

Session 15

Full house today, wrapping up the Bandit adventure!

Before sneaking up the plan is made thusly: We all sneak up around the camp and Soren will ambush whoever is on watch with a thrown spear. If he is able to silence the guard the rest rush the sleepers and pin them down to get information. If he can't silence the watcher its a fight and we rush the camp. Rua will go with Soren and step into the light, with his nonthreatening demeanour to momentarily distract the watcher giving Soren a clear shot.

The plan goes off without a hitch, Rua's distraction is perfect and just as the guard opens her mouth to wake the others, or maybe question Rua's presence, the spear sails from the darkness and pierces right through her throat, stifling whatever sound she was about to make. She topples to the ground and the surprise on her face jogs Soren's memory. He remembers her from his time in Gordin's Delve, she was leading the squad of watchmen who nearly clapped him in irons during his stay there and he narrowly escaped. Her name was Glenda. There is no time to puzzle over this as the others step into the light. Soren and Rua move to secure the sleeping Bandits

Its a quiet night back at the ford where Stella, Kiva and the others are sleeping. Stella and Kiva is woken by Fio who was on watch, saying she heard something outside their camp. On top of the usual nighttime sounds of crickets and wind blowing there is a rustling in the grass like something is moving in the dark. Kiva moves into a defensive crouch, holding her spear ready. Stella lights her lantern with a word, holding it high and casting light over the trampled grasses. The light is reflected in two orange/yellow dots coming from the dark, floating about 4 feet from the ground. Stella whispers to Kiva "what is that?" Kiva responds with panic in her voice "I don't know! I haven't seen anything like this before". "Don't you like...know things??" Stella replies in a hiss. "Usually yes!" Kiva snaps back, fear still in her voice. The lights move closer still, and as they approach Stella's light the massive furry body of a bear is revealed. Stella calls upon an invocation of Helior and holds her lantern directly towards the bear and commands "Back, bear!". A dark spot manifests inside the flame of her lantern and quickly grows to encompass the light as it turns a deep orange, eclipsing the darkness and appearing like an eye of the sun god himself. The bear had been turning towards the sheep which are huddled together at the edge of the light with the largest in front but it turns to Stella's light and pauses for a long moment. Suddenly it turns and lopes off into the night. Stella slowly lowers her lantern, the eye winking out and the light returning to its normal colour.

"Did...did I do good?" Stella asks nervously. "Yeah kiddo, you did real good" replies Fro, and Kiva also praises her impressive act. Kiva is still freaked out, that bear was massive! Fio agrees, it was a big one. It must have followed us down from the foothills, smelling us and the food we are carrying. They would be hungry after hibernating all winter, I'm glad we didn't have to fight it.

Things start to settle back to normal around the camp, but the others look at Stella with a new look, uncertain and awed by her display of power. Fio offers to maintain her watch until morning, its only a few hours away.

Back with Bogden in his predicament he starts naming names. "Mutra the Teeth, a boss from Gordin's Delve. He is a Big Deal. The other bosses, sometimes they get along and sometimes they don't. I get the impression this is a 'sometimes they don't' period." Esme asks him if he has proof and he asks to open his bag. Esme nods, and Bogden uses his finger and thumb to slowly push Treasa's axe away from his neck and sits up slowly and grabs his bag. From it he draws a letter and hands it to Esme. Esme reads it, "Your debts are settled with Pagala and have new accounts with Hawtrey in Marshedge have been setup as agreed. Don't loot travellers with red hats, they will be carrying your payment." With that Esme asks who would want to stab Mutra in the back the most, who would want to use this information against him? Bogden says "Jahalin the Keys, he runs the foundry at Gordin's Delve." Esme then draws an oath from him not to hurt anyone from stonetop unless they do harm first, and if he does swear it then he is free to go. Bogden agrees and says he will be heading south to Marshedge, collect whatever he earned and move on south to get away from this mess of a situation. Esme then turns to the other bandit and asks her name. "Wulberga" she replies sullenly. Esme then gets her to swear a similar oath.

At this Rua starts to protest, asking why they are letting them go, they are right here and easy pickings. Esme and Treasa say that there is no need for anymore killing, there is no point now. Rua throws his hands in the air and storms away from the camp. Esme calls after him, he pauses and she says that the threat is finished but he keeps waling into the grass a little ways. Soren says "I got this." and goes after him with a quick step. While the bandits prepare to leave Esme goes through Bogden's bag and finds a ledger with various names of people and groups, with Hillfolk and followers of Helior circled in red. Esme asks them to leave their weapons and Bogden protests, saying they wouldn't stand a chance in the wilds without a way to defend themselves. Treasa cuts in and says there is a way to deal with this and asks them which way they are heading. Bogden points south, towards the road, and Treasa hefts two spears and lobs them into the darkness and says that will be their defense. Esme also hands Wulberga a whistle, who receives with a sarcastic comment about how useful it is. Just before they go Treasa hands Bogden some rations of food and he thanks her for her munificence with a smirk. Then they walk away towards the thrown spears.

