HOLLOW VOICE

Already a lot of time has passed since I launched *XYZZYnews* back in January (and I didn't even have to type "wait" repeatedly). If you'll excuse my gushing for a minute, I just wanted to thank everyone for their feedback and compliments on the first issue. I've heard from text adventure fans in 20 different countries. It's been a joy to read your email, and I hope you'll keep it coming!

'Zine archives and GMD
After several false starts, the format for the e-zine version archived at ftp.gmd.de has been finalized. Each issue will still be available in both a text-only version and as a .PDF file (Adobe's Portable Document Format). So the files for this issue, for example, will be available as XYZZY2.TXT and XYZZY2.PDF in the if-archive/magazines/XYZZYnews directory on ftp.gmd.de. The only difference is that from now on I won't be compressing these files for the various computer platforms. As it turns out, the savings in file size wasn't terribly significant, and I unwittingly created formatting problems by misusing various compression schemes. Volker Blasius was invaluable in helping me organize this zine's presence on GMD; since I'd never uploaded anything to GMD before, it was a real learning experience for me. For those who're new to exploring the IF archives there, and even for those who've uploaded and downloaded there many times without thinking about how its operations take place, I had originally planned to include in this issue an interview with Volker and a behind-the-scenes look at GMD. Unfortunately a time crunch and work overload made that impossible this time around, but please look for it in a future issue.

Women play text adventures too!
My final $.02 for this issue is in response to reading several posts on the IF newsgroups and in the text of the recent game "Sorcerer's Revenge" the opinion expressed that women just don't play text adventure games or compose an insignificant percentage of the text adventure-playing audience. As far as I can tell, women players are for the most part simply less inclined to place gratuitous posts on the IF newsgroups. But the lopsided M-to-F ratio in the game programming world is consistent with the larger general computer programming industry. So what would encourage more women to learn TADS, Inform, or whatever, and become IF game programmers? My list of things that *won't* help includes 1) perpetuating a male bias by assuming that all gameplayers are men; 2) distributing the really lame soft-pornish text adventures that objectify women; and 3) putting women down, however unintentionally, as you post to the newsgroups or write the text for your own games.

    Happy gaming!

Eileen Mullin
eileen@interport.net

Contents:

XYZZY news

Electronic versions: There are currently two versions of *XYZZYnews* made available online. One is in ASCII and can be viewed with any text reader. You can also download a .PDF file that mirrors the layout of the print version. Use the Adobe Acrobat Reader (available for Windows, Mac, DOS and UNIX) to view the .PDF file; no special fonts or linked graphics are needed. You can obtain Acrobat Reader from ftp.adobe.com in the pub/adobe/applications/Acrobat folder, or http://www.adobe.com/Software.html.

Subscriptions: Both electronic versions are available at no cost. You can obtain either one by FTPing to ftp.gmd.de. To be added to the mailing list, please write to eileen@interport.net and specify text-only or .PDF version. The print version includes a 3.5" Mac or PC disk and is $21 (U.S.) for one year (6 issues) or $3.50 for a sample issue. For print subscriptions outside the U.S. or Canada, please email or write for rates.

Editorial deadline for Issue #3 is April 30, 1995.

Sneak Previews

The plots of the two "Sneak Preview" games covered in this issue involve saving your environment from complete and utter destruction. Heavy stuff! Since these games are still in development, their release date information may change.

World Under Glass, a new Inform game-in-progress by Chris Bethea (synthbrain@aol.com), is a race against the clock to save the Earth from the fiery doom that your psychic powers have foreseen. As the game begins, you are in the house you've inherited from your uncle and are trying to find the key for a huge steel door in the basement. Through that basement door is an entryway to an astral plane, where you'll find a kooky store with pocket-doom triggers, a universal translator, a mean little demon and a psychic fountain. A brief trip through a green maze will send you to a time portal, where you hurtle through dimensions only to be tried in a court of horrors to determine whether the earth is worthy of being allowed to survive. You have only 600 turns to accomplish your mission, or say goodbye to Planet Earth! "World Under Glass" will be a freeware game; it has an expected release date of March 25.

A Day in the Life, the first complete game written in the adventure language ALAN, takes place aboard a starship in the distant future. Written by Marc Sachs (sachs@crayola.cse.psu.edu) and inspired by Infocom's "Suspended", this science fiction adventure gives players the unique perspective of acting as an artificially intelligent being embodied inside a computer. Life as an AI is no picnic, however; ever since another AI apparently went berserk several years ago and caused a horrible disaster that no one will discuss with you, your kind have been reviled and gradually replaced by a dumbed-down generation of computer systems. You find yourself shunted off as a backup program while another computer flies the starship Floodland and its cryogenically frozen human cargo between the distant space colonies, until one day a terrible calamity overtakes your ship. The controlling computer is wrecked and the crippled spacecraft is on a collision course with an inhabited planet.

Much to your surprise, you are reactivated and given control of three shipboard robots to help you correct the situation and avert disaster. As you fight to save the ship, you must contend with damaged systems, corrupted and hostile computers, and your three eccentric robot charges who each have their own unique abilities and world views. Sachs plans to release the game in Amiga format by the beginning of summer, and in PC format immediately afterwards. He also plans to release the source code to help anyone who might be programming with ALAN. "The game will be completely freely distributable," Sachs adds, "as long as people are playing interactive fiction, I'll be happy!" ✪

Eileen,

Congratulations on the first issue — it looks really good (it was a great idea to distribute it in .PDF format).

All the best,
Dave
h0142kdd@rz.hu-berlin.de

To: XYZZYnews

I like your new magazine!! I have been a fan of text based adventures for years now, but I didn't know that people were still fans of them. Thanx for a great magazine!!!

jtmc1@aol.com

Hi, Eileen!

Just thought I'd drop a brief line… I think you've done a really impressive job of your magazine! Don't know how you're going to follow that one up. :) It looks particularly good in .PDF. Look forward to future issues! Who knows? Maybe I'll have something to contribute someday, though the way my game in progress is going right now perhaps I'm being excessively overoptimistic…

Neil K. Guy
Neilg@sfu.ca

Any chance of you putting up a postscript version? This would allow many more people to access the pretty version (well, me anyway!)
ct
m92ct@ecs.ox.ac.uk

I heard a lot of similar queries; see the next letter for a collective response—EM

Hi Eileen,

I finally got Acrobat Reader for unix downloaded in one piece (six megs, slow & unstable link) and managed to print out *XYZZYnews* #1, and I'm really impressed with your work. Interesting interview with Graham Nelson and reviews of numerous games, and what a layout!

I still find the .PDF format a nuisance though, not to mention the Acrobat Reader which uses almost eight megs of my disk quota :-(If your 'zine wasn't so pretty I'd go for the ascii version, but alas… Don't you think a gzip'ed (or whatever) PostScript file would be just as small as a .PDF file?

Thanks for a truly splendid magazine,

Mads Haahr
haahr@cs.ubc.ca

Mads,

First, let me applaud your perseverance in downloading Acrobat Reader in spite of your connection woes. I really want as many readers as possible to be able to see the layout, and I think the .PDF format is the best way to do that cross-platform electronically.

