

The Z-Machine Matter



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INTERACTIVE FICTION

MURDER MYSTERY

by Zack Urlocker

Instruction Manual for The Z-Machine Matter

Draft version 0.28 (Introcomp)

By Zack Urlocker

In The Z-Machine Matter, you play the role of Johnny Dollar, an insurance detective called in to investigate the accidental death of German nuclear scientist Paul Panks at the secretive Blakely Laboratory in southern California.

The game takes place at the end of June, 1950 as you finish a vacation. At the start of the game, you'll need to meet Sgt Duffy of the San Moreno Police, who will take you out to the Blakely Laboratory, in nearby Cabeza Plana where the accident has taken place. Your client has a half-million dollar double indemnity insurance policy on Paul Panks' life, so you'll need to make a determination as to what happened.

You'll have two hours to gather evidence, question the residents of Blakely Estate and report back to Sgt Duffy. Sgt Duffy will also be available to you to analyze evidence back at the Police laboratory. All evidence will be recorded automatically in your notebook. You'll need this evidence to determine if there is a crime and to establish the motive, means and opportunity.

Join us, won't you?

*Yours truly,
Johnny Dollar.*

Santa Cruz, June 2011.

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An Overview

*Much of the information in this manual is also included in the game itself and is accessible from the **HELP** menu.*

Interactive Fiction, known as IF, is a medium that was developed in the late 1970s with the release of a game known as Adventure by Will Crowther and Don Woods. A group of MIT graduates created a company called Infocom that released increasingly sophisticated games in the 1980s including Zork, Deadline, Witness, Planetfall and The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy among others.

The idea behind Interactive Fiction is to provide a form of storytelling where the player (that's you!) determines the outcome based on his or her actions. In effect, you're the protagonist in whatever story the author has created, whether it's science fiction, fantasy or mystery. In the case of The Z-Machine Matter, you play the role of Johnny Dollar, an insurance detective called in to investigate the death of a nuclear scientist.

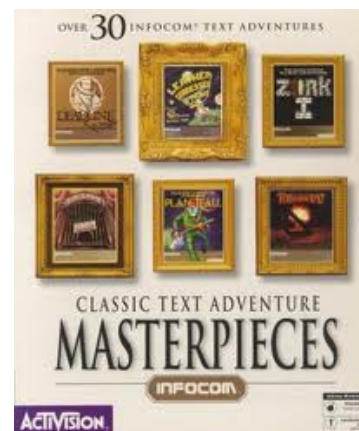
In most IF games you must uncover clues, solve puzzles and interact with other characters, events and locations that make up the story. The game proceeds only when you enter a command. So much like a game of chess, you have as much time as you like to contemplate your next move.

The story in The Z-Machine Matter begins on the evening of Friday June 30, 1950 at around 9:40 pm. Each command will move the story forward by half a minute. The case must be solved by midnight.

Finding more IF games

The IFDB Interactive-Fiction Database has many additional IF titles in a range of styles that are freely downloadable. I recommend: <http://ifdb.tads.org>

- An Act of Murder
- Lord Bellwater's Secret
- Photopia
- My Name is Jack Mills
- Make it Good
- Dangerous Curves
- Spider and Web
- Galatea
- Floatpoint
- Blue Lacuna



Copies of Infocom games can sometimes be found on eBay and Amazon.com. The first three below are fairly easy, but others can be quite difficult. I recommend:

- The Witness
- Moonmist
- Border Zone
- Suspect
- Deadline
- Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Operating the Game

Finding an interpreter

The first thing you need to do before playing The Z-Machine Matter or any other Interactive Fiction game is download and install an Interpreter to run the game.

The game is written using a language called Inform7 and compiled to a portable format known as Z-Machine byte-code, the same format used by Infocom in the 1980s as well as hundreds of more recent games. This game has been tested with:

- **Windows:** Windows Glulxe, Filfre
- **Mac:** Zoom, Spatterlight, Gargoyle
- **iPad, iPhone:** Frotz

You can download Frotz for the iPad or iPhone free from the App Store. Other interpreters can be found here:

www.z-machine-matter.com/interpreters

Loading the game

Most Z-Machine interpreters have a File Open menu for loading game files. For iPhone and iPad you can open a game as an attachment from email or use the File Transfer capability from the Settings menu of the Frotz interpreter.

