



3.2 BUILD-A-PUZZLE

By Muhammad Adib Surani

exactly 1 dial” says Doc.

“Huh,” you say, shaking your head, “sorry, I – uh – I was kinda somewhere else for a moment.”

You look around.

“Where’s my coffee?!”

Doc nods understandingly.

“Ah yes,” he says, “the old jumping-into-the-past-in-the-middle-of-a-sentence thing. I imagine that can get quite confusing.”

“Yeah,” you say, “and now my coffee’s all the way back in Tuesday, getting cold!”

Marty interrupts your complaining.

“Come on,” he says, “we gotta get out of here before your past self and the Terminator arrive. I mean, imagine if you met your past self and then you fell in love with them and then your children were never born?!”

“Huh?” you say.

“Don’t worry about him,” says Doc, “but you should go.”

Marty hands you a hoverboard.

“Oh sweeeeeeet,” you say. You and Marty jump on your hoverboards and zoom away.

(It should be mentioned at this point that, due to nerd culture’s overzealous enthusiasm for fictional gadgets and toys, we often forget that riding a hoverboard is actually very similar to riding a skateboard. You can’t just jump on a skateboard and expect that you’ll be an expert skater. Similarly, you can’t just jump on a hoverboard and expect a smooth ride. Keep that in mind.)

You zoom along.

“This is sweeeet,” you say. Suddenly, The Device starts to buzz. Your phone buzzes too. You’ve got a new email.

“Oh well,” you say, “riding a hoverboard is easy. Surely I can do it while reading an email.” (You idiot.)

You open the email. Your hoverboard collides with a bench, sending you flying, The Device in one hand, your phone in the other.

Hey Remus,

That's an excellent puzzle mechanism! I like the way you've used synonyms to decompose each image into a well-defined word. Here are my answers for double-checking, even though I'm fairly confident about all of them: FAUN, UNICORN, GHOST, DWARF, PIXIE, WYVERN, ELF, GOLEM, IMP, PHOENIX and DEMON.

The mechanism seems elegant enough that we can just provide a number with each image for indexing a letter. The final answer requirement that the first five letters be palindromic should hopefully not be overly restrictive for your puzzle. Remember to pick something thematic!

Cheers,
Adib