A THUNDERCATS™ ADVENTURE

THE EVIL CHASER



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The Evil Chaser



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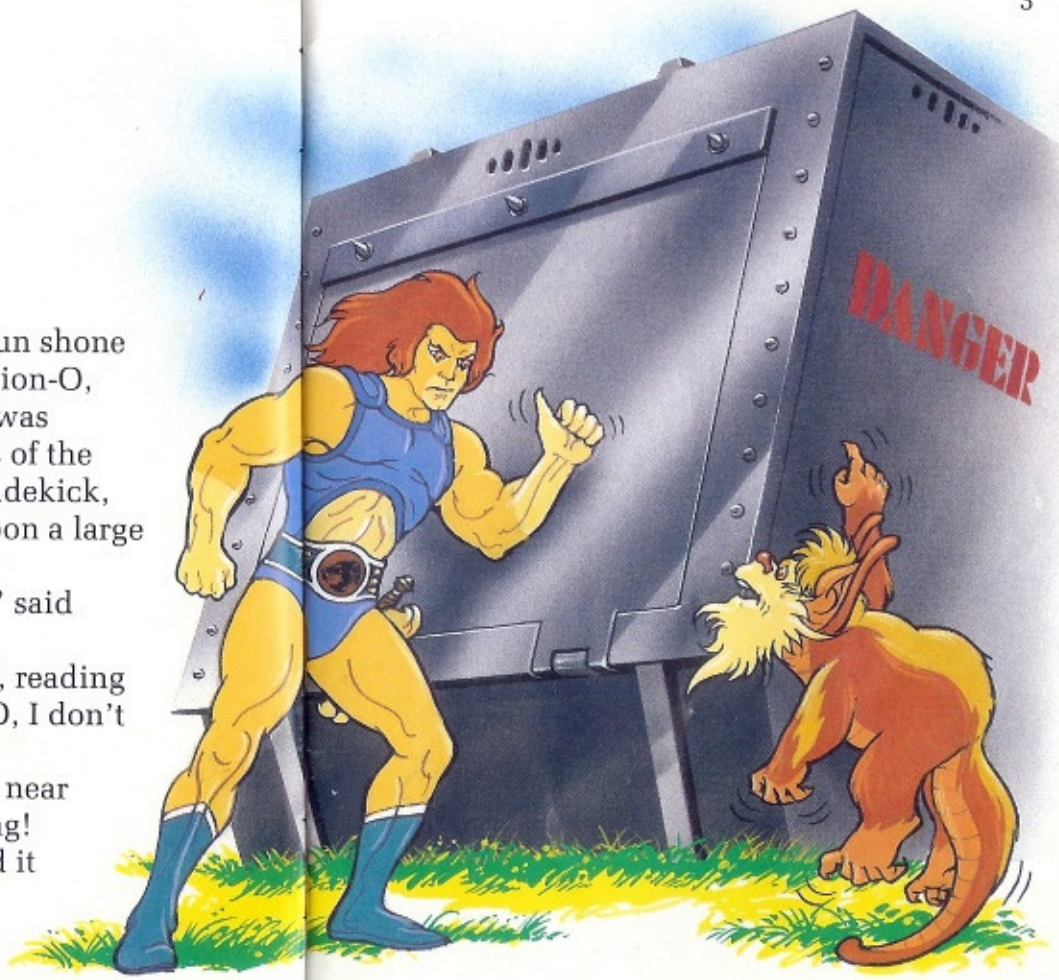
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It was morning, and the sun shone brightly on Third Earth. Lion-O, Lord of the Thundercats, was walking through the grass of the Hunting Plains with his sidekick, Snarf, when they came upon a large black box in a clearing.

"Let's take a look at it!" said Lion-O.

" 'Danger', " said Snarf, reading a sign on the box. "Lion-O, I don't think . . ."

Lion-O cocked his head near the door. "Listen! Moaning! Something's in there. And it may need help!"



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He unlocked the door.

