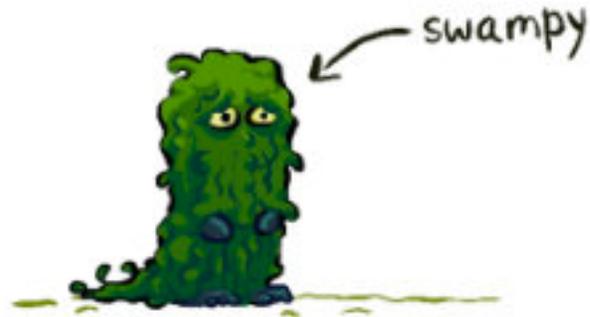


Update 1:

THE BATTLE FOR THE INSIDE COVER

Ok, so here's what happened. Let me introduce you to Swampy.



Swampy is a little kelp gnome, and he lived by himself all his life in a beautiful part of the ocean. He wasn't really lonely, because he had Joe Pebble, and Jim Seaweed to keep him company.

Here's where he lived, on the back of the front cover of Sunken Dungeon:



Isn't it grand? He's lived there his whole life, his grandparents lived there.

There's just one problem.

Ol' Inky.

A giant, hideous old octopus had moved in, and taken over Swampy's old home. He's a squatter, and he eats anything that comes close. Here's Ol' Inky:



He's baaaaaaaaaaaaaad news. He doesn't much like anyone around, and he eats folks, just for spite.

So, Swampy asked me to help him reclaim the back cover. We're setting out in the Orange November, our intrepid sub, and we're going to TAKE ON Ol' Inky, and we're going to NUKE THE HECK OUT OF HIM.

We'll try anyway. Attacking a giant octopus isn't easy. We'll need plenty of crewmembers, funding, and political support.

If we beat him, then Swampy will regain his home, and he'll be on the back of the front cover, living and having a good time with his 'friends'.

If not, Ol' Swampy will take up residence on the back of the front cover. He'll be there forever, in print.

YIKES!

(I mean, it would be cool too, but do we really want him to win?)

Here's how we'll track if we're beating him or not:



We'll update the image and tell you what happened every update. If we can kill Ol' Inky and avoid being killed ourselves by the end of the campaign, then we'll reclaim Swampy's home!!!!

Update 2:

Ol' Inky was waiting for you.

When you appear in the intrepid Orange November, Ol'Inky immediately lashes out with the force of 1000 tsunamis...or something. Maybe 1000 hungry leeches would be a better metaphor. His wiry tentacles, rough and strong from years of strangling innocent fish to death, quickly envelop the entire submarine, and the walls start to bend. That's not good for a sub.

Luckily, you had the foresight to bring the FISH NUKE™. It's a tiny little guy - only a cute li'l half-megaton blast - but the FISH NUKE™® does one thing very well: it looks and swims like a fish.

As soon as you launch the FISH NUKE™®© it swims slowly and wobbly-like - you know, kinda sideways, like a fish who isn't dangerously diseased, but it getting old and vacant and easy to catch and eat if you're an Old Octopus Who is Always Hungry.

Ol' Inky immediately and instinctually launches himself after the FISH NUKE™®©®, licking his mean ol' chops (Do octopuses have chops? Wait, do they have tongues? I'm glad Ol' Inky's a mutant, so I don't have to fact-check this story), and he chomps down on the FISH NUKE™®©® (patent pending).

That's his first mistake, because then his face explodes. I mean, slightly. He shakes it off, though. No big deal. Just a teeny tiny nuclear event.

You take this chance to enable SPEEDY-SPEEDY mode. There's no catching us now, Ol' Inky.

He rolls his eyes.

Update 3:

Ol' Inky is gaining the upper hand....er, tentacle!

As Speedy-Speedy mode really kicks in, you feel the Orange November shudder under the stress. You're going fast. Really, really fast. Your side mirrors fly off, hitting the last two fish of a certain

rare species. There's no reason for a sub to have side mirrors anyway, so you're not too worried about it.

Ol' Inky groans. He's getting old, and he's got tired old bones. *googling* Erm, tired old cartilage. *more googling* That is, tired old...soft tissue? Anyway, he's got tired old something, and he's gotten a bit lazy from decades of sitting around his cave eating the occasional school of tuna, medium-sized whale, and a constant stream of gutsy sport fishermen who delivered themselves conveniently to his door.

He stops trying to catch you, and he just sits there.

