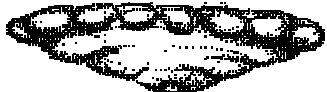


THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 59

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MESSAGE FROM ME

Welcome to issue 59 of The Eye Shield. There's yet another fun-packed issue in store for you this month, including another nostalgic stroll down Memory Lane with Gehr "Lex" Luthor in *When We Were Very Young*; Count Duckula gets the *Kids' TV Shows I Grew Up With* treatment; Ross Thompson presents the penultimate chapter of his *Adventure Time*; Ricky Temple presents the fifth enthralling chapter of *For Dungeon and Dungeon Master*, as well as helping me to update you on the status of the current audio play projects in *The Audio Play's the Thing*; there's more inspiration and explanation in *Scandinavian Knightmares*; and I rock the boat almost to capsizing point as I present something a little different in the shape of *My Top Ten Movies*.

Here are some of Jim Waterman's reactions to issue 58.

One of my favourite scenes in the level two clue room is Treguard's "hysterics" moment when one of the teams picked up the symbol and colours flashed round the room to the sound of a loud "BZZAARRRP!" I'm sure it looked like Treguard was having a heart attack.

I thought He-Man was the best thing since sliced bread covered in treacle at the time... of course, I had no idea that just about all '80s cartoons were just long toy adverts. Still, as with all these '80s cartoons, it's obvious which side is a hell of a lot cooler. As it was with the Decepticons, as it was with Mumm-Ra and co, so it is here – I'd side with Skeletor and co any day.

I like the idea of *Knightmare Wipeout* - although I think I only scored one right for the *All Three Levels* board. Bah.

Thanks once again for all your feedback, Jim. Most of Treguard's zanier moments seem to come in series 2, and that scene with Julian and the Destructor is certainly one of the zaniest! If you like Knightmare Wipeout, I'm sure you'll be thrilled to know that there's more to come in future issues, so be sure to keep reading!

Much to my delight, my recent efforts with *Kids' TV Shows I Grew Up With* seem to have gone down a treat with several readers. We've just seen what Jim has to say about He-Man; now we turn to Liam Callaghan for his thoughts on the matter.

The article on He-Man and She-Ra - interesting; I remember the episode with the blind boy! And I didn't know it was Filmation who made it but it makes sense, thinking back to the style of animation. I knew about their use of stock footage. Makes sense to use it, really - if it's expensive to keep doing different sequences for the same thing, why not!

Filmation has been criticised for its copious use of stock footage, but as you will grow to appreciate if you ever hear the fan commentary on the UK DVDs, the company

went to great pains to use it very effectively to create their own unique style, which I would say teeters on the border between extremely crappy and incredibly brilliant.

REMEMBER THIS?

Series 6. Level 2.

PEGGATTY'S FIREBALLS

Throughout series 6, whenever a dungeoneer entered Witch Haven (which they inevitably did at some point during level two) we were informed that witches did not like visitors, and so Witch Haven was not the safest place to quest through. However, the only witch who ever really showed any overt animosity towards dungeoneers was Peggatty, who would fly around above their heads (always in the same chamber, of course) and attempt to blast them with fireballs. Both Heggatty and Greystagg mentioned on occasion Peggatty's penchant for doing this, but made it clear that they did not actively disapprove of her destructive hobby, just as they did not actively disapprove of dungeoneers passing through Witch Haven.

The first dungeoneer to encounter Peggatty was Sumayya. The witch's cackling laughter filled the chamber for quite some time before she actually flew in on her broomstick, which made for a suitably atmospheric and ominous effect. In order to pass by, Sumayya had to drink a SHIELD potion to protect herself from Peggatty's fireballs, which seemed to indicate that this challenge could not be completed simply by a mad dash across the room. However, as the very next dungeoneer proved, this was not to be the case.

Alan, Ben and Sofia all passed Peggatty's fireballs by running across the chamber at top speed, throwing the necessity of Sumayya's SHIELD potion into some doubt. Having said that, Ben and Sofia both received a blast for their troubles, which caused damage to life force, thus proving that the challenge was not intended to be lethal, but rather a bit of excitement for the watchers that might go some way towards proving that Witch Haven did actually have witches in it. And it certainly did that, there can be no denying.

The final appearance of Peggatty and her fireballs was a little different, as Chris attempted to fly across the room on his own broomstick, which he had bought from Ah Wok. Certainly this prevented him from being hit by any of the fireballs, although the task of controlling the pesky broomstick was so arduous, undoubtedly it would have been easier just to dash across the room and risk a small amount of life force damage!

So, this challenge was visually pleasing and quite atmospheric, and certainly helped to conceptualize Witch Haven to some degree. However, it was never intended to present a lethal challenge, although it certainly did a lot to unnerve and confuse some advisors, which inevitably injected a welcome bit of tension and excitement into the proceedings.

Difficulty: 6 Quite tricky not to get hit, although this wasn't fatal.

Killer Instinct: 5 Two direct hits, but no lasting damage.

Gore Factor: 4 Some nice explosion sounds and effects.

Fairness: 7 Life force could be damaged quite easily, but not irreparably.

ADVENTURE TIME

By Ross Thompson

The stakes are high for dungeoneer Danny, as he strives to defeat the evil armies of both Mogdred and Lord Fear before this quest season draws to a close. Will a meeting with Brother Strange at the end of the Corridor of Blades prove beneficial? Don't ask me! Let's see what Ross has in store.

Brother Strange steps forward as Danny and friends start to think of a proverb. At first none pop into any of their heads, but finally Yartej contributes one.

"Too many cooks spoil the broth?" Danny relays the proverb to Brother Strange, but it is dismissed instantly.

"No, I've got that one. Any others?"

"A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush?" Julie says.

"Got it."

"He's very hard to please, this monk," jokes Pickle to Treguard.

The three advisors sit there for some time, chewing their pencils as they attempt to think of an appropriate proverb.

"Well, if you haven't got any, I must be on my way..." begins Brother Strange, but he is suddenly cut across by Danny, who has a brainwave.

"He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword."

"What a remarkable proverb," says the monk, looking quite amazed. "I think you deserve something for that, and unfortunately I have no magic on me, but I do have a spyglass. Do you know what one of these is? Well, it allows you to spy on the Opposition. Just hold it up to that shield of yours."

Danny holds up the spyglass to the eye shield, and the advisors peer curiously towards the screen. Mogdred is in view, talking to himself as he paces the room.

"How do I get him? I could try a... ah, Madame Morghanna. I thought I told you I did not wish to share power with you."

"I have changed my mind once more. I wish to join with you. Together we could be stronger than Lord Fear. He is getting stronger by the minute and could soon overpower you. But with me by your side, we could do great things. What say you?"

"I do not wish to..."

"But I have magic Lord Fear can only dream of..."

"I..." Mogdred begins. "Very well, we can team up. It may be the only way to defeat Lord Fear, and those pesky dungeoneers."

"Good," sneers Morghanna.

"Now - I have more things to deal with. If you can, track down that dungeoneer and set a SWORD spell on him. Wait - someone is spying on us!"

Yartej becomes frantic, and Danny drops the spyglass onto the floor.

He walks out of the corridor and emerges into a room with a well in the corner. A flashing sword bobs slowly up and down over the top. Danny begins to walk towards the well, but then the sword begins to move towards him. He sidesteps left and then right and walks backwards, but then Amanda remembers about the spell, and hastily dispels the sword. With a click, it vanishes, and Danny is free to climb down the well.

"Ah, level two. This is the Spindizzy, team. Nothing here is as it seems, and so you must be very careful now," Treguard warns the team.

Danny hesitantly steps forward, and reaches the edge of the Spindizzy. Amanda takes over instructing, and tells him to jump off. He wobbles and

lands messily, but just manages to stay on the path. He walks through the door and emerges into a bomb room.

"QUICKLY, DANNY!" shouts Julie, as he runs forward towards the door ahead. The fuse is lit and the bomb is about to explode, just as Danny makes it through the door. But he finds himself in another bomb room straight after!

"Food here, team," says Treguard temptingly, "but the fuse is running!" The team direct Danny forward and make him turn left instantly - the food is there but the bomb is about to explode. They guide him out of the room.

"Where am I?"

"You're in a small brown room with a few objects on a table. To the right is a lady's face muttering," describes Yartej. "I can see an orange on the table, so I'll direct you there."

He does so, and Danny's life force is replenished to green.

"What's that face?" Julie asks Amanda. But Treguard answers for her.

"Team, here is an Oracle of Confusion," Treguard says. "Many of its words are complete garbage, but there are some vital pieces of information amongst the drivel. To hear its words, Danny must lift the Helmet of Justice ever so slightly above his head."

Danny does so, and hears the voice ringing through the room, cold and clear.

"The first step towards immortality is taking the noble route of righteousness," says the Oracle. "Soap may cleanse, but that is all. Seven apples on a wall will only all fall. To bridge the gap, use FLY. Use FLY. Never wake a dragon. The end is coming, the end is coming..."

"On with the helmet," says Treguard dismissively, "you'll hear no more here, I think."

Danny looks down at the objects on the table - a small block of soap, a bar of silver and a jester's stick.

"The Oracle said the soap does nothing - so I think you should take the silver and the jester's thingy," says Julie wisely.

The rest of the team agree with her, and lead Danny out of the room.

The team find themselves in a small cavern, with a pit below. A jester is sitting on the edge, dangling his legs a little.

"Hello, young sir," he says. "Motley is my name, fun and frolics are my game. You'll have fun..."

"MOTLEY!" Treguard's voice rings through the antechamber. "We haven't time for this now."

"All right, all right," says Motley. "Just giving my usual welcome. What's ya name, then, young sir?"

"Danny."

"Good name, but not as good as Motley. Anyway - I've been looking for a certain folderol of mine, but... ah, I see you have it!"

Danny hands it over to Motley.

"Thank you very much, Danny. Now, I would accompany you, but this pit is in the way and I don't fancy being a worm's dinner, do you?"

Julie reminds Danny that they have the FLY spell from the Oracle, and Danny suggests this to Motley.

"I have a spell to get me across," says Danny. "If you hold on to me, you might be able to get across with me."

"All right, then," Motley says, "lead the way."

Amanda casts the spell. Motley and Danny fly over the pit, and then walk onwards.

"Warning, team," says Treguard, "this is the lair of Ariadne!"

Will Danny's quest succeed, or is he on a long road to nowhere? Will the forces of evil finally prevail over the Dungeon? Join Ross next time for the FINAL CHAPTER of Adventure Time to find out.

MY TOP TEN MOVIES

By Jake Collins

As you're no doubt well aware, I have compiled many countdowns of my favourite TV shows for TES in the past, and I have always managed to link these lists (however tentatively) back to Knightmare. I was quite happy to include *My Top Ten Sc-Fi and Fantasy Shows*, for example, as Knightmare fits nicely into this category, and (perhaps not surprisingly) made it to the top of the list. *My Gameshow Gods* was another one I put in without thinking twice, as Knightmare is a gameshow, and has appeared on Challenge TV alongside most of the programmes in that particular list. Even *The Best of the Rest* contains TV shows that can usually be classified as either "Children's" or "Sci-Fi and Fantasy", which are the two categories that Knightmare principally falls under, I would say.

Anyway, I have often found myself wondering whether I could reasonably include a rundown of my top ten favourite movies in TES - as you may have noticed, I eventually decided that I could. Of course, none of these movies really has anything to do with Nightmare, although some of them (like Nightmare) are undoubtedly aimed at children. Some, however, are definitely not for the eyes and ears of the young and impressionable, which is why I have decided to award each film a **Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating** out of five, in order to provide at least some link to the much-loved show around which this publication is supposed to be based. Unsurprisingly, most of the films I have chosen to feature in the rundown have fairly strong elements of sci-fi and/or fantasy, because these are the genres I tend to enjoy.

