

Tribute

In memory of Mary Cousins

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Tribute is a lonely game in which you explore love, loss, and permanence using a discarded or scavenged bone, found objects and artistry, and the daily weather's fickle oracle. A single player will start by focusing on a lingering loss of love (fictional or real) and create a tribute to that loss by decorating the bone.

Required

1 player

1 (one) scavenged or discarded bone, large enough to make marks on (a chicken leg bone or larger is typically appropriate)*

A knife or carving tool

A writing instrument with semi-permanent or permanent ink (pen, marker, etc.)

Ribbon, string, yarn, or twine

Paint or stain and brush or sponge to apply

*If you prefer not to use a bone, a piece of moldable (plasticine) clay is also acceptable.

Time

This game takes fifteen days to play, but only a small amount of time each day. If you choose not to engage in play on a day, you can extend the length of the game or you can let the day pass, because the days do go on without us, even when we hold on.

Pre-Game Instructions

Find and clean a bone of a large enough size that you can make marks on it with knife or pen. Typically a chicken leg bone or larger is best. To prepare the bone, remove any soft tissue, dirt, etc. (this can be done through a variety of methods, but it's typically best to use hydrogen peroxide or a biological washing powder for anything particularly messy). Once it is clean, let it dry. If you use clay, mold it into a shape you like to start with to mimic this process.

While you work through this process, determine what your loss of love that you focus on will be for play. You should think of a real or imagined

loss of love – this could be through death, a breakup, loss of interest, or any similar event that either you or the character you choose to embody has experienced in which they lost something or someone they loved.

Some examples would be the loss of a grandmother, a broken friendship, or the inability to continue a hobby due to health problems. You can create an entire fiction around this if you want, but consider looking to your real life, your real love, and that which you have lost. Whatever you decide, mark on the bone the root of the love and loss with one of the following symbols.

Symbols

death of person or creature ○
ended relationship ✕
faltering interest or activity ~

Instructions for Play

Place the bone somewhere sunlight will strike it when it shines. Each day, refer to the following Weather Oracle and decorate or damage the bone as instructed. While you do this, reflect on a memory related to the loss, and answer the Haunting Question.

When fifteen days of play have passed, or when you find no satisfaction, you must decide whether you will discard the bone or keep it, and whether you are ready to move on from the loss of love (in character or out). Answer the fifteenth Haunting Question on whichever day you end, and give the bone as a tribute by making the choice to hold on or let go. Give tribute – to yourself, to the loss, to time.

Weather Oracle

Check the weather each day and take action based on the Oracle below.

Sunny – draw a letter or symbol on the bone

Cloudy – paint on the bone, either to stain or in a way that could flake off

Raining – tie a ribbon or similar around or through the bone, adding beads if desired

Snowing – carve a number or symbol into the bone

Overcast – scrape or scratch the bone

Haunting Questions

Day 1 – what do I know about the person or thing I lost (“my loss”) that made me want to give tribute?

Day 2 – how do I remember my loss in my daily life?

Day 3 – who do I know who shares the loss with me?

Day 4 – where do I feel the loss the most acutely?

Day 5 – what are ways I distract myself from the loss?

Day 6 – what guilt do I carry over the loss, and how can I relieve it?

Day 7 – who have I told about the loss and how?

Day 8 – why do I carry this loss today specifically?

Day 9 – how can I learn from this loss?

Day 10 – what can I do to bring this loss to life, figuratively?

Day 11 – what makes me feel better about the loss?

Day 12 – what is a good memory relating to the loss?

Day 13 – where do I remember the good things from this loss the best?

Day 14 – who can I turn to that would understand this loss, even if I must seek them out?

Day 15 – am I ready to move on?

Epilogue

You may find you cannot get through this list of questions, for any number of reasons. This is okay. You may also find you are not ready to move on. This is also okay. Whether you are or aren't, whether you finish or not, the important thing to remember is that you have now given tribute, no matter how brief, to this lost love.

It's okay to let go.

It's okay to say goodbye.

It's okay. Love doesn't end with this.