


THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 50

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MESSAGE FROM ME

Welcome to issue 50 of *The Eye Shield*. In this bumper fiftieth issue, there are more *Knightmare* delights than you could shake a stick at. Just for a start, the fact that *The Eye Shield* has reached its fiftieth issue fills me with joy and pride. I remember that in one of the very early issues, Paul McIntosh joked that if *Adventure Time* dungeoneer David didn't hurry up with his quest, he'd still be in level one when issue 100 rolled around! Well, Paul, we're finally halfway there, and David is but a distant memory.

This issue boasts a plethora of interesting articles in addition to all your regular favourites, including two of my own. In *The Best of the Rest 2008*, I carry out my three-yearly checkup of some of my other favourite TV shows, while *Knightmare Series Hate* explores the shortcomings of my least favourite *Knightmare* series. Yes, I'm about to bear my soul again, so be warned!

In what has become something of a regular feature of late, *Kids' TV Shows I Grew Up With* is in the hands of Ricky Temple this issue, as he introduces you to four of his favourite childhood shows. I really do love these nostalgia articles, so thanks again for writing this one, Ricky.

Nostalgia can be a funny thing, you know. The 1980s really wasn't a very good time for this country all in all, what with the recession and the privatisation of everything under the sun and Mrs Thatcher closing down all the coal mines, but I always think of the late '80s with such fondness, as I'm sure many of the rest of you do as well. It just goes to show what a blessing childhood innocence is, and that it should be treasured for as long as possible.

Anyway, where was I? In addition to this slice of nostalgia, Ricky also presents the fourth chapter of *The Fastest Draw in the Dungeon*, in which things are really hotting up for Rio and his fellow Rangers inside Marblehead. Also on the story front, Ian Down presents the second chapter of *The Strangeness of the Walls*, in which dungeoneer Kevin continues to progress through the first level, with the help of (or perhaps in spite of) his trusty advisors. Thanks again for these, guys - great stuff!

This *Message From Me* is turning into something of a bumper issue in

itself, but I cannot end it without mentioning the new *Eye Shield* section of the Nightmare Discussion Forum. It's really exciting to have this dedicated section of the forum for specific TES-related discussion, so if you have something to say about TES that you'd prefer to post there instead of e-mailing to me, then the Issue 50 thread is ready and waiting for you. You can also use the *Eye Shield* section to keep up with the latest Nightmare QI developments, should you feel the urge to do so.

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend my particular thanks to Fidjit (the forum member, not the Nightmare character) for all his feedback about The Eye Shield issues 48 and 49. I'm really pleased that you like *Adventure Time* so much, Fidjit, and I hope you like Dan's quest as much as you did Josh's. Be sure to let me know what you think, won't you?

Finally, the more eagle-eyed among you may have noticed that I have recently uploaded several of Paul McIntosh's old TES articles onto the excellent Nightmare Lexicon, with the kind permission of the original TES top man himself, of course. Reading these hidden gems on a computer screen, it is perhaps difficult to imagine how much those quarterly Eye Shield editions meant to us original readers, feeling as though some part of our souls had been removed as Nightmare was absent from CITV's Autumn schedule for the first time in eight years, but let me assure you, they meant a great deal.

Paul wrote all those articles whilst juggling his A-level and then university studies, on a friend's computer and without having seen many of the early episodes for at least six years. This great achievement should not be underestimated, and so now I offer Lexicon users the chance to read Paul's early work, and revel in its glory.

It is always a great pleasure for me to receive an e-mail from Ross Thompson, The Eye Shield's most enthusiastic reader. Here's what he had to say about issue 49.

The pictures of Bodiam Castle were interesting – it must take a lot of effort to go to a location just to get a couple of photos, but it must be pretty exciting as well! I enjoyed your Poetry Corner as always and thought that it was well written. I agree with your Nightmare Stalemates page – it was so annoying that Giles was a couple of rooms away from winning, which the team definitely deserved.

I never realised that so many people felt quite so indignant on Giles's behalf. Anyway, this really is the kind of thing that makes all the time and effort worthwhile, Ross – again, my sincere and undying thanks to you. I'd recommend a day out at any of the

Knightmare Locations for any hardened Nightmare fan, as it is a fascinating and often surreal experience. Yes, it does take a lot of effort and sometimes there are only one or two photos to be had, but I've had several great days out in pursuit of those pictures. One of the highlights was getting lost in the maze at Leeds Castle in Kent, but fortunately I remembered a tip I learned from How 2 several years previously, and managed to find my way out! Poetry Corner was something I came up with whilst walking round a supermarket early in 1996, thinking about Helen's quest from series 4, which I had recently watched. I've written a little rhyming ditty for every issue of TES since issue 6, so I'm glad you're still enjoying them, Ross.

After reading my carefully considered opinions about modern children's television in issue 48, Chris Stallard was moved to write the following piece.

I agree that the standard of children's television has fallen rapidly over the past few years. It seems to me that the main problem is the vast growth of satellite and cable channels since the early 1990s. Whereas previously time and effort could be put into creating a well thought out, detailed show with character depth and believable plotlines, the current demand for huge amounts of programming means that more shows have to be turned out in less time, which is a definite recipe for disaster!

In the past, full series where each episode had its place and ran in a strict order (e.g. The Mysterious Cities of Gold, Dogtanian and Prince Valiant) were effective as the viewer was captivated and wanted to know what would happen the next week. However, with the huge programme demand nowadays, interchangeable episodes are required to fill the huge gaps in the schedules. (It wouldn't look good if you saw *To be continued...* at the end of an episode, only for the next episode not to follow this up.) As such, modern kids' shows largely tend to feature light, slapstick humour, which gives the impression that the producers think children are not particularly intelligent and that they do not have the ability to think for themselves.

This problem is not just limited to children's television, of course – look at the reality TV dross that seems to pollute more and more of our airwaves each year! This is surely why TV viewing figures are in long-term decline – not because of the range of choices available to viewers, but because the quality of those choices is so poor.

Amen to that, Chris! You've really captured the essence of a lot of what I was trying to say in issue 48 there, which is why I've included your e-mail pretty much in its entirety. If I ever manage to finish working on that time machine, you'll be the first to know.

Liam Callaghan considers some killer Nightmare puzzles.

The death of Simon in series 7 has to be one of the most jaw-dropping deaths ever! Between the two of them, the Trial by Spikes and Play Your Cards Right were responsible for four out of the five deaths in this one series – that's as many as the Corridor of Blades had over all five of its seasons! The Corridor of Blades is not as big a quest killer as some people remember it, but its reputation precedes it somewhat, and it's probably the most feared puzzle in the Dungeon.

Those pesky cards, eh? I for one will freely admit that I had no idea what on Earth

Simon and his friends were supposed to do when I first saw that puzzle, although it seems so obvious now. I think the Corridor of Blades is definitely the most aesthetically terrifying challenge, and the fact that it did manage to bump off four dungeoneers, including the first one ever to travel along it, adds to its bloodthirsty reputation. However, as Liam says, there are other puzzles that have proved far more ruthless in the time available to them, including Play Your Cards Right, the Trial by Spikes and the causeways. Another thing to remember about the Corridor of Blades is that, arguably, the other three teams that died there (apart from Alistair, its first victim, who was otherwise doing rather well) were all in losing status at the time, and so the Corridor of Blades was only used to hasten the inevitable – this is certainly what happened in the case of Duncan, and maybe Sarah and Daniel as well. Oh, wasn't it? Why not write in and tell me what you think?

Yes, it's that time again - QI results! Here are the answers to Liam Callaghan's mind-bending conundrums, followed by those all-important scores.

- 1. How many times did a quest come to a natural end (i.e. not including getting cut short for the end of the series) at the end of an episode of Nightmare?**

Correct answer: 4.

Cliché: 2.

Explanation: While it is true that only two mid-series episodes finished with a dungeoneer death (Tony in episode 206 and Sofia in episode 613), we must also take into account the death of Richard, at the very end of episode 108. Even though his demise was undoubtedly timed to fit in with the end of the series (as his victory would have been if he'd taken that horn), no dungeoneer followed in the same episode. Similarly, Barry's quest concludes at the end of episode 715, except he *does* win! Therefore, with the three deaths and one victory, none of which was followed by a new quest in the same episode, the answer is four.

