

900 - Etcetera and So Forth
of
Crazy George Takes a Holiday

The Fourth ~~Book~~ Study Guide

in the

Dragon Bound

a.k.a Dra@g©n B©und a.k.a

a.k.a **The D-B©und Adventuring Series** a.k.a

starring

Ruby FireHaven

and so on and so forth

as conceived, written, and enchanted by

Celli

the

Happy Go Lucky Celaphopod

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and in the Earthen Vortex

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Happy Birthday to the LeeZards

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900 - Etcetera and So Forth

Afterward: Another Dream

I know there are those who won't believe me when I say, I dreamed I was on the canals again last night. And that's fine, I'm not exactly "locked-in" to the truth... and then there's my prior record to consider... not to mention the numerous inconsistencies to be found within this very manuscript. But the fact remains, I did have a dream.

And I was on the canal again, trying to pilot the Feathered Plume while the Charlies deliberately misinterpreting my orders and Crazy George cast spells off the starboard bow -- much to Lane's amusement and my personal chagrin.

For you see, I was on a mission. And even after I realized I was dreaming, I could not relax nor let myself be carried along by the current. For, I had a destination in mind. And I was on a quest. Only, I didn't know exactly where I was going or how to get there.

Still, we sailed on.

Toward the end of the day -- or night, if you prefer -- we tied up; which it so say, everybody else ran ashore leaving me to secure the boat. Only Nadia stayed behind with me -- loyal Fairy that she is.

And thus, it was around closing time that the two of us finally arrived at our destination: The Cymbal Museum. Perhaps a pun, you know how my mind works. But in the end, I think it was meant to be taken literally. For filling a large hall, a thousand musical cymbals had been set on sticks, balanced precariously as they patiently waited to be rung, tapped, and played. It was a very surreal sort of modern art installation.

Obviously (if you ask me, anyhow), it was to be taken as metaphor for the Music of the Spheres and its bastard cousin Crystal Harmonics. The two being, together, another way to travel the planes. So, perhaps it was serendipitous that this is where I had arrived, at the end of my current journey... prior to the beginning of the next.

But do not be deceived into believing that I shall pursue that particular mode of travel any further -- neither in this tome nor the next. It is simply a conceptual bookend -- a handy way to wrap up the tale. For after all, it was a dream with which we started, and so it is only fitting that with another, we shall end.

And for those who will insist that I lie and make things up, all I can say is, if I was lying, I could have come up with a better ending than this.

Or then again, maybe I couldn't. For a river travels in both directions, and despite what Gimli will tell you in his geography class, no journey ever ends nor does it have anything that -- even remotely -- resembles a beginning.

Crystal Harmonic "Simplified"

Got a question? Just ask Crazy George. He'll explain anything you want... even if he doesn't quite understand it himself.

"Crystal Harmonics?"

"OK. Right. Here's the thing, the key.

"In the beginning there was nothing, nada, zilch, the void. Right? Got it? That's where zero comes from. It's the first

number. But just because I called it the first number, don't confuse it with the number one. I mean, it's easy to see how you might, because I just said it was, but it's not. So start over, start with zero, right. It's a thing, that zero. You can name it, place it; it exists... as the concept of that which doesn't exist, right? And so, you can say it's all that isn't there. So everything else -- by definition -- is the totality of existence. This is where one comes from. It's the whole, the unity; it's everything else. It is what is; it's one.

“So, got it? Got that one? Got that zero?”

“Zero and one, right? Zero and one. Obviously, there are two things there: zero and one. That's two, the dualistic nature of the universe. Two things. That which is and that which is not. So what do you have? Nothing is zero. What is, what exists is one. And together they make two, right? Got it? Zero, one, two. Now, there are three things there, but that would be too easy, too simple, too basic. It'll take you down the wrong track. So, you've got to ignore that, and instead add them all together. Zero and one combined aren't two, but one, and then you add two, and you get three. See, three is totality of all which has gone before, swirled together, added, and combined. It's inherent in what preceded it, but it's more, right? Right? Understand?”

“Zero, one, and two taken together makes three is three.”

“It's beautiful. It's clear. It's concise. You can keep on doing that, working it through for all the numbers. It's a thing of magic. It's creation. But suppose you deny existence, the validity of it all, and want to work backwards. You know, take it back, and regress to the mean. So you reject three. Easy, it's gone. Reject two. I mean, how can zero and one be any more than what they are? That's really the thing. Right there. But then, this is where it gets really interesting, right? You're down to one and zero. So, you take one, right? Just take it? Hold it, examine it, breathe it, love it. This is life, so live it. Just be the one, be it all. And then put zero in opposition to it. Combine them together. Matter and anti-matter. One and zero. That which is and that which isn't.”

And you get one-zero. Ten, right? One-zero, you just made ten. It's beautiful. By destruction, you get creation.

"One-zero, it's two in base two, three in base three, or ten in base ten. You see, when they say that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, this is what they mean. It's dynamic. It's fantastic. From the parts, you get the whole, but the whole is so much more, because it's composed of the parts of the parts, right? You get more than just the whole."

"Right? Got it?"

"In the end, this is where bowling comes from, you know. Ten pins to the whole, right? It's a row of one, a row of two, a row of three, and a row of four. Ten pins. Add them together, it's ten; it's beautiful. But in the ten, you've got like these countless triangles. These countless association. One and two is a triangle, right? And you've got six of those. One, two, three is another triangle, and there's three of those. And then, there's the triangle from it all, from one, two, three, and four. You got one of those. Add the triangles together and you get ten triangles, out of ten pins. It's magic. It's fantastic. It's like beautiful triangular perfection. Base ten. Zeros and ones. Existence and the null. Life and death. Mothers and daughters. Right? Mothers and daughters? Everyone one of those pins is a baby. The next generation. Set them up. Knock them down. It's bowling, right? It's a metaphor for life and death, the eternal struggle, the eternal march, and the ancient code of numbers is contained within them. Blind -- invisible to the initiated, but for all who know it's there. It's there.

"But we're into regression, right? Destruction. It's the kick we're all on. So, ten, take away one, right? That's what we're doing when we bowl. It's all about ten minus one, taking away the whole, the unity, and what does it give you? A strike! You get a strike! The highest score. Death on the grandest scale. X marks the spot. The null set. Nothing. Three in a row and you get the trinity, triple score, a turkey -- feast for all."

“Everything you ever wanted to know about Crystal Harmonics is right there. We should go bowling sometime, Celli. It’ll all make sense to you then.”

You seem to be petering out there, George. Care for a recharge, maybe some more K’fr?

“Oh, yeah-yeah, don’t mind if I do.”

Questions, Questions, Questions

Always with the Questions

Not that the typical reader is concerned with the mechanics of writing an epic masterpiece such as this. But what happens here -- now that I am at the end -- is that I go back to the beginning and sift through the notes looking for contradictions (not hard to find), spelling errors (that’s what Harry is for), and other points of concern. Like for instance, does anything herein make me look like a cad, or Sterling like a good guy?

And then of course, whilst doing this, I will undoubtedly think of some witty remark or recall some facet of the trip that I had previously forgotten to include. But rather than adding these bits of miscellany to the text proper, experience has shown that it is easier (not to mention much more conducive to the overall flow of it all) if I simply add these observations to the end of the document via a test question or similar footnote.

And this is what we soon shall be doing; but before I do, I still have a few last remaining trip noted to clear. As such, the first few questions derive from the little material which I have left. Waste not, want not; that’s what I always say -- especially when it comes to jokes, gags, character notes, and story ideas.

Thus, having set the stage more than adequately, a few questions:

Miscellany

The original working title for CGTaH was:

- A) Sex Sells
- B) Crazy George Takes a Holiday
- C) Lane Gets Her Grove On
- D) While Celli Pockets Another Boatload of K'fr
- E) All of the above, strung together all hip and pretentious like.

The original (proposed) cover art for CGTaH consisted of:

- A) Nadia sitting on my shoulder.
- B) A picture of George and Lane running through a bunch of portals in the town of Am'blin.
- C) That bikini shot of Lane, sunbathing on the deck of the Feathered Plume.
- D) A cast painting that we commissioned in Market Harbor the day before we took the cruise -- complete with a haggling George, scowling Lane, and a bunch of our friends disguised as merchants.

The original reason for writing CGTaH was:

- A) To write off my trip the Kingdoms as a non-taxable expense.
- B) As a sort of surreptitious spell and way of smuggling 100kg of K'fr into the islands whenever anyone read the finished product.
- C) To appease The Dragon... something about a Dragon's Egg.
- D) Because you've got to do something with your time.
- E) All of the above, but not necessarily in equal measure.

4) As per Groom's Bottom Revisited, the ale in Sterling's cellar tastes like:

- A) A leprechaun's backside.
- B) Unicorn droppings.
- C) A country road after the regiment has passed by.
- D) Like it costs a pretty penny.

A few more questions, perhaps best left unanswered:

1) What do you suppose lives at the bottom of the Wishing Well in the Fairy Queen's Garden?

2) How does Celli know that the Sea Monster, which Ole Trident Face sent to negotiate with him, is about the same size as a Lang'don tube station waste receptacle?

3) What does Celli mean when he says, "It's amazing how much country they've managed to cram into the Lang'don countryside"?

4) Is wet weather really what the folks in the Kingdoms do best?

5) Gimli (Gimlet, or whatever we eventually decided to call the frisky little Gnome in CGTaH) has been known to do a bit of shoe repair in addition to fixing boats (along with whatever else he winds up doing in CGTaH). Given this, why do you suppose his sign say that he will be happy to re-nail boots to any design? Why might this be important to a traveler? Or follower of Gra'gl?

6) What does the word Incunabula mean, and how does it relate to CGTaH? Or any of the titles Morgana Feldstone has put out over the years?

7) Not that you would know this, but in his notes and as a sort of character sketch, Celli describes a Dwarf that he saw in Am'blin as "walking with his arms cocked back like they are two weapons ready to go off." Why did he choose NOT to utilize this note? If he had, how would the perceived nature of Am'blin and its citizens have been changed?

8) In another note, Celli describes a Leprechaun as having "a spring in the step... due to the 'elevator' shoes he was wearing: after all, everyone can use a few extra inches." Is this consistent with Celli's other observations regarding Leprechauns.

9) "Friendly dogs belie the truth: Dwarves have kind hearts if tight purse strings." Once again, why was this clip left unused. If it was used, where might it have gone?

Believe it or not, this section (like most sections of this sort) turned out to be much shorter than I had been expecting... but we can fix that. For, now it is time for me to read the blessed thing (CGTaH, that is) over: all the way from the beginning to end. Feel free to accompany me on my journey if you like. And if you do, perhaps you will be able to figure out where, when, and why the following questions arise.

Oh, and just so we're all on the same wavelength (and as a sort of reminder to all the Gobe'lins in the audience), the correct answer to the multiple choice questions are always the _____ ones.

