

Macabre Tales

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric painting. It depicts a narrow, winding path that leads down a steep, rocky cliff. At the end of the path, a waterfall cascades down into a dark pool. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, with a bright, golden light source breaking through the clouds on the right side, creating a dramatic silhouette effect on the cliff and path.

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25¢

The
Road
to
Hell

Rogerio Biondi

Macabre Tales

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Contents for July, 1926

Cover Design _____ Rogerio Biondi

Illuminating a Scene from "The Road to Hell"

The Road to Hell _____ Rogerio Biondi 4

A Tale of Grief, Fog and choice.
The Road allows no rest.
But it allows choices.

The Road to Hell

a game by Rogerio Biondi

How to run the game

See the readme.txt file shipped with the game for installation and platform instructions.

Saving and Restoring

Use the **SAVE** and **RESTORE** commands to save and restore your game, following the conventions of your platform.

The Death Road

There is a place, in the heart of the Bolivian mountains, where asphalt surrenders to mud and mud surrenders to the abyss. The ancients called it Camino de los Yungas. The world named it **The Death Road**.

Three and a half meters wide. Twelve hundred meters of fall. A single mistake from the driver, a single curve poorly judged, and the vehicle disappears into the clouds that sleep below. Hundreds of crosses mark the asphalt. Some bear names. Others only flowers. Others... Well... No one is left to visit them.

When the fog descends, it does not descend alone. Truckers say

they hear the engines of buses long gone. That they see passengers standing at the curve where the 1983 bus fell. That, on certain nights, someone knocks on the passenger window asking to come in.

And everyone in Bolivia knows: you do not give rides on **The Death Road**.

The Yungas. Where the mountain whispers. Where Supay walks. Where Pachamama remembers her dead.

It is onto this road that you will set out tonight.



Introduction

Your name does not matter much now. What matters is that your wife, Clara, has been dead for eleven weeks. Sunday morning. Drowning, the certificate says. Recovered on the shoulder of km 47. You have read those two lines a thousand times and they have never made sense together.

There is someone on the other side of the Yungas. A defendant. A name on the summons that presses against the inner pocket of your coat.

The judge asked you to deliver it yourself, by hand. Strange.

No one else wanted to go. Maybe because it is the Death Road.

Maybe because the defendant has friends. Maybe because the judge does not like you very much.

The car waits outside, at the zero marker of the Broken Wheel Bar. Warm beer on the table, matches, an old newspaper. The briefcase with

our name does not matter much now. What matters is that your wife, Clara, has been dead for eleven weeks. Sunday morning. Drowning, the certificate says. Recovered on the shoulder of km 47. You have read those two lines a thousand times and they have never made sense together.

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The car waits outside, at the zero marker of the Broken Wheel Bar. Warm beer on the table, matches, an old newspaper. The briefcase with the documents. A photo of Clara, heavy with longing. And, three years behind her, the silence of a house with a pool that no one enters anymore.

More than a hundred kilometers of mud, fog, and abyss separate you from the defendant. Several stretches with choices. Each curve with paths, and none of them safe.

Some stops will comfort you. Others will not.

The road is waiting.
You are not alone on it.

How to Play

The Road to Hell is a work of interactive fiction: you talk to the game by typing short sentences in English, and the game answers with text describing what happens. There are no graphics. Your imagination does the heavy lifting, and nothing works better than that.

Special Offer!

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Basic Commands

LOOK or **L**
Look around.

EXAMINE **o** or **X** **o**
Look at an object/person (o) in detail.

INVENTORY or **I**
See what you are carrying.

TAKE **o**
Pick up Object (o).

DROP **o**
Drop Object (o).

OPEN **o**
CLOSE **o**
Open / close Object (o).

READ **o**
Read Object (o).

GIVE **o** **TO** **p**
Give Object (o) to a Person (p) or Entity.

TALK TO **p**
Talk to Person (p).

SAVE and **RESTORE**
Save / restore the game.

