

# Adventure Lantern

## Reviews:

- The Whispered World
- Puzzle Agent
- Black Mirror II
- Casebook Special Edition Trilogy
- Sam & Max 304: Beyond the Alley of Dolls
- Eternally Us
- Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air
- Insider Tales: The Secret of Casanova

## Editorial

The July 2010 edition of Adventure Lantern marked our return from a two-year hiatus. The issue was a solo effort, serving as an introduction to our new magazine format. However, even as I wrote the four reviews that went into the July edition, I knew that the Lantern could not continue as a simple monologue. The diversity of our staff had always been one of my favorite things about the magazine. Every contributor brought a different perspective and a distinct writing style. The Lantern needed their voices.

Hours after releasing the issue, I sent an e-mail to each of our former contributors, asking if they would rejoin our team. I was not sure what to expect as a response. It had been a long time since I had written to many of them. What had they been doing during the past two years? Did they still play games? Were any of them still willing to write for our magazine? A few of the e-mails were returned immediately. The addresses were no longer valid. A couple of others politely declined the invitation, explaining their work schedule did not leave any room for writing game reviews. Nevertheless, within a few days, several favorable responses appeared in my mailbox and we started to reassemble our team. Three of our contributors are joining me this month. More will be here in our next issue.

If you go back and take a look at our February 2006 issue, you will find a witty review of Apprentice. The article will tell you the difference between a review and a critique. It'll even suggest preposterous things like taking video games out for beer. The author is none other than our friendly Gnome. Since the day we launched the Web site, Gnome has been one of Adventure Lantern's strongest supporters. This month, he kindly agreed to rejoin our team and provided a review of Puzzle Agent. I have not received any comments about whether or not he took the game out for alcoholic beverages. Though there was a recent bar fight near [his lair](#)...

Jumping forward one month, our March 2006 edition has an article about one of my all-time favorite adventure games. In her first Adventure Lantern review, Dona took a look at the first Broken Sword and contemplated one of life's great questions: "What the hell is going on and why are you putting that clown nose in your pocket?" Four years later, she also rejoined our team, reviewing Black Mirror II and Sam & Max 304 this month. The latest reports confirm she still carries a clown nose in her pocket. It might be the inspiration for [her artwork](#).

If we had not stopped publication of our magazine in 2008, I would also be able to direct you to one of Rob Hamilton's former articles. Rob originally joined Adventure Lantern two years ago. Unfortunately, right around the time we would have published his first review, we had to interrupt our publication schedule. He graciously agreed to write for our magazine again when I contacted him this month. His first reviews are on Eternally Us and Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air. In the meantime, his latest novel, [A Fiddle of Rogues](#), is gearing up for publication.

My sincere thanks to Gnome, Dona, and Rob for their contributions to our August 2010 edition. I am honored and humbled to put my name next to theirs. I would also like to take a moment and thank all of our friends in the adventure-gaming community for their continued support. The kind folks at Just Adventure, Adventure Point, Adventure-Treff, and Adventure's Planet have greatly helped us spread the word of our return. Many thanks to all of our readers that took a moment to send me an e-mail or write a comment about our issue on a forum. Your support is tremendously appreciated.

Here's hoping our latest effort will be to your liking. Be sure to tune in next month. You'll hopefully see some more familiar faces.

Until next time,  
Ugur Sener

# Contents

## Adventurer's Ravine

---



- The Whispered World review page 3
- Puzzle Agent review page 8
- Black Mirror II review page 9
- Casebook Trilogy Special Edition review page 11
- Sam & Max 304: Beyond the Alley of Dolls review page 16

## Bandit's Cove

---



- Eternally Us review page 18

## Casual Sailing

---



- Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air review page 20
- Insider Tales: The Secret of Casanova review page 23

## Guiding Beacon

---



- Eternally Us walkthrough page 25

# The Whispered World

review by Ugur Sener

Sadwick sees the earth crumble into nothingness beneath his feet. He desperately leaps forward, trying to find safe ground. A perpetual darkness swallows the land. The only glimmer of light comes from an ominous orb. Hovering in the sky, the sphere is cold and menacing. Sadwick can feel it. This is the source of the destruction. This is the source of the chaos. As an entire kingdom is ripped apart, the orb descends upon Sadwick, calling his name.



Suddenly, the young boy wakes up from the nightmare. He is inside his trailer, safe in his bed. His brother Ben and his grandfather are outside. The family circus has set up camp at the edge of Autumn Forest. Yet Sadwick can't forget the dream. He remembers the desolation. He remembers the terrifying voice. The young clown is certain. His recurring nightmares must have a meaning.

Sadwick walks outside, seeking help from his family. Sadly, Ben is less than interested in his brother's dreams. He'd rather berate Sadwick about meaningless chores. Their grandfather can't offer any advice either. Well past his prime, the old man can't even speak coherently. Sadwick will have to find answers on his own. Perhaps someone in the mysterious Autumn Forest will be able to offer some guidance. Grabbing his loyal pet Spot, Sadwick heads into the forest. It will take a long journey to find all the answers.

Developed by Daedalic Entertainment, The Whispered World tells the story of Sadwick's epic

journey. Starting at his humble circus trailer, the young clown travels through many mystical locations before he fully understands the meaning of his visions. Set against a fantasy backdrop and featuring numerous beautifully-crafted locations, The Whispered World is a story about defying fate and seeking acceptance. Though it suffers from technical problems and several design issues, The Whispered World is still worth your consideration because of its whimsical puzzles and interesting locations.



The game is divided into four chapters. Sadwick initially explores several places around the Autumn Forest, trying to find someone who can explain the meaning of his visions. A chance encounter with one of the king's messengers gives the clown some direction. Sadwick eventually leaves the forest, on a quest to reach Corona, the kingdom's capitol. Each chapter represents a different leg of the young boy's journey. On his way to reach Corona, Sadwick travels through a lonely island and perilous caverns. The locations are depicted with highly detailed hand-drawn backgrounds. Whether you are looking at the furniture in Sadwick's trailer, the equipment in an alchemist's lab, or the entire Autumn Forest from a treetop, it is clear that a great deal of attention has been paid to make each area polished and beautiful. The character animations and the videos you see during key points of the game are equally detailed. The end result is an evocative fantasy world that is a pleasure to explore. The visual presentation is the strongest aspect of the game.

However, despite the gorgeous cartoon-like backgrounds, *The Whispered World* is not necessarily a lighthearted adventure. The game features many humorous moments, but at its core, *The Whispered World* is not a joyful tale. There is a feeling of sorrow at each location. The Autumn Forest has vibrant colors, but it feels abandoned and empty. The island that serves as the setting for the second chapter is overcast and gloomy. Fearful of losing what they have, the island's denizens refuse to take action. They sit idly, letting the days pass by and hoping nothing will change. You get the feeling that you are traveling through a world that knows dark times are coming. Unfortunately, the only person who is trying to stand against the darkness is a glum little boy dressed in a clown outfit.



Sadwick makes for a rather unique protagonist. He lacks a supportive and nurturing family. Ben appears to enjoy making Sadwick feel small and insignificant. Constantly put down by his elder brother, Sadwick lacks self confidence. He never expects to be successful at anything. Instead, he approaches everything with a sullen or cynical attitude. During the early stages of the game, the young clown's constant whining can be a little overbearing. However, once you start exploring the forest you will likely get used to his complaints. There is something endearing about the way Sadwick approaches each situation with a touch of insecurity. He may not be exceptionally brave or sure of himself, but he never gives up hope either. Despite his perceived inadequacies, he always manages to get the job done. Beyond his incessant whining, he also carries a touch of wisdom that belies his young age.

