

NOTE: I am not a professional translator or someone who does translation for a living. This is all done for the sake of sharing developers' words with my overseas friends. Please feel free to correct any mistakes or make suggestions! ^^

Translation can undergo minor edits later!

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Images come from original article; sources linked as Pathologic 3 / Ice-Pick Lodge

Mental metabolism: more details about Pathologic 3 and interview with Ice-Pick Lodge. Published on March 7th, 2025.

Time manipulation, amalgam¹ and other gameplay elements of the upcoming game.



Published by: [Oleg Chimde](#). He's been editing and writing articles about videogames for over 12 years. He is also a huge fan of horror games and narrative games in general.

Pathologic 2 was released in May of 2019. That was an artistic rework of "Pathologic Classic" – the first game from IPL. A tough survival game about a fierce rivalry with Death itself. The main character was Artemy Burakh, the Haruspex, who arrived at his hometown where a plague outbreak was about to occur. His mission was to investigate the situation, find the cure and save as many people as possible. But as the gameplay shows, this is impossible.

¹ * [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalgam_\(chemistry\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalgam_(chemistry)) (* - Translator's notes. Footnotes with no * come from the original interview's text).

In “Pathologic Classic” aside from Haruspex’s storyline, Bachelor’s and Changeling’s stories took place as well, but back in the day IPL had no budget to remake all three stories at once. So now everyone’s waiting for [Bachelor’s route](#) – a story about a scientist from the capital, who arrives at The Town to examine the nature of Life and Death, and along with Haruspex finds himself drawn into games with Death. The new game will be released in 2025, with a free prologue coming on March 17th.

Haruspex cares for The Kin and bizarre local traditions and, metaphorically speaking, he saw the Lines he could cut through. But Bachelor is a scholar from the capital, salt of the earth², the local legends are alien to him. So, the gameplay in Pathologic 3 will be completely different from the previous games.

We spoke to developers from IPL to find out more about the upcoming game.

The questions were answered by:

- Alexander Suslov - lead game designer.
- Alfina (Alexandra Golubeva) - narrative director.
- Alexander Yadrikhinsky - project manager.
- Ayrat Zakirov - managing director.
- Vasily “Mushroomer” Kashnikov - audio director.

▶ Pathologic 3: Quarantine Release Date Reveal



- In the [first Steam Q&A](#) you mentioned that Pathologic 2 and 3 characters are quite different from each other. Like how Haruspex was scavenging the trash

² * <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/salt-of-the-earth>

and struggling to survive, while Bachelor's duty is to give orders, and he has no time to care about survival. Does that mean that Bachelor no longer needs the survival? Can he get sick and die? Is Pathologic not a survival game anymore?

Alfina: If we are talking about “survival” as meant in Steam tags, then no. But it's still a hard game about survival and dealing with death on various levels.

Alexander Suslov: Dankovsky in our game is like Isaac Babel's³ characters, whose faces turned grey from extreme fatigue, who only drink tea, who spend their nights planning both the firewood preparations and executions, and in the morning, they already need to hold a rally. This is the survival of a man of intellectual labor, when the physical hunger of your own body simply doesn't exist, but there are thousands of hungry people entrusted to your responsibility. The only thing that you “own” is constant burnout.

The whole gameplay of survival is divided into two levels. The first one is Dankovsky's struggle with himself and his own mental state. The second one is his struggle for the survival of The Town.

Do you remember how in “Pathologic 2”, on Day 3 the ruling families formed a headquarters to fight the Plague? So now the player will be the one managing the headquarters' actions. If the player fails to keep Dankovsky mentally stable, or if they fight the Plague with methods that make the townsfolk start a revolution – then Dankovsky dies.

Alexander Yadrikhinsky: While Haruspex's story was quite personal and focused on his Bound and the fate of The Kin, Bachelor's is more concerned with global issues and gameplay will emphasize that.

³ * https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Babel



- **What about hunger, sleep, and other basic survival traits from Pathologic 2? Which still work in Pathologic 3 and what will the player have to deal with?**

Alexander Yadrikhinsky: The main trait player will have to keep an eye on playing as Bachelor will be his sanity which was shaken by constant stress, sleep deprivation and the weight of responsibility. But no way this is the classic “madness scale” – we call this “mental metabolism.” The player will have to balance the character’s psyche like a tightrope walker maintaining their balance, walking over an abyss.

