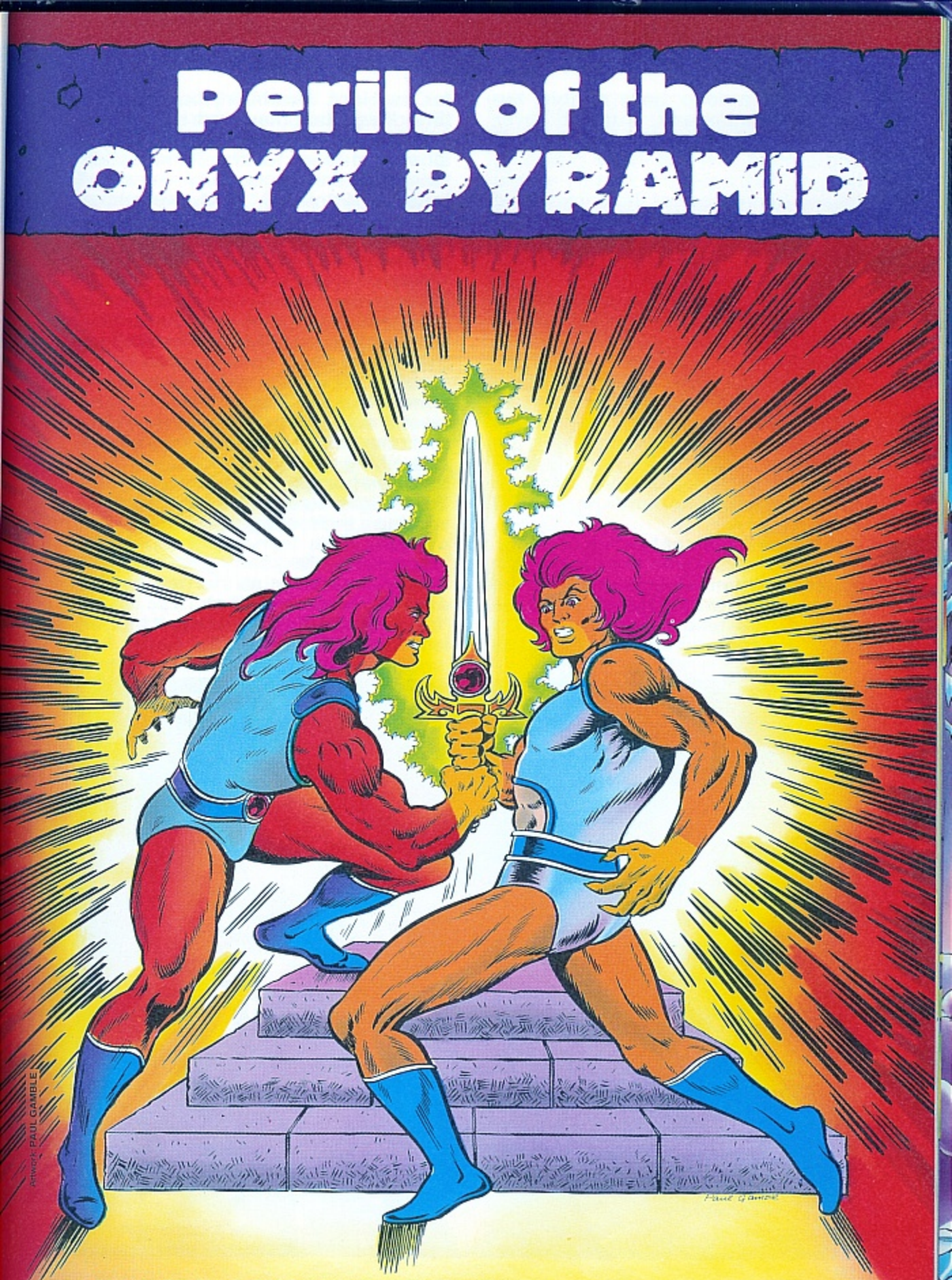
HEEHEEHEEHEEHEEHEE!

"But were they real, or just a dream those creatures sleek and small, Who crept away so silently just before the dawn..?"

The End!

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Perils of the ONYX PYRAMID

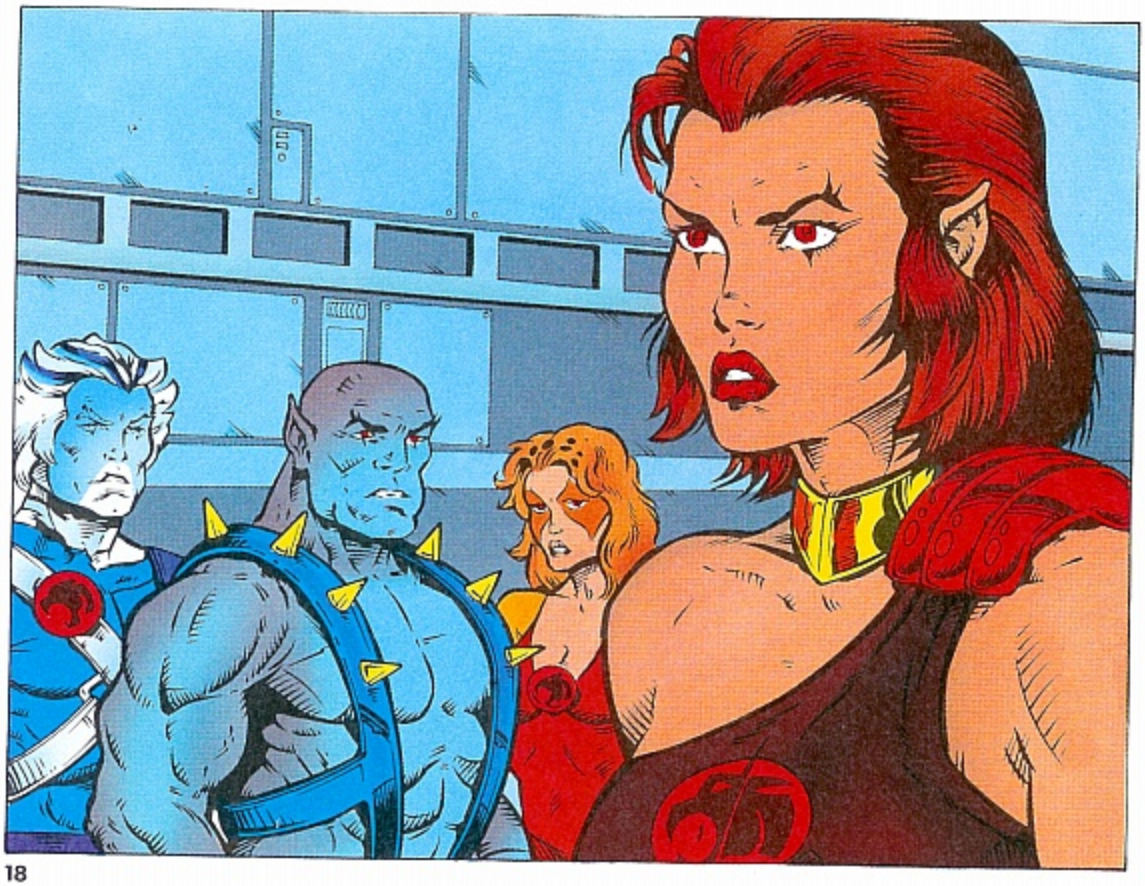


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With a deep, bass rumble, the Thundertank trundled over the drawbridge into Cats' Lair and ground to a halt in the gleaming hangar. With a resigned sigh, Panthro hauled himself out of the cockpit and leapt, gracefully, to the floor as several other 'cats ran across to him.
'Anything?' asked Cheetara, anxiously.
Panthro shook his head solemnly.
'Are you sure you looked everywhere?' asked young Bengali urgently, 'The Hunting Plains? The Berbil Village? The –' Old, blind Lynx-O hushed the exuberant youth. 'I can tell by Panthro's weary voice that he has. This is grave indeed.' Snarf, the 'cats loyal warrior-chef, hopped from foot to foot. 'Oh me, oh my... what can have happened to him?' he sobbed plaintively.
There was a rush of beating feathers, and Tygra swept into the hangar, the powerful Thunderwings unit he wore on his back lowering him gently to the ground. His face was grim. 'Not a thing.' He announced. 'I even went as far as Hook Mountain, but the last time King Hanuman and his people saw Lion-O was last winter when we all visited them for the Rammastide feast.' 'Then he is truly missing,' intoned Panthro, 'and we must presume the very worst.'
There was silence, which even the normally talkative twins, Wilykit and Wilykat, did not break. The 'cats had faced many perils in their time, always in danger of their lives. This was the eventuality that all had hoped they would never have to face.
'Look...' Pumyra's voice was quiet, almost too terrified to make a noise least it should shatter the possibility that her sharp eye had detected something in the evening sky. They followed her gaze out of the mouth of the hangar, to see the winking light coming their way, low over the dimming hills.
'Your eyes are keen, girl.' rumbled Panthro, as they all hurried to the entrance for a better look.
'Maybe,' said Pumyra, 'but is it him, or is it another false hope?'



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Emotion could be heard in Lynx-O's voice as he answered her question. 'It is him. I can *feel* it.'

The Thunderclaw, battered and broken tore down out of the twilight, smoke pluming from the engine nacelle, flames licking at the leading edges of the delta wings. Astride his crippled sky-steed, the Thundercats' young Lord could clearly be seen, dirty and dishevelled as if he had fought off the entire mutant army single handed. But there was a smile on his face.

'He's coming in very fast.' warned Tygra. 'Clear the runway, the 'claw's braking jets looked almost burnt out. Bengali, grab the emergency gear.'

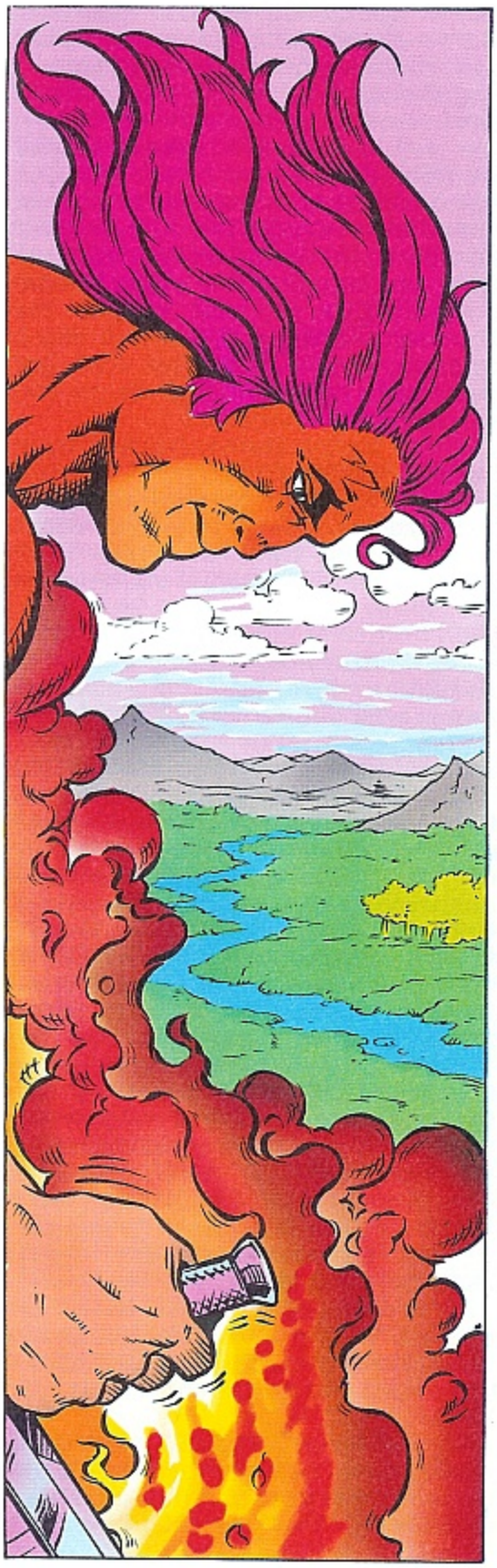
As his brother sprinted to the extinguisher rack, Tygra held the others back and they watched in alarm as the flying machine swept in low under the hangar arch, dipped, and then struck the polished floor of the cavern, shrieking up sprays of sparks as it crash-landed and skidded along the ground. As soon as it had first struck, Lion-O leapt clear of the careening craft, cartwheeling to one side, over and over until he at last bounced to his feet by their side. The stricken craft ploughed into the end wall in a flash of flame and was still. Bengali ran to douse the smouldering wreck in foam.

Lion-O turned to his anxious and overjoyed friends.

'Sorry I'm late. Hope you saved some dinner for me.'



