

**A TALE OF  
KEROVANIA**

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## CHAPTER ONE

Once upon a time (to coin a phrase) there was a fairy land called Kerovnia, ruled by King Erik and his Queen, Jendah II, which nestled cosily between the great Nattus mountain valley and the Aquatica Sea. Kerovnia was a million square miles, most of it forests. At the edge of these vast forests, stretching north to the mountains and south to the inhospitable deserts, lay a host of farming communities.

The farms were owned by the true ancestors of Kerovnia - the 'Little People', close cousins of the Dwarves and Gnomes. The Little People were also the forebears of the Roobikyoub Dwarves, who had left their farms to mine for lead in the Kerovnian forests. The little people had stayed behind, happy to continue farming; and specialising in the manufacture of their famous 'nut yogurt'.

The dwarves are giants in the world of commerce, and thrive on the cut and thrust of business. The little people, although less acute, have a reputation for hard work and industry.

The mountainous regions, with their snow-capped peaks forever glinting and flickering against the ice-blue sky, are a great tourist attraction. Mountain trekking is very popular, and it is not expensive to hire a pink unicorn, indigenous to the area, to explore the many and varied beauty spots the mountains have to offer. (These unicorns were introduced by The Little People three centuries ago, when a certain King Faldous of Aquitania, a neighbouring province, gave the King of Kerovnia a red unicorn

stallion as a birthday gift.) The Dwarves, not surprisingly, have a complete monopoly of the tourist industry.

King Erik and Queen Jendah are not vastly popular figures and command the loyalty of only a small section of the community of Dwarfs, Gnomes, and Little People. The majority of the other inhabitants are anti-royalist, and form the Opposition Party. Their leader is the notorious Gringo Baconburger, whose headquarters lie in the maze of tunnels and chambers beneath these mountains. The desert regions are mainly uninhabited, but at their extremities they run down to meet the azure blue of the Aquatica sea, which gently washes the golden shoreline. The Royal holiday villa is situated at Kerga, the capital of this region. Here, holiday resorts abound and tourism flourishes. A big attraction is the various paddling competitions throughout the summer months, which are organised by the King himself.

There is one region in Kerovnia which serves neither the tourist nor mining industries - The Great Wastelands. This is a vast area of wilderness, bordered by slimy ponds and sluggish streams. However, the whole area is of great importance to the Little People, because it is here that they breed their beloved pink unicorns and the charming Kattish Dorabs. The Dorab, a cross between a rabbit and a dog, was introduced some six hundred years ago. It is most prized for its hunting abilities. It has the body of a Spaniel, and the soft fur and droopy ears of a rabbit. Many Kerovnians, including the King himself, keep a dorab as a pet.

The Wastelands, with its grassy wilderness that sways and dances to tunes of far-off breezes in the winter, and whose rushes crackle and burn in the summer heat, lead to the capital city of Kerovnia - Keros - (home and birthplace of the honourable and righteous King Erik!)

Centuries of selective breeding, preserving the purest of blood lines by constant and meticulous inter-marriage, have resulted in the impressive figure of our present Monarch - who, in a poor light, and with a following wind, could actually be mistaken for a human.

The dwarves, gnomes, and little people are looked down upon by the Royalist party - who love and venerate King Erik. The opposition party, led by Gringo, is rapidly gaining strength, nourished by Erik's increasing reputation as a political bungler, both at home and abroad. His mishandling of affairs of State has resulted in an economic crisis and general social unrest, never before experienced in Kerovnia.

Queen Jendah is generally considered to be wiser and more politically astute than her husband. She is a charismatic figure; witty, intelligent, and the proud possessor of a graceful beauty. But the King, a closet misogynist, refuses to let his wife take an active part in home affairs, or foreign policy. She is reduced to busying herself with the "Elderly Little People's Society", and the distribution of Piquant Rat Pancakes to the poor and needy. Her talents as an artist, sculptor and interior design decorator, however, find ample outlets.

There is, in fact, only one female in the kingdom who is greatly loved by the King - the apple of his squinting eye - his daughter Lattecia; known as "Lacey". She is everything a proud father could wish for in an only child. She has inherited the pointed nose and greasy strands of lack-lustre, mousy hair, of the Golden Family. Also, she has a sweet character, which has made her enormously popular in Kerovnian high society. A most desirable catch for any foreign Prince!

Lacey has just celebrated her sixteenth birthday. She has been given a male dorab by the name of Poops, and is deeply in love with Prince Malcolm, the dashing and handsome heir to the throne of Aquitania! At present Malcolm's multifarious (some would hint nefarious!) activities as a Royal helicopter pilot - not to mention his giddy affair with the blushing and virginal Lacey - continually hit the headlines of the dwarf colour tabloid, "The Kerovnian World" - owned and run by Gringo Baconburger.

Princess Lacey has, since her childhood, been schooled for the role of

future Queen of Kerovnia. This tiresome and difficult task has been the duty of the Royal governess, Zita. This ancient crone was nursery-maid to Erik, himself, and it has been hinted that she is responsible not only for Lacey's education, but also for Erik's (who continues to take maths and science lessons at the age of fifty-three!) Gringo Baconburger even suggested, at a rather violent political meeting of the Opposition Party, that Zita was more in charge of Kerovnia's finances, and the allotment of the royal treasury funds, than the King himself. Zita's paternal grandmother, although of true Kerovnian stock, was also descended from the land of Perpetania, and Zita has inherited her supernatural powers. Her clairvoyance and Tarot reading have solved many a tricky political situation in Kerovnia. Even more importantly, Zita has magically enhanced and improved Lacey's natural beauty over the year - thus winning even more favour in the eyes of the King.

Although Zita's powers have increased her hold over the Kerovnian Royal family, she has remained a simple woman, with little in common with the local Jet Set. She lives in a small cottage in the Palace grounds overlooking Queen Jendah's famous rose garden, surrounded by her cauldrons, magic potions, cobwebs, spiders, eyes of newts, and tongues of toads; not to mention her venomous one-eyed familiar, the supercilious feline, Postlesthwaite.

Dwarf journalists have suggested that Zita is bewitching the Princess in order to obtain supreme power in the years to come; but Erik was overjoyed that she worked tirelessly for no salary, and invariably agreed with his every word.

One afternoon, Erik was giving audience to several nobles of the land. in the blue State Receiving Room. Zita was present, making discreet notes in her shabby green leather notebook, nodding and grunting away to herself. The nobles were discussing the corn tax laws, complaining bitterly about the steep increments in the yearly taxes.

Erik scratched his head in confusion, unable to deal with their mounting

hostility, when Zita stepped forward and snapped:

"You are all lucky to be able to trade at all in the Kingdom of Kerovnia! The King allows you to sell your inferior wheat to all and sundry, and you have the honour and privilege of paying taxes to the Royal purse!"

The nobles were stunned into silence by this tirade, and Erik promptly dismissed the assembled throng, before they had a chance to regain their composure. When the room was empty, Erik rushed over to Zita and grasped her bony hands in his claw-like paws, and exclaimed:

"Dear Zita, my ugly and faithful subject, my Machiavellian and toothless politician, my wart encrusted beauty! Please tell me what I can do for you, to reward you and brighten your every hour?"

Zita thoughtfully pulled a long white hair from her left nostril, and casually squeezing a pimple or two, replied as follows:-

"Dear Majesty. There is one small favour that I beg of you, in all your greatness. Not far away from our land lives a friend of mine, who was falsely sent into exile, for a crime he did not commit. He now seeks refuge in a country like Kerovnia. He is a brilliant man, with a mind unequalled - "

"Do you imply!" interrupted the King, "That this man has a greater intellect than my own?"

"Oh no Sire", winced Zita, "No living creature could possibly equal your gracious majesty!"

"Oh well, then, pray continue", conceded the King.

"I have known of him since my earliest days", Zita continued, "his magical powers are supreme and his scientific discoveries are legendary. Perhaps your majesty could find work for him, either at the Golden University or the new Research Laboratory for the cross-pollination of various types of foreign currency.?"

"No!" answered Erik, "I shall make better use of him than that, what I need at the Palace, to amuse my precious Lacey and to entertain the Royal Guests, is a Court Magician. Find him, and bring him to me!"

And so it came about that the sorcerer, Kronos by name, entered the Royal household, and became the Court Magician. So amazing were his tricks, and so numerous his feats of magic, that Lacey began almost to shirk her school lessons with Zita - Shrieking and screaming with delight as Kronos produced yet one more dorab from his green top hat.

## CHAPTER TWO

Kronos was much loved by the court, and was frequently requested to perform his feats of magic in the nobles' country houses. He was particularly admired by Queen Jendah's housemaids, for whom he often agreed to magically make the beds, dust the floors, and lay the fires. The cooks often invited him into the royal kitchens, and gourmet cuisine soon became known throughout the land. With a click of his tongue, he could turn a goose's liver into the finest Pate de Fois Gras, and with a mere glance at a citrus fruit, would produce a devilish Lemon Soufflee. Erik became so worried about the general laziness amongst the Palace staff, that he threatened to cut off their heads unless they began to work properly. Zita came to their rescue before any damage was done, and life in the palace returned to normal, and thereafter Kronos left the Palace staff well alone, and interested himself in the gardens and stables.

It was whilst making a tour of the stables, and visiting the loose box of Erik's ceremonial charger, Bruce - part unicorn and part horse - that he made the acquaintance of the head groom, JoJo. He was a pleasant enough fellow, in his late fifties, who had undergone his apprenticeship during the reign of Erik's father Willy III. They struck up conversation, and Kronos discovered to his delight, that he had found just the man to assist him in his psychological analysis of the Monarch: a project he was undertaking on behalf of the underground newspaper, 'Fight on!' JoJo had known the King when he was a little lad, and had seen him grow into manhood. He knew much about the king's faults and weaknesses, and had promised to fill Kronos in on many points of interest.



During his tours of the gardens and stables, Kronos caused quite a stir. His reputation had spread before him, and both gardeners and stable lads were anxious to meet the great man, to express their various dissatisfactions and worries. Kronos, with his calm manner and cultured appearance, soon won the hearts of those around him. Gradually, in the back of his mind, he began to wonder if he would not himself make a better, a wiser, and a more popular King of Kerovnia, than Erik! (Especially with the help of his dear sister, Zita.)

