

Okay so I'm gonna try to write this up as clearly and succinctly as I can, but keep in mind, I haven't played this game in like half a year so my memory might be a *little* hazy on some things, so bear with me.

Also this is a LONG post, and having just finished writing it I absolutely do not feel like proof reading, so you're just going to have to deal with potential repetition, redundancy or missed typos because I spent *way too long* typing this up already and I want to be done lol:

- So, first thing we see when we boot up Pathologic is a strange cutscene seemingly unrelated to anything in the rest of the game. It shows a group of children from the town engaging in a bizarre ritual burial/funeral procession for a non-descript, unremarkable doll. Curiously, they go through all the typical steps of a normal funeral but they *leave the grave open and unburied for no explicit reason*.

many people take this to be sort of just a weird teaser trailer for the game they're about to play. Something that is loosely related to the main game but has no real relation or importance to the main plot of the game. This is a mistake, however, the only way you find out how important this is to the game's lore is to connect it to your experience in the Changeling route, a route that requires you to beat the game at least *once* before accessing it. Since most people don't rewatch preview cutscenes except for maybe the first time they play the game, by the time you get to the changeling route, they usually don't notice the obvious relation to the two. That is, the beginning of the changeling route, where she ***literally wakes up in that same grave in the same spot as the doll***. The doll is nowhere to be seen-- keep this in the back of your mind, it'll be relevant later on.

- The changeling's nature and background is purposely obfuscated from both the player as well as the character herself. No one in the town seems to know her or where she came from, and rumors abound about her nature with some believing she is a miracle healer and others thinking she is the plague itself. This owes to her miraculous, and seemingly random powers to heal or kill anyone with her bare hands. This is well established even with people who do not actually go to the extent of playing her route. Less discussed/noticed however is her *other* ability or, it could be said, *disability*. That being that *Clara cannot lie*. About a third of the way through her route Clara hastily makes up an excuse to get out of trouble by lying and saying her evil twin sister did something which we know she actually did. Surprisingly, everyone believes this very obvious and child-like lie. Then, to her and our shock and horror, we **actually meet the twin sister who is now flesh and blood and has retroactively been added to the established causality of the world and story**. This establishes a crucial plot point and character trait of Clara-- she *cannot* lie, any lie she makes will retroactively become truth and may not be undone. **Clara, seemingly, has the power of creation itself over the Town's material reality**. Keep this in mind, it will come up later.

Ok, so that's really all the important background info you need set up to understand the big reveal. At the end of the game, provided we save all of our bound, we are of course invited to meet the powers that be. You probably know by now the big reveal of them being these weird

cosmic children playing in a sandbox with a miniature replica of the town. The reveal is that all the characters in the game, including you yourself, are actually dolls.... all except *one*. That's right, Clara is *not* a doll like Artemy and Daniil.

When we meet the Powers that Be as each character they have distinct reactions and dialogue for each (as is to be expected). One thing you may not notice on your first run through a full playthrough are the subtle differences in their reactions to each character. Thrush and Measly explicitly confirm that both Daniil and Haruspex are in fact dolls, to Daniil "You've always been the scary doll" and to Artemy, "you were a doll and now you're alive!" It's also important to note that neither of the powers that be treat any potential threats from Artemy or Daniil to be serious. If you threaten them as Daniil they will chide him by saying "you keep your hands to yourself... Little doll! A little doll smarting around!" Moreover, when Artemy threatens Thrush, she points out his utter impotence being a doll: "Really? So you're not a doll? Go ahead, hit me then. Well, why are you just standing there? Hit me with everything you have!"

It's also important to note that both characters are mentioned to be smaller than either of the children, with both of them taking note of their small stature (though commenting that they have "grown" though it's not too certain if that is meant literally or figuratively).

