

Writing portfolio - Måns Billing

Branching dialogue – Down the Well

The following dialogue was written for a demo of the game concept Down the Well developed at Forgotten Key. The dialogue takes place the first time that the player character – a young girl named Tay – and her friend Fawn encounters one of the mighty wardens - the Old Crow - of the mysterious underground world in which Tay has ended up.

1: And so the small stray ones come stumbling into my home. Welcome, little squabs. I hope that your wings have grown and you feel ready to leave the nest. If not, well then I fear this place will swallow you whole.

I have been watching you for quite some time. I saw you in the canal, rowing that boat. Trying to keep still, trying not to drown, trying so hard not to lose heart. But fear not, little squabs, for you are not alone. In this darkness everyone tends to lose both heart and hope.

We need your help. We need to find something. **GOTO: 1.1**

Who are you? **GOTO: 1.2**

1.1: Yes, yes, of course. You are not the first to seek me out, for most everyone comes to me when that which is lost must be found. But let us not move so fast, little squab. Before I give you anything, there is something you must do for me. After that, I might help you.

Why would you need us? **GOTO: 1.1.1**

And why should we help you? **GOTO: 1.1.3**

1.2: Oh, little squab, I am quite certain you have heard my names whispered in the dark. The Old Crow, the Great Bird, the Winged One. Down here, even the walls know of my name.

We need your help. We need to find something. **GOTO: 1.1**

Are you locked in that cage? **GOTO: 1.2.1**

1.1.1: Why not? You are small, yet stronger than my birds. And, most importantly, you are neutral. Not affiliated. My birds are, after all, my birds.

What do you need us to do? **GOTO: 1.1.1.1**

And why is that so important? **GOTO: 1.1.1.2**

1.1.3: It was you who sought me out, was it not? Assist me, or return the way you came. I care not.

[Why would you need us?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.1**

1.2.1: SILENCE! Consider your words carefully, for my beak is both sharp and quick. You ought not be so curious, little weak squab. One single clap of my beak, and I would bring about your ruin. Now tell me, why have you come?

[We need your help. We need to find something.](#) **GOTO: 1.1**

1.1.1.1: I need you to go down into the lower levels, in search of the White Raven and her flock. I sent them down there some while ago, yet they have not returned. Find out what happened to them, and I will help you on your way.

[The White Raven?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.4**

[We'll help you, as long as you remember you promise.](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.1**

1.1.1.2: Because things are ... on the move down here. I have been in this place long enough to sense the difference. There are smells which I do not recognize, echoes I have never heard before, and strange rumblings from within the walls. This is the reason why your neutrality is valuable, for one cannot give oneself away before the first move is made.

[And who will make the first move?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.1.2.1**

[What is behind all of this?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.1.2.2**

1.1.2.1: Do not doubt by memory, little squab. Now, be on your way. And if you happen to run into the Cold One ... then you better spread your wings and fly. Or find a dark corner in which to hide.

[The Cold One?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.1.1**

[Very well, we'll help you.](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.2.1**

1.1.2.2: I have my suspicions, yet I would not like to speculate at this time of hour. Now, be on your way. Look for the White Raven beyond the pale door in the room with many faces, or return from where you came. And if you happen to run into the Cold One ... then you better spread your wings and fly. Or find a dark corner in which to hide.

[The Cold One?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.1.1**

[Very well, we'll help you.](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.2.1**

1.1.2.4: A most beautiful bird, that one. Trustworthy and strong. Clever and cunning. She knows these tunnels like she knows her own nest, so her disappearance is most ... find her and I shall give you what you seek.

[Very well, we'll help you.](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.4.1**

[What do you think has happened to her?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.2**

1.1.1.2.1: Time will tell, little squab. Time will tell.

[What do you need us to do?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.1.1**

1.1.1.2.2: Oh, little squab, even a bird must be allowed his secrets. Assist me, and - who knows - perhaps I might tell you more upon your return.

[What do you need us to do?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.1.1**

1.1.2.4.1: Then look for the White Raven beyond the pale door in the room with many faces. Now, be on your way. And if you happen to run into the Cold One ... then you better spread your wings and fly. Or find a dark corner in which to hide.

[The Cold One?](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.1.1**

[Very well, we'll help you.](#) **GOTO: 1.1.2.1.2**

1.1.2.1.2: Then look for the White Raven beyond the pale door in the room with many faces. Now flutter away, for I am most anxious to find out what has happened to my little birds. **END**

1.1.2.2.1: The Old Crow would be most grateful. **END**

1.1.2.1.1: Yes. The Cold One. He roams these corridors, searching for something long since forgotten. His hands are strong and his arms are long, made to snatch little squabs and drag them into the deep dark. So whenever you feel a cold draft, when frost comes creeping along the walls and your breath turns into smoke, then I would advice you to stay still and keep silent. Now flutter away, for I am most anxious to find out what has happened to my little birds. **END**

Linear dialogue – Down the Well

The following dialogue is inspired by the game concept Down the Well developed at Forgotten Key. The player character – a young girl named Tay – and her friend Fawn, an even younger magical creature, sits around a campfire after a long day of exploring the mysterious underworld in which they have ended up.

