

## **The Official Eamon Deluxe Newsletter**

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This newsletter follows no regular schedule and will be published, as time permits, when there is Eamon Deluxe news to share. It is distributed by email only and subscriptions are always free.

Contributors are welcome and any material relating in some way to Eamon or Eamon Deluxe will be accepted. Adventure reviews aren't limited to new or previously reviewed adventures and multiple reviews of adventures are encouraged.

Please send subscription requests, new adventures, reviews, articles, bug reports, thoughts, suggestions, etc. to: [eamondeluxe@gmail.com](mailto:eamondeluxe@gmail.com).

### **Eamon on the Web**

-<http://www.eamonag.org/>

The Eamon Adventurers Guild website is by far the best Eamon resource in the entire world. It is also the gracious host of the Official Eamon Deluxe homepage as well as the most current downloads and updates.

-<http://www.eamonag.org/pages/eamondx.htm>

The Eamon Deluxe page at the Eamon Adventurer's Guild can be found at the above address.

-<http://eamon-guild.blogspot.com/>

The Guild blog is where the latest Eamon/Eamon Deluxe news is posted. New material is always encouraged here and contributors can submit their work to Matthew Clark at [EamonAG@gmail.com](mailto:EamonAG@gmail.com).

-<http://www.facebook.com/EamonGuild/>

The Official Guild Facebook page. A good way to meet and interact with other Eamon fans and sometimes former Eamon authors as well.

-<http://www.lysator.liu.se/eamon/>

Once called the "Unofficial Homepage of Eamon Games." Although it hasn't been updated in several years, the website at Lysator still survives and its webmaster, Fredrik Ekman, is quite friendly and happy to answer questions via email. Though it contains no Eamon Deluxe material and much of its material can now be found at the Eamon Adventurers Guild site, it does feature some interesting, historical facts and is worth reading.

-[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eamon\\_\(video\\_game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eamon_(video_game))

A further, thorough resource for information on Eamon (including Eamon Deluxe) is the Wikipedia page.

### **Articles**

Recherche des Eamons Perdus: Eamon Pro  
by Thomas Ferguson

The aim of this short article is to address a lacuna in the "Beyond Eamon" section of the Eamon Adventurer's Guild site, which catalogs the various attempts to upgrade and improve the basic Eamon system on the Apple II. Though systems such as Eamon II, KnightQuest, and Super Eamon are given their due, missing is reference to possibly the wildest of the bunch- Eamon Pro.

Eamon Pro, written by Ryan Page, received a mention in the December 1989 Eamon Adventurer's Guild Newsletter, though due to poor compatibility with Tom Zuchowski's computer it was treated as more of a curiosity than a proper review. Zuchowski took care to mention some of its features, including the ability for a character to hold on to nine- rather than four- weapons.

Many of the upgraded Eamon-based systems focused on adding new spells to those found in Eamon; indeed, in some cases, the results were rather interesting. Eamon Pro took this concept in a slightly different direction. Monsters found in Eamon Pro adventures carried a certain number of experience points, which were given to the character once the monster was slain. Once in the Main Hall, characters could exchange experience points to cast the usual spells at "Level Two." Each of the four traditional spells- SPEED, HEAL, BLAST, and POWER- could be thus upgraded to FEAR, CURE, ENERGY BEAM, and LEAVE, respectively.

An additional revision of the "vanilla" Eamon system was the inclusion of particular "properties" of weapons. My long-time character, for example, carries a canister of "Smylex" (from Batman!!) alongside the magical sword Trollsfire. Page rightly found something unusual about such states of affairs; while I tend to embrace this as indicative of Eamon's quirky charm, Page sought to clarify by adding properties such as "Normal" or "Magical" to weapons. Smylex, in this case, would have been labeled as "Scientific" and Trollsfire as "Enchanted." Theoretically, inasmuch as these tags would have endured in the Main Hall and beyond, this would have added an additional layer of continuity between adventures. In practice, though, it seems that one already knows that Trollsfire is indeed enchanted and doesn't require such reinforcement.

