The Little Match Girl 6
FULCRUM OF THE TELKON VORTEX
The Instruction Manual
by Hans Christian Andersen

A Note for IntroComp

The combat system featured in *The Little Match Girl 6: Fulcrum of the Telkon Vortex* is kind of complicated—I mean complicated for me, the author. For the player, it shouldn't be more difficult to understand than your typical turn-based combat system. Under the hood, though, there's an awful lot of code. It's significantly more convoluted than your typical text adventure.

I hope that by entering *The Little Match Girl 6: Fulcrum of the Telkon Vortex* in IntroComp, I can get a lot of eyes on the combat system and help iron out the kinks (right now there are a lot of kinks) and improve the balance (right now the balance is not very good). I will be very grateful if you **email me at rcveeder@me.com** to let me know about stuff like:

- You or an enemy used a certain item or ability in a certain situation and there was a runtime error (this might happen kind of a lot)
- A certain item or ability makes the game too easy
- A certain battle is too hard no matter what you try
- Something else doesn't seem to work or make any sense

I will want to follow up with you and get a bunch of details. (It will be especially helpful if you can provide a transcript of the game where the issue arose.) I would much rather handle these things via email than by receiving anonymous feedback. Also, reading reviews is very stressful, so I'm going to try not to read any reviews. **The best way to give me feedback is to email me.**

In this version of *The Little Match Girl 6: Fulcrum of the Telkon Vortex*, there are only three "realms" to visit (the beach, the creek, and the penal colony). The complete game should include more like fifteen realms. Also, in this version, you're limited to collecting the first three components of the Tangle Probe. How many components are out there? That's a secret!

The Little Match Girl 6: Fulcrum of the Telkon Vortex autosaves your progress, both in the online Vorple version (using your browser's LocalStorage) and the offline .gblorb version (by creating .glkdata files). I sincerely doubt that you'll be able to port your progress from this incomplete version into the complete version later! But there isn't much progress to be made in this version, so don't worry.

The Story So Far

For generations, the people of Oth have been fascinated by the Quasistable Metatime Tangle, a supradimensional region where anomalous timelines apparently achieve a measure of stability (quasistability, at least) by intertwining with each other and looping back on themselves.

To further understand this phenomenon, Professor Dunweb of Oth devised a most incredible thing: the "Tangle Probe," which makes the contents of the QMT observable to outsiders. Individuals with certain unique abilities can even use the Probe to enter the Tangle physically.

However, a cruel act of sabotage has scattered the components of the Tangle Probe throughout the QMT itself. To repair his invention, Dunweb needs the assistance of an individual with certain unique abilities…

Characters

Ebenezabeth Scrooge

The famed little match girl/time traveller/bounty hunter/vampire slayer Ebenezabeth Scrooge has been summoned to the Woods outside of time, where Professor Dunweb has modified his Tangle Probe to interface with certain unique abilities Scrooge possesses. When she looks at the fire in the Probe's central crucible, she'll enter the Quasistable Metatime Tangle to seek the components that can restore the Probe's full functionality. Although entering the alien environment of the Tangle takes intense concentration, she can take one other person with her at a time, such as…

Prince Linus

Ebenezabeth's associate Prince Linus of Cagliari has accompanied her to the Woods. While Ebenezabeth travels through time and space by looking at fire, Linus travels through portals he creates by opening locked doors.

Linus and his analytical command of dimensional mechanics have been an immense help to Professor Dunweb. But when it comes to fighting—and there is a lot of fighting in the QMT—Linus is not very helpful at all. He would honestly prefer Ebenezabeth took someone else, such as…

Hrieman the Crow

Ebenezabeth's associate Hrieman has accompanied her as well. Hrieman is a talking crow from the year 877! And he's way more useful in a fight than Linus is.

...and the rest

As the capabilities of the Tangle Probe are restored, Ebenezabeth will be able to choose other associates to join her in the QMT. She'll even be able to level them up (in a future version)!

Your Party

To keep track of your party while inside the Tangle,

- Use the command >PARTY (or >STATUS or >STATS) to see your party members and their most basic information.
- >LOOK AT or >EXAMINE or >X a party member to see their full character sheet.
- Use the >INVENTORY or >I command to see what items are in the party's collective inventory and what equipment each unit carries.

