

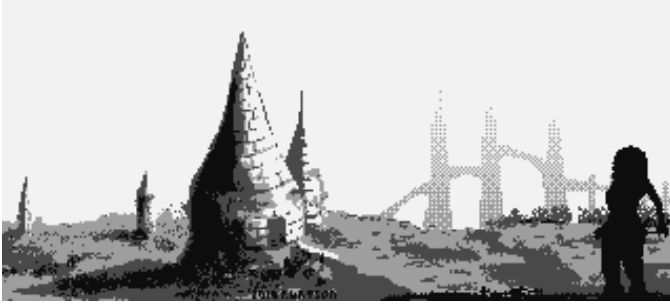
TOWERS OF VALLAS

GAME MANUAL

Version Beta 1 (0.9.0)

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The Vallan Empire



A.D. 7776. The Vallan Empire, though criticized as a totalitarian state, is about to lead mankind out of a centuries-long dark age. Its people are soon to learn about the civilizations of the past—and maybe of the technology they once held.

The sea levels are falling, revealing ancient coastal cities. The Vallan people are eager to learn about these civilizations. Scholars are hard at work exploring their depths. But the empire keeps a tight grip on their scholars and a close eye on what reports are made. They have many enemies, inside the empire and out, and know that knowledge is a great power.

A World Without Electricity. Throughout the Vallan Empire people flock to the public movie-houses to catch stories of the latest finds. The secret of electricity—its generation and manipulation—has been lost with time. The people learn of its power and it soon sparks their imaginations.

How much better life could be if this “fire” could be harnessed! How much more power could the Vallan Empire gain over its enemies? How much power could its enemies gain over the empire? The race to learn is on, and to the victor goes a great prize.

The Film-maker A.C. Emris has been working closely with the empire representatives in **Gamma Center**, a large tower complex at the edge of the capital city. The people are awaiting the film "The Lost City" after reading his book "The Electric Renaissance". But most scholars believe the film to be a distraction, to lead the enemies of the empire off the electric trail.

A change in the air. The Vallan Empire has been rounding up the undesirable, political enemies, those with unpopular opinions, and those who know too much for their own good. The exiled thief **Marika** fears her brother, **the scholar Cata**, has become their latest victim. She journeys to the Gamma Center towers in hopes Cata is being held in its prison.

There is much to discover and learn in the towers. Will Marika find Cata? Will she learn what secrets the empire is keeping about the ancient cities? Only with your help will she ever know...



Game Overview

The player takes on the role of Marika, with the final goal of reaching the imprisoned Cata.

Marika begins in the “Gamma Center” Lobby Complex—a central hub to which four towers, North, East, South, and West, are connected. The towers are all locked. She must first find onyx key, which will grant access to the towers.

Once she gains access to the towers, she will need to search for Cata’s whereabouts. Each of the four towers has three levels: A, B, and C, for a total of twelve maps. Each map contains at least one administrator’s office that holds clues to both Cata’s location and the plots of the Vallan Empire. The map’s office must be looted in order to clear the map.

Marika will need to clear all of the A level maps to access the B levels, and all of the B level maps to access the C levels.

Be warned! The towers are well-guarded. There are many opponents and hazards, along with knowledge, weapons, and treasures.

Many books are scattered throughout the towers, from which Marika can spend experience points to gain useful skills. Experience points are earned by defeating opponents in combat, completing certain objectives, and uncovering lore about the game world.

Rumor has it gold is stored in the Gamma Center, hidden in secret chambers. Other treasures include powerful elixirs, weapons, and armor.

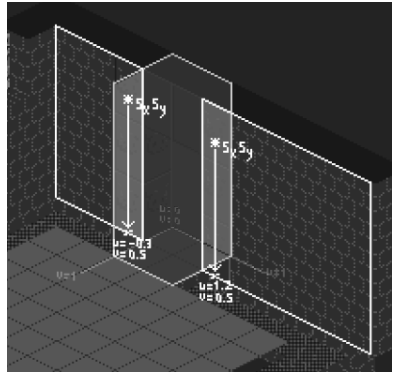
Can you help Marika find it all?



Game Engine Development

Development of Towers of Vallas began in August 2018 as an entry into *Gameboy Jam 6*. Developers are given 10 days to create a game reminiscent of a Gameboy cartridge game: four shades monochrome, 160 x 144 resolution, and chip sound.

