

Act 1: As Without, So Within

a) Darkened Woods (Wednesday, February 28th, 2018, 8 pm EST)

A leveplate reads:

"Something's got the animals down around Quarrymill all stirred up. With most of our forces pulled to Ala Mhigo, we don't really have the manpower to look into it. I'd like to hire some adventurers to try and pacify the animals, and if they're able, look into whatever has them so riled up."

-Wood Wailer Castellaint

1. Ri'nji Solstan (S'imba)
 2. Khenā Ridah (Jana)
 3. Xayah Xhavave
 4. Lycheria Itazura
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Xayah Xhavave: "Oi! This where that thing's at!? Who're you two anyways, I swear if I got to work with any lame sods..." She huffs.

Ri'nji Solstan: "Rin." He said looking the woman up and down with a fairly unreadable gaze, not really offering much else.

Lycheria Itazura smiled happily bowing towards Xayah. "I would believe so! Least I'm hoping this is the right place. Lycheria Itazura, a pleasure miss!"

Xayah Xhavave nods towards the two, her piercings would glimmer somewhat catching the light--snakebites upon her lips and a ring through her nose. "Lych and Rin, got it--I'm Xayah." She pats a hand upon her chest. "Best shot in th' land, and a bad bitch at that!"

Lycheria Itazura: "A pleasure then Lady Xayah."

Xayah Xhavave: "Eh? This one with us?"

Xayah Xhavave points at Khenā Ridah.

Xayah Xhavave: "Who are ye!? Who goes there!"

Lycheria Itazura smiled to the newly approaching person who was assumed to be accompanying them as well. Bringing her hand up to greet Khenā.

Lycheria Itazura: "Oh! And look forward to working with you as well Sir Rin."

Khena Ridah flinches as she's suddenly yelled at by some stranger. "I- I am a representative of the Botanists' Guild."

Ri'nji Solstan nods his head slowly as he looks around the group appraisingly. "Should be interesting."

Xayah Xhavave: "The Botanists' Guild!? Huh...welll they sure decided to send us their cutest eh? I like your glasses." She smirks.

(Artoria Aldsan) As the group gathers, one of the nearby Wood Wailers notice the four of you and approaches. "Hey there! Are you the adventurers that signed up to take the leve I posted?"

Khena Ridah 's ears and tail visibly bristle up in agitation, but she remains silent.

Lycheria Itazura watched Khena for a moment, bowing her head. "Apologies if she had startled you in yelling. If with the leve I look forward to working alongside you as well."

Lycheria Itazura looked to the Wood Wailer speaking up. Smiling as she nodded. "I would believe so!"

Xayah nods towards the wood wailer. "Sure as hell am!"

Khena Ridah lets out a sigh to collect her thoughts before answering. "Technically, yes..."

(Artoria Aldsan) "Ah, I'm glad to hear it. The Elezen man bows his head before offering a hand to the nearest of the adventurer's-- Xayah in this case. "The name is Castellaint. Anyways, I'm sure you read in the leve, but the Wood has been feeling... odd lately. Something has the animals spooked. I wouldn't normally call adventurers in over something like this, but with the war in Ala Mhigo... well, we've been stretched a bit thin lately."

Xayah Xhavave nods her head, looking around a bit--sniffing the air. "Hnn...somthin' odd ye' say? Some kinda....monster 'er spooky some such?"

(Artoria Aldsan) "Well... the problem is that I don't rightly know what's causing the trouble. I'd like for the four of you to look into it."

Lycheria Itazura: "Do you have any ideas where we may begin looking?"

(Artoria Aldsan) "If I had to say... maybe East of here, deeper into the woods."

Xayah Xhavave reaches down into her pocket before retrieving a compass, looking around a bit before pointing off. "So that way 'eh?"

Lycheria Itazura: "East then? Very well!" She looked off towards the south east at first to where she knew the caves and waterfalls are and then east. Using landmarks of her travels to know which way."Anything else we should know before looking?"

Khena Ridah gives a helpless little shrug. "We'll just have to try and find its trail, if it is indeed a beast."

(Artoria Aldsan) "Sorry, Miss, but I wish I could tell you more."

Lycheria Itazura smiled shaking her head."Worry not, and thank you!"

Ri'nji Solstan: "Elementals could be throwing a hissy fit." He muttered. "Damn wailers probably ticked them off by pissing on a tree."

Xayah Xhavave: "I ain't too good at this woodsy country stuff, probably aint best to be leadin' us off." She says, looking towards Khena. "You're part of that guild, bet you're suited for it."

