Session 1. For Whom The Bell Tolls

- The Town

The Town

The town exists.
It pays tythe to the Pale Compact, remembering the harsh winter that happened when the full tythe was not paid.

We belong here and all look to pretect it.

Today begins as a normal day with the faint feeling that something is slightly off.

Then the Bell at the shore rings..... and some of us heard our name called.

Those who were called:

Aethswold - Orphaned at an early age and grew up with his "sister" Aethlwynn. Joined a local seminary as a Cleric and is still early in his semiary journey. Can be a little Grumpy but is tolerant of Aethlwynn. He's still in his 20s

Aethlwynn - Abandoned as a baby and was taken in by the same kind family as Aethswold. She's 19 so, for an Elf, is practically a baby. She had left the family to train with a small group of witches but returned from foraging one day to find the camp deserted but with taces of blood. She ran back to the town with nothing but what she was carrying

Guru - A Dwarf from the mountains. He was training to learn some magic, but was mostly persuing his traditional weapons training. He is 214 years old. He had to flee after the calamity hit. Therefore didn't finish training and survived by using his smithing skills.

Sebastian - A Fisherman by trade. He has lived here all his life and his parents still live here. He's not very ambitious, the height of his ambition is to catch a bigger fish.

Salus - Has been here for as long as she can remember. She's in her 40s. She has a personal quest to learn as many magical scripts, scriptures etc as she can

The bell summoned us to the Elder Salin who gave us the following jobs for the day:

- The broken smokehouse (outside of town near some docks) Which looks to have been damaged over night. The Town is worried about food spoilage
- The missing net. A younger islander has gone east to find the net and has not returned
- the ice-tide beast. A strange beast has been seen on the edge of the ice

The broken smokehouse:

The smokehouse smells wrong and one side has buckled inwards. Initially we can see no blood or footprints

They speak with Dock Worker Bryn - who was nearby over night He did not hear dogs barking or gulls screaming. He confirms there shouldn't be any one at the smokehouse over night.

Guru checks the tool shed. He finds a narrow bench with one draw opened carefully but with the contents spilled. It looks like a knife is missing, but its probably just a normal villagers knife

Sebastian checks the snowy trail towards the woods. The snow shows something that heavy was dragged here and the wind hasn't been able to hide it. He gets the impression that the snow was deliberatly used to try and hide the trail.

Sebastian and Aethswold think some sort of carcas was dragged but does not appers to have been dragged by a predator. Sebastian thinks something was stolen from the smoke house

Salus examins a blood stained cairn. She can see the snow is darked and compressed. The snow is blood stained as though something was dragged here. The cairn is new and is something the town's folk wouldn't have made. She thinks it looks like an old burial marker, but doesn't look like it honors the dead. The blood is new and seems to be from multiple different creatures. Sebastian believs that it was intentional and meant to be seen. Something large was dragged from the cairn to the shoreline

The fire pit is cold, but the fire is not long dead. Melted frost clings to the stones in unnatural patterns. Something was added to the embers; not fuel but it has been burned away. There is a faint smell of ash and sweet rot. It's unfamiliar to Aethswold. Guru can tell this is a necromatic residue and is very weak and unstable. The fire was disturbed after it had died down. The party feel the ash was used in a ritual

The collapsed wall and the smokehouse door

The smokehouse door is partially open, but looks it's been forced from the inside. There is a smell of fish, also of cold iron and fur. The hinge appears to have been bent by strenght. There is no splintering of the door and no bite marks on the fish which look like they have been disguared.

Bryn mentions the door is always locked

Salus sees a darker smear of blood behind one of the beams

Bryn is not sure what's missing

The party knows no creature hunts like this. Footprints by the door look as though someone stood there for some time. Whatever came through the door was by intention. Gura sees very faint marks scratched on the inside of the door frame, which seem to have been made by nails. Aethlwynn wonders if a caster was here. Guru disagress and thinks it's ritualistic and could be fiendish or

devilish. They either wanted us to see the ritual or didn't care if we did.

The party opts to repair the building. Bryn helps and they spend several hours to make it secure. Some of the smoking racks seem to have been snapped. One of the racks was deliberatly pulled down and some of the racks have been arranged to make a crude sigil. Blood patterns nearby suggest that the fish were cut.

A single, bare human footprint is found near the racks, but it is bigger than normal footprint.

Found items:

Bryn says to take twine and a net repair kit, resin soaked kindling, soot stained cloths, bone shards, salt block, jar of rendered fat (looks a bit spoiled but usable), 3 smoke house hooks. Placed in the party stash

The missing net:

The party follows the path to the east in search of the missing net

They can see the normal nets hanging up, but one is missing. A single latern burns.

There is disturbed snow by a tidal pool.

Salus notices small tracks leading to the water

The party hear crying coming from behing a boulder and find a small teenager - Tamsin, her leg is bloodied. She says she found the net something big with glowing blue eyes moved under the ice causing her to fall and to drop the net. She says the creature was about half her size.The net is now lost to the sea

There is no smell of cold iron in the area and Guru can't see any unnatural markings.

Guru took a torn net

The party head back to the village with Tamsin.

The ice-tide beast:

The party head to the ice tide where they find a shallow cave on the way to the frozen fen. There are remnantsof bone and a small battered wooden chest which look to have been here for a long time

Guru investigates and finds:

- A worn cane
- a worn and weathered set of chain mail

- a small iron hammer
- a rotted leather pouch with 5 silver coins
- a waterlogged journal of which only one line is legible "The tide did not receed, it waited we should not have opened the crate"
- A mostly illegible letter. The legible words are "If this reache sshore (fades) do not trast (fades) they knew, they always knew (fades)"

The bones look to be those of a baby mammoth.

Aethswold sees 2 sets of blue glowing eyes at the bach of the cave which are

> Frost-Touched reef stalkers:

They have:

- A frost nipped bite attack dealing piercing and cold damage
- A freezing flurry attack (2 actions - with reflex save on a hit)
- A death reaction to trigger an icy blood attack. The party member who killed it takes 1 cold damage

They are resistant to vitality damage

The party manage to kill them.

Examining the bodies the party find a strip of blood stained cloth has been carefully placed around their necks. The flowing blood of the frost touched reef stalkers steams unnaturally on the ice

Both cloths have the same smell of cold iron as around the Cairn, but no smell of ash. One of the cloths is stained, not with blood but a faint violet tinge. The other cloth is bloodstained but with the blood of the reef stalkers. The knots look like a noose.

Back at Moonrest Haven

Elder Salin listens to the party's findings, but only has time to nodher head once before someone runs in and rings the bell wildly crying "Elder, there is something on the ice". Elder Saelin charges the party with investigationg and warns not to let the crowd trample the ice.
The tide is going out. Something lays about 30 paces out, dark above the snow. Bryn says it was not there before.

It's the figure of a man, face down. Not drowned and with no blood showing, he is clutching a fragment of black wax in his hand.

Guru sees a vertical dark silhouette above the ice line .....

To Be Continued