

When in Rome

a Puzzle Game in Five Brief Episodes

by Emily Short



Interactive Fiction:

You control the hero.

When in Rome tells you the beginning of a story. Then it puts you in charge and lets you decide what your character should do next. You type commands for the main character to carry out, and the story replies by telling you what happens as a result. Think of the rooms as your setting, and the objects you find as the props.

Part of your role in *When in Rome* is to help the main character overcome obstacles to his progress: solving problems, working out what is going on in the story, discovering ways to reach new locations and tools. That aspect of interactive fiction is like a game.

And part of your role is to help him make decisions. *When in Rome* has several ultimate outcomes, and they depend on your choices. That aspect is like a story — but an open-ended one.

If you enjoy *When in Rome*, you'll find a wide variety of other works available to you, most of them free. These come in many styles, some more like games, some more like stories; some are challenging, some very easy; some are serious, emotionally demanding pieces, while others explore the lighter side of life. And, like books, works of interactive fiction come in assortment of genres: fantasy, mystery, horror, and science-fiction, romance and historical, surreal and slice-of-life. This guide includes some suggestions about where to find more.



What Kind of Game is This, Anyway?

(Hint: Not the kind the Yanks play.)

A chance encounter with a strange girl and a stranger animal, and suddenly you're of overriding interest to the kind of men you did your best to avoid during the war. Men who wear black suits and use only first names.

Manhattan, May of 1954.

You have just been brought on to do some special work for the Office of Alien Protocol. No one can know the truth — that there are little green men on Earth. And blue. And purple.

Even your mother thinks you've set yourself up as a Private Investigator.

The rest of the secret had better stay between you, your secretary Esther, and your autographed photo of Joe DiMaggio.

Lunchtime Length

When in Rome is designed as a lunchtime game: there are five episodes, each of which may be played to a conclusion in fifteen to thirty minutes.

No Note-taking

The geography of each section is simple, and a summary of useful information is provided in the documents that accompany each episode. These aren't re-

quired for play, but may help jog your memory. You won't need to take any notes or preserve any pieces of paper in order to solve the game.

Replayable Sections

Each episode has multiple variants, so if you enjoy the puzzle in that episode, you can replay and try some of the variations on that theme. Though the story of the episode remains the same, the solutions of the alternate puzzles are all different.

Episodes get more challenging as the game goes on, to give you time to settle in.

Taking Charge Around Here

(Someone Has To)

You control *When in Rome* by giving typed commands — usually a simple imperative instruction for your avatar within the game.

When in Rome understands many common verbs, as well as the names of objects that appear in the game. Most of what you type will have the pattern >ACTION OBJECT: an action to do, and an object to do it to. Depending on the action, it may be appropriate to add a phrase with a second object: PUT THE FISH ON THE PLATTER, for instance.

What follows is an overview of the kinds of actions you can use; for reference, there is also a complete command list below.

Looking and Other Senses

You may want to start by familiarizing yourself with your environment. Each time you enter a room, you'll receive a short description of what the place looks like and what you find there.

If you'd like to reread this description, you can see it again by typing LOOK. You can also read more about individual objects by typing, for instance, EX-

AMINE THE SALAMI. (Since you will be using it frequently, that EXAMINE command can also be abbreviated to just plain X.)

Most items you find in the game can be examined, including yourself. Solving each episode will require you to pay close attention to the evidence you find, so if you are ever at a loss, EXAMINING the things around you may be a good idea.

You may also want to try your other senses: LISTEN, SMELL, TOUCH, and TASTE will sometimes give useful information as well.

Moving Around

Soon you may want to explore. You can move by typing compass directions: GO NORTH, for instance, or just N.

When in Rome understands eight compass directions as well as IN, OUT, UP, and DOWN. You may also find it useful to CLIMB over obstacles, or OPEN doors. The description of your location will give you some cues about which directions lead to interesting destinations.



