TWO EXCITING NEW PRODUCTS!

You're not sure who's who. But one thing is certain — someone is dead. And now they're pointing fingers at you.

INFOCOM INTRODUCES SUSPECT™

In *Suspect*, Infocom's newest mystery game, you'll attend a murderously grand party that you'll never forget.

The butler is dressed in a gorilla suit. Scores of outrageously costumed dancers waltz and two-step elegantly in the grand ballroom. A masked bartender mixes tasty and potent drinks. All around you are the cream of society — senators, blue-blooded gentry, power brokers, and the idle rich — dressed as no one has seen them before. Someone has come as a vampire; someone else as a short, cuddly robot; someone has even come dressed as a peanut butter sandwich! What a party!

If you walk around the mansion, you'll be impressed by the richness everywhere. The Sitting Room, the Library, the Morning Room, the Sun Room — all are impeccably furnished, bespeaking the wealth and fine taste of the owners. But the most striking thing you'll see here tonight is not the crystal chandelier, nor the valuable oriental rugs, nor the spectacularly-clad partygoers.
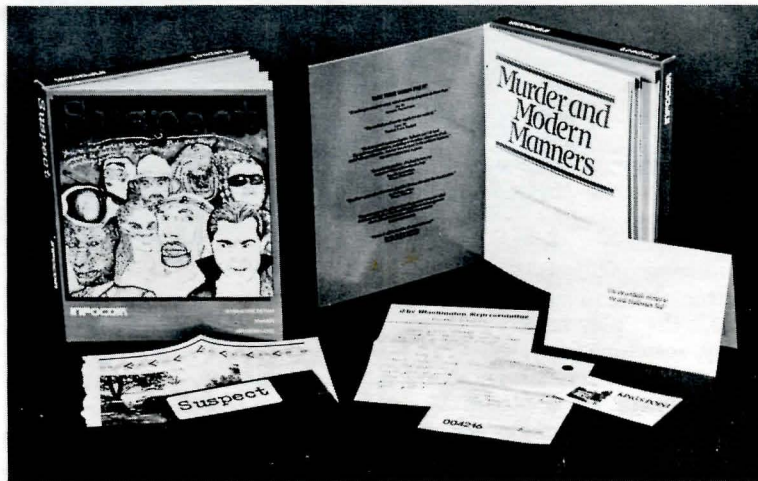
A dead body will be found here tonight, at this party. Strangled, curiously, with a piece of your costume. You don't know who the murderer is — you suspect everyone — but one thing is certain.

You are the prime suspect!

In *Suspect*, you are a newspaper reporter and an old friend of Veronica Ashcroft, the party's hostess. You looked forward to this Hallowe'en bash and to rubbing elbows with the movers and shakers of Maryland's hunt country. Little did you know that you would also be framed for a murder you didn't commit!

Like *Deadline*™ and *The Witness*™ (Infocom's other games in the mystery genre), you'll have lots of clues and false leads to wade through, and alibis and denials to consider. In *Suspect*, though, you're not the detective (assisted by the able Sergeant Duffy) looking for the killer. Instead, you're the police's number-one suspect, and you've

All this and more are tastefully tucked into every *Suspect* package.

DON'T PANIC!
Now you can see the universe the safe, sure, money-saving way with
THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY™

Here at Infocom, it would ordinarily not be too surprising for some random hanger-on, crackpot, or sychophant to get past the Guardians of Zork and venture forth with the magic words "I have this great idea for a game...."

Such gratuitous input would generally not be parsed by the gate keepers who make the decisions around here.

However, if the proposition came from someone with a little writing experience — say, with the authorship of some very funny books selling in the millions — then this would be quite a different story, indeed.

And so it was when Douglas Adams, who for years had smiled upon Infocom's work, put out a transatlantic feeler, as it were, to take the pulse of the giant in interactive fiction. The diagnosis was very favorable. Dr. Marc Blank, the company's vice president, assigned implementor S. Eric Meretzky to act as midwife for a brand new creation: Infocom's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which is based only loosely on the novel of the same title.

With the teaming up of "bestselling author" Adams and "award-winning game designer" Meretzky (*Planetfall*™, *Sorcerer*™) you would expect, well, at least a *halfway decent* game, wouldn't you? (See Footnote.)

