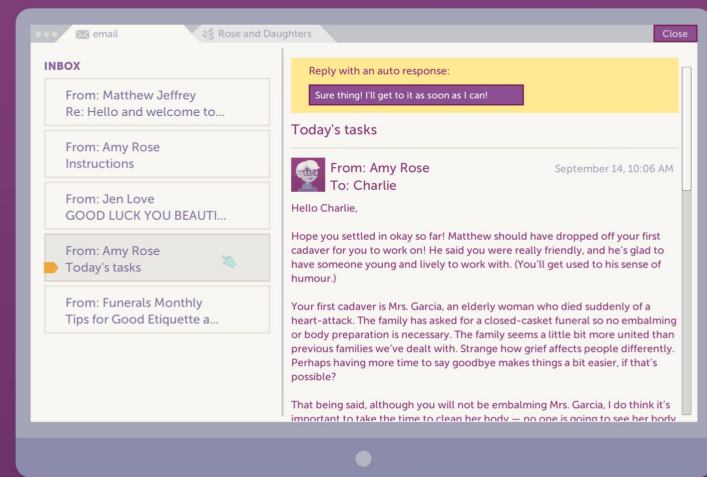# a Mortician's tale
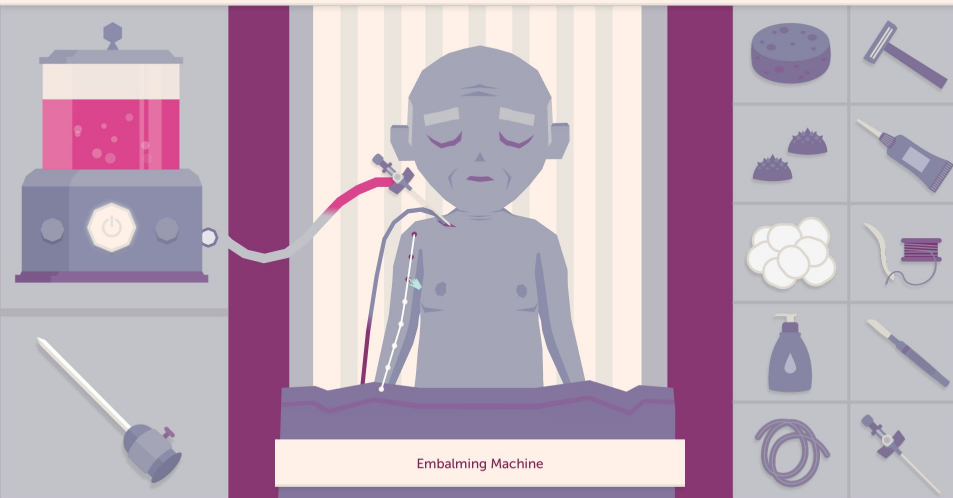
"A Different View on How Games Treat Death"

Gabby DaRienzo

- Toronto-based game developer

- ½ of Laundry Bear Games

- Designer/Artist of A Mortician's Tale

- Host of the Play Dead Podcast

Top-right panel (email interface):

email | Rose and Daughters | Close

INBOX

Reply with an auto response:
Sure thing! I'll get to it as soon as I can!

Today's tasks

From: Matthew Jeffrey
Re: Hello and welcome to...

From: Amy Rose
Instructions

From: Jen Love
GOOD LUCK YOU BEAUTI...

From: Amy Rose
Today's tasks

From: Funerals Monthly
Tips for Good Etiquette a...

From: Amy Rose
To: Charlie
September 14, 10:06 AM

Hello Charlie,

Hope you settled in okay so far! Matthew should have dropped off your first cadaver for you to work on! He said you were really friendly, and he's glad to have someone young and lively to work with. (You'll get used to his sense of humour.)

Your first cadaver is Mrs. Garcia, an elderly woman who died suddenly of a heart-attack. The family has asked for a closed-casket funeral so no embalming or body preparation is necessary. The family seems a little bit more united than previous families we've dealt with. Strange how grief affects people differently. Perhaps having more time to say goodbye makes things a bit easier, if that's possible?

That being said, although you will not be embalming Mrs. Garcia, I do think it's important to take the time to clean her body — no one is going to see her body

Bottom-left panel:

In order to evenly distribute the chemicals, you'll have to massage them through the body. Click and drag over the body to massage it.

Embalming Machine

Bottom-right panel:

Did you ever end up clearing the air with your father?