The Scanning Lens and the Logbook

Ebenezabeth always wears her trusty scanning lens, which she got from a space pirate in 4044. The scanning lens can't fight; it's basically a piece of plastic! But Ebenezabeth can use it to >SCAN things to learn more about them.

The scanning lens has taken the liberty of setting up a Logbook to keep track of all the ridiculous nonsense going on in this adventure. >EXAMINE THE LOGBOOK to see its table of contents. To read the logbook itself, use commands like >ACCESS DATALOG 3 (since a command like >LOOK AT DATALOG 3 would be parsed as a request to examine a physical Datalog 3 object).

The Nature of the Tangle

The realms that converge in the Quasistable Metatime Tangle are constantly repeating and rearranging themselves. Each time you use the Tangle Probe, you'll enter a different incarnation of the QMT. You can always >WAKE UP to leave the QMT, but we can't guarantee you'll recognize anything when you return.

Exploring the QMT is dangerous! People can be downright brutish in there! Fortunately, Ebenezabeth may exit the QMT at any time by waking up. If she's in danger of her life (or if Linus or Hrieman is), she'll wake up and return to the Woods right away.

Throughout the QMT are "gates" that connect neighboring worlds. Gates are very useful things, and anyone who gets their mitts on one will guard it jealously. Some folks even use them as bait! Ebenezabeth will have to convince the guardians to relinquish their control one way or another.

The Probe's stratal quantizer can be adjusted to target different layers of the QMT. It looks like all the missing components of the Probe have landed on different layers. Unfortunately, in its current state, the Probe can only target the three "shallowest" layers. (Maybe this isn't such a bad thing, since the deeper layers of the QMT are rumored to be the most dangerous.)

Combat Basics

Combat in *The Little Match Girl 6: Fulcrum of the Telkon Vortex* is the sort of turn-based RPG combat that you may recognize from turn-based RPGs. The units in your party each take a turn, and then the units in the enemy party each take a turn, and so on.

Units have Hit Points (HP) that are depleted when they take damage. When a unit reaches 0 HP, it is incapacitated. If that unit isn't native to the QMT, Ebenezabeth will be forced to wake up and leave. Outsiders don't have the luxury of being resurrected when the timeline starts over!

There are plenty of actions you can take without spending your turn: You can >LOOK to see who's in the battle and what their disposition is; you can >EXAMINE a person or an object; or you can >TAKE INVENTORY to remember what your party is carrying. You can >ACCESS logbook files if you think that'll help.

The typical action to take on your turn is to >ATTACK an enemy unit. You can also >USE an item (either for yourself or on another unit), if one is handy. Sometimes it is wise to >DO NOTHING.

You can also >WAIT to defer the current unit's turn ("move the cursor," so to speak), if you want another unit in your party to do something first. The distinction between >DO NOTHING and >WAIT is one that tactical geniuses will internalize as soon as possible.

Items and Equipment

When it comes to "usable" items like potions and bombs, all your units have access to the same shared inventory. You can have one unit >USE POTION ON OTHER UNIT without worrying about who's actually holding the potion in the first place. When you >TAKE INVENTORY, it should be clear which items are commonly available.

This doesn't apply to equipment items like armor and amulets, which bestow continuous effects on whoever holds them. Ebenezabeth is the viewpoint character, so she carries these things by default. To distribute such items among other units, you'll have to enter commands like >GIVE AMULET TO GUY to let Guy benefit from the amulet, or >TAKE AMULET to remove the amulet from Guy and put it back in Ebenezabeth's hands.

Fellowship

Most units have special abilities that cost Fellowship Points (FP) to use. Each unit has an "FP Contribution" stat, and all your units' contributions are combined into a single pool of points that any allied unit can spend.

The QMT presents precious few opportunities to restore your FP. Any tactical genius will tell you to use it with care!

Stances

A unit's stance changes over the course of battle. When combat begins, everyone is in the Steady stance, but circumstances may cause units to become Focused, Nimble, Pained, or Rattled.

Being in one stance or another has no inherent effect, but most attacks and abilities refer to stances in some way. For example, one unit in your party may have a basic attack that deals extra damage to Rattled enemies, and another unit may have an ability that makes enemies Rattled. A tactical genius might have the first unit >WAIT so that the second unit can set up for a stronger attack.

When you make a unit >DEFEND, in addition to taking less damage until the start of its next turn, that that unit will enter the Steady stance. To maneuver a unit into one of those other stances, you'll have to use more specialized abilities.

