

# Adventure Lantern



## **Featured Game:**

Safecracker: The Ultimate Puzzle Adventure

## **Reviews:**

Post Mortem

The Egyptian Prophecy: Fate of Ramses

Shivers

Full Throttle

Silent Hill 2

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

The Winter Rose

## **Interviews:**

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Interview with Alkis Polyrakis on Diamonds in the Rough

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# Editorial

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It is a pleasant September evening. The weather has warmed up considerably since the relatively cold morning. As the plane takes off, the sunset looks beautiful outside the window. It's been a rather long day; it feels good to be heading back home.

I find myself thinking about the brief phone conversation I had with my grandparents this past weekend. My grandfather was telling me about my youngest cousin. Apparently, she is going to fourth grade this year. It has been ten years since the last time I saw her. She was still a baby then. She was yet to learn how to speak and walk. I vaguely remember watching over her for a few hours one afternoon many years ago and wonder what kind of a person she is growing to be.

As I think about estrangement and being distanced from my own family, I notice that many of the passengers seem to be keeping to themselves. Quietly reading, solving a puzzle, listening to some music, taking a nap, or just staring into the sky. There is a calm and peaceful air throughout the entire cabin. I wonder if anybody else is reflecting on past events or admiring the crimson skies. Then I realize I seriously need to stop writing these editorials at odd hours or when I am away from home. It is time to get on with the announcements...

It is my pleasure to welcome three new teammates this month. I met La Primavera thanks to eBay while I was on my usual hunt for adventure games that are not yet part of my collection. She will be joining our team as a reviewer. Her first article is on Silent Hill 2, published here as part of our September issue.

Since we cover a number of old games each month, sometimes it's quite understandable that our readers will have a hard time getting them to work on their computers. Sir Dave will be joining us with a series of articles addressing this very issue. He will be looking at how certain well-known titles can be made to run under Windows XP as well as exploring some other cost-effective options. You can read the first part of the series on this issue.

Finally, thanks to Wendy's continual recruitment efforts, Southern Belle will be joining our team as a walkthrough writer. She has already submitted her first walkthrough, which will be published on the Web site later on this month.

As our team continues to grow, I hope you will enjoy the articles we put together for our September issue. Be sure to come back next month for a special Halloween edition. You can take a look at the last page of this issue for additional details.

-Ugur Sener

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# News

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Compiled by Gnome and Ugur Sener

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## Gray Matter and the return of Jane Jensen:

If you follow adventure gaming news regularly, you will have probably heard about Jane Jensen's return to game development by now. In case you have not seen the update anywhere else, the author of the highly successful and much revered Gabriel Knight series is coming back with a brand new game.

Officially announced at the Games Convention in Leipzig, Germany, Gray Matter already sounds like a highly promising title. Here's an excerpt from the press release introducing the game:

"ANACONDA press conference in Leipzig saw renowned adventure game author Jane Jensen present her new project, provisionally titled "Gray Matter", to more than 60 journalists from around the world.

The game's story mixes eerie mysteries with supernatural events in best Jensen-style. Neurobiologist Dr. David Styles is one of the game's central characters: since losing his wife in a horrible accident some several years ago, he has become a recluse, seldom leaving Dread Hill House, his English country estate.



When student and part-time street performer Samantha Everett shows up at his doorstep, she unexpectedly becomes his assistant. Hailing from America, she has been travelling through most of Europe the last couple years, making do by performing magic tricks on street corners, so this comes as a nice change of pace for her. But is the meeting of Sam and Styles really as coincidental as it seems?

Her first task: finding six test subjects at Oxford University for one of Styles' experiments. The experiment starts off innocently enough: the subjects are tasked with imagining different forms of physical exercise. But then inexplicable incidents start mounting - and Styles receives visitations by his dear departed wife. Now it's up to Sam to solve the mysteries of Dread Hill House.

In Gray Matter, players control both Dr. David Styles as well as Samantha Everett in their bid to uncover the secrets and find out the truth. While Dr. Styles research leads him into an investigation into the intricacies of the human mind, the player will have to tackle stage magic as Sam to solve puzzles. Gray Matter tackles questions concerning the nature of reality and the power of the mind in constructing the world we take for granted.

ANACONDA will publish Gray Matter worldwide in the 4th quarter of 2007. The game is in development at Tonuzaba Entertainment in Hungary.”



#### **THQ UK has published Broken Sword 4:**

Broken Sword 4: The Angel of Death has been published by THQ UK. It looks like gamers residing in North America will have to wait for a while, but THQ UK has released the game as of September 15. This time around, adventure gamers will meet our old friend George Stobbart in New York. George will encounter Anna Maria, who is in possession of a quite remarkable ancient manuscript. As George quickly embarks on a journey that will take him all over the world in hopes of solving an ancient riddle, adventure gamers will be treated to a healthy dose of puzzles. While we wait for the North American publish of Broken Sword 4: The Angel of Death, there is a 350 Mb demo for the game that can be downloaded either from 3Dgamers ([www.3dgamers.com/games/brokensword4](http://www.3dgamers.com/games/brokensword4)) or Worthplaying ([www.worthdownloading.com/game.php?gid=1705](http://www.worthdownloading.com/game.php?gid=1705)).

#### **Mr. Smoozles Goes Nutso is available for purchase:**

Juniper Games has released their first game. Mr. Smoozles Goes Nutso is currently available for purchase from the Juniper Games Web site. The arcade adventure game features an interesting storyline with colorful characters, merging old-school arcade style gaming with adventure gaming elements. You can purchase the game through [www.Juniper-Games.com](http://www.Juniper-Games.com).



#### **Official Web site launched for Undercover: Operation Wintersun:**

ANACONDA has announced the launch of an official Web site for their upcoming adventure game Undercover: Operation Wintersun. Undercover tells the story of Dr. John Russell as he embarks on a secret operation in Germany at the time of the Second World War. It is up to Russell to find out what the Nazis are researching and put an end to

their project. The official site, available at [www.undercover-game.com](http://www.undercover-game.com), currently features a number of screenshots, some concept art, and general information about the game.

### **The Judgement of Quintus:**

The immensely talented people responsible for the freeware, quirky and rather popular indy adventure "Jessica Plunkenstein and the Duesseldorf Conspiracy" have announced their new project. The ambitious and not-so-freeware "The Judgement of Quintus", apparently taking place in imperial Rome.

Expect a polished adventuring epic, featuring "countless dangers including evil sorceresses, would-be alchemists, plush animals, celebrity judges, overprotective parents, underzealous children, expectorant actors, resilient stagehands, tour groups, vestal vegans, Major-Generals, General-Majors, and, the most feared of all beasts, the Gladiopossum."



The game should appear sometime in 2007. For more info, have a look at the official site of greGames ([www.gregames.net/games](http://www.gregames.net/games)).



### **More episodic gaming fun:**

Seems like Telltale kick started a trend that's rapidly entering the mainstream gaming market. After Bone, the Half-Life and Sin episodes, and the hotly anticipated Sam and Max series 1, here comes the newer episodic game series: The Penny Arcade Adventures!

A collaboration of the beautiful people of Penny Arcade with the lovable Hothead Games indy developers.

The first game will be entitled Penny Arcade Adventures: On the Rain-Slick Precipice of Darkness and will ship on PC, Mac and Linux. platforms. More episodes will follow, allowing Penny Arcade fans to get their fix every few months. To find out more information, take a look at the Hot Head Games Web site ([www.hotheadgames.com/pa.php](http://www.hotheadgames.com/pa.php)).

## Interview with Scott Frost on Awaken

Conducted by Ugur Sener

**[Editorial Note:** This interview has been originally conducted for Just Adventure ([www.JustAdventure.com](http://www.JustAdventure.com)) and published here with site owner Randy Sluganski's permission.]

*Death... Could it truly be the end? Can something so intricate, so complex as a human being simply cease to exist? Or is there more to existence than the mere act of drawing breath? Millions believe in the final judgment that is to come after life as we know it comes to an end. An ancient prophecy of divine punishment and eternal bliss... The answer for all mortal suffering, the ultimate justice, a piece of the incredible plan that is so complex that it cannot be comprehended by the human mind.*

*Millions more believe in reincarnation. The return of the immortal spirit to the realm of the living in a new shell... A cycle of birth, death, and rebirth that can only be broken when the spirit sees past the illusion that is the mortal world. A tremendous journey to realize we are all part of something greater, an all-encompassing entity, the ultimate and only true consciousness, Brahma.*

*Despite our beliefs, despite our struggles to understand the deeper meaning of life, what if the truth of human existence had been known with unfaltering certainty millennia ago? What if it had been kept hidden for all these years?*

*Currently under development by Qwato Interactive Studios, Awaken draws inspiration from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian high society. The era saw a curious interest in mummified Egyptian corpses. It was not uncommon for a British aristocrat to invite guests for a mummy unwrapping. The quasi-ritualistic process offered a way to experience a spiritual connection to the ancient corpses.*



*Awaken proposes that five mummified children were found during this period. Yet they were far from the heart of Egypt. They were not hidden within an awe-inspiring pyramid. This was not the glorified preservation of a pharaoh. The children were found in an extremely humble makeshift tomb. It almost seemed like an accident that they were mummified at all.*

*After the initial discovery, the five mummies were transferred to the Americas. They seemed to be once again lost in time. Their incredible secret was hidden. What they had been guarding was unknown. The truth of their existence hidden from the mummy traders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the children had disappeared for a*

*second time. Perhaps they had been diminished to little more than a footnote in some travel log.*

*But how can the greatest truth be kept hidden forever? These ancient mummies, these Children of Light could not be farther from ordinary. They held the key to the ultimate mystery. They were the guardians of the gate that kept the very secret of human existence. The time might be at hand to finally definitively answer questions asked millennia ago. But you cannot let this sacred truth, this hidden power to fall into the wrong hands. It is time for a journey. The core of your being, your very soul must embark upon a path that could lead you to the only secret that is worth knowing.*



*Awaken is without a doubt a rather ambitious undertaking. The game not only features a highly interesting storyline and intriguing setting, but it also intends to merge together key aspects of several well-known games. Putting the emphasis on the storyline, Awaken intends to challenge players to explore its unique setting and take advantage of several distinctive game play mechanics. The game will be accessible through the Internet, allowing players to join the experience with no installation requirements.*

*Scott Frost, the director of Qwato Interactive Studios, has provided us detailed information about their upcoming project. Even as development efforts continue, here's your chance to gain some insight into this remarkable project:*

**[Ugur Sener]: What can you tell us about the story behind the game? Can you provide any details about the setting?**

**[Scott Frost]:** "During the 19th century a new form of entertainment emerged in Victorian high society. Local surgeons would draw large crowds to their homes to perform mummy unwrappings.

Eager to experience a macabre connection with the eternal Egyptian corpses, people would flock to witness the unwrappings. Some believed the corpses held medicinal properties, capable of curing all human disease.

While the phenomena continued, the mummy import business raged throughout Europe. As was common, most of the shipments were never tracked and eventually disappeared from record.

One shipment was sent to an unknown destination in the Americas. It contained the remains of five mummified children, discovered in a remote makeshift tomb,



far from the heart of Egypt.

Hidden as they were in death, they would disappear once more...

Now, amidst the chaos of modern society, the truth of human existence has been discovered. This truth possesses the power to forever change our world, our beliefs, our fate. Demi, a deformity born of loathing and despair, will stop at nothing to ensure that it does. He seeks out these Children of Light; ancient sentries to the gate that will unlock this truth.

You must be the first to locate the Children of Light. Use all of your abilities to stop Demi and his disciples from unlocking their power. Your only guide through this torment is Ari'ana; a deity who haunts your sub-conscience. Her reality will become the dreamscape from which your soul must Awaken."

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Awaken was originally born years ago as a point and click adventure game combining 3D characters and objects composited with 2D photographs of hand made miniature models. In 2002, we spent over a year building the core engine and shopped it around to all the major publishers in the US, as well as many European publishers. If you can name them, we have talked to them. Without a previous AAA+ title under our belt, we were told the product was "too niche." Although "creative and very cool

looking", it would not be able to become a cash printing machine. It was considered to belong to a dead genre and the content was not mainstream. We heard this from almost everyone we spoke with. Maybe they were being kind to us, but we really thought we had developed something that nobody had seen before.

The original DirectX demo is still available here if you (or your readers) want to download and play it. <http://www.Awaken.net/demo> - just grab and save the install.exe file. There is a readme.txt file as well.

Since the story is the most important aspect of Awaken, we decided to scale the concept way back and slash our development budget by 99.9%. Welcome to v.2.

We set the following guidelines as part of our newly defined scope:

1. Weave the world of Awaken into a user interface that combines these inspirational elements:

- the simplistic top down pixel and tile design of The Legend of Zelda.
  - the rich fiction of Zork.
  - the environmental discovery process found in Myst.
  - the dark adult edge of Trilobyte's 7<sup>th</sup> Guest and 11<sup>th</sup> Hour.
  - the anticipation of the puzzles from Google's Da Vinci Code quest.
2. Create a free to play game on the internet that lives entirely within a cross-platform compatible web browser requiring no client installation on the user's machine.

In addition we want to create a multi-player experience in the less traditional sense. We are firm believers that the people who come to play Awaken will be looking for a casual game they can hop in and out of at any time. They will probably not be looking for a game where they have to spend hours working with other players to accomplish objectives and goals. That said, we are providing areas within Awaken that are like large chat rooms. So for instance, if you enter a building and there are other characters inside, you will be able to chat with them about what they are experiencing. We are hoping that as characters get engaged in the world, they will take on the persona of their souls and help feed the fiction for other players. As far as this fiction goes, no topic is really off limits. This is an adult oriented game, therefore, we are expecting our players to let loose. Granted, we'll be on the lookout for any racial hatred, but pretty much anything else is fair game as long as it feeds the fiction.



Overall, it is a single player experience, but we have provided places where multiple-players can come together and interact. In addition, we are working on a future system where users will be able to create their own cults. These cults will have special meeting places in the world where they can bring their cult together to talk about whatever they like. Cults can either be members only, or open to the public. In addition, there are methods for recruiting any player to a cult. The bigger the cult, the more powerful it becomes and certain characteristics about each soul will change based on that.

We are hoping to launch beta of "Chapter One. Verse One." in Q4 2006. In the meantime, users can register their souls as <http://www.Awaken.net>.

In addition, we are using the following technologies and contractors for development:

- SwishMax <http://www.swishmax.com> for SWF development and coding by our lead programmer Elmar Bloss

- Adobe Photoshop
- Final Cut Pro
- Lightwave 3D
- Pro Motion <http://www.cosmigo.com/promotion/> for sprite development
- Textwrangler <http://www.barebonessoftware.com/> for PHP development
- MySQL for the database backend
- Soul Artwork by Rebecca Dell Conway
- Music composed by Steven Gutheinz <http://www.stevengutheinz.com/>
- Trailer Narration by Jim Greulich <http://www.jimgvo.com/>
- Pixel Artwork by Mick Hanrahan

**[US]: What kind of characters will players be controlling? What does the "resurrection" process entail?**

**[SF]:** You have a soul. This is the fundamental concept of Awaken. When a user begins the experience, they are tasked with creating a custom soul that is unique to them. The soul is created based upon attributes and characteristics similar to human essence. These attributes are defined as follows:

- Physical - That which makes up the perceived physical state of a human.
- Logical - That which defines the ability to think and reason of a human.
- Emotional - That which defines the sensations and experiences of a human.
- Spiritual - That which defines the beliefs, morals, and ethics of a human.
- Mortal - That which defines the conceptual understandings of life and death of a human.



There are a total of 64 character types in all that a player can choose from. For our beta launch, we will probably have close to all 64 of them created at a player level, but will only have a small selection available that physically match the on screen avatar that you would walk around with. We are hoping to have all 64 avatars created in the months post beta launch. Most of the characters were created in the vein of goth, but our character artist Rebecca Conway has done a fantastic job of giving each soul its personal identity. We are hoping that users will enjoy her artwork as well as that of our pixel artist Mick Hanrahan.

The resurrection process is simply the ability to log back in where you left off. Because we are developing a web based game, we are taking great care to ensure that anything we can know about a soul can be tracked and stored at the database level.

**[US]: How will the players be able to shape their characters? Will the game include strong role-playing elements?**

**[SF]:** As users move through the Awaken experience, the composition of their soul's attributes will be challenged and evolved through their actions, interactions with other characters, and the decisions they make. It is a model based upon analysis of psychological research. Although it includes traditional elements such as strength and armor, these are not humanistic qualities that can evolve and mature. Users can gain experience as well as money for upgraded items and increased levels of human essence. The journey will pose fundamental questions about their existence and constantly engage them on an emotional level through what we call "emotional stray clauses."

Once a soul is created users have the option to post their soul into the 'tomb of souls'. The tomb of souls is a global portal community that captures information regarding each soul: where it originates, what it looks like, and the essence it contains. The tomb of souls is a tool to track users and allow them to search and find others around the globe with similar interests.



**[US]: What kind of challenges can players expect to face during the game?**

**[SF]:** While there are no true hack'n'slash or twitchy trigger elements to Awaken, we are planning some navigational challenges to moving characters through the world to avoid the badasses as we like to call them. When a badass is encountered, we take care of the fighting for you. The outcomes and results are

randomized based upon pre-defined algorithms that take several factors into account. Any rewards from the encounter are automatically added to the soul's inventory if there is room.

These items will invariably be used to progress the plot forward, but at the same time, you must decide which items to carry and which ones to drop. It will be interesting to see statistics on the types of items that users are carrying around. We want to make all of these statistics transparent and available for everyone to see. So for instance, we can find out how many people stopped to look at the dead dog. We can see how many people are carrying a knife versus a chain. This kind of data can then be used as we develop future chapters for the game.

Each chapter in the world will also present a different final puzzle that must be solved before proceeding to the next chapter. They are essentially mind bending games designed to test a soul's mental skills and patience. We tried to select puzzles that are difficult, but not impossible. After all, what's the point in playing a game if you are not challenged by it? Will people get frustrated? Absolutely.

But there are also those out there that will find the puzzles too easy.

**[US]: Can you give me some details about the game's interface? How will players control their characters and interact with others?**

**[SF]:** Awaken is a 2D top down tile based world exploration game. It harkens back to Zelda, but also incorporates a Zork style command prompt, with 7<sup>th</sup> Guest style pop up animations and shock scenes. Think bloody head pops up with shrieking woman...nice! Almost all of the interface and command options are presented on one screen. We have tried to maximize real estate in a compressed flash interface screen. The challenge for us is to make it look good while conserving bandwidth for graphics, sound, and music. It is not easy, especially when trying to design a game that can scale as the user community grows.

**[US]: What can you tell me about the game's overall atmosphere? How do you expect this to be communicated in a multiplayer setting?**



**[SF]:** The best way to play Awaken is in a dark room with your speakers turned way up. The mood we are trying to create is a dark one. Since it is often times difficult to display pertinent details at the pixel level, we rely on sound and graphic descriptions to create the imagery we want.

In addition, our composer Steven Gutheinz will be creating some beautifully haunting music for us to set the right mood. Steve is definitely the most talented young Hollywood composer out there. If I was in the film business, I'd have him score every single movie I made. I feel privileged to have him as part of Awaken.

We are hoping that as players move through the experience, they will undoubtedly add their own flavor to the stories and descriptions. For instance, there is a diary in the first world that contains a registry of entries. Those that find it, can write their own answers to a question posed, or their own random thoughts. We hope that these kinds of items will also add content to the world for people to explore, and just make them think.

**[US]: What kind of environments can players expect to explore?**

**[SF]:** We've started off with a pretty elaborate tile set for the first few chapters, including your traditional environmental elements and multiple building styles and types. The ultimate objective is to basically imagine this large town where a lot of random people from all over the world have come in search of answers. People sleeping in cars, tents, little encampments begin to sprout up. All the while,

people are searching for the Children of Light. When one is found, others will try to steal them away. So it becomes this never ending cycle of treasure hunting.

As far as specific environments go, you have your run of the mill swamps, dead forests, scorched earth and water elements. Since we are trying to manage CPU memory, we are somewhat limited in Flash as to how complex we can make the environments. We will definitely be relying on the tile set, the fiction, and photo-realistic pop ups that give visual clues and detail.

**[US]: Will the game have a distinct beginning and ending or will it be an ongoing multiplayer world?**

**[SF]:** It will definitely have a beginning and a projected story path with several endings already in mind. However, we are hoping that if we can build a community around Awaken and make it last, we will be able to provide many new chapters. If this becomes the case, we may eventually weave fan fiction into the world of Awaken to create a more inclusive environment for our end users. We really want the fans to help shape where the story goes and how things unfold because ultimately, it is their world and we are just opening up the doors to let them in to see for themselves.



As far as the chapters go, if Awaken proves popular, we are developing our engine to be able to produce new chapters every two weeks. We are hoping to shave this down to about a week's time because people definitely want to experience new things. When we officially launch (post beta), we plan to have 3 chapters available.

*Adventure Lantern thanks Scott Frost for sharing detailed information with us about Qwato Interactive Studios' upcoming project Awaken. Based on the information provided by Mr. Frost, Awaken certainly looks like a very promising game. Exploring the game's world as a spirit and seeking the Children of Light can make for a very interesting and engaging experience. Having the opportunity to exchange observations with other players could enrich the game. Allowing players to directly contribute to the evolution of the game's world could make Awaken a very distinct and ever-changing virtual universe.*

*Unfortunately, before we can dive into the game's world, we'll have to wait a little longer. In the meantime, you can take a trip to the official Awaken Web site and register as a soul waiting for resurrection. The official site can be found at: [www.awaken.net](http://www.awaken.net). You can also take a look at the teaser trailer for Awaken. The trailer is available through the game's official site as well as YouTube ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY-2m1AA7-c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY-2m1AA7-c)).*

## Interview with Alkis Polyrakis on Diamonds in the Rough

**Conducted by Ugur Sener**

*If you play independent freeware adventure games on a regular basis, you will have more than likely come across Other Worlds, a title developed by Alkis Polyrakis. Released in late 2004, Other Worlds perhaps did not score points for groundbreaking graphics, but it did impress quite a few gamers with its interesting story, colorful characters, and entertaining challenges. And now, Alkis Polyrakis is back to design his second game. But things will be a little different this time around.*

*Early in April 2006, Alkis and his teammates officially launched an independent adventure game development company called Atropos Studios. The company seeks to deliver quality adventure games with an emphasis on story, interesting characters, and inventory-based puzzles. The development team is already hard at work on their first project, called Diamonds in the Rough.*



*The adventure game will tell the story of Jason Hart. A young man with exceptional gifts, Jason is approached by the mysterious Diamonds in the Rough organization. The organization is actively recruiting individuals with powers like telekinesis or telepathy. Even though he does not fully understand the nature of the work he will be doing, Jason accepts the job offer and moves to a town in the Midwest. But what exactly is Jason supposed to do for Diamonds in the Rough?*

*Who are the people operating the organization? What is their true agenda? It will be up to Jason to unlock the mystery.*

*As Atropos Studios continues the development efforts on Diamonds in the Rough, we conducted an extensive interview with Alkis to find more about his new company and his current project. Alkis kindly provided us with a great deal of information while telling us a little about his prior experiences with adventure games as well. Here's the interview:*

**[Adventure Lantern]: Can you tell us about how you got interested in adventure gaming in the first place? What was the first one you played? What was it that you like about the genre?**

**[Alkis Polyrakis]:** Unfortunately, I can't recall the first adventure game I ever played. It was a text adventure 20 years ago (I was 11) on a Spectrum ZX+. I remember staring at a black screen with white letters for a long time, before I realized the game was waiting for me to type something. I noticed something

about some keys on the ground, so I typed very carefully “take the keys”. The response “Taken” (or something of the sort) gave me the goosebumps, and from that moment I was hooked with adventure games and never looked back.