1. A brief history on death in video games

2. Personal history with death and games

3. Developing A Mortician's Tale

4. Other indie devs doing cool things
   with ~*~ death and games ~*~

5. Strategies on how to best use death in
   your own games

Spacewar! (1962)

Space Invaders (1978)

Super Mario Bros (1985)

Pacman (1980)

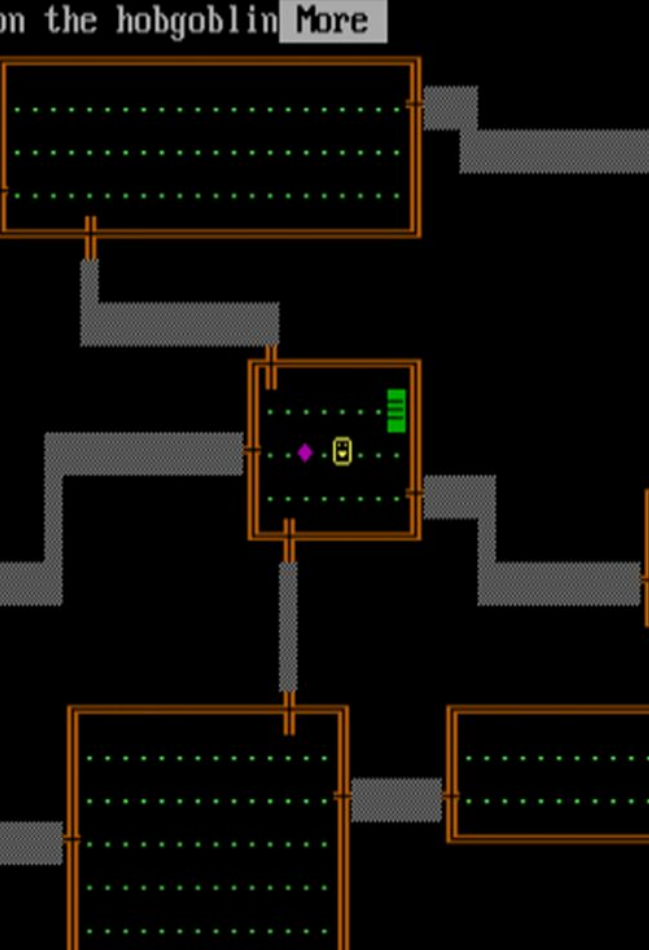Legend of Zelda (1986)

Halo: Combat Evolved (2001)

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (1989)

Doom (1993)

Call of Duty 2 (2005)

on the hobgoblin More

Rogue (1980)

Dark Souls (2011)

XCOM: Enemy Unknown (2012)

Max Payne (2001)

Mass Effect (2007–2012)

Final Fantasy 7 (1997)

10 year old
Gabby →

THE LEGOND OF **ZELDA**
MAJURA'S MASK

NoTES

Cool

This would be my outfit if I were a Hylian.

Cool eh?

Enimies

There are many kinds of enemies. They can be Nocternal or Daylit.

Nocternal means they come out at night, and Daylit means they're out during the day. And some are out Both.

Here:	Enemy	time
	bats	B
	Warewolves	N
	Blubbies	D
Swamp	Octa gores	B
	Killer turtles	B
	Angry Deku scrubs	B
	Red eyed lady bugs	B
	Skulltokias	B
	Cursed skulls	N
	Dragon Flys	B

The main bad guy, of coarse, is skull kid. But there are different enimies in different areas at different areas, times.

Some enimies are more power-ful than others. Like the warewolves.

Caitlin Doughty

In order to evenly distribute the chemicals, you'll have to massage them through the body. Click and drag over the body to massage it.
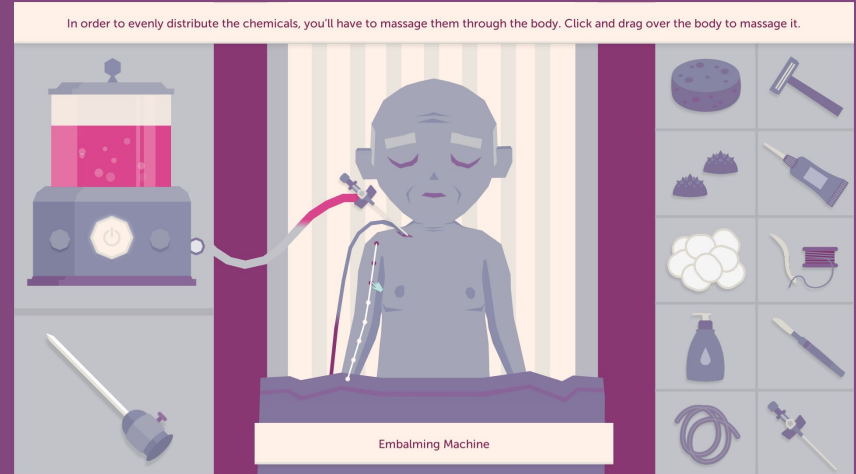
Embalming Machine

