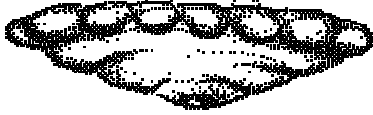


THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 64

July 2010

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MESSAGE FROM ME

Greetings, fellow lovers of Knightmare, and welcome to the sixty-fourth issue of The Eye Shield. There are several dedicated contributors whose efforts (along with my own) have helped to make this a particularly jam-packed issue; my sincere and undying thanks go out to them as usual.

Rosey Collins invites you to take a peek into the somewhat unconventional family life of the Grimwolds in *Little Ogre Annie*, while Gehn "Lex" Luthor presents not only the final instalment of the highly nostalgia-inducing *When We Were Very Young*, but also a rundown and comparison of Knightmare's most striking Starting Chambers in *The Wheel of Fortune vs. The Dice Room*.

On the story front, meanwhile, the fourth chapter of Chris Lunn's tale of incarceration and intrigue - *The Forbidden Fear* - finds Pickle nearing the end of his harrowing journey to the Forbidden Level, where further trials doubtless await him. Top contributor Ricky Temple sends stalwart Dungeon Rangers Rio Bolt and Zyssa Silverdale once more into the jaws of danger in the second chapter of *The Wickedest Show in the Realm*, reveals the next five ne'er-do-wells on his list of the *Top 35 Kids' TV Villains*, and joins creative forces with Andy Marshall to bring us the third instalment of the new season of *Adventure Time*. Thank you, Ricky, and thank you everyone, for your unswerving efforts.

As it is now exactly nine years since I took the reins of this fanzine, it seems a fairly appropriate time to announce that The Eye Shield will be coming to an end this time next year (July 2011) with its seventieth issue. I wonder how many people will notice and/or care about this, but whatever the answer is to that speculation, I am - and always will be - immensely fond and proud of TES, and I hope that its archived issues will continue to be used and enjoyed as a top online Knightmare resource for all time.

KNIGHTMARE QI

I have six people on my sign-up list for the final (at least for now) round of Nightmare QI. The entrants, questions and rules are detailed below.

The fearless ones: **Gehn "Lex" Luthor, Ross "Raven's Eye" Thompson, Joe Grocott-James, Liam Callaghan, Martin "HStorm" Odoni, Ben "Pooka" Maydon.**

1. What action have these four people all performed onscreen? **MILDREAD, HEGGATTY, PEGGATTY, CHRIS IV.**
2. Which is the first dungeoneer that can be seen climbing into a wellway?
3. How many episodes feature two separate quests starting from the antechamber?
4. Which is the first dungeoneer to speak to Smirkenorff?
5. During which scene can you see the effects of Hordriss's magic being undone by Merlin's magic?
6. In which episode is the phrase "Condition Amber" first mentioned with reference to the life force clock?
7. During which series is the phrase "the Opposition" first used?
8. The Adventurers' Code stipulates that, unlike normal clue objects, "magical objects" can be carried on different levels, but which is the one and only object that ends up being carried through multiple levels under this rule?
9. How many dungeoneers summoned Hordriss with his calling name, Malefact, or at least a pretty close approximation of it?
10. During the course of which episode do we learn that Smirkenorff can speak?

Before you even think about answering any of these questions, just remember...

- There is a maximum score of **four points** for each question - one point for providing a correct answer and up to three bonus points for any Quite Interesting supplementary information you may be able to think of.
- Any question written in **red** will have a **cliché** - give this cliché as your answer and you will lose ten points. The full quota of three QI bonus points will only be available for cliché questions when the cliché is identified as part of the QI information.
- **Time bonus points** will be awarded to the first three entries I receive. The first entry will earn one time bonus point for every five points scored, i.e. a score of 25 would be increased by five points to 30. The second entry will earn one time bonus point for every eight points scored, i.e. a score of 24 would be increased by three points to

27. The third entry will earn one time bonus point for every ten points scored, i.e. a score of 30 would be increased by three points to 33.
- There is a time limit of **four weeks** to get your answers in. Any questions that remain unanswered by **Thursday July 29th 2010** will incur a penalty of five points each, therefore if you do not submit any answers at all you will score -50.

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LITTLE OGRE ANNIE

By Rosey Collins

"Mum," said Annie. "Don't embarrass me in front of my friends, will you?"

"Of course not, dearie. As if I would. Your little friends will have a *love/y* time!"

"Good." There was a pause. "When is Dad getting back?"

"I don't know, dearie, he didn't tell me."

Annie stood in uncomfortable silence until she heard the knock at the door. She then ran to answer it, elbowing her little brother out of the way just in time.

"Uh!" the child objected, taking a swing at Annie with his miniature club.

"Put that down," Annie said, snatching the club from him with one hand and opening the door with the other. She plastered on a smile. "Hi, you guys. Come in."

Three girls filed into the house.

"Hi, Annie," said Katie. She then looked at Annie's younger brother. "Hi, Biff."

"Uh," said Biff, trying to snatch his club from Annie's hand. She gave it to him, and pushed him through the nearest doorway.

"Is that your brother?" Amelia said, her nose wrinkled with distaste.

"Yes," said Annie. "One of them. Would you like to come up to my -?"

"Hello, dearies!"

"Hi, Mum." Annie turned round to face her mother. "These are my friends. Jane Smith, Amelia Brinkatore, and you know Katie."

"Do I?"

"Katie Scaramonger, Mrs Grimwold," said Katie. "Your son works for my dad. Here, I've brought you a bone."

"Oh, dearie, you've brought a bone for Festus!" Mrs Grimwold said, taking the proffered item with a smile of gratitude.

"Who's Festus?" asked Amelia.

"Our dog," said Annie.

"He's got two - "

"Mum! Not now."

"You're a bit overdressed, aren't you, dearie?" said Mrs Grimwold, eyeing Amelia with deep suspicion.

"This is my Sunday best," said Amelia.

"Is it now! Well, wasn't it nice of you to dress up just to come and see us." She looked at Jane. "You don't say much, do you? That's all right, dearie, you'll fit in well around here. Now, why don't you girls pop up to Annie's room and I'll bring everyone a nice cup of pancreatic fluid."

Annie winced. "Have we got any apple juice, Mum?"

"Well, I think I might be able to manage - "

"AAAH!"

Annie looked round at Amelia's shriek, and saw that her youngest brother was at her ankle, holding onto it with his one sharp little tooth.

Mrs Grimwold chuckled. "Oh, Cliff, there you are!"

"Cliff!" cried Annie. "Mum, stop him!"

"All right, dearie, keep your hair on. He's teething, remember."

"Get it off me!" cried Amelia, shaking her leg frantically.

Mrs Grimwold glared at her, then stooped to pick up the baby. "There you are, dearie, he won't hurt you. Well, not much. Now then, I'll just give this bone to Festus, and then I'll bring up your apple juice." She smiled at Katie. "You are sweet to bring it all this way, dearie."

Annie got behind her friends, and ushered them up the stairs.

"Is this a council house?" asked Amelia.

"I think it's nice," said Katie.

"Better than a cave," said Annie. "Okay, well, this is my room."

Katie, Amelia and Jane looked around the room. One side was neat and tidy, with a well made bed in the corner. The other side was a mess of rocks, animal skins and bones, with a pile of rags in place of a bed.

"I have to share with my sister," said Annie, ushering her friends towards her side of the room. "So, what do you want to do?"

"Let's play Dungeon monopoly," said Jane.

Annie's heart sank. "Oh, Jane, do we have to? It takes *hours*."

"I like Dungeon monopoly," said Jane.

"Me too," said Katie. "My dad says it teaches you valuable life skills."

So Annie went to fetch the Dungeon monopoly set. On the stairs she met her mother, who was carrying a tray with four cups on it.

"That Amelia's your friend, is she?" Mrs Grimwold asked.

"Yes," said Annie. "She's very popular, actually."

"She doesn't go to Wolfenden Primary, does she? I'd have thought her parents would have her educated privately. Snooty little cow."

"No. She goes to pony club with Jane."

"Pony club!" Mrs Grimwold muttered, as she resumed her ascent of the stairs.

When Annie entered the living room, she saw her father picking at a bit of loose thread on the sofa. Seeing her, he raised his club and roared.

"Dad, Dad, it's me," said Annie. He looked at her, puzzled. "Annie. Your daughter. I'm just getting the monopoly, okay?" She edged over to the cupboard where the board games were kept. "It's okay, Dad. It's only me. My friends want to play Dungeon monopoly, so I just need to get it out of the cupboard. I've got some friends up- "

"RAAAAAGHHHH!"

"Never mind."

Annie grabbed the monopoly and made a run for it.

"I'm afraid some of it's a bit chewed," she said, as she began setting the game up on her bedroom floor.

"Bags I be the dragon," said Amelia.

"Can I be the mining cart?" said Jane.

"Sure." Annie looked at Katie. "Katie?"

"I don't really mind." She picked up a playing piece at random. "I'm the spyglass."

"Okay then," said Annie. "I'll be the hobgoblin."

They had been playing for nearly an hour, and Katie was winning, when Sophie lurched into the room and walked all over the board.

"Sophie!" said Annie, as playing pieces and cards and miniature gold and silver bars were sent all over the place.

"What on Earth is that?" cried Amelia.

Annie glared at her. "She's my sister."

Sophie wandered over to her side of the room, scratching her head. She picked up and examined a few of her discarded bones, and then left the room with no apparent purpose.

"Never mind," said Jane. "I was getting bored of it anyway. Does anyone want me to ask Mrs G for some more apple juice? I need to pop outside anyway. Annie, is there anywhere in particular you, um...?"

"Oh, I see," said Annie. "You can go behind a bush in the back garden. But ask Mum to make sure Festus is well tied up. Knock first, though, don't just go walking in. She doesn't like people in her kitchen."

Jane went. Katie helped Annie to pack away the monopoly while Amelia started looking through the wardrobe in the far corner.

"Is this all you've got?" she asked.

"Yes," said Annie.

"But it's rags! It really doesn't do anything for your complexion, you know, dressing up like an old crone. You should do something to draw attention away from that nose. You could nearly be pretty if it wasn't for that. I know!" She turned round, beaming. "Let's give you a makeover!"

"I don't want a makeover," said Annie.

Amelia snorted, and turned back to the wardrobe, muttering, "This whole family needs a makeover. Bunch of cavemen. All right," she said more loudly, "let's play truth or dare."

Annie groaned. "Do we have to? Whenever we've played truth or dare before, someone's ended up in tears."

"Don't be stupid," said Amelia. "I'll start. Katie, truth or dare?"

"Shouldn't we wait for Jane?" asked Katie.

"We might as well start now. Truth or dare?"

"Oh, all right then. Truth."

"All right," said Amelia, her eyes gleaming with evil intent. "How many times has your dad come home drunk this week?"

"Hey!"

Having no desire even to listen to the game, let alone participate in it, Annie announced that she was going to look for Jane. She picked up the monopoly set and left the room. She was actually beginning to worry. Festus had been known to get quite excited when anyone was summoned outdoors by a call of nature.

"Mum?" She popped her head round the kitchen door. "Did Jane ask you to watch Festus while she went into the bushes?"

"No, dearie," said Mrs Grimwold. "I haven't seen her."

"Well then, where...?"

Annie began a thorough search of the premises, which ended as soon as it had begun, in the living room. There she found her father chewing on a fresh human thigh.

"DAD!" screeched Annie. "Oh my God! How could you?"

"RRAAAAGHH!"

"Now then, now then, what's the matter here?" Mrs Grimwold came bustling into the room. "Oh now, Grimwold, did you eat another guest?"

"Ragh," said Grimwold.

"Mum!" cried Annie. "That was Jane! She was my friend! What's everyone at school going to say?"

"I'm sorry, dearie," said Mrs Grimwold, "but you know what men are like. You'd better pop upstairs and tell that snooty little Brinkatore girl. She can break the news to everyone at pony club."

Annie put away the monopoly, and then traipsed upstairs in a state of shock. When she reached her bedroom door, she heard raised voices.

"All right then!" said Katie, her chest puffed out and her face red with anger. "How many affairs has your mum had in the last year?"

"How dare you!" cried Amelia. "Mummy never has affairs!"

"Let's play something else," Annie said brightly.

Katie looked round, and relaxed her expression. "Oh, hi, Annie. Where's Jane?"

"What? Oh, she felt ill and had to go home."

"I can't blame her," said Amelia. "Anyone would feel ill in this place."

"Amelia!" said Katie. "Stop being a spiteful little cow!"

"Yeah," said Annie, overcome with indignation as she realised that her only link with Amelia - Jane and the pony club - had been severed. "If you don't like it here, go home!"

Amelia puffed up like an offended lord. "All right, I will!"

"I'm sorry, Katie," said Annie, as Amelia stormed off. "This hasn't been much fun, has it?"

"Well," said Katie, "I enjoyed playing Dungeon monopoly."

"Only because you're good at it." She let out a long, heartfelt sigh. "I just felt bad about having a nice time at everyone else's house and not returning the favour."

"I didn't have a nice time at Amelia's house," said Katie. "All she wanted to do was make the servants dress us up in ball gowns."

Annie giggled. "Yeah, that was pretty lame."

"And *my* sleepover was a complete disaster. I've got a big family too, remember, and they kept muscling in on everything. And when Jane met my dad wandering around drunk with no clothes on..." She shuddered.

Annie gave a sickly smile. "Yeah. Jane and dads, eh?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well..."

She was debating whether or not to tell Katie the truth when her thoughts were interrupted by a high-pitched scream, followed by vicious growling. This was a sound Annie knew only too well, and it filled her with panic. She ran downstairs, burst into the kitchen and yelled, "Mum!"

Mrs Grimwold was just coming in through the back door, wiping her hands on her apron. She looked up, and said innocently, "Yes, dearie?"

"Did you just feed Amelia to Festus?"

"I might have done." Mrs Grimwold sniffed. "If I did, it was no more than she deserved. Besides, her parents won't miss her."

"Of course they will!"

"Hardly. You know what toffs are like. No time for their kids. She probably wasn't even the count's daughter anyway - her mother's a tart."

