

Session 36

Back at Stonetop, the party takes the time to relax, unwind and level up!

The last time relationships got strained with Gordin's Delve it was when the plague swept through the village and there was a missed deliver of whisky to the town. Just before the breakout Stonetop had received a visitor from Gordin's Delve, so general sentiment had the town as the source of sickness, and the Delve hadn't heard about the plague and just thought that Stonetop failed to deliver the goods.

While out hunting in the Forest, the villagers heard an intimidating sound from the distance, seemingly coming from the south. They have notified Stonetop about this and it has stirred up uncertainty and fear regarding the forest.

Stonetop organizes its tools by using a crude sign out system. In the building where they are stored, each family has a symbol that they mark where the tool is stored so that if someone needs the tool they know generally where it may be and go knocking on the door.

Since he has returned to Gordin's Delve he is more aware than ever of the differences between the two towns. The Delve may be a hot mess, but the people have a sense of industry that Stonetop lacks. They have a greater tendency to get up and go, to build and create.

Now that the party has returned, they need to catch up on some tasks that have been neglected through their absence. Esme enlists Soren's help to add to the Chronicle the recent events, births and deaths, significant changes and various items that need recording. Before leaving Rua had promised Eliam to check each house in the village for potential woodworking needs before winter and that was not done, so he has to run around and use his budding literacy skills to track things and update Eliam. The orphanage is still running like always, but with Stella away it is looking a little rough around the edges. Granny Eadna keeps things going but is looking worn out, the common area is messier than usual and the kids a little wild. She also picks back up doing sermons at the Pavilion of the Gods and doing rounds of the village to check in and guide the residents. Soren spent an evening at the public house drinking and catching up with various villagers. He hears that the packing away for the harvest for wintertime hasn't been going well so he spends his time helping out in the granary and making sure things are squared away for winter.

In the past, Esme had tasked Soren with integrating Oliga in the village and convincing her to stay. Soren was inspired by the young love between Rua and Betta and during one Chronicling session he talks to Esme about his plan to try to set Oliga up with Dayed. Dayed is a single father to two teenage terrors and always looks frazzled so could use the help around the house, the twins are a handful and might take well to learning from someone from outside the village, and Oliga needs a

connection to the village. In his eyes its a win-win-win, and Esme gives him tips and tricks from her years of experience meddling in the village. It seems to go well at first, Dayed and Oliga have some chemistry and seem to get along but Oliga doesn't seem to know how to deal with the kids, she is awkward and unfamiliar with being around children much. Soren gets the idea that if the twins were out of the picture for a short time they could really hit it off.

Stella is working hard in the orphanage but she also spends a good amount of time basking in the late autumn sunlight, soaking up the rays while she can. She never feels like Helior talks to her, but communicates more with feelings and sensations.

Esme has that drink with Gwann in the Chronicle, going over how Betta and Soren conducted themselves on the adventure. Esme tries to impress upon her the responsibility with which they acted in Gordin's Delve, and their responsibility as elders to step back and allow the younger generation to forge their own path. Gwann is somewhat receptive, but Esme gets the feeling that she will not really change her perspective on Rua and his relationship with Betta unless she has some more respect in the village. Gwann thinks poorly of Rua and is worried that he will tarnish the image of her family and drag Betta down. Esme then subtly hints that Betta would be an ideal candidate for the maiden's role in the winter festival, and Gwann's eyes get a glimmer in them when thinking about it.

Thinking about how to keep Rhan and Shan occupied, Soren goes to Granny Eadna for advice about getting them out of the house for a few hours a day. They put their heads together and decide that getting the twins to lead the village children in some small tasks like collecting tinder at the eaves of the forest, or mushroom picking in the shade of the old Maker's wall outside Stonetop. Soren knows they won't just do this when asked, but he notices the twins are interested in the stories he tells in the evenings at the public house. When he has their rapt attention in the story of how he seduced his way into one of the hillfolk tribes he drops the story on a cliffhanger, taking a drink and moving to leave the building. Rhan and Shan start to pester him for the story and he brushes them off, but eventually relents to tell the story if they helped guide the other children in gathering deadwood at the forest's edge the next day. They grumble a little bit but ultimately agree, and he manages to keep this con running for multiple days, interrupting the story at tense points to bait them into working more and keeping them out of the house so Dayed and Oliga get to spend some quality time together

One of the villagers had a miscarriage recently, Asha who is the cousing of Helva. Esme has set her up to assist in the Orphanage as a way to grieve for her loss, and help Stella and Eadna out in keeping things running. Stella is there with Eadna when Asha makes her first appearance. Asha has mousy brown hair that curls around her ears with freckles and clear eyes and Stella recognizes her from the Pavilion of the Gods. Asha nervously steps in and says "I heard there is a lot to do around here, and I am done my chores and thought I would offer to help out." Stella perks up a little at that and asks "Who told you that?" Asha says that she was at the public house and chatting with Esme and the topic came up. Stella hmms at this, but says that there is a lot to do but they have a handle on it. There is an awkward silence that falls, until Eadna steps in and asks Asha what the visit is about. Asha mentions she has time and is looking to help out and Eadna grabs her sleeve and pulls her into the kitchen saying "There is a lot of scrubbing to do, and my old hands do not have the strength they used to." Asha helps for a couple hours, she seems to get

along with Eadna just fine but is awkward around Stella. For her part, Stella mostly ignores Asha and tends to her own duties. At the end of the day when Asha is leaving she says goodbye to Eadna she says "see you tomorrow." A few days of this pattern goes on, with Asha helping out here and there, maybe entertaining the kids or doing some cleaning. She picks up on that Stella isn't happy with her presence, but gives her some space and flashes a quick smile her direction from time to time.

