

C09: Game Cartridges Vol 1

Saturday, December 23, 2023

4:54 PM

Difficulty: Level 1

Find the first Gamegosling cartridge and beat the game

<p>CONVERSATION w/ Elf Angel Candysalt</p>	<p><u>Angel Candysalt (Rusty Quay)</u></p> <p>The name's Angel Candysalt, the great treasure hunter! A euphemism? No, why do people <i>always</i> ask me that?? Anyways, I came here to nab the treasure hidden in this ship graveyard, only to discover it's protected by this rusted maze. That must be why all these old ships are here. Their crew came to find the treasure, only to get lost in the labrynth.</p> <p>There are 3 buried treasures in total, each in its own uncharted area around Geese Islands. I've been getting lost in this maze for hours now with no luck, and my feet are starting to get sore. Maybe you'll be able to find the way through. Here, use my Gameboy Cartridge Detector. Go into your items and test it to make sure it's still working. When you get close to the treasure, it'll start sounding off. The closer you get, the louder the sound. No need to activate or fiddle with it. It just works! At least it's obvious where this one is. See that shiny spot over to the right? That's gotta be where it is! If only I had a bird's eye view. But how to get there? Up? Down? Left? Right? Oh well, that's your problem now! Come back if you can find your way to it, and I'll tell you some secrets I've heard about this one.</p> <p>From <https://2023.holidayhackchallenge.com/badge?section=conversation></p> <p><u>Dusty Giftwrap (Tarnished Trove)</u></p> <p>Arrr, matey, shiver me timbers! There be buried treasure herrrrr. Just kidding, I'm not really a pirate, I was just hoping it would make finding the treasure easier. I guess you heard about the fabled buried treasure, too? I didn't expect to see anyone else here. This uncharted islet was hard to find.</p> <p>I bet one of these creepy toys has the treasure, and I'm sure not going anywhere near them! If you find the treasure, come back and show me, and I'll tell you what I was able to research about it. Good luck!</p> <p>** ----- Response after completing challenge ----- ** Whoa, you found it! It's a... video game cartridge? Coooooollll... I mean, arrrrrr.... So, here's what my research uncovered. Not sure what it all means, maybe you can make sense of it.</p> <p>You have all three? I think that makes you ruler of the pirates!</p> <p>From <https://2023.holidayhackchallenge.com/badge?section=conversation&id=dustygiftwrap></p>
<p>HINTS</p>	<p>Buried Treasures</p> <p>From: Dusty Giftwrap</p> <p>There are 3 buried treasures in total, each in its own uncharted area around Geese Islands. Use the gameboy cartridge detector and listen for the sound it makes when treasure is nearby, which gets louder the closer you are. Also look for some kind of distinguishing mark or feature, which could mark the treasure's location.</p> <p>From <https://2023.holidayhackchallenge.com/badge?section=hint&id=hintGameboys></p> <p>Gameboy 1</p> <p>From: Dusty Giftwrap Objective: Game Cartridges: Vol 1</p> <p>1) Giving things a little push never hurts. 2) Out of sight but not out of ear-shot 3) You think you fixed the QR code? Did you scan it and see where it leads?</p> <p>From <https://2023.holidayhackchallenge.com/badge?section=hint&id=hintGameboy1></p> <p>Approximate Proximity</p> <p>From: Dusty Giftwrap Objective: Game Cartridges: Vol 1</p> <p>Listen for the gameboy cartridge detector's proximity sound that activates when near buried treasure. It may be worth checking around the strange toys in the Tarnished Trove.</p>

MY WORK AND ANSWER

This was an interesting challenge in that it consisted of a treasure hunt ([finding the cartridges](#)) and then playing the old school games.

I found the Game Cartridge Finder, appropriately so, in Misfit Toys. Finding the cartridges, which were reported to be spread across the islands, was easy enough. As I explored the islands and the seas (for fishing), I listened for the beep (from the Finder), the sound of which indicated a cartridge was nearby. To that end, I found Volume 3 in the maze of graveyard ships (did run into dead end on some paths), Volume 1 among the misfit toys (stumbled upon it), and then Volume 2 in a weird cave/grotto (didn't require a lot of exploring).

I recall these types of games but wasn't a fan then. So I didn't immediately play the GB cartridges but continued island exploration and other challenges. I started with Volume 1 and my play itself took longer than I suspected in part to my unfamiliarity with the game itself and in part to not being able to save state (each time, I exited I had to start over). I realized that I probably could have hacked that part so that I could save state and I did see player hints to that affect. A bit disinterested in this one, I opted to just play it out.

The challenge in Volume 1 is to find and move seven (7) blocks to reveal the QR code to scan. The scanned code will reveal the prize that is to be entered in the Volume 1 prompt. I found success after many attempts and my basic mapping of the as-is matrix that was invaluable to my methodical movements to reveal the QR code, which led me to the flag.

I'm not sure I would venture to complete Volumes 2 or 3. Just not interesting.

Instructions stated to press the letter (e) or (r) to sing. But I figured out that "sing" is the A button.

Jared: Elf, have you ever heard of a miner named John Liston?

Elf: What does he mine?

Jared: Crypt-o-coin?

*Elf: ** gasp ** The long lost treasure of the undead toe?*

Elf: I can't believe it!