- A) Best.
- B) Most accurate.
- C) Cleverest.
- D) Funniest.
- E) Demeaning to Gobe'lins, Or'erks, Leprechauns, and Hobblings.
- F) The first ones Celli could think of.
- G) Usually some mixture of the above, but almost always the last option on the list.

In Review'um Ad Nauseum

The Points of Contention, Inspiration, and Review

100 - Introduction

Just the one essay type question for this section. Please explain in your own words what Celli was trying to say in the introduction. When you are done, please feel free to mail him a copy of your work. Sadly, we are unable to acknowledge receipt of any unsolicited manuscripts... yada, yada. Anything with one of those accursed © marks on it will be incinerated, burned, or otherwise sacrificed on the altar of he who has no name and/or who's name must not be spoken (i.e. Gra'gl).

200 - Glossary

For most, the difference between Fey and Fey'an is:

- A) Unclear.
- B) One of spelling.
- C) A source of constant consternation.
- D) Totally unimportant.

E) All of the above... but if you must know, Fey'an literally means of the Fey; and thus, Fey'an is (technically) a subgroup of the Fey... much like Hobe'Gobe'lins are a type of hordling.

Garg was snubbed for an Oz'gar in A-POX-On-You Now! because:

A) Garg is a Cro-Magnon and the Academy is a wee bit prejudiced.

B) Killing Goblins wholesale is no longer considered as “artistic” as it once was.

C) Garg's acting was overshadowed (i.e. upstaged) by the explosive power of all the enchantments used on the set. Trust me on this one, you never want to share the stage with a mage. And yeah, that's right, I'm talking to you, Mr. Crazy George.

D) Being a Cro-Magnon, Garg sort of dropped the ball when it came to submitting the appropriate paperwork and missed the filing deadline. Live and learn, Garg. Live and learn.

As you may have noticed while reading CGTaH, Bridges, Locks, and Tunnels (if worked properly) transport their users to distant realms. What is the fundamental difference between these three modes of travel? Is one better than the other? If so, explain why. If not, justify your reasoning (but still expect to get your answer marked as incorrect by any self-respecting professor).

I (Celli) first worked with Lane while writing:

A) The Chasm Queens: Touring the Outer Realms on less than 1/666th of your soul per day.

B) Inside the Courts of Chaos: An Exposé.

C) Babes, Brunettes, and Four-Armed Chaos Queens.

D) G'narsh: The Troll, The Myth, The Legend available at better bookstores throughout the Realms and as an interactive dream elsewhere.

Crazy George has been known to rant about:

A) Why it is best to squeeze a tube of toothpaste from the middle rather than the end.

B) The virtues of a dirty bathroom.

C) Why break-fast is a misnomer.

D) Just about anything you can imagine. There were days when I regretted opening my mouth. I'd say, "Good morning." And he'd go off. "Good morning? Good morning! You're honestly saying good morning on a day like this? What's good about it? This isn't good. It's ten o'clock and the fog hasn't lifted. I can't see my own hand. I've got a bunch of Cobalts for a crew, a Celaphopod for a navigator, and a delegate for the National Women's Libber convention as a first mate. And you're saying this is good? This isn't good. Good is the last word I'd use to describe this." I could go on, and trust me, Crazy George did (till 11:34AM to exact), but I think you get the idea.

300 - The Dream

(T/F) Celli had a dream again last night in which he was floating down the canals. Unfortunately, he was experiencing boat problems. Fortunately, a group of students out on safari were there to assist him with his every need.

I don't know if the activating enchantment on the first dream stayed intact or not, but if it had, that would mean:

A) Celli's copyright on the work is still intact and has been

perfected.

B) If you apply a strip of manna to the pages of the tome you are holding, the words will glow.

C) If you apply a second strip of manna to the page after the first, the words will stop glowing. Neat trick, that.

D) Despite your best efforts and whether the letters glow or not, a decision was made in your heart and by your heart-of-hearts whilst you read the dream. The enchantment records the decision and casts the relevant vote on your behalf, backdating it to the time of the canal's construction. Welcome to the Eternal Celestial Democracy.

400 - Themes & Motifs

The theme of CGTaH is:

A) Love will make you do crazy things.

B) Wizards make bad bunkmates.

C) Never trust a Fairy... during the heat of the moment.

D) See how much fun writing a book can be when you don't actually write it.

The primary motifs in support of this theme are:

A) All the petty arguments Crazy George and Lane get into along the way. (Did you get it? Mo' tiffs? Clever, huh?)

B) Um, tell me again; what's a motif?

C) The square root of 71.

D) The shoddy, haphazard, off the cuff, and informal nature of everything you have read thus far.

Welsch Rabbit contains:

A) Welsches.

B) Rabbits.

C) Seven important vitamins and minerals.

D) By all appearances, moldy mop water.

Joy de vivre is:

- A) A classic theme.
- B) What Garg has plenty of.
- C) Some highfaluting, fancy Frau'nch word.
- D) Something a formal education tends to destroy.
- D) All of the above.

In Lang'don'ese a zipper is a:

- A) Clothing fastener.
- B) Car door.
- C) Derogatory term for a Leprechaun.
- D) Another name for a two-wheeled horse and buggy...
because they "zip" along.

During this section, Celli was obviously:

- A) Sick.
- B) Watching the Rug-B finals on TV while he wrote.
Addictive stuff, that Rug-B... especially when you "play along" at home.
- C) Distracted by Mi'lay's ever-present badgering as she tried to entice him back to bed.
- D) Going through K'fr withdrawal.

500 - Rants

Rants are:

- A) Great filler material for books. You would not believe how much time and effort Crazy George has saved me over the years with his "explanations."
- B) Very artsy in a post-modernistic, deconstructive, dadaist-nihilism type way.
- C) Not to be underestimated.
- D) Not to be overestimated.
- E) Far more fun in real time.
- F) All of the above.

Jazz is:

- A) A cool nickname if you can swing it. (These little puns are great, aren't they?)
- B) A way of life.
- C) A state of mind.
- D) Often thought of as a type of music.
- E) All of the above, but least of all D.

When reciting Sturm and Drang, it helps if you:

- A) Scream.
- B) Yell. And yes, there is a difference.
- C) Wear trendy, pretentious combat boots.
- D) Snarl.
- E) Channel your inner Depth Fiend and realize that the first classic ballad, You Will Rue the Day My Sweet Love by Viscous Viper, was inspired when ole Viscous learned that his mother was sleeping with his son... and thus, bypassing him!
- F) All of the above, but most of all E.

When compared to Jazz or Sturm and Drang, Beat is generally considered:

- A) A bit sissified.
- B) Not as authentic or real.
- C) An East Coast, Lang'don'ese thing.
- D) Culturally, more or less the same; but the simple fact remains, an aging human in a second-hand beret doesn't instill the same fear in his audience as an enraged Depth Fiend does, especially if said Depth Fiend lets it be known that he's packing a fully loaded and operational AK-47/5889x and that he isn't afraid to use it if he doesn't get the applause he thinks he work deserves.

600 - Character Summaries & Locale Descriptions

Celli the Happy Go Lucky Celaphopod can best be described

as:

- A) Vain.
- B) Well, vainish, but not totally undeserving of his own high regard.
- C) No. No. Vain pretty much covers it.
- D) A Gaul. As in, a Gaul-Gaul. Not being big on spelling, this is what many of the inhabitants in the Lands Past Sunset call Celaphopods... on account of their incredible gall.
- E) Incredibly handsome.
- F) Available for speaking engagements.
- G) Available for other engagements.
- H) All of the above, and then some, baby, and then some!

Ay! Caramba!

Crazy George is best described as:

- A) Crazy.
- B) A megalomaniac.
- C) Mentally unstable.
- D) Talkative.
- E) All of the above, but since the question is how is he best described, the answer would have to be as a wizard.

Lane fell in love with Crazy George because:

- A) I told her to, and Lane does what she's told just like a good girl.
- B) Nadia explained the situation to her and Lane is always happy to help a girlfriend out.
- C) Those thighs. Those abs. Let's face it, Lane never stood a chance against George's hard -- steroid formed -- body.
- D) Crazy George is a wizard my friends, and Lane digs power. It just sort of makes her go weak in the knees. Go figure, a Lady of Chaos being attracted to a man of power. I know, who would have thunk it?

Rover is:

- A) A crazy cat that thinks it's a dog.
- B) Quite friendly.
- C) Afraid of the dark.
- D) <Ding! Dong!> Um, excuse me. I think I hear someone scratching at the door.

The Five Kingdoms refers to:

- A) The five senses of man.
- B) The five additional senses of Oolang's.
- C) The five major animal kingdoms.
- D) The five major divisions of my girlfriend's closet.
"You've got your shoes, your coats, your hats, your dresses, and those things you like Celli. And if you want to see any more of them, I'm going to need a bigger closet."
- E) Something else, but being a lazy sort of cuss, I don't feel like explaining it again.

The biggest difference between Elves and Dwarves is:

- A) Elves drink, Dwarves get drunk.
- B) Elves create art, Dwarves create wealth.
- C) Elves smell like perfume, Dwarves just smell.
- D) Elves prefer cats, Dwarves prefer dogs.
- E) When playing Rug-B, Elves play for what's in the barrel, whereas Dwarves play for the barrel. By no means the biggest difference, but in the Kingdoms it may well be the most important one.

Hordlings are:

- A) Sentient beings, but just barely.
- B) A problem throughout the known dimensions.
- C) Legal to kill on sight in many locales.
- D) Annoying to live next to.
- E) Named after their reproductive ways. They breed. And they breed. And they breed. Until there's just no more room.

Then they raid the next vortex over: either conquering it and increasing their territory or suffering horrendous losses. And then, they start the whole process over again from scratch.

F) All of the above. But perhaps the most perplexing thing about Hordlings is their blatant refusal to recognize their breeding habits as being part of the problem. Go figure.

Sterling Watford is a:

- A) Cad.
- B) Cad.
- C) Cad.
- D) Cad.

Morgana Feldstone is _____ years old.

- A) 459
- B) Just shy of two hundred.
- C) Around forty five.
- D) Not really sure, but she sure does look like she's just turned 19.

Which ONE of the following could never be considered a Fey'an no matter how far you stretched the term:

- A) A Fingerling.
- B) A Dwarf who has taken up gardening and is active in the woodland preservation movement.
- C) An Elf -- let's just call him Stef'fan, it's a popular enough Elvin name -- who is in favor of real estate development, and because his therapist told him to try scream therapy, has taken up lumberjacking as a hobby.
- D) Any creature that has the word Fiend in its name -- no matter its political orientation.

Based on the fact that Celli (the Happy Go Lucky Celaphopod, no less) didn't want to rescue Lane when she was taken captive by Luigi, we may surmise:

A) When assembling your next adventuring party, it might be wise to leave him out of the line up.