When we meet the Powers that Be as Clara, things are much different. For one, in all the dialogue trees available with both kids, there is no mention or acknowledgement of her being a doll in any way. Neither of them are entirely sure who/what Clara is, but they know for sure she's not a doll. When asked about which protagonist they prefer, Measly tells her that they find her "weird." In fact, gauging both of their reactions **they both seem afraid of Clara and believe she could potentially hurt them**. When you talk to Measly he asks "You're not going to... hurt us, are you?" and when you interact with Thrush, she is positively frightened, saying "Why are you here? Go away... I'm scared! You're scary!" These reactions stand in stark contrast with how each reacts to Daniil and Artemy which oscillates somewhere between bemused curiosity to outright mockery. Whereas their conversations with them highlight the characters' impotence, their conversations with Clara imply the exact opposite.

It is also established that, unlike with Artemy and Daniil, Clara is not the size of a doll. In fact, it is stated outright that she is the same height as both Measly and Thrush (Thrush: "you may be a great big dummy but we're still the same height!" / Changeling: "It's because I'm hunkering down. That's why we're the same height. See?"). So from a raw, physical point of view, we already have a type of equivalency between the two parties. Clara obviously cannot be of the same type as Artemy and Daniil given her precognition of who the powers that be are and her being the same size as them.

Moreover, that is not the only equivalency we find between the two. There's an interesting but often overlooked comment that Thrush makes when talking to Artemy about the final choice regarding the town. Thrush asks him to help save the town, to which he can demand they remove either the commander or inquisitor. She replies, **"That's Impossible now! We can't. Mirrors make it all very complicated. You can't take your move back once you've made it-there are the rules of a real live game!"** This is a *crucial* piece of information about how the

Powers that Be work, mainly that they have power over creation, but they do not have the power to *undo* creation or to *contradict* it. Once they put a piece in play the laws of causality take over from there and it can't be undone whether they like it or not. Now here's where we tie this quality back to Clara-- remember that overlooked power from earlier? If Clara lies she will make it into truth, and once she makes that lie, she *cannot undo it*. In other words, ***she has the power of creation but not the power to undo it***. In effect, she has the *same exact power* as the powers that be; the only difference is her placement *within* the town rather than *outside* it.

So, to review, we can establish these qualities about Clara:

1. She is not a doll like the other characters
2. She is the same size as the powers that be
3. She seemingly has the ability to harm the powers that be (or at least they seem to believe she does in any effect)
4. She has the same power and same limitation as the powers that be

Everything here seems to point that she exists on the same level that they do, above the town but below the executors. But if this is true, why is she *in the town* instead of lording over it from the exterior like Thrush and Measly? Well, this is where we go back to the opening cutscene. The cutscene is of the children placing the doll in the same opened grave that Clara will later wake up in. Now, in hindsight, when we watch this cutscene we can see a kind of irony in it; these characters are burying a *doll* but we as the player know that *they too are dolls*. In essence, perhaps without even realizing it, they are burying one of *their own kind*. Now, what exactly is a changeling anyway? A changeling is a *supernatural creature that switches places with a human infant/child*-- they are creatures from a different realm of existence that substitute a normal individual in the real world. If all of the town, including the children, are dolls, then they are the *same thing as the doll in the grave*, meaning that the doll they place there has the same essence to it as if it were any other character in the town-- a doll is a doll after all. Clara is a "changeling" because she comes from an external, supernatural reality and comes to take the place of one of the many *dolls* found in the town.

Given that we've established that she's from a different realm from any of the other main characters, she has precognition of the nature of the town's reality, she is confirmed to be the same size as the powers that be through their own admission, she has *the same power of creation and limitations as them*, she ostensibly has the ability to harm them unlike the others who are explicitly shown not to, and that she takes the place of a "doll" in order to find herself as an external agent placed internally into the town's reality-- all of these point to a single conclusion: Clara exists at the same level or with the same nature as the Powers that Be. She is a being that exists at their level that is transported *into* the town through a purposeful changeling ritual done by the town's children.

I'm gonna stop here but there's more I could dive into, specifically with the dialogue and actions done by the child characters. A major theme throughout the game is the primacy of children and how the children of the town somehow seemingly understand what's going on better than any of the adults of the town do and are given special access to the town's reality than any of the

adults are. All of that potentially ties into that opening ritual as well as Clara's true nature, but this post is long enough as it is.