

HBGAMES.org

The E-zine!

HBGAMES.org's Official E-zine!

Issue #17 March 2014

The Castle Issue



The January Blues contest has come to a close, and judging has begun! The next issue will be a feature on the contest, looking at all of the entries and, of course, our winners.

On the Cover

The cover features concept art from a very nice looking indie game, *The First Templar*, available at www.thefirsttemplar-game.com

H B GAMES

Make. Games. Erryday.

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Quick Jump

Throughout this issue you'll see quick jump codes. These are just a simple way to link to posts and threads around the forums without wasting space in the magazine. To use them, simply go to the homepage and enter a quick jump code in the quick jump box below the left hand menu and press the enter key. Simple!

Just look out for this symbol:

QJ 123456

All issues of the eZine are now going to aim for 15 pages, if anything to make sure we squeeze as much content as possible into the magazine - there is so much that ought to be highlighted.

Basically the eZine now replaces what "This Week on .ORG" was supposed to be. It's a link dump, a gallery, a Project of the Month, and a release list rolled into one.

Creating Castles

For whatever reason, most RPGs seem to have them, but they're rarely logical. Mysticalism and magic are nice, but worlds built around rules and history often come out more interesting and more thought provoking in the process. Why was the evil King's castle built where it was? Why does it look like it does? Why is it so defensible compared to the hero's keep?

This article is going to be an amalgamation of little snippets about how our castles can be more realistic.

LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION

When it comes to siting your castle, the most important decision is where to put it. Moats and walls are man-made, but hills are hard to create; you'll want to build on a hill, cliff, or other high feature for various reasons, such as sight lines and sheer ease of coming down as opposed to climbing up, giving you the upper hand in any battle.

Water and food sources are important too. If there's woodland nearby you'll have good cover but it'll cover any enemies at the same time. As for water, being near a river is a definite need, unless you can well.

Oxbow lakes and large meandering bends in rivers form great natural moats, such as that around Shrewsbury and its castle.



MOATS AND DRAWBRIDGES

Moats seem like a good defense - and they are - but difficult to construct. You're more likely to find just a ditch, which could be quite steep and unclimbable nonetheless. Have bridges at your entrances, and make sure they're wide enough for carriages or anything else going on in your castle.

Drawbridges are neat but make sure they fit the size of both your moat and doorway, otherwise they're not going to be much use!

A portcullis - a gate which drops down filling the doorway - is more likely and more easily animatable.

If you're being this defensive, use it in your cutscenes! Many RPG castles use moats, portcullises and drawbridges, but never bother deploying them when the sieges come (it actually gets a bit annoying knowing these cheap design features are just for show).

Remember what your castle is there for. If it's to store a large amount of troops for battle then you're going to want simpler means of deployment. If you're protecting a town then being able to retreat behind your moat is invaluable.

Drawbridge machinery rooms make interesting maps if stuck for inspiration.

THE KEEP

HELP! HELP! I'M BEING REPRESSED!

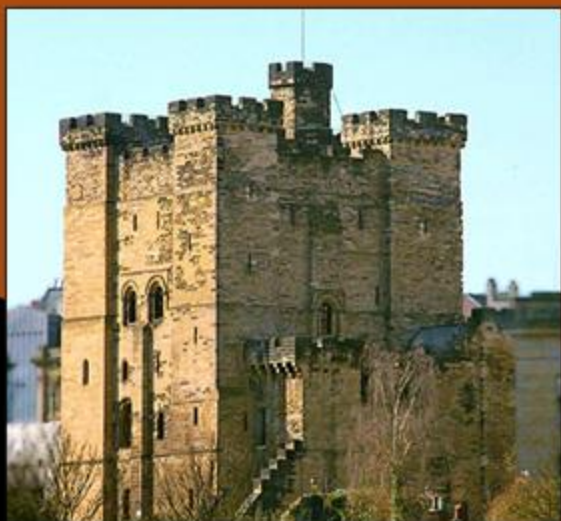
If you're not preparing an army for battle, housing a King or family that need to get out and about, and just have an object or person you need to keep in at all costs, you'll want a special kind of castle - a keep. Characterised by few windows, heavy stone walls, and no discernable entrance, a keep is a stronghold for keeping things in - and others out. It might be a prison such as the Bastille or the Tower of London - or perhaps, as in Monty Python and the Holy Grail, it's storing a valuable relic of some description. Either way, large entrances are out of the question, and you'll want more than just a moat. Perhaps putting it on an island in the middle of a lake would suit you best.