The first one I completed was The Hobbit by Beam Software. At first I was intrigued by being able to “communicate” with the computer so to speak, as for the first time I was able to type in English instead of programming. Later on, it was the challenge of solving puzzles that made me love the genre.

**[AL]: How did you feel about the transition from text adventures to graphical ones?**

**[AP]:** Most of us who were around at the time will tell you that it felt like we were witnessing technology at its very peak! But to me the most important transition was when the first games in which you didn't have to type at all came out, the first icon-driven adventures by ICOM and Lucasfilms. I admit I still miss the parser sometimes, and I wonder why we never saw more games that tried to include both an icon-driven system AND a text parser, like Leisure Suit Larry VII.



**[AL]: What made you get into game development? Can you tell us a little about the experience of making Other Worlds?**

**[AP]:** Ever since I've started playing adventure games, I wondered what it would be like to create one. I decided to make Other Worlds as a gift to my girlfriend (at the time). The project started as a text adventure for the Amiga in 1997; I was using the fantastic ADMS script language at the time. However, I abandoned it after a few months because I realized it wasn't going to be played by enough people to justify the hard work I was putting into it. A few years later, I learned about the Adventure Game Studio engine by Chris Jones. I decided to try it and I was very pleased to find out that it was by far the best engine ever created for the purpose.

The experience was very stressing but also very rewarding. I didn't expect to ever make another game, so I wanted it to be as good and lasting as possible; that is why it ended up being so huge. It took me 3.5 years to finish it, and it was worth every second.

**[AL]: Did you have anyone else help you with the development efforts or was this entirely a one-man show?**

**[AP]:** I did everything myself, but I took the background graphics, music and



sound effects from wherever I could find them on the internet (after asking for permission when possible).

**[AL]: Do you remember how you felt after finally completing the game and the first few people started downloading it? What was the initial feedback like?**

**[AP]:** First I was amazed by the numbers... more than two thousand people downloaded it within the first three weeks. The initial feedback was very enthusiastic, which of course felt good but I thought people were just trying to be nice. What really made me feel good about myself was the positive feedback I got from the first people who \*completed\* Other Worlds. I know it's a very long game so I doubt anyone would complete it if they didn't like it. In fact, I have yet to receive negative feedback from anyone who played the game to the end; most of those who didn't like it had abandoned it after a few minutes, due to the outdated graphics, which is understandable. But those who decided to tolerate them and not let go of the game until the final credits were more than satisfied.



**[AL]: Some time after releasing Other Worlds, you took a break from your development efforts. What was the cause of this? What made you come back?**

**[AP]:** I wasn't thinking of it as a break at the time. I never intended to create another game. But after some point, I couldn't continue ignoring how well Other Worlds had been received. All those positive reviews and

literally thousands of e-mails from people who enjoyed it (and still do) made me reconsider. I received feedback from players from all over the world; the youngest of them was 12 years old and the oldest one 81. They all said pretty much the same thing: that they enjoyed what I had given them for free much more than some titles they had had to pay for. A simple question rose to my mind then: If an amateur game with horrible graphics appealed to so many people, what would happen if I decided to create a professional title? That was when I decided to found my own adventure game developing company.

**[AL]: Can you describe the transition from developing an independent freeware product to commercial adventure games?**

The main difference lies in the way I work. The former was a hobby I was doing alone during my leisure time. The latter is a work project, with a budget, a team of colleagues and deadlines. What does not change is how much I am enjoying the developing process, and how I am not prepared to betray my beliefs in what makes a good game just to sell more copies.

**[AL]: And what would you say it is that makes a good adventure game?**

**[AP]:** A good, original story that ventures to be controversial and different instead of going for the usual Atlantis-Egypt-Murder-Curse etc. popular, yet overused ideas. Challenging, mostly inventory based puzzles. Plenty of character and environment interaction; respect the player and give him more than just an arrow and 1-2 hotspots per screen. Adventure game players are not idiots, so you should not insult their intelligence by giving them puzzles a 12-year old can solve. You must be able to challenge and surprise them. Meaningful dialogue, plot twists and last but not least, NO ACTION SEQUENCES.

**[AL]: Can you tell us about your new company, Atropos Studios? What kind of a team is behind the games you will be developing? How has the experience been so far? What were some of the challenges?**

**[AP]:** The biggest challenge of all was finding the right associates, in order to compose a team of experienced and enthusiastic members who could fit in our budget, which as I'm sure you understand is not unlimited for that first game of ours. At this point I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my good friend Agustin Cordes from Nucleosys, who offered me some valuable advice, not to mention a list of contacts.

The team currently consists of a product manager, a project manager, a marketing consultant, two graphics artists, a music composer, a sound engineer, a scientific committee, several voice actors and myself (story and programming). The scientific committee consists of specialists of different backgrounds (engineering, medicine, history etc.) who make sure that everything in the script is correct from a scientific point of view. Last but not least, we have a number of beta testers of varying gaming experience.

The experience so far has been flawless and I consider myself lucky to be working with such a capable and friendly crew.

**[AL]: What is your goal with Atropos Studios? What do you see as the focus of your projects?**

**[AP]:** Our goal is to create quality adventure games, keeping in mind the values that made the genre popular during its golden era (late 80s – early 90s). We do not believe that the genre has to change in order to evolve; we believe in the modernization rather than in the degeneration of adventure games.

**[AL]: Can you give me an example of the kind of modernization you are trying to achieve? Does it mostly have to do with the technologies involved rather than the style of the games?**

**[AP]:** Mostly yes, but not exclusively. The Thoughts Panel for instance, which I will explain in detail later, is an innovation that will instantly feel familiar to the player. It's new, it's modern, but it's not different than what you are used to. These are the sort of ideas the genre needs, all in my humble opinion of course.

**[AL]: Could you provide an overview of your first project, Diamonds in the Rough? What can you tell us about the story?**

**[AP]:** Diamonds in the Rough will be a 3rd person, point & click adventure game. The story is about a group of young people who are hired by an ambiguous organization thanks to their paranormal skills. You will assume the role of Jason Hart, who will eventually try to unveil what the intentions of his employers are. I'm not willing to reveal much more on the storyline at this point, but I can say that it will be a fantasy game that focuses on the dark side of the human soul.

**[AL]: What was the inspiration behind the storyline? Are there any works of literature or other adventure games that influenced the plot?**

**[AP]:** Not really. The Thoughts Panel was inspired by the 'Notepad' feature in Discworld Noir, although it's used in a very different way. But I can't say the story was consciously inspired by anything I've ever read or played.

**[AL]: What can you tell us about the main character Jason Hart?**

**[AP]:** Jason begins the game as an average 20 year old, who hadn't given his future much thought before he was approached by Diamonds in the Rough. Until then, he used to live in a small town with his mother. He's a loner by nature and he doesn't make friends easily. He has a kind of raw intelligence of which, much like his 'special skills', he's not even aware. Overall, Jason starts off as a simple, innocent young man, but expect him to change dramatically before you see the end of the game.

**[AL]: Who are some of the other characters that will be part of the game?**

**[AP]:** I'll describe two of them for you:

William is a middle age guy who works for DITR and he is the first to approach Jason. He's enigmatic by nature and it's always hard to figure out his true feelings about anything. As Jason's parents divorced when he was still a child, William will soon become his father figure. He seems to be a very wise man and most DITR employees look up to him.

Sydelle is a shy, sweet 25 year old girl. She likes Jason more than anyone else who lives in the town that serves as the company's premises. She has been working for DITR for a year, and she doesn't like talking about her past. In some ways, she's as much a mystery as William.

**[AL]: What can you tell us about the mysterious organization Diamonds in the Rough?**

**[AP]:** DITR was founded by a woman called Corinne Feller in 1989. Feller passed away a few years later, but others decided to continue her work. Their official purpose is to locate people with paranormal abilities, recruit them, confine them in a secure environment and study them out of scientific interest. Whether that is all they do or not is a question that torments our hero.



**[AL]: What kind of missions would Jason be undertaking for this organization?**

**[AP]:** All they ask him to do is to concentrate on a list of numbers and choose one of them.

**[AL]: How will Diamonds in the Rough play? What kind of an adventure gaming experience does the game seek to provide?**

**[AP]:** Diamonds in the Rough will play like the early 90s 3<sup>rd</sup> person point & click adventure games, which means that you should not expect an all-purpose cursor, empty landscapes and reduced difficulty. Instead, the game will feature multiple cursors, plenty of character interaction, descriptions for every item on the screen and a great number of challenging, mostly inventory-based puzzles. Puzzles are very important to us, and our goal will be to implement a successful ratio of easy, medium and hard tasks that will reward the experienced players without discouraging the new ones.

**[AL]: Can you tell me a little bit about how you try and gauge the difficulty of the various challenges?**

**[AP]:** A puzzle's difficulty is judged by a number of factors: the number of items required for you to solve it, the number of characters you need to contact, the hints provided that will point you to the right direction and \*when\* they were provided (should you remember something vital in a conversation early in the game?). Easy puzzles are only there to make the player feel good and move on with the story without much trouble. For example, an easy puzzle is when you are in need of an item a character has, and that character clearly hints what you have to give him to take it. Medium difficulty puzzles require combinational thinking, as the answer is not directly in front of your eyes. Hard puzzles will

make you proud of solving them; you will only do that if you carefully follow the story and understand the characters and their relations. The beta testers, who vary from newbies to hard core adventures, are responsible for determining whether a puzzle is too unfair or illogical and needs to be better hinted at, or removed completely.

**[AL]: What are some of the things that will set Diamonds in the Rough apart from other adventure games?**

**[AP]:** First of all, the story, which will be deeper and more complex than the ones we usually witness in adventure games. We will be dealing with some controversial issues that, as far as I know, have not been discussed in any other computer games. I also believe the Thoughts Panel will be an innovation that will enhance the gaming experience greatly.



**[AL]: The official Web site tells us we will have access to Jason's thoughts. Can you describe how this is going to work?**

**[AP]:** The Thoughts Panel is easy to learn, but complicated to explain in detail; I will do my best.

Think of it as a second inventory. As you progress in the game, new thoughts are added and old thoughts disappear. A simple thought is a character's name, for instance. A more complex one can be a situation, like a meeting Jason just had or something he saw.

Thoughts can be:

- Examined (example: click on a name and Jason will tell you what he thinks about that person at the time)
- Combined (example: use a name on a situation and Jason will think if there's a connection between them)
- Used anywhere else in the game, just like inventory items (example: use a situation on a person and the person may tell you something about it)

Successful use of any of the above may open a new location ("I'd better go ask X what he thinks of that"), trigger something somewhere else in the game, or even make Jason think of something new (a new thought will be added).

I like to think that the Thoughts panel will make Jason seem more real, instead of a marionette that obeys to the player's wishes. Plus, it should create some original puzzles.

**[AL]: What kind of challenges can the players expect to encounter?**

**[AP]:** The players should not expect to solve the game by brute force (trying everything on everything). Due to the increased number of items, hotspots and thoughts, that would be impossible. Instead, they will need to \*become\* Jason, start thinking what they'd do had they been in his shoes in order to progress. I'd say the game's difficulty will be higher than the one of most recent titles, but none of the puzzles will be impossible to solve by logic.

**[AL]: How far is the Atropos Studios team in the development process? Do you have a release date you can share with us?**

**[AP]:** We're still fairly early in the development process. The game is expected to be released by fall 2007.

**[AL]: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?**

**[AP]:** Dear AL readers, some of you may have noticed that more and more independent developers have decided to take matters in their own hands and create quality adventure games. I humbly ask you to have faith in them and support them. Companies like Nucleosys, Himalaya Studios, Pan Metron Ariston, and Track7 Games to name a few daily prove that you don't need a million dollars to make something good.

I would also like to thank you, Ugur, for a very interesting interview and wish you every success in the future.

*Adventure Lantern thanks Alkis for providing us detailed information about Atropos Studios and the company's first adventure game.*

*It looks like adventure gamers can expect a solid storyline from Diamonds in the Rough. It should be interesting to discover the true nature of the mysterious organization and see how Jason's objectives will change as a result of his findings. Gamers should also expect a solid challenge from Diamonds in the Rough. Atropos Studios seems to be bent on making sure we'll be spending quite a few hours overcoming the game's puzzles. Atropos Studios seems to have the potential to deliver quite an entertaining adventure game. While it is still too early to pass judgment on the project, Diamonds in the Rough may still be worth putting on the radar.*

*If you want to find out more about Atropos Studios or Diamonds in the Rough, check out the company's official site at <http://www.atropos-studios.com>.*

## Interview with Dimitris Manos on The Exchange Student

Conducted by Ugur Sener

*Before there was Adventure Lantern, there was The Inventory. Many of Adventure Lantern's readers will have undoubtedly heard of the successful downloadable magazine. Between November 2002 and May 2005, The Inventory released a total of 25 issues. Under the leadership of Dimitris Manos, the magazine delivered plenty of great adventure gaming content.*



*Sadly, at least for now, the May 2005 edition was the last issue of the magazine. Stopping the PDF magazine, Dimitris focused his energies on Adventure Europe ([www.Adventure-EU.com](http://www.Adventure-EU.com)), providing us adventure gaming information in a new format. The Web site has been around for quite some time now, featuring plenty of detailed information on a number of different titles. But at the same time, Dimitris has been working on other things.*

*When you spend several years of your life writing about adventure games, it is perhaps natural to want to be involved in the development of one. Dimitris got involved with game development with Sealed Lips. While that project seems to be on hold for now, Dimitris has been busily working on The Exchange Student.*



*The product of a small independent team, The Exchange Student is an episodic adventure game series for the PC and Macintosh. The first episode of the game was released just a few weeks ago.*

*We will cover the first episode of The Exchange Student with a review article on our October issue. In the meantime, however, we conducted an interview with Dimitris about his project and the development process up to this point. We also asked him to tell us about his experiences working on The Inventory and Adventure Europe. Without further ado, here's the interview:*

**[Adventure Lantern]:** What was it that got you interested in adventure games in the first place? When did you decide to contribute to the adventure gaming community by publishing the Inventory?

**[Dimitris Manos]:** The first adventure game I played was Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. I had watched the movie Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and I wanted to play a game that was based on a movie. Until that point I was only playing simple platform games like Golden Axe and Prince of Persia, so when I

first played Indiana Jones, I was in awe. It was not just based on a movie, it was just like playing in a movie. I guess it was the focus on storytelling that made adventure games so special as a genre in my own eyes.

I started writing The Inventory in November 2002. Back then some people wanted to present point and click adventure games as a dead genre. So The Inventory was some sort of a reaction to this statement. Now, 4 years later, The Inventory is dead, but point and click adventure games are still alive and actually kicking (A Vampyre Story and Gray Matter for instance).

**[AL]: Can you tell us a little about your experiences with the magazine?**

**[DM]:** Lots of work. Lots of sleepless nights. But the adventure game fans liked it, and it spawned a new wave of adventure games coverage so I am very happy I did it, and I wish I had the time to revive the magazine. It also was a good introduction to the world of adventure games, it gave me a better insight in adventure game mechanics and it brought me in touch with some very prestigious people in the industry.

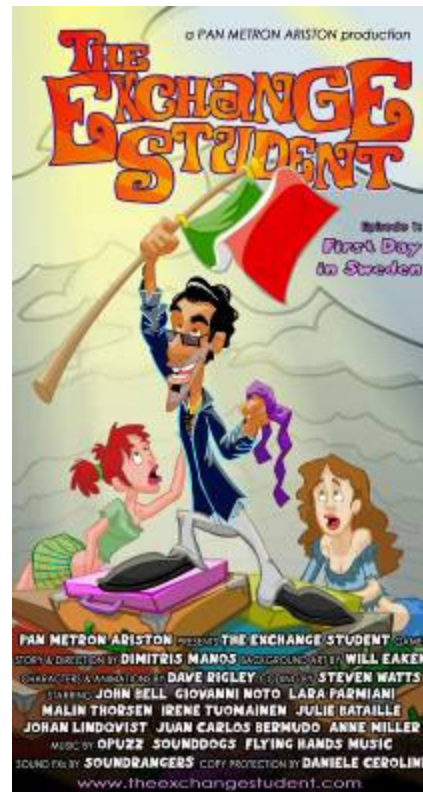
**[AL]: What led to the transition from The Inventory to Adventure Europe?**

**[DM]:** Many reasons. First of all, when you have an online magazine, you can only come across to your audience through words and screenshots. But when you have a website like Adventure Europe you can give so much more to your audience. Movies, music, demos and articles. Plus, I was starting with game development at the time and running Adventure Europe takes less time than running The Inventory.

**[AL]: Now that you are involved in game development personally, what kind of direction do you see Adventure Europe taking in the future?**

Obviously game development is taking most of my time right now, and I will need help from new colleagues so that I can keep on running Adventure Europe. But fortunately I have some very capable co-editors and assistants who make the co-existence of Adventure Europe and Pan Metron Ariston possible.

**[AL]: When did you first working on The Exchange Student? How was the idea for the game born?**

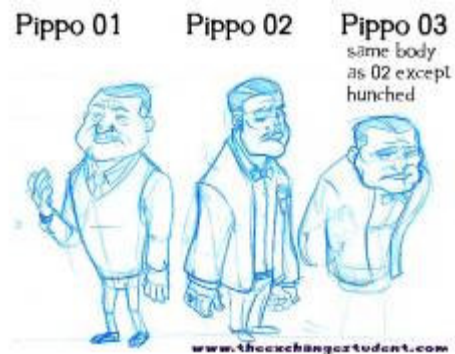




**[DM]:** A couple of years ago, I was contacted by a Russian publisher of mobile phone games called Magixoft. They were looking for a writer to write stories for new adventure games for mobile phones. I proposed that I could give it a go and that I could send them a couple of story suggestions. They said they wanted to make games like Leisure Suit Larry and Laura Bow. During my years as an exchange student I met plenty of Larry-like characters, so I thought that a story featuring an exchange student as the main hero would work great for their needs. To make a long story short: Magixoft initially hired me and some other artists to work on the game, during the development they changed their mind and preferred to move resources to other projects, and I decided to retain the rights for myself, start my own company and develop The Exchange Student for PCs, Macs and Pocket PCs.

**[AL]: Does the series carry strong influences from your days as an exchange student?**

**[DM]:** Absolutely! A lot of people ask me if Emilio's story is my story. That's not true, I have very little in common with Emilio, but almost each and every character in the game is inspired by people I've met during my years as an exchange student. I was an exchange student in Västerås, the city where the game takes place, so a lot of the locations are based on real locations as well.



**[AL]: What can you tell us about the story of the game?**

**[DM]:** The story of TES is about Emilio Carboni, a 22 y.o. Italian student who has never had a girlfriend in his entire life. His friend Vincenzo just came back from an exchange program in Sweden. Vincenzo was really satisfied with the program since he met a lot of very attractive ladies during his stay in Sweden. Emilio decides to follow his friend's path. He travels to Sweden to spend a semester there, studying in a city of Sweden called Västerås. The game follows the events taking place from the moment that Emilio leaves his house in Italy until he completes his exchange program and returns home.

**[AL]: Can you give us a broader scope than what the first episode unveils? What are some of the things you have in store for gamers?**

**[DM]:** Hmm that would be hard to do without spoiling anything. What I can say, is that those who played the first episode have seen very little of what the series has to offer. I mean, think of your favorite sitcom, and try to remember the first episode (pilot). Then try to compare the way you saw the characters after the first episode and the way you saw these characters after the end of the first season. According to the feedback we are getting our customers enjoy the humor in the

game and they like the characters a lot, but I expect they will love the characters even more after they've played a couple more episodes.

**[AL]: The first episode of The Exchange Student was released a short time ago. What are some of the things players can expect to find in the game?**

**[DM]:** Lots of humor (especially if you like TV shows like Johnny Bravo, games like Leisure Suit Larry and sitcoms like Friends, That 70s Show and Married with Children), a fast pace of gameplay that will appeal both to experienced and inexperienced gamers, an intuitive and easy to use point and click interface called Amore (identical to the coin interface of Curse of Monkey Island). Beautiful graphics by ex-Lucasarts and ex-Sierra artist Bill Eaken (Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, The Dig, Monkey Island, Leisure Suit Larry 3) and Dave Rigley ([www.24andahalf.com](http://www.24andahalf.com) webcomic). Seriously we have been getting lots of positive feedback in general. One thing we are not so happy about is the length of the game. We plan to work hard on that aspect so that the future episodes are much longer than the first.

