

Adventure Lantern

Reviews:

- **The Search for the Lost Garden**
- **Solomon's Secret**
- **The Immortals of Terra**
- **The Last Sanctuary**
- **The Silver Lining Episode 1**



Editorial

My least favorite thing about writing reviews is coming up with the grade. Since it is not practical to read every word of every review, the grade often seems to be the only thing that truly gets noticed. A single letter or number becomes a summary describing the gaming experience. As such, I always give a great deal of thought to my ratings. However, reducing the entire game to a single letter or number still seems somewhat arbitrary.

Coming up with a rating for a single chapter of an episodic game presents a special challenge. The problem is that it is hard to predict how a particular episode will ultimately fit in with the rest of the series. What doesn't work particularly well as a standalone release may become more acceptable when more of the saga is available. For instance, the first episode of Agon, called London Scene, is not a very remarkable adventure on its own. However, the same game works very well as the opening chapter of [The Mysterious Codex](#), which is a compilation of the first three episodes of the series. Thus, a review focusing on a single installment has the risk of missing the bigger picture. A grade that judges an episode as a standalone product may not accurately reflect how the game fits the overall saga.

However, there are often long gaps between the episodes of a game series. With changing schedules and shifting priorities, it can be years before a new chapter becomes available. There is also the chance that the development company will shut down before the series is completed. More importantly, with so many games competing for our entertainment dollars, I believe an individual episode is obligated to provide a satisfying experience in its own right. As such, despite the aforementioned shortcomings, in my reviews, I try to treat individual episodes as complete games. While previous episodes and the overall direction of the series is taken into account, the final grade ultimately assesses the game on its own

merits.

Browsing through this issue of Adventure Lantern, you will find reviews of The Search for the Lost Garden and Solomon's Secret, which are the first two episodes of Adam's Venture. Neither review is particularly flattering. In fact, the grades at the end of the articles could be considered a bit harsh. However, both reviews evaluate the games as standalone products. In that light, both The Search for the Lost Garden and Solomon's Secret unfortunately seem shallow and forgettable. They don't even begin to compare to truly amazing adventure games such as Buried in Time or [The Pandora Directive](#). The ratings are not meant to be bashful or dismissive of the hard work the developers at Vertigo Games surely put into the games. They merely represent my perception of the episodes when taken as individual games.

In a few years, with more episodes of Adam's Venture available, my overall opinion of the series may improve. By the time Vertigo Games is done telling Adam's story, I might even see The Search for the Lost Garden and Solomon's Secret in a different light. For now though, the harsh ratings will stand.

Here's hoping you will like our September 2011 edition more than I liked the games I reviewed this month. Besides my incessant bickering about Adam's Venture, you will find Jonathon's reviews on The Immortals of Terra, The Last Sanctuary, and the first episode of The Silver Lining. Be sure to stop by next month for a brand new PDF. It will be a special Halloween edition featuring the conclusion of Jonathon's review series on the Dracula games, along with articles on a few other horror-themed adventures.

Until next time,
Ugur

For all your questions and comments about the magazine, send an e-mail to: ugur@adventurelantern.com

To receive an update when a new issue is released, send an email to: subscribe@adventurelantern.com. Please make sure the subject line of your email includes the word "Subscribe".

Follow us on [Facebook](#).

Contents

Adventurer's Ravine



- **Adam's Venture - The Search for the Lost Garden review** **page 4**
Adam is certain that the Garden of Eden lies beyond this doorway. The disk must be the key to gaining access. Yet something appears to be missing. He will need to explore the caverns and find a way to unlock the gate. He might be on the verge of discovering humanity's birthplace.



- **Adam's Venture - Solomon's Secret review** **page 7**
The pilot is not too thrilled with Adam and Evelyn's report. He takes the duo to a facility owned by the Clairvaux corporation. Adam and Evelyn are locked into a cell and told to wait for company management to arrive. It will be up to you to help the two explorers find a way out of the cell.



- **The Immortals of Terra review** **page 10**
Perry is the regent of the League of Free Terrans. The game starts off with an attack on his headquarters by some unknown enemy who captures Mondra Diamond, Perry's love interest. As he investigates the attack, he quickly learns that it is somehow linked to the mysterious Illochim that Mondra has been researching.



