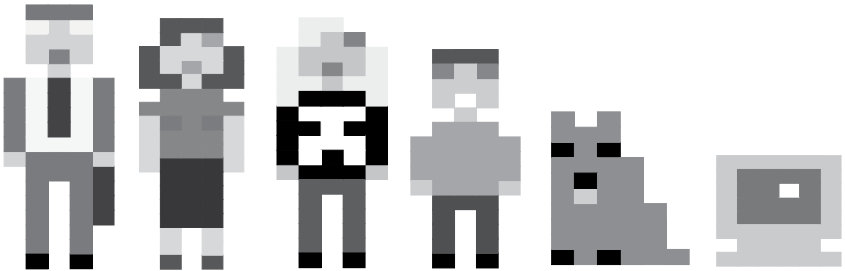


Game Quest

by Leopold McGinnis



**Read the novel in its entirety at
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ISBN: 0-9738535-0-6



Chapter 2; women & other questionable material in computer games

April 4th, 1994

“Shrink her breasts.”

“You want smaller breasts?”

“Yeah. Make them smaller. We’ve already got two women with large breasts in this game. We need variety. Not everyone likes large breasts,” said Art.

Bill looked at Art and Art was right. Art was a genius. And this was another genius moment, thought Bill. “And besides,” said Bill, “without smaller breasts, there are no bigger breasts.”

“Exactly,” said Art, and Bill began to make the breasts smaller.

“Pass me another donut,” said Art. Will, president and CEO of Madre Games Entertainment, listening to these two from his spot against the radiator, pushed the donut box down the desk to the genius who chose a sprinkled one. Art liked sprinkles.

This was going to be the greatest Swarthy Victor installment yet. And it was just getting easier to crank these things out. They had it down to an art...and Art was the mastermind behind it all. He had single-handedly created the world’s first and most popular and, Bill thought, singularly brilliant series of adult-rated games...at the tender age of 40. Well, actually, it had been an update of an earlier, popular but lesser-known text based game by another person that came out in the early 80s...but it had been Art’s idea to update it about ten years ago.

Actually, it had been Art and Will’s idea, but Art had written it, programmed it, given it the ‘*Swarthy Victor Quests for Chicks*’ title and theme song and added the now-famous Art Loel humor and puns that came to embody Swarthy Victor games. Will had only really backed the update in a business sense...and acted as a sounding board for Art. Will wasn’t that creative. He was a business guy. And Art had designed and programmed the second game too. That game took Swarthy Victor in its own direction. No longer a copy, the sequel had expanded the original

basic idea into a universe, further fleshed out Victor's character and established the game as one of the greatest ever created. Everything in that game was brilliant. At least Bill thought so.

Bill had come along in the third game as a graphic artist for Swarthy Victor's more detailed close-ups...mostly Bill's job was to draw sexy women, a task in which he had much experience from his Junior High School days. Only, now, he usually had to draw them *with* clothes. But Art had taken a shine to the young artist and though, on the third and fourth games, Bill had only done the character art, by the fifth game he had become a key part of the design team. Life was great.

And Art was so modest too, thought Bill. A lot of people might think that silly adult-rated adventure games are a shameful thing to waste genius on...but Bill didn't think so. Actually, most people didn't think Art was a genius – including Art. But Bill did and he *knew* others did – though no one ever explicitly mentioned it. He could just tell by the way they reacted the same way as he did to Art's ideas – like by saying 'Brilliant!' or 'You're a genius' after seeing Art's demos. When Bill would, off hand, say 'Art's a genius, isn't he?' to one of his co-workers, they would nod in the affirmative. Of course, if you needed someone to put that in writing, to make Art a certifiable genius – well, that would never happen. You just don't ascribe genius to a man who makes dirty computer games for a living. And Art wasn't *that* kind of a genius – not one of those certifiable ones who should be wearing a robe and smoking a pipe and telling everyone he's a genius. No, Art was one of those brilliant non-genius geniuses – who eats donuts, tells great jokes and tells everyone he's a genius...but only to get laughs. Though Art would never admit to being a genius, Bill knew he was. And he knew everyone else thought so too, even if they wouldn't admit it seriously.