Actually, if this hilarious and doomsday vision of the future were to come to pass, who knows? A *Hitchhiker's Guide* disk might improbably be recovered among the space junk by some alien race. These beings, besides possibly recognizing themselves in the story, would (if the disk would still boot) discover humans to have been

(Footnote: To say the least.... Here we illustrate just two of the features new to Infocom games, first appearing in *The Hitchhiker's Guide* game. The first is the occurrence of footnotes — accessed by typing FOOTNOTE (number) — sprinkled throughout the story to enlighten, clarify, amuse. The second is the player's ability to respond to the sometimes rhetorical questions posed by the narrative, as seen above.)

All this and more are incredibly included inside every *Hitchhiker's Guide* package.

THEY'RE NEVER SATISFIED

by Dave Lebling

I had my first encounter with a professional play-tester two years ago, when I was writing *Starcross*. As I worked, every so often my concentration would be broken by a horrible cackling laugh from a few doors down the hall. Jerry had found another bug.

Infocom's Quality Control Department (informally, play-testers) makes sure our stories are bug-free before they get published. From the first, horrifically buggy version "thrown in the swimming pool," to the final, perfect (hah!) version that we ship, the play-testers pound away, searching for flaws.

It starts out very simply. Let's take *Suspect* for a victim . . . oops, I mean an example. When a game first enters testing, it's a delicate thing, easily upset:

> BARTENDER, GIVE ME A DRINK
"Sorry, I've been hired to mix drinks and that's all."

> DANCE WITH ALICIA
Which Alicia do you mean, Alicia or the overcoat?

Veronica's body is slumped behind the desk, strangled with a lariat.

> TALK TO VERONICA
Veronica's body is listening.

Little bugs, you know? Things no one would notice. At this point the tester's job is fairly easy. The story is like a house of cards — it looks pretty solid but the slightest touch collapses it:

Media Room
> ENTER
FATAL ERROR: Pushdown Overflow

Mysteries have a lot of scope for truly odd bugs, since they have so many characters running around. Throughout the testing process, I would get reports like:

"Duffy is having serious problems. . . ."
"Alicia isn't functioning too well. . . ."
"The detective seems stuck in the North Hallway. . . ."

Suspect has thirteen characters (counting you) and a few bit players, so at times it resembled a Marx brothers movie.

Testers are relentless. Once they find out they can talk to a corpse, you can confidently expect a list of all the other things that will listen to them: cars, tables, chairs, waste baskets, anything. This is sometimes called "rubbing it in."

They had a particularly gleeful time with poor Veronica's body. It's not enough that she's been murdered. No, first they decide to hide the body. Then, to make things worse, they carry her around, presumably slung over the shoulder.

> SHOW CORPSE TO MICHAEL
Michael doesn't appear interested.

Of course, Michael is only Veronica's husband; why would he be interested? After that, it was open season! Bodies everywhere:

"I carried Veronica's body into the Ballroom. No one noticed."
"Sergeant Duffy walked right by while I was carrying the body. He didn't notice it."
"I put the body in the chair in the Library. Col. Marston came and went without seeing it."
"I picked up the body right in front of the detective."

That wasn't enough:

> THROW CORPSE IN FIREPLACE
Veronica's body is now in the fireplace.

> ATTACK CORPSE WITH CROWBAR
Veronica's body jumps out of the way.

Eventually, that all got sorted out: Veronica stayed safely dead, and her party guests got less blasé about corpses.

Producing a piece of interactive fiction is an odd combination of debugging a program and writing a story. Bug reports can concern anything from a stack overflow to a misplaced comma. There was a running battle (finally settled by Fowler's *English Usage*) over when a comma goes inside a quotation mark and when outside. By the same token, bugs can concern something as microcomputer-oriented as the stack size on the Atari implementation of the story.

Some comments from testers would not be out of place in a report from an editor at a major book publisher:

"Alicia is acting out of character."
"Why would Michael react that way when told about the murder?"
"Ostmann's motivations seem too obscure."

Some comments are directly keyed off of programming bugs that would make a BASIC programmer blush:

"Game prints garbage when Duffy enters room."
"You can drop Veronica's pulse on the floor."

There are several stages in implementing one of our stories. During the first stage, the author is so pleased that it works at all that any bug reports are welcomed. During this stage the typical bug concerns two rooms that connect in only one direction (you can go east from the first to the second but there is no way to go back).

During the second stage, all of the testers and several other game authors have had a chance to play it, and the really nasty comments come in. During this stage, bugs cause serious changes in the plot, and sub-plots are added or removed. This is when "debugging" is more like writing another draft of a novel than debugging a program. The plot is hardened into its final form, and outside testers are given their first crack at the story.