B) But then if you do, you know he's only going to stay behind and hit on your wife, girlfriend, or daughter, so maybe you ought to take him along, after all.

C) Or maybe, Celli was with Lane when she was taken captive and therefore was under a beguiling dweomer himself.

D) Another theory holds that as the time of her abduction, Celli was on a roll, cranking out page after page of well edited prose and therefore -- for artistic reasons -- did not wish to interrupt the Muses mid-flow.

E) Since the last answer is always the correct answer, I'm thinking that all of the above must be true to some extent... except for maybe that last one.

Things that a person might find in the Fairy Queen's Garden include:

A) A magical, sentient, and quite egotistical sundial that finds it easier to simply change the time rather than bothering to tell the time.

B) A bazillion and one Fingerlings.

C) More carnivorous plants than you can (or dare) shake a stick at.

D) A decomposing Dwarf or two, masquerading as a compost pile.

E) All of the above, and on a good day the Fairy Queen, herself.

Most sentient creatures call Leprechauns:

A) Cons.

B) Money grubbers.

C) Annoying.

D) Sir.

In any reader submitted story contest we might hold you can

rest assured that:

A) We'll be more than happy to pay the winners at a copper a word and not a penny more.

B) Those stories that represent Leprechauns in a positive light will already have one knock against them.

C) The official rules will run to 154 pages -- give or take.

D) Friends, relatives, and/or hot Elvin babes with loose moral values will have a better chance than average of winning the grand prize: a no-holds barred date with Celli.

Morgana Feldstone's masterwork The Circling Circle of Circling Circles is:

A) Similar to her classic Dream Vacation.

B) A retread of Moot Hall.

C) Nothing more than a clever way of "recycling back into the mist" uppity young witches that happen to be past their prime.

D) Based on the same sort enchantment as CGTaH, only CGTaH is a wee bit more benign.

E) Sort of redundantly titled... oh, and all of the above, to boot.

Market Harbor has:

A) Both a market and a harbor.

B) Both a bell and a steeple.

C) An enviable position on the K'fr Road... thanks to us.

D) A relatively stupid name.

E) All of the above.

K'fr is:

A) A sentient species of plant.

B) More of a demi-god, really.

C) Vengeful.

D) Utilized as a mode of travel throughout the known vortexes... and basically, how they came to be known in the first place.

- E) Great fun to smoke.
- F) Pronounced kerf -- the first guy to write it down was a bit smashed at the time.
- G) Highly addictive.
- H) Utilized by Gra'gl as a way of harvesting souls.
- I) Outlawed in the Seven Realms for this and various other reasons.
- J) All of the above

(T/F) Like all laws, the bans on K'fr and weapons in the Seven Realms can both be gotten around -- quiet easily, in fact -- if one knows what they are about.

(T/F) But doing so would not be such a good idea as The Dragon does not like to have his authority called into question.

I guess, I never did set down a rule for (T/F) questions. Oh, well. I'm sure you can work it out.

If a group of would be adventurers were taking a float trip on the Mystic Waters traveling from the Kingdom towards the Realms while keeping the K'fr Highway in tow by smoking K'fr at the rate of four bales a week: how many bales of K'fr would they have to buy in Market Harbor at the start of their journey in order to insure that they had enough to make the journey... even after accounting for all the tolls, duties, and customs they encountered. Please round you answer to the nearest boatload.

What wasn't present on the Feathered Plume?

- A) A whole heck of a lot of K'fr.
- B) A wood shop.
- C) An alchemist's laboratory.
- D) An herb garden on the roof.
- E) A fire extinguisher, a safety flare, an anchor, or even a handy dandy leak repair kit. (Hint: once again, the correct answer is the last one on the list. Crazy George doesn't believe in safety.

Oh, he believes in accidents to be sure, but not safety.)

I like Lang'don. I like the Five Kingdoms. But I think it would be an ignoble omission if I didn't mention that the canals are full of:

- A) Elves with no sense of shame.
- B) Good looking Fairies... with no sense of shame.
- C) More Fingerlings than you could shake a stick at... once again, sans shame.
- D) Lots of decomposing... um, er... flora and fauna -- that being dead didn't have a lot of shame.
- E) Still Water -- the dead stuff -- not noted for its shame.
- F) All this and more. So, I'm just saying, word to the wise (and shame on you if you don't heed it): if you're planning on going down the canal, pack plenty of undead repellent and get your holy symbol recharged whenever you pass a steeple; that's what they're there for.

Judging by our experience, if you cheat a Leprechaun out of his toll, you can expect:

- A) The Leprechaun League to let bygones be bygones.
- B) The locals to raise a mercenary mob to come after you.
- C) The nearest Dwarf to offer to buy you a pint of ale at the nearest bell as his way of saying thanks.
- D) To simply not get to where you thought you were going. As in, you get's what you's pays for in the Kingdoms.

Cobalts:

- A) Talk funny.
- B) Like physical labor, providing you whip them often enough... or pay them in K'fr.
- C) Travel in troops.
- D) Still like the Celaphopod, even after all they've been through... oh, and all of the preceding, as well.

From the information provided, if one were to generalize about locks in the Kingdoms, one might conclude:

A) They are often manned by slimy creatures (Kibbers and Sterling Watford both coming rapidly to mind).

B) The weather in the immediate vicinity is often a reflection of its owner/operator's disposition.

C) They are child's play to operate, seeing as how we never got lost using one... not the locks, not once.

D) Much socializing occurs on the banks while waiting in line and as one goes through.

E) All of the above.

Rus's'skin is:

A) A bit of a snake.

B) A literary critic of old.

C) Rumored to have spent a season or two at Sterling's Manor.

D) Known to have taken his K'fr seriously.

E) All of the above... except maybe D. This, too, is just a rumor.

(T/F) Yogesh smelled something awful even though he spent several hours each and every day longing in a custom hot tub that he built in the forest with a bit of help from Cope.

(T/F) Fairies dig hot tubs.

(T/F) Yogesh digs Fairies... all slippery and slidey and covered in soap and suds.

The main reason Celli dislikes Sterling Watford is because:

A) He's a cad.

B) Which is to say, Sterling is a cad (just in case the previous was unclear).

C) Sterling is one of those rich muckity-mucks (a.k.a. a cad).

D) Sterling is a dude and therefore a sexual competitor. Were Sterling a rich, good looking, Countess, things between Celli and

him might have been different. I give you Lady Morgana as a literary case in point.

The Mermen in the Pinker'ton tunnel sported pink Day-Glo hair because they were:

- A) Poofs.
- B) Which is to say, powder-puffs.
- C) Escapees from the local zoo.
- D) Punk rockers.
- E) Working a gag for the tourist trade like the honest, hard working highwaymen they were.

From all the talk of portals and patterns, the wise reader will surmise:

A) It's best to stay on the beaten path. "Down, boy! Heel! I say, heel! Or I'll have to use my cudgel on ya, ya varmity flea-bitten trail."

B) The Five Kingdoms is really more like five to the five to the five kingdoms if you count them all.

C) Lane is a trouble maker.

D) George is worse.

E) This is exactly why you will want to buy travel insurance in advance if you ever chose to visit the Kingdoms.

F) All of the above... but don't let any of this discourage you from doing a little adventuring off the beaten track of your own.

A portal differs from a pattern mainly in that (meaning there can only be one correct answer):

A) The rain in Spa'ne falls mainly on the Pla'ne.

B) Portals go on the side of boats, whereas patterns are found on dry land.

C) The toll on portals is cheaper.

D) Any hordling can work a portal; patterns on the other hand, require some modicum of intelligence. Which is to say, if you can't walk, trace, or dance a pattern, you ain't going

nowhere... unless the blasted thing has a default kill switch. Never a good thing.

Riddle me this: What does the Kingdom's Trust have in common with a stack of gold coins and a cudgel?

A) If you don't give the Kingdom's Trust its fair share of your gold, they cudgel you.

B) The Kingdom's Trust's stamp, seal, and icon is a stack of coins balanced precariously on the end of a cudgel.

Water's Abbey is named as such because:

A) It was originally built by Sir Reginald Water.

B) Subsequently bequeathed to Lady Catherine Water.

C) Thereafter made into a temple for the Holy Order of the Mystic Waters.

D) Admit it, you though this one going to be one of those all of the above answers, but it's not. The place is called Water's Abbey because there's like a lot of water in the area. Always has been. My guess, always will be.

(T/F) The entry fee for getting into any church in the Kingdom's is optional.

(T/F) But ending the lecture about how everyone has to carry their own weight and how it's people like you who ruin it for the rest of us is going to cost you a solid gold.

(T/F) These rules (the entrance fee and pretty much every other rule in the Kingdoms) is waived for Fingerlings and anyone larger or more psychotic looking than the resident caretaker. Look, let's just say, after visiting a few churches, you shouldn't have to wonder where the inspiration for the Hunchback of Not'a'Dame came from... not that I have any idea why anyone would have to clarify that these blokes are not dames.

Put the following events in the correct chronological order.
Note: it shouldn't be hard.

- A) Reginald marries Isabella for her substantial dowry.
- B) Having killed Isabella, Reginald attempts to marry Catherine for her substantial... assets.
- C) Reginald and Catherine are buried alive by an angry mob.
- D) Even though they were buried in the same tomb, snug as two bugs, since they died before having gotten official married, and no Karthrax loving priest will ever marry them, Reginald lives on in perpetual torment and anguish.
- E) Who says Karthrax isn't vengeful?

The best way to meet a ghost in Kiss'wick is to:

- A) Hire a guide.
- B) Walk through a graveyard at night.
- C) Say, "I don't believe in ghosts," to any and all comers.
- D) Stand on a street corner whilst studying a map and trying real hard to look like a yokel. They'll come a'running to offer directions. "Can I help you, good sir?" Granted, the info they give you is sure to be out of date, but who heeds what a ghost has to say, anyhow?

The two most powerful guilds in Kiss'wick sell:

- A) Apples and oranges. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. You don't want to know what oranges keep at bay.
- B) Marmit (a type of rat poison typically stored next to the marmalade) and its antidote as sold by the Fingerling's Freedom Fighters Front (a.k.a. The FFFF, as in, "What the F...?").
- C) K'fr and Drip. I think this should be self explanatory by now.
- D) Raincoats and Maps. Who would have thunk it? And don't be thinking your foreign made umbrella is going to be doing you any good, sonny. If they have to, they're more than happy to cause your hotel room to leak, get a waiter to spill drinks all over your fancy clothes, or for tough cases, simply toss you, your luggage, and the horse you rode in on into the lake. And trust me, those lakes are cold! Brrr!

(T/F) One of the reasons Mortimer can get away with selling raincoats secondhand is because he's a tree; and therefore, the threat of getting soaking wet at all hours of the day and night isn't really much of a threat to him.

Outside of pencil lead, Kiss'wick's chief export is:

A) Melanoma, for spreading on toast.

B) Mamon'ite, for use as a soup base.

