

The Pawn is the best graphics adventure on the market. The pictures are brilliantly drawn and the puzzles and atmosphere ensure it will become a classic. Part II of our exclusive map will appear in next month's issue.

THE PAWN

MAP I

COMPUTING WITH THE AMSTRAD CPC

- Corridor
- Cream door
- Knock Enter
- Adventure room
- Listing

Platform

Workshop
Kronos

Dragon chamber

High ledge

Landing

Unlock
Open
Enter

Princess's room
Princess

Outside window
(on rope)

Rope bridge

Store
Boots
Prism

Tower

Rope bridge

Plateau

Plateau

High ledge

Passage
Cavern

Store room
Aerosol
Tomes

Enter
Tower

Plateau
Snowman

Plateau

Trail end

Laboratory
Alchemist

Riverside chamber

Narrow track

Cave mouth

Large cavern
Pool

Cavern
Stalagmites

Damp passage

Pedestal
Key

Shaft

Climb: Rock

Narrow track

Small bare cave

Cave
Rem statement

Lava river

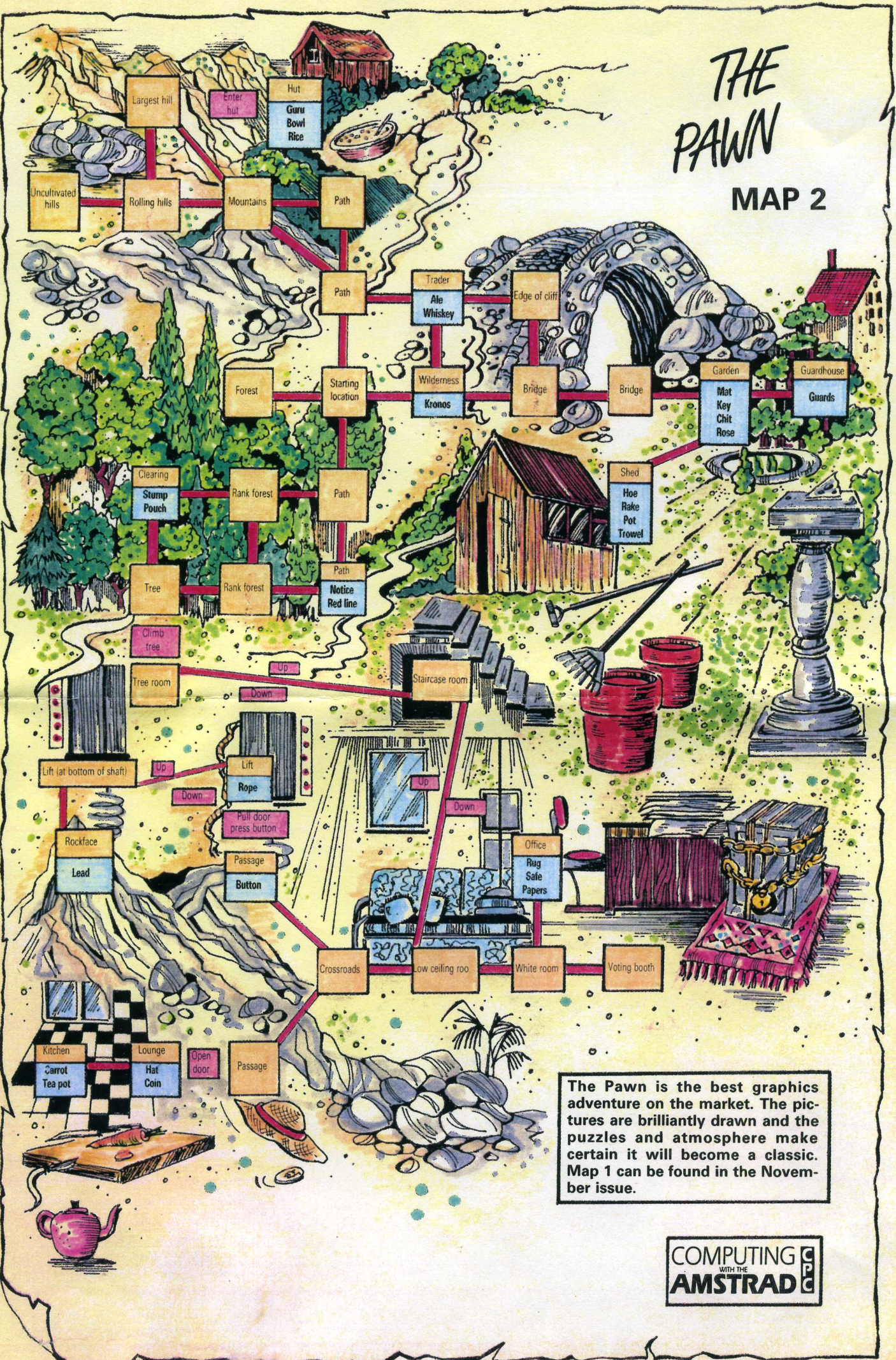
Foothills

Entrance

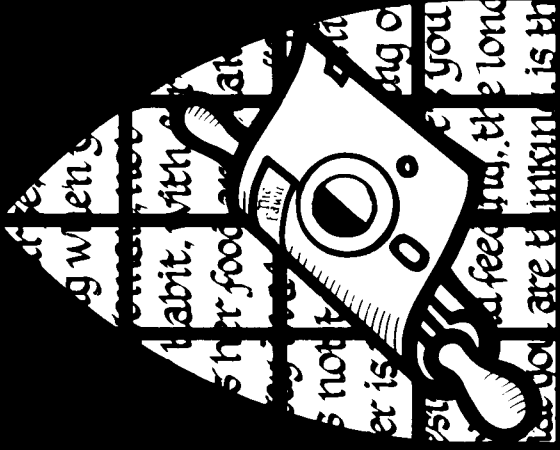
Map 2

THE PAWN

MAP 2



The Pawn is the best graphics adventure on the market. The pictures are brilliantly drawn and the puzzles and atmosphere make certain it will become a classic. Map 1 can be found in the November issue.



THE PAWN

AMSTRAD PCW GUIDE

AMSTRAD PCW GUIDE

Please make a back-up of 'The Pawn' before using it. Always use the back-up, and preserve the original. Having made the back-up do not forget to write-protect it!

Loading

To load 'The Pawn' first boot CP/M (by inserting side B of the Amstrad supplied disks and switching the machine on) then insert side A of your Pawn disk, type PAWN and press the <RETURN> key.

Screen Layout

Once loaded you will notice that the screen is split into three sections.

The top line contains the following information:-

The top left is the name of the room that you are currently in.

The first figure on the right is your score.

The second figure on the right is the number of moves you have made.

The second section is the Graphics window, which is where the pictures are displayed. The window size can be set as high or low as you wish by using the 'up' arrow (to reduce the size of the window) and the 'down' arrow (to increase it).

The third section is the text window, where your commands and the game's responses are displayed.

Talking to the program

To communicate with 'The Pawn', simply type in a sentence describing what you want to do. When it is waiting for a command 'The Pawn' displays a '>' prompt and a block cursor. Once you have typed your command press the <RETURN> key.

Editing Your Commands

The following allow you to edit the current line:

Move left one character	Left arrow
Move right one character	Right arrow
Move left one word	[+] (found to the left of the space bar)
Move right one word	[-] (found to the right of the space bar)
Delete one character to the left	<-DEL
Delete one character to the right	DEL->
Delete one word to the left	ALT <-DEL
Delete one word to the right	ALT DEL->
Move to start of line	EXCH/FIND
Move to end of line	LINE/EOL

Re-editing Your Last Command

If you discover that you have made a small typing error on your last line, pressing the COPY key will bring it back for editing.