Finally comes the stage in which every bug is seen by the author as an imposition. I can always tell when a story is almost finished by my rising level of frustration at seeing new bugs in my mailbox. At some point, coming to the office in the morning becomes an exercise in procrastination. You see, at Infocom there is a hall with all the mailboxes in it, and you have to walk past the mailboxes to get to the coffee machine. The question becomes, "How much do I really want my first cup of coffee this morning?" You can always avert your eyes as you walk by the mailboxes, but that's almost too obvious. Better is to make a casual appraisal as you walk by. "Hmm. Looks like a fairly small stack this morning. . . ." Then you can walk to the coffee machine with a clear conscience. Even a cup of yummy coffee won't improve things when you see "page 1 of 12" on the first bug report form.

Amazingly enough, it all works out in the end. Sometimes a full-page bug report will turn out to be caused by a simple little error, and you can check off three or four subsidiary bugs with one stroke. Sometimes a simple little thing you've glossed over three times as unimportant will be re-reported, and you realize it's more like the last six inches of a dragon's tail.

Best of all are the final few days before a story is shipped, when the volume of bugs drops to almost zero, and you realize that even the testers are reaching for things to report. Then, at long last you look in your mailbox and nothing's there! You say hello to the testers in the halls without terror, and there's nothing whatsoever to worry about.

Until the next game!   **Z**

CALL THE EXTERMINATOR

Despite ruthless testing by our Quality Control Department, every now and then some embarrassing bug escapes the watchful eyes of the Infocom Exterminators and creeps onto your disk. Most people never see these bugs, but they can be jarring when they rear their ugly little heads.

Take, for instance, an early version of *Deadline*. Somewhere outside the house, you are told

The gardener is here, talking to himself.

You could then have the following interaction with the computer:

> LISTEN TO THE GARDENER
The roses make no sound.

Not exactly a breakthrough in your investigation.

Your living quarters in *Starcross* are spartan: when you start the story, there's nothing in the room but you, a bunk, and a tape library. Not much can go wrong, right? Wrong.

> PUT THE TAPE LIBRARY ON THE BUNK
The bunk isn't open.

Needless to say, the bunk in *Starcross* opens about as often as the roses in *Deadline* talk.

A bug in early versions of *Sorcerer* makes you look like a better magician than you really are. If you know the name of a spell (FWEEP, for instance), you can take it even if you are nowhere near the spell scroll. Don't know where you left a spell scroll? Can't get there from here? No problem! Just type TAKE FWEEP and hey, presto! There you have it! Fortunately, the command SOLVE THE GAME isn't so obliging.

Usually, if you mention an object that you don't have or can't see, you'll be told "You don't

. . . Suspect *continued from page 1*

got to prove your innocence to Duffy and his boss to stay out of prison.

In every *Suspect* package comes a story disk, the booklet *Murder and Modern Manners* (describing murder etiquette), your party invitation, your costume receipt, a note from your editor, an article from *The Maryland Countryside* (a tony magazine for the upper class), and a business card with a suspicious message on it. *Suspect* was written by Dave Lebling, author of *Starcross*™ and co-author of *Zork*® *I, Zork II, Zork III,* and *Enchanter*™. It is an advanced-level game and will sell for $44.95 on most systems.   **Z**

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. . . Hitchhiker's *continued from page 1*

highly skilled in the interactive arts; and, contingent on the physiology to do so, they would laugh.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is the first Infocom story in which the player assumes the (rather indistinct) role of a fictional character, with the mellifluous name of Arthur Dent. But since you are the author of Arthur's actions, your decisions dictate the movement of the story.

In the beginning, Arthur (the player) must overcome bewildering circumstances — which have encroached on his pastoral home in England's West Country — to escape his doomed home and, in turn, his doomed Earth. Up to this point the story line will be similar to that in the *Hitchhiker's* novel.

Henceforth, you'll encounter characters and locations from the book appearing in a variety of misadventures written by Adams expressly for this game. For instance, in the novel there is one fanciful item of great utility which, however, in the game can be obtained only by maddeningly humorous Rube Goldberg methods.

In exploring virgin parts of the galaxy, accessing the actual Hitchhiker's Guide will be essential. The Guide, an electronic device similar in appearance to a large calculator, is consulted to enlighten its user on a wide variety of topics ranging from the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal to pocket fluff.

Throughout your knocking about the galaxy, it is as if the unique persona of Adams were lurking in the nether regions of disk accessing, anticipating your every move and miscue, and delivering the appropriate rejoinder.

