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Witch Hunt Artist’s Statement

Witch Hunt is a single player experience that presents the user with a town of 8 digital townsfolk. The user can either attempt to shape the town dialogue surrounding who the witch among them is, or instead take a hands off approach and observe how gossip spreads around the town and how it affects the standing of the speaker, receiver, and subject of the gossip.

Witch Hunt aims to remove the power from the typical actions found in social deduction games such as werewolf or clue where the player is tasked with gathering information and piecing together information, catching other in lies, or voting on who the guilty party is. In Witch Hunt, the voting is automatic and done exclusively by the NPCs, forcing the player to reflect on the power found in the only action that they are left with: the act of speaking against another.

When taking an active role, players may find that a whisper into the right ear could sway the whole town in some cases, while in others, their words fall upon deaf ears, as the speaker lacks the influence to be heard, their words doing more harm to them than having any actual effect on the person who they are accusing.

An important aspect of Witch Hunt was to clearly separate the facts from the opinions of the town. Indeed, aside from providing the player with insight to how far off the mark the rumormill may be, the objective fact of who the witch is plays no role in the villagers lives. For the town, the only facts that matter are the ones found in the collective consciousness of the town. The villagers start out with a notion of each other's trustworthiness and roll in the town. As the rumors begin to fly, telling the truth to someone unwilling to hear it could have repercussions, as your confidant may turn their sights on you for accusing their loved ones of something that they might very well be. Gossip cuts both ways, and unsavvy villagers will soon find themselves stepping on one too many eggshells.

The next step for Witch Hunt is to examine how identity is a constant assertion not only by oneself but by the larger circle of peers in which one exists. What good is any truth when people have their own truth to spread and repeat to others. The project will aim to address how much effort is required to project who you are, in a world where that assertion is just one of many.