Many castles have keeps within them, for storing prisoners and such. As in the Tower of London, the keep can be just a small part of the overall structure.



LET'S NOT GO TO CAMELOT, IT'S A SILLY PLACE

One thing Monty Python got wrong - Camelot is shown as a keep-like castle (even if it is only a model). In the mythology it's a walled city, containing a cathedral and other buildings. Still, as it's a myth, it might be a good game location. (Before someone points it out, the above isn't it.)



Castle Keep, Newcastle (hauntedhovel.com)

The difference between a *Castle* and a *Palace* is merely that a palace is not generally fortified to the standards of a castle. A *Fortress* is a castle that doesn't hold the nobility, perhaps for an army or other soldiers. A *Fortified Settlement* is a heavily armoured town housing people. The term castle is often used to describe all of these however, and they are often share many identical features.

Castles date back as far or further than the Roman Empire. Portchester castle for example (right) survives to this day. Castles therefore are a valid and interesting antiquity for lost, ancient ruins - a good location for games.

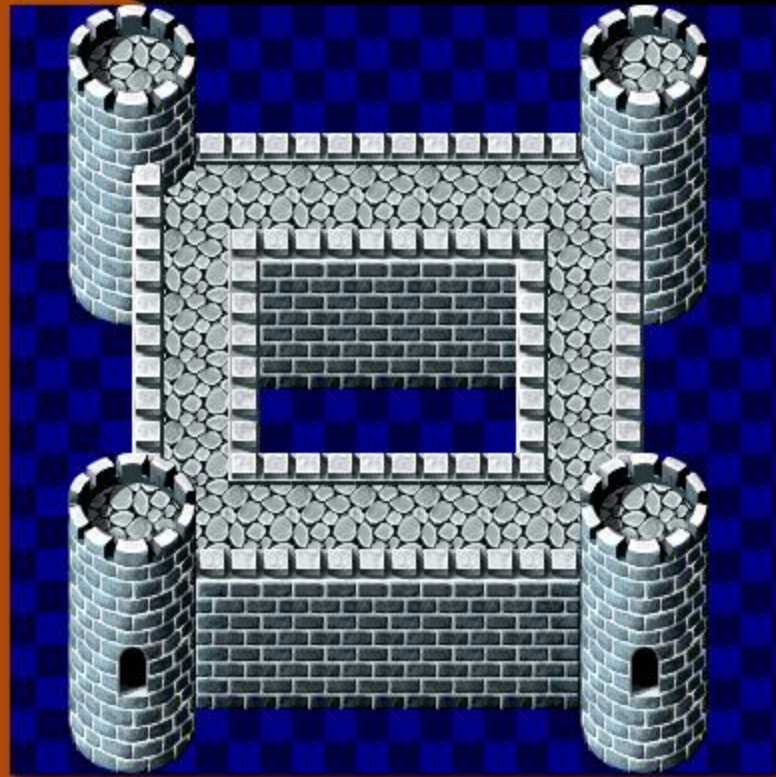


Fortified Towns

On the right is an example of a quick castle walls mapping in RPG Maker VX Ace, showing how the tiles were intended to be used. For all usefulness however you're probably not going to want the entire castle shown in one map. This is because castles that aren't just keeps generally have more than just walls: you'll have cathedrals or churches, residences, quarters for servants, stables and other buildings within the walls.

