Session 27

We continue unravelling the mystery of the Forest Folk!

While Soren and Kiva are inspecting the mural Stella steps up to the spirit off in the corner. She draws on her studies and memories of Olwinn and knows that this being cannot be affected by physical weapons. It gets colder the closer she approaches, and Esme keeps careful watch on the being with her shield is raised. Stella can't really tell what it is feeling, but she can definitely feel the hunger emanating from its eyes and she says "When Helior's eye goes down this place will become very dangerous." Esme nods and says that they should clear out and check other buildings. They all step out, staying close together and moving quickly across the square to the 2-story building with remnants of stained glass.

One of the doors is lying on the ground, the other hanging ajar. What looked like maybe a cathedral from outside turns out to be a library. There are shelves running the length of the building, and places for people to sit and read. However, there is moss and other creeping plants overgrowing. It's hard to tell if it was cultivated initially or crept in later, but some of the mosses are glowing faintly with a blue-ish bio luminescence. Rua is fascinated by this, immediately going up to a patch of the glowing plants and inspecting it. Esme is interested in the books, but as she peruses the shelves there isn't much to find. The years exposed the books to moisture and insects so every one she picks up just sheds a mass of wood pulp, she cannot find anything legible. She starts looking for what might be the Folk's version of the Chronicle, something big or valuable enough to have been protected more. Soren is helping her look around, the party needs information more than anything else right now.

Rua quickly grows bored of the moss, so he calls out "I'm going to make sure this place is safe" and heads off, methodically searching the building for any surprises. What first struck him as beautiful soon becomes a solemn scene as he explores more and more of the ruined building. He doesn't find anything solid, but he slowly gets a feeling of being watched. Once he is well away from the others he pauses in a quiet room and calls softly "Hello?". At first there is no reply, but as he looks around he sees the ghostly apparition of the upper torso of a Forest Folk, its face regards Rua sadly then flickers out again. Rua takes a step back, but then goes back to the others

A fair number of books have survived, more than they could carry back for sure. Most of them are not immediately useful, some are linguistic texts, others are botanical. Soren found a book that instructs on how to grow trees specifically for shaping living wood. Esme finds an alcove where the roof burnt down. The damage here is particularly bad, the burned roof exposed them directly to rain. Here she finds a shelf of very large books, each one is obviously destroyed as she handles them as gently as possible. Just as she is about to turn away she spots one more book, it had fallen behind the others and was more protected. The back half of the book is illegible, but there

are still many pages that can actually turn and be read. She treats it will utmost care as she witnesses the illuminated script. It is clear someone spent many hours on each page, many of the depictions are of combat, of the Forest Folk at war.

Rua finds Stella near the entrance of the building and tells her about the spirit, asking for her help to like, talk to it or something. Stella asks him to show her, and so they go together to where he saw the spirit. After waiting for a few quiet minutes the spirit's face appears again, looks at them sadly and goes away again. Rua says "Did you see that too?" Stella confirmed she did, and muses that it is not hostile, likely it is tied to this place with some sort of unfinished business. Rua remembers the spirit from the ruined village that was trying to build a wall that fell over and over. Rua says that maybe they should take the spirit with them, it could tell them what happened. He asks out loud "Hey, do you want to come back with us to Stonetop?" The spirit appears again, maybe a bit dimmer this time? It floats next to a bookshelf and slowly runs his hand along it and shakes his head slowly. Rua thinks that maybe it needs something from the bookshelf so he inspects is closely, then grabs an armful of books and asks "Is the book you need here?" The ghost appears again, a little more translucent this time but gives him a look he knows well from the elders of stonetop. "Oh..yeah OK." he says and puts the books back on the shelf.

He turns to Stella and asks her what she thinks, what does it need? Stella is not sure what to think, she has never actually met a spirit before, or a Forest Folk so she is way out of her depth. They are fairy tale creatures to her. Esme chooses this moment to enter, she had been observing letting Stella interact with it but seeing her indecisive she comes in and pats her head reassuringly. Esme turns to the center of the room and makes a gesture of greeting while speaking a greeting of respect. This time the head does not appear, but a ghostly arm shows up close to the wall and it traces a rune there. Kiva can ready it, the rune has a marker of a proper noun, she thinks its a name. Radco. Esme turns to Stella and asks her to bring the warmth of Helior to see if it will bolster its flagging energy. Stella directs her consecrated lamplight at the apparition, invoking the god of the Sun to send a ray of his comforting light to wash over the spirit.

