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AN INTRODUCTION TO

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# MUD

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MULTI-USER DUNGEON

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DUNCAN HOWARD

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INTRODUCTION ☺ RICHARD BARTLE

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## INTRODUCTION

by Richard Bartle

The original MUD was conceived, and the core written, by Roy Trubshaw in his final year at Essex University in 1980. When I took over as the game's maintainer and began to expand the number of locations and commands at the player's disposal I had little inkling of what was going to happen. First it became a cult among the university students. Then, with the advent of Packet Switch Stream (PSS), MUD began to attract players from outside the university — some calling from as far away as the USA and Japan!

MUD proved so popular that it began to slow down the Essex University DEC-10 for other users and its availability had to be restricted to the middle of the night. In other places with DEC-10 systems to whom I lent a copy of MUD the story was the same — restrictions were imposed at Aberdeen and Oslo Universities.

Even this did little to quell enthusiasm for the game. By the time we had thirty people playing simultaneously at 3 am at Essex, with every line into DEC-10 full, Roy and I realized that we had to bring the game onto a dedicated system.

The result is a new version of MUD, which we have completely rewritten from the ground up, taking into account all the lessons learned from around forty thousand hours of playtesting which the original MUD has at the time of writing had.

The new MUD contains all of the old MUD, plus part of VALLEY, the mini-MUD developed when DEC-10 core

was too precious to enable MUD to be mounted, plus about the same number of locations again — about a thousand rooms in all. At the time of writing it is about to go online on a British Telecom owned VAX in London. Meanwhile the earlier version continues to flourish on Compunet and at Essex University.

The main technical difference between the new and the old MUD is that the new one is virtually machine independent. It no longer needs a DEC-10 to mount it. From the players' point of view the main distinguishing features are that the new one contains a vast number of new spells, some of which are described later in this book, and also it enables players to communicate with machine-generated characters. Quite why, in a multi-user game where you can chat to your fellow human beings, people should want 'intelligent mobiles' is difficult to understand. But in a recent poll of existing MUD players it was top of the list of desired innovations.

MUD has never been 'frozen'. I have always enjoyed adding new areas to it, and new commands and spells. Some of these prove popular and become permanent features of the game, others are quietly dropped. So don't be surprised if you find yourself in a familiar room and mysteriously a new 'exit' has appeared. Take a look . . . .

I also welcome feedback, comments and suggestions from MUD players, so feel free to write to me at MUSE (there's a facility on most computers running MUD enabling you to do this electronically and, yes, we can also handle good old 'snail mail' if you don't yet have a modem). I don't guarantee to be able to act on all your suggestions or to be able to answer every letter individually, but I'll be doing my best to act on sensible suggestions and to take note of any comments you make or 'bugs' you think you've uncovered (previous experience suggests that if anything can go wrong with a system, MUD players will discover it!).

Despite the many violent goings-on in MUD, the fighting, cheating, stealing, arguments, and so on, I have always appreciated the tremendous camaraderie amongst MUD players. Indeed, some people I know

count other MUD players amongst their best friends — even though they may never have met them! It's my hope that this spirit will continue as the popularity of the game increases.

MUD is a game and its enjoyability is largely determined by the people who play it. So, whether you like to use MUD as a social club, swapping jokes and anecdotes with others, or whether you are more interested in behaving like a hooligan — rushing around attacking everyone and everything in sight — makes no difference. The object is to have fun! I hope some of that spirit comes across in Duncan Howard's book and will continue as MUD develops commercially.

*Richard Bartle, 1985*  
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★★★★★

*People play MUD from all over the world. One morning recently among the players were one from Japan and two from the USA, one in San Francisco, the other in New York. Thus MUD can be seen in certain ways as the 'global village'.*

★★★★★

# I

## A DAY IN THE DEATH OF AN ADVENTURER

I had heard of MUD, of course. For months the watering places where adventurers gather had been full of rumours about a fabulous land cut off from the world by mountains and which contained immeasurable wealth; a land which was said to exercise so strong a grip over its inhabitants that many adventurers never returned from it; a land ruled by all-powerful wizards and witches who were said to delight in confusing the tenderfoot adventurers who approached them; a land where magic exercised a powerful sway and wise adventurers were advised to keep their weaponry close to hand.

One summer I set out to find MUD. All day I climbed through the mountains. As evening fell, and I was thinking of halting for the night, I came across the secret pass and ventured in. Somehow, as I stood on that narrow road with the majestic mountains behind me, I knew that I had found my goal. It was raining, a thin but steady drizzle which ran off the locks of my hair in rivulets, piercing the folds of my jerkin. Around my feet a playful rabbit snuffled and I bent down to stroke it. The brute promptly turned savage so I beat a retreat down the road. 'Be careful!' the old man back in the inn had warned me, 'Nothing is ever quite what it seems in MUD.' In the distance I heard a booming sound, as if a cannon had just been fired and a distant

voice came from somewhere: 'Help! I've been locked in the kitchen. Come and let me out please!'. Then came a sinister, reverberating chuckle, the sort made only by one who takes pleasure in another's misfortune. It echoed across the skies and sent shivers down my spine . . . .

After a while I found myself wandering in a misty graveyard. The tombstones contained the epitaphs of an adventuring hall of fame — names I had heard men whisper in hushed and awe-struck tones back in the inn — Jez, Ronan, Innocent, and the legendary Sue the Witch. Beside the grave of Denise the Witch, among the footprints where Egor the Wizard had danced, lay the recumbent figure of an old rival of mine in adventuring: Aragorn. He lay prostrate, snoring like a trooper after a hogshead of ale. Alongside him lay some gold earrings, an axe, a valuable icon and a burning brand.

I could not resist the opportunity to avail myself of these valuables and had just scooped them up when he woke. 'Oi! Give those back or I'll kill you!' he bellowed. Hastily I fled, I know not in which direction. Soon I came to the edge of a massive cliff overlooking the sea. The tang of salt lay heavy in the air. Far out at sea I could make out the shell of some rotting galleon which had been wrecked on some vicious-looking rocks. Probably the inhabitants of the Land had lured it there deliberately, I mused, in order to plunder it: they seemed that sort.

Further to the north-west was a large island. Most of it seemed forested but I could make out a clearing containing a sinister Stonehenge-like structure. I stood there absorbing the atmosphere. Somehow I felt I was a part of the Land, living in it and breathing with it. I could sense the sighs of souls passing away, hear the sounds of other adventurers doing deeds of daring, feel the gamut of human emotion, the greed, the lust for conquest and blood; but also the nobler human elements of co-operation, of hospitality to fellow travellers and of generosity to others.

A gull fluttered past me, almost within touching distance, and broke my reverie. Beside me, dressed in

flowing white robes, was a beautiful and commanding-looking maiden.

'Er, greetings' I ventured nervously, 'Who are you?'. 'I am Kronos the Witch, mortal,' she replied. 'And who might you be to trouble me?'

With trepidation I explained who I was and that this was my first visit to the Land. To my surprise, by some magical process I could not divine, she proceeded to take me all over the Land. One moment I found myself in the crow's nest of the galleon I had noticed earlier, the next I was in a sorcerer's room, decked out with mysterious, magical artefacts — and then suddenly I was down a mine. Weird and strange were the things I gathered on this tour.

Finally Kronos let me down with a bump in a pleasant pasture. 'Now make for the swamp' she told me. 'Make sure you don't take any naked lights with you' and in a puff of smoke she disappeared.

Hastily I dropped my brand and made for the swamp. Something told me it was to the east — and as I drew nearer my nostrils were assailed by a noxious smell of sulphur. So this was the famous swamp! I had heard that a magnificent crown lay somewhere inside it, awaiting the first person to discover it. I dropped all the treasure I had collected and watched it sink into the murky depths. Immediately I felt a warm glow inside me. Something told me I was no longer a mere tenderfoot but a protector! I gazed awhile at the vast tract of poisonous-looking slime ahead of me and wondered how I could find the crown in it without getting lost. My musings were soon interrupted, however. For suddenly I became aware of the presence of another being — it was Aragorn!

'I've been looking for you' he growled — and he was glaring at me ominously. Then he attacked and I was bruised by the force of a backhand blow from him. Groggily I recovered and waded into the fight. My return clout sent Aragorn flying. Yet, dazedly he recovered and his counterswing sent me reeling. Dimly I felt my life blood slipping away . . . .

## 2

### WHAT IS MUD?

MUD stands for Multi-User Dungeon. It's the most advanced, interactive, computerized adventure game in the world. What makes MUD so exciting is that, unlike 'normal' adventures where there's no-one around to see you battle against the monsters, score points and carry out deeds of daring, MUD is affected by the other people playing at the same time as you. You can chat CB-style to your fellow adventurers, cast spells on them, help them, even attack them! This makes every game of MUD different. You can save your 'persona' on the computer any time you like and, later, continue play from where you left off. To play MUD, you need a home computer (almost any with an RS-232 port will do) and a modem.

In MUD your score determines your 'level' which in turn determines your ability to play. This is MUD's method of keeping the novice players from being completely overwhelmed by the more experienced players. For example, while novices are still wandering around the mainland exploring, more advanced players are off on the island hunting dragons! Eventually your score will get high enough (assuming you're clever enough not to be killed) and you'll take on the rank of wizard. This is the ultimate aim of every MUD player, but becoming a wizard doesn't spell the end of the game. MUD changes dramatically for players who become wizards, with all sorts of new commands becoming available to them. Later chapters in this

book will explain wizards and their purpose in the game in more detail.

The MUD program comes in two parts, the database and the interpreter. The former is a description of the world, what will happen if people type certain things, and what will happen of its own accord whether you do anything or not. The latter is the program which takes in commands from the user and follows the sequence of actions which this entails as defined in the database. To clarify this, you can look on the database as if it were, say, a BASIC program. It describes exactly what you want to happen, but doesn't actually do anything. The interpreter is like the BASIC interpreter, which reads in the program (database) and brings it to life. MUD's interpreter comes in two parts, one which compiles the human-readable database into computer-readable form, and one which loads and runs this.

The reason for partitioning MUD in this way is so that it can be ported over to other machines very easily, at least in theory. All you need to do is to rewrite the interpreter, and the database can remain unchanged. Unfortunately, the database is at quite a high level, and the interpreter is pretty colossal. In the new commercial version of MUD (ie. you pay to play), the interpreter is much smaller, the brunt of the work being done in the database because it's more transportable.

When you run MUD to start with, it looks like an average adventure game. It asks you for a name, what sex you want to be, and a password. Then it gives you the description of the first room. MUD's descriptions are normally about seven or eight lines long, any more and you'd get killed while reading them! The object descriptions come on separate lines (to give some hint that they're not actually part of the description, and you can *do* things to them), and so does the information about who is present in the room with you.

The aim of MUD is to collect points. There are three ways to do this. The most common way is to get treasure and drop it in the swamp, which effectively puts it out of the game, so points can't be scored for it twice. The second most common way is by killing people. When you top another player, you get one

twenty-fourth of their points, in general. The last way is to do some menial task such as making the bed or drinking some spring water, although the points for these are piteously poor.

You can lose points, too. Points can be lost for doing stupid things like trying to smoke the wolfsbane, but more often than not they go when you're killed. In MUD you die often, how permanent it is depends upon how it happened. If you're dead, it normally means you did something which killed you, like jump off the cliff without some sort of parachute, or drink some poison or whatever. This in mudspeke, the jargon MUD players use, is known as being DEAD. You can come back from being DEAD, but you lose points for it. If you are killed in a fight, however, you end up permanently deceased, or DEAD DEAD. Hence, although fights have good rewards when won, they're soul-destroying when you lose! The only way to be DEAD DEAD for doing something silly is if you carry uranium around with you, ignoring the messages about how tired you feel, until your stamina drops below zero. Resurrection is the only way to recover from being DEAD DEAD and it costs half your points. It's very costly, but the only other alternative is to start over again.

Since players with more points tend to be more popular targets for those with an urge to kill, they have better attributes than those they started with. MUD generates a random set of characteristics for you when you start — your 'persona' which consists of three attributes, these being:

- Strength
- Stamina
- Dexterity

The other attributes usually associated with adventure games such as intelligence and charisma are provided by the actual gamer. These three main attributes all affect your gameplay in various ways, most obviously your effectiveness in a fight. Strength determines how much damage you'll do to your opponent, stamina how much damage you can take,

and dexterity affects your chances of landing a blow. The average new character's attributes total about a hundred and fifty, but as your score increases so do your attributes. When you go up a level, your attributes go up by ten points each until you reach a maximum of a hundred in each category. Be warned however, that some of MUD's monsters know no such limitations, and may have a strength and stamina of well over five hundred, making them formidable creatures indeed!

The levels in MUD have changed as the game developed, with the score needed to reach wizard increasing from approximately seventy thousand when MUD started, to nearly a quarter of a million! This is due to two reasons, firstly the game itself has expanded in size, and there is more treasure for the taking. Secondly, however, MUD has been 'solved' by quite a few people, and those who ask enough questions will be well on their way to wizard. So, as more players solve the game, the level of difficulty required to become a wizard must be preserved. The current point levels in MUD are shown in the tables at the end of this chapter.