Whilst these ambitious dreams were running through the cunning mind of Kronos, an even more daring plan was being conceived by Gringo Baconburger. Gringo, who headed the Dwarf Liberation of Kerovnia party, was Erik's ruthless opposition leader, renowned for his political activities in dwarf circles, and dearly loved by the little people. If Gringo could force the King to hold a democratic election, for the first time in Kerovnian history, it was almost certain that the dwarf party would secure a majority of votes, and throw out the Royalists, whose contribution to trade and tourism was quite inept.

Gringo's grasp of international affairs was very astute and his political concepts were the most advanced of all the varying dwarf populations. It was he who had first explained to the little people, with the help of numerous histograms and statistics, that their age old demand of: 'Longer hours for less pay!' contained a subtle but fatal economic flaw. But how, short of a revolution, was he to force the King into agreeing to a general election?

Gringo Baconburger was a relatively young leader for the dwarf faction to have adopted. From the beginning his confidence as a public orator and as an intellectual figure had reached the ears of the elderly dwarf society, (the wisest members of the dwarf and little people communities) responsible for the election of important figureheads in dwarf society, as well as the tiresome activity of meeting with the King twice a year, to discuss social problems.

It had soon become clear that Gringo was the man they had been looking for to head the Opposition Party. Since his election, Kerovnia's trade, tourism and industry had flourished under his skillful management and his faithful followers. In accordance with the elder's wishes, Gringo moved away from the heart of the mining community, and bought a large house in the village of Korrezita, one of the agricultural sectors for wheat and barley. It was from this village that he directed the tourist industry, boosted the economy of the mining community, and exploited trade. All his political activities were carried out deep within the Kerovnian mountains in secret hideaways and chambers. Here the weekly editions of the political newspaper, 'Fight On!', were published: A journal bitterly condemned by the King, although secretly read by many of his palace staff.

## CHAPTER THREE

But let us, gentle reader, return to our heroine, the sweet princess Lacey. We find her sitting on her cushioned window-box seat; dreaming of her beloved Malcolm. Her exquisite room, panelled with the finest walnut, looked out onto the main palace courtyard, surrounded by high walls, fabricated from the finest Kerovnian stone. She opened wide her lattice windows to breath deeply the scent from the multitudinous blooms of the Royal garden, nodding in the silver moonlight. Below her window, the strains of the royal orchestra, performing a classical symphony, drifted towards her on the soft summer evening air, and she felt tears pricking behind her pale eyes. Almost imagining that she could see the image of the noble Malcolm reflected in the water splashing in the fountains beneath her, she swept her greasy hair from her narrow forehead and gazed dreamily into the star strewn sky, recalling her first meeting with the honourable prince.

It had been at Kerga, the previous year, when her father had invited several Royal families to spend a couple of weeks soaking up the summer atmosphere. People were always pleased to receive an invitation from the Kerovnian Royal family. They boasted some of the finest fishing available, and the summer palace had been modernised some short while before. The majority of Palaces were most uncomfortable inside; humid, dusty and filled with spiders.

Erik was considered to be an entertaining host ever since the employment

of Kronos, who continued to delight both Royal children and adults alike. The food, too, was excellent, and Queen Jendah's trifles were internationally renowned.

Five different Royal families had been invited, including Queen Hortensa of Aquitania, and her son, Malcolm. The King of Aquitania had died some five years previously in mysterious circumstances. Lacey had never before met the Aquitanian household. She had been taking part in a royal quiz programme in the capital city (aided by Zita's supernatural powers), and she arrived for the midweek dinner and ball after the presentations had been made. Erik had been busy playing canasta every evening with the King and Princess of Silenissia and had quite forgotten to introduce his daughter to the crowd of guests. So poor Lacey arrived at the dinner that particular evening feeling most shy and lost. She was dressed in a ravishing pink summer frock, her hair blow-dried into ringlets, and her patent pink leather shoes glimmered in the candlelight. She was the cynosure of all eyes. The banquet that night was taking place in the orchid room, a perfect oval shape with varnished walls and bow-shaped windows, overlooking the sea.

Directly beneath the windows grew wild orchids of vivid purple and pink, whose blooms reached up to, and enhanced the beauty of the room itself. The long oak tables were draped with pale blue lace tablecloths, bearing the Golden Families' coat of arms, and adorned with the finest silver plate and the most expensive crystal glasses in the Kingdom. Blue candles had been placed in front of every guest, and each candle stem had been lovingly decorated with a garland of tiny pink roses and purple daisies.

The royal choir, which had been discreetly positioned behind the blue silk curtains, sung a selection of Kerovnian ballads. At one end of the table sat Erik. He was clothed in a crushed cherry coloured silk uniform of the Royal Unicorn Guards, with a collar of pure ermine. His breast was ablaze with rows of brilliantly shining medals, and his thinning hair supported the August Crown. This was studded with Capachon rubies, and surrounded by seed pearls from the Aquatica sea, the symbols of the month of August.

Facing the beaming King, at the opposite end of the long table, sat the beautiful Queen Jendah. Although she wore no crown, her long, auburn locks had been fashioned in true Kerovnian style, diamonds and emeralds woven amongst the tresses of her hair. She wore a fine gold lamè dress, and pointed exquisite purple satin slippers. She outshone every other lady present.

Somewhere amongst this happy throng sat Malcolm, heir to the throne of Aquitania. Short, rather plump, with a double chin, stocky muscular legs, and very strong arms, Malcolm had always been a heart-throb with the royal ladies. His beady brown eyes were sharp to take in details of every new arrival; his rather thin lips concealed his small evenly shaped teeth. Although extremely shy in private, he had an unpleasant habit of being loud-mouthed in public to hide his inferiority complex. So far, he had spent the entire evening in conversation with the Lady Franceska, daughter of Earl Audarva of Aquitania.

Malcolm had been against the idea of spending two weeks of his summer holiday in Kerovnia, for he had planned a sailing trip with his friends, (particularly the Lady Franceska). However, his mother, Hortensa, had insisted her son accompany her to Kerga, for she had other plans for him throughout those summer days. This tall, bespectacled lady - known for her coldness and aloof attitude towards the poor inhabitants of Aquitania - had for some time nourished the idea of a matrimonial union of the two families. It was clear to her that should Malcolm wed Lattecia then Aquitania would be joined financially as well as politically to Kerovnia, allowing her to exert power over the mining community and exploit to the full their stocks of diamonds and gold. It would be easy for her to wield power through Malcolm, who adored her and respected her opinions in matters of state. She found Erik quite ridiculous, especially with all those medals scattered across his chest; but Jendah was a good friend, who would be quite happy for Hortensa to discreetly intervene in Erik's affairs.

The guests gasped with sheer pleasure as Lacey entered the banquet hall. Malcolm raised his eyes from Franceska's face to gaze at the princess as she skipped into the room, curtsying left and right to the assembled guests. She appeared to be a placid and retiring sort of girl (Malcolm detested bossy women with temperamental characters.)

Hortensa spied her son watching Lacey attentively, and sighed with deep relief. The green Witch of Aquitania's prophecy was taking its pre-destined course. As Lacey took her place next to her mother, she caught Malcolm staring at her intently. Blushing furiously, she turned quickly around and smiled sweetly at her mother.

Their real meeting did not take place until some hours later, while coffee was being served. Lacey had spent the entire dinner trying to avoid Malcolm who could not keep his eyes off her. By the end of dinner, Lacey's face was a brilliant embarrassed pink, as the bold Aquitanian's eyes constantly undressed her. Hortensa, feeling that the moment was right to introduce the pair, took his small podgy hand in her rather large one, and pulled him over to where Lacey was sitting, surrounded by friends and relatives.

"Now my dears", said Hortensa, in her loud horsey voice "I think it is about time you met one another. After all, Kerovnia really isn't far from our home city, and I think you two should become the best of friends."

At this Lacey blushed a more violent purple, and looked down at her shoes, while Malcolm smiled kindly at the wretched creature sitting before him.

"Would you care for another milkshake?" he asked nonchalantly.

"Why, yes" she stuttered. "You are too kind". And she allowed the bold Malcolm to brush his thin lips across her tiny red hands. This historic meeting had electrifying effects on the assembled guests, and gradually the hubbub of voices died away to a mere whisper. Everyone craned forward to try and catch the merest hint of the conversation between the

two Royal love-birds.

Hortensa and Jendah retired to the ladies boudoir to discuss the prospect of a Royal wedding within the next twelve months. Malcolm, who felt that he was now centre-stage, raised his voice to a deep crescendo staring at Lacey with undisguised admiration:

"My dear Lacey, perhaps you could come to Aquitania for a visit next year? I believe you would truly love our country. Although it lies to the south of Kerovnia, and has a dry climate, we are fortunate in enjoying the clement weather from the southern seas, which bring cool breezes to even the hottest of our towns."

So saying, Malcolm flexed his shoulders and arms, broad and muscular from many years of swimming and fishing. But Lacey, in her naivety, kept her eyes fixed on his aquiline nose. Malcolm continued with his description of the topography of Aquitania, while Lacey sat and listened in awe and admiration. He talked incessantly of his homeland geography, history and political and economic policies; and furnished a great deal of information about himself. And for three hours the royal coffee booths remained otherwise silent, as the guests drank in Malcolm's fascinating exposition. Hortensa was overjoyed at having conceived and raised such a paragon of an heir - so tremendously popular with the Royal public. From then on the romance between the two youngsters flourished. The Royal pair were seen everywhere together, at paddling parties, swimming parties, sailing, fishing, and crocodile shoots.

Lacey was deeply and romantically in love with Malcolm, she felt like the heroine in one her favorite Rose Romance novelettes. Some cynics thought that for Malcolm's part this was not True Love. He was not, after all, averse to dallying with many a fair maid, and perhaps he was simply enchanted by her youthful femininity and charm. Worse, it had been suggested in some quarters that he fancied himself as the future king of Kerovnia!

And so the lovers parted - with undying promises of fidelity and love. It was agreed that before Lacey returned to the Golden Palace, they would meet again shortly after her sixteenth birthday at the mountain city of Krossia for a trekking holiday. Zita would accompany them as a chaperon. The following summer saw Lacey dreaming constantly of the bold Malcolm, whilst he, devoid of any other female companionship, had invited the Lady Franceska to come away with him on a boating trip.



## CHAPTER FOUR

At this point, gentle reader, we take our leave of the fair Lacey. Her eyes ablaze with love, her tresses (treated with her mothers new conditioner for oily hair) shining brightly in the moonlight. She clasps her shabby teddy bear, whose ugly little head had been half eaten by Poops, to her meagre chest. We now travel some three hundred miles to the heart of the mountain region were we find Kronos alighting from the back a flying polar bear.

