

A solo larp about lost trolls

STONE TROLL

by Jo Dalsgaard

You're a troll. Something in another age turned you to stone. Now you're waking, and find that the land around you, once alive, has turned to stone as well. There are humans everywhere, and big blocks of concrete and metal and glass, and your friend is missing. It's all a bit much. But underneath it all the land is still there, and in some places it's poking out of the hard, heavy cover laying over it. That's a start.

This is a game about mindfully reconnecting with the land, with long-neglected parts of yourself, and with an old friend who may be dead. And who is also a troll. It's played by yourself, outside, for one or more dedicated sessions of a couple of hours.

GROUND RULES

Be gentle. Do no harm to the land.

Be patient. Engage the land on its terms.

Use all your senses. Explore curiously.

Whenever you see human leftovers, pick them up.

Avoid electronic devices, books, maps, or anything else that would demand your attention.

Take care of yourself. Drink plenty of water, be mindful of your surroundings, and take time to process.

Avoid all contact with humans.

REMEMBER

What word would your friend use to describe you? Choose one: *playful, unhurried, shy, graceful, curious, furtive, clumsy*

What's your gender presentation? Choose one: *forest femme, stone butch, big bear, gangly fairy, subterranean, litter mama, ambiguous witch*

What word would you use to describe your lost friend? Choose one: *warm, mischievous, distant, thoughtful, gentle, secretive, older*

What are your and your friend's unique scents? Choose one for each: *wild onion, elderflower, woodsmoke, iron, horse dung, citrus, earth after rain*

Write down your answers on a piece of paper, and put it in your pocket.

THE PLAN

You need to find your friend. You're not sure what happened to them. It was a long time ago. You're not sure if they've been turned to stone as well, or if they're in some other form. Whatever they are, you need to help them.

There's an old trollish recipe for a medicine that might help. A *potion of restoration*. You're not sure what it does. It must be brewed with great care, though, and knowledge of its subject.

What first attracted you to your friend? What do you miss most about them?

THE ESSENTIALS

- ✦ Your skin hasn't thickened yet. Bring layers of clothes, so you can adjust to changing weather.
- ✦ Also shoes, but with thin soles, so you can feel the ground underneath.
- ✦ You'll need something to carry small objects in, like a backpack. Nothing too cumbersome.
- ✦ You'll also need a separate bag of some sort, for human leftovers.
- ✦ Optionally, have something to write on and with, like a piece of paper or small notebook.
- ✦ Bring water, enough for yourself, and a bit for the potion as well.

THE LAND

Pick a place to start your search. It should be a sizeable area of natural land, bigger than a backyard, but you shouldn't go too far from where you are now; you know your friend is close. If you're in a city, pick a park with jagged edges and lots of places to hide. If you're in the countryside, find a place close by that speaks to you, and start from there. Don't worry about it being unspoilt and perfectly free from signs of human activity - those places are likely far away, if they even still exist, and you're not quite ready to go look for them yet.

The area you pick, however compromised, limited, and crisscrossed by infrastructure, is what's left of the land here. This is where you start.

SOFTENING YOUR SENSES & FINDING YOUR FEET

This new world demands a lot from you; it's full of sharp, harsh impressions, strong colors, loud noises, and a continuous stream of voices talking over each other. That's no good for a troll. To find your friend, you'll need to soften your senses - soft eyes, soft ears, deep breaths.

To do this, go to the edge of the land you've picked, and close your eyes. First, acknowledge the sounds of the human world around you. Let them pass through you. Then, shift your attention to the sounds of the land. Acknowledge the first sounds that come to you, but wait, and try to listen for the smaller, quieter sounds hiding behind the louder, more obvious ones. Practice using all of your senses like this. What scents are hiding behind the most pungent, immediate ones? What do they remind you of? As you do so, take your first steps onto the land. Notice how the ground feels different to your feet than what you were walking on on your way here. Walk slowly.

Try to find your troll feet, the way you used to walk before you were turned to stone. Your limbs might still be a bit rigid, your movements stiff and awkward. To find your feet, begin with the ground, and how it feels to your feet. Try walking differently, taking long strides, setting your toes down first, feel the weight of your arms swinging at your sides, roll your hips, or whatever works for you. Think of the way your friend would describe you, and use that to try and remember the way you were meant to walk. *Where did you last walk like this?*

Go back and forth between finding your feet and softening your senses. If there are paths where you are, stray from them (but be careful to not get *too* lost). Stop, and notice how the sounds change. With the sound of your footsteps gone, what sounds emerge that couldn't be heard before? *What do these sounds remind you of?*

When you've found your feet, and your senses have softened enough to perceive the land's great stillness, and all the tiny sounds that emerge from this stillness, you're ready to proceed.

CHECKING IN

You can always return to finding your feet and softening your senses. Do this if you feel lost, distracted, out of touch with your troll self, or to take a step back from emotions that come up during your search that you'd rather avoid for now. Take time to ask yourself if you're up for continuing the search, or if you'd prefer to take a break, or stop entirely. Your friend isn't going anywhere - they'll still be out there, should you decide to go back out and continue the search another time. Reassess - maybe you feel differently about things you've picked, and decide to leave some where you are. All of this is good, and part of the process of finding your friend. Take time to check in with yourself regularly, and go back to finding your feet and softening your senses as much as often as you want. Stay in this phase for as long as you need to. Stop and leave as soon as you want to.

