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adventure



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Bilestoad
is the only thing
worth living...

...or dying for!

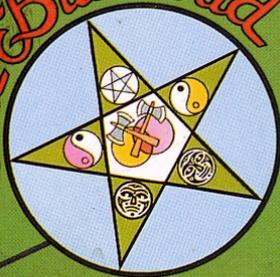
by Mangrove Earthshoe
Can you survive THE BILESTOAD?
Experience barbaric battles in a
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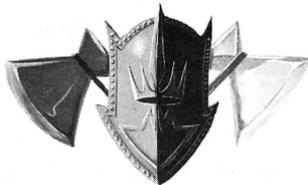
The Bilestoad™



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The Bilestoad

The Bilestoad



by Mangrove Earthshoe

Illustrated by
Martin Cannon

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Warning

This program is rated PG. It deals with violence in an explicit manner. It is not intended for children, and parents should decide whether it is suitable for small users.

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Introduction

Life was pretty bleak by the end of the twenty-fifth century. The cities had long since grown together from over-population. The one city-state was suffering from widespread poverty. Bored, frustrated people filled the walkways. Housing was limited and filthy. No one starved, thanks to total automation, but not very many people lived fulfilled lives.

Tension was at a peak. Mobs of people with nowhere to go roamed around, wreaking havoc on property and on their fellow men. They had no jobs, no money, and nothing useful to offer a world that treated them like excess baggage.

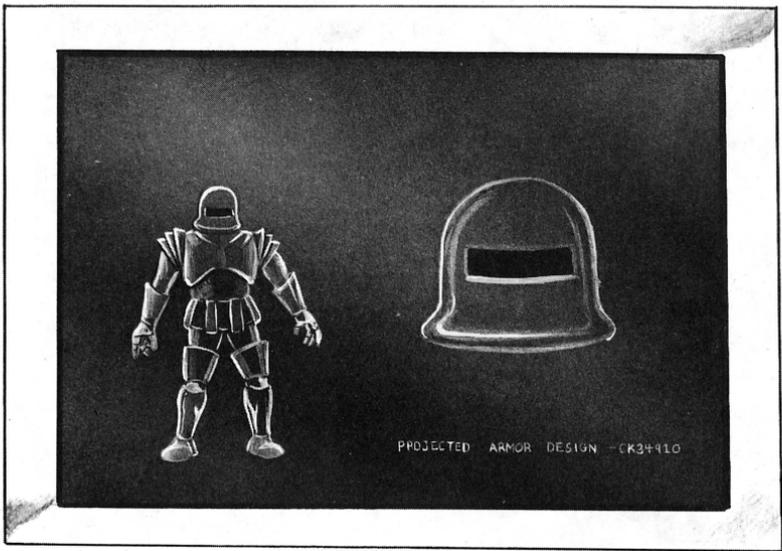
The city controller computers were worried. If trends continued on their present course, the city would be engulfed in holocaust. The mobs were at the breaking point between frustrated apathy and psychotic violence. It was plain that drastic change was needed.



Temporary measures were put into effect. Priority was given to the manufacturers of luxury items, in the hope that a higher standard of living would lull the masses. Even in the latter half of the twenty-fifth century, computers were fairly ignorant of human psychology. Those who felt that the masses were useless burdens were aggravated by the attempt to coddle them, and those that felt bitterness toward society were appalled at the blatant attempt to treat a symptom, while ignoring the disease that was infecting the entire planet.

The computers analyzed their mistake. It was apparent that the cause of human misery had to be eliminated. Extermination was considered, but quickly rejected as being too drastic. The computers did all they could. They studied human history in an attempt to understand the root causes of mob revolution.

The results were helpful. They had discerned the reasons behind the pique of the people. They understood that man's ego demands a sense of recognition. They knew that man's aggressions, when suppressed, would blaze forth in a phoenix of destruction. Thus, deriving the most economical and effective method of quelling the populace remained their task.



They went back over human history looking for a solution. They found pieces of the answer everywhere. From the Japanese Samurai tradition, from the Dark Ages, from the armies and religions of the world, they culled the symbols of humanity. They gave the world a stage where people could compete with each other, a place where man could succeed or fail on his own merits. They gave man the Bilestoad.

Everyone knew that the Bilestoad didn't really exist. Not in the reality of man, anyway. Still, reality is a product of perception. For the average young street thug tucked away in a warrior's booth, like a foetus in the womb, reality was not a valid concern. Running for shelter, the yayger hot on his heels. . . Blood oozing from the wound on his shoulder. . . The sweet perfume of roses mixed with the smell of fear. . . The salty taste of his own blood. . . What difference did it make whether a computer was taking orders directly from your brain, and feeding perception back to you? Sure, there was no world out in space on which to fight, but very few people seemed to mind. Those that did mind were usually too intellectual to be a threat to the city controller computers, anyway.

