



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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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 informations 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

You can also make virtual use of your other senses, e.g. listening

> LISTEN

Or you can decide to use your sense of smell

> SMELL

> SMELL MONICA

In the case of food and drink, you can try to taste them

> **TASTE COFFEE**

Sometimes it is worth stopping and thinking, maybe some good ideas will come out of it.

> **THINK**

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

Or also you can go ahead or returning back

> AHEAD

> GO BACK

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 COFFEE 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.





BUY A MOKA FOR COFFEE

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.

Some examples are:

- > ASK ABOUT ARABICA BLEND
- > ASK ABOUT MOUSTACHE
- > ANSWER CLASSIC
- > ASK MONICA ABOUT MAKING COFFEE

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 shopper do you mean, the white shopper or the brown shopper?”, you may answer with





just the name of the object you prefer.

In this case,

> BROWN SHOPPER

would be a good reply.

During the game, you can use the command

> VERBS

This will give you a long list of commands that the game knows.

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

> MONICA, KISS ME

> SELLER, TAKE MOKA

Please note the comma, which is mandatory.



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System commands

> 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

At any time you can ask for help typing

> HELP



Some useful strategies

Examine everything. Even if there are many things in the location (usually called "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.

In the 2023 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 stay with his pretty (and smart) mate.

But this isn't an autobiography.



The story behind this story

August 2023

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

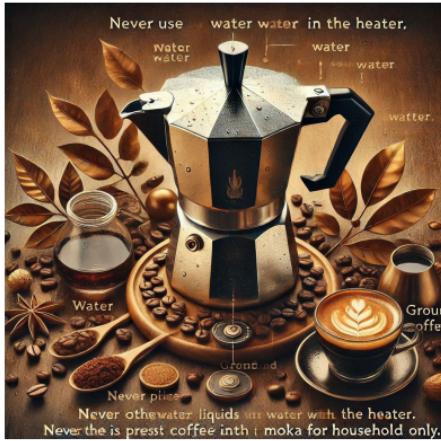
The kind reception girl points us to our room, in another building across the street: “If you don't want to get wet, you can go through here” and points us to a staircase.

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.

September 2024

My first interactive fiction, "*Breakfast in the Dolomites*", takes part in the IF Comp.

The end result was as expected: not the last place, but it was also an opportunity to receive valuable reviews and comments useful for the development of this new game.

Into the reader's mind

A problem arose during the development of the previous game.

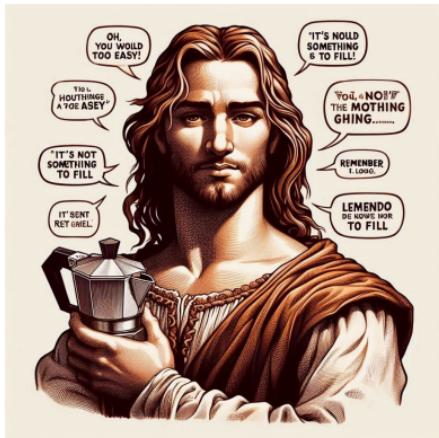
I have been interested in photography for many years and my experience allows me to visualise the result before taking the picture.

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.

I used some of these images to illustrate the booklets that came with the game, and one was even used as the cover art.

Although this was quite criticized, I found its development very useful, so I used the same methodology here.





Acknowledgements

The story was developed using Inform 7 version 10.1.2 by Graham Nelson and extensions written by Emily Short, Eric Eve, Graham Nelson, Nathanael Nerode and Zed Lopez.

For the description of the different qualities of coffee, I took inspiration from the Lavazza website, for the coffee pot makers from Bialetti and for the kitchen from the Ikea website.

Much of the text in these booklets is taken from the *Introductory Booklet* by Emily Short supplied with the Inform 7 compiler.

The cover image and the other images in these booklets were created using the AI tools Bing Image Creator.

These booklets are formatted with the help of Scribus, a DTP software package.

Thanks also to my friends Mauro and Federico Casadei for their patience in trying out the game and pointing out some problems to me.



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It is Saturday afternoon.

Francesco and Monica are walking down the main street of their town. Monica is very interested in the shop windows displaying clothes and accessories, shoes, bags...

Francesco follows her with a bored look, unable to escape this routine.

"Making good coffee seems easy!" So went the ad for a well-known brand of coffee maker.

Francesco and Monica are keen to try making coffee with a moka, just like their mums did. They admit that capsules are so much easier to use, but...

Espresso Moka

An everyday life puzzle by Roberto Ceccarelli

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