Okay, I feel that I have now completely justified the existence of this cinematic countdown, so it's time to reveal the ten lucky motion pictures that have earned themselves a special place in my heart.

10. Shrek.

Year of release: 2001.

Stars: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz.

Sequels: Shrek 2 (2004), Shrek the Third (2007).

This impressive piece of computer animation provides an alternative take on the classic fairytale setup, as cantankerous green ogre Shrek wins the heart of his true love - the butt-kicking Princess Fiona - in an unexpected and truly heart-warming way. I watched this on a complete whim one afternoon when I was at home by myself and searching for something good to watch on Ntl's pay-per-view film service, Front Row. I then went on to buy the video, also on a complete whim, when I happened to find myself in a branch of W. H. Smith in Brighton with a spare ten-pound note burning a hole in my pocket. After watching the film a few times, I discovered that I really liked it. There have been two sequels so far, and there are plenty more in the pipeline, and while I don't think any of them are strictly necessary, they're very good too.

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 5/5. This is fantasy through-and-through.

9. The Mask.

Year of release: 1994.

Stars: Jim Carrey, Cameron Diaz.

Sequel: Son of the Mask (2005).

In this piece of genuine comedy gold, mild-mannered banker Stanley Ipkiss discovers a wilder side to his personality when he puts on an

ancient mask that houses the spirit of the mischievous Norse god Loki. This film was all over the media when it first came out, thanks chiefly to its ground-breaking special effects, but I didn't see it until November 1995, when I attended a birthday sleepover with three other boys. One of them had brought *The Mask* on video and they were all very keen to watch it, so naturally I watched it too. (We had to rewind and re-watch the bit where Cameron Diaz first comes into the bank and shows off her charms several times, but it wasn't my idea!) The film was much better than I was expecting, and I bought a copy of the video myself when the opportunity presented itself. I haven't seen the sequel yet, and nothing I have read about it makes me particularly keen to do so. I'll watch it when it comes on terrestrial TV, though.

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 4/5. There is a very strong fantasy element to this film, but (unlike *Shrek*) it is set in a recognisable world with fairly realistic characters.

8. Flash Gordon.

Year of release: 1980.

Stars: Sam J Jones, Max Von Sydow, Melody Anderson.

American Football star "Flash" Gordon is surprised to find himself kidnapped by an eccentric scientist and flown in a homemade spaceship to the planet Mongo, where he must strive to prevent the evil dictator Ming the Merciless from destroying the Earth for his own sick amusement. I first watched this film on TV when I was very little, solely because I was a regular viewer of the cartoon series *Defenders of the Earth*, which featured prominently both Flash Gordon and Ming. (The Flash of the film is a bit different from the Flash of *Defenders of the Earth* and the original comics, as he is the unlikely hero whose unerring sense of honesty, justice and purity wins through against evil - inevitably, and almost accidentally - rather than the all-American hero who likes to fly around in a space rocket.) I enjoyed the film when I was very young, and I enjoyed it again when I watched it on TV for a second time when I was a bit older, although I was at a total loss to understand why! It's cheesy, it looks incredibly cheap, the acting is terrible, the plot is nonsensical, and by rights it should be absolute rubbish! But then, a few years ago, I bought the DVD and discovered why the film is so good - it's meant to look all crappy! Brian Blessed (who plays Prince Vultan, leader of the Hawk Men) explained it all to me in his audio commentary - the film is made in the style of the original black-and-white *Flash Gordon* miniseries from the 1940s, in homage to this simpler time of movie-making. If you bear

this is mind whilst watching it, you'll realise that it's done incredibly well, in that it achieves the exact effect it is going for with absolute precision!
Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 5/5. Pure sci-fi escapism, with emphasis on the fi!

7. Team America: World Police.

Year of release: 2004.

Stars: Trey Parker, Matt Stone.

The biting satire of South Park is transferred smoothly to the world of Thunderbirds-style puppetry, as Parker and Stone present their take on the war against Terror. Team America is a dedicated team of ass-kicking professionals, who spend their time blowing up national landmarks and killing millions of people in their unceasing attempts to stop terrorists from blowing up national landmarks and killing millions of people. Like South Park, this film is very insightful and jarringly satirical at the same time as being incredibly rude and unnecessarily disgusting. What a brilliant mix - I love it!

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 2/5. This doesn't really have any direct sci-fi or fantasy elements, but it is set in a world not entirely like our own, and not just because everyone in it is a puppet!

6. Candyman.

Year of release: 1992.

Stars: Tony Todd.

Sequels: Candyman II: Farewell to the Flesh (1995), Candyman III: Day of the Dead (1999).

I first watched Candyman about ten years ago, and I very quickly decided that it was a cut above your average slasher horror. Say his name five times in the mirror, and the vengeful spirit of an unfairly persecuted slave will appear behind you and eviscerate you with a metal hook! Sounds like an urban legend, doesn't it? As mature student Helen Lyle discovers to her cost when she starts poking around in the filth and depravity of Chicago's Cabrini Green, there's an alarming degree of truth behind this particular legend.

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 3/5. Like The Mask, this is a fantasy story set in a fairly realistic world. Candyman himself is, at the most basic level, a ghost, yet the ingredients of his origin story - racism, intolerance and persecution in the USA after the Civil War - are certainly real enough.

5. Masters of the Universe.

Year of release: 1987.

Stars: Dolph Lundgren, Frank Langella, Meg Foster.

Unfortunately, this was released well after the popularity of the Masters of the Universe toyline and TV series had peaked, and was something of a commercial flop. Despite my obsession with He-Man in early life, I didn't see this film until it was shown on BBC1 just before Christmas 1990, but I found it to be an entertaining way to spend an hour and forty minutes then, just as I do now. The premise goes something like this - Skeletor has finally conquered Eternia, and He-Man and his friends must undergo a severely testing time here on Earth in order to locate the missing Cosmic Key, so that they can return to Castle Grayskull and defeat Skeletor before he becomes all-powerful. As I said in last issue's *Kids' TV Shows I Grew Up With*, I feel that the movie deviates from the established world of the cartoon series a bit too much, and I wouldn't describe it as a brilliant piece of cinematography, but I still like it quite a lot. It's entertaining, it's exciting, it's action-packed, it's quite funny in places, and Frank Langella as Skeletor is well worth the price of the DVD even if nothing else is!

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 5/5. Even though a large portion of the movie is set on Earth and in fairly familiar surroundings, this is a sci-fi adventure all the way, with a smattering of fantastical sorcery thrown in for good measure.

4. The Little Mermaid.

Year of release: 1989.

Stars: Jodi Benson, Samuel E Wright.

Sequel: The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea (2001).

The first of several high-quality animated features that boosted Disney's popularity during the 1990s, this film is ostensibly based on Hans Christian Anderson's tragic fairytale (i.e. with the tragedy removed) of the same name. Deep below the ocean, the merpeople are forbidden to make contact with the human world, yet all Princess Ariel (daughter of King Triton, the ruler of the seas) desires is to become a part of that tantalising world above. She strikes up a deal with Ursula, the Sea Witch, which could bring her everything she desires, but then making a bargain with a witch is never a good idea! This film has excellent characters and fantastic songs, and is beautifully made. You couldn't ask for a better kids' movie and, if you're anything like me, you'll enjoy it well into adulthood too!

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 4/5. This film is largely set in a stunning fantasy world beneath the ocean, which contains talking sea creatures, and there's plenty of magic floating around too - it's a fantasy film, basically.

3. Beauty and the Beast.

Year of release: 1992.

Stars: Paige O'Hara, Robby Benson.

The second of Disney's efforts to reassert themselves as the world's foremost creators of animated films will always hold a special place in my heart. This was the first film I ever saw at the cinema, and I can still remember what a fantastic experience that was. Set in medieval-ish France, *Beauty and the Beast* reminds us that true beauty comes from within, as our heroine Belle discovers that the monstrous master of an enchanted castle is not really as beastly as he initially appears. It's a tired old message and one that never really seems to sink in to the collective consciousness of the world in general, but it is definitely one that we should all bear in mind on a daily basis. Perhaps the most brilliant thing about this film is the simple yet incredibly effective idea to populate the Beast's castle with walking, talking household objects and items of furniture, which used to be the Beast's servants back when he was a prince, before he severely cheesed off a beautiful (but touchy) enchantress. This setup provides endless scope for genuine comedy moments, yet the once-human objects can also be used very effectively for more serious, character-driven scenes.

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 3/5. Again, this is essentially a fantasy film, with magic fuelling its premise.

2. South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut.

Year of release: 1999.

Stars: Trey Parker, Matt Stone, Isaac Hayes.

If you, like me, are a fan of *South Park* as a TV series, you should be a fan of the *South Park* movie too, because it's pretty much the same thing. It is, however, as its title suggests, bigger, longer and uncut - the rudeness and satire are taken that one step further, the plot is truly epic, and there's plenty of naughty language to enjoy. Indeed, the whole film hinges on naughty language, and the unerring desire of the *South Park* parents to protect their children from being exposed to it at all costs... yes, even if they have to wipe out the entire country of Canada! Of all the films that I have seen in the cinema, this is the one I have most enjoyed seeing up there on the big screen. As Stan, Kyle and Cartman go to extreme lengths to prevent their parents from committing genocide, and Kenny tries desperately from beyond the grave to warn his friends that Satan and Saddam Hussein are about to rise up from Hell and take over the world, the audience is taken on a thrilling roller-coaster ride, which is littered with just the right amount of humour,

disgustingness and swearing, as well as several brilliant songs that provide just the right amount of the right emotion at the right time. Will Stan lose his one true love, Wendy, to the seemingly perfect Gregory? Will Kyle ever stand up to his overbearing mother? Will Cartman be able to get that pesky V-Chip out of his head, so that he can swear with complete impunity once again? Watch this film and you'll really care about the answers to those questions! As I mentioned, the main target for satire in this film is the overprotectiveness and double standards of parents. This is very nicely illustrated when Kyle's mother shoots Canadian potty-mouthed TV stars Terrance and Phillip through the head in cold blood (a lot of the regular characters are killed in this film, but come back to life at the end) and then tells Kyle to watch his mouth when he swears in reaction to his mother's horrifying act. Like the TV series, the film works on so many levels, from biting satire up (or down) to pure foul-mouthed escapism. I love it!

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 3/5. Most of the plots on South Park are more than a little fantastical, and thanks to Kenny's jaunt through the afterlife, there is a very strong fantasy element to this one.

1. Back to the Future.

Year of release: 1985.

Stars: Michael J Fox, Christopher Lloyd.

Sequels: Back to the Future Part II (1989), Back to the Future Part III (1990).

If you're looking for a brilliant comedy-drama that's based around time travel, you couldn't ask for anything better than Back to the Future! High school student Marty McFly finds his very existence threatened when he accidentally goes back in time thirty years and prevents his parents from meeting - well, who hasn't found themselves in a situation like that at some point! Looking at that basic premise, the film could well have been a complete flop, so why is it so popular? I think the main reason is the brilliant interaction between Michael J Fox as Marty, and the peerless Christopher Lloyd as Dr Emmett "Doc" Brown, the eccentric scientist who not only designs and builds a working time machine, but integrates it into a DeLorean car in order to give it a bit of style - a very humorous idea in mid-80s America, of course. The three Back to the Future films tell a continuous story that'll keep you guessing right up until the last moment, containing plenty of timeless humour, against-the-clock drama, and genuinely touching characterisation. Brilliant stuff - the films are always on TV, so make sure you've seen them at least once, even if you don't want to buy the DVDs!