"But - "

"Parents should take proper care of their children," Mrs Grimwold said, opening a cupboard and taking out a baby bottle. "Now then, where has Cliff got to? It's time for his pancreatic fluid."

It was with a heavy heart that Annie went back upstairs to what was left of her sleepover.

REMEMBER THIS?

Series 5/6. Level 1/2/3.

CAUSEWAYS

As I have agreed recently with my good friend Ross "Raven's Eye" Thompson, the ideal way to get the causeways into Nightmare would have been to take the variety of sequences from series 5 and the timers from series 6, and marry them together. It's a much better idea to have those four quite

interesting causeway varieties (Aggression vs. Defence; Fire, Earth & Water; Rock, Paper & Scissors; Red, Blue, Green & Grey) rather than endless number sequences, which are far less pleasing visually and get very boring, but the addition of the timer is a good development because it clearly shows both the team and the watchers how much time is allowed to get onto the next hexagon, thus eliminating the potential for rather suspect scenes such as Alex's death in series 5.

Causeways were the one aspect of Nightmare that I did start to get rather bored with after a while. Yes, they provided some very nice moments of tension, as precision guidance was always required, but having one on every single level (sometimes leading to two in the same episode) was definitely overkill in my opinion - indeed, Ross and I have also agreed that it would have been much better to have a level one causeway followed by the Great Causeway on level three, taking a break from the all too familiar puzzle format on level two. But that wouldn't have fitted in with the quest format of series 5 and 6, would it? You get your objects, you do your task for the level, then (and only then) you die if you've made a mistake at any point, either because you can't get past the causeway or you don't have the password for Dreadnort or the blocker.

However you feel about the causeways - I have somewhat mixed feelings, as you can probably tell - there can be no denying that they garnered an impressive tally of fatalities... but then they were certainly given plenty of opportunity to do so, weren't they? With three victims in each of the two series, six quests came to an end on causeways, which is the greatest victim total of any single puzzle, character or creature. Catherine and Jenna both fell off the Aggression/Defence causeway, while Alex lingered too long on Earth, Fire & Water. Matt and Alan both stumbled on regular number causeways, while Sofia died on the Great Causeway in a rather suspect situation also involving a depleting life force.

ADVENTURE TIME

By Andy Marshall & Ricky Temple

The Miremen continued their relentless advance on Reese from almost all directions.

"Quickly, team, act now or your quest is surely doomed!" Treguard intoned ominously, trying to spur the team into some kind of action. The advisors panicked, trying to think of a way out of this ambush.

"Hurry the hell up and think of something!" Reese yelled out, rapidly losing the fortitude he had maintained since stepping into the Dungeon. He could smell the Miremen as they got nearer; a pungent odour not unlike stale fish. It was nauseating, and made him gag.

Finally, one of his advisors remembered something. "The scroll! The spell that Raggie gave us!"

Responding quickly, the spellcaster called out in a loud, clear voice: "SPELLCASTING: P-A-T-H!"

Reacting to the spell, the thick wooded area that separated the two paths opened up to reveal an elf path portal.

"Exit with all haste, team, the Miremen are almost upon you!" Treguard counselled.

The team took his advice and quickly guided Reese into the portal and away from the fiendish, fishy foes.

*

Reese stepped out of the portal, vowing to maliciously enjoy a feast of sushi the first chance he got. He was confronted with a towering mountain range, the peaks of which soared upwards beyond the clouds above, out of sight. A few bleached pebbles were all that remained of a pathway stretching back into the forest. With rock face before him and forest behind him, the only way onward that the advisors could discern was the clumsily dug but well supported entrance to the mountain, where a rickety mine cart awaited.

"It seems you have reached the final area of level two, team!" boomed Treguard triumphantly. "Level three lies deep within the Sandstone Mountains, but I wouldn't hang about if I were you. Hurry up and guide Reese into the cart."

Before Reese could take a step, he was aware of a sound coming from the direction of the cave. It was a vile, throaty cackle, the kind enjoyed by the genuinely sinister or, failing that, the highly bronchial. It suggested devious intent, a perverse temperament, the kind of sordid, warped personality that would torture anything smaller and weaker than itself just to see if it would do something different from the hundreds before. In short, it was a cackle that had a lot to say for itself.

"Ello, sunshine!" said Skarkill, stepping out of the cave mouth. "Miss me?"

Reese blinked. The voice was familiar. Someone Lord Fear was talking to back in his throne room. But he spoke as though they had met before. Or perhaps he wasn't addressing him.

"Erm... should I have?" he settled for. As soon as the words left his mouth, he regretted them.

"Oh, we gots us a comedian, 'ave we?" said Skarkill, aware that he had probably flubbed his one attempt at a grand reappearance. "Snarky little goit, thinks a big shiny helmet gives him car-tay blan-shay to put a bit of lip about, eh? Well, dungeoneer, you'll have plenty of time to flap those gums of yers, when you beg the rats in his Fearship's dungeon to stop gnawing your bones! Heh heh, Luvly..."

"Well, you've done it now, team!" warned Treguard. "No magic left, and no objects that are of any practical use! And it looks like age has done nothing to mellow Skarkill's temperament one bit!"

"Now then," said Skarkill, who by now had unbuckled some rusty manacles from his belt and was swinging them around in a lazy arc. "Easy way, or nastily brutal way?"

"What's the difference?" said Reese.

"About two pints of blood," said Skarkill. "I likes being flexible in this regard, though, so that ain't a precise-"

"I say, do you MIND?!" boomed out a pompously outraged voice. Out from a bush stepped the bristling form of Sir Winchester Holmyard, blunderbuss casually slung over one shoulder. "Here I am, waiting patiently for a once-in-a-lifetime crack at the Ring Titted Bunter of the Soho Dales, and you two gabble loud enough to wake the Witch of Wookey!"

"Ere, you mind slingin' yer 'ook?" said Skarkill, ignoring the obvious retort that presented itself. "I'm sorta in the middle of something here."

"Well now! If it isn't the young fellow who was so helpful earlier on!" said Sir Winchester, utterly ignoring the goblin master's strained response. "Hallo, hallo, young Reese! And how fares you?"

"Not at my best," said Reese, indicating Skarkill. "This man wants to kill me. Or something along those lines."

"Is that right?" said Sir Winchester rhetorically, a sudden lucidness prevalent in his words that was absent before.

"I hardly thinks it's any of yer business, mush-"

"Maybe not, but I do owe a debt to Master Reese here. And if he says you want to do him in, well now, can't be having with THAT sort of thing, can we?"

"Look, pal, you're gearing up for a slap yourself if you don't make your poncey backside scarce!" roared Skarkill, who had just about had enough of this stranger and was now rapidly developing the mood for violence.

There was an uncomfortable pause.

"Well now," said Sir Winchester, unmistakable iron behind his words. "I believe those were what we so delightfully refer to as 'fighting words'. Allow me to retort!"

There was no warning, no change in his posture. There was only the pure, smooth movement of Sir Winchester's fist smashing into Skarkill's jaw. The goblin master staggered back, deeply shocked.

"Christ's teeth! Where did you learn to throw a punch like THAT?!" he spluttered. He tried to stand, to mount a defence, but now Sir Winchester was raining blow after calculated blow upon him, talking in proud, indignant tones as he did so.

"University Boxing Champion, three years running! Captain of the Rowing Team, four victories against Brown! And four gold stars in the service of *administering a sound punch up the bracket!* Public Education, sah, can't beat it! And neither, it seems, *CAN YOU!*"

By now, Skarkill had been reduced to shielding himself from the unstoppable pummelling. "Gnnnng... mercy... Reese, I beg you... call him off..."

"What say you, Master Reese?" thundered Sir Winchester, clearly enjoying the delivery of his administrations. "Has the blaggard learnt his lesson yet?"

Reese suddenly felt rebellious. Hadn't he been the subject of threats, abuse and general unpleasantness since he had begun? Wasn't it about time to turn the tables on his oppressors? That *WAS* the idea of the quest, wasn't it? To put one over the bad guys?

Hearing no objections from his advisors, he said, "I don't think he's quite got the idea yet. Better make sure he gets it proper."

"With pleasure, milad!" Sir Winchester said, taking a moment to blow on his knuckles. "Mind, you'd best be on your way now. I'll keep this oik occupied, don't you worry about that."

Guided by his advisors, Reese stepped up and into the mine cart. A sharp tug on the brake lever sent it trundling slowly forward, but almost instantly the cart seemed to pick up speed. Within seconds it was screaming forward at a breakneck pace, making corners and crossing other lines as though its control was not its own. All Reese could do was crouch down with his hands

over the helmet, hoping that any second now the cart would stop, and not be thrown off the tracks...

*

The mine cart came to a final crashing stop and Reese found himself flung out of the cart as it tipped over. He landed unceremoniously in a heap on the ground. Muttering in annoyance and dusting himself off, Reese stood up. He was in some kind of cave system; the rocks were reddish in colour and the air seemed hot and heavy. In front of him were three separate exits.

"Ahhh, welcome to the start of level three, Reese!" Treguard laughed. "But my Dungeon has grown ever larger, taking in yet more new areas. These, team, are the Fire Caverns of Gelth, a barren and desolate area that borders both Winteria and the Great Mire. The object of your quest, of course, lies in the treasure room of Marblehead, within the Great Mire. But to get there you must find your way out of the Caverns and to the port of Lingham."

Almost as soon as Treguard finished speaking, an evil sounding and yet velvety laughter rang out and the spectral image of a young lady appeared hovering over the exits. She was dressed in a black and purple dress, decorated with a spider web motif, and a metallic breastplate that covered her chest. She looked down at Reese and gave an evil, sadistic smirk.

"Well, dungeoneer, I see you made it past the sentinels to reach this far. But you'll never reach your goal... I will see to that!" The apparition moved its arms up, apparently readying to send a deadly blast of energy in Reese's direction.

Just then a figure came dashing into the room. It was another female; however her clothes and ears denoted her as being of the elfish race. She was dressed in a red tunic and brandished a crossbow. She stood in front of Reese, in the direct line of fire, and aimed the crossbow at the apparition.

"Techno Sorceress!" she said in a threatening tone. "You and your fellow Opposition scum are not welcome here, either in the physical or the astral. Leave NOW!"

The spectre scowled at the young elf warrior, then broke into an evil sneer. "Very well, I will. But not because of you or your pitiful threats, elf maiden... but because it pleases me to wait and savour the prospect of killing this dungeoneer, and to enjoy his suffering."

She then turned her attention back to Reese. "I'll be seeing you again soon, Reese. Enjoy what little time you have left." The figure faded from sight.

The young elf maiden holstered her crossbow and turned to regard Reese. "So. You're one of these dungeoneers that the Powers That Be sends into this realm, hmm? Well, can't say as I'm impressed. What's your name?" she asked.

"Reese," Reese responded.

Clearly this was not the answer the elf was hoping for, as she immediately rolled her eyes. "Dragon's blood! For a start, don't go just giving your real name out to all and sundry. Names have power, especially in a realm such as this. I won't tell you my full name - no offence, but I don't like anyone having power of calling over me. You can call me Scarletina."

"Hmm! It seems you have encountered a fire elf, team," Treguard interjected. "They are a group of elves who live exclusively in the region of Gelth. They're a warrior race and, as already demonstrated, certainly no friends to the Opposition. However, you'd hardly say they were firm friends with the Powers That Be either. You've nothing to bargain with at this point, so I'd say diplomacy is called for."

Scarletina looked Reese up and down. Although her demeanour was not hostile, it was still far from friendly. "I don't care for the Opposition, but nor am I fond of dungeoneers and the Powers That Be. Your presence here only attracts the likes of that Techno Sorceress, so kindly leave Gelth as quickly as possible."

"Well I *would*, but I don't know where the way out is," Reese said, seeing an opportunity to possibly gain some information. "If I take the wrong path I could wind up lost, and then the Opposition will just keep sending more of

their minions in here after me. Now, if I was to be pointed in the right direction..."

Scarletina narrowed her eyes and looked hard at Reese. "Where are you trying to reach?" she asked.

"Linghorm port," he answered.

"If it gets you out of Gelth quicker... take the right-hand entrance. The tunnel will take you to the outskirts of the port. Now go," she said, and - without waiting for any thanks - walked off and left Reese to be guided towards the path she had indicated.

*

After ten minutes of walking, Reese began to suspect that either a wrong turning had been taken somewhere, or that Scarletina had lied to him. Either way, he was beginning to feel weaker.

"Warning team, you have not eaten or drunk for some time. Life force is rapidly approaching critical, you will need to eat or drink something VERY soon..."

Finally, Reese stepped through an archway, but instead of the cool outside wind he was expecting, he found himself in a bleak crypt, surrounded by bones and chains. A rat scurried over his foot, and it was all he could do to avoid stepping back in alarm.

"As promised, we meet again, dungeoneer," said a familiar and not exactly friendly voice. "Wandering so blindly into level three, with no thought as to what lies within... to get this far, you must either possess bravery bordering on the suicidal, or the luck of the Gods. Well, I place no value at all on the former..."

Before Reese could move, a number of the chains from the floor leapt up and ensnared him, wrapping themselves around his wrists and ankles. With a sharp tug, Reese was suspended in midair, helpless.

"... and right now, I'd say you were fresh out of the latter."

There were footsteps as the Techno Sorceress approached, and cast a disinterested look over the struggling figure of Reese, who by now was becoming increasingly panicked, yet unable to say anything. The chains had already tightened as much as Reese could bear. Any further...

"I will not lie to you, dungeoneer. There was a time when I would have let you live. But I see from your treatment of my dear brother that the concept of mercy is not one you choose to recognise. Allow me, then, to repay the gesture in kind."

She snapped her fingers, and the chains pulled...

*

"Ooh, VERY nasty," grimaced Treguard, as the view thankfully faded. "You showed great promise, team. And who knows, if you had spared Skarkill the wrath of Sir Winchester, Reese may have survived this most fatal encounter with all his appendages still firmly attached. As it was, an inglorious end to an otherwise worthy quest."

The advisors nodded sadly. They had chosen to keep silent and allow Reese to take control of his quest, thinking he could talk his way out of any trouble. But they had allowed the more vindictive side of him to shine through, at a moment when restraint was required. And though they couldn't have foreseen the consequences at the time, it was at this moment that their fate had been decided.

