

Sense of Harmony



Available On: IFComp Website

Awards: 10th Place IFComp 2020 (Out of 103 games)

Tools: Articy, Javascript

Approximate Playtime: One Hour

Link: <https://ifarchive.org/if-archive/games/competition2020/Games/Sense%20of%20Harmony/index.html>

A character exploration of a woman whose cybernetically enhanced empathy makes it hard to set healthy emotional boundaries. This entry explores a day in her life moonlighting at a Rub n' Tug in Toronto in the year 2032.

Sample

This is a brief snippet of an exchange between Elizabeth and one of her clients at the Crown Diamond: Amir. Normally, sessions with Amir are drama-free but something is eating at him today and Elizabeth's cybernetics will not let her ignore it. Given how much school work she has coming up, she wanted this to be a simple evening.

The game's storytelling relies heavily on extra-sensory information delivered through asides alongside the main text. In order to properly convey this sample, I've arranged the sample in a two-column table with the main text on the left and the sense data on the right.

A quick example of the mechanic in action can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lacTATkr1O4>

<p>"You always know exactly what to say," Amir murmurs, still gazing forlornly into the simulated night sky. "Not like me."</p>	<p>Touch Clocking heart rate from target's neck at higher-than-expected levels following intercourse. Acute muscle twitches in back and neck.</p>
<p>He grunts and heaves himself over to his side. His head nestles between your thigh and stomach as his free arm wraps around your waist and pulls you close. The move wrinkles the many creases in his unbuttoned dress shirt.</p>	<p>Smell Empathy response. Olfactory system is detecting nearby anxiety which is being mirrored in your amygdala.</p>
<p>You frown and wrinkle your nose. A detached nervousness creeps into your fingers as they slide over the bumps in his spine.</p>	<p>Sight Renewed tightness in chest. Post-coital muscle relaxation waning faster than normal.</p> <p>Hearing Acute anomaly in vocal timbre. Hastened release at the end of each word.</p> <p>Probable tightness in throat.</p>
<p>Choice: Pay attention to him</p>	

<p>You can't help but notice there's something not quite right with him today, and the feeling is regrettably infectious because now you feel as though there's something not quite right with you. The cues from his body tingle under your temples and you wish for just a moment you had the power to turn it all off, but you have about as much choice in how they work as you did about getting them.</p> <p>The interminable timekeeper in your skull ticks on. It's been a long day, and this is your last session.</p>	<p>Self-Checkup Warning: You are experiencing a lapse of focus while on the clock.</p> <p>Possible causes: Compassion fatigue. Physical and emotional over-exertion. Impending Compiler Theory assignment.</p> <p>Also, you are experiencing an acute empathy response to the man in front of you.</p> <p>Sight Incessant foot tapping. Restless.</p> <p>Hearing Increased rumbling in his stomach.</p> <p>Touch Decrease in moisture of his breaths blowing across your thighs.</p>
<p>Choice: Ask him, "What's wrong?"</p>	
<p>His frown deepens. "My Dad..." he closes his eyes. "Is dying."</p> <p>The admission lands like a dead dove in your lap.</p>	<p>Touch Salt concentration of his tears 6mg/ml.</p> <p>Memory Searching...</p> <p>Amir: Only child. No siblings. Mother: Sonia Dhesi. Already deceased. Father: Henry Rivers. No occupation. Lost job in shipping due to automation. Lives off CESB (Canadian Equality and Security Benefit).</p>
<p>Choice: "I'm sorry..."</p>	
<p>"I know... you're not scheduled next Thursday," he says, just narrowly avoiding eye contact. "But... I wanted to book a 4PM."</p> <p>Next Thursday is the day before your first exam.</p>	<p>Memory / Database History of Computation. Essay focused. Emphasis on original and creative thoughts. Requires preparing thesis and arguments in advance.</p> <p>Current schedule has very few breaks until then.</p> <p>Self-Checkup Symptoms of fatigue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cognitive slow-down - Difficulty focusing - Slagging memory recall