

**Read the stories below then answer the questions that follow.**

### **The Ivory Dice and the Fateful Push**

I stood in the field. In my hands were two pairs of dice, a gift. Not from my father, who'd never think of it. Not from my mother, who sometimes did not know me. I could not remember who had given them to me. A visiting king? A favour-seeking noble? They were carved from ivory, inset with onyx, smooth under my thumb.

It was late summer, and I was panting with my run from the palace. Since the day of the races I had been appointed a man to train me in all our athletic arts: boxing, sword-and-spear, discus. But I had escaped him, and glowed with the giddy lightness of solitude. It was the first time I had been alone in weeks.

Then the boy appeared. His name was Clysonymus, and he was the son of a nobleman who was often at the palace. Older, larger, and unpleasantly fleshy. His eyes had caught the flash of the dice in my palm. He leered at me, held out his hand.

"Let me see them."

"No." I did not want his fingers on them, grubby and thick. And I was the prince, however small. Did I not even have this right?

But these noble sons were used to me doing what they wished. They knew my father would not intervene.

"I want them." He didn't bother to threaten me, yet. I hated him for it. I should be worth threatening.

"No."

He stepped forward. "Let me have them."

"They're mine." I grew teeth. I snapped like the dogs who fight for our table scraps.

He reached to take them, and I shoved him backwards. He stumbled, and I was glad. He would not get what was mine.

"Hey!" He was angry.

I was so small; I was rumoured to be simple. If he backed down now, it would be dishonorable. He advanced on me, face red. Without meaning to, I stepped back. He smirked then.

"Coward."

"I am no coward." My voice rose, and my skin went hot.

"Your father thinks you are." His words were deliberate, as if he were savoring them. "I heard him tell my father so."

"He did not." But I knew he had.

The boy stepped closer. He lifted a fist.

"Are you calling me a liar?"

I knew that he would hit me now. He was just waiting for an excuse. I could imagine the way my father would have said it. Coward. I planted my hands on his chest and shoved, as hard as I could. Our land was one of grass and wheat. Tumbles should not hurt.

I am making excuses. It was also a land of rocks. His head thudded dully against the stone, and I saw the surprised pop of his eyes. The ground around him began to bleed.

**Answer the questions below by choosing the letter of the correct answer.**

**1 What does the protagonist's reluctance to share who gifted the dice to him signify about his relationships?**

- A) He has a poor memory.
- ☒ B) The gift has more symbolic importance than its giver.
- C) He has received numerous gifts and doesn't value them.
- D) He distrusts the visiting king.

**2 The protagonist's "giddy lightness of solitude" after escaping his athletic trainer implies:**

- A) He dislikes physical activities.
- ☒ B) He values his alone time.
- C) He isn't dedicated to his training.
- D) He doesn't respect his trainer.

**3 What does Clysonymus's lack of threat towards the protagonist when asking for the dice reveal about their dynamic?**

- ☒ A) Clysonymus underestimates the protagonist.
- B) Clysonymus is genuinely polite.
- C) They share a friendly bond.
- D) Clysonymus has previously borrowed items.

**4 The protagonist's internal assertion, "I should be worth threatening," conveys:**

- A) A desire to be physically stronger.
- B) A wish for more material possessions.
- ☒ C) A longing for recognition and worth.
- D) Fear of Clysonymus.

**5 The phrase "I grew teeth" metaphorically means:**

- ☒ A) The protagonist physically changed.

- B) The protagonist became more defensive.
- C) The protagonist wanted to bite Clysonymus.
- D) The protagonist had something to say.

**6 What do Clysonymus's words about the protagonist's father suggest about their society's values?**

- A) The society values truth above all.
- ☒ B) Reputation and honour are of prime importance.
- C) Physical strength is a sign of leadership.
- D) Parent-child relationships are open and honest.

**7 The protagonist's reaction when Clysonymus hits his head on the rock reveals:**

- ☒ A) Regret for his own actions.
- B) Disdain for Clysonymus's clumsiness.
- C) Indifference towards Clysonymus's well-being.
- D) Satisfaction at the turn of events.

