

Towers of Pen

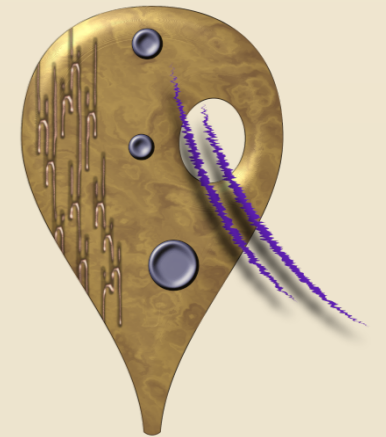
Puzzle experiences that zoom out and out

And out and out and out and out and out

And keep going forever. Forever? Who knows?

If you can read this line, you're not paying enough attention to what I'm saying.

Andrew Plotkin



- *Hadean Lands* (and a lot of other text adventures)
- I help organize NarraScope (IF conference)
- *System's Twilight* (way back in the '90s)
- “Capture the Flag with Stuff”
- I named *Werewolf*

Back in 1978...

I will spare you the photo of me as an eight-year-old

Colossal Cave Adventure ▶ Score: 36 ▶ Turns: 4

> yes

Somewhere nearby is Colossal Cave, where others have found fortunes in treasure and gold, though it is rumored that some who enter are never seen again. Magic is said to work in the cave. I will be your eyes and hands. Direct me with commands of 1 or 2 words. I should warn you that I look at only the first five letters of each word, so you'll have to enter "Northeast" as "ne" to distinguish it from "North." (Should you get stuck, type "help" or "info" for some general hints).

You are standing at the end of a road before a small brick building. Around you is a forest. A small stream flows out of the building and down a gully.

> go south

You are in a valley in the forest beside a stream tumbling along a rocky bed.

> go east







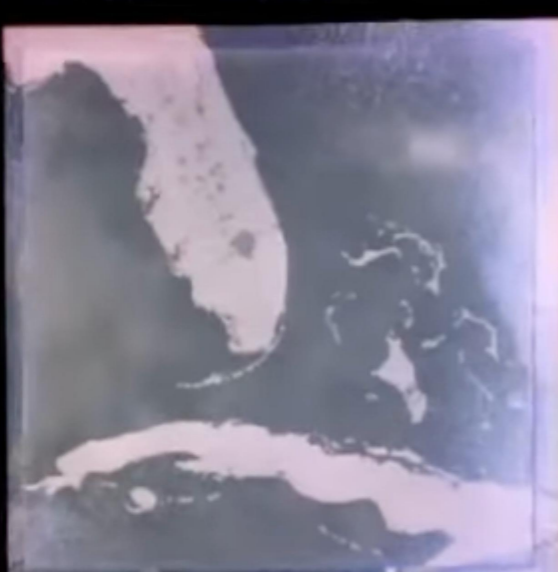
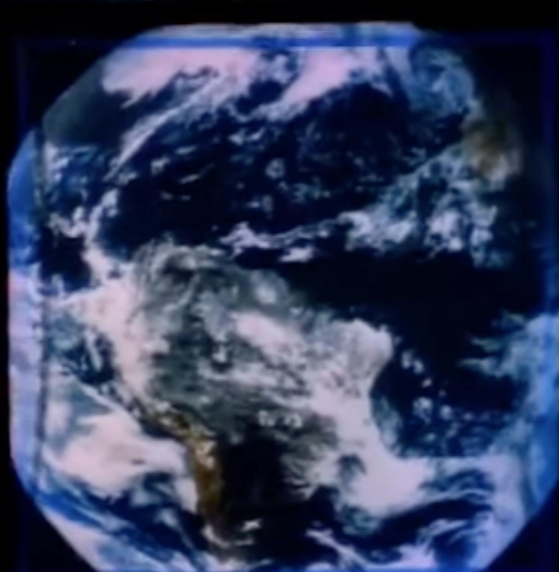

You are in open forest, with a deep valley to one side.