The game packaging provides a number of items to assist the galactic hitchhiker. A pair of peril-sensitive sunglasses warns you of impending doom. Copies of the demolition orders for your house and planet Earth remind you why you're out there in the first place. You're given a piece of fluff and a microscopic space fleet, as well as the Megadodo Publications sales brochure for the latest model of the actual Hitchhiker's Guide. And in case things get out of hand, there's a Don't Panic button.

The front of *The Hitchhiker's Guide* package says it's a standard-level game; as such, it will sell for $39.95 on most systems.   **Z**

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have that'' or "You can't see that." A bug in some versions of *Infidel*™ however, allowed the following interaction, whether you had the torch or not:
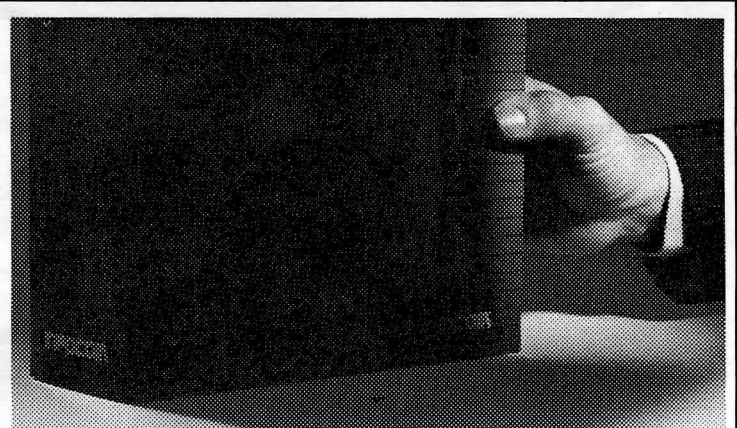
> LIGHT THE TORCH WITH THE MATCH
The bronze torch is now lit.

Philosophers once asked, "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is there, does it make any sound?" Now they wonder, "If you light a torch, but you don't have it and can't see it, is it really lit?"

Lastly, players of early *Planetfall* releases saw this charmer:

> FLOYD, TAKE THIS LASER
You manage to lift Floyd a few inches off the ground, but he is too heavy and you drop him suddenly.

The program is playing games with you. Perhaps it would rather be playing Hider-and-Seeker with Floyd.   **Z**

The New Zork® Times
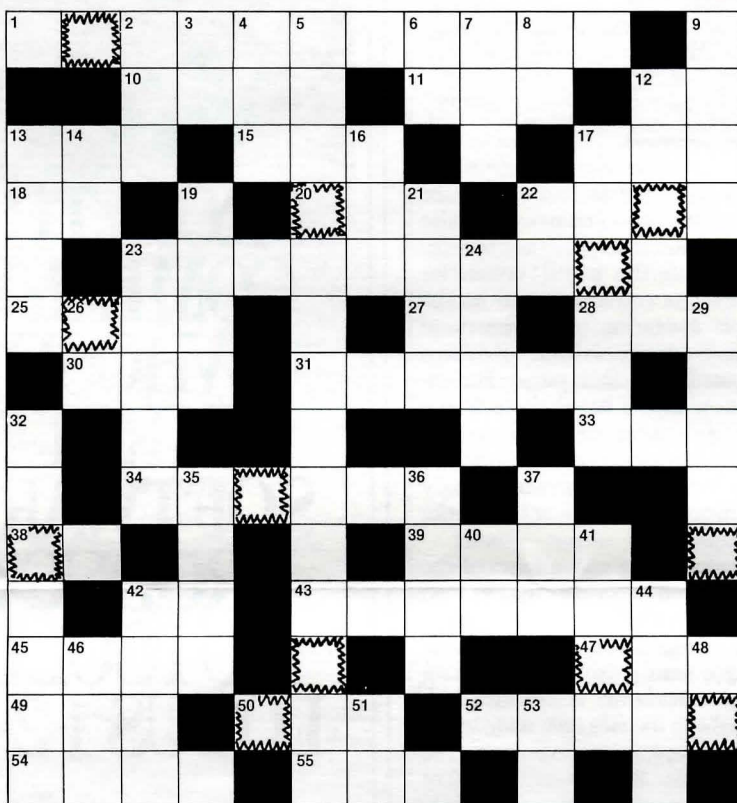
NEW ZORK TIMES PUZZLE   NUMBER 4

Fill in the crossword puzzle below using the Across and Down clues provided. Each blank square represents one letter.

