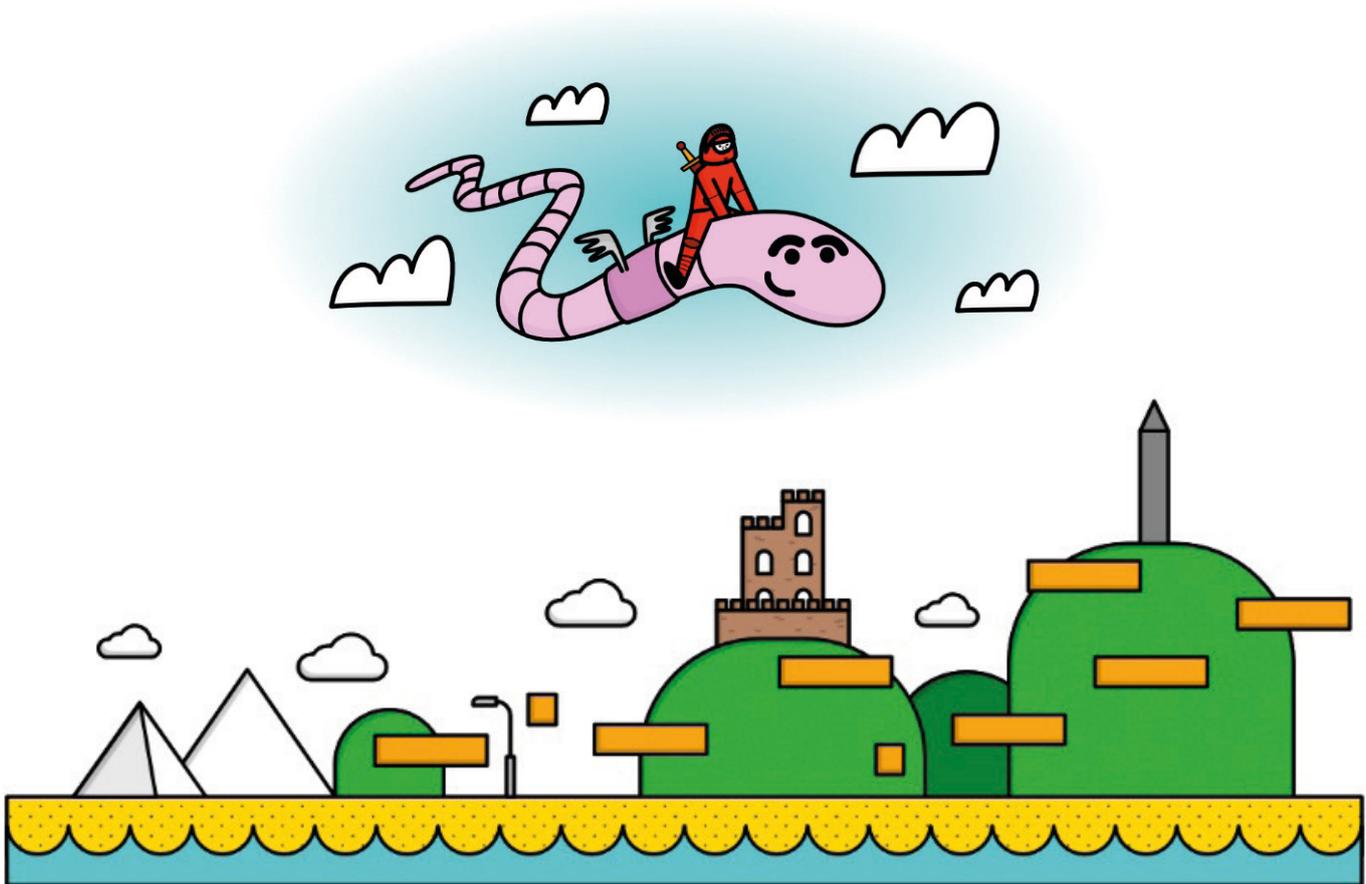




**STEPHEN
JOSEPH
THEATRE**
SCARBOROUGH



NORTH YORKSHIRE COAST
OPPORTUNITY AREA



Game's Up

A story by Saviour Pirotta and the
young people of the North Yorkshire Coast

Illustrations by Simon Whittaker
of House of Deadleg Illustration



The LOL's new clothes

Once there were ^{three} best friends their names were burryboo, boss queen and splash queen. One day in LOL city burryboo came home, she was wearing some new clothes. "Wow! Those clothes are so pretty," said splash queen looking intently towards her clothes. "Where did you get them?" said boss queen feeling the fluff on her sleeves. "Super LOL mall," said burryboo. As fast as lightning splash queen and boss queen. When they finally got there the shop was closed. They could see through the dim glass that there was only 1 last outfit. They headed home nonstop thinking about the clothes. That night burryboo got up and looked out the window and climbed out. She ran down town and to the shop. Meanwhile boss queen got out of her bed and snuck out of the front door and to the shop. Boss Queen saw splash queen at the other side they immediately started crawling through the vents at either side when they both got to there surprise there was a load of that outfit folded up! and the both got one.

Finn

SIGNED S.A.A. Astoria
Boss Queen
Lennypos

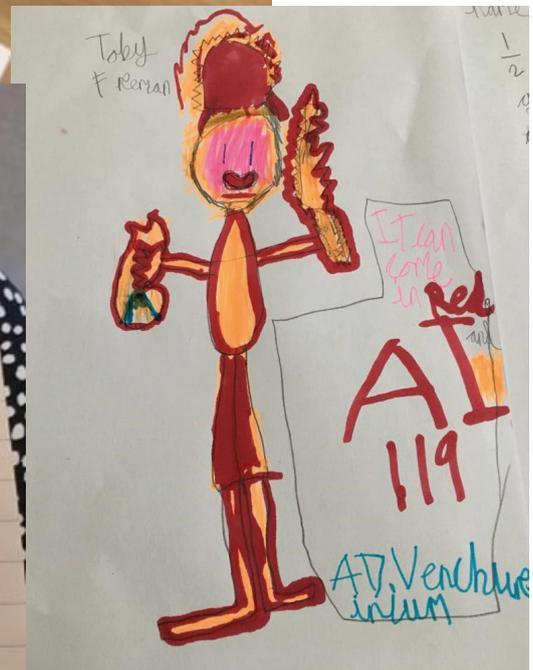
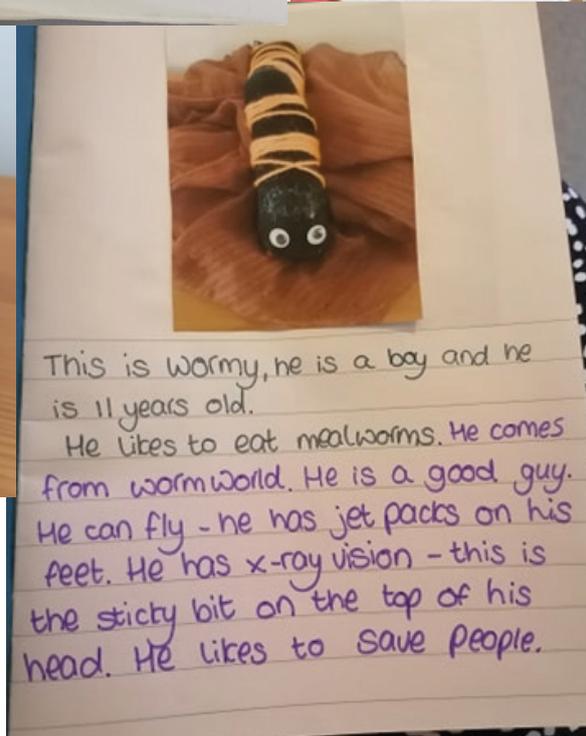
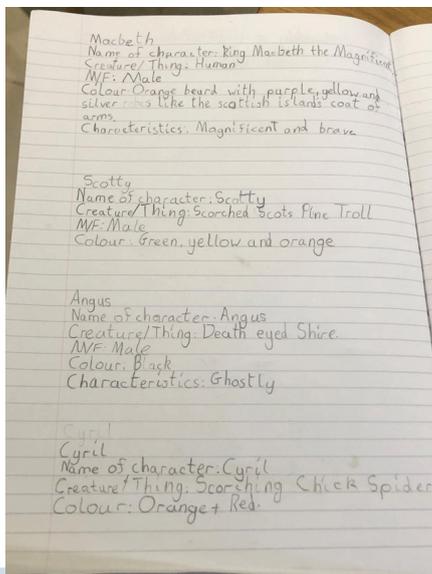
199.6mm x 289.1mm



The story behind the story

In June 2020 the National Literacy Trust teamed up with the Stephen Joseph Theatre to challenge local children to tell their stories. Over six weeks, local writing experts shared tips on world-building, character creation and plot development and invited families to submit their ideas every week - and they flooded in!

