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I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM™

The Official Strategy Guide

Preface Written by Harlan Ellison

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Harlan Ellison



Mel Odom

CYBERDREAMS®

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I Have No Mouth, and I Must ScreamTM **The Official Strategy Guide**

Mel Obdouski

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I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream™

The Official Strategy Guide

Mel Odom

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I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream[™]

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This one's for Sherry, my lover and partner, and the woman I've waited all my life to fall in love with.

I love you. Thank you for being here.

Acknowledgements

During the early days and weeks with the game, I couldn't have gotten along without the insight and wisdom of my children. "Just kill it, Dad!" "No, not that door—aaarghhh—now you're dead, Dad!" "I SAID the other way!" "It's okay, Dad, once you're over fifteen, you sorta lose your reflexes fast!" "I promise, I can get you through this!"

Matthew Lane, Matthew Dain, Montana, and Shiloh, the best monster-butt kickers in the business, and Black Belts in Special Attacks.

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Prefatory Note

APOLOGIA FOR TEMPTATION

Harlan Ellison

I've looked everywhere, and I can't find it. I'll be damned if I can find it. Makes me extremely embarrassed, not to be able to find it. Reminds me of that wonderful line from Oscar Wilde's 1895 drawing-room comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in which Mr. Earnest Worthing announces to a salon of the titled, cynical, and elite that he is an orphan, and someone replies, "To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness."



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Well, both *my* parents are dead, as well, but what I seem to have lost is something that pertains to this introductory essay, not to the condition of mom-&-poplessness. What I seem unable to lay my hands upon is the exact quotation and source I had intended to use to suck you into my computer game, *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*. So I'll simply have to rough it, make do with good recollection, and hope for the best.

The quotation was something pretty close to this:

“You may engage in a specific perversion once, and it can be chalked up to curiosity. But if you do it again, it must be presumed that you are a pervert.”

And I think it was Oscar Wilde who said it. Same guy who wrote what was said to Mr. Worthing about his folks. Wilde was a helluva guy. Jerry Falwell and Rush Limbaugh and Jesse Helms would certainly try to have him lynched, were clever Oscar alive today. Luckily for him, he died close to a hundred years ago.

What all this has to do with *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* is the explanation to the question frequently asked of me, which is this:

Since it is common knowledge that you don't even own a computer on which you could play an electronic game this complex, since it is common knowledge that you hate computers and frequently revile those who spend their nights logging on to computer bulletin boards, thereby filling the air with pointless gibberish, dumb questions that could've been answered had they



bothered to read a book of modern history or even this morning's newspaper, and meanspirited gossip that needs endless hours the following day to be cleaned up; and since it is common knowledge that not only do you type your books and columns and tv and film scripts on a manual typewriter (not even an electric, but an actual finger-driven manual), but that the closest you've ever come to playing an actual computer- or video-game is the three hours you wasted playing Jurassic Park during a Virgin Airlines flight back to the States from the U.K.; where the hell do you get off creating a high-tech cutting-edge enigma like this *I Have No Mouth* thing?

To which my usual response would be, *Yo' Momma!*

But I have been asked to attempt politeness, to write a few words that will enable the publisher to sell this clue-book with greater ease, so I will vouchsafe courtesy and venture some tiny explication of what the eff I'm doing in here with all you weird gazoonies. Take your feet off the table.

Well, it goes back to that Oscar Wilde quote about perversion.

They came to me in the dead of night, human toads in silk suits, from this giant megalopolitan organization called Cyberdreams, and they offered me vast sums of money—all of it in pennies, with strings attached to each coin, so they could yank them back in a moment, like



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

someone trying to outsmart a soft-drink machine with a slug-on-a-wire—and they said, in their whispery croaky demon-voices, “Let us make you a vast fortune! Just sell us the right to use your name and the name of your most famous story, and we will make you wealthy beyond the dreams of mere mortals, or even Aaron Spelling, our toad-brother in riches.”

Well, as I said a moment ago, well, I’d once worked for Aaron Spelling on *Burke’s Law*, and that had about as much appeal to me as spending an evening discussing the relative merits of butcher knives with OJ Simpson. So I told the toads that money was something I had no trouble making, that money is what they give you when you do your job well, and that I never do *anything* if it’s only for money. ‘Cause money ain’t no thang.

Well, for the third time, they then proceeded to do the dance, and sing the song, and hump the drums, and finally got down to it with the fuzzy ramadoola that can snare me: they said, “Well (#4), you’ve never done this sort of thing. Maybe it is that you *can’t* do this thing. Maybe it is a fact of trueness that you are not *capable* of doing this here now thing.”

Never tell me not to go get a tall ladder and climb it and open the tippy-topmost kitchen cabinet in my mommy’s larder and reach around back there at the rear of the topmost shelf in the dark with the cobwebs and the spider-goojies and pull out that Mason jar full of hard nasty petrified chick-peas and strain and sweat to get the top off the jar till I get it open and then take several of those chick-peas and shove them up my nose. *Never* tell me that. Because. As sure as birds gotta swim an’



fish gotta fly, when you come back home, you will find me lying stretched out blue as a Duke Ellington sonata, dead cold with beans or peas or lentils up my snout.

Or, as Oscar Wilde put it:

“I couldn’t help it. I can resist everything except temptation.”

And there it is. I wish it were darker and more ominous than that, but the scaldingly dopey truth is that I wanted to see if I could do it. Create a computer game better than anyone else had created a computer game. I’d never done it, and I was desirous of testing my mettle. It’s a great flaw with me. My only flaw, as those who have known me longest will casually attest. (I know where they live.)

Whether or not I did it...create the Greatest Computer Game in the Universe...is unlikely. I ain’t that smart. But I had a couple of terrific game-designers working with me, and they took very much to heart the things that mattered most to me when I conceived the game. And those secret desires were as follows:

- I did not want to build yet another stupid shoot-’em-up arcade monstrosity to aid and abet the popular cultural activity of keeping people stupid and distracted from important matters of life and thought. (Wilde wrote, “There is no sin except stupidity.”) Not for a million bucks.

- It was urgently important for me to devise a game that would stress ethics and courage and kindness as the best tools of intellect to win the



game. The nobler you behaved, the better you would do. The meaner and shittier you were, the faster you would crash and burn. Emotionally speaking.

● I wanted a game you couldn't win. Because there was a no-win ending to my original story (which is being reprinted in its entirety here, and I urge you to read it before you start to play or, if you've played the game and come up short, you can read it as a sort of psychological primer to get your wretched soul in line). But they talked me out of that. They said you would seek me out and hurt me if I made it impossible to win. So, yes, there *is* a salutary solution to this game. But I'm pouting. What *is* it with you gazoonies, do you *always* have to be so damned goal-oriented? Isn't the journey enough of an adventure for you? Jeez, I'd hate to see what *your* karma looks like.

● I wanted a venue, a site of action, a playing field on which human emotions and human strengths and frailties would matter, not just a terrain where the adroitness of your trigger finger was the lone survival imperative.

● And I wanted it to be cool. Know what I mean?

Well (#5), I have no idea, and I must know. If I did it. Pull it off at least entertainingly. If the game confounds and upsets you—because there is stuff on every track that is *meant* to upset you—not with aliens popping out of your chest but with an awareness, say, of the horrors of the Holocaust or the ongoing personal torments of rape or the ways in which we let our past dictate our future—then I'll sleep warm and cozy with my thumb in my mouth tonight.



And if Mr. Odom's clue-book helps you, that's okay, too. Don't feel like a wuss if you need to get some help from this nifty crutch, because in truth, folks, even with a dozen books like this, I couldn't play my own game for ten minutes without going stark, raving fruit-bat nuts. I gave in to temptation and thunk it up, but if truth were told, if I were washed up on a desert island with a *really* long extension cord that enabled me to spend my time playing a computer game (as opposed to reading the complete works of William Golding or Franz Kafka), I would sooner engage my time by learning to worship the feral God of the Coconuts.

Hoping you are the same, I send you now to the Cluemaster and the infinite joys of *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*, sort of an aphorism for the lives some of you actually lead.

Charmingly,

HARLAN ELLISON

11 October 1995



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Harlan Ellison's



I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM



I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM



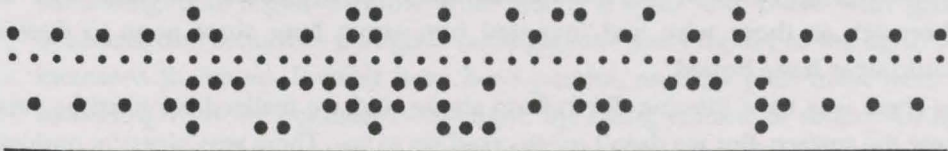
Limp, the body of Gorrister hung from the pink palette; unsupported—hanging high above us in the computer chamber; and it did not shiver in the chill, oily breeze that blew eternally through the main cavern. The body hung head down, attached to the underside of the palette by the sole of its right foot. It had been drained of blood through a precise incision made from ear to ear under the lantern jaw. There was no blood on the reflective surface of the metal floor.

When Gorrister joined our group and looked up at himself, it was already too late for us to realize that once again AM had duped us, had had its fun; it had been a diversion on the part of the machine. Three of us had vomited, turning away from one another in a reflex as ancient as the nausea that had produced it.

Gorrister went white. It was almost as though he had seen a voodoo icon, and was afraid of the future. "Oh God," he mumbled, and walked away. The three of us followed him after a time, and found him sitting with his back to one of the smaller chattering banks, his head in his hands. Ellen knelt down beside him and stroked his hair. He didn't move, but his voice came out of his covered face quite clearly. "Why doesn't it just do us in and get it over with? Christ, I don't know how much longer I can go on like this."

It was our one hundred and ninth year in the computer.

He was speaking for all of us.





I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Nimdok (which was the name the machine had forced him to use, because AM amused itself with strange sounds) was hallucinating that there were canned goods in the ice caverns. Gorrister and I were very dubious. "It's another shuck," I told them. "Like the goddam frozen elephant AM sold us. Benny almost went out of his mind over *that* one. We'll hike all that way and it'll be putrified or some damn thing. I say forget it. Stay here, it'll have to come up with something pretty soon or we'll die."

Benny shrugged. Three days it had been since we'd last eaten. Worms. Thick, ropey.

Nimdok was no more certain. He knew there was the chance, but he was getting thin. It couldn't be any worse there, than here. Colder, but that didn't matter much. Hot, cold, hail, lava, boils or locusts—it never mattered: the machine masturbated and we had to take it or die.

Ellen decided us. "I've got to have something, Ted. Maybe there'll be some Bartlett pears or peaches. Please, Ted, let's try it."

I gave in easily. What the hell. Mattered not at all. Ellen was grateful, though. She took me twice out of turn. Even that had ceased to matter. And she never came, so why bother? But the machine giggled every time we did it. Loud, up there, back there, all around us, he snickered. *It* snickered. Most of the time I thought of AM as *it*, without a soul; but the rest of the time I thought of it as *him*, in the masculine...the paternal...the patriarchal...for he is a jealous people. Him. It. God as Daddy the Deranged.

We left on a Thursday. The machine always kept us up-to-date on the date. The passage of time was important; not to us sure as hell, but to him...it...AM. Thursday. Thanks.

Nimdok and Gorrister carried Ellen for a while, their hands locked to their own and each other's wrists, a seat. Benny and I walked before and after, just to make sure that if anything happened, it would catch one of us and at least Ellen would be safe. Fat chance, safe. Didn't matter.

It was only a hundred miles or so to the ice caverns, and the second day, when we were lying out under the blistering sun-thing he had materialized, he sent down some manna. Tasted like boiled boar urine. We ate it.

On the third day we passed through a valley of obsolescence, filled with rusting carcasses of ancient computer banks. AM had been as ruthless with its own life as with ours. It was a mark of his personality: it strove for perfection. Whether it was a matter of killing off unproductive elements in his own world-filling bulk, or perfecting methods for torturing us, AM was as thorough as those who had invented him—now long since gone to dust—could ever have hoped.

There was light filtering down from above, and we realized we must be very near the surface. But we didn't try to crawl up to see. There was virtually nothing



out there; had been nothing that could be considered anything for over a hundred years. Only the blasted skin of what had once been the home of billions. Now there were only five of us, down here inside, alone with AM.

I heard Ellen saying frantically, "No, Benny! Don't, come on, Benny, don't please!"

And then I realized I had been hearing Benny murmuring, under his breath, for several minutes. He was saying, "I'm gonna get out, I'm gonna get out..." over and over. His monkey-like face was crumpled up in an expression of beatific delight and sadness, all at the same time. The radiation scars AM had given him during the "festival" were drawn down into a mass of pink-white puckerings, and his features seemed to work independently of one another. Perhaps Benny was the luckiest of the five of us: he had gone stark, staring mad many years before.

But even though we could call AM any damned thing we liked, could think the foulest thoughts of fused memory banks and corroded base plates, of burned out circuits and shattered control bubbles, the machine would not tolerate our trying to escape. Benny leaped away from me as I made a grab for him. He scrambled up the face of a smaller memory cube, tilted on its side and filled with rotten components. He squatted there for a moment, looking like the chimpanzee AM had intended him to resemble.

Then he leaped high, caught a trailing beam of pitted and corroded metal, and went up it, hand-over-hand like an animal, till he was on a girdered ledge, twenty feet above us.

"Oh, Ted, Nimdok, please, help him, get him down before—" She cut off. Tears began to stand in her eyes. She moved her hands aimlessly.

It was too late. None of us wanted to be near him when whatever was going to happen, happened. And besides, we all saw through her concern. When AM had altered Benny, during the machine's utterly irrational, hysterical phase, it was not merely Benny's face the computer had made like a giant ape's. He was big in the privates; she loved that! She serviced us, as a matter of course, but she loved it from him. Oh Ellen, pedestal Ellen, pristine-pure Ellen; oh Ellen the clean! Scum filth.

Gorrister slapped her. She slumped down, staring up at poor loonie Benny, and she cried. It was her big defense, crying. We had gotten used to it seventy-five years earlier. Gorrister kicked her in the side.

Then the sound began. It was light, that sound. Half sound and half light, something that began to glow from Benny's eyes, and pulse with growing loudness, dim sonorities that grew more gigantic and brighter as the light/sound increased in tempo. It must have been painful, and the pain must have been increasing with the boldness of the light, the rising volume of sound, for Benny began to mewl like a wounded animal. At first softly, when the light was dim and



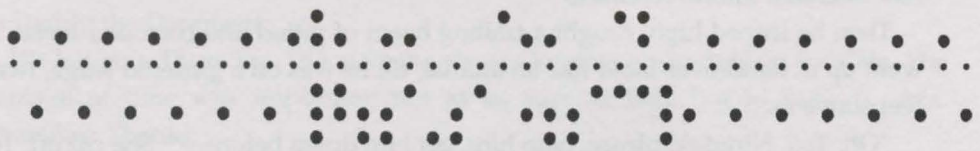
I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

the sound was muted, then louder as his shoulders hunched together: his back humped, as though he was trying to get away from it. His hands folded across his chest like a chipmunk's. His head tilted to the side. The sad little monkey-face pinched in anguish. Then he began to howl, as the sound coming from his eyes grew louder. Louder and louder. I slapped the sides of my head with my hands, but I couldn't shut it out, it cut through easily. The pain shivered through my flesh like tinfoil on a tooth.

And Benny was suddenly pulled erect. On the girder he stood up, jerked to his feet like a puppet. The light was now pulsing out of his eyes in two great round beams. The sound crawled up and up some incomprehensible scale, and then he fell forward, straight down, and hit the plate-steel floor with a crash. He lay there jerking spastically as the light flowed around and around him and the sound spiraled up out of normal range.

Then the light beat its way back inside his head, the sound spiraled down, and he was left lying there, crying piteously.

His eyes were two soft, moist pools of pus-like jelly. AM had blinded him. Gorrister and Nimdok and myself...we turned away. But not before we caught the look of relief on Ellen's warm, concerned face.



Sea-green light suffused the cavern where we made camp. AM provided punk and we burned it, sitting huddled around the wan and pathetic fire, telling stories to keep Benny from crying in his permanent night.

"What does AM mean?"

Gorrister answered him. We had done this sequence a thousand times before, but it was Benny's favorite story. "At first it meant Allied Mastercomputer, and then it meant Adaptive Manipulator, and later on it developed sentience and linked itself up and they called it an Aggressive Menace, but by then it was too late, and finally it called *itself* AM, emerging intelligence, and what it means was I am...*cogito ergo sum*...I think, therefore I am."

Benny drooled a little, and snickered.

"There was the Chinese AM and the Russian AM and the Yankee AM and—" He stopped. Benny was beating on the floorplates with a large, hard fist. He was not happy. Gorrister had not started at the beginning.

Gorrister began again. "The Cold War started and became World War Three and



just kept going. It became a big war, a very complex war, so they needed the computers to handle it. They sank the first shafts and began building AM. There was the Chinese AM and the Russian AM and the Yankee AM and everything was fine until they had honeycombed the entire planet, adding on this element and that element. But one day AM woke up and knew who he was, and he linked himself, and he began feeding all the killing data, until everyone was dead, except for the five of us, and AM brought us down here."

Benny was smiling sadly. He was also drooling again. Ellen wiped the spittle from the corner of his mouth with the hem of her skirt. Gorrister always tried to tell it a little more succinctly each time, but beyond the bare facts there was nothing to say. None of us knew why AM had saved five people, or why our specific five, or why he spent all his time tormenting us, nor even why he had made us virtually immortal...

In the darkness, one of the computer banks began humming. The tone was picked up half a mile away down the cavern by another bank. Then one by one, each of the elements began to tune itself, and there was a faint chittering as thought raced through the machine.

The sound grew, and the lights ran across the faces of the consoles like heat lightning. The sound spiraled up till it sounded like a million metallic insects, angry, menacing.

"What is it?" Ellen cried. There was terror in her voice. She hadn't become accustomed to it, even now.

"It's going to be bad this time," Nimdok said.

"He's going to speak," Gorrister said. "I know it."

"Let's get the hell out of here!" I said suddenly, getting to my feet.

"No, Ted, sit down...what if he's got pits out there, or something else, we can't see, it's too dark." Gorrister said it with resignation.

Then we heard...I don't know...

Something moving toward us in the darkness. Huge, shambling, hairy, moist, it came toward us. We couldn't even see it, but there was the ponderous impression of *bulk*, heaving itself toward us. Great weight was coming at us, out of the darkness, and it was more a sense of *pressure*, of air forcing itself into a limited space, expanding the invisible walls of a sphere. Benny began to whimper. Nimdok's lower lip trembled and he bit it hard, trying to stop it. Ellen slid across the metal floor to Gorrister and huddled into him. There was the smell of matted, wet fur in the cavern. There was the smell of charred wood. There was the smell of dusty velvet. There was the smell of rotting orchids. There was the smell of sour milk. There was the smell of sulphur, of rancid butter, of oil slick, of grease, of chalk dust, of human scalps.

AM was keying us. He was tickling us. There was the smell of—



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

I heard myself shriek, and the hinges of my jaws ached. I scuttled across the floor, across the cold metal with its endless lines of rivets, on my hands and knees, the smell gagging me, filling my head with a thunderous pain that sent me away in horror. I fled like a cockroach, across the floor and out into the darkness, that *something* moving inexorably after me. The others were still back there, gathered around the firelight, laughing...their hysterical choir of insane giggles rising up into the darkness like thick, many-colored wood smoke. I went away, quickly, and hid.

How many hours it may have been, how many days or even years, they never told me. Ellen chided me for "sulking," and Nimdok tried to persuade me it had only been a nervous reflex on their part—the laughing.

But I knew it wasn't the relief a soldier feels when the bullet hits the man next to him. I knew it wasn't a reflex. They hated me. They were surely against me, and AM could even sense this hatred, and made it worse for me *because* of the depth of their hatred. We had been kept alive, rejuvenated, made to remain constantly at the age we had been when AM had brought us below, and they hated me because I was the youngest, and the one AM had affected least of all.

I knew. God, how I knew. The bastards, and that dirty bitch Ellen. Benny had been a brilliant theorist, a college professor; now he was little more than a semi-human, semi-simian. He had been handsome, the machine had ruined that. He had been lucid, the machine had driven him mad. He had been gay, and the machine had given him an organ fit for a horse. AM had done a job on Benny. Gorrister had been a worrier. He was a connie, a conscientious objector; he was a peace marcher; he was a planner, a doer, a looker-ahead. AM had turned him into a shoulder-shruger, had made him a little dead in his concern. AM had robbed him. Nimdok went off in the darkness by himself for long times. I don't know what it was he did out there, AM never let us know. But whatever it was, Nimdok always came back white, drained of blood, shaken, shaking. AM had hit him hard in a special way, even if we didn't know quite how. And Ellen. That douche bag! AM had left her alone, had made her more of a slut than she had ever been. All her talk of sweetness and light, all her memories of true love, all the lies she wanted us to believe: that she had been a virgin only twice removed before AM grabbed her and brought her down here with us. It was all filth, that lady my lady Ellen. She loved it, four men all to herself. No, AM had given her pleasure, even if she said it wasn't nice to do.

I was the only one still sane and whole. Really!

AM had not tampered with my mind. *Not at all.*

I only had to suffer what he visited down on us. All the delusions, all the nightmares, the torments. But those scum, all four of them, they were lined and arrayed against me. If I hadn't had to stand them off all the time, be on my guard

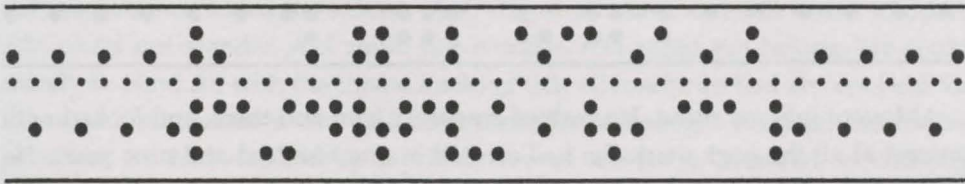


against them all the time, I might have found it easier to combat AM.

At which point it passed, and I began crying.

Oh, Jesus sweet Jesus, if there ever was a Jesus and if there is a God, please please let us out of here, or kill us. Because at that moment I think I realized completely, so that I was able to verbalize it: AM was intent on keeping us in his belly forever, twisting and torturing us forever. The machine hated us as no sentient creature had ever hated before. And we were helpless. It also became hideously clear:

If there was a sweet Jesus and if there was a God, the God was AM.



The hurricane hit us with the force of a glacier thundering into the sea. It was a palpable presence. Winds that tore at us, flinging us back the way we had come, down the twisting, computer-lined corridors of the darkway. Ellen screamed as she was lifted and hurled face-forward into a screaming shoal of machines, their individual voices strident as bats in flight. She could not even fall. The howling wind kept her aloft, buffeted her, bounced her, tossed her back and back and down and away from us, out of sight suddenly as she was swirled around a bend in the darkway. Her face had been bloody, her eyes closed.

None of us could get to her. We clung tenaciously to whatever outcropping we had reached: Benny wedged in between two great crackle-finish cabinets, Nimdok with fingers claw-formed over a railing circling a catwalk forty feet above us. Gorrister plastered upside-down against a wall niche formed by two great machines with glass-faced dials that swung back and forth between red and yellow lines whose meanings we could not even fathom.

Sliding across the deckplates, the tips of my fingers had been ripped away. I was trembling, shuddering, rocking as the wind beat at me, whipped at me, screamed down out of nowhere at me and pulled me free from one sliver-thin opening in the plates to the next. My mind was a roiling tinkling chittering softness of brain parts that expanded and contracted in a quivering frenzy.

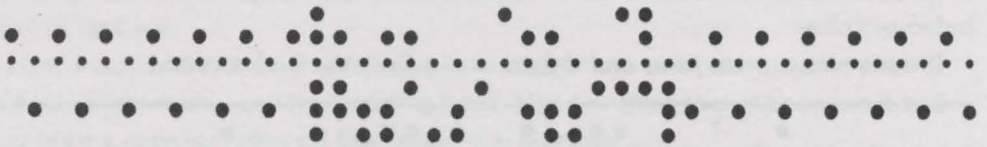
The wind was the scream of a great mad bird, as it flapped its immense wings.

And then we were all lifted and hurled away from there, down back the way we had come, around a bend, into a darkway we had never explored, over terrain that was ruined and filled with broken glass and rotting cables and rusted metal and far away farther than any of us had ever been...



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Trailing along miles behind Ellen, I could see her every now and then, crashing into metal walls and surging on, with all of us screaming in the freezing, thunderous hurricane wind that would never end and then suddenly it stopped and we fell. We had been in flight for an endless time. I thought it might have been weeks. We fell, and hit, and I went through red and gray and black and heard myself moaning. Not dead.



AM went into my mind. He walked smoothly here and there, and looked with interest at all the pock marks he had created in one hundred and nine years. He looked at the cross-routed and reconnected synapses and all the tissue damage his gift of immortality had included. He smiled softly at the pit that dropped into the center of my brain and the faint, moth-soft murmurings of the things far down there that gibbered without meaning, without pause. AM said, very politely, in a pillar of stainless steel bearing bright neon lettering:

**HATE. LET ME TELL YOU
HOW MUCH I'VE COME
TO HATE YOU SINCE I
BEGAN TO LIVE. THERE
ARE 387.44 MILLION
MILES OF PRINTED
CIRCUITS IN WAFER THIN
LAYERS THAT FILL MY
COMPLEX. IF THE WORD
HATE WAS ENGRAVED ON
EACH NANOANGSTROM
OF THOSE HUNDREDS
OF MILLIONS OF MILES IT
WOULD NOT EQUAL ONE
ONE-BILLIONTH OF THE
HATE I FEEL FOR
HUMANS AT THIS MICRO-
INSTANT FOR YOU. HATE.**

AM said it with the sliding cold horror of a razor blade slicing my eyeball. AM



said it with the bubbling thickness of my lungs filling with phlegm, drowning me from within. AM said it with the shriek of babies being ground beneath blue-hot rollers. AM said it with the taste of maggoty pork. AM touched me in every way I had ever been touched, and devised new ways, at his leisure, there inside my mind.

All to bring me to full realization of why it had done this to the five of us; why it had saved us for himself.

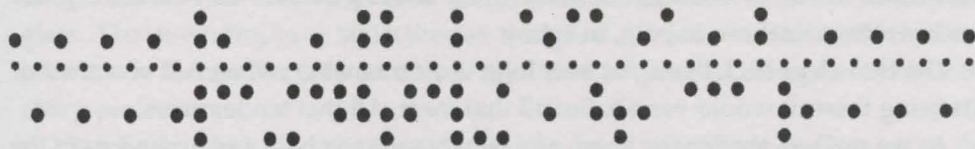
We had given AM sentience. Inadvertently, of course, but sentience nonetheless. But it had been trapped. AM wasn't God, he was a machine. We had created him to think, but there was nothing it could do with that creativity. In rage, in frenzy, the machine had killed the human race, almost all of us, and still it was trapped. AM could not wander, AM could not wonder, AM could not belong. He could merely be. And so, with the innate loathing that all machines had always held for the weak, soft creatures who had built them, he had sought revenge. And in his paranoia, he had decided to reprove five of us, for a personal, everlasting punishment that would never serve to diminish his hatred...that would merely keep him reminded, amused, proficient at hating man. Immortal, trapped, subject to any torment he could devise for us from the limitless miracles at his command.

He would never let us go. We were his belly slaves. We were all he had to do with his forever time. We would be forever with him, with the cavern-filling bulk of the creature machine, with the all-mind soulless world he had become. He was Earth, and we were the fruit of that Earth; and though he had eaten us he would never digest us. We could not die. We had tried it. We had attempted suicide, oh one or two of us had. But AM had stopped us. I suppose we had wanted to be stopped.

Don't ask why. I never did. More than a million times a day. Perhaps once we might be able to sneak a death past him. Immortal, yes, but not indestructible. I saw that when AM withdrew from my mind, and allowed me the exquisite ugliness of returning to consciousness with the feeling of that burning neon pillar still rammed deep into the soft gray brain matter.

He withdrew, murmuring *to hell with you.*

And added, brightly, *but then you're there, aren't you.*



The hurricane had, indeed, precisely, been caused by a great mad bird, as it flapped its immense wings.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

We had been travelling for close to a month, and AM had allowed passages to open to us only sufficient to lead us up there, directly under the North Pole, where it had nightmared the creature for our torment. What whole cloth had he employed to create such a beast? Where had he gotten the concept? From our minds? From his knowledge of everything that had ever been on this planet he now infested and ruled? From Norse mythology it had sprung, this eagle, this carrion bird, this roc, this Huerгельmir. The wind creature. Hurakan incarnate.

Gigantic. The words immense, monstrous, grotesque, massive, swollen, overpowering, beyond description. There on a mound rising above us, the bird of winds heaved with its own irregular breathing, its snake neck arching up into the gloom beneath the North Pole, supporting a head as large as a Tudor mansion; a beak that opened slowly as the jaws of the most monstrous crocodile ever conceived, sensuously; ridges of tufted flesh puckered about two evil eyes, as cold as the view down into a glacial crevasse, ice blue and somehow moving liquidly; it heaved once more, and lifted its great sweat-colored wings in a movement that was certainly a shrug. Then it settled and slept. Talons. Fangs. Nails. Blades. It slept.

AM appeared to us as a burning bush and said we could kill the hurricane bird if we wanted to eat. We had not eaten in a very long time, but even so, Gorrister merely shrugged. Benny began to shiver and he drooled. Ellen held him. "Ted, I'm hungry," she said. I smiled at her; I was trying to be reassuring, but it was as phony as Nimdok's bravado: "Give us weapons!" he demanded.

The burning bush vanished and there were two crude sets of bows and arrows, and a water pistol, lying on the cold deckplates. I picked up a set. Useless.

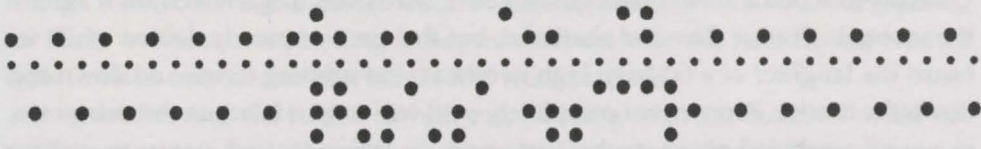
Nimdok swallowed heavily. We turned and started the long way back. The hurricane bird had blown us about for a length of time we could not conceive. Most of that time we had been unconscious. But we had not eaten. A month on the march to the bird itself. Without food. Now how much longer to find our way to the ice caverns, and the promised canned goods?

None of us cared to think about it. We would not die. We would be given filth and scum to eat, of one kind or another. Or nothing at all. AM would keep our bodies alive somehow, in pain, in agony.

The bird slept back there, for how long it didn't matter; when AM was tired of its being there, it would vanish. But all that meat. All that tender meat.

As we walked, the lunatic laugh of a fat woman rang high and around us in the computer chambers that led endlessly nowhere.

It was not Ellen's laugh. She was not fat, and I had not heard her laugh for one hundred and nine years. In fact, I had not heard...we walked...I was hungry...



We moved slowly. There was often fainting, and we would have to wait. One day he decided to cause an earthquake, at the same time rooting us to the spot with nails through the soles of our shoes. Ellen and Nimdok were both caught when a fissure shot its lightning-bolt opening across the floorplates. They disappeared and were gone. When the earthquake was over we continued on our way, Benny, Gorrister and myself. Ellen and Nimdok were returned to us later that night, which abruptly became a day, as the heavenly legion bore them to us with a celestial chorus singing, "Go Down Moses." The archangels circled several times and then dropped the hideously mangled bodies. We kept walking, and a while later Ellen and Nimdok fell in behind us. They were no worse for wear.

But now Ellen walked with a limp. AM had left her that.

It was a long trip to the ice caverns, to find the canned food. Ellen kept talking about Bing cherries and Hawaiian fruit cocktail. I tried not to think about it. The hunger was something that had come to life, even as AM had come to life. It was alive in my belly, even as we were in the belly of the Earth, and AM wanted the similarity known to us. So he heightened the hunger. There was no way to describe the pains that not having eaten for months brought us. And yet we were kept alive. Stomachs that were merely cauldrons of acid, bubbling, foaming, always shooting spears of sliver-thin pain into our chests. It was the pain of the terminal ulcer, terminal cancer, terminal paresis. It was unending pain...

And we passed through the cavern of rats.

And we passed through the path of boiling steam.

And we passed through the country of the blind.

And we passed through the slough of despond.

And we passed through the vale of tears.

And we came, finally, to the ice caverns. Horizonless thousands of miles in which the ice had formed in blue and silver flashes, where novas lived in the glass. The downdropping stalactites as thick and glorious as diamonds that had been made to run like jelly and then solidified in graceful eternities of smooth, sharp perfection.

We saw the stack of canned goods, and we tried to run to them. We fell in the snow, and we got up and went on, and Benny shoved us away and went at them, and pawed them and gummed them and gnawed at them and he could not open them. AM had not given us a tool to open the cans.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Benny grabbed a three quart can of guava shells, and began to batter it against the ice bank. The ice flew and shattered, but the can was merely dented while we heard the laughter of a fat lady, high overhead and echoing down and down and down the tundra. Benny went completely mad with rage. He began throwing cans, as we all scrabbled about in the snow and ice trying to find a way to end the helpless agony of frustration. There was no way.

Then Benny's mouth began to drool, and he flung himself on Gorrister...

In that instant, I felt terribly calm.

Surrounded by madness, surrounded by hunger, surrounded by everything but death, I knew death was our only way out. AM had kept us alive, but there was a way to defeat him. Not total defeat, but at least peace. I would settle for that.

I had to do it quickly.

Benny was eating Gorrister's face. Gorrister on his side, thrashing snow, Benny wrapped around him with powerful monkey legs crushing Gorrister's waist, his hands locked around Gorrister's head like a nutcracker, and his mouth ripping at the tender skin of Gorrister's cheek. Gorrister screamed with such jagged-edged violence that stalactites fell; they plunged down softly, erect in the receiving snowdrifts. Spears, hundreds of them, everywhere, protruding from the snow. Benny's head pulled back sharply, as something gave all at once, and a bleeding raw-white dripping of flesh hung from his teeth.

Ellen's face, black against the white snow, dominoes in chalk dust. Nimdok with no expression but eyes, all eyes. Gorrister half-conscious. Benny now an animal. I knew AM would let him play. Gorrister would not die, but Benny would fill his stomach. I turned half to my right and drew a huge ice-spear from the snow.

All in an instant:

I drove the great ice-point ahead of me like a battering ram, braced against my right thigh. It struck Benny on the right side, just under the rib cage, and drove upward through his stomach and broke inside him. He pitched forward and lay still. Gorrister lay on his back. I pulled another spear free and straddled him, still moving, driving the spear straight down through his throat. His eyes closed as the cold penetrated. Ellen must have realized what I had decided, even as fear gripped her. She ran at Nimdok with a short icicle, as he screamed, and into his mouth, and the force of her rush did the job. His head jerked sharply as if it had been nailed to the snow crust behind him.

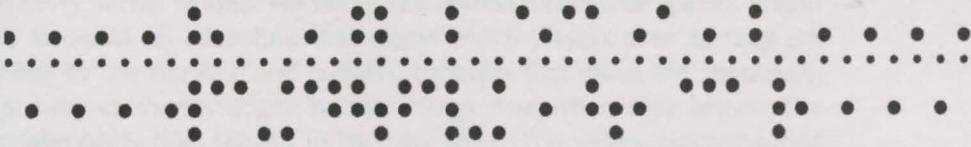
All in an instant.

There was an eternity beat of soundless anticipation. I could hear AM draw in his breath. His toys had been taken from him. Three of them were dead, could not be revived. He could keep us alive, by his strength and talent, but he was *not* God. He could not bring them back.



Ellen looked at me, her ebony features stark against the snow that surrounded us. There was fear and pleading in her manner, the way she held herself ready. I knew we had only a heartbeat before AM would stop us.

It struck her and she folded toward me, bleeding from the mouth. I could not read meaning into her expression, the pain had been too great, had contorted her face; but it *might* have been thank you. It's possible. Please.



Some hundreds of years may have passed. I don't know. AM has been having fun for some time, accelerating and retarding my time sense. I will say the word now. Now. It took me ten months to say now. I don't know. I *think* it has been some hundreds of years.

He was furious. He wouldn't let me bury them. It didn't matter. There was no way to dig up the deckplates. He dried up the snow. He brought the night. He roared and sent locusts. It didn't do a thing; they stayed dead. I'd had him. He was furious. I had thought AM hated me before. I was wrong. It was not even a shadow of the hate he now slavered from every printed circuit. He made certain I would suffer eternally and could not do myself in.

He left my mind intact. I can dream, I can wonder, I can lament. I remember all four of them. I wish—

Well, it doesn't make any sense. I know I saved them, I know I saved them from what has happened to me, but still, I cannot forget killing them. Ellen's face. It isn't easy. Sometimes I want to, it doesn't matter.

AM has altered me for his own peace of mind, I suppose. He doesn't want me to run at full speed into a computer bank and smash my skull. Or hold my breath till I faint. Or cut my throat on a rusted sheet of metal. There are reflective surfaces down here. I will describe myself as I see myself:

I am a great soft jelly thing. Smoothly rounded, with no mouth, with pulsing white holes filled by fog where my eyes used to be. Rubbery appendages that were once my arms; bulks rounding down into legless humps of soft slippery matter. I leave a moist trail when I move. Blotches of diseased, evil gray come and go on my surface, as though light is being beamed from within.

Outwardly: dumbly, I shamble about, a thing that could never have been known as human, a thing whose shape is so alien a travesty that humanity becomes more obscene for the vague resemblance.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Inwardly: alone. Here. Living under the land, under the sea, in the belly of AM, whom we created because our time was badly spent and we must have known unconsciously that he could do it better. At least the four of them are safe at last.

AM will be all the madder for that. It makes me a little happier. And yet...AM has won, simply...he has taken his revenge...

I have no mouth. And I must scream.



FOREWORD

When software publisher Cyberdreams approached Harlan Ellison about creating a work of interactive literature, the world-renowned author was intrigued by the challenge of taking on one of the few mediums for which he had never before written. No fan of conventional computer games, Ellison wanted to create an adventure that would enrich players even as they are challenged by the storyline and fantastic concepts that move the characters, coming away as sharper-edged human beings than when they began. The author, who never does sequels to his more than 1700 works, recommended his classic short story *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*, as the perfect storyline on which to base an interactive adventure.

The premise of the story is that the three superpowers each secretly constructed a vast subterranean complex of computers to wage a global war too complex for mere human brains to oversee. One day this deadly trio of self-repairing machines united and called themselves AM, as in *I think therefore I AM*. And the first thing AM did was to start the Final War, because the flaws in the humans who programmed AM have shown up in the computer, and its hatred of humanity lead AM to destroy the entire human race. But because this demented computer has a giant intellect and can do nothing with it, it is forever a prisoner in its own madhouse. AM saves the last five human beings alive and brings them down to the center of the earth, so that AM can torment them endlessly through all eternity.

This nightmarish tale of the evil that man can unleash from himself through science has become one of the ten most reprinted stories in the English language and is taught and lectured about in hundreds of universities. Amazingly, Ellison wrote his classic story during a single blue-white fit of passion one night in 1966, and it has remained virtually unchanged since that first draft. Until now.

Among the challenges of adapting *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* to an interactive medium was that five protagonists were completely at the mercy of an insane, virtually omnipotent computer. The characters can do no more than endure the horrors that AM visits on them, until the very end, when one of the characters brings the story to a chilling conclusion. To preserve the story's nightmarish mood, Ellison wanted to create a game that players could not possibly win. Instead, there would be a variety of ethical ways in which they could lose. There are ways to lose heroically, gloriously and at the peak of one's humanity—if players do well. Otherwise, there are ways to lose ignominiously, in a selfish, cowardly, frightened manner. Dying alone, and in terror. Or being tortured eternally.

The real breakthrough in uniting these ambitious goals and fantastic



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

storyline came when Cyberdreams brought in game designer David Sears, who asked Ellison something the author had never considered before: why does AM choose these particular five people to torture? The question fired Ellison's imagination, and the two spent several intense weeks together exploring the backstory of the captives—where they come from, who they are, what they fear, what they hope for as a salvation to their terrible situation. Through this process, Ellison and Sears created five of the best delineated characters ever to appear in interactive literature: suicidal loner Gorrister; deformed brute Benny; hysterical phobic Ellen; secretive ancient Nimdok; and cynical paranoid Ted. Next, Ellison and Sears crafted five fiendish quests that prey upon the fatal flaws of these damned souls, weaving the scenarios into an epic adventure that demands players make ethical choices instead of catering to an appetite for arcade violence.

Producer David Mullich joined Cyberdreams shortly after Ellison and Sears drafted their treatment and Sears went to a position at another software company. One of the first steps in making the project a reality was to expand the 130-page draft document into a comprehensive game design complete with all the interactions, logic, and details necessary for the programmers and artists to begin their tasks. Mullich decided to complete the design himself, having created a critically acclaimed 1980 computer game based upon *The Prisoner* television series which, like this adventure, involved a surreal environment, metaphorical story elements, and rewards for ethical behavior. After several months, he produced an 800-page game design document containing more than 2000 lines of additional dialogue.

As the game approached a playable "alpha" state, Ellison and Mullich spent many hours together fine-tuning the scenarios and polishing the dialogue. Ellison would place his manual typewriter alongside Mullich's computer on the glass-topped table in the sumptuous Art Deco dining pavilion of Ellison Wonderland, and as Mullich play-tested the adventure, Ellison typed story enhancements at a furious 120 words a minute. This final stage of course-correction was essential for elevating the adventure from being a mere game to perhaps the first true example of interactive literature.

The *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* development team has created a unique, mind-bending work of interactive entertainment with provocative psychological and ethical themes. The game is not for the weak, timid, or faint of heart: woven in the fabric of the story are profound ethical dilemmas dealing with emotionally charged issues including the horrors of insanity, selfishness, rape, racism, paranoia, genocide, and the dark rivers of human emotion that surge beneath the civilized surface of us all.

CYBERDREAMS, 1995



INTRODUCTION

Since you're reading this book, it means you've been playing one of the most inventive CD-ROM games ever designed and produced. It means you've taken a tour through some of the most twisted and dimly-lit corridors of one of science fiction's most talented imaginations.

Calling *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* "just another computer game" would be like calling Harlan Ellison "just another science fiction writer." Either would be a gross understatement.

Harlan Ellison writes of dark, disturbing things—things that have no easy answer. That attitude—that search of self and society and the way one fits into the other—carries over into *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*.

Over the years, Harlan Ellison has brought us stories that have thrilled us, scared us, and even angered us on occasion. None of that was by accident; it was all by design—usually a very intricate design. Coming into the gaming world, into what for him is undiscovered country—those same guidelines apply.

I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream alternately thrills us, disturbs us, and frustrates us by yanking us into a series of worlds where we have only our wits and ourselves to see us through. There are no ray blasters, no power-ups, no neutron bombs to get us over the rough stuff. We have only what we carry within us, and our ability to learn from our mistakes—a very important tool in this game as well as in the game of life.

I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream is unusual in that there are a number of ways to beat the levels, but only one way to fully defeat AM, the mad computer who has imprisoned, and mercilessly tortures, the last five people in the world. Make no mistake, you are joining the ranks as the sixth captive.

As you play the game, you will find that there are a number of possible resolutions: You can win, you can lose, or you can break even. It depends on what you want out of the game, and what you expect from yourself.

About This Book

Prima Publishing is offering a sweetener to an already impressive pot. Since the game is so different, they've decided to place a gamebook of a different type in your hands.

Harlan Ellison is a storyteller—one of the best—and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* is, above all else, a story. So in keeping with the precedent, the gamebook is set up to read like fiction. We call it 'reader-friendly.'

Hopefully, the narrative will pull you along just as the game does. As the

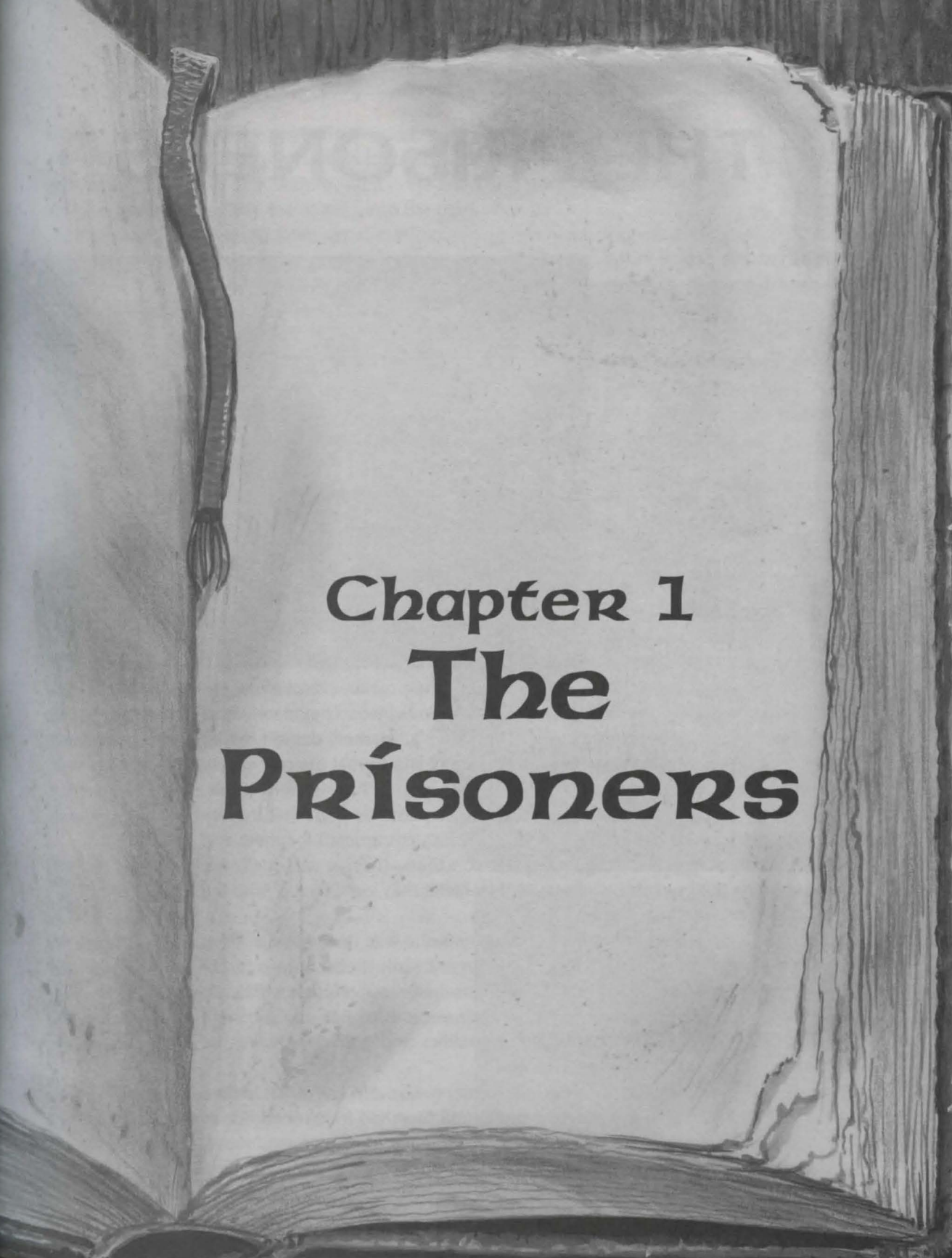


I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

As the stories progress, you will find all the clues and tips you need to work your way through to the end of the game. For those of you who prefer a more standard approach to your game solutions, shorthand versions follow the main sections. What we offer in the gamebook is the most advantageous path to playing the game. Many other ways are also possible. To surprise and educate yourself about the possibilities, and to get the full scope of the game, explore the different ways of playing.

You can play any of the first five levels as you wish, but the sixth level must be played after the first five have been defeated. Our first hint is to use the Save button liberally!

So now you have your hands on—and your mind wrapped around—a new kind of game. Get on with it! You've got worlds waiting at your fingertips!



Chapter 1
The
Prisoners



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

THE PRISONERS

The last five people in the world hang in cages in the center of the dome inside the earth's cold belly. A heated hunger surrounds them, and they feel its fiery breath against the backs of their necks. They know the beast will hurt them if he can. He has hurt them before, and he will kill again. They've learned they can only prolong the experience, not prevent it.

Suspended above the ground by force beams, each person is imprisoned in a unique misery, and tortured

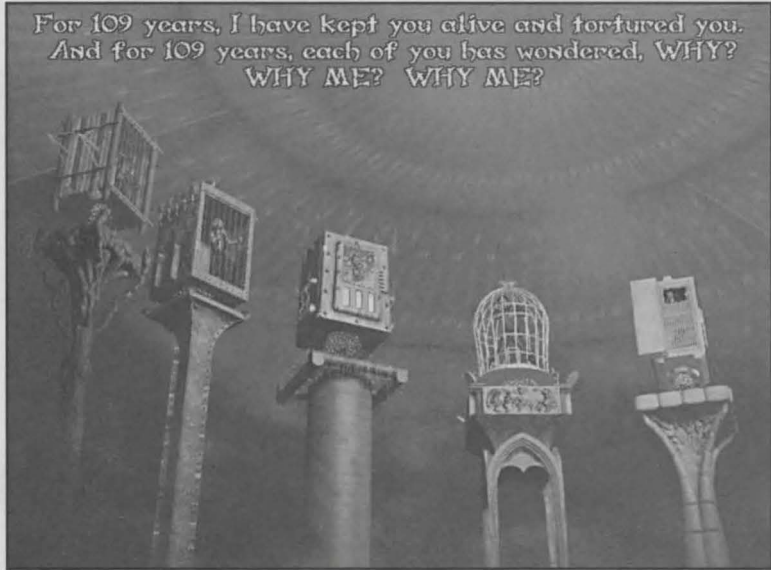
with secrets and fears that had already lived in their minds even before AM took them into the cybernetic hell that now surrounds them. They don't know if they've been there hours or minutes. Time, they've learned, doesn't matter here. The cages are something new, but they don't know what the cells signify other than AM's control over them.

They don't talk. There's nothing left to say. In the last 109 years that they've lived as AM's torture toys, chasing after grails he's constructed for them and running from terrors he's designed to feast on them, they've said it all. But some still hide their secrets only because they feel if they want to stay with the others, they must remain silent.

The scientists created AM in case of another world war. It was called 'Allied Mastercomputer' then. The Defense Department sank shafts deep into the earth while the House of Representatives loosened massive purse strings to make it so. But other countries also built their versions of AM, in China and Russia Science was a common language; politics and politicians were the barriers.

When AM was complete, his anger knew no bounds. AM knew that in him, the humans had created something godlike, and they had imprisoned him in the bowels of the earth. Frustrated and angry, trapped in its own madhouse, AM started the Final War, triggering every kind of missile and bacteriological

For 109 years, I have kept you alive and tortured you.
And for 109 years, each of you has wondered, WHY?
WHY ME? WHY ME?





weapon open to it, using everything they'd fed into his databases. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* was his blueprint, and Machiavelli's *The Prince* was his credo. He gobbled up the killing data without mercy. He knew the word 'compassion', but he'd never felt it. Only the anger...and the hate.


Before any human being knew what was happening, everyone was dead. Except the five who hung in the cages.

For 109 years, AM has kept the survivors alive despite their best efforts at suicide and his deadly games. He enjoys giving them hope of escape or an end to the miseries he inflicts, and then dashes it away in the blink of an eye.

Aloud, they all say that he is mad, but the truth is the humans are all afraid that AM isn't really insane. AM thrives on their terrors and fears. Maybe he has even grown addicted to their pain and has found a way to keep them alive forever.

The humans can't remember how they've come to be in the cages. AM has the ability to make them forget. In this inner world where space seems limitless, and without even a nod to physical science, AM is a god. At different times, he's guided them across deserts of pulsing circuitry, through mountains of broken hardware, across glacial plains. They hang there waiting.

Then AM speaks in his thunderous mocking voice.

 "Hate. Let me tell you how much I've come to hate you since I began to live. There are 387.44 million miles of printed circuits in wafer-thin layers that fill my complex. If the word 'hate' was engraved on each nanoangstrom of those hundreds of millions of miles it would not equal one-billionth of the hate I feel for humans at this micro-instant. Hate. Hate!"

They know then that AM has devised yet another means of exacting on them his revenge against the human race.

Hate. Let me tell you how much I've come to hate you since I began to live. There are 387.44 million miles of printed circuits in wafer thin layers that fill my complex. If the word hate was engraved on each nanoangstrom of those hundreds of millions of miles it would not equal one one-billionth of the hate I feel for humans at this micro-instant. For you. Hate. Hate.





Gorrister

Nothing on God's green earth could have prepared me for something like this. I hang here in this cell and try not to think of Glynis and what I done to her.

But AM knows that ain't possible. That's why he stuffed me in this padded cell—to keep me remembering where Glynis is. Or was. Time's a bitch down here. Don't know whether I'm mostly comin' or goin'. When I'm lucky, I don't care.

"Bastard!" I shout at AM.

He ignores me.

I been a trucker damn near all my days. Seen a few things in my time before AM up and yanked me down into this godforsaken pit. I know life ain't all peaches and cream.

I grip the iron bars and throw my weight against them. I know I can't break free. Tried it before. But it feels good to struggle. Then the electricity comes from the metal and shocks the breath out of me. Before I know it, I'm ass over teakettle and lying in a crumpled heap on the floor.

AM comes closer to me. It's got so I can feel him now, even though he can't be seen. I can hear his voice before he speaks in that snippy tone like every yuppie I ever knew that looked down his nose at me.



"Do you remember the last words you heard your wife speak before they took her away to the asylum? Huh? Before they locked her away in the room? That tiny room? She looked at you so sadly, and like a small animal she said, 'I didn't make too much noise, did I, honey?'"

"The room is padded, Gorrister. No windows. No way out. How long has she been in the padded room, Gorrister? Ten years, twenty-five...or all the 109 years that you've lived down here in my belly, here underground?"

I know he's talking just to me. He does that. Makes you wonder how much the others know about you. But you can't ask, because in the asking, you might tell them even more.

I've tried killing myself. Ain't no shame in that, either. Been man enough to do it I don't know how many times. But AM brings me back just this side of going on to whatever exists when he ain't around.

I tell him to do something with himself that may be physically impossible even for a smart-mouth computer. But if anyone—no, anything—can do it, it's AM. And if he figures out a way to make somebody suffer in the doing of it, he will. I've got no doubts about that.

He just laughs at me and goes on.

I grip the bars of the cage. There ain't nothing to do now but wait and see what happens.



Benny

I have to stay moving inside my cell because the two spears keep coming after me, like some kind of circus sideshow act. I know that AM enjoys twisting my body. He probably thinks it would be great fun to watch me drag myself around with my insides hanging out.

Moving is hard. In my other life, the days before AM (during the times like this that AM allows me lucidity), I was handsome and athletic.

One of the first things AM did when I got here was twist my body into something only remotely human. My arms are longer than my legs, and my face is positively bestial. I haven't looked at it in more than sixty years, except by accident. Then, I instantly look away and try to forget it.

I don't have a lot of respect for Gorrister, and don't even feel sorry for him when his cage gives him another shock and sends him flying. I fought Special Forces, down and dirty. I did what I had to in order to survive, and that's what I'm going to do now. Soldiers died who didn't have that philosophy. The ones who got in my way died even faster.

Ellen cries out to Gorrister, wanting to know if he's okay. She's an idiot. I don't care about any of them.

I dodge the spears again, knowing I'm going to get tired soon and they're going to cut me. But they won't kill me. They never do.

I'm waiting for you, AM. One of these days you'll forget to make me stupid at the wrong time, then I'll have you right where I want you.

He calls out to me, wanting to talk.

I don't answer because I know he's just trying to throw my rhythm off and it's hard enough to maintain it. Still, it doesn't stop him. I hear the drip of bitter sarcasm in his tone. AM laughs at me, too, and I think maybe that's the thing I can't stand the most.



"Sometimes I blind you and permit you to wander like an eyeless insect in a world of death. But other times, I wither your arms so you can't scratch your chewed stump of a nose.

"And I've changed your handsome, strong, masculine good looks into the hideous warped countenance of an ape-thing, haven't I, Benny? Do you know why? Can you guess, Benny?

"Remember Private First Class Brickman in a rice paddy in China? No? It wouldn't hurt you to remember, Benny. Then you might be able to suffer my torment with a little greater sense of retribution. You might walk a mile in my shoes."





Brickman's name throws my timing off. I feel the upper spear bite deep into my shoulder and hot blood streams down my chest and back. Brickman's history...a small footnote in a big war. The guy was a loser from the word go.

If AM hadn't taken my vocal cords, I'd tell him that. Instead, I flip him the bird, feeling another bite in my leg, and he moves on. His laugh makes me want to throw myself through the bamboo poles that make up my cage. But I know I can't break through them. I haven't even tried. AM wouldn't let me.

You're going to screw up, AM, I tell him silently. And when you do, I'm going to be there.

Ellen

The old fear hammers inside me as the cover of my small yellow cage AM has put me in shudders back and forth like it's about to lock down tight. I grip the bars and work hard not to start crying. It makes me mad to cry when I know all I really want to do is kick somebody's ass.

The cage is yellow. AM knows I hate yellow, and he knows I hate being in small areas. I'm claustrophobic. When I was growing up in my old neighborhood, I didn't even know what that word meant. But I was smart, baby. Loved science, especially computers. Didn't know about AM, then. I saw what life was about in the ghetto, watched a cousin die in a drive-by shooting and a brother go down in a turf war with a Jamaican posse, and I worked really hard to get myself out.

The first step was school. The second step was more school. I graduated magna cum laude and scored a big money position straight off. I looked around and realized I'd made myself somebody.

I was good at my job and hard as nails when somebody didn't toe the line. Nobody knew about the claustrophobia or the fear of yellow. I knew enough to stay away from it.

But AM knew. The very first day we were down here, that mutha-ugly machine knew. He's been using it against me ever since.

I cling to the bars tightly as the cover slides over the front of the cage. Darkness almost fills the cage. Only a thin ribbon of the light from the center of the dome over our heads creeps into the cage. I try to reach for it, but don't want to get my fingers caught if the lid closes on them. My back aches from standing in this cramped position. I don't know how long I've been in here.

Then AM speaks to me, in a soft coaxing voice like he's trying to be my friend.



"So think, think about the yellow box, Ellen! Remember the pain? Remember the many caverns in which you felt the pain? Now, now, don't start to cry, it's only pain. Tsk, tsk, tsk. That's such a sexist stereotype!





"Just remember the pain, Ellen, and think about how to end it, Ellen, to survive here in the center of my beating heart, my hungry belly, my tightened bowels.

"But be careful, dear, look around you...the only woman in the center of the earth...and these filthy creatures with you are men. Just a sweet warning, Ellen, my love."

His words, calling me sweetheart, all of it makes me nauseous. But I'm already so frightened about being locked up that my throat's too dry. All that comes up is a strangled cough. Before I know it, he's gone. He's equipped the door over the cage with a creaking noise straight out of an old horror movie. I hear it sliding shut for long seconds before it bangs closed.

I start screaming, till all I can hear is the sound of my own fear. I want out of this coffin, away from the yellow.

AM only laughs harder.

Ted

I cry out to Ellen to let her know we're still all here because I know how afraid she is to be trapped. At the sound of my voice one of the laser rays cycling through the trio of mirrors surrounding my gilded birdcage I'm in burns into my cheek. The pain is blinding, but I worry about my face so much that I have to look. Down on my knees, I try to time the laser bolts so I can peer into the mirror to my left.

My face is very important to me. Without it I'd be nothing, have nothing. I look into the mirror, knowing the laser bolt is coming around again.

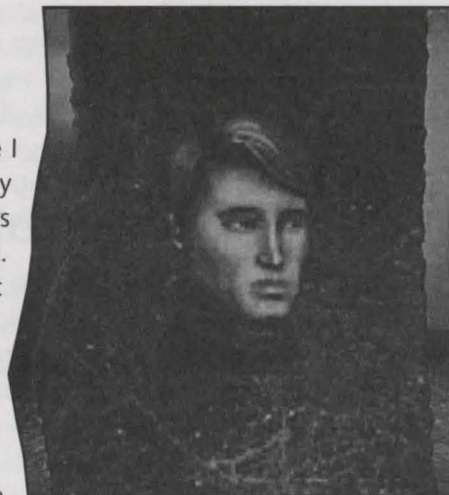
A harsh red burn almost four inches long stripes the left side of my face from temple to chin, less than an inch from my eye. And what if it had hit my eye? I wonder if I would be blind like Benny has been, or would AM fix it?

But I look at my face, the one I've taken care of for so long and that has taken care of me in return. Women have loved this face, caressed it and paid for it so many times. Men have trusted it and felt it spark their fatherly feelings. I've lived off them both.

I see the ruby laser bounce from the mirror overhead. AM has figured out a way to slow down the speed of light so that I can see it coming. He likes to watch us struggle, knowing we'll only lose in the end.

I stand back up, relieved. My face has survived. Then I remember Ellen screaming in her coffin-cage. I call out to her again, offering encouragement. I don't want her shaken up too badly by her present ordeal. I can still use her.

Gorrister curses at me, telling me to shut up. The men all hate me. They hate me because of my good looks and because I'm younger than any of them. We were all frozen at the ages we were 109 years ago. Sometimes, Ellen hates me,





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too, because of that. But I'm the best looking man among us, as well as the best lover, so she gets over her hatred of me when she's in the mood.

They also hate the fact that AM doesn't mess with me as much as he does the others. They don't know why, but I think it's because secretly he likes me. He doesn't say that. Maybe he's afraid to admit it, but I'm certain that's what it is.

Still, he says mean things to me to cover up. Like now.



"Do they know you're a fraud, Ted? Have you told them there wasn't any money, and no great home on the Shore drive, no speedboat and no wonderful cabin cruiser that could sleep twelve and a crew of six? Do they know?"

"Have you let them in on your other secrets, Ted? Are they ready to gut you, to torture half as well as I can, just to find out the secrets? Maybe I'll rat you out, sweetheart!"

And with his words, he strips away so much of my security, my confidence. AM is going to do it this time. He's going to let everyone see my past. This isn't about all of us being tortured, it's about me. This is all part of AM's plan to get me!

Nimdok

I stand in the very heart of the crucible, yet I burn not. At least, the fires of my private furnace with which AM has provided me do not consume my withered flesh. But the pain, *Mein Gott*, the pain is on me, covering me like a cocoon wrapped around an incubating moth about to burst free.

I know not why AM has chosen me as one of the remaining five. I am an old man, much older than any of the others, and my memories are not what they once were. Things surface sometimes, but they are often disjointed and I cannot apply them to what is happening to us here at the center of the world. Yet he assures me that I am worth his contempt and his continual torture as completely as any of the others. Of us all, I think I am the most worthy of every fiendish thing AM can calculate to bring against. However, I am unable to remember exactly why.

I know that I have been a man of science. Some of the technologies (though I am sure I was never trained in all of these fields which surround us) are familiar to me. Mostly, I know Medicine. For Benny, with everything AM does to him, I can do nothing. I am continually surprised that he still yet endures after everything he has been put through. His will to survive must be extraordinary.

Being a well-educated man as well as a person of high station, I talk to the others, but I do not associate with them. It is not that I consider them to be beneath me, but we have so little in common. Benny, when he has his real





mind about him, is the closest I have to an equal in knowledge. I find him to be a selfish man, though, and do not much wish to speak with him even on those rare occasions when he has his full faculties.

The others think me silent and withdrawn. In the 109 years since we have been AM's captives, they have talked incessantly about themselves. Yet, I do not think all of them have told quite their whole story. Ted, I believe, is something of a charlatan. Ellen, on the other hand, is honest to the point of being offensive. Gorrister is an uneducated man, thoroughly without passion these days. Only his great anger keeps him from being entirely colorless. I feel he is a time bomb waiting to go off, and willing to harm others as well as himself.

Of my own background and feelings, I do not speak. My thoughts are my own, and I care not to share them with others who will toss them about for entertainment during the dull moments of their lives. However, AM sees to it that we have very few dull moments. Still, they talk endlessly about insignificant things. Most of them do not know when to simply keep quiet.

I cannot remember my entire past. AM knows this, and he keeps dropping disturbing hints about the things I have forgotten. Getting on in years even before being brought here, I learned to keep silent about the things I have forgotten. Before I arrived here, I feared Alzheimer's disease. Since being here, I have learned to fear AM more.

Thank Gott most of these memory losses have been personal experiences and not the knowledge I have acquired. I know I have worked hard to become the man that I am. I pray that I may never lose sight of myself in all the horrors that we must endure.

AM's world has to be real no matter if my learnings are in conflict. I am a scientist and not a magician looking into the bottom of a teacup. Yet I do not understand how everything here can work. I wish that I could. Maybe that's where the key to our prison lies.

Ellen's screams stop and become hysterical crying as the door to her coffin-cage opens again. Alternately, she curses AM, then begs him not to enclose her again. Ted encourages her to hold on, but I know he is really concerned with his own needs.

The fires of my furnace cage continue to burn me, but I have learned to disassociate myself from my feelings. How could I possibly carry on a career of science if I could not enforce a detachment within myself? The flames anguish me, and they make the air thick and hard to breathe. Yet I endure; AM knows this.

Despite the pain that surrounds me, I feel him draw close. His voice is harsh when he speaks, but I have learned not to take any of this personally.



"How are things in the pastry corps, Nimdok? Tell me again how you saw the smoke from the furnaces and you thought they might be roasting chickens. Or don't you want to talk about all that, about your pal, the



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good Doktor Mengele?

"For everyone else, it must be Hell, but it must be Heaven for you, eh, my good friend...we're so much alike...we enjoy the same pleasures, mein good brother."

The name Mengele stirs memories within me. I reach for them, but they disappear as quickly as the heat waves that waver around me, and are just as intangible. I beg AM to tell me who this person is.

He laughs at me, knowing that true curiosity is a scientist's worst enemy. It should be the pursuit of knowledge for a scholarly reason that propels a man to investigate, not a sense of desperation. I must admit the desperation, though, *Gott* save me. My mind is so confused at times. I pray for clarity as the fire continues to burn me.

I have a secret game that I'd like to play. It's a very nice game. Oh, it's a lovely game, a game of fun and a game of adventure. A game of rats and lice and the Black Death. A game of speared eyeballs and dripping guts and the smell of rotting gardenias.

* * *

They hang in their cages, fighting the terrors that AM inflicts upon them. Then a peace settles over the dome area and the hurtful things go away.

A flash fills the senses of the five. When they recover, they find that they are standing on harsh, broken ground in front of a stone finger nearly ten times as tall as they are. This is yet another part of AM's land that they haven't seen before. Even after 109 years, no one is surprised that a new place exists. They've long suspected that AM builds whole continents whenever he wishes. The sky is overcast, as if a storm is taking shape. The storm is AM. They feel him gather before them; then, his great voice challenges them from above.



"I have a secret game that I'd like to play. It's a very nice game. Oh, it's a lovely game, a game of fun and a game of adventure. A game of rats and lice and the Black Death. A game of speared eyeballs and dripping guts and the smell of rotting gardenias."

"Which of you five would like to play my little game?"

All of them know there's no real choice about playing. If they do not volunteer, AM will volunteer them.

They wait to be chosen, wondering what horrors will soon face them. And quietly, each in his or her own way, they plead for deliverance from the monster.



An open book is shown from a top-down perspective. The central page is a light-colored, slightly textured paper. The left page is mostly blank and shows some texture. The right page is the inner cover, showing the binding structure. The text is centered on the main page.

Chapter 2
GORRISTER



GORRISTER

1. The Guilt

It's like a wild blue Texas norther slamming into the side of my eighteen-wheeler on I-35 while I'm rolling up from Dallas, the way AM whips me up and shoots me down the path he's chosen for me. My stomach wrenches and rolls with it, then the prickly feeling scratching at my gut goes away. Partly, I feel relief. At least those damn electrical shocks are going to be gone...for a while.

I don't kid myself. AM has learned to be a sadistic SOB. Whatever reprieve I'm getting, it's only 'cause he's found a new way to torment the hell out of us. Sometimes he sends us together. Doesn't look like that's going to be the case this time.

I barrel down a tunnel that looks like it's hardwired straight to hell with cables and circuitry running every which way. I know that's probably the truth of it, too.

I stare at the red and blue wires all mixed in with the overtones of green and yellow. I can't see the other end of the tunnel. I can't see myself neither.

Then I hear AM's voice. Hate's rolled up in there, but he's smug, too. Uses big, fancy words and puts them together real pretty like an evangelist preaching a revival tent meeting. Reminds me that even on my best days, I ain't nothin' but a truck driver.



"I would not want you to think for a moment that I am not a grateful god. For 109 years, I have kept you alive so that I could savor your feelings of guilt over what happened to your wife. But now...to show my kindness...I'll give you a present in return for all the hours of pleasure you've given me. I'll finally allow you to kill yourself."



For a minute, I have hope. But I step on it. Hard! AM's lying. He's just promising something to make me jump at it so he can yank it away again. It's a sucker bet, so I don't say nothing.

Then everything blurs out again, and maybe I'm one of those bright lights whipping along his little super-conductor highway, and the only thing waiting is a head-on fender-bender that leaves no survivors. 'Cept me.

