

Teaching the humanities through game design

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Communication Studies

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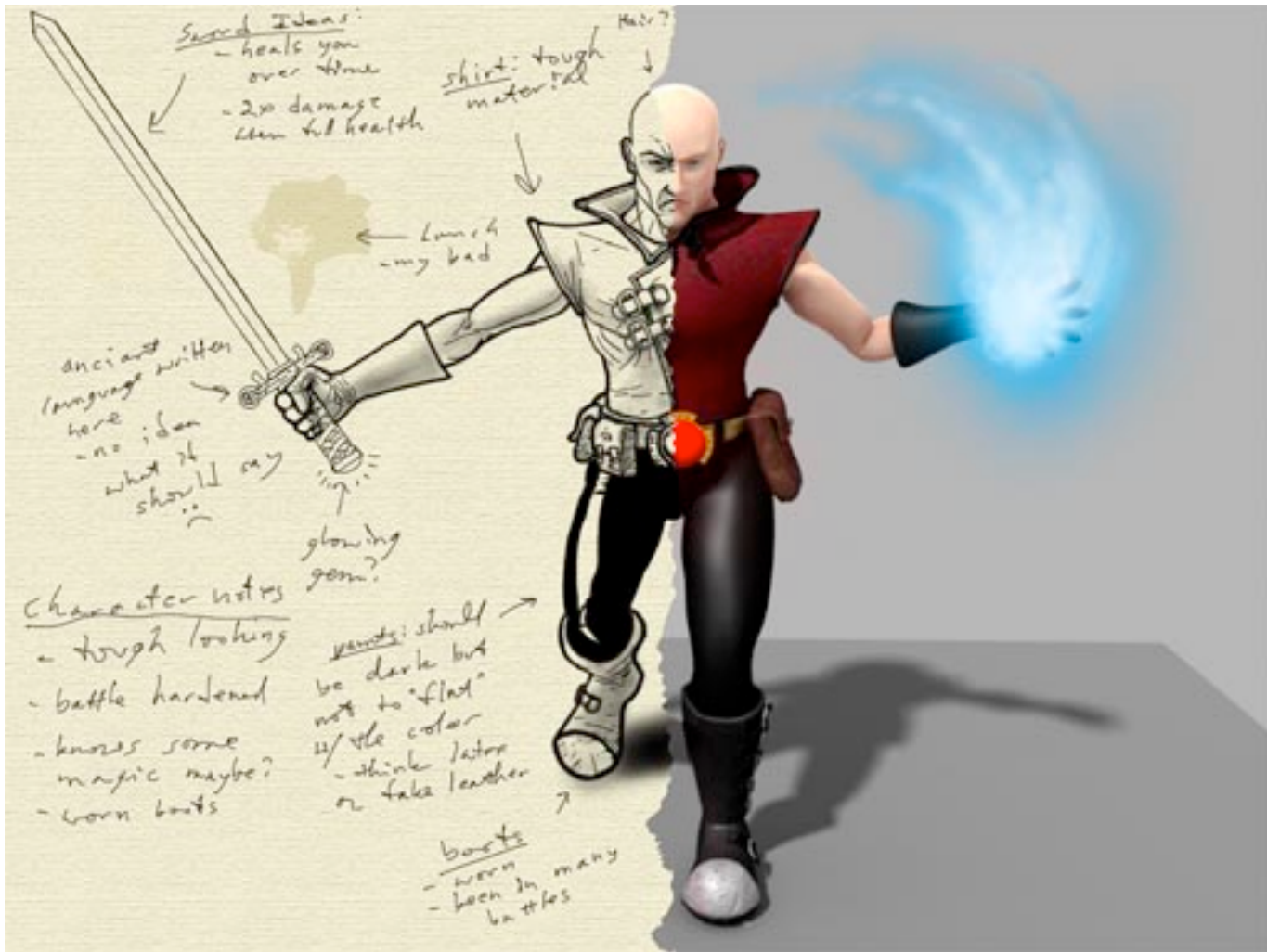
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Sword Ideas:
- heals you over time
- 2x damage when full health

shirt: tough material

Hair?

lunch - my bad

ancient language written here
- no ; dan
what it should say

glowing gem?

