

The Horrible Dungeons of Dreadful Doom by Dark

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An Entry for the 2011 Windhammer Prize for Short Gamebook Fiction
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Section 1

Welcome to the Horrible Dungeons of Dreadful Doom, a humorous adventure created by Dark.

This is a random little test gamebook I made basically to try out the Darkgrue gamebook creation program made by Aprone aka Jeremy Kaldowski. as such it's rather silly, and rather simple, with no complex stats to get in the way (though it does have items).

Those who fear terrible puns, even worse puzzles, various pop culture or literary references from obscure to hopefully recognizable and not an inconsiderable amount of Mickey taking out of fantasy in general and dungeons in particular should probably stop here.

Book may contain Grues, and is therefore not recommended for the monster intolerant!

You! have been warned!

Anyhow, let's start then.

One bright and sunny day, --- or at least the British Isles closest approximation to bright and sunny (which is actually dull and rainy), you're walking along a road by the seaside when you hear a thin, nasal voice saying "Doughnuts! get your doughnuts here! --- totally non magical, completely ordinary, absolutely safe doughnuts! Only fifty pence each"

Looking up you see a large red van, --- actually quite a lot like postman pat's van, accept distinctly more evil looking, mostly because of the definitely evil looking witchy old lady peering out of it.

Totally forgetting everything your mum told you about accepting doughnuts from weird old ladies in red vans, --- what do you mean she didn't tell you anything? see, told you you forgot!

You head over and plonk your fifty pence down in front of the crone, who gives you a beady, sinister look (though you suspect she has the type of eyes which make it very difficult to give any other kind of look).

"Oh yes deary! want a doughnut then?"

Now you know! something is up, since when has any elderly lady with good intentions ever called anyone deary?

However your misgivings are wafted away on a hale of warm scented steam from inside the red van as the old lady produces something small and round wrapped in white paper which smells divine! --- assuming of course that divinity can be measured in quantities of deep fried, sweetened dough.

"There you are deary, --- eat it up while it's nice and hot and the transportation spell hasn't worn off"

You pause for a second in the act of picking up the paper.

"Transportation what?"

"Oh nothing to worry about deary, --- take your doughnut"

Weighing your choices between questioning a mysterious old lady about mysterious magic spells and the mysterious world of the unseen that lies behind the commonplace, and filling your face, --- you decide that mysteries are best investigated on a full stomach, and resolve to do adventures once you've consumed your concentrated cholesterol.

This however is not to be, for as soon as you take a bite from the doughnut, you are magically transported by the magic of magicalness! --- there, the book had magic in it, that should keep all the harry potter fans happy.

Now you suddenly find yourself in a stone room with two doors, one to the right of you, one to the left of you, --- and for all those who know their obscure poetry, this could very well be the mouth of Hell!

So now you can sit here and get bored or choose a door.

What, --- -you want some description?

Oh alright then, you ungrateful so and so!

The room is stony and magical, you can see because it is mmmm, well magic. Actually it's pretty much like being stoned on magic mushrooms, only without the mushrooms.

There are two big, wooden doors made of darkly stained aged wood, one on either wall, which are at the moment shut and looking wooden!

Well that's all your getting, so you'd better choose a door if you actually want this adventure thingy to go anywhere interesting!

Open right door (Turn to section 2)

Open left door (Turn to section 3)

Section 2

The second you push open the door you smell a really, horrible smell. Just to get some perspective here, we're talking all night toilet in a smelly bar full of smelly people who've been eating the worst cooked kebabs in history cooked by someone with about as much knowledge of fresh meet as your average vegan.

Such kebabs inevitably result in downing lots of beer very quickly, which fact accounts for at least half of the smell of drunk infested toilets, ---- the other half being due to the kebabs themselves.

So, what I'm trying to get at here, is that the thing behind the door is smelly! really! smelly!

You actually expect a public toilet, but instead when the door fully opens you just find a common feature of public toilets, ---- well at least ones in magic schools.

A troll! a huge troll! a huge angry troll! a huge, grey, angry troll with an enormous club in it's hand.

Now before you start thinking I'm about to go on a rant about football clubs, youth clubs or any other sort of clubs, this club is the very serious, bloody huge, wooden nobly kind. It's pretty certain that bloody is very much what you will be if you get smacked with it.

Also, while your not an expert on troll psychology, the large impressive growl coming from the troll, the fact that it's lifting that huge club up, and above all the fact that your actually feeling a very strong sensation to, ---- mmm, contribute to the general smelliness of the atmosphere seems to indicate that you need to do something quick.

So, what will you do?

Fight the troll (Turn to section 4)

Slam the door in its face. (Turn to section 5)

Section 3

You quickly push open the left door and duck through. this room is also magical and stony, and also lacking mushrooms unfortunately.

In fact, it's pretty much got the same two doors as the first room, ---- well alright three doors, being as you've just come through one.

Anyhow the really interesting thing about this room is the large box labelled "treasure!" sitting in the

middle.

It actually is pretty stereotypical for a treasure chest, large iron straps, heavy, aged wood, and of course that big conspicuous sign saying "treasure" on it.

It's just the sort of treasure chest which you could imagine a pirate burying on a desert island. Well actually you couldn't, since burying treasure seems pretty stupid given that you could mmm, use it to buy things, but it's certainly the sort of chest which all those stereotypical pirates in various TV programs seem to bury treasure in.

The doors are pretty much like the last two, except now they have actual signs!

Like the signs on the chest, these seem to be written on large white squares of cardboard in very curly, fancy looking letters.

One of them says "this way to the room of horrible monster encounter!"

The other one says "This way for a perfectly safe route of safety, ---- no really we're not lying honest, can you not trust this totally mysterious sign!"

Which do you choose?

Open the treasure chest (Turn to section 6)

Go through the monster door (Turn to section 7)

Go through the perfectly safe door. (Turn to section 8)

Section 4

So, you think your up to fighting a troll? feeling tough? feeling mean? feeling lean and possibly like some sort of troll fighting mechanical apparatus?

Well hasn't anyone ever told you testosterone is bad for your health?

You don't have a wand, you don't wear glasses, in fact you've got no weapon at all, and did you see any combat rules at the start of this ridiculous book?

Nope!

So this was a mistake. Lucky for you it's not a mistake you'll make again.

The troll takes a mighty swing with it's club and there's a subsequent squishing sound! if your stil floating around in a none corporeal state, you might be pleased to know that this dullll, stony room now has a lovely coat of festive red paint on it's walls, in a very interesting modern art style pattern of splatters!

This would certainly please Santa clause, an art professor, or Jack the ripper, but i'm guessing probably not you.

So, your dead. Fancy another go?

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 5

Ah, clever you! Discretion is the better part of valour, and running like a sissy little chicken is the better part of not having your brains splattered all over the walls by a gigantic troll with a club!

You quickly shut the door, leaving you on one side, Mr. troll on the other. Of course it's rude to shut doors in people's faces, --- but it's also rude to brutally bash people's brains out with massive wooden

clubs, so it probably balances out.

Obviously that door isn't a good choice and will only lead to a very gory and smelly death.

You decide to:

Go through the left door. (Turn to section 3)

Section 6

Ah yes, treasure! just the type of thing you need when your lost in a mysterious stony dungeon! Some heavy gold coins to weigh you down when you try to peg it away from monsters, and some tempting gems to make any intelligent and criminally minded inhabitant of the dungeon want to rob you.

Some people would prefer something actually useful, --- a sword, a 9 mm pistol, a map, but no, you want treasure!

Clever you.

So, you walk over and push back the lid. As is almost always the way with these sorts of chests, despite the fairly hefty lid and iron strapping it totally fails to be locked.

Inside you see (surprise surprise), four gold coins, and a packet of gob stoppers.

You can take either of these if you wish, just remember you've gott'em, sinse maybe they may come in useful later, ---- or possibly not, the dungeon creator aka Dark might just be laughing at you staggering around an underground maze holding lots of pointless junk.

Anyhow, as this chest has a lack of tentacle, false bottoms, hidden compartments, dart traps or any of the other rubbish Dungeon chests usually come with, perhaps you should think about the two doors.

Go through the perfectly safe door. (Turn to section 8)

Go through the monster door. (Turn to section 7)

Section 7

So, you fancy tangling with monsters eh? well dungeons and monsters, they do sort of go together, ---- or at least fantasy type dungeons full of treasure and such, your average bog standard smelly stony place where medieval nobles chucked their criminals was probably less monster ridden.

Either way, monsters you want, and monsters you shall have!

Opening the door, you actually find the sign was telling the truth, because behind it there is in fact a 7 headed monster.

If you imagine Cerberus, the three headed dog that guards the gates of Hades, then imagine four more heads. Then imagine that the Greek chappy doing the fresco of Cerberus had just found out that his wife had run off with a big blond hunk from Troy, taking all his slaves, weaponry, gold and oil, and leaving him with only two drakmas to rub together which he bet on a chariot with 1000 to 1 odds which then of course ended up losing badly, so now has been doing some serious devotion to Dionysus, aka, getting roundly pissed on Athenian wine.

So when it comes to painting the dog of death he got a bit carried away and added in green slimy scales, evil yellow eyes, a gigantic tale with nasty spiky bits, more claws than you can see in a Supermarket's Christmas advertising and some really unfriendly looking horns.

So, this is the monster you've got, an ancient Greek drunk's nightmare, and it's got 7 maws full of very seriously pointy teeth all pointed at you, and all looking very pointedly hungry!

What now?

Run like the clappers. (Turn to section 9)

Use the gobstoppers if you have them of course. (Turn to section 10)

Section 8

A perfectly safe room, what could be safer! After all the sign said so!

Like the trusting little lost lambkin you are, you walk straight into the room, and yes, the room is perfectly safe, safe walls, safe ceiling, nothing bad in here at all!

Unfortunately, the floor is not safe, ---- in fact the floor is not even existant. After a brief and rather comical moment of mid air swimming as you attempt to return to the previous room and utterly fail due to lack of solid ground, you start to fall.

You then continue to fall some more, in fact you fall a long way.

A long, long, black, black, way, way, down a bloody, bloody big hole hole!

You of course start going "aaaaaaaaa!" however after a while you get a bit sick of that so you shut up and just enjoy the sensation of falling, wondering what will happen when you hit the bottom.

You fall beyond time, beyond memory, beyond light, beyond the point where describing this fall actually becomes interesting, in fact you really start wishing you had a Balrog for company here, ---- at least it'd light the place up and give you something to do on the way down, like an in flight entertainment!

So, we'll skip all the falling and just go on to the point when you get to the bottom.

You find yourself crashing into water, very cold water with a particularly nasty smell about it, ---- but we've had far too many nasty smells in this gamebook already so I don't see the point in describing another.

the water however is extremely cold, and rather slimy, and being as the magical light which has kept you going seems to be missing in this hole for entirely thematic reasons, it's also very dark indeed!

Now, the question to ask yourself in this situation is, ---- can you swim?

Well go on, ---- can you?

Honestly no, especially not after such a bloody long fall. (Turn to section 11)

I put the little mermaid to shame with my abilities under the sea. (Turn to section 12)

Section 9

Your not actually sure what the clappers are, or how running like them will make you any faster than just running, but you decide to run anyway!

Unfortunately, with 7 brains to do the thinking, the monster has pretty good reaction speed. Before you can slam the door it leaps forward moving surprisingly quickly for something so huge.

Now, this would be the point that a sensible gamebook would have a "test your agility" attribute option to see if you can leg it quickly enough through the other door.

Sadly for you, this is just a randomly silly test gamebook created by some nutter called dark and pretty much made up as it goes along, so we don't have any attributes to test.

So, for the purposes of determining whether your entirely logical, but possibly inherently doomed feat

of cowardice succeeds we'll have to just appeal to general principles.

Can your average Jo or Jane run fast enough to escape the 7 jaws of the 7 maws of a 7 foot long 7 headed horror?

On the general scientific evidence that nobody has ever reported making such a feat of ballistic scardycattery, I'm afraid the answer is no!

Of course this could be due to a general lack of real world examples of 7 headed horrors, --- but that's a very boring theory! I prefer to think the 7 headed horrors are out there but nobody has ever survived long enough to report their existence, and since it's me that's writing this, it's my word that counts! Ha!

So, you die. Your death is actually rather slow, gory and painful, since the 7 heads, after forming a very nice cooperative movement in order to actually catch you, can't determine which slaving maw of fanged awfulness gets which bit, resulting in something of a tug of war with you as the rope.

I could write an equally long, protracted and horrific description of your dismemberment and 7 way consumption by said monster, but in the traditions of the best horror writers, I think I'll leave it to your imagination.

Either way your dead, in fact you aren't just merely dead, your really most sincerely dead, (even more so than if a house had fallen on you).

So go and

Start again. (Turn to section 1)

Section 10

Gob stoppers! the perfect sweet for well, mmm, stopping gobs of course!

And for all those not familiar with British slangery, gob also translates as mouth, kisser, moosh, cakehole, or indeed the rapacious, slaving, fanged maws of a 7 headed monstrosity!

Thinking quickly, you rip open the gob stoppers and stuff one into each of the monster's gaping, fanged gobs. It begins to enthusiastically suck on them, obviously pretty pleased at the general taste of sugar, food colouring and boiled processed sweets.

Congratulations you have pacified the savage beast of savageness, however on the basis that something with green slimy scales probably has pretty fast acting saliva, you put a bit of a spurt on across the monsters' lair.

If your writing these item thingies down, you might want to delete the gobstoppers, since the packet is now empty and you really don't see much use for an empty plastic gob stopper wrapper, so you chuck it onto the floor.

Usually littering is a bad thing and should always be avoided, however in this case the room is so full of old bones and generalized muck and detritus anyway it probably doesn't matter.

The lair itself is fairly uninteresting, a dull stone room who's floor is covered with lots of gnawed bones, and old rags, as well as some really pungent smelling monster doings. There is however a second door right across from the one you came in by, which makes where you go pretty obvious.

After leaving the Lair (and the unpleasant sound of seven hideous heads sucking away at a hole bunch of gob stoppers), behind you, you find yourself in a long passageway.

Once again we're talking stone, though this stone for those who are interested is a more even, obviously metamorphic variety since it has a generally smooth volcanic glassy surface as opposed to the igneous rock which made up the previous rooms.

Still, it's pretty stony, so you progress along to the end and find yourself at a junction of two corridors.

Though you have absolutely no sense of direction whatsoever, you decide for the sake of argument to

call the one in front of you north, the one to your right east and the one to your left west. There's no particularly logical reason for this, your sense of direction (especially when transported to a magical dungeon), is pretty lousy, but hay, it helps to distinguish them and makes you feel a bit more like those intrepid adventurer type of people.

Not wanting to ridiculously blunder into anything else, you have a good look down all three corridors.

The corridor seems to slope up going from west to east, so the western passage appears to be going downwards while the eastern passage seems to be going upwards. You can here some watery type splashing sounds coming from a very long way down the western passage too, as if it ends up somewhere very wet and slimy.

The north passage doesn't seem to be going anywhere special, though you can here some hammering sounds coming from it, and by hammering we're actually talking the sound of a hammer hitting something stony, not just a more literary way of talking about a generally percussive boom boom boom!

Choices choices!

West and water would be wonderful! (Turn to section 21)

That hammering sounds interesting, lets go north. (Turn to section 28)

My future lies east. (Turn to section 46)

Section 11

Okay, honesty is a good thing, and credit to you for telling the truth, but look, this is only a gamebook, it's role-play, so you don't always have to be truthful here, and when your at the bottom of a deep dark hole in a slimy lot of water in a mysterious dungeon, self doubt really isn't helpful!

