Session 35

Confrontation in the alley! No good deed goes unpunished.

The party stands in the trash-strewn alley behind the Unfilled Mug. It is dark and gloomy, Dawa is on her knees in the hard packed dirt staring blankly into her hands, trying to come to terms with what just happened. The five toughs are advancing towards them, and the one in front calls out "Hey, step away from her!", gesturing towards Dawa. Rua calls back "Who are you anyways?!" "Who are we? We are the worst trouble you are ever gonna get in kid. Now you better get out of the way." Rua stands his ground, asking what they want with Dawa. They reply that she works for them, and then they notice that she is not paying attention to anything happening around her. One of the others steps forward, moving as to walk right through Rua and asks "What did you do to her?". Rua holds his arms to the sides and says "You are not getting past me unless Dawa says she wants to go with you." The tough steps right up to Rua and says "You need to be taught a lesson kid." Then snaps his head forwards to headbutt Rua. However, Rua's youth has made the man underestimate him and is doing this as a dominance move and not guarding himself.

Rua twists out of the way, taking the blow on his shoulder and the man gets Rua's bone in his eye. He staggers back and growls, then lunges back in shouting "Cmon boys!", and the rest of the thugs follow drawing short blades. Soren calls for Willem to give Rua some backup, while trying to sneak around the edges of the alley to flank them. He gets past 4 of them, but the one at the back spots him and calls him out, "Hey, what do you think you are doing?". At the back of the party Stella notices the conflict starting and reaches for her torch. She whispers to it to ignite it and raises it high above her as she calls for Helior's light to come down and cower her enemies. Helior's light indeed infuses the torch, the flame condensing to a pinprick of light so dense that the illumination is enormous and affects even her allies. Everyone around her is struck with fear, like the overwhelming weight of the sun is hanging directly over their heads. Kiva's anxiety spikes, but with an effort of will she calms her roiling stomach and holds her ground, ready to defend her friends, but she can't bring herself to look anywhere near Stella and her terrifying flame. Esme lifts her shield above Dawa to protect her from the effect. Two of the thugs at the front try to charge past Rua, but as they approach Stella they are stopped in their tracks, daunted by the enchanted flame she is holding. One, a chipped toothed fellow, takes a hesitant step forward then breaks and runs out of the alley. The other stands his ground, but isn't able to advance any further. The other two approach Rua, one stabs at him and he tries to fight back with his fists, having not brought any weapons on this excursion. He quickly learns why you don't bring fists to a knife fight as he takes a slash while another of the thugs grabs his arm, trying to pull him to the side. Soren tries to fast talk his way around the last thug, trying to get behind and surround them but isn't able to avoid suspicion and the thug lashes out with brass knuckles and clocking Soren on the jaw. Nothing is broken, but he is a bit rattled.

Kiva notices the thug that is stricken by Stella's light and advances on him, thrusting her spear into his side. It sinks deep and he gasps hollowly before stumbling away and collapsing to the ground, trapping her spear underneath him. Stella steps forward, her veil still up and while passing the downed man she brings her torch down and sets his clothes alight, almost as an afterthought. She continues to the mouth of the alley to aid Rua in his 2v1 struggle. As her awful light approaches, Rua's burning anger allows him to push through the fear and stand his ground. Stella strikes out with her torch trying to hit the man holding Rua's wrist, but unfortunately the man tugging on Rua pulls his arm into the path of her blow and it sears a patch of his arm. The light reaches Soren and his foe as well, and Soren becomes immediately aware of how foolish it was to try to surround them on his own, and the sting of the hit he took is throbbing even more in his jaw. He shuffles back, taking a defensive stance against the alley wall. However, his opponent isn't able to withstand the light and turns to flee. Rua turns to the last two opponents and says "This is the Daughter of Helior, if you don't get out of here, she is going to burn you both alive!!" They glance at each other, their dead companion and notice the other two have already run away and they back off and flee as well. Some bystanders who heard the commotion poke their heads into the alley and immediately nope out when seeing the enchanted flame.

Rua jeers as they run away, but when he turns to face Stella he startles back in fear, yelling as he witnesses her light. This jolts Stella and only then does she realize her light has been affecting her allies as well. She throws her torch down, stomping out the light with vitriol. Willem turns to Esme and says "You know they are going to be coming back with more, right?" Esme nods and says they need to clear out. She takes Dawa's hand to lead her out of the alley while Kiva retrieves her spear, its a bit scorched and she has to be careful as the man's clothes are smouldering. They move out of the alley together, there are few people around as the fight has cleared out any innocent bystanders. The remaining people stare of the group conspicuously, but that dies down as they head directly to the cracked anvil to gather their belongings. Soren casually mentions that they don't have time to sell George now, they'll just have to bring them along to Stonetop. Rua is concerned that Soren planned to sell the goat, but its not like they have much use for an old and sickly goat. Soren tells him he will be responsible for taking care of it, and Rua agrees readily even though he has no real experience of caring for a goat. Stella has her veil covering her face and her cloak pulled tight, but feels like the passing glances from people on the streets are like accusations. She is miserable from her light affecting her friends and the burn she gave Rua. They make it to the Inn without incident and Soren settles the tab while Rua says he will be right back and grabs Betta to go say goodbye to his aunt and uncle. Willem says oh no and runs after them. As they pack up the cart and start leaving Stella crawls into it and covers herself with some empty sacks, trying to hide from the world. Soren notices her discomfort, and when one of her legs is still poking out he says "Here, I got you" and takes his cloak and throws it over her, adding to her covering.