- 2. In which series did all the dungeoneers perish?**

Correct answer: Series 1.

Cliché: Series 1 & 3.

Explanation: Series 3 is famous for having no winners, but it does have an undefeated team – that of Chris, the twelfth and final dungeoneer of the series. Series 1 is a different matter – no one won; all six dungeoneers died!

- 3. Who was the first dungeoneer to make a pact with Hordriss that involved retrieving an object for him in exchange for magic?**

Correct answer: Chris II (Team 12 of Series 3).

Cliché: Helen II (Team 1 of Series 4).

Explanation: Of course, Hordriss spent a lot of his time making bargains of this kind in series 4, but the one he made with Helen was not the first, for he had already made one at the very end of series 3, which involved Chris retrieving an hourglass for him in exchange for a SPEED spell.

- 4. Which is the last quest to feature part of the original life force clock?**

Correct answer: January (Team 4 of Series 6).

Cliché: Kelly II (Team 9 of Series 5).

1	Chris S	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	37
2	Joe G-J	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	36
3	HStorm	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	35
4	Gehn L	4	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	1	4	27
5	Jim W	2	3	4	3	1	1	4	1	1	3	23
6	Ross T	1	3	3	1	3	4	0	0	4	3	22
7	Pooka	1	3	10	2	1	3	4	2	3	2	11

I must say, I am very pleased by the level of response this round of QI has received. As you can see, the winner is Chris Stallard, but there were several other phenomenal scores that would undoubtedly have been winning ones under different circumstances. Congratulations, Chris, on becoming the new Nightmare QI champion, and congratulations also to Joe Grocott-James and Martin "HStorm" Odoni, who both managed to score over thirty points out of forty and were just pipped at the post. To everyone who entered, thank you most sincerely and be sure to have another go, won't you? You never know - fortune may be on your side this time!

Are you ready for another round? Well, ready or not, here it is! Below are some more of my own questions, so if you don't like any of them, you really can blame me this time! Most of the answers can be found quite easily with a little research, either by watching certain Nightmare episodes or even looking on the website, but of course, it's crucial that you research in the right place - all but one of these has a cliché, so watch out!

In the case of the first question, a little research may also be required, although you might need to seek a different source of information altogether, and I urge you not to use previous issues of The Eye Shield for this purpose. I make no apology for using the cliché answer to refer to the Automatum's weapon on several occasions, just as I make no apology for using terms such as folderol and stocks in slightly erroneous contexts, as I'm sure we all know what I'm driving at, but in this case, we're talking pedantics.

1. What is the proper name of the weapon carried by the Automatum?
2. Which character personally killed the most dungeoneers?
3. Which is the only team to have the advisors as well as the dungeoneer physically affected by the circumstances of their death?
4. Which dungeoneer is the first to find a scroll on a clue table?
5. Which team is the first to choose their own quest object, rather than have it told to them?

6. In the minecart's first series 3 appearance, which character was available for giving the starting push?
7. In series 4, which dungeoneer is the first to release Gundrada from the stocks?
8. What do these three characters have in common? HORDRISS, SMIRKENORFF, MELLISANDRE.
9. Which is the only winning team not to be pictured (or at least to have their dungeoneer pictured) in the end credits of the episode in which they won?
10. Who is the last dungeoneer to make use of a trapdoor?

Remember, there is a potential score of four points for each question, including one point for giving the correct answer, one point for identifying the cliché (or the lack of a cliché, in one case) and two points for any Quite Interesting supplementary information you may be able to think of. Be sure to watch out for those clichés - each one you hit will decrease your score by ten whole points, and we don't want that, do we? E-mail your answers to the address below, or send a PM to *Eyeshield* if you prefer, by Sunday April 20th 2008, and you could be our next Knightmare QI champion!

KNIGHTMARE SERIES HATE

An analysis of series 8 and what went wrong with it

Okay, let's get this established straightaway - I don't actually hate series 8 of Knightmare. Yes, it is by far my least favourite series, but I'd still rather watch any Knightmare than anything else on TV, because I think it is quite simply the greatest programme ever made - you may have noticed this already, of course, but I just thought I'd remind you. Having said that, I do think that series 8 is by far the weakest series, and I'll tell you why - too many new developments have been crammed into too short a series, which is why the end result is a jumbled mess that doesn't really fit in with the rest of Knightmare. Of course, this is just my opinion, and I'm sure there are plenty of you out there who absolutely love series 8, but I shall now attempt to explain exactly why I think it is lacking in so many areas, and perhaps you will be able to see where I'm coming from.

When series 8 went into production, the team knew that there was a very strong possibility that it would be the final series. As we know, this was

by no means definite at the time, but it was certainly on the cards. Consequently, the production team tried to cram about three series' worth of new developments into one shortened series, which had been cut down by one third of the number of episodes of the previous series to make room in the schedules for *Virtually Impossible*. In doing so, they not only overloaded the series with too many new ideas, but also forgot to include many of the aspects that had made *Knightmare* so brilliant in the past.

The massive change in presentation was too much. There was a whole new *Great Hall of Nightmare* to get used to (presumably because of the damage caused by *Bulstrode* - that's some floor repair!); the whole team now arrived together in one group instead of the dungeoneer calling their advisors in; the *Dungeon* was completely redesigned, with only the chambers of *Goth* remaining from series 7 and no chambers at all (with the notable exception of the *Corridor of Blades*) remaining from series 6 or earlier; the ticking life force clock was turned into a boring, static pie with a stupid cherry on the top; spells were now to be found inside a very unconvincing *CG* spellbook instead of being spelt out letter-by-letter on the screen; the rather nice status bar from the previous four series had disappeared; clue objects were now carried in the knapsack; and the *Reach* wand was slipped in for good measure! All these things, combined with some very unwelcome changes that had already been implemented for series 7, such as the inclusion of *Majida* and the replacement of the *Helmet of Justice*, meant that the show did not really feel like *Knightmare* anymore.

Perhaps if these changes had been allowed to take place over several series, they wouldn't have seemed so rushed and unnatural. Indeed, if it wasn't for one major factor that I'm about to mention, perhaps the presentation style would have been acceptable even in this series. However, here is my biggest gripe about series 8 - they ruined *Treguard*! Quite apart from the unfathomable decision to have him argue and "banter" with *Majida* the whole time, he lost all contact with the watchers at home, which had been a very special part of *Knightmare* up to that point. When watching an episode of *Knightmare*, *Treguard* would greet you, then you'd watch the show, then *Treguard* would say goodbye to you. In series 4-7, *Pickle* and *Majida* joined in with this process, which was fine. However, in series 8 all we got was *Treguard* reading a few badly rhyming lines about the team, and then a quick and pointless bit of conversation between him and *Majida* at the end. Where was that special

link between Treguard and the watchers, which had always allowed to us feel like a part of the show? Gone completely!

Reasonable guy that I am, I could even forgive this oversight, if not for one very important factor - Treguard does not take us aside for his traditional message at the very end of the series, which he does in all seven other series. He doesn't even have the last word, which is given to Lord Fear! This is unforgivable. As you may have noticed, I find the final episode of Nightmare particularly disappointing, and this is the final nail in the coffin. All it would have taken was a quick word from Treguard to end the series, and all other oversights in the style of presentation would be forgivable. As it is, I still have that lingering feeling of disappointment I felt after watching the end of series 8 for the first time, all those years ago, and I don't think I'll ever really shake it off. Here's a suggestion for what Treguard should have said after Lord Fear's famous "surrender" line:

"Well, he may not be ready to surrender, but are you ready to let him win? I'll be waiting for your answer. Let me know before long, won't you?"

Or words to that effect, anyway! I'm sure that the reason behind all these unforgivable mistakes in presentation was, again, the time factor - they only had ten episodes to play around with, and they couldn't afford to waste time incorporating all the old magic of the show that made Nightmare so special. It's a big shame, it really is.

Quite apart from the ill-advised changes in presentation, series 8 contains many glaring mistakes and inconsistencies during the actual game-play. Again, time is the culprit here. Once they'd got three teams done, they realised that they had already used up more than half the series, and so the final four quests really became a succession of rushed messes. While we're on the subject, as I've said many times before, they should never have killed Nathan in the first place, but there we go. Now, let me take you through some of these inconsistencies.

