



Haunted House

An introduction to a remix by
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Contents

I - The original Haunted House game.

II - My first involvement with a Haunted House remake.

III - The 2011 Indigo speed-comp.

IV - My own experience exploring an abandoned house.

V – Acknowledgments.

VI – From 2011 to 2016: The Year of Adventure.

VII - Some trivia internet links related to works of fiction which refer to strange, abandoned, or just somehow "haunted" houses.

I – The Original *Haunted House* game.

Haunted House, the work that inspired this remake, was originally a text adventure game released in 1979 for the TRS-80 series of home computers. It was developed by *Device Oriented Games* to be distributed by *Tandy Radio Shack*, TRS-80 manufacturer, in its own chain of stores. The program, written in machine-code, was meant to be executed in Model I or III TRS-80 machines with only 4 Kb of memory, being an example of how adventure games made up for low resources with clever ways of stimulating player's imagination in the early years.



According to the dates mentioned in the printed manual, the above pics are from a 1981 reprint of the game I got at ebay in 2010.

You can find a complete dossier of the game (including walkthrough and map) at:

<http://www.figmentfly.com/hauntedhouse/hauntedhouse.html>

The original author is uncredited, but it's a known fact that most of the text adventures made by *Device Oriented Games* were written by **Robert Arnstein**, as I could check following the links from figmentfly.com to the TRS-80 section at <http://computerarcheology.com/>, so he is likely to be the author of this *Haunted House*, though I couldn't find any explicit statement of that anywhere.

