



Letter from the Editor

This has been a month where I have felt very much like not participating much in the AIF discourse, probably because I just finished *Malaise*. It had required maintaining such a high level of energy and attention that I didn't want to think much about AIF in the aftermath. I even managed to read some actual books for the first time in a couple months!

But now it's time for me to re-focus a bit, especially with the Erins coming up, and so I looked over some of the discussions taking place on the Yahoo! message board.

One discussion is about choosing a system. At first glance, it's a repeat of similar discussions we've had in the past. ADRIFT

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This Month in AIF by BBBen

It was a somewhat quieter this month than last month, but that's unsurprising. The frenzy of game releases that was going for a little while at the end of October hadn't quite finished, so we got the second Inform 7 AIF game a short time into November (although it was another one that was uploaded to the AIF Archive 2 without a notice to the rest of the community!).

There was a big discussion on the AIF Archive this month about underage characters being depicted in AIF games. Some authors (like me) tend to write some characters as being 16 years old rather than 18, because the legal age of consent in their country is 16. There was a concern that by downloading a game that depicted 16 year olds having sex, this could get the player into trouble in their own country. Personally, I seriously doubt that would happen – as far as I know fictional stories are not cracked down upon in the same way that child pornography is. There are plenty of erotic fiction pieces out there on the web that unselfconsciously depict much younger characters than AIF generally deals with – AIF really never goes younger than teenagers, for instance, while literotica definitely does. These concerns led GoblinBoy to release new versions of his games that change the ages to 18. Personally, I've had warnings on my web page for each game that contains a 16 year old, and I think that's the most reasonable reaction.

The Erin awards are approaching and, behind the scenes, we've established this year's judging panel. If you don't know how this works, basically a small group (7-9 members) of active community members (mostly authors) get together and nominate the best games of 2006 in various different categories. We make up a list of, generally, five nominees for each category and then we put it to a public vote to decide who is the best among them. We struck this balance because it makes the job of the voters much easier (and we have a lot of

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Mission Statement

Inside Erin is written and published by people who enjoy AIF. It is done for fun, but we also have some goals that we seek to achieve through the newsletter:

1. To encourage the production of more quality AIF games by providing advice from game developers, and by offering constructive criticism that is specifically relevant to AIF.
2. To encourage activity and growth in the AIF community. We aim to generate a constant level of activity so that there aren't long periods in which people can lose interest in AIF.
3. To help document and organize the AIF community. This is done through reporting on games and events, as well as by helping to organize community-wide activities such as competitions and the yearly Erin Awards.

trouble getting people to vote) yet it doesn't leave the nominations group as the exclusive arbiters of the winners. The ballots should become available around the start of the new year, and the nominees will be announced here in the newsletter.

There is also a best beta-tester award, which requires a separate vote by authors, and I've already started to try and get votes for that category. Please vote for your best beta-tester if you released a game in the period from the start of November 2005 to the end of October 2006. After all, the beta testers help you look good, and ask nothing in return! They could just wait until the complete version of the game is released, but instead they actually put in the time to go through it rigorously and tell you all about what they've found. They are really important and helpful, and they deserve a little recognition.

There was also a bit of discussion of ADRIFT vs TADS vs Inform, etc., but that's so common I'm not sure it really counts as news. Also, earlier in the month there was some concern that ADRIFT had some sort of spyware built in to it (I can assure you it doesn't)! Anyway, keep your eyes open for the Erin awards, which will be coming up in January. We like to try and get everyone involved in them, not just the authors, so when the ballots come out be sure to vote, and try to come along to the awards ceremony of the IF MUD as well.

New games

Collision by Captain Midnight, for Inform 7, released 6th November. You are travelling in space when you are hit by another ship, containing a beautiful woman.

Letter from the Editor (Continued)

is better or worse than TADS is better or worse than Inform for this or this other reason. I haven't butted in on the message board, but of course, like everyone, I do have an opinion. Rather than put another voice in favor of a particular system, though, I'd simply like to encourage everyone with an inkling to create AIF to look over all three popular IF-creation systems, pick one, and try your hand at writing an AIF.

Pick ADRIFT. It's easy to learn, easy to use, and though tricky to get it to do exactly what you want, it is very possible to get excellent results from it.

Pick TADS. It's clearly more difficult to learn, but there are excellent AIF libraries to build on (at least for TADS 2), and TADS is extremely flexible, making it possible to customize almost any interaction.

Pick Inform 7. It's approaching a whole new paradigm in IF creation. Plus, the design interface is very cool.