"Remember this lesson, boys. Mercy is a virtue, even to one's foes. If we refuse the opportunity of redemption, even to our most hated enemy, then we deserve all the scorn they pour on us. For now, it's time to reunite with Reese for the long walk home," consoled Treguard, as he led them away to the door leading out into the forest path. "Don't worry, he's not in quite so many pieces as you last saw him..."

Smiling at the prospect, the team stepped out of the castle and back along the path, the same path that had brought them to their quest, and the path that would see them safely home.

So... THAT was Skarkill's sister, thought Treguard, as he stood alone in the antechamber once more. A most dangerous addition to the Opposition. I dread to think what else lies in wait for the rest of those who challenge my Dungeon. Still, there's only one way to find out...

"ENTER, STRANGER!"

*

The next dungeoneer to brave the Dungeon in this new phase was called Dean, a short, stocky young man with glasses and freckles. He did not present the obvious choice of a potential champion, but physical prowess was but one factor of many that mattered. As with his predecessor, his quest started in the Hall of Choice.

"Well, no great mystery here, team," Treguard said to the advisors. "You must merely choose the object of your quest. The Sword, the Shield, the Crown or the Cup. Choose now."

The advisors had a short discussion before directing Dean towards the door with the Crown symbol above it. Dean found himself in a large room whose walls had a bright yellow-orange tint to them. There was a large table in the middle of the room.

"Supplies can be garnered here, team. Or so it appears," Treguard chuckled enigmatically.

The advisors guided Dean over to the table. The objects on the table were a banana, a drawstring bag with a label that read DRAGON NIP, a scroll, a red key and an egg timer. The advisors quickly instructed Dean to place the banana in his knapsack, which he did, as the far wall began to change shape.

"Warning, team. You've just disturbed this chamber's guardian. It is another new arrival to my Dungeon... but like all wall dwellers it is bound by the rules that govern its kind."

The wall monster's face was now clear to see, and bizarrely its countenance was that of a catlike creature. It peered at Dean with its feline eyes. After a few moments it spoke in a voice that was not unlike a cat purring.

"Puuurrrr... what have we here... a would-be adventurer or a common thief?"

Dean was unsure what to do.

"Speak, human!" the cat creature hissed.

"I'm a dungeoneer on a quest for the Crown," Dean responded rather hurriedly.

"Hurrmmmmm, we shall soon see. Catama will test you, and only then will you be allowed to take supplies from my chambeeerrrr. Here is my first. I'm the part of the bird that's not in the sky. I can swim in the ocean and yet remain dry. What am I?"

The advisors conferred but couldn't come up with an answer. Dean tried one of his own.

"A feather?"

"Meeaaooowww! Falsehood. Shadow was the truth I sought. Here is my second. My voice is tender, my waist is slender, I'm often invited to play. Yet wherever I go I must take my bow, or else I'll have nothing to say. What am I?"

The advisors quickly got this one and passed on the answer to Dean.

"You're a violin," he answered confidently.

"Purrrrrrrrrr. Truth accepted. Here is my third and final. A skin have I, more eyes than one. I can be very nice when I am done. What am I?"

Dean himself sussed this one out. "You're a potato," he said.

"Purrrrrrrrr. Truth accepted. Two is the score... you may know more. A little nip shall ease your flight... Purrrrrr, now, rock I was and rock I become once more... MEAOWWW!"

The face of Catama disappeared back into the rocks. The team quickly decided to take the dragon nip, and after some discussion they also took the red key. They then read the clue scroll: *In case of theft, call her name thrice.*

"I think you have learned all you can from this place, team... best to move on lest the guardian reawakens to test you some more."

*

Dean found himself in a long corridor, a sour shade of grey that contrasted sharply with the vibrant orange of the clue room. At the far end was an exit, but between that and Dean there stood, at either side of the corridor, two huge statues of frightknights. They were posed with their swords held out as if readying for combat, and at regular intervals a lightning like bolt of energy surged out of the swords and struck the centre of the corridor, where Dean had to pass through.

"Hmm. It seems Lord Fear's ego knows no bounds; his influence is beginning to creep into the upper levels. Timing and speed are required here, team, if you wish your quest to progress further."

The advisors guided Dean closer to the statues. They then watched for a few more moments to try and get the pattern of the bolts. Once they felt they had got it, they quickly guided Dean through the statues, just in the nick of time - almost as soon as Dean had got through, another bolt of energy crackled through the air and struck the place where Dean had been but moments before. Dean exhaled, hoping that any future escapes would not prove so narrow.

*

Exiting through the door, Dean now found himself in the throne room of the self-professed ruler of level one, Queen Kalina. While there was no sign of Kalina herself, a more readily recognisable figure was present - the witch Malice, apparently ransacking one of Kalina's treasure chests.

"Well, well, it seems that Malice has desires on something that is currently in the possession of Queen Kalina, and doesn't wish to ask for it," Treguard chuckled.

As the advisors were discussing what to do about this, Malice suddenly noticed Dean.

"Bah! One of you pesky dungeoneers... well I'm too busy with matters of greater importance than your insignificant and childish quest, so kindly see yourself out and don't waste my time," she said dismissively, before turning her attention back to the chest she was busy ransacking.

"Let's just move on," one of the advisors said. "We'll learn nothing of any use here."

"Hang on, though," another quickly piped up. "What about the scroll in the clue room... what did it say?"

"In case of theft, call her name thrice," the third replied.

"So?" the first asked.

"Let's call this Queen Kalina's name three times and see what happens. We've got nothing to lose."

The first shrugged and mumbled, "Suppose," not wanting to cause a fuss but inwardly thinking that the Queen could choose to do some very nasty damage if angered.

They relayed this instruction to Dean, who promptly called out, "Kalina, Kalina, Kalina!"

There was a flash of light and the figure of Queen Kalina appeared in her throne room. Malice was too engrossed in her search to notice this.

"Who dares to summon the ruler of this level?" she said indignantly. This caused Malice to turn round, realising Kalina was standing there. Kalina glared at both her and Dean.

"It was the dungeoneer! He used your calling name without permission!" Malice said, trying to divert Kalina's anger in Dean's direction.

Kalina looked at Dean. "Why did you summon me, dungeoneer? Answer me quickly or you'll pay for this indignation!"

"Be diplomatic and respectful, Dean," one of the advisors said quickly.

"My apologies, Your Highness," Dean said in a respectful tone, "but this witch was ransacking your throne room."

"WHAT?!" Kalina said angrily, rounding on Malice as she espied the open chest and the possessions strewn all over the floor. "You dare to try to steal from my royal person, you lowly witch!"

"Don't threaten me, you pretend ruler!" Malice said, trying to back Kalina down. "Your powers are no match for mine."

Kalina raised an eyebrow. "Don't be so sure, Malice. Here in my throne room I am just as powerful as you, if not more so." She raised her hands, making ready to summon a fireball. "Care for me to demonstrate?"

Malice looked at Kalina, as if deciding whether or not to take her up on this challenge. After a few moments, her face became a scowl like thunder.

"You thwart me, dungeoneer. Well, rest assured I shall do as much for you when we next meet." This threat made, she quickly turned on her heels and hurried out of the throne room.

Kalina lowered her hands and turned round to face Dean. "My thanks to you, dungeoneer. How may I reward you for your assistance in foiling Malice's attempt at robbing my royal person?"

"If you please, Your Majesty, have you any information that may aid me in my quest?" Dean said respectfully, mindful of the angry tones he had heard minutes before.

"Hmm..." Queen Kalina pondered this. "Ah, I know! I can tell you the day word that will allow you to pass the sentinel that the Opposition has placed at the start of the second level. Is this agreeable to you?"

Dean agreed.

"Very well... the day word is DUCK SOUP. Have you got that, dungeoneer?"

Dean said he had, although if there was significance to be found in the words themselves, it was beyond him.

"Very well, dungeoneer, you may pass through the remainder of my realm with my royal protection for your service to me."

Dean thanked her again, and his advisors guided him out of the throne room.

*

Dean stepped out into open air and gentle winds. Ahead of him stretched a courtyard, with crumbling arches, broken fountains and a collection of grotesque, scowling gargoyles. Exits led out to the north, east and west. On the ground lay a slice of fresh bread, which Dean duly picked up. There was no sign of any obvious presence, but Dean still felt uneasy, as though he were being watched. He looked up at one of the gargoyles, and shuddered at the pale skin, the ragged scraps of leather that curiously adorned it, those mad, flickering eyes...

"All right, you no oil painting yourself," said the statue huffily.

The advisors almost leapt off their bench in shock. Dean stepped back in alarm, recognising a human presence for the first time.

"Hee-hee-hee, did Jan-Jan scare you?" chuckled the urchin.

"A bit," said Dean, thinking it was best to indulge her. "What are you doing up there?"

The girl who called herself Jan-Jan turned this idea round in her head for a while, before settling on, "Want to know what the statues think."

"... think?"

"EVERYTHING thinks," said the urchin. "Slow, fast, simple, complicated. Memories. In the stone. Seen things for thousands of years." She giggled, as though this were some terribly clever inside joke that only she was privy to.

"You want to hear their memories?" said Dean. "Sort of, like their history, you mean?"

The urchin cocked her head to one side. "I mean? You mean? You not *mean*, are you? People used to be mean to Jan-Jan..."

"No!" said Dean. "I'm not mean." To emphasise his point, he tore a piece of the warm bread off and handed it to her. The urchin sniffed the bread, poked it, then in one complicated movement, ate it out of Dean's hand.

"Jan-Jan LIKES you," said the urchin. "Jan-Jan has shinyglass. You want shinyglass?"

"Well-"

"Shinyglass is *shiny*," said Jan-Jan, and thrust a spyglass into Dean's hand. "Jan-Jan done her bit for horny head. Gnity!"

And with those touching parting words, the urchin scampered away between the ruins of the statues and fountains.

Dean considered running the conversation back in his head to try to ascertain ANY kind of sense out of it, but instead he opted to take a look at the spyglass that he had gained. The advisors craned in to take a look into it...

PUZZLE PAGE ONE
Knightmare Wipeout VII

Each of the two grids below contains twelve answers, six of which fit into the category at the bottom and six of which don't. Identify all six correct answers if you can, chalking up cumulative amounts of theoretical money as you go (£10 for the first answer, £20 for the second, £30 for the third etc) up to a possible £210 for each grid, but just remember this - one wrong answer will wipe you out completely, so be careful!

Morghanna	Cedric	Motley	Merlin
Velda	Hordriss	Dwarf	Malice
Mogdred	Dooreen	Gibbet	Olaf
CHARACTERS THAT APPEARED ON LEVEL THREE DURING SERIES 1-4			

Greystagg	Hands	Elita	Motley
Grimaldine	Pixel	Marta	Stiletta
Gatemaster	Fidjit	Mace	Heggatty
CHARACTERS THAT APPEARED ON LEVEL THREE DURING SERIES 5-8			

**STARTING CHAMBERS:
THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE VS. THE DICE ROOM**
By Gehn "Lex" Luthor

Seven of the eight series of *Knightmare* featured recognisable starting chambers. These ranged from standard "get to the exit" rooms in the cases of the four arched-door room, the Place of Choice and the Hall of Choice of Series 1, 4 and 6, through "interactive" rooms in the cases of the Wheel of Fortune and the Dice Room of Series 2 and 3, to the Dwarf Tunnels of Series 7 and 8, for which I use the term "starting chamber" extremely loosely. As for Series 5, there was no area that appeared at the start of enough quests to qualify as an official starting chamber, although most teams opened with a journey of some sort, be it on Smirkenorff, in a boat or via the Descender. However, the purpose of this article is to examine the Wheel of Fortune and the Dice Room and weigh up the pros and cons of each to discover which of the two was a better introduction to the early Dungeon.

We shall start with the Wheel of Fortune, as it was the first of the two to exist. Eagle-eyed viewers (and those who have read the *Knightmare* website) will notice that the Wheel of Fortune Room is fundamentally based on the Worm Chamber, the only difference being that the two archways at the back were replaced by an image of stars. Oh, and the fact that there was a lever in the middle of the room. Anyway, when the dungeoneer arrived here,

the advisors would give a brief description of the room, after which a sphere of light would appear from the stars. This sphere would rotate in the middle of the room and morph into a rolling slideshow of three chambers, which interestingly enough were always mirror images of the actual rooms (just look at the location of the bomb in the Bomb Room if you do not believe me).

To stop the wheel, the dungeoneer would have to pull the lever to select "the chamber of their choice", after which they would be transported thither. It is here that I find fault with the room. Even though Treguard suggests that it was all about pulling the lever at the right time, I do not believe for a second that this was the case. I firmly believe that the succeeding chamber was predetermined, no matter when the lever was pulled. If you watch closely, you will see that the slideshow of rooms rarely stops exactly when the lever is pulled, and on at least one occasion, it fails to stop at all. Of course, this did not occur to me when I watched Series 2 originally, but having seen the repeats on *Challenge*, it has to be my conclusion.

The slideshow of chambers normally consisted of three rooms, two of which were such "standard" chambers as "that four door (arched) room", the Clue Room and that cavern ledge which sometimes featured a spider. The third room was a "nasty" room, such as a Bomb Room or the Monster's Stomach, but no team ever ended up here. My original memory of the Wheel of Fortune is extremely vague, but one thing I do recall is hoping that a team would "mis-time" their pull of the lever and end up in the Bomb Room. Sadistic, I know, but that is how it was.

One thing that worked particularly well was the sense of unease that the room caused. Treguard would explain how the room worked and then say that speed was essential, otherwise the dungeoneer would be trapped there forever in limbo. Okay, so this would never actually happen in a million quests, but to a naïve seven-year-old, this created a sense of urgency and tension. Even though there were thirteen teams in Series 2 compared to twelve in Series 3, the Wheel of Fortune and the Dice Room enjoyed the same number of outings (we all know the legend of Akash's team), so this provides the perfect link for us to examine the Dice Room.