During Mike's quest, the level one clue scroll says Keep your eye on the clock. Sensibly, the team decide to take the hourglass from the clue table. Do they get to use it? No! All they have to do is pay Rothberry for a FLOAT spell with some gold and they're in level two! Also in level one, they hear Lissard revealing the rune lock combination through the spyglass, but the rune lock is not seen until almost the end of level two -

crazy! When Mike finally does reach the end of level two, he, too, is killed off rather prematurely with a large fireball, because the team have decided not to use the trapdoor in the absence of a further FLOAT spell. Mama Mia!

Rebecca's quest just about passes for okay, but then we have Dunstan. I've said it before and I'll say it again, they should never have been given the option to use the Short Cut, no matter how little time there was left. It wasn't really the team's fault - they wanted to give themselves the best chance to win, and so they used the cheat they were given. But it should never have been an option in the first place! They could have shortened level two somewhat, and no one would have noticed - if there was time to get Oliver and chums to level three by the end of the series, there would have been time to do that!

Looking in more detail at Dunstan's quest now, there is one glaring oversight that's always bothered me. Maldame tells Dunstan to call her with her calling name - Spite - in times of trouble, and she will help him. Does he get presented with an opportunity to do this? No! What's the point of Maldame's offer, then? If only she had made such an offer to Nathan, perhaps there would have been some winners earlier in the series and the Short Cut would never have been invented! Dunstan and his team completed all the challenges they were given, and so they deserved to win. However, I have never felt that their win is as deserving as the other seven, who all received the full challenge... well, kinda.

Again, it was the ticking clock that caused these oversights, including the introduction of the Short Cut. Something similar happened at the end of series 1, of course, when they were so desperate to get Richard into level three - what on Earth was the point of Merlin's SHIELD spell? The ticking clock was responsible for another negative factor of series 8 as well - the under-use of characters. I have mentioned Treguard already, but there are several others.

Hordriss was hardly in the series at all, and was used solely as a victim of Lord Fear's evil plans whom the dungeoneer had to rescue. Motley reappeared in the first episode, to my absolute joy, but he then completely disappeared until episode 8! Sylvester Hands, too, did not get the screen-time he deserved - he only actually interacted with a dungeoneer very briefly in episode 3. Poor old Smirkenorff was grounded,

and had to wait until episode 7 to put in an appearance. These four were long-standing characters, and did not deserve such unfair treatment.

Newer characters, too, suffered. Raptor and Rothberry had to make do with one appearance each, and the inclusion of Bhal-Shebah was a wasted opportunity for some great scenes. Honesty Bartram only met two dungeoneers in the end, and Lissard never looked to be further away from making that long-anticipated appearance in the quest itself when he would finally get to interact with a dungeoneer. We didn't see much of the goblins, either - they'd been faithfully chasing dungeoneers since the first episode of series 3, yet they were confined to a few very fleeting appearances in series 8.

So, to sum up, series 8 was made in a bit of a rush, and the style and quality was detrimentally affected in several ways by this phenomenon. At least, that's what I think. If series 8 is absolutely your most favourite thing in the world ever, why not write in and tell me about it? I'd be very interested to hear your views, as would the other TES readers, I'm sure.

REMEMBER THIS?

- Series 3. Level 1.

THE PURPLE POOL

- A familiar sight in the first level during series 3 was the room that contained a thin ledge running around a pool of purple water. Inevitably this chamber would involve some kind of challenge, either with finding a way out or avoiding something dangerous that came out of the pool. There were some nice little scenes in this room, about which I shall now reminisce.

Cliff was the first dungeoneer to encounter the pool, but there was no obvious way to leave the room. By using a spell called DRINK, this team caused all the water to be sucked into a small opening on the right-hand side of the pool. Cliff then had to lower himself onto the checkered floor of the now-empty pool, and crawl through the tiny exit. Most undignified, but a nice little scene.

James had a simpler task - he just had to walk around the ledge to a door at the far end, whilst being chased by a haunted sword that came out of the water. Ross had a more complicated ordeal to face - he had to use a fishing rod to pluck a portal out of the pool and flick it up onto the causeway. This was a nice little scene, although the somewhat unresponsive advisors couldn't seem to care less about it!

When Douglas entered this room, the water was all gone! Cliff's little door could be seen in the empty pool, but there was a larger door up on the causeway for Douglas to use. Motley was in the pool, attempting to take a bath (with all his clothes on, of course) and he was most perturbed to discover that the plug had been pulled out. A large cobra appeared in the pool behind the jester, and he would undoubtedly have helped the team if they had warned him about the danger he was in. However, they failed to do so, and Motley stormed off in a huff. This was just one contributing factor to Douglas's inevitable downfall.

The pool's final - and arguably best - appearance was with Martin, who actually entered the room by walking through the water. This was not a very safe place to be, because there was a shark in the pool! We were treated to some very Jaws-like music as the black dorsal fin moved around in the water, dangerously close to Martin. Of course, he was never in any real danger - this was just a chance to show off a bit of computer wizardry. The advisors took an unnecessarily long time to guide Martin out of the pool and onto the causeway - it's a good thing the shark wasn't hungry!

-
Difficulty: 3 Despite first appearances, a safe exit was never far away.

Killer Instinct: 1 Cliff and Ross could have been stuck here.

Gore Factor: 5 A drowning scene would have been nice...

Fairness: 9 Nothing too difficult here - even the shark was just for show.

ADVENTURE TIME

As the never-ending journey continues, the Dungeon leads 14-6. New dungeoneer Dan and his friends now intend to do something about this state of affairs.

Dan's quest begins in the level one clue room. He goes up to the table and describes the objects to his advisors: a talisman, a jar of newts' eyes and a green gem.

"Plenty here on offer as usual, team, but first comes the trial," says Treguard, as the far wall reforms itself into the face of Phelheim.

"You have disturbed my sleep, puny dungeoneer!" the wall monster grumbles. "Now you must face my challenge if you are to earn your quest. I have three riddles, and here is my first. I am found on shield and mail, ancient symbols tell a tale. From my signs and colours bright, you can tell which one's my knight. What am I?"

The advisors natter together for a while, and one of them manages to come up with the correct answer.

"Coat of Arms," Dan tells the wall monster.

"Truth accepted," Phelheim replies. "Here is my second. I am always with you, but don't always show. Move your position, I'll shrink or I'll grow. What am I?"

"Shadow," says Dan at once.

"Truth accepted," Phelheim is forced to reply. "Here is my third. You are nothing without me, for I control the land and sea. I make all the world so bright, except when day turns into night. What am I?"

The advisors discuss this briefly, but the answer is fairly obvious to them.

"The sun," says Dan at length.

"Truth accepted," Phelheim replies for a third time. "Three is the score; your wits have served you well and much now can I tell. Your quest is to find the Sword, yet you may not wield it. You must complete the witch's brew, or else remain here in level one forever. The first step is the crawl, but it is not the next step."

"Remember, Dan, a perfect score means you may command him and he must answer!" Treguard exclaims urgently.

"I command you!" Dan declares.

"I hear you," says Phelheim. "Jealousy and naivety will be your downfall. The walls await me."

As Phelheim disappears, the advisors make their decision. The newts' eyes are an obvious choice, and they also manage to pick up on Phelheim's clue to avoid the green gem, so Dan takes the talisman as well.

He is then directed out, into the chamber of the spectral scorpion. Past the swinging tail, a chest is sitting between the two doors.

"Avoid that sting, team, but make sure you don't leave this chamber in too much of a hurry," Treguard advises.

The advisors take Dan up close to the swinging tail, and tell him to run forward just after it has retracted. The deadly sting is successfully avoided, and Dan is taken to the chest. The advisors cannot see it very well, as the scorpion is in the way.

"Remember, team, Dan has eyes of his own, in this particular situation at least," says Treguard.

"Examine the chest, Dan," orders one of the advisors. "Is there a lock or anything?"

"There's no lock that I can see, but there's a kind of indentation on the lid," Dan reports. "I think it's in the shape of the talisman."

The advisors relay the obvious instruction upon hearing this information, and Dan slides the talisman into the lock. He is then able to lift the lid of the chest, inside which a scroll is waiting for him.

