

## It Is Pitch Dark

MC Frontalot

You are likely to be eaten by a grue.  
If this predicament seems particularly cruel,  
Consider whose fault it could be:  
Not a torch or a match in your inventory.

It got narrated at you in the second person.  
Every time you booted up, it seemed you got another version  
Of your life told to you by a status line blinking,  
The impossible people you could be without thinking  
Yourself insane of personality problems,  
With a mop on a drop ship or trying to stab a goblin.  
That don't play in public life. You get arrested,  
Psychoactive medication daily in your big intestine  
And attesting that the voices in your head  
Said the dwarf shot first, embedded arrow then you bled.  
But doctors with needles posit repeatedly  
That you knocked down that midget in the park unneededly.  
This has seeded the idea that you should  
Never venture from the house, never get misunderstood  
By the non-player characters inhabiting Earth,  
None of whom are too concerned about Nord & Bert,  
Not one of whom ever aimed a fish around the room,  
Trying to get it in the ear canal because doom  
Beset the last planet they were on, or near  
The verge of a set of poetics they wouldn't hear.  
Never peered at the clues with invisible ink.  
No SM goddesses ever gave them pause to think.  
Never piloted six robots, each distinct.  
Don't matter how many 2-liters they drink,  
They're not gonna follow what you're saying at all.  
They impugn and appall in the scope of their gall,  
As you hide in your room in disgust with the lights turned out.  
Turn 'em on in a turn. Leave 'em off for now.

You read a pamphlet from a mailbox that urges low cunning,  
Offers cursor and prompt: type >run and you're running,  
And parses what you tell it, pronouns intact,  
Abbreviations if you need 'em (better keep it gramat.).  
Better punctuate your sentences and never redact  
The name of anything ambiguous. You're about to get asked,  
Do you mean the red one, the round one, the crooked, or the blue?  
Better keep that in your pocket, don't know yet what it could do.  
Could be the spray for the grue; you're gonna need it if it is –  
A situation that reloads, restarts, or quits.  
Wonder how many points out of how many points  
You've got to get before you're done. Endeavor then to rejoice,  
When you wish more ardently, identities shed,  
For continuance, the rhyme forever voyaging. Fled  
From all lights and colors, from all smells and sound:  
Just the lyric on the monochrome display and you're proud  
To make another verse appear by solving riddles.  
If you didn't have to sleep, you know you'd never seek acquittal.  
You'd be ever in the middle and the midst of quest.  
If it weren't for >don the gown. you'd never get dressed.  
In your underwear typing, just like Front,  
Keyboard attached up to my fingers – wrists bear the brunt –  
As I seek to do stunts simply through their descriptions.

I think I went once to some sands that were Egyptian.  
And I retain plane tickets, snapshots, receipts,  
Yet I stand unconvinced that this has happened to me.  
I wouldn't want to misremember or get confused.  
Recall of crawling towards a pyramid appearing over dunes.  
Recall of entering the thing and descending stairs.  
Does it descend from there, adventure to nightmare?  
Did I battle a snake? Was the treasure intact?  
Or did the TRS-80 in my brain get hacked?  
Thanks, Grampa, for buying it. Now my life's ruined.  
Twenty-two years later, head's infested: got the grue in.  
PLUGHing, XYZZYfying, trying to escape,  
But I can't 'cause I'm up and around and awake.