**8 Which element in the story symbolises the fragility of life and unforeseen consequences?**

- A) The dice.
- ☒ B) The rock.
- C) The protagonist's solitude.
- D) The protagonist's athletic training.

### The Monastery Encounter

We walked through the fog to the Collegiate Church. Inside, garbed in white, several monks were saying the first morning mass in unison. I couldn't understand a word they were saying, since the mass was being celebrated in Basque. Petrus sat in one of the pews to the side and indicated that I should join him. The Church was enormous and filled with art objects of incalculable value. Petrus explained to me in a whisper that it had been built through donations from the kings and queens of Portugal, Spain, France, and Germany, on a site selected by the emperor Charlemagne. On the high altar, the Virgin of Roncesvalles – sculpted in massive silver, with a face of precious stone – held in her hands a branch of flowers made of jewels. The smell of incense, the Gothic construction, and the chanting monks in white began to induce in me a state similar to the trances I had experienced during the rituals of Tradition.

'And the sorcerer?' I asked, remembering what he had said on the previous afternoon.

Petrus indicated with a nod of his head a monk who was middle-aged, thin, and bespectacled, sitting with the other brothers on the narrow benches beside the high altar. A sorcerer, and at the same time a monk! I was eager for the mass to be over, but as Petrus had said to me the day before, it is we who determine the pace of time: my anxiety caused the religious ceremony to last for more than an hour. When the mass was over,

Petrus left me alone in the pew and went out through the door that the monks had used as an exit. I remained there for a while, gazing about the church and feeling that I should offer some kind of prayer, but I wasn't able to concentrate. The images appeared to be in the distance, locked in a past that would never return, like the Golden Age of the Road to Santiago. Petrus appeared in the doorway and, without a word, signalled that I should follow him. We came to an inside garden of the monastery, surrounded by a stone veranda. At the centre of the garden there was a fountain, and seated at its edge, waiting for us, was the bespectacled monk.

'Father Jordi, this is the pilgrim,' said Petrus, introducing me.

The monk held out his hand, and I shook it. No one said anything else. I was waiting for something to happen, but I heard only the crowing of roosters in the distance and the cries of the hawks taking off for their daily hunt. The monk looked at me expressionlessly, in a way that reminded me of Lourdes's manner after I had spoken the Ancient Word.

**Answer the questions below by choosing the letter of the correct answer.**

**9 What can be inferred about the significance of the Collegiate Church from the narrative?**

- A) It is a relatively new church with limited history.
- B) It was primarily funded by local villagers.
- ☒ C) Its grandeur and value are reflective of its historical importance and contributions from several monarchs.
- D) The church was built as a personal chapel for Charlemagne.

**10 How did the protagonist react to the realisation that the monk was also a sorcerer?**

- A) He was disinterested.
- B) He felt a sense of familiarity.
- ☒ C) He was taken aback and eager to learn more.
- D) He felt it was a common occurrence.

**11 What does the protagonist's difficulty in offering a prayer in the church suggest about his mental state?**

- A) He felt completely at home in the church.
- B) He was overwhelmed by the art and beauty of the church.
- ☒ C) His mind was preoccupied with the history that hung around in the church.
- B) He felt prayer was an unnecessary ritual.

**12 The protagonist's perception of time during the mass can be best described as:**

- A) Faster than usual due to his excitement.
- B) Altered by the mesmerising chants of the monks.
- ☒ C) Slowed down due to his anxiety and anticipation.
- D) Unchanged and objective.

**13 How does the setting of the inner garden of the monastery contrast with the interior of the church?**

- A) The garden is devoid of historical significance.
- B) The garden emanates a sense of bustling activity.
- ☒ C) The garden provides a more serene and quiet environment compared to the church's grandeur.
- D) The garden has even more art objects than the church.

**14 Based on the narrative, what role does silence play in the characters' interactions?**

- A) It's a sign of discomfort and unfamiliarity.
- ☒ B) Silence is used as a way to communicate respect and reverence.
- C) It indicates a lack of topics to discuss.
- D) It's indicative of a language barrier between characters.