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HAUNTED HOUSE!!
YOU ARE AT THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE.
THERE IS A CRUMPLED PIECE OF PAPER ON THE GROUND.
THE FRONT DOOR IS CLOSED.
:GET PAPER
OK
:READ IT
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
:READ PAPER
IT SAYS, "MAGIC WORD - PLUGH."
:SAY PLUGH
YOU MATERIALIZE INSIDE THE DOOR.
YOU ARE AT THE FOYER.
:SAY PLUGH
SORRY, ONLY ONE PLUGH PER CUSTOMER.
:
```

Screen capture of *Haunted House* executed in a TRS-80 emulator

II - My first involvement with a *Haunted House* remake.

Soon after I got a copy of the original *Haunted House* TRS-80 game at ebay for my personal collection of IF related stuff, a remake-comp was organized at Commodore Amiga computer dedicated forums in the net. The idea was just to make a quick remix of any game for the Amiga, so I tried with a new version of *Haunted House* which should work on a basic Amiga model and should have had some enhancements from the original, such as a new plot and a few multimedia things here and there.

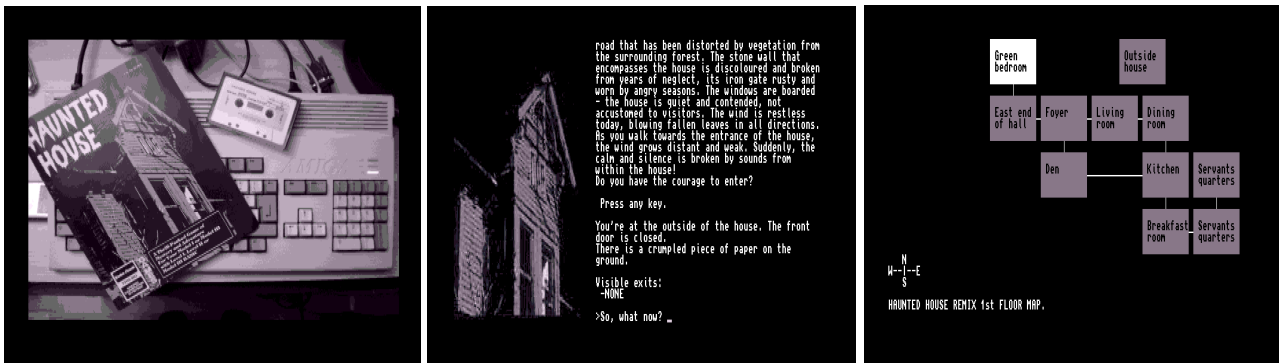
Lack of time and ideas reduced this plan to making just a plain port of the game (as I could figure out from looking at the figmentfly detailed walkthrough and from playing the game with emulators) written with AMOS Professional with some multimedia additions and an auto-map feature.

The result can be seen here:

<http://www.rockersuke.com/if/hauntedhouse/hauntedhouse.html>

And a making-of video is at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHXT5eMM6nc>



Loading screen, in-game capture, and auto-mapping in the Amiga port.

III – The 2011 Indigo speed-comp.

In April 2011 IF enthusiast **Jacqueline A. Lott** organized the Indigo New Language speed-comp, a competition for fast-creating an interactive fiction work where the premise was that authors should use an IF creation tool for their first time (and add a reference to the word *Indigo*).

I entered with my first attempt at writing IF with Inform 7 (and also my first attempt at writing an IF work in English, not my native language, presented in the IF community) trying to fulfill what I had left unresolved in my first *Haunted House* remix: some plot over the original scenario. For this, I wrote a new text adventure from scratch, no multimedia stuff this time, and added a whole new story mixing the original puzzles with new characters and some of my own childhood memories.

Participants had a great time at IFMud ClubFloyd playing all the entries together. People were really nice and forgiving with both *Haunted House* bugs and my attempts to blow up English grammar!

The *Haunted House* you are playing is a slightly polished version of this speed-comp entry with mayor *known* bugs removed and a few rewritten texts. Still it does not pretend to be a fully tested full implemented Interactive Fiction work, just a short story to have some fun with.

For reference to the other Indigo speed-comp entries see:

http://www.ifwiki.org/index.php/Indigo_New_Language_Speed-IF

IV - My own experience exploring an abandoned house.

As suggested in the game, memories are a vague, misty territory, so I could hardly date with precision the event from my real life that, in a rather distorted way, is mentioned in this *Haunted House* remix until I found, digging deep into a long time unused drawer, an old letter from a childhood friend where it was mentioned: it was the summer of 1982.

Unlike in the game, we were three boys in our early teens, and also unlike in the game the house was not in a far away solitary place but in the middle of a residential area somewhere in a village in the mountains north of Madrid, where we were spending our summer holidays, surrounded by recently constructed chalets from which it was set apart by its notably older appearance, not to mention the spreading overgrown vegetation in its garden showing it had been uninhabited for years.

The house is still there. I took the following pictures (including the one used as cover art for the story) this very same year. The fact that it hasn't been demolished in these times of extensive land-speculation shows that there are still some legal owners somewhere, so I could be doing them less than a favour if I gave away easily identifiable images or more accurate details of its actual location. Just take my word for it that the Google Earth image shows the *real* house.



Image © 2011 Google Images © 2011 GeoEye



We skipped into the garden through a hole in the wire fence at the adjacent plot, the one with the swimming pool, back then an open empty land, and then into the house through a broken window, of course, just to make the most fun out of our exploring party, at night.

Unsurprisingly, the most obvious things we found inside were an endless layer of dust and cobwebs all over the old furniture. No evil ghosts, corpses or monsters. The closest thing to a fright we had, right after the excitement of going up the stairs to the overwhelming darkness of the upper floor, happened when I first stepped into an attic room: the rotten wooden floor wouldn't support my weight and my foot made a hole in it. The potentially nasty fall gave us something to laugh at... after my heart stopped running wild!