The wildest feature of Eamon Pro, though- that thing that makes it stand out- was the addition of "magical creatures." Unicorns, vampires, werewolves, and dragons made an appearance in this system- indeed, Pro eschewed the famous Eamon dragon for the not-as-famous "Eamon unicorn." The reader may ask if this means that the player could, say, purchase such creatures as pets to bring along on adventures. Nothing so mundane is present here. Pets are for amateurs; the professional Free Adventurer becomes a unicorn. Yes, once enough experience points were accrued, the player could visit a temple and exchange the points to become such a beast. In exchange for sacrificing one's human form, the player's stats- hardiness, agility, and charisma- would receive enormous boosts (unicorns, it turns out, are incredibly charismatic) and the player would be granted mastery of one or more of the "Level Two" spells.

I infer that Tom Zuchowski's copies ultimately became corrupted, precluding Eamon Pro's inclusion in the Eamon CD. I concede that I've had little success getting the only known disk images to run properly. Hence, much of the above stems from recreating the experience from reading the programs and data files. Eamon Pro's only adventure- The Adventurer's General Store- has been converted to Eamon Deluxe and will be soon released as another "Lost Treasure." And don't worry- methods to play as a unicorn in true Pro fashion have been added.

In general these upgrades, I think, missed an important aspect of Eamon. The Main Program is entirely mutable; save for the routines accepting and sending data to the Main Hall, virtually everything is up for revision in the hands of a dedicated author. To wit, Sam Ruby's adventures tend to feature so many additional elements that they play like an "upgrade" far more than anything billing itself as such.

Perhaps in a world in which Page had written more "Pro" adventures, playing as a unicorn or possessing a "scientific" weapon would have served some purpose beyond an additional tag. Ultimately, as with most Eamon upgrades, Eamon Pro seems to offer a host of solutions in search of problems. As the solutions are radically imaginative, it is a bit of a shame that the problems weren't there to begin with. Perhaps in that world, visitors today to the EAG website are happily greeted by the Eamon Pro unicorn en rampant.

## Reviews

Ratings Key: The ratings are determined on a ten point scale, typically with one value for difficulty and one for enjoyment. An explanation of the scale:

### Difficulty:

- 1 Zero combat, zero puzzles.
- 2 No significant combat, object manipulation only.
- 3 Secret doors, one hit kill combat.
- 4 Easy combat, secret doors and keys.
- 5 Average, occasionally hit in combat, may need heal spell, some hidden and embedded artifacts.
- 6 Tough combat, will need companions, spells and items, embedded artifacts and complex map exploring.
- 7 Tough combat, hard artifact puzzles, significant exploration and average mazes.
- 8 Really tough combat, complex item puzzles, difficult mazes.
- 9 Close to impossible combat, massive maps, puzzles with less obvious solutions, huge, confusing mazes.
- 10 Impossible to complete.

### Enjoyment:

- 1 Completely dull, no point playing at all.
- 2 Possible minor interest, but generally missable.
- 3 Good as a time waster but not much else.
- 4 Mildly amusing but nothing special.
- 5 Average, worth a play and provides some fun.
- 6 Worth a couple of plays, significantly interesting.
- 7 Pretty awesome, lots to do and worth more than a second glance.
- 8 Really great, never get tired of playing it.
- 9 Fantastic, always worth another run through.
- 10 Legendary.

Also bear in mind that one man's trash is another's treasure; that one reviewer didn't care for an adventure doesn't imply that you won't enjoy it.

Realm of Fantasy by Jared Davis

(Eamon Deluxe #21)

Reviewed by Luke Hewitt and Frank Black

Extra Commands: BUY, SELL

Deleted Commands: None

Special Features: None

Playing Time: 10 -15 min.

Reviewer Rating: 6 (Average 5.5 from 2 ratings)

Difficulty Rating: 5 (Average 5.5 from 2 ratings)

Description: It was a normal day in the Main Hall. 1,000 new adventurers checked in, 1,000 were killed, and 1,000 were resurrected. One of the new adventurers was named Joslyn. As soon as he checked in, he gave you a strange look.

After that day, Joslyn seemed to keep his eyes on you for a long time. Finally, one day, he spoke:

"Hello!" he said to you. "I noticed something strange outside the Main Hall. A hole that led into the ground. My friend Oscar fell in there and never came out. I noticed that you seem to be a highly-skilled adventurer. Can you go to help him out?"

Hungry for a new adventure, you get a leave of absence from the Irishman and head down Joslyn's tunnel...

