

## Ryan Veeder - "Mud Warriors"

In this game, the supervisor of an after-school childcare program has devised a Capture the Flag-type game in which children battle by throwing mud at each other. At the beginning of the game, your character is informed that General Shaquille has a mission for you.

---

### **Playground**

The school's collection of play equipment provides ample cover from attacking Mud Warriors, and so General Shaquille has made it into his fortress. His war room is in the citadel atop a coiled covered slide, reachable via a well-guarded net ladder.

EXITS: NORTH, WEST, NORTHWEST, UP

Molly stands guard atop the net ladder.

"Jeff!" she calls out, observing your approach. "You're to report to General Shaquille immediately. Get up here!"

### **>look at me**

You are Jeff, a first-grader at Silas Elementary. Every day after school, you go to the After-School Program. Every day, you become a Mud Warrior.

### **>look at Molly**

Molly is a second-grader, General Shaquille's most trusted underling. She'd follow him right into the pit of Hell—assuming you aren't already there.

### **>talk to Molly**

"Hey there, Molly. How're you holding up?"

"No time for chit-chat, Jeff. Get your bottom up to General Shaquille's office."

### **>climb ladder**

You lay hands on the damp ropes, and with a little difficulty you make the climb up to the top of the slide.

### **Top of Slide**

From this tower, General Shaquille can survey the entire schoolyard.

Taped to one wall is a map scrawled on looseleaf. In another wall is a circular hole: The top of the slide.

EXITS: DOWN

General Shaquille crouches in a corner, clutching the Orb of Hunahpu, attempting in vain to wipe it clean with his muddy fingers.

He glances up at you. "Have a seat, Jeff."

There's not enough room at the top of the slide for both of you to sit, so you hunch over uncomfortably. The General's eyes are fixed on the Orb of Hunahpu.

"I have a mission for you, Jeff. I have a plan that will win us this war."

"You're sending me in alone, aren't you?"

The General looks up at you in shock. "How did you know?"

It's obvious enough: Shaquille would never let Molly leave his side, Atul is too worn out to fight, and you're the only other kid left in Shaquille's army.

"Just a lucky guess," you say.

"Well, I have a lucky guess, too," he whispers. "I've been monitoring General Betsy's movements. I know where the Orb of Xbalanque is. It's in her lunch box."

"Are you sure?"

"It has to be. You'll see. Get her lunch box, bring it to me—and this'll all be over."

"Pray that you're right, General."

#### **>x map**

The map is somewhat lacking for detail: The east side of the schoolyard is General Shaquille's territory. The west side is General Betsy's. Sitting on the border between the two domains are Mike and the Oracle.

Certain anxious scribbles convey the impression that the areas closer to the school building are more dangerous—nothing to hide behind.

#### **>look at orb**

A blue rubber ball, the kind you used to play dodgeball with. It's covered in muddy fingerprints. If General Betsy gets her hands on it, the war is lost.

#### **>look at slide**

The walls of the slide are streaked with mud. Rain has made the bottom somewhat slippery.

#### **>enter slide**

You peer down from the tower to be sure the coast is clear. Then you jump down the rain-slick slide, whirling down the spiral at a dizzying speed—and land with a splash in the mud below.

## **Playground**

The school's collection of play equipment provides ample cover from attacking Mud Warriors, and so General Shaquille has made it into his fortress. His war room is in the citadel atop a coiled covered slide, reachable via a well-guarded net ladder.

EXITS: NORTH, WEST, NORTHWEST, UP

Molly stands guard atop the net ladder.

>go west

## **Tetherball Courts**

Tetherball poles stick out of the mud, their chains clinking grimly in the wind.

EXITS: NORTH, NORTHEAST, EAST, WEST, NORTHWEST

>go west

## **Monkey Bars**

A steel cage stands alone in the mud. Its bars are draped with filthy towels, obscuring the chamber within.

EXITS: NORTH, NORTHEAST, EAST, WEST, NORTHWEST, INSIDE

>enter monkey bars

You hunch over, pull a towel to one side, and enter.

## **The Oracle**

Little light reaches the center of the jungle gym: Enough to see that the towels hanging in this innermost chamber are completely clean.

EXITS: OUTSIDE

The Oracle hangs upside-down from the monkey bars. She looks deep into your eyes.

"Why has a living Mud Warrior come to me?" she asks with a smile. "Has the war ended? Are all your enemies laid low?"

>look at Oracle

The Oracle is a fifth-grader—the archetype of womanhood. She hangs with her knees hooked over a monkey bar, betraying no signs of fatigue.

Her hanging ponytail nearly touches the mud below.

**>look at ponytail**

The Oracle's ponytail does not touch the mud, but her hair is always growing, and the mud is forever rising.

**>talk to Oracle**

"Oracle," you say, meeting her gaze hesitantly. "I come seeking your guidance."

"I can tell you nothing you do not already know, Mud Warrior."

"But they say you can see the future—That you know how the war will end."

The Oracle closes her eyes. "Much is given me to know. Too much. But the law binds me as it binds you: The things I have seen, I may not speak aloud. Not until the appointed time."

You bow your head. "I understand."

When you look up, there's a strange look on her face. "Hold out your hand, Mud Warrior," she intones, and you do as she says.

"This, at least, is not forbidden to me: A small gift. May it serve you well."

She places a thin silver disk in your hand: Its warmth fades rapidly in your clammy grip.

You thank the Oracle and bow again.

**>look at disk**

A skinny silver coin worth \$0.10.