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Editorial

I wake up and notice that it is four a.m. in the morning. I know I can use the rest, but I cannot go to sleep. I feel tense. There are assignments to complete on the day job. I have a paper due the following Monday that I have hardly started. I have a test coming up on Friday for which I have yet to study. The magazine is almost an entire month behind schedule… I'm beginning to wonder if going back to school was such a great idea. No, I cannot go to sleep. I need to get up, I need to try and get some work done…

Later in the same week, it's Friday evening. I am in the classroom, feeling anxious. I have spent all of two hours studying for the test. I hope it's going to be enough. I turn it in my exam, hoping for the best. I have about an hour before I need to be anywhere else. I power up the laptop in hopes of getting some editing done… When are we going to be able to release this issue? I hope my teammates are not too frustrated. I start reading one of the articles… How many days have passed since this was submitted?

The reality of the situation gradually sinks in… It's not the first time we've had a delay. How long has it been since we did not rush one of these issues? When was the last time I wrote and edited at a comfortable, enjoyable pace? How many times did we have to apologize to our readers for delays? As much as I like to pretend otherwise, I cannot keep up with everything. It's time to admit defeat and make a change…

When I started out the site, I never intended Adventure Lantern to compete with any of the larger sites. It was not meant to be 'better' than any other source for articles on gaming. It was a hobby, something I could share with like-minded people. It's hard to believe it has already been over a year since we started. During the fourteen months the site has been online, I've had the pleasure of meeting and working with some truly remarkable people. Always keeping a positive attitude, the team has come through for me on many occasions.

The site has become much more than a hobby. It is a place of tranquil. Working on the magazine or the Web pages gives me a measure of comfort. There is a sense of companionship among the team. And perhaps there are but a few people that enjoy what we do. Perhaps some of our articles have been able to entertain, providing a diversion from the worries of everyday life.

For the past several months however, finding enough time to dedicate to the magazine has been increasingly difficult. It seems there is always something eating up the bulk of my free hours. Sure, we've had some articles getting submitted late. And we've had some team members who had to stop contributing

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to the magazine. But the crux of the problem is my own schedule. And it is high time I accept that things are not going to improve for a while.

It is time to make a change. We cannot carry on releasing the issues farther apart and later than our scheduled date every single month. Even as I work on our January/February issue, I try to think of what we need to do…

We have already started discussing it. But many of the details are uncertain. It's too early to announce anything. I do know that the changes will have to be more drastic than I would like. We will have to reconsider every aspect of the magazine. But hopefully change will be for the better.

I cannot say how soon we will be able to release our next issue. I do not know how it will be put together… For many months now my estimates have been off. Our deadlines have been tentative at best. But I do know this will not be our last effort. We'll find some way to make it happen. I hope that despite the rough start, our second year will be better than our first.

Until we can meet again…

-Ugur Sener

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

To subscribe to our magazine and receive an update when a new issue is released, send an e-mail to subscribe@adventurelantern.com. Make sure the subject line of your e-mail includes the word 'Subscribe'.

News

Compiled by Gnome, Erdalion, Wendy, Thaumaturge, and Ugur

The Adventure Company to Release Hans Christian Andersen: The Ugly Prince Duckling
Set in Copenhagen, The Ugly Prince Duckling gives adventure gamers a chance to assume the role of the famous author Hans Christian Andersen during his teenage years. In what promises to be a lighthearted adventure game, you will meet characters from classic Andersen tales as you attempt to thwart the diabolical plans of the Master of Darkness. The game is scheduled to be released across North America on March 13, 2007.

GameTap Launches Myst Online: Uru Live
Myst Online: Uru Live has officially opened as of February 15, 2007. According to the press release announcing the launch of the game, "this latest installment of the best-selling Myst franchise introduces all-new Ages and puzzles while fusing the social concepts of a traditional massively multiplayer online game with mystery and problem-solving facets." What fundamentally sets Uru Live from the other installments of the series is that "player choices, actions, and experiences will help drive the ongoing storyline which expands and adapts on a continual basis." To find out more about GameTap's release, visit www.GameTap.com/MystOnline

Sam & Max Season One Continues:
The third and fourth Sam & Max Season 1 episodes are now available. The third episode, titled The Mole and the Meatball can be obtained from the Telltale Games Web site at www.TellTaleGames.com. Episode four, called Abe Lincoln Must Die, had its premiere on GameTap on February 22nd. New episodes are expected to arrive through Spring 07.

Sherlock Holmes: The Awakened Released:
Sherlock Holmes: The Awakened, the detective-horror game featuring both Sherlock and the Old Ones, is finally upon us. Take your pills, relax, smoke a pipe, remember your Lovecraft, brush up your Doyle, have a drink, and visit the official site at www.sherlockholmes-thegame.com for a nice downloadable purchase. Or just sneak around shops...

Broken Sword 4 Available in North America:
Released in Europe as Broken Sword: The Angel of Death has shipped to retail stores across North America. Published by The Adventure Company, the game was renamed for the North America release. It is being distributed under the title Broken Sword: Secrets of the Ark.

Anacapri the Dream Getting Ready for Release:
Silvio and Gey Savarese, developers of the successful adventure game called A Quiet Weekend in Capri are getting ready to release a new title. Anacapri the Dream is nearing completion. The developers report that negotiations are in progress for a Q2 2007 publish in Europe and the U.S.A. According to the press release, Anacapri the Dream promises a "gripping storyline intermingling fantasy, history, and legends of the island of Capri." Players can expect "logical and integrated puzzles, unique and personable characters drawn from Capri's past and present, more than 8000 images, and 50+ hours of gameplay!" For more information, visit the official site at www.AnacapriTheDream.com

Penumbra to Arrive in Stores:
Penumbra: Overture, an extremely promising first-person horror puzzler, will soon be invading stores near everyone. Penumbra Overture, the follow-up to the freeware but jaw-dropping Penumbra, will be using a cutting edge 3d engine and ultra-realistic physics just to make sure you're scared silly.
Official website: www.penumbra-overture.com

Lighthouse Interactive to Publish Delaware St. John Episodes
The first two episodes of the Delaware St. John series are going to be published as a bundle by the UK-based publisher Lighthouse Interactive. The games are expected to be available at retail outlets in March. In the meantime, the developer Big Time Games is getting ready to deliver the third episode in the series. The Seacliff Tragedy is scheduled for a UK release in April and a U.S. release in May.

Full Pipe Available through Steam:
Steam, Valve's hope for the future of creative video games and of course the home of the lovely Half-Life 2 chap, has just opened its arms for its first adventure: Full Pipe.
Full Pipe is a quirky russian game that looks fantastic. If you must absolutely know, it's a cartoony point-and-click adventure featuring over 40 characters and dozens of creative puzzles. The game has got its very own Steam page here:
http://steampowered.com/v/index.php?area=game&AppId=4600&

Black Mirror 2 Confirmed:
As of January 25, 2007, ANACONDA has confirmed the development of the sequel to the popular adventure game Black Mirror. Future Games, the Czech development studio that brought us Black Mirror and NiBiRu, reports that the game is currently in early concept stages. Additional details about the game will be revealed as the development process continues. The game will be published by dtp entertainment under the company's ANACONDA brand.

Hotel Dusk, New Game from CING:
Hotel Dusk, CING's (Trace Memory) latest game is in the U.S. and Japan. The game is scheduled for a Q1 2007 release in Europe. Sporting a unique visual style, a deep storyline and puzzles that make clever use of the DS's touch screen, Hotel Dusk looks to be another solid entry into the DS's ever-growing adventure game library.
The official Web site for Hotel Dusk can be found at http://www.hoteldusk.com.
Alternatively, you can view the trailer for the game at the official Japanese site:
www.nintendo.co.jp/ds/awij/index.html

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney – Justice for All is Available
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney - Justice for All, the sequel to the cult hit Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney has been released in the U.S.
The game itself is a direct sequel to Ace Attorney, with most of the lovable cast of the original making an appearance this time around as well, and plays very much like its predecessor, with two different gameplay parts: the investigation part and the trial one.
One major new gameplay feature is the Psyche-Lock system, which is presented as literal locks in people's minds that Phoenix (and the player) need to unlock in order to reveal discrepancies in their statements during trials.

### Wadjet Eye Games Releases The Blackwell Legacy:

Wadjet Eye games and of course indy designer Dave Gilbert of Shivah fame, have just released the Blackwell Legacy. It is "the first case in a miniseries of games that stars a medium named Rosangela Blackwell and her spirit guide Joey Mallone. Their mission, it seems, is to assist tormented spirits and investigate supernatural goings on. They don't understand why they are thrown together, but they do the best they can." Have a look: www.wadjeteyegames.com/blackwell.htm

Super Jazz Man Released:

Herculean Efforts, the talented developers behind the Apprentice games, have released Super Jazz Man, their first attempt at a commercial game. An extremely modestly priced commercial game, mind you.
Visit the official site here: www.herculeaneffort.com
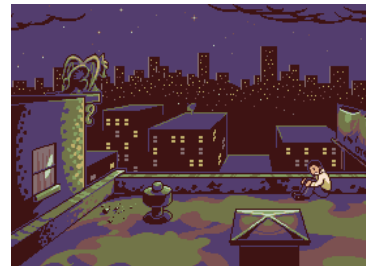
New Gumshoe Online Case in Development:

Hiding Buffalo has announced a new Gumshoe Online case that is currently under development. The new case will be called A Honourable Man.

The following details are from a release to the community members:

"Who do you call when the city pathologist is found hanging from his cellar beam?

The Mayor has put pressure on the chief of Police to solve this one quickly and quietly. City Hall cannot afford any scandals; its election time and it is rumoured that the late Dr. Brandt would be running. This is just the sort of news that could ruin Mayor Bennett's plans on getting re-elected.

The chief needs someone with the expertise and finesse to handle this swiftly and without the press ever finding out. He's requested the only person in Wheaton City with the right qualities for the job… he's requested you.

Better hurry down town, but remember, this time you cannot rely on the advice of the good doctor..."

First Ever Adventure Game Convention to Be Held in Las Vegas:

The following details are from the official release announcing the event. The conference is managed by Malinche Entertainment:

"Prepare yourself for a magical event in a magical place...

AdventureCon is the first convention for adventure

game fans by adventure game fans. Zork turns 30 this year. Join us for an unforgettable birthday party." The dates of the conference are August 27th and 28th. So far, the confirmed honored guests are Scott Adams, Al Lowe, and Jane Jensen. For more information, visit the official conference site at www.adventurecon.org/index.htm

New Release Date for Gray Matter:
Gray Matter, the upcoming game by Jane Jensen, has had its release date pushed back to the first quarter of 2008, according to GameSpot (www.gamespot.com/news/6164403.html?tag=latestnews;title;3)
This, of course, is not terribly unusual in computer game development, and while it denotes a longer wait for gamers, some may take comfort in the hope that this implies concern for the quality of the final product rather than a rush for an early release (especially as this is slipping from the fourth quarter of 2007, and thus a near-Christmas release).

Simon the Sorcerer 4 Coming Our Way:
Simon the Sorcerer 4, currently under development by German studios Silver Style (www.silver-style.com/en/home/profile.php) of Gorasul and Mad TV fame, should be quite a looker and done in proper 3D. Well, according to the screenshots Quandary (www.quandaryland.com) published it should...
Apparently the game will be ready Q1 2007.

Petition for Quest for Glory VI:
Under the leadership of 'Elsa Von Spielberg', the team behind Quest for More Glory (www.QuestForMoreGlory.com) is petitioning for the development and release of the sixth chapter in the famous Quest for Glory series. If you would like to see a new game in the series and want to sign the petition, take a trip to the Quest for More Glory Web site where you can find detailed information. Adventure Lantern thanks Kristophe, Senior Editor from Four Fat Chicks (www.FourFatChicks.com) for bringing the petition to our attention.

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Restless: A Supernatural Thriller – Preview
Written by Ugur Sener

[Editorial Note: Following the announcement of Restless and the launch of the game's official Web site, danyboy conducted an excellent interview with project leader Dan Peach on behalf of the Mystery Manor team. The original article is available at www.MysteryManor.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=3564. The following preview is based on the information available in the interview and the Restless Web site (www.RestlessGame.com). Adventure Lantern thanks Mr. Peach, danyboy, and the rest of the Mystery Manor team for allowing us to use the interview as source material for our preview.]**

She wanted the six figure income and the fancy apartment in the best part of town. Kate Jones could not be content with the ordinary. She would not be insignificant. She wanted respect, power, and influence. The ruthless and conniving defense attorney was willing to do whatever it took to get everything she desired.

She nearly had it all made. She was about to make partner at the company. It had not been an easy journey, but Kate was almost where she wanted to be. It didn't matter who she had stepped over along the way. They were insignificant, they were of no consequence. She just had to struggle a little longer. It would not be long now. Yet, so much can change in a single day.

Kate hardly paid any heed to the note given to her by the stranger. Why should she care about a silly warning about a bombing? She was late for a meeting. Maybe she could look into it later. It was probably nothing but a sick joke anyway…

But the warning was all too real. The explosion tore apart a local coffee shop, killing twenty-five people. A simple phone call to the police, and Kate would have been able to prevent the tragedy.

This was not just a dirty trick played to get a promotion. It wasn't a betrayal that gave her an advantage at the law firm. Twenty-five people had lost their lives because Kate had refused to react. The feeling of guilt was unfamiliar. But it would not let go of Kate, gnawing at her conscience, affecting every aspect of her life.

It took three months to lose everything she had worked so hard to attain. She was no longer a successful attorney. She did not have the luxurious apartment.

Broke and without a job, Kate was longing to forget. That was before the nightmares began.

Kate could no longer find peace in sleep. She was haunted by images of a stranger. The woman in her dreams was suffering. And there was nothing Kate could do to prevent it. Who could she be? Why was she in so much pain?

It was a mysterious news clipping that finally gave Kate some answers. She had passed out on her bed after a night of heavy drinking. The envelope must have been left next to her while she was asleep. Kate was astonished to see the woman from her nightmares in the clipping. Her name was Sam Michaels. She had gone missing four days ago.

Questions were pouring into Kate's mind. Who was Sam Michaels? Why was she missing? Why had Kate been seeing visions of this woman? Was she truly in pain? Was she being tortured? Kate notices a small note attached to the clipping. It read: "If you want to help yourself, help her!"

Kate did not know how she could help the stranger that haunted her dreams. But she knew she had to try. Perhaps in helping Sam she could find redemption or at least put an end to her nightmares, before she was consumed by them…

Get ready for an intense adventure game full of suspense and dark twists. Viperante is getting ready to release its first game with Restless: A Supernatural Thriller. Designed as a traditional third-person adventure, Restless promises an engaging storyline with a strong atmosphere, memorable characters, and interesting locations.

Restless tells the story of former defense attorney Kate Jones. Given the opportunity to prevent a terrible bombing, Kate refuses to take action. When the explosion actually occurs, Kate is wracked with guilt and driven to alcoholism. After months of self pity however, she may finally have a chance to start her life again. That is if she can find and help the mysterious woman that is haunting the attorney in her dreams.

As Dan Peach puts in his interview with danyboy, Restless "is a story about who we are exactly as people [and] what turns us into who we are." Players can probably expect self discovery and inner understanding to be a strong part of Kate's journey. While trying to survive in a dangerous world, deal with paranormal forces, and find out what happened to Sam Michaels, Kate will undoubtedly change and learn some things about herself. The game might ask us to question the truth of what we observe while remembering that "there are many shades of grey, and everything has a context."

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The intriguing concept and the underlying dark tone of the game should be enough to spark an interest in many adventure gamers. But among the most distinguishing features of the game is the unusual protagonist. Kate is not your typical do-gooder or self-righteous antihero out for vengeance. Before the bombing, she was cunning and ruthless. Now she is depressed, perhaps even hating herself for the deaths caused by the explosion. Can Kate truly let go of her vanity? Is she still willing to do whatever it takes to get what she wants? How will her feelings of guilt affect her interaction with the other characters? It should be interesting to see how the former attorney's character traits reflect into the game.

Designed as a pure adventure game, Restless will not feature any action sequences. The game will predominantly feature inventory-based challenges. Players can also expect a few other types of puzzles to be incorporated into the gameplay. However, lack of action elements and the emphasis on inventory puzzles does not mean Kate will not have to rely on brute force to overcome some of her challenges.

For instance, as revealed in one of the screenshots from the game's Web site and danyboy's interview, Kate will eventually obtain a gun. Just like any other inventory item, it will be up to the players to decide when it will be appropriate to actually use the gun. Yet the presence of the firearm alone should give us an idea about the nature of the game's setting. This is not a warm and fuzzy place where all the problems are going

to be solved easily. Kate might have to make some difficult decisions and put her life at risk before she can successfully complete her journey.

The preliminary information about Restless most certainly sounds interesting. The game seems to have the elements of a strong story, an unusual protagonist, and a setting that should appeal to gamers who enjoy a dark atmosphere with a touch of the paranormal. It may be too early to pass judgment on the game, but Restless sure looks like it could be worth the wait. The game is currently scheduled to hit the stores in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Interview with Anne Gregory on Scavenger Hunter
Conducted by La Primavera

Have you ever wished for a game with endless possibilities? Each time you play, things are not quite the same as before – different ways to get inside a building, different objects you find in different locations, and different worlds to explore. Have you ever wished that the voice actors just shut up? Have you ever wished that you were just allowed to explore at your leisure, totally non-linear, without the fear of being harmed or killed, without the pressure of having to solve a time-sensitive puzzle? Well, here it is; the Scavenger Hunter from an independent developer Sagewood Software may have answered your prayer.

After 7 years of work, the Scavenger Hunger was released on December 16, 2006. We at Adventure Lantern interviewed Anne Gregory, owner of Sagewood Software based in British Columbia, Canada, and the mastermind behind this replayable adventure game.

[Adventure Lantern]: Let's start from the basics. If I may be so blunt, who are you? And what do you do when you are not developing the game? (Or what were you doing before you decided to develop this game?) And what's in the name, "Sagewood Software"?

[Anne Gregory]: I am a happily married woman who lives in Burnaby, British Columbia (Canada). I work full time as a food lab technician for SoyaWorld, a major soya beverage manufacturer for Western Canada. During my free time I like working out in the garden, doing jigsaw puzzles and of course playing adventure games on the computer.
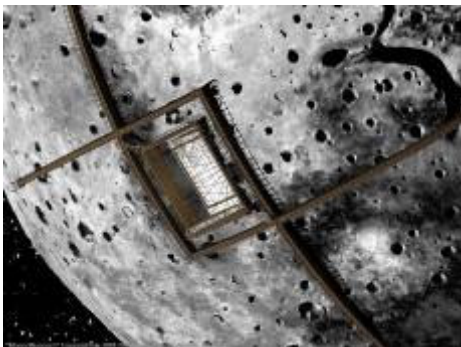
The Sagewood part of Sagewood Software had its beginnings when I started making home made soap to sell at the local crafts fairs. I was so taken with one particular fragrance that I used - sagewood - that I incorporated into my crafts business name (Sagewood Industries aka Sagewood Crafts which specializes in tatted lace). When I decided to develop a computer game, it seemed only logical to maintain the Sagewood

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name and I modified the existing Sagewood logo to have the little sagewood plant growing out of a computer disc.

[AL]: How long did it take you to develop this game? Who were in the development team? What is the development team's background?

[AG]: The game was in development for about 7 years, most of which was trying to locate programmers since I have only limited skill in computer languages. Once I found the Adventure Maker engine in 2003, we began working on the game with much more drive than in the previous years and had it ready for Beta testing in the spring of 2006. The entire team consists of myself and my husband who did all of the work on the game with the exception of the music score which was provided by my husband's brother Glen Soulis.

Glen is a professional musician who does 'gigs' in the Kitchener-Waterloo area of Ontario Canada. My husband and I had no experience with any sort of graphic/modeling programs prior to starting on the game so it was a case of learning as we went along. I have a rudimentary knowledge of computer programming, mostly self taught but I used the internet as a resource for some of the scripting that runs the AI for the game.

[AL]: Why did you decide to create a game like this? What motivated you? Any particular good or bad adventure game experience that triggered your imagination?

[AG]: Starting back in the days of the Infocom text adventures I was a bit disappointed with the play once aspect of adventure games. Back then $50.00 was a lot of money to pay for (as advertised) approximately 40 hours of play time. I always felt that I would like to try and make an adventure game that you could replay and have it present the player with different challenges. Over the years I did make attempts but a lack of sufficient computer programming skills always got in the way. I do have an early, early version of the game written in Assembler but it has a few bugs in it!

{Note: Infocom's text adventures look like this…
http://www.douglasadams.com/creations/infocomjava.html.
Ah those were the days…Not that I know personally, but I do remember the text-only World Wide Web, my computer was running MS-DOS, and my computer screen was black

and white.}

[AL]: Of all adventure games I have played since Myst, your game most strongly reminds me of Myst. Part of it is the similar interface, but graphic description of each world has similar charm, even without true-to-life realistic graphics. What do you think?

[AG]: I believe a lot of people have tried to copy the Myst style of game. It was the first to really take the adventure gaming world by storm and there are admittedly a lot of "Myst clones" out there. Although my intent was not to create a Myst clone there is certainly a lot to be said for the multiple worlds, point and click type of game. It allows the developer to create a variety of game environments and an avenue to join them together (be it linking books, time travel or portal travel).

[AL]: Whom do you see as a target audience (gamer)? Any group definable by age, ethnic background, education level, interest, etc? (I suppose the gamer should be intelligent enough to be able to do basic calculations...)

[AG]: I was looking to target the people who were not into the fast paced first person shooters and people who didn't have the time or energy to invest in RPG games where you need to create and build up your character. It is difficult to know what group of people is going to be interested by the game but both young and old who have played it seem to enjoy it and the varying challenges of the puzzles.

[AL]: These days adventure gamers are used to seeing the graphically stunning world (using TnL, for example) rendered real-time, having the total 360-degree freedom of vision and movement. How do you think your game will appeal to them?

[AG]: If people are looking for cutting edge graphics in an adventure game then they will probably be disappointed by the style of Scavenger Hunter. I have seen a lot of negative comments about the point and click type games by people who prefer the real-time 3D and 360-degree movement but there are still a lot how don't mind the slide show games.

[AL]: I have to ask you this: any plans for adding control options such as separate volume controls for ambient noise and music? To be real honest

with you, after a while the non-stop background music featuring repetitive themes started to get me, distracting me greatly from concentrating. Of course it may be just me - I'm a music major.

[AG]: That would be a good feature and I can sympathise with you after all the beta testing I did myself. I'm not sure that that ability is easily worked into the game engine but I have made some allowances in the game for people who want to turn the volume way down. You may have noticed while you were playing that when you do something and your character has something to say that might be of help, there is a text pop-up at the bottom of the screen. Anytime there is something important that the player needs to know they will be made aware of it even if the sound is turned off. (Of course the clicking of locks etc is lost)

[AL]: Any plans for adding more worlds? When? I'd love to explore those worlds that I had a glimpse of in the handbook found in the Camp.

[AG]: This will all depend on the success of the current game. All of the worlds that are in the handbook are in various stages of development, just waiting to be built into another Scavenger Hunter game or as Add-On packs for the existing game. All we need is the support of the adventure community through sales and a follow-up will be assured.

[AL]: Any plans for foreign language versions? Any plans for releasing the game in countries other than Canada and the US?

[AG]: No plans for any foreign language versions. While the game was released in Canada, we do sell to anywhere in the world and have had a number of overseas orders.

[AL]: What is your favorite adventure game?

[AG]: Not that I have played all that many adventure games but my favorite would be Riven, although Beyond Atlantis (which I'm currently playing is a close second).

[AL]: Do you intend to remain independent, or will you be seeking an alliance with a software publisher?

[AG]: Prior to releasing the game as an independent, I contacted DreamCatcher (aka The Adventure Company) and offered to send them a review copy but we never heard back. I have also sent a letter of inquiry to GotGames as well as a press release when the game was released. Press releases have also got out to other publishers including Lighthouse Interactive but so far we've been left on our own.

[AL]: What are your plans after this game? New game in the pipeline?

[AG]: Developing and putting together a game, particularly an adventure game, takes a lot of time and effort. As I mentioned before, there are additional Scavenger worlds that are waiting to be finished. The current game Scavenger Hunter has been written so that it could accommodate a world library of up to 25 different worlds that the AI would choose from but we really need to see support from the adventure community or a nibble from a publisher before I would devote that kind of time to expanding the existing game or working on a new one.

Thank you, Anne, for taking the time to give us insight into this unique game and the development process. We are all for supporting independent game developers, aren't we? Read our review in this issue, play the game and spread the word. You may think it is not really your cup of tea, but you may be surprised. I thought so myself at first, as my recent favorites in games includes blood and gore Silent Hill series. But as I played the Scavenger Hunter, I found myself quite intrigued and entertained, despite its rather plain look and feel.

Sagewood Software has a demo of the game on their website. Be sure to check it out

.

