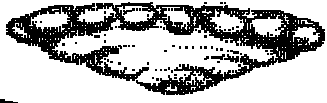


THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 57

May 2009

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MESSAGE FROM ME

Welcome to issue 57 of The Eye Shield. You're in for another jam-packed issue of Knightmare goodies, including (in addition to all your regular favourites) a very interesting rundown of all the Greek Mythology references I've found incorporated into the programme, as well as my numerous thoughts about the extensive merits of *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* in *Kids' TV Shows I Grew Up With*.

Yet again, I'm not the only one who's been busy at the keyboard. The third chapter of Ross Thompson's *Adventure Time* is upon us, while Rosey Collins explores Knightmare's comparatively rare forays into Eastern Mythology in *East is East*. Liam Callaghan concludes his musings about the modern merits of his *Big Three*, even as Jón Þórsteinn Petússon's *Scandinavian Knightmares* finally reaches its thrilling and surreal conclusion. My thanks go out to you as ever, guys, and double thanks are in order for Ricky Temple, who not only presents the third chapter of *For Dungeon and Dungeon Master*, but also offers a critical analysis of the various arrangements of the Knightmare theme tune in *The Dungeon is Alive with the Sound of Music*. Keep writing those hits, Ricky!

Liam Callaghan conjectures about the fate of Duncan in series 5 - just where did that incorrect Descender door take him?

Granted, that Duncan entered the Short Cut isn't stated absolutely, but it's the most likely possibility - consider, Pickle asks, "Where did they get to if they didn't get to level two?" Only one place it could be, really!

This is a very appealing theory, I have to admit, although it was undoubtedly not the intention of the production team at the time, as the concept of the Short Cut would not be thought up for another three years - curse that rueful day!

Here is what Ross Thompson (editor of The Eye Shield's sister fanzine, The Raven's Eye, at www.freewebs.com/ravenseyemag) had to say about issue 56.

I think you've done a great job as usual! *The Top is High* is very interesting; I agree that Knightmare changed a lot. In their own different ways, I really like every series, but part of me agrees that the old atmosphere of the earlier series was more exciting. I recognised most of the characters with the death threats, but I find it very hard to get the dungeoneers. I love *Scandinavian Knightmares* so much! I never thought that they could just turn round at the Medusa and get the dungeoneer to walk backwards - genius! The regulars were great as usual, and I say very well done - keep up the good work, Jake!

Blessings be upon you, Ross.

A little more from Liam Callaghan now, this time on the subject of issue 56.

I have read your article about sticking to your roots - excellent work. I suppose that's the good thing about Visionaries lasting only thirteen episodes - it never had the chance to stray from its roots. Gehn's article on the *See-Saw* programmes brought back a lot of memories – thank you that man! That covered a fair few shows that I'd either half forgotten about or couldn't group together in my own articles!

Thank you, Liam – we aim to please. By the way, readers, if you too are a fan of Gehn's '80s nostalgia work, don't worry – the next instalment of When We Were Very Young will be with us in the not-too-distant future!

Last issue, Jim Waterman attempted to fox us with a few Nightmare QI questions. The time has now come to discover the answers to Jim's mind-bending array.

1. **Which is the first episode of Nightmare during which a pooka can be seen?**

Correct answer: Series 4, episode 5.

Cliché: Series 4, episode 8.

Explanation: Even though a pooka doesn't appear during an actual quest until episode 8 of series 4, one can be seen during the closing credits of episode 5.

2. **Which is the last episode of Nightmare during which a pooka can be seen?**

Correct answer: Series 7, episode 14.

Cliché: Series 7, episode 10.

Explanation: Again, the closing credits are to blame here. The last appearance of a pooka in the quest (and the only such appearance during the whole of series 7) occurs with Julie in episode 10, but a couple of pookas crop up in the end credits of series 7 episodes, the last time being episode 14.

3. **Which is the first team to hear “Ooh, nasty!” from Treguard?**

Correct answer: Danny's (Team 4 of Series 1).

Cliché: David's (Team 1 of Series 1).

Explanation: Treguard first uttered those immortal words during episode 6 of series 1, when Danny got blown up. This was an ad-lib from Hugo Myatt and was not adopted as a regular catchphrase for Treguard until series 3, although it cropped up again in series 2 with the death of Akash at the hands of Lillith. The final time Treguard said “Ooh, Nasty!” on Nightmare was during episode 8 of series 8, in response to the mireman-related death of Rebecca.

4. **Which is the last quest to feature the original Helmet of Justice?**

Correct answer: Barry's (Team 7 of Series 7).

Cliché: Chris IV's (Team 7 of Series 6).

Explanation: Chris IV was the last dungeoneer to wear the Helmet of Justice, but Lord Fear used the redundant item of headwear to dress some of his

skeletons in the corridors of Goth, in an attempt to scare dungeoneers. As Barry enters Goth, and has to walk through a Barrier of Anti-Magic, the Helmet of Justice can be seen on the head of a skeleton that is lying on the floor.

5. How many of Nightmare’s contestants can be seen during the closing credits of at least one episode?

Correct answer: 41.

Cliché: 32 – all four members of all eight winning teams.

Explanation: Here are all the contestants that appeared during the closing credits, in order of their first appearance: **1. Maeve** (Team 2 of Series 1), episode 101. **2. Simon** (Team 3 of Series 1), episodes 102 and 103. **3. Danny** (Team 4 of Series 1), episodes 104 and 105. **4. Richard** (Team 6 of Series 1), episodes 107 and 108. **5. Claire** (Team 2 of Series 2), episode 201. **6. Chris** (Team 3 of Series 2), episode 202. **7. Mark** (Team 4 of Series 2), episode 205. **8. Matthew** (Team 4 of Series 2), episode 205. **9. Daniel** (Team 4 of Series 2), episode 205. **10. Jonathan** (Team 4 of Series 2), episode 205. **11. Julian** (Team 9 of Series 2), episode 213. **12. Vaughan** (Team 9 of Series 2), episode 213. **13. Becca** (Team 9 of Series 2), episode 213. **14. Mary** (Team 9 of Series 2), episode 213. **15. Kelly** (Team 7 of Series 3), episode 308. **16. Emma** (Team 7 of Series 3), episode 308. **17. Sarah** (Team 7 of Series 3), episode 308. **18. Tammy** (Team 7 of Series 3), episode 308. **19. Dickon** (Team 6 of Series 4), episode 413. **20. Dominic** (Team 6 of Series 4), episode 413. **21. Tim** (Team 6 of Series 4), episode 413. **22. Praveen** (Team 6 of Series 4), episode 413. **23. Sarah** (Team 3 of Series 5), episode 505. **24. Ben** (Team 4 of Series 5), episode 509. **25. John** (Team 4 of Series 5), episode 509. **26. Ray** (Team 4 of Series 5), episode 509. **27. Jonathan** (Team 4 of Series 5), episode 509. **28. Ben** (Team 5 of Series 6), episode 611. **29. Sofia** (Team 6 of Series 6), episode 613. **30. Claire** (Team 6 of Series 6), episode 613. **31. Kim** (Team 6 of Series 6), episode 613. **32. Emma** (Team 6 of Series 6), episode 613. **33. Julie** (Team 6 of Series 7), episode 712. **34. Helen** (Team 6 of Series 7), episodes 712 and 810. **35. Sam** (Team 6 of Series 7), episode 712. **36. Helen** (Team 6 of Series 7), episodes 712 and 810. **37. Oliver** (Team 7 of Series 8), episode 810. **38. Dunstan** (Team 6 of Series 8), episode 810. **39. Alan** (Team 6 of Series 8), episode 810. **40. Oliver** (Team 6 of Series 8), episode 810. **41. Alex** (Team 6 of Series 8), episode 810.

6. How many Nightmare characters were seen consuming alcoholic drinks?

Correct answer: 5.

Cliché: No particular cliché.

Explanation: Here is the full list – Gumboil (episodes 212 and 215), Brother Mace (episode 416 and others), Sylvester Hands (episode 505 and others), Gwendoline (episodes 515 and 516) and Julius Scaramonger (episode 614).

7. How many witches were seen making use of a broomstick?

Correct answer: 4 – Mildread, Mistress Goody, Heggatty and Peggatty.

Cliché: 3 – Mildread, Heggatty and Peggatty.

Explanation: Mildread, Heggatty and Peggatty can all be seen flying on broomsticks, while Mistress Goody can be seen making use of her magic broom in a different way – to sweep the floor!

Rank	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
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1	Gehn "Lex" Luthor	4	4	3	2	3	1	4	21
2	Liam Callaghan	1	0	3	3	3	2	4	16
3	Ben "Pooka" Maydon	3	1	3	2	0	1	2	12
4	Joe Grocott-James	0	10	4	2	0	1	4	1
5	Ross Thompson	3	10	1	2	0	0	3	-1

Congratulations to Gehn "Lex" Luthor, the new champion of Knightmare QI! I believe this is the second time you have achieved this great honour, Gehn, and that certainly is something to be proud of! Starting next issue, Knightmare QI is going to take a fairly lengthy break, so if you're still up for more, you'd better enjoy these questions from Drassil while you can!

1. Which team was the last to be DISMISSEd by Treguard?
2. Which spell had the greatest number of different casters?
3. Which of these is the odd one out: Samurai, Brollachan, Gretel, Grimwold or Dreadnort?
4. Which three of these are the odd ones in: Sidriss, Puck, Majida, Pixel?
5. What does the sequence 19, 36, 39, 41, 40, 16, 30, 31 signify?
6. Which of these is the odd one out: gauntlet, horn, witch amber or jester's sceptre?
7. What does the sequence 0, 6, 5, 4, 4, 3, 4, 4 signify?
8. Which of these is the odd one out: Temporal Disruption, Walls of Jericho, the writing on the wall, Powers That Be or Behemoth?
9. How many non-winning teams had two episodes entirely to themselves?
10. Name the odd one out: Mellisandre, Lord Fear, Lissard, Raptor.

As ever, there is a maximum score of four points for each question, including one for giving a correct answer and one for identifying the cliché. Answer with a cliché, of course, and you lose ten points, although **only three of these questions actually have specific clichés**, so I've decided to rock the boat a bit by awarding **up to three QI points for each of the other seven!** Make those answers as detailed as you can, but be careful - you could still trip over one of those three clichés! E-mail your answers to me by **Saturday June 13th 2009** and you could be the next Knightmare QI Champion - yes, you really could, because Drassil is ineligible to enter since he wrote the questions! Go on, give it a shot!

REMEMBER THIS?

Series 3. Level 1.

THE VALE OF VANBURN

The Vale of Vanburn - or, to be strictly accurate, the rocky area with the waterfall at the end of the Vale of Vanburn - was the source of the breach between the world of Nightmare and the kingdom of the elves that existed throughout series 3. Treguard referred to the valley as a *strange new land* that didn't quite exist within the confines of the Dungeon, but was nevertheless a part of it. For this reason, the Vale of Vanburn can be seen as a precursor to places such as Wolfenden, Winteria and Witch Haven, which were known to shift in and out of "Dungeon dimensions" at different times.

Because the Vale of Vanburn served as a gateway to the elf world, Velda could often be found on guard here. The wood elf described herself at one point as *Keeper of the Gate*, implying that it was her specific task to guard the valley and prevent any uninvited humans from blundering into the kingdom of the elves. Whether or not Velda had taken it upon herself to perform this task, or whether she had been instructed to guard the breach by some higher elf power, we shall probably never know.

Her role as guardian of the elven realm was perhaps what caused Velda to be so shirty most of the time, as she was obviously of the opinion that unconstrained travel between the realms of human and elf would have constituted an unforgivable affront. Nevertheless, despite Velda's unceasing efforts to keep humans out of the elf world, elves could often be seen walking in and out of the human world with complete impunity as the dungeoneers made their way - often agonisingly slowly - along the valley. The physical features of these elves were never clearly discernable, although there's one that I swear is wearing Sidriss's dress!

Anyway, perhaps we can infer from this occasional elf rush hour that the Vale of Vanburn was, in fact, part of the elf world, and the human world (i.e. the Nightmare Dungeon) had shifted in such a way that the two worlds had become overlaid. But I suppose we'll never really know for sure!