On the opposite upper wing we found what looked like the owner's bedroom. Piles with dozens of newspapers from the mid-fifties suggested the house had been empty for almost 30 years then (60 years now), and we spotted a drawer full of mail, most of it bills and receipts, addressed to a woman's name, presumably the house owner (a woman as a householder was not unseen, but certainly unusual in the sexist, conservative Spanish society of that time). The real *weird* thing was the envelope with the most recent date of them all: some hand-written pieces of old yellowed paper with the most old-fashioned, old-styled, rhetorically overcharged, desperately passionate... love letter I had ever read!

As far as I could figure out from its content, the female householder had a lover who was trying to

encourage her not to break their relationship even when, for some unmentioned reason, that could lead to a public scandal.

Why theirs was supposed to be some sort of forbidden relation or whether their story had a happy or tragical ending is anyone's guess. The only certain thing is that the house had been abandoned probably shortly after that letter arrived and that, against the scary-movie like stage our teen phantasies had imagined, the only mystery buried within the old abandoned house was just a love story with an uncertain ending.

Again, memories are fuzzy, so I can't remember either the woman's name or why, even if I regret it now, I decided to leave the letter in the drawer where we found it instead of keeping it with me. It just seemed the *right* thing to do at that time. As mentioned before, the house is still there, though the way we used to get in is blocked now and trespassing seems too inadequate from my adult point of view, anyway. So the letter is probably still there too, waiting for another adventuring kid, or perhaps the *real* haunting ghost, to come and read it...

V – Acknowledgments.

My greatest thanks to the following people without whom this *Haunted House* remix wouldn't exist as it is:

-**Robert Arnstein**, or whoever wrote the original *Haunted House* game this work is based on for *Device Oriented Games*, and all the authors who struggled to get the huge adventure gaming world into the tiny memory of early home computers. The effort was worth it!

-**Graham Nelson** and the rest of the Inform 7 development team, for making such a nice to use yet powerful IF creation tool.

-**Ron Newcomb** for his *Custom Library Messages* extension, instrumental in allowing the game to be narrated in the past tense, and **Emily Short** for her extensions *Plurality* and *Basic Screen Effects*.

-**Moya Jackie** and **Jacqueline A. Lott** for organizing the competitions that encouraged me to make not one but two different *Haunted House* remixes!

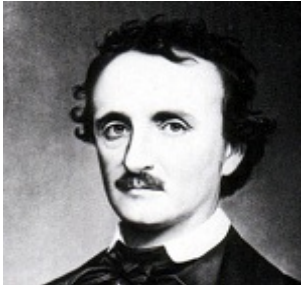
-All the people who so generously answered my request for beta-testers and proofreaders:

Austrid Beulink, Christian Kellerman, Dacharya64, Nickolis Miles.

VI – From 2011 to 2106: The Year of Adventure.

After working for some months in a properly tested and proofread version of the speed-IF entry, which was a great experience and meant a lot to me due to the awesome patience and support I received from the tester team mentioned above, the worst happened. Real life kept me away from the project for too much time, my interest in it slowly vanished... When I realized, it had been put aside for years... Even when the work was just a few paragraphs away from being “finished”, it never got publicly released. My shame, as the time and help invested by my testers deserved much better than that. Then, **Robin Johnson**, winner of the 2016 IF-Comp, organized the [Year of Adventure](#), a non-competitive jam celebrating *Colossal Cave*'s 40th anniversary, whose target included, among other things, re-releases of previous games somehow related with early interactive fiction works. That seemed to fit the long-forgotten *Haunted House* remix like a glove! So I decided to give it the final push to reach some proper public release, no matter it's still a short, not fully implemented, speed-IF game, so people can take a look at it in its intended final version.

VII - Some trivia internet links related to works of fiction which refer to strange, abandoned, or just somehow "haunted" houses.



The Fall of the House of Usher by **Edgar Allan Poe**, first published in 1839 in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/932>



The Haunted House, a collection of short stories by several authors conducted by **Charles Dickens** first published in the 1859 Christmas issue of his weekly literary magazine *All the year round*

<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/dickens/charles/d54hh/>



The Strange High House in the Mist, a short story by **H. P. Lovecraft** written in 1926 but first published in the October 1931 issue of *Weird Tales* magazine.

<http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/shh.asp>



This is a YouTube link with a reading of **Virginia Woolf's** *Haunted House*, a short poem first published in 1944, after the author's death.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT1qJ5rw2iE>



Haunted House featuring Mickey Mouse. A short 1929 Disney cartoon. Enjoy! :-)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8LiPoIpxnk>