Alexander Suslov: An apathetic Bachelor is slow; he wastes his time instead of acting. And extreme apathy deprives him of the desire to live at all. In mania, Bachelor is fast and productive but gets to complete burnout quickly. And the player will have to maintain balance between these two states all the time.

Alfina: The second “level” of gameplay traits is about moving through a non-linear narrative (to put simply - “time jumps,” although it’s not that simple plot-wise). Bachelor tells the story of his trip to the Town-on-Gorkhon⁴ to the Inspector but not always in the correct order. The ability to tell the story in different order will require him to use a certain resource called the amalgam (why? find out once the game comes out!).

Alexander Suslov: Choosing the order of telling the story is a decision worth 10-15 minutes of gameplay. Travelling from Day 3 to Day 5, and from Day 5 to Day will cost the player a lot of amalgam. That’s why the decision to jump in time can be as hard as the decision to eat bread in Pathologic 2. Bread is a rare resource.

⁴ A river that divides the Town. The Town itself has no name, so it’s simply called Town-on-Gorkhon among the community.

* Or Gorkhonsk among Russian speakers :^)

Amalgam can be collected (just like money, using which player can buy bread), but the main source of getting it might require the same stimulants needed to deal with Bachelor's main survival traits.

And the final challenge to manage resources right is headquarters management. The player will be able to issue edicts that help to reduce the level of infection or provoke riots in the Town. Obviously, the edicts establishing sanitary dictatorship will increase the probability of those riots to appear, and edicts that will calm down the crowd, so-called "jam festivals", ⁵are the best way to boost the spreading of the infection. And those resources will be provided to the player only on Day 3 and will never be refilled until the end of the game; they can only be redistributed – it is impossible to build, for example, a facility that will create pills or to expand the resources bank, but it's possible to issue an economical edict and do a couple of trading here and there, or declare a forced requisition of something from the townspeople (this will definitely provoke riots).

The plot twist is that by the starting conditions the Town goes extinct quite early, much earlier than Day 12 ⁶comes. And it's not even a "bad ending", it's just nothingness – there's no future beyond Death, and there's no way to get to a future like this one, because there's no Dankovsky. The player must unlock these "locked" days by pushing the extinction of the Town farther and farther away, quelling the riots, seeking resources to do so (perhaps by jumping back in time), getting new edicts, managing time and keeping Dankovsky from burning in mania or freezing in apathy.

⁵ * In post-soviet tradition drinking tea with raspberry jam is the most common way to treat cold. "Jam festivals" might mean that townsfolk will stop doing checkups at the hospital and start using traditional medicine to fight the Sand Plague themselves.

⁶ In both "Pathologic Classic" and "Pathologic 2" the game ended after 12 in-game days, no matter what player did.



- **Do future Pathologic 3 players need to play Pathologic 2 to understand the new game? Can the third game become an introduction for new players into Pathologic series? I know people who don't dare to play Pathologic 2 – they say the game is too difficult.**

Alfina: Yes, Pathologic 3 will be a great possibility for new players to get to know the game series – all because of not one, but few reasons.

First of all, Dankovsky is a complete stranger in the Town and that's why it's easier for new players to understand him. Second of all, he's from the big capital city and quite rational – I think his mindset and life mission is closer to average modern players', than the other protagonists of the series: the semi-mystic Haruspex or even more mystic Clara.

But there's one more important thing that must be talked about. There's a certain type of games that people prefer to watch videoessays on YouTube about rather than playing themselves ("Fear & Hunger" is a good example). Pathologic is one of these games. And we understand why this happened: we are creating experiences that make the player feel stressed, under pressure and those experiences often break the typical reward systems familiar across some other game genres. And people don't like to be under any kind of pressure even if they like game's idea – they'd rather watch the game playthrough on Twitch, watch how this pressure is implied onto someone else.

In Pathologic 3 we decided to change the nature of this pressure. The game hasn't become all rainbows and butterflies (not even close to it), but for example the nonexistence of hunger and thirst bars means that the story won't get cut short simply because the player lost to in-game's economy. Oh, and the wrong story choice can be changed. However, does the right choice even exist? Anyway – we

want to try other ways of applying certain pressure on the player, hoping that more people will want to experience this feeling and not watch someone go through it on YouTube. This option doesn't meet our objectives.

The point of "Pathologic" has never been about looking for bread, it was about looking for good decisions and never finding them. In Pathologic 3 player will do this in a little different way – and we suspect that it will be easier for new players to be invested into this system.

