

Great Gold Bird Demo/Chapter 1

wheat field



- 1) 1POV – wheat parting as Henry walks through it. You don't see Henry at all – it's just from his perspective. It's very high. You can see some sky but not much.
- 2) Camera pans down to Henry's dried blood and dirt-caked feet
- 3) Camera pans up to the sun
- 4) The circle of the sun is isolated for video projection – The sun eclipses, then a flash of horses running (video, not animation)

Scene 1 - David's room

[bolded objects are clickable objects that should have close-up versions]

- 1) Close-up of David waking up in his bed
 - quick fade to black
 - overhead view of the David in bed

Introduce instructions for gameplay here. A little bit of hand-drawn white text with these instructions over the screen (text disappears after the player presses one of the WASD buttons and the PC gets out of bed.)

W, A, S, D to move

click on an object to interact with it

Esc to quit and save

- 2) David gets out of bed. He is standing at the edge of the bed. You see the whole bedroom, and can begin moving through the space.

The bedroom: Room has a bit of an exposed, industrial feel. Maybe hardwood floors, exposed brick, exposed ducts, etc.

- A bike hangs on the wall
- some cacti
- There's an architect's drafting table with art supplies and an **unfinished graphic novel (you can flip through the pages)**
- a **functional record player** with **records** you can put on (some light animation would be involved here. I'm thinking there's a small pile of records in their jackets near the record player, you click on the pile, closeup of pile with clickable text options for the three bands appear. Once you click one of the options, it's back to full view of the room again and now the song is playing and the record player is spinning) Text options are: Murder Shoes, Fever Bones, and Dead Recipe.
- Maybe a couple band posters on the wall of our friends' bands ("Murder Shoes," "Fever Bones," and "Dead Recipe")

- a cat (lightly animated with tail twitching – maybe you can pet it or the cat just does different stuff around the room on a loop?)
- **something that belongs to your ex-girlfriend** (a letter?)
- a computer desk with nothing on it (no computer on it)
- closet door that you can open (when you open the closet, it's full-screen)
- a bookcase with nondescript books
- a trashcan with some crumpled up trash (when you click on the trash, get a closeup of a **negative results for an std test**)
- Whatever else you think makes the room feel real and reveals information about the character.

4) You click on the door leading out of the bedroom and you are in a simple apartment mailbox area. There's also another tenant's door, but you can't currently interact with it. The only p.o. box you can click on is the one with your name on it "D. Kessler". There's a lock on it that you have to turn left, right, then left at the particular numbers. You have to go back into the bedroom to find the code. Also in the bedroom are a ton of yellow post-it notes (20ish?) – on the walls, on the desk, etc. You can only click on a few of them. He is the kind of guy who encrypts everything. One of the notes reads "Cat = Mail." If you click on the cat's collar, you see that its name is "DRE." The code to the mailbox is the corresponding number to the letter of the alphabet, so for "Dre" the combination is "4 – 18 – 5."

5) There's some junk mail, **a rejection letter from a publishing company you submitted your graphic novel to, a postcard from your parents, and a mysterious package with no return address.** There is only an application for employment and a floppy disk inside. (I will give you all the text for these later)

6) Click on the door to re-enter your bedroom. Click on the closet door. There's an old computer with a disc drive inside (a Tandy? Would that be incompatible?) There's other stuff in the closet, too. More intimate things...maybe an argument letter, underwear. At least one thing that reveals information about the character. I'm thinking a collection of knives, watches, and nice pens. Things people take pride in carrying every day. If you ever have looked at the subreddit called "every day carry" or "EDC", you know what I mean. People who obsess over small designed objects. You have to click on the computer to put it in your inventory, and then you can place it on the previously bare desk.

7) Insert floppy disk from inventory. Application for employment/twine game. The application is based on this twine game: futurephoneline.com/access.html . It's a more condensed version, though. The flashbacks are no longer there. Just the first couple of answer stems on each. I'll post all of the text we'll actually be using below and suggestions for illustrations. This should be just like a full-screen twine game within the game, which will add another texture to the game. Music/sound effects will stay the same, and we'll want new illustrations. You can fail the twine game, and have to retake it.

"I will show you fear in a handful of dust."
-T.S. Eliot

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

You are crossing a wooded clearing. The only moisture is the fog of your own breath. You've walked several miles, and your feet ache. The earth rises up to meet you, instead of giving itself to your weight. A dark shape grows still. You stop. Some kind of animal is ahead in the distance. You've seen it many times before, but its name....what is its *name*....