QUIT
Quit the game.

Movement

N, S, E, W
North, South, East, West.

UP, DOWN
Go up, go down.

ENTER **o**

EXIT **o**

GET OUT OF **o**
Enter in a place or exit/get out of it.



Driving Verbs (in the car)

DRIVE or **N**
Go ahead.

TURN LEFT or **W**
Take the left path.

TURN RIGHT or **E**
Take the right path.



"The road wound through dead hills and ancestral woods, where nameless apparitions emerged from the mist like revenants born of the Chaco War; and as the automobile's headlights flickered beneath the spectral rain, you at the wheel realized with mounting dread that certain pale figures walked beside the vehicle without ever moving their feet."

BRAKE or **B**

Brake.

ACCELERATE or **A**

Accelerate.

SWERVE or **R**

Swerve left/right.

PRAY

Pray (in critical moments).

Useful Verbs (in the world)

KNOCK [on o]

Knock (on doors) or Object(o).

BURN o [with y]

Burn / light an Object(o) with Object(y).

EAT o

DRINK o

Eat / drink Object(o).

SIT on o

Sit on Object(o).

CARVE o [with y]

Carve Object(o) with y (a sharp object).

UNLOCK o with y

Unlock Object(o) with

Object(y).

DIG [with o]

Dig in a place with Object(o)

SHOOT o [with y]

KILL o [with y]

Shoot / kill Person(p) with

Object(y).

FIX o [with y]

REPAIR o [with y]

REINFORCE o [with y]

Reinforce an Object(o) with

Object(y).

PUT o in y

Put an Object(o) in a container

Object(y).

PULL o [with y]

PUSH o [with y]

Pull / push Object(o) with

Object(y).

Goal

Reach the Defendant's House by 9 a.m. the next morning and deliver the summons.



"In that subterranean shrine, where candles trembled beneath roots older than memory itself, there lingered a silence so profound and profane that one could almost believe the earth was praying to something far older than God."

Inner Mechanics

The game shows no numbers, but it watches you closely.

SANITY

Rises with comfort, prayer, and rest. Falls in the face of horror, alcohol, and voices that should not be there. Your sanity changes what you see, read, and recognize. Very low states open dark doors. High states reveal subtle messages.

GRIEF

Longing has weight. It rises with triggers, falls with small acts of redemption. In some places, grief decides whom you recognize and whom you do not.

PHYSICAL

Hunger, cold, fatigue, wounds. Take care of the body.

BALANCE

Each step tips you toward the light or the darkness. At the end of the road, this balance determines the ending. There is no "right path". There is the path you chose.

Essencial Tips

EXAMINE EVERYTHING

In interactive fiction, X (EXAMINE) reveals more than LOOK. Look at the table. Look at the bench. Examine everything you come across

READ EVERYTHING

Letters, newspapers, walls, signs, books. Important clues about the background history live in the margins. Some of them will only appear when you are sane.

SAVE OFTEN

Use SAVE before any choice that feels dramatic. RESTORE brings you back. This road does not forgive.

TAKE NOTES ON PAPER

Like the old days. Names, mileage, strange clues, recurring phrases. Draw a map. The game rewards those who pay attention.

YOUR STATE CHANGES THE GAME

High sanity opens one layer of meaning. Low sanity opens another. High grief makes you see people and things in a darker light. Low grief makes you doubt. Neither the player nor the character can fully trust their own eyes.

NOT EVERY FAMILIAR FACE IS WHAT IT SEEMS

If something looks too good to be there, perhaps it is not.

THE PATH ONLY MOVES FORWARD

You cannot return to places already visited, so explore them well and think what could be accomplished in each location.

KEEP IMPORTANT OBJECTS AND TRUST IN YOUR INTUITION

Look for objects that may be used elsewhere. Items may be

used later. They may have more than one use. Before spending the last one, think where else it might fit.



