



PARANORMAL BITCH QUEEN SIMULATOR 2007: DESIGN & PROCESS

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Play the sample at: <https://paranormalbitchsimulator.neocities.org/>

CONTENTS

PREMISE
AUDIENCE
VISUAL DESIGN
GAMEPLAY
ADDITIONAL PROCESS EXAMPLES

PREMISE

The year is 2007 and your sister (Melody) has come back from the dead to possess your hot pink Nokia flip phone. She threatens to possess you instead unless you figure out which of the prom queen candidates killed her within five days.

You must investigate the prom queen candidates to figure out what happened on the night she died. Melody can possess you temporarily to help you through tricky social situations (after all, she wasn't the most popular girl in school for nothing) but not without consequences to your sanity.

AUDIENCE

Paranormal Bitch Queen Simulator 2007 was inspired by games like *Monster Prom* and *Class of '09*, as well as movies like *Jennifer's Body*, *Mean Girls*, and *Heathers*.

Ultimately, *Paranormal Bitch Queen Simulator 2007* is a roleplay game where you, regardless of your real-life identity, are cast in the role of a teenage girl. I liked the idea of a hyperfeminine game that plays on those "chick flick" tropes in a self aware way. At the same time, I unironically love so-called "chick flicks" and many "girly" things so this game is also a silly love letter to those things. I love a makeover sequence, I love pink, and when I was a teen I loved knowing who was crushing on who and hearing that hot gossip.

But, I am also a queer goth with a love of horror who grew up biking in the woods *Stranger Things* style. I used a walkie-talkie to talk with a friend two doors down, cut my hair short, and often got covered in dirt and grass and bugs. I also had a hot pink iPod shuffle filled with Taylor Swift's seminal album *Fearless*. The point is, people who like girly things are also multifaceted. People who grew up watching magical girl shows and playing with barbies or makeup are not inherently shallow or vapid for liking those things.

Although my game is very silly and over the top and girly, it is also crass, weird, and a bit scary. So shout out to my bubble pop freaks and hyperfemme geeks. Hang loose, shitheads. This one's for you.

VISUAL DESIGN

I wanted the aesthetic of the game to be early 2000s Y2K vibes, so I decided to use bright girly colors like hot pink and purple. I also imported a font modeled after the one used by old Nokia flip phones to be used for the links. For standard text, I found a similar font that was slightly more readable than the Nokia one.

Although I have some coding capabilities—enough to customize my project to some degree—I am first and foremost a writer. One of the reasons I chose this project in the first place is I wanted something that would suit a minimalist, text based game within my programming abilities while still being fun and engaging. The retro early 2000s aesthetic works well for this while also suiting the theme. I didn't want it to feel like this game was something that “would have fancy graphics if it could,” rather, I wanted the minimalist style to feel intentional.

While I could also picture this game as a visual novel, the IF format leaves more to the imagination and I feel like that can work in my favor. With a premise as outlandish as this, sometimes whatever the player is imagining can be funnier than whatever graphics/imagery might be displayed.

GAMEPLAY

The game is primarily an exploratory text based mystery, with some TTRPG elements. You have a stat block with five core stats (see image below) that can affect the results of different conversations or actions. When encountering an obstacle, the game rolls a d10 and adds the relevant modifier to check if you succeed. Choosing certain actions or events can affect your stat block as you progress through the game.

god ur stats are atrocious

MAKEOVER TIME!

>>

Charm: +0
Fear Factor: +0
Clout: +0
Liar, Liar: +0
Madness: +0

Holy guacamole, Batman!

You're like a whole new person. With glasses
on you were ugly and completely unfuckable
(truly disgusting in every conceivable way)
but now you're, like, hot???

On the inside though, you're still the same
highschool nobody.