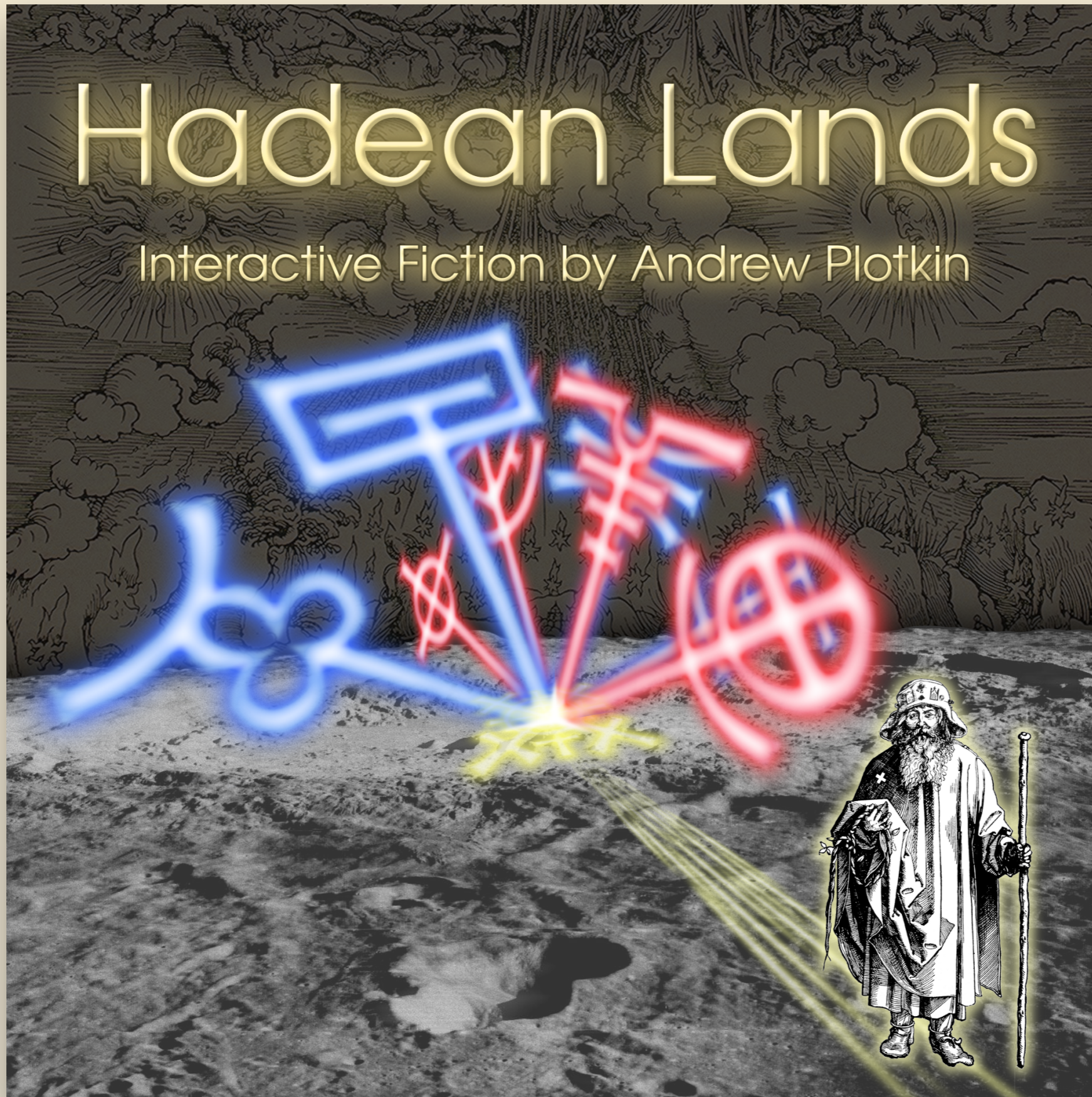
What's next? ■

Colossal Cave, Crowther and Woods, 1976-7



Powers of Ten, Charles and Ray Eames, 1968

<p>10 0</p> <p>total distance 1 meters</p> <p>travelers time 0</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light</p>		<p>10 1</p> <p>total distance 10 meters</p> <p>travelers time 10</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light</p>		<p>10 2</p> <p>total distance 100 meters</p> <p>travelers time 20</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light</p>	
<p>10 3</p> <p>total distance 1000 meters</p> <p>travelers time 30</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light</p>		<p>10 4</p> <p>total distance 10000 meters</p> <p>travelers time 40</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light</p>		<p>10 5</p> <p>total distance 100000 meters</p> <p>travelers time 50</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light</p>	
<p>10 6</p> <p>total distance 1 million meters</p> <p>travelers time 60</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light 00.03</p>		<p>10 7</p> <p>total distance 10 million meters</p> <p>travelers time 70</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light 00.30</p>		<p>10 8</p> <p>total distance 100 million meters</p> <p>travelers time 80</p> <p>earth time</p> <p>percentage of speed of light 03.00</p>	



