

Session 30

The party arrives in Gordin's Delve! What mischief will they get up to? Some additional lore/backstory established outside the regular session can be found [here](#)

Before setting out on their journey, Kiva had spent some time inspecting and researching the bone shards recovered from the mutated deer. Each night she would work with Esme to sift through her findings, with Stella looking in as well since these malicious bone shards concern her as well. Working together they observe the shards have some power infusing it from far away, but after some weeks pass they slowly morph into regular shards of bone. Through their studies they are able to identify the dark power as originating from the Things Below. Once this is uncovered Esme spent days looking into references to the Things Below and how often they influenced the world. Clearly there has been a decline in their meddling, recently there hasn't been much impact but there are many stories from hundreds of years ago of much more active influence. Nobody knows how they got trapped below the earth, but legends say it was the Things Below getting free that brought down the Makers of old.

Their third day of travel to Gordin's Delve is uneventful, other travellers pass them without comment and the wind blows through the grass, rustling it in gusts. Unseen birds trill from the surrounding prairie as they walk along. In the afternoon they spot three riders going east through the grass, and they veer towards the party on the road. As they approach they can see clan markings of a red ouroboros. Soren doesn't recognize them, and shares that with the others. They ride up, two woman and a man, and the woman in the lead hails them as they ride up. She mocks them for heading towards Gordin's Delve and fraternizing with such "unclean folk". Rua reacts defensively at the derision to his hometown and asks what's wrong with it? The mounted woman laughs harshly, going on a rant about how they desecrate the earth by digging holes in her body and burning her blood.

Soren is rankled by their blatant aggression, and says that they are neighbours and should work together and not kill each other. The Hillfolk woman snorts at this, saying that they should choose wisely between supporting the Hillfolk or the Delve, as the flag of the infinite snake will soon hang from the walls of the town. Esme introduces herself, saying they are from Stonetop, and asks who the leader of her clan is. The aggressive woman dances around the question, not revealing a name but giving more vague threats about how strong he is, and how he will unify the Hillfolk. There is more back-and-forth as Esme tries to get more information out of them while asking innocent questions before the riders say they have many miles to travel and start moving away. Rua flips them the bird as they go, with Esme wapping him with the back of her hand. Once they are out of earshot, Soren backs up Rua, the riders were being threatening, why was Esme so polite to them? He wanted to confront their behaviour, but Esme explained she was trying to get information out of them, and not start any negative incident while travelling.

Stella comments that they gave her a bad feeling, and Betta asks if all Hillfolk are that rude? Soren shakes his head "No, I lived with them for many years. Their lifestyle is unique, always moving, but they are a good folk at heart, just people trying to live well and get by like most out there. He then says that he wants to check in with the yellow-spear tribe at some point, he is worried about what Garnuss had said about trouble brewing with the tribes and the Hdour that appeared. Stella nods but says they need to focus on the immediate problem of the Things Below and whats going on with the Ustrina so the party continues on the road to the west

At camp that night they are in the foothills of the mountains. There are wildflowers blooming in the meadows and they start to feel the chill as night falls. They sit around the fire before going to sleep and plan what they will do when they get to the Delve. Honest Draigh is the Delve Boss that mostly deals with trade relations with Stonetop and Marshedge, or interferes with them. He has made himself pretty much indispensable, using his leverage over outside trade to keep a handle on the other Bosses. Its the most secure position possible in the turbulent political atmosphere of the Delve. Esme is in contact with Cairra, a mid-level servant of Honest Draigh and plans to get in contact with her, she may be able to provide them a place to stay or get them information. Rua's uncle Cillian used to work with his dad, until the mining accident that crippled him. Now he works as a tinkerer to support himself and his wife Enya by fixing whatever people bring to him to fix. Rua was close to him as a kid, and is really looking forward to reconnecting with him. Eventually it is decided they will split up when they get to the Delve, going to Mahsa's together for lunch so they all know the location, then splitting up. Soren, Esme, and Willem will take bitey and the trade goods to the market while getting in touch with their respective contacts while Kiva, Rua, Betta and Stella go visit his uncle. He knows a guy named Vaughn who told stories of trading with stranded masked people that match the descriptions of the Ustrina, maybe he can point them in the right direction.

