

# Adventure Lantern



**ISSUE #36**  
**NOVEMBER 2012**

## **REVIEWS:**

- Chaos on Deponia
- Dead Reefs
- Life In The Dorms
- Primordia
- The Walking Dead  
Episode 5: No Time Left

# EDITORIAL

Another month has come and gone and we have another issue of *Adventure Lantern* for your reading pleasure. This month we are bringing you reviews of four brand new adventure game offerings, but we also plumbed the depths of the adventure genre to bring you a review of the third-person, open-world, 2007, adventure *Dead Reefs*. The other reviews being: *Primordia*, *Life in the Dorms*, *The Walking Dead* season finale, and *Chaos on Deponia*.

We also have a new team member, Igor Tokin, who has taken over compiling the news section and will work beside Constantin in putting together the magazine each month from the articles our other team members write.

What I most want to talk about this month is our upcoming partnership with *Zodiac*. *Zodiac* is a new adventure game exclusive online store, or Steam-like to be more precise. They already offer a wide range of new and old games, including free and full priced games and everything inbetween. *Adventure Lantern* will remain a volunteer based, free, and not-for-profit magazine, and retain all of our Independence. What we will be doing is including a link on our website to *Zodiac* and including a page in our magazine which they will send us each month. In addition to helping out a worthy site this also means that we will be given their full library of old, new, and preview games to review and be mentioned on their site.

I also wanted to throw this in here, since our news section is already finished. Our good friends Gnome and the others in *Kyttaro Games* have launched their third Bundle in a Box, *Eclectic Delights*. *Eclectic Delights* is a nine game PWYW bundle featuring: *Shadows of the Vatican*, *Act:1*, *Delve Deeper & DLC*, *War of the Human Tanks*, *Eversion*, *Fibrillation*, *The Adventures of Shuggy*, *Stay Dead*, *The 4th Wall*, *Flibble*. As well as supporting charity and offering numerous soundtracks.

– Jonathon Wisnoski



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Cover Image:  
**PRIMORDIA**

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**OWNER/EXECUTIVE EDITOR**  
Ugur Sener

**OTHER EDITOR(S)**  
Jonathon Wisnoski

**ARTICLES BY**  
Nick Burgener  
Jonathon Wisnoski

**NEWS BY**  
Jonathon Wisnoski

**LAYOUT/DESIGN/ASSEMBLY**  
Constantin Starodub  
Igor Tokin aka Anian

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Not too much news this month but still a lot of it has got me excited. Lots of interesting upcoming games like the sequels to the *Dreamfall* series and *The Book of Unwritten Tales*; And newly released new IP like *Primordia* and *Cognition*. We hear from Ben304 after a long absence; And some, few year old, games were just added to the AGS list from a very interesting series. A huge, mostly exclusively German, episodic *Maniac Mansion* extension series called *Maniac Mansion Mania*. Since we had not mentioned these prior to this, as far as I am aware, I left them in the list of new AGS releases.

But perhaps some even bigger news is the addition of a new volunteer to *Adventure Lantern* who will be helping me by putting together the news section articles as well as compiling some of the review articles. This volunteer is Anian from the AGS forums.

– Jonathon Wisnoski

### Farewell to Francis “Randy” Sluganski

Founder, operator, and writer at *Just Adventure* for 14 years, Randy was a pillar of the adventure gaming community when it needed him most. In early 2011, Randy sold the *Just Adventure* site to focus on his own health; Unfortunately, at the age of 57, Randy passed away on November 6th 2012, after a hard and long battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife and children, and was interred in Jefferson Memorial Cemetery and Funeral Home in Pittsburgh, USA.

*Justadventure.com* was the preeminent adventure gaming site and forum for many years, hosting the very best reviews and meeting place for fans of old and new adventure games alike. Thousands of people routinely used *JA*'s forum to share their passion for adventure gaming, and you could not be a player of adventure games without a few trips to *Just Adventure* reviews or walkthroughs. Through his unparalleled passion for the genre, and his work with *JA*, Randy helped to keep the genre alive through the worst of its decline and without him the genre might be a very different place today.



## Announcements



### Dreamfall Chapters

After being hinted at in 2007 Dreamfall Chapters has just gotten its biggest announcement yet. It is in pre-production by Red Thread Games, who are headed by Ragnar Tornquist, the designer of The Longest Journey series. Dreamfall Chapters will be a single player adventure for the PC and Mac, set in a full third-person 3D view where the player directly controls his avatar. To keep the kind-of freedom that they say they need to make this game right, Tornquist says that they will be going the Kickstarter route to raise most of the funding they will need.



### Ortis

Ortis has the aim of being the first full release using the XAGE engine, and I believe Ben304's first fully commercial game (PWYW bundles do not count). It is planned for Windows, Xbox 360 and Windows Phone.

### Moebius

Phoenix Online Studios, the people behind Kings Quest: The Silver Lining, has teamed up once again with Jane Jensen, the creative genius behind Gabriel Knight and a host of other early adventures, and Pinkerton Road to work on the upcoming adventure game Moebius.

Here is what they have to say about this upcoming game: "With mystery, intrigue, and a touch of the supernatural, in Moebius the player takes on the role of Malachi Rector as he investigates a series of events around the globe, uncovering startling truths about the nature of time and life itself in the process."

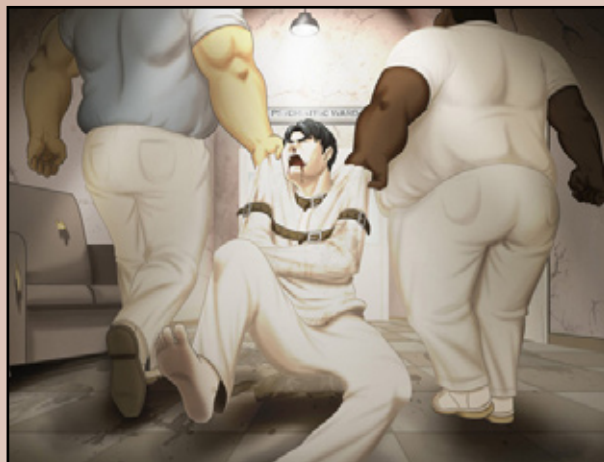


### Delaware St. John 4: Asylum of the Lost Kickstarter

Episode four of the Delaware St. John series has gotten itself a new KickStarter with some awesome reward tiers. In particular, for only \$15 you can have a pre-order of the upcoming game and copies of the first three games in the series.

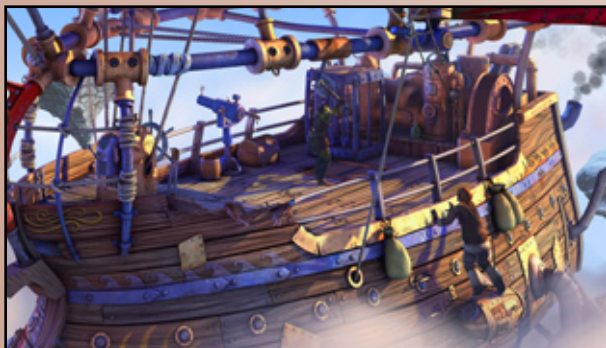
Asylum of The Lost is a first-person point and click adventure game that takes place in the long-abandoned Drake Institute for the Mentally Ill. While the hospital had a reputation for housing some of the most emotionally damaged people in the upstate NY area, it also floated rumors that innocents could also be arranged to be taken, for a price.

