

## The Pulse

2/5/22

Wind... Wind doesn't matter anymore. It doesn't "feel" the same. Nothing has for so long. Zoix slowly stood from where they had rested inside a wayward pine. Stretching now more from age old habit than a need, their automaton body made various sounds one would expect from an ancient construct.

The wind came in through the opening as the weather shifted outside. Stepping out into the early morning sun it glinted off the few bits of metal exposed that wasn't under wrappings of various states of decay. Hiding their form had been important. For the groups or creatures they have encountered while surviving. Short of stature compared to some others, the construct Zoix had made so many years ago was built for exploration, durability and enhancement of Zoix's own abilities. It had held up well. So very well. Since the fall, the failed ritual. So much death.

Shaking their head to cast away the memories free and push themselves for today's tasks they headed west. There were two Cairns they had to make sure were still sealed and safe from the Vreech and other things that would prey on the people. This task had become their purpose. Walking the world that was as it became something new. Observing the changes that occurred to the land and in those who could not make it to a cairn. The way that things have... evolved.

Gripping a set of tree roots for assistance Zoix pulled themselves up the side of a hill and looked over the valley before them. There they saw the crumbling former guild hall. Now a Vreech hive. Inside it encased in a special amber chamber rested their body. The magics of the chamber keeping them alive and sustained. Zoix didn't know why the Vreech have not fed on that chamber. Maybe there was a key part of the protective magics that kept them away. It could have been the construction of the "lattice" in the special cell their body rested in, The answer was unknown but Zoix was fascinated by it. They couldn't risk getting close enough to find out. In addition what would happen if they retrieved their body and took it from where it rested.

Right now none of that was important. The hive before them seemed dormant still. This is as it should be. It meant the few groups that existed would be safe for a while. The Vreech asleep here and sated on the glute of magic they had found inside the Esoteric order guild hall they now have made a hive. Turning and dropping back down it happened. A wave of energy rippled through their awareness. A pulse that caused them to drop to their knees. A ley line was opened. Someone or something had removed the securities that kept them secret and hidden. Even if only for a moment. "No...no...NO!" Zoix thought as they clambered to their feet and turned towards where the pulse came from. Behind them they heard the shrieks from the Vreech as they awoke.

Pure horror filled them as their feet moved with a tireless rhythm. They could outpace the Vreech hounds, maybe stop one or two. They had to keep the Vreech from the Cairns. The old protectors were gone. Only Zoix was left. This has been their only purpose for millenia. Their

only reason to maintain their sanity and self. So many lost. So much lost. If they get there soon enough maybe they could protect the people or die, finally die trying.

This wind Zoix could feel. The wind of change.