

INSIDE

ADRIFT

(... being the newsletter of the ADRIFT community...)

Issue 29
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Editorial

And so I found myself editing the newsletter.

How it came about, I'm not entirely sure. I'd thought about offering to edit it a time or two in the past, but then got cold feet at the last moment and backed down. Ss it seemed to be doing pretty well as it was, I was kind of reluctant to volunteer and risk a serious egging when the whole thing went belly-up two issues later.

But then KFAdrift announced he wasn't editing the newsletter any longer and offered it up to someone else, and, lo and behold, I found myself volunteering. With, at the time, no real idea what I was doing or how I was going to go about running the newsletter.

I'm the fourth person to take over the editorship (is that a proper word? Microsoft Word isn't hitting it with a weird red underline so I guess it must be) of the newsletter and of the others, two have since pretty much departed the world of ADRIFT for greener pastures. Is that an ill omen or just pure coincidence? Check back here in a year's time and if someone else is editing the newsletter and I'm a rapidly fading memory on the forum, you'll have your answer.

But for now I'm here to stay, frightening thought though that might be to anyone reading this.

On with the show!

David Whyld

Hot Off The Press

(... being the latest news from the big wide world of interactive fiction...)

ADRIFT 5 Looms

The latest update on ADRIFT 5 is that it should be due in the fourth quarter of 2006... as little as five months away, fingers crossed. A few of the proposed features, as mentioned by ADRIFT designer Campbell Wild on the forum, are:

- * Variables will still be Integer and Text, although I'll be extending this so you can create Arrays of each.
- * Properties will be completely separate things that you can assign to objects, and can contain links to other items, or variable type values. I'm planning on having object classes that have a pre-defined set of properties that you can assign the objects to also (e.g. you could create a Weapon class that has a strength property, the fact that it's dynamic etc).
- * *I'd like to be able to set an object in Adrift to be a vehicle, so say I'm sitting on a horse and type "East", then I'd go east on the horse, instead of the default "first getting off the horse."*

You could create a Vehicle class, then within the directions tasks (which are now editable within Generator rather than being hardcoded in Runner) you could have special cases when you are on a Vehicle object.

- * *Is this the Adrift version that will have more power when it comes to conversation? It would be great if an unlimited amount of tasks could change Ask character Subject output, though I suppose this could be handled with an ALR and variables in the current version. Better too, if Adrift kept track of whether the character had answered the question before, or if a question could trigger a task/event/etc.*

Yes, I'm planning on building in conversation trees that has logic flow

depending on previous questions asked.

- * *I hope "better ambiguity resolution" means that if I type look at the blue dog and there's a black dog also in the room, when the parser asks which dog I mean, I type "blue dog" and it will understand my meaning.*

Absolutely, and is not restricted to just the take/examine etc tasks as before.

- * You can create a Touchable property, then assign that to any objects you want, and have tasks for whenever you touch a touchable or non-touchable object.
- * The Map/Graphics etc windows in Runner are draggable, so you can lay it out however you want.
- * The Player is created as a normal character, which will allow 'switching' between Characters and the Player as each Character has the exact same properties as the Player.
- * *Perhaps a mapping tool that allowed you to drag things around.*

Yeah, I'm deliberating over this one. I like the idea of having an auto-map, so will either allow modification of the auto-map (e.g. stretch a room), or have some kind of customisable map maker.

- * Runner 5.0 should be able to load 4.0 games. Again, they may not be 100% because of the magnitude of change, but I'll do my best.
- * You'll have the freedom to group things however you want, so you could always keep those tasks next to the rooms in question.
- * *Are you considering handling of multiple instances of objects in ADRIFT 5.0? Or will it be a flat model as in 4.x whereby if you have 3 rocks, they all have to be implemented separately?*

Yes, I'm hoping to build in multiple objects into v5.0.

- * You can drag everything around in v5.0. You can even drag for example a location onto a task description, where it will automatically add the function to display the location description within the task.
- * I'll try to improve the spellchecker in v5.0. Personally, I like the Word style, where it underlines words it doesn't understand, and allows you to right-click on them for a choice of words. We'll see...

ADRIFT Forum Reorganised & Upgraded

Several big changes have been made to the ADRIFT forum recently. Gone are the Project Announcements and Feedback sections (the first now being part of Writing Discussions and the second is in General Discussion) in an attempt to clear up the forum and make it easier to access.

On the upgrade side of things, the forum has been a shiny new look. Unfortunately the upgrade hasn't gone completely smoothly as some custom member titles (including my own till it was shortened) stretched across half the screen and gave the forum a somewhat strange look when viewed in the Firefox browser. Hopefully this issue will be fixed in a forthcoming patch.

Drifter Birthdays

30 th May	AndrewF (38)
31 st May	CowInParachute (17)
	Heal Butcher (32)
6 th June	En Kerklaar (20)
	Matthaius (20)
	Seciden Mencarde (20)
8 th June	EricS39 (41)
12 th June	ShereKahn (38)
13 th June	The Amazing Poodle Boy (36)
15 th June	Matt (Dark Baron) (17)
16 th June	Blakk Matt (20)
	thatguy (31)
19 th June	NickyDude (37)
21 st June	Kinvadren (23)
22 nd June	betpet (31)
25 th June	Cannibal (36)
1 st July	proganyl (60)
2 nd July	30otsix (36)
8 th July	syke39 (34)
	phickman7872 (34)
9 th July	The Mad Monk (17)
	mammoth (38)
11 th July	3-blind-mice (18)
14 th July	timothybard (24)
15 th July	Tonyg (18)
	The Bold Slasher (15)
17 th July	Mel S (20)
18 th July	ejl0007 (32)
22 nd July	nick (22)
	driftingon (26)

IFComp 2006

The IFComp 2006 has just been announced - <http://ifcomp.org/comp06/>

In terms of IF comps, this is the big one and tends to attract upwards of 30 or 40 games at a time from practically every system out there. No good at game writing? Don't worry. That never stopped a lot of people from entering last year. ☺

Inform 7 Arrives In Beta

On 30th April, Inform 7 arrived on the scene. After a quick look through it, I can safely say that it seems significantly easier to use than any previous version. Heck, you don't even need to be a programmer to get your head around it! The clever thing about it, and its killer feature from my point of view, is that it uses a 'natural language' approach so that even a non-programmer can figure it out without too much hassle. How well it will do in the long run remains to be seen, but it's certainly an impressive start.

The only downside with the program at the moment seems to be the way the manual is written, making finding just about anything a frustrating experience.

Spatterlight

A new version of Spatterlight - a Mac OS X application that allows people on non-Windows computers to play ADRIFT games - has been released. As I don't have a Mac myself, I'm not going to benefit from it personally but it's nice to know the Mac crowd now have another interpreter to play ADRIFT games on.

Full details: <http://ccxvii.net/spatterlight/>

Spring Thing 2006

The Spring Thing 2006 came and went. While last year's Comp had a total of six entries, this year produced just four. It also had a disappointingly low amount of just fourteen voters. Not many when you consider the size of the online IF community.

Surprisingly enough, of the four games entered in the Comp two were with ADRIFT. ADRIFT games seldom make their way into anything but ADRIFT Comps so it was unusual to say the least to have half the Comp entries. Even nicer that one of them came second (not mine unfortunately but then it's nice to see *any* ADRIFT game do well in a non-ADRIFT Comp).



by Shuarian

This is the first issue of the Adrift Forum Digest. The goal is to highlight a selection of the most interesting forum threads. This issue covers the time period of April 1st to May 22, 2006. Apart from getting published here, a comprehensive list which also covers older topics is available on the Adriftwiki:

[http://insideadrift.org.uk/mwiki/index.php?title=Adrift Forum Digest](http://insideadrift.org.uk/mwiki/index.php?title=Adrift_Forum_Digest)

Adrift 5.x

-Adrift 5.0 Map

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5251>):

In a poll, Campbell asked what kind of modifications people would like to see for the map system in Adrift 5. Most people either wanted a new layout designer or keep the current system with a few changes.

-What Adrift 5 Needs Most Of All

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=4530>):

In this thread, started by David Whyld, ideas and suggestions for the upcoming release of Adrift were collected and discussed. Campbell answered many questions, and asked for any proposals to be entered at the Bugs & Enhancements page.

Programming Help

- Moving on the turn count

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=4;t=5263>):

The topic deals with the timing of tasks in combination with turns. Possible solutions can be achieved through tasks or variables.

- Notepad / journal

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=4;t=5264>):

Deals with the setup of a journal for the player-character which adds new entries

every time the player comes across certain items or places. It can be solved by using a combination of the ALR and variables.

- Changing static object's description.

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=4;t=5256>):

Explains how to use an alternate description for a static object once it has been modified (by a task) with a dynamic object.

