

Dust

A Western by IkeC

Release 1
2024/07/07

This is a transcript of the game **Dust** (<https://ikeserver.de/Dust>).

All lines starting with > are commands entered by the person playing the game.

~~~

squeeeeak ...  
squeeeeak ...  
squeeeeeek ...

You wake up slowly.

Your head is rumbling and your blood pulsates painfully through your temples.

Dust

A Western by IkeC

Release 1 / Serial number 240707 / Inform 7 v10.1.2

Room

You cough twice and finally manage to pull yourself up from the dusty floorboards.

This room is rather sparsely furnished. There's a bed in the corner with a small nightstand to the left. The opposite wall features a small window. A plain wooden door leads outside and down the stairs.

Please enter INFO now for instructions on how to play, especially if you've never played a game like this before.

> info

The game is completely solvable by giving directions such as SOUTH (short: S), NORTHWEST (NW), DOWN (D), OUT etc. and the following commands:

- LOOK (L)
- EXAMINE <Object> (X)
- PICK UP <Object> (P)
- TALK TO <Person> (T)
- USE <Object> WITH <Object>
- DROP / PUSH / OPEN <Object>

Other commands are also possible. You might start playing like this: LOOK, OPEN WINDOW, X NIGHTSTAND, GET BAG, DOWN, TALK TO WOMAN and so on.

RUN displays the locations already visited. These can be reached directly with RUN <Location>. INV (I) shows your inventory. SAVE and RESTORE commands are available as well. Type HINT for advice if you don't know what to do next.

Actions such as entering new rooms or finding items often unlock new dialog options, so it makes sense to talk to people several times. There are more hints and a walkthrough available at <https://ikeserver.de/Dust> if you get stuck.

Many thanks to Olaf Nowacki, Hannes Schüller, Michael L. and my family for testing and helpful advice. This game was translated from the original German version Staub with kind help from Amanda Walker, mathbrush and DeepL.com. The cover image was created with help from Stable Diffusion XL.

> look

Room

This room is rather sparsely furnished. There's a bed in the corner with a small nightstand to the left. The opposite wall features a small window. A plain wooden door leads outside and down the stairs.

> smell

It smells slightly of piss, but you've slept in far worse places.

> examine door

A wooden door with roughly crafted hinges.

> examine wall

The wall may once have been white, but now the gray and cracked plaster is only held up by good will.

> examine floor

This floor has not seen a broom or even water for a long time. In many places, the light from the room below shines through the floorboards.

> examine bed

A sparse bed with a stained thin mattress on it.

> examine mattress

Mattress is a pretty big word for these two roughly sewn-together lengths of fabric. Individual straws push through the seams and holes in the fabric everywhere.

> examine window

Pale light shines through the dusty glass pane of the window. Outside, you think you can make out a wind pump.

> examine windpump

A large metal windmill turns rhythmically, squeaking in the wind. The noise is hard to bear right now.

> examine nightstand

A small bedside table with an open compartment.

In the nightstand is a shoulder bag.

> take bag

Taken.

> examine bag

A scuffed shoulder bag made from slightly cracked leather.

> open bag

You open the shoulder bag, revealing a revolver, a draft notice, a drawing and some money.

> examine draft notice

A draft notice for Thomas Marshall, over five years old according to the date. An important document that you always carry with you, as it identifies you as a former member of the army. As a welcome side effect, you can also look up your name if you've had a rough night.

> examine drawing

A folded charcoal drawing, already slightly brittle at the edges. It shows Claire, your wife.

You miss her beyond words.

You carefully tuck the drawing into the inside of your vest.

> examine revolver

Your Colt Navy, Model 1861. Freshly cleaned, loaded and ready to fire.

> examine money

About twelve dollars.

> smell me

It's been a while since your last bath, and you can definitely smell it. However, it's not bad enough to attract any unpleasant attention in this area (yet).

> down

Saloon

You shuffle down the stairs, massaging your aching left shoulder.

The saloon consists of a few round tables with chairs and a small stage. Next to it, a staircase leads up to your room. On the other side is a long counter. Two massive beams run under the ceiling. The swing doors to the north lead outside.

A woman is behind the counter, polishing glasses with a moderately clean-looking cloth. She gives you a slightly amused look.

> smell

It smells of spilt beer and old cigarettes.

> examine woman

The woman behind the counter is Ella, you've first met her years before. She is in her late forties, a corpulent, attractive woman with laugh lines and calloused hands. She has a dark red cloth scarf tied around her forehead and is wiping the counter with a bored expression.

> examine tables

A few round wooden tables are scattered randomly around the room. Two of the tables have been tipped over.

> examine chairs

Inconspicuous wooden chairs and stools, some patched together with thin boards. A few of them lie shattered next to the entrance.

"I wanted to let you sleep in before I clean up the mess here", Ella says.

> examine stage

An unadorned wooden platform that has often served as the backdrop for mediocre dance routines and many a brawl.

> examine stairs

The staircase leads up to your rented room and other rooms that you are not allowed to enter.

> examine counter

The bar counter has a few dark spots and minor carving marks from bored guests, but overall, it looks quite clean.

> examine beams

Massive wooden beams support the ceiling of the large room. A long nail is hammered into one of the beams with a kerosene lamp dangling from it.

> examine nail

A long, rusty nail, driven deep into one of the ceiling beams. It will probably stay there until the saloon collapses one day.

> talk to woman

What would you like to say to Ella?

[1] "How are you doing?"  
[2] "Looks wild in here."  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["How are you doing?"]

"I'm doing quite well, thanks Tom. Nothing upsets me easily here anymore, at least not a little bar brawl.

[1] "Looks wild in here."  
[2] "There was a fight?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Looks wild in here."]

"Things got pretty rough here yesterday when you were already upstairs. I'll clean it all up later," says Ella. "You look pretty exhausted, do you want a coffee? I brewed one as soon as I heard you get up."

[1] "A coffee please."  
[2] "There was a fight?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["A coffee please."]

Ella turns around and pours a deep black steaming broth from a small tin pot into a cup and places it on the counter in front of you.

"Enjoy your coffee, that'll be a quarter. I'm afraid I'm out of sugar, but I still have a cookie."

Ella puts a cookie next to the cup. You put the money down, stick your nose deep into the cup and take a deep breath. Wonderful.

[1] "There was a fight?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["There was a fight?"]

"No idea who started it this time. The Mifflin brothers were drinking heavily again and waving dollar bills around, but of course they didn't spend it on anyone but themselves."

She shrugs and gives you a little smile. "I suppose some people didn't like that."

[1] "Mifflin? Doesn't ring a bell."

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Mifflin? Doesn't ring a bell."]

"Oh, you don't even know the Mifflin brothers? Then they must have turned up when you were already out of town back then. Their names are Calvin and Bob, they put the old mine west of here back into operation and they actually found something again it seems."

Ella pauses briefly and takes a long drag on her cigarette.

"In any case, they obviously have enough money to get drunk here on a regular basis. That's fine by me."

[0] End conversation

> 0

Saloon

The saloon consists of a few round tables with chairs and a small stage. Next to it, a staircase leads up to your room. On the other side is a long counter. Two massive beams run under the ceiling. The swing doors to the north lead outside.

Ella is behind the counter, polishing glasses with a moderately clean-looking cloth.

> examine counter

The bar counter has a few dark spots and minor carving marks from bored guests, but overall, it looks quite clean.

On the counter are a cookie and a coffee cup.

> drink coffee

You take a small sip. Not bad.

> drink coffee

You take another sip. You feel much better already.

> out

Main Street

You step through the swinging door in front of the saloon. A small canopy protects you from the scorching sun. An unpleasantly hot wind slowly carries a thorny tumbleweed out of the city. There is not a soul to be seen.

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. Three similar-looking wooden buildings are located on the opposite side of the street to the north. The saloon lies to the south.

> smell

Many unidentifiable odors mingle in the hot and dusty morning air - most of them not very pleasant.

> examine tumbleweed

The tumbleweed is already out of sight. Others will come and take its place.

> examine sun

Looking at the sun isn't particularly smart under normal circumstances, but even less so with your grumpy head.

> take sun

You take the sun and put it in your pocket.

.  
. .

It's getting a bit hot. You quickly put the sun back in its place.

> examine buildings

The building in the northwest is apparently the sheriff's office. To the north is a general store and next to it in the northeast is a small barber store.

> examine office

Sheriff Dunder's office is also his home. A cat lies lazily in the slowly diminishing shade next to the house.

> examine cat

You see nothing special about the cat.

> examine store

A sign saying "Bill's Goods & More" is dangling over the general store. You wonder what the more than goods could be.

> examine barber

The barber shop is marked by a small red, white and blue pole next to the door.

> examine pole

When the wind blows strongly, it even turns a little.

> w

Ranch

You come to a small wooden hut with an adjoining stable and a large fenced-in paddock.

A young woman sits sobbing on a small bench.

> talk to woman

What would you like to say to the young woman?

[1] "May I help you Ma'am?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["May I help you Ma'am?"]

The young woman looks up to you, her eyes welling with tears. "Michael is gone!"

[1] "Who is Michael?"

[2] "What is your name?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Who is Michael?"]

The young woman blows into her handkerchief once. "Michael is my fiancé. He wanted to go to the saloon yesterday."

She takes a deep breath and points over to the horses.

"When I got here this morning, the horses weren't looked after and there was no sign of Michael. He would never leave the horses to themselves like that!"

[1] "What is your name?"

[2] "Do you have any idea what might have happened?"

[0] End conversation

> 2

She averts her eyes.

"I don't know. Before he left yesterday, he said briefly that he had heard something about the Mifflin brothers. When I wanted to know what exactly, he looked at me thoughtfully and said it wasn't that important."

The young woman turns back to you. Her gaze wanders past your face, her eyes widen in fear.

"Hey, what--"

POW!