Review: [Note: When I compared the review I wrote with the one Luke sent me, they seemed almost identical. Using the best text from each, I combined the two into a single review. -Frank]

This is the second adventure that was written specifically for the Eamon Deluxe platform. Though the name "Realm of Fantasy" is somewhat ambiguous, and the initial rescue-a-friend-from-a-cave quest you're introduced to seems to indicate swords and sorcery, it doesn't take long before it becomes clear that "fantasy" in this case means dreamlike, fantastic or surreal, as you are introduced to a host of companions and situations from Alice in Wonderland, the Oz books, famous films and even the Super Mario Brothers games.

If the idea of having the likes of The White Rabbit and Dorothy duking it out with the infamous Bowser doesn't appeal to you, then you will most likely not appreciate this adventure in its entirety. However, if you are the sort who has a surreal or literary mind then there are definitely some nice touches which will add to the fun. e.g., having the Wicked Witch of the West crushed by Dorothy's house when she dies, or the freeing of a tin man from two evil trees.

One thing I particularly appreciated is that clearly the author was thinking of the Oz books, not the films, as characters like Mombi and Tip from The Land of Oz appear. Dorothy also happens to be wearing silver shoes, not the ruby slippers which they are commonly mistaken for due to the popularity of the well known 1930's musical adaption. This deep knowledge however is rather a double edged sword, since there were some references I didn't understand myself.

The writing is adequate to the task at hand and often humorous in places, even though some of the descriptions are a little short. Some characters and places, such as the Queen of Hearts' Palace, might have done with a bit more description. Though certainly the short length of the descriptions in question is no worse than that found in many Classic Eamon adventures. Plus the surreal situations and settings are fun, light-hearted and much of an improvement over the average underground dungeon.

I didn't notice a large amount of specials (i.e., modifications to the standard Eamon Deluxe base adventure program), but the specials I noticed worked fairly well. Although it did seem as if most of the specials were located near the start of the game and the sort of tapered off where they could have been a bit more evenly distributed throughout the adventure. Indeed even the new commands BUY and SELL are only useable in one specific location and then only for a couple of items. Nonetheless, just having the shop there was a very nice touch, as it was nonexistent in the original, 2006 release of this adventure.

This is definitely a fighter's outing as the Realm contains a very large amount of combat, frequently against seemingly random opponents. I would recommend bringing at least a medium strength character into it, even though you do come across some fairly powerful weapons and healing items as you progress throughout the game.

One interesting fact which you will either love or hate are your many companions (sometimes you will find ten or more of them faithfully following you around), who are likewise pitted against large numbers of foes. In fact, it is fairly common in this adventure to find groups of 10, 20, or even 30 enemies at a time (all of whom die usually with a single hit from your trusty allies).

It can be said that this does make for a different style of battle which adds to the unique flavor of this adventure. I often found myself on the sidelines of the battles, playing healer and supporting my companions as they fought it out with my foes. On the other hand, this also means a lot of mindless tapping of the enter key to skip past combat text which can get somewhat repetitive and wearing. In all fairness though, the unusually large number of companions I met up with also meant that battles against groups of 20+ enemies took less rounds than one would initially imagine.

The small army of companions and extra enter hitting did complicate things several times while I was simply trying to go about exploring rooms and reading the full descriptions for everything. I found myself hitting enter one too many times and inadvertently causing new descriptive text to scroll away before it could be read. This can

obviously get a little irritating, though it could also be argued that this was actually more of a symptom of my own impatience with reading the screen than a flaw in the adventure itself.

One feature I did enjoy about having an anomalous multitude of companions was having access to the various items they were carrying with them. In fact, you will most likely want to check the inventory of every companion you come across in order to get some of the bonus items that are sprinkled throughout the adventure.

Overall, the system of sitting back and playing healer was a break from the standard combat found in most Eamon adventures which was rather fun (as was seeing Dorothy give the wicked witch what for). It might indeed have been nice if more weapons were found throughout the adventure, and also if those weapons were of random and varied types. An axe-wielding Dorothy or an AK-47 toting Princess Peach would have been a fun inclusion and still would have been within the limits of keeping in tune to the somewhat psychedelic feeling that this game presents.

Overall, if you like (in no particular order): combat, literary references, colorful famous characters, surreal settings, light-hearted fun and/or if you just have a sense of humour then you will enjoy this adventure. Likewise, I recommend the experience of at least one trip through the Realm of Fantasy to every fan of Eamon adventures as it is, in several different aspects, a very unique entry into the Eamon library.