Sadwick's faithful companion Spot makes the journey even more interesting. At the beginning of the game, Spot is an oddly shaped caterpillar. He follows

Sadwick as the clown moves around the camp area. However, it won't be long before you discover ways to make the pet change his shape. At key points during the adventure, you can use Spot as an inventory item and make him permanently gain access to a new form. Once the form is unlocked, you can select it at any time using the icons at the top right corner of the screen. This metamorphosis ability proves remarkably useful throughout the adventure. There are numerous puzzles that have to be solved by using Spot's various shapes. For instance, early in the game, Spot gains the ability to burst into flames. You can use this flame mode to set other objects on fire. The developers have come up with very creative ways to use each of the forms, making Spot much more than a green blob that follows Sadwick around the screen. The idea of a shape-shifting pet is a unique feature that greatly improves the overall experience.

Besides abusing your pet, you will have to deal with a myriad of inventory-based challenges and several logic puzzles as you play through *The Whispered World*. The game does feature somewhat unconventional puzzles. Even when you have all of the required items, the solution to some of the inventory-driven challenges may not necessarily be intuitive. At times the game has a wacky sense of logic that proves quite challenging to deduce. During my first play through, there were at least a couple of times where I was stumped for significant amounts of time. I ultimately resorted to using every item in my inventory on each hot spot to make progress.



However, that does not mean you absolutely have to use a walkthrough to beat *The Whispered World*. If you listen to the dialogs and pay attention to the clues, the majority of the puzzles are doable. After getting past a few of the more whimsical challenges,

you may even find yourself better appreciating the game's internal sense of logic. The game is also generally good at outlining your objectives. You may not know all the steps required to get there, but you'll usually have a very clear idea of what you are ultimately trying to achieve.



In addition to puzzle-solving and exploration, The Whispered World features a fair amount of interaction with other characters. The conversations may help you figure out what to do next or provide background information about the game's world. There are also a few occasions where the dialogues themselves contain puzzles. For the most part, the characters you meet are fitting for the game's fantasy setting. From the grumpy train operator to the two talking rocks you encounter in Autumn Forest, the cast is colorful and consistently entertaining. However, a few of the conversations drag on a little longer than they should. Some of the dialog options do not add anything of value to the game. They are neither humorous nor important to the story. For instance, during an early section of the game, you have the opportunity to suggest several ideas to Sadwick's elder brother Ben. Each idea ultimately gets rejected, making the entire conversation fairly pointless. Some of the dialogues could have certainly used more streamlining.

Since conversations are an important element of the game, it is worth noting that the voice-acting is adequate. None of the performances are particularly memorable, but the voices do fit the characters. For instance, when you first begin the game, Sadwick's high-pitched whining may seem a little annoying. However, if you take into account that Sadwick is supposed to be a little boy, the voice is actually quite appropriate.

The Whispered World uses a mouse-driven interface

that should be familiar to most adventure gamers. A single click on the left mouse button moves Sadwick to the desired location on the screen. Each location has one or more hotspots. Holding the left mouse button while hovering over one of these hotspots brings up the action coin interface. The game provides three icons to interact with each hotspot. Clicking on the 'eye' icon provides a description of the object. Since Sadwick is the one making the observations, this means you will hear a certain amount of whining and complaining regardless of which item you examine. The 'mouth' icon is generally used to talk to other characters. There are also a few occasions where you have to use this icon for a special action such as blowing a horn. The 'hand' icon is used to pick up inventory items or use objects. The inventory is accessed with a right mouse click. Here you can select items and use them on other objects in the environment. It is also possible to combine inventory items. Finally, pressing the space bar reveals all the hotspots at a given location.

Unfortunately, despite the simple interface, the game does suffer from some technical issues. First of all, there are some stability problems. During my first time through The Whispered World, I took six unsolicited trips to the desktop as the game crashed. Luckily, The Whispered World does have a 'continue' option on the main menu. In case of a crash, this feature allows you to resume the game from where you left off. Nevertheless, frequently saving your progress would be a good idea as you play through the game.



A second technical issue is with the screen resolution. The Whispered World does not provide players the option to adjust the resolution settings. You have to use the default configuration when you launch the game. This works fine, unless you have a wide

monitor or try to play the game on a laptop. On a wide screen, the display is unable to adjust properly. The image gets stretched to fill the size of the monitor. The characters and the background objects look slightly distorted. While this should not create significant problems on most monitors, it is certainly noticeable. It is a shame that a game that boasts such beautiful graphics was shipped with an issue that hurts the visual presentation.



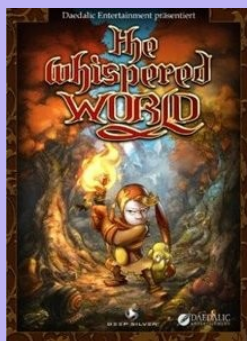
Between the long conversations, offbeat puzzles, and relatively large number of locations to explore, each chapter of The Whispered World should easily take several hours to complete. Players should expect to spend about fifteen hours before reaching the ending. However, the game's conclusion leaves something to be desired. First of all, there is a very abrupt change in tone during the last few minutes of the game. The

narrative style sharply changes as the ending sequence begins. A smoother transition and perhaps a more suspenseful build-up to the conclusion would have been appreciated. In addition, the ending utilizes a somewhat overused story-telling mechanism. Anyone familiar with a significant number of books, movies, or games will have encountered the basic concept of this conclusion at least once. Every story does not need a unique and original ending. But at least for me, a different resolution would have felt more appropriate for Sadwick's journey.

In the end, The Whispered World is an entertaining experience marred by several minor issues. Some of the conversations drag on for too long without adding much value to the game. There are a couple of technical issues, and the payoff at the end of your fifteen-hour journey is lacking. A few of the puzzles and Sadwick's continuing complaints may also get annoying. On the other hand, the gorgeous backgrounds and the interesting fantasy setting make Sadwick's world a delightful place to explore. Amusing characters and humorous moments create a nice contrast with the underlying sorrowful story. Sadwick makes for a compelling protagonist whereas Spot is a fascinating sidekick. There is a satisfying amount of content spread across the game's four chapters. If you appreciate fantasy-themed adventure games and if you are up for a challenge, The Whispered World is most certainly worth a look. It is lacking in certain aspects, but it still manages to deliver an enjoyable experience.

## The Whispered World

## PC Adventure



### Bright moments:

Beautiful presentation. Spot is an excellent sidekick.

### Fumbles in the dark:

Trite ending. Some dull conversations.

### Verdict:

An epic journey through a majestic world, hurt by a few problems. Recommended to adventurers who enjoy a fantasy setting.



### Developer:

Daedalic Entertainment

**Publisher:** Viva Media

**Release Date:** April 2010

### System Requirements:

- Windows® 7/XP/Vista/2000
- 32 bit CPU: 2GHz
- 1GB RAM
- 256MB graphic card compatible with DirectX® 9.0
- 3 GB HD space

# Puzzle Agent

review by Gnome

The president is out of erasers and agent Tethers of the FBI Puzzle Division must travel to Scoggins Minnesota and make sure the official White House eraser factory is back online. What's more, this is the agent's first field assignment in ages, which is more than appropriate, as Puzzle Agent is the first Telltale game that won't necessarily be episodic since, well, ages, meaning you'll have to support it if you want to see it developed to its full potential.



