

Session 3

Scary Crinwin!! We are back on the primary timeline.

Betta's scream carried across the search line, immediately drawing the attention of all. Rua is initially stunned but Old Esme reacts quickly, dashing forward to defend Betta and draw the attention of the threat by starting a war chant, reminiscent of a Haka. Rua turns around and upon seeing the scrawny Crinwin he holds his arms out in front of him and tries to calm it down. "Woah now, take it easy!". In response the Crinwin moves forward and claws at Rua's outstretched arms. Seeing its aggressive intent, Rua pulls out his knife and stabs at the gremlin. He sticks the knife in the Crinwin's head and it falls away from him clearly dead, but not before it gets his claws in his arm and scores three long scratches.

As Old Treasa dashes towards Betta's scream she hears another scream from opposite direction! Seeing Esme protecting Betta and one of the Crinwin already falling away she changes direction and moves toward the second scream. As she breaks through the underbrush she sees three of the monsters piled on top of Dayed who is writhing around trying to throw them off him. Wickla is there, trying to beat the Crinwin with her hammer but not finding much success as she is trying to avoid smashing Dayed at the same time. A quick review of the situation leaves Treasa with the knowledge that her torch is her best weapon, it's light is offensive to the Crinwin who are nocturnal creatures by nature. She uses the light as a distraction while swinging her staff and delivers a strong blow to one of them, staving it's head in and sending it flying into the bushes. In response, one of the monsters leaps off of Dayed and latches onto her chest, clawing at her neck.

Kiva is spooked by the screams, and recalling the stories of the Crinwin she ducks into cover of the bushes and inspects her surroundings, looking for the threat and anything she might use against them. Soren starts moving quickly and quietly towards Betta's scream, and as he approaches he sees another four of the monsters in the trees above, waiting to jump down on an unsuspecting target. Soren begins climbing the tree opposite from the fight, but as he reaches the Crinwin one of the branches he steps on cracks and one of them turns to face him, staring with its empty, milky eyes. Undeterred, Soren brandishes his knife and when the beast leaps at him and he drives the knife into its chest while twisting out of the way. The Crinwin falls to the forest floor, slamming into several branches on the way down. There is no sound of it rising from its fall.

Stella is near Treasa, and calls upon Helior's light to shine from her torch causing looping rays of light to flow from the staff like solar filaments. The light spreads through the scene, calming her allies and fortifying their minds. As the light expands, the Crinwin still on Dayed hisses and begins to flee but Treasa still has one of them latched on to her chest.

Kiva, not feeling confident in open combat, flings her staff into the bushes in an attempt to distract the Crinwin. As it rattles onto the forest floor, one of the lurking gremlins leaps through the branches like a simian and dives where the staff fell. After a moment it stands up, holding the staff in its hands and inspecting it curiously, the bands of copper flashing in the torchlight. Rua dashes forward and tries to wrest the staff from its grasp. Unfortunately his approach causes the Crinwin to spin around and, almost by accident, it clocks Rua on the side of the head, dazing him.

Elsewhere, Treasa drops her torch and staff, reaching for her beltknife with her right hand and grasping for the clawing monster's throat with her left, looking to use her large size to overpower it. Following her violent nature she ignores its attacks, taking more scratches as she holds it by the throat and uses her knife to slash its stomach open. Wickla drags the Crinwin towards Stella's light, making sure its down for good.

Soren is still up in the tree and sees Rua's misfortune. Thinking quickly, he ties his rope around a sturdy branch and uses it to fast repel down and launch himself at the beast to try to take it down and save Rua. He sticks his knife in the Crinwin's side, but is unable to take it down completely. In return he takes scratches along his forearms.

With his attackers slain or fled, Dayed's wounds become apparent. There are no serious wounds, but he is covered in scratches all over his body. Stella notes this, but is compelled to go to aid her allies that are still fighting. She approaches the scene, seeing the messy fight between Soren and the wounded Crinwin, and raises her sunlight-infused torch high and brings its warm light to bear. The light bolsters the villagers and strikes fear into the remaining creatures. The one fighting Soren and Rua clutches its side and slinks off into the bushes, and Esme sees the last one in the trees snarl something unrecognizable and leap away through the canopy.