~~~

Claire whirls around. "To the army? Are you out of your mind?"

She is so beautiful when she is angry, but the sparkling fire in her eyes sometimes scares you a little. As you try to stroke her cheek, she quickly turns away.

"You know we need the money."

You try to sound as firm and determined as possible, but you're not entirely convinced of your decision yourself. She looks out of the dusty window defiantly, her arms crossed in front of her chest. Her chin trembles slightly.

Claire...

~~~

Ouch.

Your head is pounding again, only this time it doesn't feel like too much whiskey the night before.

You slowly open your eyes, looking straight into the weather-beaten face of the sheriff.

"Enjoying a little nap, eh?"

> take bag

"You might get your stuff back later. First you tell me what happened here."

> examine Sheriff

Sheriff Dunder is a lean man in his late fifties with piercing green eyes and a white moustache. Deep wrinkles run across his deep brown face. A dull brass star adorns the vest of his otherwise unremarkable clothing.

> examine star

A simple sheriff's star as worn by sheriffs all over the country.

> talk to Sheriff

What would you like to say to Sheriff Dunder?

[1] "What happened? How did I get here?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["What happened? How did I get here?"]

"What happened? That's what I wanted to know from you, boy."

Sheriff Dunder takes a step back and leans against his desk.

"Deputy Miller found you on the ranch with your face in the dirt and blood on your head. Didn't want you to die there in the sweltering heat, so he dragged you in here."

Yeah right, the ranch, the young woman... it's all starting to come back to you.

[1] "What about the young woman?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["What about the young woman?"]

Dunder frowns. "Miller says the ranch was empty, no Michael, no Lucy. What was going on, boy?"

You briefly recount your conversation with the young woman. The sheriff eyes you critically and finally sighs.

"Lucy is the daughter of Mayor Thompson. If something happened to her, you're not the only one with a problem."

[1] "Why is this my problem now?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Why is this my problem now?"]

The sheriff approaches you slowly and pushes his face in front of yours until the tips of your noses are almost touching. His breath stinks foul and his eyes glare balefully at you.

"You've been here one day and already the mayor's daughter has disappeared. I have no idea what exactly you have to do with it and whether your story is true, but I strongly advise you to find out where she is."

[1] "Can you tell me something about Lucy?"

[2] "May I leave now?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Can you tell me something about Lucy?"]

"She's the daughter of Mayor Thompson, his stepdaughter, to be precise. She got engaged to that ranch boy, doesn't suit Thompson at all."

Dunder pulls one up noisily and spits under the plank bed.

"Her mother must have died a year or so ago. Didn't know her though, only been here a few months myself."

[1] "May I leave now?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["May I leave now?"]

The sheriff turns away from you and nods reluctantly. "Your papers stay here and you're not leaving town. The coach is already through today anyway and you won't be able to afford a horse."

Dunder comes closer again and looks at you penetratingly.

"Your stuff is on the table. We'll keep an eye on you boy. Don't do anything stupid."

[0] End conversation

> 0

Sheriff's Office

This is Sheriff Dunder's office. Two plank beds are attached to the wall.

On the opposite side is a massive desk with Sheriff Dunder sitting behind it. He has pulled his hat half over his face and seems to be dozing off. A passageway apparently leads deeper into the house. The door to the sheriff's office in the southeast leads outside.

> take bag

Taken.

> smell

It smells slightly musty and of various excrements in the bunks. Not a place where you would want to stay for long.

> examine plank beds

Simple wooden platforms to sit or lie on. They have certainly seen a few bandits and/or booze chokes and smell disgusting.

> examine passageway

A low passageway that presumably leads to holding cells and the sheriff's private rooms. Dunder won't let you go there, and you don't need to see anything back there anyway.

> examine house

You don't think you'll see any more of the house. You certainly don't want to.

> out

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> open bag

You open the shoulder bag, revealing a revolver and some money.

> w

Ranch

A small wooden hut with an adjoining stable and a large fenced-in paddock. There is a small bench in front of the house.

A narrow path leads south to the wind pump. The main road leads further out of town from the east to the west.

You hear a muffled bang followed by quiet cursing from the west.

> smell

It smells mainly of straw and horse shit.

> examine house

A small wooden house with a flat, slightly sloping roof, hardly more than a shed.

> enter house

You have no business there. Lucy and Michael are definitely not here.

> examine paddock

A small paddock, enclosed by a waist-high fence. There is nothing here but dried steppe grass.

> examine grass

Dry steppe grass, it's been a long time since the last rain. You won't need it.

> examine stable

Some horses are moving around restlessly in the stable. The stench is breathtaking.

> enter stable

The smell is really unpleasant, and you don't expect to find anything important there.

> examine horses

You don't attach any great importance to the horses.

> examine bench

A simple bench, made of wood.

> sit on bench

You really don't have time to rest now.

> w

Mine

After a short stretch of dusty road, a low ridge rises up in front of you. A few minutes later, you recognize the entrance to a mine.

The entrance to the mine is lit by torches on both sides. A thin plume of smoke rises from the highest point of the tunnel and quickly disappears in the wind.

A hollow-eyed man with disheveled black hair leans against an empty cart, playing around with his rifle.

At the edge of the path, something white flashes out from behind a small shrub.

The path to the east leads back to town.

> smell

It smells slightly of smoke.

> examine hill chain

The range of hills stretches from north-east to south.

> examine mine

Apart from a few empty carts and some torches, you can't see much at the entrance to the mine.

> examine smoke

Black smoke is constantly billowing out of the mine. Perhaps caused by the torches burning down there, or by other mining work.

> examine man

As you get closer, the man points his rifle at you.

"Get the hell out of here, quickly!"

You raise your hands apologetically and back off.

> talk to man

As you get closer, the man points his rifle at you.

"Are you deaf idiot? Get lost!"

You raise your hands apologetically and back off.

> shoot man

You can't just shoot him in the face. First of all that's not very nice and second it would probably bring other similarly bad-tempered characters onto the scene.

Maybe there's another way into the mine.

> examine shrub

A handkerchief lies next to the bush, half covered in sand.

> take hankie

You put the hankie in your pocket.

> examine hankie

A somewhat crumpled, white handkerchief made of fine fabric. The initials LT have been carefully embroidered on one corner.

> smell hankie

It smells of lavender and bitter tears.

> e

#### Ranch

A small wooden hut with an adjoining stable and a large fenced-in paddock. There is a small bench in front of the house.

A narrow path leads south to the wind pump. The main road leads further out of town from the east to the west.

> e

#### Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> nw

(first opening the door to the sheriff's office)

#### Sheriff's Office

This is Sheriff Dunder's office. Two plank beds are attached to the wall.

On the opposite side is a massive desk with Sheriff Dunder sitting behind it. He has pulled his hat half over his face and seems to be dozing off. A passageway apparently leads deeper into the house. The door to the sheriff's office in the southeast leads outside.

> talk to Sheriff

What would you like to say to Sheriff Dunder?

[1] "I think I've found Lucy's handkerchief!"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["I think I've found Lucy's handkerchief!"]

"Exciting story, boy." He looks at you disdainfully.

"Come back when you've found her and try not to get on my nerves any more."

[0] End conversation

> 0

#### Sheriff's Office

This is Sheriff Dunder's office. Two plank beds are attached to the wall.

On the opposite side is a massive desk with Sheriff Dunder sitting behind it. He has pulled his hat half over his face and seems to be dozing off. A passageway apparently leads deeper into the house. The door to the sheriff's office in the southeast leads outside.

> out

#### Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> s

Saloon

The saloon consists of a few round tables with chairs and a small stage. Next to it, a staircase leads up to your room. On the other side is a long counter. Two massive beams run under the ceiling. The swing doors to the north lead outside.