- Repeating positive scores when repeating a task

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=4;t=4592>):

Ways to increase a score every time a task is repeated. Solutions include separate tasks or a custom variable for the score.

Game Design, Writing Techniques

- How do you write yours?

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=6;t=520>):

In this thread, people tell in which way and order they write their games. Not surprisingly, there are many different approaches.

- Realism

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=458>):

Talks about the concept a player has regarding the realism of games. What people understand under 'realism' is different, and changes depending on the setting of the game. It was agreed that consistency within the fictional world plays a very important factor.

Player Preferences

- Colors?

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5215>):

TDS was asking how open people are towards a game which changes text and background colors frequently. The general consensus was that the readability of the text is the most important point, while changing colors itself doesn't pose a problem.

- Sound and graphics

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=4555>):

Asked whether using the sound and graphics capabilities of ADRIFT is popular, most drifters had a preference for text only adventures, although many also liked having graphics or sounds in their game. Including them only optionally appears to be a good idea.

Non-Adrift related IF Topics

- Inform 7 (<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5240>):

The release of the public beta of Inform 7 was noted with high interest, especially because the natural language approach seems to make learning Inform 7 easier. Quite a few people expressed their intention to give it a try. Also discussed was how Inform 7 will influence the appeal of Adrift, and how Adrift 5 will compare to it.

- ifwiki.org

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5237>):

This thread mentioned the state of Adrift entries on the IFwiki. David Welbourn used the opportunity to introduce the IFwiki and to give his account on its history and purpose.

Miscellaneous

- Newbies and mazes

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=4621>):

Apparently, mazes are more popular among first time IF authors than among most players. Reasons mentioned for this were nostalgia as well as the relative simplicity of creating mazes.

- Why haven't you finished a game?

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=4590>):

Given the few releases of new games, David Whyld made a poll asking why people haven't finished their games. Among other answers, the most common cited obstacle was the lack of time due to the influence of real life.

Thoughts On A Combat System

by David Whyld

Yes, roll your eyes and yawn: it's another article about combat systems in Adrift games.

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Still with me? Good. Then I'll proceed.

After having a bash at various ideas for combat systems in one game or another, I was left with the conclusion that combat systems just aren't very interesting. In graphical games, they're great because you get to look at all the fancy special effects going off, you can work on your strategies, plan tactics, etc, etc, but in a text adventure all you've got to look at is, pretty much, this kind of thing:

> hit goblin with sword

You hit the goblin with the sword and inflict 2 points of damage.

The goblin hits you with its axe and inflicts 3 points of damage.

> hit goblin with sword

You hit the goblin with the sword but miss.

The goblin hits you with its axe and inflicts 1 point of damage.

> hit goblin with sword

You hit the goblin with the sword and inflict 5 points of damage.

The goblin hits you with its axe but misses.

No matter how you vary things, how you change the text to make the basic descriptions more exciting, what you're left with at the end of the day is still just lines of text scrolling by on the screen and which *just isn't very interesting*.

So I got to wondering how best to write a game that uses combat and yet make it so the player doesn't end up quitting the first time they're forced to fight. I came up with the idea of some descriptive text for each round of combat, probably something along the lines of:

You and the goblin attack each other, your sword whistling through the air as it hits your enemy, knocking it backwards. The goblin roars in anger and attacks on its own; fortunately the blow fails to land as it missed your arm by a fraction of an inch.

Better than before, but still a long way from being workable. This also introduces the problem of there needing to be a *lot* of descriptive text for even a relatively short combat. Above, you have a single round of combat in which the player hits and the goblin misses. Ideally you'd need to allow for:

- * the player and the goblin both hitting
- * the player hitting and the goblin missing
- * the player missing and the goblin hitting
- * the player and the goblin both missing

Four lots of descriptive text for each round of combat, and the combats might last for half a dozen rounds or more. So each combat in the game would require at *least* twenty-four different sets of text for it. A lot of work indeed. Then, too, you're faced with the problem that the descriptive text in itself isn't really that interesting for the player when it's scrolled past their eyes for the tenth time in succession. Using the ALR to vary the descriptions would work to some degree but you'd still be talking about a considerable amount of time and effort.

So back to the drawing board: how to make a combat system that works but isn't boring?

I decided to go back to the basics of what a combat system is: namely, a way to determine who wins a fight. Ideally this doesn't need to take place over a number of rounds because it ought to be possible to determine who will win and who will lose based on the respective abilities of each combatant before the combat even begins. If the player has better fighting abilities, better weapons and better armour than his adversary, he's going to win. If on the other hand, he's weaker than his adversary and with worse weapons and armour, he's going to lose.

Simple.

You could even put in some descriptive text for winning and losing. With just two possibilities, it wouldn't require a lot of text for each combat and would be an easily manageable amount.

Of course, the obvious problem with this is that there's no real sense of adventure in it. If the player is tougher than his adversary, he wins. If he's weaker, he loses. It's also kind of depressing from the player's point of view to know that if he loses a combat once, he's going to lose it every time because his adversary's tougher.

So to keep things moving smoothly, we need to introduce a randomness element. Probably in the following format:

- * If the player and the adversary are of equal powers, there ought to be a 50/50 chance that the player wins.
- * If the player is slightly tougher than his adversary, the odds ought to be 60/40 on the player's behalf.
- * If the player is a lot tougher than his adversary, the odds ought to be 70/30 on the player's behalf.

And so on...

Likewise:

- * If the player is slightly weaker than his adversary, the odds ought to be 40/60 on the player's behalf.
- * If the player is a lot weaker than his adversary, the odds ought to be 30/70 on the player's behalf.

And so on...

So the randomness is back but is this the ideal combat system? No. Why not? Because this way the combat is over with too soon. It's basically a one second combat that ends with either the player dying or the adversary dying with no way of affecting things beyond that.

How to get around this? A round-by-round combat system isn't going to work, and nor is a combat that is decided in a second. Being killed due to purely random elements would annoy most people; if it happened right at the end of the game, it'd be the kind of thing that would get people quitting the game in droves.

A game I'm working on now - provisional title *Shattered Memory* but likely to change before (if) it gets completed - uses a combat system in which everything is decided in a single round. Originally I had it that the player died if they lost the combat round; then I decided that was a bad idea because it either meant starting the player off with great fighting abilities and/or weapons to give them a decent chance of pulling through, or risking everyone quitting the first time they found themselves killed by a randomly rolled variable. One way I saw past this was to introduce one of

two ideas:

- * The player can't die no matter what. Either he's got some kind of power that returns him to life if he *does* die or simply prevents him taking enough damage to kill him. Nice idea in theory but how long it is likely to be effective for? Sooner or later, you're going to realise you're playing a character who can't die. After that, the edge that the combat system is intended to introduce is lost because the player is aware he can't die and so starts taking unnecessary risks.
- * The player can die... but with consequences. Say, each time the player dies, he suffers a score penalty, or loses an item, or a part of the main game quest is cut off for him. Nothing fatal in itself but enough to convince whoever's playing the game to be more careful and to take less risks.

In all honesty, it's likely to be impossible to design a combat system that's ideal. You either have endless amounts of text scrolling past the player in the format listed first above, or you have a combat that's over in the blink of an eye. Saying that, I still think the combat systems are fine in principle. It just needs someone to go and make a really good one.

View From A Newbie

by Mr Toad

Ok I'm new to Adrift, I've had a play and yes I have a few words to say about the Parser and the community as a whole.....

Firstly ADRIFT itself uses a Windows style GUI which is both non-threatening and easy to use. Within a couple of hours I had a few rooms set up complete with a few items and puzzles. But still felt that I hadn't broken the surface yet.

For one ADRIFT gives the user the power to enter what commands need to be typed to complete puzzles, so after playing a few frustrating IF games where its harder to find the right verb than it is to solve the puzzle, its time to put things right!

Next comes the community.

Although I have not yet asked for any help or support when using ADRIFT (yet being the word!) I have browsed this section of the forum and the threads speak for themselves. It seems you guys are only too happy to help and all bugs seemed to be ironed out very quickly. Maybe Campbell really sees this as his pride and joy or maybe he is a very professional person who hates to see mistakes in his work? But what ever the reason problems aren't problems long.

While I'm on the community side of things I have to mention the reviews! That's right were over to the dark side!! Having read some of the reviews I find them slightly blunt but honest. I know some people would feel put out by a bad review, but try try again I suppose would be the message and maybe one day someone will write something that even David W will like! :P

So in conclusion I found ADRIFT easy to use but difficult to master. As a community drifters are likeable and honest and if your game doesn't get a shining review my advice is try harder next time.

Drifters' Think About

Inform 7 and what effect its release (albeit in beta format) will have on Adrift

KFAdrift

I think it will certainly have an effect on Adrift as it gives another possible type of environment for the non-programmer to use. From what I have seen though, it is a programming language and requires a specific wording to implement everything. There has been talk of it using natural language, but seems to be natural language for a robot.