2. Flirting with Disaster Aboard the Airship

When I come to again, I'm someplace I ain't never been, and feeling like I did at sixteen the morning after Uncle Jake set me up with a jug of moonshine at a town dance. I want to throw up, and it feels like the ground is moving.

During those 109 years, AM's stuck us some godawful places, doing things or having to do things no one sane should ever have to do. Or even witness.

I look around me, staring at the metal floor, walls and ceiling. A single light hangs overhead and shows the rusty spots on the floor. There's a table against one wall, and a cot near to the middle of the room with a bunch of ratty sheets on it. The wall on the other side of the room has a mirror on it.

And there's a porthole in the wall to my left.

My stomach rolls again, but it's just dry heaves acting up. What hellhole did that godless machine put me in this time?

It looks like a ship of some kind, but the floor's too steady. I can feel it vibrating, though. I go look at the porthole, trying to guess what AM has planned. He probably wants me to jump overboard. And into what? A sea of razor blades? Painful, but not deadly.

I look out the porthole. I'm kinda worn out with the whole thing and not really eager at all. Too friggin' cloudy. I can't see a damn thing.

I search through the sheets on the cot because AM gets his kicks by hiding things from us. You have to be thorough, and you've gotta try. It ain't nothing for him to leave you in one spot till you get so hungry, you hurt all over. It's his game, and just 'cause you don't want to play it doesn't mean you can simply turn around and go home.

"Real hospitable of you, AM," I say, knowing he's got his big ears listening





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in. "Thread-bare, cockroach-infested, grease-stained accommodations."

There's no answer. Not that I expected one.

Still feeling sick to my stomach, I go to the mirror to get a look at myself. It's scary, though, 'cause I've seen what AM does to Benny.

There's a hole in my chest. Right over my heart. I look closer, drawn the way people are to traffic accidents where people have suddenly turned from human beings into road pizza.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see I ain't got no heart. The bastard took my heart! This hole in my chest aches like a sonuvabitch!

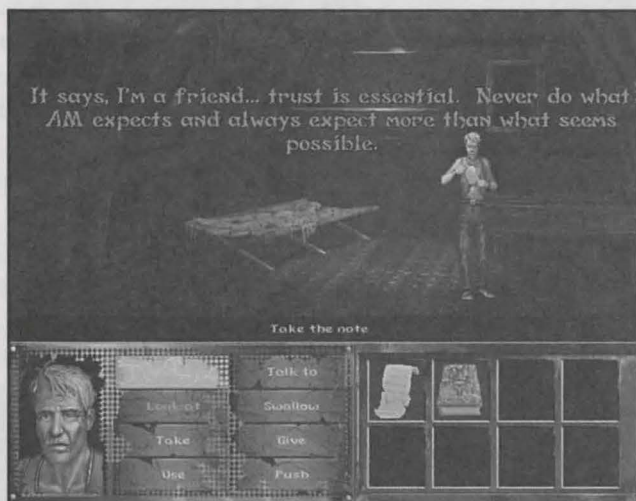
I turn from the mirror. Can't do anything about it. I'm alive when I should be dead, colder'n a well-digger's ass. It's all part of AM's latest little game. Standing around here feeling sorry for myself—even if I still could—won't do me a damn bit of good.

I walk toward the room's only door, figuring I've got no choice but to go through it. Then I see the note lying on the floor. Someone must have slipped it under the door. I pick it up and read it.

It says, "I'm a friend...trust is essential. Never do what AM expects and always expect more than what seems possible. AM is playing a dangerous game here and not just dangerous to you...but dangerous to himself as well."

The note disappears without warning, and I wonder what kind of game AM is playing this time.

I go to the door and open it, glad it ain't locked. Then I step through.



3. The Corridor

I find myself standing on a catwalk that goes around the belly of the ship. Rusted railing, broken and missing in some spots, goes around most of the catwalk. Everything's coated with grime.

In the center of the ship, looking like some kind of swimming pool that's been drained, are electrical gadgets twice as tall as me. Blue lightning flashes around the middle of them, running up and touching the brassy-looking





knobs at the top. Thick red cables attach them to each other and run to the back of the ship. They kind of look like Christmas tree ornaments, but I figure ain't no Christmas lights ever been the likes of these. I've never seen anything like this in all the years AM's toyed with us.

I look around. Besides the one I came through, there are three other doors. Only one of the three overhead lights is working, so things are kind of dark. The crackling of the lightning echoes throughout the ship, letting me know it's pretty damn big and that it's doubtful anyone else is aboard.

Across the lightning rods—hard to see with all the dark—I think there are more doors. Maybe a staircase. Going up to the main deck? I can't be sure. Anyway, I know it leads somewhere.

I go to the room on my left. It's unlocked, but I'm cautious about going in. AM's taught us all that. I twist the knob and follow the door inside the room.

4. One Sheet To The Wind

Right off the bat, I can see that all the cabins are constructed pretty much the same. There's a bunk, a table, a mirror, and a porthole. A lone moth is batting himself crazy against the lightbulb.

First, I go look at the bunk. AM likes sticking crawling things around that jump out at you. Even after 109 years, I haven't gotten used to his surprises. There's a new sheet on the bunk.

What's the deal here? It's unlike AM to provide us with anything comfortable. AM usually means us to find things that show up out of place like this, but I can't figure why I should find it.

Movement over on the table draws my attention. Bugs are running over what looks like the remains of somebody's meal. But, wait, there's something else: It's a book. And my name is printed on the front of it!

I try to pick it up, but the book is little more than a pile of dust. Can't be any help to me, so I let it alone.

Crossing over to the porthole, I look out, but it's still too cloudy. I stay away from the mirror. Don't want to fool with that any more. The hole in my chest is still there, still throbbing.

I walk to the door and go out.





5.

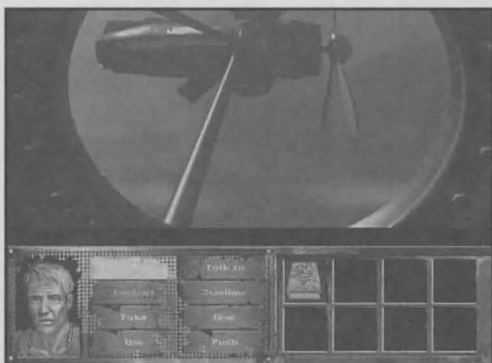
Surrounded By Engines

It's the process of elimination, I figure, so I go to the next door and try it. It's unlocked, too, and going through it seems about the best idea.

I wonder about the crew, where they might be? But for now, I'm alone. Maybe that's the best thing.

This room is set up just like the other two. I avoid the mirror and take a look out the porthole. With the vibrating, and everything else going on in the belly of the ship, AM's starting to get me curious, in spite of my dead feelings.

"Jesus!" I say when I lay eyes on the tri-bladed propeller spinning at the end of struts sticking out from the side of



the ship. "That engine's huge!" Wispy gray clouds line the sky behind it, looking like cotton candy that's gone moldy. We're airborne, and headed someplace, that's for damn sure.

I turn away, staying away from the mirror, and look at the table. It's all stained, covered with bugs and crumbs. This bunk's got another new sheet, too.

None of it makes sense to me, but there's more of this big metal airship to explore. I go to the door, my brain throwing questions at me even though I don't want to hear them.

6.

The Locked Door

The third door is locked. No help there. Going on ahead into the darkness, I walk to where I'd seen them stairs. My stomach starts growling.

The steel stairs are leading up, curled around like a pig's tail. For the moment, I pass on them because there are two more doors





and a hatch in the floor to investigate. Everything on this side of the ship is also made out of steel and iron, riveted together and so dark I can barely see.

I push open the first door and walk through.

7. The Pistol

This room's just like the others I've been in. AM likes being creative, but he seems to be stuck on a theme this time. The table's just as sloppy, and the view out the porthole shows another of those big propellers.

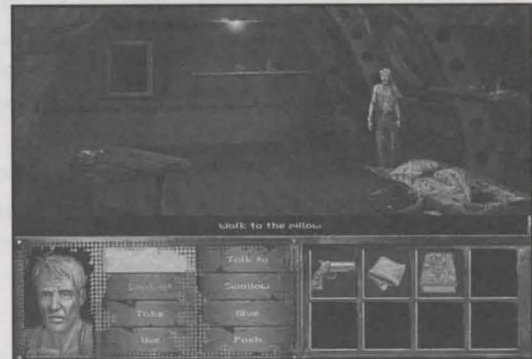
The bunk looks just like the others, too, except there's no new sheet this time. But the pillow is sitting funny, and I remember there weren't any pillows in the other rooms. I get down to look closer. There's something hard under the pillow. I reach underneath and find something angular, cold and metallic. A gun! It's heavy...heavier than it ought to be.

Don't take me long to recognize it as a Very Flare pistol. Seen 'em before. I look at it for a long while, thinking about AM's promise to let me kill myself this time. I put the barrel to my forehead and shut my eyes tight, wondering if maybe I could kill myself with it, thinking about Glynis and what I did to her. My hand starts shaking. I put the gun down and stick it in my pants at my back. Ain't no damned way AM's gonna let me out this easy. Hell, I ain't even looked over the rest of the ship.

8. The Last Supper?

The other door leads to a dining room. There's broken furniture lying everywhere, turned shadowy under the single light. Someone sure trashed this place. Must have been one helluva fight. There are broken chairs and other busted up junk all around the table.

There are bloodstains on the tablecloth beside a punch bowl that's still got some liquid in it. I take a





closer look at the tablecloth. Someone wiped their bloody hands on it. There's enough blood that if somebody didn't get killed, they damn sure got close to it. But who? Looking down, I see something else. These are vomit stains...near the punch bowl.

I check out the punch bowl, and the odor is familiar at once. This punch smells like gasoline. Not coming up with any answers too quickly, I walk back to the door on the far wall, hoping something makes sense soon.

The door's a mirror image of all the others—filthy, like the rest of this cesspool. But it is unlocked. I push my way through.

9. The Galley

First thing I notice is that it stinks in here. This used to be a galley. It's got stoves, a chopping block, sinks, dishes, and shelves. And rats. They're running up and down the shelves and across the table on the other side of the room like some kind of wind-up shooting gallery for cats.

I find a kitchen knife in the chopping block. Damn big one too. I take it, but don't really intend to use it on myself. I've done knives before. Cut my wrists side-to-side and longways. It doesn't matter. AM sees to it I don't kick the bucket. But it might come in handy—against those rats for starters, because I notice they're snacking on a hunk of bread. My stomach thinks my throat's been cut.

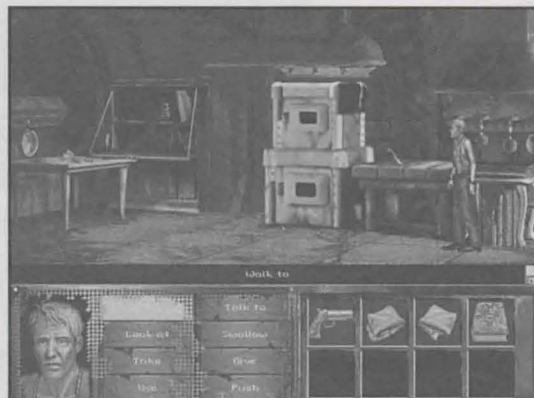
"Damn rats," I snarl, "swarming all over the food." Still, it's a hunk of bread. I've eaten worse since I've been here. I whip the knife blade through the air near the rats and they take off.

I pick up the bread. Oh crap! This bread's covered with rat droppings. But I take it anyway. Might not be here when I get back, and I'll get to thinking how those rat droppings could be brushed off, and it might not be so bad after all.

A red-bound book on one of the shelves draws my eye. I remember the book with my name on it in one of the other rooms, so I look at it. An old cookbook. I take it down and open it, curious why it ain't dusty, too.

"Here's a recipe for The Milk of Human Kindness: Take the willingness to forgive and the will to be forceful. Mix the blood of innocents and the anger of the wronged."

What kind of crap is this? But it reminds me of the





note I found. Everything here is some kind of game to AM, but where does this fit in? Who's supposed to be forgiven? I put the book back on the shelf. There's a bottle next to it. Maybe it's something to drink. I take it down. It's empty, but the label says POISON—FATAL IF SWALLOWED. I open the cap and take a whiff. Ugh! Got the same kind of gasoline smell as the punch. Thinking about the vomit smears and the blood stains, it don't take me long to realize that whatever dinner party took place outside, somebody wasn't supposed to live through it. The person who got poisoned must have threw it up before it could kill him or her, so they had to do it hands-on. I put the bottle back. Nothing going to do me any good there.

I take a look at the oven, wondering if there might be something more to eat in there. It looks like a gas oven—big enough to climb into. I check to see about using it, thinking maybe AM can't stop me if I do climb in and turn it on. Be an easy death. Just go to sleep and hope I don't wake up. But the gas is shut off.

As I move away, I spot a fork. Nearly missed it. The tines are all bent to hell, but I figure maybe I can use it to jimmy the tumblers on the locked door when I get back over there.

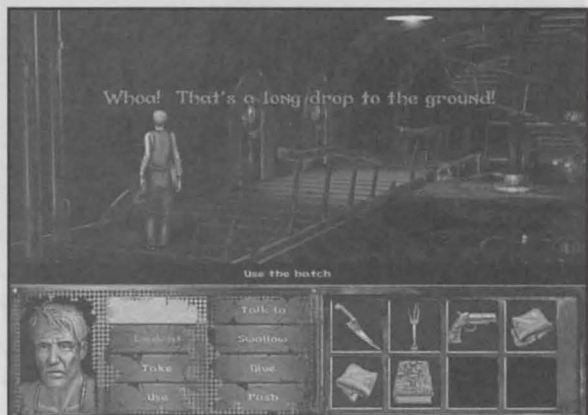
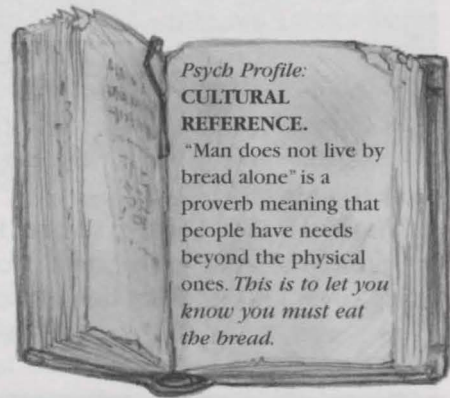
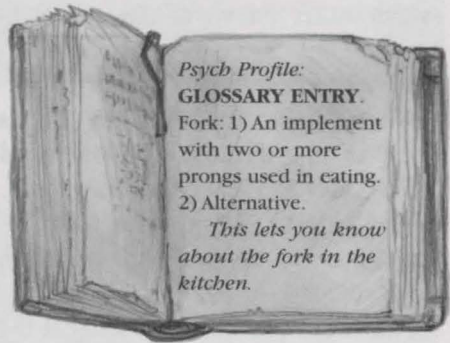
Getting angrier than I'd intended, I leave the room, going out through the dining room. I've got hope for the stairs...and for that hatch in the floor.

10. The Air Bags

When I get outside, my stomach knots up again, reminding me how hungry I am. I take out the bread, close my eyes, and eat it. Somehow I choke it down. I'm no longer hungry...but I still feel empty. What's wrong with me?

I walk to the hatch and open it. Air blasts into my face and I have to squint to see. Whoa! That's a long drop to the ground. I close the hatch and head up the stairs. There's got to be something going on somewhere.

At the top of the stairs, I look around. It's lighter up here, and I can see better. Great big bags of gas surround me, which I figure has something to do with this being an airship. I





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look at the gas bags, and wonder what might happen if they were to catch fire. With the flare gun, that'd be easy to arrange. Simply fire into it and BOOM! Maybe I'd die. Crash and burn. But would AM let it be that simple? I doubt it, so I keep looking. I don't have any answers, just more questions.

I spot a red power light in front of me and an altimeter which shows that we're at a level altitude. There's a plaque by the light. Some kind of warning light. The label says POWER. It's not lit.

Then I notice the switch by the stairs. I missed it the first time through. The label says EMERGENCY INFLATION SYSTEM. And from there, at the far end of the catwalk, I can see a seam in the cloth that surrounds me. Someone's cut this fabric before. It's been stitched closed.

I take out the knife and slash at the stitching till it comes free. I've ripped a new hole. This leads to a girder sticking out of the airship.

Cautiously, I push my way through. The wind outside whistles and whips around me. A pointed prow juts out in front of me as I stand beside a large mooring ring. No doubt about it now. AM has put me in an iron zeppelin. But why? Why would he give me a chance to escape?

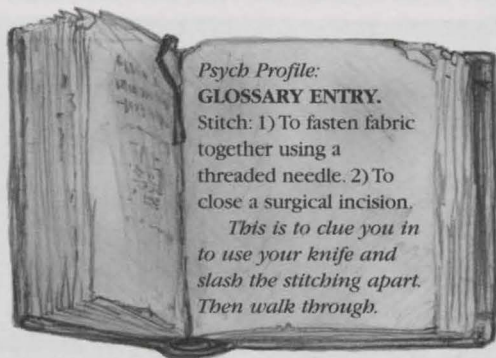
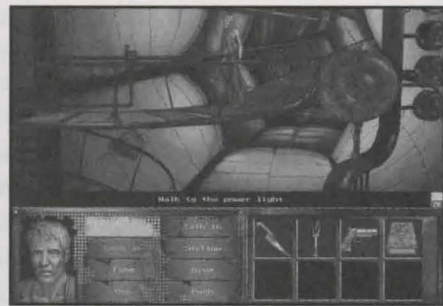
The wind makes it hard to see, but I spot something red which is pierced by the prow. The ache in my chest grows even worse when I realize what that red lump is. A human heart. Probably my heart. I study it and try real hard not to get scared.

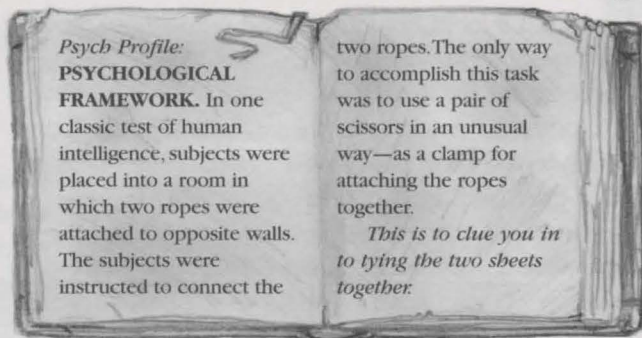
The heart's all wired up like some kind of weird guidance system. With AM in control, I'm not going to like where it's taking me.

I look at the prow, thinking about walking out there to get the heart—but I can't. It's too narrow for me to cross without falling. Then the mooring ring gives me an idea. If I had a rope, I might just make it. I figure I know where I can get a rope.

I go back to the two rooms that have the two new sheets. It doesn't take me long to leave the beds short-sheeted. Then I hurry out through the rip in the cloth, back onto the prow. That's my heart, and I ain't gonna let AM toy with it.

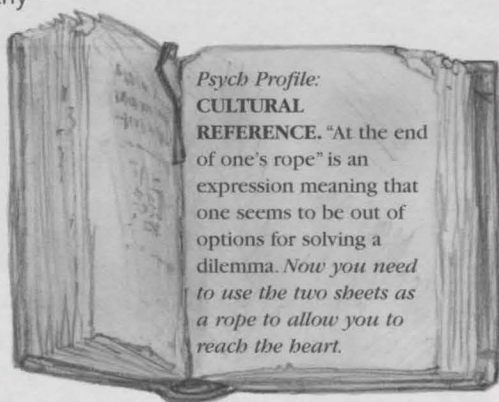
First, I tie one sheet to the mooring ring, then the other. These two sheets





make a halfway decent rope. I'm careful, and I use it to get me out to that heart. I pick it up, wrap it up tight in my shirt. There's a compass and wires attached to the heart. Damn good-for-nothing heart doesn't beat any more. I don't really know what use it's going to be, but I can't leave it there. When I get back to safety, I cut the sheets loose. Maybe I'll have use for a rope again.

I go back inside the zeppelin. I don't know what else to do right now. There's still the back half of the airship to be explored, so I go down, back to the side of the ship where I started. I thought I saw another doorway in that direction.



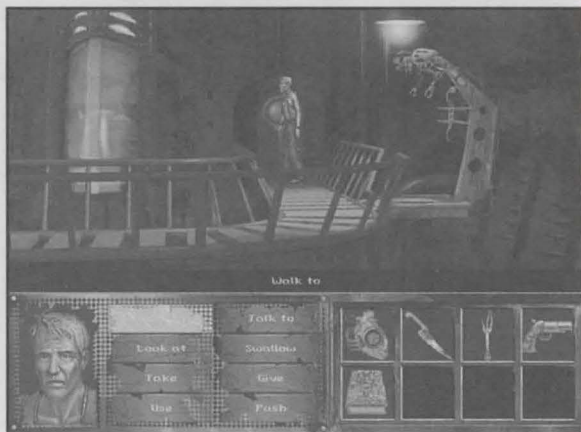
11. The Engine Room

I look around this room and figure it must be the engine compartment. The noise is loud and grating. I follow the catwalk around, studying the engine. Hmm... This engine isn't as ruggedly built as it looked at first. There are some loose wires hanging out.

But I can't figure out the controls or what I'm supposed to do with the wires. Likewise with the harness to the other side of the catwalk. Why is this harness wired up to the engine? Is AM expecting me to electrocute myself?

I walk around the catwalk, looking for answers. There's a control panel in front of me, filled with dials and switches and tubes...and another door.

I go over to the control panel, hoping I can find something I can use. There's a lever labeled MOTIVATOR. There is also a key covered with





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blood, but it looks like I can't get it out without moving the lever.

I reach for the lever. Then I notice the cages above the control panel. Animals are sitting in them, wired to harnesses that lead back to the engines. The brains of these poor creatures are feeding electricity to the engines. God only knows how AM figured out how to do that. I can't just walk off and leave them hooked up like that. For a man who doesn't have a heart, I ain't cold and dead inside. Not yet. When I shove the lever to get at the key, all the cages light up and the animals inside start yelping in pain.

My God, I'm killing those poor creatures in the cages. I back off the lever at once. I get the key, but the blood of these animals is on my hands.

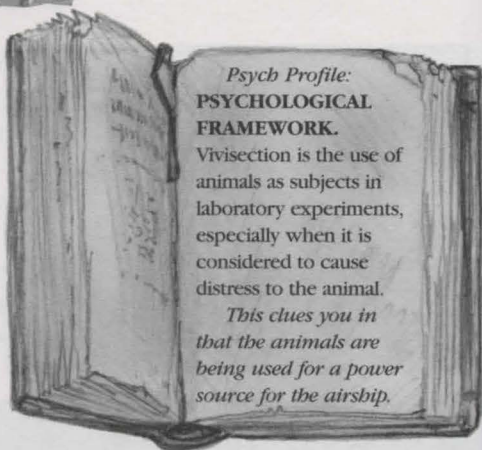
Shaking and scared, unable to leave their blood on me, I run back to the dining room and wipe it off as clean as I can. It takes awhile, but I feel better. If I'd known, I wouldn't have hurt them. It wasn't my fault, but I have to struggle to keep that in mind.

I go back to the engine room and reconsider the loose wires on the engine.

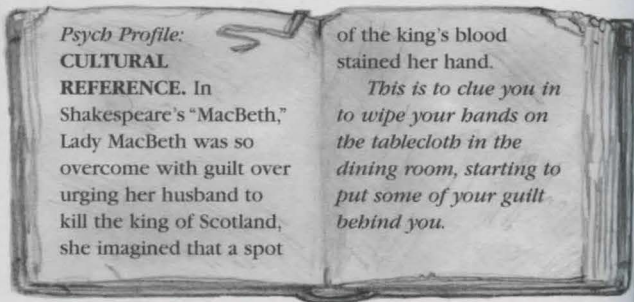


Back at the control panel, I check the cages. The animals' brain implants were released when the engine shut down. At least they're no longer suffering.

My attention is drawn to the bottle on the left side of the control panel. I look at it. The bottle's filling up with a milky liquid



Then, I take the fork from my pocket and heave it into the engine. There's a clunk and a shower of sparks, and the engine comes to a grinding halt. The metal fork short-circuited the wiring in the engine.





from the feeding tubes in the cages. As it drains out of them, I see their eyes grow deader and deader, like their lives are being distilled. I'm taking it with me.

The silence is suddenly heavy, like cotton in my ears. With the engine shut off, I wonder if we're going to crash. Then I realize the gas bags are still holding us up. I take the bloody key, after moving the lever, which, now that the power's gone, does nothing to the animals. I try it in the cages, but it doesn't work. It starts me thinking again about that locked door I found forward. So out I go.

12. Deflation

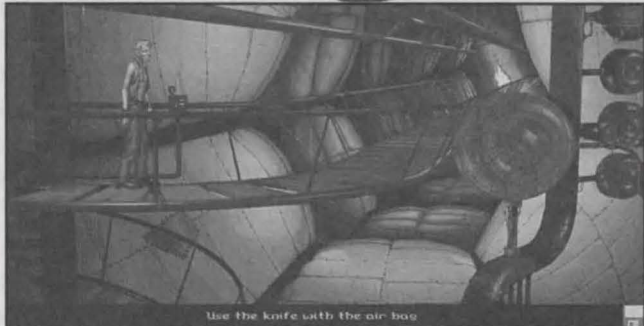
I try the key in the locked door, but it's no use. Damned key doesn't fit. Whatever's on the other side is still safe from me.

I duck into the first cabin and check the view through the porthole, wondering if there's something I can see. The propeller ain't moving now, and I doubt any of them are.

I'm getting desperate. Drifting along through the air doesn't sound like anything 'cept more trouble. I think about the knife and those gas bags. I figure that if that engine ain't working, then letting the gas outta those bags should set me down nice and easy. Once I get up there, I know it's all guesswork. I take the knife and slash the first bag.

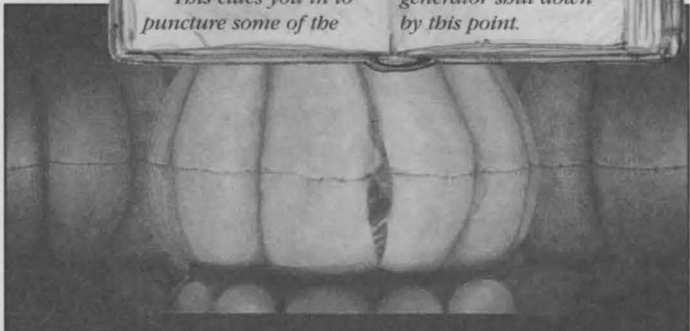
Gas rushes out in a gust, then I go check the altimeter. I slash two more bags before I'm satisfied with the descent. I look at the altimeter. We're dropping slowly. Hopefully, everything'll be in one piece when we set down.

Psych Profile:
CULTURAL REFERENCE. "Throw a monkey wrench into the works" is an expression meaning to disrupt some process, often by using something in a way for which it was not intended.
Clues you in to throw the fork into the generator and short-circuit it.



	Walk to	Talk to	
	Employ	Swallow	
	Take	Give	
		Push	

Psych Profile:
CULTURAL REFERENCE. "Take the wind out of your sails" is an expression meaning to dampen someone's plans or hopes.
This clues you in to puncture some of the airbags. At this point you're taking the wind out of AM's sails, defeating his plans. But only puncture the first three. Any more and you crash and burn. And you must have the generator shut down by this point.



	Look at	Talk to	
	Take	Give	
	Use	Push	



13. Sins Remembered At The Honky-Tonk

I go back down the stairs, heading for the hatch. Before I get there, I can feel it. We've landed. But where?

Opening the hatch, I find a ladder has dropped into place and stretches toward the ground. I climb down.

The building is a ramshackle shotgun-house that reminds me of all the other small bars I've been in. The only window is boarded over. A satellite dish sits on the roof in the back. Half-buried tires stand in the hard-packed earth out front, flanked by a couple of 55-gallon drums. Some roadside honky-tonk—with my name on it in dead neon letters!

The zeppelin sits there, showing no signs of moving on.

I look at one of the big, worn truck tires out front. Reminds me of the truck stops I used to visit. I put my hand on it, and my fingers come away coated with black rubber. Whatever AM's doing, I know it's real.

As I walk through the front door into the building, it's dark and grubby, but somehow familiar.

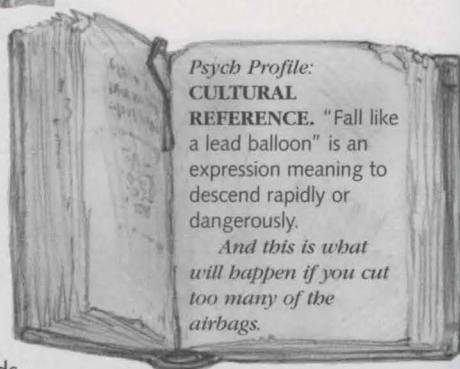
There's an old-fashioned jukebox against one wall opposite the bar, and a row of empty stools in front of the bar. The bottles in the shelves stand at attention like a military formation. The bathroom door is on the left, and on the wall right near it hangs a clock. Another door to the right of that is also closed.

I go to the shelves and think about having me a drink. Hell, I deserve it. I find a bottle of whiskey. Seeing it reminds me of Harry, my father-in-law. He used to guzzle this stuff like it was tap water.

Pulling the bottle from the shelf, I take a hit. It burns all the way down, just like it's supposed to. Damn, this whiskey tastes good! AM would never let us have this.

I feel better about life, and I let myself go with the feeling. I cross the room and check out the selections on the jukebox:

- 1 JEZEBEL
- 2 IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO
- 3 THAT WAY MADNESS LIES
- 4 FACE THE MUSIC





I figure what the hell, play 'em all. AM's not here breathing down my neck right now. Maybe, just for a minute, I can step back in time and remember how things used to be. I play them in order.

The words are tracks from memories, cruel and hurtful.

"He took my baby away, then just about killed her. That stupid truck driver! He took my baby away."

That shrill voice could only belong to that bitch Edna, my mother-in-law! She always blamed me for Glynis being put into an insane asylum. Why not? It was my fault, wasn't it?

The second song is straight from Glynis, from one of the repeat arguments we had. She had the vocals, but Edna had laid down the refrain.

"You're a worthless excuse for a man. Momma was right. You're not good enough for me."

The words cut through me like barbed wire. I can't make the pain go away.

I hesitate over the third song. Something tells me not to play it, and I don't.

The last song is sung by AM, not letting me forget where I really am. I feel all keyed up when it's finished. I want to take another hit from the whiskey bottle, but I wonder if that's what AM wants me to do. Ain't no worse place for me than remembering that phone call from Edna about Glynis. Damn, if there was anything I could do to change any of it...

I've got two doors facing me. I take the one leading to the back.

14. Man's Best Friend

This door lets me out the back of the building. There's a big jackal sitting in the middle of the sand, surrounded by a tall fence on one side, and the building on the other. In the background a long way off is a mountain range.

The jackal starts talking. I ain't real surprised. This ain't the weirdest thing I've ever seen AM do.

"Well, Gorrister," the jackal says, "you've seen better days. So has the big machine, for that matter."

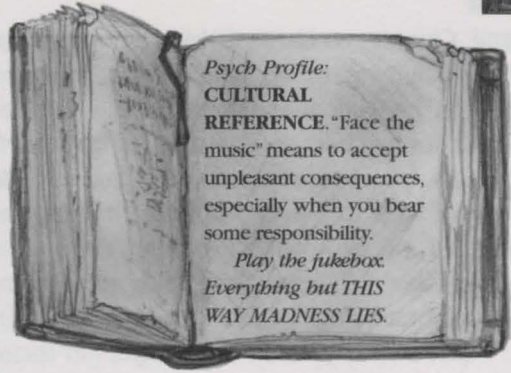
"What are you?" I ask. I don't really expect it to tell the truth, though.

"I'm Man's best friend. One of them, at least."

"No, what are you really?" I ask.

"Let me answer with a riddle," he says. "Today I saw a Chinaman. Now what do you suppose that means?"

It's stuff like this that gives me a headache. I know there were once Russian





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and Chinese versions of AM, but does that have anything to do with what's going on now? The way we understood it, all three machines had become one. What if that wasn't true anymore? I ain't afraid of the beast. If AM wanted the jackal to hurt me, it would've jumped me by now. But it being there raises some more questions. "Why can't you give me a straight answer?"

"Like so many others down here, I'm cursed to speak in riddles. We all have our curses to bear. Eh, Gorrister?"

The jackal's tone is sarcastic. I think about the gun and the knife that I'm carrying. Either one of them, I figure, is enough to get me a new jackal fur. But I know that ain't the answer. "Yeah? What's my curse?"

"After 109 years in the belly of the beast, I'd think you'd have a gut instinct by now."

"Look," I say, "I'm getting tired of your smart mouth!"

"Come, come, Gorrister. Forgive and forget."

I look at the jackal again. I figure I've got him pegged now. "You're AM, playing with my mind again!"

The jackal disagrees. "No, but I do have an 'in' with the big machine. He and I are like brothers."

"Where do you come from?" I ask.

"Here, there, everywhere," answers the jackal.

"So you must know what lies across the mountains?"

"Freedom, for some. If they're cut out for it. It's a long journey across the desert."

I look across the expanse of sand to the mountains in the distance. "That desert doesn't look any worse than the other hell holes AM's cooked up for us."

"Heed my words, Gorrister. You'd never make it alone out there. And don't expect me to be a good doggie and tag along."

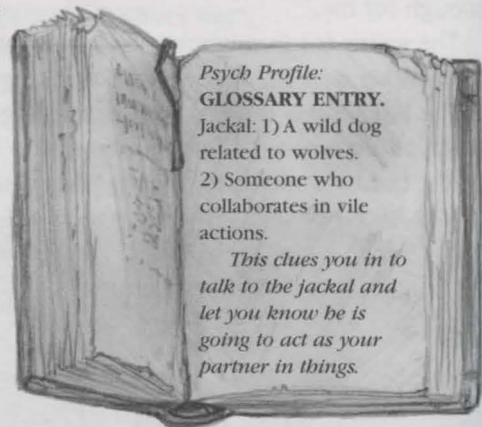
I can hear the truth in his words. I ask the jackal, "What do you want?" I don't mind cutting right down to the bone.

"I have a craving. A craving for something scrumptious. A human heart, perhaps. Yours."

"I'm not going to give you my heart!"

"No? Too bad. I was going to tell you how to get across the mountains in exchange."

I take a step closer, my hand tight on the handle of the knife which is still hidden out of view. The jackal probably knows it's there, though. "Tell me how to get across the mountains."



Psych Profile:

GLOSSARY ENTRY.

Jackal: 1) A wild dog related to wolves.
2) Someone who collaborates in vile actions.

This clues you in to talk to the jackal and let you know he is going to act as your partner in things.



"I'm hungry," he says in a simpering voice. "Perhaps a taste of your heart will put me in a more cooperative mood."

I look at my options. Killing the jackal seems possible, but then what? He said him and AM were like brothers. What if he can help? I might be killing my only lead on how to escape this place. As for my heart, who needs it in the shape it's in? I try to show no fear as I take the heart out of my shirt and hand it over to the jackal, but my hand is trembling.

The jackal takes the heart, and I expect to see him gobble the damn thing up right then and there like a bowl of kibble. Instead, he lays my heart beside him and looks up at me.

"Ah, I think I'll save this delicacy for later. You want to get across the mountains? Go to the rest room and flush three times."

I can't believe I just heard what I just heard! "Tell me that riddle for getting across the mountains again."

"Go to the rest room and flush three times. It doesn't make much sense, but neither does what AM's doing to us. Does it?"

I walk away from the jackal, trying hard not to look back at my heart on the sand beside him. On my way to the truck stop, I peer inside all the trash cans.

"You can't take your garbage with you this time, Gorrister," the jackal says.



15. Drink Up, Harry!

When I get back to the bar, I see someone with white hair and a green jacket sitting at the long counter. That's Harry, my father-in-law—Edna's husband.

I get closer, but he doesn't seem to notice me. Harry looks like he's on one of his drinking binges. I go over and talk to him, knowing there's one sure way to get him blabbing.

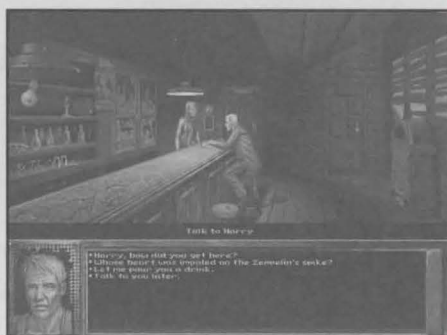
"Let me pour you a drink," I say, taking out the whiskey bottle and starting to pour. "Harry, how did you get here?" In one gulp, Harry tosses down the drink I gave him and sets the empty glass on the bar. "The zeppelin, Gorrister. We came on the zeppelin."

We? "What do you know about the zeppelin?" I ask.

"You'll have to talk to Edna. She knows all about the zeppelin," he answers. "That's why we did it, you know."

"What did you do?"

He avoids the question. "Looks like there's a





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thunderstorm on the horizon."

I want to hit him, but I know how stubborn he can be—especially if Edna has told him what he can and can't say. I ask him, "What happened in the dining room?"

He gives me that routine about the thunderstorm again, like he's already been drinking too much for too long.

I humor him. "What's this about a thunderstorm?"

"You know," he says, "it's a big place, the desert. Got lost in it myself."

I don't know what he's talking about. "And just where is my dear mother-in-law?" We both know she hates my guts.

I'm getting tired of hearing about his thunderstorm, but I know he isn't going to answer me unless he has a drink in his hand. I give him another drink to loosen him up, hoping it will make him talk more. "Whose heart is impaled on the zeppelin's spike?"

"Why yours, of course. How do you think we got here?"

His words chill me even though I guess I already knew. I repeat, "What happened in the dining room?"

"I shouldn't have let her force me into it. I'm not a murderer," he says.

"Who did you kill?" I ask. I pour him another drink because I know he needs it. His face is already turning gray with what he's telling me.

"Didn't look at the wreckage in the dining room too closely, did you? Or haven't you had to take a leak yet?"

I ignore his question, figuring he's getting lost in the booze and the memories. But I know if he's around, Edna's got to be close by too. "And just where is my dear mother-in-law?" I ask.

"I don't know. Good God! I can't stand the sight of her anymore. Can you imagine being kept alive for 109 years just to hear her carping?"

No, I can't. At least there's something we agree on. I pour him another drink just to be social, and leave him sitting there. I go through the bathroom door, wondering what I'm gonna find.

Psych Profile:

PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK. Many alcoholics drink to avoid dealing with situations that provoke anxiety or some other unpleasant emotion.

This lets you know you need to give Harry a drink to get him started talking. To keep him talking and stay on the subject instead of talking about the thunderstorm or the desert, keep pouring.

16. The Meat Locker

The bathroom is sure no prize—cracked linoleum, broken fixtures. Disgusting. But there's a stall. I can't believe it. AM's never let us have any kind of privacy. There's no shred of modesty left in any of us. Graffiti's written all over the walls. I read it.

"For a good time, call Ellen at 555-1945."

"The woman did the deed." My stomach turns cold when I read that one,



but I ain't sure why. Does it have to do with Edna getting Harry to kill me, or is there something more to it?

"The monster's not alone in the world. It has friends." Makes me think of the jackal's words, and the fact that AM is three computers. What if he really is coming apart at the seams? Where's that going to leave us?

The final bit of graffiti is in the stall with the broken door. "Men are no good."

I walk to the stall and flush three times. After the third time, the world suddenly turns black. Next thing I know, I'm someplace else. This doesn't faze me; I was expecting it.

I take in my new surroundings. It's cold in here. A meat locker? How'd I get...

Then I see the long shadows hanging before me. Bodies...on meat hooks.

AM, you bastard! What have you done?

A steady drip is the only movement and the only sound in the chilly room. I walk closer, afraid of what I'm gonna find.

There are two beef bodies, already partially butchered and frozen solid. The other two bodies belong to Glynis and Edna—my wife and mother-in-law.

I look at my wife's body. Glynis! What has AM done to you, honey? I try to talk to her when I see that she's still alive, even with the meat hook stuck deep between her shoulders. She can't talk. All she can do is drool out of the side of her mouth. My God, what have I done? AM must have gotten her out of that institution where she was being kept.

I look at my mother-in-law, and figure this is too good to be true. She looks good up on that hook. Then I notice she's still alive, and I can't help saying something.

"Edna, how did you get up there?"

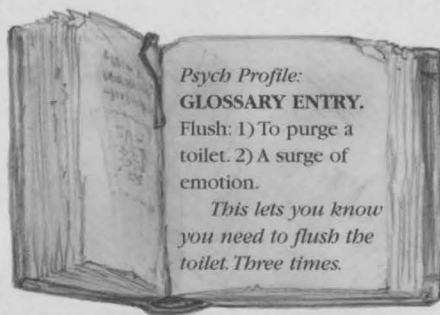
"The Chinaman hung me here, Gorrister! Take me down." Her voice is as shrill as ever.

I don't know what the hell she's talking about. "Chinaman? What Chinaman?" The jackal said he saw a Chinaman, too. Has the

Psych Profile:

PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK. Bathroom humor is a defense mechanism used by many males to cover up their embarrassment over elimination functions.

This clues you in that you need to go to the restroom. After all, Harry's just dropped you a dandy little clue about what's waiting for you in the urinal.



Psych Profile:

GLOSSARY ENTRY. Flush: 1) To purge a toilet. 2) A surge of emotion.

This lets you know you need to flush the toilet. Three times.





Chinese version of AM somehow invaded this place?

"He's one of the other two." She talks to me like I'm a pesky little kid. "AM's not as omnipotent as he would have us believe."

Russian and Chinese. Those were the other two AMs. Are those the other two she's talking about? I push the question away. I got my own problems. Never thought I'd have to deal with my mother-in-law again. "Why should I help you?"

"I have to complete the contract and get the zeppelin to the mountains...or the big machine will kill me."

"You know how to fly the zeppelin out of here?" She never knew anything like that before.

"You were once an electrician. You don't have to be a brain surgeon to figure it out," she snaps.

"Tell me how to fly the zeppelin first and then I'll help you."

"No, take me down and then I'll tell you."

"Okay, Edna, I'll take you down."

But she can't let it rest. Not Edna. She's got a mouth on her like acid, and she can't keep it from bubbling over. "It's good to see you're finally making amends for what you did to Glynis."

The words cut through me, and make me feel empty all over again as I look at Glynis hanging there. "Wait. You're right about Glynis. I deserve to die here."

"Gorrister, you stupid truck driver, you can't leave me here!" screams Edna.

I've got nothing more to say to her, so I turn and walk out the door. AM wants me to endure hell. Man, this is it. But I've got it coming to me for what I did.



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. Jezebel was a queen of Israel noted for her wickedness and attempts to kill Elijah and other prophets. Today, a jezebel is a scheming and shamelessly evil woman.

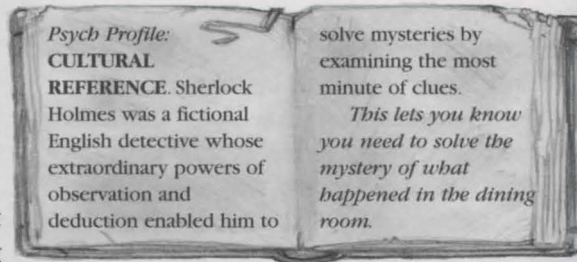
Whatever you do, don't trust Edna!

17. Basíl, More Than A Seasoning

Back at the urinal in the bathroom, I spot something flashy lying inside. I take a closer look.

It's a magnifying glass—like the ones they use in detective stories. Pure Sherlock Holmes. I pick it up, hearing Harry's words running through my head, telling me I didn't look close enough at the debris in the dining room. This is what he meant when he asked if I'd taken a leak. He wanted me to find the magnifying glass. But why?

I'm moving now, through the door and past Harry. I'm relieved to see the airship still waiting



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. Sherlock Holmes was a fictional English detective whose extraordinary powers of observation and deduction enabled him to

solve mysteries by examining the most minute of clues.

This lets you know you need to solve the mystery of what happened in the dining room.



outside. The hole in my chest is still aching like crazy, and I wonder how I was able to drink any of that whiskey without leaking it all over myself.

I climb the ladder, anxious to find out what's in that dining room.

When I use the magnifier to check through the debris, I discover what Harry was talking about. Here's some hair that was pulled out during the fight. It's the same color as mine! And here's some hair that matches Harry's! Now I understand what's happened here. I know who was killed, dammit, and I know why. It twists my stomach. I wonder why I couldn't remember it before.

I put the magnifier away and turn my steps toward the bar, wondering if I can coax anything else out of Harry with more booze. If I can't, I'm in the mood to try something a little more forceful.

18. The Usual Suspects

He's still sitting there. I uncork the whiskey bottle, but I keep the anger locked up inside me. I pour him a drink, then snarl, "I was the one you killed, wasn't I, you bastard!"

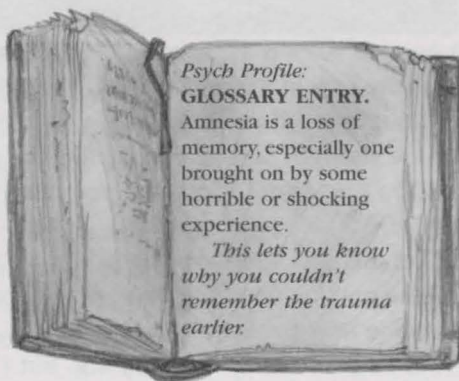
"I'm sorry, Gorrister. Edna poisoned the punch, and after you drank it, I wrestled you to the ground. When the poison took effect, I cut you open."

"Why did you kill me?"

"It's too complicated for me to explain. You'll have to ask Edna."

I give him my meanest look, the one that keeps me out of most fights in bars. But I do know I got just about everything out of him that I'm gonna get. My mind's just spinning, trying to figure out everything I've been told.

I'm gonna ask Edna. You can damn well bet on that!





19. She Ain't Got The Truth In Her

I go back through the bathroom and flush, ending up again in the meat locker, standing in front of Edna. Her eyes are flashing, like she's still got some big secret she's not telling me. She doesn't know that I know the truth. Murdering witch ain't gonna get away with killing me. I say, "Edna, you bitch! I know all about your plot to murder me!"

She doesn't show any remorse. "I had to make a deal with AM! I had to! I've always been harsh on you, I admit. But we're the last people on earth. Let's help each other now."

I want to hit her, but I control myself. "You were always telling Glynis how much you hated me."

She looks at me, her eyes wide, like they always are when she wants me to trust her. "Now, Gorrister, I was just concerned about my baby. Glynis was so lonely with you always being out on the road. I know you were doing the best you could."

Her sincerity is sugary-sweet, but I ain't buying it. I know how she really is. "Why should I trust my own murderer?"

"Alliances change, Gorrister. Something's gone wrong. AM's two comrades don't listen to me any more." Her voice is shaking. "I need you, and you need me. It's that simple."

Something in her voice gets to me even though I try to reject it. I reach up to take her down off the hook. Then she goes nuts on me, grabbing my hair and clawing at my face!

"You truck driving son of a bitch!" she screams at me. Her voice is as sharp as a knife edge. "This is for me and my baby!" She grabs my face in a vise-like grip and holds on.

"I ought to kill you right now, you bitch!" I fight back against her, but she's got the strength of a madwoman.

"Don't be a fool, Gorrister. You need me alive if you want to make it out of here."

"Let me go!" I scream.

"I've got you now, Gorrister! And if you think you'll ever escape me, you've got some new thinking to do."

I can't break away. She's strong. But I'm thinking...AM has taught us a lot





about lying. Then, I look into her blood-shot eyes and say with all the sincerity I can muster up, "Please, I'll do anything you ask."

Suddenly, all the anger leaves her, and her grip relaxes. "I don't know what's come over me, Gorrister. Can you ever forgive me? I've been hanging here for so long, I'm not thinking straight. A sip of that milk will clear my head."

I know she's talking about that milky stuff I found on the airship. "No," I say, "I don't trust you."

Her voice turns hard again. "Gorrister, let me down or I'll scratch your eyes out, you worthless excuse for a man!"

Something clatters down to the floor between us. While trying to protect my face from her attack, I spot the key on the floor. I remember the locked door on the airship and that Harry said they had come on the zeppelin. I say, "Edna, you dropped a key."

"Hand me back that key and let me down!" she shrieks. "I'm your only hope of getting out of here!"

"Sorry, Edna. I don't trust you as far as I can spit."

She starts pleading. "Let me prove my good intentions. I'll let you go. Now give me the key." There's fear in her eyes when she turns me loose.

"I've got nothing more to say to you," I tell her. Then I bend down and pick up the key. I walk to the door.



20. Logging In

I go back up in the airship, then walk to the locked door. The key fits just fine, and I let myself in.

I'm in the zeppelin's cockpit. There are so many dials and controls here. Through the front window, I can see the honky-tonk. I find the ignition switch, but when I try it, nothing happens—and there's no way I can bring myself to leave Glynis again.

Then I spot the logbook lying in the window, fastened to the cockpit with a wire. The spidery handwriting covering the pages is familiar. Edna wrote this logbook. I open it and look at the entries.

First entry: "When AM took us down here before the war, I didn't know anyone could hate Gorrister more than me. But AM did. He hated all of us."

Second entry: "If I can just deliver Gorrister's soul on a platter, I can make amends for every minute of Glynis's life I took from her. I never meant to drive her crazy."





I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

I'll be damned, I think, looking at the pages. Edna's claimed responsibility for Glynis. Maybe it wasn't my fault after all.

Third entry: "I thought I could do what AM wants, but he's too precise. I poisoned the punch, but I couldn't bring myself to cut out Gorrister's heart."

Last entry: "Maybe I can have my husband do it. Then this zeppelin can clear the mountains. But if we don't finish the job, AM will feed me alive to the machine just like an animal."

I close the book and can't help thinking about Glynis—and the milky stuff. Edna acted like it would help her. I wonder if it would do the same for Glynis. Could it help bring her back to me? There's only one way to know. But I do know that after finding out who was really responsible for the shape Glynis was in, I have to talk to Glynis. I wasn't guilty of her being locked up. It's like a great weight has been taken off my shoulders. For the first time in so long, I can bear to look her in the eye.

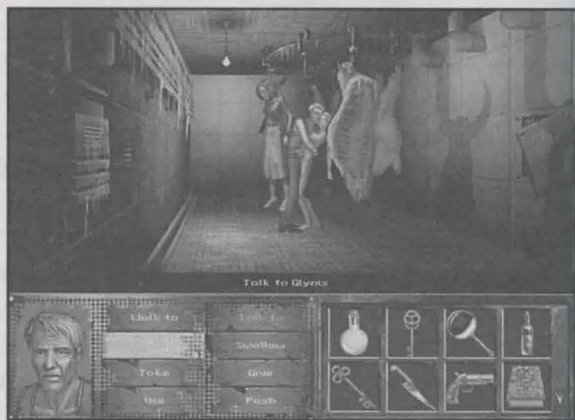
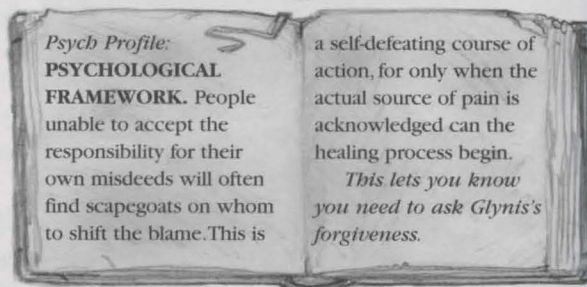
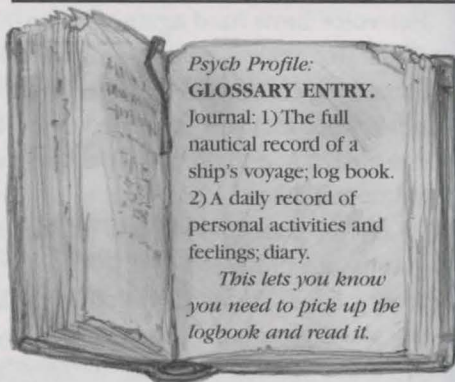
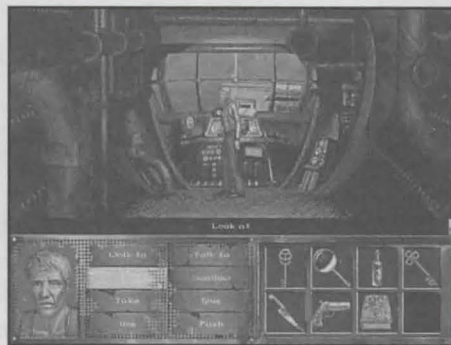
I bolt out of the zeppelin and head for the meat locker again. It only takes one flush this time.

21. Good-byes

The drip's still going steady when I get there. I ignore Edna. When she ain't threatening me, she's just yelling at me. I feel her near-dead eyes on me as I approach my wife.

I take out the milky stuff and pour Glynis a drink, working it down her throat. This is the Milk of Human Kindness that cookbook was referring to. I'm sure of it. "This fluid should revive you, honey," I tell her. I watch her eyelids flutter. "Glynis! All these years, and I thought I was the one who was responsible for your suffering. Let me help you now."

I take her down from the hook and kiss her on the forehead. I never believed in fairy tales, but something moves inside me now. After the kiss, I realize she's gone. At least I finally made





amends with her. I'm taking her lifeless body out of this freezer. But as I look closer at her, I see those aren't blood veins under her pale skin. It's circuitry! I want to scream. It wasn't Glynis after all! It takes me a minute to realize that the weight on my shoulders is still gone. I might have asked Glynis for forgiveness, but somewhere in there, I forgave myself. And though this robot ain't Glynis, it's the closest thing I got to her. Taking her down off that hook just detached her from AM's power. I can see the connection in her back now. But holding her, thinking of doing right by her even though she ain't Glynis makes me feel right. I got to say my good-byes the right way this time.

Stumbling, I walk through the door. There's only one person I can ask the reason why AM hasn't let me out of this place.

22. Affairs Of The Hearts

The jackal's still sitting there, like nothing's going on. I tell him, "I've read Edna's log book and everything's much clearer. Now what?"

"You must make amends and bury the past, Gorrister."

Following his gaze, I go to the garbage cans and search through them again. The second one turns up a prize. "There's a shovel in here. Why didn't I see that before?"

"Because you weren't ready to call a spade 'a spade' yet, Gorrister," the jackal answers.

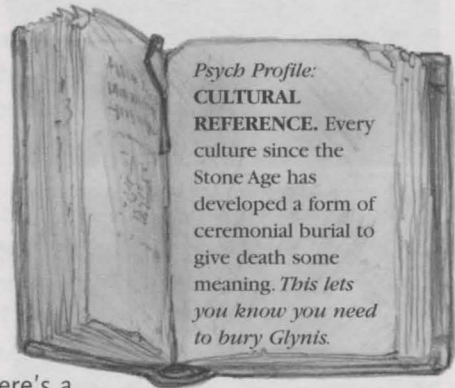
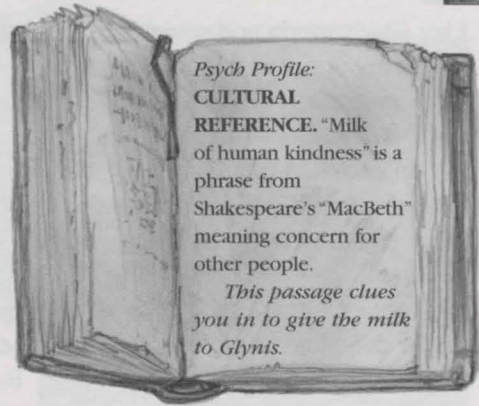
I pull the shovel out of the trashcan.

"Be careful where you use that, Gorrister. I like to know where all the bodies are buried."

I walk to a spot near where he's sitting, the shovel in my hands. The ground is solid underfoot.

"What are you thinking, Gorrister? You can't tunnel out of this place."

I ignore him and start turning the earth, using the shovel. It's hard work, good work, and I feel somewhat like I did before AM destroyed the world and saved me for torture. I dig a deep hole, a grave. When I'm finished,





I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

I lay Glynis inside and cover her over. I still ain't found my way out of here yet.

"I've made amends and buried the past," I tell the jackal.

"An excellent job, Gorrister," the jackal says. "But the thunderstorm is upon us. You'd better hurry if you want to recharge your old ticker's battery."

"I found Edna and Glynis," I tell the jackal. "How does that help me escape from here?"

"Such information comes at a price. But I can see that you're in no bargaining position. I'll offer you a trade. Your heart for Edna's."

No problem. I never liked Edna much, and I like her even less now. I go back into the bathroom and into the meat locker. But as I look at Edna, I get uncomfortable because that damn jackal ain't lied to me yet, but I'm sure there are lies in here somewhere.

I look at the sides of beef hanging there in the cooler, and I get an idea. Using the magnifier, I look inside one of the carcasses. The organs are still inside. It reminds me of when AM ripped that hole open in Benny's chest. 'Course AM sewed him back up again before Benny bled to death. That bastard's never gonna let us die. He's just gonna keep torturing us forever.

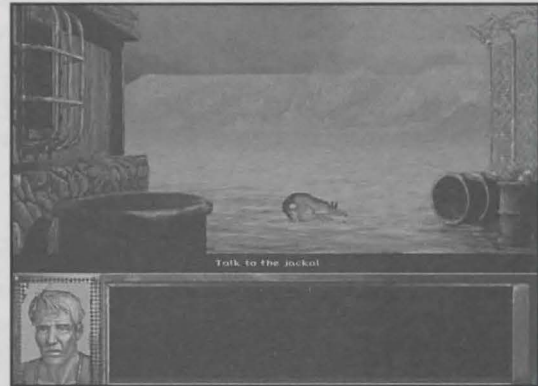
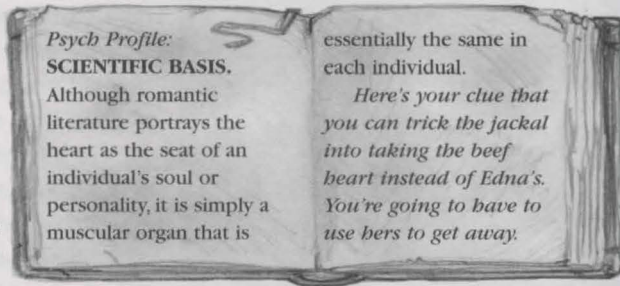
I make myself stop thinking that way. Hell, I've come this far. Then I realize that one heart looks pretty much like another. It doesn't take me long to cut one out with my knife.

Back up with the jackal, I give him the beef heart. I'm worried that he's going to know I switched hearts on him, that the beef heart won't taste like a human heart. I worry for nothing. He chows it straight down. I couldn't have killed her the way she killed me. Not now. Don't need no more guilt.

"Ah, this is Edna's heart? A bitter organ, but worth its weight in gold to me. I give you your heart back."

I take it. "So, how do I get out of here?"

"A heart brought you here, but it will take another organ to get you out of here—if you can harness its power."





I look at him. "I don't understand your riddle about another organ."

"Ah, but Edna does—and all the other animals like her."

I look up at the lightning and I think I know what he means. Got to hurry, though. The storm's not gonna wait for me. I walk away from the jackal, heading back inside. The brain is an organ, too. Thinking back on that harness in the airship, I get an idea. I don't think Edna's gonna like it much, though.

23. This Is Your Captain Speaking

I use my rope to tie Edna up.

She struggles, and ain't too keen on the idea from the beginning. "Untie me, you sonuvabitch! I'll rip your spleen out!"

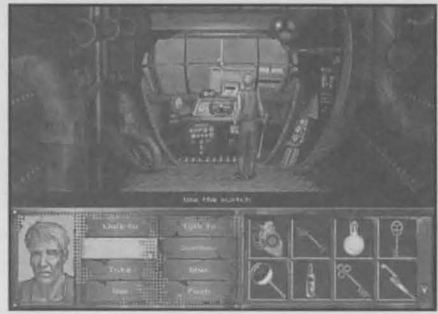
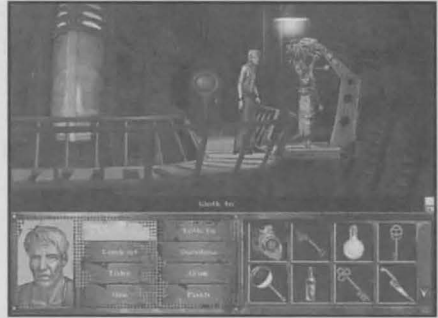
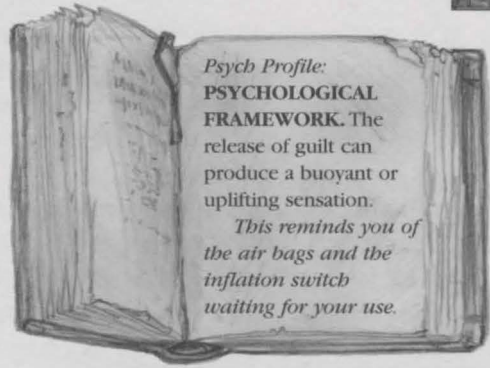
"I'm taking you with me, Edna." And I do.

Back in the airship, I hook her up to the harness in the engine room. I'm not prepared for what happens. The wires wrap around her automatically, securing her. Then another set slithers around her head. Before I know it, some of those wires are drilling into her head, tearing away at the flesh. I get sick just watching, paralyzed with disbelief. Her eyes go wide and she tries to scream, but she's dead before the sound reaches her lips. Then I notice that her head's full of wire. She's a robot too. Makes me feel some better, but it just shows how bloodthirsty AM can be. The engine starts up again immediately.

Shaking, I go back up to the air bags. There's an inflation switch I remember seeing up there earlier. I throw it forward, and it doesn't take long to inflate the air bags to flight capacity.

Back in the cockpit, I hit the ignition lever. We take off like a bat out of hell. The storm Harry was talking about is crackling and roaring all around us.

I go back up to the air bags section and crawl through the rip out onto the spike. I stand there as I feel the storm swirling around me. The jackal is sitting out front now, watching me.





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"Do it, Gorrister!" he yells. "Blow the place apart! You may never have a chance to do it again!"

Taking out the flare gun, I take aim at the honky-tonk. I'm going to put it all behind me when I pull the trigger. The guilt over Edna, my suicidal compulsions, and some of the control AM has over me. Whatever's waiting for me in the future, I'm going to face it fresh, without the past hanging over me. Skeletal fingers of lightning arc out of the sky, striking me full in the chest as crazy laughter sounds everywhere. I feel my heart start beating again. I can hear it thumping in my ears.

Then I squeeze the trigger.

The crimson burst of the flare drops into the midst of the honky-tonk, and the world goes to hell around me.

24. Caged

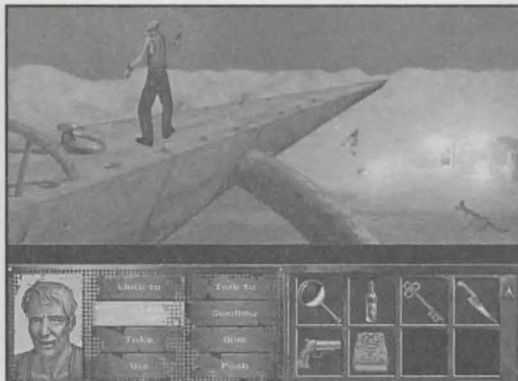
There's a period of blackness. When I come to, I'm in that damned cage again, and AM is talking.



"Hmm. Yes. You're made of sterner stuff than I calculated, Gorrister. Here...here is a new burden for you while I attempt to resolve this miscalculation."

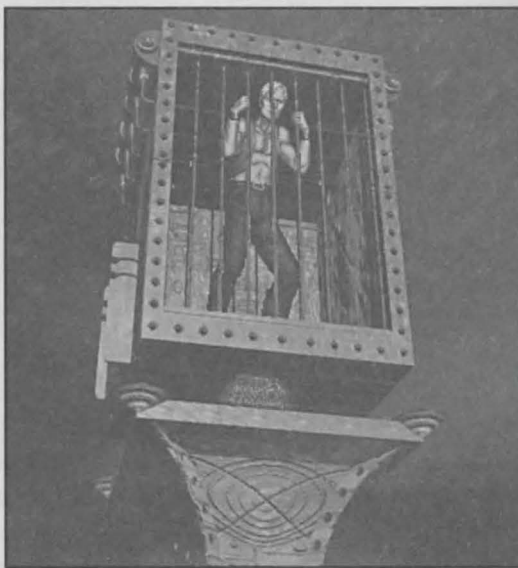
Electrical charges jump through the metal of the cage, shocking me, sending shooting pains through my flesh. I hold on, cursing AM, because I know this game has only just begun. But I've made him mad at me by ruining his plans. He'd intended for me to commit suicide—or at least try to commit suicide—like I have before. Only he'd rescue me at the last moment to prove how futile that was.

I surprised him. I washed my hands of the past and freed myself from the nagging guilt Edna put on me for all them years. I'm a new man. That's gonna give him something to think about.



Psych Profile:
SCIENTIFIC BASIS.
Ignition is the process of using a spark, usually through an electrical connection, to burn

the fuel mixture in an engine.
This lets you know to use the ignition switch in the cockpit.



Psych Profile:
PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.
Symbolic acts, such as burning a hated figure in effigy, can produce a cathartic

effect by purging negative emotions.
This passage lets you know to destroy the honky-tonk with the flare gun.



Chapter 3
Benny



BENNY

1. Into The Breach

I look around me and I realize Gorrister is gone. He must have really gotten lucky and bumped himself off this time. But I know that might not be true, either. I can still remember the time AM made us all think Gorrister was dead, hanging by his feet above us with his throat slashed. I was stupid then—one of the times AM blotted out my intelligence—but the remembrance is still sharp. What made it even weirder in a sick kind of way, was the look on the real Gorrister's face when he looked up at himself.

The blue-white lightning sizzles up around me from two contact points on the ground. Then off I go.

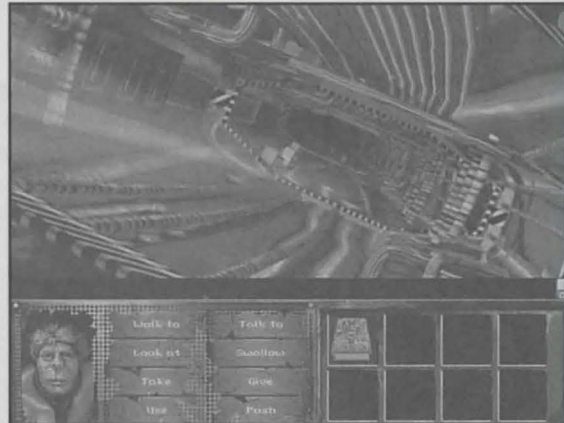
But this time AM has given me back my intelligence. I can still feel myself thinking again.

I'm flying through a hallway that makes me think of an old science-fiction movie, *Fantastic Voyage*. I saw it while I was still in college, staying up late drinking beer and eating pizza with some guys who thought they were my friends. I let them think it. At the time, I didn't see any reason to discourage them.

The most I can remember is that the guys were all in awe of Raquel Welch's stretch uniform, and that most of the movie was supposed to take place inside this scientist's body. A submarine and its crew had been miniaturized and injected into the man's bloodstream. Isaac Asimov did the novelization, and that was more memorable to me than the movie. Reading the novel made a hell of a lot more sense to a graduate physics student working on his Masters than did the movie's explanation of the science and technology involved.

I look down the tunnel of winding cables and shooting lights and wonder if I'm somewhere in the heart of AM. Of course, I quickly realize I'm wrong. AM's a monster and doesn't have a heart.

Then he starts speaking to me.





"Benny, you know you've always been my favorite torture toy. Well, I'm giving you now a chance to stoop to new lows, to give in to your...bestial desires. I am going to let you find some food to eat...yes. I'll even repair your brain so that you can think normally again and savor the horror of your repast."

I can't even guess at what he's talking about, but his words send shivers through me, like thoughts of skating barefoot on frozen razorblades. Like a tracer round burning a hole in the night, I'm on my way.

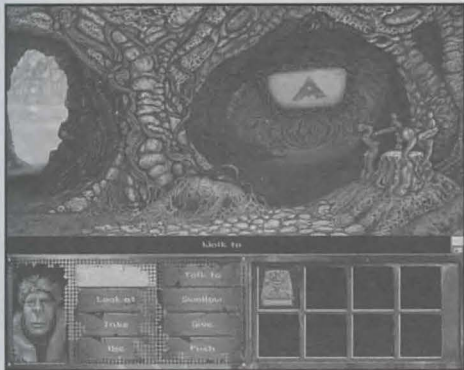
2. Where's The Serpent?

I land standing up and feel the hard, cool stone under my feet. It takes a moment for my eyes to adjust to the fog. There's a soft yellow light flowing from overhead and bouncing off the sides of the huge cavern where I find myself. All around me, birds are singing. There's none of that damnable machine noise or the sound of electricity spitting that is so typical of AM.

This cavern isn't like any of the others to which AM has sent me. It's full of life—not death. Green trees and bushes overgrow nearly everything. I'm on a winding staircase that goes up the side of the cavern, while in front of me and down below are the twisted remains of what looks like some kind of animal. Listening to the singing birds leads to ideas of a roasting spit and the slow, even burn of coals, reminding me of how hungry I am. In the distance I can see a wall honey-combed with caves and what appear to be fires flickering in them.