Stellar creative team Nadia Emam (actor and poet) and Simon Whittaker (illustrator) brought the ideas alive with professional illustrations and dramatic retellings, and bestselling local children's author Saviour Pirotta has now combined them all into one story.



Foreword

Diana Logan, Associate Director (Education) at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Literacy Champion and Mum to five year old Bronwen, esteemed creator of Jeremy the motorbike-riding, top-knot flouting Genie:

“During the spring term of 2020 the unthinkable happened and young people were no longer attending school due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All across the country young people were learning from home and were also stuck inside with their families and carers all day, every day! Cue a lot of young people looking for something exciting to get involved with...

This is when the National Literacy Trust and the Stephen Joseph Theatre joined forces to create the best story that the North Yorkshire Coast has ever heard.

Your Stories was a project created by the young people of the North Yorkshire Coast and shaped by their interests. It brought together local award-winning author Saviour Pirotta, House of Deadleg illustrator Simon Whitakker, acclaimed actor and poet Nadia Emam and Carnegie Trust Associate Director Chelsey Gillard, in a stellar team to help young people shape the story they wanted to tell about the place that they live.

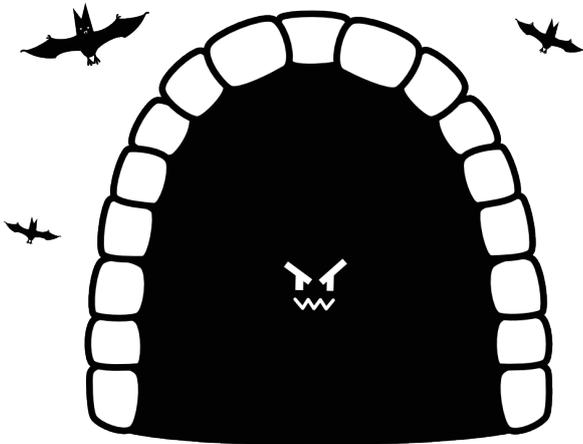
The young people worked tirelessly with this team during lockdown, taking part in weekly sessions and tutorials via Facebook to create their own characters, voices, plots and challenges which were realised by the team.

This is a story that spans the length of the coast from Whitby to Filey, and includes the sights of Scarborough. It is a tale full of villains and heroes, and highlights the power and strength that young people have inside themselves. It is also proof that they are brilliant writers, and we at the Stephen Joseph Theatre and the National Literacy Trust are so proud of them all. We hope you enjoy their story.”



PART 1

The Face Lord



It was well past midnight when the evil Face Lord looked out of his spooky hiding place. He was holed up in a secret railway tunnel, in Ravenscar, a village that should have been a bustling seaside town like nearby Scarborough but had been abandoned before it was finished.

All that had been completed of the town were some houses and a railway line. The Face Lord thought human beings were stupid: fancy building houses out of stone. Back on his planet, everything was built out of cheese, including homes. That came in very handy if you woke up peckish in the middle of the night. You just nibbled on your bedroom wall.

The Face Lord grinned as he observed bats flitting in and out of the tunnel. Despite it being the middle of summer, a chilly breeze was blowing. The Face Lord liked it when it was cold. It kept human beings indoors glued to their telly and he was free to do as he pleased without the danger of being spotted.

“Cyril? Are you still asleep? Wake up, I tell you.”

A gigantic spider came scuttling down the tunnel. Even by moonlight the spider glowed a bright red with orange stripes. You couldn’t tell by its size, but it was still a chick. One day it would grow so big, it would be able to flatten a bus just by crawling over it.

“You called, sir?” hissed Cyril the spider.

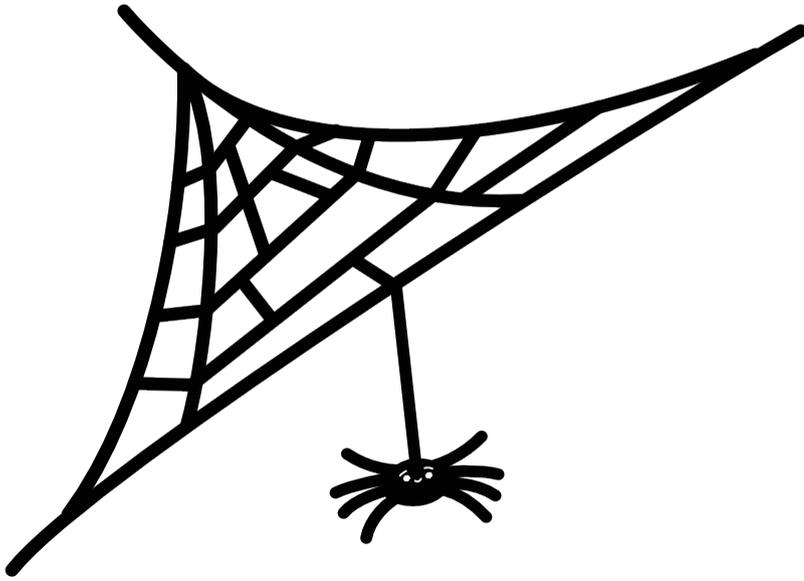
“Sir? Did you call me sir?” roared the Face Lord. “What am I? A teacher? You will address me as Lord. And when you look at me, you must hold one of your eight legs over your eyes.”

“But then I won’t be able to see you, sir... I mean... Lord. And I only have seven legs now... Lord. You pulled one off last week, remember, for forgetting to wake you up on time?”

The Face Lord curled his lips in contempt. “Are you complaining about the way I treat you, you miserable creature? If it wasn’t for me, you would still be a disgusting little spider – a real spider trying to catch flies on Scarborough seafront. Now you’re a monster, and monsters rule. So be grateful, or I’ll pull off all your other legs one by one.”

“Yes, my Lord,” whimpered Cyril. He didn’t dare tell the Face Lord but he much preferred being an ordinary spider on the seafront. It was fun living there, watching all the families enjoying themselves from the safety of his ordinary spider’s web. Cyril shut his eyes for a moment to daydream about the children eating ice-cream, or building sandcastles, or riding the donkeys on the beach. The sun was shining, music was playing in the amusement arcades and the flies... the flies were not watching where they were going. They were like kids who’d eaten too much ice-cream in the hot sun. Two of them bumbled straight into his sticky web. Quickly Cyril spun cocoons around them. He was about to have his first luscious bite when...

“Now listen, you good-for-nothing wretch,” snapped the Face Lord, jerking Cyril out of his lovely daydream.



“If you please, sir... my Lord,” the giant spider said timidly. “My name’s Cyril.”

“How dare you interrupt me, you glowing satsuma,” roared the Face Lord. He glared at the spider and another one of its legs vanished in a puff of foul-smelling smoke.

Poor Cyril whimpered in pain.

“Stop your babbling,” growled the Face Lord. “And listen up. I have to make Scarborough, Whitby and Filey my own personal kingdom. A faceless kingdom. I shall steal everyone’s face and make them my zombies, to do as I please forever.”

Cyril’s remaining six legs shook with fear.

“How are you going to do that, my Lord?”

“The human fools have created a snake in the dell in Eastfield. We are going there.”

“I’m not very keen on snakes, my Lord, Your Honour, Sir,” whimpered Cyril. “They eat spiders.”

“Not this snake,” sneered the Face Lord. “This snake is made of stones and stones don’t gobble up stupid spiders. The people have made it by painting messages on stones. All their hard work and kind thoughts have... imbued... the snake with magic. It has become the guardian, not only of Eastfield but of the whole region. If we kidnap it, the whole coast will be unprotected. Then I can steal everyone’s face and turn them into zombies.”

“But how are we... you... going to steal the snake, my Lord?” asked Cyril.

“Get ready to fly,” snapped the Face Lord without answering the question.

“Fly?” gulped Cyril. “I’m afraid of heights. When I was an ordinary spider, I’d only spin my web close to the ground.”

“Fool,” spat the Face Lord. He muttered a spell and enormous wings grew out of Cyril’s sides. Four of them, like flies’ wings, only these were a bright green.

“Eeek,” cried the spider. “I’m going to be sick. And I don’t think green goes at all well with orange and red. I hope no one sees me. Oh, the shame.”

Ignoring Cyril’s protests, the Face Lord clambered on to his back. He tapped him on the back and Cyril’s wings began fluttering without any effort on his part.

The two of them soared up into the night air, the deserted village growing smaller below them as they rose higher and higher. They swooped along the coast, past Scarborough harbour where fishing lights twinkled out at sea, past the Grand Hotel with its four towers, the Italian gardens on South Cliff, the beautiful clock tower that was showing just after 01.00AM, over Oliver’s Mount and then dived down to land on the dewy grass in the dell.