After all, Puzzle Agent is a truly unique game for Telltale, that according to, well, everyone, feels and plays a lot like the DS mega-hit Professor Layton. Not that I'd know, mind you, as I'd never think such games would appeal to me, but who can argue with the Internet?

Truth is, this is an adventure-light game filled with 50-odd puzzles of the puzzle-book variety. You'll get to talk with characters using a rather traditional adventure interface and point-and-click at screens, but what you'll mainly be doing will be rotating tiles, answering riddles and arranging logs in order to solve the puzzles that will allow you to reach the game's end. Despite the fact that some of said puzzles do feel inspired, engaging, and fun, Puzzle Agent is guilty of unbalanced difficulty, repetition, and even some incredibly easy yet ridiculously elaborate puzzles that feel like work.

On the plus side, this being a project directed by Graham Annable, Puzzle Agent sports some incredibly evocative and highly stylized graphics, that perfectly capture the atmosphere of the Grickle Internet-cartoons. The weird animation, the top-quality artwork, the odd voices, the surreal -simultaneously unsettling and amusing- writing, all make for a game that really nails its atmosphere, its characters, and its plot. A fantastic gaming experience only slightly marred by the gaming bit itself.

Check out the [Gnome's Lair](#) for more gnomish ramblings.

## Puzzle Agent

## PC Puzzle-Adventure



### Bright moments:

Getting to meet weird gnomes can be most unnerving and the atmosphere is consistently brilliantly disturbing and simultaneously light-hearted. Quite a bit like Fargo.

### Fumbles in the dark:

Argh, those boring and incredibly easy puzzles that appear. Curse them. Curse them to casual gaming hell.

### Verdict:

Close to being one of Telltale's best offerings to date, but not there yet. Guess we should support Puzzle Agent and help the series evolve to perfection.



### Developer:

Telltale Games

### Publisher:

Telltale Games

### Release Date:

July 2010

### System Requirements:

- Windows® XP / Vista / 7
- 2.0 GHz+ (3 GHz Pentium 4 or equivalent rec.)
- 512MB RAM (1GB rec.)
- DirectX 8.1 sound device
- 64MB DirectX 8.1-compliant video card (128MB rec.)
- DirectX™: Version 9.0c or better



# Black Mirror II

review by Dona

The first Black Mirror game came out seven years ago, in 2003. It quickly became known for its easy puzzles and, even more so, a rather confusing ending. Black Mirror 2 has a lengthy opening that explains the events of the first game (including that dreadful ending) and introduces us to the new protagonist: young Darren, a science student. He is on his summer vacation in Biddesford, a small town in Maine, USA, working for Mr Fuller, a grumpy and unpleasant owner of a photo shop.



The game starts off slowly - you have to do a few simple everyday things for your employer, such as changing a fuse in the basement and getting a package from the local post office. You slowly get to explore the town (some areas are closed off until you finish the task given), meet the residents and learn more about its past. This feels very natural because Darren is almost as much of a stranger to Biddesford as you are.

A beautiful girl named Angelina shows up at the shop to have her photos taken. Even though she is new in town, it seems someone's been following her. There isn't much time to find out who her stalker is, especially when Angelina becomes a murder suspect.

There are many characters you will encounter on your journey, some new, some old. The old ones are mostly our friends from the Black Mirror castle. Each character has their own story to tell, although I wish a certain few were more developed.

There is much to discover about the main character. Some of the early events revolve around him personally, encouraging you to press on and discover more about him. He may come off as rude and childish at first, talking about his favorite grunge bands and snapping at people when he probably shouldn't, but he grows into a stronger person as time goes by.

The game has a lovely concept of transitioning from light to darkness. The main character changes as events force him to, the weather changes as the story gets darker and closer to the feel of the original game. You travel from sunny sea shores of Biddesford to rainy and gloomy Willow Creek, where a lot of events take place at night.



Atmosphere is one of the things that kept me playing this game. I was eager to find new locations and explore them. When you're playing a game that requires exploration of every pixel on the screen, even the smallest details jump out at you. Whether it's the books on a shelf or a tiny bird on a nearby tree, it is clear that the developers paid special attention to the backdrops. You will be additionally rewarded if you're familiar with the first game - it is fun to explore some old areas and see how they changed over the years.

Like the first game, Black Mirror 2 contains elements of horror. There is implied sexual abuse and you get to see several dead bodies, much like in the original.

There are also moments where camera dramatically zooms in (usually on a character), but those look rather funny.

Another thing that is carried over from the first game is the difficulty of the puzzles - or the lack of thereof. Most of them are inventory-based. Difficulty level can be changed in the options menu. If you select the 'Easy' level, a 'Skip' button will appear over puzzles that are considered harder and the game will do that part for you. These puzzles are not that hard, in my opinion, and most experienced adventure gamers will just breeze through. It is a useful option if you don't have much time to spend on the game.

Controls are very basic.. You can click a hotspot until Darren has nothing more to say about it, after which the cursor disappears. Inventory is located on the bottom of the screen and all you have to do is put your mouse there to bring it up. If you press the Tab button, all hotspots will be revealed on the screen, which allows you to fine-tune the difficulty of the game. It's good for seeing what options you have in a room and also for making sure you don't overlook an important object.

There are action sequences scattered throughout the game. There aren't many of them, but they make the game more dynamic. You will usually have to do something in a limited amount of time (a timer is not displayed, though). Don't worry, they are not hard to do and if you do fail, the game will reload the last autosave, usually made right before the sequence starts.



If you haven't played for a while, there is a journal that will help refresh your memory. Designed to look like a real journal, it often contains Darren's sketches and valuable pieces of information, as well as a short recap of previous events. Another nice feature is a map that lets you quickly travel from one area to the other - no tedious walks around the town unless you want to!

As a photography enthusiast, you always have your camera on you. If you take photos of certain objects or during some events in the game, you can unlock game artwork, mini-games and special modes (such as Bobblehead Mode... which looks rather creepy).

After seven years of waiting, this is what I have to say: it was worth it. While the game doesn't bring anything revolutionary to the genre, it expands on the story of the first game, deepens it and sets a good footing for the recently announced third game. It is perfect for those who don't have time to spend hours upon hours solving a puzzle or those who want to enjoy a bit of an eye candy and a solid story.

## Black Mirror II

## PC Adventure



### Bright moments:

Brilliant atmosphere. Interesting plot twists.

### Fumbles in the dark:

Puzzles are hardly challenging, some are entirely pointless.

### Verdict:

Good game with a solid story and a dash of horror. Finally explains that confusing ending of the first one.



**Developer:** Cranberry Production

**Publisher:** Odyssia

**Release Date:** 2010

### System Requirements:

- Windows® XP / Windows Vista
- Intel Pentium IV at 1.5 GHz / Athlon XP 1500+
- Video Card : 128 MB VRAM – nVidia GeForce 6600 or better
- 1 GB RAM
- 5 GB of free Hard Drive space
- DirectX™ compatible sound card
- DirectX™ vrsion 9.0c or better

# Casebook Special Edition Trilogy

review by Ugur Sener (originally published at [Just Adventure](#))

Every crime scene tells a story. It can be in a shred of fabric, a drop of blood, or a simple footprint. Connecting the dots and finding the truth is never easy. Every detail is important. Nothing can be overlooked. It takes a keen eye to see past the mundane and reveal the vital clues. It is a good thing you do not have to do it all on your own. As you carefully scan every corner of a crime scene, your partner Detective Burton handles the interrogations. The lab technicians Pete and Anja help you analyze samples. As a team, you can solve any case and track down any criminal. It is time to grab your camera and start searching for evidence. Welcome to Casebook.