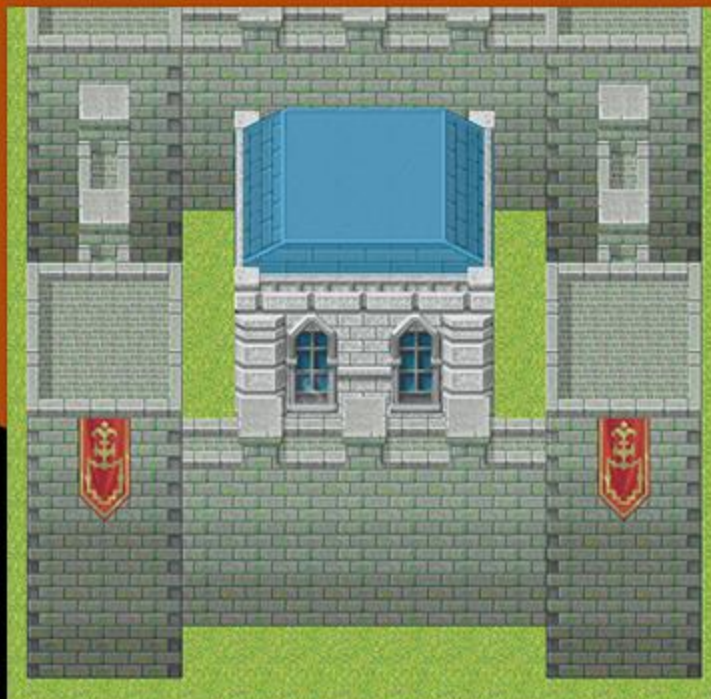
For this reason the best castle maps often show just the south-facing wall and a doorway, allowing the player to then enter the castle, switch to a new map, and explore the "inside" of the walled city in detail.

Some walled cities are immense: there is nothing impractical about the city of Destiny's Reach in Guild Wars 2 for example when compared to any real fortified settlements.



FORTIFIED COUNTRIES?

Why stop at towns and cities? Often city states sit entirely within walls, creating heavily fortified countries. Take The Vatican for example, or ancient Carthage. Be warned - it leaves limited room for industry!



The left-hand example shows a realistic situation, but not a complete map; in it a royal residence sits inside fortified walls. The walls have towers to provide look-out and archery situations. This is still too small and detailless for a good castle; nonetheless it shows how a few oft misused tiles are meant to be implemented, such as the battlements here which are often confused for stone details for parks and such, for some reason.

As the palace sits within the walls it can sacrifice fortification for elaboration. It is more stylised, with architectural features and fanciful detail, rather than being a solid structure - that purpose is left to the surrounding walls.

In reality we'd have more than just the palace inside however. The RTP tilesets don't allow much freedom for other structures. I've rarely seen both the palace and wall tiles used together, oddly, so this realistic kind of castle is very underused.

WHO LIVES IN A HOUSE LIKE THIS?

So what kind of characters are we going to find in our castles to liven up the place?

Butler - looks after the wine and beer

Castilian - the owner of the castle

Chaplain - spiritual guide and clerk; accountant

Cook - providing sustenance

Knight - a professional soldier hired by the castle

Messenger - for outside communication

Squire - trainee knight and assistant

Watchman - responsible for security

Porter - in charge of the main entrance

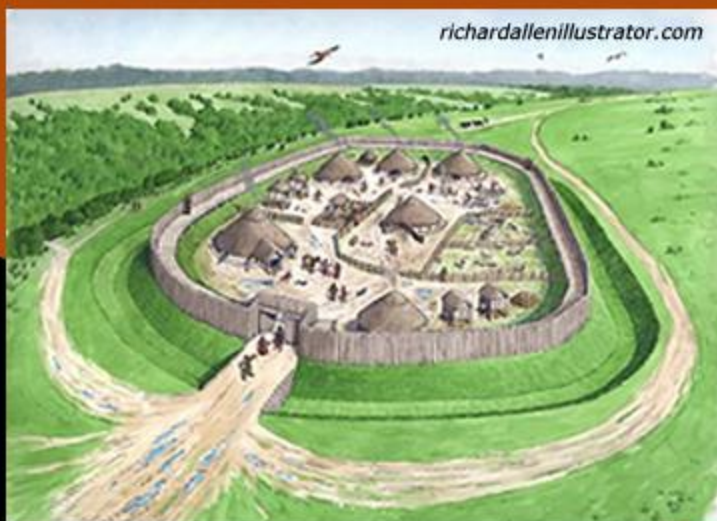
Smiths - for maintaining weaponry

Stablemen - for looking after the fleet

Farmers - for managing crops and livestock

Peasants - because somebody will need to look after all of the above, after all

Older castles will just be hill forts - houses built on top of hills. This was common in the anglo-saxon period in Britain.