"It says CHARM," Dan tells his advisors. "It could be a spell."

The advisors note this down, and then direct their dungeoneer out of the scorpion's chamber.

He walks through a blue dwarf tunnel and emerges onto a rocky cliffside, where the hulking shape of Fatilla is blocking the narrow pathway.

"Ah, hold it right there, danger-person!" the guard smiles wickedly. "I've been waiting for you, I have. You see, I've got something to give to you."

"What's that?" Dan asks dubiously.

"A good blipping and blopping, that's what!" Fatilla slurps menacingly, as he begins to advance. "Now, just hold still, and you'll get what's coming to you!"

"Offer him the..." one of the advisors begins, but then realises that Dan is not holding anything with which to bribe the guard. The advisors are caught in indecision.

"Cast the spell!" Dan tells them urgently.

"Spellcasting:" obliges one of them. "C-H-A-R-M."

Fatilla stops dead in his tracks. He cocks his head to one side, and then smiles widely at Dan.

"On second thoughts, I don't think I will blip you today, or blop you either," Fatilla says generously. "You're such a charming young dungeoneer, it'd be a shame to snuff out your quest before you've even had a chance to really get started."

"Well, thank you very much," Dan replies.

"My pleasure, my fine young fellow," Fatilla smiles winningly. "You go on ahead, and good luck to you. If you should meet Dreadnort, remember that the password is *barbarian*. Goodbye, now."

Fatilla shambles off, leaving the path clear for Dan to cross. He walks through a portal, which takes him out into the fresh air of the English countryside.

He is standing in front of the roundhouse at Holngarth, but so, unfortunately, is a very large metal robot.

"You won't get much of a chance to enjoy these rustic surroundings with this creature on guard, team," Treguard predicts. "You cannot force your way past Dreadnort, but perhaps there's another way..."

"I seek a word!" Dreadnort booms. "If you give me the correct word, I will allow you to pass. If you give me the wrong word, or if you have no word to give me, your quest will meet its end, and so will your lifelong association with all four of your limbs! Give me a word, now!"

"Barbarian," Dan says levelly.

"That word is the... correct word," Dreadnort is forced to announce. "Pass, adventurer; your quest continues, for now..."

With that, the metallic monster clanks off, allowing Dan to exit via the front door of the roundhouse.

He emerges into the smoke-filled cave of Mildread, where the loathsome old witch is bent over her cauldron as usual.

"Well, here's the witch and her brew that Phelheim mentioned, team," Treguard remarks. "Let's just hope you've brought the correct ingredient."

"Hello there, young mugwump," Mildread cackles at Dan. "How nice to have another visitor. On your way to level two, are you?"

"Er, yes," Dan replies.

"Not if you haven't brought me the right stuff to help you get there, you're not," Mildread smiles sinisterly. "Well, what have you got?"

"I've got these newts' eyes," Dan tells her, holding out the glass jar before him.

"Newts' eyes, eh?" Mildread sniffs, as she takes the bottle and examines it disdainfully. "Well, they're not as effective as bats' wings, but they should work well enough. But don't blame me if you land in a pit of carnivorous maggots, okay?"

"Sure," Dan replies.

"Very well," Mildread slurps. "It's time for a little magic, then. Eye of newt, make a spell; conjure up a Dungeon well!"

Mildread throws the jar into the cauldron, whereupon the steaming pot transforms into a large wellway.

"Well, there you are, then," the witch says to Dan. "If you do make it down to level two in one piece, you'd best remember that the second step is the shuffle. Now, you'd better get a move on, or that well might change back just as you're climbing in!"

The advisors direct Dan up the steps and into the well. He falls down into the enveloping blackness, and into level two.

How will Dan stand up against the challenges of the second level? Read the next Adventure Time to find out.

KIDS' TV SHOWS I GREW UP WITH

By Ricky Temple

The Tomorrow People (1992-1995)

Also known as *The Tomorrow People: The New Generation*, this was a remake of the original series from the 1970s, about the next stage of human evolution, with children as the heroes - the titular Tomorrow People, who possessed the powers of telepathy, telekinesis and teleportation.

Watching the pilot story, which was broadcast between November and December 1992, I remember not being impressed and thinking that this would not be a series that would capture my young imagination. Looking back at it now with the aid of the DVD release, I attribute this to the fact that the show had to cram in so much explanation, as well as the introduction of the characters and powers of the Tomorrow People, that there was precious little time to set up a good first story.

Thankfully, with that out of the way, the second and third seasons could concentrate on the actual plotlines, with each season consisting of two stories of five episodes each. Also, the main cast was cut down from an overcrowded four Tomorrow People to just three.

Of the three seasons, season two was undoubtedly the best, with its two stories, *The Culex Experiment*, guest-starring Jean Marsh as the insane

Dr Culex, and Monsoon Man, in which the Tomorrow People battled a power-hungry breakfast cereal mogul (goofy-sounding, I know, but it worked, honestly) being the most tightly scripted and engaging of them all.

Unfortunately, season three saw both the writing and directing staff changed, and as a result the stories suffered, with a lot of important plot detail being skimmed over too quickly and far too many writers' conveniences being used to get the Tomorrow People out of life-threatening situations.

The result was that The Tomorrow People was, sadly, axed, which was a shame, as this was a show that showed real promise, particularly in season two, when it showed what it could produce when it had the right material and people.

This is a perfect example of a remake done right, which is a description that cannot be afforded to my next choice when it was revived in 2006...

Finders Keepers (1991-1995, 2006)

This children's gameshow was presented by Neil Buchanan (he of Art Attack fame) for four series (the last with co-host Diane Youdale) and was fronted by Jeff Brazier in the 2006 remake, which I'll come back to later. The premise of Finders Keepers was that two teams of two contestants competed against each other for a grand prize, which was normally something like a trip to Alton Towers.

The unique thing about this gameshow was that the children had to find a certain object that was hidden in one of the eight rooms of the in-studio house by ransacking that room. The better team would then go on to the Super Search, which was a sort of treasure hunt through all eight rooms. The rooms were: the storeroom, the kitchen, the lounge and the study downstairs, and mum and dad's bedroom, the bathroom, the kids' bedroom and the fantasy room upstairs. A trademark of the show was the big blue arrow that would appear on the screen to show the viewers at home where the object was actually hidden.

There was also a quiz element to the early series, where the kids used to have to play for the chance to search the rooms by playing a memory game. This element was dropped in the final series of the original run and

replaced by *The Garage*, where the kids had to wade around in a pool of "motor oil" (gunge) to find tools to match up on the wall.

In all honesty, by the end of its original run, I felt that *Finders Keepers* had run its course and had become repetitive. However, CITV felt differently and in 2006 the show was revived with a new host and a new look. Unfortunately it couldn't recapture the magic, and after numerous scheduling changes, it was quietly put out of its misery - a sad ending for a once good show.

Making a mess, or rather trying to prevent a mess being made, was also the theme of my next choice.

The Smoggies (1988-1990)

This animated show from Canada was a quietly educational programme along environmental lines and was, with hindsight, probably ahead of its time, given the current situation. It centred around the inhabitants of Coral Island, who were called the Suntots, and their attempts to protect their island and the surrounding sea from a pair of idiotic treasure hunters called Emma and Clarence, along with their lackey, Polluto. These were the Smoggies of the title.

The Smoggies were convinced that the Suntots were protecting a Magic Coral that could give everlasting youth. In actuality, the secret to the Suntots' health and vitality was the simple fact that before the Smoggies arrived, there was no waste and no pollution.

The Smoggies used to be a staple of my Sunday mornings, as I would watch it whilst having my breakfast; this was the last cartoon I could see all the way through before the family went to church. It was a lively, fun and engaging cartoon, and it was educational without being in-your-face about it, like other shows of this sort, such as *The Magic School Bus*, were.

Tugs (1989-1990)

This show was a model animation in the same vein as *Thomas the Tank Engine* (it was made by the same studio) but featuring anthropomorphic tugboats instead of railway engines.

It centred around two rival tugboat companies. The Starr Fleet (the heroes of the piece) was owned by Captain Starr, and headed up by

tugboats Ten Cents, Sunshine, Warrior and Top Hat. The Zed Stacks (the villains of the piece) was owned by Captain Zero, and included Zorran, Zebedee, Zug and Zak, who would attempt to get business in the Bigg City Port.