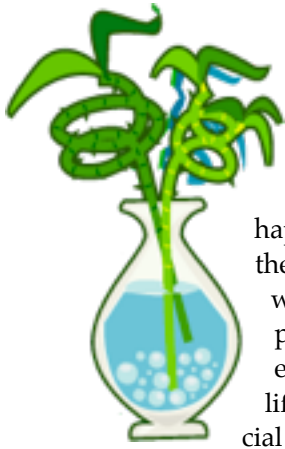
Other People (and Non-People)

In the course of *When in Rome*, you'll run into other characters, human and not. They have their own purposes and agendas, and they'll be trying to achieve their goals at the same time that you're trying to achieve yours. You may find that it is useful to watch their behavior by WAITING for a turn or two. Some characters may have strong reactions to specific items; some will want things you possess. Going along with their whims is sometimes a good idea and sometimes not.

You can try speaking to them with commands such as ASK ESTHER ABOUT THE SALAMI, or giving them instructions like ESTHER, GO WEST. Still, not all of them share your language. You may get further by GIVING them or SHOWING them things. On rare occasions, KISS and ATTACK may also come in handy.

And of course, you may find yourself resorting to tricks, persuasion, or violence, using the objects you have available.

Be careful. They may use the same methods on you.



Using Objects

The items you find are props you can use to make things happen. Many of them work in the way you might expect, given your experiences in daily life; others have special properties unique to the story. Many of these you will be able to TAKE, DROP, or PUT ON or IN other objects. Once you've acquired a few, you can also TAKE INVENTORY (or just type I for short) and get a list of things you're carrying.

There's lots to do with objects besides move them. Some can also be worn, eaten, opened, unlocked, and so on. Devices can be switched on and off. Topics of study can be looked up in books and reference works.

Starting and Stopping

A few commands allow you to manage the game. If you'd like to play an episode later than the first one, enter the password for that episode as your first move.

Though you may not often need to, you may always SAVE your game, like putting a bookmark into your place in the story. There is no limit to the number of SAVE files you can make. RE-

STORE will open up an old SAVE file and let you resume playing. When you're ready to stop, QUIT will end your game session.

If you'd like to keep a record of your play session, you can also type TRANSCRIPT at any time and begin a text file logging what happens to you.

Finally, if you try something and decide you didn't like the results, *When in Rome* will let you UNDO any move — even if it was one that ended the game.

Asking for Hints

If you get stuck during the game, you can find a complete menu of instructions, and hints about game-play, by typing HELP.

The hints change during the course of each episode to reflect what you're doing at the moment and to make sure the instructions are targeted to your current problem. You will not spoil later parts of the plot by accessing the hints too early.

Extra Materials

Everything you need to know is supplied within the game itself — if you need to take it on the run, don't worry: you're covered.

But in case you'd rather not take notes while playing, we've supplied a PDF file with informa-

tion your character would have in the game, if any, with each episode. Call it a reference copy. These files are available on the same websites as the game and this manual.

A Point About Technology

When in Rome is designed to be played on an interpreter. The interpreter delivers the story to you, but the unique information is kept in the story file itself, which is small and compact. You can play other stories on the same interpreter without downloading a whole application over again. Some interpreters even help you organize your collection of interactive fiction.

Chances are that if you have a copy of *When in Rome*, you also received an interpreter for your operating system. As of this writing, the best interpreters for this purpose are Zoom for the Macintosh and Unix machines, and Windows Frotz for Windows. These interpreters also show the cover art and display some information about each episode.

Interpreters are available for less common operating systems, and *When in Rome* can be played on a PDA — though it will run slowly, deciding what the other characters will do in response to your moves. Think of it as a bit like chess: the other player has to have a turn, too.



Common Interpreters



Zoom for the Macintosh: <http://www.logicalshift.demon.co.uk/mac/zoom.html>

Zoom for Unix: <http://www.logicalshift.demon.co.uk/unix/zoom/>

Windows Frotz for Windows: <http://www.d.kinder.btinternet.co.uk/frotz.html>

Sample Transcript

(Or: What happened to the last guy.)

Here is an example of play with a hypothetical episode *When in Rome*. (This particular puzzle isn't in the game.) The commands in bold are the player's instructions to the game; regular type shows the replies. This transcript does not demonstrate all possible commands, but it does show how the most common ones behave, and how a player might solve a problem within the game.

