inside erin
The AIF newsletter

Letter from the Editor

To attempt to combat the thinness of this edition of the newsletter, I'm going to begin a new feature, which for lack of a better name I'm referring to as Live AIF. In the Live AIF, the game author (that's me) will begin the game by providing an introduction and background and responses to a short list of initial commands. Then, I will select one volunteer player each month to issue commands into the game (by e-mail). The player and I will e-mail back and forth, the player issuing standard IF commands and I will act as parser and provide a response to each command. Each month's newsletter will then contain a transcript of the previous month's play and an invitation to become the next player. See the information at the end of this episode of the game to learn how to volunteer.

The Live AIF beginning today is intended to be a short, experimental game to determine how best to work this for a longer game (or to determine whether a longer game in this format is even feasible). As I see it at the moment, there are numerous strengths and weaknesses of this format, but I hope to learn of more. The most obvious strength is the fact that the command parser is many myriad times more powerful than the traditional game parser, and can accept complex commands

This Month in AIF by BBBen

It's been a fairly slow month, but we did get a new game release, so I've seen slower. That seems kind of weird to me, because I for one have been doing quite a lot of AIF writing lately, and so it really feels like things are happening, but from the perspective of the average AIF player it's probably business as usual.

Inform 7 is still causing a buzz, with the word being that there are a couple of AIF oriented libraries being built for the new system. Who knows, I may even give Inform 7 a bit of a look myself! No, probably not. Still, I'd recommend new authors check it out.

Interview with Shadow Wolf by A. Ninny

This month we're featuring community member and AIF library programmer Shadow Wolf. Many thanks to him for participating in this interview.

AN: To start with, who are you and what brings you to AIF?

SW: I'm a 31-year-old computer programmer who's been interested in both text games and erotica for a number of years now. To be honest, I can no longer recall how I first discovered

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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.

the AIF community - it was definitely in the days when alt.games.xtrek was more active, and prior to the TADS 3 release.

AN: You're not someone who has (yet) released any AIF games, so can you tell us about some of the things you've contributed to the community?

SW: Well, I helped mirror the download file for one of the mini-comps a couple of years ago, and I've written a couple of TADS-2 libraries on my website and the IF-archive. It has always been my intention to write an AIF work, and I've got several works-in-progress in TADS 2, but I've never announced anything because I didn't want to be one of those people who announces something but never completes it.

AN: I think our main interest in your work right now are your efforts to create the Inform 7 AIF extension. How's it coming along?

SW: So far, the layered clothing part seems to be pretty solid, and the body parts code has also been released as an extension, and I've not had any new bug reports since. I've been working on the sex verbs, which once complete should form a reasonable functional library. After that, I'm considering writing some optional extensions for bondage and multi-part clothing.

AN: What are the specific challenges you've faced?

SW: I think the greatest difficulty to this point has been coming up with appropriate English words to express certain relationships. For instance, for the relationship "worn or part of, but not carried" (used to determine if a person has a particular body part, either natively or as a prosthesis/ strapon), I ended up using the rather awkward verb "to encase". And I *still* haven't come up with an appropriate adjective meaning "outward from" that would fit the "-er/-est" form.

AN: Doesn't that make the system seem too imprecise? After all, you're a programmer, and programmers generally like things to be extremely precise.

SW: It's not that it's imprecise. It's more that the "natural language" aspect of I7 discourages the writer from using non-English constructs. In a more typical language, instead of "encase", I'd probably just do "part_or_worn", or something similar. For the layer issue, I'd either just say "x.layer > y.layer", or I'd use "outside/outsider/outsidest" without worrying about the fact that it's bad English. In I7, while you technically *could* do it, it doesn't feel right to use the non-grammatical constructs, because they break the flow of the language.

AN: What is your opinion of I7 as an authoring system?

SW: It's pretty interesting. The rule-based mechanism, in particular, is something I was trying to put together with TADS-2 and later TADS-3. One of the big drawbacks of the current libraries is that there's typically one or a very few responses for something like "fuck anne" - once you've cleared away any impediments, like clothing or arousal, the actual circumstances no longer matter much. The reason for this is that in order to write something more complicated, you have to write a *lot* of if...then...else if..., etc, and create one huge function. I was always more ambitious - I wanted to create the Galatea of AIF, if you will, which would have a large number of responses depending on past history, location, position, and possibly other circumstances. A rule-based mechanism will grant much greater flexibility to create such characters.

