

LOSTFOUND

a light horror freeform larp for 4 to 8 people about being lost and alone in nature by edmond y. chang

“What are the most common reasons people got lost? Wandered off trail (41%); Bad weather (17%); Fell off trail (16%); Got separated from group (8%); Injury (7%); Darkness (6%); Loss or failure of equipment (5%); Other (1%).”

--“Safe and Found,” *SmokyMountains.com*

“What new or neglected aspects of games and gaming might ecology, for now defined as the science of interrelation between organisms and between organisms and their environment, enable us to see?”

--Alenda Y. Chang, *Playing Nature: Ecology in Video Games*

- Premise:** You are a group of friends getting away from it all, getting back to yourselves, getting out in nature, going on a long hike. Someone said it would be easy. Someone said it was popular. But, by some twist of fate, everyone gets separated, lost. You wander aimlessly for some time, now exhausted, and you find a place to stay put. As you wait, you try to not panic and reach out to one another, offering help, encouragement, meditations, worries, random thoughts. But you wore the wrong shoes, packed the wrong things, and forgot to charge your phone. Players are playing a version of themselves.
- Space:** A public park, forest, or garden, a large yard, even wandering the neighborhood—anywhere players can access “nature” broadly conceived—big enough that players can find separate, solitary areas. (A rainy day, indoor version could use different rooms like different settings, caves, pretend biomes.) Best played during dusk or at night (if it is safe and permitted).
- Materials:** Each player needs 1 piece of candy (i.e. a caramel, a peppermint, a strawberry bon bon), a nearly finished bottle of water (a couple of glugs left), a strike anywhere match (or a small flashlight can be substituted), a set of 8 game cards, a mobile phone for texting one another or a pencil to write on the backs of cards, a six-sided die.
- Mood:** Players should discuss the overall tone of the game: emotional, tense, horror; players should determine what topics or feelings, if any, that should be off the table during play.
- Play:** After arriving at the area for play, in daylight, walkabout as a group to get to know the lay of the land, pointing out good spots for players, potential hazards (e.g. poison ivy, rough terrain), and boundaries or limits. Designate one spot as “home” base where everyone will reconvene at the end of the game. Each player is given their starting materials; if using texting, make sure every person has each player’s contact information.

Set a time limit—20 minutes for a short game, 30 minutes to allow for a little more exploration and reflection—at the end of which all players must return “home.” Start the clock and players may go anywhere in the area of play.

After taking in the surroundings, being out in nature, players find themselves utterly “lost.” Each player must find a spot away from the rest of the group, preferably out of sight and sound. Knowing that they are separated and alone, they wait for help. Calling out yields no response. Phone signals are spotty at best, batteries are running low. It’s getting dark. Each player takes stock of where they are, why they’re there, and what they have.

Each player shuffles their set of 8 game cards face down. Then, one at a time, draw a card, following the directions, engaging the questions, and completing the task at hand. The cards prompt players to think about their environment, their own bodies, their thoughts, and their missing friends. They may need to use (**lose**) one of their resources. They may need to discover (**find**) resources. The player may choose to skip a card. Cards must be completed by the end of the time limit.

When texting, the player chooses one other player to send a message to, following the prompt, keeping the text short, no explanation attached. The recipient cannot respond; no conversation is allowed. The player can choose the same or different recipient for the message for each prompt. If the player or group is not texting, then messages are written on the backs of their respective card. Each message must be addressed to one recipient in the group.

The player must finish out the time limit even if done with their cards before convening at “home.” Once the time limit passes, the game ends. If using handwritten messages, they are handed over to their recipients. The messages are a measure of connection, collaboration, and resolve. A player that receives no messages is permanently lost, never found. The player that received the most messages is found unharmed, safe, and sound. For the rest of the players, roll a six-sided dice: a player with 1-3 messages must roll a 6 to survive with some trauma or injuries, a player with 4-6 messages must roll a 5 or 6 to survive, a player with more than 6 but less than the most must roll a 4, 5, or 6 to survive.