On the fourth day they spot the Delve over the next rise. Its hard to miss, dark smoke curls up from the stack of the Foundry and a pile of tailings runs off the side of the town with red streaks and other contamination from the mines. The walls are very large, clearly of Maker origin, and would be a formidable bastion if well defended. The road up to the town is surrounded by a shanty town of tents and semi-permanent shacks. Some people are just passing through, pitching camp outside rather than paying for room at an inn. Others are those unable to afford living within the city walls. Herds of goats line the final miles of the road before the tents. As they make their way through they are surrounded by the sounds and smells of lots of humans, all total strangers. Stella hugs her arms around herself, taking solace in her nondescript clothing. Kiva is looking around, engrossed with the sheer novelty of the experience of so many people around, and all the interesting things they have. As they approach the giant gates in the wall Esme notices that people come and go freely, no guards or other authority is manning the entry to the walled town.

They go to Mahsa's food stand and they get in line, slowly moving forward as Mahsa makes miner's lunches for the line of hungry workers as the lunch rush is nearing its end. A miner's lunch is a specialty around here, a bunch of beef and vegetables wrapped in pastry like a hand pie, usually served with some paper or other cheap way to hold it while you eat. When they get to the front of the line greets Mahsa warmly, ording a miner's lunch for everyone in the group. Mahsa starts to server them, and Soren and her chat for a bit and catch up. He asks if Vaughn has been around, Mahsa says yeah he can be found at the The Broken Thumb in the afternoons. Soren remembers

this as a really seedy place, in a rough part of the town. Mahsa is quick and efficient with her movements, serving all seven of them quickly, and now is waiting for them to move aside so she can keep working. Soren is quick to move out of the way once she indicates this, leading the others to some nearby barrels and rough-hewn timber for seats as they munch. He makes loud and appreciative noises when eating his hand pie, Stonetop has many great things but Soren had really missed Mahsa's cooking. The others dig in as well, the food surprisingly delicious for the simple fare.

After enjoying their meal the party separates. Esme and Soren lead Bitye to Honest Draigh's house, Willem walking behind the cart keeping a shifty eye at the people crowding around. When they get there Esme hands a prepared letter to one of the guards. The guard is incredibly rude, but eventually acquiesces to take the letter inside. She wrote an innocuous note in cipher, letting Cairra know she is there and looking to meet. Then they head to The Swap, the central market where people from all over come to trade in various metals. They move around, trading the food and other sundries from the cart for some silver coins, should be enough to hire an engineer for a large project back at Stonetop.

Rua leads Betta to Cillian's place, with Stella and Kiva following along. They approach the smithy his aunt works at and when they get there Rua's uncle is seated on a chair outside talking to another old man, talking animatedly to him. Cillian looks over at Rua, not recognizing him and turns back to his conversation. Rua is perturbed by this, a little crestfallen at not being recognized so he walks up and says "Uncle Cillian, do you not recognize me? It's Rua!" Cillian squints for a moment before his eyes go wide before exclaiming "By the Gods it's Rua!" Rua runs up and gives him a huge hug. Rua's uncle asks if he is come back or passing through. Rua says he is just passing through, they will be travelling to the north but he wants to say hi, catch up and introduce his friends. Cillian welcomes them inside, waving goodbye to his friend and waves them inside. He calls out "Enya, put your hammer down! We have guests!" Enya comes out, a wide-shouldered woman who is sweating from working in the hot smithy. She gives them a warm welcome, and Rua introduces Betta as his girlfriend, and also introduces Kiva and Stella to them.

They sit around the small table and Cillian says he heard about Rua's parents passing and wished he could be there for the funeral, but gestures to his injured legs that he couldn't make it. He does say that Rua is the spitting image of his dad. Rua didn't know this, and thinks it's nice that he has a part of his dad with him. Cillian and Enya then talk about how business has been good enough, but there has been some trouble about. Hillfolk threatening and raiding, and more earthquakes than usual too. Rua talks about the threatening hillfolk on the road, but Cillian laughs him off saying they have always been that way, but always in small numbers so it should be fine. Rua also tells him about their quest to find the Ustrina, His aunt and uncle nod along, they don't know anything about them or their city. Rua also brought them a wooden box he crafted. He says that he has been apprenticing with a carpenter, and made him this box with his name carved in it. Cillian takes it, thanks him and inspects it. "So you just started learning, eh? Well thanks, I'll find something to put in it!"

After some time catching up, reconnecting and updating each other on the small things in their lives. At one point Rua's uncle says he has a friend who runs an inn, The Cracked Anvil, and if they mention his name they will get fair prices for a safe room. As the afternoon draws long Rua says

that they have to go meet some others, so they say their goodbye. Rua promises to come visit again before they leave the town, giving each of them great big hugs. Enya gives Betta an awkward hug as well.

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