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Session 1. For Whom The Bell Tolls

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

Session 2. The Ice Man Cometh

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

Session 3. A Light In The Dark

From The Ice To The Trees

Guru examins the body of the zombie, but there is nothing to be found. We decide it would not be a good idea to take the zombie back to town so Guru burns the body using fire from his hands while Aethswold prays over the remains of the zombie. Seb is impressed with the fire and tries to do the same. He cannot. Aethlwynn examines the ash, but can see nothing other than ash. We head back to town.

The return is quite quiet apart from a growing storm which feels wrong like it is watching and waiting. As we retunr Moonrest is shutting down for the night and the gates are only just open. The guards are surprised that we are still alive.

In the night there is a the cry of a great horn, which could have been mistaken for the storm.

The town is quiet in the morning, but rumours of what happened on the ice are circulating. Elder Saelin wants to see us immediatly, but we go via the fishhouse and the body has gone.

We head to the longhouse and see the Elder. She tells us that Yselle Marr says an unexpected thaw near the Whispering Woods may have exposed plants that can be gathered. As we head towards Yselle's with Elder Saelin she warns us not to touch anything! Yselle looks tired, but invites us in. She exlpains she'd normally send gatherers, but they are wary due to the recent unexplained happenings. On the table are lots of labelled samples and also a think black root which looks to be alive. Yselle puts a cloth over the root then unrolls a map and shows us where to go. She gives us a list of things she wants and tells us to bring back a sample of anything growing where it shouldn't.

Yselle gives Salus a healers' toolkit and Aethlwynn

- a gathering satchel
- a herb knife
- waxed sample jars
- cloth gloves and chalk markers

We can still see the odd, thick black root so Guru asks what it is. Yselle says she doesn't know and the she doesn't like it due to not knowing what it is. Guru decribes the symbol on the messengers ring and asks if Yselle knows what it is. She thinks she has seen it on crates from the mainland.

Guru asks if there's anything to look out for in the woods and Aethswold asks what people have reported seeing. Yselle tells us not to go too deep into the Whispering Woods, if we find ourselves in an area od Old Growth Forest then we should leave immediatly. She's sure ancient things lurk there and sometimes noises can be headd from there.

She says to follow the hunter trail until the marker tree. She advises that if the woods beome too quiet then leave immediatly.

As we leave Yselle's house Salus looks back and for a brief moment she thinks she sees the black root move by itself. As no one else saw it Salus assumes it was a trick of the light.

As we head out to the woods it is cold and snow is falling lightly. We find the old huntertrail and follow it. We hear creaks of the branches, the wind, the caws of ravens. Noting unusual. We see prayer ribbons, old animal traps and axe marks on the trees.

Aethlwynn sees one of the trees is marked with old symbols and sees another where some of the marks have been deliberatly scrubbed out The path does not seem to have been used recently. Salus feels the air is subtley heavier here. As we press on the trail narrows but we find the split marker trees as Yselle described. We heard a sudden crashing sound then the cry of a lone animal. The sound is ahead of us and sounds like an animal in distress. Guru scouts ahead and finds a young elk caught in an old hunter trap. One rear leg is caught in the trap but black roots twist towrds the creature. Aethlwynn tries to identify the roots but cannot. Aethswold hits it with a vitality lash. The roots react violently and immediatly spasming and violently thrashing around on the forest floor. We see a black ooze erupting from the tendrils. and a pale steam rises into air. Somehwere deeper in the woods something pulses. Aethswold casts light onto Guru's staff but the roots do not react. The elk is able to pull free itself from the tendrils but not from the hunter trap. Guru casts Ignition on the root which violently from the flames. Black sap bubbles on the surface of the roots but they grab the elk again. Aethswold kills the elk out of mercy and the roots let go of it.

The thrashing of the roots subsides and for a brief moment we see a blue light flicker deeper in the forest. As Aethlywynn fills one of the containers with the black sap Aethswold noticedsthe tendrils seem to be paying more attention to the blood flowing from the elk. Aethswold channels the blood and the roots follow it. Aethswold releases the elk from the trap and asks if Salus can examine the elk and see if the body has been corrupted. She can't see much but thinks it's probably safe to harvest. Sebastian is able to harvest meat, elk hide and antler material.

We head on into the woods trying to find items on the list Aethlwyn finds five measures of Blood Moss and a measure of Resin Sap. We follow the path further looking for plants when Aethswold suddley feels the ground shift under his feet as the snow collapses. He sees an opening area under the roots; near the edge of the collapse he sees an old hunters' lantern which he recognises as being from Moonrest Haven. However we're not aware of anyone going missing. He prods the earth around the opening and finds that the roots are old and break apart easily. The area smells of old rotted wood and a cold wind blows from the opening. He picks up the lantern, it's rusted and beyond use but Guru takes it as metal is valuable. The woods are quieter than they have been, but not deadly silent. The path seems to have run out at this point and it's just us between the trees. We see a black root vanish back into the earth and we recognise that these are the same sort of roots that grabbed the elk. We carry on deeper into the forest where the trees look older. Aethlwynn finds more Resin Sap and some Pale Fern. We start to head back the way we came then hear wet, cracking noises as one of the black roots appears to be dragging something that looks like a dead rabbit. We head back to where we found the elk and Aethlywynn finds Frost Mint. Aethswold collect a couple of bundles of twigs to take back to town.

As we leave the woods Aethlwynn looks back; all looks fine and normal as snow continus to fall.

We head to Yselle's and give her the herbs we found. She gives Aethlwynn the blood moss. Yselle looks worried when she sees the black sap then clears most of the table asks us to show her where we found it . Aethswold explains how we found the elk and says the roots are invasive. He explains it didn't like the vitality lash and he mentions the blue light like a beating heart. Yselle puts on leather gloves before opening the glass container. We see thin dark veins shifting beneath the surface. Yselle says old stories spoke of things like this in the first winter after The Shrouding. She is worried that the vitality magic worked as living things shouldn't react badly to it. As the sap moves in the container she hurridly seals the container back up. She says not to leave the container by food or herbs or sleeping places. Aethswold casts Vitality Lash on the black root on the table which causes the entire root to convulse. Thick black tendrils erupt out of the root, the lantern flames dim and several herbs are blackened. The root beats like a heart as Yselle hits it with a heavy iron tool. Thin rootlets head out of it and shrivel. The black sap bubbles and the room smells of wet rot and blood. The severed root drags itself towards a bunch of fresh herbs before collapsing again. Yselle is now in a panic.

Aethlwynn asks Yselle where she found the root while Yselle shoves a large metal bowl over the rest of the root. She found it near the outer perimiter of the pine forest a few days ago. That's where she first noticed the thaw in the snow, at first she thought it was rot, then it moved. She starts to compare the samples. Her's is smaller and less active than the sap we had collected but both are spreading in the same way. She thinks whatever we brought back is growing stonger. The tendrils spreading from the root starts to wither and the root looks like it has died. The lantern flickers blue for a second then returns to normal. The sap in the jar did not react.

Aethlwynn asks Yselle if the metal killed it or was it the vitality lash? Y says the bowl only contained it and suggests vitality hurt it. She asks is we tried any thing else? Guru says it didn't like fire and that it blistered, burned, boiled with black oil and was quite agressive. He also told Yselle that it was more interested in the blood than the rest of the elk and suggests trying a drop of blood in the jar. Yselle says to wait until we are all somewhere safer.