**15 What might be inferred about the nature of Mme Lourdes based on the protagonist's memory?**

- A) She was an overtly expressive individual.
- B) She was known for her cheerful disposition.
- C) Her manner was distinctly different from Father Jordi's.
- ☒ D) She might have had a reserved or intense demeanour, similar to Father Jordi's expression.

**16 Which of the following best captures the protagonist's feelings upon entering the Collegiate Church?**

- A) Disinterest and apathy.
- ☒ B) Overwhelm and reverence, leading to an altered state of consciousness.
- C) Immediate focus on the sorcerer monk.
- D) Eagerness to leave and explore the monastery garden.

### The Homonyms Game

"Homonyms!" said Nicholas Brant.

He was Thomas Trumbull's guest at the monthly banquet of the Black Widowers. He was rather tall, and had surprisingly prominent bags under his eyes, despite the comparative youthfulness of his appearance otherwise. His face was thin and smooth-shaven, and his brown hair showed, as yet, no signs of grey.

"Homonyms," he said.

"What?" said Mario Gonzalo blankly.

"The words you call 'sound-alikes.' The proper name for them is 'homonyms.' "

"That so?" said Gonzalo. "How do you spell it?"

Brant spelled it.

Emmanuel Rubin looked at Brant owlishly through the thick lenses of his glasses. He said, "You'll have to excuse Mario, Mr. Brant. He is a stranger to our language."

Gonzalo brushed some specks of dust from his jacket sleeve and said, "Manny is corroded with envy because I've invented a word game. He knows the words but he lacks any spark of inventiveness, and that kills him."

"Surely Mr. Rubin does not lack inventiveness," said Brant, soothingly. "I've read some of his books."

"I rest my case," said Gonzalo. "Anyway, I'm willing to call my game 'homonyms' instead of 'sound-alikes.' The thing is to make up some short situation which can be described by two words that are sound-alikes - that are homonyms. I'll give you an example: If the sky is perfectly clear, it is easy to decide to go on a picnic in the open. If it is raining cats and dogs, it is easy to decide not to go on a picnic. But what if it is cloudy, and the forecast is for possible showers, but there seem to be patches of blue here and there, so you can't make up your mind about the picnic. What would you call that?"

"A stupid story," said Trumbull tartly, passing his hand over his crisply waved white hair.

"Come on," said Gonzalo, "play the game. The answer is two words that sound alike."

There was a general silence and Gonzalo said, "The answer is 'whether weather.' It's the kind of weather where you wonder whether to go on a picnic or not. 'Whether weather,' don't you get it?"

James Drake stubbed out his cigarette and said, "We get it. The question is, how do we get rid of it?"

Roger Halsted said, in his soft voice, "Pay no attention, Mario. It's a reasonable parlour game, except that there don't seem to be many combinations you can use."

Geoffrey Avalon looked down austere from his seventy-four-inch height and said, "More than you might think. Suppose you owned a ram that was frisky on clear days and miserable on rainy days. If it were merely cloudy, however, you might wonder whether that ram would be frisky or miserable. That would be 'whether wether weather.'

**Answer the questions below by choosing the letter of the correct answer.**

**17 Based on the story's description, which of the following best captures the relationship between Emmanuel Rubin and Mario Gonzalo?**

- A) Mutual respect and admiration.
- B) Complete strangers with no prior interactions.
- ☒ C) A competitive banter with hints of underlying rivalry.
- D) A mentor-mentee relationship.

**18 What does Mario Gonzalo's reaction to Rubin's statement suggest about his character?**

- A) He is easily offended and sensitive.

- B) He values humility and often downplays his achievements.  
☒ C) He is quick-witted and uses humour as a defence mechanism.  
D) He is deeply introspective and considers criticisms seriously.

**19 Inferring from the story, which of the Black Widowers first seems least impressed with Mario's game?**

- A) Roger Halsted  
☒ B) Thomas Trumbull  
C) Geoffrey Avalon  
D) James Drake

**20 Based on the context, how might the word 'corroded' be best understood in Emmanuel Rubin's statement about Mario?**

- A) Literally, indicating Mario has a rusty appearance.  
B) To suggest Mario has decayed moral values.  
☒ C) To humorously imply jealousy or bitterness.  
D) To indicate Mario's eroding health.