Character notes

- tough looking
- battle hardened
- knows some magic maybe?
- worn boots

boots: should be dark but not too "flat" w/ the color
- think latex or fake leather

boots
- worn
- been in many battles

Game creation beyond making games

- To explore theoretical or philosophical topics
- Teach logic and precision
- Combine creativity, technical skills and analysis
- Engage critically with an increasingly meaningful form of popular culture
- Breaking out of your comfort zone
- Digital/code literacy

Cheating, games & the ethics of play media

THE WALKING DEAD



A TELLTALE GAMES SERIES





...a neighbor.

Y

X

B

...her babysitter.

A

...just some guy.



Clementine will remember that.

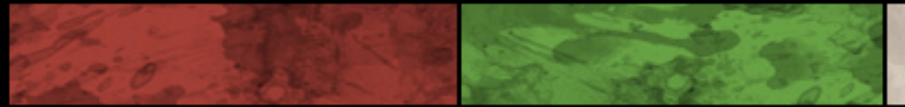


WHAT DID YOU DO?

Episode one launched you into the dark world of Robert Kirkman's zombie apocalypse. What did you choose to do? Compare your decisions to those of The Walking Dead community!



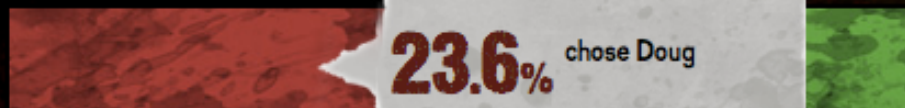
Walkers attack – save a child or an adult?



The truth is risky. Be safe and lie or trust a stranger?



Save one: Carley (knows how to handle a gun) or Doug?

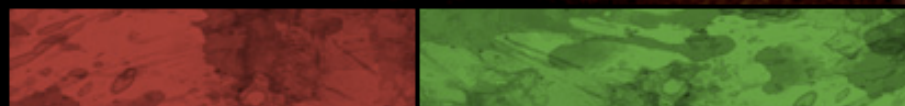


76.4% chose Carley

23.6% chose Doug



Irene is bitten. Help her or refuse to assist her suicide?