The others start inventorying the camp and tending to the horses while Soren catches up to Rua. He hadn't gone too far and Soren starts by asking him "Hey dude, that wasn't really like you. What's going on?" Rua turns to him and says that he knew Glenda, the woman Soren killed with the spear, she helped him and his mom when they were in need, why did she have to die and the other two live? It doesn't make any sense! Soren sighs and says he recognized her too, after the spear had struck, but it wasn't as pleasant a memory. She was the leader of the squad of watchmen that almost put him in chains. Rua then went on about how she was a person, same as the bandits he killed before, they were all people. Soren agreed, and said that had things been just a little different then it would have been Rua, or someone else they knew dying, and they are people too. We have to keep that in mind and only resort to violence when its required. Rua shakes his head and says it doesn't make any sense. How do you draw the line? When is killing OK and when is it not? Soren shakes his head and puts his arm around Rua's shoulder and agrees with him, its a

hard line to walk and its easy to step across it but they have to do what needs to be done but they have to keep trying. Rua nods and they start to walk back to the camp. On the way back they pass the two bandits who are leaving. Rua feels bad for them without their weapons and leaves them the spear he took when they ambushed them. Bogden accepts it with a small smirk then they part ways.

After Soren rides ahead to the town to let them know all is well and the others are returning with some guests? captives? TBD. The town is joyous at his arrival and peskering him for details. He gives the broad strokes but pleads tiredness and headed to his home and started composing the story of the adventure. Once everyone returns the next day almost the whole village has turned out to see them return triumphant. That night there is a big party and Esme starts tell the story as she had chronicled it. She gives the floor to Soren partway through and he weaves the four gods into the tale of their exploits, telling how the hand of Aratis guided them in their mission to defend the village and its people, the burning eye of Helior watched over them and channeled through Stella to ward away the darkness, and they fell upon the bandit camp with the thunder of Tor to break their defenses, and the loving embrace of Danu made space for mercy, sparing some and giving them a second chance at life.

Betta finds Rua at the party and sits next to him. He has a glass of Soren's whisky but it has been untouched for a while. As she sits she says that she is glad he is back, and asks if he was scared. Rua says that he is happy to see her again, and Esme and Treasa were there to keep them safe. Rua asks how her relationship with her mother is going. Betta replies that she is still trying to set her up with Sefan, but she has been finding ways to look busy and stay out of the house. Rua then softly talks about how he had to kill people, and he is really not sure about if it was right or wrong. Betta hugs him with one arm around his shoulder and says that is what they left the village to do, it was necessary and kept Stonetop safe. In this moment Rua leans forward to kiss Betta and she leans into it as well. Time stops for a moment between them, then it quickly snaps back when a villager taps them on the shoulder and says Betta's mother is watching. Rua says he doesn't care and leans in to continue the kiss and Betta embraces him again and a cheer goes up from the people around them. Esme is still telling the story at the front of the public house and starts talking about Rua's exploits and how he was a crucial member of the expedition to make sure Gwann had no grounds to interfere.

Kiva's father approaches her as the party goes on, saying "Hey kiddo, how are you feeling?" Kiva replies "Have you ever seen a bear before?" He laughs and says "Once, and only from a distance and thank the gods for that." "Well they are huge!" Kiva exclaims "as big as you thing they are they are even bigger!" He laughs and says "Well am proud of you." Kiva hugs him and saying "I love you Dad" and he hugs her back and kisses the top of her head and says "I love you too."

Wickla approaches Stella hesitantly and holds out to her an iron medallion with a sun engraved on it. She says "You saved my son and I wanted to make something for you. Its not much but I want you to have it." Stella takes it while stammering thanks and Wickla smiles and says "No, thank you." then moves on into the crowd. The pendant is surprisingly high quality, the engraving is prominent and clearly finely crafted. The children soon cluster around Stella, oohing and ahing at the pendant as Stella puts it on, admiring it and pestering her with questions about the bear. Stella says that it was scary to face it, they had better be careful if they ever encounter a bear. Anders

puffs up his chests and proudly states that when he is grown up he will be able to take a bear in a fight. Stella just nods her head and says sure...

Treasa tests her constitution in a whiskey judging contest, sampling all the proffered brews from the towns distilleries. She doesn't make any qualitative judgments, but waxes eloquently about the merits of each of the drinks and weathers the cajoling of the competitors who want a firm answer.

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