Most never got beyond the level of battle. For them it was enough to hack away at an opponent. An opportunity to release their anger and cleanse their souls was all they needed. They could wash themselves in blood. The mobs were quelled and quieted.

For those with a more intellectual turn of mind, the Bilestoad offered a unique chance to compete and explore. It gave them a chance to rise through the ranks and become masters. They could pass through the crowds like priests, the captains of the new world. They attained the respect they felt they needed.

Welcome to the Bilestoad, a world of half reality and half nightmare.

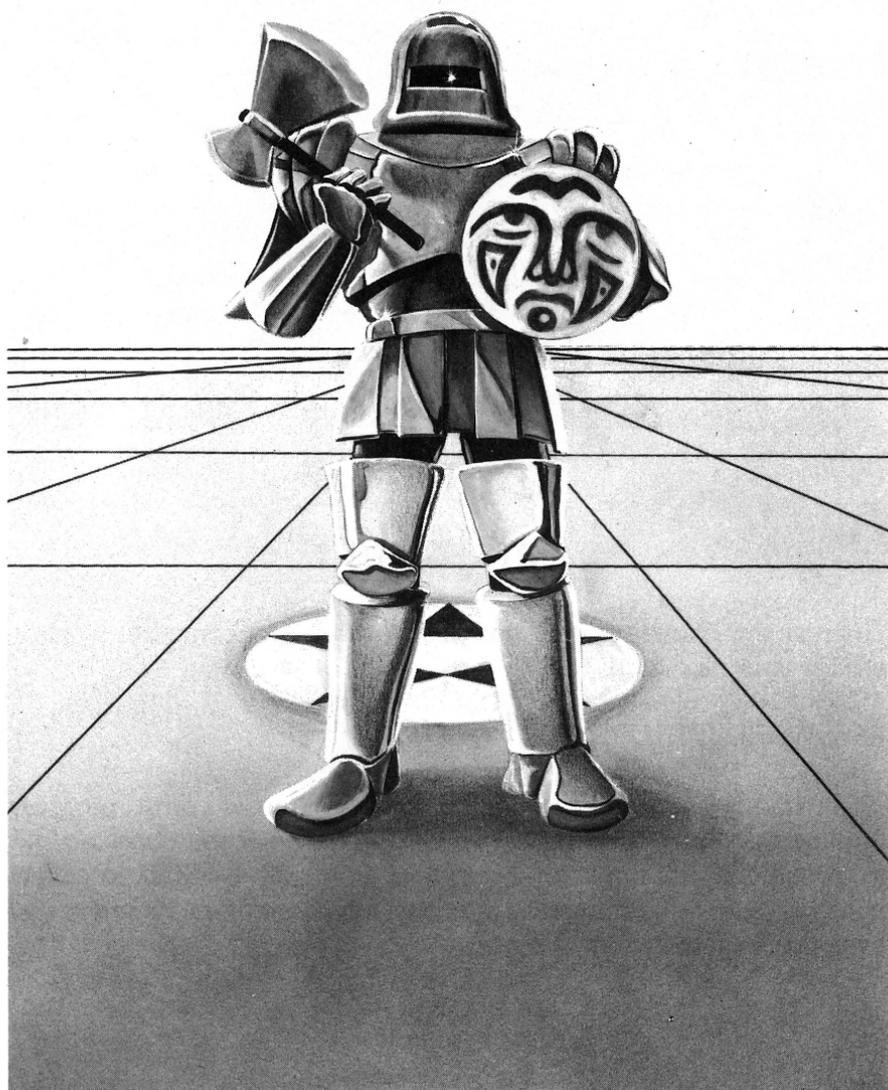


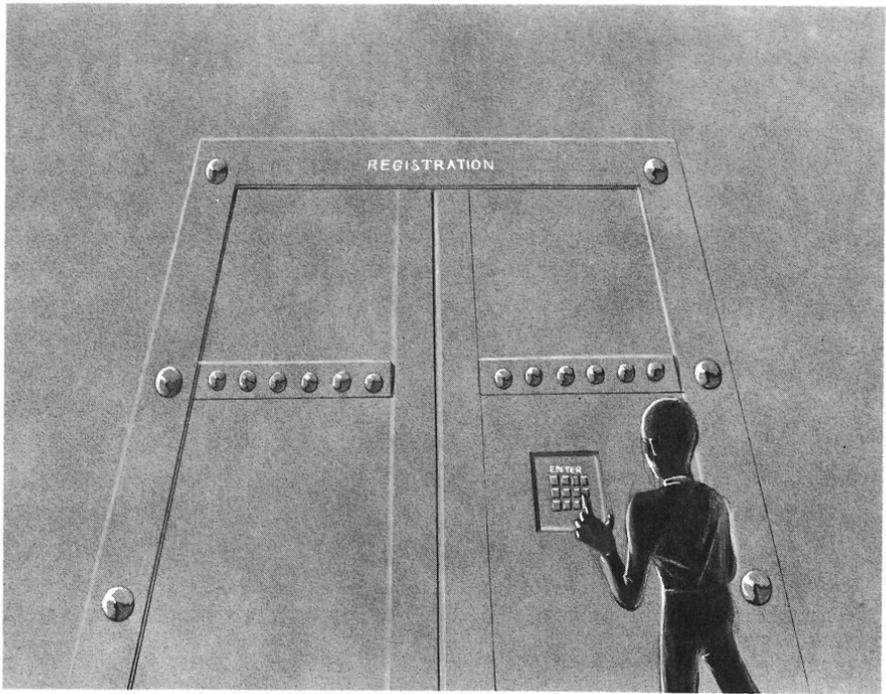
Elements of the Bilestoad

The Bilestoad is a malevolent sort of amusement park where human nature can be vented without risking personal damage. This is accomplished by using computer simulated proxies, called "meatlings," which are under your control. The meatlings are classified into alignments by rank. The more highly ranked player is designated the "yayger." The lower ranked player (or both players if they are of equal rank) is designated the "forsher."

The battleground of the meatlings is one of a number of islands on the world of the Bilestoad. The ocean which surrounds the island serves as a natural boundry. Each island is a rectangular meadow, featureless except for a strain of weedy flowers and irregularly spaced grid lines that mark off the island.

The final elements of the battleground are the "shyben." There are four types of shyben; "springers," "loyfers," "mondstralls," and the "zonenstrall." Each kind of shyben serves a different purpose.





Registration

To enter the Bilestoad, you must first register. The computer will first ask for your password:

PASSWORD (RETURN FOR ROBOT) ?

This password is your secret name which will allow you to progress through the ranks. All characters you type will be echoed back as "X" for security. If you make an error while typing, hit CTRL-X to cancel your input. *All* other characters are considered part of your input string, even the back-arrow.

Next, the computer will ask you for your class code:

CLASS (RETURN FOR ZERO LEVEL) ?

This is a three letter code group which describes your rank. It is different for different passwords, so that no one can tell your level by looking at it.