Laura 01    Laura 02    Laura 03



**[AL]: Who are some of the main characters that will be part of the adventure?**

**[DM]:** Those of you who have not played episode 1 yet please jump to the next question ☺ . Emilio is an Italian Casanova wannabe. He is a good guy at heart but he just tries way too hard to get a girl. The Spanish guys, Pedro and Miguel are real party animals. They are in Sweden for 1 reason only. Points (also known as... girls). Michelle is a French girl who does not speak English very well. She has traveled to Sweden to improve her English and to meet people from different cultures. Jonas is a Swedish guy who studies engineering. He is a bit naïve, and the party animals' gang will try to take advantage of that fact. Frida is a very good looking Swedish girl, and she becomes the dream of every guy in Emilio's corridor. Bad luck for them though; she is very picky and quite snobbish. There are more characters, but maybe it is better if the players met them in the game ☺

**[AL]: What can you tell us about the overall game play mechanics?**

**[DM]:** The Amore interface is very similar to the coin interface from the Curse of Monkey Island game. However in The Exchange Student you don't have to hold down your mouse button to keep the GUI up, you can just click on a hotspot once and the GUI stays up until you either select an option or you move the cursor away. So when you click on a hotspot you get a heart with three options, an eye (LOOK AT) a hand (INTERACT) and a mouth (TALK TO). You can bypass

dialogues pressing the space button and the inventory drops down when you move your cursor to the top of the screen.

**[AL]: What are the kinds of challenges players can expect to encounter throughout the series?**

**[DM]:** You can forget about the following: Pixel hunting, puzzles done to death (use newspaper underneath the door and push key etc), sliders and generally any sort of puzzle that has no relevance to the story. All puzzles will be intertwined with the story, if there is no reason for a puzzle we will not tuck it in there just so that we make the game longer.

**[AL]: How many episodes will the entire series have? What is the anticipated release schedule for the episodes?**

**[DM]:** When we started we had planned the series to be split in 4 episodes. However the first episode has been doing pretty well so we are thinking of increasing that number and releasing even more episodes. I can only announce a release date for episode 2, and say that it will probably be available end of October (might become beginning of November).



**[AL]: Can you tell us a little about the team behind The Exchange Student? How many people are involved?**

**[DM]:** There are 14 people (development team and the voice actors). Bill Eaken is probably the most prestigious person from the group, since he has made backgrounds and graphics for many legendary adventure game titles like Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, The Dig, Shannara, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, The Secret of Monkey Island and Leisure Suit Larry 3. John Bell, the voice actor behind Emilio, has done voice overs for Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance 2, Rise of Nations and several Star Wars games by Lucasarts. Irene Tuomainen the voice actress who performs the role of Frida, has been the dialect coach of Jennifer Garner for the TV show Alias. Dave Rigley, our animator is the man behind the webcomic 24 and a half ([www.24andahalf.com](http://www.24andahalf.com)). And I can't forget Steven Watts, our coder, who despite the fact that he is still a university student in Australia, his behavior was that of a guy who has had 10+ years of work experience. In general, everyone in the team has been a great addition, and I am thankful to all of them.

**[AL]: How has the development process been so far?**

**[DM]:** It's been a bumpy ride. The budget for the first episode was very tight, and the deadlines were tight too...this caused to a lot of turmoil within the team. But finally we passed all obstacles and The Exchange Student is here, live and kicking ☺

**[AL]: What about life after The Exchange Student? Do you have additional projects line up? Are you planning to continue creating games? Will we see another issue of The Inventory?**

**[DM]:** There are some additional projects we have lined up, but anything else would have to wait until the release of the second episode of The Exchange Student. The plan is to focus on adventure games at the time being, so we would really appreciate all the support we can get from the adventure community. Unfortunately I do not think we will see another issue of The Inventory, but you never know.

**[AL]: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?**

**[DM]:** There are plenty of things I'd like to share with your readers but I'd need more money for that sort of thing Ugur! :D Just kidding. Well, I hope that your readers will support our effort to produce adventure games that will give you this warm feeling that the old Lucasarts and Sierra adventures used to give you. And I would like to congratulate you for your Adventure Lantern magazine. I know how much work it takes to make an online magazine, and I'm both very happy and very impressed that someone have stepped up to fill the empty spot that we left when we stopped The Inventory. I wish you all the best for the future.



*Adventure Lantern thanks Dimitris Manos for providing us detailed information about The Exchange Student as well as his experiences with The Inventory and Adventure Europe. Having transitioned from publishing an online magazine to running a gaming Web site, Dimitris is also taking on the challenge of developing an episodic adventure game. Even as we start working on an article about the first episode of The Exchange Student, the project as a whole certainly sounds interesting and promising. If you want to find out more about The Exchange Student, be sure to check out the game's official Web site at <http://theexchangestudent.com>. You can download the game's demo, take a look at some artwork, and read about the other members of the development team.*

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## Playing Old Adventure Games: Part 1 – Zork Nemesis

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Written by Sir Dave

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This is the first in a monthly series dedicated to the playing of old adventure games. The main subject matter of the articles will be methods for running the games in most circumstances under Windows XP, but in some cases where that is not possible or (in my opinion) not optimal, other alternatives will be discussed. Also, where appropriate, just to make it more interesting, some history of the game(s) in question will be included. Of

course, there are other sources already on the Internet that give instructions for running old adventure games under Windows XP, but hopefully these articles will bring something original and innovative to the table! Sometimes people who lament the alleged end of the golden era of adventure games forget that there is a potential treasure trove of old games still to be played. Perhaps these articles will give you some ideas! First up: Zork Nemesis.

Zork Nemesis is an excellent example of an older adventure game just waiting to be played if you're lucky enough to have not played it already. It is a game that is, by most accounts, a classic and on many adventure game players' all-time favorites list. It is a true cross-over game that can appeal to both first person puzzle-oriented and 3rd person plot-oriented players. What's more, it is easy to acquire: it is available at CDAccess ([www.cdaccess.com](http://www.cdaccess.com)) in the U.S. and on eBay all around the world.

Zork Nemesis was released in 1996 as primarily a DOS game with the ability to run under Windows 95 added almost as an afterthought. While it carries the Zork name, it really has little relationship to the Zork games that preceded or followed it. However, it does take place in the Great Underground Empire. The quantum leap from a series that started as text-only games to a game with both the vivid graphics and first person point & click gameplay that reminds one of the original Myst is surprising only until you consider that Zork Nemesis was released at a time when Myst was at the top of best-seller lists and flying off the shelves and Riven, second in the Myst series, was planned for imminent release. It must have seemed at the time to be a sizable risk for Activision to fool so drastically with the venerable Zork franchise,



but the gamble paid off: Zork Nemesis received mostly very positive attention and reviews on its release. The game eventually won over even the most stalwart Zork players.



What is perhaps most astounding, given its early DOS beginnings, is that you can run Zork Nemesis almost perfectly under WinXP (a minor exception to be mentioned later on), and with less than 20 minutes effort, you can have it running without any disk-swapping or needing to have a disk in the CD-ROM drive. All you need is about 1.6 Gb space on your hard disk. I've tested the following instructions on 3 different WinXP systems and have had no problems

at all. The first figure is of Zork Nemesis on a Sony Vaio TR3 laptop; the second figure is Nemesis running on the newer Vaio UX180p mini-notebook 'pocket computer'. So here are the instructions:

1. First, place the Zork Nemesis CD1 in your drive and run the Install program. When asked, select the **Best Performance** installation and the **Don't Lock Me Out** option (the latter allows you the use of hint system if you choose to use it). Now, be very careful: **Do not let the program install DirectX 3**. Installing an earlier version of DirectX on your system can have almost irrevocable consequences! Keep an eye out for the box that says **'Zork Nemesis Setup Complete'**. Click on the red X which will bring up the box: **'Install DirectX'**. In response, to the prompt, **'Do you want to install DirectX 3?'**, answer, **'No'**. As soon as you do, the main installation is complete, but you're not done yet!

2. Copy the entire Zassets directory on CD1 in your drive to the directory you installed Zork Nemesis to on your hard drive.

3. Place CD2 in your CD drive and copy the entire Zassets directory to the Zassets directory in your Zork Nemesis directory. Answer **'Yes to all'** when you are warned that you will be overwriting files/folders (all the files in the Zassets directories on CD1-CD3 that have the same name are simply duplicates of each other).