More

When there are too many lines to display on the screen at once the message '<MORE>' appears at the bottom right of the screen. Pressing any key will allow the game to continue.

Save

This command enables you to save your current position in the game. You will be prompted for a file name. This must be a valid CP/M file name, the extension 'PWN' is used for saved game files, thus the names GAME.ONE and GAME.TWO will both produce a file called GAME.PWN. This name may be preceded with a drive specifier e.g. 'A:', 'B:'. Care should be taken not to save game positions onto your 'Pawn' disk. Two or three positions (on a 256k machine) may be saved onto the ram-disk device M:, these may be moved onto 'real' disks once you have left the game. NOTE, when you run 'The Pawn' the ram-disk is erased. Thus positions saved from previous sessions will be lost unless moved to a floppy disk.

Restore

To reload a previously saved game type 'RESTORE'; as with 'SAVE' you will be prompted for a filename.

Printer On (Printer Off)

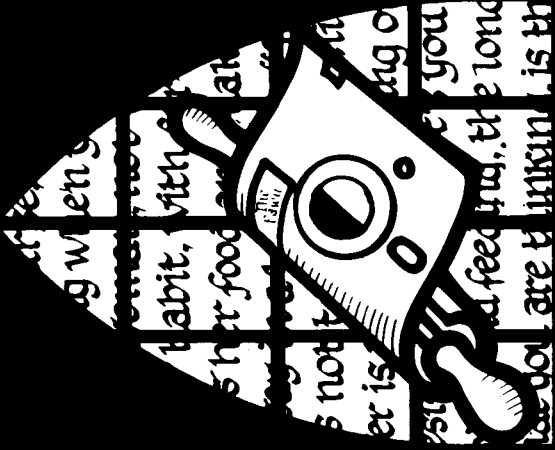
You can record your game by use of this command which turns the printer on (and off).

Graphics On (Graphics Off)

If you prefer to play 'The Pawn' without the pictures being displayed they can be disabled with 'GRAPHICS OFF'. They can then be re-enabled with 'GRAPHICS ON'.

Stipple and Dither

When you enter a room that contains a picture, 'The Pawn' decides which is the best method of displaying the picture. You can override this decision with one of the above commands.



THE PAWN GAMEPLAY

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Introduction

The Pawn is an adventure game set in the magical world of Kerovnia during a period of tremendous social upheaval.

Recently, King Erik, the present ruler of the land, has started to lose his hold on the Kerovnian peoples and can no longer rely on their loyalty and supreme devotion to support him through times of war, famine and personal bankruptcy.

Many political commentators have attributed this decline in popularity to Erik's steadfast refusal to reinstate the citizenship of the Roobikyoub dwarfs who were banished en masse soon after the assassination of the beloved Queen Jendah II and have never since returned.

The dwarfs were thought to be the sole instigators of the assassination plot but the real facts were kept well behind closed (and locked) doors.

Needless to say the dwarfs were of immense economic importance to Kerovnia with their relentless efforts to produce the smoothest, strongest malt whisky this side of the Obakanga valley and they are sorely missed in these days of economic gloom (not least for the quality of their whisky).

In the absence of the dwarfs, the drinks market has been dominated by the Farthington Real Ale Company (which has had some rather dodgy dealings with Boris Grunchkev O.K.B.) and by the Romni gnomes who produce a refreshing spring water. Neither of these two influential groups wish to see the dwarfs come back on the scene to take a large slice of the market but the people of Kerovnia, many of whom are beginning to suspect that the dwarfs were completely innocent of the assassination, vehemently disagree.

Standing in the middle of all this is King Erik who becomes more and more unpopular the longer he leaves his decision, and, to top it all, there is a general election on the horizon.

At this point, you arrive on the scene. You will be the principle player in the game and the story unfolds according to your decisions and actions.

The program will describe where you are, who (or what) is there with you and what they are doing. It is then up to you to choose what you wish to do and tell the program in plain English (well almost!).

