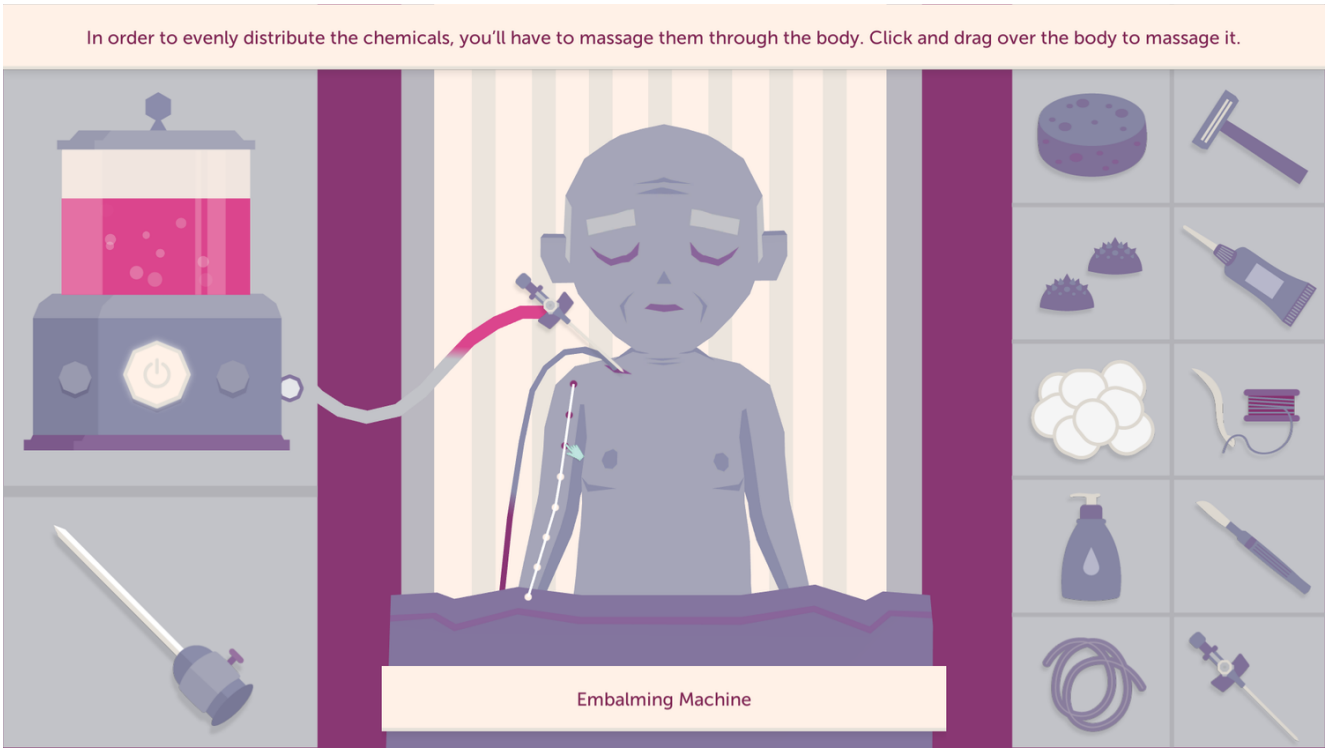
In an hour, A Mortician's Tale will make you think differently about death

It can be difficult to find time to finish a video game, especially if you only have a few hours a week to play. In our new biweekly column, Short Play, we suggest video games that can be started and finished in a weekend.

A Mortician's Tale is one of those video games where the term "game" doesn't always feel like an appropriate descriptor. It's more of an interactive meditation and self-reflection on death and what we do with bodies – but that doesn't really roll off the tongue as nicely.

It follows Charlie, a recent college graduate who was just hired as a funeral director for a small mom and pop funeral home called Rose & Daughters. You experience different days in Charlie's life, about a month apart, and each day starts with reading emails from her friends and co-workers. This acts as the narrative throughline and provides a greater context for what's happening to and around Charlie at that moment.



Laundry Bear Games

One of the emails then informs you about your job for the day, telling you not only how to prepare the body, but also about the person and how they died. You then go about the preparations. This takes the form of a surgical game-like interface where you clean the body, and use a variety of techniques like embalming, massaging, sewing eyelids shut, and inserting cotton balls into their mouth to make it appear more alive. Afterwards you attend the funeral, and talk to the family members. Some grieving, some complaining about the decor, others reminiscing, as well as the occasional child in the corner playing a game on their phone. Then you pay your respects before it moves ahead to the next day.

There aren't any choices you need to make, or ways to make a mistake. *A Mortician's Tale* is a very directed experience. It gives a lot of insight into what sort of things go on in the funeral industry, and raises a number of questions that it doesn't seek to answer for you. Are you okay with all the steps they take to make a dead body look alive? At what point does the service a funeral home provides become too impersonal

/ commercialized? Is it okay to ignore the wishes of the deceased and go with what the family wants?

[embedded content]

This isn't to say it doesn't have a specific perspective, but rather it's sort of a primer for understanding the Death Positive Movement. The tenets of the movement mainly focus on wanting to destigmatize discussions of death, allow for more open talk about death and dying, as well as empower people to make their end-of-life wishes and to involve themselves in caring for their dead if they want. The game itself never explicitly outlines these tenets; rather, it uses the choices Charlie makes and her situation to implicitly demonstrate them to you. This makes the concepts more palatable to take in, and has gotten me to rethink certain aspects of my own feelings on death and the funeral industry.

I've had small discussions here and there with my family about certain arrangements that'll need to be made, since I'll likely be put into the position to make decisions and carry them out. But beyond that I haven't personally given much thought to the subject. And while *A Mortician's Tale* hasn't necessarily made me a convert to the movement, it has gotten me to think a lot more about the subject than I have in the past. Pretty impressive for a game that takes only about an hour to play.

A Mortician's Tale was created by Laundry Bear Games. You can get it on Steam, ich.io, or Humble Store where it is playable on Windows and Mac OS. It takes about an hour to finish.

https://www.theverge.com/2018/1/7/16853780/morticians-tale-video-game-death-positive-movement-indie-short-play