



Letter from the Editor

We had originally planned on announcing the Erins nominations in this newsletter, but the judges are still working on sorting them out. To be more truthful, actually, I simply didn't start soliciting participation early enough in the month. Luckily, I did finally get a very good group of judges who are working feverishly on selecting all the nominees. So the nominations will either be announced in the December 31 edition of the newsletter or mid-month on the web site. The other judges and I will eventually make that decision, but personally, I don't see any need to rush, as long as we spend the interim drumming up enthusiasm for the public voting.

I'd like to welcome Christopher Cole, a longtime AIF enthusiast and author of many well-loved games, to our family of contributors. His new serial erotic fiction entitled "Seven Seas of Thëah" begins in this month's edition. At the end of each episode Chris will provide a number of choices and set up a poll on the AIFArchive Yahoo! group. Whichever option gets the most votes will be the direction he takes the story next

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This Month in AIF by BBBen

After seven weeks the full score of 777 was achieved for *Fever Cabin*. It was achieved by teamwork by privatenimrod and Joey/hsvsunshyn. Presumably one of them has received the prize, a free custom mousepad, and thus concluded one of the more interesting gimmicks in AIF history. Congratulations!

Alt.games.xtrek has been fairly quiet for years now, but it has seemed particularly quiet in recent months. I would speculate that the AIF Community Portal drew away some of the traffic on AGX that was there to avoid Yahoo, and that traffic has not re-established itself.

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Interview with Scarlet Herring by A. Ninny and A. Bomire

We're extremely pleased and honored to present our interview with Scarlet Herring, author of *Moist*, one of the community's all-time favorite games. Let's get right to it.

AN: Perhaps you could give us some background – who are you?

SH: I am just past 40 years of age, married to a wonderful woman, and I have a very sweet daughter. I work in computer science research. Computer games are one of my main interests, both to play and to create. Over the years, I built several action games, puzzle games, text adventure games, strategy games, and roleplaying games. Some of those have

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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.

been released to the world, some just to friends. *Moist* is the only erotic game among them.

AN: How did you come to be interested in AIF in the first place?

SH: When I had my first computer with a modem, it took about fifteen minutes to download a picture of a naked lady, which you deleted after viewing it for five seconds. Erotic stories and games would take the same amount of time to download while holding your attention for much longer. Unfortunately, at that time very little interesting AIF existed.

AN: What is your feeling about and relationship to current AIF, nearly ten years later? Do you see it as being very different now?

SH: I cannot answer this question very well, because I have not kept up with developments in AIF. From my point of view, AIF really started with the first *Xtrek* games. At that time, quite a lot of games were produced, but quality varied considerably. I think that the better games inspired authors to create games of an equally high level, and that therefore nowadays AIF is of a much higher quality than it was ten years ago. I like the fact that there is a thriving AIF community, with a competition, a newsletter, and new games being released regularly. I have not played any AIF recently, but that is more because of a lack of time than a lack of interest. I am certainly going to give NewKid's latest a spin.

AB: *Moist* has inspired dozens of authors to write new games. What was your inspiration or drive to write *Moist*?

SH: At a time when Infocom text adventures were among the most advanced computer games on the market, I got an early version of TADS on a shareware disk. I was delighted by the power and the elegance of TADS, and really wanted to use it to create a game in Infocom-style. However, I realized that as someone for whom English is not a native language, I would never be able to recreate the rich prose of these games. Rather than building yet another *Zork*-clone with broken room descriptions, I thought I could perhaps create an adult adventure that was actually interesting to play. The advantage would be that prose itself would not determine the quality of the game, but the variety and flexibility of the sexual interaction.

At that time *Smut City* was the best AIF game available. What was interesting about *Smut City* was that at a few points, the player could make different choices than the obvious ones, and then got to experience different scenes. This gave the player the feeling that the game was worth exploring to discover new stuff. I wanted to do the same thing, but at a much higher level.

For me, *Moist* was a game that I created to learn how to use TADS. I deliberately set certain challenges for myself, such as creating the endless woods, having an NPC execute a plan that the player could interfere with, and the card game sequence. I found that things went pretty easily, and that the game was actually fun to play. When it was finished, I gave it to a few friends and uploaded it to a BBS.

A few years later I ended up in the *Xtrek* newsgroup, which had been dead for a while and was rekindled by the release of *A Night With Troi*. I timidly asked whether people in this group would be interested in an adult text adventure that was not about Trek, and got a positive response. *Moist* was uploaded to the newsgroup, and slightly to my surprise was received very well.

AB: Along with inspiring authors, *Moist* also spawned libraries such as MMX and Sir Gareth's XActor, which have been used countless times in writing new games.

As a result, many consider you a "founding father" of modern AIF. How do you feel about that?