In order to evenly distribute the chemicals, you'll have to massage them through the body. Click and drag over the body to massage it.

Embalming Machine

: The laceration treatment is going
: well. Nice work, Doctor.

26 VITAL

SCORE
76400

TIME LIMIT
00:72:40

HEAL JELLY

IGN.COM

Trauma Centre: Second Opinion (2006)

A Mortician's Tale (2017)

Did you ever end up clearing the air with your father?

Recommended
0.0 hrs last two weeks / 1.5 hrs on record
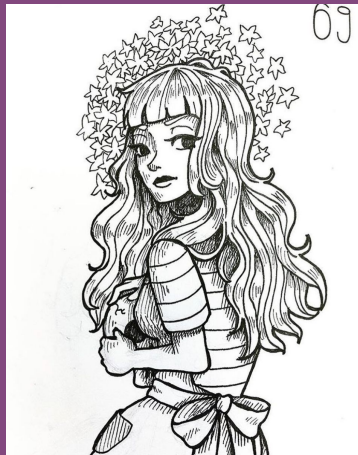
Posted: 10 Jan @ 9:54pm

I bought this game as a soft coping mechanism shortly after the passing of a loved one. Please understand this is also my first review. It didn't take long to finish the game and I guess some people might be miffed about that, but it was beautiful. It helped me understand the processes after death, and in a small way deal with the whole thing. I love this game and its developers for that simple fact. To the devs, thank you.

Dear Laundry Bear Team,

This isn't a job or an internship application. I am not used to contact game dev to talk about their games and how much I loved it. However, I had to send you this email. And I hope it will make you feel happy and proud.
I played A Mortician's Tale last december. A few days later, my mom called me to tell that her mother, my grandmother, was very sick and that it was a matter of days. There is something in the game that stayed with me. It was these little "tips". Don't ask "what can I do for you ?" or "if you need anything, tell me". At that moment, I knew that I had to be there for my mother. So I came back to my parents' to assist her in this hard time.
My grandmother passed away last week. It was the first time in my life I was going to bury someone I loved. Thanks to your game, I knew that everything was going to be okay. That my grandmother would be taken care of. It helped me cope and grief. It helped me know what to do. What to say. What not to say.
I'm sorry if my email is a mess. I am just writing as I think.
As a game dev, I know how hard it is to make games. But it's even harder to make games that really matter. Your game matters. And I hope someday I will to make a game able to change players' life.

Thank you for making A Mortician's Tale.

Best Regards,

Recommended
0.0 hrs last two weeks / 3.8 hrs on record

Posted: 18 Oct @ 9:08pm

Thank you.

I'm 27 years old. Six months ago, we found out my husband has cancer. Things change after that. We suddenly became mortal, all at once.

People can't really get it until they've looked at death, or the possibility of death, in the face. Until you're talking about what end-of-life plans would be with your partner, you don't quite know how terrifying and painful it all is.

This game helped. It's the first thing that's really helped since then. This game gets it. This game is important. And it's helped me walk through the pain a bit more, and recognize that we aren't alone in suffering and death. We all die, and we're joined by that. It doesn't have to be so terrifying.

P.S. - My husband is doing much better. Surgery went well, and he hasn't had to get any chemo/radiation yet. Things are looking up, but once your mind realizes you're mortal, you stay mortal.
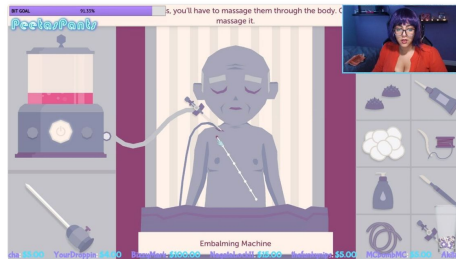
Sami-Jo "Peeta" Perruzza
@PeetasPants
Follow

Played #AMorticiansTale yesterday!