If you have never played before, just hit return in response to the class code input. The computer will then display your beginner level class code.

If your input class code does not match your password (because of an input error, or because you were trying to discover a higher level code group through guesswork) the computer will tell you that you have made an incorrect entry, and the registration for that player will repeat from the beginning.



Control of the Meatling

The meatling is controlled with a combination of keys on the keyboard as well as with the buttons on the game paddles. The meatling walks forward, in the direction in which its torso is facing when the button is depressed. Button zero controls player one, and button one controls player two.

The body of the meatling is controlled with a group of keys. Body control is broken into three processes. The axe arm can be turned clockwise, counterclockwise, or stay the same. The shield arm can also be turned clockwise, counterclockwise, or stay the same. Finally, the head (and often the whole body) can also be turned.

Two groups of keys on the keyboard control the two meatlings. These groups are:

PLAYER ONE	Counter-clockwise			Stop	Clockwise			PLAYER TWO
	Counter-clockwise	Stop	Clockwise		Counter-clockwise	Stop	Clockwise	
Axe	Q	W	E		I	O	P	Axe
Head	A	S	D		K	L	;	Head
Shield	Z	X	C		,	.	/	Shield

The top row of keys controls the axe. The center row of keys controls the head. The third row of keys controls the shield.

The first column means "counterclockwise." The second column means "stop." The righthand column means "turn clockwise." Therefore, to bring the axe out on player one, I would hit the "Q". To turn counterclockwise I would hit "A". To stop the arm from moving, I would hit "W".

These processes are totally independent. This means that it is possible to turn, move the arm, walk, and move the shield all at the same time. If you hit the keys one at a time, a fairly high rate of commands can be transferred in a very short time. The best way to practice is to sign on to both players, and practice moving one of the meatlings around.





Additional Features

The computer will control one or both meatlings if a "RETURN" is input as the password, during player registration. This will allow you to practice against a robot or to watch a robot duel. Robots always have a higher rank than humans.