Lycheria Itazura: "If you would wish to lead, I will follow close by incase of any danger and if anything goes missed! More eyes to check around the better than just one, yes?"

Khena Ridah responds in a low, quiet voice. "Yes, yes, I suppose I'll lead the way."

(Artoria Aldsan) As the group heads to the east, Ri'nji notices that the forest is strangely silent. Where normally there is always some sound, whether birds or the antelope in the region, now there is nothing.

Xayah Xhavave follows along, her gear clattering and jingling somewhat--she wore a lot of supplies, from ammo to aether converted to ropes and other metal bits!

Ri'nji Solstan narrows his eyes as he scans the area, ears flitckng and sniffing the area. "There's something odd going on in this direction."

Khena Ridah mumbles under her breath as she moves away from the jingling adventurer. "I can't hear anything in the woods..."

Lycheria Itazura: "It is..very oddly quiet though even more so than what was mentioned when you listen into the wood..Though don't think we'll find out to much more standing and waiting though." She paused look to Rin, nodding."Then let's see what it is."

Xayah Xhavave: "Aye!" She says with charisma! "Good thing it's quiet, means we'll be able to hear whatever this thing is all the better!"

(Artoria Aldsan) As the party continues, Lycheria spots long furrows carved into the trunk of a tree. It looks like claw marks, though she isn't capable of identifying the animal.

Lycheria Itazura: "Keeping in mind, we would be heard easier as well." She paused in their travels to see the claw marks within part of a tree. "Well, something was here..Looks unhappy, though don't know what kind could have made it."

(Artoria Aldsan) As the four move deeper into the wood, the trees overhead become more tangled, blocking out more and more of the sunlight leaving only dim shadows below. The underbrush catches at their clothes, and Khena notices some liquid splashed across a tree-- black and viscous.

Khena Ridah mutters something to herself as she shifts into the front of the party, moving with ease through what looks like thick underbrush but actually opens up into an animal trail. Of course, it's vacant now, and Khena pauses for a moment as she notices some kind of black liquid on a nearby tree. "Hello... What's this?"

Xayah Xhavave inches up before humming. "Hmmm, what'd you find there?"

Lycheria Itazura: "Looks, not normal" She said looking closer to what Khena found.

Ri'nji Solstan glances curiously at the substance as he approaches it cautiously to examine it.

(Artoria Aldsan) Though the color is off, the smell and consistency seem almost like blood-- but the faint sizzling of the tree, small wisps of smoke curling up as it slowly ate through the wood gave it the lie. An alchemical concoction, perhaps, though it would need more than a simple field analysis to determine which.

(Khena Ridah) Khena will scrape a sample to identify back in town!))

Xayah Xhavave: "Guueehh...that's right foul!" She says.

Lycheria Itazura: "I..Would agree, looks unsettling."

Khena Ridah takes a little time to scrape some of the liquid off the tree and into a small jar with a razor. "Whatever it is, the Guild will want to know."

(Artoria Aldsan) Xayah notices some of the underbrush nearby trampled under foot, a path leading further on.

Xayah Xhavave: "Lookie there, folks! S'at something?" She turns towards the others, unsure of herself. "Looks to me like a might fine path!"

(Artoria Aldsan) The party follows the trail, noticing broken branches here and there. Whatever came through here was reckless, and heedless of the environment.

Ri'nji Solstan wanders onwards staring at the damage set him a little bit on edge. He sniffed the air again and flexed his fingers, letting a little wind aspected aether dance around them.

Xayah Xhavave: "Hnn...looks like a tornado came through here.." She says, holding her hand a little closer to the handle of her gun.

Lycheria Itazura looked to Rin, and noticing the damage he came across. Trying to look farther in to see any farther trail of what caused this damage to the woods.

(Artoria Aldsan) A rustling can be heard in the forest up ahead, something running in the direction of the party.

Xayah Xhavave: "Uh oh.." She remarks, making sure to hop in line behind the one most armored--which ended up being Lych!

Lycheria Itazura: "Stand back incase! Sounds..As if something may be coming."

Khena Ridah shifts aside, trying to get into the brush.

Lycheria Itazura took the helm she held in her right arm to put over her head at this point just out of caution. Her right hand then moving to the hilt of her sword waiting.

Ri'nji Solstan growls low and reaches down to grab his weapon and draws it. Looking to the ground ahead as he scans the ground quickly making a plan of action.

