

AVON – information for reviewers

One feature of *Avon* that the casual explorer soon discovers is that the adventures take place on three different dates, as indicated by a calendar that the player will find. On January 6th it is a dark evening (and some events from *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter's Tale* take place); later the player can move to March 15th by drinking a potion – when it is daylight and events such as those on the Ides of March in *Julius Caesar* take place; finally it becomes June 24th and a light evening as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is not necessary to recognise the Shakespearean references in order to solve the game, which could otherwise be regarded as a ‘standard’ Adventure but using unusually poetic language!

The player starts on ‘the stage’. It will be dark soon and the first problem is to find a light source. *Macbeth's* three witches are on a heath nearby and one has a choice of objects from their cauldron: the eye of newt is the one needed at this stage. **(N, accept EYE, GET EYE.)**

Other useful items that need collecting early on are the dagger and the laundry basket. The basket has the property that putting things into it and closing it causes the objects to vanish – in fact they are transported to the end of the game and the player gets credit for this. Later on the player will need to get into the basket as well. There is also a cloud round here whose description is variable: sometimes it is shaped like a camel, or a weasel, or a whale. This is purely local colour (from *Hamlet*) and has no other purpose. **(S, E, E, GET DAGGER, E, N, GET BASKET, W.)**

The dagger has an immediate use: it cuts a pine tree and lets out the spirit Ariel (*Tempest*) who gives you a message, containing the word “Fathom” which will be useful later. **(N, NE, CUT PINE.)**

One feature of the game is the “casket problem,” which takes place on all three dates. The lady Portia (*Merchant of Venice*) has three caskets, which must be opened in the correct order. Opening them in the correct order yields a prize (in this case a portrait), whereas opening them incorrectly yields a booby prize (in this case a piece of ice). It is possible for players to think they have solved the puzzle, obtain the ice, and then look for a use for it. The solution to the puzzle is cued by an (apparent) magic word, which is really something else. Yorick, the king's jester (*Hamlet*) tells the player a “password”, which may be Golesida, Silegoda, or one of several others. The first two letters indicate which casket to open first, the next two which to open next, so that, e.g. Lesigoda means “open lead, then silver.” *It is important not to save between getting the word and opening the caskets: we “spoil” saves in order to prevent trial and error solutions!* We also collect a worm, to be used later. **SW, E, (note word), N, GET WORM, S, W, S, S, W, W (to stage), W, NW, W, OPEN CASKET (in order given by jester), GET PORTRAIT.**

You may now save again! You are now in a house and elsewhere in the house is the statue of a lady (or is it the lady herself?) – Hermione from *The Winter's Tale*. Re-animating her is easy, and gives the player more treasure. **N, E, KISS STATUE, GET NECKLACE.**

One more action can be performed in this area – killing a Scotsman (Banquo from *Macbeth*) with the dagger. Killing someone is something that even jaded adventurers shouldn't do lightly, and this action has far-reaching consequences, paralleling some of the events of the play! For the time being it gives the player Banquo's shield, which will be useful later. Banquo's ghost will also appear later. **S, SE, E (to stage), S, SW, W, KILL SCOTSMAN, GET SHIELD, E, NE, N (to stage).**

The player is now ready to explore North, beyond the witches' heath. This involves crossing an ice floe, which melts in the spring, so that the player can only go there in winter. In addition, the player is forbidden to take the potion with him (which could otherwise have been used to change time zone) by the actions of a “drug squad” who also provide the player with a word (HAVOC) that will be used shortly. First we get rid of a few items, and prepare to find some new ones. **DROP SHIELD, DAGGER, OPEN BASKET, put in PORTRAIT and NECKLACE, GET BASKET, N, NE (constable cries “HAVOC”), N, N, E, N (over ice floe, into Eastcheap and then to the church), GET COLLAR.**

The collar protects the player from being strangled by Othello, who has mistaken him for someone else. In compensation for attempting to kill the player, Othello sends him off to his “agent” in Illyria Court, whose identity is given in code on a piece of paper. Although the cipher is not identified, it is assumed to be a straight substitution and can thus refer to only one such character: e.g. “TEABAG” refers to OLIVIA, because it has 6 letters with 3rd and 5th the same, “THIGHS” means FABIAN, and so on. The player collects an antique viola as reward (punning on the name of yet another *Twelfth Night* character.) **S, W, W, W, E 5 times until you reach Illyria Court, then take correct direction and GET VIOLA.**