AN: Flexibility is good, but from someone who implemented layered sex acts in a TADS game, just providing an avenue for someone to create a vast number of responses to "fuck Anne" doesn't mean the author should write them. Adding the code (to NewKid's Chick.t library) to do the layering in *Parlour* took a few minutes, but writing the layered sex took many weeks. Do you think that offering someone the chance to create extremely realistic sex scenes means that they'll get into it and never actually finish the scene, let alone a game?

SW: I think each author will reach a point at which they say "I've added enough options to this sex scene," just like, when writing dialogue for a character, they say "I've written enough answers." When that point is reached depends on the preferences of the author and the needs of the game and character. Yes, it may take them longer to write a scene, and thus a game if they choose to use the options, but I think the resulting games will be better for it.

AN: Do you think I7 will be embraced by AIF authors? What are its strengths and weaknesses when considered alongside existing systems (particularly ADRIFT, which is the most popular AIF authoring system)?

SW: The strengths - I think the rule-based system and the relations tools will, once the community understands them better, provide a simpler way of writing more complex NPCs, and NPCs are the heart and soul of AIF. Additionally, the "scenes" mechanism has obvious implications for AIF - we're always talking about "sex scenes", and now there's a direct mechanism for managing them. It should be a lot easier to write NPCs which are involved in multiple sex scenes, without tricks like writing two separate NPCs with the same name.

The weaknesses - Right now, the Z-machine limitations. Just the basic Layered Clothing and Body Parts extensions, with a small example, is getting close to the 256K file size limitation of z5, and I don't have any way of telling how close I am to hitting the 64K writeable-memory limit, which is a hard boundary for the Z-machine. This does worry me a bit... we really need I7 to compile to Glulx before we start writing anything really ambitious. Additionally, performance has been a worry for me. Even doing something as simple as stripping when wearing four garments causes a *noticeable* pause. I7 code appears to translate to a large number of loops and rule checks. Hopefully, the I7 team can improve this - it's been noted on RAIF.

I can't really answer for the ADRIFT authors. I tried ADRIFT briefly in the 3.9 days, but I found it almost unusable. I'm a verbal thinker rather than a visual thinker, and so I've never really seen the appeal of programming by choosing drop-down options, and I couldn't tell you if those who do use ADRIFT would like I7.

AN: Shifting gears a bit, what are your favorite AIF games, and what do you think makes successful AIF?

SW: My favorite AIF games are both TADS, specifically *Beverly* and *Deanna*. This is primarily because these are probably the two most interactive NPCs in any of the games I've played, not because I'm particularly interested in either Troi or Dr. Crusher. Actually, the only Star Trek woman I've ever fantasized about is Dax.

AN: <Laughs> I liked Dax too, and I had the biggest thing for Ensign Ro Laren. But yeah, Counselor Cleavage never did it for me, either. Sorry, please continue.

SW: As I've said above, NPCs are the heart and soul of AIF, and this means *interactive* NPCs. I want Galatea, or at least Floyd, rather than the somewhat minimal NPCs that characterize most IF of both the adult and non-adult varieties. Both Beverly and Deanna, above, are steps in this direction, but I'd like to go further.

AN: Any chance you'll use your own new I7 AIF extension to create a game?

SW: I'm hoping to. Ultimately, that's why I'm writing it. I've had numerous ideas for games, ranging from a Beverly/Deanna type with a single complex NPC, to a swords, sorcery, and sex adventure with a couple of dozen NPCs, a large map, and a complex plot. I'm hoping I'll actually be able to complete at least one game, though I fear I do need to wait for Glulx compilation before it's feasible.

Shadow Wolf is the author if the in-progress Inform 7 AIF extension. You can find out more about it at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/inform7aif. He also maintains a web site with his TADS libraries at http://www.geocities.com/shadowolf3400/.