You'll have to discover the goal of the game and the best way to achieve it by utilizing the items you find on your travels, conversing with characters and exercising your imagination.

Movement

To wander around the Kerovnian countryside and neighbouring areas you must tell the program in which direction you wish to travel or where you want to go. It understands the eight points of the compass: NORTH, NORTHEAST, EAST, SOUTHEAST, SOUTH, SOUTHWEST, WEST and NORTHWEST, as well as UP and DOWN. (Also known as N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW, U and D to subsonic typists.) So, to move from one place to another immediately to the north (assuming there's nothing to stop you) you can type:—

NORTH
N
GO NORTH
EXIT NORTH
QUIETLY WALK NORTH

and one or two other variations on the theme. However, if you happen to know that to the north there is, for example, a furniture shop, then you could also type:—

ENTER THE FURNITURE SHOP
GO INTO THE FURNITURE SHOP

WALK INTO THE FURNITURE SHOP ENTER SHOP

The last example assumes that there is only one shop nearby. If there were several then the program would prompt you for an adjective (more of this anon).

Once inside the shop you might want to sit down, resting your weary legs. Thus having spotted a particularly comfortable looking leather couch:—

SIT DOWN
SIT ON THE COMFORTABLE LEATHER COUCH
SIT ON THE COUCH
GET ON THE COUCH
GO COUCH

and to get off the couch again:—

GET UP
STAND UP
GET OFF THE COUCH
GET UP OFF THE COUCH
GO SOUTH (also leaves the shop)
LEAVE SHOP
GO SOUTH

Talking of leaving the shop, there are a few ways to do this:—

S
GO S
OUT
O
EXIT
EXIT SHOP
EXIT SOUTH

It's quite possible for one location to have several exits, in these instances one will be chosen if OUT, O or EXIT are used without specifying a direction.

Locations are often connected by doors, so to get from one to the other you can use:—

GO DOOR
ENTER DOOR

this is, of course, if the door is already open.

Actions

The Pawn allows you to use many verbs to give it commands. At the simplest a command consists of a verb (e.g. GET) and a noun (e.g. paper), thus:—

GET PAPER

performs a single action (it picks up the paper). However, if you want to pick up several items (for instance the paper, pen and ink bottle) it does become rather tiresome to repeatedly type GET, so you can give it a list:—

GET PAPER, PEN AND INK BOTTLE
PICK UP PAPER, PEN, BOTTLE

If it happened that these were all in a school bag, together with an eraser then:—

GET ALL FROM THE SCHOOL BAG EXCEPT THE ERASER
GET THE CONTENTS OF THE BAG BUT NOT THE ERASER

You can use lots of verbs in this way so:—

EAT ALL ON THE PLATE EXCEPT THE BACON RASHER
is no problem.

Obviously the meaning of ALL must change, depending on the verb that it's being used with. So, in GET ALL it means the objects which are in the room, just lying about but in DROP ALL it means

the items you are carrying.

As you can see, individual actions can become quite complicated, so once they are strung together very powerful commands can be made.

GET ALL EXCEPT THE CASES BUT NOT THE VIOLIN CASE THEN KILL THE MAN EATING SHREW WITH THE CONTENTS OF THE VIOLIN CASE. REMOVE THE SHREW'S TAIL AND USE IT TO TIE THE POLE AND THE NOOSE TOGETHER.

This command can be broken down into four actions, let's look at these one at a time:—

I) GET ALL EXCEPT THE CASES BUT NOT THE VIOLIN CASE.

This will get all the objects in the room, less the cases but *will* get the violin case. CASES is an example of a group of objects which can be referred to with a single word e.g. AN OLD RUSTY KEY, A SHINY NEW KEY AND A LARGE PADLOCK KEY could be referred to with the single word KEYS, such as in the command:—
GET THE KEYS

which is equivalent to the longer:—

GET THE OLD RUSTY KEY, THE SHINY NEW KEY AND THE LARGE PADLOCK KEY

or

GET THE KEYS EXCEPT THE SHINY ONE

which is equivalent to:—

II) KILL THE MAN EATING SHREW WITH THE CONTENTS OF THE VIOLIN CASE

Here we're trying to use whatever is in the violin case to kill the shrew. Let's hope there's something mean in that violin case!