UNDER-USED ASPECTS

Livestock are going to be commonly roaming the inside of your castle, whenever raids occur. They're the main source of food for all your men - it's important to keep them alive and well. Stables and farm equipment are going to be located within the walls.

Stables are very under-used in RPG games. They're an important part of any castle, especially one that keeps cavalry. Stables are going to come with a variety of staff, too, providing interesting NPCs - these people will be dealing with the traveling knights first-hand so will have all the gossip.

Don't forget that traveling knights will also need somewhere to stay, so some kind of inn is going to be found within the walls of the castle, perhaps even within the King's residences.



Stables within Dunster Castle (redrubble.com)

As discussed later in the article on arms races, castles as a whole are pointless if there's nobody attacking you. Why build a keep when a house would do? Why build a castle with huge walls and fortifications indeed if there are only twelve people living there to protect? All castles in games need something in particular: a reason for being. Without it, they're always going to feel out of place and out of touch with the storyline. Castles can be a good asset, if used right.

HBGames Music Festival

Throughout March we're celebrating all things music. During this event a board will exist for anything music related to drop into, with some premade topics, a few mini-competitions, and some prizes to be handed out. The goal is both to highlight the good music making that goes on at .org, and to get more people interested in composing their own music, and listening to other people's creations.

Drop by, anyone's welcome to post anything. After the contest everything in the board will be diverted to the appropriate sections of the forum.

As for prizes, video game soundtracks (and the games themselves too... a bit contrived!) from the Humble Indie Bundle are up for grabs, as well as badges for your new forum user profiles, and of course, participation points.



If you're not into music or don't want to listen to any don't worry, there'll be a few forum games and such, and the forums shall go on as normal!

Music discussion
Silly gimmicks
Audio creation
Dangerous flying text

Humble Indie Bundle

HBGames.org are proud to support. **6**

Free Graphics Editors

Sometimes Paint just won't cut it (or you don't even have it due to not being on Windows). Which free graphics editors are best?

Giving them a rating would be a futile exercise: they're all free, so you can try them, and the best graphics suite is always the one that you personally are able to use best. No amount of reviewing will pull that one guy away from Microsoft Paint.

Sumopaint



Sumopaint is a web-based graphics editor very similar in layout to Adobe Photoshop. It runs straight from a browser for convenience, but only on Windows, otherwise you'll have to fork out for the app version.

Blender

If you've got patience, skill and talent behind you, then there is no better free tool for making animated movies than Blender, which has hefty tools for modeling, animating, shaders and rendering. You'll have a big learning curve to climb.



GIMP



GIMP is pretty much an industry standard, and completely free. Its Mac-style interface may be difficult to learn for Windows users, but it will handle anything you throw at it, and is completely open source and available on many platforms.

Inkscape

Inkscape is a free alternative to programs such as Adobe Illustrator, for vector graphics. Open source and using the SVG format, and available on Linux, Mac and Windows, and entirely portable.



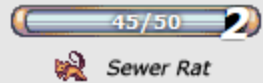
Paint.NET



Confusingly accessed via *getpaint.net*, Paint.NET is regarded as one of the best free Photoshop equivalents. As it's .NET based it's Windows exclusive but features a multitude of plug-ins from the community, such as reading PSD files.

Points

The next phase of the participation points system is now live, featuring beautiful graphics by Perihelion. You now have an EXP bar using points which levels you up, as a little gimmick for participating in the serious boards.



At each level you get a graphic which is reasonably unique to you. One of eight styles at each level is given, using a Super Secret Algorithm.

Vorge

QJ 914815

Once more we have a developer in our midst. *Vorge* is a HTML5 based ame engine created by HBGames member *Mammoth*. The editing suite is designed for non-programmers, and based on the tools which RPG Maker provides - you can see in the screenshots the work it makes of RM graphics.