Letter from the Editor (Continued)

like "Elaborate on the subject of tattoos to Ruby" or, better still, "While licking Amy's pussy, stuff my thumb up her ass with one hand and tweak her nipples with the other" (imagine typing that into an AIF!). Another strength is that, potentially, the player has immense power to steer the game's story by giving the parser/author actual ideas as to what to include next.   The clearest weakness of the format is that unlike all other AIF, almost all of you will only ever get to read a transcript of the game once a month and never play it. The only one who really has any consistent fun playing the game is me, the parser/author. So now you know really why I'm so eager to try this out…

So take a look at this month's introduction to *Green Summer*. A bit of personal background on it: I really did have the summer job described in the game one year, and I really visited the place and met the people I describe in the game. The sex part (needless to say) is pure fantasy, but it's a fantasy I'm finally able to assign some continuity to, which should be an interesting exercise.

In other areas of AIF, my own 'ordinary' game is still coming along, but due to extreme swamped-ness in my job and real life, I'm not nearly so certain I'll complete it in time for this year's Erins, as I had hoped to. In my own newsletter interview, I indicated that it will have three three-way sex scenes; those are what I'm currently knee-deep in. It's a long slog writing all those descriptions, but I'm hoping they'll be worth the effort. Chris Cole has told me he's swamped as well, so unfortunately his "Seven Seas of Theah" story is on hiatus until the end of August. I invite and encourage anyone who wants to step in and contribute a story, article or review to do so; the newsletter staff has been fantastic, but it would be better still to get more input from a more diverse group of members of the community.

AIF 101: Plotting by Johnny Freebase

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

*   *   *

Okay, last time we brainstormed a bit, and have a basic idea. Now, we can begin some more serious planning, turning that idea into a story.

There's no one way to turn an idea into a fully fledged plot, but there are some generalities. Here, our goal is to build the foundation for all of the elements that are to follow, such as character and setting.

Before I go into examples, allow me to digress on the physicality of planning for a moment. I do all of my planning on the computer, usually just in a simple text editor. Sometimes I use the freeware program MyInfo, which is a sort of indexing/note taking program you can pull off of http://www.milenix.com/myinfo. I find it helpful, but you'd do just as well with Notepad.

What you are building as you plan your game is a design document. Depending on your proficiency and style of note-taking, this can be either a really big or a really small file. I prefer to take my notes on the computer as opposed to on paper simply because you never really know how much space you're going to need to allocate to a given topic.

Let's take one of the ideas spoken of last time... the Deliverance plot. A princess being rescued by someone. Well, that gives us a character right away: a princess. We'll go into character development in a later lesson, but for right now you can simply note her existence under the Character's heading of your notes.

For the purposes of this game, we'll assume that the player is the one doing the rescuing. The player could be the kidnapper or an assistant to the rescuer, but for right now, we'll add the player as Rescuer. You can add the player to your Character notes, or as a separate heading.

Now, someone has been kidnapped. By whom? If we come up with a good idea, that's great. If not, we can go with our random idea generation... lets give that a try.

First, a tarot card: The 7 of Wands. This suggests a man overcoming great struggles.
Now, a random song: Jethro Tull – "Locomotive Breath." A dragon.

Well, let's be classic and go with the second option. A dragon has kidnapped the princess! The dragon is our antagonist. Add him to the Character notes, with a tag denoting him as the Antagonist. We decide to continue in the classic venue and decide that the player is the King's Champion, a top knight, assigned to rescue his daughter. We can add the King to the list of Characters, and why not add a Queen while we're at it?

Now, let's pause for a moment and talk backstory. What lead to things being the way they are? Why was the princess kidnapped? How did the PC become King's Champion?

A common literary and cinematic convention is the role reversal. Simply put, the protagonist's goal changes midway through the plot. Sometimes this can happen several times. Let us plant the seeds for one now: the princess wasn't kidnapped. She ran off, ran away with the dragon, her lover. Perhaps there is no dragon after all, but instead a powerful sorcerer who makes it look like there was a dragon to cover his tracks!

