SPLASHDOWN

An Interactive Misadventure
By Paul J. Furio

COLONIZATION TRAVEL GUIDE
and
USERS MANUAL

Developed with Inform v6.30 Library 6/11
Playable with any Z-Machine Compliant Interpreter

PICTURE YOURSELF ON AYRIA PRIME 6

Away from the hustle and bustle of Earth's urban sprawl is a planet that is the very meaning of relaxation. Offering 0.96% of the gravity of home, and with a compatible atmosphere and biosphere, this unspoiled destination is the newest interstellar colonization hotspot. Offworld Destinations Magazine***** gives Ayria Prime 6 a **Five-Star Rating** for Earth-like habitability and colonization desirability. And thousands of colonists are already enjoying their new life on this planetary paradise!

Interstellar Colonization, Inc., is proud to offer colonization transportation to this world that's being called "a second Earth" by leading travel reviewers and interplanetary survey teams. Only 16.5 Light Years away from Sol, travel to Ayria Prime 6 will seem like a weekend jaunt with our Half-C Ion Drives and Patented Cryogenic Sleep compartments[†]. Why not sign up today for the next ship headed to Ayria Prime 6? Once you step foot on this unspoiled planet, you'll forget you ever walked on Earth!
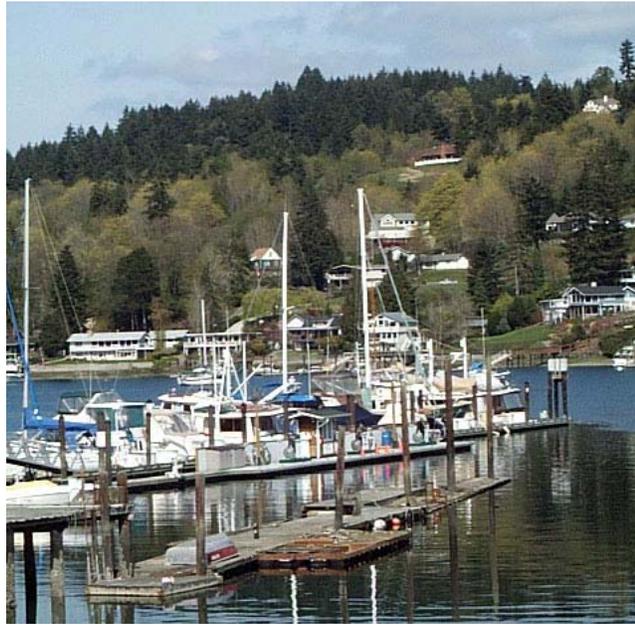
Free of overpopulation, quaint Oceanside villages like this await you on Ayria Prime 6!

Ayria Prime 6 is the perfect place to raise a family. With air unpolluted by industry, and a college currently under construction on the planet's sole natural satellite, New Moon, Ayria Prime 6 offers a clean environment and an outstanding educational opportunity for the pioneers of this new world. Family packages currently exist to afford you and your loved ones the opportunity of a lifetime to start over on this unspoiled new world!

Every colonization ship is computer-controlled for a worry-free flight, with a next-generation maintenance robot onboard to ensure your two-point-five square meter allowed cargo container remains properly stowed during your journey. Powerful Blaine-Lensborn Fusion Generators provide the power needed for interstellar travel, and a team of disembarkment stewardesses will be waiting upon your arrival at the location of your landing beacon to escort you through colonization processing on your new home planet.

Lush tropical forests near the equatorial region offer a refreshing respite from Earth's overpopulated cities.

So why not see your local Interstellar Colonization, Inc., representative about traveling to Ayria Prime 6? A planet chosen by so many to be their new home, yet still unspoiled by overpopulation and pollution — for now.

Ayria Prime 6 colonization packages are available starting at just €499,999.00!!!

The moon of Ayria Prime 6 is relatively young, and is still undergoing geological change.