As night falls a pale blue light pulses in the darkness of the woods, faster than before.

To Be Continued...

Session 4. Gone Girl

Back Into The Woods

The night deepens and the storm starts to ease. The only lights showing belong to the harbour lantern and to Yselle's cottage. In the night the wind drops but the ait is unnaturally still.

Deep within the forest a blue light pulses, the lights in Moonrest Haven dim in time with the pulse and the dogs begin to bark incessantly.

A strange sound rings out low and distant, long and mournful, not quite a horn, not quite the wind. The Harbour Bell rings out once, then silence returns.

In the morning Moonrest is uneasy, Down by the docks the dogs continue to bark. We are summoned by heavy, urgent knocking at the door and we see Bran one of the Palisades watchmen looking scared, but trying to remain composed. He says that Elder Saelin needs us now, something has happened in the night. He describes the blue light out in the trees at night and says that something seems to be moving under the snow.

As we head throught the town we see people talking in hushed voices and that many homes have their eastern shutters closed. Sebastian notices that many of the fishing ships are still docked instead of being out to sea as normal. Even though it is cold there is an abnormal amount of smoke rising from chimneys. Ravens have gathered, sitting quietly on the roof tops. Frost rime on the windows resembles branching veins. One of the locals points at us and says, "This all started after you bought something back from the forest". We head to the Long House which is busier than normal. The are villagers, guards and hunters. There are maps are over all the table and lanterns burn bright. All the people within look fearful. Elder Saelin is trying to hold everone together, but she looks exhausted. The eastern side of the Long House is empty and we notice the people are avoiding it. The Hunters are arguing amonst themselves Elder Saelin says the eastern watch reported pale lights pulsing between the trees in the forest, and before dawn came, one of the lumber families who live near the eastern pallisades realised their daughter was missing. Her name is Tala Venn and she is eleven years old. The hunters found tracks outside her home but are not sure what to make of them. One of the guards is sure he saw something black moving under the snow in the night.

Sebastian asks if we need to rescure Tala. Elder Saelin says yes but most of the town are too fearful to leave the village.

Aethlwyn asks to see Yselle before we set off but Elder Saelin tells her to wait as Yselle should be at the Long House soon. When Yselle arrives she rushes up to the table and says the pulses of light made the sample of sap activate. The jar itself tried to move to the warmth of living things and Yselle thinks it can sense them. Elder Saelin says "the oldest records of our land spoke of winters like this, where roots beneath the snow woke hungry. Be honest how bad do you think this is?" Aethlwynn looks to Yselle who says something strange is happening and it frightens her. Aethlwynn

asks Elder Saelin what the records say about how the roots were dealt with, but the Elder replies that the records are patchy. As we talk a townsperson runs in shouting "There are roots by the eastern sheds, coming up through the ground!". Elder Saelin turns to us and says "You are the best we have, please investigate and try to bring TAla home".

We will do our best as these are our people. Aethlwynn is unsure about the best way to do this but suggests taking fire brands as the roots reacted to it. Sebastian takes charge and sends three hunters to get torches and meet us by the Eastern Pallisades.

We head to the Pallisades where we see the earth is shredded with thick black roots. Salus wonders what void demage can do, we agree to see what might happen. She casts Voidwarp. The moment the energy touches it the tendrils freeze unnaturally and the blue light flashes sharply benath the surface. Salus thinks the darkness is drinking the void damage into it and seems to quite like it. Aethlwynn wonders if the roots are coming for the sap and root that Yselle found. We now think that vitality energy damages it, blood seems to draw it, fire harms it. Aethswold casts Vitality Lash at the roots which again react violently and recoil. Aethswold wonders about casting benediction radius which is divine protection but agrees to wait. Guru casts Live Wire to see if electricity has an effect. As the spell hits blue light arcs though the roots seemingly causing a chain reaction . The light gets brighter and brighter and the tendrils seem to sieze violently. More roots erupt throght the soil thrashing wildly. Eventually the light dies down and the roots quieten. The electricity didn't seem to damage the roots rather they seem to have woken up. We feel the roots carry the charge through the whole system which we think is all connected underground. Salus casts Divine Lance (spirit damage) which causes acpulse, spasms and a slight retreat and it feels like we've struck the corruption itself. When the Divine Lance struck, the blue light looks like it recoiled in pain and we hear cracking under ground as though ice is breaking. The hunters arrive with torches and drive back the roots that have come under that wall.

We head to Tala's home quite quickly. Her mother greets us, but is very frightened. She says the storm woke the family in the night and Tala was there, but when the harbour bell rang and awoke the family again she was gone. Her brother Harlan went to try and find her, neither have been seen since. There is no blood or signs of struggle, just small bare foot tracks heading east. Guru notices strange shallow furrows in the snow alonside the tracks, as though something was keeping pace with her. Aethlwynn checks for violet residue, but can see none. We see a separate set of tracks for Harlan, shod and larger and the furrows don't seem to follow him. Aethlwynn asks if Tala had injured herself wondering if blood had attracted the roots but her mother says nothing untoward had happened to her. Aethlwynn asks if they saw the blue light, but Tala's Mother says no, it was the harbour bell that woke them.

The dogs continue to bark in a spooked way, but there have been no more sightings of the starnge ship. We follow Tala's tracks towards the lumber path, the Town gates opening against the snow. There are a number of town folk on the Pallisade, but noone volunteers to joint the search. As we start to depart we hear Yselle calling, she brings a resin fire bundle for each of us and warns us to leave if the blue light pulses faster.

We follow the trail, and seeing old axe marks on the trees. The further we go the quieter the forest becomes, an unnatural calm as though it is watching us. We can still see Tala's footprints faintly.

Every now and then it looks like she was running and stumbling. The furrows still seem to follow her even though they sometimes dip undergroud. We see the roots and furrows avoided patches of sunlight In one place Tala seems to have hidden in an old log pile.

We notice that the roots seem to be generating heat and feel the corruption is spreading through a shared system which may have infected the whole forest. The pulses travel through the roots and seem to coordinate what the whole does. We've noticed that killing surface roots doesn't seem to kill what's underground. High in the tress we see a Conspiracy of Ravens silently watching us. Suddenly they erupt skywards from the trees.

Salus and Guru hear movement beneath the snow. Salus feels the movement is in parrallel to us as though following us. There is no sign of Harlan. As we continue the temperature drops . We suddenly feel vibrations which causes snow to fall from the trees and we see the blue light pulsing like a heat beat. We don't belive it's spell, more like a biological thing. Aa we continue to follow the paths thick black roots erupt from the snow and attack us.

Root Tendrils

Tendril lash attack.

Aethswold casts Benediction. The roots take no damage from being within the Benediction aura, but appear to be unhappy in the aura.

The roots take all the piercing damage from Sebastian and all the bludgeoning damage as well.

Aethlwynn casts Caustic Blast and the acid causes the roots start to hiss and crack violently. The sap and root start to thrash and the pale blue veins start to pulse. It is weak 5 to acid.

Blood sense ability. The roots have +1 attack to a bleeding individual.

Guru casts Fire. It is weak 5 to fire.

Hide - the roots can retreat back underground.

As Sebastian takes damage a change comes over him and his eyes light up.

As we beat the roots the earth collapses and we see a pit filled with black roots and animal bones. We see the roots are extracting nutrients from the animal bones Aethswold notices that the corruption is feeding more on fresh meat than on the older bones.