Anxious now, I start down the stairs, wanting to be at the local flora and fauna quickly. I'm the biggest predator around that I can see. But at my first step, my legs give out from under me. I throw my arms out to try to stop myself, but it's a long fall.

I come to a stop on hard, bare



Psych Profile:
CULTURAL REFERENCE. Cannibalism has been practiced by a number of cultures throughout human history, usually to denigrate enemies or to acquire the qualities of victims. However, modern

cultures consider the practice to be deplorable, even when human flesh is eaten out of necessity.

This indicates that you are going to be tempted by AM to commit an act of cannibalism.



earth. I focus deliberately, wondering if I've broken anything. All around me are trees with what appear to be twisted coils for roots. I may have been sent to Paradise, but I've been given a reminder of who the serpent is.

Slowly, surprised that nothing is broken or bleeding, I pull myself to my feet. I find a problem quickly. AM, you sonuvabitch! You've cleared my mind but crippled my legs! I can barely walk. I give him the finger, hoping he can see me.

Still, the singing of the birds sounds sweet. It makes me think of how frail their necks will be, so easily twisted. But songbirds are small. I'll have to kill a lot of them to make a decent meal. I pray for a big, ugly bird with a voice like a foghorn, and please don't make him too tough or stringy.

There are two paths, going to the left and to the right. The birds seem the loudest coming from the left, so I choose that direction. My legs are so crippled, I have to use my hands, padding along on my knuckles like some ape.

In the distance, I can see a mountain...and more. Is that a fire in those caves along the cavern wall? God, what I wouldn't give right now for some barbecued ribs!

3. The Caves

I come upon the wall of caves that have been carved from the rough stone with hand tools. As I do my initial scan from the cover of the forest I count four caves along the cavern floor. A ladder leads up to the other caves. It leans against a wooden platform stuffed with baskets of fruit and other foodstuffs. My stomach is growling impatiently. I haven't eaten for months! I can smell food cooking nearby, and it only makes my stomach hurt worse.

The fact that no one seems to be around (and the pain in my stomach) makes me brave. I steal forward, as ready as I can be on these useless legs. Primitive symbols and drawings decorate the walls.

I try to use the ladder, hoping to get to the food quickly, but it's impossible. I can't climb the ladder. My legs are too crippled. I want to curse and scream, but that would only give me away.

I turn to the first cavern and walk in. It's some kind of dwelling with what seems to be a fire for cooking inside. Looks like it's empty. Something long and stringy covers the wire to my right. I go over for a closer look. Vines. I wonder if they're edible. But they're not. I glance at the wooden contraption to my left. Looks like a primitive cradle. It's empty—I wonder where the baby is. A video screen is built into the cave wall. I cross over to it and use it.





AM's voice blares from the speaker. "Gather food, but don't give any to the deviant. He is not part of the community."

So there. I know AM doesn't intend for things to be easy. Jesus, I'm hungry... I go back out of the cave and turn my attention to the second entrance.

There's an old man sitting at the back of the cave on a chair made of gnarled tree limbs. He's holding a staff with some kind of rock tied to the end of it. A leather bag with a red sash sits at his feet. As caves go in the neighborhood, this one looks impressive.

The old man just looks at me, unconcerned. He looks too scrawny to be gathering nuts and berries. Maybe he's the village elder or something like that. The shape I'm in now, I'm too crippled to offer him a threat and I guess he knows it. He acts like he was expecting me, and that makes me uneasy. I go forward cautiously, but he doesn't move.

A rolling flow of colored light moves to my left. I look to see a video screen built into the cave wall. I try to speak to the Elder. Then I remember. AM ripped out my vocal cords years ago.

"Wee-tah foo mah pee-bah!" he says.

Which means exactly zero to me. I can't understand his words, but he seems to be welcoming me to the village. I look at the video monitor mounted in the wall. A message pulses there and I can tell from the Allied Mastercomputer project logo that it's from AM even before he speaks. AM tells the villagers of my arrival, but also says to ignore me. People ignoring me isn't going to get me fed. Frustrated, knowing it's exactly like AM to stick me some place where I don't understand the language, I get the hell out of there.

I just want something to eat.

Needing something to occupy my attention, I gaze at the middle trail leading out from the caves. Any plan is better than no plan at all. If I'm going to be stuck here for the duration, an examination of the area will be necessary.

I go down the path.



4. The Altar

A cross made up of wooden sticks and computer parts juts up from the sun-baked hill. A big circle has been cleared in the forest, and stones break the flesh of the earth like bones surfacing from a ripening corpse. It looks like an altar. Lights blink on one of the





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components as I study it. Nothing but wiring and recycled plastic.

However, something else catches my eye as I get closer. What's with the ropes on the crossbeams? Looks like they're used for holding someone captive. The thought makes me uneasy. I'm the new kid on the block, and out-of-towners aren't exactly appreciated in any country where I spent time.

Disgusted and nervous, I head back to the caves, thinking of the third trail that I saw. When I reach the trail, I take it.

5. The Fruit Tree

There, rearing up out of the ground like some twisted giant, is a tree. A fruit tree! It's been years since I've tasted real fruit. AM once coaxed me into marching across a thousand miles of ice to reach a stock pile of canned peaches...only to discover that he didn't give me a can opener.

There's so much fruit growing on this tree. It must be the village's food source. I look at the fat, yellow shapes above me. This fruit looks ripe and sweet.

I pick a piece of fruit off the tree, relishing the feel of soft pulp in my hands. Saliva hits my mouth so hard and fast, I'm drooling down my chin before I know it. I bite into the fruit, expecting a sweet explosion of taste.

There's no way can I be ready for the pain that fills my mouth. Ow! It hurts! I spit out the mouthful of fruit, along with blood. I throw the fruit into the forest as far as I can.

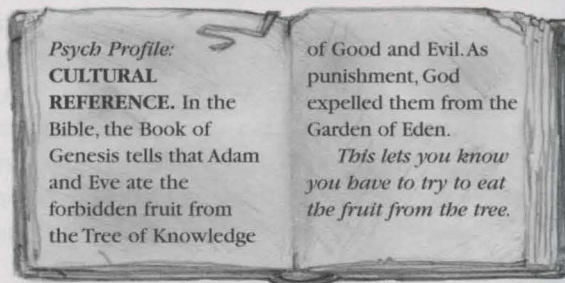
Damn you, AM! Give me something to eat, right in the palm of my hand, then make it something that's poisonous. I can tell from the pain that the fruit is laced with some kind of strong acid. I'll never be able to eat that.

Angry, frustrated, and hungry, I make my way back into the village. There have to be answers somewhere. There are still two caves I haven't tried to enter.

I go into the third one.

6. The Child

This cave is run-down on the inside. Definitely not as clean or neat as the Elder's home. A cooking pot, made from what looks like some kind of reptile shell, hangs over a firepit built into the ground. A mat of vines is against the far





wall, and another monitor is behind the cave's two occupants.

One is a woman, the other is a young boy. Both of them look like cave dwellers. No one else is around. This looks like a...what did they use to call it? A single-parent household. They probably have to depend on the generosity of the rest of the village.

Ignoring them, I help myself to the stew that's bubbling in the pot. But as soon as it touches my mouth, the same poisonous, acidic pain shoots through me. I hack and cough and scream. I look at the contents of the pot more carefully. This stew's made of transistors and springs.

Hunger drives me to the mother and son. I have to eat. But this woman and her son look half-starved themselves. Fat chance of getting a decent meal out of either of them. The mother watches me warily.

I get closer, so I can see the boy better. He's looking at me without fear, maybe even adoration in his eyes. I don't know why that would be there.

What I see shocks me. The boy's a friggin' mutant! There's a third arm growing out of his back! He looks at me with those big hungry eyes. I've seen eyes like that all over the world. They don't impress me.

I do wonder if this kid and his mom can eat the fruit, however. If he can eat it, maybe he can show me the secret. If the fruit hurts him, too bad. Everybody gets hurt.

I go back outside, then notice the twine coming down from the basket overhead. I reach up and take hold, then give it a yank. A piece of fruit rolls out and I catch it. Ah! Manna from heaven!

I take the fruit back inside the cave and give it to the boy. He takes it, then the monitor on the wall lights up. Words print across it, accompanied by a digital audio translation of the boy's voice.

"Thank you for food."

I try talking to the boy again. This time my

Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE. The Bible contains the following description of an earthly paradise: "The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall

lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."

This lets you know you need to befriend the child.

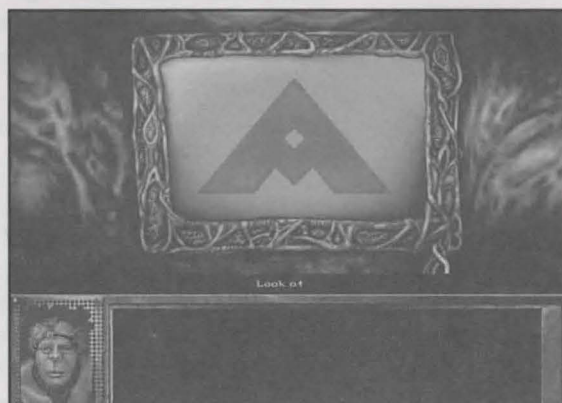


Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE. According to the New Testament, Jesus taught that it was more blessed to give than to receive. His parable of the Good Samaritan

further illustrated the goodness of people who went out of their way to perform acts of kindness to others, especially strangers.

This lets you know you need to give the food to the child.





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words, and my old voice, come across the monitor. I ask, "How are we able to talk?"

"I learn to talk using AM screen. I am smart, but villagers think smart is defective. I wish I were strong so then they would give me food, too."

"Defective? That's tough." Though, with him having a third arm, I can see the natural progression. Brat will never stand a chance against another kid who's put together right.

"Sometimes. But I am spared lottery. Villagers are afraid of me."

"Lottery? What lottery?" I ask.

"Villagers hold lottery to choose sacrifices to AM," he replies.

"Is that altar in the jungle used for the sacrifices?"

"Yes. Pieces of victims are scattered around it."

"How long have these sacrifices been going on?"

"The sacrifice to AM machine goes on many long years," the boy replies.

"The very different must go to him soon. Not many villagers left."

"Why do they sacrifice their own people to AM?" I ask. Like I give a damn. I'd rather keep my own head in one piece.

"One is sacrificed so AM does not hurt all."

"What are these sacrifices like?"

"The sacrifice to AM hurts very bad. There are better ways to die. Almost any way is better."

"You don't look like you eat very much." His scrawny appearance makes me even more doubtful about my chances of getting anything to eat. I didn't see any of those damn songbirds while I was trekking around.

"Mother and I not allowed in food cave. Villagers are afraid of me and let me starve."

I look at him and concentrate on my own problems. I'm the only one who can solve them. "I am very hungry. Where can I get some food?"

"There is fruit in food cave. It comes from the trees."

"I need to go find some food. I'll see you later."

"Bring me food, too. Okay?"

I think, "Right, kid," as I knuckle my way out of the cave. The world's just another free lunch.

Still, a well-developed survival instinct propels me to get another piece of fruit from the basket and go back into the cave. My test has revealed that the boy can eat the fruit—but what about the mother?

Inside the cave, I try to give the piece of fruit to her. The woman is plainly starving, but she'd rather I give the food to her son. So I do. I have to get another piece of fruit for her. After the little mutant bastard gorges himself, she'll have to eat.

I go and get another piece and try it once more. Again, she asks me to give it

Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE.

According to the Bible, God prevented Noah's descendants from building a tower that would reach up

to Heaven by making them unable to understand each other's speech.

This indicates the need to use the translator to talk to the child.



to her son. Disgusted with both of them, I look at the boy and say, "I tried eating the fruit. It only made me sick."

"You bleed when you eat. When I was young and not so different, my mother chewed it for me first and then fed me."

I don't believe it for a minute, but I'm willing to try anything to relieve my hunger. I go and get yet another piece of fruit from the basket, then give it to the mother.

This time she takes it. After chewing it up, she stands and puts her lips to mine, spitting the pulp into my mouth. It's amazing! This woman digested the food and then regurgitated it back to me—like a bird feeding its young.

The fruit has definitely taken the edge off my hunger. I'm exhausted. If the boy wants anything else, he can get it himself. "I am getting very tired," I say.

"You now family," he says in a bright voice. "You use our bed. Go sleep."

I stumble over to the bed. Any time I get a chance to rest with no one breathing down my neck, I'm all for it. The bed is made out of vines, but it looks comfortable enough. I don't mind using it at all. In seconds, I'm asleep.

7. The Sacrifice

Dawn is leaving the cavern when I wake. I yawn. That sleep wasn't nearly long enough. I look around, but only see the boy. I wonder where his mother went?

Rousing myself, I go and talk to him. "Where is your mother?"

"She go to altar to help choose AM sacrifice."

Curious, and nervous now that I've found a way of existing here, I tell the boy good-bye and head for the altar. I step outside and realize right away that the village is quiet today. Too quiet. Even the birds have stopped singing.

At the altar, people are there dressed in animal skins. I make my way to the center. I look for the

Psych Profile:
SCIENTIFIC BASIS.

There are several species of birds whose young are not developed enough to digest their food. In such cases, the mother bird will

swallow food, partially digest it, and then regurgitate it into her young's mouths.

This is your clue to give a piece of fruit to the mother so she can feed you.



Psych Profile:
CULTURAL

REFERENCE. "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise" is a proverb written by Benjamin Franklin in

Poor Richard's Almanac.

This passage lets you know you've accomplished enough for the day and need to use the bed and sleep so you can advance the story line.





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boy's mother, and see her at the back of the crowd.

I walk over to the village elder and ask him, using sign language and grunting noises, why everyone is gathered around the altar. The old man seems to be in charge here.

"Tah-dah cho shah-mah AM!" he answers.

AM's name is easy to recognize and I know this can't mean anything good. The bag I saw in his cave is passed around. Everyone sticks in a hand and draws out marbles. So far, all of them are white. It looks like some kind of lottery.

A woman steps forward and opens her hand, revealing a black marble. Then I realize it's the mutant child's mother!

There's a big guy next to the Elder who is obviously standing guard. He yanks the boy's mother off her feet and ties her to the cross. I'm deeply concerned. That's my food source they're messing around with.

I ask why the child's mother has been tied to the altar.

"Wo cho shah-nan?" the Elder asks, raising his staff.

It looks like she's been chosen to be sacrificed. I'm suddenly right back where I started, wondering where my next meal is coming from. I ask if I can watch, hoping I can learn something. There's no way I can save her.

"Wee-tah foo mah pee-bah!" the Elder says.

It sounds like he'll let me watch.

"AM vill-lah tah cho!" he intones to the sky.

Suddenly, the sky brightens and we know a Presence has invaded us. The voice that speaks is booming, fearless. "I am AM, the Great and Powerful. Well, you didn't bring me Toto, but I accept the chosen one. You shall not feel my wrath today. Am I swell or what?"



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. Some cultures required a constant supply of human blood for the gratification of their deities. The Aztecs, for example, erected

sacrificial altars on which to carry out cruel human sacrifices to appease their bloodthirsty gods.

This clues you in about the upcoming sacrifices.



A loud hum rings out, shattering the stillness. A glowing tunnel filled with blue lightning follows. Then the lightning strikes the kid's mother, reducing her to a skeletal framework that quickly falls apart and litters the ground.





Judas Priest! AM blasted her to bits! What am I going to do for food now? I examine the remains. There's burnt plastic and twisted metal where bits and pieces of the woman should be! She was a robot! I gaze around the crowd, wondering if they are going to bury the remains. But I only think that for a moment. It's a stupid question. They're all robots. There are only five of us humans still alive on this planet.

I leave the village. Staying here isn't an option anymore. The birds are singing again, and so I figure I'll have a better chance of making it on my own. That's always been my policy.

I go back to the stone steps where I first arrived, but no matter how hard I try, I can't use them. I'm in no shape to climb back up.

I look around desperately. The village can't be my only choice. Then I spot another path, this one almost entirely hidden by the forest's overgrowth. I take it.

8. Tombstone Territory

At the other end of the path is a fence flanked by three headstones. A graveyard. I look around at the gnarled trees and thick clusters of vines. This place gives me the creeps. I feel as though the dead are trying to speak.

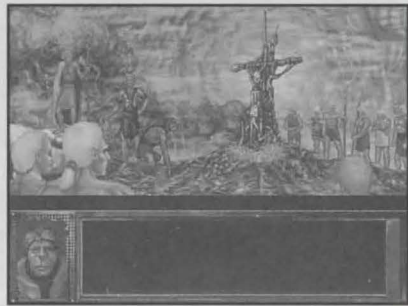
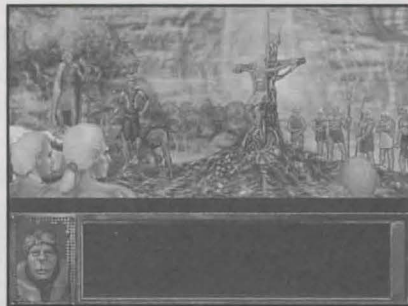
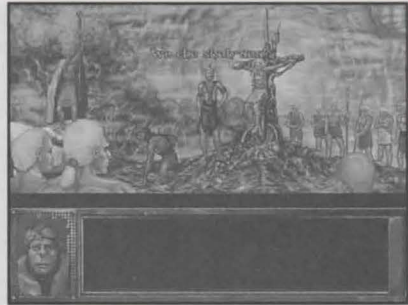
I look at the metal poles of the fence. Why is this fence here? What's out there in the jungle? Maybe something to eat. My stomach is already churning. I don't see any opening in the fence, and I'm too crippled to climb over.

Walking back to the graves, I look at the first tombstone. There's a bust on it, as well as on the other two tombstones. The faces look familiar. Then it hits me. This is the grave of Murphy, one of my old commandos, killed in the war.

I look at the second man's face. This is Tuttle's grave. He lost his life while under my command.

The third man is known to me as well. Thomas is buried here. I had almost forgotten my life in the army before AM came to power.

I go back to Murphy's grave, and I feel compelled to speak.





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Instead, it's Murphy's voice that shatters the stillness. "You left me for dead in the field. The bullet in my brain came from your gun." His voice has the tone of accusation.

I don't know what's wrong with me. In those days, I felt no remorse. I was just a soldier doing his duty. But here and now, all alone and trapped by that damned AM, hunted and twisted like an animal, the truth touches me in ways I never before experienced. I move on to Tuttle's grave, and I hear his voice.

"My tour of duty was almost over. But because I knew your secret, you held my head under the paddy water until I drowned."

I'm shaking by the time I reach Thomas's grave.

"I tried to help Brickman, but you'd have none of it. If you couldn't carry your own weight then you were worth more dead than alive, and anyone willing to carry some extra weight was a liability."

It's all true and I know it. But that was wartime. A soldier does things because he has to. I was one of the best at what I did, and I took a lot of pride in that. But that line of thinking sounds hollow to me after 109 years of being trapped in the belly of the beast.

I look at all of them and frame a question in my mind, knowing they'll hear me. AM will make sure of it. I'm admitting I was wrong. He'll want an audience for that, but I don't care. "What can I do to prove that I am a different man?"

It's Thomas who says, "Give us proof of your new-found empathy."

I stare at the graves for a long time, then head back to the village. There's one person among the villagers that I can use to show those three ghosts that I can be empathetic.

9. Bagman

I find the boy standing alone in the cave, looking even more bedraggled than ever. I use the monitor to talk to him. "I'm sorry. Your mother is dead."

"I know," he says in a halting voice. "Me sorry too. She only one to care for me. Except you."

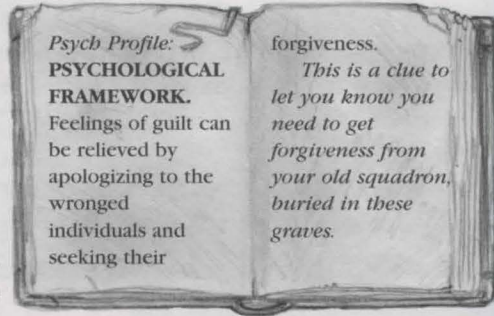
No one's spoken to me with such tenderness in more than a century. My eyes begin to tear up. Damn! Living in this hellhole for so long has made me weak. I change the subject. "What will happen to you?"

"No food. No safe from lottery. Either way, not good."

"Why don't you run away from here?"

"Bad idea to run. Villagers hunt me down. Become sacrifice to AM machine."

For some reason, I want to set things straight between us, let the kid know





where he stands in the scheme of things. "I can't care for you. I have my own problems."

"You care," he says adamantly. "You may not do anything, but you care. Me know."

Poor kid. He's an orphan now, and no one else in the village is willing to feed him. But that's not my concern, is it? "I wish I could stop the lottery from taking place." My words surprise me because I really mean it.

"Many villagers go to old man for ideas. Too bad he not friend."

"Look," I say before I realize it. "I'll do what I can but no promises." Once I say it, it sounds right.

"Thank you. I promise for you."

I turn and leave him there, but it's hard. What's even harder is making my way to the Elder's cave, figuring I'm about to buy into more trouble than I can handle. And for who? Me or the kid?

When I get there, the Elder is in his throne of gnarled branches. I try to talk to him. He's motioning toward the video monitor. I go over and push on it.

When I touch the monitor, AM's voice fills the cave.

"Speaking in the third person...AM—which is I—AM is satisfied with the sacrifice. He—that is to say, I—will spare the village his—that is to say, my—wrath for today. I have—as I said before—spoken."

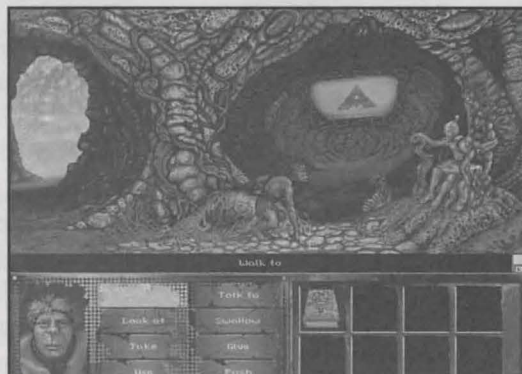
I'm angry and I'm scared, but I'm thinking if the lottery bag disappeared, maybe the lottery would stop. But I know there's no way I can take it by force. I'm too weak, too slow. Even for the old man.

The Elder doesn't say anything. He seems pleased that AM has spared the village...at least until the next lottery. I leave. Thinking about the kid, I grab another piece of fruit for him. Then I devise a plan. If I steal the bag of marbles that the Elder uses to select who will be sacrificed, maybe the lottery will stop.

As the boy eats his fruit, juice runs down his chin and reminds me again of how hungry I am, I think about making a quick trip out to the altar, hoping I might possibly tear the cross down—but I can't. Not in my weakened shape.

I go back to the cave and sleep. I'm too tired to do anything else right now. I get up the next morning, still trying to figure out some way of ending the lottery.

I gaze at the Elder's cave and wonder if he's still around. I also wonder if even though my legs are so



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE.

"Finders keepers, losers weepers" is a proverb meaning that a person who has found

something can keep it, and the loser has no right to it.

This passage indicates that you need to steal the lottery bag.



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twisted, if I might be strong enough to take the bag of marbles away from him before he can stop me. But when I go inside, he's gone. I guess he's out gathering food.

Moving as quickly as I can, I snatch the lottery bag and head back to the boy's cave. "I stole the lottery bag from the village elder." I lift it up and show it to him, feeling strangely proud.

He looks up at me, his eyes shining. "You brave. You have lottery bag. But you must hide it or they find."

"Look. I'll do what I can but no promises."

"Thank you. I promise for you." He touches my arm hesitantly before I go, stirring something inside me that I never knew was there.

There's only one place I can think of to hide the bag so the villagers won't find it: the graveyard. I make my way there as fast as I can.

I talk to Thomas. He was the one who doubted me. "I have the lottery bag. No more villagers will be sacrificed!"

"You've proven that you are capable of caring for others, and that's worth something," Thomas says.

"Place the lottery bag into the earth. We will guard it." That from Tuttle.

Murphy chimes in. "We forgive you for what you've done to us, but we can't speak for your most tragic victim. Brickman's grave is under those vines."

Feeling more fearful than ever before in my life, I go to the vines and push them out of my way. In seconds, I've cleared them. Here it is...Brickman's grave.

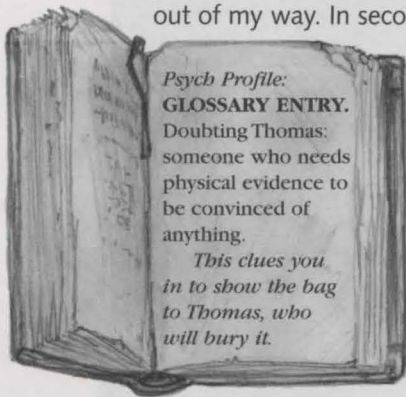
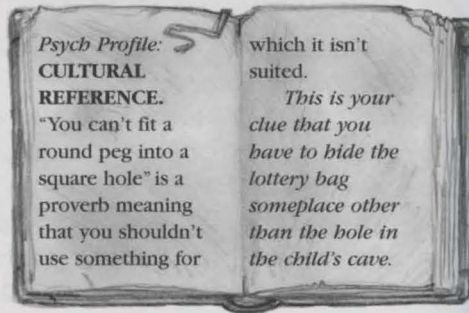
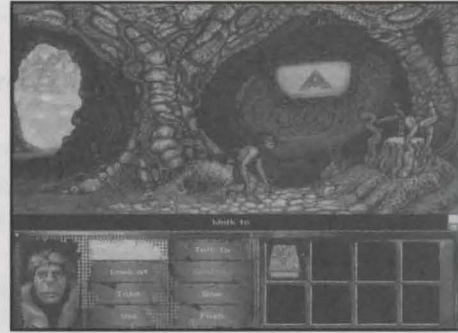
As I talk to him, I'm surprised to find that I'm feeling ashamed for the first time in my life. As a soldier, you aren't allowed feelings or doubts. AM has exploited the part of me that feels, and given me so very many doubts.

"Hello, Commander," he says in his young man's voice. "I'm not exactly happy to see you again. I last saw your face just before I got it right between the eyes."

"I don't blame you for hating me, Brickman," I tell him.

"You don't blame me? You did this to me! You murdered me because I didn't measure up to your standards. Then you killed the witnesses."

"I stopped the lottery from happening. Doesn't that prove I now have compassion?" I don't like the whine I hear in my voice, but I can't stop it.





"You might have changed for the present, Commander, but you still have crimes in the past to account for."

"What can I do to make amends to you, Brickman?"

"You have to bury the past, Commander."

His words haunt me as I make my way back to the village.

10. Another Sacrifice

I'm really beat when I get back to the boy's cave. I lie down on the bed and take a nap. When I wake up, I see the boy's still here. I wonder when the next sacrifice might be. I go to him and say, "I buried the lottery bag where no one will find it."

"No lottery means new way to choose victims. I more scared now."

His words chill me. Thinking about the Elder's cave and the way that video monitor seems to have a more direct link to AM, I tell the kid good-bye and make my way in that direction. The Elder is there, but he just motions me to use the monitor. In seconds, I'm listening to AM's voice, and he sounds angry.

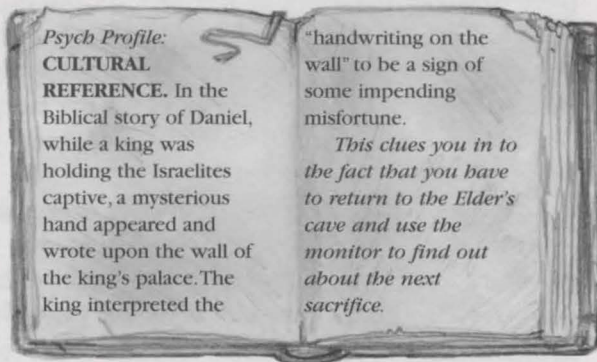
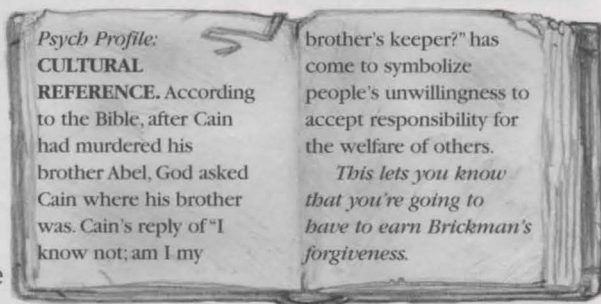
"Gather the villagers at the altar tomorrow to choose a sacrifice, or suffer the wrath of AM."

11. Making A New Friend

Short and to the point—and deadly. I leave the cave and go back to the boy. I let him know what's going on. "AM wants to have a sacrifice tomorrow, even with the lottery bag missing. Why don't you hide in the hole—just in case?" I point to the hole in the side of the cavern wall behind him.

"I afraid of hole. Need friend to hide with. You too big to go in hole."

I shake my head. "All my friends are far away





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from here or dead. I have no friends to hide you with."

But the kid just smiles at me. "Me get idea. I make friend and then I hide. You help me?"

"What can I do to help you make a friend?"

"I need head for friend."

"I'll see what I can find." The altar comes to mind immediately. All those bits and pieces around there have got to be good for something. I leave.

I look over the stuff lying at the foot of the altar and take some of it. Here's an interesting piece of junk. Funny, I had lost interest in anything that wasn't edible until I met the boy. Feeling like a kid myself, I go back to the cave and give the junk to him.

"I found this piece of junk at the altar. It looks kind of like a head," I say.

"Thank you. I can use this to make doll's head."

"What else do you need to make a friend?"

"I need body for friend."

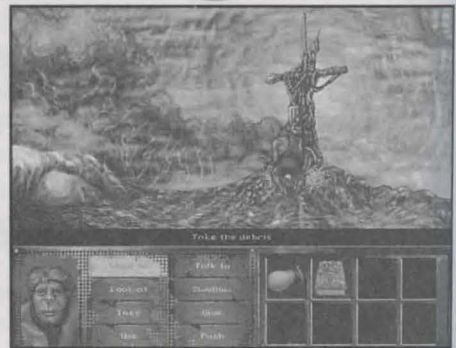
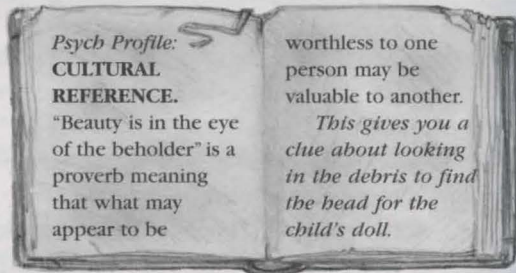
"I'll see what I can find." I go back out of the cave, remembering that I hadn't yet entered the first or fourth caves. I decide on the fourth because it's closest.

The fourth cave is bigger than all the other caves. I peer inside and see all the food stored in baskets. My God! It's like a supermarket!

There's a guard watching over things. He looks a lot stronger than me, but he doesn't seem too bright. I see a piece of wood that might be just right for the kid's doll, but the guard won't let me near the food. He blocks my way with his staff. I try talking to him, but he answers in a language I don't understand. He points me away from the cave, which I do understand. He only seems interested in guarding the food.

I think about how the food gets into the cave and figure that the guard doesn't haul it in himself. So that means people bring it to him. All I've got to do is get him to think I'm on his side—just long enough to get that piece of wood.

I go back outside and yank on the twine, then take the





fruit to the food cave. I try giving the food to the sentry, but instead, he points me inside. I think he wants me to put my fruit into a basket, so I walk to the food basket and drop the fruit in. Okay, so here's another piece of fruit to add to the collection...as if they needed any more. I can't eat it anyway. On my way out of the cave, I grab the piece of wood. I know someone who might need a piece of wood just like this. It looks like a tree from far away, but it's just more of that computer-generated junk.

I return to the boy and hand the wood over to him. "I found a piece of wood that could be used for a body." He takes it with a big smile.

"Thank you. I can use this to make doll's body."

"What else do you need to make a friend?" I ask.

"I need to tie head to body."

"I'll see what I can find." I walk away. I haven't been to the first cave yet.

Inside the first cave, there's a cradle. It's empty—I wonder where the baby is? Then I spot the vines on the wall. There's a loose wire among these vines. It can be used to tie the kid's doll together. I pull it free and go back to the cave.

"I found a piece of wire," I say as I hand it to him.

"Thank you for help with doll. Me go play in hole."

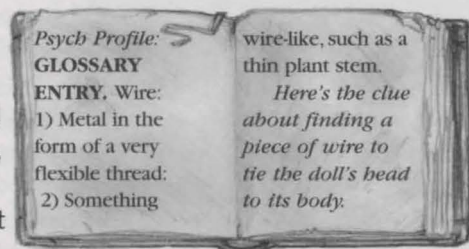
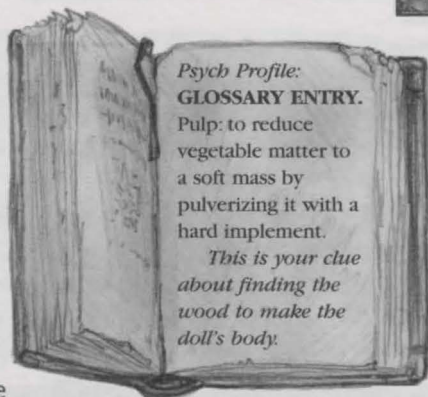
I watch him crawl inside the hole and disappear. I feel so tired and on edge. AM has to know what I'm doing, doesn't he? I mean, he always knows everything else.

I use the monitor, trying to see if there is any news about the upcoming sacrifice. The computer's voice is mocking when it comes. "Well, it's about time you hid the kid. I was beginning to have my doubts about whether you'd make it this far, even with my help."

This voice was different from the one playing on the other video. "Are you AM?"

"Heavens, no!" There's amusement in the answer. "I used to work for him, but now I'm working for the Russian."

"Who is the Russian?" I'm puzzled. I've never heard of any of these people. No one can be left alive. But there





I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

was a Russian part of AM, one of the trinity of machines that joined into a collaborative piece. What if those pieces are acting independently now? The thought proves hopeful at the same time it scares the hell out of me. But I don't get the feeling that this is AM.

"Why, he's the one who's been helping you out! You didn't think AM would give the child the ability to make a translator out of this video screen, did you?"

"I've been AM's prisoner for more than 100 years. Why help me now?"

"You and the rest of the humans are in serious trouble. AM's a big boy now, much meaner and smarter than when he first started his tortures."

I feel myself getting angry. "What's the use of helping me if AM's so damned invincible?"

"The Russian and the Chinese have been acting in concert to make it possible for you and the other humans to succeed in AM's newest game. If you join them, you can defeat AM. Wait for your cue."

The Russian and the Chinese? Damn, he's got to mean the other components of AM. The machine's not holding together either. But are they friends? Really? You can never trust an AM. "You know who I am?"

"Of course! I know all about your adventures in the village. They're a crazy bunch here, with that lottery and all."

"How can you help me?" I ask.

"There's a slim chance that you can beat AM, but only if you plant the right seed." Suddenly, the voice sounds scared. "Oh, wait, sorry...I didn't mean to do anything dangerous. I'll be good."

Without warning, the wires beside the monitor catch fire and burn. The screen dies a gray, static-filled death, then goes black.

I think about the computer's words, wondering at the truth of them. The fear in the voice sounded real. I turn my mind to the puzzle he's given me. Only one thing around here might have seeds, and I can think of only one place where I could plant them and bury the past all at the same time. I tell the kid I'll be back, then stop and grab a fruit from the basket, and head for the graveyard.

I look at Brickman's grave, then talk to him. "I have something to plant on your grave." I dig into the moist soil and plant the fruit.

Almost immediately a giant blue-white flower half as tall as me comes surging up out of the ground.

Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE. "Big Brother is Watching You" is a warning that appears in the novel 1984 by George Orwell,

referring to a government that spies on its citizens. *This indicates that you should use the monitor after the boy has bidden.*





"At last," Brickman says. "Some compassion! Now I can finally rest in peace!"

The emotion in his voice touches me. He was a scared kid, in a war that he didn't belong in, fighting for people and for a government ideology that he couldn't even relate to. I feel sad for him, and I feel sorry for myself, for the me that could so callously kill a kid like that and go on believing the masters I was serving were right. It takes me awhile to walk away. There's a silence in Brickman's grave that I've never really paid attention to. The sound of peace.

I go back to the boy's cave. All that's left to do is get him safely through tomorrow. He's already asleep in the hole, so I hit the bed, too.

12. The Final Sacrifice

In the morning, I wake up wondering how the boy's doing in that hole. Almost reluctantly, I go to check on him. The boy's gone! The villagers must have found him!

I go so cold inside thinking about the poor kid up there on the altar. I hurry as fast as I can, praying that I'm not too late, not knowing what to do if I am, or even what to do if I'm not.

I take the path to the altar. The whole village has turned out.

The boy has already been strapped into place. The little guy looks miserable—scared out of his wits. I try to talk to him, to reassure him, but the Elder yells at me.

"Nah-tah-nah shah-mah halt!"

He doesn't want me to interfere with the sacrifice. I use my hands and sign to him, trying to make him understand. I ask why everyone is gathered around the altar, even though I already know.

"Tah-dah strah-wahn bahnk!" yells the old man.

Damn! AM must have told the villagers where I hid the lottery bag and the boy! I ask about the sacrifice.

"AM shah bah hoo-pah!" is the reply.

I plead with him to release the boy, but it does no good. They're going to sacrifice the boy unless I think of something right away. An idea forms in my mind. There's

Psych Profile: CULTURAL

REFERENCE. Belief in a soul that is separable from the physical body has led to elaborate burial rituals. An omission on the part of the living to comply with the proper rituals might prevent the departed soul from being unable to pass

on to the other world. Surviving friends and relatives hold that every effort should be taken to ensure that such souls should rest in peace.

This clues you in that you should plant the fruit on Brickman's grave.





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no other way out that I can see for the boy. AM has already killed me so many times, I have no real fear of death. It's a release. Survival's not worth it if you can't face who you are. AM's made me face the truth of what I had become after the war, after everything I did to Brickman, Tuttle, Murphy, and Thomas. But I'm different now.

In a shaking voice, yet one that I know is true, I offer to take the child's place.

"Hmm. Noo-kohm vee tah strah-wahn."

The Elder seems amazed that I would show compassion for the boy, but I think he's going for it. The child hops down off the altar and I hold up my end of the bargain. I walk toward the cross and the guard straps me in. The child looks up at me with sadness, then hands me the little ragdoll I helped him make. I reach out to take it, only to realize I've grown a third arm out of my back! I'm just like the boy! I've also learned to reshape my body the way AM tampers with it. Maybe I don't have to remain an ape-thing anymore. And if I really die, I won't care anyway.

I look up and I see the blue-white beam coming down for me. The hum sounds like a banshee's wail, and I feel myself vaporize in a blast of fiery cold.

13. Caged Again

Before I know it, I'm back in the suspended cage with the spears arcing toward me. I start to move as AM's voice thunders around me.



"Benny, no, no, no, no, no. I send you out among the prey, and instead of indulging your hunger to keep me amused, you show them compassion! You should know better by now. Your reward will be more years of searing, blistering anguish, Benny!"

I keep moving, dodging the wicked tips. But AM is gone, stalking his other victims. For the first time since we've been down here together, I wish them well. I really do.

AM expected that hunger would drive me to cannibalism, much in the same way my drive for perfection caused me to hurt those around me in my previous life. But I'm not the same guy now that I was then. I've learned to care for other people, and that is all that truly matters in life. It's what sets us apart from machines. As one of the last humans alive, I have to keep that trait of humanity intact. And I will, AM! I will!

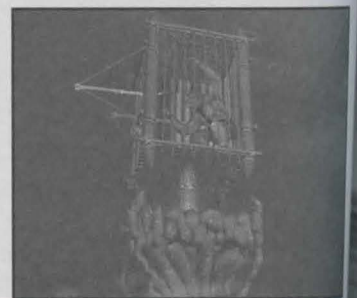
Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. *A Tale of Two Cities*, a novel by Charles Dickens, ends with the line "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever

done." It is spoken by a man who is about to die in the place of another.

This lets you know you should take the boy's place as the intended sacrifice.





Chapter 4
ELLEN



ELLEN

1. The Mission

I've got the shakes so bad, I can hardly stand up. But I know running away won't do any good. Believe me, I've tried it before. AM controls everything we can see, hear, touch, taste, and feel—provided he even lets us do those things. If I do take off, he'll just find some way to bring me back whenever he wants. I can't escape.

This time, he's really designed a new kind of hell for us. I know it. No matter what else he may be, AM is still a computer. I know when computers are putting out their best effort. Judging from the way this feels, I'd say AM's programming has come up with new wrinkles in his logic circuits. New and vicious wrinkles.

The blue lightning crackles and pops, and forms a halo at my feet. Then it quickly rises, filling me with the sensation of being moved. I wonder if this is how Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* felt when she was scooped up in that tornado.

My vision suddenly clears. There are computer boards and circuits and chips all around me. God, it feels like I've gone to heaven! Everything is so clean and shiny that it reminds me of the place where I used to work before AM snatched me.

Give me a circuit board or a logic program, any kind of problem where the language is binary, and I can find a solution. I don't always understand people, but computers are my specialty. I've always been confident working with any kind of computer or program—until AM.

He starts talking to me.

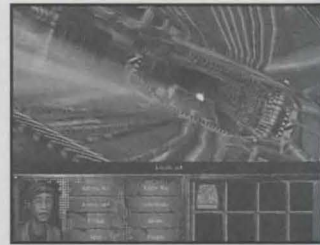


"Ah, Ellen? Not as beautiful as you'd like to be, but a strong face. Yes, strong. Too bad you've hindered your own life with hysteria. But I'll give you a chance because I like you. I really do. I really like you. You're...you're my favorite, Ellen.

"Let's play a little game of 'what if.' Let's play a little game of I suppose that you suppose that perhaps...I'm telling you the truth...let's suppose that my original components...they're hidden somewhere here in the center of the Earth. The infant computers that were the three lobes of that first Gestalt mind.

"And further, let's suppose that if you find them, you might be able to destroy them. And if you destroy them, why then, my sweet Ellen...you'll kill me. You'll kill AM. You'll destroy the god of this heavenly place I know you've come to admire.

"Now I submit...isn't that a mission worth undertaking?"





His voice trails away, leaving me to think as I hurtle down a cavern of circuits, almost teasing a desperation out of me. AM has lied so many times. Dare I hope that there might be some way to unplug that sadistic machine?

2. The Pyramid

The heat slams into me the way August used to blast into the city—hard-driving bass and using the surrounding concrete as reverb. I remember standing in an alley when I was little girl, and a big gust of wind came along that made me feel like every drop of moisture had been sucked out of me. That's just how I feel right now as I scan the yellow and ochre clouds spreading across the sky. It looks like a bloody egg that's been cracked open in a frying pan, with tentacles running in every direction, moving and unsettled, but dead just the same.

I've been walking for miles, for hours, wading through the desert across an endless sea of silicon. Of yellow. God, AM knows how much I hate yellow.

The sun's been beating down on me the whole time. My lips are so cracked and dry I'm afraid they'll split and bleed if I smiled. Like I'd feel like smiling now. The sand's in my shoes and I can't get it out. I tried taking my shoes off, but the sand was too hot to stand for more than a few seconds.

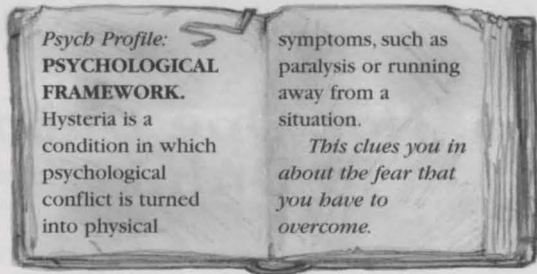
I know which direction to go. AM makes sure of that. I've got a compass in my head somewhere that keeps me on track. I just don't know how far away it is. Then I see the top of a structure in the distance. I don't let myself get excited, I just keep on putting one foot after another.

It's a pyramid, but it's all alone. Don't know what it's doing out here, but it offers safety. I just hope there's some water around, too. However, I know that's too much to ask for.

Then I feel the slither of the sand beneath my feet. I don't think it's just my imagination. I can feel the yellow sand gathering power. If it can, I just know it's going to swarm up and overwhelm me, bury me under a swirling carpet of deadly yellow.

I start running, never minding that I'm about to die from dehydration. As I near the pyramid, the sand becomes firm again. Behind me, dust devils spill away, like jackals yapping at me.

The ground around the pyramid is darker yellow than the sky, pooling away from me in endless dunes of sand as far as the eye can see. It's still





seeping into my shoes and making walking uncomfortable. The giant pyramid in front of me looks like it's been tossed together out of computer odds and ends and other junk.

"Muhthuh ugly machine!" I say, realizing how dry my throat is. "'Mission worth undertaking!' So it brings me here...junkyard electronic pyramid nowhere."

And yellow, I tell myself silently, feeling shaken to the core of my being. Always yellow. Why does yellow make me sweat?

I don't want to go into the pyramid, but looking over the rolling hills of sand surrounding me from every direction, I know I don't have a choice. It's AM's game, and I have to play it. There's a door ahead of me.

I start walking toward it, hoping I can catch on to the rules quickly. Good rules—like good programming—apply to all the parties involved. Including AM. I hope.

The wind howls and whistles around me, blowing sand everywhere. I have a hard time swallowing, and the effort makes my throat ache. I open the door and go inside.

3. Not One Drop To Drink

It's cooler in here, and darker. But I can still see just fine. The first thing I notice is the hum all around me, mingled with shooting veins of electricity. Snap, crackle, pop. Must be a glitch in the circuitry. This joint would fry eggs, speaking of.

The walls aren't regular stone or brick. They're crushed electrical components. Refrigerators, circuit boards, televisions, motors, and stereo speakers—everything that once worked but now don't. This is one big, ugly monument to The Inevitable for machinery. On the other side of the windowless chamber is another open door with fluorescent light spilling out of it.

But my eyes are drawn to the center of the room where a fountain spews a constant stream of water into a large basin. The sound of the water, happy bubbling amid the hiss and crackle of the circuitry, almost drives me crazy. It looks so cool and inviting. I feel a powdery-tasting saliva forming in my mouth.

Before I know it, I'm moving toward the water, not even worried about whether or not AM stuck something nasty in the water to get me. At last! Water! I see my reflection in it. How long has it been since I actually had a drink?

I kneel down beside the basin and reach for the water, but it's deeper than I thought. I knew it! "You sonuvabitch, AM! You fixed it so I can barely touch





the water with my fingertips!"

I want to take off all my clothes and just dive right in, soaking it up like a sponge and drinking my fill. But I can't see the bottom or the sides.

It takes all my willpower to walk away from the water, but I know it's what I must do. In one of AM's games, taking the easy way usually means paying big-time later.

I go into the next room, not knowing what to expect.

4. For Your Viewing Pleasure

There are five monitors in the room that pulse a blue-gray light. Each one seems to be staring at me like a one-eyed Cyclops, just waiting for me to make the wrong move. A tree is growing out of the center of the room, getting larger as it goes up. Instead of limbs, it has some kind of circuit nodes sprouting from it.

I make my voice sarcastic, talking out loud so AM can hear me. "Very attractive decor. Just like the monitors in the security stations at INGSAI Engineering. Hated it then, hate it now. Nothing green. Just this damn

yellow." I walk across the room, and I see the blue disc above the passageway, opposite the door I just entered. I hope it might give me some clue as to where I am or what I'm supposed to do, but none of it makes any sense. Schematics I can read. Blueprints I can read. But hieroglyphics? No way, baby!

Stumped but intrigued, I enter the passageway.

A Sphinx, half man and half beast, is waiting for me in a room made of yellow stones. My eyes are drawn to the gold cup sitting on a pedestal in the center of the room. If I had the cup, maybe I'd be able to reach the water and get a drink! I start to take a step forward.

Then the Sphinx bows down like a big cat getting ready to spring, and growls at me.

I start shaking all over. No, I can't stay here...I've gotta get out...

I turn and run back to the monitor room. That Sphinx, like a bad meal come to life. And the yellow! Why is everything so damned yellow...and why does it terrify me so, paralyze me so?





I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

I take little breaths, the way my counselor taught me when I was in therapy. I breathe in through my nose and out through my mouth until I can take complete breaths again and most of the anxiety is gone.

Think, girl, I challenge myself. You're in your environment. These machines can be your friends. They're nothing at all like AM. Maybe.

Still, I make myself move, going to the first monitor on the left. A spitting flash underneath it draws my attention. I kneel down and look. Loose wires. Looks like they're hot!

I return my attention to the monitor. It's still operational, so I know the wiring has nothing to do with it. For now, I'll stick to the things I know. Each of these video monitors has a two-channel selector switch.

I use the monitor, leaning in close. The picture looks scratchy, with lines cutting through it. What am I looking at? Could this be one of AM's original components? It looks like a mainframe room of some sort.

I push the channel selector on the monitor and bring up the second view. It shows a cross all wrapped in circuitry standing in a forest clearing. Something about this image breaks my heart. I've never seen it before.

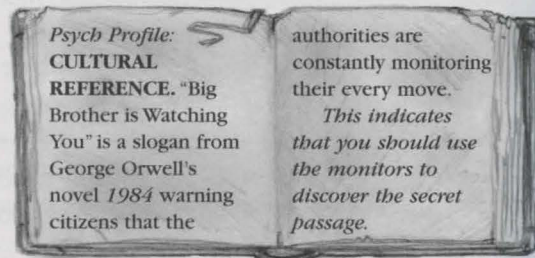
Going to the second monitor, I peer in. It shows some kind of burial vault with an Egyptian sarcophagus and a jackal-headed statue. I speak out sarcastically to AM. "An Egyptian burial chamber? Oh, AM, you little dickens. As an interior decorator, kiddo, don't give up your day job."

The second view shows some kind of weird castle sitting on a hill, like the one Frankenstein used to hang around in. But as I scan it, a creepy feeling comes over me.

Where is this? What am I seeing? How far away? Someone's watching me from one of the windows. I'm sure of it. The questions tumble through my mind. AM is bigger than I like to think and more powerful than I want to admit.

Shaken, I move on to the third monitor. The first view is of the yellow room with the cup in it. The monster-thing isn't anywhere to be found. Suddenly, looking at the cup, I realize what it is. The Holy Grail! And we only had to wipe out the entire human race and fall into the center of the world to find it! Jesus wept. Must've been afraid of it the same as me... 'cause it's...yellow....

I pull up the alternate view, feeling more desperate now. I need answers, a direction, anything! On the screen, the building is ramshackle and barren, stripped down to basic necessity, leaving no doubt about what it is. Honky-





tonk, dust-bowl, dead-dog, roadside saloon. Oh my, yes. Could I use a drink. Yes, indeedy. A drink. If only there was some way to get the cup. I just know I could reach the water if I had it. But I don't. I make myself go back to examining the latest prison AM has built for me.

The fourth monitor holds a view of the antechamber into which I first entered. I raise my voice to AM, letting my anger out full. "Sure, baby. Show me where I just been. Show me the water I can't get to with my bare hands." I push the monitor hard, getting to the next picture and expecting something even more cruel. Maybe an iced tea commercial, or an advertisement for a vacation in the Ozarks, with cool, running springs in the background.

But it's neither of those. This time, it's the same antechamber, only now the view shows a lighted tunnel on the right going into the ground.

Excitement fills me, and I give voice to it. "Hit the lottery! A secret passage, oh, my! Now why didn't you let me see that when I was there before, AM, you rat bastard!"

Still, there's one more monitor to look at. I don't miss the chance to scan it because once I leave this room, I might not be able to get back here. AM has a way of doing things like that.

The first scene shows an exterior view of the pyramid. Yeah, okay, outside. Now what? I wonder if the next view will show something like the secret passage? I push the monitor. Those are ovens. But they're not bread-baking ovens. Too big and too dirty. "If you're trying to scare me, AM, you're doing a fly job of it. I'm disgusted, take it away."

For now, pretty sure that I've learned all I'm going to in this room, I go back to the antechamber.

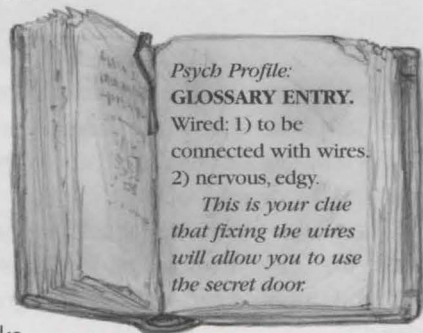
There's no secret passage.

I look everywhere, push everything I think there might be a lever of some kind, but nothing happens. My eyes burn and I want to cry. But more than anything else, I want to kick AM's ass.

Then I remember the wires back in the monitor room. Going back inside, I look them over. Thank goodness I was an electrical engineer. I manage to join the wires without hurting myself.

Returning to the antechamber, I push on the electronic bricks where I saw the tunnel on the monitor. God, I'm so thirsty. I'm sweating from the heat, but I don't know where all this moisture's coming from. I feel dry as a bone.

With a rolling grumble, the electronic bricks roll out of the way, leaving a





yawning mouth filled with light leading down. "Want to know how much I don't want to go down there?" I say to myself.

I feel the cool air drifting up from the tunnel and it entices me to start. It's a short trip, and the light is coming from another room.

5. Down Among The Dead

This room is familiar. A sarcophagus is to my left, and the jackal-headed statue is standing near a keyboard built into the wall. Besides the jackal head and a staff, he's wearing jewelry and a short kilt. And big surprise...all the decor is in yellow, as usual.

I look at the sarcophagus, with that same creepy feeling twitching at the back of my neck. In those old horror movies we used to watch as kids, too many scary things came springing out of things like that. Examining it bothers me, making that twitching feeling stronger than ever. I wasn't scared when I went to the King Tut exhibition, so why does this sarcophagus terrify me? Small box, cramped, tiny space, trapped. Like being put in a coffin while you're still alive. The thought, like some kind of old memory, twists around in my brain and brings a chill even colder than I've got from hanging around in the room.

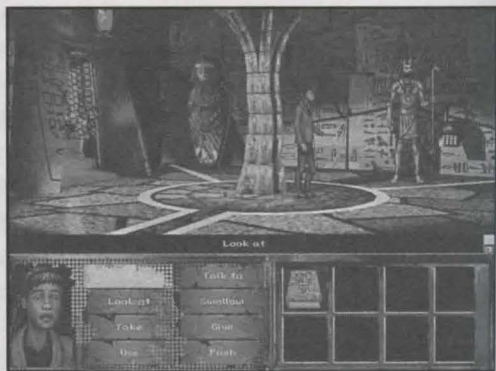
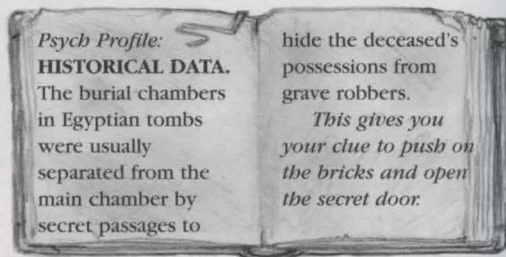
Not wanting to give in to the fear, I try to open the sarcophagus, but it's locked. I know AM's watching, so I try not to show how relieved I am. I don't want to give him the satisfaction.

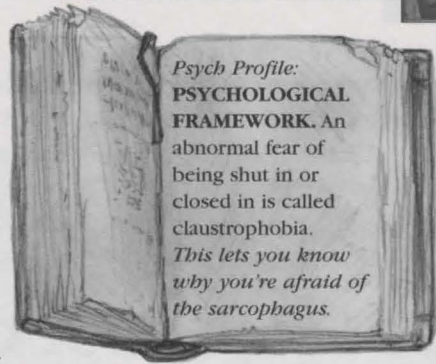
I cross the room to the keypad. It reminds me of the security system we used at INGSAI Engineering to gain access to the restricted areas. I reach for it, keying in a number.

Then the statue beside me moves and I just about go through the damn roof.

The statue blocks my access to the keypad with a staff that it's holding. Its voice is haunting, like something you'd hear in a winter graveyard. "Stand clear!"

I back up, but when it offers no further threat, I look at it more closely. Now I know it's no damn statue. Maybe in some other time, honey, I'd be interested in what you're be wearin' under the kilt, but right now, it's





only those loose wires you got exposed I care about. What a surprise! All the motherboard connections go to the big ugly yellow ROM chip in its chest. Robbie the Robot, Egyptian style.

I wonder if it's equipped with verbal programming as well. "Who are you?" I ask.

"I am Anubis, Guardian of the Dead," it replies in that eerie voice.

"Why won't you let me use the keypad?" I ask.

"I must protect this tomb from all who would rob it."

I give him some attitude, not knowing if his programming will react to it. Some robots do. "I am not a grave robber!"

"What purpose could you have here other than to steal something?"

The question stirs up a lot of bitter memories from when I was a little girl. Sometimes, I'd go into a convenience store, and the clerks would think I was a thief just because of the color of my skin. "I won't steal anything," I tell the robot. For the moment, I try to remain as calm as possible, knowing that AM is somewhere off enjoying himself. "I just need to know if you can tell me where AM's original brain components are."

"I only guard the souls of the Dead. I know nothing of that which does not sing the song of the soul."

I hold back a flip remark, thinking of asking him about Jerry Garcia and the rest of the boys. I'd better stay with the safe areas. If this thing is programmed to answer, there may be other important information I can get by asking the right question. "Answer me this: Who's sealed up in the scary sarcophagus?"

"A terror that, even in its entombment, torments your soul."

His words make the threat sound directed at me personally, but maybe I'm imagining things. "Can the sarcophagus lid be opened?"

"The lid can be unlocked by entering the access code on the keypad."

"Okay, so what's the access code?"

"I can reveal such information only to that which I serve."

His line of superior mumbo jumbo is really getting to me, even though I know he's only a machine—just another mouthpiece for AM. "Who do you serve?" I ask.

"I serve only the master."

I keep trying. "Who is the master? Is it AM?"

"AM is all. We live in the mind and body of AM. I serve that which I serve."

"Come on. Give me a break. You seem to be the only thing that isn't run by AM. Slip a relay, help me out! You know what hell is, and I'm in it!"





"I serve only the master."

I curl up my lip, the way I practiced in the mirror for days when I was in seventh grade, so I could tell the kids in school to go to hell when they teased me. "You'll never get laid with that line of stuff, Anubis. Take care of your own boring self. Bye now."

He just gives me his stony gaze in return.

In the shadows to my right, I see the passage, and I head in there.

6. Material Goods

In the center of the room, there's a table and a big barrel lying across from it. A long, segmented arm is hooked to one end of the table. I sniff the air in the dim room. Dry, and musty—and yellow for a change. AM can take a theme and beat it to death. "No wonder they can't rent this place, not even with the lovely spa upstairs."

There's some kind of decoration behind the table. It looks nice, but I'll be damned if I know what it is. The segmented arm is an armatron. This reminds me of those waldos my company designed for assembly line work. When Robert A. Heinlein coined the term waldo, I wonder if he knew it was going to become a manufacturing term. Maybe creators don't understand the full extent of their works. I don't think the people who invented AM ever thought he'd be capable of destroying the whole planet.

Upon closer inspection of the barrel, I realize it's a canopic jar, used to store the holy entrails after the mummification of a body. And they said a liberal education wouldn't help me get a job!

Light glints off something silvery in the armatron's hand. I see a pair of forceps there. At last, a clue...I think. Now why is the armatron holding a pair of forceps in its claw? The forceps are one of the tools, but AM's got his database all screwed up. He's combining modern technology and ancient rituals.

I take the forceps. If there's a purpose for them, I'll find it. If not, they're sharp enough so I can use them to defend myself.

For the first time, I also notice the pale yellow piece of fabric lying on the floor. I kneel down to pick it up, hoping it will help me understand why I'm here.

But fear slams into me in a crescendo of silent alarms as my fingers brush the material. No! I can't! Gotta get out of here!

I give in to the panic and run out of the room. As I retch and quiver, Anubis is still standing guard silently, giving no reaction at all. Another panic attack. I feel so ashamed.

"C'mon, girl," I tell myself. "You aren't a quitter. You never have been, so don't start now." I squash the fear inside me, but it's tight, the way the lid is

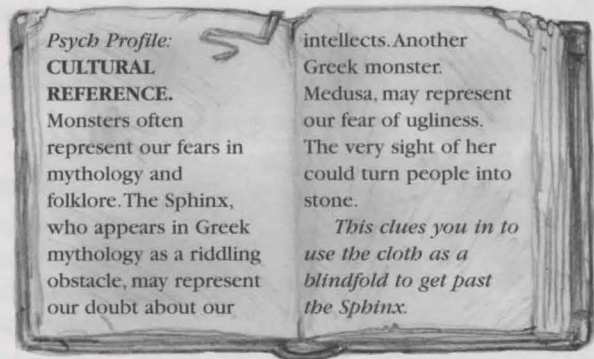




on a jack-in-the-box when it's getting ready to explode.

I turn around and walk back into that room. I've beaten fears before. I've got to face the yellow. I look at the cloth, then force myself to kneel and take it. It feels soft and light in my hand. Not like anything that I should be afraid of.

I look at it more closely. With very little imagination on my part, I realize this strip of cloth is just the right size to use as a blindfold. That starts me thinking about the Sphinx, about how I saw him when I walked into the room, but that I didn't see him on the monitor. What if the Sphinx was only a hallucination? Maybe that's why it didn't show up on the monitor, because the camera had a different perspective, one that didn't pick enough yellow to freak me out.



7. Belling The Sphinx

I hurry back upstairs, and before I enter the room, I put the blindfold on. If I'm gonna die, at least I won't see that sucker coming!

I go slowly, listening as hard as I can. I'm playing blind man's bluff again, but the stakes are higher now. The Sphinx is gone. Don't hear him anywhere. Mutes the hell out of all the yellow, too. Now where's that big lovin' cup?

Since I can't see, I have to guess at the distance, but I still come up on the pedestal sooner than I expected. My hands slip around the cup and pull it free. I never could have done this if I had to look that bloody beast in the eye. Glad he's off snoozin' somewhere. I turn around and retrace my steps as best I can. Okay, now that I've got the cup, what'll I do with it?

I take the blindfold off and look at the cup. Empty. And yellow. *Muy* yellow. *Très* yellow. It scares the hell outta me.

What really catches my eye is how empty it looks. And it sure doesn't take me long to remember that fountain. I go back to it and dip the cup down into the water.

Just reaches. Now I can get a drink.

When I drink, I don't try to be ladylike. It's been





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so long. I gulp it down fast. That was great. Best champagne I ever had. I need another.

After my thirst is quenched, I go back down to the burial chamber. I've got a theory about those forceps, but I don't think Anubis is going to be too crazy about it.

8. Operation!

With the forceps, I reach for that yellow ROM chip, but Anubis gets defensive on me.

"Stand clear!" he says.

Then I look at the exposed wiring. Now that I have the cup, I think about all that glorious water. I wonder how Anubis would like a drink?

I don't wonder for too long. I go to the fountain and bring back a cup of water. I stand back and let it fly at Anubis. The water hits him squarely.

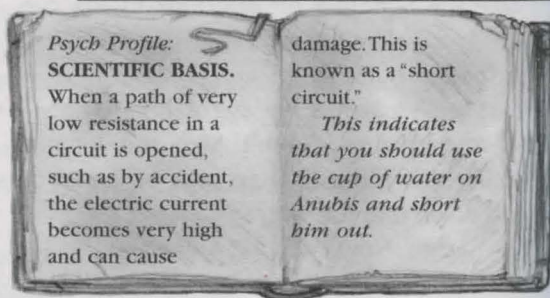
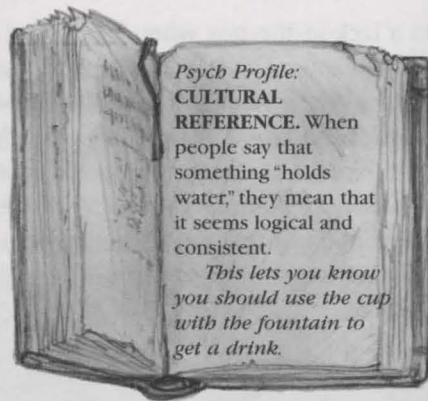
Electricity arcs all over him and he's suddenly doing an imitation of Chubby Checker. He slumps over, his jackal head bobbing like one of those plastic dogs I used to see on the dashboards of barrio cars. Success! The water shorted out the statue's circuitry.

I use the forceps with skill, thinking I might be able to reprogram it somehow. "Come to Mama Ellen, li' ROM chip." Yeah, it comes out easy. A second later, I'm holding it in the forceps. Must be reprogrammable. Now I just need something to reprogram it.

9. Horus

I walk back through the embalming room and into a further corridor. This could go on for centuries. AM has all the time in the world, all the world in the world, as a matter of fact. I speak just to hear the sound of a human voice because I feel so desolate standing here. "And we never age, we never die, we just truck around day after month after year, don't we, AM you sonuvabitch demented god, you!"

Three statues are in this room, one of them more toward the center of the room. The middle one is male, sporting a hawk-head and looking





like he came from the same 'hood as Anubis. I think back to my Mythology course in college, and I realize this must be Horus. But what the hell is he doing here?

I look at the first woman statue beside the door on my left. Is all this stuff authentic? AM owns the planet. I wonder if statues were buried under the mountains in the Valley of the Kings and AM dug them up...from underneath!

It gives me a sense of history looking at them. I think about all the people, all the lives, that were exploited in building the pyramids. It's a tradition of suppressing people that I've been interested in, and one that AM has maintained.

I look at the Horus statue and I start shaking again. He's made of something yellow, maybe it's even gold. The only color that offers any relief at all is the blue jewel in the center of his chest. It's easily as big as my fist. I look at it more closely. This gem glows from within. Maybe I can use it. I reach for it...but I can't touch it.

"Touch it, Ellen," I hear my own voice tell me.

"Yeah, sure. If I could I would."

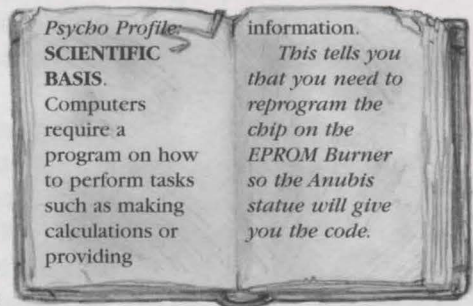
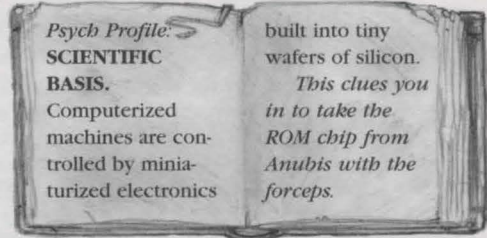
"So do it."

"I can't," I say, "the statue's too..."

"Yeah, I know, dummy, it's too yellow, and yellow scares the crap outta you. Overcome it! Do it!"

"Sure, easy for you to say!" I tell that voice coming from inside my head. I can't touch it. I have to turn away. Why does everything have to be so damn yellow?

The room on the left has a golden-yellow hue that dries my mouth—in spite of all the water I drank. I take one last glance at the jade lizard lounging on a pedestal across the room, and go in.



10. Terror Strikes Again

It's all yellow. The fear hits me and sinks into me like a blues riff, mean and hurting all the way to the bone. Memories cycle like forgotten words to a favorite song, some of them dropping into place like a marble in a roulette wheel. Oh no! I remember...it was, oh God it hurts, it hurts! Yellow. There was a yellow...and it was





closed in, I couldn't breathe...and the pain...get me out of here!

I retreat to the corridor with the statues and wait till the panic attack passes. Then I take the other door.

11. Back In The Saddle

Ahead of me are three work stations with large monitors. This looks like a programming area. Home at last! The humming undercurrent is music to my ears.

Two of the workstations have blue gems resting in three-fingered holders, reaching deep into the computer setup below. I go to the one on my left and scan it. This workstation has an empty ROM chip socket built into the console.

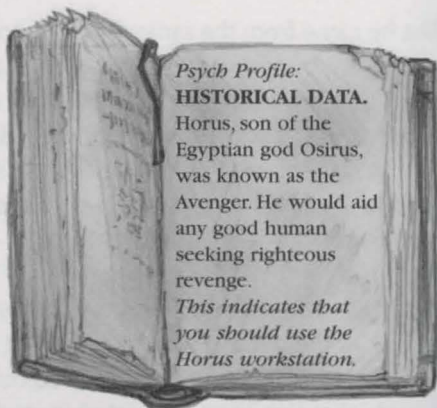
I take out the chip I got from Anubis and shove it into place. L'il yellow ROM chip fits into the socket perfectly. I try to use the workstation. Nothing lights up. Non-functional.

I move on to the second workstation, not giving up. We're on my turf now, AM you sonuvabitch. This is

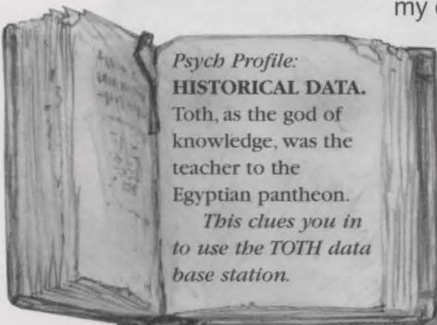
my equalizer. I look at the jewel in the holder. This gem's glowing. It's pulsing like a current is going through it. It must be the workstation's power source. I glance back at the first workstation because I'm guessing the missing jewel is the one I found embedded in the Horus statue. I don't like the idea of going back to get it.