A Runcible Cargo by Thomas Ferguson

(Eamon Deluxe #22)

Reviewed by Frank Black

Extra Commands: None

Deleted Commands: None

Special Features: None

Playing Time: 6 -8 hours

Reviewer Rating: 9.5

Difficulty Rating: 5

Description: Admittedly, you don't know how you got here, but a relaxing, if uncanny, sunset greets your gaze.

But you have unexpected company, in the form of an incredibly large rabbit.

Being a seasoned Eamonaut, a rabbit of this stature should seem pedestrian. You, after all, have battled wizards with rocket launchers and engaged in space opera with broadswords...

...so why does this rabbit unnerve you so?

Review: Above is the entire intro text, which, when paired with the author warning me ahead of time that he had little programming experience and had never written an Eamon before, led me to believe I was in for a mildly entertaining, Alice in Wonderland type hack'n'slash fest. But looks can be deceiving and A Runcible (look it up) Cargo is a good example of that. Weighing in at 102 rooms, 141 artifacts, 39 monsters and 162 effects, this nearly 17,000 word Eamon Deluxe original is best described as an interactive novel, with a true feeling of adventure and rich with the flavor of Classic Eamon Lore. Indeed there are so many references to the Main Hall regulars and various classic adventures across the board that I was left dazed in a fantastic sort of way.

I initially sat down with my girlfriend at 1 a.m. one night, expecting to play through this adventure in an hour or less, make a few notes about bugs and typos and whip out a quick review. Three hours later I looked over to see her literally shudder while reading a description of a creepy figure outside a hotel window and felt a slight chill wash over myself as well. It had somehow become 4 a.m. and neither of us had noticed, being completely entranced in Mr. Ferguson's well crafted little world. I had to force myself to save the game and go to sleep. I did a quick 'seen flag' count which told me that, after three hours of game play, we had only been to less than half of the rooms in this adventure.

It took several days for me to set aside enough time to continue the adventure properly. I was playing it alone this time, picking up right where we had left off and it still took me another three hours to complete it. Six hours total game play! I know Eamon Deluxe inside and out, plus I was cheating slightly by already having a map and adding some code to list all the embedded artifacts in each room so I didn't have to spend time examining everything in the rich and interesting room descriptions. In fact there are very few descriptions in the entire adventure that are under 200 characters long or that are repetitious of each other. Even average "N/S corridor"-type rooms with nothing in them get treated to their own expository and unique descriptions.

I can't praise the author's excellent writing style enough and I felt completely drawn into his creation as I played through it. He has a definite mastery over words and you can feel how much fun he is having with them as he builds his interesting images around you. A Runcible Cargo is verbose to the point of almost being ridiculous at times with clever puns and inside Eamon references everywhere, and yet somehow manages to be light-hearted and often funny while still portraying a strong sense of mood and urgency. I have played over 200 Eamon adventures, some of them being extremely good, and I can honestly say that I have never been as entertained (or taken as many notes) as I did while playing this one.

While the area you start in has a sort of dreamy aimless feel to it (for a good reason), it matches up perfectly with the intro text and it isn't long before you move into another area and the action starts immediately! I had to laugh at myself as I noticed I was gripping my chair and my heart was racing at one point, something that doesn't normally happen to me from any form of entertainment. As you progress through the adventure the mood shifts perfectly to match the various settings and it is obvious that the author took great care down to the smallest details which make it much more realistic than an average adventure game.

As I mentioned, there is an area of intense action near the start which really gets things going. The pace slows down a bit afterwards and you are left to wander the large map at your leisure, but that sense of urgency never really goes away and, while, the author kindly lets you have your freedom to explore in your own way, he also makes sure you don't stray too far from your intended quest.

In fact you can mostly ignore the usual hints, heal spell and frequent saving that accompanies most complex adventures. The author is very fair to the player and seems more interested in entertaining you than killing you off, which is refreshing in an Eamon adventure. He also offers multiple ways for you to finish the game with varying consequences which further adds to the realism and leaves the player well satisfied as they exit the adventure.