Whichever one you choose, remember that this community is full of people who have gone that way before. We're willing to offer assistance and advice to anybody with a question on how to get the most out whichever system they're using.

Another discussion has to do with continuity in AIF sex scenes. I sense some rumblings of discontent with the current model, but no consensus as to how to improve it. The issue, as I see it, is that the convention for creating AIF sex closely mirrors that of pornographic videos. In porn, the standard sex scene has well-endowed actors and actresses with shaved pubic regions - better for unobstructed camera views - who have sex non-stop for at least twenty minutes in a variety of positions, but each position is held for several minutes - long enough to show it from numerous (and predictable) camera angles. In AIF, the convention is similar: male character has sex with female character in numerous positions, each position described once or twice, until he orgasms. Male character is able to have as many orgasms as necessary so that the player can experience all the positions to an equal level of fulfillment.

By following these conventions, neither AIF nor porn pretends even remotely to simulate real sex. This lack of 'trueness' is part of the lament by members of the community, and several have come up with suggestions as to how to create more continuity in AIF sex scenes. But is it even possible? The real sex we're hoping to simulate requires two (or more, but we'll leave that aside for the moment) people, each with his/her own desires, senses and reactions. Those desires, senses and reactions are what make real sex real. AIF simply isn't able to properly replicate that. So AIF authors are beginning to look to the next best thing - sex continuity. This is the idea that the game can provide different responses to the player's action based on what actions have occurred before. This means that a kiss at the start of a sex scene will be very different than one that's post-coital; a

breast rub will be different based on whether or not the player has just sucked it, and so on. This is a worthy goal, but unfortunately one that requires much work writing numerous different descriptions for the same player action. So much work, in fact, that I doubt many games with this kind of continuity are likely to come into being. Even *Parlour*, which used a very simple sex-act layering system, took far longer to write than it would have had I simply written standard cut-scenes.

The only AIF to ever offer proper sex continuity was *Green Summer*, the experiment in live AIF that was conducted in this newsletter, and that was because the only commands that had to be parsed were the ones the players actually issued. There was no need for me to write in hundreds of possible command responses, and since every command was parsed in my brain (with my ability to either remember or re-read the earlier responses), I was able to respond with descriptions that invariably followed immediately after the ones preceding it.

There will always be new ideas, and there will be those who try a new way of creating AIF. Similar things happen, occasionally, in porn – virtual porn is a relevant example in that it tries to make porn more personal to the watcher - and I expect a similar, though slowly evolving, shift in AIF.

A review of Gargoyle - An IF Interpreter by A. Bomire

About a year or so ago, I was reading through some posts online discussing the frustration some players have over the various formats used by interactive fiction authors. Basically, the problem was that while most games were released in Z-machine/Inform format or TADS, there were a lot of games written in ADRIFT 3.9, ADRIFT 4.0, Hugo, etc. And every game had its own interpreter that you had to download and install to run. And, not all interpreters were available for all operating systems. From a player's perspective, this can be very frustrating - but what are you to do? The debate waged back and forth but basically boiled down to this: different authoring systems appealed to different authors, and you weren't very likely to get someone who wrote ADRIFT games to switch to TADS 3.

This appeared to be all theoretical, and insoluble, until just recently when I came across another post which mentioned an interpreter I had never heard of - *Gargoyle*. The context of the post seemed to imply it was an interpreter for ADRIFT games which played both ADRIFT 3.9 and 4.0 games. I was intrigued, both because I never heard of it, and because of its apparent flexibility. I had to find out more, so I downloaded a copy and tried it out. What I found was very surprising - Gargoyle plays ADRIFT games, plus a whole lot more!

Gargoyle supports just about every major system for writing interactive fiction: AdvSys, ADRIFT (3.9 and 4.0), AGT, Alan, Glulx, Hugo, Inform/Z-machine, Level 9, Magnetic Scrolls and TADS (2 and 3). There's no need to tell Gargoyle what type of game it is, it will open the game and figure it out for itself. Simply browse to the directory in which you have your IF games, and Gargoyle will list the games it finds within that directory which it supports. Open the file and it launches the game. In the Windows version, you can even drag-and-drop the game file onto your Gargoyle icon to automatically launch that game.