Interstellar Colonization, Inc., does not guarantee safety or proper landing of Ayria Prime 6 colonization ships. In case of water landing, ballast tanks are provided, but automatic pressurization is not guaranteed. Manual release of Cryobay couplings may be required. Redundant beacon systems, while provided, are not guaranteed to launch. Actual allowed cargo capacity per passenger is 2.13 cubic meters. Robotic maintenance droids are provided, but may not be sufficient to repair all problems encountered in flight. Interstellar Colonization, Inc., will not be held responsible for hypothermia, frostbite, or deep-freeze sickness that results from cryogenic suspension. Interstellar Colonization, Inc., cannot be held responsible for radiation, space debris, gravity waves, civil war, radio frequency changes, orbital disturbances, fusion generator meltdowns, sickness, death, or dismemberment that may occur during interstellar travel. All colonization fees are non-refundable. Hey, we're packing you in a giant tin can, freezing you like an ice cube, and shipping you off 15 light years away to a new planet that few people have ever seen. What do you expect, really?

Instruction Manual for Splashdown

Spashdown is a work of Interactive Fiction developed for the standard Z-Machine format Interpreter. What this means is that Splashdown can be played on any computer for which a Z-Machine Interpreter has been written, which includes most modern computer systems. A list of Z-Machine interpreters can be found at this URL:

http://www.inform-fiction.org/zmachine/interpreters.html

To play the game, simply open the game file, *Splashdown.z5*, in your Z-Machine Interpreter, and prepare to enter the world of Splashdown.

In *Splashdown*, you're a colonist who has been cryogenically frozen for the interstellar journey to your new home planet, Ayria Prime 6. While most of the journey was uneventful, the ship failed to land on the designated landing zone, and instead splashed down in the ocean of your new homeworld. Unable to recover on its own, the ship computer has woken you up out of suspended animation in the hopes that you can save your fellow colonists, as well as yourself!

If you're an experienced player of Interactive Fiction, you probably don't need to read this manual. You may want to read over the supplementary material included at the start of this document, however, for some background on the game setting.

How to play Interactive Fiction

These general instructions are an excerpt from: "A Beginner's Guide to Playing Interactive Fiction". The full text can be found at http://IFGuide.ramsberg.net

The game starts
When you start a game, you will first see an introduction, usually consisting of one or a few screenfuls of text, giving you some background on who you are, where you are, and perhaps even what your objectives in the game are. Whenever the game has printed a screenful of text, it will wait until you press ENTER or some other key, so that you get a chance to read everything before it scrolls off the top of the screen.

How to interact
When the introduction is over, you will get a prompt, usually ">", but it may be a little different from game to game. The prompt means that the game is now waiting for you to tell it what you want to do. You do this by typing in imperative commands, as if you were commanding someone. Let's say the introduction told you that you are in a kitchen, and that you can see a closed glass jar standing on the kitchen counter. Commands you could try at this point include TAKE THE JAR, or OPEN THE JAR, or perhaps EXAMINE THE JAR (Throughout this document, things that are written in capital letters are complete commands that can be typed into an IF game. They don't have to be typed in capital letters when entered into a game). If you want to, you can skip the articles: TAKE JAR will work just at well as TAKE THE JAR. If there are several different jars you could mean, the game may ask you which one you mean. Just type one or more words that uniquely identifies one of the items. For instance, if the game says "Which jar do you mean, the blue glass jar or the green glass jar?", you might reply BLUE to take the blue one. You can also choose to ignore the question altogether, just typing a new command.

Movement
To go to another location, most games expect you to type in which direction you want to go. You can type GO SOUTH, but just SOUTH will also do the trick, as will S (which is the commonly accepted abbreviation for SOUTH). Other directions and their abbreviations are NORTH (N), EAST (E), WEST (W), NORTHEAST (NE), SOUTHEAST (SE), NORTHWEST (NW), SOUTHWEST (SW), UP (U), DOWN (D), IN and OUT. If

you are aboard a ship of some kind you may also be able to use FORE, AFT, STARBOARD (or SB) and PORT.

Other ways to move around may include commands like ENTER CAR, GO CAR, SIT ON MOTORCYCLE, GET ON BIKE, CLIMB ONTO SHIP, JUMP ONTO PLATFORM, DIVE INTO LAKE, BOARD SHIP, EXIT CAR, EXIT, LEAVE, GET OUT. Exactly which commands are recognised vary from game to game as well as from situation to situation in those games. When interacting with IF games, always try to express yourself as simply as possible. If you have tried several ways of expressing yourself and the game refuses to understand what you want to do, you are most probably on the wrong track; it's time to try something completely different.