But Bill didn't think it was a waste of Art's genius to be making dirty computer games. Everything needs a touch of genius. There are unheralded genius plumbers and genius mechanics. Art was the genius of dirty computer games. And Swarthy Victor went beyond being just a dirty game – it was hilarious and brilliant...and sometimes had social commentary – though Art would be loath to admit that and, if called on it, would do all he could to remove any sort of redeeming quality from the game. 'Redeeming quality material is obscene in a silly, dirty adult-rated computer game', he would say. And Swarthy Victor was Art's genius. Art was a *good* music teacher, a *funny* guy, a *great* father, had *excellent* taste in food – but he was a GENIUS when it came to Swarthy Victor. It his calling. And it was amazing to work with him...to be a part

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of the genius, to work in this moment of history.

Art was leaning back in his chair, munching thoughtfully on his donut. The sun was just rising behind the frosted Madre forest treetops framed in the window behind him, streaming in and highlighting his leather chair, the top of his round, bald head, the sprinkles on his donut. "I'm thinking we should give her a different skin color," suggested Art into the creative ether of the room, the free space where suggestions could be remarked, modified, altered, judged by anyone. "We already have three mostly white babes. We need more variety. Adventure games need variety – especially when all you're doing is trying to have sex with women. They've got to be different."

Art's right, thought Bill, who stopped shrinking the breasts on the model sketch, sat back and thought.

"How about black," suggested Will. "There hasn't been a black woman in a Swarthy Victor game since number two."

"Yeah, I'm thinking that too," said Art, "but black seems so... stereotypical. I mean, whenever they want to add some ethnic diversity to...something...a movie, a book, an award show...they throw in a black person. Or if they're really creative they throw in an Asian person. I don't just want to have the appearance of ethnic diversity – I want *actual* ethnic diversity."

"Hmmm," Will sat back against the radiator, put his hand to his mouth and thought. Will was the owner & president of Madre Games Entertainment. He was the only guy to consistently wear a suit to work, always with a red striped tie hanging from the collar, resting lightly on the slight outward curve of his middle-aged belly. Will was the only guy in the entire company, including the recently acquired subsidiary, Synapse Games, to wear a moustache (well, except for Carlos in beta-testing. But that wasn't so much a moustache as it was a...face...thing.) In an industry known for people starting work at 11 a.m. and staying until 3 a.m., where jeans are too corporate for casual day and the main ingredient in lunch is Soda Pop, Will was the straight man. Not the straight man in the comedy duo, who is always the butt of jokes – no – Will was smart. And he had a sense of humor...maybe not to make up jokes, but to laugh at them. He was the serious guy who took care of all these wacky game geeks, herded them across the great, empty and dangerous plains of software publishing. He was the serious cowboy type. Didn't know much about fancy things like character design and third-tier puzzle theory, he just had to keep them programming cattle focused, protected and herd 'em across God's land. Will crossed the i's and dotted

the t's at Madre Games. No wait – that's the other way around. Well, he got it right anyway. He was good at that. He liked doing it. He planned the meetings. He organized the game release dates. He authorized new games. He was the Big Boss.

Will wasn't officially part of the Swarthy Victor design team. But it was he and Art who had initially thought of re-doing the original text-based game and it was he who had given the game the green light. He let Art have all the creative control. Will was more the programmer/hacker type. Good with logic, the kind of guy who made breakthroughs squeezing more computing power out of a silicon chip...and he'd pulled several stupefying programming stunts back in the day. He'd programmed all of Madre's original games when the company was just a computer in a garage...when he was the male half of Madre's workforce. But he hadn't done any programming in years. After they started hiring programmers, of which Art was one of the first, there were more important things for him to do.

Now he ran the ever-growing corporation, did the books and made the executive decisions...at least officially. His wife, Kendra, no doubt had a strong bedroom ear, and, unofficially, was the other boss of the company. Will really had nothing to do with the actual content of the games anymore, though he liked to stop in on these impromptu meetings in Art's office – the ones that start, unofficially, before everyone else is in the office. Will liked to see how things were going, make suggestions, join in on the development fun without having the odious responsibility of worrying about the details or actually finishing the game. And Art liked to have him around to use as a sounding board for his ideas. Will liked to be a sounding board. He was good at yay or nay decisions.