Another feature is that each game is run in a consistent-looking window with the same fonts, window size, etc. So, no matter what type of game you run, the look and feel on-screen is the same. If you don't like that, Gargoyle allows you to customize the fonts, screen size, etc. for each type of game (TADS can look different than ADRIFT, for example). But that isn't the really cool part - you can do the same thing for each *individual game*! Thus, you can set the screen size and fonts for "Tomorrow Never Comes" to be completely different than what you see for "Last Minute Gift", for example. The fonts are "sub-pixel rendered", which helps to smooth them out on LCD screens (flat-screens). This can give them a bit of a fuzzy look when you aren't use to them, but you soon get used to it.

How does Gargoyle do this? Well, it cheats. It doesn't really interpret each game. Instead, the Gargoyle program is a front-end to a collection of GLK-enabled interpreters for each of the formats which it supports. So, for example, when you are playing an ADRIFT game, it launches the Scare interpreter for you. For Inform/Z-machine games, it uses Frotz. And so on for other game formats.

(Warning: Really technical bit. Non-programming geeks can skip this part. What is "GLK-enabled"? From the home page of Andrew Plotkin [aka: Zarf], "GLK is an attempt to define a portable API [application programming interface] for applications with text UIs [user interfaces]". Basically, that is a lot of techno-speak for a standard way of outputting the text generated by an interactive fiction interpreter. So, a GLK-enabled interpreter is one that outputs the text in a format compatible with the GLK standard.)

After reading about Gargoyle, I had to try it out for myself as it seemed to be the Holy Grail of Interactive Fiction interpreters. Well, it is pretty good. It is currently available for Windows and Linux/Unix. I didn't read any plans to make it available for Mac users. The install is simplicity itself, simply extract the files to someplace on your disk. There really is no install (at least for Windows). That makes it very portable as the whole thing is less than 3MB in size. (1.2MB in a compressed ZIP file.) I can put it on a flash drive and carry it with me from machine to machine and never be without an interpreter.

I immediately started playing with it, opening up various games in different formats - TADS 2, TADS 3, ADRIFT 3.9, ADRIFT 4.0, AGT and Hugo. It handled all of them except the Hugo game, which locked up. Hugo is very graphics intensive, and it could just have been that it was taking longer than I wanted to wait to open the game, but after close to a minute I finally had to close the program down instead of waiting any longer. Other than that, it opened all of the other games flawlessly, even the AGT game.

Using Gargoyle was very simple. Launching the program immediately brought up a browsing window to let me select the game which I wanted to play. Selecting a game and clicking "OK" launched that game in the appropriate interpreter. It couldn't have been easier.

There were a couple of things I found that could stand improving:

- The fonts and screen sizes are stored in an INI file (GARGLK.INI). To change them, you have to manually edit this file. The file is documented within itself, but this can still be a bit intimidating to some players. An "Options" menu or something similar within the Gargoyle user interface would be nice.

- The interpreters included with Gargoyle are text-only - none of them handled any multimedia. They played the games just fine, just without any of the pictures or sounds that were included with the games. I understand that this is part of the GLK standard, which specifies that it handles text, not pictures. So, this isn't really something that Gargoyle is doing wrong, just something that some players will miss when playing the games.

Something else that players may miss is the system-specific options. For example, there is no mapping feature available when playing ADRIFT games, because the Scare interpreter doesn't support it.

All in all, I found Gargoyle to be very impressive. It presented a very clean and easy way of playing various types of interactive fiction games without having to download and install a bunch of interpreters. It was portable and easy to use. There are some features missing, but mostly it was just graphics and there aren't a lot of graphic games released. I would recommend this to anyone who is tired of accidentally trying to open an ADRIFT 4.0 game in ADRIFT 3.9 or vice-versa.

For more information, or to download a copy of the software, go to the Gargoyle home page:

<http://ccxvii.net/gargoyle/>

AIF Author's Log by Bitterfrost

Hello, folks! Bitterfrost here! You know--that git who's slogging through his first overly ambitious AIF game and sharing (whining about) the experience every month. Yeah. That guy. It's a little thing I like to call "How Not to Write AIF."

I almost didn't make it this month. In fact, I nearly threw down my guns and walked away. Fortunately, the newsletter's sumptuous buffet and open bar drew me back. I'm a pushover for good food and cheap liquor.

This month's chronicle is not so much a breakdown of the surprisingly Herculean tasks involved in creating AIF as much as it is a peek inside an author's head. (It's filthy in there. I highly recommend galoshes.) That's not simply because I made absolutely no progress this month and found myself desperate to fill this space. No. No. No. This is a much bigger issue.

I suppose every AIF/IF author goes through this at some point, but I never thought it would happen to me. Yeah, I said that about Chlamydia, too. Hey, come back! I'm just kidding. I'm disease free. You might want to wash your hands, though.