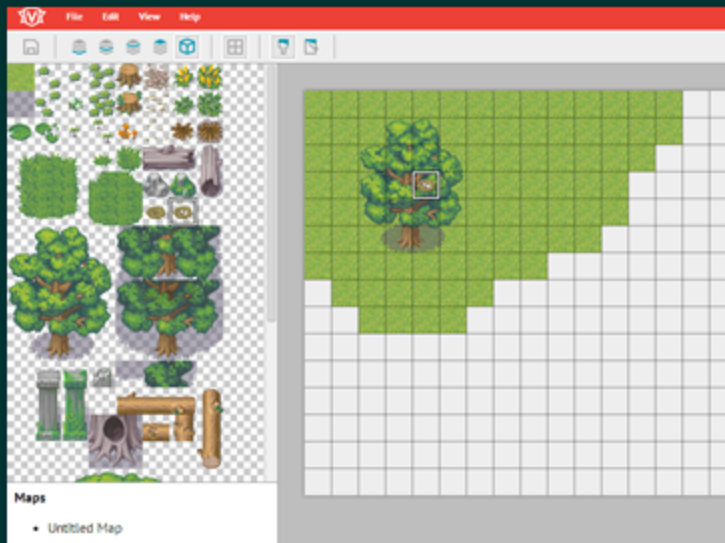
What interests me most is the eventing engine. At first glance what you get is the same as RPG Maker: some buttons, leading to a readout of what you've chosen in a pseudolanguage. But this readout is editable, allowing you to use event commands but still edit them fully at your will, to create more powerful events.

Event Functions

```

1 event.dialogue("Old Man", [
2     "Hello, stranger.",
3     "Not sure if I've seen ye around before.",
4     "Where are you from?"
5 ], undefined);
6 event.options([
7     ["That's none of your business.",
8     function() {
9         event.dialogue("Old Man", [
10            "How rude!",
11            "Respect your elders, you hoodlum."
12        ], undefined);
13        }
14    ],
15    ["Oh, you know, far away."

```



Check out Mammoth's progress in the thread; we're all super excited to see where this ends up as it opens up HTML5 game making to the masses with a simple editor and essentially the premade game which RPG Maker provides, allowing complete newbies to get stuck in editing a game and then making it their own.

Hopefully it'll get it's own graphics rather than relying on RPG Maker RTP, which lets down so many custom game engines going currently.

The Arms Race

So often it's the plot of a role playing game: the evil overlord, because they are evil, has created the Ultimate Weapon and is going to destroy the world with it. Despite having the technology to do this the rest of the world lives in relative dark ages – a world of farm hands and straw houses. Regardless of this apparent inability to fight back, the evil overlord feels need to create a weapon so powerful that it will only end in one thing: the destruction of the whole world.

This is not how history has worked thus far. We ended up at the atom bomb, but got there because we had other weapons we needed to defend ourselves against. Not to put anyone off having a mad evil overlord destroy the world in their games, I nonetheless want to discuss how we ourselves ended up with such weapons and what it could mean for an interesting backstory.

For the first few centuries – millenia even – there was very little military progress. Yes, we moved from spear heads made of rock to spear heads made of metal, and then proceeded to turn these into swords, but relatively speaking for much of the human age we have been slow to produce better weaponry. This all changed in the 18th century. After the invention of the rifle, we then had the flint-lock rifle – a much better gun than that which required a match to be lit in order to fire. Guns became central to all of the big wars, the first biggie being the French revolution. Napoleon was educated at a Lycee in the art of artillery: big guns. A big user of grape shot (a great load of shrapnel in a cannon, working like a nail bomb) he made guns big, and to combat this, the other nations around France did the same. Eventually guns became ubiquitous and the main bulk of each of the big armies was made up of columns of riflemen.



Spear heads - Ancientresource.com

When each army became the same, we reached what we call an "arms race". The British started wearing green to camouflage themselves, so the French followed suit. One nation invented the machine gun: another followed up with a better machine gun. Artillery was countered with bigger artillery. Mass lines of troops countered with machine guns. Machine guns countered with barricades and battlements. Fortifications countered with tanks. Tanks countered with anti-tank guns. Anti-tank guns countered with air bombers. Air bombers countered with anti-aircraft guns. And, ultimately, everything countered with the atom bomb.



