

Session 33

They have found the Ustrina, what will they find out?

"Names, names are required" The Ustrina states. Soren complies, introducing each of the those who are present and mentions two more are away exploring. "This one is the Valorix, Art Keeper of the Sitra" it replies. Soren then requests information on the fate of Viemrod, the location of any survivors and how to fight the Bone Plague. "This one shall tell The Soren about the agreement with the Folk of the Forest, explain the manner and cause of the flight and tell the Soren of their location."

"This one would request 10 pounds of Aetherium...we have need of it". Soren nods, he knows that Etherium is a rare metal that is used a lot by the makers. There is some in circulation, traded or found in ruins. It is said to be metal that is infused with lightning. 10 pounds is a lot, Soren is not sure where he would find that. Soren says that they put a lot of time coming here at no small risk to themselves. Would they be able to at least tell them if they know the fate of Nyah? The Valorix looks to their companions and they communicate with each other in some manner the group cannot understand. After a few moments they turn back and say "This one is not aware of the fate of the Nyah, but as a token of good will we will inquire after them and have that information for you when the bargain is completed."

Soren mentions that Aetherium is quite rare, he has only seen it in small trinkets. He asks if there is another material they would accept. The Valorix says "There is another material, abundant on the surface that we would accept. One container of this size of human blood could replace one pound of Aetherium" and they gesture with their hands, a volume of about 2 litres. Soren is dumbstruck by this, restraining his reaction to not give offence but unable to respond quickly. Rua speaks up, asking what they use the blood for. The Valorix says "This information is also for sale, for 5 of these containers of human blood" and gestures to a similar sized container before.

At this time Esme shows up with Garvan and is confused as to the circumstances of the conversation and Soren quickly catches her up on the happenings. Esme knows from reading the Chronicle that, hundreds of years ago, people used to find Aetherium in the soil while plowing or digging in the ruins of what was there before Stonetop was Stonetop. Rua keeps pressing them, asking why they are asking for human blood. The Valorix states "Why would we ask for something that we did not need?" Rua hmms at this, and is getting disgusted by the conversation so turns away to go stand with Betta, leaning against the building. Soren asks when they are expecting the metal and they reply "Time is of no difficulty, but a bargain must be equal in value. Return here when you have it, and ring the Gong once more."

Esme asks if the Ustrina care for the bodies of their dead

As they are moving through the cavern, retracing their steps back to the surface, they hear a sound in the darkness that clearly doesn't come from them. Soren's danger sense is tingling, so he calls out in a genial tone "Ahoy there fellow miners! What brings you so deep into the delve?". After a moment of silence a man steps out. It's Shag, Smiling Francis' enforcer, and he says "I am no miner, but I do have to thank you for leading me to the Ustrina. Now I know which direction they come from, I will be going to them now." Esme steps forward at this, asking him what he intends to do with them and he laughs, saying it's not like he is going to hug them. The group all looks to each other, unspoken agreement passing amongst them as they decide to try to stop Shag. Soren draws his sword, saying "We can't let you do that, we have business with the Ustrina and need them whole and healthy. You will be coming with us, and if we come to the surface with nothing unpleasant happening we can each go our separate ways." Shag gives Soren a disparaging look and says "quit yapping young pup" and turns to leave, taking out a tinder box to light his own oil lantern.