C) Marmit, used as a breath freshener in some of the more backward vortexes.

D) Happy memories... and if they could ever find a way to get rid of them, probably ghosts, as well.

OK. Here's a freebie for anyone who has bothered to read The Dragon Bound Quartet. A fully developed mine -- even if it started producing copper, tin, lead, or coal -- will eventually yield:

A) Gold necklaces.

B) Diamonds rings.

C) Limited liability wishes.

D) Manna! OK, sure. Wishes might sound better to some (even limited liability ones); but since manna is basically a wish without a demon trying to screw you over, it really is much better. Besides, no one's ever figured how to pull wishes out a hat, much less a hole in the ground, so that's really not an option.

Many gift shops in the Kingdoms (along with guest houses, pubs, and so on) have roaring blazes going in their fireplaces, because:

A) They all worship Zoë, the Goddess of Fire; she's hot stuff that Zoë. Yowza!

B) It's the law.

C) It's cold in the Kingdom's. I mean, have you ever been there? Ice falls from the sky! In the middle of the summer!

D) Hot Elves wear less clothing and rigorous studies have

shown that both Celli and Crazy George spend more money when they are waited upon by scantily clad Elvin shop girls.

A 6,000 year old dragon war banner (as acquired by Celli at Ming's Dynasty) is good for:

A) Striking the fear of... well, a dragon, I suppose, into the heart's of your enemies.

B) +1 to all combat rolls for troops within sight of the banner.

C) +45.3225% (I checked, and that's exact an exact figure) to all morale rolls for any and all armies who march under the sign of the banner.

D) Good for? Good for? Come on. Get real. Since the banner was being sold at an antique shop, you can bet your last silver the only major function it has left is as a wall hanging. But hey, what a way to decorate your walls! And after all these years, I'm guessing it has a long life ahead of it as a +12 conversation starter.

A Snacker Bar™ is one of the many things commonly available in the Realms that is no where to be found in the Kingdoms. Don't ask me why? It's just the way it is. Though, if I were a conspiracy nut, I might put forth that the real reason you can't find a Snacker Bar™ in the Kingdoms is because:

A) They don't meet the Kingdom's definition of food. But considering they serve Marmalite and all, that seems pretty unlikely.

B) Um, oddly, that's the only conspiracy theory I can come up with at the drop of the hat. Oh, I suppose I could go on about some Leprechaun Food Cabal or something like that, but I don't feel like it at the moment.

(T/F) Crazy George and Lane both enjoy a good fight.

(T/F) Based on his imposing intellect, eclectic database, and absolute refusal to admit defeat, Crazy George usually wins these arguments.

Would you like to change your answer to the above? Or would you prefer being turned into a toad? Or having your arms ripped off? The choice is yours.

If you're capable of connecting the dots and finding the amusing connection Celli was alluding to in the section concerning Gimlet's Repair Shop and the Kibbers from the Ming's Dynasty antique shop, you should:

- A) Have your head examined.
- B) Don't worry, the ringing will go away.
- C) Write Celli a long and convoluted letter asking him numerous detailed questions regarding the subplot, assured that, since he only spends a half hour writing each day, that means he has ten or twelve hours lying around with which to read your letter and write a custom reply.
- D) Become a writer. That's right, I'm egging you on, fanboy. Become the competition. Or if you've found becoming a professional writer to be a tad difficult, don't know how to get your leg in the door, and/or find a copper a word to be more gold than you ever dreamed possible, take out quill and parchment and scratch out a story. Who knows? Maybe you'll win the contest at the back of the book.

If CGTaH was ever made into a movie, it should be a:

- A) Documentary.
- B) Travelogue.
- C) Musical, complete with singing Leprechauns, choreographed Fingerling dance numbers, and lusty Elvin barmaids singing the praises of Celli.

Crazy George is allergic to:

- A) Chocolate.
- B) Tree nuts.
- C) Celery.
- D) Anything that belongs to Celli.

E) Especially story notes.

F) All of the above; and trust me, the list is growing daily.

Ole Trident Face is:

A) A bit aggressive when it comes to commissions, tribute, and royalty fees.

B) God Almighty of all that is liquid.

C) Getting a bit big for his breaches, if you ask me.

D) Probably going to get his revenge in the next book in the series; I mean, we're going to have to settle accounts eventually. Which isn't to say, choices A, B, & C aren't equally relevant.

Ah, Stef'fan, Stef'fan, Stef'fan -- to know him is to:

A) Love him.

B) Hate him.

C) Want to cuddle, squeeze, and play with him.

D) Stef'fan? Why are you focusing on Stef'fan? Have you ever seen his girlfriend? That Mi'lay is one hot number. She wants me, you know.

If we ever do another story in which Crazy George, a map, and a bank are featured, we'll probably call it:

A) Sticky Fingers.

B) Crazy Like a George.

C) Crazy George Steals the Show.

D) Rigor Pass 1866: The Manna Boom Years, because, you know, that's like the next book in the series... or so I have been promising my fans for years.

CGTaH ends at the Le Bank Restaurant'e, because:

A) It's got to end somewhere.

B) That's the last time Celli ever saw George, Lane, Stef'fan, Mi'lay, Nadia or any of the rest.

C) That's when his girlfriend arrived and took him home... kicking and screaming.

- D) That's where he is to this very day washing dishes.
- E) Twenty five hundred in gold and not a copper less. I think that's reason enough.

700 - Chapter Summaries

- Celli wrote CGTaH as the notes to the notes because:
- A) It just makes more sense that way.
 - B) He gets paid by the word and the notes are longer than the novel would be.
 - C) All that K'fr, trust me, he doesn't remember a thing.
 - D) Because he could. Straightforward and simple, because he could. Next question.

- There are _____ books in the Dragon Bound series.
- A) Two, only two are actually books. The other three are a movie, a study guide, and if it ever gets written, a play.
 - B) Five, there are five books in the Dragon Bound series. That's why Celli keeps on listing them off: The Dragon Bound Quartet, Minataur Tales, The K'fr Road: To Ve'kahn and Back Again, Crazy George Takes a Holiday, and Rigor Pass 1866: The Manna Boom Years.
 - C) Four! How many times do I have to say it? The K'fr Road: To Ve'kahn and Back Again was a movie!
 - D) Twenty, five books times four sub-books, equals twenty.
 - E) Sixteen! Only four were books, one was a movie, so sixteen!
 - F) Twenty!
 - G) Sixteen!
 - H) Twenty! Want to take this outside?
 - I) Why? Too dark in here for you to see your fingers? Sixteen?
 - J) Actually, the last one hasn't even been written yet, so...
 - K) Stay out of this!
 - L) Yeah, butt out! So where were we?

- M) Twenty!
- N) Sixteen!
- O) Three!
- P) OK. That's it. Let's get him.
- Q) And the debate rages on to this day... mainly betwixt Celli, his publisher, and his agent.

One Egg to bind them, one Egg to rule them, one Egg to... er, I forget. The Egg's true purpose is:

- A) It's one of those rare Tif'n'Nay jeweled eggs.
 - B) Gives a +2 to all omelet making rolls.
 - C) It contains K'fr, valuable stuff that K'fr.
 - D) Nobody really knows, or if they do, they're not telling me.
- Still, with a name like the Dragon's Egg, it probably has something to do with dragons, ya think?

How about an essay question this time? Compare and contrast George and Lane's perception of the adventure. If you like, do so in a contrasting (he said / she said) narrative format and submit it to Celli. If it's coherent, proofread, and ready for publication, out of the goodness of his heart, he might just pay you 1-0-0 for it. OK. 1-5-0, but that's as high as he'll go.

For Extra Credit: spend a few minutes visualizing Lane in all of her chain-mail bikini, plate-mail pasty glory. Or if you like, do the same for an un-bathed, unkempt, bathrobe wearing wizard with a tenuous grasp on reality and a brace on his knee. Me, I'll be spending a few moments pulling up that memory I have filed away of Lane sunbathing on the ship's deck during the doldrums sequence.

In pre-production, Nadia had the leading role. She ended up losing the lead to Lane because:

- A) Being an indentured servant (or what we in the trades like to call chattel), Lane works for less.

- B) Crazy George doesn't have a thing for Fairies.
- C) Actually, I think he might be allergic to Fairies... you know, if he ever gave them a go. (All those fingerlings poking him in the eye, don't you know.)
- D) Celli wanted Nadia all to himself.
- E) Although all of the above are true statements, the reason Nellie didn't get the lead is because that's not the way the story went. And if you thought the Mystic Waters was hard to understand, it's nothing compared to Story Book Magic.

- Nadia is:
- A) Cute.
 - B) Like really, really cute.
 - C) Supermodel cute.
 - D) But for whatever reason self-conscious enough that she doesn't think so.

- More than anything else, the Charlies like to:
- A) Work... Oh'd, who'd write dis crappers. Charlie no likers to works. We likers to:
 - B) Basker's in da suns.
 - C) Swimmers.
 - D) Enjoyers da beer in da tavern. But does anybodies eber takers the Charlies to the pub'ers? No. No's dey do not.
 - E) And the correct answer is E. Drum roll please. More than anything else, the Charlies like to grumble... Oh'd you'd grumblies too, Mister, you'd have'd to do'd halfers the workees the Charlies have to do.

(T/F) Within every similarity between the Five Kingdoms and the Seven Realms lies a subtle difference waiting to reveal itself at the most inappropriate moment.

- Sterling Watford blew his one chance with Lane because:
- A) He's a bit of a cad.

- B) Who just so happens to be a Vampire.
- C) That turns into a multi-tentacled swamp monster at night.
- D) OK. Truth be told, it's because he wanted her to sign a prenup.
- E) None of those choices sound convincing? Well then, maybe it was because she had already given her heart to another at that point (even if she didn't know it), to a one Crazy M. George. And don't even ask me what the 'M' stands for. Probably something stupid like Maximillious.

CGTaH is part of the Dragon Bound series. The group of books is known as the Dragon Bound series on account of:

- A) The Dragon stars in all the stories.
- B) The bindings on the books are hand bound by captive dragons.
- C) The Dragon owns the company that publishes the series.
- D) The first book in the series, The Dragon Bound Quartet, was such a smash hit, so The Dragon decided to name his publishing company after it.

Celli isn't noted for the descriptive sequences in his narratives, so if a person were to describe Morgana, they would be most accurate in describing her as:

- A) Vaguely as possible.
- B) Deathly beautiful and leave it at that.
- C) Hot enough to die for.
- D) Cold enough to die for.
- E) An undead beauty, who through the power of witchcraft can look pretty much however she wants. Hence, making it all the more difficult to determine how many sisters are in residence at any one time... as she could look like them all and probably does.

K'fr differs from the Mystic Waters mainly in that:

- A) The one is dry while the other is wet.
- B) Drip (the drug equivalent of the Waters) is loads cheaper

than K'fr and not nearly as addictive. (Um, just to be on the safe side, I should tell you, this is most definitely not the case.)