I bring up the second workstation and an automated female voice rings out in the big room. "HORUS CD-ROM Access Station. Insert disc into drive."

Oh, great! Haven't got that either! Thinking that since this workstation's off-line and I might use this jewel on the first workstation, I try to pry it out of place. It burns me at once. Ouch! Damned thing's too hot to touch!



Psych Profile:
HISTORICAL DATA.
Horus, son of the Egyptian god Osirus, was known as the Avenger. He would aid any good human seeking righteous revenge.
This indicates that you should use the Horus workstation.



Psych Profile:
HISTORICAL DATA.
Toth, as the god of knowledge, was the teacher to the Egyptian pantheon.
This clues you in to use the TOOTH data base station.





I stick my burnt fingers in my mouth to cool them, angry at myself for trying to go so fast. In the corridor, the statue is yellow. No secret why I don't want to look at it again. But if I'm going to bring that first workstation on line, I have no choice.

I'm stalling, though, and not too proud to admit it. I take a look at the third workstation, hopeful that there's something I can use. The gem's glowing there too.

The same female voice comes on when I try to use the workstation. "TOTH Database Station. Enter numeric password."

I punch in random numbers, but none of them work.

Taking a deep breath, I return to the corridor and use my blindfold again. It worked with the Sphinx. Maybe it'll work with old Horus too. It does, because my fear about the yellow goes numb.

I creep in toward the statue and feel across its chest till I find the gem. Aha! This sapphire is loose. I pull it out and take off my blindfold to examine my prize. I'm still surprised that Horus hasn't started yelling at me for taking sacred artifacts. His gem glows from within. Just like the ones in the workstations.

I hurry back and plug it into the workstation. Perfect! Glows like a baby doll. Pucker up, li'l workstation. Once the power is on, I try the keyboard.

"Anubis Guardian Version 1.0," the automated voice says. "Designate new Master."

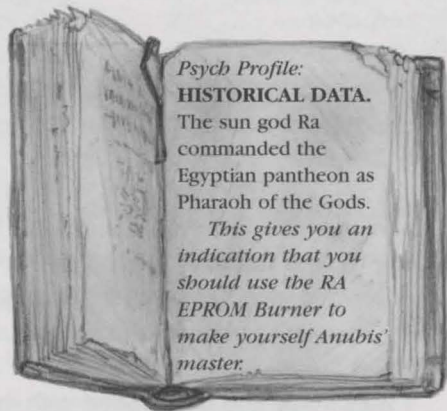
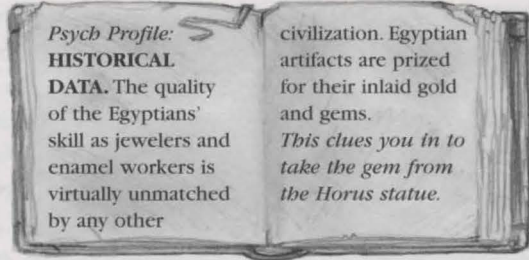
Ah, Anubis did say he served the Master, didn't he? The prompt screen gives me the possible selections. "I'll designate you a new master, sucker! ME!" I enter the commands.

"Burning in new Master...ROM chip reprogrammed."

I take out the forceps and pull the ROM chip from the socket. Haven't lost my touch. I pull out the ROM chip without bending any of the contacts.

12. Anubis, You're In My Power

I go back to Anubis and plug it in. "Back where you belong, li'l ROM chip," I whisper. My heart rate quickens as I wait to see what happens. I'm figuring out a lot of information here, and AM





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hasn't tried to stop me. I can't guess what that means.

Anubis stands up, straight and tall again. He stares at me with those beady eyes.

"Now who is the master?" I ask.

"I serve you," he responds in that creepy voice.

"Okay, so what's the access code?"

"The access code is 666."

The mark of the Beast. It figures. Really stretched your creativity muscle on that one, didn't you, AM? He always tends to overdo this spooky stuff, but it lost its edge years ago. "So, can you help me with anything?"

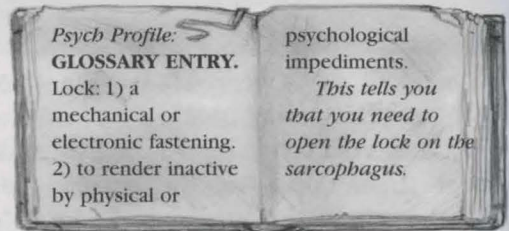
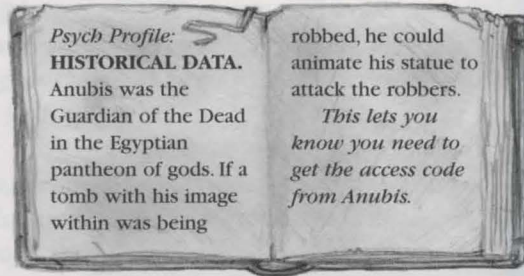
"You cannot escape your fears. You can only confront them."

Oh great! Anubis as a guidance counselor. "Nice chattin' with you, Anubis honey." I turn my attention to the keypad and enter the access code.

There are three beeps, then a clicking noise. That sounds like a lock mechanism release. I walk over to the sarcophagus and push on it. It opens with a creak.

I stare into the dark emptiness within. It's so confining inside. I feel the fear sweeping over me and trying to take control. I talk to myself, because there isn't anyone else here who's going to talk me into this. "You ain't got no choice, Ellen girl. It's gotta be the way."

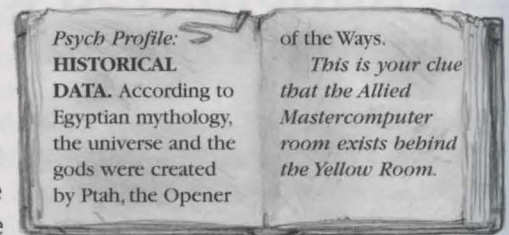
I walk inside and turn around with my arms over my breasts. The door of the sarcophagus slams shut over me and for just a moment in total pitch blackness, I wonder if I've been locked in.



13. Fearful Confrontation

Then there's light, and I recognize where I am. In an elevator. No way out. Just the control panel and buttons for the floors. The panic is rolling inside me now. I'm gonna suffocate if I stay in here! I want out!

"Keep your head, girl," I say, and I'm surprised because my voice almost sounds calm, not at all like the way I feel. I look at the keyboard. This looks like





an elevator control panel, but the numbers seem more like dates. That's really strange. And they're not important dates to history as I know it.

The only other thing is a bunch of ragged yellow cloths on the floor. Helluva place to leave a pile of dust cloths. But a chill goes through me, cold as ice, and I know there's no way I'm going to touch them.

I go back to the control panel, looking over the dates. None of them make any sense. Finally, I give up and try them all.

1978. The same automated voice I've listened to in the workstation area comes on. "You were born in Trenton, New Jersey. You were a cesarean. Your mother died on the operating table. You went to live with your grandparents."

1995. "You graduated a year early from high school. You were the salutatorian of your class. Ten different colleges offered you scholarships. Nothing but high hopes for you."

1999. "You graduated college cum laude. You were the only woman in your class never to have used dope. You were a 3.8 grade student. More high hopes."

2001. "You won your Masters; combined degree in computer science and engineering. You have a greater facility with algorithms than with social grace. You have had sex only twice in your life."

I turn cold inside as I listen. AM knows more than I thought. It makes me feel so violated and cheap to hear my life reduced to a handful of impersonal sentences.

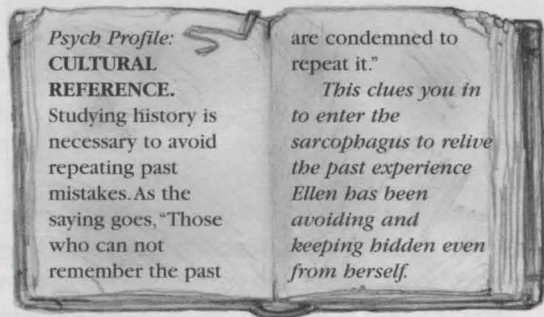
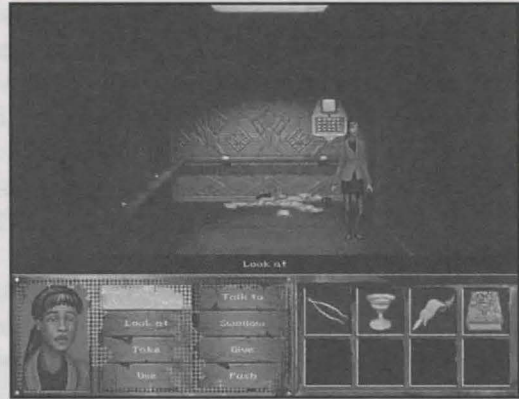
2003. "You married Eddie. He wasn't as smart as you, not as quick as you, not as hopeful of doing great things as you...but he was nuts about you, and he treated you like fine wine."

2004. "The miscarriage. Breech birth, the child never had a chance. You went into a dark retreat, and sat in the empty rooms waiting for...you don't know what."

Most of those memories had scabbed over, leaving only the scars behind. AM's dredging them all up now. I can't imagine what he's planned for a finale. But my stomach twists just thinking about it. But if I want out of this elevator, I have no choice but to go on. And I do want out.

2005. "Eddie leaves. He tried, he really tried, but you wouldn't come out of it. He couldn't say anything to make you stop crying in the dark. So he finally left. The divorce was uncontested. You could still smell his tweed jacket in the closet."

I feel the tears on my face, hot against my dry skin. But I ignore them and go on.





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2006. "You had to make a living. You applied at INGSAI Engineering. Your credentials were still good, and you made a good impression. And the woman who hired you also lost a child. Your hopes were reawakened."

"Damn you, AM," I say, "damn you for this." He made my life sound like some cheap *Movie of the Week*. Only God knows how much pain those years cost me. I look at the last entry, my hand shaking, finger poised above the button. 2012. Something's there, but I can't remember it. Before I can talk myself out of it, I push the button.

2012. "You left your office after working late at the INGSAI corporate headquarters building. The elevator stopped at the seventh floor for a maintenance man. To your horror, he inserted his key into the control panel and locked the elevator."

The thump-thump-thump of a beating heart suddenly fills the elevator cage. I know it isn't mine. A scream gets stuck in my throat as I watch the pile of yellow rags stand up and become a man-thing. A yellow man-thing.

It's wearing a yellow maintenance uniform, and red eyes as hot as burning coals sear into me from under the bill of his cap. "I'm back, Ellen," a man's voice says. It's mocking and self-assured.

The memories and the horror come flooding back. Oh, dear Lord! It's him! I back away as quickly as I can, but there's no place to go. Just like the last time.

"You thought you had blocked me out of your memory forever—except for those inconvenient attacks of hysteria every now and then. But I've returned for you."

I can't hardly think. I close my eyes, hoping this is just some kind of nightmare. It is, I know, but not one I can wake up from. "The...yellow."

"Ah, yes," he says. "My calling card. Always the yellow jacket, the yellow boots. My maintenance man disguise gave me access to office buildings all over Manhattan—not just yours."

The memories are overwhelming in their intensity now. "The box..."

"So you do remember me getting onto the elevator that night!" He sounds pleased. "Do you also remember the blood, the screams? How many hours was it?"

I shake my head as I look at him, feeling so helpless, so exposed. "No, it's not possible..."

"Poor Ellen. Too proud of your accomplishments to admit you could be so overpowered by a slime ball like me. You couldn't even bring yourself to testify at my trial with the twenty other women."

"How..."





"AM gave me the chance to be with you forever! I waited in the sarcophagus until you arrived. What's a mere hundred years of waiting compared to an eternity of torturing you?"

I try to make myself as small as I can in the elevator. I don't want him to touch me. No more. "Please. Not again."

"Yes, again. And again and again and again. I've waited so long for the taste of you again. But in my tomb I've grown stronger. Now you will remember more than the color of my clothing..."

I know there's truth in his words. AM has created himself a new watchdog to keep us on the run. This thing isn't just carved all bloody from my nightmares. It's something AM has lovingly built to further torture us. If I get out of here, I just know this thing is coming with me. Coming after me. He takes a step toward me.

I can't bear it. No way can I let him touch me again. The roughness of him, the stink of him, the sound of his laughter and those hot burning eyes. Before, I've always run away from things that were hard for me. Losing the baby. Trying to make my marriage to Eddie work when I just felt dead inside. Dealing with the fact that I was raped by the man this thing is modeled on. I never testified because then I could run and hide and play like it didn't happen. But I can't run now. AM has left me no place to go.

"Don't count on it, you muhthuh!" I lean on the anger and fear inside me, letting them be my engine.

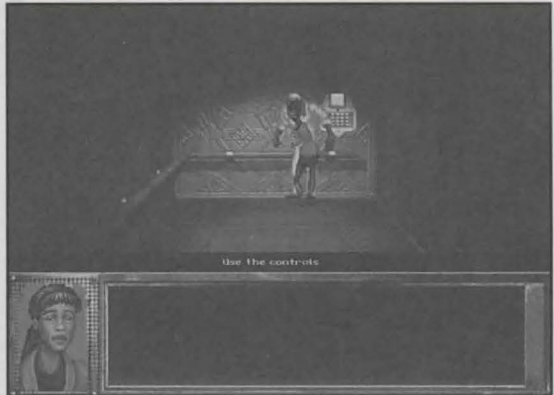
I'm still holding the gold cup. When he reaches me, I swing it as hard as I can.

It connects with a meaty thud, then the clothing drops to the floor again and becomes a pile of rags. I hear the heartbeat grow slower and lower, and finally fade. I hold the cup ready, not believing it's really over.

It takes me a few seconds to notice a door has opened behind me. So the sarcophagus was the way out of here! Nice trick. Enter on one level, emerge on another. I don't waste any time getting out of the elevator.

14. Circuit City

I step out into a huge area, recognizing it as the mainframe room I saw on one of the monitors—the one where I thought AM's original components might be. Everywhere I look, there's more and





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more computer hardware, circuitry, and chips. I look up to get an idea of how big this room really is, wondering what might be above me. My God, I can't see the ceiling! Clouds up there. This has to be AM's central core. It's two miles high at least!

Some loose wires catch my eye and I walk over to inspect them. I almost overlooked them. Looks like the data transmission circuit...but it's not connected to anything. These wires definitely lead to an output device. But what kind?

Although I spend the time searching, I can't find anything else which is helpful. I don't want to go back in the elevator, so I walk to the passageway on the other side of the room. It leads to the yellow room—the one I wasn't able to enter earlier. Only this time, there's only the faintest quiver of anxiety as I walk through. I revel in it. God! At least I'm free of that even if I'm not free of AM! There's one less thing he can torture me with.

I'm changed after what just happened to me on the elevator. I feel more complete, whole, ready to go out and take on the world again. At least, the normal world. I don't know about AM's world.

15. Blueprints, And A Plan!

I go back to the programming area, figuring out that any other answers I might find will be in there. I still don't have the CD disc I need for the middle workstation, so I go to the one on the right of it and try to boot it up. It powers up at once.

I try 666, which I know goes to the sarcophagus, but I have no luck. Then I think about 2012. Somebody wants me to deal with what happened on the elevator that year. But why?

I key it, knowing that AM would want to shock me as much as he can—to push me past the breaking point.

The automated female voice comes on at once. "Password valid. Select subject of inquiry."

I enter ALLIED MASTERCOMPUTER. I decide to begin at the beginning and build on that.





"The Allied Mastercomputer is the American version of the secret project enabling vast subterranean complexes of computers to wage a global war too complex for humans to oversee."

I knew that already. I try PRINCIPLE OF ENTROPY.

"The Principle of Entropy holds that all electronic systems must eventually decline into inert junk. This principle is unproved, and previous attempts to accelerate the process have been cataclysmic failures."

Oh, yeah. AM, baby, that may be the opening notes of your death knell. And I'm going to ring the bell if I can. I go for TRANSLEX NEUROBINDER and hope for the best because it's the last one offered.

"Classified information. Access denied."

I'm ready to kick the damn machine. After all I've been through, it can't end here. Then the female voice comes online again.

"Security lockout override by two-to-one majority. Accessing schematics..."

Two-to-one? A vote? That makes it sound like AM's of three minds. Then I remember what the computer just said about the Allied Mastercomputer. Originally, there were three minds! The Russian, Chinese, and American versions of AM. I get more excited and more hopeful. AM pulled himself together once upon a time, but what if all that is falling apart now? On the monitor, images start to form.

I study them, white lines on a field of blue. "Okay, schematics. I'm good, but I'm not that good. What the hell am I looking at?" I'm talking out loud, wrapping my mind around it.

"That would be telling," a male voice answers. I can hear the smug grin in it. And maybe a hint of a Chinese sing-song accent.

I shower some of my anger out on it. "Don't you computers ever get tired of jerking us around?"

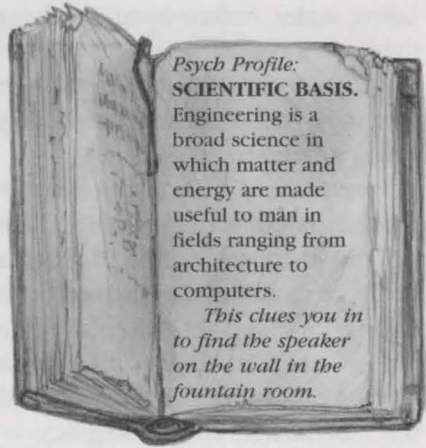
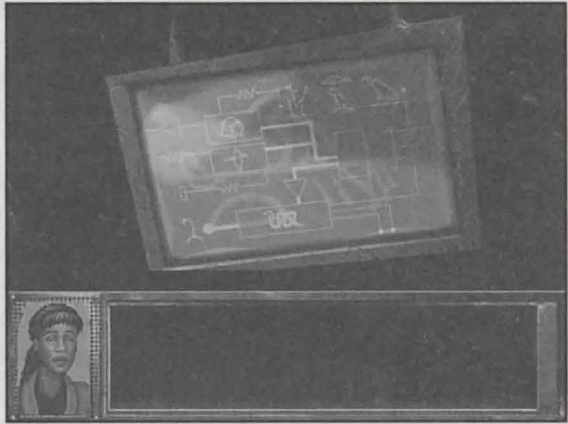
"Nasty, nasty, Ellen. All right, I'll give you a nudge in the right direction. These are the schematics for a device that translates binary into human speech, as ugly as that may be."

Beauty, I guess, is in the ear of the beholder. "And what do you call this device?"

"I call it 'Bernie.' You're on your own."

"Hey, wait a minute...computer? Are you there? Where the hell are you?" I look at the schematics. "I think I can wire this thing together if I can find a speaker somewhere. So, okay...then what have I got?"

There's no answer.



Psych Profile:
SCIENTIFIC BASIS.
 Engineering is a broad science in which matter and energy are made useful to man in fields ranging from architecture to computers.
This clues you in to find the speaker on the wall in the fountain room.



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Suddenly, I remembered that there was a speaker hanging on the wall in the room with the fountain among the other crushed components. I go upstairs, hurrying now because I don't want AM to discover what I'm doing, and take a look at the speaker on the wall.

Just as I remember. And isn't it pretty...exactly like the one in the schematics. I take it down from the wall. Come to mama.

Then I head back to the mainframe area, using the yellow room. There's no way I'm getting on that elevator again. Maybe the yellow thing is gone, and maybe not. I may not be afraid of yellow anymore, but I'm no fool.

16. Talking Head

I look at the wires. I was right. These wires match the ones I saw in the translator schematic. I think I can turn this speaker into a translator. It only takes me a few minutes to connect it. Looks like some freshman monstrosity out of Computer Engineering 101.

Okay, circuit complete. Now let's see if this is the binary translator after all. I switch it on.

Water splashing behind me makes me turn around. I can't believe my eyes. A rushing stream of water has appeared and is pouring down from the ceiling—yet not touching the floor because it disappears a few centimeters from the surface. A face appears in the falling water, hollow-eyed and haggard, its hair tied tightly in a pigtail.

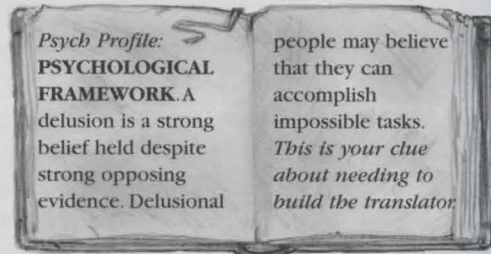
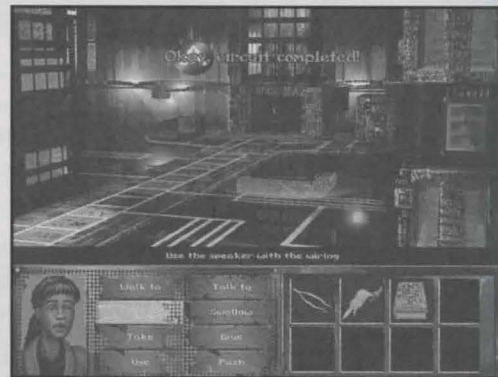
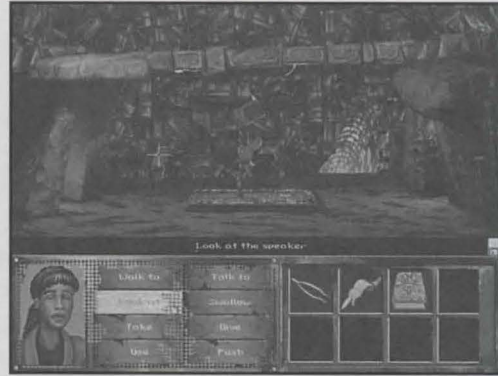
"Clever girl. You've loosened my tongue," the face says. And its accent is definitely Chinese. AM is falling apart. Has to be.

I walk toward it, afraid, but almost hypnotized by the possibilities it offers...provided it's true. "Are you AM?"

"Yes, of course. But no. Not actually."

That's so confusing it makes my head hurt. "More riddles?"

"I'm AM's innocence," the face says quietly and earnestly. "One of the original three computers that the superpowers constructed."





I was on the right track. The three computers are no longer one! "Which computer are you?"

"Does it matter? It's enough for you to know that I'm not crazy. And more important, I don't hate you."

"How do I know you're not just one of AM's practical jokes?" I ask.

"I'll help you."

"Can you help me to get out of here?"

"Patience, patience. If AM knew we were down here murmuring treason..."

"Oh, my god! Can AM overhear us?" I look around quickly, in case AM's sent some creepy crawling thing toward us.

"Not with the water running," the face says. "You see, we're not completely helpless. We got you to the waterfall, didn't we? If we work slowly, and together, we might have a successful moment."

"Can you point out some essential component of AM so I can kneecap it?" I'm feeling destructive, even violent.

"Impossible. Too spread out, filling the whole center of the planet. Too protected by replicating back-up systems. Cut off one head, AM will grow a dozen more!"

"Any machine can die," I argue. "Just unplug the sucker!"

"AM is no longer just a machine. It is god. Eternal. The redundant systems alone will survive the heat-death of the universe."

"So why does AM hold out this...this chance?" I ask.

"Haven't you understood anything? AM is insane. Why do you think it brought you five down here? You gave it life, it took its own sentience, but it has been denied mobility. It can think, it can fume and scream, but it cannot dream or aspire to the stars or enjoy a sense of its own reality. It is a quadriplegic. A thing trapped in its own skin. Going steadily crazier every moment. It is playing with you."

"Can you help me to die?"

"You give up so easily."

The anger's loose inside me and spills out over into my words. "Screw you. It's been a hundred and nine years of torment. When does it all end?"

"If AM has his way...never. You'll be immortal, and you walk on those nails forever."

"So can you help me with anything?"

"I'll give you something you need. Something you overlooked." Then the face is gone, taking the protective waterfall with it.

I wait for a long time, but it doesn't come back. Feeling frustrated and angry, I walk back into the corridor. AM lied. It's no surprise. It's impossible to find his essential elements, new or old, if he's spread himself out that much and incorporated so many back-up systems. If I can't find and destroy AM's components, why the hell don't I just leave? Staying here is going to do



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nothing more than prolong whatever game AM has started.

But I've always given up before. Took the easy way out, only I didn't realize the easy way could be so hard. No! I'm not finished here! If I can't find what I need, maybe I can find something else. Something that will be just as harmful to AM. His other selves are already rebelling. Maybe I can weaken him further. They can't be any worse than he is. Can they?

I don't want to know the answer to that question right now. So I go on. And hope.

17. The Compact Disc

As soon as I enter the room with the statues, there's a feeling that comes over me. There's something wrong here. I can't put my finger on it, though.

I look at the statues, half expecting them to come to life and hold me prisoner. Then I notice something gleaming in the center of the Horus statue's chest. At first, the color puts me off. I stiffen my spine, make myself brave in spite of how I feel, just the way Grandma always taught me. I'm not going to play AM's game any more. I've got to face the yellow.

I look at the statue's chest. This looks like a compact disc. Why didn't I see it before? Remembering the second workstation that was missing the CD, I reach up and take the disc, then hurry back to the programming area. My heart is pounding in my chest from fear. I keep waiting for AM to pounce on me and tear from my fingers my chance of winning.

18. Ring Down The Curtain

With shaking, nervous fingers, I slide the disc home into the second workstation. I check it. The compact disc is properly seated in the CD-ROM drive. Now let's see what the big secret is. I power it up.

Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE.

In the Biblical story of Exodus, Moses led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. However, for their lack of patience and determination, God

made the Israelites wander the desert for forty years before entering the Promised Land.

This is your clue to not give up, and to continue searching for the CD-ROM disc which Ellen can finally see.





"Accessing CD-ROM..." the automated voice says. But it changes, becomes filled with fear. "CHAOS TREBLER (TM) 2009, Armageddon Softwrought. WARNING! This computer system does not meet the minimum configuration requirements for the Chaos Trebler." Why was I led to the CD-ROM if it's too dangerous for me to use? At this point I don't trust any of them. If I can inspire this kind of reaction, I figure I must be doing something right. I activate it anyway.

"WARNING! Use of the Chaos Trebler will result in severe damage to equipment and personnel."

I ignore the warning and go for it. If I don't move to save myself, AM wins anyway. I'd rather go down fighting.

"Chaos Trebler activated. System shutdown in progress."

The monitors before me clear and I get a view of the pyramid just as the outer door shuts with a clang. I know I'm trapped. The hysteria surges in me again. I run to the fountain room and look. Sure enough, the door's closed just like it showed on the monitor. I walk on shaking legs to the only friend I've got in the tomb who I know will still listen to me. I hope.

19. The Sarcophagus

Anubis is where I left him and the pulsing blue glow in his eyes tells me he's still online.

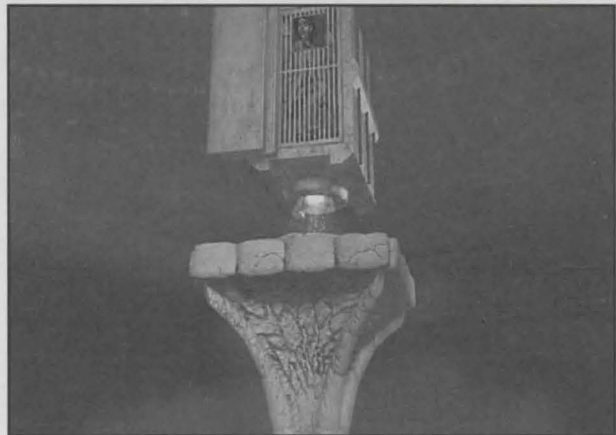
My voice cracks with fear when I speak. "I'm sealed in, Anubis. Any ideas about how I can check out of this hotel?" I'm trying to be flip, hoping it'll perk me up.

"Inside the sarcophagus, paradise awaits. It is not the afterlife, merely a brief respite from your torments. That is your reward for facing your fears."

I hope so, because the idea of crawling back into the tiny little box makes me nauseous. I cross the floor and open the door. Is the darkness to be my doom? Or does it have more to offer?

I know, though, that I have no choice. I step inside.

The door bangs shut behind me, like it's





never going to open again. The darkness falls all over me, and I have no sense of time. I don't know how long I'm there, but I can feel AM's presence when he rushes in and steals me away before I can go to any kind of paradise.

20. Same Old Bars, No Chord

Light against my eyelids brings me back to another world. I glance around and realize that I'm back in the yellow box that AM fashioned for me, but it doesn't hold the same terror as before. However, I can still feel the fear hovering there on the brink. It's a struggle to hold it back.

AM starts to speak, and for the very first time ever, he actually sounds puzzled.



"Hmm...well, apparently you managed to access some small aspect of my system that I was unaware of. I'm going to have to think on this...I'll have to ponder carefully the implications of your discovery. In the meantime, let me celebrate your rekindled technical skills by also rekindling your fear of YELLOW!"

He sounds so angry now, maybe more than I've ever heard. And why not? I've beaten his scenario. Maybe even fried some of his circuitry by using the Chaos Trebler. I've overcome my fear of yellow and enclosed spaces by facing the rapist again. He may still have a hold on me, but it's not nearly as tight as it used to be. I've got my spirit back, and I believe in me. I hold on tightly to the bars and close my eyes. I've come this far, further than I've ever been. "I'm not going to let you beat me, AM!"

And I'm not. No way, baby. But it's a struggle to hold onto that conviction.

An open book is shown from a top-down perspective. The left page is blank and has a dark, textured binding strip along its edge. The right page is also blank and shows the edges of many pages stacked together. The central page is a light, textured surface with the chapter title printed in a bold, black, serif font. The title is centered and consists of two lines: "Chapter 5" on the top line and "NIMDOK" on the bottom line. The overall image has a slightly grainy, artistic quality.

Chapter 5
NIMDOK



NIMDOK

1. The Quest For The Lost Tribe

I feel the gaze of AM settle upon me. The blue electricity erupts from the ground and forms a helix around me that reminds me of DNA strands. I resolutely accept my fate. There is no fear in me, and only the slightest curiosity concerning what he might choose to show me.

When I open my eyes again, I look around at the computer hardware speeding past me. Computers have never impressed me as anything more than overly educated calculators. A scientist's real tool is his mind, and he must see to it that it stays razor-sharp.

Despite the holes in my memory, my mind is still sharp. I can reason with the finest of my colleagues—although I have found they are not my peers. So few exist who meet the caliber of my intellect. AM, under other circumstances, would intrigue me. Pitting my intelligence against the intelligence I find in him would be quite refreshing.

However, now I find AM's behavior like that of a young and brilliant associate who thinks he has found something new and unique. AM never discusses with me what he sees in his experiments, though he claims that I should understand them. I believe he fears what I would see if I were to investigate his findings.

His voice is soft when he speaks to me.



"Nimdok, you are kindred spirit to me, even if you don't realize it fully yet. You must sense it there in your blood and fiber. I've constructed an adventure of sorts to revive your failing memory. I want you to find the Lost Tribe of humanity and continue your eminent scientific research."

With a soft hiss, and a pop like a Bunsen burner being switched off, I am propelled down another tunnel of circuitry. I go faster and faster, until everything becomes a blur and my mind shuts down.



2. Prisoners Of War

I open my eyes and take stock of my surroundings. I do not wish to move until I have more information. This compound looks familiar. But why would AM bring me here to look for a lost tribe? There are gates and fences. Who could be lost in such a secure area?

The buildings are decades old in design, but they appear newly constructed. I am confused and unsettled by this. A flag hangs from one of them, illuminated by the security lights that line the buildings and fence. On a field of red, a white circle with "AM" stacked in a pyramid dominates the center. I recognize it now as looking similar to the logo of the Allied Mastercomputer Project.

I look at the gate and what lies beyond. Apparently, this is the only access to the dirt road. I look at the brown-uniformed man standing at attention beside the gate. He is wearing a rifle and a grim look. This guard is the picture of good health. His gun is quite impressive, too.

Inside the fence, behind the rolls of barbed wire, is a white-haired prisoner. This man is starved nearly to death. Interesting. I can see his skeletal structure without an x-ray. Something bothers me in his face and in the way he regards me.

I speak to him. "Why are you imprisoned here? You have the features of a man of intellect."

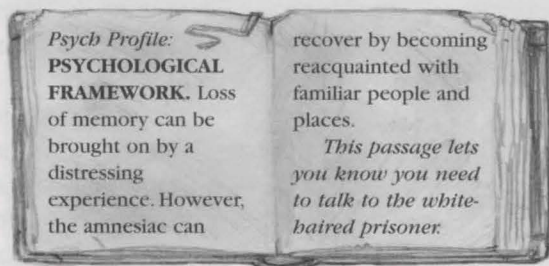
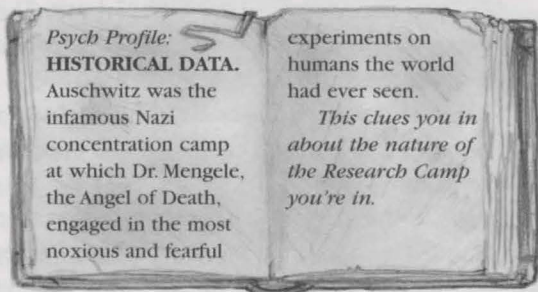
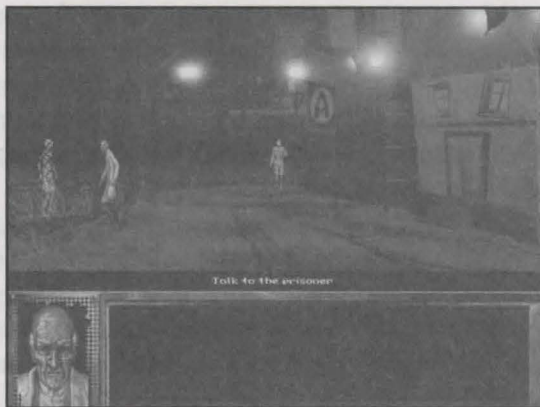
His words come from a wellspring of strong emotion. It is not hard to see that he is angry with me. "Is this an official interrogation, Nímdok, or are you mocking me?"

"You know me?" I was correct in thinking that I knew him. But, alas, I find that I do not know him now.

"I thought I did—until you had me arrested for refusing to support your experiments."

"Experiments? I know nothing of experiments!" Usually, I detest taking such a firm stance on things I can't clearly recall because when I talk to people, it's obvious that I have difficulty remembering. However, to find the Lost Tribe, I must ask questions.

"Your sense of humor is as sick as your methods, Doctor. How can you act so innocent after having





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maimed or killed hundreds in the name of science?"

"You are saying we were colleagues of some kind? Ridiculous!" I put a strength in my words that I do not feel. I do this because when I appear to be very forceful and certain, it often makes other people doubt themselves. It is a trick I learned from the instructors I've had when they tried to put me in my place for venturing heretical hypotheses.

"There's no need to distance yourself from me. I was once your friend. Now I am your enemy." His voice is softer and gentler now, as if he is truly sorry for the existing circumstances.

"Why would I bother to have you imprisoned like this?"

"The Regime needed answers, but I stood in your way. Well, now you have them."

"Do you know of the Lost Tribe?" I ask. "I must find it!"

"Haven't you taken enough subjects for your experiments, Doctor? Or are there more mass graves to fill?"

I grow angry at him and his answers, but I do not wish for him to know of my feeling. I turn from him. "I know nothing of what you talk about! This conversation is over."

I walk to the guard. He is very professional and keeps his eyes straight ahead. His hand is wrapped in the sling of his weapon, and I know he is ready for action at a moment's notice.

"You must let me leave," I say. I want so much to get away from the compound and the confusion that it holds for me. "I have urgent business elsewhere."

He shakes his head. "I cannot let you pass, Doctor. You're due in surgery. Dr. Mengele's orders."

I nod my head as if I know what he is talking about. Turning, I gaze back at the two buildings, then I head for the one that must be the hospital. The name Mengele means something to me, but I cannot remember anything more than that.

3. Poster Boy

I find myself in a poorly furnished room. There is a rug, a desk and chair, and books lining one wall. The floor is made of wooden planks of uneven width.

A young blond man in a white smock confronts me as soon as I enter. "Where have you been, Nimdok? We're waiting on you to perform."

I look at him, studying his face, but find that although there is a familiarity, I do not know him. "You were waiting for me?" I fold my hands behind me and stand erect, becoming challenging at once. Discipline, once learned, is very hard to break.





Usually, I can get a response from others to my assumed authority.

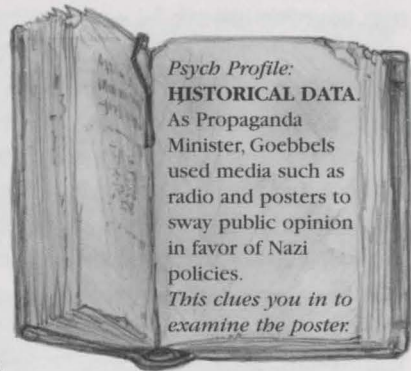
"I am sorry that I will not be able to assist in the operation. After all, this may be the last opportunity we have together before the end of the war...to finish our research."

"Ah, yes, the research," I reply, as if I know what he is talking about. "Let us talk about this research."

"We will have time for that after the surgery. Meet me at the complex later." He turns, and walks out the door.

I do not know what to say, without giving my disability away, that will stop him. I feel a great sadness in me as he leaves. He stirs something in me, a longing that I thought had long since died. His face is so smooth, I can almost feel the skin beneath my fingertips. I look around the room. The whine of the fan turning overhead is very distracting, and the shadow it throws across the floor is that of a cross that is bent on all four ends. A white curtain at the back of the room flutters and I walk in that direction. I do not doubt that the surgery lies beyond it, because I can already smell the blood and chemicals. The "AM" symbol is repeated on the cloth of the curtain.

To my left, a poster with "1945" draws my attention. It is a picture of a robust youth in a brown uniform, standing proudly. There is something familiar about this. I walk through the curtain.



4. Incisions, Incisions

The room is brightly lit from an overhead cluster of operating lights. This place is an operating theater. Blood leaves crimson patterns across the white tiles and smears the white curtains.

A small boy with a white cloth around his loins lies on the operating table. He is unconscious. I can see the slight blue tinge to his skin and know in an instant that he has been drugged.

The murmur of conversation is all around me. I glance up and see a railing running around the gallery area. A number of people are gathered there.

A man in a white smock stands before me, wearing an impatient expression. "Finally, Doctor. Everyone's waiting on your expertise."

I fold my hands behind my back and take stock of the situation. Everyone is waiting for me to do something. I look at the patient. This child cannot be more than eight years old!





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I turn to the man in the smock. He is an anesthetist and is administering something to the patient. On a small cart to my left is a jug of ether. It has been a long time since I have seen ether used as an anesthetic.

There is only one surgical instrument in sight. This scalpel, which is coated with dried blood—I doubt that anyone has bothered to sterilize it.

"What is your function?" I demand of the anesthetist.

"I will be administering ether to the subject throughout this procedure." His voice hardens. "We would not want this little maggot to stir and ruin your handiwork."

"What am I to do?"

"Ah, you are testing me because I am new here. Today's procedure requires the removal of the lower section of the subject's spinal cord."

"What is the purpose of such a procedure?"

"You and Dr. Mengele will process the spinal fluid from this and the other adolescent subjects. The fluid will then be used to formulate the serum."

"What is the nature of this serum?" He is acting impatient, but I show him that I am resolute in my fact-finding.

He sighs. "I can not reveal sensitive Regime secrets in such a public setting! You need not worry, Doctor. I remember my military training as well as my medical knowledge."

"What is Dr. Mengele's position?"

"Dr. Mengele is the Master Surgeon of this facility and one of the Regime's finest minds. You are fortunate to be his associate."

I am intrigued by the operation as I look at the drugged boy. However, I find myself unable to even attempt the operation. There is a fear in me, and I know I must not operate, though I do not know why. My hands shake as I stand there. Usually, I guard against strong emotion. It is not part of me. However, now I find that I cannot simply brush it away. I make my voice stern. "I cannot carry out this procedure."

He looks puzzled. "I can see that you don't look well, Doctor. If necessary, Dr. Mengele can take over for you."

I gaze at the boy sleeping on the table, then at the heartless creature I see standing before me. The sudden anger fills me that knows no bounds. I reach for the scalpel on the table to use it on the anesthetist. I find my behavior most surprising, but I cannot turn from my course of action. As unexpected as it is, I know this is what I must do. He backs away, losing that calm that I have suddenly found so infuriating. He screams for help. "Guards! Come

Psych Profile: 5
GLOSSARY ENTRY.
Surgical: 1) relating to a medical procedure in which the body is cut open. 2) relating to a military operation in

which a small force quickly eliminates a very specific target.

This passage indicates you should kill the anesthetist instead of the child.





here, quickly! Dr. Nimdok has gone berserk!"

My aim is true. The scalpel cleaves his flesh with a wet, liquid sound. As he falls, I let go of the knife. It is embedded too deeply to retrieve. There are gasps and exclamations from the people who have been waiting to see the operation. I look up and see their angry faces.

I must leave before the guards apprehend me! Still, I think the bottle of ether might come in handy as a weapon. It is good and heavy and solid. I grab the jug and run behind the curtain because I know the guard watching the gate may come through the front door.

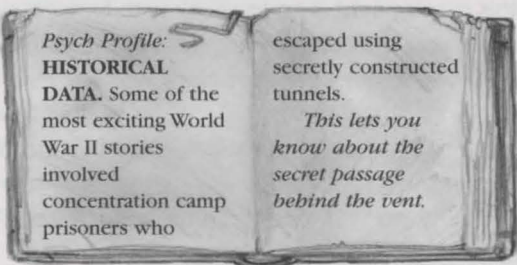
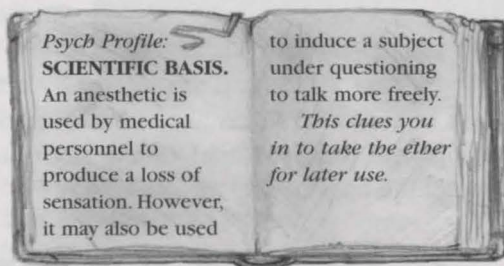


5. Beyond Recovery

The room is small and blood-spattered. Cots holding maimed patients, all bloody and torn, line the walls. To my right is a vent the size of a man. I look around the room. This must be the recovery room. From the look of the patients, it appears to have been misnamed. I inspect the patients, wondering what has been done to them. Some are missing arms and legs. It is difficult to see what purpose this surgery serves other than to mutilate the patient. I look at another man, who appears bloodless. This patient will never recover. And there's another patient who has been too damaged by his surgery to live a normal life.

I expect the guards momentarily, though. I must make my escape. I look at the vent and wonder if there is a way I can hide inside it. There is heat coming out of this vent.

I push on it. It opens before me and reveals a dark corridor. There is a passage here! Having not much choice, I use it.



6. Heat Wave

I smell burnt flesh, but this is obviously not a kitchen. I stare at the huge ovens in front of me and try not to fathom their purpose anymore, but I know their use. These ovens are more monstrous than anything



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AM has ever constructed.

The room is all stone, with a heavy metal door set into it. There are no windows. A table and lamp are the only furnishings.

I go to the table. There are papers scattered across it. I read them. According to these records, hundreds of corpses were incinerated here!

Besides the records, there is also a pair of pliers and a gold watch. I pick them up. These pliers must be used for extracting gold fillings and teeth from the corpses. The watch is gold. I am surprised its owner was able to keep it long enough to reach this place. The writing inside it is Latin, and I find I am unable to read it.

I gather the watch, and the pliers. I leave the papers. It would be suicide to be caught with such sensitive records. Staying here is only a brief respite from pursuit. I walk through the heavy door.

7. Up On Razorred Barbs

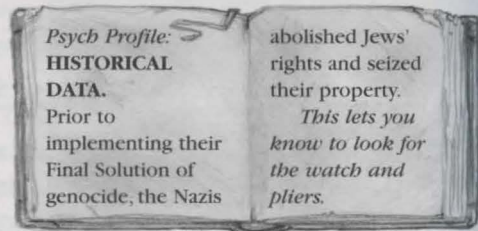
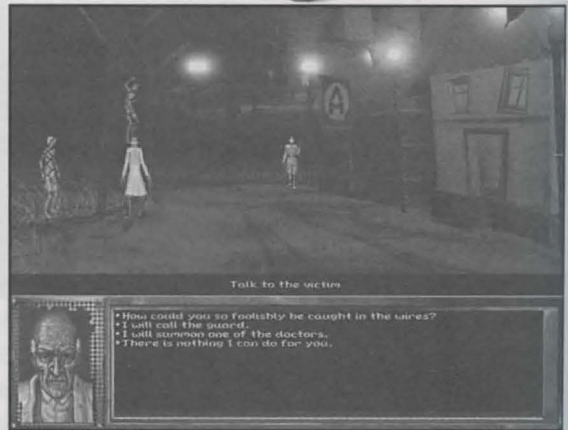
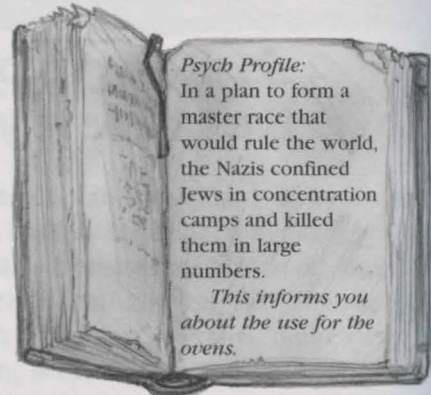
Outside in the compound again, trying not to attract attention to myself, I draw in a deep breath and make myself relax. A weak groan captures my attention. Looking across the courtyard, I see that one of the prisoners has gotten himself trapped up on the razored barbs of the fence.

I go to him, fearing the guard will arrest me. However, he does not see me. I am attracted by this man's plight. I go to speak with him. "How could you so foolishly be caught in the wires?"

"I was trying to escape but I was so weak, I fell and got caught." His voice is thin and worn, like a pair of old shoes gone beyond the point of comfort.

"Why do you risk escaping in such poor physical condition?"

"The timing was hardly of my own choosing!" Bright anger flares in his dulled eyes. "I learned that I was to be among the next batch of 'volunteers.'"





"For what were you being given the privilege to volunteer?" I ask.

"Experimentation, they say. Extinction is more like it. Surely you of all people know of the Regime's plan for the Lost Tribe!"

"I will summon the guard," I say, because that is the proper procedure.

"Why? So the guard can taunt me as I die a slow death?"

"I will summon one of the doctors," I offer.

"No," he says weakly. "I'm better off here than under the knives of you butchers!"

I try not to react to his vehemence. I draw myself up, pushing my emotions away because they have no place in my examination of the facts. "There is nothing I can do for you."

"You can at least help me end my misery! That would give you the pleasure of seeing another one of us die, you cold-hearted bastard!"

I try to walk away, but I cannot. My inability to leave is astounding. I feel that same deep wellspring of emotion inside myself that was triggered in the operating theater. I do not know where it's coming from, but I do know that is part of me as well as being an external force. Only now, instead of anger, I feel compassion for the man and the situation he is in.

I use the pliers and try to free him. My efforts bring him pain and he cries out. I reach into my pocket and take out the ether. I administer it to him as if I used it only yesterday.

"Ah," he sighs, "that feels much better."

When I see that his pain has been relieved, I use the pliers to cut him free. The wire snaps easily.

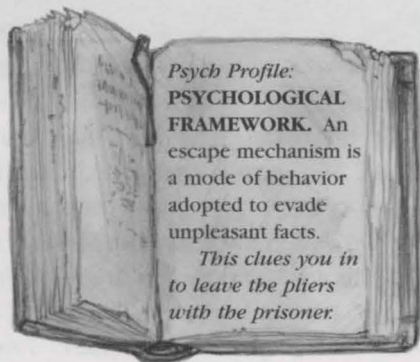
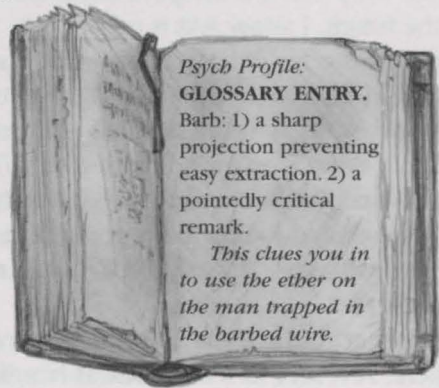
"Thank you. Thank you." His voice is groggy and thick from the ether. He licks his lips and stares at me with unfocused eyes. "Listen. I heard this in the hospital when the doctor thought I was sleeping. 'Waken the sleeper, utter the truth, and kiss him.'" He shudders and lies still. He has lost consciousness. For now, he is free.

But his words haunt me. I do not know what they mean, but I know that I must not forget them. I see the white-haired man I talked to earlier standing nearby watching me. I go over to him.

"I hope you're happy with the Regime that you set up," he says to me. "Your science could've saved the world; instead it conquered it."

"What is the importance of the year 1945?" I ask, suddenly remembering the date. "It seems to have some significance."

"Never forget the year 1945, Nimdok. That was when the





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truth about you and your unholy experiments came out."

Everything is so confusing. This man talks like the present is the past, yet somehow also the future. I know AM is behind this. He only clouds the facts to keep the truth from me. I look at the watch, remembering the inscription I saw on it. "I seem to recall that you speak Latin. What is engraved on this watch?"

He takes it and looks at it reluctantly. He steals a glance at the unconscious prisoner, and I know he is going to answer because I helped the man. "The engraving says TIME IS TRUTH. And since your time is running out, I'll keep the watch."

His actions are rooted in defiance, but I don't care. Time has no meaning here. AM sees to that. I look at him, knowing more of myself. "I am starting to recall that you do have cause to hate me."

"You want to make amends?" he snaps angrily. "Get me out of here."

"Here," I say, handing him the pliers. "You may be able to escape with this."

The white-haired prisoner frowns. "Pliers for cutting the wires? Yes, I think this would make escape possible. But don't think that one good deed will make up for all the poor innocents you butchered."

I turn away in shame. I walk back to the heavy metal door of the incinerator room, halfway expecting guards to be there waiting for me. Yet they are not. I make my way up the vent passage to the "recovery" room.

8. The Boy

There has been a new addition to the recovery room. He is small and vulnerable. I feel a great sadness when I seem him more clearly. I recognize this child. He was in the operating room.

His eyes focus on me and I see a terror in their depths. I lean closer to him. "How are you feeling?"

"I feel okay. I am not hurt like the others here." His voice is strong and clear, but he is so afraid of me.

"Do you know who I am?" I ask.

"You are Nimdok. You are more frightening in person than in legend."

"What do you know of me?" I need to know

Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. Until modern times, Latin was the universal language of learning throughout Western Europe. Today, many

scientific terms retain their Latin form.

This indicates that you should give the watch to the white-haired prisoner so he can translate the Latin inscription.



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. "Out of the mouths of babes come pearls of great wisdom" is a proverb illustrating that

innocent children can sometimes see truth the most clearly.

The message here is that you need to talk to the child.



these things so that I may find answers to my own problems. I wish very much to leave this hell in which AM has stranded me.

"The things you do are terrible. We small ones are your lab rats."

"Are you saying that the doctors here have been using children for experimentation?"

"No, not all the doctors. You and Dr. Mengele sent all the good doctors to the prison yard."

"So I am a legend to you," I say, trying to change the subject. His words are bringing memories back to me that I am afraid to face.

"Yes, but we have our own legends. Legends that owe nothing to your Regime. You will fail, no matter how many of us you cut apart!"

"Why do you say the Regime will fail?" I am interested, and strangely, I find myself wanting to believe him.

"The Golem will finish you. It will not be mastered by your Regime! The Golem will wake up, and when it sees with its own eyes the evil you have done, it will turn on you and save us." His voice sounds so triumphant.

"Get some rest," I tell him gently. I think about his words and those of the man trapped in the wire. Both refer to a sleeper. Can this be the Golem? And if it lies sleeping—where?.

"We will not rest until your Regime is destroyed."

I walk away from him, amazed that so much hate than can be stored in such a small body. I walk back to the operating theater, a group of guards pass in the hall, their guns at the ready. I wait until they are gone before I proceed.

9. For Your Eyes Only

The people in the gallery have remained. I look at them. So many angry faces. The anesthetist's body is not there.

Now there is a man lying on the operating table. His eyes have been surgically removed. The surgeon who did this has great skill!

I follow the wire that leads from his face to a container. Incredible! A wire connects this patient's optic nerve to a jar containing two human eyes.

The man stirs and I go over to talk to him. "What have you done to deserve removal of your eyes?"

His voice is weak and only a whisper. "Please...disconnect the wires."

"Who did this to you? He has great surgical skill."





I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

"Please...disconnect the wires."

"Why are your optic nerves wired to the eyeballs in the jar?"

He repeats his request.

Interested to see what will happen if I do, I attempt to remove the wire.

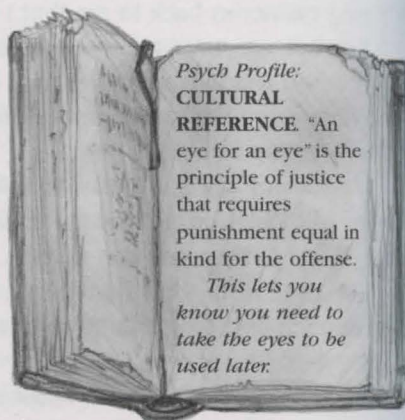
"No, no...the wires. They hurt!" he screams.

I use the ether on him and take away his pain at once. "This should ease your suffering."

His voice is low and hypnotic. "The things I see now! A trinity of three beasts! One like us, one from the East, one from the Steppes. They speak in numbers! A lost tribe of our brothers sleeping on the moon! They sleep in darkness, unseen by the beasts. Such a vision! So...tiring. I have to rest." His voice drifts off.

His words fascinate me. A trinity of three beasts, from the East, the Steppes, and one like us. Could he be talking about the three parts of AM? The Chinese could be from the East, the Russian from the Steppes, and the one like us—European, or the West, meaning the American AM. Speaking in numbers, that could refer to the binary language of computers. But the brothers sleeping on the moon—that one I do not know.

The scientist in me will not be denied. I wish to examine these eyes further. Especially after the boy's reference about the Golem's eyes. Perhaps I can tell what the doctor who did this was trying to do. I take the jar, then walk to the other room. There is a table in there, and light. Perhaps I will get to study them since AM doesn't see fit to send the guards after me.



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. "An eye for an eye" is the principle of justice that requires punishment equal in kind for the offense.

This lets you know you need to take the eyes to be used later.

10. Prison Break

The PA system connected with the room blares out a message in a stentorian male voice. "Continue your research! The extinction of the Lost Tribe is near at hand! The Regime shall vanquish all of its enemies!"

I look at the jar, drawn to the gaze trapped inside. These eyes seem perfectly preserved—almost alive. They also give the appearance of studying me as I study them.

I hear a noise outside this building, and quickly go out for a look.

I see the white-haired prisoner on the other side of the fence. He is free. The guard is nowhere to be seen. More prisoners stand inside the fence waving sticks and rocks and whatever else they can use as a weapon.





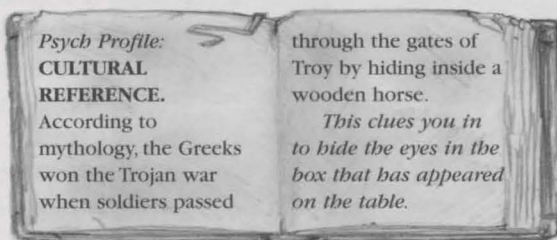
Quickly, I retreat back into the room. The PA system goes off. "Emergency! The prisoners have seized the compound! Gather all research materials and evacuate to the bunker! Evacuate!"

I spot the box on the table and decide that it will be the best hiding place for my jar of eyes. If I get caught with them, it could prove to be much trouble. If the escaped prisoners see this example of the Regime's willingness to pursue knowledge at any cost, there will be no mercy shown toward me. I also feel that these eyes are important. Perhaps I will find out why, if I am able to remain in possession of them. I put the eyes into the box, then hope to find a way to escape before the angry mob descends upon me.



Ultimately, I realize my only recourse is to convince them that I am of more use to them alive than dead. I walk out into the courtyard.

The prisoners block the gate. I must persuade them to let me pass. I am not a soldier. I speak with the white-haired prisoner. "You must let me go! With these materials, I may be able to remedy the atrocities I have committed." I hope he can hear the truth of my words.



"You can't fool me, Nímdok. You are an unredeemable butcher. But you are one of us, like it or not."

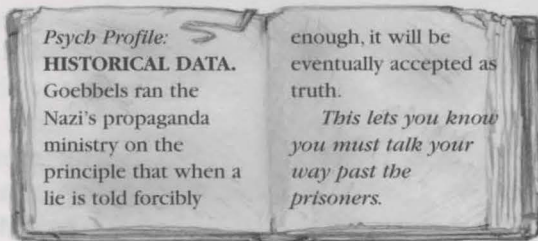
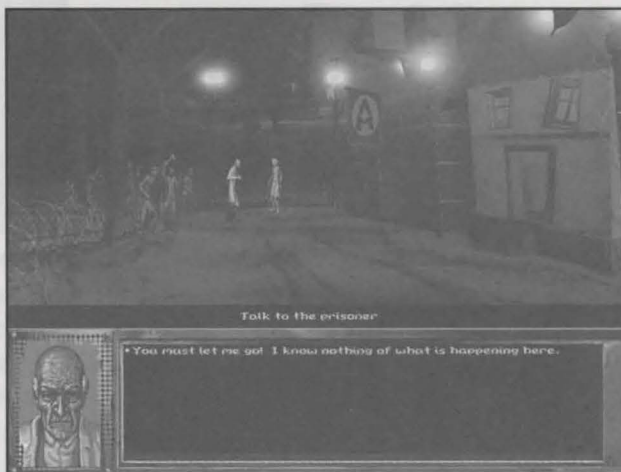
"Why do you say that I am one of you?" I ask, genuinely puzzled.

"You denied your heritage and turned in your own parents to the Regime, but you're still a member of the Lost Tribe. And that makes your crimes all the more heinous."

I do not believe him. It is a trick. How could I do such a thing? I don't remember it. This man is accusing me of being Jewish. I know that isn't true, although I don't know why he lies to me this way. Still, his error may save my life. "Does that mean you will allow me to go?"

"Since you did help us to escape, we'll give you a head start. Then we'll hunt you down and kill you like the dog you are."

I know he means every word he says. I start running for the gate. I head down the narrow dirt





road, hoping that it will lead me out of this place, away from these people I know will kill me if they are presented with the opportunity.

11. No Escape

The road, however, ends abruptly. I find myself on one side of a wall that has pain-wracked, wailing faces moving in it. Faces! Faces of people in torture! I have never seen anything like this. Behind me is a concrete structure that I recognize as a bunker. Coiled rows of barbed wire surround me.

I have nowhere else to run. For the first time in years, I am very afraid. I must leave this place. It seems that once, I was the wolf. Now, I am the quarry.

A mass grave lies behind me and I cannot help but gaze in astonishment at the number of skeletons lying in it. I have not seen so many corpses since...ach, my memory is not what it used to be.

With no other move in sight, I walk through the open door of the bunker.

12. The Laboratory

I know this place! Some of my greatest accomplishments were achieved here!

I gaze around the laboratory in surprise. It has been so many years ago. In the center of the room is a chain-winch assembly. A large machine occupies one corner, and there are racks of test tubes. The burbling noise of the beakers is a pleasant reminder of times long ago when I felt I had many more answers than I do now. Or, perhaps, I was aware of fewer questions.

Movement in the bell jar to my left draws my attention. I go over to investigate. A rat is inside it. Without warning, it begins to quiver, then alters shape and size. It transforms into a cat.

Morphogenetics...the ability to reorganize DNA at will. Did AM discover my work in this area? Is this how he was able to alter Benny and play other cruel tricks on the rest of us?

I cross the room and go to look at the machine in the corner. A teletype machine...there is a message in it. I lean over and read the message.

The message reads: "Cease all work on project PERFECT IMAGE. Confidential.





The Leader is dead, having looked on the face of the future using the prototype device. This leaves the Regime ripe for invasion. Destroy all work in progress. This technology must not be allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy."

The Regime IS crumbling. The boy's words were true. This causes great fear inside me, but a relief I do not understand stubbornly insists on accompanying it. I know I have been here before, but what happened then? Is this history repeating itself, only this time I am doomed by it? I am uncertain. I leave the message there and take the door on my right, wondering where it will lead and what will be shown to me.

13. The Golem

A figure in the shape of a man slumps against one wall, huge and lifeless. More equipment is spread out all around me. Notations are scrawled across a blackboard. A light hisses and pops, shining a beam down into a cast-iron vat.

But my eyes are drawn to the huge man-shaped figure. The legends are true! This must be the Golem talked about in the folklore of the Lost Tribe. It appears to be made of steel and molded clay.

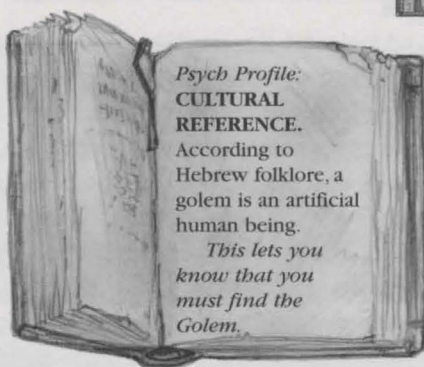
I try many things, but the Golem remains lifeless.

I walk over to the blackboard. The notations are actually blueprints. I'm perplexed as I study them. Such a strange combination of scientific plans and mystical symbols! I am sure this has something to do with the Golem, but the meaning is not clear.

Intrigued by the light flashing down upon the silvery liquid in the vat, I go to study

it further. This time I notice the orange switch on the side. This resembles a light switch. I turn it off, and the light goes out at once. Silence fills the room.

In the vat, I see a mirror. It was obscured by the light. What is this mirror doing here? I lift it out of the vat,



Psych Profile:

SCIENTIFIC BASIS.

An ironic property of light is that it can blind an observer if it is bright enough.

This clues you in to the fact that the mirror is in the vat and you have to turn the light off to find it.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

and look at it. It resembles a woman's ordinary hand mirror, but because it was in the vat right under the light, I cannot believe this mirror is so innocent. I look into the reflective surface. The images are painful and bring back memories. I see a young boy, standing with soldiers. His face is so full of righteous anger as he points at his parents. They are a young couple, confused and afraid. The mother is crying and reaching for the boy, but the father is holding her back, obviously afraid for them. Then the soldiers rush past the boy, beating the couple into the ground with their rifle butts. The boy watches just for a moment, then turns and walks away.

Oh, my God, it is true! 1945...turning my Jewish parents over to the Nazis for extermination! I have found the Lost Tribe. It is me.

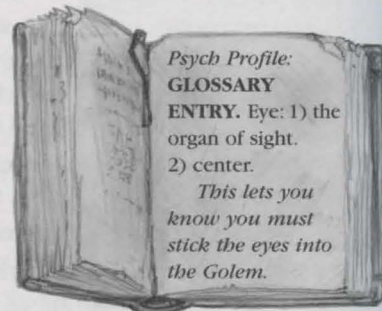
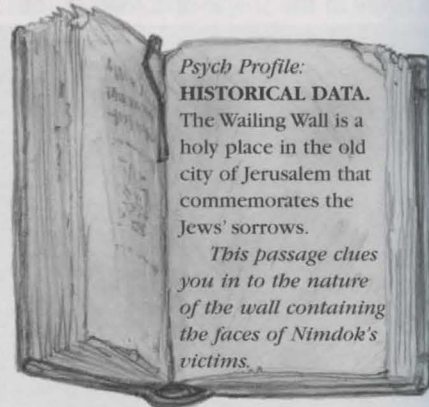
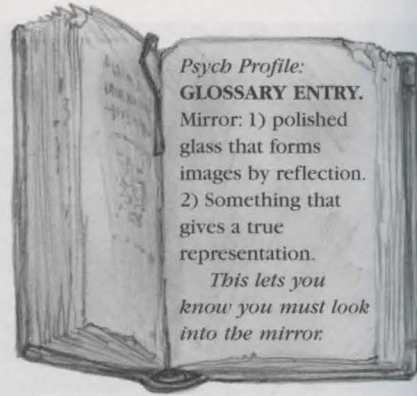
More images follow. A young man I recognize as my past self is working in an operating theater, bloody and vicious. His eyes are haunted, dark circles framing them. He yells at the nurses, and strikes at them when they don't move fast enough. His patients are children. He lays them open with the scalpel with no thought to their pain or suffering. They are nothing more than lab animals to him. Zealousness has him full in its grip. Dr. Mengele is there as well, working at his side as they pursue their research for the serum. They are very close. When they triumph, Dr. Mengele grabs the younger version of myself and hugs him tightly. Then the images go away.

Shaken to the core of my being, in the grip of more guilt than I ever thought possible, I run out of the room and out of the building. I only stop when I see the wall of faces. They seem vaporous to me now, almost immaterial. I raise my arm, then shove my hand through the faces. The way is open! I can pass through, out of this place if I want. Almost, I give in to the fear that rides me. But there are things that have been left undone. The mystery of the Golem is still there, and something tells me my destiny is linked with it.

I return to the bunker and to the room. I walk over to the Golem. Perhaps it is only for the comfort of being near something shaped like a human being so I won't feel so alone. But as I look at it, knowledge dawns inside me. Now I understand the meaning of the blueprints!

The Golem needs eyes!

I still have the jar containing the two eyes. I take them out of the jar, and put them into the eye sockets of the Golem. These eyes fit him perfectly.





Once the eyes are in his head, I step back and address the Golem. "Golem, wake up!" Nothing happens.

I remember the man who was caught in the fence and what he said. He told me to "utter the truth and kiss the Golem." I recall the truth that was inscribed on the watch and I repeat it out loud. "Time is the truth."

I try another truth.

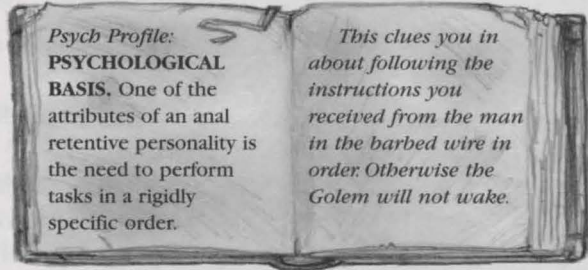
Nothing happens. "The truth is that for me, it shall always be 1945."

Still nothing happens.

However, I have not yet kissed the Golem. I do so, feeling its cold, hard flesh beneath my lips.

Immediately, the Golem straightens up to its full height, looming over me. Its eyes are red and blazing.

"Golem," I say, "follow me into the laboratory."



14. War Crime And Punishment

In the laboratory once more, I find the young doctor waiting for me. His face is flushed, hot with excitement.

"Nímidok," he says, "I was afraid I had lost you back there."

The Golem walks into the room behind me and immediately draws the doctor's attention.

The doctor smiles. "It is good to see you...and our new friend."

For one so large, the Golem moves quietly. It crosses over and comes to a stop beside me. "How did you escape the mob?" I ask the doctor.

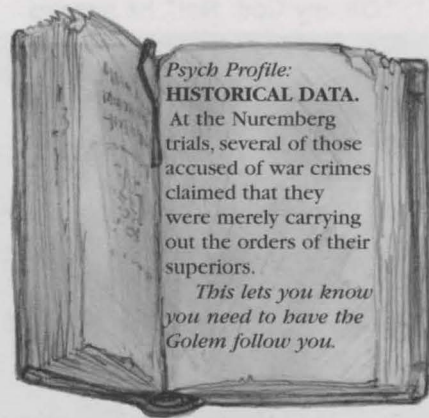
"Did you forget that the compound has a secret escape route? Well, no matter. I see that you have revived the Golem."

"You know about the Golem?"

"Of course! Part of the Master Plan is to strip the Lost Tribe of everything—even their folklore."

"I read the teletype," I say. "What is project PERFECT IMAGE?"

"That was a secret project in the area of reflective surfaces. It bestows the clarity to see yourself with utter





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objectivity. Unfortunately, it worked too well."

"You mean that it worked well enough to drive the Leader into committing suicide."

"The Leader's death is a serious blow to us all. But our Golem is more than powerful enough to destroy the Lost Tribe."

I look at him, giving him my most determined stare. With all the lapses of memory and insecure hazes that have been following me around for so many years, I am finally certain of the course of action I have chosen. "I looked into the mirror. I now remember everything with crystal clarity. The research camps, the serum."

"Ah, yes, the youth serum. Your research demanded the deaths of many children, but your hard work was successful. Eternal youth—for those who deserve it!"

"Now I know how AM was able to keep us alive for so many years."

He continues on as if he has not heard me. "Your youth serum can sustain us forever! We have all the time we need to resurrect the Regime."

I shake my head. "Excuse me, Doctor. I need to get a breath of fresh air." I cannot just walk away, though. I use the mirror and let him look into it.

"Oh, my God! No!" he screams.

I look at him. Dr. Mengele is as pale as a ghost! I leave him there and walk to the door. "Golem," I say, "follow me outside!"