Rua is burning with righteous anger at Shag's threats to the Ustrina and darts forward to snatch the lantern out of his hands. Unfortunately Shag has lightning quick reactions and is able to pull it away in time, drawing a short sword in response. Soren is circling around to flank him, attempting to cut him off and Shag in response throws his lantern right at Soren. It splashes burning oil all over him before falling to the ground and shattering. Soren screams, batting at the flames on his arms and Kiva rushes over, bundles him onto the ground and scatters what dirt is present to put out the flames, stopping them from lighting his clothes on fire. Esme snatches the lantern from Garvan's hand to use it to chase after the feeling rogue and Garvan mutters "I can't believe this is happening..." while he shelters behind a nearby pillar. Esme isn't able to find any trace of Shag. Without a light he must still be nearby but they can't pinpoint his position. Stella has been whispering to a bundle of torches and passes them out to everyone around her. Rua calls out in a taunt "The children of Gordin's Delve have a boot coming for you, you coward!" Esme joins in "Yeah, you must be too afraid fight a granny!" Their bait is successful and Shag reveals his position by flinging a dagger towards Esme. The light of the torches flashes off it and Esme is able to dodge to the side, taking only a grazing hit. Stella invokes Helior, she can sense the sun's position in the sky even through miles of rock and she channels his warmth into the flame of her torch, causing it to detach from its source and become a ghostly flame that she sends towards Shag, hovering above his head and illuminating him clearly. Soren is panting from the pain and moves to stand near Betta while telling Willem to go take Shag down!

Willem stomps forward, bringing his club to bear and charges at the now revealed position of Shag. Esme is on the flank, causing just a moment's distraction that allows Willem's club to hit home, striking Shag's ribs in a direct hit and knocking him back a few steps. Willem doesn't get away unscathed, the handle of a dagger sticks from his side. The villain winces in pain, then says "Fuck this..." pulling out what looks like an egg and smashing it to the ground, causing a deeply foul smoke to envelop Esme and Willem. As it gets in their eyes and lungs they start to sneeze and cough uncontrollably. Rua takes this moment to charge forward in an attempt to grapple Shag to the ground. Rua is able to get a good grip, but takes Shag's sword to the thigh and brings them both down together. Kiva sees her chance and grips her spear tightly in her right hand, walking up to the grappled Shag and stabs him right through the neck. Blood fountains from his neck, covering both Rua and Kiva as he stops thrashing in his grip.

Once he is still Willem walks up and looks to Kiva "Good work" he says simply, then leans down to make sure Shag is dead. "Yep, hes a goner." Betta rushes forward to Rua, shocked at his injuries and fumbling in her pack for the bandages she brought with her. Stella kneels next to her and asks her to make some room, and Betta quickly moves aside as Stella brings out her lamp and consecrates it, then invokes it into a bath of healing light to envelop the wound in Rua's leg. So deep in the ground Helior's light isn't quite as warm, but the wound mostly closes, leaving a deep red welt. Betta then moves forward to bandage the remaining wound, and Rua thanks her profusely. Stella checks on Willem, but the knife he took didn't go too deep and he shrugs her off.

Esme goes through Shag's pockets and finds an iron sword, two more throwing daggers and some assorted jewelry. Esme pockets it all as Garvan slowly approaches the group. Rua turns to him and says "Best if what happened down here stays down here, yeah?" Garvan nods quickly and says "I didn't see nothing!" Esme promises that when they come back to close the bargain there will be extra payment for him, and Garvan replies "There better be, y'all are getting me mixed up in business that I really don't want to be involved in." After this, Esme asks Willem if he is willing to carry Shag's body to be bait for Jenny. Willem snorts at this and says "He may as well be useful for once." Stella is not happy about this, but when pressed she doesn't have an alternative option to deal with his body. They don't have the fuel to burn it, and there is not much difference if they leave it in a crevasse so she relents. Willem hoists the body up once everyone else is ready and they start moving again.

They struggle together to get up the ravine they left the rope in, and when they approach Jenny's cavern Willem puts the body down. Soren takes the arms, Willem the legs and on a count of three they send the body into the cavern and then wait for a few minutes. Nothing much happens, so they move as quietly as possible around the edges of the cavern. Near the exit they hear a rustling sound of scales on stone, but its not moving towards them so they are able to get clear safely. The rest of the trip back is uneventful, but they take time at the pond near the surface to wash off the blood and disguise their wounds so its not as obvious they were in a fight. Once they get to the surface they head directly back to the Cracked Anvil Inn and pay Garvan. On top of the agreed pay they agree he will take the ancient coins he and Esme found and she will keep the jewelry. They promise to check in with him when they are back in town.

End of Session!

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