4. Place CD3 in your CD drive and do exactly as you did in Step 3.

5. Now for the most important step: Find the file NEMESIS.ZIX in the Nemesis directory on your hard drive and open it with Notepad. Carefully substitute DIR for all entries CD0, CD1, CD2 which are to the left in the middle portion of the file. Make no other changes! Now close Notepad. The middle portion of NEMESIS.ZIX you changed should now look like this:

```

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DIR: .
DIR: .\znemmx
DIR: .\znemscr
DIR: .\znemscr\gscr.zfs
DIR: .\znemscr\tscr.zfs
DIR: .\znemscr\mscr.zfs
DIR: .\znemscr\vsr.zfs
DIR: .\znemscr\asr.zfs
DIR: .\znemscr\csr.zfs
DIR: .\znemscr\esr.zfs
DIR: .\znemscr\cursor.zfs
DIR: zassets
DIR: zassets\global
DIR: zassets\global\venus
DIR: zassets\temple
DIR: zassets\temple
DIR: zassets
DIR: zassets\global2
DIR: zassets\conserv
DIR: zassets\monast
DIR: zassets\global3
DIR: zassets\asylum
DIR: zassets\castle
DIR: zassets\endgame
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```



6. The installation automatically puts a shortcut icon on your Desktop. You need to delete it (since it assumes that you are still using CDs in your drive). Replace it by right-clicking **znemesis.exe** in the Nemesis directory and selecting *Send to -> Desktop (create shortcut)*. Now right-click on the new shortcut on your Desktop, select the *Compatibility* tab and make sure that both *Disable visual themes* and *Turn off advanced level services for this program* are checked.

That's it. You're done... almost! Now, there is a Graphics Patch for Nemesis that you may want to consider installing. I advise it. One source for the file is: <http://dlh.net/cgi-bin/dlp.cgi?lang=eng&sys=pc&file=znpatch.zip&ref=%20ps>.

There is also a Subtitle patch available through The Zork Library at: <http://www.thezorklibrary.com/thefallenempire/948gue.htm>. This patch file is

called ZNPATCH.ZIP as is the graphics patch I mentioned above. Be sure to rename it to something like ZNPATCH1.ZIP so it doesn't overwrite the graphics patch. **[Editorial note:** At the time of posting this article, the link to the subtitle patch did not seem to be working. The site might have been taken down permanently.]

Finally, there is an end save-game patch which is actually more of a cheat:

<http://www.ggmania.com/cheat.php3?cheat=307>



There remains one final item to mention (this was the 'minor exception' I mentioned earlier): Zork Nemesis was one of the earliest adventure games to anticipate the use of 3D graphics in that it uses what was called 'Z-Vision Surround Technology' which allows 360 degree panning combined with regular point & click nodal movement. This has resulted in a problem with the faster present-day systems in that

panning causes the image to spin rather than turn slowly as it was meant to. The solution is a program to slow the CPU down so that the screen image turns without making you reach for the Dramamine. There are two freeware programs that I know of that people have had good luck with. First is CpuGrabber (<http://www.geocities.com/kulhain/cpugrab.zip>) and the second one is Turbo (<http://www.geocities.com/kulhain/turbo.zip>). I prefer Turbo, but they both work. Try using the Turbo setting of around 5-10% if your CPU is over 2GHz.



# Safecracker

PC Review by Ugur Sener

He was a safe collector. He was an eccentric. He also happened to be a billionaire with a lot of time and money to spare. Duncan W. Adams was fascinated by all manners of safes. He wanted to understand their construction; he wanted to work on their design. The old man designed his entire mansion around safes. The place felt like one large, well-calculated puzzle. Moving between the rooms was not easy. A great deal of deductive reasoning and perhaps a little bit of luck would be required to explore the place without Duncan's help.



None of that helped Mr. Adams' relatives when Duncan passed away. They knew that Duncan's will was hidden somewhere in his mansion. But almost all of the rooms were locked down. A series of safes needed to be cracked before the inner rooms would become accessible. Duncan's relatives were sure that his will was under lock inside one of the inner chambers. But there was one problem. None of them could figure out how to access the inner areas of the mansion. And that is of course precisely where you come into the picture.



Acting as a representative of the entire family, Elizabeth Adams, one of Duncan's relatives has hired you to find the will. You are renowned for your remarkable skills in opening any kind of lock. It will be up to you to find a way to open the locked safes and doors throughout the mansion, in an effort to locate Duncan's elusive last will and testament along with the deed to his property. Thus, you arrive at the beautiful mansion. Your first challenge is just a few steps away. You carry no special equipment. You will not be unlocking the safes with the latest high-tech decoders or sophisticated lock-picking devices. Instead, you will have to rely on your wit and your observation skills.

Developed by Kheops Studio and published by The Adventure Company, Safecracker is a new puzzle adventure game inspired by the 1997 Dreamcatcher release that carried the same title. However, Kheops Studio's Safecracker is far from a simple remake. While it carries structural similarities to the previous puzzle adventure, the new release has an original story and a different set of puzzles to keep gamers occupied. The end result may not be a perfect game, but it can still deliver a fairly entertaining and enjoyable experience.

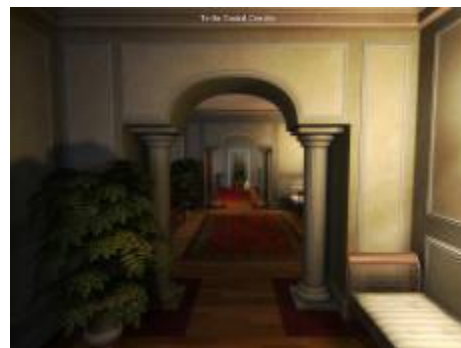
Safecracker: The Ultimate Puzzle Adventure has a relatively simple storyline. The game opens with a short introduction movie explaining how Duncan W. Adams made his fortune. Unfortunately, after Duncan passed away, nobody has been able to locate his will and unlock the mysteries of his mansion. Your job, as an expert safecracker, is to go into the mansion and locate the missing will. The



sizeable mansion contains a large number of rather unique safes. Starting with the first puzzle on the ground floor, you will have to determine how each chest can be opened. Clues are hidden inside the safes and throughout the mansion to help you ultimately reach the master safe. It will be a challenging task, but with some determination and close attention to details, you just might be able to unlock all of the safes.

The core premise of the game is not challenged throughout the adventure. There is a bit of a twist at the very end, but you will most likely see it coming long before you get to the final safe. There are also several documents scattered around the mansion that give you a little bit of insight into Duncan W. Adams and his family. However, Safecracker is most certainly not a game you should play for its engaging storyline and unexpected plot twists. Safecracker puts the focus almost entirely on its puzzles. The entire mansion has been designed as a series of different challenges eventually leading players to the master safe. Instead of an engaging storyline, Safecracker offers a wide variety of puzzles to test your deductive reasoning and observation skills.

The game starts in the antechamber of the mansion, just past the main door. You will quickly notice that the door in front of you and the door to your left are both locked. This leaves only one direction to explore, which takes you straight to the first puzzle. Once you tackle that puzzle, you will find a clue to help you make a little more progress. Eventually, more rooms will open up, giving you access to a greater area. When you have a few

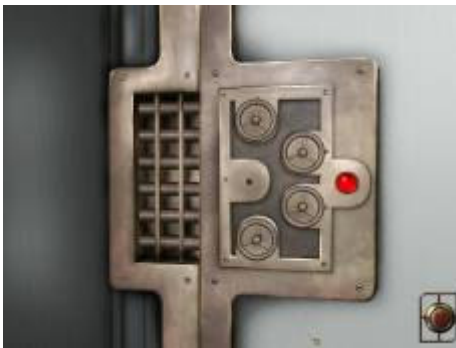


additional rooms to explore, you will also be able to attempt more than one puzzle. The developers have clearly taken care to include a puzzle or at least some kind of clue in each room. While the mansion is not extremely large, it does have a second floor and a basement. It may not be the most imaginative adventure gaming environment to be conceived, but exploring it can still be fairly entertaining. The game's beautiful graphics and the level of detail presented in many of the rooms enhance the experience.

Safecracker is played from a first-person perspective. The game features 360 degree panoramas, allowing players to look in all directions. The game ships on a single CD and requires 700 MB of hard disk space. Once you complete the installation, you do not need to keep the CD in the disk drive to play the game. Simple mouse icons are used to depict available actions. The cursor changes when you can move in the indicated direction, use an object in the environment, or go over a hotspot where you can use an inventory item. Safecracker does not use movement animations. Transitions from one screen to the next are presented in slideshow format with a fade effect.



The inventory is accessed with a right click. When you open the inventory, available items are presented as a list of icons along the bottom portion of the screen. The inventory view also gives players access to the map and the game's main menu. The map presents the layout of each room of the mansion. A poker chip is used to indicate your current location on the map. In addition, all the puzzles available on the current floor are indicated with X's. If you have already solved the puzzle, the X will be colored green. Otherwise it will be colored red. The main menu allows players to load or save the game, and configure options like subtitles or sound volume.



The puzzles vary significantly in terms of their difficulty and style. A solid number of the puzzles are self-contained. They do not require the use of additional items and you do not need to find clues in order to crack them. Sometimes the biggest challenge in these types of puzzles is to understand how they actually work. Once you see all the things you can do to manipulate the puzzle and discern its underlying logical structure, finding the answer

becomes much easier. Examples of the self-contained puzzles include a circuit puzzle where you need to direct electricity from a single source to multiple bulbs. Another puzzle involves using four electromagnets to direct a metallic ball from its starting point to the exit.

Each time you solve a puzzle, you will be awarded with a clue or an item that will help you overcome a different challenge. You may also gain access to a new area of the mansion. The puzzles are not limited to the safes distributed throughout the estate. You also need to overcome various challenges to unlock many of the doors. The items you obtain by solving the puzzles are stored in your inventory. Sometimes all you find is a simple clue that either directly states the solution to a different puzzle or gives you hints you can use to piece together the

answer. At other times, you will find items you need to use on certain safes before you can even attempt its associated puzzle. Taken out of context, these hints or inventory items may not make too much sense. However, once you encounter where you need to use the clue or the item, the answer should become fairly clear. You may also need to find and combine multiple clues before you can find the answer.



While they are usually on the easier side, the puzzles do vary in terms of difficulty. Some of the puzzles only require a few moves before you get to the correct answer. Others have very straightforward clues that can quite literally spell out the answer. Yet there are also more challenging puzzles that can easily take a significant amount of time to solve. For instance, there is puzzle where you need to rearrange tiles in a fashion comparable to

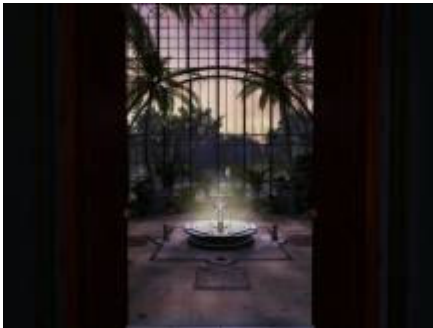
classic slider puzzles to reconstruct a picture. Unfortunately, the game does not allow players to see what the completed solution would look like before attempting the puzzle. The only visual hint you get is provided at a rather unusual spot and it is can be very easy to miss. As such, figuring out the solution, especially the pieces that go around the edges of the puzzle can be rather difficult. For the most part however, especially for veteran adventure gamers, as long as you are paying attention to your surroundings, the puzzles should not be overly challenging.

While Safecracker is a fairly pleasant game, it does have its share of problems. The biggest issue is with the selection of puzzles. Far too many of the challenges featured in the game will look extremely familiar to experienced adventure gamers. Seasoned players will have undoubtedly seen puzzles structurally identical to many of the ones featured in Safecracker. While the specific solution required in this game might be different than what you may have seen in a different adventure, you may still pretty much know exactly what to do as soon as you see the puzzle. In an adventure game with a strong storyline and interesting characters, having a couple of borrowed challenges would not have been much of a problem. However, since the entire selling point of Safecracker is its puzzles, a little more original content would have been greatly appreciated.



The length of Safecracker might also be a problem for some gamers. Even if you do not consult a walkthrough on any of the puzzles, it is quite possible to get through Safecracker in a single session. The game's case boasts over thirty

different safes waiting to be unlocked. And there are additional puzzles on top of the safes that have to be solved before you can explore the entire mansion and reach the end of the game. However, many of the puzzles can be solved very quickly when you have the right clue or the right item. There is practically no guesswork involved with which inventory item is the correct one to use in a given situation. And once you understand how they work, even the hardest puzzles can be solved fairly easily with some amount of trial and error. Unless you miss an important clue or get stuck at one of the more challenging puzzles, the game can be a breeze. There is no plot development or cutscenes to add to the time you will spend with the game either. Safecracker may not be the shortest game out there, but it can still be finished quite rapidly and may leave you a little dissatisfied in the end. It is also worth noting that unless you particularly like some of the puzzles, once you complete the game for the first time, there is not much point in going through the game again since the solutions are identical each time you play the game.



Overall, Safecracker: The Ultimate Puzzle Adventure makes for a fairly enjoyable experience. Depicted through the game's beautiful graphics, the mansion can make an interesting place to explore. While it may not be a terribly large environment, it does feature a number of different rooms with obvious attention to detail in certain areas. Even though it can get a little repetitive, the soundtrack fits the overall relaxed tone of the game. You will not hear much of it, but the voice acting is successfully handled. There are a good number of puzzles and they are nicely varied in terms of their structure. For the most part, they should not be overly challenging, but a few of them should hopefully keep even the more experienced players busy for a while. The game is a little on the short side and it does feature a number of puzzles many adventurers will have encountered in other games. But despite its shortcomings, Safecracker still manages to remain entertaining. If you like puzzle adventures, especially considering its reasonable retail price, Safecracker is certainly worth a try. If you play adventure games for a strong storyline with lots of character development and a number of plot twists, Safecracker is not for you. But if you are in the mood for some serious puzzle-solving, Safecracker can give you a pleasant Sunday afternoon.

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| <p><b>Developer:</b> Kheops Studio<br/> <b>Publisher:</b> The Adventure Company<br/> <b>Platform:</b> PC<br/> <b>Genre:</b> Adventure<br/> <b>Release Date:</b> August 2006<br/> <b>Grade:</b> 80/100</p> | <p><b>Minimum System Requirements:</b><br/> Windows® 98 / 2000 / ME / XP<br/> Pentium® III 800 MHz<br/> 64 MB RAM<br/> DirectX® 9.0c compatible 64 MB video card<br/> DirectX® 9.0c compatible sound card<br/> 16X CD/DVD-ROM drive<br/> 700 MB Hard disk space</p> |
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# Post Mortem

PC Review by Wendy Nellius

After achieving much success with Syberia, Microids chose to take a walk on the darker side and bring us Post Mortem. This is the first appearance of Gus MacPherson whose role was reprised in the creation of Still Life. It is important to note that Post Mortem does contain mature subject matter and is not recommended for the younger set.

## Set the scene...

It is a dark and stormy night. It's the kind of evening perfect for staying indoors cozying up to someone special. From an aerial view, we travel over the city of Paris in the 1920's. The rain crashes down on the rooftops and lightning slashes through the night sky. We creep along through the sky edging closer to an open window. Quite like a voyeur, we peek through a window in the Hotel Orphee.



## Perhaps we should turn away...

It looks like romance.....or lust is in the air. Clothes are strewn across the outer room. A woman's giggle penetrates the silence. We're not really going to open the bedroom door, are we? But, of course we are. We'll get a quick view of a couple in the throes of passion.



## The horror...

A flash of lightning... The door flies open... A masked man... A knife... Screams of terror... Cut to black. What the hell just happened????

## Across town (and we're glad to be there)...

Gus MacPherson, our main character, is in his apartment. Gus used to be a private detective, but after being accused of murder on his last case in New York, he has given it up as of late to pursue the gentler and more artistic profession of painting. A knock at the door propels Gus into an immediate psychic vision. It is in this very vision that we see the ultimate conclusion of the first scene. It is quite gruesome. The couple has been beheaded and grotesquely displayed with each victim holding their own head and

both mouths containing a gold coin. What kind of sick reprobate would commit such a heinous crime?

### The client...

Distrust in the police's capabilities and a desire for only the best has led Sophia Blake to Gus's doorstep. Her sister and brother-in-law (The Whytes) were the victims in that hotel room. They were an upper class couple who traveled in style. An odd note is that they traveled with a family heirloom although Sophia claims this heirloom has no monetary value. She's willing to pay 500 Francs to start and 500 Francs for every day of successful investigation in finding the killer.



You will have the initial choice to either accept or decline the case through the dialog you choose. But, ultimately, you will have to accept the case or there will be no game.

### Things are not always what they appear to be...

During the course of his investigation many surprises will present themselves. You, playing as Gus, will need to determine if the people you're involved with and investigating are truly who they say they are. There will be more victims and the urgency to solve the case will become more pressing. There are strange clues leading to a connection to a secret society that has ties to the Knights Templar. Could they be involved? It's up to you to find out.

Post Mortem comes complete with 2 CD's and a small manual. The game loads easily and no technical problems were encountered during game play. The 2<sup>nd</sup> CD is needed in the drive to play the game. While most of the game is conducted in the 1<sup>st</sup> person perspective, conversations with other characters in the game are seen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective. Post Mortem is an entirely point and click adventure. At the main menu, you have the option to adjust the volume, turn subtitles on or off and also make gamma corrections. In true Microids fashion, there is the customary cinematic button where you can check out all those cut scenes again. Post Mortem also offers the opportunity to create 6 different players each with their own save directory. There are ample save slots available.



What is clear right away is that Post Mortem is a beautiful-looking game. If you have

played any of the other Microids games (Syberia, Syberia II, Still Life), you know full-well the talent Microids has for creating masterful cinematic cutscenes. They do not disappoint in Post Mortem. The background environments are dimly lit, moody and are befitting of the subject matter. It is obvious that a great deal of time has been spent in detailing each location. That's one of the best things about having a 360 degree view. Every viewable angle must be complete. I found myself checking out every ceiling just to see if they've done their job. And, in Post Mortem, they did!



You will start out in Gus's apartment. Half of it is a studio and the other half is the living area. No fluff in this room. You'll get to visit the police station, an upscale restaurant, quite a few rooms in the hotel where the murder took place, the secret society location, and an asylum just to name a few. There are even more locations and each is as impressive as the last. The only location that disappointed a little was a bar called the Alambic. There are quite a lot of people in the bar but they do not move. So, it's almost like walking through a painting. It was a little disconcerting.

The characters are visually appealing in the sense that each character is distinct, interesting, and fully representative of what you would expect the character to look like. The voice acting is done well. There was really only one voice that perhaps wasn't the best, but this can be easily overlooked. Disappointment is experienced when examining character movement. Most of the characters have an odd rocking motion to them. Arm movements and hand gestures tend to be awkward and follow a set pattern which repeats continuously throughout a conversation. A comparison comes to mind in that of a Jack-in-the-box. Anyone who had this toy as a child will remember turning the crank on the side of the box and at the end of the song, Jack (who is attached to a spring) would pop out and bob back and forth with arms flailing until finally coming to rest. Then, one would jam him back in the box and start all over (And, yes ....we were amused by so little back then). A decent job is done at lip synching. However, facial expressions are slim to none. It would have been nice to see a little more.

During game play, you will be investigating as Gus and at one point during the game you will switch and play as another character. Gus is your typical P.I. wearing the typical fedora. Gus has a pretty mellow personality which helps him to get information out of people easier. Sophia Blake is a beautiful woman all dressed in black. She has quite the mysterious air about her and there is





something that makes you not want to trust her, but you're not quite sure what it is.

There are quite a few NPC's to interact with during your investigation. You'll have to deal with the hotel staff where the murder took place. The bartender is willing to provide help, but do not expect the same from the front desk clerk. It will take some incentive to pry information out of him. Gus will even get a chance to meet another psychic. Although deemed a nutcase by the police, she could be a valuable source of information. She does seem more than a bit eccentric, but Gus won't let that deter him. After all, perhaps she is a psychic kindred spirit. The local psychiatrist seems willing to help, but he's just downright creepy to talk to. There are police to deal with and a few more shady characters. Gus does tend to have an affinity for "Ladies of the Evening". Berenice is his leading lady so to speak in Post Mortem.



Getting around is as simple as can be. When you enter a room, you are able to pan 360 degrees. A pair of shoes will show up if you can move further into the location and the shoes also denote exits. A magnifying glass allows for examination of items and a hand to pick items up. A small megaphone will appear over a character if conversation is allowed. Perhaps the most welcome feature for any gamer is the inclusion of a map. This allows the player to quickly move between locations without a lot of unnecessary and aimless walking. This is important because the game is fairly non-linear. You can visit locations and conduct your investigation in any order.



Inventory can be accessed by right clicking at the bottom of the screen. When you have accumulated a lot of items, you will need to scroll through them one at a time to find what you are looking for. While this may not be the best setup, it does not hurt game play as you will never need to combine any inventory items. The map is accessible from this location also. Gus has a notebook which will keep track of documents, suspect, witnesses and full detailed access to each conversation

that you have had. From the notebook, you can reach the main menu where you can save, load or exit the game.

The dialogue trees are the key to the non-linear game play. When conversing with a character, you are given multiple dialog choices. Your questioning choices will determine which new clues, locations and puzzles become available to you.

Depending on which dialogue path you choose, you may need to revisit characters often to cover additional topics. In one way, this structure adds to the enjoyment because you're actually getting to choose what you wish to ask. You're not just clicking through the dialog mindlessly. This brings up a minor grievance. There is no way to skip through dialog. Fortunately, while this is a dialogue heavy game overall, none of the characters is particularly long winded. Responses are quite brief.



While having the choice to determine your path is a welcome addition (thumbs up), the dialogue trees don't always follow along with the chosen path (thumbs down). There are times when you can ask a certain character about a subject that Gus has not even learned about yet. There are other instances where you have learned pertinent information, but when Gus questions the next person along, he will ask a question as if this is brand new information and he has never heard it before. This can end up leading to confusion and is disappointing because the potential was truly there for this feature to be outstanding.

How and when you encounter puzzles will ultimately depend on the conversation choices you make. There are simple puzzles in this game such as the old "push the key out of the lock onto a piece of paper", finding ways to sneak into locations, or just having the right inventory item needed at the right time. In other puzzles, you will definitely have your wits tested. There is an unbearably heinous lock pick puzzle. You're given a set of 5 individual lock pick tools. You need to figure out how many of the 5 you will need, which specific tools you need, where each tool will go in the lock, and the position of each tool. [insert cut scene of reviewer banging her head repeatedly against the keyboard].

Another notable puzzle ended up being a pixel-hunting nightmare. Using a candle, you are required to slowly (and I mean slowly!) drag the candle over an entire large painting. The goal is to highlight hidden brush strokes which Gus will draw in his sketchbook as they appear. Then, you will need to piece together those brush strokes to form a picture of something. You can not possibly move slowly enough on this puzzle. Even when you think you've pixel hunted an entire section completely, it is still possible that you missed something. Since you don't really know what picture you're trying to come up with or how many pieces you need to find, this can be quite the frustrating puzzle. On the plus side however, players do often get tired



of seeing the same type of puzzles over and over again in adventure games. Mixing it up a bit like they did in Post Mortem is a good thing to keep our minds fresh.

The storyline is intriguing. There are some out there who have seen enough of the secret society/Templar based stories. However, this type of theme happens to be one of my favorites along with Egyptian themed games. I just find it fascinating. The most enjoyable part of Post Mortem is the choices that you're given. In a small way, you get to control the story. This holds true even to the end. The finale is determined by your choices and there are alternate endings based upon that. So, in essence, you could play Post Mortem multiple times and have a different experience each time. This is definitely a positive aspect of the game.

Overall, Post Mortem is a good game. Those who like an intriguing mystery with a little occult mixed in will have fun with the game. The puzzles are diverse and can be quite challenging. Post Mortem is entertaining to play and the good features will end up outweighing any negative ones. But, it must be pointed out that Post Mortem had the potential to be an outstanding game. It just didn't quite take that extra step to make it to the "A" level. Add it to your collection even if only to pay tribute to the Microids team.



Final Grade: 80/100

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| <p><b>Developer:</b> Microids<br/> <b>Publisher:</b> The Adventure Company<br/> <b>Platform:</b> PC<br/> <b>Genre:</b> Adventure<br/> <b>Release Date:</b> 2003<br/> <b>Grade:</b> 80/100</p> | <p><b>Minimum System Requirements:</b><br/> Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP<br/> Pentium® II 350 MHz or higher<br/> 64 MB RAM<br/> DirectX 7 or above<br/> DirectX 7 video and sound compatible<br/> 16x CD-ROM Drive<br/> Hard Drive space of 470 MB</p> |
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## The Egyptian Prophecy: Fate of Ramses

PC Review by Wendy Nellius

Immerse yourself in mystery and wonder as we travel back in time to Egypt. Egypt's history has long fascinated scholars, archaeologists and quite frankly, the world alike. Flip through the channels on your TV on any given day to the Discovery Channel or the History Channel and you're likely to find a program dedicated to Egyptian culture and history. Much research is dedicated to understanding the rituals involved in preparing the deceased for their journey in the afterlife, the gods that they worshipped and the amazingly mystical architecture. In addition to pyramids and tombs, there are many other architectural wonders to be found in Egypt. One of those is the obelisk. Obelisks originated from the granite quarries and are one solid piece of stone with the exception of the very tip. One obelisk of record is known to weigh 254 tons!!! Obelisks could be erected to celebrate a Pharaoh's 30 year reign and as protection for a temple. The top of the obelisk is adorned with a pyramid covered in gold or electrum and is about 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the obelisk's size. The gold/electrum pyramid is an offering to the Sun God, Re.



Egyptian Prophecy takes us through the story of one Pharaoh's battle to erect such an obelisk against fierce obstacles. At the age of 60 and fearing he was nearing the end of his life, Ramses II went to the great temple of Abu Simbel and made a plea to the god Amun-Re to extend his life and prolong his reign over



Egypt. This request was granted under the condition that the most majestic obelisk ever be erected to honor Amun-Re before the season of Shemu. If this is done, Ramses II will be granted 20 more years of life to rule Egypt as he sees fit. Ramses II is quite confident that the obelisk will be raised on time because he has contracted Paser, a master architect and the only person who possesses the secret knowledge to accomplish such a task.

Ramses II's confidence begins to falter when he receives word from the site that serious problems have arisen. It seems that there have been a multitude of mysterious accidents and one of those accidents has left Paser extremely sick and unable to provide the direction needed for such an important undertaking. If the obelisk is not raised in time, Ramses II will surely die. To get to the bottom of

the problems, Ramses II sends a young woman, Maya, to the site. Maya is a talented magician, but also a clairvoyant. It is Ramses II's hope that Maya will be able to see what others can not. But, will she find the truth in time?