We move about 100 meters before we find a shattered lumber sled leaning against a pine tree. One runner is shattered, supplies are spread about. A blue light is in the background.

To Be Continued ....

Session 5. Now We Are Six

A stranger in our midst

As we approach the sledge we see signs of a struggle and and see that there is fresh blood and drag marks in the snow. We see one set of adult tracks in the area and another set of tracks that vanish under the snow. Aethlwynn suggests we follow the tracks, and we follow the obviously recent set that seem to vanish. We start to hear a weak cough in the forest silence which seems to come from under the sled. We see a man half covered by the sled; he looks very cold. One hand grips an axe, his clothes are ripped and he looks almost hypothermic. Guru puts his cloak over him. and he thanks us. Guru helps him up. and sees his shoulder is bleeding and badly injured. While Salus stops the bleedong. Aethlwynn asks him his name - Riteable is the answer. Guru asks where he is headed, Riteable replies that he was sent out to look for Tala last night as folk know he was in the army and now sells his sword.

Aethlwynn points out the other footprints and ask if Riteable knows who the footprints belong to, he thinks he saw Tala but heard her screaming a name like "arlan". Then there were blue lights, the earth shook and he lost his footing. He thought he saw something but passed out and the next thing he knows is seeing us. We agree we have the same goal and Sebastian suggests we follow the footprints. Riteable asks if we should back go to the village but we agree to press on as little girl is lost . The other footprints seem to vanish, but seem to be wearing some short of shoes. Salus realises the blood is recent and can see that they were dragged under ground seemingly alive, but can't be seen. The other prints leading away look like a small barefoot child. Aethlwynn wants to try to help who or whatever was dragged underground but we can't see a way underground. There are roots which look like a mix of tree roots and the corrupted black roots. We can't see the blue lights but can sense a general pulse. Aethlwynn says to the forest "You have one of ours if you let him go there is no need to set a fire". There is no response, but soon after the birds fall silent and the wind has drops It feels as though like something is listening. The forest does not feel hostile or kind, and it doesn't feel like the forest itself doing the listening. Aethlwynn also has a strange sense of smoke within the general forest scents. As the scent seems to be coming from the direction of Tala's footprints we follow Tala's them.

We head north until we see one of the old camps. There is neither smoke rising nor voices in the distance. The watch tower has collapsed, and we can make out pale blue pulses from the ground.

Guru scouts ahead. Aethswold notices faint ripples beneath the snow which he thinks there are potentially weak areas. He also thinks he can see faint movements in the hut. He feels the safest way in is through a gap in the fence rather than through the main gate He sees a small fire and lanterns outside the hut which the roots seem to avoid. Salus notices bare footprints leading into the shed she also sees drag marks and blood in the main courtyard as well as frozen black sap in the snow. Aethlwynn sees that the roots seem to be feeding on the warmth in the area and that the nearby plant growth seem to be corrupted. Aethswold thinks the watch tower collapse is recent and has been caused by the roots. Aethswold sees a long stick with a metalic blade leading againt the shed. It's a scythe.

Riteable moves to the shed and kicks the door in. The door collapses and he hears a gasp, but he can't see anyone. He lights a torch and looks deeper into the shed. It looks full of old dusty items including an overturned cot in the corner where the gasp came from. He moves the cot and sees a panicing young girl. She looks in severe shock and points outside muttering "Roots are moving". She says Harlan told her to keep running -then she says something under the camp was talking. Aethswold asks what it sounded like, but she can't get her words out. She says she can't hear the voices any more. She tries to explain a blue light came from under the tower and that Harlan told her to stay in the shed. He tried to set the roots on fire but then he was gone.

Aethlwynn suggests we investigate the watch tower and Salus suggests we leave Tala in the shed. Before we can move Aethswold hears a faint cry of "Tala" coming from under the snow. The blue glow starts to intesify, the ground vibrates, the lanterns start to dim and glow blue pulsing in time with the blue glow. Sebastian and Aethswold realise the roots are now responding to the pulses. Aethswold senses something under the ground is coordinating the roots' movements. Suddenly the camp floor collapses as roots start to attack us.

Combat starts

One root uses a Root Glide Ability but we can't see what that does yet

Another vanishes underground

Sebastian casts Haunting Hymn which destabilises the tendrils which take full sonic damage

Riteable proves to be resourceful in a fight, using a buring torch to attack the roots

As we beat back the roots the last of the tendrils convulses violently. The roots all then collapse and turn in on themselves. We see the body of a young man over by the collapsed Watch Tower. His chest is covered in blood and he is very weak, but alive. It's Harlan, still holding on.

To Be Continued....

Session 6. The Boy From The Woods

The Slow, Sad Return

Harlan is still gripping a woodsman's axe with a dead man's grip, his fingers white and tense.

Tala runs to him and wraps herself around him. Harlan opens his eyes and realises his sister is here. He starts to cough up blood, but says "Told you I'd find you". Salus performs first aid on Harlan, she realises his wounds are catastrophic but somehow he has survived. Although in severe shock he is oddly strong. As she heals him she sees a faint blue light running through his veins. As he heals he finally lets go of the axe. Aethlwynn runs to Tala. Harlan looks to all of us, thanks us and asks what he can do for us. Guru asks what happened to him and Harlan replies that the roots came from below, up through the ground and that there were far many everywhere. Aethlewynn asks where this happens, Harlan replies "The watchtower; it started with the pulse". He looks terrified and says "Like the world's heartbeat". Guru asks him "Who else was here?" Harlan replies that Jon, Elias and Merrin didn't make it, that they were taken. Aethswold asks "Taken where?". Harlan answers "They went staight down like something underground. took them" Guru looks round the compound but sees nothing.

Aethlewynn reminds them of the pit near the sled; Harlan says "That's where they were taken".

Aethswold and Sebastian see Harlan's left hand begin to twitch, almost rhtymically, as though he's matching something beneath the ground, Something that feels alive but alien to us. Something that doesn't seem like possession. Guru looks for a magical link with the hand tremor and can perceive that something is in Harlan, an incredibly brief blue flicker within him that fades. It stays the same as we move Hralan from the Watchtower. Guru continues to monitor using sustaining his detect magic, but this doesn't behave like a spell as the pulse originates in his chest but seems to answer to something far away.

Harlan repeatts that he doesn't know how he got there but he felt something take him under ground, then next thing he knows is that he was here. Guru is worried that he is transforming and is concerned about taking him back to the town.

Guru looks for Magic on Tala and sees nothing. She has no magical aura and he cannot detect any blue pulses. Guru then decides to investiagte the small lodge by the Watchtower.

Aethlewynn gently asks Tala why she ran out from her house and what scared her so much she had to run away. Aethlewynn also reminds Tala that she said she heard voices and asks what they were.

Tala says that she can't remember leaving the house and the next thing she remembers is being in the hut and the door being kicked in. Aethlewynn gently asks again about the voices. Tala looks to the old forest but says she isn't sure, at first she thought it was Harlan calling her, then she heard voices of a woman and child crying for help. She can't hear anything now. Aethlewynn asks what

the last thing Tala remembers - it's being put to bed by her mum.

Aethlewynn looks at Tala's feet, but she seems to be physically fine. Perhaps a little too fine as she shows no ill effects after being barefoot in the snow all night. Her clothes seems only faintly damaged and there are no signs of her being taken under ground. Aethlewynn continues to watch Tala but sees nothing more than a frail, scared, little girl.