"What if we make her Swedish?" suggested Bill.

"Yeah," said Art, "but we already have too many white women."

"I know," said Bill, "But just because she's Swedish doesn't mean she couldn't be black."

Art turned from his seat and looked at Will. They looked at each other and both smiled.

"She could have a Swedish accent and everything," continued Bill.

Art laughed an excited laugh – the deep, hearty, quick *ha-ha* he always did when there was a development breakthrough that he was especially pleased with. "Good call, Bill!" he shouted. It was such a good idea that Art actually put down his donut. He wrote 'SWEDE' down on the pad in front of him. "That's AWESome!"

Bill smiled. Satisfied. *Art thinks I'm AWESome!*

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“Great,” continued Art and scribbled a little bit more down. “Bill, show Will the proposed sketches for the museum bit. I want to bounce them off him. Well, not literally of course.”

“Sure,” Bill picked up the dossier from the floor and searched through for a couple of sketches he had done for the museum section.

“This is the scene where they are running naked through the museum,” Art volunteered, bringing Will up to speed.

“Almost got ‘em,” Bill said pulling a large sheet of paper out.

“Why are they running naked through the museum?”

“Because the Neo-Nazis are chasing them.”

“Oh. Why are they naked?”

“We don’t know yet,” said Art.

Bill said, as he pulled two large drawings out onto the desk, “We just thought it would be great to have a running-naked-through-a-museum scene.”

“Hmmm,” said Will pointing to the sketch of the man. “Are you planning on changing the look of Victor again?”

“No. Oh...no. That’s not Victor. That’s Manlio. He’s a cover model for romance novels and Victor’s main competition.”

“I see. That’s not a bad idea. Contemporary. And it will definitely be big with female players...” Will philosophized aloud.

“Hey,” said Art leaning in toward one of the drawings and squinting, “How come you can’t see his schlong in this one?”

“You want to see his schlong?” Bill started to ask but was cut short by a knock at the open doorway. Kendra Roberts, the other (unofficial) boss of Madre Games Entertainment (and Will’s wife) was standing there peering in. She looked serious. Perhaps like she hadn’t slept much the night before. She often looked haggard and tired just before one of her games was about to ship. And in four days one of hers was. Of course, everyone usually looks haggard when their latest game is about to ship, but Kendra usually much more so. And today, right now, she looked even more so than her usual much more so. Everyone looked up at the sound of her knock.

“Hi guys,” she said and then to Will, “We’ve got a problem.” It was definitely a ‘we have to talk about this problem before this morning’s big meeting’ problem. Will could tell from the sound of her voice. There was trouble in them thar hills and the cowpoke was needed on the plain.

“Alright,” said Will standing up from his unusually casual stance against the radiator. “We’ve got a couple of minutes.” He turned to Bill and Art, “I’ll let you guys finish up in here and see you at the meeting.

Sounds like the prelim design is coming right along.”

And with that Will and Kendra headed out and down the row of cubicles outside Art’s ‘Orifice’ as it had been altered by Art to read on the door.

“See ya,” said Art.

“See ya,” said Bill. Bill turned back to Art. “You wanna see his dink in this one? I thought we were gonna keep this series R rated?”

“Of course we are, but, I mean, we show women’s breasts – and, in extreme conditions, a little of the ‘hair down there’...we *gotta* show his wiener. It would be such a cop-out and probably sexist not to. Besides, it’s not like it’s a close-up...or erect. It’s way back there. It’s gonna be, what, three pixels long? Otherwise the female players will feel ripped off. That was the whole reason for putting the Elena and Manlio characters in, to even out the sexual references and broaden the playing field. I mean, there’s boobs and sex everywhere in the game and suddenly when a naked male character shows up, his wang is constantly hidden behind his leg? What? Is it taped there? That won’t work. Besides, we never had qualms about making penis and dildo jokes before. This man needs a wiener.”