LOOKING FOR INGREDIENTS

Now you should be ready to begin your search. First, you'll need to look for ingredients for your potion of restoration. Specifically, you're looking for *natural objects that have lost their place, and speak to you*. Use your newly softened senses to look and listen for anything that calls out to you. Be especially mindful of any scents reminiscent of your friend's. Things speak with different voices, some more loudly than others. Walk softly and deliberately, and be careful what you step on. Look for things that are dead, misplaced, scattered, fallen, wayward - but still somehow powerful. Judging whether something is at home in its place or not is simple: if when you pick it up you can tell that it was there, and it feels like it's now missing, put it back. If it resists your taking it somehow, leave it.

But, if something speaks to you, and is out of place, it may be of use in your potion. To determine this, examine it closely. What happened to it? Where do you think it came from, and how might it have ended up here? How does it feel in your hand? What does it smell like? Then, think about your friend. For the potion to work, its ingredients need to correspond to the subject's true nature. With what voice did this thing call out to you? Is it surprisingly comforting, weirdly familiar, mildly disturbing, impossibly old? Does it feel playful, wise, soft, powerful? *How does it remind you of your friend?*

If you can answer the last question, you've found your first ingredient! Stay with the memory for a bit. It might be a brief moment of silence and eye contact, a shared meal, or maybe the years you spent walking the forests on the far side of the continent. *What about the land before does this memory connect you with?*

If you decide that this thing will help, bring it with you. Continue walking, looking for lost objects to use in your potion, until you have around four to six ingredients, or until you find your friend, and feel confident that you have the essential ingredients of their nature.

A NOTE ON HUMAN LEFTOVERS

During your search, you'll likely come across a lot of things left behind by humans. *These are never appropriate ingredients for a potion, and will almost certainly spoil it*. At the same time, these should not be left here, as they're surely interfering with their surroundings, making it harder for the things around them to have their voices heard, and to thrive. Take anything left by humans with you that you can feasibly carry, and put it in the bag you brought for this purpose. Consider taking things too large for your bag and carrying them to the edge of the land, and disposing of them there. This will not only help the land, but also help you to more clearly hear the voices of the things around you.

FINDING YOUR FRIEND

Think about everything you remember about your friend, and try to picture them as clearly as possible. This should be easier once you have your ingredients, but you might also find them before you're ready to make the potion. Try to imagine what form your friend could have taken in this land. Would they be tall and narrow, soft and round, partially hidden, crooked, resplendent, broken? Look for surprising features and things that stand out. Keep the memory of your friend fresh in your mind. Once you find them, you'll know.

When you've found your friend, and have the ingredients for your potion, quietly let them know you're there for them, in whatever way feels appropriate. Give them some space and some time; in their current form, they may be slow to process and react, and the ways they do so are probably different from yours. It's also possible they won't, or can't, react at all. But maybe this is okay?

Before making your potion, quietly ask your friend if they want you to. Maybe they're happier now, in their current form. Or maybe they're lost, cut off, hurting, same as the land. They are, after all, an extension of the land, as all trolls are. They're strong, and old, but missing so much of themselves already. Maybe the potion will help, but you still don't really know what it's even supposed to do. It should be their decision, not yours. Ask, and wait for a change, or a silence. Try to interpret your friend's wishes as best you can.

What does the land want? What might restoration look like in this place?

If you decide to make the potion, proceed to the next section. Otherwise, skip to the next page.

MAKING THE POTION

You've done most of the work already. Now it's just a matter of bringing the ingredients together.

Situate yourself comfortably on the ground next to your friend. Take the things you've found from your back one at a time, and lay them out before you. In whatever order feels appropriate, take them and arrange them right next to your friend's body. When placing each object, remember again. Acknowledge each memory, and let it pass through you. Take time to notice the quieter memories hiding behind the obvious ones. Once you've done this, take your water bottle, drink from it, and pour whatever's left on the ingredients. Mix them carefully with your hands, feel them break, let your hands get dirty, and rub them gently on your friend's body. Make a prayer, or sit quietly for a moment.

What do you wish the potion will do? What are you afraid might happen?

LEAVING

When you're ready, say goodbye to your friend, for now. You can always come and visit. They'll be here a while still.

Leave the land for now, slowly and deliberately. Take time as you leave to stop and check in with yourself. Take deep breaths. Let go of everything you don't want to take with you.

What do you take with you? What do you leave behind?

RETURNING

If you feel welcome, you can return to your friend whenever you want. If you gave them the potion, check on their progress. You can keep making and administering the potion for them if you want to and they seem to want or need it. The process of finding ingredients is the same, but it should be easier now that you've gone through the steps already. If you decided not to, but your friend seems to change their mind later, and you want to, you can.

Look for changes. Try to interpret these if you want, but also take time to just be with your friend, in silence or in quiet conversation. Ask them questions and wait for their answer. Keep waiting. Take care of them. Keep their space free of human leftovers. Enjoy their company.

A NOTE ON ACCESSIBILITY

This game is written with the implicit assumption that the player is able to comfortably walk for longer stretches in natural terrain. If this is a problem for you, feel free to change it in whatever way seems natural to you. The game should play more or less the same, but hasn't been tested for people with significant mobility issues. If you decide to adapt the game to your needs, I would love to hear about your experience, though!

CREDITS

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