While Aethlewynn talks to Tala Guru looks in the hut. It has been damaged recently. He finds a flint and steel, 2 torches, 50ft hemp rope, a small kettle, dried venison (4 rations) 2 waterskins (but the water could be stale) and a wooden axe. There are 3 minor healing potions, unfortunatly one is cracked and not usable. Under a broken bunk there is a locked footlocker which he drags outside. Guru and Aethswold use the wooden axe to open it find:

2 sets of quilted armour (DEX MOD 3) 1 set of leath armour, a heavy winter cloak bearing the Moonrest Insignia, a small pouch with 12 silver coins and 34 copper coins as well as sealed wax packed labelled "To Elder Saelin if we do not return".

After one more quick look round the site we prepare to leave. The wind instantly drops and the snow starts to fall silently. All bird song stops. Harlan falls silent and looks towards the deep forest. Without warning we feel a deep thrum, a pulse deep under our boots. Something huge has moved under the earth. Harlan's eyes widen as he screams "No!" As another thrum pulses under us he makes a dash for Guru who feels Harlan is much stornger than he should be. Harlam screams out "It's here!" and blue veins ripple across his body.

Aethlewynn again adresses the forest. She cries "We have found our own, it looks like one of ours is also one of yours, can we leave in peace?" But she now knows this is not coming from the forest, it's coming from below. For a brief moment Harlan regains his composure. He mutters Tala's name as he kneels down beside her. He tries to speak but can only cough up blood. He steadies himself and manages to say "Don't follow the" he breaks off mid sentence to look down and say "Its's waking". The ground under Harlan explodes up with black roots and they sieze Harlan pulling his body apart while pushing it up into the frozen air. Aethlewynn wraps herself round Tala to protect he and to stop her from seeing this. Harlan hangs suspended in the air, his body convulses and his hands start to claw at his stomache and chest. At first his blood runs red, then turns black. Salus tries to hit him with a divine lance. The divine lane is stopped by the roots even though they recoil violently. Guru also embraces Tala. She tries to reach Harlan even though Aethlewynn and Guru are holding her. She cries out "Please don't" and for one moment everything falls still. Harlan regains his focus. He says "Sorry, please save my sister". He looks at peace, even though the roots continue to hold him aloft then draw him deep into the darkness.

Guru picks up Tala. Aehtelwynn says "You have taken back your own". The roots drag Harlan into the ground, it's about a minute before he is enveloped and is no more. The clearing falls silent again as snow falls, the ground trembles like slow breath. The forest exhales and deep within something answers, deep and seeming to be from every direction at one. Again the blue light begins to pulse, racing away like live veins from the clearing in every direction. A small narrow wound remains in the soil where the black roots weave around themselves; we see a blue light pulsing throught them. Aethlewynn sees the pulse resembles magical energy but running though

living tissue. Salus sees it is resembling arteries carrying human blood. She sees that it seems to resemble no known faith but is more biological. The roots do not resemble tree roots as much as a nervous stsem. Aethswold notices the roots are not still, they move very slightly as though breathing shaloowly. Guru's detect magic shows the entire clearing is radiating primal and occult energy as well as an energy he cannot identify. Tala is crying and muttering "He promised he'd bring everyone home" She falls quiet suddenly and whispers "It's listening because it's stopped making a noise". Aethlewynn and Guru both hear her.

We head back towards the town but have travelled only a very short distance when we hear a deep, low, ancient note ring out. The trees seem to carry the sound of a mournful call almost like a long call of a horn. Guru feels Tala freeze instantly as she turns to the forest and gasps "No! Not from the old growth, no-one goes in there any more". As we follow the path back it feels oddly unfamiliar and the silence in the forest in overwhelming. Sebastian glances back to the Watchtower, for a brief heartbeat the tower seem higher than before. It is such a brief impression that he wonders if he is seeing things. We pass the sled, and keep heading back. As we pass the site of the previous root attack the remaining thick black roots seem to give under our boots as though alive. We hasten our return.

As we head towards Moonrest Haven we hear the tolling of a bell. 1-2-3, pause then repeat. Tala starts to panic as she hears Elder Saelin's emergency bell, the bell that summoned us those few days ago. She says "It "hasn't finished". As we leave the forest and follow the Hunters' Path, we see one of the marked stones has been cracked by the roots which now run through it.

The bell continues to toll as we get closer. The woods, now distant watch us in silence.

Closer yet the gates are open and all faces on the pallisades turn towards us. We are greeted by Bran as we enter through the gates. He asks "Where's Harlan?" Aethswold replies "He was taken by the evil in the forest". He bows his head towards Tala. As the terrible news spreads parents instictivley gather their kids towards them and head to their homes. Elder Saelin and two council member run up to us. She has already heard Harlan is not with us but asks "No-one else?" She sighs and says "Then the forest has claimed them." Tala pulls free from Guru, runs to Elder Saelin and collapses in front of her. Her voice breaks as she sobs "I'm sorry it's all because of me. Harlan tried to save me".

As Elder Saelin places a hand on her shoulder the bell stop rining, but the silence feels heavy. Yselle runs up to join the group. Seeing the black marks from out fights with the roots she asks if any of it came back with us. Aethlewynn replies "Not that I know of" . Yselle whispers "This isn't over". Aethlewynn whispers back to Yselle "Tala said that too". Elder Saelin looks the wider community and beckons us to the Long House saying "Best we go somewher quieter".

Once we are in private Elder Saelin asks for a debrief. As normal Aethlewynn will tell everything she knows. One Council Member starts to pray when she reaches at the transformation of Harlan. At the mention of the horn blast from deep in the forest one of the older Council Members mutters "Haven't heard that since I was a boy. Elder Saelin says "Enough for tonight, we will mourn those that have not returned. No-one will enter the Whispering Woods. You have done more than we have asked". Elder Saelin then asks all the other coucil members to leave before telling us that

she's never had to bury a man the forest refused to give back". She turns to Yselle and asks if she can tell anything from what's on our clothes. Before Yselle can answer Guru hands over the sealed package to Elder Saelin who says she knows the handwriting, and opens it carefully As Elder Saelin open it we can see that most of the message is soaked in blood and only a few lines are legible. She quitely reads "The pulse beneath the old pines is not an animal. If the bell rings again burn the lower paths" . She says looks at us as says "This was written by Garrick, one of the the leaders at the Watchttower, not a man to panic. If he wrote this then he truly believes there's no coming back". The lower paths have not been used for years but burning them would meant cutting off anyone who is still out there.

She asks us "Before I condem half this island to the flames is there anything that can be done?". Yselle runs her finger over the blood and says "This was not written after the attack. Whoever wrote this had time and knew something was coming".

To be continued....

Session 7. East Coast Road

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Wolves

Yselle gives us a list of items that she needs foraging from the eastern coastline. She thinks the corruption has not spread there yet. She tell us to make sure we are back by dusk for Harlan's funeral and the vigil for those who are still missing. We head to the eastern coastline but first hunt and harvest some wildlife.

We find a collapsed tunnel which appears to be very old. It looks as though it would take a long time to excavate so we decide to press on.

As we reach the coastline area we find the tracks of a wolf patrol and identified a small cave as the location of their den. We decide to avoid the patrol paths when we gather the items required. As wolves appeared on some rocks looking down at us from some rocks we attacked. Teh wolves retailiate using pack tactics .Aethswold took the brunt of the attack and was knocked down We eventually defeated the wolves and decided to skin and fully harvest all the wolves in order to make a cloak.