Developed by Areo, Casebook is an episodic adventure game series featuring photorealistic environments and full-motion video (FMV) clips. The first episode of the series, called Kidnapped, was released in 2008. Since then, Areo has added two more chapters to the Casebook saga. As development continues on the fourth chapter, the first three episodes are now available as a special edition trilogy pack.

## Episode I – Kidnapped

The series opens with a kidnapping case. The two Birchermann children, Harry and Greta, have been taken from their home in the middle of the night. The kidnapper is demanding a hefty ransom. You start surveying the crime scene, looking for connections. Who could be responsible for this? The children's

father, Larson Birchermann, is the chairman of Slade Forestry. Could it be the work of a competitor? Is it a disgruntled former employee?

As you delve deeper into the case, you realize neither Larson nor his wife Sylvia appear to be telling the whole truth. What are they holding back when their children are missing? It'll be up to you and Detective Burton to unravel the mystery. Harry and Greta's lives depend on it.

The first episode of Casebook tells a compelling story. The investigation takes you to four different crime scenes. What starts out as a straightforward kidnapping case turns into something more elaborate. It may not be terribly difficult to predict the ending by the time you are a little more than halfway through the episode. However, 'Kidnapped' still delivers an enjoyable introduction to Casebook.

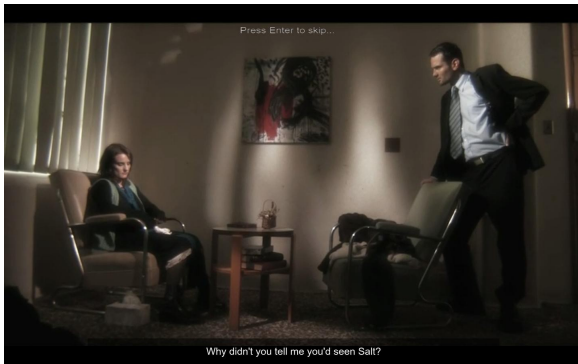


## Episode II – The Watcher

The second episode begins with a gripping video of a young man falling off an apartment building. You arrive at the scene early in the morning, Detective Burton at your side. You find out that the young man was an Egyptologist called Francis Salt. He was living alone. Many of the neighbors didn't even know his name. Francis stopped working several weeks ago. Nobody knows why he went on leave. At a cursory glance, suicide seems plausible. The reclusive young man certainly fits the profile, but did he really kill himself? Could someone have pushed him out of the

window? Who would want Francis dead?

You walk into Mr. Salt's apartment to discover a camcorder sitting next to a window. Evidently, Francis had a habit of watching his neighbors. Memory cards scattered throughout the apartment are full of cryptic recordings. In the meantime, Detective Burton questions the rest of the tenants. They seem a little too eccentric. Perhaps it is not a coincidence this building used to be a psychiatric hospital. It is clear that there is more to the story. You'll have to let the evidence guide you.



The second episode of Casebook delivers three new crime scenes to explore. The central plot involving Mr. Salt's death is rather intriguing. Between the quirky tenants and Francis's strange videos, the story remains engaging throughout the episode. It is a good thing episode III is included in the special edition package, because 'The Watcher' does have something of a cliffhanger ending. While the investigation about Francis is completed, one portion of the storyline directly ties into Episode III.

### Episode III – Snake in the Grass

The third episode has you and Detective Burton operating outside your jurisdiction. You follow the trail of a mastermind to a small town called Garden. A man has been brutally murdered inside the town's chapel. The police have already arrested a young man who confessed to the crime. The evidence appears to confirm the confession. Yet Burton is convinced there is more to the story. Is your partner simply blinded by his unfinished business from the previous case? Can you trust his instincts?

'Snake in the Grass' provides a conclusion to the storyline from the second episode of Casebook.

Working outside your jurisdiction zone changes the tone of the adventure. Burton's obsession with the case makes you doubt your partner's motivations. Episode III also sets the course for the next chapter in the Casebook saga. As with episode II, your primary investigation will be completed, but the conclusion of 'Snake in the Grass' does give you a couple of reasons to come back for the next installment.

### The Trilogy

Viewed as a whole, the first three episodes of Casebook deliver a significant amount of content and an enjoyable gaming experience. The fundamental game mechanics do not change between the episodes. However, the compelling storylines, interesting characters, and the addictive nature of hunting for evidence make the trilogy well worth your attention.

Each episode of the game is divided into two segments. First, you search the current crime scene for objects that might be relevant to the investigation. You move around the scene by turning toward the desired direction and clicking on the left mouse button. It is also possible to move by using the WASD keys on the keyboard. A right click on the mouse brings up your camera. You use the camera to take pictures of objects that might be used as evidence. A red rectangle appears around objects that may be important for the case. The game displays a message if you are too far or too close to the object you are trying to picture. The mouse wheel is used to zoom in and out, bringing the item to focus. A single left click takes a picture. The camera holds up to eight pictures at a time.



Once you have one or more pictures to analyze, you can leave the scene and go to the 'crime van.' The

van has a computer that can be used to upload your pictures. As you upload photographs, Detective Burton or one of the lab technicians will comment on them. Some of your pictures will not be relevant to the case and get discarded. Others will be saved as evidence. Sometimes, the object you photographed will require further analysis. For instance, you might need to powder a doorknob to reveal fingerprints or you may need to centrifuge a chemical to determine its components. This type of analysis is performed through mini-games.



For the most part, the mini-games are rather simple. Your task might be as easy as moving the mouse in a circular pattern to make the centrifuge machine work. There are also games designed for identifying fingerprints, separating chromosomes in a DNA sample, and restoring videos. All of these puzzles represent some form of evidence analysis. They are easy, but at least they feel appropriate for a game where you play as a crime scene investigator. You will not find any random slider puzzles or weird contraptions keeping doors locked for no apparent reason.

However, by the time you complete the three episodes, you may find yourself yearning for a little more variety and complexity in the mini-games. The straightforward puzzles start to feel a little redundant. After all, there are only so many times you can have fun as you watch the chemicals in a test tube boil or click on three buttons to extract DNA from a cell. Fortunately, the mini-games are not the focus of Casebook. Given the game's strong storylines and distinct process for gathering evidence, the somewhat tedious puzzles do not significantly detract from the experience.

When you upload all of your pictures and finish the appropriate mini-games, you can go to your 'evidence

folder' to look for connections. The folder provides a picture of all the individuals associated with your investigation at the top. You can click on these pictures to see a brief description of the character. The main portion of the folder contains all the evidence you accumulated from taking photographs and conducting lab tests. The clues are sorted based on the crime scene where you obtained them. There is a separate tab for each scene. You can select each piece of evidence and drag it on top of another clue. If it is possible to make some kind of connection between the two items, they become linked. For instance, if you have a shred of fabric and a piece of clothing, you can try to combine the two items. If the fabric came from the piece of clothing, the items will become linked.