- Debrief:** To close out the experience, each player should share one or two things they discovered, felt, experienced during play, what they **lost** and **found**, particularly as they sent or received messages (or received few or no messages). Most importantly, the players should reflect on and share how the experience revealed their relationship to their surroundings, to the environment, to each other, to resources and technologies: what does it mean to be “lost in nature”?

Candy

Time limit: finishing the candy.

A piece of candy **found** at the bottom of your bag, the only food you have. Pop it in your mouth. Make sure to keep the wrapper to dispose of later. As you enjoy it, savor it:

1. What does it taste like? How does it feel on your tongue, in your mouth? Does the flavor remind you of anything?
2. Are you hungry? Let out a growl or a howl. Are there things nearby hungry, too?
3. Looking around you, do you see anything that could be foraged for food later?

Before you finish the candy, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on where you are **lost**, how you feel, the dangers nearby. Go to next card.



Sounds

Time limit: 1 minute.

Take a moment to quiet your thoughts, to clear your mind, to stay still for a minute. Focus on the sounds that **find** you:

1. What do you hear? What is the loudest sound? What is the quietest sound? Can you identify what they are?
2. Do you hear anyone calling for you? Looking for you? Do they even know you are **lost**?
3. What do you feel? How does it feel to be alone? Are you always alone? Do you belong here?

After a minute (or what feels like a minute), choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on how you feel, how your voice may not be heard at all, what is top of mind. Go to next card.



Water

Time limit: finishing the water.

Get out your almost empty water bottle. You wish you had **found** a place to refill it. If it is not a reusable bottle, make sure to recycle it later. As you sip, as you drink:

1. What does it taste like? What is its temperature?
2. Are you thirsty? What if you can't find more water? Did you prepare to be here?
3. Looking around you, do you see other sources of potable water or that could be used to collect water? What if the water is polluted?

By the time you finish the water, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on the last drops of water **lost**, what you are feeling, thirst lingering. Go to next card.



Leaves

Time limit: no more than 3 minutes.

Take in your surroundings. Look around you. If available, **find** a handful different leaves. Pick them if you can. (Be careful of poisonous or protected trees and plants.) Look at each and consider:

1. What is their shape, color, size, pattern, texture, smell?
2. Can you identify the plant or tree the leaf belongs to? Can they be used to clean with, wipe with, sleep on?
3. Ask for a little luck, then crush them up, tear them up, scattering the pieces around you.

After contemplating the leaves for a few minutes, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on **lost** hopes, **lost** friends and lands, how you feel at the moment. Go to next card.



Sky

Time limit: 5 long breaths.

Stand still, sit, or lay down. Look up, take in the sky. **Find** a cloud or star. Take five, long, deep breaths. Inhale slow, exhale slow, and wonder:

1. What is the color of the sky? What time of day is it? Are there any clouds? Is there any wind? What if the weather turns bad?
2. How do you feel? Tired? Afraid? Small?
3. How does it feel to be still, quiet, and alone? What are your friends doing now?

After 5 long breaths, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on your state of mind, how you feel, how you **lost** your way. Go to next card.



Sticks

Time limit: no more than 3 minutes.

Take in your surroundings. Look around you. If available, on the ground, **find** five straight sticks of similar lengths. (Be careful of poisonous or protected trees and plants.) Look at each and consider:

1. What is their length, color, features, textures, smell? Are they dry, brittle, pliant, green?
2. Can you identify the plant or tree the stick belongs to?
3. Lay the sticks on the ground to form a star, like a marker, a sign you were there. Will someone notice?

After contemplating the sticks for a few minutes (or what feels like a few minutes), choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on your worries, how you feel, what you have **lost** along the way. Go to next card.



Match

Time limit: till the match burns down.

Carefully, sheltered from any breeze, light your match, the only match you have **found** in a pocket. (Or turn on a flashlight, which will die after 8 seconds). Watch it burn, putting it out before you burn yourself:

1. What does the flame look like? How did it move? Did you feel its light and warmth?
2. Could you start a fire without using a match or lighter?
3. Are you afraid of the dark?