The way it works could provide some food for thought for Campbell's development of Adrift 5 in implementing game elements and simply allowing the author more freedom.

David Whyld

My first impression of Inform 7 was that it was pretty amazing. Compared to the complexity of Inform 6, or Tads, or even a 'simply' programming language like Alan, Inform 7 just seemed *so* easy to use it was hard to believe someone hadn't come up with the idea of a natural language program years before. But when I started trying to do anything harder than create a few rooms with a few objects in them, I ran into problems. Partly this was due to the manual - which seems to be written in a confusing manner and divided into chapters whose headings make precious little sense unless you really sit and read through the entire thing from start to finish - and partly because, while it might *seem* incredibly easy to use when you first start with it, the difficulty factor really cranks up the moment you start trying to do anything more complex. After several false starts, much head scratching and a lot of hunting through the manual to try and find out how to do something that I'd have done in ADRIFT in two seconds flat, I decided to push Inform 7 aside for the time being.

But how will this affect ADRIFT and its stranglehold on the non-programmers' side of the IF market? At this stage, it's difficult to say. In the past, if you wanted to write IF and you either didn't know how to program or weren't interested in learning, you had a choice of either ADRIFT or Quest. 99% of people picked ADRIFT as it's overall a better program, is far easier to use and has a larger user base. But now there's a third contender and this time it's one with a far better pedigree than Quest.

So does this mean a migration of people from ADRIFT to Inform 7? Maybe. At the moment, it's difficult to say what will happen one way or the other. If you're looking for the easiest system around, you're still far better off with ADRIFT... but, saying that, if you're prepared to put in the extra effort of learning Inform 7 (and it's a *lot* of extra effort compared to learning ADRIFT), it's probably fair to say that, when the final version comes around, Inform 7 might be the better choice. Of course, it all depends to a large degree just how much effort you're willing to put into something that is nothing more than a hobby.

In The Hot Seat

Interview with Richard Otter

And this month (hopefully the first of many months) we have an interview. This time with none other than prolific ADRIFT author Richard Otter (aka Rotter).

First of all, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for the newsletter. Let's start with a few easy questions to get the ball rolling:

IA: Who is Rotter? Tell us a bit about yourself.

Rotter: Well, as a quick look at my profile will tell you I'm not the youngest member of the forum. Married for 20 years (to the same woman), I have three children, two of whom are teenagers (tell me about it!) and two dogs. So my house is never quiet, always full of children (both my own and dozens of their friends), always noisy and mostly untidy.

To pay the bills I'm the network manager at a medium sized company, which involves anything to do with servers, computers, laptops, printers, cabling, installing software, supporting users and so on. Unfortunately my main hobby is computers as well, so my wife claims she is a computer widow.

My interest in IF is from the glory days of adventure games in the 80s and 90s. I must have played all the old ZX Spectrum classics such as Sherlock, Hobbit, Lords of Time, Snowball and Subsunk. I even had a go at writing my own stuff in those days using the dear old Quill by Gilsoft.

IA: You seemed to write a lot of games initially - four in 2004, five in 2005 - and then... nothing. You haven't quit or run out of ideas, have you?

Rotter: Run out of ideas? Certainly not! No, after last years IFComp I basically burned myself out. I had never put so much effort into one game before and

certainly never tested one so much. So, I decided to take a rest for a month and then start on my End of Year game. Unfortunately just at that time real-life interrupted in a big way and it is only now I have some spare time again. Don't worry; I'll get some games out this year somehow.

IA: Which of your games so far do you think has been your best work and why? What would you say sets that game above all the others?

Rotter: This is an easy one to answer, my entry in last years Finish the Game Comp, "Pathway to Destruction" is by far my favourite game to date.

Why? I think most will agree that the ideas behind my games are ok but it is usually the implementation that lets them down. With Pathway I feel I got it right. For me everything worked well, the plot, the locations, the implementation and it was one of those games that seemed to write itself.

IA: The more you use ADRIFT, the more proficient with it you become. Have you ever considered revising an old game of yours and adding extra aspects to it that you didn't at the time because you either didn't know how to or never thought of?

Rotter: The simple answer is, for the most part, no. I will always put right things in my games like bugs, typo's, poor spelling and loose grammar as soon as they are reported to me. Once I've released a game I'm usually content to leave it as it is and more importantly I'm usually bored with it by the time it is released. Any new ideas I might have I would rather use in a new effort.

Although, I do have one game that I've never been that happy with and that is "Target". Despite winning the comp it was entered in, it should have had far more content and the only NPC in the game doesn't really work. I'm still keen to create a game which is different each time it is played but it is more likely to be a "Target 2" rather than a rewrite.

IA: You hosted an Intro Comp last year. Any plans to host another at any time in the future?

Rotter: I am considering running about another Intro Comp this year, as I feel anything getting people creating in Adrift is good. I loved the 'Finish the Game' comp last year and the recent 'Writing Challenge' for that reason (I was disappointed that I was not able to put in an entry).

I was very interested by a recent thread on the forum regarding a one-room competition. Not sure I'd run it myself as I would love to write a one-room adventure myself as this is one thing I haven't attempted yet.

IA: Do you finish all of the games that you start writing or have some of them fallen by the wayside?

Rotter: What drifter doesn't have games that fall by the wayside! I've released about nine games to date but must have twice that many sitting on my hard desk. After a quick look, I basically have four categories of games on my computer -

- a) Stuff I'm working on,
- b) Stuff I think will work but I'm leaving for the moment,
- c) Stuff which started but I got fed-up of,

And finally

- d) Things which seemed a good idea at the time.

IA: (if yes to the above question) Tell us about some of the games that, for one reason or another, have never been completed. Also, do you intend to go back to them one day?

Rotter: Two games stand out for me as being really disappointing and these are two I created with the Quill years ago, namely "Delron" and "Wakemare". I started a new version of "Delron" and "Wakemare" when I first discovered Adrift. I have put a considerable amount of effort into both since then and "Delron" has even been beta-tested. I even named my website after this game but I just can't make it work as a modern game. I pick up "Wakemare" at irregular intervals and add little bits to it but to be honest I just get bored with it.

A game called "Taken" (a 'd' on my list) is about a woman who is kidnapped and the game revolves around her efforts to both stay alive and escape from her captor. I love the idea behind this game but just can't seem to make it work at the moment. I'm hopeful that one day this game will see the light of day.

IA: Which IF (ADRIFT or otherwise) games have you played lately and which would you recommend?

Rotter: First, I would recommend that everyone plays anything by Robert Street. Second, this question actually gave me a few problems as I would never usually recommend anything I like (apart from the Robert Street bit). Why? Because I really seem to like stuff others are not keen on. Games like "When Beer Isn't Enough" by Matt (Dark Baron) or "Sleaze City" by Mel S appealed to me for one reason or another.

Anyway, I must answer this question. I have played every Adrift game released this year (apart from AIF, not really my bag) although considering how few have been

released this is not much of an achievement. The game I like best this year so far is "The Potter and the Mould". And strangely this is another great game by Mr Street.

I didn't play "Back To Life... Unfortunately" by David Whyld that much when it came out so I replayed it recently. I think this is actually my favourite Whyld game, good plot and not one that I've seen used before. Rotter says play this game.

For a non-Adrift game then "Vespers" by Jason Devlin is another game I have played again recently and I would highly recommend this to anyone. I really enjoyed playing this game and consider it to be very well written and has an excellent plot.

IA: What made you choose ADRIFT over all the other text adventure systems out there?

Rotter: I was clearing out the attic one day and came across my old Quill games, hiding in an old cardboard box. I decided to play a few and fired up the old Spectrum emulator and before long I had got the adventure bug again. I went looking on the Internet to see if a Windows version of the Quill existed and stumbled on something called Adrift and its forum. Surprisingly that didn't put me off! I actually registered Adrift on the same day I downloaded it, that is how much I liked it.

Basically, this is a hobby and I do not have either the time or inclination to learn a programming language. I have looked at Tads and Inform and even got one of my games up and running in Alan. The problem is I seemed to spend all my time trying to find a missing comma or bracket, with Adrift I can just get on with the writing.

IA: You fared pretty well in the IFComp last year - the highest place ADRIFT game. Are you planning to enter again this year?

Rotter: No one was more surprised that me to be placed so highly in last years IFComp, especially after I played the other Adrift entries. I fully expected to be in the bottom quarter and would have been more than happy with that. I think the subject matter of my entry helped and probably masked my usual failings, such as loose grammar and poor NPC's.

This year? Well, I have registered and my IFComp06 entry is nearing the beta-testing stage.