Interview with Vince Twelve from xii games

Conducted by Gnome

[Editorial Note: The following interview was originally posted at our friendly Gnome's lair at http://gnomeslair.blogspot.com**]**

Vince Twelve, the evil mastermind behind xii games (http://xiigames.com), the creators of such innovative, excellent, very freeware and quite indy adventure games as Anna, What Linus Bruckman Sees When His Eyes Are Closed and Spooks, gets interviewed. Right here. By a gnome. Read on, read on...

[Gnome:] So, is it Vince Twelve or Vince xii? Oh, and do please add a bit of further personal info to spice things up… The tabloids will love you.

[Vince Twelve]: I am not Vince the Twelfth. I do not come from a long line of Vinces. I am Vince Twelve. However, if you want to save a few keystrokes, roman numerals will do.

Quick personal run-down: I'm 24, married, have a one-year-old daughter, and I live in Japan where I teach English in a Junior High School. And for the benefit of the tabloids: I'm dating Jennifer Aniston, have an eating disorder, a drug problem, an illegitimate love-child, and I'm gay. How's that for spicy?

[G]: Are you more of a game designer, a programmer or even (don't deny it) an evolving visual artist?

[VT]: I'd like to someday be able to say, "Hi, I'm Vince Twelve. I'm a game designer." But I don't know if I'm allowed to do that yet. I have a piece of paper in the form of a college degree that proves that I can program. There's very little subjectivity there. But proving that you can design is a very different thing.

As long as I can remember, I've wanted to design games. The only way I can prove to myself that I'm capable in that regard, however, is to release games and get feedback from the players. That's why I'm always starving for any kind of feedback I can get.

As far as being an artist… while I'm quite pleased with the final looks of both Anna and Linus, I don't have the artistic skill that I need to realize some of the

games that I'd like to make. Plus I take way too long to draw anything. I'm learning as I go, but it's a slow process.

[G]: Xii games. Quite a few people have been credited in your three (brilliant) games. Is it indeed a group or are people just coming and going? Well, Anna was completely a solo outing, but I made the game entirely in a week, so I wasn't lonely for long.

[VT]: Spooks was definitely an amazing team effort, but it was still Erin's baby. She designed, wrote, and drew everything. I joined the project after her previous programmer vanished and took all the game's code along with him. Erin and I were in constant communication for the next few months as she finished up art and animation and I put the whole thing together. Chris Moorson was also there the whole time working on music and sound.
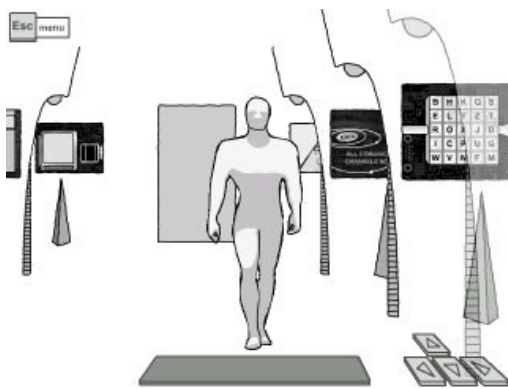
For Linus, I was back in the designer's chair. After I worked up a working prototype of the game, I got Nikolas Sideris on board to do the music. But he ended up being much more than just a musician. I sent him updates throughout the development for suggestions and motivation. He was really awesome. The third major member of the Linus team was my wife, who wrote all the Japanese translations as well as providing a lot of support (and if you finished the game and saw the super-secret ending: that was her playing the sexy nurse!). It was really great to be able to share my love for making games with my wife. I definitely plan on involving her in more of my projects.

[G]: From Anna to What Linus Bruckman Sees When His Eyes Are Closed… What's next? A paragraph long name?

[VT]: What's in a name? As the bard wrote: "A game by any other name would still not emit any odor, because it's really just a collection of ones and zeros and not a tangible object." Or something like that…

Yeah, I was totally pleased with the long name. I thought it up really early in development and it just seemed appropriately strange... and it makes more sense if you see the super-secret ending!

[G]: Right. Names aside, what's more impressive is your tendency to constantly innovate. Anna is quite possibly the only 3D, keyboard controlled AGS adventure, and Linus really did something never attempted before. So, how important is innovation? Do you believe gamers are actually interested in it?

[VT]: I do think that innovation is important, but I don't think it's necessary in every game. A lot of people are making games with more consideration for nostalgia than innovation, and that's perfectly fine. Afterall, refining and perfecting old ideas can be just as important as coming up with new ones. If you're making a game, especially a freeware game, you only have to answer to yourself, so you can make the kind of game that you want to make.

That being said, freeware game makers are in a unique position to innovate. Since they don't have significant money invested in the game, it isn't such a big deal if their clever, innovative idea doesn't work so well in a game as it did in their head. Compared to a big developer with millions of dollars invested in a title's success, or even a small developer who scraped together every last penny they could find to fund their game, this is a big opportunity to take some risks and try something new.

As for the gamers' interest in innovation, I suppose that depends on how successful the innovation turns out to be. Afterall, "innovation" implies "new" not necessarily "fun". I do think that most gamers are always on the lookout for something unique and exciting, and when that new idea turns out to be genuinely fun, you have a real gem of a game. I think Linus was moderately successful in this regard.

[G]: Linus, well WLBSWHEAC, lets the player simultaneously play two games and experience two stories and two totally different visual styles with only one mouse. You've already mentioned the DS (and your shower) was an inspiration. Care to elaborate?

[VT]: I remember reading a book about game design several years ago that had a lot of advice from big names in the industry. One of the designers, I can't remember who, said that a good game designer is always thinking about games and should be able to come up with ten game ideas before breakfast. That quote just stuck with me, and since then, I've always been challenging myself to come up with different types of game design ideas.

When the Nintendo DS was first announced, I began thinking of the new types of games that could be made for the system. I figured that if I thought of myself as a game designer, I should easily be able to think up some unique new types of gameplay for such an innovative system. One of the ideas that I really liked was having two completely different worlds, one in each screen, and playing them simultaneously. I carried that idea around in the back of my head for a while until I decided to start fleshing it out for a PC game. The idea eventually grew into

Linus.

One very rewarding thing is seeing professional designers coming up with ideas very similar to yours and turning them into real commercial games. I was almost finished with Linus when I heard about a DS game called Contact which displays two different worlds on the two screens using two completely different art styles for each. Even though the gameplay is very different – it's an RPG in which you control only one of the characters – I had to immediately buy the game because of the similarities. Also, Square Enix just announced a new DS game in which you control two characters simultaneously, one on the top screen, one on the bottom. But rather than your commands being mirrored in both screens like in Linus, you control the characters separately – one with the d-pad and one with the stylus.

It's very interesting to me to see how professional designers play with these similar ideas. It's also quite gratifying. It makes me feel like I was on the right track with my design.

[G]: Why is it such a hard and complex game?

[VT]: Here's another tidbit for my bio: I also have a degree in mathematics and love brain-bending logic puzzles. Linus, from the start, was going to be a fairly complex puzzle game with a shiny adventure exterior. I know that everyone doesn't adore a good brain-twister like I do, so I thought I was toning down the difficulty here, I really did!

At the time of me writing this, out of the thousands of downloads from my site and from the other places that it's been picked up and hosted, only fourteen are listed in the online Hall of Completion. (Though I'm guessing it's just that most people don't care enough to go online and type in their completion code…)

That being said, I knew from the get go that this kind of game wouldn't appeal to everyone. I'm sure that a lot of people download the game because of the promise of something unique and then start to play it only to find out that the gameplay and logic puzzles don't really appeal to them. But that's the benefit of making a freeware game. My only real customer is myself! Sorry if anyone found it too hard.

[G]: What should we expect next of xii games? More innovative thinking? A sequel to the almost traditional but excellent Spooks? An action game? Erotic interactive fiction?

[VT]: Right now, I'm programming a small game for someone else that I'm not sure I'm allowed to talk about. It's just a small project that should only take a couple of weeks. After it's done, I'll start preliminary work on my next game.

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I've got several ideas which I've trimmed down to two to decide between. I want to do something longer than Anna or Linus and tell a full story. One of the two ideas relies on me finding an artist or two who are willing to help me realize the game, so we'll see about that. (Any artists out there want to help me out?) But you can be sure that there will be some innovative thinking included in the design. I wouldn't make a game that didn't have something unique to offer.

As for the sequel to Spooks, Erin is still working on the story, design, and art. It's coming but it's a ways off. And whether or not I'll be coding it or xii games releasing it is still up in the air.

And I think I'll leave the erotic fiction up to the fans. I don't know if you've read the recently released "Linus Bruckman Tosses Mortia a Bone," but it's quite tittilating.

[G]: Any thoughts of releasing a commercial game?

[VT]: Definitely. I would love to release something commercially. Again, however, I would need to find some artists to work with because I don't feel that my art is of commercial quality. If I could assemble an adequate team right now, my next release would be commercial.

[G]: Now for the final/double-feature question. Enjoyed any of the recently released adventure games? How's your Wii doing?

[VT]: Commercially, I really enjoyed the Blackwell Legacy. Other than that, I haven't really played many commercial adventure games lately. In 2006, my favorite game was easily Phoenix Wright for the DS. I picked up the sequel here in Japan recently. I don't think it's out in the West yet. I haven't had a chance to start it yet, but I'm really looking forward to cracking it open.

Totally loving my Wii. WarioWare: Smooth Moves has to be the most fun I've had (and the dumbest I've looked) in quite a while. The one downside of the Wii is that my wife consistently beats me in tennis, and so of course that's the only game she ever wants to play!

Cheers!

Thanks for taking the time to interview me!

[G]: Thanks for taking the time to answer, thanks for the games and good luck!

The Best Way to Play Old Classics – Part B

Playing Old Adventure Games – Part 4   **Written by SirDave**

In Part A of this 2-part subject, *The Best Way To Play Old Classics*, we looked at playing the old classic adventure games from the purist point of view that the best way to play them the first time is to play them *optimally*. In my opinion, when it comes to classic adventure games that don't play perfectly under Windows XP, the best way to play them is under the operating system that they were created under or as close to that ideal as is reasonably possible. Lucky for us, the internet and eBay make it possible to achieve that ideal by giving us an inexpensive and relatively easy way to acquire well-built, workhorse laptops from the late 1990s such as the *Toshiba Portege 320ct* and the *IBM Thinkpad 380z* running Windows 98SE. In Part A we saw how effectively that concept works for the classic game, Grim Fandango. In Part B we will see how it works for the four games that have been notorious for their incompatibility with Windows XP: *Under A Killing Moon, The Pandora Directive, Secrets of the Luxor and Amber: Journeys Beyond*.

Under A Killing Moon and The Pandora Directive

First a little history:

Under A Killing Moon (UAKM) is the poster child of classic adventure games that choke under Windows XP. I maintain that it is virtually impossible to play UAKM perfectly (with the emphasis on the word, perfectly) under Windows XP even with the help of an emulator such as Virtual PC. In any instance when people claimed to 'play' it under Windows XP, the results appeared to be less than optimal. I don't want to read *The Da Vinci Files* with a page torn out every so often, watch *A Shawshank Redemption* with picture dropouts and I don't want to play UAKM with jerky audio or video when I know that it plays perfectly under Windows 98SE on the Toshiba Portege 320ct and the IBM Thinkpad 380z!

Under A Killing Moon, released by Access in 1994, was the first of a triad of Tex Murphy games using the concept of an 'interactive movie' with extensive FMV and a first person, plot-oriented design. These were big money projects whereby Access *a)* designed an entirely new 3D-like engine that could take advantage of

the period's latest hardware and *b)* hired fairly well-known actors (albeit a little past their prime) for the FMV and Chris Jones as the exceptional star.

What is particularly fascinating is that Access either was completely caught with its pants down with the release of Windows 95 or, like a lot of us at the time, didn't believe that Windows could provide the multimedia experience that DOS could. This resulted in a conundrum: In an attempt to maximize the multimedia capability of DOS by allowing the use of the most advanced computer hardware of the time, Access created a game that didn't work without a fair amount of tweaking on even some DOS systems and yet, because it was never designed or tested to run under the most advanced operating system of the time, the new Windows 95, UAKM became more and more incompatible with later versions of Windows. An example of how crazy this scenario became is that the attempt to make the game so advanced was taken to such an extreme that it was designed to recognize the presence of each of its four CDs in four separate(!) CD players. Now, how many people had two, let alone four, physical CD hardware drives in 1994? And then, in the *Readme* file that comes with the UAKM, there is the heading 'Running Under Windows 95' underwhich is the word: *'No!'*. In retropect, it's all rather bizarre.

Setting up the games:

Luckily, Under A Killing Moon can run under Win95 and Win98SE and it runs perfectly on the Toshiba Portege 320ct and the IBM Thinkpad 380z! Here are some instructions for set up UAKM under Windows 95 and Windows 98SE on these computers:

1) From the UAKM Cdrom, run INSTALL.EXE. It will install by default to a C:\Moon directory though you can change that. This is not a true windows installer but rather a program that creates a directory (folder) on your hard drive and moves files to it from the CD. Therefore, the game is not '*seen*' by the Windows registry and, in effect, Windows doesn't know that UAKM is installed. In a sense, Windows is only being used as a host and to help manage memory in order to avoid the use of DOS boot disks that use Autoexec.bat and Config.sys files to accomplish the same thing.

2) After the install is complete, exit the DOS window and from the C:\Moon directory that was created, rt-click on Moon.exe and create a shortcut that should

be placed on the desktop. Rt-click on that shortcut (now on the desktop) and go to: Properties->Program->and check *'Close on exit'* and under 'Run', select '*Maximized*'. Under the Screen tab, go to *'Usage'* and make sure *'Full-screen'* is selected. Now return to the Program tab, click on *Advanced* and check *'Prevent MS-DOS-based games from detecting Windows.'* and uncheck *'Suggest MS-DOS mode as necessary'*. To complete this part of the installation, click on Apply. Now click on the UAKM shortcut to configure the game before playing.

3) *UAKM Configuration*: Forget trying to Auto-Select the soundboard. Select the Soundblaster Pro option and enter: *Port Address as 220, Interrupt as 5 and DMA as 0 or 1* (usually 1). The next screen automatically will select Soundblaster as the Midi device. The next screen is the main configuation screen. Select Window Size as 640x480 and Mouse Sensitivity as Low. You're done! Click OK and UAKM is ready to play!

To my way of thinking, The Pandora Directive is to Under A Killing Moon as Riven is to Myst. Access took a successful formula and further refined it to an almost perfect result. The Pandora Directive (PD) was released in 1996 and Access put some effort into making it Windows 95 compatible. It uses exactly the same engine and setting it up is very similar to that of Under A Killing Moon with the notable exception that PD uses a true Windows installer. You start the installation by running SETUP.EXE (rather than INSTALL.EXE) and this time Windows knows that PD exists (ie. there is a registry entry). For the same reason, it is not necessary to customize the PD shortcut in the way that was necessary with UAKM. The game does require configuration that is very similiar to that of UAKM. Once again the Soundblaster Pro settings should be *Port Address 220, IRQ 5, DMA 1*. The other configuration settings are much the same as with UAKM. The Pandora Directive runs perfectly under Windows 98SE on both the Toshiba Portege 320ct and the IBM Thinkpad 380z.

For Your Consideration- The Toshiba Libretto:

At the end of Part A, I mentioned that I would introduce the use of one more laptop for the more adventurous! The laptop in question is the Toshiba Libretto 100/110ct (not the 50ct, 70ct or the more recent U105). The Libretto was first introduced in 1997 and was almost miraculous for the time! The first two models, the 50ct and the 70ct were relatively underpowered for much in the way of serious adventure gaming, but the 100ct introduced in 1998 has a very usable

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166mhz processor and the final model of that series, the 110ct, has a 233mhz processor. These are tiny little puppies at only 8.25in x 5in x 1.25in with 5 inch gorgeous LCD screens and are small enough to sit on your chest when lying down. They are usually sold already running Windows 95 or Windows 98SE. In the place of a mouse, they use an ingeniously-designed directional button very much like that on the Sony PSP gaming handheld. One limitation is that one has to use an external CD player to load and play games (though these are often sold with the Librettos), but one can easily use virtual drive programs to do the equivalent of a full hard drive install so that totally portable play is possible. The Librettos will play almost any adventure game from the period of 1993 to 2000,

however, I only recommend them to those who have some computer expertise because it does take a bit of 'techie tinkering around' to get the most out of these little critters. Also, they are a little pricey compared to the other two computers I've been discussing. At any given time, you will find both the 100ct and 110ct on eBay selling anywhere from $200 to $350.

Secrets of the Luxor and Amber: Journeys Beyond

Secrets of the Luxor and Amber are second only to Under A Killing Moon and The Pandora Directive when it comes to difficulty running under Windows XP. Interestingly enough, they both were released in 1996 and used the then popular combination of Macromedia and Quicktime. They differ in that Secrets of the Luxor was not designed to run under Windows 95 while Amber was. This results in a few quirks when it comes to running Secrets of the Luxor. Both games can apparently run reasonably well on a Windows XP system using Virtual PC (mentioned in Part A), but, nonetheless, they both need some tweaking to make them work. On the other hand, they both run perfectly on the Toshiba Portege 320ct, Toshiba Libretto 100ct/110ct and the IBM Thinkpad 380z under Windows 95 or Windows 98SE!
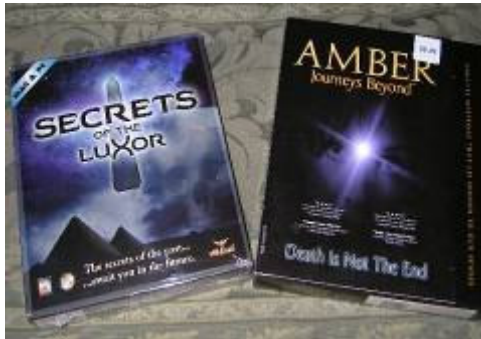
Secrets of the Luxor (SOTL) was released in 1996 when Myst had a lock on the top of computer game best-seller lists. Mojave's attempt to create a game with 'Myst-like appeal' is obvious throughout SOTL, in a good way mind you, but don't mistake: this game stands on its own. Along those lines, the game apparently caught the notice of Myst creators Rand and Robyn Miller who warmly endorsed it. In fact, in the credits of the SOTL manual is written *'Special thanks Robyn and Rand for keeping us mystified'.*

A little rant:

My experience with SOTL is one of the reasons I don't have much patience with the term 'Myst-clone' being used as it is in an often derogatory manner: SOTL is an example of a 'Myst-clone' that has often been misreviewed. It has, at times, been given C grades and criticized for things that indicate that the reviewers simply didn't play the entire game, didn't bother reading material given to them in instructions/the game or both. For instance, one reviewer had problems getting some of the video to work- it is obvious from the review information that the reviewer didn't install the Quicktime 16bit player which is mandatory. Another reviewer said that something was amiss because the game goes off on a science-fiction tangent. In fact, the science-fiction element is carefully described in the journal you are given at the beginning of the game, is a critical part of the story, and in a broad sense is no different than the concept of Myst's Ages! Still another reviewer comments about the 60+ pages of the journal and says you won't need to read it except for the end to help with a final puzzle. Au contraire-you had better read the journal at the beginning of the game just as you were supposed to read the Myst books in the Myst Library! However, Randy Sluganski of JustAdventure got it right in his great article: *'The 10 Best Adventure Games That (Almost) No One Has Ever Played'* in which he said, *'Luxor is one of those games that very few adventure gamers have had the pleasure of playing, but those who have relish the memory'*

Secrets of the Luxor is a wonderful little game. It has that 'Myst-like appeal', the graphics are very good, the puzzles are original and the music has a recurring very catchy melody! Unfortunately, SOTL is somewhat hard to find now, but it does turn up on Ebay periodically. Perceived as collector's item, it may also be a little expensive, but the investement will pay off in weeks of enjoyment. One reason (besides difficulty running SOTL under Windows XP) I include it in this project is that it is a prime example of a little gold nugget in the unfairly much-maligned Myst-clone category.

Setting Up Secrets of the Luxor:

SOTL comes on 2 disks. Basically, as described in the manual, installation consists of simply copying the Secrets directory from CD1 over to your hard drive and making a shortcut to the Secrets.exe program. Actually, there is an installer

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program on CD1 of the game, but all it does is install the Secrets directory and gives you the option of installing Quicktime. Since this is a DOS-based game, there is no entry in the Windows registry and therefore, Windows doesn't know it exists. The main game will run off the CDs in the drive. Interestingly, SOTL will not run on any computer on which there are virtual drives created by programs such as Virtual CD because, due to the DOS-based design, the game is confused by the presence of the virtual drives such that it is unable find the hardware CD drive! Another installation quirk related to SOTL's DOS origin is that you have to be sure to install the 16-bit version of Quicktime; the 32-bit version usually associated with Windows installations is not enough!

Setting Up Amber:

Amber is another little gem of a game. It was not a big seller when first released, but it has become a favorite of aficiandos of classic adventure games and is often mentioned as a great Halloween-season game! Amber comes on one CD and uses a Windows installer which makes an entry in the Windows registry so that Windows knows the game is there. Amber is rather picky about the version of Quicktime installed and it prefers the 32-bit version 2.1.2 provided on the CD. I found that it didn't work with Quicktime version 6.5 and results were not optimal with version 4. Amber is compatible with virtual drives and works particularly well with a program such as Virtual CD (which allows a full hard drive install) on the Toshiba Libretto.

This concludes our small series on 'the best way to play the adventure game classics'. In conclusion, one can spend hours trying to get games such as the four discussed above to play under Windows XP using various emulators or Windows XP tweaks with often less than optimal results, or you can spend no more than $90 to $200 to purchase well-made, heavy-duty laptops from the late 1990s that will play these games perfectly (and almost any others of the period that you throw at them). The countless hours of enjoyment these games can bring played the way they were meant to be played makes the relatively small hardware investment more than worth its while!

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Runaway II: The Dream of the Turtle

Greek Release   **PC Review by Fallen Angel**

Story:

The story begins as Brian throws Gina out of an airplane while she is screaming "No, Brian, please!" Does their love end in such an inglorious way? Did Brian save her from the Mafia (Runaway 1) to kill her afterwards? What has she done to him to deserve such an end? And if Gina gets killed, who will you save this time?

No need to worry; it still is beautiful Gina that you have to save once more. How can this be? The answer will be given to you as soon as the question pops up in your minds. And this is how your adventure begins. Narrating the story backwards, Brian is once more going to inform you about what exactly happened during his new adventure. And if you look carefully at Brian's appearance while he is narrating what has happened to him this time, you will notice that inevitably you will find yourself in that position during the game –a turn of the story introduced in a beautiful and absolutely coherent and logical way.

All characters are once again indescribably perfect. Each one of them represents a caricature that will certainly make you laugh. At the same time, they add a unique color to the game that will be difficult to forget. Moreover, many of the faddish and memorable characters from the first game make an appearance, giving a unique flavor to the game's style. It should be mentioned that Camille (a newly introduced character) is a real person. She is a French girl who won a contest whose prize was to have your own character in the game. If you like, you can find out more about this on the game's forum.

Another newcomer, which I just have to mention, is Lokelani. She is a female figure of extraordinary beauty that is undoubtedly going to steal men's hearts. My brother kept saying every other second while I was playing Runaway 2: "Go back to Lokelani. It doesn't matter that she won't have anything new to tell us. The moment we see her, we'll be inspired about what to do!" I think that this summarizes everything about Lokelani and her impact on men! ;-)

Let's move on to the one characteristic of the game that will probably generate many negative comments. The game ends before the story is completed! I couldn't have said that in a more straightforward or simpler way. However, the actual way the games ends and the reason of such a "sudden" ending that Pendulo offers through Brian's words, is surely not disappointing. The reasoning that there is still much to do and the promise that all those will be given out in an extended new adventure game -instead of being squeezed in a single chapter, is rather satisfactory. At least, personally, I felt quite satisfied and impatient towards the sequel that will follow. All that of course after the initial shock! By the way, right after the game's credits, there is a video sequence which you do not want to miss out since it pleasantly surprises you while creating new questions about the story –or is it that it just reminds you of things that you had totally forgotten about?

Finally, it is worth mentioning that there is a button on the menu page that offers a beautiful summary of Runaway and informs you about what has happened during Brian's first adventure. Note that you can play Runaway 2 without having first played Runaway. However, everyone who has already played Runaway, will certainly notice various indirect connections between the two games and their characters.