Ri'nji Solstan makes a few drawing motions along the ground creating a few aethering tethers to form and create a sparkling web of aether that then seemed to blend into the ground around it, hopefully enough to entangle whatever wanted them dead, or slow it down at the very least.

(Artoria Aldsan) The sound continues until an antelope rushes out of the underbrush. The animal seems frenzied and panicked, and ready to charge the party for the sake of getting through it.

Lycheria Itazura looked at the Antelope trying to rush through, a bit of a frown."If...possible we could try to move aside to let it through..I know not of those being hostile." She said keeping her hand upon the hilt of her sword.

Khena Ridah speaks in a low voice, to avoid being heard by anyone but the group. "It's probably fleeing from something further in."

Xayah Xhavave: "Whatever you think botonist girl, you got more smarts 'bout this place 'an I!"

Ri'nji Solstan gives a low feral sounding growl as he sees the antelope coming, instincts kicking in out of self defense he quickly formed a pocket of air which he hurled at the antelope's legs in an attempt to knock it to the ground rather than attempt any actual harm.

(Artoria Aldsan) Though the air pocket trips up the antelope, it is only for a moment, and it soon charges its attacker-- only to be /knocked prone/ as Ri'nji proved ready for it.

Ri'nji Solstan almost as if he had been predicting it he swirls around to the side of it flicking his rapier up and placing it in staff form sending another gust of air into it that made it get /knocked prone/. Flashy with style.

Ri'nji Solstan swings his hand at the animal this time forming a good sized stone. Though rather than kill it he simply moves to take advantage of it, prone state to knock it out cold so that it could be investigated.

(Artoria Aldsan) Now unconscious, the antelope is easy to examine. A long gash is torn into its side. Though the wound looks fresh, there are signs of necrosis in the wound.

Khena Ridah takes a little time to scrape some of the antelope's flesh into another tiny jar. "This animal was already sick... Or perhaps, infected. Its wound is dead instead of healing or scarring."

Lycheria Itazura winced at the words and the sight of the long scar as some was scraped into the jar. "Is..it anything like what was found on that tree?"

Ri'nji Solstan keeps his eyes further on the road though keeps a portion of his attention on Khena. "Any possibility of healing the wound?"

Xayah Xhavave takes a few steps back. "Guueehh! That ain't nothing good, sure ain't worth the gil to me!" She takes a turn and runs away!

Lycheria Itazura: "I..hope she's safe going back.."

Khena Ridah: "There isn't any sort of black fluid, as best as I can tell. The wound is just dead."

Lycheria Itazura: "As..Sir Rin asked, know if it can be tended to or healed?"

Khena Ridah: "Perhaps if all the dead flesh was cut away, the living skin might heal normally. But if it's too much cut away, the antelope would die of its wounds anyway."

Lycheria Itazura: "Will the wound cause any issues for him if left untreated?"

Lycheria Itazura looked to the antelope for a moment. "If needed could try to tend to it quickly and test my luck with aether towards the injury. After that we should get to moving immediately to find the cause before anything else like this comes charging at us."

Khena Ridah: "The dead skin will simply spread its rot to the rest of the body. If it's deep enough or gets into the blood, the infection will kill it very quickly."

Ri'nji Solstan: "I know some healing magic, so I suppose it's worth a shot...unless someone else is more versed in healing."

Lycheria Itazura: "Likely know as much as I!"

Lycheria Itazura: "Was my thoughts before we moved on, if it was worth the try."

Ri'nji Solstan: "Well then let's give it a shot."

Khena Ridah kneels near the unconscious beast, using a razor to cut out as much of the rotting skin as she can.

Ri'nji Solstan moved forwards while he waited for Khena to finish her surgery, with her skill it made finding the areas to apply the healing magic much easier and far less draining, almost to the point he almost looked like a proper healer than some red mage casting heals in a middle of a raid.

(Artoria Aldsan) The antelope is left breathing, but still unconscious. And the path it traveled through looms ahead.

Lycheria Itazura: Lycheria smiled bowing her head as she'd step back up to where they were before the antelope scanning back through if safe to continue.

Khena Ridah: "Right, let's press on then."

Ri'nji Solstan stands up nodding to Khena in agreement brushing the dirt off himself and turning to face the direction that it came, squinting his eyes as looked for anything unusual.

(Artoria Aldsan) The party moves forward cautiously, though the forest seems still, not even insects gracing them now.