Sadly, due to the costs of producing both this show and Thomas the Tank Engine, Tugs only ran for one season of thirteen episodes before being dropped in favour of its more famous and longer-lived sister show. I have always preferred Tugs to Thomas as I feel it was the more original of the two, and had the more engaging characters and storylines.

PUZZLE PAGE ONE

Knightmare Blockbusters

Print off this grid and get a friend (or two, if you want to be strictly accurate) to play against you in this all-new edition of one of ITV's finest gameshows, Blockbusters! (If you can, get Bob Holness round to read out the questions as well.) Choose a team colour and make your way across the board, one square at a time - no diagonals allowed! Of course, in this game, each letter only has one question, so you only get one chance to win each square - are you up to the challenge?

	Start	Start	Start	Start	Start	Start	
Start	G	B	C	S	H	T	Home
Start	E	F	J	L	N	U	Home
Start	A	D	I	M	K	GG	Home
Start	HOJ	Q	Z	O	Y	V	Home
Start	P	VOB	R	W	COB	STC	Home
	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home	

- G. What G was Grimaldine's colour?
- B. What B was the name of two winning dungeoneers?
- C. What C was Sidriss's cat?
- S. What S had a poisonous tail?
- H. What H was Tiny's species?

- M. What M was Lord Fear's tower?
- K. What K were Treguard, Gumboil and Sir Hugh?
- GG. What GG sailed to Marblehead?
- HOJ. What HOJ did dungeoneers wear?
- Q. What Q was Greystagg's title?

- | | |
|--|--|
| T. What T was Smirky's mother? | Z. What Z knew about the Holy Grail? |
| E. What E was Merlin's life force restoration spell? | O. What O was the first character ever seen in the Dungeon itself? |
| F. What F was the forest of the Abbey of St Severine the Silent? | Y. What Y was the answer to a riddle asked by Gwendoline to Alex I? |
| J. What J was a merchant's Christian name? | V. What V was a spell that allowed a dungeoneer to see through his helmet? |
| L. What L came from Atlantis? | P. What P was a pixie with a nasty bite? |
| N. What N was a sea captain? | VOB. What VOB conquered Dunshelm? |
| U. What U was the answer to two of Granitas's riddles? | R. What R challenged Paul and Lucy at every turn on their journey? |
| A. What A ruled Winteria? | W. What W had to save a dragon's egg? |
| D. What D collected passwords? | COB. What COB claimed four victims? |
| I. What I was made of red bricks? | STC. What STC was Hordriss's daughter? |

CLASSIC QUEST

Series 2

Quest: The Shield.

Dungeoneer: Steven Worton.

Advisors: Mark, Paul and Chris.

Home town: Weston-Super-Mare.

Team score: 6 out of 10.

This was a bright, enthusiastic and fairly intelligent team, whose quest took place during the latter stages of series 2.

Level One: After pulling the lever at the Wheel of Fate, Steven has to avoid a giant spider (possibly Ariadne, looking rather smaller than usual) on a rocky ledge, before ending up in the Dungeon Kitchen with Folly. The jester demonstrates his culinary abilities (which don't seem to be up to much) before giving Steven a couple of useful hints, as well as telling him the object of his quest. In the clue room, Igneous is on guard. The team scores two out of three, but the choice of objects does not prove to be very difficult, as Steven is able to pick up an amulet of invisibility, which certainly promises to prove useful, as well as a gauntlet with which to hold the magic talisman when he does not want to be invisible. These objects are put to use in the Troll's chamber, where the hungry monster is completely confused and frustrated by Steven's disappearing act. The

advisors have to guide him carefully to the exit, checking his position every so often, which they manage with no problems. The magic of the amulet also impresses Mildread, whose chamber follows the Troll's, and she tells Steven to exit through the left-hand door, as the right-hand leads to a mined chamber. The advisors decide not to trust Mildread, and take Steven through the right-hand door. As it turns out, there *is* actually a bomb on the other side, but goodness knows what worse horrors were waiting behind the left-hand door! Steven exits the room in plenty of time, and enters the chamber of the Lion's Head and the Lasers. He has time to pick up a loaf of bread and a key from the floor, abandoning the talisman and the glove as he does so, before the lasers start to crack the floor. Another speedy exit takes Steven to the wellway room. The Automatum clanks into the picture and chases Steven on his way to the well, which has a golden keyhole blocking it. (This is the only time in Nightmare that a wellway is literally locked in this way.) The key clears the well, allowing Steven to climb inside, and descend to level two.

Level Two: Steven lands right on top of Cedric! The mad monk is not pleased by this, and demands that Steven challenge him. Steven answers all three of Cedric's riddles in lightning-quick time, with no help at all from his advisors. Cedric parts with a lot of useful information, namely the password and instructions to deal with Ariadne, as well as a spell called AVAUNT. Ariadne's lair follows, where Steven is soon trapped by the spider's webs. However, by whistling the French National Anthem, Steven is able to get rid of Ariadne and clear the webs from the doors! The clue room follows, where a cavernwraith is on guard. With a spectacular green flash, the AVAUNT spell gets rid of the malignant foe. Steven is then free to pick up a bar of gold from the table, as well as Casper the talking key. Steven next arrives in the Bridged Vale, where Gumboil is on guard. He is blind-drunk, but still manages to ask for the password. Steven tells it to him, and Gumboil tells him to pass, but Casper insults the drunken knight! Thinking that Steven rather than Casper is talking, Gumboil demands an apology and a token to show how sorry Steven is. Steven apologizes and gives Gumboil the bar of gold, so he is allowed to pass after all. Merlin's chamber follows, where Casper helps Steven to bend down and touch a glowing letter M on the floor. Merlin appears on his throne, and poses the team a riddle. Unfortunately, they are unable to answer this relatively easy but obscurely worded brainteaser about what an elephant ever forgets: "*An elephant forgets nothing, because an elephant never forgets!*" - **Merlin**. Without Merlin's

magical aid, the quest is doomed. A quick trot across the Combat Chess board and through the Hall of Spears follows, but when Steven reaches the wellway room, the light source fades, Steven disappears and the quest is over. Treguard explains that without Merlin's magic, there was no way for them to reach level three: *"Bad luck, Steven. As a dungeoneer you're great at disappearing, but this time it's once too often."* - **Treguard.**

Summary: This was a high-quality quest, and it was fun to watch. However, like so many quests, it failed for the want of one single riddle answer.

THE STRANGENESS OF THE WALLS

By Ian Down

Having entered the castle, still in level one and without any objects or spells, Kevin found himself in a small stony room, inhabited by just a table, upon which there was a chess board, with pieces, and attended by Brother Mace. There was also a large jug and tankard that appeared to have had much use made of them over the years.

"Ecco homo caecus!" shouted Brother Mace. (The monk was prone to blathering in dodgy and somewhat inebriated Latin.) *"Greetings, helmeted one; I've been expecting you. Come, come, have a seat."*

Mace guided Kevin to a small stool upon which he sat, and then accepted the bread offered to him to restore his health.

"Now then, what is your name, young traveller?" said Mace, clearly with a drink inside him.

"Kevin. I'm on a quest for a Chalice."

"Ah, I see, a quest for the Cup. I am more of a flagon man myself as, of course, I am a tavern monk and therefore my greatest desire is for ale. If you are lacking in such a beverage, you must provide wisdom to attain

my help, and as sure as Absinthe makes the heart grow fonder, I must demand one or the other."

"I don't have any ale, I'm afraid," Kevin admitted weakly.

"Oh well, not to worry, I have three barrels round the back," Brother Mace muttered, gesturing with one hand as he rubbed his large belly lustily with the other. "Anyway, to gain any advantage, you must prove your wisdom to me. Answer me this, young adventurer. Which word can never be spoken without breaking it?"

Brother Mace sat back smugly, watching the dungeoneer consult his advisors. Alice had an idea.

"What do you break every time you speak? You break the silence! Say *silence*, Kevin."

"Is it silence?" Kevin enquired.

"Well done, young man, you and your friends show some promise. Now give me the answer to this often used and extremely corny tavern joke. How do you fix a broken gorilla?"