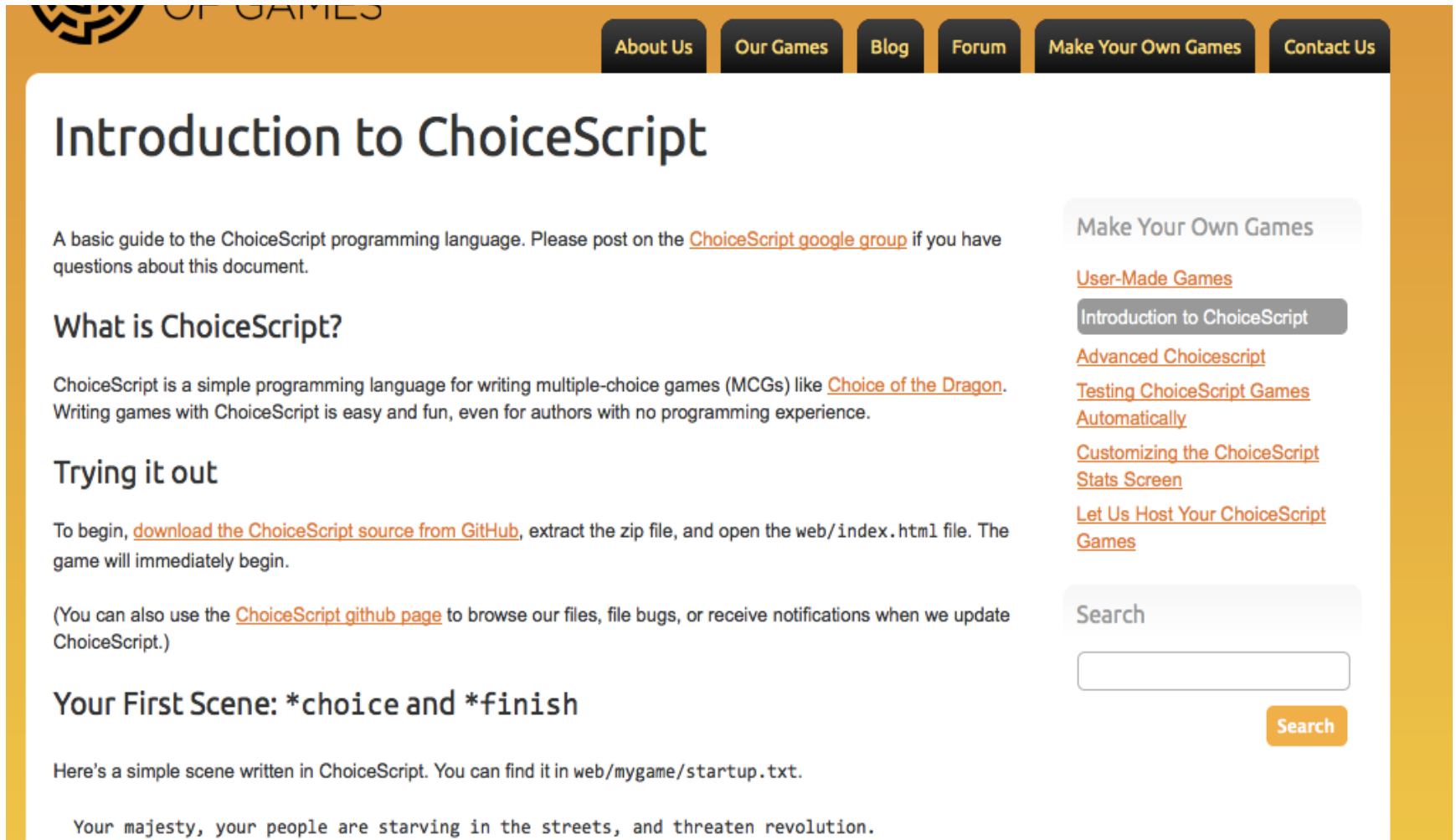
Assignment

- Create a game based on moral or ethical dilemmas
- Use ChoiceScript to create a text-based game to explore some aspect of cheating or ethics of interest to you
- Formulate a research question to explore
- Multi-stage assignment

Assignments

- First Playable
 - Two chapters
 - Branching narrative
 - Tentative Research Question
- Second Playable
 - Four chapters
 - Integrated stats
 - Fully playable
- Post-Mortem

In class support



The screenshot shows the ChoiceScript website with a navigation bar at the top containing links for 'About Us', 'Our Games', 'Blog', 'Forum', 'Make Your Own Games', and 'Contact Us'. The main content area is titled 'Introduction to ChoiceScript' and includes a paragraph about the programming language, a section 'What is ChoiceScript?' with a definition, a section 'Trying it out' with instructions on how to run the program, and a section 'Your First Scene: *choice and *finish' with a sample code snippet. A sidebar on the right contains a 'Make Your Own Games' section with several links and a search box.

Introduction to ChoiceScript

A basic guide to the ChoiceScript programming language. Please post on the [ChoiceScript google group](#) if you have questions about this document.

What is ChoiceScript?

ChoiceScript is a simple programming language for writing multiple-choice games (MCGs) like [Choice of the Dragon](#). Writing games with ChoiceScript is easy and fun, even for authors with no programming experience.

Trying it out

To begin, [download the ChoiceScript source from GitHub](#), extract the zip file, and open the web/index.html file. The game will immediately begin.

(You can also use the [ChoiceScript github page](#) to browse our files, file bugs, or receive notifications when we update ChoiceScript.)

