



Macabre Tales

The Obscure Magazine

July

2026

25¢

The
Road
to
Hell

Rogério Biondi

Macabre Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME VIII

NUMBER 1

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 403 Holiday Building, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 19, 1922, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$2.90 a year in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopetield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1926, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for July, 1926

Cover Design _____ Rogerio Biondi

Illuminating a Scene from "The Road to Hell"

The Road to Hell _____ Rogerio Biondi 4

A Tale of Grief, Fog and choice.
The Road allows no rest.
But it allows choices.

The Road to Hell

a game by Rogerio Biondi

How to run the game

See the readme.txt file shipped with the game for installation and platform instructions.

Saving and Restoring

Use the **SAVE** and **RESTORE** commands to save and restore your game, following the conventions of your platform.

The Death Road

There is a place, in the heart of the Bolivian mountains, where asphalt surrenders to mud and mud surrenders to the abyss. The ancients called it Camino de los Yungas. The world named it *The Death Road*.

Three and a half meters wide. Twelve hundred meters of fall. A single mistake from the driver, a single curve poorly judged, and the vehicle disappears into the clouds that sleep below. Hundreds of crosses mark the asphalt. Some bear names. Others only flowers. Others... Well... No one is left to visit them.

When the fog descends, it does not descend alone. Truckers say

they hear the engines of buses long gone. That they see passengers standing at the curve where the 1983 bus fell. That, on certain nights, someone knocks on the passenger window asking to come in.

And everyone in Bolivia knows: you do not give rides on *The Death Road*.

The Yungas. Where the mountain whispers. Where Supay walks. Where Pachamama remembers her dead.

It is onto this road that you will set out tonight.



Introduction

Your name does not matter much now. What matters is that your wife, Clara, has been dead for eleven weeks. Sunday morning. Drowning, the certificate says. Recovered on the shoulder of km 47. You have read those two lines a thousand times and they have never made sense together.

There is someone on the other side of the Yungas. A defendant. A name on the summons that presses against the inner pocket of your coat.

The judge asked you to deliver it yourself, by hand. Strange.

No one else wanted to go. Maybe because it is the Death Road.

Maybe because the defendant has friends. Maybe because the judge does not like you very much.

The car waits outside, at the zero marker of the Broken Wheel Bar. Warm beer on the table, matches, an old newspaper. The briefcase with

our name does not matter much now. What matters is that your wife, Clara, has been dead for eleven weeks. Sunday morning. Drowning, the certificate says. Recovered on the shoulder of km 47. You have read those two lines a thousand times and they have never made sense together.

There is someone on the other side of the Yungas. A defendant. A name on the summons that presses against the inner pocket of your coat. The judge asked you to deliver it yourself, by hand. Strange.

No one else wanted to go. Maybe because it is the Death Road.

Maybe because the defendant has friends. Maybe because the judge does not like you very much.

The car waits outside, at the zero marker of the Broken Wheel Bar. Warm beer on the table, matches, an old newspaper. The briefcase with the documents. A photo of Clara, heavy with longing. And, three years behind her, the silence of a house with a pool that no one enters anymore.

More than a hundred kilometers of mud, fog, and abyss separate you from the defendant. Several stretches with choices. Each curve with paths, and none of them safe.

Some stops will comfort you. Others will not.

The road is waiting.
You are not alone on it.

How to Play

The Road to Hell is a work of interactive fiction: you talk to the game by typing short sentences in English, and the game answers with text describing what happens. There are no graphics. Your imagination does the heavy lifting, and nothing works better than that.

Special Offer!

Are You Willing to Pay a Penny for a Good Story?

IMAGINE paying just a penny for the kind of story that you enjoy! That's just what we are offering to you. Our May, June and July numbers of 1924 were combined into one big issue and there are fifty distinct features—Novels, Short Stories and Novelettes—all for 50c.

YOU WILL ENJOY OUR ANNIVERSARY NUMBER

IF YOUR mental appetite craves stories of the supernatural with well-balanced thrills—hair-exercising tales that stir the sterner emotions—you will be well fed by reading this issue. This monster edition offers a pleasurable excursion from the land of realism.

DON'T PASS THIS UP!

Your life is not complete until you have read this mammoth Anniversary Number. The stories in this over-sized edition are full of breath-taking adventures, and every crime—woven in a masterly fashion by the authors. They are extraordinary, unusual, imaginative tales of stark terror and shuddering horror.

A few of the smashing stories are:

THE SUNKEN LAND, by George W. Bayly

An eerie tale of a forest of great trees alive with hate and armed with giant tentacles.

THE PURPLE DEATH, by Edith Lyle Ragsdale

In your wildest imaginings you will not guess what killed these men until the author reveals it to you.