I suppose we could give you some sort of physical attribute type test, but that would involve actually writing up some physical attributes and inventing some sort of dice system to test them, so let's just pretend you can swim okay?

Trust me, it just makes life easier, and you wouldn't want to drown would you?

No, thought not.

I swim very well actually. (Turn to section 12)

Section 12

Okay, I believe you, ---- thousands wouldn't, but never mind, positive thinking is a good thing.

So, through sheer luck, a pack of lies, superior aquatic skill, or the power of positive thinking you start swimming through the horribly cold, rather slimy and very dark water.

You find yourself worrying that something with large tentacles and suckers probably lives down here, but since your already in the water it's a bit late to start worrying, ---- besides that would interfere with your new, positive attitude!

So, you continue on in spite of the possible danger, like a mighty hero on a mighty quest who may not be turned aside from fulfilling a mighty purpose, ---- or like a block headed twit who's too dumb to do anything but continue forward in spite of everything else.

It's dark, it's cold, it's unpleasantly scummy, it's also absolutely ruining your clothes and giving your hair a distinctly ghost busters slimed sort of style, but hay, you've gotta do what you've gotta do!

After a few minutes of steady front crawl you see a light some distance away, ---- in fact it seems to be

the same sort of completely unexplained magical light source which has existed in the rest of this dungeon, --- a light which can be born of nothing but an author who's too lazy to write about burning torches or oil lamps or whatever.

So, you obviously head for it, and pretty soon you can feel a pebbly sort of shingle under your feet and you find yourself climbing out of the water onto a long, gravel covered beach. A few feet away is the rocky wall of a very large cavern, however on the shingle beach you see something far more interesting to you.

A beech hut, made of what looks like your usual beech hut style plastic, with a sign over the door which reads "devil donald's demonic drying service"

As your dripping wet, covered in slime, and freezing, this sounds like a very attractive proposition to you, demons or no demons.

However, there are alternatives if you don't fancy tangling with diabolicalness right now.

You can head up the beach to your left towards the light, or alternately try going right to where the beach extends away into the darkness.

Make choices:

Brave the demon drying hut (Turn to section 13)

Go for the light man. (Turn to section 15)

Darks the one for me. (Turn to section 16)

Section 13

Now I know your wet, I know your cold, I know your covered with more slime and scum than a politician attempting to be truthful, --- but do you really think trusting the conveniences of demons is a good idea?

You open the door and a wave of sulphur hits you. you can see flames in there, and clouds of steam belch out. There even seems to be a sound system pounding out a composition by Carl Orf too, --- and that only! ever gets played in seriously devilish circumstances.

Something is silhouetted against the light, something with horns, a long tale and carrying what seems to be a pitchfork.

Are you really sure getting yourself cleaned up here is a good idea? After all, cleanliness may be next to godliness, --- but so's hellishness!

If you still think this is a good plan, you can head inside, if not, the options up and down the beach are still open to you.

I want rid of this slime and wetness at any cost. (Turn to section 14)

Head towards the light. (Turn to section 15)

Head out into the dark. (Turn to section 16)

Section 14

Your clothes are your life, you live or die by the state of your hair. such sliminess and scumminess upon your person totally goes against your self image and you will brave the hoards of Hell to be clean again.

After all good looks means popularity, and popularity is everything!

Braving the hoards of hell is just what your doing now. when you enter the hut, the small, red skinned demon clucks sympathetically at the state of your usually immaculate appearance and leads you obediently to a cubical.

Your a little disturbed by all the steam, screaming, and rather obnoxiously loud playing of choral music, but not one to be racist you put it down to cultural differences and decide to accept the drying.

Unfortunately, one cultural difference between the residents of Hell and humans you didn't really bargain for is the demon's asbestos skin.

This means, what is a pleasant, gentle heat to a demon, sufficient to dry the most stubborn slime from a usually glossy set of horns, is a heat something in the region of 800 degrees Centigrade.

You don't however have long to contemplate your mistake though, sinse the instant you step into the cubical a jet of incandescently glowing gas spurts out of the nozzle of the drier and engulfs you.

The good news is, all the slime and water is definitely gone.

The bad news is, other than a small carbonized crust on the flaw of the demonic drying cubical, one which will actually give the demon cleaner some quite considerable trouble to scrape off when the drying hut closes for business, ---- so are you.

In short, you are definitely and absolutely dead, so it's time to

Start again. (Turn to section 1)

Section 15

Here, a long stone corridor glowing with the same entirely unexplained light as the rest of the dungeon gives out onto a sweeping shingle beach beside a wide black lake.

The lake looks distinctly unhealthy, quite scummy and slimy and cold, and swimming doesn't seem like a good idea even if you are on a beach.

In fact the total absence of ice cream vans, fish and chip shops, arcades and donkeys giving rides makes this not feel much like a beach at all.

On the plus side though, there is also an absence of wailing children, jostling crowds, losing your Ipod in the sea and sand in your socks so it's not all bad.

You even get roughly the same amount of sun here, several miles underground as you do on the average British beach as well.

The beach seems totally empty accept for a lot of shingle, and curves off ahead of you into the dark as evidently the dungeon's inexplicably magical light only applies to corridors.

One thing you do see however, just in side the corridor leaning up against the wall that gives out onto the shore, is a set of three, metal lockers.

They're pretty much like the sort you get at school, in gyms, at the public swimming baths, or just about anywhere else where people need to temporarily lock things away for safe keeping. Dull, boxy and metallic, accept that they don't seem to have locks on, just handles, and seem pretty easy to open.

One of them bares the sign Captain "D Jones esquire. I give yee warning! thar be unseen terrors deep in me locker, and any scurvy lubber as opens it will be in dire trouble! don't say I didn't warrrrn yee, garr!"

And yes, it does say "garr!" Among pirates Garr! substitutes for a period and must come at the end of every sentence (people have been keel hauled for missing it off).

The second locker doesn't have a label, but there are rather unpleasant scrabbling sounds coming from inside.

On the third locker is a sign saying:

"Here within is the magic sword of amazing magic! it has the power to resolve any plot, slay any enemy, and transport those who wield it far from any danger"

Now, choice time!

Make your way up the beach into the dark. (Turn to section 16)

Go up the corridor. (Turn to section 17)

Open the scrabbling locker. (Turn to section 18)

Open Davy Jones locker. (Turn to section 19)

Open the magic sword locker. (Turn to section 20)

Section 16

Light source? we don't need no stinkin light source!

You turn your back on the light and start crunching your way up the beach.

Things actually start to get first a little worrying, then progress to rather disturbing, then finally crank all the way up to damnably creepy as the light fades behind you, and all you can here is the crunch, crunch, of your footsteps on the shale and the dim slap slap of water to one side.

Your beginning to think this wasn't such a good idea when suddenly, you here a really nasty, highly unpleasant growl from somewhere off to your right, ---- which pretty much confirms that this was definitely not! a good idea. Then it comes to you, ---- what lives in darkness, what do you find when you have neither torch nor a match in your in ven tor ree?

You have walked into the jaws of a lirking Grue! you twit.

Fortunately for you, a second after you find yourself slamming into a large unseen pare of jaws, you here a polite, very cultured voice saying.

"Oh do excuse me, I'm terribly sorry. ---- you humans, always walking into our jaws, ---- it really is most careless of you"

"mmm," you say, feeling a little confused as you remember all the times you've found yourself reading messages about restarting or quitting in interactive fiction adventure games.

"Don't you usually eat humans?"

From out of the darkness comes a very shocked and somewhat aggrieved response.

"Oh goodness me no! --- -but if you will walk into our jaws so recklessly, well accidents have been known to happen I will admit"

You really want to get this point sorted out.

"So, you don't actually eat people for food then"

This time the reply sounds slightly irritated.

"Oh dear me Certainly not! --- for one thing, they taste terrible! only a 7 headed monstrosity with a totally untrained pallet would even consider such a thing!"

"Now"

The voice takes on a more brisk tone.

"I assume that you would wish to find egress from this dungeon"

After remembering what egress means you hastily assure this mysteriously helpful Grue that yes indeed you would.

"Well, perchance I have some information that may be of help to you. At the end of this beach is a long corridor which will take you to a crossing. If you carry on straight forward, you will find the two gates that lead you to the lair of the fowl witch Sugarina, and the way out of the dungeon. You must defeat her

in order to pass, ---- though I confess I have no idea how"

"To pass the two gates however you will need two mystical objects, the Prawn of Destiny and the Adjective of Noun. The prawn is currently in the hands of it's guardian Davy Jones, while I have heard the adjective was recently stolen by a gang of miner goblins"

"Miner goblins?"

You ask, wondering what is the difference between a miner goblin and a major goblin, but the Grue just continues without seeming to have heard you.

"Also, it is whispered in the underground passages that the Lord Dark who created this dungeon is a huge fan of Lord of the rings, and anyone wishing to escape with their lives would find that knowledge useful"

Suddenly there is a splash from out of the darkness and you hear the Grue turn away from you.

"Now, please do excuse me, ---- I believe that is a large and tasty fish and I will confess I find myself somewhat hungered, ---- really! eat humans indeed! pah!"

And the sound of the grumbling Grue fades away into the distance.

Well done, you've found a clue room, ---- indeed a Grue room! and now hopefully have some sort of idea about what is going on in this random dungeon of pointlessness (and since by all accounts this Lord dark doesn't have much idea himself, that's saying something).

However, since you can here water ahead as well as to one side, you decide that you've likely gone as far as you can in this direction and should probably turn around and

Head back up the beach. (Turn to section 15)

Section 17

You start up the west corridor. In fact that phrase is quite literally true, since the corridor seems to be climbing rather steeply.

If we were bothering with such things as meals, or something like endurance points, you'd probably be losing a few, since it's really quite a long hike, and the backs of your knees begin to ache rather fiercely as though the world's most evil fitness instructor had given you 20 minutes on Hell's own diabolical treadmill.

Fortunately for you though, we're not bothering with all that sort of cobblers, so we'll just assume your a single minded walking machine that can keep going up miles and miles of fairly dull steadily inclining stone corridor without a break or any rest, albeit with rather aching legs.

Well at least if you ever get out of this dungeon alive you'll be awesomely fit, and the next time you kick someone in the unmentionables it'll really count for something.

Finally after a good few hours of walking, you do actually come upon something interesting and worth expending some descriptive language upon.

What could it be?

A monster of dreadfulness? a treasure beyond the dreams of avarice (who reputedly dreamed about lots of treasure), something stimulating and challenging? or just another pathetic piece of humour.

Only one way to find out:

Continue oh bold adventurer. (Turn to section 21)

Section 18

Not one to be daunted by a mysterious scrabbling from within an entirely inexplicable locker in an illogical and random dungeon, you pull the door open, and instantly recoil in shock.

Inside the metal box, is a yellow and black scorpion about the same length as your hand with a coiled and distinctly sharp looking sting. Obviously the scrabbling was caused by it's frantic efforts to somehow get out of the locker it was trapped in. With it's red glowing multi-faceted eyes, threateningly waving pincers and the general air of a creature who is really! quite irritated about the fact that someone shut it into a dark metal locker, it's not a creature you really want in close proximity, even if it does seem to have quite a reasonable justification for being so angry (you'd feel the same way if it were you).

Before you can move the insect takes a flying leap and lands on your shoulder. Every muscle in your body goes tense as you feel eight small legs scraping in the vicinity of your neck, which actually feels like the last time you wore one of your dad's woolly jumpers on a cold evening, ---- accept of course for the more obvious prospect of receiving a large amount of fatal venom sharply delivered in the neck (woolly jumpers are bad, --- but not quite that bad).

However, after a good few tense moments, you still remain unstung.

To your utter surprise you here a rather contented purring coming from the small scorpion, which has now curled itself up on your shoulder and is plainly quite happy to be there.

You decide letting sleeping scorpions lie would probably be a wise move (add scorpion to your inventory if your keeping one).

Now you

Turn your attention back to the other lockers and possible exits. (Turn to section 15)

Section 19

Well, it had to be. Davy Jones' locker, garr!

As you swing the door open you wonder why exactly pirates never lock anything, and precisely what dire and terrific dangers could await you in the depths of this dreadful but perfectly ordinary looking locker.

Apart from the smell however, there really doesn't seem anything that bad in here, and quite honestly by now, bad smells are something you really don't notice any more.

The locker contains a surprisingly normal collection of stuff. a pair of rather large trainers, some stripy distinctly piratical looking shorts, some underwear who's attributes you really don't want to examine too closely, and a T shirt baring the message "I'm with stupid, ---- and I killed him and nicked all his treasure, garr!"

The two things that really peak your interest, are a rather stylish pare of socks, with a skull and crossbones on them. Not only do they look your size, but they also seem woolly and warm, and just the thing for stumping around frozen ship decks on the high seas, ---- or indeed damp and chilly dungeons.

Then, there is a purse containing 10 gold coins.

If you fancy taking the purse or the socks, write it down if your doing so, and

Turn your attention back to the other lockers and the possible exits. (Turn to section 15)

Section 20

So, you want a magic sword.

Why does everyone want a magic sword! there are occasions when a magic axe or a magic spear is better, but really there are far more weapons than swords to do magic things to.

Why not a magic crossbow? ---- never seen one of them have you, or a magic pike! pikes defeated Charles the second you know!

So, anyway you want a magic sword. Well, you open the locker and indeed a magic sword appears, all magic, and glowing with glowy magicalness.

You don't however get much time to admire it, since it floats straight out of the locker (you wanted magic), and cleaves you in twain, ---- in fact it doesn't stop there, it cleaves you in thrain, in fain, and in quite a few other ains as well.

Well you can't say the sign was telling you a lie, it definitely resolved the plot, and transported you away from this hideously ironic dungeon, albeit to the afterlife.

That'll learn you for wanting magic swords and easy solutions, ---- you'll take a magic axe next time and like it!

Go back to the start. (Turn to section 1)

Section 21

Here, the smooth, fairly boring stone of the long corridor is broken by two alcoves, each about six foot deep.

Since for some aesthetically pleasing reason of interior design (plus plot suspense), you can't actually see into them, you'll have to brave the dreadful shadows and fearful fearfulness of whatever dangers might lurk in these cosy little nooks to find out what is within.

Perhaps such fabled horrors as the Sofa of reasonable comfort!

Alternately, if the scary thoughts of pot plants and pleasant interior design are too much for you, you can wimp out and head up or down the corridor.

Speaking of the corridor, there is a handy little sign on one wall:

"This is the west corridor, okay?"

So, now the corridor has a name, ---- cool! of course the fact that you have no idea where you are, and that the sign may be lying completely anyway, really doesn't make knowing this is the west corridor all that useful, but well, --- knowledge is power, and maybe now your a little more powerful.

So, in your pleased contemplation of your newly found powerful status and your acquisition of the important skill "sense of direction"

Make choices:

Onwards and upwards, well up the west corridor anyway. (Turn to section 22)

Screw your courage up to try the right alcove. (Turn to section 24)

Gird your loins to hazard the left alcove. (Turn to section 25)

Downwards and onwards. (Turn to section 27)

Section 22

The western corridor your following suddenly opens out into a crossroads with another passage.

Ah good, choice, adventure and danger! your just contemplating which may be the least hazardous course to follow when with a whirr and a clang, a port cullice abruptly slams down over the southern passage.

Obviously you won't be going that way, though judging by the intensive growling sounds coming from down there you can presume it leads to either a den of seriously unhappy monsters, or a bike rally where at least a dozen burly bikers are having a "who can rev their engines and belch out the most smoke" contest.