However, development of the game engine began much earlier—the oldest incarnations date way back to 2015. “Vallas Engine” is a 2.5/3D isometric game engine built on top of Stencyl, a 2D platform. Much of the difficulty of programming the game stemmed from adding the extra dimension on top of Stencyl’s, while incorporating dynamic-casted shadows, lighting effects, and 3D physics.



Prior to Towers of Vallas, only one game has been created with any incarnation of this game engine: Temple of Idosra. This game was created as an entry into Stencyl Jam 16 in October 2016, and used a (at the time) new variation of the engine that allowed for gameplay—as opposed to simply displaying static test screens. Many sacrifices had to be made to create the game within the 10-day time limit. Even more sacrifices had to be made after five days were lost to Hurricane Matthew. The result was very simple, buggy, but a complete game that won an honorable mention.

Since then, many features were designed and included. Dynamic lighting was re-implemented. *edmap*, a 3D tile map editor and *VSEdit*, a multi-track sound effects mixer were built. Also introduced into the game was a spin-off of Utility AI, dubbed “Atomic AI” that powers NPC actions.

How to Play

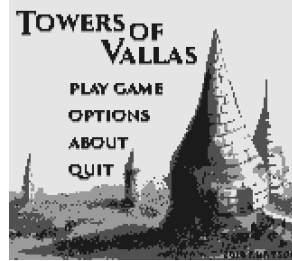
Getting Started

After booting up, the player is taken to the main menu, shown below. From the main menu, select **Play Game** to either start a new game or load a saved game.

Options allows the player to configure sound, resolution, and keyboard/gamepad controls.

About brings up the credits

Quit is self-explanatory.



The Play Game Menu

From the **Play Game** menu, the player can start a new game or load a saved game. If a game is already in progress, the option to resume can also be found.

By starting a new game or loading a saved game, the player will be brought to the **Select Slot** screen.

Five save slots are provided. Initially they will all be empty. There is no option to clear the contents of a save slot. Instead, starting a new game will write over any existing contents in the chosen save slot.



Every time the game is saved, a **Life Experience Level (LEv)** is computed. The life experience level does not affect the player. It is simply a way to help them remember how much progress they have made in that particular game.



Saving

There are two ways to save a game in progress. First, the player can find a **Save Point**. Save Points are represented as ankh statues. Save Points can be used any number of times, but they can't be moved to different locations. They are usually found near the starting point of a map.



Second, the player can find a **Save Book**. The Save Book has an ankh on its cover. The game will be saved at whatever location the book is read at. Each Save Book can only be used once, but there are several scattered throughout the game.

If Marika dies, the player will be given the option to restart the game (**Rebirth**) at the last save point—so the player should save often if they are not confident! When Marika is reborn, she will have full health.

Hint: The best time to use Save Books is when it is dangerous to return to the map's Save Point.



Configuration

The player can configure the sound and music volumes independently, as well as configure the resolution. The game is presented in classic 160 x 144 resolution. The game can be played in windows from 1x to 4x scale. The player can also choose to play in full screen. Full screen will move some of the HUD elements to the margins, and so will not run in the original aspect ratio.



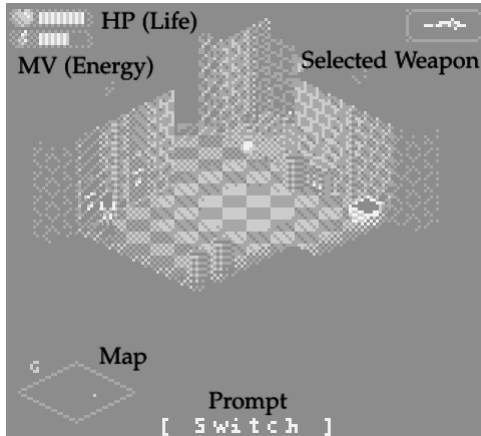
If necessary, the configuration file can be edited manually. Configuration options are stored in the **pconfig.xml** file within the game's data directory. Be careful editing any of the game's XML files. An improperly formatted file may prevent the game from starting up.

There is also the option to use a game controller. The game controller will need to be set up by completing a short survey, shown below:



The controller can be reconfigured at any time. The keyboard controls can also be reconfigured in a similar manner.