C) The Mystic Waters makes you talk more. (Nope.)

D) In the end, there is no difference, Grasshopper, for the Waters flow through the leaves of the K'fr and it is for the K'fr that the Waters flow. Yeah, put that in your pipe and smoke it, Grasshopper dude.

E) If Celli really knew, he might explain it, but you know how it is. Just because a person has nothing to say, doesn't mean they aren't going to say it... or get paid by the word while they say it.

The Hormonal Elf actually liked having Harry around while her boyfriend, Celli, was gone because:

A) Harry cooked her supper.

B) Cleaned the house.

C) Did her nails.

D) Dressed a lot better than the Celaphopod.

E) Was more hygienic.

F) All of the above, and then there was that whole listening to her talk thing. Harry even did that... the suck up.

Stef'fan is happy that Celli is staying with him because:

A) Celli chips in with the rent.

B) Celli chips in with the groceries.

C) Stef'fan is hoping Celli will eventually be successful in his attempts to seduce Mi'lay and thereby take the clingy girl off his hands.

D) Stef'fan is happy because he is an Elf. He'd be happy if the sky was falling. So, it's really not so much that Stef'fan is happy because Celli is staying with him, as it is more that Stef'fan remains happy despite the Celaphopod's continued presence.

E) And now that I think about it, this is going to have to be one of those None of the Above answers, because I like Stef'fan and all, but he's got to be about the most morose Elf I've ever met.

Good thing he's in therapy.

The smart money concedes that Ole Trident Face will eventually back off in his demands and:

A) Slink to the bottom of the ocean where he belongs.
B) Do one of those things where a hot Mermaid falls for the Celaphopod and transforms herself into an Elvin maiden. (Well, a Celaphopod can dream, anyhow.)

C) Concede that 10% is a ridiculous amount of tribute to demand simply because the story took place on water.

D) Make an object lesson out of Celli in his next book...

E) Heck, maybe if Ole Trident Face agrees to be reasonable and wipe the slate clean, we'll give him a starring role in the next book... maybe pay him by the word.

"How does that sound Trid'i, old boy? Deal?"

"You want how much? A gold a word?"

"For every scene you appear in?"

"And as one of the starring characters, you expect to be in every last scene?"

"That's highway robbery!"

"That's criminal!"

"No. No. It's a deal. Shake?"

"You do realize the next book is called Rigor Pass 1866: The Manna Boom Years?"

"Oh, just that it takes place in a desert, so you'll need to bring your own water."

"Um, I should be going now. Until Rigor Pass, ta-ta."

700 - Example Chapters

The best way to win the contest is to:

- A) Follow the chapter summaries to the letter.
- B) Zealously adhere to the plot. Plot is central. Plot is key.
- C) Write the blasted thing as if you were Celli. You're not, of course, but no one will know, so no worries.

D) Bribe the judges with... well, use your imagination. But just remember, if you send foodstuffs, Crazy George is only going to think that you're trying to poison him. So really, gobs of gold will probably work best.

Chapter 1, "Old Man River", is principally about:

- A) Lane.
- B) Lane in all her chain-mail glory.
- C) Lane in all of her low-cut, battle distressed, chain-mail glory.
- D) Crazy George's eyes popping out of his head as he takes in Lane in all her chain-mail, etc. glory... which is really sort of odd, seeing as how Lane wasn't really wearing all that much chain-mail in the first place.

Chapter 2, "All Aboard," is mainly about:

- A) How good Lane looks while standing in the rain.
- B) Dripping wet.
- C) Sort of like a model in those wet chain-mail bikini posters you see here and there about the Realms.
- D) While her ire -- I think that's what they're called -- slowly gets aroused.
- E) If only she would talk more about the sensuous delights of the water trickling over her flesh.
- F) I mean, we paid a lot for that rainstorm... not buying raincoats and all.
- G) And all our gear got wet.
- H) But we didn't care. We got a full twenty five hundred words of Lane cursing the darkness as she runs about in her scantily clad chain-mail bikini glory. What a chapter! A few more like that, and we might actually have ourselves a book! And a bestseller at that!

(T/F) Although Chapter 3, "Floating on the River", might at first blush appear to be about the Mystic Waters, it's really just an

excuse to watch Lane dry herself off on deck as the smoke from the K'fr braziers slowly wafts through her hair and befuddles the mind's of whoever stares at her too long... like Crazy George, Celli, Charlie, the rest of the crew, and everyone we passed on the shore as we drifted on by.

Celli would like to tell you what happened to the frog that has been chasing Crazy George around, but:

A) He doesn't know, because much like Crazy George, he doesn't really care about some stupid frog.

B) I think A pretty much nailed it on the head, actually. No sense belaboring the point.

Squiggly, the sea monster, thinks Sterling Watford is the leader of (and I quote, myself if no one else) a "nefarious ring of villainy," because:

A) Sterling really IS the leader of a nefarious ring of villainy.

B) OK, he just looks the part.

C) A crime in and of itself in many vortexes.

D) Fine, don't like that answer? Then maybe it's because the sea monster eventually met Sterling in person. Does that satisfy you?

E) But the truth of the matter is, magic is a wonderful thing and it's simply amazing the things you can do these days to an unconscious opponent.

During the "Doldrum" sequence, Lane is:

A) In charge.

B) Sexy.

C) Bored.

D) Getting a little frisky.

E) All that, and a whole lot more; which is just another way of saying, if you haven't already bought the photo spread, my good friend, then what are you waiting for? Buy the photo spread, already... available wherever sleazy images and postcards are sold.

Charlies gotters to's writers da chapters, becausers:

A) Da coppers da word be da lotters more's dan he'd be making'ers now'd.

B) Dat Celler'painer be'd eben laziers dan he sounders. If we'd no teller's our side of da stories, den nobodies will'd.

C) Ifin's we'd no doer dis, he'd (dat Celler'painer) just finders some'ting elsters for'd da Charlie to do's.

D) We'd no lied, so it be'er all'd of da abovers. Besiders, we no know'd how'd to writers, so da Celler have to try to keep uppers wit all of us talking'ers at once... if funniers to watchee.

800 - Critical Essays

(T/F) Many teachers in the Realms can be bought.

(T/F) The price for said purchase is amazingly low.

(T/F) If you like, you can think of Dragon Bound Publishing's Generous Profit Sharing Plan as a way of providing a discount on the purchase price of our books.

(T/F) Only instead of the discount going to the purchaser, it goes to the teacher who made buying the book a requirement of his or her course in the first place.

(T/F) Since used books only gut the market and serve to provide students with a second hand experience (as apposed to the first hand experience that reading a book provides), Dragon Bound Publishing strongly recommends including some sort of book-destruction exercise as part of any course requirement.

Such exercises may include:

A) An end of semester book burning ceremony. Good riddance to bad rubbish, I say.

B) A requirement to utilize original passages from the book whenever quoting said work in an essay (i.e. students must cut apart their copy of CGTaH and paste the original passages into their essays) with grading to be directly proportional to amount of

material quoted in this way.

C) Encouragement by the teacher to highlight the books with non-erasable, non-transparent black ink.

D) Making the most recent version of CGTaH the only acceptable version to be used in the classroom, even though it doesn't differ in any substantial way from any of the previous versions available for a copper a copy in pawn shops across the Realms.

E) All of the above. See CGTaH the Official Teachers Compendium for additional suggestions.

Guess what? I'm sick of writing questions, so the last one (for this section, anyway) is going to be an essay question. Write another course outline as done in the second half of Section 800 - Critical Essays... and make sure it's a good one. Your ability to land a cushy post-grad teaching assignment may depend upon it.

900 - Etcetera and So Forth

Crystal Harmonics:

A) Makes no sense.

B) Seems to make sense to Crazy George.

C) Which is sort of disturbing in its own right.

D) Still, some think it's a powerful way to travel the planes.

E) Done as it is with smoke, mirrors, and a little triangular gong.

F) But actually, this question isn't multiple choice, it's an essay question.

G) That's sort of non-sequitur is what Crystal Harmonics is all about.

G) So the most likely is that the answer is some combination of the above, but don't ask me to explain how or why, 'cause I don't know.

Dreams... They Come in Threes, you know

I guess the book -- er, rather, the notes to the book -- must be long enough, because it sure did take me a long time to read through it again from beginning to end and compose the questions. I think a month... maybe two (three actually, now that I check my calendar). And if you're reading it any faster, I'm thinking you aren't savoring it enough... or then, maybe you found yourself caught by its -- couldn't put it down, read straight through till the very end -- magical spell.

Anyhow, you've all, no doubt, been anxiously awaiting the rules to the contest, and this is where I should insert them, but I'm not going to.

Why? you ask in a nice, calm, civilized manner.

Simple, I had another dream.. And believe you me, if you slept half as much as I do, you would learn to take you dreams more seriously.

The dream in question went something like this:

I -- your humble narrator, a Celaphopod extraordinaire, and cross-vortex adventurer of no small experience -- had finally made it home to The Cove. I was relaxing in my hot tub. A hot Elvin delight was at my side. A few Water Nymphs were at play under the water. And just as things were about to get interesting, I heard a knock at the door.

Thinking it might be Mi'lay, I said, "Come in."

Big mistake, that. It was Harry the Story Finishing Gnome -- normally a good chap to have around, but not during a hot tub segment. (He hogs the soap.)

Anyhow, he said, "Mail's here."

And I promptly ignored him. I think I may have mentioned the Elf and the Water Nymphs.

Of course, Harry is used to be ignored by me, so he just went back outside and got the mail... which for some reason involved a dump truck and a crane: there being that much of it.

Now, normally I wouldn't have cared one way or another. The dream was going pretty good. The birds were signing, as were the Water Nymphs -- well, making those happy gurgling sounds that they are so prone to do -- and even my girlfriend seemed to be in a good mood. But once the ladies noticed Harry and the mail piled high (manuscripts to the ceiling, parchment rolls stacked like cord wood, grand opi scratched on bricks of gold scattered here and there -- well, not really that last, but a Celaphopod has a right to enjoy his dreams) the girls sort of lost interest in me and started reading the contest entries.

“Oh, this one's good,” one said.

Which was quickly followed by, “Ha! You got to read this one.”

“I really dig this twist ending.”

And so forth.

A more industrious man (there not being such a thing as a more industrious Celaphopod) might have scrambled to take notes during all of this; so upon awakening, they could write the stories down as their own. But like I said, that would take a certain amount of industriousness... and a willingness to write the stories down upon awakening.

So instead, I contented myself to letting the girls read the contest entries... and of course, Harry. You want industrious? Then Harry's your... er, Story Finishing Gnome, I guess.

And that's more or less when I awoke. Not in a cold sweat. Not dripping with fear. Simply with the unswerving conviction that if I undertook to have a contest, then I would have to read all of the submissions, and that's simply not something that I'm going to do.