Puzzles:

Runaway 2 is a pure point & click adventure. You only need your mouse to play it. As the manual masterfully says, "Keyboards are for pianists!" Most of Runaway 2's puzzles are inventory based, while you will encounter only a few other types of puzzles. You just have to find what you need, combine it -if necessary- with something else and use it on the proper hotspot. The difficulty level of the puzzles increases gradually throughout the

adventure. At the beginning, you need to be a little patient until you understand how to move and act through this game. You look everywhere and you try out combinations using objects on several hotspots without really understanding why you do so. Eventually, however, you grasp the game's logic and proceed undeterred to its challenges. Nonetheless, as you advance through the game, the difficulty level rises and overcoming some of the challenges will not be a picnic. That does not mean, however, that it gets way too difficult. It just requires
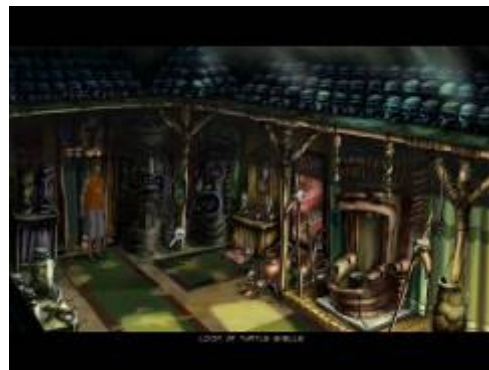
a little bit more thinking on your behalf. After all, let's not forget that the game requires observation and imagination from start to finish.

One thing you should keep in mind is that you, yourself, are not the hero of this adventure. You only help its hero to move on. Brian acts on his own or completes your thoughts and actions every now and then in the game. For instance, you have put together a slingshot and you are desperately looking for a rock to use it with. Try using the slingshot at the target hotspot. You will then see that Brian picks up a rock to use with the slingshot. He is not stupid!

Moreover, there are several times when you will think "Oh! I know what to do! I will have to do this in order for that to be done". However, don't rush to pat yourself on the back about having solved the problem. Pendulo will have their way and surprise you by revealing that they have deliberately misled you on the wrong path and they will have Brian do something stupid (in a silly way) that will ruin your perfectly designed plan. This is a rather amusing detail. In retrospect that is, as at that time you just feel the urge to kill Brian on the spot in order to get over the intense shock he put you through.

Runaway 2 requires patience and persistence. Although you may think that you have done everything, you may find yourself unable to advance in the game. Well, obviously, you have not done everything after all! Explore and examine the locations thoroughly, search for hotspots that you have missed before and try using objects on hotspots that might initially seem improper (you do not know how Brian will interpret it and how he will utilize the situation). The best thing to do when you are stuck somewhere is to try all possible object-hotspot combinations. There is no reason for you to feel embarrassed; no one sees what you are doing. Well, except Brian of course, who will not neglect to pull your leg and to chaff your pointless actions every now and then. Nonetheless, dialogues and Brian's comments are a very helpful parameter as they guide you through

what needs to be done in order to advance in the game. So, listen carefully to what you are told. Among what is said, you will obtain very useful information that will make your life easier. In Runaway 2 you often know what you have to do and you are on the hunt for how to do it (this is where your imagination is required!).

There is a particular puzzle in the game that calls for a warning. It's a puzzle where you

have to answer to a series of questions, recalling previous conversations. The funny part is that you cannot hear these dialogues again although you surely will not remember them by heart as they contain several names. However, there is no need to be worried about this puzzle. Its solution is plain and simple: trial and error. By trying out one by one all the alternative answers, sooner or later you will find the correct one. I should also mention that sometimes you just have to leave and return to the scene of action, in order for the required action to be completed. So, before you start wondering about looking for something else to do –provided you do know that you are waiting for something to happen, try leaving and returning to the spot where the action is taking place. You probably do not need to do anything else.

Finally, some combinations in your inventory can only be made after certain events in the game. You combine things only when there is a need to do so. This means that a combination that was not possible earlier on may become possible after you have advanced in the game. The same goes for the collection of new objects. Even though you can collect some because you assume they will be useful later on, you ignore others that are not useful for the time being. Nonetheless, you will have to go back and get them when you discover where and how you can use them.

Music - Dialogues:

There are many and long conversations throughout the game. Provided you like a plethora of dialogues in a game, you will surely love the dialogues of Runaway 2 as they are not only full of ingenuity and humor, but they also stand out because of these elements. Influences and references to older games and movies also enrich many dialogues. Some references are direct, but you will have to read between the lines to catch the others.

The one element that surmounts everything by far is the sharp humor of Runaway 2, which satirizes various contemporary issues that trouble us. The jokes will likely make you laugh many times during this adventure. For instance, at a certain point in the game you will encounter one of the most popular and amusing games of puns and innuendos. It is a dialogue where someone is describing Lokelani to Brian. What's funny about it? When listening to this description, you are

convinced that it is 'inappropriate' due to its vulgar expressions (even though you will not actually hear any of the nasty words). As you may have guessed already, in the end it turns out that you just have a dirty mind and the description is absolutely 'innocent'.

Dialogues, however, do not exist in the game just to offer you a good laugh. On the contrary, they play a major part in unfolding and understanding Runaway 2's story. First of all, as I have already mentioned, dialogues help you solve certain puzzles and at the same time figure out what you have to do next. Moreover, they help you understand the imaginative story and the title of Runaway 2. However, in order to keep up with the storyline, you have to listen carefully and pay attention to the hints given from the beginning as well as the full explanation that comes later on.

One characteristic of the dialogues is that Brian talks directly to the gamer every now and then. This is a detail that most certainly offers a strong connection between you and Brian and that immerses you even deeper in Runaway 2's world. The voice over of the characters, which is actually based on the Australian way of talking in a rather stereotyped manner, is extremely funny. I do not know if this will annoy some, but surely it will cause a lot of laughs to anyone who likes listening to this kind of pronunciation. Finally, Runaway 2's music is appropriate for the game, characteristic and pleasant to listen to, without being able, though, to surpass the dialogues which steal the show.

Graphics:

The story takes you to all the possible locations that you would like to see in an adventure. So, Brian will go from an exotic island where he was spending his summer holiday to the snowy Alaska, from archeological excavations to high-tech places, and finally, he will have an amusing break while being on a pirate's ship in a previous century. One must admit that Runaway 2 offers a great variety in the locations you come to visit and that the diversity of its chapters will surely satisfy everyone's demands. This sense of great diversity and renewal of scenery is amplified by the fact that Brian changes his outfits frequently, causing the gamer to feel that he/she is looking at something new while still coping with same old Brian.

Even the graphics of Runaway 2 are full of humorous references and insinuations as they have been designed in magnificent detail. Actually, if you look carefully, you will

notice many surprising and funny details in the graphics of the surroundings that will either hide insinuations or just be there for your amusement (hidden faces, boat's name, Brian's T-shirt, etc). The one thing, however, that took my breath away was the detail with which Pendulo designed Brian's footprints in the snow: It is snowing and Brian leaves his footprints in the snow. The snow keeps falling down and Brian's footprints vanish *gradually* until they completely disappear under the fresh snow. A beautiful detail!

Technical Problems - Bugs:

Unfortunately, this is not a flawless game. And even though all its 'problems' are small and negligible, it is a pity that they were not spotted in time so that Runaway 2 would leave everyone with the best impressions possible. Most of the problems are related to the dialogues function. There are some dialogues that disappear while the character is still talking. Therefore, you are not provided with the necessary time to read them. In other cases, Brian continues to talk with a certain accent while pretending to be someone else when there is no need to do so as his true identity has been discovered earlier on. There are also some mistakes in the verbalization and the spelling of the dialogues. What is unbelievable, though, is that certain combinations of objects do not show a subtitle; instead you read the indescribable "line not found"!

Another annoying element is that all the characters have a peculiar delay in answering when you talk to each of them for the first time. It would be better to have a direct response and not to have to wait for them to meditate or do their assigned movement. Finally, I noticed a bug in the inventory, where you can still see an object as available even though not only have you already given it to someone, but you can actually see the object on him!

In Conclusion:

Runaway 2 is quite a long game (provided you do not play it with a walkthrough!) that surely many will love. If you liked the first Runaway, you should get a copy of this one as well. The sequel is much better. If you were not thrilled by the first game, but you do like this sort of game in general, I would recommend you try Runaway 2. It has a lot to offer. If, however, you do not like games with lots of

long funny dialogues or games that require you to think and use your imagination in order to solve a problem, it would be wise of you to avoid Runaway 2, as those are the exact things that it has to offer through its turbulent story that unfolds in beautiful cartoon graphics that will satisfy all demands.

If the only thing troubling you -as to whether to buy the game- is the fact that the story does not end, then I would strongly advise you not to let this tiny detail deprive you of a fantastic experience full of many funny hours of gameplay. The idea that all the remaining tasks at the end of the game would not fit into a single chapter is a pleasant thought. And the promise of another sequel is compelling. Why squeeze everything down to a few minutes play, when you can expand it into a whole new game? Wouldn't that be a pity?!

Personal comment:

I find the mentioning of the 'good impact' of drugs in a game that is accessible to minors a bit obnoxious. Even though I personally enjoyed these statements, I would prefer they were not included since the game has been rated 12+.

Important Note:

This review was based on the Greek version, which may be a little different from the U.S. version, especially with regards to its dialogues and voice acting.

The final grade is 96/100.

Developer: Pendulo Studios **Publisher:** Focus Home Interactive **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** December 2006 **Grade:** 96/100	**Minimum System Requirements:** Windows 98/ME/2000/XP Pentium III 500 128 Mb RAM Video card (DirectX 9 compatible) with a resolution of 1024x768 and 16/24 bits colors. Sound card DirectX 9 compatible DVD-ROM drive Mouse and keyboard

Sam & Max: Season 1 – Situation: Comedy

PC Review by Erdalion

They are back again. Before even the most ardent of their fans had a chance to miss them, the dynamic duo return for some more Freelance Police...ing. In other words, the highly anticipated second episode of the new Sam and Max season is here, since Telltale games kept their promise and delivered in less than a month.

If you played the previous game of the season, Culture Shock, the whole experience will feel very familiar, but that should hardly be surprising, in all honesty. After all, Situation: Comedy is just another episode in the on-going series. Think of it like a television show, especially a sitcom. There are no big differences between episodes, but you get the same characters that you know and love, with new jokes every episode to keep you interested. Whether this truly works in a game is a whole different discussion, however, and does not belong in this review. Still, given the fact it is meant to be just another episode of a series, similarities were unavoidable. The game even makes fun of this a couple of times, especially at the beginning, in Sam and Max's office.

Due to these similarities however, your initial reaction to the game may be a negative one, especially if you are expecting too much. Sights and sounds feel exactly the same, and you even have to visit the exact same areas as the first game, in the beginning at least.

Nonetheless, this is not necessarily a bad thing, since it means that all the good aspects of the first game remain too. The graphics of the game are still really good, particularly for an adventure game, and the animation is smooth as well. The backgrounds, while slightly simplistic, are filled with funny little details and in-jokes that should keep you amused. The music in the game is also very good, filled with jazzy tunes that supplement the game's atmosphere perfectly.

Voice-overs demand special mention since it was one of the criticisms directed towards the first episode, so it has to be said that they definitely sound better and feel more natural this time. It may be partially due to the fact that they have grown on us even more since the first game, but that is not to say they are not good. The actors do a solid job and their

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voices fit the personalities of their characters' nicely. If there is one that stands above the rest, that would be Bosco, but more on that later.

Concerning the gameplay itself, you will find that there are no real changes in this part of the game either. The interface is exactly the same, left-clicking will get you everywhere, and the puzzles are composed of the typical inventory and dialog variation. While on the subject of puzzles, it should be pointed out that they are a bit on the easy side, definitely easier than in Culture Shock, as even the less-experienced adventurers should not have a lot of problems solving them after a few tries. On the bright side of things, all the puzzles are fairly logical and simply require observation skills in order to be solved, rather than sheer luck. The only slightly frustrating part is a chase scene (one that purists would call an "action scene"), but thankfully it is far too short, so by the time you will be annoyed by it, it will already be over.

So far, it seems that Situation: Comedy is nothing original, and not that different from its predecessor. However, let us for one moment take a step back and be honest with ourselves; even the original Sam and Max: Freelance Police did not provide us with a deep and meaningful story, nor with engrossing and ground-breaking gameplay. Rather, its focus was on providing a genuinely funny experience, through visual gags and snappy one-liners, and it delivered exactly that, in spades. Situation: Comedy is no different. Its strength lies in its humor, its characters and its dialog, and it excels in these areas.

It has to be said that the story is more amusing this time around, and has a better focus. The main part of the game takes part in a series of television studios, all based on a certain successful contemporary craze, such as a "reality" show singing competition or a cooking show directed towards male bachelors. The script does not shy away from making some pretty caustic remarks about the nature of these types of shows, either, in true Sam and Max fashion, something that should keep fans of the series happy.

The characters, both old and new, are also funnier than in Culture Shock. Bosco, the loveable 7-Eleven owner with the conspiracy-theory phobia is especially hilarious, since in order to hide from his imaginary persecutors he has adopted a whole new persona of an English gentleman, accent included. As a matter of fact, I found myself visiting his store just to listen to his random nonsense, simply

because it was so funny. The Soda Poppers make another appearance as well, and this time they are used a lot better, as they are, dare I say, less... disturbing? The new characters are all very amusing as well, especially the apparent villainess herself, Myra Stump, a mockery of the overprotecting mother stereotype. Just wait until you see some of her comments towards Sam.

That brings us to what is probably Situation: Comedy's greatest strength, its dialogs. One could say that they are ingeniously and hilariously insane, or perhaps insanely and hilariously ingenious, or any other combination of these adjectives, but the truth is that they are all that and then some. From Max's crazy commentary on events and Sam's dry wit, and from Bosco's faux-British phraseology to Myra's putdowns, the game is full of one-liners that are sure to make you laugh even if you are a grumpy and bitter person. And that is the game's whole point after all, to entertain and amuse you. In that respect, Situation: Comedy is a great success.

So where does that leave the second episode of the Sam and Max season? If you look at it as a stand-alone game, it is certainly entertaining in its own right. It is technically solid, the puzzles are nothing too bad, and while a bit on the short side, it is cheap enough so you get your money's worth. However, as a game in an ongoing series, avoiding some criticism is not an easy thing to do. While, for the most part, ignoring the easier puzzles, Situation Comedy is better than Culture Shock, it is quite similar to its predecessor, perhaps a bit too similar. At the moment, that is not really a problem per se, both games still feel fresh enough to avoid tedium. However, if the future games do not differentiate enough from these two in terms of settings and supporting characters, and perhaps puzzles too, there is the always the danger of players becoming tired of the same old experience.

Still, it is still far too early to know how the future games will turn out, and Telltale has shown that they listen to customer feedback, so you should not worry about that just yet. For now, Situation Comedy is here and it is a worthy sequel to Culture Shock and also worthy of the Freelance Police legacy.

Developer: Telltale Games	**Minimum System Requirements:**
Publisher: Telltale Games	Windows XP
Platform: PC	Pentium III 800 MHz *
Genre: Adventure	256 MB RAM
Release Date: January 2007	32 MB 3D-accelerated video card
Grade: 92/100	230 MB hard disk space
	*Processor requirement is 1.5GHz if using
	a video card without hardware T&L

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Scavenger Hunter

PC Review by La Primavera

Not your ordinary adventure game of late…

There is no voice-acting or cutscene to roll your eyes over, no illogical storyline to fume at, no rich, graphic marvels to admire. No sound puzzles that sound alike, no boring and long journals and books to read. There's no one to kill, and nothing will harm you.
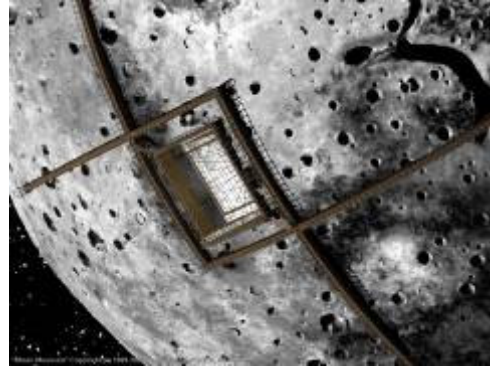
Instead, the first game from a Canadian game developer Sagewood Software will give you almost infinite permutations of situations on 9 different worlds, out of which you get to play 5 of them each time. Scavenger Hunter is a unique, replayable adventure game.

Introduction to the Game

The game is set, so I've figured from Sagewood's website, sometime in the near future. The human beings on the planet Earth are not alone in the universe any more. They are not alone either in suffering from mysterious disappearance of valuable artifacts; it turns out to be a galaxy-wide problem for centuries. An alien race called "The Scavengers" are responsible for the theft, and now Inter Universe Insurance Corporation has set up an elite group of people (terrans and aliens) to hunt down and retrieve the stolen objects and destroy the Scavengers' worlds so that they cannot come pilfering the valuable objects again. Each of these worlds is powered and sustained by a crystal, which the Scavengers guard by putting in a cage with a special code to unlock it. To destroy their worlds, you have to destroy their crystals in the Alien Control Room.

You will play as an agent attached to this elite taskforce. You will be assigned 5 different worlds; after picking up the scanner, the stolen item list, and a bag to put the items in the office, you are ready to go. For your effort, you will get 10% cut of the value of the artifacts that you recover, plus 15% of that amount if you destroy the Scavengers' worlds. So to recap, your mission is

1. Retrieve as many stolen objects on the list from these 5 alien worlds you are assigned to;
2. Locate and collect crystals from each world and destroy their worlds in the Alien Control Room.

A door in the insurance office (where you start the game) leads to a portal that will take you to one of the worlds assigned to you. You click on the portal control, which activates the portal. You turn to face the portal, and in you go.

Once in the alien world, you will have to repair broken portals in each world by finding and replacing the blue plasma fuses in the portal control box so you will be able to move freely between the worlds. In order to reach the Alien Control Room to demolish their worlds, you need the special red fuses to power up the special portal. To complete your mission successfully, you are required to be attentive to details, observant, and methodical.

Well, it's cute but it's a kids' stuff, said I, the snooty. What could there be for me to get excited about (and excited enough to write a review about)? It looked like a simple point and click with OK graphics, and it was basically a game to find and collect things… Let's just say I was in for a little surprise.

Game Mechanics

The Scavenger Hunter is indeed a first-person, point and click game. All scenes are pre-rendered, and you play the game from a predetermined position and angle. Once you are in the alien world, the game is totally non-linear, which I like a lot. You are free to go anywhere, to any world (once you repair the portals); there is no event which should take place before the next sequence is triggered. The exception to this is of course the end game, which only happens after you finish your task in the Alien Control Room.

The navigation is very simple and mostly trouble-free: go forward, turn left, turn right, turn around, and occasional look up and look down. Sometimes, if you move the mouse too quickly to show the "turn around" cursor, you may miss the "look down" cursor which, when it appears, is right above the "turn around" cursor.

The inventory items (your tools and retrieved

objects) are readily accessible on top of the screen. While you are exploring the surroundings all you see is the "Inventory" icon in the top left corner. When you need to use the items in the inventory, move the cursor over the "Inventory" icon, and the items will be displayed across the top of the screen.

All the tools that you will need are already given to you once the game starts. You will not need to look for a tool to complete your tasks in the alien worlds. This is nice. It takes out the stress of having to constantly find new tools to do something in a new setting, as it happens frequently in adventure games these days.

The cursor is mostly accurate, and hot spots are well-defined. You don't need to read the manual to figure out most of the navigation movement and cursor types (I didn't, as usual), but you may want to read how some of the default inventory items are supposed to work. (I didn't read it, and suffered because of it.)

The game has infinite saves, and the saved files are stored in the game program directory as .sav file. The game installs completely on the hard disk, and there is no need to keep the disc in the CD-ROM drive to play the game. The game takes up a sizeable chunk of your hard disk drive, though. Once installed, it is very stable, and loads relatively fast.

Basic Setup of the Worlds

Even though the game boasts almost infinite number of variations, I've noticed that there is a fundamental setup in each world that will not change from game to game. (Of course I could be dead-wrong here, as I haven't played a hundred times yet...)

- In each world, there are at least one, usually two building structures that you get to explore.
- The places you are allowed to explore this time will be the same as the next time. Other hardware, such as landscape, street lights, buildings that you are not allowed in, does not change from game to game.
- The location of the box that contains the crystal cage seems to be the same each time. (However, the crystal cage is not always locked in the box.)
- Anywhere you go, you do not meet any living soul, human or otherwise.

So, what changes in each new game? Here is what I have found so far:

- Different combinations of the 5 worlds out of 9: You will still have at least one world from your previous game, but even in that world, there will be changes in how things are set up.
- Access methods to the buildings in each world: There are three methods of entry that I have found so far. An old-fashioned key, a more modern-looking hole-punched card, and a numeric pad to punch in the entry codes. They are usually somewhere very close to the entrance, so you don't need to go running around all over the world to find the key, card, or codes.

- Codes with numbers and/or symbols are generated new in each new game.
- Different stolen objects will appear in different locations and/or different worlds.

In other words, the look and feel of each world will not change, but details within the world will change from game to game.

Alien worlds

The graphic resolution of this game is 800 x 600, and the scenes are all pre-rendered. Not for admiring realistically rendered worlds, like you may expect these days in adventure games. Frankly, I didn't expect much at all when I saw the picture on the CD sleeve.

The opening scene in the insurance company's office confirmed my rather low expectation. However, as I went through the portal and land on the alien world, I had to admit that the graphic description of each world had a certain irresistible charm, much like the original Myst. All I can say is, see for yourself.

There are currently 9 different worlds to explore and hunt down the stolen objects. Judging from how these worlds are constructed, these light-fingered aliens must really like our lifestyle here on Earth. They have created their worlds replete with buildings that are reminiscent of a good, middle-class neighborhood and household. Stolen artifacts are displayed in good taste, among modest furniture. They keep their yards nice and tidy. Fields, vineyards, orchards are connected by

well-tended roads and pathways. It is quite enjoyable and relaxing, as there is no one there in any of the worlds. There is nothing outlandish or "alien-looking" about anything in these worlds. They seem even to use English as the second language.

I am not being cynical here. For some reason I liked all these worlds that these Scavengers had created. Neat, orderly, not extravagant but charming. Almost made me feel bad about taking back the stolen objects from them. But such sentiment doesn't matter much in this game. The whole purpose of playing this game is not to speculate on alien psychology but retrieve the stolen objects and destroy their worlds. Oh we are such barbarians…

But not to worry. The AI engine of this game makes sure that the destroyed worlds are recreated the next time you start the game, with different objects and different puzzles.

Puzzles

Puzzles in this game are pretty well integrated into the game. They are not overly difficult, and they fall into three categories: how to gain access to a locked door; how to operate a machinery to achieve desired results, finding a piece of information to open a box or lock. The piece of information sometimes takes a form of cryptic poem. Most of the puzzles are solvable without resorting to a walkthrough (which doesn't yet exist, if ever. But there is a hint guide by Sagewood Software that covers the basics.)

The plasma fuses and stolen artifacts are not purposely hidden. They are out in the open, so to speak, although some of them are stored in a cabinet or safe. All you need to do to find them is to look everywhere carefully and open every door when possible.

After a few worlds, you get the hang of different types of puzzles. The difficulty level of the puzzles doesn't seem to go up or down in each new game. (Not that I've noticed so far.) You will be able to zip through a world sooner or later, and the only thing that may keeps you interested in playing the game repeatedly is the different stolen objects and fuses appearing in different places.

Hints

Sagewood Software has a HTML-based hint file you can download. A hint is revealed if you drag your mouse to highlight the seemingly empty space right next to the word "Hint 1 (or 2, 3, etc.)". I used it myself, when I just couldn't locate the red fuses. (Again my usual tendency to not read the instruction first proved almost disastrous; I thought the file was deficient, with no hint at all.) It is not a comprehensive guide, but enough to get you going without getting overly frustrated.

No control over the soundtrack…Agggghh

There is one component of this game that I actively, immensely disliked. It's BGM. Throughout the game, you will hear music. There are several tunes with different instrumentation, but they are all repetitive, and they are played NONSTOP! They really got on my nerves after a while, as it became increasingly difficult to concentrate. Finally I had to turn down the volume on my computer to zero, even if I would miss ambient noise which I'd like to have (sound of a button pushed, creaking of the door, occasional cow mooing, etc.)

But it could only be me. I am the kind of person who wants to hear music of her own choice and in her own chosen time. Unless the music is integral part of the game (for puzzle solving, or for indicating some imminent disaster) I don't want to be forced to hear it. It would have been nice if music were played only in the first few minutes of entering the new world, and it stopped.

Replayable, but do you want to? Well, you'll never know…

The introduction of the game notwithstanding, there is no storyline to follow, and there is nothing to learn about these Scavengers (other than the fact that they like our stuff). Instead, this game relies on its replayability.

The replayability claim of this game rests on the AI engine that generates near-infinite possibilities of where certain objects and puzzles are placed. The look and feel of each world will not change, but details within the world will change from game to game. To me, this is rather wanting. The game may be replayable, but will the player want to replay? On the second visit to a certain world in a new

game, for example, I'd love to have some new places opened up for exploration, different levels of puzzles, even the change of weather and vegetation. After all, having their worlds destroyed, wouldn't the Scavengers decide to fortify their worlds so that they wouldn't be so easily destroyed next time?(I know I am asking too much as a non-programmer…)

That said, I freely admit I much enjoyed playing the Scavenger Hunter. Actually I am still playing to see what other worlds I can get, and what new artifacts I can find. (Well, so much for what I just said in the previous paragraph…) There is something to be said about hunting for treasure; it is very addictive, whether it is in the game or in the real world.