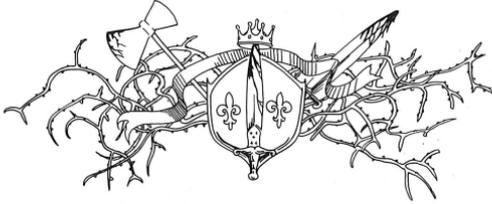
Hitting "ESC" during the course of play will cause the game to pause. Play will resume after any key is hit.

Hitting CTRL-S during the course of play will toggle the sound on/off.

There are 44 islands for the 39 levels of beginning play. The double master game, the robot-master game, and the double robot game, all create new islands for continuing excitement.

Hitting CTRL-R during the course of play will restart the game.

If the robots become deadlocked during demonstration battle, the standard keyboard controls can be used to break them up. "A", "D", "K", and ";" are especially effective.



Appearance and Function of Elements

Meatling in Body Armour



Player one has orange body armour. Player two has aqua body armour.

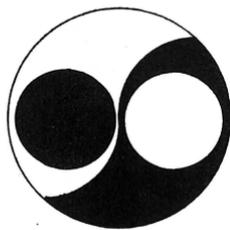
Four Types of Shyben with Functions

Springer



This is the most basic type of shyben. There are eight of these on each island. When the meatling steps on the active area of a springer, he is teleported to the springer of the same color, elsewhere on the island.

Loyfer



While the meatling stands on the active area of the loyfer, both skim along at an accelerated rate of speed, in the direction the meatling is facing. The rate of speed is determined by whether the color of the meatling's body armour matches one of the colors in the loyfer. If the colors match, the rate of speed is greater than if the colors don't match.

Mondstrall



The mondstrall is the symbol of man's darker nature. The yayger is beamed in on the mondstrall at the start of each round. Stepping on one is an automatic forfeit, and the opponent is awarded points for a major objective.

Zonenstrall



The zonenstrall is the symbol of man's lighter nature. There is only one zonenstrall on each island. The forsher scores a major objective for stepping on one. He is also beamed in on the zonenstrall at the start of each round. The yayger scores a minor objective for stepping on the zonenstrall.

Objectives

As detailed before, a meatling is classified as either a forsher or a yayger. The yayger is the representative of man's darker nature. At the start of each round, he is beamed in on the mondstrall. His major objective is to kill his opponent. He scores a minor objective for standing on the zonenstrall.

The forsher is the representative of man's lighter side. At the beginning of each round, he is beamed in on the zonenstrall. His major objective is to escape on the zonenstrall. He scores a minor objective for killing his opponent.

A meatling is killed when he suffers a certain number of blows. He is also killed when he is decapitated.

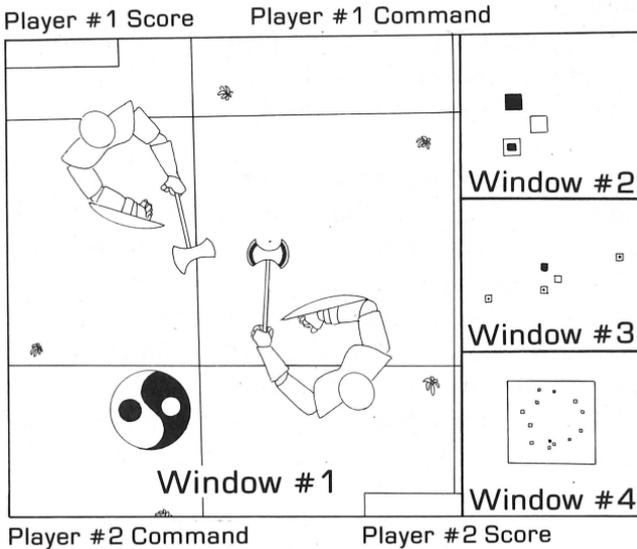
A round is over when either a minor or a major objective is scored. The meatlings move to the next island after each round. A game consists of five rounds. At the end of each game, the player with the most points may be promoted.

Scoring is as follows:

Major objective	5570
Minor objective	1130
Taking a hit	-70
Losing any limb ..	-430

The Screen

The screen is broken into four windows:



RADAR SYMBOLS

Player #1 ■

Shyben □

Player #2 □

Blood, Limbs ■

Window #1 is the main view from above.

Window #2 is the same view, but from 4 times the height of window #1.

Window #3 is the same view, but from 4 times the height of window #2.

Window #4 is from twice the height of window #3, and serves as a map view of the entire island.

When the two meatinglings are close to each other, the view is centered on the point halfway between the two meatinglings. When they are out of range, the view focuses on one meatingling, and switches back and forth at regular intervals. Note that time passes for you and you are still moving, even if you are off screen. In a one player game, the view always focuses on the human.