(Artoria Aldsan) Lycheria and Khenah are the first to notice it. Some strange creature stalks through the woods. Its muzzle looks like a wolf's but-- the proportions are wrong. Its limbs are too long, snout too wide. Its teeth and claws are like knives, and its front legs end in what look far too much like misshapen human hands. It prowls around, sniffing at the air, its fur matted with blood.

Ri'nji Solstan freezes as the beast notices him too late now, he draws his weapon again and prepares for glorious combat.

Lycheria Itazura quickly grabbed for her sword as she caught notice of the beast, looking over its body and what looked like blood throughout its fur..Its entire form seems wrong in every sense."I-I think we found it..Pretty sure we found it..And might have noticed."

(Artoria Aldsan) The beast lunges forward-- the bright red that Ri'nji wears catching its attention. As it nears, the stench of rot washes over the party and its claws swipe at the red mage as though to tear him apart.

Ri'nji Solstan snarls as he gets a nasty slash across the chest, feeling like the wound is literally eating away at his flesh. "Menphina's tits..."

Lycheria Itazura set her left foot back as she brought her blade gripped in both hands to her back shoulder with the blade aimed towards the beast. With its attention on Rin she took a step in with her left leg at the same time pushing her arms out into a heavy thrust to the creature's side.

Ri'nji Solstan forms his staff and points it to the air as a ball of white light forms above the monster. Suddenly a beam of light drops down in a brilliant pillar like a hammer of justice to smash into the monster's body.

Lycheria Itazura channeled forth holy aspected aether into the blade of the sword before the blow made contact to pierce through easier.

(Artoria Aldsan) The beast snarls as its claws swipe at Ri'nji, its large frame seemingly /Too Quick/ to keep track of.

Lycheria Itazura having pulled her sword back, now with her left shoulder forward she pushed her left hand upon the pommel of the sword to guide it to a horizontal strike towards the beast's right arm as it came to an end of its claw swipe.

Khenah whips her spear off her back and jumps out of the shrubs, thrusting at the monster's flanks, though her attack is blocked. "Its flesh is rotting, try to use it!"

Ri'nji Solstan could see the monster getting ready to attack him with something that was likely going to completely wreck him. The only option was to get it before it got him. He dropped everything he had into his next spell as the smell of brimstone began to fill the air and small sparks began to surround the wold. Suddenly each of those small glows exploded in a glorious conflagration, burning rotten hair and blasting the thing to pieces like staypuft marshmallow man. Bits of singed dog hair and cooked dog meat raining down around the party, leaving the miniqo'te panting on all fours like he had just ran a marathon, a smoldering crater where the beast had previously been.

Khena Ridah lowers her spear and retches.

Lycheria Itazura with a sigh of relief wiped what blood was on her sword if any before sheathing it. Taking a deep breath now thankful even more so for her helmet from the creature being blow up into the crater. Stepping back she'd look around to the party. "Seems..Rest of us are okay..How are you Sir Rin?"

Ri'nji Solstan clutches his bleeding chest. "Been better, those were some nasty claws."

Khena Ridah wipes her face with a sleeve.

Khena Ridah jogs up to the man on his knees. "We need to clean your wound right away, before you end up like the antelope."

Ri'nji Solstan nods his head slowly. "Yeah, I think I can already feel it going that way."

Khena Ridah frowns as she motions for the man to remove at least his top clothes, then uses a clean razor and some filtered water to clean the wound.

Ri'nji Solstan gives a small whimper as he looks around and slowly exposes himself to the others, flushing a bright red.

Khena Ridah uses a bit more force than necessary to wrap a clean cloth around the man. "Right, put yer coat on and let's move. We need to report back."

Ri'nji Solstan doesn't have to be told twice as he pulls his coat back on as fast as he possibly can.

Lycheria Itazura chuckled softly, reaching to remove her helmet. "We have it's location and you took samples that could maybe work as hopeful proof! If you're feeling up to walking would be a good idea.

Ri'nji Solstan groaned and stood to his feet. "I'll be fine."

Khena Ridah takes the time to gather some... Beast-sludge into a jar before turning to depart.
"Yes, let's hurry back. We ill need to stick around any longer..."

Ri'nji Solstan: "Back to quarry mill then?"

Lycheria Itazura: "Yup!"

(Artoria Aldsan) When you return to Quarrymill and report your findings, the Wood Wailer you had spoken with before looks disturbed. "This sort of thing bodes ill. I hope that there are not more beasts of this kind out there. In any case, I'll see about getting more patrols in the area now that there's evidence of something. Thank you for your help."

Lycheria smiled bowing towards the Wood Wailer. "Of course, and thank you as well!"