Also, in the deluge of adventure games that may have realistic and highly atmospheric graphics but absolutely bomb because of the lousy storyline, lousy script and voice-acting, and boring, illogical puzzles, the Scavenger Hunter's simple, uncomplicated setup is refreshing. You can explore, collect objects, solve puzzles at your own pace. Graphics may not be cutting-edge, but still good enough to keep you interested. With no profane language and no blood and gore, the game is suitable for players of all ages. The only requirement would be that you should be able to read English and do basic calculations (add, subtract, multiply, and divide).

My final score is 81. Despite my misgivings about replayability, I think you will still enjoy playing this game - a nice break from high-feature, high-pressure games. As for myself, I am certainly looking forward to having more worlds to explore, as I have glimpsed in a booklet during the game. (And I do hope they can do something about the music…) In this issue, you can also read the interview with Anne Gregory, the owner of Sagewood Software who created this game.

Developer: Sagewood Software **Publisher:** Sagewood Software **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** December 2006 **Grade:** 81/100	**Minimum System Requirements:** Windows® 9x/ME/2000/XP CPU 800 MHz or better 720 MB HDD free space 64 MB RAM Video Card Sound Card CD-ROM Drive Keyboard, mouse, speakers

Agatha Christie: Murder on the Orient Express
PC Review by Wendy Nellius

After initial success with "And then there were None", AWE Games and The Adventure Company bring the incomparable Agatha Christie back for a second foray in to the adventure game area. Written in 1934, "Murder on the Orient Express" is perhaps one of the more widely recognized titles in Agatha Christie's collection. Its popularity eventually led to a film version in 1974 starring all time greats such as Betty and Lauren Bacall, Richard Widmark, Albert Finney, Ingrid Bergman, Sean Connery and many others.

New Paltz, New York - 1924

Police surround an old farmhouse with guns at the ready in what appears to be a tense standoff. Hoping to force the enemy out, they riddle the farmhouse with bullets. The front door flies open. Prepared for a fierce gun battle, the officers ready themselves. But, there is no need. Two men exit slowly from the building, their upraised hands in surrender. What does this have to do with the Orient Express? No clue, at least not now. All will be revealed in due time.

Istanbul, Turkey – 1934

You will play as Antoinette Marceau, an employee of Compagnie Internationale des Wagon-Lits; i.e. the Orient Express. She's quite intelligent and a hard worker. This dedication, however, seems to have been overlooked by management. Of course, the story takes place in the 1930's. Offers of promotions or even equal pay were quite scarce for women. However, due the unexpected arrival of an extra-special passenger who will be boarding in Istanbul, she may just get that promotion if she handles the situation correctly.

Who is this passenger and why is he so important? Hercule Poirot is a Belgian investigator of masterful proportions who has made his name known across England. His intuition is spot-on and his ability to understand the criminal mind uncanny. Antoinette is quite the fan of his work. She has even followed some of his most celebrated cases. This will be an for Antoinette.

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[*For those of you who are unfamiliar with the name, the character Hercule Poirot first appeared in Agatha Christie's novel "The Mysterious Affair at Styles" which was first published in 1920. The Poirot character was quite the hit and continued to be featured in Ms. Christie's works throughout her career even though she personally had lost some of her love for his narcissistic personality that she herself created*]

You (as Antoinette) will begin in the square in Istabul. All Antoinette needs to do is make her way to the train. A polite "excuse me" here and there and she should be on her way. However, it seems some of the fine passengers of her train are determined to block the way with little tasks and in some cases; just plain rudeness. Quick investigation of hotspots in the square should solve most of the problems. And, she will get a preview of some of the passengers…..and an even better idea of who to avoid if possible. And, of course, taking care of Poirot will not go as smoothly as Antoinette would like. She'll need to straighten that out as well.

All Aboard!

Finally, the train is off on its journey. The major work has been accomplished and Antoinette will get a moment to relax and chat with Poirot. Flattered by her knowledge of his work, Poirot gives Antoinette an opportunity to join his world and to expound on her observations of the passengers.

But, this isn't called Murder on the Orient Express for nothing. Shortly after a scheduled stop, the train crashes to a halt as a direct result of an untimely avalanche. The waiting begins for a plow train to clear the tracks. This creates the perfect scenario. It's silently snowing outside and everyone is stuck on the train with nowhere to go. It is the perfect set-up for a murder. And, this is exactly what happens to one of the passengers. Thank goodness Poirot is on board. He will get to the bottom of this immediately. Not so fast... Poirot now seems to be sporting an ankle injury and must stay put. Antoinette will end up taking care of the "legwork" for him. This is where the real work begins. Dark secrets will be revealed. One of the biggest concerns the victim himself. Let the investigation begin!

The facts and all the other stuff you need to know…

Murder on the Orient Express is a 3rd person point and click mystery presented with a game manual and 2 CD's which load and install with no technical difficulties. Kudos to AWE and The Adventure Company for once again including the novel along with game. It is much appreciated. The main menu can be accessed at the top of the game screen. It is here that you can save, load and exit the game. Options include volume control for music and effect. Brightness can also be adjusted. Then, there are the options to turn on/off text captions, visual special effect and anti-aliasing.

The game controls are simple and clearly identified. There are different cursors for examining, opening doors, picking up items etc. Double clicking on the little footsteps will allow Antoinette to immediately move to the next node. The investigation takes place in many forms. You can talk to all the passengers and after a certain point interrogate them under the authority of Poirot. If a shadow cursor appears, it means you may follow behind someone unnoticed and get to see what they're up to. Sometimes it's what people say behind closed doors that can be the most interesting. Eavesdropping is actually encouraged. Just look for the little ear icon and listen away. It's like being the proverbial fly on the wall……uhmm…..door.

The inventory is broken up into 6 different screens.

Main Inventory Screen: It is here that you can see all the items/evidence you've collected so far. But, that's all you do in this screen. All other interactions take place in another screen.

Examining Screen: Dragging an item to the magnifying glass from the main inventory will allow you to examine the front and back of the item. If there is something special there, Poirot's voice will tell you. Also, there is a scroll bar so that you have the option to view every item without returning to the main inventory.

Combining Screen: This was the one part of the inventory screen that was not enjoyable. You choose an item and drag it to the combine icon. The new screen pops up and you can place your item on the left hand side in preparation. Then, you must go back to the main inventory screen and choose your next item. Then, drag and place it again. Click on the combine button and see if you're right.

If you're wrong, you have to remove the offending item from the combine screen first, then go back and choose again. This method felt clumsy and irritating. It would have been preferable to combine items on the main inventory screen and just drag one onto the other.

Antoinette's scrapbook: This is the most important tool you will use throughout the game. Along with documents received during the game, Antoinette can keep track of suspects. As you collect items from passengers such as passports or fingerprints, the notebook will keep track of it so you'll know if you missed anyone. Even more important is the list of Poirot's instructions. Throughout the game, you have the option to go back and update Poirot on your progress. Poirot will then give Antoinette a list of tasks. The list is updated with additions throughout the game and items are crossed out once you have completed them. The notebook should be checked often and definitely checked if and when you get stuck.

Passport & Fingerprint Screens: These are the last two screens. On one screen you can view the passports (complete with pictures, addresses & occupations) which help the memory process as there are 20 people on the train (including Antoinette). In the fingerprint screen, you will be able to compare passenger fingerprints that you've collected to ones found on various items throughout the train. This is fun at first but can get a little tedious considering the number of people.

One of the enjoyable features for this reviewer is being able to snoop through everyone's belongings and of course the customary "taking everything that's not nailed down" concept. There's nothing better than looking through someone's suitcase to find out their dirty little secrets. Thankfully, secrets are the only "dirty" things you'll find. No sign of crumpled underwear or other such personal unmentionables.

How much walking back and forth is involved? There are approximately 3 nodes in each car when walking straight through. Since you will constantly be searching rooms or speaking to randomly placed NPC's, you will be up and down those cars quite a lot. Double clicking will speed up the process in moving between nodes. A map (of sorts) has also been provided. The various cars are pictured at the top of the game screen. When the game first begins, you will only have access to 3 cars. As you progress through the game and find necessary

keys, other cars will become available. You can then click on any car and be immediately transported. This is a great feature for there will be times when you need to go from the 1st car to the last.

At the beginning of the investigation, you are given a choice of accepting Poirot's challenge to investigate with very little of his help, or to let him direct the investigation fully. Honestly, there wasn't a huge difference between the two. In the "help" version, Poirot would tell me that my report was incomplete and I should check the rooms again or question the passengers again. But, there is no major clue (either in words or the notebook) to let you know what to look for as you search. So, you end up searching the same rooms over and over. You also will get sick and tired of Poirot telling you to use "the little gray cells". Basically, he's calling you an idiot. Apparently, Poirot doesn't believe in thinking outside the box at all.

The game is also linear in the sense that there are triggers that must be activated in order to progress to the next step. On playing a second time, I thought I could consolidate tasks together to avoid the repetitious walking on the train, but the game does not allow you to do that. You are essentially forced to complete these tasks consecutively with little overlap. While there seems to be no specific order in which to interrogate the passengers, there were instances where you could ask about something you already knew. For example, I collected a passport from one of the staff rooms, but when I spoke to him later, his greeting was to tell me his passport was in his room even though I already had it.

Most of the puzzles are task or conversation related. Tasks such as finding missing ingredients for the chef turned out to be really easy. The standard puzzles you would expect in an adventure game are minimal. There is one box puzzle that is quite easy and a safe that you will need to find the combination to. You'll need to find keys, but you can acquire some of them just by asking at the right time. There are 2 puzzles that require combining multiple inventory items. Both of them require that some items be combined in the game while the rest of the pieces must be combined within the inventory screen. When there are multiple items to combine, there needs to be some consistency here. Either do it all on screen or do it all in the inventory. I have no problem with difficulty levels, but found this to be just irritating considering the aggravating inventory interface. There is also a reported problem of an assembly completed within the inventory not working when placed in the game. This,

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however, has been corrected with a patch. The puzzles integrated quite well into the story but a few more logic or mechanical puzzles would have been welcome.

Conversation is the key in *Murder on the Orient Express*.   A good 60% of the entire investigation involves questioning the passengers and staff of the train. Some of the conversations can be lengthier depending on how much of a suspect they are. I personally am a fan of longer dialog, but some of you may be put off by this. It is important to really pay attention to the clues you receive. You will need to know them at the end of the game. Unfortunately, you do not get any choice to make real decisions in your questioning. You basically just click on topics until you've exhausted them all. You can, however, click to move the dialog along. It must be noted that the voice acting is outstanding. What's most important is that the voice fit the characters and that you can believe in the realism of the character. This was most certainly accomplished.

Most impressive was the inclusion of David Suchet as Poirot. In addition to his other acting accomplishments, this award winning actor has played Poirot 59 times in television adaptations of Ms. Christie's works. You can't get more real than that. Vanessa Marshall (Antoinette) and Nolan North (Dr. Constantine/ Cyrus Hardman/ Edward Masterman) have both done the voices for so many games, it's easy to lose count! In fact, all the characters are played by accomplished actors. You have likely seen most of them on television. Leigh Allyn Baker (Countess Andrenyi and Mary Debenham) had a recurring role as Ellen on "Will and Grace" in addition to a million other things. That's just four of them. The list goes on and on. I'm including the link so you all can check it out for yourselves: http://www.imdb.comt0815095/fullcredits.   It always brings a shiver of pleasure when you can see that tremendous emphasis put on the casting…truly, a solid "A" in this area.

You'll be dealing with a wide range of characters. There's royalty, salesmen, a teacher, a colonel, a doctor, an obnoxious American and much more. The character renderings were beautiful for the most part.   The bodies were a little stiff in their movement, but the faces were gorgeous. One in particular that stand out is Princess Dragomiroff. Her face is full of wrinkles, yet she maintains quite the regal look. The only wish would be that their faces had more expression during game play. Each character has little body movements that they perform. An example would be Antoinette, when idle, will smooth her dress, brush

something off her shoulders or clasp her hands together.   She has different movements when she's out in the cold.

The backgrounds impress as well. In Istanbul, along with the market square, you will also get to view the Sirkeci train station. After seeing real-life pictures of the station, it is apparent that great effort was taken to maintain accuracy. If you look up in the sky, the clouds are always moving.

Take a look at a picture of the real Sirkeci station and the game version next to it:

As you walk inside, light streams through the stained glass windows onto the gorgeous tile floors. The train itself has 2 sleeping cars, restaurant, salon, a baggage and an engine car.   The same can be said for the train itself. In comparing a picture of an actual sleeping compartment to the game, the similarities are obvious. You can find genuine recreations of the lamps, wood paneling and small tables near the windows.   Even the door and window handles are duplicated. Out in the hallway, the view looking straight towards the steward's seat is accurate as well.   The difference between the 2 sleeping cars is mainly in the color scheme. The Calais car uses more browns and has a pink lamp in each room. The Athens-Paris coach utilizes more blues.

My only gripe here would be that all the rooms look exactly the same. Well, shouldn't they? No.   Each occupied room is neat as a pin. Everyone's suitcases are fully packed and on the baggage rack.   Now, there are some passengers who have staff to keep their area clean, but what about the rest of them? Is it realistic to assume that not one of the passengers is a slob? With the exception of the murder victim, it looks as though everyone has just arrived.   And, the staff members being housed in the Athens-Paris coach do not seem to have any bags in their rooms. All they have is a pair of shoes in the closet.   I'm not asking for a lot. Perhaps a pair of socks could be thrown on a chair or a tie hanging on the door? Am I the only one who travels and has their stuff strewn all over the room by the end of day one?

Antoinette will get the opportunity to get off the train a couple of times. There is one intentional stop for the train and then, of course, the stop caused by the avalanche. There is a veritable winter wonderland out there and Antoinette will get a chance to see it up close and personal.

Nice touches are the falling snow seen through every window of the train. And, the landscape is different in each window as well. There are some cinematic cut scenes which are pretty and help move the game along, but they are somewhat pixilated. I thought perhaps it was my graphics card, but it was the same on another computer as well. But, this does not hinder the game or detract from it. The game also makes great use of ambient sounds. It truly feels as if you are there. Music is sparse in the game but helps to create the feeling of a wondrous journey on the Orient Express with a hint of danger tucked in behind.

So, does the game follow the book to a "T"? I have no idea. I wanted to play the game without having preconceived knowledge. However, I have heard that it does an admirable job and only a few things were dramatically changed for playability. The ending is not at all what was expected but Poirot is able to sum it all up in a neat little package (with your support, of course). Murder on the Orient Express is greatly improved from "And then there were none". While the game has its little aggravating moments, I truly enjoyed playing and taking that step back into history. And, don't forget the snooping......gotta love the snooping! Agatha Christie fans will be pleased and all the rest of you will too. I look forward to seeing even more improvement from this team and can't wait to see which Agatha Christie gem is next in line.

Final Grade: 89/100

Developer: AWE Games **Publisher:** The Adventure Company **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** November 2006 **Grade:** 89/100	**Minimum System Requirements:** Windows® 2000/XP Pentium 3 or Equivalent 1.4 GHz 256 MB RAM (512 recommended) 64 MB DirectX® 9 Compatible Video 16 bit DirectX® Compatible Sound Card 16x CD-ROM Drive Hard Drive space of 1.5 GB

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Dark Fall II: Lights Out

PC Review by La Primavera

From the developer of Dark Fall

It must be hard to live up to expectations when you have a successful first game. So what's the score card for the 2nd game from the developer of popular *Dark Fall*? Well, it is a good try, but I have to say the score is mixed at best. *Dark Fall II: Lights Out* gives you more or less of everything that already obtained in the previous game without much improvement.

Story is interesting enough

Even though the title says Dark Fall II, the story has little to do with the original Dark Fall. The only common elements are (1) a character named Polly White, a ghost-hunter in Dark Fall; (2) everywhere you go, the place is devoid of living things and full of eerie noises.

The year is 1912. You are Benjamin Parker, a young cartographer who has been hired to map the treacherous shores of Fetch Rock Lighthouse off the coast of Wales. Fetch Rock Lighthouse has been a strange, haunted place where bizarre things have happened over centuries. As Parker examines the Lighthouse and its environs, he becomes an accidental time traveler going back and forth between 2090BC, 1912AD, 2004AD and 2090AD, all on the same location.

The best I've figured out so far, the story is about something that caused a kink in the time-space-continuum that in turn caused the haunted lighthouse. As an avid sci-fi fan, I like the premise. But unfortunately this premise failed to develop into an engaging game.

Familiar, easy navigation, but…

This game is a first-person point and click, just like Dark Fall. It uses the same navigation system – turn left, turn right, go forward. This isn't necessarily bad, as it is super-easy to learn the navigation. You also have the freedom to scan the frame for hot spots.

However, with fewer hot spots to scan for in a wider, darker area in this game, this primitive navigation is a pain in the neck. You waste quite a lot of time scanning the wall or scanning the dark corner only to find out that you have to be

at a specific angle from a specific spot to find these hot spots. If the game had allowed a totally free panning, things would have been much easier.

Claustrophobic setting, maybe more so than before

The world you get to explore is not big. The initial game is played on a very narrow and crowded strip of real estate between the very small lodging of Parker and the tiny harbor where a small boat is moored. On the lighthouse island, things are not necessarily better. You don't have much room to move or get a bigger view. Every building, open area, and room is small, and there is not much wiggle space. It feels suffocating. At least in the original Dark Fall, you got to see a big chunk of the railroad station and the hotel, and space to wonder about for more than 2 or 3 clicks.

Graphics are better, but…

Graphics are definitely better. They use higher resolution (800 x 600) instead of 640 x 400 as in Dark Fall. The scenes are very realistic and atmospheric.

However, the scenes are of static beauty. The presentation of the game is still a slideshow style. Aside from the opening movie, there is no animated cutscenes. You look at objects, streets, buildings, from the predetermined viewing angles.

The time travel element of the story would have worked better if each era had come with something visually unexpected or extraordinary. 2090BC looks interesting with a primitive village on the marshes, but there is precious little to do or explore in that village. 2004AD lighthouse is indeed different from 1912AD lighthouse, but it only has things we expect from a lighthouse-turned-museum today. 2090AD is totally disappointing. The developer's imagination clearly failed describing this future. So about 84 years from now, are we expected to believe that we will still have a mechanical elevator for vertical transportation, dynamites for demolition, X-rays for diagnostics, and floppy disks for information storage? My computer (which was made in 2004) doesn't even have a floppy disk drive.

Supposed to be non-linear, but not really

The game, just like Dark Fall, claims to be non-linear. However, in order to board the boat from the initial location you will have to click on just about every hot spot you can find. All you really need is to talk to Demarion (the one who hired Parker)

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and pick up a floppy disk from his pantry, but unless you click on almost all indoor hotspots and some outdoor spots to be safe, the boat is not triggered. Other than the floppy disk, there is nothing you can collect as an inventory item.

There are close to 40 clickable items and places in the initial location. And you can only pick up one item and get to talk to one person. You do the math. It's rather unrewarding, wouldn't you say?

Once you land on the lighthouse island, you will be stuck there; you won't be able to take the boat back to the town again. And if you manage to reach the lighthouse, you still have to be on the predetermined path. **[Editorial Note:** Skip to the next paragraph if you do not want to read any detailed information about what to do during the first segment on the island**]** The trigger to the next age is the cave underneath the lighthouse. Even though you may know about the existence of the cave from reading Demarion's journal, for the ladder to the cave to be activated, you need Drake's map in his room on the third floor. To open Drake's door, you must have a lock combination, which is somewhere on the 1st floor. To get to the 1st floor, you need a light. To light up the place, you need to start the boiler in the basement… Get the idea?

After you discover a certain item, the game does become more non-linear. But that's after almost half of the game is played rather linearly.

Nonsensical and arbitrary puzzles

To solve the puzzles, you investigate, collect items, and read journals, as in Dark Fall. However, in Lights Out, you investigate less, collect FAR LESS, and read journals, books and exhibits WAY MORE. Your inventory bar will not come close to full until toward the end of the game. Most of the time there are only a few items.

When it comes to logical thinking in puzzles, the developer and I seem to live not only in different times but on different planets. Unlike in Dark Fall, I find the puzzles in this game nonsensical and arbitrary.

Let me give you one example of arbitrary nature of the puzzles. You are supposed to observe 4 different symbols in four different colors that will be needed in the end game. Two of the symbols are so easy to miss because there is no indication or warning that there are such symbols to look for in certain

places. One of them is the symbol you see if you enter the cave in 2004 Fetch Rock. That is, IF you enter the cave. There is no explicit or implicit logical need to do so.

Journals, and more journals!!

Just like Dark Fall, this game relies quite heavily on having the player read displays, journals and books. However, this reliance is has gone overboard. Even though I agree that this is not a game that you want to zip through, there is so much reading to do that it effectively dampens the enthusiasm of the player to continue.

Ever since Myst was released in early 1990s, adventure game developers may have come to a very erroneous conclusion that adventure gamers love reading pages and pages of journals. Yes, if they are interesting. No, if they are boring. (Duh.) Unfortunately this game is the latter.

What is more, journal reading was more or less optional in Myst, and when there was a clue for a puzzle within the journal the clue was made conspicuous – either by bold type face or some schematic drawing – so that you could spot it easily as you flipped through the pages. I read almost all journals in all of Myst games, because they were fascinating as they provided insights into strange worlds and characters in the games.

In contrast, I failed to find ghost stories in an obscure region in Wales or the poorly written journals interesting. And to fish out the puzzle clues from what seems like endless gibberish in the books and journals, forget it. For one, I totally missed a clue on door knocking in Polly White's journal, because her handwriting was terrible and the journal was long and the content was so boring, and blah blah blah. As a result I was stuck in front of the door for a long time.

Pixel hunting at its worst

Another excess of this game is pixel hunting. There are many dark or ill-lit places, and to scan the screen with the mouse to locate a hot spot without the benefit of free movement and 360-degree view is asking too much.

You are forced to do pixel hunting, because (1) there are not many hot spots in the game to begin with; (2) often, the hot spots are not placed in a logical spot.

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There are many items you can click on, which are located in plain view. However, important clues are often hidden in the dark where you wouldn't even think of looking. One good example is the EVP/EMP detector in 2004 Fetch Rock. Even if you can figure out from the pathetic drawing by Polly (I couldn't) that you are supposed to locate this special pair of glasses in the World War visitor center, you still have to do some intensive pixel hunting in obscure corners to find them.

Lack of interactivity

Another minus that is more conspicuous this time around is lack of interactivity. You can examine many items but you get to collect very few of them. The items you can examine – cups, pots, bottles, keys – don't give you much insight into what's going on.
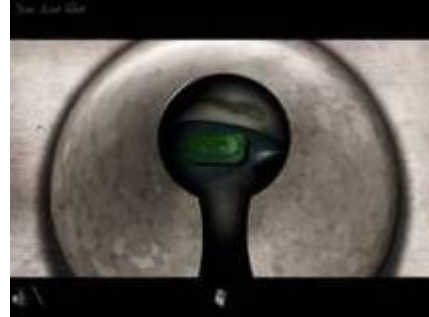
As Parker, you only meet two people. Or, to be exact, half the face of one person, and one eye of the other. The encounter with the latter is simply ridiculous. You have to knock on the door in codes like a third-rate spy movie. Both encounters are just one-time affairs, and you are left alone again. I suppose you could say it's an improvement from Dark Fall, where the interaction with another being was with an invisible boy with heavy cockney accent.

End game?

So I fought the boredom and managed to reach the end game. But what end game? What happened to all people who disappeared? What happened to the haunted lighthouse? What happened to Parker? Was he no longer a suspected

killer? Would he still exist, after the past was altered? The game answers none of these questions.

At least in Dark Fall, you had a satisfaction in knowing that what you did made a difference. In Lights Out, you will never know the consequence of your action. This is highly unsatisfying for adventure gamers.

Game play glitches

Even though this is not a big game which fully installs on the hard disk, it kept crashing my computer. After I changed to the Compatibility Mode, it crashed less, but remained very unstable. I couldn't find any patch or help online.

Sometimes the movement cursor fails to appear where they should appear. After a few clicks they usually come back. Some hot spots are not precisely defined.

Subtitles would have helped. Even though there are not many places where you hear people speak, I would have still appreciated subtitles. I couldn't understand a single word uttered in a particular sequence!

So what's next?

I am eternally hopeful that there will be an independent adventure game developer, somewhere, someday, who will wow me the way the game Myst did so many years ago. This developer's first game had a promise. But two years after the first one, I don't see much improvement. The graphics are better and more atmospheric, but other than that it feels and plays the same. Worse, the game's overemphasis on reading for storytelling and for clues for puzzles effectively kills enthusiasm of the player. It surely killed mine.

I finished the game simply because I didn't like to feel defeated by a mediocre game. In the end credits, the developer thanked me for my time. I didn't want gratitude. I wanted an exciting game! Alas, this was not it. My time would have been better spent elsewhere.

The developer seems to have joined force with an entity called Darkling Room based in Cornwall in 2005. Their next game looks like another ghost-buster story, this time on England's east coast. I don't know. Maybe only those people who are interested in ghost stories in that region of England may find it worth the time and money. I'll keep a cautious distance, for now.