How to Use the Screen

At first glance the screen looks very confusing. Four complex pictures are presented to you, each with its own meaning and interpretation. Don't be intimidated. Only one of the pictures is needed at any given time. With a little experience, it is fairly easy to decide which picture to use, and gain an understanding of the system.

Windows one, two and three all focus on the same point. This point may be one of the players, or the point between the players. If both players are on the main screen, then both players will be on all the windows. If only one player is on the main screen, then the center of the screen is focused on the player, and the other player may or may not appear on the second and third screens. Windows two and three will also be focused on the player shown on the main screen. The fourth window is the exception to the rule. It is focused on the island itself, and is not affected by the position of the players. It functions as a map view.

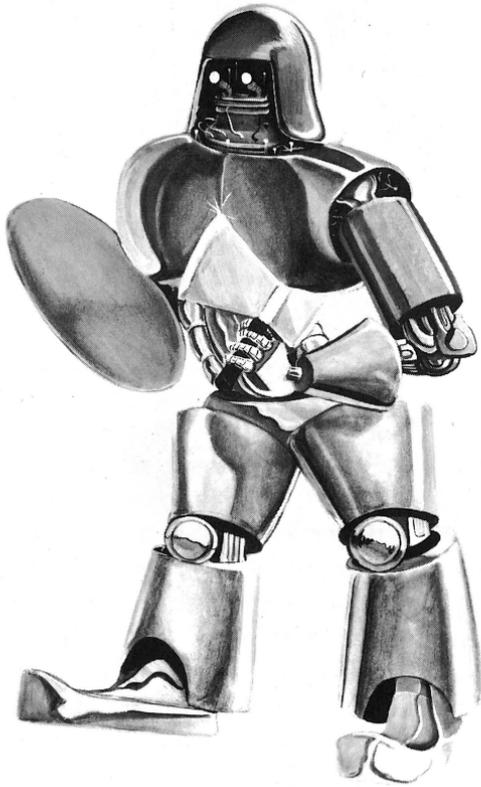
When a player is beamed in, he will also be beamed in on all the windows. It is important to watch the fourth screen to see where on the island he is beamed. Also, when moving with a springer, watch the map (window four) to see where on the island you are beamed. If you follow these simple rules, you will always know where you are in relation to the other player, and to the shyben.

Use window three or four when you decide to walk to a shyben. Pick one that is close. When your meatling appears on the main screen, turn him so that he is pointing in the direction of the shyben. When you are pointing in the right direction, make sure your command is "NO CHANGE" so that you don't turn accidentally. Then, you can walk and follow your progress on the other windows. When you get close enough to the shyben, it will appear on another window, i.e. when you get close enough to it on the fourth window it will appear on the third, when you get close enough to it on the third it will appear on the second, and when you are close enough to it on the second window it will appear on the main screen. Each time you get close to the shyben on the window you are watching, look for it on the next window. You

will probably need to repoint your meatling several times to come close to the shyben. Eventually, you will get it on the main screen. Then you will be able to use it or to pass it by.

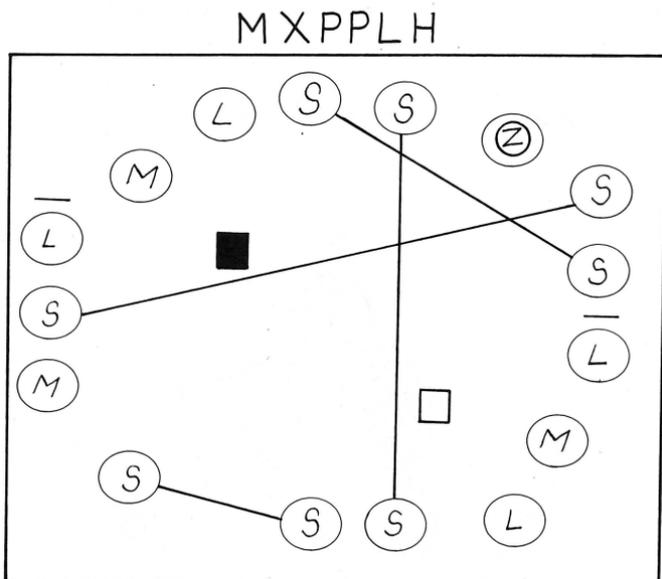
It's possible to accidentally pass the shyben by when the other player is on the screen. Your meatling continues to walk even when you cannot see him. Fortunately, the view shifts often enough to keep a good idea of where you are located.