The princess was from a foreign country, here to be married off against her will to the Prince for political reasons. Add him to the character list... lets make him a bit of an asshole, too. The King, his father, has gotten old and feeble, and now all the Prince needs to replace him is a Queen of his own.

The "dragon" is actually a sorcerer from the Princess's home kingdom. He "rescued" her, and they've fled. The Player, one of the aging king's greatest knights (perhaps now getting a bit on in years as well), has been tasked by the Prince to rescue his fiancé.

Another backstory element is the general game setting. Fantasy is the most obvious match for our project, but it could easily be adapted to space opera, cyberpunk, whatever. We'll leave it as fantasy for now. I won't get into too much detail, but as far as world creation goes, we need to determine the following.

- Our PCs culture
- The Princess's culture
- The political situation between the two cultures
- The nature of any magic to be performed or witnessed

For our PCs culture, we'll leave it as "Generic Medieval European." No elves or dwarves or any other races... we'll leave anything we don't define as being basically "Generic medieval Earth".

We want the Princess to be exotic. She can be from some vaguely Asian culture.

To make things more dramatic, we'll make relations between our two defined nations uneasy at best. Perhaps the union of the Prince and Princess is to avoid a war... or end one. Nah, that makes our player's eventual decision way easier if the fate of nations hangs in the balance! We'll say that the Princess's nation is subjugated by ours, and that she was taken against both her and her family's will.

Hey! Maybe the Dragon isn't a forgotten lover, but her brother. This opens up the avenue of a relationship between her and the PC!

That's the backstory.

Now, eventually in the game the player will have to choose... show loyalty to the king's misguided and arrogant son, killing the sorcerer and returning the princess, or stay true to his knightly virtues and assist them in escaping back to their homeland?

Lets note that honor vs. loyalty will be a strong theme in the game, and to bring up the prince's dark nature and the tenets of chivalry often. A possible climax: The player has to choose weather to assist the prince or the sorcerer in a showdown.

"Wait!" I hear the cry: "That's not very AIF sounding at all! Where's the sex?"

There are lots of opportunities for sex. Perhaps the player is having an affair with the queen. Perhaps he can demand "payment" from the Princess in exchange for helping escape the prince. All I've established is the main plot... much more will occur in the game than that.

Even so, if you want something more directly AIF, the process is the same. In a "Night With XXX" game, the plot is simple: The player wants to fuck character XXX. What must be done to accomplish this?

Or, as in many AIF games, the goal is to score with a certain character, and for some reason you have to screw a number of other characters first. *Moist*, *Camp Windy Lake, HI*, whatever. You still have characters and a plot. The particular game I've presented may be more story than character based, but it's the same general process.

So, our plot summary:

An aging knight is ordered to rescue the King's arrogant son's fiancé from a dragon. After it turns out that the "dragon" is actually the woman's brother from her homeland there to rescue her, he must choose to help them escape, or turn them in.

Note: Green Summer is an adult interactive fiction game that will be played out over the next few months in the pages of this newsletter. The 'player' in this episode is the author, setting the stage for upcoming players to take over. Please refer to the procedures at the end of this episode to learn how you may become the next player.

*   *   *

Home from college for the summer, you grabbed a flyer advertising "SUMMER JOBS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT!!" It caught your eye, and you're basically a well-meaning guy and you believe in protecting the environment -- so you called the number on the flyer. Turns out, the flyer was posted by the local chapter of Environmentalists International, and the job consists of walking suburban neighborhoods, going door to door requesting donations for the Cause.

Every night you're out there, equipped with your clipboard and sturdy shoes, ringing doorbells and trying desperately to make your $100 per night quota so as to not be ridiculed by the boss in front of the entire canvassing team.

In the beginning of the summer it was a piece of cake to make money for the cause. You were enthusiastic and they sent you to neighborhoods known to be easy: those with like-minded folk who have a lot of money and a lot of guilt about not using more of that money for good. It was also a good time. You've made quite a few friends among your co-canvassers, including several very attractive women. It was deliberate on the part of the bosses: build your ego, build the team, and hone your pitch on the easy targets. Then send you out into the real jungle.