Suddenly the door flew open, knocking Lion-O and Snarf to the ground. A filthy, spike-haired creature in rags came running out and disappeared in the tall grass. Then came another creature, part man and part machine, whose powerful body was armoured in old automobile parts. He revved his engines and roared off.



Finally a tall, wiry creature strolled out. He helped Lion-O and Snarf to their feet, brushed them off, then tipped his hat and walked away.

"Well," said Lion-O, "at least he was polite."

Suddenly, Snarf yelled. "My coin purse! It's gone! That polite beanpole picked my pocket!"



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"What!" said Lion-O. Then he, too, cried out. "My belt is empty! He stole the Sword of Omens!"

Snarf and Lion-O searched the tall grass, but the three creatures had vanished.



"I've been a fool because of my curiosity," said Lion-O, sadly.

Just then an engine roared in the sky, and a space bike came zooming

down at them. As it got closer they could see its double-whip aerial, its saddle bags—and its rider, head down, gripping the handlebars with studded gloves.

The bike skidded to a stop and the rider vaulted off, her black and red leather jumpsuit gleaming in the sunlight.



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"Who opened that door!?" she boomed at them.

"I did!" said Lion-O. "I thought someone needed help. We chased them but—"

"Help!" the woman said. "You've just released three of the universe's most wanted evildoers. I was about to transport them to the Planet of Discipline and Correction."

"Who are you, anyway?" asked Snarf.

The woman flashed a badge at them. "Evil Chaser First-Class Mandora. Interplanetary Control Force," she said. Then she hopped back on to her bike. "Now, let's get those criminals! We'll start with Plutar. Everything he touches dies—trees, flowers, animals. Are there any gassy swamps nearby?"

"Yes," said Lion-O. "The Living Ooze."

"Good. Climb aboard. I'll need directions."

Lion-O, delighted, jumped on to the bike, but Snarf hung back. "Come on, Snarf," said Lion-O. "It may be our only hope of recovering the Sword."

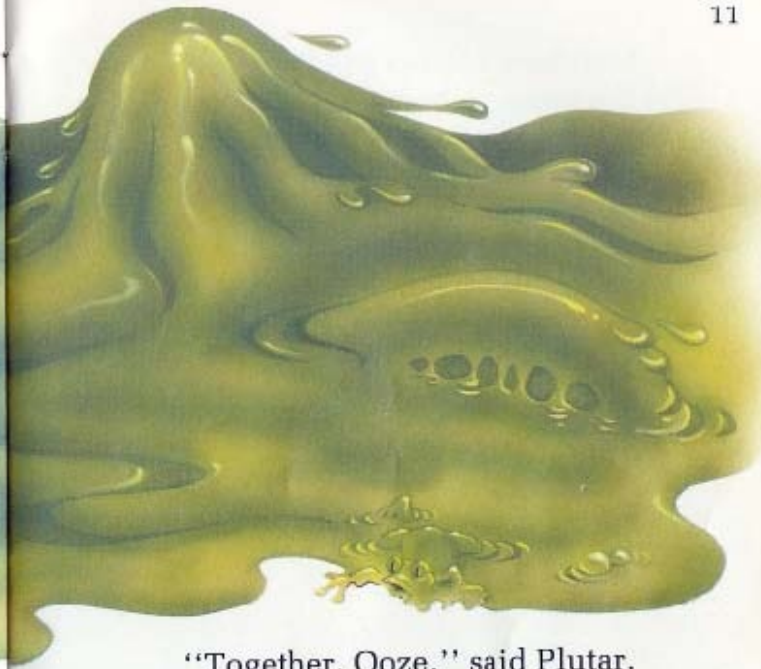
"Don't we need helmets or something?" Snarf whined as he reluctantly climbed on to the bike.



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Meanwhile, Plutar had come upon the Living Ooze—a sticky, tentacled creature that lived in the middle of a swamp. Plutar tried to convince the Ooze to join forces with him.



"Together, Ooze," said Plutar, "we can ruin this planet. But we have to work fast. The Evil Chaser is after me, and she has a weapon that can destroy us both—but not if we work together!"