It's a cop out. No doubt about it.

So, if any of you readers want to have a contest on your own, go for it.

I, Celli the Happy Go Lucky Celaphopod, promise to do nothing to prevent it. I might even give a trophy or something to

the best of the best if I ever become aware of it or something.

But as to The Dragon's opinion on the matter (or any of the other copyright holders), I cannot say. Nor for that matter, do I care.

. "Celli, you've got to read this."

"Oh, she's right. This Lord Silver Watercross guy has got your number."

"What? Give me that!"

And Now a Word from The Dragon

I have spells.

I have claws.

I have a standing army and a fully charged breath weapon that I haven't used since before the Dragon Bound books began.

So, don't even think about mucking about with my intellectual property rights.

Oh, did I mention that I have lawyers?

"Sick 'em, boys. Sick 'em."

Psst! Lucky's Tavern, Friday Nights, Six to Close, Pass the Word

Harry the Story Finishing Gnome here to set the record straight. Like Celli said, he's been rereading the notes to the notes for nigh on quarter year now; so in the interim, I took it upon myself to bring a few samples of CGTaH to my weekly writing club to get some feedback.

And here's the thing. Once my fellow hobbyists got wind of a contest, they got right to work and decided to have an informal contest of their very own so as to better prepare their work for the real thing.

Last week was the semi-finals. And although neither Celli nor The Dragon will (or perhaps can) "officially" condone such an activity, I'll point out that not did two individuals wearing dark sunglasses did attend the event, they even participated... sort

of.

Trent's Ode to a Celaphopod

Oh, to the West
Were skies are clear
Eagles Nest
And dragon's dear

I'll get better roles
Of that you'll see
Or heads will roll
Right into the sea

Truly awful, but smoke was pouring from Trent's nostrils whilst he read the piece, so we all applauded and agreed to advance his entry to the next round. Trust me, you would have done the same.

Um, just in case you don't know, Trent is what The Dragon sometimes calls himself while he's in human form. And what with the black dragon tattoo across his face and a thousand empty weapon's scabbards, he's kind of hard to miss... even with the dark sunglasses.

Not that Celli was any better. He must have stopped by a costume shop or something on his way, because he was dressed pretty flamboyantly as some pirate dandy with the Charlies in tow as his crew. And his "ultra-witty" response to Trent's ode went something along the lines of:

Argh! If it be action you're after,
You'll have to pay me better.
'Cause me wages be now
The matter for laughter.

He and his "crew" then went off to the bar in search of

malted milks, threatening to run anyone, who dared to get in his way, through (with his pen, no doubt).

And of course, right here is where I'd insert some of the better entries my writing group put forward; but in the end, we decided to save them for the contest... and, you know, actually have some pitifully small chance of getting paid for our work.

Shiver me timbers, but that's a good idea!!!

The CGTaH Contest that Makes Absolutely No Sense

OK. Here's the short and the sweet of the contest as finally hammer out between all interested parties... and as explained as convolutedly as possible.

Pirates, being the original democracy of the seas and not the blood thirsty villains of old that Ole Trident Face would have you believe, used to split up their loot up by the following formula:

Eight shares for the Captain (see, Pieces of Eight: A Pirates Anthology for a complete description, feeling free to skip the title story in which the Captain is chopped up into eight lopsided pieces for cheating his crew out of their fair share),

Two shares for the First Mate (usually because he's a Two Faced Liar (see aforementioned anthology), and/or because he is a she pretending to be two crewmembers at the same time -- see The Captain's Boy),

And one share for everyone else.

And although this might sound fair and simple at first blush, what no one ever goes on to explain is that that the Captain and the crew always ended up disagreeing (i.e. fighting) over whether one share for everyone else means one share in total for the entire crew or one share for each and every crew member (as explained in further detail in All for One and One for All, the final story of Pieces of Eight: A Pirates Anthology now available from Dragon Bound publishing... you know, assuming some writes the blessed thing).

Now, I'm sure I could clarify in advance what one share for everyone else means, but by the time we got this far, we decided (which is to say, I decided) it was best to rethink the entire idea of a Pirates Plunder Contest... so really, don't even ask me while I included the above discussion in the first place.

Maybe to kill time? Who knows? Could be? Knowing the way I like to kill words, it does seem like a possibility.

Anyway, moving on. Next I thought it might be best to simply fall back on the traditional method that publishers have been using since time immemorial and pay folks a copper a word for anything I liked and ditch the rest. But there are two problems with that (note the quotes) "solution":

- 1) I still have to pick the winners,
- 2) And the way things work around here, the coppers would end up coming out of my pockets. And as they say, my pockets ain't that deep.

So then, I settled on the ideal solution. Which would be, I would hold a contest for the contest with the best idea for a contest winning.

Brilliant, yes?

Well, I thought so.

Now all I have to do is find someone else to administer the contest (I'm thinking whoever has the winning entry can do that), review the entries (once again, something best left to the winner), and then pay everyone off (once again, you got it, this be part of the winner's duties, as well).

So, enter as often as you like... possibly more.

Entries that have Hot Elvin Babes strapped to the outside of the packaging will be opened first.

The remainder will be ignored, incinerated, or read as is per my personal inclination (or to whomever you address the material).

And remember, if it sounds like a sucky contest, well then, you have no one to blame for that but yourself.

And no, it's not the worst contest ever. Try reading The Lang'don'ese Lottery (you win, you die) or The Devil's Draft

(ditto) if you don't believe me.

A bit o' Nepotism

Come on, Lane, dance.

"No! And you can't make me."

Make her dance, George.

"Are you crazy?"

Um, if you'll remember, you're the one who's crazy.

"Don't be calling my George crazy."

And then Nadia came in to save the day, "I'll dance." And so she did. Nadia is a great dancer. Far better than Lane is... currently... dancing... at the moment.

Well, that didn't get a rise out of Lane. So, I guess we'll be going with Nadia, the loveliest Fairy I know, and on account of her wings, quite nimble on her feet.

OK. So as Lane and George walk away, I guess that indicates that this section is going to be voluntary. So, we'll see who my true "friends" are. The main purpose here is to simply point out that the contest (whichever or whatever contest that we may or may not be talking about) is not limited to words.

Nadia

"So, this is where I start? Just stand on the X? I thought I was supposed to dance? Oh, just dance on the X. How about if I hover over the X, flitter about, and then fall into your arms like this, Celli?"

Are you going to say your line or not?

"Oh, yeah, that. I think we should have a dancing contest for the contest."

And?

"And? Oh, right-right. And the winner gets to dance with Celli."

Or for him.

“Same thing. So, did I win?”

I do believe so.

Got it? So, this shouldn't be too hard.

I said, this shouldn't be too hard.

Isn't anybody going to help me out?

Ah, here comes Garg. Good old Garg.

Garg

“Contest be charcoal cave painting.”

Good, I like that. Very original. Very creative. Very... primitive. Giving away rocks for the grand prize, are we?

“Winner do Garg's cave!”

So, you're saying, maybe you'll cook a meal, throw a mastodon barbeque or something, and have a cave painting party.

“Winner paint Garg cave!”

OK. Righty, then. Moving along.

“Winner paint Garg cave!”

We get it.

“Winner...” etc., so on, and so forth.

“No et'c! Winner paint Garg cave!”

Crazy George

“Cave man problems, Cel?”

Oh, hey, thanks for coming back, George.

“Not a problem. The boat could use a good cleaning. And Lane's been driving me nuts.”

Not crazy?

“I'll choose my own dialogue if you please. Anyhow, boat cleaning contest, yada, yada. Winner gets to clean my boat.”

I'm not letting this contest devolve into an errand list or help wanted ad for out of control characters.

“Oh, sure. You say that to me, but you let Garg walk all over

you.”

He scares me. It’s true, he really does. Look, he’s a caveman with the brain the size of a... cave man. There’s no reasoning with him. You’re crazy if you think you can.

“I want... Lane wants a clean boat.”

So, snap your fingers.

“It’s not that easy.”

Sure it is.

“OK, then you do it for me.”

And there we have the third -- brilliant -- contest. Crazy George is going to host an Improve Spell Tournament on his boat.

“I never said no such thing.”

The winner gets to clean his boat.

“Well, in that case, I guess it’s alright.”

While the losers, and I’m guessing their will be plenty of those, will get a free knick-knack for participating -- red line, 8-track cassettes, and that sort of thing...

“Hey!”

And to boot, they get to mess up his boat even more with their wayward spells. So it’ll be fun. Everyone’s welcome. And don’t worry if you haven’t been practicing your spell craft as much as you should be, Crazy George likes to clean up after a rogue spell every now and again.

“I do not!”

Don’t listen to him.

Lane

“And what does all of this have to do with a Contest, Mr. Pod? Any contest? I might ask.”

Well, er...

“If you don’t stop messing with my boyfriend, I’m going to have a contest of my own... a Celaphopod arm ripping contest.”

“Oh, can I sign up for that one.”

“Stay out of this, George.”

So, you’re saying...

“I’m saying, keep your stupid contests off my boat or I’ll rip your arms off .”

“Your boat?”

“Yes, my boat, George.”

“Since when is the Feathered Plume your boat?”

“Since we got divorced.”

“Only half of it is yours.”

“The clean half.”

“There is no clean half.”

“I could make it clean... and then that half would be mine.”

“And you wonder why I never want to clean my boat.”

“Don’t change the subject.”

“I’m not changing the subject.”

Luckily, once the two of them get going, they never notice anyone else who takes it upon themselves to quietly tiptoe away, head for cover, and close out the section by saying something like, etc., so on, and so forth.

“Clean! This! Boat! Now!”

“I have to preserve it -- in its natural state -- for the contest.”

Harry

“Why make this more complicated than it needs to be. Just hold a writing contest like we originally discussed and as you’ve been promising all along?”

With the prize being the knowledge of a job well done, furthering the cause of art, and that sort of crap?

“Well. Yes. That and a maybe some gold. Times are hard.”

Eh, what can it hurt? OK. A copper a word and not a penny more.

“Unless its good.”

A copper a word and not a penny more.

“We’ll see.”

Pete (the Paladin for those not in the know)

“What? No. Tell me I’m not too late.”

Sorry, copper a word -- and not a penny more -- its been settled.

“Yeah, but that’s just like the prize money.”

Your point.

“Guidance, even if the contest is restricted to writing...”

Baked goods, scantily clad Elvin beauties dancing to their hearts delights, esoteric works of art, esoteric works of so-called art, stacks of gold, drawings, sculptures, cave paintings...

“But you’re expecting mostly prose, right?”

Yeah, with the odd poem here and there.

“You’re talking about Trent, right?”

Yeah, I already got the 0-2-9 laid aside, ‘cause you know he’s going to win.

“And yours.”

At 0-2-2, he’s going to rub those seven coppers in my face forever. I can already hear him, ‘I won more than you did. I won more than you did.’ You know, for a dragon, The Dragon can be a bit childish at times.

