

The Darkmaster's Challenge

I kept glancing at the clock while I played my Mazecrawler game on the computer. Maybe Randy forgot that he was supposed to come over with a brand new game. Or maybe he was just late, like usual. I was thinking about calling when I heard my Mom holler, "Dennis, Randy's here." A second later he came blazing into my bedroom and whipped off his backpack. "Check this out," he said, taking a package out of the pack.

"Realm of the Darkmaster," I read off the cover, "I've never even heard of this one."

"Me neither. But I found this really neat little store over on Sixth street and the guy in charge told me that this was the coolest game ever made! It's the test version, so he gave it to me free! C'mon, let's play!"

Randy is in sixth grade with me and he's probably the number one computer freak in the school. If anyone could find the coolest computer game in the world, it would be him. I popped the disk into my CD ROM drive and waited for it to install. But instead the screen went completely black. Then a face slowly began to appear on it.

The face was thin, pale and completely hairless not even eyebrows and the way it seemed to be looking right at me gave me the willies.

"I am the Darkmaster," the face said, "and I challenge you to enter to my realm, if you dare. Click on the green shield and you will be taken on an amazing adventure, but beware: there is only one way out.

Are you smart enough and brave enough to discover the secret?" The face then started to laugh, which made the hairs on my neck stand up. I was about to suggest playing something else when Randy clicked on the green shield icon

Then lightning struck my room. That's the only way I can describe it. A sudden flash knocked me over and the next thing I knew, Randy and I were on our hands and knees in some kind of a hot, stuffy, stone room. There were lit torches and I could see picture writing on the walls. "Egyptian hieroglyphics!" I said. "This is totally nuts, but we're inside a pyramid!"

But he was too busy screaming to hear me. I turned and saw what he was screaming at. Leaning against one wall was a mummy case, and the lid was creaking open! When it opened all the way, the wrinkled bone-bag inside raised its head and looked at us!

We ran into each other at first but then toward a passageway that led out of the chamber. From behind us we heard footsteps...the mummy was chasing us!

We kept running until the passageway split into two. "Which way?" I asked, but our decision was made by the gray, scurrying thing that came out of the passageway on the right. "Eeew, a rat!" Randy screamed.

"I think it's only a mouse," I said, "but I still don't like it. Let's go the other way."

After going on for what seemed like ten miles, the passageway ended in front of two huge wooden doors."This one," Randy decided, though I think he was just guessing.



It took both of us to push the heavy door open. On the other side was a huge wooden room, like the kind you see in old castles. Standing on platforms against each wall was a huge suit of armor, complete with a battle sword and shield. The weird thing was they were all different colors: one was blue, one red, one yellow and one black. On the other side was another door. And there were mice in this room, too.

"You know what's happened, don't you?" Randy said, and I didn't even have to answer. I knew. Crazy as it sounded, somehow we'd been pulled into the game itself!

"Maybe that's the way out," I said, and we headed for the other door, but a clanking metal sound stopped us. Looking over, I saw that the blue suit of armor had stepped down and was now walking towards us! We turned to run back, but the red suit of armor cut us off. Then the black and the yellow ones moved in on us and before long we were surrounded! And if this wasn't bad enough, a mouse was crawling on my shoe!

"Now what?" Randy cried.

"That Darkmaster creep said there was one way out, we just have to find it."

The knights were closing in, swords raised!

The mouse was now trying to crawl up my pantleg. "Aw, man!" I shouted, shaking my foot, but just then an idea hit me. "No," I said, "that can't really be the way out, it's too corny."

"Who cares?" Randy hollered. "If you've got an idea, go for it!"

"Okay." Reaching down, I forced myself to pick up the mouse. It wriggled and squirmed in my hand and I almost dropped it, but I managed to hold on. "Green means go, so red must mean stop." I turned to the red knight and held the mouse up to its shield, then made a clicking sound with my tongue. In an instant, there was another flash of lightning, and when I opened my eyes, we were back in my room!

"Man," Randy panted, "what did you do?"

"The secret was a sick joke. To start the game we mouse-clicked on a green shield, right? So to get out "

"You clicked a mouse on a red shield," Randy groaned.

"Sorry, but this disk is going in the trash," I said, opening my CD ROM drive. But the disk wasn't there!



The next day we decided to visit the little store where Randy had gotten it. But when we got there, he nearly had a cow, because there was no store, only a vacant lot.

"But it was here!" he cried.

"Hey, what's that?" I said, pointing to an envelope on the ground an envelope with our names on it! With shaking hands, I picked it up, opened it and read: "You won, and therefore I must go back and make my game more challenging. Perhaps we shall play again someday."

It was signed: "The Darkmaster."