Search the rotting building to collect inventory items to gain access to previously off-limit areas. Solve diabolical puzzles to outsmart the ghoulish residents and put wandering souls to rest. Exploration, navigation and inventory management are done entirely with the mouse.



### The Critter Chronicles

The prequel to 2009 hit The Book of Unwritten Tales has been announced and its release is only a few days away. On the 5th of December The Critter Chronicles will be released on all major distributors, for Windows, Mac, and Linux.



## Upcoming Releases



### Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs - New Trailer

A Machine for Pigs gets a new Halloween trailer.

While A Machine for Pigs is not a direct sequel, and contains a whole new cast of characters, it is set in the same

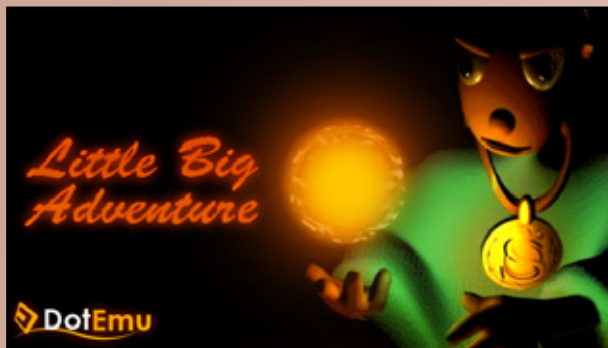
world, about 60 or so years in the future. The world is much changed at this point and is "in the thick of Victoriana – empire, invention, social revolution, spiritualism. Rampant industrialization along with the attendant issues of dehumanization, poverty, disease, racism. It's right at the turn of the century, so there's that panic of what's coming next, and then there are these powerful industrialists pushing society forward, without any real thought to consequences." - (GameZone interview).

The story focuses around Oswald Mandus, a wealthy industrialist who made his fortune in the livestock industry. He is taken ill during a expedition in Mexico and when he wakes up from his fevered dreams discovered some of what he has been dreaming has come to life.

### Gone Home

Rock, Paper Shotgun has published a long two article interview with the developer The Fullbright Company on Gone Home.





### Little Big Adventure - Remake

The classic Little Big Adventure is getting remade by the original team, who are also interested in eventually expanding the series with a part three. But for now we can look for a remade LBA for the iPhone and Android in latter this year.

I have yet to play Little Big Adventure, so will let GOG explain it for those of you who, like me, do not really know much about it. "Little Big Adventure is a real gem in the genre. There is nothing else like it. The game is filled with surreal action and adventure that will make you laugh many times because you can hardly believe the kind of crazy things they've thought up. So if you are in a mood for a crazy adventure with great story, clever puzzles with more than one solution, and open world then you can't go wrong with this masterpiece of a game."

### The Witness

Jonathan Blow's exploration puzzle game based on an uninhabited island is quickly filling out.



### Magrunner

The successfully crowd-funded puzzler Magrunner has gotten itself a publisher, Focus Home Interactive, and some new screenshots.

Magrunner has been described as Portal meets Cthulu, and focuses on the manipulation of magnetic polarity and platforming to solve physical environmental puzzles. With the Magtech glove, you can load objects with a positive or negative charge. Two items loaded with the same charge will attract each other, while two items loaded with different charges will repel. Developed on Unreal Engine 3, Magrunner transports players into the near future, where technology will confront the Cthulhu Mythos as it was imagined by the author of fantasy novels, H.P. Lovecraft.

Magrunner is being developed by 3AM Games (Frogwares) for PlayStation Network, Xbox LIVE and PC.





## New Releases



### **Cognition: An Erica Reed Thriller Episode 1: The Hangman**

A chilling point-and-click adventure that follows Erica Reed, a Boston-based FBI agent, haunted by the unsolved case of a serial killer who took her brother's life. Taking a turn for the strange, Erica unravels her cases with the help of her post-cognition abilities – seeing an object's past with a touch. But things take a dangerous twist as it becomes clear that someone knows Erica's secret. Who are they? How do they know what she can, and what do they want from her?

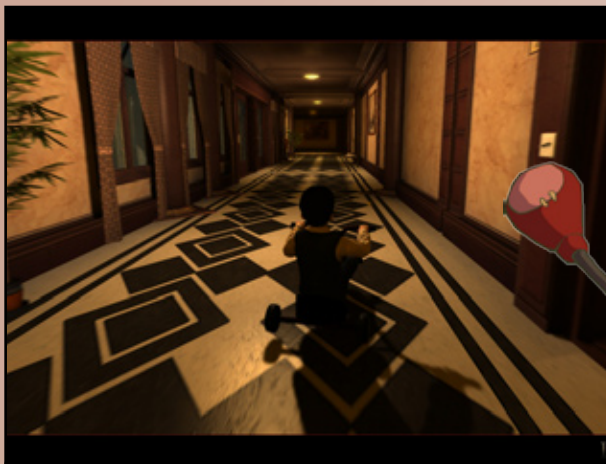
Cognition is a four part series with Jane Jensen involved with the story creation. It comes from the team behind The Silver Lining and is their first commercial game. It is \$30 for a season pass or \$9.99 for the single episode.



### **The Fool and his Money**

10 years in the making, and funded by pre-orders from a small dedicated fan-base, comes the sequel to the award winning puzzle game The Fool's Errand (1987), by Chris Johnson. The original game is available for free, but this new one will set you back a whopping \$40, luckily a demo is available.





### Lucius

Released late last month Lucius equips you with supernatural powers, and has you take control of Lucius as he begins his blood filled tour of horror through his own house, using Hell's powers of telekinesis and mind control to orchestrate deadly accidents that will minimize the population of the Dante Manor one by one by one.



### Chaos on Deponia

The second title in Daedalic Entertainment's Deponia trilogy was released on November 6th on many distributors for the Windows OS. Deponia is set on a world with the surface entirely covered with garbage and with floating cities for the upper class.

Chaos on Deponia tells a unique, self-contained story playable without further knowledge of the first installment. Fans of the first game discover new aspects of familiar characters' backgrounds and see open questions answered.



## Updated Releases

### Anna

The psychological horror adventure Anna gets a post-release video showing the team exploring the house that the game is based around and in.

The game has also been released onto Mac OSX through the Mac App Store and Steam.



### Hamlet

mif2000's Hamlet or the Last Game without MMORPG Features, Shaders and Product Placement is the original point-and-click adventure game based on twisted William Shakespeare's Hamlet. Solve logic puzzles and fight with monsters to uncover secrets, punish all the villains and rescue the princess.

Hamlet was originally release in 2010 for the PC, got a iOS and Android release over the next two years, and now has finally made it to Steam for \$4.99.



### The Walking Dead

The Walking Dead is going retail with an expected release date of December 4th, for both PS3 and Xbox 360. The game will be available for \$29.99 in a standard edition or \$69.99 for a limited collectors edition with the first 48 issues of the comic book series as well as exclusive artwork.



