Day 2. The Ice Man Cometh

- The Ice

The Ice

The body lies face down on the ice. No-one from Moonrest has dared to touch it.

Elder Saelin tells us "We do not let the tide take the dead but do not bury what we do not understand. Determine how the man died, take him to the fish house and examine him".

She tells us to record everything for the Moonrest arvices. "Do this carefully" she cautions "Do not let rumours circulate" .

We see a well dressed human male, frozen stiff with the sea frost clinging to his clothes. They are of a very high quality; he is obviously not a fisherman. His boots do not look worn and have not seen much wear. He has bruising around his wrists, but no other signs of injury.

Sebastian sees the body didn't drift here as he sees faint drag marks partially covered by the drifting snow. A bag looks like it has been dropped next to him. There are no foot/boot prints.

Bryn suggest moving him to the fish house now so we make an A frame strecher and carry him back there.

As we return to the fish house with the body, the villagers are outside watching. None help, they just watch.

As we get close to the fish house a man in his mid 40s stops us and says "Your'e not bringing that into the village. You don't know what he's carrying." Aethlewynn doesn't know the man but asks him if he knows who the body is. Tha man does not know him. He calms slightly when Aethlewynn tells him we are doing this on Elder Saelin's orders. An old lady tells the gathering crowd to let him pass - "If the sea gave him back we take care of him".

We continue on. Passing between two houses we hear a group of children playing and singing a rhyme we recognise. "I hear what you say. He walks where oaths are torn in two, And smiles like friends you think you knew. Lock your door when moon’s gone thin, Don’t let a traitor’s shadow in."

We can hear the crowd asking if anyone knows him or what has happened, none do. Noone else stops us and we take the body to the fish house and lay him out.

We start to examine him, head to toe. He does not look panicked so we don't think he struggled. We check his chest and Guru notices water in his lungs, Salas thinks the water entered after death. Salas notices a small puncture wound in his spine which looks itentional. Bryn says he's not seen anything like that from the sea.

Salas and Guru sees his wrists are bruised and look like he was restrained. They see lavender marks under his finger nails which Aethlewynn and Sebastian believe is an alchemical residue His hands seem to have reacted oddly to the cold.

His outer clothing are high quality and we think they are probably from one of the main continents. His jacket has reinforced seams, but in some areas they seem a lot thicker than you'd normally expect. Sebastian and Guru can see the stitching is deliberatly reinforced with different thread and looks out of place with the rest of the jacket. Guru uses a knife from the fish house and unpicks the seams. Bryn comments the stitching was done to protect something, Sebastian thinks it was done to hide something quickly. Guru finds a wax sealed packet in the seam. The jacket pockets appear empty. The trouser pockets contain a scrap of cloth and a small piece of cord, but no coin. An inner pocket holds a small metal ring, wrapped carefully in some cloth. It seems to be a signet ring and to have been intentionally hidden. It's well crafted and not local. Aethlewynn doesn't think its cult based or magic. There is no insription in the ring but Bryn thinks he's seen the insignia before on crates from the mainland.
Guru open the letter from the jacket. Most has been worn away, but he can make out:

"Moonrest Isle classified low activity.”
“Threshold variance within tolerance.”
“reserves stable.”
“Knight oversight unnecessary at this stage.”

Guru thinks he's some sort of courier from the mainland.

We take a closer look at the needle mark in his spine. We know of plants that could be ground down and would cause paralysis and stop hearts; that could be the cause of death. Then he was tossed into the water when dead. All ID seems to have been removed apart from what was hidden.

Bryn reminds us to write this down for Elder Saelin.

We record suspicious death, by persons unknow.

We record the suspicious puncture marks, the bruising on his wrists and the hidden items that we found.

We try to leave nothing out of the report.

Bryn covers the body as we head out to see Saelin. Bryn suggests we have a chat with the locals to see if any of them saw or heard anything.

Aethlewynn goes to talk to Edda. Edda saw nothing and doesn't recognise him. She believes "This one was not meant to come back, The sea does not often give back." Edda thinks he must be dangerous if the sea did not want to keep him and tells us "You should be careful not to invite the danger here."