Kronos had been called out on a mission of some urgency: his brief being that of a real magician, rather than a court jester. The problem concerned a somewhat large dragon by the name of Harry. This charming creature had been a pet of Kronos' for quite some time. Harry was a Kerulgian dragon; a cold-blooded mammal found only in the mountainous regions, where it can retire to the damp and cold of a subterranean cave when the temperatures reach an uncomfortable heat during the daylight hours. The Kerulgian dragon is some two meters in length, green and orange in colour, with bright red scales lining the periphery of its arched back. Its tail forms at least half of its body, curved and sharpened at both ends. It has bovine, brown eyes and large raspberry coloured tusks. But these dragons, though ferocious to look at, have an unusual psychological trait: they are afraid of people. Indeed, even the smallest mouse is inclined to make them jump. Because of this timidity, most Kerulgian dragons have been eaten by other species of dragon, and very few are left in Kerovnia. How Harry has survived over the years is a story in itself. Harry was rescued as a baby on the shores of the Aquatica Sea, having been abandoned by his mother,

and was rescued by Kronos, who happened to be visiting the area at the time. Kronos and Harry formed an immediate attachment to each other and travelled everywhere together. As the majority of Kerulgian dragons were finding it difficult to survive, Kronos invented a magic potion to make him more aggressive in times of danger. Thus, every time Harry felt himself threatened by man or beast, he would take a secret sip of the potion and almost immediately was enabled to exhale a hellsome fire for a radius of 50 miles. Sometimes, however, either through eagerness or nervousness, he would take an overdose of the potion - which resulted in immediate disaster! A yellow fog would then descend over Kerovnia, so that one could scarcely see ones hand in front of ones face; and even at the height of noon it would be folly to drive without the use of headlights! Often, to impress strangers, Kronos would ask Harry to breathe extra deeply - and entire villages would be covered either in flames of molten gold, or in a foul-smelling fog.

One particular evening, Harry, at home within the foothill region of Kozza, had requested Kronos to bring him an urgent supply of magic potion, as he was feeling alarmed and threatened by a large herd of blue dragons, which were reported to be lurking in the neighbourhood. Kronos would rather that Harry lived with him, but unfortunately dragons were not allowed within the palace boundary; so he made post-haste to the foothills to deliver the potion to Harry's secret lair. There he noticed some posters scattered over the table in the corner of the room.

"What have we here, Harry?" he enquired, glancing in the direction of the posters.

"Funny you should ask that, pal. Well, you see, this chap came round the other day canvassing for the Gringo Baconburger Party."

The dragon inhaled deeply, lighting up his orange nostrils. "Funny thing is, his politcal headquarters aren't far from here; in fact, on other side of the valley. He seems an interesting chap, this Gringo, and he's quite against the Royal family - rather like you. Well, it appears that he plans a general

uprising to force the King to hold democratic elections, and then, if all goes well, he plans to take over Kerovnia and force the Royal family into exile."

Kronos stroked his beard thoughtfully, and gazed deeply at his friend. "I wonder if you would introduce me to this Gringo person, Harry." he said. "It's strange I have not heard of him before. I tend to know everyone in Kerovnia, especially in political circles."

"Oh, I don't think it so surprising that you haven't heard of Gringo. After all, the dwarf faction don't have any seats in the Royal Parliament. The entire Government is run by the King's political friends and the supporters of the Royal house of Aquitania. The whole thing smacks of nepotism. I always have my ear to the ground, here in the hills. I suppose all you hear, living in the palace, is the same old royalist propoganda."

Kronos, somewhat taken aback at Harry's social and political acumen, decided that the problem must be the magic potion, and resolved that in future he would cut down on the parsley and thyme, to avoid any further embarrassment. Harry, finding Kronos's discomfort amusing, and on a definite high, having just taken an extra slug of potion, roared with glee, slapped all seven of his thighs and set the roof of his house alight with a cascading shower of orange sparks!

"Pray curb your enthusiasm, Harry. I shall have to pay for the refurbishment of your gloomy lair out of the Royal purse. Conduct me a straight way to the home of this Gringo Baconburger and introduce us. I think it is of the utmost urgency that we meet before the set of sun."

Kronos spoke with stern authority, and the dragon realised that the fun and games were at an end. He padded obediently over to a stone recess, from which he removed his blue and gold striped scarf, which he wound ten or fifteen times round his neck with his ivory plated teeth. He moved towards the entrance of the cave, donning his best Sunday tweed hat, which he stuck jauntily between his large floppy ears.

"OK. Shall we go? Do you really want to go? Is it absolutely necessary to go? It's rather late to go calling. Do you think we'll wake him up? Do you think he'll be annoyed? It's rather a long way. Jolly cold outside, it's - "

"Stop fussing, you overgrown tadpole!" snarled Kronos. "Can't you ever summon up the spirit of adventure, worrying whether a dwarf - a mere dwarf - will be inconvenienced or not. Pshaw! Tcha! Hrmph! What care I for dwarfs - or any other creature? The only thing that matters is that I see him, and that we proceed without delay."

With that, Kronos strolled out of the cave, muttering to himself that it was difficult to find a chap of one's own intellectual ability, and that dragons could sometimes be extremely boring.

Harry stumbled along behind him, his clawed feet slipping occasionally on the moss-covered stones that had been carved into the staircase for the use of the local residents. The dragon, feeling rather hurt, bumbled and stumbled along until he finally overtook Kronos, and, leading the way down the slope to the edge of the valley, pointed out the lights twinkling in the distance: The home of Gringo Baconburger.

At that hour of the night there was nobody else to be seen. No busy dwarfs heading towards the mines, with spades and shovels slung over their shoulders; no little people pushing carts filled with home-made produce for sale to the mining canteens. There were no ladies of noble class riding their magnificent unicorns through the hills, followed by their foot servants. The land was quiet and dark as far as the eye could see. The moon was like a giant, iced vanilla balloon gleaming brilliantly in the pagoda of the sky. It lit the way to the deep bottom of the valley, clearly showing the stairs which led to the residential area where Gringo had his small stone house.

As they neared the house the moon passed overhead, and for a few seconds lit up the golden chimney, perched on top of the roof. This chimney had

become a symbol, for the members of Gringo's political party, of the strife that was yet to come. Harry paused, and gazed intently at the beautiful object, which somewhat resembled a gold charm on a bracelet.

He was a sentimental fellow, and he felt tears pricking at his large watery eyes.

"Kronos, don't you think it would be rather lovely if I could have a chimney like that? Or perhaps a silver one would be more fashionable?"

Kronos preserved a dignified silence. Though he had raised the dragon himself, he could hardly believe that the animal could talk such nonsense. Kronos, like most sorcerers, was something of a Victorian, and averse to any display of enthusiasm or extremes of emotion. He had never learnt to cry, and rarely showed signs of sentiment: In the Magician's Guild it is, of course, considered a sign of weakness. (Although it is rumoured that the green witches of Aquitania had learnt certain feminine wiles; in order to charm wizards and steal away their magic powers!)

Upon reaching Gringo's house, Kronos removed his magical golden wand from his inside vest pocket and clasped it firmly in his left hand. Should they encounter any problems, he intended to use it. Harry peered through the lattice windows, and saw that several candles had been lit and carefully positioned on a large beechnut desk, at which a rather handsome dwarf was seated, scribbling furiously away on a piece of parchment. Kronos rapped sharply at the door, and the dwarf, looking up, saw the dragon breathing furiously at him through the window.

Gringo rose slowly from his cushioned chair, pushed the dark curly locks from his eyes, removed the horn-rimmed reading glasses from his unusually small nose, walked purposefully towards the front door, opened it sharply and proceeded to knock the magic wand straight out of Kronos's hand!

"None of that here, old man", he admonished the astonished magician. "We

don't go in for magic and that sort of tomfoolery around here, you know. Put away that juvenile by-product of crowd-control technology! Grow up, be a man, get a decent job! Come in, sit down, have a scotch and soda!"

Kronos, scarlet with indignation, grudgingly followed Gringo into the hallway, bending his long neck to avoid colliding with the copper bell hanging from the doorway. Harry, stifling a fiery chortle, winked at the gold chimney, did a little pirouette and skipped after Kronos into the hall.

They followed Gringo into a narrow room furnished with comfortable weather-beaten sofas covered with cotton sheets. The room was too low for the dragon and he had to curl his immensely long tail into a tight ball and sit on it. Gringo motioned Kronos into the largest of the three armchairs, while he went to the sideboard and poured out three strong measures of whisky in large crystal goblets. Kronos had gone an even darker shade of purple and was rubbing his hands together so violently that they gave off sparks of anger.

The dwarf served the drinks with irritating slowness. Kronos's face turned from purple to white with fury, and smoke began to pour out from his ears. Harry, whose tail was suffering severe cramp, collapsed to the floor, rolled over on his back, and stared gloomily at the ceiling, deeply regretting that he had left the posters lying about his room. Gringo handed round the drinks (shaken, not stirred), and sat sedately on his cushioned chair. Kronos finished his glass in one gulp, and spitting with rage jumped to his feet and screeched at Harry, who was by now rolling about in a drunken stupor:

"You know alcohol and magic potion don't mix! You foolish, foolish dragon. You should be ashamed of yourself!"

Gringo winked at the befuddled dragon. "So you are the beast that everybody has been complaining about. Perhaps instead of casting your evil fog over these parts, you would do us all a favour and smother the palace instead."

"Certainly not!" Interrupted Kronos. "What a disgraceful suggestion. What do you know about dragons anyway?"

"Actually quite a lot", answered Gringo, complacently. "My doctoral thesis contained three chapters on the influence of the red dragons on the Kerovnian population during the reign of King Faldos. It is well known that these beasts possessed quite alarming intellectual faculties, and that they were used -"

"Enough! Enough, I say." screamed the magician, his face turning every colour of the rainbow. "For heavens sake, enough of this idle chitchat, let's get down to business."

"I am not entirely sure," replied Gringo calmly, "That you and I have any business to discuss." This prompted a stream of unprintable abuse from the irate magician, causing Harry to squirm into a corner with embarrassment and wrap his tail firmly around his ears.

Gringo stared at the sorcerer as he whipped his magic wand from his pocket and brandished it in the dwarf's face.

"I'll get my own back on you, you stunted little villian! Don't imagine you could possibly seize power in Kerovnia without consulting the genius of Kronos. Your puny political activities are at an end, my friend. The time is ripe for me to rule all of this domain, and you and your like will grovel as my subjects!"

With this parting shot he swept out of the room, and Harry, uncoiling his aching limbs, swayed out after him.