Unlike the Wheel of Fortune, the Dice Room was not based in an already familiar chamber. Indeed, it was one of the "new for Series 3" computer

graphics that did nothing for me when I first saw them in 1989 (I am a Series 2 purist, I am afraid). Of course, looking back now and seeing how *Nightmare* developed over the years, in particular between Series 3 and 4, I have become much more accepting of the Series 3 Dwarf Tunnels, Golgarach, etc, and would easily have chosen them in place of the eye shield and the outside locations.

So what was the Dice Room's *modus operandi*? The dungeoneer would arrive here, sometimes by means of a short blue Dwarf Tunnel, and be confronted by a completely green room with no means of exit. At the front of the room was a table with a dice on it. At this point, Treguard would say something about a game of chance and that the team should try their luck. When the dice was rolled, a computerised image of a huge dice would come in and spin around before landing and opening up to reveal three doors. That was pretty much all there was to this room, although a symbol (perhaps a shield or a chalice) would sometimes appear over one of the doors. Satisfyingly, each of the three doors featured a symbol at some point during Series 3, meaning that all the doors were used at least once.

As an aside, the only time the leftmost door in "that four door (arched) room" was used was when Team 8 of Series 2 ended up trapped there after they had failed to take the divining rod, and even then, they only entered the room through that door; when they tried to exit back through it, the "no turning back" rule prevented them from leaving, meaning that the door was never used in the "usual" way. Now not many of you had noticed that, had you?

To make this a fair comparison with the Wheel of Fortune, we should ask the same questions of the Dice Room. I am sure that the producers knew what chamber lay behind each door of the Dice Room, thereby demonstrating predetermination to an extent, but since the viewer could not see a slideshow of possibilities, we were always kept guessing. Furthermore, I believe that a different chamber was planned for each door, as can be seen from Team 7's experience. I do not think it is a coincidence that, after taking a door other than the one marked with a shield, they ended up in a Bomb Room. I would have liked to have seen this developed throughout their quest, perhaps by Golgarach giving them a different quest because they had rejected the Shield, but alas, this opportunity was not capitalised upon.

Where this room falls short is in the atmosphere department. We have already seen how Treguard added urgency to the Wheel of Fortune, and even suggested that the teams could die there. No such things happen in the Dice Room, and because the room is effectively just a green box, the "sense of dungeon" that is present in most of the chambers of Series 1-3 is notably absent. On the flipside, it is an extremely memorable room. As I pointed out previously, my memory of the Wheel of Fortune was extremely vague - indeed, I did not remember it at all until I discovered the *Nightmare* website - but I have never forgotten the Dice Room. After all, who is going to forget a bright green room that is so radically different from anything that has gone before?

So I guess we need to draw a conclusion and favour one over the other. You may be expecting me to choose the Wheel of Fortune purely because it is from Series 2, but unfortunately, the decision is not so clear cut. Although Series 2 is my favourite series by quite some margin, I feel that the predetermination of the chamber directly succeeding the Wheel of Fortune takes the edge away from the room. Perhaps if the wheel had stopped on the Bomb Room just once, I would feel differently, but as it is, I believe that opportunities were missed. Okay, so Treguard helped to create uneasiness there, which was also intensified by the room itself, but I am not convinced that this balances things out enough.

While the Dice Room did not create the same atmosphere as the Wheel of Fortune, it did provide an element of unpredictability, which was shown most obviously when Team 7 went through an unmarked door and arrived in a Bomb Room. Indeed (and I have surprised myself in this article), I would conclude that the Dice Room just about edges victory, if only because of Team 7's experience, and that its unpredictability makes up for its lack of atmosphere more satisfactorily than how the Wheel of Fortune's atmosphere attempts to compensate for its predictability.

CLASSIC QUEST

Series 5

Quest: The Cup.

Dungeoneer: Alex I.

Advisors: Ian, Grant and Richard.

Home town: Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

Team score: 7 out of 10.

Taking a break from fagging for Ian, Grant and Richard at Dr Challoner's Grammar School in Amersham, Alex was given the chance to have a go at being their dungeoneer instead. Sadly, they let him down a bit... although I'm sure he didn't hold a grudge, and was back stoking their fires and warming the seat for them when school resumed in September!

Level One: The team's first task is to choose their clue objects, from an unusually plentiful array of five. With a little help from the scroll and a little common sense, they manage to make the correct choice of a bar of gold and Gwendoline's green arrow, rejecting a ruby, a key and a lantern. A ride in the Descender leads to a room where Hordriss is "in disguise" as Harris the beggar. In return for a spell called HERO, the team agrees to deliver a book to Sylvester Hands. Hordriss places the book into the knapsack, apparently having treated it with magic so that he can bend the rules of the quest for his own ends, which is one of the last delightfully ambiguous things he ever does: *"Don't be alarmed - it will not be consumed, despite what you've been told."* - **Hordriss**.

In the Wolfglade, Alex makes use of a spyglass, revealing a fairly standard scene between Skarkill and Lord Fear, which tells us that an encounter with the Goblin Master is undoubtedly on the cards. In another part of the forest, Alex meets Gwendoline, who is pleased that he is carrying the green arrow but still demands two correct answers from three questions if she is to reveal the password. Throwing into doubt the value of a private education, the team only scores one, but Gwendoline decides to be generous: *"I can see you're trying, and you're carrying my green arrow, so I'll let you have the password."* - **Gwendoline**. The password is "sabretooth" and it allows Alex - unsurprisingly - to get past a blocker.

When Alex is accosted by Sylvester Hands, Hordriss's book transforms the thief into a hobgoblin, by means of a very cheap effect that involves Paul Valentine claspng a goblin mask to his face and running off to the sound of very muffled screams. The HERO spell then saves the day when Skarkill turns up, as Sir Hugh arrives and quickly sends the Goblin Master packing. A jaunt across the Rock-Paper-Scissors causeway leads Alex onto Smirkenorff's back, where Elita is on hand to negotiate payment. She is more than happy to accept the bar of gold (which Alex has been carrying since the very first room) and helps Alex into the saddle before Smirky flies him to level two: *"Hang on tight, and hold onto your breakfast!" - Elita.*

Level Two: Again, the choice of clue objects comes first, and Alex leaves the room with a ruby and a divining rod in hand. He then meets Hordriss and Elita, and it soon becomes apparent that Elita's voice is missing. Hordriss deduces that Lord Fear has stolen it, and gives the team a spell - BAG - to capture the voice if they should happen to encounter it. A spyglass sequence reveals that Skarkill has allowed Elita's voice to escape, and it is now loose on level two. Predictably, Alex encounters the voice in the next room, and it begins to make fun of him. The advisors think they are being asked some kind of riddle, and Alex has to explain to them that he is, in fact, being insulted by Elita's voice. The BAG spell is utilised to capture the voice (despite the fact that the team stupidly tried to cast it on a skull ghost in the previous chamber, and therefore should actually have squandered it) and Elita is called. After some initial rudeness, she is grateful to Alex for returning her voice and she tells him that the password is "black rock".

When Pickle informs the team that something magic is hidden in a castle courtyard, the divining rod is used and a chest drops from the sky. Alex gains a key from the chest, apparently to open the way to level three. The blocker is sated by the password but - after all that - the quest is undone on the causeway. The team's directions are too slow and hesitant, and after all their previous stumbles, Alex is sent plummeting downwards when he is left standing on a hexagon for an unusually long time. At the time this seemed very unfair, but with hindsight you can see why they were killed off.

Summary: In terms of progress, the third best team of the series. They almost reached level three, but a series of stumbles and hesitations led to their eventual downfall.

THE WICKEDEST SHOW IN THE REALM

By Ricky Temple

Zyssa stirring in the bed beside him had woken Rio from his sleep. The sight that greeted him as he opened his eyes couldn't fail to bring a smile to his face - the still sleeping figure of Zyssa. She was lying on her side, facing him.

She looked so peaceful and beautiful. One strand of her hair hung down over her face. Part of Rio wanted to reach across and brush it away so he could see her face clearly, but the other side of him didn't want to wake her, she looked so perfect and fragile. In fact so fragile that it seemed like just a feather gently brushing against her soft silky skin might cause this vision of beauty to shatter into a million pieces.

Rio would have loved to stay like this for all time, just watching Zyssa; however, he knew that they had a job to do. After a few moments he reluctantly reached across and gently touched her shoulder and whispered in her ear, "Zyssa, my love, it's morning; we need to get started."

Zyssa stirred again and murmured something that puzzled Rio. "Gloriana... please don't... don't put me in this situation... she's not worth this."

Rio blinked and tried to work out what she was talking about. She'd never mentioned anyone called *Gloriana* to him.

"Zyssa," he said, a bit firmer and louder, and gently shook her. Zyssa's eyes flickered open. She looked up at him and smiled.

"Well, this inn has a very good wake up call service - what better way to start the day than with this vision of handsomeness I'm looking at right now?" she teased, and leant up and kissed him. "Good morning, my love," she said, and then kissed him again.

Rio kissed her back, smiling. "We should get dressed, Zyssa. We have to meet Ariel today and get to work on this case."

Zyssa nodded, slid out of the bed, went over to where her clothes were, and started to get dressed. Rio did the same, watching her as he did so, wondering whether to voice what was on his mind.

"Zyssa..." he said conversationally.

"Mmm-hmm?" Zyssa said, as she pulled her dress over her head.

Rio took a breath before continuing. "Who's *Gloriana*?"

Zyssa froze to the spot.

"Only just now you were talking about someone called *Gloriana* while you were half asleep."

Zyssa shifted and murmured a very un-ladylike word under her breath, which caught Rio slightly by surprise. She turned around and looked at him.

"Someone I know rather well, someone who's made some bad decisions... and who I hope never meets you."

Rio wasn't really sure how to respond to that. "I'm sure I would be able to cope, Zyssa," he settled on as a response.

Zyssa shook her head. "I know, and that's what worries me," she said sadly.

"I don't think I understand," Rio said.

Zyssa sighed and walked over to him, and finished buttoning his tabard for him. "One day, my love... I'll explain it all to you... one day... but not right now. It's too complicated to go into right now as we need to have clear minds for what we need to do here in *Glameldal*."

Rio smiled slightly and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Seems we both have skeletons in our closets, my love," he said, and kissed her forehead. "But I'll respect your wishes, Zyssa."

"Thank you, Rio," Zyssa smiled. "We'd better get going, though."

Rio nodded. The two finished dressing and made their way out of the inn. They had only just got out onto the street when their attention was drawn to a small crowd gathering near a house. Something about it drew Rio's attention, and he grabbed Zyssa's arm.

"Zyssa, I think we'd better head over there. Something tells me it's got something to do with the reason we're here."

The two Rangers made their way over. Neither of them noticed the dark figure observing them from the shadows of a nearby alleyway. Zyssa and Rio reached the house and began pushing their way through the gathered crowd. Rio had to stop and take a deep breath. The door of this house had been literally wrenched from the hinges and was now lying on the ground, shattered into a great number of pieces.

Zyssa gently touched his arm. "You okay, Rio?" she said softly.

Rio nodded and smiled weakly. "Let's get to it."

The two made their way towards the door. Just as they got there, however, a figure appeared from inside and blocked their entrance.

"You can't come in - this is a crime scene."

Rio recognised the man's uniform as that of the Bureau of Inquisitors.

"We're aware of that, Inquisitor," Rio said calmly. "We're Dungeon Rangers, here at the behest of the Dungeon Master and Lord of Dunshelm, Treguard, and at the request of the senior local Powers That Be representative Ariel Martinez."

The Inquisitor, however, looked unimpressed. "Well THIS is a matter for Inquisitors, not the Powers That Be, so you two just..."

"Let them pass."

A female voice cut him off mid-sentence and a young woman appeared from within the house. She was about Rio's height and was dressed in a long flowing dress that reminded Zyssa of the type senior members of the Grey Sisterhood or other such witch covens wore. However, it was black and pale green in colour. She had long hazel coloured hair and pale blue eyes. Zyssa guessed this was the Powers That Be agent, the half-witch Ariel Martinez, both from the authority in her tone and the slight discolouration of her pupils, which had an amber-goldish tint to them, a sign of witch amber use. She didn't acknowledge Rio and Zyssa, but held the Inquisitor with a hard stare. The Inquisitor stared right back.

"Look, Miss Martinez, I know you're a big shot with the Powers That Be, but Lieutenant-Inquisitor Finley's instructions..."

"I asked for their presence here... and contrary to what Inquisitor Finley may think, *I* am the one in charge of this investigation."

The Inquisitor tried to hold his ground but Ariel held his gaze. Zyssa couldn't be sure but she suspected Ariel was using more than just ordinary strong willpower on him. Finally he stepped aside to let Rio and Zyssa inside. Rio and Zyssa quickly walked past him and into the house.

"Thank you," Ariel said sharply to the Inquisitor.

Rio indicated for Zyssa to wait where she was. He went over and had a brief, quiet conversation with Ariel, before coming back over to her.

"This way, Rangers," Ariel said, indicating for Rio and Zyssa to follow her. Zyssa felt rather nervous around this woman - she seemed very dominating and intimidating. She looked at Rio for advice.

He simply shrugged. "Ariel's a bit of a stickler for the rules, Zyssa. So be on your best behaviour - no flirting, wisecracks or innuendo-laced byplay while we're here, or your feet won't even touch the floor."

Zyssa bit her bottom lip, shifted uncomfortably, and nodded. Rio indicated for her to follow Ariel's instructions. Ariel led them down the hallway, out of sight of the Inquisitor. Once they were out of sight, she turned to face them and looked them over.

"I take it you're Ranger Silverdale," she said to Zyssa.

Zyssa quickly stood to attention, not wanting to get on the wrong side of this matriarchal agent. "Yes, Ma'am," she said smartly.

Ariel looked her over. "From what I've heard about you from your superiors and Ranger Bolt here, you're one for making smart remarks and flirting with male personnel."

Zyssa shifted uncomfortably. "Sometimes, Ma'am," she answered.

Ariel raised an eyebrow and looked hard at her. "Just sometimes?" she asked.

"Yes, Ma'am," Zyssa responded.

Ariel looked at her in silence for a few moments, then broke into a grin. "Well then, you're not much fun, are you, Zyssa Silverdale?" she laughed.

Zyssa looked at her blankly and then became aware of Rio sniggering. "YOU!" she snapped, not knowing whether she was annoyed or amused.