Difficulty: 6 Dealing with Velda was never exactly an easy task.

Killer Instinct: 1 Discounting quicksand, the only threat was the crossbow.

Gore Factor: 2 It only fired purple lasers.

Fairness: 9 A nice introduction to the wider parameters of the Dungeon.

IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME

Following hot on the heels of my lists of Camelot and Robin Hood references, here are all the Knightmare allusions I can find to Greek Mythology. These include all the oracle and Medusa appearances, of course, as well as those of the cowed ferryman, whose similarity to Charon cannot be denied.

Episode	Greek Mythology References
203	Character: Medusa.
206	Character: Oracle of Confusion.
207	Riddle: "No earthly, earthbound steed am I. My hurdles are the mountains and my racetrack is the sky; who am I?" - Granitas. ANSWER: Pegasus.
208	Riddle: "What did Jason seek?" - Merlin. ANSWER: The Golden Fleece.
208/209	Riddle: "What monster did Theseus encounter in the Labyrinth?" - Merlin. ANSWER: Minotaur.
211	Riddle: "Who sang songs to the sailormen; who sang songs of promise but delivered only death?" - Olgarth. ANSWER: Psirens.
212	Riddle: "Paris killed Achilles, but where did his arrow strike?" - Merlin. ANSWER: The heel.
213	Character: Medusa.
304	Character: Oracle. Riddle: "In Ancient Greece, a young maid challenged the goddess Athene to a weaving and spinning competition. The goddess was so angered by her defeat that she turned the girl into a different creature. The girl's name was Arachne. What creature did she become?" - Brangwen. ANSWER: Spider.
305	Character: Oracle. Character: Medusa. Riddle: "What was the nationality of the first Marathon runner?" - Merlin. ANSWER: Greek.

306	<p>Riddle: "Who owned the box that held all the evils of the world; that box which never should have been opened?" - Golgarach. ANSWER: Pandora.</p> <p>Riddle: "Nine goddesses there were in Greece, of music, art and rhyming piece. Now tell me quick and answer true, what name called they this magic crew?" - Golgarach. ANSWER: Muses.</p>
311	Character: Oracle.
313	Riddle: "Name the ship of heroes; the ship in which Jason sailed to find the Golden Fleece." - Golgarach. ANSWER: The Argo.
314	Character: Oracle.
402	Character: Ferryman. "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" asks Brother Mace, upon learning the name of the dungeoneer - but it's Helen of Sunderland, not Helen of Troy!
405	Character: Ferryman.
409	"You're not Amazons, are you?" Treguard asks of Vicky's advisors.
412	Character: Ferryman.
416	Character: Ferryman.
504	Character: Ferryman.
711	Riddle: "Castor was one; who was the other?" - Brollachan. ANSWER: Polydeuces.
805/806	Lord Fear contrives a plan to have Snapper-Jack ask Nathan a series of Greek Mythology riddles, which he will be completely unable to answer. Nathan buys a talking book from Honesty Bartram to answer the questions for him, but the quest comes to an end before this plot strand can be resolved.
807	Riddle: "Give me the name of the God down there, beginning with P." - Snapper-Jack. ANSWER: Pluto.

ADVENTURE TIME

Tragedy for Queen Kalina

The time has come once again to join Ross Thompson on his roller coaster of a journey through the Nightmare Dungeon, where a great

power struggle is even now taking place. How will the next dungeoneer fare in this most inhospitable of environments?

A tall, brown-haired boy walks through the Dungeon door.

"Greetings," Treguard says. "Your name, please."

"My name is Matthew."

"Please call your advisors," Treguard instructs.

"Ben, Daniel, Nathan, come!"

"Majida! The helmet!" Treguard orders. "Now, here is the knapsack and the eye shield. The quest objects have been put aside for the moment - we must retrieve something that has been stolen by Lord Fear, who dwells in level three. Mogdred and Morghanna are struggling for power over level two, and Queen Kalina rules level one. Your quest, Matthew, is to retrieve the reach wand. Be successful and you will be placed on the scrolls of honour. So now, enter the Dungeon..."

"Where am I?" Matthew asks.

"You're in a big room," Daniel describes, "and it is all green. On a throne in front of you is a woman all in red."

"Aha!" the woman says. "A dungeoneer! I am Queen Kalina and I rule level one."

"Get out of there quickly, Matthew!" Ben panics.

"Don't worry, team," says Treguard. "Listen to what she has to say first."

"I hate Mogdred and Lord Fear, as they are both trying to rule the whole Dungeon. Are you allies to these miserable tyrants?"

"No, my quest is against them," Matthew replies.

"Oh good. Remember to address me as Your Majesty."

"Okay," Matthew replies.

"Call me Your Majesty!"

"Sorry, Your Majesty!"

"That's better. Now, I was thinking of making a pact with you, but you are a bit rude..."

"I apologise, Your Majesty."

"Good. Now, if you can find a small drinking glass which is situated somewhere in level three, I will reward you. My calling name is Karine. Call three times and I will come, or at least I will try. It's getting harder to enter level three by magic. Now, be off with you!"

Daniel directs Matthew out of the door.

"Careful, team, I can hear a goblin horn!" Treguard exclaims.

"Where am I?"

"You're in a long corridor," Ben describes. "There are two doors - one on your left and one on your right."

"Hurry, team! This is the Corridor of the Catacombs! That figure down there is the Mindless Mechanical Warrior - beware! Also, I think those goblins are hot on your heels!" Treguard warns.

"Come on, team!" Majida shouts.

"What's that, Master?" Pickle asks.

"It's a scroll!" Nathan notices. "Read it quickly!"

The scroll has a symbol on it, and Ben notices that the same symbol is over the door on the left.

"Go that way!" Nathan shouts.

Ben begins to guide Matthew out when the Automatum starts walking down the corridor. The goblin horn sounds again.

"Walk forward!"

The Automatum closes in on Matthew.

"Turn left! TURN LEFT!"

The Automatum is right behind Matthew and the goblins appear.

"WALK FORWARD!" Ben shouts, and leads Matthew through the door.

"Matthew, it looks like a clue room. Walk up to the table."

Matthew takes the bread from the table. There is also a bar of gold, some dragon mints and a lamp.

"What should we take, Matthew?" Daniel asks, just as Brangwen's face appears on the wall.

"Stop, intruder!" the wall monster commands. "You, thief, must answer my riddles before you may pass."

Suddenly, goblins run into the room.

"Go, vermin!" Brangwen shouts, and the goblins run away. "Now, you! You still have a chance, though you must answer at least one of my three riddles correctly. Here is my first. The colour green is deemed lucky for sailors. True or false?"

"No, can't be," Ben says, "because sailors were sick a lot and stuff - I just don't think it's right."

"False," Matthew says,

"Truth accepted. Here is my second. The common cold is a bacteria. True or false?"

"True!" Matthew says immediately.

"Falsehood," Brangwen answers. "It is a virus. Here is my third. The pterodactyl was the world's largest flying animal. True or false?"

"Yes, that's right, Matthew," Nathan says.

"True."

"Truth accepted. Two is the score, you may know more. The wyrm that lies ahead demands payment. The lamp may bring you no light."

Brangwen disappears. Matthew takes the lamp and the gold. Next, Matthew faces a terrible challenge - the Block and Tackle. Nathan automatically switches to panic mode as he guides Matthew narrowly past the first pit. He agrees for Ben to take over. A pit appears to Matthew's left.

"Sidestep right!"

Blocks swing from left to right, narrowly missing Matthew.

"QUICKLY!"

Matthew just makes it through the door. He enters a large cave. Smirkenorff the dragon is sitting in his pit.

"Oh, don't just hang around, come on over!" he says. "So, dungeoneer, what's your name and quest?"

"I am Matthew, on the quest for the reach wand."

"Very good! I have some magic here, but I don't give it away willy-nilly. Have you got any payment?"

"I have a bar of gold," Matthew says.

"What good is a bar of gold to a dragon in a pit? No, Matthew, but thank you for the offer. I must let you continue. Good luck on your quest."

Matthew exits the room with guidance from Ben. The next room includes a well, though it spells panic for the team as they notice Lord Fear standing in the corner.

"You may go no further in what should soon be MY level and MY Dungeon!" Lord Fear proclaims.

Fear conjures a big haunting over the top of the well, barring Matthew's path.

"Just that pesky Mogdred to go, and the Dungeon will be mine!"

The team notice Queen Kalina magically locked up in a cage made out of skeletron bones.

"Help, Matthew, help!" she pleads. "I'll remove that haunting for you!"

"What nonsense!" Lord Fear says. "You are now mine, Kalina, and I will see Hands remove you from the Dungeon. Hands! Where are you? Come and get this Kalina, and take the dungeoneer with you too!"

Will Hands and Lord Fear spell doom for Matthew? Will Queen Kalina escape Lord Fear's clutches? Read the next Adventure Time to find out.

PUZZLE PAGE ONE

"Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness."

There was nothing many Nightmare characters enjoyed more than disguising themselves as other Nightmare characters, or even as new characters of their own devising! Of course, some disguises were a lot more convincing than others! Which character is speaking in each quote below, and as what or whom (by means of a costume change or a magic spell) are they disguised at the time?

1.) "And what do you think you are doing? So, we meet at last, _____. And do you know who I am, or perhaps more importantly, what I am?"

2.) "Despite one's oddly reduced circumstances, one is always pleased to... see a new face."

3.) "Fill us a frothy tankard, will ya? I tell you what, being a wandering troub... trouba... singing person, don't half work up a terrible thirst."

4.) "Oh, pity a poor beggar; a poor, blind, starving beggar with no food, obviously. Oh, do I sense a presence there? Come closer."

5.) "I've just finished baking this lovely pie, and if you come over here, you can help yourself to a great big slice!"

6.) "Such strangeness; such oddness. Hordriss will be completely deceived, Lordness."

7.) "Have pity! Pity a poor prisoner unjustly held! Help me! Help me!"

8.) "And to further help you if I might, for we are but travellers who pass in the night, there is this - the spell FLOAT will help you through the trapdoor you will find."

9.) "Go away! Nasty, pesky little humans, go away! _____ don't like humans, go away!"

10.) "Welcome, _____. Congratulations on finding the wellway to level two. Now the well is right in front of you, so just walk forwards until you can see the edge and climb in!"

11.) "I knows it I does, I knows it! When it dies, yeah! I ate a swan once, it was lovely!"

12.) "Supplies and equipment, equipment and supplies - only the best when you're on a quest! Ah, I suppose you want to know what I'm selling. Well, I'm afraid that depends on what you're buying, and talking of buying, what are you paying?"

EAST IS EAST

Eastern Mythology in Nightmare

By Rosey Collins

We all know that Nightmare is packed with puzzles, riddles, characters, settings etc. inspired by western mythology - Grimm fairytales, Camelot, Robin Hood... loads of cool stuff! But also, here and there, we saw a sprinkling of myths from other parts of the world. Every culture has its myths and legends, and personally I've always been rather partial to those from the east, most famously the stories told by Scheherazade to her sultan husband who likes to behead his wives the morning after they marry. Myths from all over the world have a basic formula: magic, adventure, love, hate, good vs. evil... all the classic stuff, and it's interesting to see what different cultures do with the same ideas. So anyway, how much eastern mythology made it into Nightmare? We shall see.

The first reference to eastern mythology comes as early as episode one, when Maeve has to spell out SESAME by walking on the jumbled letters on the floor in order to unlock a door. "Open Sesame" is surely the most famous password (actually, it's two words) ever! In series five, it is twice given as a spell that opens locked doors: it is given to Ben by Brother Mace, and to Duncan by Elita. ("*That's S-E-S-A-M-E, stupid!*" - *Elita*.) In the media, the phrase "Open Sesame" is usually shown in connection with the story of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and protects a cave of

stolen treasures. According to my edition of *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, this is correct. Ali Baba is a poor woodcutter, who happens upon the forty thieves and sees them stashing their loot in the cave. Ali Baba then enters the cave himself, and steals some gold. He tells his brother-in-law Kasim all about it, and Kasim goes to see for himself - but he forgets the words "Open Sesame", and stands there saying things like "Open Wheat" and "Open Barley" until the thieves turn up and kill him. (Sesame is, of course, an Asian plant. Perhaps when you were forced to make bread rolls at school, as we all were, you sprinkled some sesame seeds on one or two of them.)