I've been wrestling with this AIF game for over two years now. Remarkably, though my attention

might have wandered now and again, I've always maintained a level of lunatic enthusiasm about it. Just ask any of the poor sots I've emailed the last couple of years. I've been like an excited puppy. "My own AIF game! Oh boy oh boy oh boy oh boy!"

Yeah, pretty disgusting. In fact, a lot of that enthusiasm slopped over onto other authors, cheerleading their work. I just love the whirling, twirling Spirograph of the English language and the way it playfully unfurls in well-written AIF. I know--I need help. We all have our funny little ways, I suppose.

Throughout all of these many months of scribbling, I've been happy to make what little progress I can, enjoying the writing outlet and the whole puzzle-y nature of the process. It hasn't mattered that there's always been a long way to go. I was enjoying the journey: just a happy git with a pack on his back and a quirky, winding road 'neath his feet.

And then I woke up several weeks ago to a sudden meteoric drop in enthusiasm.

It wasn't a case of being intimidated by the amount of work still ahead. It wasn't a matter of ADRIFT workaround frustration. It wasn't even a good old attack of writer's block.

It was a fundamental, foundational "Why am I doing this?" U-turn. An anti-epiphany.

Seriously. I went from "Hmm, what part of this beastie should I work on next?" to "Why the hell have I been wasting my time with this?!" in the course of a single night's sleep. It's obviously the work of alien mind control. I knew I should've worn my foil nightcap.

Couldn't hope to tell you why that happened. I don't have a history of being bipolar.

I went through the day feeling not only intense disinterest but also regret for the nickels and dimes of time squandered over the last two years. Out of the blue, I finally lived up to my handle. I muttered about how I could have spent all of this time on something respectable and promptly gave the work the cold shoulder.

And by "respectable" I don't mean demure IF. It's just as much of a time vacuum. I won't dignify the whole IF versus AIF debate; they're two sides of the same coin to me. AIF is just another flavor of IF. You've got your fantasy IF, your mystery IF and your erotic IF. The only distinction is that it's kept in the back room of the video store. There's good IF and good AIF, bad IF and bad AIF. Get over it. Find another witch to burn.

Anyway, I mean a novel or something else that's relatively lucrative, "something that really matters." OK, so I had no clue what that was, but I knew it wasn't AIF/IF anymore. I didn't even want to do the minimum to publish the game as-is. I just wanted to walk away. Why bother doing so much work for almost no reward? Oh the things I could've done with this time!

So this mood swing/altered perspective persisted, and I found myself getting all pissy about time spent, energy expended and brain cells depleted in the name of this game. I mean, if you go by word count, I've written a plump novel already. And for what? Why? I couldn't come up with answers, and it just ticked me off more.

Ever get into one of those spirals where you pick something up and promptly fumble it? Then you get angry, reach for it and drop it again? Then a minute passes where you're dropping everything left and right like a complete spazz until you're in a frothing rage? That's how this past month has been. Sure, it's funny in hindsight because you make a complete ass of yourself, but at the time it's as though the universe is hazing you.

As seems to be the prevailing theme in this chronicle, I'm an idiot. After a few weeks of ridiculous doubt and sneering snobbery, I'm back at it, chipping away at this project once again.

I never did figure out why I stormed offstage. Nor did I come up with logical reasons to keep pursuing it. I did, however, read through a transcript and found myself chuckling at the narration, the quirky humor and the smutty bits. And it all came back.

Boiled down, it's just pure self-indulgence. At its roots, this project has been an off-and-on outlet for creative frustration and sex-obsessed synapses. There's no deeper meaning there. No focus. No goal. I suppose the quirky tabooiness of the whole thing and the idea that all of maybe ten people might appreciate it provided the momentum. If this game inspires a laugh and provides a halfway unique AIF experience, then it's done its job. I guess I can't resent it, no matter how hard I try.

My wife is bemused by the whole thing, accepting this odd, little hobby with a "you're weird but I love you" smirk. She teases me about it and wonders what part of our sex life I'm going to write about next. She's enjoyed the writing, so it can't be all bad. I think she'd like me to see it through if for no other reason than I'll finally get over it and get on with doing something else. She probably has a list, the lovely smartass.

As I said, I'm sure veteran authors have been through this malaise and soldiered on, but it was a shock for me.

So crown me fool. I wasted a month navel gazing. But I'm back in the game. No matter how long it takes, I'll see this mutha through.