I thought about posting the PostScript format but I went with the .PDF version (which is just a modified PostScript file anyway) so that you can view it on-screen, and use links to go from article to article. Acrobat also has very impressive cross-platform support, and the file size is much, much smaller than PostScript files. The PS file didn't compress that well either, probably because of the fonts. But as I experienced firsthand with issue #1, com-

pressing the files for specific platforms defeated the purpose of making the 'zine available in a format that could be read on a variety of platforms.

Let me also take this opportunity to also remind readers that if the Adobe Acrobat software isn't available on your computer platform of choice (I think the Acorn users are out of luck on this one, for example), don't forget that print subscriptions are always available.—EM

Dear *XYZZYnews,*

I saw a review of the game Odieus' Quest for the Magic Flingshot in issue 1 of *XYZZYnews.* Mr. Meckler, the reviewer, states that he completed the AGT version of the game but was unable to complete the Inform version due to a bug that prevented him from cooling the hot springs.

I too noticed the same problem. In the AGT version you can simply throw the beans (any colour) into the spring, but if you try this in the Inform version you get the strange message "Alas, it is closed." But I fiddled around with it for a while and finally discovered that the command "PLANT BLUE BEAN" will do the trick. As a result I finished the game, but only got 148 out of 150 points, and haven't bothered to track down the other 2 yet.

Graeme Cree
72630.304@compuserve.com

Graeme,

Thanks for tracking down the elusive wording. If you're really hung up on those two

points, I can see what I can do about getting together a walkthrough and listing how points are accumulated.

—Lauren Meckler

Eileen,

I was glad to see your new 'zine today. I was also really thrilled when Activision put together the Lost Treasures collections a few years back. It gave me a chance to consolidate all the Infocom games in one computer format. I have a question for your next issue if you feel it is worth inserting. For some reason, The Lost Treasures collections (I and II) put out by Activision didn't include Meretzky's Leather Goddesses of Phobos. Does anyone know where a legal copy can be acquired?

A dedicated Infocom fan,
Kevin Casey
70642,2700@compuserve.com

Kevin,
Since your message was forwarded to me from the Mac Gamers forum assistant sysop on CompuServe, I'm assuming that you're using a Macintosh. As far as I know, Leather Goddesses of Phobos is no longer available from Activision on the Mac platform at this time. You might have better luck trying to buy an older used copy or looking for the PC version. You can also reach Activision at Activision/Infocom, P.O. Box 67001, Los Angeles, CA 90067; their ordering number is 1-800-477-3650; fax 1-310-479-4005.   —EM

Seeking assistant interactive authors

Modus Operandi is a multiplayer, text-based, interactive fiction game which will debut on multiple online services later this year. The game is being produced by Simutronics Corp (also responsible for Gemstone III and Cyberstrike on GEnie, which are among the most popular online games) in association with Time-Warner Mysterious Press. MO has a modern resort island setting and player action centers around finding and solving mysteries and puzzles.

The members of the MO design team (called "Interactive Authors") are seeking assistant IAs to help in the creation, implementation and, eventually, running, of the MO world. We are looking for imaginative people who believe well-written and designed interactive text fiction can be every bit as rewarding as any multimedia extravaganza. Ideally, we would like people who are skilled writers and programmers, not to mention fiendish puzzle creators and mystery fans.

The downside: Assistant IAs are NOT paid; being an assistant IA is sort of a training/testing ground. Those that prosper may move to becoming full IAs as the game audience grows, at which point there is some monetary compensation. The amount of work involved is serious—it would not be unusual to see assistant IAs putting in 15+ hours per week.

The upside: The rewarding experience of seeing hundreds, or probably, thousands of players encounter your designs; the chance to get a foot in the door and get your name known in the professional computer gaming industry; free access (possibly) to certain areas of certain online services; the opportunity to participate in creating, expanding and generally putting your imprint on an enormous, ever-changing online world. It's also a lot of fun.

If you are seriously interested, please write Dave Woods at dwoods@nero.uvic.ca.

Dear Madame,

Greetings to you from Japan! I got your XYZZYnews from CompuServe/MACFUN and found it very interesting.

I still keep disks of Zork for CP/M. I remember I was just stunned by having noticed how smart the program (the parser) was and how much richness of story and description was condensed into at most 150 KB.

My best IF experiment was "Planetfall". Many years have passed since then and it came to appear a bit corny and gushing, however I think what we can only do is tell the old stories over and over again, and what's important is how well.

Sincerely yours,
Yoichiro Itose
71070.2252@compuserve.com

Correction
Some versions of *XYZZYnews #1* erroneously identified "Veritas" author Jim Reese as a Stanford med student. Reese graduated from Yale Med school 3 years ago and is now doing his neurosurgery residency at Stanford.

The Infocom Bugs List

by C.E. Forman

The following list is an effort to collect all known bugs in all Infocom interactive fiction games. Games are listed in alphabetical order, with details of each bug following. Be aware that Infocom released several versions of most games and that some of the bugs listed here have been fixed in the more recent releases. Where possible, I have made every effort to personally ensure the validity of the information I received, but due to lack of access to all versions of all games, I occasionally had no choice but to rely solely on the word of contributors. Also where possible, I have included the specific versions of games in which the bugs will work. You can find the release and serial number of your own copy by typing VERSION at the prompt. In this document, the format for the version number is listed as follows: Release-Number/Serial-Number. Bugs that were originally mentioned in the *New Zork Times* "Exterminator" columns are indicated by an **NZT** icon.

I should also mention that this list covers only the most noteworthy oddities — invalid responses, crashes, printed garbage, or other unusual but easily recognizable errors. I have neither the time nor the inclination to uncover every minor bug in every version of the Infocom parser, so you won't find anything like that here. What you will find is a set of (hopefully) interesting things to try in some of those old adventure games you still may have lying around gathering dust.

Beyond Zork
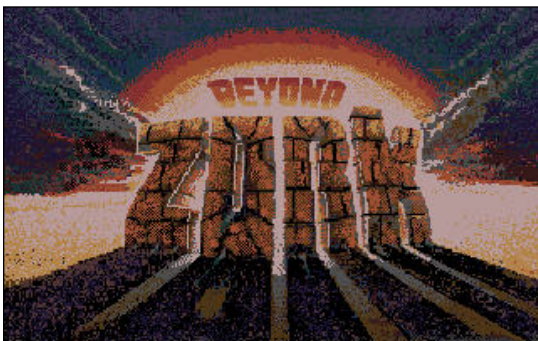
If you go to the Pool of Radiance, then type "DIP ME IN POOL" (as opposed to "GET IN THE POOL"), it will say that you see yourself in the pool, even though you really aren't. However, you will now be unable to interact with yourself ("EXAMINE ME," "POINT WAND AT ME," etc.) for the remainder of the game, unless you are at the pool. There is no way to get "yourself" back out of the pool once you "put" yourself in. This works in any version.

In early versions (47/870915 and possibly 49/870917), you can take the hurdy-gurdy away from the Monkey Grinder using the levitation wand. He'll still be able to use it against you, though.