Getting back to Maeve, one of her riddles from *Granitas* was all about a creature that lives in the Himalayas: the Yeti. My geography isn't up to very much, I'm afraid, but I do know that that particular mountain range is in the east because I watched a programme about it, presented by Michael Palin, although he unfortunately did not meet the Yeti. The riddle is this:

*Name the manlike monster of the snows,
Whose face and form nobody knows.*

Then how do you know it's manlike? Well, anyway, speaking of riddles - here is one of Merlin's, which was put to silly old Richard of series one (imagine taking the dagger!):

As the eagle is to the sparrow, so the great bird of legend is to the condor. Only his memory survives; but can you remember his name?

This is a rather complicated way of asking for the name of a really, really big bird, but it's quite poetic. Richard does not know the answer: roc. According to my book (which calls it a *rukh*, but never mind), a roc has *claws as large as the tusks of elephants* and *feathers as black as my miserable fate*. These words are spoken by Sinbad the Sailor, telling the story of when he was carried away by one such bird. She drops him into her nest, next to her egg, and sits on them both. I suppose she plans to feed Sinbad to her chick when it hatches. Sinbad, of course, manages to escape. He ties himself to the roc's talon with his turban, and waits for her to fly him out of there herself. I'm sure the chick got its meal in the end, though - I have heard that rocs are rather partial to a bit of elephant.

Getting back to Nightmare, then, series six makes use of a new Samurai spell. A samurai is, or was (they're not around so much now), an aristocratic Japanese warrior, who according to Nightmare repeatedly raised and lowered their swords whilst moving aimlessly around. The samurai warrior appears twice, and only in series six. Dungeoneer Matt receives the spell from Sidriss, and then uses it to subdue Sylvester Hands. ("Ooh! It's a samurai person!" - *Hands*.) The second time the samurai is summoned, it is an attempt by the Opposition to scare away the merchant Ah Wok, who is stealing business from Julius Scaramonger - Ah Wok had perhaps had a bad experience with a Japanese warrior back home. Of course, Alan has to dispel the apparition in return for a bit of help with his quest. The samurai warrior can also be seen stalking through the dwarf tunnels during the end credits of one episode. A screen test, perhaps? It seems likely - but in the end, they decided not to have the samurai pursuing dungeoneers.

Samurai warriors, I must point out, aren't actually mythological. As I have mentioned them anyway, I must also point out that the Nightmare assassins were inspired by the original Muslim assassins who operated during the Crusades. But now let us get back to myth.

I must give a quick mention to oil lamps, famous as they are in the story of *Aladdin* - or indeed, *The Tale of Ala al-Din and his Wonderful Lamp*. Everyone knows that a wish-granting genie came out of Aladdin's lamp, even if only from watching Disney. Disney's *Aladdin* is a fabulous film, but it deviates a great deal from the original story - you'll get a truer adaptation if you go to a pantomime version. In the original story, the princess is tricked into exchanging Aladdin's seemingly tatty old lamp for a brand new one - but thankfully, he still has the *Genie of the Ring*. Great stuff. Unfortunately, the oil lamps found in the Nightmare Dungeon have nothing to do with genies. In the very first episode, David failed to take the oil lamp among his level one clue objects, and therefore starved to death in a darkened room for want of a light source. There was also an oil lamp among the level two clue objects that series two's Julian was not able to take. I doubt it would have contained a genie - it was all just a bunch of stuff he didn't need!

Speaking of genies, let's not forget everyone's favourite character! (Well, maybe not...) Jackie Sawiris did her job as well as could be expected, and I don't blame her for anything, but unfortunately Majida was simply not a good replacement for Pickle. But she *was* a genie. She

looked fairly eastern, thanks to her dark colouring and the efforts of the costume department (who did a much better job with her in series seven than eight, in my opinion), and of course her feigned generic foreign accent. By series eight she seems at home in the antechamber, and she and Treguard have grown used to each other. For much of series seven, however, she is constantly asking questions about the characters in the Dungeon, while Treguard does not even know what a genie *is*. Their total ignorance of each other's mythology and culture is believable, and a nice touch. Majida, unlike Aladdin's genies - from a lamp and a ring respectively - comes from a bottle.

This may remind you of Christina Aguilera's debut single, and/or popular sixties sitcom *I Dream of Jeannie*. But you may not be familiar with the story of *The Fisherman and the Bottle*, in which - you'll never guess - a fisherman finds a bottle. From it he releases a genie, who has been trapped for thousands of years, and consequently is very upset and has vowed to kill whoever releases him. Had someone got to him a thousand years earlier, he would have been grateful and granted wishes - something genies are famous for, although Majida never suggests that she could grant wishes if she wanted to. (Well, she's so moody and objectionable, I expect she just doesn't feel like it.) Anyway, if you're worried about the fate of the fisherman, don't be - he lives. He somehow traps the genie in the bottle again, and throws it out to sea. Majida, meanwhile, was only trapped in her bottle for a week. Perhaps Treguard has heard something of *The Fisherman and the Bottle*, as he was so quick to suggest - with more than a hint of sarcasm - that Majida was about to claim she had been trapped for a thousand years.

Finally, Nightmare has one other character who comes from the east: series six's Captain Nemanor, played by Adrian Neil. Like Majida, Nemanor has a hard-to-place foreign accent and a distinctly eastern appearance, thanks to the costume and makeup departments. I always liked this character, as he reminded me straightaway of Sinbad the Sailor - a favourite mythological figure of mine - as he appears in illustrations, and those rather old films that are sometimes on telly. It seems likely that Sinbad was the direct inspiration for Nemanor, or at least influenced his development when the character was being fleshed out. In the original *Arabian Nights*, Sinbad sailed seven voyages, although only two of them are recounted in my edition. Then Shahrazad - who spells her name slightly differently in this version - gets bored of Sinbad

after two voyages, and simply says, "Sinbad sailed on five more voyages, my attentive and unsleeping lord."

There have been several films inspired by Sinbad, including a very poor animated one starring Brad Pitt, and a second-rate television series from Canada, starring Zen Gesner, that I rather enjoyed. In this respect, Sinbad is rather like Count Dracula, appearing in several adaptations that have little to do with the original stories. Nemanor, on the other hand, appears in only one series of *Knightmare*, and three quests. He must have an interesting story; we are led to wonder how and why he ended up as captain of the *Cloudwalker*. "*This ship is cursed never to find land, and I am cursed never to leave it.*" - **Nemanor**. Intriguing stuff! But characters' back stories were never explored on screen, which is no great loss; the focus was always on the quest, leaving Nemanor with little to do. Alan boards his ship, but does not meet the captain in person; he only sees him in a spyglass sequence, assuring Lord Fear that any stowaways caught on his ship will be killed. Nemanor hates two things: stowaways, and Lord Fear. Therefore, when he meets Ben and has made him pay for passage on his ship, he is prepared to help with his quest against Lord Fear (which is a fix anyway, but that's another story). He also lets dungeoneer Chris take his lightning rod at the end of the series, in order to stop Lord Fear from killing everybody with his dragon, Red Death.

So there you have it. From its first episode to its last (thanks to Majida's continued presence throughout series eight), *Knightmare* incorporated a smattering of eastern mythology, and a few assassins and samurai warriors as well. Maeve and her team had their knowledge of eastern mythology tested extensively (well, twice) and Richard once, both in series one. It is not until series six that characters came to the Dungeon from the east. For me, both Nemanor and Ah Wok were welcome additions to the cast, and provided a nice bit of variety. It's a shame that Majida, who was such a poor character, had to represent the east entirely on her own for the last two series. But still, genies are arguably - I would say *definitely* - the most famous mythical creatures to come from the east, so it only seems right that one should have appeared in *Knightmare*. It might have been interesting, and certainly useful, to have a genie in the Dungeon. It's easy to see what would have happened: the dungeoneer would have helped the genie out - perhaps freeing it from some kind of container - and got a wish in return. A password or a spell, probably. But that didn't happen. Oh well.

Reference: Geraldine McGaughrean, *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* (1982) (Oxford University Press, 1999)

CLASSIC QUEST

Series 7

Quest: The Sword.

Dungeoneer: Nicola II.

Advisors: Diane, Lisa and Vicky.

Home town: Oldham.

Team score: 6 out of 10.

Nicola and her Lancashire lasses were quite engaging and did quite well, so now it's finally time for them to get the recognition they deserve. Lisa certainly wins the prize for the best ever item of advisor clothing - a white t-shirt with a big pink hippo on it!

Level One: The quest begins in a dark dwarf tunnel, where Nicola has terrible problems as she attempts to pluck a bag of gold off the wall in front of her. This item is required to pay off Sylvester Hands, who is in the middle of robbing Romahna in the subsequent courtyard. Hands is only too pleased to make a quick exit in exchange for the gold, although Romahna is as shirty and ungrateful as usual; all Nicola gets in return for rescuing the dragon wardress is a short escort to the clue room. Here she picks up a glow-light and a wand - the Wand of Confusion, according to the scroll - before making use of a spyglass. The team sees Lord Fear and Lissard discussing the shortcomings of the Pool of Veracity, before the Brollachan turns up and does his usual moaning act.

In the next room, Nicola meets Sidriss and a giant cat. Sidriss explains that her feline companion is actually Marta, whom she has accidentally transmogrified during an argument. In return for her wand, Sidriss gives Nicola a firestone. She also attempts to transform Marta back to normal, but only succeeds in turning her into a black labrador. Another maze of dark dwarf tunnels, which is made slightly less dark by means of the glow-light, leads to the final chamber of the level. Unexpectedly, Raptor runs into the room with Grippa and Rhark, and Nicola is promised a quick and

decisive death. However, the large metal door opens and Smirkenorff promptly sees Raptor off by launching a fireball at his backside! (This is a very fun scene, but it's completely pointless in the context of the quest itself.) Smirkenorff accepts the firestone as payment for Nicola's flight to level two, and flies her to the Rift of Angar.

Level Two: Hordriss and Grimaldine are thoughtlessly blocking the way into the second level by throwing fireballs at each other across the path. (Treguard explains that they are taking part in a Wizards' Test Match.) The team has to time Nicola's dash to the door, which doesn't present any major problems. However, it seems that Hordriss does have some major problems, as he runs after Nicola and accosts her in the next room, looking distinctly green. The reason for Hordriss's predicament is obvious - he's been hit by a green fireball, which Grimaldine has sneakily unleashed in an attempt to win the Test Match. Hordriss charges Nicola with finding a health potion to return him to normal, and tells her that she should call him once she gets hold of one.

The level two clue room soon follows, and unfortunately it is here that the fatal mistake is made. The girls work out to take a divining rod from the table, acting on the advice of the scroll, but they are left with the choice of a purse of silver and a *nightsight* potion, with no clues to choose between them. Sadly but not unreasonably, seeing as they know they are probably going to have to buy Hordriss's potion, they decide to take the silver. In the next room, the divining rod is used to discover a spyglass, through which the team sees Lord Fear telling Lissard the combination to the Trial by Spikes. It is the first appearance of the deadly puzzle, yet the girls manage to handle it with no real difficulty. On the Trial By Spikes, they are able to pick up a bar of gold. (This does not say anything good about the choice they made back in the clue room, which is a sad fact of which the team and the watchers are well aware by now.)

Nicola goes on to meet Rothberry, who (after a very funny exchange) sells her a health potion for Hordriss in exchange for the gold. Nicola calls *Malefact* three times and Hordriss arrives, still looking rather green about the gills... and everywhere else, for that matter. Once he has taken the potion, he returns to full health and rewards Nicola with a key that will allow her to access the Descender, which he says will take her to level three. However, she doesn't get that far. The next chamber is enshrouded in darkness, and without the *nightsight*, there is nothing the team can do to rectify this state of affairs. As goblin horns blare out and

troll steps echo ominously, Lord Fear himself delivers a message: "*Two-nil, I think. Nice one!*" - **Lord Fear**. This is not really a very satisfying death at all!

Summary: Just short of a level three performance - they could have done with a scroll clue to take that *nightsight*, really. Interestingly enough, this was the only death in series 7 not to occur on either Play Your Cards Right or the Trial by Spikes.