Once again, the windows are easy to use when you know which one to watch. This will come with experience. The best way to practice is to sign on to both players, and then just wander around with one of them. This will help you avoid being slaughtered by the robot.



Advice to the Beginner

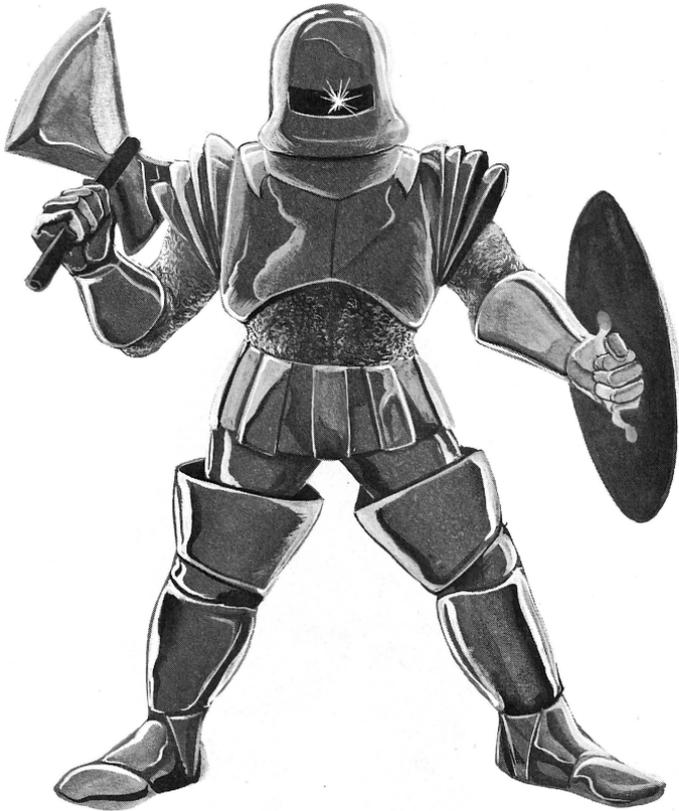
The most important point is to *WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN!* When you get promoted, write down your new code group, so you don't forget it. Also, be sure to map out each new island so that you will be able to tell where everything is on subsequent games. I have found the following system of mapping to be very effective:



When I first get to a new island, I draw circles where all the shyben are. Then, I fill in the circles as I get the chance. 'M' is mondstrall, 'Z' is zonenstrall, 'S' is springer, and 'L' is loyfer. I circle the zonenstrall twice so that it stands out more. The springers are connected with lines to show the jump links, and the loyfers of a certain color have lines over them so that I can tell them apart. I also add the starting position of the two meatlings, and label the map with the name of the island, for later reference. You may decide to map differently, or find a better way, but I hope this method will help you to get started.

Good luck!





The Forsher/Yayger Relationship

The player of higher rank is the yayger. It is assumed that he has more experience than the forsher. The sequence of islands is selected on the basis of the yayger's rank. This means that the yayger is familiar with the sequence of islands. He should know by this time where most of the important shyben are. He can keep the forsher from finding the zonenstrall if he can force enough battles.

The forsher is not as familiar with the island as the yayger is. If he is to win, he must search the island and locate the zonenstrall.

If the yayger is of a master level, the sequence of islands is selected by the forsher's rank. This means that both players will be familiar with the islands, and it will be even harder for the master to force enough conflicts to win, before his opponent can reach the zonenstrall.

If both players are of equal rank, they will both be forshers. This means that they get the same points for all their actions. If they just want to battle to the death, then they can do so on equal footing. It should be noted, however, that a forsher will still get about five times as many points for escaping as he would for killing his opponent.

Consequently, battle should be avoided by all but yaygers, and those with no desire to win.



