Game: SPENT

Reading: Experimental Games: Critique, Play and Design in the Age of Gamification (Experimental games)

Failure in many larger games have become something of a taboo. From time rewinds in Forza Horizon series, to checkpoints in games Call of Duty or God of War, it seems that the majority of the game industry has designed failure to be something which should be mitigated and avoided. However, as Jagoda writes in Experimental games, failure, when done well, can be a tool to convey a message.

For example, SPENT is a game about ensuring that one has enough finances to make it through a month in the United States while earning minimum wage. Crucially, the game is (sadly) unforgiving as it aims to provide a viewpoint on the difficulty of living minimum wage in America. In it, failure is a way to provide a light on reality, and for players to empathise (see previous game log) with the difficulties, of those in the real world. The ending screen thus allows players to donate to the Urban Ministries of Durham, an organization which helps those who are unable to live with minimum wage. Games like SPENT provide an excellent example of how failure can be used as a force for good, instead of a waste of resources or time (and thus be neutered as much as possible to sell more copies of games).