Your First Scene: *choice and *finish

Here's a simple scene written in ChoiceScript. You can find it in web/mygame/startup.txt.

```
Your majesty, your people are starving in the streets, and threaten revolution.
```

Make Your Own Games

- [User-Made Games](#)
- Introduction to ChoiceScript**
- [Advanced Choicescript](#)
- [Testing ChoiceScript Games Automatically](#)
- [Customizing the ChoiceScript Stats Screen](#)
- [Let Us Host Your ChoiceScript Games](#)

Search

Search

Your First Scene: *choice and *finish

Here's a simple scene written in ChoiceScript. You can find it in `web/mygame/startup.txt`.

Your majesty, your people are starving in the streets, and threaten revolution. Our enemies to the west are weak, but they threaten soon to invade. What will you do?

*choice

#Make pre-emptive war on the western lands.

If you can seize their territory, your kingdom will flourish. But your army's morale is low and the kingdom's armory is empty. How will you win the war?

*choice

#Drive the peasants like slaves; if we work hard enough, we'll win.

Unfortunately, morale doesn't work like that. Your army soon turns against you and the kingdom falls to the western barbarians.

*finish

#Appoint charismatic knights and give them land, peasants, and resources.

Your majesty's people are eminently resourceful. Your knights win the day, but take care: they may soon demand a convention of parliament.

*finish

#Steal food and weapons from the enemy in the dead of night.

A cunning plan. Soon your army is a match for the westerners; they choose not to invade for now, but how long can your majesty postpone the inevitable?

*finish

#Beat swords to plowshares and trade food to the westerners for protection.

The westerners have you at the point of a sword. They demand unfair terms from you.

*choice

#Accept the terms for now.

Eventually, the barbarian westerners conquer you anyway, destroying their bread basket, and the entire region starves.

Choice of the Dragon

by Dan Fabulich and Adam Strong-Morse

[About](#) [More Games](#) [Blog](#) [Subscribe](#) Share on: [StumbleUpon](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)

Show Stats

Restart

Let us begin.

A knight charges up the slope at you. His horse pounds at the ground, carrying the heavily armored warrior as if he were a child's doll. The knight sets his lance to attack you.

How do you defend yourself, O mighty dragon?

- I take to the air with a quick beat of my wings.
- I knock the knight from his horse with a slap of my tail.
- I rush into his charge and tear him to pieces with my claws.
- A puff of my fiery breath should be enough for him.

Next



Teaching games, ethics and Choice-Script: A post-mortem

By [Mia](#) at 2:17 pm • December 21, 2012

For several years I've had the pleasure of teaching a class titled [Cheating, Games and the Ethics of Play Media](#) to both graduate and undergraduate students. The course examines the role of cheating and ethics in and around videogames. As part of the course, students play a game (we've moved from a list of potential games, to Dragon Age, to The Walking Dead), interview other players about their play activities, and finally make a game that explores some question related to cheating or ethics. To do that we've used ChoiceScript, a variant of Java created by the folks at [ChoiceofGames.com](#). In choosing this platform I wanted to ensure I found a tool that was affordable or free, available for both Mac and PC, and simple enough for non-programmers to use. Another added bonus was that it is a text-based "choose your own adventure" style engine, meaning that the graphic-design challenged among us would not feel stigmatized.

This year I had about 20 undergraduates working on games, which I plan to post to the TAG site soon. But first I wanted to reflect on the assignment, what went right and wrong, and how this is useful for thinking about game studies classes as well as how to venture into the world of game design for non-designers, and non-coders.

What went right:

1. Everyone created a playable game.

There was definite variation in terms of depth, length, creativity and sophistication, but every student could point to a game that worked and say "I made this." Indeed, in many of their own post-mortems, students expressed great pride in making their game. For the majority this was their first time coding anything, and they were quite nervous about the process. These were humanities students, and this was an upper-level class, meaning they all had experience writing term papers, summarizing articles, and making verbal arguments. But game design, and technical coding, was new to many. This made them nervous, but ultimately they rose to the challenge and created stuff. And they rightly took pride in their accomplishment.