Room 1103 at the Plaza

A high-class establishment — sure a lot nicer than any place you ever stayed — but badly in need of maid service.

Next to the bed is a strange creature: almost as tall as you, and with dirty white fur. It is carrying a bottle of gin.

Strewn around the room, you can see a pin-striped suit, a cotton shirt, some briefs, a bucket of ice, and a guidebook to central Manhattan.

>examine creature

This one is white and furry, with thick brows and a jaded expression. It carries a bottle of gin nonchalantly in one paw. Spitting image of that guy Harry Jarvis you almost got for a step-dad once.

The Visitor picks up the pin-striped suit and shakes it. Apparently it shares your opinion of the housekeeping.

>x suit

Finely tailored in a slightly-too-flashy way. Your guess is, the owner is a very successful gangster.

The Visitor eats the pin-striped suit lapels and cuffs first, in the manner of a gourmand.

The manager chooses this moment to check on you.



"Hey! What's the meaning of this?" he demands, picking up a pin-striped rag. "You know whose suite this is?"

>Manager, out

"I don't care if you've got the whole hotel rented out to Mamie Eisenhower," you say. "You've got to keep this place clear until I've dealt with the critter here."

He goes out muttering about government eggheads. Next time you'll think of a better lie than "it's a top-secret veterinary emergency."

>take inventory

You are wearing a fedora and a trench coat.

The Visitor cranes its head around, trying to see under and behind the bed.

>look under the bed

There's a ball of socks under there.

The Visitor considers eating the cotton shirt, but decides against.

>wait five minutes

The Visitor tries on the briefs, but they're a bad fit.

The Visitor stirs the contents of the bucket of ice.

The Visitor flips through the pages of the guidebook (upside down).

The creature takes a deep swig from the bottle of gin.

It is now 11:52 pm.

The Visitor warbles tunelessly.

>x me

You've looked better. This is the third escaped critter in two days, and you haven't gotten much sleep.

The furry white creature sizes up the bed, then takes a running jump and hops over it.

>x bed

It looks comfortable... No! No time to sleep now.

The furry white Visitor jumps on the bed a few more times. The occupant of room 1101 bangs on the wall.

>x gin

You can only conclude that it belonged to the former occupant of the room.

The Visitor takes another swig from the bottle of gin.

>get the gin

You make a move towards the bottle of gin; the creature dodges woosily. Probably just luck, but it does manage to keep control of the bottle.

>again

You lunge again, and this time you do manage to wrestle the bottle of gin away from it.

The furry white Visitor picks up the briefs from the floor. Time someone did a little cleaning around here.

>x gin

There's a lot left, but it was a large bottle to start with.

The creature chucks the briefs in your direction, causing you to drop the bottle of gin, more out of surprise than because of the impact.

>z

You wait to see what the creature will do next.

The Visitor hiccups, but gathers the gin bottle back to itself like a lost child.

>pet visitor

The Visitor bristles. A grouchy drunk, then.

>get visitor

The Visitor momentarily allows you to pick it up but then scrambles out of your arms again.

The creature takes a deep swig from the bottle of gin. You wonder whether they've heard of hangovers on its planet.

>get ice

You pick up the bucket of ice.

The furry white Visitor blinks at you in a less than intelligent manner.

>wave at visitor

You wave at the Visitor. It watches your hand move from side to side.

>smell visitor

To judge from its exhalations, it came from a planet with a pure-martini atmosphere.

The Visitor swallows more of the bottle of gin.

>i

You're carrying a bucket of ice and some briefs. You are wearing a fedora and a trench coat.

With a final hiccup, the creature goes limp and falls over. A moment later it begins to snore heartily.

***** The boys are not going to be pleased that the visitor got into such a state *****

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game, or QUIT?

> undo

Room 1103 at the Plaza

[Previous turn undone.]

>throw ice at the creature

You pour out the ice water on the Visitor, which shivers and blinks at you in shock. It looks unhappy, but a great deal more alert.

...and so on. From here the player might resort to other means to capture the critter and get it out of the hotel, but at least it is (temporarily) sober...



Approved Command List

See your Office of Alien Protocol contact for more information.