LIAM'S BIG THREE

With Liam Callaghan

Defenders of the Earth (continued):

I finally gave in to curiosity and picked up a DVD containing the first eight episodes and the very last one, and another one containing the three five-part adventures the series produced, although that second box-set had two faulty discs, and I haven't been able to obtain replacements. So here, I'll finally comment on the beginning of the series. I think that the episode *Root of Evil* was the first one they made, because the animation is radically different to the rest of the series. Ming's skin is pale blue instead of green, the Ice Robots have a different design, Lothar, LJ and Jedda have different outfits (and indeed Jedda has a completely different hairstyle), and Mandrake and LJ have slightly different voices (still voiced by the same actors, but they simply hadn't settled on the exact tones, notably Mandrake does have a slight American accent). Although it wasn't the first episode in terms of the whole storyline. It's a stand-alone episode that you could place pretty much anywhere.

The first two episodes are *Escape From Mongo* and *The Creation of Monitor*, and it's in these two that the whole overarching storyline is set up. In the first episode, Ming drained the life force from Flash's wife with his Inquisitor, and left Mongo for Earth; Flash teamed up with Mandrake and Lothar, and then sought out the Phantom, who also joined them. In the second episode, both the Defenders and Ming set up their bases - Monitor and Ice Station Earth - with Rick using a crystal taken

from the Inquisitor, containing the essence of his mother's personality, to create their supercomputer Dynak X.

A quicker setup, then, than either of the other two shows - Visionaries started with a three-part storyline (although the basics were all set up in the first episode) while Thundercats took four to six episodes, depending on what you're counting as the cutoff point for setting up the important details. Then again, gadgetry aside, the setting of the show does allow for a quicker setup - it's contemporary, it's on Earth, and the characters are human... well, the good guys are! This also allows for the moral messages of some episodes to be more obvious. Having looked up synopses for the complete series online, I noticed that a lot of moral messages are shown much more directly than with other shows. There's an episode where Rick battles with a drug problem, and another where Kshin has a friend in a wheelchair who uses his disability to his advantage to outwit Ming.

Anyway, after watching the two DVDs, and getting another video in a charity shop (containing one episode I already had on DVD and one that I didn't), I can finally draw some conclusions. Notably, the best episodes tend to be the ones where everybody has a part to play. This isn't an absolute divide, of course not - *A House Divided*, which is entirely about the history of the Phantom and is the first episode not to feature all the Defenders, is a cracker. But that was a personal storyline for the character - the personal element is missing from the three episodes on that first video I bought, so my general point still stands - it's best when they make use of all the characters.

This is why the five-parters are worth watching; the Prince Krotan one in particular, but also *The Necklace of Oros* - although strictly speaking, the middle episode doesn't really further the storyline, and it would be just as effective if it wasn't there. Still, that's more continuous than *The Book of Enigmas*, which is really just five individual episodes linked by the presence of this book that Kshin discovers in Mandrake's library.

As for individual episodes, special mention must go to two. Firstly, *Sleeper Awakes*, in which Ming resurrects an ancient Annihilator robot - by far and away the best episode to feature Kshin at the heart of the storyline (for once he doesn't come across as annoying) and featuring a guest appearance from another Visionaries actor, Neil Ross. Indeed, the moral lesson of the episode, about finding your inner strength, is very, very well handled, better than a lot of equivalent episodes in different

series, particularly *Feryl Steps Out* in *Visionaries*. The other special mention goes to *Bits 'n' Chips*, in which Ming takes over Dynak X, because it is the only single episode on this set in which everybody (apart from Kshin) has their part to play... not counting the first two episodes, of course, because the opening storyline of a series is always an ensemble piece.

To conclude, then, this show does still hold up, but it does depend on which episodes you get. The DVD sets that have been released are pretty good, but I'd rather see a release of the whole series, then I could judge it properly. Still, I'm willing to give it the thumbs up for the moment.

Thundercats:

As I said last time, this was the first one I ever got into, and again it has evoked mixed feelings, although there's a different reason for this, as will become clear. I'm sure you don't need any explanations about Lion-O, Tygra, Panthro, Cheetara, Wilykit, Wilykat and Snarf escaping from their dying home planet of Thundera and finding a new home on Third Earth - which, if you're not sure, is definitely our planet, way, way in the future, presumably after we nuke ourselves back into the Stone Age!

This show had possibly the most memorable catchphrase of any action cartoon ever - I refer of course to Lion-O's famous, "Thunder! Thunder! Thunder! Thundercats - Ho!" accompanied by a glowing Sword of Omens, and that red beam with the cat's head signal coming out for the other Thundercats to respond to. It was certainly not the only catchphrase the show had, though - Lion-O frequently also commanded the sword to "Come to my hand!" or "Give me sight beyond sight!"

Then there was Mumm-Ra's famous transformation sequence, in which he called out, "Ancient Spirits of Evil, transform this decayed form to Mumm-Ra, the Ever Living!" - and magically, his bandages would fly off, and he grew to twice his original size. No doubt about it, Mumm-Ra was the scariest of all the classic cartoon villains.

Other prominent memories included the incidental music, which, unlike the other series I've mentioned, had specific themes for different occurrences. Tygra, Cheetara and Panthro each had their own theme, as did the Thunderkittens, Snarf, Jaga and Mumm-Ra. There were multiple themes for the Sword of Omens, depending on what Lion-O was doing with it, and various establishing themes for the Cats' Lair and Castle

Plundarr, but undoubtedly the coolest theme in this show was that of the Thundertank.

My first grown-up exposure to the show came when the DVD was first coming out; they showed a clip of it on TV - specifically, the final scene of the very first episode. Not the most exciting scene... in fact, quite a boring bit to be honest. It didn't exactly fill me with high expectations of how well the show had aged, so I didn't bother with it. But then, as with Defenders of the Earth, I found an old video in a charity shop containing a couple of episodes, one of which I remembered very well indeed; the other one I remembered the basic premise of, but not much in the way of detail. Rather a random pairing of episodes, to be honest - they weren't even next to each other in production or air-date order, let alone any continuity in the overall storyline. Still, after the disheartening experience with Defenders of the Earth, I figured I had nothing to lose, so I bought it, and to my pleasant surprise, it was all right.

After subsequently acquiring the first four episodes by means of a trade, I then felt brave enough to get the first season DVDs, or rather to ask my best friend to get them for my birthday. Watching it all brought back a lot of memories. Indeed, I remembered most of the episodes from my youth, and saw them in a whole new light as an adult, with certain episodes tackling social themes like drug addiction, mindless violence and so on. These episodes did have the obligatory moral lesson at the end, of course, and while they didn't have quite as much subtlety as Visionaries, it wasn't patronising.

Special mention must again be made of the voice actors - this show had a cast of just six in the first season, some of them providing many voices. Notably, in the first season, Lynne Lipton voiced every single female character in the show (and every married one, too)! As to the male actors, some voice pairings are easier to identify than others; notably Peter Newman, primarily responsible for the voice of Tygra, was also the man behind Wilykat and Monkian. Equally, you could always tell any voices provided by Earle Hyman, who gave us Panthro, because his voice was so distinctive. Earl Hammond in the parts of Jaga and Mumm-Ra is also not too difficult to imagine, but add Vultureman to the list and you might just be surprised.

Although not as much as with the two real stars of the show, Larry Kenney and Robert McFadden. Larry Kenney is the man who was

responsible for Lion-O, but he also provided the voice of Jackalman! Don't believe me? I don't blame you; I didn't believe it myself at first. But get the Season 1, Volume 2 DVD, which includes interviews with the cast and crew, and you'll hear him switch between the two voices at the drop of a hat! Voice acting doesn't get much better than this! As for Robert McFadden, he voiced Slithe and... Snarf! You have to watch a lot of episodes, including the later series, to connect those two voices to the same actor, and even then it's via a long chain of "guest" characters.

Speaking of the later series, it's time to talk about them. As far as I am aware, only the first season was ever broadcast on British television - certainly on the BBC, anyway; I don't know about Sky. Anyhow, Season 2, Volumes 1 and 2 actually consist of seasons 2, 3 and 4, along with the movie - *Thundercats Ho!* - which may have been screened over here; some people do appear to remember it. Anyway, the movie occurs before the start of the second season, because it serves as an introduction to three new Thundercats - Bengali (voiced by Peter Newman), Pumyra (newcomer Gerianne Raphael), and Lynx-O (Robert McFadden, although many sources credit this character incorrectly to other newcomer Doug Preis).

Of these, only Lynx-O is a really worthwhile addition, and it's worth pointing out here that this character is blind, but he certainly makes the most of his other senses, to the point where you actually forget he has a disability at all. Moreover, there are one or two episodes where it's Lynx-O, not Lion-O, who saves the day, although this is not completely unprecedented as Tygra, Cheetara, the Thunderkittens and Snarf all had an episode or two in the first season where they got to save the day - although oddly not Panthro.

Of course, with new heroes come new villains, and Season 2 started with Mumm-Ra getting his new canine sidekick, the otherwise silent Ma-Mutt, the only new character whose presence wasn't properly explained. Mumm-Ra also ordered the Mutants to release the Lunataks - Luna (voiced by Lynne Lipton), Amuk (Earl Hammond, apparently), Chilla (who, as her name implied, had powers of heat and cold, voiced by Gerianne Raphael), Red-Eye (Earle Hyman's character had exceptional eyesight, and could even see Tygra when invisible), Tug-Mug (with the ability to manipulate gravity; this was either Robert McFadden or Larry Kenney - whoever it was, it's the same voice as Ratar-O), and Alluro (this *was* Doug Preis; he doesn't sound like any other character).

Once again, of these, only Alluro is a worthwhile addition, with his power to talk an opponent into surrender. Chilla would have been a decent one-time villain, as would Red-Eye, and even Tug-Mug, but certainly they should never have been regular characters. As for the diminutive Luna, she led the group but had no special power to speak of, except in one episode where she recovered her grandmother's belt, which endowed her with considerable powers, as well as more than doubling her height. But usually she just rode around on the large-but-dim Amuk. I have to say, these characters were completely pointless. The Mutants at least had some modicum of personality, but the Lunataks were much too samey. Still, that was only the tip of the iceberg.

Now, maybe my opinion is biased by the weight of nostalgia, but these newer series did not have anything like the same clout as the first season. They had their moments, certainly, but it got more than a little dodgy on more than one occasion. This may have something to do with head writer Leonard Starr leaving the creative staff. He wrote all the really important episodes in the first series, establishing the continuity of everything, but his name is completely missing from the individual episode credits in seasons three and four (he's still listed as head writer on the closing credits, but no individual episodes are credited to him).

For starters, the Sword of Omens was able to do things that it could never have done in the first series. Notably, the summoning catchphrase seemed to have much more use, and not just for summoning purposes. Yes, there was the odd occasion in the first season when that catchphrase suddenly gave the other Thundercats the strength to suddenly overcome adversity that had seemed impossible - including one episode where they recovered from being turned to stone - but these were exceptions. In the later series, it was the other way around. Not only did the sword give them the extra strength, but it did other things too. In one episode, it knocked Mumm-Ra for six, in another it reformed the broken Chain of Loyalty, and in another the beam curved round and pressed a button to stop an out-of-control train. I could go on, but I think I've made my point.

Secondly, the presence of the newer characters did sideline some of the older ones. Establishing the Lunataks meant we didn't see much of the Mutants in the second season, although that's nothing compared to the fourth season, when both of these groups were almost completely absent, except for one episode each (two for Vultureman). Likewise in the fourth

season, when the Thundercats returned to New Thundera, Tygra and Pumyra were left behind on Third Earth, and only appeared in three episodes each. Tygra's role was taken over by Bengali and Lynx-O, and Lynx-O also took over a lot of the role that originally went to Jaga. This last detail did have practical advantages, as Jaga's ghost could only appear to Lion-O, but it did reduce Jaga's role to little more than, "Use the power of the Sword of Omens" - meaning, "Use your catchphrase".