You start off as a novice and remain a fighter until you perform a certain heroic deed. Magic-users are just as powerful as fighters but have the added ability of being able to cast spells. Long term wizards and people employed by MUSE, who are especially trusted, may become arch wizards. They are appointed by the game's administrators.

The reason for the exponential gain in points between levels is that novice players take just as long to gain their first level, as the more experienced players take to move from Sorcerer to Necromancer. This allows the better players to get back quickly to their level of play (if they're killed) and go off in search of treasure completely beyond the reach of the newer players.

Such treasures might include the throne, buried deep within the dwarven realm, or perhaps the legendary druidical treasure trove hidden below the dragon's island! And finding these items is just half the problem, for to score any points you must return safely to

the swamp and deposit your treasure there. Dumping hard-earned treasure in a swamp doesn't sound like the best thing you could do with it, but this ensures that other players can't score points for treasure that you've already been credited for. If you are waylaid on your way back to the swamp, and have your entire haul stolen, you get no reward for your work. Instead the points go to the player who finally manages to drop the treasure in the swamp. The strategies that can be built up around this are endless.

This gives rise to one of MUD's main characteristics which is that it allows you to behave in a way which would be totally unacceptable in real life. It is this fantasy element which makes the game very enjoyable and encourages players to return for more. You won't be able to recover your treasure if it is stolen, but you might extract some grim form of pleasure in exacting punishment from the player who deprived you of the fruits of your labours. Revenge can be taken by chasing after the felon with a broadsword and running him through. You won't score nearly as many points for this, but perhaps such a threat will keep that player from trying the same thing again! There is a good chance you will kill the offending player, but there is the possibility that you will lose the fight. Fighting techniques and strategies are detailed later in this book.

MUD is a huge game, played in an area often described as the Land. Currently, MUD has over a thousand rooms to explore so it's easy to see why you'll be able to spend quite a long time just getting familiar with the game. A room doesn't have to be an enclosed chamber but, as with most adventure games, it's just an area with its own description. The eastern pasture is as much a room, for example, as the entrance to the mine. You move from one room to another by telling MUD to move your persona in a specific direction eg.: GO SOUTH. To find out where (most of) the exits from a room are, type EXITS and a list of possible directions is displayed. Sometimes exits are hidden though, and it's wise to try out every possibility.

As you explore the Land it's likely that you'll encounter one of the wizards or witches that have

mastered the game. Called wizzes, these are players who have 'finished' MUD and are now playing as the game's referees, helping (or hindering) the mortal players as they see fit. Wizards have powers far beyond those of ordinary players, some of which will be described later. At this point, it's fair to say that wizzes are not to be trifled with. They can be great allies, but they can also be horrendous enemies if you get on the wrong side of them. Remember, wizards are usually happy to help you, but if you pester them continually for advice and points it won't go well for you in the long run. Part of the game (in fact, a major portion of it!) is learning to allow for each wizard's own little eccentricities. That you will learn later, so for the time being let's stick to the basics and examine MUD's command set. This is what MUD allows you to tell your persona to do in the game.

### PLAYER LEVELS AND POINTS FOR FIGHTERS

| <i>Points Needed</i> | <i>MALE</i>         | <i>FEMALE</i>        |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 0                    | NOVICE              |                      |
| 200                  | PROTECTOR           |                      |
| 400                  | YEOMAN              |                      |
| 800                  | WARRIOR             |                      |
| 1,600                | SWORDSMAN           | SWORDSWOMAN          |
| 3,200                | HERO                | HEROINE              |
| 6,400                | SUPERHERO           | SUPERHEROINE         |
| 12,800               | CHAMPION            | CHAMPIONNE           |
| 25,600               | GUARDIAN            |                      |
| 51,200               | LEGEND              |                      |
| 102,400              | SIR ( <i>name</i> ) | LADY ( <i>name</i> ) |
| 204,800              | WIZARD              | WITCH                |

### PLAYER LEVELS AND POINTS FOR MAGIC-USERS

| <i>Points Needed</i> | <i>MALE</i> | <i>FEMALE</i> |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 0                    | NOVICE      |               |
| 200                  | SEER        | SEERESS       |
| 400                  | SOOTHSAYER  |               |
| 800                  | CABALIST    |               |
| 1,600                | MAGICIAN    |               |
| 3,200                | ENCHANTER   | ENCHANTRESS   |
| 6,400                | SPELLBINDER | SPELLBINDRESS |
| 12,800               | SORCERER    | SORCERESS     |
| 25,600               | NECROMANCER | NECROMANCESS  |
| 51,200               | WARLOCK     |               |
| 102,400              | MAGE        |               |
| 204,800              | WIZARD      | WITCH         |

## WHAT IS MUD?

The original version of MUD, has a very different table of levels, as there is no such class as a fighter. It looks like this:

| <i>Points Needed</i> | <i>MALE</i> | <i>FEMALE</i> |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 0                    | NOVICE      |               |
| 400                  | WARRIOR     |               |
| 800                  | HERO        | HEROINE       |
| 1,600                | CHAMPION    | CHAMPIONNE    |
| 3,200                | SUPERHERO   | SUPERHEROINE  |
| 6,400                | ENCHANTER   | ENCHANTRESS   |
| 12,800               | SORCERER    | SORCERESS     |
| 25,600               | NECROMANCER | NECROMANCESS  |
| 51,200               | LEGEND      |               |
| 102,400              | WIZARD      | WITCH         |

## 3

### MUD COMMANDS

You need to guide your character through the Land by entering commands which are processed by the MUD program. When MUD is ready for you to tell it what your persona is to do, it displays a \*. At this point MUD is waiting for you to enter a command, telling it what to do. Movement is as in most adventure games: go west (or just W), out, back, south and so on. In addition to movement, MUD has many other commands. This chapter lists some of them, and gives a few examples of their use.

#### AUTOWHO

List who is playing every set period. For example, AW:10 will list players every 10 seconds; you can stop this by typing AW:0.

#### BACK

Move in the direction you just came from.

#### BRIEF

Shortens MUD's textual descriptions, reversed with the VERBOSE command.

#### BYE

Quit the game and logoff the system.

## MUD COMMANDS

### COMMANDS

Display a list of all the valid commands.

### CONVERSE

Enter 'conversational' mode, where all text typed is treated as speech unless surrounded by parentheses. Conversational mode is exited by typing \*.

### DROP <item>

Drop something that you're holding on to. For example, DROP gems in swamp.

### EMPTY

Empty a container that you're holding. For example, EMPTY sack will GET everything contained in a sack (if you are holding the sack at the time).

### EXITS

Display the valid exits from the room you are in.

### FEED <monster> WITH <something>

Try to feed an item to a monster, such as FEED ogre WI acorn.

### FLEE <direction>

Retreat from a fight or monster. FLEE OUT (shortened to FO) — for example, means leave *very* quickly!

### FOLLOW <player>

Follow someone (or something) around the Land. FOLLOW zombie — now, you're following a zombie, for whatever reason . . . .

### GET <item>

Pick up an item in the same room as you. GET axe or GET ring from sack; or even better, GET all — a definite timesaver.

### GIVE <item> TO <someone>

Give something to another player, such as GIVE crown TO Paysul — which would be a very generous act.

### GO <direction>

Move in the specified direction. GO down — works well on staircases.

### HELP

Displays some useful information.

### HELP <player>

Offer to assist another player. HELP Egor; perhaps together you can lift a heavy chest?

### HINTS

Displays some helpful hints to get you started.

### HUG <player>

Hug another player (try it!). Will also transfer a small number of points from the hugger to the hugged.

### INFO

Displays some useful information about MUD.

### INVENTORY

Lists all the items in your possession.

### KEEP <item>

If you keep something, and type DROP all, the kept item will not be dropped. You can get rid of it by either UNKEEPing it, or by specifically telling MUD you want to drop that single item.

### KILL <player/monster>

MUD's all time great command. KILL ogre with axe or KILL Igor with broadsword — all fairly self-explanatory.

## MUD COMMANDS

KISS <player>

Kiss another player (rather like HUG in that a small amount of points is transferred).

LAUGH

Display your amusement.

LEVELS

List how many points you need to move from level to level.

LOOK

Examine your surroundings or an item.

LOSE <player>

Stops someone from following you.

PRONOUNS

Display MUD's current interpretation of HIM, HER and THEM.

QUICKWHO

Display an abbreviated list of MUD's current players.

QUIT

Exit the game, but don't logout.

REFUSE <player>

Stop another player from helping you.

RETALIATE WITH <weapon>

Defend yourself if attacked. Its wise to type this fairly quickly, and you can shorten it to RET <weapon>.

SAVE

Save your persona in its current state (this is done automatically when you leave the game).

SCORE

Display your character's score.

## MUD COMMANDS

SHOUT <message>

Shout a message to all the other players in the game. In later versions of MUD, only players in nearby areas will get your messages. SH HI, anyone here playing from Aberdeen?

SLEEP

Go to sleep and recover some stamina.

SPELLS

List the spells you can cast.

STEAL <item> FROM <player>

Try to steal an item from another player.

TELL <player>, <message>

Tell another player something. You can also do the same thing simply by preceeding your message with the other player's name, eg.: ZAPHOD Where is the umbrella?

UNKEEP

The reverse of KEEP.

VALUE <item>

Display the point of value of an item. VALUE crown — displays a number between two thousand and five thousand.

VERBOSE

The reverse of BRIEF.

WEIGH <item>

Display the weight of an item.

WHO

List the names and levels of the other players in the game. QW can also be used (which is short for QUICKWHO) to display a slightly abbreviated list.

WRITE <object>, <message>

Write a message somewhere, in a book perhaps.

This chapter has only touched on MUD's vocabulary, which is immense, and it has not described MUD's ability to understand entire sentences. Using advanced artificial intelligence (AI) programming techniques, MUD is able to parse amazingly complex commands. Keep the above list handy because a quick glance at it while playing can often aid you in solving a puzzle or getting around a problem.

## 4

### FIGHTING IN MUD

One of the first things you'll learn in MUD is how to kill things. MUD is a very violent game, and pacifists never live long (with the notable exception of Innocence the Witch, who never killed anyone on her rise to wisdom!). Monsters and other players can be very hostile indeed. There are many weapons that you can use in MUD, ranging from large sticks to magical longswords. The specifics vary from one MUD to another but the Essex version has such weapons as: longsword, broadsword, chain (made of solid gold), axes, épée, rapier and burning torches. The syntax for using any of these weapons is very simple, all you type is:

KILL <monster/player> WITH <weapon>

Then you're propelled into a fearsome battle with your enemy. MUD itself takes over at the fighting once you've attacked something (or when you're attacked). It takes into account any weapons used and the combatants' attributes when calculating the blows, each of which, whether it strikes home or lands harmlessly, will be described to you. A persona who has been attacked has the option of retaliating with any weapons on his or her person (if they can type fast enough!). Combat in MUD is a very serious business, with a lot of points involved. If you're slain in combat, half your points are lost forever, that being the price of resurrection (in earlier versions you had to restart completely as a novice!).

Conflicts do not have to end in death, you can flee from the battle by typing:

FLEE <direction>

Retreat involves dropping everything you're carrying and the loss of a few points, but that's decidedly better than being slain. Discretion is the better part of valour.

It's your stamina that determines how long you can hold up in a fight. Every time you're hit, it drops by a few points, and if it goes below zero, you die. Fighting leaves your persona in a somewhat battered state, and it's always wise to spend some time recuperating after every fight. There are several ways to regain stamina, the easiest of which is going to sleep. The longer you sleep, the more points you recover (until you're fully healed), but it's a time-consuming process and you leave yourself open to attack while doing so. A faster way of recovering stamina is to eat a wafer. Found deep in the dwarven realm, these wafers have great healing properties: one wafer can restore up to forty points of stamina. If you quit the game, one point of stamina is recovered per minute, so by playing two characters regularly, you can swap if one of them is in danger of dying and you don't want to stop playing the game. Another advantage to this, is that if one of your personas is killed, you won't be completely without the advantages that come with owning a high level persona.

A gang of players is quite difficult to overcome, and players often find it beneficial to form one of their own. Such terror tactics aren't too common as most players aren't willing to co-operate to that extent, but, when they are used, gangs are deadly! The easiest way to keep a mob out of your hair is to join a group, and this leads to 'wars' between rival factions of MUD players. Some versions of MUD allow a third character type known as the 'berserker'. The future of this character type is in doubt as its only purpose in life is to kill things. Indeed, they don't score points for dropping treasure in the swamp, only for killing monsters and/or other players (some drop treasure in the swamp anyway, just to annoy other players and incite them to violence). A berserker has increased

attributes, does slightly better in combat and receives more points for killing something than the average character. When berserkers get enough points to be classed as wizards (a very rare thing), they aren't given wizardly powers but instead a strength and stamina of two hundred points each, twice the maximum of any other character. A berserker wizard is a very, very dangerous character and should be avoided at all costs.

