

Of the Woods



Lonely Games of Imagination

curated by Brie Sheldon

Of the Woods

Lonely Games of Imagination
arranged and edited by Brie Sheldon

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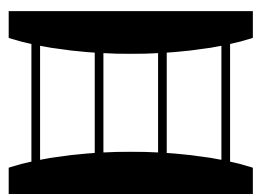
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Introduction

When I wrote *Locked Away*, the first game in this collection, I shared it on social media for my friends. I described it as a “lonely game”: a game meant for a single player to be played alone, and with the option to share the story that came from it. I’ve written a few lonely games, but this one felt so rich when I played it—it made loneliness feel less empty.

So many of my posts go unread or pass through the internet with no acknowledgement that I had no reason to believe it would be read, but I later got a message that someone had played it. I was very excited, and when I found out that a friend—a fantastic designer, Kimberley Lam—had written a piece inspired by it, I was shocked and flattered!

I was happy in part because my game—a lonely game—had inspired something more within a community. All of the games in this collection, from Kimberly Lam, Moyra Turkington, Meera Barry, and Chris Bennett, and Adam McConnaughey’s variant, were created because I made something for when people are alone. To have such great creators work on something meaningful for me is an honor.

I wrote *Locked Away* because I don’t always have someone else to tell stories with, and sometimes, telling stories alone feels good, but most of all because for me, loneliness can feel empty. I hope that when you play this collection of games, you will feel full in your loneliness.

—Brie Sheldon

Locked Away

a lonely game by
Brie Sheldon



Locked Away
a lonely game
by Brie Sheldon

In your hands you hold a key; outside the forest is still.

It is a time in the past, when candles lit the night and good books only told the Word of God. You are alone with your family, exiled and full of pride in your faith. Something lurks in the forest, and you lose something precious. When others blame you, you blame the wood.

Who are your family members?

Who of them do you trust?

Who of them does not trust you?

What did you lose?

Why did you lie, and what lie did you tell?

What do you fear?

What does the key unlock?

What did you hear whispered in the dark?

Do not speak of what lies in the wood.

HOLLOW



a craving game by
Kimberley Lam

Hollow
a craving game
by Kimberley Lam

In your chest is a void; outside the forest thrums with power.

It has been an age since you chose to slumber to escape the ache of your loss. You fled to the forest, its roots drinking deep from the world's heart and its branches stretching to pray to the stars. Someone at the forest's edge has brought you out of your restless nightmares and you rise as a horror, wearing your sins like another skin.

Who were your family members?

Who of them do you mourn?

Who of them drove you to flee into the forest's embrace?

What truth did you speak and why would you not be silenced?

What is your great shame?

What power has the forest given you?

What is its terrible price?

What do you want to feel again, at any cost?

Draw a soul into the forest to feed your hunger.

DEVOUR



a game of **appetites** by
Moyra Turkington

Devour
a game of appetites
by Moyra Turkington

All you hear is the trembling hunger, growing to a roar inside your mind.

You've always known that people are only separated by a thin psychic membrane that imposes order and sanity in the world. It was when you came of age that you grew ravenous and ate through the first one. With nothing between you, you drank in your lover's mind and devoured it whole. And like a python, you've been smug and sated and self-satisfied ever since. You thought that maybe it was just a rite of passage that made you who are today: not a monster, but a victor ascendant. But it's been seven years, and the last tendrils of your meal are evaporating. You've started to smell the weakness in the membranes of everyone you meet, and you know the time is coming for you to feast again.

You've digested your meal, thought by delicious thought. What's the last one they have left?

How has it felt to be the only thing in their whole terrified universe?

What will you miss about them?

What family do you still hold tight to?

Who among them makes you feel most human?

What have they seen of your monstrous pride?

Who is it that you're fixated on consuming?

Tell us how they scar you as you swallow them whole.

ABANDONED



a lonely game by **Meera Barry**

Abandoned

a lonely game
by Meera Barry

The laughter and conversation surround you, but your tongue is silenced.

The lights and music fill the air, but your eyes are blinded by the rush of movement. Hands holding hands, but your hands are empty. Dancing partners whirl around you, but you are rooted to the ground. The room is warm with sweat and people, and you are cold, ice-cold, empty. A web of glittering connections, but the spider is not home, and you fall from the net.

Who reaches out a hand to catch you, only to fail?

Who promises to be there and laughs as they turn their backs?

Why do they leave? Why do they always leave?

Who stalks you when you are lonely?

Who would hear your voice if you could find it?

Why do they hate you so much?

What would ignite your fire?

How would you punish them?

Tell us what now fills your hands.

I BELIEVE



a lonely game by
Chris Bennett

I Believe
a lonely game
by Chris Bennett

They are coming tonight, and no one believes but you.

Use any one of the following words as you answer each question below. Cross off the word after you've used it.

Sky, Fear, Opaque, Landing, Confusion, Never, Always, Remember, Shimmer, Rumble, Goodbye

Who will you tell first?

Who will you hide it from?

How do you know it's tonight?

How will you prepare?

What will you put off doing?

How will they try and stop you?

What will you sacrifice to get away?

How will you feel when they arrive?

What will happen when you finally close your eyes?

There are no whispers in the dark.

A stylized, low-poly illustration of a landscape. On the left, a large, dark, jagged shape resembling a tree trunk or a rock formation dominates the foreground. The background features rolling green hills, a winding path, a small cluster of houses with a single lit window, and a water tower. The sky is a gradient of blue, purple, and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall style is minimalist and geometric.

HOME AGAIN

a lonely tarot game by
Adam McConnaughey

Home Again

a lonely tarot game
by Adam McConnaughey

For this variant lonely game, you will need one complete tarot deck, and sufficient space to make a spread of eleven cards.

You were sixteen when you left. You're older now.

So you've come back to the small town you grew up in. You still don't drive. It's hotter than you'd remembered. The people still look upon you with the same hard eyes. You recognize a few of them.

After you read each question, draw a Tarot card and place it in front of you. Make a spread. Observe the cards as they are drawn with an eye of passive contemplation. Think on the card drawn until an answer to the question becomes clear. For later questions, consider the card in relationship to the other cards drawn and truths established. Write down your answer. Move to the next question.

Instead of checking out your old home, what location do you visit first, in secret? Why?

What new feature has your town grown, like a boil?

Who are you afraid will recognize you?

Who are you afraid won't?

It's your house. You knock; someone else lives there now, of course they do. You make small talk, you leave. There is no question here.

Home Again
a lonely tarot game
by Adam McConnaughey

What memory rises to the surface, unbidden, as you turn away?

Who recognizes you first?

What's in your pocket?

Who are you here to confront for the way they wronged you cruelly?

What did they do?

Where do you find them?

What happens then?

Never return.