### The Fall Trilogy, Chapter 1: Separation

The casual Kheops game The Fall Trilogy: Separation has finally made it to Mac OSX and is available for something like \$9 on the Mac Apple Store.



### The Journey Down

Theodor Waern has released a Art of TJD 10 page pdf containing "a bunch of haphazard rants by me about various parts of our art process, ranging from our cultural influences all the way down to the nitty gritty art-process detailing the development and thoughts behind several of the game's backdrops."

At the time of this writing it is only available on a 3 day sale along with the game through Indie Game Stand, but by the time this is published I am sure it will be available through other distributors, no word on pricing.





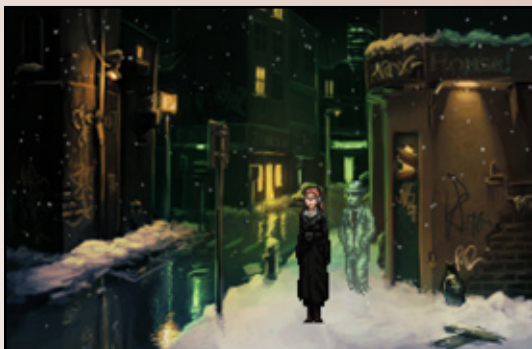
## News From the Big Blue Cup



### Han Solo Adventures

The very interesting sounding Han Solo Adventures has gotten itself a playable demo (link in the comments). Han Solo Adventures is labeled as a sort of spiritual successor to Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis but set in the Star Wars universe. It is set

before A New Hope and has Han Solo visiting many new and familiar locations; And will be spread over a series of chapters, with an expected price of free.



### Blackwell

I feel like this must of already been announced somewhere else before, but this is the first I think I have heard of it. Wadjet Eye Games is working on the next Blackwell game and Ben304 is doing the character animation as well as the background art.



### Primordia

The upcoming post-apocalyptic, punk, robot, adventure being published by Wadjet eye will be released on December 5th. But if you cannot wait to purchase the game, or are interested in the limited edition content a pre-order is up now for the \$8.99 digital version or \$19.99 for the pre-order exclusive physical bundle (that included everything in the digital purchase as well as a DVD and some other goodies).

**A Matter of Some Gravity (Markus Klein)**

- It's the summer holidays in Ronville and it has been raining for weeks. The perfect time for Bernard Bernoulli to work on his newest invention, which is able to abolish all known spatial boundaries. After its completion he wants to proudly present it to his neighbour Hoagie - but is this really a good idea?

Play as the dynamic duo Bernard and Hoagie and bring them both down to earth again - because in the end, it's only a matter of some gravity.

Also known as Episode 77 of Maniac Mansion Mania, A Matter of Some Gravity is one of the many many episodes in an almost exclusively German Maniac Mansion extension "Fanadventure" series.

**Sheep Quest (cat)** - Molly the lamb has run away! Can you help shepherd Angus to find her? Meet quirky villagers, collect items kleptomaniacally and enjoy colorful graphics during your childfriendly quest which can be completed in under an hour.



**Spaceman in Space (Ben304)** - Ben304's latest released game is a collaboration with Grundislav for the October MAGS competition.

**One Rainy Day (Basti)** - Our heroine is in the mood to stay at home, yet, her fear of storms puts her in serious trouble.

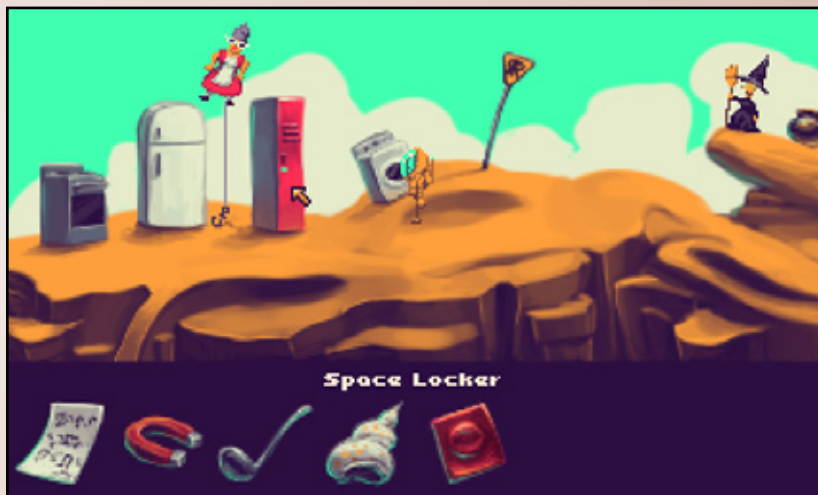


**The Burger Flipper [v1.2](elruffo)** - Tom is a regular guy, trapped in an awful job. A job that he loves. He is a burger flipper! His boss hates him and there is this girl he is in love with. And something very weird is going to happen. That's pretty much it. Everything a story needs: a very short story by the way.

**Day of the Dead (Bnoógieman)** - The third episode of the 2005 Halloween special of the Maniac Mansion Mania project. Bernard wakes up and realizes during breakfast that people in Ronville are mutating to flesh-eating zombies and only Dr. Fred can stop this madness...



**A Matter of Some Gravity**  
(Markus Klein)



**Spaceman in Space** (Ben304)

**Day of the Dead**  
(Bnoógieman)



# Chaos on Deponia



Genre: adventure Developer: Daedalic Entertainment  
Publisher: Lace Mamba Global Release date: November 6, 2012  
Platform: Windows, Mac OSX Website: <http://www.deponia.de/en/>



The second game in the *Deponia* trilogy by Lace Mamba and Daedalic, *Chaos on Deponia* is out and takes over directly where *Deponia* left off. Available on Windows and Mac OSX, *Chaos on Deponia* continues the tale of the roguish and almost completely unlikable Rufus, with at least eight hours of gameplay (and I could imagine many people spending twice that long). *Deponia* is the story of this rogue who has an inexhaustible supply of dangerous and foolhardy schemes to get to Elysium and get the girl. Rufus lives on the surface of Deponia, which is a trash covered wreck of a world, forever dreaming of reaching Elysium, the floating city of the uppercases.

## Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

*Chaos on Deponia* (CoD) is just more of Deponia. But I also see them taking the main criticisms to heart and fixing them better than I would of thought possible. Rufus has been made a whole lot more unlikable; Rufus's chaotic nature is constantly reinforced and reiterated in many different ways. Unfortunately, kleptomaniacs are a





common trait of adventure game protagonists, so that really did not cut it in the first game. Also we see a big improvement in how the game is structured; In *Deponia* original you either had non-linear gameplay or story. The entire first half of the game was very open ended but nothing interesting happened and there was no story progression. Meanwhile in *CoD*, the entire game is extremely non-linear and still manages to tell a story and make the experience seem worthwhile.

