



Letter from the Editor

The recent demise of the newly-created AIF Community Portal has made this a month where I felt disconnected from the goings-on in the community. Even though the portal and the message boards within were not heavily used (a few messages per day on average), I was seeing them become a primary source for information and collaboration in the community. With the announcements, the forums and the growing list of downloads, the community portal was being used by hundreds of AIF fans. It was also by far the easiest-to-use and most interactive of any of the several AIF portal sites around.

The AIF community is small. The roster of those people who contribute to the community is far smaller. There are probably a few thousand individuals who play AIF, as many as a hundred who will post on various forums, and only a few dozen who actually create the content. It is extremely useful for the community as a whole to have one place to call 'home,' a place versatile enough so that those people who merely consume AIF can watch for new releases, for people who like

Continued on page 4

This Month in AIF by BBBen

Well, I'm back. I wasn't able to write this column for last month's issue, and A. Ninny had to cover for me. This was due to an unavoidable hardware problem that hopefully won't resurface again. The problem is I was away on the month we got our new comic strip! Cool, isn't it? Hi, Erin! You're a star!

Speaking of hardware trouble, as most of you probably know the aifcommunity.org server went down this month, losing all the data for the AIF Community Portal, the *Inside Erin* site, and others. This incident has demonstrated the obvious problem with the community putting all its eggs in one basket (or one server), in that it can all come crashing down at once.

Continued on page 5

Interview with Adam Hendine by A. Bomire

This month I have the distinct pleasure of interviewing one the authors who were a big influence in my own game authorship style: Adam Hendine. Although he hasn't been that active in the AIF community in recent years, the three games he produced stand out as classics of the genre.

AB: I think every interview starts this way, but I can't really see why not to ask the question: What would you like to tell our readers about yourself?

AH: Don't worry about starting with something you think is unoriginal - just position it as a homage to interview questions and all will be well. I've got away with that for years... Anyway: Adam Hendine is a thirty-something male with a

Continued on page 2

Contents

Page 1

Letter from the Editor

This Month in AIF

Adam Hendine Interview

Page 5

Erin Street Interviews

Page 7

Non-Linearity and CYOA

Page 9

Review of *Turnberry Manor*

Page 10

Review of *Crossworlds Pt. 3*

Page 11

Review of *OMM: Abduction*

Page 12

Review of *Tomorrow Never Comes*

Page 14

Erin!

Info about *Inside Erin*

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.

wonderful wife, a dead end job with a tyrannical boss, and a baby on the way - his first! Found that out less than a couple of weeks ago and joyously terrified. Hobbies include role playing games (the storytelling kind, not the computer kind or dressing up as goblins kind) and reading. Lots of reading. Mainly junk.

AB: As far as I know, you have written three games: *Theater, Peril in the Skies* and *Academy of Spies*. (If I am mistaken, please let me know.) They told the story of members of the Darcy family. After three games, you suddenly quit. If you don't mind my asking - What happened?

AH: Actually I've written a couple more games than that BUT have never released them. They were written pre-Theatre (please note the spelling - in case you couldn't tell from the preponderance of SM in my games, I'm English!) and before I got to grips with the TADS language. Some of the bugs that were evident in Theatre run rampant in these earlier efforts, and I also hadn't learned that individual characters could have individual action-descriptors so some of the repeated actions were a bit bland. I'd be ashamed to have them see the light of day, but they were a good learning ground for me.

As a blatant tease I'll even describe them:

Casimir's Treat - was written as a birthday present for Mrs. Hendine - it was based around characters from a role playing campaign I'd run for her. The lead was a despotic Eastern European monarch in a vaguely medieval setting who was out to enjoy HIS birthday evening - with the aid of his pretty but modest wife, his mistress, her saucy maid, some voyeurism involving the most beautiful but most chaste noblewoman of the court and a plot to help a favoured warrior get one over on his tease of a girlfriend.

Office Politics - the lead character was the CEO of a (frankly unlikely) corporation with some very strict and unusual rules concerning dress, deportment and behaviour. The plot involved (ahem) explaining to some new female staff just why they should have read the small print of their contracts a little more closely and building up to the discovery that the lead character's "perfect PA" had committed an almost unpardonable faux pas and a certain amount of... correction... might be needed. The usual Hendine mix of sex, friendly lesbians, voyeurism and mild SM.

The "Trilogy" I released does indeed revolve around the Darcy family (albeit only in a tangential way in *Academy*). In fact there is another Darcy game in circulation, but it's not an Adam Hendine creation... in fact it was one of the first I played where the atmosphere proved more compelling than the sex and puzzle element - quite an inspiration for me despite it being a pretty small, buggy and simple game. It's the main reason I started writing AIF, and I used the Darcy name as a sly reference for my own amusement (the hero of this old game being Henry Darcy. [**AB: *Rakish* by Nigel Downs.**] I think he would have approved of the way his ancestors turned out!)

And why did I quit after three? Well the truth is that I have a major personality defect which I've only really recently identified. So long as I'm learning new things about a subject I tend to throw myself whole-heartedly into it- learning TADS was one such thing. Theatre was a first trial for something I dared release and from feedback to that I learned that more was possible - hence Peril. After Peril I was ready to give up but then I thought "I wonder if I could write a female lead..." so I did. Afterwards I didn't really have a "next big challenge" to explore and I imagine some other interest grabbed my butterfly attention away from TADS.

I wish I could provide a more interesting/dramatic reason but there really isn't one, sorry.