IN THE WEIRD LIGHT, by Edward Everett Wright and Ralph Howard Wright

A fascinating novelette about one who wandered through the madstrom into the secret corners of earth.

WE are filling a great number of orders for this gigantic sized wonder book every day and it won't be long before we shall be out of copies. Mail your order in to us to day before it is too late. Price 50c.

-----USE COUPON-----

Enclosed find 50c for copy of Anniversary Number.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Basic Commands

LOOK or **L**
Look around.

EXAMINE **o** or **X o**
Look at an object/person (o) in detail.

INVENTORY or **I**
See what you are carrying.

TAKE **o**
Pick up Object (o).

DROP **o**
Drop Object (o).

OPEN **o**
CLOSE **o**
Open / close Object (o).

READ **o**
Read Object (o).

GIVE **o** **TO** **p**
Give Object (o) to a Person (p) or Entity.

TALK TO **p**
Talk to Person (p).

SAVE and **RESTORE**
Save / restore the game.

QUIT
Quit the game.

Movement

N, S, E, W
North, South, East, West.

UP, DOWN
Go up, go down.

ENTER **o**

EXIT **o**

GET OUT OF **o**
Enter in a place or exit/get out of it.



Driving Verbs (in the car)

DRIVE or **N**
Go ahead.

TURN LEFT or **W**
Take the left path.

TURN RIGHT or **E**
Take the right path.



"The road wound through dead hills and ancestral woods, where nameless apparitions emerged from the mist like revenants born of the Chaco War; and as the automobile's headlights flickered beneath the spectral rain, you at the wheel realized with mounting dread that certain pale figures walked beside the vehicle without ever moving their feet."

BRAKE or **B**
Brake.

ACCELERATE or **A**
Accelerate.

SWERVE or **R**
Swerve left/right.

PRAY
Pray (in critical moments).

Useful Verbs (in the world)

KNOCK [on o]
Knock (on doors) or Object(o).

BURN o [with y]
Burn / light an Object(o) with
Object(y).

EAT o
DRINK o
Eat / drink Object(o).

SIT on o
Sit on Object(o).

CARVE o [with y]
Carve Object(o) with y (a
sharp object).

UNLOCK o with y

Unlock Object(o) with
Object(y).

DIG [with o]
Dig in a place with Object(o)

SHOOT o [with y]
KILL o [with y]
Shoot / kill Person(p) with
Object(y).

FIX o [with y]
REPAIR o [with y]
REINFORCE o [with y]
Reinforce an Object(o) with
Object(y).

PUT o in y
Put an Object(o) in a container
Object(y).

PULL o [with y]
PUSH o [with y]
Pull / push Object(o) with
Object(y).

Goal

Reach the Defendant's
House by 9 a.m. the next
morning and deliver the
summons.



"In that subterranean shrine, where candles trembled beneath roots older than memory itself, there lingered a silence so profound and profane that one could almost believe the earth was praying to something far older than God."

Inner Mechanics

The game shows no numbers, but it watches you closely.

SANITY

Rises with comfort, prayer, and rest. Falls in the face of horror, alcohol, and voices that should not be there. Your sanity changes what you see, read, and recognize. Very low states open dark doors. High states reveal subtle messages.

GRIEF

Longing has weight. It rises with triggers, falls with small acts of redemption. In some places, grief decides whom you recognize and whom you do not.

PHYSICAL

Hunger, cold, fatigue, wounds. Take care of the body.

BALANCE

Each step tips you toward the light or the darkness. At the end of the road, this balance determines the ending. There is no "right path". There is the path you chose.

Essencial Tips

EXAMINE EVERYTHING

In interactive fiction, X (EXAMINE) reveals more than LOOK. Look at the table. Look at the bench. Examine everything you come across

READ EVERYTHING

Letters, newspapers, walls, signs, books. Important clues about the background history live in the margins. Some of them will only appear when you are sane.

SAVE OFTEN

Use SAVE before any choice that feels dramatic. RESTORE brings you back. This road does not forgive.

TAKE NOTES ON PAPER

Like the old days. Names, mileage, strange clues, recurring phrases. Draw a map. The game rewards those who pay attention.

YOUR STATE CHANGES THE GAME

High sanity opens one layer of meaning. Low sanity opens another. High grief makes you see people and things in a darker light. Low grief makes you doubt. Neither the player nor the character can fully trust their own eyes.

NOT EVERY FAMILIAR FACE IS WHAT IT SEEMS

If something looks too good to be there, perhaps it is not.

THE PATH ONLY MOVES FORWARD

You cannot return to places already visited, so explore them well and think what could be accomplished in each location.