SH: I do not really see myself as that. I think that NewKid is far more deserving of such a title than I am. NewKid released *The Sexed Generation*, which is probably the best *Xtrek* game available, at about the same time I released *Moist*. Had NewKid stopped producing AIF at that time, as I did, I doubt whether it would be as evolved as it is now. But he continued and released more and much better games over time. If anything is inspiring, it is his example. I can probably be named as the author who first introduced NPCs with arousal levels. But even that idea was not originally mine; I copied it from the first commercial interactive erotica, such as Pixis' *Space Sirens* series.

AN: Do you feel differently about *Moist* now than you did when you first released it?

SH: I certainly do. I now think *Moist* is quite awful in places. It truly is. Besides the fact that it has awkward prose, it is full of mistakes which IF programmers should not make. It contains many ways to make the game impossible to solve. It does not deal properly with certain verbs. For some problems I took the very easy way out, such as making it impossible for two NPCs to be in the same room. That said, I realize *Moist* also has redeeming features. There are elements in the game, such as its flexibility and its attention to details, which I definitely would want to return in a new game. And, despite its blemishes, *Moist* is a finished game, and it is always a good thing to have finished games.

AB: For such a small game (in terms of rooms), *Moist* is a very large game in terms of flexibility and immersiveness. How long did it take you to write it?

SH: It did not take long to write *Moist*. I think I needed two weeks for the first version, and maybe a week of tweaking after that. But that was mainly because I allowed myself to take shortcuts for the hard programming problems, such as the way I dealt with clothing and the avoidance of dealings between NPCs. And, of course, I had considerable experience in programming.

AB: Did you find yourself treading down one path and deciding "Ooh, let's add this in!" or was it fully planned out from the beginning?

The game was not fully planned from the beginning. After dabbling a bit with the entrance area to experience the power of TADS, I decided upon the NPCs I would have, but I gave myself the opportunity to design puzzles and situations on the fly. I do that for all the games I create. I have found that when I plan everything from the start, the game is finished for me when the design document is finished, and I cannot find the drive to work on it anymore. So I try to design no more than the basic plot line, and leave the rest for the implementation phase. Mind you, this is an approach that works for me, but it is not necessarily the best way to create a good game.

AN: Along the same lines, did you have any ideas on expanding NPC sexual interaction, maybe try out some different ideas in *Moist* or a subsequent never-released game?

SH: My intention with the sexual interaction in *Moist* was that the player should be able to enact his (or her) own fantasies, which would not necessarily coincide with mine. In a sequel, that element should stay and be expanded upon. I would also keep the freedom of interaction. However, I certainly would reduce the amount of repetitions in the sexual interaction, such as driving the player to type 'again' and read the same message over and over again, just to raise arousal levels. That is just boring gameplay, even though one could argue that that is part of the genre, as video porn is also quite repetitive.

I actually have been working on a second AIF game, which uses a different approach to the sexual content. I wanted a game that would be considered erotica but not porn. The gameplay is quite titillating, with several women in situations which would stimulate the player to seek sexual interaction with them. However, it is very hard to actually have sex with them. The game will allow the player to try to have sex, but each time he manages to get somewhere with a woman, he will find that he has botched the quest and the game will inform him that he is unable to continue. The game is easiest to finish without having sex at all, even though many of the puzzles in the game need a solution that is erotically stimulating in some way, such as distracting NPCs by making sure they have sex with each other. However, with some very hard and clever thinking, the player would be able to discover, for each possible sexual encounter, how to actually experience an interactive sex scene and still be able to finish the game.

The game is about 50% finished, and has been that for over five years. There are two reasons I stopped working on it. The first was that for the game I needed to program a couple of things that were very hard to achieve in TADS. The most difficult of these, which I got to work after a few days of programming, stopped working when I upgraded to a new TADS release. That put me off very badly. The second is simply a lack of time. I have a family and a job. Next to that, basically, I had to choose: either finish a Ph.D., or work on AIF and have other hobbies. I chose the first.

AB: One of the draws of *Moist* (at least from my viewpoint) is its replayability [AN: I concur. *Moist* is probably the only game I've played more than twice]. Were there any specific things you put into the game to achieve this, or was it a sort-of happy accident? If it was deliberate, what sort of elements do you recommend for new authors to help achieve the same sort of replayability?

SH: That was deliberate. I wanted a game that would reward player exploration. I wanted people to play the game, finish it, and then wake up in the middle of the night and think 'Wait a moment –

perhaps I could use the rope to tie the girls up!’ and then try it out in the morning and find that the game indeed allows to use the rope in that way.

I once read an interview with Marc Blank and David Lebling of Infocom. They talked about the encounter with a troll in *Zork*, who attacks the player with an axe. When the troll is defeated, the axe remains. One of the test-players picked up the axe and said ‘Cool! Now I will go into the woods and chop down some trees!’ That did not work, of course, since the axe was put in the game purely as a weapon, not as a tool. However, in an interactive environment using an axe as a tool should certainly be an option. In the same interview Blank and Lebling also observed that in *Zork* the thief was a much more interesting character than the troll, since the thief seemed to have a life of his own by responding to particular player actions.