I've also received several reports of the "Butterfly Bug" in earlier releases. You were able to sell the butterfly in any of the shops, but it would still follow you around, enabling you to sell it again and get infinite zorkmids. It was even possible to win the game without obtaining the Crocodile's Tear by doing this. The version included with LTOI (57/871221) has this one fixed.

Also fixed in LTOI is a bug which allowed you to read the scroll of recall, then walk onto the lava without the aid of the ring of shielding.

For some reason, the potion of forgetfulness doesn't seem to erase your map in the LTOI version, although it did in earlier releases. Not sure whether this is a bug or an act of kindness on the part of Infocom.

Deadline

In the earliest version of Infocom's classic mystery (26/821108), after the murder of Ms. Dunbar, two Dunbars would sometimes be present — one living and the other dead!

NZT In the earliest release, the bathroom door on the first floor was impossible to open. "OPEN DOOR" would generate the response, "Which door do you mean, the door or the south closet door?" Answering "THE DOOR" would start the process all over again. • Some versions don't recognize the player as being in the room when he's sitting on a piece of furniture. For example, sitting on the couch and typing, "BAXTER, TELL ME ABOUT ROBNER" would respond with "You can't see any me here." • The six-letter recognition system used by Infocom's early parser often created problems. "LISTEN TO THE GARDENER" would generate a reply of "The roses make no sound." The game, looking at the first six letters, recognized "GARDEN" and "GARDENer" as the same word.

Enchanter

A well-documented bug in the earliest version (10/830810) allowed the player to fill the jug anywhere in the game simply by typing "FILL JUG" (provided that there was at least a small quantity of water already in it).

A similar error allowed the player to obtain any spell he wanted simply by typing "GNUSTO *<spell name>.*" (Not sure if this worked with KULCAD, GUNCHO, or FILFRE.) This one was also corrected in the second release.

Normally, if the player continues to wander around without sleep for long enough, he'll drop from exhaustion. If you happen to be near the Engine Room when this occurs, however, you won't be able to sleep because of the noise. After you drop, try typing "DIAGNOSE," and you'll see garbage for the description of how rested you are. Repeat this several times, and eventually you'll start seeing the Rainbow Turtle's dialogue mixed in. This one works in all versions, including the one in LTOI (29/860820).

Here's a bug that erases the entire contents of your spell book. At the Landing, enter the following sequence: "MEMORIZE BLORB. EAST. KULCAD THE STAIRS. CAST BLORB ON ME." When Belboz restores you to life, your spell book will be empty when you try to read it! You can do this in any version.

NZT In an old version, sending the turtle into the temple would be interpreted by the game as though you'd gone in instead, and you would end up dying. • Casting Guncho to dispel the magic in the rope around the jewelled box would work, but the box would be empty, and typing "LOOK" would make the rope visible. Also, the portrait in the gallery would disappear if you moved it and typed "LOOK."

Infidel

The wooden mast of the Royal Barge is responsible for several bugs in this game. According to the hint book, you're supposed to need both hands free to take the beam, which means you have to put the torch in the knothole. However, if you remove the shim, then go back up to the main deck of the barge, you'll be able to remove the beam no matter what you're holding. So you never have to put the torch in the knothole. Also, try dropping the beam aboard the barge or in the area immediately surrounding it. It will reappear on the central deck, no matter where you drop it. Sometimes I've even had it drop there just by passing through the central deck! As there was only one version of this game released (22/830916), the problems with the mast were never corrected.

NZT You can "LIGHT THE TORCH" anywhere in the game, regardless of whether or not the torch is present. (There was only one version, so this one's still out there.) After you put the beam in the niches, if you type "GET BEAM" from anywhere in the game, you fall into a pit of rats. • Filling the silver chalice when it's already full responds with "The silver chalice is filled with water. The silver chalice is now empty." • The container bug from Starcross and Zork I is also here.

Leather Goddesses of Phobos

At any point in the game, you can manipulate the purple or orange buttons on the barge, even when you're not in the same place as the barge.
The reply goes something like this:

> >EXAMINE THE PURPLE BUTTON
> You can't see any purple button.
> The huge purple button reads: Go With The Flow.

Pushing the buttons works as well. This one is still present in the Solid Gold release (4/880405).

Lurking Horror

After you obtain the master key from the hacker, try losing it in a way which prevents you from retrieving it. (Dropping it into the pit beside the altar works well.) Now if you go back to the Terminal Room and ask the hacker for it again, he'll give it back to you. This works in 203/870506, the earliest version. Not sure if it's still there in the Mac or Amiga versions with the digitized sound effects.

When you encounter the rats in the steam tunnels, try escaping them by climbing on the coaxial cables above you. Eventually the rats will swarm up and start to bite you, making you fall. But if you try letting go of the cables before they do this, you'll get two descriptions of your death — one saying that you let go of the cables, and the other saying that the rats bit you and made you fall.

Moonmist

If you give another character a sequence of commands, ending with a request that the character follow you, the character will instantly appear at your side, no matter where he or she is. For example, lead a character to the first-floor gallery. Now type: "<character>, GO DOWN THEN GO WEST THEN GO NORTH THEN GO WEST THEN GO DOWN

THEN GO WEST THEN FOLLOW ME." The character should now be somewhere in the basement, but if you go east, into your room, he or she will instantly reappear at your side. This works in both versions of the game.

Nord and Bert

Although I can't recall details, I once got the game into an unsolvable state by performing several actions out of sequence, with the skeleton in the bathtub in the "Meet the Mayor" scene. I remember being unable to interact with the skeleton, despite the fact that the room description said it was still there.

Planetfall

At the end of the game, pushing the elevator button more than once will make it restart its descent, with no ill effects. In more recent releases, it's been fixed, and you go back up to the main floor where the mutants are eating. Not sure which versions this one is present in.

NZT Ordering Floyd to take an item was interpreted by the game as if the player typed "TAKE FLOYD." • Taking the fused bedistor, then dropping it, would make it impossible to pick up again, since the game thought it was still fused to the socket. • Floyd would bring you the shiny fromitz board over and over.

Quarterstaff

Trying to burn anything with a sub-menu (such as any item acting as a container, or a creature holding an item) causes the game to crash. Several locations, such as the Charred Room, will eventually set your party on fire and also lead to the crash. This one caused so much trouble that Infocom even reported it in an issue of The Status Line.

Sorcerer

Several sources informed me that, in earlier versions, it is possible to GNUSTO the Golmac spell and use it later, even though it has no effect. I couldn't get it to work in the PC LTOI version (15/851108), so I can only assume it's been fixed. In this version, trying to leave with the Golmac scroll causes a paradox, and you lose your grip on the rope if you try to enter the room with the spell book.

NZT As in Enchanter, you could TAKE any spell scroll at any point in the game, no matter where it was. You could even get a second Aimfiz scroll this way.

Spellbreaker

In the first release (63/850916), if you tried using the knife to cut up the magic carpet while you were sitting on it, the status line would say you were still sitting on the carpet, even though it was destroyed. If you then got off the carpet, the status line would show garbage, and you would find yourself in a location with no description and no exits. Attempting to use the Blorple spell to get out of this location would make the game hang.

