

MAYAN MAGIC *in the jungle ruins*

As a world-renowned anthropologist and explorer, you are thrilled to be in the jungles of the Yucatan Peninsula in search of fabled Mayan ruins and treasures. It is your third day on the expedition, and you have decided to break apart from the rest of the team.

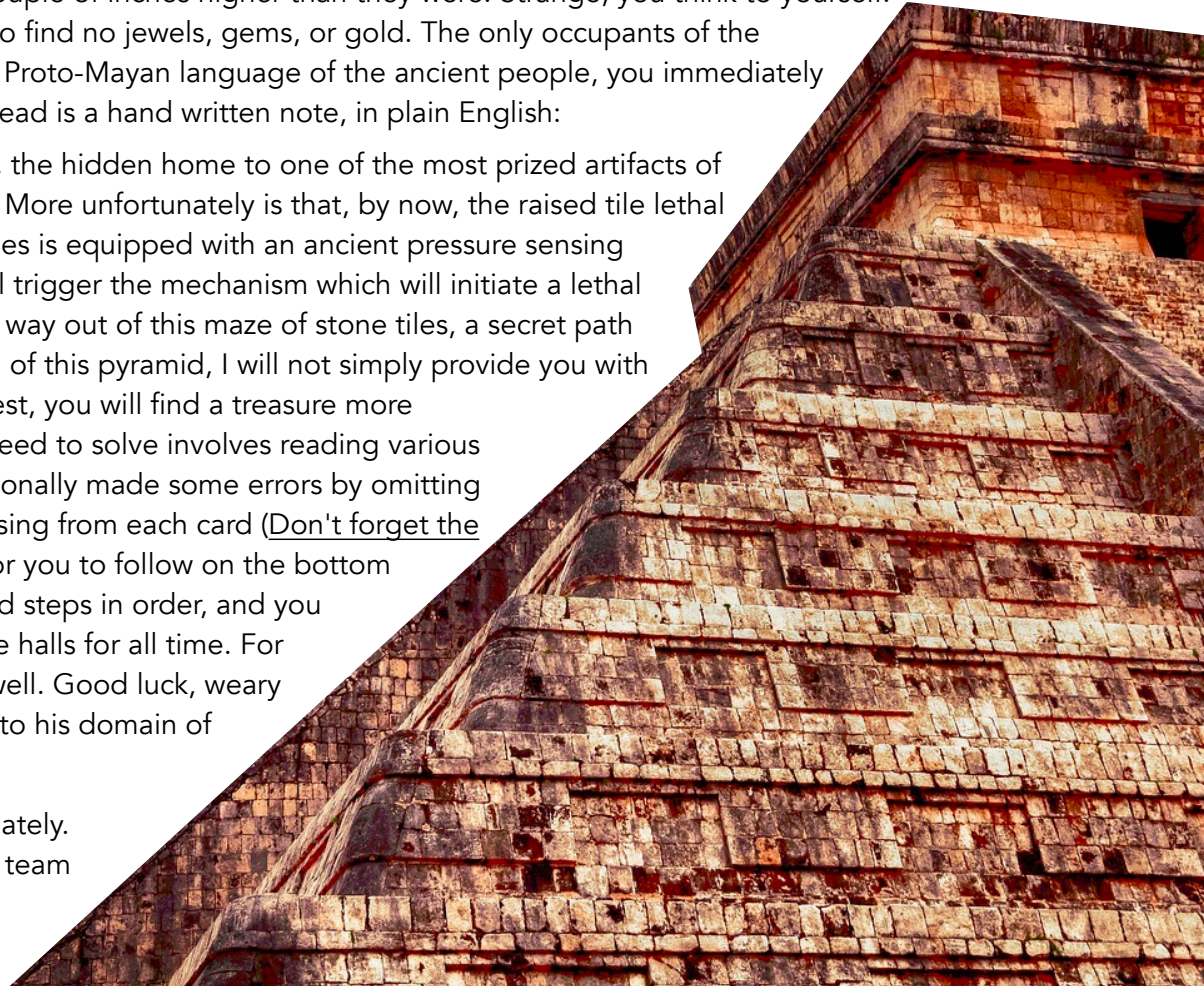
As you are walking, you come to an old, stone staircase climbing what could easily be mistaken as a jungle knoll. Upon closer inspection, you find the hill is, in fact, a highly dilapidated Mayan pyramid, cracked and crumbling, and covered with creeping vines and other lush vegetation. A quick search around the perimeter reveals a heavy wooden door, not entirely rotten, behind which is a passage that appears to lead into the heart of the pyramid. Too excited to go back and find the team, you ignore protocol and immediately head into the pyramid with a flashlight in hand. As your eyes adjust to the dark interior, you are relieved by the cool, underground air. You soon come to a large chamber. The floor of the chamber is covered in wide stone tiles, and in the center of the room sits a perfectly preserved Mayan treasure chest. You quickly cross the stone floor and, reaching the chest, open it.