'An amazing story...' laughed Cheetara, 'that must be your closest call yet. How did you escape from Mumm-Ra's clutches?' Lion-O helped himself to more Berbilfruit flan. He had washed and changed, and with food inside him, had come to resemble the young lord they all knew and loved. 'It was the oldest trick in the book. When I realised that it was a trap, I tried to escape, but Mumm-Ra was about to blast me with an eldritch fireball spell. At the last moment, just



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as he was going to utter the final words of the incantation, I shouted 'Look behind you!' He paused, turned and the spell backfired. You should have seen the fireworks!'

'He fell for that?' asked Wilykit incredulously.

'He did indeed, kitten. He's always, been a bit on the gullible side. I ran for my life then, because the misfired spell was bringing the whole temple down. I just got out aboard the Thunderclaw when it went up like a volcano. That's when the craft got damaged. I had to limp home. As you can see, I only just made it.'

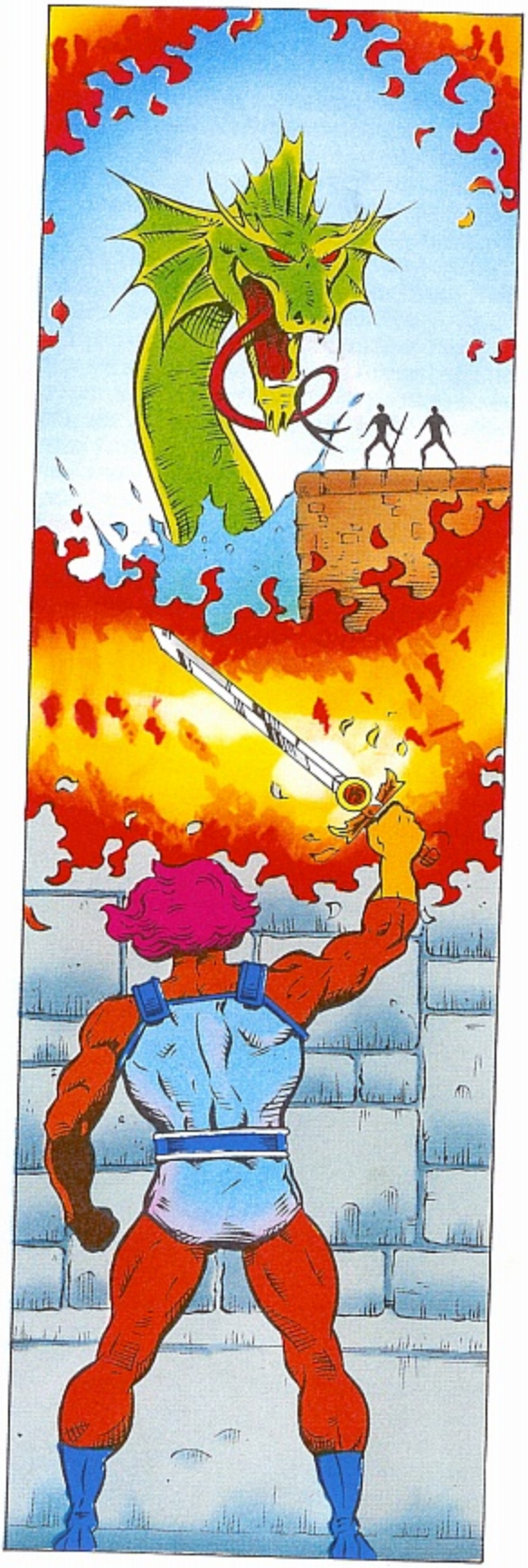
'Are you saying Mumm-Ra destroyed himself with his fireball?'

Lion-O shrugged. 'You know that old devil, he's slippery as a Thunderan slime-eel and twice as crafty. I bet we'll be hearing from him sometime in the future.'

'Don't doubt it, little ones.' chuckled Panthro. 'But now it's way past your bedtime, and I'm sure Lion-O wants to turn in after such a hard day...'

At last, after many goodnights, the Thundercats went their separate ways to bed and Lion-O found himself alone in his chamber. A strange smile of victory curled on his lips. He unsheathed the mighty Sword of Omens and held it aloft. Then an odd feeling overwhelmed him. The Eye of Thundera, a mystic jewel set into the Sword's hilt, made it not only a vital weapon, but an alarm system for the Thundercats. When people were imperilled, it would convey a warning to Lion-O, showing him a vision in the way that it would when he called for 'sight beyond sight'. Now was such a time. Before Lion-O's eyes formed a picture of the village of the Nai people. A sea dragon was once again assailing their walls, and that meant the Thundercats' help would be needed. With a look quite unlike his normal heroic expression, Lion-O put the sword away, ignoring the cry for help.

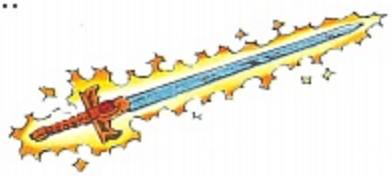
The Sword of Omens, its mystic intelligence confused by this, throbbed with energy in an attempt to spur Lion-O on. The energy pulse was immense, powerful, but Lion-O just



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looked at the sword and grinned. 'I am no longer your loyal pawn, Sword of Omens, you have no power over me. I am the Lord of the Thundercats now, and I'll do what I wish, when I wish. I am not at your beck and call.'
Lion-O relaxed on the bed, oblivious to the frantic summons of the Sword. 'Give it up,' he whispered callously, 'your power is no match for my magic now...'



Lion-O awoke in a casket of cold stone, and thought that he had died and come back to life. All was dark around him, and there was throbbing in his head, like a terrible headache. It was all so confusing. Where was he? What had happened? Why was there this tingling in his mind like the one he felt when the Sword of Omens was summoning him?
Then he remembered...
He remembered Mumm-Ra's dreadful trap, fighting against the forces of the Mutants until Mumm-Ra's spell knocked him into unconsciousness. He was a prisoner, and the Sword was gone.
Lion-O clambered out of the stone casket he had been placed in and looked around. His surroundings were dismal, dark mauve stone, cobwebs and muck, lit only by a guttering torch in a wall bracket. There was a bad smell in the air, the smell of the tomb...
There was only one place he could be – *Mumm-Ra's Onyx Pyramid, and in the dungeon, no less*!
What had Mumm-Ra cackled as he had enveloped Lion-O with his spell? 'Now you shall be my prisoner, and I shall be *you*'? If that was true (and the absence of the Sword of Omens only added weight to his fears) then he had to find his way out of this nightmare and get back to the Lair, before Mumm-Ra attacked the unsuspecting Thundercats. But which way? There were four doors out of the crypt, dark, foreboding archways, and not a clue as to which one to follow...

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At last, light ahead! Lion-O had traced the correct route, but now there was much lost time to be made up, and the summons in his head was getting worse all the time. He had heard stories about the dark dungeons of the Onyx Pyramid, and the fearful traps that lay within. This could take a long time, he pondered, but I must get on. Ahead, in the torchlit passageway, he could see movement, and he flung himself into the shadows of a corner niche. Heavy footsteps and a clinking of chains came his way. In the long, flickering shadows thrown by the flames, Lion-O could see the bulky form of a large figure approaching. He sucked in his breath and tried to stay as still as possible. Down the corridor came S-S-Slithe, the reptilian beast-commander of the Mutants, a foul ogre, toying with a large bunch of keys. The monster was hissing to himself a charming little ditty about how good it was to be a dungeon jailer, and the nice things he liked to get up to with a rack and an iron maiden. Lion-O tensed and then leapt from his concealment, crashing into the fearsome oaf. With a cry of surprise, S-S-Slithe tumbled to the floor, his keys and lantern clattered in the stones, and the two warriors locked into a desperate wrestling match. S-S-Slithe was strong, very strong, but the young lord had surprise and wits on his side and quickly locked the mutant into a tight full-nelson hold from which the creature could not escape. 'Tell me –' hissed Lion-O, 'which is the quickest way out of here?'

'You!' gasped the mutant, as a glimpse of crimson mane betrayed his assailant's identity. 'But you were meant to be imprisoned! Mumm-Ra had cast on you the arcane conjuration of the eternal slumber – he told me himself!'

'Then let's just say I'm a light sleeper.' retorted Lion–O. 'Now, S-S-Slithe, if you value your miserable life, tell me the way out!'

S-S-Slithe wriggled and fidgeted, but could not get free. 'You'll never escape! The dungeon is a labyrinth from which no mortal ever leaves!'



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'You seem to manage...' mused Lion- O.
'I've got a special pass!' squeaked S-S-Slithe.
'Really?'
'Yes, when I get to the main gate I shout 'Oi, it's me, S-S-Slithe! Let me out or it's half rations for the lot of you!'"
'What a wonderful security system.' Lion-O remarked. '*And*... and I've got the keys!' said S-S-Slithe desperately.
Lion-O glanced at the fallen bunch on the flagstones. 'Now I have.' he said.
S-S-Slithe knew he was almost beaten.
'Maybe! Maybe! But you don't know your way around! You'll be dead and munched and trapped and eaten and combusted and vanished and pounded to the size of a waffle before you take one step in any direction unless you have the map!'
'Map?'
'Did I say 'map'?' cringed S-S-Slithe, 'I meant...guts! Yes, guts! Cat gut, in fact heh heh heh heh heh!'
'You said 'map' and you meant it. Now where is it?' Lion-O increased the tightness of his hold on the mutant.
'The hall of arches! The hall of arches! But you'll never find the hall, so that's no good to you! And that's all you're getting out of me!'
Keeping a tight grip on the mutant, Lion-O lifted the keys and bundled his prisoner down to the nearest cell door. 'I'll find it, thanks, you've been most helpful.'
'W-what are you going to do with me?' asked S-S-Slithe anxiously.
'Well... I considered munching, trapping, eating, combusting, vanishing and turning you into a waffle with a bit of judicious pounding...'
'Y-yes..?'
'Then I thought about Mumm-Ra, and what he'd do if he found you'd let me escape. In you go, fat boy!' Lion-O pushed the protesting mutant through the door of the prison cell he'd just opened. A rather awful smell came out of the room. Lion-O slammed the door shut again and peeped through the jailer's slit.
'Nooooo!' came the muffled voice. 'This is the pen for the mutant pigs! I'll stifle! I'll be trampled! Help me!'
Lion-O saw the massive creatures that shuffled good-naturedly out of the darkness to investigate their new companion and laughed. 'Looks like you're in good company!' He said and strode off.

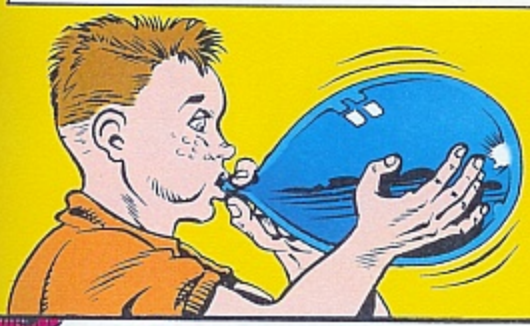


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MAKE YOUR OWN MUTANT PIG

To make your own Mutant Pig you will need: a newspaper, wallpaper paste, a bucket, a balloon, an eggbox, a pipe-cleaner, card, a brush and some Polyfilla. First ask a grown-up to help you.

1) Inflate the balloon, then rip the newspaper into tiny bits and soak them in a bucket of wallpaper paste. Cover the balloon with them and build up several layers, leaving the knotted end of the balloon sticking out (this will help make the tail). At the opposite end build up quite a few layers for the head.



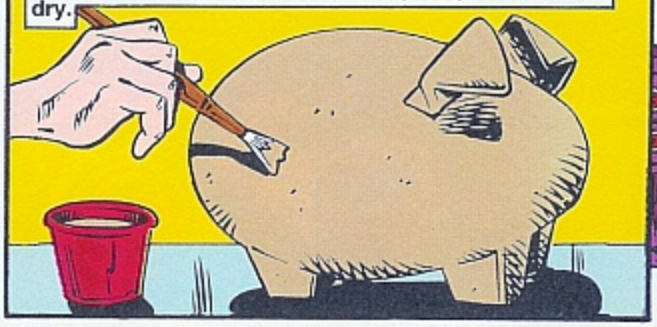
2) Cut four sections off the eggbox for the Mutant Pig's legs and one of the remaining sections for the snout. Stick them onto the body with some more paste-soaked paper, keep doing this until you have achieved a smooth join.