Ella is behind the counter, blowing her nose into her kitchen towel. She looks up.

"Don't you want your cookie?"

> examine counter

The bar counter has a few dark spots and minor carving marks from bored guests, but overall, it looks quite clean.

On the counter are a cookie and a coffee cup.

> examine cookie

It's a cookie.

> take cookie

You wrap the cookie carefully.

> eat cookie

You'd better save that for later.

> talk to woman

What would you like to say to Ella?

[1] "Have you seen Lucy?"

[2] "I think I've found Lucy's hankie."

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Have you seen Lucy?"]

"Lucy? Why?"

You briefly tell Ella what happened.

"Bloody hell. I last saw Lucy a few days ago, but Michael was here yesterday. I saw him whispering with a few people, then I don't remember. He probably left before the brawl, that's not his thing."

[1] "I think I've found Lucy's hankie."

[0] End conversation

> 1

["I think I've found Lucy's hankie."]

You show the handkerchief with the monogram to Ella.

"Yes, that must be hers. Where did you find this?"

[1] "Close to the mine entrance west of here."

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Close to the mine entrance west of here."]

Ella's face darkens.

"I don't like all this at all. She would never go into the mine voluntarily, she's been afraid of it ever since she was a child."

She takes a nervous drag on her cigarette and looks you firmly in the eye.

"Tom, you have to go in there. I think the entrance is too well guarded. There used to be a tunnel to the south, but it was buried by a pile of rubble a few years ago."

[0] End conversation

> 0

Saloon

The saloon consists of a few round tables with chairs and a small stage. Next to it, a staircase leads up to your room. On the other side is a long counter. Two massive beams run under the ceiling. The swing doors to the north lead outside.

Ella is behind the counter, scratching her chin.

> n

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

A cat trots past you at a leisurely pace, gives you a tired look and disappears into the shadows between the houses.

> ne

Barber Shop

You briefly nudge the red, white and blue pole next to the entrance door and enter the store. You are pleasantly surprised at how bright and clean it is here.

An expansive tilt chair made of red leather is resplendent in front of a large mirror attached to the wall. Small bottles, cans and other novelties are scattered around on various tables and shelves.

The parrot sits on a perch and wobbles its head. The barber stands behind the armchair sharpening his scissors.

> smell

It smells pretty good here. Somewhat fresh.

> examine novelties

You're not interested in all this hairdressing stuff.

> examine tilt chair

A large armchair in red leather that can be adjusted in height.

> pull tilt chair

The barber probably doesn't like it when you fiddle around with his armchair, and unfortunately you don't have time to enjoy any of his services.

> examine mirror

You could do with a shave. And a haircut. And taking a bath.

> examine parrot

A beautiful parrot is tripping up and down on its perch peacefully.

> talk to parrot

"Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep and doesn't know where to find it. Braaak!"

> talk to parrot

"I shot an arrow as a test, a hundred paces shot it west. Braaaak!"

> examine barber

The barber is a stocky man with thick upper arms and a well-groomed black beard. He is wearing a striped vest and short linen pants.

> talk to barber

The barber takes a small step towards you and gives you a friendly grin.

"Moin Mister! My name is Marten, what can I do for you today? Trim your beard, cut your hair, treat a bullet wound?"

What would you like to say to Marten?

- [1] "Moin? Is that French or something?"
- [2] "Gunshot wound? I thought you were a barber."
- [3] "Any idea how to get into the mine?"
- [0] End conversation

> 1

["Moin? Is that French or something?"]

Marten laughs heartily and holds his belly.

"Excuse me mister, I can't quite break that habit. I am Frisian."

- [1] "What brought you here?"
- [2] "Gunshot wound? I thought you were a barber."
- [3] "Any idea how to get into the mine?"
- [0] End conversation

> 1

["What brought you here?"]

"I came here over ten years ago on a clipper, was first mate. Actually wanted to go gold prospecting with Molly, but then the war took us elsewhere."

[1] "Gunshot wound? I thought you were a barber."  
[2] "So Molly is your wife?"  
[3] "Any idea how to get into the mine?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Gunshot wound? I thought you were a barber."]

Marten laughs boomingly.

"As a barber on the high seas, it's always useful to know a bit about treating wounds. Besides, there's no doctor here anymore."

He pulls a small pipe out of his pocket and puffs some tobacco into it with a practiced movement.

"And before you ask, I'm also the gravedigger here. Fortunately, I haven't had much work like that since the war."

[1] "So Molly is your wife?"  
[2] "Any idea how to get into the mine?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["So Molly is your wife?"]

"My wife? Haa-ha-ha!"

Marten can barely contain himself and slaps his thighs.

"Molly is my bird young lad! We've experienced a lot together at sea. She was there as a fire watcher, she goes off like an alarm at the slightest bit of smoke."

[1] "Why was Molly at sea with you again?"  
[2] "Any idea how to get into the mine?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Why was Molly at sea with you again?"]

"She was our fire watcher, goes off like an alarm at the slightest bit of smoke."

[1] "Why was Molly at sea with you again?"  
[2] "Any idea how to get into the mine?"  
[0] End conversation

> 2

["Any idea how to get into the mine?"]

"The mine? Why would you want to go in there?"

You tell Marten what's going on. For the first time, he makes a serious face.

"Aah. That's bad news. Don't think you'll get in through the front, not with those boys there. Maybe there's another way in."

[1] "Why was Molly at sea with you again?"  
[2] "May I borrow Molly for a little while?"  
[0] End conversation

> 0

Barber Shop

An expansive tilt chair made of red leather is resplendent in front of a large mirror attached to the wall. Small bottles, cans and other novelties are scattered around on various tables and shelves.

The parrot sits on a perch and wobbles its head. Marten stands behind the armchair sorting some tins.

> take Molly

Marten gives you a suspicious look. You leave it alone for now.

> give cookie to Molly

Molly greedily grabs the cookie and munches it down in no time at all.

> take Molly

You hold your outstretched arm out to Molly. She trundles towards you, looks briefly at Marten and then hops back onto her perch.

> talk to Marten

What would you like to say to Marten?

[1] "Why was Molly at sea with you again?"  
[2] "May I borrow Molly for a little while?"  
[0] End conversation

> 2

["May I borrow Molly for a little while?"]

"What, you wanna take my bird with you? Because of Lucy?"

Marten scratches thoughtfully at the tattooed anchor on his upper right arm.

"Well, if she goes with you voluntarily, that's fine with me. She'll run off when things get dicey. But please take good care of her!"

[1] "Why was Molly at sea with you again?"  
[0] End conversation

> 0

Barber Shop

An expansive tilt chair made of red leather is resplendent in front of a large mirror attached to the wall. Small bottles, cans and other novelties are scattered around on various tables and shelves.

The parrot sits on a perch and wobbles its head. Marten stands behind the armchair sharpening his scissors.

> take Molly

You hold your outstretched arm out to Molly. She looks briefly at Marten, who nods approvingly, then hops along on your arm and makes herself comfortable on your left shoulder.

"BRAAAK!"

> out

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> w

Ranch

A small wooden hut with an adjoining stable and a large fenced-in paddock. There is a small bench in front of the house.

A narrow path leads south to the wind pump. The main road leads further out of town from the east to the west.

Something whizzes past your head and lands in the paddock in front of you. A little boy sprints up and jumps over the fence.

Shortly afterwards he reappears with a ball of cloth under his arm and runs off. "You didn't see nothin', mister!"

> s

Wind Pump

After a few yards you arrive at the wind pump that you could see through the window of your room.

The windmill is mounted at a height of around fifteen yards on a lattice mast made of long metal rods. It squeaks terribly with every rotation. A metal tail vane automatically points the rotor blades in the direction of the wind.

The path leads back to the ranch in the north and towards the hill chain in the west.

> smell

You don't smell anything special. The squeaking wheel takes over your senses.

> examine windpump

The windmill turns slightly in the wind and squeaks heartbreakingly.

> examine mast

The lattice mast consists of welded metal rods. One of the rods near the ground seems to have come loose.

> climb mast

You're a bit afraid of heights, and there's nothing up there that you need.

> w

#### Hill Chain

After a few minutes' walk, you find yourself at the bottom of a low hill chain.