How to Beat the Robot

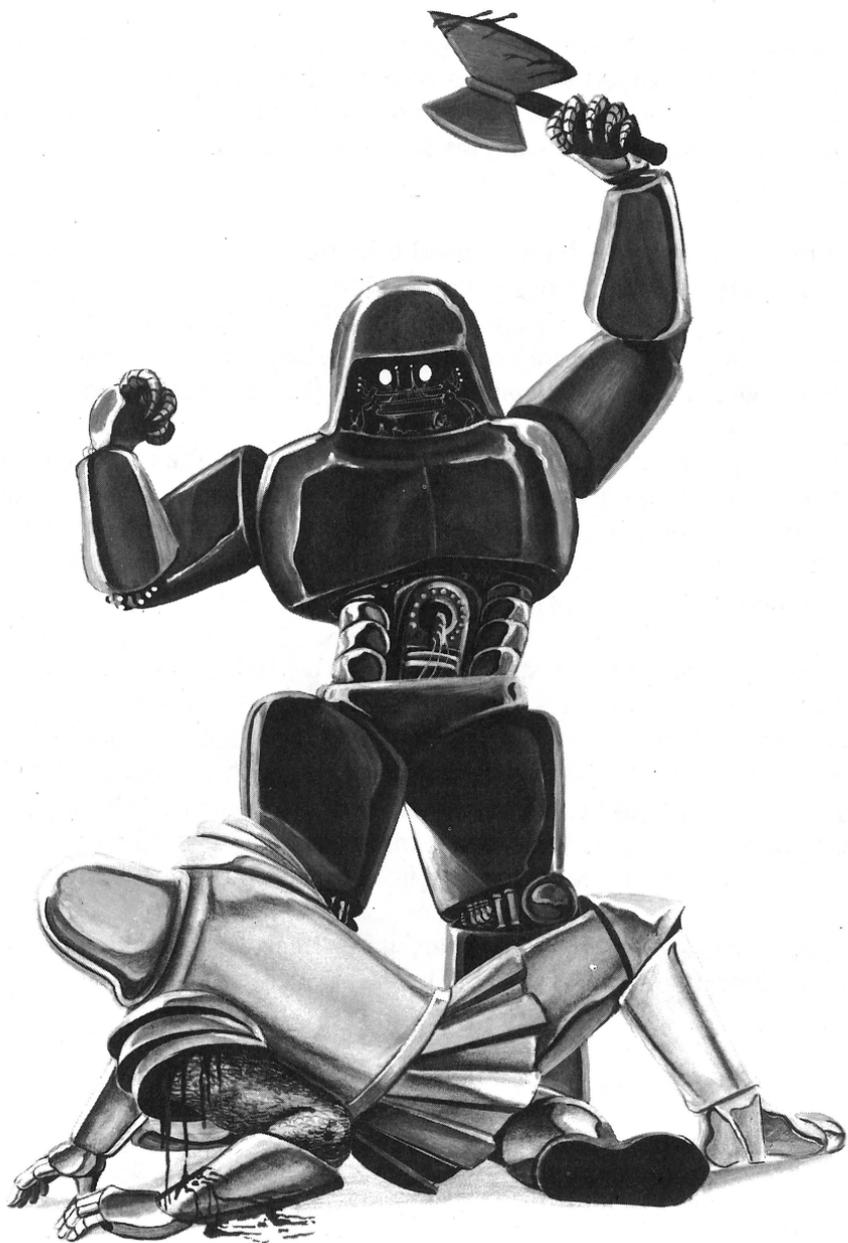
This section is for people who would like to become masters, and just can't figure out where to start.

Beating the robot is quite simple, really. All you need to do is to play along your alignment. You have noticed that the robot is always the yayger. There are two reasons for this. The first is that it is very difficult to kill the robot. He will usually beat even the best players. If you want to win, you must avoid battle with the robot.

The second reason is that the robot always has a perfect knowledge of each island. This is in keeping with the spirit of the forsher/yayger relationship detailed earlier. If the robot was the forsher, there would be absolutely no way to win. The robot would always walk straight to the zonenstrall, and it would always get there before you could stop it.

So, to win, all you have to do is avoid battle. Run away from the robot. Run towards a shyben. When you get to the shyben, use it. Escape with a springer. Get away with a loyfer. Win with the zonenstrall. Pass by the mondstrall, and run to a different shyben. Search the entire island, shyben by shyben, until you find the zonenstrall. Then, step on it and win.

When you become familiar with the controls and the screen you will consistently be able to beat the robot.



