

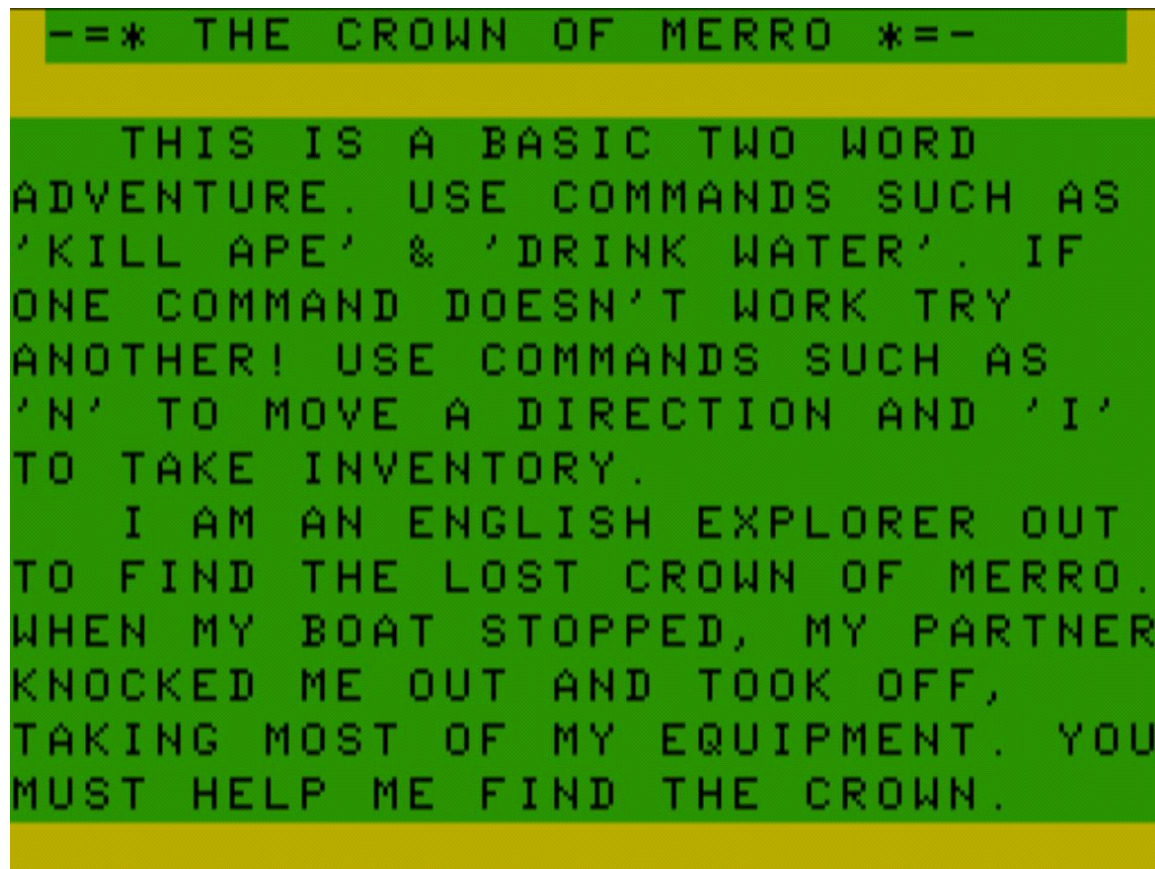
The Crown of Merro

"The Crown of Merro" is a text adventure written in BASIC for the TRS-80 Color Computer. It was published in the February 1984 issue of The Rainbow magazine. It was written by Jeff Craig when he was a sophomore and honor student at Orchard View High School in Muskegon, Michigan. I played the game using MAME, emulating a CoCo 3, and got the disk image by finding the correct issue of Rainbow on Disk in the Color Computer Archive.

This adventure first caught my eye the first time I read that issue of the magazine, when I was 12 years old. The two-page artwork promised grand treasure-hunting adventure in the vein of Indiana Jones, so I started entering the BASIC listing. I never managed to get it running, though, discouraged as I was by the length of the listing, my tendency to add typos, and because the listing itself spoiled some of the puzzles.

30 years later, I still remembered the existence of that old text adventure, but I'd long forgotten those spoilers. Reading Dale Dobson's "Adventure of the Week" blog posts on his site, Gaming After 40, I was inspired to write my own. His blog is a great way to learn about text adventures you might not ever play yourself, with a writing style that is wry and intelligent. I do not claim I can match his wit, but nevertheless I hope you enjoy this write-up. A step-by-step walkthrough is included at the end.

When we load and run the game, we are presented with this title page, which explains what a text adventure is and loosely sets up the premise.