“Ok,” said Bill. “I agree with you one-hundred percent, actually. I even have a live model I can use to make sure it looks right,” joked Bill.

“Actually, make it four pixels long. We only have one naked male character in this game besides Victor – who’s pretty much a loser in all categories. We might as well give the women something a little bit... extra.”

“He *is* a romance novel model, after all,” said Bill.

“Ooh! Ooh!” shouted Art, piping up as he got a good idea. “He should have a secret name for it. Something European. We could do a lot of jokes around that. Something like Alphonso or something...”

Art wrote Alphonso down on his pad. This had been a productive morning – a black Swede and an extra long European penis named Alphonso. This game was practically writing itself!, he thought.

Elena had been another of Art’s brilliant ideas – in the last Swarthy Victor instalment he had introduced a strong female main character that the player actually got to control. It added a lot of new playability to an idea that was getting old (there are only so many games you can make where the only objective is to sleep with all the women in the game), was really funny and, as Art suspected it would, drew a lot of females to the series.

At the time Will and others had worried that introducing a female

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main character – a virtual sex-change as it was billed by Art – might turn away the traditional male player. But Art, encouraged by the few female fan letters he had received for the previous games (many of whom confessed to secretly playing their boyfriend's, husband's or brother's copies) correctly argued that “women play Swarthy Victor too. Everyone wants to role-play as a dirty, sleazy, horny Italian loser...even women. Besides, they're curious. They play because they want a peek into the male mind. Just the same reason men read their girlfriend's copies of Cosmo. With Elena men will finally have a chance to role-play as a woman and conquer *men*! It will be great! Think of all the new jokes we can make!”

So Elena was introduced and Art was right. She was a huge hit. Letters from female fans poured in for the best selling Swarthy Victor in the series. Latent female fans came out of the woodwork. Men loved the sex-change idea. The nature of the game hadn't been corrupted, it had been boosted, multiplying the opportunities for risqué and silly situations, to use bad puns, for Elena (or Victor) to be embarrassingly naked and to use personal objects as suggestive inventory items.

Art had been right. Just like he'd been right about the theme song – yet another distinction of Art's: creating the first recurring theme song for a computer game.

Bill tucked the two drawings back into the dossier. “We still haven't figured out how to give the player a clue on how to get through the Minotaur maze.”

“Yeah. I don't know. It's still not obvious enough. But I can't figure out a way to hint to the player how to do it. It's still gotta be a puzzle. And I really don't want to resort to a Transvernacular Obfusculator*.”

“For sure,” said Bill. “What if it's written on a bathroom wall? Victor is always getting sage advice from bathroom walls.”

“Yeah, but we do that in every game. Actually, that's a good thing. But we already did that once in this game.”

“Hmmm. What about if he gets it from a drunk, like in Swarthy Victor Quests for Chicks.”

“Yeah...that's not a bad idea. But it's gotta be something different.” Art leaned back in his chair. Bill put his hand to his chin and thought.

“Us!” shouted Art, suddenly sitting forward. He had that twinkle in his eye. “That's so perfect! *WE* tell him.”

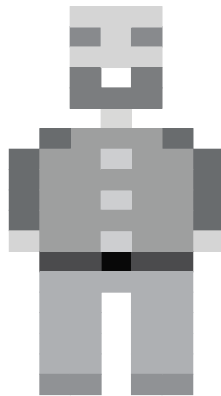
**the Transvernacular Obfusculator is famous among the employees at Madre Games. But you'll learn more on that later.*

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, he goes into a taverna – looking for one of the gods, I suppose – and *we’re* there. You and me as creators of the game. We really don’t need to be there. We just answer questions about the game and we tell him one thing we really want him to remember, stress that it’s important – and tell him the hint for the maze. The hint’s not perfect so the player will have to figure it out still – but they won’t be totally left in the dark as to the sequence of turns. That’s wicked!” He began to write on the pad. “I’m a genius!” he said to himself.

Art was right. That was the perfect solution. It was funny; It was irreverent; It worked.

Art was right. He *was* a genius.

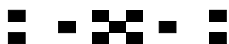


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