

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

## Part 5 – The Gate

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Quil, being a very thorough researcher, mapped all the areas that she had explored so far (See Figure 5). As she travelled more inland, she estimated that she was about halfway to the centre of the island. Agalloch was not a huge isle, but its dense forests soon gave way to hillocks, which themselves gave way to a few mountains and short, yet deep, canyons. It was in one of these canyons that Quil found her objective.



Figure 5. Quil made her landing on the south-west beach and proceeded north-eastward, towards the centre of the island.

Looking over the edge of the cliff above the canyon, she spied below her a door that could more appropriately be called a massive gate. Shining with a metallic orange, this gate was undoubtedly made from lodgium, Quil had told me. She recounted seeing the stuff in devices and contraptions of all kinds, yet admitted that she had never seen so much in once place. And in the form of a titanic, ornate gate as well. Lodgium was a metal known for its strength, but also its ability to transfer energy.

As I remembered her regaling me with this tale of Agalloch, I also remembered my innate fascination with Quil's descriptions of organic materials, including flora and fauna. Every member of the GLRU, from novice to Loremaster, must chose a duality to focus their work upon. Many outside the Global Lore Researcher's Union have trouble understanding the concept of dualities, therefore, if this tome finds its way to those outside the union, I shall elaborate.

A duality, by definition, pertains to subjects of contrasting nature that coincide, or otherwise exist together in some capacity. Every member who enters the GLRU must chose two different subjects to study, with the aim of becoming a master of both in equal measure.

Quil's duality was to focus upon natural science and engineering. She inspired me to take up natural science as half of my duality, but in place of engineering I focused upon visual artistry.

Being an adept researcher of some renown on her native isle of Gainsborough, in the western waters of the South Peleca Sea, Quil had come to Agalloch with sufficient knowledge to attempt a visual dissection of this strange lodgium door. Even at a distance, she saw that the design of this door lent itself to being opened vertically, rather than horizontally like the wood and stone doors.

Quil leaned over the edge a bit more, trying to get a better view, when the boulder that she was leaning on suddenly gave way, rolling off the side of the cliff. She jumped back, away from the edge, but the sudden shift of the boulder had caused the stones beneath her feet to separate, leaving her with nowhere to stand.

Among many stones, Quil fell downwards, into the depths of the canyon. Rushing up to meet her, along with the canyon floor, was the shining orange gate. Near the top of the gate, though, she spied the exposed roots of some long-buried tree. In desperation, she reached out and grabbed them. As the roots took her weight, they were ripped from the earthy pocket in the cliff, but did a great deal to slow Quil's downward momentum. Luckily, she was only about a meter from the top of the lodgium gate. As the roots were torn free from the cliff, she fell onto the gate with a thud.

Quil told me that it was one of the scariest moments in her entire life. She said that she would never forget the sensation of plummeting towards her doom. Briefly, I remembered her going off on a tangent about the species of plant that the heroic roots had belonged to, but it was quite dull and I shall spare you an in-depth botanical lecture...for now.

As the researcher stood upon the top of the gate, she said that it felt warm. She also heard a humming, as if there was an energetic current nearby. As she examined the top of the huge door, she peered cautiously over the side and noted that she was still quite high up. Though, from this height, the fall would more likely result in injury than death, but that was still a fate that she said she wanted desperately to avoid.

She then peered over the other side, the 'inside' of the gate, so to speak. On this side she spied a most curious sight. One that she had expected, in a colossal troll-like being, but accompanied by such a strange companion that she claimed that she could barely wrap her mind around what she had witnessed. After spotting such a queer sight, she claimed that it gave her nightmares for years to come. Ones plagued by a primordial hunger the likes of which man, troll, or otherwise would likely never fully fathom.