Sort:	Date	Name	Formulas	Rituals	Facts
		Doubled Tarnish Cleansing Inscription (with the brass pin)			“FOR THE CLEANSING OF BRASS TARNISH: Prepare an atmosphere of fiery principles. Place a brass token within the bound, and seal it. Speak a word of essential nature, so that the properties of brass may be evoked. Compound the atmosphere with a resinous note. Then intone the Lesser Phlogistical Saturation to complete the token’s investment. Place token directly on tarnished item.”
		Basic Rust Cleansing Inscription (with the steel bolt)			
		Basic Tarnish Cleansing Inscription (with the brass pin)			

>open fire door

You make your way to the Pyrics Lab.

You make your way to the Chymic Lab.

You take the flask of saline.

You make your way to the Secondary Alchemy Lab.

You take the impet of ginger oil from the side table.

You take the impet of peppermint oil from the side table.

You brew a bottle of fire-resistance potion.

You drink the potion of fire resistance.

You make your way to the Pyrics Lab.

You reach into the kiln and take the thick key.

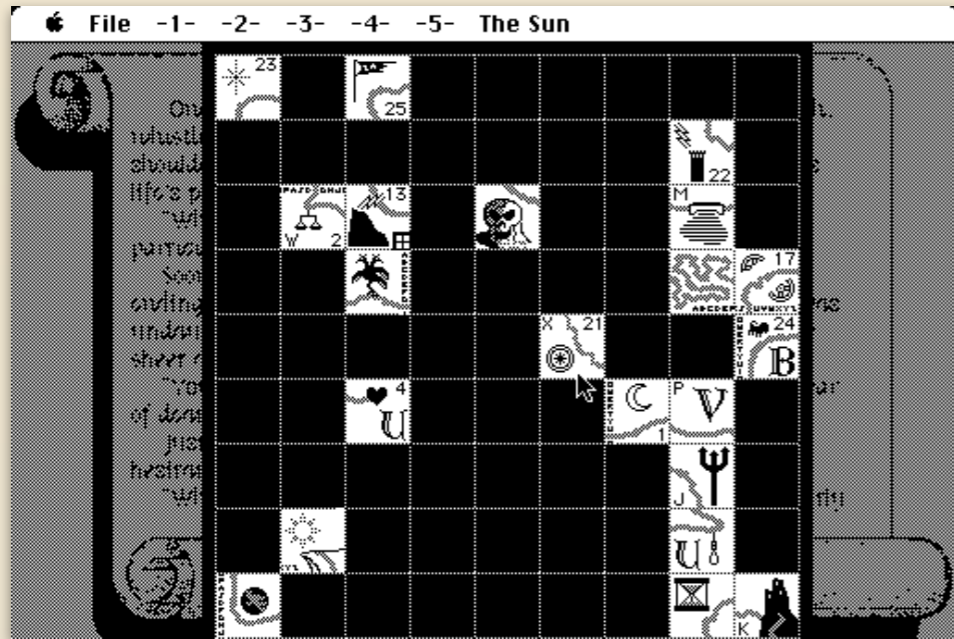
You make your way to the Lab Wing Hallway.