In the mean while though, you still have a choice of two passages to consider.

Both are the same rather boring stone type of affairs you've got used to, but you can here hammering from the northern way, while the east passage seems to carry on the generally upward trend the floor has been following.

Its hammer time! or at least time to investigate hammering. (Turn to section 28)

East seems the least beastly. (Turn to section 46)

Section 23

Let me get this straight. Your somewhere obviously underground (or at least seriously constructed of stone), and you want to go further down?

Does this seem like a good idea to you?

Well as you quite obviously chose this way, it presumably does. It's not really logical, but who am I to criticise.

Maybe your just a lazy git and going down hill seemed like the best idea at the time since it took some weight off your feet, ---- that's really lazy and it'd serve you right if you came to a sticky and possibly obese end.

However, no end of either sort presents itself for quite some considerable time.

Down you wanted, and down you got, lots and lots and lots of down for far longer than it'd be really interesting to describe.

Because however of a hole bunch of interesting physicsy type of rules which dictate that however much it feels like it you actually can't! go down forever, you do eventually find yourself coming to the end of the corridor, and indeed it seems to be a rather wet end.

Section 24

Fearing the dreaded lamp of tasteful interior design and the horrors of floral wall paper, you timidly step into the strangely shadowy little cubby on the right hand side of the dungeon corridor.

However, the mean and stony nature of the dungeon doesn't let you down, ---- though you do happen to see several chips of calcified sandstone embedded in the rear wall of the alcove, which seems rather unusual given the generally volcanic strata you appear to be in.

However mineralogical concerns are quickly driven from your mind by the object you discover in the back corner of the alcove.

It appears to be something like a cross between a shower cubical and a rather futuristic looking sunlamp, lots of gleaming metal and curvy bits and glass.

At the base of the alcove you find yet another printed sign.

"Deluxe Teleport Master 2000!"

"Your first class ticket to any sort of safety, simply enter pod and say "beam me up" in a loud and obnoxious tone"

You notice some words written underneath in very very small print, which you can only actually read by ripping the sign off it's staples and carrying it to the light of the corridor.

This teleporter is used at customers own risk, and transgalactic inc takes no responsibility for any side effects suffered as per the case of Riker vs Riker, Galactic Court of Justice 2373"

"Side effects may include nausea, premature hair loss, Loss of appetite,, unexpected cloning, infestation by sentient alien parasites, transportation to an evil mirror universe, loss of any and all limbs and/or internal organs, paranoia, unexpected materialisation in the wild west, mild rashes and dizziness."

"Expectant mothers, those with a heart condition, and those with an aversion to their atoms being thrown around at random are recommended not to use this service. Also note teleportation pod may contain cyborgs, antimatter, supposedly long dead star ship crew and nuts"

So, ---- a choice!

On the one hand you've always fancied going bing! and suddenly ending up out of danger, ---- pluss you might in fact end up somewhere safe, ---- on the other while you rather like the idea of losing your heart one day, this isn't really the way you'd choose to do it.

So, what do you do?

I canre do it cappan i donre have the courage! (Turn to section 21)

Beam me up (Turn to section 26)

Section 25

Like the bold hero you are, you stride bravely into the darkness of this cosy little corner, totally unheeding of tasteful little tapestry footstools or tiny glass tables with plastic gnomes on them.

However your bravado seems to have been a total waste, since the only thing in this alcove is a boring old fancy pedestal filled with impressively ominous looking signs, a totally needless amount of corners, and enough shimmery bits to make costume jewellery for a very well accessorized army.

You eagerly look atop the needlessly elaborate thing, wondering if you'll find some mystic treasure of ancient days, a magic weapon of unimaginable power, or a holy relic of a lost civilization.

What you do find is a total shock! a large, flat, slightly pink, clearly dead, though apparently still very fresh fish!

You wonder exactly why someone would construct such a needlessly showy pedestal, ---- which is after all only another term for a very small table with almost no reasonable surface space, and stick a dead fish on it, then again, you find yourself wondering why a lot of things in this insane dungeon are done the way they are.

Hastily, you glance around, looking for one of those convenient, ---- if often slightly misleading signs, but the only thing you can find is a gilded inscription atop the pedestal just under the hunk of dead fish which reads:

minius Clupea harengus.

"Harengus"

You think, ---- as in Herring.

Then suddenly your blood runs cold as the full and chilling realization of the diabolical device of cunning that you have encountered hits you squarely in whatever it is chilling knowledge usually hits.

You have encountered the fabled red herring!

If you wish to take it, make a note, but remember that it could be just a red herring, ---- probably because it is! in fact just a red herring.

Since there is a total lack of secret levers and mystic runes on the pedestal, you decide to

Return to the corridor. (Turn to section 21)

Section 26

You step onto the pad of the teleporter, and declaim in as authoritative and captain like voice as possible:

"Beam me uaaaaa!"

The reason for the unexpected uaaaa! was that presumably whoever set this thing for voice control didn't particularly bother waiting for the word up. Logical really since many an intrepid hero has been inches away from a gruesome end (though not involving Grues), when saying those words.

However you feel a little peeved about not getting your big line out.

What peeves you rather more, is the sensation that every atom of your body is being taken apart piece by piece, ---- a sensation which really isn't pleasant, though it's actually a pretty accurate description of what's going on.

When your eyeballs have been reconstructed (thankfully both facing the right way, ---- out of, and not into your skull), you see a door in front of you baring a sign giving very strong indications of safety.

Eagerly, you open it and step straight through, hoping that finally you'll be out of this mad house, ---- or at least out of the bits of it that are likely to cause you immediate and painful death.

Safety! ---- hopefully. (Turn to section 8)

Section 27

Lets see, the only thing you know about where you are is that your underground, ---- owing to general stoniness and all the references to dungeons, and your going down! Lets be clear on this down!

Up, somewhere above you is the sky, the clouds, and the entirety of human civilization, all the good and bad, the normal stuff like planes and cars, and irritating gamebooks written on the internet. Your friends, your family and that bloody annoying person who really gets on your wick.

Yet your going down! After all what's below you, ---- the mantle, the earth's core, --- possibly hell if you believe medieval cosmology.

Still, that's the way you chose, so down you shall go.

Maybe you just went that way because your a really lazy git and down seemed like a good idea as it took weight off your feet.

Don't you know that that sort of thinking will lead to a sticky, ---- and probably overweight end?

Down you chose though and down you shall have, in fact this corridor has lots and lots and lots of down! all the down you could possibly want.

So much concentrated declination in fact that it's a good while before you do finally get to the bottom and the end of the corridor.

What lies at the end? Something fat? well lets' find out!

Lets see what's at the bottom then. (Turn to section 15)

Section 28

You start up the northern way towards the distant tonk! tonk! of hammers and stone.

However you've not got too far along the passage when you come to a door set into the wall on one side. Unlike most of the doors you've seen which have been hefty, wooden affairs, this one seems to have a more modern, metallic look to it, as though it were the door to a bank vault.

Above it is a very straight forward sign which reads "fire exit, only to be used in emergencies"

Your heart races. Could this really be an easy exit from this ridiculous nightmare? ---- after all being trapped here is definitely! an emergency.

And even if it isn't the way out, ---- maybe an exit would be worth investigating anyway?

Choices await!

Go through the fire exit (Turn to section 29)

Carry on along the passage. (Turn to section 30)

Section 29

You eagerly turn the handle, lift a couple of bolts and slip through the hefty hatch labelled fire exit.

You find yourself in a circular, metal pipe with grills set into some of the sides, and a roof low enough to force you to crouch.

However it's not your cramped position, the grills digging painfully into your knees or the knew metal turn the surroundings have taken which really interests you, ---- not with that bright circle at the end of the pipe, a circle that you know must be sunlight.

Out! out into the real world, back to mobile phones, and pizza hut and bad reality TV.

However you soon realize, as the bright circle of blinding whiteness gets rapidly closer, ---- far more rapidly than your humping progress could account for, that this isn't an exit in case of fire, ---- it's an exit into! fire!

As the metal starts to heat up around you you desperately try to push yourself away from the advancing column of superheated white flames, but every second the air gets thinner, and the metal sides start first to blister, then to burn.

Luckily, the heat is intense enough to insure that your end is quick, ---- though sadly not quick enough to avoid being excruciatingly painful in the process.

Well, probably one of the nastier ways to go, though really one which could've been avoided with a little thought on the connotations of the word "fire exit"

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 30

Continuing on down the passage, you can't help noticing that the stone is getting steadily rougher and less well put together, as though your heading into some very naturally formed caves.

Fortunately, the totally unnatural and inexplicable light doesn't seem to be changing at all.

There even seem to be a set of hefty scuff marks in the middle of the corridor, --- like two wheel ruts caused you presume by a mine cart of some sort.

You're just congratulating yourself on your powers of observation, when a figure leaps out from a totally unobserved crack just ahead of you catching you by surprise.

You have no doubt this is a pirate.

You're not sure which thing tipped you off to this, Whether it's the skull and crossbones hat, the ridiculously purple trousers, the large black hook poking out of his right sleeve, the eyepatch or the parrot sitting on his shoulder, --- or possibly even the loud:

"Garrrr! avast yee skurvy devil garr!" he bellows at you as he approaches.

"mmmm, hello"

You can't help feeling this is a distinctly inadequate thing to say to someone with a black beard and a set of lungs that plainly put Brian Blessed to shame.

"Greetings yee land lubber! I be the famous pirate Davie Jones, garr!"

You hastily look around for squid tentacles, but it appears this Pirate's beard is completely natural, --- if of a rather terrifying size.

"You've heard of me then, --- I do be famous garr!"

"Well yes I just saw Pirates of the Caribbean last year and ----"

"Pirates of the Caribbean! garr!"

The pirate turns and spits, and you can't help noticing that his spittle not only flies quite a distance but also bounces from the rocky wall with a resounding ping.

"so then, lets get to it, ---- I'd better rob yee! and kill yee, ---- or maybe tother way round not that it matters, garr!"

From somewhere behind his braces the pirate produces something sharp and nasty which might be a long knife or a short sword, but is definitely a cutlass, and definitely pointed in your direction with murderous and/or larcenous intent.

YOU'd better do something quick!

Attempt to bribe him if you have some gold. (Turn to section 31)

Stall for time. (Turn to section 32)

If you broke into Davy Jones' locker and pinched his pirate socks go here. (Turn to section 35)

Fight him. (Turn to section 37)

Section 31

"Well look" you say desperately.

"Is the killing part necessary?"

Davy Jones pauses in the act of drawing back his cutlass.

"How about, I give you all my money, and you mmm, ---- let me go?"

"Sorry, --- can't do that garr!"

"But why not" You protest.

"After all, who's to hear of your famous robbery if you go around killing people"

Davy Jones raises his eyes (or rather his eye), ceilingwards as if he's talking to a complete idiot.

"Suppose ya gives me some gold and I lets ya go, ---- how do I know you ain't got another 100 pieces o' gold stashed in your breaches garr!"

""Oh come on" You protest. "I'd tell the truth"

"Would yee now, ---- in my experience folks just ain't truthful about their valuables garr!"

Davy Jones continues forward, bringing his cutlass up to throat hight.

"Well, ---- mmm, ----" You say, throwing modesty to the winds. "How about I take off all my clothes and you search them"

To your utter and complete surprise the small portion of Davy Jones' face which isn't covered by thick black beard goes a brilliant shade of red.

"Couldn't possibly do that! then you'd be naked"

A second later he adds a half hearted "gar"

"But you'd search my body after you killed me, ---- wouldn't that involve me being naked?" You ask, slightly mystified at this unexpected piratical modesty.

"You'd be dead! tain't the same, --- has you no decency! Garrrrr!" Davy Jones roars, and before you can protest any further with a swing of his cutlass powered by the strength of aggrieved sensibility he sends your head flying across the cave.

Well you seem to have died unfortunately, and of all things to a pirate with strangely coloured trousers and a distinctly odd sense of propriety.

Fancy another go?

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 32

"This is a bit of a weird thing for a pirate to be up to isn't it?"

"What d'ya mean"

Davy Jones pauses in his inspection of your torso, obviously deciding which bit of you is the best target for his cutlass.

"Well, hanging out in a mine robbing people, ---- I thought pirates went in for plunder on the high seas"

Davy Jones' eye grows a bit misty, and his cutlass starts to droop in a decidedly dejected fashion. You get the impression that underneath all that hair he's wearing a wistful expression.

"Well times 'ave changed. It just ain't the same any more. Now it's all security alarms and submachine guns. Not a decent fat merchant in sight, and even when ya do get some decent loot like as not it'll be paper money, ---- no good for buryin', ---- and when ya cursed to sale the seas forever that's a right royal pain in the neck!"

He lets out a whistful "gar"

"Cursed?" you ask, slightly intrigued.

"Aye, ---- bloody albatross! garr!"

Suddenly he seems to recollect himself and his cutlass stops drooping.

"Anyhow, ---- if it's all the same to you, mind if I slit ya gizzard now, ---- only I got some major merchant robbin' booked in at three and what with shootin', keel hauling and such it'll likely take all knight garr!"

You briefly wonder how exactly Davy's planning to keel haul anyone in the total absence of a ship, but since the pirate is once again pointing his wicked looking cutlass at some fatal areas on your body, you probably ought to think of a way out of this fast.

Attempt to bribe him if you have some gold. (Turn to section 31)

Say your an orphan. (Turn to section 33)

Section 33

Wishing you had an orchestra to play something minor and catchy, ---- not to mention a chorus of opera singing pirates and ladies in victorian bathing costumes to accompany you, you assume a dramatic posture and try to adopt the saddest expression you can (not too difficult when your about to have your mortal coil cut short by cutlass).

"Oh man of dark and dismal fate, forgo your cruel employ"

You start slightly over dramatically.

"Have pity on my Lonely state, ---- I am an orphan boy!"

(You decide boy is best to go for for rhyming effect irrespective of your actual number of chromosomes).

You wait anxiously to see if this rather insane strategy will work.

Once again Davy's cutlass pauses half way to your throat.

"Go on, ---- garr!"

You wrack your brain hastily for everything you know about orphans.

"Well, I grew up in the work house, and they fed us gruel every day. They made us sing for our supper, and anyone who sang out of tune was beaten with a really hefty book of music"

The pirate gives out a great sniff, but unfortunately his cutlass doesn't move from it's station near your neck. You can see the light gleaming wickedly along the jagged edge of the blade.

Hastily you try and think of more orphan related material.

"---- and I was always picked on. There was this one boy called Tom Riddle who had really evil magic powers and a nasty streak, and he used to do horrible things to me, ---- all the time, ---- it was awful!"

"gaaaaahaaaa!"

Davy lets out a rather busy sob as tears start to leak from his eye and trickle down his beard. more to the point, his cutlass starts to shake wildly.

Hastily you step back, worried about the sharp steel jiggling close to your jugular and press home your advantage.

"Tom riddle was pure evil! one day he dragged me into a cave where he ----"

"Stoooooop! ---gaaaaahaaaa" Davy wails.

"I be an orphan too. I know just how it feels. ---- go! just go! gaaahaahaaa!"

Dropping his cutlass to the cavern floor with an impressive clang the Pirate huddles into a sobbing, bawling mass.

Feeling glorious at the story you just spun you decide to beat a hasty retreat before you run out of orphan references, ---- besides, you suspect that if the buccaneer's grief gets any worse you'll have a cave in on your hands.