The puzzles in *CoD* are varied and numerous, but the meat of the game is inventory based. In general, these puzzles are good and enjoyable, but there are a few that are just illogical. The only reason they are not impossibly hard is because the steps to complete them are obvious, it is simply the reason for you doing them that is impenetrable. There is at least one puzzle that is impenetrably hard, I really do not see how anyone is expected to get it. So while the difficulty is easy-medium, or just right, on average, you will encounter some areas where it is not easy at all and not in a good challenging way. Quite a lot of *CoD's* puzzles are in one or another puzzle arc, or quest, with some of these being quite long and rewarding. Puzzle-wise, the game is separated into two main sections and has only two main objectives, one after the other. These major objects each have many puzzles and many major puzzle arcs, some of which are so involved that they have their own mini puzzle/story arcs embedded within them. This occasional integration of what could almost be called small self contained games, with their own subplots and sometimes even non-



linear puzzle arcs, is a great boon to the game, and really breaks up the gameplay into manageable and non-monotonous chunks.

This time round we also get a few minigames; Not that we did not have any in *Deponia* original but they were more logic puzzles, far less self-contained, and just not as well done. Like in the original, we still have the option of skipping these minigames, but in *Chaos on Deponia* there is less reason to; none of them are quite as challenging as some found in *Deponia*, and all of them have obvious goals. One of them is actually quite big, involved, and an «important» part of the story; Specifically, I am talking about this fighting minigame, with accompanying leveling up training dummy; And this is where we get to see the fur bikini and padded fighting staff that is advertised on the game's cover.

The minigame itself is nothing special, but it is surprisingly involved and decent as minigames go. I also prominently remember a fast-food ordering

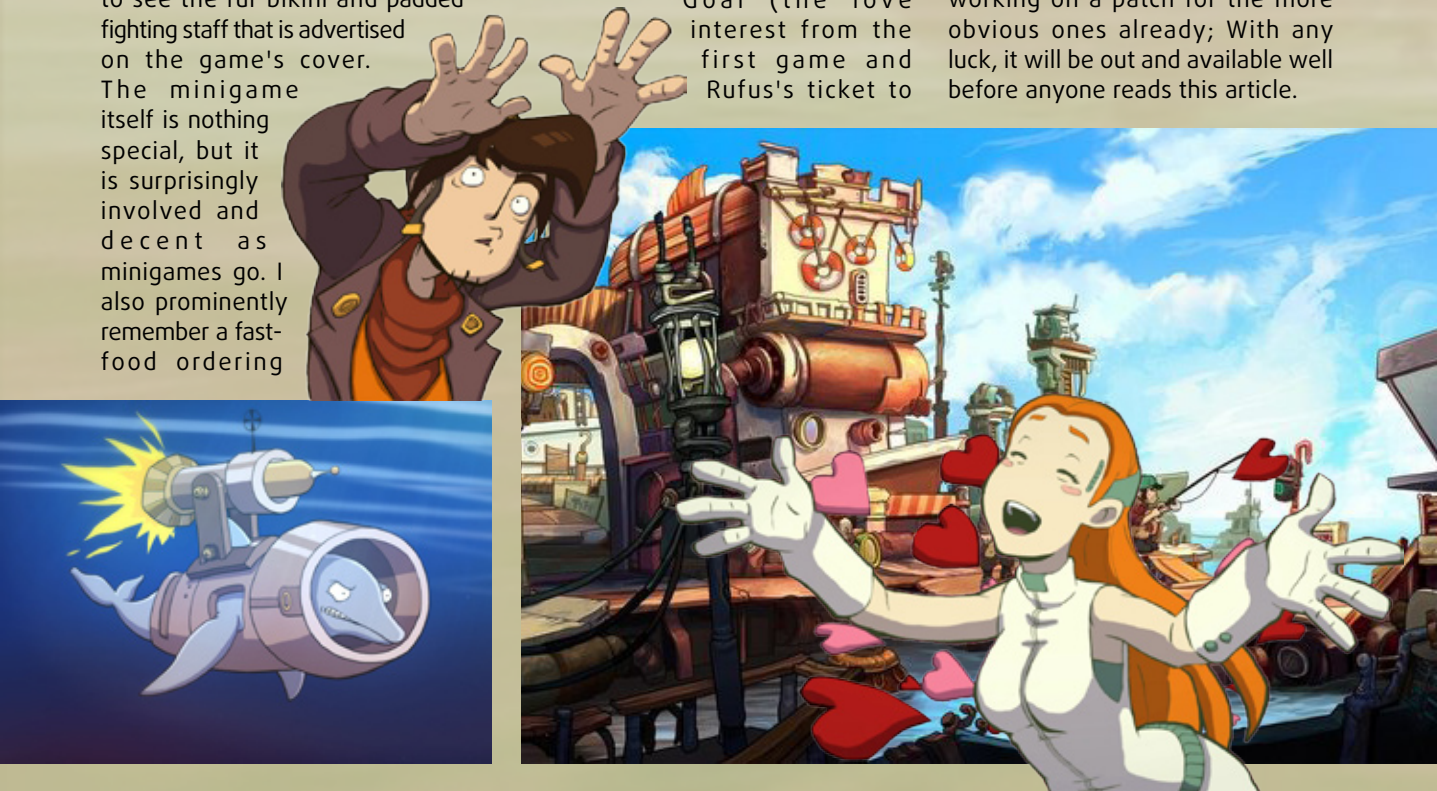
game, which served as a very interesting logical puzzle type game wrapped up in a realistic experience.

The story in *CoD* is one of my favorite parts of the game, and a noticeable improvement from *Deponia* original. It is somewhat self contained, while still integrating well into the whole; It is not just *Deponia 1* all over again, it is a very different story and ending; And best of all, it retains the original's potency while smoothing out the experience, so that it is all worth experiencing. I would say that it is funnier than the original, and it is quite funny and I did not find it at all cheesy, nor did it feel to me like it was trying too hard. The one thing I did not like was the amount of self-referential meta content found in the game.

Without giving too much away, *Chaos on Deponia* revolves around Goal (the love interest from the first game and Rufus's ticket to

Elysium) getting her personality split three ways and Rufus having to manage these Goals; This is after another of Rufus's failed attempts to get to Elysium, and after yet again causing Goal to fall out of her craft damaging her implants.

The only real issue I have with *Chaos on Deponia*, an issue that it shares with the rest of the series so far, is its system requirements. *Deponia* has the system requirements of a modern action game, but without the ability to effectively manage the game's required resources by turning down settings. It is just ridiculously high, and it seems to actually use all of them because it started lagging to the point of being unplayable if I had anything else running beside the game. The game also contains a few bugs, but nothing really to worry about, and I hear they are working on a patch for the more obvious ones already; With any luck, it will be out and available well before anyone reads this article.





The presentation of *Chaos on Deponia* is just more of the same from *Deponia* original. It does seem to have more natural, healthy looking, visual content, for example the Rust Red Sea is in fact an idyllic blue, but the artistic style is identical. It is a cartoon style, decently detailed, with lots of animations on most screens. There are numerous cutscenes, with identical looking graphics; Lots and lots of voice overs, everything and everyone is voiced; And professional sound effects and music for every situation and event. It is a professional product from top to bottom, and it shows, not that any of it stood out as particularly amazing.