What went right:

- Everyone created a playable game
- Everyone took on the challenge of putting stats in their game
- I got more comfortable using ChoiceScript myself
- Post-mortems were very helpful in assessing games
- Mixing technical precision with creativity and analysis was fun

What went wrong

- Not everyone play tested their game with other people
- High levels of anxiety appeared (in retrospect) pervasive
- Games drawing on existing IP struggled
- Even more iterations would have helped
- In-class coding workshops could have been better structured

Useful game creation tools

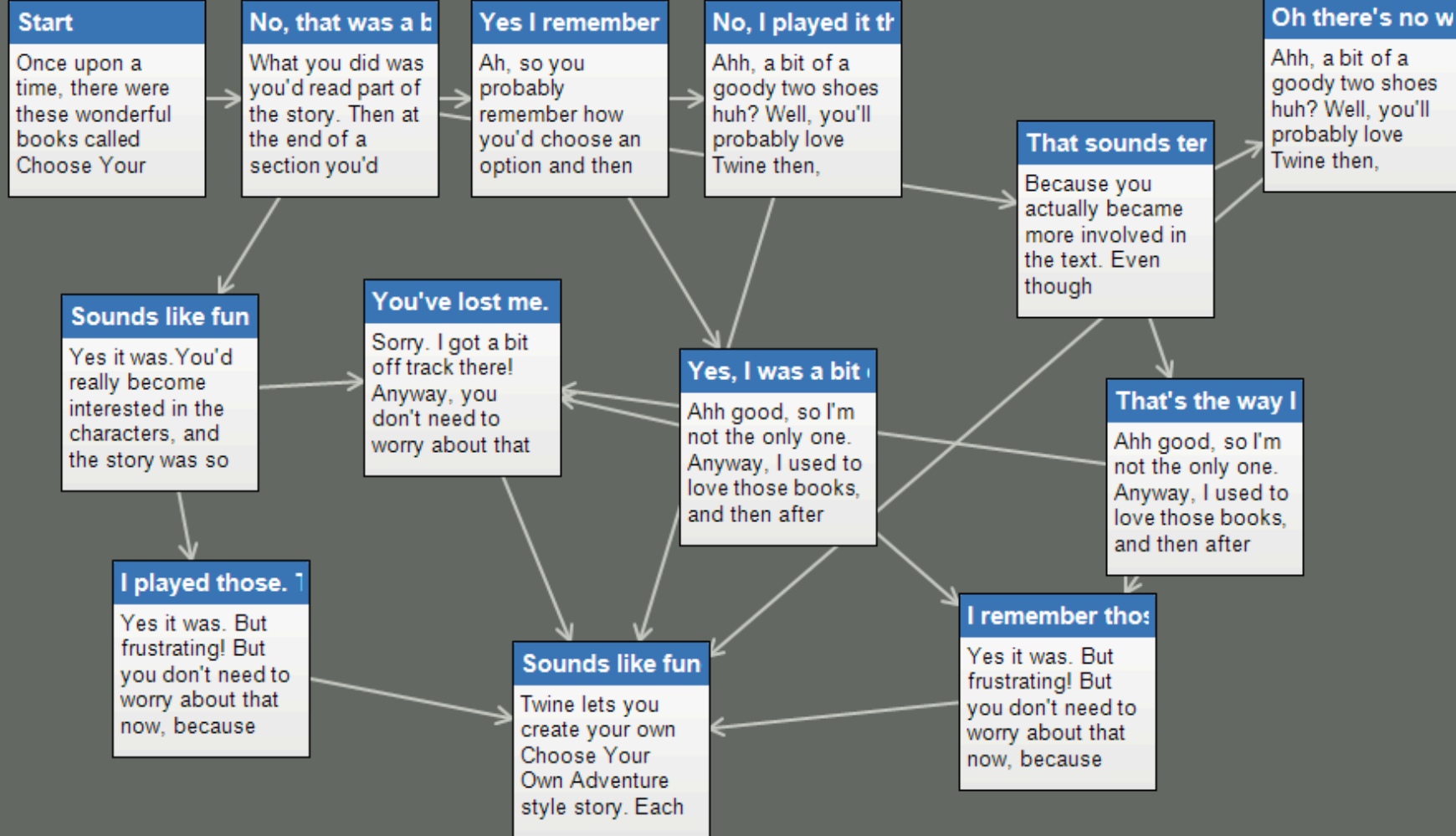
- ChoiceScript
 - Choiceofgames.com
- Twine
 - <http://gimcrackd.com/etc/src/>
- Inform 7
 - Inform7.com
- InkleWriter
 - <http://www.inklestudios.com/inklewriter>
- And more (StoryNexus; Stencyl; Game Maker)

