

Haunted by the video games I didn't play

Julien Kirch

Walkthroughs before the internet

My first computer was an Amstrad CPC.

It was the 1980's, we had no internet and the video games magazine we read were printed on paper.

I was (and still is) a heavy user of cheat codes. A magazine called Joystick contained cheats and walkthroughs in each issues, and published a few “bibles” collecting them.

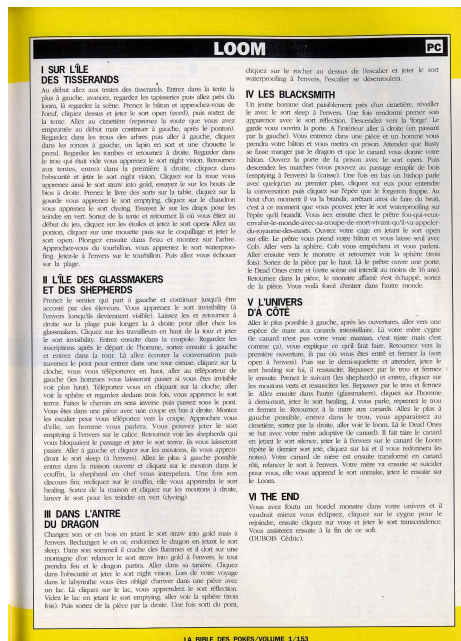


I remember reading some of the walkthroughs of those bibles cover to cover so many times.

THE TIME DOORS

1. *Take infrared glasses*
2. *East*
3. *Take card from the table*
4. *Put on glasses*
5. *Read code card (27182)*
6. *Remove glasses*
7. *East*
8. *Take shoker*
9. *Enter code 27182*
10. *North*
11. *Melt ice*

I didn't know the game the walkthroughs were supposed to solve, and they were published without any screenshot. Only a few of them had a picture from their cover box or a drawing.



LOOM

I On the wavers' island

At first go to the weavers' tents. Enter the leftmost tent, move forward, look at the tapestries and then go near the loom, there look at the scene. Take the stick and approach the egg, click on it and cast the open spell (eced), then get out of the tent. Go to the cemetery (take the road you took at the beginning but continue left, after the pontoon). Look into the holes in the trees and then go to the left, click into the brambles on the left, a rabbit comes out and an owl takes it. Look at the graves and turn right. Looking into the hole that was empty you learn the night vision. Go back to the tents, enter the first one on the right, click in the dark and cast the night vision spell.

From the walkthroughs' content I could daydream: what kind of game it was, in which universe, who was your character?

Nowadays you could search the games name on the Internet and have screenshots and videos of it, but at the time I only had the game title and the list of actions to be done to solve it. There's probably a Plato's cave thing somewhere, if you're into this kind of things.

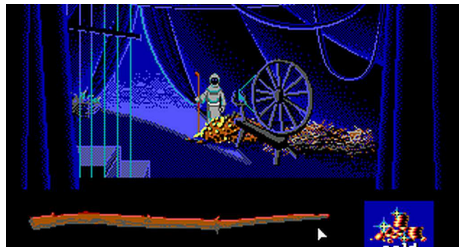
It's not that I didn't had enough games to play, but it was another way to experience video games.

A game called "The time doors" probably means time travel was involved, but what was your role, what kind of mess were to trying to fix?

I didn't even knew what "Loom" meant, in the game you seemed to be a kind of wizard who learnt and used spells, there was a monster, and a swan.

In many games, the character is a blank slate so the player can project themselves in, these walkthroughs were kind of blank games I could recreate differently each time I dreamt about them.

Since I've learnt what some of these games were about, for example those like Loom that are considered seminal enough to be mentioned even in recent articles. For the other ones, I've resisted so far to the temptation to search them online, I prefer to keep my imaginary version of them.



Nowadays' articles

Nowadays I spent much less time playing video games than I used to. The type of games I love to play has also decreased, as I mostly enjoy puzzle games.

But on the other hand, I spend more time reading articles about video games.

Unlike the old walkthroughs, articles about video games can explain the game plot, the kind of game, their mechanics and often shows screenshots. But it's not the same as playing and it's not a replacement for it.

I have a computer and a Switch so I could start playing some of them in a few minutes, and sometimes I buy a game after reading about it.

And often feel betrayed when I pay for a game I don't have fun with, specially if it's a game from a genre I don't really like because it means I probably more or less expected I wouldn't enjoy it.

(Why did I bought Monster Hunter?)

So I let those games haunt me, the games I know I would not have fun with, the games I know I wouldn't invest the time they require.