The search party gathers and takes stock of the situation. It is decided that, while Dayed is injured, its better to stick together in the failing light and press on in the search for Cayu. As they go, Stella is reminded by Esme of Dayed's wounds and goes to see if she can help him. He looks at her gratefully and explains that he will be okay through the night, but will be feeling and recovering from the wounds for days if not weeks to come. Stella releases her invocation, causing the brilliant light to go dim and the torch gutters out completely. She leans into the torch and starts whispering a quiet entreaty in the darkness, causing the bright firelight to spring up once more. She then calls to her deity, Helior, and a warm bath of healing light begins to spread from the torch. She brings the torch close to his wounds and he finds the flame does not burn but spreads a soothing warmth and his wounds begin to close. He sighs in gratitude, saying "Thank you Honoured One, I am feeling much better. It would have been a fitting punishment for the twins to see me wounded, but I would much rather being able to walk without pain."

Another hour passes and they arrive at the Tumble-Down Wall. There are large stones strewn in the vicinity, but the only structure still standing is the one large wall. Soren recalls his own trip to scribe his name on the wall as a child. It was a fun adventure to begin with but once the scraping sound of the stone he used to make his mark faded he was acutely aware of all the rustling and creaking sounds of the living forest around him. Suddenly he felt very alone, and fled from the place back to the village. As that feeling rushes in he subconsciously moves closer to Kiva and it seems the sounds of the forest become muted around them.

Rua asks Betta to show him where she made her mark on the wall. They approach and Betta scrapes some moss away, showing her X among the other initials and scratches. Rua speaks, "I know this is not the time to do it, but we should come back sometime so I can mark the wall as well." "Yes, but maybe during the day" she replies. Nodding in agreement, Rua turns and joins the rest of the party in their search, with Betta coming along. Stella feels drawn to make her mark as well and join the ranks of the village youth, but remembers her responsibilities and holds herself away. Kiva feels no such restraint and chisels her name in a flowing script, dotting the "i" in her name with a small heart.

Old Treasa inspects the forest warily but doesn't know the woodcraft to tell if there is anything amiss. She approaches Fio and asks in a low voice if she is able to find any trail or marks of Cayu's passing. Fio nods and asks Treasa to hold her light high while she works. Fio finds a small trail of scuffed moss and lichen leading north, which is curious because it is not the way he came. Treasa quizzes Fio, asking "So was he frightened? Running away? What magic can you sense?" Fio looks at her strangely, saying "What do you think I am a wizard? Look at this scuff here, it was clearly made by a boot but it is not a deep or long so he was likely walking." Treasa hums, "I don't see what you are pointing at, clearly your magic is working". Treasa starts singing the finding song, but terribly off-key and timing to draw the rest of the party and let them know a trail has been found.

Esme starts speaking, trying to re-form the search line in the direction of the trail. Treasa counters by saying the trail is more clear now and a smaller group will make better time. The larger portion of people should head back to the village, there are many dangers other than Crinwin deeper in the woods. They argue back and forth for a moment, but Esme eventually slumps her shoulders and allows Treasa's plan to be the course of action. Many of the villagers decide to head back, but the main party and several others choose to push on. Wickla speaks with determination, "May the Gods curse me if I turn back now.". Fio also joins the party, and Betta takes a shaky breath and chooses to continue as well. Rua gives her hand a quick squeeze, reassuring her and moving forward with her to join the others. Remembering his fear and loneliness, Soren also decides to join the group. He wants to rescue Cayu and save him from the same feeling. Stella is conflicted, knowing she could be useful in either party but ultimately decides to push on.

They move out, following the trail with Fio in the lead. Treasa studies Esme and finds she is seeming more muted, her reflexes slowed, and seems to not being in the same kind of mood as usual. Treasa gets the feeling that Esme is regretting the choice to move on with a smaller group. Aratis is a god of civilization, the more people that come together, the more magic is brought to the forest and turns it from something other to something that is connected. To Esme the finding song isn't just a good idea, it is a song whereby people come together and tell a story and the story evokes and recreates the narrative of what came before. Losing the people and ending the song means that instead of weaving a story together (transforming the forest from somewhere scary to a place where we know what will happen) its a small group, brute forcing their way into the darkness and Esme doesn't just seem but is literally less than she was.

Session End.