The validity of the berserker character has been questioned many times, by MUD's followers. They seem to appear whenever wizards decide to get rid of someone, and the game can get very difficult if not impossible. On the other hand, the presence of berserkers ensures that only the most skillful players ever reach the rank of wizard. It's a two-way argument, but berserkers aren't allowed in the version of MUD now running at Essex University or on Compunet (much to the discomfiture of some). Oslo University's MUD (running since mid-1984) allows berserkers, and the game's 'wizards' take great delight in using their berserkers to wreak havoc. Especially dangerous is Slayer, the berserker wizard of Knut Borges, who has already been killed off several times. Every time he reappears, having been worked up quickly by Knut, to hack (and slay) again! It's worth noting that many people (who are *not* wizards) prefer the Norwegian game, to the domestic one despite its greater difficulty.

One of the oldest tricks in MUD is to summon someone and then attack them when they appear before you. It's a very nasty (but effective) system, as summoning someone also forces them to drop all their equipment (and weapons) and the summoinee has nothing to defend themselves with. You can guard against this by keeping a firestone in your possession, as it protects you from spells of summoning. If a player casts a successful summoning spell on you, and you're in possession of a stone it will tell you about the attempt, and you'll know who to look out for in the future. If the worst happens and you are summoned, then type F 0 as quickly as you can, that being the abbreviated form of FLEE OUT. If you think your persona will last long enough, you can try stealing the weapon of your attacker and then retaliating with it.

It's not often a successful tactic, but if you do pull it off, you feel a kind of poetic justice and your attacker is bound to feel a little put out by it as well.

The summoning spell and others are very useful when fighting in MUD. You can also cripple your victims, or send them to sleep before going after them, and you'll have quite an advantage. The spells in MUD, how to use them and their effects are detailed in the next chapter.

## 5

### MUD SPELLS

As your persona gains in power, it not only becomes a more proficient fighter, but more powerful in the arcane arts of spell-casting. As MUD has evolved from its fairly primitive beginnings, the complexity of its spells has increased. The earlier versions of MUD had these spells:

|                |                                       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| SLEEP <person> | send victim to sleep                  |
| WHERE <item>   | locate something or someone           |
| FORCE <person> | force another player to do            |
| :<command>     | anything                              |
| DUMB           | victim loses the ability to speak     |
| BLIND          | victim loses the ability to see       |
| DEAF           | victim loses the ability to hear      |
| CRIPPLE        | victim loses the ability to move      |
| SUMMON         | victim appears instantly in your room |

These spells have carried over into the newer versions of MUD, in various permutations. The commercial version of MUD gives your persona a 'magic' stamina as well as an ordinary one. When it runs out you're not able to cast any more spells. Your spell points will be recovered, like normal stamina, by sleeping or time spent off-line. The more powerful spells use more spell points and require the caster to be of a minimum level. A list of MUD spells in order of ease to cast, follows. Those marked \* are reversible, eg.: UNGLow. Most spells have a duration and will run out after a period of time.

## DIVINE

Detect magic/invisibility.

## GLOW \*

Radiate light.

## HOLD \*

Stops an object from being opened.

## INVIGORATE

Removes need to sleep, eat and so on.

## SCRAMBLE \*

Make a piece of writing unreadable.

## SHIELD

Make yourself harder to hit.

## WISH

Make a wish to the powers that be.

## FREEZE \*

Turn water to ice.

## IGNITE \*

Set fire to something.

## INFRAVISION \*

See in the dark without light.

## LOCATE

Tells you where something is.

## MELT \*

Turn ice into water.

## PARTIAL INVIS \*

Become invisible to certain creatures.

## REMEMBER and RECALL

RECALL will teleport you to the place where you last cast REMEMBER.

## CHANGE

Toggle someone's sex.

## CURE \*

Heal yourself.

## DAZZLE \*

Blind someone temporarily.

## GAG \*

Stop someone from speaking.

## LEVITATE

Move up or down, but no lateral movement.

## PLUG \*

Deafen someone temporarily.

## PROTECT \*

From a specific threat eg.: fire.

## PURIFY \*

Unpoison something.

## SLEEP

Put someone to sleep temporarily.

## WEB \*

Entangle someone temporarily.

## CLAIRAUDIENCE \*

Hear all that happens in a named room.

## CLAIRVOYANCE \*

See all that happens in a named room.

## MUD SPELLS

### FIREBALL

Everyone in room takes damage but you.

### FIREWALL \*

Prevent anything from entering or exiting.

### FLY

Allows you to fly.

### ILLUSION \*

Create a vision which appears real.

### INVISIBILITY \*

No-one can see you when you cast this spell.

### STRENGTH

Increases your strength.

### THUNDERFLASH

Deafens, blinds, dumbs and cripples victim.

### WATERBREATHE

Lets you breathe underwater.

### BLIND \*

Victim loses sight.

### CRIPPLE \*

Victim loses mobility.

### DEAFEN \*

Victim loses hearing.

### DUMB \*

Victim loses ability to speak.

### EXORCISE

Dispose of undead or corpse.

## MUD SPELLS

### HEAL

Get back lots of stamina.

### ICEWALL \*

Stops anything from entering room.

### LIGHTNING

Zaps an individual.

### PARALYSE

Stops victim from doing anything.

### SUMMON

Transport someone to where you stand.

### ATTACH

Leave your body and enter another.

### DELAY \*

Delay all victim's commands.

### DETACH

Return to your body and exorcise old one.

### FORCE

Force victim to enter a command.

### FORCESPHERE \*

Nothing/no-one enters your area.

### INFORM

Tells you if someone casts a spell on you.

### REINCARNATE

Make a zombie from a corpse.

### TELEPORT

Go somewhere in MUD directly.

## MUD SPELLS

### TIMEBOMB

Delayed action fireball.

### BEWITCH

Puts victim under your control.

### CREATE \*

Create certain objects or monsters.

### SHELL \*

No spells can be cast on or by you.

### TIMESTOP

No-one but you can do anything for a short while.

### TURN

Change something into something else.

The game has been expanded enormously, and the spells let players have a great time causing havoc. With many players armed with such a battery of commands, it's easy to see how each game of MUD is unique. In addition, Richard Bartle takes delight in adding a new spell every once in a while, so this list will probably be out of date fairly soon. Even so, it gives you an idea of the range of spells that MUD allows you to cast. Of course the newest players won't have this many spells at their disposal, but as they gain levels they'll also gain spells. In fact, one of the great incentives to work for more points, is that you'll be able to try out newer and more powerful spells. The variety of spells is enormous and you can accomplish all sorts of things with them. Never before have you been able to put your computer to sleep, only to have a fireball thrown in your direction!

## 6

## MONSTERS

The Land is populated by a fearsome collection of monsters. Sometimes they're guarding a particular treasure, but a good proportion of them roam around, attacking adventurers at random. The denizens of MUD range from the undead, to huge, fire-breathing dragons. There are dwarves, goblins, snakes, evil dryads and even a club-wielding ogre! All of these creatures are lethal, some more than others. Careful experimentation will reveal that there is more than one way to kill a dragon!

One of the best methods for ridding the Land of a troublesome beast is to team up with several other players and take on the monster together. While a dragon can kill player after player with no ill effects, a band of ten is another story. However, it's often quite difficult to get ten players to co-operate for long enough. A single player can do away with many of the less powerful monsters in MUD due to the deadly destructive force of the magic wand. Players of higher levels can ZAP troublesome beasts and be rid of them. However, if you try to ZAP a really nasty creature, be prepared for some surprising results. Monsters that can be zapped with the wand are:

- Zombies
- Skeletons
- Evil Dryads

- most Dwarves
- Ogres
- Vipers
- Goblins

Some that are too powerful for the wand are:

- Dragons
- Sharks
- The Wolf
- Guardian
- Dwarves
- Golems

Monsters might not be in MUD to harm your persona though, they do have alternate uses. Some of them are quite talkative, and may provide you with hints and advice. Sometimes in MUD-2 a wizard will assume the guise of a monster though, so you'll never know exactly who (or what!) you're dealing with.

There are many other creatures that you'll encounter but I'll leave them for you to discover. If you ZAP another player with the wand, it won't kill them straight away, but MUD will treat it as an attack with a very powerful weapon. Through careful playing, MUD's monsters can be avoided, but one slip can mean the end of a valuable character. Funnily enough, you will find the monsters in MUD to be the least of your problems: compared to the other players that is!

## 7

### TREASURE IN MUD

Most of the objects that you'll find scattered about the Land are worth points if dropped in the swamp. Some of the treasure (known in mudspeke as T) are very easy to find, but aren't worth very much. New players are left to go after these, while more experienced players go off in quest of bigger and better things. Easy to find treasure, called surface T because it's just sitting on the ground at the beginning of each game, doesn't last too long as players snap it up very quickly. The other treasures which lie deep in tin mines or in wrecked galleons off the coast are much more difficult to reach, and the major portion of each game is spent trying to find these. The most valuable of all the different treasures are not only hard to find, but protected by all manner of puzzles, riddles and traps!

If an object isn't valuable as far as points go, it probably has a special use that will help lead to other more valuable items. For example, the wand is one of MUD's most important items. It has no intrinsic value, yet the start of every game of MUD is marked by a mad rush of players trying to find it, and other magical items before anyone else. The wand is extremely useful to higher level characters who use it to destroy many of the lesser monsters which plague the Land. Instead of engaging in deadly combat, the wand can be used as a kind of medieval laser, to ZAP monsters quickly and easily into non-existence. The wand does have its limits though; stronger monsters can resist its effects.

If you try to ZAP the ravenous wolf, the wand is eaten (thus removing it from the game) and then the wolf goes after *you*! Attempting to ZAP the dragon produces similar results. Other items to look out for in MUD include the amulet, the oracle, the mirror and the crystals, to describe only a few. Some treasures in MUD require a secondary item to get at them, a basic example of which is the tin, which needs to be dug out of the walls with a sharp object. Here is a list of some of MUD's more important objects and their methods of use.

### **The Wand**

The wand can be used to ZAP items, monsters or even other players. This makes it one of MUD's most useful items as it allows you to avoid costly engagements with various assailants.

### **The Oracle**

The oracle allows you to find out the location of any object you desire, you can use it up to seven times before its magic fades.

### **The Amulet**

You can force another player to do anything, but only once, with the amulet. After you have used its magic once, the amulet turns to dust in your hands. Until you reach wizard, this is the closest you will get to the wizard command FORCE.

### **The Mirror**

High-level characters can spy on other players using the mirror but only use it once per game. To stop snooping, however, the mirror must be broken. Another wiz command is unveiled here, SNOOP.

### **The Umbrella**

When opened, the broly (or parasol) is very useful for descending from high places. Like jumping off a cliff, for example.

### **The Bow and Baton**

A player who uses these items together is able to transport himself all the way across the Land with a pass of the hand (literally). There are several items in MUD which can be used to get from place to place. Not all of them are as obvious as the flying carpet or the pegasus, however.

### **The Crystals**

Characters can change their sex by inhaling the crystals.

### **The Wafers**

Found scattered about the Land, these small biscuits boast amazing restorative properties.

### **The Pick**

Players can dig for tin and other treasure with this item, but more importantly, it's used to get into the dwarven realm.

### **The Lantern**

Players can use the lantern as a temporary source of light when exploring the unlit areas in MUD. The lantern is safer than an open flame as it doesn't ignite swamp gas!

### **Firestones**

The glowing gems are used as light sources too, but they also have several side effects. Some are helpful — they prevent your being summoned involuntarily — but others aren't so beneficial.

### **The Horn**

The horn is another item which can be used once only. It is used to summon another player and deposit him or her in the same room as you — which is extremely useful if you want to kill someone.

While this list is by no means complete, it does give you an idea of the variety available during a game of

MUD. None of the items listed above is worth that many points (except the oracle and the amulet before you use their magic) but through their correct use, clever players can locate various valuable treasures. There are some restrictions on the use of magical items, however. To use most of them you must be of a certain rank (or higher), which keeps new players from grabbing items which they'll have no idea of what to do with (it also gives them an incentive for reaching a higher level, so that they can try them out!). It's always interesting to watch your persona grow in strength as you play, and to explore your new capabilities as you ascend the ranks, towards wizard.

Players will find that if they play in teams, MUD becomes much easier. Working together, two players can accomplish a lot more in the same amount of time than if they weren't co-operating. Some players take a fiendish delight in double-crossing their former allies and making off with the loot, so choose your friends carefully. On top of that, wizards often intervene (meddle?), by forcing one member of a team to do something which causes the other member to doubt his reliability. Occasionally, gangs will form and terrorize the other players, who often develop their own gangs and so on. The multi-user aspect of MUD is a lot of fun, and this sort of player-to-player interaction takes place all the time.

Long sessions of play will eventually deplete the Land's supply of treasure and at that point, a wizard will reset the game. A reset forces all the players to quit the game and saves their persona. It then restores the Land to its original state, with all the treasure (and monsters!) put back in their starting positions (which may vary from game to game). A reset can be upsetting to players who have spent a lot of time to get to a specific area only to get chucked out of the game, so wizards will normally only reset the game if every player agrees to it. On the other hand, MUDs sometimes need to reset themselves in which case you get a message `Something magical is happening . . .` In that case you will leave the game, and will be able to restart in two or three minutes. If this happens and you lose many points, a friendly wizard will be happy

to help you regain lost points. This doesn't happen too often though, but to be safe you should type in `SAVE` every time you drop some treasure in the swamp or score a lot of points. If there are no wizards about and the game has run out of treasure, there is a way in some MUDs to allow mortals to reset the game. It's currently a 'reset button' hidden deep in the mine, which only works if the majority of the treasures are in the swamp and if no-one else is playing. This prevents mortals who can find the button from making life a misery for everyone else, by resetting the game once a minute.

