Objective

A mobile app in the genre of a **dating simulation** game, inspired by the "**otome game**" style. The purpose of the game is to persuade players to **practice social distancing** and to **stay at home**. This is achieved by keeping the player company with a cast of characters that can have conversations with the player, provide suggestions for stay-at-home activities, and even comment on the player's real-life habits via the GPS-tracking feature in smartphones.

Premise

As with many otome-style games, you (The player character) are introduced to the setting of the world and the game's scenario through **visual novel**-type gameplay. The game opens with a written exposition that prepares players for what to expect. As with most visual novels, the format is similar to this example:

1. Credit: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visual_Novelty_interface.png

In which dialogue is presented in a textbox at the bottom of the screen, a character's sprite is displayed in the center (or multiple characters, depending on the scene) and there is a fitting background image.

In this game, there will be four different characters/romance options for the player to select from. Each character has a unique look and personality, so players can pick the one that interests them the most. The game's plot begins with the **player character ("PC")** waking up in her bedroom to a newscast discussing the rising rates of COVID infections and reminding viewers to maintain social distancing, wear a mask when around others, and do their part to help reduce the spread of the virus. The PC seems a bit annoyed by this but decides she will do her best, despite the temptation to ignore these warnings. The PC then gets up to brush her teeth and make breakfast when she receives a text from her friend asking her to

come to a large party later that night. The PC is unsure whether she should go; as she indecisively goes back and forth, trying to decide, she is shocked as four men appear in her apartment with a *poof* of smoke. Cue a freak-out between all characters- The PC at all the men who magically appeared, and the men at eachother- they all seem to think they should have been the only one to appear, and question why the other three are there as well. The men seem to all know each other. As the dialogue proceeds, it is revealed to the PC that each man is actually a low-ranking angel assigned the job of going to Earth and keeping a lonely human company during the pandemic. Through some whacky misunderstanding, it seems that not one, but four of them have been assigned to you, the Player Character··· And they're all willing to vie for your attention. Maybe, they just want to be the most successful at their mission, but maybe there's something more, some romance blossoming in the air···? (This sounds so cheesy, but trust me, this is pretty standard fare for the genre.)

Target Audience

- Girls/women ages 18-30's*
- People who live alone/feel lonely or stressed during quarantine- likely people who have already graduated from college and are working
- English-speaking/primarily American audience*
- Lower-middle income or higher (Smartphone required)
  *Ganzon, Sarah. (2019). Growing the Otome Game Market: Fan Labor and Otome Game Communities Online. Human Technology. 15. 347-366. 10.17011/ht/urn.201911265024.

Characters

Before going any further and explaining the gameplay, I feel like it's important to introduce the four characters you can interact with, since the game is character-driven. These are characters I had already made for an unrelated personal project but I thought it would be fun to repurpose some of their designs for this game idea, but the personalities and other data is all new. Each character has unique dialogue options and interactions, allowing for players

Damon

For an "angel", he's rather mischievous and self-serving.

Age: 24

Height: 6 ft.

Sign: Scorpio

Likes: Gambling, thrills, dogs

Dislikes: Boredom, cats

Favorite food: Wasabi crackers

Secret: He will only express genuine emotions to those he really trusts- otherwise, he'll maintain an overconfident and somewhat annoying persona.

LEVI

The reserved type. Usually rather encouraging and positive, but takes things seriously.

Age: 24

Height: 5 ft. 10

Sign: Capricorn

Likes: street art, cats

Dislikes: Damon

Favorite food: Cheap pizza

Secret: He's used to giving out compliments and encouragement, but hasn't received much of it himself.

Vox

Hyper; always jumping from one thing to next. A total rookie.

Age: 22

Height: 5 ft. 8

Sign: Leo

Likes: Photography, action movies

Dislikes: Awkward situations

Favorite food: Steak

Secret: Gets nervous around girls.