Continue north. (Turn to section 34)

Section 34

As you continue slogging through what is clearly no longer a corridor and now is very distinctly a cave, that intermittent hammering is getting steadily louder and louder.

Combine this with the fact that you now occasionally see drifts of sand, broken shovel handles, and in one place a few bulky wagons scattered about you come to the conclusion that your in a mine, ---- and judging by the relative size of the various tools and wagons, a mine populated by people of a distinctly miner size.

Then suddenly, above the progressive sound of hammering, you here a group of fairly jaunty male voices raised in an irritatingly catchy, entirely superfluous little ditty in a major key, ---- and one which probably under normal circumstances would be far to energetic to be sung at the same time someone was swinging a pick-axe.

"groggash! groggash!"

"Groggash, groggash, we're going to make some cash. we'll buy a keen new torture machine groggash! groggash groggash groggash!"

You stop, rather surprised that something so guttural and profoundly unpleasant could sound so irritatingly cheerful when set to music.

A little cautiously you continue, still listening to further verses of the somewhat disturbing song.

"groggash! groggash, your skull we'd like to smash, we'll first make dosh then humans squash groggash, groggash groggash groggash!"

Groggash, we'll kill anyone we catch, we'll rip off their ears and drink some beers groggash! groggash groggash groggash!"

At this last verse you definitely think, despite the rather harmonious singing that continuing in this direction would be distinctly hazardous to your health. You resolve to quietly back away up the passage before whatever is singing this grizzly, if happy tune catches you, and drinks beers!

You begin to back slowly away, trying to make as little noise as possible. however, you are so busy attempting to stealthily creep backwards that you totally fail to see the collection of long handled mining tools leaned up against the cavern wall, ---- really, creeping forwards would've been far more efficient.

Your just congratulating yourself on your superior sneakery, when suddenly you find that the long, wooden haft of a pickaxe has become lodged between your ankles.

The sudden jolt catches you completely off balance and reflexively you put out a hand to steady yourself. Unfortunately, the thing you steady yourself on is yet another long pickaxe which is precariously balanced against a heap of others.

The net result of all this is that you along with a large collection of pickaxes, not to mention your pride, end up clattering to the cavern floor in an extremely noisy, highly undignified and totally unstealthy heap.

If you had hit points, we could assume you lost some here, --- -at least you picked up a number of bruises in interesting places and a very nasty crick in your ankle. however, since you don't have hit points we'll just assume that you spend most of the rest of the adventure feeling stiff and slightly sore in various parts of your body.

The singing abruptly breaks off, and you here several pairs of feet skittering down the cavern towards you.

You are just trying to recollect your wits, disentangle yourself from the heap of stacked mining equipment and decide which bruise to rub first, when you here two stony, squelchy but surprisingly polite voices above you.

"Oh dear me. I think it's a human"

"Yes, I do believe your right, ---- here please assist me in helping it up"

Two sets of small but strong and surprisingly rough hands are stuck under your arms and you find yourself lifted gently to your feet where you can at last get a look at the creatures who helped you up, ---- creatures who were presumably just singing that entirely bloodthirsty, though rather tuneful little song.

You feel yourself stiffen with a combination of instinctive shock and worry, sinse there is absolutely no doubt what your looking at, ---- even though it's definitely something you've never seen in actuality before.

Small, hairy and misshapen, clad in what is apparently a set of overalls made out of some sort of furry hide, with narrow, squinting eyes, large ears and some impressive looking fangs these are, without any atom of doubt, ---- goblins, --- or possibly orcs, naals, kobolds, hob goblins, sprites, hobs, pucks, or about

a million other names.

You decide however goblin is probably the easiest to deal with.

"mmmm," You begin uncertainly.

One of the creatures peers up at you with a concerned expression, --- assuming that something with a set of brilliant green eyes plainly only intended by nature to give looks of menace and evil can look concerned.

"Are you alright you poor human, ---- we can take you to our first aide tent if you like, Bloodbag makes a fine cup of tea"

"mmmm" You continue eloquently, still slightly stunned by the real existence of things you've only previously read about in books or seen in films, and even more confused at the idea of a goblin making a fine cup of tea.

The second creature pats you reassuringly on the shoulder, ---- or at least on the small of the back.

"Yes, a cuppa is just what you need, ---- now come with us"

You find yourself being steered down the corridor by these two quite solicitous goblins who keep muttering reassuring sounding nonsences as though they're a couple of old ladies looking after a toddler.

You hear "dear dear, such a dreadful fall" and "we'll see you alright."

At the end of the corridor (or rather the cave), you see a large rock face where a number of other goblins are obviously hard at work mining. Some seem to be applying pickaxes and shovels, while others are loading up and pushing huge wagons laden with loose stone and rock.

At the site of you a good many crowd over and you here several comments like "oo! a visitor" and "the poor thing, it looks confused"

Over to one side is a stripy, canvas structure which the mob of by now very concerned goblins shepherd you into.

A second later you find yourself sat down on a folding camp chair and having a steaming mug of tea pressed into one hand while another goblin is offering a plate of what are clearly cookies.

"Batrash baked them this morning" You hear.

Then suddenly the goblin who brought you in (the one with the distinctly evil green eyes), is pushing all the others away with cries of "give it room let it have a rest!"

And a second later you find yourself left alone in what is clearly the Goblin's break tent.

Swigging at the hot sweet tea and eating one of the rather overly sugary biscuits, you start to look around.

apart from the fact that everything is a trifle smaller than your used to, this looks pretty much the way you'd expect any expedition's break and first aide tent to be, ---- though some of the bottles in the first aid cabinet have labels like

"bugrosh's best death flower brue" and "dr. glooprot's toe nale ointment"

You could just sit here and wait for your host to get back, but on the other hand you do see a couple of things which look worth investigating.

On the table you see a copy of a huge, red bound book with an impressive title in gold letters.

"The downfall of the lord of the rings and the ending of the third age, as seen by the little people"

To one side is what is apparently a cash box, ---- at least it's a hefty wooden chest with impressive iron strappy bits, a huge bulging lock and a sign on saying "cash."

So, what will you do?

Read the book. (Turn to section 38)

Investigate the cash box. (Turn to section 39)

Wait for the goblin to return. (Turn to section 42)

Section 35

You back hastily away from the up raised blade, but to your utter irritation before you've backed more than a couple of steps the heel of your shoe catches a snag on the floor.

Not only does this leave you in a decidedly undignified position falling at Davy Jones' feet, but also the socks you got from Davy's locker fall out of your pocket and unroll themselves across the stone, displaying their brilliantly white skull and crossbones for all to see.

hastily you scramble to your hands and knees, but before you can make a grab for the socks the Buccaneer scoops them up.

"These're mighty fine foot covers, ---- I likes the skull, just like mine garr!"

"Well you know, skulls and crossbones, very stilish ----"

"Same wool as mine too ----"

You swallow nervously, visions of disembowelment jiggling in your head.

"---- what a coincidence ----"

Davy turns the top of the socks inside out to display a small, white piece of paper pinned to the inner lining.

"---- and the tag as says, property of Davy jones, ---- that be just like mine too. I think, ----"

He steps forward and jabs you in the chest with a calloused thumb, --- -which is actually pretty painful.

"---- I think, you've been in me locker, and you've been pinchin' me socks!"

Davy Jones is now standing close enough for You to smell a mixture of sweat and rum rolling of him in waves which only serves to make you more nervous, ---- most odd that your more bothered about him finding out you swiped his socks than when he was just going to kill you.

Abruptly, the pirate's hairy face splits into a huge grin showing a motly collection of teeth which run the gammit from extremely wrotten to solid gold.

"Good! on ya! gaaaaaarrrrr!!!"

The force of his bellow is nearly enough to knock you flying, however the hearty slap on the back finishes that task nicely and you find yourself face down on the cavern floor while above you Davy Jones continues to laugh uproariously.

"And there's me athinkin' people in this day n' age ain't interested in lootin' and pillagin', just not got the guts to be pirates! ---- ha! great to know old larceny ain't dead yet!"

You scramble to your feet, feeling an overwhelming sense of relief. After a few moments the pirate captain seems to calm down enough to speak coherently again.

"Ya need a reward for this, ---- here! I were told to give this to a venturesome scoundrel!"

Reaching into the pocket of his luridly purple trousers, Davy Jones produces a small, beautifully calved statue made of something very glittery and see-through which you strongly suspect to be crystal.

Your a little shocked though when you realize that what you initially thought was an abstract calving is actually a statue of a small, curved shell fish, one you're more used to seeing fried in batter at chinese restaurants or smothered with salad creme and mayonnaise just before Christmas dinner.

"Behold! Davy Jones booms, ---- you've gathered that booming is pretty much all he does.

"The prawn of destiny! garr!"

You stare from Jones' perfectly serious expression (or at least his perfectly serious beard), to the small glittering statue.

Oh well, ---- Prawns presumably have destiny too, albeit that destiny frequently involves the deep fat fryer or the cocktail dish.

You take the statue and stick it in your pocket. If your keeping track, make a note that you've got the prawn of destiny, since it's likely to be important.

With a few last cavernous laughs Davy Jones' excuses himself on the basis that he has more robbing

and looting to do, and you find yourself oncemore alone in the rocky corridor.

Now you can

Continue north. (Turn to section 34)

Return to the crossroads. (Turn to section 36)

Section 36

You make it out of the north corridor to find the crossroads once again in front of you. with great irony, an iron grating has fallen over the southern passage, though you find this isn't an irony you can be grateful for.

So, which way now?

West seems best when compared to the rest. (Turn to section 21)

You hope east wont leave you deceased. (Turn to section 46)

Section 37

Having little else to lose when a jagged edged pirate weapon is rapidly approaching your vitals, you let fly with a right to Davy's highly hairy jaw.

Despite the thick layer of beard, your fist connects with a satisfying crunch, --- you just hope the pirate's face feels more damaged than your knuckles do.

Davy steps backwards, plainly quite disorientated by your sudden attack. You weigh in, giving him a left, but quickly have to step back to avoid a vicious chop of the cutlass, ---- obviously the pirate wasn't that! surprised.

You land a hook to the side of the Captain's head, and are just reflecting that this hole fighting lark isn't really all that bad, when Davy hauls off with his right and catches you with a hefty hook to the stomach.

Usually this would result in at the worst some rather nasty bruising and probably you being winded, however when we're talking about pirates delivering a hook it's quite another matter.

You suddenly realize your lying on the floor, and the large mass of rather rubbery looking stuff around you is actually your internal organs which it would seem, are now very much external organs.

Your not left to think about this sudden change in definition for long however, since it doesn't take too much time for Davy to stride over and do something very quick and permanent with his cutlass.

And the moral of the story is, violence never solves anything, ---- or at least not when your opponent has a steel hook and a bloody big knife (or small sword), and you've only got your bare hands which, --- sadly for you, unlike bear hands are not equipped with gigantic claws.

So, your now rather dead I'm afraid.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 38

Opening the dense tome, you find this is indeed as you expected, a copy of Lord of the Rings. You're just about to put it down when suddenly you notice that the author is listed as:

"RJJ Tornspleen"

And the book bears an inscription on the front cover which reads:

"Despite the many false tellings of the story of the great war of the Ring, it is hoped this truthful tale which shows the full suffering of the goblin people and the end of the reign of Sauron the Great as it actually happened, free of Elf propaganda, will be a valuable aide to both goblins and other intelligent peoples in piecing together the true events of that historical period, free from bias"

Interested to know what a Goblin-centric version of the story would be like, you begin flipping through it.

It begins when the Great and Wise Lord Sauron, freely gave his time and knowledge to the elves to help them make magic rings. However because Sauron's own ring was (simply through superior skill), far more powerful than theirs, the elves initiated a huge war to get it.

This ended when the elf's ally, the pirate king Isildur mutilated Wise Lord Sauron and nicked the ring himself.

However, the elves and their allies were so profoundly greedy, eventually the ring got completely lost until the master burglar Bilbo Baggins stole it from another thief named Golum.

Bilbo was then robbed by his apprentice Thief Frodo who, it turned out was an elf sympathizer, and under the racist guidance of the wizard Gandalf he set out along with the terrorist Aragorn to both destroy the ring, and give the elves and their allies a political stranglehold over the main powers of the region. This plan involved removing pro-goblin elements in the government of Rohan to instigate an unprovoked attack on the goblin-friendly power of Isengard, then creating an anti-goblin government in Gondor (after doing away with the legitimate ruler in a supposedly! accidental fire in the city's tombs).

With these political allies in place, Gandalf was then able to engineer a multinational war against Mordor and Sauron's allies.

Apparently, all didn't end happily since Wise Lord Sauron died in a magical terrorist attack by Frodo on his tower's main power source in a nearby volcano, though there was some justice since Frodo, Gandalf and most of the war criminals were exiled across the sea to the Valinor penal colony.

Fascinating as all this is, there is however one particular thing that catches your eye as unusual and possibly significant, the first little poem at the front of this rather reversed edition of Lord of the Rings:

"1 ring for Sauron the good to hold, nine for Mortals next shall come, seven for dwarves who only love gold, and three for the elves who are utter scum!"

You commit this to memory for later reference, though you're uncertain as to why accept it makes your adventurer's senses tingle!

What now?

Investigate the cash box. (Turn to section 39)

Wait for the goblin to return. (Turn to section 42)

Section 39

An unopened treasure chest is something like a red rag to a bull you find, utterly irresistible.

Putting the tea and biscuits down you wander over to the cash box and push up the lid (does nobody! lock these?).

Sure enough, inside are flipping great wodges of treasure! gold and jewels, diamonds, rubies, and lots of other stones who's name you don't know, but they look extremely glittery and expensive!

Well, everyone knows goblin gold really doesn't belong to them but to whoever removes it from them. Working on this principle, you begin shovelling the stuff into your pockets, totally forgetting where you are, your head full of visions of limos, five star hotels, world travel, meals at the finest restaurants and actually being able to afford all those games you've wanted to play for ages!

This happy prospect however is quickly and abruptly cut short when the greeneyed goblin, --- and several of his pals, push through the tent flap and catch you quite literally in the act.

You really are a little stuck at this point, even protesting your innocence seems a bit futile when you've been caught with your hands and indeed pockets full of other people's gold.

The goblins quickly get over their initial shock, and within seconds you find yourself held by a bunch of very strong, hairy little hands as all the gold is removed from you.

You're then dragged outside the tent where the goblin with the green eyes (who seems to be at least the most assertive if not formally the boss). Calls all the other goblins together for a meeting where he explains that you prayed upon their good nature in order to get in and steal their cash.

Some of them are in favour of good old fashioned family tortures, --- and indeed sing some traditional goblin folk songs as examples.

These include "here we go splattering gnomes in may", "Are you going to scalp an elf bare" and "what shall we do with a sober goblin" (a most interesting song with 97 verses, all of which seem to involve doing unpleasant things to internal organs and parts of the anatomy with a variety of implements from garden rakes to coffee spoons).

Others however are more in favour of a civilized punishment, since after all they are modern, enlightened goblins and should act in a reasonable and rational manner leaving beside the barbarism of the past.

This faction advocates chopping off one of your hands, which is held to bbe the most common punishment for a thief in most civilizations.

Green eyes however, points out that since you were caught, no harm was done, so really the only reparation needed is to teach you a lesson, ---- besides it's your first offence.

It is therefore decided that you will perform community service by helping the goblins with their ore mining for a month or so.

You are then lead off and quickly find yourself pushing a mine cart loaded with loose rock and rubble up and down a set of tracks from the rock face to the dumping ground.