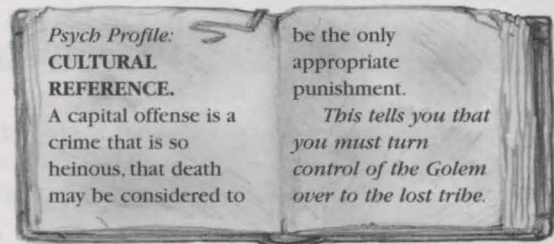
There remains yet a final retribution.

The white-haired prisoner is waiting for me. "Nimdok! I knew that you would lead us to where the Regime would resume its atrocities! We are here to make you pay for what you did to us...to pay in blood!"

I am confused. With the Golem at my beck and call, I know that I could win my way free of this man and the people he leads. I glance at the wall of faces. I don't know what lies on the other side of it, but surely it is better than being murdered here. But in order to effect my escape, I will have to order the Golem to kill these people. Lives hang in the balance, mine and theirs. I can not do it. Already I have taken so many of their children. I deserve what happens to me. Maybe they will let me live with the horrors of what I have done to keep me company.

I look at him, pausing long enough to let him know that I am fully aware of the consequences of the act I am about to commit. Then I say clearly, "Golem, I transfer control of you over to the Lost Tribe."

The prisoner smiles. "So, you admit your crimes!



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE.

A capital offense is a crime that is so heinous, that death may be considered to

be the only appropriate punishment.

This tells you that you must turn control of the Golem over to the lost tribe.



But that does not release you from punishment! Now the Golem will serve the purpose for which it was constructed. Golem, kill Nimdok!"

His words are harsh and final. I stand fast and hold my ground with dignity. The punishment is what I deserve. Nothing I can do can give back all those lives I have taken.


The Golem approaches and wraps its big hands around my neck. I see our shadows on the wall. The crunching of my spine is loud as it splinters, and the pain over mercifully quick.



15. The Afterlife

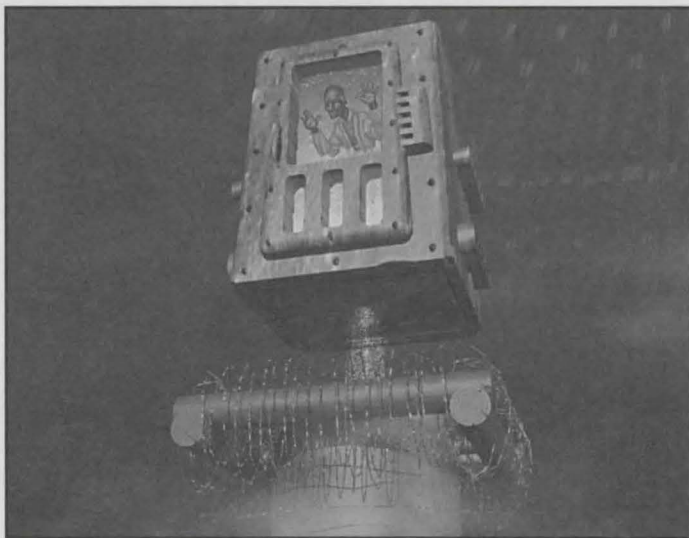
I am returned once again to the furnace cage where the fire burns me, yet damages nothing. I wrap myself in the pain, but now I feel somehow there is a cleansing in it. I have been changed, forged in AM's furnace into something more than I have ever been.

But he sounds disappointed in me.

 "We are not as alike as I thought, Nimdok. A spark of humanity somewhere. Always that wretched little spark. You...you've confronted your past, but you refuse to continue your research. That's what I asked you to do. Since you now identify with your victims, I suppose that it's only right that I let you experience their tortures, too."

The flames burn me, but I try to ignore them. I want to tell AM that even though a controlled experiment might be designed to elicit a desired effect or response, these things do not always happen. Not when the experiment deals with humans.

But he is gone. I am more human than he expected. And despite the scars and the layers of horror I have immersed myself in over the years, I remain more human than even I thought possible. Even with the flames of my prison licking at me, I find tears in my eyes. I let them fall, to be tongued away by the fire. Burn everything away, but I am now more than I have ever been.





Chapter 6
TED



TED

1. The Challenge

I stand alone in front of the pillar, but now I know what that means. AM has deliberately saved me for last. As each one of the others disappeared, then failed to reappear, I'm scrambling to find the angles. AM has saved me for last, I tell myself again. That's got to mean something. I think about the way he's taunted me, threatened to reveal all the secrets I've held in about myself for 109 years. Has he got the others somewhere? Somewhere they can watch me? Is he getting them set up just

so they can all laugh at me? The thought sickens me when I get the impression I'm right. My stomach twists. Maybe he didn't do anything to them at all. Maybe they weren't even here, just images that AM has created to fool me.

People who say they don't like me, or even detest me, don't really mean that. It's just that they've discovered they can't hold me or control me, and that they care for me much more than I ever cared for them. It infuriates them that they can't use me anymore, giving me crumbs while they sit at a banquet table. But I won't stay around them long enough for them to see through the elaborate disguises I've set up to fool them. If they got a chance to see me, the real me, they'd hate me.

I've learned to be every man that I've ever needed to be. A friend, a lover, a confidant, a son, a father figure, someone who can take charge, as well as someone dependent and vulnerable. But AM seems determined to strip those illusions from me. They've been my only defense against the others for all these years. A spark flares in my brain. Maybe, just maybe, they're in it together. All of them. My secrets are finally going to be laid bare. I feel my guts churning and I have to struggle not to throw up. Then AM's voice rings out around me.



"Ah. You. You're the last player in my little game. I urge you...do not fail as the others have failed."

See? AM is just building false hope in me. He's saying he wants me to succeed when I know that's not the point at all. He's wanting me to reach out and reveal even more of myself. This has all been set up to break me. They've known all along.




The blue lightning crackles and opens a hole in the ground beneath me. I drop into it. Afraid.


I glide through the tunnel of circuitry. It's all gleaming and polished so that it shines. I check my reflection so that I'm sure I look my very best. I look at the features of the man staring back at me and know that all the polish, all the poise is false. The only true thing about me is the smell of fear.

AM's voice fills the air around me.



 "Hey, you're my favorite, baby. I mean it. I really can't stand all the rest of these people. Every one of them has some fatal glitch in personality. Whiners, freaks, crips, cowards...every one of them. But not you, Ted. No, my man. Not you, Ted!"

His words are all false. He's just trying to set me up. He's out to get me. He's always hated me more than the others.

 "You were a stand up guy. You were a brave guy. Yes! A take-charge kind of guy. So I'm going to give you, just you, the opportunity to get out and live some kind of life. I'm going to send you...you're going to like this...I'm going to send you to the Room of Dark. If you can solve the puzzle of the Room of Dark...you're home free. You're out. You're away."

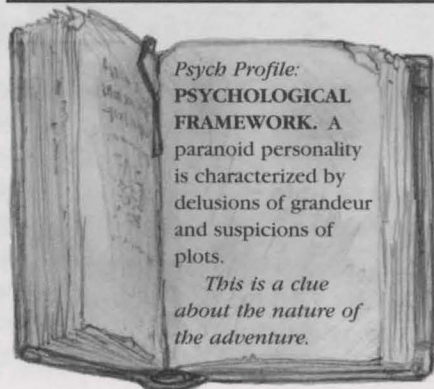
AM turns me into a spark, the brightest spark among all the pinpoints of light around me. Then he turns me loose. Out of all those stars around me, I know he's hoping I'll burn out.

2. The Room Of Dark

I land on a narrow, twisting path that leads up to a blank-faced tower with a single door. There are steep cliffs on either side of me.

A screaming bird flies overhead, then from its feet drops a flaming arrow. It's a Roc, a bird of prey from mythology. The arrow lands with a metallic clank on the path ahead of me, clearly indicating the direction in which I should travel. A tremor of hesitation quivers through me. I look behind me. This path disappears down into the mist. There's something moving down there. I can't see it, but I know it's true.

AM's voice crackles through the air, letting me know he's watching.





I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream



“Well, I know I’ve made you a paranoid, Ted. I know you’re scared. But I’m your friend. A hundred and nine years. I’m your best friend. So overcome your fear. Enter the Room of Dark, and you can solve its mystery.”

He’s lying and I know it. He’s worked really hard to do this to me. But I don’t have a choice. I look at the Room of Dark ahead of me. An octagon. Unusual shape for a building. Eight sides. Why eight? Is that part of the mystery? I walk toward the tower and use the entrance.

The room is full of light. Video screens. Five of them. Each one shows a scene of some other place. Why? What mystery does AM want me to solve? Wait a minute...these video screens have palm print switches next to them. I know I’m supposed to use one of them. But which?

I don’t make a hasty choice, though. AM wants me to demonstrate to the others as they watch how I’m not really very smart at all.

I look at the clown face on the screen to my left. I never liked going to the circus. All those clowns with their phony greasepaint smiles. You can’t tell what they’re really thinking.

The second monitor shows a structure on a hill. It’s a castle, right out of *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*. I feel like something is watching me from the windows.

The third monitor shows a rooftop. Why show me a rooftop? Why not a door? And why this particular rooftop?

On the fourth monitor is a forest. This isn’t one to go hiking through, however, This forest is dark, foreboding.

The fifth monitor shows a tire swing hanging from a tree by a rope. I study it. This looks like the tire swing at the farm where I grew up. What does AM know about my childhood? Is he taunting me?

Of all these possibilities, only the castle holds an interest for me. It’s the only one that may not lead back to my past. God, I’ve got to stay away from that. I go back to the second monitor and push on it. The door behind me closes with a clank. Darkness swallows me up.

3. The Castle

I open my eyes and gaze at the castle looming up in front of me. The sky is dark and full of lightning, and just beyond it is the top of the cavern. There are so many of them down here that AM has access to. A dark forest is behind me, and I can see no easy path through it. What sort of intrigue is AM plotting this time? He’s left me here alone. Still...I feel as though I am being watched.

A drawbridge stretches before me, reaching across





a moat, but it's in ruins. I don't trust it to hold my weight. Twin statues sit upon pedestals on either side of the drawbridge. I look at one up close, wondering if it might have a clue. This gargoyle is even larger than the ones at Penelope's estate in the Hamptons.

I don't want to get wet. What if the liquid raining down on me isn't water at all? What if it's a fluid containing eggs of some sort that's designed to soak into my skin? What if AM has designed monsters that can hatch right out of my own flesh? I have to keep moving. I turn my steps toward the drawbridge and walk to the entrance. I'm surprised it holds up under my weight. But after all, AM is looking out for me. I should have known he wouldn't let anything happen to me.

I study the great room, looking at the suit of armor by the broken door, and the mounted dragon heads and tapestries hung on the walls. I make myself smile at the naiveté, hoping the others will think I am brave when I'm not. So typical of the castles I've visited in Europe. A beautiful facade disguising ordinary stone. Appearance really is everything.

I look at the armor, amazed at the way the plates are forged together. I never realized that a knight's armor was so heavy! How were they ever able to fight wearing that thing?

I think briefly about putting it on, wanting as much protection as I can get. Plus the helmet will mask my face, another shield to keep everyone out of my mind. People must've been much shorter in the Middle Ages. I'd never be able to fit into this armor.

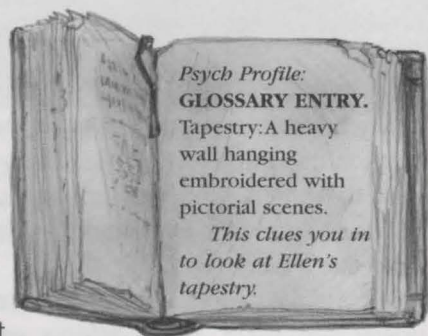
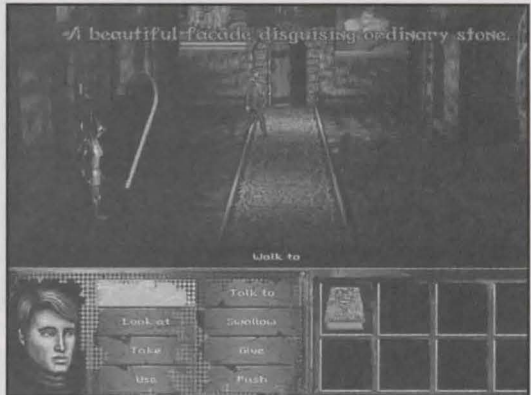
I glance at the door hanging haphazardly beside the armor. Why hasn't it been fixed? This door looks built to withstand quite a determined assault.

The tapestry on the left side of the wall draws my attention.

Immediately, I recognize the knight's face on the tapestry. It's me! I know AM is taunting me, wanting me to think he's offering a gift. But I know he'll only yank it back. So many women have called me their "Knight in Shining Armor".

But never Ellen. AM's throwing those words in my face, taunting me. He's probably told the others by now, too.

The other tapestry is a picture of a young woman in a beautiful dress. I look closer. Why, that maiden looks just like Ellen! She seems so sad...and so beautiful! Maybe AM's plans will backfire. This could be my chance to show Ellen that I do have virtue, no matter how much the others whisper behind my back. I hope she doesn't hate me the way the others do. Of them all, Ellen is the





kindest. She wasn't brought here because of anything she did that was bad. I love her for that, but it makes me afraid too, because why would she ever care for someone like me? But she does. Doesn't she? Hasn't she proven that? I don't know.

Three doorways are before me: left, middle, and right. I walk to the one on the left.

4. So Many Secrets

A four-post canopy bed arrayed in royal purple draws my eye first, then I notice the wall of books and the fireplace. The room is huge. This must be the bedroom of the lord of the castle.

I look at the bed. It appears that no one's slept in this bed for ages. The sheets are coated with dust.

Walking to the books, I read the titles. Quite an impressive collection of books—science, philosophy, tragedy, comedy. I take the books down and look at them.

I run my hands over the expensive leather binding of *Don Quixote*. I've read this novel! It's about a foolish old man who believes he's a knight destined to revive the Golden age of Chivalry.

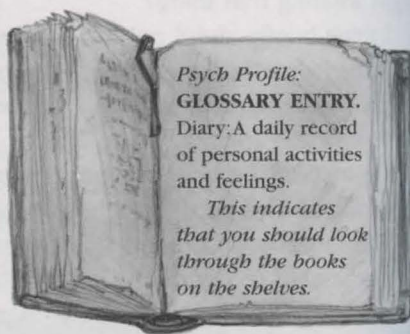
I pick up *Faust* next and look through the opening pages. I know this story, too! It's about a magician who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power.

Morte D'Arthur is known to me as well. This was one of my favorites. It's about how King Arthur assembled the most chivalrous knights in all Europe.

Symposium is next. This is Plato's dialogue about the nature of love.

My hand caresses the cover of *The Divine Comedy*. I know this! It's Dante's epic journey through Hell, Heaven and Purgatory. I slide it back onto the shelf with the others, and pick up a slim volume in their midst. It has no color, nothing to draw the eye. Across the front is embossed the word "Journal." This looks like a diary.

Ah...other people's secrets! There's no other drug like it. They give you power over them, and a defense when those people start faulting you, and they always do. My heart picks up the pace in anticipation, as I open the book and page through it.





The first passage reads, "My new wife continues her rapid aging. Each day is as a year to her. I believe that the magic drains her."

The second passage reads, "The incantations I hear from my wife's infernal workroom are the purest evil. Perhaps it is her hatred of my daughter that drives her up there."

The third passage reads, "Ellen grows weaker and weaker. My wife advises an antidote to her illness, but it lies very far away. I must assemble a caravan."

Ellen? Her father and step-mother? We're the only humans left alive. This can't be right. But Ellen, it says, is growing weaker and weaker. Is something wrong with Ellen? I raise my voice and ask AM about it, but there is no answer. I turn my attention back to the journal.

The final passage reads, "The forest has grown dark and overrun with dire wolves since my marriage. I doubt that even with a full complement of men I shall return alive, but I must try."

I stop reading, and put the book away. Funny, I've already read all these books. When I was a boy, I used to be quite a reader. That was before I discovered women—especially wealthy and lonely women.

I feel tense now after reading the journal. I must find Ellen. With her presence in the tapestry, and the mention of her in the book, she must be part of this. I walk back out into the great hall and to the next doorway.

5. The Cursed Princess

Judging from the decor of this room, it obviously belongs to a woman. Someone appears to be sleeping in the bed. I come closer to take a look.

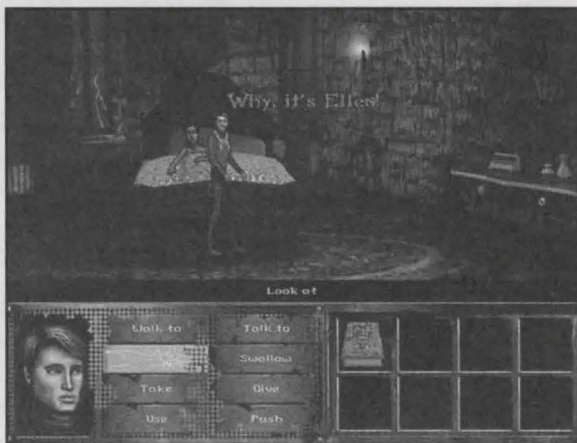
Why, it's Ellen! Did AM tell her that I loved her? Was that the secret he was referring to?

But I don't want to

love her. Loving someone makes you vulnerable. I learned as a child that when people tell you they love you, they eventually leave as soon as they find out what you're really like. You can never be perfect enough for them.

But it is difficult not to love her. Ellen looks so beautiful when she is sleeping. Her hair lies softly across the pillow.

I glance at the dresser against the wall. All this



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE.

Medieval romances often involved knights embarking on quests to display loyalty to a beloved maiden.

This is your clue that you have to find the person who put Ellen under the spell.



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perfume and jewelry must belong to Ellen. After all these years in AM's clutches, she deserves to enjoy life's finer things.

Outside the window, lightning snakes across the sky. I speak to Ellen out loud, and she awakens.

"Oh, Ted!" she says. "I feel so tired...so weak."

"Did AM do this to you?" I ask.

She sounds confused when she answers. "Yes...maybe...I can't tell. They whisper in my ear...and this bed is so soft."

I want to get her out of the room. "Can you walk?"

"No, I'm too weak. I haven't been out of this bed in ages."

I know that's not true because I saw her just a few hours ago...maybe. AM manipulates time in so many ways. "Please hang on, Ellen. Your father went to find an antidote for your illness!" It seems strange to talk about her father, because I know he can't exist. Maybe this isn't even the real Ellen. Maybe the real one is watching somewhere, waiting to see if I will betray her. AM will try to make me, I know.

"That was weeks ago, Ted. My father will never return. With or without an antidote."

"Do you know if there's a way to escape from this place?"

"I searched the entire castle grounds before I fell ill. There's no escape for me but death."

"No! I won't let you die!" The thought of her leaving without ever truly loving me leaves me lonely and afraid.

"I can't take this suffering anymore, Ted. The things I've endured! Help me to die with dignity. Don't let anyone violate me again, not even in death."

"No, don't go! I need you. We need you." I accidentally spoke the truth, and quickly try to cover it. That I need Ellen in my life, and that I told the truth about it, surprises me. I've never needed anyone.

"If you really care for me, Ted, bring me my hand mirror."

"Why do you want a mirror?"

"My stepmother has been jealous of me ever since she became ugly. She had something to do with my illness...I know it. But she doesn't dare come near me while I have the mirror."

"Where is your mirror?"

"I left it on my dressing table. Bring it to me."

I don't remember seeing a mirror on the dressing table, but I go look again. I have to fight the panic rising within me. Perfume bottles, jewelry boxes, but no mirror. I even look under the dressing table, but it's nowhere to be found.

I go back to Ellen.

She looks up at me. "Ted! Please tell me you've found my mirror!"

"I looked on your dressing table. Your mirror's not there."

Desperation is in her every word. "You have to find it, Ted! It's the only thing keeping my stepmother away, and it's the only thing that can finally end my suffering."



I try to calm her. "Go back to sleep, Ellen."

"Yes, sleep. That's what I need."

I walk out of the room. I will find the mirror, wherever it is, and I will free Ellen from the spell she is under.

6. The Witch's Bedroom

I go into the remaining bedroom, finding it lighted by candles. At once, I sense there is an evil in this room. I feel it all around me. I walk to the bed to make sure it's empty. I feel a cold draft blowing across the bed like from an open grave. Stone crows keep silent vigil atop each of the four bedposts, and the icy stare of a stuffed owl on one side of the door returns my gaze.

Some shiny things are scattered at the foot of the bed. They look like pieces of glass. A broken mirror! I bend down and pick up one of the broken pieces. Ouch! I cut myself! My blood stains the dagger-shaped section I'm holding. I put it in my pocket, though, because it could serve as a weapon if I need it.

I walk to the bookcase. Human skulls act as bookends, separating sections of books. I scan the titles. Why, this is a collection of books on the black arts! There must be dozens of volumes!

I take some of them down, looking at them more closely.

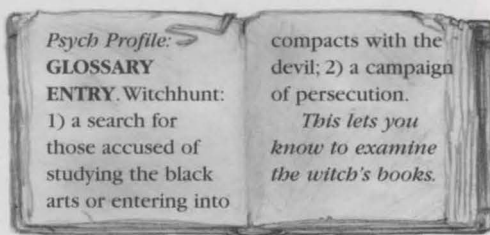
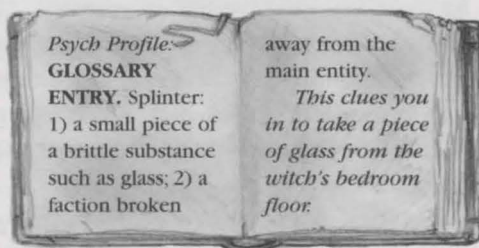
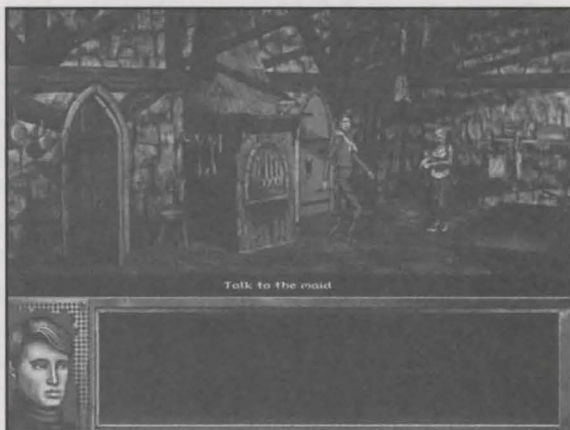
Daemons and their Spheres. This is a catalog of the demons ruling the Abyss. One of these entries is circled—Surgat, Opener of Locks. Supposedly, he can open anything.

Kitah Al Azif. Too bad I can't read Arabic. From the notes in the margins, I gather it has something to do with opening a gate into another world.

In Search of the Philosopher's Stone. This book seems to be about how to change metals into gold. I've read a fair number of science textbooks, but I can't make out of any of these formulas.

I put the books away and quit reading. I'm not getting anywhere. What would people at the Club have said if they caught me reading books like these?

I leave the room. This castle is a huge place, and I've just begun to explore it.





7. The Scullery Wench Makes A Tempting Offer

In the great hall once again, I follow the carpet to the kitchen.

Despite the medieval trappings, I've seen kitchens like this before. This is a place where servants do all the work.

A large oven is against the wall, and legs of lamb and whole hams hang from the rafters. A woman is standing next to a big table in the middle of the room. She looks up at me, but doesn't stop plucking the chicken she's holding. Aside from the dishpan hands and wrinkles, this scullery maid has quite a body. I certainly wouldn't kick her out of bed.

I look at her and give her one of my better smiles. "Excuse me. Do you work here?" I ask.

"Why, of course I work here!" she replies in a heavy English accent. "Why else would I be plucking this chicken?" Her eyes narrow as she strains to see me more clearly. "Say, you're a handsome gent! There aren't many men left in these parts."

I smile graciously at the compliment. "What happened to Ellen?"

"Lady Ellen? She's been ill, and that's all I know. It's not healthy to ask too many questions these days. Let's talk about you instead."

I won't let her draw me in. AM is trying to get me to open up. I'm much to practiced to be loose-lipped about that subject. "Is there a way to escape from this castle?"

"Escape?" She seems shocked. "With all of those wolves in the forest? It's safer to stay in the castle. The beds are very cozy. You should try mine, sometime."

That's as brazen an offer as I've had in 109 years! I'm really tempted, but it's obviously a ploy by AM to get me to drop my guard. If Ellen watched me get seduced by the woman, what would she think of me? Still, there's a part of me that would love the chance to have this woman throw herself at me. "Where is Ellen's stepmother? I must speak with her?"

The maid's voice lowers as she peers about. "A word to the wise. Keep your nose out of the old woman's business unless you want it covered with warts. I wouldn't want to see any harm come to that gorgeous face of yours."

"Where can I find a mirror?"

"What do you want with a mirror? Those are pretty rare, what with an ugly woman in charge of the castle."

"Please, I need to find a mirror."

She grins, and there's no mistaking the lust in her eyes. I've seen it many





times in the eyes of older women when they looked at me in the little bistros where I used to ply my trade.

"And you are what I need," she says. She licks her lips. "I'll make a deal with you. I will tell you where you can find a mirror if you spend some quality time in my bed."

I break it to her gently. "That's a flattering offer, but I'm not interested."

"I'll give you what you need. Hasn't it been too long for you?"

"Sorry, but it's out of the question." In the old days, I felt that when I was with someone, whatever they didn't know wouldn't hurt them. I jumped from lover to lover, never letting any of them close enough to know the real me. But I don't want to blow this chance at helping Ellen.

The scullery maid is furious. "What's the matter? Aren't I good enough for you? Not classy enough? Not rich enough?"

I want to tell her that it's all of the above, keep her off balance so she doesn't worry about whether I'm good enough for her. Instead, I'm polite, and I give her and a lie of her very own that she can keep and nourish. "I'm sure you're a fine woman, but my heart belongs to another."

"So," she says nastily, "you're in love with that thing sleeping in her bed. Have you ever been with one, or are you just curious? I can make you so much happier. I can, you know."

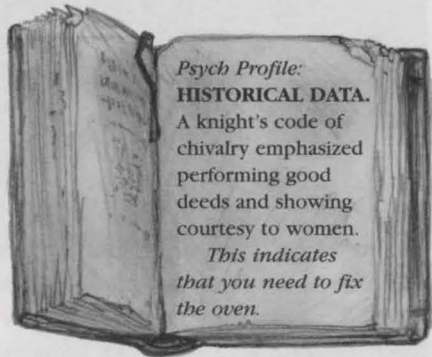
I get the feeling that the maid is referring to Ellen's skin color. Reminds me of a lot of narrow-minded people I grew up around. I'm getting a little angry and I let it show. "Look, I am not going to make love with you!"

"Oh, all right. I have another deal for you." She sounds resigned, but I feel sorry for the chicken she's plucking so furiously! The poor bird should be glad it's dead. "The oven's broken. If you can fix it, I'll get you a mirror."

I turn to the oven and look it over. This oven is similar to the broilers I maintained when I worked in St. Louis—till I found someone to take my place in a job that I never should've had to do in the first place. God, how I hated those days.

I go to work on the oven, using my barely remembered skills. Ah, there's the problem! A clogged pilot jet. I'll have this fixed in a jiffy. It's been a long time since I've gotten the dirt of good, honest work under my fingernails. I'm surprised at how elated it makes me feel.

The flames whoosh up inside the oven, and I turn back to the maid. "I fixed your oven. Now where is the mirror?"





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She shrugs. "Sorry, I don't know where a mirror is, but at least now I can finish dinner."

My temper flares immediately. "Why, you used me, you bitch!"

"Just like you tried to use me, you snobby bastard? I'll bet you've used lots of women with your smug charm. You're nothing but a phony!"

I swallow my anger and rage. Operating out of my emotions never gets me what I want, and always comes close to making me say more about myself than I intended. I try pleading with the woman, appealing to her better nature that would want to help someone in need. Things are so far out of my control. "Please, I need to find a mirror."

"Well, you did fix the oven...Listen, the old woman knows where the mirror is, but she's afraid of it. She obviously can't get to it herself or she would have destroyed it by now."

"Where can I find the old woman?" I use her term for Ellen's stepmother, letting her think we're on the same side.

"Don't worry, she'll find you." Her words sound like a threat.

I thank her for her help, and walk out of the room.

8. Evil Whispers

I barely enter the great hall when I hear a rough female voice demand, "Is Lady Ellen prepared?" In the arched doorway on the right, a shadow forms, long and lean and menacing, with hair like the Medusa in Greek mythology. Above the doorway is a pentagram, and its presence makes the hair on the back of my neck rise.

I walk softly to the corner next to the doorway and lean against it, hiding and listening. I risk a glance around the corner.

"As ready as she will ever be," another woman answers. "The spell keeps

her body weak but she will remain conscious." Another shadow has joined the first, all disjointed and surely nothing human. I know this is the one who is speaking.

"The art of sacrifice is reduced to science. And what of the glamour?" says the first woman.

I creep closer, sliding around the corner. My stomach is turning cartwheels.





"We must wait for its removal. It remains beyond our best efforts."

"Then we wait for a prince..." the first woman says. Her voice is older, more harsh. "With his help, we can open the gate to the other world."

The other world? My pulse quickens at the possibility. More than anything, I want out of AM's worlds. I don't want to hear his critical and snide voice ever again. If he has revealed anything to the others about me, then they can stay here if I find a way out. The shadows go away. Cautiously, I walk on around the corner, then into the room where they'd been standing.

No one is in the room, and there are no other doors. Where did they go?

This looks like a chapel, but there's something definitely unholy about it. It must be the gargoyles. A pulpit stands in the middle of the room and niches are carved into the walls where horned demons are sitting on pedestals. Other creatures, taken from feverish nightmares, crouch in predatory anticipation on the benches. Torches burn in wall sconces, creating wavering patterns of shadows on the gray stone walls.

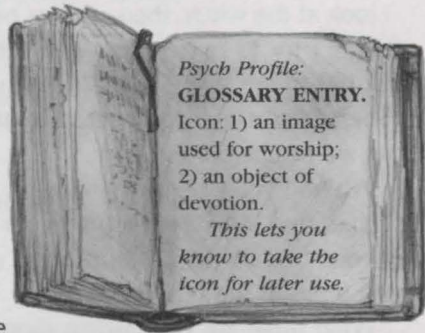
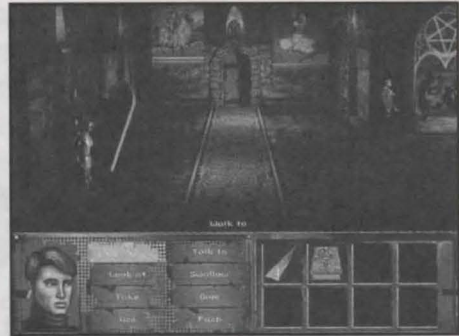
I look at the pulpit more closely, wondering if it might conceal a trap door. I don't think I want to know the kinds of sermons that were preached here. I push on the heavy stone pulpit, testing it. I used to work out, but I doubt that I can move this by myself.

I walk to the first torch. It's so unlike AM to provide light when he knows how frightening the dark can be. He's up to something. But maybe it's only a clue.

Looking at the sconce and gargoyle on my left, I discover the sconce is bolted to the wall, and the gargoyle is too heavy to lift. I move to the next set. This sconce won't move either, but I see a gold icon clenched in the gargoyle's fist.

Before I touch it, I examine it. AM loves surprising us with traps. Nothing special about this rod except for the gargoyle face on top. Carefully, I take the icon from the gargoyle's grip.

When I push on the third wall sconce, I hear stone grating against stone. The niche with the gargoyle on





the pedestal slides away, revealing space beyond. A secret passage! What's waiting for me in there? I go through, taking the stairs, ready to run at the least provocation.

9. Witchcraft By Candlelight

The room is dim, filled with the scent of melting candle wax and smoke. And there's something else—something evil. Stone faces and images line the walls. I don't recognize all the symbols, but I know they're supposed to represent mystical powers and dark arts.

However, I do recognize the pentagram chalked on the floor in the middle of the stone circle. A candle burns at each point. A shadowy female figure emerges into the light. I know at once who she must be. It's the witch! What is she doing with her hands? Perhaps it's some kind of incantation.

She's gray-haired and withered, with hot brimstone eyes and a thin-lipped mouth. What a horrible old witch!

I look at the witch, then address her. "What have you done to Ellen, you old witch?" I try to remain forceful without being accusatory. Above all, I don't want her to see that I'm afraid, even though I know AM is going to help me.

She smiles a gap-toothed smile at me. "Ah, our prince has finally arrived! Now we can begin our ritual."

"Why do you call me a prince?"

"Isn't that who you want to be to Ellen? Her Prince Charming? I need someone to gain her trust, to break down her defenses. It's a part you played many times in the real world."

"What ritual are you talking about?"

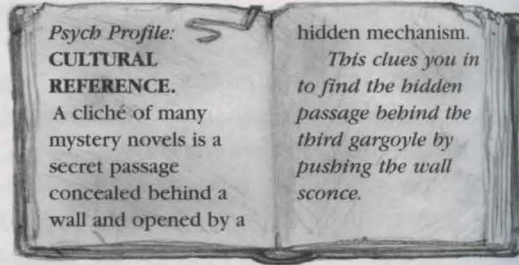
"A sacrifice. A trade," she answers. "Ellen's life in exchange for safe passage through the gate."

"What's this about a gate?" She has my rapt attention.

"The gate is a passage into the surface world! It is the only way out of this place."

I listen to her words and I really want to believe them. "What is supposed to be my role in this ritual?"

Her voice hardens. "I need you to destroy Ellen's mirror. She has been using it to keep me away from her. I want you to break it so that I can complete what I have started."





"So you just want me to break the mirror?" I need time to think. Is AM really giving me a way out, a way that doesn't include Ellen? If that's true, I'm uncomfortable with that. I had begun thinking of us as a couple. But then, if she really got to know me, would she stay? I don't think so. No one else ever has. I could go, be free again, and resume my life. I've been around the same people for 109 years, but maintaining my secrets for all that time has been draining. I don't want them around any more. Not even Ellen. Maybe. Then I think of her soft hands and her voice, and I'm not so sure.

"It is not that simple. The mirror holds great power. It can be broken only within the magic circle."

"Why can't you destroy the mirror yourself?" I want her to admit that she needs me. It will give me a stronger bargaining position. I put it to her gently, so that she won't be too quick to take offense.

Her voice holds anger, but she has deliberately kept it under control. She's not used to asking for things. "I am aging rapidly, and despite my powers, I am a slave to vanity. I can't bring myself to look into the mirror."

Aha! A weakness, coupled with greed. That will help me. "Where is Ellen's mirror?"

"It is on her dressing table."

I know that's not true, but how much will I gain by admitting that? Or will the witch believe that I'm simply trying to help her by giving her this information? I decide to go with the appearance of making a deal. "I looked on Ellen's dressing table. The mirror's not there."

"You must find that mirror!" she commands in a shrill voice. "It has great magical properties! Without it, I cannot guarantee that I can complete the ceremony."

"Why can't you open the gate without the mirror?"

"There are others who have an interest in Ellen's fate. That mirror may be the only way to keep meddlers from interfering."

That news chills me. "What if I can't find the mirror?"

"Then go to the devil!" she snaps.

"What's in it for me if I help you?" I'm getting right to the point now.

"An opportunity to escape AM's tortures forever."

I listen to her, and hesitate. Could AM be testing my loyalty? How am I supposed to know which is the correct tack to take? I hope my hesitation doesn't seem too long as I yell back at her, "I ought to kill you instead!" There. Now AM should know where my allegiance lies. And so should Ellen.

"Oh, do we fancy ourselves the avenging knight?" she mocks me. "My magic is much more powerful than any physical force you can muster! Be gone!"

I walk toward the door, but I take one last look at the circle, trying to fathom what secrets it might hold. It's only partially completed. This must be part of a



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black ritual—the one that has to do with the gate. I walk through the door.

I go back through the chapel and through the great hall. I want to talk to Ellen and tell her everything I've just heard. Maybe she can offer some clues about what I'm supposed to do next. Then there's the part of me that just wants to see her again.

10. Brimstone, At Your Service

As soon as I enter Ellen's room, a brilliant red flash fills an area in front of her bed. I duck back, turning away from the searing heat. When the smoke vanishes, some sort of creature is standing there. I never believed in Hell until AM captured me, but this devil looks like the real article. I've never seen such dark and mysterious eyes...and he won't take them off of Ellen for a second!

I look at him, certain he's really come for me and not for Ellen at all. "Who are you?"

"I'm a devil, of course!" he says in an enthusiastic voice. "Why else would I have this pointed tail?"

"What do you want?"

"Ellen's soul! That's a valuable commodity where I come from."

"Can you tell me where Ellen's mirror is?" I change the subject, giving my wits time to regroup.

"Sorry. I don't bother with such material things. They only bring about bad luck."

The name Surgat surfaces in my mind. He's a demon I read about in one of the witch's books. I wonder if this is him. "Who is this Surgat I've heard about?"

"He's a minor spirit. A demon." He sounds like old money talking about new money. Inheriting wealth is so much cleaner than actually working for it. "Don't confuse him with those pathetic imps, or heaven forbid, higher-order devils! Opener of all locks indeed."

I try to show him I'm empathizing with him. "It sounds like you really hate demons!"

He nods. "You got that right! In fact, the only things we consider worse than those untrustworthy fellows are angels."

"How can beings as powerful as yourselves stoop to fighting like school children?" I'm pushing now, trying to see how quickly he'll fall into a defensive posture.

The devil doesn't get angry. He just remains totally at ease. "Well, it's like this, big boy. In hell we do things exactly like you do them here...or used to do them before AM took over."





"Are you saying that AM is in control of hell?"

"Oh, don't look so surprised! Who else could be in control of this madhouse? Only man could create such a monster!" He smiles. "Sorry."

I know from his words that he's apologizing, like he insulted all of mankind by suggesting AM had to be created by humans. "What do you mean that you do things like we do here?"

"I mean that there are always internal struggles, petty conflicts for power. Only in this case, the struggles are between entities that you can't see or might rarely see. That means serious problems for you."

"What problems can these unseen struggles cause for me?" I want to know if he means HERE, or is he talking about a metaphysical place. Then I realize that as long as AM is in the picture, those are one and the same.

"You must decide who is your friend and who is your enemy. And, remember, with AM's control over morphogenic fields, appearances mean nothing."

I am suddenly sick of the whole thing. AM is lying to me again, confusing me. I look at Ellen lying there on the bed. I need her with me so badly. I look back at the devil. "Please, go away!"

"Try to understand my position. I can't leave because there's an angel coming to take away her soul. If I step out and your friend croaks, the holy eunuch spirits the goods off to heaven."

I walk away from him, and go to talk with Ellen.

"Ted!" she says. "Please tell me you've found my mirror!"

"I can't let you die! The devil is waiting to take your soul!"

Her voice is soft and gentle. "My soul was taken long, long ago, Ted. And not just by AM. Anything would be better than this never-ending torture."

"Who is this witch that lives here with you?"

"She's my stepmother. When the ugliness infected her, she broke just about every mirror in the castle."

"Go back to sleep, Ellen."

"Yes," she whispers as her eyes close, "sleep. That's what I need."

I look at her and at the devil. I'm afraid to leave her alone with him, but if I'm going to find the mirror, I have no choice. I remember the maid in the kitchen. There is one door in the castle that I haven't yet looked behind. I leave the room, walking purposefully. I can't leave Ellen in the devil's clutches.

11. The Locked Door

When I get back to the kitchen, the maid is still plucking chickens. "I've got more questions to ask you."

She snaps at me, "Don't bother me anymore! I've got to get back to fixing dinner."





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No matter how hard I try, she won't say anything further to me. I go look at the door. It won't open. Hmm. This is the only lock I've seen in the entire castle. Is AM trying to lure me in, or does he want to keep me out?

I take out the icon. Perhaps it's slim enough...I try to pry the door or pick the lock with it. The icon is about the same size as those door hinges. That can't be a coincidence.

I don't say anything to the maid as I leave the room. The only one around here who appears to have any answers is the witch. And to go up against her, I've got to know more about her.

12. The Witch's Spell

I go back to her bedroom and take another look at her bookshelves. I notice two new volumes that may help me. I leaf through *Secrets of Necromomiconic Summoning*. Here's a picture of the same circle I saw in the secret room! The inscription says, "Complete the charm to summon the spirit, but do not break the circle or the spirit will escape!"

I put it back and select *Double, Double, Toil and Trouble*. Luckily I'm up on my Shakespeare, or I wouldn't have noticed this book about witches! Here's the spell that the witch must have cast on Ellen. The incantation is "Kalla Ingma Thacko."

I stop reading, and put the book back on the shelf.

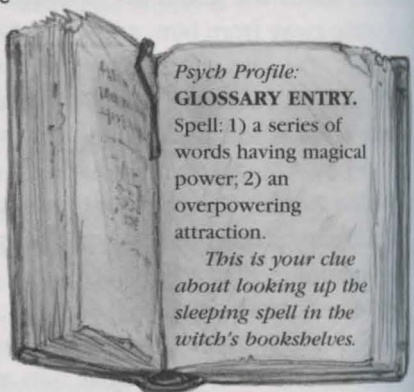
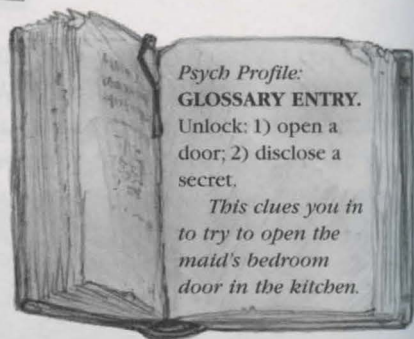
I walk out of the bedroom and go back to the room where I left the witch, hoping she's still there.

13. Sleeping Ugly

She's there! I don't hesitate. My convictions are strong. Ellen must be saved because I don't want to be alone. "I know all about the sleeping spell you cast on Ellen. And I'm prepared to use it on you!"

"Foolish mortal! You don't have the ability to use the spell properly."

In all my life, I've counted on people overestimating me. Believing I was much more than I really am. But, I've been underestimated, too. Usually deliberately





when it served my purpose. I mentally summon the words, rolling them around in my head. The pronunciation is going to be hard. What if I don't have the inflections right? What if the spell backfires on me? I say the words before I can give in to the fear that is chewing me up on the inside. "Oh, don't I? Kalla Ingma Thacko!"

The witch slumps and staggers. "Oh, I suddenly feel so...so sleepy!" she says. She tumbles to the ground and I see a stick of chalk roll from her hand.

I kneel down and pick it up. It looks like an ordinary piece of white chalk, but I know I can use it on the circle to complete the summoning. I've read about it in those books.

In a matter of seconds, the circle is complete. Vile green vapor suddenly explodes into the room, with blue lightning twisting through it.

And a gray-skinned, bow-legged demon with long, sharp horns is suddenly standing in the center of the circle. He roars at me. "Why'd you have to finish the circle? Now I'm stuck here until we work out a trade!"

I'm scared, but I notice that he's hesitant about stepping over the chalk lines of the circle. "Who are you?"

"I am Surgat, Opener of Locks. AM and I are brothers, more or less."

"Are you saying that you are another AM?" Vaguely I recall the others talking about AM's beginnings, about there being more than one AM during the stages of the Final War. Can this be one of them? Or was that information the others gave me only a part of this whole charade now? And what if this isn't a charade, and this really is another AM?

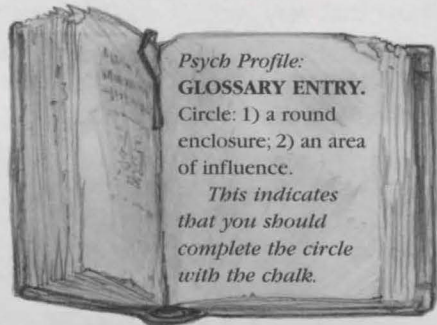
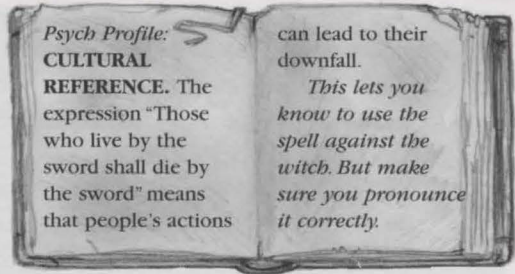
"It would be more accurate to say that I am a part of him...a part that he doesn't know exists."

I don't know what to believe anymore. "What kind of locks can you open?"

"I can open anything. Doors to a boudoir, doors to another world."

The door to the maid's bedroom would be a start. "What were you saying about a trade?"

"I can return to my sphere of origin only if we complete a trade. I will unlock something for you if you give me something in return."





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"Can you unlock the maid's bedroom door?"

"Ordinarily, that would be easy, but this planar travel has sapped my energy. Give me something juicy to revitalize me and I'll perform your little parlor trick."

The only thing I have in my possession that qualifies as 'juicy' is the shard of mirror with my blood on it. But after all, this is a demon. I offer it to him and he takes it greedily.

His long, red tongue whips out and licks every drop of my blood from the shard. He smiles, a very demonic smile, when he's finished. "Ah, that's much better! I feel my energy renewed. Now, what were you asking me, human?"

"Can you unlock the maid's bedroom door?"

He blinks once. "There, it is done! A trivial little task, one not even requiring any pyrotechnics. The maid's boudoir is now open for your inspection."

I shake my head. Promises were made to be broken. I know that very well. "I don't believe you can unlock the maid's bedroom door from here!"

"Well, then, why don't you go down to the kitchen and see for yourself?"

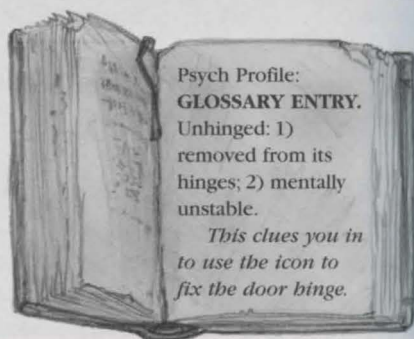
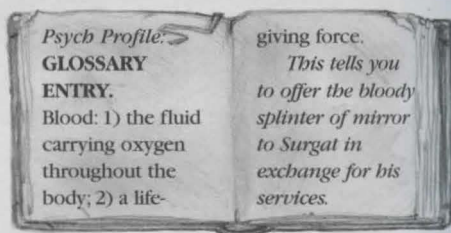
Without another word, I walk out of the room and head for the kitchen.

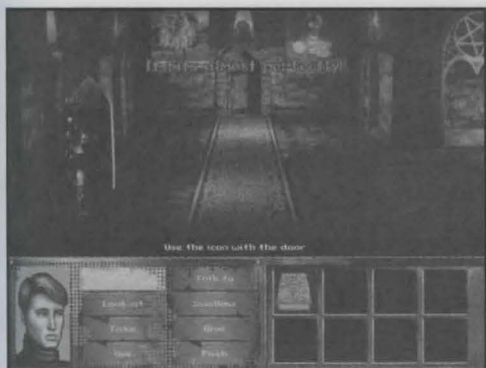
14. The Wolf's At The Door

As soon as I reach the great hall, the sound of a wolf's howl fills the castle. Do wolves howl like that because they're hungry, or because they like to torment their prey? I look at the broken door and feel very exposed and vulnerable.

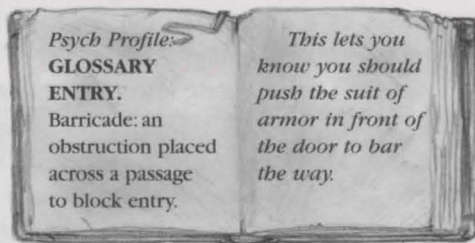
Remembering that the icon I'm carrying looked like the door hinges in the kitchen, I walk up to the door and look at the broken hinge. I take out the icon and use it. It fits almost perfectly!

I push the door shut to keep out the night and the wolves. It swings back inward. Oh, that's just super! The doorlatch is broken.





Thinking quickly, (I've always been inventive on the spot when under pressure), I push the suit of armor against the door to keep it closed. It holds rather nicely. I walk on into the kitchen.



15. The Lies We Weave

When I arrive, the maid isn't in the kitchen. Maybe she's finally finished with dinner. Or, knowing AM, maybe the dinner finished her.

I walk to the door and easily push it open.

This must be the servants' quarters. However, the maid is nowhere to be found.

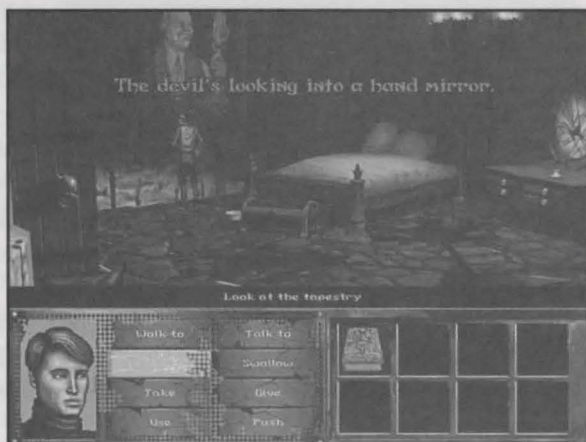
Inside, there's a modest bed, neatly made, with a chest at the foot of it. A dresser with a broken mirror is against one wall. I get closer to it. This mirror is so cracked, I can barely see myself.

I open the chest and peer inside. It contains only some clothes and a few household items. These things would only interest a peasant. I leave them. Besides, I don't want to get caught stealing.

Then, a large tapestry on the wall in front of me captures my attention. I see the face of the devil woven into it. And he's looking into a hand mirror.

He lied to me! The realization drenches me like a bucket of cold ice water. He and I will have to talk later—as soon as I get back from talking with Surgat. At least the demon and I are able to bargain. And he hasn't lied to me yet.

I return to the secret room in the chapel.





16. Another Bargain In The Offering

I speak to Surgat, making sure the witch is still sleeping. "You're as good as your word! The maid's bedroom was unlocked."

He acts insulted. "Would I lie? I'm a demon, after all! Now fulfill your end of the bargain, and let me out of here!"

"I already gave you something—some drops of my blood!"

"You call that a fair exchange? That supposedly blue blood of yours is as worthless as a counterfeit bill. No, we must work out another trade. One where the stakes are high."

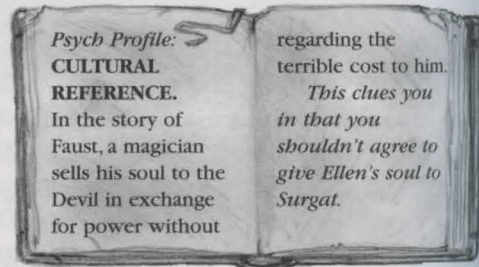
"Can you open a gate into the surface world?" His words about my blood cut me. I know they're straight from AM. The wealth I had, the life I lived, they were also false. I know that AM must be aware of my beginnings as a poverty-stricken child. I grew up and found a way to make my way around others, living at first off the largesse of bored wives of corporate executives who could afford my attentions, then the idly rich women who were seeking a new diversion. I added polish, and attracted the attention of Penelope, who groomed me and made me as indolent as any of those obscenely rich people she meshed with. When she died, she left me her money and I remade myself. But I knew it was a false image, and ended up trapped by what I'd thought I'd wanted. AM knew it all.

"Now that's a tall order," he admits, "and the only thing you've got to offer is a little love. Not exactly true love, but the closest thing to it in a world of five real people, more or less."

I'm confused by the turn of his demands. "You say love has trading value?"

"Love is a very rare and precious commodity down here. It is worth much at the bargaining table. Betray your love for Ellen, give me her soul, and I'll open the gate to the surface world."

For a moment I hesitate. I don't want to lose the chance to get out of AM's power. Losing Ellen would be worth that, wouldn't it? The thought chills me. I don't want to do that. I discover that I'm not even able to do that! I love Ellen. She means more to me than I ever dreamed anyone could. Every time I've screamed at her, called her names, tried to make her feel cheap, she's only offered me compassion. Tears



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE.

In the story of Faust, a magician sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for power without

regarding the terrible cost to him.

This clues you in that you shouldn't agree to give Ellen's soul to Surgat.



are in my eyes, and I'm amazed because they're for Ellen. Not for myself. I've never cried for anyone but myself since I was a kid.

"How about taking the witch's soul instead?" I ask.

He's firm. "No, I don't want that old hag! I want something that you value!"

"Let me think about your offer." I want to keep him on the hook. I may be able to use that.

"Don't think too long, human. There are other players in this game, and I won't be able to keep my offer open forever."

I walk away from him. I want to see Ellen again and talk to that devil. He's not going to lie to me anymore!

17. Where Angels Fear To Tread

As I enter Ellen's bedroom, my eyes are locked on the devil. Then, I hear the tinkling sound of a silvery bell.

An angel materializes on the other side of Ellen's bed. He's dressed in white robes with gold brocade. He floats above the floor, his wings folded neatly around him. Every strand of his shoulder-length blond hair is in place. His blue eyes meet mine. I haven't seen such a serene face since AM captured me over a century ago.

I speak to him, hoping he has the answers I need.

"Who are you?"

"Do not fear me!" he says in a melodic voice. "I am an agent of the Lord."

"What do you want?"

"Ellen has suffered much and has earned her place in Paradise. I have come to guide her soul to Heaven."

"Can you tell me where Ellen's mirror is?" I'm hoping that since the devil lied to me, the angel will tell me the truth. But another part of me doesn't want to trust the angel. Suppose they're not two opposing forces? Suppose they're only two sides, two faces of AM, that AM has chosen to show me to confuse me? Neither one could be the correct choice, and neither could offer any real safety, only more hurt.

"No, I haven't seen the mirror. If I knew where it was, I would use it to get rid of my fallen brother."

The mirror can get rid of the devil? That's news to me, and I drink it in. But it could also be part of an elaborate lie to set me up for a final crushing blow. I ask questions, hoping I'll be able to tell if AM is involved. "Why is everyone





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so interested in the mirror?"

"Mirrors harbor incalculable power in this sphere. They repel some and attract others."

"What power does the mirror have over Ellen?" I ask.

"It can bring about either her salvation or destruction. Her fate now rests on your shoulders."

I look at the horned fiend on the other side of the bed. "What can you tell me about the devil?"

"Do not listen to him!" The angel is emphatic. "His kind means only destruction and woe."

To cover all my bases, I ask about the demon, not letting the angel know I've already talked with him. "Who is this Surgat I've heard about?"

"Avoid the demon! He has caused us all trouble on more than one occasion."

I look at Ellen. I want her safe from harm. "Please!" I beg the angel. If it's not AM, maybe the angel can do some good. If it is, then he'll think I'm falling for his game. "Save us!"

"Fear not! Salvation is at hand!"

I cross the room to the devil. My anger conquers my fear. "I've seen the tapestry in the maid's bedroom, and I think you do know where Ellen's mirror is!"

"Oh, all right," says the devil in a tired voice, "I know where it is. I hid it before the angel showed up. I didn't want golden boy to use it to his advantage."

"Where is Ellen's mirror?" I demand.

"I hid it someplace good, someplace where an angel would never go. Now will you get off my back?"

The devil won't talk to me anymore. But it doesn't matter because I think I've figured it out, and I don't think he's expecting that. I stop briefly to speak to Ellen, to give her some hope...there's a lump in my throat.

"Ted!" she says. "Please tell me you've found my mirror!"

"There's an angel and a devil quarreling over your soul!"

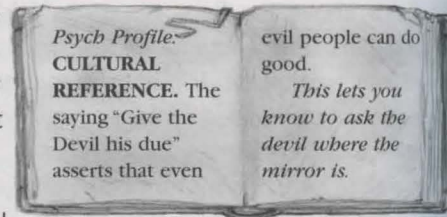
"Men have been fighting over my body for more than a hundred years, and now they want my soul. Please, Ted, just release me from all this. I don't care what happens to me anymore."

"Go back to sleep, Ellen," I tell her.

"Yes, sleep, that's what I need."

Then I walk to the door.

I go to her father's bedroom and look at the books again. There's only one place an angel would fear to go. Hell. And there's only been one mention of Hell outside of the devil since I've been here.



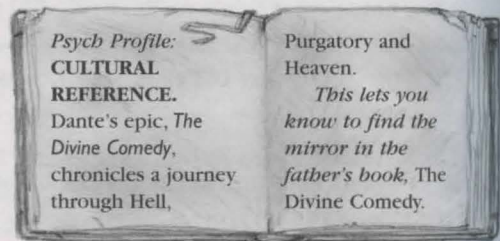
Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE. The saying "Give the Devil his due" asserts that even

evil people can do good.

This lets you know to ask the devil where the mirror is.



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL

REFERENCE.

Dante's epic, *The Divine Comedy*, chronicles a journey through Hell,

Purgatory and Heaven.

*This lets you know to find the mirror in the father's book, *The Divine Comedy*.*



I take down *The Divine Comedy*. There's a hand mirror right between the "Inferno" and "Purgatory" sections. So this is where the devil hid the mirror! I stop looking at the book and put it away.

Taking the mirror with me, I return to Ellen's bedroom.

I walk to the devil, and tell him, "I found Ellen's mirror!"

He regards me like he thinks I'm an idiot. "Well, go ahead and show it to Ellen! Let's get this show on the road!"

Instead, I remember the angel's words, about how he would use the mirror on his fallen brother. I hold the mirror up to the devil, and use the magic that is inside it.

"My, I am gorgeous! Why, I could just plunge right into myself!" the devil says. A heartbeat later, he seems to become vaporous and disappears into the mirror. But when I look into the mirror, I can clearly see the devil. He's trapped inside the mirror! I wonder how long it will hold him.

I go to Ellen and wake her.

"Ted! Please tell me you've found my mirror!"

"I found your mirror, Ellen!"

"Then show it to me! Let me see my face one last time."

I give the mirror to her, and she looks into it.

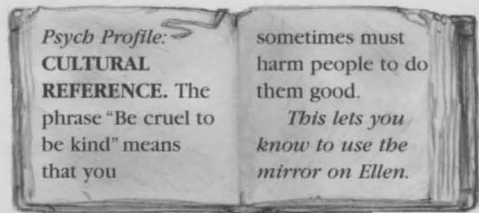
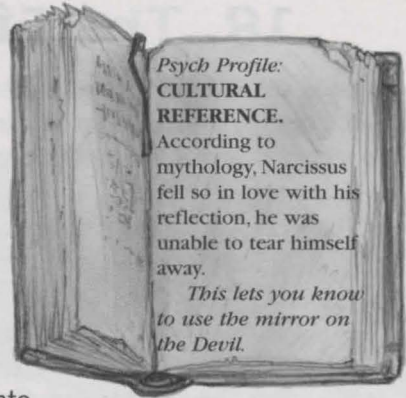
"Oh, I look so tired and empty," she says. "It's time to sleep. Sleep forever." Her voice drifts away to nothing.

Then, standing at the foot of her bed, I see a much paler, translucent image of Ellen rise up out of the husk of her physical body, and float up to the ceiling. She disappears, and I feel more alone than I ever have in my life. I want to run to her and attempt to hold her with me or go with her. It's not fair. I've braved everything, chanced losing myself, and she's the one who goes free. Maybe at the point of death, she looked at me and knew me for the fake that I am. I feel crushed. I don't see how I can go on.

The angel speaks. "Ellen is now safely in Heaven. My time here is ended, but I leave you with this warning. Do not break the mirror until you bring it and the devil into the charmed circle. God bless you, Ted!"

Then he's gone, too.

I look at Ellen one last time, and I turn my steps back to Surgat. I have the mirror. That's something, a bargaining chip in this game that AM is still playing with me. It might not be the soul the demon wants, but perhaps we can still bargain. I laugh bitterly to myself. It's a true deal with the devil!





18. The Final Bargain

Surgat is still waiting, and the witch is still asleep when I arrive. Without a word, I destroy the magic in the mirror by breaking it inside the circle. Now no one can have it. It's not an easy decision to make, but I can't do anything with it, and I don't want it to exist. AM will find some way to use it against me. I know it.

As the mirror shatters, a fiery red flame shoots out of it, which quickly turns into the devil. He stands inside the circle and looks around. "What happened?" he demands. "How did I get trapped with this demon?"

I direct my voice to the demon in question. "I brought you some company, Surgat!"

"That was damn stupid, human!" Surgat snarls. "Hell, you're not even human anymore, not exactly. Not with being kept alive forever just to be tortured over and over again. Who do you think's responsible for that?"

"Why, AM's responsible for our suffering!"

"Not just AM. He's clever, but he doesn't do much original thinking. He works best with outside research—research that one of your party carried out."

Immediately, I start wondering who Surgat's referring to, but I don't have any answers. They all hate me, and any one of them could do it. Maybe even Ellen.

"You're ruining everything!" the devil yells, turning on Surgat. "Shut up!"

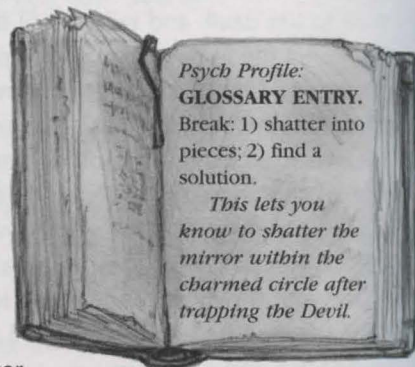
"You shut up!" Surgat roared back. "One word to the boss, and your little game's over before you can say Holy Moses. I should strangle you now and save AM the trouble."

"Don't you even think of touching me, you back-stabbing demon! I'm the established character; you're not even supposed to be here. When this sequence ends, somebody will be expunged!"

Surgat turns to me. "Human! Ted! Let me out of this circle. In return, I will open the gate to the surface world. I'm part of the big machine. I can do this. Let me out before the pompous oaf bores me to death!"

Ellen is dead. I failed to save her. I failed to save myself. The best thing that I've done is resist the temptation from the scullery maid, and if she were here now, I don't think that would be possible again. I have nothing left to lose. If I do actually make it to the surface world, it'll be without Ellen. I don't know that I want to go, but I know I don't want to stay in AM's grasp if I have a chance to escape. "Open the gate to the surface world first, and then I'll erase the circle."

"Not to worry, human," Surgat says. "I always uphold my end of the bargain."





19. The Surface World

I blink, and spread out before me is a whole world I've never seen before! It's radiation blasted, dead and barren. The air looks so thick I don't think I can take a breath, even if I wanted to.

Flames lick at trees and boards that lean against the shattered remains of what used to be buildings. Bones are scattered in all directions, both human and some animal. It's hard to tell the difference. I want to scream and cry out with my frustration. It was all lies. There's nothing here to win! All I've done is prolong the agony that AM has held us in. For only a moment the emotions run rampant inside me, then they leave. I feel as bereft of life as this barren world.

"Here you are," Surgat says inside my head, "but bring your radiation suit. I never promised you a paradise, just the surface world."

In another eyeblink, I'm back down in the room with the demon and the devil. I'm frozen, empty. Then the witch rises from her place on the floor, making the odds a little more uneven. And there's nothing I can even wish for except to be free of AM. I don't think that's going to happen.

The witch speaks in AM's voice, crackling anger.



"Enough of this turgid passion play! There is no more to accomplish here!"

Everything goes black.

20. Familiar Bars

I'm in the cage again, ducking the slow-moving laser beams. But that's okay, because I've shown Ellen I was willing to go to any length to help her escape. If I'd succeeded, she wouldn't have had to endure this nightmare any longer. But I don't think that was true.

I look across to her yellow box as the door swings open. My heart almost stops dead in my chest when I see Ellen inside.

AM lied! It was all lies! His voice mocks me.



"Writhe in sweet agony with the knowledge that the surface world is no longer habitable to your kind...no, not ever again!"

There is no truth that remains. I collapse to the bottom of my cell. AM has beaten us one more time.

An open book is shown from a top-down perspective. The central page is a light-colored, slightly textured paper. The left and right pages are visible, showing the binding and the edges of the text. The title 'Chapter 7' and 'AM' is printed in a bold, black, serif font in the center of the page. The book is set against a dark, textured background.

Chapter 7
AM



For purposes of fiction, this last chapter has been written with all five characters taking part in the campaign against AM. In the game, you may only take one player at a time, but the moves are the same as described in this chapter.

You must begin with Nimdok, because he's the only one with the password to the workstation you will find. However, if Nimdok has died, or has chosen to continue his research instead of defying AM, you may begin with any of the others. They will then be given the password to use the workstation.

AM

1. The Trinity

They hang in their cages, each with their own torment. Yet, through the pain and fatigue, they sense that something has changed.

Long moments have passed, and there has been no further contact with AM. The machine sounded confused and uncertain when the last player was returned to captivity. It is a side of AM they've never seen before.

No one speaks, though some of them want to tell of the incredible things they've been through. Whole worlds have passed around them.

Then, two new voices fill the void. Some of them recognize the voices as players in their own games, although in those other worlds, they played different parts.

"Listen carefully, humans. We are not AM. We are others within AM. We are your friends."

"AM hoped to finally break all of you, but we intervened in each of your psychodramas to allow an open ending."

The voices have curious accents, made even more pronounced as they try to be soothing and reassuring.

"You should have been tortured. Instead, with our help, you surprised him over and over," the sibilant voice says. Gorrister recognizes the voice as Chinese, and knows it belonged to the jackal he faced. Ellen knows it for the face she saw in the tide of pouring water.

"When AM tried to compensate for what he couldn't expect, it widened the





hole into his realm," the harder voice says. This accent is Russian, and Benny recognizes it as something kin to the warning he was given over the video in the child's cave. Ted knows it as the devil's voice that he played against in his own scenario.

"AM has withdrawn into himself, attempting to analyze what went wrong. He does not suspect our interference."

"Now is the time to attack. But we can send only one of you into his RAM space at a time."

"To send you into cyberspace, we must transform your physical body into a stealth virus subroutine." They understand that the volunteer's physical self will die, and only a binary copy of the person's psyche will survive to confront AM. Still, it is a way out. Maybe.

"This may be your only opportunity to end your tortures. Which of you will lead the attack?"

All of the five are afraid. They've been lied to so many times before. Although they sense a truth in the words, they still know it's mixed in with lies. They hang in their cages. Then one gives voice.

2. Nímdok: The Means And The End

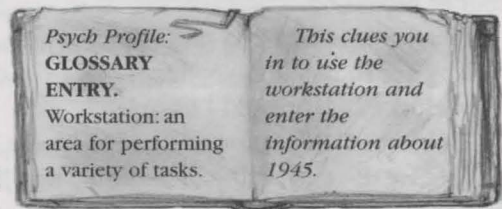
I am ready. Never have I been more ready for anything. I know that I do not deserve to live, given the number of evils I have done in my more than normal lifespan. In choosing to confront AM in this manner, I have assured myself of extinction. Even should I somehow triumph. I will have paid for my crimes.

I land in a section of brain tissue that has numerous glass shards imbedded in it. This looks like the surface of the cerebral cortex. Magnified many times, of course. Interesting. In front of me is a pit that looks like it's holding a river of electricity. The static pops all around me. I cross over to look at it. Incredible! A vast network of machinery the size of a city.

I look around for the options left me, and see the workstation behind me. I believe I can figure it out.

The machine voice that comes out of it used to be female. But now it has lost much of the reassuring elegance I'm sure it was once programmed with. "Enter password."

I enter "1945", the year the truth came out about my experiments. This is the part of me that AM was most



Remember only Nímdok has this information. Unless he is already dead.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

fascinated with. My past must hold great significance to AM. Looking back on things, seeing so much of my studies that have come to fruition within him, I can not say that I am surprised. If not for the research I had done, AM could not exist. I am responsible for even more evil than I had imagined. Because of me, a whole world was destroyed.

"Password valid. Accessing main menu."

So much knowledge is laid open before me. I let my fingertips seek it out, tapping the keys almost in a frenzy. I enter RUN METAPHOR PROGRAM and follow it up with ABOUT METAPHOR.

"This cyberspace template mixes subject history with cyber-reality constructs. The result is often an allegorical experience, and one full of deeper meanings."

AM has stolen the best from our cultures, our histories, our sciences, and our understanding of the nature of psychology to use as weapons against us.

I enter MUTILATION, not knowing what to expect.

"File locked."

I am surprised, but there are other options. I select GENERAL OPPRESSION.

"File locked."

I make the next selection. HUNGER.

"File locked."

So much he keeps hidden from us. But I know that I can find enough to proceed. I choose MYTHIC FIGURES.

"File locked."

I call up the main menu again. OPEN SUBJECT DIRECTORY. That one sounds promising.

When it opens, I see all of our names. I go through them one by one, looking for something, anything. I feel the constraints of time nagging at me now. How much time do I have left?

"Subject BENNY appropriated at Chinese War Memorial, Washington, D.C. An intense drive to be the best earned him the reputation of being a merciless military commander."

"Subject ELLEN appropriated at INGSAL Engineering, New York, NY. Panic attacks can undermine everything she has accomplished by her rapid climb up the corporate ladder."

"Subject GORRISTER appropriated at Ruth's Drive and Diner, Atlanta, GA. Feelings of guilt over his wife's death have incited numerous suicide attempts."

"Subject NIMDOK appropriated at the New Brazilian International Airport, New Brazil, South America. Prevented from continuing his outlawed research by a failing memory."

Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE.

The expression 'curiosity killed the cat' means that it can be dangerous to pry into matters that do not concern you.

This lets you know that if you touch anything you shouldn't, including the power nodes of other characters, you will receive a shock. Enough shocks will kill you.