If you're playing the first release, it's impossible to offer the merchant an exact number of zorkmids in exchange for the magic carpet (for example, you can't "OFFER 250 ZORK-MIDS"). All you can do is offer him the opal or the coin.

Also in the first release, typing "THANKS" gives you the response, "How do you do that with a *<string of garbage>*?" Weird, considering Infocom usually handled Q&A and rhetorical replies pretty well.

And then there's the famous Girgol/Blorple bug that caused quite a commotion in the rec.games.int-fiction newsgroup a couple months ago. Normally, if you try to get by the ogre by casting Girgol, the scroll and gold box will be frozen in time and you won't be able to take them until the spell wears off, at which point the ogre will come in and kill you. But casting the Blorple spell on a non-magical object, and then waiting in the Nondescript Room until Girgol wears off, would allow you to exit and take the Espnis spell and gold box without being killed by the ogre. There was considerable disagreement as to whether or not this was really a bug, but I recently discovered that, in the second release (version 87/860909), included with LTOI, the Girgol/Blorple solution to the ogre's cave does not work. Apparently the folks at Infocom decided that it was in fact a bug—Told you so!—and removed it from the game.

Starcross

In the first PC release (which I believe is the one included with LTOI), you can put the red disk on the blue disk, then put the blue disk on the red disk. This causes them both to disappear, along with anything else that was on either of them. Similar bugs appear in early versions of a few other games that have items acting as containers.

Similarly, trying to shake an object would put the game into an infinite loop. This one has apparently been fixed, substituting the cute response, "You can't take it; thus you can't shake it."

NZT You were once able to get the red rod from the grue's nest by typing "NEST, DROP ROD."
• Climbing the tree and typing "THROW HANDS" once resulted in, "The pair of hands sails away, drifting in a long arc towards the ground."

Suspect

I received word that, in the first release of this mystery, it was possible to get to Veronica's office before her murder occurred. The path which must be taken is geographically longer, but requires fewer moves, and should allow you to reach the murder scene one turn before the body appears. Supposedly, typing "LOOK" again will display the text about the body, even though it wasn't there the turn before. Lacking this version of the game (it doesn't work in LTOI), I can't confirm this one myself.
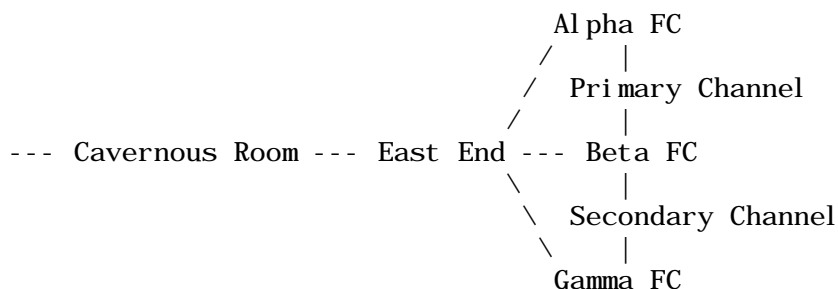
Suspended

In the earliest version (5/830222), there was no way to determine which of Iris' chips was shorted and needed to be repaired.

You don't need to use two robots to move Fred from the cabinet. In all versions, you can cheat and use just one: "BOTH SENSA AND SENSA, MOVE FRED."

In any release, you can configure the game on the second move, not just the first. This means you can make one move (most likely picking up an object) and then re-configure the game to put the robot with the object in a better position. This can be a great time-saver if used correctly.

There's also an error with the map that was never fixed. Referring to the southeastern section:

```
                              Alpha FC
                             /      |
                            /  Primary Channel
                           /        |
  --- Cavernous Room --- East End --- Beta FC
                           \        |
                            \  Secondary Channel
                             \      |
                              Gamma FC
```

While you can walk northeast from East End to the Alpha FC, there is no direct route back from Alpha FC to East End, and no indication that this is a one-way corridor. An attempt to backtrack results in the standard "You can't go that way" message, despite the fact that it directly contradicts the map. To get back to East End, you have to walk south through Primary Channel and Beta FC.

Trinity

The Book of Hours is not reversed after passing through the Pergola in any version of the game. This could be considered more of a design flaw than an actual bug. (Or perhaps the book doesn't change because it represents time, which, unlike directions, cannot be reversed.)

When you're on the paper bird above Nagasaki, and you hear the plane approaching, type "LISTEN." You'll die, but the message will be the same as if you'd still been on the ground rather than flying on the paper bird.

Wishbringer

In version 68/850501, you could take the gold coin back from Miss Voss after buying a movie ticket, enabling you to repeat the action and earn an infinite number of points. The PC version of LTOI uses a later version (69/850920), but this bug should still be present in LTOI for the Mac.

Witness

NZT You could "GET A DRINK" anywhere in the game. • If a player got into the shower or the broken window, he would become trapped, as the game would think you needed to get up first, because it thought you were sitting in the chair.

Zork I

The earliest release of Zork I (release 5, no serial number) would become *very* confused if you nested objects too deeply in your inventory. The output of the "INVENTORY" command would get spurious "Such language in a high-class establishment like this!" messages, with other random junk interspersed in it. This would also lead to the object hierarchy getting screwed up, in such a way that an "INVENTORY" would claim that you were carrying a bunch of rooms around. I'd LOVE to get my hands on a copy of this version and try it out.

Here's a variation on the Starcross disk bug. If the sack and the bottle are both empty, it's possible to put the sack in the bottle, then put the bottle in the sack, causing both to vanish. This is still present even in 88/840726, the LTOI version (!), but I think the Solid Gold release (52/871125) finally fixed it.

NZT In early versions, shaking an open container that isn't empty may crash the game. • In early versions, you can bump your head on things such as the river by trying to enter them. • Commands such as GO DOOR or GO TREE can send players into bizarre locations.

Zork II

When the wizard appears before you, but doesn't cast any spell, you will see the following text:

```
The Wizard seems about to say something, but thinks better of
it, and peers at you from under his bushy eyebrows.
```

Type "KILL THE WIZARD," and you will get the following reply:

```
The Wizard retreats, waving his wand and chanting.  He says, "Fear!"
Nothing happens!  With a terrified glance at the demon, the Wizard
runs past you and out of the room.
```

This text clearly belongs much later in the game, after you've freed the demon and ordered him to kill the wizard.

In older versions (not the one in LTOI), you were able to give commands to inanimate objects. For example, you could say "AQUARIUM, GO EAST," and the game would say "The aquarium has left the room." Typing "AQUARIUM, EAST. EAST" would result in a message saying that you have died, but in reality it is the aquarium that has "died." I don't have an older version of Zork II to confirm this myself.

Also in early versions, you could take immovable objects by reading them. For instance, "READ UNICORN" will (provided the unicorn is actually present in the first place) reply:

```
Taken.
How can you read a unicorn?
```

Another example: Reading the stands on the Wizard's workbench will let you take them, even though the game claims they are firmly bolted to the table. However, since the text about the stands is a part of the room description, they remain attached to the table, even if you're carrying them, and even if you drop them elsewhere, even though the table itself doesn't move along with them.