Saving & Restoring

You can (and should) save your position in the game occasionally with the command:

```
> save
```

This is especially important if you are about to do something dangerous. The interpreter will prompt you for the name and or location to save the file.

To restore a saved game you can click on the file or use the command:

```
> restore
```

Quitting & Restarting

You can quit the game at any time with the command:

```
> quit
```

The interpreter will ask you to confirm the choice. You must save the file before quitting if you wish to restore later on.

You can restart with the command:

```
> restart
```

This is useful if you want to try a different sequence through the game.

Troubleshooting

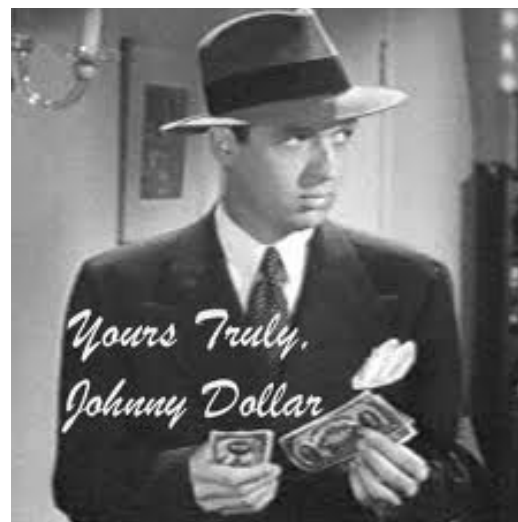
Older interpreters, such as Windows Frotz are not Glulx compatible and will not load games using the larger .Gblorb format. You will need to download a newer Glulx Interpreter.

Feedback & Bug Reports

If you would like to give feedback or report a bug or problem, please contact me via email at: ZUrlocker@hotmail.com

Or go to the website:

www.z-machine-matter.com

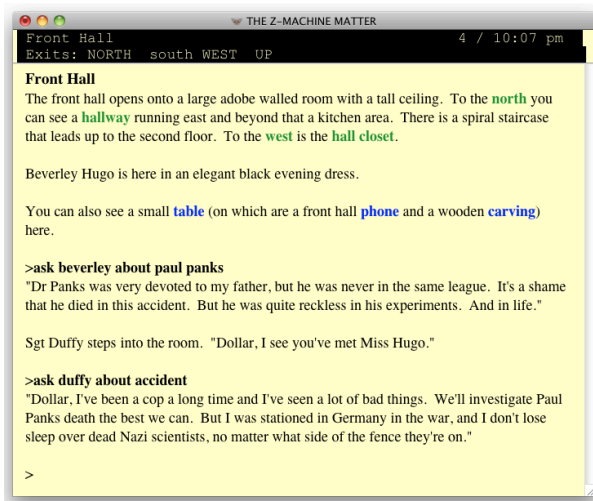


Tips for Newcomers

If you're new to Interactive Fiction (IF) sometimes it can be daunting to stare at the > prompt wondering what to do.

The Z-Machine Matter is a mystery story where you must explore the environment, gather clues, then find motive, means and evidence to determine if a crime has occurred. You will need to ask suspects about their whereabouts and alibis. The game also includes the services of a helpful police officer Sgt Duffy who can analyze evidence for you and arrest a suspect when asked. Evidence is recorded automatically in your notebook, which you can read or consult at any time.

During gameplay, a status line at the top of the screen displays the location of exits (North, South, etc), the current score and time. Objects and locations that may be important will be **highlighted**.



You can type the name of an object (e.g. Gun, Radio, Desk) to examine it, or the name of a location or direction to go there (e.g. Bathroom, Hallway, Back, South, E, NW).