My score is 50 for this game. I am rather disappointed, although I haven't totally written off this developer yet.

Developer: XXv Productions **Publisher:** The Adventure Company **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** August 2004 **Grade:** 50/100	**Minimum System Requirements:** Windows 98/ME/2000/XP Pentium III 450 MHz or better 128 MB RAM (256 MB Recommended) SVGA Graphics Card or better with 32-bit Color (at 800 x 600) DirectX 9 Compatible Sound Card 24x CD-ROM Drive Keyboard, mouse, speakers

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

CSI : Crime Scene Investigation

PC Review by Ugur Sener

Welcome to Las Vegas. You are the new intern joining the city's forensic scientist team. You will have a chance to work alongside expert crime scene investigators as you attempt to solve a series of mysteries. While learning from the best in the field, you may help in the capture of criminals and ensure that justice is served.

On your first night as part of the graveyard shift, you get to meet your supervisor Dr. Gil Grissom. There is no time for a long introduction or a tour of the facilities however. Moments after you meet him, Grissom receives a phone call. There has been a murder at the Champagne Hotel. You will have to join Gil as he heads out to the scene of the crime.

You arrive at the hotel and discover the lifeless body of a young woman. She is tied to the bed and blindfolded with clear signs of injury around her neck. It is time to put your detective skills and equipment into good use. Critical evidence that might lead you to the murderer might be hidden somewhere in this hotel room. Perhaps you can find a partial fingerprint, a small piece of hair, or an item accidentally left behind by the criminal… It will be up to you to make sense of the evidence and track down the killer.

Developed by 369 Interactive, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation is an adventure game based on the popular TV show of the same name. In the role of a new intern, players join the forensic scientist team featured in the show. The game consists of five cases where players try to solve a crime with the assistance of a different character from the series. Unfortunately, while it does have some good elements, the game ultimately fails to deliver a satisfying experience.

When you start the game, the first thing you will have to do is to create a profile. Once you have a profile, you will be able to select the first case and get to work. After a very brief introduction from Grissom, you will be on your way to the first crime scene and start looking for evidence. The first few minutes of the game have been designed as a tutorial. You will be guided through the basics of using your detection tools, speaking to other characters, and asking your supervisor for a hint. When you complete the tutorial, you will gain full control of your character and carry out the rest of the investigation on your own.

For the most part, all five cases featured in the game work in a similar pattern. You will start by searching through a location for clues. Once you uncover some evidence, you will need to go into the crime lab to conduct some tests. If a dead body was found at the crime scene, you will be able to go into the morgue to obtain details about the autopsy. Assuming you did not miss any key pieces of evidence, based on your findings at the CSI offices you may discover a new location or bring in a suspect for interrogation.

Played from a first-person perspective, CSI uses a mouse-driven interface. When you are visiting a location, moving the mouse to the left or right of the screen will pan the camera. You cannot look up and down in the game. If you bring the mouse over a hotspot, the icon will change color. If the hotspot is an object, clicking on it will allow you to take a closer look. If you are pointing to a character, clicking will initiate a conversation.

Discovering interesting objects is only part of your task. Once you focus on a piece of evidence, you will need to use the appropriate tool to collect it. There are two types of tools at your disposal. Collection tools will help you pick up and transfer evidence to the crime lab without damaging it. You might need to use tweezers to pick up small objects or put on gloves avoid contaminating larger pieces of evidence. You can use the casting kit to take impressions of footprints or swabs to collect DNA samples. On the other hand, detection tools will allow you to better examine various objects to help you find hidden trace evidence. You will get to dust for fingerprints and examine objects under UV light. Luminol will allow you to detect bloodstains while ninhydrin will help you find fingerprints on porous objects.

Once you successfully find and collect evidence, you will have to take it to the CSI offices for further examination. Greg Sanders will be available at the lab during each case to conduct tests on the items you uncover. He will often give you important details that will help with the investigation. He will also compare your findings from multiple locations and tell you if there is a connection between various pieces of evidence. For some objects however, you will have to do the detailed analysis on your own. You will have access to a computer and a microscope. The computer will be particularly helpful as you will need to access it to match trace evidence to entries that might be available in the database.

In addition to working with evidence, you will have a chance to speak with a number of other characters throughout the game. You may either meet witnesses at a crime scene or bring in people you have proven to have a connection to the case for an interrogation. The conversation interface is fairly simple. You are given a selection of questions on the bottom left corner of the screen. You ask the questions by clicking on them and they disappear from your list once you hear the answer. Depending on how the conversation goes, additional topics may become available.

The characters from the CSI cast provide you assistance during each case. They will travel with you to each of the locations associated with the case. While they will not directly help you find clues, they might offer some insight about the evidence you manage to uncover. They can make recommendations on the type of evidence collection tool you should be using. If you are having trouble making progress in the case, you also have the option of asking them questions about the various items you have discovered.

At the end of each case, players are assigned a rating depending on the percentage of evidence you were able to find. If you asked the member of the CSI team assisting you on the case for hints, you get points deducted from your score. Bonus images can be unlocked based on your final ranking in each case. While this may not necessarily interest many players, it does provide some incentive to replay the cases where you might have missed some evidence.

On the surface, CSI does have elements that could be combined to make an engaging adventure game. Hunting down evidence at various locations and interrogating witnesses to unlock the mystery behind five different cases can easily sound interesting to many adventure gamers. The prospect of working with the members of the show's cast can also be appealing. However, there are a series of problems that prevent the game from ultimately offering a satisfying experience.

First of all, even though CSI features five different cases, the game is still rather short. Given the relatively easy difficulty level, experienced adventurers should expect to rapidly get through the game. The cases lack any kind of true complexity. Sure, there is a small twist in each case and there is an underlying storyline that connects some of the mysteries. But you will not find any elaborate plots and you will most likely not feel the excitement of cracking a truly challenging case.

Once you solve a couple of the cases, the game starts feeling rather repetitive and formulaic. You are constantly looking for a small number of clues that then need to be analyzed in the lab, which usually either opens a new location or gives you grounds to bring a suspect in for an interrogation. Even when events escalate and you approach the resolution of a case, this methodical approach fails to create a sense of urgency and excitement.

The overall experience also suffers due to the relatively small number of available locations. Excluding the crime lab, the morgue, and Captain Brass's office, there are no more than three or four places you can visit in the majority of the cases. To make matters worse, you are greatly restricted in how you actually analyze the locations that might be related to the crime. You are typically situated at the center of the location and you pan the camera to look for hotspots. You are not allowed to move around and see areas from various different camera angles. You can't walk into different rooms. For the most part, all you can do is to obtain a close-up view of an object you want to examine and gather the evidence with the right tool.

If you are looking for an engaging adventure game with a solid storyline, challenging puzzles, and a good deal of exploration, you will most certainly be disappointed by CSI. The game does offer a few entertaining moments and the prospect of solving five different cases with the help of the popular TV show's characters. There are no serious problems with the graphics, sound effects, and the voice acting. In fact, fans of the show will likely appreciate seeing the likenesses of the original cast and hearing their voices. However, small number of locations you have to explore in a restricted manner, the tedious nature of the game, and the lack of truly captivating storylines significantly hurt the game. In the end CSI can only be recommended to fans of the show or players are looking for a relatively simple game to spend a few hours.

Developer: 369 Interactive	**Minimum System Requirements:**
Publisher: Ubi Soft	Windows 98/ME/2000/XP
Platform: PC	Pentium II 300 MHz
Genre: Adventure	128 MB RAM (256 recommended for XP)
Release Date: 2003	350 MB hard disk space
Grade: 61/100	8 MB Direct X 8.1 compatible video card
	Direct X 8.1 compatible sound card
	4X CD-ROM drive

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Law & Order: Dead on the Money

PC Review by Ugur Sener

New York City, early morning… The morning joggers are already at Central Park. The food stands are open for business; the city is getting ready for another busy day. It has not been long since park worker Charlie Ryan has started his shift. Unfortunately, an unpleasant discovery will disrupt Ryan's morning routine.

Slightly off one of the well-trafficked jogging paths, Ryan discovers a dead body. He immediately alerts his coworkers and the police quickly arrive at the scene. The woman is not carrying any identification. After a quick survey, it is clear that she has been strangled. There are signs indicating she might have tried to run away from the murderer. She was not fast enough however, as the criminal managed to catch up and attacked the victim from behind.

It will be up to you to take the lead on the investigation. Who is the woman that was murdered? Who could be responsible for the crime? Your only clues are the items scattered around the dead body. You will have to sift through the regular park trash and try to find a solid lead. And that is just the beginning…

Thankfully, you will not have to cope with the investigation alone. Seasoned detective Lennie Briscoe will be assisting you as you discover evidence and interview witnesses or suspects. You will also be able to submit your findings for lab analysis or research as you need. Perhaps working with the other officers you will be able to find enough evidence to make an arrest. Then it will be up to the district attorneys to get the criminal convicted…

Legacy Interactive gives adventure gamers a chance to experience the long running and highly popular TV show Law & Order in an interactive way. Following the structure of the show, the game allows players to investigate a murder case as a detective and then participate in a trial as a district attorney. While it does have some problems that hurt the overall experience, Law & Order: Dead on the Money does mostly manage to recreate the essence of the show and delivers a fairly entertaining experience.

Dead on the Money opens with the famous Law & Order theme music from Mike Post. Before you start the actual game, you can take a look at the two tutorials

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available through the main menu. While they do not go into a great deal of detail about every single aspect of the game, the tutorials will give you an overview of what you will be doing as a detective and a lawyer.
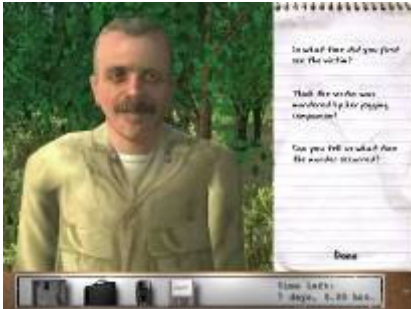
When you start a new game, you will be asked to select two skills. Depending on which version of the game you have, three or four skills might be available to you. In general, the skills are intended to give you various advantages through the course of the investigation. For instance, choosing interview will allow you to eliminate unnecessary questions when you are talking to a witness. It will be easier for you to focus on questions that will provide you important details about the case. If you choose the evidence collection skill, the cursor will turn into a magnifying glass when you bring the mouse over a hotspot. The teamwork skill allows you to receive hints from your supervisor as you carry out the investigation. Finally, if you have the patched version of the game you will have access to the efficiency skill. Since Dead on the Money otherwise imposes a strict time limit on gamers, the efficiency skill is almost indispensable as it considerably slows down the game's clock.

After you choose your detective skills, the game starts as Charlie Ryan discovers the victim's body in Central Park. You arrive at the scene with Lennie Briscoe and immediately start the investigation. Your first task is to survey the site in an attempt to determine the victim's identity. You will be able to add the evidence you find into your case file.

It won't be long before you discover the victim was an investment manager. As you uncover more details about the case, new locations will become accessible. You will be able to interview a number of people that were connected to the victim and look through a series of locations for clues that will eventually lead you to a specific suspect. Dead on the Money may not have a remarkably complex plot, but the game still offers

some twists and turns that should keep you guessing as you conduct your investigation. The story gains some depth and becomes more interesting as you delve deeper and get closer to the truth.

Dead on the Money features a simple interface for navigating the game's locations, talking to witnesses, and analyzing the clues you have uncovered. You interact with the game from a first-person perspective. Moving the mouse will allow you to rotate the camera and focus on various objects in the environment. If you can move in an indicated direction, the mouse icon will turn into an arrow.

Clicking on hotspots will give you a close-up view. If the item you are examining might be related to the crime, you will be able to put it in your case file.

When you are interviewing another character, questions will be listed on the right side of the screen. You will be able to ask a question with a single click and hear the other character's response. Only three questions will be available at any given time. If you have chosen the interview skill, one of them will disabled, indicating asking the question would not get you any useful information. As you ask the questions, the list will be updated with new entries until you get all the information the other character is able to provide.

Important game functions that allow you to examine clues, travel between locations, or submit lab test requests are all accessible through a list of icons at the bottom of the screen. Before you can use any of these functions, you will have to hit the spacebar to activate the icon list. Choosing the map icon will show you all the available locations on a map of Manhattan. You can travel to any available location with a single click on its name.

The second icon on the list is a briefcase. Clicking on it will let you see all the items you have placed in your case file as important pieces of evidence. If you need more information about a particular piece of evidence or a person, you can use the right side of the case file screen to ask for help. Four tabs are available that give you access to various resources. For instance, evidence can be submitted to the crime lab for testing. They may be able to find fingerprints or other useful information that might help the investigation. You can ask a detective to put one or more suspects under surveillance. Alternatively, you can request a psychological evaluation on various characters or ask the research specialist to dig up information about witnesses or pieces of evidence.

The cell phone icon allows you check your voicemail. When you request lab tests, research, surveillance, or psych evaluations, you will eventually receive voice mail to let you know the results are available. Other characters will also call you periodically with updates on the case or just to share their views. The messages are usually fairly short and listening to them should not take up a significant chunk of your playing time.

The final icon gives you access to the game's main menu. This is where you can save and load your game, set your preferences, or view the game's credits. It is

worth noting that Dead on the Money does have a limited number of save slots. However, given the structure and length of the game, the slots available will probably be more than enough for most players.

There are certain elements that set the investigation part of Dead on the Money apart from many other adventure games. First of all, the original version of the game has a very strict time restriction. When you start the game, you have seven eight-hour days to complete your investigation and arrest the murderer. Every action you perform in the game takes time. Minutes will rapidly go by as you examine locations or talk to witnesses trying to understand all the important details. The game's clock runs pretty fast and you can easily run out of time before you uncover all the clues.

While it might add to the excitement of the investigation, playing the game with the time restriction can be rather challenging. Especially the first time you start the game, not knowing which clues you should submit for research and not knowing which questions will get you the most out of each interview, you can use up the available time very easily. The game seems to be deliberately designed so players would have to play through it several times before successfully completing the investigation phase.

Fortunately, if you happen to have the original version of the game, Legacy Interactive was quick to release a patch that resolves the time restriction problem. If you install the patch and choose the efficiency skill, the game's clock will run significantly slower and the time restriction will be effectively eliminated. If you get Dead on the Money as an extra bonus to the third chapter in the series, you will have the patched version and will not need to look for an update online.

One downside of removing the time restriction is that you will lose some of the game's sense of realism. When you submit items for lab tests and research and the game's clock is running at its regular speed, you can see that it takes a noticeable amount of time to get back the results. With the efficiency skill turned on, it will still take a while before you can get the report, but time in the game's world will not have advanced much. This feels especially odd when you ask for surveillance. The detective who conducted the surveillance will give you the report for a full day while clock only indicates a few minutes have passed. Thankfully, while it does feel awkward, this is not a problem that should significantly detract from the experience.

Another distinct aspect of the investigation portion of Dead on the Money is the restriction imposed on the number of items you can carry in your case file. Initially, there might appear to be plenty of slots open for items, but as you start finding additional clues, you might quickly run out of space. You simply do not have enough room to store every single thing you will find. As such, you may need to refrain from picking up items that do not seem very important. You may also have to discard items that you do not think you will need in the later stages of the game. Of course, when you do not know all the facts about the crime and what you might uncover next, it will be difficult decide which items you should discard and which items you should not pick up in the first place. Saving your game before discarding a number of items from your case file might be a good idea just in case you end up needing to present them as evidence during the trial portion.

As you proceed through the case, you have the ability to request search warrants and arrest warrants. If you find a lot of evidence that seems to incriminate one of the suspects, you might want to get a warrant to search their residence. This is done by submitting the suspect's name and the pieces of evidence that give you reason extend your search. If you are able to provide enough evidence to convince the judge, you will be issued a warrant and gain access to a new location.

Similarly, towards the end of the detective segment of the game, you should be ready to have one of the suspects arrested. You will once again be asked to provide the suspect's name and supporting evidence. If what you have is enough to convince the judge, you will arrest a suspect and the game will proceed to the trial phase.

When you move onto the trial segment of the game, you will work with Serena Southerlyn. You will have to come up with a list of people to question during the trial along with pieces of evidence you will want to present to the jury. The trial itself consists of several different stages. After the prosecution's witnesses are questioned by both sides, the defense will call upon additional witnesses. Finally, the prosecution will present the

rebuttal witnesses and evidence. Between each stage of the trial, you will have some time to continue your investigation and uncover more clues.
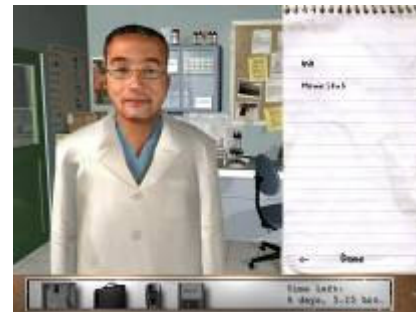
The ultimate outcome of the case will depend on the strength of your evidence as well as your skills during the trial. You will have to make sure you ask the right questions and object to improper questions asked by the defense attorney. If you

are not familiar with how a trial should be conducted, the game does offer documentation to help you through the process.

Arguably, the trial is the more entertaining portion of Dead on the Money. You will get to delve deeper into the mystery and gain a better understanding of the murder. You may also feel as though you have a greater influence on the outcome as it will be important for you to ask the right questions and object to the defense attorney from time to time.

The separation of the investigation and trial sections in Dead on the Money is consistent with the format of the show. In addition, fans of the show will undoubtedly notice that the developers have captured the likeness of Law & Order characters for the game. The main characters Lennie Briscoe, Serena Southerlyn, and Lieutenant Anita Van Buren certainly look like the actors who bring them to life on TV. You will also get to hear the voices of the shows cast as you go through the game. Hearing Jerry Orbach, Elisabeth Rohm, or Epatha Merkerson definitely helps the game feel more authentic.

Law & Order: Dead on the Money certainly has its share of problems. The time restriction can get frustrating and managing the case file can become tedious. The game is also relatively short. However, despite its issues, the game still has a lot to offer. The murder case is not extremely complicated, but it is interesting enough to keep you searching for clues and trying to unravel the truth. Finding all the important clues and presenting them effectively during the trial makes for a distinct gaming experience that you will not find in many other titles. If you are a fan of Law & Order or similar legal dramas, Dead on the Money is most certainly worth a look. The game may not be very challenging for seasoned adventurers, but even those with a casual interest in Law & Order and its spin-offs should find something to enjoy in Dead on the Money.

Developer: Legacy Interactive **Publisher:** Legacy Interactive **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** 2002 **Grade:** 80/100	**Minimum System Requirements:** Pentium II 400 MHz 96 MB RAM DirectX-compatible 8 MB Video Card 12x CD-ROM Drive 700 MB of Hard Drive

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Resident Evil 4

GameCube Review by Erdalion

Resident Evil 4 was a big bet for Capcom. The Resident Evil series had become the company's primary franchise once Street Fighter had lost its momentum in the mid-Nineties. But by the end of that same decade, the Resident Evil games themselves had already started to become stale as well. Gamers were complaining, and not without reason, about quite a few things. The graphics style, pre-rendered backgrounds with a static camera was rapidly becoming outdated, the "human-tank" controls were unintuitive, the storylines and acting were sub-par. It felt like the series was running out of fresh ideas. Code: Veronica tried something slightly different by offering fully three-dimensional backgrounds, but players still had no control over the camera providing a poor solution to the existing problem.

Seeing that the future of their franchise depended on their first true sequel to 1999's Resident Evil 3: Nemesis (Code: Veronica, and Resident Evil 0 were considered spin-offs, and Resident Evil for the Gamecube was just a remake of the original), Capcom took the criticism seriously. So much so, that they started the game from scratch not once, but three whole times, to ensure that the finished product would live up their standards. Interestingly enough, the first abandoned version of Resident Evil 4 ended up as Devil May Cry on the Playstation 2, which went to become another one of Capcom's bestselling games and spawned a franchise of its own.

Back to Resident Evil 4 however, Capcom proved that they could in fact reinvent the tired formula of the RE games. Graphics became fully three-dimensional, the controls were changed to a much more intuitive scheme, the camera changed into a unique perspective, and the gameplay was filled with clever ideas. The end product feels radically different to any previous game in the series that you may have played. Not in a bad sense, mind you, as it still retains the elements that made the previous games so enjoyable, yet does away with all the annoying little things that plagued them.

The graphics are probably the first thing you will notice about the game. Although

RE4 is not a recent release, as it was published in early 2005, it still looks astounding. Especially if your television supports progressive scan, then you are in for a treat. Everything, from the character models to the backgrounds is highly detailed. The only minor complaint would be some blurry textures here and there, something that is almost a Capcom trademark, but when the overall look of the game is so great, that is just minor nitpicking.

The sound of Resident Evil 4 is almost equally impressive as its looks. The music themes range from haunting to tense to anything in between, and always fit the action taking place on screen. The sound effects are also of high quality, gunshots are very realistic, and some of the noises made by some of your enemies will most likely startle you, at the very least. The only negative aspect of the game's sound is the voice-overs, which still feel overly B-movie-ish. Still, they are better than what was featured in the previous games, and miles away from the groan-inducing acting found in the first Resident Evil. In other words, there are no "I hope this is not Chris's blood" moments.

The atmosphere of RE4, as a result, is excellent. It is not as scary as the Silent Hill and Fatal Frame games, but it does not have to be. RE4 is a game that emphasizes action, but it is eerie and gloomy enough to keep you on your toes while playing, and there are still some scenes that will make you jump with fear. Especially when a certain something is after you... And the sounds it will be making while it is stalking you... Well, I think I will just let you experience that for yourselves.

The only thing that has the potential to spoil the atmosphere and your immersion into the game is the story and dialogs, even though we get to see the return of Resident Evil 2 stars, Leon Kennedy and Ada Wong. The story and dialog are bad even by Resident Evil standards. While there are several hints throughout the game of a deeper storyline and mystery, we never get to see much of it, and the end resolution just falls flat on its face. The dialogs fare no better. There are some unintentionally funny lines and some that just feel awkward and forced. This is slightly disappointing, but the game does place its emphasis on action over plot, and in light of all other improvements, this is something you might be willing to overlook.

The most important improvement in the game when compared to its predecessors, however, would be the gameplay. Previous installments were always the same in this area. You would enter a room, search for items, kill zombies using the exact same routine, over and over again. Even though that was entertaining to a point, it did get tedious after a while. That is not the case with this installment. You have a lot more options when it comes to fighting your opponents, especially with the addition of the new aiming system, which allows you to target specific body parts. You may try to aim for an enemy's head and hope for a clean headshot that will make their head explode (literally!), or shoot their arms so they will stop shooting at you for a while. You may also shoot their legs, and hit them with your knife while they are down, or perform a suplex on them. You may even use your environment to outright avoid your enemies for a short period of time if you need to reload. The sheer amount of options is staggering, and it ensures that you will never be bored fighting through the game's (numerous) battles. All of this however, would have been far less enjoyable if not for the all-new control system of RE4.

The previous RE games had been heavily criticized for their lackluster controls. RE4 is a radical departure from the previously used system, to such a degree that you may have problems playing a previous RE game again, because the controls are so much better this time around. The structure is intuitive and fluid. You always feel in control (pardon the pun) of your character's actions. No longer will that zombie be able to bite you because you could not turn fast enough. The camera also helps a lot with this, as it is fast and very responsive. It is also easy to manipulate so you can always have a clear view of things. The only thing that may bother you is the lack of a strafing option, but you learn to live without it after a while.

Speaking of enemies, gone are the slow-moving and mindless zombies of old. Your new enemies are seemingly normal villagers, who use weapons and even basic tactics, like surrounding you while you are trying to shoot one of them. They are hardly on the level of the AI found in Halo 2 or F.E.A.R., but it is a vast improvement over previous RE games. In fact, they may even catch you by surprise

a few times with their actions. A *subtle* hint: If you ever, at any point, send something down a fiery pit of hot magma, do not try to gloat over its dead body. Trust me on this one. The only thing that may strike you as somewhat silly about

your enemies is their occasional movement. If they are far in the distance, you will see them dashing towards you to bridge the distance, only to stop a few meters away from you and start walking casually again. It is hardly realistic, and almost embarrassingly funny to watch, but you do get used to it after a while. Not to mention that most of the time you will probably be too busy trying to kill them to notice how hilarious they sometimes look.

One word of caution would be that, unless action games are not really your specialty, if you are interested in the best gaming experience, you should play the game in the normal difficulty level, even if it seems too hard at first. Once you get used to the fighting system, you will have no real problems. The easy setting is far too simple. If you choose that you will lose some truly great moments of gaming. Do make a note to preserve ammunition, though, just do not be too stingy with it either, or you will end up like yours truly; at the end of the game, I had enough ammo to kill off an entire planet of ganados -the name of the villagers in the game.