Cyril could see the Snake of the Dell meandering along a winding path. The Face Lord climbed off his back and walked along the snake, whose multi-coloured stones glowed in the moonlight. Cyril followed until he and his master were standing near the snake’s head.

Suddenly a big black and white dog came running up. He licked one of the stones with his enormous tongue, leaving it covered in thick spittle.

“Greetings,” said Cyril who loved dogs. “What’s your name?”

“I’m Scooby,” replied the dog. “I belong to two lovely boys and I helped paint this stone. I sneaked out to make sure it’s alright. I see the paint is dry.”

Scooby wagged his tail happily. “People keep adding stones to the Snake of the Dell. It helps get them out of the house and do some exercise.”

“Now go away, you repulsive dog or I’ll turn you into a stone,” hissed the Face Lord.

Scooby growled but he could tell the Face Lord was really mean, so he turned and pattered away.

“Poor Scooby,” muttered Cyril to himself. “Dogs are nice, unless they’re hot dogs with mustard, then they’re a bit hard on the stomach.”

“Hello,” said the Face Lord to the snake, ignoring Cyril.

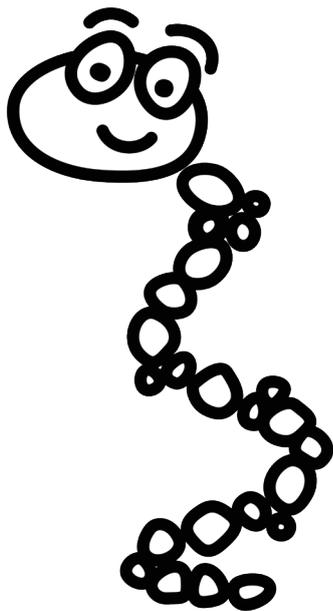
“My Lord, stones don’t have ears to hear with, ” interrupted Cyril before he could stop himself.

“One more word out of you..” hissed the Face Lord “and you’ll fly home with FIVE legs.”

He turned back to the snake. “Can you hear me, snake?”

To Cyril’s amazement, the snake came alive. It raised its head and a multi-coloured tongue flicked out of its mouth.

“Yessss,” it hissed. “The... Snake of the Dell... can... hear... you.”



“A mighty fine job you’re doing, showing people how much they are appreciated,” said the Face Lord, not sounding very sincere. “You deserve a little treat after all that hard work. Do you like sweets?”

“But snakes don’t eat sweets,” Cyril was about to splutter before he thought better of it.

The snake’s tongue flicked. “Yesss... I lovessssss... sweetssssssss.”

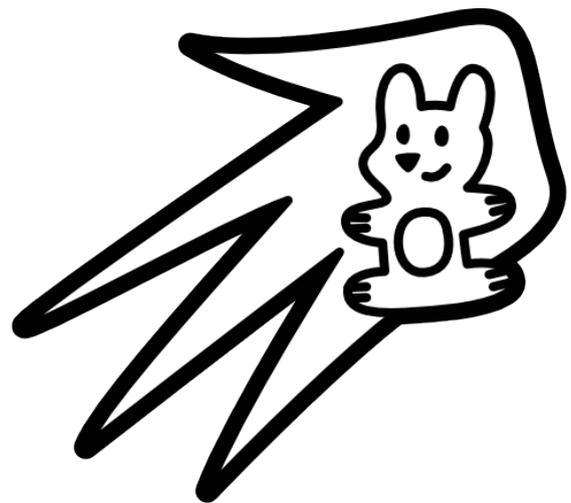
The Face Lord held out his hand to show a gummy bear lying on his palm. “Here you are. Come and get it.”

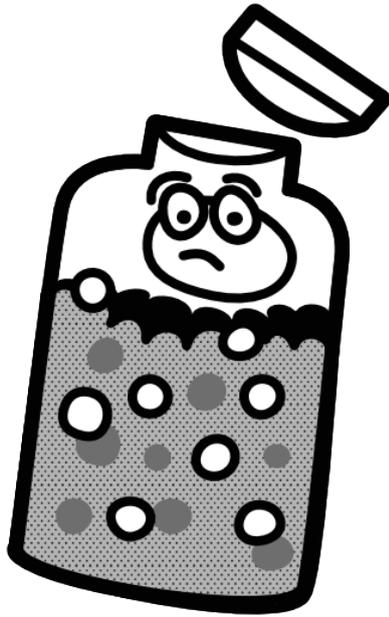
The snake’s tongue shot out and the moment it touched the sweet, there was a flash of bright purple lightning. The snake’s stones all flew up in the air whirling and spinning. As Cyril watched

in astonishment the stones turned into sweets and fell back to the ground. Laughing, the Face Lord snapped his fingers and a sweet jar appeared in his hands. The sweets all leapt as one into it and a jar lid fell out of the sky to trap them inside. The Face Lord muttered a spell and the sweet jar took off like a rocket and disappeared into the night sky.

“Where has it gone, my Lord?” gasped Cyril.

“Somewhere where no one can reach it,” chuckled the Face Lord. “Now all we have to do is wait for the morning. Without the Snake of the Dell’s protection, any human being who looks me in the face will





lose his own. By sunset tomorrow, everyone should be a zombie... and I shall be their absolute ruler.”

The Face Lord held his tummy with both hands as he shook with delight. “I shall order them to pull down the entire county and rebuild it in cheese.”

While the Face Lord and Cyril the Monster Spider Chick were flying back to rest up in the secret tunnel, a boy was sitting up in bed, playing a game on his tablet.

His name was Toby. He was ten years old and he lived with his mum, dad and big brother in the old town in Scarborough. He was meant to be asleep but the game he was playing was too

interesting, and he was on level 99. One more level and he’d beat his personal best. His fingers were a blur as he tapped on the screen. Suddenly, colours flashed. A speech bubble mushroomed and opened up to show a message.

CONGRATULATIONS YOU HAVE COMPLETED 100 LEVELS.

“Yay,” thought Toby. “I’ve done it. I’m a champion.”

Most kids wouldn’t have thought much of this milestone but Toby was no ordinary kid. Small for his age and lacking confidence, he lived mostly in a fantasy world of his own making. A world that looked very much like the one in his computer games. Toby wished his fantasy world was true and he was an undisputed champ.

He got up to go to the bathroom, taking the tablet with him. Sitting on the toilet, he made sure his winning score was saved.

There was another message flashing on the screen.

TAP HERE FOR YOUR PRIZE.

Toby tapped on the message. It changed, showing the words.

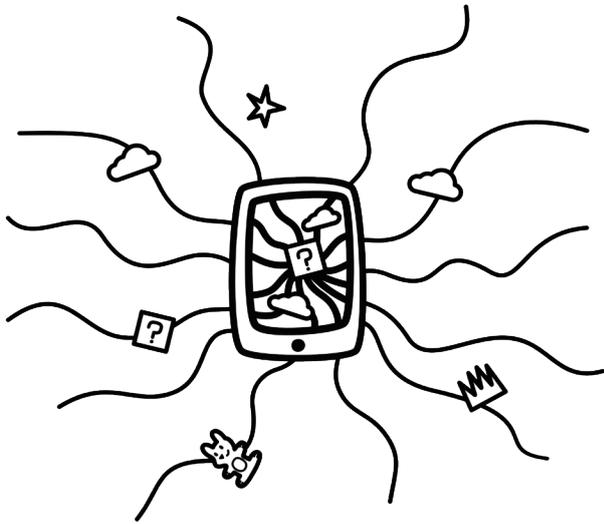
PRIZE DELIVERED.

Nothing else came up. No extra coins, no power-ups, no secret levels to explore.



How odd. What was the prize, then?

Toby heard a dripping noise and looked up from the tablet. Someone had left the bath full of scummy water. The tap was dripping. Plop! Plop! Plop! Funny how he hadn't noticed that before. Toby bent forward to turn it off and the tablet slipped out of his hand.



It fell in the bath. Horrified, Toby looked down. He'd only had the tablet for a couple of months and it had taken him ages to convince his parents to buy it. Now he'd gone and dropped it in dirty bath water. He was in BIG trouble.

Then he noticed bright colours floating – oozing - out of the tablet – not just colours, but shapes and images too. The fantasy worlds of his computer games seemed to be leaking out of it into the water. But how was that possible?

Toby reached down to grab the tablet and something rushed past him into the water. He saw the bathroom, his bedroom, the whole upstairs of the house and the downstairs disappear into the bath as if carried on a tidal wave. The force of it

nearly took Toby along too, but he grabbed the edge of the bath and somehow managed to hold on.

Where his own world had been there was now a brightly coloured one. It was the world of his imagination, and his computer games! He seemed to be standing in an old-fashioned living room like the ones he'd seen in photos of his nan's old house, except the walls were pixelated.

A battered old biscuit tin sat on the coffee table. It was actually hopping up and down and a reedy voice echoed out of it.