Yet another early Zork II bug: If you looked into one of the three spheres when they were all in the same place, the game would recursively describe the room as seen through each sphere, which would overflow the interpreter stack.

I've also had a parser bug in early Zork II releases brought to my attention by several people. It stems from having two objects of the same color in the same room, and then referring to the object simply by its color, for example:

>TAKE THE RED
Which *<several lines of garbage>* do you mean?

In the LTOI version (48/840904) the parser bug has been fixed, and the reply "There seems to be a noun missing in that sentence" replaces the garbage. (Early parser versions of other Infocom games may have similar bugs.)

Another minor parser bug: Restart the game, and try using a pronoun in your first command, such as "EXAMINE IT." You should get the reply:

There's nothing special about the *<short string of garbage>*.

This happens in other games running early versions of the Infocom parser, but I first noticed it with Zork II.

Zork III

In very early versions of Zork III, the chest was too big and could thus contain items that normally weren't supposed to fit. The most notable was the wooden staff, which, if put safely inside, would not get broken when the player fought and killed the man at the cliff ledge. Thus a player could get
the treasure and keep the staff intact as well. Another interesting use of this bug involved using the chest to transport the lamp or torch across the lake, thus eliminating the need for the grue repellent and viewing table. This allowed the player to win with only 6 of the 7 possible points. It's incredibly difficult to find a version with this bug still intact.

Another bug in the early releases actually let the Dungeon Master follow the player outside the endgame area if you knocked on the dungeon door a second time, from the inside. LTOI doesn't have this one either.

After you've climbed down the rope to the cliff ledge, you can't climb back up again with the chest. However, typing "CLIMB THE ROPE" (as opposed to "CLIMB UP THE ROPE") will make you climb DOWN the rope again, putting you at the cliff base, even though the rope ends a few feet above the cliff ledge! This one's present in the version included with LTOI.

When you get to the Dungeon area, try this (in any version):

>DUNGEON MASTER, KILL ME WITH THE STAFF
"If you wish," he replies.
If you insist... Poof, you're dead!
**** The dungeon master has died ****
The dungeon master follows you.
Your sword has begun to glow very brightly.

Or this:

```
>DUNGEON MASTER, KILL DUNGEON MASTER WITH STAFF
"If you wish," he replies.
"If you wish," he replies.
You aren't even holding the staff!
```

The last message appears even though you ARE holding the staff! Very surreal. I'm still scratching my head over these.

NZT At the very end of the first released version of Zork III, the sword was often a source of trouble. If the player happened to be holding the sword when he/she was in cell #4, the game would crash when the player asked the Dungeon Master to push the button. This was because there were two different possible exits to the north, and the sword routine got confused when it checked the adjacent rooms to see whether or not the sword should glow. Infocom's testers didn't find this originally, because they'd been leaving the sword to block the beam of light. • It's possible to get the Dungeon Master to follow you beyond the Dungeon area, if you get beyond the door, drop one of the items you need, then knock on the door again, from the INSIDE! It's even possible to get the DM stuck in the area from Zork I.

Zork Zero

After you put John Paul Flathead's spyglass in the cauldron of Megaboz, you can go back to the Frigid River Valley and ask Otto for it again, which allows you to get infinite points. When you use this technique to throw more than 24 Flathead items into the cauldron, you'll start getting garbage to describe what the cauldron is doing. Unfortunately, the spell of Megaboz, which breaks the Curse, won't work once you get more than 1000 points.

Well, that's all of 'em. Before I wrap this up, I'd like to mention that my intent here was not to nitpick every game Infocom ever released, as is frequently the case with discussions of other forms of entertainment on the 'net. I merely hoped to provide fellow Infocom fans with a new incentive to dig out your collections again and see some new things that you may not have known existed in them. As one of my contributors so eloquently put it, almost all of these are minor bugs which have little effect on gameplay and are unlikely to show themselves unless a user actively seeks them out. When we consider the scope for errors in games of this depth and complexity, it's really quite incredible that there were so few.

Speaking of contributors, if I've somehow forgotten to add your name here and I've screwed up everything else with this list, so that wouldn't surprise me in the least), just let me know and I'll update it and post a revision.

Contributors: Tim Anderson, Daniel Dobson, Paul David Doherty, Roger N. Dominick, Allen Garvin, Neil K. Guy, Eric Smith.

Special thanks to Paul D. Smith for his Table of Infocom Games, which I used extensively as a reference in preparing this article, and to Alex Wai for forwarding the bugs listed in the *New Zork Times* "Exterminator" columns. ✖

GobblerNet is Newest Text Adventure BBS

It's tough to beat the camaraderie of a bulletin board system as a meeting place and library resource for special interests. But there have been few BBSes for text adventure fans to hang out at, and fewer still with last November's closing of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, an enormous text game BBS. Bob Newell hopes to change that with his new text adventure BBS, GobblerNet, operated from Bismarck, North Dakota).

Newell hopes to establish on GobblerNet the largest collection of text games to be found on any BBS, although by his own admission it still has a long way to go. GobblerNet will also feature character graphics games, such as the ZZT games and the Kroz series, among others. According to Newell, one of the prides of GobblerNet is its Spectrum Sinclair section, with emulators and hundreds and hundreds of classic Speccy games, including a large number of Speccy text adventures.

GobblerNet will also host special online games since, as a Linux BBS, some really large games can be played online. Currently offered is the multiplayer game Imperium as well as, in the text game tradition, an honest-to-goodness MOO (which is currently very small due to lack of programmers). Also on-line is Graham Nelson's "Curses," 12 of the Scott Adams text adventures, and the multiplayer game "Empire."

GobblerNet also echoes the rec.arts.int-fiction and rec.games.int-fiction newsgroups, which may be read on-line or downloaded for offline reading.

Best of all, in the tradition of the Internet, accessing GobblerNet is totally free; the only cost is your phone call. GobblerNet neither requests nor accepts membership fees, donations, or payments of any kind. There are no upload requirements or ratio limits, either.

GobblerNet can be reached at nearly all times at 701-222-0429, at speeds up to 14.4 kbps, 8-N-1. ✪

Ed. note: *If you have any information about noteworthy or newsworthy happenings in the interactive fiction community, please pass it on to us at eileen@interport.net. We're always interested in releases of new versions of design tools, innovations in new games or other new software, and related Web sites or BBSes.*

New Feature: Top 10 Picks for Interactive Fiction on the World Wide Web

Beginning with this issue, *XYZZYnews* will include a "top 10" listing of URLs for useful or less-than-useful-but-possibly-entertaining IF Web pages that we've run across and want to pass along to you. These include online interactive games, resources for IF games programming, home pages for related MUDs and MOOs, among other topics. The HTML version of this 'zine is already set up to let you link to these URLs; very convenient, n'est-ce pas? And so without further ado, in no particular order, the March/April IF Web page picks:

CMU School of Computer Science Oz Project Home Page
http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/afs/cs.cmu.edu /project/oz/web/oz.html

Inform Programming Page
http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/users/gdr11/ inform/

The TADS Programming Page
http://yallara.cs.rmit.edu.au/~s9406702/tads/

The TechMOOseum
http://www.thetech.com/techmooseum.html

LegendMud Home Page
http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/Web/People/ johnmil/legend/legend.html