What I learned from all this for *Moist* was that, for every object that I put in the game, I had to consider whether it would be reasonable to use it in a different way, especially in a sexual way, and then implement those alternatives. Furthermore, it helps to observe what test-players do, and accommodate everything they try which is not unreasonable. And finally, I tried to have the NPCs respond semi-intelligently to most things the players would do in their presence. NPCs should not be treated as objects.

Remember that it does not matter if no more than one percent of all players of your game encounter a clever piece of interaction. All players will discover different things in the game. As long as you manage to amuse them with a few surprises, they will be stimulated to explore the game further.

AN: Why did you decide to release the source code for *Moist*, especially considering, as you admit, so much of it is wrong? Did you have misgivings about releasing it?

SH: A few people asked for the source code, and I saw no reason to keep it for myself. The only thing I had misgivings about was that people would learn bad TADS practices from it. So that is why I gave the warning. Seeing that the release of the code has led to several useful libraries, I am happy that I chose to do it, bad examples and all.

AB: *Moist* is at the top of almost every player's list of great games - what's at the top of yours?

SH: The best AIF game I played is NewKid's *Generic New York Apartment Building*. I really enjoyed that one. For regular games, my all-time favorite is *Planescape: Torment*. If you want to experience NPCs that the player will actually care about, *Torment* is the game to play. And since lifelike NPCs are probably the most important element of AIF games, I think AIF authors should take it as an example of what can be achieved with truly emotional relationships in games.

Scarlet Herring is the author of *Moist*. We're very grateful to him for providing us such an insightful and interesting interview.

Letter from the Editor (Continued)

month. I hope this will be a very popular feature.

I didn't plan a full-fledged "AIF Scuttlebutt" column this month, but after publishing one last month I heard from One-Eyed Jack. He is working on a new AIF game; it will be a collaboration with a number of his real-life friends. He isn't able to commit to any schedule for completion, but is at least optimistic that it will be released.

There has been quite a bit more talk this month about why the output of new AIF has slowed so much. I'll let the discussion hash itself out on the message boards. I'm mentioning it here to put out these two challenges to the AIF public:

1. If you've ever considered writing an AIF game, I want you to get to it. Potential authors: commit to yourself that you will begin working on a new AIF game right now. If you don't think you could write anything that's any good, try. You may well surprise yourself, and us. If you're looking for guidance on how to start, there are several excellent guides to writing AIF out there, including Rap's "Writing AIF" (<http://aifcommunity.org/resources/WAIF.zip>) and Johnny Freebase's "AIF 101" (<http://jfreebase.tripod.com/AIF101/aif101.html>). Good luck!

2. Authors have found that aside from 'how do I get past x puzzle?'-type emails or posts, they almost never hear anything from players. The newsletter tries to fill the void by reviewing games,

but it would be very nice for authors to hear from players how well their games are liked and what suggestions players have for making them better. Players: commit to yourself that for every new game you play, you'll write something to the author expressing *something* about how you feel about the game.

One final topic: I hope all our American readers thoroughly enjoyed their Thanksgiving holiday. I took Wednesday off and waited in line with at least a hundred other suburbanites to pick up our turkey at our local poultry specialty store, then spent the rest of the day and most of Thursday preparing our massive feast. I didn't even get to watch any football. Still, it was good to have that much family time, and that's what the holiday is all about. On the same track, we at *Inside Erin* wish our readers a safe and happy holiday season.

This Month in AIF (Continued)

Actually it was a quiet month all over, so there's not really much to say here. Despite my comments last month, I do think it is of at least mild concern that there has been a noticeable slow down of game releases over the last year. In 2004 you could expect more than one game a week, now it's more like two a month, and that's possibly slowing down further. The irony is that the AIF "infrastructure" is pretty good these days. It may be that sloppier authors are being deterred by the new increase in standards brought about by the renewal of the Erins, the encouragement of beta-testing and the increase in the rate of game reviewing.

Purple Dragon made the point that it seems like maybe the community's responses to games has diminished. It is very important to authors to get feedback on their games – in the absence of any other form of payoff for actually writing AIF games, the only real incentive is to satisfy the writer's wish to be read. If you release a game and get a lot of buzz about it, there's a lot of energy that results that helps you to produce another one. If it seems like nobody really cares if anyone is writing games then before too long nobody will be. So is there less community activity these days? Well, it's hard to say, not having seen the kind of email responses that other authors have received, but I for one think Purple Dragon might be on to something. I would encourage everyone to give feedback – both the good and the bad – to authors when they release games. If you've got an opinion, share it!