Robert thought for a second and piped up brightly, "With a monkey wrench, it must be!"

The team giggled at this rare piece of levity in their adventure. Kevin gave the answer and Brother Mace began to smile warmly.

"Ah, *salve varitate*. Very good. One more for the road, I think. I'm rather partial to those myself, but this is a difficult one. A square building has four walls with a window in each wall. All of the windows face south. There is a large bear visible through one of the windows. What colour is the bear?"

The team thought for a moment.

"How can all the windows face south?" queried Alice, "That's impossible."

Puzzled faces all round. Eventually, Robert had an idea: "If all the windows face south, the building must be at the North Pole!"

"In that case, it would have to be a polar bear!" Alice was suddenly excited.

"Say *white*, Kevin," John instructed.

"White," said Kevin, not having worked out the puzzle himself, but trusting his friends anyway.

"Yes indeed!" Brother Mace seemed delighted. "Well, you seem to have enough of a clue about you to deserve a further, more valuable one."

Brother Mace leant forward and spoke with a deathly serious demeanour.

"I hear that a Lady of great power and malevolence is roaming the deeper realms of the Dungeon," he said. "To survive, you must always pander to her vanity, and should you encounter any item she may wish to have to embellish her beauty, you must sacrifice anything to acquire it. And as you have demonstrated your competence so well, I may be able to meet with you further down your path to assist you... should you make it that far. *Dominus vobiscum*."

This last piece of Latin sounded rather more plausible than usual and the team took it to mean *good luck* or perhaps *safe journey*. Kevin was about to get up and leave, when Brother Mace had a further thought.

"Oh, and if you happen to run into that pesky giant arachnid, just use this old spell, now where did I put it? *Lapsus Memoriae*... ah, here it is! It's called SLOW. It was just left lying around here so you may as well have it. Now, be on your way, traveller, and should you find any free ale, you know where to find me. *Eventus stultorum magister*."

With that, a slightly confused Kevin got up and was guided on to the next room. Almost predictably, the dingy, wooded area contained a large, wizened oak tree with a heavy canopy of spider-web.

"Caution, team, this is the lair of Ariadne. You must waste no time or you will be trapped." Treguard showed only mild concern.

As ominous sounds echoed about the lair, the giant spider crept inexorably into view and the team, without hesitation, decided to use the SLOW spell to halt her progress.

"Spellcasting: S-L-O-W."

Kevin was guided through the little dark opening without too much trouble. The next room was cavernous, but with a wellway at the far end. An easy path to level two, they thought. Easy, that is, until an angry guard appeared, brandishing a large broadsword.

"Gimme the password or I'll 'ave yer 'ead off!" the guard shouted. "I loves a good decapitation of an afternoon!"

The guard got his stance ready to finish the dungeoneer.

"Say *cockroach*, Kevin," said John, hoping that Elita hadn't been up to one of her tricks.

Kevin gave the password and the guard looked distraught.

"Oh, thumbscrews!" the guard groaned. "That's the right word; I'll have to let you through. That's the third one this month! Can't I just lop off an ear? Or a finger, even? Just so I can say I did me job, like?"

"No way," said Kevin, who gleefully leapt into the wellway as guided.

Ah, classic stuff there, Ian - excellent. Level two follows in the next issue, readers. Don't miss it!

REMEMBER HIM?

Series 3. Level 2.

MCGREW

Quite how this burly, bearded Scotsman came to be hanging around the second level of the Nightmare Dungeon remains a mystery to this day.

David Verrey wore the traditional full-length kilt and put on the strong Scottish accent, which really defined the character of McGrew. Most of David Verrey's time was taken up with playing Golgarach; McGrew was clearly introduced as a way for the actor to show off his (not unimpressive) acting skills, in scenes that were likely to include more variety than simply asking three questions and handing out information, as was the one and only function of a wall monster, like Golgarach. However, because McGrew only appeared in two episodes, David Verrey hardly had a chance to shine!

McGrew's first appearance was during the third episode of series 3, in the second-to-last chamber dungeoneer Cliff visited in level two. McGrew rushed into the room and started threatening to cleave Cliff in half with his mighty claymore, clearly establishing that he was a potentially dangerous and very violent character. Quite correctly, the team thought they were in danger, and used Merlin's magic - a spell called DANCE - against McGrew. Being forced to prance around the room like an oversized ballerina took all the fight out of the clansman, and he started begging with Cliff to undo the magic, in return for his allegiance. Here the team made their fatal mistake - instead of dispelling DANCE, they just took Cliff straight out of the room! He arrived in the minecart chamber, where a haunted sword promptly finished him off. Had McGrew been there to help them, he would have fought off the haunted sword and pushed Cliff down to level three in the minecart. As Treguard said: *"If only you'd listened to the pleas of McGrew, perhaps then you would have had the help you need here!" - Treguard.*

As well as cutting short Cliff's quest, this turn of events also denied David Verrey the chance to really show us what he could do. So it was that McGrew returned for the latter stages of level two during Ross's quest, although magic was not required to pacify him this time. After convincing McGrew that he was not a member of the rival Campbell clan, and then saving him from an amphibious fate at the hands of Mogdred, Ross earned the clansman's unerring allegiance: *"Where e'er you go on this level, Black McGrew's your man!" - McGrew.* McGrew turned out to be more than worth his salt to Ross, as he fought off two haunted swords in the Cavern Range, one of them while Ross was busy collecting a quest piece, and then pushed him down to level three in the minecart, just as he had been supposed to do for Cliff.

Series 3 was only halfway done after McGrew's second appearance, but we didn't see him again. This is undoubtedly why he is something of a forgettable character, which is a shame really, as there was the potential for some nice confrontations with this character, both for dungeoneers and characters, like Mogdred. Ah well, no point in dwelling...

Fear Factor: 7 Clearly a threat, and a formidable one.

Killer Instinct: 2 Was on the brink of finishing off both dungeoneers!

Humour Rating: 3 Loosened up a bit with Ross, but pretty serious.

Oscar Standard: 7 "Put on a Scottish accent and wave your sword around, David." Well, he certainly did that!

KNIGHTMARE LOCATIONS

Bodiam Castle, Hastings, East Sussex

Bodiam Castle. Vital Statistics:

Location: Bodiam, near Hastings, East Sussex.

Century of Origin: 14th.

Also Known As: Various Dungeon rooms new to series 5.

Series featured in: 5, 6 and 7.

These pictures were taken by me, Jake Collins, and scanned by Rosey Collins, in October 2006.

This room comes straight out of Nightmare, if you ignore the scaffolding, of course. Level one clues were found here many times during series 5 and 6.



Directly below is a close-up of the stairs that served as an exit from this chamber, as seen many times through the eye shield.

The third picture is the view from the top of the staircase that always made Pickle very nervous (because it was so high) with some more scaffolding thrown in for good measure.



Next Issue: More from Bodiam Castle.

THE BEST OF THE REST 2008

As you may have guessed, it's time for our three-yearly check-up of some of my other favourite TV shows. As in issue 31, I shall be updating you on the status of the shows that were still airing new episodes at the time of the last instalment of this article (January 2005), before introducing you to a couple of things that have caught my eye since then.

Sooty (1952 - 2005)

I mentioned last time how disappointing this show had become since Matthew Corbett left, and it seems that someone at CITV agreed with me, as no new Sooty has aired for over three years. Of course, seeing as CITV no longer really exists, there is virtually no chance of the poor little yellow bear getting back on television anytime soon, and what a disgrace that is! Sooty is a much-loved character who's kept generations of children (including myself) entertained for over fifty years! Come out of retirement, Matthew, and show the world how good The Sooty Show can really be!

Grange Hill (1978 - 2008)

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! What a sad, sorry state this show is in. After being situated firmly in the London Borough of Northam for twenty-five years, Grange Hill Comprehensive now seems to be located somewhere in the London/Liverpool/Newcastle/Manchester/Scotland/Northern Ireland area of the country - it just doesn't work! The storylines are completely unbelievable for the most part, and most if not all of the recent ones have been directly recycled from Grange Hill's heyday of the late '80s/early '90s. You didn't know Chrissie Mainwaring was still in it, did you? Oh no, sorry, she's called Emma now! The decision to stop showing the programme on BBC1 (confining it entirely to the CBBC Channel) was both baffling and plain wrong, and seemed to me to mark the beginning of the end. Just to prove me right, the BBC announced on February 6th 2008 that the show was being axed after exactly thirty years on the air, with this year's much dumbed down series being the last. Thank God for that!