It has to be said that Resident Evil 4 is a long game, by series standards. While previous installments took on average about 10 hours to complete, there are easily more than 20 hours of gameplay in RE4's two discs, regardless of the fact that the second disk feels much shorter than the first one. There is plenty to sink your teeth into here, and with a lot of boss battles to keep you entertained. Speaking of boss battles, another minor criticism on the previous RE games was the fact that the bosses were pretty typical, all you had to do was strafe and shoot. Yet again, RE4 marks a huge departure from that, since the vast majority of boss battles are really well designed and require you to use your brain as much as your reflexes. Sadly, the only exception to this would be the very final boss battle, which feels very formulaic, but then again nothing is ever perfect.

Which is to say, Resident Evil 4's greater asset is the fact that it has too few flaws. It is hardly flawless, but it is one of the rare cases where a game is polished to such a degree, it is obvious that a lot of care has gone in it.

All in all, Resident Evil 4 is easily the best installment of the franchise so far, even if it is a radical departure from its predecessors, and one of the best games in recent years. No fan of the action and survival-horror genres should be without this game.

Developer: Capcom **Publisher:** Capcom **Platform:** GameCube (version reviewed), PS2 **Genre:** Survival Horror **Release Date:** Jan 2005 (GameCube), Oct 2005 (PS2) **Grade:** 97/100

Die by the Sword

PC Review by Thaumaturge

The firelight bathes the stone circle in warm yellow light, in soft contrast to the cooler hues of night that predominate without. Resting near the dancing flames are Enric and Maya, adventurers and partners, seekers of battles. They first met over the blood of ogres, orcs and the like, both fighting in defense of a caravan, Maya having taken a job guarding it, Enric having been attracted by the sounds of a fight. With their respective skills in battle each impressed the other, and a companionship was born.

Outside of the firelight the night is washed in cool, pale blues, through which moves another, bolder shade of blue – this the fur of a small creature, dog-like in general frame, though it moves on two legs and carries a spear and a wooden shield, and is dressed in simple clothing: a kobold.

It reaches the circle, takes to the cover of one standing stone, looks about itself, then carefully moves towards the gap between two rocks. It enters the circle and approaches Enric and Maya, before whom it begins to jump, yip and wave its weapon, seemingly attempting to taunt them, for all that it is one diminutive creature facing two fully-grown humans armed and armoured.

The couple share a look, Maya gives a little shake of her head in the direction of their "guest", and Enric rises, drawing his sword. The kobold runs into the night, and Enric gives chase – and a merry chase it is that his quarry gives him. If he hears the high-pitched yips and laughter that rise in the circle of stones it is too late – by the time that he returns Maya is gone, abducted by a band of the kobolds.

Enric wastes little time. Again he gives chase, this time after the group that took Maya. They lead him to the entrance of a cave in the nearby mountain, the adventurer managing to dive in only just ahead of the rocks that crash down over the opening, blocking off retreat – not that Enric has any intention of going back, of course, not while Maya lies ahead...

And ahead are many dangers, for the caves and corridors of the mountain are peopled by creatures few of whom show benign intent towards our would-be

rescuer. His search for his love drives Enric deeper and deeper into the warrens of the mountain, battling its deadly inhabitants and evading traps.

The story is, of course, little more than a variation on the classic "save the damsel" quest – although admittedly in this case the "damsel" is hardly a shy and retiring princess, and nor does our "prince charming" display much gentlemanliness. No, this is a slightly rougher take on rescuing the captured loved one.

The story goes little further than that during the game. Further information on Maya's fate ahead of Enric is given between areas in short movies, and in one or two in-game cut-scenes, eventually revealing some of the reason behind her abduction (although more is given in the background featured in the game manual).

Of course, the story is to little degree the focus of the game. Rather, this is a game of combat, cunning and observation, of weapons clashing, traps evaded and secret passages.

It is in combat that Die by the Sword specializes, appropriately enough. Another game might keep the player's interest with myriad types of monster, or swarms of foes, or a variety of weapons and spells with which to customize one's play. Die By the Sword, on the other hand, offers fairly few types of monster, and usually in groups of about one to four. Enric's only weapon is his sword (unless you count the severed limbs of your foes, which can be picked up and used to beat the enemy, the limbs' erstwhile owners included, should they still be alive). There are precious few power-ups to be found, aside from a variety of health-restoratives.

Instead it is through the fighting itself that Die by the Sword offers its main challenge. The creatures faced may approach only cautiously, or attempt to move around the player, and may have more than one attack animation. Some may even turn and run for a time if disarmed (a phrase which in this game, as has been suggested, takes on quite a literal meaning...).

The player's movement is handled simply. The 'w' and 's' keys move Enric forward and backwards, while the 'q' and 'e' keys have him step to the left and right, and the 'a' and 'd' keys turn him left and right. There is a jump key and a crouch key (the former of which holds him in a crouch until release of the key has him leap up), and a key which instructs Enric to

attempt to climb onto an object. When his sword is sheathed by yet another key, there is one more to instruct him to interact with the world, such as in picking up an item, opening a door or pulling a lever.

This, however, should not sound terribly unfamiliar to action gamers. It is the combat controls that can be another story.

There are two modes of control for combat. Firstly, for those who wish to use a perhaps simpler-to-use system, there is also the "arcade" mode, which makes use of a simplified set of combat controls, in which three keys map to three predefined swings (a high, middle and and overhead slash), while three others define three blocking moves.

More interesting, perhaps, is the "VSIM" (standing for "Virtual SIMulation") mode. Under this system the player is given more direct control over Enric's sword-arm than in the arcade mode. Instead of a single button being responsible for an entire sword stroke, the controls (one can choose to use the numeric keypad, mouse, or a joystick) command the position of the sword arm. For instance, when using the keypad, pressing the '9' key has Enric move his sword to a high position, with his shoulder turned to his right (the sword ending up behind him). Similarly, pressing the '1' key has him move his sword to a low position on his left. Of course, neither position alone does much (although one *could* try to charge the monsters with one's sword held in one position, it's not recommended) – rather, it is when one key is used after the other that things become interesting. If, having held the '9' key, that key is released and the '1' key pressed immediately afterwards, Enric's sword moves from one position to the next in an arc – an arc that, properly timed to catch a foe's flesh, should do them damage.

Furthermore, under both arcade and VSIM modes, the damage done by a given sword-stroke seems to be related to the relative speed of the blade to the foe that it strikes. For instance, a downward cut made on the drop from a jump should do more damage than a downward cut made while standing still.

Unfortunately, the VSIM system is also a control mechanism that I, at least, found difficult to come to grips, at least within a fairly short period of time. Rather, this would seem to me to be a control mechanism for those patient enough to learn its proper use and, more importantly, I think, become accustomed to its use.

I suspect, however, that if one were to take the time to master the system, it could provide a very powerful means to varied, effective attacks that could be useful in both the single player modes and the multiplayer.

Overall, the VSIM control mode provides the player with an unusual degree of freedom in the maneuvering of Enric's blade. When combined with cunning and a good sense of control over Enric's movements and sword, it is a control mechanism that could potentially offer a very effective battle system to those willing to get to grips with it. For others, especially those more interested in diving in and playing, the arcade mode offers a simplified but still useful means to play the game.

The combat system is supported by a good, if not perfect, physics system, especially with regards to the interactions of characters' weapons with the bodies and weapons of their foes. Weapons clash against each other, blocking the blow. When a weapon makes contact with a foe, however, the damage affects not only the creature's overall health, but also the strength of the part that was hit. Damage a particular part – say, an arm, or a head – enough, and it is severed, knocked away to fall to the ground. Oddly enough, none of the creatures seem terribly inconvenienced by the loss of a leg, aside from hopping rather than walking. The loss of its weapon arm, however, has at times seen a kobold turning and running, having no way to hurt the player. Furthermore, as has already been mentioned, when his sword is sheathed Enric can take up that selfsame severed limb and chase down the one from whom it was hewn to finish their beating.

While this severability doesn't seem to apply to Enric himself during the main quest (at least not on the easy difficulty level that I will confess to using for my journey through the tunnels and caverns under the mountain), it *does* apply to him in some of the other, arena-based game modes.

More impressively, some of the more powerful creatures are quite capable of, when they manage a particularly effective strike, knocking Enric across a room.

The levels are for the most part well-designed, set in a number of regions beneath the mountain, from ordinary caves and tunnels fitted with rough fences and gates to an underground river and a lost temple, amongst others. Tunnels can be found in inobvious corners or behind secret doors, leading to hidden rooms or alternate routes, and potions may be hidden around corners to be

found by those that explore. Moreover there are at a number of points along the journey special items that add a little extra interest to the game while they are in effect, such as a potion that shrinks Enric enough for him to enter the small tunnels used by the kobolds, or another that induces in our hero for a time a berserker power.

Along the way the player will doubtless also encounter a number of traps, such as swinging pendulums or spears that dart from walls - the temple level in particular having a variety of traps for the player to evade and navigate. While there are one or two puzzles to be solved, there are none that I would expect to give most people any real trouble for long.

At each level's end the player is presented with the number of enemies that they killed and how many were available and a score, tallied from a number of elements, such as the player's state of health at the end of the level and the achievement of certain objectives (including some hidden ones, which might be represented as a row of question marks if not discovered).

Adding a welcome touch of humor and humanity to the action is Enric's character (as far as it is revealed). Enric is a rough-and-ready adventurer, not uncommonly ready with a boisterous comment, whether it be a taunt to an enemy ("You hit like a kobold!" for example), a curse (and Enric does swear) at being hurt, a comment on his own handiwork, or simply be an exclamation of "Aah, bit a nosh!" (if I heard that correctly) when eating food found along the way. Furthermore, the lines are delivered well, in a suitable accent and slightly (but appropriately for the part, I feel) over-the-top style that allows Enric to add a touch of atmosphere into a game that might otherwise be a little less interesting.

Perhaps worth mentioning is that Die by the Sword uses a save point system. There is no function to save at will during play; instead, upon certain events (such as entering a certain room, or defeating a certain foe, for instance) the game is automatically saved for that player under an appropriate name. If the player later returns to an old save, the subsequent automatic saves overwrite the old ones and move up to the top of the save list as they are saved.

In addition to the main quest, there are the arena and tournament modes of play. In the arena, the player selects up to three monsters to fight against (and, if they wish, can elect to play as a monster or as Maya, or even elect to not play, leaving only the monsters to do battle with each other) and select one from a set of four arenas: the Lava Pit, the Mosh Pit, the Pit of Love and the Pit of Ennui, three of which come with attendant environmental dangers (such as the large balls fitted

with spinning blades that swing from the ceiling of the Mosh Pit). The tournament mode takes place in these pits as well, pitting (if you'll excuse the pun) the player against a long series of battles against various combinations of foes, and which remembers a given player's progress so that one can return another time to continue the challenge.

The graphics of Die by the Sword are nothing groundbreaking, at least by today's standards: the models are fairly simple, the textures of low resolution, and thus a little blocky, and the animations are at times a little on the jerky side. These flaws, however, are quite probably simply attributable to technical limitations of the day.

The game is viewed from a third-person perspective through a "camera" that is, overall effective, although it does occasionally suffer from objects blocking the player's view of Enric.

One nice feature that comes with the game is an editor for the creation of custom moves. This allows the player to define and save special attacks and manoeuvres that can be used within the game and accessed via the press of a key.

In conclusion Die by the Sword is not a deep game, nor for that matter is it a long game, but it is one that I found to be a great deal of fun. On the negative side, the graphics are nothing wonderful, and there are few monsters to be faced and items and power-ups to be collected. On the positive side, a good combat system, enjoyable fights with foes that offer up enough of a challenge to be enjoyable in numbers less than horde strength, decent levels with some fun challenges, and an atmosphere that is not overall too serious, with Enric's comments providing a sketch of a boisterous, rough, adventurous character all contribute, to a game that makes for a very enjoyable experience. It's not a great game, I wouldn't say, but it is a good one.

Developer: Trevarch	**Minimum System Requirements:**
Publisher: Interplay / Tantrum Entertainment	Windows 95 (works under XP)
Platform: PC	Pentium 100 MHz
Genre: Action	16 MB RAM
Release Date: 1998	120 MB free hard drive space
Grade: 73/100	DirectX Certified Sound & Video cards
	4x CD-ROM Drive
	Keyboard, mouse

UNCHARTED WATERS

Agatha Christie: Murder on the Orient Express Walkthrough
Written by Southern Belle

When you move your cursor to the top of the screen, you will find the tool bar. Access your inventory at the left end and the menu at the right end. There is a map of the train in between. If a car is "lit", you may "jump" to that car by clicking on it. Otherwise, you will have to walk. Each item you pick up should be looked at in inventory with your magnifying glass. Right clicking on the mouse will give you your inventory. When you are walking, you may double click on the left button and "zip" through the screen.

And now, Adventure Lantern and Southern Belle invite you to climb aboard a luxurious train and play the key role in Agatha Christie's world-famous mystery "Murder on the Orient Express".

- Click on Poirot to follow him.
- Talk with Chef Klaus on the right.
- Select the cleaver in his left hand.
- Go forward.
- Click on Poirot.
- Click on the goat on the right.
- Click on Poirot.
- Talk with the two men blocking the path.
- Go back twice and take the large bowl next to the man in the brown coat.
- Return to the two men and give them the bowl.
- Take the grain from the cart on the left.
- Go further down the path.
- Talk with the two women blocking the path.
- Go back to the goat and give him the grain.
- Take the parasol.
- Return to the two women and give them the parasol.
- Go forward and talk with the woman on the right. Exhaust all dialogue.
- Go right.
- Talk with the two men on the left. Exhaust all dialogue.
- Enter the train station and go left.
- Go left again.
- Continue left, following Poirot.
- Go up to the ticket taker and talk with him.
- Go through the door behind the attendant and continue left. Catch up with Poirot.
- Talk with the attendant and Poirot until it is decided that you will share a cabin with Miss Ohlsson.
- After the cut scene, talk with Poirot. Exhaust all conversation.

- After the cut scene, go left.
- Go left again and talk with the two men by the fountain.
- Go right twice. After the cut scene, click on the gate in the fence.
- Continue right and talk with the men by the train. Exhaust all conversation.
- Move away from the men and go left.
- Look at the boxes on the cart.
- Go back to the men and talk with Michel. Exhaust all conversation.
- Return to the cart and click on the box label on the right.
- After the cut scene, go up to the top of the screen and enter the Salon Car.
- Go forward into the Salon Car and go behind the bar. Take the ice tongs and all the water glasses you can pick up. Open the drawer and take the napkins and the tape.
- Move your cursor to the top of the screen and a train appears with two cars highlighted. Click on the Calais Coach and "jump" there. You can walk if you would prefer.
- Click on your scrapbook. Then click on Maps and then on Calais Manifest.
- Using a glass from your inventory, click on the doors in the Calais Coach. Skip your room.
- When Michel catches you eavesdropping, click on the "shadow" icon and follow him to the baggage car. Leave the baggage car and go back to your room in the Calais Coach. Talk with Greta. After the cut scene, exhaust all conversation with Greta.
- Move toward your door and click on it to peek out the keyhole. After the cut scene, peek again.
- After you hear a noise, peek again.
- When you see the woman in the red kimono, go to the Salon car and find it locked.
- Go talk with Michel. Exhaust all conversation. Talk with him again.
- Return to your room.
- After the cut scene, talk with Poirot. Exhaust all conversation. You must make a choice about whether you want to conduct your own investigation or accept help from Poirot. If you let him help you, he will give you hints.
- Click on the handkerchief on the floor, click on the blanket. Click on the pocket on the left side of the pajamas and take the watch. Click on the pillow and take the gun. Move back from the body. Click on the table under the window and take the teeth, the glass, the statue, the cigar stub, the flat match, the round match and the scrap of burnt paper.
- Back away from the table and look at the suitcase on the rack above your head. Take the sleeping draught.
- Look out the window.
- Back away from the window and move toward the door. Check the coat and take the matches.
- Take the pipe cleaner on the floor on the right and the hat on the right hand side of the door.

- Turn around and talk with the doctor. Talk with him again. Continue the conversation until you ask him to see that the crime scene is undisturbed.
- Check each item in your inventory with the magnifying glass or you will be unable to proceed.
- After the cut scene, exhaust all conversation with Poirot.
- Go to the Restaurant car by jumping or walking and take the spirit lamp from the buffet table.
- Go back to the Calais Coach and enter room 5-6.
- Take the box from Schmidt's suitcase and check it with the magnifying glass.
- Open Debenham's suitcase and take the handkerchief with CMH embroidered on it.
- Go to room 7-8, click on the hatbox on the shelf on the left and take the wire frame.
- Go to room 11 and take the letter from the suitcase and the button from the floor left of the connecting door.
- Go to room 14 and take the wire frame from the hatbox on the right.
- Open the suitcase and take the puzzle box. Open the puzzle box by sliding the short top panel right, bottom short panel left, long side panel up, short top panel left back to the starting position, short bottom right back to the starting position, long side panel up, short top panel left, short bottom panel right, bottom short panel down, top panel left. Take the locket.
- Click on the connecting door and open the suitcase on the rack. Take the pipe cleaners that are under the clothes.
- Go to room 16 and take the leather sap from the suitcase. Click on the case on the seat and take the typewriter ribbon on the lower left
- Go to room 9 and take the curling tongs from the table beside Poirot. Talk with him. Exhaust all conversation.
- From your inventory, take a hat frame and place it on the table. Pick up the curling tongs in your inventory and click on the gears. Place the tongs in a box. Pick up the piece of paper in your inventory and click on the gears. Place the piece of paper in a box. Click on the gears in the center and combine the two items. Click on the X at the top right of the curling tongs and paper and put the combined items into your inventory. Take the curling tongs with paper from your inventory and place it on the hat frame. Put the other hat frame over the paper. Put the spirit lamp on the table and light it.

- Go to room 10 and look out the window. Follow Hardman by clicking on the shadow icon.
- Talk with Matteo.
- Move down and enter room 16. Look at the radio.
- Go to room 15 and take the Morse book from the bench. Take the passport from the table.
- Enter room 14 and take the snowshoes from under the bed.
- Move to room 13 and check the coat on the wall. Take the passport from the table. Open the suitcase on the rack and take the announcement.

- Enter room 12 and take the torn letter from the floor. Put the pieces together. Click and drag a piece to place it in the box. Use the arrows at the bottom of the box to rotate the pieces.
- Enter room 10 and take the passport from the table.
- Go to room 9 and take the passport from the suitcase.
- Move to room 7-8 and look at the handle next to the bathroom and the flower vase.
- Enter the bathroom and take the pliers out of the cabinet below the sink.
- Go to room 3-4 and the the gloves from the bench and the passport from the table.
- Exit this room and go back to Matteo. Use this door to exit the car.
- Go to the cab of the train and talk with the engineer. Exhaust all conversation and give him the teeth.
- Click on the hammer. Give Tayyip the leather sap.
- Take the hammer and a lump of coal.
- Exit the cab and look under the coal tender to see where the steam is escaping.
- Go to the open window in the Calais coach and enter the train.
- Talk with Michel. Exhaust all conversation.
- Go to the Restaurant car. Go all the way through it to the Baggage car and open the door.

- Go to the middle of the car and look at the crate with the label Two Pairs on it. Look closely at the nails in the lid. Use the hammer to remove the nails. Open the lid and take the snowshoes.
- Pick up the bound snowshoes in your inventory and click on the gears. Place the snowshoes in the right hand box and click on the center gears. Click on the X in the snowshoe box and the wire box and place them in inventory.
- Back away from the box and move right.
- Look at the clipboard on the left and the kegs on the right.
- Back away from the kegs and go further down the passageway. Check the security door.
- Go back to the Calais coach and enter room 10. Exit the train through the open window and go left.
- When you get to the end of the train, go right.
- Use the snowshoes on Antoinette when you get to the large rock.
- Go right and use the gun to frighten the wolf.
- Continue right and take the spout off the tree on the left.
- Turn around and go back to the large rock.
- Go left.
- Take the path at the bottom of the screen.
- Turn left and take the spout from the tree.
- Leave this scene and go to the fork. Continue on the upper path to the right.
- Do not turn here. Continue to the right.
- Use the gun again to scare the wolf.
- Bear left and go up the snow bank.
- Continue straight ahead.
- Click on the hole in the snow near the bottom of the screen and pick up a steak knife. Look at it in inventory.
- After the cut scene, go right.
- Go to the hut and look closely at the bars on the window.
- Use the hammer to take an iron bar.
- Use the iron bar on the padlock.
- Enter the hut and pick up the attendant's uniform. Look at it in inventory and get a second pass key.
- Go down and pick up the stiletto from the chair. Look at it in inventory.
- Use the pliers to take a piece of the stove pipe.
- Exit the hut and use the snowshoes on Antoinette.
- Go down twice and you will be back at the cliff.
- Go down right.
- Go left, down and right twice.
- Go down left and go back to the train.
- Move forward to the coal tender.
- Look under the coal tender and use the stove pipe on the broken pipe.
- After the cut scene, go to the Restaurant car and go to the kitchen. Click on the door.

- Go to the baggage car.
- Go to the kegs and use the spouts on the vinegar and oil. Use a glass from your inventory to collect the vinegar and oil.
- Return to the kitchen and give the vinegar and oil to the chef.
- Once Klaus leaves, enter the kitchen.
- Take the turkey baster from the drawer under the bread. Take the orange juice from the refrigerator. Take the cleaver from the chopping block and take the batter from the stove.
- Exit the kitchen and go to the buffet table. Take the blank menu cards and the butter knife.
- Go to the baggage car and take Klaus' fingerprints. Fingerprints will be taken automatically if you are carrying blank menu cards, a typewriter ribbon and paper napkins.
- Go to the Salon car. Question anyone you can find. Exhaust all conversation. Get their passports. Take their fingerprints.
- When you talk with the bartender, take the ice bucket. Back away and take the punch bowl from the bar.
- Move to the right and talk with Foscarelli.
- Go to the Calais Coach and enter room 1-2 and talk with Masterman. Open the suitcase on the rack and take Love's Captive book.
- Open Foscarell's suitdcase and take the chauffeur's license.
- Go to room 3-4 and talk with MacQueen. Exhaust all conversation.
- Take the letters from the briefcase to the left of the door.
- Go to room 5-6 and take the passport from the table.
- Talk with Schmidt.
- Go to room 7-8.
- Talk with Greta and take the bible from the table.
- Open the suitcase in the rack and take the postcard. Look at it in inventory.
- Go to room 11 and talk with Mrs. Hubbard.
- Go to room 12 and check the label of the suitcase for the hidden initials under it.
- Enter room 13 and search the suitcase. Nothing.
- Move on to room 14 and take the passport and copper bracelet. Exhaust all conversation with the Princess.
- Go to room 15 and talk to Col. Arbuthnot.
- Go to room 16 and take the passport from the table.
- Exit the room and talk with Michel.
- Use the Athens-Paris coach key to enter that car.
- Enter room 1-2 and take the passport on the table.
- Go to room 11. After the cut scene, talk with Hardman.
- When the conversation is over, open the suitcase on the rack and take the passport and photograph.
- Go to room 13 and talk with Constantine.
- Exit the room 13 and talk with Matteo.
- Exit the train and go forward to talk with the Fireman.

- Enter the cab and talk with the Engineer.
- Exit the cab and go to the Calais coach.
- Go to room 16 and look under the table to get Hardman's real passport, credentials and a letter.
- Go to Poirot's room in the Calais coach and talk with him.
- Go to the Baggage car and all the way to the security door.
- Use the small key taken from Hardman to open the security door.
- Use the magnifying glass to look at Ratchett's hat and Greta's bible.
- Go to the safe in the corner. The combination is 666. Place the cursor to the left of the dial and click until the 6 is under the arrow. Place the cursor to the right and do the same. Place the cursor once more on the left and click until the 6 is under the arrow again. Turn the handle and take the confession.
- Back away from the safe and go to the crate. Use the iron bar to open the crate. Take the uniform and look at the books at the right side.
- Pick up the lump of coal in your inventory and click on the gears. Place the lump of coal in the top box. Pick up the hammer in your inventory and place it in the next box. Click on the center gears and get coal dust.
- Put the coal dust in the top box and the turkey baster in the second box. Click on the center gears and fill the turkey baster with coal dust.
- Look closely at the latch on the crate. Use the baster on the latch. Use the tape on the latch and lift a fingerprint.
- Look closely at the books inside the crate and use the baster and the tape again to lift another print.
- Exit the security room and get fingerprints from the handle on the security room door.
- Go further into the baggage car and look at the crate from which you removed the nails. Lift a fingerprint.
- Look at the open crate on top of the crate with green items in it. Lift a fingerprint.
- Go to the Calais coach and enter room 10.
- Get a close up view of the windowsill and lift a fingerprint.
- Exit room 10 and enter room 11.
- Look closely at the doorknob of the connecting room and lift a print.
- Go to the Athens-Paris coach and enter room 7-8.
- Look at the bars on the right side of the connecting door. Lift a print.
- Move away from the bars and look closely at the vase on the table. Lift a print.
- Pick up the turkey baster from your inventory. Click on the gears and place it in the top box. Pick up the snowshoes from your inventory and click on the gears. Place the snowshoes in the second box. Click on the center gears. Pick up the snowshoes from the right hand box and place them in the top box. Pick up the tape in your inventory and place it in the second box. Click on the center gears and lift a print. Repeat these steps for the thick tumbler, stiletto and broken padlock.