IA: What's your big hope for ADRIFT 5 - giving the TADS/Inform/Hugo crowd a run for their money? Easier, and quicker, to write larger and more complicated games? Or something else?

Rotter: I could go on about all the little things that Campbell really should put right,

but I actually love Adrift 4 R46. For me it is stable, easy to use and more importantly it really annoys the programmers over at RAIF.

So, in v5 I would first like it to be more portable, to run on strange systems such as Linux and Macs. I would love it to have a parser that will keep the RAIF crowd quiet. To me being able to create a stand-alone version of my games so that future releases can't break them would be a good move forward. Finally, Adrift should have a much better hints system.

IA: The age old question: where do your ideas come from?

Rotter: This is difficult to say really, as my ideas seem to at me from everywhere and can pop up at anytime. As an example my first Adrift game, "Ticket to No Where", came from being stuck for hours on yet another railway station waiting for yet another non-existent train.

"Target" was my attempt to make a game which was different each time it was played (I know, I failed!).

"Darkness" was a variant on the term linear game, in that you can only really do up and down. Also think I read a story about an abandoned lighthouse sometime in the past and the idea stuck.

"Where are my keys" was my attempt at a conversation tree which worked fine but it was a real shame about the game!

"Escape to New York" was my attempt at Titanic game, which happens to be another hobby of mine. I have wanted to write a game based on this ship since my Quill days but I've really no idea how the plot came about. It just developed with the game.

IA: Have you ever played a game and felt it was so amazing that you've had a sudden desire to write a game in homage to it?

Rotter: Normally the answer to this would be no but after "The Plague (Redux)" last year I decided I wouldn't mind having a go at a zombie game. I have a game called "Pestilence" which will probably be my Summer Comp entry in production.

If you cast your mind back you may remember that I ported a game called "Escape to Freedom by Mario Moeller" the other year. I just love old adventure games and I enjoyed this one at sometime in the past and so when I came across it again I just had to have a go at bringing in back to life. I have a few others started which will probably be released when I have time.

IA: Collaboration is an idea that gets mentioned from time to time on the ADRIFT forum. Have you ever tried to collaborate with someone? If a major collaboration project came along, would you be interested in giving it a shot?

Rotter: This would have to be a big no. This is not something I would be interesting in or consider I would actually be any good at. I would be really be annoying to work with on a collaboration game, as I'm forever changing my mind about something in a game. I take stuff out of a game and then later I go and put it all back in again. Works for me.

IA: You've been using ADRIFT for around two years now. Do you intend to carry on using it for the foreseeable future or are there plans to move to a different system at some point?

Rotter: At the moment I can't see any good reason to stop using Adrift. As far as I'm concerned the other IF creation systems have nothing extra to offer for me. Even the new Inform7 is unlikely to change my mind on this one.

IA: Finally, what games are you working on now?

Rotter: I'm working on two games at the moment -

"Unauthorized Termination"

You are a senior investigator with the police force of what is basically a totalitarian state. On a world where nearly all forms of crime are punishable by execution, you have been called on to investigate someone who has been unlawfully killed. From the initial investigation it clearly looks like an accident and your superior is very keen for you to close the case. You decide to dig a little deeper and it is then that you uncover something that should probably have been better left hidden.

"Pestilence"

Thinking back, it is now difficult to remember an exact moment when it all started. Like a lot of the large events it started very small. In the beginning it just seemed like a particularly nasty form of flu sweeping the country. Many blamed cattle, some Illegal Immigration and others thought it all down to genetically modified foods.

It always starts the same way; the person infected would have a very bad head cold that no quantities of drugs would help. Then blinding headaches would strike, the type that sit right behind the eyes. Just before the headaches dissipated boils and sensitive areas on the skin would form all over the body. This would be rapidly followed by flu like symptoms lasting anything up to three weeks. During this time madness and incoherence would development

How it spread no one could say and everything from the food eaten to animal bites got the blame. But, still it spread. The last reports on the television and radio, before

they went silent, ordered the population to remain calm and stay indoors. It is now a week later you have just started sneezing and a terrible headache has arrived. Scared, you head to the nearest medical centre.

Richard Otter is the author of nine ADRIFT Games:

- 22 08 04 1) Ticket To No Where
- 10 10 04 2) Where Are My Keys?
- 23 11 04 3) We Are Coming To Get You!
- 14 12 04 4) Darkness
- 17 04 05 5) Fire In The Blood
- 16 06 05 6) Escape To Freedom
- 21 08 05 7) Target
- 25 09 05 8) Pathway To Destruction
- 01 10 05 9) Escape To New York

“Fire In The Blood” was the joint winner of the ADRIFT Spring Comp 2005; “Target” won the Summer Comp 2005; “Pathway To Destruction” won the Finish The Game Comp in 2006; “Fire In The Blood” and “Escape To New York” came joint third in the ADRIFT End of Year Comp 2005; “Escape To New York” was the highest placed ADRIFT game in the IFCComp 2005 where it came 11th.

In 2005, he hosted the first ADRIFT Intro Comp. It attracted eight entries.

He runs a website at <http://www.delron.org.uk/>

New Games

New ADRIFT games released over the last few months:

The Warlord, The Princess & The Bulldog by David Whyld (*31st March 2006*)

They said the fortress of the evil warlord was impregnable: stone walls sixteen feet thick, infrared security cameras and motion detectors, enemy soldiers with machine guns, attack dogs, tanks, aircraft, etc, etc. The works. They said no one could ever get in, rescue the kidnapped princess, assassinate the warlord, and get out in one piece.

Of course, they never reckoned on The Bulldog...

The Potter & The Mould by Robert Street (*31st March 2006*)

This game features the past and present adventures of a shapeshifting superhero called the Mould.

For Love Of Digby by David Whyld (*released 4th April 2006*)

A calamity has arisen: your remote is broken and you're just six hours away from the 18th repeat of "Digby, The World's Biggest Dog"! Somehow, you've got to get your remote working again in time for this televisual treat, but all without leaving the comfort of your favourite chair.

Resident Lust by Night_Owl (*24th April 2006*)

You play the part of a superhero after the GameMaster. An AIF game.

Paradise Hotel by Blue Meanie (*27th April 2006*)

You're the assistant manager at Paradise Hotel in this AIF game in which the aim is, not surprisingly, to get laid.

In Progress

Works in progress from members of the ADRIFT community. How many will ever get finished? Only time will tell...

Core Bound

by Tech

What do you do with the last resources of a dying planet? You build huge containers, fill them with trash and slingshot them out into the galaxy. That is, if you are among the rich who get to choose. You don't care where the trash goes. You don't care whether the living, breathing souls arrive safely at a destination. No, as long as the trash doesn't return to continue polluting your planet. The trash could fall into the sun as long as you couldn't hear them scream.

Except that you don't particularly think of yourself as trash. And you never expected to be herded from your home, sealed up in one of the containers and... and left to die. At least those were your last thoughts before the sling drives drove your mind into darkness.

When you awoke, it was so quiet. And dark. At first despair washes over you. But then you hear the faint sound of another survivor over the thrumming of the sling drives. That gives you hope.

You've chosen to live. To find a way out. Possibly a way back home.

Hackworks 1.0

by Tech

High Speed Connection being established, please wait... connected. Transferring to

the Imaginette Online portal... completed.

Portal

A navy blue floor is engulfed by an infinite black void stretching beyond three meters in every direction. A glowing transparent sign with yellow lettering floats 2 meters over the floor.

>read sign

The glowing transparent sign with yellow lettering floats 2 meters over the floor. The sign reads as follows...

Welcome to Imaginette Online 1.0

NEWS

1. As of 01/01/2104, beta testing of I.O. is finally over! A huge thank you to all of our beta-testers who have helped to fine tune the unlimited worlds of Imaginette Online. Remember, beta-testers receive half off the normal monthly subscription rate during their first sixty days online!

2. The I.O. User Agreement has been modified to ban the use of Hackworks Adaptive Code™ products. Tighter sniffer controls have been implemented to uncover users of these tools that lead to unfair play. Users in violation of the agreement will be banned for life from Imaginette Online.

Please touch the sign to signify your agreement with these terms. You will then be taken to your personal apartment.

>touch sign

The world melts and rematerializes around you...

Personal Apartment

Furnished in the spartan style, a box bed without sheets is here along with the doorway north to the "common grounds". Two blue balls float next to the doorway, one above the other giving off a blue glow saturating the room.

>touch bottom ball

You are rattled to hear the voice of your girlfriend, Jade.

"Nate, Please help me," she asks with a worried tone in her voice. The two of you haven't spoken for two days after a stupid fight you had offline. You'd been playing it cool, staying away, hoping that she'd feign some interest and send you a message. Something in her tone though says this isn't an apology.

