



Espresso Moka



Welcome to *Espresso Moka*

This is an interactive fiction: in interactive fiction you control the main character. His challenges, and his choices, are yours.

Interactive fiction tells you the beginning of a story. Then it puts you in charge and lets you decide what your character should do. You type commands for the main character to carry out, and the story replies by telling you what happens next. Think of the rooms as your setting, and the objects you find as the props.

Part of your role is to help the main character overcome obstacles to his progress: solving problems, working out what is going on in the story, discovering ways to reach new locations and tools. That aspect of interactive fiction is like a game.

And part of your role is to help him make decisions. Interactive fiction may have multiple endings, subject to your choices. That aspect is like a story, but an open-ended one.



Francesco: you

> EXAMINE ME

A guy, about 30 years old, with blond hair and blue eyes.

You work as a software engineer, enjoy photography and love hiking in the mountains.

In love with your girlfriend, very beautiful, but also shrewish when something doesn't go her way. In the end you always please her and she appreciates it.

Monica sometimes calls you Ciccio.

You wear a black t-shirt, a pair of beige pants and a pair of blue sneakers.



Monica: your girlfriend

> LOOK AT MONICA

Tall, slim with lots of slightly reddish, frizzy hair and sparkling green eyes.

Could you not fall in love with her?

A peppy girl, she won't forgive you anything you do that she doesn't like, but deep down she has her heart beating for you.

You got used to shortening her name to Mo.

She wears a pair of jeans, a striped camisole and a pair of shimmering gold sneakers.

She also wears a shiny black handbag.



Marco: the coffee shop manager

> X MARCO

A man aged about 45 with a slightly heavyset build, with short brown hair and brown eyes.

You are not his friends, but you know each other because you are his regular customers. And by now he knows your taste in coffee.



MOKA is the best friend of those
who love a Italian coffee.



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and aso set of tools & that gow gov into a real ritual.

How to play

Interactive fiction understands many common verbs, as well as the names of objects that appear in the story. Most of what you type will have the pattern:

> ACTION OBJECT

You may want to start by familiarizing yourself with your environment. You'll receive a description of your surroundings each time you enter a new room. If you'd like to reread this description, you can see it again by typing

> LOOK

You can also read more about individual objects or people by typing, for instance,

> EXAMINE ME

which returns information about yourself, or

> LOOK AT MONICA

to discover more about your girlfriend. Since you will be using it frequently, that EXAMINE command can also be abbreviated to just plain X, like:

> **X TABLE**

Soon you may want to explore a bit. Often you can move by typing compass directions:

> **GO NORTH**

for instance, or just N. It is common, though not universal, to understand eight compass directions as well as IN, OUT, UP and DOWN. The “status bar” line at the top of the screen contains information about where you are, as well.

Instead of using compass directions you can use the name of the room where you want to go, also without specifying the GO verb:

> **GO TO SHOP**

> **COFFEE-SHOP**

The items you find are props you can use to make things happen. Many of them work in the way you might expect, given your experiences in daily life; others have special properties unique to the story. Many of these you will be able to TAKE, DROP, or PUT ON or IN other objects.

> **TAKE MOKA**

> **DROP SHOPPER**

> **PUT COFFE ON TABLE**

> **PUT WALLET IN LEFT POCKET**

Once you've acquired a few objects, you can also

> **TAKE INVENTORY**

(or just type I for short) and get a list of things you're carrying.

There's lots to do with objects besides move them around, of course. Some can also be worn, eaten, opened, unlocked, and so on. Devices can be turned on and turned off. Topics of study can be looked up in books and reference works.

In addition to objects, you may encounter other characters. These may have all sorts of roles, some of them are there to talk to. You can:

- > **KISS MONICA**
- > **SHOW CARD TO THE SELLER**
- > **SAY HELLO TO MARCO**

It is possible to **ASK** a person **ABOUT** some topic or some thing; **TELL** a person **ABOUT** a topic; **RESPONSE** some text **TO** someone.

The conversation starts when you **GREET** a person: from this point you can omit the person you are talking to the command; you can simply type **HI** to start the conversation with a random person in the room who is not Monica.

Some examples are:

- > **ASK ABOUT ARABICA BLEND**
- > **ASK ABOUT MOUSTACHE**
- > **ANSWER CLASSIC**

Words that express ways of doing something (like QUICKLY or QUIETLY) are generally not useful in the game and will not be understood.

You do not usually need to refer to specific body parts: so not HIT THE DOOR WITH MY FIST, but just HIT THE DOOR.