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

Nearly a dozen surround you—alert but completely still. The cloud of your breath shrinks to a small stream. A shape blinks. You blink. A shape moves towards you with alarming grace, its massive torso supported by four spindly legs. Nothing else moves like this... but what is it called?

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

Your mouth makes the shape of a surprise when you start to say its name out loud. It stands a few inches from you now. You reach out your hand to smooth the short, coarse hairs along its jaw. Its heavy eyelashes blink dreamily. Steam rolls from its nostrils. Woodsmoke cuts the air. In the distance, you see black plumes rising above the treeline.

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

[Choose A or B, only it won't say "A" and "B"]

A) Follow the horses.

B) Follow the smoke.

(A) It was only a few firecrackers. I wasn't trying to burn anything down, I just wanted to see what would happen. I set them off in the barn, so pa wouldn't catch me. The first couple didn't do much, just sparked and whined. So I got bold and threw a handful. The tobacco was the first to catch fire. It spread to the hay and then the horses. They burst from their stalls, and broke towards the woods. I followed them. Sleeping on cold earth for three nights, half-starved, half hoping to die. I woke to the small, tawny mare hovering over me. The one pa said couldn't be broke. Her breath was warm, her withers charred. I

reached for her cautiously, afraid she'd buck if I startled her. But there was no fire left in her eyes. I knew I could go home then.

Ain't nothin left for her here, boy. G'on turn her loose.

I let go of her, but she remained perfectly still. Blinking at me dumbly. Maybe she wasn't broke, just tired.

OR

B) Wildfire breaks loose, and spooks all the horses. They tear at the ground, hurtling themselves into the great, dark yawn of Lake Ladoga. When water is extremely pure—it can stay liquid below the freezing point. It forgets how to freeze until it has a nucleator— something to freeze around: a snowflake, a fish...a horse. As the horses swim towards shore, the jaws of the lake snap around them—leaving only their necks suspended above surface. They remain there all winter, baying at the sky, eyes as milky as the moon.

When the ice thaws, the horses sink beneath the surface of the lake. Fish grow fat on the horses' flesh. Green tubers sprout from the ashy forest floor. Deer return. A boy tosses his ball into the lake. He dives to retrieve it, fingers trailing over slimy rocks and weeds. When he surfaces for air, he is holding the jaw of a horse.

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

“There will be time to murder and create,
and time for all the works and days of hands”
— T.S. Eliot

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

You are standing in an enormous stone temple. Massive columns stretch skywards to secure the domed roof above. There are no solid walls—only the columns. Barren, cracked earth fans out in all directions. There is no sign of life. You feel neither warm nor cool. Everything that came before is forgotten. Across a crumbling arch, an inscription reads: *Contra vim mortis un crescit herba in hortis.*

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

There are two openings in the dome above you. Under one is a stone basin from which perfumed smoke rises in waves. No tinder feeds the fire. An identical basin is filled with rich, fertile soil. A small glass vial holding a single seed sits atop the soil. Above it hangs a crude pulley system from which a tin cup is attached. Impossibly, the string seems to stretch out past the mountains beyond the horizon.

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

[Choose A or B]

A) Create

B) Destroy

A) You press the fragile seed into the dark, cool soil. Then you tug on the twine that connects the tin cup to the pulley system, sending it singing towards the mountains. Just as you are about to give up, you see it making its way back towards you. It still contains a small amount of water.

//water soil//

You pour the water onto the seed, and send it back towards the mountain. There is neither morning nor night. There is only the small green sapling peeking out from the soil.

//water soil//

Insects gather, but they do not disturb you. You forget hunger, thirst, and sleep. There is only the perfumed smoke, the singing tin cup, the growing sapling.

//water soil//

//water soil//

Moss forms around the stone basin. The sapling is now the size of your hand.

//water soil//

//water soil//

Birdsong can be heard for the first time. The sapling has grown into a small tree. How long have you been here?

//water soil//

//water soil//

//water soil//

The perfumed smoke has grown thicker. Moss and lichen cover the entire temple. The tree has outgrown the basin, which has begun to crack.

//water soil//

//water soil//

The roots of the tree have shattered the basin and dug down past the foundation. A family of foxes laps from a pool forming around the base of the tree. They do not fear you.

//water soil//
//water soil//
//water soil//
//water soil//

The slow passage of water down the mountainside has etched out the smallest beginnings of a stream. The smoke disappears. Close your eyes. You rest in the roots of the tree.