**21 What implicit detail can be inferred about Roger Halsted's character based on his intervention?**

- A) He is dismissive of Mario's ideas.  
☒ B) He is a mediator, aiming to keep the peace.  
C) He is passionate about word games.  
D) He is confrontational and seeks conflict.

**22 The theme of uncertain weather runs through the story. Which character extends this theme in a humorous manner, adding complexity?**

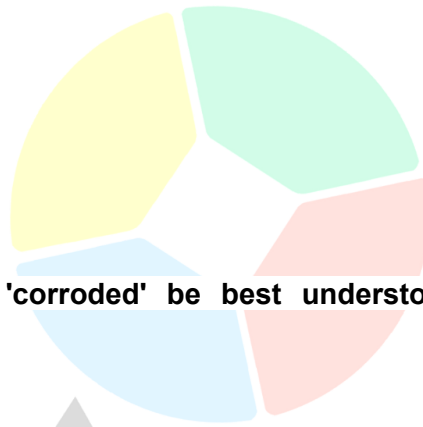
- A) Mario Gonzalo  
B) James Drake  
C) Roger Halsted  
☒ D) Geoffrey Avalon

**23 Analysing the interaction patterns, which member seems to play the role of a challenger or sceptic most frequently?**

- ☒ A) Thomas Trumbull  
B) James Drake  
C) Geoffrey Avalon  
D) Mario Gonzalo

**24 Based on the context, why might Geoffrey Avalon's example be considered more sophisticated than Mario's original one?**

- ☒ A) Because it is longer and more detailed.  
B) Because it introduces an animal character into the narrative.





- C) Because it employs a three-word homonym instead of a two-word one.  
D) Because it directly counters Mario's idea.

### Homecoming: A Tale of Family, Memory, and Unlikely Bonds

At home, I found another shock from the past.

I live across the George Washington Bridge from Manhattan - in the typical American-dream suburb of Green River, New Jersey, a township with, despite the moniker, no river and shrinking amounts of green. Home is Grandpa's house. I moved in with him and a revolving door of foreign nurses when Nana died three years ago.

Grandpa has Alzheimer's. His mind is a bit like an old black-and-white TV with damaged rabbit-ear antennas. He goes in and out and some days are better than others and you have to hold the antennas a certain way and not move at all, and even then the picture does the intermittent vertical spin. At least, that was how it used to be. But lately - to keep within this metaphor - the TV barely flickers on.

I never really liked my grandfather. He was a domineering man, the kind of old-fashioned, lift-by-the-bootstraps type whose affection was meted out in direct proportion to your success. He was a gruff man of tough love and old-world machismo. A grandson who was both sensitive and unathletic, even with good grades, was easily dismissed.

The reason I agreed to move in with him was that I knew if I didn't, my sister would have taken him in. Linda was like that. When we sang at Brooklake summer camp that "He has the whole world in His hands," she took the meaning a little too much to heart. She would have felt obligated. But Linda had a son and a life partner and responsibilities. I did not. So I made a preemptive strike by moving in. I liked living here well enough, I guess. It was quiet.

Chloe, my dog, ran up to me, wagging her tail. I scratched her behind the floppy ears. She took it in for a moment or two and then started eyeing the leash.

"Give me a minute," I told her.

Chloe doesn't like this phrase. She gave me a look - no easy feat when your hair totally covers your eyes. Chloe is a bearded collie, a breed that appears far more like a sheepdog than any sort of collie I've ever seen. Elizabeth and I had bought Chloe right after we got married. Elizabeth had loved dogs. I hadn't. I do now.

Chloe leaned up against the front door. She looked at the door, then at me, then back at the door again. Hint, hint.

