



Röki takes you on an adventure with young protagonists Tove and Lars.



With simple controls and a charming style, Röki is very accessible.



Explore strange, menacing Scandinavian folklore.

Lars
Quick! A troll is under the bridge!



The game is underpinned by a touching family narrative.



Röki

Take a stroll through a deep, dark wood

HERE'S A LOVELY THING: An adventure game based on Scandinavian folklore, *Röki* casts you as Tove, capable elder sister of little Lars, who won't go to bed without his stuffed toy and a story. The story she chooses is one of four guardians, and it feels heavy with foreshadowing.

Lars is a playful boy, and sees trolls and monsters everywhere he roams, even if that's just to the bathroom at night. The siblings have a father, who does little but sit in his chair and eat pickled herrings, and the family is still hurting from the loss of their mother. Early comments from Tove about her father not keeping her mother's possessions show that this rankles just as much as having to cook eggs once again for dinner. It's a picture of domestic unease, the leaky roof of the small timber cabin they live in as much a metaphor for family life as the license plate falling off their father's beat-up car is for his condition.

There's a constant edge to all the Scandinavian coolness, however. Tove loves horror novels while Lars prefers fairytales, and the landscape is conducive to both. Pure white snow coats the forest, and the lake is a mirror of ice. A village clings to its edge, but Tove and Lars don't live there, they're isolated out in the forest,

and when Lars imagines there could be a troll under the bridge, well, you kind of believe him. Ravens cluster around their home, remarked upon as a bad omen, and when something awful really does happen, the cold forest turns out to be even more infested with creatures than Lars could ever have predicted. Some of them are even friendly.

The adventure mechanics are smooth and well thought-out, perfectly designed for controller or mouse, if a little too reliant on pressing a single button to advance lines of dialog. A journal keeps you up to date on what you're doing and displays items you've found, while your backpack holds useful things, including snowballs. Open the backpack, and you can scroll through its contents before clicking and dragging to combine items or use them with objects in the environment. You can click to highlight all the interactive areas on a screen, and approaching them brings up an icon that tells you whether you're going to examine or collect them.

It really couldn't be simpler, and having such a smooth system underpinning your explorations makes the game's three chapters pass quickly as you find yourself deep in the forest, separated from all your family members, yet expressing a joy at

your surroundings that can only come from such young protagonists.

If you see the game in a cold, analytical light, then it's just a bunch of fetch quests bundled up in some family stories to pluck at your heartstrings, backed up by just enough fairytale menace to make you wonder about all those stone statues that stand by the forest paths. But to look at it this way is to overlook the other light coming from the huge moon that looms over the children's home, or the winter sunlight that peeps through their bedroom window. There's a warmth to *Röki* that overcomes its wintry setting, and for a fairly short game it leaves a long-lasting impression. **-IAN EVENDEN**



VERDICT

Röki

BRIDGE A fine intermingling of characters, landscape and adventure mechanics.

TROLL Slow; lots of fetch quests; final third removes many of the best bits that came before.

RECOMMENDED SPECS CPU, i5 4690k / Ryzen 5 1600. RAM, 8GB. GPU: GTX 970 / RX 480.

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