"I couldn't jack out of the system or get out of my apartment. These automations showed up. I don't know where they've taken me. They want me to tell you that they

want the golden sword of Anra back. Geez, Nate, I was messing around... I'm sorry," she says breaking off into crying.

Momentarily she brings it back together. "After our fight, I took your stupid sword and created a quest for you. I was going to get back at you. They don't believe me. They think I'm protecting you and that you still have it. They know you have a Hackworks mod also. They say after finding the sword, you'll disable it or they'll kill me. Can they do that? This is just a game, right? I'm scared, Nate. I can't jack out! Nate, please."

End of audio message.

Jim Pond: A Meeting With S.K.U.M.

by David Whyld

The call came through, as it usually did, while I was 'entertaining' a lady friend. She was a classy dame: elegant, discreet and, what's more, cheap. Very cheap. Always an admirable quality in a woman as far as I'm concerned.

But the call had come through and I had to leave. I left her tied to my bed (I would be back in a week or two so figured she was fine as there was a half bottle of coke with a straw in the top by the side of the bed), hopped into my car, sped at 95 mph through the 30 mph streets of London, and arrived at the office a short time later.

Miss Funnyfanny greeted me at the door. She might have been coming onto me. The fact that she was naked and had a rose between her teeth hinted at this. But my mind was firmly on business right now so I strode past her and entered P's office. Pausing to throw my coat at the coatstand in typical secret agent style, I sat myself in the chair before P's desk and said, "what's up, doc?"

P was not amused. Then again, P is a miserable old bastard and precious little amused him.

"What's up, Pond," he said, "is that terrorists have stolen a bomb and are threatening to blow up an unspecified target if we don't pay the unspecified ransom amount."

"Which target?" I ask, my attention momentarily diverted by the rather fetching blonde I had just noticed in the corner of the room.

"Unspecified, Pond," says P. "Meaning they haven't said yet."

"Oh." I give the blonde the once over. Then the twice over. Then a third one. There is something familiar about her... "And how much is the unspecified ransom amount?"

P sighs.

"This is Miss Layla Dinkwad," says P, indicating the blonde who is, currently, the sole focus of my attention. "Miss Dinkwad, this is-

"Jim Pond," says Layla. "We have... met."

I remember. South America. 1999. I was there for... oh, something or other... an assassination?... foiling terrorists?... something like that... and as I went to get a paper one morning, I happened to glance over to a woman sitting in a café and, as she was female and I was Jim Pond, I filed her face (and other characteristics) away for future reference.

"The pleasure is all mine... Layla," I say.

"Miss Dinkwad-" says P.

Layla holds up one perfectly manicured hand. "Layla, please."

P nods. "Layla has infiltrated the terrorist cell and brought us considerable information on them."

Layla sits next to me, crossing her legs in an alluring manner.

P goes on, "so this is where you come in, Pond. We need you to go deep under cover..."

"My thoughts precisely, P," I say. "Myself and Layla. Deep. Under the covers."

P reaches over the desk and slaps me across the face. "Stay focused, Pond. This is important."

"Focused," I say, massaging my face, "is my middle name."

P sighs some more. He seems to do this a lot whenever I am around. Maybe it's an allergic reaction or something. "You are to pose as a buyer of ancient artefacts in order to allow you access to a certain Parisian art gallery where the terrorist cell is located. There, you will liaise with Layla-

"Liaise?" I nod. "Oh yes."

"-and proceed to locate the bomb. After that-

"Boom."

P frowns. "I sincerely hope the bomb doesn't explode, Pond."

"I wasn't referring to the bomb."

"Layla is already working undercover at the gallery," says P. "As-"

I stop him. "Let me guess. As a model? A passing porn star? A-"

"I'm the cleaner," says Layla with a sigh. "I help wipe up all the vomit and the occasional dead body."

"Oh." That kind of dampens the erotic image I have of her in my mind but no matter. I'm adaptable.

"You will be posing as Cecille Berkhold," says P, "who is a major figure in the art world... and he has a collection of many, many... and furthermore he is virtually unknown in that area of Paris so there will be little chance of... it will be hard of course... Indeed, P. Now, assuming you were paying full attention during my briefing, you have everything you need to get going."

I blink and come out of the customary daze I generally fall into whenever P is speaking.

"Good luck to you both," says P. "And thank heavens you're so organised and prepared. The least trouble here could lead to both of you winding up dead in an unmarked grave by the end of the week."

I escort Layla out. We discuss the plan as we walk through the reception area where Mrs Funnyfanny dances around naked with the rose in her mouth. Layla will come to my apartment this evening to 'discuss the mission' and then we will proceed separately to Paris where she will slip into her role as the cleaner at the art gallery and I will become Cecille Berkhold.

Katlin's Story

by Tech

A long time ago, you consulted a man many spoke of as a reliable seer. He came highly regarded for his uncanny insight. However, as you sat in his worn shack watching the old, withered man attempt to pour you a cup of spiced tea, it made you wonder. A man with accurate abilities should possess wealth. Still, you listened to him as he huddled close to you so that he may gaze on your face as he spoke.

"Born to a world of failing magic, Katlin Further, I herald you as do other mages. You are our hope."

He pauses momentarily seemingly searching for something within your expression.

"You are without a peer. Long ago, in the beginning, there were mages called elementalists. Their power was beyond anything seen for millennium. In fact, until I gazed on your aura; they were as myth to me, my father and all of his grandfathers."

You wonder, were the pauses for dramatic affect?

"Sir, continue please."

"You are an elementalist; though a baby. You've learned to channel and destroy. Later you will learn to create."

Imploringly he searches your eyes, "You must learn to create... or... or you will die. And all of our dreams along with you. Possibly the world."

"Why me?" you ask.

"I do not know. I only know what you are. Not why or how."

The conversation meandered off into ancient history. Much of which is stuffed away subconsciously until needed.

Funny that this memory came back to you as you stand outside the gates of the winery. By the light of the stars and moon peeking out partially between gathering rain clouds, you can see the sign reads, "Vernon Winery est. 122170."

Even at this late hour, the sounds of work spill out from the inside. That doesn't surprise you. A week ago, a young apprentice mage, Darrin, went missing. A master compass attuned to his aura produced nothing until late this afternoon when it began twirling for hours until finally settling down on a single direction.

You came here following Darrin's aura. Information gathered from others indicated that the winery employed slave labor. Even possibly had business ties with a guild. That's alright, you didn't expect to be welcomed with open arms tonight.

All that matters is finding Darrin.

Mecasite

by Tech

It started during the long hard rain of a northern lightning storm when I had just pulled over a stolen Sierra Air Craft.

The rain was coming down hard and the wipers of my police craft barely wiped away the water from the windshield before it was replaced. The red signal lights of the stolen silver Sierra were broken into a million shards through each of the rain drops along the windshield. The blue glow of the dash lit the interior of my craft. Grabbing a poncho and my unclasping my personal sidearm, I repeated my last request through the load horn, "Step out of the car."

The Sierra lay unmoving on the grassy knoll its driver had brought it to a halt. Lightning outlined its form momentarily. It's windows were nearly opaque keeping the driver unseen.

"Ok, we'll do this the hard way," I said stepping out the car, "Central, I'll need backup. I'm attempting to make contact with the driver."

"Understood," came the response, "standing by."

Wind whipped the rain up under the hood against the fur of my face. But it also brought the smell of something. It smelt like blood. Instantly alert, I pulled my sidearm.

Pulling alongside the Sierra and pointing the sidearm at the driver side window, I yelled over the wind and the rain, "I said get out of the car."

Surprisingly, the driver side window rolled down and I could make out the driver hidden in robes.

"On a night like this, officer?" came the sound of a woman's voice.

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The Road Home

by Tech

For the last five years, the depths of the Black Forest have been your home. A proven safe haven for many wanted men such as yourself, you've built a home and farmed the surrounding land. Crops sold to a nearby tavern and travelling merchants bring in your meager living. A meager living as a freeman. A much different life than it would be back in the kingdoms. This time of year, each cold winter's night emphasizes how isolated the region is. No merchants have been through in nearly a week. From your home, you decide to head over to the Journey's End Tavern to eat a warm meal, share a warm fire and enjoy what little contact with others you can.

Sun Empire: Quest For Founders II

by Tech

The last few minutes of your life have been a blur. A few hours ago you, Tangee Simone, were the foremost research scientist at the Rosemon Genetics Institute on Rhiannon. But then, the Orgaans attacked. Following instinctual hatred centuries old, the Institute was destroyed. You barely made it out alive with your peer, Mark Eridian, and Malthew, the Kantan head of security. Now, the three of you are riding in the back of the evac bus with six Sun Empire marines you can make out in the darkened compartment.