The numerous references to Eamon Lore and the various shifting moods within a myriad of interesting settings make it a real treat to play for both experienced Eamon gamers and those new to the system. If you know your Eamon history and are familiar with most of the adventures then you will be amazed at the amount of "throwbacks" that are made throughout the game. The most obvious of all possibly being a wagon you come across near the start which contains a ray gun and a sword; this is no accident or random artifact placement but rather a well done symbol of the diversity and creative strangeness that has always been a part of Eamon. In fact, the whole adventure in itself could be described as one big tribute to/celebration of the Eamon multiverse. He even went as far as to incorporate one of the worst Eamons ever made, The Eamon Railroad, which is placed perfectly on the map and and I enjoyed quite a bit.

From the dreamy light hearted starting point, to the absolute chaos that follows, to the distinct feeling of abandonment and entropy in the Eamon Rail Yard (which is perfect for an adventure nobody has wanted to play for over 20 years), to the spine tingling creepiness in the town of Dodge, to the local inn which made me laugh out loud to myself as I explored and discovered that a bunch of jerks had ransacked it, locked the owner in his own appliance and invaded his quarters for a sleazy poker game. I particularly enjoyed dispatching them and then laughed again for letting myself get so involved in the story.

Nearly every area of Eamon is touched upon, including the obligatory sailing where you just walk between watery rooms in a perhaps imaginary boat, to the Eamon sewers...Even the rarely spoken of House of Ill Repute gets a

quick and hilarious visit. In short, this is an adventure which the author took care to craft slowly, trying to cover every detail along the way and all of his hard work shows.

A Runcible Cargo has all of the traits of a great adventure. A steady pace; rich and realistic, yet fun, descriptions; a clear quest; lots of specials and action to keep the interest up; plenty of laughs and often amusing companions who seem to display real personality traits. The adventure seems to never be afraid to break the fourth wall, but yet remained, in many ways, the most realistic Eamon adventure I have played to date. Halfway through the game I was sure I was going to give it a perfect 10 rating, something I don't believe any adventure has ever gotten in the history of Eamon.

Why did I lower the rating to 9.5 then? Well there were a few things, mostly towards the end, that didn't sit well with me personally.

First off, most of the monsters are cardboard cutout "bandits." While this goes with the clear storyline and quest, it also gets rather tedious. At first I was impressed with the author's ability to write rich entertaining descriptions for each one of these cutouts, but by the end I was less amused and somewhat bored with each new way to verbosely say "You see a bandit." I found myself just skimming the bandit descriptions and blankly looking around my house as I repeatedly tapped the Enter key until they were dead and I could move on with my explorations.

The order in which I chose to pursue the map most likely worked against my rating as well because apparently I came across the most vacant and perhaps somewhat unfinished section of the game at the end of my explorations. This struck me with an anti-climactic feeling lingering after all of the interesting places I had visited previously. Here I found myself in a nearly empty college campus with a bunch of doors that were practically left wide open (I am guessing the author had some programming problems and gave up on trying to get them to work right at some point).

On that subject, there were way too many doors in this adventure in general, especially given the fact that few of them seemed to actually work right. Locked door puzzles can get old fast and that, combined with the cardboard cutout bad guys, brought the excellent material in the rest of the game down with it a little.

Once I acquired the Runcible Cargo there were some good special effects which brought the tension and interest back up again. I expected more of these effects as I journeyed on with it, but nothing else happened which was another small let down. The end of the game routines also seemed a bit rushed to me and not nearly as smoothly done as the beginning.

Keep in mind that these are all just my personal opinions and others may rate this adventure differently than I did based upon their own preferences.

With the few gripes I just listed aside, A Runcible Cargo is nothing short of a complete masterpiece of interactive fiction and definitely one of the top five best Eamons ever written. It's well crafted, well written, detailed and also a perfect example of the powerful capabilities Eamon Deluxe has over previous Eamon versions as well. This is an excellent yet somehow precisely humble entry for a first time author and I hope Mr. Ferguson sticks around for a long time and decides to write more adventures in the future.

Overall, I give it a difficulty rating of around 5 and part of that reflects the amount of time one needs to set aside just to play through and see everything rather than dangers of character death. I highly recommend this adventure to everyone. It is Eamon flavored interactive fiction at its best.