“Let me out. Let me out. Help!”

Toby made himself walk up to the table. Carefully, he picked up the box which danced in his hands.

“Hurry up,” repeated the voice inside. “It stinks of mouldy digestives in here.”

Toby opened the box. There was a musty smell of stale crumbs. Something that looked like a giant yellow marshmallow ballooned out of it. It took the shape of a man with a scar across his face and enormous arms folded across an equally enormous chest.

“Greetings, human,” it said. “I am Jeremy the motor-bike riding genie. What do you think of my man bun?”

“Your what?” said an astonished Toby.

“It used to be called a top-knot when I was a baby thirty two thousand years ago,” replied Jeremy. “But I believe the proper term for it nowadays is man bun.”

“Where... where is your motorbike?” asked Toby. “Is it in that biscuit tin?”



"I'd never park my motorbike in a biscuit tin," roared Jeremy. "Crumbs might get in the petrol tank. Imagine having to clean that out. No, it's in my special lamp. A lamp what looks like a small lamp from the outside but inside it's a big garage for my motorbike."

"But how did you end up in the biscuit tin?" asked Toby.

"Silly game designers," answered Jeremy. "They think it's cool to trap genies in small containers. I could have been given a palace with a genie princess. But no, a vintage biscuit tin full of crumbs. But enough of me for now. What is your name, child?"

"Toby Macaulay," said Toby.

"Well, from now on you shall be known as Toby Adventurinium," said the genie. "You are a superhero and your mission is to save Scarborough, Whitby and Filey from certain doom."

Toby liked the idea of being a superhero and he tried not to look too pleased as the genie went on.

"The Face Lord has kidnapped the Snake of the Dell and locked it away in his own sweetshop. Without its protection, the people of Scarborough, Filey and Whitby will lose face with the Face Lord, meaning the Face Lord will remove their faces and turn them into faceless zombies to do his bidding. I believe he wants to pull down your world and rebuild it in gorgonzola or something. Your mission, Toby Adventurinium, is to rescue the snake before sunrise so that it can protect the people from the Face Lord."

"Why me?" asked Toby.

"You have reached level 100 in your chosen game. This is your prize, to be a superhero for a night."

"And how can I save the snake?" Toby wanted to know.

"The Face Lord's sweetshop is hidden under the ground in the fantasy world," explained the genie. It is a bit like a sweetshop in the real world but there are magic differences. To gain access, you must find three hidden treasures, one in fantasy Scarborough, one in fantasy Whitby and one in fantasy Filey. Only then can you confront the Face Lord himself and free the Snake of the Dell."

"Cool," said Toby in a new voice he hoped made him sound like a real hero.

"One word of warning," said Jeremy. "If the Face Lord glares at you, you must cover your eyes right away or you'll be hypnotised till your face disappears."

"Not so cool," said Toby. "I guess the Face Lord can travel between my world and this world whenever he pleases."

"Yes," agreed Jeremy. "He might follow you but he won't make himself known until you are in his sweet shop."

"Exactly how do I free the snake?" Toby wanted to know.

The genie handed Toby a small packet. "It's lemon sherbet," he said. "But not just any sherbet. It's magic sherbet made by my ancestors, the genies of Gormeta in the desert of Deloria thousands of years ago. When you finally find the Snake of the Dell, sprinkle this on its head."

Toby felt a thrill of excitement as he tucked the sherbet in his pocket. Imagine something so old – a relic, his teacher Mrs Skipsea would call it – and he was getting to handle it.

"You'll be glad to know you will not fight alone," said the genie. "You shall have someone to help you on every level."

He clapped and a giant worm came flying through the window. It had eyes as huge as dinner plates and yellow stripes criss-crossing its back.

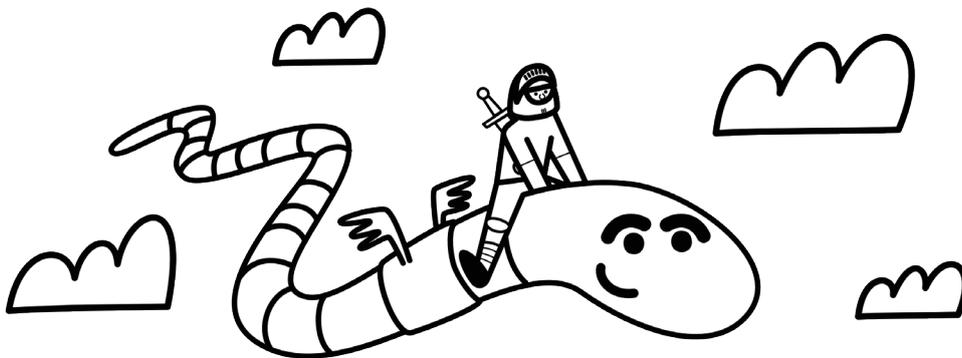
“This is Wormy from Wormworld,” said Jeremy the genie as the worm landed on jet-pack feet.

“First worm I’ve ever seen with feet,” observed Toby. “Are you sure he’s not a caterpillar?”

“He’s definitely a worm,” replied Jeremy. “Wormworld is an old-skool game long forgotten now. He eats mealworms which make him er – release smelly gas at very embarrassing moments – but he has x-ray vision and he likes to help save people. He’ll be your perfect companion. But don’t let me keep you. The Face Lord and the sunrise wait for no one. On Level 1, you must locate the first treasure – my special lamp, which I want back the moment you’re finished with it. I can’t wait to get my hands on my bike again.”

He handed Toby a bag and a sword. “Here, you will need these. Please look after the sword. It belonged to my first master in the times before the sand.”

There was tinkly electronic music as the genie disappeared. Wormy smiled at Toby Adventurinium and with a nod of his head, invited him to climb on to his back. With Toby safely on board, the worm slid out of the window into a brightly-coloured Scarborough.



PART 2

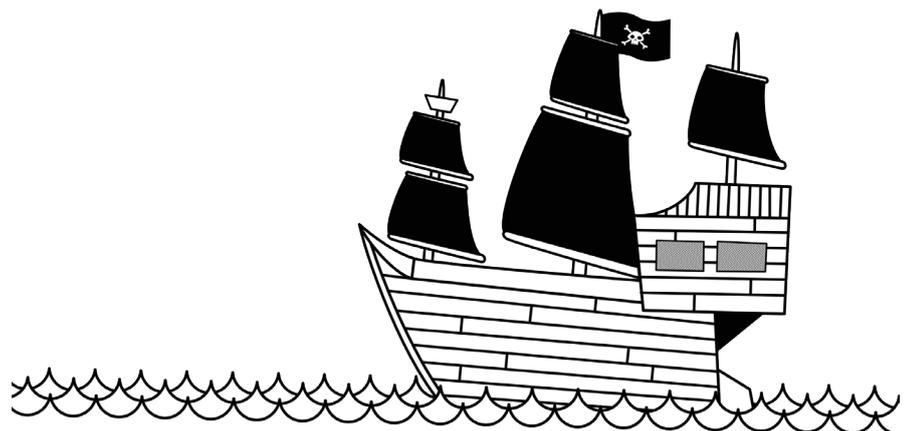
Scarborough

Along the empty streets Wormy slithered, and up rocky ground until he was in Scarborough Castle – not the ruin we know today but a fortification still in its prime. The walls were teeming with armed guards but none of them spotted Toby and Wormy. They slipped unnoticed through the gate, across a field where a king was entertaining people under a canopy. Wormy headed across a courtyard towards a well.

Down, down, down they went into solid darkness until Toby saw a light ahead and they came out into an underground cave with a lake in the middle. There was a pirate ship anchored right in the middle of it, with hideous skeleton pirates clattering around on deck.

“Where do you think Jeremy’s lamp might be hidden?” Toby asked Wormy.

“I have no idea,” said Wormy in a squeaky voice that belied his size, “You’re the hero, Mr Adventurinium. I guess you’ll find it.”



"I bet it's in the captain's cabin," said Toby. "Important things are always kept there. But how do we get across the water? Will you carry me, Wormy?"

"I'm afraid I can't swim," mumbled Wormy. "Terrified of water, in fact. But here's someone to help us, no doubt. Aren't these games cool? Help whenever you need it."

Toby noticed a pink boat coming through the water. Rowing it was a headless figure in an England t-shirt."

The boat stopped right in front of Toby and Wormy. A girl's voice echoed out of it.

"I am Ellie. Please don't stare. I'm not headless. My head is just invisible."

"We're not staring," Wormy apologised. "We're just fascinated."

"Just because you've never seen someone with an invisible head doesn't mean they don't exist," scolded Ellie. "There's loads of us around. We all live in Invisible Headland."

"Where's that on the map?" asked Wormy.