Fawn: I'm sooo tired, Tay. And my legs are hurting. I really think we walked a bit too far today.

Tay: Oh, come on Fawn. We didn't walk THAT far, did we? Besides, if we ever want to find that rusty old coin and get out of here ... well, then we'll have to do some walking. I doubt we'll just stumble upon it.

Fawn: You know what? Once, back home, I stumbled upon a coin. It was just lying there, outside our home. Maybe the same thing will happen again. Tomorrow when we wake up, the coin will be right in front of us.

Tay: So, what did you do with it? The coin?

Fawn: I showed it to my brother. He said he'd "keep it safe".

Tay: And...?

Fawn: I never saw it again. He lost it. So much for safekeeping!

Tay: Maybe he still had it and meant to give it back someday. Or perhaps he wanted to buy you something on your birthday.

Fawn: I don't know ... maybe, but ... I'll ask him when I get home!

Tay: You know, if we don't find that coin tomorrow when we wake up, we'll might have to walk some more. Just so you know.

Fawn: It's ok. We'll find it tomorrow, don't worry Tay.

Tay: If you say so.

Fawn: I'm a bit sleepy. I think I'll go to bed. Don't fall asleep before me, ok?

Tay: I promise. Dream of that coin, and maybe it'll show up tomorrow.

Fawn: I'll do my best! I'm good at that. I'll wake you tomorrow, Tay.

Tay: I'm sure you will. Sleep tight Fawn.

Prose

Sky-tower 17

Somewhere along the border, a lonely watchman sits in his sky-tower, waiting for an enemy that might never come. The following text was written as an atmospheric test for a game concept developed by Måns Billing and Andreas Nilsson.

The stern face of the Venerable Mother looked down at him from the sun-bleached poster on the wall of the lookout cabin. At the bottom of the poster a stylized text read "*Among the Clouds, We Stand Vigilant.*" It was the official epigraph of the Watchmen of the Sky-Towers. He glanced out the window. It was cloudy, windy and cold. As always. He took a sip of coffee from his worn mug. It tasted awful. As always. He could hardly remember the taste of real coffee. This was coffee only by name. "But", he thought, "we're all in this together. God knows I'm privileged after all."

The tower swayed as gusts of wind grabbed hold of it. The first few months he'd been afraid it would all collapse; now – nine months later – it felt like the most natural thing in the world. The imperial flag fluttered outside the window. He could see gray storm clouds at the horizon. "Rain again. I'd better check all top-hatches. But first...", he said to himself, "I'll finish my coffee."

This part of the border had been quiet for the last few months now. It made him uneasy. The hated enemy only waited for so long before trying to break the border. He knew they would come. Probably sooner than later.

He got up from the chair and went over to the key cabinet. That's when he heard it. The clicking, beeping and humming sound of the telegraph receiver. He turned around. The machine was already busy printing the incoming message. He walked up to it and waited for the message to end. When it did, he pulled the stiff paper from the machine and looked at it.

*Sing rain and sing cloud.
Dawn breaks as the lost one returns.
Sing with us, you vigilant one.
Sing with us, and rejoice.*

Puzzled, he scratched his head for he did not understand what it meant. He pulled his chair to him and sat down. His coffee had gone lukewarm. It didn't improve the taste. He looked at the image of the Venerable Mother, and then out the window. "What to do?", he thought. "What to do?"

Intro text – Down the Well

The following dialogue was written for a demo of the game concept Down the Well developed at Forgotten Key. The text was meant as an introductory piece, both setting the atmosphere and giving some general directions to the player

I am afraid I cannot help you any further, little ones. My powers are lost beyond that border which you must cross. Follow the flow of water. Upstream, behind a gilded gate, lies the deep-rooted nest of the one you seek. He will help you, as long as you help him in return. He is a greedy one, and he offers nothing for free.

Do not to stray, little ones, for the darkness is deep and the winding corridors never-ending. And remember ... you always have each other. Never forget that.

Items and lore entries

White amber

Bearing the color of pristine snow, the tiny stone is cold to the touch and sparkles when catching sunlight. If looking long enough on the smooth surface, a slow movement of sorts can be seen below the stone's surface.

Ammonia

The glass bottle is covered by a thick layer of dust, and a spider-web encompasses most of the jar's bottom. An old yellow label can be partially be discerned in the dim light.

Deep Moore Castle

Situated on top of an impenetrable cliff, with only a narrow and rocky path leading up to the weather-beaten palisade, Deep Moore Castle stands as a testament to the unrelenting will and dedication of the Moore-dwellers. Never conquered, the castle now faces an unknown future, ruled as it is by a blind king and his daft son.

The Stretch

Extending through the entirety of the Taurus station, the Stretch acts as the main blood vessel of the outpost. The walkway features a multitude of trinket shops, rowdy cantinas and mysterious antiquaries. It is a common saying that 'What cannot be found on the Stretch, is not worth having.'