"Well", said Gringo, "It looks like the fun is just beginning". He replenished his empty glass, picked up the telephone, dialled a secret number, and said "George, get over here pronto! And hold the front page, we've got one hell of a story for the palace newspaper! Oh, bring Pete with you, while you're at

it. We'll have to creep over to that dragon's lair to sneak some photos. What do you think of this for a headline? KRONOS AND DRAGON EN TETE A TETE - WHAT A TEA PARTY!"



## CHAPTER FIVE

The peachy summer days drifted slowly by. Kerovnia, land of milk and honey (and nut yogurt) blossomed and flourished in the eternal sunshine. The court that year had decided to remain in Keros, mainly because Erik had heard, from underground sources, of a potential dwarf uprising. Queen Jendah, however, had left for the winter palace where she was working on her royal architectural projects.

Zita and Kronos had gone on holiday, and were shortly to attend a secret sorcerers conference. Lacey was packing; excitedly preparing to leave for Aquitania to join her fiancée. Love had transformed Lacey: her hair had grown shoulder length, the braces had been removed from her teeth, and the judicious use of plum and strawberry make-up cleverly disguised many of her spots and pimples. She was wearing higher heeled shoes, and shorter dresses, and she proudly displayed her knobbly knees to the assembled journalists at the railway station as she boarded the purple express for her departure to Aquitania.

In the happy throng, concealed behind the band playing the Kerovnian national anthem, lurked Gringo, accompanied by Pete and George, the Underworld newspaper's photographers. Lacey's excitement at visiting Aquitania for the first time was fully justified; she could see that most of the country looked like a gigantic seaside resort with the occasional enclave of coconut or almond trees. The waters of the Aquitanian sea were the purest and greenest in the universe, with unrivalled displays of coral and fish. The city of Aquatica itself is a brilliant white, with houses

of domed roofs and porpoise-shaped swimming pools. The palace where Lacey was to stay was fashioned of pink marble, and flamingoes fluttered in droves from every rampart and tower.

As Lacey alighted from the train the whole of Aquatica seemed to be there to meet her, and suddenly, there was Malcolm, rushing forward with arms outstretched to greet her! He was tanned and fit, wearing his grey and white tracksuit, white leather sneakers, with his walkman strung casually around his muscular neck. Only one person was seen to be scowling slightly. Lord Audarva, father of the bossy and jealous Lady Franceska. Malcolm shepherded Lacey away from the tumultuous throng and they embarked in his private helicopter for the Palace. They alighted on the heli-pad on the Palace roof, scattering squawking flamingoes left and right. The appointed ladies in waiting, curtsying and giggling, led the way to the elevator, which descended to Lacey's bedroom suite overlooking the famous cactus gardens.

Her rooms were magnificent - Larger than any she had seen before, with its ornate white and pink silk hangings, and intricate antique furniture. She had her own telephone, television, and two video recorders. One for her, and a smaller one for Poops.

While Lacey was unpacking her Cindy dolls, the ladies in waiting bustled around with towels and toiletries, hairbrushes and ribbons, puffs and powders, soaps and unguents. Suddenly the phone rang - It was her mother, Queen Jendah, telephoning long distance from Kozza, the capital of the mountain region. She had been joined at the winter palace by Queen Hortensa, and the two ladies had spent many a happy hour together in deep conclave, plotting and planning the forthcoming Royal Wedding. She was on tenterhooks to enquire of Lacey if she was behaving herself in a Royal and ladylike manner? - If everything was going well? Was Malcolm truly smitten? - The Aquitanian court duly impressed by her ladylike beauty and decorum? - Was Poops behaving himself? - And had she remembered to pack a second pair of tights?

As hours became days, and days drifted into weeks, Lacey hardly noticed the passing of time in her constant delight and happiness with Aquitania in general, and the bold Malcolm in particular. Things however, did not continue so smoothly in the Kingdom of Kerovnia. Unrest amongst the general population was increasing. Dissatisfaction was rife because of the burden of increased taxation. The Royal family already owned two palaces and a residential seaside villa, and now another Royal Palace was planned, not to mention the enormous expenditure of the fast approaching Royal Wedding. Queen Jendah had several private building projects on hand, and the Added Value Tax on the emerald mining had risen to an unprecedented 23%! Erik had been warned by his subterranean espionage agency that mass insurrection was brewing and he decided to take the heat out of the situation by holding a democratic by-election.

This was a unique, historic, and (some thought) dangerous notion:- but nevertheless Erik insisted that candidates for the election should comprise not only of a member of the Noble family guild, but also representatives of the Little People, Gnome and Dwarf communities. It was the dawn of a new era, history was in the melting pot: Erik, Gringo, Kronos, Jendah, Zita, (and indeed Lacey herself) would all have their part to play in the rich tapestry of events that were soon to follow.

Lacey splashed happily in the dappled water of the swimming pool, surrounded by the playful Dolphos, (the hybrid of dolphin-frogs), that she had befriended during her stay in Aquitania. She felt fitter and happier than she had done in her entire life. This, despite her ominous lobster-pink colour: a result of either too little sun-screen lotion, or too much of Malcolm! Although the Princess's visit was running more smoothly than Malcolm had expected, this did not deter his gaze from wandering from Lacey's face, and dwelling on the lanky legged Franceska, as she scowled aggressively at the royal photographers. He felt a twinge of regret that he would shortly see her only on state occasions - and that official business would have to replace monkey business! Jumping up and stretching to the full four feet and two inches of his tanned and rippling frame, he dived in royal fashion into the heated water, and energetically

swam several lengths of the pool to impress the female spectators. Lacey stopped splashing around, and gazed wonderingly at her Prince. She pushed the Dolphos to one side and put a hand to her trembling bosom, as Malcolm calmly swam over to Franceska, and wickedly pinched her toes.

Franceska squealed "Don't do that Malcolm, you know how ticklish I am."

"Why don't you come for a swim, you lazy beast" he quipped, and grabbing her by the ankle, pulled her into the water. Then, while the guests laughed wildly at his antics, he chased the Lady Franceska round the perimeter of the pool, whooping and yelling as she screamed with delight. Her pleasure was considerably increased when she noticed a shocked Princess Lacey regarding the scene with horror and dismay.

"Malcolm. Oh no, Malcolm" Lacey whispered. "Don't do this to me. Why are you so interested in that - that thing, when I am here? Why, Malcolm? Oh, Why?" Her whisper rose steadily to a nasal whine, and Poops, who was fast asleep under a large cactus, began barking fiercely.

Dorabs are often over-protective towards their mistresses, and when he saw Lacey's distress he whipped himself into a fury. Dashing towards the edge of the pool, he tripped over an empty wine glass and somersaulted into the water. With teeth bared and nostrils flaring, he dorab-paddled at high speed towards the frolicking Franceska.

Before you could say "Humfrey Humbleburger!" Poops had his teeth in the top half of her bikini, and as the wild flurry of flashing teeth and frothing spray subsided....

**SHOCK! HORROR! READ ALL ABOUT IT - Franceska's torso was suddenly revealed to the delighted throng, as naked as the day she was born!**

Malcolm's lithe figure carved through the water towards Franceska, partly to rescue her from the vicious dorab, but mainly to get a close up view of the lady's embarrassment. Teeth snapping, fur flying, Poops turned on

Malcolm, and viciously bit his finger. Malcolm screamed in pain and hit out at the tiny creature. Missing the Dorab by an inch, he caught Francesca a glancing blow on the jaw and knocked her under the water. The guests, thinking Malcolm was suffering from sun stroke, and was attacking the lovely lady, began diving into the water and raining blows from all sides upon the unfortunate Prince, who was soon knocked unconscious, and had to be rescued by the Royal Lifeguards.

Lacey became hysterical and ran screaming from the pool to her room, closely followed by several ladies of the court, shrieking and swooning as they fluttered behind her. The horror of the entire scene had been caught by two dwarf journalists, hiding behind some pringle bushes, who were bearing Gringo's support badge, and had been taking photographs of the prevailing confusion.

News of the events spread quickly to other lands, and the ten o'clock news on Aquitanian television devoted a full hour to the story. King Erik was disturbed from a heavy game of pinochle, to attend an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss the advisability of his daughter's intended marriage. Hortensa cut short her visit to Silenissia to return home, and Jendah rushed back to the capital city to comfort her daughter. Foreign reporters had been urged to treat the entire affair as an unfortunate accident - mere high spirits by the holiday guests - but the underground press made excellent use of both pictures and story to further undermine the King's already shaky position.

Kronos, chortling continually to himself, turned the whole affair to his advantage; persuading many members of the Palace staff that Lacey suffered from congenital madness, which was responsible for the entire incident. And when the poor red-eyed princess returned home, with no official greeting or palace band for welcome, unkind whispers and rumours abounded on every side. Jendah decided her daughter should spend several months at Kozza, recuperating from the traumatic affair. Malcolm was in disgrace, and was sent to the countryside, where, as a punishment, he was enrolled as leader of the boy scouts association. Deep in his heart he still

felt strongly for Lacey and was ashamed of his own behavior. Why had he sparked off the whole ridiculous incident? Perhaps, after all, Franceska's mother had been a green witch!

## CHAPTER SIX

For Gringo and many of the dwarfs, it seemed an eternity until election day. Their time had been fully occupied with many and varied tasks, pinning posters of Gringo to the trees around the forest perimeter, addressing rallies of eager dwarfs, and preparing political speeches. Not to mention the day-to-day running of the emerald mines and the tourist industry.

Erik's spies had promised a reward of two golden coins to every dwarf, gnome or little person who voted for the Royalist party, for the King felt that if a commoner was elected to the empty seat in the forthcoming by-election, it would signal the beginning of the end of his tenuous grip on his empire.

Malcolm, in Aquitania, was beginning to enjoy the outdoor life. He led his boy scout troop with pride, and was secretly planning a trip to Kerovnia to sweep Lacey off her feet and marry her in total secrecy, surrounded by his eagle scouts - Disappearing with Lacey and the entire troop as company to some forlorn country retreat, where there would be plenty of rock climbing and hiking to indulge in.

Kronos, on the other hand, was plunged into a deep despair. Although he had nothing but contempt for King Erik, the last thing in the world he wanted was to see the dreadful Gringo elected to office. He had planned to prepare a magic potion which he would introduce into Kerovnia's water supply, which would sway the populus towards the royalist party. But due

to lack of time and because he was without the vital assistance of Zita (who was busily employed in looking after the prostrate Lacey) he was unable to prepare the magic potion in time. He stayed locked in his room, sulking away the few days that remained before the election.