The fire-resistance potion has worn off.

You open the heavy door.



Baba Is You, Hempuli, 2019



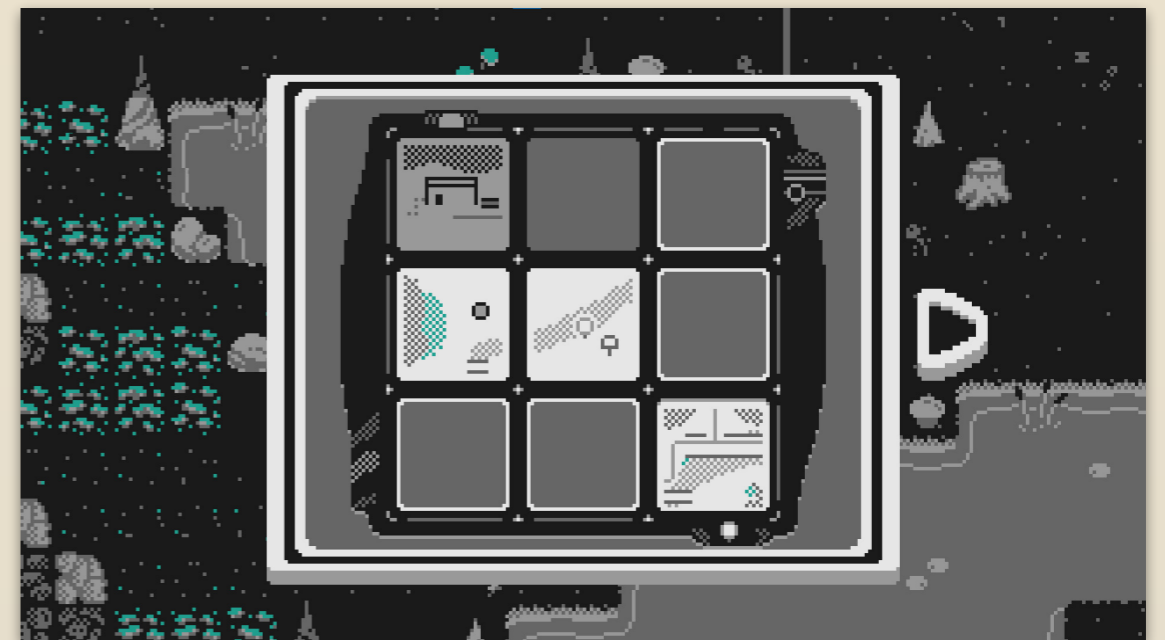