Try to escape. (Turn to section 40)

Serve your sentence. (Turn to section 41)

Section 40

The goblins, despite the rather bloodthirsty folk songs which they repeatedly give vent to, are neither cruel, nor particularly good guards.

It therefore doesn't take more than an hour of pushing the mine cart to find a time when your left entirely alone with most of the goblins either off on a tea break or over at the far end of the diggings where apparently Gotroth the Merciless has stubbed his toe quite painfully.

Seizing your chance, you sprint for the passage leading back towards the dungeon crossroads.

You run swiftly, swerving around large rocks and bumping over small ones, hearing goblins voices and

shouts behind you. However, you have far longer legs than the goblins not to mention a head start which means even their fastest runners are soon left way behind.

Putting on an extra burst you dive into the north corridor and begin running, the going far easier now owing to the much smoother floor.

However, you have completely forgotten the fact that nobody has cleared up the set of old goblin pickaxes you tripped over earlier and they're left exactly where they fell, all over the corridor in a tangled heap.

For the second time in two hours the shaft of a pickaxe catches you between the ankles as your attention wanders and you find yourself crashing to the stone floor.

Unfortunately for you, the stone floor is already populated with a host of fallen pickaxes, --- one in particular which is pointed upwards at a most inconvenient and rather fatal angle.

You now find yourself firmly, distinctly and rather gorily stuck on the end of a pickaxe in the middle of a corridor with lots of very unhappy goblins just behind you, goblins who really don't like their reasonableness being presumed upon twice in such quick succession.

The only really good thing to say is thanks to the angle of the pickaxe and what it has pierced, you only last up to verse 7 of what shall we do with a sober goblin, and since verse eight apparently involved a bottle opener, that's actually quite a relief.

You may now most definitely and completely be described as of the deceased persuasion, or to put it more bluntly, you are dead!

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 41

Despite all the books you've read and films you've seen, working in a goblin mine really isn't too bad.

For one thing there are no guards with whips, (though given the slightly repetitive goblin folk songs sometimes you wish there were just for variety), and also since you are larger and stronger than most of the goblins, you find they take what are to you very frequent breaks, meaning that the work never gets too hard.

Most of the goblins have apparently decided that since your serving your community service peacefully, your probably not all bad and obviously back on the straight and narrow, so you find yourself not only frequently being handed cups of tea, biscuits and fungus sandwiches, but also being plied with questions.

The goblins explain that they're a bunch of miners sent by the goblin king to collect crystals for his labyrinth refurbishment, but that they're in some trouble since the transport spell they were sent has become stuck behind a magic door which mysteriously appeared for no reason.

After a day of hauling rocks and digging chunks of ore out of the rock face, --- with you feeling extremely rugged given that your far less tired than the goblins around you, you all head back to the break tent where Bladvash the Mawler has prepared a surprisingly tasty mushroom stew.

After supper, as the goblins are sitting around telling jokes or drinking none alcoholic beverages (they are very concerned about getting drunk on the job, you offer to take a look at the locked door.

After all, you might not know too much about magic, but you've read enough fantasy, and anyway, all the repeatedly harmonic singing of "We salt the fields and slaughter" is getting a bit much.

Confront the devilish door! (Turn to section 43)

Section 42

The goblin with the green eyes is soon back, he introduces himself as Gougehook Throatmangler, and fusses about offering you more tea and putting a cushion under your head.

After profuse, if somewhat embarrassed thanks and refusing more tea and biscuits (really you can't cope with that much sugar), You do tentatively voice the opinion that this is hardly the sort of behaviour you expected from goblins.

"Oh yes indeed" Gougehook begins a little wistfully.

"It's rather sad really. People assume that all goblins are barbaric and mindless killers bent only on destruction and loot, --- that's just our cultural heritage and while we still like to respect it, in practical terms it has little to do with goblins today"

You ask about the song, and Gougehook explains that it's just an old goblin folksong, and like most concerns cruelty, conquest and torture, --- but he hastens to reassure you that goblins don't actually do that any more, --- well not unless it's a special occasion such as the yearly festival of blood or one of their official and legally sanctioned ravaging raids for loot and slaves, (who are only symbolically enslaved for purposes of upholding the tradition).

You then ask about the mine works, and the dungeon generally, since this is the first time you've managed to find someone sane enough to give you a rational explanation of just where! you are.

Gougehook has no idea about how you got there or how you get back, but does inform you that his gang are a group of miners from the goblin city sent by the king to mine special crystals to put in his new labyrinth.

This mine and the attached dungeon are apparently a good 50 intestine lengths from the goblin city and 30 intestine lengths from the nearest settlement, off deep in the Underneath.

However, since you have no idea where the goblin city is, where the Underneath (which clearly has capital letter status), is, or how long an intestine length is (a fact you'd actually prefer not to know), this really doesn't help you too much.

When however you explain you were brought to the dungeon by a magic doughnut, Gougehook rapidly becomes quite excited.

"Magic? We are in something of a jam concerning a spell. If you know something about magic, could you possibly see your way to giving us some of your time to help? if it's not too inconvenient of course"

You hastily tell Gougehook you really don't know much about spells despite being the victim of one, but would be willing to give the goblins a hand if you could, --- they are the kindest creatures you've met in the dungeon thus far, and after all you owe them for the tea.

Gougehook explains that the problem concerns the transport spell they bought with them as a quick way home which (through a magic and possibly dungeon related accident), has become locked behind a magic door which they cannot open without unlocking the spell that keeps it shut.

None of them have any idea how to remove the unlocking spell to get past the door, and without the transport spell they'll be looking at a very long journey home indeed.

You agree to take a look at it and see if you can possibly help, --- after all, your the hero of this story, --- or at least your the protagonist, either way, you are the sort of person who does good deeds if at all possible.

If your not, --- think of this as a nice change.

Heroically try to break the spell. (Turn to section 43)

Section 43

You find yourself lead away by the green-eyed monster, ---- actually Gougehook Throatmangler the spokes-goblin and not jealousy.

He takes you down a crack to one side of the rock face where you can see little shards of crystal glinting in the light. The crack gets steadily narrower, first to the point you have to duck, then to the point you have to squat, then to the point where your seriously wondering if your claustrophobic, then to the point you start thinking you probably should be.

Before however your quite reduced to squirming and panic levels, the crack suddenly opens out and your able to stand fully upright.

"Here is the magic door" announces Gougehook, gesturing grandly.

Recovering your sense of space you look around to find yourself in a small cave hung with stalactites and stalagmites. Across what is clearly another entrance though is hung something quite different and very obviously something that doesn't usually belong in a cave, --- maybe a very well furnished and comfortable hobbit hole, but clearly not a rough cave in a half dug goblin mine.

A large, handsomely varnished door with a brass knocker in the shape of, ---- well a knocker. Expecting claw or eagle or something weren't you, --- -well you were wrong! sometimes a knocker is just a knocker even when a door isn't ajar.

Anyway, the door actually seems like it's been transplanted from a nice victorian mansion, it's the sort of door you'd expect to be answered by someone in evening dress calling himself Jeves.

The one rather odd thing is across the center of the door underneath the leaded glass window (which by the way is completely dark), where you usually would expect the number of the house to be written is a brass plate bearing a rather dramatic inscription.

Set across the lock where the handle would usually be are a large number of transverse brass wheels with letters on their outwards faces, ---- rather like those combination locks you see on sute cases though with far more tumblers.

Suddenly you groan in dawning comprehension. a magic spell! what sort of a twisted, insane and truly quite appallingly bad sense of humour would confuse "spelling" with spells.

Unfortunately, the answer is plainly whoever designed this dungeon and it's accompanying doors.

So, obviously it's a riddle game and the answer is a word.

Wishing you were better at crosswords you scrutinise the inscription which is written in rather curly and fancy writing on the brass plate:

"This thing devours all, none shall escape it's final call, the mightiest king is it's willing slave, none shall defy it coward or brave. It governs the end of all souls, with cunning device it fills in holes. Those who know it may be wise, yet in it's mastery peril lies.

Upon this portal write it's name, but one guess only has this game, for those who falsely write a spell are ringing in their own death knell."

You park yourself on a convenient stalagmite and start thinking.

You can think of a number of guesses which fit the bill, but your rather uncertain which is right and you really don't like that part about death knells.

Still, you can but try.

Guess time. (Turn to section 44)

Guess fate. (Turn to section 69)

Guess death. (Turn to section 70)

Guess plot (Turn to section 45)

Guess history. (Turn to section 71)

Section 44

After a little thinking your mind is made up. Your not sure whether this is the right answer, but it seems like your best guess.

As Gougehook watches tensely, you step up to the door and turn the tumblers to reflect your answer.

From inside the door you here a serious amount of clunking and whirring noises and you begin to feel rather more hopeful since obviously the lock mechanism is doing something important.

You lean forward, waiting for the door to spring open, however after a rusty clicking sound a loud, brassy bong! rings out across the cavern.

You begin to step backwards but already it is too late, from the dark leaded windows at the top of the door a pair of long metallic poles suddenly spring downwards towards you, a loop of fine chain held between them aiming at your neck.

You throw up both hands but with more intelligence than a clockwork mechanism really should have credit for, the flexible metal rods slip past your grip and drop the noose of chain deftly over your head.

A second later you find yourself hoisted into the air, thrashing wildly and gasping for breath with the chain wrapped tightly around your neck. Dimly you become aware of Gougehook attempting to climb a stalactite and knock the chain loose but the metal is plainly too strong.

As your brain starts to feel the effects of oxygen starvation, you do reflect that hanging is at least the correct punishment for those who get their spellings wrong, however appropriate as it may be, you stil aren't precisely happy that your about to die, ---- though dead you clearly will be in a few seconds. a second loud bong! rings out around the small cavern as you finally slip into unconsciousness.

Dead you now most definitely are, the bell said so.

Maybe a different answer will prove more profitable should you be reincarnated and find yourself in exactly the same place given exactly the same choice.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 45

Yes, you are certain it really had to be. Briefly looking around the cave to see if there are any fourth walls handy you can shatter, you step up to the door and start turning the wheels to spell your answer.

As soon as the "T" is in place the door vanishes!

No fireworks, no flash, not even the probably more scientifically accurate but still moderately dramatic clash of air meeting in the middle as a vacuum is suddenly created by something disappearing out of existence.

One moment there was a door, the next there is simply nothing there, ---- in fact given that the back of the cave is pretty much like the bit your currently standing in, mysteriously unexplained magical light, rocks, pointy standing or ceiling bits, you really can't be certain where the door actually was.

However, with a cry of pleasure (or possibly a yell of fury, goblin vocal cords just aren't specific enough on such points), Gougehook leaps forward and snatches up a small cardboard box which had been resting on the floor in the bit of cave you believe was behind the now disappeared magic door.

"This is it! ---- thank you human!"

On the box you see a printed card reading "J. W. Wells, PLC, Old established family sorcerers"

With a grin which you hope isn't as horrific as it looks, Gougehook asks you to follow him back to the rockface. A short crawl later and you find yourself in the middle of a break tent full of goblins who very quickly change state from their usual pleased, industrious cheerfulness, to a highly energetic extreme form of pleased, and you are subjected to so many grateful goblin hugs and slaps on the back that you

begin to seriously worry about what they may do to your kidneys through lower back strain.

Gougehook takes a little time out of urging everyone to begin a major party to explain to you that if the goblins arrived late with the crystals, the king would probably do something highly legal but inevitably unpleasant, such as having them chopped into tiny pieces.

With the spell back in their hands however, they will be able to get the crystals back on time, which will bring them great honour and earn them a worthy place in the afterlife.

There is something of an interruption at this point when Skullmash points out that according to the book of nasty injuries and the account of "him what actually been there" getting chopped into tiny pieces is probably a far better way of insuring the state of a goblin's immortal soul than anything else.

This leads to something of a theological debate most of the points of which you find somewhat incomprehensible to say the least, though since this also gives you the chance to sit down in one of the goblins' folding chairs and help yourself to some tea you don't mind.

Finally it is agreed that whether or not you've earned the goblins some time away from their punishment on the pillars of mastication, you've certainly helped them stay in the goblin king's good books which is a good thing either way.

After the dispute seems to have been resolved, you look up from your teacup to see Gougehook making his way towards you.

"Human, I take it you wish to escape the dungeon"

You nod very enthusiastically.

"Well, this may be of use to you. We took it to try and help us break the door spell, but it didn't seem to work"

Gougehook reaches into the pocket of his hide overalls and produces a small, blue, plastic card.

You are just about to wonder how an American Express card will help you get out of the dungeon, when you see written on one side in fancy gold letters is:

"The Adjective of noun"

And on the other in slightly smaller writing:

"Of help to any who wish to quit the dungeon"

If your writing these sorts of things down, you'd probably better make a note of this, as doubtless it'll be important.

Though your slightly confused as to how a small very odd linguistic pun written on a plastic card will help you escape the dungeon, you give Gougehook your thanks.

Several cups of tea and a very large celebratory chocolate cake later (originally baked for Bograt Dwarf Throtler's birthday, though given the circumstances Bograt didn't mind sharing it early), and Gougehook is escorting you back down the north passage towards the dungeon crossroads.

You almost feel sorry, after all, the goblins have been actually quite a nice and friendly bunch, and were it not for the irritatingly catchy if unpleasant folk songs you'd almost consider staying for a while and perhaps visiting the goblin city.

However really you think you should probably get on with the hole solving the dungeon business, and regretfully say a large number of farewells.

Gougehook bids you a fond farewell at the crossroads and you once again find yourself facing four entrances, --- well two entrances really since going back north would be highly pointless, and the southern entrance is covered by an impassable iron grill.

Your fairly certain this grill is impassable. It's large, made of strong black iron and clearly intended to keep things and people out, and on it is hung one of those familiar white cardboard dungeon signs which says "impassable iron grill, entrance is restricted to insubstantial beings only"

Still, this does leave you a choice of two highly mysterious passages to choose between, either the western passage that slopes mysteriously down to parts unknown or the eastern way climbing mysteriously upwards to undiscovered regions.

Make choices!

Your feeling western today. (Turn to section 21)

Eastwards and onwards. (Turn to section 46)

Section 46

The eastern passage seems to slope slowly upwards, though whether this is in fact a good thing your not certain. Other than that, for quite some distance it appears pretty much the same as the other dungeon passages you've seen, rocky and strangely lit for no readily apparent reason.

You really are starting to get a little sick of this hole solid grey stone decorating plan. Why not some wallpaper, some Art Deco moulding around the ceiling, a few nice landscapes on the walls, or at the very least any self respecting dungeon has the odd drip of multicoloured slime and maybe a mystic rune chalked here and there just to break up the monotony.

But other than the cardboard door signs here you've seen nothing but very boring stony walls. Obviously the creator of the dungeon has little to no imagination when it comes to interior decorating.

You are just wondering if painting some sort of mural over the walls would be a good idea, when suddenly you find yourself choking on a cloud of dense black smoke that apparently appeared out of no where.

Hastily waving your hands in a desperate attempt to fend off the fumes, your vision slowly clears to reveal a figure dressed from head to toe in tight fitting black somersaulting down from the ceiling to land in front of you in a very stiff upright pose. Your not sure whether this indicates mastery of the martial arts or acute constipation, but as the figure produces a long, shining sword with a wicked looking edge from somewhere about it's person you decide this does not matter, either way your in trouble again.

Attempt conversation. (Turn to section 47)

Attempt violence. (Turn to section 48)

Attempt yellow bellied cowardice! (Turn to section 49)

Section 47

Hoping that the pen, or at least the spoken word is mightier than the sword, you hold up both hands in what you hope is a posture indicating your lack of violent intentions.

