

LISA

Narrative Review by

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OVERVIEW

LISA: The Painful RPG tells a story of trauma through the eyes of a struggling drug addict in a brutal post-apocalypse. It's witty, direct, and painfully raw, asking players to truly question themselves and the type of person they think they are. The road to hell is paved with good intentions after all...

LESSONS

Despite the extremely serious story and main cast of the LISA games, a large chunk of LISA: The Painful is dedicated solely to comedy. Most of the humor is there to balance out the dark depressing events of the main story and helps to both soften the blow and emphasize the darker moments through contrast.

Utilizing diegesis can really help to strengthen a game's narrative. When Brad loses an arm, the player notices how he becomes physically weaker in battle. Similarly, there are serious in-game benefits to fueling Brad's joy addiction, putting both Brad and the player in the same mindset of making a bad decision.

STRANGENESS

If there was a word used to describe how the game presents itself, it would be "strange." LISA is a game of few words. There are multiple points where something funny, or disturbing, or weird plays out on screen that is not acknowledged. Often times the player can't even inspect oddities in their environment, forced to come to their own conclusions instead.

TRUQUITY

LISA depicts trauma passing from generation to generation. It starts with Brad's father and ends with Brad's daughter, Buddy. It affects the characters' actions, relationships, and worldview in damaging ways, hurting themselves as well as others. Brad Armstrong is a bad person who desperately wants to be good, but the player ultimately can do nothing but watch as a victim of abuse becomes an abuser himself.