III) REMOVE THE SHREW'S TAIL

This is an example of a possessive construction. Saying SHREW'S lets The Pawn know that we mean that particular tail, well, it would

be mighty unwise to try to remove the tail belonging to the fire breathing dragon that happens to be asleep next to the shrew!

IV) USE IT TO TIE THE POLE AND THE NOOSE TOGETHER

Worthy of note in this command is the use of the pronoun IT, which refers back to the last direct object you used, in this case the shrew's tail. This command is also phrased in the form USE ITEM TO DO VERB TO ANOTHER ITEM. I guess a man eating shrew's tail has to have it's uses . . .

These four distinct parts can all be issued in the same command by using AND, THEN, " " and " , "

More About Talking To The Program

When you have played The Pawn for some time you will find that lots of common, long or just plain awkward to type words have short versions to allow quicker input of commands. Here is a list of just a few:—

DROP	DR	GET	G
INVENTORY	IN	NORTH	N
SOUTH	S	EAST	E
WEST	W	NORTHEAST	NE
NORTHWEST	NW	SOUTHEAST	SE
SOUTHWEST	SW	UP	U
DOWN	D	OUT	O
LOOK	L	PRONOUNS	PN
WITH	WI	FROM	F

In addition to the abbreviation of some words, you will soon notice that The Pawn will not object if you allow your English to become a little sloppier. For example, the following commands are all completely fine by the program:—

GET THE NOOSE THEN TIE IT TO THE POLE
G NOOSE, TIE IT TO POLE

or

GET EVERYTHING THEN PUT HAT ON

G ALL, WEAR HAT

Occasionally it will object if you are not specific enough when telling it which object you really mean. For example, if you are carrying two hats, a spotted blue one and a small yellow one, and you say

DROP HAT

the program cannot decide which hat you want to drop, and so responds:—

Which hat, the small hat or the spotted hat?

you can now reply in several ways, let's assume it's the small yellow hat you want to drop, some possible replies are:—

YELLOW

SMALL

YELLOW ONE

SMALL ONE

THE YELLOW ONE

THE YELLOW HAT

THE YELLOW SMALL HAT

SMALL YELLOW ONE

as well as retyping the command again, having inserted the missing adjective thus:—

DROP YELLOW HAT

DROP SMALL YELLOW HAT

Should you give a combination of adjectives unknown to the program, assuming there is no spotted yellow hat, then

DROP SPOTTED YELLOW HAT

will produce:—

What spotted yellow hat?

The position of an object can also be used to specify which particular

RESTART

This lets you replay the game from the beginning without having to reset your machine and reload the game.

Advice From The Experts

If you have never played an adventure game before the following advice will be helpful. Some of it may seem a bit obvious at first but, taken as a whole, it provides a good basis for success in the game.

- I) Make a map, briefly detailing each location, its exits and the objects you find there.
- II) Examine everything closely as most of the objects you find will be useful at some point in the game.
- III) Read the location descriptions very carefully — otherwise you may miss something important.
- IV) Save the game frequently. That way you can try something risky and return to the saved position if something goes badly wrong or you inadvertently get 'killed'.
- V) If the program doesn't understand one of your commands try rephrasing it, using different words to convey what you wish to achieve — be sure that what you type would allow anyone reading it to understand your meaning, so that they could perform the actions you're asking the computer to understand.

A TALE OF KEROVNIA



CYPHERIC HELP SECTION INCLUDED
VERSION II

KEROVNIA



**A TALE OF
KEROVNIA**

**BY
G. SINCLAIR**

**EDITED BY
C. GALE**



CHAPTER ONE

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

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

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

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

Aquitania, a neighbouring province, gave the King of Kerovnia a red unicorn stallion as a birthday gift.) The Dwarfs, not surprisingly, have a complete monopoly of the tourist industry.