Main Play Screen



Marika can walk around, jump, interact with objects, and engage in combat. Her health (HP) are shown in the upper-left, along with energy (MV).

When Marika's HP bar is depleted, she will die. Don't let this happen!

Performing certain actions will deplete Marika's MV bar. When the bar is completely depleted, she will be exhausted. She will need to rest before the MV bar regenerates. Learning certain skills will help her recover faster.

If Marika is wearing heavy armor, she will be encumbered and the MV bar may not completely fill up. The player should decide between protecting her from damage or giving her more strength in combat.

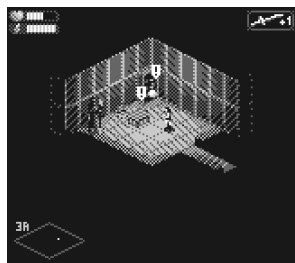
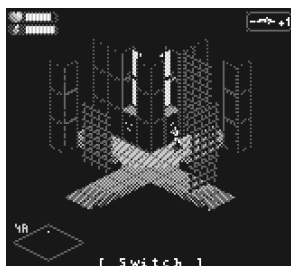
The current weapon is shown in the upper right. Some weapons shoot projectiles. For those, the number of remaining shots is shown here.

When the skill **Perception** has been learned, a map will show in the lower left. Initially, the map will only show Marika's position relative to the map borders. By learning new skills or conversing with certain NPCs, new features will be added to the map.

On the bottom of the screen is the prompt. If an item is displayed in brackets, the player can use the **Interact Key** (default: *enter*) to interact with the item shown. Common items are switches, containers, and save points.

Switches usually control gates, but may have other effects. Some switches require a key to operate. In order to use that switch, the key must be found.

Most keys are in the same map as the switch. But—three special keys: A, B, and C, are more difficult to find!



There are many containers in the towers. Containers come in the form of chests, bookcases, tables, counters, debris, and more. Each may contain valuable items to help Marika on her quest. The skill **Thievery** is very useful. It will alert the player with a ! flag when a container has an obvious content.

Thievery does not work on closed containers (such as closed chests), or on containers in **Secret Rooms**.

There are many other kinds of things for the player to interact with in the towers. Go explore!

Main Controls

The default keyboard keys can be reassigned in the **Configuration Menu**. Each of these controls, except for Hotkeys, can also be assigned a button on a gamepad controller.

Cursor Keys or WASD. Movement is 8-directional and from isometric perspective. (e.g. holding down LEFT + DOWN moves Marika south on the area grid)

Action 1. (*default: z*) Uses primary inventory item that is equipped (typically the melee weapon). Also can be used to select a highlighted menu option or inventory card.

Action 2. (*default: x*) Jump. The Jump skill must be learned first.

Interact. (*default: enter key*) When the player is near an item, a prompt at the bottom of the screen displays the item name. If the player strikes the interact key, a menu will pop up where the player can view a description of the item and a list of verbs to perform against it.

Inventory. (*default: i or escape*) Brings up the inventory screen. The player can select whatever inventory from their hammer-space to interact with. When an item is selected, a menu will pop up where the player can view a description of the item and a list of verbs to perform against it.

Pause. (*default: p*) Pauses the game with no menu displayed.

Next Weapon. (*default: l*) Cycle up through the weapons currently held.

Previous Weapon. (*default: l*) Cycle down through the weapons currently held.

1 - 9 Keys. The player can assign *Hotkeys* to perform certain actions. See the next section on Hotkeys.

Inventory Screen Controls

Inventory items are represented as cards, and can include non-tangible items. The player character is also represented as a card, which can be selected to examine stats or skills. The game is paused in this screen. Player actions in inventory screen are:

Cursor Keys or WASD. Move the highlight cursor up or down to select a card category, and left or right to select a card.



Interact. (default: enter key) to select the current item. This opens the card. Move the cursor left or right to select an action for that item.



Back. (default: escape or p) to go back to the previous menu (or return to game from main inventory screen).

Hotkeys

Before selecting an object action, the player can press one of keyboard 1-9 keys. This key can then be used as a shortcut to repeat the same action. Hotkeys are especially useful for elixirs and “book-marking” favorite weapons.

Example. Suppose you want Marika is running out of energy alot, so you want her to consume a ruby potion every time you press ‘1’.



Combat

Some thought is needed before the player sends Marika charging into battle. The tower guards are sneaky and they know how to put up a fight!

