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Very early in the game it is good to find the mirrors on each island and solve the vex chambers -- in fact, sometimes it can be a real boon to see if you can scout out as many islands as possible and hit the 6 chambers as quickly as possible -- you can rest in the chambers before you try to solve the puzzle (Don't do it after you solve the puzzle, or the teleport will go away and you'll be buried alive!) Here's some help with the following chambers:

1. No help necessary -- this is more of a joke. All paths lead to the same thing, so take whichever you prefer.

2. This is a tanagram puzzle, where you have to slide the pieces into a perfect rectangular fir in the westernmost alcove. The finished puzzle (if each of the pieces could be represented by numbers) Looks like this:

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11111
22221
34521
34521
33336
77776
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The first thing to do is move the small 2 - block pieces as far east as they will go without pushing them against the wall. (You need to leave one space to get yourself back behind them in order to move them again) This will give you some room to maneuver. Zip north, go west, then circle around piece 2 (the one that starts part in the west alcove) and push it one space west. You need to do this to push the biggest piece (piece 1) at least one space east so the little 2-piece block inside of it is freed up.

From there you need to carefully navigate the two medium-sized L-shaped pieces into the alcove -- each one will have to have at least one block extending from the alcove, because neither piece goes up against the north or south wall, and if you push them too far in you won't be able to push them together into the center. Piece 3, whose base of its L side will

touch the west wall, will go in further first; navigate the small 2-block piece that was up against the big L (the one you freed up first) down into the alcove, and navigate one of the other 2 2-piece blocks, so that you can lock them in the center of the 2 L-shaped pieces and make a 4 by 4 square that will have an open space to the north and south in the alcove. Once you've gotten that square, the rest is child's play: Bring the big L piece down and lock it in the northern position, take the one straight piece and shove it in the southern position, and then cap the hole with the final 2-piece block. A path will open west and you can walk in freely.

3. "Child's Play" I was surprised to find some folks found this puzzle difficult; it is actually very easy -- scissors, paper, rock. Grab all three objects. Equip ONE (and only ONE) of them, then walk over the object it beats in the scissors - paper - rock game. (For example, if the item in the first alcove is a rock, arm the parchment shield). Once you step on it a doorway will open. Since each corridor that can open has an object at both ends, it is faster if you have already opened a passage to stand just to the side of the other open end and grab the other object rather than have to switch your inventory again. For example, if you open the first passage with the shield, as you walk east you will find another object at the end of this same passage you just opened, leading into one of the square rooms.. If you pick it up, you don't have to fumble for your inventory items. The parchment shields and the little knife can be sold for minimal amounts later on.

4. "Lightweight puzzle" -- kind of a cool concept. Imagine that there are 7 sliding walls, each with an opening. Your job in this vex is to get all the openings to slide together into a passageway. Each of the pressure plates on the floor will slide the wall one space leftward for every pound of weight placed on the plate. (For odd game reasons, if you step on it, no matter how much you are carrying, you only weigh one pound) Since you can only see the first wall's opening at first, you have to move it to the center -- slide it one space west. The rocks you collected are all of different weights, so you simply need to drop the right amount of weight on each pressure plate to scoot the right wall over a few spaces. You will work from the top pressure plate to the bottom. The wall only moves 1 space when you move one space, so after dropping a weight on the plate you may have to hit z a few times to see if you got it right. One sure way to measure the weight is use a very heavy rock (if you can see the passageway) and hit Z and count the number of items it moves left until you see the opening. The wall will keep moving left (you'll have to take the heavy rock back off of the plate and it will slide back one space right each round) and put on the correct weight. One plate takes 4 lbs to move, and you'll have to use two 2lb rocks to get it right.

The correct weights, from top to bottom:

1 - 2 - 4 - 1 - 6 - 3 - 5

After solving this vex you can ditch the rocks.

5. Musical Nightmare. I must not be the only tone-deaf person in the world. However, a bug in the game helps you cheat long enough to get used to the tones, so don't sweat it. :)

If you use the magnifying glass on the ground, you'll notice that it will say if an area is just "dirt" or if it is a "trap". So, first walk all the way north until you are just past the entryway to the large chamber with the two braziers. Look at the ground in the three cardinal directions: North and West both say they are traps; East is clean. When you move east you hear another tone (the east tone) So as long as you keep hearing music you know you're doing the right thing. After a while you will be able to recognize tones, but using the magnifying glass will help eliminate most options -- just find the path not the way you just stepped from

that is not a trap. (Sometimes you could go two ways, only one of which is correct: If the music stops you'll have to go far south again, pull the switch, and restart the puzzle) Is all this aggravation worth it? Most definitely! Solving the musical nightmare awards you 100 extra Psionic points -- which makes all the difference in the world! You also get a Nemesis Staff, which will allow you to teleport to the end of the game -- but don't use it, because then you can't go back to any of the other islands. It is better to get to Nemesis by Ronan's tower on the last island. . . however, you may later wish to replay and do the staff entrance, since there are 3 puzzles in the game you never see if you don't take the staff way.