A large boulder field of larger and smaller rocks stretches hundreds of yards across. The hills seem to offer good protection from the wind as it is almost windless here.

The path in the east leads back to the wind pump of the town.

Molly paces restlessly up and down on your shoulder.

> smell

It smells slightly of smoke.

> examine boulder field

You walk up and down the boulder field when Molly suddenly starts flapping excitedly and hops off your shoulder onto one of the boulders.

"Braak! BRAAAAK! FIREEEEE!"

> look

#### Hill Chain

A large boulder field of larger and smaller rocks stretches hundreds of yards across. The hills seem to offer good protection from the wind as it is almost windless here.

The path in the east leads back to the wind pump of the town.

Molly sits on a boulder and flutters her wings excitedly.

> examine boulder

Molly sits on the boulder and flutters excitedly. As you examine the boulder more closely, you recognize what appears to be a larger cavity behind a thumb wide crevice.

> examine crevice

There seems to be a larger cavity behind the thumb wide crevice. You hold your hand inside and feel a faint draught.

> e

#### Wind Pump

The windmill is mounted at a height of around fifteen yards on a lattice mast made of long metal rods. It squeaks terribly with every rotation. A metal tail vane automatically points the rotor blades in the direction of the wind.

The path leads back to the ranch in the north and towards the hill chain in the west.

> n

#### Ranch

A small wooden hut with an adjoining stable and a large fenced-in paddock. There is a small bench in front of the house.

A narrow path leads south to the wind pump. The main road leads further out of town from the east to the west.

> e

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> n

(first opening the store door)

General Store

A small bell jingles brightly as you enter the store. The area for customers is so small that two people can barely turn around at the same time.

The shopkeeper Bill appears in the doorway behind the counter, croaks a quiet "morning" and gives you a wry smile.

You're standing in front of the counter. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> examine bell

A small bell on the store door, probably made of brass.

> examine counter

A wide wooden counter with a flap as a passageway.

> examine shelves

The large wall shelves are pretty empty. A few cardboard boxes, tins, small canvas bags and large brown bottles apparently contain flour, sugar, beans and a few other things that you can't identify more precisely from the scrawled labels.

> examine labels

You can't read the labels, but you don't think you will need any of these things.

> examine man

The hunchbacked shopkeeper's name is Bill, at least that's what it says on the sign outside. He is an old man with snow-white, thinning hair and a scarred but friendly-looking face. He wears a stained smock and leans on a walking stick.

> buy tools

Just talk to Bill if you want to buy something. If you need something specific, you'll be able to ask for it.

> talk to Bill

What would you like to say to Bill?

[1] "How's it going?"

[2] "What's for sale here?"  
[3] "Do you happen to know where Lucy is?"  
[4] "Do you have a chisel or something like that?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["How's it going?"]

"Well, it has to, right?"

Bill grins, showing off a yellow incisor in the upper jaw of his otherwise toothless mouth.

"The coach is overdue, and I've got almost nothing left. I hope there was no robbery."

[1] "What's for sale here?"  
[2] "Do you happen to know where Lucy is?"  
[3] "Do you have a chisel or something like that?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["What's for sale here?"]

"Everything you see behind me, you'll have to read it yourself. I won't sell you these red herrings though, they're no good anymore."

[1] "I can't read most of the labels."  
[2] "Do you happen to know where Lucy is?"  
[3] "Do you have a chisel or something like that?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["I can't read most of the labels."]

Bill laughs out loud, croaking, and suffers a small coughing fit. He wipes his mouth on his coat and smiles, looking slightly past you.

"I'm sorry, boy. My wife used to label the goods, but she's no more. Her writing was beautiful."

He grabs his face, lost in thought, shakes his head briefly and looks at you.

"Just ask me if you want something specific, I'll probably remember where it is. I keep tools and stuff in the back anyway."

[1] "Do you happen to know where Lucy is?"  
[2] "Do you have a chisel or something like that?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Do you happen to know where Lucy is?"]

Bill squints his eyes suspiciously.

"Lucy is a fine girl, what's your business with her?"

[1] "Lucy has gone missing."  
[2] "Do you have a chisel or something like that?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Lucy has gone missing."]

You tell Bill what happened. He seems moved.

"Oh boy. I don't know where she might be, maybe with her lad? Anyway, she hasn't been in the store for a few days, and I can't really see much through these dirty windows. I'm sorry."

[1] "Do you have a chisel or something like that?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Do you have a chisel or something like that?"]

Bill blinks at you. "A chisel? Nah, I don't have one of those."

He thinks for a moment and smiles. "But I should have a gooseneck somewhere around the back."

[1] "What the heck is a gooseneck?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["What the heck is a gooseneck?"]

The shopkeeper looks at you in amazement and then laughs croakily. "Where do you come from, boy? A crowbar! Hold on, I'll go and get it."

He disappears through the passageway in the back. A couple of minutes and a few dubious noises and expletives later, he steps back up to the counter, his sparse hair full of cobwebs.

"Sorry boy, I can't find it. I just can't see well enough without my pince-nez."

[1] "Can I have a look maybe?"  
[2] "Where are your pince-nez?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Can I have a look maybe?"]

Bill backs away and squints his eyes.

"And then you knock me out back there? Nah nah, you stay right here in the front boy!"

[1] "Where are your pince-nez?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Where are your pince-nez?"]

Bill looks through the stained windows, lost in thought. "I don't know."

He raps his knuckles on the counter. "I must have still had them when I went over to my wife's grave this morning. I couldn't see ten feet in this sandstorm without them."

[1] "Where are your pince-nez?"  
[0] End conversation

> 0

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill coughing croakily. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> out

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> e

Gallows

As you pass the last building, the wind hits you hard from the side. You pull your scarf over your nose and continue walking slowly. After a few more steps, you can gradually make out a kind of scaffolding in the cloud of dust in front of you.

You are standing in front of a gallows consisting of two posts with crossbars and a noose. A wooden platform serves as a foundation.

Further north you think you can recognize some leaning crosses. Heading west, you can return to town.

> smell

The wind here is too piercing to smell anything.

> examine gallows

The gallows consist of two thick posts with crossbars and a rope. The noose is severed.

> examine noose

A thick rope, tied into a noose and cut at the lower end. The gallows were probably decommissioned after the war.

> take noose

Even if you could unknot the noose, the rope would be of no use to you in this form.

> examine crosses

Several crosses, some of them crooked. From a distance you can't make out any details.

> examine town

A couple of inconspicuous houses in the west.

> examine platform

A wooden platform, apparently hastily put together, forms the foundation of the gallows. It is almost completely covered with sand.

> look under platform

The platform is completely closed off with thick wooden beams.

> n

Cemetery

You walk a few steps further towards the crosses. Half-height bushes protect the gravesites and their visitors from the wind.

Several crooked crosses stand carelessly crammed next to each other on a small hill, none of them inscribed. Possibly the final resting place of deserters.

Further ahead, four crosses stand neatly lined up next to each other, each at the head of a grave thoroughly edged with stones.

In the south you can see the outline of the gallows.

> examine bushes

Small bushes enclose the cemetery and offer some protection from the piercing wind.

> smell

The bushes, hot from the sun, exude a slightly sweet scent.

> examine crosses

Which of the crosses would you like to read?

- [1] First cross
- [2] Second cross
- [3] Third cross
- [4] Fourth cross
- [0] End

> 1

[First cross]

"Biff Clayton"  
"1837-1868"

- [1] First cross
- [2] Second cross
- [3] Third cross
- [4] Fourth cross
- [0] End

> 2

[Second cross]

"Mathilda Brooks, née Walker"  
"1808-1869"

[1] First cross  
[2] Second cross  
[3] Third cross  
[4] Fourth cross  
[0] End

> 3

[Third cross]

"Wendy Porter"  
"1816-1875"