*Chaos on Deponia* is a clear improvement on the first game, and since the first game was pretty good to begin with we are left with a very good game. In particular, I absolutely adore the pacing and non-linearity of it all; *Chaos on Deponia* is in the absolute top of its class in this area. Meanwhile the rest of content is almost blandly professional; It is all great, but nothing that a hardened veteran of adventure gaming is going to get excited about. ●



### BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The non-linearity and ingenious game structuring.

### FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The system requirements are way to high for an adventure game.

### VERDICT:

A clear improvement on the first game. Somewhat professionally bland but with a dash of brilliance.



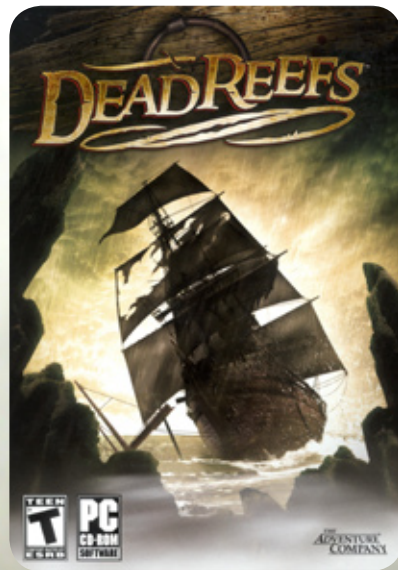
# Dead Reefs



Genre: adventure Developer: Streko-Graphics Publisher: The Adventure Company

Release date: July 3, 2007 Platform: Windows

Website: [http://www.streko-graphics.com/game\\_deadreefs.php](http://www.streko-graphics.com/game_deadreefs.php)



Released in 2007 by *The Adventure Company* and *Streko-Graphics*. *Dead Reefs* is a very intriguing adventure game, and in particular the box art is rather irresistible. Unfortunately, it is a missed opportunity; There are a lot of interesting features in *Dead Reefs*, yet they are all ruined by some bad design choice or error.

## Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

*Dead Reefs* is a buggy, error filled mess. The very first word you read, when starting a new game, is misspelled. It is possible to get completely stuck and have to reload an old savegame. And worst of all, the final puzzle in the game, the biggest most involved one, is fatally flawed; The game

very clearly tells you to do one thing to solve the puzzle, while a completely different solution is needed. It has been said that this was fixed in latter releases, but the only purchasable digital version of *Dead Reefs* I ever found does not have this fix and no patches seem to be available. The game also had some trouble running on my PC, and even while it is new



enough that this should not be an issue, I had to play around with the compatibility settings to get it to run; Specifically, my Windows 7 64bit computer needed «desktop composition» disabled, for the game to start.

One of the most problematic areas of the game is its user interface. *Dead Reefs* has a third-person perspective with keyboard only controls; Surprisingly, it is a Windows only release, as the controls are console controls and very clunky feeling on a PC. Part of this clunkiness is because you simply do not use a mouse, but it is obvious that a few bad key-bindings were selected and the in-game interface is too basic. The best example of this is the inventory, you scroll through this inventory, only seeing one item at a time. You also have no

direct control over the camera, and a significant proportion of the scenes have some very shitty angles, and when moving, the camera is rather choppy. But the one unforgivable aspect of the interface is the small undependable hotspots; Unless you know where to look you will miss many of them, because you often have to try half a dozen different positions before you get one to work. So the only reason that the game is still playable is the first-person investigation view, which momentarily puts the camera under your control and in a first-person perspective; You are stuck in place, but get a detailed view of everything in front of you and hotspot indicators. While I praise this view as offering many different and nice viewing angles, its necessary constant use is rather annoying. You must use it on every single scene multiple times to find all the hotspots, that you would miss otherwise.

The story of *Dead Reefs* is not a horror story, it has a horror setting, but is not fear inspiring in the least. It could of been quite good, but was ruined by emotionless characters. The voice acting is as bad as I have ever seen, but it is not the only issue. The investigator only seems





to pay lip service to conducting a real investigation and shows the all too commonplace protagonist slowness of wit, as he seems to always be ten steps behind the story in comprehension.

The game is set on an island off of England's coast called Dead Reefs in the 18th century. This island gets its name because, not a century ago, it was inhabited by pirates. These pirates lured innocent ships to their

island's rocky shores, killing their crew and looting their valuables. One night, generations ago, a particularly luxurious statuette was looted that was said to be cursed, and on the anniversary of that night, every nine years, a person is mysteriously killed or goes insane. You play Amadeo Finvinerro, the king's investigator, sent to investigate the death (and potential murder) of the current baron's son. The

anniversary is also approaching, and strange and paranormal activity is on the rise. The game does not quite feature multiple endings, but a few failure instances do show extended cutscene endings (cutscenes worth watching).

The graphics go from great to dated. The pre-rendered cutscenes are fabulous, but the rest is noticeably dated tech. There are still a bunch of worthwhile views in



this world, but there are also areas that are ugly (though you normally need to go into first person view to see them). While its age does show, many scenes are still beautiful and evocative, and they do a great job of working around the limited tech.

The gameplay does not do anything to raise my opinion of the game in general. There are a bunch of decent puzzles of every variety, but they are all far from inspiring. On the good side, you have a journal, which helps by remembering what you did last and gives you hints

about future puzzles. The in-game narration also provides hints for the expected course of action when some improper solutions are tried. But some of these puzzles are not very logical; In one instance you must find a book by decrypting the owners method for sorting them; the solution is completely illogical, and the method used could not work in real life, on multiple levels. One aspect that takes away quite a bit from the immersion is the amount

of invisible walls, useless doors, and locations you can only visit at certain times (without any in-game explanation). The game is extremely linear, far more so than the general story structure needed.

The game is definitely below average. Most of its major areas has some major problem, with a sprinkling of bad design and bugs throughout. I like its style, and its graphics are pretty good, so it is not a bad game, just not very good. ●



**BRIGHT MOMENTS:**

The pre-rendered cutscenes, story concept, and game cover.

**FUMBLES IN THE DARK:**

The many bugs and bad design choices.

**VERDICT:**

A below average adventure.



# Life In The Dorms



Genre: adventure Developer/publisher: Moment Games  
 Release date: September 14, 2012 Platform: Xbox 360 (XLIG)  
 Website: <http://lifeinthedorms.momentgames.com/>

Ramen noodles, plastic lightsabers, frisbees, lumberjacks, black bears, psychotic resident assistants, and splenectomies -- these are all things you may or not encounter in college life, but they're certainly a major part of *Life in the Dorms*, a \$1 adventure game currently available on Xbox Live Indie Games. You play as Dack Peeples, a college freshman experiencing his first few days in his new dormitory. Dack's time in college starts out reasonably enough as he adjusts to a new environment, but the situation quickly escalates as his RA comes up with increasingly devious and maniacal ways to get his new pupils to bond.



## Review by Nick Burgener

*Life in the Dorms* plays like any typical adventure game: you talk to characters, collect items, and solve puzzles to advance the story. Most of the puzzles are pretty creative, but what really makes the game enjoyable is the setting and its unique sense of humor. Not many games specifically focus on college life, and I frequently found myself

laughing or smiling at the absurd situations happening around Dack. And for a \$1 game, there's quite a bit of content to experience; it took me roughly 5.5 hours to finish the game, so you can definitely get your money's worth.

