

Of the Sky, Of the Sea, and of the Stones

Part 4 – Solid Answers

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Quil's plan was to get the titanic stone troll to open the door. Instead of trying to speak to them, the scholar feigned as if she was calling out, addressing the stone troll. Like the wood troll, the stone one squinted in an attempt to comprehend Quil from beyond the separation.

Quil continued to mime and act as if she was trying to communicate with the stone troll, until eventually, out of curiosity, it knelt down. It brought its head closer in an effort to hear Quil's words.

More and more she acted and pantomimed until the troll's interest grew so great that it opened the door and stepped out of it, and into a space where the adept could speak to them.

Relieved, Quil told me that she had nearly passed out from the energetic flailing, but managed to communicate with the huge troll. She, attempting to be mannerly, introduced herself as an adept researcher of the Global Lore Researchers Union who had come to the Isle of Agalloch to study the doors. She then asked after their name.

The stone troll, who spoke flawless Okeanese, albeit in a deep, gravelly voice that was apparently difficult to understand, introduced themselves as 'Stone Doors'. Quil noted that this was similar to how the wood troll had identified themselves, though amongst its maddened screaming, Quil had not realized they were mentioning their name.

Quil asked Stone Doors of the origin of their name and of their duties on the island. The big troll responded by saying that like all upon Agalloch, they were named after what they are. They also stated that their duty was to permit or deny entry through this particular area.

The adept only discovered more questions to ask at these answers. Almost salivating at the idea of new and formally unknown knowledge, she then had a great discussion with Stone Doors.

What she learned was that the entire island used to be home to great structures, but whenever she queried about the lifeforms that inhabited these structures, she was always met with a strange and nearly incomprehensible response. Stone Doors stated that, in a manner of speaking, the structures were the inhabitants themselves. She asked if they took the forms of trolls as well, to which Stone Doors did not understand.



Figure 4. A realistic depiction of one of the stone doors of Agalloch. It should be noted that these doors open from the inside.

They had no knowledge of what a troll was, or even goblins, orcs, elves, dwarves, or all manner of races. They didn't even seem to fully understand what a human was, seemingly thinking that Quil was just a particularly talkative and flexible tree. Her dark brown skin and naturally green hair was quite good at making others think of her as arboreal in nature. Even those who knew what humans were.

To Stone Doors, structures were living beings. It is at this that Quil asked of what happened to all the other structures and that why only the doors remain.

The big structure responded in another unusual response. One that Quil said she had a great deal of difficulty understanding. She told me that it had taken weeks to fully parse the details mentioned, which she had written down during her conversation with the strange being.

What Stone Doors told her was that Time and Chaos ate their people. The wind and rain were like vultures, pecking away at their kin, while Time and Chaos drew the heights of great cyclopean buildings down into the stone over the course of millennia. But the way Stone Doors phrased it made the process seem more predatory than natural erosion.

They also stated that the reason only the doors remain is because of their thresholds. The meetings of two separately defined areas on Agalloch were all marked with doorways. These doorways not only once lead in and out of structures, but also acted to contain, identify, and catalogue the various rifts found upon the island. The smallest rifts were set with wooden doors; the moderately sized ones with stone doors, and the greatest were fashioned with Lodgium doors of colossal size. These rifts, which the doors were magically bound to, entwined the structure's material with that of different states of being.

From the perspective of the structures, this lent them great and undeniable strength and resilience, but from the perspective of a human such as Quil, resulted in a ponderous thought. One more to the ever-growing list of such thoughts, might I add.

"Why?" Quil asked. To everything. Why were the structures built? Why were the rifts there to begin with? Also, who built them?

Before Stone Doors could respond, however, the actual stone door behind them began to slowly swing close. Panicking, the troll-like being stood up quickly and retreated back to the doorframe. Not wanting to miss the chance to pass through it, Quil swiftly followed, being careful not to get crushed by the huge being's feet. Before the door could close, Quil made it through.

The door shut with a grating and a slam, although the loudness was due to the structures size more than the force in which it closed. Quil and Stone Doors were both on the same side, the one opposite from which Quil had discovered big doorway. She was beyond, and further more, the huge troll did not seem to notice. It was facing the door. It opened the door by a crack and peeked outside, seemingly looking for Quil, but shrugged as it saw no one and closed the door once more.

Strangely, though, it did not do anything else. It just stood there, facing the closed door. It was so motionless that as Quil stared, she pondered if the strange being was truly alive in the same way she was. She was tempted to engage the troll in conversation once more, but remembered the rage of the wood troll and decided to leave the huge creature alone. She had acquired many great answers, but the hydra of curiosity was now flourishing within Quil's very essence.

She proceeded inward, towards the centre of the island, searching for even more answers, but also a particular find. She was now on a quest to meet a lodgium door troll. One that may give her insight into the deepest, and most ancient, secrets of Agalloch.