The Beginner's Adventures

(Eamon Deluxe #1)

Reviewed by Luke Hewitt

Reviewer Rating: 7 (Average 5, plus 2 for being a good introduction to Eamon)

Difficulty Rating: 5

Review: The first volume of Eamon Deluxe unsurprisingly comprises seven beginner-level adventures intended to ease players into the system lightly, as well as introduce Eamon Deluxe and its concepts. Though several of the titles (including the traditional Beginner's Cave) originally would only allow new characters freshly created at the Main Hall, Frank has modified the set so that any character can enter. This means a starting player can play through all of the beginner scenarios if they want (provided they can stomach the tantrums thrown by the various Guardians of Beginnerhood). In fact this might be a good idea for anyone who wants to build up their character through pure adventuring rather than using a pre-generated character or modifying a character with the editor.

Also it goes without saying that as part of Eamon Deluxe, some of the problems which I see mentioned in the National Eamon Users Club reviews that had to do with earlier versions of the Eamon program, such as not being able to abbreviate commands, or having text disappearing off the screen are not an issue here. Nevertheless, these are fairly bare bones adventures with a beginners' theme (including the first ever Eamon adventure by Don Brown), thus they tend to take the simple loot and pillage approach to the action, not that there's anything wrong with that.

The Beginner's Adventures was of course where I started with Eamon Deluxe, and had the effects in the Beginner's Cave not grabbed my interest, I probably wouldn't be playing too much more of it today, so I'll always have something of a fondness for several of these, simple though they are. The basic fantasy principle they're based on, dungeons, magic traps, grabbing loot and rescuing maidens, is actually rather refreshing these days, especially when the authors have taken the time to add in atmospheric descriptions or special effects, short though some of these may be.

To quote The Sound of Music, the very beginning is certainly a good place to start.

Adventure 1: The Beginner's Cave.

Reviewer Rating: 4

Difficulty Rating: 3

This was of course the first Eamon adventure I played, probably along with most other people, and as an introduction to the system it serves reasonably well. The layout is very simple really just a long corridor with a few doors off it containing possible companions, several fights and, of course, treasure. Having an actual damsel to rescue along the way as well is a nice touch since it gives your quest slightly more purpose beyond just looting in a Warlord's cave, though it would have been nice to get some prior indication that she was missing in the first place, rather than simply running into her as, effectively, just another treasure item.

The descriptions were short and to the point, but little touches, like the engraving on magic swords, add to the atmosphere and Frank has put in one or two extra bits of description and added a couple of previously hinted at artifacts here and there in addition to the faithful replication of Donald Brown's original design. The environment still feels a little sparse in comparison to other outings and I am not a fan of the "It has a sticker on it" method that is used for one item.

The thing, however, that surprised me the most (and indeed really caught my interest) were the several special effects. Magic spells, a secret door, a disguised monster and a very interesting death trap (though since I saved first, I didn't mind the death trap even the first time it happened). These turned what was a fairly simple kill-and-loot scenario into something a lot more fun. Indeed one minor problem I had with the adventure is that you can run out of monsters to fight before trying one of the cooler combat effects!

Speaking of fights, this is obviously stated as a beginner's game and the enemies are lightweight, plus you get some decent companions to help as well.



Truthfully, if you are just looking for one beginner level adventure before moving on, there are some better adventures in the set. And playing this one is a little pointless if you intend to play the Enhanced Beginners' Cave as well, since that replicates absolutely everything from this adventure, while adding a fair amount of new content. If, however, you are interested in visiting the place where Eamon began or just want to try everything then it's not a bad intro.

Adventure 2: Alternate Beginner's Cave.

Reviewer Rating: 6

Difficulty Rating: 5

I was actually rather surprised that the National Eamon Users Club review for this adventure gave it such a lukewarm reception. I personally think of it as an introduction to Eamon which is a distinct improvement over the original Beginner's Cave even.

It's a good deal larger than Don Brown's cave, though not confusingly so, and more is made of the descriptions of the various rooms and objects making for a rather colourful underground complex. There is a slightly more coherent overall theme (there are no random hermits or pirates, though randomness is all a daily part of Eamon), and there are some rather nice specials to surprise you and keep you on your toes. These include a couple of slightly obscure events (though Frank has provided hints which can lead you to those).

The fights are generally easy and you have companions to help you, and of course there is plenty of treasure for building your character's wealth. One fight is especially hard, however using the right item can get you past that and there is a nice reward for doing so.

Also, though having no objective introduced at the start, there is a rescuable maiden, albeit a slightly less logical maiden than the noble lady of the Beginner's Cave (what this particular maiden is doing in an underground cavern is a little beyond me).