There are a limited range of commands that can be used to move the story forward. Different IF games use different commands and part of the fun (or frustration) is in making yourself understood. Here are a few typical commands you can try:

Common commands:

North	South	East	West	Up
Down	Back	Enter	Search	Look
Drink	Pour	Open	Close	Wait
Use	Move	Kiss	Hit	Get
Drop	Tell	Ask	Lock	Accuse
Arrest	Consult	Analyze	Inventory	
Listen	Confront	Suspects	Hint	

Save	Restore	Again	Undo	Quit
Help	Script	Exits	Topics	

Common commands can be shortened to single letters: N, S, E, W for directions, I for Inventory, L for Look, X for Examine, Z for Wait, G for Again, T for Topics.

The game takes about 2 hours to complete. Experienced players may complete it in a shorter time and newcomers may take longer, depending on whether you use the HELP and HINTS or not.

Save the game before doing anything dangerous! You can always restore a saved game if things don't turn out as expected.

Many Interactive Fiction games have puzzles that require clever thinking, so Examine everything. Many items will give you clues about their use if you examine them.

If you get stuck, try the TOPICS, HINT or HELP commands. TOPICS will suggest things to ASK or TELL someone ABOUT. HELP provides detailed information, hints and most of the information in this manual.

Communicating in the Game

Communicate with the game by entering commands at the > prompt. Commands are often shown in upper case, but you can type them in upper, lower or mixed case. Note also that the game will ignore pronouns. The following commands are all acceptable:

- > examine the gun
- > take it
- > Turn on radio
- > Examine newspaper
- > Desk
- > open desk
- > Go North
- > NW
- > Lobby
- > Back
- > Wait
- > again

Commands can also be more complex:

- > take gun then examine it
- > drop all but the gun then north
- > get the gun and postcard
- > turn on the radio then wait

The game has several built-in facilities for making it easier to enter commands. On Mac or Windows you can use the arrow keys to cycle through previous commands. On the iPhone or iPad you can tap on any word to enter it as a command. You can double tap to bring up a command history.

The game allows several shortcuts; you can examine an object by typing its name. The game will also correct common typos.

Here are some very important commands:

- > ASK someone ABOUT something
- > TELL someone ABOUT something
- > READ notebook
- > CONSULT notebook ABOUT something
- > SUSPECTS
- > CONFRONT someone
- > ACCUSE someone of lying
- > ACCUSE someone of something
- > ANALYZE something
- > ARREST someone

Talking to characters

The game includes several characters some of whom may be suspects and all of whom can be sources of information. You can refer to the characters by their first or last names or both. You interact with these characters through dialog using ASK ABOUT and TELL ABOUT commands. TOPICS will give suggestions of things to ASK or TELL ABOUT. You can also SHOW or GIVE them items if you think that will make them more forthcoming. e.g.

- > Tell Alan Hugo about the police
- > Ask Beverley about alibi
- > Ask Charlie about Dietrich
- > Ask Dietrich about whereabouts
- > Show Emile the letter
- > Accuse Emile of lying
- > Tell Sgt Duffy about the war
- > Show Duffy the newspaper
- > Give Duffy a cigarette

Vocabulary

While this game and others written in Inform have a larger vocabulary than the early IF games from the 1980s, there are still many limitations in what the program understands. If the game does not understand a command, it could be a spelling mistake the game was unable to correct, or that you've used a word it simply does not understand. If the game doesn't understand a word, try a synonym. It could also be that the item you're referring to is not important in the game and is just part of the background scenery.

In some cases, the game will prompt you to use a different command. If you type:

- > Talk to Monica

The game will respond:

"Johnny, what do you want to Ask me or Tell me About?"

This suggests using commands like:

- > Ask Monica about Cabeza Plana
- > Tell Monica about police
- > Ask Monica about Paul Panks

Cast of Characters

Johnny Dollar

An ex-cop with a soft spot for the ladies, Dollar's not afraid to get tough to solve a case.

Monica Robner

A beautiful woman who used to work at the Blakely Estate in Cabeza Plana.

Sgt Duffy

Without a promotion in years, Duffy is as jaded an officer as you've met.

Paul Panks

A top German scientist brought to the US in Operation Paperclip, he was found dead at Blakely Lab.