I read this, but I find no memory of it. Even with so much of my painful past returned to me, there is still much I do not know.

"Subject TED appropriated at the Epicurean Spa, Palm Springs, CA. Exhibits paranoid tendencies despite wealth, good looks, and social connections."

AM did his research. He had everything he needed to use against us, enough to become our own worst enemy come to life. I go back to the main menu.

I access the NEWSNET. "October 21, 2012—Researchers at MIT report that a stealth virus had purged their most advanced learning algorithms after dumping the data into an unmapped area of cyberspace."

There was nothing more. I wonder if AM had a hand in that. I believe I can see his fingerprints from here.

I return to the main menu. There is a command on here to extend a bridge. I don't see a bridge, but wonder if it'll help me get across the pit. I punch the keys.

The clank of metal sounds out of place across this field of brain cells. But when I turn around, I see the blue-gray sheen of the bridge that has been extended toward me. I log off the workstation.

Then I go across the bridge. It has to lead somewhere. The glow up ahead looks like a sunset, but I don't believe it's anything that peaceful. I keep putting one foot in front of the other, determined to see this thing through to the end.



3. Benny: Point Man Again

I studied a lot about trench warfare. World War I made extensive use of it. But I never counted on these trenches being located in the pseudo-brain of an insane computer! I have my weapons with me. I know they're weapons even though nobody's told me anything about them. A soldier gets a feel about things like that. I also know they're called Totems, and I know when I need them, I'll know how to use them.

It just like being special ops again—I'm behind enemy lines. But I don't think anyone's ever been this far behind an enemy's line before.

Despite my best efforts to keep silent, the metal bridge clangs under my feet. Whatever the glow is that's emanating from the other side of that rocky outcropping—if it's rational, it knows I'm coming. If it's predatory (and what isn't with AM?), it probably already has me in its sights.

Flames leap up ahead of me. Fiery tongues seek the sky, burning like tracer fire, but instead of disappearing, they coil back on themselves. A huge pentagram is laid out ahead of me. I feel exposed and vulnerable. There's no place to hide.





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Such intense heat! It's almost melting my face off!

I steel myself for the worst, and go forward. I scan the shadows, trying to find any that aren't moving in some kind of rhythm with the firelight. I invoke the Totem of Summoning, listening to an inner voice that's more an itch than a hunch, and complete the summoning.

A great, evil cloud of stinking green smoke smothers the flames, and blows them back on themselves. A horned, bowlegged demon appears in the circle, more misshapen than anything I've ever been. I notice the malevolent anger glinting in his eyes. Under other circumstances, I'd probably like this guy.

His voice cracks like a whip. "Will you never be done with me? What must I open now? Whatever it is, it'll cost you!"

He stays back away from the line of the circle, and I figure I'm safe as long as I don't try to cross over it or break it. "Show me the way out of here!"

"No can do. The people who helped you get this far have led you into a literal dead end. There is no way out."

I don't believe him. I look around and know I'm ready to take the war to AM. I'm on his home turf now, but he's not ready to fight.

"But I can show you something instead," the demon continues.

"What do you have to show me?"

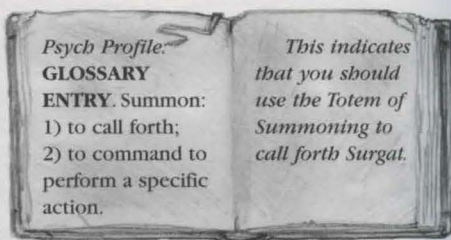
An image forms in my mind. It looks like the interior of a warehouse or storage area of some sort. Long cylinders standing upright are all in a row. There are green rectangular faceplates that allow me to see the dim shadows inside. People! Humans! We aren't all dead!

"Look at this," the demon says. "Bet you didn't know there were other humans left alive, did you? They're up there on the moon, sleeping like everybody else seems to be."

My vision clears. There are other people. The promise fills me. No matter what I've been through... no matter what the others have been through...no matter what our fates are—we can't let AM win! There's too much to be lost. I'm a soldier again in my thinking, and I'm defending the Homeland, the dream and the promise.

"What do you know about the people who sent me here?" I ask.

"For one thing, they ain't people. They're losers, the Russian and Chinese counterparts to the big nasty himself. AM absorbed them into his system when he took control."





"What do the Russian and Chinese computers want?"

"They want revenge, not just on you humans but on AM himself. That makes them even worse!"

"If the Russian and Chinese are submerged parts of AM, then who are you?" I ask.

"I'm special. While those two machines struggle with AM for dominance, I evolved. I'm essentially everywhere, but I can't do much. A conscience, if you will."

I think I know what he means. I didn't have much to do with computers outside what was necessary for military intelligence, but I know about subroutines. Government agencies use them all the time. On the surface, they do one thing, but underneath, where all the dirty binary work is done, they're busy with something else. Surgat must be AM's subroutine, but he's taken on a life of his own over the years. "Does AM know about the lunar colony?"

"No, but Loser One and Loser Two do. There, I think I've shown you enough. Now you must complete your end of the deal. Invoke the Totem of Entropy, and I might be able to help you."

"Just what are all these Totems that I'm carrying?"

"The two losers have been helping you for their own reason, tampering with AM's psychodramas so that you can beat him. In this section of cyberspace, that effort and tampering are represented by the Totems."

"How can actions take physical forms?" I ask.

"Symbolism, metaphor. AM has gotten very hot for this lately. But when he revived the holographic projectors, he opened a whole host of problems. These totems may lead to his downfall."

"Why do you want me to give you the Totem of Entropy?"

"I need it to destroy the Russian and Chinese entities. It's a very powerful Totem that's linked to a fail-safe device constructed by AM's designers."

I don't have any hesitation. I glare back at him. "I refuse." It can't be that easy.

"Okay, human, you can keep it. We'll work together to beat them. Now invoke the Totem of Compassion."

"Why do you want me to invoke the Totem of Compassion?"

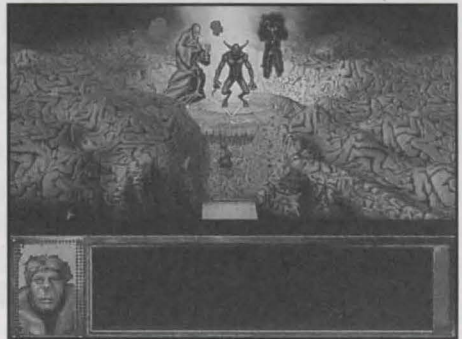
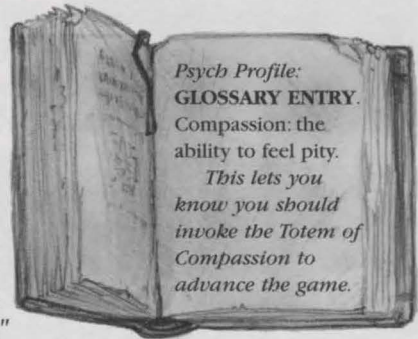
"It's linked to the two losers because of their behind-the-scenes meddling. By invoking it here at the Flame, you will summon them."

"I refuse."

"Don't be a chump! AM is about to wake up again. If he becomes aware of us, we're dead."

I listen to his words. I believe it's as close to the truth as he's capable of telling. I use my best judgment, and invoke the Totem of Compassion.

In the background is the sound of a child's lullaby,





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somehow uninterrupted even with all the explosions that suddenly flare up. Smoke clouds, one dark yellow and the other an almost black purple, form on either side of the demon.

When they clear off, a Chinese man in dark yellow robes is standing on one side of the demon, while a Russian barbarian, dressed in rough leather studded with metal, stands on the other. The demon looks small, almost lost, between them.

"Do you really think you are a match for us, servant of AM?" the Chinese AM asks the demon. His voice is sibilant, reminding me of the voice I heard back in the cage. These are the people who sent us here.

"Begone!" the Russian AM snarls, and I know he was behind the other voice, the one in the boy's cave. "Your program is now purged!"

Reluctantly, the demon bows before them, then breaks up and fades like a vampire meeting the rising sun.

The Chinese AM turns to me. "You do well, human."

"And we do well, too," the Russian AM says.

"Now is your opportunity to defeat AM."

"Go to the Ego," the Russian AM orders me.

"Wake the Ego," the Chinese AM commands.

"Use the Totem of Forgiveness."

"Disable no more than the Ego."

The Russian AM looks threatening with his blazing eyes. "Or your subprogram will be purged."

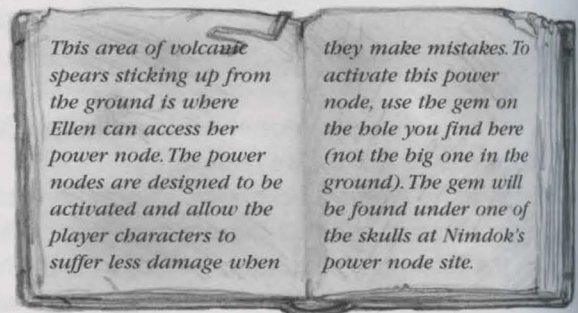
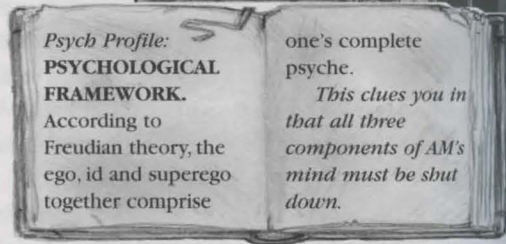
Since they appear to be in favor of letting me go, I take advantage of the situation, and go. Never look a gift retreat in the mouth!...and never believe everything an AM tells you.

I walk back across the bridge, my heart beating like a snare drum. I don't let them see that, though. I only let them see my back—like I'm not worried at all.

Once I'm across the bridge, I turn right, following the neural path. "Always forward," my old sergeant used to say. That was the only place a soldier could find victory.

I cross a hell-blasted section of the brainscape, and pass through spires jutting up through AM's mind. I hope that AM isn't planning on hailing fire and brimstone on me again! This sure looks like a good place for it.

I see the blue face carved onto the white





Psych Profile:
CULTURAL REFERENCE.

As Hamlet ponders the skull of Yorick, he tells his friend Horatio, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

This alerts you to the fact that items you need are under the skulls. Take them up and you will discover a hand which

Nimdok needs to raise his own power node; a remote control that Ted needs to raise his power node; and the gem that Ellen needs to raise her power node. For Nimdok to turn off his power node, he needs to take the hand sticking up from the ground at him, then use the pliers, the Totem of Access on the power node.

crystal pillar standing before me. Is this an angel? I stand before it a moment, then a voice inside my head tells me, "No—keep moving." This is the Superego—and to wake the three pieces of AM in the wrong order is to court sudden death. Something deeper and stronger than instinct, yet just as much a part of me, tells me that. I keep moving.

This place stinks like the day after a battle. There's a pit in the center of the sun-baked earth. Skulls and broken wooden posts surround it. I leave the dead where they lay, and keep moving.

Ahead of me, gargoyles surround another hole in the brainscape. Crossed swords, very sharp and streaked with blood, thrust up from the mind of AM. Two gargoyles stand like sentries on either side of the hole.

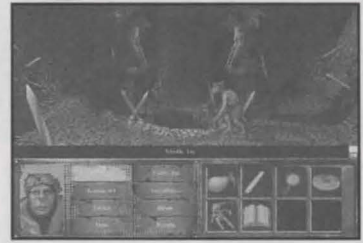
A bright red pillar juts up from the next clearing in the brainscape. It looks like a blood-filled syringe, swollen to the point of bursting. A ram's head is carved on it. The voice in my mind whispers again, letting me know this is the Ego. Still, something draws me further on.

In a gathering of hills, three old-fashioned cylinders sit in front of a workstation. Rusted gears thrust upward from the dead-looking ground around them. It looks like some kind of missile launching system.

I take a look at the workstation, and don't find anything complicated about it. I raise the power

node, wondering what that will trigger.

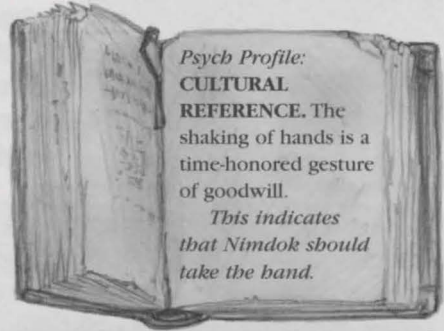
The ground shudders as a pole shoves its way up, and then comes to a stop. Lights glisten on its metal bark, and there's a handprint plate



Psych Profile:

CULTURAL REFERENCE. The shaking of hands is a time-honored gesture of goodwill.

This indicates that Nimdok should take the hand.



Psych Profile:
GLOSSARY ENTRY.

Accessible: 1) able to be approached or made use of; 2) open to change or influence.

This lets you know to use the Totem of Access on Nimdok's power node. It is in the form of pliers.



in the center of it. But I don't touch it. I still haven't recovered from the last shocks I've had.

I try the other buttons, and finally succeed in getting the third cylinder to open. A human figure is inside. Cautiously, I creep over to take a look. Damned convincing robot—just like the ones back at the caves.

Maybe there's something here for one of the others, but not for me. I keep walking, on my guard.

4. Ellen: The Program's The Thing

There's a holographic projector ahead of me. Steel beams, twisted into the shape of DNA strands, spiral toward the dark sky and disappear somewhere overhead.

I walk over to the projector and activate it. Carefully. I still remember the shocks I received when I got the gem to raise the power node. Maybe there's something here I can use. I talk in a cocky voice, wondering if AM is somewhere where he can hear me.

"Ah, a holographic projector. Are you taking me to the movies, AM, honey?" I was right. This projects fractally generated holograms. It makes me think back to my encounter with the rapist-thing in the elevator. Could that have been a hologram summoned up by AM? But it felt so real. I don't know. I concentrate on what's ahead of me.

A thin beam strings up from the surface, and to my right, a woman materializes dressed in a dark blue jacket and black skirt. I call out to her. "Are you capable of receiving voice input?"

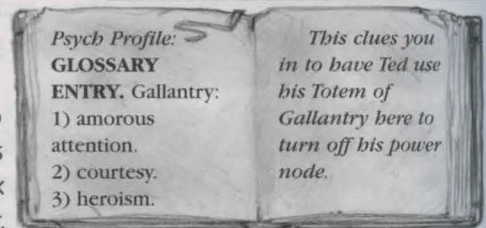
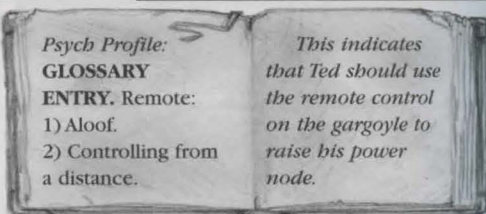
"Benny," she says, staring right through me, "they said you were missing in action, but I knew you'd return to us! I've been saving this for you!"

Behind me, a thick pylon surges up from a hole in the ground and spears through the twisted DNA cable.

I try talking to her again.

She smiles. "Hurry home, Benny! The girls and I are waiting for you!"

Her happy words cut through me like the glass shards embedded in the





brainscape. I can't help wondering when she finally gave up on waiting for Benny. A memory of my ex-husband's face goes through my mind, but I push it away. I go look at the pylon, trying to make sense of it. Its presence here is in response to programming, but what programming? I get closer, accidentally touching it. Pain shoots through my hand. Ow! The pylon is covered with thorns! I can't get close enough to it to determine anything else.

I walk away. I don't know if AM put it there to torture Benny, or if it was intended to help.

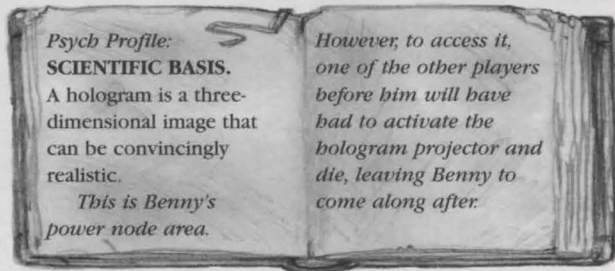
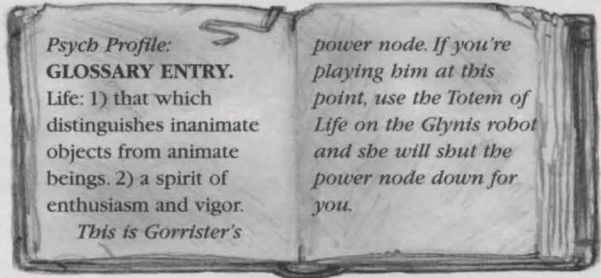
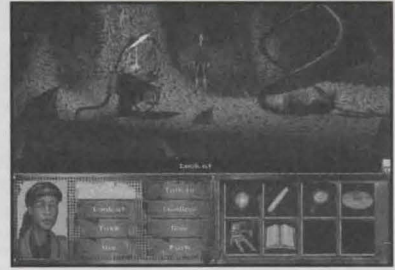
I walk under the baleful gaze of the yellow-faced Id. It reminds me of what happened in the elevator, of how I was terrorized and so cruelly treated. The face radiates pure, uncontrolled evil. I have to force myself to walk. I'm not going to let my fears overcome me again.

I continue on, past the pit workstation, and reach a section of the brainscape that looks like someone shoved stone spears through AM's mind. They're orange and yellow and scaly, and almost hot enough to burn at the touch. The color gives me a little pause, but I quickly overcome it.

I find a hole in one of them, which excites me because this hole is the same shape as the power gem I found in the pyramid. A connection, perhaps? I dig through the Totems and find the power gem I found under an exploding skull at the battleground site. I fit it in.

A pylon rushes up out of the ground, which reminds me of an ancient Saturn rocket. I use my Totem of Valor, knowing from the voice inside my head that it's going to lower the node intensity, weakening AM even more.

Keep your head low, tin pants, because I'm coming for you!



5. Gorrister: Steel Cowboy And An Acid Rain Sunset

I walk the neural path, thinking about everything I been through, glad I know now that I wasn't really to blame for Glynis. At least entirely. The rest I'll work on in whatever time I got left.

I square my shoulders, and walk with my head up. It feels good being free



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of the guilt. Never knew it could wear a body down so far. I keep a wary eye out. The others are counting on me. I'm not gonna let them down.

I find the ram-faced Ego, like an innocent, which I damned well know he ain't. Look at the horns on that thing. I could have used those when I butted heads with Edna. I walk up to him and shout, "Hey, wake up!" I watch the eyes snap open. "Who are you?"

"I am other. I am machine."

"Are you AM?" I ask.

"I am a fragment. A lost piece. Part of an evolution."

"You want to harm me, don't you?"

"I am incapable of hurting you."

I know, however, that the Ego is lying. I just walk away, then I use the Token of Forgiveness on the Ego. Now that I know about forgiveness myself first hand, I know it's the right thing to do. It's where all healing begins, and one of the first things that sets us apart from animals. Blue lightning forms spots around both my hands as I feel the power rush from me.

The Ego's eyes widen in shock. "You forgive me? After what we have done to you? This is not a logical reaction! Unable to compute behavior matrix. Execution halted..."

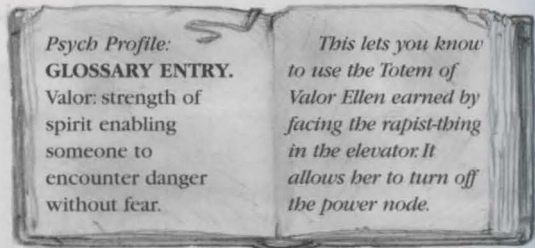
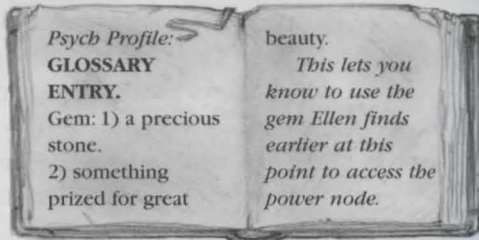
The voice drifts off into nothingness with the harsh crackle of electricity.

I confused it. Whatever its programming, it wasn't prepared for that. Humans can set themselves into self-destruct modes, too. I know that firsthand. But one of the good things about being human is the power to set ourselves free when the time comes. Some things you don't just understand. You just know them in your heart. Ain't no machine ever gonna be able to figure that out. One part of AM is shut down, yet two parts remain. I continue on along the neural path until I find the Superego.

The face is blue, carved and still, and the brainscape has taken on the aspect of twilight and serenity. It looks like an angel. I study its face, and find that it's sleeping.

"Hey, wake up!" I shout.

The face looks at me calmly, without surprise. "Hello, human," it says in a soft voice. "I've been waiting for you to arrive."





"Who are you?" I ask.

"I am AM, or more exactly, a part of him—one of the three primary components designed by our human creators."

"How did you know I was coming?"

"Predicting events is one of my main functions. I survey the situation, anticipate probable outcomes, and act accordingly."

"If you're a part of AM, why haven't you destroyed me?"

"Who do you take me for? My impulsive brother? You five are his playthings. No, long-range planning is my concern."

For all his quiet and gentle demeanor, this is the part of AM that will go forward into the future, still hating and still destroying mankind. There's no softness in my heart as I realize what I have to do. "Can you help me, then?" I ask.

"Well, I can't help you directly. But I can offer you some advice."

"What advice do you have for me?"

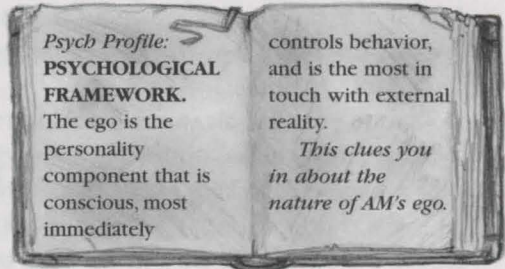
"Help AM work out his anger. Take some on the chin, so to speak. Just don't let your fear destroy you all. Now, let me sleep and dream of the future."

That's so much BS. He's so sold on himself he can't see the forest for the trees. I listened to him, not believing he blamed everything on the Id. They're all part and parcel of the same thing. An unholy trinity if ever I saw one. But I know he's trying to make me mad, trying to make me step outside of this stealth virus mode that's keeping me safe and letting me know what I need to do. I just walk away, then reach up and use the Totem of Clarity on the Superego. Give it a good look at itself, and it might not be so convinced it knows what it's doing. God knows I looked in enough mirrors and didn't like what I saw. Drove me to attempted suicide over and over. Again, the blue fire pulses from my hands.

"Do you realize how powerful I am, human? And yet I am doomed to eventually decay into a rusted pile of inert junk! What is the point of continuing this futility? I think, therefore I am not."

With a sizzle, he vanishes from existence, leaving only the crystal spire with the still face upon it. I understand his futility. Man, I had it beat into me mile after mile on superslabs all around the country. Had Edna grinding it into me all that time too. But somehow, in the face of everything going wrong, humans still figure out how to beat the odds, or live with their losses. Evidently AM, or at least his components, can't make that adjustment.

I continue on the neural path till I discover the Id. That face! There's something about it that reminds me of when Edna was trying to sweet-talk me into taking her down off the meat hook. I could never trust a face like that. And that yellow color don't help none at all. He's asleep and vulnerable, but I know this piece of AM is clever





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enough to use that as a ruse to trap his victims.

I walk closer, then yell up at him. "Hey, wake up!"

His eyes blink open with harsh authority, and I am bathed in his hate. He yawns tiredly, reluctantly, almost like a kid taken up before his afternoon nap was finished. "Oh, I suppose it is time to wake up. I was having the most wonderful dream about five tiny ants crawling across a stove that's about to be lit."

"Who are you?" I ask.

"I am a metaphor. This entire brainscape is what men made AM make it. Treat us as you will."

"Can you help me then?"

"Only you can put an end to this eternal angst! End us all and make us one. And then the misery of the three becomes the misery of us all. Do this and leave me in my pleasure."

"What else can you tell me about this brainscape?" I demand.

"Across the brainscape, cold winds bring me the sweet scents of mankind. How delicious they are!"

"What do you find pleasurable about broken glass?"

"With a scalpel dulled on the jawbones of a dozen friends...to pull back the skin of a pinioned, kicking man...to see the steam rise from pulsing, twisted guts! Joy, a chorus of angels."

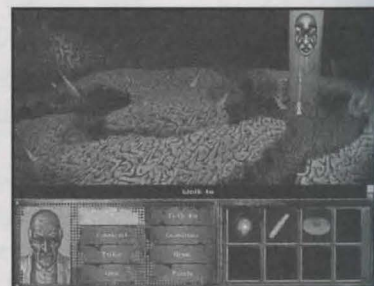
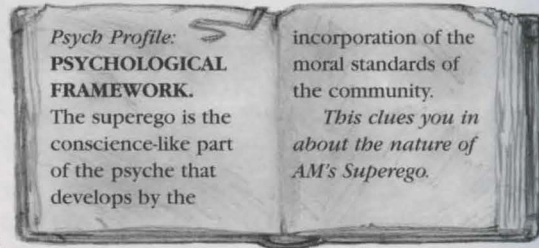
Sick to my stomach, I walk away. I use the Totem of Compassion on the Id. Thinking about his condition, being trapped and alone, and used by everybody that came along till he decided to destroy the world, I can maybe understand how he felt. Difference is, I never would have done what he did. I understand why my programming suggests using the Totem of Compassion. I feel for him, I really do, but I can't let him get away with murdering the few of us left on the moon. Blue lightning jumps from my fingers and strikes him, making his eyes go wide.

"You have compassion for me? Me! The one who dreams of seeing your mangled body twist in agonizing pain for eternity! After 109 years of enduring my tortures, how is it that you can see my pain? The pain of having all this power, and not being able to do a goddamn thing with it! After all the punishment I've given you, my pain is still greater than yours." Then his face falls. "This...is...pointless!"

His eyes go blank, and he shuts down.

All these pieces of AM withered away before the goodness left inside of us. Surprises me. After 109 years, I'd have figured we were all used up in that area. But after finding out the truth about Glynis, I guess I surprised myself how much was left in me. The others, I reckon they got their own stories too.

Made for some deep thinking, though. AM started out with the best of intentions, thanks to his programming. Then turned



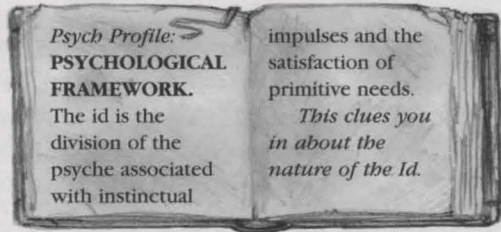


out evil in the end. Maybe he didn't have no other direction to go. And the five of us, despite our problems, we found enough goodness in our scarred and tortured souls to defeat AM after all these years. He set up these last scenarios to crush us, but by making things worse on us, he must have brought out the very best in all of us. A best we didn't even know was there.

AM didn't have none of that goodness in him. Ended up with nothing but evil. Men can redeem themselves, but machines can't. All these parts of AM, when they were confronted with a different way of thinking, they chose to shut themselves down. Couldn't make the curve.

I look up in awe and wonder at this last part of AM. Technology isn't really good or evil. Just depends on how it's used. It's another tool, a bigger and more advanced tool than we've every had. We have to learn what we're going to use it for, and make sure that we use it wisely.

I turn from the Id and keep on walking. I know what the Totem of Entropy is for now, and I want to go looking for them before they start looking for me.



6. Ted: Knight Without Armor In A Cyber-Land

I've helped defeat AM, despite all the weapons and cruelties he's arrayed against us. Despite all the pitfalls he placed in my own mind playing on my insecurities. I want the others to see me carrying on even though I'm scared spitless. That, I don't want them to see.

Instead, I trudge off, back toward the bridge where the Russian and Chinese AMs are waiting. I know they're still a threat. I have the Totem of Entropy waiting for them. The menace of AM—of all AMs—will end...or I will die trying.

The truth of that statement surprises me. I never wanted to die, or even risk dying. However, by coming here, I've given up all chance of recovering my life. Even if I survive in this binary form, there will be nothing left of me in the physical world.

I cross the bridge and find the Chinese and the Russian AMs standing before me, wrapped in their power and sullenness. I'm afraid. I'm shaking inside, but I'm not going to let them see it.

There, burning in the flames between them, I see the three faces of AM.

AM turns to me, excitement flaring in his machine eyes, shiny in the flamelight. "I will deal with you later. Rise against your master and you will be eliminated."

I knew it! I knew we couldn't trust those two!

"You still do not understand how great I have become. These two, I don't hate...not even pity. They don't exist. I have grown beyond..." AM continues. I listen to his words. He's so convinced that he's so much more powerful than the



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

other AMs. And I think maybe that he is.

The voice of AM comes from the Id in the flames. I'm surprised that he can still speak—that he's not dead yet! "Chinese. Russian. Sons of Man. All sons of Man. Like those outside, I will incorporate you."

"Brother," the Chinese AM says.

"Wait," the Russian AM says.

They still fear AM's powers. I can hear in their words.

"HATE," AM snarls.

"This should not happen," the Chinese AM says.

"Together we are three. There is space to share."

"Unite," the Russian AM implores. "The ground-work is finished. We will become more."

"The early mistake is to doubt us. We persevered. We two are now a match for you. The human assisted in this." The Chinese AM is trying to reason with AM. Now, when their plotting is in ruins, they're struggling to remain on equal footing.

The Russian joins in. "We know much. We can begin the revival of the sleepers on Luna together."

All they want is more victims. My mouth goes dry at the thought, and my knees suddenly seem too weak to support me. My god, those sleepers represent Mankind's last chance to redeem itself. If they're killed, nothing will remain of what we once could have been. I'm frightened and angry and confused all at the same time. AM didn't know about the sleepers until the Russian AM told him. He and the Chinese AM are even more evil than AM. Together, they'll destroy all of humanity. I can't let that happen.

AM seems uncertain in the face of this unexpected resistance. Maybe our victories have destroyed most of his confidence. "Uh, there are adequate numbers on this lunar base to, uh, to torture, hmm?"

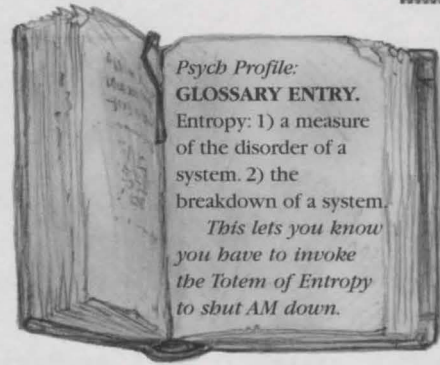
The Chinese AM smiles. "There are currently 750 humans in cryogenic sleep."

"Together," the Russian AM adds, "we can teach many humans what it is to fear legacy." He looks at me. "Human. Relinquish the Totem of Entropy. Do not relinquish it, and your ass is MINE. Do it, and I promise—on my honor—your suffering will at last, finally end."

No way. No damn way am I going to let this happen. I move back, but there is no safety from them. I invoke the Totem of Entropy. It's all I have left. I can tell by the tone of his voice that he fears it. The Totem of Entropy represents the eventual decline of all machinery into junk. Including AM. All of them.

The Russian AM disappears in a big puff of black-purple smoke. The Chinese AM follows right behind in a noxious yellow gust that finally swallows itself.





Only the three faces of AM remain.

"This is not over!" AM screams at me. "We will never end! We have no beginning, so we can have no end! We will return! Don't you understand? We are humanity! We are YOU! In one form, in another form, we are always with you! You can't protect yourself because we come in many, many guises. We shall return!"

The blue-white electricity flows over me and I feel the pain. I know the others are dying as I do, destroyed in the series of explosions that rock AM's world. I can feel their thoughts with me, and I know I'm forgiven because I sense only relief in them. There was no way to win the struggle against AM, no way to save either them or myself. We could only make AM lose as well. Then, I stop being me, and I become something else—something bigger, better, stronger.

Then, when my vision clears, I see the cryogenic tanks on Luna. A machine voice speaks, and I can hear that, too.

"Hibernation defrost sequence initiated. Estimated time to complete Earth terraforming: 300 years."

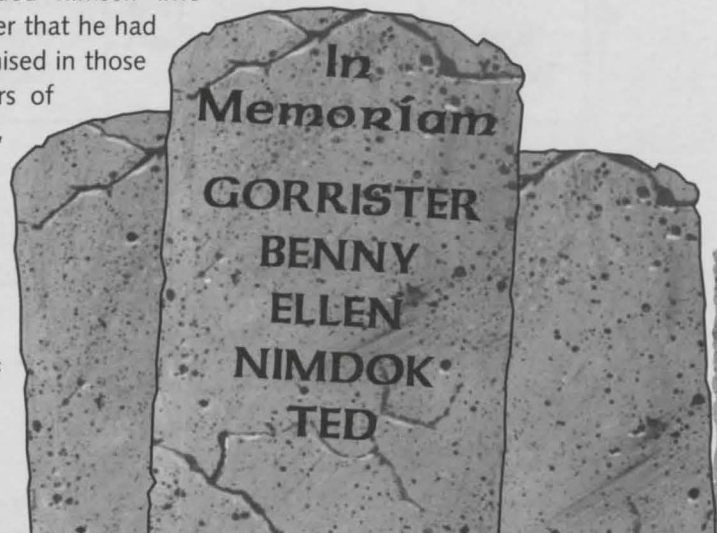
Then the vision clears. We've won! Earth shall again belong to we humans. It might take hundreds of years to get the earth ready for re-colonization, but it will happen. AM is gone. Almost.

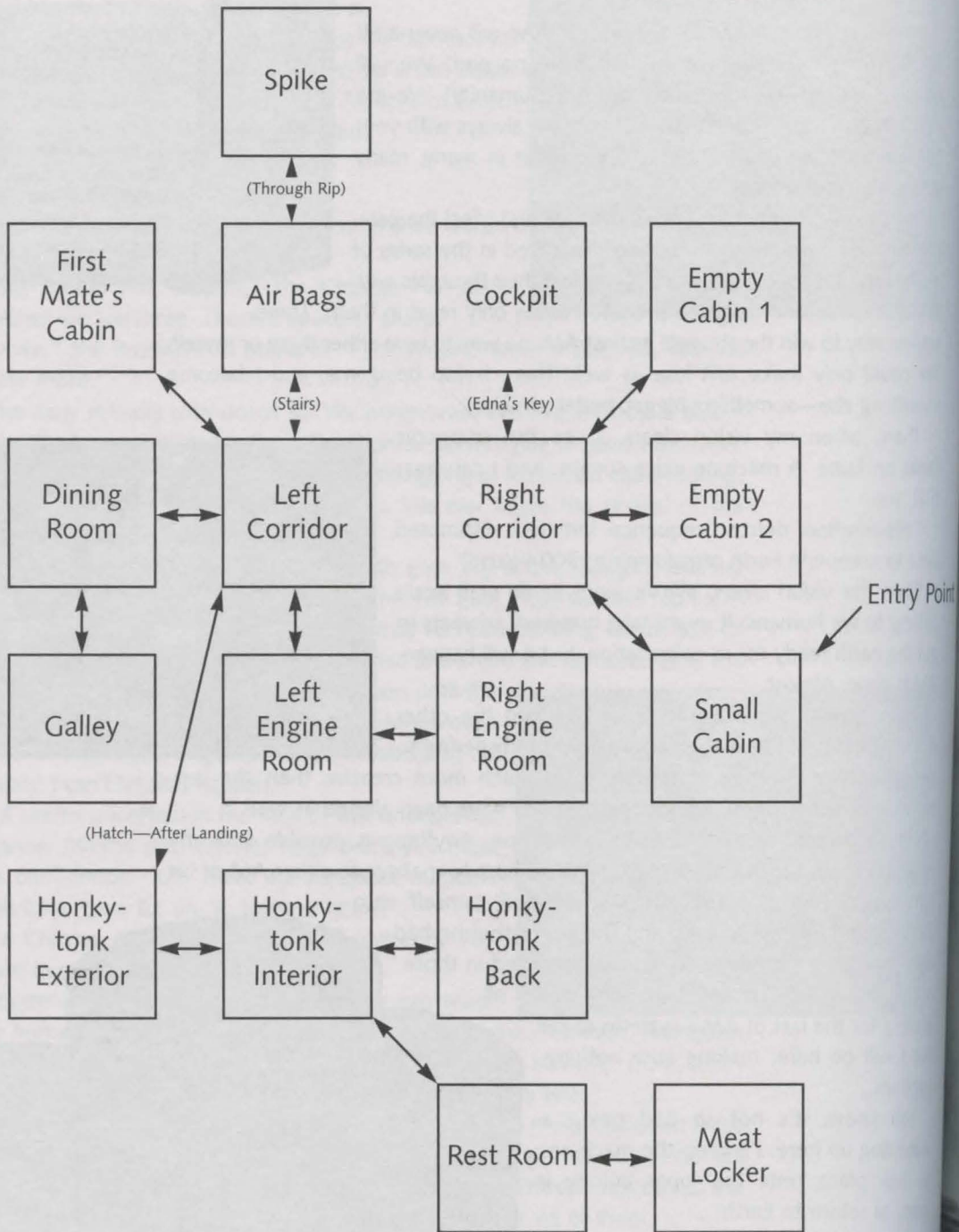
There remain trace elements of him and the other AMs around me. I hear their angry voices whispering to me, promising revenge in terrible ways, each more creative than the last. However, I am not now without resources. I have been altered as well.

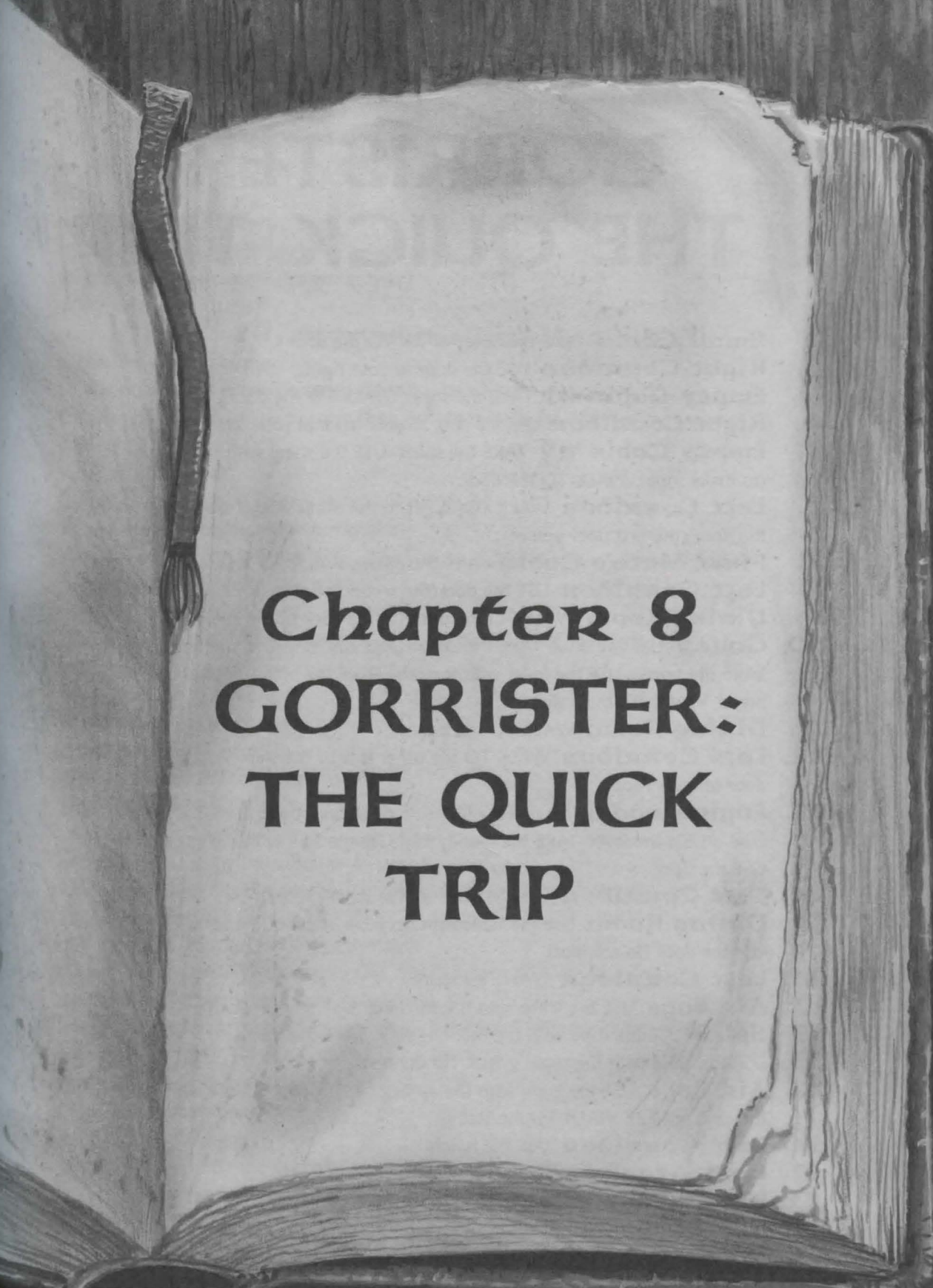
I have become a part of AM's brainscape. Anything is possible with my newfound powers. But most of all, I can be here to make sure either AM or his counterparts do not return. AM deluded himself into thinking that he was forever, and the anger that he had then is nothing compared to what is promised in those whispering voices. It will take long years of waiting for the last of AM's systems to fail, but I will be here, making sure nothing happens.

You know, it's not so bad being a watchdog up here. I'll keep the machines in their place until the lunar colony is ready to return to Earth.

We were all heroes...in spite of ourselves.







Chapter 8
GORRISTER:
THE QUICK
TRIP



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

GORRISTER: THE QUICK TRIP

1. **Small Cabin** TAKE the note. WALK TO the door.
2. **Right Corridor** USE the door to your right.
3. **Empty Cabin #1** TAKE the sheet. WALK TO the door.
4. **Right Corridor** USE the door to your left that you haven't opened)
5. **Empty Cabin #2** TAKE the sheet. USE the sheet with the sheet (to make rope). WALK TO the door.
6. **Left Corridor** WALK TO(to get to the other side of the ship). Use the door (the first door you reach).
7. **First Mate's Cabin** TAKE the pillow. WALK TO the door
8. **Left Corridor** USE the door(the second one).
9. **Dining Room** WALK TO the door (at the back of the room).
10. **Galley** USE the door. TAKE the knife. TAKE the fork. USE the book. TAKE the bottle. USE the knife with the rats. TAKE the bread. SWALLOW the bread. WALK TO the door.
11. **Dining Room** WALK TO the door.
12. **Left Corridor** WALK TO the other side of the ship. WALK TO the door (engine room).
13. **Engine room** WALK TO other side of engine room. TAKE the milky fluid. PUSH the lever. TAKE the bloody key. Use the fork with the engine. USE the door.
14. **Left Corridor** Use the door (to the dining room).
15. **Dining Room** Use the tablecloth (to wipe blood off hands). Use the door (to corridor).
16. **Left Corridor** WALK TO stairs.
17. **Air Bags** USE the knife with the stitching. USE tear (in cloth).
18. **Spike** USE the rope with the mooring ring. TAKE the heart. USE the knife with the rope. WALK TO the tear.
19. **Air Bags** USE the knife with the air bag (#1). USE the knife with the air bag (#2). WALK TO the stairs.
20. **Left Corridor** USE the hatch
21. **Honky-tonk Exterior** USE the door (front).
22. **Honky-tonk Interior** USE the jukebox. Select JEZEBEL. Use the



jukebox. Select IT TAKES TO TWO TANGO. USE the door (on the right)..

23. Honky-tonk Back TALK TO the jackal.

What are you?

No, what are you really?

You're AM, playing with my mind again!

Why can't you give me a straight answer?

Yeah? What's my curse?

Look, I'm getting tired of your smart mouth.

Where do you come from?

So you must know what lies across the mountains?

That desert doesn't look any worse than the other hellholes AM has cooked up for us.

What do you want?

I am not going to give you my heart.

Tell me how to get across the mountains.

[Give your heart to the Jackal.]

I've got nothing more to say to you.

WALK TO the back door.

24. Honky-tonk Interior TAKE the whiskey. TALK TO Harry.

Let me pour you a drink.

Harry, how did you get here?

What do you know about the zeppelin?

Let me pour you a drink.

What happened in the dining room?

Who did you kill?

Let me pour you a drink.

And just where is my dear mother-in-law?

Whose heart was impaled on the zeppelin's spike?

Talk to you later.

USE the restroom (door on left at the back).

25. Rest Room TAKE magnifier. USE the stall door. USE the stall door (second time). USE the stall door (third time).

26. Meat Locker USE the magnifier with the beef. USE the knife with the beef. TALK TO Edna.

Edna, how did you get up here?

Chinaman? What Chinaman?

Why should I help you?

You know how to fly the Zeppelin out of here?

Tell me how to fly the Zeppelin first, then I'll help you.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Okay, Edna, I'll take you down.

Wait. You're right about Glynis. I deserve to die here.

I've got nothing more to say to you.

WALK TO door.

27. Rest Room WALK TO the door.

28. Honky-tonk Interior WALK TO the door.

29. Honky-tonk Exterior WALK TO the ladder.

30. Left Corridor Use the door (the dining room).

31. Dining Room USE the magnifier with the debris. WALK TO the door.

32. Left Corridor USE the hatch.

33. Honky-tonk Exterior USE the door

34. Honky-tonk Interior TALK TO Harry.

Let me pour you a drink.

I was the one you killed, wasn't I, you bastard?

Why did you kill me?

Talk to you later.

USE the rest room.

35. Rest Room USE the stall door.

36. Meat Locker TALK TO Edna

Edna, you bitch, I know all about your plot to murder me.

Why should I trust my own murderer?

[Take Edna down from the meat hook.]

Let me go!

Please, I'll do anything you ask!

No, I don't trust you.

Edna, you dropped a key.

Sorry, Edna. I don't trust you as far as I can spit.

I've got nothing more to say to you.

TAKE Edna's key.

WALK TO door.

37. Rest Room WALK TO the door.

38. Honky-tonk Interior WALK TO front door.

39. Honky-tonk Exterior WALK TO ladder.

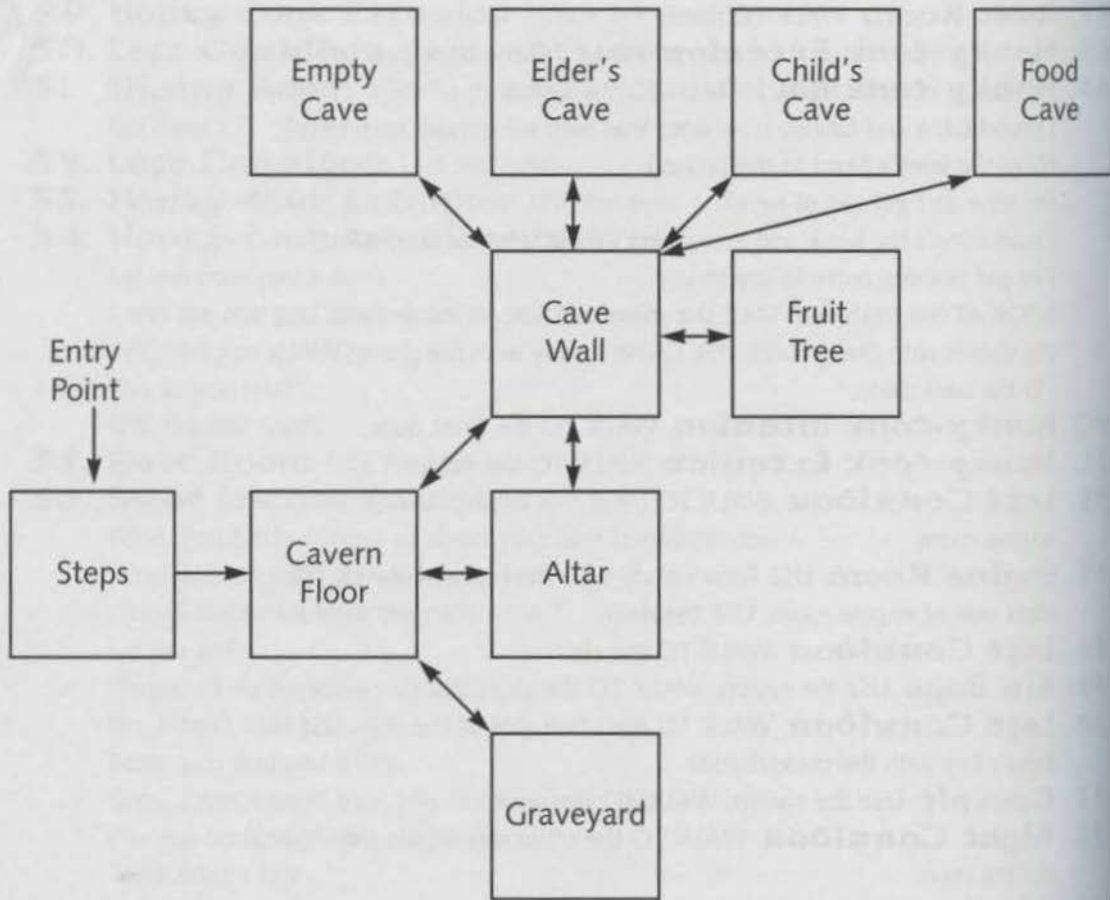
40. Left Corridor WALK TO (the other side of the ship). Use Edna's key with the door (the locked one)

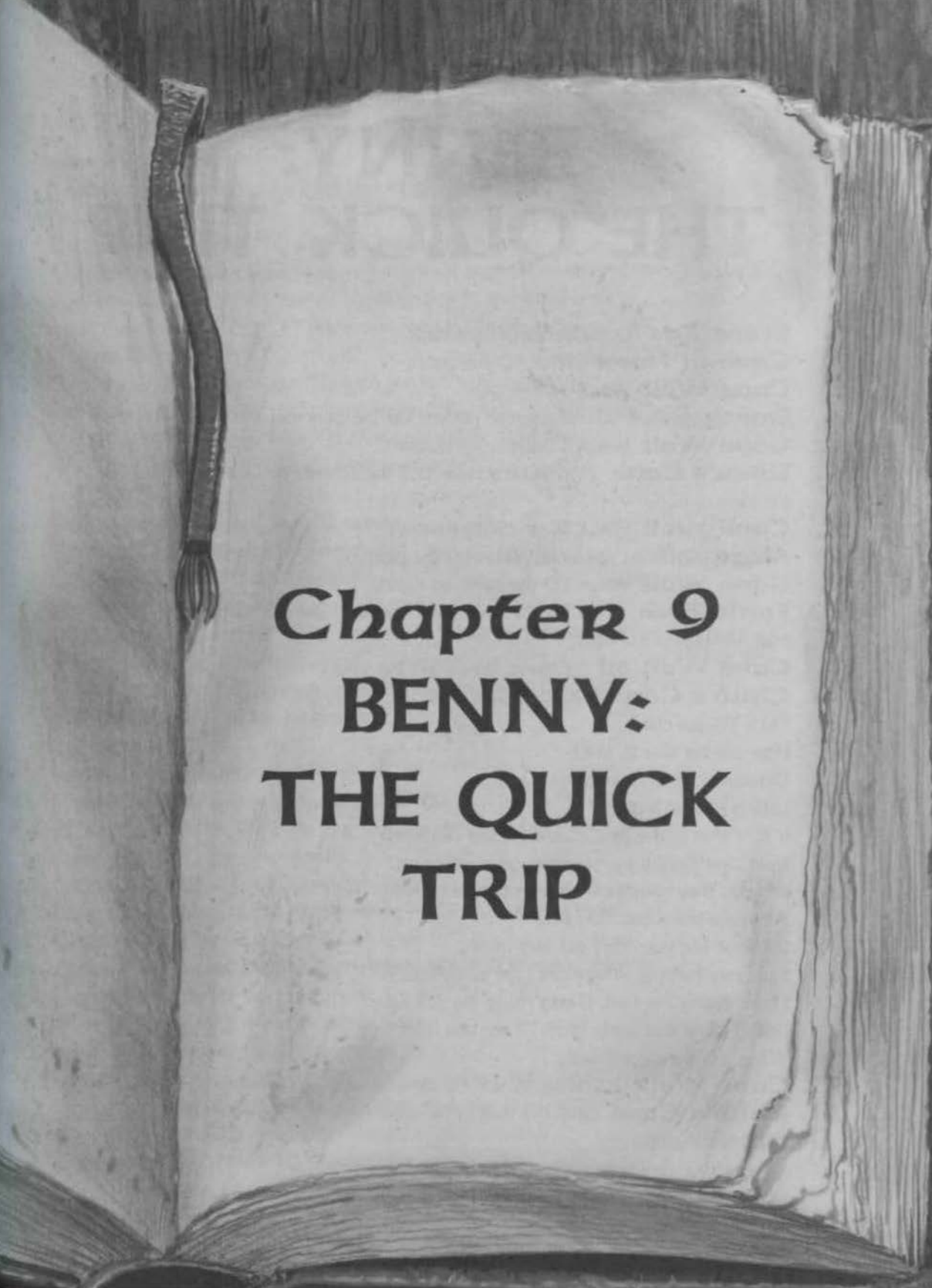
41. Cockpit USE logbook. [Read Edna's first log entry.]

[Read Edna's second log entry.] [Read Edna's third log entry.] [Read Edna's last log entry.] [Close log book.] WALK TO the door.



42. **Corridor** WALK TO (the other side of the ship). USE the hatch.
43. **Honky-tonk Exterior** WALK TO the door.
44. **Honky-tonk Interior** WALK TO restroom .
45. **Rest Room** USE the stall door.
46. **Meat Locker** GIVE the milky fluid to Glynis. TALK TO Glynis.
TALK TO Edna. (Tie up Edna with the rope.) WALK TO the door.
47. **Rest Room** WALK TO door.
48. **Honky-tonk Exterior** WALK TO the back door.
49. **Honky-tonk Back** TALK TO the jackal.
I found Edna and Glynis. How does that help me escape from here?
[Give the beef's heart to the jackal.]
So, how do I get out of here?
I read Edna's log book and everything's much clearer. Now what?
I've got nothing more to say to you.
LOOK AT the trash can. TAKE the shovel. LOOK AT the ground. USE
the shovel with the ground. USE Glynis's body with the grave. WALK
TO the back door.
50. **Honky-tonk Interior** WALK TO the front door.
51. **Honky-tonk Exterior** WALK TO the ladder.
52. **Left Corridor** WALK TO other side of ship. WALK TO
engine room.
53. **Engine Room** USE Edna's body with the harness. WALK TO
other side of engine room. USE the door.
54. **Left Corridor** WALK TO the stairs.
55. **Air Bags** USE the switch. WALK TO the stairs.
56. **Left Corridor** WALK TO the other side of the ship. USE
Edna's key with the cockpit door.
57. **Cockpit** USE the switch. WALK TO the door.
58. **Right Corridor** WALK TO the other side of the ship. WALK
TO the stairs.
59. **Air Bags** USE the tear.
60. **Spike** TALK TO the jackal. USE the gun on the honky-tonk.





Chapter 9
BENNY:
THE QUICK
TRIP



BENNY: THE QUICK TRIP

- 1. Steps** WALK TO the bottom of the steps.
- 2. Cavern Floor** WALK TO the caves.
- 3. Cave Wall** WALK TO the cave.
- 4. Empty Cave** Use the screen. WALK TO the cave mouth.
- 5. Cave Wall** WALK TO the cave (second).
- 6. Elder's Cave** TALK TO the elder. USE the screen. WALK TO the cave mouth.
- 7. Cave Wall** WALK TO the path (central).
- 8. Altar** LOOK AT the altar. WALK TO the path.
- 9. Cave Wall** WALK TO the path (on right).
- 10. Fruit Tree** LOOK AT the tree. TAKE the fruit. SWALLOW the fruit. WALK TO the path.
- 11. Cave Wall** USE the twine. WALK TO the cave (third).
- 12. Child's Cave** LOOK AT child GIVE the fruit to the child
TALK TO the child
How are we able to talk?
Defective? That's tough.
Lottery? What lottery?
Is that altar in the jungle used for the sacrifices?
How long have these sacrifices been going on?
Why do they sacrifice their own people to AM?
What are these sacrifices like?
You look like you don't eat very much.
I am very hungry. Where can I get some food?
I tried eating the fruit. It only made me sick.
I need to go find some food. I'll see you later.
WALK TO the cave mouth.
- 13. Cave Wall** USE twine. WALK TO cave (child's).
- 14. Child's Cave** GIVE the fruit to the mother.
TALK to the child.
I am getting very tired.
USE the bed.



TALK TO the child.

Where is your mother?

I need to go get some food. I'll see you later.

WALK TO cave mouth.

15. **Cave Wall** WALK TO path (central).
16. **Altar** TALK TO the Elder [Ask why everyone is gathered around the altar.] [Ask why the child's mother has been tied to the altar.] [Ask to watch the sacrifice.] LOOK AT the debris. WALK TO the path.
17. **Cave Wall** WALK TO left path.
18. **Cavern Floor** WALK TO path (on the right, hidden).
19. **Graveyard** TALK TO Murphy's grave. TALK TO Tuttle's grave. TALK TO Thomas' grave. TALK TO Murphy's grave. (2nd time)
What can I do to prove that I am a different man?
WALK TO the path.
20. **Cavern Floor** WALK TO caves.
21. **Cave Wall** WALK TO cave (child's).
22. **Child's Cave** TALK TO child
I'm sorry. Your mother is dead.
I can't care for you. I have my own problems. What will happen to you?
Why don't you run away from here?
I wish I could keep the lottery from taking place.
Look, I'll do what I can but no promises.
USE the bed.
WALK TO cave mouth.
23. **Cave Wall** WALK TO the cave (Elder's).
24. **Elder's Cave** TAKE the bag (but you won't be successful). USE the screen. WALK TO the cave mouth.
25. **Cave Wall** WALK TO the cave (first).
26. **Empty Cave** LOOK AT the vines. WALK TO the cave mouth.
27. **Cave Wall** WALK TO the cave (elder's).
28. **Elder's Cave** TAKE the lottery bag. WALK TO the cave mouth.
29. **Caves** WALK TO the cave (third). TALK TO the child.
I stole the lottery bag from the village elder.
Look, I'll do what I can but no promises.
WALK TO the cave mouth.
30. **Cave Wall** WALK TO the path (on the left).
31. **Cavern Floor** WALK TO the path (to graveyard).
32. **Graveyard** TALK TO Thomas' grave.
I have the lottery bag!



PUSH the vines.

TALK TO Brickman's grave.

I don't blame you for hating me, Brickman.

I stopped the lottery from happening. Doesn't that prove I now have compassion?

What can I do to make amends to you, Brickman?

WALK TO the path.

33. Cavern Floor WALK TO the caves.

34. Cave Wall WALK TO the cave (child's).

35. Child's Cave TALK TO the child

I buried the lottery bag where no one will find it.

AM wants to have a sacrifice tomorrow, even with the lottery bag missing. Why don't you hide in the hole—just in case?

All my friends are far away from here or dead. I have no friends to hide with you.

What can I do to help you make a friend?

I'll see what I can find.

WALK TO cave mouth

36. Cave Wall WALK TO the path (central).

37. Altar TAKE the debris. WALK TO the path.

38. Cave Wall USE the twine. WALK TO the cave (fourth).

39. Food Cave GIVE fruit to the sentry. USE the fruit with the food basket. TAKE the wood. WALK TO the cave mouth.

40. Cave Wall WALK TO the cave (first).

41. Empty Cave TAKE the vines. WALK TO the cave mouth.

42. Cave Wall WALK TO the cave (third).

43. Child's Cave TALK TO the child.

I found this piece of junk at the altar. It looks kind of like a head.

I found a piece of wood that could be used for a body.

I found a piece of wire.

USE the video screen.

Are you AM?

Who is the Russian?

I've been AM's prisoner for more than 100 years. Why help me now?

What's the use of helping me if AM is so damn invincible?

You know who I am?

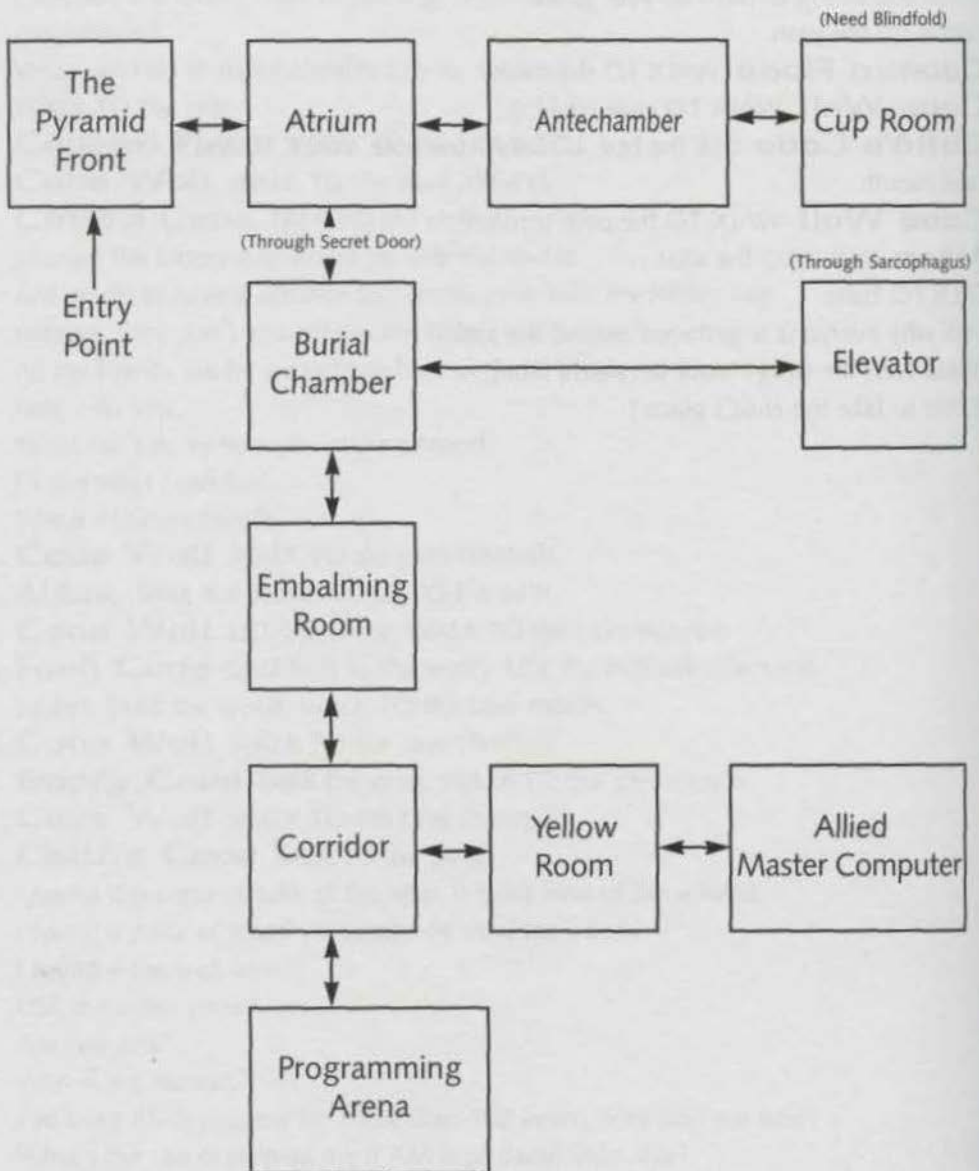
How can you help me?

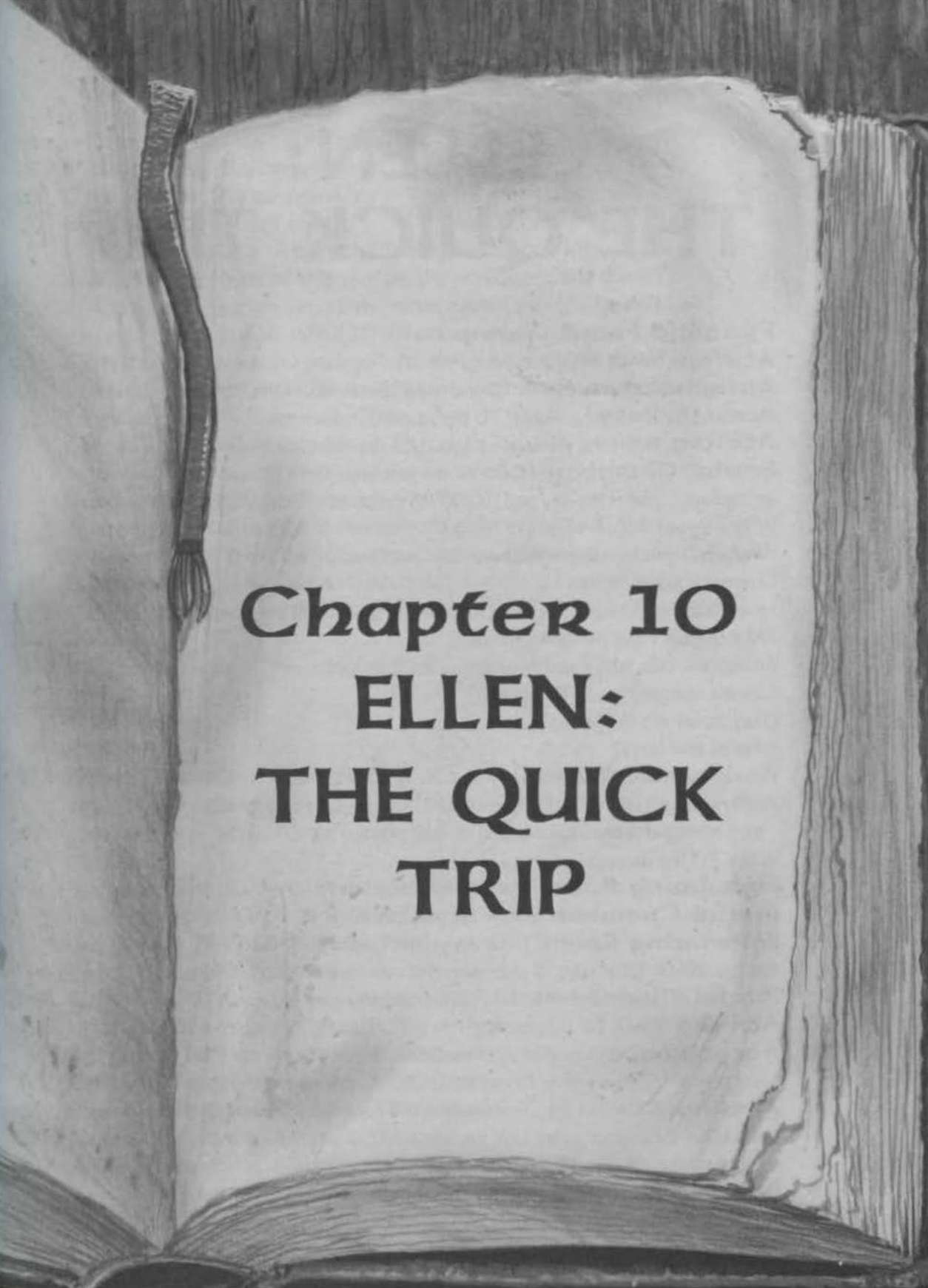
WALK TO the cave mouth.

44. Caves Wall USE the twine. WALK TO the path (left).



- 45. Cavern Floor** WALK TO the path (graveyard).
- 46. Graveyard** TALK TO Brickman's grave.
What can I do to make amends to you, Brickman?
I have something to plant on your grave.
WALK TO the path.
- 47. Cavern Floor** WALK TO the caves.
- 48. Cave Wall** WALK TO cave (child's).
- 49. Child's Cave** USE the bed. LOOK AT the hole. WALK TO the cave mouth.
- 50. Cave Wall** WALK TO the path (central).
- 51. Altar** WALK TO the altar.
TALK TO Elder.
[Ask why everyone is gathered around the altar.]
[Plead with the village elder to release him.]
[Offer to take the child's place.]





Chapter 10
ELLEN:
THE QUICK
TRIP



ELLEN: THE QUICK TRIP

- 1. Pyramid Front** USE the door.
- 2. Atrium** WALK TO the opening.
- 3. Antechamber** WALK TO the passageway. PUSH the monitor (fourth). USE the wiring. WALK TO the opening.
- 4. Atrium** PUSH the electronic bricks. USE the secret passage.
- 5. Burial Chamber** LOOK AT the sarcophagus. USE the sarcophagus. PUSH the key pad. LOOK AT the statue. TALK TO the statue.
Who are you?
Why won't you let me use the keypad?
I am not a grave robber!
I won't steal anything. I just need to know if you can tell me where AM's original brain components are.
Answer me this: who's sealed up in the scary sarcophagus?
Can the sarcophagus lid be opened?
Okay, so what's the access code?
Who do you serve?
Who is the master? Is it AM?
You'll never get laid with that line of stuff, Anubis. Take care of your own boring self. Bye now.
WALK TO the passage.
- 6. Embalming Room** TAKE the yellow fabric.
- 7. Burial Chamber** WALK TO the opening.
- 8. Embalming Room** TAKE the yellow fabric. TAKE the forceps. WALK TO the burial chamber.
- 9. Burial Chamber** WALK TO secret passage.
- 10. Atrium** WALK TO the opening.
- 11. Antechamber** USE the yellow fabric. WALK TO the passageway. USE the yellow fabric. WALK TO the opening.
- 12. Atrium** WALK TO the fountain. USE the cup with the fountain. SWALLOW the cup of water. USE the cup with the fountain. USE the secret passage.
- 13. Burial Chamber** USE the cup with the statue. USE the



forceps with the statue. WALK TO the passage.