Oh, and if you want the "easy" way:

E E N N N W W W S W W S S W W W N N N E N N W W (at this point you should be just to the east of the first brazier. Whew!)

S W W W S S W W N N N N N N (now at 1 square just south of touching the north wall)

E E S E E E N E E E S E E S S (right at the fire bucket)

E E N N N N W W E E E E E & you get teleported! Whew!!!

Note in that last sequence you move west twice then have to reverse your direction the way you just came; that's the only time in the puzzle you do that, but don't screw it up, because once you start that trek east you're home free!

6. The Fable: Your objective is to place the golden balls on the table in the order the jester supposedly discerned in the fable. Each of the phrases associated with when the sons spoke their answer offers the clue to their position on the table: The first son spoke in a second -- therefore, his position is second on the table; the fourth second, always second to last in everything the brothers did, is in the fourth slot (the second to last of five slots). The fifth son is first. The order (if my memory serves) should then be: 5 1 3 4 2. If that doesn't work, flip balls to 5 1 2 4 3, but 5 1 3 4 2 should be the correct answer (the problem of the gamer attempting to read his own handwritten notes) Along with your power increase you'll also get a Nemesis Staff here, which functions just like the one in Vex chamber # 5.

Special Notes:

The First Island (Un): The Niacian library has a book on weapons -- grab it and then you can identify the actual damage your weapons do. Also make sure to go to the little hidden hut off in the northeast peninsula; there a monk will teach you 2 forms of hand to hand fighting styles. Brushing up on these and getting good at them is not a bad idea, because later on you will get access to a new fighting style and find bare-hand fighting more powerful than most of the weapons you can use. However, you will also probably use the Niacan Life-ENDER (a 2-handed weapon) to be able to survive going from island 1 to island 2, and for a long time the life-ender is your best weapon. You can get the life-ender by bringing an item the Niacan elders value from Elba.

IMPORTANT: Your first Area of effect spell is in a secret passage in the tunnel between Niac and Elba. There are actually 2 secret passages. One is on your left as you are walking down the long corridor with square rooms on your left and right side. Look for a wall piece with small black inward curved indentions. Getting the area of effect spell is crucial to early survival, because it weakens or kills many of your enemies at once.

There is another secret room, with one false wall that leads north, also in the caverns. It is guarded by a snake-creature that you see on the second island, and you probably should have the life-ender on hand before you try and tackle it.

Once you get the area of effect spell (the cryromancy), use it as often as you can get the psionic points to do so. Just life fighting often and killing things increases your hit points, so will killing creatures with your mind increase your mental potency. You don't get any credit for defensive psionics or "passive killing psionics" (the deadly air cloud spell or spontaneous combustion). You'll eventually want to get Pyromania, also found in a hidden chamber, in the bee passageway between the third and fifth island -- after the place where the Professional glow is, you'll keep travelling east until you get to a squar jog in the passage -- north, west, then south -- check the wall behind you -- its false -- but there are more of those damn bees in there and they are hard to kill. Getting pyromania will make life incredibly better, though, so grab it while you can.

Second island: It is better to solve the priest puzzle by extinguishing the flame rather than poisoning the priests. (It doesn't count against you -- the game is like that -- but one priest will survive and kill all the workers in the other variant, a much less satisfying solution, though it doesn't change the dynamics of the game) Also, when you get the IR Helm from the priest area, take it up to the blind priest in the north hut. **DO NOT TAKE HIS STUFF!!!** If you give him his helm he will offer you his stuff, and will have enhanced it -- giving you Highly professional Glow, and turning the red potion(which will drain psionic points) into a blue potion (that instantly restores all your psi points to max, a very useful potion to use in a tough combat)

Third Island: There are no good solutions to the idiots in Billsville. Pollux will die if you free him, but you really need to in order to "solve" this island -- and plus he does give you some cool stuff before the guards catch him and kick his butt. The best you can do in this place is convert the towns using the entropy setting in the cavern to Joesvilles -- at least you won't have to change clothing every morning to match everyone else's. (Though the temptation to wipe out the towns may be high for you) Notably, the game itself doesn't care what you do here -- but do remember you're supposed to be a hero, right?

