Haverson, Aster and Germain dismounted in the forest, the tall northern mounts seemed agitated despite the lack of underbrush. The snorted and paced at the ground, and looked around nervously.

“Ha, well that’s not a good start to things is it?” Germain said with a slight smile, his hand going to the massive sword strapped to his back.

Haverson waved Germain's comment away and bade him not draw his weapon. “Don't fret. That’s actually a good sign. We haven't gotten lost.”

Aster nodded, but still glanced wearily around the clearing. A wind blew cost and damp from the south west. She looked at the trees, the muted gray greens above them letting in the pale light of morning. It was still cold, and the frost hung on the bark and the few bushes around them.

They walked and lead their horses towards a clearing some ways off, where they presumed the entrance was.

Aster ran a hand over one of the trees as they passed, melting off the layer of frozen dew. “This place is… sad.” She said suddenly and quietly, a frown threatening to crease her face.

“Ah, you feel it too? We are in the old forest, and not just the old forest, the heart of it. The elves left their mark on this place. Something of that bond still shares their sorrow.” Haverson said, glancing at Aster.

The blond young woman looked back at him. He smiled at her, but the return lacked heart. The sadness of the place was pervasive. Magic and emotion and old power. Things to stay away from, or control at least. This place was anathema to his life of attempted balance, for the elves were true in all things, from their love to their hatred; richer and deeper and always without restraint. Yes they were going to have to keep on their toes here…

He turned to spy a look at Germain. The younger man seemed content enough. He was oblivious to the magic of the place, and strode confidently through the woods, his symbol etched leather armor swishing softly with his steps. Yes, there was a part of Haverson that envied the younger man. Against Germain, it was clear what the years had done to Haverson, and the young man's assuredness was something Haverson could only remember as if in a dream of a time long ago.

Yet, brashness aside, the man was a formidable adventurer by himself, and his god's aegis and magical abilities were bound to be a boon in the coming days. They had really gotten luck finding him.

After only a few more steps they burst into comparably brighter sunlight. Despite the sun not even having completely risen, the contrast between the pale gloom of the forest and the open clearing left them all blinking. The wind from the south west started up again, somehow navigating the trees in front of them.

“Errrgh” Germain said loudly, drawing Haverson's attention. But the younger man was just stretching. “So my friends, where is this library we are supposed to be looking for?” Germain said, touching his toes.

“Oh!” Aster said, suddenly.

“Heh, you finally see it as well? Lets give Germain some time.”

Haverson said grinning. Aster peered forward at the runeblade with an amused expression.

“What are you all talking about?” Germain said with a fake pout, whirling around, surveying the clearing. “There’s nothing here!” He said, exasperated.

“Oh yeah?” Aster teased. “Well, I guess we'll just have to go back to Dor's Crag, tell the merchant that we just couldn't find the library or his team.”

“Now hold on.” Germain said, now seriously studying the clearing. The grass was soft and still covered with frost, the trees echoed in all directions, as far as the eye could see. Somewhere to the north the hills lay and then the mountains. One or two birds chirped in the distance. The wind continued its steady and weak but unrelenting assault.

“There's nothing here but that boulder.” He said, pointing to a massive stone, easily larger than all of them combined, and the horses as well.

“Look at the boulder carefully. Remember, this is elven worksmanship we're dealing with, and the library was made at a time when the very much did not want to be found.”

“Oh.” Germain said simply, the boulder somehow shifting before his eyes. The shape didn't change. He could have sworn that nothing moved, it was as if the entrance had always been there, yet just a second ago…

“Great, now we all see it. Took you long enough.” Aster teased again. “I guess that god of yours didn't give you eyes to go with those muscles.”

“Hey now. I worked hard for these.” He said, flexing, winking at Aster before pouting defensively again. Then back to seriousness: “Besides, I would rather the sharp clash of iron and the vibrant shine of steel to these muted, lifeless colors. I'm just not used to this part of the world.” He admitted.

The entrance gaped before them, the damp wind drawing them in, somehow warmer now, not that it made it feel better. It was nearly a story and a half tall, a simple triangle of greened stone, jutting from the earth. As they drew closer, they saw that it was covered with intrecate designs, pictures, words, symbols.

Germain and Aster both abruptly stopped, independently of one another. Germain, reached around and stroked the head of his black horse, who apparently refused to step closer to the entrance.

“Wait, are those Elven symbols?” Germain asked, casing Haverson to stop and swing around.

“Of course.” He replied. “They're certainly not dwarven.” He scoffed. “What did you expect in an elven library?”

“I don't know, its just… are you sure its safe to go in there? This whole thing looks like it could be magically trapped. All those symbols… They could be anything!” Germain said, eyes intent, pointing at the symbols on the entrance and then pointing at his own on his armor.

“Look guys.” Haverson said. “This is an elven ruin. I will be honest. Its not a friendly place. They are usually worn, trapped, magicked, and gods know what else, cursed too, I imagine.” He said, waving his hands imitating some ancient witch casting a spell.

“But the merchant sent his team in, and they clear most of the top of the place. They have a former battle mage from the Capital with them, a good one, or so I've been told. We just have to group up with them, keep our eyes sharp, grab that damn tome and get the hell out of here. No one is asking you to live here. At least, not for long anyways.” He said, crossing his arms.

“Satisfied?” Haverson asked.

Aster and Germain looked at each other and then back at Haverson. “Not a bit.” Aster said, emoting with her hand holding Haverson's grey horse's reins. “I can feel this place. I don't want to stay here a second longer than I have to.”

“Oh, I forgot. We will definitely have to figure out someway to look after the horses up here. I can tell there’s no way they're going to let us bring them down there.” Haverson added, starting again towards the stone structure.

“Indeed.” Aster agreed, staking both her and Germain's horse. “Wasn't the merchant's team supposed to leave a signal fire out for us?” She asked, quickly finishing.

Germain shrugged, “It probably went out in this damp wind. I suppose its been blowing all night.”

Haverson grimaced somewhat without them seeing as he stumbled over te remains of a burned out fire, somehow already half overgrown in pale green grass. He pointed it out to the rest of them. “I hope you're ready for more things like that. Elven magic was worked deep here, and even now, centuries since the last elven foot trod this entrance, I can assure you it remains. Nothing is a coincidence here. Please stay very alert.”

“Okay. As you say. In and out.” Germain said, motioning Aster to go in front of him.

The group move into the stone entrance, the solid quiet rock swallowing them up like the mouth of some mythical giant. The wind, like its breath, sucking them gently inward. Aster shot one last look backward at the horses, and continued onward.

And so they took their first steps into the silent library.