The Interactive Fiction Home Page
www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/ wsr/Web/IF/homepage.html

MuseNet WWW Server
http://www.musenet.org/

Spork I: The Great Underground Kitchenware Outlet
http://www.wam.umd.edu/~twoflowr/spork. html

Drool
http://www.mit.edu:8001/afs/athena.mit.edu /user/j/b/jbreiden/game/entry.html

Praser Maze 5
http://orac.andrew.cmu.edu:5823/pra5

John's Fire Witch

(version 1.01)

Parser: TADS
Author: John Baker (baker-j@ix.netcom.com)
Availability: ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/games/TADS;
    CompuServe
Supports: TADS ports

What's going on down in *your* basement? If you're John Baker, it's a life-and-death struggle between two magical forces, a Fire Witch and an Ice Wizard. And you thought having termites was a bummer! The premise of "John's Fire Witch" places you as a visitor to the Baker residence, where it's up to you to rescue John and the Fire Witch from captivity, acquire what you need to outsmart several fiendish creatures, and ultimately overpower the Ice Wizard himself.

While the scenario may sound a bit simplistic, "John's Fire Witch" turns out to be a pleasantly engaging, unpretentious game that should appeal to a broad range of IF gameplayers. With fewer than 40 locations and a scoring total of 10, "John's Fire Witch" is well-suited to the "snack-sized adventure" label applied by its author. The game's small size and small number of puzzles make it a good introductory game for beginning to intermediate IF players; however, the puzzles are interesting enough to intrigue more experienced players for at least several hours.

The game's parser is also geared toward beginning players. For example, it suggests the proper syntax for saying a magic word when an improper method is tried, and issues a warning if you expose yourself to the dangers of falling into a deep pit. If you fail to heed such warnings, however, you have only yourself to blame; there's no resurrection in this game, although you can undo a fatal command. There are plenty of ways to die, from impaling yourself upon sharp spikes to freezing on an icy bridge.

Often, text adventure games are criticized for being autobiographical in certain regards—if the game's author appears in it or if the author's home is a prominent location, there's always that certain potential for private jokes that are tiresome for most players who just don't get it. Luckily, "John's Fire Witch" rises above such criticism. Although John Baker appears in his own game, he shows up as a human Popsicle until the final stages. In fact, there's one private joke in the game that IF devotees are certain to enjoy; the final location in the game is a Trophy Room that contains noteworthy artifacts from other text adventure games such as "The Lurking Horror" and "Curses".

The most useful bit of prior knowledge for you to have before playing the game is a recollection of the seven deadly sins. A scavenger hunt puzzle involves supplying a devil with a bag containing items that represent these sins. I spent an inordinate amount of time racking my brains for the last two sins after only coming up with five! All the game's puzzles have satisfyingly logical solutions, though some are more obvious than others.

The game's layout is also straightforward; there are no mazes, and locations with similar-sounding names are numbered (i.e., Long Tunnel (1), Long Tunnel (2)) to avoid mapping confusion. You should be prepared to save your game often though, since you may walk into a dangerous situation more than once. Hints are only available to registered players, but you should be able to learn a lot by a careful examination of your surroundings and the objects in them (not to mention a certain dream sequence). The only syntactical trouble I encountered was when solving the getting-the-ring-from-the-bottle puzzle, but I finally managed it with enough trial-and-error.

There are some red herrings among the objects you run across in this game, which I guarantee you'll waste some time on trying to utilize. Among the more useful objects you'll find is a crystal card for transporting yourself among several key locations, and a magic wand that demonstrates some pretty attractive properties.

Registering "John's Fire Witch" will set you back a $6 shareware fee. I even enjoyed the registration notice for this game: "If you enjoy playing the game, you are welcome to show your appreciation by buying me lunch. Right now, my favorite lunch is a soup & sandwich combo at a restaurant on Sawmill Road that comes to six bucks ($6.00), including my usual tip. If you don't want to buy me lunch in person, you can just send me the money."

The game hints at an upcoming (and darker and more serious) sequel. After playing this snack-sized adventure, I'm sure that the next course will be well worth waiting for. ✪

— Lauren Meckler

The Legend Lives!

An Unnkulian Universe Adventure

(version 1.0)

Parser: TADS
Author: David Baggett (dmb@ai.mit.edu)
Publisher: Adventions
Availability: ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/games/tads
Supports: TADS ports. For PC users, reports of memory management errors suggest using a DOS shell through Windows; not a problem for Mac users.

"The Legend Lives!", an ambitious and beautifully written game by David Baggett, places you as Gavin Kelly, a grad student in computer science at Akmi Yooniversity who has just stumbled across a deadly galaxywide computer virus and who must rally forces to defeat this evil Unnkulian threat. The straightforward plot, however, takes a backseat to the eloquent room and character descriptions, a recurring theme of the conflict of nature versus technology, and innovative devices for manipulating objects and travelling between locations.

The descriptions of many of the game locations are highly engrossing and impart a genuine atmospheric quality to that portion of the game. You'll get caught up in the shopping frenzy of the crowds at the Barfee outlet, the hackers' activity in the Data Den, and the hordes of smiling, benevolent Duhdists at Kuwl Starport. I was so disturbed by the descriptions of New Hell and the Watchmen I couldn't get out of that area fast enough. As you meet new characters, such as Jax O Pax or Timon Sketch, additional screensful of text appear that propel the narrative forward. You may frequently need to scroll up several screens to read or reread this prose, which is a minor annoyance. Literal-minded players who like to search or examine every object in a room will find themselves in for a looooonnnng game session.

"Legend" boasts an impressive, fairly diverse cast of characters. Some character descriptions are eloquently and succinctly expressed, especially those for the old man in the living room or the Hoppian salesman, while others seem deliberately enigmatic, such as the Watchmaker or the bartender. However, character development was left incomplete on the whole, perhaps due to remaining loose ends in the storyline. The stories of Reb Glaz, your absent girlfriend Ada, and the development of the relationship between Jax and Mare were unresolved and left me scratching my head by the end of the game. And even though we do get to see what happens to JC, the artificial intelligent being, your inability to interact genuinely with him makes it difficult to form an appropriate emotional attachment by the end of the game.

Your ability to access new areas of the game hinges upon your expertise in consulting a color chart, entering three-dimensional coordinates into a matter mover, and decoding any encrypted coordinates. This very imaginative spin on solving locked-door puzzles adds an appropriate beam-me-up sci-fi atmosphere; it also presents an ongoing challenge almost to the end of the game.

Over the course of "Legend" you must also achieve a certain degree of competence in using various computers, vending machines, a transmogrifyer and other conversion machines, and a little mechanized toy named Squirt. These puzzles range widely in difficulty but all allude to our dependence on technology. The red herring quotient in "The Legend Lives!" is high, but you'll enjoy playing with the various trinkets as you strive to hit on the correct solution. Mercifully, the number of cheezy Akmi products is relatively small!