“You should be careful of what you say about The Dragon.”

Why? I say something suicidal and everyone else always says, ‘You should be careful.’ Plays right into The Dragon’s hands; he thinks it builds up his mystique. Say the wrong thing and he’ll toast you, that sort of thing. Besides, like a court jester, I’ve got a sort of immunity. Anyhow the point is, the contest is over, so thanks for dropping by and all, but you can go home now.

“I don’t have a home to go home to.”

So, go on a quest. Rescue a maiden in distress or something.

“It gets old after a while.”

So, you’re saying you want to stay the night?

“Well, yeah.”

NO! Absolutely not! It’s out of the question.

Aw, come on.

“No. You’re not cute. You’re not a chick. Spend the night down at the beach. Heck, maybe one of the Mermaids needs rescuing? Come to think of it, I’m sure one of them does. Sailor

lost at sea, something like that. Chat her up, she'll tell you all about it, maybe start you off in the right direction.

"You're just saying that to get rid of me."

Yes. Yes, I am. So, take the hint and get going. Skedaddle.

"Not until I've talked to you about my role in the story, my role in CGTaH."

You don't have a role in CGTaH.

"That's pretty much what I wanted to talk to you about."

Come again?

"My role in the story."

Like I said, you don't have a role in the story.

"Exactly."

Exactly what? No, look. I don't have time for this cryptic back and forth nonsense. I've got a hormonal Elf waiting for me somewhere and failing that a nap. So, if you've got something to say, spit it out.

"For the contest. One of the categories should be my point of view. You know, telling the story of why I -- Pete the Paladin -- was too busy to participate in CGTaH... perhaps as part of my endless quest to rescue fair maidens in distress."

The way I hear it, you were fishing.

"Fishing for a plot."

You were fishing for trout. Come on, you're sworn to tell the truth. How are you going to work a summer spent fishing into some glamorous quest..

"Well, um, you see, the truth of the matter is, rather than fishing, I prefer to think that I spent my time more wisely and was rescuing a damsel in distress. Did you note the prefer part?"

Yeah, I sort of picked up on that.

"And just to show how good my intentions are in the matter, I can come up with a whopping grand prize of 10-0-0, if that's what it takes to have my side of the tale told..."

In a totally unbiased, yet truthful manner.

"Yes. Exactly."

OK. I think we have time for one more gratuitous sketch before the readers get sick of this nonsense. Any takers?

Ruby of Clan Firehaven

Oh, hey Ruby. Long time, no see.

“Good vacation, Celli?”

Yeah, I’ll say.

“And Ver...”

Careful, say her name and I’ll have to pay her royalties.

“Um, OK.”

So, I heard you’re starting a Bed and Breakfast down at the ‘ole homestead.

“Well, not really.”

Not really?

“Well, my mom wants to start a spa. You know, branch out from the beauty salon, hire a few Ogres and start doing massages on the side.”

Ogre massages?

“Yeah, you know, deep tissues stuff.”

I’m not going to hold a contest so you can get “test subjects” and “volunteers” for your mom’s Ogres to practice on.

“Oh, no. Nothing like that, Celli. It’s just that if mom does that, then we’re going to need a bigger place. So if anybody wants to come down, hang out, drag a few blocks of rock around or whatever, they’re more than welcome to drop by.”

So what you’re asking for is slave labor? I thought better of you than this, Ruby.

“I think you’re trying awfully hard to twist my words around the wrong way, Celli. My mom is starting a spa. Anybody whose got any experience with that sort of thing and wants to help out is more than welcome. And if we’re going to be hosting guests, then that little cottage of ours is going to start getting awfully crowded, so maybe we’ll build an Inn down by the lake. And if anybody out there wants to help with that? Well then, come on down. And then finally, Roger, my step father...”

The Troll.

“Well, he wants to start a training camp for bridge engineers.”

Don’t you mean toll takers.

“If you’ll remember, he owns the bridge now. There’s a lot more to owning a bridge than simply collecting tolls, and he wants to pass on the knowledge he’s gained to any interested parties, well, specifically to the Troll Scouts...”

You’re putting me on.

“Granted, the Troll Scouts don’t exist yet, but there’s been talk, and everybody’s been sort of hoping you would help out a little there.”

I’m not babysitting any Trolls.

“Maybe if you just inserted a blurb about the Troll Scouts in CGTaH, that would be enough to get the entire thing off the ground.”

I don’t know.

“What do you mean you don’t know? A free story arc there for the plucking? Of course you’re going to include it.

Yeah, I guess you’re right.

So, while you’re doing that, just mention that Ruby and her family are planning on building a few building over the summer and anyone who wants to come, hang out, and help is welcome to stay as long as they like.”

“Really!”

Oh, no. Look out. With an open invitation like that, you were sure to get Pete’s attention.

“Damsel? Check. In distress? Check.”

“I’m not really in distress, Pete. But I could use a helping hand.”

“That’s close enough for me. I’m there.”

“Thanks, Pete. And anyone else. Come on by, lend a hand, and write about your experience if you want to. Oh, Lane, if you and George want to tie up down by the lake, you’re more than welcome. If you don’t mind the pun, we could always use an extra

pair of helping hands.”

“That’s very generous of you, Ruby. I think George could use a break and would be delighted to tie-up somewhere for awhile.”

“Um, I don’t like the sound of that, dear.”

“You will, Georgie. Don’t worry, you will.”

And that, my dear friends, is a rap on the contest, which brings us mere pages away from the end of the book.

Ending in Style: Thoroughly and Completely

I’ll be honest. I thought about doing a Bibliography and/or a Reference Section like they do in your better study guides, but since this isn’t one of your better study guides and the entire idea of a reference section sounds awfully boring (even more boring to write than to read), I gave it up. Instead, I decided to go out with a bang and leave you with a few pages of character blurbs, outtakes, and completely unsolicited recommendations by the character actors involved and anyone else who happens to drop by or even just drop me a line (hint, hint) in the next few weeks.

And then, of course, that idea got shifted around a little, because I started hitting the celebratory hot chocolate, you know, a wee bit prematurely. And the next time I looked at a calendar an entire month and a half had passed.

A lot of things change in a month and a half, especially when some of your so called friends are jostling for position in the next book. So in the end, I figure an update of the action would be best, help clear my head as the fog lifts, and that sort of thing.

Ole Trident Face left for the coast. I don’t know where he went or why, but he had a smug sort of look on his face, so I guess he’s finally realized that I didn’t screw him over in the casting for Rigor Pass 1866: The Manna Boom Years. I mean let’s face it, the

God of Water is only like the most prayed to deity in every desert town known to Man, Orc, or Goblin.

After Ole Trid'e lifted his blockade, I thought I'd be leaving for home, but Stef'fan invited me to stay a bit longer and as Mi'lay had a sort of devilish look in her eye when she said, "Promise me you'll stay for at least another month." I took her up on it. That's when Stef'fan, Mi'lay, and the Hormone Queen left for parts unknown.

You'd think I'd know, but seeing as how I write for a living, me and the Old Ball and Chain (a.k.a. She Who Shall Not Be Mentioned By Name) don't exchange communiqués, memos, or letters as often as one might suppose. Anyway, I think they've gone back into the Wild West for a little R&R and to put the Elvin contingent together for RP 1866 -- along with Jeannette Stevens (a.k.a. Stevie Jean) and Minne the Minataur (a.k.a. Torrance). Or maybe they just went to Ruby's to help out. I really don't know.

Nadia, on the other hand, stayed behind to keep me company. My hard partying as of late has helped her see the light, or the darkness in this particular case. Which is just another way of saying, she's become a devoted follower of Gra'gl. Which in the end, is just another way of saying, we've been having a good ole time -- her, me, and all 32 of her sisters -- and that the next book is probably even further away from being written than it was two years ago.

No worries about that though. Two years will give Ruby more than enough time to finish her Inn, Pub, Western Salon, or whatever it is she's building, Roger the time he will need to organize the Troll Scouts (sort of a prescient name, considering the western theme of R(i)P 1866, and all), and for Rachel's salon to grow into The premier beauty parlor this side of the Great Divide.

Which brings us to Grt. I'm really going to have to drop by and see what he's up to one of these days, but knowing him, by the time I do, he'll have become the mascot for the Troll Scouts, entered the first grade, and/or become a bit of a bookworm.

If the last turns out to be the case, you can be sure to blame Clarence (the Boogeyman) for it; he's a reader, that guy. And as long as I'm talking about him, I might as well mention that rumors are flying (mainly by me as of this writing) that he's talking about installing a dungeon, mine, underground labyrinth or something like that at Ruby's place. So, I'm thinking we'll use whatever he comes up with as the location for our Striking It Rich mining sequence in R(i)P 1866.

Oh, and this is great. Speaking of striking it rich, you know how Igor, Chad, and Bruce monetary dreams (such as they were) all came true at the end of The Dragon Bound Quartet? Well, guess what? They've formed a team of sorts and now they travel around the Realms giving inspirational talks and marketing get rich quick schemes. I do believe we have our snake oil salesmen, ladies and gentlemen.

So, a week later and who else does that leave -- to catch up on and/or work into R(i)P 1866?

Pierce Mosswood was always a bit of a poof, so I think he'll work nicely for the role of theater director.

Obviously, Stacey (the Ogre) will make for a fine wanna-be starlet, assuming she's still willing to work at less-than-union rates now that she's a mom. And her husband, Greez (the big hearted one-eyed freak), can be her stage manager, always reading the fine print in those contracts for her, don't you know.

Speaking of contracts, I've always planned to cast The Dragon as a cattle baron, you know, looking to screw everyone else out of the deed to their lands. And from our brief correspondence concerning the matter, he seems eager to get the project underway. But as you can imagine, once Ruby learned of the general idea behind it all, she became equally eager to thwart The Dragon's plans. One need not spend too much time wondering how this sensitive material was leaked to her in the first place. Having a leading role, she has a sort of veto right over any

major plot points in the Dragon Bound series.

Unfortunately, so does Crazy George. And you can bet your last wooden nickel, paper dime, or rubber quarter that Crazy George, Lane, Milton, and Sasha are planning on forming some sort of nefarious, dark, underworld cartel -- the better to give both Ruby and The Dragon a run for their money. Me, I figure they'll end up being the regulars at the saloon. Yeah, I don't care if Ruby (et al) built the place. If you ask me, everything will be a lot more fun if good ole Crazy George is in charge of the salon, running a crooked game of faro.

Oh, and by the way, the salon (got to think of a name for that place, maybe The Last Draw) is where I'm going to put all of Nadia's sisters. Tell me, what kind of salon would it be without a tassel of dancing girls willing to give it their all for a sip of your drink?

Another week disappeared somewhere, down a bottle somewhere, I imagine as I found Mi'lay's collection of potions, unguents, and extracts -- the good stuff. So, seeing as there are still a few bottles left, things might get a bit squirrely from here on out.