- **Dracula 2: The Last Sanctuary review** **page 12**
Dracula 2: The Last Sanctuary is a point-and-click, node based, graphical adventure game. It is quite long and filled with tons of content, including a long interesting story containing many interesting characters showcased with numerous graphically impressive cutscenes, and gameplay comprised of many different puzzles types and quite a few action sequences.

Bandit's Cove



- **The Silver Lining - What is Decreed Must Be review** **page 14**
Before the wedding concludes, a dark-robed character appears and casts a malevolent spell on both princess Rosella and her brother Alexander, causing them to fall into a magical sleep. King Graham must then don his traditional adventuring gear and head out to explore the Green Isles in search of a cure for his children.

Adam's Venture Episode 1: The Search for the Lost Garden

review by Ugur Sener

It all begins in an old church, where the explorer Adam Venture discovers the memoirs of a Templar knight named Charles L'Heureux. According to the memoirs, L'Heureux was part of the Third Crusade. During his time in Jerusalem, the knight came in possession of a scroll that describes the location of the Garden of Eden. Using the knight's notes, Adam locates the ancient scroll. The explorer is convinced that the document can be used to locate the Garden of Eden. After four years of searching, Adam discovers a set of caverns that is mentioned in the scroll. With the help of Clairvaux corporation, he organizes a trip to the caverns.

Adam arrives at the caves accompanied by his friend Evelyn and Professor Jacques Saint-Omair from the Clairvaux corporation. He soon finds an impressive gate with a massive stone disk standing in front of it. Symbols are carved around the disk. Adam is certain that the Garden of Eden lies beyond this doorway. The disk must be the key to gaining access. Yet something appears to be missing. He will need to explore the caverns and find a way to unlock the gate. He might be on the verge of discovering humanity's birthplace.



Adam's Venture is an episodic third-person adventure series from Vertigo Games. The first episode, called The Search for the Lost Garden, follows the explorer Adam Venture as he tries to gain access to the Garden of Eden. With its attractive visuals and relaxed gaming experience, the episode certainly has significant appeal. However, derivative puzzles, lack

of plot development, and an unacceptably short amount of playtime keep the game from being a complete success.

The game begins outside the gate that presumably leads to the Garden of Eden. After brief conversations with Evelyn and the Professor, Adam realizes that he needs some artifacts to unlock the massive door. He heads into the caves, trying to find the relics that will grant him access to the Garden. What follows is a relaxed adventure as you direct Adam through the cave system. The explorer will follow a set path through the caverns and solve the occasional logic puzzle.



The game is played from a third-person perspective. Players control Adam using the keyboard. The 'WASD' keys are used for moving the explorer in the desired direction. The 'enter' key is used to interact with objects. Adam can also crouch and jump using the 'ctrl' and 'space' keys, respectively. These keyboard-driven controls can certainly make Adam's Venture seem like an action game. At least superficially, jumping and crouching your way through caverns sounds like something you would find in a Tomb Raider game. However, at its core, The Search for the Lost Garden is still an adventure offering. The game features no combat and very little platforming. You do not have to worry about long jumping sequences that require great dexterity with the keyboard. There are a couple of timed puzzles, but the time limit is fairly generous. Once you figure out how these puzzles work, you should not have much

trouble getting past them. Most importantly, the occasional climbing, jumping, or crouching do not get in the way of the underlying adventure experience. If anything, the inclusion of these features makes the exploration feel a little more hands-on and improves the atmosphere.

The Search for the Lost Garden also has a good deal of visual appeal. Using the Unreal 3 engine, the game delivers attractive lighting and shadow effects in some areas. The character models are also handled nicely. However, the game frequently goes overboard with the use of light. In a number of areas, there is far too much glow, making it difficult to see what you are doing. Fortunately, this is not a prevalent problem in all sections of the game, but it still hurts the overall experience.



Given the premise of opening the door to the Garden of Eden, it should come as no surprise that many of the challenges in The Search for the Lost Garden have a biblical context. In fact, the most common type of puzzle featured in the game involves putting three fragments of a biblical quote in the correct order. If you are concerned about the presence of religious themes in the game, it is worth noting that Adam's Venture does not get preachy at any point. Having some knowledge about the Book of Genesis might make the experience more enjoyable. However, the game is most certainly not a tool to convert players to Christianity. The biblical quotes and religious themes simply provide a context for the puzzles. The same set of challenges could have been easily constructed using elements from a different faith system.

