Panic and Judgment

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Statement of Artists Intent: Panic and Judgment

*The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov begins with a conversation between Berlioz and Bezdomny, but a third person, who is later found to be the devil, joins the conversation. This escalates into Berlioz dying and Bezdomny ending up in a mental asylum indefinitely. During the first night in the asylum, the doctor says to Bezdomny '"Comrade Bezdomny," said the face in a voice suited to anniversary celebrations, "Calm down! You're upset over the death of our beloved Mihkail Alexandrovich... Misha Berlioz, to us. We all understand perfectly..."' (53). The wording the doctor uses to calm down Bezdomny reflects two facets of human nature and society: panic and people being quick to judge. Throughout the whole predicament, the reader knows that Bezdomny is acting irrationally. He barges into a restaurant with very little improvised clothing and offers no coherent or rational explanation of the crime he believes was committed. Bezdomny rants and yells because his mind is in a state of panic. This panic causes others to view him as a man insane enough to be kept in a mental asylum. This brings into play the other facet, humans being quick to judge. First impressions are important, and the same applies here. Berlioz merely arrives to the restaurant "dressed in white striped long johns and a torn once-white Tolstoyan peasant blouse which had a paper icon..." (52) when the basso says "...pitilessly,,"A clear-cut case. The DT's,"' (52). People are quick to judge Bezdomny. As opposed to letting him calm down and asking for an explanation, Archibald decides that Bezdomny deserves to end up in a mental asylum.   
 To express the theme of panic and the human tendency to judge quickly, a pick-your-own adventure programmed in Windows Batch was created where the player plays as Bezdomny. The person who plays this game with the intent of reaching the best ending will easily find it. There are some obvious bad choices the player can avoid. This was done on purpose to illustrate how the calm and rational player can quickly resolve this section of the plot as opposed to the plight Bezdomny finds himself in due to his panicking. The pick-your-own adventure was also created to explore alternate routes to the story if Bezdomny made different decisions. Typically, stories follow a linear path, they are read from beginning to end, but this medium of expression allows for the reader/player to experience modifications to the original storyline.   
 Creating this program takes a lot of mental effort. Not only does it require keeping track of details in the book, but also keeping track mentally of every branch in the storyline compacted into a single file. If any branching is left untouched, the program will run into errors and ruin the experience. The programming language is also very strict. Any extra spacing or usage of special characters will result in errors. Once all the programming is complete, there is an extreme amount of joy and mental relief. Keeping track of all the branching in the program is a mentally exhausting task that only gets more mentally taxing as the program grows in size.