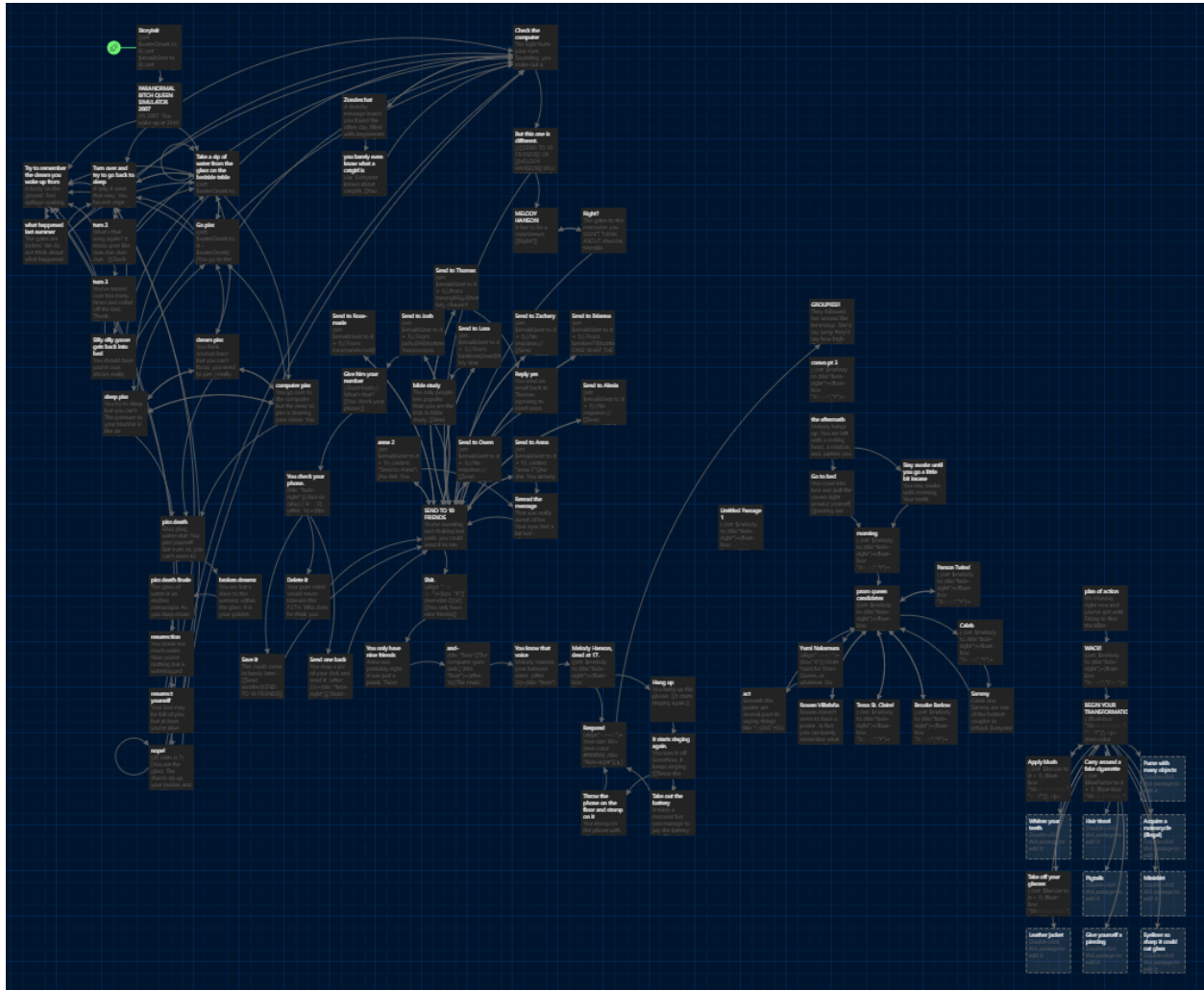
CONTINUE YOUR TRANSFORMATION

Charm: +0
Fear Factor: +0
Clout: +0
Liar, Liar: +1
Madness: +0

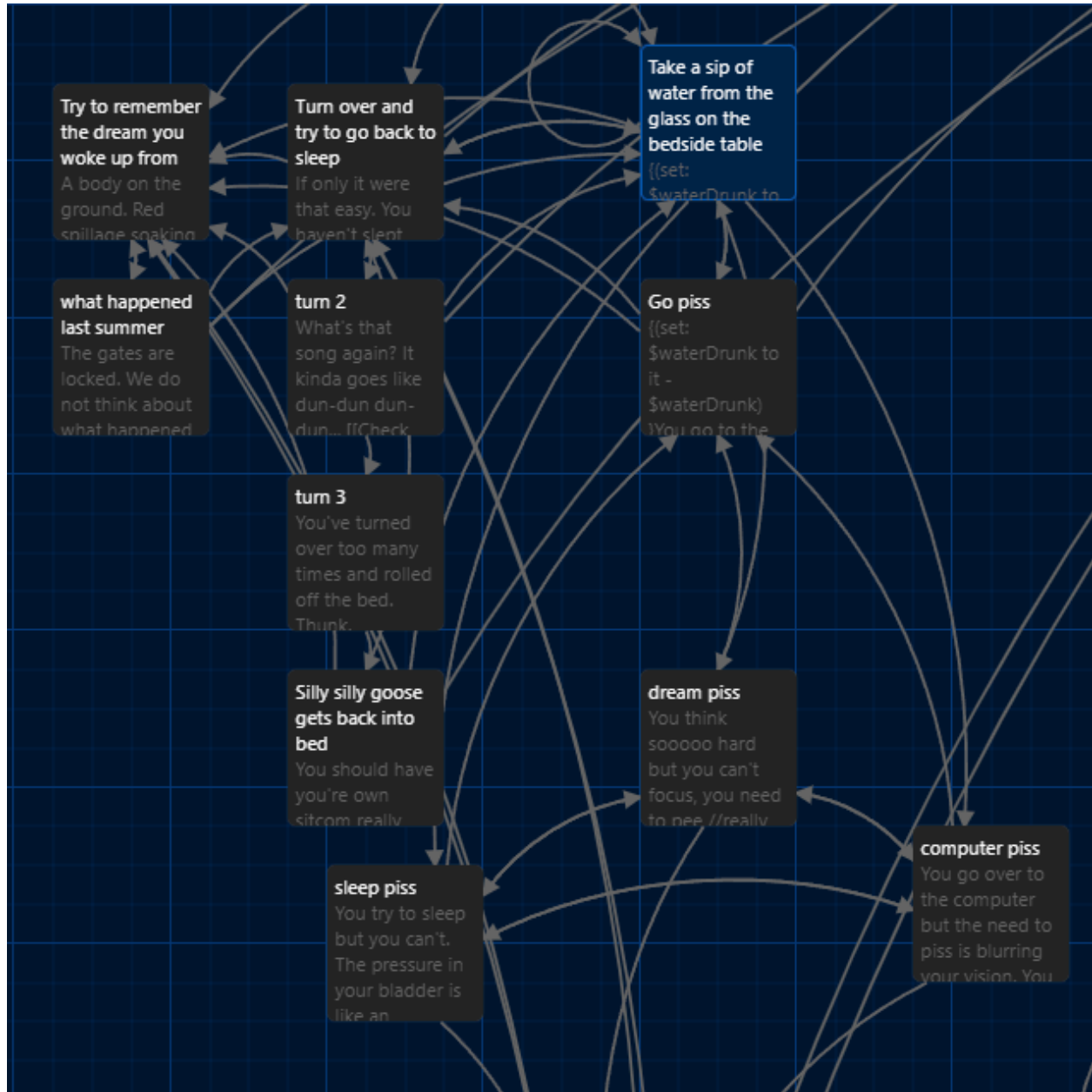
To determine your starting stats, I incorporated a makeover sequence! I absolutely love the makeover trope in early 2000s teen movies, and I wanted to incorporate that in a silly way that's a bit tongue and cheek. Each makeover option you choose affects your starting stats. For example, "take off your glasses" adds a +1 modifier to Liar, Liar on your stat block (pictured above). I tested whether people prefer to know how items influence your stats in advance, or if they'd rather choose options based on vibes and see how it turns out. Players prefer to go in blind, so you only see how your stats are affected after you've chosen a specific option.

I also think it gives the stats an element of unpredictability, which I enjoy. With something like D&D it can be fun to plan your stats based on your play style or min/max if that's your thing, but with a game like this the focus is more on the story. I think D&D style stat building might put the focus more on strategy, which isn't really the point of this game.

