Anti-Hitchhiking/ Serial Killer Conversation Simulator

Conceptual Description: “…he started picking up female hitchhikers…practicing what to say to them to get them into his car, practicing what to talk to them about once they were in his car… he picked up over 150 hitchhikers as practice… and then he decided he was going to fix the passenger side door so it couldn’t be opened from the inside…” (*My Favorite Murder*, Episode 39, “Kind of Loco”.)

The project will be a text-based game based on the serial murders committed by Ed Kemper, also known as the Coed Killer, in the early 1970s. Numerous notable serial killers have been known to simulate their criminal fantasies in some way before enacting them in reality. The idea behind this game is to draw attention to the “that could’ve been me” effect of violent crime. In the past, some games (ex. Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty, etc.) have been critiqued for having gratuitous violence and de-sensitizing players to the horrors of mass murder. This project seeks to interrogate the idea of how “violent” material is categorized, as well as to highlight the differences between the detached, flurry-of-passion manner of mass murderers (both in games and in life), with the drawn-out, pre-meditated strategies of high-intelligence serial killers.

Technical Description: In this game, the user plays as a man driving a car (for simplicity’s sake, we’ll call him Driver), who finds hitchhikers and takes them to their destination. During gameplay, the user is given a few key details about the woman they pick up (ex. hair color, approximate age, items that she carries such as a purse or a backpack, etc.) as well as a dominant personality trait (ex. timid). Driver then carries out a conversation with the woman as he drives her to her destination. The motive/goal of the conversation is not given to the user, so they may direct the conversation however they see fit. However, while they are given a wide variety of choices of responses in the beginning, they will find that throughout the conversation choices diminish as the personality and intentions of the Driver comes through. The program/ player will learn from previous conversations what lines get the “best” responses (possibly through a points system), and start narrowing down choices in successive rounds. There is no depiction of violence in the game. Possibly, as an ending, there will be a short description relating the above quote/information about Kemper to the game.