"God, Zyssa," Rio laughed, "I've never seen you so military."

"*Yes Ma'am, No Ma'am?*" Ariel said, imitating Zyssa, who felt herself going bright red as she realised she had been had. "I'd heard you liked to have a good time, Zyssa Silverdale," she continued. "I didn't realise you were such a stickler for the rules. I'd have worn my dress uniform if I'd known."

Zyssa hid her face with her hands. "I hate you both!" she giggled.

Rio smiled and playfully jabbed her shoulder. "Come on, Zyssa, just a little fun to try and break the ice between you and Ariel here." He took a deep intake of breath. "And to allow us all a bit of light-heartedness before we have to face what's in there," he finished, pointing to the door Ariel had been leading them towards.

Ariel smiled slightly and nodded, then laid a hand on Zyssa's shoulder. "Come on, Zyssa, let's get to it... I'll find you a nice handsome man to stand beside and you can flirt with him to your heart's content."

"Ooh, that'd be nice," Zyssa said. "It's been so long since I had a handsome man to have fun with," she added, glancing at Rio with a teasing smirk.

Ariel didn't notice this, however she did look at Zyssa for a few moments, her eyes seeming to mist over. "Of course," she said softly, "I'm not one to stand in the way of... love."

Zyssa's head spun round. "I... what?" She looked at Rio. "You told her! I thought we'd agreed our private life was just that! Private!"

Ariel laughed softly and shook her head. "No, he didn't tell me... you did."

Zyssa looked blankly at her. "I did?"

"Ariel can read emotions, my love," Rio explained.

Zyssa blushed. "Don't tell anyone else, Miss Martinez, please."

Ariel smiled. "Tell who, what, Zyssa?" she smiled. "And please, it's Ariel."

Zyssa smiled back and gave Ariel a friendly hug; she was now convinced that she and Ariel would become very good friends.

"Thank you, Ariel," she said, as Ariel returned the hug.

"No thanks needed, Zyssa," she said. "So... shall we get down to the unpleasantness?"

Rio and Zyssa nodded. Ariel turned, opened the door and went in. Rio hesitated for a few moments; Zyssa came over to him and gave his right hand a gentle squeeze.

"I'm here with you, my love," she said softly.

Rio looked at her and gave her a slight smile. He steeled himself and walked into the room. Inside was a scene of carnage. Chairs and tables were overturned, crockery was smashed and strewn around the room - it had been one hell of a ferocious struggle. The end result was plain to see. In the middle of the room lay the body of a female. Kneeling beside the body was the local apothecary, a middle-aged, portly man with a head of well combed grey hair, and a bushy grey moustache that gave him a very distinguished look and an air of experience. As they came in, he looked up and gave Rio a slight nod and a smile. Rio returned the greeting. He recognised the man as Hector "Hec" Gemini, one of the apothecaries who had treated Rio following his scarring by Lord Fear's experiments. The presence of these three friendly faces - Hec, Ariel and Zyssa - made Rio relax slightly.

"How did you two Rangers get in?" an imperious voice demanded.

Rio rolled his eyes and sighed. He turned round and looked to where the voice had come from. Standing in the hallway, dressed in the official uniform of a Lieutenant-Inquisitor, was Sir Charles Finley, someone Rio had hoped never to run into again. Finley looked hard at Rio and then smirked in an unpleasant manner.

"Oh it's you, Bolt. I thought they'd invalidated you out of the service after what happened to you in that Marblehead incursion. The Ranger service must be desperate if they've kept you on. The Inquisitor service would have thrown you out long before such an incident ever happened."

Rio gritted his teeth. Finley then turned his attention to Zyssa.

"And who are you?" he asked rudely.

"Zyssa Silverdale, though to you, Inquisitor, it's Ranger Silverdale," she said coldly.

Finley narrowed his eyes and turned this name over in his mind. "Zyssa Silverdale... the disgraced Green Warden?"

Zyssa went pale.

"Like I said, the Ranger service is desperate if they're even recruiting your sort," Finley sneered.

Ariel had heard enough, and stepped forward. "Inquisitor Finley, kindly keep your opinions to yourself... or I'll have you removed from this place."

"Yes indeed, such behaviour is unbecoming to someone of your rank, young man," Hec Gemini said in a deep, rich voice.

Bristling, Finley turned round to look at Ariel. "Miss Martinez, you seem to be confused as to who is charge of this investigation..."

Ariel held her hand up to stifle him. "On the contrary, Inquisitor Finley, it is you who is confused. I am in charge and you are here purely on sufferance, since the Inquisitor Bureau felt the need to send you down to investigate this spate of killings."

Finley laughed. "Miss Martinez, you don't seriously mean to tell me you think this is linked to your investigation into the murder of that former Powers That Be agent? Clearly what we have here is a burglary which turned nasty, therefore it is an Inquisitor matter and not a Powers That Be matter."

"And how do you explain the fact that the three victims have all died from a broken back?" Ariel demanded.

"Coincidence," Finley stated. "And besides, this poor woman's back was broken when she fell. Clearly she struggled with the intruder, he pushed her off and she fell, breaking her back in the process."

"Rubbish!" Rio snorted. "And I can prove it."

"Ha!" Finley laughed. "More of your posturing, Bolt!"

"No, a perfectly demonstrable fact." Turning to Hec he asked, "Gemini, have you found which area of the spine the break occurred in?"

"Yes, Rio," Gemini responded.

"It's the lumbar region, isn't it? The third lumbar vertebra," Rio said with a grim smile.

"Extraordinary! You're exactly right, Rio," Gemini said in disbelief.

"And does such a break concur with Inquisitor Finley's theory?" Rio asked.

Gemini shook his head. "Highly unlikely - this kind of break suggests to me that external force was applied, and that it was a deliberate act."

"And I suppose Ranger Bolt is going to tell us who's responsible as well?" Finley scoffed.

"Yes, I think I can," Rio responded. "I have known but one killer who used that technique."

Finley looked at Rio in disbelief. "What? Oh come on, Bolt, he's dead and done for!"

"You remember him, then?" Rio asked.

"Am I likely to forget the Cossgrove Fiend?"

"Cossgrove Fiend?" Zyssa asked.

"Cossgrove Horror, I used to call him," Finley said.

"That monster that I told you about, Zyssa," Rio explained. "With the chest of an ogre and the arms of a gorilla. His method of murder is back breaking... always the third lumbar vertebra."

Zyssa shuddered. "Horrible."

Finley shook his head. "Do you honestly mean to stand there and say you think he's still alive? Why, they got him just over a year ago, trying to escape from Stonewall Island Prison!"

"I read the report, Inquisitor," Rio said. "But what makes you so certain he IS dead? They never found any corpse."

"There's over two miles of water round that place, Bolt - the corpse probably sank!" Finley asserted.

"Only if it were weighted down. In my experience, dead bodies normally float," Hec Gemini stated. "And if that were the case, I'd have expected the cadaver to wash ashore somewhere by now."

"All right, Bolt, you have your little theory. I'll take my solid facts, thank you very much, and I guarantee that the DBI will have this little matter cleared up before too long. Should be a simple enough job looking for known housebreakers in the area."

"If you wish to waste your time, as well as that of your men and the local sheriff, Inquisitor Finley, please feel free to do so," Ariel said. "But the resources of the Powers That Be will be directed to finding the real killer, if it's the Cossgrove Fiend or not."

Finley sneered, then arrogantly turned and walked out of the house, taking most of his men with him.

"Insufferable oaf!" Gemini said in disgust. "Knew his father, you know... good man, not like his son... apples bounce well away from the tree on that one, I'm afraid."

Rio sighed. "The man's a dangerous incompetent, and one of these days it's going to have serious consequences."

"And the scary thing is, it might not be him who suffers them," Ariel added.

Rio nodded.

"Is there anything else we can learn here?" Zyssa asked.

Rio looked around. "Was the other attack like this?" he asked Ariel.

Ariel looked around and nodded. "Pretty much exactly like it... even down to the smashed china."

Rio looked at her. "He smashed the china in both houses?"

"Yes. Why?" Ariel asked.

"What is it, Rio?" Zyssa pressed.

"The Cossgrove Fiend is a killer... but he's not a maniac. This whole scene screams of someone in the grip of bestial fury... he kills them, THEN smashes up the personal effects and furniture."

"So?" Zyssa asked.

"So I think THAT may have been the motive, and the deaths were just incidental. The victims were in the wrong place at the wrong time. He's looking for something."

"What, though?" Ariel asked.

"I don't know what... but I don't think he knows exactly where it is. There must be something among the stuff he's smashed that's the same in all four houses."

"All *four!*" Ariel said in disbelief. "You mean there have been two other murders like this?"

Rio nodded. "In two other hamlets... outside your jurisdiction, Ariel, but not outside mine and Zyssa's... and if we can conclusively link them," he smiled slightly, "it also means it's out of our friend Lieutenant-Inquisitor Finley's jurisdiction as well."

Ariel returned his slight smile, and nodded.

Rio looked around the room again. "I don't think we can do any more here. Are arrangements being made for the poor woman?" he asked Gemini.

The apothecary nodded. "Yes, Rio my boy, I've sent word to her next of kin in the town and I'll help them see to any arrangements that are needed."

Rio smiled and nodded. "If you find anything else, Gemini, let us know."

"Of course, Rio," Gemini nodded.

Rio looked at the smashed crockery. "Ariel, did you keep the smashed china from Captain Keel's house?"

"The scene's not been touched, Rio. I told them to leave it until you had seen it."

Rio nodded thoughtfully. "Can you arrange for it to be collected and then sent to me and Zyssa, and the same with this lot, clearly labelled which house the crockery comes from?"

Ariel nodded and signalled for an aide to come over. She relayed the request to him. Rio, meanwhile, indicated to Zyssa that it was time to leave.

"I knew I was right in requesting you, Rio," Ariel said. "You've already justified my faith in you."

Rio smiled. "Thank you, Ariel. What do you intend to do now?"

"I'm going back to my headquarters to start collating all the information we have at the moment about these killings, and see if I can't work out what this Cossgrove Fiend might be looking for. What about you two?"

"I think we'll head back to the inn and get in touch with Calwain. We'll see if he can have the information on the other two killings sent to us here. Have the crockery sent there."

Ariel nodded. "Which inn are you staying at?"

"The Innsmouth Shadow," Zyssa replied.

Ariel nodded. "Shall we meet up later and compare notes? And I'll treat you both to some local cuisine."

"Yes, that sounds lovely," Rio agreed. "See you later, then... say around six?"

"Six it is," said Ariel.

The three parted company, unaware of the many eyes that watched them, not only from within the dark alleyway but also from much further afield, and using much more ethereal means. The image faded from the crystal ball, and the lady sat back with a thoughtful look on her face.

"These two newcomers... they may prove bothersome, Norman," she said to her companion, a thin and weasly man.

The man nodded meekly. "Shall I get the Fiend to pay them a visit tonight, Madam Cruithne?" he asked, a clear note of enjoyment clear in his voice.

The woman shook her head. "No, Norman, that would only serve to confirm his presence, and besides that it would distract him from his task in hand. No, we'll use more subtle methods to remove these unexpected inconveniences."

She turned and looked at Norman, a cold and evil smile on her face. "Ask Heckle-Jeckle to come in and see me."

Some time later, in their room at the inn, Rio and Zyssa were pouring over what information there was about the other two killings, which Calwain had been able to transport to them. Rio was sitting on one of the chairs, while Zyssa was lying on her stomach on the bed, her head resting in her hands.

Rio sighed. "I don't know, Zyssa, I've been over and over this documented account of the first killing, and apart from the broken backs and smashed china, which can be dismissed as coincidences, I can't see anything that would solidly link it to the killings here in Glameldal."

Zyssa sighed and nodded. "It's the same with the second one," she said, propping herself up further on her arms. "The victims weren't even found in the same manner as these last three... this one was found..."

She noticed Rio looking at her, without paying full attention to what she was saying. "Rio!"

Rio's eyes snapped up to hers. "Yes, Zyssa?"

Zyssa looked confused for a moment, then she glanced down and a smirk appeared on her face. In propping herself up on her arms, she had caused her dress to fall loose at the front. She looked up at Rio with a mock scowl.

"Focus, Ranger Bolt," she teasingly scolded him, as she pressed her dress tighter to her body.

"You make it very hard to sometimes, Zyssa Silverdale," Rio retorted with a slight laugh.

Zyssa raised an eyebrow. "Haven't you seen enough of me over the last two months?" she asked with a slight smirk.

Rio laughed. "It's like the Ambrosia of the Greek Gods, my love... once you've tasted it, you always want more."

Zyssa laughed. "Well, you'll just have to wait - we've got a job to do, remember."

She went back to looking at the scroll in her hand. Rio smirked and placed his scroll down, before walking over to the bed.

"Zyssa..." he said.

"Hmm?" she said, looking up.

Rio put one of his arms around her and made to kiss her.

"Oh, no... no, no!" Zyssa said, trying not to laugh and to get some distance between herself and Rio.

Rio kept up his pursuit of her lips. "A little rest and recreation might help us think more clearly."

"Uh-uh, no way," Zyssa said laughingly.

Rio's lips finally caught up to hers and claimed them. Zyssa responded to the kiss. She broke away and sighed.

"Lock the door, then," she said.

Rio smirked and started nuzzling her neck.

"Rio... lock the door!" Zyssa laughed.

"Uh-huh... later," Rio said.

"Rio, we don't want someone walking in on us; lock the door..." Zyssa laughed, as she fell back onto the bed and back into the whirlwind of pleasure.

An hour later Zyssa was looking into the mirror, trying to straighten her clothes and hair.

"You made a shocking mess of my hair, you sadistic brute," she teasingly chided Rio, who was getting dressed on the other side of the room.

"You weren't complaining at the time," he retorted.

Zyssa responded by sticking her tongue out at him. Rio laughed, finished dressing, walked over to her and gave her a playful smack on the bottom. "Come on, we've got to meet Ariel and share what we know about these other killings with her... for what use it will be."

Zyssa looked at him and stroked his cheek. "Maybe when we see all the killings compared, we'll see the link we're looking for."

Rio smiled and nodded. "Come on, Zyssa, we'd best get going."

They left their room and headed downstairs. Just as they exited the inn, a man approached them.