"mmmm, Look" you begin.

"Why would you want to kill me? I've nothing worth stealing"

The black clad swordsman (or woman), stops for a second but only long enough to bark out in a heavily accented voice.

"Kill for honour of cran! you die!"

Then he/she continues towards you, sword swinging menacingly.

Frantically you wrack your brains for a topic of conversation that will quickly save you from this not so eloquent Ninja.

After wracking, flogging, applying various nasty iron implements, and finally forcing your brain to listen to an entire Spice Girls album, you can think of a number of conversation topics which you've encountered on your travels that might save your life from this not quite silent killer.

Obviously you can only talk about something you've actually experienced.

Choose your words carefully:

Talk about the seven headed horror. (Turn to section 53)

Talk about the strangely pleasant goblins. (Turn to section 72)

Talk about the pirate. (Turn to section 54)

Talk about the weirdly helpful Grue. (Turn to section 73)

Talk about and demonstrate your amazing running speed. (Turn to section 58)

Section 48

Bravely you stand your ground and wait until the black clad warrior raises it's sword into a skull cleaving position. As it begins a down swing, you dive quickly to one side in a move you practised last time you were crossing a pedestrian crossing in front of a white van.

This would be more impressive if the warrior didn't warn you with a very loud "whaaaa!" just before swinging.

Another "whaaa!" alerts you to a kick which you once again dodge, also giving you the chance to retaliate with a punch in the warrior's midriff (you just hope it hurt the warrior's ribs as much as it did your fingers).

You start fondly imagining that you are floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee, (actually your floating like a bluebottle and stinging like an enraged moth, --- but who's counting).

The warrior tries to backflip obviously intending to get out of arm range and back into curvy deadly sword range, however backflipping when someone is close enough to grab your ankle is never a good idea, and unfortunately for your black clad foe, close enough you are.

The warrior crashes to the floor and lies at your feet for a second, obviously a little bruised (that black velvet stuff doesn't look too protective slick though it might be).

Now, before the warrior recovers his, --- or maybe her poise (the whaaaaa was certainly high pitched but that's really no guide), you have choices to make.

Put the boot in. (Turn to section 51)

If you have a scorpion go here. (Turn to section 52)

Violence is not the way, cowardice is! (Turn to section 49)

Section 49

After summing up the odds of attempting to fight a trained warrior who is very clearly intent on relieving you of several body parts, you decide that out of all possible military options your best plan is a strategic withdrawal, --- a very fast strategic withdrawal!

You perform a smart about turn, then begin a quick march that is actually more of a drum roll. from behind you here a voice shout in what is obviously not it's native language.

"Cowlard! kurring you not honorable!"

To your intense relief, a glance back reveals that the black clad figure is obviously not following. Congratulating yourself on your wise military discipline (and trying not to get too hung up on the word coward), you skid to a halt back at the dungeon crossroads.

back to crossroads. (Turn to section 50)

Section 50

You find yourself at a place where four dungeon passages meet which you instantly decide to call a crossroads, --- despite the lack of anything resembling a road.

Just to confuse definitions even further, the southern way seems to be blocked by an iron grating, though this still leaves you three choices to deliberate upon.

Down the steadily inclining passage to the west you can hear the sound of water, while the passage to the east slopes upwards and out of view.

Off to the north echoes the sound of industrious hammering, probably indicating that some form of mining, smithing, building or other industry involving hitting one thing with another thing is going on down there, --- hopefully both things are inanimate though you can't be sure.

There is nothing special about the eastern way, accept that it seems to slope upwards, which promises a nice workout for your calf muscles.

East would be beast. (Turn to section 46)

West would be best. (Turn to section 21)

North would be borth, ---- well mmmm, good. (Turn to section 28)

Section 51

All this violence is rapidly undermining your moral constitution, and instead of thinking like a bold, heroic adventurer, you start thinking like a football hooligan, or indeed an enraged and thuggish supporter of most any sport (I wonder if there are Chess hooligans).

You lift a foot and prepare to stomp mercilessly on your fallen enemy. Unfortunately (and this time without the Whaaaaa!), your opponent has been able to roll forwards bringing the sword upwards at a highly nasty angle just as you stomp down.

this results in about a foot of very sharp steel ending up in a very sensitive area of your anatomy (whichever gender you belong to, it's a sensitive area), and one unfortunately full of major arteries.

The only good news is you don't have time to either feel the full extent of the intense pain or bleed to death, since the warrior quickly gets to his/her feet and treats your helpless form to a dazzling display of sword work.

Suffice it to say, that should someone even decide to collect up your remains and arrange a funeral, you'll be in more need of a toast-rack than a coffin.

You are most certainly and definitely dead!

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 52

You are just considering whether hitting someone when they're down is actually dishonourable or just common sense, when suddenly the warrior rolls forward completely waalessly, and your forced to dive sideways once again to stop the sword stabbing your vitals, ---- well stomachs are vital, or at least hopefully contain vitamins if you've been eating a balanced diet.

As you dodge aside, your shoulder comes into violent contact with the stones of the wall, which unlike the warrior's ribs your pretty sure are not the least bit hurt. this concussion however sends a small, clearly

irritated, black and yellow scorpion hurtling out of it's peaceful seat near your collar bone.

The creature flies through the air, pincers clicking and tale with it's appallingly long sting waving furiously, though in fairness you imagine smacking a stone wall wouldn't be a nice way for anyone to wake up. A second later, the Scorpion's trajectory finishes in the exact center of the warrior's velvet covered chest.

You see the tale spin round, and imagine you catch a quick gleam of poison, then a second later it's buried sting deep in your opponent's torso. Seeming to feel that it's rage wasn't satisfied with just the one sting, the scorpion grabs on firmly with both sets of horrible pincers, and begins wagging it's tale like a friendly dog, ---- though even the most aggressively affectionate dogs don't have tales that deliver a lethal dose of poison with each wave.

The warrior's sword falls to the ground with a clang, as he or she claps both hands to the scorpion and attempts to wrench it off, while simultaneously staggering around like someone who's just about to be ejected from a bar for having one too many.

A few seconds later, the scorpion (showing a remarkable instinct for self preservation), leaps from your erstwhile opponent's chest just before the unfortunate warrior crashes to the floor face first. You catch a brief glimpse of light flashing on a black and yellow shell just before the small insect scuttles off into the distance.

Looking down at the black clad corpse you can't help thinking that that was one fight in which the scorpion won, and with a fatality what's more. Obviously no oriental warrior can stand up to the power of a dedicated scorpion.

You briefly consider taking the curved sword with you, after all it's light weight and certainly would be useful if you run into any further violence. Then you realize that you are lacking any sort of scabbard, sheathe or holster, and while you could stick it through your belt the idea of a couple of feet of scalpel sharp metal swinging around near your vulnerable lower regions is really not one you want to contemplate.

Shrugging your shoulders and wishing you had a few more scorpions handy (something you never expected to wish), you turn eastward and continue up the tunnel.

Continue through the horrible tunnels! (Turn to section 55)

Section 53

You begin to describe your chosen topic but the warrior hardly pauses. mid word, you find a slash suddenly inserted into the standard punctuation, a slash across the body with a very sharp and expertly applied sword.

As you crumple to the floor with various bodily parts and fluids moving into unexpected places around you, you find yourself thinking that communication would truly be the way to stop violence, either that or a submachine gun.

Sadly you have neither, though fortunately since the ninja is an expert your death is quick, clean and decorative (the origami rose made out of your pancreas is particularly impressive).

So, your mortal coil has been cut short, or at least twisted into an attractive and no longer living shape. It's therefore time to

Start again. (Turn to section 1)

Section 54

Then it comes to you. My enemy's enemy is my friend, but my enemy's mortal blood foe of a thousand years and enough hatred to fuel a gangster wrap group is my saviour, and Ninjas have one mortal enemy!

You back a few steps from the advancing warrior.

"There's this pirate down the corridor"

The change is instantaneous. from a mildly murderous, menacing advance, the Ninja instantly stiffens into a pose that promises swift, sharp and silent death.

"Pilot! ---- where pilot!"

You're not about to spend 21 years quibbling over a misplaced L.

"Up there and round the corner"

You jerk a thumb behind you.

The ninja lets out a high pitched and murderous scream, like a recently initiated Castrati, then accelerates off down the corridor at a speed that almost makes you expect smoke to belch from his/her behind.

Smiling to yourself, you wait a minute or two, then booming up from behind like the roar of an approaching express train you here a mixture of "waaaaa!" and "gaarr!" and the clash of weapons.

Once more the eternal struggle for supreme victory begins, plus Davy Jones is sure to keep the Ninja busy.

You briefly wonder which of them is likely to win, but then decide such a question of immortal moment and world shattering importance is one no mere single human can answer, ---- well not without access to internet forums anyway.

Turning your back on the furious sounds of combat, you once more face up the tunnel and continue eastwards.

Continue into the dreadful tunnels! (Turn to section 55)

Section 55

As you continue up the eastern way, you begin to see a brighter light ahead of you, and not the wierdly unexplained light of the dungeon passages either. This is the smelly, industrial light of electricity on grimy metal, the sort of thing you'd find in any bus station or shopping center. While no where near as good as daylight, it is however much better than the general weirdness you've experienced thus far. So, you put on a spurt and begin running towards it, hoping that you'll find yourself under a convenient grating leading to the world above or at least somewhere a little more civilized and less full of ways to meet a grisly end, ---- or at any rate a train station.

You are rather disappointed when you finally reach the light however, to find that it is nothing but another, more scientific looking sector of corridor. Abruptly, the smooth stony floor and walls turn into sheets of dully reflective metal, and the magical light is replaced with what are clearly bog standard orange arc-lights that make everything look a little surreal and eerie (though given that this is still the bowels of a mysterious and magical dungeon that's not particularly difficult).

After a short distance of this more industrial look, you see that the passage ahead of you is completely blocked. right across the width of the corridor someone has built a large grill of metal bars, all painted that colour commonly known as annoying institution yellow. Through them you can see the corridor progressing on the other side, but there is clearly no way to progress yourself without opening the grate somehow.

Stepping closer, you see that in the center of the metal bars is what appears to be a bulky square box with bars running through it, like the turnstiles you find at crowded train stations.

Written on the side of the box in one of those by now very familiar pieces of dungeon pasteboard is a sign saying "the Turnstyle of Destiny" with a small, irregularly shaped slot just above it.

You sigh dismally. Surely a door of destiny should be a little more impressive than this. Something big and bulky with bronze or gold, with burning torches angry guards or horrific monsters, not this absolute anticlimax?

Nevertheless, lacking in dramatic potential though this rather industrial barrier is, your fairly certain you won't get any further unless you insert the right thing into the slot.

If you have the prawn of destiny go here. (Turn to section 56)

If you don't go here. (Turn to section 57)

Section 56

The small, glass statue glints in the light as you slip it from your pocket. For a second you admire the way the sodium lighting gleams off the polished surface, then remind yourself it is after all a statue of a prawn, and stuff it into the slot.

Your ears are assaulted, ---- well more correctly mugged, beaten up and dumped into a river, by the massively amplified roar of what you first take to be several car horns in concert. After jamming your thumbs as far down your ear-holes as they'll go, you finally reduce the skull splitting sound enough to recognize it as actually a hugely amplified, and quite harmonic, trumpet fanfare. Clearly, whatever expense was spared on the door of destiny got lavished on a truly monstrous sound system.

A few nose vibrating notes later, and the trumpets stop just as the gate swings open. Removing your thumbs you sprint for the opening, hoping that the trumpets weren't the start of the 1812 overture, but luckily it just seems that the last trump has sounded, so you can progress forward with your eardrums intact.

For several more minutes you continue eastwards, the industrial light and total lack of magic around you now reminding you so strongly of bus or train stations that you half expect to see badly peeling posters and scrawled slogans on the walls, however obviously the dungeon has a far better litter management program than the average town council does, either that or there are fewer advertisers and graffiti scrawling hooligans down here.

Suddenly, the corridor ahead tales off and you find yourself stepping into a large round chamber nearly 30 feet across. You tense yourself, looking into the shadowy orange lit gloom fearfully, waiting for the attack, the puzzle, the new diabolical and twisted horror.

As you step a few feet into the dark, a huge electric bulb above quickly snaps on with an audible click, bathing the space around you in harsh white light. You back against the wall, but the room is still completely empty, and across the other side from the passageway you entered another corridor seems to lead off eastwards once again. Deciding that sticking around would be a bad idea, you begin to cross the dazzling white floor towards the other passage.

Though the outer floor of the room appears the standard metal, in the center is a long white painted oval covering most of the ground, around which are a number of black posts about five feet high. You can't help noticing that atop each post is a small metal box about the size of a camera, all pointing into the center of the ring.

Since there is no way across the floor without treading into the oval you nervously enter, expecting doom at any second. However all that happens once you step onto the white floor is that you can now see the words printed in dramatic blue letters across it's center.

"Boxing Ring"

Looking around, you now see that from the front the box like objects on the poles are not just box like, but actually boxes! each has a small door and handle facing inwards, and each has a number printed on a small card stuck above the handle.

Briefly you hesitate. Such an abysmally bad pun as making a boxing ring by surrounding a ring with boxes has to mean something, and certainly some of those numbers look significant.

You wonder if you should try one of the boxes, or whether you should leave well alone and continue onwards.

Will you be able to box clever? or have you been out-boxed.

Open box 1973 (Turn to section 61)

Open box 2001 (Turn to section 59)

Open box 3791 (Turn to section 74)

Open box 1138. (Turn to section 75)

Don't risk a box, just continue going east. (Turn to section 62)

Section 57

As many a drunk and fair dodger have noticed in the passed, steel gratings cannot be bent, bashed, or squeezed through, nor can this one be climbed over since it stretches right up to the ceiling of the tunnel.

You can't think of any item you have that looks the right size for the slot, it's too big for a gold coin, and too narrow for most anything else.

With a disappointed shrug, you turn away and clomp off back down the corridor to the west, in search of something that will hopefully get you through the door.

Continue to crossroads. (Turn to section 50)

Section 58

"Hay" you begin, turning slightly sideways and bunching your leg muscles under you in that stand known universally as the cowards' start.

"Did I tell you I'm an amazing runner, ---- watch!"

Your upwards leap, mid air twist to the opposite direction and running landing is a truly beautiful piece of balletic spinelessness, and would earn you a tutu in any ballet in the world.

You are already several feet from the warrior when you land, and your speed rapidly increases to a truly impressive sprint, making you briefly wonder if aggressive persons with sharp weaponry should be introduced at the starting blocks of Olympic running events.

"Cowlard! kurring you not honorable"

You ignore the yell from the warrior (and try to ignore the word coward in whatever accent), and increase your pace down the eastern tunnel.

Finally you get:

Back to crossroads. (Turn to section 50)

Section 59

You look at the numbers on the box. Surely those are significant numerals. Feeling a degree of confidence you reach over to the small metal handle that protrudes from the box's front and give it a tug.

Instantly the box flips open revealing a dark interior. Your just about to stick a hand in to try and pull out some hopefully useful items when suddenly something cannons out of the box and smacks you hard in the side of the head.

You reel away across the white painted ring, feeling a little dizzy. It is only when the same object jumps out again that you recognize it as a small metal boxing glove on the end of a long retractable spring.

Desperately you hurl yourself to one side, trying to avoid another spring loaded wollop, however as you here an ominous clunking from behind you realize that it's not just this box which is attempting to punch your lights out.