This is best illustrated in one episode where Lion-O, Tygra, Panthro and Cheetara were trapped in a stony prison that would shrink whenever they tried to escape from it. All four of them used their weapons to various effects - including Lion-O with the sword - but then Jaga appeared and told him to use the sword, this time he used the catchphrase, and as if by magic, they were all propelled to freedom. So much for Jaga's role, and Tygra's - particularly as they had the best themes of the individual characters.

Back on the subject of New Thundera, that's the third problem, with both seasons three and four. In season three, the exploded planet Thundera reforms, and the rest of the season is spent making several trips to New Thundera to find and recover various pieces of it, including the Chain of Loyalty, the Bracelet of Power, the Totem of Dera, and the Key of Thundera. Then in season four, they return to New Thundera and actually re-settle there.

As if that wasn't hard enough to swallow, a lot of Thunderian refugees gradually arrive on the planet - refugees that shouldn't even be alive! It was made very clear in the first episode that, apart from the flagship, all fleeing refugee ships were destroyed by the Mutants. Now, maybe you could argue that that was only the final wave of fleeing refugees, which would make sense - after all, you can't evacuate an entire planet in one wave - but that was never specified. The eight characters on board that flagship were clearly specified to be the only survivors (although Jaga of course perished during the voyage). So where did these refugees come from?

OK, having covered the negatives, I'd better sum up. By all means, get the first series DVDs (the red and the blue one) if you remember Thundercats and you're feeling nostalgic. They're still great. However, steer clear of the later series (the yellow and purple ones) if you don't want your memories tarnished.

FOR DUNGEON AND DUNGEON MASTER

By Ricky Temple

The powerful Netherworld sorceress and aristocratic fugitive finished removing her hood and shook her hair free so that it fell freely down her back. She smiled at Princess Deanery's Shar. It was a smile that the Princess knew all too well; a smile that was cold and yet oddly warm at the same time. Lady Mercury was clearly here on business, not pleasure.

"My apologies for the deceit about my name, but I'd prefer it if my visit here was kept secret from all but yourself and Us. It must also, I'm afraid, be as brief as possible, which is the reason I travelled here by teleport, and not by more civilized means," she said, with a slight raise of her eyebrows.

Princess Deanery's Shar nodded - she knew what Lady Mercury meant. "I thought it odd that you should choose to be addressed such. How keeps my brother? I assume it is on his behalf that you have come?"

"You would assume right, Your Majesty."

The Princess narrowed her eyes slightly. "Forgive me, Lady Mercury, but that was only half an answer to my question. Does he keep well, or is he in need of my intervention in matters of the law again? If so, please be straight and to the point!"

For a moment, Lady Mercury's professional veneer slipped and a glimmer of emotion appeared in her eyes in response to the Princess's obvious love for her brother - someone whom Lady Mercury also loved, though she would never tell him so. But as quickly as it appeared, it vanished. Lady Mercury quickly regained her cool, detached business face.

"Rest easy, Your Highness - he keeps well. The reason for my visit is that we would like to inquire as to whether or not you have yet accepted the invitation you received to attend the archery tournament that is to be held by one Hubert Dracher."

Deanery's Shar raised one of her eyebrows slightly; Lady Mercury smiled like the cat that had got the cream.

"We have our sources, Princess. Even within the household of Hubert Dracher."

"Hmm, so I see. In answer to your question, no, I have not yet responded."

"Well then, we would like you to help us... if Your Majesty would consent to do so, that is."

"I'm listening, Constance." Deanery's Shar smiled coolly at the sorceress.

Back in Dunshelm Castle, matters were also progressing, though not as fast as some would have liked.

"PICKLE! PICKLE! Dragon's teeth, but that elf is slow sometimes! PICKLE, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!" Treguard called out, rising from his chair with the intention of going to find his elf assistant himself. Just as he got up, the door opened.

"Apologies, Master, but... root and fen, it didn't seem right to me to hurry a young lady."

"That young lady, Pickle, happens to be a Dungeon Ranger. She'll face far worse in her duties than an elfin halfwit telling her to hurry along, but as both of you have now arrived, please show Ranger Silverdale in."

"No sooner said than done, Master," Pickle said, stepping aside.

Rio Bolt, who had tactfully kept quiet during the exchange, looked towards the door to see who this Ranger Silverdale was. He was slightly taken aback by the sight that met his eyes. Entering the antechamber was a young girl, in her mid to early-late twenties, Rio reckoned, and of average height. She had hazel-brown, shoulder-length hair that ended in curls. Her eyes were a curious mix of brown and green. Her face was not extraordinarily beautiful, but it had an air of cuteness and simple prettiness.

At first glance, Rio thought that her physique and stance looked more like that of a serving wench than of a Ranger. However, when he looked more closely he noticed that she did in fact have the look of someone who at one time had seen some sort of active service. Her arms, though nowhere near as well developed as Gwendoline the Green Warden's or the warrior thief Stiletta's, were undoubtedly athletically more developed than those of a serving wench.

"Come in, Ranger," Treguard bid the lady.

"Thank you, Dungeon Master," she replied in a soft voice, which again seemed at odds with Rio's notions of either a serving wench or a Dungeon Ranger. It lacked the self-confidence of a wench as well as the toughness of a Ranger, yet it seemed to fit this young girl perfectly, and put Rio in mind of a Green Warden, and the manner in which they spoke.

"Ranger Silverdale, you have already been informed of the mission that you have been selected for?" Calwain asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, then. All that remains is for you to meet your partner for this mission."

Calwain beckoned Rio forward. The young girl turned her gaze to him for what seemed to be the first time; Rio guessed this was so by the very slight start she gave when she saw his wounds, and the light of the fire glinting off them. However, she quickly regained herself and extended a hand.

"Hi, I'm Ranger Silverdale."

Rio smiled and shook her hand. He had grown to like this girl in the space of a few moments.

"Ranger? That's a bit of an odd first name," he teased.

The young girl giggled and blushed slightly. "Well, my first name is actually Zyssa."

"It's nice to meet you, Zyssa. My name is Rio Bolt, but just call me Rio."

"Oh, you're the one who..." Zyssa stopped mid-sentence and blushed. "I mean..."

Rio nodded his head slightly. "Yes, I am, but don't be embarrassed about it." He flexed his metal hand. "I don't let it bother me," he said, even though he knew that it was a lie, "so don't let it worry you either."

Zyssa nodded.

"Well, now that you two have met and have been informed of your mission," Calwain said, "it just remains to give you your cover story. Rio, there's always a chance that Dracher will be aware to some degree of who you are. However, it seems unlikely that Lord Fear would have wanted the fact that you escaped broadcast throughout his ranks of minions and allies, so there's a much stronger possibility of Dracher not knowing. Your cover story is going to be that of a local village militia member from Greenshades, and Zyssa here is to be a local maid who is acting as your second for the tournament. It's up to you two what aliases you choose to adopt. Are you both clear on that?"

"Yes, sir," Rio and Zyssa responded.

"Very well, then. Pickle!" Treguard called out, rising once more from his chair. "Have two horses made ready for Rangers Bolt and Silverdale, and make sure the stable boy doesn't use any equipment with Powers That Be markings."

Pickle nodded and hurried off to carry out the instructions. Treguard turned to the two Dungeon Rangers.

"The tournament starts in two days. Dracher's estate is just outside the town of Bruin, a good day's ride from here. It would be advisable to leave as soon as the horses are ready, so as to be sure to arrive in time to sign up for the tournament. May good fortune attend you both upon this most dangerous of undertakings. Should you be able to bring this mission to a successful conclusion, it will be one of the most significant blows dealt to Lord Fear and the Opposition for many a year. Good luck!"

Rio and Zyssa bowed to Treguard and saluted Calwain. They departed from the antechamber and started making their way to the stables to begin their mission. Calwain watched them go, then turned and looked again at Treguard, who was now sitting in his chair and staring into the fire.

"I still don't like it, Dungeon Master," he said in a resigned voice.

"No, Calwain. But the trap is now set and cannot be unset. We must try our best to snare Hubert Dracher in it. There is no other option, much as you may not like it," Treguard sighed. "And neither do I..." he added in a soft voice.

Elsewhere in the realm, on the outskirts of the town of Bruin, preparations were well underway for the great archery tournament. In the grounds of Hubert Dracher's estate, targets were being set up and viewing stands were being erected. Servants were bustling to and fro, making sure all was going according to schedule and would be ready for the big day. In his private study, Hubert Dracher was also finalising some details in regard to the contest. He bowed slightly as the Spy Mirror on the wall fizzed into life, and the image of Lord Fear appeared.

"My Lord, your servant greets you," said Dracher. "Let me express my thanks again, Your Lordship, for your help with this matter - your generosity shall not have been misplaced, I assure you."

"It had better not, Dracher!" Lord Fear replied. "I'm risking a serious amount of cash to bail you out of this mess you've created for yourself."

"I assure you, Lord, you will be fully reimbursed once matters with the Guild's accounts have been set to rights, and the danger of the audit has passed. Has Your Lordship selected a man to represent your interests in the tournament?"

"Yes. One of my top archers has been dispatched to your estate with orders to win the tournament. He will introduce himself to you and identify himself with the day word - RINGER."

"Oh, most appropriate, Your Lordship. Have no fear - I will make sure he wins the tournament."

"He'd better, Dracher... for BOTH your sakes! Dismiss."

The Spy Mirror went black. Dracher gulped slightly. There came a knock on the study door.

"Enter!" he called out, and a servant opened the door and leaned his head in.

"Please excuse the disturbance, Master, but Countess Mercurio has returned from her walk."

"Show her straight in to me."

The servant nodded his head. He then opened the door fully and a lady walked in. She had sandy blond hair that fell to the middle of her back, and pale green eyes. Her features, however, were exquisitely beautiful; in fact they were almost reminiscent of a fine porcelain doll.

"Ah, my dear Jane, please do come in. I trust your trip into town was pleasant?"

"Oh yes, my dear Hubert - a most fruitful visit," she said, with a pleasant smile.

Lady Mercury breathed a mental sigh of relief - the plan was working perfectly and she had got back in time not to draw suspicion. Her glamour spell and her false identity as Countess Jane Mercurio were both working wonders, completely deceiving Dracher and his servants as to her true identity. The pieces were all in place and ready; the trap was primed and set... now all there was to do was wait and see.

REMEMBER HIM?

Series 5. Level 1/2.

THE GATEMASTER

The name of this character sums him up accurately. The *Gatemaster* was to be found guarding gates at the ends of levels in series 5, and it was his decision alone whether anyone was allowed to pass through to the next level. He carried a large staff, and spoke in deep, resonating tones. His large, imposing form was provided by Michael Cule, who fitted the part very nicely.

We first met the *Gatemaster* in episode 6 of the series, when Sarah reached the end of level two. Her way to level three was by means of the *Descender*, which was to be found this time inside the tall, purplish *Gate Tower*. As Sarah approached the tower, the *Gatemaster* strolled in and started speaking to her in a somewhat threatening manner, which the advisors - and I'm sure a lot of the watchers, including myself - obviously found surprising and somewhat unnerving.

The *Gatemaster* went to great lengths to build up his importance as the one person who had the power to decide whether or not Sarah had earned the right to travel to level three: "*All you've achieved so far leads to me!*" - *Gatemaster*. However, once Sarah had told him her name and the object of her quest, he immediately allowed her to pass and told her how to reach level three, by travelling five levels down, six levels up, and then two levels back down again. As the *Descender* only travels downwards (the clue's in the name) Sarah and her friends had to work out that the *Gatemaster* was really telling them to go down one level, which they did fairly quickly.

Although the *Gatemaster* had been keen to stress his role as the sole authority for allowing travellers to reach level three, he never appeared at the end of level two again, for the very good reason that no team got that far in the series after Ben's winning quest, which directly followed Sarah's effort. In order to give the *Gatemaster* more appearances, the *Gate Tower* was moved to the end of level one for Duncan's quest, in the penultimate episode of the series. The *Gatemaster* turned up for a somewhat pointless appearance, during which he scared Sylvester Hands away and then told Duncan that he was allowed to approach the *Gate Tower*. Here the *Gatemaster* demonstrated his authority once more by forbidding Hands to descend to level two for a further four hours, although Duncan's team was cheeky enough to use a *SESAME* spell to open the *Gate Tower* even though the *Gatemaster* had specifically said that magic (along with combat and thievery) was not permitted on neutral ground.