The real jungle, as it turns out, is the suburban sprawl. Tonight, for instance, you're walking meandering drives with no sidewalks, dozens of identical four-unit townhouses, streets all named after flowers, like Hyacinth Way or Hydrangea Court or Honeysuckle Drive. Keeping it all straight is nearly beyond you. Each townhouses has a garage bigger than its living space. Each one, as it also turns out, has a resident who feels no shame in closing the door in your face.

It's a hot evening. The sun is going down, but it hasn't set, and your body is bathed in perspiration. You've finished the last of your water bottle, and all the talking you've done has parched you. Townhouse after townhouse, door after door, people listen, then politely refuse, or not so politely. Even the people have become as indistinguishable as their homes. Welcome to suburban America, Phil. Altogether you've raised a distressingly paltry $20 tonight.

Green Summer
Adult Interactive Fiction by A. Ninny
© 2006
Version 1.0

It isn't supposed to be the last doorbell you ring. Your turf tonight takes you to several more streets, perhaps a dozen more houses. This townhouse - the door, the doorbell, the landscaping – is all but indistinguishable from the others. But, as you are about to find, sometimes it is possible to be surprised.

Outside the Townhouse

You're standing outside the front door of a townhouse that is identical to every other you've visited tonight. Clapboard siding, cheap vinyl windows, white front door, little patch of artificially healthy grass, immense garage door, wide concrete driveway. The walkway back to the road leads south; there are some neatly manicured flowers and bushes planted along the path. There is a mailbox and a doorbell next to the door.

>x me
You're Phil Woods, college student and canvasser ordinaire for the environment. You stand about 5'-10", with a decent (though not magnificent) physique, and you have short brown hair and green eyes. You're wearing shorts, a t-shirt and sturdy walking shoes.

>i
You are carrying a clipboard. Attached to the clipboard you see a pile of paperwork.

>x paperwork
The paperwork consists of petitions, sheets of propaganda about environmental degradation and

corporate greed, brochures about your employer, and your instructions for the evening.

>read instructions
The instructions merely give you your route (a small map and list of addresses to visit), your pickup and drop-off location, and a reminder to collect your quota.

>read brochure
The brochure lists all the magnificent things your employer does to help save the environment. They do research, political action and take 'direct action' against polluters. Does that mean ecoterrorism? You don't know, but you've been led to believe that the money you're raising this summer will be used to hire environmental lawyers to sue companies that violate environmental laws. You wonder if those environmental lawyers make as little money as you do…

>x mailbox
The mailbox is perfectly indistinguishable from every other mailbox on every other house you've visited tonight. Peeking inside the mailbox, you see that it is empty.

>south
You haven't been refused money at this house yet.

(okay, enough mucking about)

>ring doorbell

*   *   *

Procedures for Live AIF:

To be the next player, please send an e-mail to aifsummer@gmail.com. I will select one player at random from all those who write in. The deadline for volunteering is the 5th day of each month. I will notify the selected player and invite them to begin playing. All others who volunteer will not receive a reply, simply because it would take too long to write to everyone. If the selected player does not respond in three days after I send the invitation, I will select someone else.

The selected player will play until I decide that enough turns have lapsed, but I'll start with a target of 20 turns. After all, the game transcript has to fit in the newsletter. The number of turns may be an on-the-fly decision and will be fine-tuned as the game goes on.

A quick note for this upcoming installment: there probably won't be an interactive steamy sex scene (SSS) next month. If you're hoping to play the game during an SSS, you should wait. Once you've had a chance to be the player, you won't be able to play again.

I'm interested in hearing what you think about this as the game progresses. If you have suggestions for how to make this a better feature, please write to me at the above address or at aifsubmissions@gmail.com.

This Month in AIF (Continued)

The biggest debate this month was over the proposal (which has been batted around several times before) for a "one world, many authors" game or series of games. Basically, while these ideas have been suggested before and seem like fun, they've never gotten off the ground. There was some talk a while back on the now dead AIF Community Portal in the idea of a Baldur's Gate 2 collaboration, that was notable because it had interest from several experienced authors, and later there were a couple of attempts, including the "Free City of Stolgar" steampunk idea, to create a new setting that would attract other authors. However, so far, nothing has happened and my reasoning would be that there are not very many active AIF authors out there. If this can be pulled off successfully then I'll be pleased, but I for one have to work on my own collaborative game project.