South Park (1997 - present)

I can't believe this show is still going on, and I can't believe even more that it's still consistently the funniest and most poignant piece of satire I've ever seen in my life! South Park is obviously not nearly as popular on

this side of the Atlantic as it was at the turn of the century, as Channel Four stopped airing it after series 6, and Sky One lost the rites to it after series 7. However, thanks to Paramount Comedy One, we South Park enthusiasts can still see the new episodes, which is a welcome development indeed. South Park is currently renewed through its fifteenth series, which is due to finish airing in America in 2011 - there can't possibly be any more life left in it after that, can there?

Mona the Vampire (2000 - 2005)

Every time I see that this cartoon is going to be repeated on CBBC, I begin to think that it can't possibly be as good as I used to think it was, and every time I'm proved strikingly and definitively wrong! You might be forgiven for thinking that *Mona the Vampire* is just another run-of-the-mill kids' cartoon that's come flooding out of North America with about two million others of the same low quality, but there's something about it that really connects with me, although I'm not really sure why. Perhaps the fact that the show is based on a very definitely English book series from the 1990s has something to do with its appeal. I read somewhere on the internet that the target audience for this show is girls aged between six and nine, but I was a boy aged sixteen when I first watched it, and I still enjoy it a lot today. Oh dear, perhaps there's something wrong with me! I really do think that the strong and engaging character of Mona herself carries the show a great deal, with the brilliant, enthusiastic voice talents of Canadian actress Emma Taylor-Isherwood playing a major role in this phenomenon. Mona is a great modern heroine, and we could all learn a lot from her views about life, the universe and everything. After five series, there have been no more new episodes, and the earlier ones are certainly the best. However, this has given CBBC a huge pool of episodes from which to select repeats, and it's always a pleasure to see them again.

All Grown Up! (2003 - 2006)

Strangely, this didn't fare nearly as well as *Rugrats*, although I originally thought it looked like it was going to be quite a lot better than its parent show. After a very promising first series, *All Grown Up* really went downhill at a terrific pace, which was a shame in many ways, although I haven't been losing any sleep over it, I have to tell you. Most of the characters were redesigned slightly for series 2, and the unfathomable decision to turn Tommy Pickles into some kind of male nymphomaniac was ridiculously injudicious! Having said all that, I still consider the ten-year-old version of Dil Pickles to be one of the greatest cartoon characters

(along with Mona "the Vampire" Parker and Helga Pataki of Hey Arnold fame) of all time.

Raven (2002 - present)

I won't harp on about it any more than I already have done, but Raven is the best thing CBBC has produced for many, many years, and it really does embody the old Knightmare spirit, for me at least. After seven regular series and two forays into the world of spin-offs, Raven still seems to be going strong. Although I actually think the best series are 2 and 3, I'll keep watching for as long as CBBC decides to make the show, because it's brilliant!

Shoobox Zoo (2004 - 2006)

This seems to have petered out after two series, which is probably a good thing, as the second series (in which protagonist Marnie McBride travelled to North America to find a magic book that was supposed to have been hidden somewhere in Edinburgh) was not nearly as good as the first. Having said that, there was a nice little twist at the end, when it turned out that the narrator of the show (credited since the very first episode as the Storyteller) was not actually just a disembodied voice but also the master of the Shoobox Zoo animals, who had apparently sent them to cross paths with Marnie, and also her mother before her, for mysterious reasons of his own. The final line of the series was delivered by Rik Mayall as Edwin the Eagle, as he asked the Storyteller what mission he wished his diminutive servants to perform next. An intriguing prospect for a third series, I thought, but I don't think there's going to be one. Ah, well...

American Dragon: Jake Long (2005 - 2007)

As I mentioned a couple of issues ago, I do quite enjoy this Disney cartoon about human/dragon hybrid Jake Long, whose sacred duty it is to protect the magical creatures of New York City from the forces of darkness. Its research into mythical lore to find fabled creatures is thorough and varied, and it can be very funny on occasion. Again, Jake's strong character really stands out for me, but then I've always liked characters called Jake - childish of me, I know. I'll tell you what, though; I don't like the complete change in style for series 2 - it's horrible!

Heroes (2006 - present)

As well as being the name of a Knightmare spell, Heroes is also the name of a popular US drama series about a group of superheroes from all over

the world (well, one of them's from Japan and the rest are from all over the USA) who have to come together to save New York from being destroyed. Amongst the group is Indestructible Cheerleader (a.k.a. Claire), Telepathic Cop (a.k.a. Matt), Paints the Future Drug Addict (a.k.a. Isaac), Flying Politician (a.k.a. Nathan), Fuses With Technology Boy (a.k.a. Micah) and the show's breakout character, Time Manipulation Japanese Guy (a.k.a. Hiro). That makes it all sound rather silly, but it's actually very good. If the first series had a fault, it was that it took a very long time for all the heroes to get to grips with their powers and come together to work as a team, but the build-up was very exciting and intriguing in places. I'm sure there are a few good seasons left in this show, which BBC2 has now adopted as its own, so watch this space!

PUZZLE PAGE TWO

Changing Levels

Match each method of changing levels (on the left) with the first dungeoneer to use it for this purpose (in the middle) and the episode in which this occurred (on the right). Then find each level-changing method hidden in the letter grid below the table.

<u>Method.</u>	<u>Dungeoneer.</u>	<u>Episode.</u>
Descender	Sarah	714
Minecart	Simon I	606
Rowing boat	Catherine	402
Ship	Barry	305
Smirkenorff	Helen II	103
Stairs	Leo	311
Trapdoor	Alan	505
Wellway	Scott	501

S	Q	W	E	K	J	H	F	D	L	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M
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T	R	A	P	D	O	O	R	S	A	I	O	P	C	M	X	Q
A	V	B	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	S	A	S	H	I	P	W
I	N	D	M	Q	W	R	Y	U	P	A	F	D	V	N	Z	E
R	J	E	H	G	E	T	W	I	O	S	D	F	B	E	L	R
S	K	S	M	I	R	K	E	N	O	R	F	F	N	C	K	T
L	E	C	R	G	H	N	L	M	G	A	S	G	M	A	J	Y
M	W	E	T	F	J	B	L	Q	F	P	D	H	Q	R	H	U
Z	Q	N	Y	D	R	O	W	I	N	G	B	O	A	T	G	I
X	M	D	U	S	K	V	A	W	H	O	K	J	W	E	F	O
C	N	E	I	A	L	C	Y	E	J	I	L	C	U	R	D	P
V	B	R	O	P	Z	X	T	R	Y	U	Z	X	Y	T	S	A

DUNGEONEER DWELLINGS

Series 6

-



4. January
Shrewsbury

3. Alan
St. Albans

1. Matt
Bath

2. Sumaiyah
7. Chris
London

5. Ben
Salisbury

6. Sofia
Bournemouth

THE FASTEST DRAW IN THE DUNGEON

By Ricky Temple

Unaware that they were being watched, or of the danger they were walking into, Rio, Armstrong and Merick continued on through the dark corridors of Marblehead, getting ever closer to Lord Fear's treasure room and the object of their quest, Merlin's Talisman.

"We're almost there," Merick said, looking at the map. "And not a solitary Opposition lackey to be seen."

"I'm not so sure I like that," Armstrong mused.

"They probably don't even know we're here," Rio said confidently. "They're looking for people coming in from below, not above."

"Hmm, you could be right Rio, but still..." Armstrong didn't finish because, as they rounded the corner, they saw what they were looking for. The decorative doors could mean only one thing.

"The treasure room! We've found it!" Merick said excitedly.

"Yeah, but look what's guarding it!" Armstrong said, and pointed towards the doors. There was no lock on them, but they didn't need one, because standing guard in front of them was the Dreadnort. "Good job we managed to obtain the word of the day."

Slowly the three made their way towards the magical monstrosity. It sensed them and spoke out.