Alan Hugo

The wealthy scientist founded Blakely Lab after returning from the war and working at Los Alamos.

Beverley Hugo

Alan Hugo's beautiful daughter has just returned to the Blakely Estate from Arkham Massachusetts.

Charlie Tads

Alan Hugo's loyal assistant and valet, an enigmatic Chumash indian from Cabeza Plana.

Dietrich Plotkin

The second most senior scientist on the Z-Machine, also recruited to the US in Operation Paperclip.

Emile Long

A reporter from England who has taken a strong interest in Blakely Lab and the Z-Machine.

Nelson Graham (not in the Alpha game)

The barkeep at the Brass Lantern sees all the comings and goings of Cabeza Plana.



Map of the San Moreno Inn & the Blakely Estate

Alpha release map.

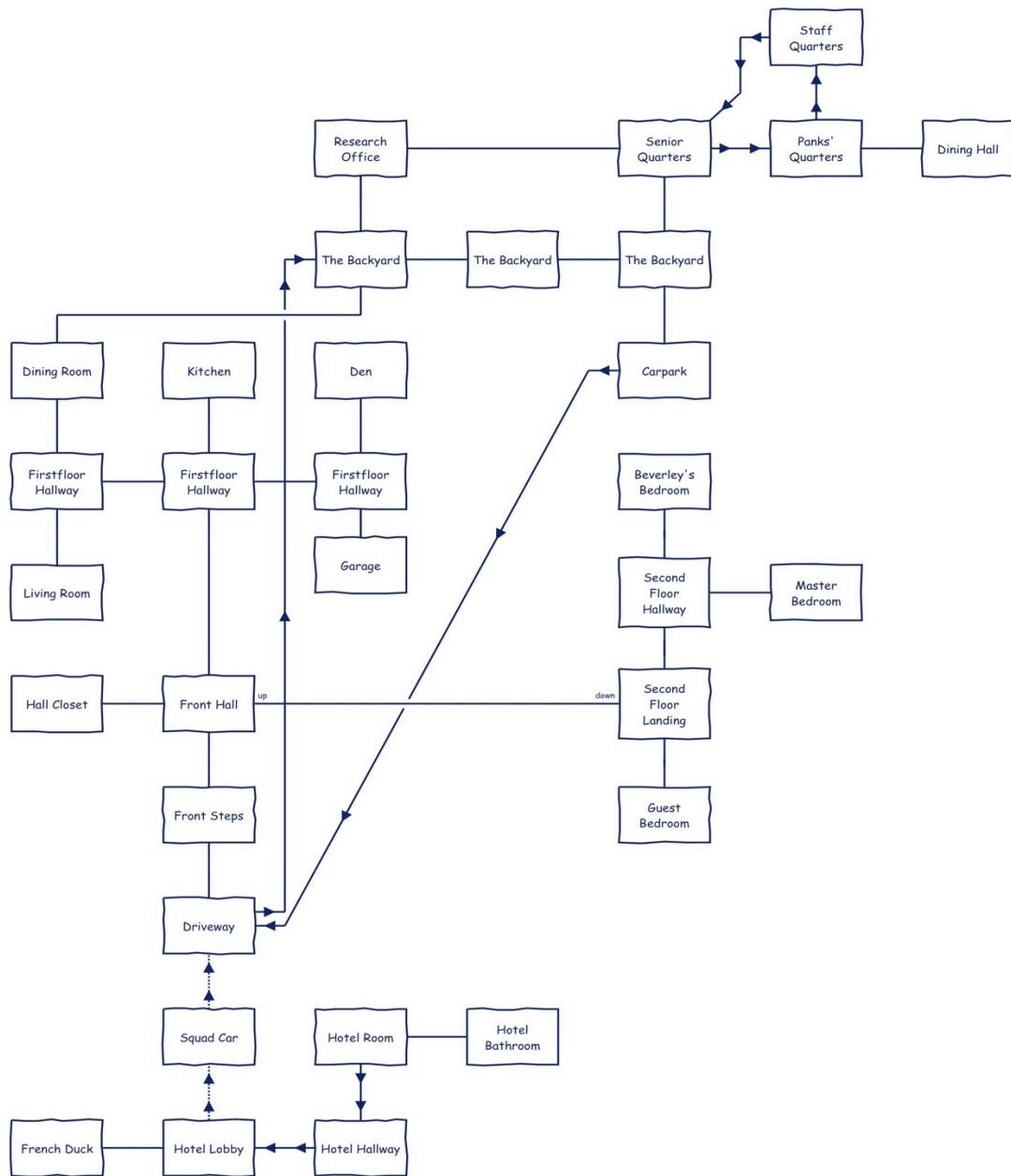


Figure 1 –Trizbort Map – Courtesy Erwin Genstein

Historical Background

The story is loosely based on historical incidents that occurred during the cold war, but were only revealed many years later. These include Operation Paperclip, which brought more than 700 German scientists to the US in the 1940s, and The Venona Project, which had US and UK intelligence services working together to decrypt Soviet intelligence cables.

The Venona Project provided evidence that led to the arrest of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg on spying charges in the summer of 1950 and their subsequent execution three years later. Information around The Venona Project only came to the public's attention in the late 1980s with the publication of books by Robert Lamphere of the FBI and Peter Wright of MI5. Materials from The Venona Project were released publicly in 1995. Hundreds of codenames referenced in translated cables remain unidentified even today.

More information is available here:

Operation Paperclip

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Paperclip

http://www.conspiracyarchive.com/NWO/project_paperclip.htm

The Venona Project

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venona_project

www.fbi.gov/libref/historic/history/foxpaper.htm

www.theblackvault.com/documents/nsa/venona/monographs/monograph-1.html