New Games

The New Superstud by Richard Deckmaster, ADRIFT 4.0, released 19th June 2006. A dating sim in which you venture to be the new "superstud" by scoring with seven exchange students.

The New SuperStud, a review by A. Bomire

Name:	*The New SuperStud*
Author:	Deckmaster
Platform:	Adrift 4.0
Size:	319K
Content:	m/f
Extras:	Pictures
Type:	Dating Sim
Length:	Long

Basic Plot

Seven gorgeous exchange students from around the world have just started attending the local college. You and two other guys are trying desperately to sleep with all of them before the end of the school year.

This game is modeled after a popular type of game style used in many Anime and Hentai game formats, usually produced in Japan, called a Dating Simulation (or Sim). This type of game uses a combination of techniques to get a girl (or multiple girls, in this case) to become more attracted to you, represented by a relationship score or "love meter". You usually have a fixed length of time to do so.

In the case of this game, you can get different jobs to earn money and raise your stats (charisma and charm). You also spend time with each girl, and even resort to out-and-out bribery (buying and giving gifts), to get her to the point where she will sleep with you. Along the way you learn stuff about each girl, and are subjected to a "How well do you know me?" quiz before she'll go all the way with you.

Overall Thoughts

This is the second dating sim game produced by this author, his previous game being *The Village of Love and Lust*. Producing a dating simulation game is a chancy prospect – even more so than a typical AIF game. A well-designed game will have multiple outcomes and branching storylines depending upon which statistics you build up. Will you swim a lot and get the girl on the swim team, or read at the library for a chance with the school nerd? These types of games are often designed to be played over and over.

In many of these games, however, you simply mindlessly perform the same boring tasks over and over just to watch your score increase. This type of game has very little in the way of replay value, and in fact is hardly any fun to play the first time through. Unfortunately, I found that this game falls more in line with the latter group.

Puzzles/ Game Play

The only real puzzles in this game are "Where is *name*?" and "How does she feel about me?" The game has the typical dating sim scenario of getting jobs to both raise your statistics and earn cash to buy gifts for the girls. However, I found that I could largely ignore the job getting phase and simply talk to the girls a number of times to raise their love meter towards me. I don't know if this is a bug or not, but it certainly isn't the way this type of game is usually played.

The author explains within his README file that you should take notes on the girls to find out where they are likely to be during certain segments of the game (day, evening, night, etc.). But he also helpfully provided a "where is" command (along with ADRIFT's built-in "find" command) that will tell you where any girl is at any time. Each girl gives you a wealth of knowledge about herself such as her favorite colors, movies, sexual positions, etc. Deckmaster has helpfully stored this for you in a "notes" command so that you can review it when the question-and-answer segment comes up. In all, I found I could ignore the note taking thanks to these helpful additions.

Sex

As you build up each girl's relationship, she will allow you to progress further and further with her - from a SLAP! to full out sex in her room. The sex scenes are cut-scenes described for you after you complete the quiz portion with each girl. They are good, but nothing really exciting about

them. You can also kiss and fondle the girls during the game. These portions are pretty repetitive, with no effort made to customize the results. For example, "kiss tits Victoria" (yes, an odd way of phrasing which is explained in the read me) is no different than "touch tits Victoria", or for that matter "kiss ass Victoria" and "kiss pussy Victoria". The only really distinctive sexual scenes are the results of the question-and-answer sessions.

Technical

As I mentioned earlier, I found I could ignore the job getting portion and simply "talk to *girl*" over and over to raise her stats. I do not know if this is a bug, but it isn't the way these types of games usually are played. Also, although you are meant to sleep during a portion of each day, I made it through the whole game without ever sleeping with no discernible penalty. This may also be a bug, although it is a bug in my favor.

