

Here, still

A game about long distance rocky relationships, limited time together and forces beyond our control.

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Recommended read: [Still Life](#)

Introduction:

In this game all players take the roles of rocks pondering the meaning of their existence with each other and their environment. One player temporarily takes on the role of the Elemental Forces (EF), affecting the rocky lives, receiving lots of letters and keeping track of things.

This game is meant for 3 to 8 players, although more should work. It requires a long distance between players, and from a few weeks to a few months to end. It actually needs not to end.

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Disclaimer:

In its original form, some form of contact address will be shared between players so the game can happen (as letters need a place to arrive). Be mindful.

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Setup:

Set the Tone.

As a group, players should discuss and decide what tone they want the game to take. This game can be played as a serious, meditative experience of internal thoughts, it can be played as a wacky rock romantic comedy opera, or whatever.

It is important to establish what should NOT be part of the game. When remote, people can be stupid. Consider that drawings and pictures might be exchanged.

Find your Rock. Stablish your Foundation.

Each player should define their rock type. Then, define where you as a rock are located at. Write a description for it. Better yet, draw/find pictures that suit it. And ambience sounds. And other things. Go ballistic.

Decide the first EF.

One player will be the first EF. Decide whom and share their receiving address with all players.

Send your Foundation.

All players should send their prepared Foundation (rock type and ambience things) to the EF address.

Set a deadline for the letters to be received.

Dig a Question.

Each rock will have a question about the meaning of its existence. The focus of the play will be striving to find an answer to this question. Players may do this by interior meditation and by communicating with other rocks about their questions. The players may or may not ultimately find an answer to their questions. The important thing here is to explore the possibilities presented by your Question.

Decide on the Question of your rock. Examples of rocks and Questions are provided in the example section.

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Playing “Here, still”:

In the main cycle of the game, players send an envelope letter to the current EF, and await their response. EF adds to the received envelope and returns it to each rock. Cycle repeats.

As a rock, you are free to build thoughts, observe and collect impressions from surroundings as you wait. When you have your envelope back, add to it as desired.

You can communicate with rocks that are current near you. The EF will establish which ones. Do NOT communicate with other rocks.

Movement.

Rocks cannot move unless acted upon by an elemental force. But if an EF moves you, consider how that change in position influences your foundation and your question. It may result in the question being answered!

Answering Questions.

When a rock arrives at an answer to their Question that they are satisfied with, they may write it up explaining what their question was, their answer to it, and how they cease to be the same rock (by turning into sand, melting into lava, breaking in half, etc). This can be sent to the current EF in a different envelope, who will share your answer with all other rocks. Rocks may learn something about themselves from other rocks' answers.

New Foundation, new Question.

As you changed with your Question being answered, it is time for a new one! This question should reflect their changed state and should be something that the rock is interested in exploring further. Also, it may be a good idea to establish a new Foundation.

Becoming an Elemental Force.

With each EF answer, you may be the next EF. See EF Guidelines. You are free to still communicate as a rock.

Ending Play.

At any time, a player may decide to exit play. Like having a Question answered, take the opportunity to write a few words in character, whether or not the Question was answered, and send it to the EF, who will share it. OR communicate outside letters to the group. Keep your envelope as a memento.

Joining Play.

At any time, players can also join in the play. Just create and send a Foundation to the current EF while still on time.

If a player misses a deadline, to rejoin just send your envelope to the current EF.

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Elemental Forces Guidelines:

Be a force.

Narrate what the forces are doing to the rocks. This can be done only to the rock being acted upon, but also to all. Some EF are stronger than others.

Also don't be afraid to NOT do anything to a rock. Stillness is part of being a rock.

Be creative, add as you wish to the envelope and its contents.

Mix Up the rocks.

Strive for interesting dynamics. Put people in pairs, large groups, or alone. Don't leave any rock alone for too long, but don't be afraid to just let things sit for some length of time.

Don't roll yourself.

As the EF, don't act on your own rock. Take the quiet.

Inform changes.

Inform rocks if they moved, and if they now see / don't see other rocks. Be clear about it. Inform how they can logistically communicate with each other.

Keep track.

There should be a tracking record of the rock positions passing from EF to EF. Something like RockX near Rock Y and Z. Update it. Be sure that the rocks are identifiable.

Choose the next EF.

Pick up the address of the last letter to arrive (or some other method) and inform all rocks of the new EF address and the new Deadline (based on when you return the answers). Send the tracking record to the new EF with its response.

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Example Rocks and Questions:

Piece of Brick.

What if I can't carry them forever?

Granite.

Can I be tough enough to withstand the elements?

Sandstone.

What does it mean to be both a stone and sand?

Quartz.

Do I only exist for the human gaze?

Marble.

Why haven't I been chosen?

Unidentified Pebble.

What am I?

Shale.

As parts of myself break away, am I still the same rock?

Petrified wood.

Once alive, now a rock. Which side do I truly belong to?

Fool's gold.

If I try hard enough, will people think I'm authentic?

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Notes on Logistics

It is very possible to keep track of all players/address, and don't enforce a deadline. I choose not to do this because I believe the anonymity of just being a rock and an address adds to the game. The only known address/person should be the first EF on the very first round. Rocks will change, and addresses can easily change as well.

Playing by email should be easy enough. I also suggest playing the reference Still Life on apps with characters and maps, such as Roll20.

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Notes from the Author

This game was made for the Golden Cobra Competition 2023. Since this year proposed remixing previous games and keeping them pandemic safe, I decided to remix games that were heavy location and touch based, and make them work by post. Nothing replaces touch, but journaling together can be intense in its own right. Hopefully you enjoy it!