"It's somewhere in England, of course" replied Ellie. "That's why I'm wearing the shirt? Now I'm guessing you want me to row you to that pirate ship. Hurry up, get on board. I want to get home early. We're having my favourite dinner tonight. Invisible Chinese takeaway."

Toby and Wormy scrambled on board and Ellie rowed them across the water to the boat, which Toby noticed was called The Clumsy Bones. She waited until they had both scrambled up to the deck, Toby using Wormy like a rope.

"Goodbye," called Ellie softly as she rowed away. "Good luck."

Alerted by her voice, the skeleton pirates surrounded Toby at once.

The old Toby would have been very good at fighting the pirates by tapping on the screen. To his surprise, Toby the superhero was even more brilliant at fighting them with the genie's ancient sword. With no one's warnings holding him back, he leapt into the fray.

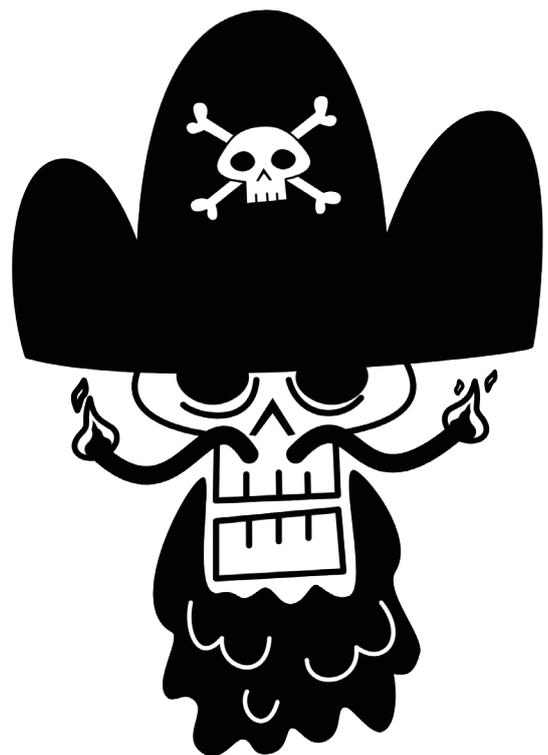
"Stand well away from the action, Wormy," hissed Toby. "I wouldn't like to see you tangle with all these swords. Don't come out until I tell you it's safe."

While Wormy coiled himself up in a corner and pretended to be a rope, points flashed up in the air as one by one the pirates fell to the deck, their skulls and bones clattering everywhere. Soon there were none left standing. Toby sprinted towards the captain's cabin whose door swung open to reveal the captain stomping out. Blackbeard, the world's meanest pirate himself. As always, the tips of his curled moustache burnt like oil lamps.

"You scurvy cur," thundered Blackbeard at Toby, drawing a lethal-looking cutlass. "How dare you try to invade my cabin?"

The infamous seadog had forced many a luckless man and woman to walk the plank but he'd never faced a genie's sword before. The sound of steel rang across the lake as he and Toby fought.

"I have to admit, you are good, boy" grunted Blackbeard. "Join my crew and you shall have a large share of every treasure



we find. We shall sail to Yorkshire rich men, you and I.”

“I am an honest man, I do not steal other people’s treasures,” replied Toby as he took one more lunge at the pirate. It went straight through Blackbeard’s heart and the pirate vanished in an explosion of blood-red pixels.

Suddenly it was eerily silent on board The Clumsy Bones. Wormy uncoiled himself to help Toby search for the treasure. It didn’t seem to be anywhere. Finally, Toby stopped to have a think.

Obviously his idea of it being in the captain’s cabin was wrong. Perhaps it wasn’t on the ship at all. Perhaps Blackbeard had buried it on a deserted island. No, that would be no good either. Everybody knew pirates buried treasure on deserted islands. Blackbeard was too clever for that.

Looking out at the lake, Toby had an idea. He’d hide the lamp in the lake, and he’d paint it blue to camouflage it. Was that what Blackbeard had done?

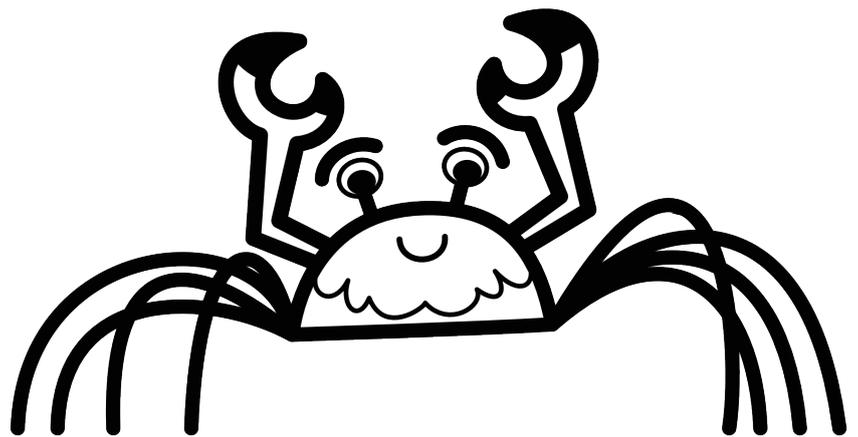
Clambering on to Wormy, Toby explored the lake, jabbing at the blue water with his sword. He was ready to give up, when the tip of the sword rang against something solid in the lake. The shape of a blue lamp rose out of the water, turning a bright gold as it spun round and round.

Toby put it in his bag. “You have collected your first item,” squeaked Wormy. “Your work on this level is finished. You must now proceed to Level 2. But we must say goodbye here. You shall have a new sidekick for the next test.”

As he spoke, a giant crab rose out of the lake. It shook enormous sharp claws and fixed beady-eyes-on-stalks on Toby.

“Do not be frightened of me, Toby Adventurinium,” it said in a booming voice. “These claws are meant for enemies not friends. Hop on to my back. I am called Leapy Giant, by the way.”

Toby said thanks and goodbye to Wormy who bent himself into a zero shape and vanished. Toby hopped on to the crab whose shell was rather slippery. There was that tinkly music again and the lake went dark. When the light came on again, Toby and Leapy Giant were standing outside ruined Whitby Abbey.



PART 3

Whitby

As Toby Adventurinium watched, the ruined abbey started to glow in lots of different colours.

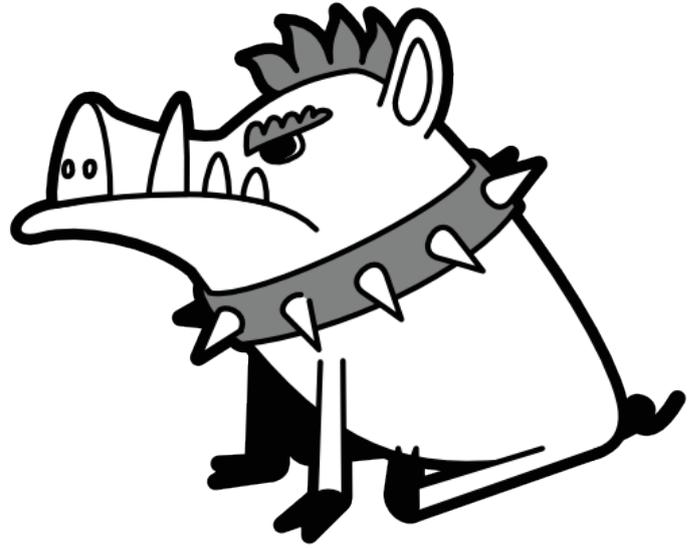
“It was lit up like this for Halloween,” said Toby. “We came to watch a play.”

“In the other world,” explained the giant crab in a squeaky voice, “Whitby Abbey was home to England’s first poet. In the world of literature, it is associated with Dracula the vampire. And in our game world, there is an even more terrible creature stalking its cloisters. Raskinstillstein, the werewolf son of Frankenstein’s Monster! He bites people to turn them into ghostly werewolves. Three kings have tried

unsuccessfully to vanquish Raskinstillstein. King Macbeth the Magnificent, King Richard the Righteous and King Fred the Fearless, who shared a country across the sea. They were all bitten in the neck and will spend the rest of their lives fearing the full moon. Kill the werewolf yourself and King Macbeth will give you his crown. It will be your second prize. I shall wait for you here.”

Entering the abbey through a pointed arch, Toby found himself crossing a vast courtyard. At the other end was a building that looked very much like a palace. Its front door was open. Toby passed through it to find himself in a large hall. A fire was crackling in a massive fireplace, with a roasting hog turning at the spit. Three large hairy boars with spiky backs were tied with chains to metal rings in the wall. But there was no one else around.