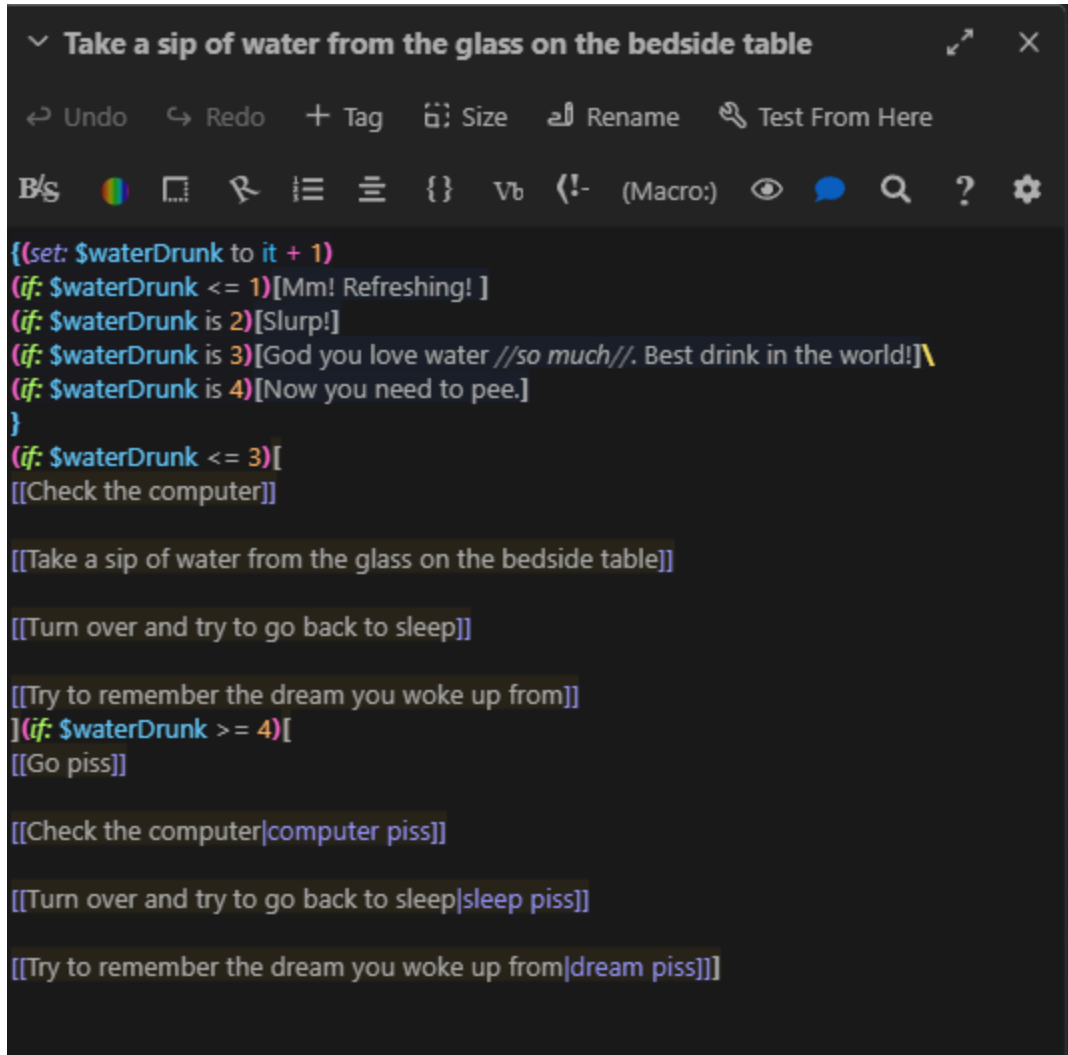
ADDITIONAL PROCESS EXAMPLES



This is the full Twine map of the branching narrative so far.



I wanted to include some fun secrets for those that like to mess around with clicking silly options. Here, I have what some of my testers have dubbed “the piss loop,” where technically, if you want you can just drink water and go to the restroom forever and that’s the game. To progress, you either have to choose not to use the restroom and end up dying from water poisoning, or you click a different option besides drinking water.