# 8

## WIZARDS AND WITCHES

MUD's multi-user capabilities set it aside from normal adventure games. There are many of these features, for example communication, interaction by way of giving, stealing, kissing and of course the great favourite, killing your fellow players. These are the reasonably direct consequences of having more than one person playing in the same world at the same time. The most significant development, however, is in an entirely different vein. It is the concept of a wizard/witch.

Since 'wizard/witch' is a bit of a mouthful, and since MUD players are too fastidious to tolerate the type mismatch involved in calling a male a witch or a female a wizard, the MUDspeke term 'wiz' has been coined to mean wizard/witch generically. You never know, by 1999 it might have got into the *OED*. It's possible to make wiz in four or five games if you get absolutely all the treasure. Indeed, you can make it in only one game if you don't mind kicking the beggar 102,400 times! Once you've reached wiz, however, the game changes.

It's not fair to say the game actually changes, it's still the same MUD, it's just that once you're a wiz it takes on a new perspective. If MUD were an ordinary adventure, you could expect at this point some kind of 'endgame', and that would be it. But MUD is not an ordinary adventure, and reaching wiz is where the fun really begins! When you're a wiz, you have power. You can do virtually anything. A forbidding array of commands

lies at your fingertips. These are so virulent that it's easy to crash the game if you're not careful. Once people make it to wiz in the early versions of MUD, for the next couple of days the game crashes with monotonous regularity until they learn the ropes. Fortunately, one of the first commands they learn is how to reset the game so that they can unscrew all the problems they've caused!

Of course, in any commercial version of MUD this sort of thing has to be toned down a bit, otherwise you'd get people from rival games companies making wiz and keeping your world in a perpetual state of destruction. Since MUD has no competition as yet, though, this fragility is left unchecked to give the 'mortals' (non-wiz) a little more incentive to get those few elusive points that they need to reach the top.

Most wiz commands remain in the commercial MUD, however. Some are powerful, yet not dangerous, for example SNOOP. This enables you to see what is on the screen of any mortal you choose, exactly as it appears to them. In effect, everything MUD sends to their terminal is copied and sent to yours too (in addition to the stuff you'd normally get). Of course, you can't snoop on someone who is snooping on someone else, otherwise it's possible to get into a sort of feedback loop, which wouldn't do the game much good at all! SNOOP is one of the most popular wiz commands, and it's normal for wizzes to be snooping on a mortal full-time. The reason it's so good is that there's a certain wicked human fascination for watching other people making complete idiots of themselves as they try to go about doing things completely the wrong way.

Other reasonably safe commands include the ability to pick up or drop objects anywhere you like without having to move there. And if a wizard did feel the need to make an appearance, he could materialise instantaneously rather than take the normal walking sort of route which mortals are obliged to use. There are a few rooms, in fact, which are *impossible* to reach except by teleportation. These are the STORE, full of useful spare items which you might want players to come across (like zombies, for example); HOME, the wiz room where you can sit and SNOOP on mortals without their even

knowing you're in the game (since HOME is cloaked from their view); LIMBO, an exit-less room which corresponds to a sort of 'sin-bin', a place to dump mortals who are annoying you to cool off, leaving them to languish until you deign to release them; and XMASBX, which contains all you need for a merry Christmas, and which wizzes distribute to players when they feel the seasonal urge to do a bit of goodwill to all mankind.

These abilities are reasonably harmless; tormenting mortals by sitting around in HOME, SNOOPing on them and dropping strange objects in the room you think they're about to enter is the sort of fun thing wizzes do all the time. Some of the things they can do are not harmless, though. Primary among these is the FOD. This stands for Finger Of Death, and what it does is more or less obvious from that! Once you're FODed you're DEAD DEAD, ie. you lose all your points, your persona is destroyed, and you have to start again from scratch. Wizzes mainly FOD each other, since they can come back straight away using a password on wiz mode. Once you've made wiz, you just say the password and you're back to wiz again. Sometimes, though, if mortals *really* play up a lot and pester you despite your ominous warnings of the dark and mysterious things you're going to do to them, you might use your FOD on them as a last resort.

Wizzes, although all-powerful, are meant to be generally benign. Most of what is done to mortals is really just to tease them, and they are generally rewarded by a few points or some treasure once the wiz has finished play. Mortals don't have much say in the matter, naturally, but are spurred on by the knowledge that when they finally make wiz, they'll be able to dish out similar treatment to hapless, innocent victims!

There is an unwritten code of conduct which wizzes follow, and which works because the wizzes were once mortals themselves. Wizzes know all too well what it's like to be summoned to a cold, dark room and left alone with hehehe ringing in their ears. They know the disappointment of forging through the swamp for half an hour only to find that someone has swapped the incredibly valuable crown in the centre for a fake one.

They've felt the pangs of outrage from being attacked by a souped-up bunny rabbit which it takes fifteen minutes to kill. In short, they know when to stop.

Wizards should be treated with respect without being fawning. Most wizards will be happy to assist a mortal who is in desperate trouble or who finds a needed item which is beyond mortal grasp. However, nothing annoys a wizard more than a mortal begging for treasure because he or she can't work out how to find it, or asking to be transported to a different area of MUD because the player is too lazy (or scared) to make the journey alone. A wizard is not a Santa Claus nor a taxi service; on the other hand, wizards are (usually!) benign and they listen to reasonable requests for help from hardworking players, as well as preventing them from doing something disastrous now and then.

The wiz-code makes for a very flexible system, and it gives wizards a lot of freedom. A certain amount of trust is involved between each wizard and the game's owners. Mortals can complain to 'higher' authorities if they feel they've suffered unjustly at the hands of a wizard, and if that wiz's name becomes associated with unfair play, then he or she will certainly face severe reprimands. It's a system that looks very open to abuse, but on the whole it seems to work well.

A total exceeding fifty thousand hours of play has been spent on MUD, and if any single point arises from that it's that wizzes make the game. They rule it, they stamp their personalities on it, and they give mortals something to aim for, a goal, a purpose, something which explains why they're in there hacking and slaying. Without wizzes, MUD would only be half the fun that it is with them. If MUD does nothing else for multi-user adventure games except for evolving the concept of a wiz, it should always be remembered.

## 9

### PLACES IN THE LAND

MUD has been growing in size since it was written, as Richard Bartle, the game's co-author and current maintainer, expands and modifies it. The MUD running on university computers now consists of about four hundred rooms, and the commercial version is made up of over one thousand rooms, some of which came from the university version. It's a bit much to get to grips with, so MUSE, who run the commercial version of MUD, have thoughtfully provided an incomplete map with every starter-pack they sell. Using this, you'll be able to find your way around and soon you'll be adding to the map as your explorations carry you further into the unknown. Only when you make it to wizard do MUSE supply you with a map showing all MUD's locations.

Upon your first game of MUD, visit the gravedigger's cottage which is west and south of the starting position. After that, a trip to the swamp is in order (in case you have found some treasure, or just for the experience). Getting to the swamp is usually no problem, all you need do is type SWAMP (or GO SWAMP) and MUD will determine the proper direction for you. This doesn't work for any locations apart from the swamp though, so you can't type GO ISLAND and expect to get there. To reach the island, you have to descend a very steep cliff and traverse some fairly treacherous waters on a small raft. One slip, and you'll drown (losing all your treasure), but since you're not DEAD DEAD you can come back into the game, little the

worse for wear. Watch out for the shark though, because it's quite capable of killing you (DEAD DEAD this time!) and it's very, very nasty. Once you finally reach the island, you have to avoid the dragon, which will most certainly slaughter you if it happens upon you (or you happen upon it!). And for what do you endure these hardships? Beneath the ring of stones lies a cache of druidical treasure of fantastic value, but to get to it you must first solve a number of — often deadly — puzzles.

In the original version of MUD running on Compunet and at Essex University, insofar as MUD has places which you can put dates to, everything gets older the further away from the Start that you wander. Thus the house has a 1930s' look while to the far north of the mainland the disused railway line and tin mine have a post-Industrial Revolution feel. The galleon out at sea gives the impression of being related to the *Mary Rose*, conjuring up visions of swashbuckling pirates and smugglers.

Underneath the mainland in places like the dwarven realm we seem to enter a Tolkien-like world of Middle Earth while, further afield, in places like the shrine, or the druid chamber beneath the ring of stones on the island there are echoes of an Arthurian Britain: objects like the chalice, sacrificial stone slabs and extremely powerful magic reinforce this impression. Some players associate the Island of Woe with its enormous arch, which bestows temporary invisibility on those who pass through it, with Grecian myths.

The new MUD is not so clear-cut in its layout. For a start it incorporates VALLEY, the mini-MUD consisting of around a hundred rooms, which currently lies directly east of Start. In Essex and Compunet MUD, if you go east from Start, however (you squeeze through the narrow gap . . .), you find yourself out of the game and you have to re-enter via VALLEY or MUD. Only wizards can hop from one game to the other with the command SUPERGO — and even they can't carry objects with them from one game to the other (the databases couldn't take it). In the new MUD, even mortals can wander freely between the two Lands and, since players begin the game in random locations (the

dangerousness of which is related to their current level), the feeling that everything begins at Start should dissipate. Most of the new MUD's additions are said to lie north of VALLEY and north-east of MUD, though at the time of writing rumours abound of a vast refurbishing taking place to the desolate Admiral Bonbow Inn in VALLEY and of new tunnels being dug deep within the mine to allow greater interconnection. There is also rumour of a great realm in the mountains where fabulous treasure awaits those brave enough to climb there. There is only one thing for it — you have to explore it for yourself.

It's very important to make detailed, complete maps on your journey to wizdom. If you don't try all the possible exits from every location, you'll surely miss many important locations, perhaps even whole portions of the Land. And what's the point of slogging through a difficult maze, only to have to solve it again next time, because you don't remember how you managed before?

★★★★★

*Another very popular wiz command is FORCE. If you SHOUT in MUD all the other players see what you're saying on their screens. So if you type Force Asterix: shout I am a total wally, everyone gets the message Asterix shouts 'I am a total wally'!*

★★★★★

# 10

## DAEMONS

Many times during a game of MUD, strange and inexplicable events occur. Known to the game's authors as daemons, these events are triggered off by some specific event. Some take quite a while to take effect, the longest being nearly half an hour from the initial action to the end result. During the delay, play continues in the normal fashion. For example, if your persona comes across a bottle of rum and drinks it, nothing will happen, not to start with anyway. After a few minutes, however, you'll find your persona is falling asleep, stumbling backwards and basically tripping over its own feet like any inebriated adventurer. There are two ways to recover from this, one of which is to leave the game. The other is a little quicker, if more gruesome, and I'll let you discover that for yourself.

Daemons are not rarities that crop up once in a while, they appear in every area of the game. When you wave the bow and baton and are magically teleported, that is a daemon. When you ZAP a monster with the wand, or fire a cannon and destroy a door, that is a daemon. Daemons are used to make things happen in MUD. When you type OPEN the door, a daemon in MUD will open the door in question, but the more memorable daemons are usually very surprising, in that certain actions generate results that are far from predictable. Daemons can be hilarious, uncanny or downright deadly.

The item which has the most daemons associated with it is the wand, and many, many weird things can happen if you use it improperly, or in unusual circumstances. If you wave the wand, while carrying the marble pillar, be prepared for a humorous (if painful) example of a daemon. Snake poison is a daemon which takes a good deal of time to run its course. If you fail to counteract it, it will kill you (not permanently though). Before you pass away, you will begin to feel ill, get dizzy and your vision will blur. In other words your persona will begin to feel very, very sick.

Not all daemons are harmful or inconvenient, sometimes they are used by MUD to bestow points on players for doing the right thing at the right time. If you manage to repair the sundial and get it to tell you the time, a surprising sequence of events will ensue that will leave you with about fifty more points than before. Or, more impressively, there is the hidden fountain, which if found and swum in, will bestow upwards of a thousand points on you.

Basically daemons account for everything that happens in a game of MUD. Mastery of the game requires that you learn about them, how to activate them and what they do. Soon daemons will no longer come as complete surprises, and you'll be able to use them to your advantage in the game, thus increasing your chances of success (and dazzling the other players as well). A hint for you: the dragon is killed via a daemon, and knowledgeable players can easily do away with it.

## II

### PUZZLES AND MAZES

There are two particular kinds of problem commonly encountered in adventure programs which typically cause tempers to become frayed and arguments to develop the moment they are discussed. You either love them or you hate them — and liking one has no influence on whether or not you'll like the other. I'm referring to the notions of mazes and logic puzzles.

What is the sort of problem you normally get in an adventure game? Well even in a multi-player one like MUD, the basic arrangement is that you have a collection of objects, the presence and properties of which either allow or disallow the execution of commands (which I'll call actions). Actions, once carried out, alter certain objects in predefined ways, and so create a different set of restrictions which determine what actions can be performed afterwards.