Maya's first task will be to find Paser. At least there is some good news. The temple is alive with the sounds of hammers and chisels banging away at the stone walls. So, despite some setbacks, the temple is still being prepared for the arrival of the obelisk. After talking to Djer, supervisor of construction, Maya is directed to Paser's house. It is here that she finds Paser incapacitated. He can not even stand up and has clearly been inflicted with some horrible malady. He is unsure as to what is causing all the accidents at the site. Maya's initial investigation reveals that a cursed object has been placed in the temple. Who would do such a thing? Maya's objectives are clear. She must find a way to heal Paser and put a stop to the evil force behind the curse.

The Egyptian Prophecy was developed by Kheops Studio. Kheops Studio is an independent developer borne in 2003 and has brought us such titles as Return to Mysterious Island, Voyage: Inspired by Jules Verne, Crystal Key 2, and the most recent title Safecracker: The Ultimate Puzzle Adventure. The Egyptian Prophecy comes with 3 CD's and a game manual. The 3<sup>rd</sup> CD is required in the drive to run the game. No technical problems were encountered during installation or game play. This is a 1<sup>st</sup> person point and click adventure.

One of the nicer features of the game is that it allows for up to 5 separate players each with their own individual game saves. Not many PC games allow this opportunity. Another bonus feature of the game is the documentary database. Kheops Studio has really done a lot of research to make a lot of the elements historically and geographically accurate. In addition to incorporating these historical facts into the story, they also have provided a lot of background research so the player can glean more details about the history and culture of Egypt if so desired. Not only are you entertained, but there is the opportunity for increased desire to learn about this most fascinating place and its people. Mind you, the game isn't all fact. There is a nice balance between fact and fantasy.



The graphics in The Egyptian Prophecy are beautiful to look at in a more simplistic way. The background environments are crisp and clean and are not

over-cluttered. But, the game still manages to convey the beauty of the architecture and landscape. Considering that we have a 360° view, every inch from ceiling to floor is detailed appropriately.

**Pi-Ramses** – Maya's journey will start at the Pi-Ramses construction site. As you walk through the temple, be sure to follow the columns all the way up to the ceiling. You'll be able to see the hand-chiseled drawings and hieroglyphics that reach the tops of the columns. Sunlight streams through the openings in the ceiling. You'll be able to hear the sounds of the worker's hammers and chisels as you stand in the midst of the temple.



**Aswan** – You'll get to visit the granite quarries in Aswan. Houses of the workers line the left hand side. To the right is open land where the obelisks are extracted from the ground. You'll get a chance to get into the house of a renowned healer. The house is littered with all sorts of odd ingredients used to create the magical healing remedies.

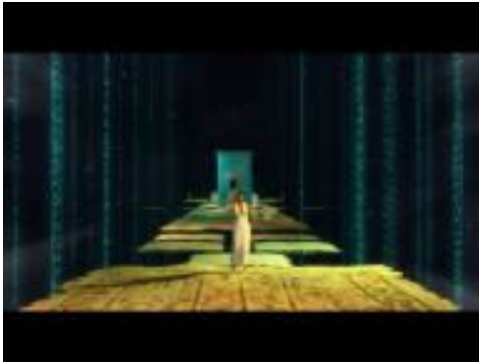
**Memphis** – Here you'll get to meet Khaemouaset, the High Priest in the temple of Ptah. The temple itself is quite majestic and is guarded well. Surrounding the temple is a courtyard with a pool that stretches the length of the courtyard.

**The Forge of Ptah** – This is the god Ptah's lair. It is a series of caverns surrounding a huge pool of bubbling lava. This location is fraught with danger and is a puzzle all by itself. Maya will need her wits about her if she is to navigate it safely and be granted a face to face meeting with Ptah.



**The World of Isis** – This location is truly beautiful. Maya stands on lush green banks surrounded by water. Isis arises from the water like an ethereal angel. She is willing to help Maya, but many tasks will present themselves that involve finding various ways to cross the water barriers. It is the colors that are truly eye-catching at this location. All the blues and greens blending together make this a truly mystical place.

**The Book of the Dead** – This is perhaps the coolest location of them all. This location floats high up in the atmosphere. You will feel as if any moment, you could fall off and plummet back down to earth. And, there is that chance. Maya will have to face quite a few trials here to prove herself worthy of help.



Every time Maya completes a task of importance, the action is completed in the form of a cinematic cut scene. These cut scenes were really wonderful to watch. You will get to see Maya perform spells and have those spells animated in front of you. It really helps to get you into the story. There are 10 chapters in the game. Each chapter ends with Maya traveling to another location. This travel is accomplished with a cut scene of Maya traveling down the Nile on a boat. The

only disappointment here is that it is the same cut scene played out for every chapter. Even the movements Maya makes are exactly the same each time. It would have been much better if they had mixed it up a bit. It was really pretty the first time, but boring by the 3<sup>rd</sup> time.

The character renderings were excellent both in face and body. But, some of you may be disturbed by the lip-synching or lack thereof. Yes, the lips do move, but they pretty much just flap and don't actually match any of the words. And, the lips sometimes keep going for a second or two longer than the actual dialog. I'm not usually bothered by imperfect lip-synching, but I must be honest – this drove me slightly nuts. The voice acting for the most part was good. Maya's voice fit her character well as did most of the major characters. There were just a couple of minor characters that caused my eyebrows to rise when hearing their voices. They just didn't fit.

The dialog trees are linear as well. When initiating a conversation, you are given multiple topics to choose from. This is sort of like a main menu pop-up of dialog. Pick one and another dialog tree will pop up with a second round of questions/statements specific to the original one chosen. You will end up asking them in order (1,2,3 etc.) then finish with Maya's "I thank thee". This will return you to the main question pop-up where you can choose another statement



or question until the only choice left is "I thank thee". So, while you may feel as though you are being given choices, those choices don't affect the order or the answers whatsoever. Dialog is short and to the point. You don't get a lot of additional detail that would help you understand more about the character's lives. There are characters to interact with but expect only one or two at each location. It's just enough to get you by.

Getting around is accomplished with some basic adventure game cursors. The directional cursors which allows for 360° viewing will light up to indicate further exploration within a location. The cursor will change to 2 small gears when you can interact with an item. As customary, there is a hand cursor for picking items up and a separate conversation icon as well. There is no map provided, but this is not needed. These are not huge locations like a game such as Syberia. And, as this is a linear game, Maya will automatically transfer to the next location upon completing all the tasks in a specific chapter. If a location is revisited, this will happen in the form of a brand new chapter.

Inventory is easily accessed by a right click of the mouse and will appear at the bottom of the screen. On the left side are items Maya has collected. On the right side are all the spells she has acquired as gifts from people she has helped out along the way. Although you can examine an item in inventory, you will never need to combine them in the inventory screen. The quantity of inventory items is also limited. You generally have just the important items that you need; not 10 important and 60 useless ones.



Maya constantly has to prove that she is worthy of information, new spells or help in general. The typical response you get from other characters is “If you do this, then I will help you”. So, Maya ends up with a lot of tasks. The majority of tasks are easy to complete. There isn’t as much thought involved as there should be. What you need to do is often spelled out for you. Hotspots are few and far between. You can be walking along and the camera view will suddenly swing around and Maya will say something like “Hmm...what’s this?” Spells are easily



cast as it only takes knowing which one to use. You will only use one at a time (usually right after you acquire it). To activate a spell, you only need to click on it like an inventory item and then click where you want to use it. The process is quite uncomplicated. You will get to use all your spells in one battle near the end, but this is quite easily overcome as well. There are some logic puzzles which are also relative easy. There is a timed puzzle in which Maya must create a potion.

Luckily, all the ingredients needed are within the immediate area. If Maya does happen to lose her life, there is no major penalty. Like a Nancy Drew game, Maya will automatically restart the game right at the beginning of the puzzle.



There were only a couple of puzzles that truly had me stumped for quite a while. One such puzzle occurred at the very end and involved a game board like a checkerboard. The object is to block is to destroy a snake by casting spells on certain squares. You must prevent the snake from moving in certain directions and protect Maya as well. This puzzle was truly perplexing; and it seemed oddly difficult in a game filled with much easier puzzles. Another puzzle was a lock pick puzzle that involved using a key (more like a rod) to rotate cylinders one at a time to get them to lock. Rotating one affects one or two others. It took quite a while to figure out the relationships between cylinders, making the puzzle quite challenging.

Overall, The Egyptian Prophecy is a decent game. It's pretty to look at and has a good story concept. Unfortunately, while including background information was a great addition, the story in the game itself needed more depth in order to feel as though you are involved in the main character's life. Considering most of the game is quite easy with the exception of a couple of puzzles, this game would be best aimed at newer adventure gamers. It is also on the short side making it a great starter game. Yet seasoned gamers may still enjoy the game as a nice diversion on a Saturday.

Final Grade: 78/100



**Developer:** Kheops Studio  
**Publisher:** The Adventure Company  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** 2004  
**Grade:** 78/100

**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP  
 Pentium® III 600 MHz or higher  
 64 MB RAM  
 DirectX 7 or above  
 32 MB DirectX compatible 3D video card  
 16x CD-ROM Drive (24x recommended)

# Shivers

PC Review by Ugur Sener

## A most unusual museum...

The mysterious museum always intrigued you. When it was first announced, the townspeople had embraced the idea so enthusiastically. Professor Windlenot had moved to the town of Mt. Pleasant White from England. His research about the unexplained mysteries around the globe had been met with disrespect and unabashed ridicule from his colleagues. Thus, the professor had decided to take his work across the ocean to the United States. The museum was to be the culmination of years dedicated to understanding the greatest secrets of our history.



Unfortunately, the construction of the museum took much longer than what Professor Windlenot originally estimated. Many problems were encountered as the project continued. Gradually, the townspeople started to lose interest in the effort, regarding Windlenot as an eccentric with far too much money to waste, if not a certifiable lunatic.

Yet the museum had so much potential. Numerous exhibits were planned with a variety of different themes. Windlenot wanted to expose the visitors to a wide range of mysteries. Visitors would be able to learn about strange mystical beasts that might have at one point inhabited the world in one exhibit while reading about UFO sightings and visitors from outer space in another. The museum would give visitors a glimpse into ancient civilizations, mysteries that might be hidden deep beneath the ocean, and an unknown world that may exist right beneath the Earth's surface. Touring the museum would have been a real pleasure. The exhibits were to be separated from one another by various puzzles, challenging visitors to test their wits and pay attention to the information provided throughout the building. Unfortunately, the museum was never fully completed.



### If your friends told you to jump off a bridge...

The museum had been quiet for a full fifteen years. You remembered stories about two students particularly interested in the museum. Along with the professor himself, the students had mysteriously disappeared. There were quite disturbing rumors that surrounded these disappearances. Some believed that it was the professor himself that went insane and murdered the two students, burying them somewhere on the museum grounds. You did not know whether or not those stories had any truth to them, but there was definitely something sinister, something haunting about the museum grounds. It beckoned you to explore, to discover its secrets.

Just about every time you talked to your friends, you kept bringing up the museum. Eventually, your oh-so dear friends decided that the best way to shut you up was to make you spend a night at the old building. And thus, they dared you to stay at the museum for an entire night. Of course, you were not about to back down from the dare. You wanted to show them you were not afraid of the seemingly abandoned building. And this was the perfect excuse to finally unlock the museum's secrets.



You let your friends lock you inside the museum grounds. As they walked away, you were already second guessing your decision. What was that ominous sound you heard just before your friends left? Why had the museum never been completed? What was the true story behind the disappearance of Professor Windlenot and the two students? There was something sinister in the air. This was going to be a very long night inside the imposing building.

### No point spending the entire night in the front yard...

A set of stairs lead to the main entrance to the building. But, as expected, the doors were locked. Seemingly trapped inside the garden area, you made your way to the small pond on the left side of the building. You noticed a few symbols etched on various objects along the way. Did they mean anything? There was some machinery next to the fountain. Taking a closer look, you realized you needed to enter a code to open the panel before you could operate the machine. Could it control another entrance to the main building?



Seeing as there wasn't much of anything to do

in the garden area, even though the pond looked very nice, you thought it might be more interesting to find a way to enter the building. Things got much more interesting once you did manage to break into the museum. It was not long before you encountered the strange apparitions. You managed to gather that they were called Ixupi. These spiritual beings had somehow been set loose across the museum. They were very dangerous, capable of stealing your very life essence.



At first you did not know how the Ixupi managed to break free from their prisons. You did not know where they were hidden. You did not understand what had to be done in order to recapture them. But one thing was clear. If you let the Ixupi run free, they could easily threaten much more than just the museum grounds. You had to find a way to catch them and return them to confinement. Your very survival inside the museum depended on it.

### **Pots, talismans, and why certain things should be left undisturbed...**

Shivers is a puzzle adventure game from Sierra. The game is played from a first-person perspective. Navigation is handled in slideshow fashion, there are no movement animations. You simply jump from one screen to the next. You interact with the game through a simple mouse-driven interface. The mouse icon changes when you can move in a certain direction. You can take a closer look at certain objects or attempt to solve puzzles with a single click on the left mouse button. The options menu is accessible through a button located at the bottom of the screen. The game can be saved and loaded at any time, but there are a limited number of save-game slots. The game comes on a single CD. Even though it was developed back in 1995 for Windows 95, Shivers seems to run smoothly on a Windows XP system as long as you turn on the compatibility mode. In the tradition set by Trilobyte's 7<sup>th</sup> Guest, the game throws players into a creepy environment stuffed to the rim with numerous puzzles. The sizeable and cleverly-designed museum makes for a greatly entertaining place to explore as you try to capture the renegade Ixupi.

You will be able to enter the museum after solving a few puzzles in the garden area. You will quickly realize strange things are going on inside the museum. It seems Professor Windlenot has brought back certain artifacts from his explorations that would have been much better off had he left them undisturbed. But it is a little too late for that... Apparitions



are spread throughout the museum, waiting for unsuspecting visitors. These beings can absorb the life essence from humans. If they are not recaptured, there may be dire consequences.

You eventually learn that while it is impossible to fight the Ixupi with conventional means, they do have a weakness. They had been brought to the museum in strange containers. Pots and talismans with supernatural powers can be used to capture and contain the Ixupi. The spirits are irresistibly drawn to specific pot and talisman combinations that appeal to their native elements. Thus, in theory, by combining the correct pot and the correct talisman, you can create a container with which you can capture a certain Ixupi. Of course in practice, things a bit more complicated than that.



First of all, each Ixupi can be hidden in any one of multiple places across the museum. The same thing is true for the pots and talismans you are supposed to locate. Since it was Professor Windlenot's dream to make the museum as interesting and engaging as possible, many of the passageways are locked by puzzles. You have to overcome numerous challenges before you can explore the entire museum. And you need to do a lot more than just explore the museum and take a look at all the exhibits.

The exhibits contain a number of puzzles waiting to be solved. It is these puzzles that contain the talismans and pots required to capture the Ixupi. But you have to be careful which objects you try to examine. You never know if an apparition is about jump right at you when you try to take a closer look. To make things even more challenging, there is a considerable number of different hiding places for the pots and talismans. And it is impossible for you to carry more than one pot or talisman at the same time. You only have room for a single inventory item. Fortunately, if you do manage to find a matching pot or talisman when you are carrying its counterpart, the items can be combined and you are allowed to carry the resulting container.

Once you do have a talisman paired up with its associated pot, you have to determine which Ixupi can be captured with that combination. Then you have to find the corresponding spirit somewhere in the museum in an effort to trap it. If you try to capture the wrong apparition, you will not only lose part of your life essence, but you will also lose the pot and the talisman.



### The atmosphere...

The core storyline of Shivers is quite simple. Once you manage to get inside the museum, it should only be a few minutes before you learn about the evil spirits and what you need to do to capture them. The rest of the game is an elongated and glorified scavenger hunt to locate each of the necessary items. But that in no way means Shivers is a bad game. In fact, it has a number of elements that can make it rather entertaining.

Among the stronger aspects of Shivers is its atmosphere. While the game may not feature a detailed plot with lots of different characters and some interesting plot twists, it does manage to create a creepy atmosphere. Exploring the strangely quiet and seemingly abandoned museum has a welcome eerie feel to it. Even before you encounter any of the evil spirits, you get the sense that something is definitely not quite right. A foul presence seems to be lurking just around the corner, waiting for you to stumble into its trap. The theme of the museum contributes greatly to this effect. Seeing the many exhibits that deal with strange and unexplained phenomenon puts you in the right mood.



The soundtrack of the game also greatly contributes to the atmosphere. Some of the tracks create a sense of urgency, while others are downright disturbing and make you want to get away from the building as fast as possible. Adding to that a couple of startling shadows and small details like the ominous sounds you hear on the in-game menu, you are in for a creepy ride. The only downside to the game's atmosphere is that the effect is greatly diminished once you have explored the entire museum. Since capturing the Ixupi does require a certain amount of backtracking, during the last parts of the game, the museum can altogether stop feeling eerie or frightening as you will have learned all of its secrets.



### Interesting puzzles and a lot of frustration...

There are some notable exceptions, but the game also succeeds in delivering a series of interesting puzzles that should be entertaining to solve. In general, the puzzles can be divided into two groups. The first group includes self-contained puzzles. You can find the solution to these solely by examining them and trying to understand how they work. Once you comprehend the rules, you need to use

your deductive reasoning skills or a trial and error approach to arrive at the solution. Other puzzles require you to piece together clues provided throughout the museum. Any document or drawing you come across might have some significance. It is essential to pay close attention to your surroundings in order to overcome many of the game's challenges. Fortunately, Shivers has a feature that alleviates the burden of solving these types of puzzles. After the first time you encounter an important document, you can review it by accessing the in-game menu. This "Flashback" feature can be a real time-saver especially if you are not fond of taking notes as you play through an adventure game.



By solving the puzzles you encounter, you will gain access to new areas of the museum or find pots and talismans. It is worth noting that some pots and talismans are hidden in places that do not require players to solve a puzzle before they are accessible. Many of the puzzles featured in the game do show a good deal of creativity and should put your observation and deductive reasoning skills to test. However, Shivers does have a number of puzzles that could have been replaced with better ones. For instance, the puzzle involving Chinese checkers or the puzzle involving moving different colored pinballs to correct positions could have been avoided. Some of the clues required for overcoming certain challenges are also in quite obscure places and can be easy to miss. Sometimes it is even quite possible to walk by a puzzle containing a pot or talisman without noticing it. Nevertheless, the game does have a good mixture of many different kinds of puzzles, which should keep adventure gamers occupied for a considerable amount of time.



The single most frustrating aspect of Shivers is the amount of backtracking involved. There are very real restrictions in your hunt for the Ixupi and their corresponding pots and talismans. Only being able to carry a single inventory item is a great restriction. You can end up wandering around the museum for quite a long time in search for the counterpart of a pot or talisman. To make matters worse, since Ixupi guard certain pots or talismans, it might even be impossible to obtain the

counterpart of the item you are carrying before you take capture some other evil spirits first. Even when you have a completed container, finding the right Ixupi to capture can be a tedious exercise. Of course the game does provide you hints for identifying the correct spirit, but actually finding the apparition can be a whole different matter since it can in most cases be hidden in any one of several

different places. The end result is a noticeable amount of running around the museum even after you solve all the puzzles and locate each of the pots and talismans. By the time you complete the game, many of the initially entertaining exhibits can start to look all too familiar. And after all your efforts to hunt the spirits, the ending of the game will most likely be a letdown. Shivers could have been a much better experience with a bit more of a fulfilling ending and less backtracking.



### The bottom line...

Despite its considerable problems, Shivers still manages to deliver a greatly entertaining experience. The game manages to successfully create an eerie atmosphere as soon as you enter the museum grounds. The soundtrack nicely enhances the mood and the graphics still look fairly pleasant eleven years after the original release. While some environments could have used a little more polish, much of the game shows a good deal of attention to detail and clever design. The puzzles vary in terms of difficulty and style, but many of them should be quite entertaining for adventure gamers. The handful of uninspired or needlessly tedious puzzles do not significantly take away from the experience. If you did not have a chance to play Shivers when it was originally released, it is certainly worth giving a try. If you enjoy puzzle adventure games and if you can put up with the more tedious and frustrating aspects of the game, you will more than likely have a good time as you explore Professor Windlenot's museum.



**Developer:** Sierra On-Line  
**Publisher:** Sierra On-Line  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** 1995  
**Grade:** 84/100

**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows® 95  
 486/33 Processor  
 8 MB RAM  
 Sound Card with DAC  
 SVGA Video Card  
 2x CD-ROM Drive



# Full Throttle

PC Review by Ugur Sener

It is not just a simple hobby; it is a lifestyle. Ben's bike is his most valued possession. It is his home and ever-faithful companion. He is the leader of the Polecats, a motorcycle gang that lives on the highways. It is not an easy life. Money seems to be always tight, and they can never be quite sure where they will find another meal or a halfway decent place to sleep. But it is also a life of great freedom. They make their own rules. Constantly on the road, the gang members know the highways better than the cities they connect.



Yet Ben and the Polecats are members of a dying breed. There is a single domestic motorcycle manufacturer left in the country. Without Corley Motors, everyone might have already been bound by those pesky hover cars. Who can trust something without wheels anyway? But the company owner Malcolm Corley is getting quite old. He will not be around to personally lead the company for much longer. And Adrian Ripburger, the top executive reporting to Mr. Corley has great plans for the company. He may not be willing to wait until Corley dies either.



Full Throttle is a classic third-person adventure game from LucasArts. It is a game many players remember very fondly, and with good reason. With a solid, engaging storyline, colorful characters that you will actually care about, a handful of fun puzzles, and a great deal of style, Full Throttle is a fun ride from start to finish. Even though the game was released back in 1994, it remains quite playable and entertaining to this day.

The game opens with a lengthy introduction movie showing Ben and his gang members riding their bikes along the highway. They come across Malcolm Corley's fancy hover car. Defying gravity, Ben deftly jumps on top of the vehicle with his motorcycle, riding across the car. Being an old-time biker himself, Corley decides to follow the gang to a bar further down the highway. Telling Ripburger to wait in the car, Malcolm walks into the bar to spend some time with the gang members. Eventually, Ripburger gets impatient and decides to speed things along a little. Walking in, he announces that Corley Motors is interested in hiring

the Polecats as an escort for Malcolm at the company's annual shareholder meeting.



Ben is not really interested in the offer, but he still goes outside with Ripburger to discuss it in detail. After explaining to the corporate goon that his gang is not for hire, Ben is just about ready to go back to the bar. Unfortunately, Ripburger's thugs attack him from behind, knock him out, and throw him into the dumpster. When Ben comes to his senses, his gang has already left the area. The biker quickly finds out that Ripburger is planning an ambush. His gang is somehow involved, but he is not quite sure how. Jumping on his motorcycle, Ben sets out to catch up with the rest of the Polecats and prevent the ambush. Unfortunately, his bike unexpectedly breaks down as he is speeding down the highway. Barely surviving the accident, Ben gets knocked out for the second time in a single day.

This time a journalist finds the biker and takes him to a nearby town. An exceptionally kind mechanic named Maureen patches up Ben's wounds. She also agrees to fix his bike at no charge. But she does need Ben's help in order to complete the repairs. And thus, the adventure truly begins. Trapped in the town of Melonweed, Ben has to help Maureen fix his bike. He then has to locate his gang and somehow prevent the ambush before something terrible happens. The welfare of his entire gang and the future of Corley Motors may depend on Ben. The biker has a very tough night ahead of him.

Full Throttle is played from a third-person perspective and uses a mouse-driven interface. Clicking on any part of the screen makes Ben go in the indicated direction. The default mouse icon is a white crosshair. If you hover the mouse over a hotspot, a red border appears around the crosshair. In order to interact with the hotspot, players have to hold down the left mouse button. This brings up icons indicating the available actions. Players can attempt four possible actions on any object. Clicking on the eyeballs makes Ben examine the object and provide a description. Selecting the leather boot will make Ben kick the object. The tongue icon will instruct Ben to use his mouth on an object or talk to another character. Finally, the fist icon is used to pick up inventory items, use objects such as switches or levers, or punch the indicated object. The inventory is accessed with a click on the right mouse button. The available items are presented as a list of



icons. By scrolling through the list, players can select the desired item and click on an object in the environment in order to use it.



While the mouse-driven interface will be used throughout the bulk of the game, it is worth noting that Full Throttle does feature a couple of mini-games where the controls are a little different. In addition, a couple of keyboard shortcuts are available. While pressing on the spacebar pauses the game, tapping the F1 key brings up the in-game menu. Using this menu players can save or load the game, adjust sound volumes, and turn on subtitles. Full Throttle comes on a single CD and takes

up less than a megabyte of space on the hard drive. It is possible to run the game on a Windows XP system with the help of DosBox.