As the bumps and jolts of the ride toss you about, you wonder why the Orgaans would attack the Institute? Why has the war with them gone on for so long? You can't ask anyone else because the noise from the speeding bus is too great. The marines are able to talk through com systems in their helmets. A few eye the three of you; at least one smiles and waves.

Finally, the bus comes to a sliding halt and the marines lean forward in anticipation. Sunlight streams into the darkened compartment as the rear of the bus is opened. Temporarily blinded by the sudden light, the marines behind push you out onto solid

ground. Rough hands wrench your arms behind your back and shackle you.

"Hey, what are you doing?" you hear Mark question. A low growl off to your left. Then you are suddenly thrown back into the compartment alone. Struggling to regain your feet; a marine draws himself up onto the back of the bus. As the compartment door draws close; you see beyond Mark and Malthew lying on the ground of a desert under guard by the remaining marines.

The marine draws near. Holding something in his hand, he speaks to you softly, "Hold still." Feeling a prick, a coolness washes through your body. Expecting your vision to adjust to the light, instead you feel dizzy and the darkness completely takes hold...

Awakening, you find yourself in a different place... the evac bus and marines are gone...

Sun Empire: Quest For Founders III

by Tech

The journey has been four long months. Four long months since the research station on Janis 4 experienced an unprecedented planet wide quake. Four months since the station's commander, Brom Thandia, began broadcasting a broad spectrum emergency signal. Three months since the signal was ceased without explanation. After four months of streaming along at 75c, the Long March finally begins to slow as it approaches the solar system of Jan II.

There was no response to any communication from orbit. After four long months, you begin to doubt anyone survived. Visual images show a battered, leaning tower surrounded by four smaller towers connected by archways. The station sits embedded in the bottom of a valley. Confirmation with original geological charts indicate that the station used to sit above a plain. The quake created a large sinkhole into which the station fell. Amazingly, only one of the archways was damaged in the quake. Its smaller towered nearly collapsed with the archway taking a steep decent to the valley floor.

A large rectangular concrete hangar sitting a quarter mile away from the station faired better. Its topside shuttle pad appears stable enough for use. A large set of greenhouses better than a mile away and sitting atop the actual level of the surrounding plains appear to also have been left intact. Water from underground rivers in the region have formed a miniature swamp around the base of the station.

First on the scene, you take a team in a shuttle down to the station shuttle landing pad and begin your given task: Assist and rescue any survivors.

Sun Empire: Ghostship

by Tech

Slipping silently between the stars, the SE Ranger expected to arrive back on the White Nova within a few days.

Exhausted from your successful rescue mission in the O'Dahlmoor system, you've spent most of the last week recuperating in bed. The last day and half, you've begun to feel slightly alone.

The Ranger's science facilities are limited and all of the other scientists are aboard the White Nova. At first, you attempted to talk to the marnette Snow because you've had so little contact with his kind. However, his shock and anger over being appropriated for "research" functions seems to have limited his vocabulary. Giving up, you're pretty sure that Snow would only be happy planning another job.

Fortunately, the working relationship that you've begun over the last few months with Sfirra gives you something to begin a few decent conversations while you wait. After a while, you start to even consider her a friend.

Between those conversations, you find yourself walking the near empty halls when Commander Johnathan calls you to the bridge.

"Tamara, I've received some more intelligence reports from the Kantan Invisible Order. I believe they are offering you something for what you've helped 'em out with. For the life of me though, I'm pretty sure only you'd want to take a look at this," He motions you over to a monitor.

"What is it, Johnathan?" you ask.

On the monitor is a large, black starship floating near what appears to be a small moon. The system's sun in the background is the only illumination bouncing off of the ship's hull. Roughly shaped like a bullet, the ship is a construction of various compartments. Its fairly certain by the number of portals that the front of the ship was a command and living quarters. However, the function and purpose of the myriad of box and oval shaped compartments that make up the body of the ship escapes you. Hundreds of towers, enclosed walkways and girders tie it all together. Giving you perspective, a flashing red beacon gives you momentary illumination of an automated military turret emplacement floating in the shadow the immense ship.

"It's almost as big as the White Nova," you state.

"Yes, but much older according to the reports that I've read. This vessel has been derelict since it was chartered fifteen years ago. The research institutes haven't been informed of its existence because the Order believes that the ship is of Orgaan design."

"I've never seen an Orgaan ship like that before," you reply.

"I've got to agree with that. Well, It falls under military jurisdiction and no one else even the Orgaan appear to care or notice it. So, it sits."

Standing, you look at Johnathan and ask, "But why show me this? It's a derelict vessel. Bring everyone in and we'll tear the place apart."

"Ah, but they've done some low level scanning already and they believe there is still life aboard. Furthermore, from the up close inspection and the age of the outer hull, they believe this some kind of ancient science ship."

Slowly it dawns on you, there has never been a record of an Orgaan science vessel. The age of the ship could place it back to another time. Another time where the Orgaans may have brushed up against the founders. With what you've learned so far, the ship may contain the missing pieces to the genetic puzzle. A big grin crawls across your face.

"I was afraid of that smile," says Johnathan, "I've already put us on course. Report down to the personnel docking hatch when we arrive. Sfira and Snow are going to accompany you on this. I'd expect this to be dangerous so Sfira needs to watch out for you. As for Snow, well, you need to use his abilities as well as you can."

"Thank you, commander," you reply walking away from the bridge in a daze at the possibilities. Here you have a pristine opportunity to recover new scientific information unseen of. Your head swimming with the possibilities, you never realize how dangerous this mission might be.

That is, until you step into the cramped quarters of the auxillary airlock and the SE Ranger is shut off behind you...

Twiddles' Terrible Twin

by David Whyld

The Bulldog was in love. And it was every bit as horrifying as his father had warned him. That he was in love with a princess just complicated the matter still further.

Princess Leonora, she of the flawless complexion but less-than-flawless

personality, who widely regarded poor people as some kind of inhuman sub-species, who thought abolishing slavery had been a remarkably bad idea and who felt the law should be amended to give her the right to shoot people if she took a dislike to them, was his true love and intended, one day, to make him her husband. Whether he wanted it or not. To The Bulldog, who had looked death in the face so many times they were practically on first name terms, it was the most frightening experience of his life.

* * * * *

"We shall do some shopping first... then the theatre... then perhaps a light meal... then I need to get my hair done... then we shall..."

The Bulldog listened to the litany recorded on his answer phone and suppressed a grunt that would have turned into a full blown scream if he let it. The message was seven minutes long, even though the tape in his machine was only four minutes long. By all logic it should have expired just over halfway into Leonora's message but it hadn't. It probably daren't.

Right then, a terrorist trying to kill him by blowing his house up would have been a welcome diversion. Terrorists he could handle. You just hit them and hit them and hit them and, sooner or later, they stopped being a problem. It was never as easy with Leonora...

It was, strangely enough, Twiddles who came to his rescue.

* * * * *

"Appreciate this is your day off and all, old chap," said Twiddles over the phone. The Bulldog could almost hear him stroking his cat, Marmaduke. "But we're having a spot of bother at the office and wonder if you'd mind stopping by-"

"I'll do it."

"-to take care of it. Only there's a problem in the Middle East with a shipment of arms and we need someone out there somewhat sharpish to-"

"I'll do it!"

"-deal with it before it escalates into a full blown incident. You've had an easy time since the Baron Grishtak incident so I figured you might-"

"I'LL DO IT!"

"-care to give it a..." Twiddles' trails off. "Say, Bulldog, for a second there I could swear you were speaking and not just doing your usual gru-"

"Do you want me there or not?" The Bulldog asks, eyeing the clock worriedly. Leonora said 11.00 am and it's now five to. "Yes or no?"

"Y-" is as much as The Bulldog heard before he was tearing out of the house and flagging down the first taxi to take him to the 'office'.

* * * * *

Of course, it's not really an office. It just looks like one. Well, an office block actually, as the Department of Defence & Securities is a very big place. It overlooks the Thames and, on a good day, you can stand on the roof and see for miles in all directions. Twiddles' office, which is an actual office, is at the top. The Bulldog even has his own office here, but he threw the desk and the filing cabinet out a while ago and just uses the computer for something to rest his rocket launcher on.

He arrives in the parking lot beneath the building, nods to Henry the doorman who nods back and buzzes him through into the entrance to the building... and that's when The Bulldog realises something that he should have realised right from the word go. Namely, that the voice on the phone wasn't that of Sergeant Twiddles, but just sounded like his voice. Maybe that landmine explosion he suffered to the head a fortnight back has affected his hearing.

Because when he stepped through the door into the entrance of the building, he found himself facing not the smiling receptionist, but instead a barricaded area, two dozen men armed with machine guns and an unpleasant looking fellow holding a gun to the receptionist's head.

