

June 2003 Issue 7

# Inside ADRIFT

Welcome to Inside ADRIFT! With summer approaching fast, this will be the last issue of the newsletter that I will be putting together. KF has agreed to take on the responsibility. I wish him the best of luck, and encourage everyone to contribute.

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## Announcements!

### **KF's Adrift Summer Minicomp 2003**

The Summer Minicomp will be run during August 2003. Entries will be due in by 15:00 GMT on Sunday 20 August 2003. There will be a week of judging time where anyone who wanted to can download the entries and have a vote on the result. To view the rules, please visit the Announcements section of the ADRIFT Forum. All entries should be sent to KF at [competition@kfadrift.org.uk](mailto:competition@kfadrift.org.uk) by 15:00 GMT on Sunday 18 August 2003.

### **Happy Birthday Drifters!**

En Kerklaar-17, Mattaius-17, Seciden Mencarde-14, The Amazing Poodle Boy-33, Matt (Dark Baron)-14, Blakk Matt-17, Nicky Dude-34, Kinvadren-20, Cannibal-33

## News

A hot topic around the ADRIFT forum lately has been about off-topic threads. Every forum seems to have them, so why is this such a big issue?

Some feel that the ADRIFT forum should be strictly moderated and everything not related to ADRIFT or IF be removed immediately. This doesn't sit well with some, myself included.

I, along with others feel that the ADRIFT Forum is a thriving community of people who share the same interests with other people from all over the world. We would like to get to know our fellow Drifters better, and the forum seems the logical place to do that.

Although Drifters have different views on this subject, they are seeking out ways to find a solution that will be satisfactory for everyone. I am happy to say that I am proud of everyone for being peaceful and addressing issues they feel strongly about in a collective, mature manner.

## Feature Article

Development of the NPC *By Mystery*

After talking with several people about Non-Player Characters (NPC's), I have come to the conclusion that the NPC is highly feared. I think that this is because both the player and the author tend to have the same problem. Neither knows how to interact with a NPC. I think the NPC is extremely valuable and more is needed to help both the player and author to understand NPC's.

No matter what kind of game you are making, or the location of the NPC, there is something the NPC should always be able to converse about. What is it? The NPC's environment! If your NPC is a shop owner, then he should be able to converse about everything in his shop. If the NPC is standing by a fountain, he should know why he is there and be able to tell you something about that fountain. Using that example, I will show you how to build NPC conversation. All we know right now is that there is a man standing by a fountain.

You are standing near a fountain, joined by a man on the other side.

### >Ask man about fountain

"It is a fine marble fountain, and really compliments the park well. I like to come here to think."

Now you know, through conversation, that the fountain is located in a park, it is made of marble, and the man comes here to think. Based on the information that the man gave, we can continue to ask him questions.

**>Ask man about marble**

"It's from Sherman's Marble Shop, across the street. It's the finest marble shop around. I should know. I'm Sherman."

Now we know that the man is named Sherman, he is a marble salesman, and owns the shop across the street.

**>Ask Sherman about street**

"Oak Street hasn't changed much. My shop has been here for over thirty years."

So what do we know so far through conversing with the man?

He is an older man named Sherman. He is a salesman who owns a marble shop on Oak Street. His shop is across the street from the park, and has been here for over 30 years. He enjoys going to the park and standing by the fountain to think.

You use his response to direct the player into more conversation subjects. It really is rather simple. If you practice, you will be creating fully interactive NPC's in no time.

I hope this gets you started on building better conversations with your NPC. (Please note that there are other NPC interactions that are not covered here-This was just an exercise to get you started on building better NPC Interaction.

## **Interview** - Special Guest, Ken Franklin a.k.a. KF

### *Interviewed by Mystery*

It is a pleasure to have you join us, KF. For some time now you have been hosting many competitions for the ADRIFT Community, and we thank you for that.

**Q.** What made you decide to hold that first competition?

**A.** Can't claim to be first with the idea. Campbell actually suggested a minicomp as a way for people to demonstrate their skills. The first was run by Michael Reese and won by DuoDave. I then realised that it might be useful to have regular events that drifters could work towards.

**Q.** It must take great organization skills to keep a competition running smoothly. How do you manage to keep everything together?

**A.** You think I keep things together? Actually they don't tend to be too bad as there aren't many entries or judges, but of course I would prefer more entries and judges to make it more worthwhile. The thing is that you gradually develop a system that can be applied which means you can just rehash what you did last time.

My basic process runs, announce competition and set up web page with rules. As closing date approaches begin putting together judging pack and associated page. Post up pages and games as soon as possible to allow judges to start. Set up a document to keep track of marks as they arrive. When judging is complete post up results as soon as possible, sending scores and comments to the entrants. As you can see it isn't too difficult.

**Q.** You have decided to put up prize money for competitions, or at least the last few, what made you decide to go that extra step? And is it worth it?

**A.** The prime reason was the hope that it would give an incentive for people to enter, although that may seem mercenary it gives a reason to work harder to get their game completed. It has worked in the sense that some early comps had one entry, hardly good! Now we are up to three, which is the right direction.

**Q.** Participation has been weak in the past couple of comps, despite a monetary prize, how would you like that to change in future competitions?

**A.** Not sure I can do a lot more, I know from the games that I have tried to write that it is a difficult process and rarely goes as you planned. That is why you get many more people who say "great I'll start writing something" than actually submit something at the end. In the end you do have to acknowledge that the active writing base for Adrift games is reasonably small.

It is always encouraging to see newer writers enter a competition, as with Syke in the recent Spring Competition. I hope that it gives an incentive to build on their writing skills as authors see their weaknesses.

