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FMS

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### The Charming Depression in *What Remains of Edith Finch*

Interweaved in *What Remains of Edith Finch*'s gameplay is a sense of loneliness, brought on by the survivor's guilt of its titular protagonist. Through the eyes (and words) of Edith, the game tells the story of herself and her tragic family, cursed with the frequent fatalities of her relatives. Returning after seven years, 17-year-old Edith navigates the Finch house, a tall and cramped structure riddled with hidden corridors and paths as she uncovers the secrets about her family kept by her deceased mother and the details of the unique deaths of her family. These are revealed in written texts like diary entries and passages for Edith to discover along her journey. Each relative's death is experienced respectively different from one another in terms of their gameplay. It's within the gameplay of these tragedies that make the game's story equal parts charming and melancholic.

What struck me in this gameplay sequence was its simplicity. *What Remains of Edith Finch* and other games similar to it, are referred to as "Walking Simulations" : games which story are revealed by progressing through the levels on foot, with next to no other mechanic or style of gameplay. For a game with such a simple presentation, the story and sequences like this are not as much, and that combination makes the game unique. The ease of what occurs says a lot on its own for they aren't lighthearted or casual moments, but instead very important chapters in the story. While each of the Finches fates were not in the hands of Edith, by the end of the game she

will have read and learned about each and every one of them, and in the player's case, experience either the true or surrealistic nature of those events firsthand.

The gameplay is split into two perspectives. The first, Edith, is obvious since the player spends the majority in her point of view. The second, is the each of her passed relatives,

The first sequence is about Molly, who died in 1947 at the age of ten. Edith discovers the truth about her death through her diary. This is when the player is planted in Molly's perspective and led to experience the follow-up to her death. Her journey starts after being sent to her room by her mother without being fed, and resides to eating toothpaste, gerbil food and holly berries. Her tale takes a strange turn, as you are suddenly turned into a cat, and travel outside as Molly tried to catch a bird. At this point, the player should realize that Molly is not actually turning into a cat, rather she is hallucinating due to the effects of her strange diet. You as the player can't change or control the story, but are left pouncing your way to her eventual demise, which in the real world occurred in her sleep.

The next story is about Calvin, and further demonstrates how the gameplay suggests the surrealistic dread of their fate. As Calvin, you are swinging on a swing-set and you are only allowed to swing in a forward and a backward motion. This lack of control makes the player understand the helplessness of the situation and by the end, when all is said and done and Calvin flies into the sky as his brother's written passage about his death is described.

In this level, it's not just what the player does as Calvin, but what he sees that helps make this a memorable moment. Overlooking Calvin's view of the ocean in this scene is a beautiful, cloudy haze that is only complimented by the orange leaves that hit feet brush against after a few swings. For something as tragic as the death of another Finch child, its still beautifully displayed

here, and with each passage read and written by Sam, Calvin's brother, we learn the ambition filled within him after being told he won't be able to swing all of the way around the tree swing. This kind of ambition is shown and displayed throughout the rest of the Finches tales. Each have their own depressing background, but each finish with a wondrous and almost fulfilling end.