AB: I do apologize for the incorrect spelling. You raise an interesting point here - it seems to me that many of the games released by English authors deal with S&M in one way or another, much more so than any other group of AIF authors. Is S&M such a big part of English culture, or possibly sub-culture?

AH: Actually I don't think it is. I made the comment more or less as a joke, since the predilection for corporal punishment is apparently referred to on the continent as the *vice anglaise* and I've read one or two books that refer to a fondness for spanking etc as "a bit English for my tastes." So I suppose there must be something to the stereotype, but it's not something one encounters everyday while going to the shop (store) for some biscuits (cookies) and milk (sodie pop). Every other day perhaps... I personally include the SM stuff because it's something that's part of my own kinks but whether those kinks have been formed by some hidden current in English culture or not I don't know. I have noticed that there do seem to be cultural trends though - American porn seems

obsessed with oral sex, German porn with anal (if you're lucky- there's far stranger stuff coming from that neck of the woods. If any German friend of yours points out his glass coffee-table with pride stay well clear) and Japanese porn with sunburned teenagers.

I do know that joking about SM stuff is pretty common here - if there's a chance to make a smutty innuendo about smacking, spanking, caning, discipline etc etc you can guarantee it will be made even by mainstream types - but I don't know if that is indicative of anything.

Good grief Hendine, can an answer get any more vague. Onward please, question-master!

AB: *Peril in the Skies* is considered a classic by many AIF players - not so much for the sex, which is excellent, but for the wonderful storyline and atmosphere. I know it inspired me! What were some of the things or works that inspired you?

AH: I'm glad you enjoyed it! A large part of my inspiration came from my hobby as a role playing referee - I've been designing playable plots for a couple of decades now, and hopefully improving with age. I've always enjoyed the larger than life aspect of pulp fiction (the genre, not the profanity-rich moving picture) so a few years ago I penned my own set of rules called "Spicy Tales" - allowing adventures in a pulp background and incorporating a few racy elements for the benefit of Mrs. H and I.

The whole plot of *Peril* was originally a face to face adventure I ran for her about 6 months before I penned the AIF version. The details were different but the central concept of Professor Hades in his floating sky fortress protected by glamorous leather-clad female fighter aces was lifted straight from my RPG adventure. Mrs. Hendine's character in that by the way was one Anthea Dashwood who I've decided was the grandmother of Candy, star of *Academy* (I do like continuity!).

AB: Your game *Peril in the Skies* was ground breaking in that it was one of the first games for which sex wasn't a goal, but simply the icing on the cake, so to speak. What prompted you to make that type of game, when the general trend in AIF at the time was sex oriented games?

AH: Simply put: I wrote the type of game I'd like to play. A lot of the AIF around at the time was really good (and I enjoyed playing it all) but I like a little more fantasy and escapism to be involved in the plot of anything that has to hold my attention. Besides I never really fancied Deanna Troi so 90% of the stuff around then went over my head... Since there was nothing around that hit my hot-buttons 100%, I decided to write some of my own.

AB: *Academy of Spies* was written with a female protagonist. What were some of the challenges you faced in writing from a female point of view?

AH: LOL - I think you're being a little too kind there. *Academy* was written from the point of view of a male pornographer writing about a female; not from a female point of view. Candy (who followed very much in her grandmother's dainty high-heeled footsteps) was a clichéd oversexed spy-babe in a spoof setting. I'd blush to even make a claim that she was written from a female point of view.

One of the problems in writing *Academy* however was spotted by one of the earlier reviewers: Adam Hendine just doesn't find men sexy... so it was very hard to write a straight sex scene for Candy. Hence the predominance of Lesbian and Perv encounters. Must book some counseling so I can get more in touch with my feminine side...

AB: Which one of your three games was the most fun to write? Why do you feel that way?

AH: *Peril*, definitely. I had a pre-existing plot from my RPG version and one thing I enjoyed was seeing just how much I could include of that original work in this computer version. Plus the setting has always appealed to me and the melodrama too. Anyway, Jack Darcy is just such a fun guy to write - he's got all the Dominant Bastard Gene that Robert Darcy had in Theatre, but tempered with a little more humour and likeability.

AB: I definitely think *Peril in the Skies* is one of my favorite games. What games are your favorites?

AH: It's a difficult question to answer and while I hate to sound like some sappy Hollywood Celeb, I have enjoyed and learned a little at least from almost every AIF game I've played. As I mentioned earlier I enjoy anything with a plot & interesting setting a lot more than a generic

shagfest however. I thought *British Fox* was magnificent, for instance, I was awestruck. Very glad to see Lucilla sweep the last set of awards - well deserved.

AB: I know you hate to hear this, but I feel duty-bound to ask it - is there anything on the horizon? Will we be hearing any more from the Darcy family?

AH: Good grief is that the time...? I really must be.. Stop mumbling, I can't hear what you're saying...

(sigh) I'm sorry but it is unlikely. Regardless of my diminishing amount of spare time, I would honestly feel daunted to step back into the arena now. There are a lot of really good authors producing some magnificent works now, in a style which really appeals to me. I honestly don't think Adam Hendine is needed - there are so many people like Lucilla and your good self [**AB: Thanks!**] doing a far better job than I could hope to - and I just don't think I could compete. I won't write it off entirely though - if inspiration strikes then I won't be able to stop myself opening up the old compiler just to see if I can work out how to simulate "X" using TADS.... which is how the whole ride started in the first place.

AB: Thanks for taking the time to answer these questions.

AH: My pleasure.