So a closed door might restrict you from performing the GO west action, say. In order to GO west you need to perform some action which changes the state of the door such that it is no longer closed, and the obvious one is something like UNLOCK door with key. Once you have performed this action, the property of the door is changed such that a modified set of actions is now executable, including some new ones (GO west is now OK) but excluding some old ones (UNLOCK door with key won't work this time!).

So, you can look on actions as having preconditions, which are tests on the objects required for the action to be satisfactorily carried out. One precondition of opening the door with the keys is that you have to have the keys, and if you haven't then you'd have to give some command which made it so you did have them (GET keys from bag, perhaps).

This is a very basic outline of the mechanism behind adventures, and put this way it sounds pretty mundane. The skill and fun in playing comes from imposing an interesting structure on the actions and objects, so that you're not mindlessly trying out all possible commands but can use your intelligence to find the right thing to do. Without this logical structure binding the universe together, there's no guarantee that *any* command might do something. Common sense might dictate that INVENTORY isn't likely to open a door for you, so you probably wouldn't try it (unless you were absolutely desperate!), but if you treat it like any other action then why shouldn't it? It's just another command. Why shouldn't something like CLOSE door with keys open the door either, come to that?

It's because of this logical structure, of course. You assume that the players have a certain collection of common commands at their disposal, and you try to mimic these commands so they behave as the players expect. So making the command to open a door, CLOSE, is generally regarded as the result of not having been to sleep the previous four nights! Things like having INVENTORY open a door should be accompanied by generous clues; not so basic as a scroll reading DO AN INVENTORY IN ROOM X AND IT'LL OPEN THE DOOR perhaps, but certainly it would be OK to have something which noted the remarkable similarity between the body movements needed to do an inventory and those needed for an OPEN door spell. Even CLOSE for OPEN might be acceptable in an 'inverted' world, such as through a mirror.

Take puzzles, for example. When you need to solve the problem  $2+2=?$  to get through the door, well that's easy enough, it's, er, 4, but what if they were much harder? What is the square root of 6, 023, 921,

858, 319, 047, 472, 771, 692, 203, 936, 249? It might take some time to figure out that it's 77, 613, 928, 249, 503, 307. Or what about Name the 142, 812th prime number? Or cracking a substitution code?

These are problems which have occurred in MUD. MUD has a room, the mausoleum, with other rooms off it. Each of these rooms (tombs) is accessible only through one door (unless you're a wiz, when you can fly there of course!), and on the door is a puzzle. Solve the puzzle, the door opens, and in you rush to claim your reward.

Not all the puzzles are pure computation, of course, some of them are 'armchair' ones which you can solve on the spot if you're quick. These can be things like the Roman numeral substitution of 104, 49, be polite or involve well known sequences scrunpled up in some way (AnEbArPrAyUnU1?? — months of the year). The mausoleum has gone through several generations of problems (all of which were/are original), because it turns out that this kind of thing is *not* suitable in multi-user games. Put bluntly, people exchange answers with each other so readily that it's only a couple of days after one of them has been cracked before everyone knows! Even if you don't tell people, the chances are that someone will SNOOP on you while you're in the mausoleum typing in the fruits of your hard-earned labour, and then distribute the answers to whoever wants to know!

There are constraints on what the answers may be, too. Numeric answers must be pretty big or people will just type in all the likely integers until they get the one which is right.

Apart from the mausoleum, MUD has no other problems of this kind. They are kept in their place, where they can't interfere with the rest of play, but some players love them! Especially since what is in each room behind the doors varies between games and you never know quite what to expect there.

But why is it most people *do* prefer to give away these solutions, when they keep the usual kind of answer to the 'how do you get to room X' problems to themselves? It is, of course, because the majority of

them find it intensely irritating not to be able to get some treasure just because of a smarmy problem which they *know* how to solve but which takes them ages to do, or which they can't 'see' instantaneously and which has no clue that would hint at the answer.

Their objection is that you need 'outside' knowledge to solve the wretched things. Outside knowledge is needed anyway, but it's one thing to assume people know that keys, and not bottles of medicine, open doors, and another to assume they can solve second-order differential equations. At least with normal problems you can try every possible combination of objects until you get the one which opens the door, but unless you are informed that the number sequence was treble scores on a dartboard, or that the letters were initials of streets on Monopoly board, you'd never solve a logic puzzle.

However, you can have raging arguments with people who adore this 'IQ' stuff, as for them it breaks up the monotony of 'find it and try it' play — something anyone else in a multi-user game would do by talking!

In normal adventure games the reaction to a maze is something like 'oh no, not *another* one!'. There's no problem-solving to be done, you see, it's a cinch to solve mazes once you know how, but it takes ages. The situation is similar to having two objects which need to be in a certain room together but which are positioned as far away from that room and each other as possible; it's just trekking time to get them to the same place, and there's no intellectual difficulty in that! Some mazes might be tricky — they spell out a magic word or something — but they still need to be mapped. The standard technique of dropping objects to work out which room you're in and then trying all directions is a pretty boring occupation, especially if you just know there's a pirate or a magpie or something that's going to pick up some stuff and muck you up, secreting the booty away somewhere for you to seek out later.

In comparison with the dismal translation of logic problems into MUD, which (if you can comprehend such an idea!) are even worse here than in normal

adventures, the translation of mazes works quite well! MUD has two major mazes and two minor ones. The minor ones are small, four or five rooms, and stop people from dropping objects in them to make maps by the simple expedient of not letting them take any in with them! Including a light source! They're fairly easy to solve, and they ought to be because in general you want to get back quick because you left a pile of essential items outside before entering!

The major maze which is entered the most in MUD is the graveyard, which isn't really a maze at all because you can never get lost in it, it's just confusing (you *think* you're lost!). It comprises around ten rooms, but there are no loops. That means that if you're in, say, the third room then seven directions will take you back to the third room and one will take you to the fourth room, and so on. So by trying random directions you'll eventually get through (it takes about three goes 'round the clock' — N, NE, E, SE, . . . — to work through). There's even a magical item to help you, a statuette of a lion with 'Drop me in the garden of death to find the path' written on it. So why is it confusing? Because when you return to a room, the description changes. If you give a dud direction and wind up back where you were, it's hard to tell because the gravestone has changed (gravestones bear the names and epitaphs of wizzes). The description even changes if you LOOK! So it's hard to find out what room you're in unless you take a whole sackful of goodies with you so you can tell the rooms apart.

And this, of course, is where MUD's multi-user aspect comes in! As there are no loops it's pretty easy to follow someone without their knowing you're there, and hence you can clear up after them, collecting their objects. They're not going to get back to pick them up for some time, so it's quite easy — especially if you know the way already! This was a design decision for the graveyard, to exploit MUD's multi-user capabilities — the maze is easy to solve, but risky! There's no mindless, animated pirate to nick your treasure and hide it away, but instead the awful possibility of a real person grabbing hold of it and putting it where you'll never find it ever again!

The graveyard was put to great use by Gwyn the Wizard in his mortal days while he was working his way up to that exalted rank. It's quite easy for novices to wander in accidentally, and it takes them a while to find how to get out (you type the direction OUT!). So Gwyn would wait at the start of the maze, slaughter anyone who wandered in, then run deeper in and go to sleep. Going to sleep gets you back lost stamina points from fights, and is usually very dangerous in case anyone stumbles across you. But who is going to find you in a maze?

MUD's other major maze is not so easy, though. It's possibly the most devious, cunning part of the whole game and exploits to the full the fact that there is more than one person playing at once. Most people don't even realise it's a maze as it's well disguised, although some regulars have heard rumours of the incredibly valuable crown said to lie in the centre. Of those who know its true meaning, only a handful have ever made it to the middle except by sheer accident, but the reward has been worth it. This maze is the swamp.

The swamp in MUD, in case you've forgotten is where you drop treasure to score points. If you have something valuable, worth eighty points say, then you don't score for it until you drop it in the swamp (yes, also a good place for ambushes!). It then sinks to the bottom and is out of play for everyone. Now if the swamp is a maze, how do you map a maze? Easy, drop stuff in so that when you return to a room you know you've been there before. Only what happens to things you drop in the swamp? Yes, they sink! There are absolutely *no* objects in MUD which you can let go of in the swamp and be able to see, they all sink. Not quite *everything* sinks in the swamp: players don't. If you want to map the swamp you have to use real people as markers. You can't do *that* in a normal adventure game! Just to make it harder, the route through the swamp changes every game. There are scores of possible ways through, though, but only one of them is the one for the particular game you're in at any instant. So mapping the swamp in one game to get through again in the next is not on!

What's the reward for your efforts, then? Well in a drier part of the swamp, some seven or eight rooms in (it varies) is the crown. Unless some wiz watching your pioneering progress was wicked enough to substitute it with the dummy crown from the wiz's STORE, you now have the most valuable treasure in MUD! The people who acted as markers have nothing for their pains, though, and will need bribing with lesser treasures to stop them lynching you (unless you quit pretty soon after you drop the crown, but then they'll rip you to pieces in the next game!).

Mazes transfer over to multi-user games quite well. In ordinary games they're boring at the best of times, but multi-user aspects make them actually quite enjoyable! Contrast this with the case for logic puzzles, which are much worse in MUDs than in single-user games. It is interesting to speculate on the effects of porting other single-user features into multi-user games. This is a side-effect of the shift in perspective which MUD's unique multi-user capabilities provide — things to be solved by individuals don't work as well as things to be solved in teams. It's as if the players *want* to help each other, but are thwarted in single-user games by the fact there's no-one else there!

## I 2

### WHO'S WHO IN MUD

The whole point about multi-player adventures is that you're playing in the same game as other people, possibly complete strangers in real life, but whom you encounter during play and with whom you are likely to engage in conversation. If you spend a fair amount of time in the game chatting to other players, then, as with other similar forms of social interaction (school, work, holiday), you will strike up friendships and get to know folk.

You'll also get to hear of certain other players quite a lot, by virtue of their interesting behaviour. If you see someone acting really strangely, then you'll naturally want to talk to other people about them; if something terrible happens to another player, you'll want to pass on the bad (or good!) news; if a wiz is a soft touch, your friends should know, and similarly if they FODded you for merely daring to utter a meek request for a lit brand, you may wish to warn your acquaintances!

In MUD, with its strange ability to magnify the personalities of those who play, there are plenty of people to talk about. Stories about individuals are passed on, rumours circulate, myths form, and eventually certain players become part and parcel of the game itself, blending in with the unique MUD atmosphere almost as if they had been programmed in!

This short set of biographies introduces you to some of MUD's classic players, who have made their mark in

MUD's folklore for one reason or another, and whose names live on, even, as is the case with some of them, if they haven't actually been able to play for years. They are all wizzes: the reason is that you have to play for quite a while for people to get to know your personality, and even longer for them to relate stories about your endeavours to each other (rather in the manner of Anglo-saxon bards, who wrote ballads about deeds of derring-do, to be sung in the mead hall on cold, dark nights, perpetuating the names of heroes long since departed). So to become some kind of legendary figure, you have to play for many hours; if you do play for that long then either you'll eventually make it up to wiz, or you're incredibly thick, or extremely unlucky!

The reason some of these people have two names is because you're allowed two as a wiz. One is normally your real name, the other the one which you used to work up to wiz. For some, the personalities are distinct (Sue the Witch is much nastier playing as Endora), but for most they're just synonyms. Here is an assortment of MUD players for you.

## SUE THE WITCH

There cannot be the slightest doubt in anyone's mind about MUD's greatest player — Sue the Witch, also known as Endora. Sue played MUD all the hours God sent. As soon as MUD became playable at around 1 am (at Essex University), Sue went into the Land. Sue would remain there for as long as possible before the need to sleep overcame all. Sue did this every night, too! It was a matter of concern if neither Sue nor Endora appeared — people began to wonder what had happened. She might have been playing incognito as a mortal, of course, but sometimes it was more serious (Sue missed a couple of days after a riding accident). Such is Sue's dedication and enthusiasm for the game that it took her only four weeks to become a witch, from a complete novice. Sue was killed on several occasions, too, and had to restart from nothing. She had an intimate knowledge of the way MUD functioned, and must have tried out virtually every command (swinging the cat in a small room, setting fire to the

keg of gunpowder, lighting a torch with a dragon, etc.). Few other people will have ever seen the message you get when you attempt to, say, walk the wolf, because they have never tried it.

The other wizzes didn't always see eye to eye with Sue, because she had so much experience at play that if another wiz slipped up, Sue would tick them off about it, and often appeared quite bossy! The mortals, however, loved her! She knew just the right kind of hints to give that didn't exactly spell out the solution to a problem but rather pointed the way to a solution (well what do you think you do to idols?!). Sue also protected them from the ravages of supernatural intervention (I've just been attacked by the shark - in the forest!). It was mainly Sue's uncanny knack of making the game fun to play that earned her the reputation of epitomising the Essex MUD.