- How much and how often do you use the assets from Pathologic 2?

Alexander Yadrikhinsky: Pathologic 3 was created almost from scratch in technical terms, there is not a single line of code from the previous game. Mechanics and UI are also completely new. We updated the artwork as much as we could too, reworked it and added new details; but few assets underwent a full update.

- Can you describe the gameplay loop player will experience in Pathologic 3? What's the core of this gameplay? Please, describe it in a simple way so that more people can understand.

Alexander Suslov: Let's start with that player's main mission is to defeat the Plague. By default, the Town goes extinct much earlier than in Pathologic 2. This means that approximately half of in-game days are unavailable to the player as they are the future that hasn't come yet, which must be unlocked by delaying the Plague's victory to later.

And how to achieve this uncertain "later"? We⁷ dive into the Town's stories, intrigues and mysteries; and as we're doing this, we find different leads and ideas of what can be done. These ideas become edicts that we can issue as headquarters' manager. Each edict has its own price – both in resources (we'll need both staff and supplies) and consequences: there may happen a riot against Dankovsky's sanitary dictatorship. Especially when the edicts are about vaccination – Dankovsky is preparing a vaccine against The Plague⁸, but people don't want to have a substance they are unfamiliar with inside them. Sometimes it's necessary to issue edicts that will please or frighten the crowds.

But to get a flexible "deck" of such edicts, player will have to do main story quests. They require time and some mental resources: generally speaking - people often get too... annoying. Dankovsky takes medicine that gives him a burst of energy and he thinks that time speeds up, he does everything on time. But taking this medicine means sacrificing health and ability to talk to people straight. He then has to take sedatives⁹ which have their own disadvantages.

⁷ * The players.

⁸ * The original interview in Russian mentioned the word "peschanka" – a short form of the Plague's name. How it was described in the article: "This is the name of the plague that swept through the city. The full name is Sand Plague."

⁹ * <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sedative>

And that is how the basic gameplay cycle of the game works: we talk to people; get ideas for the future edicts that will help us to push back the Town's extinction and prevent townsfolk from rioting; in order to have time to talk to everyone we look for different medicine and take it; we issue the edicts and the Plague among with riots gets pushed further to the future, we unlock new days and that means we can access new people or new situations that will give us new ideas for the edicts, and this is how we reach the end of the game.

Few more additional systems are attached to this basic gameplay cycle. One of the most notable systems is managing the hospital, a description of which we've [covered before](#), and which serves as one of the main sources of new edicts. Dankovsky examines special patients, diagnoses them, and if there was no mistake he gets to create a test sample of vaccine and issue an edict to vaccinate the whole Town with it.

There are a few more notable subsystems to the game, but we'll save those for later!

- **Will it be possible to walk around the Town just like it was possible in Pathologic 2? Or does Bachelor's game consist of smaller zones with loading screens between them? How is the game space organized in general?**

Alfina: Haruspex was a character who sewed together the broken parts, while Bachelor is about breaking the sewed, his face is broken even on the Steam preview page. From his point of view the Town is not a whole living creature, but (roughly speaking) a map, a set of important points and addresses, which, to his displeasure, he sometimes has to pay a visit to. He's not a survivalist vagabond, but a strategist, who's leaning over his desk and planning his next move.

Yes, the Town consists of few more zones. But they are not so small – there's plenty of space to walk and things to do. And also, no matter how much Bachelor tries to distance himself from the Town, it won't let him do so: if the Plague and riots are all over the Town's streets, then no matter which route the player will take, it will be dangerous anyway.



- **Will there be new locations in Pathologic 3? I noticed a few more buildings on the Town map as I looked at the screenshots.**

Alexander Yadrichinsky: Yes.

- **So, the Bachelor can do time jumps. That means that if the player does something in the present and then sees where it led to in the future. How does it affect Haruspex's story? We've already seen the whole storyline and have a rough vision of how the story might end. Or are we talking about the multiverse?**

Alfina: As we mentioned before, the plotline looks like this:

Dankovsky is being interrogated. He's accused of terrible crimes, but he says he's innocent. And he has to investigate the events, check them one by one and keep repeating: "No, wait, it wasn't like this, but like that".

...However, for some reason he'll need a special resource (amalgam) to do so, which Dankovsky gathers inside the story. This seems illogical. And it seems like something is wrong with this story route. We'll tell more inside the game.

