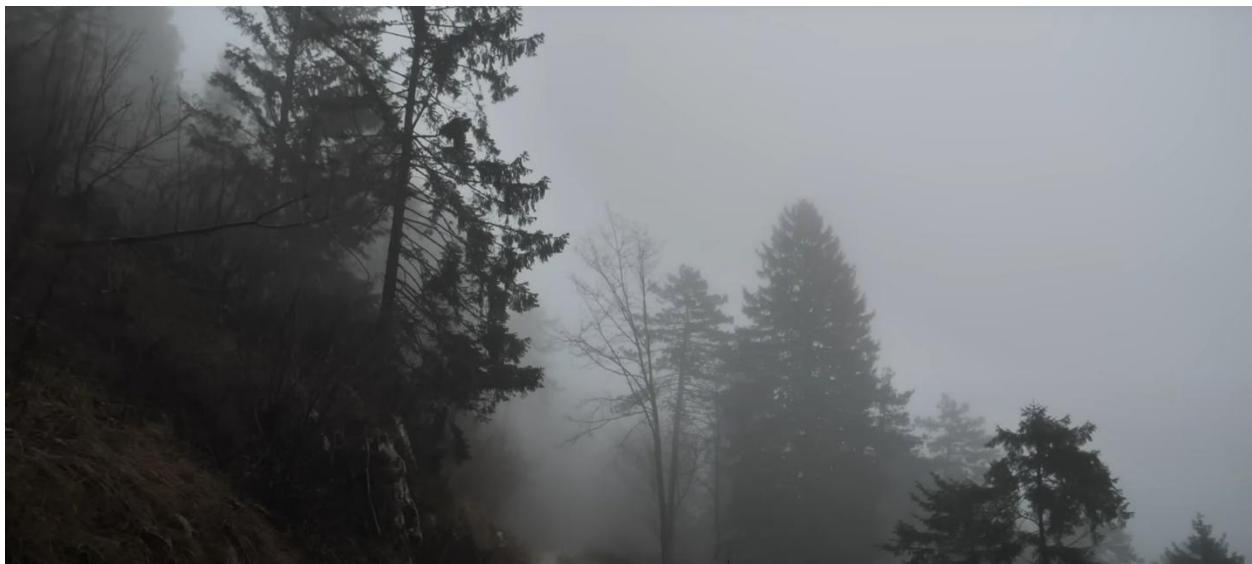




Field Journal — Entry 27, Full Report

Recorded by Mirka "Quill" Dath, Cartographer for Livadi's Arcana & Glass

The misted forests of the northern reaches continue to present one of the more paradoxical environments we've encountered: tranquil to the senses, yet undeniably watchful. At dawn, the fog rises in soft, rippling sheets that bend the light and swallow sound. Even our footfalls seem hesitant, as though the forest itself is deciding whether to allow us passage. These conditions remain ideal, of course, for the development of certain rare alchemical flora — luminescent mosses, dew-thread vines, and silver-vein spores chief among them. Their growth depends on the stillness the mist provides, and thus we move with deliberate care so as not to disturb what we came to study.



Maelin, true to form, identified the first cluster of dew-thread vines before I had even finished making my initial topographical notes of the area. She has a knack for spotting plants the way I find patterns in terrain—intuitive, precise, and sometimes irritatingly fast. I've stopped pretending I see things before she does; she finds that amusing, and I find that admitting defeat saves me ink. Today she offered me a sprig of mist-holly “for luck,” though I suspect she simply enjoys watching me pretend not to believe in such superstitions.

Nareth, meanwhile, carries himself with that quiet, careful grace that only someone accustomed to negotiating with unpredictable wildlife can manage. Before any of us sensed movement, he paused mid-step and murmured something low to the trees. Moments later, we realized we had been skirting the edge of a dusk-stalker’s hunting ground. He never gloats about these near-misses, though I sometimes catch the faintest smile when Maelin or I jump at a rustle he clearly recognized as harmless. I maintain that it *sounded* like a threat. He maintains that I exaggerate in my notes. Both may be true.

And then there is Livadi—archivist, storyteller, and keeper of the ever-mysterious guidebook that continues to lead us from one curious region to another. She spent much of the morning comparing a half-faded rune in the margin of the book to symbols carved into a fallen log nearby. When she finally matched the two, she announced it with the triumphant calm of someone who *knew* we doubted her ability to decode it, even though none of us actually did. I suspect she narrates our journey in her head long before any of it happens, and the rest of us are simply walking into the story at our appointed times.

As for myself, I continue to map the shifting pathways of this forest. The work is patient, rhythmic, and occasionally interrupted by Maelin’s plant lectures, Nareth’s soft warnings, or Livadi’s sudden exclamations about forgotten lore. I don’t mind. Their interruptions add texture to the quiet, much like the murmuring of the fog as it curls around ancient roots.

In these still, mist-drenched hours, I am reminded that discovery rarely belongs to one person alone. It is shaped by the company we keep — their eyes, their instincts, their laughter, their silences. And here, in a forest that listens as closely as we do, that shared rhythm feels almost like permission to continue on.