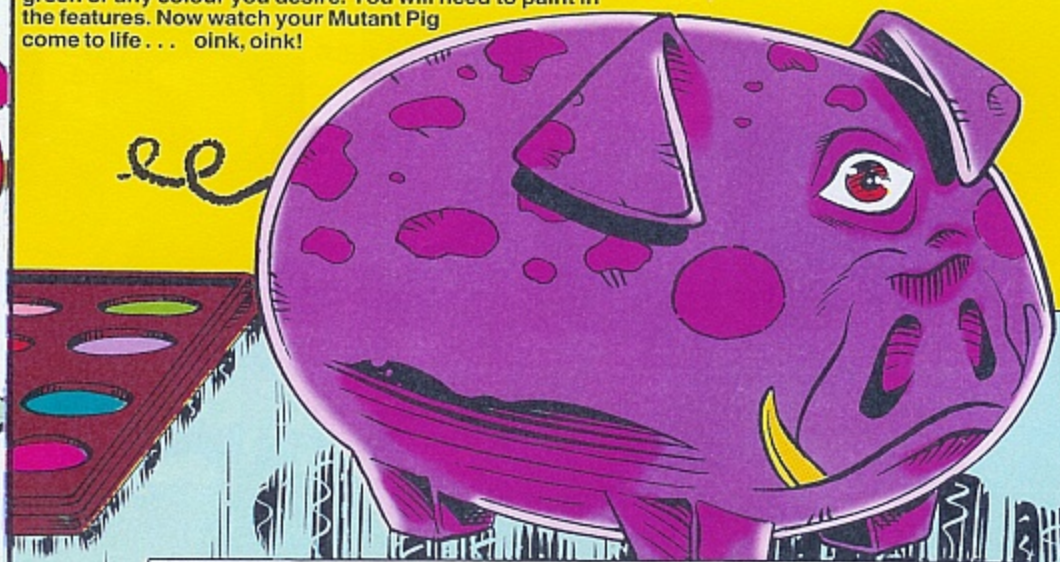
3) Now tie one end of the pipe-cleaner to the knotted end of the balloon. Shape it into a curly piggie tail and wrap with pieces of paste-soaked paper.
Next, mix up a dish of thin Polyfilla and spread it over your Mutant Pig, making the surface as smooth as possible.



4) Cut out some small triangles from the card and use these as tusks on the Pig's snout. You will also need to cut out some paper ears. The ears and tusks should stick quite easily onto the still damp Polyfilla. Leave to dry.



5) You can now paint your Mutant Pig pink, purple, green or any colour you desire. You will need to paint in the features. Now watch your Mutant Pig come to life . . . oink, oink!

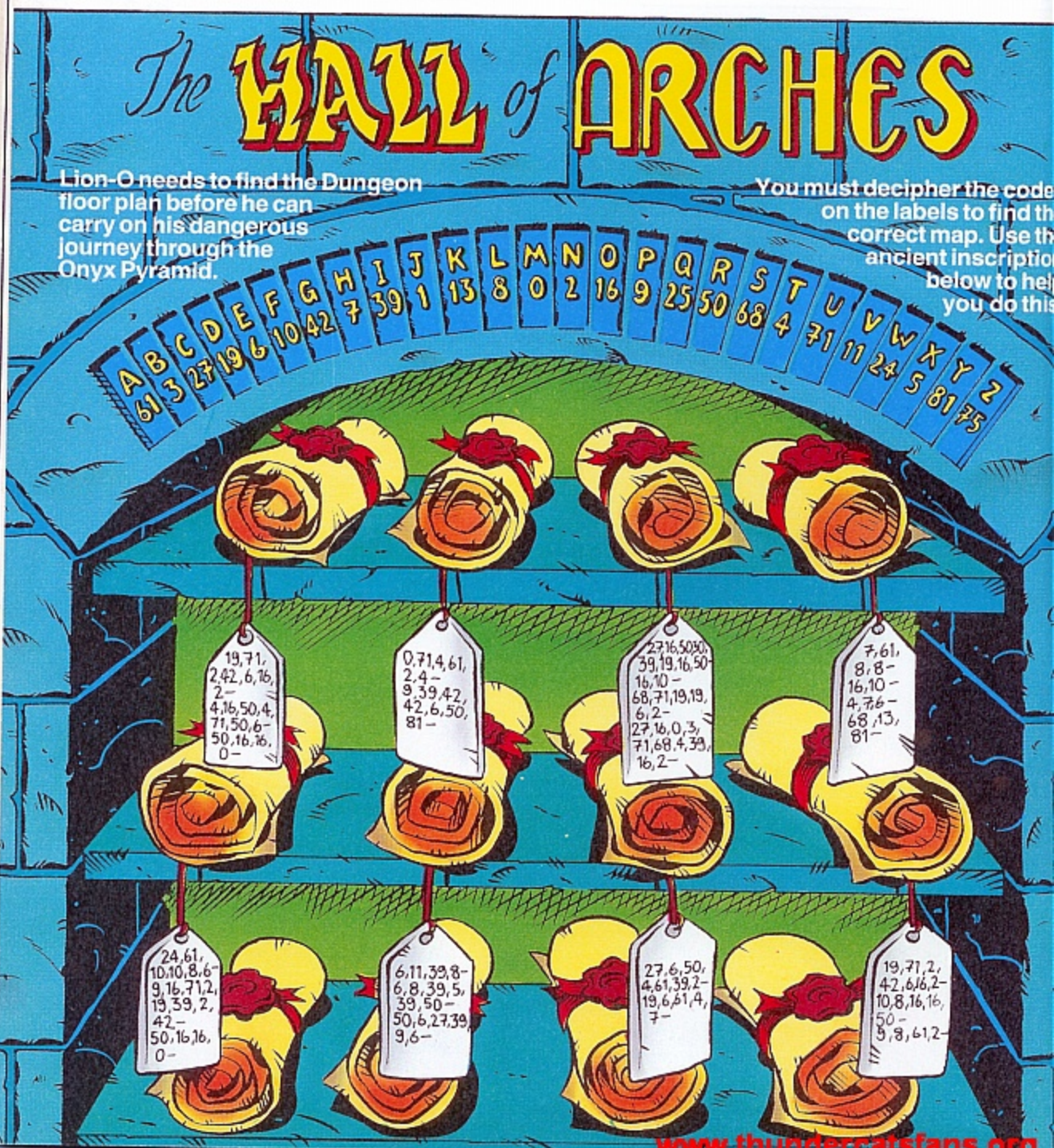


Please note that all Mutant Pigs are different, so the amount of horns, tusks and eyes that you add and how you add them is entirely up to you!

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At the next corner, Lion-O saw a carved sign which said 'Certain Death' to the left and 'Hall of Arches' to the right. He turned left. Mumm-Ra, he knew, had a sense of humour...

Lion-O had found the Hall of Arches, a massive underground crypt of blue stone lined with alcoves. Along one wall were a series of hollows labelled 'Nasty Things to Use on Prisoners', along another were 'Spare leashes for Ma-Mutt' and along a third 'Slopping out Brooms for the Mutant Piggery'. It was the fourth wall of arches that interested Lion-O. In the alcoves were racks and racks of scrolled parchments, all labelled in a mysterious language, with an inscription over the top of the lot of them. One, Lion-O knew, was the map of the dungeon, the others could lead him to certain death, even without the help of the signs! But which one..?



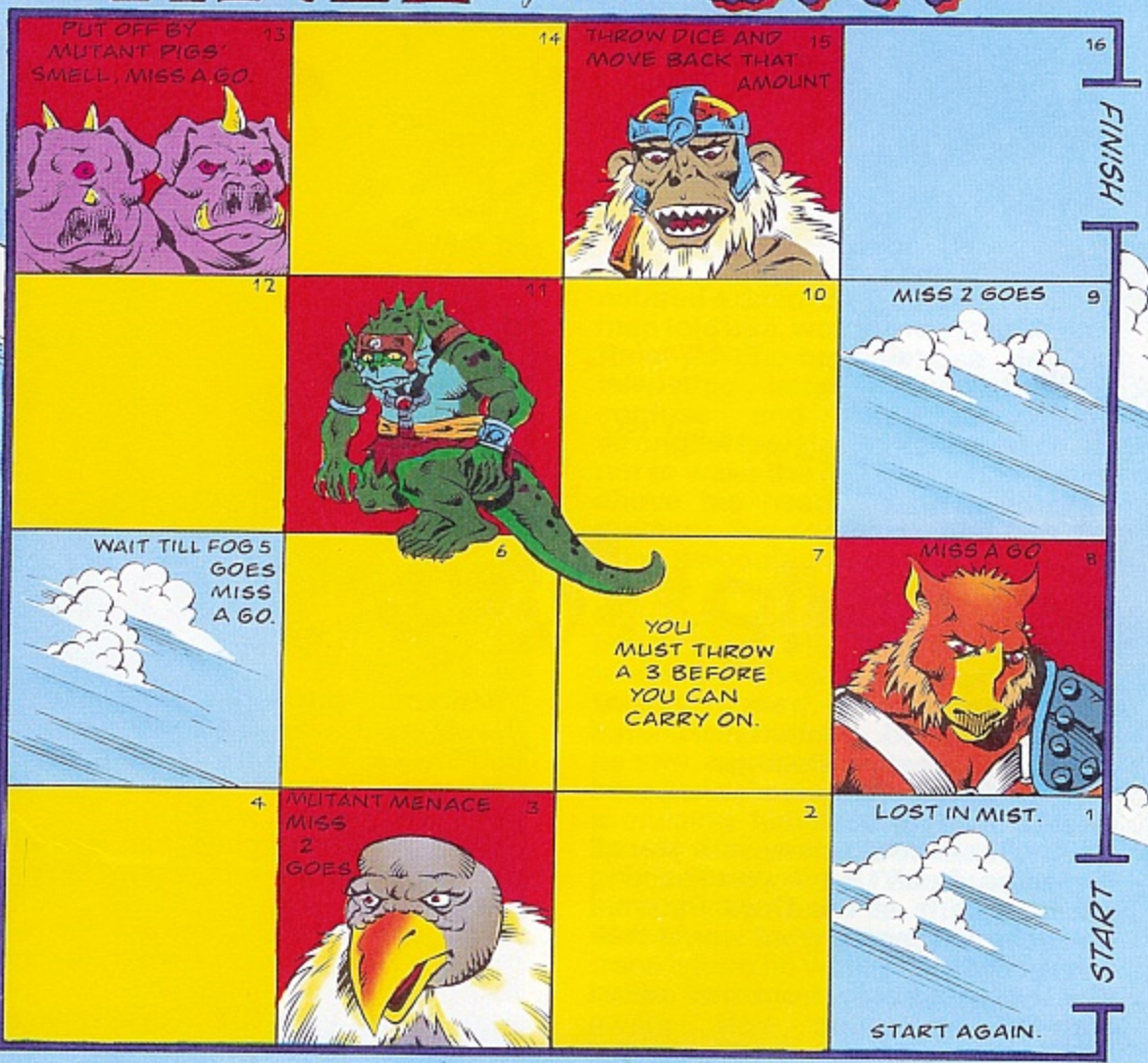
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Now Lion-O had the map, he would make better speed, although even with it, he felt sure there were some nasty surprises in store for him. He moved off in the direction indicated, past another sign that assured him certain death awaited round the corner, but by now he had come to expect that...

The hallway before him was vast, and its floor was clouded in wisping tendrils of steam. It looked like a cloudy sky, a fog had been brought underground and encouraged to settle on the flagstone floor. On his map, Lion-O read 'Hall of the Sky' and he knew that a wrong footstep could set him back in time, if not lose him utterly. But the strength of his loyalty to the Thundercats drove him on. With the tingling summons of the Sword of Omens still ringing in his head, he stepped forward into the misty room...

To be able to navigate the Cloud Hall successfully, you must find your way through the mist in the Hall of the Sky. To play this game you will need one dice. You can only start by throwing a six. Follow the instructions on the squares. If you are unfortunate enough to land on S-S-Slithe you must slide down his slippery tail. To finish this game you must land exactly on the last square.