"All right," agreed the Ooze. "A curse on all that is clean and bright!"

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Mandora, Lion-O and Snarf arrived at the swampy home of the Living Ooze, but Plutar was nowhere in sight. As Mandora landed, one of the Ooze's tentacles slithered out of the swamp and grabbed her bike. The bike tumbled out of control and all three passengers were thrown into the Ooze.

"I *knew* that thing wasn't safe!" cried Snarf.

Suddenly a shadow loomed over Mandora. She looked up and saw Plutar sneering down at her from the edge of the swamp.

"I warn you, Plutar!" she said, struggling vainly. "Resisting arrest is against the law!"



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Plutar guffawed. "Soon there will be no law around here!" He glanced at Lion-O and Snarf, who were slowly sinking into the Ooze.

While his head was turned, Mandora grabbed the zipper of her jumpsuit and gave it a mighty tug downward. The jumpsuit opened, and Mandora, in her full body stocking, wriggled out of it. She was free! She ran to her bike, grabbed a small tank with a hose on it, and aimed the hose at Plutar.





"Oh, no!" shouted Plutar. "The enzyme catalyser!"

A jet of white foam shot from the hose and covered Plutar. Then Mandora fired the hose at her bike, and when the foam cleared, the bike was completely clean.

"Hey!" shouted Lion-O from the swamp.

"Mmmff!" mumbled Snarf, barely visible.

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Mandora fired a stream of foam at each of them, and the Ooze dissolved. They got to their feet and stared at Plutar.



He stood there in a daze, his skin pink, his clothes still in tatters but now clean and white.

"What is in that gun?" Lion-O asked, amazed.

"An ancient formula," Mandora replied. "Now a closely guarded secret. It used to be called *soap*!"

Just then they heard the snarl of an engine nearby.

"That sounds like Burnout," said Mandora. "The second criminal you 'helped' out of the holding cell."

Sure enough, Burnout was charging from the forest—straight at Lion-O and Snarf!



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"I know what will stop him!" Lion-O said. He took the Claw Shield from his arm and tossed it into Burnout's path. It landed flat, its steel claws flashing in the sunlight. Burnout saw it and slammed on his brakes, but he was too late.

"Yeow!" he yelled, as he ran over the sharp claws.



From her hip holster Mandora drew her boomslang—an electronic boomerang—and threw it at Burnout. It looped round his head and squirted two tiny jets of liquid into his eyes.

Burnout staggered and then tumbled into a nearby pond, sizzling and smoking. Mandora dragged his limp body from the water.

"Is he alive?" Snarf asked.

"He'll recover," Mandora replied. "You couldn't dent that head with a laser driver." She draped Burnout over her bike. "Catching Quickpic isn't going to be this easy," she continued. "He's a master escape artist."



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"I have a special interest in *him*," said Lion-O.

"Wait here while I put these two back in the cell," Mandora ordered. She flew off with Plutar and Burnout on the bike, then returned several minutes later, sirens wailing.

"We'll have to pursue Quickpic on foot," she said, "with this electronic tracker."



With Mandora's tracker beeping faintly, the three of them set off. Soon they were walking through the barren mounds above the underground cavern of the Mudhogs. They didn't see several Mudhogs poking their snouts out of mounds here and there, nostrils twitching, tusks quivering in the air.

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Mandora's tracker began to beep loudly. "We must be right on top of him," she said. "He's got to be—eeek!"



A clawed hand had reached up from one of the mounds and pulled Mandora down through the earth. Then, suddenly, Lion-O and Snarf were pulled down too. In a tunnel below, a dozen hairy-handed Mudhogs tied them up and dragged them into a huge cavern.



The first thing they saw was Quickpic, tied to a tree root. The Mudhogs, snorting with glee, pushed Mandora, Lion-O and Snarf to the ground beside him and tied them up.

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"Mandora!" said Quickpic. "Nice of you to drop in!"