If you are interested in playing any of Adam Hendine's games, he has written three, all in TADS 2 format:

Theatre: A Knight at the Opera
Peril in the Skies
Academy of Spies

He received 2002 Erin Awards for "Best Female PC in a New Age Game" (*Academy of Spies*), "Best Lead Female NPC in a New Age Game" (*Theatre: A Knight at the Opera*), and "Best Female-Female Scene in a New Age Game" (*Academy of Spies*).

Letter from the Editor (Continued)

to know what's going on behind the scenes to read up on the latest discourse, and for contributors and authors to share ideas and try to organize major projects, like the community-based game project that was (and still is) being designed.

The portal did the job for this admirably, far better than the Yahoo AIF Archive group. Yahoo has serious shortcomings. It limits bandwidth for downloads. It limits overall storage. It lacks threaded discussion. It lacks the ability for users to post announcements outside of the single message board. Files available for download cannot be sorted by anything other than file name. Finally, it requires users to register with Yahoo. In an area of pornographic entertainment, clearly, not requiring registration allows users to maintain a greater level of anonymity.

Presuming that the original portal data cannot be recovered and reinstated, I encourage its founders, Matrix Mole, Dris Arter and Zeiram to rebuild the portal site. I'm also putting out the call to all AIFers to step up and offer to lend a hand in rebuilding the portal. If you can do some coding or writing for them, email me at the newsletter and I'll forward your offers of help to them.

Thanks. The community will be far better off for it.

Several other random notes:

- Remember that if you're writing a game and you want it to go up against the *Ideal Pacific Coast University* juggernaut in competition for the 2005 Erins, it must be released to the public no later than October 31, 2005.
- If you wish to participate in running the 2005 Erins (judging, writing, web design, graphics), please let me know.
- If you've used beta testers from the roster on this site, I'd be interested in your reactions. How did the testers work out? At some point I think it would be helpful to establish some sort of tester rating system.

This Month in AIF (Continued)

However, Matrix Mole has promised to keep much more rigorous back-ups to avoid any repeat of the problem, and so hopefully the issue won't arise again. At the time of writing the AIF Community Portal is still not back up, and may not be for a while yet. There hasn't been a word on the re-establishment of the site, so we'll have to wait and see. In the meantime, just use the Yahoo! AIF Archive and/or alt.games.xtrek.

I want to take the time this month to discuss the term 'AIF'. I asked around on AGX but nobody seems to know exactly when or where the term 'AIF' originated, and the earliest references available suggest its usage was already common in the sense that it is used now. The context (and common sense) suggest that the term was first used by the IF community, which is interesting since some in the IF community has seen the AIF community as having excluded itself needlessly and hermetically from the rest of IF. The reason this exclusion has been seen as needless is that the name *Adult Interactive Fiction* suggests to them that IF'ers are not on the whole adult enough to deal with AIF games. A similar, though different, perspective has been that since AIF is "adult", and adult means mature, then AIF should also include mature content, not just sex fantasies.

There is disagreement about what AIF is or should be. Some people feel that AIF should be treated like IF but with some sex to spice things up. Other people prefer to see AIF as a type of game that is all about sex with some interactivity and maybe a bit of story to spice it up - kind of like an interactive version of *erotica*. Another line of thought is to look at AIF as including not just these things, but also (and perhaps preferably) including other 'adult' subject matter, such as horror, violence and serious, literary explorations of sex. To a large extent I think that people should just write what they want, call it AIF if they want, and not bitch about the type of thing other people are writing, but I'm biased.

I do have an idea for a solution, however. I would suggest a division within AIF - two sub-categories. The first is for the less common form of AIF that attempts to be basically like IF but with some sex (or possibly not, there could be violence etc.) and is not there just for the sex. This type of AIF does not aspire to be pornography, but rather aspires to be a form of IF that is not closed-minded - it aspires to be Mature Interactive Fiction, and therefore I suggest the label MIF. The other type of AIF is AIF that does aspire to be pornography - these are the romp games, the sex, sex, sex, girls, girls, girls, games that are designed with everything structured around sexual fantasy and titillation as the central concern. For these games (which make up the majority of the games out there and include the games I write, in point of fact) I suggest the label XIF. Therefore if someone writes an XIF game they needn't be the subject of disapproval from someone who was for whatever reason hoping for an MIF game. Of course I know this sub-division won't occur, but it's food for thought if you're planning to write an AIF game - is it more an MIF game, or an XIF game?

New games for September 2005

Fever Cabin — by GoddoG, released 27 September, 2005. This game is comprised of a series of seemingly unconnected episodes, each made to loosely resemble a different movie genre, and all have a *Twilight Zone*-esque feeling about them.

Erin Street: Interviews with AIF Players by A. Ninny

Welcome to Erin Street, where we interview AIF players and ask them their opinions about their favorite AIF games and issues facing the AIF community.

This is the third in a series of brief player interviews that will appear in *Inside Erin*. After this month, this feature will be on hiatus. We'll bring it back sometime in the future. This month, we thank Boss Hogg, The Dew and A. Necroignis for participating in the interview.

***Inside Erin:* How did you discover AIF and what was it that grabbed you about it?**

Boss Hogg: It was late June, 1998, and I was a regular trawler on alt.sex.stories. A post with the subject "[Emy discovers life - text game - read info here](#)" appeared. Although I'd been playing regular IF for several years, it was the first AIF game I'd ever heard of. EDL was buggy and hard to win, but that made it part of a challenge to see all the text. What really grabbed me for good was when *Moist* came out a few months later. I was very impressed.