After the match is done, making sure it is fully extinguished, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on your weaknesses, the light **lost**, how you feel. Go to next card.



Stones

Time limit: no more than 3 minutes.

Look down, to the ground, search. If available, **find** six small stones. Collect them in your hand. Look at each and consider:

1. What is their size, shape, color, textures, features?
2. Can you identify the type of stone for each? Do they feel heavy? Do you feel heavy?
3. Lay the stones on the ground to form an arrow, like a sign, pointing in the direction of home. Is this your home? Will you get home?

After contemplating the stones for a few minutes, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on your strengths, what opportunities have been **lost** along the path, what is top of mind. Go to next card.



LOSTFOUND

a cozy freeform larp for 4 to 8 people about being alone but not alone in nature by edmond y. chang

“What new or neglected aspects of games and gaming might ecology, for now defined as the science of interrelation between organisms and between organisms and their environment, enable us to see?”

--Alenda Y. Chang, *Playing Nature: Ecology in Video Games*

“Not all those who wander are lost.”

--J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

- Premise:** You are a group of friends getting away from it all, getting back to yourselves, getting out in nature, going on a long, meandering hike. By some twist of fate, everyone gets separated, lost. Rather than wander aimlessly, everyone knows to stay put until found. As you wait, you try to reach out to one another, offering help, encouragement, meditations, observations, random thoughts. Players are playing a version of themselves.
- Space:** A public park, forest, or garden, a large yard, even wandering the neighborhood—anywhere players can access “nature” broadly conceived—big enough that players can find separate, solitary areas. (A rainy day, indoor version could use different rooms like different settings, caves, pretend biomes.) Best played during dusk.
- Materials:** Each player needs 1 piece of candy (i.e. a caramel, a peppermint, a strawberry bon bon), a nearly finished bottle of water (a couple of glugs left), a strike anywhere match (or a small flashlight can be substituted), a set of 8 game cards, a mobile phone for texting one another or a pencil to write on the backs of cards.
- Mood:** Players should discuss the overall tone of the game: cozy, contemplative, emotional; players should determine what topics or feelings, if any, that should be off the table during play.
- Play:** After arriving at the area for play, walkabout as a group to get to know the lay of the land, pointing out good spots for players, potential hazards (e.g. poison ivy, rough terrain), and boundaries or limits. Designate one spot as “home” base where everyone will reconvene at the end of the game. Each player is given their starting materials; if using texting, make sure every person has each player’s contact information.

Set a time limit—20 minutes for a short game, 30 minutes to allow for a little more exploration and reflection—at the end of which all players must return “home.” Start the clock and players may go anywhere in the designated area of play.

After taking in the surroundings, being out in nature, players find themselves utterly “lost.” Each player must find a spot away from the rest of the group, preferably out of sight and sound. Knowing that they are separated and alone, they wait for help. Calling out yields no response. Phone signals are spotty at best, batteries are running low. It’s getting dark. Each player takes stock of where they are, why they’re there, and what they have.

Each player shuffles their set of 8 game cards face down. Then, one at a time, draw a card, following the directions, engaging the questions, and completing the task at hand. The cards prompt players to think about their environment, their own bodies, their thoughts, and their missing friends. They may need to use (**lose**) one of their resources. They may need to discover (**find**) resources. The player may choose to skip a card. Cards must be completed by the end of the time limit.

When texting, the player chooses one other player to send a message to, following the prompt, keeping the text short, no explanation attached. The recipient cannot respond; no conversation is allowed. The player can choose the same or different recipient for the message for each prompt. If the player or group is not texting, then messages are written on the backs of their respective card. Each message must be addressed to one recipient in the group.

The player must finish out the time limit even if done with their cards before convening at “home.” Once the time limit passes, the game ends. In this cozy version, all players are found, rescued, or find their way back to their friends.