Note that twelve of the blank squares are highlighted. The letters inside these twelve squares, when rearranged, spell *something you want to be*. Write this something in the answer box below. (Note the hyphen and the space!) Only the answer placed in the answer box will be used to judge your entry.

ACROSS

1. *Starcross* activity
10. A _____ of light
11. Number of wrenches in *Zork I*
12. Not don't
13. Common keyboard abbreviation
15. The parrot's in *Cutthroats*™ is wooden
17. Item inside *Enchanter's* Shack
18. Initials of person in charge of *Sorcerer's* Coal Mine
20. Johnny
22. Type of phobia no *Starcross* player should have
23. One of the komplekses
25. Hard, as said by the Wizard of Frobozz
27. *Infidel* chamber
28. Strewn about in *Enchanter's* Library
30. *Seastalker*™ companion
31. LoBlo owner
33. Pete
34. Mrs. Robner, to Baxter
38. Dir. from Systems Corridor West to red spool
39. Has one grasping extension
42. _____ *Leviathan*
43. You're a reporter in this game
45. Z
47. Type of reactor that powers the *Feinstein*
49. TAKE _____
50. Number of bumps at Red Airlock
52. Mrs. Robner is one
54. Response is sometimes "Aaaaarrrgh!"
55. Like Monica's car

DOWN

2. Shape of hole in box in Dusty Room (abbrev.)
3. Dir. from Meadow to turtle
4. Tip is one
5. Item in *Infidel*
6. GNUS____ ("writes magic")
7. The Red Boar is one
8. Dir. from Armory to cannon
9. Type of stick that Floyd might like
12. Lots of these in *Infidel*
13. Auda isn't this
14. ME____ ("wilts plants")
16. Jewel
17. Evil force in *Sorcerer*
19. Item on trophy case
21. This is gray and purple and black and gray and white
22. Type of IBM PC
23. Played the heavy in *Enchanter*
24. Angus Mc____
26. Common pronoun
29. Separates the Thin Forest and the Repair Room
32. Between Deck Eight and Deck Nine
35. From Bathroom to Tub Room
36. From Creepy Crawl to Tight Squeeze
37. Dirs. from Turret to Torture Chamber
40. From Galley to Wheelhouse
41. Liquid that mutants love to lap up
42. Most windows have one
44. *Seastalker's* universal ____
46. S____ (word on manila folder)
48. Dir. from Engravings Cave to Round Room
51. Dir. from Circular Room to ruby cluster
53. From the North End of Garden to the Gazebo

CONTEST RULES:

1. All entries must be submitted on this form. No copies accepted.
2. All entries must be received by February 1, 1985.
3. Up to 25 prizes will be awarded for correct answers. If more than 25 correct answers are received, a drawing will be held to determine the winners. Void where prohibited by law.

PRIZE: 100%-cotton *New Zork Times* Puzzle Winner T-Shirt.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ T-Shirt Size (S, M, L, XL): _____

ANSWER: ___-__ __ ____ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

MORE PUZZLE WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

A second drawing has been held for Puzzle Number Two to accommodate the 12,000 people who received their issue of the NZT too late to make the original deadline. An additional 137 correct answers were received. (The correct answer was "Zork III"; consult the last issue of the NZT for details.) Here are the ten winners, drawn at random:

1. David Eatough
   Provo, Utah
2. David DeBry
   Salt Lake City, Utah
3. Richard Evans
   Tampa, Florida
4. Penny Sutton-Maraglia
   Aurora, Colorado
5. John Potempa
   Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
6. Dan Dougherty
   Berkeley, California
7. Al Petrofsky
   San Rafael, California
8. Irwin Tillman
   Kings Park, New York
9. Patrick Chin
   Portland, Oregon
10. Mark Jackson
    Hendersonville, Tennessee

The solution to puzzle Number Three, and the list of winners, will appear in the next issue of the NZT. **Z**

YAK FACTS

The 80's have witnessed a long-overdue rebirth of interest in the yak among computer gamers. The newfound interest in this splendid beast has, until now, been ignored by recreational software companies and their consumer newsletters. With this issue, the editors of *The New Zork Times* will begin to rectify this need with the first installment in a series of Yak Facts.

Did you know that...

► domesticated yaks are a source of milk and beef?

► large bull yaks can achieve a height of six feet at their shoulder hump?

► wild yaks (*Bos grunniens mutus*) are an endangered species?

► the yak is the principal beast of burden not only in Tibet, but also in neighboring portions of India, China, Nepal, and Bhutan? **Z**