The most common attack is with a melee weapon. When Marika strikes, she can hit any nearby enemies she is facing. A crafty player can get several enemies to bunch up in front of her, so she can take out several at once!

At the start of the game, Marika is susceptible to crowds. Some enemies will try to circle around behind her, where she is most vulnerable.



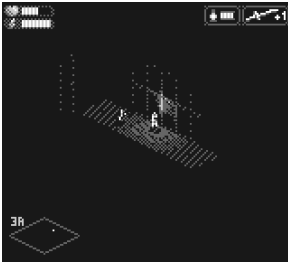
The player must also know when to retreat. A highly effective strategy is to move in for a swing, then step back.



When an opponent is struck, it will briefly be stunned. Enemies can also be confused if they lose sight of Marika. If a particular group of enemies is overwhelming, try stunning them then moving behind them. When they come to, they are likely to get confused and will be vulnerable to another attack.

Generally, the best strategy in large, open rooms is to move around a lot. Try not to get pinned against the wall by enemies. Marika can also be stunned if she is struck. When she is stunned, enemies may hit her multiple times.

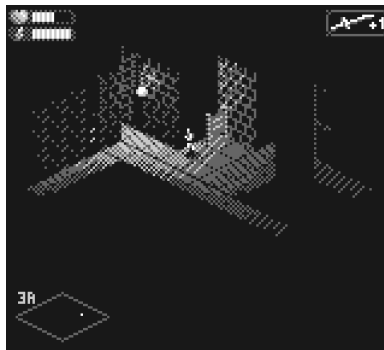
The skill **Resilience** will help reduce the odds that Marika will be stunned, and also how long she is stunned for.



In long, thin corridors enemies are unlikely to be able to surround Marika. These are easier to fight in, since Marika usually has the upper hand in one-on-one combat.

Be especially careful on bridges and other areas with drop-offs, or around spike traps. Enemies can be killed by pushing them off bridges, but they can do the same to Marika! Marika will die instantly if she falls into spikes, and will be heavily damaged if she tries to walk into them.

Rooms with multiple doors and branching corridors also present a special challenge. Some guards will keep an eye on neighboring rooms and move in when they see Marika! If the player wants to be careful, they shouldn't sprint past too many lines-of-sight at once.



Gaining Strength and Power

Marika's power is determined by three statistics:

Experience (EXP) determines Marika's intelligence. She gains experience by completing key objectives, uncovering lore about the game world, reading **Reward Books**, and defeating opponents in combat.

Marika will uncover **Skill Books** that teach skills. EXP can be spent to gain skills from these books. Generally, books with a higher EXP cost teach more powerful skills.

Constitution determines how many hits Marika can take before she dies. She starts the game with 20 hitpoints (HP). Her health and maximum health can be restored by various items scattered throughout the towers. The skill **Sanctuary** will allow her to take one more hit at 0 HP.

Energy determines how much Marika can exert before she poops out. She starts the game with 20 move points (MV). Attacking reduces MV. Resting regenerates MV. Heavier weapons are more powerful, but reduce MV faster. Items and skills can restore Marika's MV or even raise the maximum. If her MV falls to 0, she will be **Exhausted** and will need to rest.

Armor items encumber Marika. When Marika is encumbered, she will not regenerate all of her MV. This **Regeneration Cap** may be as low as half of her MV, which would mean half of her MV is permanently spent by wearing the armor.

Marika cannot wear armor items that reduce the regeneration cap to below half of the maximum. Early in the game the player may not be able to use all of the armor items they find. Elixirs or skills that raise Marika's max MV will allow her to use heavier armor items.

Toward the end of the game the player may find they have more than enough MV to wear all the armor and never become exhausted. The skill **Power** lets the player use the extra MV to deliver extra damage.

Helpful Items

There are four common elixirs which will help Marika on her quest to find Cata.

The **Emerald Elixir** restores health. If Marika has a lot of HP, she may need to drink multiple emerald elixirs to regain full health.

The **Sapphire Elixir** restores health to full and raises maximum life by 3 HP.

The **Ruby Elixir** restores energy to full and raises maximum energy by 3 MV.

The **Gold Elixir** temporarily doubles Marika's strength. Gold elixirs are rare, so they should be saved for urgent situations!