- Debrief:** To close out the experience, each player should share one or two things they discovered, felt, experienced during play, what they lost and found, particularly as they sent or received messages (or received few or no messages). If using handwritten messages, they are handed over to their recipients. Most importantly, the players should reflect on and share how the experience revealed their relationship to their surroundings, to the environment, to each other, to resources and technologies: what does it mean to be “lost in nature”?

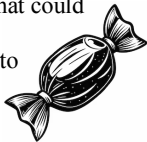
Candy

Time limit: finishing the candy.

A piece of candy **found** at the bottom of your bag, a calming sweet. Pop it in your mouth. Make sure to keep the wrapper to dispose of later. As you enjoy it, savor it:

1. What does it taste like? How does it feel on your tongue, in your mouth? Does the flavor remind you of anything?
2. Are you hungry? What is your favorite thing to eat? What do you want to eat right now?
3. Looking around you, do you see anything that could be foraged for food later?

Before you finish the candy, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on where you are **lost**, how you feel, what is top of mind. Go to next card.



Sounds

Time limit: 1 minute.

Take a moment to quiet your thoughts, to clear your mind, to stay still for a minute. Focus on the **found** sounds in and around you:

1. What do you hear? What is the loudest sound? What is the quietest sound? Can you identify what they are?
2. Call out only once. Do you hear anyone calling for you? Looking for you? Are you making any sounds?
3. What do you feel? How does it feel to be quiet. How does it feel to be alone?

After a minute (or what feels like a minute), choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on how you feel, how your voice might be **lost**, what is top of mind. Go to next card.



Water

Time limit: finishing the water.

Get out your almost empty water bottle. Luckily, you **found** that water station a while back. If it is not a reusable bottle, make sure to recycle it later. As you sip, as you drink:

1. What does it taste like? What is its temperature?
2. Are you thirsty? What is your favorite thing to drink? What do you want to drink right now?
3. Looking around you, do you see other sources of potable water or that could be used to collect water?

By the time you finish the water, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on the last drops of water **lost**, what you are feeling, what is top of mind. Go to next card.



Leaves

Time limit: no more than 3 minutes.

Take in your surroundings. Look around you. If available, **find** a handful different leaves. Pick them if you can. (Be careful of poisonous or protected trees and plants.) Look at each and consider:

1. What is their shape, color, size, pattern, texture, smell?
2. Can you identify the plant or tree the leaf belongs to? Can they be used to clean with, wipe with, sleep on?
3. Ask for a little luck, then scatter them to the wind, all around you.

After contemplating the leaves for a few minutes, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on your hopes, **lost** leaves, how you feel at the moment. Go to next card.



Sky

Time limit: 5 long breaths.

Stand still, sit, or lay down. Look up, take in the sky. **Find** a cloud or star. Take five, long, deep breaths. Inhale slow, exhale slow, and wonder:

1. What is the color of the sky? What time of day is it? Are there any clouds? (Or stars?) Is there any wind?
2. How do you feel? Are you content? Tired? Alert? Curious? Relaxed? Concerned?
3. How does it feel to be still, quiet, and alone?

After 5 long breaths, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on your state of mind, how you feel, how you **lost** your way. Go to next card.



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1. What does the flame look like? How did it move? Did you feel its light and warmth?
2. Could you start a fire without using a match or lighter?
3. Do you see any other lights?

After the match is done, making sure it is fully extinguished, choose one other player to text (or write on the back of the card) a short reflection on your weaknesses, the light **lost**, how you feel. Go to next card.



Stones

Time limit: no more than 3 minutes.

Look down, to the ground, search. If available, **find** six small stones. Collect them in your hand. Look at each and consider:

1. What is their size, shape, color, textures, features?
2. Can you identify the type of stone for each? Can any of them make a spark?
3. Lay the stones on the ground to form an arrow, like a sign, pointing in the direction of home.

After contemplating the stones for a few minutes, choose one other player to text (or write on the back card) a short reflection on your strengths, what opportunities have been **lost** along the path, what is top of mind. Go to next card.