Rua, Betta and Willem make it to his uncle's forge and starts quickly saying his goodbyes, thanking them for their hospitality, inviting them to come visit him in Stonetop and saying he loves them. His uncle is a bit taken aback at the rushed goodbye and gives him a gentle hug, trying to avoid his injuries. When they part Willem taps his shoulder, gesturing to two men who are staring right at them and walking purposefully towards them. "We should start running." He says grimly. Rua takes a closer look and it is clear that they are looking for him specifically, it seems the bosses are already aware of the fight and looking to get revenge. The three of them quickly get scarce,

running to meet the others at the front entrance. The rest of the group has been blending in with other traders leaving the city, and when the three run up their followers don't go through the gate. They get onto the maker's road and start the journey home to Stonetop. As the city

One day out of the city Soren spots some Hillfolk riders to the south, away at the edge of his vision. He can't place their tribe, but it reminds him of the aggressive hillfolk they encountered on the way in. It makes him uneasy, and he wells on the bad news he previously heard from Garnuss regarding the Hdour. On the second night a friendly mushroom spirit approaches their camp and latches itself to Stella's leg in a playful manner. It follows them for the next day, but as they Stella has been noticeably withdrawn, almost avoiding the sun while pulling her cloak tightly around her. The third day breaks clear and the sun is too strong for her to ignore and eventually she pulls her hood down and tilts her head back to bask in the warmth of Helior's light, reconnecting with him and restoring her faith. On the third night, Kiva sees the bobbing lights of the Nosgalau in the distance. She knows they took something from her so is careful not to fall under their spell again but she is curious and wants to know more about them, to protect herself and others from them in the future. She spends the night sketching the various shapes the spirits takes, and relating her experience onto the pages of her notebook, letting the intellectual pursuit distract her from their hypnotic patterns.

After 4 days of travel that is exhausting but a refreshing break from the noise and bustle of Gordin's Delve they approach Stonetop. The watchtower bells ring out announcing their return on the Maker's Road. They pull into town and Gwann is standing arms crossed in the middle of the road. Rua runs right up to her and moves to embrace her tightly, thanking her for giving them such a warm welcome home. As he approaches Gwann pulls back a fist and slugs him in the gut, right where he had previously been stabbed and he staggers back, clearly in pain. She has a deathly glare in her eyes, if looks could kill Rua would be six feet under. "H-How-How dare you entice her into danger! When you end up getting killed just like your parents you are going to drag her down with you." Rua freezes at this, stunned and doesn't know what to say. Soren steps forwards at this, fixing her with a steely glare and says "Now that is too far, Betta is a grown woman and capable of making her own choices." She steps up to Soren in turn and says "You knew this was happening, and you let it happen. She hasn't even held a weapon before!" Soren nods, and says "She still hasn't, though she can now wield a shield to defend herself if necessary. Don't take out your misplaced anger on Rua." "MISPLACED!! I don't think so, he is a bad influence on her." She then turns to Esme "and YOU, these youngsters I can understand being reckless but you are supposed to know better." Esme matches her glare and says "There comes a time when us older folk need to step back and let the youth make their own choices." Gwann asks if that is a threat and Esme states that it is just advice. She knows that Gwann will not be placated easily, it will take time to wear her down and she will probably be easier to mollify if she knows the youth in question are more responsible. Esme invites her to the Chronicle so they can share a drink and Esme can fill her in on all the details on how Betta and Rua acted on the trip. Gwann mutters and is still furious, throwing a sharp look at Betta before stomping off grumbling.

While the confrontation is going down Stella slips away from the group, heading to the Pavilion of the Gods and spends some time before the altar of Helior, basking in his light. Then she returns to the orphanage and Granny Eadna welcomes her home warmly and asks her about the trip. "Did the trading go well?" Stella stutters and stumbles on her words a bit, and goes quiet before

completing any full sentences. Eadna nods gently and says she will go and take care of some chores, but it is good to have Stella back to help with the kids. Stella perks up at that and asks after them. "are they well?" Eadna says "Yeah, for the most part. Can you take the time to sit and chat with Ridney? She has been extra eery recently, she is talking more and more about her imaginary friends and she is getting much too old for that." Stella nods and says that she will, after she has something to eat. "Take your time, you are coming from a long trip so make sure you get some rest."

After Gwann stomped off and the curious crowd started to disperse, Soren gently puts his arm around Dawa's shoulders and starts to guide her around the village. He shows her the landmarks of the cistern, the Stone, where to get water and the stream so she can bathe. All the time, introducing her to villagers they pass. The villagers clearly notice she is from Barrier Pass by her dress, and are a little discomfited by her strangeness and orange eyes, but Soren is polite so they are in return. He finishes the tour at the Public House, arranging for her to stay there and leaving her with a bowl of hearty stew. Kiva takes her notes on the Nosgalau and compares them against her parent's library, trying to understand more about the spirits and how they work. Esme looks for Stella after settling in and finds her in the Pavilion of the Gods. Stella is not quite as miserable as before, but still has some lingering melancholy around her. Esme puts a gentle hand on her shoulder "Still beating yourself up?". Stella replies "Do you ever feel like you are too powerful?". Esme nods sagely and says that Stella has been looking to the healing and supportive side of Helior all her life, and is just now seeing the more terrifying and dangerous side of her god. She was born with this power, didn't have to work for it, but if she doesn't acknowledge the fact that the Sun can burn then she is ignoring half of Helior's nature. Stella nods and says that is what she is afraid of. Esme goes on to say that there are some definite evils, the Things Below want to eat everything and the dark spirits at the bottoms of the lakes are a danger to all. But power isn't evil, it simply is, and you have it due to your birthright. If you don't use it, some other asshole is going to try to force their will on the world. Stella nods at this, and thanks Esme for her advice. Esme gives her a light noogie, and asks if she has had anything to eat. Stella shakes her head so they go to get some food together.

End of Session!

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