We couldn't get blood samples due to lack of conrtainers.

Session 8. Dusk

Session 8. Dusk

Harlan's funeral

Guru looks into the Wolves' Den and sees animal bones but also a ripped and torn haversack. In it is a field kit containing parchment, vials and an inscribers kit.

We take two vials of blood from the Wolves and determine the following will be needed to craft a Frost Mane Cloak:

- Thick Fur X 6
- Tough Hide X 2
- Animal Fat X 2
- Bone Fragments X 2
- Monster Fang X 2 to make Decorative Clasps
- Linen Thread X 2 spools
- Leather Straps X 2

We return to Moonrest which is sombre in the dusk. Harlan's cloak, gloves and axe lie on a bier. Many of the villagers are gathered, there's no order and folk stand where they wish. Shrine Keeper Torv slowly tolls the bell three times. As the final note fades into the dusk Elder Saelin steps forward to speak the eulogy for Harlan Oakheart, telling tales of his bravery and strong sense of duty. Tala steps forward carrying a bundle. She opens it to reveal a carved seabird which Harlan made for her. She places it lovingly on the bier as Torv chants.

We stand together a s a group and Torv turns to us. He gives all an unlit candle and asks if we will place our candles by the memorial. As one we all place a candle on the bier and say a few words in memory of Harlan.

Bran removes his Moonrest Broach and adds it to Harlan's cloak. The remaining members of the watch salute their comrade. At this point all the villagers light candles and leave them to burn through the night.

The villagers remain by the funeral bier Torv takes Harlan's memorial candle and lights a lantern made of dark iron and polished oak. He then lights three lanterns for those who have not yet returned. The lanterns are old, and each bears a plaque showing the names of the three missing. Torv speaks softly and places a hand on each of the lanterns in turn reminding people to bring the missing home.

Elder Saelin addresses the crowd telling them that hope still remains.

The vigil complete, the villagers return to their homes. talking quietly amongst themselves. Torv watches them leave, turns to us and says "There is one last duty if you have the strength. Will you walk with me, please?" He leads us through a narrow path until we reach the Elders' Long House.

Outside is now fully dark as he asks us into the building. He moves a heavy rug and opens a broad hatch, showing us steps leading down into a dark basement smelling of resin and old oak. Massive beams holding up the roof have names carved into them. Aethswold and Aethlewynn realise the names are all equal in status; the oldest look to have been here for centuries. Torv says that wood lives forever if cared for, but stone breaks and books burn.

A large, well-cared for inscription reads "The Brunswick Boys". Torv says "They were travellers, heroes to some, troublemakers to others".

Another reads "Merrick Trugust" Torv smiles as he says "He was a friend to Moonrest. Spent most of his life down here as he couldn't stop asking questions". Then starts to carve a new name - Harlan Oakheart.

He asks what mark we wish to leave. Aethswold carves a raven. Aethlewynn asks to wait as she still has to find out who she is. Guru carves a cat. Riteable leaves a print. We choose wings and a halo for Salus and suggest Sebastien would choose a fish.

As we leave Torv says most think the village is build from wood and stone, but it's built from the people who chose to stay and give all. Salus turns to look at the ledger seeing that it is old and well handled; containing different peoples' handwriting and different writing styles. She notices the entries become more detailed as we get closer to the present day, and that although the handwriting changes the style doesn't. It is as though each Elder now writes alongside the long dead.

Aethlewynn looks for clues to her parents in the ledger and finds an entry made eighteen years ago. Although she finds two names she is unsure if they are her parents as she has been lead to believe she is seventeen:

1. **Aelira Vael** , Elf . Traveller in Winter. Taken by fever after arriving from the Southern Seas. Remembered for a quiet voice, a silver pendant and asking too many questions about the old paths. No family recorded.
2. **Caelith Vael**, Elf. Companion of Aelira. Depated Moonrest three days after her death destination unknown. No memorial carving made.

As the sun rises on a new day life returns to Moonrest once more.

Bran hurries to find us and asks us to bring all the foraged items to Yselle at the Longhouse. Aethlewynn heads there as quickly as she can. Yselle is in the loft where she has covered all available surfaces with notes, samples and containers.

As we hand over all the items we have gathered, she says, "It'll take as long as it takes" and she opens a new notebook. Aethlewynn offers to help and looks downcast when Yselle tells her that she works better alone and that we should rest and take some time for ourselves.

We leave and Bran closes the door after us and saying "She'll be like that for days now".

Aethlewynn is at a loose end and seeks out Tala. She finds her helping Mara at the Tavern. Tala tells Aethlewynn that she is alright and nothing odd has happened to her since she returned from the forest. Aethlewynn asks Mara for work, but there is none. Mara does offer us free food and gives Aethlewynn six vials. Salus says Aethlewynn can use her house for crafting.

As we're in the Tavern a young lady comes in and nods to Aethswold who recognises the Graveskeeper, Lysa Venn. She takes a seat by herself and Aethswold goes to join her. Lysa tells him that she's on to something and may have work for us in a few days.

Guru trades the stone he collected and the kettle with Garran, who would be willing to trade them for a blacksmith's kit.

To be continued.

Session 9. Things To Make And Do

Planning

Sebastien and Salus spend two days on the Frozen Coast gathering resources. Sebastien gets fish oil and animal fat. Aethlwynn joins them for one day then spends the second day asking if anyone needs healing. As Moonrest's citizens are all healthy she starts to ask about the Vaels She is directed to Yselle, Tor, Elder Saelin and Bran as they were in Moonrest at that time. Garran Holt was also there, but had only just arrived on the Island himself. As Yselle is preoccupied Aethlwyn goes to Elder Saelin first. Elder Saelin tells her that Elira is buried in the graveyard but has no memorial as she was not from Moonrest. Caelin left very soon afterwards, some though he left a little too soon, but other thought he was grieving. Aethlwynn asks if Elira and Caelin could have left her as a baby so they examine some old records in the Long House. The records hint that Elira could have given birth, but there's nothing in the notes to say a child was buried with her, or that Caelin took a child with him. Elder Salin suggests asking more of the folk who found her. Aethlwynn spends the next few days trying to craft a Healing Potion, but is disturbed by her thoughts and cannot do so.

Salus spends a few more days foraging and finds Pale Ritual Ash and Salt Touched Bone.

Aethswold starts gathering ingredients to wood based weapons e.g. bows and arrows. He asks the hunters and Sebastien to find feathers for him. He looks for resin sap for Salus, finds two portions and hands them over to her

Guru goes to the Frozen Coast for three days and returns with enough Bog Iron to craft two ingots which he gives to Aethswold to make arrow heads.

Riteable crafts woven threads from the Marsh Reed Fibre Aethlwynn gathered. He gives it to Aethswold, who has found 2 hardwood branches that he can begin to craft into bows.

Sebastien starts to have regular gigs at the Inn and the villagers now seem friendlier towards us. They seem to have got over their fears of us bringing the body into Moonrest.

After several days Bran approaches us and tells us Yselle would like to see us at our leisure. She's been researching the Older Elders work and would like a fresh set of eyes. Aethlwynn leads the way as the villagers greet us cordially. The Main Hall is usually quiet, the table is cleared and there are no meetings. Bran looks puzzled to see noone there but hears Yselle calling for him to bring us up to her loft. The loft is still covered in Yselle's collection. Half of the room is organized but the other half is chaos. Yselle is in the centre of the room surrounded by the specimens from the north that we gathered previously. She's muttering to herself, seems momentarily surprised to see us then welcomes us. She makes a space on the table and lays out the specimens for view. She asks us to tell us everything we remember about the expedition including how many wolves there were. She writes everthing down.