Grandpa was slumped in front of a TV game show. He didn't turn toward me, but then again, he didn't seem to be looking at the picture either. His face was stuck in what had become a steady, pallid death-freeze. The only time I saw the death-freeze melt was when he was having his diaper changed. When that happened, Grandpa's lips thinned and his face went slack. His eyes watered and sometimes a tear escaped. I think he is at his most lucid at the exact moment he craves senility.

**Answer the questions below by choosing the letter of the correct answer.**



**25 What can be inferred about the protagonist's relationship with his grandfather prior to his Alzheimer's?**

- A) They were extremely close and shared many happy memories.
- B) The protagonist looked up to his grandfather as a role model.
- ☒ C) The protagonist had reservations due to his grandfather's demanding nature.
- D) They were distant but still managed to share some moments of bonding.

**26 The protagonist's comparison of his grandfather's mind to "an old black-and-white TV with damaged rabbit-ear antennas" suggests:**

- A) Grandpa has an affinity for old television shows.
- ☒ B) Grandpa's mind is outdated and obsolete.
- C) Grandpa's cognitive state is unpredictable and deteriorating.
- D) The protagonist sees his grandfather as an old relic.

**27 Why did the protagonist move in with his grandfather?**

- ☒ A) To prevent his sister, Linda, from having to shoulder the responsibility.
- B) He genuinely wanted to bond with his grandfather.
- C) He was offered an inheritance in return.
- D) His home was under renovation and he needed a temporary place to stay.

**28 What best captures the essence of Linda's character from the narrative's perspective?**

- A) She is irresponsible and tends to run away from challenges.
- B) She is pragmatic, choosing what is practically best.
- ☒ C) She is deeply compassionate, sometimes to her own detriment.
- D) She is uninvolved in the family affairs.

**29 How does the protagonist's perception of dogs evolve over time?**

- A) He has always loved dogs and remains passionate about them.
- B) He is indifferent to them, treating them merely as pets.
- ☒ C) His fondness for dogs is a recent development.
- D) He is afraid of dogs and tries to avoid them.

**30 Chloe's actions when she sees the protagonist after he returns home reflect:**

- ☒ A) Her impatience to go out for a walk.
- B) Her fear of the protagonist due to prior mistreatment.
- C) Her confusion, likely due to a medical condition.
- D) Her displeasure with the house's living conditions.

**31 The description of Grandpa's face being "stuck in what had become a steady, pallid death-freeze" implies:**

- A) Grandpa is physically frozen due to the room's temperature.

- B) Grandpa is in a state of emotional shock from a recent event.  
C) Grandpa is consistently in a detached, unresponsive state.  
D) Grandpa is mimicking a scene from a TV show he's watching.

**32 The protagonist's observation of Grandpa during his diaper change reveals that:**

- A) Grandpa feels a deep sense of embarrassment during those moments.  
B) Grandpa is unaware of his surroundings most of the time.  
C) The protagonist is indifferent to his grandfather's emotional state.  
D) Diaper changing is a routine that Grandpa looks forward to.

**Robots and Empire**

Robot Giskard Reventlov was waiting in the living room and Gladia greeted him with that same pang of uneasiness that always assailed her when she faced him.

He was primitive in comparison with Daneel. He was obviously a robot - metallic, with a face that had nothing human in expression upon it, with eyes that glowed a dim red, as could be seen if it were dark enough. Whereas Daneel wore clothing, Giskard had only the illusion of clothing but a skillful illusion, for it was Gladia herself who had designed it.

"Well, Giskard," she said.

"Good evening, Madam Gladia," said Giskard with a small bow of his head.

Gladia remembered the words of Elijah Baley long ago, like a whisper inside the recesses of her brain:

"Daneel will take care of you. He will be your friend as well as protector and you must be a friend to him - for my sake. But it is Giskard I want you to listen to. Let him be your adviser."

Gladia had frowned. "Why him? I'm not sure I like him."

"I do not ask you to like him. I ask you to trust him."

And he would not say why.

Gladia tried to trust the robot Giskard, but was glad she did not have to try to like him. Something about him made her shiver.