HALL of the SKY

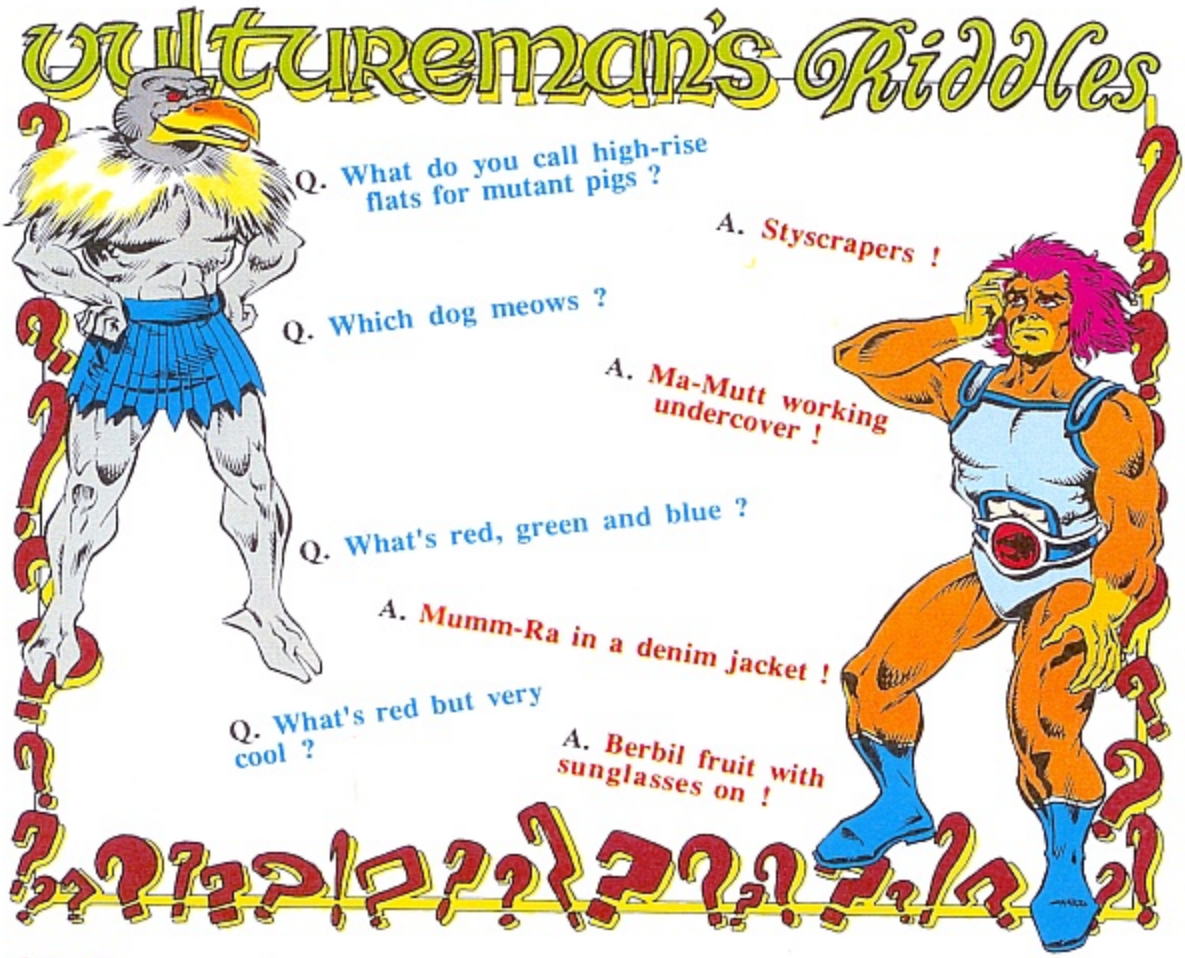


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Lion-O was through the treacherous cloudy trap! He summoned up his last reserves of strength and pressed on through the next corridor. But he was not alone... Lion-O wheeled as the menacing figure of Vultureman rose out of the shadows, his sword lowered at the Thundercat threateningly.

'A challenge... I do so enjoy a challenge.' Vultureman fluted through his hooked beak. 'And the Lord of the Thundercats is the best challenge of all! You are at my mercy, Lion-O! My sword is sharp and my wits are sharper! Answer my riddles, and I might let you live!'

Can you figure out Vultureman's riddles? Go on see if you can help Lion-O, because he's looking rather baffled.



'Very good... very good,' admitted Vultureman, his beady eyes winking.

'I'm glad you think so.' answered Lion-O, 'I did my best.'

'Still, I'll have to do away with you all the same. I can't have you roaming the dungeons of the Onyx Pyramid now, can I? I mean, what would S-S-Slithe say?'

'Get these pigs away from me?' asked Lion-O.

'Why would he say that?' queried Vultureman, puzzled.

'Never mind.' Lion-O stepped forward, cautiously. 'But honestly, Vultureman, you wouldn't finish me before I got to ask you *my* riddle, would you?'

The mutant scratched his feathery neck. 'Well no, I suppose not. Go on, fire away...'

'Well,' said Lion-O carefully. 'What's grey and dangerous one minute and flying off to escape the next?'

'Hmmmm... I don't know. A mouse going on holiday? No, no... An

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elephant hiding in a cherry tree? No, too obvious... I know! A winged donkey with second thoughts!'
Vultureman looked down and saw that Lion-O had taken the sword from him and was advancing in a threatening manner.
'M-ME?' the mutant squealed, taking to the air and flying off. 'Fourth time lucky. Lion-O shouted after him. 'Birds,' he mused, 'No sense of humour...'



Lion-O followed the map further, and entered a deep, dark cavern. Here, the map told him, was the roost of Mumm-Ra's psycho-bats, whose dreadful telepathic talents could bemuse, confuse and bring down the strongest foe. He crept forward, trying not to wake the evil bats who roosted above his head. To no avail! In a moment, his footsteps had brought them swooping down out of the dim ceiling perches they had occupied, shrieking and cawing. At once, his mind began to muddle, as their telepathic challenges assailed him. Reality blurred and phantoms rose before him. Panthro! It was Panthro he saw, his old friend come to rescue him! But so many Panthro's, each one promising him the way out! Lion-O fought to clear his head but it was no good! One of the Panthros represented the exit to this dreadful chamber, the others represented traps where he would fall and become victim to the vampiric bats. His head swam. How could he tell the difference? How could he get out?

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He was free! Lion-O scampered to freedom as behind him the bats shrilled their anger at his escape. Surely he must be near the surface now, thought Lion-O, surely he must soon be free...

The chamber he approached was warm and welcoming. As he entered, through the palls of steam, Lion-O saw Monkian at work at the mighty oven, baking bread for the mutant army. He spun round as he saw Lion-O enter, but the Lord of the Thundercats swung the bright steel of Vultureman's sword in his hands. Monkian started, leapt back and lifted the crossbow he had concealed by the side of the stove.

'An impasse, I believe, Thundercat. You are quick, I know, but my aim is deadly. I've no idea how you got past Mumm-Ra's other defenders, but you'll not get past me.'

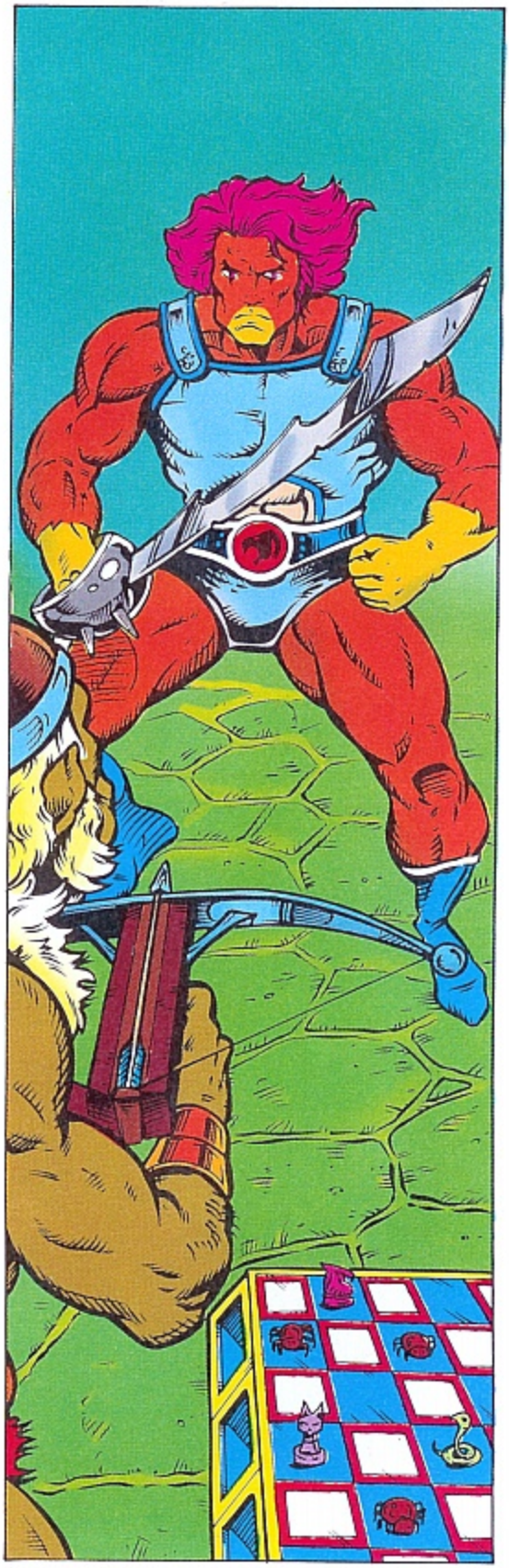
'Indeed.' mused Lion-O, watching the crossbow carefully. 'I agree it is an impasse. Do you suggest a more even measure of skill, or do we try and test each other's reactions? I assure you I am most gifted when it comes to swordplay. The sword can be thrown like a spear, you know..?'



'Over here,' beckoned Monkian slyly, the crossbow never wavering from Lion-O's chest. He gestured to a board game, like chess, that was layed out on a table nearby. 'When I'm bored, I play this diverting game. It's not often I have a talented adversary to play it with. What do you say? A quick game...and the winner takes all?'

Llon-O eyed the boards game, and sighed. He and Cheetara had spent many happy hours playing Thunderian Pursuit, and he had often won. Now there was more at stake than who does the washing up. Still, he had no choice. Monkian's finger was tensed at the trigger. He had to play well, and he had to win. 'All right,' he said, settling himself by the bench, 'You're on!

'Good,' said Monkian, 'Let play commence – you go first...'



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THE Fin

START

1 TRIP UP MISS A GO.

2

3 GO BACK TO SQUARE 1.

4 SLIP ON BERBIL FRUIT FLAN. MISS A GO.

19

20 PROCEED TO SQUARE 22.

21 THROW A 1 TO START NEXT TIME.

22

23 MISS A GO

24 THROW A 1 TO FINISH OR GO BACK AMOUNT THROWN.

FINISH

12 BACK TO SQUARE 12.

17

16 MUTANT TRAP! THROW A 1 TO GO NEXT TIME.

15

14 ANGRY ROCK-MEN. MISS A GO.

13 CHEETARA SHOWS A SPEEDY ROUTE TO SQUARE 17.

12

11 AVOID EVILNESS. GO BACK TO SQUARE 7.

10

9 CAUGHT IN THE CLAWS OF THE CRABMEN. MISS 2 GOES.

8 BESERKERS! GO BACK 3 SQUARES.

7

6 PANTHRO SHOWS YOU THE WAY TO SQUARE 10.

This is your last and final chance to escape the motley crew
your intellect to win your way out of this one! It may be too
conflict, there's no time to waste! You will need one dice
instructions on the squares. Lion-O plays on the bottom half

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CONFLICT

Mutant rabble, and the evil Onyx Pyramid. You will need to use all already to save your Thundercat chums. So begin your final he first one to cross the finishing line wins, following the he board and Monkian on the top.

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'Crikey!' said Monkian as the game finished, 'that was certainly a good challenge! I almost feel sorry to have to do away with you after all that.'
'And how will you do that?' asked Lion-O
'Well, with my...'
'Crossbow?' asked Lion-O. 'That'll be difficult without your arrows, won't it?'
Monkian glanced down at the now unloaded crossbow and the bundle of arrows that Lion-O was busy snapping. 'So, what are you going to do, Mutant?' asked the Thunderian.
'Let you go?' tried Monkian.
Lion-O reached the inner gates of the dungeon. The mouldering doors rose up before him like cliff faces. He hammered hard on them, and heard Jackalman's wavering voice. 'Who goes there?' 'Oi!' cried Lion-O, 'It's me, S-S-Slithe! Let me out or it's half rations for the lot of you!'

The Thundercats grouped around their leader as he announced the upcoming mission the 'cats were about to face. 'We will go to the Onyx Pyramid,' declaimed Lion-O, 'for as Mumm-Ra has been thrown to rout , we shall conquer it easily!'
'Are you sure?' asked Tygra, carefully.
'I thought he might still be waiting in the wings,' added Wilykit.
'Do you mistrust me? Am I not your Lord?' bellowed Lion-O monstrously.
'Well, no, actually.' said a voice from the back. They all turned.
'You?' yelled Lion-O from the throne.
'I think you mean 'Me?'' Lion-O answered from the floor. He held out his hand, and the Sword of Omens gleefully leapt from its owner's grasp by the throne to the hand of the newcomer Lion-O.
'The game's up.' Lion-O said. On the throne, 'Lion-O' contorted and wavered, his body becoming ugly and green.
'Mumm-Ra!' gasped the assembled Thundercats.
'Curse you!' spat Mumm-Ra as he vanished to live for another day.
'But how did you...' began Cheetara.
'Shhh!' said Lion-O. 'I'm back, that's all that matters. Now about these Nai people...'