Had they all run away from Raskinstillstein? Were they all hiding, waiting for Toby to free them from the werewolf? Toby had seen werewolves in films but would this one look the same? Sword in hand, he explored the corridors which all led into various rooms. Slowly, he became aware of ghostly figures shuffling past him. People in old-fashioned clothes straight out of films like the Hunchback of Notre Dame or Cinderella. Except these people had hairy faces and pointed ears like wolves. Slime dripped out from between their fangs. Their images flickered as they shuffled on, completely unaware of



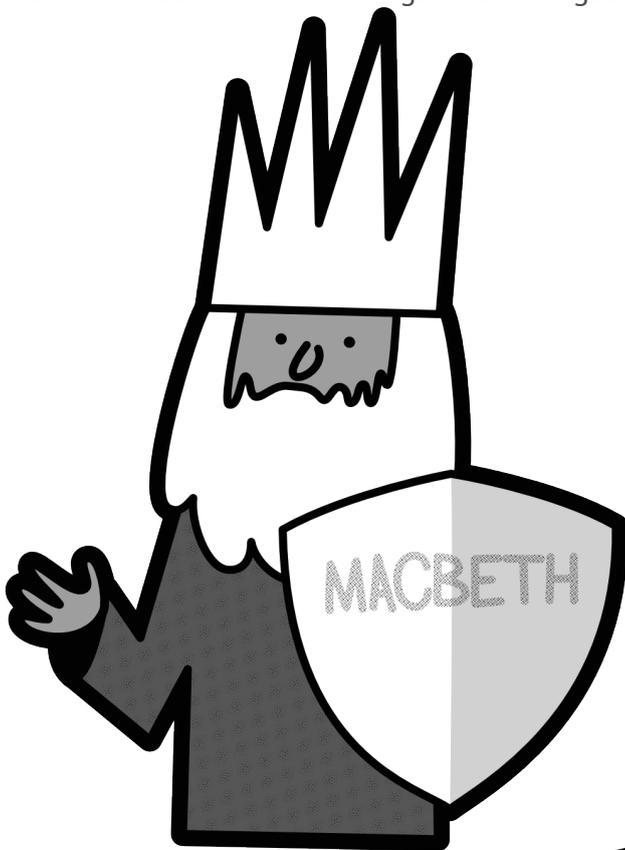
Toby. He realised they were the victims of the infamous Raskinstillstein.

A door to his right opened and out walked a king with a crown on his head and MACBETH spelled out in glittering diamonds on his shield.

“He must be on his way to try and kill Raskinstillstein again,” thought Toby. “Brave man.” The king did not even glance at him as Toby followed. They went down stone steps into a wine cellar filled with old barrels and dusty bottles. King Macbeth opened a trapdoor in the floor and led the way down a second set of steps. Here was a doorway with a sign above it that said:

MAZE OF DOOM. GIVE UP ALL HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.

Flickering lamps in the walls lit the corridors beyond.



King Macbeth turned and acknowledged Toby for the first time.

“The power of the kings go with you. May ye succeed where all else have failed.”

Holding his breath, Toby ventured into the narrow corridors of the maze. They were thick with cobwebs and the sparkly eyes of spiders glittered at him.

He could hear the laboured breathing of the werewolf. It was close, but no matter which direction Toby looked, he could not see it.

Without warning, there was a horrific roar and the werewolf pounced into view. It towered at least seven feet tall, with powerful arms and shoulders. A pair of bloodshot eyes glared out of a shaggy head. The mouth was open in a wide snarl, showing yellow fangs.

For a long moment, Toby was frozen with fear. His sword arm went so stiff, he could feel his fingers cramp around the hilt.

Sensing Toby’s fear, the werewolf sauntered forward, its eyes blazing. They were hypnotising Toby, who stood in the werewolf’s path like a hare caught in a car’s headlights.

The werewolf came closer and closer until it was so close, its disgusting breath caused Toby to snap out of his trance. Dodging past Raskinstillstein, Toby ran back out of the maze, up the steps into the wine cellar, into the big hall and out into the sunshine where Leapy was waiting.

“I need your help,” he shouted.

Clambering on to the giant crab, he rode it into the hall.

“Free those boars,” he ordered.

Leapy clicked his sharp claws, cutting through the metal chains as easily as a hot knife through butter. Enraged by being chained up for so long, the boars turned on the nearest living creature: the giant crab. Their tusks bashed against the crab but his hard shell would not be broken.

Then Raskinstillstein stumbled through the open door. Instantly, the wild boars turned on him. The first one to get him reared his head and tossed the werewolf high in the air. Leapy reached out and caught him neatly in his claws. One snap, and the werewolf fell to the ground in two pieces.

Toby leapt off the crab and ran his sword through the werewolf’s heart. From watching so many movies, he knew the only way to destroy a werewolf was to pierce its heart with metal.

There was a flash and King Macbeth appeared in a halo of bright light.

“Bravo,” he said to Toby. “I give thee my crown in recognition of your bravery. You have saved the abbey and all of Whitby.”

“There’s your second prize,” said Leapy Giant outside the abbey. “You have one more left to win but I am not to help you on to Level 3. I am merely to hand you over to your next helper, or I should say helpers. There will be two of them.”

The sky went dark as Toby put the sword in the bag. The tinkly music started again and the fantasy Whitby disappeared.

PART 4

Filey

As the bright sun rose, Toby found himself on Filey beach, which stretched for miles on either side of him. Leapy Giant was pointing with his claws towards someone walking out of the sea. Toby could tell right away it was a girl more or less his age. As she got near, Toby noticed her skin was a pale blue and every time she blinked, her eyes changed colour. They went from blue to green to black and brown.

“This is Beasty,” explained Leapy Giant. “She likes apples and tomatoes, and ice-cream and cake too. She can walk incredibly fast.”

“And this is Scarlett,” continued the giant crab as another girl came out of the sea. “Scarlett only talks once every three days. They will both help you win your last prize.”

Scarlett smiled at Toby. She too had pale blue skin but it was her hair instead of her eyes that changed colour, and it did so every time she smiled.

“There is a great muddle at Filey’s Bird Garden and Animal Park,” replied Leapy Giant. “Sparky the manager had to leave early last night. Someone left the gate unlocked and all the otters, penguins and parrots have escaped.”

“Penguins?” said Toby. “I don’t think there are penguins at Filey Bird Gardens.”

“Not in the one in your own world,” explained Leapy. “But here in the fantasy world, it has everything and then some more. Sabre-toothed tigers, two-trunk elephants, giraffes with short necks. I hear they want a giant crab next, so I must get going before they spot me.”

“You, Scarlett and Beasty must help Sparky recapture the otters and the parrots. If you succeed, he will give you one of the parrots’ tail feathers. It’s your third prize. Good luck and goodbye.”

Leapy Giant waved his claws to say goodbye before ambling into the sea and disappearing beneath the waves.

In real life, Toby knew the way to the Filey Bird Garden and Animal Park because he’d been there many times for birthday treats. But the way to the fantasy Bird Garden and Animal Park was along a winding cobblestone path with different coloured cobbles. Step on a blue one and you’d find yourself back at the start.

“This is very frustrating,” said Toby to Beasty and Scarlett after they’d found themselves at the beginning a fifth time.

“The only way to avoid stepping on the blue stones is to navigate the path on our hands,” said Scarlett.

“What do you mean?” asked Toby.

But, having spoken, Scarlett was now silent and would stay like that for three days.

“She means if we walk on our hands, we might not touch the blue cobbles,” said Beasty instead of her. “Do you walk on your hands, sir? Scarlett and I learned to do it in Mrs Ballanshine’s upside down class at school.”

“I’ve never had an upside down class in my entire life,” said Toby, “I’m more of a coding type of guy. But seeing as I am a superhero at the moment, I guess I can do anything.”

Beasty and Scarlett stood on their hands and set off along the winding path with surprising ease.

Despite being a superhero, Toby found it really hard following them. He kept at it, though, and finally managed to get to the park entrance.

Sparky was sitting in a little kiosk. He was a short man with curly hair and a merry twinkle in his eye. A safari hat sat on his head at a jaunty angle.

“You’ve come to help, have you?” he said. “Thank you most kindly. I’ve been running after those escaped animals all morning and I’m quite out of breath. Have you any ideas?”