Rua runs into Mad Gethin leaning against a fencepost, he is drawing patterns in the dirt with a stick and crossing them out. Rua can see in his eyes he is in a less crazy phase right now, he is more stable at the moment. He is still a little loopy but can hold a conversation. "Rua, pull up a stone and have a seat!" Rua says "Absolutely! and I brought you something." Rua hands him a small flask of Soren's whisky and Gethin thanks him and takes a deep pull, rolls it around in his mouth for a moment before swallowing. "Ah, that was good. So how are you doing?" Rua talks to Gethin about how he has been running around and working on people's houses and cataloguing the woodworking issues. Gethin nods sagely and says "You have made the grave error of letting them think you are responsible enough to handle it. Nobody expects me to do anything, so when I do get things done I always receive a lot of thanks like its a big thing!" Rua comments that he seems to be doing better and Gethin says that he has the hardest time with reality in the middle of summer and winter, so right now he is doing just fine, enjoying the sun and some time to myself. Rua asks if he can sit in the sun with him and Gethin nods saying "I think I would like that".

Rua notices the designs Gethin is drawing intricate geometric designs in the dirt, and when its complete he absentmindedly wipes it out. Rua inquires about this, and Gethin stammers while answering "you know how there are patterns that go through everything?" Rua nods, not understanding at all. "There are times when you can see them, just on things, on the ground or wall or someone's face. You can follow the lines between people and places and map them out. Haven't really figured out what it means yet." Rua asks if there are any patterns on himself? Gethin squints at Rua's face closely, bringing his face uncomfortably close and scans his face. "Oh yeah, I can't see it clearly now but there is something there." Impulsively, Rua asks if he knows how to tattoo, and Gethin laughs and says "no, no I don't. And people wouldn't let me near their skin anyways." Rua squints at the dirt where Gethin is tracing the designs but can't see anything, its just some dirt to him. Rua shakes his head and then awkwardly asks "Hey Gethin, I've got a feeling that you want something from me, or there is something I should do. Do you know what that would be?" Gethin sighs and says "I was hoping you could see the patterns too, cause the patterns have been getting all weird recently and nobody will believe me if I say so. I got the feeling you were different, maybe different like me, but I guess you have your own road to travel." Rua promises that he if meets anyone else you can see the patterns he will learn everything he can. Gethin smiles painfully, "That would be appreciated, cause the alternative is that it is all up here" he taps the side of his head. "It would be nice to know that it means something. Can I have another swig of that whisky?" Rua hands it over and they spend the rest of their time together in silence.

Soren goes to talk to Stella after one of her sermons in the Pavilion of the Gods, and tries to get her assistance with gathering some able bodies to dig a cold cellar to use the Dark Ice they got to help preserve food. Stella is reticent at first, she does not trust the ice because it gives her a bad feeling in her gut and she doesn't want it around food. Soren says "Well if you are involved you

can make sure there is nothing dark going on, and I am sure it would help ease the minds of the others." Stella nods, but says "If something evil should happen because of this, consider yourself warned." Soren nods seriously, but then has her confirm she will spread the word. "Anyone who is available should meet me north of the public house, that is where we will be digging." Stella confirms she will, but after Soren leaves she inspects the Dark Ice, trying to plumb its secrets. After examining it with her physical senses and her spiritual ones, she doesn't think it has a will or a mind, but its not just cold. There is a definite magical effect, like a soporific, calming, sleepy magic emanates from the thing. She knows from Olwinn's writing that there are legends about Dark Ice. The Rime Lords were able to form and shape it at will, it was something they created and its unclear if anyone is capable of creating it anymore. Unfortunately there is nothing about using it as a refrigerant.

Soren is able to get the Elder's council buy-in to dig the cellar, but they don't approve installing the Dark Ice until it is studied more and known to be safe. With Stella's help there are a bunch of people who show up to work to dig, but many of them are called away to do other work and while the job gets finished, there is a giant ugly hole in front of some people's houses with piles of dirt around. It causes some grumbling around the village, some good natured and some not. As time passes they notice something odd. Every few days at night there are barely perceptible vibrations that run through the ground that continue for a few minutes then stop. It causes some gossip around the square each morning it happens so its not their imaginations. Soren remembers the earthquakes when they were in Viemrod so he volunteers for some night watches and spends his evenings near the cliff edge, waiting for the vibrations and looking out over the forest for disturbances. On his second night he feels the rumbling, like a subtle directionless vibration, and there is no disturbance from the forest. No cracking of trees, no sudden sinkholes. Rua shows up in the morning, pack full and spear ready, asking where the issue is and when they are leaving. Soren pats his shoulder and says that he admires his drive but unfortunately there is no clear indication its related to the issues in the forest. Rua seems crestfallen, and Soren says if he is so eager he can take the next watch cause he is tired and needs to sleep. Rua haltingly agrees, so Soren goes to bed.

End of Session!

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