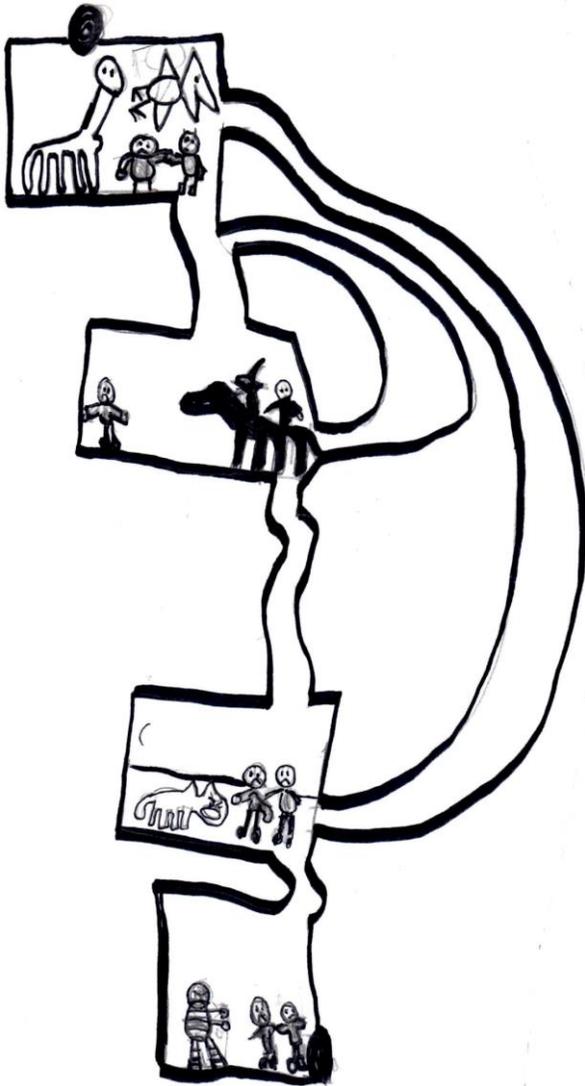


The Time Travel Mystery

The Tiny Tyrant, Age 7, offers up her entry into the 2015 One Page Dungeon Contest. Herewith presented with commentary, as a reflection upon the state of the RPG industry, as well as an instructive glimpse into the mental landscape of our nation's youth.

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|  | <p>"There is a sewer with a glowing drain. If they decide to go into a sewer drain because it was glowing, they end up in a Time Travel Mystery Dungeon."</p> | <p>The Tiny Tyrant begins with visual scene-setting. A glowing portal...a classic MacGuffin. Note that she confidently provides players the option of <i>not</i> taking the bait, confidently resisting the urge to railroad them through the subsequent narrative.</p> |
| | <p>"They go in and find out that it has two dinosaurs. What is that one with a really long neck and a really long tail? And a flying one."</p> | <p>Dinosaurs here represent the deep psyche of this classic Heroic Narrative. Also that dinosaurs are cool.</p> |
| | <p>"When they get away, there is a secret tunnel and they can skip most of the dungeon. If they found out that out later, I bet they would be mad."</p> | <p>Psychologically, this may be the crux of the piece. See how the Tiny Tyrant anticipates the players' reactions? Their torment? What you can't hear is how fiendishly gleeful she is about it.</p> |
| | <p>"But then they went into the next one. They accidentally went through, and when one of them can slide onto the horse of the knight, then they are able to defeat the knight and they get away."</p> | <p>Note the switch from the subjunctive "if they..." to the declarative "they went..." This is the superego ascendant. C.F. Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline & Punish</i>.</p> |
| | <p>"Then they see a sabretooth out of the corner of their eye. If they are able to fight it they can get away."</p> | <p>With the return to "if," the Tyrant, having demonstrated her mastery of the situation, negotiates the distributed authorial functionality central to the RPG experience.</p> |
| | <p>"A humongous mummy. They can get away through a door they can see out."</p> | <p>"Humongous." This is a child with a large, dare I say humongous, vocabulary. This type of scene painting is essential to what Coleridge termed the "suspension of disbelief." The return to visual cues ("they can see") here denotes a return to hope after severe trials, in the tradition of Campbell's 'Hero's Journey.'</p> |
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