NINO

Goes at his own pace. Chill, but not very up on the latest trends.
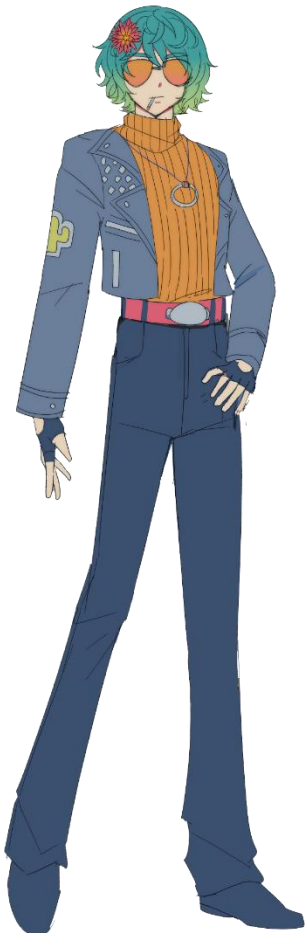
Age: 31

Height: 6 ft. 2

Sign: Aries

Likes: Nature, music

Dislikes: Winter

Favorite food: Pudding

Secret: Clueless about fashion, he just owns 10 pairs of the exact same outfit and nothing else.
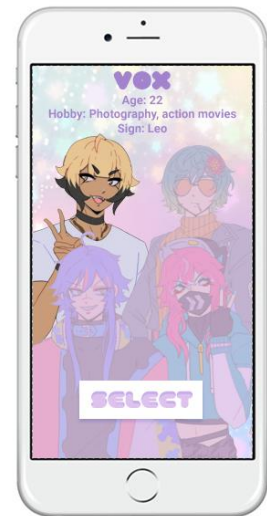
Gameplay

At this point, after the initial plot set-up is complete. The actual gameplay will open up. You will have the ability to choose what character to converse and interact with, and consistently interacting with a certain character will increase your "Affection Score" with that character in particular. This, in turn, will unlock new dialogues and scenarios with the character, encouraging players to consistently play the game.

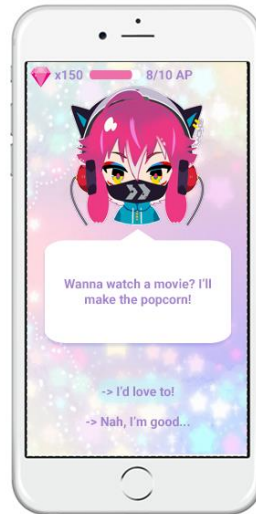Splash Screen

Character Select

Character Select
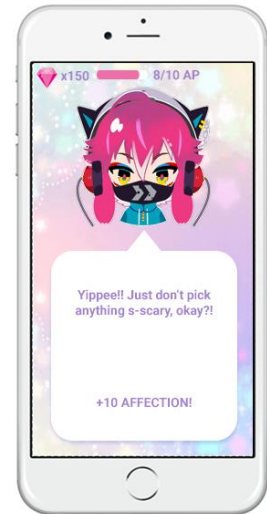(after tapping a character)

Persuasive Game
Wireframe

AT HOME! ~A Quarantine Romance~ is a persuasive game that encourages players to stay at home.

Genre: Casual Mobile Dating Sim (aimed at women)

Gameplay Sample

Gameplay Sample

Above are some wireframes for various screens of the game. The splash screen is the first thing the user sees upon opening the app. One screen that can be navigated to is the character select menu, where users can swap out the character they are currently interacting with. After tapping the character, some

basic information about them is displayed and the user can confirm their selection. The sample gameplay images at the bottom show a possible communication with one of the characters- the user can respond to the character's comment or question, and a "good" response increases the affection level for that character.

To explain the elements on the screen in more detail:

- **Gems**- Seen in the top left corner; gems are earned in-game by boosting your affection level with characters, maintaining social distancing and other safety procedures, and other various activities. Gems can be spent to unlock content such as new stories to read.
- **AP bar**- The "AP bar" seen in the gameplay sample stands for "Action Points". The player has a certain amount of Action Points which replenish naturally over time. AP must be spent to read new chapters and certain character interactions. This model is intended to encourage players to re-visit the app often to check if their AP is replenished, and a similar system exists in the majority of games in this genre.
- **Affection**- A stat that increases by interacting positively with the character. As a character grows more affectionate towards you, you will unlock new dialog with them as well as side-stories that focus on that character.