"Rangers Rio Bolt and... Zyssa Silverdale?" he asked, looking at a scrappy piece of parchment.

"Yes," Zyssa responded.

Rio remained silent and looked at the man. He was dressed in reasonably official looking clothes. The man smiled and placed the parchment in his breast pocket.

"My name's Mr. Kest, driver from Reliance House, the local headquarters of the Powers That Be. Miss Ariel Martinez sent me to collect you both and take you there to meet her."

"Oh, that's fine, Mr. Kest," Rio responded. "But I need to talk with the landlord about extending our reservations, and I think I've left some important scrolls back in our room... Zyssa, would you be a good girl and fetch them while I talk to the landlord?"

"Oh, I can take care of the reservations, sir," Mr. Kest offered helpfully.

"No, no, Mr. Kest, you just stay with the cart," Rio reassured him, and gently led Zyssa (who was looking slightly perplexed) back into the inn.

"Rio, I have ALL the scrolls here with me!" she hissed. "And the landlord's already agreed to let us stay as long as we need."

"I know that, Zyssa, but Mr. Kest doesn't," he said, taking out his spyglass. "Rio Bolt calling Ariel Martinez... come in, Ariel."

Shortly, the face of Ariel appeared in the spyglass. "Greetings, Ranger. What can I do for you?"

"Just calling to let you know we're on our way to meet you."

Ariel smiled. "Most courteous, Rio, but you didn't have to - we did arrange to meet up, after all."

Rio smiled. "Yes, but I thought it was only good manners. Oh, by the way, you didn't send a driver to take us to Reliance House, did you?" Rio asked conversationally.

"A driver? No, I didn't think you'd need one - you know where the local headquarters is situated, and how to get here."

Rio smiled and nodded. "Quite right. We'll see you soon... though do forgive us if we're... a little late."

He deactivated the spyglass and looked at Zyssa, who had gone a bit pale.

"Well... who sent him?" she asked.

Rio shrugged. "Only one way to find out... come on, and act like we don't know he's a fraud."

Zyssa nodded, and the two walked back outside. Mr. Kest was waiting for them with a horse and buggy. He smiled and opened the door for them to get in. Zyssa went first.

"So, where would you like to go first?" Mr. Kest asked, as Rio got in.

"Oh, Reliance House, but we're not in any hurry. Just... take us for a ride," he said airily.

Mr. Kest smiled and nodded. He climbed into the buggy's driving seat, and they set off. What neither Mr. Kest nor Rio and Zyssa noticed was a horse-drawn wagon that had been parked down the road. It was painted black and was pulled by two black horses. In the driving seat sat the weasly man called Norman who had been observing them through the crystal ball. The wagon set off, following them at pace.

As the buggy left the town and headed out into the surrounding area, Rio became aware that they were moving at some pace.

"Do you always drive this fast, Mr. Kest?" he quizzed the driver. "I told you we weren't in any hurry."

"Sorry, sir," Kest replied nervously, "but I think there's some character trying to follow us."

Rio was unsure what to make of this, but a quick glance at the road behind showed that Mr. Kest was apparently telling the truth, as an ominous looking black wagon was indeed trying to keep pace with them. Rio looked at Zyssa, then back at Mr. Kest.

"May I suggest that you try and lose them, then?" he advised.

Kest nodded and encouraged the horse to go faster. Rio and Zyssa watched the black wagon to see if it would react. It did. Its speed increased to try and keep pace with them. The buggy and the wagon tore down the dirt roads. Rio tried to come up with a game plan. He spotted his inspiration up ahead, and tapped Kest on the shoulder.

"Take the next turning on the left and stop," he instructed.

Kest nodded and sharply pulled on the reins, making the horse turn left and go down the side road, and then brought the buggy to a dead stop. They held their breath and waited to see if Rio's stratagem had worked. The black wagon tore past their hiding place and carried on down the road.

Mr. Kest breathed a sigh of relief and started wiping beads of sweat from his forehead. Then suddenly he froze as he felt Rio Bolt's crossbow press into the base of his neck.

"Now, Mr. Kest, talk fast before your friend there doubles back. Just who are you working for?"

Mr. Kest tensed up. "I... I don't know what you're talking about. I was just sent to collect you."

"Ah, but by whom?" Rio pressed.

"By... by Ariel Martinez," Kest responded, as he let go of the reins with one hand and slowly tried to reach for something hidden under the driver's seat.

"No, I don't think so," Rio said, shaking his head before cuffing Kest's free arm. "Keep tight hold of the reins with BOTH hands, Mr. Kest - me and Zyssa are both very nervous passengers."

Using his free hand, Rio opened the door of the buggy.

"Dismount!" he instructed Kest.

He himself started to get out of the buggy, still keeping his crossbow levelled at Kest. Kest let go of the reins and slowly stood up to dismount. However, as he did so, he flicked a hidden switch and the footrest upon which Rio was standing suddenly dropped free of the buggy, taking Rio with it.

There was a crash as Rio hit the ground hard. Quickly Kest's hand shot under the driver's seat and tried again to unsheathe the dagger he had hidden there. Zyssa acted just as quickly, striking out at Kest with a knife chop to his arm. He cried out in pain and the dagger fell from his grasp, clattering to the floor. Zyssa quickly followed up her first blow with a second that sent Kest falling from the driver's seat, and left him sprawling on the ground below.

Zyssa tried to dismount from the buggy and attend to Rio, who was still lying dazed on the ground. However, Kest was up more quickly than she had expected, and charged her. Using the height advantage being in the buggy afforded her, she lashed out with a hard kick that caught Kest in the face and sent him sprawling back to the floor.

Quickly she hopped down from the buggy. She could see that Kest still wasn't subdued; he pushed himself up and tried to launch a kick at her. Remembering her Green Warden unarmed combat training, she grabbed the oncoming kick, one hand holding the foot and the other grasping the ankle. She then twisted her hands, sending the already off-balance Kest crashing to the floor once more.

She stepped away to get some distance between them, and also to catch her breath.

"Get up!" she said, in a tone of voice that was much more harsh and authoritative than her normal, quiet voice.

Kest did slowly get up on one knee, but Zyssa didn't notice he had a handful of sand until it was too late.

"Ahhhhhhh!" she cried, as the dirt hit her in the face. She tried to wipe it from her eyes but wasn't quick enough before Kest had tackled her to the floor.

Kest pinned Zyssa to the ground. He then grabbed a large rock that was beside them and raised it, intending to bring it smashing down on Zyssa's skull. Zyssa tensed and closed her eyes, not wishing to see the blow coming. Thankfully, before it did, Kest's hand was grabbed in a vicelike grip by the metal hand of Rio Bolt, who hauled Kest off Zyssa before levelling him with a hard right hand to his face.

"You okay, Zyssa?" he asked, helping her to her feet.

"I'm fine, Rio. What about you? I thought you'd broken your back the way you hit the ground."

Rio smiled and gently kissed her forehead. "I'm fine... and I was right in what I told Calwain."

Zyssa tilted her head and looked at him quizzically.

"You can handle yourself just fine."

Zyssa blushed. Rio went over to the prone figure of Kest, and hauled the semiconscious would-be killer to his feet. He propped him against the buggy.

"Now, talk!"

Kest was breathing heavily. Blood was running from his lip, and his clothes were covered in dirt and dust.

"Alright... alright," he agreed, before reaching into one of his breast pockets. Zyssa quickly grabbed the hand to stop him.

"Let me have some mint to chew on," Kest said.

Rio nodded and reached inside Kest's pocket. He brought out a little silver case. He opened it and took out what he assumed was a mint leaf and handed it to Kest. Kest took the leaf and looked at it for a few moments, then took it into his mouth and bit down hard on it. There was the faint sound of breaking glass, and then Kest started making choking and gasping noises. Rio grabbed Kest and hauled him up to face him. There was a slight ring of foam around his mouth.

"To Hell with the pair of you!" he managed to rasp, before his body convulsed violently.

Rio let go and the dead body crumpled to the floor. Zyssa took the silver case from Rio and began examining the remaining leaves, while Rio bent down and examined Kest's body. Zyssa took one leaf out and sniffed it. Her nose wrinkled and she replaced it, before shutting the case.

"The smell of sour almonds... in other words, cyanide," she said. "Whoever he worked for put the fear of God into him... so much so he'd rather kill himself than talk."

Rio looked at something he was holding in his hand, which he had found in one of Kest's pockets.

"Not quite the fear of God, Zyssa... more the fear... of Fear," he said, showing her what he'd found - a ring that was an all too familiar shape to the two Dungeon Rangers' eyes.

"A frightknight ring," Zyssa said quietly. "That means..."

Rio nodded "An Opposition agent... I think we may have just found out who's behind all this."

REMEMBER HER?

Series 3. Level 3.

MORGHANNA

Morghanna is one of three Nightmare characters lifted from (or at least based on) Arthurian legend, the other two being Merlin and Mogdred, of course. Tantalisingly, Merlin informs Martin's team that Morghanna has "moved from the old realm and entered the Dungeon via the deeper catacombs", perhaps suggesting that this Morghanna is indeed the same one from the tales of King Arthur.

I think the main reason that this character has always been so well remembered by Nightmare fans (despite the fact that she only made two brief appearances) has a lot more to do with the dark, sinister, fatal nature of her encounters with both Ross and Martin than it has to do with Natasha Pope's skills at playing the character. The key to Morghanna's success is atmosphere - an evil, powerful foe lurking in the deepest, darkest depths of

level three, waiting at the very climax of the adventure in a particularly tough questing season, and mercilessly snuffing out the dungeoneer on both occasions. Wow, that's classic Knightmare atmosphere for you! So it doesn't really stand out or matter that Natasha Pope didn't really do anything very interesting with the character, or make a very convincing stab at the few lines she was given!

In practical terms, of course, the fact that neither dungeoneer left the room alive after meeting her had nothing to do with Morghanna's ruthless nature. In Ross's case, it was a very forgivable guiding error on a particularly tough path, and Martin's team would have survived the encounter if they'd been entomologists, and thus earned some dragon magic. But in both cases, we were left with the impression that Morghanna - a dark, scary presence that haunted level three in a most chilling manner - was far more ruthless than Mogdred, even though he proved that he, too, could and would kill under the right circumstances (i.e. if the team made a fatal mistake) when he was given the chance.

This is a lot of what makes Knightmare so brilliant, of course - it leaves us with these lasting impressions, and the thrilling, slightly fearful sensations they've formed in our minds, even though - with hindsight - you can look back and explain it all away when you've watched it on video a few times... as long as you don't mind shattering that wonderful illusion.

KNIGHTMARE LOCATIONS

Castle Rising, King's Lynn, Norfolk

Location: Castle Rising Village, near King's Lynn, Norfolk.

AKA: The Tower of Time.

Series featured in: 4.

These pictures were taken by me, Jake Collins, in September 2009.

"That which we call level three of the *Greater Dungeon* must lie somewhere below this fortress. And there must be some way down to it, if only you can find it." Yes, the outside of Castle Rising may be the *Castle of Doom*, but beyond the main door it's the *Tower of Time*:





Next Issue: More from Castle Rising.

WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG
Pre-school TV Shows of the 1980s VIII
By Gehn "Lex" Luthor

Crystal Tipps and Alistair (early 1970s):

Of the four programmes designated to this final episode of *When We Were Very Young*, *Crystal Tipps and Alistair*, created by Hilary Hayton, seems to be the best remembered. Originally broadcast in the early 1970s, this programme would be repeated throughout the '80s and even into the '90s, whenever a vacant five-minute slot appeared in the schedule. Indeed, it did make it to the *See-Saw* slot at some point (I believe it was the early '90s) hence its place in this article.

Fifty episodes of five minutes, plus a twenty-minute Christmas special, were made of this surreal show that was centred around a girl called Crystal Tipps and her dog Alistair. After having seen these characters, one is unlikely ever to forget them: Crystal Tipps with her huge pyramid of purple hair, and Alistair's triangular face. Uniquely, there was neither dialogue nor narration; the only sound was a fitting music score that played throughout each episode.

Crystal Tipps and Alistair would get up to the usual mischievous capers that were typical of children's programmes, such as tipping water over each other or throwing custard pies, although it was normally Alistair who came off worse. Birdie and Butterfly, the other two semi-regular characters, apparently hatched out of an egg and a cocoon respectively during the first two episodes. I say "apparently" because I personally do not recall either of them, but then, this show was not a particular favourite of mine. Having said that, I found an episode on YouTube during my research, and I have to say that I enjoyed it more this time than I think I ever did in the past.

As far as the educational and entertainment values are concerned, I cannot see children learning much from *Crystal Tipps and Alistair*, other than how

to torment a dog and then have it trying to get them back. However, the "stories" (not that there ever seemed to be much of a plot) were easy-going and often featured slapstick humour. I can think of worse ways to spend five minutes, so I have given it a fairly high entertainment value. Finally, if this brief summary has ignited a passion in you to rediscover the show, it would appear that a DVD, featuring all fifty episodes, has been released. This is a little surprising to me, especially when I consider how little online information there is for this programme compared to the online resources for *Nightmare*. Ah well.

Educational Value = 1/5.

Entertainment Value = 4/5.

Melvin and Maureen's Music-A-Grams (1991-1993?):

"Melvin had glasses, Maureen was played by Sophie Aldred, the last line of the theme tune was the title of the show with an extended 'graaaa-aaaa-aaams', and my mum thought that the programme was stupid." That would pretty much cover everything I remembered about *Melvin and Maureen's Music-A-Grams*, meaning that the construction of this section was going to be rather difficult. However, within the last couple of months, an episode has been uploaded onto YouTube, making this task a whole lot easier. Had the CBeebies channel not elected to show repeats in 2007, things would have been very different.

Other information on *Melvin and Maureen's Music-A-Grams* is very scant - I am unable to say exactly how many episodes were made and when they were originally broadcast. One site suggests 1991, the episode on You Tube was made in 1992 (the end credits are fortunately included), and there is further information to say that the show was still around in 1993. Suffice to say, therefore, that it frequented the *See-Saw* slot during the early '90s, which would explain why my memory of it is pretty thin, what with having to grow up etc...