USE THE BRIEFCASE WELL

The briefcase lets you carry more than the player can with empty hands. Use it wisely.

THE PATHS ARE DIFFERENT

The roads of each stretch, and how you travel them, tell different stories. In a single run you will not see everything. Play several times and try other choices.



"There are moments when the memory of the departed returns with such dreadful clarity that one almost feels the universe itself has committed some terrible error in allowing them to vanish from the world; and in the suffocating silence of lonely nights, while rain whispers against forgotten windows, the heart begins to understand that grief is not merely sorrow, but a haunting... A slow and eternal visitation from those whom time has stolen, yet whom the soul refuses to surrender to the abyss."

ENJOY AND REPLAY

The game can be finished in a little under an hour and has seven different endings. Play several times to discover them all.

STOP AND PRAY

PRAY is not decorative. At the right moments it opens Passages that other commands do not.

THE CAR IS NOT JUST TRANSPORT

Read the manual in the glove compartment. It matters.

TIME MOVES

In some places, lingering kills. Find a quick way out.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU DRINK, HEAR, OR TURN ON

Some temptations cost dearly.

THE END HAS MORE THAN ONE FACE

There is no single ending. Everything you did on the road will collect its bill at the finish. Or its reward.

Special Thanks

This game could never have been created without the invaluable help of the following people.

Renato Degiovani and Divino Leitão

Renato was the editor of Micro-sistemas magazine and one of the most influential pioneers of Brazilian game development during the rise of home computing in the 1980s. At a time when access to technology and technical knowledge was still extremely limited in Brazil, his work helped introduce an entire generation to programming, game design, and interactive storytelling. Through his articles, reviews, and especially his adventure games, Renato encouraged countless young enthusiasts to experiment, create, and explore the possibilities of computers such as the ZX Spectrum and TK series. His passion for interactive fiction and creativity had a profound impact on the Brazilian gaming scene. I remain deeply grateful

for his contribution to my own development and for much of what I know about adventure games.

Tim Gilberts

Founder of Gilsoft, played a fundamental role during the 8-bit era by democratizing game development through the release of The Quill and PAW. Under his technical leadership, these tools enabled thousands of people to create text adventures without needing to master complex programming languages, serving as the foundation for hundreds of commercial titles on the ZX Spectrum. In addition to innovating with software such as The Illustrator, his legacy remains alive through his active collaboration in modern retro-

computing and preservation projects.

Graham Nelson, Fredrik Ramsberg and Johan Berntsson

Nelson created Inform 6, while Ramsberg and Berntsson developed the PunyInform library, which made it possible to bring rich and high-quality



Divino Leitão (1957–2025) was a pioneering figure in Brazilian microcomputing and game development, widely recognized for his work with the legendary Micro Sistemas magazine. During the ZX81 and TK90X era, he created classic games such as Cavernas de Marte and helped inspire an entire generation of programmers and technology enthusiasts in Brazil.



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All around you there is abundant Success, Wealth and Happiness. Get Your Share. The "LUCKY SEVEN" Secret Rules are free to all who wear this Rare and beautiful Talisman Ring. On each side of this Odd and Charming Ring is moulded the Figure of Fortuna—The "Goddess of Luck". Ancient belief, that her emblem brings luck and success to wearers in Love, Health and everything. Genuine

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interactive fiction to 8-bit computers with very limited resources. Every day I become more impressed by the ingenuity behind these tools.

Stefan Vogt

Stefan is the creator of PunyBuildTools, a powerful toolkit that greatly simplifies the building and development process. He is an exceptionally generous person who has always shared his knowledge with others, while also being an outstanding author of remarkable adventure games, such as Hibernated and The Curse of Rabenstein.

André Luna Leão

André is the editor of Planeta Sinclair and plays a vital role in software preservation and within the ZX Spectrum community. With remarkable patience and dedication, he helped me extensively during testing and provided invaluable suggestions that allowed this adventure to reach its players.

And above all, thank you, the player!



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