Most of these commands have synonyms which are also recognized – for instance, “awake” and “awaken” are understood to mean the same thing as “wake up”. But these are all you will need.

answer [text] to [someone]
ask [someone] about [something]
ask [someone] for [something]
attack [something]
blow [something held]
call [someone]
climb [something]
close [something]
drink [something]
drop [things held]
eat [something held]
enter [something]
examine [something] (or X)
exit
get off [something]
give [something] to [someone]
glue [something] shut
glue [something] to [something]

go [direction -- N, S, E, W, NW, NE, SW, SE, up, down, in, out]
help
inventory (or I)
jump
kiss [someone]
listen
listen to [something]
lock [something]
look
look inside [something]
look under [something]
look up [text] in [something]
open [something]
pet [something]
pull [something]
push [something]
put [things] in [something]
put [things] on [something]
quit (or Q)
read [something]
restart
restore
rub [something]
save
shoot [something] at [something]
shout [something]
show [something] to [someone]
sing
sit on [something]
sleep
smell [something]
squeeze [something]

switch [something] [on/off]
take [things]
take off [something]
taste [something]
throw [something] at [something]
touch [something]
transcript [on/off]
turn [something]
unlock [something]
wait (or Z)
wait [number] minutes
wake
wear [something]
write [something] on [something]

A few useful things to know...

ALL refers to all items you can see, so TAKE ALL will pick up every portable thing in sight. AGAIN (or G) repeats the action you just did.

You may give instructions to other characters in the format, “ESTHER, OPEN THE DOOR.”

Words that express ways of doing something (like QUICKLY or QUIETLY) are not useful in the game. You also do not need to refer to specific body parts: so not HIT THE DOOR WITH MY FIST, but just HIT THE DOOR.

If the game asks you a question, like “Which horse do you mean, the white horse or the brown horse?”, you may answer with the name of the object you prefer. In this case, >BROWN HORSE would be a good reply.



More Interactive Fiction

And a message from Legal

Finding More Interactive Fiction

Most interactive fiction currently released is free, which means that you are allowed to download and play it without charge on any computer you like. If you'd like to try some of these, here are some resources.

The Interactive Fiction Archive is an immense repository containing interpreters, programming languages, documentation, and over two thousand games, some of them dating back to the 1970s and some of them brand new. Sifting the riches for something you'd enjoy can be pretty daunting, so the best way to approach it is to consult Baf's Guide to the Interactive Fiction Archive. Baf's Guide records games and authors, provides reviews of many works, and lists the recipients of awards and winners of competitions.

The Interactive Fiction Ratings site is another source for information about game quality and genre. The Ratings site col-



lects opinions from players and keeps a running scoreboard of games in many genres. It also contains information about how long a given game might take to complete.

For fuller reviews and discussions of games and gaming, and an introduction to the community of interactive fiction players and authors, take a look at the online magazines SPAG and IF-Review, and the Brass Lantern website.

About the Making of *When in Rome*

When in Rome was written in part as a demonstration of Inform 7, a programming language created by Graham Nelson for interactive fiction. The annotated source code for *When in Rome* is available online.

This game would not have been possible without the efforts

of its beta-testing team; for a complete set of credits, consult the menu in the game.

We have of course done our best to stomp out problems, but if you do find any errors, feel free to contact the author (Emily Short, emshort@mindspring.com) to report them (and earn your own place in the testing credits).

+ Distribution

While *When in Rome* remains copyright of its author, anyone is welcome to make copies and distribute them freely, in physical or electronic form, without charge, as long as the following conditions are met:

You may not alter the game or remove the authorship attribution.

You may not distribute the game for profit without the author's explicit written permission. Charging a fee to cover physical media or shipping is acceptable.

Notifying the author before including *When in Rome* in any compilations would be a welcome courtesy, but is not required.

Interactive Fiction Archives and Reviews



Baf's Guide to the IF Archive: <http://www.wurb.com/if/>
Interactive Fiction Ratings: <http://www.carouselchain.com/if/>
SPAG Review Magazine online: <http://www.sparkynet.com/spag/>
IF-Review: <http://www.ministryofpeace.com/if-review/>
Brass Lantern, a site about IF: <http://www.brasslantern.org/>