The next puzzle involves winning a drinking contest with Falstaff (from *Henry IV part I*). To do this the player must eat a loaf of bread first to help himself. Taking the loaf of bread will later result in the player being arrested but he can escape. Winning the contest gains a trophy and causes a butt of Malmsey wine to be removed from the storeroom of the inn: if the player goes in while the butt is still there he drowns in it, as in *Richard III*. **W, N, E, GET LOAF, EAT LOAF, W, S, W, W, N (into inn), win the trophy, GET TROPHY, W, N.**

There is a spear attached to the wall. Shaking this opens a secret door into a cellar. Apart from more treasure there is a clue written on the wall. **SHAKE SPEAR, N, GET AGATE, OPEN BASKET, put in AGATE, TROPHY, VIOLA, GET BASKET.**

The player now takes the worm to an angler nearby. This obvious action has less obvious consequences including the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father, who provides the player with a 'spirit' word, such as GIN, WHISKY etc. for later use. (There are a lot of spirits of one kind or another in this game!) The player should then go to the palace of King Lear and help the king decide which daughter to favour (the clue was given earlier by an anagram: ANGER is REGAN, ONE GIRL is GONERIL, CORAL DIE is CORDELIA.) The player can then help a farmer nearby by crying 'HAVOC' to summon a dog. (This was hinted at by the drug squad, earlier.) **S, S, S, obtain word, N, E, E, E, N, N, W to palace and use clue to name, GET ROBE, E, HAVOC, GET TOUCHSTONE.**

Now for a simple 'maze'. On the mountain paths, the player can go NE or NW at each stage. Taking the wrong path brings Cassandra (from *Troilus and Cressida*) prophesying doom. The player should go back (South) and take the other exit. After finding the treasure at the end, it is time to leave town but the player ends up in gaol. Fortunately the gaoler's musical tastes are strongly hinted at, and the player can escape and make his way to the vasty deep. **N, do maze (NE or NW at each stage), GET ILIAD, SOUTH (8 times), W, W, S (into gaol), ARNE, GET ALL, SE.**

Summoning spirits from the vasty deep requires the player to know the right name (as provided by Hamlet's father) and to be wearing the collar (in order to impersonate a cleric). (This whole incident conflates scenes from *Henry IV part I* and *Twelfth Night*.) So now back to the stage, and prepare to move to the next time zone by drinking a potion of mandragora. **WHISKY (or whatever), GET TOPAZ, NW, S, SW, S (to stage), put ROBE, ILIAD, TOPAZ, TOUCHSTONE in basket, GET ALL, DROP COLLAR AND DAGGER (you should still have SHIELD, BASKET, EYE), W, SW, GET PHIAL.**

There are only a few puzzles which have to be solved in March. We start by obtaining the frog's toe from the witches. Then onto the bare moor, where a bear stopped further progress in the winter. The player finds a meat pie as in *Titus Andronicus* (and gets a particularly repulsive and fatal message if he tries to eat it), as well as a hovel where a poor mad creature (from *King Lear*) is lurking. The mad creature will be needed later: at this stage one merely has to drive him from the hovel using the word 'Fathom' provided by Ariel in January. (The creature's mad phrases are limited to one involving 'Fathom' once Ariel has been rescued. Otherwise one obtains a wide selection of authentic but incomprehensible ravings from *King Lear*.) **DRINK PHIAL, GET ALL, NE, E, N, accept TOE, GET TOE, S, E, E, E, N, E, S, GET PIE, FATHOM, SE, GET GOBLET, NW, N, W, W, S, W, W, W (to market place), DROP ALL EXCEPT TOE AND BASKET.**