Where the game really fails to deliver is in plot development. The introduction movie rapidly explains how Adam found the caverns. A couple of conversations with Evelyn and the Professor are used to convey your overall objective. After these cutscenes, Adam is off to the caverns. The bulk of the

episode consists of Adam exploring the caves by himself. He has the occasional conversation with Evelyn using his radio, but these sections do not add much depth to the story. In fact, the chats can be a little jarring since Evelyn occasionally makes a reference to things Adam did not explicitly describe in a previous conversation. The story never really advances beyond what you learn during the first few moments of the game. The only thing that resembles a plot twist is highly cliched and predictable.

In addition, as you go through the episode, you learn very few details about Adam's past. You will not discover much about his personality either. To a certain extent, this is understandable since The Search for the Lost Garden is only the first episode in the series. The episode is clearly intended to get players familiar with the gameplay mechanics and raise a few questions that will be answered in later installments. Nevertheless, a little more character interaction and some effort to introduce Adam and Evelyn as individuals would have made for a more immersive experience.



Beyond the lack of plot development, some relatively minor details about the game manage to hurt the overall atmosphere. Right off the bat, I find the idea of playing an adventure game where the hero is called **Adam Venture** a bit groan-inducing. Similarly, having characters named **Adam** and **Evelyn** looking for the Garden of Eden borders on the comical. They might as well have dropped the 'lyn' and just called her Eve. When you throw in a comment about eating an apple during the first minute of the game, it becomes a little difficult to take Adam's Venture seriously. Similar heavy-handed references are seen in some of the puzzles as well. Since Adam's Venture appears to be targeted toward a younger audience, the developers may have deliberately tried to make the biblical context obvious. However, a little more subtlety and a touch of symbolism would have probably done the

Christian themes more justice. After all, seeking the deeper meaning of a religious text is probably not a strange concept in any faith system. In a way, blunt references like calling the main characters Adam and Evelyn misses the opportunity for more insightful exposition.



Things get even worse when you encounter a smoke monster that seems to be blatantly copied from the TV show *Lost*. The creature even makes sounds that will be familiar to those who watched the series. It may have been wiser to seek 'inspiration' from a less popular show. Absurdities like awkward character names and the smoke monster copycat would have been welcome if *The Search for the Lost Garden* were a full-on comedy adventure. However, when the overall tone of the game is fairly serious, these oddities only serve to break the mood and disrupt the atmosphere.

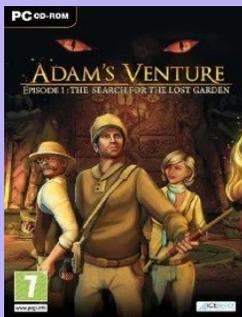
As you explore the caverns and admire the scenery, you will have to solve the occasional logic puzzle. These puzzles typically involve operating some kind of machinery to open the door to the next area. You may also have to find a key or some other object. In

general, the puzzles are very straightforward and should be relatively easy to solve for experienced adventure gamers. In fact, some of the challenges feel overly simple and require little more than running from one part of the screen to the next. The puzzles are also fairly repetitive. In particular, the word puzzles that involve assembling the pieces of a biblical quote in the correct order are used far too many times throughout the short adventure. The development team may have tried to provide a challenge level that would be appropriate for players that are new to the adventure genre. Nevertheless, a little more puzzle variety and depth would have been greatly appreciated.

In the end, the first episode of *Adam's Venture* is a promising game that fails to deliver. The idea of trying to enter the Garden of Eden is certainly interesting. The visuals are impressive and the game has a welcome hands-on feel. However, *The Search for the Lost Garden* is hurt by a lack of plot development and simplistic puzzles. The episode is also far too short for a commercial release. It took me only two hours to complete the game. Some of the shortcomings can be excused if you take into account that the game meant to be the first episode of a larger series. However, it is hard to justify spending money on an incredibly brief adventure that also has significant problems. Even at a deep discount, two hours of playtime seems unreasonably short. Fortunately, all is not lost with the series. The development team appears to be aware of and responsive to the issues with the first episode. The second episode, called *Solomon's Secret*, delivers substantially improved puzzles and a more detailed storyline. *The Search for the Lost Garden* might be underwhelming, but at least the series appears to be headed in the right direction.

Adam's Venture Ep 1: The Search for the Lost Garden

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

Relaxed, but hands-on adventuring experience.