THE END



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Plot **STEVE ALAN** Script **IAN RIMMER** Pencils **DOUGIE BRAITHWAITE** Inks **MARTIN GRIFFITHS** Letters **GLIB** Colour **STUART PLACE**

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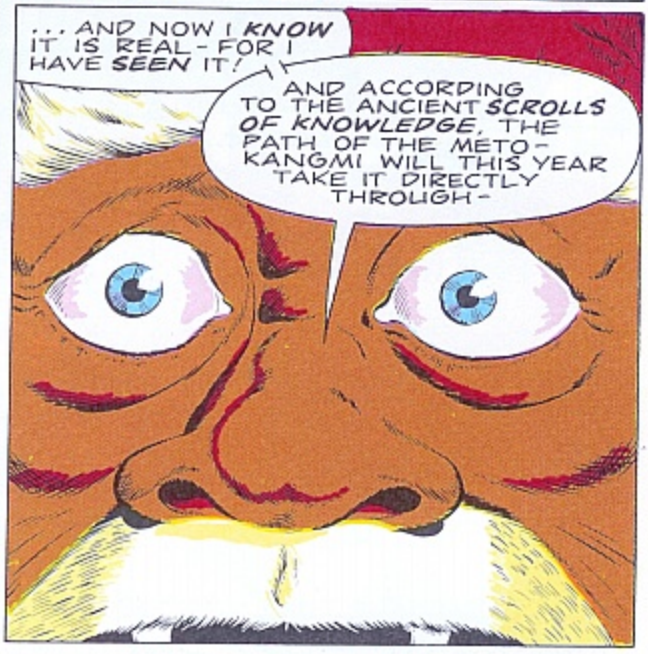


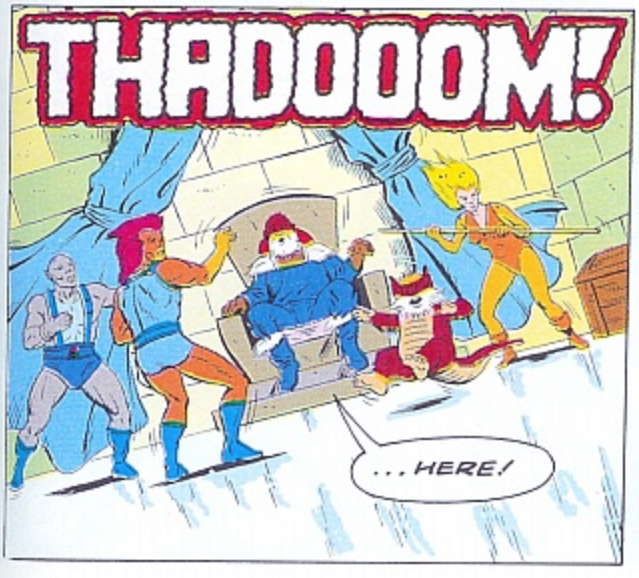
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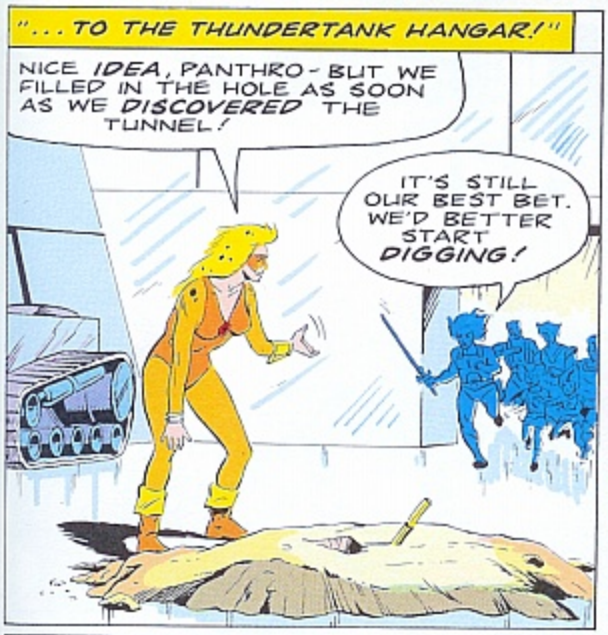
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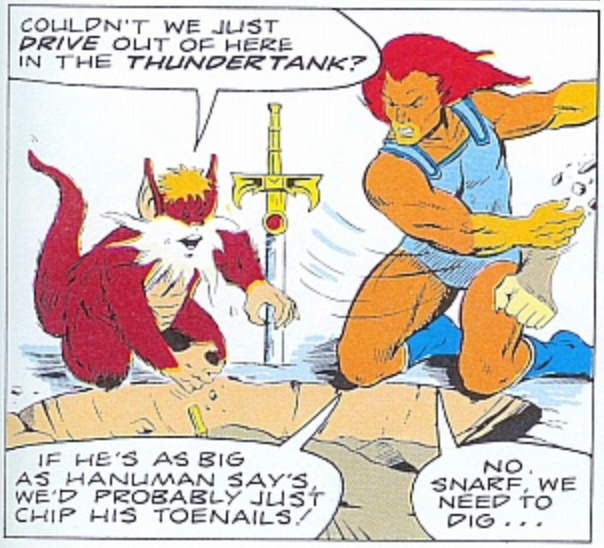
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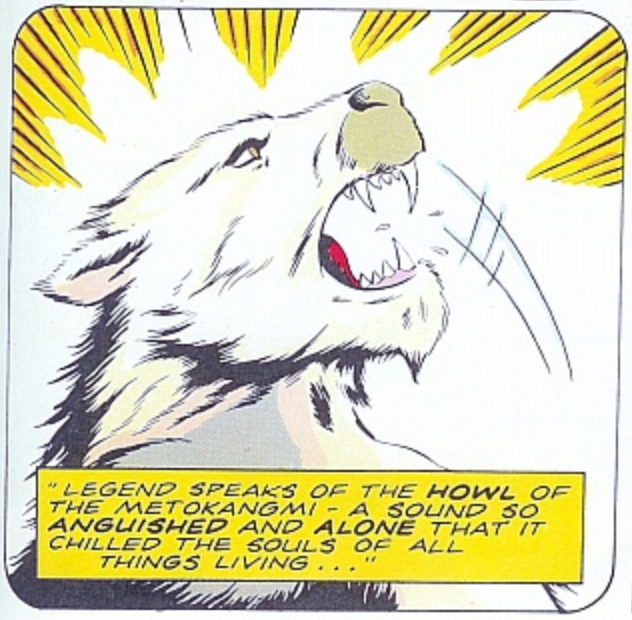
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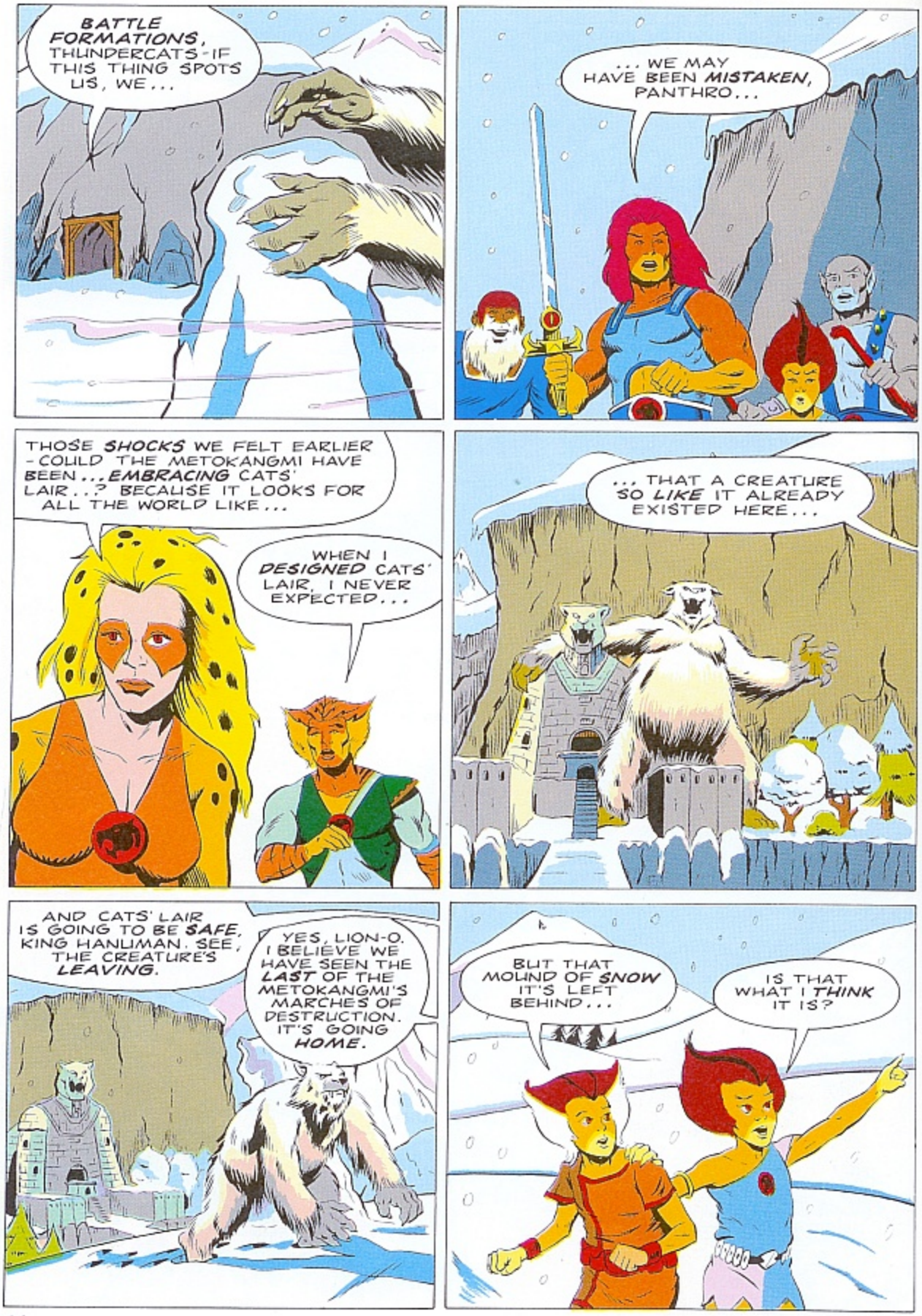








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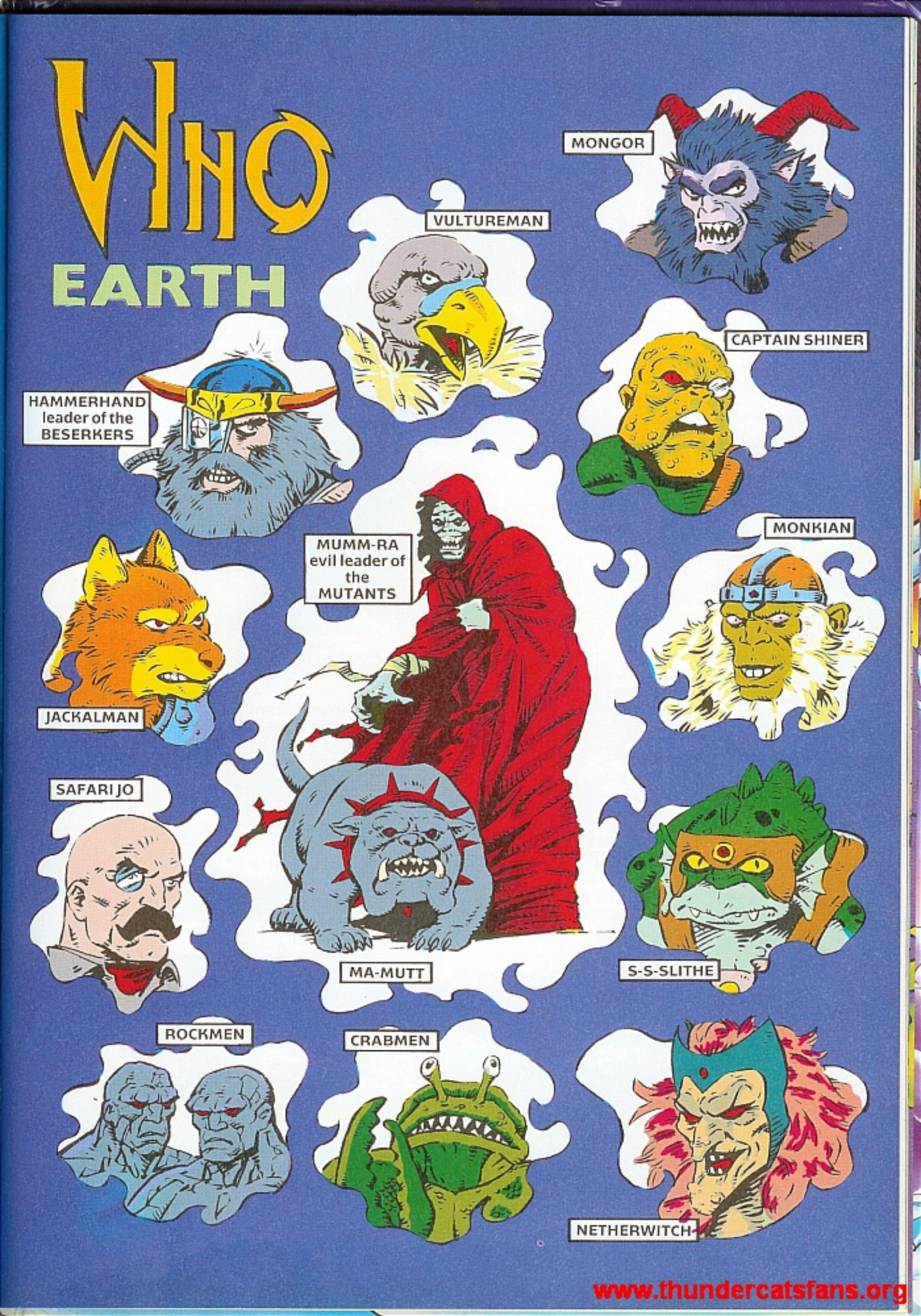
The End!