## JEZ THE WIZARD

Jez the Wizard, or Zaphod as he is occasionally known, was MUD's first external MUD wiz (an external is someone who is playing MUD from a site removed from the host system). Being one of those people who has contacts absolutely everywhere, he heard of MUD fairly soon after Essex University opened it to the public and he took to it like a duck to water. After several months of glorious bloodletting, and suitably impressive telephone bills, this precocious seventeen-year-old (as he was then) made it up to wiz. Now he is MUD's most senior active wizard after Richard Bartle, and along with Sue is trusted enough to be allowed to use an arch-wizard persona called DEBUGGER. This is a very powerful character, used only for debugging purposes (surprise!), to fix problems like people forgetting passwords, or some drunk wiz causing chaos (yes, it does happen!).

Jez has a huge circle of friends in the modem-using community (you might call them 'hackers' if you didn't know the proper meaning of the word), and he must have told just about all of them about MUD. It was mainly due to his influence, and that of one of his close

friends, Thor (also a wiz), that MUD caught on in the outside world. People took his advice, tried the game, liked it, and told their friends. Whenever they looked in, Jez was in there to greet them with a cheery *Hiya*, and eventually people got to know him more as Jez than by his real name, Jeremy. Nowadays, if he doesn't sign his letters 'Jez', most people do a double-take before they remember who he is! Talk about games taking over lives.

Jez, in fact, follows all the goings-on in MUD with the devotion of a soap-opera fan. Probably more so, as he's actually in a position to alter the plot! So he knows the last time Egor played and why he's not around at the moment. He knows what it was that made Sue and Kronos fall out (and was the one who patched it up again). If there's anything approaching a scandal, Jez is there, ears flapping, hoping to pick up some titbit of information which he can then loudly publicise!

It follows, then, that Jez is immensely popular! There's nothing people like more than a good gossip, and Jez is the one to see about that! Even the people who are the butt of his stories tend not to mind, because he does it all very nicely, and besides, it's not long before he's dragging someone else's name through the dirt. Or through the mud, perhaps.

## EGOR THE WIZARD

The second external player to make it to wiz was Egor. Egor has been fascinated by computers ever since his father bought him an electronics kit when he was eight. By the age of eleven he'd constructed his own computer.

Egor is brilliant at discovering any 'bugs' lurking in MUD — but before dutifully reporting them he exploits them to the maximum. One day he discovered a back-door method of logging in as another persona (normally all personas are password protected). He instantly logged in as Jez (his usual sparring partner), went round MUD for half an hour, insulting everyone, killing off novices and generally behaving like an oaf before quitting the game. When the real Jez rolled up an hour

later he was almost lynched by a collection of furious players!

Another 'bug' which Egor exploited is the fact that wizards can pick up any object in the game and imbue it with fighting characteristics. Thus if you suddenly find yourself attacked by the sundial you'll know a wizard is playing tricks. One night Egor did this with the river which flows through the Land. Then he teleported into a room full of mortals shouting 'Oh no! It's that Killer River again!'. The terrified and bewildered mortals then witnessed a titanic struggle between Egor the Wizard and the river before the river finally 'expired' and Egor proudly announced 'Phew! I saved you!'

While working his way up as a mortal, Egor found after thirty-six hours of continuous play even he couldn't keep his eyes open. But unable to bear the thought of missing out on the game, he wrote a little program to run round the fixed points of VALLEY, doing specific things which earned a few points and SAVEing his character (as has been pointed out, you could theoretically become a wizard by kicking the beggar for hours on end), while he went to bed. He thought his behaviour would go undetected because almost always when MUD is running at Essex, the players go there rather than the VALLEY. However, his sneaky ploy was uncovered by a local wiz having a snoop, and when Egor returned to his terminal, refreshed from a few hours' sleep, he discovered that some pretty unpleasant things had been done to him by the wiz, who strongly disapproved of this 'unsporting behaviour'. It was Egor, too, who forced Richard Bartle to amend MUD so that people couldn't quit in the middle of a fight as he discovered that if something unpleasant happened to him (such as getting on the wrong side of the dragon), he could rescue himself by QUITting.

## FELICITY AND CYNTHIA

Felicity and Cynthia were the names chosen by Mark Longley, an internal to Essex University and an addict of science fiction books (he reads about one a day). He picked these names because they were the two most

terrible names he could think of at the time (Christabel was too long, and someone was already using Charlene). The idea was that people would find the names such dreadful cliches that they would avoid him at all costs. So successful was his ploy that most people couldn't bear to talk to him even at a distance, and they dropped the obnoxious, lengthy versions in favour of the more favourable Fliss and Cinth, depending on which he was using at the time. Indeed, the reason MUD has a flower in it was because you could then pick it up, give it to him, and say Hiya, Cinth!

After winning MUD's very first spectacular (see the following chapter), and getting 25,000 points for so doing, Fliss soon made it to witch, and became one of the kindest, most responsible wizzes of all time. It is common knowledge that Sue's great success as a witch is based on her trying to follow Fliss's lead. Asking yourself 'What would Fliss have done in this situation?' can be a good way to see sense (although Fliss himself would probably find that highly amusing!).

Mark left the University a couple of years ago, but Fliss and Cinth still get mentioned from time to time, and there's always the entry in the graveyard. What does it say? 'A spectacular life lead me here', of course!

## FOXY THE WIZARD

The name of Foxy the Wizard lives on in MUD not because of the way he made it to wiz, but because of the way he didn't. Also an internal to the University, Foxy spent many long hours clawing his way up through the ranks. He always behaved impeccably, only killing people in self-defence (well, nearly always!), and he knew the game inside out by virtue of enormous MUD sessions lasting all weekend. Everyone agreed that if anyone deserved to reach wiz at all, then that person was Foxy. It was merely a case of mistaken identity, then, one assumes, when five people ambushed him in the graveyard and killed him when he had less than 300 to go of the 102,400 points needed to reach wiz. The self-control exhibited by Foxy in not jumping from the nearest tall building, or sending letter bombs to all concerned, earned him great re-

spect. He didn't shed a tear, just started again from scratch with great dignity and killed three or four of the rotten so-and-sos instead with a handy sword, thoughtfully provided by a sympathetic wizard.

His eventual rise to immortality was not, it turns out, via the normal channels; rather he was elected to wiz for his work on ROCK, MUD's version of ITV's *Fraggle Rock* TV show. Real name Phil Fox, he's now a teacher at a nearby school, and occasionally returns to hack and slay in MUD.

## EVIL THE WIZARD

Evil the Wizard was the first person to work his way up to that immortal status, rather than be made one straight away for debugging purposes. He also set a trend, since followed by three other Welsh wizards (despite being called Phil Scott in real life!). A surprising number of MUD devotees are of Welsh extraction, although only four have made it to wiz so far at Essex; it must be their barbarian blood (the nationality breakdown of Essex University wizards in late 1984 was forty English, five Scottish, four Welsh, one Irish, one American, one Czech and one Malasian!).

Evil made it to wiz in real style. His thorough knowledge of the finer details of the MUD world is unsurpassed, except by Richard Bartle and probably Sue, and he must still be about the only player who figured out by himself what you're supposed to do with the ox (stroke it, take it to the sacrificial blade, stroke it, kill it with the blade, stroke it again, then drop it in the swamp for the points!). If you wanted to get to any room from any other, no matter how far away, he could give you the shortest route almost instantly. This was despite the fact that he laboured under a tremendous disability; east-west dyslexia.

It is for this that Evil is best known. His entire in-the-head map of MUD, and all those he wrote down on paper, were flipped east for west. His misapprehension extended to commands, so if he wanted to go west from the start, which is to the left, he'd think it was to the right, and that the command for going to the right

was west. So he'd get it correct, but in the wrong way! So absolutely everything was inverted, in a kind of 'Evil through the looking-glass'. Indeed, when Richard Bartle finally found out about his error he put a looking-glass in MUD to celebrate! Evil didn't realise his mistake for years after he'd made it to wiz, and if people used left/right descriptions of rooms instead of west/east, he just thought they were barmy. Only when Richard drew a map of MUD on a blackboard did he finally discover his gaffe, and to this day thinks a subtle change in the physics of the universe caused everyone in the world to swap east for west in their heads except for him, who remained unaffected due to his enormous and obvious intelligence.

These, then, are a few brief sketches of players in the Essex MUD. MUDS will always have their resident personalities no matter where they are or who runs them, because people *are* the game. That's what lifts MUD above the rest of the world's computer games, the real-live people who play. Anyone who has played in the Essex MUD, the Oslo MUD, the Compunet MUD and the short-lived Dundee MUD, will tell you that, although they are identical programs, they 'play' quite differently. People brought up on Compunet MUD are horrified by Essex's large number of killings — they're much friendlier when they pay to play the game. Essex people are astonished by the easy-going wizzes in Oslo, who have even been known temporarily to promote mortals so they can see what it's like being a wiz (gasp!). The players make the game.

That's not the full story, though, because just as people can make an impact on MUD, so MUD feeds back into their lives. Not only does Jez have a new name, but MUD is what brought Evil back to do his exams after he decided to take five weeks unscheduled leave from the University. Felicity's one-a-day SF book habit was only abated for those days he played MUD — it saved him hundreds of pounds! Sue, however, may be suffering from an overdose of MUD, so it's not always a guaranteed Good Thing. Just most of the time!

## 13

### A SPECKTACKERLER CHRISTMAS

Christmastide is generally regarded by MUD players as a fun time for one and all. No-one goes about maliciously attacking other players (especially if there is a wiz watching to stop them!), and even the most paranoid of players has been known to join in for a chorus of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' without fear of someone stealing their broadsword while they stand still in the same place. The roots of this tradition lie in the days when MUD was enjoyed by a select band of students only, and the outside world had barely heard of the game. Then, at the end of term, with all assignments out of the way and three days before they went home, the MUD devotees would all get together for an afternoon-long session of good cheer, before they disappeared off to their respective parental homes in sunny Huddersfield or wherever, for a month of mudlessness.

In order to promote goodwill to all mankind, MUD has a special room called the Christmas Box (or XMASBX in its abbreviated form), which only wizards and witches can enter as it lies in its own half-world, inaccessible from the domain of mortals. For fifty weeks of the year the room is left unvisited, gathering dust and forgotten by one and all. Only for the middle two weeks of December do memories stir, and a wiz

will venture into the XMASBX to see if all is well. And then mortals will notice a subtle change in the game.

The XMASBX, you see, contains everything you need for a merry Christmas, and the wizzes liberally distribute the loot around the Land for players to stumble across and drop in the swamp, in order to score the generous number of points which the presents are worth. Everything you are likely to need to make Christmas festive is there. There is holly (not decking the hall), a candle, a snowman (trying very hard not to melt), a cracker and a wealth of other things. Of course there is a beautiful Christmas tree, decorated in pretty lights and baubles, which usually winds up stuck in the pine forests to the south of MUD, where unsuspecting adventurers suddenly find it looming through the trees at them.

Some of the objects (all of which have been there for at least three years) have uses other than merely being treasure. The Christmas bell which 'plays its old familiar carols here' can actually be hit, sending a ~D~O~N~G~ reverberating throughout the Land. If you don't want to DONG it, you can DING it, and everyone gets a ~D~I~N~G~ echoing on their screen. Sometimes some quite tuneful-looking melodies can be played, until someone on 110 baud who can't get a word in edgewise manages to steal the wretched item and drop it in the swamp out of harm's way!

In its usual endearingly skewed way, MUD's Christmas carol book isn't quite what it should be, containing such masterpieces as *Once in Royal Boughs of Holly*, *I Saw Three French Hens Come Sailing by* and *Oh Silent Night of First Noel*. There is plenty of Christmas fare (well, it would be if it let you eat it!) including plum pudding, mince pies, and a shocking-pink mousse (not to be confused with the mouse, although since the mouse is made of sugar perhaps confusing them is OK after all!).

The final foodstuff likely to be met is the turkey, only it's not dead and spends most of its time running around in a mad panic trying to stay that way. Other mobiles include Santa Claus (ho ho ho) plus sleigh, and his reindeer (which, of course, glows in the

dark!). The reindeer parodies MUD's oldest object, the ox, and has the same description except instead of a sturdy ox lumbering past you nearby, it's a reindeer.

Some other 'normal' objects you find in the game are extra-significant at Christmas, too. The ivy which entwines itself round the bird-bath in the pine forest is usually moved to somewhere more prominent. Also likely to be placed where people can find it is the mistletoe (yes, you *can* kiss under it . . .), although that happens less often since the mistletoe is the last object required to gain access to MUD's greatest treasure trove, the druids' chamber beneath the ring of stones far away on the island. If people get hold of the mistletoe (because they've not figured out how to get it out from where it lies — drop it in the underground stream and pick it up outside) they can rush off to the island and drag home a sack full of riches. Unless the wiz who moved it spots them, of course, in which case they might find the dragon has something to say about it.

Also at Christmas, you get more people imbibing the rum, which is stored in the smugglers' cave near the beach. Naturally this has an intoxicating effect on players, and they will occasionally issue loud hics, or stagger backwards into some strange room, or drop asleep. It wears off after a while, or if you're sick, but at Christmas it's quite likely that at least half the players will wander around in a blitzed state kissing bunny rabbits and trying to eat lit torches.