You spin frantically, whirling one arm down in what is quite a reasonable block, however a third hand catches you hard in the ribs and once more you stagger sideways, putting you into the range of yet more rapidly extending gloves.

This is a boxing ring indeed, and right now you seem to have awakened a many armed, spring loaded fight to the death. With increasingly more desperation you turn, trying to either bat away or dodge the many gloves that stretch out towards you, but it seems every turn you make just exposes another area of your body to a bruising smash.

Frantically you try to back towards one of the entrances, but this only decreases the range of some of the extending fists, and means that they hit harder.

After several blows to the head you find your vision going gradually fuzzy. One fist catches you neatly on the kneecap and there is an unpleasant snapping noise.

As you collapse under the hail of punishing blows, you realize that boxing ring though this is, there is certainly no referee, and have a nasty suspicion that this round won't end until you've been knocked out of life itself.

This sadly proves true, as a fury of increased pummelling from the extending boxing gloves leaves you in a boneless, battered heap.

You are now dead, and also definitely not the winner of this match.

Maybe one of the other boxes would be a more profitable choice, should you find yourself mysteriously reincarnated and back in exactly the same place once again.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 60

You begin to describe your chosen topic but the warrior hardly pauses. mid word, you find a slash suddenly inserted into the standard punctuation, a slash across the body with a very sharp and expertly applied sword.

As you crumple to the floor with various bodily parts and fluids moving into unexpected places around you, you find yourself thinking that communication would truly be the way to stop violence, either that or a submachine gun.

Sadly you have neither, though fortunately since the ninja is an expert your death is quick, clean and decorative (the origami rose made out of your pancreas is particularly impressive).

So, your mortal coil has been cut short, or at least twisted into an attractive and no longer living shape.

It's therefore time to start again. (Turn to section 1)

Section 61

You smile as you reach for the box handle, remembering the goblin biased copy of lord of the rings' and it's rather reversed rhyme. The instant you open the little door on the box there is a grinding of gears and twanging of springs, and something shoots past your head to hang quivering in the air.

You see a dull metal hand protruding from the box, wobbling gently on the end of a long iron spring. However it's what is held in the grasp of the metallic fingers that really interests you. A small, brown leather jewellery box, the sort you've often seen in the windows of Jewellers shops, usually ornamented with price tags baring a rather unreasonable number of zeroes.

You reach forward and gently take the little case from the hand, which instantly shoots back from whence it came, the numbered door slamming down like the lid on a metal jack in the box.

Eagerly you flip up the lid, expecting diamonds and rubies at the very least, however your disappointed to find nothing but a plane, unadorned silver ring lying on a bed of red plush. Pleasant and sparkly though it seems in the strong white light, your pretty sure that silver rings really aren't worth any reasonable sized fortune. Still, on the basis that some fortune is better than none you take the ring from the box. underneath, you find a small folded scrap of paper, but all you see written on it when you open it out are the words "the two ring" which are hardly illuminating.

Idly you slip the ring over the end of your thumb, then start back in surprise.

Your hand has completely vanished! Looking down, you see no sign of your feet or indeed any other part of your anatomy, just the strong light of the electric bulb showering across the white painted oval, punctuated with the hard black shadows of the boxes on poles.

hardly daring to breathe you slip off the ring, and there you are again, large and solid as life. Deciding a further test is needed you stick the ring on your finger, and the instant the circle of metal hits your knuckle, ping! you have vanished.

You raise one hand and completely cover your eyes, but though you can feel your hand, it's as if nothing is there. obviously you are completely and totally invisible!

You briefly find yourself wondering why your clothes and the contents of your stomach also vanish with you, but then again it'd be a pretty disgusting and very inconvenient thing if they didn't. You slip off the ring and tuck it reverently into your pocket, thinking of all the great places you could go if you were invisible, ---- top security bank vaults, secret political meetings, withing bottom kicking distance of reality tv contestants!

Now here was a real! magic item. It might not be precious, but certainly it would be hugely useful.

With a confident grin you turn towards the eastern passage and start striding resolutely forward. Half way there, one foot slips on the polished metal and you find yourself doing a very embarrassing splits across the floor. As you recover you reflect that obviously heroic striding requires much more sensible footwear, and continue on normally.

Onwards with confidence! (Turn to section 62)

Section 62

As you leave the boxing ring, the white lights turn off behind you with a loud and derisive click, and once again you find yourself in orange lit metallic gloom. You continue onward for a few steps, wondering exactly where this long passage leads, still hopeful that the increased industrialization might mean your at last coming to the end of the dungeon. Given past experience though, it might just mean your close to catching the train to hell or something similarly nasty and ironic, but then again, with the state of the average British train if one did go to hell arriving would probably be a relief.

You are not left to contemplate the inequities of transport for long though, as soon enough you find the passage once again completely blocked.

This door is massive, a huge slab of brazen metal that would not look out of place on a nuclear bunker. Like the grating it covers the entire passage from floor to ceiling, in fact the only thing that tells you it's a door and not a complete dead end is the small slot and pushable metal handle set at roughly waste height.

Engraved across the doors' broad face in flat, industrial letters are the words,

"The Gate of Grammary"

You begin to wonder what grammary, which your pretty certain is more connected with magic than what looks like a secret government installation could have to do with such a door, when suddenly your interrupted by the shrilling of a klaxon.

Bright green bulbs begin flashing from around the door as the klaxon settles into a steady spine bending rhythm.

Your not given time to wonder exactly why down here green seems to be the colour of danger rather than red, as the deep, ominous tones of a massive voice start to boom out across the corridor and into your skull.

If ever Dath Vader were to start playing with voice changing software to see how deep his voice could go, then said recording was played through a 60 foot organ pipe it might sound a little like the voice that is currently making your teeth rattle in your jaw.

"Unauthorized intruder. Enter spell or prepare for termination. Twenty seconds to terminal action!"

As the green lights flash eerily on the metal walls You look around frantically for some way out of this. Not only does terminal action sound distinctly unpleasant but you have a nasty feeling that after counting down 20 seconds in that voice you'll need someone to stick your bones back together.

"Nineteen seconds to terminal action!"

Your glance falls on the slot next to the door handle. Obviously that's what is needed to somehow enter a spell (though how a spell goes into an electric card reader is something that's a little beyond you).

"Eighteen seconds to terminal action!"

You'd better do something quick, that one felt as if your eyeballs were liquefying!

If you have the adjective of noun go here. (Turn to section 63)

If you don't go here. (Turn to section 64)

Section 63

"Seventeen seconds to terminal action!"

After some frantic scrabbling in your pocket, you pull out the small card that Gougehook gave you. Now it is obvious why a weird linguistic phrase like "the adjective of noun" is written on a small plastic card.

"Sixteen seconds to terminal action!"

Quickly you slip the card into the slot and push down, hoping that the goblins did indeed steel the right card to get through the door.

"Fifteen sec ---"

Abruptly, the green lights stop flashing, and the deep unpleasant voice halts mid word. A moment later you here a clunk from inside the door, and the voice speaks again, this time at normal volume (though still at a depth that makes Barry White sound like the chip monks).

"Spell accepted, gramma confirmed. Please continue"

With a hiss of hydraulics the door swings open and you blink at the sudden spill of bright, normal electric light that sweeps across the floor towards you like an extremely friendly tide.

What sounds far less friendly however is the cracked, old voice that lances out of the light and does nasty things to your ears.

"Come in dearie, I've got some lovely ways to kill you"

You take a deep breath and wish you had something gurd worthy for your loins and a decent weapon, in fact even a bad weapon would improve on your current position. Clearly, behind that huge metal door is the twisted old hag who's magical doughnut brought you to this bizarre and deadly dungeon.

You glance back, but you have little choice but to enter.

The first impression you get is one of frilly tassels, the next is the rather more expected impression of an evil, sadistic magician who rules a dark and diabolic domain.

Behind the door, stretches a wide electrically lit room full of tasteful furniture, pretty and slightly old fashioned charm, and implements of death and magic!

The floor is covered by a thick floral patterned carpet in a pale but unpleasant shade of pink, but the stains that mark various areas are very obviously blood. along one wall sits a set of ornate wooden shelves, and on top of some rather frilly doilies and tasselled fringes are plainly a wide array of potion ingredients, dried herbs, various sorts of bones, and a number of gruesome looking liquids, disconcertingly bubbling away in old brown derby tea pots or willow patterned bowls.

Across another wall are hanging a collection of objects that at first you can't identify, but then you realize they are an entire goblin folk group's worth of medieval torture devices all decked out with fringed lacy tassels, or hung with quilted cloths. You see a pair of iron boots thickly studded with brutal looking wheels, each painted with a sappy bunny rabbit with pink ears. a pair of thumbscrews sit in pink silk lined plush boxes, while a set of various sized knives are neatly arranged on a frilly white cloth embroidered with leaves and roses.

Hung at the end of the row is a puzzling item which after a moment you realize is a hefty iron ball and chain, with what is apparently a patchwork tea-cosy draped over the spiky ball.

Delicate curtains and tapestries cover the walls, and over in one corner stands a blackened iron cauldron big enough to bathe in, ---- with a pair of flowered oven mitts set neatly on it's rim.

The room is lit by a set of very ordinary electric lamps which link on small wooden tables in a couple of corners, sitting beside rose patterned dishes containing what look suspiciously like severed human fingers, and a number of unpleasantly spiky and tentacular plants bound around with bright strips of ribbon.

All this monstrous fluffy death however you take in at a single glance, for the instant your feet touch the abominably pink carpet, your attention is riveted to the old lady sitting on a throne of what looks suspiciously like solid gold (among a large heap of lace fringed cushions).

Sure enough, this is the old woman who gave you the diabolic doughnut, though now there is absolutely no mistaking her true profession as a distinctly unpleasant witch of the king murdering, child baking, princess heart eating variety. from her black pointed hat to her black pointed carpet slippers, (not to mention her black pointed finger nails), she's every inch the worst crone you could possibly imagine.

"Hay you!"

You begin indignantly. The witch lays aside her knitting (which seems to be a long blood red scarf ornamented with human skulls), and with a creaking of joints and a swirl of black dress stands up to face you.

"Now deary, why so upset? didn't you enjoy my dungeon?"

"No you old, ---- mmmm"

Remarks fail you for a second.

"---- witch!"

"Oh that's a shame deary. You have done so well, usually people ends up dead far earlier than this, ---- such a lovely thing to watch while I do my knitting!"

You feel the righteous wrath burning like a tide.

"Watch! you mean all this has just been for amusement? The monsters, the traps, everything!"

"Oh yes deary. At my time of life there's nothing as nice as seeing young people die in horrific ways"

The old hag gives you a highly unpleasant, speculating look.

"Now, how is Sugarina going to deal with you, ---- oh it does make a change to have a live victim.

Nobody visits me any more you know"

Just as your trying to entangle the bad intentions from the inane prattle, sugarina starts a rapid hobble towards the wall of torture implements, running a proud eye over the array of spikes, hooks, blades and elaborate needlework.

"Oh, there's some of these I haven't used for such a long time ---- those dear little nostril tweasers for instance ---- "

You definitely think this is time for some affirmative action. While you are firmly against striking little old ladies, having your nostrils teased by a powerful witch is clearly quite another matter.

Summoning all your strength, and a good tide of fury based on all those long stone corridors and near death escapes, you take a couple of rapid steps forward and let fly with your best right cross at the back of Sugarina's grey bun.

Smoothly, the old woman turns aside from your blow as though she has eyes in the back of her head (which actually would not be impossible), slipping away from the punch so that you quickly have to recover your balance.

"So, strike a defenseless old woman would you, ---- young people today"

She breaks off for a round of grandmotherly tutting.

"I'll have to do something about that"

Sugarina raises one palm upwards, and an indistinct mass of misty, amorphous green light gathers above her hand and poles straight towards your head.

Quickly you bend your knees and duck to the carpeted floor, but the enchantress only points a finger downwards and the mass of greenish smoky stuff starts descending towards you. You roll aside, but with another prod of her bony finger the witch redirects the spell once again.

You need to do something fast, since the magic is closing and you really don't want to find out what Sugarina will decide to do to you.

If you have the two ring go here. (Turn to section 65)

If you don't go here. (Turn to section 66)

Section 64

Frantically you search through your possessions, but nothing you have even vaguely resembles a card that would fit into such a slot.

"Sixteen seconds to terminal action!"

You take a look at the door, but see absolutely no way to open it.

"Fifteen seconds to terminal action!"

the handle is as firmly stuck as a football fan in the pub on a Saturday afternoon, and you can't even get a finger into the slot.

"Fourteen seconds to terminal action!"

Sticking your fingers in your ears, you turn and begin legging it blindly back in the direction of the boxing ring.

"Thirteen seconds to terminal action!"

Undoubtedly your feet are making quite a noise on the metallic floors, but between the horrific wailing of the Klaxon and the booming basso diabolico of the voice you can barely feel the vibrations of your

footsteps, let alone here them.

"10 seconds to terminal action!"

You put on a spurt, but it seems with every announcement the voice is getting louder and louder! It began at your average brain busting car-horn in the ear volume, but now it's past through explosion, volcano and rock concert levels and soon will be approaching the truly eardrum exploding proportions only normally experienced in the most brainless and drunken of nightclubs.

"Eight seconds to terminal action!"

Eyes streaming, legs wobbling you stagger onwards, fingers still in your ears.

"Five seconds to terminal action!"

You think you see the light of the boxing ring ahead, but when you charge at it you find yourself striking your head against the metal wall somewhere near one of the still glowing orange arc-lights, clearly you've become disorientated as well as near half deafened.

"Three seconds to terminal action!"

It's at this point that your knees actually give way and you find yourself lying in a crumpled heap on the metal floor as the waves of hideous sound roll and crash over you.

"Two seconds to terminal action!"

You close your eyes wearily, thinking that dying would probably be a relief.

"One second to terminal action! ----- zero!"

Abruptly, the sound stops. you wait breathlessly for a few heartbeats, wondering if your about to be fried, stabbed, crushed or otherwise disposed of, but nothing continues to happen.

Cautiously, you unstick your thumbs from your ears (something that requires a surprising amount of effort), and rub your eyes. looking around you see nothing but the orange lights of the corridor stretching away in both directions like sign posts on the way to a very unpleasant destination (probably a railway station).

Nervously you stand up, feeling every joint and muscle throbbing after the sonic battering. Then suddenly you are knocked to the ground again by a barrage of solid, horrific sound so loud and deep that it hits you like a wall.

Just before your skull cracks like an egg under a bulldozer, you have time to here the words:

"You are my sun shine, my only sun shine, you make me happy when skies are grey!"

Well I don't know about taking sunshine away, but sadly this rendition of the old song, 8 octaves below middle C sung at a volume of septuple forte has taken your life away.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 65

As the old harridan prods her finger towards you, directing the mass of unpleasantly crackling magic your way, you suddenly remember the silver ring. Your not sure if invisibility works on witches (Tolkien was a little scanty on witch based information), but definitely it's worth a try.

You plunge one hand into your pocket, scrabble through a few paper tissues and finally close your fingers around the cold circle of the ring.

As you slip it on the hag gives a screech of horror, spitting out some words which most respectable old ladies would certainly never use.

"You little ratbag! steal my magic items will you! ---- deaths too good for you"

She claps both bony blue-veined hands together and the hovering mass of green vanishes. Breathing a sigh of relief you start looking around for a convenient weapon. sadly the only items that look to have some witch slaying potential seem to be the implements of torture, and those are all hung on the wall

behind where Sugarina is standing.