Additionally, there are various ways to communicate with the characters within the game. Each method is described below:

- **Story Dialog-** The "story mode" of the game is comprised of a series of unlockable Visual Novel-style stories that tell the overarching plot of the game, and are intended to take a decent amount of time to unlock via earning gems, so players have a long-term goal to aim for.
- **Affection-based Dialog-** As stated above,
- **Location-based Dialog-** The game will use GPS-tracking technology standard in all smartphones to aid the persuasive goal of encouraging quarantining and social distancing. If your location indicates you are in a public setting, it will send push notifications (unless disabled) and/or in-game messages that remind the user of good etiquette such as wearing a mask, staying 6 feet apart, etc. The messages are written in-character to appear as if they are coming from one of the characters themselves.
- **Free Chat-** To reinforce one of the goals of the game- to help prevent loneliness- players can chat with characters any time, even if there is not currently a new main story to be read. Ideally there would be enough dialog that players can talk with characters for hours without repeating phrases.

In addition to the rewards discussed above, there are potential punishments in the game as well. If the GPS data shows that the user is not maintaining proper social distancing and other measures, the characters' affection may be lowered and they will encourage the user to change their actions in the future.

Script Sample

Below is sample dialogue of the beginning of the game: (each > denoting a new textbox; italics are narrations not spoken by a character)

[Background image: A dimly lit bedroom with a flickering TV, the only source of light in the room. It appears to be on a news channel.]

> [News reporter, on the TV] ⋯cases are increasing at a rapid rate. Please continue to wear a mask when around others, and refrain from going to large gatherings. And now, the weather.

> *You awaken with a groggy sigh. Seems like you left the TV on all night again⋯*

> Oh, whoops, I left the TV on again⋯ And of course, they were talking about that⋯

> *The global pandemic. Starting in early 2020, the Coronavirus outbreak changed daily life drastically for many people.*

>*Public outings, crowded places, schools and jobs⋯ many things have adjusted to prevent the spread of the virus.*

>*As this scenario continues for months on end, some people are growing tired of self-isolation and social distancing.*

>*Perhaps they feel lonely, or just want life to return to normal.*

>Ah, time to get up. Gotta make breakfast before online classes start⋯

>*Your phone buzzes with the sound of a new notification, on the table beside you.*

>Oh, huh⋯.

> *You reach for your phone and see a text from your friend and former roommate, Maya.*

> *"Party tonight? Everyone's gonna be there, and I mean EVERYONE!"*

> Huh? A party? It does sound like fun, but should they be doing that right now⋯?

>*You place your phone back on the bedside table and walk to the bathroom.*

>*You brush your teeth, contemplating the text.*

>I haven't gone to a party in a while⋯.. It couldn't hurt, right?

> *You head to the kitchen and start making some toast.*

[Background: An apartment kitchen. Morning time.]

>*You sit leaned against a counter, waiting for the toast to be ready.*

> After my old roommate left, it did get kinda lonely here, huh⋯..

> *You think to yourself, remembering how your roommate left to go live with her boyfriend.*

> I guess living alone has its perks too, like⋯ uh⋯.

> No one to steal my toast?

> *Just as you think of it, your toast pops up from the toaster, startling you slightly.*

> Ah!

> *You grab your toast, butter it, and sit down at your small kitchen table.*

> One party should be fine⋯ Everyone would have fun without me. I don't want that to happen.

> Yeah⋯ I'll text Maya back right now!

> You stand up and start walking to the bedroom to grab your phone.

> Or rather, you would, but the second you stand up⋯⋯.

> *WOOSH!*

> *A puff of smoke, large and opaque, suddenly appears in front of you and covers your view.*

>Wahhh!!!