Master Level Games

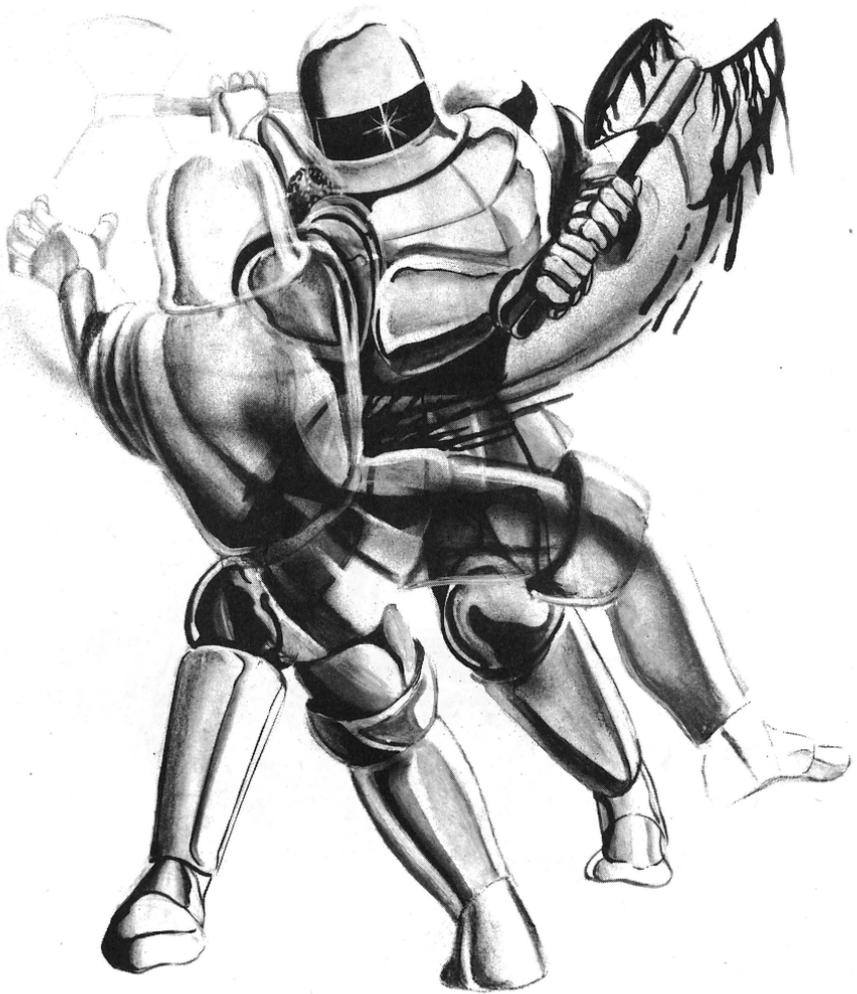
The Bilestoad is a non-structured game. This means that many different games can be played within the framework of the game. When the system is fully understood, interesting and novel uses for the elements can be created. A few examples follow to serve as an inspiration to your quest.

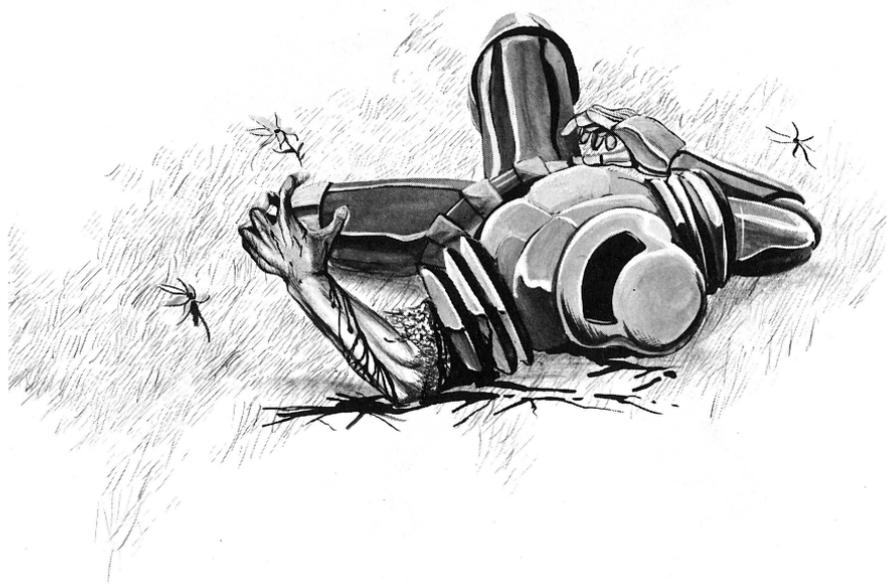
By this time you may have noticed that the shyben are governed by rules of precedence. In other words, when two more shyben occupy the same space, and the meatling simultaneously enters the active areas of both shyben, only one of the shyben will be activated. The shyben which is activated will be the one closest to the ground.

The first example of a master level game follows. Take a loyfer and place it under the zonenstrall. The loyfer has precedence over the zonenstrall. Later if you dismember one of your opponents during battle, the loyfer will prevent him from using the zonenstrall. You will then have another chance to finish him off.

Another example of a master level game is one which takes advantage of the fact that springers have precedence over loyfers. The robot always runs to a specific loyfer. If you beat the robot to his loyfer, and run over a springer, you will be beamed to another springer and the loyfer will be parked on the springer. You can now wait for the robot to transport over, as it will when it tries to use its loyfer. Several interesting strategies can be developed from this premise.

If you come up with any other interesting games, I'd love to hear about them. Drop me a line in care of Datamost.







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