OR

B) So you think this is some kind of wonder drug or something? You know how crazy that makes you sound? You can't say shit like that around here.

I know. But, I mean...it's not a drug. It's just a plant at this stage. And we don't even know that it'll survive the move. But yeah, I mean so far it looks like it might even be chasing down epithelial cells. Rachel's submitting for the second peer review. That's not exactly nothing.

There is no magic pill, okay? And let's just say there is. Let's say that this time...your source—this guy, whoever he is—somehow stumbled onto this cure-all plant, uh *Ghost Laurel*. So let's just run with that. You think that's a good thing? Everyone just gets to live forever. No more disease. That's what this thing does, right?

Well, lifespans *would* be longer...

Until the world collapses under its own weight?

Man...listen. I don't know. I'm not gonna debate ethics here. We'll probably be on Mars or something by the time that's even a problem.

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

*"It may be that in all her phrases stirred
The grinding water and the gasping wind;
But it was she and not the sea we heard."
—Wallace Stevens*

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

Aknidi, daughter of the Sun, was the brightest star in the night sky. She was sent by her father in the form of a beautiful woman as a gift to the Sami people of the northern tundra—"The Children of the Sun." She cared for her people, especially the women, teaching them embroidery, sea shanties, and button-making. As time passed, the women grew jealous of Aknidi's radiance. One day they asked her to search the

shore for the best shells, so that they could fashion them into a crown for her. When she stooped to pick up a shell, the women heaved a great stone from the cliff above her. “My daughters! What have you done?” she cried, as she lay crushed beneath its weight. The seagulls mimicked her cries, tormenting the women for eternity.

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

The Sun, who loved Aknidi best of all his children, refused to shine on the Sami people, cursing them to darkness. Their crops were blighted, and their sacred caribou grew famished. One by one, the Sami people began to disappear. The women wept and made sacrificial offerings of what little caribou remained to atone. The spirit of Aknidi pleaded with her father to forgive her people. She begged him to return to his place in the sky, bearing them life-giving light.

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

[Choose A or B]

- A) I can deny you nothing.
- B) How can you ask that of me?

A) Moved by his daughter’s tenderness, the Sun struck a bargain with her. He would never shine on the Sami again, but in the summer months, Aknidi could take his place in the sky and do as she pleased. In the winter months, he would disappear entirely into darkness. To make up for her father’s absence in the winter, Aknidi would shine far into the evening during the summer. This is how northern Scandinavia became known as “The Land of the Midnight Sun.”

OR

B) Because The Sun loved her best of all, he couldn’t bring himself to shine on their land again. To honor his daughter’s memory, he painted her spirit across the night sky to remind the women of her beauty. This is how the Northern Lights were formed.

(click an arrow or press space bar for above text to disappear and below text to appear)

If you don’t answer all the questions correctly, it says, “I can’t trust you until you start making better decisions.” The game restarts.

OR

If you make all the right choices, it says, “Okay, we can move on. I had to know that you wouldn’t make the same mistakes I would. The less you know for now, the safer you’ll be. There are spies everywhere. Call when you’re ready: XXX-XXX-XXXX.” (some made up phone number). -- twilio

David doesn't have a phone anywhere in his room. You now have the option of knocking on the door in the mailbox room. An annoyed middle-aged woman appears in the doorway.

"You need to use the phone again, David?"

"Just one last time, I swear."

"When are you going to get your own phone?"

"You know the government is tracking our phone calls."

"Here."

[She hands him the phone. Close-up of just a cellphone with a dial tone underneath it. You have to manually dial the number given to you at the end of twine game using the number keys on the keyboard. You dial Henry's conspiracy hotline, and are given menu options to choose from. You have to press the corresponding number to hear the menu option. These have already been written and recorded. This fills the player in on the main quest of the game.]

Call the number. You reach the voicemail of an older man's audio repair shop.

"Hello, you've reached Comb's Audio Repair Services. Home of Austin's fastest, most affordable vintage stereo repair and restoration service. I'm sorry I'm unavailable to take your call right now, but if you could please leave your name, number, and a brief message after the beep, I'll get back to you as soon as possible"

[ambient music pad with white noise—beautiful wash of sound, instead of beep lasts 20-30 seconds]

"Okay, good you're still here. We don't have much time, but I need to know I can trust you. If this fell into the wrong hands, it could be disastrous. I need you to do something for me. It's very important. Please use this call menu service to educate yourself on past and future events."