This makes Speedy-Speedy mode a little less impressive. After several loop-de-loops, some dazzlingly fast spirals, and a few entirely un-needed feints and dodges, you come to a rest opposite Ol' Inky, feeling defeated and slightly sick from all the speedy-speedy movement. He raises two of his tentacles, and does a great impression of a sarcastic slow-clap.

You CHARGE Ol' Inky furiously. He easily dodges out of the way, with a move perfected with the help of 10,000 now-deceased hopeful sport fishermen with harpoons.

You crash into the big rock that makes up Swampy's home. Don't worry about the rock too much, though - all it got was a little crack.

The submarine got a really big crack. How big?

Let me put it this way. Get a can of La Croix or something, and climb to the top of the Eiffel Tower. Wait, they don't like you dropping things from up there. Climb to the top of a pile of whales 984 feet tall. Drop the can from the top of your teetering pile of whales (who probably have had enough of this, frankly), climb down, and examine the can. It will resemble your submarine, except instead of fizzy water that tastes like something if you have a really good imagination, your submarine is filled with sea water.

So I guess when I say "crack", what I mean to say is "portion of itself completely smashed and destroyed".

Yeah, that's better. You're in trouble. Ol' Inky turns and calmly moves in for the kill.

But then he stops. His sensitive octopus senses are tingling. Side note: He was bit by a radioactive fish at one point, and gained amazing powers. He immediately strangled his tyrannical old Uncle, and concluded "With great power comes great...POWER!!!!" He gained amazing extra-sensory perception, which means that he's very sensitive to what's happening in other realities. For example, when Frodo destroyed the ring, Ol' Inky got a mild headache for a few hours. When Iron Man Died, Ol' Inky smiled, and felt pleasantly happy.

Ol' Inky's senses tingle away like mad. He almost feels pain. What is that feeling, so horrible and painful to Ol' Inky's ink-filled sack of a heart? *googling* That is, what's so horrible and painful to his three ink-filled ...sacks of hearts? Sack of hearts? Sacks of a heart? Why does english have to be stupid, and why do octopuses have to have three hearts? Also, side note: are they octopuses, octopi, or octopods? Those different plural forms all look wrong, LIKE EVERY WAY I CAN THINK OF TO FORMULATE THIS SENTENCE.

Let's try again:

He almost feels pain. What is that feeling, so horrible and painful to Ol' Inky's ink-filled sack of a heart, and his other ink-filled sack of a heart, and his back-up ink-filled sack of a heart? That's right. It's love.

Ol' Inky can't stand love.

See, so many folks pressed the heart icon on the last post, that we broke through reality and messed with Ol' Inky's brain. *googling* Yep, brain. *more googling* Erm, nine brains. We messed with his...NINE BRAINS.

Ol' Inky is so much smarter than us, guys.

But instead of turning and immediately killing us, Ol' Inky is distracted by all the love emanating from this campaign - all the sponsorships and all hearts.

The answer, as is so often the case, was love.

Well, it was the answer for a moment. Ol' Inky shakes it off and reaches out his 8 tentacles **EACH OF WHICH ACTUALLY HAS A BRAIN**, in a strangley way towards the Orange November. But he was just distracted enough that you can limp out of the way and fire a volley of harpoons.

They all miss, but it was a nice effort.

Ol' Inky gives you a thumbs-up, as if it say "A for effort!"

Except he doesn't have thumbs. HAH! He's got us beat on number of brains and hearts and stuff, **BUT DOES HE HAVE A THUMB TO HIS NAME? HE DOES NOT!**

Checkmate, Ol' Inky.

Checkmate.

Update 4:

OL' INKY'S GOT US RIGHT WHERE WE WANTS US

Ol' Inky has got his dukes up, and is firing well-aimed blows at the Orange November.

The Orange November is taking on water. You're pumping frantically, salt water up to your chin. The pilot gains you a few minutes respite from the onslaught by driving straight into a nearby pile of debris. At impact, the dust, decaying seaweed, and dead fish that have been accumulating there over the past few centuries burst out around the sub, giving you a bit of a smokescreen. It's dark, and you power down so you can try to recover the last attack.

That's when you hear Ol' Inky laughing.

That's not good.

You hear a raspy, deep voice slithering through the water. "You think the darkness will hide you? Dear children, I was born in the darkness. I drank deep of loneliness and despair long before you were mewling infants. My eyes are keen and my senses sharp. You will not escape my gaze, and you will not escape destruction."

You see nothing outside but darkness, and the occasional half-decayed fish. Then, suddenly, an explosion: tentacles strike the side of the sub repeatedly, knocking everyone to the floor. Ol' Inky comes into view.