There are four common armor items. Armor can be encumbering. If Marika is too weak to wear all the armor she finds, the player should help her find some Ruby Elixirs!

The **Tunic** is Marika's best protection against strikes to her torso.

The **Bracers** protect Marika's wrists so an enemy's strike doesn't disarm her.

The **Boots** protect Marika's toes so she doesn't stub them on stairs.

The **Shield** is very heavy, but great for defending against enemy blows. Marika will need to learn **Shield Block** to know how to use it effectively.



There are also four common weapons. Weapons have a variety of damage and also a variety of speed. Enemies can be stunned when struck, so sometimes a faster weapon may sometimes be better than a powerful one.

Fists: Marika knows how to fist fight, but she's not great at it. She can swing very rapidly, but not hard.

The **Dagger** is quick to swing and deals a fair amount of damage.

The **Sword** is heavy and slow, but powerful.

The **Sling** is ineffective at close-range, but great for dispatching enemies from a safe distance. Marika will need to learn the skill **Marks-manship** in order to use the sling.

There is also a variety of helpful utilities. These are the common ones:

A **Lamp** is needed to see in the many dark areas in the towers.

The lamp burns oil, so look out for **Fuel**.

Gold is not required to beat the game, but will give you a better score at the end. Gold is only found in secret areas. Happy hunting!

Trash: One man's trash is another goat's treasure.



Hazards

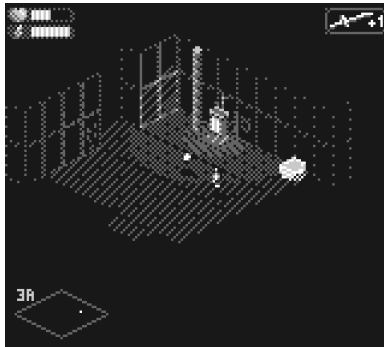
There are many hazards in the Gamma Center! The most obvious are the **guards**. Guards have a variety of abilities, but all of them are hostile. Success is found in learning how they behave and manipulating them to Marika's advantage.

Other hazards include:

Spikes are sharp and deadly. Falling into spikes will kill Marika instantly. Walking into spikes deals significant damage. Be careful!

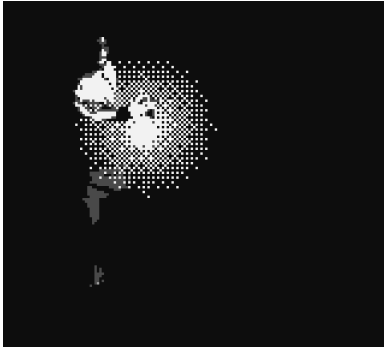
Pits: Parts of the Gamma Center are under construction or are connected by tall bridges. Don't fall off! Marika will need to learn how to **jump**.

Trapped Walls: Some rooms are booby-trapped. Be careful jumping into the unknown!



Some enemies also fire projectiles. Marika can attempt to block projectiles with the **Shield**, but she will need to be facing the shooter.

Darkness: Not deadly on its own, but good at concealing other hazards.



When the lamp is activated, a gauge next to the “Selected Weapon” icon will show how much fuel is left. The lamp does not consume fuel in lit rooms.

Rogue Rating

When you complete the game, Marika will give you a *Rogue Rating* based on how well she feels you guided her. Can you get a perfect score of 800 points?

Gaining experience, finding gold, and learning skills will raise your score. Dying will lower your score.

Reference

Skills

There are 25 skill books hidden in the towers. To read them, Marika must acquire the enough experience points to learn from the books. Experience points are spent when a skill is learned. There is approximately 225,000 experience points in the game, but it costs roughly 160,000 to learn from all of the books. Some skills become more powerful when Marika earns more experience, so it's still worthwhile to collect EXP after learning all of the skills.

Perception enables a mini-map in the bottom-left corner of the screen. The map shows Marika's position relative to the map borders. Skills and actions will add new features to this map once it is unlocked.

Exploration enables arrows which will alert the player to unexplored rooms in the map. This skill will help the player ensure they've explored everything. It is rumored some rooms are secret. Exploration will not alert the player to secret rooms.

Thievery will give Marika a keen eye for valuables. When this skill is learned, the player will be alerted to open containers that have useful items inside. Thievery will not work on closed containers, like chests.