If the game asks you a question, like “Which horse do you mean, the white horse or the brown horse?”, you may answer with just the name of the object you prefer. In this case, >BROWN HORSE would be a good reply.

You can ask another character to do something, naturally not everyone will be willing to obey your commands!

> MONICA, KISS ME

Please note the comma, which is mandatory.

There are also some system command:

> **SAVE**

Save a file containing your current game position; you can resume the game to that point writing:

> **RESTORE**

You can also take back your last move with

> **UNDO**

or you can repeat it with

> **AGAIN**

To save a transcript file of your game session issue the command

> **SCRIPT**

and terminate the transcript with

> **SCRIPT OFF**



Some useful strategies

Examine everything. Even if there are many things in the room, try to examine each one, at least once. Be systematic.

Notice which objects the game is focussing your attention on, and which seem to be background or scenery. (If it looks like the most important thing in the room, it probably is. If the game says it's not important, it probably isn't.)

Try to interact with things. Use common sense. If you see a button, push it. If you find a flute, play it. And “take” anything that you can possibly lift.

Remember that you cannot carry an infinite number of items with you, so wear what you can, if you have containers (pockets, backpacks, plates...) put some items in them.

If you try a command on an object, and you get a distinctive response, your ears should perk up. It means you're on the right track. Maybe you have to try a related command, or change something else in the

environment, or bring a second object in somehow. Maybe you won't be able to complete the action until later in the game. But it's important.

Notice when the game is leading you towards a specific command. If the game says "You could probably bend the bars," then "bend bars" is worth trying.

Pay attention to common elements. If you find rubies and emeralds, look for red and green places to sell, put, or drop them. If a machine is made of brass, look for a brass part to add to it. If a door is barred by shimmering silver light, look for anything that magically glows with a similar light.

When you find something which moves by itself, hang out and watch it for a while. You may need to understand its entire range of movement.

During the game SAVE and RESTORE frequently to avoid the need to starting over time and again. You should save the game every time you approach a new obstacle, and every time immediately after you (finally) solve the problem.



The author

Hi, I'm Roberto, and I'm a boomer, as my kids say.

Ever since I was a little kid, I've loved taking photos, following in my dad's footsteps. I kept all my photos in a drawer for a long time, but recently I had the chance to show them off at some exhibitions in different places in Italy.

I started programming computers in 1981 with a Texas Instruments calculator. It was just a game at the time, but it's now become my job!

I also love trying new things in my spare time. Last year I discovered the Inform 7 language and fell in love with it.

The main character in this story is a bit like me! He loves to take photos and go hiking in the mountains.

But this isn't an autobiography.

The story behind this story

March 2020

During the pandemic lockdown, I wrote a BBS system that looks like the ones I used in the early '90s but using more contemporary systems: C#, Entity Framework, Maria DB and a Raspberry Pi 2 as host.

I thought that a game should be great in it, why not an adventure game? They were very popular in those years.

Fortunately, the lockdown was over. Due to lack of time, the BBS project was shelved.

August 2023

In a small town in the Ahrntal, the northernmost valley in Italy, with my family. It was raining.

The kind reception girl points us to our room, in another building across the street: "If you don't want to get wet, you can go through here" and points us to a staircase.

We descend the staircase, which is covered with green carpet with rocking horses drawn on it.

Unbelievably, there was a whole world to discover down there: a reading room with a small library, a well-equipped gym, game stations, billiards, table tennis...

The walls were lined with showcases containing toy horses of various origins, from the smallest to those too big for a child to ride.

I take out my smartphone and start taking pictures; there are also mirrors to "play" with. "Playing", I think, what a great setting for an adventure game!

In the evening, I begin to explore the Internet to see if there are any examples I can take inspiration from, and to my amazement, I discover that entire development systems for such programs still exist, recently updated. I also find a very strange language, Inform7, download it and greedily read the manual.

I carried out various tests and I started a story called "The house of the rocking horses", never completed, to learn how the system works.

Into the reader's mind

A problem arises.

I have been interested in photography for many years and my experience allows me to visualise the result before taking the picture.

But in the case of a written text, how can I know what image it will create in the reader's mind?

To try to find out, I took fragments of text from the story and used them as prompts for text-to-image generation tools; I got hundreds of images, some of which illustrate this and the other manuals that come with the game.

One of these, generated with a specially modified prompt, is the cover art for this game.



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This booklet contains instructions to quickly start the game on your PC.

Espresso Moka

An everyday life puzzle by Roberto Ceccarelli

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