[1] First cross  
[2] Second cross  
[3] Third cross  
[4] Fourth cross  
[0] End

> 4

[Fourth cross]

"Lucille Thompson, née Powell"  
"1845-1878"

[1] First cross  
[2] Second cross  
[3] Third cross  
[4] Fourth cross  
[0] End

> 0

Cemetery

Several crooked crosses stand carelessly crammed next to each other on a small hill, none of them inscribed. Possibly the final resting place of deserters.

Further ahead, four crosses stand neatly lined up next to each other, each at the head of a grave thoroughly edged with stones.

In the south you can see the outline of the gallows.

A gecko sits rigidly on one of the grave crosses basking in the sun. As you reach out for it, it disappears into the bushes in a flash.

> s

Gallows

You are standing in front of a gallows consisting of two posts with crossbars and a noose. A wooden platform serves as a foundation.

Further north you think you can recognize some leaning crosses. Heading west, you can return to town.

> w

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

A vulture sits on the roof gable in front of you and looks at you suspiciously before flying away.

> n

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill scratching his chin. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> talk to Bill

What would you like to say to Bill?

[1] "Um, what is your wife's name?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Um, what is your wife's name?"]

"Her name was Mathilda."

He pulls up his nose and rubs his eye. "Called her Hilda most of the time."

[0] End conversation

> 0

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill coughing croakily. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> out

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> e

Gallows

You are standing in front of a gallows consisting of two posts with crossbars and a noose. A wooden platform serves as a foundation.

Further north you think you can recognize some leaning crosses. Heading west, you can return to town.

"Looking for your friends, eh? We don't want to see the likes of you around here anymore!"

You look around, puzzled, and see an elderly woman disappear into one of the houses, poking the air wildly with her walking stick.

> n

Cemetery

Several crooked crosses stand carelessly crammed next to each other on a small hill, none of them inscribed. Possibly the final resting place of deserters.

Further ahead, four crosses stand neatly lined up next to each other, each at the head of a grave thoroughly edged with stones.

In the south you can see the outline of the gallows.

> examine crosses

Which of the crosses would you like to read?

- [1] First cross
- [2] Second cross
- [3] Third cross
- [4] Fourth cross
- [0] End

> 1

[First cross]

"Biff Clayton"  
"1837-1868"

- [1] First cross
- [2] Second cross
- [3] Third cross
- [4] Fourth cross
- [0] End

> 2

[Second cross]

"Mathilda Brooks, née Walker"  
"1808-1869"

This is probably the grave of Bill's wife.

- [1] First cross
- [2] Second cross
- [3] Third cross
- [4] Fourth cross
- [0] End

> 0

Cemetery

Several crooked crosses stand carelessly crammed next to each other on a small hill, none of them inscribed. Possibly the final resting place of deserters.

Further ahead, four crosses stand neatly lined up next to each other, each at the head of a grave thoroughly edged with stones.

In the south you can see the outline of the gallows.

> examine graves

Which of the graves would you like to examine?

- [1] First grave
- [2] Second grave
- [3] Third grave
- [4] Fourth grave
- [0] End

> 2

[Second grave]

You carefully run your fingers through the fine sand on the grave until your fingers feel something.

There they are, Bill's pince-nez!

You gently blow the sand off the lenses and pocket them.

- [1] First grave
- [2] Second grave
- [3] Third grave
- [4] Fourth grave
- [0] End

> 0

Cemetery

Several crooked crosses stand carelessly crammed next to each other on a small hill, none of them inscribed. Possibly the final resting place of deserters.

Further ahead, four crosses stand neatly lined up next to each other, each at the head of a grave thoroughly edged with stones.

In the south you can see the outline of the gallows.

> run to Bill

A short time later...

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill leaning on his walking stick. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> talk to Bill

What would you like to say to Bill?

- [1] "I believe I've found your pince-nez."
- [0] End conversation

> 1

["I believe I've found your pince-nez."]

You gently place the pince-nez on the counter. Bill's face brightens and he looks at you gratefully.

"There they are! Thank you very much, my boy! Without them, I'd be pretty screwed in the long run."

[1] "Could you have another look for that crowbar now?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Could you have another look for that crowbar now?"]

"Of course! I'll be back in a minute."

A seemingly endless minute later, Bill reappears in the doorway and slams the crowbar down on the counter in front of you.

"It's normally eight bucks, but if you don't need it forever, I'll lend it to you, you seem like an honest guy."

[0] End conversation

> 0

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill scratching his chin. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

There is a crowbar on the counter. The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> take crowbar

Taken.

> examine crowbar

A crowbar made of steel, about two feet long. Both sides are slotted, and one side is bent.

> s

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> w

Ranch

A small wooden hut with an adjoining stable and a large fenced-in paddock. There is a small bench in front of the house.

A narrow path leads south to the wind pump. The main road leads further out of town from the east to the west.

> s

Wind Pump

The windmill is mounted at a height of around fifteen yards on a lattice mast made of long metal rods. It squeaks terribly with every rotation. A metal tail vane automatically points the rotor blades in the direction of the wind.

The path leads back to the ranch in the north and towards the hill chain in the west.

Two coyotes sneak up to within a few yards of you. You pick up a stone and throw it roughly in their direction, causing them to howl and run away.

> w

Hill Chain

A large boulder field of larger and smaller rocks stretches hundreds of yards across. The hills seem to offer good protection from the wind as it is almost windless here.

The path in the east leads back to the wind pump of the town.

Molly sits on a boulder and flutters her wings excitedly.

> use crowbar with crevice

You push the flat, straight end of the crowbar into the gap and hammer on the curved end with a flat stone.

You knock and pry for a while until a flat, hand-width piece of rock finally breaks off the boulder. The gap is now much wider.

You put the crowbar back in.

> run to Bill

A few minutes later...

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill coughing croakily. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> talk to Bill

What would you like to say to Bill?

[1] "I could use a long pole or something."

[0] End conversation

> 1

["I could use a long pole or something."]

Bill looks at you, puzzled. "Do I look like a builders' merchant? I don't have anything like that."

He closes his eyes as if to think, but then shakes his head in annoyance. "The squeaking of that damn windmill is driving me crazy, I'm telling you."

[1] "I could use a long pole or something."

[0] End conversation

> 0

#### General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill rubbing his eyes. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> run to windpump

A few steps later...

#### Wind Pump

The windmill is mounted at a height of around fifteen yards on a lattice mast made of long metal rods. It squeaks terribly with every rotation. A metal tail vane automatically points the rotor blades in the direction of the wind.

The path leads back to the ranch in the north and towards the hill chain in the west.

> examine mast

The lattice mast consists of welded metal rods. One of the rods near the ground seems to have come loose.

> take rod

You lever the rod back and forth until the remaining weld seam detaches from the lattice mast. It is so long and heavy that you have to carry it with both hands.

> examine rod

A solid metal rod, about ten feet long with a diameter of about two inches.

> w

#### Hill Chain

A large boulder field of larger and smaller rocks stretches hundreds of yards across. The hills seem to offer good protection from the wind as it is almost windless here.

The path in the east leads back to the wind pump of the town.

Molly sits on a boulder and flutters her wings excitedly.

> use rod on crevice

You slowly push the long metal rod into the gap. It fits perfectly!

You grab the rod with both hands at the free end and push it hard towards the mountain. The boulder seems to move slightly. "BRAAAK!" Molly croaks excitedly and settles on your shoulder.

You look around again - there doesn't seem to be anyone within earshot. You brace yourself against the rod again with all your weight, and lo and behold - the boulder comes loose!

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR...