But there is one other possibility – that this newsletter in itself may have helped to contribute to the lessening of games. Bear in mind that though last year's Erins crop may be small, next year's will probably be smaller still since the game release rate seems to have dropped to around one a month in recent months. There is a concern that by creating an atmosphere of more criticism we may be discouraging bad games, but we may also be discouraging new authors who have potential. Nobody wants a bad review, but nobody really wants a mediocre review either, and with something as sensitive as writing we tend not to take criticism all that well. David Whyld suggests that it's about time that we got more critical because the broader IF community is much more severe, but I personally think that we should not be aspiring to that standard. The AIF community is supposed to be fun, and people shouldn't be writing AIF games just to get a pat on the head about how polished their game is. This issue is something that warrants some further discussion about what is to be done, and whether our higher standards may be killing off participation in the community.

Anyway, one last point before we get to the new games – we at the newsletter have been wondering why for months now the only games released have been released *just* before the end of the month. It means we don't have time to review the games for the issue, and a couple of times my column has had to be edited just before the newsletter is released. I know it's not a conspiracy, but it's starting to feel like it is! Well, enough of my bellyaching.

New games for November 2005

Notice Me, by Wotan-Anubis, released 28 Nov 2005. Based on the Nintendo game *Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance*, you play as Jill, desperately desiring the shape shifting cat-woman, Lethe.

Seven Seas of Thēah—Episode 1 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>.

The port of Dechaine, on the northern border of Montaigne, was your typical den of thieves. Indeed, it was primarily used as a port by outlaws as any legitimate ships would dock at Muguet or Crieux before heading into the Trade Sea on their way to Eisen or beyond. The only law here was the law of the sword, and Montaigne officials didn't mind as it kept the unwanted far from the capital of Charouse.

Magnus Rischen sauntered into the Clanging Bell, a seaside tavern in Decahine built onto the docks themselves, and looked around. The place was filled with pipe-smoke, laughter, and bodies. He smiled inwardly. Magnus was a lithe, muscular fellow with shoulder-length light brown hair and a number of scars on his face. The scars didn't take away from his good looks however, but gave him a rugged handsomeness. He wore an overcoat of best repair, always wearing fancy but functional clothing. A sword hung from his belt, the fancy golden hilt and hand guard fashioned in the form of a snake. A pistol was hidden inside his jacket. He looked to his side and nodded at his female companion before the two stepped inside.

Violetta de Carabas was a tall beauty who preferred to dress as a man. A bandana kept her lengthy jet locks in check. Her hair was so black it earned her the nickname "The Raven". Though it was difficult to tell, she had a very lovely body underneath her tunic and breeches. Even with her masculine dress, there was no mistaking that she was all woman. A sabre hung loosely at her side. She nodded back to Magnus and followed him to an empty table at the center of the tavern.

The two were looking for passage to Eisen, Magnus' homeland, as they had found themselves wanted by officials in Charouse for a misunderstanding involving a few jewels. The misunderstanding was solely on the heads of the officials, as the jewels sat nice and safe in a pouch under Magnus' tunic, and he had no compunction about them being there. He hoped to use one of the jewels to secure passage aboard a small but fast ship; no questions asked. The hard part was over, however. Magnus and Violetta knew that in making it to Dechaine they were practically home free, as the royal guard would never dare come this far north. Potential bounty hunters, assassins and even everyday cutthroats were another matter however, so though they planned on enjoying their new-found wealth, they would keep their eyes open and their wits about them.

Magnus had never been in this tavern before, though he had docked at Dechaine a few times in his youth, but being a lowly mate barely into his teen years he was never allowed to leave the ship. The captain may have been a mean man, but corrupting a youth was below even him. Magnus knew of the Bell, and he knew if he wanted to book passage from Montaigne to anywhere in Thēah without fear of the law, and he had good money to pay, then this was the port—and the pub—to do it in. You still had to be careful however; you needed to find an actual privateer or pirate and not a spy.

"It won't hurt to test the waters," Magnus said to Violetta after one of the serving wenches placed two mugs on their table.

"Agreed," she said, watching Magnus' eyes trail after the buxom girl. "But even if we book passage tonight, we will surely not sail until the morrow."

Magnus nodded, his eyes finally leaving the wenches and returning to Violetta.

"Then we'll need to procure some lodging," he smiled.

Magnus and Violetta took in the denizens of the tavern. Two men sat at one table, their long jackets not hiding the fact that they were well-armed. Both men were bearded and dirty as if just returning from the road or sea.

A short, fat man tended the bar, filling tankards of ale per request and laughing along with anyone willing to talk.

Two wenches served drinks and food to the tables. Both had ample cleavage spilling out over their

loosely tied bodices. One had short fiery red hair, the other long tangles of blonde curls.

A tall man in fancy clothing stood alone in the corner, smoking a pipe and staring at their table.

WHAT SHOULD MAGNUS DO?