The Dew: I ran across a TADS2 game site while searching for *Zork* games online. :D

A. Necroignis: *X-trek*. I've always been a big *Star Trek* junkie.

Inside Erin: Which AIF SSS (steamy sex scenes) do you remember, fondly or otherwise; what made them memorable?

Boss Hogg: In *Moist*, the scene with Ilsa, the guard, totally turned me on, probably because it appealed to my specific kinks. *A Night with Troi*, which is basically one long SSS with no plot, was pretty good too because I always thought Marina Sirtis was the hottest thing on legs in the Trek universe. (Until Jeri Ryan, that is.) Finally, the SSS with Keesha in *Sam Shooter 3* was pure joy, again because of my own predilections. So I guess the moral is that I find scenes memorable when they strike a chord with what I wish I was doing myself, rather than how well the author has actually written it; a scene written by Tennessee Williams with a Barbie doll probably won't get my attention, while amateurs can get me going easily with a fat chick or some BDSM.

The Dew: I would have to say One-eyed Jack's *Sam Shooter 1: Graduation Day*, the playing doctor scene with Sam's sister's dumb blonde friend. (C'mon, it's always a trip when you mix the humor and the sex all together so seamlessly!)

Inside Erin: We at the newsletter have made a big push to reduce the bugginess of AIF games. How big a deal is it to you that the games you play be technically clean?

Boss Hogg: It's pretty important. If I get really frustrated by unreachable objects or guess-the-word problems, I'll probably not bother to continue playing. I've got a strong aversion to ADRIFT for that reason, which has earned me some scorn, no doubt. Maybe next year I'll give it another try.

The Dew: It's a huge deal when you struggle to play a game. A good example is *Devil Child* which is an awesome game but there are HUGE guess the verb issues in it. Even with a walkthrough, most of the game is useless because of a bug in the English class segment that makes it so you can't even finish the game.

A. Necroignis: Technical perfection is not required so long as the game is playable and constructive criticism is welcome.

Inside Erin: What recurring bugs or technical problems do you find give you the biggest headaches when you play?

Boss Hogg: Misspellings and other really poor writing always give me a jolt. But being told "It's not here" or "I don't know that verb" in whatever form is always the most frustrating.

The Dew: Again, guess-the-verb problems, or when authors apply a task to the wrong room, so that even if you use the proper command in the correct room, the game still won't work.

A. Necroignis: Guess-the-verb. I hate guessing what someone else was thinking when they wrote the game.

Inside Erin: How do you think images, sound and HTML effects can be best used in AIF, if at all?

Boss Hogg: I'm fine without them, thanks.

The Dew: Sound has never made a huge impact for me in AIF games. Images work well if authors tie them in to their x (character). I loved the way Chris Cole worked them into his games. As far as HTML I don't think that it's that big a deal in AIF to tell the truth.

A. Necroignis: there are already several games out there that incorporate images, etc and most are pretty solid games.

If you'd like to participate in a future "Erin Street" interview, send an e-mail to the Editor. We'll be looking for participants when this feature returns.

Interactive fiction and games in general have a largely under-realised potential for storytelling that is different than anything else available in either books or movies. Many computer games seem to offer the opportunity to experience an 'interactive movie', while adult interactive fiction, being text-based, seems to offer the chance of an interactive erotic story, or perhaps even an erotic 'choose your own adventure'. In my opinion neither of these perspectives are perfect, and AIF has more potential.

The idea of a 'choose your own adventure' story can seem exciting at first, but I think once the novelty wears off the results tend to be a bit disappointing. This is because good writing fundamentally is not about giving the reader what they want and expect all the time. Rather, good writing is about making the reader want something, and while AIF does have a strong element of fantasy gratification, even in AIF the best writing will surprise the reader.

In a 'choose your own adventure' story, the choices you get are limited and if they are going to surprise the reader, then there will probably be an element of annoyance, rather than appreciation at the result. Imagine a circumstance that is reminiscent of some of the 'choose your own adventure' writing that I read as a kid:

You are riding on the train when at the other end of the car you see Alfonzo, the gangster, playing solitaire on his tray table. Alfonzo doesn't know what you look like, so what do you do?

If you want to sit quietly and keep a discrete eye on Alfonzo, turn to page 17.

If you want to run to the end of the car and jump out of the moving train, turn to page 23.

The sensible choice seems to be page 17, so let's turn to it.

You sit quietly, observing Alfonzo when you feel a knife get pressed against your throat from behind. A voice whispers in your ear, "Mr Alfonzo, he don't like to be watched!"

You are murdered in front of a train car full of witnesses.

You are dead.

Okay, that didn't work, so let's try page 23.

You run to the end of the carriage, fling the door open and leap out as bullets whiz through the air behind you. You roll and tumble onto a fortunately soft patch of foliage. As the train shoots off into the distance, a beautiful woman in a race car pulls up and says, "Get in! I've been sent to help you! And let me make this clear right away, I don't date people I'm working with!"

Maybe this isn't the best example of how to use the medium or in fact how to write a half-decent story, but it illustrates the point that being surprised by the results of your choices is not particularly gratifying. If you are making a choice, you want the results of that choice to be reasonably predictable. Unpredictability of this kind is only fun when you are taking in the story in a more passive way.