"Now, I shall crack you like an oyster, and scoop out the insides."

You would totally be toast at this point, if he did what he said immediately. But, like so many evil/misunderstood megalomaniacs, Ol' Inky is particularly fond of having people listen to him. These types have spent so much time alone, talking only to themselves, that they've developed a deep fondness for the sound of their own voices, and usually consider themselves intelligent, erudite, with a keen sense of humor. They love to have people listen to them. They might hate you more than anything else in the world, but say to them "Tell me more" or "Oh, how interesting" and they'll open up like a flower. You'll probably be best friends right before they kill you.

Ol' Inky wraps his various extremities around your vessel tenderly, and continues. "I didn't have to eat you, you know. If you'd just leave me in peace." He looks sadly off into the gloom, an action which he calculates makes him look wistful, thoughtful, and wise.

"I never wanted anything except to be left alone," he lies, "All I wanted was a peaceful existence all by myself. But you had to come with your implements of war, your guns and your nukes. I'm not an unreasonable individual, after all. Could we not just have a conversation, before you seek lethal force? What small, pitiful creatures you are."

He glances at Swampy through the windshield (watershield?) of the Orange November. "Small swamp creature, you pitiful, acquisitive little ball of muck. You seek to use their power to usurp my home. I see all, little one. I do not reproach you, no! I understand. For what are you, without a home? Of course, you seek to drive me out of mine. And that - " his eyes flash with a dark anger "THAT MAKES OL' INKY ANGRYYYYY!"

The walls start to shudder, and rivets start popping out. Submarines kinda need rivets. Inky is just

about to tear you to shreds, but he took so long listening to his own voice, that the airplanes showed up. The government mobilized the fighter jets, and their hot bullets start streaking their way through the murky water. Ol' Inky is a remarkably easy target to hit, even if it was your first day flying a fighter jet.

Ol' Inky roars, and releases you. You've distracted him, but you have a feeling that he's not down yet.

Update 5:

Ol' Inky's angry.

...and the Orange November is beaten and dented. Ol' Inky spits a few bullets out of his mouth, and looks about fed up with this fight. He looms over the submarine, and reaches out with the intent to kill.

Inside the Orange November, a light turns on. You hastily consults the Owner's Manual. There's a giant list of lights and corresponding functions printed there in 8 pt type. To make matters worse, it looks like someone spilled their coffee on the manual at some point, and ate a chocolate doughnut while familiarizing themselves with the finer points of submarine owning.

Ol' Inky's getting closer. No pressure.

You find the light color, and try to figure out what it's trying to tell you. Is the CHUM RELEASE VALVE, the COOL LOOP-DE-LOOP ENGINE FUNCTION, or perhaps the OXYGEN DEPRESSURIZATION TOGGLE (NEVER SWITCH THIS SWITCH IF YOU WANT TO LIVE)? They're all terribly difficult to read, being partially obscured by old cream cheese, which must have come from the bagel that followed the chocolate doughnut.

As Ol' Inky reaches for you, with dark shades of murder tinting his fathomless eye, you reach over, squeeze your eyes shut, and flip the switch.

Luckily for you (and our narrative) that was the DEUS EX MACHINA BRAND STEALTH MODE FOR STEALTHY SNEAKY SNEAKS.

Your submarine disappears. You distance yourself from Ol' Inky for a bit, while you make such repairs as you can underwater.

Swampy has been dead silent the whole time. It seemed like Ol' Inky recognized him back there. Very unusual.

He's not saying anything, though.

Update 6:

Our next weapon has come online!

We've got enough funding that we can buy a brand new, shiny Warmonger's Regret! We enter our payment info, and our onboard 3-D printer starts spinning up. In a few seconds, you've got a lovely new nuke. Amazing! Gotta love technology.

You load the nuke into your torpedo tube, feeling with strong certainty that's how submarines work. The nuke is strangely light, like it's only a shell. But you figure that a single nucleus doesn't weigh much.

Swampy looks nervously at the operation. "Gee, that's a huge b-bomb, are you sure we-"

He's a really slow talker, so you only half-listen while you go ahead and arm the bomb. He mumbles something about regret.

You leave stealth mode, and fire! The slick white projectile streaks towards Ol' Inky, spelling certain doom for the sinister cephalopod.

Unfortunately, it's called "Warmonger's Regret" for a reason. Apparently, "I regret that I shelled out money" is the regret they're talking about.