Immediately, a deafening groaning sound fills the room. All of the stone tiles making up the floor slowly begin lifting up. Suddenly, the unseen mechanism driving this stops: the stone tiles are now raised a couple of inches higher than they were. Strange, you think to yourself.

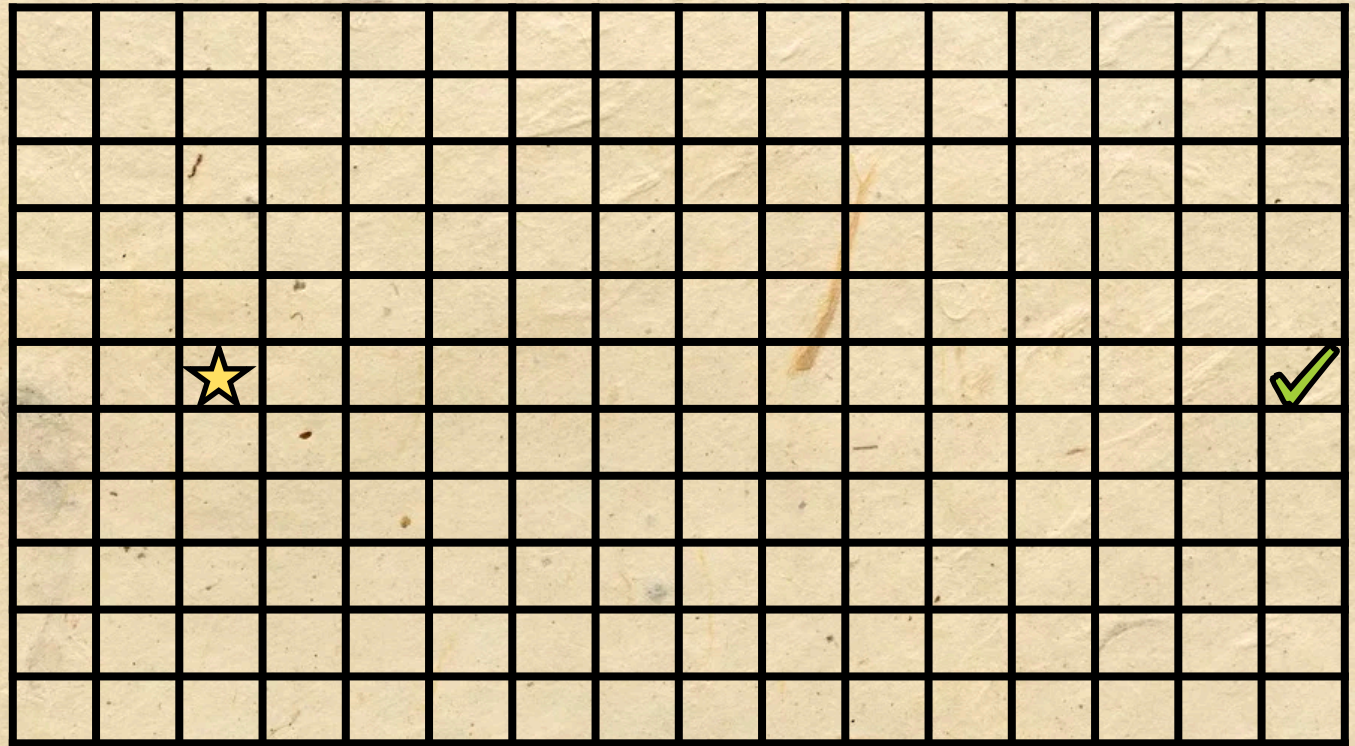
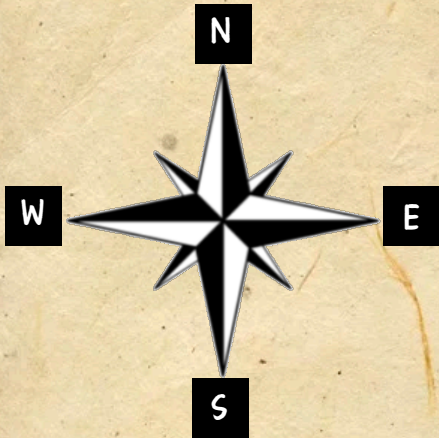
Looking in the treasure chest, you are somewhat disappointed to find no jewels, gems, or gold. The only occupants of the treasure chest are various small manuscripts. Being fluent in the Proto-Mayan language of the ancient people, you immediately retrieve the manuscripts to begin translating. What you find instead is a hand written note, in plain English:

Dear Explorer: Congratulations on finding the Yucatay Pyramid, the hidden home to one of the most prized artifacts of the ancient Mayan people. Unfortunately for you, I found it first. More unfortunately is that, by now, the raised tile lethal defense system has been activated. Each of these raised floor tiles is equipped with an ancient pressure sensing system. Step on the wrong stone at the wrong time, and you will trigger the mechanism which will initiate a lethal attack on your position. I am not without a kind heart. There is a way out of this maze of stone tiles, a secret path known only to me. In the spirit of the Mayan protective function of this pyramid, I will not simply provide you with the way. You must prove your worth and pass my test. In this chest, you will find a treasure more valuable than anything else: the chance to live. The riddle you need to solve involves reading various passages I have written for you. In these passages, I have intentionally made some errors by omitting needed commas in series. Count up how many commas are missing from each card (Don't forget the Oxford comma). Use this number to complete the instructions for you to follow on the bottom of each card. Count the commas correctly, complete the required steps in order, and you escape without harm. Make a mistake, and you will occupy these halls for all time. For your convenience, I've included a floor plan of the chamber as well. Good luck, weary traveller. May the Mayan Sun god, Kinich Ahau, guide you back to his domain of light. ~**Madeline the Bold**

Your task is abundantly clear. You had better get started immediately. Who knows how long your flashlight batteries will last, and your team will be wondering where you are. Good luck!



FLOOR PLAN



-  = You are here (treasure)
-  = Exit

Step 1 Instructions: Travel ___ tile(s) due west

The number of deities that were revered in the traditions of the ancient Mayan pantheon is impressive. More interestingly, perhaps, is that these many and varied gods existed in a dynamic narrative. Over time, several of their characteristics would evolve, including their import their influence and even their existence. It is estimated that there were approximately 150 to 250 ancient Mayan deities. Amongst these, some of the most influential included Itzamna, Kinich Ahau, and Huracan. It is interesting to note that the gods of the ancient Mayan, although formidable and supernatural, were nevertheless imperfect. They were, much like people, subject to making poor decisions and pursuing flawed goals. In fact, some of these gods were even said to have been destroyed by mere mortal men.

Step 2 Instructions: Travel ___ tile(s) due south

Growing up in the jungle ruins of the ancient Mayan people certainly was memorable. My youth was very unique. How many children can say they grew up wandering amongst the pyramids of Chicken Itza, roaming the overgrown ruins of Calakmul and pretending to be a warrior of old amongst the coastal structures of Tulum? I'd never chastise my parents' decision to allow me to roam so freely amongst the ancient structures. I'm sure they wouldn't have if they knew the power contained in that underground chamber. Once I had a taste for the magic of old, there was no turning back. This was a cause definitely worth devoting a lifetime to pursue.

Step 3 Instructions: Travel ___ tile(s) due east

Many of the ancient traditions have been lost to us forever, including the ability to cure the many plagues of the jungle with local vegetation the ability to accurately predict major weather events based upon signs from wildlife and the ability to harness the power of the sun. Occasionally, a new manuscript is uncovered, shedding insight into the ancient ways. For instance, it was recently discovered that the summer solstice was an important time to summon supernatural powers. Through rituals, the power of the sun could be stored in gemstones including sapphire ruby and amethyst. These powerful gemstones could be used to build to destroy to cure or to kill. The mana in these stones could be extracted very quickly very slowly soon after storing it or many months later.

Step 4 Instructions: Travel ___ tile(s) due north

The Mayans used an elaborate system of hieroglyphs to record their knowledge beliefs and customs. Their system of writing took many years to understand by modern academics. In the late 1950s, an archaeologist named Tatiana Proskouriakoff made significant gains in understanding some of the glyphs utilized by the Mayans. Unfortunately, many of the ancient Mayan manuscripts, or Codices, were destroyed by European explorers during first contact. The codices that still remain today include the Paris Codex the Dresden Codex and the Madrid Codex.

Step 5 Instructions: Travel ___ tile(s) due east

The ancient Mayans possessed, for the their time, a truly advanced concept of time, and they used multiple calendars. Mayans used different calendars for different purposes. Some of these included the Long Count Calendar a sacred calendar known as the Tzolkin and a 365 day solar calendar (much like that which we use). Some interesting math properties were evident in the Mayan calendar system, including the concept of zero the use of common multiples and the evidence of combined cyclical/linear trends. The calendar was used in various ways. It was used to determine when to harvest crops, when to stay inside in order to avoid dangerous supernatural events and even when to launch war campaigns. Contrary to popular belief, the Mayan Long Count Calendar never predicted a doomsday marking the end of the world.

Step 6 Instructions: Travel ___ tile(s) due south

When they came, everything changed. For centuries, we had lived relatively peacefully. We existed in a state of perfect harmony with the land the animals and the neighboring people of nearby villages. It became abundantly clear that no such harmony remained when the changing tides carried wave after wave of oppressors to our shores. They robbed us of our goods, they slashed and burned our crops and they desecrated our sanctuaries. We tried to offer them gifts and land to appease their lust for war, but they were not interested in peace. There was no option left for us but to flee into the depths of the jungle, leaving behind everything we ever knew.