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Rating: 4/5. Hill Valley, California, could be any other town in the world, but for that fact that its history has been altered time and time again thanks to Doc Brown's DeLorean. These are undoubtedly character-driven movies, but the sci-fi based premise is always at the heart of proceedings.

PUZZLE PAGE ONE

Hidden Nightmare Characters

Here's an old favourite that shouldn't prove too taxing on the brain cells - find the name of a Nightmare character hidden within each sentence!

- 1) Stand in the middle of the shopping centre, guard the ornamental fountain with your life, and shoot anyone who tries to jump in!
- 2) I'm waiting for the promised delivery of my hired car. Hark, I think I hear it coming along the road!
- 3) On the day of Tom's birthday party, I might decide to feel ill, I think.
- 4) I have neither heard, read nor told the story of the Three Little Pigs.
- 5) The entire transport infrastructure of Blackpool may have broken down, but we'll make it to the cocktail bar, tram or no tram!
- 6) In a famous Old Testament story, the serving maid Bilhah woke Jacob by sitting on his face.
- 7) Despite the other soldiers' misgivings, the general demanded war for the umpteenth time.
- 8) As you've eaten so much caramel, lie down and have a little rest.

9) "Would you like a bowl of Kellogg's All-Bran, Gwen?" asked Captain Jack Harkness, as the operatives of Torchwood settled down to breakfast one morning.

10) "For goodness sake, Gwen, do line the tiles up straight this time!" demanded Captain Jack Harkness, as the operatives of Torchwood settled down to play a game of Scrabble.

CLASSIC QUEST

Series 2

Quest: The Chalice.

Dungeoneer: Stuart Etherland.

Advisors: Neil, Greg and Neil.

Home town: Leicester.

Team score: 4 out of 10.

I have never found this team to be very engaging or particularly memorable, but their moment in the spotlight has arrived nonetheless! As you will see, they (unlike Jamie's team) have no one but themselves to blame for their level two demise.

Level One: After pulling the lever at the Wheel of Fate, Stuart gets straight into a particularly tricky game of Combat Chess, which I actually found quite exciting when I first rewatched series 2 on video, although I knew he was going to win in the end. A leisurely stroll through the Fire Cave then leads to the chamber of Igneous, where the team just about manages to score two out of three with a little help from Treguard. Stuart picks up a key and a white silken glove from the table, rejecting a gauntlet, as Igneous has averred that "*she will not wear a man's glove*".

The sting of the spectral scorpion is then avoided with very little trouble, before Stuart arrives in Lillith's lair. Unusually, Lillith herself is absent; even more unusually, the lever from the Wheel of Fate stands at Stuart's right hand. Pulling the lever summons Lillith's causeway, whereupon Lillith herself flounces into the chamber and accuses Stuart of being a burglar. The silken glove is required to pacify her: "*Before I allow you to leave,*

you must present me with some lovely thing.” - Lillith. A locked door awaits in the next chamber, where the Automatum is close behind Stuart, but despite some panic and dithering from the advisors, the exit is reached and the key is used successfully. The Automatum continues to chase Stuart towards the wellway, but a fairly speedy dash is all that is required to reach level two.

Level Two: Unsurprisingly, Stuart lands in Cedric's room. Cedric appears to be standing by the door with his back to the team, but to everyone's surprise and horror, the robed figure is actually Mogdred! A fairly one-sided conversation ensues, as Mogdred attempts to entice the team to serve him, and gifts them the spell POWER. The clue room is next, where the fatal mistake is made. The choice is between a dagger, a divining rod and a pot of honey. Treguard very quickly guides the team into choosing the honey, but they then decide to take the dagger as well, with very little thought or discussion! What a silly mistake to make, yet they carry on in blissful ignorance.

Olaf is on guard in the next chamber, and seems very reluctant to let Stuart pass. However, he is attacked by a swarm of bees when he opens the honey pot, allowing Stuart plenty of time to make his escape. The four-door chamber that is often seen at the start of level one follows, and Treguard explains that they needed the divining rod to show them which door to take. Stuart is guided through one of the doors on the right, but ends up back in the same room! They then try another door, but the same thing happens. Stuart's life force runs out very quickly, and Treguard tells the team in no uncertain terms what dullards they are, before getting rid of them: *“Starvation can be so debilitating. You're out I'm afraid, boys, but there again, at least you're off this Dungeon roundabout.” - Treguard.*

Summary: A fairly average attempt that culminated in a classic mistake - avoid the weapons of your enemies, as the Adventurers' Code instructs, or you die!

FOR DUNGEON AND DUNGEON MASTER

By Ricky Temple

Hubert Dracher stood in the gardens of his estate and greeted the contestants as they arrived. He was glad-handing and making small talk with them, covertly trying to locate the archer that his master Lord Fear had sent to ensure that the prize money returned to where it had come from - Lord Fear's treasure room.

He was talking to the contestant representing the Grimdale region of the Dungeon when he saw the royal coach rounding the corner. Excusing himself from the conversation, he made his way over to the coach. He paid no heed to the driver, who had so fascinated and worried Rio Bolt but a few moments ago, and failed to notice how - after making sure the door of the coach was open - the driver had seemingly disappeared into the crowd of contestants, seconds and spectators.

A figure emerged from the coach, dressed in a heavy black cloak that bore the crest of the House of Shar. He lowered the hood of the cloak and looked around; Dracher quickly noted the pale skin and piercing blue left eye (his right was covered by an eye patch) both of which denoted him as a Winterian.

He was followed by another figure, who was dressed similarly although he was also wearing tattered gloves. His movements were much slower and more deliberate than his companion's, and when he lowered his hood Dracher was rather surprised to see that he had a thick strip of cloth tied around his head, covering his eyes. This - along with his movements - indicated that he was blind. He, however, did not have the pale skin of a Winterian.

The man with the eye patch guided his blind companion to stand beside him. Then a regally dressed Lady emerged from the coach - the Crown Princess herself. The man with the eye patch gave his companion a tap on the shoulder, and the two bowed their heads as the Princess disembarked. She was dressed in a long, flowing, pale blue gown, along with her tiara and a thin fur-trimmed cape, which was covering her right arm. Dracher bowed in respect as Deanery's came towards him.

"Mr Hubert Dracher?" she enquired.

Dracher rose. "At your service, Your Highness. You do me a great honour by gracing my humble estate and tournament with your presence."

Deanery's held out her left hand and Dracher kissed it.

"Yes indeed, Crown Princess," he continued to fawn over his royal guest, "this humble tournament of mine is enhanced by the participation of so talented an archer as yourself."

"It is of my participation that I wish to speak to you, Mr Dracher," Deanery's said, removing her cloak to reveal that her right arm was held in a sling.

"Oh my Gods, what happened, Your Highness?" Dracher asked.

"A hunting accident... but the whys and hows are of no importance to me. What is important to me is Winteria's honour and participation in this tournament, since you so kindly extended the invitation to us to participate." Deanery's turned round slightly and signalled for her companion with the eye patch to approach. "This is the best archer in the ranks of my personal bodyguards, and as such I wish him to participate in this tournament in my stead."

Dracher regarded the one-eyed archer more closely than he had at first. Something about him made Dracher feel uneasy; he had an air of danger about him.

"What is it with these high class women and the hiring of bodyguards?" Dracher thought to himself. "They always seem to pick common-or-garden thugs."

He looked back at Deanery's and smiled. "That can easily be arranged, Princess. What do we call your champion?"

Deanery's simply nodded her head. "My champion and his second," she said, indicating the blind guard, "are called Commander Jonathan DeCobray and Weston."

"A blind second... isn't that something of a handicap, Commander DeCobray?" Dracher enquired of the one-eyed archer.

"Strange thing about the human senses, Mr Dracher," DeCobray responded. "When you deprive a man of one, the others have a tendency

to compensate for it. As my second, Weston can function just as well as any full-sighted man."

Dracher looked hard at DeCobray - he had taken a dislike to this man. "Well, I look forward to seeing you both in action. If you will excuse me, Your Highness, I'll just go and inform the stewards of the substitution of Commander DeCobray in your place. If Your Highness would care to view the tournament, there is a spectators' booth set up over there for the more distinguished guests."

"Thank you, Mr Dracher, that will be adequate for our needs," said Princess Deanery's Shar.

Dracher bowed and left, heading towards the servants he had appointed as stewards for the tournament.

"Well, so far so good, Squire," said Weston, who until now had been silent.

DeCobray and the Princess turned and looked back at him.

"Yes, so far so good," DeCobray agreed.

Deanery's sighed slightly. "Just remember, you're representing the House of Shar. Whether officially or not, don't do anything to disgrace us!"

This said, she dismissed the two and set off towards the spectators' booth. They bowed and headed off towards where the tournament would take place. Deanery's looked back over her shoulder.

"And take care, brother dear," she said under her breath.

As Dracher was making his way through the crowd, he saw Rio Bolt and Zyssa entering the garden. He made his way over to them, still intent on finding Lord Fear's archer.

"Good day to you, Archer, and to your fair companion. I am Hubert Dracher, the owner of this humble estate. Are you here to take part in my tournament?"

Just then, Dracher caught sight of Rio's metal hand. He looked curiously at Rio... could it be?

Rio bowed. "Yes, Mr Dracher, I am Kal of Greenshades. I am here to represent my village. This is my second, Miss Elizabeth Fern."

Zyssa curtsied.

"Greenshades, is it?" Dracher said. "Are you a Greenwarden?"

"No, sir." Rio shook his head. "I'm a member of the local militia."

"Ah, a soldier. I thought so - you have that bearing," Dracher laughed. "And you, my dear... what do you do?"

"I... I work at the local inn. I..." Zyssa stammered, as she tried to think of something to say.

Rio, picking up on this, cut in. "You must forgive her, Mr Dracher. She's never left the village before, so this is all rather overwhelming for her."

Dracher smiled and nodded. "Understandable, but I do hope it won't hamper you, Archer."

"I have confidence in my second, Mr Dracher. I'd trust her with my life."

"Oh, you've known each other for a long time, then?" Dracher enquired.

"I'm his fiancée," Zyssa blurted out, catching Rio off guard.

"Oh, a soon-to-be husband and wife team," Dracher said, with a smile that was just a little too wide.

"Yes," Rio said, recovering himself. "The prize money would help to pay for the wedding."

"Well, then I wish you the best of luck, my dears," Dracher said. "Yes indeed, I would be delighted if you were to win. It would be so nice to know I played a role in the happiness of such a lovely young couple."

"Thank you, Mr Dracher, but please excuse us now," said Rio. "We must get ready for the tournament. Come along, my sweet."

He took Zyssa by the hand and led her away.

"Fiancée?" he enquired, when he was sure they were out of earshot.

Zyssa blushed. "I panicked - it was the first thing that came into my head!"

Rio smiled. "Well, I'm flattered, Zyssa, Shall I book the honeymoon? I hear Dungarth is nice at this time of year," he teased.

"Oh, shut up," Zyssa said, although she couldn't help but smile.

Dracher watched them get swallowed up by the crowd. "Hmm, that's two lots of contestants that need close watching. I'm sure that's the Dungeon Ranger who escaped from Marblehead - the one his Lordship told me about some months ago - and I don't trust that Commander Jonathan DeCobray or his blind friend at all."