The missile bounces off Ol' Inky instead of exploding. Later on a hermit crab grabs it for a home, and is the most envied hermit crab in the ocean.

Ol' Inky looks kinda dizzy and dazed, so at least there's that. You get off a quick round of harpoons.

Update 7:

Ol' Inky

A flood of new crewmates beam onboard the Orange November, and quickly get to work getting new systems up and running. You check the balance on your debit card, and it looks like your parents came through! You've got enough money for the next weapon you've had your eye on: The Disappearer-er from Discount Henry's Discount Destructors. The Warmonger's Regret was a slight disappointment, but the Disappearer-er looks way scarier. You pay the down payment, and the printer spins up, printing the biggest nuke you've ever seen. It's glossy black. It's got menacing red fins. And it's got a money-back guarantee (when returned in like-new condition) so you feel good about your purchase.

Swampy burbles something about going too far, but you're too excited to listen. You're about to launch the Disappearer-er, when you realize that Ol' Inky's got you.

Of course. You exited stealth mode to fire the Warmonger's regret. Darn.

Ol' Inky is wasting no time, he lifts the Orange November above his head with apparent ease, and smashes us into the side of a rock formation. You run frantically to the button that fires the Disappearer-er, and punch it. The sub shakes with the force as you launch the massive, heavy nuclear device. You watch with bated breath (like that time you accidentally swallowed a fishing lure), as the ponderous missile leaves your torpedo tube...and then instantly disappears. Angrily, you read the fine print - oh. Disappearing is the Disappearer-er's main function. I guess that could have been predicted.

Of course, at this point your ineffectual attempts to hurt Ol' Inky have been so pathetic, that Ol' Inky is overcome with giggles.

He doubles over, laughing so hard that eventually he's left out of breath, and wheezing "It hurts! IT HURTS!" He's actually hurt himself laughing, and would have bruised all his ribs, if he had any. He wipes tears out of his eyes (It's hard to tell what's tears and what's seawater down here, but you're pretty sure he was wiping tears out of his eyes) and speaks: "You should not have come here. I feel perhaps that killing you is something like killing a baby seal: easy, and quite unsporting. Unluckily for you, I love the taste of human flesh almost as much as I love the taste of baby seal meat. Alas for you and those you love." Ol' Inky lunges for you.

You see your life flash before your eyes. It's a shorter experience than you expect, and you're slightly shocked at how much of your life is spent avoiding things. Avoiding pain, avoiding that thing you know you should do but are too afraid, avoiding realizing that you're afraid, avoiding those people who you wronged and are too proud to say you're sorry to, avoiding thinking about your own death...now in the painful clarity of your own certain demise, you realize that you should have avoided less, because in the end it doesn't seem like all that avoidance bought you anything except more things to regret.

Suddenly glowing hamsters appear everywhere.

All the extra crew members were able to enable Hamster Mode, an extra-special energy-projection technology that transforms the power from your reactor core into matter - specifically, in the shape of hamsters. Everywhere. More specifically, copies of one hamster who lived many decades ago, a hamster called Mr. Fluffernutter. Mr. Fluffernutter was the beloved pet of the inventor of the energy-to-matter process, who sought to immortalize his pet by making endless copies, everywhere.

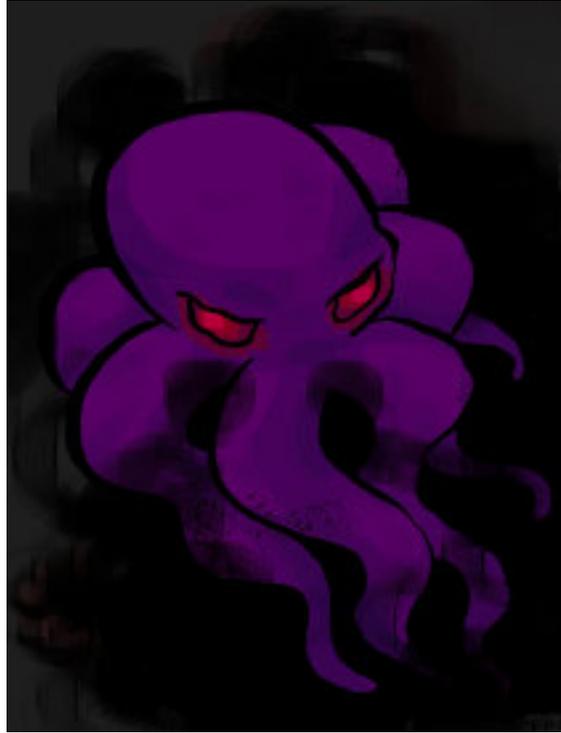
Hamster Mode would be totally useless, if Mr. Fluffernutter wasn't (in the words of his owner, while tickling Mr. Fluffernutter's chin) "such a good, good hamster-boy and such a smart, smart good smart hamster-boy" the good-good-smart-good hamster boys size up the situation immediately, and start running the sub for you.