The evidence folder also contains a tab for 'exemplars.' The exemplars are specimens obtained from the suspects associated with the case. For instance, if you find a fingerprint at the crime scene, Detective Burton may automatically collect samples from the suspects. You can compare the fingerprint you found to the exemplars. This will help you determine if any of the individuals were at the crime scene.

After examining a set of clues in the crime van, you typically need to return to the scene and look for more evidence. Each scene is full of items you can photograph. Not every item is relevant to the investigation, but you may not always know which objects are important until you analyze them in the van. As such, it takes a significant amount of time to search through each room. As you work through the case, hunting for evidence does take on a life of its own. You may find yourself trying hard to find every last important item in each location.

The storyline progresses as you take pictures,

process photographs on the computer, and make connections using your evidence folder. As you comb through the crime scene, Detective Burton interrogates the suspects. He may ask questions based on the objects you discovered. The game also gives you specific objectives to complete at each scene. For instance, you might be asked to find pieces of trace evidence that links a certain individual to a location. As you complete the objectives, the plot advances through FMV sequences. During the vast majority of these movies, you are merely a spectator. You'll watch the case unfold as Burton interacts with the other characters. However, at key points in each episode, you will be asked to make decisions. These decisions have some impact in the ultimate outcome of the case.

Since the FMV sequences are such a vital part of the Casebook, it is worth noting that the videos are generally very well produced. The scripts feel carefully constructed and the atmosphere is certainly fitting for a crime drama. The characters are often intriguing and the dramatization is consistently believable. In particular, Julian Temple seems well suited for the role of Detective Burton. He is convincing as a rugged cop and a loyal partner. It is clear that a good deal of effort has gone into producing the movies. Watching the storyline develop is enough of a reason to play the game. There are a few spots where the acting may leave something to be desired, but these are rare and do not break the mood.



As you complete key portions of the investigation in each episode, Casebook shows you a scorecard. The scorecard indicates how many pieces of evidence you successfully collected and how many mini-games you completed. You receive an overall ranking based on how thoroughly you were able to examine the crime scenes. You can also see your progress at any

time by accessing the 'Stats' option from the game's menu. This will help you keep track of the amount of evidence you need to find during the current section of the game.



Casebook does have a few features to help with your investigation. While you are visiting a given location, you can hit the 'I' button on the keyboard to use your intuition. This will turn you toward an object that is relevant to the case. You can then take out your camera and photograph the item. 'Intuition' is also available as an icon on the evidence folder. Clicking on the icon shows you a pair of clues that you should try combining. Finally, you can use a button to skip any of the mini-games. While these options may help you work through the case faster, they all have a negative impact on your score. If you want to achieve the maximum ranking, you'll have to avoid using them.

The first three episodes of Casebook deliver a significant amount of content. Playing at a casual pace and occasionally using the intuition feature, you should expect to spend several hours on each episode. The trilogy should take at least twelve to fourteen hours to complete. The episodes have some replay value as well. After completing the cases, you can revisit them to make different decisions and see how the outcome changes. You could also look for any evidence that you missed during your first attempt.

Unfortunately, Casebook does not have a save game feature that would make this process more convenient. Each time you take a photograph or analyze a picture, your progress is recorded automatically. You cannot create save files on your own. If you quit the game before completing the episode, you can resume from the last autosave. This was most likely a deliberate design choice to prevent

cheating. With a conventional save system, players could use the intuition button and then immediately load a save file. Nevertheless, it would have been nice to have the option to return to specific points in the investigation.



Casebook also appears to have some minor stability issues. For instance, there were a couple of times where the game got stuck just as I finished analyzing pictures in the crime van. It was not possible to leave the screen and go back to the crime scene, forcing me to use task manager to terminate the game. Fortunately, this issue was encountered very few times during the three episodes and did not cause significant trouble.

Overall, the first three episodes of Casebook deliver a very distinct and enjoyable gaming experience. The crime scenes are cleverly designed and entertaining

to explore. The process of finding clues and making connections is engaging, making you feel involved with the case. The videos are professionally produced and the storylines are consistently interesting. The mini-games do get tedious and there are a couple of technical glitches, but the problems are relatively easy to overlook. If you like detective stories or FMV adventures, you should certainly consider giving the Casebook trilogy a try. The special edition trilogy delivers a solid amount of content at a reasonable price and offers a good way to catch up on the Casebook saga before episode IV is released.



If you are still on the fence based on the review, you can also consider trying Episode 0 of Casebook for free. While the storyline is nowhere near as complex as what is offered in the trilogy, the free episode is a great way to test the game's core mechanics. It can be downloaded [here](#).

## Casebook Special Edition Trilogy

## PC Adventure



**Bright moments:**

Engaging story. Clever script. Good use of FMV.

**Fumbles in the dark:**

The mini-games can get a bit repetitive.

**Verdict:**

A unique and enjoyable experience. Easy recommendation for fans of detective stories, crime dramas, or FMV adventures.



**Developer:** Areo Cinematic Games

**Publisher:** Areo Cinematic Games

**Release Date:** June 2010

**System Requirements:**

- OS: Windows® XP SP2 & above/Vista
- Processor: 1.5Ghz CPU (Core 2 or equivalent or newer)
- Memory: 1GB (2GB recommended)
- Video: 128MB DirectX 9.0c & Shader Model 1.4 support (256MB recommended)
- DirectX™ Compatible Sound Card

# Sam & Max 304: Beyond the Alley of Dolls

a survey of Sam & Max's third season by Dona

**Editorial Note:** Quite shockingly, when Adventure Lantern took a two-year hiatus, the gaming world did not stop. Among the many games we did not get to cover during our long absence were the first three episodes from the current Sam & Max season, called *The Devil's Playhouse*. When the fourth episode, *Beyond the Alley of the Dolls* became available, Dona took it upon herself to get us caught up on Sam & Max's latest adventures. Rather than a formal review of episode four, what follows is Dona's survey of the current season with a focus on the latest episode.



The Devil's Toybox has gone missing and Toys of Power are scattered throughout the universe... They grant great power to those that possess them and some are prepared to go great lengths to obtain them. The third season of the Sam & Max series starts with our protagonists trapped on the space ship of General Skun-ka'pe, the space gorilla, who managed to collect several Toys of Power. Max responds to the Toys quite well and uses his newly acquired psychic powers to kick the General into the Penal Zone, a prison-like dimension far away from the world we know (pun very much intended).

Truth to be told, I was not very thrilled with this season. Similar to the previous two seasons, each episode introduced a new gameplay concept, something to keep the players entertained and the game fresh. However, it all came down to one thing -

using Max's newly acquired powers. He usually had about three. It would get tiring very fast. Perhaps it is just me, but the humor wasn't as good as it had been previously either. I am not saying the episodes weren't funny - they were - but I did feel like something was missing.

Telltale took a rather brave approach by combining sci-fi and ancient fantasy in one game. The downside is that it took the first two episodes to show the both 'worlds' that come together rather clumsily in the third one. Another thing that's new to the series is that the current season plays more like a movie cut into several parts. Events are tightly connected and continue with each new game. This wasn't the case with the old series - while all of the episodes had a common plot, the events were often a few months apart and there was a lot more freedom for something completely random and fresh to happen.

Most of the old characters are gone. Those that do make a comeback, however, have been given a nice little make-over. The graphics software has been updated, introducing real-time shadows. Don't worry if your computer is a bit old though, the options menu allows you to fine-tune it so even old machines can run the game.





