

## **Elmwood Caverns — The Veinpath**

**Behind the Elmwood Inn, beneath the sagging floorboards and crumbling mortar, waits a hole no mason admits to carving. It does not look like a passage. It looks like a wound. Step inside, and the air thickens. The stone groans around you.**

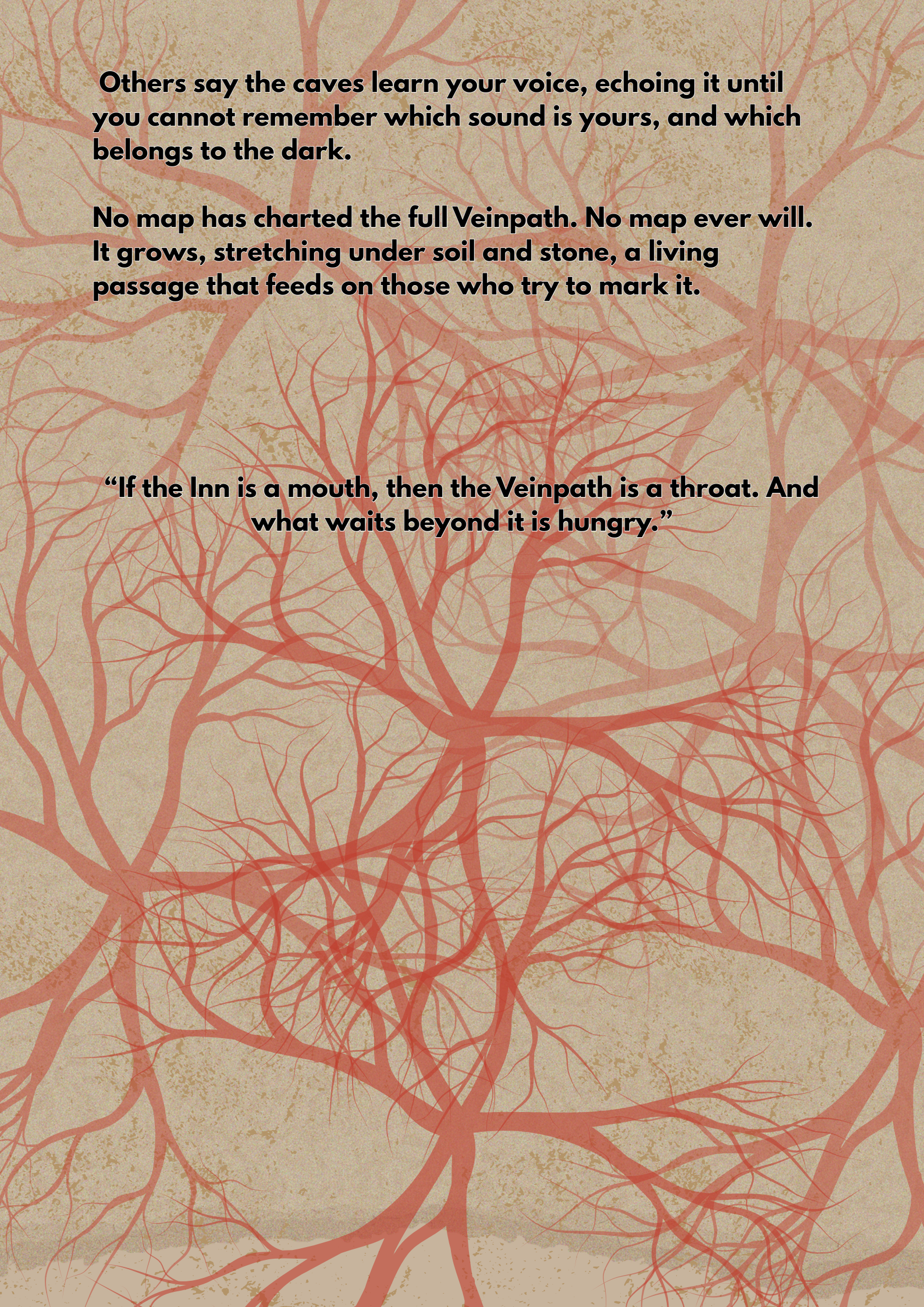
**The first cavern reeks of mildew and candle smoke, as though it remembers every torch carried into its ribs. Carved into the walls are handprints, not painted but pressed deep, as though the rock softened once, long ago, under the weight of desperate palms.**

**Past the first bend, roots dangle like chandeliers, each drop of sap hissing when it lands on stone. The locals call this the Veinpath—a corridor of living rock that pulses faintly if you rest your hand against it, like the artery of a buried heart. The Rootline—the blind caretakers—swear it carries Elmwood's will through soil and stone, guiding them in the darkness.**

**The path twists toward the Forbidden Forest, where the ceiling lowers until you crawl. Stone scrapes your back; roots scrape your scalp. And then it opens into the Crying Caves.**

**Here the walls do not stay silent. They weep—not water, but something black and metallic, dripping in patterns like written words no one has lived long enough to translate. Some say the sound of the weeping is what keeps explorers from ever returning. Others say the**





**Others say the caves learn your voice, echoing it until you cannot remember which sound is yours, and which belongs to the dark.**

**No map has charted the full Veinpath. No map ever will. It grows, stretching under soil and stone, a living passage that feeds on those who try to mark it.**

**“If the Inn is a mouth, then the Veinpath is a throat. And what waits beyond it is hungry.”**