~~~

You haven't been here at the pier for ages. As always, she wanted to save the money for later, but today you really wanted to go to the sea with her.

"With or without the hat, what do you think?"

Claire is sitting on a stool, laughing and holding the hat flapping wildly in the wind. You gave the artist two dollars, hopefully it'll be a nice picture. His piece of charcoal flits across the paper hastily and with skilled strokes.

Seagulls circle at the end of the pier and screech loudly as a little boy tries to catch them. She turns her head and smiles at you. You clench your fist in your pocket, clutching the ring tightly.

Where are you, Claire?

~~~

You open your eyes.

It seems like you hit your head (again), this time probably when you tried to jump to safety from the rolling boulder it seems. At least that seems to have worked.

You slowly pick yourself up and pat the dust off your shoulders. What a shitty day.

> take rod

The long metal rod is bent and even more unwieldy than before. You no longer want to carry it around with you.

> n

Cave

You squeeze through the narrow gap. After a few small steps, you can stand comfortably and move freely.

The air is pleasantly cool and damp, and it slightly smells of smoke. It's so dark that you can hardly see your own feet.

To the south, pale light filters through the long, narrow cave entrance.

> smell

It smells slightly of smoke and damp stone. And somehow slightly sweet, a smell you've never smelled before.

> e

You carefully feel the wall. This is as far as it goes.

> w

You carefully feel the wall. This is as far as it goes.

> n

You feel your way forward carefully...

Ouch! You hit your shin on a big rock or something.

It really is too dark in here to go any further, you could seriously hurt yourself.

> examine rock

The pointed rock feels damp and smooth.

> s

Hill Chain

A large boulder field of larger and smaller rocks stretches hundreds of yards across. The hills seem to offer good protection from the wind as it is almost windless here.

To the north, a narrow passage about shoulder-high can be seen between the stones, with a bent metal rod lying next to it. A few yards off is the boulder that previously closed off the tunnel entrance.

The path in the east leads back to the wind pump of the town.

> e

Wind Pump

The windmill is mounted at a height of around fifteen yards on a lattice mast made of long metal rods. It squeaks terribly with every rotation. A metal tail vane automatically points the rotor blades in the direction of the wind.

The path leads back to the ranch in the north and towards the hill chain in the west.

> n

Ranch

A small wooden hut with an adjoining stable and a large fenced-in paddock. There is a small bench in front of the house.

A narrow path leads south to the wind pump. The main road leads further out of town from the east to the west.

You hear the soft rattle of a rattlesnake. As you step next to the house with your revolver drawn, it quickly disappears into the steppe.

> e

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> s

Saloon

The saloon consists of a few round tables with chairs and a small stage. Next to it, a staircase leads up to your room. On the other side is a long counter. Two massive beams run under the ceiling. The swing doors to the north lead outside.

Ella is behind the counter, wiping the counter with a bored expression.

> examine ceiling

Massive wooden beams support the ceiling of the large room. A long nail is hammered into one of the beams with a kerosene lamp dangling from it.

> examine lamp

A large kerosene lamp with a handle. It is not lit.

> take lamp

You can't quite reach it like this, the lamp is hanging a little too high.

> use crowbar on lamp

You try to fumble down the lamp with the crowbar, but you don't succeed. There must be an easier way.

> pull chair

You place one of the chairs under the ceiling beam with the lantern.

> take lamp

Ella raises an eyebrow. "What do you think you're doing there?"

> talk to woman

What would you like to say to Ella?

[1] "Can I borrow that lamp?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Can I borrow that lamp?"]

You briefly tell Ella about the tunnel entrance that you have uncovered. She smiles and nods.

"You're welcome to take the lamp with you, but I need it back by tonight!"

[0] End conversation

> 0

Saloon

The saloon consists of a few round tables with chairs and a small stage. Next to it, a staircase leads up to your room. On the other side is a long counter. Two massive beams run under the ceiling. The swing doors to the north lead outside.

Ella is behind the counter, polishing glasses with a moderately clean-looking cloth.

> use chair

You climb onto the chair under the beam.

Saloon (on the chair)

The saloon consists of a few round tables with chairs and a small stage. Next to it, a staircase leads up to your room. On the other side is a long counter. Two massive beams run under the ceiling. The swing doors to the north lead outside.

Ella is behind the counter, blowing her nose into her kitchen towel.

> take lamp

You take the lamp off the nail.

> examine lamp

A large, filled kerosene lamp with a handle. It is not lit.

> turn on lamp

You have nothing to light the lamp.

> talk to woman

If you're not about to give a speech, you might want to get off the chair first.

> 1

I didn't understand that sentence.

> 0

I didn't understand that sentence.

> n

(first getting off the chair)

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

A window shutter flies open with a loud bang and a blanket is vigorously shaken out by two thick arms. It disappears in an impressive dust cloud and the window is slammed shut again with a crash.

> n

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill leaning on his walking stick. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> talk to Bill

What would you like to say to Bill?

[1] "Do you sell matches?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Do you sell matches?"]

Bill's face brightens. "Of course I do! The good old ones without that security bullshit, you can light them anywhere."

He puts a small brown paper bag on the table. "That'll be a dollar."

You put a crumpled dollar bill on the counter. Bill pockets it.

[0] End conversation

> 0

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill coughing croakily. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

There is a small brown envelope with matches on the counter. The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> take matches

Taken.

> examine matches

A considerable number of matches in a brown paper envelope.

> use matches on lamp

You take one of the matches and swipe it over your ragged thumbnail, then gently holding it to the wick of the lamp. A cozy light spreads out.

> run to cave

A bit later...

Cave

The air is pleasantly cool and damp, and it slightly smells of smoke. A large, pointed boulder marks the edge of a precipice to the north.

To the south, pale light filters through the long, narrow cave entrance.

> n

The precipice is far too steep to climb down safely without gear.

> examine precipice

Even with the light from the lamp, you can't see the bottom. It's definitely too deep to jump.

> down

The precipice is far too steep to climb down safely without gear.

> run to Bill

A few minutes later...

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill scratching his chin. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> talk to Bill

What would you like to say to Bill?

[1] "I have to climb down somewhere, do you have anything for me?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["I have to climb down somewhere, do you have anything for me?"]

The old man scratches his chin thoughtfully and looks out of the window.

"I had about fifty feet of a nice thick rope. Two young soldiers came by and said they only needed like twenty feet of it."

His eyes flash as a broad grin spreads across his face.

"Told them I had nothing to cut it, so they bought the whole thing."

[1] "What did they need the rope for?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["What did they need the rope for?"]

"They were in a hurry building a gallows to hang a few deserters outside the city."

Bill squints his eyes and draws in his breath. The memory seems unpleasant to him.

"The whole village should be watching. As soon as it was done, the soldiers left again, and Marten was told to take care of the bodies."

He rubs his nose briefly and looks directly at you. "Now that I think of it, they didn't seem to have the rest of the rope with them. I wouldn't be surprised if it's still out there somewhere."

[0] End conversation

> 0

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill leaning on his walking stick. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> s

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> ne

Barber Shop

An expansive tilt chair made of red leather is resplendent in front of a large mirror attached to the wall. Small bottles, cans and other novelties are scattered around on various tables and shelves.

The parrot sits on a perch and wobbles its head. Marten stands behind the armchair sorting some tins.

> talk to Marten

What would you like to say to Marten?

[1] "Were you there when the gallows were built?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Were you there when the gallows were built?"]

Marten flinches and looks at you suspiciously.

"No, I wasn't. Unfortunately, I was there when they were inaugurated, and I also was allowed to work for two days straight afterwards until everyone was buried. Why do you ask?"

[1] "Bill said there must have been a lot of rope left over, do you know where that went?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Bill said there must have been a lot of rope left over, do you know where that went?"]

"Yes, of course lad. After all, I was ordered to clean up the mess."

He shakes his head and clears his throat.

"The soldiers gave me a bit of money and told me to put all the rest of the stuff in the hatch and nail it up tight, cut the noose and bury the bodies. It was a ridiculous wage for all the work, but saying no certainly wouldn't have been a good idea."

[0] End conversation

> 0

Barber Shop

An expansive tilt chair made of red leather is resplendent in front of a large mirror attached to the wall. Small bottles, cans and other novelties are scattered around on various tables and shelves.

The parrot sits on a perch and wobbles its head. Marten stands behind the armchair checking his razor blade.

> out

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> e

Gallows

You are standing in front of a gallows consisting of two posts with crossbars and a noose. A wooden platform serves as a foundation.

Further north you think you can recognize some leaning crosses. Heading west, you can return to town.

> examine platform

A wooden platform, apparently hastily put together, forms the foundation of the gallows. It is almost completely covered with sand.

> examine sand

The sand forms a small dune and comes up to your knee at the highest point. There is practically nothing left to see of the base of the platform.

> take sand

You try to scrape the sand away with your feet, but in this wind that seems to be a pointless endeavor. Perhaps you would have more success with proper tools.

> w

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> n

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill scratching his chin. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> talk to Bill

What would you like to say to Bill?

[1] "Do you have a shovel for me?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Do you have a shovel for me?"]

"No, unfortunately I don't have any more. I sold my last one to Marten."

[0] End conversation

> 0

General Store

You're standing in front of the counter, behind it is Bill leaning on his walking stick. Apart from the open wall shelves behind Bill, the store is quite empty.

The door to the south leads out onto the road.

> s

Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> ne

Barber Shop

An expansive tilt chair made of red leather is resplendent in front of a large mirror attached to the wall. Small bottles, cans and other novelties are scattered around on various tables and shelves.

The parrot sits on a perch and wobbles its head. Marten stands behind the armchair popping his nose.

> talk to Marten

What would you like to say to Marten?

[1] "You must have a shovel, right?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["You must have a shovel, right?"]

Marten laughs boomingly and blinks at you.

"You think I dig the graves here with my hands or what? Of course I have a shovel! I just got a new one a few days ago from Bill, the old cheapskate!"

[1] "May I borrow your shovel? It is really important."

[0] End conversation

> 1

["May I borrow your shovel? It is really important."]

"Is this for the Lucy thing?", Marten asks. You nod. He tilts his head and strokes his beard. "Well okay then, I'll go get it for you."

He briefly disappears in the back of the store and reappears shortly afterwards with a large sturdy-looking shovel in his hand.

"It's a bit muddy, so clean it up if it bothers you. And make sure I'll see it again!"

You thank him and take the shovel.

[0] End conversation

> 0

Barber Shop

An expansive tilt chair made of red leather is resplendent in front of a large mirror attached to the wall. Small bottles, cans and other novelties are scattered around on various tables and shelves.

The parrot sits on a perch and wobbles its head. Marten stands behind the armchair checking his razor blade.

> out

## Main Street

The wide, dusty road runs from east to west. The sheriff's office is to the northwest, the general store lies to the north and the barber shop to the northeast. The saloon lies to the south.

> e

## Gallows

You are standing in front of a gallows consisting of two posts with crossbars and a noose. A wooden platform serves as a foundation.

Further north you think you can recognize some leaning crosses. Heading west, you can return to town.

> dig sand with shovel

Piece by piece, you free the platform from the large pile of sand, while the wind whips relentlessly in your face.

Directly under the gallows, a sturdy wooden board becomes visible, which has been carefully nailed to the pedestal with a lot of large nails.

> examine plate

A large wooden plate was nailed to the platform directly under the gallows.

> use crowbar on plate

You pry one nail after another out of the platform, not without regularly swearing and asking yourself out loud what the hell you're doing here.

About half an hour and a broken fingernail later, you have successfully removed all the nails. Drenched in sweat, you push the wooden panel aside to reveal a square, dark opening.

> examine opening

You shine your lamp into the opening. A few mice take flight, squeaking.

In the pale light of the lamp, you can make out a few bent nails, some boards covered in cobwebs and a coiled rope.

> examine rope

(the rope)

A long, thick rope, at least ten yards long.

> take rope

(the rope)

You throw the coiled rope over your shoulder. Quite heavy.

> run to cave

Shortly afterwards...

## Cave

The air is pleasantly cool and damp, and it slightly smells of smoke. A large, pointed boulder marks the edge of a precipice to the north.

To the south, pale light filters through the long, narrow cave entrance.

> use rope on precipice

Simply throwing the rope into the abyss will probably not help.

> tie rope to rock

You tie the rope around the rock and secure it with a proper knot.

> down

You take the handle of the kerosene lamp between your teeth and grasp the rope with both hands.

With your feet braced against the rock face, you slowly rappel down into the dark abyss.