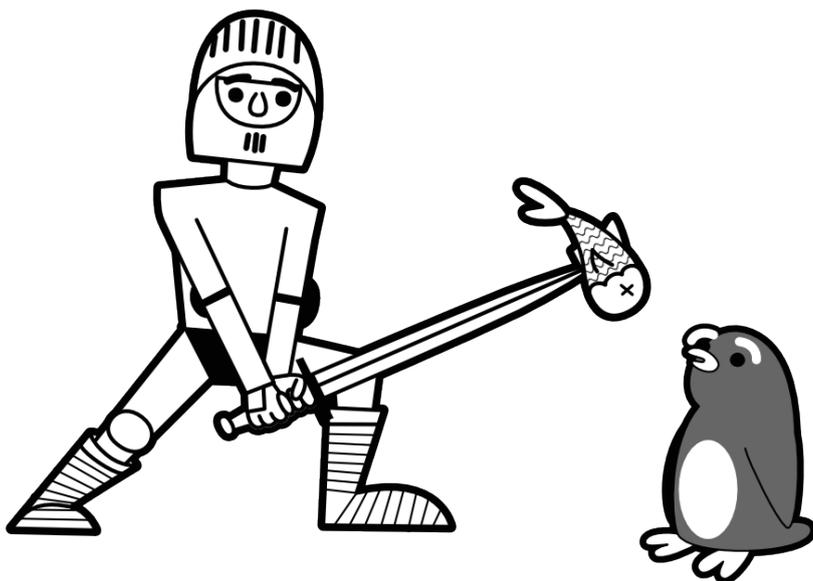
Toby looked from Beasty to Scarlett. He hadn’t had time to think HOW they were going to catch the animals.

“Toby can catch the penguins,” said Beasty, her eyes flashing different colours as she talked. “He has a sword and he can force them back home at sword-point.”

“Scarlett will catch the otters because she’s quiet as a mouse and can creep up on the beastly beasts unnoticed. I shall endeavour to catch the parrots because I’m lightning fast.”

“That all sounds very promising,” mumbled Sparky, sounding a bit confused because he was watching the girls’ eyes and hair change colour. “Now I suggest you only go after one animal at a time. Bring it back to me and I’ll pop it in its right cage or enclosure.”

Beasty set off right away, her long legs just a blur as she ran among the trees looking for the parrots.



Scarlett sneaked off after the otters who were playing in the surf. Silent as a shadow, it didn’t take her long to start bringing them back.

Toby himself found a dead fish on the beach and, dipping the tip of his sword in it until it smelt fishy, lured the penguins back to the bird garden.

“That’s the lot recaptured,” said Sparky when twenty of each animal were safely back in their homes.

He handed Toby a bright green parrot feather.

“Here you are, by way of payment. Will you sign a receipt for it, please? And would you please answer some questions by way of market research? In your opinion would you say that Filey Bird Gardens:

- Is more exciting than Filey Museum but less exciting than Filey Dams Nature Reserve?
- Has more or less birds in them than Filey Museum or Filey Dams Nature Reserve?
- Has more or less choice of snacks than Filey Museum or Filey Dams Nature Reserve?”

“I think we should be going,” whispered Beasty, “or it might be time for Scarlett to talk again by the time you’ve answered all Sparky’s questions.”

“Thanks for all your help,” said Toby. “We were a great team.” He felt very pleased as he put the parrot’s feather in his bag. “Now what?” he pondered.

PART 5

The Secret Level

Loud music blared out of nowhere as Filey faded from view and Toby found himself alone in an underground corridor. There was no sign of Beasty and Scarlett. Toby wished he'd had time to say goodbye.

At the far end of the corridor, he could see a door with a sign above it. The window was full of sweet jars, all filled with brightly coloured sweets like diamonds.

Toby hurried towards it, clutching the bag with the prizes. As he got closer, he read the sign above the door.

SWEET REVENGE

"You don't want that shop, not just yet," said a voice behind Toby.

He whirled round to see three girls standing behind him. He had no idea how they'd got there but there they were, one with her hair done up in a sparkly bun, one with a pink pony tail and the third with a blue kiss curl.

"I'm Boss Queen," said the girl with the sparkly bun.

"And I'm Splash Queen," cut in the girl with the blue kiss curl.

"And I'm Bunnyboo," finished the girl with the pink pony tail.

The three of them joined hands. "Together we're The Secret Level."

"Is that a band?" asked Toby.

"A girl group," confirmed Bunnyboo. "But right now we need your game playing skills."

"A superhero's assistance," added Splash Queen.

"I'm a bit busy right now," said Toby.

"What kind of superhero refuses to help those in need?" admonished Boss Queen.

Toby thought about it. The girls were right. He wouldn't be much of a superhero if he couldn't help others. Besides, games always had secret levels to distract you from your main quest.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked Boss Queen.

Bunnyboo pointed to a shop Toby hadn't noticed before. It had a golden sign on the door that said LOL City Garments for All Occasions.

"We all bought outfits in there," said Splash Queen, "but we left them behind by mistake. Now the shop is shut and we need them for our performance tonight."



“Will you get them for us?” pleaded Bunnyboo.

“Of course,” said Toby.

He inspected the ceiling until he spotted an air vent. He pointed at it and to his amazement a rope shot out of his sleeve and fixed itself to the vent.

His mind reeled as he clambered up the rope. Was KINDNESS giving him these extra powers? Is that what really made you a superhero? Wanting to help people?

Clambering into the vent, he found himself in a long dark tunnel with a very low roof. He crawled along it on his hands and knees, like an ant scurrying along an anthill and soon saw a weak light ahead.

It was coming from around a second vent. He opened the metal flap and dropped feet first into the clothes shop.

“Excuse me,” said a voice. “We’re shut?”

The person talking had a purple head with a bright yellow unicorn horn. A badge on her flowery shirt said: Oops-Acorn.

“I’m not buying anything,” said Toby hastily. “My friends left some outfits here and they need them for tonight.”

Oops-Acorn rolled her eyes. “People are always forgetting things. It’s so annoying.” She went to the counter, rummaged through stuff behind and pulled out a large carrier bag. She peeked inside. “Three identical outfits.”

“That must be it,” said Toby.

“Cropped jackets. Fake fur collars. So last year,” moaned Oops-Acorn, handing him the bag.

“Thanks,” said Toby who thought Oops-Acorn was very rude.

“Don’t mention it,” replied Oops-Acorn grumpily. “I’m not listening anyway. I have a tae-kwan-do class to get to. Don’t forget to close the vent behind you.”

She nodded her horn and instantly changed into a moth.

“A shapeshifting shop assistant,” said Toby. “I like it.”

“Retail manager, if you please,” squeaked the moth before it flew off.

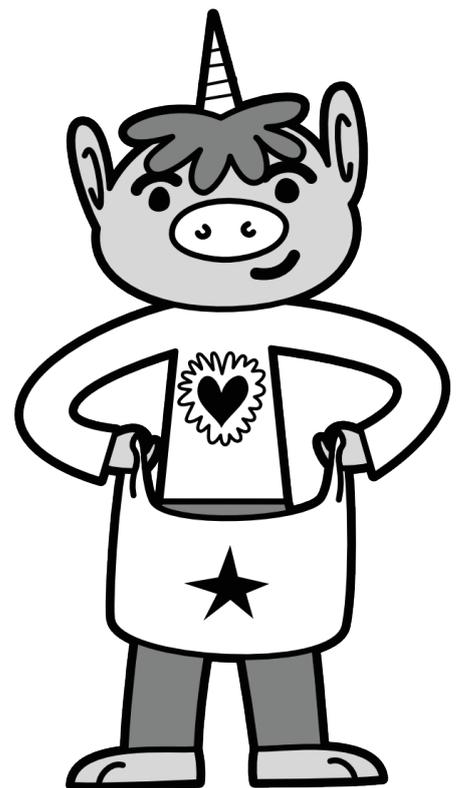
Back in the corridor, Toby handed Boss Queen the outfits.

“Thank you, so much,” said Splash Queen.

“You’re our hero,” smiled Bunnyboo. She removed a star badge from her lapel. “Here’s something from the three of us by way of thank you.”

“Good luck with your gig tonight,” said Toby.

The girls disappeared in a shower of glitter, leaving him alone. He turned to the sweetshop door. He turned the handle on the door only to find it locked. Of course, he needed the three prizes to gain entry. He took the lamp out of the bag and immediately a lamp-shaped hole in the door began to flash.



Toby put the lamp in it, which disappeared. There was a loud click and the door handle turned once. Toby fitted the crown and the feather in the two holes that appeared next. The door handle turned two more times but it still didn't open.

"Hey, what's going on?" said Toby out loud. "The genie said I needed three gifts to get in."

As he spoke, a FOURTH hole appeared in the door. A star!

Of course, the gift from the secret level. Thinking how much his kindness had paid off, Toby put the star in place. The door creaked open.

PART 6

The Sweetshop

Toby had expected the sweetshop to be on the small side like the ones in Scarborough. But this one was bigger than the amusement arcades on Scarborough seafront.

Rows and rows of shelves lined the walls, all groaning under the weight of thousands of sweet jars.

How on earth was Toby to find the Snake of the Dell? He was aware the clock was ticking and the sun would rise soon.

He walked up and down the hall inspecting every jar closely. Humbugs, jawbreakers, fruit pastilles, wine gums, mints, liquorice, spaceships, sherbets. Everything except the snake.

"Are you looking for something in particular, my sweet-toothed friend?" rasped a voice.