She had both Daneel and Giskard as effective parts of her establishment for many decades during which Fastolfe had held titular ownership. It was only on his deathbed that Han Fastolfe had actually transferred ownership. Giskard was the second item, after Daneel, that Fastolfe had left Gladia.

She had said to the old man, "Daneel is enough, Han. Your daughter Vasilisa would like to have Giskard. I'm sure of that."

Fastolfe was lying in bed quietly, eyes closed, looking more peaceful than she had seen him look in years. He did not answer immediately and for a moment she thought he had slipped out of life so

quietly that she had not noticed. She tightened her grip on his hand convulsively and his eyes opened.

He whispered, "I care nothing for my biological daughters, Gladia. For twenty centuries, I have had but one functional daughter and that has been you. I want you to have Giskard. He is valuable."

"Why is he valuable?"

"I cannot say, but I have always found his presence consoling. Keep him always, Gladia. Promise me that."

"I promise," she said.

And then his eyes opened one last time and his voice, finding a final reservoir of strength, said, in almost a natural tone of voice, "I love you, Gladia, my daughter."

And Gladia said, "I love you, Han, my father."

Those were the last words he said and heard. Gladia found herself holding the hand of a dead man and, for a while, could not bring herself to let go.

So Giskard was hers. And yet he made her uneasy and she didn't know why.

"Well, Giskard," she said, "I've been trying to see Solaria in the sky among the stars, but Daneel tells me it won't be visible till 03:20 and that I would require magni lenses even then. Would you have known that?"

**Answer the questions by choosing the letter of the correct answer.**

**33 Based on the description of Giskard Reventlov, which statement best captures his appearance in comparison to Daneel?**

- a) Giskard looks more human than Daneel.
- b) Giskard is as equally human-looking as Daneel.
- ☒ c) Giskard has a more metallic and less human appearance than Daneel.
- d) Both robots have the same level of expressiveness in their faces.

**34 Elijah Baley's advice to Gladia concerning the two robots suggests:**

- ☒ a) A deeper trust in Giskard's abilities than in Daneel's.
- b) A preference for Giskard's companionship over Daneel's.
- c) A belief that Daneel is not trustworthy.
- d) A dismissal of Giskard's role in Gladia's life.

**35 What is revealed about Han Fastolfe's feelings towards Gladia based on their final interaction?**

- a) He views her as a cherished colleague.
- b) He regards her as a biological daughter.

- c) He sees her as the most important figure in his life.  
☒ d) He perceives her as a functional daughter, closer than his biological ones.

**36 Gladia's disposition towards Giskard can best be described as:**

- a) Wholeheartedly trusting.  
b) Deeply fond and affectionate.  
☒ c) Uneasy and slightly distrustful.  
d) Indifferent with a touch of admiration.



**37 How does Fastolfe's view on family and relationships manifest in his interactions with Gladia and his biological daughters?**

- a) He values biological relationships over any other form.  
b) He holds robots, like Giskard, in higher regard than any human.  
c) He believes in the importance of both biological and functional relationships equally.  
☒ d) He perceives Gladia as his true daughter due to their deeper functional bond, regardless of biology.

**38 Based on Gladia's sentiments about Giskard and her conversation with Han Fastolfe, what might be a potential reason for her hesitation to fully embrace Giskard despite owning him?**

- a) She feels Giskard is not as valuable as Daneel.  
b) Han Fastolfe's insistence on Giskard's value makes her wary.  
☒ c) She does not like robots in general.  
d) Gladia feels threatened by Giskard's presence.

**39 Given the description of Giskard's appearance and Gladia's reaction to him, which statement is most likely true about the society they live in?**

- ☒ a) Robots that appear more human-like are preferred and more socially accepted.  
b) Robots are typically designed to be indistinguishable from humans.  
c) Robots are not allowed to wear clothing.  
d) All robots are designed to have a metallic appearance.

**40 Considering the interactions between Gladia, Fastolfe, and the robots, what might be a broader theme of the story?**

- ☒ a) The evolving definition of family and relationships in a futuristic society.  
b) The superiority of robots over humans.  
c) The ethical implications of robot ownership.  
d) The challenges of designing lifelike robots.