Fumbles in the dark:

Lack of plot development. Repetitive and simplistic puzzles. Incredibly short for a commercial adventure.

Verdict:

A pleasant game that is significantly hurt by its short length, lack of plot development, and easy puzzles.



Developer: Vertigo Games

Publisher: Iceberg Interactive

Release Date: 2009

System Requirements:

- Windows® 2000/XP/Vista
- Intel® Pentium® 2.0 GHz or Equivalent AMD®
- 512 MB RAM (1 GB Recommended for Windows® Vista™)
- NVIDIA 6200+ or ATI R520+ Video Card
- DirectX® 9.0 Compatible Sound Card
- 600 MB Disk Space

Adam's Venture Episode 2: Solomon's Secret

review by Ugur Sener

To me, the first episode of Adam's Venture, *The Search for the Lost Garden*, felt like a missed opportunity. The game offered attractive visuals, a pleasant relaxed pace, and an interesting premise. The keyboard-driven controls seemed fitting, creating a welcome hands-on feel. However, the adventure was hurt by its remarkably short length, overly simplistic puzzles, and lack of plot development. In the end, *The Search for the Lost Garden* was a somewhat shallow adventure that did not fully capitalize on its strong points. Fortunately, the second episode of the series, called *Solomon's Secret*, addresses many of the concerns I had about the first chapter, delivering a far more satisfying adventure-gaming experience.



At the end of *The Search for the Lost Garden*, Adam and Evelyn had boarded an airplane headed toward Jerusalem. Picking up right where first episode left off, *Solomon's Secret* begins in this airplane. Adam and Evelyn, the two protagonists we met during the first chapter of the saga, explain to the pilot what transpired in the caverns. Unfortunately, the pilot is not too thrilled with Adam and Evelyn's report. He takes the duo to a facility owned by the Clairvaux corporation, which was the company that funded the excavation from the first episode. Adam and Evelyn are locked into a cell and told to wait for company management to arrive. It will be up to you to help the two explorers find a way out of the cell. If you can manage to escape the compound, you might be able to seek some shelter in Jerusalem. With some luck, you might also discover the ancient city's secrets.

After the opening cinematic, you assume control of Adam inside the prison cell. Your first task is to find a way to unlock the door and escape the facility. The first few minutes of the game also serve as a quick tutorial. At appropriate times, the game reminds players about the keyboard layout. As with the first episode, you use the WASD keys to move Adam. The space key is used to jump and the ctrl key is used to crouch. Adam investigates objects, picks up inventory items, and talks to other characters using the enter button. Just like the first chapter, the controls are straightforward and make you feel immersed in the exploration. The game does not require overwhelming amounts of dexterity with the keyboard either. You do not have to worry about long jumping sequences or challenging timed puzzles. Similar to *The Search For the Lost Garden*, *Solomon's Secret* has a relaxed pace and encourages the players to enjoy the scenery.



Keeping in line with the first episode, *Solomon's Secret* is visually appealing. Starting with the very first building you need to escape, all the areas are fairly detailed. It seems the development team spent a great deal of effort to ensure every location is fun to explore. The second episode also seems better at avoiding the over-the-top glow that occasionally obscured your vision in the first chapter. There are still some sections that look a little awkward, but in general, the light and shadow effects are a little more subdued and the game looks better for it.

In addition to correcting some of the graphical issues

from *The Search for the Lost Garden*, *Solomon's Secret* offers a more diverse set of locations to explore. The entire first episode was confined to a series of caverns that had to be explored in a linear fashion. While the caves were fairly detailed and alluring, they did not offer much in the way of variety. In *Solomon's Secret*, Adam and Evelyn cover a substantially larger area. Besides the facility where the game begins, you get to explore several locations in Jerusalem. The progression is still very linear. Adam and Evelyn are confined to a very restricted path as they explore Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. However, the periodic changes in scenery help the episode feel less monotonous. The different sites Adam and Evelyn visit give the game a bigger scope, making you feel like you are involved in a grand adventure.

The second episode also does a somewhat better job with plot development. There is a lot more to the story than figuring out a way to open an oversized door. Events escalate as you go deeper into Jerusalem and start to find out more about the Clairvaux corporation. The story still does not carry a tremendous amount of depth. Do not expect an exciting tale that will have you clinging to the edge of your seat. There are no shocking plot twists or grand revelations. However, the story is well-paced and far more engaging than what we saw in the first chapter of the saga.