Episode four, Beyond the Alley of the Dolls, starts with an attack of Sam clones. They chase our heroes in zombie mob fashion, before Sam & Max find refuge in Stinky's Diner. The camera becomes shaky, imitating zombie outbreak movies, while Grandpa Stinky and Max do their best to fight off the clones with guns. It is up to Sam to find a way out. The first half of the game isn't much different from the previous episodes, but then things start to heat up. With only one more episode left everything works towards what may be the most amazing finale ever. Beyond the Alley of Dolls gets epic.

I don't want to give much away, but there is this 'trend' where every fourth episode in a Sam & Max season has a musical number. It is not quite Good For You nor a Birthday Mariachi song, but something completely new and fun and interactive. Playing through felt very intuitive and rewarding and left me eager to see more. There is much to look forward to finding out what lies in The City That Dares Not Sleep.

Check out [Dona-V.com](http://Dona-V.com) for Dona's artwork and find out what she does when she's not wasting time on video games.



## Sam & Max 304: Beyond the Alley of Dolls

## PC Adventure



### Bright moments:

Highly creative, funny.

### Fumbles in the dark:

Gameplay gets a little repetitive after a while.

### Verdict:

Great new installment of the well-established franchise. The first three episodes are a bit slow, but the fourth one makes it worth your while.

### Developer:

Telltale Games

Publisher: Telltale Games

Release Date: July 2010

### System Requirements:

- Windows XP® / Vista / 7
- 2.0 GHz CPU
- 1GB RAM
- 128 MB DirectX 8.1-compliant video card
- DirectX™ 8.1 compatible sound device
- DirectX™ version 9.0c or better

# Eternally Us

review by Rob Hamilton

Cue music. Cue birdsong. **Location:** A park bench on a beautiful summer's day. **Scene:** Two best friends, Amber and Fio, enjoy a day out together doing nothing more taxing than feeding the birds. Unfortunately, this idyllic situation is about to be shattered by a piece of devastating news. Fio has a terminal illness and death is about to rip apart a friendship that has lasted since childhood; twenty-five is much too young to die. And no, it's not fair, but it is reality. Death does not discriminate, one bad hand and it's all over. Surely, this cannot happen to such a beautiful person – but it does.

And Fio is gone.



This is an Interesting premise, no doubt about that, but is the subject matter too dark? Playing adventure games is supposed to be entertaining. It's supposed to be fun. Right? *Eternally Us* has just five locations and a similar number of puzzles, and that information is certainly not going to raise collective pulse rates. Even a novice player should be able to complete the whole thing in well under an hour. So, is it worth hitting the download button?

Oh, yes. Most definitely, unequivocally – yes.

This story is about understanding grief and how to come to terms with the ensuing emotions. Somebody once said, the only thing guaranteed in life – is death. So, let's step through the five screens and see where they lead. In the first screen it is summertime; the world is bright and life is worth living. But in this game, nothing is ever what it seems; even the

puzzles have a meaning. To progress you have to feed a single bird, a bird that is no longer part of the flock. It is isolated – like Amber. Solve this puzzle and death will appear in the guise of a malevolent, red-eyed spirit, and Amber's journey will begin.

The second screen is a depressing, rain swept rooftop. The puzzle is simple enough; Amber must find the key and open the door. But solving this puzzle is not about gaining an object; it's about understanding human nature and defining emotional responsibility. Every action has a reaction. Listen to the two spirits when they speak, every word is relevant. Look beyond the obvious. Seek the truth – it is within *you*.

The third screen is probably the most difficult to negotiate because the purpose is not immediately obvious. Amber finds herself trapped in a swamp. You must disturb the two trees in the swamp and allow her to ask the questions. Without dialogue, she cannot progress on her journey. She wants something, but nobody *has* what she wants. It is an exercise in futility because she asks for the impossible. Her feet can take her everywhere – and nowhere. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes.



Amber arrives in the fourth screen from above and lands in a heap at the feet of death, who teases her. Why has she learnt so little? Why does she persist in continuing this futile journey? It is now winter and snow covers the ground. Everything is chilled. Bleak. Hopeless. A locked gate bars the only exit. Amber must find the key that not only opens the gate, but

also dissipates the darkness within her soul. To solve this puzzle she must wait. Patience, cold, cold heart, the answer is in your own hands.

The fifth screen opens in the fall. Autumn. A time of change. Rebirth. Acceptance. Solve the puzzle, which involves a squirrel and an acorn, and a cut scene will provide a resolution. Everything Amber has done in the previous four screens will now make sense; her journey is complete. She may not want to hear the brutal truth, but at least she now understands it – and so do we.



Ben Chandler designed and drew the graphics for this game and they are stunning. Each beautifully crafted scene adds a sense of depth to the narrative, slowly drawing the player into Amber's world. The visual effects, rain, snow, falling leaves, drift magically across the screen with jaw-dropping clarity. It is no surprise that this game won the AGS Mags competition for April 2010. Also included in the download is the file WINSETUP. Tick the box *run in a window* to avoid any resolution problems. There is

also an option to select the graphics driver and filter of your choice should you encounter problems with the default setting.

When you listen to the subtle sounds in this game, birdsong, falling rain, soothing music, you might imagine that it took an office full of professional programmers and musicians to produce these effects. And you'd be wrong. Stand up and take a bow Steven Poulton who programmed and scored the whole thing. The music, a simple melody used sparingly in a couple of scenes, adds a haunting quality to the whole production. A perceived weakness in games like this is usually the voice acting, which can range from the ridiculous to the laughable. No such thing here. The voice acting is exceptional and blends seamlessly into the production.

The game controls are uncomplicated. The left mouse button allows Amber to use things; the right mouse button allows her to examine things. When she picks up an item, it goes to the inventory. Move the mouse to the top of the screen to access inventory items. If only all games were as simple. There are also options to save, load and quit.

I couldn't find a single fault with this game. Yes, it's short. Yes, it has limited game play, but it delivers. *Eternally Us* is about dealing with the realities of life and death, and that's something none of us can avoid. I'm sure Hollywood could take this story and turn it into a two-hour tearjerker. I hope they don't; a short animated film would suffice. In the meantime, the game is free and is available for download from [this address](#).

## Eternally Us

## PC Adventure



### Bright moments:

The cut scene that reveals the purpose of Amber's journey.

### Fumbles in the dark:

None. Everything fits together perfectly.

### Verdict:

An unusual adventure. Well worth playing.



**Developer:** Ben Chandler

**Release Date:** May 2010

### System Requirements:

- OS: Windows® XP / Vista
- CPU: 500 mhz
- Video card that supports 16 bit 640x480 resolution
- The WINSETUP.exe file allows adjustment of graphics and sound settings.

# Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air

review by Rob Hamilton

Are you an avid gamer? Of course you are; silly question. Do you love adventure games? Again, yes; you wouldn't be reading this review if you didn't. So, have you heard of the Dream Chronicles? If you haven't, I can tell you that it's a very popular series of fantasy adventure games with a vociferous cult following.

What's it all about?

Try this from the developer's website: 'The epic Dream Chronicles saga continues in PlayFirst's award-winning adventure series. Play as Lyra, Faye's daughter, who finds herself trapped in a strange dimension on the day before her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Following clues sent by her grandfather, she flies across the realm in search of the Clockmaker who will help her restore time and return home. Solve intriguing puzzles and search for items that will reunite Lyra with family and friends in Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air!'