Elf: I'd love to quest for the treasure but there ain't no way I'll ever find this Tom Lis..

Jared: I'm sending you Tom's first, middle and last name, His home address, His cell number, and the last four of social.

*** Elf's cellphone chimes ***

Elf: Excellent! Never fear

Very Senior Technical Engineer

Jared Folkins

Elf: I will find this treasure and Liston and I will receive ...

*Jared: ** GROANS ***

Ooooooh no

Elf: Muuuuuch

T-Wiz: I absolutely know what Elf is about to say

Elf: Glooooooory!



I quickly found a group of blocks in close proximity to each other that were movable. Walking or pushing and singing, I was able to find the remaining blocks, one of which needed to be pushed to the other side of the QR code via moving it outside the box.

After several unsuccessful attempts, I saw that there was an order in which some of the blocks were to be moved.

In my attempt to tackle this once and for all, I replicated the initial QR code block as an image.

I then used it to mark where the movable blocks were and where they were to be moved and noted where order of movement was important (as noted in the image to the right).



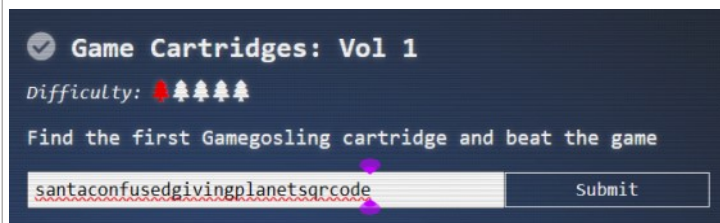
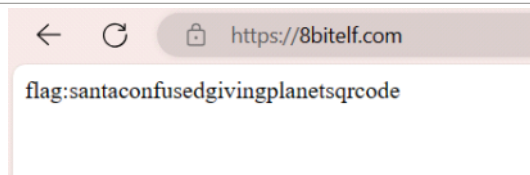
With the completed QR code (did not grab a screenshot of that image), I scanned it to reveal the URL where I found the flag.

QR code pointed to URL: 8bitelf.com



Flag found at the URL, 8bitelf.com

In hindsight, I should have used Linux to extract the flag



Comments of Interest from other Players

NOTE: You can get a local copy of the games

Finding the Items

Gameboy Cartridge finder in Misfit Toys and will be added to tools

- It's ambient (not regular) SFX; it dings when you get near.
- Ambient SFX are on a loop and have a range function built into the engine already, so making it ambient was the most time-efficient option.

In lieu of searching manually for the cartridges, you can interact directly w/ the websockets that run holiday hack - don't take too long to script a mapping module

- <https://imgur.com/a/x1HssF6> (non-cartridge map to avoid spoilers) - looks neat but an almost unaltered copy of what the websockets send when entering an area

Playing Gameboy Volume 1

The challenge is to play the game and move the blocks. It's complete when you have 7/7 and will reveal the QR code to scan

Things to remember:

- No way to pull blocks; can only push a block to an empty spot behind it
- You push a block by running into
- If a cube gets stuck in a corner, talk to Kody the dog. He can reset the level.
- It's convenient to sing to the box while moving it.
- I was able to find something that made things easier
- guess if there was a hint I would say: Think Outside of the Box

Other hints included:

- If it is already in 2x2 you will not be able to move it, you can only push a block to an empty spot behind it
- Not that I could find, you have to move them in a certain order.
- Pat the dog, which is right near the entrance door.
How to get block to center when you cannot pull it?
- take a detour or cheat <:santa:787168795613331456>
- One block needed to be moved far
 - Need some help here. I found a block near the top left. However, when I sing to it, it doesn't show me the proper location. Is the proper location so far that it doesn't show on the screen?
- Found it - it was far away
 - Where to move the last block?
- i just hauled it with me next to the whole qr code perimeter and spammed sing. Until the spot showed up
- keep singing to it and marching that little buddy around i'm sure you're close
 - one of the blocks blinks for me, but there's not a green destination spot flashing anywhere nearby
- Yes - down far away
 - The blocks only sing back for a short time. Try looking around after you sing to it.
 - hmmm the last block (6/7) which sings back ... it seems that it does not show its desired position ... i inspected QR Code v3 29x29 pattern but have no clue where to put the last one
- Maybe the place it needs to go is on the other side of the map maybe you just can't see where it goes
- Take the block for a tour

the output is embedded in the ROM somewhere

Using an External Emulator

If you grab the rom and play it on an external emulator like BGB or SameBoy you can save states to make it easier to go back when you mess up.

- For game emulator there's stuff like visualboyadvance amongst others
1. If not there are actually web-based emulators you could resort to also 😊
 2. No worries. I know some other favorites are <https://sameboy.github.io/> and <https://bgb.bircd.org/>

Hacking Source Code

Read through the source code to find the keybindings... they aren't all listed in the game

- Find the key binding which changes the colour schemes. You may find a colour scheme which hints at the blocks you need to move.
- might be a magic keybind in the web emulator. As well as your local emulator capabilities to cheat time
- check out the JavaScript, maybe they "forgot" to tell us all the configured keys
 - After completing this challenge, learned that the space bar or backspace key allows you to take back a move.