Common verbs
As you know by now, you can use the verb TAKE to pick up items in the game. Of course, you can also use DROP to drop items. Most modern games actually recognise a hundred different verbs or more. With some of the most used verbs, you can also use multiple items, like this: TAKE GREEN BALL AND SCREWDRIVER or DROP ALL or PUT ALL BUT HAMMER IN BAG. You'll find that ALL is often a very useful word, although it only works with certain verbs, most notably TAKE and DROP. Here are some of most important verbs, with examples:

LOOK or **L**	L or LOOK AT BOB or LOOK IN JAR or LOOK UNDER BED
TAKE	TAKE KNIFE
DROP	DROP KNIFE
EXAMINE or **X**	EXAMINE KNIFE or X KNIFE
SEARCH	SEARCH DESK
INVENTORY or **I**	I
OPEN	OPEN DRAWER
CLOSE	CLOSE DRAWER
LOCK	LOCK DOOR WITH RUSTY KEY
UNLOCK	UNLOCK DOOR WITH RUSTY KEY
ASK	ASK JOHN ABOUT POLICE OFFICER
TELL	TELL JOHN ABOUT MURDER
SAY	SAY HELLO TO JOHN
GIVE	GIVE RABBIT TO BOB
SHOW	SHOW KNIFE TO POLICE OFFICER
WAIT or **Z**	Z
AGAIN or **G**	G

Other verbs you will need from time to time include ATTACK, BUY, COVER, DRINK, EAT, FILL, JUMP, KISS, KNOCK, LISTEN, MOVE, PULL, PUSH, REMOVE, READ, SIT, SLEEP, STAND, THROW, TIE, TOUCH, TURN, TYPE, UNTIE, WEAR. There are lots more. Hopefully they will seem natural to you when you need them.

How time works
Almost all IF games count time in turns, rather than hours and minutes. Every time you type something and press ENTER, one turn passes. This also means that until you press ENTER, no time passes. You could think of a turn as being something like a minute, but how long it actually is depends on what you do during that turn. If you want time to pass, but don't want to perform any actions, just type WAIT or Z. This will prove useful while waiting for someone to arrive or something to get ready in the oven etc (in the game world, not in the real world!).

There are games that use real-time instead of turn-based play, but they are few and far between, and they will tell you about their real-time system at the beginning of the game.

Talking to people
The most useful ways of talking to people usually involve the verbs ASK and TELL. When using them, try to pin down the best keyword for what you are interested in, rather than longer constructs. For example, TELL BOB ABOUT HOW I SAW SHEILA GIVE A STRANGE AMULET TO ANOTHER WOMAN is not likely to yield any useful results, but TELL BOB ABOUT AMULET or perhaps TELL BOB ABOUT SHEILA may indeed be useful. In other words, you tell the game the subject you want to talk about or ask about, not exactly what to say.

The game will try to make reasonable assumptions on what you want to say regarding the subject.

Also note that many games are quite primitive when it comes to modelling people. The author has to put in an enormous amount of work to make people in the game behave realistically and respond well to conversation. In general, don't expect too much from people in the game, but there are of course games that shine in this area too. You'll also see that some authors prefer menu-based conversation, to facilitate interaction.

To tell someone else to do something, type the name of the person, a comma, and then a command. Example: BOB, BREAK THE JAR. Just like in real life, most people won't automatically do something just because you tell them to. If you think Bob knows what to do with the jar, you can also try GIVE JAR TO BOB or SHOW JAR TO BOB.

Special verbs
All games recognise some verbs that don't do anything in the game world, but tells the game something about how you want it to behave, or some special task you want it to peform. These verbs include:

UNDO	Takes back the last move you made.
QUIT or **Q**	Ends the current game.
RESTART	Starts the game over from the beginning.
SAVE	Saves your current position to a file on disk.
RESTORE	Loads a previously saved game position.
HELP or **ABOUT**	Shows some information about the game and its author, in some cases even hints to some of the puzzles.
VERBOSE	Tells the game you want a long description of every room you enter, even if you've been there before.
BRIEF	Tells the game you want a long description the first time you enter a room, and a short description when you come back. This is the default mode.
SUPERBRIEF	Tells the game you always want short descriptions of all rooms.