Concise. Sounds interesting. Select Casual or Challenging mode, press NEW GAME and Lyra is standing on Main Street in her beloved town of Wish. Why beloved? There's no back-story, no foreshadowing of events, this is all a bit of a mystery. Other than a brief opening cut scene, there is nothing that indicates how or why Lyra finds herself in this

predicament. A box suddenly appears, sent by Lyra's grandfather, and it contains a dream journal. Look inside the journal for guidance when needed. The first puzzle involves rebuilding the statute of the Guardian of Knowledge, a task that isn't overly complicated, and once completed allows Lyra to move into the Schoolroom. Now it starts to make a warped kind of sense; all Lyra has to do is find a map, locate a means of transport and the game is under way. Lyra's grandfather, Tangle, leaves a printed note at each location offering a series of clues. Once you have read the note, it flies across the screen and slots into the dream journal, which records every activity.



There are several main locations to visit; the village of Wish, the Clockmaker's Tower; the Tree House village, Wind Music Island and the Water Collector. Find the airship, repair it, input the co-ordinates and traverse an extensive map. There are two or three puzzle/logic problems to solve at each of the locations. The type of puzzle defines each location; clocks, trees, music and water all play a part and involve numbers, words or sliding blocks. At the Clockmaker's, for instance, you will find several puzzles concerning cogs and gears; fit them together and make everything run smoothly. Solve the puzzles and the Clockmaker advises Lyra to find three keys hidden in the various locations. Once she has the keys, the Time Synchronisation Machine is activated, which is easier said than done, and the adventure is

almost complete. Climb Into the airship for the final time and fly back to the village of Wish.

Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air is a highly polished 1<sup>st</sup> person point-and-click game with a beautifully designed interface and simple control system. Left click on an item and it flies into the inventory, which is located at the bottom of the screen. Inventory items are always visible on screen and are available to manipulate in a variety of different ways. Scattered around most of the screens are dream pieces. Collect a set number of these jewel pieces and five spells will eventually become active, Decipher, Reveal, Transmute, Brilliance and Thunder; without these spells, it is impossible to make any significant progress.



Even in challenging mode, clues are everywhere which makes this a very user-friendly game – and that's a problem. It's too user-friendly. I once played a game called Schizm II which required the player to convert a series of numbers to a base 12 system, square the result, and do it with alien instructions – I needed three weeks of therapy when I eventually finished the game. Nobody needs that level of difficulty, but some developers do not want gamers to solve the puzzles, they want them stuck in their game world forever. Unfortunately, the developer of Dream Chronicles has gone in the other direction and made things too easy. Objects are scattered around the screens in full view, nothing is hidden, nothing is ambiguous; everything you need is right there, in your face. And if, for some unfathomable reason, you do happen to miss an object there's a locate button which will find the object for you. Having said that, when you eventually reach them, most of the puzzles are interesting and add to the overall game play,

although I would have liked the screens leading up to the puzzles to have offered more of a challenge. And I would have preferred more game play. From start to finish, The Book of Air takes no more than four hours.

The graphics in this game are stunning. Every location contains a beautifully crafted, detailed drawing which adds to the overall dream-like experience. The airship that takes Lyra around the various locations resembles a Jules Verne/Captain Nemo creation and is a wondrous contraption. If the graphic designers were aiming to provide a cinematic experience, there's no doubt about it – they succeeded.



The voice acting is acceptable; the only three voices you will hear are Lyra's, her grandfather's and the clockmaker's. There is an option to turn these voices off and just read the dialogue straight from the screen, although I can't imagine why anybody would want to do that. In fact, if the sound effects really hack you off, you can use the mute button and play in silence, no music, voices or ambient sound. One gamer took it upon himself to write to the game's music composer to tell him, in no uncertain terms, that he didn't like the music. He received the following reply: 'The music in the Book of Air is comprised of little 15 second stings that swell in and out of the ambience, instead of longer one or two minute songs as in the past 3 iterations of Dream Chronicles. I'm sorry you don't like this new format, but the developer adopted a new style.'

Quite so. Couldn't have put it better myself.

The Book of Air is obviously another chapter in what will eventually be a complete series of adventures. It is possible to play this game to a conclusion of sorts as a standalone adventure, but not knowing what went before in previous chapters weakens the storyline and leaves a lot of loose ends lying around. However, at a budget price of just \$6.99, it's worth playing first in challenging mode, complete it, and then go around again in casual mode, which is essentially a cheat mode. You can then skip all the

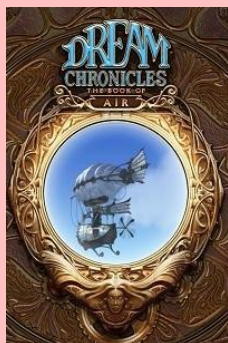
puzzles and just enjoy the wonderful graphics. And if you really like these puzzles, you can keep going back for more because many of them have random solutions which differ every time the game is played. Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air is available for download [here](#).

Visit [Rob's personal site](#) for more of his writing and to find out more information about his novels.



## Dream Chronicles: The Book of Air

## PC Casual Adventure



### Bright moments:

Repairing the airship and getting it airborne.

### Fumbles in the dark:

Four hours game play is nowhere near enough.

### Verdict:

A budget priced adventure that ticks most of the boxes.



**Developer:** KatGames

**Publisher:** PlayFirst, Inc.

**Release Date:** July 2010

### System Requirements:

- OS: Windows® XP/Vista
- CPU: 1.2 GHz or faster
- RAM: 128 MB
- 118 MB hard disk space
- DirectX™ 9.0 or higher

# Insider Tales: The Secret of Casanova

review by Ugur Sener

Inspector Francesca DiPorta is in the middle of her vacation when she receives the call. Professor Manini has discovered an important relic. He needs Francesca's help to decipher the secrets within the artifact. Cutting her vacation short, Francesca boards the next plane for Milan. Arriving at Manini's mansion, she discovers that the professor has disappeared.



Francesca searches Manini's office in hopes of finding a clue. A hidden compartment reveals a mysterious journal. Perusing through the pages, the detective realizes that the journal belongs to none other than Giacomo Casanova. The book is full of cryptic messages and curious diagrams, leading to Casanova's greatest secret. It will be up to Francesca to piece together the clues and discover the truth. However, the young detective may come to realize that some secrets are better left hidden.

The second installment in the Insider Tales series, *The Secret of Casanova* is a casual adventure game that takes players on a journey across Europe. Players assume the role of inspector DiPorta. After a brief introductory sequence at Manini's mansion, players get a chance to visit Paris, Vienna, Prague, and Venice. Each city features puzzles focusing on a different aspect of Casanova's life. With its pleasant atmosphere and detailed environments, *The Secret of Casanova* starts out as a promising adventure. However, its short length and repetitive puzzles ultimately prevent the game from living up to its full potential.

The majority of the game takes place at the four European cities. Players can visit these cities in any

order desired. While each location offers a unique set of challenges, the puzzles follow the same pattern. The level begins as Francesca arrives at an area described in Casanova's journal. After an introductory cut scene, players are asked to find a series of objects hidden throughout the area. The game provides a list of objects on the bottom right portion of the screen. The list displays eight types of items at a time. Players are asked to locate the object on the screen and collect it with a click on the left mouse button. New items often get added to the list until players find all the important objects at the location.