The Fool's Errand, 1987



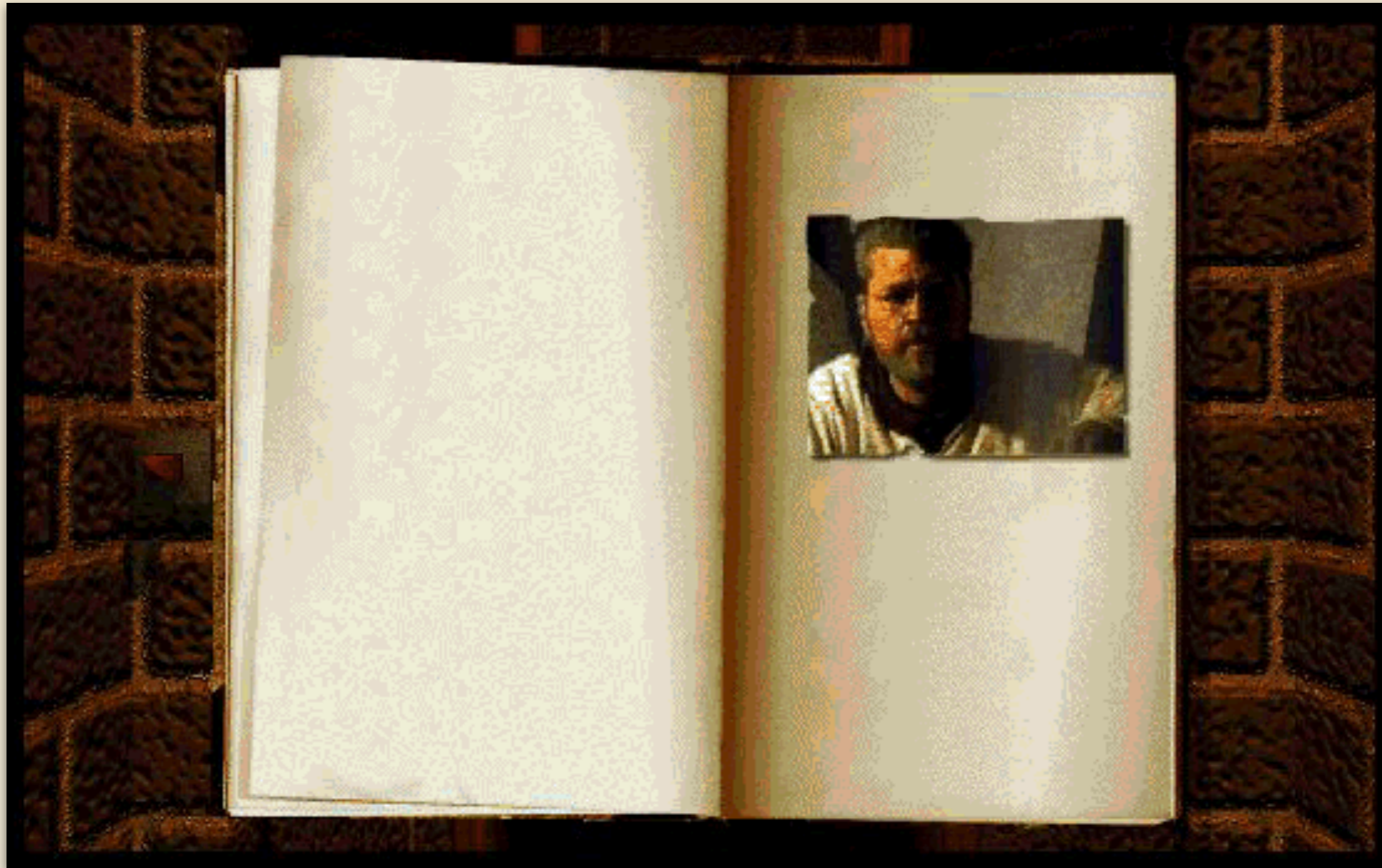
Carto, 2021



Cocoon, 2023



Slider, 2024



“Don’t come here to Dunny, not yet.”