"I SEEK A WORD! IF YOU GIVE ME THE WRONG WORD, IF YOU GIVE ME NO WORD, THEN I TAKE A LIMB INSTEAD! PERHAPS AN ARM, OR MAYBE EVEN A HEAD! GIVE ME A WORD!"

The three stood their ground and Armstrong said, "survivor." The Dreadnort turned the word over in its mechanical brain and the three Rangers held their breath.

"THAT WORD IS THE... RIGHT WORD. PASS, FRIENDS, AND LIVE IN

FEAR!"

A collective sigh of relief escaped the three Rangers' bodies as the huge Dreadnort walked off down the dark corridor.

"Well, that was easy enough," Rio said, as he started to push the treasure room doors open.

"Hmm, yes it was," Armstrong said.

The doors creaked open to reveal Lord Fear's treasure room and all the ill-gotten gains that were held within. There was gold in both bar and coin form, precious stones such as diamonds, rubies, sapphires and pearls, stone sculptures and vast tapestries.

"Sheesh, feast your eyes on this haul! Talk about crime paying," Rio said, picking up a small ruby. Then the three Dungeon Rangers' eyes alighted on something in the centre of the room. On a small pillar stood an ornate wooden box with a familiar crest engraved on it - a large **M**.

"We've found it!" Merick said excitedly.

"Well, let's not waste time," said Rio. "Let's get it and get out of here!"

The three Rangers quickly and curiously made their way over to the pillar. Rio picked up the box.

"Got it," he said.

"Just take the Talisman out, Rio, and leave the box," Armstrong said. "With any luck, they won't realise it's missing 'til we're far away!"

Rio quickly put the box back on the pillar and opened it. "IT'S EMPTY!" he yelled in shock. "IT'S A TRAP!"

Armstrong yelled, "LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!"

"Well, how rude!" said a voice the three Dungeon Rangers knew so well, even though they had never heard it before. "Leaving without saying goodbye? My, my, I will have to have a word with Treguard - he really needs to teach his men some manners. Wouldn't you agree, my minions?"

"Yesss indeed, Lordness."

"HE-HE-HE-HE-HE-HE! Want me and my goblins to teach them a lesson? LOVELY!"

Rio, Armstrong and Merick turned around and found themselves face-to-face with Lord Fear, his Atlantian seneschal Lissard, and the vile Goblin Master Skarkill, along with the goblin brothers Grippa and Rhark. Lord Fear was sitting in his throne, which had obviously materialised at the command of its master. Lissard was skulking just behind it, well out of harm's way should there be any rough stuff, while Skarkill and his goblins were dead in front, ready to pounce.

"Is this what you're looking for, by any chance?" Lord Fear held up the Talisman for the three to see. "Well, take a good look because this is as close as you three will ever get to it! TAKE THEM AWAY!"

"With pleasure, your Lordship. Lovely!" Skarkill and his goblins moved in on the cornered Rangers.

"We're done for this time," Merick said nervously, as Grippa and Rhark circled them and Skarkill advanced forward.

"Not quite," Rio said quietly. He still had the small ruby in his hands. He closed his fist tightly so that their adversaries couldn't see it. "When I say, you two run and grab the Talisman, and keep running! I'll be just behind you."

"Shut up!" Skarkill growled. He was quite close now, and sneered at the trapped Rangers. "So you're the best the Powers that Be could muster, eh? Well, you don't look so good to me..."

Rio smiled. "I'm surprised you can see us at all - you appear to have something in your eye!" he said confidently.

"Huh? What're you talking about?" Skarkill asked, bemused. "I ain't got nothing in my eye!"

"Really? Then what's...this?" Quick as a flash, Rio flicked the ruby right into Skarkill's one good eye as hard as he could.

"YEEEEOOOOWWWW!" Skarkill cried in agony and clasped at his eye.

"SKARKILL, YOU BLUNDERING IDIOT! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?" Lord Fear raged in shock and anger. He started to rise from his throne.

"NOW!" Rio cried, and charged headfirst into the blinded Skarkill's mid-section. The temporarily blinded Goblin Master stumbled backwards, right into Grippa and Rhark. Already off-balance, this was too much for Skarkill. He lost his footing and fell backwards, right into Lord Fear, who, screaming with rage, fell back into the throne and sent it tipping over, right onto the cowering Lissard, who barely had time to cry out in terror before the heavy throne crashed down on top of him, knocking him out and pinning him to the floor. Merrick and Armstrong dashed forward, Armstrong grabbing the Talisman from the flailing hand of Lord Fear, who was pinned under Skarkill and his goblins.

"STOP THEM!" Fear yelled. "SKARKILL, YOU ONE-EYED PIECE OF UGLINESS, GET OFF ME!"

"Come on, Rio!" Merrick called out to Rio who, after running headlong into the Goblin Master, had ended up on the floor as well. Rio struggled to get to his feet and flee with his comrades. He found his feet and took off like a shot. His two comrades had already disappeared from sight as he tore down the hallway. In the distance he heard the sound of running feet and a goblin horn; Skarkill and the goblins had untangled themselves from the Opposition pileup and were gaining on him. He rounded a corner and caught sight of the window. His escape point - he was going to make it! Then it hit him. A goblin club hurtled out of the darkness and struck him on the back of the head. Rio staggered forward and then collapsed. He rolled over onto his back and saw the image of Skarkill and the goblins leering over him. He heard the Goblin Master's vile laugh and then... blackness.

POETRY CORNER

Following hot on the heels of a winning team can be a daunting experience, particularly if none of the members of your team have any brains whatsoever, as Jenna would undoubtedly attest. Let's see how these four Exeter maidens fared in the Dungeon, shall we? Yeah, I fancy a laugh!

Dear little Jenna and her team
Did prove that they were Devon cream
By facing Dungeon tasks so well
As they amused us for a spell.
And if you think I'm being sincere
Perhaps I haven't made it clear
That Jenna's team was pretty bad.
They met an early death; how sad!
With box and gold held safe in hand,
Mace rowed the boat from lake to land.
In Wolfenden a stall was found,
With aniseed, fresh picked, not ground!
In castle ruins, greedy Sly
Was forced to say a quick goodbye
As Pixel flew out of the box
And pricked him right down to his socks!
Assassins lurked in greenwood glade
And Gwendoline was most dismayed
By Jenna's noise-polluting shout,
But soon the girls' luck would run out.
Upon the causeway's rocky brink
Defence was best to choose, I think.
But Jenna stepped onto a sword
And rapid death was her reward!

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Knightmare Blockbusters:

G. Green or Grey.

B. Ben.

C. Cheshire.

S. Scorpion.

M. Marblehead.

K. Knights.

GG. Golden Galleon.

HOJ. Helmet of Justice.

H. Hobgoblin.
 T. Talionis.
 E. Energy or Erg.
 F. Freneville.
 J. Julius.
 L. Lissard.
 N. Nemanor.
 U. Unicorn. (One on TV, one in a book.)
 A. Aesandre.
 D. Dreadhort.
 I. Igneous.

Q. Queen.
 Z. Zaman.
 O. Olgarth.
 Y. Yew.
 V. Visor.
 P. Pixel.
 VOB. Vestan of Brittany.
 R. Riddles.
 W. William.
 COB. Corridor of Blades.
 STC. Sidriss the Confused.

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S	Q	W	E	K	J	H	F	D	L	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M
T	R	A	P	D	O	O	R	S	A	I	O	P	C	M	X	Q
A	V	B	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	S	A	S	H	I	P	W
I	N	D	M	Q	W	R	Y	U	P	A	F	D	V	N	Z	E
R	J	E	H	G	E	T	W	I	O	S	D	F	B	E	L	R
S	K	S	M	I	R	K	E	N	O	R	F	F	N	C	K	T
L	E	C	R	G	H	N	L	M	G	A	S	G	M	A	J	Y
M	W	E	T	F	J	B	L	Q	F	P	D	H	Q	R	H	U
Z	Q	N	Y	D	R	O	W	I	N	G	B	O	A	T	G	I
X	M	D	U	S	K	V	A	W	H	O	K	J	W	E	F	O
C	N	E	I	A	L	C	Y	E	J	I	L	C	U	R	D	P
V	B	R	O	P	Z	X	T	R	Y	U	Z	X	Y	T	S	A