The image is a screenshot of a text-based interface, likely from a computer terminal or emulator. It features a green background with black text. At the top, a title line reads "-=* THE CROWN OF MERRO *=-". Below this, a block of text provides instructions for playing the game, mentioning commands like 'KILL APE', 'DRINK WATER', 'N' for movement, and 'I' for inventory. A second block of text sets the scene, describing the player as an English explorer who has been betrayed by a partner and must find a lost crown. The text is centered and uses a monospaced font typical of early computer games.

```
-=* THE CROWN OF MERRO *=-  
  
THIS IS A BASIC TWO WORD  
ADVENTURE. USE COMMANDS SUCH AS  
'KILL APE' & 'DRINK WATER'. IF  
ONE COMMAND DOESN'T WORK TRY  
ANOTHER! USE COMMANDS SUCH AS  
'N' TO MOVE A DIRECTION AND 'I'  
TO TAKE INVENTORY.  
  
I AM AN ENGLISH EXPLORER OUT  
TO FIND THE LOST CROWN OF MERRO.  
WHEN MY BOAT STOPPED, MY PARTNER  
KNOCKED ME OUT AND TOOK OFF,  
TAKING MOST OF MY EQUIPMENT. YOU  
MUST HELP ME FIND THE CROWN.
```

Be warned that there are SPOILERS contained herein!

The adventure begins STANDING ON A SHORE, where I see THE AMAZON RIVER. Taking stock of my belongings, I'm gratified to learn that my partner left me with Some Super Flare Matches, Survival Rations, and an Empty Canteen.

I can't seem to do anything with the river, though. EXAMINE RIVER, LOOK RIVER, GO RIVER, and FILL CANTEEN all result in I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T DO THAT. GET WATER returns TRY PUTTING IT IN SOMETHING. OPEN CANTEEN and PUT WATER are similarly fruitless. So, I'll just give up on the river and head south.

I find a BANANA and a PRIMITIVE WEAPON in short order, but I can't immediately pick them up because I can apparently only carry three things at a time. So, we're dealing with a very tight inventory in this game.

I find an APE, and with some inventory juggling, I give him the BANANA. This opens the path he was blocking. I examine the PRIMITIVE WEAPON, which reveals that it is actually A VERY SHARP AXE. I can then CHOP TREES with it, but that seems to serve no purpose.

I soon discover AN ANCIENT FOUNTAIN, and once I get it working, I am able to fill my canteen.

To the west, A VERY DENSE JUNGLE forms a small maze, in the tradition of these sorts of adventures. Fortunately it only has two locations, but there's apparently no reason to explore it at all, so instead I proceed south from the fountain.

I soon discover A ELEPHANT GRAVEYARD [sic], containing ELEPHANT SKELETONS. LOOK SKELETONS reveals AN IVORY TUSK. Once in my inventory, it is displayed as AN * IVORY TUSK *, so we've found our first treasure! If there's a SCORE room, though, I haven't found it yet. With the limited inventory space, I decide to leave the tusk here for now.

To the east is more dense jungle, containing AN OLD MAP and A * LARGE RUBY *. LOOK RUBY reveals IT'S MADE OF GLASS. So, now I have A GLASS RUBY and it's not a treasure after all. Perhaps I shouldn't have looked at it so closely and carried on in the belief that it was valuable? LOOK MAP rewards us with some of the author's teenage sense of humor, with IT SAYS: GO DIRECTLY TO JAIL, DO NOT PASS GO, AND DO NOT COLLECT \$200. Uh huh.

South of the graveyard is still more VERY DENSE JUNGLE, but here there are MANY ARMY ANTS and A BRANCHY TREE. LOOK ANTS reveals THERE ARE 1,957,321 OF THE LITTLE SUCKERS!! so apparently we took the time to count them, and they aren't much of a threat for now. It is unclear what we might need the ants for or whether they are blocking a path.

The BRANCHY TREE can be climbed and there is found A STURDY VINE. It can be taken, but then we can't CLIMB DOWN while holding it, so it is attached to the tree. SWING VINE causes an exciting swing and what sounds like a hard landing. Now we're in AN OLD TREE, where we find A THUUNOON EGG. LOOK EGG doesn't work until we GET EGG, revealing IT'S YELLOW WITH BROWN SPOTS.

I find A HACKSAW somebody left lying around. LOOK HACKSAW reveals an apparent glitch in the program, as the description says IT LOOKS LIKE THE ONE THAT WAS STOLEN FROM ME, but then part of the title screen is written again, I AM AN ENGLISH EXPLORER OUT TO FIND THE LOST CROWN OF MERRO... etc. The title scroll THE CROWN OF MERRO BY JEFF CRAIG returns to the top edge of the screen. But, pressing a key seems to put us back where we were, so no harm is apparent. Nevertheless, I restore my game and return to that point, grabbing the hacksaw without looking at it.