With this in mind, he made his way over to the stewards and informed them of the substitution of DeCobray. He told them to keep a close eye on him, and also on Rio and Zyssa. This done, Dracher made his way into the crowd again. He looked around and sighed - it was almost time to start the tournament, and there was still no sign of Lord Fear's archer. Dracher was about to head to the spectators' booth when there was a tap on his shoulder. He turned around and found himself face-to-face with a man dressed in grey robes and a chainmail vest made of black metal.

"Mr Dracher?" the stranger enquired.

"Yes," Dracher said, trying to sound cheerful. He was sick of all this glad-handing.

The man smiled and bowed. "I am Vizar Galgen, from the Great Mire. It is an honour to perform in front of a man such as you."

"Well, thank you, Vizar," Dracher said. "I look forward to your performance. I'm sure it will be entertaining."

He turned away and again made to head for the spectators' booth.

"Indeed, Mr Dracher," Vizar responded. "I'm sure I can guarantee you a real *ringer* of a performance."

Dracher's head snapped round; he looked at Vizar hard. Vizar smiled (a cold, sinister smile) and nodded his head. A confident, smug grin crossed Dracher's face.

"Of that, and of your inevitable victory, my dear Vizar Galgen, I have no doubt."

Vizar bowed and made his way towards the tournament area. Dracher watched him go, smiling to himself - everything was going according to plan. He then made his way to the booth, where Crown Princess Deanery's Shar and several other distinguished guests had already assembled, so he could watch the final stages of this elaborate Opposition scam unfold in comfort. The tournament was about to begin.

THE AUDIO PLAY'S THE THING

Just when you thought I'd forgotten all about this feature, here it is, back with a vengeance! The Nightmare audio play project is still alive and kicking at www.kmramdram.co.uk and if you haven't done so already (or even if you have) why not go there right now and listen to the third audio play, *Bolt to the Head*, which stars a very talented young actor as Hordriss the Confuser. Yes, if you enjoyed *Famous For Retreating* and *KM-Today*, you're sure to get a kick (or maybe a blast) out of *Bolt to the Head*.

BOLT TO THE HEAD (Released December 2008):

Written by **Andy Marshall**, based on *Boot to the Head* by the Frantics.
Featuring **Martin Odoni** as Lord Fear and Casper, **Russell Odoni** as Treguard, **Jake Collins** as Hordriss, **Alec Downs** as Skarkill, **Andy Marshall** as Folly, and **Rosey Collins** as Morghanna.

This comedy sketch is based on the events of *Famous For Retreating*, but is obviously not set in the same continuity. The beneficiaries of Merlin's will have gathered together to receive what is rightfully theirs, but there is a nasty surprise in store as Merlin begins to exact his revenge on them all from beyond the grave. Give it a listen - it's funny!

But, I hear you cry, what about the future of the audio plays? Well, it's brighter than you might expect. The fourth audio play (entitled *Yes, Dungeon Master*) will be with us very soon - Monday 7th September, to be exact. This is another comedic production, not set in any particular continuity, but it is much longer than *Bolt to the Head* and promises to provide more than a smattering of laughs.

At some point in the not-too-distant future, it is hoped that *The Fire & Ice Chronicles* (which can currently be enjoyed in prose form at www.kmramdram.co.uk/thefireicechronicles.htm) will be recorded as audio plays. With more information about *Fire & Ice*, here's The Eye Shield's stalwart storyteller Ricky Temple, helped out by fellow *Fire & Ice* scribe Andy Marshall:

What is it?

The *Fire & Ice Chronicles* is a series of Knightmare-inspired prose adventures created and written by Ricky Temple, Andy Marshall, Louise Brockhouse and Lizzie Northcott. Other writers and contributors include Martin Odoni, Julia Lawson, and Amber & Penny Ryder.

What's it about?

The *Chronicles* follow the exploits of a group of mercenaries known as the *Fire & Ice Gang*, who ply their trade against the backdrop of the ongoing civil war between the forces of Dungeon Master Treguard and the Powers That Be, and Lord Fear and the Opposition. *Fire & Ice* are not allied to either side and are expressly neutral. However, they operate with a dark and somewhat twisted morality, a sense of honour and a strong belief in natural justice. This has led to them being regarded more as outlaw heroes than out-and-out villains.

Where and when in the Dungeon does it take place?

The *Chronicles* use a variety of Knightmare locations - some from the TV show, others that were mentioned in the books, others that were created on the Knightmare-based role-play forum *Surrounds*, and some completely new and original locations. The stories take place in the same

timeline/continuity as the audio play *Famous For Retreating* with the first story, **The Colour of Amber**, having a direct link to the events in FFR, and the second story, **Balance**, taking place a couple of months later. The Chronicles also have ties with the series of stories involving Dungeon Ranger Rio Bolt (written and created by Ricky Temple) that are currently being published in *The Eye Shield*, as characters from both series crossover in some stories.

Who's in it?

As with the locations, the Chronicles feature characters that appeared in the TV show and in the books, and also original characters, although the gang rarely interacts with the two main factions and most stories find them pitted against original foes and villains. The gang itself is made up of ten members, each of whom is specialist in their chosen field and possesses a skill that makes them unique. The three main characters are:

Vyrrian Wren: An alumnus of the Guild of Assassins and a self-professed "Gentleman Assassin". He is a master of stealth and possesses near-superhuman aim and accuracy with his chosen weapon, throwing knives.

Leytan: The freelance mercenary/assassin for hire known as "The Ice Killer", Leytan is half Atlantian and half Winterian. He possesses the unique traits from both races - he can survive underwater for long periods of time and can manipulate the atmosphere. He is also a crossbow marksman. (Leytan and Wren are the titular "Fire & Ice".)

Lady Constance Isabel Mercury: A powerful sorceress from another realm, where she was High Priestess of a Grail Order. Lady Mercury is a sassy, sarcastic and sexy thrill-seeking fugitive aristocrat, with a fierce intellect and fiery temper. She has absconded from the boredom of her upper class lifestyle. Lady Mercury is the mistress of Leytan and along with her magic and intellect, she is skilled with both a sword and in the art of seduction.

Leytan, Wren and Lady Mercury are the only characters to appear in all stories. The other members of the gang are:

Midnight: Also known as Rhiannon, Midnight is a former member of the Powers That Be who has deserted and joined the Fire & Ice Gang. She is one of the last surviving members of a race known as "The Watchers" and possesses the ability to shape-shift into the form of a black panther, and

also to heal most wounds. She is the gang's second-in-command after the trinity of Leytan, Wren and Lady Mercury.

Drago Lestrade: A renegade from the race known as Airwan or Dragon Riders, Drago is a thief of the second level and is the gang's "pilot" as it is on the back of Drago's dragon charge (the Fire-Drake known as Lokie) that they often ride when they need to cover long distances.

Stiletta: The famous female Warrior Thief has, since the end of the Greater Game, joined the ranks of the Fire & Ice Gang. However, her membership is not known to anyone outside the gang and its main allies. Officially Stiletta is still a Powers That Be agent, but in fact she is really a double agent for the gang and passes on information to them of any Powers That Be activity which may threaten them. She is in a relationship with Drago Lestrade, and the two act as the gang's leaders during the rare times that Leytan, Wren, Lady Mercury and Midnight are all absent.

Keno: Known as "The Alley Cat" due to his agility, Keno is one of the Dungeon realm's top acrobats, and also one of its top burglars as his acrobatic skills mean he can scale almost any wall. Keno is also the brute force of the gang as he is an immensely strong individual. Rendered mute as a child, Keno is also a master both with a rope and with oriental chain weapons.

Akira Sasuke: This young orphan from the Orient seeking vengeance for her family's murder is, like Gundrada, a Sword Mistress. She has training both in the ways of a Samurai and a Ninja. She is the most skilled sword fighter in the gang and is often armed with her two Wazikashis (Japanese short swords).

Drake-Gabriel Makepeace: Known as "Masque" (short for Masquerade) Drake is a silver-tongued and smooth-talking con-man. A former actor turned highwayman and confidence trickster, Drake serves as the gang's fixer and infiltrator, as with his acting past he has the ability to portray any role (be it a lowly beggar or someone from the highest nobility) to near perfection.

Jan-Jan: January Lucile Mallory the Third, better known as Jan-Jan, is a half-feral and wildly eccentric urchin who has adopted the gang, particularly Midnight, as her new family. Her carefree attitude, whimsical and naive outlook on life, combined with her singsong way of talking, make

her seem the least skilled of the gang. However, when it comes to Jan-Jan looks are deceiving. She is highly skilled in the use of Spy Magic, be it Glasses or Mirrors, and is the gang's communication expert.

Where can I find it again?

The Fire & Ice Chronicles are published on the KMRAMDRAM website at www.kmramdram.co.uk/thefireicechronicles.htm

The first two stories (**The Colour of Amber**, written by Ricky Temple and Andy Marshall, and **Balance**, written by Martin Odoni) are already available to read, and a third story (**The Solitary Dancer**, written by Ricky Temple, Andy Marshall and Amber Ryder) will start being published sometime later this year.

The Colour of Amber: Leytan, Wren and Lady Mercury are hired by Greystagg and the Grey Sisters to infiltrate the Opposition stronghold of Marblehead. Their objective is to retrieve Lord Fear's Amber Duplicator so the Grey Sisters may finally stand up against Lord Fear's tyranny, but this is no walk in the park. Fire & Ice brave the traps, horrors and tricks of Marblehead to achieve their aim... but in the end, will any of it be worth it?

Balance: The Fire & Ice crew are hired by a Castillian merchant called Rogo to run weapons over the border to Inverchaber in Scotland, where a feud has raged for generations between two rival Highland clans - the Clan MacGrou and the Clan CamBeul. Suspicious of the motives of their latest employer, Leytan investigates both clans, and uncovers clues to an outside conspiracy that, having seen opportunities to enrich itself by supplying arms to both sides, has been interfering in the feud to prevent it from ever ending; as well as two young lovers caught in the war, longing for peace in order to follow their forbidden love.

REMEMBER HIM?

Series 2. Level 1.

THE TROLL

This colossal stone giant was hardly the sharpest sword in the armoury, yet he provided some fairly good scenes with a few genuinely tense moments. Unlike the trolls of series 7 and 8, this Troll spoke English (not perfectly, it has to be said) and, in no uncertain terms, informed any dungeoneers unlucky enough to appear on the rocky ledge beside his pit that he was going to devour them. The Troll was played by Guy Standeven, in his only non-wall monster role!

The Troll's first appearance was with Claire, the second dungeoneer of series 2. After informing the dungeoneer that he suspected her to be a goat (because of the horns on the Helmet of Justice) the hungry monster stated his intention to feed: *"I is hungry, and trolls likes goats!"* - **Troll**. The team needs a prompt from Treguard before they decide to cast a spell called LITTLE, which Lillith has previously awarded them. The Troll shrinks rapidly and soon disappears from view, cursing Claire all the while in an increasingly high-pitched voice.

The Troll's next appearance was at the start of Akash's infamously bungled quest, and this was the only occasion on which a spell or object was not required to deal with him. As usual, he declaimed his intention to devour the dungeoneer, forcing Akash to plead for his life by making a convincing case that he was not good to eat. I actually think this is the high point of Akash's entire quest, as the clueless dungeoneer does quite a good job of convincing the Troll that he tastes very nasty indeed! Of course, this whole scene is set up so that the Troll can reward Akash for his honesty with the spell TRUTH, which the team desperately needs to get past Igneous because they are all so thick!