**Q.** What do you think is the most important part of holding a competition?

**A.** To act as an incentive to actually write a game. This is why I think that a minicomp, with some size limitations, gives the author something out of the ordinary to do. It gives a focus on your game development, even if you didn't initially start out to enter it in the competition. I'd like to think of it as giving a showcase for authors, and a way they can get feedback from the judges.

**Q.** How would you like competitions to change in the future?

**A.** Hopefully things will evolve and this will get more entries, but I have made quite a few recent changes. In the last year I brought in the installable competition download, which I think gives a more professional way of running the games, while at the same time giving the straight web option. The new web voting form was well received and used by all who judged the Spring Comp.

I am now trying to stick to a formula for the competition types. In April there will be a competition for complete new games. August will be a minicomp, timed for school holidays and aimed not to clash with the Annual IF Comp where I would expect bigger games to be heading. Finally in December comes the End of Year Comp as a kind of beauty contest for Adrift games released this year.

**Q.** Last of all, where can people contact you to donate prizes for future competitions?

**A.** Just e-mail me at the usual address ([kf@kfadrift.org.uk](mailto:kf@kfadrift.org.uk)), I tend to be a bit wary about third party prizes if only because of the logistics of delivery.

## **Review** - To Hell in a Hamper *By Jason Guest* *David Whyld*

The winner of the Adrift Spring Mini-Comp 2003, To Hell in a Hamper is the best example yet of just how good really small games can be. Then again, it's not really a small game as such – only one room, true, but there's a fair sized game in there and one quite a bit larger than several "proper" games that have made their way onto the downloads page over the past few years.

The storyline follows the efforts of one Professor Pettibone who is an "eminent Victorian balloonist" determined to circumnavigate the world in a hot air balloon. Off he sets, accompanied by a single companion, the strange and quite demented (not to mention bizarrely-named) Hubert Booby. Problems soon become apparent as the balloon seems to have great difficulty attaining the necessary height to pass over an erupting volcano, leading you to the sneaking suspicion that your companion might well have smuggled aboard several heavy items in his ever-expanding overcoat.

Every bit as strange as the writer's first game Goldilocks is a Fox, To Hell in a Hamper is, if anything, even better. I have to admit that I wasn't sure whether a one-room game would be much of an entry in the competition but this proved me well and truly wrong (it beat my game as well, but any between-the-lines insults are purely coincidental). There are enough ideas packed in here for several games and the seriously over-the-top humour is always top notch. In particular, Hubert Booby is the sort of character who is just crying out to have a game written about him.

Despite being confined to a single room, To Hell in a Hamper isn't an easy game by any means. It's fairly straightforward making a little progress here and there but problems soon hit when you get a further and have to discover new and ingenious ways of getting Hubert to relinquish his remaining items – killing him, alas, isn't an option. Nor does murder work on his Aunt Gertie despite her nasty habit of constantly whacking me with her cane.

Several amusing features add to the replay value and show a definitive flare for the imaginative: throwing the Egyptian mummy out of the balloon results in an ancient curse being activated; get rid of the dog and it climbs back into the balloon (quite a feat for a dumb animal though not one I appreciated at the time

considering the hassles I had gone through to get rid of it in the first place); throwing Hubert's troublesome Aunt Gertie out doesn't work well either as the canny old bird grabs hold of the anchor rope and climbs back inside.

As far as one room games go, it's hard to imagine a better one than this coming around any time soon. Indeed, it's one of the most amusing games I've ever played and will probably take some beating in the comedy stakes.

**Logic: 6 out of 10**

How logical a balloon risking being destroyed in an erupting volcano due to your travelling companion smuggling a vast horde of items – including his Aunt Gertie, a dog and an Egyptian mummy among other things – under his coat is I'm not sure, but then this was never meant to be a logical game and I don't think it suffers for it at all.

**Problems: 9 out of 10** (10 = no problems)

Nothing major but some of the tasks seemed overly complicated – the one involving the ear-trumpet and the dog in particular.

**Story: 7 out of 10**

There's an amusing little back story at the beginning of the game which sets the feel for the adventure well enough. A one room game is never going to have – or need – a lengthier storyline and this one did its job.

**Characters: 9 out of 10**

Three, although Hubert Booby takes the cake. I tried hitting him with just about every item I could lay my hands on just to see if I could get another of his daft responses.

**Writing: 8 out of 10**

Very good indeed.

**Game: 8 out of 10**

Definitely the best one room game I've ever played and more than a match for quite a few of the full size games.

**Overall: 47 out of 60**

## In The Manual

*Page 14 of the ADRIFT V4 Manual*

### Objects and Locations

If the object is static, then you have to say in which room(s) the object is present. Usually this will just be a single room, but there may be reasons you would want it to span more than one. This might be a river that was in more than one room, a generic object such as the sky, ground, walls etc, or just a door, which you can view from either side. To choose the rooms, click on the room names in the list on the right hand side. Clicking on **All Rooms** will highlight all the rooms in the list. Similarly **No Rooms** will deselect all the rooms.

A special case for the static object type is if it is part of a character. Instead of selecting a room for the object, select the location "**Part of Character**". This will activate the Character dropdown list. You can then select whether this should be the Player or a specific character. You can now only examine this object when the particular character is in the room.

If the object is dynamic, you have to select the initial position for the object from the pull down menu. This can be either Hidden, **Held by someone**, **Inside an object**, **On an object**, a specific room, or **Worn by someone** if the object is wearable.

If you select **Held by someone**, the **Held by who** pull down menu becomes active. You should then select whether the Player or another character holds it. Similarly, for **Worn by someone**. If you select **Inside an object**, or **On an object**, the **Inside/on object** pull down menu becomes active. This will then give a list of all objects that have a surface or are containers.

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Thanks to everyone who made contributions to this, and past issues of the newsletter. It couldn' t have been done without you.