Seven Seas of Thēah: Episode 11 by Christopher Cole

OPTIONS: At the end of this story each month, you will be given a number of options. Choose the option that you like and vote in the poll at the Yahoo AIF Archive. The option that gets the most votes will determine how the story continues in next month's newsletter.

NOTE: You can read background information and other tidbits about this story here: <http://ccole.aftermath.cx/theah.htm>.

Reis! Magnus thought to himself. It was a name he knew well. Indeed it was a name most seafarers knew and feared. Captain Reis was perhaps the most dreaded pirate in the seven seas. He was the thing of nightmares; a black-bearded monster of a man who liked to dress in a blood-red tunic, wielding a hand-held scythe with a violent and fatal precision.

The men around Magnus were running out of the little cabin, heading top side to face the pirate attack. The captain began to move to join them.

"Captain," Magnus said. "Perhaps we could be of some assistance."

Magnus didn't really give a fig whether or not the captain was able to get out of this mess with her ship intact, except for the reason that they were a day out and without this ship, he and Violetta would be in a rather dire circumstance.

Magnus continued when the captain stopped to look at him. "The Raven and I have been known to hold our own in a fight, and against someone like Reis, I'm sure you could use all the help you can get..."

The captain paused briefly before nodding to one of her men. "Give them their weapons," she said.

The man did not pause, and followed the orders immediately. As Magnus was strapping his sword back on, another explosion rocked the ship. "Thank you Captain," he said. "You know, I didn't get your name..."

"McGee," the captain said. "Bonnie McGee."

"Greetings," Magnus said and he and Violetta joined Captain McGee as she left the cabin and raced to the upper deck.

The first thing Magnus noticed was the smoke and rain. The *Hurricane* didn't seem to have taken any serious damage, but there was some smoke coming from somewhere below decks. The rain was still coming down, but the worst of the storm Magnus had slept through had obviously passed.

The second thing he noticed was the pirate ship coming out of the mist and rain like some sort of sea monster. It had already overtaken the *Hurricane* and had been able to blast away at it with its cannons while coming out of the fog. Now they were closing in to board.

Captain McGee's men were preparing to intercept the boarding, loading muskets and loosing swords. Some were still busy with the trying to keep the ship under control in the weather. Magnus chanced a glimpse over the side of the ship and wasn't surprised to see the waves nearly splashing over the lip.

“Are you sure about this?” Violetta had to yell to be heard over all the commotion.

Magnus shrugged. “I don’t really see that we have a choice.”

They stood back from the edge of the ship and watched as Reis’ ship closed with the *Hurricane*. It didn’t take long. Soon grapplers were sliding across on ropes, or jumping aboard from the huge pirate vessel. They met McGee’s crew head on with a clash of steel and an explosion of gun smoke and hot steel. A few pirates crashed through the line and Magnus and Violetta found themselves fighting for their lives. It wasn’t like a normal duel or skirmish you might find yourself in. This was war; brutish and unskilled. The sheer numbers and the small, soaked and slippery space was proving extremely difficult for Magnus and Violetta.

Violetta’s unsure footing wasn’t allowing her to utilize her amazing skill with the blade and she was being pressed backward and up the steps to the wheelhouse. Magnus fired his pistol, felling a pirate brute, but dropped it when the ship lurched to the side. He slashed with his sword before wincing as his back slammed against the far railing. The air around him was full of smoke, screams and the smell of gunpowder.

He dispatched the pirate that was pressing him back, and took a moment to see if Violetta was alright. She was cornered by two of the pirates who rushed at her. Smiling, she ducked slightly to the side, grabbed hold of them with her arms and flipped over the side of the ship.

Magnus couldn’t believe what she had just done. He turned and gazed down into the roiling sea, his face wet with the sea spray. There was no sign of her in the chopping waves.

He turned back around and realized he was alone for the moment. He wondered what to do.

WHAT SHOULD MAGNUS DO?

- 1) Jump overboard and try to save Violetta?**
- 2) Find more pirates to kill?**
- 3) Try to board Reis’ ship?**
- 4) Go below decks and hide?**
- 5) Start searching the dead bodies?**

AIF 101: Coding by Johnny Freebase

Editor’s note:

We are re-publishing Johnny Freebase’s excellent AIF 101 tutorials that were originally posted on alt.games.xtrek. It’s our feeling that there are enough new community members who may not be aware of the existence of this guide. The tutorial was originally posted as a series of articles and we will maintain that construct here. This is the sixth installment.

* * *

Now that you know pretty much what your game is about, you can choose an IF language in which to make it. You know what you need, now choose a language that allows you to do it. Don’t feel hemmed in by forcing yourself to choose a language that you already know... there’s nothing wrong with learning a new skill.