> *Before you have time to react, three more puffs of smoke appear in quick succession.*

> *One in the kitchen behind you, one a few feet away, another a bit to the left⋯.*

>*W-What's going on?!?*

> *You see that the smoke is quickly- almost unnaturally so- beginning to dissipate⋯*

> *You see a vague silhouette in each cloud of smoke.*

> *No way⋯ are those⋯.*

> *People?!?!?*

> *What⋯⋯. Is happening?*

> *What should I do?*

> *You panic, looking to protect yourself from these potential attackers.*

> *Unfortunately, the only thing near you is the piece of toast sitting on the table. You grab it, readying your weapon, as the smoke clears⋯.*

> *Revealing four men, surrounding you on all sides.*

> *You realize- rather late- that the toast will not do much to protect you, if they are here to attack you⋯*

> *So you stare at one of them, a blue-haired man wearing a colorful jacket.*

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Damon

>Pa-

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Levi

>R-

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Vox

>Do-

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Nino

>N-

[Sprite displayed on screen: none]

>*All four men begin to speak at once. What are they saying···?*

>*Pardon? Pardon the intrusion?*

>*This is so weird···.*

>*Just as the four men begin to speak, they all stop, eyes darting to look at each other.*

> *They all seem surprised, as if they expected to be the only one suddenly appearing here.*

>*At first, all their eyes were on you, but now they seem totally distracted by eachother···.*

>*They stare at eachother for a split second before one of the men begins to speak···*

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Damon

> Hey, hey, hey······ what the hell are you guys doing here?

> This is MY assignment!

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Levi

>I believe this was my assignment, actually···

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Vox

> No, this is definitely my assignment, what's wrong with you guys?!?

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Nino

>*The man in sunglasses simply shrugs.*

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Vox

> Oh, hey, Nino! Fancy seeing you here···

> Wait! That's not the point. I got distracted! The point is···

> The three of you need to leave immediately! It's one angel per human, yeah?!?

> And this one's mine··· Got it?

> *Wait··· angel······ did he say······*

> *Angel?!?!*

> *Just who are these people?*

>*Sure, they magically appeared inside my apartment, but··· There's no way they're angels!*

> *Even if those are real, these guys don't have··· wings, or halos, or white robes···*

> *So surely I misheard him···.*

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Damon

> *The blue-haired man laughs.*

>Guys, I think we're scaring the girl here···.

>He gestures to your shaking hands and frightened expression.

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Levi

>For once, Damon has a point···

> Sorry for interruption, miss. Only one of us was supposed to appear, but it seems as if there's been some sort of misunderstanding.

> I'm Levi, that's Damon, those two are Vox and Nino. [sprites appear as he names each]

> And as Vox subtly alluded to a second ago··· We are, in fact, angels. Or at least, that's the name you humans would recognize us by.

>*You freeze. These guys are delusional! Angels···.?*

>*Levi senses your hesitation and continues speaking.*

> Need proof, huh? That's understandable. Most people do.

> *As if on command, a glowing halo materializes above his head and two radiant wings appear from his back. He flutters them for a moment before making them disappear once again.*

[Sprite displayed on screen]: None

>*Your knees buckle to the floor in shock. You feel yourself falling···*

> *You see the silent one, Nino, swiftly move to catch you before you hit the ground. He releases you gently so you now sit on the floor, unharmed.*

> I don't get it. Why··· why are you here? Am I going to die?

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Levi

> *The pink-haired man walks over to you and squats down so he is at eye-level as you sit on the floor.*

>No, you're not going to die··· You see, in times of major events in humanity, we are given assignments.

> Assignments to help a certain human. Maybe someone who is lonely, or lost, or in danger···

> And I just so happened to be assigned to you. Or, I guess, maybe we all were···

> *Levi stares at the other three men with a slightly annoyed scowl.*

[Sprite displayed on screen]: None

>A-assigned to me? So you're staying here?

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Levi

>Precisely. Keeping you company, making sure you stay safe and follow all the rules⋯ That's my job.

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Damon

>You mean my job!

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Vox

>MY job!

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Nino

>Hmph.

[Sprite displayed on screen]: Levi

>Well⋯ we'll figure that part out soon. Hey, how about an apartment tour?

[Sprite displayed on screen]: None

>*You shakily get up from the floor. This feels surreal⋯*

>*These four men just⋯ appear in your house, claim to be supernatural beings, and then want to act like everything is normal?*

>*You have a feeling you're not going to make it to that party tonight.*

>*And thus starts your first day of cohabitating with four unruly angels. Good luck!*

-END OF PROLOGUE-