The *Gatemaster* returned for a third appearance in the final episode of the series, although he decided to refer to himself as the *Gate Keeper* this time - perhaps he was trying out a new image. *Dungeoneer Kelly* had to present him with *Gwendoline's* green arrow as a token that she was on the path of truth, which was enough to earn her the *Gatemaster's* generous permission to travel to level two. This time it was not the *Descender* beyond the door, but *Smirkenorff*. The *Gatemaster* instructed *Kelly* to tell the dragon to land when they reached a castle, thus bringing to a close his three somewhat token appearances on *Knightmare*.

It was during the *Gatemaster's* final scene, of course, that perhaps his most defining and pleasing moment occurred. As *Kelly* was about to present the arrow, *Tiny* the hobgoblin wandered into the room in a most threatening manner. This was the first time a hobgoblin had been seen since the penultimate episode of series 3, and I can still remember how exciting it was at the time. As this was the final episode of the series, *Tiny* wasn't actually presenting a threat to the continuation of the quest, as the *Gatemaster* quickly and efficiently sent the creature back to *Mount Fear* with a blast of energy from his staff. However, it was a satisfactory, crowd-pleasing moment, even though it was really just a bit of filler to hasten the end of the series. It was probably the *Gatemaster's* finest hour, as he was shown to be very powerful and ruthlessly efficient, just as he had always claimed to be.

Fear Factor: 8 Especially if you're a hobgoblin!

Killer Instinct: 2 He seemed to respect the sanctity of the quest.

Humour Rating: 1 A tiny bit of mocking humour whilst addressing *Hands*.

Oscar Standard: 9 Not exactly a meaty part, but very effectively done.

KNIGHTMARE LOCATIONS

Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Chichester, West Sussex.

Location: Singleton, near Chichester, West Sussex.

AKA: Wolfenden, the Wolfglade and other village/forest locations.

Series featured in: 5 and 6.

These pictures were taken by me, Jake Collins, and scanned by Rosey Collins, in September 2008.

Here is the market hall from Titchfield, Hampshire, which formed a central part of Wolfenden village... and this time, no pushchairs!



Here we see the far end of Wolfenden High Street, as viewed through the eye shield by Catherine's team during the first episode of series 5, as Catherine made her way towards the Gateway Inn:



The very end of the same eye shield sequence, featuring a brick building that was probably a bit too modern for Wolfenden, which may be why this particular shot was only used once:



Next Issue: More from the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

THE DUNGEON IS ALIVE WITH THE SOUND OF MUSIC

By Ricky Temple

There were few things in the ever-changing world of Knightmare that didn't change completely but that evolved with the programme. For example, the character of Treguard over time changed from the neutral and somewhat sinister observer/referee of the *Greater Game* to the Leader of the Powers That Be, while still maintaining the basic elements of the original character - at least until the eighth series, but let's not dredge that debate up again!

Another element of the show that remained basically the same throughout was the unforgettable theme tune, and in this article I am going to be looking at the different incarnations of this brilliantly constructed piece of music (which was composed by the talented Edward Welch, who also composed the theme tune for *Blockbusters*) and giving my personal opinions of each of them.

Version 1 (Series 1-3):

The original version of the Knightmare theme tune is instantly recognisable, with its shrill and unnerving opening chord, which always sounds to me somewhat like the famous film/TV stock sound, the Wilhelm Scream. This attention-grabbing sound pulls you straight into the show and, coupled with the original animated opening credits, it was a very effective hook to get the viewers interested straight from the word go. The rest of the theme, to me, isn't as striking or attention-grabbing as the first couple of seconds, and at times sounds almost like nothing more than a jumble of sounds. That said, this only adds to the slight unease that the opening shriek/chord instils.

The ending version of this first theme was distinguished - but sadly only for the first series and a few episodes of the second - by an evil laugh pervading the first part. I personally prefer the "evil laugh" version of the original closing theme, particularly when Mary Miller's Lillith laugh was used. Conversely, John Woodnutt's Mogdred laugh always seemed forced to me.

Version 2 (Series 4-5):

This remixed version of the original theme only had a short tenure of two

series, compared to the other two versions' runs of three series. However, I would personally say that this was the pinnacle of the Nightmare theme tune. It took the original version and improved it, without losing the spirit of the original. Although the opening "scream" was dropped, it was replaced by a slow-building intro that led nicely into a much clearer theme. The sense of unease, however, was not lost, and the theme could still send shivers up the spine, as the haunting tone that the slow-building intro created was present throughout the theme.

There was very little marked difference between this remixed version's opening and closing themes. This is by far my favorite version of the opening titles. It starts slowly and builds to a climax, and with its haunting qualities it sets the tone of the show perfectly.

Version 3 (Series 6-8):

This version, in my opinion, could be subtitled *A Remix Too Far*. This was where the Nightmare theme tune lost its way. It is no quirk of fate that this coincided with the original animated titles being replaced by the live-action/CGI version that lasted until Nightmare's untimely end. The new remixed version was synchronized around these opening titles, and suffered as a result. There are far too many sound effects and this detracts from the theme greatly, and makes it feel disjointed. However, this version does not compensate by adding to the slight sense of unease that the theme had always managed to generate, but instead makes it hard to get into the theme at all.

The closing theme does partially make up for this, as it is not weighed down by sound effects and does (with its intro of drums) invoke memories of the Series 4-5 remix. However, it is a little too electronic and feels a little hollow, but it is definitely superior to the opening titles version.

Conclusion:

For a whole legion of fans, the Nightmare theme defined a Friday night's viewing - when it came out of the TV speakers, you knew you were about to be transported to a magical realm of adventures, dragons, wizards and goblins! It was the icing on the cake for one of the greatest kids' TV shows of all time. From the spooky and sinister first version, to the haunting (but all too short-lived) first remix, it set the tone for the show perfectly. Though it did sadly lose its way somewhat with the final version, to this day it ranks in the top five TV themes of all time, in my opinion.

KIDS' TV SHOWS I GREW UP WITH

Focus on: The Mysterious Cities of Gold.

Original Broadcast Run: May 1982 - February 1983 (Japan), September 1986 - June 1987 (UK).

UK TV Channel: BBC1.

The *Mysterious Cities of Gold* is a thirty-nine part animated series that was co-produced by two television companies; one in Japan, the other in France. After the original Japanese and French language versions of the cartoon became immensely popular, it was dubbed into English by a Canadian company in the hopes that it would prove just as popular in the USA and the United Kingdom - and boy, did it prove just as popular!

Interestingly enough, the script was translated from French to English by the Frenchwoman whose striking tones can be heard at the beginning and end of each episode, telling us what has already happened and what is next to come. There are a few slightly iffy lines that perhaps didn't translate from French to English very well, which I'm sure must have been left in for a laugh! For example, exclaiming "*It will eat us all up!*" in a most hammy manner when you are about to be devoured by a giant anaconda is surely not normal behaviour! Still, the Canadian voice actors all do a fantastic job with the script they've got - the show certainly would not be so magical without them!

Ever since I first ventured into the extensive world of Internet TV nostalgia almost ten years ago, *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* is a programme that I have seen mentioned again and again as a televisual masterpiece without equal. I used to have very vague memories of watching the show when I was about six years old, and I remembered that I had enjoyed it a lot, despite the fact that it had seemed somewhat protracted to me back then. Some time during the summer of 2006, my curiosity about just how good the show actually was came to a head, and I watched the whole series on YouTube. What was my eventual verdict? *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* is a televisual masterpiece without equal!

To summarise the series in its simplest terms, it is the story of a twelve-year-old Spanish orphan named Esteban, who sails from Barcelona to South America in search of his father and (purely as a means of finding said parent) the fabled and mysterious Cities of Gold. But this is the sixteenth century - a time of conquistadors, cannons and extreme avarice. As you can imagine, Esteban never has that easy a time of things, especially as he starts to find himself falling deeper and deeper into an epic sci-fi adventure!

Joining Esteban on his voyage to the New World are Zia, a young Inca girl who has been living in Spain as a prisoner for about five years and is desperate to return to her home and her father; Mendoza, a highly skilled Spanish navigator who arranges for Esteban and Zia to stow away on the ship, the *Esperanza*; Pedro and Sancho, two bumbling sailors who provide the "comic relief"; and a whole host of greedy Spaniards - led by the suave and cunning Commander Gomez - who are hoping to force Zia to use her knowledge of the Inca writings - the string Quipu - to lead them to the Cities of Gold. Once the ship has sunk and Esteban, Zia, Mendoza, Pedro and Sancho have become separated from everyone else, they meet up with Tao, the last descendant of an ancient and powerful empire, as well as Kokapetl, Tao's chatty and highly intelligent parrot, on the Galapagos Islands.

Kokapetl is a very interesting character - he does seem to understand everything he says, but often the other characters don't seem to realise this. "*Kokapetl is becoming very smart*" says Mendoza at one point, long after Kokapetl has come out with such lines as "*Don't forget your bundle, Tao!*" and other helpful pieces of advice that are undoubtedly pertinent to what's going on. Surely this stark inconsistency must be another little joke from the production team!

When I first rewatched *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* on YouTube, I enjoyed it far, far more than I ever thought it would be possible for me to enjoy it! I was struck by the whole epic adventure aspect of the series, and I was intrigued by the seamless way in which sci-fi, history and fantasy all came together to create that adventure. The opening and closing music and titles were even more atmospheric and evocative than I had remembered, and the story, characters and background music all came together magnificently to create a truly wonderful and unique viewing experience.

The *Mysterious Cities of Gold* is brilliantly, lovingly and beautifully made in a style all of its own - it is not quite true anime, but it is a long way from the traditional Western style too. The background music really is magical, and conjures up so many different emotions at different points in the story. There is a scene in the first episode in which Esteban is running to meet Mendoza at the docks, having made the decision to stow away and travel to the New World, and the music makes it seem so exciting and adventurous; it's the first of many magical moments of which the music is an integral part. Interestingly enough, some of the background music was reused directly by Filmation (an American company) for *He-Man and She-Ra*.

The *Mysterious Cities of Gold* has so much depth that I cannot possibly put it into words, yet it is so delightfully subtly done. There is nothing directly preachy or in-your-face, but there's so much profundity to the story and the characters. The show is not afraid to take its time in telling the story - crossing the Atlantic Ocean, for example, takes about three episodes and not a great deal happens (before the shipwreck, at least) but still it is a magical viewing experience with some truly stunning animation sequences and some compelling bits of characterisation.

I cannot find the words to describe just how brilliant the characters are. Esteban is everything you could possibly want a hero to be - brave, loyal, compassionate, caring and generally the right kind of guy to get caught up in an adventure with! When he first arrives in South America, the Incas think that Esteban is the "white-skinned god" for whom they have been waiting, and that he will save them from the tyranny of the conquistadors. One of my favourite scenes of the whole series involves Esteban walking on his hands to prove to a group of Inca children that he is not a god, but is actually just like them. Why does he do this? Well, Esteban is horrified that the Incas should think of him (or any other individual) as a god, because he knows that all people are equal and basically the same at heart. This is a remarkably progressive attitude, and one that I don't think is demonstrated nearly enough in the world today - if only more people were like Esteban, the world would be a far better place!

Here is an interesting observation about Esteban - usually when you see pictures of him (in the opening titles; on promotional material; in fan-art etc) the round section of his Medallion of the Sun is missing, yet he has this part for fully two thirds of the series - he only spends the first third without it! For the first thirteen episodes, Mendoza keeps a firm

hand on the missing part of Esteban's medallion; I shall be mentioning the circumstances under which he returns it to Esteban later in the article.

I absolutely love the friendship between Esteban, Zia and Tao, which is so simple and honest, yet so terribly effective at achieving all kinds of great things. Zia and Tao are instrumental in helping Esteban to conquer his fear of heights, for example, which has proved to be a real nuisance on occasions. The way in which the three always help and support each other demonstrates that we can all achieve great things with a bit of inner strength combined with help and support from true friends! The kids are always loyal, compassionate, just and true, unlike most of the adults in the series. This is demonstrated most effectively during a scene in which Esteban, Zia and Tao decide share their depleting water rations with a dying giant warrior who has previously tried to kill them. It is a virtuous and wholly compassionate gesture, and underpins a powerful scene that really underlines the characters of the three kids.