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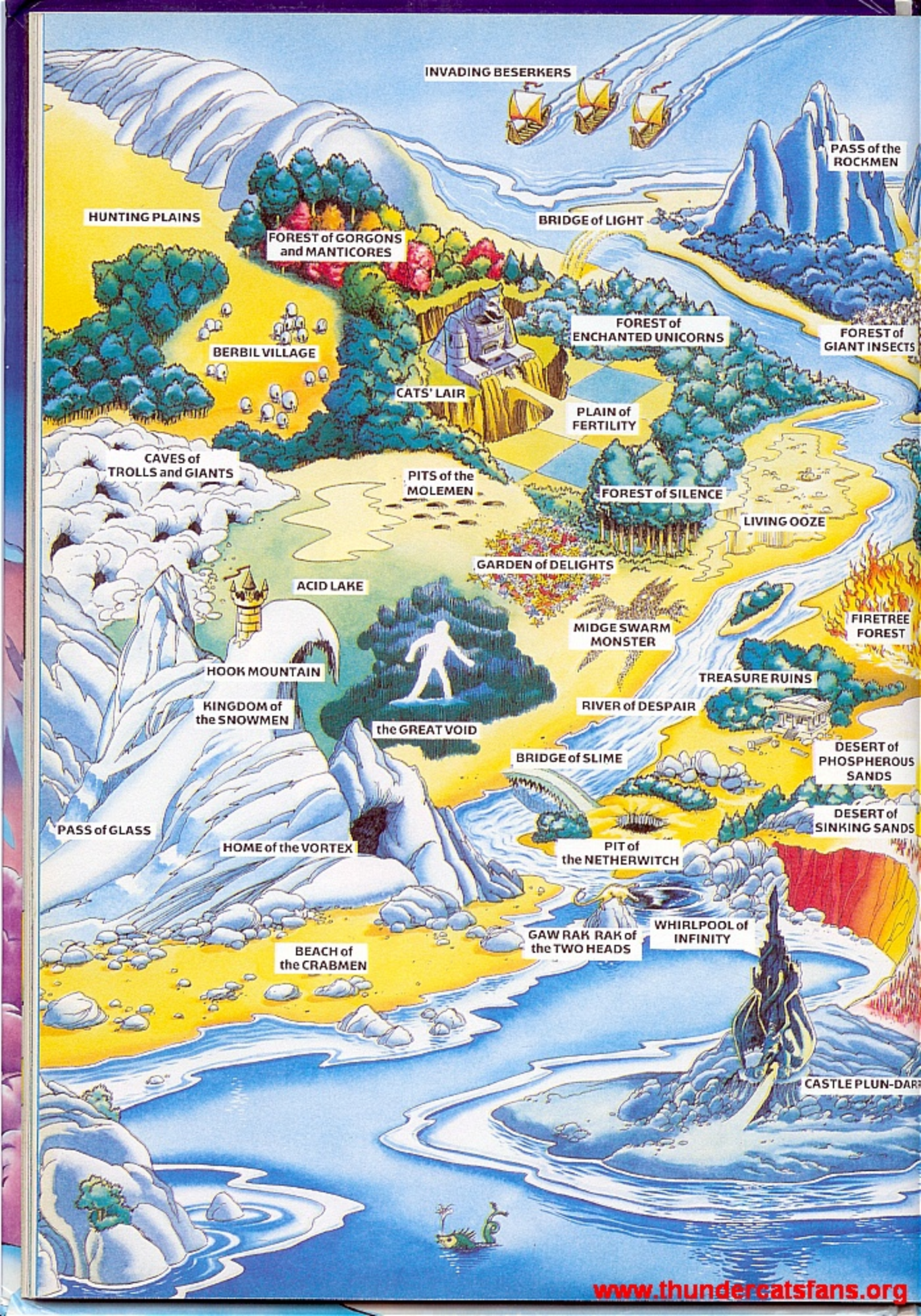


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WHO EARTH



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THE CHRONICLES OF THIRD EARTH

And it came to pass that the noblecats of **Thundera** and the Mutants of **Plun-darr** did make planetfall on a small blue-green planet, third in line from a young and vital sun. **Third Earth** was already home to a great variety of races and species, some of whom welcomed the alien newcomers, and some of whom did not. One such was **Mumm-Ra the Ever Living**, ancient devil priest and former ruler of Third Earth. A thousand years before the arrival of the Thundercats, Mumm-Ra ruled the world as **Pharoah Ka-Rey-Bar**, from the luxury of a great **Onyx Pyramid**

However, Ka-Rey-Bar was merely a front for Mumm-Ra's true activities, and his was a five-hundred year reign of terror. It ended with the great **Rammastide** uprising, in which the oppressed peoples of Third Earth banded together against their cruel ruler. Powerful though he was, Mumm-Ra could not withstand the combined threat of his angry subjects, and the fierce struggle which followed could have only one conclusion. Hopelessly outnumbered, Mumm-Ra and his **Thugron** armies were driven back to the Onyx Pyramid. There the devil priest still waits, his now ancient body swathed in life-giving bandages. Although able to summon the ancient forces in short bursts, to restore his youth and vigour, Mumm-Ra cannot maintain the level for long, and now relies on cunning and deceit to carry out his evil plans. The arrival of the Thundercats on Third Earth held the promise of a new lease of life, when Mumm-Ra discovered that the Thunderian Flagship, carrying Lion-O and his fellow 'Cats to the planet, also bore the **Eye of Thundera**, mystic crystal of time – lost power. Mumm-Ra was joined in his pursuit of the Eye by Reptilian **S-S-Slithe** of the **Evil Mutants**, and both formed an uneasy alliance in their aim to outwit and destroy the 'Cats. There might be some small dispute over ownership of the Eye after it came into their possession – but neither S-S-Slithe nor Mumm-Ra are worried. After all, they never *really* trusted one another. . .'

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NEVER, AND BEYOND

'Who was Leopardo?' Lion-O, lord of the Thundercats, asked the question casually enough but a silence fell over the breakfast table as if he'd just announced he was asking Mumm-Ra over for tea.

'By Thundera!' said Tygra with a surprised smile, 'where did you get that name from? I haven't heard the name Leopardo for a good many years!'

'Me neither,' put in Panthro, 'in fact, I haven't heard it since we were on dear Thundera...'

Lion-O looked anxiously at his friends as they spoke. 'Hey, I didn't mean to upset anybody. The name just popped into my head last night, in a dream.'

'A dream?' queried Cheetara.

'Weirdest one ever! You remember when I stumbled into the Cave of Time by accident, ages back?'

'How could we forget!' cried Snarf, 'The whole affair put years on me!'

Lion-O cut through the general laughter round the table as he went on. 'Well, I had a dream where I was back in the Cave of Time, crawling helplessly on the floor as the Cave aged me by years with each passing minute. Only it wasn't me, if you see what I mean, it wasn't a dream about Lion-O. In my dream I was somebody else. And when I woke up, there was this name in my mind – 'Leopardo'. I thought it might mean something.'

Tygra nodded. 'It does, Lion-O, it does indeed. Come on, let's get this meal cleared away and I'll tell you all about it.'

The winter storms were battering the walls of Cats' Lair, wind and icy rain pattering against the windows of the main control room. But inside it was cosy and warm and safe. Lion-O watched the blue forks of lightning flicker over the dim, distant hills as Tygra sat before the Lair's central computer and pressed a series of keys.

'Look here...' said Tygra, and Lion-O turned to see the picture of a powerful Thunderan warrior displayed on the main viewer. Lion-O started at the picture. The warrior shown was the spitting image of himself. 'That's me!' cried Lion-O. 'No, it's Leopardo... General of the Thunderan Legions during the reign of your predecessor, Jaga. A mighty warrior and gifted scientist, a member of the honoured Thundercats order... and your uncle, Lion-O!'

Lion-O jumped in surprise. 'My uncle? But I've never heard of him before!'

Tygra nodded sadly. 'Leopardo was a greatly-loved Thunderan, strong and wise and admired by all. Indeed, my young friend, I believe you take after him in many ways, the resemblance is considerable, don't you think?'

Lion-O waved aside the compliment in frustration. 'So what happened to him, Tygra? Did he perish when Thundera was destroyed? Why is he such a secret?'

Tygra heaved a great sigh. 'It is a sad, shameful story. Leopardo was studying the mechanics of Time itself. He was an expert in that field. He believed that a mastery of the Fourth Dimension could give the Thunderan Civilisation power beyond their wildest imaginings, make them masters of the planet, and, what's more, bring to a victorious end once and for all the war against the mutant Plundarans. Jaga warned Leopardo that meddling with such powers was too dangerous, but Leopardo was sure he was close to completing a device with which he could control and direct the passage and flow of time. To complete the last few experiments, Leopardo went out into space in his flagship, the *Pride of Thundera* in order to carry out the final checks safely away from the population centres.

'It was there that he came face to face with the battlefleet of Plundera com-

Story: DAN ABNETT Artwork: JERRY PARIS, GARY FRANK and JOHN BURNS Colour: LOUISE CASSELL

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manded by R-R-Rassk. R-R-Rassk was a massive reptilian, the predecessor of S-S-Slithe, and he'd heard rumours of Leopardo's work and was out to stop him before the Thunderans gained control of such a powerful device.'

Tygra cast his glance downwards, sadly. Lion-O urged him to continue.

'R-R-Rassk boarded the Pride of Thundera and confronted Leopardo. We back on Thundera saw all that took place via the ship's viewer. Leopardo had completed the final checks, he said, and the device was operational and a success. R-R-Rassk demanded that Leopardo hand it over to him, so that the Plundarans might enjoy its power, and threatened to kill Leopardo if he didn't comply. With horror, we watched as Leopardo, rather than battle R-R-Rassk away or try and escape, or even destroy the device, fell to his knees and begged to be spared, saying that in return, he would help R-R-Rassk master the time device properly. Leopardo had shamefully and cowardly turned against the Thundercats. He had turned traitor.

'Gleefully, R-R-Rassk accepted the offer and spared the traitor's life. Soon after, the Pride of Thundera, with R-R-Rassk and Leopardo aboard, disappeared into deep space. So distraught and betrayed was Jaga, that he decreed no one should ever speak of the traitor Leopardo again in the presence of him or the Thundercats. It was law. Leopardo was written out of the history books and deliberately forgotten.'

'So what happened to him?' Lion-O asked.

Tygra shrugged. 'No one knows. Within a month of his betrayal, Thundera was destroyed in the Supernova, and all that had been the Thunderan civilisation was no more. It is possible that the traitor and his partner R-R-Rassk returned to the planet sometime after that only to find it gone. From there, they could go anywhere. With the Time device, they were the most powerful beings in the universe, Masters of Reality.'

Lion-O's mind buzzed with further questions, not the least of which was 'why was Leopardo in my dream?' but before he could ask any more, the pair were interrupted by Panthro, who was hurrying in from the sub control room, where he had been monitoring the winter storm fronts.

'Look at this.' he said grimly, and held out a number of image slides that the weather-watch computer had just printed out. On the first was a massive swirling bloom like black, inky water draining away down a plug hole. But Lion-O knew that he wasn't looking at a bath plug. This image was from one of the Thundercats' weather satellites high in orbit and showed a massive storm, hundreds of miles wide, raging across the surface of Third Earth.

Panthro was brief and solemn. 'It's the biggest typhoon I've ever seen, I didn't think storms of this magnitude could exist on this world. Also, the energy readings contained within it are bizarre. I don't think it's entirely natural.'