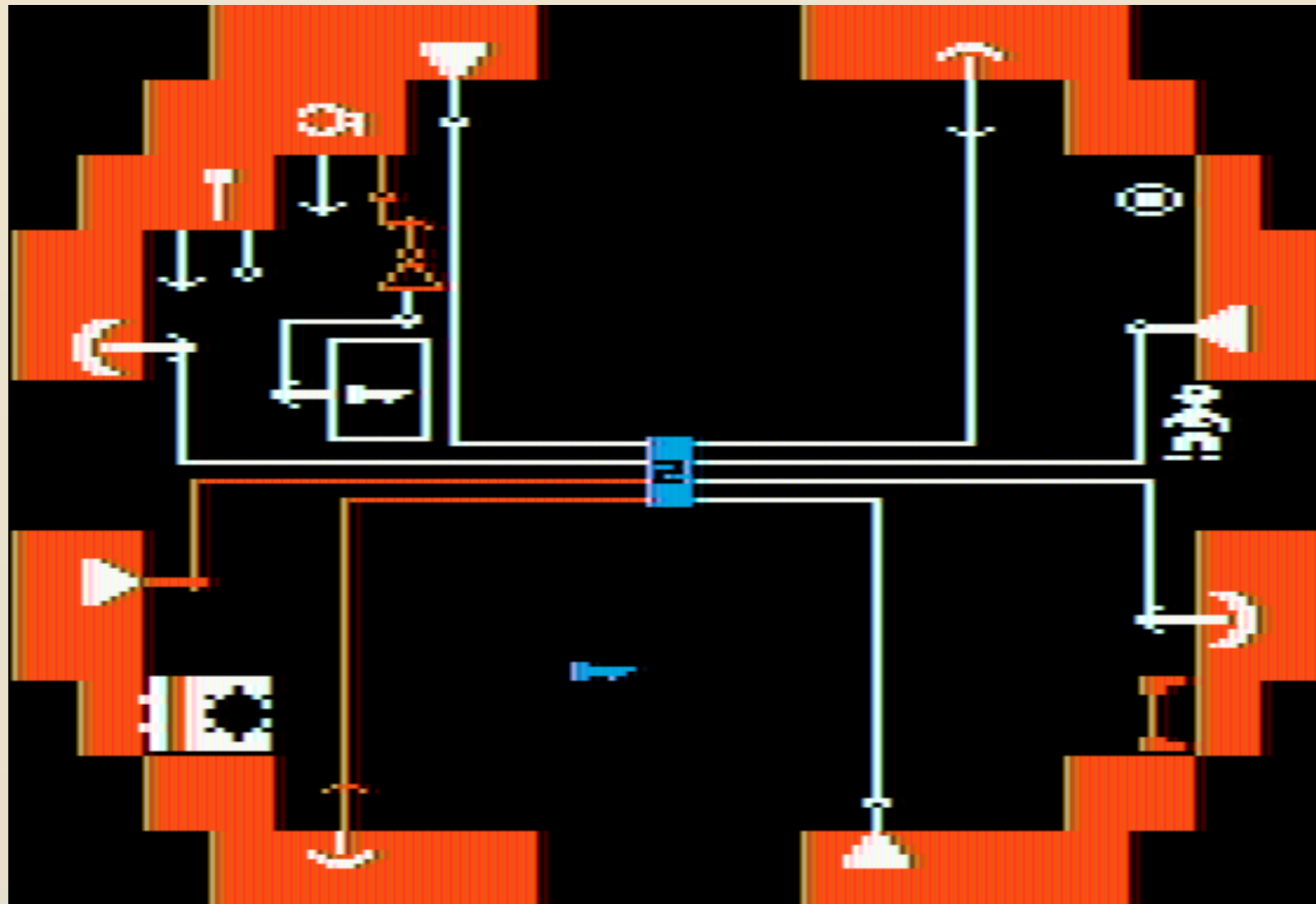
“The whole book, fool, did you bring the whole darn book?”

Diagnosis

- You're playing a game
- You discover a new layer

Diagnosis

- You're playing a game
- You discover a new layer
- The original layer gets out of your way



Robot Odyssey, The Learning Co., 1984

Modern electronics builders

- <https://nandgame.com/>
- <https://www.nand2tetris.org/>
- <https://turingcomplete.game/>
- <https://asteriskman7.github.io/dldtg/>
(*Digital Logic Design: The Game*)