~~~

Vault

After what feels like an eternity, your feet finally feel solid ground again. Sweat runs down your back as you turn away from the wall. Your strained panting paints small clouds of steam into the glow of your lantern.

A deep rumble, apparently not far away, makes you fall silent in a flash. Carefully, you follow the dim light of the curved tunnel ahead of you.

As the passage widens and becomes brighter, you can hear voices more and more clearly. Carefully, you take cover behind a waist-high stone ledge from which you can see the large vault below you, illuminated by countless torches.

~~~

About a dozen men seem to be working at various stations some distance away. Some are stirring in large, fired steel kettles, others are handling large vats covered with cloth, while others seem to be rolling something flat and forming it into balls. It smells bad and sweet at the same time, making you feel a bit dizzy.

Just a few yards away from you is a large rock alcove. A young couple crouches on the ground behind the bars, sometimes whispering to each other. That's Lucy! Then the young man must be Michael.

In front of it, a grumpy-looking fellow sits on a flattened stone, his arms resting on his thighs and a pistol in his right hand.

> smell

Smoke and various vapors mix here in an unpleasant way to create a sweet, slightly stagnant smell. You feel slightly foggy.

> examine vet

You can't see any such thing.

> examine guard

The man looks glumly at the ground in front of him and scratches his feet in the sand. Occasionally he glances at the young couple in the makeshift cage or lets his gaze wander in your direction, but you are obviously unrecognizable in the semi-darkness behind the rocky ledge.

> examine niche

Just a few yards away from you is a large rock alcove. A young couple crouches on the ground behind the bars, sometimes whispering to each other. That's Lucy! Then the young man must be Michael.

> examine Michael

The young man repeatedly puts his hand on his companion's arm or strokes her face reassuringly.

> talk to guard

Not a good idea.

> shoot guard

That would cause quite a stir. A more inconspicuous approach would probably make more sense.

> drop hankie

You take the bright white handkerchief and let it slide over the edge of the ledge as the guard briefly looks at the prisoners.

A moment later, the man turns his head back in your direction and frowns in irritation. He stands up, slowly walks towards you and bends down in front of you to grab the hankie.

"Where the hell did that come from?"

> s

You should take care of that guard as soon as possible. Time seems to stand still as you ponder all the potential actions to take.

> hit guard with shovel

POW! You strike the man down with a well-aimed blow with the shovel.

You look around furtively, but none of the workers seem to have heard anything. You quickly put the bright handkerchief back in your pocket.

> talk to guard

He doesn't talk much anymore.

> examine guard

The guard lies face down in the dirt and doesn't move.

> look

Vault

About a dozen men seem to be working at various stations some distance away. Some are stirring in large, fired steel kettles, others are handling large vats covered with cloth, while others seem to be rolling something flat and forming it into balls. It smells bad and sweet at the same time, making you feel a bit dizzy.

Lucy and Michael rattle the bars and gesticulate wildly in your direction. You slowly get the impression that they urgently want to talk to you.

> examine niche

Lucy and Michael rattle the bars and gesticulate wildly in your direction. You slowly get the impression that they urgently want to talk to you.

> up

Are you just going to leave Lucy and Michael here? The guard could be discovered at any time.

> talk to couple

```
[1] "Everything okay with you?"  
[0] End conversation
```

> 1

```
["Everything okay with you?"]
```

Lucy glares at you, her expression a wild mixture of desperation and sheer rage. "Please get us out of here damnit!"

You use your crowbar to pry the bars apart so that they both can just squeeze through.

The young man breathes a sigh of relief and holds out his hand to you. "Thank you very much sir. I am Michael." You shake his hand.

```
[1] "What happened to you?"  
[0] End conversation
```

> 1

"We don't have time for this now!", Lucy hisses excitedly. "They're cooking up some mess here, and my stepfather is in on it!"

Her eyes widen and she hastily pulls you both back into the niche. "Watch out, they're coming!"

Vault

A very dapper-looking middle-aged man with a cane and bowler hat and a much younger, dirtier and wildly gesticulating fellow stroll in your direction. They stop just a few steps away.

"What else are we supposed to do Ron? They'll start singing as soon as we let them out!"

"That's still Mr. Thompson to you, Cal. I'll talk to Lucy when she's calmed down a bit, then we'll see." Ah, the younger man must be Calvin Mifflin then!

~~~

The young man looks down and shakes his head. "Well, I don't know Ro-- Mr. Thompson. She sounds like a smart mouth to me."

With a quick, almost casual movement, Thompson swings the cane and brings the knob down on the man's left knee with lightning speed. "AAAARGH!" the man cries out in surprise and collapses instantly.

As if nothing had happened, Thompson continues to speak in a consistently sonorous voice. "It's not your place to talk about her like that. If she and her groom don't come to their senses, we will have to find another solution I'm afraid."

Lucy turns crimson red. "YOU GODDAMN---"

~~~

Michael quickly presses a hand over Lucy's mouth, but it's too late. Thompson takes a few steps to the side to look into the alcove. His eyes widen.

"The prisoners are free! Over here, now!"

Several men look up and run down from the cave entrance in your direction, some reaching for their weapons.

> look

Vault

Several men run down from the cave entrance in your direction, some with their weapons drawn. You perceive the situation as if in slow motion. Your right hand twitches slightly.

> e

You raise your arms placatingly and take a step towards the men.

"Guys, this is just a misunderst--"

The noise is deafening as several men open fire on you at the same time. Hit by several bullets, you slump to the ground.

--- WHITE LIGHT ---

~~~

No, that's not what really happened. You think through all the possible courses of action again.

The white fog slowly clears before your eyes. The men are still charging towards you.

> up

You grab Lucy and Michael, pushing them over towards the ledge. Bullets whiz past your heads, and as you turn around, you feel a searing pain in your left shoulder that throws you to the ground.

--- WHITE LIGHT ---

~~~

No, that's not what really happened. In reality of course, you had come up with a much smarter solution.

The white fog slowly clears before your eyes. The men are still charging towards you.

> hit Thompson with shovel

That's not going to work.

> shoot men

You raise your revolver and hit two of the charging men in the chest and stomach before a bullet shreds your knee. You fall to the ground, screaming.

--- WHITE LIGHT ---

~~~

No, that's not what really happened. You did it differently somehow, you're sure of it.

The white fog slowly clears before your eyes. The men are still charging towards you.

> look

Vault

Several men run down from the cave entrance in your direction, some with their weapons drawn. You perceive the situation as if in slow motion. Your right hand twitches slightly.

Everything seems like a blur, but next to the cave entrance a cart loaded with barrels catches your eye.

A large wooden wedge blocks one of the wheels and prevents the cart from rolling away.

> examine cart

A cart with four spoked wheels, loaded with several wooden barrels.

A large wooden wedge under one of the wheels prevents the cart from rolling away.

> shoot cart

You draw the revolver at lightning speed and shoot at the cart.

The cart wobbles slightly but does not tip over.

A rifle butt hits you brutally on the forehead as the men reach and overpower you.