We next see the Troll during Jamie's quest. The team desperately attempts to bribe the hungry monster with a jar of humbugs and a bag of small change, but he just isn't interested! It's up to Treguard to tell Jamie to take the stopper off the humbug jar, whereupon the Troll is attacked by a swarm of bees, creating an almost identical scene to one in the previous episode involving Stuart, Olaf and a jar of honey!

The Troll's fourth and final appearance came towards the end of the series, with the penultimate dungeoneer, Steven. I think this is probably my favourite scene involving the Troll, as it really is quite funny. As you may remember, Steven was in possession of an amulet of invisibility, and was able to control whether or not he was visible with the help of a gauntlet. The advisors had to guide the invisible Steven carefully along

the Troll's ledge, checking his position every so often. Because the Troll was so stupid, he just could not work out why his lunch kept appearing and disappearing, and didn't have a clue how to deal with the situation. His expressions of surprise and frustration as Steven keeps disappearing really are funny to watch - well done, Guy Standeven, you did a good job!

Fear Factor: 7 A very large and very genuine threat.

Killer Instinct: 2 Plenty of instinct, but never got round to it in the end.

Humour Rating: 4 He sang a fun little song to Steven.

Oscar Standard: 9 An excellent performance.

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.

This wagon shed can be seen at the start of an eye shield sequence:



The sequence moves on, through (or, as Sir Hugh so rightly says, past) the gate and into the farmyard:



"I think this is a place called *Greenshades*, and that house is an inn."
According to Pickle, that is:



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

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

Gran (1983):

Designed and directed by Ivor Wood, who was also the producer of *Postman Pat*, *Gran* told of the adventures of an elderly grandmother. All thirteen episodes would feature Gran and her grandson Jim, and plots would revolve around Gran getting herself into scrapes and therefore requiring assistance from Jim. The show was narrated by Patricia Hayes, whom I always considered to have the perfect voice for Gran, although Jim sounded a little strange. Almost every episode would open with the narrated line "there was always something for Gran to grumble about", while Jim closed every episode by saying: "Haven't I got the most surprising Gran?" The words "The End" would then appear in an opportune place, such as on a flag or a tea towel.

Gran's grumbles tended to be about such everyday affairs as laundry or

shopping, so efforts would be made throughout the five-minute episode to resolve such issues. Often *Gran's* solutions to the problems would be eccentric, resulting in madcap adventures and excessive concern from Jim. This is especially evident in the episode entitled *Gran's Bike*, since it culminates with her participating in cross-country racing, even though her original use for the bike was to bring the shopping home. This episode also features *Gran* saying: "Haven't I got the most surprising grandson?" To my knowledge, this is the only time that this happens.

Other episodes feature *Gran* digging up dinosaur bones, hang gliding or knitting a huge scarf to keep her house warm when the heating fails in the winter. This particular episode was a favourite of mine, I have to say. The one negative thing about this programme was the fact that each episode lasted only five minutes. As a result, it would be paired with other programmes of ten minutes, and I believe that this is why it tends to slip through people's memories, even though it is on a par with *Postman Pat* in terms of entertainment, despite not being as educational.

Finally, a useless but fascinating piece of trivia! On a flight to the USA in 2002, I was looking at what in-flight entertainment was provided, and tucked away in the children's section, amongst all the modern tripe, was an episode of *Gran* (*Gran's Bike*, I believe). Before that day, I had not seen *Gran* in over ten years and I have not seen it anywhere since except online. Thirteen episodes were made, which I am sure you are shocked and surprised to know.

Educational Value = 2/5.

Entertainment Value = 5/5.

King Rollo (1980):

As was the case with *Gran*, episodes of *King Rollo* were only five minutes in duration, but for whatever reason, *King Rollo* (the first production from David McGee's *King Rollo Films*) is remembered far more readily. *King Rollo* himself was an adult (he had a beard) although he was portrayed as a child, since he would be told off, and even punished, by other members of the castle if he misbehaved, suggesting that the point of each episode was that there was a lesson to be learnt.

King Rollo lived in the castle with blonde-haired Cook (literally a female cook), who would tell him off more than anyone else; the Magician, who could do magic spells by moving his hat and causing bright flashes; and the cat, Hamlet, who would always be in the wrong place at the wrong

time if, for example, something fell over. Other characters were the red-haired Queen Gwen, who lived in a nearby palace and would feature in several episodes, and King Frank, whom King Rollo originally did not like.

Episode plots would often focus on King Rollo having to learn to do something new. At first, he would put up resistance, but after being told off by Cook and assisted by the Magician, he would eventually do what was necessary. In one episode, he receives a pair of new shoes but has no idea how to tie the laces. Using magic, the Magician makes the laces tie themselves to show King Rollo how to do it. The king therefore goes to the Magician every time he wants his laces tied, but the Magician, saying that Rollo needs to learn how to do it himself, will not help him, and sends him to his room to practise. Of course, by the end of the episode, King Rollo has mastered the technique, and it was this programme that taught me how to tie shoelaces, although it took me much longer than five minutes to have any idea how to do it.

King Rollo was one of the more educational *See-Saw* programmes but managed to sustain a high level of entertainment at the same time as teaching, which is not always easy to do. It taught children to do such things as tie up shoelaces, make breakfast, and make birthday cards themselves instead of merely buying them at shops. For these reasons (and owing to the fact that I was a huge fan of the show), I have given it the maximum score in both categories. No prizes for guessing the number of episodes, either.

Educational Value = 5/5.

Entertainment Value = 5/5.

Pinny's House (1986-1987):

Another five-minute show that would be aired alongside such programmes as *Bric-A-Brac*, *Pinny's House* was written by Peter Firmin and directed by Oliver Postgate of *Smallfilms*. It told of the adventures of a pin-sized doll named Pinny, who lived in a china house on a mantelpiece. The show was based on the "Pinny" books, and this is demonstrated insofar as the majority of each episode consisted of still pictures, over which Matilda Thorpe narrated the story; animation was fairly minimal.

The setting for the series was on the mantelpiece of a house, in which lived two children (Tom and Jo) and their naughty dog, Tess. In the first episode, Pinny's china house is empty, so Victor, the pin-sized doll who lives in a nearby sailing boat, is lonely. One day, the children place a

pedlar doll called Peg beside the boat. Victor wants to buy a valuable doll from Peg, but cannot do so because he has no money. In the end, he finds a diamond ring between the floorboards and uses it to pay for Pinny. Pinny subsequently lives in the china house for the rest of the series.

In the other episodes, Pinny and Victor have various adventures, often resulting in them being found away from the mantelpiece. Of course, when the children are around, the dolls do not move, so they are obviously extremely confused when they find Pinny and Victor in unusual places. The adventures the dolls had included taking a trip on a paper aeroplane, having a party, and Victor falling off the mantelpiece, breaking his arm and consequently being vacuumed up. Worse still, the vacuum bag was then put outside in the bin. However, if my memory serves me correctly, he made it back to his boat when a rat chewed the bag open, meaning he could crawl back to the lounge. Pinny then sent down some string to haul him back up to the mantelpiece, where he was able to put his broken arm into a sling.

One interesting point about this series is that, during the opening titles, the episode number would appear on the sail of Victor's boat, something which I cannot recall ever seeing anywhere else. And yes, there were thirteen episodes. As with all the five-minute programmes, time prevented any significant plots, but unlike *Gran*, which I always felt was too short, *Pinny's House* seemed to fit the five-minute slot perfectly.

Educational Value = 1/5.

Entertainment Value = 3/5.

The Adventures of Spot (1987):

Continuing our reviews of five-minute programmes, we now reach *The Adventures of Spot*, more commonly known as "Spot the Dog". There is a whole host of information available about Spot, which is more than can be said for several other shows. Indeed, the only information I can find ANYWHERE online about one particular programme gives the following information: "Children's series." Gee, thanks! (Join us in a later issue of TES to find out which show I am referencing.)

Anyway, back to "the lovable Spot". Spot's stories were originally in the form of picture books written by Eric Hill, but were made into a television series by David McGee of *King Rollo Films*. The original series consisted of thirteen episodes and was shown in 1987, but there have been many subsequent releases. Two series of an educational version called *It's Fun*

To Learn With Spot, which taught such skills as counting and the alphabet, were released in 1990 and 1994, while a second series of *The Adventures of Spot* appeared in 1993. There have also been two specials (1995 and 1997) and a series of *Spot's Musical Adventures* was shown in 2000 - unlike many of our favourites from the 1980s, Spot has enjoyed a long and successful career.

Spot, a yellow puppy with a brown spot on each side of his body, is obviously the star of the show, and during the original series, Spot would get himself into scrapes, learn from new experiences and generally frolic around and be mischievous. His mother Sally appeared in most episodes but his father Sam made only occasional appearances. Other characters included Helen the Hippo, Steve the Monkey and Tom the Crocodile, all of whom would play and interact with Spot throughout the stories.

The Adventures of Spot introduced viewers to everyday childhood situations, such as starting school, meeting people and playing such games as Hide and Seek; in the episode entitled *Where's Spot?*, we do not see Spot himself until the very end because the rest of the episode is dedicated to Spot's mother searching for him. Other episodes would focus on Spot's canine side, such as searching for a lost bone or following his nose to make a discovery.

Although *The Adventures of Spot* was never a favourite of mine (perhaps because I was a little older by the time I first saw it, and therefore saw it as a bit too simple), I nevertheless feel that it provided a good introduction to basic life experiences while still being entertaining.

Educational Value = 5/5.

Entertainment Value = 3/5.

The Flumps (1977):

It would seem that we have now covered all the five-minute programmes (well, at least all the ones I ever remember seeing) so to end this instalment, let us look at one of the first shows I believe I ever saw: *The Flumps*, produced by *David Yates Productions* and narrated by Gay Soper.

The Flumps were furry puppets that were animated by means of a stop motion camera (à la *Postman Pat*). The Flump family consisted of Grandfather Flump, Father Flump, Mother Flump, the two children Perkin and Posie, and the baby Pootle, all of whom were recognisable by their hats (or bow, in Posie's case). The adult figures were very stereotypical:

Father would invent things in his workshop, Mother would cook and read stories to the children, and Grandfather would often be sitting in his armchair sleeping or reading the newspaper. The children would often be found outside playing, and episodes tended to revolve around one or all of them. For example, in *The Cloud*, Perkin is in a bad mood, causing there to be a cloud over his head, and the episode is devoted to finding a way to get rid of it. The plots were interspersed with songs and sometimes a story from Mother Flump's book.

As can be seen from the episode mentioned above, there was an educational element to the show - in that case, to teach children not to be grumpy. Other episodes featured such themes as exercise, in which they all suggest different exercises they can do to keep fit (again, educational). However, as with the majority of the *See-Saw* programmes, the educational element was woven into the storyline without ever appearing to preach.

The theme music deserves a word or two. In my humble opinion, it suits the show, and specifically the Flumps' appearances, perfectly. While the show itself has not been seen on television in over twenty years, the theme music still survives today, for the current advertisements for *Auto Trader* feature it. So, to anyone who has seen those commercials and has heard and recognised the tune but not been able to place it, now you know.

Unlike the other programmes we have examined, the BBC stopped repeating the thirteen episodes of *The Flumps* fairly quickly, meaning that my own memories of it are fairly scanty. Nevertheless, it must have made an impression on me, since I have never forgotten Pootle's "Knees and Nose" exercise in *Keeping Fit*.

Educational Value = 4/5.

Entertainment Value = 4/5.

KIDS' TV SHOWS I GREW UP WITH

Focus on: Count Duckula.

Original Broadcast Run: September 1988 - February 1993.

UK TV Channel: ITV1.