What's more, a really good story should have an ending that resonates somehow with the story and characters as a whole. If you want to create the story, perhaps you would be better off actually going out and writing one, because the results of something where the plot is truly guided by the reader are generally going to be rather unsatisfying. Of course, multiple endings that are up to the player can be really good in some circumstances. In some games, getting to pick the girl that you end up with can be very gratifying, such as in the classic hentai game *True Love*. This is true, however, because in this case the story is not so critical an element, and the game is more about character interaction. The game plays in largely the same way except that you focus on different girls in different run-throughs of the game; the basic plot doesn't differ too much except at the end.

So how then do we take advantage of this great potential that I mentioned? Well, books and movies have an element of subtlety in them, if they are any good. There are layers to what goes on that you pick up, while only being given the apparent surface information. It's not a great example, but if you take the passage I wrote above, there are probably a range of things inherent in the stupid little world I created that you can pick up instantly without being told.

- The hero is probably some kind of sleuth or investigator.

- Alfonso has henchmen, probably a gang, and presumably some sort of means of wealth creation or importance.
- The beautiful woman is some kind of special agent, because who else, when chasing a murderer, would drive a race car?
- The woman will almost certainly be a love interest. She has some kind of past with guys she worked with trying or succeeding to pick her up, and it didn't go well, but her icy demeanour will thaw...

Anyway, I don't just mean to point out what's predictable, but rather to point out how we read a lot into a situation that is put before us in a narrative without ever having to be told all of it. In such a weak and clichéd set-up you can almost extrapolate the whole story from one little passage. In a good story, however, the writer will lead you to think certain things without telling them, and because you figured them out yourself they are more engaging and feel more real. If the writer is really good, they will often then surprise you by turning what you've figured out onto its head.

In games and AIF we can have this level of subtlety, though it is rarely applied. What we can also have to make the story more immersive, however, is another layer of discovery, a more active form of discovery. A player can come into a room and see a description:

This room is lushly furnished, with fine paintings all over the walls. There is a Persian rug on the floor and several bookshelves packed with those old-style books without dust jackets or interesting covers that only ever appear in rooms in old mansions like this one.

Since the player is looking for a safe, and since the main character in this particular AIF game is "Shirley Holmes – the world's greatest sextective", the player checks out the paintings.

> x paintings

These are portraits of dead, rich people. One of them, a portrait of the current owner of the house, Lord Vunderflibilt, is hung a little crooked.

> get portrait of Lord Vunderflibilt

You take the portrait of the handsome Lord Vunderflibilt off the wall and behind it is a safe!

Here what has happened is the player has read the surroundings, understood the world, thought for him or herself, and then figured out what had to be done. What would be a poor scene in a book or movie is much more interesting simply because the player has experienced it as if it were actually happening to them. This principle applies much more strongly to a sex scene, where the player can enjoy the sex scene in what feels like a much less vicarious and voyeuristic way than if they were watching a porno.

Another thing that this form of fiction has is the possibility for a level of detail and involvement that is largely dictated by the player's own interest. If a player finds a particular sex scene boring in AIF, they can usually get through it rather quickly and onto something that engages them more, without having to hit a fast-forward button or skip a few pages like you would in a film or book. You just continue with the next step without stopping to smell the roses. If the game is good, it will then allow the player to become more immersed in parts that they do like, examining the other characters in greater detail, trying all sorts of different positions etc.

If you've played the computer game *Half-Life 2*, you will probably realise that while the game can be played as a simple shoot-em-up action spectacular with little in the way of breaks or thought, the game also has a lot of depth, and careful exploration will reveal a lot of detail. Talking to people you don't need to talk to, stopping to hear announcements over the tv, reading posters and graffiti on the walls and doing quite a lot of reading between the lines, none of these things are in any way useful to you in killing the next zombie that pops up, but they will give you a story and a world that is very clever and carefully constructed. The information is withheld from the player, and must be sought out and discovered if the player wants the whole story. Failing to answer the reader's questions about a story is the best motivator for the reader to keep reading.

Any form of fiction will be interpreted differently by each reader. Each reader will create a different reading based on their own perspective and how much they take in, even if many people's readings will be quite similar to one another's. Non-linearity could be used very effectively to enhance this; not to allow people to try and write their own story (which will never really work in my opinion) but to read their own story. You can have plot divergences in such a method but they each have to resonate and be worthwhile. Non-linearity should not just be a gimmick. It should not be included for its own sake, but rather you should use it if you actually have something interesting to do with it. Extra detail or plot possibilities are pointless if they are boring, and sometimes I feel it is better to limit interactivity in order to promote a more carefully

crafted piece of fiction.

A 'choose your own adventure' story is not, in my opinion, the best way to exploit the possibilities of the non-linearity of games. Rather, I prefer a depth and complexity to be woven into the setting and characters that takes work and interest for the player to discover. This is not of course to say that some level of branching plots can't be a good thing, just that the best fiction ever written has not been 'choose your own adventure'. Dickens, for example, never wrote in that particular form, and the story-telling power of games can be used in a more subtle and smooth way. Non-linearity does not have to take over a game, but it certainly should be used where it can to deepen a game.

Game Reviews

Turnberry Manor, a review by BBBen

Game Info:	<i>Turnberry Manor</i> - released 5th Oct 2004
Author:	DeLaFlunk
Platform:	ADRIFT 3.9
Size:	433KB
Content:	m/f, f/f, m/f/f
Game Type:	Romp
Length:	Long
Reviewed:	September 2005
Extras:	None

Basic Plot:

You take over Turnberry Manor, an isolated country mansion, and with it the duty to care for the young women that live there.