Lion-O looked up. A huge Mudhog sat on a throne above them. Hanging from a belt around his waist was a familiar-looking coin purse—and in his hand was the Sword of Omens!

"Who is that on the throne?" Mandora asked Quickpic.

"The king of the Mudhogs," he replied.

Lion-O nodded towards the king. "If I could get my sword back, we could get out of here."

"Well, *you're* the great sleight-of-hand artist," Mandora reminded Quickpic.

"What good would it do?" Quickpic answered. "One sword against all these beasts?"

"That is no ordinary sword you stole from me, friend," said Lion-O.



"In my hands it guarantees freedom!"

"In that case," said Quickpic, "come closer . . ."

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Snarf, Mandora and Lion-O closed around Quickpic, and he vanished. A few moments later the Mudhog king snorted wildly and jumped up from the throne. Quickpic had snatched the Sword, and now he tossed it to Lion-O.



Lion-O, muscles bulging, broke the ropes that held him. He caught the Sword, held it high, and cried, "Thunder-Thunder-Thunder-Thundercats—Ho!"



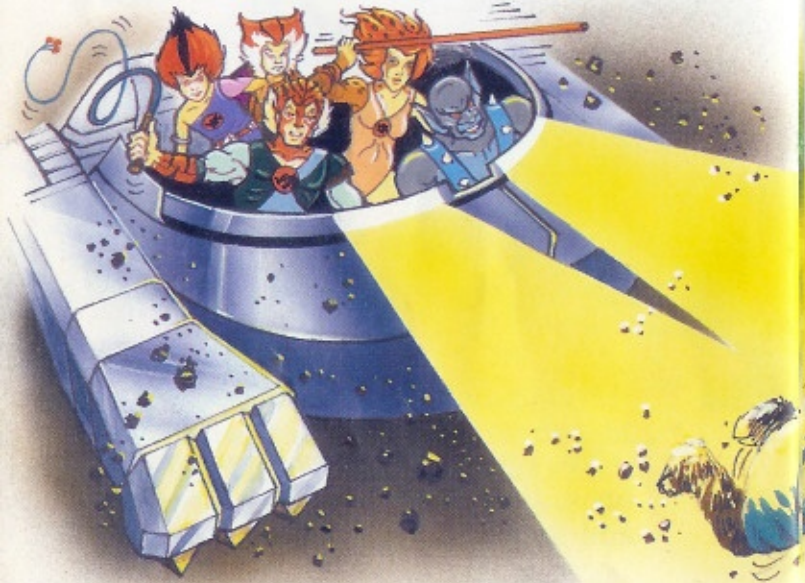
The Eye of Thundera snapped open, the Sword began to grow—and the Mudhogs charged!

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Far away, at the Cats' Lair, the Thundercats saw the Eye of Thundera shining in the clouds above.

"Thundercats—Ho!" they cried, and raced for the ThunderTank.

Panthro jumped behind the wheel, with Tygra, Cheetara, Wilykit and Wilykat right behind him, and the tank roared off.



Soon the Thundercats had reached the cavern. Panthro drove the tank right through the roof and down the side of the cavern like a huge bulldozer, scattering the Mudhogs before him.

"Shall we use the catblaster on them?" Tygra asked.

"No," said Panthro. "Let's use something they fear even more!" He flipped a switch and twin arc lights glared from the front of the tank, blinding the Mudhogs. Snorting in terror, they scrambled away into the tunnels.



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The next day the Thundercats said good-bye to Mandora.

"I'm sorry I started all this trouble," Lion-O told her.



"If it weren't for trouble," said Mandora, "I wouldn't have a job. Besides, you weren't half bad as an Evil Chaser . . . Oh, I almost forgot."

She scribbled something on a pad, then tore it off and handed it to Panthro. "Here, this is for you." Then she swung on to her bike and took off.



The Thundercats crowded around Panthro.

"What is it?" Cheetara asked eagerly. "A thank-you note for saving her life?"

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Panthro looked at the paper, and his jaw dropped.

"It's a ticket!" he cried. "For driving without interplanetary plates!"



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