To the east I find A RIVER OF PIRANHA and A TALL TREE. I can't climb the tree, and looking at it reveals nothing, so CHOP TREE is the obvious action, which reduces the tall tree to A LOG OVER A RIVER.

I cross the log and make a grisly find on the other side, A HUMAN LIMB. Is it an arm or a leg? It's unknown, and looking at it reveals no further details. Now I'm carrying A HACKSAW and A HUMAN LIMB around with me.

Further along is A SMALL VILLAGE, where I find A SHRUNKEN HEAD and A GROUP OF CANNIBALS. I can't seem to LOOK or TALK CANNIBALS. I drop the axe and take the head, but looking at it reveals nothing.

The map is proving to be fairly linear, and my limited inventory seems to contain nothing of interest to the cannibals. At this point, it's definitely either the ants or the cannibals I need to get past. The ants don't seem to be interested in the head or the limb.

The sturdy vine takes up an inventory slot to swing on it, meaning that I can only move two objects at a time across the swinging vine. Tediously, I bring all of my abandoned inventory items across, including those matches I started the adventure with.

LIGHT MATCH returns with THE CANNIBALS ARE AWED BY THE MATCH FLAME. GIVE MATCHES turns them into CANNIBALS WITH MATCHES, and opens paths to the north and south.

To the south we find a clearing containing AN ANCIENT STRUCTURE and AN EVIL EXPLORER. The structure has A CAVE ENTRENCE [sic]. While LOOK EXPLORER reveals HE LOOKS VERY GREEDY. Hmm. I try GIVE MAP but he isn't fooled. HE SAYS: HA! HA! YOU MUST THINK I'M STUPID! Well, trying again... GIVE RUBY works, and he runs off into the jungle with a final "SO LONG SUCKER!"

With the evil explorer out of the way, GO CAVE brings us to A DISMAL CAVE containing A BRONZE TORCH. Going south from here proves hazardous.



AAAARGH!! A SPEAR TRAP!
THE SPEAR WAS COATED WITH DEADLY
KATOOMO POISON! I'LL BE DEAD IN
A MATTER OF SECONDS!
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

A couple of moves later with no antidote, and THE POISON SWIFTLY TRAVELED MY BLOOD STREAM TO YOUR HEART... I AM DEAD. As if the confusing pronouns weren't enough to make one wonder who was poisoned and who actually died, the game follows it up with a SORRY SUCKER... PLAY AGAIN (Y/N)? So, we need an antidote here. Bringing the full canteen back, DRINK WATER proves to be the very simple antidote, and that threat is past.

LOOK at the TORCH and THE TORCH JUST LIT UP! That's very convenient!

Going south from the DAMP CAVE brings us to a DREARY ALCOVE which appears to have no exits. There is A RUSTY GATE, however. Looking at the gate causes it to fall, blocking the only exit, and suddenly I wish I'd brought the hacksaw. So, restoring again and bringing the hacksaw with me this time, I am able to saw the gate. Strangely enough, this room seems to serve no purpose except to be a trap. It can be avoided altogether.

To the west of the spear trap room, I find myself in A ERIE TEMPLE [sic]. Perhaps I'm near the Great Lakes, or this temple was built by those Native American people. Here, there is a SACRIFICIAL ALTAR. Hmm. Perhaps the limb or the shrunken head might be useful here. The altar has a A ROTTING SKULL on it. LOOK SKULL reveals THE SKULL HAS THE WORD - (ORREMKNIG) ON IT'S[sic] FOREHEAD. So, we've found a magic word! SAY ORREMKNIG does nothing right now, though.

After being stuck for a very long time, I analyzed the source code and learned that TURN SKULL was what was needed to advance here. This opens a passage to a SPOOKY CRYPT to the south.

Here, there are spider webs and MANY BLACK WIDOW SPIDERS. Fortunately, our torch is useful to BURN WEBS. This ends the threat and opens a path to the south.

Now we are in the titular Merro's tomb, where we find his coffin. OPEN COFFIN causes THE GHOST OF KING MERRO JUST JUMPED OUT! He looks very mean and he's wearing a crown.

SAY ORREMKNIG makes short work of the ghost, however, with a flashing white screen. He leaves behind * MERRO'S CROWN *.

Taking the crown immediately ends the adventure, so I need to make sure I've got the tusk in hand, first. Restarting, and bringing the tusk here with me, I can get the crown and be rewarded with victory, for obtaining 2 out of TWO treasures!