Another Christmassy effect in MUD, which rears its head around this time of year, is the snow. Normally, MUD has a fairly regular pattern of sunshine for around thirty minutes, followed by rain for about ten. The rain prevents you carrying out certain actions, like sailing at sea, and swells the river so you can't cross (which can cut you off if you had to brave it to get the mistletoe, incidentally). At Yuletide, however, the wizzes who are full of the spirit of Christmas usually switch on the snow, which is just like the rain but lasts for longer. This can be something of a surprise to the mortals, who know exactly what rain is but don't really know what to make of snow. It's quite amusing watching them talk to each other:

What's this snow?

Don't know, I just saw Father Christmas go by, and someone has given me this cracker ...

There is another Christmas-derived feature in MUD, which now has a more general appeal — the 'spectacular'. A spectacular (pronounced 'specktackerler', after the Welsh wizard, Evil, who coined the phrase but couldn't say it properly) is one almighty carnage, but tremendous fun! The idea is that you get as many people playing at once as you can manage, and put them all in together. You then 'wizard lock' the game, to stop anyone else getting in, and give the word. Thereupon, they chase about after each other, killing shouting and screaming as they go, until all but one is dead. This person is the winner, and receives a thousand points for every mortal who started the spectacular, and for each of the spectating wizards.

Spectaculars are terrific to play, but hellishly difficult to organise! Quite apart from getting the players to come along at the same time (assuming the computer is up, too!) you have to re-arrange the locations of objects and things so that the fast typers don't get to the goodies first. Also, introducing the odd 'new' monster, and hyping-up some of the old ones, can take time if you want to do it right. Finding six different yet logical places to put the spare swords can be quite an exercise in itself! Still, the overall effect is well worth it.

What normally happens at Essex is that the internal players get two or three terminals each (this being OK since everyone else has gone home for the holidays) and go in with a like number of mortals. Two of them follow the third around, and when they meet someone they all join in the fray. Sometimes different players will gang up, so there might be gangs of six or eight scouring the countryside looking for hidden individuals. Externals (people playing on PSS), being slower moving, are quite often caught this way, although as the spectacular progresses the larger teams tend to get broken up by attacks on some of the

'followers', and in the resulting attempt to rally forces other members of the group are picked off.

Wizzes watching the game take a great delight in seeing what is happening. They cheer the brave ones, boo the cowards, and if people are scurrying around deep underground hoping everyone else will do the job for them, the wizzes are likely to pick them up by the scruff of the neck and drop them in the thick of things — asleep! Everyone's game is logged into a different file, and at the end of the day these are printed off and a 'report' is compiled, saying who was done over by whom at what time. The shortest period of time spent in a spectacular is reputed to be three seconds, when one of Gwyn the Wizard's mortal personas typed EAST at the start instead of WEST, and left MUD into VALLEY, only to learn that he couldn't return.

Most of the hacking and slaying in spectaculars goes on in the mainland, but eventually there are only a few players left and they find it increasingly hard to catch each other (although the WHO command during a spectacular tells you what room your prey is in, instead of just what their name is). At this point, the wizards collar the survivors and move them to the ship. They also give them all weapons, in order to promote good bloodshed, and let them loose. As the ship has only about nine rooms in total, this leaves little chance to escape, but it can be quite cramped. Recent spectaculars' endings have been moved to the island, further out to sea, where there is twice as much space and people get more say in who kills them!

Spectaculars now take place fairly often, late in the evening at the end of term when Essex University's computer can take the load without inconveniencing anyone else. It's interesting to observe that they are quite different from the events which inspired their conception, and which still take place every Christmas in MUD. The year of feuding, fighting and paranoia is forgotten for just a few brief days prior to December 25th, and MUD players get together bound by a wave of camaraderie reminiscent of those First World War films where the Tommies and the Hun meet in Norman's land for a few, fleeting hours. A shame that it doesn't last the whole year round, but, as any wiz will

tell you, there's only a certain amount of being nice that a MUD player can stand, and two weeks seems quite long enough to last most MUD players for the rest of the year!

Spectaculars have aided many people, but not all have reached wiz as a result. This is often because the battles were won by someone who already had a wiz persona, but was playing as a mortal for the sheer thrill of the kill (it makes a nice change from being benevolent). A quick perusal of MUD's graveyard will reveal only one person who made it as a result — Felicity the Witch whose tombstone reads: 'A spectacular life led me here', and it did. The extra points were just about enough to get her to witch. Of course, for every success story there is a failure, and another player with a similar score to start with came second by a hair's breadth. And he lost the second spectacular by a similar margin, too, after killing fifty percent of the other players single-handed! Such is life (and death) in MUD.

## I4

### IN CONCLUSION

What we see in the Multi-User Dungeons running at various universities, and commercially in one form or the other can only be called the beginning. As computers of all sizes gain in power while decreasing in price, systems with the capability to run multi-user games will become available to more and more people. Eventually MUDs of all kinds will be available, running to suit the tastes of all the different people who are maintaining them. Even at Essex University, different types of MUD have sprung into existence, with *ROCK* being the first 'unofficial' MUD, based on ITV's *Fraggle Rock*. Soon afterwards, *CRUD* appeared, a humorous take-off of the genuine MUD, written by Jez the Wizard. A student at Essex, Martin Fry (or Yawn the Witch) further modified *CRUD* to produce *BLUD*, a hyper-violent (as opposed to super-violent, which might be considered the norm in MUD) game, where the sole aim of the players is to kill things. The latest MUD to appear is *UNI*, a game based on the actual campus of the Essex University, which had many sarcastic descriptions of various locations (like the student's pub).

What all this points to, is that MUD is not a one-off occurrence. Instead, it's just the first of a new generation of computer game. The launch of *MUD-2* marks the second step of MUD's advance into our lives. Instead of having its availability restricted to the few who could reach Essex in the dead of night, it will be up during 'normal' hours, thus allowing 'normal'

people to play. The results of this should be surprising, but it's not unrealistic to think that the average, everyday business man would enjoy a quick session of 'Hack & Slay' after work, is it? Talented games designers who would like to use the multi-user software to implement their own games designs are encouraged to get in touch with MUSE Ltd (see Appendix B).

Now that you've read the book, I suggest you actually play the game. While you may have some idea of the nature of MUD, nothing can really describe the thrill of being chased by an axe-wielding maniac, as you flee for your life! So, with that I'll let you go, to play MUD, to journey into the Land, perhaps never to return.

## Appendix A

### A LOGGED GAME OF MUD

The following is an actual logged game of MUD on the Essex University DEC-10. (Essex University has the earlier version of MUD: at the time of writing the new MUD was not available.)

As our intrepid adventurer, Pathos, set out on his expedition across the Land, he encountered several other players, including a few of those mysterious and unfathomable wizards. Eventually, Pathos reached the shrine, where people can teleport themselves to the secret sanctum, which contains four highly valuable icons. To do this, however, required several other people to meditate as well, giving him sufficient 'power' to make the 'jump'. So he enlisted the aid of two other players, and finally magically transported himself to the sanctum!

However, there was a mistake in his plans: he forgot about the iron golem that guards the treasure in the sanctum, and arrived without a weapon with which to dispose of it! Pathos found himself faced with a problem. Was he going to go back to the mainland empty handed, and disappoint those who had been helping him out, or would he risk life and limb and brave the evil golem? Unwilling to face up to his error, Pathos gritted his teeth and attacked the monster with his bare hands! It was a furious battle, but Pathos was blessed with incredible luck (or perhaps a kindly, but anonymous wizard helped him out?) and the creature

barely landed a blow on him. So this time Pathos easily won the battle. Instead of taking the traditional path back to the mainland, as outlined by Aphrodite the Heroine (who naturally wanted her share of the loot pronto!), he decided to leave the sanctum via its exit to the galleon, which lies wrecked off the coast of the Land. He found it had been mostly ransacked, but discovered a raft and some silk that the looters had left behind. He also ventured into the captain's cabin, where mortals can leave permanent messages by writing in the captain's log book. (If you do write in the book you get a charming message from MUD telling you, You feel proud to have left your mark on the Land . . . .)

Using his new-found raft to head for home, Pathos ran aground on the Isle of Woe, where the powerful magic contained in the arches made him temporarily invisible! (This is indicated by a pair of parentheses surrounding the \* which prompts the player for commands.)

Invisible, but still quite determined, he sailed quickly for the shore and made his way to the start where he wanted to rendezvous with the other players whose prayers had helped him to the sanctum. There he was going to give each of his friends an icon for their troubles. Tardis was there in the swamp to receive his reward but Aphrodite was a bit slow to arrive so the temptation to swamp the icon he had promised her proved too great for him to resist! So he unloaded all the treasures he discovered on his brief (but harrowing) journey. Tired, but satisfied by a reasonably successful bout of adventuring (and not wanting to hang around to make excuses to Aphrodite), Pathos decided to call it a day, knowing that in the near future he would return to explore further. Who knows, perhaps next time he would sail beyond the ship to the island, and meet the dreaded fire-breathing dragon!

Notice how almost all of MUD's commands can be abbreviated. Pathos does not bother to type words like SCORE or KILL or SHOUT in full. He simply uses sc or k or sh. QUICKWHO is similarly reduced to qw — and since fast typing is often inaccurate MUD accepts wq as the same.

Another feature which the log shows is how MUD takes over the fighting once the fray has commenced. All Pathos could do once his battle with the golem had commenced was keep his fingers crossed . . . .

Here then is the complete log of Pathos the Champion's session of MUD.

```
ESSEX UNIVERSITY: Multi-User Dungeon.
This Mud created: 17th July 1985 at 12:09:08
Origin of version: 06:19:21.
Accumulated game time: 5 mins 2 secs.
Welcome! By what name shall I call you?
*PATHOS
```

```
This persona already exists - what's the password?
*Password
Yes!
Your last game was today at 6:24:32.
```

```
Hello again, Pathos the champion!
Narrow road between lands.
You are stood on a narrow road between The Land and whence you came. To the north and south are the small foothills of a pair of majestic mountains, with a large wall running round. To the west the road continues, where in the distance you can see a thatched cottage opposite an ancient cemetery. The way out is to the east, where a shroud of mist covers the secret pass by which you entered The Land.
Mugsanon the witch is here, carrying key
*Fanman the enchanter has just arrived.
```

```
*"Hi Wizard
```

```
*
Mugsanon the witch says "Hi Pathos"
```

```
*who
Maria the sorceress is playing
Pathos the champion is playing
Fanman the enchanter is playing
Mugsanon the witch is playing
Tana the legend is playing
Aphrodite the warrior is playing
Jethro is playing
Grobble the legend is playing
Kalamazoo the superhero is playing
Rebecca the necromancer is playing
Stev is playing
```

```
*s
Foothills.
These are some foothills to the tall mountains which tower above you to the east. Travel in that direction is impossible because of a tall stone wall, built by the locals when they learned of the creatures dwelling within The Land... To the north runs an east-west road, and to the west is forest. The hills rise slowly to the south.
There is a small hole in the ground, about 5 inches across. It bends too sharply for you to see anything down it.
```

```
*s
Cave.
This is a cave, wherein once dwelled a hermit in times long passed. Above is a huge mountain towering amongst the clouds, and outside can be seen a pasture, small cottage and a cemetery in the distance. At the east end of the cave is a small opening in the wall.
```

```
*s
Rapids.
You are on the bank of some dangerous rapids. Beyond them to the east the river goes underground; to the west it continues out of sight, and you can
```

hear a thundering as of falling water from that direction. To the south can be seen (and smelled!) a fuming swamp, and southeast is a small pond.

\*s  
You are waylaid in a treacherous swamp.

\*w  
Dense forest.  
You are wandering around in some dense forest, to the south of a pleasant pasture, and to the west of a fuming swamp. To the southwest the forest opens up onto a magical glade.

\*s  
Magical glade.  
You are in a magical glade, surrounded by forest. East and west it looks impenetrable, but in the northerly directions the trees are less dense. In the southerly directions, the trees are of soft pine, and through them to the southwest can be glimpsed a sundial.

\*se  
Entrance to badger's sett.  
You are in part of a large pine forest. Northwest, the forest opens up onto a magical glade, and in all other directions the forest continues, although in some the trees are too thick to permit passage. In front of you, in the ground, a hole leads downwards into a badger's sett.

\*se  
Pine forest.  
You are wandering around amongst some soft pine trees. All about you are more, some densely packed and others allowing passage through. Through the trees to the southeast you can see what appears to be a bandstand.

\*se  
You hear the clear notes of a flute ringing through the air.

\*  
Bandstand.  
You are stood in a bandstand in the midst of the pine forest. All around you are trees, denser in the easterly directions than in the westerly ones. The bandstand hasn't been used for some time, obviously with it being in the middle of a forest, and in places its paint is peeling, but it is nevertheless a surprisingly fine example.

\*sw  
Pine forest.  
You are wandering around amongst some soft pine trees. All about you are more, some densely packed and others allowing passage through. To the northeast through the trees can be made out a wooden building something like a bandstand. To the southeast there looks to be some sort of religious shrine.

\*se  
Shrine.  
You are inside a small yet sacrosanct shrine. A sense of deep respectfulness fills this modest room. The way out, into a pine forest, is to the northwest. It is obvious that the shrine was meant to be used for quiet meditation, like similar chambers.