In *Solomon's Secret*, we also get to know the two protagonists a little better. Adam and Evelyn travel together during the majority of the episode. The frequent chats between the two characters reveal a few details about their personalities. At times, the dialog feels very awkward and could have used some streamlining. Adam and Evelyn use phrases that just don't fit the flow of a normal conversation. In addition, Adam's occasional pig-headed remarks are not at all amusing. If the developers were attempting to be humorous with Adam's sexist commentary, they

missed the mark entirely. Presumably, the idea is to deliberately portray Adam as an immature jerk, so he can evolve into more of a gentleman in future installments. Unfortunately, the end result is that you get to play as a somewhat annoying and unlikable protagonist during *Solomon's Secret*. However, there is a silver lining to the attempts at character development. Despite the negative aspects of the dialogs and Adam's undesirable traits, the simple fact that the developers put more of an effort to flesh out Adam and Evelyn's characters is very much appreciated. The protagonists are still somewhat shallow and one-dimensional, but there is at least a noticeable effort to move things in the right direction.



Where *Solomon's Secret* makes the biggest improvements over its predecessor is in the puzzles department. The first episode contained a number of overly easy logic puzzles. In addition, the puzzle involving putting portions of a biblical quote in the correct order was reused far too many times to be entertaining. In the second episode, the puzzles are substantially more diverse and engaging. You will need to examine the clues in the immediate area and try to determine how various mechanisms work. Some of the puzzles test pattern recognition whereas others require a small amount of arithmetic. Occasionally, you will also be tasked with exploring an area to find several items. Several challenges, such as the lock-picking mini-game, will be familiar to seasoned adventurers. Fortunately, *Solomon's Secret* also has some fairly novel puzzles that are rather fun to solve. Thanks to the increased puzzle diversity and quantity, the game delivers a significantly more fulfilling gaming experience.

Despite the considerably larger number and variety of puzzles, *Solomon's Secret* still feels like a game designed for relatively inexperienced adventurers. Do not expect overly complex puzzles that require a great deal of thought. You will not need to make great

leaps of logic or meticulously search each area for clues. In many cases, you will be confined to a rather small location with a single puzzle to solve. Any clues you might need will be available nearby. While the simplicity of the puzzles may disappoint veteran adventurers, the relatively easy challenges do create a relaxed gaming experience. After all, every game does not need to be punishingly difficult.



It is worth noting that there is a small amount of repetition with the game's puzzles. Several contraptions are encountered multiple times. In each instance, the mechanism gets a little more complicated and you need to come up with a different solution. These multiple incarnations of the same puzzle seem to be intended as stepping stones, helping gamers understand how a machine or mechanical lock works before they have to solve the most complicated version. As such, the repetition does not detract from the overall experience as it did in *The Search for the Lost Garden*.

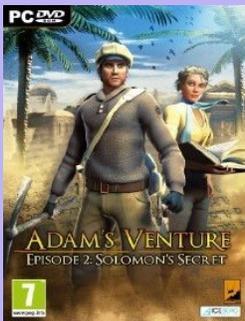
The biggest problem with *Solomon's Secret* is its

length. With the increased number of locations and puzzles, this episode is significantly longer than *The Search for the Lost Garden*. Nevertheless, in my opinion, *Solomon's Secret* is still too short for a commercial release. You can expect to complete the entire episode in less than four hours. Once you watch the end credits roll, there is not much of a reason to replay the game either. To a certain extent, the short length can be justified when you consider *Solomon's Secret* is intended to be a single chapter in a larger saga. However, I would have still preferred a longer and more satisfying adventure.

Overall, *Solomon's Secret* is a significant improvement over the first episode of *Adam's Venture*. It seems as though the development team made an effort to respond to every complaint about *The Search for The Lost Garden*. *Solomon's Secret* features a more engaging story and a larger number of locations to explore. There are also marked improvements in terms of puzzle variety. At the same time, the game maintains the visual appeal and relaxed pace from the first chapter. Unfortunately, despite all the improvements, there are still several issues with the game. Some of the conversations seem awkward. The relatively simple puzzles and the linear nature of the game can be frustrating for some gamers. The short length of the adventure is also rather irritating. However, if you are in the mood for a laid-back adventure with attractive visuals, *Solomon's Secret* is still worth a try. On its own, *Solomon's Secret* is not a remarkable adventure, but if the development team continues to make improvements, *Adam's Venture* may still turn out to be successful and enjoyable saga.