The light suffuses Radco and it is clear that some energy has returned, now his entire body is showing not just torso or arm. Esme asks him if there are any survivors, where they are they? Radco moves his arm to the wall again and traces another glyph that glows and Kiva reads as meaning "far away". She then asks if the bone spur threat is known to them. He draws another glyph that glows and fades, another name like "Beresija"? Its hard for Kiva to make out exactly, and she doesn't know what it is talking about. Esme asks again about survivors, which direction are they? Radco points to the west, the direction the part came from. Seeing their surprise it pushes more energy into another rune on the wall, a name "Ustrina". This name tickles something in Esme's memory, its a people that is related to the old forge lords and they live out in the mountains. She remembers that they have a variety of factions and sects, and nobody knows exactly what they look like because they always go about cloaked and masked. They have never been seen in Stonetop.

The spirit moves again and writes two more runes on the wall which Kiva reads as "Save the books". Esme promises to take away as many of them as she can, and the others nod agreement. She asks one final question "Do you know if Nya is alive?" The ghost shakes his head then draws a short series of lines on the wall that Kiva reads as "uncertain". Radco is starting to fade again, his

legs have disappeared and its just his right arm and upper torso remaining. With this Esme finishes her questioning. Rua steps forward and bows, saying "It was nice to meet you, sir". Radco bows back, touching his forehead with the same gesture of respect Esme gave. They all make the motion back and a look of relief comes over his face and he slowly fades away. They gather as many legible books as they can, not taking with yet but putting them all in one place with a protective covering to be collected later.

On the way they notice something odd about the square. Most of it is paved with regularly shaped stones, but near the library there is a hole about 10 feet across where it looks like some sort of tunnel broke the surface here. It looks like it opened up from below, cobblestones are scattered a little ways around but whatever it was is collapsed now. As they closer to the ruined tower it is obvious the structure is unstable. They carefully enter, and Esme pauses at the entrance and squats down near the door, her eyes unfocused looking off into the distance. The others enter and carefully pick their way through the rubble. They find the crushed wooden bodies of some Forest Folk near the centre. One of them was carrying an iron-headed spear. One of them appeared to have been carrying something, their arms are clutched to their chest when they got crushed. If they had been holding anything it seems to have rotted away long ago. Rua looks up and sees fragments of the upper floors still remain, and is about to start climbing up when Soren asks him to stop, this building is clearly unstable and its not safe. Stella chimes in that fire has gutted it as well, its unlikely anything survived up there. Rua looks up and back down, but agrees and doesn't try to climb up. Finding nothing else of note, they leave the building and decide ot head north.

The path north winds through some trees, working through the forest for a ways towards a series of domed buildings. They are interconnected, and there is only one entrance at the front of the smallest dome. The door is intact and shut, but not locked and it creaks open as Soren pushes on it. He beckons Stella forward to shine her light through the portal as he pushes it open. The smell hits them immediately, its very humid and damp and filled with the smell of greenery, it clearly hasn't been opened in 10 years. Fio gets one whiff of it and says she will stand guard outside. The rest head inside and start to look around. The first dome has a bunch of wrecked furniture and bodies of some Folk, the bone spurs appear to have killed them bu bursting out of their skin. Esme takes a scrap of cloth, gets it wet and covers her mouth with it and encourages the others to do the same. As they proceed into one of the other connected buildings it becomes clear this is a set of baths. There is a cabinet to the side with the remains of some ceramics. The smashed jars contain some sort of incense or scented oil, and some of them are still intact, Kiva takes an interest in these, gathering up several of them and taking them with her.

As they move into the third building its more baths that are raised up so fires could be lit under, though now it is cold and damp. There is a relief of a beautiful figure, half Forest Folk and half tree. It has clearly been carved with extreme skill. Soren and Rua take a moment to appreciate its beauty, even with years of decay and splits in the wood the figure is exquisitely carved. Nothing else of interest is found in the buildings so they clear out before breathing too much of the foul air. They discard the cloths on their faces, Stella burning hers.

End of Session!

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