\*sh Does anyone want to meditate with me?

\*pray  
Worship in these parts is customarily conducted near idols, usually their eyes if there are precious stones there.

\*qw  
Pathos the champion  
Blatch the enchantress  
Maria the sorceress  
Blink  
Fanman the enchanter  
Mugs the necromancer  
Tardis the hero  
Aphrodite the heroine  
Jethro  
Grobbles the legend

Kalamazoo the enchanter  
Rebecca the necromancer  
Stev

\*  
A male voice in the distance shouts "Tardis"

\*  
Aphrodite the heroine tells you "I will"

\*  
A female voice in the distance shouts "yep i do blink."

\*  
A male voice in the distance shouts "kalamazoo ( in tree )"

\*sh Ok, Im in the shrine. The rest of you get ready!

\*  
A male voice in the distance shouts "Tardis in cave"

\*  
Aphrodite the heroine tells you "ready?"

\*  
Tardis the hero tells you "Tardis in cave."

\*sh Ok, Lets try now!!!

\*meditate  
You feel a great tranquility filling your being, and when you cease your meditation, you are in a strange place...  
Outer sanctum.  
A golem of solid iron stands here as guardian of the inner sanctum.

\*sh Ummm.. is this golem pretty tough?  
Aphrodite the heroine tells you "ok?"  
A male voice in the distance shouts "Idiot. Yes, pretty tough."

\*  
Aphrodite the heroine tells you "Pretty tough. you got a weapon I hope?"

Kalamazoo the enchanter tells you "what a prat ..."

\*wish, Ummm, may I have a weapon?  
Your spell works, but the power of the magic you have invoked causes you to fall into a deep slumber...

You can't get to sleep in this small place.

\*  
Aphrodite the heroine tells you "if you survive get icons and meditate out"

\*aphrodite ok

\*kalamazoo First time for everything!  
A male voice in the distance shouts "Or a sword..."

\*sc  
Score to date: 1766  
Level of experience: Champion  
Strength: 90 Stamina: 85 Dexterity: 92 Sex: male  
Maximum stamina: 85  
Weight carried: 0g (max. weight: 90000g)  
Objects carried: 0 (max. number: 11)  
Games played to date: 2

\*  
A male voice in the distance shouts "Aphro claims to have done it with a brand once though."

\*  
Kalamazoo the enchanter tells you "yeah well , u should have asked someone ..."

*\*look*

Outer sanctum.

You find yourself in the outer sanctum of some strange, holy temple. All about you, the walls seem to be a hazy, formless blackness, but there is a visible opening to the north from whence comes an eerie, golden light.

A golem of solid iron stands here as guardian of the inner sanctum.

\*

A female voice in the distance shouts "I was a novice and had 1 stam left afterwards. I was lucky"

\*

*\*sh Well.. here goes!**\*j*

You aren't carrying anything!

*\*kill golem*

\*The viciousness of a whack by the golem sends you sideways. Dazedly you pull through, and press forward into the contest. Your mis-timed return blow at the golem is effortlessly shrugged off.

\*You easily evade a poor swing from the golem. You bash the golem with a punishing forehead!

\*You comfortably shrug off a feeble thump by the golem. You wallop the golem with a crushing whack!

\*You easily shrug off a clumsy forehead by the golem. You strike out at the golem with a stunning cross!

\*You effortlessly shrug off a bungled forehead by the golem. You strike home at the golem with a stunning blow!

\*You narrowly evade a feeble swing from the golem. You smite the golem with a furious forehead!

\*Your last thump was the end of the golem! You are victorious - this time...

\*

Aphrodite the heroine tells you "right hook, right hook, body blow"

\*

Aphrodite the heroine tells you "jab jab uppercut!"

Rebecca has been exorcised.

*\*Sh That was easy!! (pew)**\*sc*

Score to date: 1826

Level of experience: Champion

Strength: 90 Stamina: 74 Dexterity: 92 Sex: male

Maximum stamina: 85

Weight carried: 0g (max. weight: 90000g)

Objects carried: 0 (max. number: 11)

Games played to date: 2

\*

A male voice in the distance shouts "By the way, I already lost a champion to it tonight: with axe!"

\*

Tardis the hero tells you "U know how to get back?"

*\*tardis Yeah*

Tardis the hero tells you "where meet?"

Inner sanctum.

A marvellous icon depicting the inner sanctum lies here.

A glorious icon depicting an ancient chamber lies here.

A valuable icon depicting a shrine lies here.

A beautiful icon depicting a hallowed chamber lies here.

*\*get all*

Icon taken.

Icon taken.

Icon taken.

Icon taken.

*\*j*

You are currently holding the following:

icon icon icon icon

*\*exits*

south Outer sanctum.

in Outer sanctum.

out Outer sanctum.

north Vicious rocks.

northeast Vicious rocks.

east Vicious rocks.

southeast Vicious rocks.

southwest Vicious rocks.

west Vicious rocks.

northwest Vicious rocks.

swamp Vicious rocks.

jump Vicious rocks.

\*

Aphrodite the heroine tells you "meditate now"

*\*aphrodite I will do the ship.*

\*

Tardis the hero tells you "Well? meditate!"

*\*n*

Vicious rocks.

An animated skeleton bars your way.

*\*ki skeleton*

\*The strength of a blow by the skeleton sends you sideways. Yet courageously you carry on, and charge back into the action. Your follow-through thrust sends the skeleton to the ground!

\*You simply parry a pathetic punch by the skeleton. You take aim at the skeleton with a mighty cross!

\*You easily elude a poor punch from the skeleton.

\*The savageness of a thump from the skeleton sends you staggering. But you pull together, and launch yourself into the tussle. Your follow-through cross sends the skeleton sideways!

\*You are stricken by the force of a slash from the skeleton! Groggily you compose, and stagger forward into the melee. Your next blow sends the skeleton flying!

Aphrodite the heroine tells you "check for raft first!!"

\*Your last swing took the life of the skeleton!

You are victorious - this time...

*\*n*

Deck.

*\*d*

Hold.

A raft, large enough to carry one person, has been left here. Lying on the floor is some fine silk.

*\*get raft,silk*

\*Raft taken.

\*Silk taken.

\*u  
Deck.

\*Crow's nest.  
The golden earrings of some fotgotten pirate lie here.

\*get all

\*Earrings taken

\*e  
Deck.

\*Steps.

\*e  
Poop deck.

\*w  
Steps.

\*w

\*Deck.

\*in  
Captain's cabin.  
An inky quill-pen has been left here.  
The log of Captain Oliver is here. In it is transcribed the following:  
"Hack and Slay, Hack and Slay, Hack and Slay!"  
"Shadow's still lengthening, in a 2060 stylee!"  
"Gail was here all alone and without Richard (sob)..."  
"Anana was here with the 5 zombies and 1 skeleton!"  
"Was he? So that makes 6 zombies and a skeleton all together?"  
"...dogn't miss the Gnome at Home - 01-348 3247.. (advtt!)"  
"Duncan the wizard played from California... ALL by himself!!! "  
"fodded everyone else did he?"  
"Hack & Slay... and slay.. and slay!"  
"Himani, daughter of the Himalayas writes in the log at last !!!"  
"I Love you, Himani !xxx"  
"I.Buryum & Sons (Undertakers) -----"  
"Can the following please leave their measurements: Math, Romnanm, Gna"  
"..gwhoops gwrong gnumber - Gnome At Home on 01-888 8894 (advtt!)"  
"Essex is in its death throws....see you guys some time (Yawn Bsc.Hons"  
"jane collett of Richmond was here,thanks to darling bytor!"  
"Darling Bytor was here - thanks to no-one!"  
"Hello from Maria..... Love and kisses to you all!"  
"the original MEEPIE has been here - watch you feet"  
"(prev message cot'd) & slay & slay & slay!!!!"  
"frobazz the wiz and kate the mortal were married in essex mud on"  
"july 5th 1985 by Erekoze the cleric"  
"Jessica the infamous managed to a) get here & b) get thru to Gnome at"  
"Home - whatever next?! a delivered Demon modem ? hehehe"  
"Ok dan... i actually made it!"  
"And i made it again dan...signed andie"  
"Isn't it fun when your invisible with the egg?hehe"  
"Well is 58k in one night a record? took me 7 hours"  
"Make that 64k...."  
"AtAt last!!! I've finally found out how to write in this book!"  
"satan has claimed yet another legend hehehehe"

An ancient chart lies in its frame here.

\*out  
Deck.

\*s  
Vicious rocks.

\*i  
You are currently holding the following:  
earrings silk raft icon icon icon icon

\*s,s,s  
Sea.  
Sea.  
North part of Isle of Woe.

\*s  
South part of Isle of Woe.

\*n  
North part of Isle of Woe.

(\*n,n,n,n  
Sea.  
Sea.  
Vicious rocks.

(\*e,ne,n,ne,e

(\*)Sea.  
Sea.  
Sea.  
Sea.  
Stony beach.  
Scrub slope.

(\*s  
Dangerous cliff.

(\*s  
Forest on steep slope.

(\*s  
Dense forest.

(\*s  
A female voice in the distance shouts "Yes, tell me where!"  
Dense forest.  
There is a felled yew tree here. You can see that the hollow stump leads down to the depths.

(\*s  
Beaten track.

(\*e  
Road opposite cottage.

(\*e  
Narrow road.

(\*e  
Narrow road between lands.  
Mugsanon the witch is here, carrying nothing  
Grob is here, carrying nothing

(\*)Sh Come to the start if I owe you an icon.  
(\*)Tardis the hero has just arrived.

(\*)Edicius has just arrived.  
Tardis the hero has just left.

(\*)Tardis the hero has just arrived.

(\*)give icon to tardis  
(\*)  
Icon given to Tardis the hero.  
(\*)  
In the distance you hear a sudden rushing sound, as if a huge torrent of water has just started to flood somewhere.

(\*s  
Foothills.  
There is a small hole in the ground, about 5 inches across. It bends too sharply for you to see anything down it.

# A LOGGED GAME OF MUD

(\*)Stev has just arrived.

(\*)Jethro the warrior has arrived.

(\*)Jethro the warrior has just left.

(\*)  
Cave.

(\*)Stev has just arrived.

(\*)Rapids.

(\*)s  
You are waylaid in a treacherous swamp.

\*drop icon,icon,icon,silk

Icon dropped.  
Icon dropped.  
Icon dropped.  
Silk dropped.

(\*)sc

(\*)Score to date: 1851  
Level of experience: Champion  
Strength: 90 Stamina: 61 Dexterity: 92 Sex: male  
Maximum stamina: 85  
Weight carried: 10500g (max. weight: 90000g)  
Objects carried: 1 (max. number: 11)  
Games played to date: 2

(\*)

(\*)Mensch the superhero has just arrived.

(\*)Mensch the superhero has just left.

(\*)  
A female voice in the distance shouts "Oh no, not again!"

(\*)save

Pathos the champion saved.

(\*)  
A male voice in the distance shouts "WHAT DID YOU DO THAT FOR"

(\*)n  
Rapids.  
It is snowing.

(\*)Edicius  
(Pathos the champion)  
Blatch the enchantress  
Maria the sorceress  
Dimar the hero  
Mensch the superhero  
Mugsanon the witch  
Tardis the champion  
Aphrodite  
Grob  
Kalamazoo the warrior  
Stev

East pasture.

(\*)n

You hear the clear notes of a flute ringing through the air.

(\*)In front of hut.

\*"Ah well.. time to go home."  
\*quit

## Appendix B

### USEFUL ADDRESSES

#### MUSE MUD

Multi-User Entertainment Ltd is the company set up to write the software for MUD and its successors. They are responsible for licensing the game and for looking after the users in the new version co-published with British Telecom. A MUD starter pack costs £20. It includes a map, a booklet containing hints and tips, a password protected account and your first three hours in the game free. Thereafter MUD costs between £1 and £2 per hour depending on how much time you purchase in advance.

MUSE Ltd,  
6, Albemarle Way,  
London EC1V 4JB

Telephone: (01) 608 1171

#### COMPUNET MUD

Originally set up for Commodore 64 owners, Compunet sell a special modem enabling you to access the original MUD as well as offering various other services. They now offer associate membership to people who

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

have different micros and modems. MUD on Compunet costs around £3 per hour.

Compunet Teleservices Ltd,  
Metford House,  
15-18 Clipstone Street,  
London W1P 7DF

Telephone: (01) 637 0942

### Packet Switch Stream

A PSS account is essential if you want to play on Essex University in the middle of the night or don't want to pay for long-distance calls to the MUSE/BT Vax. The University's NUA is A2206411411 and, once through, you LOG 2653,2653. The password is GUESTS. Then you just type MUD. At the time of writing only 20 players are permitted on the system simultaneously, however. The NUA of the new MUD is not available at the time of writing but contact MUSE to find it. A PSS account costs around £25 per year and around £1 per hour to play MUD. There are no charges to use the Essex DEC-10 but the hours are unfriendly and it's difficult to get in.

Packet Switch Stream,  
GO7 Lutyens House,  
1-6 Finsbury Circus,  
London EC2M 7LY

Telephone: (01) 920 0661

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