The storyline and the atmosphere are without a doubt among the strongest aspects of Full Throttle. The near-future setting and the biker theme makes for a rather distinctive experience. While the game is presented in cartoon-like graphics and features plenty of humor, the underlying tone is quite serious. Full Throttle manages to capture the free-spirited feeling of a road adventure while at the same time creating a sense of urgency with its storyline. The game has an edgy and stylish tone that is quite immersive and befitting the main plot. It may not feature the most unexpected plot twists and it may not be the longest adventure game you will play, but Full Throttle certainly has what it takes to capture your interest from the very beginning. Once you get into the game, you will most likely not want to stop playing until you reach the end.

A large part of Full Throttle's success comes from the characters featured in the game. Full Throttle does not have an exceptionally large cast of significant characters, but the people you get to meet are quite interesting and should make you care more about the storyline. With his tough-guy attitude and remarkable resourcefulness, Ben makes for a highly entertaining lead character. Even if you have no affinity towards motorcycles, there is something immediately likeable about his attachment to his bike, the road, and his gang. Being a good leader, you get the sense that he is truly concerned about what happens to his gang. He also seems to have a sense of honor and dignity that sets him apart from many of the other bikers wreaking havoc across the highways and country roads.



The other characters also greatly contribute to the story and help maintain your interest in the game. There is definitely something mysterious about Maureen, the mechanic who so kindly offers to fix Ben's bike for free. She seems to be quite kind and caring underneath her serious façade. The old-timer Malcolm Corley might be at the head of a sizeable corporation, but you can easily tell he is still a biker at heart. He knows how to have a good time and get along with the gang members. He might be spending much of his time attending boring meetings at corporate offices, but it is the road where he truly seems to feel at home. Adrian Ripburger on the other hand makes for an excellent corporate jerk. He is clearly willing to do whatever it takes to achieve his goals. Along with his two faithful goons, he is simply waiting for the right opportunity to take action.

The exceptional voice-acting featured in Full Throttle greatly helps bring the game's characters to life. All the voices seem very fitting for the characters. In particular, Roy Conrad and Mark Hamill deliver memorable performances in the roles of Ben and Ripburger.



The puzzles featured in Full Throttle are mostly inventory-based. For the most part, the challenges Ben has to overcome are not exceptionally difficult. The game usually does a nice job of providing the necessary clues. As long as you carefully examine each environment, you should be able to overcome many of the puzzles without too much trouble. It is also important to remember that punching and kicking things are very much available actions in the game. If conventional methods are not getting you where you need to go, using Ben's brute strength may turn out to be a good idea. The hotspots are generally easy to find and fairly obvious. Players should not expect to resort to tedious pixel hunting in order to get through the game.



It is important to note that Full Throttle does feature some mini-games you have to play in order to complete the game. Admittedly, these mini-games can seem out of place in a traditional adventure game. They can get a little frustrating and take away from the overall experience. However, the point of the mini-games is not really to test your hand-eye coordination. While some careful timing will be required, the mini-games actually work like puzzles. Once you figure out how they work,

it should be fairly easy to find a way to overcome these challenges. In addition, the mini-games fortunately do not appear in excessive amounts and do not

overshadow the traditional third-person adventure gaming portions of Full Throttle.

Given the nature of the storyline, Ben will encounter a number of dangerous situations throughout the course of the adventure. During some of these segments, you will have to complete a series of actions within a limited amount of time. If you let the time limit expire, Ben might lose his life. Fortunately, Full Throttle has been designed to prevent Ben's untimely demise from being too much of a hassle. If you make a fatal mistake, the game will automatically resume from the beginning of the corresponding segment. It is impossible to permanently lose the game. Even if you forget to save your progress at regular intervals, you will still be able to resume the adventure if Ben dies before you reach the end.



As a whole, Full Throttle is a greatly entertaining adventure. The game tells an interesting and very engaging story that should keep you interested from start to finish. With a colorful cast of characters, excellent voice acting, a fitting soundtrack, stylish cartoon-like graphics, and a healthy dose of humor, Full



Throttle manages to deliver a very successful road adventure. The mini-games and the timed sequences might put off some players. The game is also fairly short and can be completed in just a few hours. However, it is still a thoroughly fun ride and can be easily recommended to fans of third-person point-and-click adventure games. If you have not played it yet, try and get a hold of a copy. You will be in for a treat.

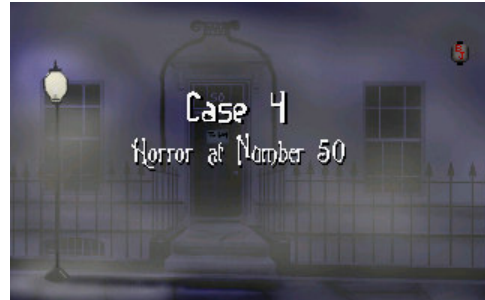
**Developer:** LucasArts  
**Publisher:** LucasArts  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** 1994  
**Grade:** 92/100

**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 MS DOS 5.0 or higher  
 486DX/33 processor  
 8 MB RAM  
 1 MB Hard disk space  
 256 color VGA video card  
 SoundBlaster, Gravis UltraSound, Pro Audio Spectrum, Ensoniq Soundscape, or 100% compatible sound card  
 Keyboard, mouse, speakers

## Ben Jordan Case 4: Horror at Number 50

PC Review by Thaumaturge

Benjamin Jordan is a paranormal investigator, a man who has followed his passion in life and made a career of it. His first case took him to Florida, where he faced the Skunk Ape and the villain behind it. His second called on him from California and the Salton Sea, under which he rescued a man and encountered a ghost. His third case, however, was different. For one, it was his first case outside of his native United States, taking place in the small Scottish town of Smailholm. More importantly, however, he was not simply an investigator attempting to solve the case. He was a part of the case. Moreover, in Smailholm he found an unexpected ally in Professor Percival Quentin Jones, an Oxford criminologist. Ben also found love in a local woman – a woman who too taught him grief.



In the aftermath of the case in Smailholm, Ben returns to London with Professor Jones to give Scotland Yard his version of the events in the little Scottish town. In fact, it is in Professor Jones' office that he receives his next case, announced by an unexpected knock at the professor's door. The visitor is a white-haired gentleman, who gives his name as Randolph Miggs, and his profession as the proprietor of a rare and antique bookstore, located at Number 50, Berkeley Square. For a long time, Number 50 had held a dark reputation as the haunt of a deadly apparition, the nameless Horror. But in Miggs' time nothing has been heard of any such ghost, until recently, when ghostly disturbances began to make themselves known. Now Miggs is seeking Ben's aid in removing the evil spirit from the house – and of course, Ben agrees. Such things are, after all, both his job and his fascination.



Ben receives a surprise upon arriving at Number 50 – he is not the only paranormal investigator to be summoned by Mr. Miggs. In fact four others are introduced: Madame Tilly Rosenquist is a Londoner who claims to be a psychic and “True Seer”. Otto Schneider, is a German man whose strength seem to lie in research. He is taciturn but friendly. Simon Booth is an Englishman who professes a penchant for using technology in his investigations of the paranormal. Alice Wilkins is an American like Ben, majoring in parapsychology at Harvard.

Throughout the investigation, each character will have their part to play. Ben will find two good friends and kindred spirits in the group. But there are other spirits lurking in the hallways and rooms of the house. Some deliver ominous signs to drive the living men and women from the house. These troubled spirits hope to help the group escape the terrible fate that found them. The faceless Horror, however, has an entirely different perspective on the interlopers, and in the end Ben will find himself in a deadly confrontation with a being more powerful than any that he has yet encountered. Only by working together, each with their own talents and traits, will they stand a chance of defeating the Horror at Number 50...

As with Case 3: The Sorceress of Smailholm, Case 4 delivers a stronger story than the games which preceded it in the series, and a good and enjoyable story in and of itself. The story is also written with awareness of its protagonist's history; events in Smailholm have left their mark on Ben and at times on the way that he reacts to those around him.



While there are not many characters to be met and most have little time to truly develop, the characters present are nonetheless interesting, and each has his or her role to play in the story. Simon Booth in particular is well-wrought, in my opinion, making for an engaging character. Additionally, Ben now also has an ally in the character of Professor Jones who, although

not present in the house itself, makes appearances in the cut-scenes at both endings of the game. He can also be contacted during the adventure.

The case at Number 50 is not just another case – it is an important point in a story arc that has not yet entirely played out. This storyline had its apparent beginning in the third case, in Smailholm. Just as Ben met two important people there, two of the relationships that Ben forges in the haunted Number 50 will be of great importance to him.

The writing, overall, is not perfect, but is nevertheless adequate and conveys the story effectively. A few points of humor or camaraderie between some of the characters serve to provide relief from the otherwise serious atmosphere.

As with the previous installment of the series, Ben Jordan Case 4 comes with an excerpt from “The Paranormal Investigator’s Handbook”. This provides some basic background to haunts in the world of Ben Jordan, as well as a little foreshadowing and even a suggestion for one of the puzzles. It is a nice touch, and while the writing is not exceptional, it is presented very nicely, right down to a label on the back cover proclaiming that this copy of the handbook belongs to one “B. Jordan”.



As with the cases prior to this, the music is good (sometimes very good) setting and emphasizing the mood of the story very nicely. While not omnipresent (being found mostly in certain rooms and at certain points in the story), it is, I feel, appropriate and effective.

Similarly, the sound effects are good, sometimes very good. Ambient sounds are used well in rooms that do not have music, generally setting an appropriate atmosphere for the room at the time. My only criticism might be that the volume of a few of the ambient sounds could perhaps be a little higher with respect to the other sounds in the game.

Graphically, Ben Jordan Case 4 continues the trend seen in the previous cases in the series: it may not be groundbreaking, but it once again improves a little on its predecessor. While a few areas show graphical errors such as visible seams at room corners, most are good and provide decent portrayals of their subjects.

The gameplay in Horror at Number 50 is for the most part the same as that found in the previous elements of the series, albeit with a few changes. The player controls the eponymous character via the mouse, which has available five standard mouse cursors, each corresponding to one type of action that Ben can perform. Through these Ben can be told to walk to a spot, look at an object or place, interact with his environment, chat to a person or interrogate or converse with another character. These cursors can be selected either by simply clicking the right mouse button, which causes the mouse cursor to cycle to the next available cursor with each click, or via their icons in a menu bar that appears when the mouse is moved to the top of the screen. Once the appropriate mouse cursor has been selected, a single left mouse button click instructs Ben to attempt to perform an action of the type indicated by the mouse cursor at the location of the click. Thus, by selecting the "walk to" cursor (a tiny Ben in mid-stride) and clicking on a spot on the floor, Ben will attempt to walk to that point, while selecting the "look at" cursor (an eye) calls for a description of the item or place indicated by the mouse click.



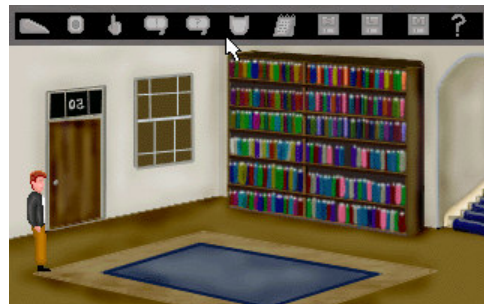
Also found on the menu bar is the inventory button, represented by an image of one of Ben's pockets. Clicking on this opens the inventory, displaying for the player everything of importance that Ben is carrying at the time. Here items can be examined to gain a brief description of the item in question, used in and of themselves, as well as, perhaps most importantly, selected for use. When an item is selected, the cursor changes to an image of that item. While the item is



selected this new cursor becomes a sixth available by right clicking – thus the player can choose to, for instance, walk to another room and examine an object before reselecting the item cursor via right clicks and using it on another object. In similar fashion to performing other actions, using an item on an object or place is achieved by clicking the mouse on an object or area in the game world (or indeed on another item in the inventory) while this item cursor is selected.

As with its predecessors, a notepad has been made available in which Ben occasionally writes down important information. However, this seems to be done infrequently, and so, I feel, a potentially useful addition to the gameplay lacks the utility that it might otherwise have had.

While the previous games in the Ben Jordan series had only a single “talk” cursor, this game has two. The first is represented by a speech bubble containing an exclamation mark, and indicates that Ben make small talk with the character indicated. The second, represented by a speech bubble containing a question mark, instructs Ben to engage a character in conversation, generally either to tell or to ask them something important.



The second change evident from the previous games is that Ben now has access to a cellular telephone, with which he can contact people outside of the house. At first only Professor Jones’ number is available, but it should not be long before players discover another person’s telephone number. This makes for a nice gameplay element, allowing the player to acquire information or aid from the outside on occasion. This telephone is represented nicely; the image used for it is good, although the numbers on the buttons are rather blurred. The sound effects seem realistic. One problem, however, is that the telephone begins to attempt to connect to a number a little too quickly, for me at least. When dialing, if the no more numbers are pressed for a rather short time, the telephone attempts to dial that number – if the player does not dial quickly enough, frustration may potentially result from the telephone dialing before they have finished entering the number. It thus might perhaps have been preferable to have had a separate button to initiate the call, thus allowing players to take their time dialing. Nevertheless, on the whole I found this to be a good addition to the gameplay.



A final, relatively minor change, is that in this game when the cursor passes over an object or place of potential interest that object or place’s name appears in a caption at the bottom of the screen.

The puzzles encountered in Ben Jordan: Case 4 are, for the most part, inventory-based, although there are a few that might be classified as “investigative”, involving uncovering something in the environment, such as locating a hidden item. While points are also awarded for covering certain topics with certain characters in conversation, and certain topics open up new avenues within the game, one can gain these points and avenues by simply exhausting all conversation topics with all characters, and thus it is debatable whether these can truly be considered puzzles. The puzzles are, I feel, both fair and appropriate. They each have some degree of logic – I believe that I encountered none which gave the sometimes frustrating experience of solving a puzzle only to think something similar to: “how was I supposed to think of that?” None are particularly difficult; I would say that players are most likely to get stuck by not thinking of talking to the appropriate person (such as one of those who are available only by telephone), rather than not knowing how to solve a particular puzzle. Additionally, a few events are triggered by entry into a particular region at a particular point in the game, so when all else fails it can sometimes help to have another look around the house.



In conclusion, I found Case 4 of Ben Jordan: Paranormal Investigator to be a very enjoyable game with a solid climax. The characters are interesting, the story is engaging, and the setting is effectively portrayed through graphics, music, ambient effects and sounds. The game is free to download, is of decent length for a freeware game (it should provide at least an hour or two of play), and at around 22MB should not be too large to be a worthwhile download for modem users. While not perfect, it provides an interesting and entertaining story and experience, and continues, I feel, to improve over what has gone before in the series while continuing the story of Ben Jordan: Paranormal Investigator in an entertaining manner.

|                                    |                                                                     |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Developer:</b> Grundislav Games | <b>Minimum System Requirements:</b>                                 |
| <b>Publisher:</b> Grundislav Games | Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP                                              |
| <b>Platform:</b> PC                | Pentium® 600 MHz                                                    |
| <b>Genre:</b> Adventure            | 128 MB RAM                                                          |
| <b>Release Date:</b> 2005          | Video Card Capable of 320x200 or 640x480 in 16-Bit Colour           |
| <b>Grade:</b> 75/100               | Windows® Compatible Soundcard                                       |
|                                    | Keyboard, mouse, speakers                                           |
|                                    | (Note: This game may well run on slower machines than listed above) |

## Ben Jordan Case 5: Land of the Rising Dead

PC Review by Thaumaturge

Heavy clouds hang solemnly over the Scottish countryside as he climbs the small hillock. He kneels at the grave that crowns the hill, speaking sorrowfully to the one interred within, one that he had loved. He is sorry, so sorry for the way that events unfolded...



The hand that thrusts from the grave to grab his wrist startles him awake, as it has done every night since he returned from London to his native United States. Awake now, and perhaps unwilling to risk a return to that graveside, Ben Jordan, paranormal investigator, decides to face the new day.

This new day holds a surprise for him, however. Despite the early hour, the telephone rings, and on the other end he hears the voice of Simon Booth, one of the two fellow paranormal investigators that he befriended while investigating the Horror at Number 50. Also on the line is the other, Alice Wilkins, and having contacted them both Simon relates a potential case to them, one that he suggests that they investigate together. It seems that there have been a number of murders in Osaka, Japan, with elements that have led to them being named "The Ghost Murders." Ben and Alice both agree readily, and arrangements are made for them to travel to Japan.



Once there, the investigation begins. Ben's first port of call is the police station, where the lead investigator and some less-than-legal methods will grant him his first leads. In his investigation Ben will speak with heads of corporations, a sushi chef, villagers, and more. He will explore locations both within the city of Osaka as well as a nearby village, a place whose

tranquility is overshadowed by suspicious deaths. Ben and his friends will face danger, and a villain with no apparent compunctions about using very underhanded tactics, or the removal of those that threaten his ambitions. Ben will even get to be the guest star of a television programme – if not one that he will likely look back on with fondness.

The events from Ben's third case will continue to cast a shadow over him. It was the case that took him to the little Scottish town of Smailholm, a place in which he

found both love and grief. Since then he has not allowed himself to move on, has not allowed himself to see what may be closer than he thinks.



The story told in Ben Jordan 5 has an interesting premise. A series of murders is being committed, seemingly by a supernatural agency and for reasons unknown. The path that the player is given to take is interesting, even if it may not be the best one ever to grace a game. Better yet, the relationship between Ben and Alice adds a little emotional weight to the story,

especially given that Ben's grief over events at Smailholm not yet fully resolved. While the characters are perhaps a little flat, they are nonetheless somewhat interesting. The cast may not be as eclectic or as interesting as that which convened in the last case, but it should at least keep players interested for the duration of the adventure. Overall, I would say that the writing isn't bad, if not perfect, although the climax is perhaps not as strong as those found in the previous two games in the series.

As in previous cases, an excerpt from "The Paranormal Investigator's Handbook" has been provided. This provides background to the type of villain faced in this case – zombies and their masters – as well as the hint that has also accompanied previous extracts from this "book". As with the excerpts given with the previous cases, this one is decently-written, with a good presentation – and here again I note with pleasure the touch of having it signed as belonging to "B. Jordan" on the back cover. A point in the "handbook's" favor, in my mind at least, is that it explains zombies through medicine rather than going to the classic "walking corpse" explanation.

Graphically Ben Jordan 5 is on average a definite improvement over its predecessors. The backdrops continue to improve, especially that used to depict Ben's bedroom. When compared with the same scene as portrayed in the first three episodes, the new image shows a marked improvement. The character sprites are also better in this installment. However, perhaps the most striking examples of this improvement lie in the character portraits. A number of these are much better than some of the portraits seen previously, most notably the improved portraits for Ben, Simon and Mary Blaine.



Slightly less impressive is the map used to take Ben between locations. While it does have the look of a real map (and it wouldn't surprise me at all if a real map

had in fact been used), it looks a little dull, and the background shows what appear to be some artifacts of image compression when viewed at full-screen.

Musically, Land of the Rising Dead is good, if perhaps a little inferior to the previous games in the series. However, I feel that the music does in general sound appropriate to the settings and moods that it supports, and does so to good effect.



In terms of gameplay, the interface is essentially the same as that used in Ben Jordan Case 4, with the exception that the cellular telephone is no longer available. Ben is controlled by single clicks of the left mouse button, the nature of the desired action being specified by the mouse cursor being used at the time. There are five standard mouse cursors available: a

miniature Ben in mid-stride to instruct Ben to walk to a spot, an eye to instruct him to describe an object or place, a pointing hand to instruct him to use or otherwise interact with an object or place, a speech bubble containing an exclamation mark to instruct him to make small talk with a person, and a speech bubble containing a question mark to instruct him to begin a conversation with a character, either asking them questions or telling them something important.

These cursors can be selected from by two means: firstly, they are available via icons found on a bar that pops up when the cursor is moved to the top of the game screen, and secondly they can be found by clicking the right mouse button, each click of which causes the mouse cursor to cycle to the next available cursor.

Also found via the icon bar at the top of the game screen is the inventory, represented by an image of one of Ben's pockets. Clicking on this icon causes Ben's inventory to be displayed on the screen, containing all of the potentially-important items that Ben is carrying at the time. Available in this view are icons that allow the player to examine, interact with or select items from the inventory.

When an item is selected, the current cursor is replaced by a new one in that item's image, which becomes available via right clicks in the same manner as the standard cursors, allowing players to perform other standard actions before using a selected item without requiring that they reopen and reselect that item. Clicking on an object (whether one found in the game world or Ben's inventory) or place while this item cursor is selected instructs Ben to attempt to use the selected item with the object or place specified by the click.



As is usual in the Ben Jordan games, a notepad is available to remind players of important tasks and information. This notepad is, I feel, better used in this game than in the previous, although I would have liked to have seen more important information being recorded in it.



The puzzles to be solved in Land of the Rising Dead are primarily of the inventory kind, although there is one quiz and one code, the latter of which, however, is optional.

The aforementioned quiz stands out to me as a curiosity in this game. It takes place in a setting quite aside from the main plot of the game, and is a style of puzzle not common to the Ben Jordan games thus far. This odd excursion can be, depending on your point of view, either a brief and amusing diversion from the main plot, or an annoying and irrelevant detraction from it.

It is, I feel, worth mentioning that it is possible to die at a few points in the plot. If this happens, the player is presented with a death screen, featuring a short rhyme on their demise, and the options to restore a saved game, restart the game, or quit.

In conclusion, Ben Jordan: Paranormal Investigator, Case 5: Land of the Rising Dead, is a good game. Given that it is distributed as freeware, is of decent length for a freeware game, and at around 23MB should not be too large for those of us restricted to modems to download, I would recommend this game to those interested in the genre and themes, and especially to those who have played and enjoyed the other games in the Ben Jordan series.



**Developer:** Grundislav Games  
**Publisher:** Grundislav Games  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** 2006  
**Grade:** 73/100

**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP  
 Pentium® 600 MHz  
 128 MB RAM  
 Video Card Capable of 320x200 or 640x480 in 16-Bit Colour  
 Windows® Compatible Soundcard  
 Keyboard, mouse, speakers

(Note: This game may well run on slower machines than listed above)

# The Winter Rose

PC Review by Thaumaturge

Over the mountains but before the sea could once be found a forested land of beauty and enchantment. While human beings were few and far between, those that did live there did so in happiness and in harmony with their land and fellow creatures.



The death of this idyll was the coming of the ice dragon. From over the sea it flew, and from its jaws streamed a deadly black fire. Where normal flames might consume in heat, that which the black fire engulfed was frozen solid, held in icy grip as convenient food for the mighty dragon. What's more, the midnight flames seemed even to draw the warmth from the very air, and an unnatural and enduring winter clutched tight the realm. The people of the land fought back, of course, and foreign lords came to slay the beast, but not one of them could stand before the terrible monster or survive its deadly breath; those that quested for its death found only theirs.

Those few who survived hid themselves away, and scratched a meager living from the frigid soil – but even they slowly dwindled, until it seemed to Rose's elderly father that he and his daughter may well have been all of humankind that remained in the once-pleasant land. Now, lying in his bed, Rose's father feels his strength all but spent and death creeping nearer. Yet he would have it that young Rose should not share his fate, and so tells her to seek her fortune outside of the ice dragon's reach, to strive to find a way through the forest, perhaps, and



thus, he hopes, to come to some other land. To this end he offers her his bow, and whatever else she would take, and suggests that she seek out the hermit who lived on the eastern cliffs and the Enchantress of the Isle for help in her quest. While Rose accepts the offer and the advice, she does not accept the quest. Instead, bold, adventurous and spirited, she determines to slay the dragon herself.

With that determination in mind, Rose sets out into the winter landscape. The dragon's death will not come easily, however. To bring it about Rose will outwit a murderous forest gnome, help an abominable snowman, speak with a member of the "underground economy," and much more. She will meet characters that range from cheerful through sage to grim, villainous and evil. With her bow and

mind to aid her, she may yet have a chance of defeating the beast of cold that has beset her homeland...

The story of *The Winter Rose* has the feel of a fairy-tale to it. The game's setting – a forest land with few people and magical creatures underscores this fairy-tale atmosphere, while the characters fit their setting, being written in broad, bold strokes, color making up for the lack of the depth that one might expect in other genres. Even the introduction given in the informative “readme” file, beginning with the words “over the mountains but before the sea” contributed for me to this atmosphere, having a similar effect for this story as do the time-honored words “in a land far, far away;” that of beginning to evoke a place that is at once familiar, magical, and unknowably distant – a place recognized from the stories of our youth and yet so very unlike the world in which we live. This is well-supported by the writing, which is decently-crafted, with a slightly archaic, story-book choice of words that contributes well to the fairy-tale setting.



Contributing too to this atmosphere are the graphics. The game is viewed in the classic static third-person perspective, as though one were watching the main character from an elevated distance. The backgrounds were hand painted by the creator of the game, then, as desired, enhanced or finished with computer-drawn artwork, according to the game creator's website (which offers a brief “behind the scenes” look at the process that went into creating the artwork, which I found interesting). These backgrounds are in general very good, having a strongly artistic story-book feel, in places very slightly surreal – an aesthetic that I found to work excellently in the general atmosphere of the game.



The creatures and items encountered, as well as Rose herself, have a similar feel to them. All are rendered without shading, in simple, flat tones. Furthermore, the depictions of human beings, such as Rose, omit the details of their features, such as eyes and mouth (although close observation of Rose's talking animation when she faces one side does show her