- **Pathologic 2 was difficult. Then you added difficulty settings but advised players to experience the game on the highest one. Will Pathologic 3 be difficult as well? What's the main challenge for the player in the new game?**

Alexander Suslov: We are quite determined in terms of death mechanics. On the one hand, time jumps allow players to fix everything without loading saves. But on the other hand - we added a certain resource to use these saves, and when the player runs out of it, there'll be a game over. So, it is possible that player will run out of amalgam and that means there'll be no more in-game "time", there will be only one single life, and if Dankovsky gets hit on the head with a bottle in a rioting Town district, he will die forever, and the game will start from the beginning.

That's a pretty bold move, but we think that such boldness will give the excitement we're going for. Otherwise, it's like playing poker just for fun: what's the point of not raising the bet if it's all fake and you are not risking anything? But if you are betting something real like money or your own pants – that's when your behavior changes. We think that the game has to change the player's behavior.

Alfina: And over the years I've realized that I don't really like the concept of difficulty in games. It can be applied to certain game types – like number of enemies needed to be killed or aiming assist in a shooter game, the speed of music in rhythm games – but can it be applied to "Pathologic"?

To be honest, "Pathologic" wasn't really challenging and hard, it was a game about rule discovery. I'll mention "Fear & Hunger" again: it has a dark atmosphere and the player dies a lot – but once you find the optimal way of killing enemies, you can defeat the majority of them without taking damage at all. In other words, the game is only hard before you figure out how you should play it. Pathologic 2 is the same kind of game. But if Haruspex's story is all about everything falling apart at first, and then the player's mission is to understand how everything works, how to trade and how everything is connected, then Bachelor needs another kind of challenge. A different vibe, so to speak.



- I, and probably the majority of players, really liked the way you portrayed Death in Pathologic 2. It is truly powerful. Death speaks to Haruspex (and sometimes to the player too) and takes away everything he holds dear. Sometimes it's possible to even feel the need to die just to get into the Theatre of Death again. What role will Death play in Pathologic 3? Will it be given a voice?

Alfina: Alexander Suslov already spoke on how powerful Death is in new Pathologic, it is the one absolute boundary that the game wants to overcome. We didn't go far away from the archetypal dialog between the doctor and Death – "Pathologic" is full of it.

But the role of this weird key matter which is hovering over the player both in terms of lore and gameplay will be taken by something different from Death. I'd rather not spoil any further details.

- **Pathologic has an interesting mechanic against save scumming¹⁰. The game is rigged so that if a character is destined to die – they'll die. Will there be anything like that in Pathologic 3? Or will save scumming be possible?**

Alexander Yadrikhinsky: This is literally a game about save scumming since Bachelor can go back in time and change the past, cancel some decisions and make others. So, this mechanic is already included in game balance and the save system will be rather similar to the one in FromSoftware's games, where it's impossible to replay by loading a file which was saved earlier. If the player wants to change the past, they should do it using in-game ways.

- **Are real doctors involved in creating Pathologic 3? How medically accurate will the gameplay be?**

Alexander Yadrikhinsky: Yes, they are. We take doctors' advice on different gameplay aspects and moreover, many developers responsible for creating medical in-game features are involved in medicine. We have fictional diseases and fictional theories for those diseases. Sometimes dramaturgical principles are more important than authenticity; but we're trying to make sure that our fictions won't sound silly.

- **Are there any changes in Bachelor's character and life values since 2005's "Pathologic Classic"?**

Alfina: Fundamentally, no (same with Haruspex and Changeling). But the story accents are placed slightly differently: there is more of The Thanatica ¹¹and the capital city life Bachelor left behind, as well as more of impact of the immortal-but-dead Simon Kain ¹²and Bachelor's research into it.

But Dankovsky's key mission is still the same: to defeat Death, and not just as in "prolonging human lives", but fundamentally, existentially, to overcome human nature itself.

¹⁰ *The act of saving a game frequently and reloading the most recent save if something in the game has not gone your way. Via

<https://blog.acer.com/en/discussion/911/what-is-save-scumming#:~:text=Save%20scumming%20in%20video%20games.has%20not%20gone%20your%20way.>

¹¹ A research lab in the capital, where scientists are looking for ways to defeat Death.

¹² In the original "Pathologic", Bachelor comes to The Town to meet Simon Kain, one of the town's most remarkable people, because he is supposedly immortal. But the meeting fails: Simon Kain turns out to be dead by the time Bachelor arrives.