Overall Thoughts:

I have mixed feelings on what to say about this game, I guess I'll just say that I think this game is very good but a little over-ambitious. I think DeLaFlunk's writing is strong and his characters are good, and I think it's a little unfortunate that the game's flaws may have left a diminished impression on players of what could otherwise have been a more acclaimed work.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

There are some puzzles, but I'm afraid they're a bit obscured by the technical problems. Often figuring out what you are supposed to do is not the problem, it's more a question of guess-the-command. Still, there is not much to distract from the sex, so it plays well for a romp game nevertheless. There is probably not much here for anyone who doesn't enjoy an AIF romp, but that can be said about many of my favourite AIF games.

Sex:

There is quite a bit, and some of it is quite good and memorable. There are several characters that I really appreciated, particularly Hope, Hannah and Cindy. Some of the sex seemed a little redundant, but there are a number of good scenes that made the experience quite satisfying. Unfortunately, though, I had enough technical trouble that I wasn't able to see everything in the game.

Technical:

This is, unfortunately, where I have to criticise the game rather more than I would like to. The technical side of the game is fairly shoddy, and I think this can largely be attributed to the large size of *Turnberry Manor*. If it had been smaller then I think the game wouldn't have been such a problem, but as it is there are a large number of little niggles and several more serious bugs. Navigating the bugs is in fact something of a challenge, and as I played I was surprised that DeLaFlunk was able to stick with the game so long as it was apparently becoming somewhat unmanageable to write.

I'm not sure if there are game-killer bugs per se, but I certainly got stuck without the ability to continue through the game. Maybe it was just guess-the-command trouble, but I knew what I was supposed to do and couldn't get through. Though I'm pretty sure I saw most of the game, but not being able to finish or see everything is a pretty serious problem, and a bad blow to the game as a whole.

Intangibles:

The whole rambling, discovering-the-house nature of the game is quite appealing to me – it reminds me of the hentai game *Nocturnal Illusion*. There is an oddness about *Turnberry Manor* that may simply be because the story is a little unguided, but I will choose to be more generous about it because I kind of liked the atmosphere.

Final Thoughts:

As I said before, I think this game was over-ambitious. I think it should have been pruned down to a more manageable size by cutting out some of the less necessary bits and focusing more on the strongest characters. I find it a bit difficult to rate *Turnberry Manor* because I need to reconcile the roughness of the game with the genuinely good elements. As I can't rate purely for potential, I'll give this game a rating based on its reality and say that I hope to see more games from DeLaFlunk, as the problems he has encountered will probably be smoothed over by experience.

Rating: B-

Crossworlds Part 3 - The Final Far, Far Away Frontier, a review by A. Bomire

Game Info:	<i>Crossworlds Part 3 – The Final Far, Far Away Frontier</i> released 1/3/2005
Author:	BBBen
Platform:	Adrift 3.9
Size:	217 KB (zipped)
Content:	m/f, m/f/f, aliens
Type:	Puzzle Fest
Length:	Short
Reviewed:	September 2005
Extras:	None

Basic Plot:

This is the third installment in the *Crossworlds* saga (or the 5th, if you count *Sleep Over* and *Janey's Diary*). In this game, you and the three girls from the other *Crossworlds* adventures - Debbie, Lin and your girlfriend Janey - materialize on a space ship where you are the captain. Your mission is to destroy a "wormhole suppressant" created by Empress Jessica, Janey's mother, who has inexplicably turned to evil. To do this, there are items you will need to retrieve and utilize. Along the way, you get several opportunities to have sexual encounters.

Overall Thoughts:

Like all of the *Crossworlds* games, this one is fairly large. However, it is made to feel smaller by being divided into several very small playing areas. While the game pays homage to several science fiction shows, movies and books (see BBBen's web site for a list of them all), it had for me an overall feeling of being based in the *Star Trek* universe.

Like the other games in this series, it is a very light-hearted and fast-paced game, with humor interjected at various points. For example, the protagonist (yourself) at one point actually bemoans the fact that the plot is so predictable (which it is). Or Lin's response of "I hate it when we get into trouble. I prefer the sex parts." when you talk to her at certain points in the game. This is good, considering much of the game is very sparsely described or mundanely duplicated (all of the bedrooms are more-or-less identical, for example).

Puzzles/Game play

Even though this game is defined as a "puzzle fest", the puzzles really aren't that difficult. In fact, it almost feels as though the author takes you in hand - leading you from one solution to the next. You are given specific instructions on what to find, and talking to various characters in the game reveals exactly what to do with the objects once you've found them. The first half of the game has puzzles where you need to figure out whom to see and in what order. Later, you need to utilize the various alien powers of your companions (much like what took place in the previous game, *Crossworlds 2*). Again, the puzzles aren't that difficult, just understanding which girl to use at which time.

There are some non-standard IF commands used, which BBBen takes pains to point out and

describe within the accompanying README. This is a nice touch, and all authors should do this. Other nice touches are the non-standard responses BBBen has added to the error messages you receive when you try something you can't do. For example, instead of the normal "Nothing special" message you receive when attempting to examine a non-described object, you get a message that appears to come from the ship's computer - much like the voice-response of the computer on *Star Trek*. (Is it wrong that I heard it in my head as Majel Barret's voice?)

Another non-standard technique BBBen has used in this game is to replace the normal ASK/TELL system with a TALK TO system. I certainly can't complain about it as it is the system I have opted to use in most of my games, and BBBen implements it well. There has been much discussion about the benefits of this type of system over ASK/TELL, as well as its drawbacks, and BBBen has an article about that on his site if you require more information. It works well in this game.