Sanctuary will let Marika take an extra hit before dying. Normally when an opponent strikes Marika for more damage than she has HP, she will expire. Sanctuary will truncate the damage and bring her to 0 HP. If she is struck again in the 0 HP state before healing, she will die.

Perception 2 will add switches to the mini-map. When Marika finds a switch and does not have the key, it will be marked on the map. Once she finds the key, the marker will change color.

Parry will teach Marika to block enemy attacks with her melee weapon. She will have a chance to block an attack when she is

currently swinging. Parry will not block attacks if she is not swinging or struck from behind. Some weapons are better for parry than others.

Shield Block will teach Marika to use a shield when she is not attacking. If she equips a shield, she will block enemy attacks so long as she is standing still. Shield block will not work if she is struck from behind. Be warned! The shield is heavy and Marika may need to strengthen up before she can use it.

Jump will enable Marika to jump over pits and gaps in bridges. She won't get far without knowing how to jump effectively!

Marksmanship will teach Marika to use projectile weapons. The sling is particularly effective at dispatching foes from a distance. Projectile weapons are not good for blocking attacks, however. The player should be cautious not to leave Marika susceptible to damage.

Stamina raises Marika's max MV by 12 points and she will regenerate MV 20% faster.

Endurance raises Marika's max MV by another 12 points. The MV cost to use weapons also decreases so long as she is not tired (at less than half max MV)

Courage Marika will apply life experiences to summon the courage to fight more effectively. Her max MV will raise with experience.

Fitness Marika will apply life experiences to keep healthy and strong. Her max HP will raise with experience.

Sneak teaches Marika to move about more quietly. She is less likely to alert the tower guards to her presence if she is sneaky.

Backstab enables Marika to take advantage of distracted opponents. If she strikes an enemy who is facing away from her, she will deal much more damage. Backstab is particularly useful when combined with sneak, since an enemy is less likely to face toward her as she approaches.

Scout enables Marika to see farther. The player can use Action 4 + Move to see into a neighboring room.

Frenzy can be a real life-saver! Frenzy teaches Marika how to swing in a complete circle, striking opponents in all directions. While this skill will drain MV quickly, it is very helpful when Marika is surrounded by opponents.

Resilience reduces the time Marika is stunned after taking damage. It greatly reduces the odds Marika will be struck multiple times when fighting several enemies at once.

Recovery reduces the time it takes for Marika to recover from an exhausted state.

Fortitude Marika will apply life experiences to learn to be stronger. Increases the bonus awarded from Courage.

Robust Marika will apply life experiences to learn to be healthier. Increases the bonus awarded from Fitness.

Physical Prowess Marika will apply life experiences to learn to be even stronger. Increases the bonus awarded from Courage and Fortitude.

Vigorous Marika will apply life experiences to learn to be even healthier. Increases the bonus awarded from Fitness and Robust.

Power teaches Marika to use her strength to strike accurately. She will gain a small bonus to damage for each 8 max MV earned over her original 20 MV.

Charge teaches Marika how to use movement to add power to her attack. If she is moving toward an enemy when striking, the enemy will take much more damage.

Hints...

The recommended order of completing the towers is:

1. North A, West A, East A, South A
2. Return to the Lobby Complex
3. North B, West B, East B, South B
4. North C, West C, East C, South C
5. Return to the Lobby Complex
6. Cellar

Each of the level A and B tower maps has one Save Book. Try not to use any of them in the A maps. They'll be more useful in the B maps.

The Sanctuary skill book can be found in a secret room in the lobby complex. You'll definitely want this skill before moving on to the A level maps. It has a high cost compared to the other lobby complex skills. You may want to learn the other skills first. Marika will gain a lot of experience points by reading the lore items in the lobby complex office, once she breaks in.

True or Not True...

There is a secret tower accessible from a broken bridge

The secret to electricity generation can be found in the towers

There are ghosts in the East Tower

The Black Elixir is said to empower those who are reborn

Watch out for green bats!

Beta Tester Feedback

Your responses to these questions would be appreciated and will help to improve the game!

1. What did you like about the game?
2. What did you not like about the game?
3. What aspects of the game can be improved?
4. Were you satisfied with the flexibility of the controls?
5. How easy was the game to pick up and learn to play?
6. Did you run into any fatal bugs (“Green Screen of Death” with four-digit code)?
7. Would you like to be added to the list of beta testers in the credits? If so, write the name and/or country, US state you would like to include.