- In your inventory, click on the fingerprint icon. The suspects' prints are in the top row. The prints lifted from items are in the bottom row. Scroll through the suspects and prints until you have matched as many suspects to items as you can.
  - MacQueen matches the latch on Rachette's crate.
  - Michel matches the security room handle.
  - Foscarelli matches the small crate.
  - Foscarelli matches the empty crate.
  - Foscarelli matches the windowsill.
  - Greta matches the doorknob.
  - Arbuthnot matches the handle.
  - Debenham matches the flower vase.
  - Matteo matches the padlock.
  - Masterman matches the tumbler.
  - Arbuthnot matches the snowshoes.

- Exit the train and go to the footprints under Ratchett's window.
- Get a close up view of the footprint. Pick up the batter from your inventory and use it on the footprint. Use the ice tongs to pick up the frozen batter. Combine the ice bucket and the frozen batter in inventory.
- Go back inside the train. While you are in the Calais coach, go to room 1-2 and use the ice bucket with footprint on the shoes on the top shelf of the closet next to the door. Check the shoes on the bottom shelf as well. Check all the men's shoes in the Calais coach. They are in rooms 3-4, 13, 15 and 16.
- Go to the Athens-Paris coach and check the closets in rooms 1-2, 3-4, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 15.
- Go to the Calais coach and enter Poirot's room.
- After the cut scene, go to the Salon car.
- Talk with MacQueen and Arbuthnot at the first table.
- Talk with Foscarelli, Hubbard , Hardman and Debenham.
- Go to the Restaurant car.
- Talk with Dr Constantine, the Count and Countess, Masterman, Schmidt, the Princess, Greta, Lucien and Klaus.
- Go to the Calais coach and enter your room. Look in your suitcase.
- Exit your room and see that Michel is missing. Check the bathroom door.
- Go to the Athens-Paris coach and see that Matteo is missing. Enter room 16 and look out the window.
- Exit the train.
- After the cut scene is over, take the parasol from under the bed. Open the window and use the parasol on the padlock.
- Exit the hut and check the box on the right in the snow. Take the padlock by the door.
- Use the snowshoes on Antoinette and go back to the train. Move down three times the go left down, right, right and left twice.

- Go to the Calais coach and enter Poirot's room. Talk with Poirot. Take the letter from his suitcase.
- Go to the Athens-Paris coach and enter room 16.
- Combine the butter knife with the pliers.
- Combine the bent butter knife with the nails and the hammer.
- Look at the table. Take the makeshift telegraph key and place in on the table.
- Combine the copper wire with the pliers.
- Use the pieces of copper wire on the telegraph key.
- Put the punch bowl on the table. Use the orange juice on the punch bowl. Put the statue in the bowl. Combine the copper bracelet with the pliers. Use the bent copper bracelet on the bowl.
- Click on the telegraph key. After the cut scene, exhaust all conversation with Barnaby.
- Turn off the radio.
- Turn the radio on and click on the telegraph key. Get the answers to your questions.
- Turn the radio off and then back on. Click on the telegraph key.
- Turn the radio off.
- Go to the salon car and talk with Debenham at the back table.
- Go to the Restaurant car and talk with the doctor and the Countess.
- Make absolutely sure you have examined the following items: pocket watch; both of the attendant's uniforms; gun; cigar stub; Love's Captive book; flat match; chauffeur license; round match; bible; thick tumbler; postcard; sleeping draught; button; hat; family photo; handkerchief; Hardman's credentials; dainty handkerchief; stiletto; pipe cleaner; scarlet kimono; packet of pipe cleaners; parasol; small latched box; steak knife; locket and the announcement.
- Go to the Calais car and enter Poirot's room.
- After the cut scene, Poirot will reveal solutions. You will be asked to answer questions. Answer in the following order for the first solution.
    - Threatening letter
    - Cyrus Hardman
    - Matteo and Dr. Constantine
    - Through the door left unbolted by MacQueen
    - Attendant's uniform
    - Masterman confirmed the dosage of the sleeping draught
    - Stiletto
    - Torn letter
    - Empty room in the Athens-Paris coach

- Answer in the following order for the second solution.
    - After 1:15 AM
    - In America
    - Do not select Count Andrenyi, Cyrus Hardman, Mrs. Hubbard or Pierre Michel. Finally, select "None of the Above".

- Colonel Arbuthnot
- All of these clues agree with the first solution
- When he said the snow was bright
- Ferrier
- Steak knife
- Pipe cleaner
- Handkerchief
- Broken padlock
- Scarlet kimono

- Answer in the following order for the third solution.
  - The Engineer
  - Pile of books

- Click on all three selections one at a time for the solution.

Developer: AWE Games **Publisher:** The Adventure Company **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** November 2006 **Grade:** 89/100	**Minimum System Requirements:** Windows® 2000/XP Pentium 3 or Equivalent 1.4 GHz 256 MB RAM (512 recommended) 64 MB DirectX® 9 Compatible Video 16 bit DirectX® Compatible Sound Card 16x CD-ROM Drive Hard Drive space of 1.5 GB

THE GUIDING BEACON

Gumshoe Online: The Osborne Mystery – Walkthrough

Written by Southern Belle

[Editorial Note: The Osborne Mystery and the other cases currently available for Gumshoe Online can be accessed through www.gumshoe-online.com**]**

Earl and Brewster Accountants

- Open the map and go to Earl and Brewster
- **_Talk with James French_** and find that you have to break in to Earl and Brewster and find a key and address for Mr. Osborne's house in the cloakroom.
- **_Pick up the crowbar_** next to the steps in front of Earl & Brewster.
- Go down the alley on the left of the building.
- **_Look in the barrel_** on the far left and see sawdust.
- **_Look at the wooden packing crates in the corner._**
- or **_Look at the label on the crate._**
- Enter the building.
- **_Look at the notice board_** and find an **_address in Rapid City, South Dakota_** and an **_apartment address in Quincy, Massachusetts._**
- Look at the barrel on the right and find a **_photograph_**.
- Go right.
- Look at the plant and **_take the key_** from under it.
- **_Look at the boxes_** going to other states next to the stairwell.
- Enter the cloakroom.
- See **_money_** lying on the bench.
- Look on the floor on the left and **_pick up the letter_** addressed to David Osborne.
- Leave the building and **_talk with James French._**

David Osborne's House

- Select the map and go to the Osborne's house.
- **_Talk with Eric Anderson._**
- Enter Osborne's house.
- Enter the living room.
- **_Look at the flowers._**
- Pixel hunt the book shelves and find a book with **_a torn picture piece_** in it.
- Go into the dining room.
- Look at the carpet and find a trap door. Multiply the first row going across. The first digit by 2 for the digit in the second column and then by 3 for the digit

in the third column. Double going down. First row 3, 6, 9. Second row 6, 12, 18. Third row 12, 24, 36. It is too far to jump.

- ***Look at the newspaper.***
- ***Look at the light on the left.***
- Go into the kitchen.
- ***Look in the bin.***
- ***Look at the bottles by the sink.***
- Look at the door to the garden and find it is locked.
- Go upstairs.
- Enter the master bedroom.
- ***Pick up the earrings*** on the floor next to the wardrobe.
- ***Open the wardrobe*** and find it almost empty.
- Look under the nightstand and ***find a gun***.
- ***Look at the bed***. It looks slept in.
- Look at the blue book and find the ***lock picks.***
- Exit the master bedroom.
- Go downstairs and click on the study door. Move #3 up l. Lock #4. Move #3 down 4.
- Enter the study.
- ***Look in the wastepaper bin*** and find the third piece of the picture.
- Pick up the ***bedroom key*** from the top of the bookshelf.
- Look at the picture.
- ***Take the hook.***
- Exit the study and go back upstairs.
- Take the ***casino chip*** from the shelf.
- Enter the spare bedroom. You must click on the question mark in this room in order to get the fifth piece of the photograph.
- Look at the photo on the nightstand
- ***Take the key*** to the back door.
- Look at the ***open window***.
- Look at the picture above the radiator.
- Turn the valve.
- Go back downstairs and out into the garden.
- Look at the barrel lid, it moves.
- Look inside the barrel and find a ***rope***.
- Combine the rope with the hook.
- ***Look at the barrels to the left*** and find that they are just like the barrels outside the accountants.
- ***Look at the patch of motor oil*** in front of the shed.
- Look under the shed door and ***find a piece of photograph.***
- Look at the shed door. It is padlocked.

The Accountant's Office Revisited

- Open the map and go to the account's office and around the back.
- Click on the ladder and it will descend.
- Pick up the ***screwdriver*** at the top of the stairs.
- Force the right window open with the screwdriver.
- Enter the building.
- ***Look at the paintings on the floor***.

The Osborne's House Revisited

- Go back to Osborne's house and out into the garden.
- Click on the padlock.
- Enter the shed.
- Pick up the matchbox full of ***matches*** on the bottom shelf of the workbench.
- ***Look at the box and find a few loose tens in it.***
- Click on the ladder and move it into the dining room.
- Click on the lantern and light the basement.
- ***Look at the pictures.***

Your Office

- Go back to your office and find the ***fifth piece of the picture*** in the mail.
- Put the picture together.

The Osborne's House Revisited Again

- Go back to the Osborne house and upstairs to the safe in the spare bedroom. Open the safe. 19, 54, 31, 96. The combination is found on the back of the completed picture.
- ***Find the timetable.***

The Solution

- Go back to your office and solve the case.
- David Osborne left in a hurry because the smugglers found out he was keeping some of the loot for himself.
- Money found in the box under the workbench
- Pictures found in the basement
- Pictures found at the office
- The timetable with DO on it
- The barrels in the backyard are the same as the ones at the office.

Syberia II – Walkthrough

Written by Wendy Nellius

Romansburg

Train – Walk to the back of the train. Speak to Hans. Talk to him about all topics. It seems it's up to Kate in this series also to wind the train. Walk to the front of the train. Kate's cell phone rings. It's Oscar. He tells Kate that the train has arrived at the station. Exit the train.

Train Station – The stationmaster greets you and gives Kate the standard welcome. He is interrupted by a loudspeaker announcement of the same words. The stationmaster goes inside. Follow him.

General Store – Speak to the stationmaster about all topics. On the way out, examine the candy machines next to the counter. You won't be able to use them yet. Exit the store. Walk to Kate's right. Examine the gate. It's locked. Walk to Kate's left.

Train Station – Examine the coal loader machine to the left. Examine the machine and pull the lever. It doesn't seem to work correctly. Continue to walk to the left. Find Oscar. Speak to him about all topics. Next to the train is the winding machine. Click on the wheel and then pull the lever. After the train is wound, click on the wheel again to reset it. Speak to Oscar again to tell him the train is wound. Oscar now tells Kate they need coal to keep the train warm. Kate will need to fill the coal car. Go back to the big machine. See a little girl below. Speak to Malka about all topics. She says the Colonel keeps the gate locked to keep the lowlifes from coming up.

General Store – Walk past the Colonel to where he was working before. Examine the table. Take the small key. Speak to the Colonel about all topics. He tells Kate she will have to wait weeks for maintenance to come and fix the coal machine. He also claims he lost the key to the gate.

Coal Loader – Speak to Malka again. Ask about the key. Malka will tell you who has the key if you get her some candy from the store. Speak about all topics.

General Store – Examine the candy machines. Use the small key on the machine to the very right. Take the coins from the machine drawer. Take the key.   Use the coin with the moose head on the left most machine. Take the candy. Use the key on the left most
candy machine to get the coin back.

Coal Loader – Speak to Malka again. Use the candy on Malka. She will send the key up to Kate via balloon.

Town Below Gate - Use the gate key to open the entrance to the town. Watch cut scene of Kate's boss.

Town Below – Walk to the right and examine the upside down vehicle. Go back towards the steps and walk forward into town.   Malka is waiting for Kate. Speak to Malka. She will tell you that Cirkos takes care of her. She tells you the Bourgoff brothers probably know how to work the coal machine but they are liars and thieves. Enter the door at the right to the bar called Cirkos Cabaret.

Cirkos Cabaret – Go forward once and speak to Mr. Cirkos. Speak to him about all topics. Go to the right to see the mechanical horses. Examine the panel in front of the horses. It seems to be missing something. Maybe you'll find the missing piece later. Exit the Cirkos Cabaret. Go straight across to examine the coal machine.

Coal Machine – Click on the red button to the right of the motor. The machine is out of gas. Take the red gas can from the left. Exit.   Go straight across past Malka and walk to the left. Walk past the circus signs until you reach the gate to the Bourgoff brother's place.

Bourgoff Brothers – Click on the gate and Kate will ring the bell. The short brother (Ivan) will speak to Kate through the gate. Speak to him about all topics. He claims he doesn't have any gas. She will have to get it somewhere else. Exit the gate. Keep walking to Kate's left along the fence. Kate will find a circus poster covering a gap in the fence. Click on the top of the poster to tear it down. Enter and walk over to the big crate in the middle of the lot. Examine the crate. There is an animal inside. Click on the crate lock to let the animal off. Ivan will run after the animal to catch it. Walk to the corner of the yard. Click on the red

gas can to take it. Kate will take it and replace it with the empty one from her inventory. Speak to the tall brother (Igor) who is sleeping on the couch. Ivan will return and Kate makes a quick getaway. Go to the coal machine.

Coal Machine – Use the gas on the coal machine. Press the red button. The machine starts up. Go upstairs to the coal loader.

Coal Loader – Examine the lever and pull it. The train will be loaded with coal. Oscar shows up and tells Kate that Hans is missing from the train. Go to the general store.

General Store – Speak to the Colonel to find out if he has seen Hans. He hasn't. You will need to go back downstairs.

Town Below – Speak to Malka about Hans. He went to Cirkos' place.

Cirkos Cabaret – Enter to speak to Hans. He collapses on the floor. They will be automatically transported to the train.

Train – You are in the sleeping car in the train. Speak to Hans. He seems to be delirious. Walk to the front of the train and meet up with Oscar. Kate will need to find some help for Hans. Go to the general store.

General Store – Speak to the Colonel about "Hans" and the "Mission". He tells you that you're only hope may be the monks on the top of the hill. Go to the town below.

Town Below – Speak to Malka about "Hans" twice. Then, speak to her about the mission. She also tells Kate about the monastery. Ask more about the topic. There are specific rules to follow or they will not help. Go and speak to Cirkos.

Cirkos Cabaret – Speak to Cirkos. Ask about all topics. Cirkos tells you about rules too. The patients face has to be imprinted on a cloth. He can not introduce Kate as they don't like Cirkos. Kate should turn right out of the cabaret. She can't miss it. Malka is the keeper of the shrouds which are kept in a metal box. Go back and see Malka.

Town Below – Speak to Malka about all topics. She will help Kate. She gives you a token for the shroud box. Walk past the Bourgoff Brother's place. Keep following along until you see the monastery. As you get closer, you should see the Shroud box. Insert the token, pull the lever and take the shroud. Go back to see Hans.

Train – Use the shroud on Hans' face. His face imprint will appear on the shroud. Go back to the town below. Go speak to Cirkos.

Cirkos Cabaret – Speak to Cirkos about all topics. Kate will ask him for some warm clothing. He's not much help. Go back upstairs to the General Store. Speak to him about "Help". The colonel allows Kate to go to the attic and find some clothes for free.

Climb the ladder into the attic. Take the clothes on top of the crate. Kate now has to find somewhere to change into her warm clothes. Go to the train.

Train – As you enter the train, there is a door to Kate's right. This is the bathroom. Enter the bathroom and Kate will automatically change clothes. Now it's time to go back to the monastery.

Town Below – Go back to where you found the shroud box. Continue on the path up to the monastery.

Monastery – As you arrive at the front of the monastery. There is a rope hanging down. Pull on the rope. You will see a monk looking down at you, but he will not answer. Take the path to the right. You will find another Monk. Speak to him about all topics. As you speak to him, you will hear a bird call. He would love to get a glimpse of that bird. The bird is white as snow and those who see it have their intelligence grow. He tells Kate she needs to see the Patriarch. The monk up above only lets in those he feels are worthy. Keep asking about Latin to find out women are not allowed. Perhaps Kate needs to be dressed differently. The monk is washing some robes, but Kate will need to get rid of him to get one. Go and see the colonel.

General Store – Speak to the colonel. He gives Kate 3 bird callers. Go back to the monastery.

Monastery – Find the monk washing the clothes again. Give him the silver bird caller and he will leave the area. Take one of the robes. Go back to the front of the monastery and pull the rope to ring the bell. The elevator is lowered. Enter the elevator.

Inside Monastery – Examine the stove to Kate's right. Take the matches. Continue forward. Examine the wheel barrel. Continue forward. Try to speak to the two monks standing together. They won't talk to Kate. Go past them and enter the door. Walk to the front of the church. The Patriarch will come out. Speak to him about all topics. They will help Hans. Watch cut scene of the office and transportation of Hans to monastery. The Patriarch will come out and tell Kate that Hans is dying. Speak to him about all topics. He allows Kate to see Hans. Go to the last room in the corridor.

Hans' Room – Speak to Hans about all topics. Hans tells Kate to find Brother Alexei. He lived with the Youkals and will be able to cure Hans. Exit the room and see a monk who has been eavesdropping.

Inside Monastery – See the monk who has been eavesdropping. Speak to him about all topics. He won't say much, but hands Kate a scroll and stained glass mammoth. You will need to exit out of the scroll and then re-open it in inventory to be able to read it.

The last sentence is: The key is in the light of the mammoth's eye. Go out to the courtyard. Take the brush that is next to the bucket.   When you get to the main crossroad, head to Kate's left to go see the Patriarch. Speak to the Patriarch about all topics. He tells Kate Brother Alexei is dead. Head toward the exit but don't leave yet. At the right and left are 2 paintings on the wall that can be examined. Pick the one to the left of the Patriarch's door. A "use" icon will appear. Use the brush from inventory on the painting. A picture of a cross appears with dots around it.

Notate this on a piece of paper. You will need it shortly. You can't do anything with the other painting just yet. Exit this room and go to door next to the graveyard. This is the library.

Library – Turn to Kate's left and follow the carpet until you reach the bottom of the lottery. Take the long metal rod which is hanging on the wall.   You are surrounded by a circle of candles.   Use the cross picture that you saw in the chapel as your guide of which candles to pull down.   As you pull the candles down, they will light (see picture below).

See a cut scene of a window opening up above. Go back upstairs. Keep going until you see the open window. Use the mammoth stained glass on the window. The side panels will open.

Click in the following pattern. 1234, then 2341, then 3412
The outline of the mammoth will appear on the other side of the library. The eye is right on another window.   Exit and go around until you get to that window. Examine the window and click on the button. A secret panel will open. Take Alexei's journal. Read the journal. Take the Youkal relic also.   It seems that Scarlet Bramble has healing properties and only grows on the tomb of one whose soul is at peace. Maybe Kate should look for Alexei's grave. Exit the library and head to Kate's right to the graveyard.

Graveyard – Take the path on the right side of the tree. You will find Alexei's grave covered in what seems to be Scarlet bramble. Kate will need something to cut it off. Remember the wheelbarrow Kate saw near the entrance? Go back there. Take the shears from the wheelbarrow and return to the grave. Use the shears on the bramble. Take the bramble. Now, as the book states, you need to burn it. Kate will need to make a candle.

Inside Monastery -- Go back to where Kate first entered the monastery and examine the candle maker. Pull the handle at the left to activate the bellows. This will make the fire hotter. Add the bramble to the pot. Click on the candle mold below the spigot. This will open it. Click on the candle wicks which are hanging to the left of the pot. Click on the mold again to close it. Click on the lever above the spigot to fill the mold. Click on the mold to open it and get the green herbal candle. Go back to Hans' room.

Hans' Room – Examine the table. Use the Youkal relic on the table. Use the herbal candle on the relic. Use the matches on the candle. You will see candlelight mammoths circling the room. Hans wakes up. Speak to Hans. Now, Kate needs to find a way out.

Inside Monastery – Go to the elevator where you first entered the monastery. Try to exit and Kate will speak to the Patriarch who is standing there. He forbids them to leave. Speak to him about all topics. He tells Kate Hans will only be leaving in a box. Go to the cemetery.

Cemetery – Take the path to the left of the tree. See a monk digging in the graveyard. Examine the coffin and the hole in the brick wall. Perhaps Kate could slide down the hill but she needs to get rid of the monk first. They usually use bells in monasteries to notify the brothers. Go to the chapel.

Chapel – Examine the gate on the left hand side when you first come in the door. It's locked. Now that the Patriarch is blocking the entrance, take the time to go into the back room. Take the key. Use the key on the gate. Enter and pull the rope to ring the bell. Exit the chapel.

Inside Monastery – Notice that all the monks are missing now. Go to the cemetery.

Cemetery – Take the path to the left of the tree. Click on the coffin and Kate will move it into place. Examine the hole in the wall again. Go get Hans.

Hans' Room – Speak to Hans and he will follow Kate to the cemetery. Watch the cut scene of the great escape.

Train – Kate and Hans are back in the train again. Speak to Hans about the departure. He wants Kate to fix the clockwork horses at Cirkos Cabaret. He gives Kate a mechanical heart to install. Exit the train.

Cirkos Cabaret – Enter and see Cirkos trying to train a Youki. It doesn't go very well.
Examine the mechanical horses. Use the mechanical heart on the spindle.

Mechanical Horse Puzzle:

There is a button in the center that will wind the horses up. Don't use this button just yet until you test the connections. There are 4 sections on the mechanical heart. Each has 3 holes in it. Starting at the lower left section of the wheel, number the sections 1 thru 4.
Each section will correspond to a particular horse. Section 1 is for the 1st horse on the left and 2,3,4 as expected.

THE GUIDING BEACON
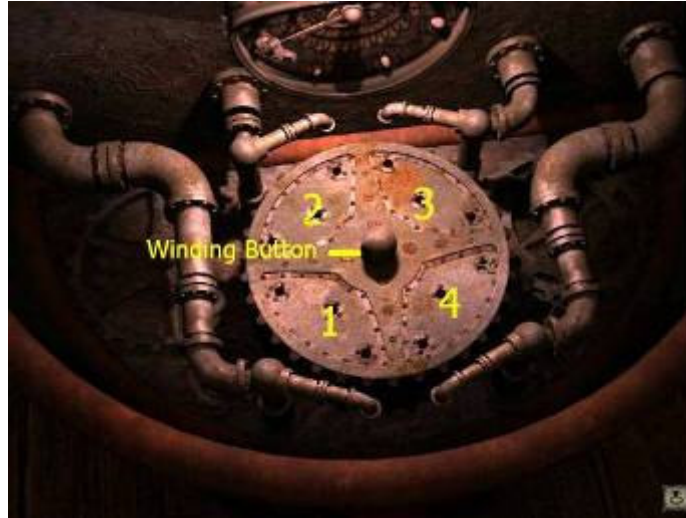
To begin, connect each pipe to one hole in each section. It doesn't matter which one right now as we're just picking randomly to start. All 4 must be connected to do the test.

Click on the button in the center. Cut scene will show the horses. If a horse rises up, that means you picked the correct connection for that horse. Try moving the others to see if you can get any of the other horses to move. When you have correctly placed all the pipes and have seen all four horses, rise up, disconnect all the hoses and click on the button in the center to wind the machine until the small horse has moved all the way to the right (3 times). Then place the pipes back in their correct locations and press the button in the center. The final setup should look as below:

Watch cut scene of the horses back in action. The whole building will begin to shake and Kate will suddenly run out. The train has left without her.

General Store – Enter the general store and speak to the colonel. He tells Kate about the old gang car which is hanging under the track. Exit the store.

Train Station – At the end of the station near the entrance to the town is a lever. Pull on the lever and the gang car will flip up from below. Click on the gang car and Kate will attempt to drive it. However, it seems to die just feet from where she was.

General Store – Speak to the Colonel again about all topics. It seems the gang car has a   mouse wheel type mechanism on the back. Kate needs some kind of animal to run inside it. How about that Youki? Exit the store.

Town Below – As you come down the steps, you will hear the Youki yelping. Go to the Bourgoff brother's place.

Bourgoff Brothers – Enter and find it abandoned. Ivan and Igor are missing. Oscar calls on the cell phone and tells Kate that Ivan and Igor have taken the train. Walk to the area where the couch is. Take the newspaper from the table and read it. Looks like the Bourgoff brothers are off to Syberia to find some ivory. Exit the area and the Youki will be lying there and howling. Remember what book you got at the monastery said? The Youki is motivated by food. Try to find some food.

Cirkos Cabaret – Speak to Cirkos. He says Kate can have the Youki. But it appears, he doesn't have any food. Go to the General Store.

General Store – The middle candy machine is a fish candy. It's the closest to fish that Kate is going to get. Use the coin with 50 and a hole in it. Go back to find the Youki.