- 1) See about lodging?
- 2) Talk to the two men about passage on a ship?
- 3) Hit on the wenches?
- 4) Ask the man in the corner why he's staring at them?
- 5) Stay seated with Violetta?

Discussion with Orgun by A. Ninny

Back in June, Orgun wrote about persistent worlds in games, and how he is working on a totally new game development platform (called TSIE) in which persistent worlds will be a primary feature. I have some questions for you if you'd like to talk about how the platform will work, what totally new features it will provide, and how soon we might actually see it. My conversation with him was fairly lengthy – this edition includes the first part.

AN: So, what is TSIE?

Orgun: It's TISE actually. Standing for TISE Interactive Fiction Script Engine (Yeah! A very weird recursive acronym, but it sounds cool, that's the important part!).

AN: Sorry, TISE. How's TISE coming along?

Orgun: Due to other work projects that will hopefully bring monetary gains in the near future, I'm busy with deadlines on those. TISE is currently on a pause. However, since I strongly believe in flexible and modular programming, a lot of the code I wrote for my other projects will also benefit TISE as well.

AN: Can you give a description of what the TISE engine and development environment will look like to the first-time TISE author? Are you designing some sort of interface or is designing games in TISE strictly text editing?

Orgun: My ultimate goal is "both".

I expect to be taking a route not too different from Quest in that regards. First versions will only be possible to author using a text editor of the author's choice. The programming language is actually very simple, and in some ways limited. It's not truly a programming language either, it's closer to a very specific BASIC-inspired scripting language.

There are no C-like { } or ugly := or == or things like that, the simplicity of the TISE scripting allows TISE to know what you are trying to do by simply looking at the code you write. There will also be a sample included, and documentation that (hopefully) will get you started.

Later versions though, will have something similar to Quest's, and ADRIFT's author interfaces (IDE's). One of the top priorities for the TISE editor is a sort of author map tool, since I myself love how ADRIFT let you visually see where rooms are and how/where they are connected to one another. 3rd party author tools are also more than welcome, and I'd be happy to help such projects in any way I can!

AN: I'm currently a TADS author, but beyond writing in TADS, I'm not really much of a programmer. If I choose to compose a game in TISE, what skills will I need, and how easy do you think it will be to transition? What if I was an ADRIFT author and not a programmer at all?

Orgun: If you have messed around with TADS, AGT, Inform, Quest, Hugo, ALAN, etc. then TISE will be super-simple to script for. TISE will obviously not be as flexible as virtual machines like TADS3 are, but it is much more flexible than ADRIFT as you, as author, have line-by-line control of everything going on in your game. As mentioned earlier, the first versions of TISE will

require an author to use a text editor or programming text editor of some sorts; for a ADRIFT author that is maybe a difficult step for them.

Still, to copy/duplicate a room, for example, it's no harder than copying a file, renaming it and editing the text and commands in it. Likewise, to duplicate a house you just copy a folder and rename it. Likewise with an entire street, or objects/items, or actors/NPC's. By relying on the capabilities of your system's file structure, the game is sorted and spread out in a familiar way.

As for distributing your games, a simple but "does what it's supposed to do" installer will be made. That makes it easy for even the most inexperienced text adventure players to install (and uninstall btw!) the game. Later down the road, a general TISE player will be available, and games can be distributed in an archive form instead.

AN: Have you received any feedback on the TISE project from the rec.arts.int-fiction (or any other) community?

Orgun: If they are aware of my TISE project, they sure aren't admitting it. Maybe it's because it's born in the adult area of Interactive Fiction authoring? TISE itself will have nothing oriented towards any genre at all. TISE should be just as suitable for AIF as it will be for IF.

There are a lot of "great" languages, script engines, and who-knows-what-else out there. A lot of that has turned out to be vaporware, and maybe a lot of people have avoided getting into the hype of TISE and would rather just wait and see what the result looks like. I would say that is a very smart decision.

I doubt TISE will blow anyone's minds at all in its first incarnations; the later versions will get more impressive as both author and player feedback is received. That is...if the players care what powers the game has at all, and why should they? A player wishes to play the game, and not mess with anything else. Simplicity for the player will always be the ultimate goal; the secondary goal is simplicity for the author.

Powered by TISE
Let TISE entice you!

Oh yeah, slogan's ready even! Heh!

Anyway, when the first public beta version of TISE is available a website will be made where the latest beta (and future full releases) will be downloadable. I think when that point is reached that communities like rec.arts.int-fiction will take notice that something real and touchable is available to try out.

The AIF community inspired me to make my own game; the needs of my own game inspired me to make my own script language interpreter/game engine. The AIF community will be the first to get to take advantage of TISE, and I suspect that TISE will always be rooted in the adult community.

Which I think is a good thing, a smaller, more closed community is always a much better place to make something new, let it grow and get feedback. And the AIF community, even if small, has the right mix of players (skilled or not), authors (skilled or not), IDE authors (those who like ADRIFT, etc.), old-schoolers (TADS etc.), perfectionists, and those who just don't care.