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

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

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

Centuries of selective breeding, preserving the purest of blood lines by

constant and meticulous inter-marriage, have resulted in the impressive figure of our present monarch - who, in a poor light, and with a following wind, could actually be mistaken for a human.

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

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

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

Lacey has just celebrated her sixteenth birthday. She has been given a male dorab by the name of Poops, and is deeply in love with Prince Malcolm, the dashing and handsome heir to the throne of Aquitania! At present Malcolm's multifarious (some would hint nefarious!) activities as a Royal helicopter pilot - not to mention his giddy affair with the

blushing and virginal Lacey - continually hit the headlines of the Dwarf colour tabloid, "The Kerovnian World" - owned and run by Gringo Baconburger.

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

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

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

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

Erik scratched his head in confusion, unable to deal with their mounting hostility, when Zita stepped forward and snapped:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER TWO

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

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

Kronos in on many points of interest.

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

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

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

Gringo Baconburger was a relatively young leader for the Dwarf faction to have adopted. From the beginning his confidence as a public orator and as an intellectual figure had reached the ears of the Elderly Dwarf Society, (the wisest members of the Dwarf and Little People communities)

responsible for the election of important figureheads in Dwarf society, as well as the tiresome activity of meeting with the King twice a year, to discuss social problems.

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

CHAPTER THREE

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

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

Erik was considered to be an entertaining host ever since the employment of Kronos, who continued to delight both Royal children and adults alike. The food, too, was excellent, and Queen Jendah's trifles were internationally renowned.

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

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

The Royal choir, which had been discreetly positioned behind the blue silk curtains, sung a selection of Kerovnian ballads. At one end of the table sat Erik. He was clothed in a crushed cherry coloured silk uniform of the Royal Unicorn Guards, with a collar of pure ermine. His breast was ablaze with

rows of brilliantly shining medals, and his thinning hair supported the August Crown. This was studied with Capachon rubies, and surrounded by seed pearls from the Aquatica sea, the symbols of the month of August.

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

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

Malcolm had been against the idea of spending two weeks of his summer holiday in Kerovnia, for he had planned a sailing trip with his friends, (particularly the Lady Francesca). However, his mother, Hortensa, had insisted her son accompany her to Kerga, for she had other plans for him throughout those summer days. This tall, bespectacled lady - known for her coldness and aloof attitude towards the poor inhabitants of Aquitania - had for some time nourished the idea of a matrimonial union of the two families. It was clear to her that should Malcolm wed Lattecia then Aquitania would be joined financially as well as politically to Kerovnia, allowing her to exert power over the mining community and exploit to the full their stocks of diamonds and gold. It would be easy for her to wield power through Malcolm, who adored her and respected her opinions in

matters of state. She found Erik quite ridiculous, especially with all those medals scattered across his chest; but Jendah was a good friend, who would be quite happy for Hortensa to discreetly intervene in Erik's affairs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER FOUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

The dragon inhaled deeply, lighting up his orange nostrils. "Funny thing is,

his political headquarters aren't far from here; in fact, on the other side of the valley. He seems an interesting chap, this Gringo, and he's quite against the Royal family - rather like you. Well, it appears that he plans a general uprising to force the King to hold democratic elections, and then, if all goes well, he plans to take over Kerovnia and force the Royal family into exile."

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

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

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

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

Kronos spoke with stern authority, and the dragon realised that the fun and

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

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

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

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

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

At that hour of the night there was nobody else to be seen. No busy Dwarfs heading towards the mines, with spades and shovels slung over their shoulders; no Little People pushing carts filled with home-made produce for sale to the mining canteens. There were no ladies of noble class riding their magnificent unicorns through the hills, followed by their foot servants. The land was quiet and dark as far as the eye could see. The