Melvin (Matthew Devitt) and Maureen (Sophie Aldred) ran a shop that dealt in music-a-grams. People (played by the same actors in different costumes) would call and order these music-a-grams, and Melvin and Maureen would have to prepare them. It would appear that a music-a-gram consisted of a collection of a specific style of instrument (brass, woodwind, etc), so the

required instruments would be gathered together in preparation for the customer.

Younger viewers would be introduced to musical instruments and their sounds throughout the programme, as in *Fingermouse*. There would also be a story with a musical theme - read by one character and acted out by the other - as well as a song. A small teddy called Groovy Ted, whom I had totally forgotten but whose name was immediately familiar when I heard it again, lived in a cupboard with a monkey called Mr. Spoons, and he would make further observations about the musical instruments, often at the expense of Mr. Spoons (having him hit over the head with different objects to demonstrate different percussive sounds, for example). Having just watched the episode again (well, I have seen nothing of this programme in nearly twenty years, so give me a break), I have come to the conclusion that Groovy Ted is supposed to be some sort of record producer, since he wears a leather jacket and suggests that the sounds made by Mr. Spoons being hit could be used to accompany his records. Furthermore, he can be heard in the background talking to Mr. Spoons about agencies.

Anyway, by the end of each episode, the music-a-gram was ready and the show would conclude. Despite having now seen an episode, I cannot claim that hundreds of memories of *Melvin and Maureen's Music-A-Grams* have come flooding back, suggesting that I did not see it especially frequently. However, what did strike me was the educational aspect, as Melvin and Maureen went into a fair amount of detail when describing the instruments - when Melvin had a drum kit, he gave the names of all the individual drums and cymbals, and Maureen demonstrated why the piano is technically a percussion instrument. This was done in a more light-hearted way than on *Fingermouse*, which is not a huge surprise, given the relative decades of the shows. However, this approach appears to work pretty well, meaning that I have scored the show much more highly than I thought I would.

Educational Value = 5/5.

Entertainment Value = 4/5.

Forget-Me-Not Farm (1990):

Given how well I remember this show myself, I was amazed to find that there is very little mention of it anywhere online. Nevertheless, I shall share what I have been able to discover, together with my own recollections of the

programme, an episode of which we used to have on video (another life-saver).

Thirteen episodes of *Forget-Me-Not Farm* were made, each revolving around an aspect of farming. For much of the programme, a scarecrow and two crow puppets would examine such farming procedures as milking cows, and there would then be an animated tale at the end. As with other shows of this genre, I always considered the last part to be the best. Anyway, the main character was a scarecrow, played by Mike Amatt, whom you may remember from the review of *Mop and Smiff* in Episode 4 of *When We Were Very Young*. Indeed, the format of these two programmes was extremely similar, what with the "real-life" educational beginning and the animated end.

At the start of each episode, the scarecrow would be standing in the field and the two crows - Dandelion and Burdock - would arrive. For reference, Dandelion was the one with the glasses. As the three characters talked about the farm, footage of the farming procedures would be shown, as well as the farmer himself, who was referred to simply as "Farmer". There would also be sections where there was music and no dialogue, such as when milk was being bottled and gathered for collection by a dairy tanker, and songs, sung by the scarecrow and the crows. Throughout the whole episode, the crows would crack farming jokes, such as a cow having "Moosli" for breakfast.

To introduce the animated story, the scarecrow would face the camera and give a brief, rhyming synopsis of what was about to happen. The story would then begin, featuring characters who were mentioned and displayed during the opening credits. As expected, these characters were farm animals and machinery: Portly the Pig, Gracie the Cow, Merthyr the Sheep, Topper the Tanker and Trundle the Tractor. Dandelion and Burdock would also feature, again cracking jokes. As an aside, I was always surprised that Trundle the Tractor was female, but that could just be my strange mind.

Given that only five minutes were allocated for the stories, the plots were fairly simple, normally featuring an issue on the farm and a brief song. Of course, everything would be solved by the end. Once the story was over, the scarecrow and crows would appear again and briefly sign off, often with the crows flying away and the scarecrow saying goodbye to the viewers.

As I have already indicated, I was never a huge fan of the "real-life" bits of such programmes as *Forget-Me-Not Farm*. However, I cannot deny that they were extremely educational and taught me what little I do know about farming. Overall, I think the combination of education and entertainment worked pretty well, so quite why nobody else remembers this show is beyond me.

Educational Value = 5/5.

Entertainment Value = 3/5.

Chris and Crumble (early '90s?):

"Children's series, produced by Maurice Pooley and narrated by Peter Hawkins." That is it for online resources on this show, but I cannot believe that I am the only person alive who remembers *Chris and Crumble*. To be fair, had some clown not recorded over Episode 316 of *Nightmare* with it, perhaps it would have slipped through my memory too. Every cloud has a silver lining, I suppose.

The stories in *Chris and Crumble* were primarily still pictures, although a small amount of animation was employed. Chris was the name of a brown-haired girl who woke up one morning to find that all her clothes had disappeared. On investigating the reason why, she finds Crumble, a hairy purple monster that resembles a mop head with eyes, under her bed with one of her clothes hanging out of its mouth. Of course, she is terrified at first, but she soon learns that Crumble is harmless. However, because it has eaten all her clothes, all she has left is her nightdress, so whenever she goes out, she wears Crumble as a fur coat, a theme that continues for the rest of the series.

At some point, Crumble gives birth to a multitude of baby Crumbles, implying that the original Crumble is female. Not wishing to leave them in the house, Chris hides some of them in her bag (if I remember correctly) and uses the others as a fur hat. Of course, the babies are quite mischievous, and when Chris goes to a jumble sale, the babies escape from her head and bag and terrorise the other customers by getting inside jumpers and bouncing around. As a result, they get a good telling off from Chris, whose character develops a maternal nature as the series progresses.

You have probably guessed that the jumble sale episode was the one I used to have on video (until some joker went and recorded *Neighbours* over it). As far as the rest of the series is concerned, I am afraid that my memory of it is zero, excluding the very first episode, which we have already covered. Whether the last episode gave the series a "complete" feeling is, alas, beyond my knowledge. Although not educational, *Chris and Crumble* was not a bad show, and the stories were usually fun and light-hearted. I hope that some readers of this review will remember *Chris and Crumble*, otherwise I may start to think that the whole thing was a concept of my imagination.

Educational Value = 1/5.

Entertainment Value =4/5.

That, I am afraid, concludes this series of *When We Were Very Young*. I hope that people have enjoyed reminiscing with me about the children's programmes of yesteryear. I apologise if I have missed anything that you remember yourselves with great fondness. If so, maybe you can let *TES* know so that I may be reminded too.

KIDS' TV SHOWS I GREW UP WITH

Focus on: Sooty.

Original Broadcast Run: May 1952 - December 2004.

UK TV Channels: BBC1, ITV1.

If there is anyone in this country who has been a regular watcher of children's television at some point during the past sixty years and has never come across Sooty, I'd be incredibly surprised. The definitive TV hand puppet, the original Sooty (a fairly unremarkable yellow bear) was bought by Harry Corbett at the end of Blackpool's North Pier in 1948, and made his TV debut in 1952. Harry blacked the bear's ears with soot (earning him the name Sooty) and used him to entertain his children. Within the space of four years, Harry and Sooty had become a well-known comedy double-act and had been invited to make several TV appearances, leading to their own BBC show in 1955 - pretty impressive work!

Harry Corbett spent twenty years being hit with hammers and sprayed with water at the mischievous paws of Sooty. During this time, Sooty was joined by his two almost equally famous puppet friends - Sweep, a grey dog with floppy black ears (in 1957) and Soo, a female giant panda (in 1964, a move that caused some to question whether elements of sex were being introduced into the show!) thus creating the dream puppet team! Sooty, of course, only ever whispered to his co-stars, while Sweep spoke in an indistinguishable trilling squeak (an effect created by blowing through a saxophone reed) and Soo spoke perfectly normally, originally with the voice of Harry Corbett's wife, Marjorie.

After suffering a heart attack in 1975 (although he lived on in retirement until 1989, and still did stage shows) Harry handed over the reins of his enormously successful show to his son Matthew, who established himself as Sooty's keeper with a Christmas special that year. And so we come to my own personal experience of watching The Sooty Show - it was the mid '80s, and the show had moved to CITV by this time. Matthew, Sooty, Sweep and Soo (now voiced by puppeteer Brenda Longman) lived in a normal-looking house in London, and muddled their way through an endless series of hilarious sitcom scenarios. Sooty's two most famous props - his magic wand and his water pistol - had made it through from the '50s along with the famous bear himself, and were creating just as much mayhem and humour as ever. It was, quite simply, a brilliant children's TV show!

But how could such a simple and slightly outdated premise work so incredibly well? I'm sure there are many reasons behind Sooty's timeless appeal, though I'm not sure what they are, but what made that particular era of The Sooty Show so utterly brilliant was one important factor - Matthew Corbett. The man was (and still is, I expect, when he feels like it) an utter genius. He wrote and produced every single episode of the show, and made it both entertaining and hilarious not only to its young target audience but also to the mums and dads - there were so many knowing references and comments thrown into the mix, no parent could fail to laugh!

As a comedy performer, too, Matthew's skills were second to none. There was nothing he wouldn't do - no humiliation he wouldn't put himself through - to make us laugh out loud, and he did this consistently every single week! He

threw himself into barrels of water, he abused himself with hammers and mousetraps and all sorts of things (with Sooty on his right hand, of course) and he even ran around the centre of Manchester (a few years later, after production of the show had moved up there in 1993) wrapped in a bath towel, asking members of the public if they had seen Sooty and/or his clothes!

Whether they were scaring each other with ghost stories or hatching dragons from giant ping-pong balls, Matthew and his three puppet friends never failed to entertain. A new puppet character was introduced in one episode of the 1990 series - Little Cousin Scampi, a small grey bear with a blue and red school uniform, who was even more mischievous than his cousin Sooty, and caused a lot of hilarious slapstick trouble for Matthew. Scampi appeared sporadically during the 1991 and 1992 series, and became a regular fixture when production of the show moved from London to Manchester for the 1993 series, after Thames Television lost its ITV franchise and Granada stepped in to continue production of Sooty.

From 1993, The Sooty Show was no more - it was renamed Sooty & Co, which was also the name of the Manchester shop (which sold almost anything) that Matthew had bought and hoped to run with the help of Sooty, Sweep, Soo and Scampi. Needless to say, it was not really a commercial success, which was a fact that often annoyed Matthew and was the basis of many of the amusing plots for the series. Even though the show did start to amuse me slightly less as time went by (although this may have been just as much to do with my advancing years as with the quality of the programme) Sooty & Co was still unmissable television, and it continued to work so well mainly because of Matthew and his unrivalled brilliance as a comedy writer and performer. Another highlight of Sooty & Co was that Brenda Longman (in addition to her work as Soo) took on a human role as Mo from t'Market, the shop's only regular customer, who never bought a single thing!

Sooty & Co ran for six years, until Matthew Corbett decided to retire at the end of the 1998 run. I thought at the time (and I still think) that this was a terrible shame, and it really was the beginning of the end for the show, but Matthew's decision to retire (even though he was only 50 at the time) was quite understandable, as he had been working on Sooty pretty much non-stop for twenty-three years (writing and performing the TV show, and appearing in stage shows whenever he was having a break from that) and was probably

in dire need of a good rest. But Matthew had sold the rights to Sooty and the show was to continue without him, for better or worse. To ease the transition, two new character-cum-presenters were introduced into the final series of Sooty & Co alongside Matthew - Richard Cadell and Liana Bridges.

Come the 1999 series, it was all change - the show was renamed Sooty Heights, and found Richard and Liana running a hotel with the help of Sooty, Sweep, Soo and Scampi. They were both okay as presenters, although Richard always tried too hard to emulate Matthew's style, which he failed miserably to do. There was a huge, Matthew-shaped hole in the show that never came close to being filled, in my opinion. Brenda Longman made a few appearances as a new human character called Dottie, a rival hotel owner, which did a little to make the show seem like the Sooty of old, but Sooty Heights was never as good as Sooty & Co or The Sooty Show. Gone were the jokes for the mums and dads, and in came the dumbing down. Sooty Heights was okay, but it wasn't what Sooty could and should be.

After two series of Sooty Heights, more changes were afoot. The 2001 series saw Liana replaced by Vicki Lee Taylor (who'd acted in a lot of CBBC and CITV shows during the late '90s) and the show renamed with the simple title Sooty, although the hotel (drastically redecorated) was still the setting. This was the point at which almost all the Sooty magic I remembered from my early childhood completely deserted the show. 2001 also turned out to be Brenda Longman's last year as Soo, which really was the final nail in the coffin.

When Soo turned up in the 2002 series with an obviously different voice, I remember discussing with Rosey whether something terrible might have happened to Brenda Longman, and hoping that it hadn't, but we both agreed that she had probably left the show (after twenty years) because it had become so bad. It seems that this deduction may well have been correct, as Brenda Longman (alive and well) returned as Soo for an appearance on a puppet special of The Weakest Link (which she won) in 2007, and an appearance on Celebrity Bargain Hunt in 2008.

Under Richard's guardianship, Sooty churned out a few more dire and lacklustre series, and by the time of the final series (to date) it was no longer considered worth watching in our household... although I was 21 at the

time and Rosey was 19, so perhaps it was still being enjoyed by some younger viewers! Perhaps partly due to ITV's complete lack of investment in children's programmes after the middle of the last decade, Sooty ingloriously disappeared from children's television for the first time in fifty years, which was a great shame in many ways.

But he may yet return! A couple of years ago, Richard Cadell bought the rights to Sooty (and has recently performed with him on stage) and is apparently working to get the show back on television in some format. In many ways I hope he succeeds, although I'm convinced that the show won't be nearly as good as it could or should be unless Matthew Corbett comes out of retirement (he's had twelve years off now, that should be enough of a rest for anyone!) and shows us all how Sooty should be done!

So, to sum up, Sooty played a significant role in my childhood, as he did in that of my mum and practically everyone else in between, and it would be a shame if he was never given the chance to delight TV audiences (young and old) again. It seems very telling to me that Sooty spent forty-six astoundingly popular years on TV in (or on) the capable hands of the Corbett family, yet when they lost all links with the show it petered out well within the space of ten years. Sooty has an undeniably glorious past, and could have an equally glorious future, under the right circumstances...