At last the great day dawned - and Gringo won the seat by a stupendous majority. As the dwarf journalists proudly read the notices on television that night, Gringo was carried, shoulder high, to the local tavern, where his supporters drank whisky (The finest, distilled by the Roobikyoub dwarfs) and Sparkling Spring Water (The most pure from the Obakanga valley) all night long. When the results came through, Erik hurled his crown on the floor, and jumped up and down on it! A fit of bad temper, which he instantly regretted, as it was full of spiky diamonds and very knobbly rubies!

Kronos, on the other hand, once he was presented with the fait accompli of Gringo's election, wasted no time on idle fury, but began sketching out future plans for tricking the dwarf leader into collaboration with the evil sorcerer.

After the hectic events of the last few days, Gringo fell into a deep slumber. He dreamt, amongst other things, that he was making his maiden speech in parliament - and suddenly awoke to discover that he was!

The long Kerovnian summer months drifted slowly to an end, marked by an Indian summer of brilliant sunshine and cloudless blue sky. The wheat and barley harvest were completed well on time, because the little people, overjoyed by Gringo's success, worked harder than they had ever done before. The dwarves, too, went happily about their labours, singing and whistling political airs, in polite mockery of the King and noblemen. The only person who seemed dissatisfied was Gringo himself, for, although he had the attention of certain radical royalists, no political, or social changes seemed imminent.

A few weeks prior to the National Celebration and Parade day, Gringo



called an emergency meeting of the Elderly Dwarf Society, and outlined his plans for a national strike. He was intent on ridding Kerovnia of Kronos and Zita and their strange powers over the Royal Family; for surely they were in league with the forces of evil? Once Kronos and Zita had been banished, it would not be too difficult, he suggested, to gradually dismantle the entire monarchic system? Lacey could marry Prince Malcolm and spend the rest of her days in Aquitania; and the King and Queen should be politely, but if necessary forcibly, removed - either to the summer home or the winter palace. This would leave the capital city free for the dwarves themselves to inhabit. Gringo secretly looked forward to redecorating the palacious rooms at Keros, and inviting the numerous members of his family to take up residence in the various outhouses! The whole scheme was wildly approved by his friends and associates, who had spent most of their working lives toiling in the mines - to the sole benefit of the King's exchequer.

Queen Jendah was depressed and aggravated by the current events in Kerovnia, though for quite a different reason from that which was upsetting her husband. She had received several nagging letters from her erstwhile friend, Hortensa, urging her to decide on a wedding date for the Royal couple. She presented various excuses for Malcolm's extraordinary behaviour; saying that he was a reformed character and that he would be only too pleased to assist Erik in the day-to-day running of Kerovnia. She reminded Jendah that Lattecia was almost eighteen, and was getting somewhat long in the tooth for an unmarried lady! These letters inspired rage in the Queen, who realised that Hortensa was trying to install this sprig of Aquitanian Royalty in the Kerovnian lineage. If her precious daughter were to marry the baboon, he could legally remain in Kerovnia for ever - and eventually force the King to abdicate in favour of his daughter and the Prince Consort!

Malcolm was completely under Hortensa's thumb, and if given the opportunity he would soon remove the dwarfs from political office and replace the mineworkers with Aquitanian peasants. Jendah made up her mind that under no circumstances would her daughter ever marry the

neighbouring Prince. She would soon find a suitable match elsewhere.

Lacey, unaware of her mother's plans regarding her future, continued to write to Malcolm twice daily. She dictated her letters to Zita, who passed them immediately onto Jendah. All these letters were put into a large copper chest, hidden under the Queen's bed. All the incoming letters from Malcolm were discreetly removed from the Princess's mail tray first thing in the morning, and also hidden in the copper chest.

Zita continually nagged the poor girl, telling her she was wasting her time writing to Malcolm, as he obviously had no intention of replying. The princess grieved deeply and began to sicken. She was no longer the dumpy, knock-kneed girl of yore. She soon turned into a scarecrow-like figure, with a grey face, and straggly hair. Her pale eyes became black with sorrow, and sunk deep into her wrinkled face. She begged Zita to use her magic powers to explain why Malcolm had forgotten her; and Zita would then pretend to look deeply into her crystal ball and tell disturbing tales of Malcolm's love for a certain Aquitanian lady, and how he had lost interest in Lacey because of her lack of 'sporting' prowess. The situation was made even worse, because Kronos in his off-duty hours would visit Zita and encourage her to keep the princess well away from Malcolm. Kronos feared that if Lacey married the foreign Prince, and power was eventually handed over to Queen Hortensa, then the dwarfs would be banished from Kerovnia, and the Aquitanian army would take command of the kingdom; whereupon Kronos himself would at best be banished, or at worse assassinated by some Aquitanian thug.

In the early days of Autumn, the political situation finally came to a head. Parliament had been convened to discuss seating arrangements for the famous September Parade some two days later. A list of foreign guests to be invited to the ceremony had also to be drawn up without delay. The debate droned on for three hours or more, when suddenly Gringo leapt to his feet, spectacles in hand, and loudly proclaimed:

"Gentlemen! The time has come to face the realities in Kerovnia. How

many times have I beseeched you to revise and revitalise our society? But all you do is sleep and snore through every parliamentary session, when there is work to be done."

Shouts of protest arose from the assembled members, waving their clenched fists, and demanding that the dwarf should be removed from the chamber.

Erik, who was fast asleep, was woken by Kronos. He looked blearily around him, and, quite misunderstanding the situation, gestured to Gringo to finish his speech. The dwarf did not hesitate, and raising his voice to fever pitch, pointed at the Royal Magician, and uttered the following curse:

"Damn you, Kronos! Damn you and your sister Zita! A curse upon your evil souls! It is you who are responsible for all the ills that assail our country!"

Kronos jumped to his feet, bellowing in rage, and called upon the household cavalry to take Gringo prisoner. At that moment a group of angry dwarfs appeared, brandishing sabres and guns; and before the cavalry had a chance to arrest Gringo, the armed group of little men formed a circle around the perimeter of the hall, their weapons pointing towards the assembly. The King, too bewildered to speak, collapsed in a heap on his throne, weeping copiously. Gringo jumped down from the podium and made his way to the centre of the stage, through a throng of cheering dwarves.

"This is your last chance Kronos. Either you leave the palace and the land of Kerovnia peacefully, or you and your sister-in-crime, Zita, will be imprisoned!"

He turned to the King: "Your Majesty, do you not realise that you have been nurturing two vipers in your bosom? Your magician, and your ex-nursery maid? Do you realise the harm they have caused over the years through their malign influence on the Princess Lacey, the future Queen of Kerovnia?"

The King's sobs were replaced by a wail of anguish, "Oh no" he moaned "can this be true, Gringo? I fear it is, I fear you are right after all!"

Silence descended on the hall as the audience held its breath. Suddenly the dwarves rushed forward and Kronos, snarling and barking like a mad dog was pinned to the ground. His face became a deep purple, and his ears belched forth flame and smoke. The congregation of elderly noblemen retreated slowly to the doors, seeking the safety of the fire exits. Kronos, bellowing like a wounded buffalo as he realised the totality of his defeat, clasped his hands together, and intoned a strange incantation, beseeching help from his unknown Master.

For a few moments nothing happened; and then suddenly the entire room exploded into a myriad of lights, as an orange ball of fire descended through the roof and plummeted to the polished wooden floor. Fortunately Gringo had a pair of sunglasses with him, but the light was so overwhelming that the dwarves holding Kronos were forced to let him go. Gringo stared in amazement as Kronos leapt into a burning fiery carriage that appeared from the orange ball of flame. It was drawn by four black horses, rearing and snorting, pulling and tearing at their harnesses of molten red fire. Their hooves scraped the floor, the silver of their shoes glittering and sparking; their whinnying, a sound too terrible for human ears.

The ball of fire floated through the ceiling, and Gringo shivered with fear as he saw the driver of the devilish contraption. He wore a long black cape, his top hat was aflame, a long driving whip firmly gripped in his cloven leather gloves. He howled and screamed with glee at the frightened throng pressing themselves into the corners of the hall.

"See you all again" he screeched; and as his words reverberated on the wind, the fiery vision vanished.

Eventually order was restored, and Erik was put to bed with a severe dose

of hiccups. Gringo rallied his supporters and gave instructions that they should spread out around the town to avoid any trouble. He gave orders for Zita to be arrested, and removed from the country home of Kozza, to a place of safety far beneath the great Atina mountains.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Gringo decided that the national celebration day should go ahead, although he would have to force agreement to a democratic general election later on. On reflection he felt that the terrifying events that day in parliament were nothing more than a magic trick produced by Kronos to effect his escape. He was convinced that he would shortly return - if only in an attempt to rescue his sister, Zita.

It was thought better to keep all reports of these strange and terrifying events away from the ears of the fragile Princess Lacey. As the celebration day grew nearer, excitement mounted among the Kerovnians. It was felt in the air that great events were afoot. There were many radical changes in Kerovnian society, the most unusual being the formation, by public decree, of a Worry and Suggestion Society. Large yellow boxes were placed in the main streets, into which people could place papers indicating their worries, desires, and suggestions for reform in Kerovnia. The boxes were emptied regularly three times a day, and the suggestions were studied by the president of the Society and his colleagues. By this, and other subtle and insidious means, Kerovnian society began to turn quietly and discreetly into a community of dwarves.

The morning of the national celebration proved to be fine, if rather windy. Erik, still weak from his chronic attack of hiccups, managed a brave smile as his stable lads brought Bruce to the mounting block. The royal horse was in fine spirits, his long black mane was threaded with gold, and pink roses had been fastened to his tail. He had been shod with golden shoes,

and his horn was of a matching hue. Queen Jendah was sporting a long sweeping gown of pure silver, on which were fashioned hundreds of tiny flags of the Kerovnian state.

Erik, who had mellowed somewhat since his illness, permitted her for the first time to wear a crown. Unfortunately no crowns had been forged for women in the Kingdom for many centuries, and hers was too large, and threatened either to fall off the back of her head or slip down over her nose. Lacey had not been permitted to join the royal procession, so she had to be content to watch her parents leave the Palace from the main balcony. It was considered wiser for her own safety that she remained within the Palace walls, although she planned to join the festivities later in the day. The royal cortege moved slowly away in the brilliant sunshine.