* * * * *

"The Bulldog," says a man who looks remarkably like Twiddles, even down to the fact that he has a cat in his lap. "Nice of you to drop by. I am Mobius Twiddles. I believe you work for my brother." He smiles the same smile that is often plastered across Twiddles' face. The kind of smile that makes a guy almost want to pull his face off. "I have a little job for you..."

Voyage Of The Starfarer

by AndrewF

The world was not the same after the massive pandemic swept its way around the globe in the first half of the new century. In only two short months, the deadly virus that swept the globe had infected 90% of the Earth's population and had killed over a third of those infected. Whole towns were left standing empty, cities ground to a halt as the population fell ill and died in their hundreds of thousands and entire

countries faced the threat of extinction.

In the aftermath of the global disaster the surviving peoples of Earth were dismayed by the fragility of life on their small planet, and as a whole they loudly demanded "NEVER AGAIN!"

Never again, must the human race be allowed to be vulnerable in the same way, they demanded that something be done!

A large asteroid over one thousand metres long and six hundred metres wide was moved from the asteroid belt into orbit around Earth and construction began on a massive scale. The interior of the asteroid was hollowed out, spun up (to simulate gravity) and refitted to hold the ten thousand who had volunteered to be colonists, the human "eggs" being transplanted into a new basket. Mammoth fusion plants were installed into the southern end-cap and linked directly into the gigantic engines built into the very rock of the asteroid.

After many years of extremely hard work, finally the Arkship "Starfarer" was complete.

A grand adventure!

That was what you had signed up for; at least that is what you can remember as the fog of sleep slowly clears.

You had seen the global advertising. Who could miss it?

You had thought it could be fun and exciting to start a new life on a new world so far from home.

You were one of those brave individuals who had volunteered to people the Arkship "Starfarer" and travel to another star to colonise the Earth-like planet astronomers had found there.

You were so proud when you were selected to be amongst the ten thousand colonists.

You thought you knew all the risks.

You felt a little trepidation when you realised that the trip would take many lifetimes, and that everyone would be put in cryo-stasis for the duration of the voyage.

You were elated when you were selected to be on one of the emergency revival teams, those who would be unfrozen early in the unlikely event of anything happening that "mother", the sentient computer controlling the Starfarer, couldn't handle.

You were disappointed when you found out you were on the tertiary backup team.....

The Tertiary backup team!!!...

That must mean that something so drastic has happened that all four teams are needed to sort it out...

or...

The first three teams have already failed and it's now your team's turn to try!!!

Willow

by Mizgriz

You are Ellen Holmes, a well-known American romance novelist. After the death of your husband, your ten-year old daughter, Leah, has become melancholy. She speaks very little and eats very little.

When you see an ad in the paper for an isolated mountain resort, you jump at the chance to take Leah. A vacation may be all she needs....

You spend a few days packing, and then, you're off. As you start driving, it begins to rain. You hope it won't rain through the whole trip.

On the way, you find yourself driving through a massive, old, forest on an old, winding, road that doesn't even have guardrails.

Deciding that now would be a good time to try to strike up a conversation, you speak to Leah.

"Are you excited?"

She shrugs.

"You still like being outside, right? You like renting cabins, right?"

She shrugs again.

"Do you...want to talk about Daddy?"

"No."

You shrug and keep driving. The rain is coming down harder now. It's getting hard to see. As you ease on the brake and slow down, Leah screams...

"Leah? What is it, sweetie?"

"Don't you see her, Mom?"

"See who, honey?"

"That little girl! Mom, you're going to hit her!"

"Leah, there's no--" You never finish the sentence. In a split second, Leah leans over and grabs the steering wheel, yanking it to the side and sending your car careening off of the road and into a deep forest. The car is headed right for a tree-- and try as you might, you are unable to stop it. You take hold of Leah's hand as the tree comes closer--

Everything goes black.

When you come to, your maternal instinct takes over. You undo your seatbelt and look at the passenger seat...but, to your horror, it is empty...and the passenger side door is wide open!

"Leah? Leah!"

You run out of the car and look at the muddy ground beneath you. There are some little shoeprints leading north, toward an old, abandoned mansion...and, figuring they must be your daughter's, you follow them...

As you pass through the mansion's rusted iron gates, you can't help but be a little unnerved by its appearance. The paint on the exterior is faded and peeling off and the old porch has a gaping hole in it. You wonder if it will even hold your weight, and, breathing deeply, you walk up the steps and onto the porch. Amazingly, it supports your weight. You take hold of the handles on the rotting French doors, and pull. For being so old and out of shape, they open easily! They don't even creak! Taking a deep breath, you step into the mansion...and the doors slam shut behind you...

Wizardry

by Tech

Lead blindfolded down countless steps and twisting passages, the air grows musky and damp. Smelling the pungent odor of the sewers, you curse under your breath as you are lead into calf-deep water. "Is this necessary?" you ask your guides. One of them chuckles and replies, "You tell us. We can lead you back out if you're having second thoughts." "Never mind," says the other voice, "We're here. Time for us to leave." Removing the blindfold, you barely take note of your "guides" before they leave, locking a large iron gate behind them.

"Welcome, Apprentice, I hope that you have prepared well for your final challenge. You are completely free of restrictions. Much importance is riding on your individual actions. It is how we will judge you and how you will join us. You will have no other chance."

Falling Off The Conveyor Belt

by David Whyld

Ever worked on a game that has never gone anywhere for one reason or another? Of course you have.

Here's one of mine:

The High Powered World Of Life On The Conveyor Belt

(...introduction...)

A klaxon sounds over the factory floor, sending shivers of dread into the hearts of the workers mulling aimlessly about like extras in a zombie movie remake. The klaxon can mean one of three things: World War 3 has broken out; aliens have landed and are beginning to systematically wipe out the population of the Earth; or the factory supervisor has decided to pay a surprise visit.

Bad luck.

It's the third of these.

"Yea, though we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death," says Frobisher, the factory foreman, who used to be the Pope but gave it up for the high powered world of factory maintenance instead, "we will endeavour to get our jobs done for fearsome is the wrath of The One Who Shall Not Be Named--"

"Is that Stenson?" a voice calls out.

The foreman, used to such interruptions, doesn't even pause: "-and verily shall His wrath strike down the evil-doers who have not done His will." He mutters a short prayer (something along the lines of 'oh God, why did I get out of bed this morning?') and regards his 'congregation' with disappointment evident in his eyes. "He Who Shall Not Be Named is indeed paying a visit to our pari- er, our *factory*

later today. He has promised floggings [*does that say floggings? Ah, sackings*] for any who fail to live up to the ideals He has set. We must stand together, my brethren, or we will surely fail. Any questions?"

cTwenty two hands shoot up. As there are only six of you here, there is definitely something fishy about all this.

"No questions? Excellent." Frobisher crosses himself. "To your stations, my faithful comrades. In our hour of darkness, we shall stand fast and we shall triumph." He points to each of you in turn: "Hogbert: you shall manage the pumps; Alicia: the press; Oswald van Blunderbilde IV: the computers; Tarquin: the sharpening of the pencils; Morgrim: get sweeping. Go forth, my comrades, and vanquish the--"

"Er, what about me?" you ask hesitantly.

Frobisher peers at you. "You?" He frowns. "Do I know--"

"It's Bob," you say.

He frowns some more.

I sigh. "Your *son*."

He brightens. "Ah, dear boy! Yes, indeed! Go and do your... your... your job. Yes, do that. You work on the..."

"The conveyor belt, dad."

"Indeed. Indeed. Go to it, my boy. You shall make us all proud."

Sighing deeply, you head over to the conveyor belt as your fellow workmates move to their respective stations.

Whatever happens, it's going to be one hell of a day.

This was a game I had high hopes for at one time. It was going to be similar in style to an earlier one room game I wrote called *Paint!!!* but far larger in scope. *Paint!!!* had a number of random elements scattered through it, but it was essentially the same game each time. After you'd been through it once, you could see what you'd done wrong and, when playing again, fix your mistakes to move you closer and

closer to the best score and best ending.

Conveyor Belt would be different. It was intended as a game that would be as random as it was possible to be. NPCs - of which there were six in total - would have different moods from game to game; items would be in different locations; events would happen in some games and not in others; the player would have random abilities that in one game might allow him to open the locked safe but in another would mean he needed help in getting it open... and so on. It seemed like a wonderful idea for a game when I started it, but somewhere between dreaming up the idea and actually beginning to write it, it just lost a lot of its appeal for me.

Part of the problem was that it was going to be a decidedly complex game, certainly the most complex game I had ever written. Now *Paint!!!* - which I was quite pleased with - was a pain to write. Events firing off all over the place and randomness meant testing it was a nightmare. Even when I thought I'd tested it to death and all the bugs were firmly squashed, I find out, much to my dismay, that a good number of them had got past me (in the original version, the maximum score couldn't be attained because of something I'd changed during testing and neglected to change back afterwards). So if *Paint!!!* was a nightmare, what would *Conveyor Belt* - at roughly four or five times the size - be like?