They do evasive maneuvers you've never seen before. They adeptly dodge every attack until Ol' Inky is tired and frustrated. Mr. Fluffernutter's clones are taking care of everything, and are proving themselves significantly better at piloting a sub than you are.

You have a moment to watch this all, and in that moment you remember the clarity you experienced when you thought you were going to die. It all seems silly now, clearly you were just panicking.

Update 8:

Ol' Inky looms above.



It's been a long and hard battle. Ol' Inky has some new scars, the Orange November resembles a soda can after it's been run over repeatedly with a train.

Ol' Inky gasps water, tries to swing another punch, and misses.

Inside the Orange November, there are warning lights going off everywhere - the dash board looks like a Christmas tree. The hamsters are barely keeping it together, if you didn't have their help you would've been toast. But you're still rapidly taking on water, your engines are off, and it's only a matter of time before you meet your watery death.

Ol' Inky's caught his breath. He slowly encircles the sub, taking his time. He places his tentacles on either side of the sub, ready to tear it apart.

His glowy-gloomy red eyes peer into the submarine.

"Now, small ones. You meet your doom."

The sub starts straining under the pressure of his strong limbs. Your nuclear arsenal is spent (your folks won't be happy about the credit card bill), military support dried up, and you've got no more tricks up your sleeves. The hamsters start strapping on tiny cute little scuba gear. You didn't bring any with you, unfortunately. Man, those hamsters are smart.

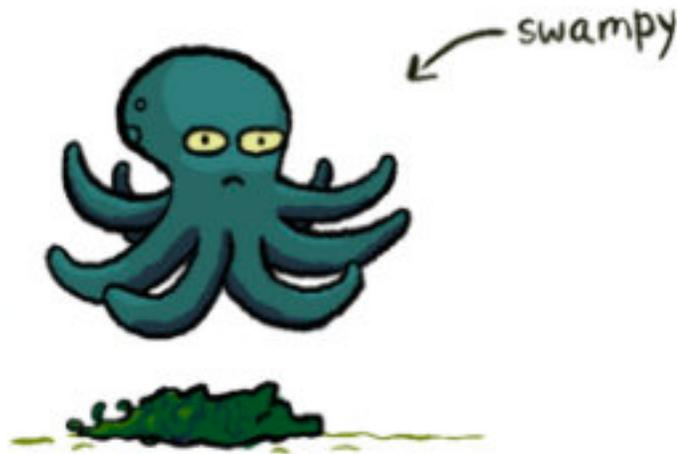
Water starts rushing in. Rivets pop out of the walls. Darkness begins closing in.

Suddenly, Swampy jumps up on the dashboard of the Orange November. He screams in a whiney voice: "DAAAAAAAAAAAAAD! Don't kill my friends! You SAID you'd never do it againnnn!"

OI' Inky stops disassembling your vessel. He speaks.

"Dear child, that agreement is null-and-void. You abandoned your right to have living friends when I took a nuke to the face." Suddenly something snaps, and OI' Inky loses a certain amount of his cool. He voice rises up to an angry, petulant pitch. "How many times have I told you? I feel very much like a broken record. No nuking daddy! NO NUKING DADDY! You're a very bad swampy to nuke daddy!"

Swampy turns away, and you notice that the seaweed draped over him is floating away in the water now flooding the sub.



"Yeah, but dad! You came on MY cliff, and you promised you wouldn't! How are we going to have any sort of healthful parent-child relationship if you won't respect my boundaries? When I have to nuke you to get your attention, that doesn't speak to a quality relationship! Why can't you COMMUNICATE, instead of just

ignoring me and doing what you want? Also, I haven't called you "daddy" for years! You act like I'm still a one-year-old."

Their discussion sounds like it's going to take a while, and is embarrassingly personal. Luckily, you figure out that you can suck the oxygen from the tiny little tanks on the hamster's backs, and you swim to the surface, at the rate of about 2 hamsters a minute. You're pretty sure the hamsters are not really alive, so it's not horribly, terribly wrong and evil.

As you swim back to shore, you still hear Swampy and Ol' Inky yelling at each other. Some people just overreact to everything.