Title

Tags (separate with spaces)

Once upon a time, there were these wonderful books called Choose Your Own Adventure. They were really popular in the time before advanced computer games, as they allowed you to choose the path of a character. Did you ever read these books?

[[Yes I remember reading them]]
[[No, that was a bit before (or after) my time]]



Your ship sets down on a blasted desert world. With your dust-goggles and o2-mask on, you gaze at an endless brown horizon, unable to pick out the place where the ground becomes the sky.

Could there be gay people here? You guess you can look around.

Look under a rock.

Dig a hole.



Reyjavik Airport

0/1

volcano

An Interactive Fiction by Mia L Consalvo

Release 1 / Serial number 130301 / Inform 7 build 6G60 (I6/v6.32 lib
6/12N)

Reyjavik Airport

Chaos swirls around you, much like the ash cloud swirls through the sky outside. Your flight has been cancelled, just like all flights have been cancelled, for at least six days, thanks to that damn volcano. At least you still have a few vacation days left, although you'll need to get back to work soon. Mysteries don't solve themselves and you're the best investigator in your firm in New York. Growing increasingly annoyed by the crowds and confusion, you spy an exit to the south of the Departures hall.

> |

You just started up a game and now you're staring at *text* and a **(>|)** *blinking cursor* and you *don't know what to do!*

Don't panic kids—

Crazy Uncle Zarf is here to help you get started...

You are standing in an open **field** west of a white **house**, with a boarded front **door**. There is a small **mailbox*** here. *Try opening!

You can try all sorts of commands on the **things** you see.

Try the commands that make sense!

Doors are for opening; buttons are for pushing; pie is for eating. (*Mmm, pie.*)

◇◇◇◇

If you meet a person, these should work:

TALK TO *name*
ASK *name* **ABOUT** *something*
TELL *name* **ABOUT** *something*
GIVE *something* **TO** *name*
SHOW *something* **TO** *name*

Each game has slightly different commands, but they all look pretty much like these.

These commands are very common:

EXAMINE <i>it</i>	PUSH <i>it</i>
TAKE <i>it</i>	PULL <i>it</i>
DROP <i>it</i>	TURN <i>it</i>
OPEN <i>it</i>	FEEL <i>it</i>
PUT <i>it</i> IN <i>something</i>	

You could also try:

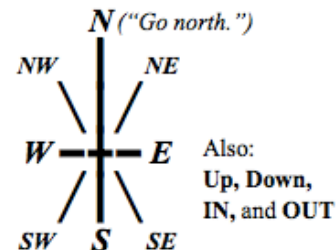
EAT <i>it</i>	CLIMB <i>it</i>
DRINK <i>it</i>	WAVE <i>it</i>
FILL <i>it</i>	WEAR <i>it</i>
SMELL <i>it</i>	TAKE <i>it</i> OFF
LISTEN TO <i>it</i>	TURN <i>it</i> ON
BREAK <i>it</i>	DIG <i>IN</i> <i>it</i>
BURN <i>it</i>	ENTER <i>it</i>
LOOK UNDER <i>it</i>	SEARCH <i>it</i>
UNLOCK <i>it</i> WITH <i>something</i>	

Or even:

LISTEN	JUMP
SLEEP	PRAY
WAKE UP	CURSE
UNDO [†]	SING

[†]Take back one move — handy!

Does the game intro suggest
ABOUT, INFO, HELP?
Try them first!



“What if I only want to type one or two letters?”

◇◇◇◇

N/E/S/W/NE/SE/NW/SW: GO
in the indicated compass direction.

L: LOOK
around to see what is nearby.

X: EXAMINE
a thing in more detail.

