

# Session 25

A new expedition begins! The expedition consists of Soren, Kiva, Esme, Rua, Fio, Stella. They are going to go deeper into the Great Wood than even Fio has ever ventured, unknown perils await!

As they are going around the village preparing their gear Rua runs into Betta. She says that she knows she can't ask him to stay, but she feels terrible seeing him go and never knowing if he is going to come back. Rua sighs and says he has to go, this is important and he needs to see it through. Betta nods and says that is what is so great about him while blushing, then pulls a small pendant from a pocket and offers it to him. She made it from a piece of cobble in the town square, so he can take a little piece of home with him anywhere he goes. Rua immediately puts it on, promising to come back to her. Esme appears from around a corner and butts in, saying that she will definitely make sure he comes back safe, and Betta turns to her and says that she will be held accountable then! Esme also notes there is a strong presence of Aratis' will in the pendant, the square is where all the major social events of the community happens

Once they are mostly prepared the party gathers in the Public House where Fio lays out the map they received from Thistledown. She adds some notes and markers from her own experience, then starts laying out the route they would take. She points out a clearing on the near side of a river saying that is the farthest she has ever been, but you can see the Dawn Rock that Thistledown talked about if you climb a tree. If all goes well, we should be able to get to the Dawn Rock in 3 days.

When they set out it is a bright and cool morning with no rain in the skies. They cross the stream at the bottom of the cliffs and enter into the forest where it is cool and quiet, with the sounds of birds and leaves around them. They quickly move past the familiar ground around the village and soon all but Fio are hopelessly lost as they tread steadily eastward. Sometimes they walk in silence, other times chat about meaningless things. The first night is uneventful, with Rua and Kiva spending their time playing cards and dice games and Kiva demonstrating slight of hand techniques and bluffing to him. Gambling is an important life skill after all! One thing Soren does that Esme finds increasingly annoying is he tends to absentmindedly bite his fingernails. On the second day she 'accidentally' takes his hand and brushes his fingertips against a tree leaking sticky sap so it coats his fingernails, making them taste nasty. Soren has no idea why she did this as she just walks away, whistling innocently. He isn't even thinking about biting his nails, he is(unsuccesfully) trying to rub the sap off on passing plants and moss. The second day Rua asks Kiva about her experiments, and how she has reconciled her Mind Gem with her scientific understanding of the world. Kiva says that she has ultimately one of two conclusions: Either the Mind Gem is an example of some lost or forgotten field of knowledge, or the world doesn't work nearly close to the way she thinks it does.

On the third day they encounter the banks of the river cutting through the forest. It is much wider and deeper than the stream by Stonetop, and the gods only know what spirits reside in its depths. They follow it eastward until they approach the clearing marked on the map. Fio says that she has been here a couple times before, not much of interest here except some stones with weird writing on them. Soren inspects the surroundings, looking for anything that will help them cross the river. Rua scampers up a nearby tree to help look. He spots a tree that has fallen into the river, making a slight barrier against the current. While the spring rains have passed, the river is still deep and strong in places. They will need to be careful not to get dragged away by the currents or any malicious spirits. He continues looking for anything useful, and while scouting the edges of the clearing Soren finds a boulder. It looks ordinary, except he sees some strange markings on it. Looking closely they are a looping set of symbols, these can't be natural markings so he calls over Kiva and Esme to inspect it. Kiva recognizes the script as Forest Folk writing, and her experience with ancient runes, along with Esme over her shoulder pointing out a couple specific symbols, allows her to get the gist of this message. The stone is a warning, there is danger nearby! Esme immediately starts to scan the clearing.

Esme looks around and as she moves around the edge of the clearing she gets a sense that something is nearby...She finds a ring of mushrooms a small way into the forest away from the clearing. Inside the ring is a stone, but it almost seems to be hiding from her mind. The knowledge of the stone keeps trying to slip out of her mind, but she is able to focus through and remember it. She knows that there are many a story about Faerie waystones, allowing quick travel over long distances to the Fair Folk, but mortals taking the trails often get entrapped or lead astray by the mysterious denizens of the Faerie realm. She also knows that Greenwood Jack, a folk myth with many stories about him, used the waystones with his Faerie friends to enact his many hi-jinks. She takes some leftover hardtack from the previous night and lays a breadcrumb trail from the mushroom circle back to the clearing, and puts the last of their milk into a bowl. She then sits a small way away from the bowl and sings a song of entreaty to any Faeries that may be nearby. Rua, inspired by her previous comments about his amulet from Betta having Aratis' influence, joins her in song. As they sing Soren and Fio leave the clearing to try to forage some provisions but are not able to find anything edible in the immediate vicinity.