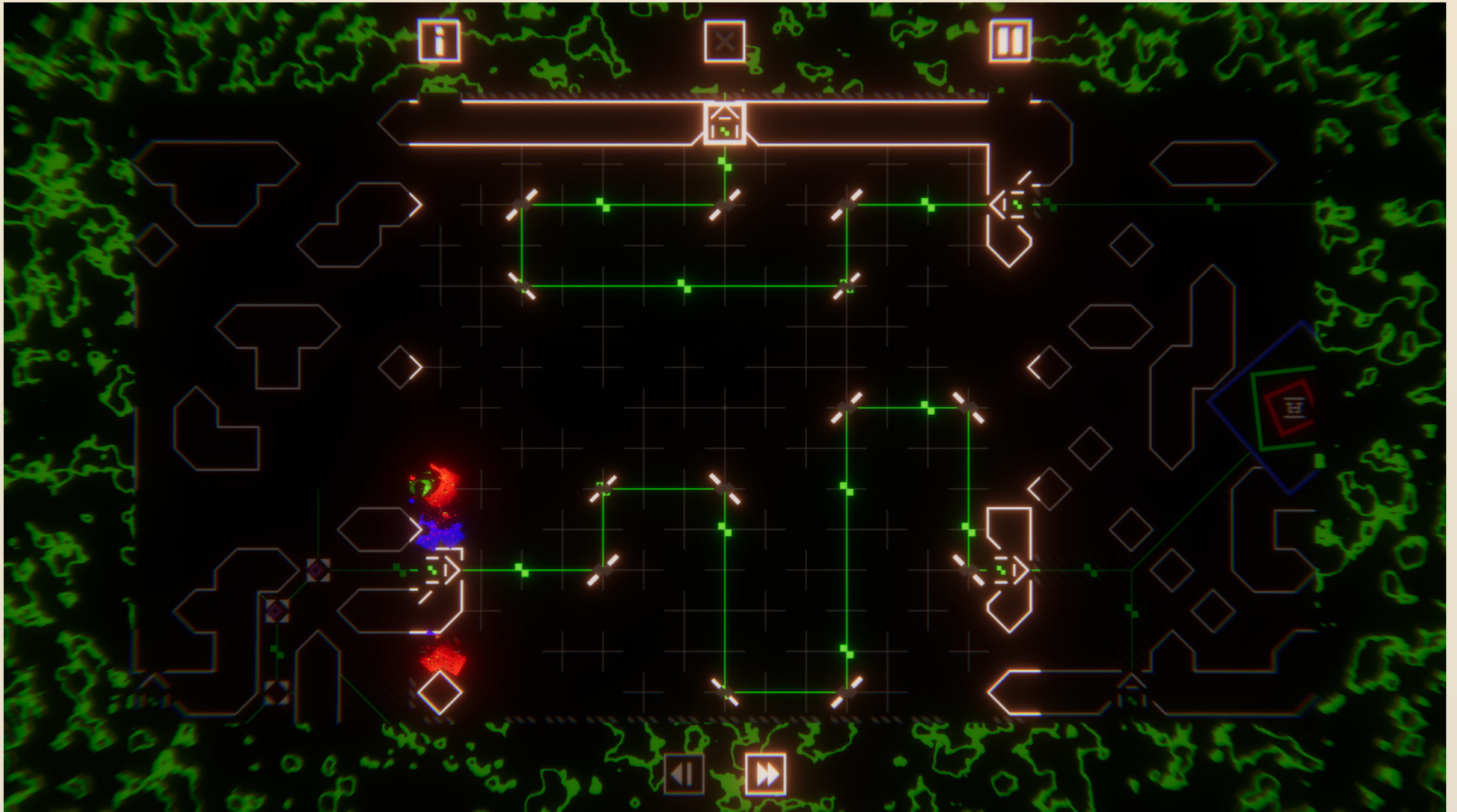
Except for INTERCAL

- ***X mingle Y***: Take bits alternately from *X* and *Y*.
- ***X select Y***: Take from *X* whichever bits correspond to 1's in *Y*, and pack these bits to the right.

(also by Don Woods, by the way)

Diagnosis

- You're playing a game
- You discover a new layer
- The original layer gets out of your way
- But not entirely



SOLAS / 28, Amicable Animal, 2021

Narrative zooming

- What do you do today, at home?
...Has results this week on your street
- What do your friends do this week on your street?
...Has results this month in your neighborhood.
- What do your neighbors do this month in your neighborhood?
...Has results this year in your city.

Diagnosis (reprise)

- You're playing a game (*puzzle, narrative, choice...?*)
- You discover a new layer (*verbs made of smaller verbs*)
- The original layer gets out of your way (*new game of composite actions*)
- But not entirely (*you sometimes backtrack*)

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