

# Analysis of Mechanics

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**Title:** Pathologic 2

**Released:** 2019

**Author:** Ice-Pick Lodge

**Primary Genre:** Adventure

**Secondary Genre:** Horror RPG

**Style:** Semi-Realistic

## Analysis

Pathologic 2 is a Single-Player Open-World RPG with an emphasis on difficulty. It takes place in a nameless town that is about to experience a plague outbreak named "The Sand Pest." The player is playing the role of a surgeon called Artemy Burakh, also known as 'Haruspex.' Artemy returns to the town upon his father's warning stating that "great difficulties are coming." When arriving at the station, however, he is attacked by 3 locals trying to murder him, accused of patricide, and later has to find a panacea for The Sand Pest that is about to hit the town.

The story is structured into 12 days, in which every day has something new to offer for the player to interact with or explore. The player can go anywhere and do anything; however, the game limits the player in doing anything he wants by several ways. The most notable one being the constant ticking of the clock. Artemy has a lot of tasks he has to do every day, and it is extremely difficult to do all of them because the player always runs out of time. Despite this, a big part of the game is talking with people. Doing some favors for them helps you uncover the truth about the death of Artemy's father and progresses the ultimate goal: finding the panacea to cure The Sand Pest.

In Pathologic 2, as in many other RPG games, you have to manage your personal stats (hunger, infection, thirst, fatigue, reputation...). Ignoring any of these stats results in a lot of negative effects and usually will result in death. The player trades his money for items that help manage these stats; however, these items can also be traded or are straight-up necessary for completing a quest. Failing a quest is not a "death state" you will continue to play the game without the option of repeating said quest. Artemy doesn't get experience levels and does not "level up" in any sense. The RPG progression here is in the form of the player gaining experience and knowledge required to progress the game. Dying makes the player continue from the last saved check-point, with the drawback of having his maximum health permanently reduced.

The RPG part is being taken quite literally as you, the player, are literally playing your role in a theatre made for you through Artemy's eyes. Artemy himself is just "a vessel" for you to take control of and experience the town through. Some characters are aware of this and will talk directly to you, the player, instead of Artemy.

Pathologic 2 blends these two genres very well for what it's trying to do. The constant ticking of the clock alongside managing your stats makes adventuring difficult and really incites the feeling of despair and anxiety. If you choose to focus on managing your stats (RPG elements), you lose the ability to explore the town (adventure elements), therefore missing some interesting things, like quests, for example. However, this goes the other way too. If you only focus on exploring and completing the quests, you will die. A lot. The player needs to do a delicate dance to survive the town as well as complete all the quests he can.

What ultimately sets Pathologic 2 apart from other games is how it uses difficulty, by tightly coupling these 2 genres together, and despair not as obstacles to overcome, but as tools to tell its story. Failure is not the end, but a part of the experience – making the game feel less like entertainment and more like a literal theatrical performance.