"I'll show you! You can invite my next guest!"

You aren't left wondering what Sugarina means for very long as she quickly extends both hands towards you, fingers stretching forward like claws. From the pointed ends of her very unpleasant nails bursts a stream of liquid silver light like the sparkling tale of one of the more expensive types of firework.

The silver blast flies across the room fast as a bullet to strike an ornament on a table behind your last position. The ornament (a jolly looking garden gnome doing something painful to another gnome with a pitchfork), vanishes in a burst of light like a camera flash, and in its place is a small, brown, crusted circle giving off wisps of steam.

It's only as you sidle quickly away from another blast that results in another circle that you recognize the objects as freshly baked, hot doughnuts, delicious, sweet smelling and ready to trick some other hungry pedestrian into this hell hole of a dungeon.

Quickly you start an invisible tango around the room, but from the worrying accuracy of the streams of silver that the witch continues to shoot, you have a nasty suspicion that the imprints of your feet on the carpet are still visible to the crone, either that or witches have especially good eyesight for seeing the unseen. For whatever reason, her saving throws are clearly extremely good, since whenever she throws spells your way, despite your magical camouflage you really have to work to save yourself from being hit.

You grab up a hefty teapot from the shelf of potion materials and hurl it at the witch, but a blast of silver meets it in mid-air like a striking snake, and yet another round, sticky doughnut plops onto the carpet.

It's clear that Sugarina is becoming increasingly frustrated as rays of silver light burst wildly from her hands like bullets from the machine gun in an episode of the A team, and more and more of the rooms eclectic contents are transformed into doughnuts.

Obviously you'll need some sort of weapon to dispose of the witch, but what?

Anything you pick up is only going to make you more visible, ---- unless the witch turns it into a doughnut herself, and it's only a matter of time before one of those silver beams gets lucky and you end your life as a sugared, deep fried snack item.

If you don't go here. (Turn to section 67)

If you have a red herring go here. (Turn to section 68)

Section 66

You duck and weave, but whatever you attempt the hovering mass of magic rapidly closes the distance.

"Oh you can't outrun it deary, but don't worry, it'll only freeze you not kill you"

You turn to the massive metal door by which you entered, but unfortunately it seems to have slammed shut behind you, and you don't have time to find the opening mechanism from this side.

The magic hits with a warm gentle puff like aromatic steam from a bath overloaded with smellables.

It would actually be quite a pleasant feeling, except that every muscle in your body goes rigid and you find yourself falling helplessly to the floor, totally unable to move.

Though you technically do not die for a good while after that, a protracted description of the large number of decidedly unpleasant things which Sugarina thinks up to fill the rest of your not too long life does not seem necessary, ---- especially those moments when she forces you to look at pictures of her grand children.

Nevertheless, at last you are definitely dead, though you can take comfort in the fact that you did come extremely close to vanquishing the dungeon.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 67

With a frantic lunge you reach for the ball and chain at the end of the row of implements of pain, hoping that you'll get time to swing it around into clobbering range before Sugarina has time to transfix you with a burst of silver.

Unfortunately, the one thing you hadn't counted on is the extreme difficulty of getting a spiky ball, about five foot of well studded chain, and a patchwork tea cosy to move quickly. You grab the padded ball and heave upwards trying to unstick the weapon from the peg on which it hangs, however your motion is a little too enthusiastic, resulting in quite a large quantity of fairly hefty iron chain flying off it's peg and whirling around like a badly done yo-yo trick.

The flailing handle catches a long wooden hafted skewer like device next to it (who's purpose you really don't want to contemplate), and both implements topple towards you, striking you painfully and knocking you flat.

While the impacts themselves are only bruising, remaining undetected from a psychotic, magic throwing old sorceress is a rather difficult proposition when lying on the carpet under several feet of chain and a good length of steel.

You are still frantically trying to slip sideways (getting a nasty friction burn on the pink carpet), when you here the witches' cry of triumph from above, and a lance of silver light beams down at you.

Your entire body seems first to soften and run like wax, then to squeeze tight, twisting painfully inwards. It's actually a very similar sensation to that a fat person gets when they insist on wearing clothes a good three inches too small in an effort to prove they've lost weight.

In your case however, you are definitely losing weight, along with mass, and quite a bit of substance as well as complex chemical structures.

The hole process of softening and tightening goes on for what seems to be an eternity, but is probably less than a second. At last, you find yourself lying in total darkness unable to see or hear, only feel.

The sensation of large spikes sticking into your soft side quickly fades, and is replaced by one of a smooth, thin surface cradling your round, sugar crusted body.

You realize with horror you've been picked up and stuck into a paper bag, no doubt to wait for the next poor fool who tries to get a cheap snack on a British seaside and is destined to enter the horrific dungeon.

Not only will this be a terrible injustice, but you are not particularly happy about the fact that you'll be eaten in the process as well.

Your quest has come to a very sticky end indeed, though you might find it a comforting thought that you've actually fallen at the final hurdle, ----- or rather circle with hole in the middle.

If your immortal hole should ever find itself this way again, sopefully you can overcome the vile Sugarina next time.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 68

As you desperately circle the room, blasts of doughnut transmogrifying silver energy whistling unpleasantly close, you brush up against the side of one of the potion shelves. From somewhere in your pocket regions comes an unexpected squish. Reaching down, your hand comes into contact with

something wet and slimy stuffed down inside your pocket. Doing a quick shuffle across the corner of the room to avoid another erratic spell that converts a tentacular plant into yet another lump of fried dough, you suddenly remember the impressive pedestal in the western alcove.

Your fingers explore the distinctly nasty feeling mess experimentally. The flesh is firm and a little slimy, but underneath you can clearly feel some pretty strong fish bones. Furthermore, you find yourself wincing as your thumb comes into contact with a particularly sharp section of fin.

At last! a weapon concealed under your clothes and within the invisible barrier of the ring. You have no idea whether witches have some weakness to fish (though you do recall water in general causing them problems), but right now anything is worth a try.

Lacking any sort of dice to test your agility, you duck, bob and weave, trying to get close to Sugarina. Grabbing up a cut glass bowl of shredded toadstools you hurl it vigorously towards the whirling, screeching black clad figure. As Sugarina blasts the bowl with a burst of silver and a derisive squawk, you dash quickly in to one side.

Using the momentum of your run to give you extra force, you pull the fish from your pocket and sweep it forward in one motion, like a samurai suddenly engaged in slapstick comedy.

The speed of your rush, and the fact that the fish doesn't become visible until it actually leaves your grasp means that you catch Sugarina completely off balance. The half pound of slimy dead piscine slaps brutally onto her liver spotted cheek with a very satisfying squish!

Involuntarily, the witch jerks back in disgust, letting fly with another highly colourful expression, her thin black clad arms sweeping up reflexively to cup her cheek. Being as her hands were full of ballistic enchantment at the time, this reflexive reaction really was not the best in the circumstances, as from her fingers a ray of blinding silver energy strikes her full in her ugly, hate filled face.

In the best tradition of vanquished villains your not disappointed that the first sound Sugarina lets forth is a very loud wailing "noooooooooooooo!"

There is a sudden bright flash of white light, far brighter than when the witch turned other objects into doughnuts. You watch in fascinated horror as the witches' hideous form begins to writhe and ripple like an action figure in a microwave. Her body twists, black rags of cloth flapping and billowing as her limbs distort and bubble. With a horrible hiss, clouds of dense black smoke fly from the twitching bundle which is rapidly shrinking and distorting into inhuman shapes beneath the layer of black shrouds.

For a second you see what appears to be a round, circular object suspended in mid-air within the cloud of wavering cloth and billowing fumes, then suddenly there is another bright flash, this one the sparking orange of fire and all the black rags that once were the witches dress burst into sooty, spitting flames.

A few seconds later all that is left of the villainous old hag is a sticky black stain on the carpet and a horrible smell of burnt sugar.

Cautiously, you tip-toe over to inspect the carpet where Sugarina was standing, but there really is nothing but a few last wisps of smoke and that unpleasant stain which even the strongest carpet cleaner would have a tough time shifting.

Nervously, you tug off the magic ring, it's quite hard to get off since your hands are rather sweaty by this point, and walk tentatively around the witch's empty den.

The room is a shambles, most of it's unpleasant contents have been transformed into doughnuts, and the nasty smell of overdone baking and frazzled cloth hovers thickly in the air.

Walking over to the shelves where one or two bowls and teapots still hold potion ingredients despite the spate of erratic spell hurling, you pick up one of the doughnuts that once was a plastic bowl.

It sits in your hand, the still warm coating of sugar on the outside making your fingers sticky, the familiar smell of frying assailing your nostrils and reminding you of good times at the seaside, fish and chips, paddling in the sea, carrying an umbrella around the beach as the rain beats down.

You have no doubt what to do next. Slowly, you raise the doughnut to your mouth, close your eyes, hold your breath and take an enormous bite!

A second later, you feel the gentle pit pat of drizzle on your face and you can here the familiar sound of slow moving traffic. Opening your eyes, you find yourself standing on a long grey road, the beach a little ways away, cars idling past and a large square bright red van parked neatly at the corner.

You turn your back on the bvan and start walking. Carefully you pull a paper tissue from your pocket and wrap the rest of the cooling doughnut in it, after all you would like to see Gougehook and the other goblins again, maybe tour the goblin city. But for now, you are home. Back to mobile phones and the internet, celebrity TV and pizza hut.

Yet now, you know more than that. You put a hand into your pocket and idly caress the two ring, your little souvenir of magic. you'll find a use for that soon.

After all, now you've seen the world that lies behind the commonplace, the world of goblins and monsters, magic spells and secret knowledge. You know there is more to life than the next paycheck, the next blockbuster movie, the next years' fashion.

You are wiser and stronger now, you've faced monsters, seen through riddles and puzzles, and defeated a powerful enchantress. Truly you are a ----

"Toffee apples! perfectly safe, absolutely none magical toffee apples"

You stop, looking towards the small stand by the side of the road where a withered, twisted old stump of a man is proffering something round and sweet smelling on a stick.

Wow! you didn't even know they made toffee apples any more, lovely!

Truly, you are a sucker!

The End.

Congratulations, you have survived the Horrible dungeons of dreadful doom. Any comments, questions, diatribes or death threats, please contact me on dark@xgam.org, and for more information about Darkgrue, go to <http://www.kaldobsky.com/audiogames/>

I hope you have enjoyed the book and it's rather insane brand of humour. hopefully I'll be able to come up with more gamebooks in the future.

Goodbye for now.

Dark.

Section 69.

After a little thinking your mind is made up. Your not sure whether this is the right answer, but it seems like your best guess.

As Gougehook watches tensely, you step up to the door and turn the tumblers to reflect your answer.

From inside the door you here a serious amount of clunking and whirring noises and you begin to feel rather more hopeful since obviously the lock mechanism is doing something important.

You lean forward, waiting for the door to spring open, however after a rusty clicking sound a loud, brassy bong! rings out across the cavern.

You begin to step backwards but already it is too late, from the dark leaded windows at the top of the door a pair of long metallic poles suddenly spring downwards towards you, a loop of fine chain held between them aiming at your neck.

You throw up both hands but with more intelligence than a clockwork mechanism really should have

credit for, the flexible metal rods slip past your grip and drop the noose of chain deftly over your head.

A second later you find yourself hoisted into the air, thrashing wildly and gasping for breath with the chain wrapped tightly around your neck. Dimly you become aware of Gougehook attempting to climb a stalactite and knock the chain loose but the metal is plainly too strong.

As your brain starts to feel the effects of oxygen starvation, you do reflect that hanging is at least the correct punishment for those who get their spellings wrong, however appropriate as it may be, you still aren't precisely happy that your about to die, --- though dead you clearly will be in a few seconds. a second loud bong! rings out around the small cavern as you finally slip into unconsciousness.

Dead you now most definitely are, the bell said so.

Maybe a different answer will prove more profitable should you be reincarnated and find yourself in exactly the same place given exactly the same choice.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 70.

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You throw up both hands but with more intelligence than a clockwork mechanism really should have credit for, the flexible metal rods slip past your grip and drop the noose of chain deftly over your head.

A second later you find yourself hoisted into the air, thrashing wildly and gasping for breath with the chain wrapped tightly around your kneck. Dimly you become aware of Gougehook attempting to climb a stalactite and knock the chain loose but the metal is plainly too strong.

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Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 72.

You begin to describe your chosen topic but the warrior hardly pauses. mid word, you find a slash suddenly inserted into the standard punctuation, a slash across the body with a very sharp and expertly applied sword.

As you crumple to the floor with various bodily parts and fluids moving into unexpected places around you, you find yourself thinking that communication would truly be the way to stop violence, either that or a submachine gun.

Sadly you have neither, though fortunately since the ninja is an expert your death is quick, clean and decorative (the origami rose made out of your pancreas is particularly impressive).

So, your mortal coil has been cut short, or at least twisted into an attractive and no longer living shape. It's therefore time to

Start again. (Turn to section 1)

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decorative (the origami rose made out of your pancreas is particularly impressive).

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Start again. (Turn to section 1)

Section 74.

You look at the numbers on the box. Surely those are significant numerals. Feeling a degree of confidence you reach over to the small metal handle that protrudes from the box's front and give it a tug.

Instantly the box flips open revealing a dark interior. Your just about to stick a hand in to try and pull out some hopefully useful items when suddenly something cannons out of the box and smacks you hard in the side of the head.

You reel away across the white painted ring, feeling a little dizzy. It is only when the same object jumps out again that you recognize it as a small metal boxing glove on the end of a long retractable spring.

Desperately you hurl yourself to one side, trying to avoid another spring loaded wollop, however as you here an ominous clunking from behind you realize that it's not just this box which is attempting to punch your lights out.

You spin frantically, whirling one arm down in what is quite a reasonable block, however a third hand catches you hard in the ribs and once more you stagger sideways, putting you into the range of yet more rapidly extending gloves.

This is a boxing ring indeed, and right now you seem to have awakened a many armed, spring loaded fight to the death. With increasingly more desperation you turn, trying to either bat away or dodge the many gloves that stretch out towards you, but it seems every turn you make just exposes another area of your body to a bruising smash.

Frantically you try to back towards one of the entrances, but this only decreases the range of some of the extending fists, and means that they hit harder.

After several blows to the head you find your vision going gradually fuzzy. One fist catches you neatly on the kneecap and there is an unpleasant snapping noise.

As you collapse under the hail of punishing blows, you realize that boxing ring though this is, there is certainly no referee, and have a nasty suspicion that this round won't end until you've been knocked out of life itself.

This sadly proves true, as a fury of increased pummelling from the extending boxing gloves leaves you in a boneless, battered heap.

You are now dead, and also definitely not the winner of this match.

Maybe one of the other boxes would be a more profitable choice, should you find yourself mysteriously reincarnated and back in exactly the same place once again.

Back to start (Turn to section 1)

Section 75.

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Instantly the box flips open revealing a dark interior. Your just about to stick a hand in to try and pull out some hopefully useful items when suddenly something cannons out of the box and smacks you hard

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You reel away across the white painted ring, feeling a little dizzy. It is only when the same object jumps out again that you recognize it as a small metal boxing glove on the end of a long retractable spring.

Desperately you hurl yourself to one side, trying to avoid another spring loaded wallop, however as you hear an ominous clunking from behind you realize that it's not just this box which is attempting to punch your lights out.

You spin frantically, whirling one arm down in what is quite a reasonable block, however a third hand catches you hard in the ribs and once more you stagger sideways, putting you into the range of yet more rapidly extending gloves.

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