When Tao first appears in the series, he is seen to attempt to come between Esteban and Zia somewhat, but he soon realises that this is quite impossible. This unfortunate introduction shouldn't be held against Tao, however - he is only acting on the advice of a prophecy that says Zia will lead him to the New World, so it is not really his fault that he unwittingly becomes something of an antagonist for a very brief period. Throughout the rest of the series, you will occasionally see Tao being neglected by Esteban and Zia as the inseparable pair help each other out. Nevertheless, the three share a very strong bond of friendship that always keeps them going and allows them to achieve great things.

I want to talk for a little while about the relationship between Esteban and Zia, which is certainly (in my eyes, at least) the strongest and the most interesting in the series. Like everything else, of course, it is beautifully and subtly done. It should be obvious to anyone with at least half a brain that Esteban and Zia spend the five-month voyage on the *Esperanza* falling in love, although their feelings for each other are never defined specifically with this term. The moment that most clearly defines Esteban and Zia's relationship for me comes when Zia is about to give herself up to the greedy Spaniards in order to save an entire Inca village, and Esteban attempts to convey to her exactly how he feels about her before she carries out this noble deed. Esteban takes Zia's hand, looks into her eyes and says... just her name, but it conveys so much emotion that I was literally open-mouthed when I watched the scene on YouTube.

The background music at this point is particularly striking - it really is an incredibly powerful scene.

Esteban and Zia always support and help each other emotionally as well as physically, constantly demonstrating implicit and total trust in one other. They always go along with each other's plans, crazy as they may sometimes seem, and turn to each other in times of emotional need. This does create a slight rift with Tao on occasion - some of his clashes with Esteban about the latter's crazier plans lead to a few Chuckle brother-like scenes between the two boys. Tao is used to following his own clever, well thought-out plans, and often thinks Esteban is a bit too impulsive and headstrong. However, this does nothing to undermine the strong bond of friendship that clearly exists between all three of the kids.

Esteban spends a good deal of his time saving Zia from mortal danger, which often involves rescuing her from various enemies. This is a very prominent aspect of their relationship, actually - Esteban adopts the role of Zia's protector, which is a situation that they both seem to fall into very naturally. Undoubtedly the coolest of these rescues (and indeed the coolest scene of the whole series, I'm inclined to think) involves Esteban saving Zia from the flying machine of the evil Olmecs by smashing a large window with the pommel of his shortsword, before dragging her into a lake below and swimming her to the relative safety of a nearby island. Zia's reaction as Esteban slides through the closing cockpit door ("Ooh, Esteban!") is fantastic. It really is a super-cool scene, and has to be seen to be believed.

During this scene, Esteban is seen guarding Zia behind the point of his sword, which is a very clear image of him as her protector. This seems to sum up the foundation of their relationship quite nicely. Ironically, the closing episodes of the series (the ones involving the Olmecs) are, generally speaking, my least favourite, as there is little for the three kids to actually do as we finally get closer to the discovery of the titular City of Gold!

My only gripe about the window-smashing scene is Zia's reaction to Esteban's incredible rescue the next morning, after they have both been retrieved from the beach by the High Priest of the Cities of Gold. Zia describes the High Priest to Esteban as "the man who saved our lives" but Esteban was the one who did all the work (fighting, smashing, swimming) to get her to the island, going to extreme lengths as usual to save her

life! I really think she should have been more grateful to him - a little chaste kiss would even have been appropriate, I feel.

Another of my favourite rescues involves Esteban shoving Zia out of the way of a huge boulder that is rolling unstoppably towards them and then leaping over it himself with catlike agility. I am also a big fan of Esteban's near-superhuman swim to save Zia from Tao's island; although it turns out that she isn't actually in any physical danger on this occasion, it clearly shows the extreme lengths to which Esteban is prepared to go in order to keep the promise he has made to Zia to stay with her and protect her forever. (Just in case you are wondering, Zia does actually return the gesture on one occasion by saving Esteban from falling off a wall, although it is not a particularly high one.)

Despite my great enthusiasm for the relationship between Esteban and Zia, and for the wider friendship they share with Tao, I have been forced to conclude that Mendoza is probably the most interesting individual character in the whole show because he is deliciously ambiguous. You could debate for hours whether Mendoza is a "goodie" or a "baddie" but the real answer is that he isn't really either. From the first episode, it is obvious that he is a generally decent man who is unfortunately motivated by greed. Throughout the course of the series, it is impossible to be absolutely sure just how far that motivation will take him, and where his loyalties truly lie.

Having said that, my feelings about Mendoza are basically positive, as he makes a very important decision quite late in the series that I think really defines the kernel of his character - he decides to stick around and help Esteban and the Mayas to fight against the tyranny of the Olmecs, and forces Sancho and Pedro to do the same thing, whereas he could just as easily have snuck off and tried to plunder the First City of Gold, as he had just worked out exactly where to find it. This is a very important moment for Mendoza, and although he does end up pilfering a bit of gold AFTER the Olmecs have been defeated, I think he should be forgiven for this - after all, he's done a lot to earn it!

The relationship between Esteban and Mendoza is almost as interesting as the relationship between Esteban and Zia. Mendoza appears in some ways to look on Esteban in a fatherly manner, yet their relationship is actually far more complicated than this as it contains strong elements of trust, loyalty, admiration and affection on both sides, as well as a good

deal of wariness and respect for each other's intelligence and shrewdness. The scene in which Esteban persuades Mendoza to hand back the missing part of his Medallion of the Sun is probably the coolest Esteban/Mendoza moment. Esteban has to outwit Mendoza and kind of trick him into giving it back - Mendoza is clearly somewhat frustrated by this turn of events, yet he just as clearly admires Esteban immensely for orchestrating it.

I hope I have given you at least some impression of how brilliant I think Esteban, Zia and Mendoza (and Tao too, to a lesser extent) are, but what about the other two protagonists, Sancho and Pedro? As I mentioned earlier, they mainly serve as the "comic relief" characters, but the problem is that they just aren't funny! I really don't think Sancho and Pedro add anything to the show, but they don't really spoil it to any degree either because it's just so brilliant in so many other ways! Still, however you cut it, I don't really like them. They pretty much just remain the clowns throughout the entire series - they don't have any character development at all, although they can sometimes be seen facilitating the plot with their greed and foolishness. I suppose you could argue that they develop genuine fondness for the three children, but gold is really all they're interested in, unlike Mendoza, who not only cares a great deal for Esteban and his two friends, but is actually very brave and has a sense of honour, although he likes gold a lot too!

The Golden Condor is probably the coolest thing in the world ever! With its stunning flight sequences and exhilarating background music, it's just fantastic! Piloting the Condor seems to do wonders for Esteban's arm muscles - all that yanking the joystick around seemingly makes him really buff! As the series progresses, Esteban's rippling arms and chest play more and more prominent a role! A very cool scene involves Esteban shooting a bunch of alligators with an oversized bow - ooh, just look at those muscles tense and flex!

I think it is worth mentioning how refreshing I find it to hear terms such as *damn*, *Hell* and *the Devil* used freely in a children's show - always in context and by appropriate characters, of course. Phrases such as "*Damn those kids!*" and "*that damned Inca*" (the latter in reference to Zia) do add a sense of gritty realism. Even Esteban shows himself able to cuss with the best of them when he tells Gomez to "*go to the Devil!*" which I find to be quite a powerful line.

Probably the weirdest bit of the series: Esteban and Tao get naked and go swimming together - I kid you not!

For many years there have been Internet rumours of a new series of *The Mysterious Cities of Gold*, and there is even talk of a CG movie. Personally, I would prefer to see the existing series left exactly as it is - as far as I'm concerned, there is absolutely no point or merit in remaking or re-imagining such a piece of televisual perfection. Also, I do like the open end, which leaves fans free to make up their own sequel, and there's plenty of material to work with. The series should be left exactly as it is, and that's a point on which I shall never be swayed!

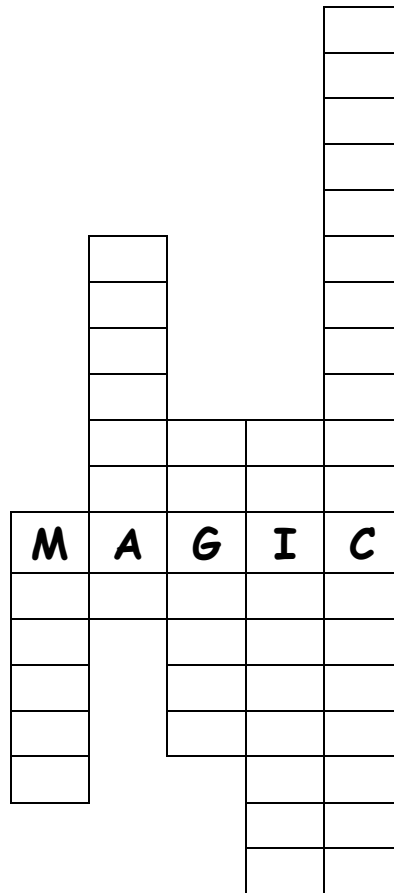
Because it is so subtle and intricate in so many ways, I think I connect with the show a lot more now than I did when I was six, but if TV bosses actually have enough respect for the intelligence of children to show them something like this, they're always going to love it, because it's such a compelling story with such a great sense of adventure, and it's so beautifully made. I remember that, as with *Knightmare*, I used to insist on moving Heaven and Earth to be able to watch every episode of *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* when it was shown on CBBC in 1989, which is why I'm sure I was absolutely enthralled by it even then, even though I think I generally enjoy it more now. There's just so much to this show that I can't possibly tell you exactly why it's so brilliant, but take my word for it - it is! If you're considering buying the DVD, do it! You won't regret it, I promise!

As you will discover if you do buy the DVD, each episode is followed by a short documentary about the history and culture of South and Central America, often focusing on the Spanish and Portuguese colonisation. These documentaries are generally very interesting and informative; apparently they were omitted from the original UK airings, which seems like a bit of a shame to me!

In conclusion, *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* is one show that I cannot praise enough, simply because it is so brilliant in so many ways. Excitement, adventure, intrigue, mystery, sci-fi, stunning animation, fantastic locations, brilliant characters - you'll get all these things and more from *The Mysterious Cities of Gold*! Twenty years ago, Esteban and friends earned a special place in my heart, and now I know they'll be there forever. If you, like me, let yourself become immersed in this fantastic piece of animation, I guarantee you won't regret it!

PUZZLE PAGE TWO
The Magic Word

Using the **MAGIC** word as a basis, can you fill in the names of Knightmare's five male sorcerers?



M. Original Master Wizard.	I. Sometimes grey, always green.
A. Master of Techno-magic.	C. A good "One" to finish on.
G. The Dark Side of M.	

Jón Þórsteinn Petúrssón, February 2008

DISCLAIMER: Despite the apparent timelessness of this not-so-short story, it is part of an existing series, which has so far contained graphic depictions of extreme alcoholism, drug use, violence, theft, martial arts, animal torture, institutionalisation, church arson, abduction, sodomy, bizarre fetishes, underage sex, fascism, murder, cannibalism... and Cradle of Filth. Please be assured that any references to any of these slightly controversial subjects do not reflect the opinions or beliefs of the author of this piece or the editor of The Eye Shield fanzine, but are used for purely literary purposes to reflect the purely fictional opinions and/or beliefs of the purely (well, mostly purely) fictional characters. **YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!**

"Where am I?"

"You're in a room with one exit at the far end, with the door shut and a sword over it. There's a wall in front of you, and in the corner of the wall it says 'Jericho 6'," Håkon answered.

"Finally, team, it appears you've done something right," Treguard remarked. "Now, Gunnar, how do you bring down the walls of Jericho?"

"I know what you're going to say here," Øyvind growled. "Don't bother. We are Vikings. We have our own way of sacking ancient cities. Týr knows we had enough practice. Gunnar, throw the horn away."

Gunnar did so. "Truth is, I only took it for the obvious innuendo," he replied. "It doesn't make any noise anyway."

"Can you see the wall?" Håkon asked.