Technical:

Like all of BBBen's works, this one is almost technically flawless. What bugs there are (a typo here, an odd response there) are so minor that you would probably not notice them if you weren't looking for them (as I was). The most noticeable has to do with the TALK TO system mentioned above. There are a couple of occasions where you attempt to TALK TO someone (usually a background or incidental character) and you get a message of "use ask person about [subject]". When you ASK that person ABOUT a subject, you then get a message saying to use TALK TO. It's a pretty minor problem that doesn't really get in the way of the game.

Sex:

For the most part, the sex in this game comes as part of a reward for solving one of the puzzles. After 4 previous games with the three main girls, you'd think that the sex would start to become stale and repetitious. Well, I have to be honest and say that in some descriptions...it is. But, BBBen has thrown in enough new female encounters to keep it interesting, as well as the differences that arise from having sex with non-humans (Lin and Janey are an alien species, while Debbie is a robot). While not quite set-the-computer-on-fire hot, the sexual encounters are still interesting and enjoyable.

Final Thoughts:

While much of the game is a little predictable and has a feeling of *deja vu*, there are many small things and humorous interjections that keep it interesting. Most players who are a fan of the *Crossworlds* series will not be disappointed by this game. Those who are not familiar with BBBen's other works will still find a fairly enjoyable game to play.

Rating: B

Of Masters and Mistresses: Abduction, a review by A. Ninny

Game Info:	<i>Of Masters and Mistresses: Abduction</i> released 1/30/05
Author:	Grimm Sharlak
Platform:	ADRIFT 4.0
Size:	56K
Content:	m/f, bdsm, underage
Game Type:	PF
Length:	Medium
Reviewed:	September 2005
Extras:	None

Basic Plot:

You play a private detective hired by a mysterious man to find a missing woman. This game is the first part of a two-part series; the second part has not yet been released.

Overall Thoughts:

This game has a promising backstory and compelling premise: you're a private eye with a client whose face you never see; it has the hallmarks of most noir detective fiction: seedy settings, shady characters and damsels in distress. Grimm Sharlak is an author who can put together a sentence

and a story. What he doesn't seem to have been able to create here, and what this game sorely lacks, is robust implementation. The environments have barely minimal detail, most objects mentioned in the room don't exist on their own, and some very unusual verb-object combinations are sure to trip up players. My general overall impression while playing is that I was following a script, lock-step. If I tried, for whatever reason to deviate from the script or try to experience something not connected to that script, I'd be walking into emptiness. When Grimm tried to inject some atmosphere into the game (a playground with parents and children, for example), he chose not to embellish these atmospheric touches with any life, nor did he ever let you interact with any of the atmosphere or even acknowledge its existence outside of the mention in the room description.

As for the sex, several of the scenes feel very force-fit, like Grimm was struggling to make this AIF and made a few very unlikely - and generally irrelevant to the main plot - sex scenes fit into the game. Maybe he'll tie them in in the second installment. At least, I hope he does. The final sex scene of this game is better - it does integrate with the main body of the story and sets up a decent cliffhanger for the next game.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

Many of the puzzles in this game are of the 'ask about' / 'tell about' variety. This makes sense in the context of a detective story - you'd expect to ask questions of people to increase your knowledge and solve the mystery. Most of these puzzles work reasonably well. There are a couple of object puzzles in which very unusual commands are required, classic guess-the-verb fodder. Helloooo, walkthrough. Also, considering the fact that you're supposed to ask characters about stuff, a lot of sensible topics that may not directly relate to the story (may just relate to the game's atmosphere, for example) are not actually implemented for them to respond to, and you're expected to glean from minimal cues what to ask, and when (rarely, by the way, but occasionally required) to 'tell' rather than 'ask'.

Sex:

The main problem I had with a number of the sex scenes in the game is that they simply had nothing to do with anything I knew about the character or his goals. They were classic examples of opportunistic sex with willing AIF strangers. As a result of this, and as a result of fairly uninspired prose, they did little for me. There was one exception: in the final scene, where the player's relationship with the character in question has direct bearing on his mission and also features some good, fun, kink. It also has features S&M, so players who dislike this content are warned that it is there.

Technical:

The game is simply not implemented robustly. There are quite a few picky bugs and incompletely coded verbs. As a typical example of what I mean (and *OMM* is riddled with stuff like this): 'strip chick' isn't implemented, but 'chick strip' is. *Insert forehead slap here.* My forehead was pretty red by the time I finished playing. Add to that some nasty verb guessing and you may end up with a few missing handfuls of hair in addition to that red forehead.

Final Thoughts:

Breakout demonstrated that this author can fill a game with a good story, a rich environment and get good technical results with ADFIRT. Somehow he fell far short with *OM&M: Abduction*. I think this game has a compelling idea for a story, and I do enough want to find out how it ends that I'm looking forward to the sequel. Unfortunately, this installment is saddled with random-feeling cardboard sex, inadequate environments and poor technical implementation.

Rating: C-

Tomorrow Never Comes, a review by Grimm Sharlak

Game Info:	<i>Tomorrow Never Comes</i> , released February 28, 2005
Author:	A. Bomire
Platform:	TADS
Size:	527KB
Content:	m/f
Game Type:	Spy Spoof
Length:	Medium

Reviewed: September 2005
Extras: Multimedia (sounds and pictures for when you change between locales)

Basic Plot:

'Welcome to MI6, agent' – is what you'd like to hear when you roll up to the centre of British Intelligence every morning, but unfortunately you're just a lowly member of Q branch, outfitting agents like James Bond with spectacular gadgetry for their secret spy missions. You're given an assignment to rendezvous with a double-O agent to make a delivery, and from there, your life begins to get much more exciting...