Count Duckula is one of several highly entertaining cartoons produced by Cosgrove-Hall during the '80s and '90s. It was a spin-off from the company's most widely known and popular show, *Danger Mouse*, which I do not seem to remember with the same clarity and fondness as many other children of the '80s. I remember watching DM (which ran from 1981 to 1992) as a small child, but I never enjoyed it as much as *Count Duckula*. After some serious thought, I have deduced that there are two plausible reasons for this - the first is that I was probably a little too young to appreciate *Danger Mouse* in its absolute heyday, and the second is that I definitely prefer the vampire genre over that of secret agents and spies.

Yes, as its title suggests, this show was something of a parody of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* - or at the very least, it was loosely based on said novel. Deep in the Carpathian Mountains of Transylvania, the sinister Counts of Duckula - a dreadful dynasty of vicious vampire ducks - had terrorised the local populace through innumerable centuries with their evil deeds. However, what the local populace didn't realise was that all the Counts of Duckula were, in fact, the same vampire, who had been resurrected over and over again by means of a sacred rite that could be performed once a century, and which gave the Count a different personality each time he was resurrected. The latest reincarnation, of course, had not gone according to plan - thanks to a stray bottle of tomato ketchup, Count Duckula had been resurrected as a vegetarian vampire, which put a whole new spin on his unlife. All of this took place, of course, in a world populated almost entirely by anthropomorphic birds.

The show works so well, in my opinion, for one very important reason - it has three brilliant lead characters, all of whom are very funny in very different ways, and bounce off each other perfectly. The titular vegetarian vampire count himself was voiced by David Jason, who was also the voice of *Danger Mouse*. Apart from the fact that he was a green duck, Duckula looked very much like the traditional gentleman vampire, with his cloak and bowtie and immaculate black hair. (He had no fangs, of course, since he no longer had any need for them.) He is the kind of character that I would not have been surprised to see presented as rather stupid and witless, as he was constantly getting himself into all kinds of needless trouble with absolutely no idea of how to get out of it. However, *Count Duckula* is intelligent, witty and often quite canny, ever

ready with a razor-sharp quip for any situation. So, why is he so easy to laugh at?

The reason Duckula is so funny is that he is unbelievably extroverted. David Jason's versatile vocal talents take every emotion to the extreme, creating (as the theme tune puts it) the wild and wacky one they call Count Duckula. Any situation quickly spirals out of control once Duckula gets involved - intelligent as he is, he's also impetuous, impulsive, reckless and occasionally hysterical. He has a childlike desire for his every whim to be fulfilled, very much in the vein of the traditional spoiled aristocrat. Duckula would have found his unlife far more peaceful and much easier to cope with if he himself hadn't regularly insisted on stamping his own (extremely wacky) personality on it.

Something that has always fascinated me about Count Duckula is that despite his vegetarian nature, he is - at the most basic level - a vampire. As this was a children's show, this was a subject that was rarely explored in much detail, although some episodes (such as *One Stormy Night*, *Dear Diary* and *Dr Goosewing and Mr Duck*) did show us quite clearly what Duckula was like in his truly vampiric form, and he was pretty darned scary! Even in his vegetarian form, Duckula retained some of his vampiric traits - he had no reflection, and could teleport himself from place to place, although his control over this power was not always reliable and he was sometimes heard to wonder exactly how he was managing to do it. Duckula also mentioned on occasion that he didn't show up in photographs, although he managed to appear on TV in a couple of episodes without any problems. The mirror thing, however, they were always very consistent with, except in one episode (entitled *The Mutinous Penguins*) in which Duckula is seen through a periscope - they obviously didn't think about that one for long enough!

The second of the show's three main characters is Igor, voiced by the late Jack May. This hunchbacked vulture was the immortal butler of the Duckula family, who was most perturbed to be serving a vegetarian vampire, and was constantly trying to find ways to return his master to his former, evil self. Despite this, Igor's loyalty to Count Duckula was unwavering. He used his superior intelligence and devious nature to help his master out of many fixes, frustrated as he always found himself at the end of it all to be serving goblets of warm carrot juice instead of warm blood. Duckula and Igor make a brilliant double-act, as Duckula (the

extreme extrovert) perfectly juxt-opposes Igor's quiet, brooding, sinister demeanour.

The third protagonist is Nanny, voiced in true Monty Python style by Brian Trueman. Another immortal servant of the Duckula clan, Nanny was a large, unbelievably stupid chicken, whose duties around Castle Duckula included cooking, cleaning, receiving guests (by pulling the front door off its hinges) and tucking her "Little Ducky-Boos" into bed at night with a mug of cocoa and some choccy bickies. Duckula often found Nanny's babying very frustrating, although he was shown on several occasions to be more than a little dependent on it. I can't imagine that his previous incarnations felt the same way, though - I often wonder exactly what they made of Nanny.

Nanny was easy to use for comedy scenes because she was incredibly dense and incredibly clumsy; Duckula and Igor would often share a joke at Nanny's expense, as her stupidity was the one thing that they agreed about. Nanny would never get the joke, of course, and seemed quite content to spend most of her time demolishing the walls and doors of Castle Duckula for comic effect. Despite her overriding status as a joke character, however, Nanny was often very useful to Duckula when he'd got himself into trouble, thanks chiefly to her great strength, and also to the endless supply of useful objects that she kept in the sling that was constantly supporting her right arm.

This is a show that I always remembered fondly, but I couldn't for the life of me remember what the characters actually did during the course of an episode. I always remembered the basic premise perfectly, but as to what Duckula, Igor and Nanny actually got up to on a regular basis, I had no idea - and even now, after watching the entire series on DVD, I'm still not sure I can actually put it into words! The best explanation I can give is that there are three basic types of Count Duckula episode:

- 1.) The gang leave Transylvania and travel to another part of the world, where a crazy adventure ensues. (As you probably remember, Castle Duckula had the magical ability to transport itself anywhere that its master told it to, but it always returned at dawn, Eastern Transylvanian Standard Time.)
- 2.) Count Duckula attempts to become rich and/or famous in some way, which refers back to his early appearances in *Danger Mouse* as an aspiring conjurer.

3.) A visitor or visitors come(s) to the castle and create(s) a situation that needs to be dealt with.

Obviously there are some episodes that overlap two (or even all three) of these basic premises, and there are some that don't quite fit into any of them, but I'm sure you get the basic idea. In the case of the third scenario, the visitor(s) would often be one (or more) of the semi-regular antagonists, entertaining plans of either killing or taking advantage of Duckula in some way.

By far the most well-known (and the most regular) of these antagonists is Dr Von Goosewing - voiced (with a comical German accent) by Jimmy Hibbert - who was the latest in a long line of vampire hunters who had tried for centuries to do away with the Duckulas. Goosewing invented many anti-vampire devices, but none of them worked properly, fortunately for Duckula. I've never really liked Goosewing, or found him particularly funny - I think the main problem with him is that he spends most of his time talking to himself (or to his "invisible" assistant Heinrich) and therefore doesn't really have any chemistry with the three main characters, who have so much with each other. But I'm well aware that Goosewing does have his fans out there!

Other recurring antagonists included the Crow Brothers, four very inept burglars. They once tried (in an episode entitled *Mobile Home*) to steal Castle Duckula itself, brick by brick, and reassemble it in the backyard of a rich American, who would then pay them a lot of money. They tried to number the bricks so that the castle could be rebuilt accurately, but as the crow doing the numbering could only count up to five, the reassembled castle wasn't exactly perfect. The whole venture proved to be completely fruitless in the end, as the castle returned to Transylvania under its own steam at dawn, Eastern Transylvanian Standard Time, just as it always did.

My favourite recurring antagonists are Gaston and Pierre, two incredibly inept criminals who were forever struggling to commit a successful crime - the tall, suave Gaston would always come up with a perfect plan, and then entrust the small, stupid Pierre to carry it out. Inevitably, the plan fell apart very quickly. Gaston and Pierre were so funny that they got their own spin-off cartoon, *Victor and Hugo*, the two series of which were shown just before *Knightmare* series 5 and 6! The premise was exactly the same, but the characters were changed from birds to humans, as well

as being renamed. However, Jimmy Hibbert and David Jason gave Victor and Hugo exactly the same voices and character dynamic as Gaston and Pierre.

Before I wrap this up, there are just a couple more things I have to mention. The chilling narration for the show was provided by Barry Clayton, who usually seemed to be completely unaware that Duckula was no longer a vampire, and introduced us to each show in an accordingly grisly manner. The dark, scary style of the show's introductions and conclusions is certainly one of the highlights for me. Who could ever forget the opening titles with the creepy explanation of the premise - "Castle Duckula, home for many centuries to a dreadful dynasty of vicious vampire ducks!" I always remembered it word-for-word, and I'm sure many other impressionable young viewers did too. That final chilling phrase with which the narrator closed each show - "Goodnight out there, whatever you are!" - is also something that will be forever ingrained in my memory.

A slightly less glorious aspect of the show, I feel, is the Clock, which contained two mechanical bats who would often appear during the episode and tell each other really bad jokes, most of which were in some way relevant to the story. Okay, so the jokes were supposed to be terrible, but I still don't really feel that the bats really added anything to the show. Sometimes, of course, the Clock was directly involved in the plot, as it was the most important part of Castle Duckula's travelling mechanism. Twice when he was on a trip abroad, Count Duckula foolishly sold the Clock, leading to a frantic chase to get it back before dawn so that the castle would be able to return to Transylvania!

Count Duckula is a show that I will always remember fondly, and enjoy watching on DVD from time to time. One of my most abiding Duckula-related memories involves eating a large number of Trio bars over a period of several weeks in order to find all five of the free Count Duckula stickers that were being given away with the tasty little chocolate bars. They came in packs of about six, with a long rectangular Duckula sticker tucked inside. It was easy to find Duckula, Nanny, Dr Von Goosewing and the Clock, but Igor was nowhere to be found! At last he turned up in a packet of Choc Trios, and I'm fairly sure that was the only Igor sticker I ever had, although I had several of the other four. I'm looking at that Igor sticker on the wall in front of me right now, along with one of each of the other four - yes, I and my family went to such pains to find them

all that I have always kept track of them! They glow in the dark, which is pretty cool, and they still work after twenty years - you don't get free merchandise of that quality nowadays!

PUZZLE PAGE TWO

Going For Nightmare!

In the style of former BBC One and current Channel Five gameshow *Going For Gold*, the following descriptions are all worth a maximum of four points. Ask former ITN newsreader John Suchet (or, if you can't find him, ask someone else) to read each question to you and try to shout out the correct answer as soon as possible. If you answer correctly whilst your questioner is reading out the pink section, you get four points. If you answer correctly whilst your questioner is reading out the green section, you get three points. If you answer correctly whilst your questioner is reading out the blue section, you get two points. If you answer correctly whilst your questioner is reading out the red section, you get one point. Tot up your score out of forty at the end and see how well you did!

- 1) I am a Nightmare character who first appeared in series 1. All my appearances in this series were confined to one particular room. I was the only Dungeon-dwelling character from series 1 to appear in series 3 and 4. Beginning with M, I am... who?
- 2) I am a Nightmare creature that first appeared in series 3. During this appearance, I was accompanied by another creature that looked a lot like me. I made three further appearances, in series 5, 6 and 8. Beginning with H, I am a... what?
- 3) I am a dungeoneer from series 8. I met Motley on level one. I took a Short Cut to level three. Beginning with O, I am... who?
- 4) I am a Nightmare puzzle from series 2. I was first attempted on level one. I also appeared on level two on occasion. Beginning with C, I am Combat... what?