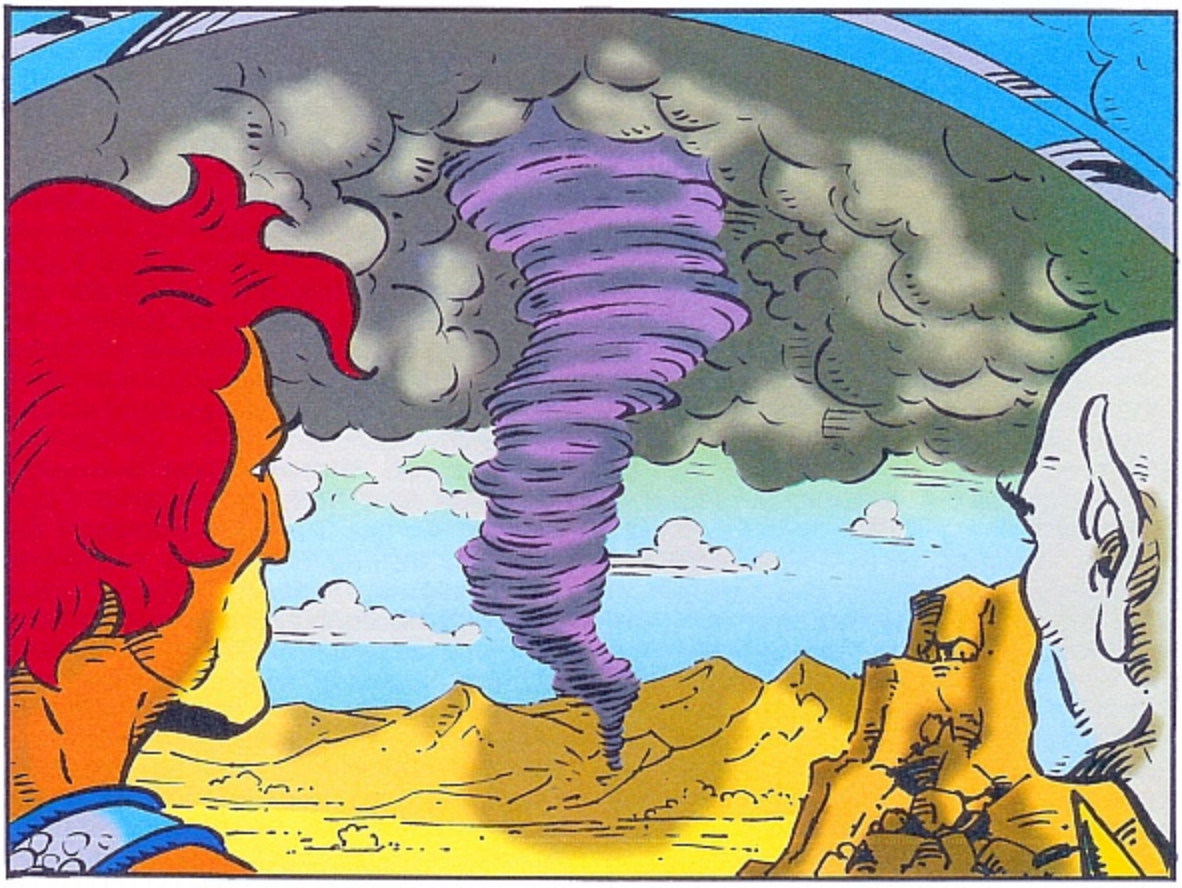
'Could this be another of Mumm-Ra's foul schemes?' Tygra asked. Panthro shrugged and held out another of the slides. 'I thought so, until I discovered two more facts that had an altogether uncanny ring to them in the light of this morning's breakfast table conversation. First, the eye of the storm seems to be directly over the Cave of Time...' Lion-O took the slide from Panthro, studying carefully the magnified image of the clouds, through which a shape loomed. 'What's this? It looks like a fin of some kind sticking up through the storm clouds. It's got writing on it... 'P' something...'

'That's the second thing. There seems to be an object out there in the midst of the storm, a large object. We can see just one fin of it, but it looks like a starship...a starship carrying the name the *Pride of Thundera*...'

They could barely hear Panthro's voice over the noise of the storm that howled against the outer armoured skin of the slowly moving Thundertank. 'This is the most intense meteorological trauma we've ever experienced. I only hope the tank will hold up to the punishment!'

Cheetara's comments were rather more direct. 'I wouldn't send a dog out

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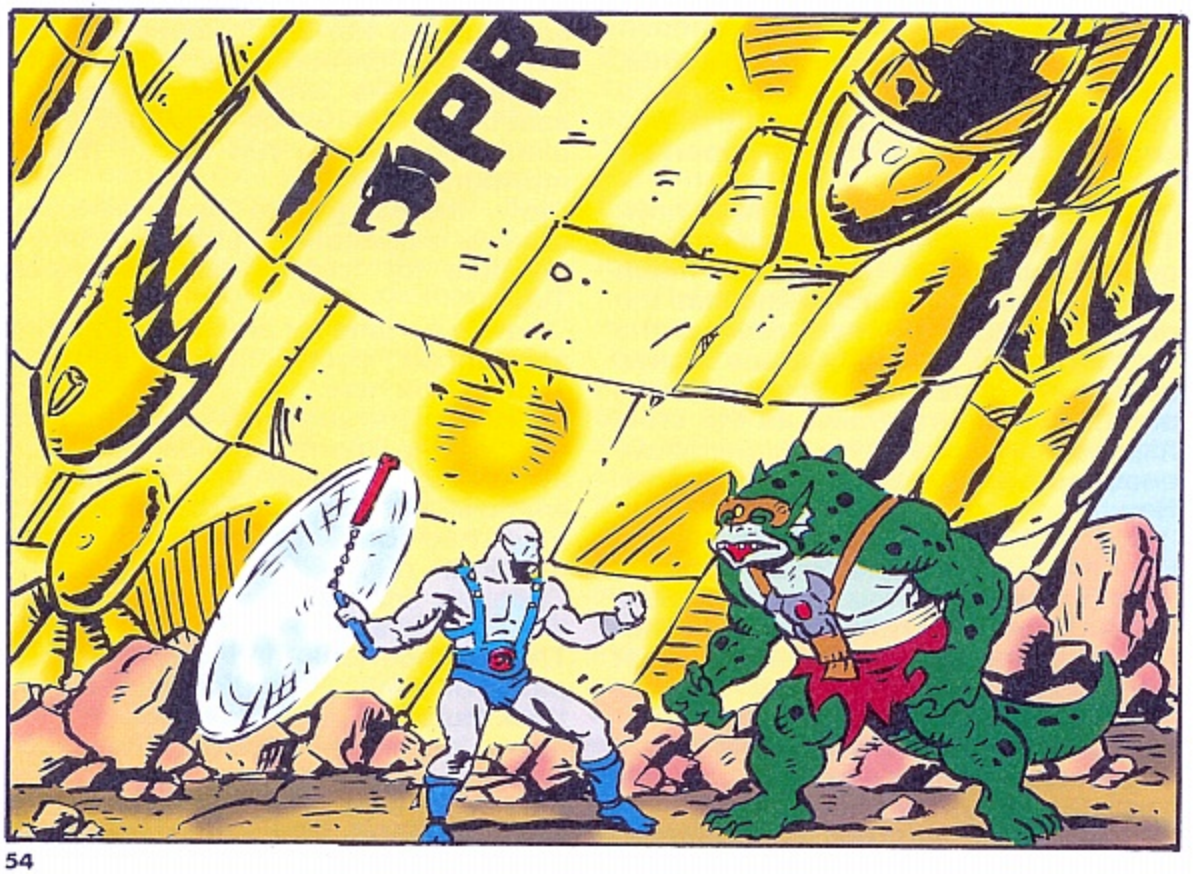
on a night like this...'
Lion-O smiled to lift her rattled spirits. 'Under *any* other circumstances, we'd have stayed in the Lair until it was over. This though...it's too important to wait.'
'Well, I hope it won't be too long now. The others back at the Lair will be getting worried by now. How much further Panthro?' Panthro checked the dials over the instrument dash of the tank's driving position, hands locked about the steering lever. 'About another Thunderan mile, as the crow flies, old friend. A little longer if we encounter any *unexpected* obstacles. Hey...'
'What is it?' Tygra asked, as he and the others leaned forward to Panthro. 'I can't explain it...' muttered the great, dark–skinned warrior. 'The chronometer on the tank's display has just gone blank. Look, it's just winking '00.00' on and off.'
' A malfunction in the circuit board...' suggested Tygra, reaching for the inspection shutter to have a look.
'I don't think so,' cut in Cheetara, turning over her left forearm to show the wrist chronometer she wore buckled there under her weapons scabbard. 'My watch has just gone blank too.' 'We've run out of time...' murmured Lion-O.
'Now, there's got to be a perfectly rational explanation, Lion-O. There's no time for feeble jokes ' snapped Tygra.
'There's no time for *anything*,' Panthro announced coolly, 'Lion-O's right, Tygra. Look here.'
Tygra became suddenly aware that the roar of the storm outside had died away. Light shone in through the window slits for the first time since they had set out into the storm wracked night. He joined Lion-O, Cheetara and Panthro in looking out. 'By Thundera..!'
The Thundertank had driven into a patch of sunlit desert, surrounded by thick outcrops of sandy rock. A mile away, on every horizon, the black typhoon raged, but here, at its centre they were untouched, undisturbed. It was unnatural, frightening almost, to

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be in this strange, silent world of tranquil daylight. But even more frightening was the massive metal shape thrusting up skywards out of the broken rock, a battered starship almost as huge as Cats' Lair. A Thunderan starship, with a now familiar name on its prow.
'Oboy...' breathed Lion-O.

The four Thundercats left the tank and approached the massive ship on foot. The air around them was cool and still, charged with the electric smell of ozone from the massive storm that rumbled all around them in the middle distance. Out of the tank, the Pride of Thundera seemed bigger and the 'cats had to clamber up to it over massive boulders and broken slabs of basalt that were like small mountains. It had split the ground open with a great deal of fury when it burst out. But how does a starship burst *out* of a planet's surface..? Lion-O wanted to ask the question but knew he would get nothing more than an 'I have absolutely no idea' from any of his companions.

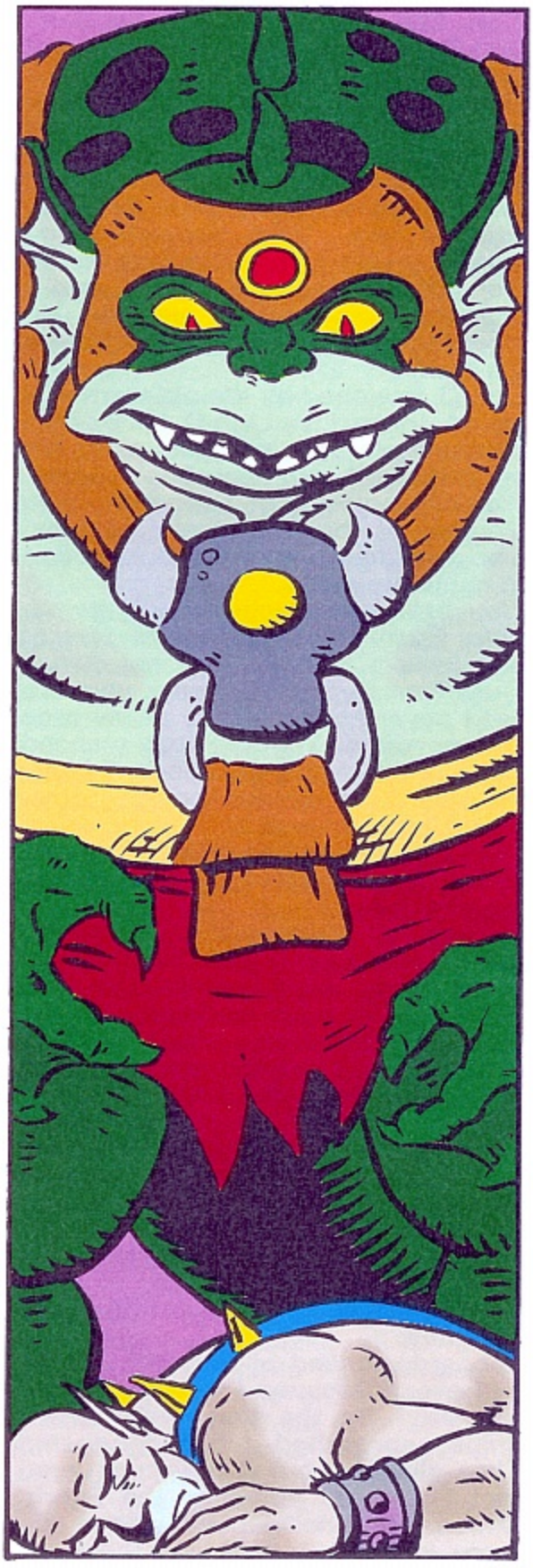
The quartet reached the hull of the ship. Close up, they saw it to be pitted and scarred by more than its turbulent exit from the rock of Third Earth. Meteor craters dotted the metal, and the scars of comet debris, asteroid ice, and the heat-score of violent atmospheric re-entries. 'This craft has been through a lot,' announced Tygra. 'Let's spread out, and see if we can find a working hatch or entry port.' Cheetara and Lion-O moved off to the left, Panthro and Tygra to the right, hoping to circle the massive craft and find a way in.
Panthro ran his hand over the rough metal of the hull, as he and Tygra moved across the torn rocks. 'I bet this old beauty has some stories to tell.' he said. 'Indeed it has,' a voice answered before Tygra could. Panthro wheeled round, his body steeled in a fighting pose, his knumbchuck weapons spinning in his hand. Before him stood a massive reptillian warrior, like S-S-Slithe in many respects, but much larger and more powerfully muscled. The creature chuckled quietly. 'Thunderans... after all this



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time.' Then, with a speed that seemed to belie his size, the monster struck out. Panthro's knumbchuck whirred to block the blow, but at once the creature's other hand snapped round and caught hold of the swinging chain. Panthro found himself being dragged forward by his own hand. He let go of the knumbchuck and dived to the left, but by then it was too late and he was too close. The creature connected with a mighty blow and Panthro slumped into unconsciousness. 'Now, where's the other one?' murmured the reptilian, looking around with a nasty grin. Abruptly, he was rocked backwards by a blow out of nowhere. 'Ooooh! Invisible, eh? We'll see about that.' The reptilian turned a dial on a small device he wore on his harness belt, and the machine hummed. At once Tygra reappeared in front of his adversary.
'What the..?'
'Just ran your time stream backwards there for a minute. Took you back to the point *before* you disappeared.'
Tygra, confused and bewildered, looked up into the evil eyes of the creature. *'R-R-Rassk!'*
'You remember me, Tygra? I'm touched. Thank you... and goodnight!'