- Haruspex is very close to The Kin. Bachelor, on the other hand, comes from the capital and doesn't understand anything about it. Hypothetically, it is easier to introduce the player to the complex lore of the game via Bachelor's perspective. But he's the second playable character, coming after Haruspex. So, the player already knows a lot about the game's world. What new things can Pathologic 3 tell about The Kin then? How does the steppe show itself there?

Alexander Yadrikhinsky: I think it is much more important what the Bachelor can tell about the world around him. Unlike Haruspex, he is new to the Town, the steppe and the Kin are alien to him, but he will look at them through the eyes of a scientist from the capital, and what is happening to the Kin and its people will be shocking to him.

Alfina: And he is not necessarily the second character - we assume that the player can enjoy the games in any order. There are enough surprises both ways.



- Will it be possible to save Eva?

Alfina: Will Eva save us?

- How long would it take to beat Pathologic 3?

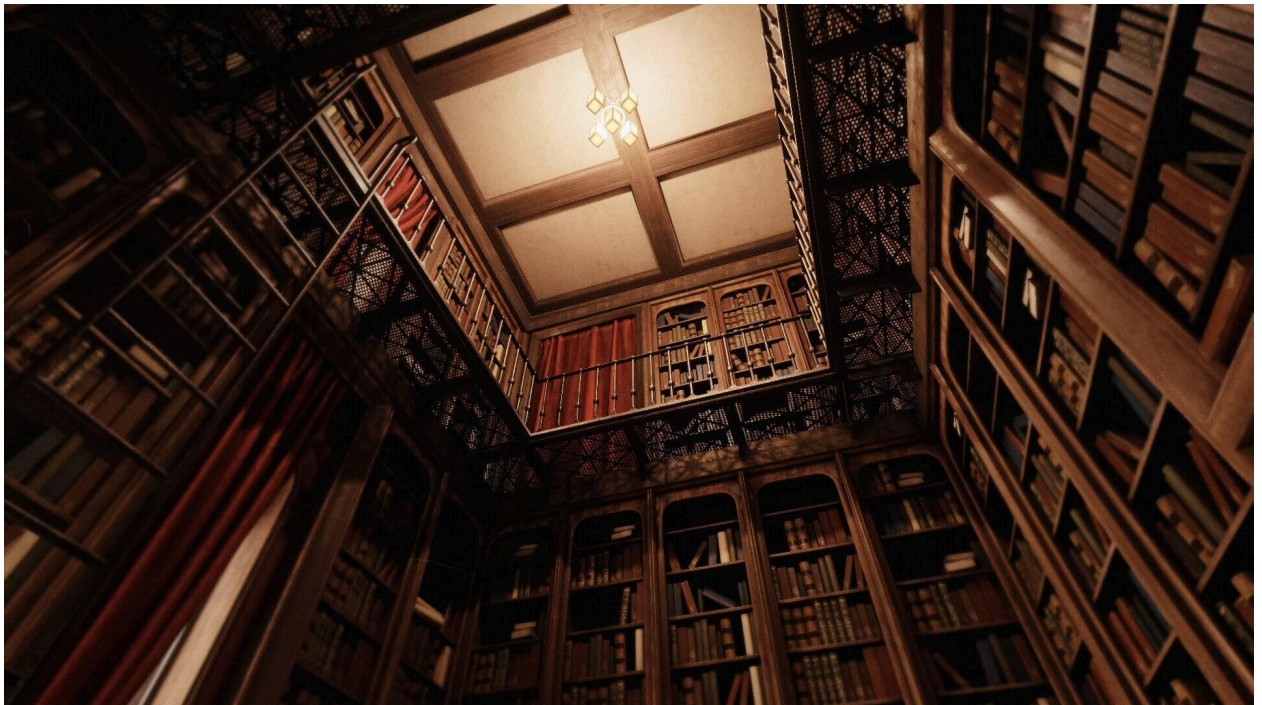
Alfina: Great question! I have no idea since the storytelling is now non-linear! The time needed to finish the game will greatly depend on how much the player wants to jump into the past, rewind and replay. Overall, there is already way more to the story than Haruspex had, and we haven't finished making it yet!

- **Have you switched to a newer version of the Unity engine? And have you considered switching to a different engine altogether, given that Unity doesn't seem to handle open spaces well?**

Ayrat Zakirov: Our usage of Unity is a long tale. However, since in Pathologic 3 the original plan is to divide the city into zones, and the developing team has good experience with Unity, we're using it for Pathologic 3. And for the next projects we are considering working with Unreal Engine.