The King and Queen were flanked by members of their personal guard, dressed in their best uniforms of red and gold. Behind the foot soldiers walked the royal mascot, none other than Poops, dressed for the occasion in a tiny gold and red coat. He was followed by the head kennel-keeper, dressed in identical uniform.

Then came a unit of the golden cavalry mounted on pink unicorns representing the light-guards, and finally a division of the heavy-guard mounted on pale blue elephants. Behind the elephants followed a procession of royal guests and various members of the aristocracy. The royal cortege proceeded peacefully for three miles, the cheering becoming ever louder as the sun rose higher in the sky. But then, as they rounded a narrow bend, to pass in front of the Town Hall where the mayor was waiting to greet them, Bruce suddenly panicked at the sight of a green and yellow crocodile and reared high on his hind legs. Erik's visor slammed shut across his eyes, the charger reared again, and the King lost his balance and hurtled to the ground, hitting his head on the pavement, and was promptly knocked unconscious.

The guards rushed forward to assist his majesty, and Jendah, fearing that

her mount would be crushed in the panic, spurred her little unicorn forward. Suddenly out of the blue a large stone whistled through the air, and struck her smartly in the centre of her forehead. She toppled off her mount, and in an instant died.

A mysterious shadow fluttered over her and disappeared.

The horrific news of Jendah's assassination spread quickly throughout the neighbouring countries, and Kerovnia went into deep mourning for the beautiful Queen. The King, who had suffered nothing more than a bump on the head, retired to Kerga with his daughter to prepare for the funeral.

They were joined at Kerga by numerous noblemen and state councillors, who gathered to advise the King on what course of action should be taken. Many thought that Erik himself was at fault, because he had allowed the lowly dwarfs to take power; and others blamed him for exiling the sorcerer - who surely could have predicted, and thus probably avoided, the tragic train of events.

Queen Hortensa, for her part, feared that a matrimonial union would now never take place between the two countries. On the advice of her green witch she determined to marry Erik, thus ensuring that Kerovnia and Aquitania were permanently linked. One person who had been quite forgotten by those at Kerga (admittedly an easy person to forget) was the noble Malcolm. On hearing the news of Queen Jendah's death, his thoughts raced to his beloved Lacey; and he proceeded post haste by way of helicopter to Kerga.

Many people were milling around the palace, but Lacey was nowhere to be seen. The Princess spent most of her days looking out to sea, seated on a great wooden raft that floated on the waters on the main palace swimming pool. She was unaware that the Prince had arrived in Kerga, and thought that her happiness had been lost forever. Malcolm explored every nook and cranny of the Summer Palace and eventually wandered into the extensive gardens. Creamy clouds speckled the pale blue sky, light winds rose off



the sea, and brushed Lacey's hair against her cabbage cheeks. Poops, who was also in a state of nervous depression, sat next to her listlessly reading a comic. She stared miserably out to sea, searching for a ship that would come and rescue her.

Suddenly, out of the blue sky, a voice reverberated across the water: "Lacey, my darling, so this is where you have been hiding from me all this time. At last I have found you!"

Lacey rose to her feet, and at the sight of Malcolm, swooned and fell into the water. Poops barked madly, and Malcolm carried the bedraggled princess to the safety of the shore and administered the kiss of life, at unnecessary length. Eventually she opened her pale red eyes, looked into the deep blue of Malcolm's and knew that, at last, she had found True Love.

"We must leave here at once!" said the Prince, "Let us make our way to the capital and seek help from friends. Will you come with me, my adored one?"

"Of course", uttered Lacey weakly. "I will follow you to the ends of the earth." Tears of happiness, mingled with beetroot mascara, ran down her cheeks.

"Let us leave at once" whispered Malcolm "I shall order a carriage of unicorns to be prepared. It is too dangerous to travel by helicopter, we could be intercepted by a unit of flying walruses! - Go quickly and pack some clothes and we shall be on our way to happiness"

Whilst this idyllic scene was taking place, Erik sat listening unhappily to the recriminations of his advisors, demanding the removal of all dwarfs from the land of Kerovnia.

"They are but murderers and thieves!" screamed the courtiers. "They killed the Queen. Banish them forever, let them be punished for all eternity!"

A united cry arose from the assembled throng, louder and louder still:

"Banish the murderers, banish the murderers!"

"Perhaps they are correct", mused Erik at length. "Bring forth my secretaries and let them enscribe this decree:

'All dwarves are henceforth banished from Kerovnia! All power that has been given them, whether political or financial, is hereby rescinded'"

The secretaries busily scribbled the King's decree on a huge sheet of parchment, and the noblemen nodded in agreement.

Hortensa felt strangely moved by Erik's display of strength in such difficult times, - and promised herself that she would marry the bereaved King at the earliest opportunity.

Erik then ordered the assembly to leave the room, indicating by a nod and a vague wave of the hand that the audience was over. Jauntily adjusting his September crown so that it covered his balding patch, he rose to his feet, pulling his ermine cloak firmly around him. As he left the room the crowd bowed low in obeisance. Erik felt decidedly better: he had rarely felt so wise, so noble, so respected - so very much a King!

## EPILOGUE

And so it came to pass that almost all the friendly dwarf community, together with their cousins, the Little People, were forced to leave their jobs, abandon their stone houses and go to live in the neighbouring lands to scrape a meagre existence from the soil.

The resourceful Gringo, however, stayed behind and rallied his compatriots and friends. The more influential of his companions were hidden safely in the mountainous regions in bolt-holes that had been built long ago in case of war or other emergencies.

Erik dwelt at Kerga, cosseted by Hortensa, who strived to win his heart. Although the King found her intelligent (for a woman), he had no intention of remarrying; at least not until he had found his precious Lacey. Since Malcolm and his princess had fled the summer palace, no news had reached Erik of their whereabouts. He had been informed by a coachman that the Prince had requested a carriage and four unicorns, and the last he had seen of Princess Lacey, she was being bundled into the carriage by Malcolm. Then they had sped away from Kerga in a cloud of dust, and disappeared.

At first the King had found it difficult to believe that his daughter could have run away with such a fellow, and thought that perhaps the coachman had been mistaken. He hoped that Lacey had simply taken up residence at Kozza to be alone with her thoughts. He could not have been further from the truth!

Two weeks after the funeral a messenger, travelling south on an errand for Queen Hortensa, thought that he had spotted the carriage heading north. The description of the man driving the unicorns fitted Malcolm, although the Princess had not been seen. The King began to worry about Lacey quite seriously. Spies were sent out to every corner of the land in an endeavour to trace the couple, and a huge reward was offered for any news of their whereabouts.

Erik began to lose weight, and took to spending long hours in his bed-chamber, reflecting on the miseries of life. Hortensa, quick to take advantage of the situation, made herself head of the Kerovnian parliament.

The months sped by, and soon the winter melted into spring, with still no news of the Princess and her Prince. The King took finally and completely to his bed and the land of Kerovnia plunged into financial and political despair!

As the economic climate degenerated, it began to look as if the Royal Treasury would fail to pay off the national debt. Nature herself took a strange course - The great forests that had so dominated the countryside, with their emerald green beauty, began to wither and die. Agricultural experts were asked to explain why the thousand year old trees were suddenly losing their lust for life. Tree surgeons tried many different medications but the trees continued to die, and it was feared that very soon there would be no forest left at all.

The greatest loss to the community was Princess Lacey and Prince Malcolm. Both Hortensa and Erik, in their grief, had abandoned the idea of seeing their children again, and feared that the wicked dwarfs had assassinated them whilst on route to Kozza. To console their grief, they decided to remain together at Kerga and plan the future of their two countries.

And so the seasons changed once more, the skies became a brittle,

brilliant blue, and snow fell on the mountain tops. The dwarfs went about their underground activities with as much zeal as in the old days, and planned the coming revolution. The tourist season proved to be a minor success that year; which was of some comfort to the King, and throughout the winter months people were to be found trekking among the foothills mounted on the pretty pink unicorns.

There was an extraordinary discovery that year (first sighted by two investigative journalists) of a snowman, some ten feet tall, who overlooked the largest of the ice valleys. People travelled from far and wide to look at him, and admire the clownish smile forever pinned to his icy features. His eyes seemed to be focussed on one particular mountain peak - and from time to time a frosty tear rolled down his icy cheeks, turning to a tiny myriad-hue icicle as it touched the ground. It was almost as if he had lost something; or wanted to go in search of something, but could not, because he was so firmly rooted to his icy patch.

It was said by some that at night, when the moon hung silently in the sky counting the stars, it would tell sad tales of the old man living in the moon to the snowman, and in response his icy friend would invent strange stories of magicians and kings, fairies and princesses.....

## **Cypheric Help Section**

Another unique feature of The Pawn is an integrated Help Line written into the program itself which will provide you with limited advice on specific problems. This overcomes the Adventurer's usual nightmare of phoning the author, begging him for 20 minutes to impart some snippet of advice on how to kick the stuffing out of dragons, and finally being cut off half way through the solution. It's also considerably quicker and cheaper.

### **How it works**

We call this section 'cypheric' because instead of printing an answer in plain English, we provide you with an encrypted message or 'cypher' that, off the page, is totally meaningless. The Pawn recognises this cypher and will translate it for you if you type it in. Imparting help in this way overcomes the usual problem with hint-sheets (i.e. accidentally reading solutions to problems you haven't encountered yet.)

### **How to use it**

Scan the section for a question that resembles your particular problem. You will notice that there are about 3 cyphers to each question. These are roughly in order of difficulty, and you may be prevented from reading certain answers until you have achieved a certain score or level of competence.

### **Using the Cypher**

Simply type 'HINT' when prompted for a command by the game. Then enter the numbers and letters which lie between the '<' and '>' marks (you may ignore spaces if you wish). If a particular answer is not available you will be greeted with the message -

"You'll need more points to find that out!"

If you have entered the cypher incorrectly you will be told -

"Sorry, try that one again."

Remember, not all the answers will be useful to you. Some will be merely flippant. (It is said that a true adventurer prefers his wounds well salted!)

### **Example**

When the program has loaded, try entering the following:

```
<5N CM ET PA XX CF EQ PA XF CK EW PG XE CR E7 PU YU>  
<AN YV NB OA 7Q YL NB OQ GQ 50 RF M6 76 Y7 NB OZ G6 Y6 N1  
08 7Q 5Q RA MU GW HW>
```

If you successfully read those then you now understand how to use this section.