Bourgoff Brothers – Use the fish candy on the Youki. He will now follow Kate. Go back to the gang car. Click on the gang car and Kate will be off to chase the train.

Wilderness

Forest area – Move forward once. The brothers taunt Kate from the train. Keep going forward. You will see an owl in a tree. To the left is a small Youkal altar. Examine it. There is a fish stuck inside there. You have matches to melt the ice, but no kindling. Keep going forward until you reach a stream. The Youki will chase a beaver. Get up closer to the stream. It seems the beaver was just about to chew through a tree that would be great to help Kate cross the stream. But, the Youki will not stop barking. Exit out and take the path to the left of the stream. Take the kindling from the rock pile in the center. A cabin is visible from here. Go back to the Youkal altar. Examine the altar. Use the kindling at the base of the altar. Use the matches on the kindling. The ice will melt. Take the

fish. Go back and find the Youki. Use the fish on the Youki to lure him away. Hear the tree fall which means the Beaver has finished. Cross the stream. Move forward and up the hill. You will come to a crossroads. Take the right path. When you get to the top, you will see a wolf wandering around. Get out of there. Now take the left path.   You will see a broken bridge. Kate can't reach it just yet. Go past the bridge and see the house. Enter the front door.

House – Try to go back out the front door. The Youki will cower in fear. Take a look and see a bear out there. Examine the window to the left of the door. That bear is not going anywhere. Examine the fireplace mantle. Take the Russian doll, the hatchet and the book. Read the book to learn about orange salmon. They prefer green frogs to eat. Go into the kitchen and examine the counter. Take the fish tank. It's what will hold the fish Kate catches. Exit the back door and go down to the dock.

Dock -- There is a fishing rod and a tackle box. Click on the rod and Kate will put the fish tank down and pick up the rod. Examine the tackle box. We have to pick the lure that looks most like a green frog.   Pick the one that is greenish/yellow and does not have spots on it. As soon as you pick a tackle, Kate will get ready to cast her line. You will have to pick a spot to fish in. You most likely will get a blue salmon first. Go in the house.

House – Go to the front window. Use the salmon on the bear. He's a picky eater and doesn't eat blue salmon. Go back to the dock.

Dock – Follow the same procedure. Cast your line to the right of the fallen tree. Kate will now have an orange salmon.

House – Throw the orange salmon out the front window. The bear eats it and leaves. You can now exit the front door.

Outside House – Pick up the fish bones left by the bear. Go back to the broken bridge.

Forest Area -- Use the hatchet on the ladder to get the rope with plate. Use the rope with plate on the dead tree extending across the gap. Kate will jump across. The Youki will follow.   You can only move in one direction now.   Follow the path. The Youki will take off chasing a bird. Follow the Youki. When you get to the top of the hill, Igor and Ivan will try to kill Kate. Watch as a plane flies over and crashes. Kate will now need to climb the wall.

Use the hatchet on the wall. You can either move up, down, right or left. This all depends on where the cursor shows up. You need to move around and find the correct path.   This is the correct path:

Up 3 times, right 2 times, Up 4 times, Left 4 times, Up 2 times, Right 2 times, Up 2 times, Right 2 times, Up 4 times.

Once you are at the top, move forward once. You have a choice of 3 directions – east, west and north.

Take the north path. Keep going forward until you se the plane's cockpit.

Plane Crash Site -- Examine the cockpit. There are a lot of moveable buttons in there. Surely this will be a task later. But, the pilot is missing. Keep walking past the plane. You will find the pilot. Try speaking to him. He's asleep and won't wake up. Go back to the crossroads and take the west path. Ivan and Igor will speed past Kate on a snowmobile. Take the west path again and follow the snowmobile tracks. See a communications tower up ahead.

Tower Site -- Examine the radio in the small shed. Press the large red button to turn the power on. The smaller buttons are used to enter the radio frequency. The microphone has a red button that must be pushed to talk. Exit and climb the ladder up to the tower. Clicking on the handle moves the dish around. But, we're not sure where to turn it yet. Go back to the plane.

Plane Crash Site -- Examine the plane cockpit again. Click on the red knob (#1) to turn on the power. Notice the 3 lights at the top: red, yellow and green. At the bottom right of the panel, there are 3 switches with the same colors.

Place all 3 switches (4,5 & 6) in the "up" position. Move the 2 black switches (7 & 8) to the up position also. You should see the screen above flashing all 8's. Place both green switches (3 & 6) to the "down" position. You should now see 03 flash instead of all 8's. This is the 1st half of the frequency we need. Put both green switches (3 & 6) back to the "up" position. Place both yellow switches (2 & 4) into the "down position".   See the number 28 flash. So, that's our frequency: 0328. Put the yellow switches (2 & 4) back to the "up position". Go back to the tower.

Tower Site -- Climb the ladder on the tower. Turn the handle until it covers up the letter "C". Climb back down.   Examine the radio. Use the small red buttons to enter the frequency 0328. Press the red button on the microphone. Hear Kate make contact. Go back to the plane.

Plane Crash Site -- Boris is working on the plane. Speak to Boris about all topics. Hear about the ejector seat.   Examine the plane's control panel again. This time you will be able to enter coordinates for the train. This is where you will be ejected to. Speak to Boris again. He will tell Kate that the radar is broken on the plane. So, you'll have to use the big tower again. Examine the radio. There is a box all the way to the right. Use the red button to turn it on. You will see the radar working. There is nothing where we have dish pointed right now. Go back up the ladder and turn the dish once. Go back down and check the radar again. You're looking and listening for a blip. To get the blip, the handle on the dish should be covering up the "10".   Go back down and look at the radar.

There are coordinate markers on the tops and sides. They're kind of like a ruler. It looks like the blip is around 80 & 20. Go back to the plane.

Plane Crash Site -- Speak to Boris first. Then click on the cockpit. Set the coordinates for 80 and 20 as shown.

Press the large red button. Boris will tell Kate she's correct. Watch Kate fly through the air.

Train – The Youki will greet Kate. Walk towards the train. The colonel from Romansburg calls. He tells Kate she's being followed. Look to the left and see what looks like Oscar's hand sticking out of the snow. Click on it to pull Oscar out. Speak to Oscar. He's in bad shape. Enter the front of the train. Kate won't be able to use any of the controls. Exit and go to the other entrance on the train. Enter and go to the back of the train. The stand which held the music box is displaced. Examine the panel underneath it. Go into the sleeping car. Take the train blueprints from the floor and read them. It seems the sleeping car can be disconnected from the train. Take the oil can from the floor. Go back to see Oscar. Use the oil can on Oscar. Follow him onto the train. Speak to Oscar and he tells Kate to get on the train and be seated. Go to the back section of the train. The train doesn't seem to be moving. Go back to the front of the train and speak to Oscar again. Oscar wants Kate to go back and find the unhitching panel. She should call him on the phone so he can open the panel. Go back to the car with the music box. Click on the cell phone in inventory to activate it. Use the "down" arrow to scroll to Oscar's name. Click on send. Oscar will open the panel. Kate must activate it.

Click on the sliders in the following order: 5 3 1

Watch cut scene of train taking off.

Tundra

Outside -- Walk forward until you see the snowmobile. Examine the back of the snowmobile and take the blanket. Examine the bird statue on the left. There seems to be a hole that goes through the beak. Exit out. Try to walk up the hill. Kate will slide back down. She needs something to get her feet to grip. Go back towards the train. Cross over in front of the train. Go straight once and see Igor by himself. Speak to Igor. He is terrified of the spirits he thinks he hears. Exhaust all topics. Go back and speak to Oscar on the train. Exhaust all dialogue. Exit the train and go back to the bird statue. Use the blanket on the hole in the beak. The howling noise stops. Go back and find Igor again. Speak to Igor. Igor will make a quick getaway on the snowmobile. Underneath the snowmobile was a pair of ice cleats. Take the cleats and Kate will walk up the hill. Upon reaching the top of the hill Ivan will try to attack Kate. Speak to Ivan. See a sled full of bones to the right of Kate. Try to examine it and Ivan will stop Kate. Use the cell phone in inventory to call Oscar. Oscar will use the train horn to distract Ivan. Examine the sled again. Take the knife and use it on the strap that is holding the sled in place. The sled is cut loose and heads towards Ivan. As it does, the ice beneath Kate will crack and Kate will fall through.

Youkal Village

Hut – Examine the window. Exit the hut. The chief is outside waiting for Kate. Speak to the Chief about all topics. It seems Hans is with the spirit woman and is being prepared for death. Examine the pot directly behind Kate. Take the reindeer antlers.

The Youkal village is quite confusing to navigate. Pictures will be used as much as possible:

Go in the direction as pictured:

See the spirit woman's house. Enter the location. Try to go past the beating drums. Kate can't seem to do it. The drums are powered by a water wheel. There has to be a way to jam it. Look up and see a large icicle above the water wheel. It will have to be knocked down. We'll need to make a slingshot. The reindeer antlers will work well. Now, you just have to find a rubber band of sorts.

Move in the direction as pictured:

Directly across from the woman stirring the pot is a wooden stand. Examine it and take the leather strap. It will immediately be combined with the antlers to make the slingshot. Continue along the path and see another wooden stand.


Take the flask and the cork bung. Attach the flask to the hook and then click on the handle to lower the flask. Click on the handle again to raise the flask. It will now be full of water. Go back to the spirit woman's house. Use the slingshot on the icicle. The drums have now stopped. Enter the house.

Spirit Woman's House – Speak to Spirit woman about all topics. Find out you need to create music to call the Harfang to help.   In order to lead Hans back through the corridor of dreams, Kate will need to find the fruit of the Laughing Tree. Examine the masks on the wall to the right of Hans. Take the mask. Examine the room to the left of Hans. Examine the table and take the prayer wheel. Exit the house.

Move in the direction shown below:
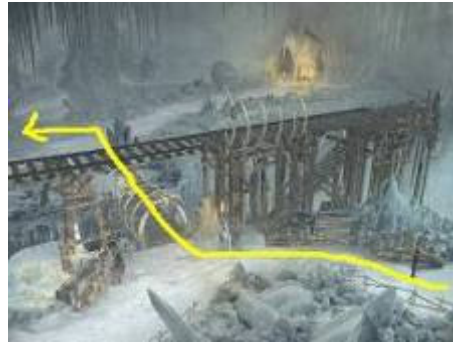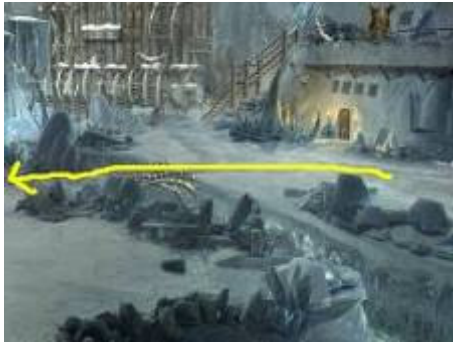
Tundra -- Speak to the two Youkals who are outside by the train. They don't understand Kate. Walk towards the train. Examine the bird statue. See the chain lying on the tracks. Go back to where the 2 Youkals are. Try speaking to them again. Still no luck. Climb down the ladder. Examine the pen with the Youkis in it. You're going to have to go back and speak with the chief. Perhaps he can translate for Kate.

Hut -- Speak to Chief about all topics including the train. He tells Kate the Youkals are afraid of Oscar. We'll have to get back to this problem. We need to find the fruit first.

Cave
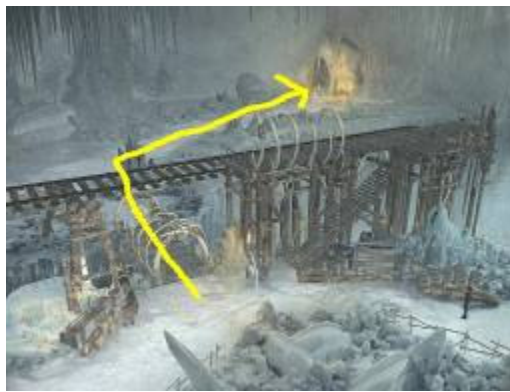
Enter the cave and take the left path. Examine the wall of ice. There are some berries stuck in the wall and a bunch of holes. There is also a small lemming. . Since there is no way to reach in, Kate will have to coax the lemming in to get the berries. The Harfang could scare the animal.

Step 1: Plug the bottom right hole.

Now we need to scare the lemming in to the left hole. There is a perch to the right of you. Use the prayer wheel on the perch. Click on the prayer wheel to spin it. The Harfang will fly to the perch.

Step 2: There is a small trap like pit that the lemming won't cross. Plug the hole over the pit.

Step 3: The lemming will need to get up the tunnel. Plug the bottom of the tunnel and use the flask of water on the hole at the top. The lemming will float up and get the berries.
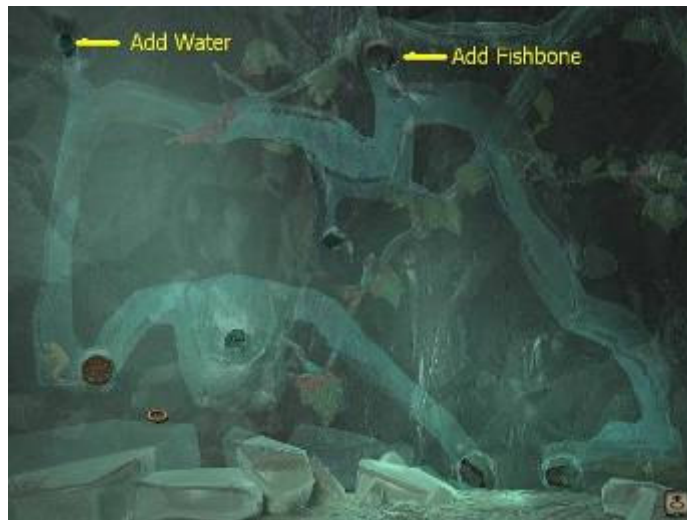
Step 4: The lemming will need to get out. Use the fishbone in the hole on the top right. The lemming will crawl out and fall. The berries will fall out of the right bottom hole.

Before leaving the cave, be sure to take the prayer wheel.

Spirit Woman's House – Enter the house. Speak to the Spirit Woman. Kate will automatically hand over the berries and enter the dream tunnel.

Dream World

Valadilene – Go forward. Kate will now be in a cave just like the one from his childhood. Go further into the cave and examine the mammoth doll on the ground. Take the mammoth doll. Exit the cave. Follow the path. Cross over the stream bed. Turn left.
Walk past the boat. Continue going forward. If you played Syberia I, you will remember this path. Just keep following the path until you get to an area with benches. See an old woman standing there. This is Han's sister Anna as a child.   Speak to Anna about all topics. Find out that Hans is in the attic of the estate. Go down the steps and over the bridge. At the bottom, turn to Kate's left. Keep going until you can see a wall on the right. Enter at the right through the wall. Take the path that goes east. Enter the mansion.

Voralberg Estate – Enter the room on the right. Speak to Mr. Voralberg about all topics. He won't let Kate see Hans. Exit the room.   Examine the clock. The levers move the time forward.   Examine the top of the clock. The hands on the clock tell you it is currently at 2:45. Go back and see Anna. She tells you her father will return to the factory at exactly 7:15.

Clock Puzzle:

There are 2 levers used to set the time. If you click on just the right lever multiple times, the time will be advanced by the ½ hour. The same applies to the left lever. Alternating the levers will allow you to set the time to the ¼ hour mark. Set the time to 2:45.
There are 2 automatons above the levers. Click on the left automaton to wind him. Then, click on the right automaton to wind him also.   Click on the pendulum to make in swing.
Now use the 2 levers to change the time to be 7:15. Click on the chain hanging on the right. Then click on the bell. It will chime and Mr. Voralberg will leave. He leaves the key to the attic on the table.

Enter the room and take the key from the table. Go up the stairs to the attic. Use the key on the door to open it. Go forward into the attic.

Attic -- See Hans and speak to him. He won't speak back. Use the mammoth doll on Hans. Hans goes back and forth from Adult Hans to Child Hans. He wants you to open Oscar's heart. Click on the table and be transported out of the dream.

Youkal Village

Spirit Woman's House – Kate awakes from the dream. Exit the house and go to the train and find Oscar.

Train -- Speak to Oscar about all topics until he puts on the mask you got from the spirit woman's house.. Now, go back to the 2 Youkals. Speak to them about all topics. They will go and hook the cable up to the train. Examine the hook on the train. Click on the hook and Kate will winch the rope. Go back the other direction and up the steps. Make your first left.

Bridge -- Examine the winching machine. There are 2 levers. Click on the right one. Watch cut scene of train being pulled inside. Go back in the direction of the cave. Go through the small tusk bridge and up the steps to the train.

Train -- Enter the train and speak to Oscar. He tells Kate goodbye and leaves the train. Go to the spirit woman's house.

Spirit Woman's House – See Oscar lying on the bed beneath Hans. Examine Oscar.

Heart Puzzle:
You will see a circle with buttons around it. It looks like a clock. Remember the time that was important in the dream? 7:15.   So, press the buttons that would represent 3 and 7.

You will see some movement in the center of the panel. Then, press the buttons that would represent N,S, E & W: So, press 3, 6, 9,12   The panel opens up and a key emerges.

Take the key.   Speak to the spirit woman. She says Kate must prepare the voyage. Exit the house and go back to the hut. Speak to the Chief. He tells Kate the journey must continue, but not with the train. To the right of where the train is located is a giant ark. Read the last few pages in the Monk's journal in inventory. The journal says it can not sail due to excessive ice.   Go back to the train.

Train Puzzle:

The goal of the train controls is to create enough heat & steam to melt the ice around the ark. Pressing the controls in a specific order will meet that goal.
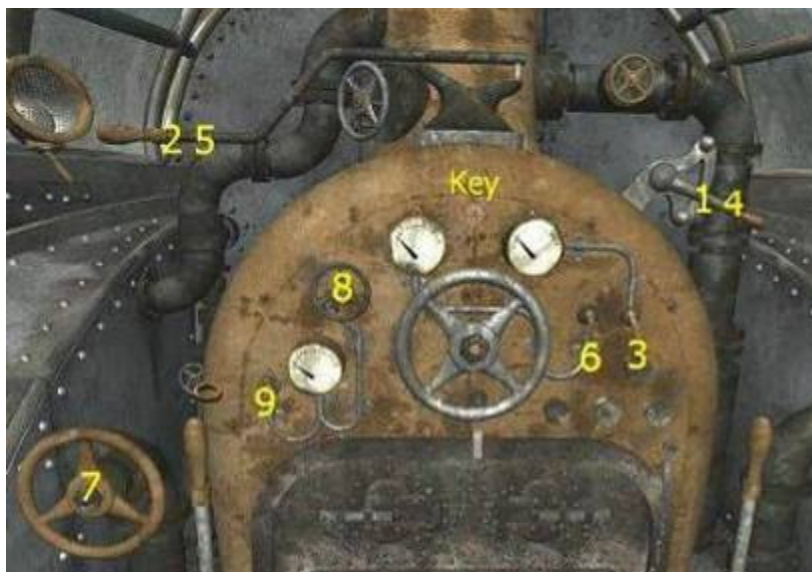
Click 1 & 2: The metal snake with the bird head will come out towards the coal car.
Click 3: The snake will collect the coal.

Click 4 & 5: The metal snake will come out of the bottom of the train.
Click 6: The coal will be dispensed.
Click 7 & 8: The burner will heat up
Click 9: Watch cut scene of ark being de-iced.

Ark --   See the Chief outside the ark. He will open the gates, but Kate should bring the Youki. Go back to where you saw the Youki pen. If you go to the stand where you got the water, there is an exit directly across. This is where you'll find the Youki. Click on the gate to open it. The Youki will run out and head for the ark. Enter the ark.

Sea Voyage

Ark – Speak to Hans. The ark has gotten stuck on an ice shelf. Exit the Ark.

Ice Shelf -- See the line to the anchor. Follow the direction of the line to find the anchor. Try to dislodge the anchor. It's stuck. Walk towards the big group of penguins on the hill. Examine and take the tusk that's in the snow. Go back and use the tusk on the ice around the anchor. It's released. Head back towards the ark just in time to see Ivan getting on board. He has lifted the ladder to the ark. Kate can not get back on.   Go back the other direction, past where the anchor was until you get to the end. Kate can go to her left, but there is a group of penguins blocking the ice peninsula.   As you turn around to face the direction of the ark, there is an exit on the left. Go that direction. Examine the penguin eggs. Use the Russian doll on the eggs. The penguins will be called over. Go back to the ice peninsula. The ice cracks as Kate stands on it.   Use the tusk on the crack to completely break the ice. It breaks off and floats over to the ark. Kate sneaks inside.

Ark – Click on the barrel to roll it away from the door.   Go to the other side of the room. Examine the animal skins on the wall. These will be important later so you will want to make notes. Go back to the other side of the room. Go through the door to see Hans. Speak to Hans. Climb up the ladder closest to Hans. Take the ivory hook from the floor. Examine the anchor mechanism. Go back down. Climb up the other ladder to hear Ivan muttering. Go back to the other room. Climb up on the barrel. Use the ivory hook in the pipe like slot. Click on the rope and Kate will put it on the hook. Climb back down and pull the lever. Ivan is catapulted off the ship and attacked by the penguins on the ice shelf.

Syberia

Watch Hans get off the ark. Exit the ark and follow the path.

Island -- Examine the box at the end of the path. Take the 3 stone tablets. Go back the other way and walk through a long archway made of tusks. Examine

the large gate. Pull the lever to bring the large wheel down. This wheel is just like the one we put the Youki in to chase the train. It looks like we will need the Youki for this. Go back to the ark.

Ark -- Go down to the cabin to get the Youki. He's in a deep sleep and can't be woken. Read Alexei's journal again. You need to find Blue grass which will awaken him. Exit the Ark and head to the right. Go up the ladder and try to talk to the man. He falls apart. Take the medallion. Go back down the ladder. Walk past the ark and down the steps. Turn right. As you enter the archway, examine the flowers to the right. Take a flower and the stone tablet. Go back to the ark.

Ark. – Go down into the cabin. Use the flower on the Youki. He will wake up and run out. Go back to the gate.

Gate – The Youki will automatically jump in the wheel and the gate will open.

Beyond the Gate – Enter through the gate and go up the steps. Examine the stand. Examine the center of it. It is a wheel of symbols. Where have you seen that before? On the medallion you got off the dead man. Pick up the broken piece lying at the left. You will have to place all 5 pieces into the correct positions.   Keep referencing the medallion in inventory. Below is a picture of the correct placement:

Exit out and turn the wheel. The sand will spill out onto one of the stones. Pay close attention to which stone the sand hits.   Something will pop up in the middle of the wheel. Examine and take the ivory key.

Go up the steps and speak to Hans. He wants Kate to play the music which will call the Mammoths. Go down the stairs on the other side. See a large machine which is used to make a multiple of calls. There are 2 parts to examine: a small panel in the front and a puzzle on the actual pipes.

Panel Puzzle:

Use the ivory key on the key hole. A panel is opened. Remove the key. You will now have to insert the key into the correct hole.   A clue was given in the other puzzle. The sand spilled out onto a particular stone. If you can't remember which one, you can go back and turn the wheel again to see the sand fall. Examine the medallion in inventory.

Find the sand symbol on the inner ring. It looks like a rounded Y or a C with a line attached. The red symbol it corresponds to is the one you want to use the key on.

This is the correct placement:

Pipe Puzzle:

Examine the pipes.

You will have to open, partially open or close each hole to get the desired call. To figure out the calls, you will have to remember the animal skins hanging in the ship on the wall. Each skin had a picture of a situation and symbols to go with it.

Here is the mammoth skin picture:

Star = open
Circle = ½ open
Blank = closed

Set the pipes as pictured:

Top Row: open, ½ open, open
Bottom Row: ½ open, closed, open

Exit out and walk to the front of the machine. Turn the wheel to turn it in the right direction. Then, go back to the pipes and click on one of the levers that is in a horizontal position all the way at the right of the holes.

Watch cut scene and end of game.

A Final Note…

The last page of another issue… This is where I need to talk about what you can expect in our next edition. Ordinarily you would find a little insight into the articles we are putting together, perhaps even an expected release date. The information is purposely kept a little vague to allow for any potential changes in assignments and deadlines.

This month is different however. There is a great degree of uncertainty about our future issues. With severe constraints on my schedule, how do we handle editing? How will we manage the formatting? When can we make sure the Web versions of the articles are released? Most importantly, when do we release the next issue? Can we deliver something in March? Are we going to have to wait until April?

I don't pretend to have all the details. There is no secret plan we are waiting to hatch. But as noted in the editorial, this is a time of change. I do know that for the next several weeks Adventure Lantern will be in a state of flux. We will almost certainly transfer some responsibilities to ensure the magazine and the Web articles are delivered in a timely manner.

Please be patient with us as we work on improving our process. We are going through an almost complete restructuring effort and trying to fully evaluate how we do things. It will be a difficult transition, but hopefully it will be for the better. In the meantime, I hope you've found something to enjoy in the pages of our January/February edition.

Until we can meet again…

- Ugur Sener