We are now ready to solve the March version of the casket puzzle. This involves entering a house which is locked except in March, seeing a clue in a letter therein, and then hiding in the laundry basket in order to avoid being slain as an intruder. If one does this the basket is emptied into the river, (as in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) and the player must have eaten the frog's toe in order to avoid drowning. Now, without saving, we proceed back to Portia and open the caskets. The notation is similar to January's: if the letter was addressed to Mistress Silegond, one opens SILVER then LEAD, and so forth. This time one gains a ring, which must be retained. **EAT TOE, W, note letter's addressee, OPEN BASKET and get in at once, (thrown into river), N, GET BASKET, NE, N, W, NW, W, OPEN correct CASKETS, GET RING, E, SE, GET PHIAL.**

And so we reach June 24th, on which date the remainder of the game takes place. One of the first things that happens is that the player has an ass's head put on him (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). This has two uses: it enables him to eat some grass and open up a path that was overgrown; also he can come to the aid of Richard III at Bosworth who has offered his kingdom for a horse. King Richard will also remove

the ass's head. (If the player goes to Bosworth in January he is greeted by an appropriate "now is the winter of our discontent" from the same play.) We also return to the graveyard: in the intervening months Yorick has died and we take his skull to the witches in order to obtain *both* the remaining items from the cauldron (otherwise we only get one). **DRINK PHIAL, GET ALL EXCEPT CALENDAR, E, E, E, N, N, NE, W** (ass's head collected), **SE, E, EAT GRASS, E, GET PEARL, OPEN BASKET, put in PEARL and GOBLET, GET BASKET, W, W, GET SKULL, W, S, S, E, S** (Bosworth), **GET CROWN, N, W, W, W, N, trade skull for wool and tongue, put CROWN in basket, GET ALL.**

We now go through a prolonged sequence which is heavily based on *Macbeth*. There's now the smell of blood on your hands (killing that Scotsman brings its Nemesis) and the dog's tongue must be used to remove the blood. Then the player is able to sit down at the banquet, be haunted by Banquo's ghost, and proceed into Birnham Wood. The wood is now moving about frenziedly, and paths open where there were none before. (If you wandered into Birnham Wood earlier you would find that the paths led nowhere at that stage.) Through the wood we go and reach Dunsinane house, where there is a sceptre. Getting back is tricky: we jump off the balcony of the house, carrying the bat's wool, which expands into a giant bat and returns us to the stage (cf. Ariel in *The Tempest* again.) **S, S, SW, WASH HANDS, DROP TONGUE, NE, N, W, NW, NW, SIT at banquet, NE** (after ghost), **E, NE, N, NW** (to milestone), **WAIT for path to open, SW, W, SW, SE** (to post), **WAIT for path, NE, N, E, WAIT again, SW to Dunsinane, S, GET SCEPTRE, U, S, D** (fly back to stage), **put SCEPTRE in basket, DROP WOOL, GET BASKET** (you should now have basket, ring, shield and pie.)

It is now possible to visit the Capitol, where a visit on the Ides of March would have been fatal. There we collect a scroll for later use and the name of the orator (Legosinius, Gosilenius, etc.) for use with the casket problem once more. This time we win Malvolio's silk stockings (*Twelfth Night*). **E, E, E, N, E, E, GET SCROLL and note orator's name, W, W, S, W, W, W** (to stage), **W, NW, W, OPEN correct CASKETS, GET STOCKINGS.**

At about now the player starts becoming warm and your too too solid flesh begins to melt (*Hamlet*), but this is easily cured by washing and we now wish to use the scroll to map the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns (also *Hamlet*). This is a maze and reading the scroll when in it tells the player the next direction to go in (including possibly BACK) by means of a Shakespeare quotation. Reading the scroll elsewhere gives a random enigmatic message (the most helpful being "By indirections find directions out"). At the centre of the maze lies Imogen (a rare reference to *Cymbeline*) whose bracelet we take. A final read of the scroll gives us the unusual direction north-north-west, and NNW returns us to familiar territory. **E, SE, E, S, SW, WASH, S, SE, READ SCROLL and move in correct direction, repeat until you find Imogen, GET BRACELET, READ SCROLL, NNW, N, NE, N, put BRACELET in basket, GET BASKET.**

The rest of the game takes place beyond the Capitol. **E, E, E, N, E, E, SE, DROP RING, SCROLL and STOCKINGS.**