And lots and lots of talent.

For such a small community, the AIF community is definitely the most diverse I've seen.

Look for the continuation of my talk with Orgun next month.

Drawing the Line and Getting it Done by BBBen

‘Scope creep’ can be a problem in the design of games – when you are simply dreaming about a game you can populate it with hundreds of steamy sex scenes, each one bigger than *One Girl* and *Escape Pod* combined. When it comes to actually putting the game together, however, such plans will obviously be unrealisable.

Scope creep can be particularly deceptive in the case of orgy scenes. If you are going to have a sex scene between a man and a woman with 9 possible interactions, then that’s easy. If you want to include another girl who can have sex with both of them in 9 actions each, then that addition triples the amount of work involved in the scene to 27 interactions. The addition of another girl on the same parameters would take you up to 54 actions, without including any group or combination actions. While on the face of it a m/f/f scene might only seem a step away from a m/f/f/f scene, exponential growth actually makes them much, much bigger in terms of the work load. I actually wrote an m/f/f/f scene once, so I know whereof I speak.

The other problem with getting an SSS done is that some of the commands can simply be boring. Once you’ve written a few “rub tits” commands you can find yourself running out of ideas, and you may only be interested in certain parts of the scene anyway. Non-writers may not realise this, but the sex is probably the hardest part of an AIF game to write. This is because it is generally the most important thing in the game, and because you can quickly find yourself running out of ideas on how these two people getting together is different from the two people you had getting together earlier in your game.

First of all, chopping down your design concept is usually a good idea. Pruning makes for a healthier plant, and you will find if you just focus on the areas that are important and interesting then they will grow stronger and richer. Try to eliminate everything but your most interesting ideas, and *have a different idea for every SSS*. Try not to revisit the same territory you have gone to before because that’s when you get the problem of running out of ideas.

It is probably a good idea to have some sort of minimum length for each response in an SSS to prevent you from slacking off too much, but don’t feel that everything has to be even. If you have a really good idea for the “rub tits” response but can’t get much for the “rub ass” response, then just write the minimum for “rub ass” and go full on with the “rub tits” response.

A nice, long and interesting response to one action can make up for a weaker one elsewhere, but it can help to have a different idea for each individual command. Don’t feel that you have to write the definitive standard “rub tits” command every time, do unusual stuff with it like rubbing a whiffle ball on them or something. It doesn’t have to be the same thing every time. To this end, it helps if you have a number of unique features about every steamy sex scene. The characters should be getting together for different reasons, they should have different attitudes to sex, and they should be in different environments. It’s easier to come up with a “rub tits” response if the characters are in the back seat of a car in the middle of a road trip, than if they are in a bedroom.

Remember, while the idea of a huge, comprehensive game may be inspiring, chances are that your plan has a lot of dead wood that can be removed. A smaller game that is nevertheless all gold will be a much more successful production than a huge game with a lot of crap. It is the gold that people will remember, and so in the design process you have to refine the ore until all you have is a gleaming, wonderful game.

Game Reviews

***Archie's Birthday - Chapter 1: Reggie's Gift*, a review by Grimm Sharlak**

Game Info:	<i>Archie's Birthday - Chapter 1: Reggie's Gift</i> released 10/29/05
Author:	Purple Dragon
Platform:	Adrift 3.9
Size:	279KB
Content:	m/f, f/f, voyeurism
Type:	T&AIF (Sex romp)
Length:	Short
Reviewed:	November 2005
Extras:	None

Basic Plot:

You play Reggie Mantle, long-time nemesis of Archie Andrews, of the widely popular “Archie” comics. It’s Archie’s birthday, and despite continuing to be a self-centred and narcissistic man, Reggie has taken it upon himself to get Archie a gift he’ll never forget – and it involves the girls’ shower room at the school...

Overall Thoughts:

Reggie’s Gift is, according to Purple Dragon, the first part of a much larger game, and as such is very short and to the point. I must applaud the author for this direction, however, as it allowed him to test the waters with his concept and writing, as well as picking up plenty of suggestions for the full game (which will include this chapter).

While I’ve never been a big Archie fan, you would have had to have lived under a rock to have never read at least one of his books, and as such all the characters are instantly recognisable, although there have been a few new characters created here as well.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

Gameplay centres around Reggie’s attempts to gain access to film the girls in the shower room. For the most part this involves completing tasks concerning characters like the principal Mr. Weatherbee and the janitor Svenson, but rather than just the usual fetch quests, the puzzles take a slightly different turn here.

Due to the short length of the game, there aren’t many puzzles, but the major puzzle of the game is actually a nice one. To gain an item from Weatherbee, you need to complete a series of quizzes from the other teachers. Each quiz takes the form of multiple choice, covering history, maths, chemistry and more. While it took me a few tries to complete each (being an Aussie, American presidents aren’t exactly my forte) the need to only get 4 out of 5 right and the ability to take each test multiple times made it a fun little knowledge test rather than a chore.