On the other side of the Pride of Thundera, Lion-O and Cheetara were failing dismally to find a way into the massive ship. 'It's no good!' exclaimed Lion-O in frustration, 'There's no sign of a portal anywhere on the hull.' Cheetara was about to reply, but she fell silent, staring down into the rocks below that lay around the ship. 'Lion-O – look. Down there. A figure, moving...'
At once, the pair of Thundercats bolted down the rocks towards the figure, Lion-O – cursing himself for being slow as , the lithe superfast Cheetara left him behind as she bounded down the rocks. On the desert floor Lion-O caught up with her, as her rate had dropped to a slow, cautious advance. They saw the figure before them, an old, frail Thunderan in azure armour who lay prone in the dusty rocks. He looked just as Lion-O had done when the Cave of Time had aged him.



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'Can that be Leopardo?' breathed Lion-O. 'He fits the description, but he's so old...*ancient*!'

They approached the old 'cat, who stirred as they came up and opened his firey eyes. 'I'm dreaming...' the old Thunderan mumbled, 'and that means my time has now truly come. Or is this another trick, Time Spirits? I see myself, young again, standing before me with the Sword of Omens, and a beautiful Warrioress at his side. No more torment, Time Spirits! Let this be the end!'

Lion-O crouched by the old warrior. 'I am no dream. I am Lion-O, Lord of the Thundercats. This is Cheetara. We are on Third Earth, our new chosen home. We believe you to be Leopardo, once General of the Thunderan Legions, who vanished before the destruction of our home world...'

'You believe correctly, young friend. Third Earth, you say? Then I'll warrant you have a story to rival my own. I knew Thundera was no more, you see, but I never imagined any of my race had survived.' The old 'cat glanced down at the sword of Omens. 'I knew the sword still existed though, *somewhere*. I could sense it.'

Old Leopardo looked up into Lion-O's eyes. 'It is what has brought us together now.'

'It was all a mistake...' Leopardo began, after Lion-O and Cheetara had made him more comfortable '...I should never have meddled with the forces of Time. Jaga warned me when I set out, but I was too proud to heed him. Mark well what I tell you now. With my invention, the chrono-device, I conquered the secrets of time-flow, and became the master of the past, the present and the future. I had perfected it in a series of tests by the time R-R-Rassk boarded my ship and threatened my life...'

'Why didn't you fight him off?' asked Cheetara.

Leopardo looked at her with feeble, sad eyes. 'Because I was powerless, my lady! By the time R-R-Rassk's ships approached, I had conquered Time all right, but it had conquered me! There are forces in the Fourth Dimension, intelligences whose life force is Time itself. I call them the



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Time Spirits for want of a better name. I had angered them by my presumptuous invasion of their domain. They came to me, threatened to destroy me, and then saw that the chrono-device gave them access to our dimension just as it had given me access to theirs. They saw power in that, the opportunity to invade and control our three dimensional universe. They required me to be the instrument of that invasion. I rejected the idea, and tried to destroy the device. But they were too strong for me. They locked me in a loop of time until they had need of me. Then R-R-Rassk entered the scene. In him they saw the evil and strength needed to implement their plans. The Time Spirits took him into their thrall, released me from the loop and made me speak and act as if I were R-R-Rassk's ally. But I double crossed them. Lulled into a sense of false security by my compliance, R-R-Rassk was careless with me. I misled him about the controls of the chrono-device, and the whole ship, with R-R-R-assk and myself aboard, were thrown out of control, into a maelstrom of time!'

'You sacrificed your own life and ship to stop R-R-Rassk?' asked Lion-O.
'I suppose so... but it wasn't R-R-Rassk I wanted to stop. It was his masters, the Time Spirits. I could not allow them to control the device.'
'As the Pride of Thundera tumbled through time space, R-R-Rassk and the Spirits wrought cruel vengeance on me, aging me into the poor husk you see before you. But whilst such small manipulations of time were possible for them, they could do nothing to prevent the headlong tumble through time I had set them on. For centuries we have fallen through time and space, lost and lonely.'
Leopardo looked up at his two companions with anxiety in his face.
'But the Time Spirits had devised a plan, a plan to free them from their prison and allow them to once more threaten our Universe. They knew of a place on a distant planet where time is pooled and turbulent. That place is here...'
'The Cave of Time!' exclaimed Lion-O.

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'If that's what you call it.' replied Leopardo. 'The Time Spirits knew that if they could only get here, the power of the Cave of Time would negate the power of the device for a while, and hold the Pride of Thundera in temporal stasis allowing them to concentrate on controlling its power. According to their knowledge, there was only one power source capable of controlling the chrono-device.'
'Only one indeed!' came a voice from behind. The Thundercats turned to see the towering figure of R-R-Rassk. 'And that power source is *The Sword of Omens*!'

In the shadow of the mighty Pride of Thundera, the four re–united Thundercats watched in mounting alarm as R-R-Rassk carried the limp, exhausted form of Leopardo towards the ship. 'I have no more need of you now your young friends are mine, Thunderan. I will put you in the ship where you can dream out the rest of your feeble days.'
'Can't we do anything?' Lion-O asked Tygra desperately. Tygra, nursing a bruised jaw, shook his head sadly. 'That small object on R-R-Rassk's harness is the chrono-device. It gives him total control over local time. Any action we make, any move to escape or fight, he can counter act and take us right back to the moment before we started it.'
'But he hasn't got greater control over it than that, right?' asked Cheetara.
'Exactly. That's been the problem all along since Leopardo misled him as to its working. He can't carry out any greater feats – moving stars, for instance, accelerating the rise and fall of civilisations or whatever his masters have in mind – unless he has a sizeable power source to do it with.'
'The Sword of Omens.'
'The Sword of Omens, precisely. R-R-Rassk has arrested his headlong fall through time by materialising in the Cave of Time itself. That's holding everything in a state of suspension – and causing the massive storm we came through, I might add. Now he needs the Sword to gain active control of the device and the ship he travels in. Once he's got it, no one can stop him.' Tygra finished, and Panthro and Cheetara sighed in defeat. there was nothing that was even worth trying at this stage. But Lion-O kept his head raised. R-R-Rassk was returning from depositing Leopardo in the ship. Lion-O stepped up to him, and drew the Sword.
'You want this, I believe,' Lion-O said calmly.
'Lion-O! NO!' cried his fellow Thundercats. R-R-Rassk chuckled and took the Sword of Omens from Lion-O's hand. 'Much obliged, Thunderan' he snorted.
R-R-Rassk barely had time to gloat when there was a sudden flash from the direction of the Pride of Thundera. A mighty figure leapt down from the rocks and landed in front of R-R-Rassk. The Thundercats, all except Lion-O, gasped out loud. So did the Plundaran. Lion-O just smiled.
It was Leopardo... young and powerful, a dead ringer for Lion-O again. He smiled at R-R-Rassk.
'I don't know how you did it, Thunderan,' bellowed R-R-Rassk, 'but getting young again isn't enough to stop me or the Time Spirits. Not while I have – eh?' R-R-Rassk had reached for the chrono-device, but it was no longer on his belt.
'This what you're looking for?' inquired Leopardo, holding out the device.
'How did you get that?' bellowed the Reptile.
'Lion-O gave it to me, after he had used it to give me back my youth.' Leopardo handed the device to the Lord of the Thundercats.
'But how did *he* get it?' snarled R-R-Rassk. 'Because I just gave it to him' smiled Leopardo. 'Now, Lion-O, do what you have to do.'
Lion-O turned a dial on the device and he seemed to shimmer for a moment.
'All done,' he announced.
'What's going on?' asked Tygra.
'Simple, really,' said Lion-O. 'As R-R-Rassk came to take the Sword from me, I decided that if we won through all this, and I got hold of the device, the first thing I'd do is make Leopardo young again and give him the device so that he could come back and defeat R-R-Rassk by giving the device to me... if you see what I mean. I decided

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on a future action that would influence the past, and once I'd decided it, it all happened.'

'Wait... tell me all that again... said Panthro, wide-eyed. But he was interrupted by a roar from R-R-Rassk. 'You may have the device, but I have the Sword! I'll defeat you yet!'

There was a blur as Cheetara raced forward, dodging under R-R-Rassk's arm and grabbing the Sword, which she threw back to Lion-O. 'I think I have all the trump cards now, R-R-Rassk, don't you?' said Lion-O sweetly.

'Quickly, Lion-O' exclaimed Leopardo, 'before the Time Spirits can undermine your paradox with one of their own. You must do what I explained to you.'

Lion-O adjusted another dial on the chrono-device, and at once the air was torn by a piercing shriek and the storm seemed to close in on them.

'Look!' cried Tygra, pointing to Leopardo and R-R-Rassk, who were both getting younger by the second. 'What are you doing?'

'The only thing that will stop the Time Spirits. They are a living part of time itself, so the only defence we have against them is to turn time backwards on itself. I'm sending Leopardo and R-R-Rassk back to the point just before Leopardo completed his device, and this time, Leopardo knows he must *never* finish it. The Thundercats looked on in awe as time around them stabilised, leaving R-R-Rassk and Leopardo now young adults, the ages they were on the fateful day their paths crossed. Behind them the Pride of Thundera gleamed shiny and new. Above them all, the storm swirled to fever pitch.

'Leopardo, now's the time!' yelled Lion-O over the storm. 'The choice is yours. You must decide to *not* invent the chrono device.'

'It is a decision I make happily and freely. There is no other choice I wish for. Thank you Lion-O, for everything.'

In the twinkling of an eye, the storm disappeared, and the Pride of Thundera vanished with it. All that remained were R-R–Rassk and Leopardo, now just infants, confused and frightened. The mutant was wearing the supple harness of a baby Plundarian, and the Thunderan had changed from his azure armour to the tunic and wrist bands of a Thundercat child. Tygra grabbed hold of them, but they were diminishing and vanishing in his surprised grasp. 'Let them go, Tygra!' called Lion-O, his sad eyes catching for one final moment the child eyes of his uncle, Leopardo.

Then, the two children were gone, vanished in a swirl of time. Tygra turned to Lion-O, who was gazing sadly at the empty air. 'So you sent Leopardo back and he made a different choice this time.'

'This time he heeded Jaga's words and never meddled with time at all.'

'But the ship, the storm...where did they go?' asked Panthro. 'They vanished, because they were never here. Leopardo and R-R-Rassk returned to their childhoods to live their lives over again, to a different outcome. All the rest of the story, the chrono-device, the Time Spirits, the Pride of Thundera tumbling through time, everything that happened here today has gone because it never happened.'

'But I remember it,' said Cheetara.

'Because we were here when it didn't happen. Our memories are lying to us now. That's just something we'll have to get used to.'

'A small price to pay to know that Leopardo was no traitor after all,' mused Panthro.

'Indeed.' Tygra smiled. 'Though I must say, Lion-O, for one who convinced Leopardo that meddling with time was wrong, you took some chances there yourself.'

'I did what had to be done,' said Lion-O gravely. 'Come on, let's get home.'

They moved off towards the Thundertank.

'It's sad to think that the old Leopardo has ceased to exist,' said Cheetara.

'Oh, he'll exist somewhere, in the past, just like R-R-Rassk. And they have gone somewhere. Not the present, or the future, but sort of sideways, into no time.'

'Never?' asked Tygra.

Lion-O nodded. 'Never,' he smiled, 'and beyond.'

THE END

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ISBN 1-85400-292-9

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