Perfect camouflage for battle... maybe. - Wikipedia

Throughout all of the ways the simplest winner was always going to be the better equipped one (be that equipped by technology, brainpower, or luck). To counter this countries always had to become better than their partner. America didn't invent the atom bomb on a whim: it had to, to counter the bombs being sent it's way beforehand. It was a deterrent (although, unfortunately, used twice at Nagasaki and Hiroshima).

America had atom bombs, so Russia followed suit. America had several so Russia needed several more. Eventually this stockpiling lead to us having enough to wipe out the entire planet if we wanted to. It happened

gradually, not all in one go.

An interesting villain might be one who creates a doomsday device because they're bored. A much more believable villain is one who has access to doomsday devices that have been built up over centuries of fighting, especially when the enemy is perfectly within their abilities to counter it with another doomsday device of their own.



Although swords in tanks look immediately cool, Warhammer 40k loses a great deal of realism.

It is unlikely that anybody would have happened upon an atom bomb in the middle of 1066 Hastings. Neither side needed them, and if they had access to machine guns they would have used those instead. Necessity is the mother of invention, that's true, but even more-so, needlessness is the mother of mundanity. We didn't need a doomsday device, so instead we settled on a Domesday book. (Ho, ho, ho.)

While we're on the subject of Warhammer by the way, one could question the absurdity of fighting hand-to-hand combat in a universe where planets are regularly destroyed by giant intergalactic fleets. If a world is being taken over by Tyranids you aren't going to send in a fleet of nine-minuters: you're going to blow that planet to smitherines at the earliest available opportunity.

But that would be less fun and spoil the game.

Doomsday devices are, in that line, a poor plot device. We didn't fight the Cold War hand-to-hand because we didn't need to, with our world-ending bombs sitting at home ready to fire at will.

Fighting to stop somebody *making* a doomsday device is a different matter - but why would they be making one if they didn't need to? Unless, and that'd be a good plot, they're against the Earth itself and don't want to win a war, but just want to destroy everything. You'd have to come up with a pretty good reason for this suicidal move though.



That's nice, but why do you want to ride the planet through space?



New user profiles

Uses board styling now

Board Presence box now looks more like your profile in posts

My forum content: handy links to lists of things a user has posted, such as their games, resources, or music.

Awards you've won - if you have any!

Consolidated contact info, which may be replaced with more useful options soon.

Participation point information

Viewing profile - Tuna [Banning] [Administrate user]

Board presence	User statistics
<p>Tuna</p> <p>AWESOME BRO</p> <p>online</p> <p>[Test out user's permissions]</p>	<p>Joined: 09 Jul 2009, 15:12 Last visited: 25 Oct 2013, 02:52 Warnings: 0 [View user notes Warn user]</p> <p>Total posts: 3884 [0.52% of all posts / 2.29 posts per day] Search user's posts</p> <p>Most active forum: The Rec Room [3243 Posts / 83.50% of user's posts]</p> <p>Most active topic: Post What's On Your Mind [3171 Posts / 81.64% of user's posts]</p>
<p>My Forum Content</p> <p> Posts Completed Games Projects Artwork Music </p>	
<p>User Awards</p>	
<p>Contact</p> <p>Location: Everywhere & Nowhere Age: 21 Occupation: College Student Interests: Etc. Website: link</p> <p> Email: <input type="text"/> E-mail PM: <input type="text"/> PM MSN: <input type="text"/> msnm YIM: AIM: ICQ: Jabber: </p>	<p>Participation Points</p> <p>1</p> <p>Comments: 25</p> <p>Li Stone</p>

Old awards

If you think you've won an award or contest and want it adding to your profile, just let us know. If it's acceptable we'll add it to the awards section of your profile.



Keeping up Appearances

We've been a bit lax on the rules lately, but we're stamping down on low quality threads in the more professional forums. Nothing big - just make sure any games you post have more than just a download link: a brief description and a few screenshots will do, but recently people haven't even gone this far. This is the Internet, please don't expect people to download quite hefty files without some idea of what they're getting into. And remember completed games end up on the homepage, so quality is a must.



Yep, everything has to be slanted now.

SPOTLIGHT

Highlighting good looking games and other work from around the forums.