Fusion Research & The Z-Machine

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_nuclear_fusion

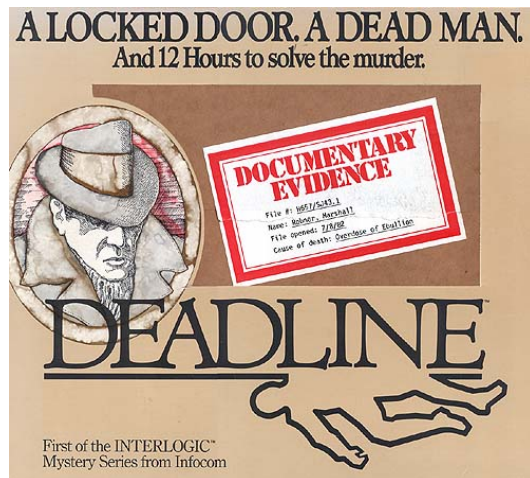
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Sherwood

www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2000/dec/31/life1.lifemagazine

About the Author

This is my this work of Interactive Fiction (IF). I'm sure at some point I'll get the hang of it.

The Z-Machine Matter was inspired by the great mystery stories created by Infocom in the 1980s, including Deadline, Suspect, and my favorite, The Witness. Not only were Infocom games fun, but they set the bar in creative packaging and props. In a tribute to the quality of the Infocom software, the original architecture developed to provide portability across early microcomputers continues to thrive 30 years later running on every type of PC and smartphone imaginable.



I've tried to capture some of the things that made Infocom games unique by combining a 1950s style radio detective drama with elements of a cold war mystery. I've also included some Infocom-inspired retro artwork and packaging.

The name of the story is in reference to Infocom's virtual machine architecture as well as to a type of fusion power generator developed at Los Alamos and the UK in the 1950s and is still in use today at Sandia National Lab. Experienced players may recognize additional references to Infocom games and the IF community.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the authors of Inform7, the language that I've used to implement the Z-Machine Matter. Also thanks to Emily Short, Aaron Reed and Eric Eve, authors of Inform7 extensions that I have used and without which the game would be much more primitive. Thanks to Felix, Matt w, capmikee and others on the intfiction.org forum for help with my numerous coding questions. Thanks to the San Francisco IF Meetup Group for play testing. Thanks to alpha testers Dan Fabulich, Colin 'Agent Kong' Djukic, Duncan Bowsman, James Curry, Doug Orleans, Adam Thornton, Jason Ouelette, Seth Spurlock and Ben Riga among others who helped immensely.