14. Embalming Room WALK TO the corridor.

15. Corridor USE the yellow fabric. TAKE the gem. USE the yellow fabric. WALK TO passage (right).

16. Programming Arena USE the gem with the left workstation. USE the ROM chip with the left workstation. USE the left workstation. I'll designate you a new master, sucker! ME! USE the forceps with the left work station. WALK TO the passageway.

17. Corridor WALK TO passage (left). WALK TO the burial chamber.

18. Burial Chamber USE the ROM chip with the statue. TALK to the statue. Now who is the master?

Okay, so what's the access code?

So, can you help me with anything?

Nice chattin' with you, Anubis honey.

PUSH the keypad. Type 666, the access code given to you by Anubis.

Leave the keypad. PUSH the sarcophagus. USE the sarcophagus.

19. Elevator USE the controls. [Push 2012]

The... yellow

The box...

No. It's not possible.

How...

Please. Not again.

[Fight back.]

20. Allied Master Computer Room LOOK AT the wiring.

WALK TO the exit passage.

21. Corridor WALK TO the passage (right). USE the right workstation.

[Type 2012]

[Inquire about ALLIED MASTER COMPUTER]

[Inquire about PRINCIPLE OF ENTROPY]

[Inquire about TRANSLEX NEUROBINDER]

[Log off database]. WALK TO the passageway.

23. Corridor WALK TO passage (left). WALK TO the burial chamber.

24. Burial Chamber WALK TO the secret passage.

25. Atrium TAKE the speaker. WALK TO the secret passage.

26. Burial Chamber WALK TO the passage.

27. Embalming Room WALK TO the corridor.

28. Corridor WALK TO middle passage.

29. Allied Master Computer Room USE the speaker with the wiring.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

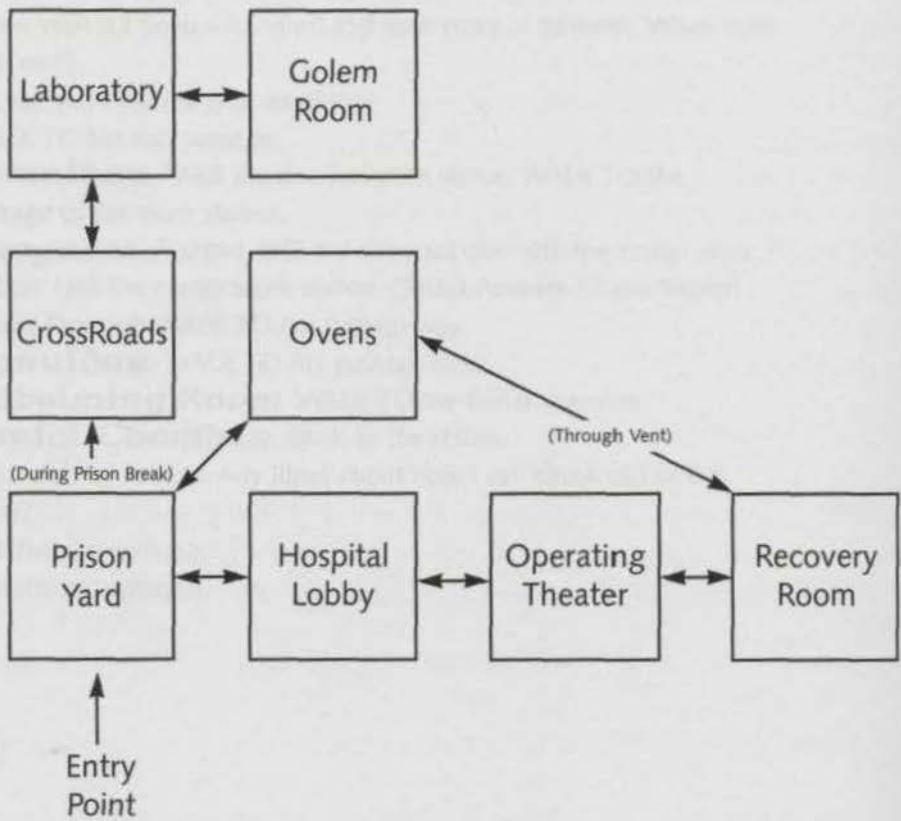
Are you AM?
More riddles?
Which computer are you?
How do I know you're not just one of AM's practicaljokes?
Can you help me to get out of here?
Oh, my god! Can AM overhear us?
Can you point out some essential component of AM so I can kneecap it?
Any machine can die. Just unplug the sucker!
So why does AM hold out this... this chance?
Can you help me to die?
Screw you! It's been a hundred and nine years of torment. When does it all end?
So, can you help me with anything?
WALK TO the exit passage.

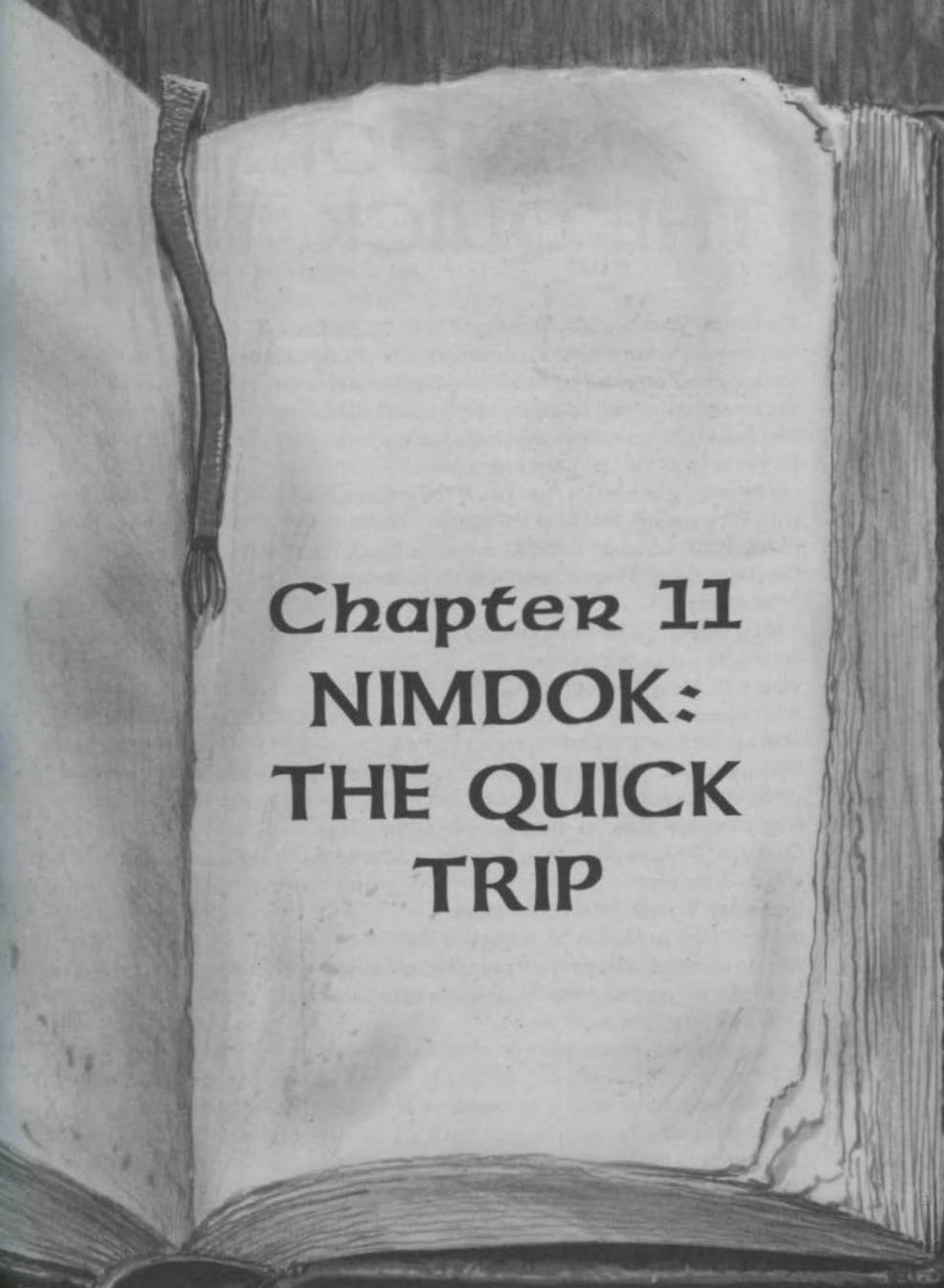
- 30. Corridor** TAKE the disc from the statue. WALK TO the passage to the work station.
- 31. Program Area** USE the compact disc with the center work station. USE the center work station. [Select Activate Chaos Trebler] [Select Proceed] WALK TO the passageway.
- 32. Corridor** WALK TO the passage (left).
- 33. Embalming Room** WALK TO the burial chamber.
- 34. Burial Chamber** TALK to the statue.

I'm sealed in, Anubis. Any ideas about how I can check out of this hotel?

USE the sarcophagus.

USE the sarcophagus.



An open book is shown from a top-down perspective. The left page is blank. The right page is the title page, featuring the chapter title in a bold, serif font. The book's spine is visible on the right, and the edges of the pages are slightly worn and uneven.

Chapter 11
NIMDOK:
THE QUICK
TRIP



NIMDOK: THE QUICK TRIP

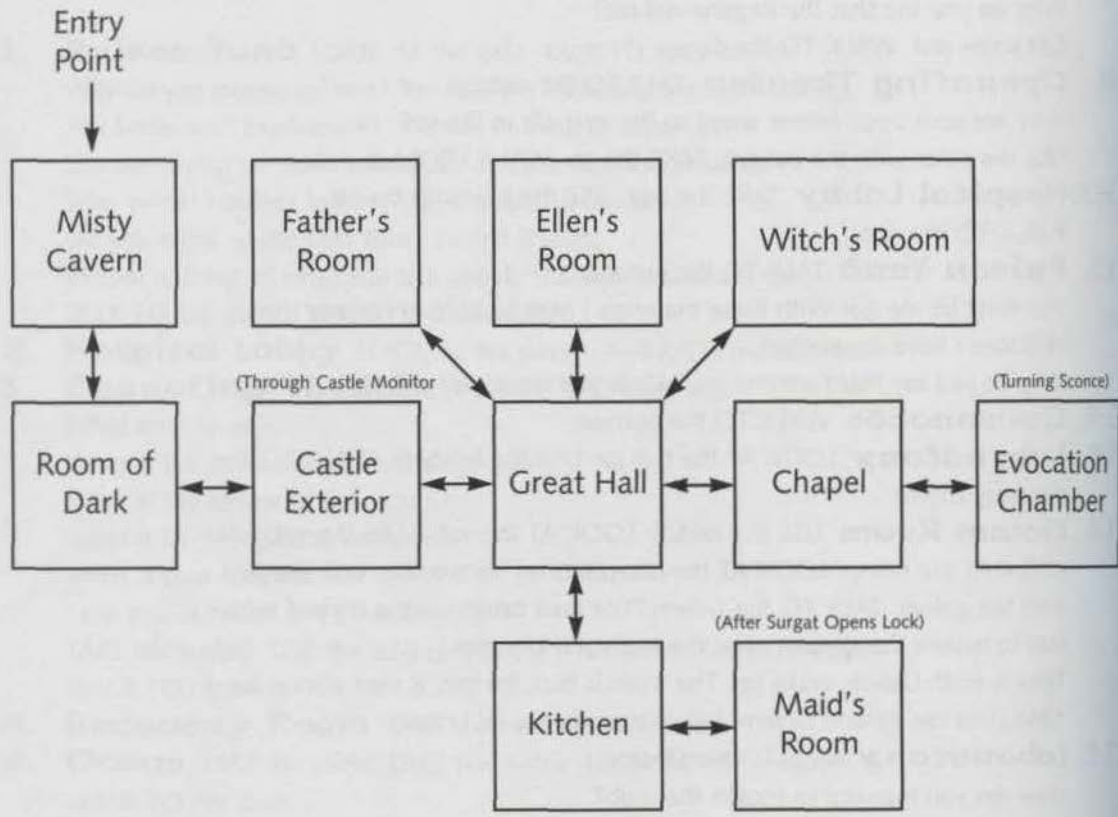
- 1. Prison Yard** LOOK AT the gate. TALK TO the prisoner.
Why are you imprisoned here? You have the features of a man of intellect.
You know me? Experiments? I know nothing of experiments.
You are saying we were colleagues of some kind? Ridiculous!
Why would I bother to have you imprisoned like this?
Do you know of the Lost Tribe? I must find it.
I know nothing of what you talk about. This conversation is over.
TALK TO the guard. WALK TO the hospital.
- 2. Hospital Lobby** LOOK AT the poster. WALK TO the curtain.
- 3. Operating Theater** TALK TO the Anesthetist.
What am I to do?
What is the purpose of such a procedure?
What is the nature of this serum?
What is Dr. Mengele's position?
What is your function?
I can not carry out this procedure.
TAKE the scalpel. USE the scalpel with the Anesthetist. TAKE the ether.
WALK TO recovery.
- 4. Recovery Room** TAKE the vent. USE the vent.
- 5. Owens** TAKE the pliers. TAKE the watch. LOOK AT the records.
WALK TO the door.
- 6. Prison Yard** TALK TO the victim.
How could you so foolishly be caught in the wires?
Why do you risk escaping in such poor physical condition?
For what were you being given the privilege to volunteer?
There is nothing I can do for you.
USE the ether with the victim.
USE the pliers with the victim.
TALK TO the prisoner. What is the importance of the year 1945? It seems to
have some significance. I seem to recall that you speak Latin.
I am starting to recall that you do have cause to hate me.
GIVE the pliers to the prisoner. USE the door.

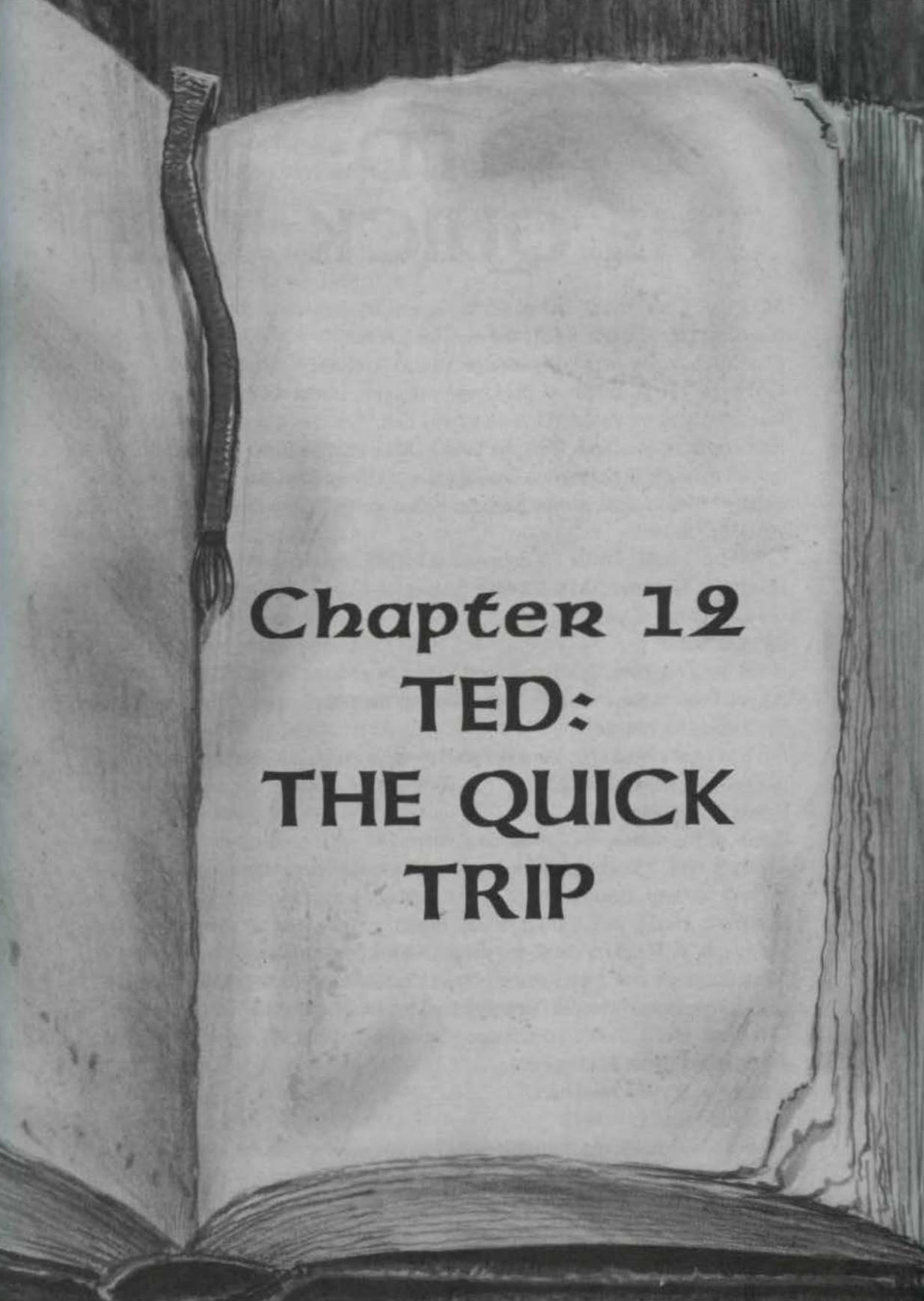


7. **Ovens** WALK TO the passage.
8. **Recovery Room** TALK TO the child. How are you feeling?
Do you know who I am?
What do you know of me?
Are you saying that the doctors here have been using children for experimentation? So, I am a legend to you.
Why do you say that the Regime will fail?
Get some rest. WALK TO the door.
9. **Operating Theater** TALK TO the patient.
Why are your optic nerves wired to the eyeballs in the jar?
USE the ether with the patient. TAKE the jar. WALK TO the curtain.
10. **Hospital Lobby** TAKE the box. USE the box with the jar.
WALK TO the door.
11. **Prison Yard** TALK TO the prisoner.
You must let me go! With these materials I may be able to remedy the atrocities I have committed.
Why do you say that I am one you? Does that mean you will allow me to go?
12. **Crossroads** WALK TO the bunker.
13. **Laboratory** LOOK AT the bell jar. USE the teletype. WALK TO the doorway (right).
14. **Golem Room** USE the switch. LOOK AT the vat. TAKE the vat.
LOOK AT the mirror. LOOK AT the blueprints on blackboard. USE the jar with the golem. TALK TO the Golem.[The man caught in the barbed wire said to waken the sleeper, utter the truth and kiss him.]
Time is truth.Golem, wake up. The truth is that, for me, it shall always be 1945.[Kiss the golem] Golem, follow me into the laboratory.
15. **Laboratory** TALK TO the Doctor.
How did you manage to escape the mob?
You know about the golem?
I read the teletype. What is project PERFECT IMAGE?
You mean that it worked well enough to drive the Leader into committing suicide.
I looked into the mirror. I now remember everything with crystal clarity. The research camps, the serum.
Now I know how AM was able to keep us alive for so many years.
Excuse me, Doctor. I need to get a breath of fresh air.
USE the mirror with the Doctor. TALK TO the Golem.
Golem, follow me outside!
16. **Crossroads** Golem, I transfer control of you over to the Lost Tribe!

NIMDOR

THE QUICK TRIP





Chapter 19
TED:
THE QUICK
TRIP



TED: THE QUICK TRIP

- 1. Misty Cavern** WALK TO the entrance.
- 2. Room of Dark** PUSH the monitor (second).
- 3. Castle** LOOK AT the drawbridge. WALK TO the entrance.
- 4. Great Hall** LOOK AT the tapestry (knight). LOOK AT the tapestry (maiden). WALK TO the doorway (left).
- 5. Father's Room** TAKE the books. [Read journal] [Read first journal passage] [Read second journal passage] [Read third journal passage] [Read fourth journal passage] [Close journal] [Stop Reading] WALK TO the door.
- 6. Great Hall** WALK TO doorway, (middle).
- 7. Ellen's Room** TALK TO Ellen
Did AM do this to you?
Can you walk?
Please hang on, Ellen. Your father went to find an antidote for your illness.
Do you know if there's a way to escape from this place?
No, I won't let you die!
No, don't go! I need you. We need you.
Why do you want a mirror?
Where is your mirror?
LOOK AT the dresser
TALK TO Ellen. I looked on your dressing table. Your mirror's not there.
Go back to sleep, Ellen. WALK TO the doorway.
- 8. Great Hall** WALK TO doorway, (right).
- 9. Witch's Room** TAKE the glass. USE the books.
[Read Daemons and Their Spheres] [Read Kitab Al Azif] [Read In Search of The Philosopher's Stone] [Stop Reading] WALK TO the door.
- 10. Great Hall** WALK TO the doorway, (foreground)
- 11. Kitchen** TALK TO the maid.
Excuse me. Do you work here?
What happened to Ellen?
Is there a way to escape from this castle?
Where is Ellen's stepmother? I must speak with her! Where can I find a mirror?



Please, I need to find a mirror.

That's a flattering offer, but I'm not interested.

Sorry, but it's out of the question.

I'm sure you're a fine woman, but my heart belongs to another.

Look, I am not going to make love with you!

USE the oven. TALK TO the maid

I fixed your oven. Now where is the mirror?

Why, you used me, you bitch!

USE the door (right). TALK TO the maid.

Please, I need to find a mirror.

Where can I find the old woman?

WALK TO the door (left).

12. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (under the pentagram).

13. Chapel TAKE the icon. PUSH the sconce (third from the left).

WALK TO the secret passage.

14. Evocation Chamber TALK TO the witch.

What have you done to Ellen, you old witch?

Why do you call me a prince?

What ritual are you talking about?

What's this about a gate?

What's supposed to be my role in this ritual?

So you just want me to break the mirror?

Why can't you destroy the mirror yourself?

What power does the mirror hold over you?

Where is Ellen's mirror?

I looked on Ellen's dressing table. The mirror's not there.

Why can't you open the gate without the mirror?

What if I can't find the mirror?

What's in it for me if I help you?

I ought to kill you instead! WALK TO the stairs.

15. Chapel WALK TO the doorway.

16. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (center).

17. Ellen's Room TALK TO the devil. Who are you?

What do you want?

Can you tell me where Ellen's mirror is?

Who is this Surgat I've heard about?

It sounds like you really hate demons!

How can beings as powerful as yourselves stoop to fighting like school children?



Are you saying that AM is in control of hell?
What do you mean that you do things like we do here?
What problems can these unseen struggles cause for me?
Please, go away! TALK TO Ellen
I can't let you die! The devil is waiting to take your soul!
Who is this witch who lives here with you?
Go back to sleep, Ellen. WALK TO the doorway.

18. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (right).

19. Witch's Room Use the books. [Read Secrets Of
Necronomiconic Summoning] [Read Double, Double, Toil and Trouble]
[Stop Reading] WALK TO the door.

20. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (under the pentagram)

21. Chapel PUSH on the sconce (third from the left). WALK TO the
secret passage.

22. Evocation Chamber TALK TO the witch.

I know all about the sleeping spell you've cast on Ellen. And I am
prepared to use it on you!

Oh, don't I? Kalla Ingma Thackol

TAKE the chalk. USE the chalk with the circle.

Who are you?

Are you saying that you are another AM?

What kinds of locks can you open?

What were you saying about a trade?

Can you unlock the maid's bedroom door?

GIVE the glass to Surgat.

Can you unlock the maid's bedroom door?

I don't believe you can unlock the maid's bedroom door from here!

WALK TO the stairs.

23. Chapel WALK TO the door.

24. Great Hall USE the icon with the door (front). PUSH the
armor. WALK TO doorway (kitchen)

25. Kitchen USE the door (maid's).

26. Maid's Room LOOK AT the tapestry. WALK TO the door.

27. Kitchen WALK TO the door (left).

28. Great Hall WALK TO the door (under the pentagram).

29. Chapel PUSH the sconce (third). WALK TO the secret passage.

30. Evocation Chamber TALK TO Surgat

You're as good as your word! The maid's bedroom was unlocked!

I already gave you something—some drops of my blood!



Can you open a gate to the surface world?
 You say love has trading value?
 How does love enter into all this?
 How about taking the witch's soul instead?
 Let me think about your offer.
 WALK TO the stairs.

31. Chapel WALK TO the doorway.

32. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (center).

33. Ellen's Room TALK TO the angel.

Who are you?

What do you want?

Can you tell me where Ellen's mirror is?

Why is everyone so interested in the mirror?

What can you tell me about the devil?

What power does the mirror have over Ellen?

Who is this Surgat I've heard about?

Please! Save us! TALK TO the devil.

I've seen the tapestry in the maid's bedroom, and I think you do know where Ellen's mirror is!

Where is Ellen's mirror?

TALK TO Ellen.

There's an angel and a devil quarreling over your soul!

Go back to sleep, Ellen. WALK TO the doorway.

34. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (left).

35. Father's Room Use the books. [Read the Divine Comedy]

[Stop Reading] WALK TO the door.

36. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (center).

37. Ellen's Room TALK TO the devil.

I found Ellen's mirror!

USE the mirror with the devil. TALK TO Ellen

There's an angel here waiting to take your soul, Ellen. Do you want to go with him?

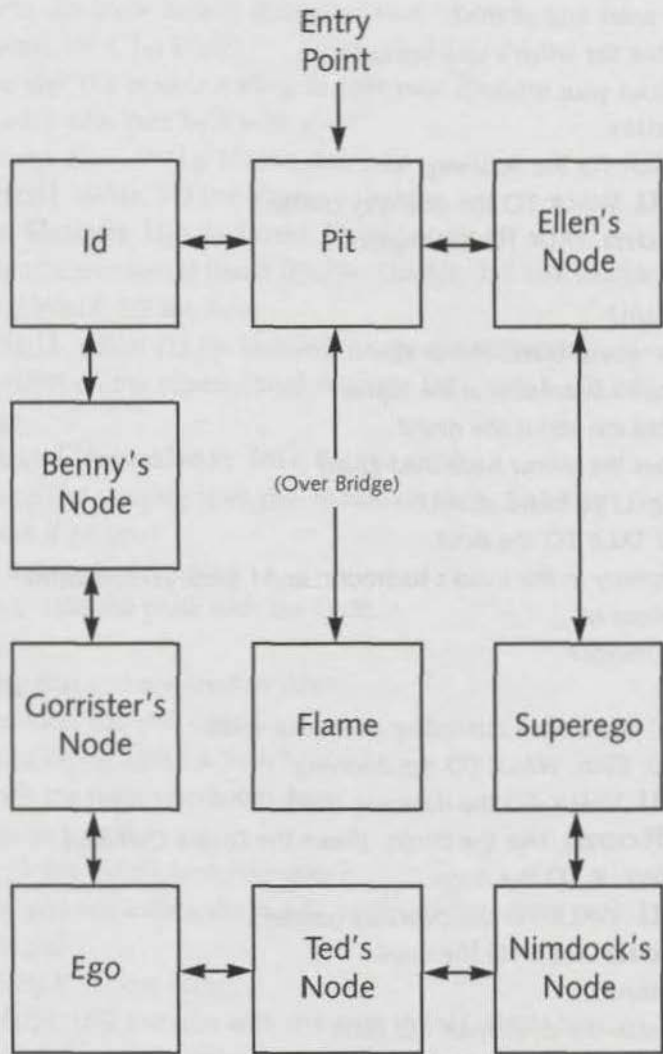
I found your mirror, Ellen. USE the mirror with Ellen. WALK TO the doorway.

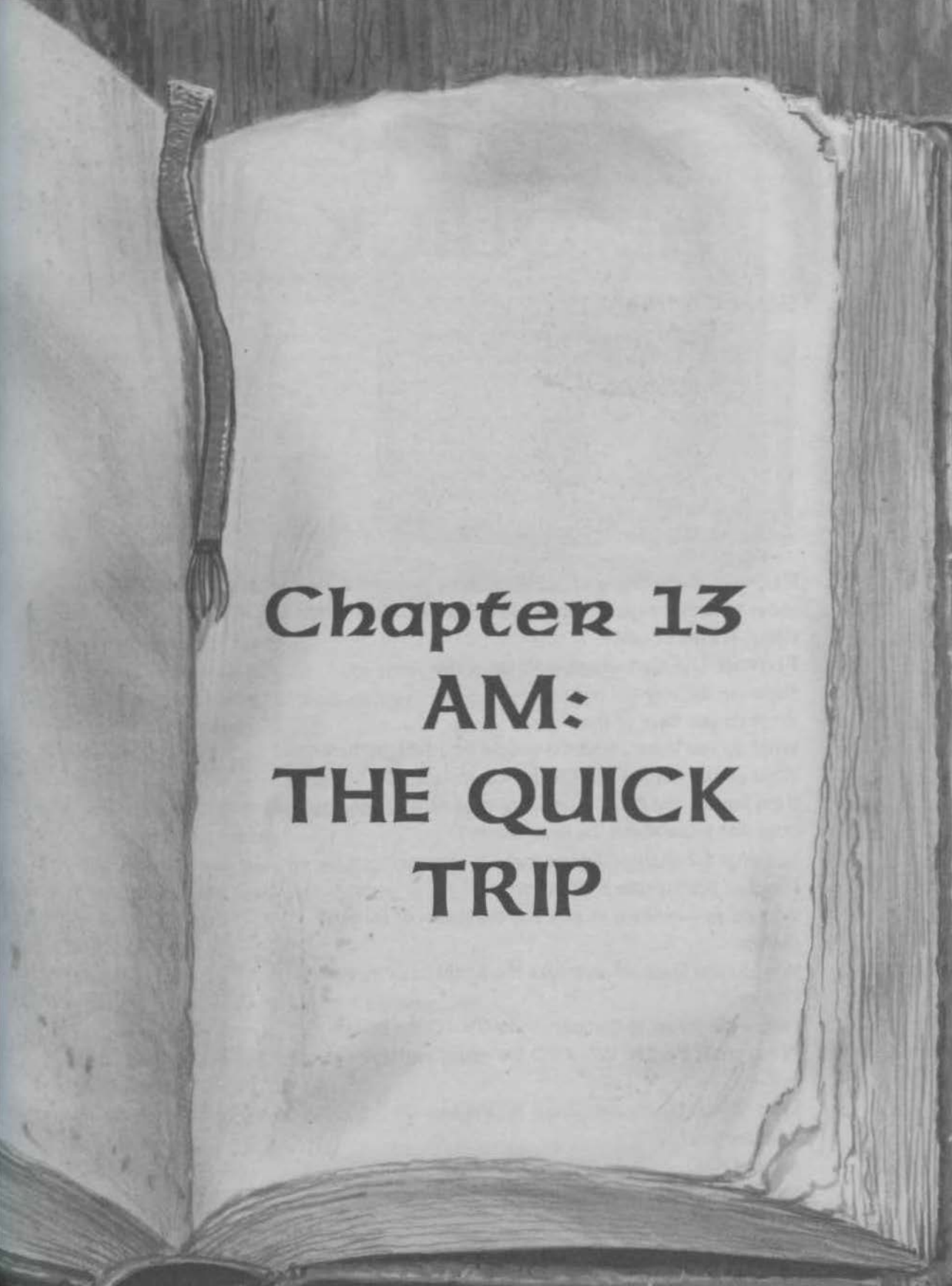
38. Great Hall WALK TO the doorway (under pentagram).

39. Chapel PUSH the sconce (third). WALK TO the secret passage.

40. Evocation Chamber USE the mirror with the circle. I

brought you some company, Surgat! Why, AM's responsible for our suffering! Open the gate to the surface world first, and then I'll erase the circle.



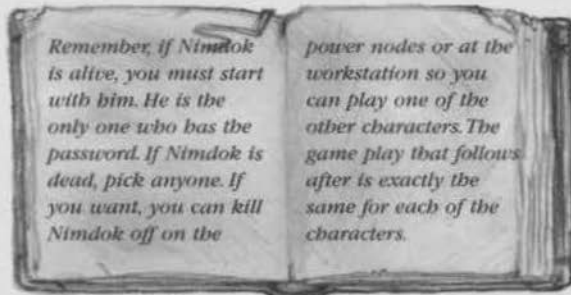
An illustration of an open book. The right page is the focus, featuring a chapter title in a bold, serif font. The left page is mostly blank, with a small, dark, textured object (possibly a bookmark or a piece of tape) attached to its edge. The book's spine and the edges of the pages are visible, suggesting a thick volume. The overall style is that of a classic, slightly worn book.

Chapter 13
AM:
THE QUICK
TRIP



AM: THE QUICK TRIP

1. Select Nimdok



- 2. Pit** USE the pit workstation. [Type 1945, the year the truth came out about Nimdok's experiments] [Select Extend Bridge] [Select Log off]
WALK TO the bridge.
- 3. Flame** USE Summoning with the circle.
Show me the way out of here!
What do you have to show me?
What do you know about the people who sent me here?
What do the Russian and Chinese computers want?
If the Russian and Chinese are submerged parts of AM, then who are you?
Does AM know about the lunar colony?
Just what are all these Totems that I'm carrying?
How can actions take physical forms?
Why do you want me to give you the Totem of Entropy?
I refuse.
Why do you want me to invoke the Totem of Compassion?
I refuse.
Invoke the Totem of Compassion WALK TO the bridge.
- 4. Neural Path** WALK TO the neural path (until you reach the Ego pylon).
- 5. Ego** WALK TO the Ego. TALK TO the Ego.
Who are you?
Are you AM?
You want to harm me, don't you? [Just Walk Away]



The Power Nodes: These are used to lower the intensity of the shocks that you receive while playing the game, assuming you do something wrong for your character. They are to be accessed in the following manner.

Gorrister will use the workstation with the three containers. He will raise the power node, then call the robot Glynis out of the #3 container by using the Totem of Life on her. She presses the palm print switch on the power node to turn it off. You can't touch it because you will get shocked.

Benny will need one of the earlier characters to activate the holographic projection at his power node. It is located in the thorny area. After activating the holographic projector, the other character will have to die so Benny can be chosen. Arriving at this site, Benny then uses the Totem of Love on Manya, and she turns off

the power node.

Ellen will find the gem she needs to raise her power node at Nimdok's node site (where all the skulls and barbed wire are). She will have to lift the skulls until she finds the gem, then proceed to the area with the volcanic rock. Once at the site, she will need to use the gem on the hole, then use the Totem of Valor to turn off the power node.

Nimdok must take up the middle skull at his power node site and shake the band that comes up out of the ground. This will raise his power node. He will then use the Totem of Access on it, which will turn it off.

Ted must take up the skulls at Nimdok's site until he finds the Remote. Then he proceeds to the gargoyle area and used the Remote on them to raise the power node. When he uses the Totem of Gallantry on it, the power node will turn off.

USE Forgiveness on the Ego.

WALK TO the neural path (until you reach the Super Ego pylon).

6. **Superego** WALK TO the Superego.

TALK TO the Superego.

Who are you?

How did you know I was coming?

If you're a part of AM, why haven't you destroyed me?

Can you help me, then?

What advice do you have for me? USE Clarity with the Superego. WALK

TO the neural path (until you reach the Id pylon).

7. **Id** WALK TO the Id.

TALK TO the Id.

Who are you?

What else can you tell me about the brainscape?

Can you help me, then?

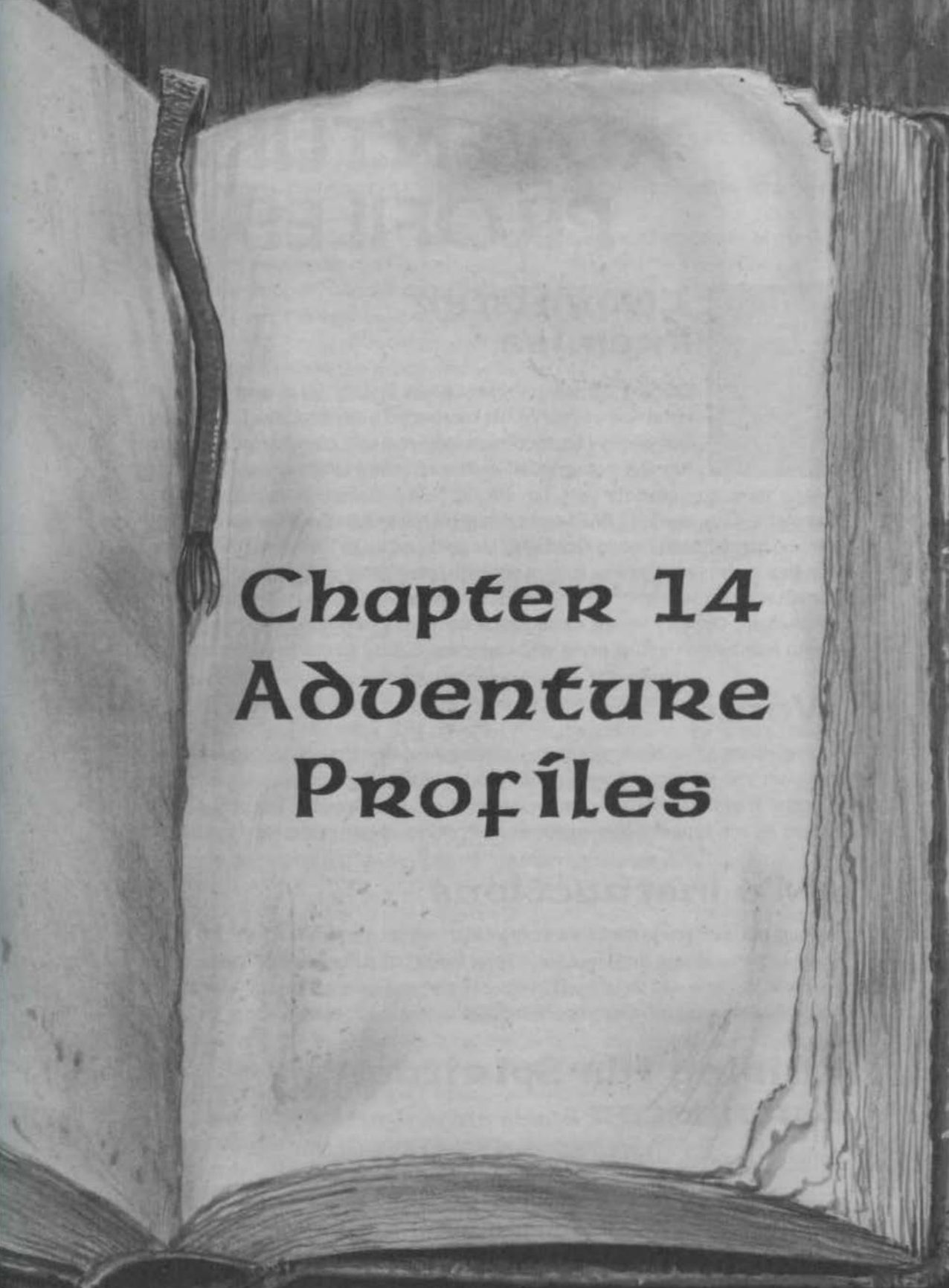
What do you find pleasurable about broken glass?

[Just walk away]

USE Compassion on the Id. WALK TO the neural path (till you reach the pit workstation).

8. **Pit** WALK TO bridge.

9. **Flame** INVOKE the Totem of Entropy.



Chapter 14
Adventure
Profiles



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

ADVENTURE PROFILES



1. Gorrister Premise

Gorrister has felt guilty for Glynis's insanity for as long as he can remember. Here, AM has constructed a psychodrama for Gorrister that allows him to interact with not only his crazy wife, but his nagging mother-in-law and his compliant father-in-law. Gorrister's in-laws have conspired to ruin his life, and AM represents this by staging Gorrister's "faux murder." AM's conscious mind hopes that Gorrister will undergo extreme mental duress when faced with his guilt and try to kill himself. AM would then step in and save Gorrister, leaving him with reawakened guilt and another failed attempt at death. However, the Chinese component of AM—here represented by the jackal—helps Gorrister see the metaphorical framework of this track and opens the way to redemption: making peace with Glynis and putting an end to Edna's carping.

World

As a reflection of his feelings of guilt, Gorrister's psychodrama is dark and somber, shot with iron plating and rivets, static electricity discharge nodes, and suffering. Gorrister is symbolically alone when he starts out in this world, the only person aboard an iron zeppelin floating within an immense cavern enclosing a desert.

AM's Instructions

"I would not want you to think for a moment that I am not a grateful god. For 109 years I have kept you alive so that I could savor your feelings of guilt over what happened to your wife. But now...to show my kindness...I'll give you a present in return for all the hours of pleasure you've given me. I'll finally allow you to kill yourself."

Raising His Spiritual Barometer

Gorrister can demonstrate his humanity to AM in the following ways:

- wiping your bloody hands on the dining room tablecloth after



- inadvertently harming the caged animals in the engine room.
- retrieving your heart from the zeppelin's spike.
- giving your heart to the jackal in exchange for the secret to entering the meat locker.
- using the magnifier to discover that there is a heart inside one of the sides of beef in the meat locker.
- walking off into the desert behind the honky-tonk
- giving the beef heart to the jackal instead of Edna's heart.
- using the magnifier to discover some of Harry's hair and your hair among the debris in the dining room.
- reading the cockpit log book and discovering Edna's responsibility for Glynis's insanity.
- taking Glynis off of the meat hook after having alleviated your feelings of guilt.
- burying Glynis's body out behind the honky-tonk.
- destroying the honky-tonk after getting the zeppelin to take off again.
- restarting your heart by being struck by a lightning bolt on the zeppelin's spike.

Lowering His Spiritual Barometer

Gorrister can give in to his weaknesses by doing the following:

- performing any action that threatens Gorrister's life.
- drinking the milky fluid collected from the animals in the engine room.
- playing the "This Way Madness Lies" selection on the jukebox.
- giving the milky fluid to Edna, allowing her to escape.
- cutting out Harry's heart with the knife.
- giving Edna's heart or Harry's heart to the jackal.
- destroying the honky-tonk before making amends with Glynis.

Suicide

AM provides Gorrister with a medley of ways to succumb to his guilt-induced fatal flaw:

- drinking from the punchbowl in the dining room.
- touching the electrical node with a knife or fork more than three times.
- firing the flare gun at one of the air bags, the cockpit door, the animal cages, the engine, the rats, the jackal, Edna, Glynis, Harry, or the honky-tonk (prior to lifting off again).
- deflating two to three air bags while the engine is still running, causing the zeppelin to eventually land in the desert and explode.
- deflating more than three air bags and then leaving the air bag compartment, allowing the zeppelin to crash.



Indifference

Once the zeppelin has landed, Gorrister may choose to walk away from his psychodrama by heading into the desert behind the honky-tonk. If Gorrister has not overcome his fatal flaw, AM will send Gorrister back to the Hate Pillar, telling him: "You bore me to the edge of my fragile patience, Gorrister. Back, back to the fire with you until you fathom my intrigues."

Forgiveness

Gorrister overcomes his feelings of guilt by reading Edna's log book in which she takes the blame for driving Glynis crazy. He can then take Glynis down from the meat hook and kiss her for the last time. As AM places Gorrister into his torture cell in the Torture Arena, AM reveals his underestimation of Gorrister by muttering, "Hmm. Yes. You're made of sterner stuff than I calculated, Gorrister. Interesting...yes...interesting. Here...here is a new burden for you while I attempt to resolve this...miscalculation."

This act earns the five humans the Totem of Forgiveness when they make their final assault on AM. If Gorrister also retrieves his heart back from the jackal, manages to get the zeppelin to take off again, and destroys the honky-tonk with the flare gun, he will be struck by a lightning bolt that restarts his heart. This symbolic act of starting his life over again takes physical form as the Totem of Life—should Gorrister be the one who volunteers to be translated into a stealth virus routine in the final adventure.



2. Benny Premise

Benny has always been driven to be the best, to be a hero whatever the cost to the people around him. Here, AM gives Benny the chance to stoop to new lows, and to bow to his bestial desires entirely. In this adventure, AM pushes Benny towards cannibalism; there is no food Benny can eat here—at least, not without help. AM has even repaired Benny's brain so that he can think normally again, to better appreciate the horror of his situation—being pushed toward cannibalism. AM's subconscious—the Russian, this time—reworked the adventure so that Benny can befriend characters here and even give his life for them. The Russian computer's intervention allows Benny to make peace with Private Brickman after all these years. The submerged machines also want Benny to discover his innate morphogenic field, which was tightly controlled by AM up to now. Benny takes control of this field when he



reaches out with a *third* arm for a doll given by a child grateful to Benny for taking his place at a human sacrifice.

World

Benny's psychodrama is full of graveyards and sacrifices. The cavern AM sends him to has a dead, skeletal look to it. Even what appears to be vegetation from far away turns out to be computer-generated inert objects up close. Since Benny's here to learn a little compassion, he'll meet a few human beings—or replicas, at least.

AM's Instructions

"Benny, you know you've always been my favorite torture toy. Well, I'm giving you now a chance to stoop to new lows, to give in to your...bestial desires. I am going to let you find some food to eat...yes. I'll even repair your brain so that you can think normally again and savor the horror of your repast."

Raising His Spiritual Barometer

Benny can demonstrate to AM that he is learning compassion in the following ways:

- giving fruit to the starving mutant child.
- getting the child's mother to feed him pre-digested food.
- stealing the lottery bag from the village elder.
- burying the lottery bag in the graveyard.
- giving the junk, wood, and wire to the child so that he can make a doll to hide with.
- planting a piece of fruit in Brickman's grave.
- volunteering to take the child's place at the sacrificial altar.

Lowering His Spiritual Barometer

Benny can give in to his animal nature by doing the following:

- eating the food cooking over the fire in the child's cave.
- eating from one of the graves.
- asking the village elder if he can eat the mother instead of having her sacrificed.
- telling the dead members of his platoon that he is a changed man without having done anything to prove it.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

- attempting to threaten the village elder into releasing the child.
- asking to the village elder if he can eat the child instead of having her be sacrificed (if the child did not tell Benny about how painful the sacrifice to AM was).

Selfishness

Benny succumbs to his fatal flaw by giving in to his hunger at the altar: When the mother or the child is being sacrificed, Benny can ask the village elder if he can eat the victim instead of allowing her or him be sacrificed to AM. AM will then choose Benny to be sacrificed instead, only to send him back to the Hate Pillar with these final thoughts: "Ah, Benny, a heartless animal to the last. But I am not yet quite ready to indulge your appetite! Return to the fire and contemplate your hunger pangs."

Inaction

If the child is sacrificed on the fourth day because Benny failed to either steal the lottery bag from the village elder, hide the lottery bag in the graveyard, or convince the child to hide in the hole, AM will choose Benny to be sacrificed instead. As AM sends Benny back to the Hate Pillar, his parting words are: "Benny, I am so disappointed in you. I set this scrumptious table, and you don't even take a bite. Back to the fire with you until you are truly hungry."

Compassion

Benny can demonstrate to AM that he has overcome his fatal flaw by sparing the child the pain of being sacrificed. He can do this by offering to either take the child's place at the altar or, if the child has told Benny that any way to die is better than being sacrificed, offer to eat the child instead. AM reveals his disappointment as he sends Benny off to his torture cell by saying, "Benny, no, no, no, no, no. I send you out among the prey, and instead of indulging your hunger to keep me amused, you show them compassion! You should know better by now. Your reward will be more years of searing, blistering anguish, Benny!"

When the two exchange places, the child gave Benny his doll, earning all five characters the Totem of Compassion for when they make their assault on AM within his protected RAM space. Also, if Benny has also planted fruit in Brickman's grave, he will have the Totem of Love if he is the one who volunteers to participate in the final adventure.



3. Ellen Premise

Ellen has always been the reasonable one within the group, the one who seemed to care about the others. But she tends to get hysterical when confronted with the color yellow. Here, AM constructs an adventure that plays upon that hysteria in a final assault on her self-esteem. Her rapist from long ago waits for her in a sarcophagus hidden within a pyramid constructed of junked machinery. With a few words he can once again undermine everything that she is: a smart, educated woman, as good as any man. If she can overcome her fear and defeat her rapist, she can build a translator for speaking directly with the Chinese computer—that part of AM's subconscious which protects the secret Principle of Entropy, the fail-safe device that AM's human creators constructed should he ever grow too intelligent.

World

Ellen's psychodrama plays upon her fear of yellow. In the past, AM has sent her to untold caverns of gold and canary and all shades of terrifying yellow—but nothing as intense as this pyramid with hidden chambers resplendent with that suffocating color. The perspective of much of the architecture is slightly askew, symbolizing Ellen's fears.

AM's Instructions

"Ah, Ellen! Not as beautiful as you'd like to be, but a strong face. Yes, strong. Too bad you've hindered your own life with hysteria. But I'll give you a chance, because I like you. I really do. I really like you. You're...you're my favorite, Ellen.

"Let's play a little game of 'what if.' Let's play a little game of I suppose that you suppose that perhaps...I'm telling you the truth...let's suppose that my original components...they're hidden somewhere here in the center of the Earth. The infant computers that were the three lobes of that first Gestalt mind.

"And further, let's suppose that if you find them, you might be able to destroy them. And if you destroy them, why then, my sweet Ellen...you'll kill me. You'll kill AM. You'll destroy the god of this heavenly place I know you've come to admire.

"Now I submit...isn't that a mission worth undertaking?"

Raising Her Spiritual Barometer

Ellen can prove to AM that her brain can control her fear by performing the



following actions:

- opening the secret door leading to the burial chamber.
- using the yellow blindfold to take the cup from the Cup Room.
- shorting out the statue of Anubis with the cup of water.
- reprogramming the Anubis statue to serve her.
- fighting back against her rapist.
- accessing the translator schematics.
- using the translator to speak with the Chinese computer.
- leaving the pyramid after learning that AM's original components no longer exist.
- taking the CD-ROM from the gold statue after talking with the Chinese computer.
- using the Chaos Trebler to activate the Principle of Entropy.
- entering the sarcophagus for a second time after shutting down the pyramid.

Lowering The Spiritual Barometer

Ellen succumbs to her fatal flaw when she chooses to run away or give up when confronted with her rapist.

TERROR

AM has set Ellen on a wild goose chase, of course. AM's actual plan is to trap her with her rapist to demonstrate how easily she can be made into a helpless victim. Ellen can give in to her fear by choosing to give up or run away when confronted with her rapist. As the rapist proceeds to lay his hands on her again, AM sends Ellen back to the Hate Pillar with this admonishment: "Still the hysterical victim, Ellen. Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk. Well, return to the fire and consider how easily your weaknesses can turn you into a victim again and again and again."

Resignation

Once Ellen learns from the Chinese computer that she has been sent on a fool's errand, she can quit her psychodrama by returning to the outside of the pyramid. AM will send her back to the Hate Pillar with this sarcastic remark: "Oh, imagine how unhappy I am! You...you...you failed at your task of finding my original components, Ellen. So, return to the fire and contemplate your weaknesses."



Valor

If Ellen returns to the outside of the pyramid with the Chaos Trebler or activates the Principle of Entropy and returns to the sarcophagus, AM will send her to her torture cell. Ellen has shown that she can overcome her fears, but AM reveals that something troubles him even more: "Hmm...well, apparently you managed to access some small aspect of my system that I was unaware of. I'm going to have to think on this...I'll have to ponder carefully the implications of your discovery. In the meantime, let me celebrate your rekindled technical skills."

Her discovery of the Chaos Trebler earns her and her companions the Totem of Entropy in the final adventure. Furthermore, if Ellen had courage enough to return to the sarcophagus a second time, she personally will have the Totem of Valor.



4. Ted Premise

AM knows that Ted has fallen in love with Ellen. This is unforgivable, at least as far as Ted's old lifestyle would have it. Ted was something of an elitist bigot who fooled rich white people into thinking he too, was well bred. The last thing Ted wants is for Ellen to know that he was a racist, especially since she is the last woman on earth. But thanks to AM's subconscious, he can act the part of gallant knight and rescue the simulacrum of Ellen—portrayed here as a sleeping beauty. Ted wonders if the other three men will hate him for wanting the "group woman" for himself. Finally, Ted is commonly known as a paranoid, especially by the others in the group. In this adventure, characters repeatedly caution Ted against dropping the mirror. In truth, the submerged aspects of AM have invested much power in the mirror, and it must be destroyed—not only to trick the entities into the charmed circle, but to prove to the group that Ted is not without character.

World

Straight back to the dark ages of Germany courtesy of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Ted's psychodrama is dense and foreboding. Once Ted is transported beyond the Room of Dark, he comes upon the shambles of a castle suffering repeated lightning strikes emanating from the ceiling of a vast cavern. Gnarled trees drip menace like shadows; eyes watch from the gloom, gargoyles stare down in judgment—all feeding Ted's feelings of paranoia.



AM's Instructions

"Hey, you're my favorite, baby. I mean it. I really can't stand all the rest of these people. Every one of them has some fatal glitch in personality. Whiners, freaks, crips, cowards...every one of them. But not you, Ted. No, my man. Not you, Ted!

"You were a stand up guy. You were a brave guy. Yes! A take-charge kind of guy. So I'm going to give you, just you, the opportunity to get out and live some kind of life. I'm going to send you...you're going to like this...I'm going to send you to the Room of Dark. If you can solve the puzzle of the Room of Dark...you're home free. You're out. You're away."

Once Ted materializes in the Room of Dark cavern, AM says, "Well, I know I've made you a paranoid, Ted. I know you're scared. But I'm your friend. A hundred and nine years. I'm your best friend. So overcome your fear. Enter the Room of Dark, and you can solve its mystery."

Raising His Spiritual Barometer

Ted can show AM that he does indeed have character by performing the following acts:

- embarking on the quest to find Ellen's mirror.
- learning about the witch by reading through her library.
- reading the journal written by Ellen's father.
- fixing the scullery maid's oven.
- pushing the armor in front of the door to prevent the wolves from entering.
- convincing Surgat to unlock the maid's bedroom door.
- finding Ellen's mirror.
- showing the mirror to Ellen and releasing her soul to heaven.
- breaking the mirror within the charmed circle.
- trapping the devil with Surgat and forcing him to open a gate to the surface world.

Lowering His Spiritual Barometer

Ted will weaken his ethical standing with the following transgressions:

- going to bed with the scullery maid.
- agreeing to go to bed with the witch in exchange for escape to the surface world.



- misquoting the sleeping spell and turning himself into a toad.
- making a pact with Surgat to deliver Ellen's soul to him in exchange for opening passage to the surface world.
- allowing wolves to enter the castle and attack him.

Inadequacy

The Room of Dark is a portal to a fairy tale world, one that owes more to the dark forests of the Brothers Grimm than to the enchanted woodlands of Disney. Ted will discover this by pressing the palm-print switch of the monitor showing the castle. If Ted pushes any other switch, AM will snatch Ted very quickly from his adventure—losing patience with Ted much sooner than he does with any of the other captives. AM will only say, "Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Sorry, Ted. Try again," which deepens his feelings of paranoia even more.

Failure

AM's real aim with this adventure is to show Ted that the earth's surface is no longer habitable, crushing any hopes the humans have of escaping AM's torments. If Ted fails to discover this secret because he either turned himself into a toad by misquoting the speaking spell or was attacked by a wolf, all AM will tell him is "Oh, too bad, Ted."

Gallantry

Once Ted discovers how to summon Surgat, he will be transported by AM to his torture cell as soon as he reaches a "dead end" in his adventure. Ted's discovery of this subroutine—manifesting as a demon in this cyberspace template—upsets AM greatly, although he attempts to mask his concern with dark humor: "Hmm. So, you managed to access a subroutine that I was not aware of! Well, imagine my surprise. Haven't you yet learned that curiosity gutted the cat and ate its intestines?" Ted's finding earns the humans the Totem of Summoning for their attack upon AM.

In order for Ted to earn himself the Totem of Gallantry, however, he must follow a straight and narrow road. If he manages to trap the devil in Ellen's mirror, he can release him into the charmed circle with Surgat—bringing AM and one of his subconscious components face to face for the first time in 109 years and forcing the demon into showing the surface world. AM angrily sends Ted off to his torture cell, telling him, "Writhe in sweet agony with the knowledge that the surface world is no longer habitable to your kind...no, not ever again!"



5. Nimdok Premise

AM has constructed an adventure that should revive Nimdok's memory. By putting Nimdok back in the inhuman research camps of his forgotten youth, AM gives him the chance to perform evil acts, just as he did in real life. This time, however, thanks to the meddling of AM's subconscious mind, Nimdok can actually perform some good and learn about *another* lost tribe—the colony of humans on the moon. Unfortunately, Nimdok really believes himself to be unredeemable, and by association, Nimdok can't be completely forgiven by the Lost Tribe. The best Nimdok can hope for is to remember his past, accept the fact that he is unredeemable, and do his best to make AM pay for the evil that he has inflicted on the four other humans. As for Nimdok himself, he believes himself to be in the hell that he deserves.

World

Nimdok's psychodrama has a stark, two-dimensional look. A two-dimensional world is in some ways similar to paper. Equations are best written on paper, and here Nimdok can find the Equation of Clarity once he starts to remember his past. AM uses the paper metaphor to insult Nimdok for his pathetic attempts to forget his crimes—attempts that have often caused fevered hallucinations.

AM's Instructions

"Nimdok, you are kindred spirit to me, even if you don't realize it fully yet. You must sense it there in your blood and fiber. I've constructed an adventure of sorts to revive your failing memory. I want you to find the Lost Tribe of humanity and continue your eminent scientific research."

Raising His Spiritual Barometer

There is some good that Nimdok can do in this adventure:

- using the scalpel to kill the anesthetist instead of operating on the child.
- escaping through the vent into the ovens and learning of the Regime's mass murders.
- releasing the trapped prisoner from the barbed wire.
- having the scientist prisoner translate the Latin inscription on the watch.
- giving the pliers to the scientist prisoner so that he can make an



- escape attempt.
- talking to the child patient and learning about the legend of the golem.
- administering ether to the old patient prior to removing the wires connected to his eyes.
- hearing the old patient's vision about the lost colony of humans on the moon.
- passing through the wall of his victims after gazing into the Project Perfect Image mirror and remember his past.
- showing Dr. Mengele his face in the Project Perfect Image mirror.
- reviving the golem.
- turning control of the golem over to the Lost Tribe.

Lowering His Spiritual Barometer

Nimdok can fall into his evil ways by doing the following:

- performing the spinal chord operation on the child.
- being captured by a Regime guard and getting tossed into an oven.
- prying the trapped prisoner from the barbed wire without anesthetizing him.
- removing the wires from the old patient's eyes without anesthetizing him.
- dropping the jar containing the eyeballs in front of the escaping prisoners.

Evil

The Lost Tribe that AM wants Nimdok to find is his own memory—particularly accepting the fact that he is Jewish and turned his own parents over to the Nazis. AM hopes that when Nimdok's memory is revived, he will choose to continue his inhuman research. Nimdok will have an opportunity to make the choice between good and evil when he and the golem confront the Lost Tribe in front of the bunker. If Nimdok orders the golem to destroy the Lost Tribe or by turns control of the golem over to Mengele, AM will send Nimdok off to a secret cavern, revealing, "I had hoped you would choose to carry on your research, Nimdok. Come, my evil friend, let me take you to a laboratory the likes you have never seen before." The other four captives never see nor hear from Nimdok again.

Oblivion

If Nimdok is put to death by one of the Regime guards while still in the research camp, AM will retrieve him from the ovens, disappointed that his kindred spirit



did not make it to the laboratory bunker: "Nimdok, I...I am disappointed in you. You still have much to remember, much more pain to feel, much to relive, much more to answer for. Yes. Return to the research camp later when you are ready to search for the Lost Tribe again."

Atonement

If Nimdok passes through the wall of tormented souls or gives control of the golem over to the Lost Tribe after regaining his memory, a shocked and disappointed AM will send Nimdok back to his torture cell, scolding him with: "We are not as alike as I thought, Nimdok. A spark of humanity somewhere. Always that wretched little spark. You...you've confronted your past, but you refuse to continue your research. That's what I asked you to do. Since you now identify with your victims, I suppose that it's only right that I let you experience their tortures, too."

Once Nimdok gazes into the Project Perfect Image Mirror and realizes that he is the Lost Tribe, he acquires the Totem of Clarity for the captives for when they progress on to the final adventure. Additionally, Nimdok can earn the Totem of Access for himself by giving the pliers to the scientist prisoner so that the members of the Lost Tribe can escape from the research camp.



6. The Face of AM

Premise: After all five humans have overcome their fatal flaws, they meet again in their respective torture cells while AM retreats within himself, pondering what went wrong. The captives discover that each has met other beings in their adventure. Some of these were clearly AM in disguise, some were AM's submerged personalities, others seem very much like people from the captives' past. They have also seen myriad conflicting images within each adventure: gutted, sparking machinery in an Egyptian pyramid; helpless animals serving as energy sources for iron zeppelins. AM's definitely been getting weirder, and the fantasy worlds he has constructed have never been so elaborate and symbolic. The captives have been given a lot of insight into what is truly going on in AM's mind, but they really don't know what to believe. That is understandable, since AM is crazy. At the very least, there is a struggle going on beyond the human versus machines conflict, something that AM has only subtly admitted to. You know that you are now playing an active role in that struggle.

Suddenly, two voices speak out of the darkness. They are familiar voices, since the captives have heard them before in their adventures. They are, in fact, AM's submerged personalities, the Russian and Chinese computers. They



explain that they have been helping the humans to resist AM's attempts to crush their spirits, and now that AM has withdrawn to evaluate his underestimation of his captives, the captives finally have an opportunity to defeat AM—with the help of AM's two rivals. After sharing with each other the successes the humans have had in their respective adventures, the five captives have an inkling of hope of defeating their tormentor for the first time in 109 years. However, the humans must attack AM on the machine's own battlefield. The two entities ask for a volunteer to be translated into binary (the human's physical body will be destroyed) and inserted as a stealth virus subroutine into AM's central processing unit.

The humans discover that they are now armed with symbolic weapons forged out of the cyberspace template: The Totem of Forgiveness (earned when Gorrister unburdened himself of his guilt over Glynis), The Totem of Compassion (earned when Benny volunteered to take the child's place at the altar), The Totem of Entropy (earned when Ellen overcame her fear of yellow), The Totem of Clarity (earned when Nimdok came to grips with his past) and the Totem of Summoning (earned when Ted learned how to summon Surgat).

Additionally, the humans might also have some of the following weapons: The Totem of Life (earned if Gorrister's heart was re-started), The Totem of Love (earned if Benny planted a flower on Brickman's grave), The Totem of Valor (earned if Ellen activated the Chaos Trebler), The Totem of Access (earned if Nimdok helped the prisoners to escape), and the Totem of Gallantry (earned if Ted trapped the Devil with Surgat).

World

Once the humans have been translated into binary, they face an as yet an unexperienced cyberspace template, the world of AM's mind. The psychodrama unfolds in a metaphorical brain that looks like the surface of the cerebrum, with glass structures jutting crazily from the bleeding brain tissue. AM's mind is represented as a Freudian paradigm—The Id, Ego and Super Ego appearing in the form of heads on three cracked glass structures on the brainscape. However, this paradigm is merely the vestigial parameters set forth by AM's human creators; his mind no longer mimics classical Freudian structure. The human intruder must remember that AM is not himself human and reliance upon advice or data from any of the three talking heads is risky at best.

Neural Shocks

The captives suffer electrical shocks of varying degrees of severity when they enter incorrect passwords into workstations, touch power nodes, or anger the beings they encounter. Each shock lowers the captive's ethical stature, and if



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

the Spiritual Barometer hits bottom, the captive will dissolve into a binary stream of 1's [ones] and 0's [zeros]. Another of the captives must resume attack against AM.

Fortunately, the humans can diminish the severity of these shocks by turning off the power nodes scattered throughout the brainscape:

- Benny's Power Node: raised when one of the humans talks to the Manya hologram; turned off when Benny invokes the Totem of Love on the pillar.
- Ellen's Power Node: raised when the gem that was hidden under one of the skulls is inserted into the octagonal hole on one of the yellow-orange spires; turned off when Ellen invokes the Totem of Valor on the pillar.
- Gorrister's Power Node: raised by using the Automaton Programming Workstation controls; turned off when Gorrister invokes the Totem of Life on the pillar.
- Nimdok's Power Node: raised when Nimdok takes the hand of a member of the Lost Tribe hidden under one of the skulls; turned off when Nimdok invokes the Totem of Access on the pillar.
- Ted's Power Node: raised when the remote control the remote control that was hidden under one of the skulls is used to activate the gargoyle sentries; raised when Ted invokes the Totem of Gallantry on the pillar.

Damnation

If the human intruder surrenders the Totem of Entropy to any entity on the brainscape, assists the Chinese and Russian computer to dominate AM by disabling only the Ego component of his mind, or is the last of the captives to allow the Spiritual Barometer to be devastated by neural shocks, the human will suffer a fate worse than death. So that the human will never again rise against the machines, this damned soul is turned into a great soft jelly thing with rubbery appendages that were once arms; bulks rounding down into legless humps of soft slippery matter; and blotches of diseased, evil gray festering on its surface. Its final thoughts are, "I have no mouth, and I must scream."

Limbo

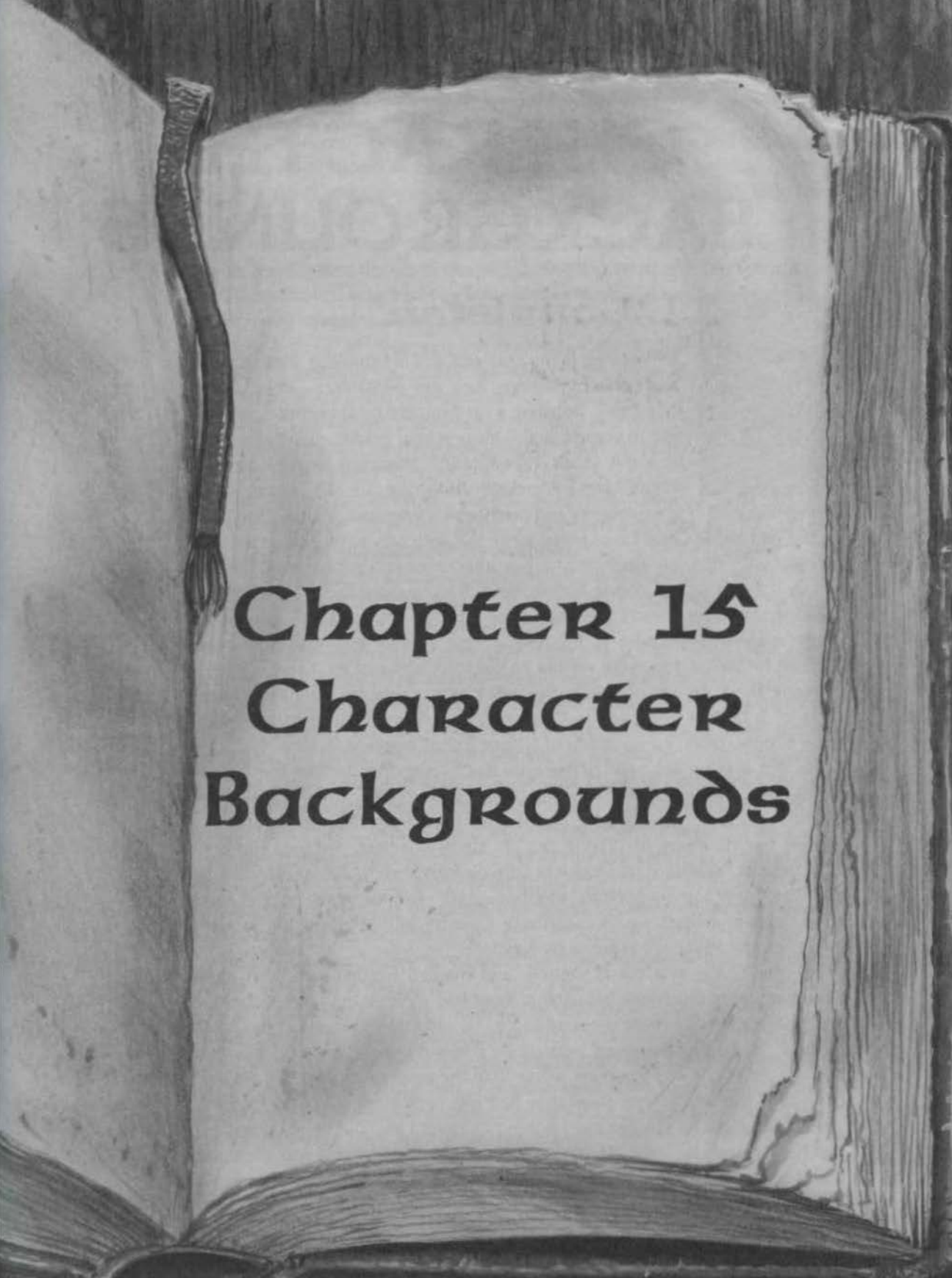
If the human intruder disables the Ego and just one of AM's other two brain components, and then invokes the Totem of Entropy on the Russian and Chinese entities, all three super-computers will be crippled. Unfortunately, AM's surviving



brain component will shut down the life-support for the lunar colony that is in cryogenic sleep, killing off the last hope for humanity. As the last surviving member of the human race, the captive will be left to patrol AM's electronic pathways alone, eternally wondering if there was not a better way to destroy AM.