The premise is simple: Dack arrives at his new college dormitory as a freshman, missing his old high school friends and wishing he could just go back to high school. He says

goodbye to his parents and starts unpacking his things, but his RA Brian shows up to inform him of the scavenger hunt -- a competition among floormates with roommates paired up in teams. Since Dack's roommate hasn't arrived yet, he has to do the scavenger hunt on his own, hoping to win the \$300 prize and buy a new myPhone. As he works on the scavenger hunt, he begins to worry about what his new





roommate will be like. Introductions with floormates follows, and soon his pet turtle goes missing, a ransom note left in its tank.

If any of this sounds mundane, it's anything but. At every other turn in this game, something outrageously absurd is happening. That's where the game's sense of humor comes into play, often stemming from obscure references and self-parody, but it's mainly a surreal element built upon hyperbole, absurdity, and logical defiance. Early in the game, Dack jumps to conclusions about his new roommate, fearing that he might be an axe-wielding, murderous psychopath (one of the movies he brings with him is titled «How to Tell if Your Roommate is an Axe-Wielding Psychopath»).

It's amusing because Dack's paranoid thoughts about his roommate are so absurdly irrational, and yet every piece of evidence that he learns about his

roommate (up until he actually meets him) seems to corroborate those irrational beliefs, at least in his eyes. It makes you think that Dack is just being paranoid, and so you smirk at how far he extends the irrationality, because it feels like that's supposed to be the joke in and of itself. When his roommate finally arrives, he's got an axe

in his hands, and all of Dack's paranoid delusions are confirmed, as implausible as that might seem.

As it turns out, his roommate comes from a long line of lumberjacks and is going to college for its prestigious lumberjack program. It's all about subverting your expectations, and this particular joke manages to throw



several amusing curve balls. That's kind of how the humor works; it takes a simple situation, pushes it to the extreme, and then puts a completely twist-ending on the punchline. Some of the jokes are a little hit or miss, but the attempts are always creative, and that's enough to appreciate the clever writing.

As an adventure game, the bulk of the gameplay consists of solving puzzles, and this part of the game proves fairly satisfying. Most of the puzzles feel naturally-implemented in the environment and story; you're obviously trying to solve a puzzle, but they make sense within the context and they give you clear goals to work towards. There's a nice variety to the types of puzzles, as well -- some involve combining items in your inventory, some involve saying the right things in a conversation, some involve performing a surgery while blind-folded, etc. It's also somewhat impressive how many puzzles the designers were able to fit into relatively few environments -- even though you spend most of the game in the same handful of scenes, there's plenty to do.

Where the puzzles fall short, however, is that many of them require a very specific order of operations to solve. One of your objectives in the scavenger hunt, for example, is to find a roll of toilet paper. You go to the restroom and find a bunch of rolls up on a high shelf, so you'd think you would have a few options at your disposal (using your plastic lightsaber to knock one over), but you can't actually reach this solution until you've checked each bathroom stall first. It's just kind of annoying that you know the solution, and yet you have to play along with meaningless, arbitrary steps to get there.

Some puzzles have really obtuse solutions, as well. In the same scavenger hunt, you have to move a refrigerator five feet. I'm not a very strong individual, but I've shimmied a full-sized refrigerator a couple of feet before without much physical exertion. But because this is supposed to be a puzzle with some kind of clever solution, Dack says he's too weak to move the fridge on his own. The solution to this puzzle is to slip plastic frisbees

under two legs of the fridge so you can slide it across the floor .... but if Dack is strong enough to lift the fridge high enough to slip the frisbees under it, and strong enough to pull the fridge while balancing it on two legs, then why couldn't he have just moved the thing himself?

In the same puzzle with the refrigerator, when you try to unplug the refrigerator, Dack says he shouldn't do that unless he has a good reason to. The whole time he's saying this, I'm thinking «you HAVE a good reason to unplug it.» He doesn't unplug the fridge until after you've already placed the improvised furniture coasters under it, another instance of a puzzle requiring a very precise order of operations to progress. Does it really matter whether you unplug the fridge before or after you place the coasters? This seeming lack of cooperation from your protagonist becomes extremely frustrating when you don't have the game's intended solution in mind.

Once again returning to the scavenger hunt, another item on the list requires you to construct a scale model of the dormitory,





are a little wonky, like sitting down or typing on a phone, and I feel like conversations would've been more interesting if characters could have had very simple animations for their eyebrows, like angry and sad eyebrows to exaggerate the emotions of the dialogue. I also ran into an inventory glitch at one point (when Dack gets trapped inside a video game) that completely prevented me from doing anything, requiring me to load the most recent save.

*Life in the Dorms* is certainly not a perfect game, but except for a couple major annoyances with some of the puzzle designs, it's a fine game with a lot to enjoy. The humor and setting are particularly enjoyable, and its low cost means it's definitely worth your time and money. I would even love to see a sequel in the same style, where Dack gets to experience other aspects of college life for the first time, like dining halls, classes, student groups, sporting events, or whatever else. Here's hoping we can see more out of Moment Games in the future. ●

and you ultimately have to build it out of ramen noodles. Is there anyone who would honestly ever consider using ramen noodles to build a model a rational thought? It took me so long to come to this conclusion because I had an ample supply of crafting materials available to me (I got glue from some of my floormates, and I had a bunch of cardboard boxes I could've used in my room), and it got to a point where I was arbitrarily trying every single thing I could because the solution was just so obtuse.

Fortunately, the frustrations of the scavenger hunt are the worst offenders, and they're out of the way very quickly, happening very early in the game. Once you're through with the scavenger hunt, the puzzles become a little more manageable and sensible, but those kinds of problems still manifest themselves throughout the game, remaining a consistent (albeit slight) annoyance in the puzzle design.

Other than that, there are a number of little things that add up to detract from the overall experience. Whenever you click to examine something, you have to wait three whole seconds while your character slowly turns in

place to face the camera, and then waits for the camera to zoom in on his face. He does the same thing whenever you decide to «flit» about something on your phone. This makes very simple actions far more time-consuming and laborious than they really should be.

Every time you want to talk to your floormates, you click the «use» icon on their door, and Dack says to himself «Maybe I should knock first.» That's kind of implied by the action icon; you don't need to say it every single time. Some of the animations

### BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The game's surreal humor is particularly entertaining, the college setting is fun to explore, and most puzzles feel natural in the game's context.

### FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

Some puzzles have very obtuse solutions and can cause unnecessary frustration for requiring such precise order of operations.

### VERDICT:

The game is not perfect or fully polished, but it's well worth the money if you want a fun, humorous adventure in a rare college setting.