"For information on the Philadelphia Experiment, press 1"

You've heard of Nikola Tesla. Plenty of people thought he was a quack, but the technology just didn't exist to keep up with his inventions. In 1940 FDR asked Tesla to head a military defense program that would make navy vessels not only invisible to German radar systems, but also to the naked eye by manipulating the electromagnetic and gravity fields surrounding the ship. This would later be known as The Philadelphia Experiment. Tesla backed out of the project due to ethical concerns. He was found dead in his hotel room ten months later. I was chosen to be part of the test crew aboard the USS Eldridge during these experiments. The Eldridge *did* disappear for twelve minutes, but when it returned, five sailors were fused to the steel deck, eight went completely mad, and three, including myself, jumped ship the moment all hell broke loose. Two of them, Al Bieleck—formerly known as Edward Cameron—and Duncan Cameron emerged in

1983, and were sent back to 1943 to dismantle the equipment on the Eldridge. You can go digging for their story, if you're ever curious. I wound up alone in 2048.

“For information regarding Project Eden, press 2”

When I visited 2048, I stuck around long enough to figure out why the world population had shrunk from 10 billion to 300 million. Sometime in the late 1980's, someone in charge decided our only shot at survival was to quietly, slowly thin the herd using biochemical warfare. It's simple: less carbon footprint, more resources. When's the last time you've glanced at the ingredients on the back of your toothpaste, or personally tested your water samples? Women became infertile—except for the chosen few, of course. This is known as Project Eden. It began with a series of strange phenomena: household pets suddenly became feral, attacking their owners, and returning to the natural world in droves. Animals formed packs with various species to compete for dominance. These packs contained two of every species native to the area. Parakeets, chihuahuas, and grizzly bears would cooperate peacefully, but would fight other packs to the death in a Darwinian struggle for the strongest single ecosystem.

“For information concerning the Ghost Laurel, press 3

In 2048 I got involved with a rebel group of scientists who engineered a plant hybrid that exponentially increases the body's naturally-occurring detoxification process. It's called the ghost laurel, named for its pale branches. If the fruit of this plant is ingested every day, it will negate any harmful effects of the chemicals. We've tested it, and it works, but toxicity levels are astronomical in 2048, and there aren't enough people left for it to make a significant impact. I need your help finding the seeds, and distributing them worldwide. I'd do it myself, but I'm being monitored by the QSA.

“For information about the Quantum Surveillance Agency, press 4”

“Surely you've heard of the NSA in light of recent events. Well, those guys are just the tip of the iceberg. They're the only public sector of the QSA —Quantum Surveillance Agency. I've encrypted our email exchanges, so that no one can eavesdrop, but the powers that be always find a way in. The QSA knows I've been hopping timelines. They don't know what I'm doing exactly, but if they start to suspect that it has something to do with Project Eden, they'll stop at nothing to make sure their depopulation program isn't tampered with. If I'm discovered, I have a device that can erase my memory, so you won't be implicated.”

“For an explanation of how to distinguish chemtrails from regular contrails, press 5”

Contrails are thin white lines scratched into the sky by regular commercial planes when air compresses into water vapor. They disappear within a few minutes, and are completely harmless. Chemtrails on the other hand, start off looking like contrails, but instead of

disappearing, they fan out into fat, hazy cloud trails, and remain there for hours. They look like big white X's hovering over heavily populated areas. They're made up of an unknown chemical cocktail sprayed by unmarked black jets.

"To hear a stylization of a song from the distant future, press 6"

[You hear a weird song featuring barking dogs with lots of reverb.]

"To retrieve the seeds, press 7"

"I figured the safest place to hide the seeds was in plain view, so they are currently on display as part of the impermanent collection at the Museum of Natural and Artificial Ephemerata. You're going to need to receive a tour in order to retrieve them, but for godssake don't mention the seeds. I *may* have said something to Scott and Jen, the curators of the museum, about the seeds being from the future so they didn't toss em, but I didn't really go into detail. I doubt they believe me, but if they knew for certain, they'd never let them go. What you're looking for is a small purple bag. You'll need to swap these with some fake seeds—caraway or sunflower—whatever, I don't care. I doubt they looked at them too closely anyway. Leave the bag there, just take the seeds. Don't touch anything else, though! You'll need to create a diversion to get Scott and Jen out of the room, so you have enough time to swap them out. Ask Scott about his narwhal horn collection or something—that'll keep him talking for a while. Be creative."

End of Demo.