KEEP IMPORTANT OBJECTS AND TRUST IN YOUR INTUITION

Look for objects that may be used elsewhere. Items may be

used later. They may have more than one use. Before spending the last one, think where else it might fit.



USE THE BRIEFCASE WELL

The briefcase lets you carry more than the player can with empty hands. Use it wisely.

THE PATHS ARE DIFFERENT

The roads of each stretch, and how you travel them, tell different stories. In a single run you will not see everything. Play several times and try other choices.



"There are moments when the memory of the departed returns with such dreadful clarity that one almost feels the universe itself has committed some terrible error in allowing them to vanish from the world; and in the suffocating silence of lonely nights, while rain whispers against forgotten windows, the heart begins to understand that grief is not merely sorrow, but a haunting... A slow and eternal visitation from those whom time has stolen, yet whom the soul refuses to surrender to the abyss."

ENJOY AND REPLAY

The game can be finished in a little under an hour and has seven different endings. Play several times to discover them all.

STOP AND PRAY

PRAY is not decorative. At the right moments it opens Passages that other commands do not.

THE CAR IS NOT JUST TRANSPORT

Read the manual in the glove compartment. It matters.

TIME MOVES

In some places, lingering kills. Find a quick way out.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU DRINK, HEAR, OR TURN ON

Some temptations cost dearly.

THE END HAS MORE THAN ONE FACE

There is no single ending. Everything you did on the road will collect its bill at the finish. Or its reward.

Special Thanks

This game could never have been created without the invaluable help of the following people.

Renato Degiovani and Divino Leitão

Renato was the editor of Micro-sistemas magazine and one of the most influential pioneers of Brazilian game development during the rise of home computing in the 1980s. At a time when access to technology and technical knowledge was still extremely limited in Brazil, his work helped introduce an entire generation to programming, game design, and interactive storytelling. Through his articles, reviews, and especially his adventure games, Renato encouraged countless young enthusiasts to experiment, create, and explore the possibilities of computers such as the ZX Spectrum and TK series. His passion for interactive fiction and creativity had a profound impact on the Brazilian gaming scene. I remain deeply grateful

for his contribution to my own development and for much of what I know about adventure games.



Divino Leitão (1957–2025) was a pioneering figure in Brazilian microcomputing and game development, widely recognized for his work with the legendary *Micro Sistemas* magazine. During the ZX81 and TK90X era, he created classic games such as *Cavernas de Marte* and helped inspire an entire generation of programmers and technology enthusiasts in Brazil.

Tim Gilberts

Founder of Gilsoft, played a fundamental role during the 8-bit era by democratizing game development through the release of *The Quill* and *PAW*. Under his technical leadership, these tools enabled thousands of people to create text adventures without needing to master complex programming languages, serving as the foundation for hundreds of commercial titles on the ZX Spectrum. In addition to innovating with software such as *The Illustrator*, his legacy remains alive through his active collaboration in modern retro-

computing and preservation projects.

Graham Nelson, Fredrik Ramsberg and Johan Berntsson

Nelson created *Inform 6*, while Ramsberg and Berntsson developed the *PunyInform* library, which made it possible to bring rich and high-quality



LUCK

All around you there is abundant Success, Wealth and Happiness. Get Your Share. The "LUCKY SEVEN" Secret Rules are free to all who wear this Rare and beautiful Tailor-made Ring. On each side of the Odd and Charming Ring is molded the figure of Fortuna—The "Goddess of Luck". Ancient belief, that her emblem brings luck and success to wearer in Love, Games, Business, Health and everything. Genuine 14-K Antique Gold R. Ring, mounted with one carat Blazing Blue White Mexican Im. Diamond. Guaranteed 20 years. Send strip of paper to show finger size and we will send you this wonderful ring. When it arrives pay the postman only \$3.95. Nothing more to pay. Yours to keep, wear and enjoy forever. Wear 7 days—follow the 7 rules that we send you. If not satisfied your money quickly returned. Address: **Steele-Peach Business Importing Co., St. Paul, Minn. Dept. 37-L**



FREE! WONDER OF THE 20th CENTURY

The new, unique secret book, announced the world's greatest discovery of the 20th century—personal magnetism, dominating, conquering, influencing, controlling, etc. This book—the wonder of the 20th century—written by the best men of the world—will give you the secret of the 20th century—make everything you want every wish and desire—success and health, success, with respect to the world's 20th century, wealth, success, position. Send the greatest thing in the history of man. The most perfect, complete and easily learned system. For only \$1.00, delivered. In your package.