Rua and Esme sing together for some time, until their throats start to get sore. Just as they are about to falter Esme notices a small figure perched on the edge of the bowl. At first they mistake it for a dragonfly, but looking closer they see it's a small humanoid figure with gossamer insect wings and faceted insect eyes on its head, which is currently dunked in the bowl of milk drinking deep. Esme and Rua switch the song to one about Caradoc the Courageous, a Stonetop folk hero who has a whole lot of fun in the forest with his friends, going on many adventures! The Faerie raises its head from the milk, cocking an ear to their tune. Esme sees it listening and calls out to it, asking it if it wants to join them. Rua waves, introducing himself and Esme and says Well Met. The little insect-looking creature flits over to them, first hovering in front of Esme then in front of Rua. It buzzes around a few moments more before nearing Rua's pack. It rings out a high pitched buzzing after approaching it and rapidly zooms off into the forest. Esme calls out loudly "Oh no! and I had some candy here I was going to give away!"...There is silence coming from the forest. A quick inspection of Rua's pack reveals the mess kit they have been using to prepare their supplies, the iron pot must have scared it away.

Rua apologizes for this, but the others quickly assure him its fine, he shouldn't take it too hard. Shit happens. They turn their focus to crossing the river, mostly looking at the tree that has fallen partway across. Rua remembers he brought some rope! He decides to tie it to a sturdy tree and around his shoulders to swim across and tie it to make other's crossing easier. Nobody else has a better idea, so he goes for it! As he swims across he gets a deep, uneasy feeling. What he is doing is so wrong, his whole life he has been told about the dangers of water he can't see the bottom of. However, nothing untowards happens. His feet soon touch the stones of the far bank, and he hauls himself dripping out of the water to tie the rope off on another tree, making a taught guide across the flowing river. The others follow along one-by-one, with only Kiva losing her footing and needing to be helped across to avoid being swept away. They all come out dripping, and gather some dead wood around for a decent fire as the light slowly fades.

The next day they approach the Dawn Rock. Its lower slopes are forested, but it turns to bare rock near the summit. They make the trek to the top, and the view is well worth the effort! A seemingly endless sea of green flows away from them, with the suns rays playing over the swaying tree tops. Wispy clouds wreath the tops of the mountains to the north, and to the north-east they can see the far-flung figure of the Golden Oak, the great tree at the center of the Great Wood. They spend a minute taking in the view, but just as they are to start heading down a rumble sounds from the north-east and they can see some trees fall down accompanied by a deep rumbling, so far away its barely audible. As they are all staring that way wondering what happened another ring of trees fall, creating a clearing in the forest with a rumbling sound, like an earthquake. Everyone is concerned, at first Esme wants to stay far clear of these disruptions but Soren points out there have been multiple earthquakes around Stonetop. This might be related. Kiva is naturally curious and wants to know more, but they all agree to focus on the Forest Folk first since it is closer(the earthquakes are at least a few days away from the Dawn Rock), and that is a more immediate high-level issue. They scramble back down the Dawn Rock, it is solidly in the afternoon now so they push on until nightfall.

They do not notice it right away, but the atmosphere has subtly changed. The sounds of birds aren't quite gone, but is noticeably muted as if the trees around them are holding their breath. They agree on double watches that night, and Esme and Soren take first watch. Regardless of the uneasy feeling nothing disturbs their fitful rest. The morning dawns with a thick mist that proceeds into rain that envelops them. The overcast skies and precipitation makes it hard to track the passage of time, but at a certain point they realize they have passed into the city limits already. The buildings have been cleverly built into the forest around them, and adding what looks like decades worth of dilapidation makes it even harder to pick out the outlines of the buildings. As they slowly move through the run-down structures Esme's jaw is clenched tightly. Rua notices, but doesn't want to draw attention to it.

End of Session!

---

Revision #1

Created 14 January 2026 02:36:36 by Garettv2\_Bigger\_Bolder\_Badder

Updated 14 January 2026 04:53:23 by Garettv2\_Bigger\_Bolder\_Badder