## Questions

How do I cross the red Line?

```
<5N CS EQ PØ XY TY I1 AU HD CD M9 G8 5E TE>  
<5N C8 E7 PV XB TB IR AE H6 CU EE PA HA TT IM AF XF CV EU  
PE XU CT EX PO XT TT IL AD H1 TJ IT AS HH TM IS PK YK>  
<AN Y5 NI OO GO 59 RV MU G5 Y5 NN OA 7H YJ NT MT GJ 5D RU  
OU 7A YD NØ OP 7Z Y9 N1 O8 7F 5R TR>
```

Why is the guru laughing?

```
<AN Y5 N6 OØ GØ 5B RJ MU 7Ø 5Ø RF MJ GT YT N5 OS PS>  
<MN PD XØ CH EV AV HH TA IF PF XV CU EK A9 HR CR ET PZ XB  
C5 I5 AU H1 T9 IR PR XL CH ES PF XM C5 EN PG XP TP I8 AQ  
HA RA>  
<5N CV E7 PL HL TT IJ AF HE TF IZ AD HF CF EL PQ XK TK I1  
AI HN TH EH PZ XK CZ EF PØ XZ TZ IF AM 5M>
```

How do I drop the wristband?

```
<TM OO 7P YJ N9 MD 7D YØ NP OS GM 5F NF OZ 7P 5U TU>  
<5A C7 EE PP XS TR ER G5 Y7 NA MA GS 5O RØ MZ GB 5X RB MV  
GW YW ND OX 7Q YA RA MP GX 56 N6 OW 7K YY NH MH GØ 5B RJ  
MO 7O YS NP OI GI 5J RØ MP 7S 5P NS ES>  
<TA OQ 7S Y1 R1 M9 GI 5S RH MM GS YS NF OJ 7U YD NL OB 7V  
5V RN MI 7I YO NS MS GH 5Ø NØ OL 7D YA RA MK GV 55 T5>
```

How do I get into the shed?

```
<TN OV 79 YU N7 M7 GY 5E RA OX 7Q 5Q RS M5 GN 5T RN MØ 7Ø  
YQ NV OA 7O YS NB OA PA>  
<MN PF XL CW ER PH HH TY I7 P7 XL CD EX AX HO TS IQ AK HW
```



TQ IW AM XM CI EP PO X1 CJ IJ A5 HG TK IY PY XA CE EZ 7Z>  
<MN PV X7 CL IL A7 HY T9 IG PG XZ CB E6 PØ X9 CR I7 P7 5V  
RB MD G9 5D RY OR PR>

What does the guru want?

<5N CG E5 AH XH CS ED AF HS CS EP PX XB TB ID PD 5K RZ MK  
GQ 5F NF IØ AJ HQ RQ>  
<5N CV E9 PØ HØ TJ IQ AX H6 TF IX PX XT CL IL AW HQ T8 IZ  
AK HU T5 IN A6 HO CE IE AP H8 C8 EF P6 X8 C5 I5 7N YS N6  
OF 7O YH NJ OP 7I Y1 C1>  
<5N CG E5 PU HU T5 IY AT XT CG EK PØ XK CF EG AG H1 T6 IN  
AV 5V>

How do I get past the guards?

<MN PE XG CJ E1 A1 HY T5 IS AY XY CW EU PJ X1 CY E5 PR X7  
C5 O5>  
<TN OD 7U YE NI OG 7Z YH RH MS GA YA NQ OZ 7K YA RA MY GE  
5A RU OU 7A YP NO OL GL 57 RY M9 79 YO NP OS 7D YU NB ML  
7B 5L TL>  
<5N CF EL PZ XP TP II AM HD TU EU PA XH CJ EV PD HD TY I7  
A8 X8 CF EJ AJ HI T7 I6 AW XW CK IK AL HW TF IQ AJ H9 C9  
EW PU XE TE IU AV HW TY I7 AO XV NV>

What do I do with the note?

<TN OV 77 YL RL MH GR 5Y RH MS GP 5H NH OS 7D 5I TI>  
<5N CI E5 A5 H6 TF IV AK HU TB EB PX XH CA EF PD XJ CT EL  
A8 X8 CF EJ PQ HB TX EX PB XM CW IW AR HH TT IR A5 HI TR  
ER P5 XU TV MV>  
<TN OA 7E Y8 NE OA 7D 5D RV MK 7K YW NY MY PA XD CL EB PZ  
XH TH IT AL HV TB IU GU>

How do I buy things?

<5N CØ EQ PM HS TR IS PS XP CI EP PG HG T1 I6 AL HW TG I7  
 AI H5 T7 E7 PY XI TI IØ AJ HV T5 IS GS>  
 <MN PD XU CW EP P7 XM TM IB AZ HO TX I5 P5 XY CT EZ PK HK  
 TW IR AH XH C1 EI PP XZ CP E8 A8 HD TB IM A7 HP TI I9 AI  
 XI CJ EB PX XH TH IN AI H5 TS I1 G1>  
 <MN P8 XQ CF EX P7 XG TG IW A6 HF CF E8 PS XX CF E5 PS XF  
 TD ED PQ XM CB EL PQ XA CF EX PN HN TM IA AD HU T8 I7 AP  
 H7 TL ML>

### How do I get the lead?

<TA OO 7L 5J RO OO 7G YM N5 OS 7N YS N5 OX GX 5T RA OA 7Q  
 YZ NK MK GY 57 RX MG AG>  
 <MA PF XS C5 I5 AN HG TF EF PS XT CH EL PI HI TK IV AK HF  
 RF>

### How do I read the tomes?

<MA P5 XN C8 EE AE H7 C7 EU PX XN CT EN AN XH TH O5 7R YM  
 N7 M7 GI 5K NK OR 7Y YD NM EM>  
 <TA OQ 7Z YF NS MS GM 5A RI MP 7P YM ND MD GB YB N5 ON 76  
 Y1 NØ ON GT YT NH OO 7L YW NR MR GY 5X RY OE GE X8 C5 EJ  
 AJ XL R9 M1 GG 5W NW IY AØ H9 TD I9 PK YK>  
 <AA YQ NZ OK 7Y YT RT MX GQ YQ NJ OF GF 5M RO MA GD 5V NV  
 OF 7K YG NO MO 77 57 RS M5 GU YU NT OM 7Q 5B RM M7 77 YU  
 NW OR 7W YM RM MW GU 5N NN OV 7H Y1 NJ O9 G9 5U R5 O5 7R  
 Y7 R7 MR GE 5D NZ EZ>

### How do I use the aerosoul?

<TX OO 7S 5R NR O5 7U 56 R5 O5 7I YN NV MV GU YU N7 OQ 78  
 YL N8 OW 7V Y8 R8 MZ GF 5S RD MB GW 5L N8 M8 GN 5H RT MZ  
 GP YE N7 OV 7E YA RM IM>  
 <TX O9 78 Y7 R7 MR GH 5R RT OT 7J YF RF M9 GU 5O RU OU 77

YY NS O5 7G YN NX MX GM 5P RJ MO GL HL>  
<AX XO TX EO GP 5S RN ON 7V Y9 NØ ON GN 5H RJ MO GL YL N1  
OJ GJ 5Z RT MY GW 56 RZ ME 7E YM N7 OE 7M 5M NM EM>  
<TX IU AE HA TB IA PA XT CM EØ PM XI CP IS GS>

### How do I kill Kronos?

<TN OF 7L YD N9 OØ GØ 5U R9 MI GK YK NV O6 G6 57 RM ME GG  
55 RV ME 7E YS NR O1 7J YO RO MR GE 5P RM MH GP YP NL OI  
PI>  
<MM PW XU CN IE AO HE CE EY PT XY CH IH AX HN TT I9 P9 XW  
CR EE PP HP TO IX AP HZ TQ I8 A5 X5 C6 E1 PR XW CØ E9 79  
<MA PK XV C5 I5 AT HØ TP IZ PZ XU C9 ED P9 H9 TV I1 AD XD  
CØ EF AF HL TQ IX PX XY CR E5 P8 Y8>  
<AS YD NJ OP 7X Y6 R6 M7 GG 50 NO OK 7V YN NY O7 7R 5R RP  
MX GB 5X RY MT 7T YH NØ MØ GB 5J RU IU>  
<TS O1 76 YE RE MM GT 5A NX OB GB 5Q R8 ME 7E YO NS OP 7H  
5H RØ MQ 7Q Y6 N1 M1 GV 5N TN>  
<5N CØ EQ PM HM TN II AW HQ T6 E6 P7 XV CH IH AØ HB TV EV  
PN XR CH EL P6 X1 C8 E7 PX XY CT EH PL HL TK IZ AR H5 TA  
IE PE YE>

### Where's the thermonuclear device?

<MS PD XA CK IK AW XW CØ EQ PK XO CE EA PQ X8 CL E7 A7 HA  
TO IH AO HG T9 IØ AF HM CM EA P7 XD CU EK PI XW CR EH AM  
XM TS OR 7E YU NB MB GZ 5J NJ OT 7S Y5 R5 O5 A8 HQ TF ID  
AB HL TT EO AE XE CF E6 PN XR CY EØ PP HS CP IS GS>

### How do I use the platform?

<MX PU XE CA EQ P8 X1 CØ IØ AN HI TW E1 PI XP TP O5 78 Y9  
N6 O1 7G XG>  
<AX YB NO O9 G9 5T RN M5 GU 58 R9 MG GM YM NO OP 70 50 RQ  
MJ GV 5H NH OA 7T YY RY MZ GL 57 N7 OY 7I 5I RK MZ G6 5Z

RF MØ GZ YZ NF OB GB 5R RE M6 7U YE NA MA PY XK CV EW PU  
X7 N7>

<5X CB EØ PD XZ CU IU AW H9 C9 EU P5 H5 TN I8 P8 X6 T6 IZ  
AL HH TP II PI XJ C1 EV P8 XK C6 E9 PK HK TQ IF AV H9 TU  
IK AZ 5Z>

What can I do with the devil?

<MA PQ XS C1 I1 AØ HQ TL IB AQ XQ C5 EY PR X9 T9 IV AB XB  
CD EM PR XK NK>

How do I get past the cream doors?

<5A CY EE PR XO CN IN PR 5Y RK MZ 7Z YE NR O1 G1 5G RK MY  
GT YT NU OW 7I 5R RW ML 7L YQ NJ OT 7M 5M RA M7 GD 5U RK  
MI GW 5R RH MZ 75 5R TR>  
<5X C7 EG PO XR CM IM AW HU TN EN PR XY CL EW PV H8 TE EE  
PN XI CK IK AI HE TA EA PU XE CG E1 PY XO CP ES PN YN>

How do I work the lift?