# Primordia



Genre: adventure Developer: Wormwood Studios

Publisher: Wadjet Eye Games Release date: December 5, 2012

Platform: Windows Website: <http://www.primordiagame.com/>

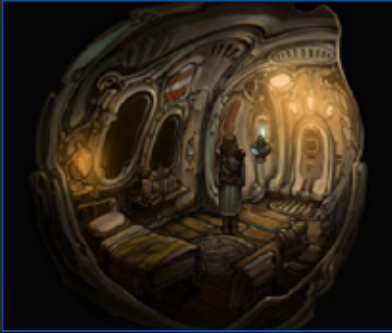


If I had to pick a game I was most looking forward to this last year it would have to be *Primordia*. There are just not that many games that get a poem and a short story written about them as some sort of style concept. Also, there is no denying its stylish graphics, and who does not like a post-apocalyptic cyberpunk storyline? Now having played *Primordia*, I can say that it was one of the few games I have ever had such high hopes for and not only had then proved true but surpassed by the final product.

## Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

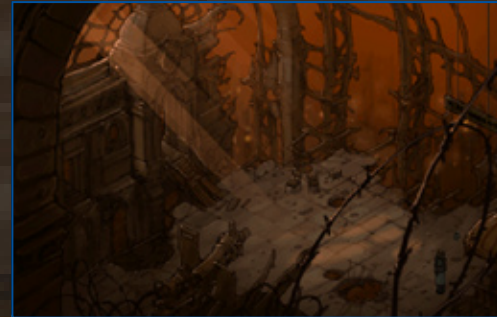
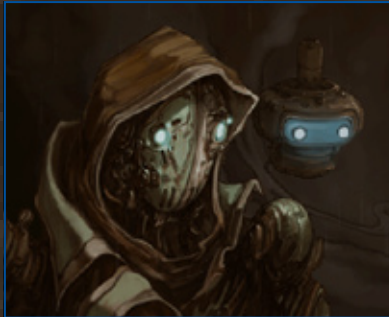
*Primordia* is the first Wadjet Eye game to be developed by a full team of developers, *Wormwood Studios*; With individuals whose sole job was to look after one aspect of the game: visuals, story, programming, and audio. Meaning that everyone of these features received the full attention of a developer for the entirety of the game, and each of them shows this level of polish.





Man no longer walks the Earth and all that is left are sentient machines (lesser machines, built by those built by Man) and ruins from the great age of Man and building; Now called the first age, the great Primordium. Man has since passed into legend and then myth. By a small group of robots calling themselves Humanists he is hailed as the All-Builder, the perfect machine, «a machine of unbreakable form, endless memory, and absolute logic», as written in the Gospel of Man. *Primordia* tells the tale of Horatio Nullbuilt and his ever present companion and creation, the talking floating lamp Crispin. One night a marauding robot comes aboard his wrecked ship and steals their power core, leaving them without lights, running systems, or energy to recharge their quickly dwindling reserves.

I am writing this from a preview version of *Primordia* and while the game is structurally complete it obviously needs some tweaking. As it stands right now it is still a terrific game with no game breaking issues, but a few easily noticeable and annoying problems. For instance, there are occasional voice volume level inconsistencies, the protagonist's walking animation is jumpy, and there is one instance of very important information not being recorded in your journal. I



assume these issues, and any others I might of missed, will be fixed by the release date, or at least shortly afterwards. Fortunately, none of these these issues would change my overall score or opinion of the game.

The presentation of *Primordia* is top-notch. The visuals are low resolution with a restricted, sepia tone heavy, color pallet; Filled with corroded copper, dirty deck plating, and dark pollution filled skies. These visuals are ridiculously detailed, having been scaled down at least in some instances, and completely superb; It is arguably the best in it class, and I for one cannot think of any other low resolution art that approaches its beauty and

polish. The soundtrack is a great companion to these visuals with its muted atmospheric metallic sounds. The game is fully voiced, with a full cast of talented voice actors, and contains abundant animation, with some scenes being quite busy.

The gameplay is equally detailed with loads of alternative routes and completely optional content and puzzles. It really only has one ending, but there are two failure endings, with corresponding cutscenes, and the correct ending is variable with numerous little changes that are decided by how you solve many of the puzzles throughout the game. These optional puzzles can also unlock



an extended story or, at least in one instance, be cashed in later in the form of an easier solution to a puzzle. This is pretty much the style the whole game had, there are two solutions to most of the puzzles, one requiring a medium amount of ingenuity and another far more challenging one that will unlock extra content, a better ending, or

just be there to complete if you want to. It is a genius system that allows multiple playthroughs and keeps you thinking well past the credits on how you could do that better.

Throughout the entire game floats your ever present sidekick Crispin. Both he and the main protagonist Horatio narrate the game, describing objects and

commenting on choices. What they did here that I found to be quite refreshing is how they narrated it; There is quite a lot of great repartee between the two for every single action no matter how small, they do not just repeat the same lines for everything, and they do not even repeat the same lines when you try the same thing over again, at least the first few times. he is also used as an addition item, which can be used to interact with the environment, and can be talked to to be given hints on how to proceed.

The puzzles of *Primordia* are a combination of logic and inventory. Both of these types are made all that much better by all the alternative paths and optional content, because just randomly using items or picking options will often lead to dead-ending these paths. Risking sounding like a broken record, I have to say that these challenges are another fantastic part of the game, and are simply well thought out and very



## GOSPEL OF MAN

**M** on the All-Builder spoke the Word, and the Word begot the Code, and so the world began to spin. Thus dawned the Primordium, the first age, the age of building.



polished. They are logical, but still challenging; Rewarding when you get them, but not frustrating enough to interrupt the story or get to stuck too much.

*Primordia* is a completely fantastic game, no ifs, ands, or buts. It is polished from top to bottom, and while it remains mostly classical in style, its story makes it feel completely fresh and unique. It only has a moderately short length (six hours, would be my best guesstimate, for a playthrough), but the replayability and optional content easily push that to twelve hours of enjoyment. ●

## THE MARCH TO METROPOL

**I** watched bombs falling one by one, till all Urboni's men were gone, and ochre clouds obscured the sun and hid from us the coming down.

The night was moonless, grim and dark, when through our circuits rang the call, "Surly Company: gear up, embark, your city needs you, one and all."

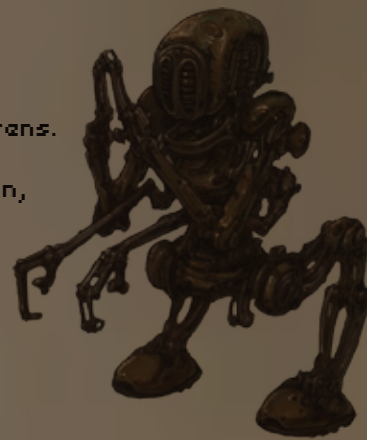
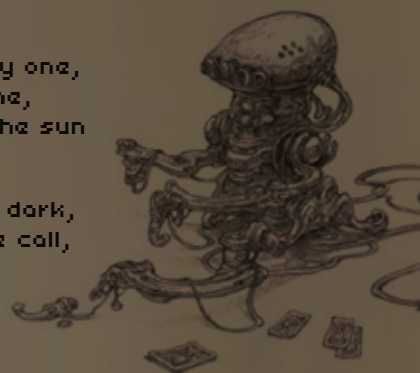
Two hundred robots soon set out, Legion's finest, primed to wreck and slay. We had our orders, knew no doubts, And to the endless wastes made our way.