One day I'd like to go back to it and get it finished because I think there's a decent game lurking here somewhere, but when - or if - that happens to be, I don't know.

What I Didn't Do On My Holidays

by Sprite

I have to confess, I feel slightly guilty that this is my only contribution to the Adrift world lately - other than absurd amounts of posting, that is. I feel guilty because there are people out there who actually do write games. It seems a little unfair that I should get to write about *not* writing one.

Still, when I saw that David (my beloved father, if you believe everything you read) had left it as an option, I decided that it's one I'm supremely qualified to write about. I haven't written *loads* of games.

Sifting through some of the more untouched regions of my computer, I come across a few beauties that will, in all probability, never see the light of day. It seems a shame. I pause lovingly over the remains of an Arthurian comedy (I actually really like it) about an egg-shaped table. And a sword, there's always got to be a sword... The characters, setting, and plot are all there, just waiting to be dusted off and used again, but for some reason I hit a wall and gave up. Maybe one day.

Moving on, I find the setting for a fantastic game in which you can plug yourself in to the net. Ah yes, I had Otherland by Tad Williams on my mind when I thought that one up. I still play that one occasionally, enjoy the scenery as it were, before remembering that I haven't inserted a plot yet and there's only two rooms.

I resume my saunter down memory lane. Ah, Funhouse! The first Adrift game I ever wrote. Still unfinished. Well, unstarted really, it's a mishmash of colours and noise (metaphorically speaking - I didn't know how to do colours and noise at the time). If madness was a .taf file, this would be it. A series of unconnected rooms and objects, no logic to it, and the only possible endings are stealing George W. Bush's teddy bear and getting shot, or being eaten by a Clanger on the moon. (I did *say* it doesn't make sense.) Oh wait, you can also get eaten by a hippocorn. Or was it the unigriff. That one, perhaps, is best left forgotten.

Those were the ideas that almost went somewhere. Further back in the shadowy recesses of my computer, we find the dregs. The one-room disasters that I should have deleted, but haven't. A choose-your-own where you are on a deserted island...

I couldn't work out how to make the numbers behave, so I thoughtlessly cast it aside. A game where you can choose one helpful item before you are thrown out into a world of chaos and confusion. (Well, I say world. You are actually thrown onto a cloud. Then it rains you into a lake. Yes, I know.) An alley with graffiti on it. Well, not *just* that, obviously... the graffiti also changes every time you read it. For the first four times, anyway. It felt like an achievement at the time, and for that reason I am reluctant to let it slide into the darkness it deserves...

Just think... these are the ten percent that made it. I couldn't possibly count the number of times I've started up the old Adrift generator with the best intentions in the world, only to review my progress after ten minutes and scrap the whole lot. How depressing; it's moments like these that I begin to despair of ever finishing another game.

Hang on...

... what's this? "Wolf". I remember this one! I wanted to write a horror. I focused on the atmosphere, the tension. It was quite good if I recall correctly... couldn't make the events behave, though... how far did that one get?

Hmm. It actually looks workable...

And with that, I'm off again, looking to the future instead of the past. Let the other games rot until I call on them again. In the meantime, I've had this fantastic idea about a mouse who lives up the Eiffel Tower, no listen, this one's gonna be good...

Reference

Who's Who & What's What

(...being a list of individual sites within the ADRIFT community...)

<http://www.adrift.org.uk>

The main ADRIFT website.

<http://www.thephurroughs.com/projects/atts>

The ADRIFT Tutorial. (Written for ADRIFT 3.9 but mostly still relevant.)

<http://web-ring.freesevers.com/cgi-bin/webring?showring=K5G14H>

The ADRIFT Webring.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/jasea>

The homepage of jAsea, a program that allows people on non-Windows systems to play ADRIFT games.

http://www.geocities.com/legion_if/scare.html

The homepage of SCARE, a clone of jAsea which allows ADRIFT games to be run on non-Windows systems.

* * * * *

<http://bbben.aifcommunity.org/> - "BBBen? Yes!"

AIF writer BBBen's website.

<http://ccole.aftermath.cx/> - "Christopher Cole's AIF"

AIF writer Christopher Cole's website.

<http://www.delron.org.uk/> - "Delron"
Richard Otter's website.

<http://www.geocities.com/shenanda976/garden.html> - "The Garden Of Life"
Renata Burianova's website.

<http://www.insideadrift.org.uk/e107/news.php> - "Inside ADRIFT"
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<http://www.kfadrift.org.uk/news.php> - "KFAdrift On The Web"
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Eric Mayer's website.

<http://mysite.verizon.net/dlgoodwin/bob/pkgirl> - "The PK Girl"
Hanadorobou's website [home of the ADRIFT game **The PK Girl**].

<http://adrift.sitesled.com/> - "Reviews Exchange"
Rafgon's {aka Robert Street} website.

<http://www.shadowvault.net> - "Shadowvault"
David Whyld's website.

Facts & Figures

The 10 most recent ADRIFT games:

27 04 06	Paradise Hotel <i>by</i> Blue Meanie
24 04 06	Resident Lust <i>by</i> Night_Owl
07 04 06	The Clairvoyant <i>by</i> Priapus Rex
07 04 06	A Dream Come True <i>by</i> Purple Dragon
07 04 06	Shamelessly Slutty Teacher <i>by</i> Rip_CPU
07 04 06	Warlock <i>by</i> Christopher Cole
04 04 06	For Love Of Digby <i>by</i> David Whyld
31 03 06	The Potter & The Mould <i>by</i> Robert Street
31 03 06	The Warlord, The Princess & The Bulldog <i>by</i> David Whyld
18 03 06	Glum Fiddle <i>by</i> C. Henshaw

ADRIFT games year by year:

1999	2 games
2000	14 games
2001	51 games
2002	65 games
2003	80 games
2004	85 games
2005	57 games
2006	17 games (so far)

Total number of games written with ADRIFT: 441

Total number of people who have written a game with ADRIFT: 204

Word Search

Contained in the word search below are the names of twenty different ADRIFT games. Can you find them all?

As a good number of ADRIFT games start with the word "the", I've taken the liberty of losing "the". So if you were looking for The PK Girl (don't, it's not here), you'd need to look for PK Girl.

A few to start you off:

Fire In The Blood
Old Church
Vagabond
Vendetta
The Wheels Must Turn

The rest you'll have to find yourself.

Best of luck. Answers in the next issue.

A V A G A B O N D I O P L F R F E E G I
W O O D S A R E D A R K G S F F T R B A
B T Y Y T L Y U H G N B G A E Y B T G D
H Q T U A O E E U I G G E F E F T T J R
B J K L X S W E F A E B N F B S R G G I
E Q B S E T G L V E H U I I R D U I T F
V A G U B M U H N E N T H R F F T O T T
R S F G U I H U U Z S T Q E T Q T I H M
T R C T Y N K H M K H Z V G H G U I P A
O F T W H E E L S M U S T T U R N I M Z
C I H G G S D E N I F E D N U N R M N E
V E N D E T T A T O F S D R B A N R U M
S R X Y U N R A V E L L I N G G O D T N
H H H E Q D E Q R S I X T G J T R S S H
A T S Q D J K D O I N I T U T G K S S G
D U T T T F I N G U G V B B S G A I N G
O I G E E Y U X T Y R B G T R T U U Y R
W O T Y Y R T Y I O O Q E Z S T G B T E
J P W Q R E G U U O O A D F G E O C I Q
A O P S S D T E L I M X F T Y U T J C X
C X E G A K C E R W G H C R U H C D L O
K I Q W E G F I R E I N T H E B L O O D

Why Not Testing Your Games Is Sometimes A Good Idea

- 1) It gives people who don't get out much lots of things to laugh over.
- 2) It allows the more spiteful among us a good opportunity to let loose with their vitriol.
- 3) Sarcasm might be the lowest form of wit but, damnit, it's still bloody funny.
- 4) You can get into lots of pointless debates over it...
- 5) ... and thus improve your post count dramatically!
- 6) It keeps the Bad Game Writers' Graveyard well populated.
- 7) You can achieve cult status...
- 8) ... even if it is for all the wrong reasons...
- 9) ... and don't be surprised if some people misspell 'cult'...
- 10) It gives me an excuse to fire my cannon every now and then.

Contributions

Many thanks to:

Shuarian for the ADRIFT forum digest

Mr Toad for 'View From A Newbie'

Richard Otter for agreeing to be interviewed

Sprite for 'What I Didn't Do On My Holidays'

Back Issues

Previous issues of the Newsletter can be found at: <http://insideadrift.org.uk/>