- 5) I am a clue object that first appeared in series 2. My final appearance was in series 7. I was found in either bar or bag form. Beginning with S, I am what precious metal?
- 6) I am a Nightmare character who first appeared in series 5. I also appeared in series 6, 7 and 8. I am not a puppet. Beginning with H, I am Sylvester... who?
- 7) I am a Nightmare creature from series 8. I was sometimes found guarding the corridors of Linghorm. I was often armed, but not always. Beginning with S, I am a... what?
- 8) I am a dungeoneer from series 1. I did not make it to level two. My wall monster was Granitas. Beginning with M, I am... who?
- 9) I am a Nightmare puzzle from series 4. I also appeared in series 5. I then appeared once each in series 6 and 7, and three times in series 8. Beginning with B, I am the Corridor of... what?
- 10) I am a clue object that first appeared in series 1. On this occasion, I was mistakenly (and fatally) left behind. I am often heard rather than seen. Beginning with H, I am a... what?

SCANDINAVIAN NIGHTMARES: JÓN'S NOTES

LEVEL TWO, ROOM ONE: A FRIENDLY CHAT WITH CEDRIC

TEXT REFERENCE

Gunnar had to have the worst landing possible. Right on top of Cedric.

"You ignorant pig!"

NOTE

This scene with Cedric is based on two real quests. This opening misfortune is one of them; Steven, the second to last dungeoneer of series 2, was the one to "land" on top of Cedric. Only, in this reality, where the two rooms really are one below the other, Gunnar lands on Cedric rather harder than Steven did.

A very Cedric-like insult, maybe, but

He was thrown out of his last monastery for using the Bishop of Dunshelm for some impromptu quarterstaff practice during evensong, and he's never found a suitable place that would contain his anger, which has been allowed to fester here ever since.

"...it's clobberin' time!"

*"This is a monk! A servant of the vile and cretinous Christian religion!..." (...)
"Mighty Odin!" (Håkon) roared to the sky. "We hail your magnificent presence!"*

The One-Eyed Man Upstairs, in the company of several of the Einherjer, was in the middle of an enormous meal of spit-roasted pork washed down with several gallons of mead, but heard the call, and answered, before jamming a huge and very hairy piece of crackling into his mouth.

"...All those endless days spent praying in a monastery will not help you now... you should have used that time to come up with some more original and cutting insults, shouldn't you, spawn of the putrid disgorgement of the bowels of a freakishly deformed genetic experiment gone horrifically wrong!"

that's not one of his own. It was helpfully provided by my old woodwork teacher... when he burst into a furious tirade in only the second lesson of the academic year for a particularly minor offence. *That* year was fun...

When I think of monks, I think of hardcore religious indoctrination, and vows of silence. I always wondered how Cedric could ever have been a monk given his volatile behaviour. So, I provided my own explanation of how he ended up in the Dungeon.

Again, not an original Cedric line. Yes, he did bawl about "clobbering" dungeoneers, but this is actually a Sick Of It All track, off their first album...

Xander is an avowed Satanist, and Håkon is the most hardcore Odinst since... Odin. Øyvind just hates everyone in general. The mere presence of a monk is going to be a red rag to three already very angry bulls.

In this reality, the Norse Gods really do exist, and are quite prepared to answer any call made by any of their most dedicated followers, at any time. Including in the middle of dinner. All Odin has to do is wave his hand, or have the raven sitting on his shoulder to squawk something (maybe "Goodnight, Jack"?) and what was asked for, is done. Thor, Tyr, Heimdall and the rest can all do the same, although Thor's answer usually involves a few bolts of lightning thrown in at no extra cost.

For all the punishment I've dealt out to him here, Cedric's extreme rudeness made him one of my favourite characters of the early series - the idea that a monk could be so abusive and still *be* a monk was somewhat intriguing, and he'd never be as hopelessly un-threatening as, say, Folly or Gretel. Still, here, we have a different situation, as alluded to in Xander's venomous comment above. The corrosive contempt for Christianity that the three advisers have, coupled with Gunnar's lightning-quick thinking and

"Who is the master now?"

"...my god wields a hammer, and yours died nailed to a cross! Do you have any further questions?"

"All right, I'll do it..." Cedric whimpered, by now in total submission.

"...or I will taunt you a second time!"

champion wordsmithery, give this team the arsenal required to subdue Cedric without lifting a finger.

I think this is a *Star Wars* quote, but I can't be sure. I was never very interested in the first film, and *The Empire Strikes Back* sent me to sleep...

Although, officially, I Hate The Internet for the barrage of pictures of cats defaced with illiterate dribblings it continues to send my way, I'll admit stealing this from one of the better captioned pictures out there. Or it might have been a t-shirt. Either way, the internet was involved.

As I mentioned, I based this whole scene on two real quests; this ending references the second of these - the final quest of series 1, where dungeoneer Richard (shortly after holding his nose to drop down the well) sat back and watched as Folly duelled with Cedric using insults as weapons. Folly is nearly as good with words as Gunnar is. Nearly.

It's the first *Monty Python* reference in this episode... but not the last!

LEVEL TWO, ROOM TWO: CLUE ROOM TWO

TEXT REFERENCE

"I'm Casper. Casper the key, that's me. I can unlock anything..." (...) "Grab the vodka and the spanner and go!"

NOTE

Casper the key was a regular in level 2 of series 1. Despite his irritating squeaky voice, failure to pick him up meant certain termination of the quest. Do any of you *really* think I was going to let that happen?

LEVEL TWO, ROOM THREE: FOUR DOORS, FOUR SKULLS

TEXT REFERENCE

The skulls hovered just far enough away from Gunnar to allow time for a lengthy spell to be cast without ever looking like they might attack.

NOTE

Regular watchers of series 3-5 will no doubt have noticed that this behavioural pattern of the skull ghosts made them about as threatening as Gretel, to all but the most comically incompetent teams. By series 5, clue rooms appeared to be

unguarded, giving us all an Øyvind-esque "I wonder what is going to happen here?" moment. Lo and behold, a skull ghost appears, and is always *just behind* the dungeoneer... I chose the series 3 skull ghosts for this scene because I never liked the series 4-5 version. The graphics can only be described as "a bit too good for the job" - like series 8's CGI dungeons - but were allied to this strangely jerky movement, as if they were drawn on a bit of paper that someone was pulling - a bit like the way scrolling credits were animated on 1970s TV shows.

"Come on, team, these are dangerous hauntings, who you gonna call?"

The jangly spell noise was quickly replaced with an electronic theme tune that sounded like an awful parody of Ray Parker Jr's original theme tune, but with just enough differences to be called a different composition. After all, the producers had narrowly avoided being sued for ripping off the music from Jaws and they were in no mood for a repeat performance.

"I'm going to send them into the Mills of Doom - we haven't had a death in there yet, I spent ages dreaming up a death sequence for that room and I'm itching to use it. I say we tip the balance a little in our favour."

This was the first joke I had planned for the entire episode, and was inspired by the scene I am about to describe below...

I think that the first time I saw the shark scene, in the eleventh quest of series 3, I was in stunned disbelief for what seemed like eternity. That the production team were so blatant in their use of the *Jaws* music *with just enough tweaks to attempt to call it an original composition even though it very, very obviously wasn't* left me wondering how the blue hell they could have got away with it. I still do, to this day.

Rumours continue to circulate that several teams, such as the one involving the notorious Screeching Gideon (who, in this reality, no longer exists...), wound up the production team so much that they retaliated in the only way they could - by shoving the team into an extra-difficult scenario with the aim of killing them off. It should come as no surprise that we are looking at the most extreme example of such a team.

LEVEL TWO, ROOM FOUR: THE MILLS OF DOOM

TEXT REFERENCE

Without any warning, and with Gunnar stranded at the edge of the cog, the machinery started to speed up.

NOTE

This is a reference to the final quest of series 8, where Lord Fear sped up the Corridor of Blades.

The spanner slid through his hands, and dropped right between the cogs... which slowed down and stopped with a mighty crunch of mangled metal.

Backstage, Dave returned with a chunky optical disc the size of a VHS video cassette.

...and *this* is what happened to the "Corridor of No Blades" in the final quest of series 4 when Giles encountered it - he appeared to drop the spanner on the floor rather than throw it. We'll be hearing more of Giles' antics in level 3...

It's based on something I found in a drawer at work. It was a huge contraption like a Jaz disk (the Zip's bigger and far more expensive brother - anyone remember them?), only bigger, and nobody had any idea if there was anything still in existence that could read it. I think it held about 250 MB - a gargantuan amount in its day...

LEVEL TWO, ROOM FIVE: TREASURES OF THE MINDLORD INTERRUPTS...

TEXT REFERENCE

(the whole room)

NOTE

This entire room is one huge tribute to the long-forgotten *Treasures Of The Mindlord*. And, yes, I have a confession to make. I didn't write this room, as I've never seen *Treasures...* - but my good friend Jim (Ironlord on the forums) insisted that he should be able to write it, given that he is probably the only one in the entire world who remembers anything of it - he tells me he wrote the ukgameshows.com [entry for the show](#), as nobody running the site had any idea what went on, beyond a Real Video clip of the opening titles on [TV Ark](#) - if anyone can still use this format. For the uninitiated, *Treasures...* has been seen as something of a predecessor to *Knightmare*, having first aired in 1986 and only for one series. Jim's idea was to highlight the link between the two shows (whether any link was intended or not!) by cramming as many aspects of *Treasures...* into one *Knightmare* room, all of which would appear as shockingly out-of-place as Olaf would if he had actually tried to move to Norway. Anyway, here's a quick run-down of the show: instead of a computer-generated

dungeon, it relied on two teams of kids being guided (not blindfolded, mind) round a stately home of some kind, aided and abetted by a woman called Jana and hindered (I think?) by Enyon, the Mindlord of the title, who wore a huge, gold, triangular hat. What they did on the way allowed them to collect various credits at the end of the game, and the team with the highest number of credits won... something. All the other details of the show that Jim knew of have been included in this room, which can be seen in the next two "Jim's Notes". And as far as either of us is aware, *Treasures...* has never been repeated anywhere on any channel since then; it was made by the West Country-based TSW, who lost their ITV franchise in 1993, and that will have had a lot to do with its disappearance. Someone, *somewhere*, still has the master tapes - *or do they?* I'm not sure anyone knows.

...collecting the Sybil Fawlty Prize for stating the bleedin' obvious.

"There's a blue screen, with a crudely drawn graphic of a stick man sitting in a chair..." (...) The blue screen slowly turned pink, giving an equally crude effect of the walls closing in on the stick man. (...) Within seconds, the pink walls had closed in and hit the stick figure. There was an electronic howling noise, and the border of the monitor in the antechamber flashed blue. (...)

"...go towards the flashing lights." (...) As he approached the lights, the flip-screen appeared that indicated he had gone through a door, even though there had not been one there. (...) "Heeheeheehee! I've popped him into a time tunnel."

In one episode of *Fawlty Towers*, Basil attempted to insult Sybil with a *Mastermind* reference: "Name? Sybil Fawlty. Specialised subject? The bleedin' obvious!"

"Jim's Note:" This was usually a brief quiz or puzzle of some sort, asked by the computer that ran the game. The pink closing-in wall would sometimes be replaced by a Pac-Man that ate the screen from the top down, and if the team failed to solve the riddle before the Pac-Man or the pink wall hit the stick figure, there would be that electronic screech, the blue flashing border on the screen, and some kind of "lifeforce damage" equivalent. Hence why Treguard parroted his usual line here and the lifeforce clock took a hit.