Park Publishing Co., Dept. 67, 15 Hoffman St., New York

MIDGET NAME CARDS

Trade Mark. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.
THE LATEST NOVELTY 30c. Per Book

Each book contains 50 perfect little name cards, size 1 1/4 x 1/2, in genuine leather case. Choice of black, tan, green or red. A perfect name card. Name in Old English type. Price complete \$50. Send sample, color or money order. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. *Agents W. and W.*

MIDGET CARD SHOP

55 S. Second Street, Harrisburg, Pa.

GOVT. POSITIONS

MEN WANTING FOREST RANGER, RAILWAY mail clerk, Internal revenue agent, post-office clerk, carrier and field clerk positions. \$1500 to \$3700 year. Write for free particulars. MOKANE, DEPT. 203, DENVER, COLO.

BE A RAPID-FIRE TRICK CARTOONIST

\$1 **BOYS COMPLETE COURSE, including 40 Color Cartoon Sketches: "How to Give a Performance" "How to Organize Shows" "Gauging" etc.**
MODERN CARTOON SERVICE,
Dept. B, 228 Bergen St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

TOBACCO Or Snuff Habit Cured Or No Pay

Any form, degree, or habit, whether or not, full or complete cure, no cost. **Harrison, Cohn \$1.50 P.M. cure, exclusive of \$1 fee. (Used by 250,000 Men and Women) Superfine Co. 87-47 Bklyn, N.Y.**

interactive fiction to 8-bit computers with very limited resources. Every day I become more impressed by the ingenuity behind these tools.

Stefan Vogt

Stefan is the creator of PunyBuildTools, a powerful toolkit that greatly simplifies the building and development process. He is an exceptionally generous person who has always shared his knowledge with others, while also being an outstanding author of remarkable adventure games, such as Hibernated and The Curse of Rabenstein.

André Luna Leão

André is the editor of Planeta Sinclair and plays a vital role in software preservation and within the ZX Spectrum community. With remarkable patience and dedication, he helped me extensively during testing and provided invaluable suggestions that allowed this adventure to reach its players.

And above all, thank you, the player!



12 Detective Story Books



Summer Reading

**Special \$1.00
Bargain**

**For ALL
For a Very
Limited Time**

HERE THEY ARE

1 Crimson Popples—Dr. Hower evolves a brilliant plot to inherit the wealth of a lunatic millionaire.

2 Buff—A mob reporter and a death mystery—a story that works up to a crashing climax.

3 The Triangle of Terror—A goosebump story that will send the cold shivers up your spine.

4 The Valley of Missing Men—Read how Parkinson discovered this baffling mystery—a story pulsating with hair-raising incidents.

5 The Sign of the Tood—An eerie detective story, full of exciting situations and mysterious deaths.

6 The Mystery of Eagle Lodge—Read gripping, fascinating, true full of action—You will move in the land of make-believe with a touch of the unreal.

7 The Web—This tale threads the sinister net that was torn asunder by the murder of James Hagar.

8 The Glass Eye—The convict warred out a clever and diabolical scheme, but a dead man's eye betrayed him.

9 The Dangerous Hours—Brilliant with excitement and full of suspense—a remarkable story with thrills galore.

10 Disappearing Bullets—Criminal with blood-curdling action and strange happenings in the underworld—mastermind crooks and criminals.

11 The Green-Red Monster—A thrilling book, teeming with startling coincidences and brilliant with action.

12 Deering-Do—A vivid tale of Chinamen, opium traffic, the secret service, and desperate fighting.

JUST think, you can get this whole library of 12 Mystery-Adventure-Detective Story Books for \$1.00. Every one of these splendid books has a striking cover in colors on enamel stock, and the inside is printed on good white paper. You are cheating yourself if you miss these masterpieces of starting, gripping, thrilling. These novels, ranging from 15,000 to 25,000 words in length, are powerfully written and will hold you spellbound—make you breathe fast with a new mental sensation. They are not the usual run of stories, but are off the beaten path—uncommon tales that will cling to your memory for many a day.

SUPPLY NEAR EXHAUSTION

This offer may be withdrawn at any time. Treat yourself to some real entertainment while you still have the chance. Read for these books today. Do it now! Just pin a dollar bill to the coupon.

POPULAR FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY

Dept. W-19, Ohio and Alabama Sts., Indianapolis, Ind.

POPULAR FICTION PUB. CO., Dept. W-19
Ohio and Alabama Sts., Indianapolis, Ind.

I enclose \$1. Send at once, postage prepaid, the 12 volumes listed in this advertisement. It is understood this \$1 is payment in full.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

**MAIL
THIS
TODAY**

Credits

Design, writing and code

Rogério Biondi

Language

Inform 6 / PunyInform 6.4.1

Author page

rbiondi.itch.io

July, 2026

São Paulo - Brazil

This Manual is Inspired by pulp horror magazines.
All trademarks mentioned are the property of their
respective owners.