Getting stuck and unstuck
While playing IF, you will get stuck. This is part of the deal -- where there are puzzles, there will also be stuckness. If you grow tired of being stuck in the same spot for too long, you can either type HELP in the game to see if there are any hints available, or you can ask other players for hints. A good place to ask for hints is the newsgroup rec.games.int-fiction (can be reached at http://groups.google.com/groups?group=rec.games.int-fiction). That's also one of the best places to meet other IF players, discuss games you've played, get tips on games you should play and more.

Oh, one last thing about playing Interactive Fiction. Make a map as you play. You are very likely to need it.

Sample Transcript and Map

This transcript is not from *Splashdown*, but it does show some of the usual things you can do in the story. It shows several simple puzzles and their solutions, and it should give you a good idea of how Interactive Fiction works. The player's sentences appear in capital letters after each prompt (>). The map represents the terrain in the sample transcript as you might have drawn it.

```
You awaken to the blaring of a klaxxon overhead. Rubbing you eyes, you
realize that the alarm can only mean one thing: The computer has found
platinum ore just beneath the surface of this otherwise desolate rock.


Cabin
You're lying in the utilitarian bed of your cabin, which is sadly the most
comfortable spot on this entire survey ship.  A computer terminal is set
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into the foreword bulkhead, and a single doorway leads to port.

> PORT
You'll have to get off the bed first.

> STAND UP
You're back on your own two feet.

> PORT
Aft Hall
This corridor runs the length of the ship, which is to say it doesn't go very far. Piping and cabling run overhead and continue forward to the other end of the hallway. A doorway to starboard leads to your cabin.
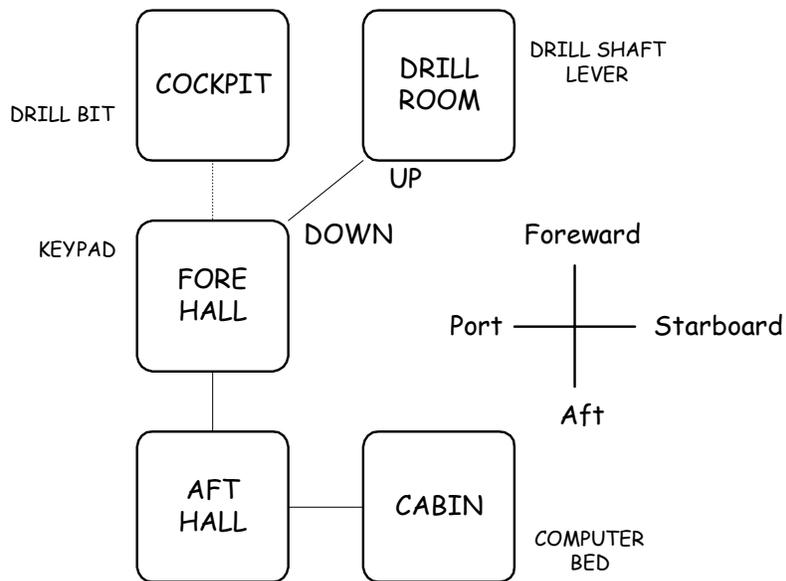
> FORE
Fore Hall
The forward end of the hallway ends in a large hatch, above which cables and pipes run directly into the wall. Beside the hatch is a small keypad, with keys numbered 0 through 9. On the other side of the door, a ladder leads downward through the floor.

> FORE
The large hatch stands in your way.

> OPEN THE HATCH
The forward hatch remains steadfastly shut. You must still be groggy, because it takes you a minute to remember that the door is secured with a security code, which is changed every day. Luckily, your employers see fit to email the code to you. Usually.

> AFT
Aft Hall

> SB
Cabin

> EXAMINE COMPUTER
It's one of those voice activated computers, with a large screen a medium sized speaker, and a microphone.

> READ THE SCREEN
The screen reads:

30 AUGUST 2056 08:05:52
16 DAYS REMAIN OF CHARTERED DUTY

Map diagram:

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                 COCKPIT        DRILL        DRILL SHAFT
   DRILL BIT                    ROOM         LEVER

                                    UP

   KEYPAD        FORE      DOWN          Foreward
                 HALL                        |
                                    Port ----+---- Starboard
                                             |
                 AFT       CABIN          Aft
                 HALL
                                    COMPUTER
                                    BED
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MESSAGES:

•  MSG1 — 30 AUGUST 2065 04:00:00 — NEW


> COMPUTER, PLAYBACK MSG1
"Playback of MSG1 follows:
        The daily key code is 4592."

> LOOK AT BED
It's not much more than an aero-foam mattress on a metal slab.
Utilitarian, but comfortable.  A single drawer is built into the slab.

> OPEN THE DRAWER
Opening the drawer reveals a pair of pliers.

> TAKE PLIERS
Taken.

> PORT
Aft Hall

> FORE
Fore Hall

>TYPE 4592 ON KEYPAD
The keypad beeps pleasantly, and the hatch slides open.

[Your score has just gone up by 5 points!]

> FORE
Cockpit
A large window fills most of the wall space here, presenting a gray view
of the desolate asteroid surface.  The ship has set down within a shallow
crater, thankfully devoid of the rocks and boulders that otherwise litter
the surface of this wasteland.  An open hatch leads aft.

A drill bit rests on a counter near the window.

> TAKE BIT.
Taken.

[Your score has just gone up by 2 points!]

> AFT
Fore Hall

> DOWN
You descend the ladder...

Drill Room
A vertical drill shaft dominates this squat chamber, and the smell of
motor oil fills the air.  Machinery on the aft wall is connected to the
shaft via thick chain links, and a single lever extends next to a blinking
sign, which reads "PLATNIUM ORE FOUND. COMMENCE DRILLING."
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> PULL LEVER
You pull the lever downward, causing the machinery to start up with a
cantankerous roar.  The shaft drives downward through a pressure-sealed
hole in the floor, only to make an awful thudding sound.  After a few
seconds, the shaft returns to the upwards position, and spins down to a
stop.

> EXAMINE SHAFT
The shaft is a vertical rod about a quarter of a meter in diameter.  A
large socket at the bottom of the shaft is closed, but empty.

> PUT BIT IN SOCKET
The bit won't fit in the socket while it's closed.

> OPEN SOCKET
You twist mightily, but are unable to get the torque necessary to open the
socket.

> OPEN SOCKET WITH PLIERS
Using the pliers, you manage to twist the socket open.

> PUT BIT IN SOCKET
The bit fits snugly in the socket, which you easily tighten around it.

> PULL LEVER
You pull the lever downward, causing the machinery to start up with a
cantankerous roar.  The shaft drives downward through a pressure-sealed
hole in the floor, and is soon followed by the high pitched whine of ore
grinding.  Within moments, the blinking sign behind you changes to read
"PLATNIUM RECOVERY BEGINNING."

[Your score has just gone up by 5 points!]

** You Have Won **

Your score is 12 out of 12, for the rank of Space Commander.
```

About the Author

Paul J. Furio holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, with a minor in Electronic Arts. After several years writing software in the Financial and Control Systems industries, Paul moved to Seattle, Washington, to pursue a career as a video game developer. He has worked on five shipped titles for the PC and Xbox, including *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (PC), and as of this writing is on contract with Microsoft as a developer on the Xbox title *Forza Motorsport*. Paul is married to his beautiful wife Mary, and he enjoys cycling, and writing music for his band, Static Engine. *Splashdown* is Paul's first completed work of Interactive Fiction.

Design and development of Splashdown began on March 20th, 2004, and reached Beta on July 5th, 2004. Testing was conducted by Mary McDonagh, Eli Curtz, Wes Cumberland, Peter Chapman, Anna Chan, Douglas Taylor, and L00pback.

Information and updates can be found at the following URL: http://www.staticengine.com/splashdown/
For questions, please contact the author via email: pjf@staticengine.com