We now meet the Merchant of Venice and borrow 3,000 ducats from him with a pound of flesh as security. Since we don't want to give them back, we put them in the basket. By the docks we find a starling in a cage. Another puzzle nearby involves waiting for a chest to be swept in by the tide (cf. *Pericles*), opening it (it can't be taken), letting it drift away, and waiting for another, smaller, chest to arrive. This one can't be opened (it is barred up ten times and the last fastening defeats the player.) Back past the moneylender, and instead of losing our life we give him that disgusting *Titus Andronicus* pie as his pound of flesh. **S, S, borrow money, put DUCATS in basket, GET BASKET, SW, GET CAGE, NE, SE, WAIT several times, OPEN CHEST when it's at your feet, GET SPICES, WAIT again, GET CHEST when it arrives, NW, N** (losing pie), **N, E.**

Don't worry about the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune yet, nor about Cleopatra's barge – we'll come back to them. We next map the forest of Arden, whose trees, as in *As You Like It*, sometimes bear notices saying "Rosalind". This maze is different every time you map it (we have become a bit tired of having mazes whose maps are in public circulation), so only map it once. Whenever you lose the line of Rosalinds, move randomly until you find you are out of the wood or at the first one again (this soon happens). The starling has been crying "Mortimer" fairly regularly (as in *Henry IV part I*), and this is useful when we reach the centre and rescue a sleeping man from a snake (as in *As You Like It*) with this cry. He gives us the name

of a friend of his, and we wander randomly out of the forest. **N to Arden, map the maze by following the line of Rosalind notices, wake the sleeping man with MORTIMER, get the name of his friend (Costard, Parolles, Nym, Scroop etc.), leave forest (to eastern fringe of town).**

Back to the town and we go onto Cleopatra's barge. She will not let us leave again and the only solution is to give her the asp which poisons her (cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*). Carrying the asp (in a vase) is a problem and we have to stop carrying the vase if the asp wakes up. An exceptionally tame shrew has to be picked up using the cage and taken home. **OPEN CAGE, W, S, E, GET VASE (if it ever moves DROP it, WAIT and TAKE it again), W, S, S, THROW VASE, D, GET SHREW (in cage), U, GET VASE, N, N, N, put VASE and SPICES into basket and GET ALL EXCEPT SCROLL (so you have ring, stockings, basket, chest, shrew in cage, and shield.)**

Into the fog now, where *King Lear*'s madman guides us to what he says is the top of a cliff but is in fact the bottom of one. On into the Brave New World (cf. *The Tempest*) and collect a bow to go with our arrow. You are prompted to give a name at this stage – it doesn't matter what you call yourself but it forms the basis for a *Comedy of Errors* problem later. **E, GET ARROW, E (fog), N, JUMP, DROP SHIELD, put CAGE in basket, GET BOW AND BASKET, E, give any name.**

Further on there is a tavern, but you are not allowed to take weapons into it. The way beyond it is blocked by a mighty statue, a Colossus no less, (a reference to *Julius Caesar*) and so we shoot the arrow *over* the building to slay it. We also collect a fretful porpentine (i.e. porcupine) (cf. *Hamlet*), protecting our hands with the aid of Malvolio's yellow stockings. This will soon have two uses. In the tavern we call for the man we were told about in the forest of Arden and he extracts the jewel (a sapphire) from the chest for us. **FIRE ARROW, S, GET PORPENTINE (with stockings), N, DROP BOW, E, say correct name (COSTARD, SCROOP or whatever).**

We carry on, and meet Portia for the last time, who checks that we still have the ring she gave us. Into a network of streets, and a goldsmith who mistakes us for our double and gives us a chain (cf. *Comedy of Errors*). To avoid him finding us and claiming it back or demanding payment we cause a 'bomb scare' by using the porpentine (no wonder it's fretful!) to burst a balloon near his shop. Finally we are stuck outside the castle, with just a watchman standing in our way. We hurl the porpentine at him, run past, and go safely into the castle to complete the game. **E, GET BLADDER, E (past Portia), N, NE, N, NW, GET CHAIN, BURST BLADDER (with porpentine), SW, S, SE, S, put RING, CHAIN, SAPPHIRE and STOCKINGS in basket, THROW PORPENTINE and win!**