Adam's Venture Episode 2: Solomon's Secret

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

Improves upon all aspects of its predecessor.

Fumbles in the dark:

Very short. Awkward conversations. Puzzles may be too simple for experienced gamers.

Verdict:

Solomon's Secret is not a great game, but the series is getting better.



Developer: Vertigo Games

Publisher: Iceberg Interactive

Release Date: May 2011

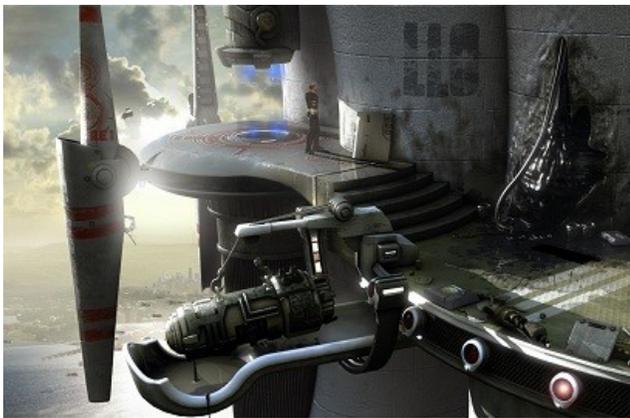
System Requirements:

- Windows® 2000/XP/Vista/7
- Intel® Pentium® 2.0 GHz or Equivalent AMD®
- 512 MB RAM (1 GB Recommended for Windows® Vista™)
- Pixel Shader 3.0 Compatible Video Card
- 1 GB Disk Space

The Immortals of Terra: A Perry Rhodan Adventure aka Perry Rhodan: Myth of the Illochim

review by Jonathon Wisnoski (originally appeared on [Jonathon's blog](#))

The Immortals of Terra: A Perry Rhodan Adventure is an adventure title set within the universe of the long-running German science fiction magazine/novella series Perry Rhodan. The game even sports the same protagonist, Perry Rhodan himself. In publication since 1961, with over 2500 issues of the original series released so far (with numerous spin-offs), and covering millions of years of history through time travel and immortal creatures, The Perry Rhodan universe is considered to be one of the most successful sci-fi settings. So how does the game cope with this 50+ years of publication and millions of years of in-universe backstory? Surprisingly well, at least from the perspective of this reviewer who has never read a single Perry Rhodan story. In a time of frequent reboots and re-imaginings, this hefty and substantial platform on which to base a game is appreciated.



In the original series, the main story-line starts in 1971 with the first manned moon landing by Perry Rhodan and his crew. Diverting from reality even more, they encounter an alien spaceship which contains advanced technology. Then, they return to Earth to share these technologies and strengthen humanity. As the series progresses, it covers pretty much every aspect of sci-fi from parallel universes to time travel and everything in between with the main crux being the relative immortality that many of the major characters are granted. The game incorporates

this backstory terrifically and with the notable exception of the history museum, backstory is always given in small bite size chunks that leaves you wanting more.

The Immortals of Terra: A Perry Rhodan Adventure is set within the 3rd century of Perry's life. He is currently the regent of the League of Free Terrans. The game starts off with an attack on his headquarters by some unknown enemy who captures Mondra Diamond, Perry's love interest. As he investigates the attack, Perry quickly learns that it is somehow linked to the mysterious and little-known Illochim that Mondra has been researching and who appear to have disappeared from this part of the universe 10,000 years ago. What follows is an adventure spanning many planets and involving many alien races, where Perry discovers the mystery of the Illochim and the abduction of his love.



The puzzles are well done and work well within the equally well-executed plot. The lions share goes to a wide variety of inventory-based puzzles. The rest of the puzzles are made up of a special style of logic puzzle, which I would call puzzle through obfuscation. And what I mean by this is that the puzzle itself is relatively easy. The challenge lies in figuring out what the controls do and what the visuals/audio indicators mean. This puzzle style works very well alongside alien technology (of which much is present) and

compliments the exploration aspect of any game very well. It is a shame that I see this style so infrequently. In fact, the only game that compares to The Immortals of Terra in this department is the legendary classic [The Dig](#).