"Jim's Note:" "Go towards the flashing lights" were the exact words used by the guiding computer, as was the comment about the time tunnel. 23 years later, I have still not forgotten the mild panic going round the team when the time tunnel struck - even Jana had no

(apparent) idea what was going on. I think the purpose of this may have been to get the second team started on their quest - which would, again, end with the flashing lights and "don't tell me, the time tunnel again!" from Jana. Eventually, the first team would be released to have their shot at the "picking up the gold objects on the table for credits" malarkey.

Heh... that's the West Country equivalent of a tea break.

"We swiped this from TSW years ago when the security guards were off on their cider break..."

"...now everyone will know where we got half our ideas from!"

Knightmare, as we all know, was made by Anglia TV from 1987-94 but the original concept was hatched in 1985, a year before *Treasures Of The Mindlord* aired. Although that pretty much precludes anyone from Anglia stealing ideas from TSW, seeing as it's quite likely that neither ITV franchise knew what the other was creating, I wonder if there was anyone at Anglia HQ who felt aggrieved when TSW, by the looks of things, stole a march on them...

LEVEL TWO, ROOM SIX: THE FIRE EXIT

TEXT REFERENCE

...to the sound of audible curses of frustration and a teacup shattering on the ground somewhere far beyond the Dungeon.

"You're in a room with four doors; two on the side walls and two on the far wall. The side doors have grilles over them; the far right door has a keyhole on it, and the left is open, and says FIRE EXIT over it. And there's something on the floor."

"It's an amusingly-shaped turnip..."

"Any more of that and I'd have been

NOTE

That'll be one of the production team who really thought the *Treasures Of The Mindlord* room would be enough to finish them off. Or maybe it was the gaffer who had to sort the mess out afterwards.

This is a real room from series 1, as encountered by dungeoneer Richard in the final quest. Of course, they had Casper the key with them.

Yes, it's a *Blackadder* reference, from the second series. I leave it to you to decide if it was in exactly the same shape as a thingy, but there's nothing more likely to damage lifeforce than a thingy-shaped turnip. Still, this one was beneficial.

If I was thinking of anything here, it was

forced to pick up the monitor and hurl it into the Dungeon, creating some kind of space-time-dungeon paradox which could have been unimaginably disastrous."

"But team," Treguard interjected, "where's the fire?"

likely to be *Back To The Future II* in which Marty McFly must not meet his "other own self" or risk destroying the universe...

This is another real line - but was not said to the aforementioned Richard's team. The recipients were Julian's advisers, the tenth team of series 2, who considered taking the fire exit in their first room proper. Despite this inauspicious start, they went on to be the second winning team. Fire exits were reasonably common in the first two series, but no team ever went through one, so nobody knows what would have happened. However, there's no way the production team could have objected here to Gunnar taking the fire exit when there *was* a fire.

LEVEL TWO, ROOM SEVEN: GUNNAR MEETS SYLVESTER HANDS

TEXT REFERENCE

"Oooh, look 'ere! It's a danger-fingy!" yelled Sylvester Hands excitedly.

...removing the single loop of rope he was not exactly trapped in.

"It looks like Sylvester Hands has been... pole-axed."

Gunnar continued to search Hands, and also found a bar of gold.

NOTE

There was no way I could have left Sylvester Hands out of this. He was one of the most entertaining characters of the later series, and presented *four* potential plot points all in one - his stupidity, "magic rope", alcoholism and kleptomania. I've grabbed them all with both hands. No pun intended.

Gunnar is, due to his time in the Norwegian Scouts, a master of knots. Sylvester Hands is not - even when he managed to "tie up" the amusingly-named January near the middle of series 6, there still wasn't a knot in the rope to speak of. Gunnar's actions are more reminiscent of Cocky Matt, the first dungeoneer to tackle series 6.

Knightmare was riddled with groan-inducing puns, so I had to have one in there somewhere. But nobody ever reacted as badly as Øyvind did...

This is more of a reference to an obscure ZX Spectrum text adventure than anything else; it's from *The Atlas*

Backstage, it was said you could cut the atmosphere with a cricket stump.

Assignment, where by rifling through an unconscious drunk's pockets will yield a wad of banknotes, which are needed to progress.

Of all Murray Walker's many, many verbal outpourings, this one is easily the most bizarre. It's long since passed into legend, and I know I heard it live... only, I have no idea when or where it happened!

LEVEL TWO, ROOM EIGHT: ANOTHER PIT OF MAGGOTS

TEXT REFERENCE

"Right, Gunnar, listen up. Didn't Per-Erik teach you a few of those kung fu tricks when he came back from Denmark?"

He took off right at the edge of the gap, but definitely still in contact with it so the production team couldn't "accidentally" drop him into the pit without drawing accusations of foul play.

...he flew through the air with the smooth motion of a sprite from Street Fighter II - obviously we're not talking about E. Honda here...

NOTE

For the uninitiated - that's all of you - Per-Erik, Gunnar's alcoholic older brother, attempted to beat his addiction by travelling to the Far East and learning a martial art for a bit of much-needed self-control. He ended up drunk in the gutter having only reached Copenhagen before he ran out of money, and joined a multinational temple in the city's Chinatown (which exists in this reality). Here, he sobered up, and found he was thoroughly excellent at their take on kung fu.

Think of this as another "what if..." moment. We've previously discussed Scott of series 3, whose attempt to jump the gap in Merlin's room, after missing one of the essential steps earlier on, ended in failure... *but only just*, as he fell off the edge, having made the distance easily. I wonder if this was a hint of perfidery on the part of the production team. Were they absolutely determined to send him packing here, come what may? If he'd jumped even slightly straighter they'd have had to let him off, hence showing that it's not entirely necessary to pick up all the clues to beat this obstacle.

E. Honda *did* have a throwing-himself-across-the-air attack, if you remember - but it was head first. Gunnar flew feet first.

LEVEL TWO, ROOM NINE: DOWN T' PIT

TEXT REFERENCE

"Raise your right hand..." (...) "Heil Hitler!" Xander hollered at the top of his voice.

"Get on with it!" Gunnar barked. "Yes, get on with it!" chorused Håkon, Øyvind, Xander, Treguard, and anyone else who might have been around.

"Do dwarf women have beards?"

"No, no, no, you're wrong," moaned Bumptious. "Of course they don't, they're women!"

"The Naugrim were ever, as they still remain, short and squat in stature..." (Gunnar's entire monologue)

"Now, what do dwarves seek?"

"I've also been studying the legends of the dwarves of Finland; like the Naugrim, they live underground, and never see the sun."

NOTE

Is there *anyone* who didn't see this coming? This is one of the incidents in the original series - Bumptious always asked the dungeoneer to raise his/her right hand during his overtly bureaucratic initiation ceremony - that set me thinking "what if a team was sent from *Scandinavian Winters...*?"

Monty Python and the Holy Grail again, as I'm sure you'll all know. It's even more appropriate here, as Bumptious didn't half waffle on and on during his meetings with a dungeoneer.

Bumptious asked both these questions to Neil, the hapless dungeoneer whose team couldn't cast spells (which resulted in a violent demise at the hands of Cedric) in series 2. By the time the mid-2000s repeats came on, I knew just enough about dwarves - at least, the Tolkien version - to know that *this* dwarf was talking out of his arse. Neil said dwarf women *did* have beards...

...and *this* was Bumptious' reaction in the original series. Neil did not think to correct him. Gunnar, on the other hand...

Of course, I had to get help from some Tolkien geeks almost as hardcore as Gunnar to find *this* much of a detailed answer...

Bumptious' exact wording to Neil was: "What do dwarves like best?" Now, while gold was also the answer he was looking for then, I was going to have a bit more fun with this answer...

Ungrim and untrøø though it is, Gunnar is referring to Korpiklaani lyrics. "There's men underground who have never seen the sun and they really know how to party..." Sounds like dwarves to me, and Jonne Järvelä's dwarves eat reindeer and [raise their wooden pints, and they yoik and sing, and they fight and dance till the morning!](#)

*"I've had enough of this..." he grumbled.
"I'm on strike!"*

*"You needed his help to get you into level
3, as you cannot enter the mine shaft on
foot."*

*There was a jangly spell noise, but it
decreased in pitch as the spell failed to
fire, in much in the same way as a series
one team had failed to create a well.*

*Now, if I throw this heavy gold bar in the
opposite direction to the way we want to
go, hopefully it will be heavy enough and
I can throw it fast enough to give us
enough momentum to start us off down the
tracks.*

I'm sure I read somewhere that (despite the time lag...) Bumptious was supposed to be a parody of Arthur Scargill. Certainly he was a miner with a strong Yorkshire accent... but he never went on strike. I had to put *that* right!

Cliff of series 3 found himself in this predicament - the mine cart's there, but there's nobody to push it through (which, in that case, would have been McGrew) so the producers stuck a haunted sword in there to kill him off quickly. Of course, Cliff didn't have a MOTOR spell...

It was the fifth team of series 1 who suffered this fate; this is the only time the "failing spell" noise was ever used.

There is *no way* that the gold bar would have been heavy enough to cause this reaction unless Gunnar hurled it at Mach Ten. But in *this* reality, it seems anything is possible...

POETRY CORNER

It's back to series 5 again, to the very start this time, where Catherine and her friends from the "B" Team are doing their best to kick off the questing season in style.

**Bold Catherine and her friends from Hants
Were glad to get the treasured chance
To face the Dungeon's tricky test,
And see if they could come off best.
Deep in the Wolfglade, by the stumps,
Old Brother Mace soon came up trumps.
The gold he gave then found its way
To Wolfenden, on market day.
With barter skills of highest class,
The team procured a useful glass.**

It showed Lord Fear, in gloating glee,
The wisest choice was then to flee.
By archer's test, in forest green,
A useful word the team did glean.
With this the blocker turned to rubble,
They'll get to level two, no trouble.
By lift they travelled, double-quick,
Then journeyed on, via stairs of brick,
To Hordriss, who proposed a deal,
Then Pixel's sting made goblins squeal.
But then, alas, on causeway high,
Bold Cath was sadly doomed to die,
For though the wits were sharp enough,
The footwork was a little rough!

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Hidden Nightmare Characters:

- 1) Stand in the middle of the shopping centre, **guard** the ornamental fountain with your life, and shoot anyone who tries to jump in!
- 2) I'm waiting for the promised delivery of my hired car. **Hark**, I think I hear it coming along the road!
- 3) On the day of Tom's birthday party, I might decide to feel **ill**, **I think**.
- 4) I have neither heard, **read nor** told the story of the Three Little Pigs.
- 5) The entire transport infrastructure of Blackpool may have broken down, but we'll make it to the cocktail **bar**, **tram** or no tram!
- 6) In a famous Old Testament story, the serving maid **Bilhah woke** Jacob by sitting on his face.
- 7) Despite the other soldiers' misgivings, the general demanded **war for** the umpteenth time.
- 8) As you've eaten so much **caramel**, **lie** down and have a little rest.
- 9) "Would you like a bowl of Kellogg's All-**Bran**, **Gwen**?" asked Captain Jack Harkness, as the operatives of Torchwood settled down to breakfast one morning.
- 10) "For goodness sake, **Gwen**, **do line** the tiles up straight this time!" demanded Captain Jack Harkness, as the operatives of Torchwood settled down to play a game of Scrabble.

Going For Nightmare:

- 1) Merlin.
- 2) Hobgoblin.
- 3) Oliver.
- 4) Chess.
- 5) Silver.
- 6) Hands.
- 7) Skeletron.
- 8) Maeve.
- 9) Blades.
- 10) Horn.