She then unpacks the specimens one at a time asking who collected each specimen and how they went about it. She tells us that Winter Moss only grows where snow lies undistured, that the Frost Lichen appeares uncorrupted. The root fragment is still damp and Salus and Aethlwynn get the feeling that the root feels wrong, its fibres resemble muscles more than wood. Guru cannot detect magic from it at all. Yselle looks at the beast blood and the black sap. They seem the same until candle light shows that the blood coagulates, but the sap doesn't. Yselle asks what we have concluded from what we've seen. She then agrees that the roots appera to behave like a nervous system. She brings out a cracked stone, one of the Forest Makers but it's cracked and broken where roots have grown through it.

She hangs up six sketches and starts to connect them with string trying to map how things have moved round. All the evidence seems to point back to the watch tower, but Yselle says that's not necessarily the part the keeps her awake. She looks at the string links and says "No these don't answer anything". While looking at the latest samples, she points to the map and picks up three pins, one red, one blue and onewhite. She asks us to show her exaclty where we found everthing. Salus tells the tales.

Yselle asks what happened to the ground at the watchtower - vines broke through the floor and took Harlan. Salus puts in the red pin. Salus passes the blue pin to Yselle who hands her the sketch of the fallen in tunnel and says it was obviously not made recently. As tht blue pin is pressed into the map Yselle says she can find no reference to anyone in Moonrest making it. She hands Salus the white pin and says "Its not the first time the ground has opened has it?" Salus points to the opening in the ground in the whispering woods telling Yselle that there was passage beyond it. We chose not to enter at the time, but felt a cold wind blowing from it. Yselle starts moving around while thinking, then says "These aren't tunnels" as she points poining to the Watch Tower. "The blue dot shows something was built beoynd Moonrest. Seems we have two breaches and an ancient passage".

Yselle again asks us what we think. We agree the tunnel may not be connected but the other breaches seem like a giant nervous system. Yselle takes the sketch of the eastern tunnel and muses that Moonrest had secrets long before Harlan died. She discounts the Watch Tower and the rubble filled tunnel. She points to the hole and asks what we want to do - we agree to investigate, to sketch what's there and take samples where safe, but not to touch the roots.

Yselle give Salus parchment for sketching and scrolls. Elder Saelin arrives and asks if Yselle has found something - she points to us and says "They might".

To be continued....

Session 10. Roots

Going Underground

We are likely to away for several days so Elder Saelin suggests we see Brannick the Quartermaster and Garran the Blacksmith to see if they have supplies that can help us.

We decide to head out in the early morning light. As we see the woods in the distance, Bran is at the gates recording who is outside of the settlement. Folk have been told to stay nearby. Bran adds our names to list of those who have ventured outside.

We head north to the trees following a now familiar path. We recognise the stones and the shallow valleys, but roots now break through where there used to be only snow. Some have split the ground and run for a while, other appear above ground and vanish again quickly.

Aethlwynn studies the new roots and determines this is new growth is likely a maximum of seven days old. The roots don't seem to have one source so she thinks that whatever links them must lie well beneath the surface. This time the roots leave us alone. We can hear birds and animals but not as many as normal.

As we enter the woods the wind drops and our footsteps seem loud even though the canopy is not silent . Further into the trees something small moves through the undergrowth, and birds sing quietly. Aethswold finds the route to the collapse in the ground after a little disagreement with Sebastien. When we reach the hole in the ground we find the opening is now much larger and that the hillside has been pulled apart by huge roots. Several have grown large enough to split revealing fibres within. The roots growth has revealed stonework, cut and placed not natural rock and a passage into the hillside. Aethlwynn examines the roots and confirms they have opened the earth and exploited cracks to reveal the passage. She quietly confesses to Aethswold that she's scared. He comforts his sister saying that he will look after her and that they've been through worse.

Salus casts Light and can see that the passage is mostly clear. It's dusty and stone fragment cover the floor. We can't see any movement inside. Sebastien and Guru check the archway leading into the passage looking for inscriptions. They see that ihas been made from worked stone, but can't see much else.

As we head into the passage way a root shifts causing a thin stream of dust and rock falls injuring Guru. The collapse hasn't sealed the door way, but we need to be careful. While Salus tends to the wounded Aethlwynn checks to see if there items that can prop up the doorway and finds a number of rocks and branches. Our stronger comrades spend some time to brace the entrance way and we head into the tunnel. The passage opens into a bare chamber with no writing or decoration. Nothing to suggests a tomb, but it is silent. Although we can see roots at the entrance we can see none ahead. We see no hazards in the chamber so Sebastien checks the door to the south and finds it's not locked or trapped. Guru opens the door and sees a long stone passage leading to a T-

junction. Sebastien sees the stone work continues. Aethlwynn notices that most of the passage was excavated through the bed rock and then faced in places with stone additions. We notice that the stone work is similar to the collapsed tunnel on the eastern coast and that the the construction is very old and built to last.

Sebastien checks and opens the door to the east finding an unremarkable long shallow chamber with recesses in the walls. Faint black marks show where lamps once burned. Aethlwynn thinks people spent a lot of time in here and it may have been guard room, but she can't really tell. We can't see any roots here and continue to explore. Sebastien checks and opens sever doors until we find another chamber. Inside we find a metal tool which has collapsed against the wall. We can see other items here that were once usable, but all are now ruined. Guru gets the feeling that the tunnel system is older than Moonrest itself. On the western wall we notice a fitted stone inspection panel. Guru tries to remove it but can't, but Sebastien removes the panel to reveal a narrow service passage. It runs for about 10 feet before a roof collapse has sealed it off.

The corridor to the right was been broken into by the roots. Several of the roots are cracked and dry but some are still fresh. We can tell that they haven't grown along the corridor, they've broken through the walls. Guru moves up and casts Ignition at one of the roots. Several shudder of them shudder and retreat. Aethlwynn looks at the dead roots but cant see anything about the tunnel that could have killed them. Guru examines the roots and confirms the roots are newer than the masonry having broken through from the outside. He sees that the damage is newer than the original stonework. Sebastien sees that one thinner root is making small movements whenever someone steps heavily nearby. We kill off the root after a short combat, then we see that the south bound passage way is blocked with rubble, however the north bound passage looks clear. Sebastien finds another door leading into a broad chamber which looks to have been used extensively. The chamber contains a large cylinder in the center with several smaller cylinders around the outside of the chamber. There are are three channels running to the central cylinder, all contain dried residue. Roots have broken into the chamber, but don't seem threatening. Aethlwynn tries to work out what the residue is but can't. Sebastien notices that the mineral staining is different between the three channels and definitely all carried water at some point. Guru examines the central cylinder and thinks its a distributor and that water would flow in through one channel and out through another. He thinks it still workable but a lever is missing and the mechanism seems seized with mineral deposit. We did find a corroded bronze lever head in a previous room so Sebastien hands it to Guru who tries to make the ancient collar move. Nothing happens.

To be continued.....

Session 11. Notes From Underground

Stumped

Aethlwynn casts detect magic but finds none. Sebastien confirms he has animal fat and fish oil to grease the iron bands if needed. Salus checks the small cylinders and finds they are all dry. Aethlwynn checks the room for buckets but finds none. Salus looks to the ceiling but sees no water source there either.