Language Selection

Generally speaking every language has its own good and bad points. Adrift is very simple to use for simple games, and has a nice built in auto map feature. If you dislike planning, it’s also easy to make up games "on the fly". TADS 2 or 3 is better suited for games involving complex NPC interactions and dialogue, as well as almost anything involving arithmetic functions or randomization.

Complex work in Adrift is accomplished through tasks. You take the line of input that a player might enter, like PULL LEVER or KISS MARY and decide what the results are. In TADS, the results of actions are stored as methods (little mini programs) within objects.

I don’t have any experience with Inform, AGT, Hugo, or any other language, so I really can’t comment. I survey I took of posters to alt.games.xtrek some time ago found that while approximately half of the authors who responded preferred to work in Adrift, over 80% of responding players preferred TADS games.

Log Files

Coding a game can be a daunting project. It can take a long time to code a game depending on how much time you spend on it. I find that it is best to work on programming/coding for at least an hour every day to keep it fresh in your mind. This isn't always feasible with work/school schedules and waxing and waning interest in a project. I recommend creating a log file for every project.

A log file is simply a record of the progress you've made in a game; it is usually a simple text file. I usually just list the project, its start date, and then a daily list of what was accomplished during that time. If I find myself skipping anything as I program, or am struck with inspiration that I cannot immediately implement, I make a note of it at the end of the log file under a TO DO heading. Keeping an accurate log file is imperative when working with someone else, so you both know what has been done and what needs to be done.

Organization

Organization is very important when programming. I keep all files associated with a project in its own directory. Art or sound files, ADRIFT ALRs, and anything for TADS. I usually call my log file "project name".LOG.

TADS TIP:

When programming in TADS, I divide every map and important npc into a separate file. NPC files I give the extension .NPC, maps get the extension .MAP. If the player object is complex, they become "project name".ME. Each of my libraries gets its own file (SEX.LIB, NPC.LIB, CLOTHING.LIB etc) and I include copies in the project folder. I usually have little more than the intro in the "project name".t file.

Introductory Text

The game's introductory text is usually the first thing I work out. I usually already have it written out to some degree during the planning stage. The needs of your introduction vary from game to game, but in general you want to get certain things across to the player... namely WHO and WHERE they are in at least a general sense. If the character or setting are not likely to be familiar with the player, you can sprinkle the early game with books, newspapers, scripted npc dialogue, etc that reveals these things to the player. Large text dumps are boring... the old creative writing adage of "show, don't tell" definitely applies to IF. The player should also have some sort of initial goal, even if it is just a minor push that will change within the first few turns of play.

Let us examine the introductory text we wrote for the Princess/Dragon idea.

You've never been terribly fond of royal balls, but as the King's Champion you are bound by both decorum and duty to attend. You hate the useless ceremonial armour you are forced to wear, hate the disgusting "gourmet" food they serve, and most of all, you hate the looks these soft courtiers give you, a battlefield veteran who earned his position not through an accident of birth but through the spilt blood of the kingdom's foes.

You'd much rather be out in the rain drilling with the guard, performing maneuvers in the mud. Still, for now, you're a soldier, and you follow orders. You may have gone a bit grey, but you're not deaf and the painful whispers that you have passed your prime and should retire still reach your ears. You're determined to cling grimly to your title until one of the younger knights manages to wrest it from you at tourney, or until your body at last fails you.

Your morbid musings are interrupted by a page.

"Sir Jordan", he politely speaks. "Her majesty desires your presence."

This tells us who we are (A knight, the Champion, getting on in years), where you are (a feudal kingdom, a fancy ball), and gives us an initial goal (meet the queen). Type it up, spell check it, and drop it into wherever it needs to go.

The Coding Cycle

As I've mentioned, coding is less intimidating if broken up into easier-to-manage chunks. Divide your game up by major scenes or locations, depending on whether your game is more location or event based. For each thusly divided scene/location, you will go through the following stages.

1. Locations:

Code each "room" in your game. Room descriptions should be fully typed up at this point, as should any necessary objects in the rooms. You can, if you like, make all included objects "fully functional" if you like, or simply leave them as "skeletons" that you can't really interact with yet and get back to them later.

Room descriptions should take sight, sound, and smell into account. NEVER include a player's actions in the room description, unless its a description they only ever see once. If a player LOOKS while in a room, and the description includes them looking around while they climb in through a window, that can be very jarring.