Sex:

Sex is pretty light on the ground in this short game, but what is there is of a high quality. The short-but-sweet scene with Miss Brown has an excellent build-up, and some nice descriptions. You’re left wanting more, which is what a preview should do.

However, if that’s too short for you, the game’s final sex scene is a heavily detailed one. Taking a voyeuristic angle, you can still control the participants’ actions as they discover each other. The sex follows the standard ADRIFT rub/lick tits/ass/pussy, but rather than just being linear, as you progress to certain areas you can go back to other body parts for new messages and to progress the scene. This stops the scene from being too repetitive while also allowing the player to see everything with a minimum of fuss. It was slightly frustrating at first, but once I realised that I had to go back to go forward in a sense, the scene really came alive.

Technical:

I detected nary a spelling error or bug with this game. Every item listed in the room description can be examined, although there is an abundance of empty cabinets, closets and the like. It’s a shame that, for example, the kitchen cabinets couldn’t be filled with plates and dishes to flesh them out somewhat, as the closets and such in the game do have clothes in them. It just makes them seem tacked on to have an empty refrigerator and cabinets in one room.

Speaking of which, the game does have one interesting quirk; movement is normal, but to enter or exit a separate building, you need to use ‘in’ or ‘out,’ despite the fact that the area in question is listed as being to your east, etc. However, this is explained when you look at the large size of the map and that each of these areas has a separate map of its own. It is clear that the final game is going to be quite large.

Intangibles:

Not much to tell here, as my knowledge of the characters isn’t fleshed out enough to tell whether they stay true to their origins or not. Reggie acts and thinks like Reggie, at least, especially when there’s a mirror in the room. Each character has a number of topics to talk about, but there is no massive character development here.

Final Thoughts:

A nice little preview of what's to come from Purple Dragon. This adventure into Riverdale is certainly something I'm looking forward to, especially if Purple Dragon can maintain the detail and quality of his sex scenes.

Rating: B

Fever Cabin , a review by NASDAQ

Game Info:	<i>Fever Cabin</i> released 9/27/05
Author:	GoddoG
Platform:	TADS 2
Size:	0.98 MB
Content:	m/f, f/f, m/f/f, BDSM, (light) torture, (light) rape, (light) bestiality, (light) watersports
Type:	Multiple Genre (Sci-Fi, Horror) point-oriented
Length:	Long
Reviewed:	November 2005
Extras:	Images

Basic Plot/Story:

You are David Ellison Fever, a 20-year-old who - even after two years of community college - lacks a solid direction in life (sound familiar?). When your father's frustrations get you kicked out of the house, your mother sympathizes and arranges for you to spend some time away at the Fever family's mountain cabin (once inhabited by your Uncle Danny, who "mysteriously vanished" ten years ago).

The game begins in the desolate, snowed-in cabin, but before too long, a surprising twist of science fiction whisks the player away to other locales (or "chapters"), which are played as separate, seemingly-unrelated "mini-stories" within the larger plot - each with their own puzzle-related mysteries to solve.

Overall Thoughts:

Fever Cabin is one of the most clever, challenging, and well-executed AIF games I have ever played. The writer's thorough attention to description sucked me in (without bombarding me), and gave my imagination all the pieces it needed to kick back and enjoy my suspension of disbelief (I got distracted studying the variations in wall texture/paneling throughout the cabin), which is what, in my opinion, Interactive Fiction is all about. The game's responsiveness to most of my actions (without giving me the jarring "I don't know the word '____'") left me the freedom to experiment not only with my surroundings, but with my logic as well - I was able to take an intelligent idea much further than I would normally bother to in most games.

I was impressed with the writer's ability to take a realistic story, and easily introduce its surreal plot-advancing elements, without disrupting the smooth flow and overall enjoyment of the gameplay. (GoddoG even used science to tackle AIF's biggest-yet-willfully-overlooked idiosyncrasy: the gift of "infinite sex" (bestowed upon every player character, in every game) - making it believable AND integral to the plot!) The four chapters are infused with action and suspense, calling the player to think on one's feet, while employing survival-based decision-making, but they're not too lengthy to become mired or unexciting.

Puzzles/Game play:

Part of the beauty of *Fever Cabin* is it's dual challenge: One can either set their sights on "getting to the end" OR on collecting all 777 points hidden along the way - both of which are rewarding. The basic puzzles - those that need solving in order to advance to the next stage - are standard (yet solid) IF fare, requiring only the player's abilities to read descriptions, and put two-and-two together (and maybe use the "look" command properly). The smaller, "point puzzles" require a more experienced and thoughtful approach. I almost lost my mind before reaching out for help.