mouth in some frames as her profile changes with the opening of her mouth) – only non-human creatures are shown with eyes (such as the Abominable Snowman or the Moiler Mole). However, while in another game this might have been a negative point, this minimalistic depiction works very well in this setting, I feel, again enhancing the story-book feel of the game. On the negative side, while most of the characters are well-drawn, a few are perhaps of lesser quality,



a few items do seem a little crude, and some of the animations, while decent, are a little jerky due to having fewer frames than might perhaps have been preferable. Similarly, the depictions of items held in Rose's inventory could, I feel, use improvement, although a few are nice.

The environment has been furnished with many areas and objects that Rose can examine, providing those interested in exploring the game's world with plenty of things to look at, potentially enhancing the game's immersivity – and showing an attention to detail that is most pleasing to encounter. It could have been all too easy to have simply allowed the player to examine areas and objects directly relevant to the game, and thus perhaps have created a more static, less involving world.



The music in *The Winter Rose* is drawn from classical stock, specifically Vivaldi. While not ubiquitous throughout, the music used is beautiful, and very appropriate to the atmosphere of the game. Despite the fact that only one piece plays during the majority of the game (being replaced by a more appropriate piece in the confrontation with the dragon), I found that I was not bored by the lack of variation at all – in fact, this choice of music is one element of *The Winter Rose* that I found to be unequivocally good.

Less pleasant, however, are the sound effects. While some are good, I found others to be a little annoying (the forest gnome's laugh most gratingly so), especially because the difference in volume between the sound effects and music seems to be oddly large, meaning that setting one's speaker volume to a level that allows the music to be enjoyed results in sound effects at a volume that might be found to be a little on the loud side (as was my opinion).



In terms of interface, *The Winter Rose* overall conforms to one of the most prevalent styles of adventure game interface. Rose is controlled entirely via the mouse, with single clicks of the left mouse button instructing her to walk to a location, use an item, talk to a person and so on. The manner of action indicated is determined firstly by the mouse cursor in

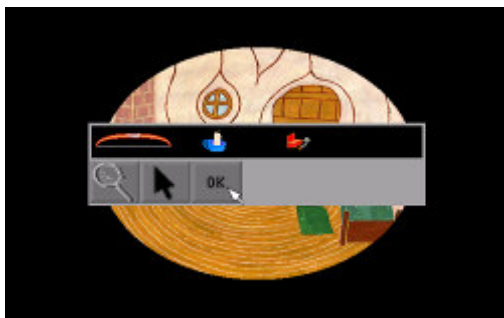
use at the time, of which there are five: one each to instruct Rose to walk to a spot (indicated by a cursor depicting a boot), look at an object or place (an eye), interact with an object or place (a hand), talk to another character (a speech bubble containing the word "talk"), and shoot at a target with her bow (a bow and arrow). Each of these cursors is very nicely-drawn in simple black-outlined white,

and the last-mentioned – the cursor that allows the player to instruct Rose to fire at an object or place with her bow – is a very nice addition. The desired cursor can be chosen in one of two ways: first, they can be selected by repeated clicks of the right mouse button, each one of which causes the cursor to cycle to the next available cursor, and second. They can be found via an icon bar that appears at the top of the screen when the cursor is moved into that region.

Talking to the characters met in The Winter Rose is a simple matter. Clicking on a character while the “talk” cursor is in effect has Rose speak to the indicated character. These conversations are generally short, and the player does not select what Rose says. Instead, when Rose has more than one thing to say to or ask of a character, simply initiating conversation again will have her move on to the next topic, generally returning to the first topic again once all topics have been exhausted, thus in these cases allowing the player to return to already-read conversations (which is especially useful when those conversations hold clues to puzzles elsewhere in the game).



Also available via the aforementioned icon bar is the inventory. When opened, this displays all of the potentially useful items that Rose has about her person. Here these items can be examined (providing a description on the item in question, and, in at least one case, producing new items from the one examined), as well as selected for use, either on other inventory items or in the game world.



When an inventory item is selected, the mouse cursor takes on the appearance of that item; it in effect becomes a sixth available mouse cursor (and becomes available via right-clicking, just as the standard cursors are). While this cursor is in use, left-clicking instructs Rose to attempt to use that item in the place or on the object indicated by the click.

For the most part items and areas of interest in the game world are fairly visible, although there are a few instances in which they are less obvious than might be desired – and at the least this game does not suffer from any true pixel-hunting tasks!

Rose will face a number of challenges, all of which are overcome with some application of inventory items. While one or two might be found to be a little tricky, these inventory puzzles are for the most part fair and good, some even

quite clever, and most problems should be soluble with suitable application of thought and attention payed to the information provided by characters and Rose's environment.

The world in which Rose finds her self can be a dangerous and treacherous one. Aside from the deadly dragon, for instance, the waters of the river and sea flow icy cold, and the forest is home to a malicious forest gnome, whose tricks can be



decidedly fatal. Consequently, it is quite possible for Rose to die. If this happens, the player is presented with a death screen, showing an image of the means of Rose's death, a brief quip, and buttons allowing the player to select from restoring a saved game, retrying the game from just before the danger, restarting the game, which returns the player to the main menu, or quitting the game.

Overall, I would say that The Winter Rose is a very good game. The graphics, while not always perfect, are nevertheless lovely (most especially the backgrounds), and the inclusion of snowflakes falling in the outdoors areas and Rose's footprints in the snow behind her make for nice touches. The classical music is beautiful, sets a wonderful mood, and is very well chosen, which to my mind makes up for the less impressive sound effects. The overall effect is of an enchanting fantasy with the feel of a fairy-tale and gameplay that is fun and engaging. Despite this fairy-tale atmosphere, however, this is not a game that I would think too childish for adults; instead The Winter Rose is a game that I would expect both adults and children to enjoy – I know that I certainly did.

The Winter Rose is free to download, and although it takes place in a fairly limited area, is of decent length for a freeware game. At just over 8MB, it is also a game that I would not expect to pose a serious problem for those of us still restricted to modems.

The Winter Rose is a game that may be imperfect in some ways, but I do indeed recommend it to all of those who enjoy fantasy adventures, and especially to those with a taste for the fairy-tale.

**Developer:** Hatter's Guild Productions  
**Publisher:** Hatter's Guild Productions  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** November 2005  
**Grade:** 80/100

**Minimum System Requirements:**

Windows® 95 and up (this game ran without trouble under Windows XP® on this reviewer's system)  
 Screen resolution of 640x400 or 320x200  
 Windows®-compatible sound card  
 Keyboard, mouse, speakers

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# Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

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PC Review by Ugur Sener

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Millennia before the Galactic Empire's reign of terror spread throughout the galaxy, the Republic faced the threat of the Mandalorians. They were incredibly fierce warriors equipped with advanced weaponry. It was a dark time when they descended upon the galaxy. They started with attacks on independent planets outside the Republic's control. The initial assault went on for twenty years. The Republic chose not to intervene.



After all, the hostilities were occurring in areas outside of the government's domain. Several worlds fell under the strength of the Mandalorian invasion. But that was only the beginning. The warriors eventually turned towards the Republic, managing to take control of planets located on the Outer Rim.

The Republic fleet could not hope to keep up with the Mandalorians. They lost battle after battle as the warriors dominated an ever growing region of the galaxy. The Jedi Council was reluctant to intervene. They believed the greater threat had not been revealed. They refused to take action and enter the battle prematurely. Yet all members of the Jedi order were not about to wait for the Council to finally make a move. The young knights Revan and Malak decided to take matters into their own hands.

Revan proved to be an incredible leader and a brilliant tactician. Other Jedi decided to join the war against the Mandalorians under Revan's command. The Mandalorians could not hope to keep up with Revan's tactics. The Jedi knight was always able to outmaneuver the enemy. Utilizing the most cunning strategies, the commander managed to turn the tide of the war. The Republic was victorious, making Revan and Malak legendary heroes.



Yet even during the war, there was something dark and twisted about Revan's tactics. It went beyond a simple willingness to make sacrifices. Revan would fight a ferocity and passion befitting those who had fallen to the dark side. When the Mandalorians were ultimately defeated, the Revan and Malak disappeared. The knights were supposed to be tracking down the remnants of the Mandalorian army. In truth, they had a much

different quest. Nobody would hear of the two Jedi knights for some time, with the exception of a few rumors.

When Revan and Malak returned, they had completely changed. They were no longer on the path of light. Both Jedi had been consumed by the dark side of the force. The heroic Revan was now at the head of a massive Sith armada. The Jedi knight had become the dark lord. Barely freed from the Mandalorians, the weakened Republic now faced another huge threat. The very Revan that led the Republic to victory was now back to invade the galaxy. But how had Revan and Malak created a fleet in such an incredibly short amount of time? What was the power behind the massive army and the seemingly endless supplies?



The Republic army did not have all the answers, but one thing was certain. Revan had to be stopped. There had to be a way to defeat the great tactician. After countless soldiers fell victim to the war, the Jedi came to the rescue once again. A group of highly gifted Jedi knights formed a strike team. Their task was to ambush Revan. Perhaps without their charismatic commander, the Sith army would crumble.

The ambush was only partly successful. Just as the Jedi knights launched their attack, Malak seized the opportunity to betray his master. The legendary Revan had been defeated. But now Malak was in control of the Sith army. Perhaps they were without Revan's superior strategic skills, but they were still an incredible force, threatening to destroy the entire Republic. Hundreds of Jedi knights had already fallen. How much longer could the Republic hope to survive?

A fierce battle raged in the skies above the city-planet known as Taris. The Endar Spire, a ship belonging to the Republic's armada was under attack by a sizeable Sith strike force. The Sith soldiers were trying to capture a Jedi knight called Bastila. This young knight had been part of the strike team that attacked Revan. But that was not why the Sith soldiers wanted to capture her. Bastila possessed an incredible force power known as Battle Meditation. When Bastila used her Battle Meditation skill, she could influence entire armies. She could instill confidence within Republic soldiers. She could make the Sith soldiers lose their will to fight. This influence alone could easily tip the scales in the Republic's favor in many battles.



Yet using the power required a great deal of concentration. The attack on the Endar Spire had been too sudden, leaving Bastila no time to use her Battle

Meditation. The ship was almost completely overrun by the Sith soldiers. In a matter of minutes, every Republic soldier would either be dead or captured.

You were stationed on the Endar Spire. You had been recently assigned to the ship. And part of your duties included protecting Bastila. When the Sith attack woke you up, you immediately joined one of the other Republic soldiers to find Bastila and make sure she was safe. As you ran through the ship's corridors and headed to the bridge, you encountered a number of Sith soldiers. Time was running short. You had to find the Jedi knight quickly and abandon the ship.



When you finally reached the bridge, you realized Bastila was no longer on the ship. Perhaps she had managed to flee to Taris in an escape pod. With Bastila gone, the Sith soldiers had no reason not to destroy the ship. You desperately raced to reach the last remaining escape pod. The famous Republic pilot Carth Onasi joined you as you left the ship and headed for Taris.

It must have been a very rough landing. A couple of days had passed before you came to your senses. You suffered from dreams you could not understand. Who was the woman in your visions? Who was she fighting against? When you finally woke up, Carth Onasi explained that you had managed to safely arrive in Taris. Unfortunately, the entire planet was under Sith control. Martial law had been declared and the planet had been placed under quarantine. No ships could enter or leave the planet unless approved by the Sith army. It was safe to assume the Sith soldiers were still looking for Bastila.



Carth intended to do the exact same thing. He wanted to ensure the safety of the Jedi knight. But there was more to it than that. A resourceful Jedi knight like Bastila could potentially help in escaping the planet. You joined Carth in his search. But you would have to tread very carefully. Taris was swarming with Sith soldiers. You would have to keep a low profile and avoid confrontations as much as possible.

As you left the abandoned apartment that would serve as your base of operations, you knew you were beginning a great journey. Sure, finding Bastila and escaping Taris could aid the Republic war efforts. But there was more at play here. Your nightmares had to have some sort of meaning. Perhaps it was not

only luck that got you through the attack on the Endar Spire. Taris was only the beginning.



Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic is a truly remarkable role-playing game developed by Bioware and published by LucasArts. Combining an interesting and highly engaging storyline, a host of memorable characters, and very solid game play mechanics, Knights of the Old Republic delivers a great experience from start to finish. The game does a fantastic job of capturing the spirit of the Star Wars universe. From the sound

effects to the music, from the types of characters that join your party to the non-player characters, everything feels like it belongs to the Star Wars setting. The dichotomy of good and evil is not only effectively presented, but also directly factors into game play in terms of the consequences of your actions. Even if you are not a fan of the Star Wars universe or role-playing games in general, you might still find a lot to enjoy in this game.

Knights of the Old Republic is played from a third person perspective. The PC version of the game ships on four CD's. The game can be controlled with a combination of the mouse and the keyboard. You can use the keyboard to move your character across the screen. Holding down its right button, you can move the mouse around to adjust the camera. Left clicking on an object such as a locker or a door will instruct your character to use it. If you are not right next to the object in question, your character will automatically run towards it. The game will automatically stop each time you encounter a set of enemies. This gives you time to choose the actions your character and each of your party members should perform when you resume the game. Once combat begins, the game can be paused at any time to assign new actions. It is also possible to queue up actions so you do not have to pause the game too frequently. Knights of the Old Republic does feature a number of keyboard shortcuts to give players quick access to various screens such as the inventory or the quest journal.



You start Knights of the Old Republic during the attack on the Endar Spire. The first part of the game essentially serves as a tutorial. A Republic soldier explains the basics of the game as you explore few small areas and fight against a handful of Sith troops. You also get to see the beginnings of the storyline as you find out who Bastila is and why she is so important to the Republic war efforts. But the game truly begins once manage to escape from the space ship.

The first chapter of the game takes place in Tiris. A single city covers the surface of the entire planet. But Tiris is no utopian metropolis. The city is separated into multiple levels. At first glance, the Upper City seems glamorous with its pristine buildings and elegant architecture. But many of the citizens are greatly prejudiced against all non-humans. Random and unsolicited attacks on aliens are not entirely uncommon. The Lower City contains the hideouts of swoop gangs.



When they are not racing with their swoop bikes, the gangs always seem to be at each other's throats. The people deemed unfit to live with the rest of Tiris's residents are cast away into the Undercity. The desolate place never sees the light of day. Corruption runs deep in each level of the city. Crime lords are constantly harassing citizens. And to make matters even worse, now the entire planet is under Sith control. Tiris feels like a pressure cooker. Finding the missing Jedi knight in this city will certainly not be an easy task.

During your time in Tiris, the plot will start to thicken. A number of events will gradually propel the story onward. Knights of the Old Republic has been nicely structured to make you care about your immediate surroundings and quests at hand. Yet at the same time, the game drops hints of its bigger plot from the very



beginning. You get to experience the extent of the Sith invasion first hand as you travel through Tiris in search of Bastila. A number of fun side quests are provided for you to gain some experience and familiarize yourself with the setting. Towards the end of the first chapter however, the story catapults. As the events escalate, you eventually find yourself visiting a wide variety of different locations across the Star Wars universe.

The storyline remains interesting throughout the entire game. And that is a very good thing since Knights of the Old Republic can easily take well over thirty hours to complete. As the main plot gradually unfolds, the game features numerous side quests to maintain your interest. As expected, a number of other characters eventually join your party to travel with your character. The game provides many opportunities to get to know these party members better. It is great to see that your party members are more than an extra pair of hands to wield a weapon. Many of them have a good deal of depth. They have their individual secrets waiting for you to uncover. If you make an effort, you can learn quite a few details about many of the party members. It is also great to see the interaction between the different party members. The arguments and discussions



they occasionally have definitely adds to the game. On the other hand, if you couldn't care less to learn about the people helping your character on the main quest, you do not have to make an effort as much of this content is optional.



In addition to the characters that actively join your team, Knights of the Old Republic also features a good number of different non-player characters. You encounter a myriad of personalities, making the game's universe feel rather rich and diverse. Many different Star Wars races are represented in the game. These non-human characters typically speak in their native tongue, arguably enhancing the science-fiction feel. You will however notice that every line of dialog spoken by aliens does not have unique voice acting. Each alien race has a specific number of different voice samples. As such, you will hear certain phrases get repeated even though the alien is supposed to be talking about different topics.

As much as it shows a good deal of creativity and imagination, there is one considerable problem with the game's storyline. The two biggest plot points you will encounter are a little too obvious. The game drops a few too many hints, making it fairly easy to guess what is going to happen long before you finally experience it in a cut scene. Fortunately, this should not have a huge impact on the enjoyment you will derive from the game. There are plenty of surprises along the way to keep things interested even if you can guess some of the plot twists. More importantly, the well-written dialogue and the colorful characters keep things interesting and fun to watch even if you figure out what is about to happen.

While the earlier and the very last parts of the game are structured, Knights of the Old Republic gives players a great deal of freedom in terms of how they explore the game's universe. Several hours into the lengthy game, you are assigned what is essentially your main quest. There are a number of individual tasks you will have to complete before you can resolve the main quest. As such, you can choose to explore various locations in any order you like.



Knights of the Old Republic also features a considerable number of side quests you can complete as you play through the game. In many cases, how you actually go about completing a quest is entirely up to you. You will be given many chances to explore one of several different options. Open conflict may not always be the main answer. In certain cases, the game gives players the opportunity to

look for peaceful resolutions. At other times, players can find subtler, stealthier ways of getting things done. Of course there is also plenty of opportunity for Star Wars style combat. You will most certainly get to play with many familiar Star Wars weapons. From blaster rifles to thermal detonators, from frag grenades to lightsabers, it is all here.

Having multiple solutions available for a number of quests is already a nice feature. However, there is also plenty of ethical consideration in Knights of the Old Republic. The game will present you many opportunities where you decide how to treat another character or handle a given situation. Depending on your actions, you may earn light side or dark side points. In general, the path to the light side lies in avoiding unnecessary fights, treating people kindly, protecting the innocent, and offering your help whenever possible. On the other hand, if you continually treat people badly, fight whenever possible, and in general act like a total jerk, you will find yourself on the fast track to the dark side. Your alignment is not dependent upon a single choice, but rather on a series of conscious decisions you will make for your character.



The path you choose in any given situation will have an impact on the immediate outcome. Your actions may save people's lives or bring about death and destruction when it could have been easily avoided. If you continually try to do the right thing, you will eventually find yourself firmly on the light side. On the other hand, if you continually start fights and refuse to help people, you will wind up on the dark side. Alternatively, you can try to maintain more of a neutral path. Depending on which side of the force you end up, certain force powers may become more or less difficult to use. If you are on the light side, you will find it difficult to use dark side powers. The opposite is true if you end up on the dark side.



Having the numerous moral dilemmas gives Knights of the Old Republic a distinct feel. Your alignment is more than something you artificially select at the beginning of the game. Instead, it is the result of a series of actions. And it is great to see the impact of your actions on the events. In addition to the smaller changes you will observe throughout the game, the ending you will see will be determined by a major decision you will have to make later on your journey.



When you start a new game, you are taken to the character creation screen. Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic is developed around the Star Wars role-playing system designed by Wizards of the Coast. If you are familiar with the system, the character creation process will probably be very simple. Since the Star Wars pen-and-paper RPG is an essentially a slightly different implementation of the Dungeons and Dragons system, if you have played Wizards

of the Coast RPG settings in the past, you should also feel right at home. If you are new to the world of role-playing games however, the game does provide descriptions that should guide you throughout character creation. The game also allows players ways to make characters without having to know the underlying details. It is possible to have the game automatically determine the stats of your character at the beginning. All you truly have to choose is your characters gender, class, portrait, and name. The game also has an auto level-up feature you can utilize each time you gain a new experience level. As such, it is possible to get through Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic without having to know much about the underlying role-playing system. However, if you want to get the most out of the game and make an effective character that truly suits your style, you will have to get into the details.

The first step in character creation is to select a gender and class. Your gender choice does have an impact on the game. Certain characters will react towards you differently depending on whether you are playing a male or female character. There are three available classes in Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic. The soldier class is the most efficient in combat. Soldiers can rapidly gain many feats, giving them significant advantages during fights. Their skill development however will be rather slow. Scoundrels on the other hand, try to rely on deception and stealth as opposed to open conflict. They have the most rapid skill progression across all three classes. They are also able to improve important skills like demolitions, persuasion, and security most efficiently. Having a high persuasion skill in particular comes in very handy during some conversations throughout the game. The scout class is somewhere in between the scoundrel and the soldier classes. While they do not gain as many feats as soldiers or as many skill points as scoundrels, they can maintain a good balance, making open combat or stealth equally viable options in many situations.



Once you settle on your character's class and gender, you will have a chance to select your starting attribute scores. Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic uses the same core attributes commonly seen in role-playing systems developed by Wizards of the Coast. The key attributes are strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma. You start with a score of eight on each attribute. Thirty points are available to spend towards each different attribute. Spending a single point towards any attribute will increase your score by one. If you raise an attribute score to fourteen however, additional increases will cost you two bonus points.

Strength determines your character's chance to hit with melee weapons. Having a high strength also gives you a damage bonus when your melee attacks succeed. Since you will most likely be using lightsabers during a large portion of the game, having a high strength score can be greatly beneficial. Dexterity is a measure of your character's overall quickness. A high dexterity score makes your character harder to hit. It also improves your accuracy with ranged



weapons different types of blasters and grenades. However, it is important to note that the type of armor you are wearing might restrict the maximum defensive bonus you can obtain from having a high dexterity. The constitution is a representation of your character's resilience. In game play terms, the constitution score affects the number of vitality points you gain each time you earn a new experience level. The cumulative effect of increased vitality points can easily make the difference in some fights. Your character's intelligence impacts the number of skill points you will gain at each level. Especially if you are planning to heavily use skills like security or computers, having a high intelligence score can prove to be very helpful. While it may not mean much at the very beginning of the game, wisdom directly affects your character's Jedi Force Points. Having a high wisdom score also makes your character's Jedi powers harder to resist. Finally, your charisma score impacts the effectiveness of certain force powers and your persuasion skill. Since the successful use of persuasion can give you

advantages throughout the game, having a high charisma score can help you out in numerous conversations.



After you determine how you want to distribute your attribute points, you need to configure your skills. The starting score for each skill is zero. You will have to distribute your bonus points across all the available skills. Depending on your character class, some skills will be easier to improve, costing

only a single point per rank. These are your class skills and represent disciplines with which your character is most likely to be familiar. All remaining skills will require two points to advance by a single rank. Due to your character class selection, you do not have as much aptitude in these cross-class disciplines, which explains the higher cost for advancement.



Knights of the Old Republic features a total of eight different skills. You will notice that each skill has a related attribute. If you have a high score in the corresponding attribute, you will be more effective at using the skill. Computer use refers to your ability to hack, or to use Star Wars terminology, slice into different kinds of systems. In order to slice a system, you need to use disposable modules called spikes. The number of spikes required for each operation depends on your computer

use rank. The repair skill has a similar structure. Throughout your journey, you will encounter a number of broken machinery that can be repaired to aid you in your quest. Making repairs requires the use of parts. The higher your repair rank, the fewer parts you will need to complete the operation. The stealth and security skills are extremely useful for quietly breaking into places. Using special devices, it is possible to turn yourself invisible. Your rank in stealth determines how hard it will be to detect your character when you are using camouflage devices. Security on the other hand indicates your proficiency in picking locks. The demolitions skill comes into play when you are dealing with mines. With a high rank in demolitions, you will be more effective at disarming and recovering mines. The skill will also help you when you are laying mines yourself. Awareness deals with your ability detect hidden objects and enemies. Treat injury represents your character's proficiency in using healing items. Having a high ranking in this skill will allow you to recover additional vitality points. Finally, the persuasion skill is extremely useful in a number of conversations. At certain times, you will be able to utilize this skill to convince other characters to see things your way. Through persuasion you might be able to get discounts or even avoid unnecessary combat.