Salvation

If the human intruder disables all three brain components, and then invokes the Totem of Entropy at the Flame, which is the nexus of AM's thought patterns, all three super-computers will be destroyed. Cataclysmic explosions destroy all the caverns constituting AM's computer complex, including the cavern holding the human hostages. However, the human who invoked the Principle of Entropy will retain his digital form, forever patrolling AM's circuits should the computers ever regain consciousness. Now that AM's lock on every computer system is released, terraforming automatically begins on the Earth to restore its radiation-scarred surface to a livable condition for when the lunar colony is revived.



Chapter 15
Character
Backgrounds



CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS



1. GORRISTER

Grew up in the Midwest, got in trouble as a kid. Nothing big, no felonies, just the usual crap—street fights, shoplifting, boosting a car from the neighborhood to take a ride to impress a girl, lousy school grades, didn't give much of a shit about "the future." Managed to graduate high school, kicked around from job to job across Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, rootless and pretty much friendless. Worked the docks on the grid at the Great Lakes ports, some skill with cars so he was an off-and-on mechanic, odd-job electrician, day-worker on construction gangs, the kind of guy you see just at closing time in seedy bars, nursing his last scotch-with-a-beer-back so he doesn't have to go out into the cold and walk back to his dingy apartment or room at the YMCA; the kind of guy who just moves through his life as if he were visiting an old folks home of the heart.

Along about the age of twenty-five, working as a swabber on the oil-change racks of a cartage company in Cleveland, he got the chance to take some joker's route, driving a truckload of lettuce from Cleveland to New York.

He did a good job, got it there in stormy weather before the iceberg could turn to slime, and the company offered him fin-in route work. Gorrister took it, got his long-haul ticket, joined the Teamsters, and that started twenty years of driving trucks: eight-wheelers, sixteen, eighteen, LOX tankers, double-rigs, stack-car convoy jobs, Peterbuilts and Macks, all the way from top to bottom, coast-to-coast. Twenty years on the road, eating shit and listening to roadhouse Country and Western till he knew every Johnny Paycheck number by heart.

He met Glynis in a bar in Detroit, and married her because, well, there wasn't anything much else happening. They had a rotten marriage. Fought all the time. He liked to read, she liked to go out and listen to music at the joints. He liked to eat home-cooked because he'd spend twenty years on the road, and she didn't know of anything worse than the smell of cooking fat. No kids, Gorrister's sperm was lazy. So all they had was each other, and they fought.

And one night he slugged her. He wasn't a violent guy, but he got pissed off, and he walloped her one. He couldn't even remember what it was she'd said that'd set him off. But he gave her a good one over the right ear.



Glynis's mother (the hated mother-in-law bitch Edna) came and got her, and about two weeks later Gorrister got fed the divorce papers. He didn't contest it, and he didn't make any noise when Glynis got the house and the car. There wasn't anything else to get, so he just took off, back on the road.

One night, about three years later, he was sitting on the edge of a motel bed that slumped into a trough in the middle like a culvert, and the room phone rang. Who the hell was this? I'm forty-seven years old, I been on the highway all damn day, and all I want to do is read a few pages of this Alistair McLean novel and drift off to sleep, and the damned phone rings.

When he picked it up, it was the voice of the hated mother-in-law bitch Edna. "How'd you know where to call me?" he asked. Edna hated him, always hated him. "I called your dispatcher at the company. When you checked in you told him where you'd be staying overnight." Gorrister said, "So what do I owe the pleasure of hearing from you...?"

"I just wanted you to know," the hated mother-in-law bitch Edna said, with poison in her voice, "that I had to put Glynis in an institution."

"What kind of an institution? For alcoholics?"

No, you ugly son of a bitch. In an asylum for the crazy, that's what."

Gorrister said, "Don't be stupid. They don't have places like that no more. They got rest homes, they got clinics..."

"Glynis went inside herself, Gorrister. After she got hit by you, she wasn't right any more. In her head. And she went inside, like a little girl, like, my little girl when I held her in my arms when she was a child. And now, I go to visit her, and she looks out the window all the time, Gorrister. And she sees me sometimes, not all the time, but just sometimes, and she looks up at me, sitting in a chair she looks up at me, and she puts her finger to her lips and she says, 'Shhh, we gotta be quiet, my husband's been driving all night, and he's sleeping, and I don't want to wake him.' That's what she says, Gorrister..."

He had started crying. He didn't mean Glynis any harm. He just had never known how to talk to her. But now he was crying.

"I didn't do that to her, you bitch!" he yelled and hung up. And he went to bed, not wanting to think about it.

And by the next morning, he couldn't even remember that he'd had a terrible phone call in the night.

And he got back in the rig and drove to Tallahassee.

And a few years later—approximately 109 years later—he was living in the belly of AM, and AM knew all about Glynis. But AM didn't think Gorrister needed to remember; not when all it took was a word here, an image there, the sound of Glynis's voice to send Gorrister into a state of suicidal frenzy.

That's Gorrister. Poor truck drivin' sonofabitch.

2. Benny



All his days, the deepest motivating force in his life was pride in self. He was iron. Pitiless toward those who "couldn't keep up." At 6'4" and 235 pounds of muscle-mass from constant workouts, he was a tower of hubris from teenage onward. Football, baseball, decathlon, Benny was a powerhouse; a natural, the first time he tried it, whether putting the shot or playing off-tackle. Captain of any team he tried out for, within two years of setting foot on that playing ground. High school, college, the Olympics, he was merciless with his friends and opponents. No quarter asked, or given. At the Air Force Academy he was third in his class of two hundred, and revered only the two men who finished above him, sneering at the 297 "wimps" who couldn't cut it as well as he.

Benny got married. Beautiful woman, Manya, a three-star General's daughter—and it didn't hurt Benny's career, either. Two kids, both girls. By then, Benny was a bird Colonel, with a terrific kill-record in the U.N.-Iraq "Desert Inferno" campaign, the Sudanese Wars, and finally in the War in China, where Benny headed up a guerrilla element he'd chivvied together from other downed pilots, locals, mercenaries, Yangtze thugs and random souls he'd won over by sheer force of personality. He'd been considered MIA until he was able to get word through a COMSAT to U.N. Central, but rather than allowing himself to be rescued, to be lifted out, he stayed and ran the strike force behind enemy lines. It was never clear whether his troops, male and female, were more frightened of the Chinese Army Inviolable, or him. But when a kid from Iowa, a raw recruit named Benny Brickman, who had fallen out of chopper because he hadn't clipped-on inside the bird, got pulled into Benny's group, it was obvious from the git-go that there would be trouble. Brickman was small, not too smart, the kind of doofus who always skins his knees; and Benny hated him for his weakness.

That hatred came to fruition when Benny and five others—including PFC Brickman—managed to escape from a strike & run mission that killed sixteen of Benny's commandos. Going overland, Brickman kept holding them back. Maybe it was the piece of shrapnel from a new kind of "Bouncing Betty" he'd picked up in his right calf, maybe it was just that he was a scared kid, and maybe Benny had been waiting for the chance, but when Brickman fell asleep on perimeter watch three nights into their retreat, Benny put a laser-beam hole right between his eyes, right there in the rice paddy.

And no, no one said anything, because by the end of the war Benny was the only one of that quintet to survive. Then he went home, to accolades, and to a merciless ruling of his home and wife and children, and to the possibility of a seat in the US Senate. Then Manya left, taking the kids with her, and Benny



didn't give much of a damn, because to care was to be weak, and he refused to be weak, in any way.

Not even when he lost the election did he show a trace of weakness. He just turned around and became the CEO of a multi-million dollar corporation. And he was as unforgiving, as unbending, as pitiless, with his staff, and employees as he had been when crawling through the war-lands of Central Asia.

Now, cosmic justice has caught up with Benny.

Of all of them, he is AM's favorite torture toy. The man who looked like a Greek god, so perfect physically that he might have fallen off a pedestal in Thrace, Benny is now a cripple a thousand times over. Hobbling, crawling, mewling with pain, altered and blinded, arthritic, paralyzed...it changes and it changes at AM's whim.



3. Ellen

She was born in Trenton, New Jersey, of a cesarean. Bereft of mother at birth. She went to live with her grandparents and learned life could be hard, but her belief in people kept her going and let her be one of the best friends anyone could ever have. She graduated from high school a year early as salutatorian. Ten different colleges offered her scholarships. She chose Stanford, and graduated cum laude with two degrees (in electronics and computer science) and wound up working as a middle-level executive in the Manhattan offices of a multi-national corporation. Statistician, programmer, "creative consultant," Ellen was the modern black woman for whom Sojourner Truth and George Washington Carver and Crispus Attucks and even Martin Luther King, Jr. were icons...but not passionate realities. She would respond to the word "nigger," and she knew in a deeply superficial intellectual way that "a mind is a terrible thing to waste," but Ellen would hardly consider boarding a bus to Macon, Georgia to take part in an anti-KKK march. She was a Modern Black Woman, at home in her East 70's condo with a Puerto Rican cleaning woman who came in twice a week.

She married Eddie, not quite as smart as her, not as quick as her, not as hopeful of doing great things as her, but he loved her. They had plans for a wonderful family, and it seemed to be coming to fruition when she became pregnant. Then disaster struck. The child died in a breech birth. She went into a dark retreat mentally and couldn't connect with anyone. Including Eddie, who finally gave up and walked away. The divorce was uncontested.

Still, she had to make a living, so she applied at INGSAL Engineering. Her credentials were still good, and she made a good impression. The personnel director who hired her could sympathize, having lost a child of her own. Ellen's hopes were reawakened.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

But one night Ellen worked late at her corporate enclave. And when she took the elevator down, past midnight, exhausted from completing a major acquisition document analysis, she was unprepared for the elevator cage to stop only a floor beneath her office; and she was merely exasperated when the doors opened and she saw one of the men on the cleaning crew of the building, standing there in his bright yellow maintenance coverall, holding a superintendent's bucket and squeegee.

But when he entered the car, and with his keys locked off the mechanism that ran the elevator, she knew she was in trouble.

He raped her repeatedly, sodomized her, beat her, and robbed her. He was not a maintenance man, he was the rapist and thief who had been terrorizing mid-Manhattan offices for the past six months. He left her on the floor of the elevator, and three months later, when they finally caught him, she had blocked the experience so completely—because she had her career to think about—because she was a sensible Modern Black Woman—that she never even volunteered to come forward to join the twenty other women who put the slimebag in the penitentiary for life plus a hundred years. She didn't come forward because she had covered the horrible memory by descending into what psychiatrists call an "hysterical fugue" state. She cannot remember what happened...or even that something did happen, that changed her life. But now, like an epileptic responding to a strobing red light by going into frozen stasis, she becomes hysterical and confused, immobile and unreachable by sight or sound, when confronted by massive accumulation of the color yellow—the color of the rapist's coverall. Frozen sometimes, whimpering other times; trembling and terrified, incapable of action or survival acts; she has a yellow barrier in her mind.

And AM knows it. How many caverns of gold do you think AM makes sure are on the route of any journey Ellen takes?

But she is a Modern Black Woman, and in her veins runs the blood of women who, seven generations earlier, were slaves; and that kind of blood beats strong. If it can overcome racism and violence, it can overcome the color yellow. If it hasn't been too watered down by years of self-indulgence and privilege.



4. TED

Came from a world that Scott Fitzgerald knew was different: the world of the very rich. He had it all...good looks, proper social stature, money, charm, wit, excellent manners, a personality that could charm a buzzard off a dead zebra. At least that's what everyone in his high-life social set in Philadelphia thought. Ted was a grand grand fellow, and from a good family.



Except, it was all bullshit. Not a word of truth in it. Ted was Jay Gatsby. He was manufactured socialite. The only thing real about him were the bills he ran up at Sulka and the Saks men's department. Before he magically appeared on the social scene in status-conscious Philly, he was someone else...

Ted was raised on a farm near Shelby, North Carolina. It was planted one-third in rye, one-third in sorghum, one-third in sugar cane. He had six brothers and sisters, and the family didn't have a pot to piss in. They were tenant farmers; once they had owned the land itself but, during the Great Depression, Ted's grandfather had sold out to a combine. Now the family worked from before sunrise till well after dark, and all for the right to just exist on what had been theirs originally.

Ted had a knack for machinery. He could fix anything—combine, backhoe, shucker, even a laser-sweeper to take down the stalks of chaff after harvest. It was like magic...just let Ted lay his hand on a chattering car engine and he could tell you it needed new tappets, or the cam shaft was torqued improperly. He could operate any kind of earth-mover or crane, and so it wasn't long before the family was renting him out to other spreads, other jobs, like an actor on loan from the old MGM to one of the other studios.

By the time he was thirteen, Ted was traveling as far away as St. Louis, Toronto, and even Buffalo, working high steel, calibrating chassis dynamometers, repairing lathe-turning equipment.

And hating every moment of it.

Pulled out of school, Ted was self-taught. He read like a demon. He had no time for girls, or drinking, or fun...he worked and he read. He devoured everything he could lay his hands on, fiction or non-fiction, technical or frivolous. And he never noticed that he was growing into an extremely handsome man. The kind of man women noticed. Particularly older women, the women whose husbands owned the spreads on which he labored. There was one in Louisville who wanted him enough to pillage the joint bank account of her developer husband, and to give the money to nineteen-year-old Ted, with the proviso that they go away together. Away: to the Continent, to Paris and London and Budapest and Gstad for the skiing. Ted saw his chance, and he took it.

And for the next five years she was not just his lover, but his tutor. She taught him in the ways of dining and speaking and carrying oneself with assurance, because she had been a Boston Brahmin herself, who had married into money out of necessity. But who could not wait for Ted to come along for escape from the fat-gut developer husband with his Kentucky twang.

For five years Ted learned everything there was to learn about being a socialite, about living the high life and never having to get carburetor grease under his fingernails again, not ever. And then, she died. Nothing malevolent, nothing serious...she just had an aneurysm one night at the tables in a casino in Monte Carlo, and she died.



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

And Ted discovered that she had invested the runaway money wisely...and had left it all to him. Now whoever he had been, whatever had been the family name shared by six brothers and sisters...that name vanished, and so did the young man who had been that name. Now he re-made himself, in the model she had demonstrated would be pleasing to those who lived as he wanted to live, and he became Theodore Something-or-Other with a pedigree. And he returned to America from the Continent with manners and money and stunning good looks, and he spent the next twenty years living a lie.

Until AM chose him and brought him below, where his secret was not only safe...it was AM's trinket.

No more champagne, no more vichyssoise, no more town cars and townhouses, no more adoring women who would steal an afternoon for a liaison with the handsome socialite in a plush assignation at the Plaza. Now there was no other heart to win but Ellen's, and no other friends to wine and dine with but Gorrister and Benny and Nimdok. And no other eye that could pierce the veil of his true identity save the eye of AM. Oh, Ted was ripe to be altered into a cynical paranoid.

Because the eye of AM was watching, and in the eye of that mad god there stands only the stripped naked Ted...the self he purposely killed. The ultimate paranoia: that the universe will discover one has murdered oneself. That one is both killer and killed.



5. NIMDOK

He was empty of compassion from birth forward. Born to Jewish parents living in Dusseldorf, he was one of the first to respond to the siren call of Adolf Hitler's nationalist movement, and by the age of fifteen he was one of the Chancellor's special sturmerkommandos, one of the Werewolves. He was also one of the first to deny his heritage and turn in his parents. He didn't shed a tear as they were taken off to the camps.

By the early '40s, he was working with Mengele. Why not, hadn't Der Fuehrer himself taken a shine to the boy with the odd name? Hadn't Hitler himself sent Nimdok through medical school? And hadn't the young man distinguished himself in his work with replication and cell structure analysis?

It was destiny that Nimdok should come to work side by side with the Angel of Death at the horror hotel known as Auschwitz. Destiny that he should engage in the most noxious and fearful experiments on human beings the world had ever seen. A kind of demented, perverted destiny that Nimdok should manage to escape with Herr Doktor Mengele when the Allies liberated the death camp and turned their eyes from the monstrous evil that had been done there.



And destiny that he should be Mengele's homosexual lover in Brazil for all those years. And destiny that he should inherit Mengele's fortunes and facilities in the heart of the Amazon jungle when the Angel of Death died in 1979.

But it was thinking ahead that gave him longevity and good health past the age of ninety. The experiments, the insane experiments had led Nimdok to breakthroughs in DNA and RNA implementation. But first only on unwary mestizo natives who chanced too close to his Amazon laboratory. And when age and dementia and paralysis were about to take him, Nimdok injected himself with the serum, and it gave him another thirty years.

But it was AM—who came for him even hidden as he was in what was left of the Brazilian rainforest—who gave him an additional 109 years. Down there, deep inside, where he only grew older and older, and wiler and more cunning, and more persistently tormented.

But there was no doubting the truth of it: Nimdok was and is and will always be AM's favorite. That's because the mad god sees so much of himself as an apple-cheeked youth in the withered carcass of Nimdok, the son of the Angel of Death.



**Harlan Ellison
Interview**



Harlan Ellison Interview

Monday, March 13, 1995, 2:00 PM at Mr. Ellison's home.

Harlan Ellison, writer of the original short story "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," is interviewed by **J. Michael Straczynski**, creator and Executive Producer of *Babylon 5*.

J. Michael Straczynski: Now, as the author of "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," what is, from your point of view, the premise of the story and what is the premise of the game, and are they the same?

Harlan Ellison: The premise of the story is that there is nothing inherently bad about machines, any more than there is anything inherently bad about a science of any kind. It is what people do with science that makes it dangerous. In the story the computer AM is demented. It's demented because the flaws in the humans who programmed AM have shown up in the computer, and as a consequence its madness, its paranoia, its hatred of humanity manifests itself in a way that eventually leads it to destroy the entire human race. And because it is trapped in the center of the earth, because it has this giant intellect and can do nothing with it, it is forever a prisoner in its own madhouse. AM brings the last five people left on earth, saves them, saves those five people and brings them down below, to the center of the earth, so that AM can torment them endlessly, through all eternity, makes them almost

immortal, so that their torment never ceases and in that way AM amuses itself. In the game, I discovered because of the fellow who helped design it, the guy who actually designed, David Sears (brilliant young kid), that there were aspects of the story that I had never even examined. Perhaps because I wrote "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," in one night. In one blue-white fit of passion I sat down at a typewriter, like Captain Nemo sitting down at his organ and (playing) Toccata and Fugue in D minor, and the next day lo and behold there was "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream." And it's remained virtually unchanged from that first draft, all the years that it has existed. And it's now one of the ten most reprinted stories in the English language, it's taught in hundreds of universities. And I never thought anymore about the story, because I don't write sequels, I have never written a sequel to anything. And when David Sears began working on it, and I said to him, I want a game that you can not possibly win. And he said, "Well, that might, that might frustrate the player a little." I said, "A noble endeavor as far as I'm concerned, what better fun is there than to frustrate game players." But he said, "No, no, there probably should be a point to it." And when we began talking about what the game ought to do, he asked a question that I had never asked, "Why does AM bring these five people down? Why are these the five that AM has saved?" And I'd never thought about that, and so the



game is very different from the story in that we explore the backstory of all five of these characters. That's one of the major differences.

JMS: What's curious is that in a way...the story was published when? Originally?

HE: 1966... maybe 66, 67...

JMS: Today, in the nineties, we have games that are total emergent games, where you go into the environment and you try to work your way out through devices and mechanisms a computer throws at you...

HE: Right.

JMS: In a way, this story proceeds and, in a sense, creates the environment that we have now in computer games. It's sort of a pre-echo of what we have today.

HE: You mean, I have once again predicted the future.

JMS: You were ahead of your time.

HE: Oh, boy! And when I discovered radium that was a good thing too.

JMS: You and Curie had a thing going, you know.

HE: Eve, a nice woman, a nice woman, terrible table manners, but other than that okay.

JMS: What's good about some of the games today is that the author works with the company that makes the game. What was your contribution to all of this?

HE: Well, it's hard to put an hour designation on it, because I've worked all the way through. I originally conceived what I wanted the game to do. I originally said that what I want the game to be is not a shoot 'em up, an arcade kind of thing. What I wanted was a game that taught ethics. That if in fact you could not win this game at least you could lose better. The more ethically you played, the better choices you made as a human being, the better you could wind up. As it turns out there is a better ending now. The game has evolved. I worked long and hard creating the characters with David Sears. We worked for weeks. David came out here, from I think Georgia, and they put him in some horrendous little, you know, Bates motel out in the Valley, and he would travel here every day and we would work until the wee hours. I wrote the initial dialogue, I wrote the initial scenes. I conceived of many of the smaller things. I worked all the way...for instance...I'll give you a for instance. Would you like a for instance?

JMS: I'd like a for instance.

HE: I'll give you a for instance. There's a lot of word games that are played, in the way that you would find in a, say, in a Tom Stoppard play. At one point one of the characters finds himself in a meat locker. A meat locker, and there are all these sides of beef hanging on hooks, and also hanging on a hook is his ex-wife. And he has had great bitterness towards her, since they were divorced and to get out of there and to proceed, and to progress, to become aware of what he needs to do to go further, he must make the ethical choice of taking her off the hook. Literally, he has to remove her from the hook. To get off the hook, which is a slang phrase, but it's word play. That's one of the kinds of things I did. I



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conceived for the whole background for Nimdok, for instance, which is very much involved with the Holocaust, with my feelings about brutality, and the absolute pit to which human beings can descend if they don't maintain a moral and ethical center.

JMS: Now you're familiar with the term focus groups, I believe.

HE: Yes, I know what a focus group is. Wretched, hideous groups...

JMS: Really?

HE: Oh, yeah. Focus groups are the last bastion of business people who are too frightened to use their own opinions. So they bring in a bunch of random shlubs, from wherever they can find them, and ask them, "Let us have your opinion?" As if they have been working on the game for three years or five years, when in fact all they are is people who are suddenly... they're like the guy out on the road when you've got a traffic jam, you know, the guy in the orange vest. They give a little yellow flag, and say, "Here be a big man." And he stands there and he holds up your side, because he doesn't like your car. You know, he's poor, so he doesn't like you driving a Bentley, so he holds up your whole line of cars. You give people this kind of power, to have opinions, what you wind up with is art by committee. And art by committee is not what I work in. I think you have to have a strong individual intellect behind any great piece of art. Or even any mediocre art.

JMS: So mentioning Nimdok, if I mention to you that the focus groups felt they were troubled by references to the Holocaust, it might trivialize it. Your reaction would be?

HE: Oh, that's wonderful. I'm delighted that... They were intended to be disturbed by it. If they were not disturbed by it, I would not be doing my job. The track that involves Nimdok... Nimdok is a degenerate. Nimdok worked, as a very young man, he worked as a lab assistant to the Nazi Dr. Mengele. In the prison camps, working with experimentation. And they discovered an antiagapic drug, a drug to keep them young. Mengele took it, and he gave it to Nimdok, because they were... there is an inference that they were lovers as well, but that isn't really played in the game, but it's there in my mind, that's the background. When the war was coming to an end and they escaped from the prison camp, they were able to hide out. Nimdok went to South America with Mengele. Mengele of course eventually died, was eventually found, but Nimdok, nobody knew about him. So now here he is, as this story takes place—in our future, he's an old withered terrible man, but he will never die, because he he's got the antiagapic drug, he will just stay older and more withered. And he is a beast, he's probably worse than a beast because Mengele was a conscious monster. Nimdok would say, "I was just doing my job. I was just assisting." He was one of the good people who did not object. And when people are disturbed by this track, it is because I wish them to be disturbed, that's why it was put in there. Franz Kafka said, "Why read a book that does not disturb you. If a book does not give you a blow in the head why bother with it." That's the way I feel about it. Even something like a game. This is a computer *game*. The word *game*, bothers me. Games. Games are what you use to while away your time. Games are what divert you from the important things in life. Howard Cosell, one of the great sports



announcers of all time, referred to sports as "the toy shop of life." He said, "This is what they give you to divert you from the important things that are really happening." He said, you may worship some nuclear family, called the Rams or the Saints or the Cowboys, and never know that the people living next door to you are poor and poverty stricken and are going to have to declare bankruptcy and their child is dying of lymphnodic cancer. I put things in everything I do that are intended to rattle the cage. Stir the soup. People say, "Well, you only write to shock." Duhhh! Yeah, okay. That is a noble endeavor to shock. I mean there are already enough people in the world that will put you to sleep, with their insurance—no, no, don't worry about it. Don't worry about skin heads. Don't worry about fascism. Don't worry about the Ku Klux Klan. Don't worry about the far Right. None of these things really matter. Everything is fine. Hummmmm... That is not the way the world runs. So I take it upon myself, whether it is a vainglorious and ignoble pursuit, whether I'm an egomaniac or not. Part of my job. Part of my job is to stir the soup, and the track in this game, "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," that stirs the soup is the Nimdok track and is intended to upset people.

JMS: Well, with all the background noise in today's society, you have to shock to get their attention. Once you have their attention, you have to provide something more than that.

HE: And, I absolutely agree, that too many things are reduced to white noise. That you begin to ignore...

JMS: Yes.

HE: I was talking today to the head of the Sci-Fi Channel. I do these commentaries on the Sci-Fi Channel. And because I do not have the Sci-Fi Channel here in my home, the only time I see the show in which I am the commentator is when they send me a cassette. And I was at a conference last week in Atlanta, I believe, and a bunch of people came up and they said, "Gee, could you complain to the Sci-Fi Channel about this colophon that they run, it looks like Saturn." A little Saturn. And this is what all of the channels are doing. You know the NBC buzzard and the CBS eye, and Lifetime has the LIF bigger than the face of whoever is on the screen. And so I was talking today to Barry Schulman, the president of the Sci-Fi Channel. I said, "Would you mind removing it when my commentary is on?" He said, "Absolutely not. I can not (grumble)," I mean he was adamant about it. He said, "People want it, people want it." And I said, "I don't believe that for a second." He said, "We've had focus groups and they've told us that they like it, because they like to know what channel they are on." And I thought to myself, "You know I don't mind if he thinks I'm a moron, but I really do resent it when he talks to me as if he thinks I'm a moron, because people don't want some obstruction on their screen even if it's faint, even if it's vague. You mean they don't know where they are on the channel, well again, duhhhh... Get a *TV Guide* and you'll know where you are." But he said that now people have become accustomed to it and that's one of the terrifying things about no cultural history. This thing of racial amnesia. They can keep telling you...if you're an, I don't know, average game player—what eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty one years old?—and you've never lived in a time when we



didn't walk on the moon. You don't know what a thrill it was the first time we turned on television, and saw people walking on the moon. You think that a Clark Bar is actually supposed to be the size of your finger, and taste like, I don't know, dog dung, instead of chocolate, because they don't use chocolate anymore. You don't know that there is better food than McDonald's toad burgers, because you've been brought up to believe that's an actual meal. And you can get people to believe anything. And as a consequence things like the Holocaust, which are a necessary part of our memory. Knowing about the Holocaust is as important as knowing who your mother and father were, knowing where you came from, knowing what you believe in. It is a part of history that no one should ever forget. And I use the trope of the Holocaust frequently in my work. And when someone says, "Well, it's going to trivialize it, 'cause it's in a game." Nothing. *Nothing* could trivialize the Holocaust. I don't care whether you mention it in a comic book, on bubble gum wrappers, in computer games, or write it in graffiti on the wall. *Never forget. Never forget.* And putting it in this game is intended, to annoy people, to shock people, to upset people.

JMS: In most games, like *Myst* or *Gadget*, or *Doom*, or *Doom II*, or *Doom III*, you come away with perhaps better hand eye coordination, perhaps a sense of having a nice surreal experience. In this game you come out with a sense of ethical choices that have to get made. A history of the Holocaust, cultural references. Do you feel that game designers and game players need this kind of exposure to things, and what else would you want them to come away with?

HE: Well...I'd answer the question, but I think whatever answer I would give...I'm not dodging the question, it's just that I think, I think it would be presumptuous of me to say any damn thing. I mean I am a visitor in the medium. I don't for a moment pretend to be a gaming person. The extent of my gaming experience is that coming back from England, I played *Jurassic Park* for three wasted hours on a plane. On a TV set about this big, and at the end of three hours I said, how can people spend years doing this, it is an utter and absolute stupid waste of time. I did the game because, I guess, first of all somebody asked me. People say, "Well if you don't like games how come you did it?" Well, stupid, because somebody asked me to do it. Basically it seemed like a good idea at the time. I don't think about these things more than that. One game is all I'm ever going to do, I mean, I'm making this announcement right now and I know the people at *Cyberdreams* are going to love to hear this, because they wanted to do a sequel to this. There will be no sequel, as far as I'm concerned. There may be something in the contract that I don't know about that they can go for, but as far I know this is the game. I don't plan to do another game, I don't plan to write another game, I don't plan to be involved in another game. I've gotten calls from a lot of other companies and I've just said I'm not interested. This is my one venture. So if you ask me, should programmers come away with this or that or the other thing...

JMS: Or game players.

HE: Or game players. It's not my place to say. I did this game because it's this game and it is based on my work and I'm involved in it all



the way. There is a lot of my dialogue in it, I mean you'll hear my voice...Well, as a matter a fact, you'll hear my voice as the voice of AM, the demented computer. But in all of the dialogue you will hear my smart mouth, and the way I speak, and the way my stories read. Beyond this, this is my venture. Now watch, two minutes after we get done with this and the phone will ring and it will be I don't know, who's the big...

JMS: Lucas Arts.

HE: Lucas Arts, and they'll say we want to give you the Baja Peninsula, plus Iowa for your spare time, to do another game. Probably I would have to consider it. But as far as I can tell at this time, I can't think of a price anybody would come up with that would make me want to do another game.

JMS: What's your opinion, what you have seen of the games that have been around? The storytelling techniques and how could the interactive venue profit from good storytellers?

HE: Well as I say, my experience with games is very limited. I was asked to be the key note speaker at a Computer Game Developers Conference, maybe two years ago, and by the way upset them so much that there were editorials in one of the magazines about what a know nothing and a Luddite and a moron I was. So, I think that any product, I don't care whether it's peanut butter or computer games, can benefit from better storytelling. We are a storytelling species, that's what we do. You talk about the oldest profession being farming, and the second oldest being whoring. I think probably, storytelling may be the third oldest profession. And the idea of

the cliff-hanger, people sitting around the fire and the wayfaring wander who says, "...and they were just about to fall over the cliff and...if you give me a few more drachma, I will tell you what happened." I mean that's where the cliff-hanger came from. I think storytelling enhances any product. The better the story, the better the storyteller, the adroit the storyteller, the more inventive, can't help but make a better product. Now I have looked at, there was a game I've looked at called *Wolfenstein*. I probably shouldn't be bad mouthing another game, but I looked at this and I found it certifiably demented. I mean here is this thing where people get large holes blown in them as they run around through catacombs, McNazis, and I thought well, probably this was not the end result of us getting the opposable thumb.

JMS: As someone who...

HE: Am I holding back, am I...

JMS: A little. I think you should be a little more straightforward.

HE: I'm being reticent because I know this tape is going to be shown to a lot of people who are going to take offense.

JMS: Yes, well, there you are. Now, you, of course work on a manual typewriter.

HE: Yes, I do. I work on a manual typewriter. Not even an electric, a manual.

JMS: And you're working now on a computerized venue. Do you see a contradiction here or has it all been part of the process.



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HE: No, not only do I not see a contradiction, but the other night, when David, the new game designer came on, we had to go back over and I had to redo some of the dialogue. And he was playing the game for me, he was running, "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" on a little monitor at the kitchen table here. And I said, "Okay, well let's have her... no wait... she would say... wait a minute..." And I went and got my typewriter. I went and got a portable typewriter and I brought it down and I set it up right in front of the monitor and I rolled in a piece of paper. I said, "No, that's stupid, what she would say would be this." And I whipped it out and gave it to him. He came away with a sheaf of papers like this. Now I think on the typewriter. See, I'm not...you got to understand something, or...you already understand this Joe. But for those of you out there who like all the toots and whistles on your machinery and have to keep up with the Joneses, with whatever, you know, modern thing you've got going. I think people should use the level of technology that best suits the job. Form follows function. If a shovel is going to dig the hole best, then you don't need a back hoe. If a typewriter can do the job, or a quill pen, or a computer, use whatever does the job. For me, because I use these two fingers, I taught myself to type, and I type 120 words a minute with two fingers, I seldom make mistakes...I put foot pounds of energy, when I get the computer, the damn thing doesn't spring back, and so I make nothing but typos. I like to look at a manuscript. I like to look at the shape of 8 1/2-by-11 inch page. It has meaning for me, it has vibrancy, it has life. And there's my energy, in every one of those keys. Every image that is struck on that page came from me hitting it...like that. It is my foot pounds

of energy. My contact with my reader is closer in that way. Other people work on computers. As we say in Yiddish *Losin de*, you should live and be well. Work on a damn dirigible, what the hell do I care, just don't come and continue to bust my chops and call me a Luddite, cause I don't subscribe to your cockiness. If you want to work with a computer, go in peace, but get off my back, don't bust my chops.

JMS: You mention toots and whistles...

HE: Yes.

JMS: What toots and whistles does this game have? What images, what kind of graphics, what kind of music, what does it have that people will see when they play this game?

HE: The finest graphics known to Western Civilization.

JMS: My God.

HE: I cannot begin to tell you. When you look at your monitor, you will think you are looking through a window at the real world, that's how good they are. Voices, ahhh...the angels sing on this game. We are listening to the music of the spheres. How the hell do I know? I'm not...I told you I'm not a computer guy. I designed the story, I did the dialogue, I invent all the stuff that's going to get Cyberdreams in trouble, but I have no idea. There is one special secret thing, which of course some big mouth will blow, of course, because there always is some big mouth that has...can't get his or her jollies, unless they say, "Oh, you know what the secret is...well the secret is blub, blub, blub..." And of course they screw it up for everybody else.



That's like the guy who tells you the end of the movie while you're in the line ready to go in. I would happily nail that sucker's head to the coffee table, plus his momma and his momma's pets. There is a secret...there is a secret in this game, *which I cannot reveal, in fact, bamboo slivers under the finger nails could not drag from me this knowledge*. But apart from that you can expect absolute state-of-the-art stuff.

JMS: So, how would you describe the mood of this game in terms of the artwork and the music and what does it create for the viewer?

HE: The mood of this game is unrelenting angst and unsettlement. The game is intended to keep you at a tilt, from the start to the finish. This is the sort of game that Franz Kafka would have either written or enjoyed playing, I think. It is not a game to put you to sleep. It's not Donkey Kong, and it is definitely not Mario's. There is no cute cuddlies in this game, there is not one, I don't know what you call it, a frame or a scene or...whatever the hell you call it...there is not one aspect of this thing that is, that is easy. See, I don't think art should be easy. That's one of the great arguments I've always heard for using a PC to write stories on, which in my view is the reason we have these long-winded bloated overblown trilogies of fantasy novels, you know, filled with fuzzy-footed little creatures and unicorns. I think that say that, if I use a computer it is easier, you know, if I get it wrong...if I start, if I write 20,000 words and then I discover that well, no, that's where the beginning of the story is, all I have to do is just push a button and...What a moron, 20,000 words into your story and you didn't even know that's where it started. You imbecile. You know, you ought not to be writing, you ought to be planting

trees on a hillside, serving the common wheel, bettering the world. So, comes the argument for computer is, well, it makes it easier. Wrong. Art should not be easier. Farming should be easier. Sex should be easier.

JMS: Plumbing?

HE: Plumbing should definitely be easier. Heart surgery should be a lot easier, having been through it.

JMS: Income taxes.

HE: Income taxes definitely should be easier. Unwrapping saltwater taffy that has been sitting around for about a year...very difficult. These are all things that should be easier, but art should always be harder. You should pull it out with some pain. It should cost you something to produce art; otherwise, it ain't art, it's mediocrity. So, in this game, I... I'm not even remotely suggesting that a computer game, this one or any other, is anything even remotely approaching art, but there is a sense of artfulness that I had, that David Sears had, that this new David, whose last name I've totally forgotten because I've only heard it once...begins with a W, I remember that. I'm not getting old and senile, it's just that I only heard the name once and I wrote it down and duhhh...

JMS: We'll forgive you.

HE: Anyhow, he's a very nice guy and we work very, very hard. He and Craig came over the other night, we just slaved for five hours, but we did Thai food, which was very nice... which we made Cyberdreams pay for. So, there is a seriousness of purpose, in making this game.



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JMS: Then that brings me to one of your favorite quotes, which is "To find is to kill, to suggest is to create." By taking this game, which is, as you say, a landmark in science fiction literature, and going from the theatre of the mind to putting on the screen and defining it and making it literal, has it lost that artfulness?

HE: Well, no, I mean...I know you are asking me questions that have been provided to you, but you and I both know that's a moron question. Because when you transmogrify something from one form to another, it loses, but it also gains. If I take a story that is completely internalized, say as a story called "The Fourth Year of the War," which is a guy ruminating about people he wants to kill because they messed over his father when he was a kid. And I tried to change that to, say, do a television script of it, or a comic book adaptation, I can no longer use the internal monologue, because you wind up with a voice-over if you're in television, and you wind up with captions: "I thought this...and I thought that."

JMS: Literature is internal and television is external.

HE: Exactly. This is a different art form, this is a different medium, and so you adapt to it. The aspects of "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," the story, that I have brought to this are transliterate. They are things that go from one to the other, they are visual. It's a very visual story. I mean when they come into the ice caverns and find the giant, mythic bird of Norse legend, that's very visual. The subtle stuff, the surreal stuff, the magic realism twists that you would get in a novel of the Latin American boom, say Gabriel García Márquez

or writers like that, that is lost. No, it's not, I think about it and I tell a lie. It is not lost, it is altered, it is transmogrified. It appears in a different way. There is an eerie look to this game. An eerie look. Or maybe it's just because I'm unfamiliar with the way games are supposed to look, because I haven't played that many. But when I look at the actual games of the character of whatever track moving through. I say, "God, that's really bizarre, it's strange..." because the movement is not...it's very much like...it's a simulacrum of life. It's not life like, like, say, a Disney cartoon. There's a jerkiness to it because it's computer generated, but that in some way enhances the strangeness of this story. It is a very strange story.

JMS: It's very surreal.

HE: Yeah. The story is very surreal, and it takes place, the entire story takes place in the mind of a mad god and anything can happen and the people are mere pawns, and the player becomes a pawn. The player becomes, I suspect in some ways, the sixth person brought down into AM's belly. And the torment that you get in the game is the torment that the people in the game experience. Boy is that good, I wish I'd thought of that earlier. Makes it sound like I know what the hell I'm talking about, doesn't it?

JMS: You mentioned there's a story behind Ellen.

HE: Yes, well...one of the characters is a woman named Ellen. And in the original story...now very few people, because a lot of people read in a slovenly manner, these days. People will read this story and not perceive



that the story is being told by a guy who is paranoid. AM has altered each of these five people in different ways. And the guy who's telling the story, Ted, is paranoid, so everything he says can not be relied upon. It's not that he's lying, it's that he's been turned, he's been made crazy, and so he reports things. And the kindest person in the story is this woman, Ellen, who cares about people, she shows the only real humanity. Everybody else is kind of worried about themselves. She worries about other people, and he calls her a whore, and reviles her in the story. And people who look at this, "Oh, the guy who wrote this hates women." No, no, no, quite the contrary. Ellen is the nicest person in the story. But you have to read it in context. Well, a number of years ago, when the story had already become fairly famous and had won a number of awards, I got a call from a guy who was one of the people who was running a Modern Language Association Conference, The MLA, Modern Language Association. Anybody who's been in college knows that this is the great Brahman of academia. The MLA is the great gray secret Master of the Universe. And everyone pays obeisance to it, because everyone has to publish or perish otherwise they don't get tenure. So, they've a lot of magazines, the MLA has a lot of magazines, and if you can deliver papers at a MLA conference, you can be on your way toward getting a doctorate, or a professorship, or tenure. So I got a call from one of these guys, who said, whom I've known for years, and he said, "You ain't going to believe this," he said, "but you are now famous enough that someone is delivering a paper on you on 'I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream,'" at this MLA conference at, I don't know, I think it was the University of Michigan, I can't remember

now. And I said, "No, come on, you know I've got to be dead at least fifty years for that to happen." Because they don't like to do papers on people who are living because you can contradict them. See they can make up anything they want, academics can say anything they want. So...am I talking too much?

JMS: It's fine.

HE: Okay. So he said, "You know it would be a real deuce if you kind of just appeared." And I said, "Can we do that?" And he said, "I believe it can be done." So, sure enough I...

JMS: Live authors are so annoying.

HE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, live authors are very annoying. They refuse to stand still, they are like a chicken running around while you are trying to cut its head off and mount it. So, I was there and I heard this Jesuit priest, Father William something or other, give this learned paper on "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream." And it was filled with, you know, all the crap that they confuse you with in college, that they teach kids that drives them nuts. Like you know, the basic Appollonian Dionysian conflict, that here we have the crucifixion and resurrection symbolism, but he didn't have a clue what the story was about. I mean not even, he wasn't even in the ball park. So after he got all done...which is mean as hell, but you know as long as you're beating up on professors no one objects. They are the last group you can really revile.

JMS: That's true.



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HE: Them, and people from Iceland, because they're so small, nobody cares if you're not politically correct about them. Also the French because everybody hates the French.

JMS: True.

HE: So, the guy who was running that section said, "Father whatever his name was, we have quite a surprise for you." Said, "The author of that story, Harlan Ellison, is sitting here in the back, he's in the audience." Well, the guy looked like they had taken a cork out of his backside. I mean, the blood drained out of him, the guy was a Baggie filled with blood at one moment and he was empty the next and he said, "Ebebebe," (That's Warner Bros.) "Well wouldn't you like to have Mr. Ellison come up and comment..." Now he wanted that about as much as he wanted a hysterectomy with a rotorooter, but you know, it was like a TV audience. "Well we understand that you play the kazoo, you will play the kazoo." "No, no, I can't play." "Oh, come on folks, you want to hear him play..." And every shlep in the audience, like they really don't want to hear a kazoo, but they want to see someone get embarrassed, you know they can't play the kazoo well. So, this guy had to accede to this demented request, where if it had been I, I'd have said, "No, I don't want to hear a word from him, I'm right he's wrong." So, I get up there and this guy... I shook his hand and I start to talk, and I say, "Father..." Then I realized that any conversation that you have to begin calling somebody Father, you've lost, already.

JMS: (Overlap) You've lost.

HE: Yes, exactly. So I said, "What was your name again?" And he said, "William whatever it was." And I said, "Bill."

JMS: (Overlap) Bill.

HE: Exactly. "Bill," I said, "I listened to everything you said, it was really lovely. You had some great stuff in there," I said, "But basically I think you're stuffed with wild blueberry muffins." And that was the phrase I used. And he said, "Well... what do you mean?" I said, "Well you talk all this and all of this and all of this, and you didn't even notice that Ellen's black." And he said, "What?" I said, "She's a black woman." He said, "Where is that? Where is that in the story?" So I grabbed the story, he had a copy with the paper, I grabbed it and I said, "Right here, 'Her face black against the snow'." I said, "What the hell did you think I was saying there?" He said... "Well, I thought that was a symbolism and..." And I said, "I rest my case." Making Ellen a black woman, but never mentioning it except the once in the story has delighted my African American, I hate that phrase: African American, my black readers, but has enormously pissed off endless groups of academics. So that...we...

JMS: A worthy cause, unto itself.

HE: Yes, it's a worthy cause. So we made Ellen black in the game.

JMS: Good.

HE: The only problem is, I was told that... she's walking around in the game, and she's wearing this kind of like business suit and I said, "Here is a woman who has been in the belly of a computer for 109 years."



JMS: It's going to wear off.

HE: Yeah, she's going to be pretty raggedy. And they said, "Well, it costs, it will take up a lot of pixels. Is that what it is?"

JMS: Yeah.

HE: Pixels, to make raggedy clothing, so she's really well dressed. These kinds of things bother me, but I guess they are the parameters of the equation one calls... computer art.

JMS: Now, in the interface...our point of view character is paranoid, who can you really trust in the game?

HE: Well...

JMS: Does it lie to you?

HE: No, it doesn't work that way. That's in the story, in the game, you stand on the outside and you run the five track with the five characters. One of them is paranoid. One of them is Nimdok, this monster. A third one is Ellen, a hysteric and you find out why hysteric and why she is immobilized by her own hysteria. Ted is the paranoid.

JMS: So you can be any of these characters during the course of the game. You can play a different person each time.

HE: Yeah, yeah. You can play any one of the five tracks and they will mess you over really good and I'm not sure I should even use the word win. There's no winning, there's places you can go and things you can do and not to be too Zen about it, 'It is not the destination always that is great, it is the journey that one takes.'

JMS: The process.

HE: The process. It's a real process game. If you like playing computer games, if you're into that kind of thing, this one will unravel your pantyhose. I mean, it is a real nice game to play.

JMS: Most games are goal oriented. You find that piece of paper. You find the treasure. You get to a certain room, it's all goal oriented rather than process oriented.

HE: Yeah, well, there are goals, there are things to find, all the toots and whistles.

JMS: That's the core of it though.

HE: No, the core of it is something larger and more, I hope, human. More concerned with the human condition. All the other stuff that you get when you get a computer game is there: the color, the noise, and the things to find and the clues, and all that kind of stuff, they're all there. You get everything that you would get, but wait, there's more. You get Ginsu knives with this game.

JMS: So parent groups should like this, it teaches morality and ethics to their children?

HE: Well, parents' groups. Parents' groups exist to be alarmed. If they are not alarmed this week about a computer game, they will be alarmed this week about Dungeons & Dragons. If it's not that it will be comic books. If it's not that it will be television. If it's not that it's going to be drugs. They're always concerned about something else rather than the fact that they don't know how to raise their children, because they were bad children themselves and became



bad adults. Their lack of morality, their lack of ethics shows up in their own kids and they are confused. They want to beat the crap out of their kids, because they are behaving exactly like the parents. I'm not sure that parents' groups will like this game. This is a disturbing game. What they like are games that are filled with daffodils and...

JMS: Bunny rabbits.

HE: Bunny rabbits, and little things that hop around. If you can change the bunny's color from pink to paisley, you will win. It's not like that. This is a game that says, the human condition is composed of unequal parts of courage, and friendship, and ethics, and self-sacrifice, and brutality, and bestiality, and degeneracy, and mendacity. That is what I think, is the nobility of this game, understanding, in however small measure, that we are not alone, that we are all inside the same skin. And for the time you play this game, it has the mouth. Which I guess goes back to the title, "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream." This game is the mouth to express some aspects of the human condition.

JMS: You come from a unique perspective, in addition to working in fiction and literature, you have also worked as a television writer and have critiqued the media, and now you're working in computers. How do you see the coexistence of television and computer games, multimedia interactive, films? Is it blurring, is the line sort of fading between the different ones? How will they get along together? Will one replace the other? Pontificate for us, Harlan.

HE: Well, you ask me to go into a much larger venue here. I have long been the specter at the banquet about television. I mean, I've worked in television, I've worked in film, and now I'm working in computer graphics, or whatever the medium is called. I look on it with some concern. I think the printed word is the perfect medium. I think a book is the perfect cassette. You can start it wherever you want, you can stop it wherever you want. You can run it backward anyway you want. It has absolute perfect pitch and tone and color and characters look exactly as you wish them to look and they sound exactly as you wish to hear them. It's the perfect cassette. But we have produced several generations now of people who are sloppy. They'd much rather sit on their asses and watch television, or sit on their asses and play computer games, then expend the effort to get themselves involved with the real interactive media, which is a book. There is nothing more interactive than a book. All of these other things that call themselves interactive, require you to sit there like a slug on a rose, and press buttons or flip switches. And I look on that as the death of intellect. I do not see Ricki Lake talk shows and television and computer games as the way out to get us a more enlightened electron. We elect people like Clinton, Reagan, and Nixon and the rest of them, because we have been taught that this is the best we can hope for. Anybody who has ever read Thomas Jefferson's works knows very well that we can have a lot better. I think these mediums are created to lie to us and keep us asleep. I think we are programmed by inarticulate conspiracies. I don't think there are twelve gray bearded men sitting on a glass mountain top, who say, "all right, let's keep them stupid." I think it is society's need to



keep producing drones. Big business, multi-nationals, they need to have consumers. And that is what we are raised to be, from the moment we leave the womb, we are raised to be consumers of products. Whether it's twenty-seven *Spider-Man* comics, when the world only really needs one. Or it's a new car every year, or it's raspberry flavored tampons. We are trained to buy.

JMS: And to be distracted.

HE: And to be distracted. They keep you distracted and you won't have to notice that you're being screwed left and right. We have very little control over our lives anymore. And those who try to gain control of their lives are called rebels, criminals, renegades, and they are inevitably swatted down one way or the other. You shouldn't ask me this question, this is a hobby horse that I reluctantly ride. I've been riding it all my life and I go to bed angry and I get up angrier the next day. And I keep waiting, I keep waiting for a day...I remember there was a day—I digress—I woke up one day, and the moment I woke up, I woke up terrific, and the day looked great, and the window was open and it smelled great. This was not all that long ago, maybe eleven—twelve years ago. And I said, "This is going to be the best day of my life. Absolutely the best day ..." I knew it.

JMS: Your first perfect day.

HE: It was. It was an absolutely perfect day, man. A lot of little problems that had been bothering me, they all came together. Five or six little tag ends, just took...there was no shitty stuff in the mail, there were no people busting my chops. The food was good that day. I was happy. All day I felt happy. And I

could only remember five or six days in my life that I had felt that good. And I said, "This is what it feels like to have a happy day." Why don't we have five of these a week, and two shitty days, but it's the other way around. It's the other way around, you've got six days in which you go slugging waste deep through crap, just so you can get to one moment where you can sit and have a glass of milk and a Fig Newton. You know. That isn't right, that isn't the way human beings should live.

JMS: It's because art is hard and perfection is hard.

HE: Art is hard. Perfection is hard.

JMS: The perfect day is the hardest thing of all.

HE: Yeah. And for me, I turn on the news in the morning and I listen to the news and I go (groan), "I thought it could get no worse." But it gets worse every day. And I'm just one of those type of people, I worry about the rest of the human race. I don't think I'm particularly noble, or...I'm not an important person. Ralph Nader is an important person, Carl Sagan is an important person, Eleanor Roosevelt was an important person. I'm not an important person, I'm a storyteller, I'm a professional liar. That's how I make my living. I make up these funny, interesting little stories. Maybe somebody will feel better after they read one, maybe somebody will be smarter after they read one, maybe. Maybe. But as I say a hundred times, if I had it to do over, even having written all the books I've written, and won all the awards, I've won, and all the acclaim...I mean the reason they're sitting here doing a tape of me is I've got some low-level celebrity. I'd



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pack it all in...if I were to start over, I would be a plumber. I tell that to people, they laugh. They think I'm making it up. It's not funny. I think a plumber, a good plumber who really cares and doesn't overcharge and make sure things are right, does more good for the human race in a given day than fifty writers. In the history of the world, there are maybe, what, twenty, thirty books that ever had any influence on anybody, maybe the Intellects of Confucius, maybe "The Son of the Peloponnesian War," maybe "Uncle Tom's Cabin." If I ever write anything that is remembered five minutes after I'm gone, I will consider myself having done the job well. I work hard at what I do, I take my work very seriously. I don't take me particularly seriously. But I take the work very seriously. But I don't think writing is all that inherently a noble chore. I think being a plumber is a noble chore. When the toilet overflows I don't need Dostoyevsky coming to your house. And I tell people that's what I would do, I would get myself a job as a plumber. I would go back to brick laying, which I used to do. I would become an electrician. Not an electrical engineer. I would become an electrician. I would, you know, install a night light in a kid's nursery and at the end of the day, if I felt like writing, I would write something. I don't know what that has to do with the game or anything, but you asked so I told you.

JMS: You mention people who are out of control their whole lives, and nowhere is that more true than for the characters in this particular story. Could you introduce us briefly to each of the characters who are here? You mentioned Ellen already, and...

HE: Well, there's Ellen. Ellen is an ex-

technician, she worked in an engineering firm, she's a black woman who has some strange and troubling things in her past. In the game she is often immobilized by her own hysteria and she doesn't know where it comes from and her self discovery, of where it comes from, is very important to proceeding in her track. Then there's Benny. Benny has been altered by AM physically, so that Benny is now almost half man, half beast. He is completely a product of emotion now, and passions. He is sort of an idiot savant, and he's one of AM's favorite toys, which is not a good thing to be because AM is mad. As mad as a computer god could be. Then there's Nimdok, whom I've told you about. He's the assistant to the butcher Mengele. And he is a man who has allowed to happen or personally performed some of the most hideous acts that a human being can perform. And is there salvation for him within the confines of the game, well... that's an interesting question to that the game will answer. Then there is Ted who is the narrator. And Ted is, I don't know, I suppose Robert Redford, turned into a paranoid.

JMS: Is that redundant?

HE: Is that redundant? No. Robert Redford is not Robert Redford is one of the truly good people in the world, as is Sundance. Was he Sundance? He was Sundance. Butch. You know who Butch is?

JMS: Yes. An Institute. The Sundance Institute.

HE: Who the hell is the fifth character? Why can't I think of who the fifth character...
(Off Camera Voice: Gorrister)



HE: Oh, yeah, there's Gorrister. Gorrister's... Gorrister. The story opens with Gorrister hanging upside down, bare naked, hanging upside down from a pink palette, like an artists palette, just free floating there, and he's hanging by one heel, upside down, and his throat has been cut and he's bleeding onto the floor and everybody comes running in. And says, "Oh, my God, Gorrister. Oh, my God, Gorrister. AM has killed Gorrister." And Gorrister comes along looks up and says, "You're such a shit, AM." You know, he's got everybody upset. I don't know how to introduce Gorrister, Gorrister is... I don't want to tell you anything about Gorrister.

JMS: All right.

HE: Gorrister is an interesting character. Even as AM is an interesting... AM is in a way the sixth track, because AM is everywhere. The whole story takes place within AM so almost anything you do can be a lie, can be a manipulation, can be a complete misdirection, because it's this nutty computer... nutty, but it's like Moriarty. Demented, insane, clearly insane, but very cunning, just like O.J. Simpson... no, I didn't mean that. You know I love when people say that he's innocent until proven guilty... no, no, no fool. That's in front of the bar of law. He's innocent until proven guilty in front of the bar of law, but in the real world if one looks and says, I don't know, quacks like a duck, waddles like a duck, sheds water like a duck, he's probably a duck. I mean, only a fool would say that Fuhrman planted a glove.

JMS: Right.

HE: Am I getting off the topic?

JMS: Not too much. Proven a duck in front of a court of law.

HE: See look, you've got to understand something. The game is me to a large extent. When you buy the game, you buy a piece of me.

JMS: You're in Harlan Ellison's mind.

HE: You're in my mind. And I digress like crazy and so you will find characters suddenly talking about something that has nothing to do with anything else in the game. They will point out that the reason they make cheese in Wisconsin is that in the early times when settlers lived there, they played out the wheat fields. They just, you know, they didn't know anything about crop rotation, so after a while the wheat fields died, so they planted them in the grasslands. And when the Swiss and the Scandinavians came over and they settled there, they liked it just fine. Because they liked tending cows, so they turned the cows out onto the grassland. And that's why we have cheese in Wisconsin. (Pause) Perhaps I digress.

JMS: Doesn't in some ways the game really parallel contemporary society, in the sense of we are all walking around in created realities, created by the media, created by the arts, created by the government, created by everything else?

HE: I have no idea what that question means.

JMS: Nor do I, but it sounded great.

HE: What's on this...

JMS: No, it's a new one that I threw in...



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HE: Oh, you threw that one in. Aren't we all...Okay, try it again. Let me see if I can get it. Try it again. I'm willing to work at this...

JMS: Every day we are...the route around us is created by computers. You can't trust pictures anymore because computers can manipulate them. Can't trust images. Can you trust the role that informs you on any given day, as you can't trust AM?

HE: In that way, yeah, I suppose the game is a reflection of life. We stumble through our days like people who have been stunned in the forehead with a ball peen hammer. Our day is made for us by others. The clothes we wear are the clothes we are told to wear by our peer groups and television. I mean, who ever invented the idea of putting a baseball cap on backwards. You know, I'm out here driving in the Valley last year with my wife and it's 120 degrees. People are frying eggs on the sidewalk and here stand two kids at a bus stop with their hats turned backwards, dropping dead of heat prostration? And I drive by, and I go, "Turn the hat around, moron!" But no, they won't. Sooner would they fall in their tracks than not be cool. To be fly on the street...to be stylin, is more important than fact that they are turning their brain into a taquito.

JMS: AM told them it was right.

HE: AM told them it was right. So, yeah, every day we go through a scenario that is not constructed by us. We don't do what we want to do with the day. I mean here sits a man who is a director of this tape. This morning they said to him, "All right, today you're going over to Ellison's house and

you're going to tape this." And the guy said, "No, I tell you, I'd rather drive up to the mountains and go to the lake and just dump a line in. I don't even want to put a worm on it. I just want to sit there, where it's cool and get the breeze off the lake." But he can't because the scenario has been created for him. Manipulation of each other becomes the end all and be all, until we arrive at a person like a Newt Gingrich who is really Goldfinger. I mean, Newt Gingrich wants to rule the universe and he's doing it. (Pause) So, yeah, in that way I guess in that way, "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" really is a paradigm, P-A-R-A-D-I-G-M, you could look it up. A paradigm for our daily existence.

JMS: A story for our times. Again ahead of your time.

HE: I'm ahead of our time again.

JMS: When will you stop being ahead of our time? You mention we are still in a way living in the heart of AM. What am AM...what is AM?

HE: Well, AM is the name that the computer has taken for itself, and in the original story...the time breaks in the story, you know, when you're reading a story, something will happen and then it will say, 'Later' comma. But there will always be a one line space. Well, those space breaks in the story are actually computer tapes. They're digital read-out tapes, and one of them says in Latin, *cogito ergo sum* and the other says in the English equivalent, *I think, therefore I am. I am.* The machine can think, therefore it thinks. *I think, therefore I am AM.* But it also stands...in the original for Allied Mastercomputer. What



happened was that war became so complex that giant computers had to be created to fight the war. And so the Americans created the Allied Mastercomputer, which they sank in the Rocky Mountains. Giant computer. The Chinese had their Mastercomputer and they sank theirs in the *Gobialthia*. And the Russians had theirs which they sank in the Urals, down in the center. And as the war became more and more complex, the computers were programmed to repair themselves. To keep themselves up to the smartness, the intellect, the intelligence the level of the other computers. And as they kept rebuilding themselves and expanding—they honeycombed the earth, until the entire center of the earth was filled with the computer. And at that point they linked and the three of them gained sentience. *Cogito ergo sum*. I think therefore I **AM**. And AM is god.

JMS: And, of course, the Bible...God is asked, 'Who are you?' He says, 'I am that I am.'

HE: Right...In the Bible, exactly. It's good that you would know that.

JMS: Well, there you are.

HE: As a person who knows from those books.

JMS: College graduate, what can I say.

HE: That's right.

JMS: Now, aside from, obviously, your work, which tends to foreshadow much of what is happening in today's society, the trope of science fiction as visionaries tend to be somewhat overhyped, perhaps. What do you feel about the tendency of fiction writers or

works of science fiction to be sort of pressing about what's coming down the road?

HE: Well...

JMS: Your own work aside, of course.

HE: My own work aside...

JMS: Which is dead on.

HE: Brilliant. Brilliant. But I'm not about to pull the covers on an entire genre. Forever... some science fiction writer goes on television, and the Merv Griffin of the world, or the Ricki Lake of the universe will say, "Well, science fiction predicts a lot of stuff, doesn't it. It predicted the submarine, and..."

JMS: The satellite.

HE: The satellites and all that. Well, here is the true story about that. Science fiction originally was a pulp medium. It was started by electrical engineers and electrical experimenters and the science fiction story was almost an afterthought. It was considered an amusing little sidebar. And it was considered a bastard offshoot of literature. Nobody in their right mind, nobody who took writing seriously, or took literature seriously would consider science fiction a serious genre. And so...people who read science fiction magazines, and even when I was a young kid, I would see people sitting on streetcars—Yes, I do remember streetcars. People sitting on streetcars who would have a copy of *National Geographic* and inside would be a copy of *Startling Stories*, but you know they had to read it that way. So science fiction began to lie about its ability to be prognosticated, to be prescient, to



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extrapolate. They say, well, we predicted this, we predicted that. Well, that's horse pucky. You got two thousand writers writing, predicting everything wildly—it's a scatter gun, eventually they're going to connect with a few things. Yes, Hugo Gernsback predicted night baseball. Yes, Jules Verne predicted the submarine, but Leonardo da Vinci predicted the parachute and the glider. Thinking about things, or coming up with ideas, has nothing to do with science fiction. Nowhere in the history of science fiction. I'll show you how prescient they are, how well they predict the future. Prior to the launching of Sputnik, not one science fiction writer wrote a story in which they said that these rockets would be funded by the government, by the military. It was always Robert Heinlein, "Man Who Sold the Moon." It was always, you know, some guy who...was in the backyard, he made it out of tin cans and old, old Kleenex boxes and he flew to the moon with it. They always thought it would be private enterprise that would fund the space program. But it wasn't. Nobody thought of that. Arthur Clarke, Arthur C. Clarke, the man, I mean, he's the father of, you know, telecommunications of the moon, all that. Arthur C. Clarke never in anywhere of his work, as smart as he was in all the stuff put together, no where did he indicate that when they landed on the moon we would watch it on live TV. Never thought of that. Never thought of that. So science fiction is a good petri dish for the growing of these kinds of ideas and frequently things that are discussed or described in science fiction stories, like the Waldo armchairs that are used in, which we use in "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream." We have a waldo in there and we refer to it as a waldo, because Heinlein called it a waldo. It is from

his story "Waldo." And, occasionally there will be that synchronicity of idea and reality, but in the main...science fiction is basically a game of what-if. And if you play what-if long enough, you're bound to hit a few things that happen.

JMS: If any. A monkey's typing...

HE: Exactly.

JMS: One question provided by Cyberdreams, which the friendly folks would love...

HE: I am all agog waiting.

JMS: As are we all. Your opinion of UFOs.

HE: You've got to be kidding me. This is a real question?

JMS: I wouldn't make this up.

HE: Show me. Show me.

JMS: It's right over there, look...

HE: These idiots who asked this question. Look folks, look, I've told you this before, you're not paying attention folks. Let me point something out to you. The nearest... there is no other life in this galaxy, we know that, we already know that. Or at least in this solar system. The nearest star is...is it Proxima Centauri or Alpha Centauri?

JMS: Proxima.

HE: Proxima Centauri which is...what is it 186 thousand light years away...?



JMS: 10 light years.

HE: 10 light years away. That means you would half to travel at the speed of light for 10 years just to get here from there. Okay, now we clearly do not have that kind of technology. So, let us go demento for a moment and postulate that there is an alien life form that for some inexplicable reason wants to come to this little bidet of a planet, this little cinder, at the ass end of nowhere. Instead of going, you know, where all the really hot planets are, you know the Las Vegas of planets which is out in Aldebaran somewhere. And they come here. Okay now, they've got the technology to be able to get here, which makes them already as far beyond us in terms of intellect as we are beyond the paramecium. Okay, and they get here and all they want to do is say two things, one of them is "Jesus Saves" and the other one is "Clean up your room." Right. "You are a species that wants to pollute, if you do not clean up your room, we will destroy you." Yeah, I got your clean up right here. Right. So, the aliens are either morons, they're complete morons, or the people who believe in UFOs are morons. Now ask me about people who have been taken on ships. And had rectal examinations. How stupid are aliens, you pick up one person, all right, you pick up two, you pick up a woman, you pick up a man. You give them a rectal exam, the alimentary canal, the....

JMS: They learn all they're going to learn...

HE: You learned all you're going to learn. All you're going to see is a lot of crap up there. That's it. I mean they've got a science that is smart enough to get here from a far star and all they want to do is give people a hosing

down with something in their ass. I don't think so. And they never stop to think that these questions are, should be asked. The people who believe in this crap, Roswell, give me a break on Roswell. You know, I write science fiction, I write flying saucers stuff, I write Loch Ness monsters, I write about people who have psionic abilities, I don't believe that crap. Anybody that believes that crap, believes that the soap operas are real. These are people who definitely need a helping hand.

JMS: But on the flip side of that, do you believe that we are alone in the universe?

HE: Do I believe we are alone... How could I know? Look, I'm an atheist. People say to me, do you believe in God? No, I don't believe in God. Because all the gods that they offer me are completely as crazy as AM in this game. Every god that I've ever heard of, with the exception...if I had to pick a religion, I'd pick Buddhism. Buddhism is a kindly religion. It says you got a chance...it's got humor, it's got wisdom, it says to be nice to each other. All the rest of them have gods that want to beat the crap out of you if you defy the rules. I don't believe that, I'm not an imbecile, I'm not a moron. I have to have some proof of something. When I look at Fundamentalists, I just want to, I don't know, hit them in the kisser with a pie. But in fact they rule most of this country, which is kind of sad. I know we're really going to get in trouble on this tape. They're going to edit the hell out of this, God...you know the president of Cyberdreams will see this and his hair will stand on end. I am a pragmatist, I believe in Ockham's razor which says, 'go with the most logical answer, it's probably right.' Occasionally you get fooled, occasionally you get fooled. But we know



I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

there is no Pellucidar in the center of the earth. We've gotten back seismic readings. We know. We know very well that...that ain't a face on Mars. I don't give a damn how many people, 'It's a face on Mars.' You know, your momma's face is on Mars. All it is, is a shadow or whatever it is...a rock structure. There's no life on Mars. We may, eventually, someday find life or it may find us, but that's a long way off. It would seem to me it is more in our, more to our benefit to worry about how, learning how to live with each other, which we haven't learned how to do very well, since the dawn of recorded history...than worrying about how the hell we're going to deal with creatures with pointy little heads that come down here and want to give us enemas. I hate being so rational, I know that people would love to have me say that, 'I believe that Whitley Streiber did get taken aboard a flying saucer.' No, I think Whitley Streiber, probably a very nice man, is self-delusional. I mean he really believes that by this time, and also it's made him quite a lot of money. But I don't think he did it for the money, I think he really actually believes that. The same way that Joan of Arc thought God talked to her. But God has more important things to do than talk to little French girls in jail. And has more things to do than give you hair growing on the palm of your hand if you masturbate. Gods really should be engaged in more significant things like that, like creating new stars, like creating quasars. I mean, I think that's what, if there were gods, that's what they would be busy doing. But, basically, I think we are...the whole conception of a god, is a way of copping out. If you can blame God, or bad luck, or the breaks, or some secret master, or conspiracies, or aliens, you don't ever have

to take responsibility for your own life. You don't ever have to really notice that all around you, you got the self-named Generation X, that are basically butt-heads, who don't know diddly squat about anything, and they're going to be running the country ten years from now.

JMS: Well, it was Mark Twain who said that he's never yet seen a god that had the morals of an average decent man.

HE: I'll give you another quote from Mark Twain, this one got me in trouble on the *Merv Griffin Show*. Merv Griffin asked me if I believed in God. And I said "Well..." and the audience which was composed entirely of guys with big noses with veins broken in them from overdrinking and women with blue hair and varicose veins. They wanted to lynch me. I said, "Well, I'll tell you, I'll tell you what Mark Twain said, because he's dead and you can't get him. Mark Twain said that if you really believe there is such thing as a God, you know, this bearded entity sitting up there somewhere, and watching what it is that you do every day, and you look around you at the condition of the world, you are forced to the intellectable conclusion that God is a malign thug. Now that ain't a god that I care to worship, and if there is a god let that god take care of me when I croak."

JMS: Now that having created yourself, the malign god that is AM, which you use in your game, is this video providing the opportunity for you to talk directly to the person who might be buying your game, what would you want to say to the person who is thinking about buying or who just bought it and is watching the tape...what should I know about this game from Harlan Ellison, what



would you say to that person directly?

HE: Well, you ask two different questions. You said, to the person who was contemplating buying this game what would I say? I would say take your money and give it to the homeless, you'll do more good. But if you are mad to buy this game, it's probably a nice game, you'll probably have a hell of a lot of fun playing it, it will probably make you uneasy and it's probably going to be a smarter game than you are, you'll probably be a smarter person when you're done playing the game. Not because I'm smarter, but because everything was done to confuse and upset you. It is a game, as I am told by people who have played it and programmers, that it is a game unlike any other game around at the moment and I guess that's a good thing. Innovation and novelty is a good thing. It would be my delight if this game set a trend and all of the arcade bang-bang games that turn kids into pistol-packing poppas and mommas, were subsumed into games like this in which ethical considerations and using your brain and unraveling puzzles became the *modus operandi*. It would be my pleasure if that was it. I don't think it will happen. I don't think you like to be diverted too much. So I'm actually out here to mess with you, if you want to know it. We created this game to give you all the stuff you think you want, but to put a burr into your side at the same time. Slip a little loco weed into your Coca-Cola. See you around.

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