Sex:

Oh, yeah - the Sex: ...DAMN. To further demonstrate his ability to snare a reader, GoddoG introduces the sex teasingly through the first few chapters, offering all-too-brief tantalizing samples. Disappointing? No. Egging you on? Yes.

Without going into detail, please, just allow me to say: The final scene is one of the most satisfyingly rompy, intricate, multi-faceted sex scenes I can remember playing in an AIF game - and it somehow manages to remain within the bounds of the STORY! The scene is comprised of a single girls' dorm room in Texas (from which there is no escape), occupied by David; Lori, a wicked, petite brunette athlete; and Kim, a shapely, dominating blonde of "Amazon Goddess" stature. And everyone's horny - in light of the recent state-wide ban on all sex toys. And both girls are science majors. And the player is the unwilling subject of a whole slew of experiments they're conducting for their dissertations. And . . . and . . . jeez, it just goes ON (things even seem to come full circle plot-wise, but, um, at this point, er - well, let's face it... it's hardly important).

Technical:

Superb. The game's responsiveness was logical to the point of intuitive. The only "glitch" worth noting is the TADS-typical "no response" to certain (overly-noun'ed and/or overly conjuncted) commands, which I assume is more related to the TADS operating structure than the author's abilities (Just a hunch-I haven't tried coding with TADS yet).

Intangibles:

GoddoG does a great job of "steering" the game, while maintaining a realistic, deeply-layered playing universe, but I found that the game's vastness of detail left me with some unanswered questions. This is not a complaint - I must simply move on - but... In most "good" games, the author employs the use of red herrings, yes? In *Fever Cabin*, I believe there were elements that crept surreptitiously beyond the realm of "red herring", and into blank corners of gameplay where seemingly-positive responses to my actions lead me to waste too much time. I'm sure that I'm mostly at fault here, but I can't help wondering: Was GoddoG able to complete every avenue he had embarked upon in *Fever Cabin*? Or has GoddoG simply raised the bar in regard to the use of red herrings, as well?

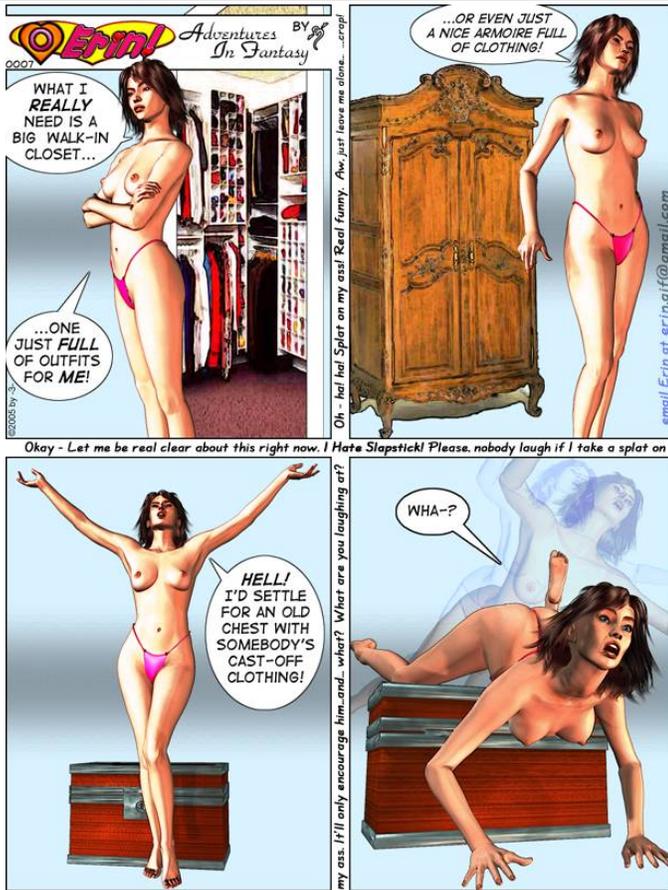
OR (and this is more likely): even after maxing out my score at 777, is there still more to be unlocked and uncovered? I can only hope. If not, GoddoG, will there be a sequel/re-write/re-mix/special/Criterion/letterbox edition(+bonus scenes, director's commentary, alternate ending, etc.) of *Fever Cabin*? Please?

(I mean, come on - we both KNOW that Lori's affair with Sifu isn't over yet, right?)

Final Thoughts:

To GoddoG: A Big Thank You. Thanks for giving us a highly entertaining, high-quality game to play. It's an example of how AIF (any-IF, for that matter) can be done... WELL. Your beta-testers were chosen wisely (they are great AIF authors themselves!), and listened-to carefully. In a time when AIF output is in a lull, or flooded with carelessness, it's good to know that there are still masters hard at work.

Rating: A+



This is Erin! comic strip #7. All previous strips can be viewed on the AIFNewsletter web site. Don't miss them!

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Staff

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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.