Matching the rest of the game, the visuals certainly do not disappoint. Whether the scene is in a Terran building or in a cavern deep below the surface of an alien planet, The Immortals of Terra impresses and is always excellently science-fictiony with its semi-3D fixed camera graphics and its classical sci-fi flair. And that is just the regular in-game graphics. In addition to

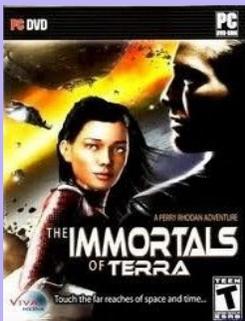
these, there are the fantastic, almost Hollywood movie quality, cutscenes and one of the best looking interfaces I have ever used in any graphical adventure.

The one trouble I have with this game is how to rate it. By any scientific methodology this game would come out almost perfect (at least in my opinion), but there simply was not that spark of love that some games have given me. Still I loved the universe and really found nothing but great story, graphics, and gameplay within.



The Immortals of Terra: A Perry Rhodan Adventure

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

The wonderfully fleshed-out sci-fi universe

Fumbles in the dark:

The lack of any word about a sequel.

Verdict:

An amazing adventure game.



Developer: 3d-io

Publisher: Deep Silver, Viva Media

Release Date: June 2008

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows 2000 or newer
- CPU: 1.5 GHz
- RAM: 512 GB (1024 MB for Vista or newer)
- Video: 64 MB
- Hard Drive: 3.5 GB

Dracula 2: The Last Sanctuary

review by Jonathon Wisnoski (originally appeared on [Jonathon's blog](#))

Dracula 2: The Last Sanctuary is a point-and-click, node based, graphical adventure game. It is quite long and filled with tons of content, including a long interesting story containing many interesting characters showcased with numerous graphically impressive cutscenes, and gameplay comprised of many different puzzle types and quite a few action sequences.

The graphics, while always setting a great horrific atmosphere, are all over the spectrum in terms of both technical merit and stylish good looks. While the cinematics always look great, with a few small technical glitches being the only problem, the in-game graphics vary quite a lot. These graphics go from moderately low resolution, but still great looking to extremely grainy looking and everything in between. For the most part the visuals are quite good, sometimes great, and only once or twice did I ever notice a location that truly looked bad.



The one thing that I found moderately distracting about the whole presentation was the conversation script, particularly Dracula's. It was often somewhat corny and always executed with far too many and too dramatic hand gestures. I do not know what the animators were thinking, sometimes it was almost funny with the otherwise serious characters waving their arms around like lunatics. **[Editorial note:** It is possible that the animation issue Jonathon is describing was exacerbated because he played the game on a modern PC. [Atlantis: The Lost Tales](#) from

Cryo Interactive has a similar issue, where character animations become erratic and overly rapid unless you run the game on a PC from the Windows 95/98 era. I was unable to confirm this with my copy of The Last Sanctuary since I do not currently have a Windows 98 system in working condition. -Ugur]

I also found the item interface very unpolished. In the inventory all you are given is a picture of the item, which more often than you would like, leaves you with no idea of what you actually have. And in game the item you are currently holding does not even show up unless you are looking at something it can be used with. I found this very unintuitive, and was quite confused about how the game worked for quite awhile because of this. But other than that, the presentation is fantastic. The OST is enjoyable and only adds to the scary atmosphere, and at times was very well done.



Now to get to the real meat of it: the gameplay. And there is a huge range of puzzle types and challenges to talk about. There are the action sequences that for the most part give you a limited amount of time to deal with an imminent and deadly challenge. These serve to advance the story and add a sense of excitement to the game overall. While that much is good, the action sequences are not done all that well. So do not expect any interesting gameplay or cinematics out of them. Other than that, there are tons of logic and inventory puzzles. The biggest difference between The Last Sanctuary and many

other games is that the information and items used to solve some of these puzzles are often found far away from the spot where you need to use them.

The one noteworthy issue I had was with the vampire glasses, which are used to see magic. These glasses are used like any other item, but since they are utilized to see something that is otherwise invisible, you have no idea where you are supposed to aim them, or that you are even supposed to use them. I often found it hard to figure out where to point the glasses even after looking up the solution from a walkthrough. This ambiguity is seen throughout the entire game in different guises, but never as bad as it is with the glasses.

Probably the only real drawback of the entire experience is the extreme linearity of the adventure. Individual locations are quite small and very linear themselves and the player cannot go between these locations at will. You can only follow a strict story progression through them. Thankfully, this does not seem to exist in any of the other games in the series.