TOP 35 KIDS' TV VILLAINS (Part Two)

By Ricky Temple

30. The Count of Cagliostro (Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro):

Another anime villain and although technically a "movie villain", the Count is one of the most infamous enemies of the anime anti-hero Arsen Lupin III, who - before moving into animated feature films - had two successful TV series (and later a slightly less successful third) to his credit. To international audiences it is probably this film (directed by *Spirited Away's* [Hayao Miyazaki](#)) that Lupin is best known for.

The unorthodox gentleman thief Lupin III is drawn to the small principality of Cagliostro on the trail of the legendary "Goat Bills", a type of forged money that is impossible to identify as a forgery. Along the way - and with the aid of his cohorts in crime, sharpshooting Chicago gangster Daisuke Jigen, Samurai for hire Goemon Ishikawa, and femme-fatal thief Fujiko Mine - he becomes embroiled in the Count's ruthless ploy to gain access to the mythical "Cagliostro family treasure" by forcibly marrying his cousin, Celeste Cagliostro, with whom, it turns out, Lupin has a history.

Lupin and his gang resolve to thwart the Count's plans, save Celeste... and steal the treasure for themselves, all the while being hounded by Lupin's perennial "nemesis", Interpol agent Inspector Zenigata.

29. Looten Plunder (Captain Planet and the Planeteers):

This eco-villain (voiced by late Hollywood legend James Coburn) could in many ways be regarded as "Lex Luthor" to Captain Planet's "Superman". Poaching, illegal logging, war profiteering and arms dealing - there was little this embodiment of the evils and excesses of Capitalism would not do to turn a profit. Aided by his equally ruthless henchman, the mercenary Argos Bleak, Looten Plunder was one of Captain Planet and the Planeteers' persistent foes, and also one of their toughest to foil.

Unlike some of the other eco-villains, Looten Plunder quite often either worked within the letter of the law in his wrongdoings, or let Bleak do the "dirty work" while he maintained a "plausible deniability" distance. In fact Plunder can claim a victory over the Planeteers, as he was once able to annihilate an entire forest legally before the Planeteers were able to get a court order to stop him.

28. The Olmecs (The Mysterious Cities of Gold):

The Olmecs were the primary antagonists for the second and final half of *The Mysterious Cities of Gold*. They are based on a real Central American civilisation; however there is a great deal of "creative licence" taken with them for the purposes of the story. They are presented as a sterile, semi-mutated race, whose ancestors survived what is implied to have been a thermonuclear war.

The two main Olmecs are the aging Olmec king, Menator, and his deputy and leader of the Olmec army, Kalmech. Kalmech to me always comes off as much more the villain than Menator, or at least as the greater of two evils. Whereas Menator's motivation is to try and prevent his race's extinction, Kalmech is a treacherous character who (to me at least) seems motivated purely by the chance of conquest, and his belief in the superiority of the Olmec race.

In some ways it is hard not to feel some pangs of sympathy for the Olmecs, due to their finding themselves - through no action of their own - totally sterile and knowingly looking total extinction in the face. However, the methods that they employ to prevent this - along with the presence of someone like Kalmech in their ruling elite - does qualify them as villains, whether you feel sympathy for them or not.

27. The Beagle Boys (Duck Tales):

This family of thieves - headed up by their mother, Ma Beagle - were a constant thorn in the side of Scrooge McDuck and his nephews. They were determined to break into Scrooge's Money Bin and steal all his money. Dressed in almost identical prison uniforms, the Beagle Boys consisted of: Big Time Beagle, Bank Job Beagle, Burger Beagle, Babyface Beagle, Baggy Beagle, Bouncer Beagle and BeBop Beagle.

However, fortunately for Scrooge, the Beagle Boys were lacking in the brain department and their schemes often blew up in their faces, resulting in them being carted off once more to prison to finish off their life sentences. As well as working on their own, the Beagle Boys often found work as hired muscle for other Duck Tales villains like Magica De Spell.

26. Professor Coldheart (The Care Bears: DIC Series):

The Care Bears' original foe, the creepy, cunning, crafty and clever Professor Coldheart sought mainly to eradicate all feelings in the world, although in later appearances his ambitions had turned towards world domination.

Professor Coldheart debuted in the first Care Bears' TV special, *Care Bears in the Land Without Feelings*, in which the Care Bears saved a runaway boy and a group of other children who had wandered into Coldheart's kingdom

and been changed into goblin-like creatures by one of his potions. He returned in the sequel, *The Care Bears Vs. The Freeze Machine*, joined by his henchman Frostbite in an attempt to use a freeze ray on a whole town.

He and Frostbite went on to be the main antagonists of the DIC Care Bears TV series, with different plots such as using an airborne cement mixer in an attempt to coat the world in concrete, or rigging a mayoral election in order to do away with all rules. All his plans were foiled by the Care Bears - or "Fuzzy Wuzzies" as Coldheart referred to them. Professor Coldheart remained a thorn in the side of the Care Bears until DIC lost the franchise rights to Nelvana Productions, and he was replaced in the new series by Wizard No-Heart.

PUZZLE PAGE TWO
Knightmare Wipeout VIII

Each of the two grids below contains twelve answers, six of which fit into the category at the bottom and six of which don't. Identify all six correct answers if you can, chalking up cumulative amounts of theoretical money as you go (£10 for the first answer, £20 for the second, £30 for the third etc) up to a possible £210 for each grid, but just remember this - one wrong answer will wipe you out completely, so be careful!

Mildread	Cedric	Troll	Merlin
Automatum	Granitas	Folly	Casper
Mogdred	Igneous	Olgarth	Olaf
CHARACTERS MET BY FIRST-EVER WINNER MARK WICKSON			

S-Jack	Raptor	Sidriss	Motley
Hordriss	Strange	Rothberry	Stiletta
Maldame	Hands	Bartram	Smirky
CHARACTERS MET BY LAST-EVER WINNER DUNSTAN ROBERTS			

THE FORBIDDEN FEAR

Chapter 4: Flight from the Frightknight

By Chris Lunn

As Pickle watched Merlin disappear into the abyss, a tear ran down his cheek.

"Merlin... no! Now how am I going to escape level three?"

The surface of the spyglass changed to reveal the cold visage of Lord Fear.

"Now, little elf, see what happens when you stand against the forces of darkness!"

Pickle dropped the spyglass to the floor in fright and ran from the room as fast as his legs would carry him.

In the depths of Nightmare Castle, a grinding metallic sound cut through the darkness. As Lord Fear advanced to the bottom of the steps, a mechanical creature emerged from the gloom, stopping just short of the hem of his robes. The robot towered over the evil Lord. He had a large metal sword, encrusted with rust after years of neglect, and a large oval shield. The strangest thing of all about this mechanical man was that, despite the sounds of grinding gears and moving machinery, there appeared to be nothing

but empty air behind the large grey helmet. Lord Fear withdrew a picture of Pickle from his pocket and showed it to the machine.

"You are to find and eliminate this elf. Be careful, as he has proven to be much more slippery than I first assumed."

The robot nodded his great head and lumbered off into the darkness. Behind him, a cold smile played about his master's lips.

As Pickle ran down the corridors that made up a vast portion of Aesandre's icy fortress, he ran his hands around the precious Cup and Shield he had collected on previous levels. Remembering his battles with the hobgoblin and his master, and the sacrifice it had taken to defeat them, he ran faster, hoping to find some way out of the level. In the background he began to hear mechanical sounds, as if a machine had started up somewhere in the distance. Knowing that this was not possible in level three, he stopped and hid behind a pillar. As the noise got closer, he was able to make out the outline of the approaching figure by the light of a nearby window. He gasped in horror.

"Frightknight!"

Bolting from his hiding place, he dived through the portal at the end of the corridor.

Pickle came to an abrupt halt as he entered a room with high walls and a hexagonal pattern on the floor. On the tiles were symbols - a mace, a helmet and a shield.

"I know this room," breathed Pickle.

In his mind, he went back over some of the previous quests in the Dungeon. Remembering his master's old saying *defence is the best offence*, he made his way onto the first tile. Stepping only on the one with a shield on it, he watched as some of the floor tiles around him disappeared into the abyss beneath him. Pickle gingerly crept across the tiles, making sure to avoid any with the picture of a mace. As he touched the last tile, he risked a glance behind him, noting that the frightknight had passed the door.

"Well, that's him taken care of, for now anyway."

He turned, faced the darkness of the portal, and strode purposefully forward.

The room he emerged into was covered in snow. The temperature was cold and the windows were full of large icicles. In the corner of the room, a

statue solemnly watched him. Looking more closely, he realised that he knew who the statue appeared to be based on.

"Merlin's beard, if it isn't Hordriss the Confuser!"

A low moan reverberated around the room, bouncing off all four walls.

"I wonder what caused that," Pickle breathed. "I don't think I want to hang around and find out!"

As he walked to the exit, another moan - more plaintive this time - assailed his eardrums. Looking round, Pickle decided it could only have come from the statue. He approached it stealthily, looking more closely at its surface.

"Hang on a pixie's minute, it *is* Hordriss!" he exclaimed. "He's been frozen to the spot."

Standing back for a second, he ran through the possibilities, arriving at a conclusion that chilled his spine in more ways than one.

"Only one person could have done this - Old Icy Knickers herself, Aesandre!"

Listening closely to a third wail, he could discern the words *de* and *frost*.

"De-frost? What could that mean?" Suddenly a light came on in Pickle's head. "It's a spell!"

"Spellcasting: D-E-F-R-O-S-T!" he called, summoning his most booming voice.

There was flash and the statue was gone. In its place stood a man in a red cloak. He had a long white beard, a pointy hat, and a face that seemed to be fixed in a permanent scowl.

"It took you long enough!" he grumbled.

"What, no *thank you for rescuing me*?" Pickle retorted.

"Sorry, Pickle, but being frozen like that does give one a rather chilly disposition."

Pickle nodded his head, accepting Hordriss's apology.

"Anyway, I had better leave before Aesandre returns."

"For releasing me, I grant you this spell. It is called RUST, and will bung up the works of anything metal or metal-based."

"Thank you, Hordriss," said Pickle.

With a flourish, Hordriss gathered his cloak and left the room.

"Now, I'd better leave before Old Icy Knickers discovers what I've done."

He picked up the knapsack from the floor where he had dropped it after Hordriss had been released, and left the room through the nearest door.

Pickle emerged into a great clearing in the middle of a frozen wood. Around the edge of the wood lay a blue luminous haze. The tang of electricity was heavy in the air.

"The edge of the Dungeon!" Pickle gasped.

Here there be dragons, he thought wryly, thinking of an old pirate saying. As he stood looking around in amazement, the clanking of the frightknight rang from the distance. Advancing on the barrier, Pickle tentatively extended his hand. As his hand touched the barrier, a bolt of energy struck him flush in the chest and knocked him to the floor. As he lay there in the grass, he realised that the clanking sound had ceased. As he started to rise, a massive shadow covered him from head to foot. Fearful, he looked up, straight into the emotionless visage of the frightknight. Backing away, he reached for the spell Hordriss had given him.

"Spellc-c-asting:" he quavered. "R-U-S-T!"

All of a sudden, the knight stopped. The shiny metal of his armour turned red, and he froze in position. His sword slipped from his grip and fell to the floor. Pickle pulled himself up and staggered to the nearest tree. Regaining his breath, he looked at the remains of the fearsome machine.

"Not so fearsome when you are in bits!" he crowed, kicking the battered breastplate as he said so.

He looked down at the knight's sword.

"That looks much smaller than I remember."

He bent down and picked it up. As he did so, script appeared on the sword's blade.

"The Sword of Freedom!" Pickle exclaimed.

Turning to his knapsack, which had fallen to the floor during the standoff with the knight, he put the Sword (which had now somehow shrunk to the size of a dagger) into it.

"Now for the unknown." He turned to face the barrier and realised that a portal had now appeared. "Well, here goes nothing!"

He took slow footsteps, and disappeared into the Forbidden Level.

POETRY CORNER

This was potentially a rather good team in many ways (although I don't think Greystagg would agree with that statement) but Chris IV and his Ruislip compadres were never really given the chance to prove themselves either way, as they ended up doing little more than filling the final two episodes of series 6 with suitably interesting and/or innovative Nightmare scenes, before leaving undefeated.

**When Chris and friends from Ruislip came
They had no time to win the game,
Yet still they tried their level best
And made an entertaining quest.
A key was what the team required,
A washed-up Julius desired
A bar of gold, plus mallet's clunk
To sell the key, in drunken funk.
Sidriss explained the causeway's trick,
The password sat on numbered brick.
In Wolfenden a chest was found,
The key was turned, Elita frowned
To learn of Lord Fear's dragon red,
And so to level two they fled.
With deal refused Fear spat and fumed,
And Greystagg feared her tribe was doomed.
With robe and broom Chris flew on by,
And amber took from warty Sly.
The team then got into a mess,
As Greystagg caused *and* felt distress.
Then Chris, no more a novice witch,
Dispelled the pooka without hitch.
And then Red Death loomed overhead,
The lightning rod soon made him dead.
Lord Fear and Skarkill then were squashed,
And evil (well, for now) was quashed.**

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Knightmare Wipeout VII:

Correct	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	Correct
WIPEOUT	Correct	WIPEOUT	Correct
Correct	Correct	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT
CHARACTERS THAT APPEARED ON LEVEL THREE DURING SERIES 1-4			

Correct	Correct	Correct	Correct
Correct	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	Correct
WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT
CHARACTERS THAT APPEARED ON LEVEL THREE DURING SERIES 5-8			

Knightmare Wipeout VIII:

WIPEOUT	Correct	WIPEOUT	Correct
WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	Correct	WIPEOUT
Correct	Correct	WIPEOUT	Correct
CHARACTERS MET BY FIRST-EVER WINNER MARK WICKSON			

Correct	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	Correct
Correct	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	Correct
Correct	WIPEOUT	WIPEOUT	Correct
CHARACTERS MET BY LAST-EVER WINNER DUNSTAN ROBERTS			