Conditions

Although every unit always has a *stance (*which doesn't do anything on its own)*,* you will also run into *status conditions* (which have more direct effects). Here are a few of the status conditions that may affect you or your enemies:

- A *poisoned* unit takes 1 poison damage at the beginning of its turn.
- An *asleep* unit can't take an action on its turn, but will wake up if it takes damage.
- A unit with a *headache* can't use abilities that cost FP.
- A *frightened* unit deals -1 damage with physical attacks.

Status conditions typically wear off over time and always disappear at the end of a battle.

Settings

You can review your current settings with the >SETTINGS command.

Combat option compression is disabled by default. On each of your unit's turns, you'll see a full list of that unit's abilities, e.g.:

- **Smack**: Hit an enemy with your gloved hand, dealing 1 damage.
- **Screech** (2 FP): Scream very loudly, stunning all other units.
- **Defend**
- **Do Nothing**
- **Wait**

After enabling combat option compression with the command >COMPRESS (or >TOGGLE OPTION COMPRESSION), a unit's combat options will be displayed as a single line with fewer details, like so:

Smack / **Screech** (2 FP) / **Defend** / **Do Nothing** / **Wait**

You may find it useful to compress combat options after you become familiar with your units' abilities, and decompress them when you find new abilities or new units. (You can always >EXAMINE one of your units to get detailed information about abilities and features.)

Fast battle is disabled by default, when there are multiple enemies taking turns, those turns will be broken up by "press any key to continue" prompts. This makes it easier to keep track of everything that's going on. If you enable fast battle with the command >TOGGLE FAST BATTLE, the game prints all the enemies' turns and then your next unit's command prompt all at once and I don't recommend it.

Full combatants is disabled by default. The list of all units engaged in the current battle and their various dispositions is displayed at the beginning of a combat round, or whenever you >LOOK during the battle. To display this list at the beginning of all your units' turns, use the command >TOGGLE FULL COMBATANTS. But I think you'd be better served by leaving this turned off and using the >LOOK command when necessary.

Screen reader mode is disabled by default. Some text in the game looks cool, but sounds weird through a screen reader; enabling this setting will replace it with text that doesn't sound as weird.

Key to Ability Property Icons

Abilities have "properties" or "tags" that can affect how they interact with other abilities and features. These icons appear as shorthand for ability properties (in the Vorple version, while screen reader mode is disabled):

"Direct" - an ability that targets a single unit (so you have to stipulate an object for the verb)

"Indirect" - an ability that affects only its user, or all units, or similar (so you don't have to stipulate an object for the verb)

"Physical" - an ability that operates through objects touching each other

"Psychological" - an ability that operates on units' minds

"Magical" - an ability that operates through supernatural means

"Melee" - an ability that involves getting right up close to another unit (possibly incurring a counterattack of some kind)

"Ranged" - an ability that takes its effect from a distance (possibly incurring a counterattack of another kind)

Hans Christian Andersen's Tips and Tricks

1. Ebenezabeth can >SCAN an enemy in battle, but that uses up her turn! It would be wiser to >SCAN enemies before you start fighting them, if you have the opportunity. (You can >ACCESS data for scanned enemies in battle without using up your turn.)

2. Gates heal you a bit when you open them for the first time. Before you open a gate, consider whether you need that healing right at the moment.

3. Gates can be traversed in either direction, so you don't have to finish exploring one area before you enter the gate to the next one. Jumping back and forth is free!

4. If an enemy seems hungry or thirsty, you might be able to avoid fighting them by giving them something to eat or drink outside of combat. Some other enemies have other desires you might be able to satisfy.

5. Most of the time, enemy attacks can be avoided if you're in the right stance. But you also have to know which of your units that enemy will try to attack! Some enemies focus on attacking Ebenezabeth and then work down the list; some start at the bottom of that list and work their way up. Some will always target the opponent with the lowest HP. Some will fixate on attacking whoever just attacked them, and so on. Nobody makes decisions randomly.

6. It might be useful to attack your own units once in a while, just to get their stances lined up properly…

Things Hans Christian Andersen Plans to Change

- The list of which realms you're about to visit in which order that appears when you enter the Probe is only there for debug purposes. Not knowing this information will be a different experience when there are more than three realms.
- In the real verison of this game we ought to disable UNDO.
- It might be nice to implement all the party members' various accoutrements as individual items.