

# Session 34

Out of the mines, should be wrapping up the events in Gordin's Delve.

Before going to bed that night Esme checks in with Caira about any potential engineers who are looking for work. "I asked around, but engineers are well sought after here and generally paid quite well. There is one who would fit the bill, but he is a heavy drinker. If he is not at work, he is at the tavern." Esme thinks about it, this doesn't sound like a person they want long term but they are at least worth an interview. She gets his typical location from Caira then goes back to the Inn.

After a decent nights sleep they meet in the common room in the Cracked Anvil. The first thing they all notice is the background noise of the building. Underground it was eerily quiet, no whooshing wind, no hustle and bustle of the city. It is comforting to have the regular noises envelop them. They go to meet the prospective engineer, but he is clearly not the kind of person they are looking for so they thank him for his time and move on. They spend the rest of the morning trading their food and other supplies, as well as the necklaces Esme looted from the crypt, from Stonetop for iron tools and other sundries that are more easily found in Gordin's Delve.

In the spare time on the last day Soren and the others get a last Miner's Lunch at Mahsa's. While there, Soren uses his silver tongue to get cozy with the locals and surreptitiously ask about the orange-eyed woman. There have been some whispered rumours, they say that she works for one of the bosses, Mutra the Teeth. One of the woman there says that she saw someone matching that description at the Unfilled Mug, also known to the locals as the Vomit Hole. Soren is able to deflect any inquiring questions, leaving subtle hints that Smiling Fransis is the one who wants to know. Across the street there is the merchant from the Midsummer's Festival selling bottled dreams, there are various people slumped unconscious around his cart. This makes Rua a little uncomfortable, and the group does not engage with the vendor. Once they are done eating they decide to go to the illustrious Vomit Hole. Rua and Betta go in a few minutes before the others, acting like kids running away from some responsibility and the rough characters at the bar soon ignore them, not caring about kids shirking their duties.

Outside the dive bar there are some unconscious bodies lying around. Esme takes a closer look at them, one is clearly blackout drunk and the other is stabbed and the pallor of death has taken their skin to indicate they have been dead for a while. There is no door in the frame, just a ratty blanket strung up on a rope as a visual block. Esme is wearing a thick cloak to disguise her judginess so they don't get the poor treatment they received at the Broken Thumb. They take a seat near Rua and Betta, and each get a drink. Esme slides a glass of liquor in front of Stella and Stella just looks from the mug to Esme in shock, uncertain of what to do. Betta leans towards her and whispers "It tastes *terrible*." While sitting, Esme Soren and Stella all look subtly around, trying to see if any of the other patrons match the description of Dawa. In the far corner there is a woman with her cowl

pulled low, her eyes pointing down to the table as she nurses her cheap drink.

They look at each other and nod, deciding to do this. Esme buys two of what the woman is drinking and takes it to her table, sitting in front of her and sliding the drinks forward. She looks up slowly, and even beneath the shadows of her hood her irises are clearly stoned orange. "Dawa, I presume" Esme begins, and Dawa's immediately tenses up, either to flee or to fight. "Who the hell are you?" she counters, immediately suspicious. Esme assures her that they are not from her homeland, and indeed sent them even farther away from the Delve. Dawa shrugs, and says "What of it, why would you do that?" Esme says that they did not seem like very trustworthy people, and Dawa's situation seems like something that she might be able to help with. At this point the entire bar is silent, tension building as they all listen in on the conversation. Stella has been inspecting Dawa's persona and gets the feeling that there is a cloud of dark magic covering her. Esme knows that there are rumours and stories of furious fighters from the north, that would fly into murderous rages. She always thought it was a story to keep wayward children from leaving the village and wandering too far. The longer they spend around Dawa the more...off she feels. The fingers on her hand are a little too long, her mouth shaped a little cruel.

Esme decides to be blunt, and asks "Would you like help with a curse?" Dawa's hand clenches hard on the mug, the wood creaking as she says harshly "This isn't the kind of thing you just cure, everyone knows that isn't possible." Soren speaks up, saying that it isn't the first time he has banished a dark spirit, its possible. Hearing Esme's genuine offer and Soren's truthful statement her hand relaxes slightly, and she says "Well its not like you could make it any worse. There's an alley out back, meet me there in a few minutes." She then downs the rest of her drink and pushes past them, stomping out of the dive bar. They gather back at the table, taking a few minutes before also leaving. They get to the mouth of the alley and Rua and Betta offer to stand watch and make sure they are not disturbed. Esme suggests that they make out to keep people away and Rua immediately says "no no, she just joking Betta, she doesn't mean it." Esme immediately refutes that, saying she very much does mean it. Betta blushes furiously, and says that she is ready to do her part for the team. Rua steps close to her, taking her face in his hands while the others enter they alley.

They find Dawa waiting there, her posture tense and she looks at them warily as Stella, Esme and Soren stand around her in a circle. Soren says that he will have to put his hands on her and she nods curtly. Soren looks into himself, searching for the connection to Aratis he had when banishing the spirit from the deer and raises his hand to the sky before letting it fall on Dawa's shoulder, trying to banish the darkness within her. At first there is no effect, but over her shoulder Soren sees Rua and Betta kissing and sees the seeds of the future of community, and realizes that those little meddlesome moments from Esme is her building relationships and tightening the bonds of community and suddenly the power rises inside him. He raises his arm again purposefully, and strikes her shoulder with intent. When Soren makes that connection to the power of Aratis it feels different this time. Last time he was cutting the string of the thing that was controlling the deer. With Dawa it feels like a seed that has been planted in her and is slowly growing. He focuses his energy on the seed as best he can, and it feels more and more like a flame on the wind. Stella has invoked the Warmth of the Sun, the light of her lamp illuminating the circle and she channels the light into Dawa. She can sense the same seed, and starts using her light to prune away the growths inside her and slowly revealing the core of the dark sickness inside her. The darkness has

to go somewhere, it sloughs off Dawa's body in waves and Esme wields her Makersglass shield, planting it in front of her and angling it into the sky. She braces herself against it, and as the darkness falls it hits like a heavy weight causing her to grunt with effort. She begins to sing a simple, child's song of hope and resilience. It seems simple, but Esme believes wholeheartedly in the power of the song to provide the resilience and direct the exuding darkness upwards and into the purifying beams of sunlight above. Stella feels like they are arduously chopping at a choking bramble, cutting it back to clear the field. She knows the seeds below will likely sprout again, but for now the field is clear. It would take a magnitude more effort to tear out the roots of this curse, but Dawa's soul is free of the corruption for now.

Dawa stands there for a while, staring at the ground before quiet sobs start wracking her frame. Rua and Betta run up, "I felt something there, did it work!?" Soren looks at his hands and says "I think so, I felt something leaving her but I don't have much of a feel for these things yet." and he looks to Stella and Esme for confirmation. They both nod, and Stella steps forward to comfort her and asks Dawa if she is alright. She replies "No, but...I think I might get there eventually." As they are getting their bearings and helping Dawa deal with her newfound freedom from darkness five men step into the alley, their shadows falling on the group. The one in the lead calls out "What are you doing there with Eye-gouger?!"

End of Session!

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