Sebastain asks Bryn what he thinks about the dead man. Bryn hasn't seen him before and no official ships or small boats have landed. Bryn says it's been quiet for many weeks.

Aethlewynn asks Bryn about the drag marks, wanting to know if he knew of anything that could have dragged the body up but left no marks, he does not. Aethlewynn begins to remember the blue eyed fish had sharp teeth which could have caused a puncture wound.

Aethswold talks to the Lorekeeper, Tovin - his sister is a herbalist so will know the Aeth siblings. Tovin has heard rumours about the body, but ignores them. He has no writing or recollection of the dead man. When asked, Tovin checks his ledgers and confirms what Bryn has said about landings.

Sebastian talks to Mara, the bar keep. She says the whole village is talking about the investigation. Sebastian asks what whispers she has heard? She mentions that we don't normally get visitors in winter and outsiders never stay long. She says quitely that the official people who come never travel alone and they do what needs to be done and go quickly.

Tomas, a refugee says he is not sure if knows anything at all. Aethlewynn sits down and tries to engage him in conversation conversation but Sebastian notices he seems afraid. He seems to be trying to avoid answering questions and his eyes keep darting to the shoreline. Sebastian reckons it is in the direction where the body was found. Aethlewynn asks Tomas where he was from originally, says from one of the main continents, but his family has been travelling the seas since before he was born. Born at sea, but grew up on the island once his parents died. He says he hates the ocean and would rather keep his feet on dry land. Aethlewynn asks if recognises the clothes on the man, he says he does not. He is hiding something. Aethswold asks if he was afraid of the body. He's evasive, but he eventually cracks and says he'll tell. He couldn't sleep and the tide was wrong when he went to the ice. Someone else was there, not using a lantern as though they knew where everything was. He saw a hooded, cloaked figure leaning over the dead body seeming to be checking for something. Tomas saw the figure walk away onto the sea then it vanished into the fog. Tomas doesn't know anything about the cloak or the dead mans clothes.

Aethlewynn thinks that would explain the lack of footprints. Aethswold has heard of ancient mythical creatures, but none that are humanoid figures.

We go to the Longhouse to see Elder Saelin and give our report. Guru gives her the letter and ring and she recognises they are from the Port Authority - i.e. The Pale Compact. Elder Saelin is wondering why they are watching Moonrest. Aethswold and Guru think he was undercover. Saelin says if he is Pale Compact then someone will come looking for him. She asks all of us for our opinion on whether we should contact the Pale Compact or not. All of us think there is more to uncover - except Sebastain who thinks we should tell the authorities right away. Elder Saelin decides to wait for the time being. She says Compact Agents do not die and certainly don't die alone. If that is the case then something has gone very wrong. She asks the other council members to leave. When they have gone she asks us if there is anything we didn't wish to say in front of the others. Aethlewynn mentions the hooded figure that Tomas saw. Guru mentions the odd, blue eyed sea creatures that seemed to be under control by something and the ritual at the smokehouse. The common factor in all these events is the archane violet residue. Elder Saelin summarises that the ring carries a lot of protection and events must be serious if he had hidden it. She wonders if the Compact have lost control and is now more wary of contacting them. Guru wonders if there is something here that could help The Compact. Saelin says that in all things The Comapct act in their own interest. She asks us to keep quiet and would like us to see things through as Moonrest seems to be in danger. She gives us all an Adventurers' Pack as a gift.

Suddenly one of the Shorewatchers dashes through the door saying something is moving on the Western Shoals - the ice is breaking where it shouldn't. She sends us to investigate.

At the Shoals we see a single set of prints heading out towards the ice, We see drag marks heading out to the cracks in the ice and see more of the lavender residue. The wind picks up and tide seems to have been pulled back further than it should be. Then we see hands puncture the ice and a body pulls itself through the ice. It is a Zombie but seemingly the dead body we left in the fish house. How did he get here?

> **Drowned Messenger !**

We defeat him causing the waters to still and the cracks to stop widening.

We see an indistinct shape of a ship on the horizon. Just for a fleeting second we see a single, hooded figure in the rigging before it fades into the fog….

To Be Continued