A screenshot of a Harlowe code editor window. The title bar reads "Take a sip of water from the glass on the bedside table". The editor has a dark theme and a toolbar with icons for Undo, Redo, Tag, Size, Rename, and Test From Here. Below the toolbar is a row of icons for various Harlowe features like bold, italic, link, etc. The code is written in a macro block, starting with `{(set: $waterDrunk to it + 1)}`. It contains several `(if: $waterDrunk is ...)` statements that trigger different responses based on the value of `$waterDrunk`. For example, when `$waterDrunk` is 1, it says "Mm! Refreshing!"; when it's 2, it says "Slurp!"; when it's 3, it says "God you love water //so much//. Best drink in the world!"; and when it's 4, it says "Now you need to pee." After the `(if: $waterDrunk is 4)` block, there is a `(if: $waterDrunk <= 3)` block that contains the response "[[Check the computer]]". Below this, there are several response lines: "[[Take a sip of water from the glass on the bedside table]]", "[[Turn over and try to go back to sleep]]", "[[Try to remember the dream you woke up from]]", "[[Go piss]]", "[[Check the computer|computer piss]]", "[[Turn over and try to go back to sleep|sleep piss]]", and "[[Try to remember the dream you woke up from|dream piss]]".

This is the start of the “piss loop” in Harlowe. I created a variable called `waterDrunk` that keeps track of how many times the player clicks the “Take a sip of water” option and gives a different response based on that number. Once they have clicked it four times the game informs you that you need to pee and gives you the option to use the restroom. If you choose to not use the restroom, the `waterDrunk` variable remains at 4 or greater and the original options to “check the computer” and “go back to sleep” etcetera instead take the player to new pages (“computer piss,” “sleep piss,” and “dream piss”).

**MEET THIS YEARS CANDIDATES FOR PROM
QUEEN!**

First up we have the **Parson Twins!** Two
for the price of one!

Next is the ever affable **Caleb**, your
resident femboy extraordinaire--popular with
the guys and the gals!

Yumi Nakamura, the coolest kid
around!

And of course, everyone and their mother
knows **Tessa St. Claire!**

Brooke Barlow, running to spread the
word of Jesus Christ--how honorable!

And finally we have **Rowan Villafañe**
...does anyone really know why she's
running? How mysterious!



I designed the introduction of the prom queen candidates to look like an event flyer. When you click on each name, you get a description of their prom queen poster along with some links that trigger Melody to share her thoughts.

```

    Respond

    Undo Redo + Tag Size Rename Test From Here

    B/S [Icons] (Macro:) [Icons]

    (align:"=><=")+(text-size:10)+(text-color: #f90f99)[ (t8n: "fade-right") [ ] ]
    {(align:"=><=")+(text-color: #f90f99)+(t8n: "fade") [>>]}
    (set: $melody to (t8n:"fade-right")+(float-box: "X===", "Y")+(text-style: "smear")+(text-color: purple))
    (set: $you to (align:"==>")+(float-box: "===X", "Y")+(text-color: green)+(t8n:"fade-left"))
    (click: ">>>")[$you["melody?"]]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["r u actually dumb"]]

    (click: ">>>")[$you["so this isnt..."]]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["OFC ITS ME U DUMB FUCK"]]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["am i in your cell??"]]

    (click: ">>>")[$you["uh" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["nevermind. don't answer that" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["i can tell from your stupid crackly voice" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$you["...whats going on" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["get yourself together" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["god, i must have misfired and ended up in here" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$you["misfired?" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["keep up!" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["i was trying to possess //you//" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["not ur dumb phone" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$you[//"YOU WERE TRYING TO POSSESS ME????"/" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["calm down, jesus" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$melody["what's a little possession between friends?" ] ]

    (click: ">>>")[$you[//"I'M NOT ONE OF YOUR FUCKING [[GROUPIES!!!]]"/" ] ]
    }

```

This is a sample of a phone conversation with you and Melody in Harlowe, Twine's native programming language. At the top I created variables that store stylistic information for the two speakers. If I want Melody to speak, the variable \$melody formats the text to have a certain colour, special effect, text size, and placement on the screen.