Dracula 3 has a moderately open-world and not excessively linear. And Dracula 1 is very non-linear, starting off in a huge open town.

One benefit The Last Sanctuary does have over the entire series and many other adventure games in general is its length. It is simply a huge game, all of it is fun and interesting. You visit and travel through many locations, some of them multiple times and others you would have seen before in Dracula Resurrection. You solve interesting and unique puzzle after puzzle. And you interact with interesting people and fight off or escape from Dracula's minions over and over again. And it does not feel drawn out at all, it is what you would expect from a grand adventure that spans continents.

The Last Sanctuary is a truly great adventure. An adventure that has its annoying eccentricities, which would be a whole lot worse if you did not have time to get used to them. But when analyzing the finished whole, these issues appear quite insignificant.



Dracula 2: The Last Sanctuary

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

Long and definitely not rushed, there is simply tons of content in all aspects of this game.

Fumbles in the dark:

Some of the puzzles can be quite ambiguous.

Verdict:

A more than decent game in a more than decent series.



Developer: Wanadoo Edition, Canal+ Multimedia

Publisher: Cryo Interactive

Release Date: 2000

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows 98 or newer
- Processor: Pentium III 500 MHz
- RAM: 128MB (256MB for Windows XP or later)
- Video: 8MB, Direct X Compatible

The Silver Lining – What is Decreed Must Be

review by Jonathon Wisnoski

What is Decreed Must Be is the first episode of The Silver Lining, the unofficial continuation of Sierra's Kings Quest series. It is a free indie 3D point-and-click adventure game, with obvious inspiration taken from the Kings Quest series. The development of The Silver Lining was started by Kings Quest fans almost ten years ago and has had a rocky history with two separate cease and desist notices from Vivendi and then Activision. But the game is now well into development and several of the planned episodes have already been released.

The game starts off in the Castle of the Crown with the wedding of princess Rosella, who is the daughter of king Graham, the series protagonist. But before the wedding concludes, a dark-robed character appears and casts a malevolent spell on both princess Rosella and her brother Alexander, causing them to fall into a magical sleep. King Graham must then don his traditional adventuring gear and head out to explore the Green Isles in search of a cure for his children.

What is Decreed Must Be is steeped in the lore and history of Daventry, which is the setting of the Kings Quest series. Even the most inconsequential items have long descriptions, obviously filled with affection by the developers. These descriptions and numerous humorous and informative statements are only made better by the wonderful narration of Amy Kurlyo. Another source of history and information are the conversations with NPCs, who also in general do a decent job voicing their roles.

What really brought me into the game is the atmosphere of classical adventure overhanging everything, but with more modern production values. The game has very good 3D graphics, if with somewhat less polygons than contemporary FPS games. Yet The Silver Lining is somehow still reminiscent of classical adventurer games. What really fortifies this feeling is the interface, which is similar to old adventures, particularly the past Kings Quest games. The in-game menu is a drop down on the top of the screen, with both the inventory and the interaction cursor types available. There are four different cursor types: walk, look, pickup/use, and talk. These are available either from the menu or iterated through using the right mouse button.

Another feature that really plays into the great atmosphere is the music. The music really strengthens the atmosphere and brings you into the game.

While it is an enjoyable game, one flaw of What is Decreed Must Be is its length. It is very short even using episodic standards. It can be completed in less than 30 minutes. Additionally, the game only features a single extremely simple puzzle. Not that you can really complain about the length with the game being free, but more content would be appreciated in subsequent episodes. Overall, I think The Silver Lining will be a great addition to the Kings Quest series, and will hopefully inspire more fan-made sequels to old, but not forgotten game series.

The Silver Lining – What is Decreed Must Be

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

The amount of love and detail put into every object and character.

Fumbles in the dark:

The complete lack of any interesting puzzles.

Verdict:

A good solid game that does not really fall short anywhere except for its lack of content.



Developer: Phoenix Online Studios

Publisher: Phoenix Online Studios

Release Date: July 2010

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows XP, Vista, 7
- CPU: 1 GHz Intel or AMD Processor
- RAM: 512 MB RAM (1GB recommended for Vista and 7)
- DirectX: 9.0c+ compatible video card with 256 MB video RAM
- Hard Drive: 447 MB