<5M CD EX PR XX CP ES AS HH TØ MØ>  
<TM OV 7U Y9 NR MR GG 55 R8 O8 7W YG RN OG GN HN>  
<AM YP NZ MØ GP YP NN OU 77 Y6 R6 MZ GF 59 RØ OØ 7J 5J RP  
MI GG 5A NA OG 7E Y5 NU EU>  
<TM OA 7T YR RR M5 GU YU N1 O9 7I 5I R9 MD GØ 51 RV MW G1  
Y1 NØ OQ 7O YO NJ EJ>

How do I vote?

<TM OW 7U YN RN MG GO 5G RP OP 7O 5O RY MR GS 5R RE M8 78  
YM NA O6 7F YX RX OR GR XY CK EZ AZ HE TR I1 P1 X9 C6 I6  
A8 H1 T9 IG AH HX TT IL AO XO CS EQ AQ HX TP IE AA HQ TZ

IF AØ HZ C5 O5>  
<TM OF 7X Y9 R9 MD GL 5D RK M6 G9 5K NK OG 7N YS N5 O8 G8  
5E RI MP 7P YJ NH OP PP>  
<MA PQ XZ CK IK AR HY TI IP PP XM CD ID AZ HB TX EX PS XF  
TF I6 AL HI TK IA PA XM CD ID AØ HH CH EO PA XD CM EF AF  
HQ T7 IQ A8 H6 TN I8 G8>  
<MA PN XX CT EA PX HX TT IR AH HA TG I5 A7 HI TT IH A5 HH  
TV EV P5 XI C9 E8 P7 XR CT IT AK H6 TZ I6 P6 XB CZ EH PO  
HO TN II AW XW CP EX PT XA CQ EX 7X>

How do I kill the adventurer?

<TM OP GH 5N NN OG 75 YU RU M7 G8 55 RS OS AH XH CG EI P5  
H5 TA IH AM HE TR I7 AM XM CF EL PQ XX TX IG AE HY TH EH  
PA XS TS ID AJ HB TL IJ PQ HJ RJ>  
<5M CV EB P1 XB T1 E1 PV X6 T6 IO AS HB CB E9 PY XW CG IN  
PG HN TI I5 AH HV CV ML GH 5A RT MM GD YD N8 O6 79 59 RV  
MB G1 5H TH>

How do I get past the dragon?

<AA YQ NZ OK GK 5L RH MT GO 5S RP OP 7M YD RD M7 GM 5B RR  
OR 7K Y8 N9 OG 7W 5F RS MH GP 5A RQ M8 GF HF>  
<AA YP NI MI G7 5U NU OV 7J YO NS MS G6 5F RX M9 79 YV N5  
OI 7R YW NM EM>  
<TA OQ 7S Y1 R1 MG G7 5Y RZ MF GØ 5Z NZ OQ 7L Y6 R6 M5 GG  
5M R7 M6 GW 58 R1 MW 7W YL N8 ON 7X 5X RB MZ 7Z YK NW OG  
PG>  
<MA PP XI TI I5 AS H5 TX IQ PQ XA CH IH AX HS T6 IF PF XM  
CO EG PM HM TP I7 AP HL T6 IK AU HV TN IX A5 X5 CN E8 A8  
HS T5 IH A5 55>

How do I move the wheelbarrow?

<AN YV N9 OØ GØ 5G R7 MM G7 5P RR MY GK 5Y R7 MB 7B YJ NO

M0 G1 5J RP M8 78 YK NZ OL 7Y YD CD>  
<5X CB EØ P9 H9 TO IM A7 HM TI IH AT HZ TT IM AV XV C1 EG  
AG HN TI IK PK KL CW EY PN XE CY ET PR HR T9 I8 P8 XB CV  
IV AØ HQ TN IX A5 X5 TT ET PG XO CL IL A7 HY T9 EK PY XT  
TT IL AD HA TD IY PY XD CL EP AP HO TJ I8 AQ H6 C6 E9 P8  
XS TP ES 7S>

How do I get through the double doors?

<MA Pn XX TX IU AW HQ TL IO AG 5G>  
<AA YI NG ON 7O 5Ø RH MS GY 5T RL IL>  
<TA OM 7H YY RY M1 GV 5S NS OD 7J Y1 R1 MH GA 5D RS M5 G8  
H8>  
<AA YH NØ OB 7V Y7 NB OJ 7O YG RG MF GJ 5H NP O7 7P 5P RØ  
MW GU 55 RA MP 7P Y8 N9 OY 7K 5K RJ MD GB 5L R9 MØ GP HP>

How do I get past the paper wall room?

<AM Y8 N6 OA 7E YU RU MQ GF 5O NØ OK 7Z 5Z RP MX GF 5Ø TØ>  
<5M CW EU PN HN TT IM AT HE CE EG PN HN TV I9 AØ XØ CW EI  
PL X1 C6 E8 P5 XX NX>  
<5M CW EU PN HN TG IO AG HP CP EO HØ TQ I7 AM 5M>

I've won but not with full score. Why?

<TN OY GG 5M NM MB 7S 5R NR OP 7L YO RO EA AA HP TO I1 AJ  
HQ CB EX AX HA TH IØ PØ XJ TJ IR AW HU TX IN A6 X6 CJ EF  
PU HO CØ EG P7 XL TN EN GY YY NH OA 7T 5O RL OL 7V YW NU  
OA GG YG NW O6 7F YS N5 M5 GU 51 RV MW G1 5G NG OS 7B YA  
NQ MQ GZ 5L RI ML GW 5V NJ MJ GT 5S RX MB 7Q YX RX MS GR  
5S NP MS 7P XP>  
<AX Y5 NR OT GT 5U RW MI 7I YT NS O5 7N YV RO IO>  
<TX O9 78 Y7 R7 MR GH 5R RT OT 7J YF RF MU GN 5O NØ O1 7I  
Y7 NR OM 7D 5D RQ MØ GO YO RØ OØ 7Y YT NM O8 7L YW CW>  
<5X C6 EW PL XO CM E7 PV HV TH IA AF XF C6 E9 PQ XØ CN EX

P5 H5 TY IN A8 X8 CZ EO PJ XB C6 I6 A1 HI CI E5 PG XW TW  
 EF AF HU TN IØ PØ XB CJ EU AU HW TV IB GB>  
 <MX PH XT CW EL AL H7 TY I9 P9 XW CU EN PG XP TP IZ AQ H8  
 C8 MM GT 5J NJ IR AS HX TO IL PN YN>  
 <AX YB NM OW GW 5P RX MB GX 5T RA MX 7X YT NJ MJ GR 5W RU  
 MX GN 56 RZ ME AE>  
 <MX PD XM C7 I7 A6 HW TL EL PH XS CM EO PL HL TT IM AB HX  
 CX EP PT HT TX IR AJ HV TB I9 AØ HF TM MM>  
 <TM OT 7S 5S R8 MQ GW 5Q NW MW GH 5X RP OP 71 Y9 N6 07 7U  
 5U RX MN G6 5V RB M6 G7 5I RN MG 7N 5G NN MN GH 5T RE MA  
 7A Y7 NY MY GZ 5F RM MO 7O YL NF 06 G6 55 RA MH GL 5W NW  
 OM 7T YØ RZ MR GH YH NP OX 7B 5D TD>

What about the alchemists?

<MM PP HP TG I5 AI XR C9 I9 AF HØ TQ I5 PH HH TW I6 A8 HE  
 CE E7 PS XO CZ EP AP HZ TQ I8 AZ X5 N5>  
 <5M CF EL PW X8 C5 I5 AR HT TY IR PR XE C5 I5 AE HR TE IM  
 PM XP CØ EF AD HS CS EU PN XY C1 EJ AJ HD TB IS AD HU CU  
 EQ PM XP CØ ED PZ XK NK>  
 <5M CF EL PW HW T1 IR AW HI CI EE P7 XA TA IB AZ H8 TQ EQ  
 PD XL CD EV AJ XJ CP EI PA XE CP ER PH XL TB EL AB XG NG>  
 <5A CK EV P5 H7 TP I7 P7 XR CH EK PZ XT TT IO AG HW CW EG  
 P7 XM TM IS AO HE TM EH AH Y5 NS OX 75 55 RR M7 G6 51 N1  
 OW 7U YØ N1 M1 GZ 5L RB OQ 7A 5A RN MX 7X Y5 NG ON 7X 5S  
 NS ES>

Where do I find some light?

<5M CW EU PN HN TG IO AG HP CP EZ PB HB TQ IL AY HT CT EJ  
 PD XU TU I6 AE HU TN EN PF XL CZ EP AP HA TE EE PD XB CL  
 EO PJ HQ CQ MA GP 5I R5 O5 7H YS NF OM 77 YR RR M9 G8 Y8

NK O6 7L XL>  
<AM YH NA OU GU 57 RM MA GD 58 RK OK 7I YE NA MA G5 5H RR  
MY GK 56 R9 MK AK>  
<MA PE XO CG EM P7 XR C9 E1 PI XQ TQ O7 7G YF NS OH 7G Y1  
YS>  
<AA YI N7 OZ GZ 5P RA ME GP HP>

### How do I get into the tree?

<5N CU EK PF XJ CK ED AD HS TT IY PY XH CA EH PL HL C6 I6  
7L YP NØ OH GH XS TS ID AU HØ TU EU PT XM CQ IQ A8 HX TN  
I6 AO HL TF IZ AD HF CR OR>  
<TN OV 77 YL RL MO GM 57 N7 OB 7Z YB NU OD 7Z 5Z RB ML GW  
HW>  
<AN YV N9 OØ GØ 5W RK MI 7I Y9 N1 OY GY 57 RR OR 79 YV NB  
MB G9 51 RY IY>

### Floorboards - How do I move them?

<5N CV E9 PØ XN TN IH AA HV TB EB PE XA CD EY AY HT TH IZ  
AF HK TA MA>  
<TN OF 76 YN NX MX G9 58 R7 O7 7S YO NO OF GF 5Z RD OD 7B  
5B R8 M6 GN 5G NB EB>  
<TN OV 79 YØ NF MF GS 5T RØ MH 7H YØ NB OV GV 5D RL MD GA  
YG RG E5 GP YU CU>

### How do I get past the boulders?

<TN O7 7I Y5 NX MX GS YS NR OH 7K YZ NT M8 A8>  
<MN 7G 5N NG I5 A8 X8 CE ED PL YL>  
<AM YH NA OU GU 58 RW MA 7A YQ NZ OK 7Q 5Q RA MH GP 5I RK  
M8 GQ 5S TS>



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