Sebastien opens the door to the South East on entering the next chamber he sees a large pool of dark and stagnant water being fed by water seeping in through the surrounding rock. He sees a bronze conduit on the wall that runs to the cylinder chamber The water is very cold and dark. Guru also enters the room and feels that there is a groundwater somewhere that is seeping in here. Aethlwynn heads into the room and confirms that that the bronze assembly allows water from this pool to pass into the cylinder room. She sees that the water isn't deep and could be walked through and that there is no magic in this room either. Between us we think that we could get the water flowing again. Sebastien wades through the ice cold, very fresh water. It's crystal clear now that he can look into it, but it's very heavily mineralised. He sees the valve is badly seized but manages to shift it and and water starts to move through the system for the first time in many years. Salus and Aethswold see a thin stream of water heading into the central cylinder. Guru returns to the main chamber and is able to move the main cylinder mechanism to send water into the eastern channel. As it flows under the wall we hear something huge start to move in another part of the complex. Near the eastern wall a thin root lies along the path of the channel and we notice that it flinches away. Sebastien sees no magical effect when the root reacted to the water, it just doesn't seem to like it. Slowly a large gate opens to the east of the cylinder chamber.

Guru moves the mechanism again to send water into the second channel. It flows briefly but causes a section of the channel to collapse sending a jet of icy water shooting into the air hurting Salus, Guru and Aethswold. Guru turns the mechanism to channel one but can't move it. Sebastien hears a door opening to the south and can hear the footsteps of several creatures.

We head through the door opened by channel three and see that the corridor beyond becomes increasingly damaged and leads to a chamber filled with roots.

We are attacked by two of the RootBound creatures which we defeat, but Aethswold is knocked unconscious. Aethlwyn is very grateful to Salus for healing him.

Guru returns to sending the water down channel 1, succeeding this time and sending the water running round the chamber and out through a grate. For a second the water roars away making Guru think that channel 1 simply drains and resets the regulator.

We head back through the door opened by channel 3. Although the passage is increasingly damaged and there are many roots in the chamber beyond we exit via a door to the south into a another corridor which leads to a strange door. It's locked but without a conventional lock and

handle. There's a Star shaped symbol recessed into the door looking like something should fit in to open the door.

We back head out and follow the passage north but it leads to two dead ends. There's a door to the right again without a conventional handle but we can see that the water flowing through channel 3 has opened it. Most of the east wall is covered by rows of shallow geometric markings, they may not be righting, but there is no indication that they are magical. We can see a mechanical system with a rod in the ground that is part of a pressure driven counter weight powered by the water and that the geometric markings look more like technical markings that writing. Salus takes impressions of the markings using the paper and charcoal Yselle gave her.

We go in search of a star shaped key and find a chamber containing 3 long stone benches. It has obviously not been used for a long time and appears empty so we pass though into a corridor leading to a another, smaller chamber. In the middle is a small cylinder with a metal band round it. we see a thin metal pointer under a cover and metal rods running into the floor. It seems to be a measuring/monitoring device. Guru thinks it measured something moving through the system but the mechanism looks like it needs a lot of work to make it function again. There's a door to the south witch leads into a corridor. Aethswold pushes on ahead. As he steps on a stone slab we can hear something snap and stones starts to drop. Aethswold jumps out of the way but is hurt a little. Suddenly a shutter crashes into the floor and cutting him off from the rest of us. We spend 10 mins or so clearing the rubble util we are reunited.

There is a door to the left which leads into a wide 6 sided chamber with a columnar support at each corner There is a central structure with channels leading out from it. All the bronze handles on the chamber point in different directions. One of the exit channels has crystalised residue in it, Aethlwynn takes a sample of it. Sebastien tastes it - and it tastes like mineral water.

The central structure looks solid but it is hollow like a stone drum. There are no marking on the outside but there are grooves inside which look a little stained by the minerals.

We see no symbols on the support columns. Aethlwynn pushes one of the bronze handles and there's a noise in the walls and the floor vibrated sounding like something moved. Nothing else happens and we think that it wasn't aligned properly. We feel we need to move the handles so the grooves on the inside line up with the outside. Sebastien, Salus and Aethlwynn work together to do this. When aligned there's a metallic knock from the wall and the floor followed by a flow of water for about 20 seconds before it dies down. A hidden room is revealed. Within there's a heavy bronze shaped tool in the star shape, a sealed mineral tube with a perfectly preserved Saltbloom Crystal and copper plates. Guru takes the key and the copper plates. Aethlwynn takes the Saltbloom Crystal.

We head back to the mysterious door and put the key in the keyhole. The door opens into a wide chamber. We walk though the chamber and into a corridor. Much of the stone is intact and several metal channels still run though the chamber and corridor which are followed by the roots. There's a door at the end of the corridor and a small ante chamber to the left. Behind the solid door there's a humming. A few seconds later something seems to answer from behind the wall. In the ante chamber there's an old lever which Sebastien examines. He also finds three large unmarked bronze

pipes heading into the wall. He can see the lever, pipes and channels are part of the the water system, but what ever is beyond the door seems to be pushing the water back. As the flow has been restored further up the system Sebastien can see the system is now pressurized and he can feel that the pipes contain cold water. He tries to prime the chamber's system. The control wheel even turns and allows water to start moving in the walls.

The primed mechanism seems to be reacting to the thrum, the sequence is thrum, a mechanical sound then the roots twitch. Guru opens the door at the end of the corridor and we a see a horrific creature staring back at us. It has no face that we can recognize; it is a tangle of roots and dead animal parts but the roots respond to it. In a moment of clarity we see that it is wrapped round the central mechanism fed by bronze channels , and are very glad that we retrofitted a rest into the story!

To be Continued.....

Session 12. Heart Of Oak?

The Fight

We enter the central chamber and combat begins.

Although Aethswold hits the Pulsebound we can see it heals from the feeder roots.

Sebastien proves to be a hero by running to the far end of the room and turning on the water which suppresses the Pulsebound, limiting its ability to move and heal. Aethlwynn targets the feeder roots managing to injure two and kill one with her Caustic Blasts. Sebastien injures two feeder roots with his Haunting Hymn. Salus proves invaluable at keeping Aethswold and Guru fighting the Pulsebound.

Finally Guru kills the Pulsebound and we think we can relax, but there is a mighty cracking noise as the creature hiding within the roots and bones is released. The creature glares with a steady, malevolent blue light, we can only watch as the feeder roots come back to life.

Sebastien runs to the other handle risking being hit by the feeder roots. Aethwold wounds the creature with his scythe but it aborbs two of the feeder roots to heal. As Sebastien turns on the water again the creature retreats to the far side of the chamber. Aethlwynn surprises herself by critically hitting the creature with her Befuddle spell making the creature Clumsy, Stupefied , and Confused. Although it is now easier to hit it still fights fiercely and as Aethswold hits the killing blow we think we have lost Guru. However he is a touch Dwarf and stabilizes.

Once the creatures body has collapsed the whole chamber is eerily quiet. Salus needs all her healing powers to help Aethswold, Guru and Sebastien.

As we look round the room Aethlwynn sees the creature grew directly from the root network but that the roots not attempting to regrow it.

Salus looks at the bones entwined in the creature's covering and sees that they are all various animal bones of varying ages. None of the bones seem to be human, so the missing could still be alive and Harlan's body is not here.

