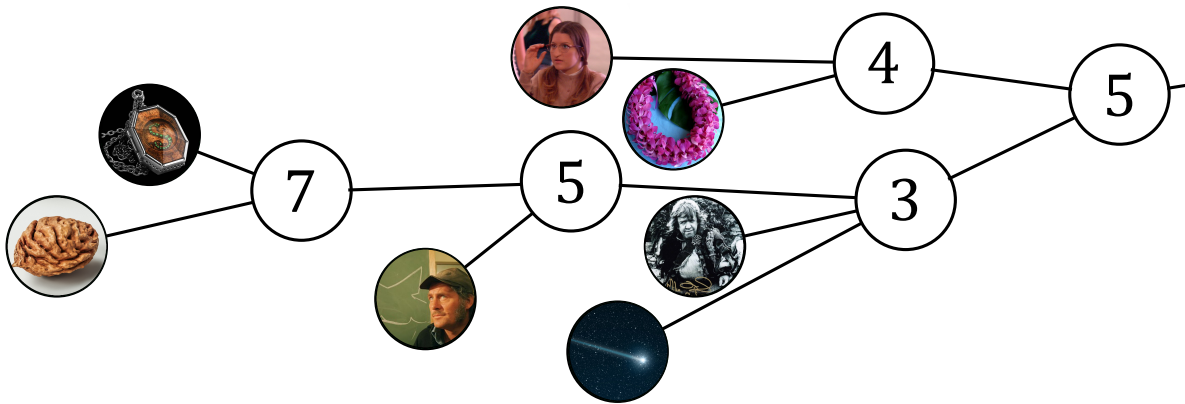


CONSTRUCTION NOTES

We had the idea to create a nested crossword-clue puzzle early in our hunt design, but our plans never progressed very far because we focused on parsing TOMATOES directly (as TOM+A+TOES), which seemed too easy to short-circuit. We abandoned the plan and started work on a “spaghetti code” puzzle which executed code on Alphabet Soup letters.¹ The code puzzle seemed promising, but also fizzled. In the end, we returned to our first idea in a modified form.

The last major change in this puzzle was the introduction of pictures as terminal nodes, which were added to answer the question “why can’t we just keep recursing forever?” This design choice had some pros and cons – on the one hand, it added some much-needed visual interest to the puzzle; on the other hand, the restriction to “picturable” words made construction itself a lot harder.

As a final bit of trivia, this was the puzzle which saw the greatest change as a result of test-solving. One of the central branches consistently stumped our test-solvers, so we wrote a new, simpler version for use in the real hunt. Just for fun, here’s the early version we replaced:



¹Wikipedia has a delightful article on an 18th-century thoroughbred racehorse called Potooooo. According to legend, the owner planned to name his horse Potato, which was humorously misspelled on the horse’s feed bag by a not-so-literate stable boy. The name stuck, and Potooooo went on to win over 30 races. The horse’s name was pronounced Potatoes.

So, what to do with this humorous anecdote? Obviously, write a puzzle involving code which, when run successfully, would output the string of letters T, O, M, O, O, O, O, O, O, O, O. We’d obfuscate the code, theme it with Alphabet Soup and SpaghettiOs, and call the puzzle *Spaghetti Code*.