--- WHITE LIGHT ---

~~~

No, that's not what really happened. You think through all the possible courses of action again.

Perhaps you should take another look around.

The white fog slowly clears before your eyes. The men are still charging towards you.

> look

Vault

Several men run down from the cave entrance in your direction, some with their weapons drawn. You perceive the situation as if in slow motion. Your right hand twitches slightly.

Everything seems like a blur, but next to the cave entrance a cart loaded with barrels catches your eye. A large wooden wedge blocks one of the wheels and prevents the cart from rolling away.

> examine barrels

Several wooden barrels. On one of them you can see the letters NG.

> shoot barrels

You pull up the revolver, aim carefully and shoot at the barrels on the cart.

You believe to see a watery liquid trickling out of one of the barrels just before a powerfully swung bandit fist smashes your nasal bone with full force.

--- WHITE LIGHT ---

~~~

No, that's not what really happened. You did it differently somehow, you're sure of it.

Perhaps you should take another look around.

The white fog slowly clears before your eyes. The men are still charging towards you.

> hit man with crowbar

I think he's had enough for now.

> examine wedge

A large wooden wedge blocks one of the wheels and prevents the cart from rolling away.

> use revolver with wedge

You squint your left eye and carefully aim at the wooden wedge holding the cart in place. You breathe out halfway and pull the trigger.

The shot releases perfectly and sends the wooden wedge flying in a high arc. The cart rumbles loudly through the resulting cloud of dust and rolls straight towards you.

The men pause and turn around, their eyes widening in fear.

"The nitro! GET OUT!"

You turn to Michael and Lucy, who are staring past you with their mouths wide open. You leap onto them and push them to the ground just before the world explodes around you.

--- WHITE LIGHT ---

~~~

Sheriff's Office

You're lying on one of the plank beds in the sheriff's office. Michael and Lucy are sitting in the corner, the young man wearing a slightly bloody bandage around his head. Sheriff Dunder is sitting behind his desk.

> out

You feel dizzy as you try to get up from the plank bed. The sheriff rushes over and puts a friendly but firm hand on your shoulder.

"Slow down, boy. I think there are still a few things to discuss here."

> take draft notice

"I'll give you your papers as soon as you've told me everything."

> talk to Dunder

What would you like to say?

- [1] "What happened?"
- [2] "What were they doing in that cave?"
- [3] "Where is Thompson?"
- [0] End conversation

> 1

["What happened?"]

Dunder stands up and puts a hand on Lucy's shoulder.

"Well, as far as I've understood these two correctly, you saved their lives after a cart of nitro barrels rolled loose in the cave and exploded."

He blinks at you slyly. "What a coincidence, eh?"

- [1] "How's your head, Michael?"
- [2] "What were they doing in that cave?"
- [3] "Where is Thompson?"
- [0] End conversation

> 1

["How's your head, Michael?"]

Michael grabs his head and adjusts his bandage a little.

"Oh, it's all right now. It must have bled a lot when they found us, but Marten looked at it and bandaged it up straight away."

- [1] "How did you end up there anyway?"
- [2] "What were they doing in that cave?"
- [3] "Where is Thompson?"
- [0] End conversation

> 1

["How did you end up there anyway?"]

"I'd heard that things weren't quite right at the mine and that Thompson had a hand in it. So, when Cal and Bob turned up at Ella's that evening and things were getting heated, I thought it would be a good time to check it out."

Michael notices Lucy's reproachful look and raises his arms apologetically. "I wanted to tell you at first, but it could have just been empty talk. After all, it's about your fa-- um, stepfather."

Lucy takes a deep breath, and he continues speaking quickly. "Anyway, unfortunately the mine wasn't as deserted as I thought, I was discovered and locked up."

[1] "What were they doing in that cave?"  
[2] "Where is Thompson?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["What were they doing in that cave?"]

Lucy stands up hastily. Her lower lip is trembling.

"Those crooks made some kind of filth for folks to smoke! And that's after what happened to my mother!"

She struggles to keep her composure and turns to Michael, who takes her in his arms.

[1] "What happened to your mother?"  
[2] "Where is Thompson?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["What happened to your mother?"]

Michael turns to you. "Lucy's mother must have smoked opium and became very ill at some point. Unfortunately, she passed away last year."

Lucy cries. "I never understood exactly what was wrong with her. That asshole! My real father would never have let that happen!"

[1] "Where is Thompson?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Where is Thompson?"]

Dunder sighs and raises his hands.

"Unfortunately, we don't have him yet. Deputy Miller was the first one at the mine entrance after the explosion. A few of the bandits must have made it out coughing and crawling. Marten took care of them."

He sits down next to Lucy. "Most of the others weren't so lucky. Cal Mifflin is dead, we've got his brother Bob in the back here in a cell. Miller sure had to climb over a few bodies before he found you back there."

Stepping over dead bodies... The terrible memories of the events at Red Rock briefly drill a path into your consciousness, and a cold shiver runs down your spine.

[1] "What exactly did they produce?"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["What exactly did they produce?"]

"We assume that they produced Chandu."

The sheriff looks at your questioning face and laughs. "Yeah, that's about how I looked at first, but Marten explained it to me. You know that opium stuff those Chinese fellas smoke? The governor still tolerates it, but it's no longer welcome here. It makes people sick."

He pulls a flask out of his pocket, takes a sip and holds it out to you. You take it gratefully.

"Well, they it looks like they brought opium down into that vault, then did all sorts of things with it and ended up with these little balls. They're probably easier to sell, and Marten thinks they're stretched with plant fibers or something, hence all the secrecy."

[1] "What an effort!"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["What an effort!"]

Dunder nods. "Well, that stuff probably spoils pretty quickly when it's no longer pure, and outside in the fresh air the production doesn't seem to work. I don't know. I guess it was sold over in the city as quickly as possible."

He glances at the door. "When Bob wakes up and we catch Thompson, maybe there will be more answers."

Answers... You suddenly remember what brought you to this place and take the drawing out of your vest that you showed to many people in town the day before.

[1] "Michael, do you know this woman?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Michael, do you know this woman?"]

You show Michael the drawing. He studies it carefully and smiles.

"Of course! This woman arrived at the ranch late the other night. Her horse almost collapsed under her, and she looked like she could really do with a good night's sleep."

He returns the drawing. "I offered her a room at Ella's, but she didn't want one. So I let her sleep in the hay and looked after her horse. When I went to check on her the next morning, she and her horse had disappeared."

[1] "Where was she going?"

[0] End conversation

> 1

["Where was she going?"]

"She had given me a few dollars that evening and said she wanted to go to the city because her husband was in a military prison there."

Oh Claire, no!

[1] "I have to get there as quickly as possible!"  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["I have to get there as quickly as possible!"]

"Military prison, eh? Well, that's none of my business right now." Dunder opens the drawer of his desk and hands you your draft notice.

"The governor's men will be here soon to find Thompson and question Mifflin."

Michael clears his throat. "Um, we haven't even properly thanked you for everything you've done for us yet. So... Thank you very much."

He shakes your hand a little awkwardly. Lucy looks at you, her eyes red, and gives you a quick, tight hug.

[1] "Here's your hankie. It sure helped me a lot."  
[0] End conversation

> 1

["Here's your hankie. It sure helped me a lot."]

Lucy's tear-stained face lights up a little. "Thank you!"

She takes the handkerchief from your hand and blows her nose.

"Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of money, and I won't touch my stepfather's money for sure. But we'd like to offer you Billy, he's our fastest horse."

She looks at Michael, who nods eagerly.

"Just leave him with my cousin Marc in Tanner Street when you're in the city."

You accept with gratitude and get up.

[0] End conversation

> 1

Steppe

You sit on Billy, a freshly saddled young stallion, your shoulder bag firmly in your grasp. The slowly setting sun casts long shadows on the dusty path in front of you, leading east out of town.

You turn around one last time and raise your hand towards Ella, Marten and Bill, who are standing in the street waving back at you.

Looking ahead, you set the black horse into a gentle trot. There is still a long way to go.

Why did you think I was in prison, Claire? Who told you that?

No matter. You would find her and soon you would be together again, you were sure of that... But that would be a story for another day.

~~~

~~~ **FIN** ~~~

~~~

Thank you for playing **Dust**. I really hope you enjoyed it.

I would be happy to receive suggestions, praise and criticism at <https://bit.ly/Ikes-Discord> or by email to dust@ikeserver.de.

Many thanks to Olaf Nowacki, Hannes Schüller, Michael L. and my family for testing and helpful advice. This game was translated from the original German version **Staub** with kind help from Amanda Walker, mathbrush and DeepL.com. The cover image was created with help from Stable Diffusion XL.

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> look

Steppe

In the dusty haze as dusk falls, you can make out the outline of a larger city.

However, you won't be able to reach it today.

> examine Billy

Billy whips across the steppe as fast as the wind and at full gallop now.

> run to saloon

There is no turning back. Your next adventure is waiting somewhere else.

> quit

Are you sure you want to quit?

> yes

Ok.