As a group we feel that the supernatural resonance that previously filled the chamber seems to have gone.

We examine the creature and see that a knot in the chest has partly detached and appears to be a heart, but it is unlike any heart we have ever seen before. Sebastien tries to harvest from the creature and manages to take the heart material noticing it seems to still pulse faintly. Aethswold harvest 2 blackened roots and some root fibre.

Sebastien notices the regulators are damaged but largely intact. We leave the mechanisms in place.

To Be Continued....

Session 13. More Things To Make And Do

New Page

We leave the dungeon and once again see the woods. The breach remains, but we see the roots around the exit are still. We can hear birdsong and see fresh animal tracks in the snow; the forest seems to be a just normal forest. We can feel no pulse under our feet and the sounds we hear are not threatening

As we leave the forest and can see the mountains in the distance we see a dark rider upon the ridge. It watches us then slowly turn away over the ridge. The outline looks similar to the figure we saw in the rigging of the ship a while back, but cannot make out any detail.

We return to Moonrest where Bran counts us back in and is happy to see us. He looks back to the woods and tells us there have been no further root breaches, so it looks like something worked. He takes us to the Long House to see Elder Saelin to give her our report.

Yselle also appears asking for an update. Aethlwynn prods Sebastien and tells him to show Yselle the heart he harvested. Yselle examines it before Salus hands over the sketches she made. Yselle says Merrick's name keeps appearing whenever questions are asked and needs to investigate further. Aethlwynn asks if she can help, but again, Yselle says she works best alone. Elder Saelin warmly tells us that as the roots are no longer an issue we've done enough for now and that we need a good feed and sleep. Garron was also in the Long House looking at what we brought back. He's more interested in the stone work and will pop into Yselle's to see the sketches.

Aethlywynn mentions the rider we saw. Elder Saelin pauses and starts speculating out loud that it could be the Compact, or someone pretending to be them. But she sends us to the Tide and Stars where Mara will have a hot meal for us. Aethlwynn says she'll put in a good word for Sebastien, who again denies being a hero.

The bar is visibly louder, the food is served and the conversation seems normal. Mara welcomes us in and we relax and Mara gives Sebastien a pair of spoons and asks him to play. Aethlwynn tells Mara Sebastien is being very modest about how brave he was. The tavern sings along with Sebastien and the villagers have a great time. As it gets late folk start to go home as do we.

The next day passes with no emergency, no roots and no blue pulse. Hunters leave Moonrest and return safely. Moonrest seems to have returned to normal.

Sebastien is going to see the Tide Warden and the Shrine Keeper as he's privately concerned about blacking out in combat and having the strange feeling that another person wants to take control of him. Neither feel it's their area of expertise and refer him to Lysa who may be able to help due to her role with the dead. Sebastien and Aethwold continue to plan the Hurdy Gurdy and realise they need more timber. Guru want to work on his Long Hammer but needs more iron ingots. Guru and Aethswold go mining as Aethsowold also needs iron for his arrow heads. Aethswold crafts a staff for

Salus and travels out of Moonrest to get more frost hardened wood. He gets some more resin sap and root fibre as well. He then heads to the pine forest to get pine bark. Sebastein gives Guru some tanned leather. Aethlwynn tries to craft a healing potion, but can't quite get it right.

One night in the Tavern Aethswold gets a message to speak to Lysa at the graveyard. She stands beside a grave we don't recognise brushing the snow from the stone. She says to Aethswold and says that he knows that death matters and that it has rules and boundaries. She says one name survived the - Hallowed Necromancer. She asks Aethswold what death means to him and she is pleased with his answer. She tells us that there is a place inland, the Frozen Fenn that is older than people remember. It's a remnant of a time when people believed they could use the dead and old account mention there were graves for the living. She needs us to visit the Fenn and asks us to find what has been buried.

Aethswold asks if we need to be aware of anything and what we can take to help. Lysa replies that as far as she know it has been abandoned for over 100 years and what was once there has been defeated however she believes Aethswold needs to go the the Fenn for his own growth. As we leave the Graveyard Sebastien sees lysa staring at us. He tells Aethlewynn that he thinks Lysa has designs on Aethswold.

The Frozen Fenn is about 20 miles away which we think will take us about two days travel. Guru exchanges 4 bog iron ingots for tents and bed rolls.

We set off to the Frozen Fenn.

To be Continued.....

Session 14.

Page 1

Bran records our departure from Moonrest and wishes us a safe return. The first leg of our journey is quite. The snow is light and it's only slightly cold. We see sights and evidence of animals, nothing out of the ordinary. We forage as we travel; Guru gets Iron Stone, Aethswold gets frost hardened wood, Aethlwynn gets Snow Moss, Salus gets Pale Ritual Ash and Sebastien hunts to get meat.

The paths become more complicated as we head into the ice fields. The tracks now reveal much heavier footprints in the snow which Aethlwynn believes to be from a Daeodon, an unfriendly boar like which will attack on sight. They're substantial animals about 10 ft long and about 2000lbs in weight.

Guru scouts ahead prepared for combat. He hears rustling in the reeds to the North East. Aethswold can hear it as well he can also see the reeds moving slightly. Guru investigates the reeds and hears a scurrying, he moves the reeds and disturbs a rabbit which runs up the road. It is attacked by a Daeodon which then sees us.

We are all seen by a second Daeodon and both attack. It is a hard fight with them using their Tusk Attack to great effect. We discover no weaknesses or resistances, but the have ferocity and need to be at wounded 3 before they die. Aethlwynn ran form one, as it did not attack we assume they do not have a reaction attack. It takes all Salus's skills to keep us fighting but eventually Guru finally kills the last one while screaming like a mad man.

It's now late and the snow is blustery as we head down through some of the rockier outcrops. We see a small cave to the north and as the snow is getting thicker we decide to check it out. As we approach we can now see three caves and decide to check out which is empty. Aethlwynn can see all caves have a lot of bones in them, but they don't look like anything has been here for a few days. Aethlwynn sees a partial footprint belonging to a large creature and thinks it might be a Smilodon. These large cats are known to prowl the land and may not return to the den until they have caught prey.

We look at the bottom cave first. Aethswold checks the cave and as far as he can tell - he can;t see round tthe large bouldrs bit ti doessn't seem to go far back. We haead in out of the weather we set a watch and create a fire. A keeps watch as the snow drifts into the cave. A doesn't see anyhting, but she senses something is watching us. She hands over to Guru who senses eyes are watching from somewhere. He hears noises echoes from behind and occasional scratching. He hands over to Aethswold who starts to hear echos coming from somewhere behind and senses the caves aren't quite what they seemed and there is something in there. It sounds living and sounds like it's echoing. Aeths maks sure we're secure and explores the boulders and now sees that there is a small tunnell system behind us. It's branching and seems to split with one path going up and another goes down. As he passes the boulddrs the echoing growl gets louder. He wakes Guru and tells him he's investigating. He takes the path up. It's narrow but he can see over to the other path

going down, the path dosn't go far - maybe 100/150 feet then he starts to see the glow of the moon, then starts to see tthe other cave at the top. The growling is fainter so Aeths turns back, and looks over the cliff edge area an sees something prowling at the botttom of the lower pathway - it's the smilodon. Aeths heads back to the party, tries to bee sneaky but get the feeling it's seen him. It has..... it's a bit of a beast with huge teeth.