Solid soundtrack, story line, graphic quality, AND was super informative. +JEN IS BAE. #DeathPositive

10:23 AM - 19 Oct 2017

blushingredd
Following

blushingredd Kawaii-Kon is this weekend! Come say hi in the artist alley, table L08! Going to be cosplaying on Saturday as Charlie from #amorticianstale by @laundrybeargames The amazing artwork is from @jacquelindeleon #deathpositive #cosplay #kawaiikon2017 #kawaiikon

Night in the Woods (2017)

The Graveyard (2008)

Speed Dating for Ghosts (2018)

The Walking Dead (2012)

What Remains of Edith Finch (2017)

Oxenfree (2016)

ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
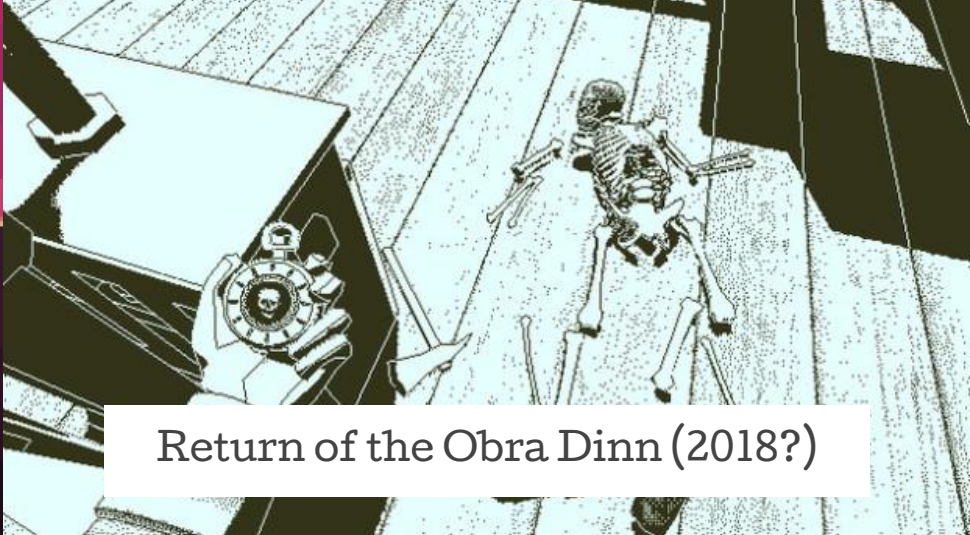
YOU'RE AN IDIOT.

WATCH YOUR STEP!

Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons (2013)

That Dragon, Cancer (2016)

Sunburn (2014)

Return of the Obra Dinn (2018?)