A progressive online hint system and a humorous, often wry collection of footnotes add to the game's polished appearance. The fairly extensive hint system is a welcome relief for overcoming mental blocks. As far as I could tell, though, you can't solve the game through hints alone; there are at least some puzzles you *must* solve on your own. You can encrypt the hints if you're likely to peek and want to resist the temptation. However, I saw no way to skip the beginning hints if you wanted to see, for example, only the seventh of seven hints. Without hints, some puzzles will be extremely time-consuming to solve (such as the transmogrifyer) or next to impossible (such as using Squirt).

One of my favorite parts of "Legend" was the Unnkulian III game-within-a-game. Although I've seen this device utilized in a number of other text adventures, this piece of mini-IF is really a work of art: it's tied in so eloquently to the rest of the game and serves to acknowledge the rest of the Unnkulian Unventure series in such an appropriate way.

"The Legend Lives!" is excellent proof that interactive fiction can be as much fun to read as to play. More fiction, and more fried eggs, please! ✖

—*Eileen Mullin*

Hotel California

Author: Dan Harris-Warrick
Availability: America Online (Mac Games library),
        freeware
Supports: Any Macintosh

Inspired by the Eagles' classic song of the same name, "Hotel California" is a very short but enjoyable adventure marred only by a extremely limited parser. As the game opens you find yourself at the Hotel California; once you check in, you're free to roam the premises, talk with other people you meet, and learn the secrets of the hotel's existence. The haunting, enigmatic quality of the song is truly captured in the game's atmosphere, but is it a solid enough foundation to base an entire game on? The song is, after all, only a few verses long. Nevertheless, nearly all of the song's verses and imagery is produced verbatim in this game, as in the exchanges below:

```
>ask woman about hotel
The woman responds enigmatically,
"We are all just prisoners here of
our own device."
```

or

```
>north
The clerk blocks your path!
"Sorry," he says. "You can check
out any time you like, but you can
never leave."
```

And so on. My favorite bit of dialogue is the song's chorus, which you hear repeated from time to time by strange voices in the corridor. The only way you can really interact with the other characters is to ask them about certain items, and they may respond with a clue or some useful advice. But any interrogation of the other characters quickly deteriorates into a guessing game.

The game's author is very upfront about the parser's limitations. In the game's instructions, he states that the parser works by first searching for a verb it recognizes, then recognizes the words that follow the verb only if they are typed in exactly as they are described in the game. For example, if you see a clothesline, the parser won't recognize "rope" as a synonym. The parser also can't deal with adjectives as such, so if for example you see a pair of white gloves, "take gloves" will procure them for you but "take white gloves" will produce "You can't see that here!" When adjectives become necessary to distinguish objects from each other, such as a match that's lit versus one that's unlit, the game resorts to defining "lit-match" (one word) as an object. Pretty clunky.

Since the game's parser is so limited, I was frustratedly playing "guess-the-verb" until I found in the library room a dictionary listing all the verbs the game understood. This really speeded up the game for me! At first I thought it was highly unusual for the game's author to provide this kind of help, but then I was reminded of the similarly useful (though not complete) verb lists in some of the Infocom games' packaging.

The puzzles themselves are mostly of the getting-past-obstacles variety, such as needing the right clothes to access a certain room. There are several logical ways that you can die suddenly, such as by jumping out a window (although I think you'd be more likely to only break your leg jumping from a third-story window).

Directions in the game are limited to up, down, and the four major compass points. There are no room games given, an annoying drawback for mapmaking. The game is scored out of a total of 75 points, but there's no notification of when you are awarded points. Even after playing it, I'm still not quite sure what I was awarded points for. Another drawback to the game's interface is that you are only allowed one saved game. I'd be really interested in playing a port of this game in one of the other text adventure systems that have overcome interface limitations such as clunky parsers or limited saved gamefiles.

The game contains some self-referential text adventure game parlance; I had to smile when I walked into a dark room and read "It is very dark. You hope Infocom has a copyright on grues." But it's odd that if you ask the clerk about the key to your room, he says, "It's not hard to figure out. Go to your room and type 'unlock door.'" While it's not surprising that the character told me *what* to type, I was taken aback that he told me *to* type it.

The game suggests that a sequel may be in the works, and the author is also said to be working on a much more involved text adventure called "The Summoned". Another story from Dan Harris-Warrick Enterprises will definitely be something to look forward to if a much better parser is used. ✪

— Greg Soultanis

Demon's Tomb: The Awakening

Publisher: Silhouette Software/Mastertronic/
          Melbourne House (commercial)
Availability: Check the bargain shelf at your local
          computer game store
Supports: PCs

"The story begins on a one man archaeological dig in a remote English forest, in the heart of Devonshire. The one man with whom we are concerned here is a Professor Edward Lynton, an unfortunate academic doomed to die a violent and mysterious death…" So begins the tale of "Demon's Tomb," a nifty little piece of IF that in many ways far surpasses the earliest efforts of Infocom, but in other ways falls unfortunately behind.

"Demon's Tomb" is divided into two parts. In the game's prologue, the player assumes the role of Professor Edward Lynton. Trapped in an ancient tomb he has uncovered, a deadly fire spreading all around him, Lynton knows there is no escape and begins to work furiously to save his research in the hopes of alerting someone, anyone, to the horror he has discovered. Whether the player succeeds in this or fails miserably, s/he then enters the primary phase of the story, in the role of Professor Lynton's 16-year-old son, Richard. Richard is concerned that his father's interest in the tomb is starting to become an obsession, and, with his faithful but essentially brainless canine companion Sam, has come talk some sense into him.

As Richard, it is the player's job to determine what has happened, and more importantly, what is still going on out there in the forests of Exmoor. The more items you have Lynton preserve in the prologue, the more you'll be able to accomplish when you play Richard, although achieving complete victory eventually requires you to save everything. This is an original and interesting method of maintaining non-linearity in the game's puzzle structure, as the player can save a few items, then restore and try others to explore different possibilities in the game. Saving all of Lynton's research is the major challenge of the game, requiring flawless execution and perfect timing, but if you don't quite get it right, you're still able to do some serious exploration with what you do manage to save.

The downside to this is that it's all too easy for a player to use the information obtained from Lynton's death to do better the next time. The game even provides you with a bit of insight into Lynton's final thoughts, letting you know what you should be concentrating on. Even worse, some of the puzzles you solve as Richard exist only to provide you with information. Since there are no random elements in the game, the player has the option of completely bypassing these puzzles the next time through, thus eliminating a large portion of the game altogether. Also lost is the threat of the time limit — the player is given only a few hours of game time to complete the quest. But by skipping puzzles, hours of time are saved, and any possibility of tension is gone.

Some of the puzzles are generic, but a few, particularly the prologue, are quite good. There are a couple of minor red herrings that serve only to waste players' time, but nothing you'll spend hours trying vainly to use.

The game's parser is adequate, not as advanced as Infocom's, but it allows you to accomplish what you need to without playing guess-the-verb, as well as letting you do some fun stuff (Sam accounts for a large portion of the game's humor). A menu-driven parser is available for non-typists that allows you to select verbs, objects, and prepositions with just a few keystrokes. The menus include a wide variety of words, never giving puzzles away. No specific scoring system is used in the game, but the few places where a player might screw up big-time are easily recognized.