- In terms of in-game graphics, will the game be better than the previous one? After the announcement I've seen comments that now it looks beautiful... And what about optimization? Pathologic 2 had problems with that.

Ayrat Zakirov: Well, what is beautiful and what is not is for our audience to decide, not us. We suggest you look at both games yourself and compare. We can say that in Pathologic 3 objects are placed denser (for the sake of higher level of details), the light is rendered better and in general the optimization got better.



- **Heard that Ressa Schwarzwald's ¹³studio is working on Pathologic. Great news! But does that mean that the new game will sound somehow different from the previous one? How will it sound?**

Vasily "Mushroomer" Kashnikov: We're really happy to work with Ressa and her team. Now we're using FMOD, which has greatly expanded the possibilities of interactive systems. In general, we talked about sound in detail in our [first devlog](#).

¹³ * Audio director in tinyBuild games, now also running audio outsourcing studio Gameowdio.

- **In Pathologic 2 you invited Theodor Bastard ¹⁴to work on the game's music. I still have their songs on my playlist. Will the new game use Theodor Bastard's music? Will there be any music with vocals?**

Alfina: We are still working with Theodor Bastard, we have the right to use their music, but we feel that the sound that TB gave to Pathologic 2 is very Haruspex-ish. Bachelor hears the world differently. According to current plans, one or two tracks from the mentioned soundtrack will be played in the game, in some quests where it is story-driven. But there will be other musical surprises which you definitely don't expect!

- **Any ideas on Changeling's game, Pathologic 4? Maybe you're already working on it?**

Alfina: There are vision documents and no resources to move to production. We'll release the Bachelor's game and only then will we take the next step.

And let's be clear. We didn't plan to turn Pathologic into a franchise, it happened by accident. But it's already done and now it's hard to imagine Changeling's story in any format other than an independent game with its own mechanics. She deserves the same attention as Bachelor and Haruspex do.

Well, although there is no specific plan right now, Changeling's game will probably be called something like Pathologic 4. We do find irony in it, but in general I think that it is an interesting move to turn one game about three characters into three different games, each of which is deeply about the worldview of its protagonist, because it allows us to make them quite different and show this difference of each character's perception not only in terms of story and visuals, but also in terms of game mechanics.

¹⁴ * A music band which worked on some soundtracks for Pathologic 2.



- **And how do you deal with difficulties? I think you've faced a lot throughout the IPL's story. First, it's this, then it's that. How can I avoid giving up and keep doing what I once promised myself and others?**

Alexander Suslov: I can't speak on everyone's behalf here, because everyone's difficulties are different, and everyone has to overcome them on their own. There's always the risk of drowning in self-pity or losing yourself to fear for yourself or your loved ones, in the end it is still fear of personal loss.

How to overcome the difficulties? Let's look, for example, at the Tocharians¹⁵, people who lived in Central Asia around 3,000 years ago. We only know that there were Proto-Tocharians and so-called pseudo-Tocharians, who were not closely related. They probably spoke a language from the Eastern Iranian languages group. And we don't know much else about them. There was society, there were cities, there was art, there must have been politics. Nothing remains but a few mummies and various theories.

Maybe we are all future Tocharians, too. Any mention about us, about our little and bigger problems, about our thoughts and achievements - all this will arouse the same interest as the term "Afanasievo culture".¹⁶ And if you keep that in mind, any stress can be related to things that are not very important in the context of global history.

Drinking tea with gingerbread helps too, make sure you have at least two types of jam served to you.

Alfina: Well, I just left the studio.

¹⁵ * <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tocharians>

¹⁶ * https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afanasievo_culture

And then I came back, because in addition to skills and experience, for which I am incredibly grateful to all my other colleagues, I realized that I still need to be truly in love with what I do. Not just to respect and appreciate it, but to have stupid cartoonish stars in my eyes and sigh with adoration when I look at It (the game of my dreams). I need to feel that I'm not just creating good things, but actually interesting ones. Since IPL's games give me that feeling, everything else is doable.

- **If you arrived in the Town, who would be the first person you would visit? What would you say to them?**

Alfina: Well, I guess I'd go around asking what "what is strength in¹⁷" and then I'd die on Day 4, infected by the Sand Plague.

¹⁷ * https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strength_is_in_truth - a popular saying in Russia.