For the first time, Toby noticed a counter. There was a man behind it, with the most hideous, wrinkly face he'd ever had the misfortune to see.

The Face Lord!

"We have some new mint imperials just in. They're face-meltingly minty. Would you like to try?"

"No, thanks," said Toby.

"You are looking for...?" enquired the Face Lord, glaring.

"Snake sweets," said Toby.

"I'm afraid we only have sweets for humans," sniggered the Face Lord.

"Nothing for pets."

Something behind him whimpered. Toby saw a giant spider with red and orange stripes. It was so brightly coloured, it had merged with the millions of sweets around it.

"You know exactly what I mean," snapped Toby. "Sweets strung together to look like a snake."



“Ah,” said the Face Lord and his mouth set itself in a straight hard line. Sparks flew from his eyes as they bore into Toby. The superhero remembered the genie’s warning and instantly covered his face.

“Look at me, you coward” demanded the Face Lord.

“No!”

“Look at him,” said the giant spider in a surprisingly soft voice. “Or he’ll turn you into face on toast... I mean cheese on toast. Don’t I, sir, your honour.”

“I ordered you to look at me,” repeated the Face Lord, ignoring the giant spider.

“Never,” said Toby.

“I admit you have guts,” said the Face Lord. “Alright, I’ll give you a chance. Find the snake in ten minutes and I’ll let you have it. But fail to find it, and yours will be the first face I melt in Scarborough.”

“Where is it hidden?” asked Toby.

“In a jar, of course,” replied the Face Lord. “That’s where sweet sellers keep sweets.”

“In one of *these* little jars?” said Toby. “I don’t believe you. I read in the paper the Snake of the Dell has over eight hundred stones. They couldn’t possibly fit in one of these jars.”

“Do you dare contradict me?” screamed the Face Lord. “If you must know, I shrunk the snake.”

“Oh, so you’re a magician too. You do magic tricks as well as melt people’s faces,” said Toby.

“Tricks, you impertinent fool?” raged the Face Lord. “My magic is real.”

“I still don’t believe you,” said Toby firmly. “Not even a magician can do that.”

“Watch and learn, fool,” roared the Face Lord. He raised his hand and a sweet jar came flying off the shelf to land with a thud on the counter. Toby could see the sweet snake coiled inside it.

“Do you see it?” hissed the Face Lord.

“I see a jumble of sweets,” answered Toby. “But I don’t believe they’re the Snake of the Dell.”

“I shall show you,” said the Face Lord, “and then I shall melt your face right off your skull.”

He ripped the lid off the jar and muttered a spell. Instantly, the sweets slithered out in a long line, knocking against each other like beads on a necklace.

“That might be a snake, I have to admit” said Toby. “But it’s not the Snake of the Dell. It’s too small. And the Snake of the Dell has writing on it.”

Looking fit to burst, the Face Lord muttered a second spell and the snake started to grow. The sweets turned into familiar hand painted stones.

“Now do you believe me, minion?” shouted the Face Lord.

“Maybe I do,” said Toby cheekily. “And maybe I don’t.” Secretly, reaching for the sherbet in his pocket, he leapt at the snake and showered it with the lemon-smelling powder.

The snake instantly came alive. A forked tongue flicked out of its mouth to get the Face Lord – in the face. The Face Lord reeled back, clawing at his cheeks.

“I’m shrinking,” he screamed at Toby. “The snake’s goodness has destroyed all my wonderful wickedness.”

He fell to the ground where he grew smaller and smaller until there was nothing left of him.

“Game’s up for him,” thought Toby.

A tinny voice echoed round the sweetshop.

“Congratulations. Game won! Game won. Game won.”

Then the door opened again and Jeremy swooped in on his flashy motorbike.

“Well done, mortal. You have saved Scarborough, Whitby and Filey from doom. The Face Lord is no more. He came from outer space, you know. From a planet where all the houses are made of cheese. He melted everyone’s face there – apparently they were all made of cheese too. So he got exiled and tried to make this place his new home.”

Toby handed the genie back his sword.

“Still as good as new,” said Jeremy. “Of course you’re a superhero because you know how to use your heart and your brain. Those are powers that will help us all win the battles of life.”

“I hope that now you have proved yourself in this fantasy world of computer games, you will face life with more confidence in the real world. Adios, Toby Adventurinium! Asta-La-Vista.”

“Asta-La-Vista,” said Toby. He was sad that his adventure was over. But he did feel more confident to face real life. It was nothing he could put his finger on. He just felt... bolder... all over.

The genie started his motorbike which roared out of the door to disappear in a cloud of sherbet. As it cleared, Toby found himself back in his bathroom. The tablet was still in the bath.

Toby reached for it and, the moment he picked it up, the fantasy world disappeared into it to be replaced by the real one.

Toby looked around him. Everything in the room was like it had been before. The toilet seat up. Towels hanging from the towel rail. Toothbrushes in the toothbrush mugs. But one really important thing hadn’t changed back to what it was before.

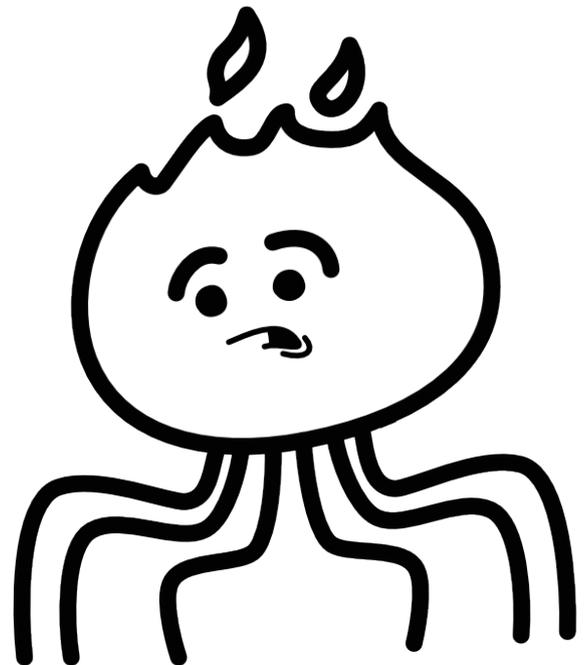
Even with the exciting game world gone, Toby still felt like a superhero. He didn’t have the genie’s sword anymore, nor any magical assistants to help him find hidden objects. But he still had the confidence that he had found inside him.

As the last of the water disappeared in the bath, a small red spider with orange stripes crawled out of the plug hole. The poor thing had only six legs.

Toby picked it up gently. “You look like the giant spider in the Face Lord’s sweet shop,” said Toby, scooping up the spider in his hands “You can be my pet, if you like. You can live in our back yard and I’ll look after you. Now what shall I call you?”

Instantly a name popped into his head.

“I know! Cyril!”



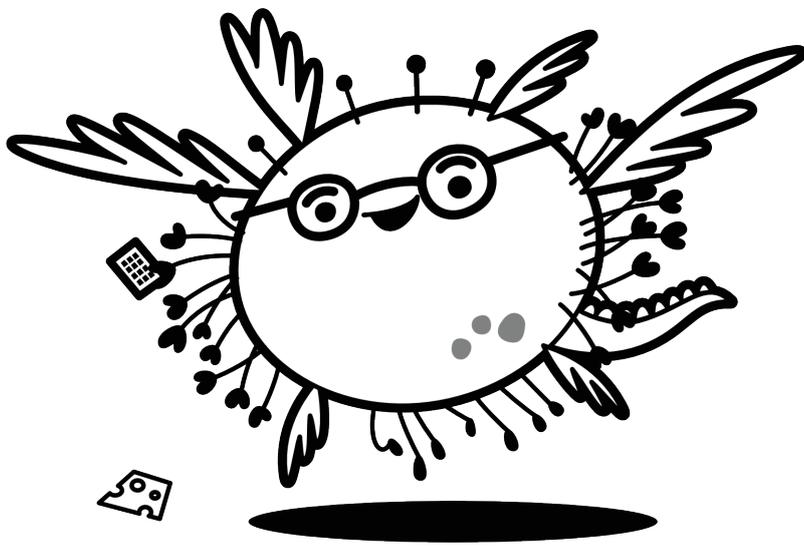
The sun was rising as a creature from outer space flew over across the sea towards Ravenscar. It was round like a ball. Rainbow spots dotted its bright purple skin.

The creature landed in the disused train station and inspected a mound of melted cheese on the ground.

One of its twenty hands pressed the buttons on a space-phone.

“Sir, this is Ethan speaking. I have located the remains of the Face Lord.”

“Bag them up,” crackled back a voice. “And bring them home to Planet Gouda. Even renegades deserve a decent toasting.”



“Bagging up in progress, sir,” replied the purple creature. “This is Ethan relaying from Planet Earth. Over and out.”



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