Guacamelee (2013)
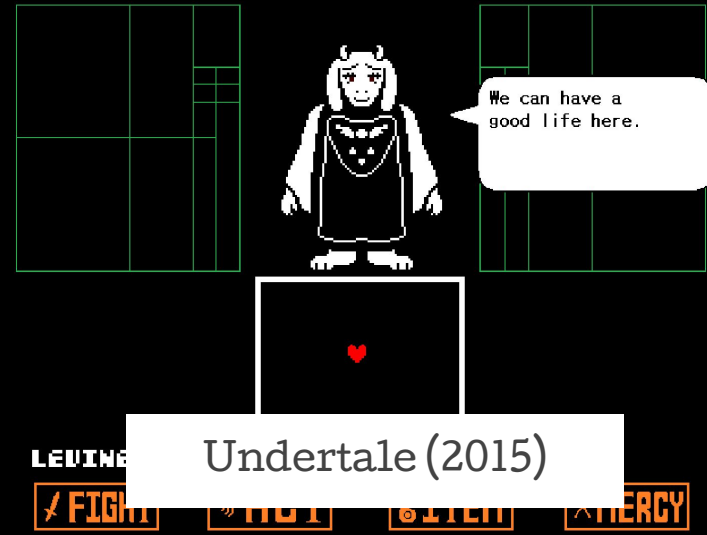
Eve Valkyrie (2016)
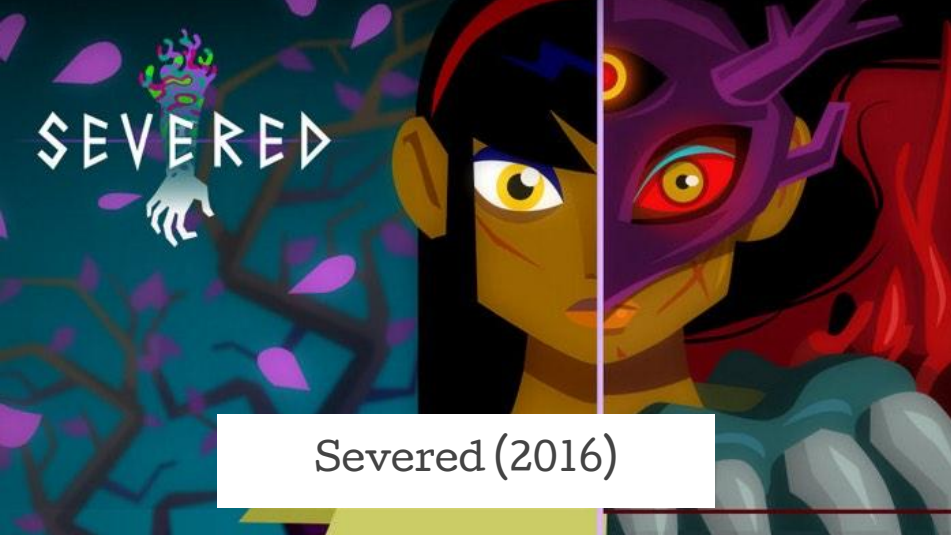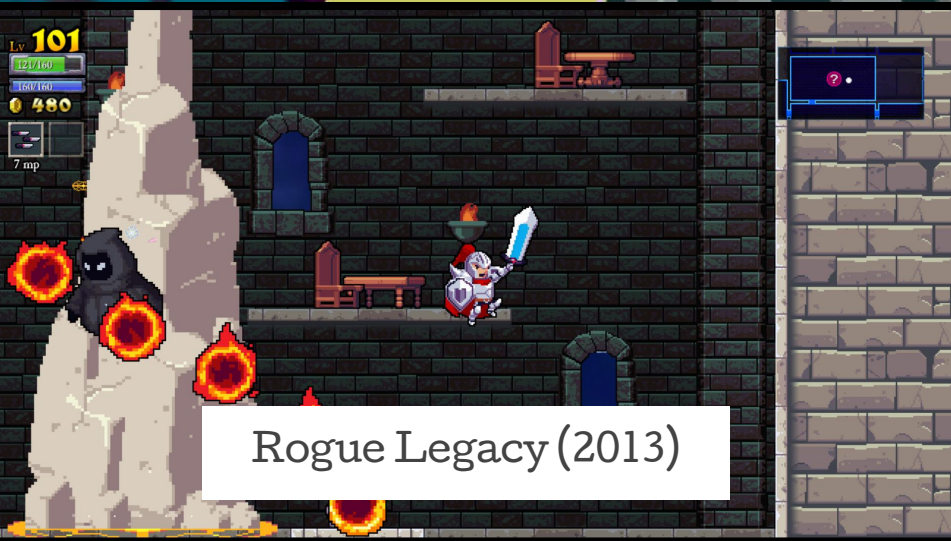
Severed (2016)

Undertale (2015)

We can have a good life here.

Rogue Legacy (2013)

Doki Doki Literature Club (2017)

1. How will your game use death?

Think about how death can best work for your game

- Mechanics first? Narrative first?

  - Should support each other

- Don't just rely on traditional death mechanics

  - Figure out what works best for <u>your game's design</u>

- Is death necessary in your game?

2. Do your research and consult

Make sure you're being accurate and respectful

- Interviews and consultations

- The internet can be a great resource

  - ...Consider turning on safe search tho

- Be respectful

  - Not just with death but with other cultures and their rituals around death

3. Be understanding with your players

How are your players going to handle the death in your game?

- Death and grief is understandably hard for a lot of people
  - Interaction is personal and can be difficult
- Understand playtesting is not indicative of final play session
  - People play games differently alone than with people

4. Assess your own feelings on death

How comfortable are you with this subject matter?

- Important to be comfortable with discussions, research, etc
  - Make sure your team is also comfortable
- Self care is important
- If you aren't comfortable with death = explore *those* feelings
  - Can be therapeutic

Thank you 💜

Twitter: @gabdar

gabby@laundrybear.com

MorticiansTale.com