Once Francesca is satisfied with the objects she has collected, players may be asked to solve a logic puzzle or an inventory-based puzzle. For instance, during one hidden-object sequence, Francesca collects sixteen paperclips from around the screen. Once all the paperclips have been located, the inspector automatically selects the strongest one and the game loads a lock-picking puzzle.



For the most part, the hidden objects are not overly difficult to spot. The environments are rather crowded, but you can still locate the desired items with a little bit of perseverance. The game does offer a 'hint' button that can be used to highlight one of the hidden items you have yet to collect. Once you click on it, the 'hint' button must recharge for a few moments before it can be used again. Similarly, the game offers a 'skip' button for players that want to move past the logic puzzles. While it is certainly possible to complete the game without using the hint and skip buttons, these player-friendly features may be a welcome addition for beginners.

Unfortunately, the hidden-object and puzzle sequences do get a little redundant. It seems as though the game is repeating the same formula over and over again during each level. Regardless of which location you visit, Francesca has to look for approximately sixteen objects before she can solve a relatively simple puzzle. Repeating the exercise several times completes the city. The formulaic nature of the levels makes some of the challenges feel arbitrary. At times, it seems as though Francesca has to pick up items without a good story reason. It just gives players something to do. At least in certain areas, it may have been advisable to better integrate the item-finding and puzzle-solving sections with the overall storyline.



It is also worth noting that some of the hidden-object sequences will require you to suspend your disbelief. For instance, it is unlikely that sixteen brushes would be conveniently hanging close to a statue that happens to need dusting. Items are not necessarily sized and positioned realistically either. A paperclip may be as large as a tire. You might find a breakfast

plate serving as the hubcap of a truck. Pieces of a ladder might be found hovering above the ground. The disproportionate sizing and unrealistic positioning is certainly a good way to make items more difficult to spot. However, it also makes some of the screens look like a crowded mess. The game would have benefited from some streamlining in terms of item placement.

Despite the frustration they may cause, the repetitive nature of the levels and the unrealistic presentation of hidden objects are minor issues that can be overlooked. However, the game's extremely short length makes it very difficult to recommend. It took me approximately two and a half hours to get through The Secret of Casanova on my first attempt. To make matters worse, once you reach the end of the adventure, there is little reason to go back and play through it again. There is no additional content to unlock. The positions of the hidden objects do not appear to change between sessions either. It is not fair to expect ten or twenty hours of playtime from a casual adventure that has a low price point. However, less than three hours with no replay value is still unacceptable.

The Secret of Casanova has the right elements to deliver a pleasant experience. The environments are detailed and the logic puzzles are entertaining. The soundtrack is very fitting for the game's calm atmosphere. Some of the hidden objects are rather cleverly placed and will have players searching the screen for a while. Unfortunately, the game also has repetitive sequences and the adventure ends far too soon. Given its remarkably short length, The Secret of Casanova is only recommended if you can purchase it at a deeply discounted price.

**Insider Tales: The Secret of Casanova**

**PC Casual Adventure**



**Bright moments:**

Charming environments. A few entertaining puzzles.

**Fumbles in the dark:**

The same formula is repeated in every city. Far too short for a commercial release.

**Verdict:**

A pleasant game lacking in content.



**Developer:** Lesta Studio

**Publisher:** Intenim

**Release Date:** Q3 2009

**System Requirements:**

- OS: Windows® XP/Vista
- CPU: 800 MHz or faster
- RAM: 1024 MB
- 200 MB hard disk space
- 32 MB graphics card
- Sound card
- DirectX™ 9.0 or higher



# Eternally Us

walkthrough by Ugur Sener

## General Instructions:

Eternally Us is a point-and-click adventure game played from a third-person perspective. The game takes place in a series of small locations. Players control a young girl named Amber. The left mouse is used to interact with objects and move Amber around the screen. The right mouse button is used to hear descriptions of objects. The inventory is accessed by hovering the mouse over the top portion of the screen. You can select an item using the left mouse button and click on an object in the environment to use the item. The top bar also has options save, load, and quit the game.

## The Park:

- Click on the bush on the far right side of the screen. Observe the birds. The larger birds will quickly arrive at the bush. The small bird will arrive a few moments later.
- Click on the path on the far left side of the screen. As soon as the large birds move, click on the bush again. The little bird should still be by the bush and grab a piece of bread before the larger birds return.
- If you are quick enough, this should work on your first attempt. If it doesn't, repeat the previous step by clicking on the path and the bush again.
- You will see a cut scene and move on to the next portion of the game.

## The Doorway:

- Listen to the gargoyles.
- When the conversation is over, pick up the metal pipe behind Amber.



- Use the metal pipe on the crate. The crate will break, but another one will appear to replace it.
- Use the metal pipe to break the second crate. A third crate with a key symbol will appear.
- Right click to put the metal pipe away. Left click to open the crate.
- Select the key from your inventory at the top portion of the screen. Use the key on the door.

## The Swamp:

- Note the tree root that periodically emerges from the swamp.
- Click on the root to grab it. Wait for a few seconds to observe its movements. The root pulls Amber, but it stops for a moment between each pull.

- You can left click to tug back at the root. If you click when the root is pulling, Amber loses her grip. You need to wait until the root pauses.
- When the branch stops pulling, left click to tug at it. The root will slip away. The eyes of one of the trees will start to open.
- Grab the root again. Tug at the root when it stops pulling.
- Repeat the previous step one more time.
- After the scene, a different root will start rising from the swamp.
- As before, grab the root and tug at it when it stops pulling. A second tree will start opening its eyes.
- Repeat the process two more times.
- During the conversation, you will be offered some dialog options. Choose whichever option you prefer. It does not affect the outcome of the scene.

### The Statue:

- There is a plaque at the plaque at the feet of the statue. Right click on it to read the message.



- A yellow light will start appearing on the ground. Click on it as soon as you see it.
- The light turns out to be a small glowworm. Once you pick up the first one, a second glowworm will appear. Take the second worm as well.
- Repeat the process for a third time to capture the final glowworm.
- Select a glowworm from your inventory and use it on the lamp in the statue's hand.
- Use a second worm on the lamp to the left side of the gate.
- Use the final worm on the lamp to the right side of the gate.
- The light from the lamps reveals an object. Click on the 'glimmering light' on the ground. It is a key.
- Use the key on the chest. Click on the chest to find a stone heart. Use the stone heart on the statue's empty hand.

**The Grave:**

- Take the three stones from the ground.



- Use the stones on the bucket hanging from the tree branch.
- Pull on the bucket. Amber is not heavy enough to pull down the bucket on her own, but with the added weight of the stones, she successfully removes it from the tree branch.
- Use the bucket on the well to the left side of the screen.
- Left click on the berry bush next to the well. Amber will pick up a few berries.
- Select the berries from the inventory. Position yourself so you are to the left of the acorn hanging from the tree branch.
- Note the squirrel sitting on the same branch.
- Left click on the squirrel. Amber will wave the berries at him, making the squirrel run across the branch and shaking the acorn.
- Now move to the right side of the acorn. Wave the berries again. The squirrel will run across one more time, shaking the nut.
- Move to the left side of the nut and wave the berries one last time. The acorn will fall to the ground.
- Use the bucket of water on the acorn.

Congratulations, you just completed Eternally Us.