And kudos to Jason Scott whose documentary film 'Get Lamp' and Chris Huang whose excellent game 'An Act of Murder' rekindled my interest in IF.

Feedback, complaints and bug reports can be sent to: ZUrlocker@hotmail.com

Or visit the web site:
www.z-machine-matter.com

Release History

Introcomp Entry

Version 0.28

June, 2011

This is an Alpha Release of the opening two scenes of the game. You can think of it as a working prototype or preview version. It represents about 28% of the entire game. There are several additional characters, new scenes as well as many more rooms and objects that still need to be implemented.

I have tested for basic compatibility with Windows Glulxe, Filfre, iPhone, iPad, and Mac Zoom, Gargoyle, Spatterlight interpreters. The game is now large enough that it requires a Glulx interpreter and will not run in Windows Frotz.

Your feedback and input is very much appreciated. If your time is limited, focus on the first item below:

- **Please send me a SCRIPT transcript of the game!**
- Are there commands or topics you tried which the game did not understand?
- Did you find anything illogical, annoying or abrupt?
- What piqued your interest?
- Did you use the HINTS? TOPICS?
- How long did you spend playing?

Recent improvements:

- Fixed a bug that caused player to be moved to kitchen without explanation
- New map thanks to Erwin Genstein!
- Many new commands understood based on alpha tester feedback
- Added cliffhanger ending to the 2nd act
- New commands: CONFRONT, TOPICS, SUSPECTS, ABOUT, CREDITS, HINT
- Eliminated some ambiguities

Known issues:

- The game requires a Glulx interpreter.
- iPad Frotz 1.5.2 has a bug so you cannot open a game from email. This has been fixed in Frotz 1.5.3.
- The parser complains if you use commas. Instead use AND e.g.:
GET BOURBON AND COLA
- The telephone only calls numbers: so you can dial 2481 but not CH 2481, Tony or Brass Lantern.
- When using CONSULT NOTEBOOK ABOUT the text must closely match the name of the item
- There are some objects in the game that currently serve no purpose
- Around 30 clues can be found.
- Scoring is limited to around 50 points. You don't need all the points to finish.

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Or visit the website:

www.z-machine-matter.com

Please use the SCRIPT command to record the game transcript during testing.



Included in every copy of THE Z-MACHINE MATTER is a complete set of instructions, built-in hints, a map and important evidence that will help you solve the case.

An accident, murder or...?

When the cops run into an insurance fraud that's too hot to handle who do you think gets the call? You do. The man with the action-packed expense account --America's fabulous freelance insurance detective --Johnny Dollar.

It's a steamy summer night in Southern California, 1950 when a German nuclear scientist winds up dead at the hand of his own invention, the Z-Machine fusion generator.

With a half a million dollar life insurance policy up for grabs, you better call off your date, load your pistol and get to work. You've got just two hours to gather the evidence, find the clues and state your case. But be careful. There's a cold war going on and you don't want to be the next victim of an unfortunate accident.

Sgt Duffy's Back!

You'll need to meet Sgt Duffy in the hotel lobby and get yourself over to the Blakely Estate where the accident occurred. Once you're there it will take all your skill to figure out who you can trust and who might not want you to get to the bottom of things.

Join us, won't you?

*Yours Truly,
Johnny Dollar.*

Get The Inside Story

It's like being inside your favourite detective story! Load the Z-Machine Matter story into your Z-Code or Glulx interpreter on your computer or smartphone and discover yourself at the centre of an investigation with surprising twists, colorful characters and crafty puzzles.

But you're more than just a reader. You're the main character. You'll need to locate the witness, and ask suspects about their alibis. And it's up to you to make sure that justice is served before the deadline!

INFOCOM

55 Wheeler St., Cambridge, MA 02138

For your Z-Code / Glulx interpreter equipped machine including Windows, Macintosh OS/X, iPad, iPhone, Android as well as many other past and future computers. Written using Inform7. Props by Propnomicon.

Includes cover art, hints and sound.

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