Overall Thoughts:

Ahhhh, James Bond – this endearing fictional figure represents a life many of us wish we had: jetting off around the world, having amazing adventures and seducing beautiful women. The Bond books and movies have been spoofed and made homage to on many occasions, but A. Bomire has written quite possibly the first Bond-themed AIF. Not to say that there haven't been AIF with secret agents before (British Fox, anyone?) but this is the first game to take place in the Bond universe, and as such can provide a new angle for AIF as well as some classic characters for the player to interact with.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

You're a secret agent now, son – act like one! You are now in the world of disguises, gadgets and high-stakes card games. The latter takes centre stage in the early game, as you play a game of baccarat with more than just money on the line. While I had never played baccarat in my life, the game explained the rules and how to play it easily, and I won the game first time. If that's not playability, I don't know what is.

Throughout the game I rarely had any problems with puzzles, at least the ones required to progress in the game. Scoring with the various women, however, is non-essential to the plot but can cause some head scratching moments.

Sex:

Bomire writes sex scenes well, and *TNC* is no exception. While there isn't an overabundance of ladies in the game, you will get the opportunity to interact with the famous Miss Money Penny as well as the necessary innuendo-laced female villain. Not to mention the plucky female agent who is initially resistant to your charms...

As noted, some of the sex scenes are optional, but all are well worth your time. The women really do seem to fall for your charm, rather than just being sex-starved nymphomaniacs who'll jump anything that moves. And no, you won't have to fetch a certain item to score with a certain girl – usually it's more of a case of "be nice".

Technical:

I can't say I've seen many AIF games with sounds, music or pictures, let alone all three. When you jet from location to location, you get a fitting sound effect and picture of your destination. Adding to the Bond flavour are the opening and closing themes. When you sit down and play the game, it really gets you in the mood with its multimedia.

The card game is another technical achievement. It runs fine, and while you can lose, I never managed to "break" it in anyway. In fact, the entire game is a clean piece of programming, with NPCs wandering all over the place, plenty of conversation and puzzles without any faults.

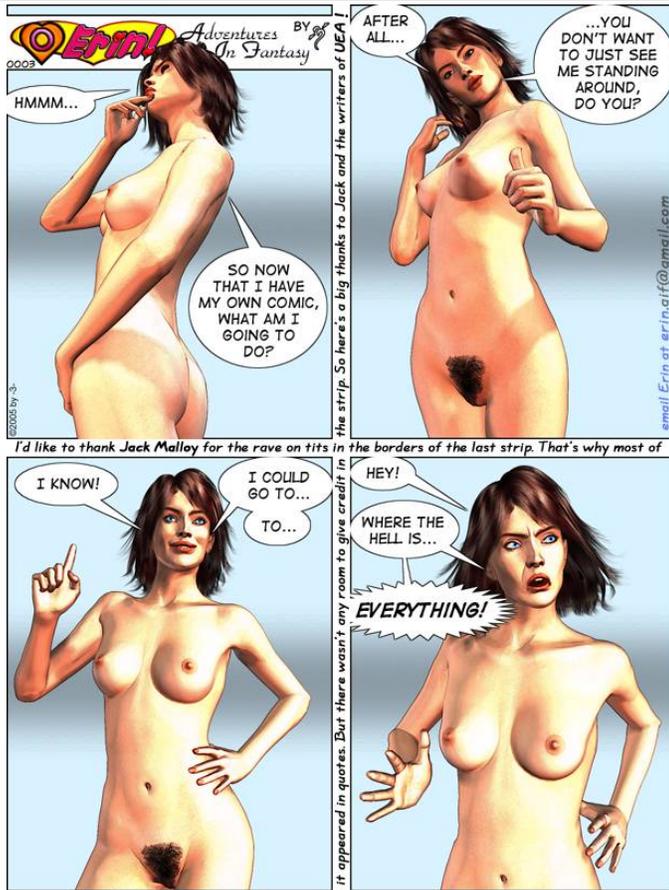
Intangibles:

Nothing beats the feeling of being an almost-Bond, and the game's themes, locales and room descriptions all reflect this. A. Bomire has nailed the Bond feel, conveying it in text well.

Final Thoughts:

JAMES BOND WILL RETURN greets in the credits of every Bond movie. Will this latest character return? Judging by the high quality of this game, I sure hope so. If you have any love for spy movies or any AIF in general, you will enjoy this game.

Rating: A



This is Erin! comic strip #3. All previous strips can be viewed on the AIFNewsletter web site. Don't miss them!

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Staff

Editor A Ninny is an AIF player, author of two AIF games and frequent beta-tester. His *Parlour* received an Erin for Best "One Night Stand" game in 2004.

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Staff Writers A Bomire is the author of several TADS AIF games, including *Dexter Dixon: In Search of the Prussian Pussy*, *Tomorrow Never Comes* and *The Backlot*. His games have won numerous awards and Erin nominations.

BBBen is an AIF author. He has released six games, including the *Crossworlds* series and *Normville High* which won A. Bomire's 2004 mini-comp. Debbie, his popular character in the *Crossworlds* series won the 2004 Erin award for best female non-player character

Grimm Sharlak is the author of two AIF games: *Breakout* and *Of Masters and Mistresses: Abduction*.

Richard Gillingham writes with a British accent. He does our proofreading and hopefully his column will appear regularly.

Submitting your work to "Inside Erin"

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