The last step in character creation is to choose a starting feat. These feats represent special advantages your character has in certain situations. For instance, your character might be particularly adept at using melee weapons, giving you a bonus to damage. Alternatively, you might be exceptionally good at wielding two weapons. While many of the feats deal with combat, some of them will improve your skills. In order



to obtain a given feat, you will often have to meet certain prerequisites. Your character may have to reach a certain experience level or you might be required to acquire a different feat first. In many ways, the feats you select determine the fighting style of your character.

The combat in Knights of the Old Republic can be quite interesting. At the very beginning of the game, you will be able to use ranged or melee weapons. During the later stages however, you will want to start using lightsabers. When you can easily close the distance between you and an opponent wielding a gun and you have the ability to deflect laser blasts on top of that, there is really no reason not to use the tremendously effective and devastatingly powerful lightsabers. Yet the best part of the combat is not in the weapons you get to use, but in the underlying mechanics.



The development team has done an excellent job in presenting the combat. If you examine the fights closely, you can see that characters attack in regular intervals, indicating that the game is using turn-based pen-and-paper role-playing dynamics. However, the actual presentation, particularly in melee fights is quite fascinating. You can see characters perform different types of swings and parry blows when the attack does not go through. When you use special abilities like flurry or fight with two weapons equipped, there are noticeable changes in the presentation of the fight. The action looks quite fluid and it is without a doubt inspired by the lightsaber duels featured in the movies. It is excellent to see more than two characters just facing each other and swinging their weapons in exactly the same motion over and over again. In Knights of the Old Republic the swordplay can be quite fun to watch. Adding to that the fact that you will have to keep an eye on the characters you are not directly controlling, make sure you heal your characters when it is necessary, and watch for opportunities to use explosive weapons or force powers, the fighting becomes quite intense and entertaining.



Like many other RPG's, Knights of the Old Republic features a few mini-games that offer a fun diversion. For the most part, whether or not you engage in these mini-games is entirely up to you. There are however a few instances where you will be required to participate. You will get a chance to do some racing, learn how to play a card game, and use the gun turrets on a spaceship. In general, the mini-games can make a nice

break from the regular game while giving you a chance to earn some extra credits.

As expected Knights of the Old Republic also gives players a chance to try out a good number of different force powers. Many of the force powers carry an alignment. The light side force powers generally deal with boosting the entire party's effectiveness in combat. There are also light-side powers that can speed up your character or help you recover lost vitality points. On the other hand, dark-side powers can help you deal damage to your enemies, draining away their vitality points with powerful mental attacks. You can even siphon the lost health to your own character. Finally, there are a number of neutral powers. You can use the force to throw your lightsaber or push away your enemies. Many of the powers are straight from the Star Wars movies, adding to the authenticity of the game. The successful implementation of these powers definitely has a positive impact on the game.

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic is a truly remarkable game. The solid storyline certainly has what it takes to grasp your attention, not letting go until you reach the end. The main campaign has a satisfying length. Players are provided with many opportunities to complete side quests. Alternative approaches are available and your decisions have consequences on how the events unfold. Many of the party



members who join your make for interesting characters. You will most likely enjoy getting to know them throughout the course of the game. The fighting is quite engaging and visually appealing. In fact the entire game features fairly nice visuals, particularly on the modeling of certain alien characters. The game does have a couple of small problems. The plot twists can be too obvious and your party members do occasionally get stuck around corners when they are trying to follow you. However, neither of these issues even comes close to hurting the overall experience. Knights of the Old Republic is a highly enjoyable game that captures the essence of the Star Wars universe in an excellent way. If you like RPG's or the Star Wars setting, the game is without a doubt a must-have. It will keep you entertained for many hours as you explore the galaxy.

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| <p><b>Developer:</b> BioWare<br/> <b>Publisher:</b> LucasArts<br/> <b>Platform:</b> PC (version reviewed); Xbox<br/> <b>Genre:</b> RPG<br/> <b>Release Date:</b> 2003<br/> <b>Grade:</b> 96/100</p> | <p><b>Minimum System Requirements:</b><br/> Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP<br/> Pentium® III 1 GHz processor<br/> 256 MB RAM (128 MB for Windows 98)<br/> 4 GB Hard disk space<br/> 32 MB video card<br/> DirectX® 9.0b Compatible Soundcard<br/> 4X CD-ROM drive<br/> Keyboard and mouse</p> |
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# Silent Hill 2

PC Review by La Primavera

Do you like horror action games where you are in face-to-face combat with bloody monsters? Or do you like adventure games in which you are immersed in an imaginary world, uncovering dark secrets and solving mysteries? Here's your chance to do both in a single game. Throw in multiple scenarios, multiple endings, and multiple combat and puzzle levels, and you get a long, brooding nightmare called Silent Hill 2.



Silent Hill 2 was created by Konami, a veteran Japanese game developer and publisher, following the blockbuster success of the original Silent Hill which had debuted in 1999. Silent Hill 2 was first released in Japan in September 2001 for PlayStation 2. Extremely popular on PS2 and Xbox, it was later released for PC.

## Step into the nightmare...

The game opens in a disgustingly filthy, dilapidated public toilet (quite lovely, isn't it?), with a close-up shot of the protagonist, James Sunderland (who reminds me of the popular English soccer player David Beckham).

He has come here, to the lakeside town of Silent Hill, after he received a letter from his wife, Mary. She says she is waiting for him in their "special" place. The only problem is that his wife has been dead for 3 years. James is still mourning the loss of his wife, and quite confused with the letter. Is this some kind of cruel joke, or is she alive somehow?



In this third-person perspective game, playing as James Sunderland, you are going to find out what really happened to your wife.

When you reach the town, you find it deserted, with no sign of life except for – you guessed it – monsters, lots of them. Every street, every corner is shrouded in almost impenetrable fog, which gives way only grudgingly and closes in just as quickly. You see smears of blood everywhere. Everything looks run-down, grungy, and dark. You can't even tell what time of the day it is.



You will encounter four human (or seemingly human) companions in the game, Angela, Maria, Laura, and Eddie, who all seem to be in serious need of psychiatric care. Angela is a disturbed young woman with suicidal tendencies. Maria looks identical to James's late wife, except his wife would have never worn



a tight-fitting mini-skirt, exposing her midriff with a tattoo. Laura is a bratty 8 year old who is also looking for Mary. Eddie is a big boy whom you'll first see puking into the toilet bowl.

They are not there necessarily to help you in your quest, but may help shed light to the mystery surrounding your wife, this desolate town, and the very reason why you are here.

### The game has a story to tell

What differentiates Silent Hill 2 from run-of-the-mill horror action games is its intriguing storyline. Sick and disturbing it may be, but the game has a story to tell, and it does it pretty well without forcing you to watch a cut scene that lasts 5 minutes, listen to a long monologue explaining things, or to read pages upon pages of journals and diaries. (The only exception is a letter that appears in the monologue. It goes on and on and on and on and...)

The mystery unravels bit by bit, through short interactions with people you encounter, through snippets of newspaper and magazine articles you get to read. Dark surroundings of decrepit buildings and monsters start to weigh on you. These monsters look disturbingly human, somehow flipped inside out. You begin to wonder what kind of people remain human anyway (that includes you, as James) in this town. The conclusion you may come to may not be pretty. Eddie shouts in one scene, "This town called you too. You and I are the same. Don't you know that?"

The horror in this game is more psychological than physical. It comes from not knowing exactly what's happening around you in this dreary place, not knowing why you are here, and not knowing when and if all this will end and how. It is like a nightmare that you desperately try to wake up from.



(The whole game looks and feels like a movie. And guess what? Sony Picture has indeed made a movie out of the original Silent Hill, and it was released in the U.S. in July 2006. It is now available on DVD as well.)

## And does it in style

And the game tells the story in style. Graphics match the nightmarish storyline and disturbing themes. They create a haunting, sinister, and grungy atmosphere which is enhanced by restrained but good sound effects.

The developer's attention to detail is obvious in the visual description of the different locations. You can almost smell a foul odor of a corpse, and you squirm when James puts his hand in the clogged toilet.



Characters look realistic, instead of looking cartoonish as is often the case with third-person perspective games. They are created with 3D polygon and are imparted with enough facial expression and natural movement. They transition pretty smoothly from cut scenes to game scenes.

The single most effective visual element is the fog / darkness that envelops almost every scene and the use of light. The flashlight, which you will pick up (hopefully) earlier in the game, wobbles very realistically as you walk or run in the dark, but the light is barely enough to see a few steps ahead. It gives you this sinking feeling that you are trapped here forever.

I must say, though, they could have done a better job on trees and vegetation, which look as natural as the trees in the original Myst game.

## Puzzles and monsters

I set the puzzle level as Hard (hardest it can get in the version I had), but by the adventure game standard the puzzles are not very difficult. In most cases they have their internal logic which you can pretty much figure out without consulting the walkthrough. If they are random, you won't suffer endless trials and errors. They mostly involve finding objects that will be needed to get to the next location, or simply opening the door to the next location.



Monsters on the streets and in the buildings look like bloody mannequins often with two sets of legs (one set replacing where arms should be). Sometimes they are armed with sticks to whack your head. There are door-monsters, which look like, well, a door. You also encounter giant monkey-like monsters that hang from

metal grates on the ground. They will try to grab you by the foot as you walk or run on the grates. In addition, there are oversized cockroaches everywhere.



These monsters are not really scary, but you can get killed by them. Once, I got so upset when I was killed by the swarm of giant cockroaches when I set the combat level to Normal. If you prefer, you can just avoid fighting the monsters on the streets by running past them, saving ammo for encounters in tight corners where you have no choice.

Killing monsters won't affect the outcome of the game. If you get injured by them, whether you treat the injury or not may affect the outcome. If you get killed, that's the end of your game. Much as I love arcade shooting games, I had the combat level as Beginner because of the control issue (discussed later).

In each main location, you will encounter the head honcho, the executioner who wears a blood-stained triangular helmet. He seems to kill both humans and monsters. For most of the time, all you can do is avoid getting killed by him and run. And run fast...

### Voice Acting

I thought the voice acting in Silent Hill 2 was quite good, if somewhat overplayed. Female characters in the game seem to burst into a diatribe at the slightest perceived insult, which some of you may feel out of place and context. (Personally, I felt like I was back in Japan watching prime-time TV drama.)



English, which was translated from original Japanese, flows naturally enough. Actors are all native speakers. You can turn on the subtitles, but you really don't need them. The words are spoken clearly, well above the ambient sound level. You still read James's thoughts in subtitles.

### Multiple scenarios, multiple endings

Another thing I found great about this game is that you get to play multiple scenarios and multiple endings. There are two different scenarios, the main scenario where you play James Sunderland, and the sub-scenario where you play Maria, who wakes up one day not knowing where she is or who she is. The sub-scenario is much shorter, but quite charming on its own. **[Editorial Note:**

This extra scenario where you play as Maria was not available on the original PS2 version of the game. It is however available on the Xbox and PC versions as well as the PS2 Greatest Hits version.]

For the main scenario, depending on what you do and/or how you behave in the game, you get four different endings. One of them is not accessible the first time you play through the game. You also get two Easter-egg endings which are triggered after you finish both the main scenario and the sub-scenario once. I have to caution you that none of the regular endings are what you would call happy endings.



The Easter-egg endings cut a happy contrast to the dreary regular endings. They will definitely make you laugh. They will also cut short the game prematurely, but they are so hilariously funny you shouldn't miss. (You'll even get to see James without a shirt.) Who says Japanese don't have a sense of humor? Each ending comes with unique original theme music that attempts to capture the mood of the particular ending.

### And nightmarish game control

Now the bad part... Nightmare is also the right word for the game control for the PC version. As this game was translated from game console platform to PC, the control is done on your keyboard.



It is simply maddening, if you don't have a joystick or gamepad (I don't). It was so awkward to control the movement using the direction keys I almost abandoned the game even before I got out of the public toilet. (That was like 10 seconds into the game.)

You do get used to it, with enough perseverance and determination (i.e. get your money's worth), but this is definitely a big minus of the game for PC gamers. **[Editorial Note:** It is worth pointing out that the controls are fairly simple, easy-to-learn, and much less frustrating on the PS2 versions of the game that I have played.]

All the game control keys are programmable in the Control Options menu, if you don't like what comes as default. For PC gamers using the keyboard for control, I recommend using the rotational control (default), instead of directional.

## Multiple skill level settings

The game has four combat level settings: Beginner, Easy, Normal, and Hard. The higher combat settings result in more monsters that are harder to kill and faster - instead of 2 whacks to the head, it takes 5 whacks or more to kill them. If you don't have a joystick or game pad, setting the combat setting to Beginner takes the pressure off of having to move fast.



There are four puzzle level settings available: Easy, Normal, Hard, Extra Hard (later version only). For adventure game buffs, only the puzzle levels of Hard or Extra Hard would satisfy your inquiring mind.

## Collecting Inventory items can be tricky

Since there are no hot spots that you can find with the mouse (you can't use the mouse!!), the only way to identify inventory items is to observe if James turns his head to any particular direction. It becomes harder to detect his head turning if you have him run. To pick an item, you press the space bar (that's the Action key). One tricky thing is to direct James to just the right angle facing the item; otherwise he won't pick it up.

There are three types of inventory items: weapons and ammo, health drinks and first-aid kits, and odd objects like keys, bottles, a piece of hair, etc. necessary to solve the puzzles. Certain items do not appear until after certain events are triggered.

The single most important type of inventory item is the maps. This is a long game, with numerous locations to explore. If you are geographically challenged like I am, finding a map should be the first priority. You won't be able to leave the initial parking lot (where the filthy toilet stands) unless you find a map of Silent Hill first, but in all the other locations it is quite possible to miss it.



## Other game play consideration

The game comes with 3 CD-ROMs, installs without any problems, and is stable. The bulk of the game is installed on your hard disk, so you don't need to swap CD-ROMs in the middle of the game. You do need the Disc 1 on your CD-ROM/DVD drive at all times to play the game.

Unlike the PS2 and Xbox versions, you can save the game any time, though I ran out of saving slots after 100 saves and had to overwrite. I don't know if it is the same in later versions or not. Hitting the escape key temporarily stops the game, and gives you an access to the menu screen.

### Overall

This game is rated "mature", and rightly so. In addition to blood and gore and strong language, there are some very dark themes (suicide, abuse, murder, mental illness, etc.). I wouldn't recommend it for anyone who feel themselves too impressionable and susceptible to negative suggestions. (Seriously.) The combination of monster-bashing action with mystery-solving adventure may not necessarily satisfy fans of either game genre. If anything, I think horror action fans are more disappointed because fighting the monsters is not the essential part of the game.



That said, the game manages to finish strongly without losing steam. The game near the end seems to be made with the same attention to detail as the beginning. It is a tightly and stylishly made, story and character-driven survival horror game.



If you are of sound body and mind, and can tolerate a slight diversion (of fighting the monsters) from your quest for the truth, you will find the game's nightmarish atmosphere and story quite disturbing and yet entertaining. It is definitely worth your time, and with multiple endings and multiple scenarios, replay value is quite high. You might want to consider borrowing, if not buying, a joystick or gamepad, for the PC version though.

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| <p><b>Developer:</b> Konami<br/> <b>Publisher:</b> Konami<br/> <b>Platform:</b> PC (reviewed), PS2, Xbox<br/> <b>Genre:</b> Survival Horror<br/> <b>Release Date:</b> September 2001<br/> <b>Grade:</b> 89/100</p> | <p><b>Minimum System Requirements:</b><br/> Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP<br/> Pentium® III 700 MHz or AMD Athlon®<br/> 64 MB RAM<br/> 32 MB 3-D Graphics Card<br/> DirectX® 8.1 Compatible Soundcard<br/> 4x CD-ROM Drive<br/> 1.8 GB Hard disk space<br/> Keyboard, mouse, speakers</p> |
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# The Winter Rose - Walkthrough

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Written by Thaumaturge

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A few starting notes:

- In The Winter Rose talking to characters multiple times often produces multiple conversations, some of which provide important clues. When this walkthrough suggests talking to a character, this should be taken to mean that one should talk to that character until no new conversations are had – usually indicated by Rose returning to an already-covered conversation, but sometimes by the same final conversation repeating.
- “Using” and “taking” are achieved via the same cursor, the hand cursor. I have used “take” in this walkthrough to indicate instances when “using” an object results in Rose taking it; The exceptions are those cases in which one “uses” an object that holds the item that Rose takes.
- “Shoot” indicates that the “bow and arrow” cursor be used, which instructs Rose to attempt to shoot whatever is clicked on.

The land that lies over the mountains but before the sea used to be a peaceful and wonderful place, before the ice dragon came, bringing with it the clutches of an unnatural winter. The people of the land did not submit, however, and fought back. Foreign lords too came questing to slay the deadly monster. All, however, failed, and in the end the dragon waxed unchallenged, while those that remained hid themselves away and scratched a living from the ice-bound land.

Lying on his bed, most probably with not long to live, Rose’s elderly father urges her to leave, to seek a way to escape the frozen land and outdistance the clutches of the terrible dragon. But the young girl has more fire than that, and, refusing her father’s desire, she determines to slay the dragon herself.

Can young Rose succeed where so many valiant warriors failed...?

The game begins in the hollowed-out hemlock tree that Rose and her father call home, just after Rose declares her intention to slay the dragon and takes her father’s bow.

First, **talk** to Rose’s father.

That done, take the **blue cup containing a candle**, which can be found on the table near the window, the **tinderbox**, which is found on the mantle above the fireplace.

Open your inventory and examine the **blue cup containing a candle**. You should now have two items instead of one: a **blue cup** and a **candle**.

**Exit** the house by **using** the **door**.

**Use** the path to have Rose make a **snowball** – don't worry, it would seem to be cold enough that the snowball doesn't melt.

**Talk** to the **vulture** if you wish; there is little that you can do to it now, but later is another matter...

**Walk** up the path to reach the village, avoiding the nearby stream.

**Take** the **bucket** in the snow to the right of the well.

**Use** the **woman** beside the well to gain a **comb**.

**Use** the **soldier** under the tree to gain his **shield**.

**Walk** right to the next screen, the hot springs.

**Walk** down to find another frozen soldier (this one bearing a rather sharp-looking spear – take note of that).

**Use** the stump to take the **arrow** embedded within it – Rose now has an arrow to go with her bow!

**Walk** left to the next screen, bringing us back to the hemlock tree.

Attempt to **shoot** the **vulture** – it will fly off, going to perch in the tree in the village (the one under which the soldier from whom we acquired the shield lies).

**Walk** up (note the new perch that the vulture has found, but do nothing for now), then right and right again to find a rather suspicious-looking **apple-on-a-stick**. Do not attempt to take the apple by hand, unless you want to see the death screen that results. Instead, **shoot** the apple from the stick, which will spring the trap.

**Take** both the **apple** and the **dagger** that was flung by the trap.

**Walk** right to the next screen – the frozen waterfall. Attempt, if you wish, to **use** the **dagger** to aid a climb up the **waterfall** – it seems that you should keep an eye out for another dagger.

**Walk** right again, then down to find the dock and the wrecked ship.

**Use** the **hole** in the wreck to find a **flask of liquor**.

**Walk** left to find a toppled tree and the **Abominable Snowman**.



**Talk** to the **Abominable Snowman**. It seems that he has a bit of a dagger problem, but doesn't want it removed unless the wound is sterilised – such as by alcohol, perhaps.

**Use** the **flask of liquor** on the **Abominable Snowman** – you should now gain another **dagger**.

**Use** the **patch of dirt** that shows where the fallen tree had been rooted – you should gain an **earthworm**.

**Walk** right, then up, then left to once again reach the frozen waterfall. Hmm... presuming that north is up (as seems reasonable), would these not be likely to be the eastern cliffs that Rose's father mentioned? The problem is how to scale them...

**Use** either of your **daggers** on the **frozen waterfall**. Now that you have two Rose can use them to aid her climb, bringing you to the clifftop, and the hermit.

**Walk** to the **hermit** (by first **walking** to the **stone pillar**), avoiding the "lookout."

**Talk** to the **hermit** to receive clues about the Isle of the Enchantress, the forest gnome, the vulture and the dragon.

Well, we know where the Isle of The Enchantress is, but how to get there? There might be ice on the sea, but will it hold your weight? The hermit suggested speed – perhaps we should use the run-up provided by the lookout to our advantage...

In your inventory, **use** the **candle** on the **shield** to wax it – we now have a nice, slippery shield – **use** this on **Rose** to go sledding down the lookout, and out over the frozen sea to reach the Isle of the Enchantress, albeit at the cost of the shield.

**Take** the **spellbook**.

In your inventory, **examine** the **spellbook**. Despite the ink stains, we get an idea from the symbols at the bottom.

**Use** the **boat** to return to the docks on the mainland. The boat now provides safe travel to and from the Isle of the Enchantress.

**Walk** up, then left to return to the frozen waterfall.

In your inventory, **use** the **tinderbox** on the **candle** to light it.

**Use** the **lit candle** on the **small hole** (the black area to the left of the frozen waterfall) to meet the Moiler Mole.

**Talk** to the **Moiler Mole**.

**Use** the **comb** on the **Moiler Mole**.

**Talk** to the **Moiler Mole** again.

**Click** on the “**Play**” **button** (in the bottom right corner of the screen).

**Walk** left to return to that nasty trap. Hmm... the hermit suggested turning the gnome’s tricks back on itself... (the gnome is revealed to be the culprit if you attempt to take the apple by hand instead of shooting it.)

**Use** the **snowball** on the **suspicious tree** (the rightmost one, which had held the dagger before you sprung the trap). Rose should reset the trap with a snowball and get ready...

**Use** the **unconscious gnome**.

Once Rose has had her little “chat” with the gnome, **take** the **horn**.

**Walk** left again to reach the hot springs.

**Talk** to the **Abominable Snowman**. Very interesting... it seems that because of his fur he is immune to freezing...

**Use** the **apple** on the **Abominable Snowman** – he should give you a large hairball (oh what a *lovely* present, you may well think – but worry not, it has its uses...)

**Use** the bucket on the **hot springs** – you now have a **bucket full of water**. In this weather, however, it’ll freeze quickly, it seems...

So, what use is water? Well, the hermit said something about vultures disliking it...

**Walk** left to the village.

**Use** the **bucket full of water** on the **vulture** – *that* should give it a nasty shock!

**Walk** right, then right again. Well well well – it would seem that water *does* freeze quickly here, to judge by what happened to the vulture...

**Use** the **vulture** to gain a **feather**.

**Walk** right yet again.

As before, open your inventory and **use** the **tinderbox** on the **candle**, and then **use** the **lit candle** on the **dark hole**.

**Use** the **hairball** on the **Moiler Mole**.

**Click** on the “**Play**” **button**, the once again open your inventory, **use** the **tinderbox** on the **candle**, and then **use** the **lit candle** on the **dark hole**.

**Take** the **longjohns**.

**Click** on the “**Play**” **button**. Rose will get changed into her new insulating underwear.

**Walk** left, down, then left again We’re missing one item from the spellbook – dragon’s blood. But how to gain such a thing?

Well, we do know that the ice dragon is attracted to heat...

**Use** the **tinderbox** on the **soldier** – the result: a sore dragon and a blood-stained spear.

**Use** the **flask** on the **soldier** – you now have **dragon’s blood!**

**Walk** right, right, then right again to reach the docks.

**Use** the **boat** to return to the Isle of the Enchantress.

**Use** the **earthworm** on the **cauldron**.

**Use** the **feather** on the **cauldron**.

**Use** the **dragon’s blood** on the **cauldron**.

Congratulations! You have freed the Enchantress from her black fire prison!

**Talk** to the **Enchantress**. She should give you her wand.

**Use** the **boat** to return to the mainland.

**Walk** up, then left and left again to reach the trap and the dead vulture.

The time for the final confrontation has begun...

**Walk** up to reach the pass, then up again to reach the dragon on its peak.

That peak looks rather fragile, especially considering that it has a rather large dragon perched on it, doesn't it? What's more, the spellbook, on the page adjacent to that which gave you the spell that freed the Enchantress, mentions a horn, gnomes, power and the earth. Lastly, if you happened to venture too far up the pass before dealing with the gnome you might already have some idea of the horn's powers...

But the dragon has wings – what good is pulling the earth out from beneath it if it can just fly up again?

But now is not a time to tarry – if you take too long to act the dragon may well kill poor Rose.

**Use** the **wand** on the **dragon**. Heheh, no more flying for *this* dragon...

**Use** the **horn** on **Rose**.

Congratulations! You have slain the terrible ice dragon, and completed the quest of The Winter Rose!

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## A Final Note...

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Here we are at the end of Adventure Lantern's ninth issue. As Thaumaturge concluded his series of articles on the Ben Jordan series, Wendy shared her impressions on Post Mortem and Egyptian prophecy. We also welcomed some new members to our team and took a look at Kehops Studio's latest puzzle adventure Safecracker. Scott Frost, Alkis Polyrakis, and Dimitris Manos kindly gave us great insight into their current development efforts.

For our October issue, we have something special planned for you. Our tenth issue will feature a Halloween theme in celebration of the holiday coming up at the end of October. Sure, we will have articles on a couple of newly released games, but the bulk of the issue will feature a horror theme. We have articles planned on Blackstone Chronicles, Amber: Journeys Beyond, Darkfall, Shivers 2, Eternal Darkness, the remainder of the Silent Hill series, and the Resident Evil series to give you a solid dose of all things creepy, frightening, downright disturbing, and deviously gory. We can also contemplate life's great mysteries like how a grenade launcher and a lighter occupy the same amount of space in the inventory and why monsters tend to quadruple in size when they feel the end of the game is coming.

As we delve into the world of horror gaming with psychotic smiles on our faces, I hope you enjoyed this month's issue. Tune in next month to join us on our ride to the dark side of gaming. In the meantime, we have ghosts to hunt, zombies to kill, and monsters to avoid. If you happen to find any spare ammunition, extra rocket launchers, stakes, or magic cameras that can hurt ghosts, please let us know. We are already running low...

Until next month...

-Ugur Sener