Anyway, as for other, increasingly bit, characters:

I anticipate Raging Bertha will lead the Doomcrag Goblin Horde in their push for independence. She's been chomping at the bit for that for years now. And quite frankly, I've been looking forward to impeding her progress in that endeavor every step of the way for just as long, so don't be expecting the Goblin Nation to rise again anytime soon, my friends.

Pete (the Paladin) could probably go a long way towards fulfilling his vows if he took-on Bertha as his damsel in distress, but how that's all going to fare with Karthrax ("The only good Goblin is a dead Goblin") is anybody's guess. It should be fun to watch Pete squirm, though, as he tries to play preacher man and finds the middle road between Goblin tradition and anything

resembling the word of Karthrax.

Steve (the Ranger), on the other hand, will be a dirt farmer. I guess Buddy (the Minataur), too. Maybe they'll be able to get the Elves to back them in a land war against The Dragon. But really, I don't know. That all sort of sounds boring to me right now, so maybe that plotline will die right here and now. Which is to say, in the opening chapter of any good Western, somebody needs to get slaughtered. Am I right?

And what better way than a Massacre at the Homestead sequence to bring Targor (of the fourteen movies fame) & Zay'ar'lyne (his tough as nails, fur bikini wearing newlywed) into the story as a pair of out for blood (but in a good way) vigilantes, trying to do the right thing by the underdogs. Which in the end, sounds like every Targor movie I've ever seen. Garg book, too, now that you mention it. So, that just might be something you can bank on, as is the three of them teaming up to rob the bank; which coincidentally, also sounds like just about every Targor movie I've ever seen or Garg book I've ever read.

OK.

So, I'm not going to say another week, or another month, or even another year just flashed by without me knowing it, because quiet honestly, I don't know exactly how long it's been. More importantly, I don't care. Suffice it to say, Stef'fan no longer has any chocolate left -- good or bad. Mi'lay's unguents, potions, elixirs, powders, roots, preserves, and so forth are all gone. And sometime after they ran out, so did Nadia's sisters (i.e. they got bored and left).

Now the first thing I noticed, after I had gained something approximating consciousness was, Boy! Stef'fan and Mi'lay sure do live in a dump. What pigs! No wonder they didn't mind giving me free run of the place. The second thing I noticed was that we were out of the unguents (et al) and that this was probably why I had indeed noticed the mess in the first place. Now, this might be where this little rant would end, but then I sort of recalled Mi'lay

saying something along the lines of “Now make yourself at home,” which obviously I had, but you really had to admit that this was a fairly foolish thing for an Elf to say to anybody, but in particular to a guy like me.

Anyway, seeing as how we were completely out of dry goods, wet goods, and all manner of sundry, it was obvious we were going to have to get more if the party were to continue -- or at least, for it to be any fun. And that being the generous Elvin hosts that Stef’fan and Mi’lay were (and presumably still are), they probably wouldn’t mind if I convinced a few of the local merchants to extend me a little credit -- in the duo’s good name, of course.

Long story short, I’ve got about an hour before I’ll be so loaded on chocolate truffles I won’t be able to write, or so I hope. I’ve heard good things about Bel & Jam Chocolate, and I’m counting on the stuff to do the trick. And since said delivery of same is expected within the hour, what do you say we blow the last of this sucker out?

I’ll take that as a yes.

Blaming my present condition and the self-revelatory nature of the hangover (see any book which starts with the lead character awaking after a binge and you’ll note that they’re a pretty honest bunch), I will happily admit (and no doubt regret it in the morning) that I’ve got the hots for Katrinita. I mention this only because if we put off the next book long enough, she’ll finally be of age. Outside of hoping she’ll read this passage and admit to herself that she’s always had the hots for me as well, thus leading to an episode wherein we go riding off with each other into the sunset (or at least, the hot tub), the other reason for revealing this personal information is that I’ve played around with pictures of Katrinita more than enough to be pretty darn sure that she’ll look drop dead gorgeous in a uniform. Good for her, that last, because I’m going to make her the Captain of the Guard, Calvary, or whatever they

have in the Wild West. One might think that this would suit her (yuck-yuck) just fine, seeing as how she grew up amidst the military culture of the Citadel, but who knows Katrinita, knows that she couldn't hurt a fly? That last being, perhaps, another reason why I might not be so scared about admitted what a fine young woman she is turning out to be. Talk about curves in all the right places!

Speaking of which (fine young woman and all, not necessarily the bit about the curves; but then, maybe), have I mentioned Ruby yet? In direct regards to R(i)P 1866? Yeah, I don't know either. Let's just assume I haven't. That way I can tell you that I've got her penciled in for the role of School Marm, who just so happens to arrive by way of a runaway stagecoach. Knowing her, Ruby won't be too thrilled with the idea, but I don't think she'll be able to say no to Tring & Celeste's mongrel half-breed children who I've got slated to be her students. And just by the by, when I say 'mongrel half-breed,' I mean that they are delightfully divergent children who each bring a unique blend of genetics traits from two diverse races which Karthrax never intended to interbreed. What? That sounds racist, you say? I'll have you know, I got a Golden Heart award for the tasteful inclusion of those very same mongrel half-breed children back in TDBQ, so just back off on your hasty judgments. To quote the Bard, "Humor hath no taste." And I dare say, neither do I.

Oh, now here's a character I haven't thought about in a while. (Just going through some correspondence while I await those chocolates. Where are they, anyway?) Larry Magma says he's available for "anything." Says, he's always wanted to travel to the Wild West and if he can't be the Sheriff, he's willing to switch sides and play the opposition. Well, I think we've got ourselves our gun for hire, ladies and gentlemen. And being an Elemental half-breed (The Mutt!!!), he's impervious to flying metal. Could be a handy thing in a gunfight, that last.

When last we saw Bones, he had decided to become a seamstress (and here's where I would insert some sort of "sissy man" comment, you know, if we weren't talking about Bones). Anyway, I'm thinking he'll open a lingerie store and work as the theatre company's costume designer. "You'll like what I make, and wear it. Mu-ha-ha-ha," or something like that. Going to have work with the writers on that one, I imagine.

Oh, and here are two more actors, out of work, desperate for a little action, and more than happy to protest the casting of Ruby as a school teacher, seeing as how she's not even out of high school yet and is therefore still a student of theirs! I speak, of course, of Mr. Thwartbridge the Senior a.k.a. Max and his son, Mr. Thwartbridge the Junior a.k.a. Mr. Thwartbridge the Junior.

Now, where is that chocolate delivery guy? Should have been here... minutes ago. Got to do something to keep my mind off the craving -- MUST HAVE CHOCOLATE, NOW!

Ah, I know. A few more entries.

There's Little Bo Peep, the cross-dressing Cyclops... And what to do with her/him, truthfully, I don't know? Maybe we'll turn Bo into the town drunk. And I bet you thought I was gunning for that role. Gotcha.

ABE-1-2-3 (the gourmet chef, robot, broken hearts club standby) will undoubtedly open a nice bakery cafe on the main thoroughfare, with ample outdoor seating to view the daily gunfights, or so I'm hoping. Save me a good seat, Abe.

Oh, and what cafe, would be compete with a little string quartet number playing quietly in the background. I speak, of course, of The Four Horsemen, better known as the Nasty-Nasty-Ghouls.

Let's see...

Yikes, I've just come across two letters: one in which the Cobalts demand inclusion in the script (not so bad) and another where the horrid little Hobblings are demanding the same thing... at union rates, no less. I'd be happy to eliminate the Hobblings entirely (from reality, the script, whatever), but I sort of owe the Cobalts vis a vie Carl (the Courteous Cobalt) who has been running the Special Effects department here at Dragon Bound Publishing since the first page of TDBQ. So, I suppose we can use Carl as the theatre company's stage manager, special effects guy, and/or lighting director. And then, we'll just use his family (all three thousand of them) as paid extra's. That's going to kill the budget. And speaking of kill (you just knew I was going to work that in there, didn't you), that's what we should do to the Hobblings. Which is to say, the Goblin Horde needs an enemy, so I say we let them slaughter the Hobblings.

No? You don't like that idea? How about putting the Hobblings freaks in a traveling show? No? Sounds disrespectful, you say? Well, it was intended to be disrespectful, you know.

Well, no sense straining the brain, I've got two years (maybe more), I'll think of something.

And who does that leave?

The Sm©rks™, Tr©ll-Tr©lls™, Screaming Greenies™, and Teddy Bears. I'm thinking, they can be extra's for the stage production, because believe it or not, I think I finally hear that knock at my door.

“Will you get that Nadia?”

They'll trust her more than me. No, it's true. My kind isn't exactly held in high regard by the merchant class. Whereas they might realistically believe (or claim in a year that they believed) that Stef'fan and Mi'lay (two globe trotting Elves, don't you know) were keeping Nadia (a lowly gutter Fairy) as an indentured servant to look after the place in their absence. And since that is indeed almost exactly the truth, you'll forgive the merchants their

lapse in judgment brought about by the hopes of our running up a truly staggeringly large bill in the interim.

Anyhow, while Nadia gets the door, I did want to mention Con-in-my-Head one final time. Maybe we'll hold a convention while we're putting on the play and writing R(i)P: 1866. That would really explain why Rigor Pass had turned into a Boom Town, you know, without going into the pretense that there's Manna in Them Thar Hills, because if there aren't, the props are going to cost us a fortune.

And is it just me? Or is R(i)P 1866 starting to sound like it's going to be one whopper of a tale? Epic even? Hate to have to write that sucker. Which is as good as a segue as I'm probably ever going to get to mention my good friend and acquaintance, Harry the Story Finishing Gnome. Just between you and me, if anything is missing from this study guide, it's all Harry's fault. And the same will be true of R(i)P 1866 in which he will continue his award winning role as my personal assistant, fact checker, and fall guy.

Now if you'll excuse me, Nadia has been so good as to place a steaming hot cup of chocolate in my hand...

"Not to mention a steaming hot Fairy."

I'll say.

"Why thank you."

So, I will be taking my leave.

Bidding my adieu.

Saying sayonara.

"Put down the quill and kiss the Fairy, already. She's the one who thought of getting store credit, after all."

And I always believe in giving credit where credit is due.

"Just kiss the Fairy."

How much chocolate did they leave?

"Enough. And not just chocolate." <POP!> "Try this."

What is 'this'?

"I don't know..."

As you might imagine, the notes continue for another three tomes, but no magic known (period) can make any sense of them or divine their hidden meaning. If you wish more, I can only recommend that you find yourself a time machine and hop to the future wherein you will be able to obtain for yourself a copy of Rigor Pass 1866: The Manna Boom Years, a rip-roaring adventure set in the Wild West, assuming of course that it ever gets written.

Harry the Story Finishing Gnome

(Now if you'll excuse me, a bit of cake and sensibly sized portion of the hot chocolate awaits. Cheery-O.)