Here are the initial locations in our example game.

NORTHEAST CORNER OF BALLROOM

Soft elegant music fills the grand ballroom, which has been lavishly decorated for the King's 74th birthday ball. Delicate purple and gold streamers adorn the walls, and beautiful glass ornaments hang high above you from the distant domed ceiling. This is a quieter corner of the grand ballroom, almost devoid the guests filling the spacious room to the south and west.

Objects to code: *music, streamers, ornaments, ceiling, ballroom, guests*

We have two more ballroom locations, to the south and west. Each will include the same first two lines.

SOUTHERN BALLROOM

Soft elegant music fills the grand ballroom, which has been lavishly decorated for the King's 74th birthday ball. Delicate purple and gold streamers adorn the walls, and beautiful glass ornaments hang high above you from the distant domed ceiling. The crowd of party goers here is clustered about a slightly raised dais upon which rests a long banquet table laden with rich foods. Through the crowd you can spy a relatively quiet corner to the north, and you think the King is off somewhere to the northwest. An almost hidden doorway leads out into a small garden to the east.

Objects to code: *music, streamers, ornaments, ceiling, ballroom, guests, table, food, corner, King, doorway, garden*

WEST BALLROOM

Soft elegant music fills the grand ballroom, which has been lavishly decorated for the King's 74th birthday ball. Delicate purple and gold streamers adorn the walls, and beautiful glass ornaments hang high above you from the distant domed ceiling. The crowd here is particularly thick, offering relief only in an isolated corner to the east, and a balcony to the west. You can see a banquet table off to the southeast.

Objects to code: *music, streamers, ornaments, ceiling, ballroom, guests, corner, balcony, table*

GARDEN

Well secluded from the vibrant party within the ballroom to the west, this peaceful garden seems almost grey under the pale moonlight. Exotic night blooming flowers from far off lands fill the garden with a soothing atmosphere, and the chirping of crickets overpowers the soft distant music from within.

Objects to code: *ballroom, garden, moon, flowers, chirping, crickets*

BALCONY

This balcony offers a temporary refuge from the hustle and bustle of the ball back inside to the east. It looks out over the moat

around the castle at the surrounding countryside, bathed in pale light from the full moon overhead.

Objects to code: ball, moat, countryside, moon

Keep in mind that after the dragon attacks, we'll change these to something else reflecting the loss of a party atmosphere, and possibly include the sight of the dragon flying away with the princess visible from the balcony.

2. NPCs

Next, we code the NPCs. In TADS, I give each NPC its own #included file. At this point, it might be prudent to also include any items the npcs carry, body parts, what have you. At this point all that is needed is to code the NPCs as static objects with little interactivity. If you like, you can code up an NPCs dialogue responses and AI scripting, or you can leave it until later.

3. PUZZLES

If you've decided on any puzzles involving the NPCs, Objects, or travel, you can implement them now. For example, lets say the door to the garden is stuck shut. To open it and gain access to the queen, you'll need to get some grease from the food on the banquet table. In ADRIFT, that would require you to create a greasy food item (lets say butter), and add a RUB BUTTER ON HINGE or whatever task, and add a hidden hinge object that appears to be stuck, and obstruct attempts at opening the door. In TADS, you'd need to create the butter, door, and hinge items, make the door only openable if the hinge is greased, and add the functionality of greasing the hinge.

4. EVENTS

At this point you can add the coding for the major events occurring in a scene/map.

For our example, first we'd code in the queen's seduction attempt. Each turn she'd make bolder and bolder advances on the player... innuendo, teasing caresses, exposing a bit of leg, groping, whatever... until the player relents or leaves the area.

This would trigger the second event, the chaos and confusion of the dragon attack. Screams and sounds of conflict from the ballroom... by the time the player returns we can change all of the descriptions to reflect the carnage. Stunned party goers, some scorch marks, and the princess is gone. Some generic guard NPCs can be milling about. When the PC gets to the area where the Princess was, the Prince will make some sort of plan, only to be interrupted by the king's assertion that only you, the Champion, can rescue his son's bride. Lady Elva is selected to go as well. As soon as the player heads out of the ballroom to get prepared...

We have a title screen. Display credits, the title, whatever. Transition to the next major scene/location.

If you get to the end of the game in this scene, work that out as an event as well.

5. DETAILS

Finally, we have the detail work. Add in any objects you'd expect to find in the area, flesh out what you need to flesh out, and fill out the NPCs dialogue actions. Make sure everything is as interactive as you have the patience to get it.