One issue with this adventure is that what appeared to be the last room ends in front of a door welded shut, which feels a little of an anticlimax, having to retreat rather than explore further, despite the dramatic fight and treasures in that area.

Despite that issue though, Rick's cave might actually be a nice adventure to start on if you're just planning on playing one or two beginner Eamons, since it does pretty much what the Beginner's Cave does, just with slightly more style.

Adventure 3: Beginner's Forest.

Reviewer Rating: 5

Difficulty Rating: 6

This is notable for being the only one of the beginners adventures not set in a dungeon, however it seems that getting out of the dungeons also gets you into lots of trouble since this is one of the harder adventures in the set. Though, thanks to Frank's wizardly talents, several of the more critically nasty points have been made somewhat less fatal in quite an amusing fashion. Also several special events that were a little irritating in the original version have now received a word or two of explanation, so that careful reading of the text can help avoid them.

That's about all of the bad points though. This adventure has some nice features, one being a well described environment which includes some fantasy, fairy tale like locations around an enchanted forest. There are a number of enemies to battle and friends to back you up, ranging from trolls and giants to King Arthur's knights. I wasn't sure what a contemporary outlaw like Jessie James was doing in the forest, but hey, randomness is a regular part of life on Planet Eamon. And, other than a couple of very obvious digressions, the setting stays extremely consistent.

There were a couple of special events to keep things interesting, including one rescue. The rescue is also part of one of the specials and gains you a good reward for your actions.

Though hard to take too seriously given its fairy tale atmosphere, the fantasy setting also makes for an interesting visit. Be prepared for some tough combat though, unless you use Frank's work around (check the HINTS). Fortunately the Eamon Deluxe 5.0 revisions have made this adventure a bit more fun to explore than its previous, more frustrating incarnations.

Adventure 4: Beginner's Cave II.

Reviewer Rating: 4

Difficulty Rating: 4

The intro text for this one pretty much tells you that it's intended as a money maker, which really is its main focus. Although there is a lot of treasure to grab, I actually found this to be the least appealing of the Beginners Adventures. The room descriptions were extremely short and many didn't particularly say much more than the room name with shown exits. "You are in an east/west corridor with an exit to the north." adds little to the already struggling atmosphere of the game. Plus the map is simple to the point of boring, consisting of three long passages off a central hall with rooms along the ends.

There were no specials, not even disguised monsters or surprises. The only items of interest to find were a couple of fairly obvious secret doors. There is, however, a lot of combat interaction involving some rather strange dungeon inhabitants. There is some humour to be had from reading their descriptions (I quite like the idea of a dwarf cyclops).

I'd only recommend this one if you're after lots of quick money, especially enjoy combat or just want to play everything.

Adventure 5: Enhanced Beginner's Cave.

Reviewer Rating: 5

Difficulty Rating: 3

This is obviously a complete clone of the original Beginner's Cave with some rather nice extras added in. The pirate theme gets a little expansion, a couple of extra monsters put in an appearance, and there is a new secret passage to find.

This is a nice, short intro to Eamon with all of the same special effects found in the original Beginner's Cave plus the bonus exploration of the expanded content. Indeed if you only wish to pick one of Beginners Caves to explore, I would recommend this be the one. It has the same light hearted, adventuring atmosphere that made Donald Brown's original so engaging; a theme that's very much continued in some additional descriptions Frank added to the recent Eamon Deluxe 5.0 revision. (I found examining the cat idol to be quite fun).

Just like the original Beginner's Cave, this is a good adventure to choose when playing Eamon Deluxe for the first time or if you plan on playing just the one adventure in the Beginners Adventures collection. There is at least a larger area to explore in the Enhanced Cave and, unlike John Nelson's own Beginner's Cave II, the new material and setting adds something to the environment.

Adventure 6: The Training Ground.

Reviewer Rating: 6

Difficulty Rating: 6

Like the Alternate Beginner's Cave, this got a rather less than enthusiastic review from the National Eamon Users Club, yet it is possibly the best adventure in the entire Beginners set. It has a good amount of special effects, interesting descriptions and several fun artifacts to read and examine. This includes several embedded artifacts

such as those found in more advanced adventures, which means taking careful observations of your surroundings generally pays off.