There were a couple of situations that arose where I assume I was in a position to observe a girl having sex with one of my competitors, but no messages to this affect were ever displayed. My assumption is based upon the fact that the girl and guy were in her room late at night, and attempts to start the question-and-answer session were rebuffed by the guy with a "Hey! Can't you see we're busy!" message of some sort. But, I could be mistaken about this and they were simply playing an invisible game of Parcheesi.

There are some other minor technical problems as well, but nothing that caused the game to hang up or interfered with play.

Intangibles

The game does come with a set of pictures that change during the course of play. The pictures appear to be original works by the author. It is a nice touch that you see a different picture for a girl who is sunbathing at the beach than you do when she is dancing at the night club.

Final Thoughts

Because most dating sim games use a pattern of repeatedly performing tasks to raise statistics, I usually find them not to my taste. I found that this game falls into that category. You seem to be able to avoid all of the "sim" part quite easily. The reward is some pretty bland sex scenes (one per girl), which doesn't seem to be worth the effort.

Rating: **D**

Midsomer Bottom Manor, a review by Grimm Sharlak

Game Info:	*Midsomer Bottom Manor,* released September 14th, 2004
Author:	Sly Old Dog
Platform:	Adrift 4
Size:	59KB (zipped)
Content:	m/f, m/m/f
Game Type:	T&AIF
Length:	Medium
Reviewed:	June 2006
Extras:	Walkthrough

Basic Plot:

You play as the butler to the esteemed upper class English couple, Sir John and his wife the Lady Emma. As you go about your duties, you see the underbelly of upper class society while creating a scandal or two of your own with the other hired help.

Overall Thoughts:

There's a little alarm that can go off in the back of a player's mind when they unzip that latest game. Like when fifteen poor porno photos appear alongside the game file. Or when poorly *drawn* porno pictures appear. None of this happened with *Midsomer Bottom Manor*, however. What came with it was a walkthrough.

Now, this is not a strange thing. Many games come with a hint file or score list, but in this case,

it's quite necessary, as *Midsomer* is an ambitious, but somewhat frustrating game.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

Midsomer can be a frustrating game, at times. Nearly every puzzle is time-based in some way, and, for example when the lady of the house tells you to meet her in the chapel via the secret passage, unless you press down in the right room you'll never find your way. The game has too much of a lack of direction, which could have been solved by having both exits in the room descriptions and "NPC moves of to the south" messages in certain instances. Not knowing where a NPC has gone when you need to find them within a certain time limit, due solely to them having "left the room" isn't challenging, it's just frustrating.

Also frustrating is the door system. Once upstairs, you have to unlock and open doors almost every time you want to enter one. The final frustration is in character naming. His Lordship, Sir John, has aliases such as 'Lordship,' 'Sir John' and 'John,' but not all aliases will work with all commands. The same can happen with other characters. Points for effort in including the aliases, but the fact that they're not implemented fully kind of wastes that effort.

Sex:

The sex is short, sharp and shiny. It's all about getting down to business in this game, even in the final "reward" sex scene. And all are rather short. Unfortunately, if you tackle the game in order, you start off banging the fat cook and then a stable hand everyone thought was a boy before you get to the better fare. Not exactly the best buildup, especially when the sex with the more desirable ladies of the manor is just as short or shorter than these initial trysts.

However, the one threesome scene in the game is the longest, if nothing else, and provides something different to the rest, so there's some variety to be had.

Technical:

Again, points for effort here, as the author has gone for some realism in your role; you're the butler, you need to do certain things at certain times and time is always passing in the manor. This can make things difficult at times, but for the most part its implemented well enough.

Intangibles:

Including a walkthrough with the game was a great idea, although it needs to be more explicit. When you can't do something that the walkthrough says you can (sliding down the handrail) then that's just… Confusing.

Still, the time aspect is a different spin on the "manor of horny chicks" type game, and the coin game near the end is also well done.

Final Thoughts:

Midsomer Bottom Manor has its good points, and is certainly doing its best to be innovative, but unfortunately the implementation lets it down. Sorting out the complicated timing system is a grand effort in ADRIFT, but the naming problems and short sex scenes make it seem like similar effort didn't go into all the aspects of the game.

Rating: C

This is "O Erin!" #19

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