Fourth Island: While exploring the destroyed city you can lock yourself in some of the rooms and sleep and recover hit points and psionics. Lots of good stuff in this town, especially the razor-edged boomerang, which is about the only really useful ranged weapon in the game (the bows are pretty useless because you have to keep switching back and forth as creatures close on you) If you have a good one-handed weapon in your right hand (and there are a number of them in the game, including the trident you can get as a prize in the fifth island) you can arm the left hand with the boomerang, and attack with the left when creatures are closing in on you and then hit with the right when they are next to you. This is one of the most effective attack routines until you learn Maximillian's fighting style, at which point you have to use both your bare hands, but the damage you do is so significant few creatures need softening up at that point. (especially if you have bumped your hand to hand skills to level 3 or 4 on the first island as I suggested -- then when you get Max's style your hits will mostly be critical hits and wipe the walls with most monsters) While the dig spell would seem to work on either gem, you can only get it to work successfully on the Purple gem -- that's okay, Hiram is pretty clueless about what you are doing. The best solution for this island means not killing Hiram -- but you'll want to figure out when he sleeps, because that's the only time you can invisibly get his Scepter of Pain from him -- and at that point Pitor can be led back into the city. Good news: he gives you the best armour in the game as a reward.

Fifth Island: the friendly monster island is difficult to get to, but easy to play with. DO NOT THROW THE SWITCH IN THE CENTER OF THE ISLAND UNTIL YOU HAVE ALTERED THE SPELL IN THE SECRET ROOM!!! I did so accidentally and was filled with guilt for having accidentally killed everyone on the island surface without even knowing it -- and it was only after 3 hours of play later (I had left the island and come back) that I realized I had committed genocide and had to restart from a much older save game. This is a really great island, the only one where you can actually camp outdoors in peace and quiet.

Solving this island takes a lot of shuttling back and forth -- after you bring the librarian to his friend Bertrand, don't forget to talk to Bertrand again -- he's got a tuning fork you need to use in the switch cave to get the secret door open and will give it to you after you bring him his friend. After the monsters are human again, make sure to talk to Deborah to bring her back to her father. I seemed to have a small glitch where at first she didn't say what she needed to, so I had to leave the island and come back to "reset her." She is the woman in white in the cave, but there are two people in white in the cave and this might not have been a game error but mine in not catching the right person. either way, make sure after the folks return to the town to talk to every one again -- they're so grateful you can get a lot of goodies!

If you haven't gotten the people back to normal, don't forget the secret entrance back into the city is two steps east of it -- there is not ladder on the outside map; if you're prone to forgetting where it is, the first time you come out of the city drop a rock or something on the ground to mark it.

Oh, and a nota bene: The wooden lizard is useless, but it is a copy of a plastic lizard that Richard Rouse III has in his house. It is reputed that Richard, who is self-admittedly not the artist in this game, "drew that graphic himself."

Sixth Island: The best stuff in the nice town is in the chamber in the southeast wall, and also search the outside of the wall for the ladder down that the errant minion left along with his diary. The city of Flog you may find challenging, but know that EVENTUALLY you will have to kill all of the minions in it -- and your life will be much simpler if you knock them out as early as possible. One good way is to stand in the front entrance, let loose pyromaniacs until you burn out, whap on wounded minions, and run back south if they're still not dead by then. Monsters don't heal in this game but you do. Also, after a period of time the minions forget it was you that burnt them -- so you can kill some minions, hightail it out of Flog for a while, and then return much later and they won't know what (or who) hit them. Once the front door is clear you can take the little kid back to his dad Kaleb in the exile town, and the father will give you a glowstone -- NO MORE LIGHT SPELLS!!! YAY!!!

Do take some time to visit the sewers under Flog, there are many secret chambers and lots of goodies, including the most interestingly-named "Megadeath" spell. (My all-time favorite weapon name was the "Kick Axe", even though it wasn't the best weapon in the game). You can get to the sewers by talking to the slayers in Flog and getting them to open the gateway -- its easier to get the Pax Flog folks to open the door (through Milo), but you can still get in the sewers by dropping through the trash compactor in the tower.

One interesting side note -- amongst the prisoners who don't help you is a fellow named Peter. If you remember from the first island (Un) there is a female performance artist who misses her long lost love, Peter, who was taken away by guards or something. This is him. You can't do anything about it, but its a nice little touch.

Nemesis and the final solutions: There are four endings to the game. Be aware that none of

the endings lets you survive AND makes the world 100% right. But most players will find one of the endings very satisfactory. . . in a very strange way.