Among the specials are a couple of hidden monsters and a (vaguely) secret door to discover. While there is no quest, there are a good amount of fun surprises. Most of these are well done and some are indeed quite strange (in a good way). This marks the first adventure I've played so far that gives the POWER spell a good work out too, with one surprising result that can be slightly inconvenient, though not so much so that it spoils the adventure. It's more of a quirky challenge really, and checking the HINTS can avoid a potential panic at a sudden unrequested change to your character.

There is a pamphlet near the entrance that refers to the setting as "The Barrow Downs Training Ground." This appears to be random, however, and I encountered no references to wights or any other undead creatures from Tolkien lore. It seemed to be more of a haunt for brigands and magical creatures instead.

Most of the combat is easy for a beginning character, with one of the harder fights being avoidable, plus you get some nice help from the companions you pick up along the way. One tip: if you run into a fight against multiple enemies alone, you may need to FLEE until you come across some companions to aide you.

Aside from the tough fights, I very much enjoyed this adventure. The room and artifact descriptions were lively and engaging (I particularly liked the descriptions of the three books) as well as the descriptions of the various denizens you encounter. The rewards, in terms of specials and weapons, were very nice and it was overall a very fun dungeon to explore.

Technically this is not for absolute beginning level characters because some of the specials require your character to already know their magic spells a bit. It is mostly scaled towards starting level standards though and is a very nice adventure to use to advance your character and have some fun with the various special effects along the way. I highly recommend trying this one out.

Adventure 7: Eamon Deluxe 5.0 Demo Adventure.

Reviewer Rating: 7

Difficulty Rating: 6

This is a fairly simple slash and grab adventure scenario for starting level characters, intended as an introduction to the world of Eamon Deluxe. There are, however, a number of very nice points that make the 5.0 Demo Adventure stand out from the other titles in the Beginner Adventures collection.

Firstly, though there is indeed a classic dungeon with treasures, this isn't in fact all that the setting contains. It's entrance and introduction set the scene with you exploring an abandoned building which quickly turns out to be the home of a thief who's gotten himself into trouble with an underground criminal gang which employs brutish monsters as its extra muscle.

While not an original or highly fleshed out plot, this does at least give a little more explanation to what you are doing, and means that the enemies, albeit the usual giants and ogres, have a little more purpose than just random wildlife which got in your way; the treasure was slightly more logically explained as well, rather than just being a natural feature of underground dungeons.

The plot also gives something of a quest feeling to the game even though there aren't any outlined objectives. The quest feeling is compounded in the final showdown (which will be a rather tough battle for beginning level characters) and the fact that you do get to rescue the thief himself. It even has a very nice exit at the end of the dungeon to go back to the Main Hall, rather than the common practice of making you backtrack to the entrance that is found in many other adventures.

Another major factor I enjoyed in this adventure as opposed to the others is the huge range of embedded artifacts. Though there are no puzzles such as passwords, you have to make far more use of the EXAMINE command than in any other title from the Beginner Adventures set. In fact, just about every single piece of furniture mentioned in the room descriptions is examinable, sometimes to your profit, and several monsters are carrying useful artifacts so using the inventory command on them is recommended too.

The adventure isn't entirely stand alone either since, as well as some comical references to popular interactive fiction, there are also references to some other Eamon adventures which those experienced in Eamon gaming will pick up on, while new players will possibly find them a tantalizing hint as to what the rest of Eamon Deluxe has to offer.

Though it is a demo adventure which uses only the power of the basic Eamon Deluxe system itself, the large number of embedded artifacts (those which only show up in the descriptions of other things and not directly until you have examined them) means that players should keep an eye out for objects to EXAMINE, since the game strategically uses these artifacts to create its puzzles without the addition of any special programming. In fact, several points can't even be passed without examining your surroundings carefully.

My only minor criticism is that several artifacts are a little fourth wall breaking, such as a "message" which exists only to test in-game error handling; or mentioning that a certain monster has specific attributes, a certain artifact is of a specific type, etc.. But there are very few of these instances when compared to all the other items in the game and this is, after all, a demo adventure for the entire Eamon Deluxe System.

Either way it's certainly worth a visit, and a very fun introduction to Eamon Deluxe 5.0 gaming.

#### **Next Issue**

Upcoming features in the next issue include:

- A review of Stronghold of Kahr-Dur by D. Jeter
- Discussion of the Eamon-inspired Commodore 64 Imagery!
- Reviews of the Atari ST Eamons and their conversions

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