I'll admit, I have a soft spot for trading card games, but looking particularly epic this month is Kingdom Ablaze, a card game by Vergessen. A strategy card game, it is similar to games such as Magic TG, but as an added bonus the entire game is moddable. Graphics, cards, hell the whole game's database can be edited, removed and replaced with your own.

QJ 894918



fps: 2593 ram(close guess): 137

Kingdom Ablaze





I'm not one of them! I would never hurt someone...unless they deserved it, like the man in the cloak.

Crossing, by Xephyr

QJ 889217



Dragon Fantasy

QJ 889217



VILLAGER
I REMEMBER WHEN A MAN FROM OBIU TO THE EAST LET ME RIDE ON HIS SHIP. IT WAS A GREAT EXPERIENCE.

Cait

QJ 915778



corleonis

QJ 910691

Agency Owner:
Now that we have your identity, I will give you one last chance to bring us the hidden artefact from the cave within 14 days.



Good looking game by Bernd

QJ 915734



luv_kitty12

QJ 916146

Oh look, it's strawberli again

QJ 916118



Robux

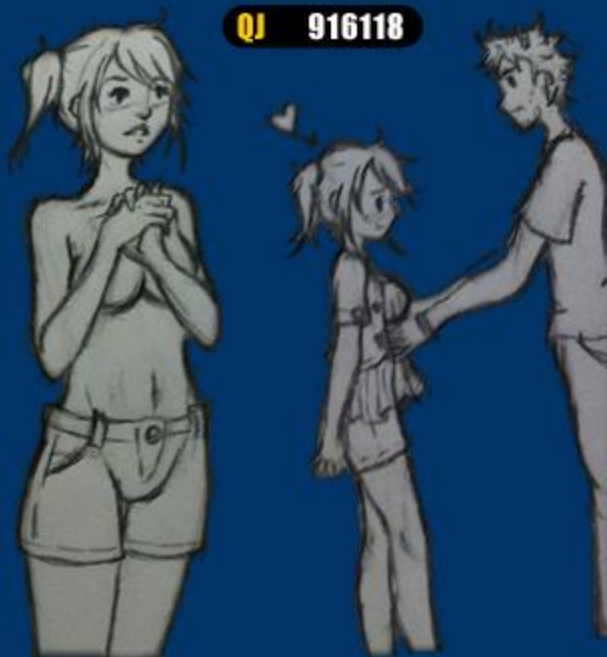
jroovers

QJ 916010



Bacon

QJ 915974



New games this month

Final Fantasy Oblivion



Version 0.2 released. This includes the Great Desert, Splinter Forest, Struden City, Arydos Temple, and various new and improved systems, such as the Crystallis Upgrade System.

Sida Semen



Sida Semen is, believe it or not, the second ejaculation based game to be released on .ORG. Created by Draf, it's a joke game, but professionally handled and it looks great, with a functional multiplayer system based on Facebook.

Jesus Christ RPG Trilogy



The first of two completed game threads by wholetonegames, Jesus Christ RPG is a set of three games based on the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Divide by Zero



A MATH FOG is encroaching upon the city and numbers attack the population. An amnesiac android must find the bearers of MATH POWER and find out who or what is behind this most mysterious mathematical invasion.

Contest Games



Don't forget, there are a whole load of new releases to play from the HBGames.org January Blues contest. You'll find them in the normal completed games forum following the end of the contest.

NEXT TIME...

Keep an eye out for the comprehensive January Blues contest special edition, which will feature all the info on every game submitted, as well as the winners of both the contest and the community champion prize.

WE NEED YOU

Unless you want us to resort to creating political posters featuring Robert Downey Junior with breasts to waste space in the eZine, we need your submissions!

Feel free to submit anything, reviews, adverts, articles, introspectives, your soul, money, your life, etc. We can't guarantee it will be featured, and it will be subject to editing to fit the mag, but hey, it can't hurt anything to try! Anything you provide is much appreciated.

Thank you to everyone who helped in this issue. Suggestions are also invaluable, so thank you for your kind and critical comments!

But I am afraid it is too late. You asked for it.



YES WE CAN

If you enjoyed this issue, back issues are available at www.hbgames.org