I: take INVENTORY
of what you possess.

Z: WAIT
a turn without doing anything.

G: do the same thing AGAIN

◇◇◇◇

A service of the People's Republic of Interactive Fiction: <http://pr-if.org/>

"volcano" by Mia L Consalvo

When play begins: say "Welcome to Iceland! It is April 2010 and the volcano whose name nobody can pronounce has just erupted. Iceland is also in the middle of a financial crisis and several of its banks have failed. You are just wrapping up a spa/EVE Online con vacation and are looking forward to returning home. However, nothing is ever easy."

The Hotel Lobby is a room. "From the general darkness of the room, it's difficult to tell exactly what hour it is. The rich carpet muffles all sound, and no one is staffing the reception area. Through the door to the south is the taxi stand where rides can be hired to the airport." The hotel lobby contains a reception desk. The desk is scenery.

A general notice is a thing on the desk. The description of the general notice is "Dear Guests, as you may know, the eruption of Mt. Skweyseekyll has had profound effects on Iceland locally as well as on global air travel. We regret to inform you that all air travel has been suspended until further notice, due to the ash cloud currently traveling through the jet stream. Please feel free to extend your stay with us during this uncertain time."

A letter addressed to you is a thing on the desk. The description of the letter is "My dear friend, [line break] [line break]It has come to our attention that you will be spending some additional time in Iceland and we would like to hire you for a special task. The ongoing banking crisis has resulted in much chaos, and investigations are still ongoing. Due to the small and insular nature of this country, it is difficult to see the problem from a more objective- or at least balanced- perspective. [line break][line break]Owing to that, we would like to employ you to help us investigate a few individuals that have so far evaded justice. The pay will be commensurate with your usual fees. If you are interested, please travel to Blarn Village, east of the airport, for more instructions. [line break] Most sincerely, [line break] Yarn Thoravik."

Reyjavik Airport is south of the the hotel lobby. "Chaos swirls around you, much like the ash cloud swirls through the sky outside. Confirming what you already know but were hoping was a bad dream, your flight has been cancelled, just like all flights have been cancelled. The airlines are grounded for at least six days, thanks to that damn volcano. At least you still have a few vacation days left, although you'll need to get home to your regular life soon. Growing increasingly annoyed by the crowds and confusion, you spy an exit to the south of the Departures hall."

Outside the airport is south of Reyjavik Airport. "Much quieter here. But what now? You can't stand outside the airport all day, much less for six. Was that letter for real? Whatever the case, the message said to start by heading to Blarn Village, a short trip east of the airport, to learn more."

Blarn Village is east of outside the airport. "Blarn Village is a modest place, set against the dramatic backdrop of terrifying mountains, none of which happen to be erupting at the moment, thankfully. Several small buildings form the core of the town, although the focus of the place is the sheep. Sheep are everywhere. Gray, sad sheep that look hungry. And why wouldn't they be hungry? Ash blankets everything, including a thick coating on what used to be the sheep grazing fields. Just south of the Village is where travelers apparently stay, a place called the Viking Pub, and to the north is a small convenience store, which most likely sells food, sundries, and overpriced souvenirs."

The Sad Sheep is a female animal in Blarn Village. The description is "If possible, this sheep is sadder and graver looking than all the others. Leaning over to be sure, you swear you see a small tear make its

Hotel Lobby

Welcome to Iceland! It is April 2010 and the volcano whose name nobody can pronounce has just erupted. Iceland is also in the middle of a financial crisis and several of its banks have failed. You are just wrapping up a spa/EVE Online con vacation and are looking forward to returning home. However, nothing is ever easy.

volcano
An Interactive Fiction by Mia L Consalvo
Release 1 / Serial number 130404 / Inform 7 build 6G60 (16/v

Hotel Lobby
From the general darkness of the room, it's difficult to tell exactly what hour it is. The rich carpet muffles all sound, and no one is staffing the reception area. Through the door to the south is the taxi stand where rides can be hired to the airport.

On the reception desk are a general notice and a letter addressed to you.

>

Email me for more information:

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