"Yes... it's right in front of me, and all the bricks are blue," Gunnar replied. "Right, here goes..."

Gunnar lunged at the wall, delivering a perfectly-timed boot straight into the middle of the structure. Chromakeyed bricks flew all over the screen, and Gunnar picked his way through the rubble.

"There's a table behind the wall. What's on it?" Håkon asked.

"It's a bacon sandwich," Gunnar answered. "That should do just fine to take me through to the end of the quest. Many a vegetarian has fallen prey to its all-conquering power." Gunnar deposited the bacon sandwich in the knapsack, which was now contaminated with all sorts of decaying scraps of food. The life force clock turned green – and froze in its starting position. With a flash of lightning, Lord Fear appeared again.

"Do you never leave us alone?" Gunnar protested. "The joke's on you now, anyway. After a bacon sandwich I can achieve anything."

"Never mind that you had to have three before you asked Thyra Njállsson out," Xander sneered.

"Enough!" barked Lord Fear. "If you want to face me and beat this Dungeon, you'll have to pass through the toughest trap of them all."

The door opened, and to nobody's surprise, revealed a blue tunnel with a conveyor belt running through it.

Lord Fear laughed. "Let's hope you don't get too *cut up* if you don't make it through, dungeoneer," he snarled. "Now, maybe you should make a *sharp* exit!"

Lord Fear's eyes glowed red, and conjured up a haunted sword to chase Gunnar through the door.

"Sidestep to your left... fast!" Håkon howled. "Now run forwards!"

"Stop!"

Gunnar put the brakes on, rapidly.

"You're on a moving belt, and... sidestep right!"

There was no time for Håkon to even begin to describe the situation. Gunnar did as he was told, as a huge circular saw whizzing down the left wall at knee-height missed him by the merest whisker. Håkon saw another one coming.

"Left! Quickly!"

Gunnar sidestepped to his left, as another blade on the right wall sped past him, again missing by a fraction. Another approached on the right, at head-height.

"Gunnar, when I give you a direction, you are to *throw* yourself at that wall. Got it?"

"Will do..."

The sound of another approaching blade could be heard.

"RIGHT!"

Most of the blades seemed to be at knee height. It was if someone behind the scenes was determined to chop Gunnar in half by fair means or foul. Another blade approached, again at knee-height.

"LEFT!"

Gunnar was by now covering himself in bruises. Another blade shot down the left wall at head-height.

"DUCK!"

Backstage, the director was growing in frustration. "Let's see how you deal with this," he sneered, pressing a couple of keys on his keyboard. His deputy was unimpressed at the lengths to which his boss was prepared to go to cheat the team of victory.

"RIGHT! ...And DUCK!"

Gunnar flung himself at the right-hand wall, and crouched down. A blade on the left wall shot past him at knee-height, accompanied by a simultaneous head-height blade on the right wall, passing directly above him. Håkon saw two more approaching.

"LEFT! DUCK!"

"Sod this for a game of soldiers," mumbled Gunnar, crouching in the left corner. Before the next blade approached, he spread himself out flat on the conveyor belt, face down. The next blade, just one low one approaching on the left, passed right over him with no hint of contact.

Backstage, as more and more blades zipped past Gunnar without him having to move a muscle, tempers were frayed to breaking point.

"No, boss, it was *your* idea to send him into the Corridor of Blades," Dave fumed.

"And an extra-long corridor at that. You said if they made it through, that was to be it. If you stop them now, I've had enough and I'll get on the phone to Richard O'Brien and see if he wants to do another series of *The Crystal Maze* instead. And even if he doesn't I'll have a word with Ed Tudor-Pole. Maybe I could get Martin Walkyier to agree to it. Anything to get me out of here!"

Finally, the conveyer belt slowed down and stopped.

"Right, it seems to be safe now," Håkon advised. "There's an exit to your right. Sidestep right."

They looked round to see Treguard giving a round of polite applause. It seemed he

had finally warmed to their attempts to beat the Dungeon by whatever means necessary.

"Where am I?" Gunnar, at this stage, did not know that this would be the final time he would have to parrot this line.

"This is the final showdown, team!" Treguard enthused. "Look, the Sword is in the stone!"

"Gunnar... walk forwards... stop. Now, can you see the stone?"

"Yes..."

Before Håkon could issue the obvious command, there was a flash of lightning, and Lord Fear appeared in person.

"I can't believe you have had the temerity to come this far," Lord Fear sneered. "I mean, the very idea. Remember, it's not the taking part that counts, it's the winning. And winning is something I'm very good at. You can take the Sword if you want, but you will never make it back to Nightmare Castle. As soon as you touch it, I will strike you down with a huge fireball. So, instead, I'll watch you starve, as that bacon sandwich has to run out sometime. And, as I said before, I will gloat. Because nothing gives me more pleasure than... oooooOOOOFFF!"

Lord Fear was cut short mid-gloat by Gunnar headbutting him square in the jaw. After all, he had come this far by committing the most serious acts of perfidery the Greater Game had ever seen. One more wasn't exactly going to hurt. At least, not unless your name was Lord Fear... or the Helmet of Justice, which if it was sentient would now be squealing in pain, with the area covering Gunnar's face all caved in.

"My turn to gloat this time, bitch!" sneered Gunnar, as he pulled the Sword from the stone, which was made of grey painted polystyrene, and swung it around.

"Yeah! How do you like that, Granite-arse?" Gunnar howled in triumph. "Who says I may not wield the sword, eh? Look what I'm doing now! Just you try and stop me!"

Håkon, Xander and Øyvind grimaced with satisfaction. Gunnar enthused further with the spoils of victory.

"Hordriss the Confuser! Queen Greystagg! Sir Hugh de Witless! Count Brinkatore! Julius Scaramonger! Mr and Mrs Grimwold! Barry Thorne! Treguard of Dunshelm! Can you hear me?"

"Yes, I hear you," Treguard answered.

"Treguard of Dunshelm, your Dungeon took one hell of a beating! Your Dungeon took one hell of a beating!"

"Yes, I realise what has happened," Treguard informed him. "Now, we must conclude this quest in the proper manner. Merlin!"

Of course, nothing happened. As Lord Fear had previously said, Mogdred was confined to the old folks' home, and as he and Merlin were one and the same person...

"Hordriss!"

Nothing happened.

"Dragon's breath... Hordriss!"

Nothing happened again.

"Call *three* times," Håkon reminded the one man who should have known better than anyone.

"HORDRISS!"

A flash of lightning was seen in the antechamber.

"Who dares to call one from one's important business?" Hordriss demanded. Treguard

pointed to the monitor to show Gunnar still waving the sword around in celebration. "Ah, I see you have found a winner!" Hordriss commented. "And it seems the curse of the first team of the series has been lifted... now, we must bring our young adventurer home. *Restitute!*"

In a blinding flash, Gunnar was catapulted out of the Dungeon and back to the antechamber. Treguard removed the Helmet of Justice, and the first person Gunnar saw was Hordriss.

"Nice hair, old timer," he commented, sarcastically. "Like the raspberry ripple effect. And the Blackpool rock eyebrows."

"Victorious or not, one's hair is of no concern to dungeoneers," grumbled Hordriss. "Now, one must finalise the proceedings. *Revelante!*"

A frightknight trophy appeared in front of the team. "Now, you must realise that this is not valuable, merely a memento," Hordriss advised. "As the quest was yours to share, so now is this."

"Cheers for the offer, but I think we'll have the sword instead," Håkon boomed, jumping up and grabbing it from the back of the room. "See ya."

The boys dashed out of the antechamber before either Hordriss or Treguard had any chance to stop them.

"Blast," Hordress grumbled. "And one was just about to use *Septentrionales eunt domus* to send them home with. One was busy watching *The Life Of Brian* when you called. One finds this film very witty."

"And look what they did to the Helmet of Justice!" Treguard fumed. "Now I suppose we'll have to use the second one. Still, any new team can't possibly be anywhere near as much of a trial as that lot were."

"One can sympathise with you on that front," Hordriss said. "Still, one must now depart. One wants to see what punishment the Romans give Brian for his appalling defacement of the city walls."

Hordriss disappeared in a flash of lightning. Treguard picked up the knapsack and the second Helmet of Justice, and prepared for a new quest, hopefully one which would be easier to manage.

"Enter, stranger!"

A man in white racing overalls and a crash helmet appeared.

"Name yourself, please!"

Silence.

"Very well, call your advisors..."

Silence. Even so, the advisors appeared. To Treguard's surprise – and he still had some capacity for surprise after the previous quest – three middle-aged men appeared.

"Who guides this dungeoneer?"

"Jeremy Clarkson, from Chipping Norton."

"Richard Hammond, from Gloucester."

"James May, from under a pile of oily pieces of a 1960s Moto Guzzi in a flat somewhere in London."

It was said that some time later that day, a heavily bearded man dressed in medieval clothes was seen being taken away in a straitjacket, but no witnesses would ever come forward to confirm it...

***** EPILOGUE *****

Gunnar was woken up by falling out of bed with a loud crash. He could hardly see properly. Everything around him was a haze, and every joint in his body ached. As he hauled himself off the floor, he could see that he was fully clothed and had landed on something sharp. Turning round, he could see the broken bits of black plastic that had once been DVD cases, containing illegal pirate DVDs of three series of *Knightmare*.

Per-Erik burst into his room. "Oi, bruv, get up..." he bumbled. "We're supposed to be packing for Wacken... what's this?"

He lunged towards a bottle that was lying empty on the floor beside Gunnar. "You been drinking my vodka? I keep telling you this stuff is lethal except to us hardened alcoholics..."

As Gunnar's vision returned, he could just about make out "Wszladowychsky Polski Wodka" on the bottle.

"See what it's done to you, there..." Per-Erik pointed to the bed, and Gunnar's favourite *Lord Of The Rings* t-shirt. As Per-Erik left the room, Gunnar noticed that he had been violently sick all over his bed but had passed out and had been rolling around in it all night. He surveyed the scene, and the horrible mess that he was surrounded by that was entirely of his own making. He mumbled to himself...

"Oooh, nasty!"

This quest hails the memory of John Woodnutt, who was still alive at the time it was set (July 2005). But only just.

POETRY CORNER

Some do say that Sofia, Claire, Kim and Emma put in the best overall performance of series 6, despite the fact that they didn't win, and after some serious thought, I have to admit that I do tend to agree. Here, then, is a merry verse about the true champions of series 6!

**From Bournemouth town there came four maids,
Who've earned their share of accolades.
In level one, the task was clear -
The dragon-calling horn was near!
The capture of the strange device
Ensured Red Death would stay on ice.
A magic ring Sofia did use
To alter Scaramonger's views.
Elita took the horn away,**

And gave Sofia a word to say.
A dragon-ride to level two
Soon found Ridolfo in a stew.
Another ring would prove the key
To solve the minstrel's misery.
Soon Hordriss gave a late reprieve,
Sofia then found that she could leave
For level three, not far to go,
Unless Lord Fear should spoil the show.
The Hand of Atrab was the key
That held Sofia's victory.
So near, so far, and so bereft
Of clues to cross the rocky cleft.
Without the scroll from wizards' school,
Sofia was made to look the fool.
On Causeway Great, no way to go,
Except for down, wouldn't you know!

PUZZLE ANSWERS

"Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness."

- 1.) Mogdred is in disguise as Cedric. Episode 210. Stuart.
- 2.) Hordriss/Harris. Episode 510. Alex I.
- 3.) Sylvester Hands/a troubadour. Episode 707. Naila.
- 4.) Lord Fear/Harris (Hordriss). Episode 606. Alan.
- 5.) Mildread/Gretel. Episode 212. Julian.
- 6.) Lissard/Marta. Episode 713. Barry.
- 7.) Merlin/an imprisoned monk. Episode 407. Nicola I (Nicky).
- 8.) Lord Fear/Brother Strange. Episode 808. Rebecca.
- 9.) Hordriss/a witch. Episode 613. Sofia.
- 10.) Mildread/Treguard. Episode 202. Christopher.
- 11.) Sylvester Hands/a dungeoneer (Ben). Episode 508. Ben I.
- 12.) Merlin/a peddler. Episode 404. Alistair.

The Magic Word:

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