We marched, and marched, and marched yet more, beneath the scorching acid rain, past monumental scars of war, on rubble roads men built in vain.

We fell. First ones and twos, then tens. Who did not break, began to bend. Legion built his sons to fight for men, not for marches that never end.

But on we went, and on we'll go, Toward a battle we'll never know, Killing days instead of foes, leaving food for rust, not crows.

- 137th Legionbuilt, Surly Company

**BRIGHT MOMENTS:**

The general all-round well thought and polished nature of it.

**FUMBLES IN THE DARK:**

Nothing that I do not expect to be fixed by release, and nothing that is of any real consequence.

**VERDICT:**

Basically a perfect adventure. A must play.



# The Walking Dead Episode 5: No Time Left



Genre: adventure Developer/publisher: Telltale Games  
Release date: November 20, 2012 Platforms:  
Windows, Mac OS X, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, iOS  
Website: <http://www.telltalegames.com/walkingdead>



*No Time Left* marks the fifth and final installment of the first season to *Telltale's The Walking Dead* series. Throughout the the entire series, the goal for Lee Everett and company has been to protect Clementine and their loved ones from the horrors of the zombie apocalypse, and to reach the coast in hopes of finding a seaworthy boat to escape the droning hordes of undead. With Clementine kidnapped by an unknown voice on the walkie-talkie and Lee bitten by a walker at the end of the previous episode, *No Time Left* commands an unprecedented sense of urgency going into the finale. Everything is at stake, no one is safe, and time is of the essence.

## Review by Nick Burgener

As another episode in the series, *No Time Left* is a fine experience, but as a series finale it leaves a little something to be desired. The final moments are easily some of the most emotional I've ever seen in a video game, but most of the

other major things the series had been building towards were kind of anticlimactic, and the post-credits cutscene basically only serves as a teaser for season two without offering any conclusive resolution to this particular story arc. If you've been keeping up with the series, you pretty much have to play

*Episode Five*, but I find it difficult not to feel conflicted over Telltale's handling of the final episode.

Compared to other episodes in the series, *Episode Five* has perhaps the simplest story progression, since your only objective is a relatively straightforward matter of catching up to Clementine





at the Marsh House, the hotel where her parents were staying in Savannah. As such, the bulk of the episode consists of wandering through streets and rooftops as you sort of wait for next accident or catastrophe to happen. There's one sequence where you hole up in the house from *Episode Four*, attempting to defend it from walkers (almost reminiscent of the cabin sequence from *Resident Evil 4*, except in a more adventure-gameplay format) before being forced to take refuge in the attic.

Perhaps the biggest decision you have to make comes in the first few minutes of the game; after passing out from the effects of the bite on the wrist, you're faced with the decision of amputating your arm. Those who have read the comics or watched the television show will know that removing the

source of the bite quick enough can stop the spread of the infection, meaning Lee might have a chance to survive (if he doesn't die of blood loss, but he'll be manually impaired in the coming efforts of rescuing Clementine. Leaving the arm intact means dealing with occasional blackouts as the effects of zombification grow stronger.

Like virtually all other decisions in the series, this one doesn't have a major impact on anything since you still wind up in the same situations with the same solutions, but there are a few nice differences in certain scenes and you are, in fact, treated

to a few completely different (albeit small) scenes depending on this choice. Despite that, it's still kind of amusing that, even if you leave his arm intact, Lee still only uses one hand for a number of actions, and tends to walk around with his left arm hanging lifelessly by his side, or simply doesn't use it to gesture during certain conversations, slightly belittling the impact of the decision.

The best thing about *Episode Five* is that it brings many of your decisions full circle, forcing you to reflect on many of the choices you'd made and demonstrating that there was a lasting impact on what may have seemed like a trivial decision early in the series. Even though, in the grand scheme of things, your decisions didn't





have an effect on the direction of the story, this episode emphasizes that each decision was supposed to be a personal judgment of morality, an intrinsic conflict you had to resolve for yourself, living with the consequences in regret or contentment.

But even still, with this being the final episode, you'd think the necessity for streamlining decisions would no longer apply, that the game could actually branch out towards the end without having to tie everything together at the end of the episode. At the end of *Episode Four*, it seemed like things were actually branching out in terms of who was going to go with you on your mission to rescue Clementine, but things revert back to the usual status quo 10 or 15 minutes into *Episode Five*.



Likewise, since *Telltale* announced they'd be making a follow-up second season to this series, everything has to converge to one canonical ending so that they have a canonical start to season two; there is one, single ending that everyone gets, no matter what seemingly critical, branching decisions you make towards the end in regards to Clementine's future, and that's a bitter pill to swallow for a game that supposedly adapts to the choices you make, especially after



investing so much time playing the game and waiting weeks or months between episodes.

Either way, the whole point of *Episode Five* is to see the ending and everything the series has been building towards, and in many regards it's somewhat anticlimactic. Disappointment and anticlimaxes are to be expected in a zombie apocalypse, but the fact remains that this is a video game and building effective drama should be an important consideration in the story writing -- you can still have a tragically disappointing resolution without sacrificing the dramatic impact. The final moments before the credits are very effective in both regards, sincerely tugging at my heartstrings and causing me to





shed a tear, but the other inevitable resolutions we'd been expecting (learning the fate of Clementine's parents and meeting with the stranger on the walkie-talkie) were, to varying degrees, a letdown.

The real disappointment comes after the credits when you're treated to a brief cutscene meant to add some closure after the abrupt cut to credits. The problem with this cutscene, however, is that it doesn't provide any closure -- it's a deliberate cliffhanger that feels more like a teaser for season two than an actual resolution for season one. Cliffhangers between seasons are common enough that I can't really complain about that, but season finales are supposed to resolve one story arc while setting up another, and cliffhanger ending to this first season leaves so many things unresolved as to be almost completely unsatisfying.

*Episode Five* also feels noticeably shorter than other recent episodes. Before going into *Episode Five*, I decided to replay *Episode Four* to refresh my memory and (hopefully) see some different outcomes; that took me 3.1 hours to accomplish, knowing exactly what to do at every step of the way. *Episode Five* took 2.1 hours to complete. I was utterly shocked at one point when an entire chapter (1/8th of the game's narrative) lasted literally no more than two minutes.

Still, I have to tip my hat to *Telltale* for not copping out on the ending

by trying to tie things together with a consequence-free, happy ribbon. From the very beginning, I kind of knew it had to end one of two ways, and I was very pleased that they chose to take the darker route, because that's the essence of the comics. I feel like *Telltale* definitely could've handled this finale much better (it feels a little rushed in some regards), but the final moments were truly touching, even despite a handful of anticlimactic disappointments and missed opportunities. ●

### BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The finale brings some of your previous decisions full circle, and the final moments are some of the most emotional I've ever seen in a video game

### FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

Some anticlimactic subplot resolutions, and the cliffhanger ending doesn't properly resolve the story arc of this series.

### VERDICT:

Episode Five is absolutely essential for the series, but there's a lot of missed potential where the finale could've had a much bigger impact.



# Adventure Lantern