When you've done, alpha test the completed section by trying to do everything, make sure it works. Later you'll have beta testers, but right now just make sure you can do what you want to, that everything is presented as you want.

Repeat this 5-step process for every major scene, making sure the scene transitions work as well.

***Bob's Garage*, a review by Grimm Sharlak**

Game Info: *Bob's Garage*, released October 2006
Author: A Bomire
Platform: Inform
Size: 154 KB, zipped
Content: m/f
Game Type: Puzzle fest
Length: Short
Reviewed: November 2006
Extras: None

Basic Plot:

The plot of this short game is straight and to the point; you play the role of a mechanic, who after a sexy encounter on the train to work, ends up fixing a car for a particularly thankful customer.

Overall Thoughts:

Bob's Garage is A Bomire's "test game" for Inform 7, written while reviewing the new coding language. As such it is very short and very easy, but still a fun little game.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

The only real puzzle in the game is how to fix the car, and finding the necessary parts to do so. As long as you search everything, you'll never get stuck.

Sex:

Despite it being such a short game, there are two well-written sex scenes in this game. The opening scene especially is quite intense and features a pregnant woman, something I've never seen in AIF before. Relax, though, you don't actually have sex with her!

Technical:

Not a single problem I could see, which is admirable for a first effort with a new language.

Intangibles:

As I mentioned earlier, the addition of a pregnant woman in one scene was definitely different.

Final Thoughts:

While short, *Bob's Garage* is another well written AIF from A Bomire. The only thing that could have made it better was if it were longer!

Rating: B

***Baron's Plot 2: Key to Eternity*, a review by Grimm Sharlak**

Game Info: *Baron's Plot 2: Key to Eternity*
Author: GoblinBoy
Platform: TADS
Size: 1.4 MB (zipped)
Content: m/f, f/f, group, voyeuristic
Game Type: Sex romp
Length: Long
Reviewed: November 2006
Extras: Pictures

Basic Plot:

The world of Eros is in danger yet again, and playing as both Princess Dania, who now carries the

Gift of Phallius, and a Captain in the army. You need to find the Great Positions to seal away the evil that is threatening the land.

Overall Thoughts:

Holy crap, man, this game is long! GoblinBoy has obviously put in a lot of effort here, with this tale spanning multiple chapters, with a large cast of characters and two main characters. While the original game took place in just one castle, *Key to Eternity* also goes to multiple areas, traversing across the fantasy world GoblinBoy has created.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

Considering the nature of the game, some may be wondering why I have specified the game type as "Sex romp" instead of "Puzzle fest" because believe me, there are a lot of puzzles in this game. However, the puzzles are mostly of a simple nature, and are mostly solved with sex.

The idea of the game is all about finding things; both the Positions, all the points and as a nice little bonus, various books about the world of Eros.

Sex:

The sex in *Key to Eternity* has a particular quirk that makes it unique. As mentioned, you go through the game learning sexual positions, and as such you can use these positions in any subsequent sex scenes as long as you learned them! This certainly helps avoid any tedium that some may find from the usual "fuck pussy, fuck ass, seeya later" scenes in other games.

Along with its fantasy setting, you'll find yourself shagging more than the usual suspects as well. Various fantastic creatures are present, and with the dual protagonists, you get scenes from both the male and female point of view. Not to mention the climactic scene where you get to choose your point of view, which comes off quite well in giving the player another level of control.

Technical:

Despite the wide scope of the game, I came across virtually no bugs or issues. While this is admirable, the simple nature of the game structure and its puzzles makes it hard to break, both from a programming and playing angle.

Intangibles:

If the thought of sex with non-human (although still definitely humanoid) characters irks you, you may want to avoid this game. Also, there are two scenes which deal with near rape (although both are avoidable, and relatively easy to do so) so this may irk some players as well.

Final Thoughts:

This game is truly one of the more epic pieces of AIF I have ever played. As both a sequel and a stand alone game it is long, well written and enjoyable.

Rating: A



This is "O Erin!" #24.

All previous strips can be viewed on the AIF Newsletter web site and on -3-'s new site: <http://comics.aifcommunity.org>. Don't miss them!

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Staff

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BBBen is an AIF author. His games have received two Erin awards, numerous nominations and first place in A. Bomire's 2004 mini-comp.

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Bitterfrost is a longtime IF/AIF player working on his first (and last) game, *How I Got Syphilix*.

Submitting your work to "Inside Erin"

Please direct all comments, articles, reviews, discussion and art to the Editor, A. Ninny, at aifsubmissions@gmail.com.