Other nice features include a game configuration screen with a lot (and I mean a LOT) of options, previous command recall, user-defined macros, EGA graphics that are crude but available for players who want to see them, and my personal favorite, the "pretend-to-be-working" mode. The game also offers built-in hints in the form of a "THINK ABOUT" command that lets you see what Lynton or Richard makes of a particular item or place. This system does an admirable job of steering players in the right direction without giving away the entire solution.

Despite its shortcomings, "Demon's Tomb" is a likeable game, one that I feel more players should try. It doesn't overwhelm beginners, and makes an effort to challenge more experienced players as well. So check it out, and see if you can help Richard piece together the mystery of Professor Lynton's startling discovery. ✪

— C.E. Forman

Q. How do you keep from freezing to death on the ice bridge in John's Fire Witch? No matter what I do (i.e., use the card to teleport, keep moving) I always freeze after three moves on the bridge past the devil. Help!

A. There are two things you'll need to have in order to safely navigate the ice bridge: the red gem (from the vault guarded by the demon) and the ring from the bottle in the Safe Room. And where is the Safe Room? Well, have you gone through the archway (which gives you a "strange feeling") in the Side Corridor? After you go through it once to trap the demon, try going through it a second time... Of course, there are still a couple of puzzles for you to figure out: how to unlock the safe, and how to get the ring physically *out* of the bottle.

Q. I don't know if "Gabriel Knight " falls strictly within the realm of interactive fiction, but I'm completely stuck in Day 8 and hope you can help. What do I do in the library? I can't find anything useful in the books here but it was so much work to get into this room that I figure that I must be missing something. Please help.

A. In *XYZZYnews,* the terms "interactive fiction" and "text adventure" are often used interchangeably, which would leave out games like "Gabriel Knight" or "Return to Zork." But it seems to me that most text adventure fans are also the same ones who're playing the graphical adventures, even if it's just to say how much they hate them. :) Personally, I usually count as IF any game where you get an inventory and use objects from it to affect your environment, which includes the Sierra games but pretty much leaves out "Myst." But anyway, to get back to Day 8 of GK...

Random browsing may not get you much of anywhere (as you've discovered). You first need to examine each section or each shelf to learn which bookshelves are devoted to which topics. As you search thoroughly, you'll eventually find a book that will catch Gabriel's eye and he'll pull it out and read it. At the end of the excerpt from the book there should be a reference to another book you should read. You then need to find the aforementioned book, and read that excerpt through in order to find a reference to yet another book. Repeat this process until it produces more tangible results for you.

Q. I'm a little embarrassed to bug you for spoilers, especially since this game [The Legend Lives] already *has* hints built in (am I lame or what?) but I can't find any help for the answer to this question and don't have the patience for too much trial and error. I've gotten all the little toys from the cranemaster in Elwood's Eats but can't figure out what to do with them.

A. There are six items you can retrieve from the crane machine, but the only item that you're going to need elsewhere in the game is the firecracker. Now all you need to think about is where it'll do you the most good to do something destructive, and how you're going to get the thing lit.

Q. I am a big fan of the old text only Infocom games. I recently found your magazine web page, and am glad to find some other folks who enjoy interactive fiction puzzle games. I hate to bug you with hint questions, but...

I have recently begun tooling around again in an old Zork game I never completed, "Beyond Zork", and I am stuck. I can not move beyond the Christmas tree monsters to reach the mountain castle nor can I move beyond the throng of angry corbies in the fields of frotzen. I'm not sure which I need to do first. Could the butterfly be the key to moving beyond the trees? Are the chocolate truffles good for anything? Can the old sailor help me? Is it possible to get the helmet when you move back in time? Can you kill the monkey grinder, or, even better, steal his really cool organ? Why is a grown man concerned with such things?

A. Your last question was the best one I received this month, but alas, it's as hard to answer in such a limited space as your Beyond Zork questions as a whole. Since you say you're on the Web, I thought I'd give you the URL to a Beyond Zork walkthrough. It's at: http://wcl-rs.bham.ac.uk/GamesDomain/walkthru/bzork.html. For your final question though, you're on your own! :D ✪

The companion disk for XYZZYnews #2 contains the following game files. It's a good deal for people who have slower modems—at 2400 bps, it'd take about two to three hours to download the contents of the companion disk. It's also a good deal for people with limited or no access to FTP sites or online services as a source for new games. If you're reading an electronic version of this issue, you can obtain this games disk with a print copy of XYZZYnews #2 by enclosing $3.50 for postage and handling with the coupon on the bottom of this page. If you play and enjoy these games, please pay the shareware fees as applicable.

JOHN'S FIRE WITCH — A snack-sized text adventure written using TADS. Go on a scavenger hunt for the seven deadly sins, outsmart various evil creatures, and rescue the game's author from permanent freezer burn. The difficulty level is for beginner to intermediate players. (See review in this issue.) Shareware, $6.

BALANCES and ADVENT— A pair of small games from Graham Nelson. Balances is a tribute to Infocom's "Enchanter" trilogy, largely designed to demonstrate features of the Inform language. Advent is an Inform port of the Crowther & Woods' classic of the same name. Freeware.

THE HORRORS OF RYLVANIA (DEMO) — This file is a fully-playable free demo of about one-quarter of the commercial TADS game "The Horror of Rylvania." Ordering information for the full game is included. If you haven't tried an Adventions game before, what are you waiting for? Vampires, graphic descriptions of violent injuries), superbly written interactive fiction.

MAC WESLEYAN (aka PC UNIVERSITY) — This TADS-based game takes you on a whirlwind adventure through Middletown, Connecticut's finest academic institution. Battle evil Domino's Pizza trucks, puzzle over 5,000 mailboxes (see *XYZZYnews #1*) or stop for a chat with God on your way to complete the dreaded Student Identification Form. Freeware.

Ed. note: *Programmers — These game disks are a great way to distribute your creations to an audience that's unlikely to find them online. If you've written a game that you'd like to see included on a future disk (or considered for a game review in a future issue) please send an email to eileen@interport.net. Multi-platform games are given first consideration.*

XYZZY*news* Magazine/Disk Order Form

Checks and money orders preferred. Please send coupon with payment to: Eileen Mullin, XYZZYnews, 160 W. 24th Street, Ste. 7C, New York, NY 10011.

☐ Please send me a copy of the print version and companion games disk for *XYZZYnews* Issue #2. I have enclosed $3.50 for postage & handling. (Check one: Mac disk ___ or PC disk ___)

☐ I need just the companion games disk for *XYZZYnews* Issue #2. I have enclosed $2.50 for postage & handling. (Check one: Mac disk ___ or PC disk ___)

☐ Sign me up for a 6-issue subscription (within the U.S.). I have enclosed US$21 for postage and handling. (Check one: Mac disk ___ or PC disk ___)

☐ Please send me a copy of the upcoming *XYZZYnews* Issue #3. I have enclosed $3.50 for postage & handling. (Check one: Mac disk ___ or PC disk ___)

Full Name (please print): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____   State: _____   Zip/Postal Code: _____

Country: _____   Email Address: _____