

Session 44 - The Spring Fair is here again!

The party is back at Stonetop, falling back into the flow of village life as the Spring Fair approaches. Esme keeps the items they stole from Mael in the Chronicle as it is warding against any possible scrying, but invites Kiva to check them out with her. Kiva meanwhile has been making a bunch of different types of tea for her mother to keep her comfortable, being supportive of her through her pregnancy. However, in the back of her mind she is thinking about finding a new place to live. It would be hard to do her research with a wailing baby after all. There are several empty houses leftover after the Blood Plague ripped through the village several years ago, though they are fairly rundown and will need some repairs before they are livable.

She finds a nice little house just outside the low wall around the village, nearby where Soren and Rua live. While she is looking they show up and start discussing her plans. Rua is immediately onboard and sees this as a great opportunity to flex his woodworking skills, as the roof needs serious work as well as the walls repaired. At first he wants to move in with Kiva, but Kiva is hesitant as a young man and his paramour spending their time in her house would not be conducive to quiet and effective research. Soren points out that Rua fixing his own house for him and Betta would be a great way to prove to Gwann that he knows a useful trade and is capable of providing a good life for Betta. He nods his head, agreeing with Soren and saying he will help Kiva fix her house then work on one for him and Betta. Soren nods, says "Yeah, you can make all your mistakes on her house then make sure yours is perfect!" Rua waves his arms around saying "No no no! Don't say that in front of her!" They spend some time playfully bantering back and forth before going their separate ways.

Soren wants to finish the cold cellar, there is currently just a hole in the ground behind the Public House. Soren recruits Emmer in an attempt to keep him busy and not campaigning to chop down trees in the forest. With him and a few others they start quarrying stone from the cliff face in order to line the cellar and finish it before the fair. At first it goes well, Emmer is very strong and the work progresses but soon it gets very clear that he interpreted Soren's invitation to help as Emmer should be in charge of the project. They butt heads frequently when trying to organize workers and plan the project, and towards the end of the work they have a big argument with Emmer throwing down his tools and storming away in anger. The work got done, but Soren made an enemy in the process.

Stella is taking the time to fully decompress, the journey to Three-Coven Lake was arduous and left her very stressed out. She spends many hours sitting in the sunlight, absorbing its energy and re-centering her mind. Zhiwa has been teaching about various didn't gods to the villagers. One of them, the god of joints and arthritis, is praised by Angrad as the amulets Zhiwa made in their name have done wonders for her aching hands. He gets along well with Stella, and tells her about

Berunaught, the Goddess who is the Protector of Children. If Stella lived in his lands she would be the beloved of her, though it may be rude in these lands it may be rude as she is a devout follower of Helior. Stella waves him away, saying it makes sense that one can be a disciple of multiple gods. He nods enthusiastically, "I knew you would agree!"

The work finished just in time, as they are laying the dark ice in its box and the temperature settles to a chill just above freezing, visitors and traders start to trickle into town for the Spring Fair. Its always a bustling affair, with the first traders after the winter looking to make profitable trips and the villagers happy to be in the sunshine and interacting with people not of the village.

Betta drags Rua to an axe-throwing competition. They have been practising together, since the trip to Gordin's Delve she has been interested in some methods of self defence that keep her at a distance. Betta does passingly well, getting knocked out part way through. Rua gets to the last round, competing against one of the experienced hunters who is really good with a hatchet. By a hairs-breadth Rua's axe is closer to the center of the target. The crowd cheers in celebration, Soren is there and one of the loudest voices congratulating Rua. He is mildly embarrassed by the attention, quickly stepping aside to see Betta and praised her progress, she has only been practising for a few months and did fairly well in the tourney. However, Gwann quickly steps over and grabs his arm, holding it up and forcing him back into the spotlight so he can be recognized. He puts up with it for a minute, congratulating his opponent before prying Gwann's fingers off his arm and going back to Betta.

Soren has been taking on more and more responsibilities from Esme, and this is one such time. She has had him take over most of the duties of Judge for the spring fair, and part of that is resolving any disputes that may come up. Once such issue is a fight has broken out between Orlando and one of the merchants. Orlando was browsing for interesting rocks and/or crystals and found one that caught his eye. However, the vendor was rude and dismissive of Orlando when he expressed interest in his shy, awkward way so Orlando just took the stone and started to walk away. The vendor was not having it, chasing after him and grabbing his shoulder and soon enough it turned into a scuffle. When Soren came upon the scene he found them both grabbing the stone, yanking it back and forth between them. He gets one of the bystanders to break up the fight and tries to figure out what is going on. Once he learned Orlando stole the stone he tried to talk to him with a reproving glance, "Orlando you know you can't just take stuff from the merchants, you have to pay or trade for them in a way both parties agree on." However, Orlando is being stubborn, muttering "He wasn't even taking care of it properly...". Soren was making no progress and the vendor was starting to raise a stink, so Soren went to him and apologized on Orlando's behalf and paid for the stone. Soren was able to mollify the vendor, who went back to his stall without any further complaints. Turning around he tells Orlando he took care of it, but he is disappointed and doesn't want to see him do this again. Orlando leaves then, going back to his home and Soren goes back to keeping an eye on the Fair.

Later on Shoffra, ta rader from Marshedge, hands Soren a letter. Its from Smiling Fransis and it reminds him to not forget about their deal. After he finishes reading it the trader says "So, where do you want this wood?" Soren is super excited about the cherry wood from Smiling Fransis, he directs Shoffra to his still outside the village, quickly making enough space for the planks. Its a medium-sized load, not enough for a house or anything but plenty for a dozen barrels or so.

When Stella has some downtime during the festival between her duties as Lightbringer so she finds the table where kids are being taught how to weave the flower garlands that decorate the village and people. She sits with Granny Eadna to teach the orphanage kids the traditional weaving techniques so the traditions of the village are passed down to the next generation. The finished ones are left at the front of the table to for people to use in their own decorations.

When Kiva stops by the Public House for a quick drink and bite to eat she sees Faruza sitting in the corner with Kutha, drinking and talking together. Kiva is curious seeing him again, getting a drink of her own and sitting with him, asking him how his research is going. He gives Kiva a winning smile "Oh it has been going very well. So many interesting things to learn about in the this land. I think I will continue travelling, return to Gordin's Delve for the winter. Hopefully I will find some sign of our compatriot, who travelled in this area and went missing some years ago." Kiva nods, his story lining up well with what he said last time they met. She says she will keep a lookout and let him know. He nods and says "I am sure you will." with a wide smile. Kiva nods then leaves, and decides to ask the mind gem later what it knows about him. Once Esme knows he is in town she spreads the word that he is untrustworthy, asking some reliable folks to keep an eye on him and let her know who he talks to.

Later in the evening a traditional game starts up in the Public House. Contestants take turns downing a shot of very harsh whisky, then walking a circuit around the room without falling over or leaning on anything for support. Helva, the old blacksmith, is the old champion of the game but retired a few years ago, saying the hangover the next day is not worth it. Esme is able to join for the first time in decades as Soren is handling the Judge duties elsewhere so she enjoys herself, making it all the way to the last round. The other frontrunners slowly drop out of the race until its just Emmer and Esme. As she takes her last shot Esme goes to stand up, but before she can move she passes right out sitting at the table. There is silence for a few moments as the onlookers wait for her to get up and do the circuit, until a loud snore emits from her and its clear she is out of the game. Emmer stands up shakily, waving to the crowd and enjoying their cheers before stumbling out the back door to vomit in a corner somewhere.

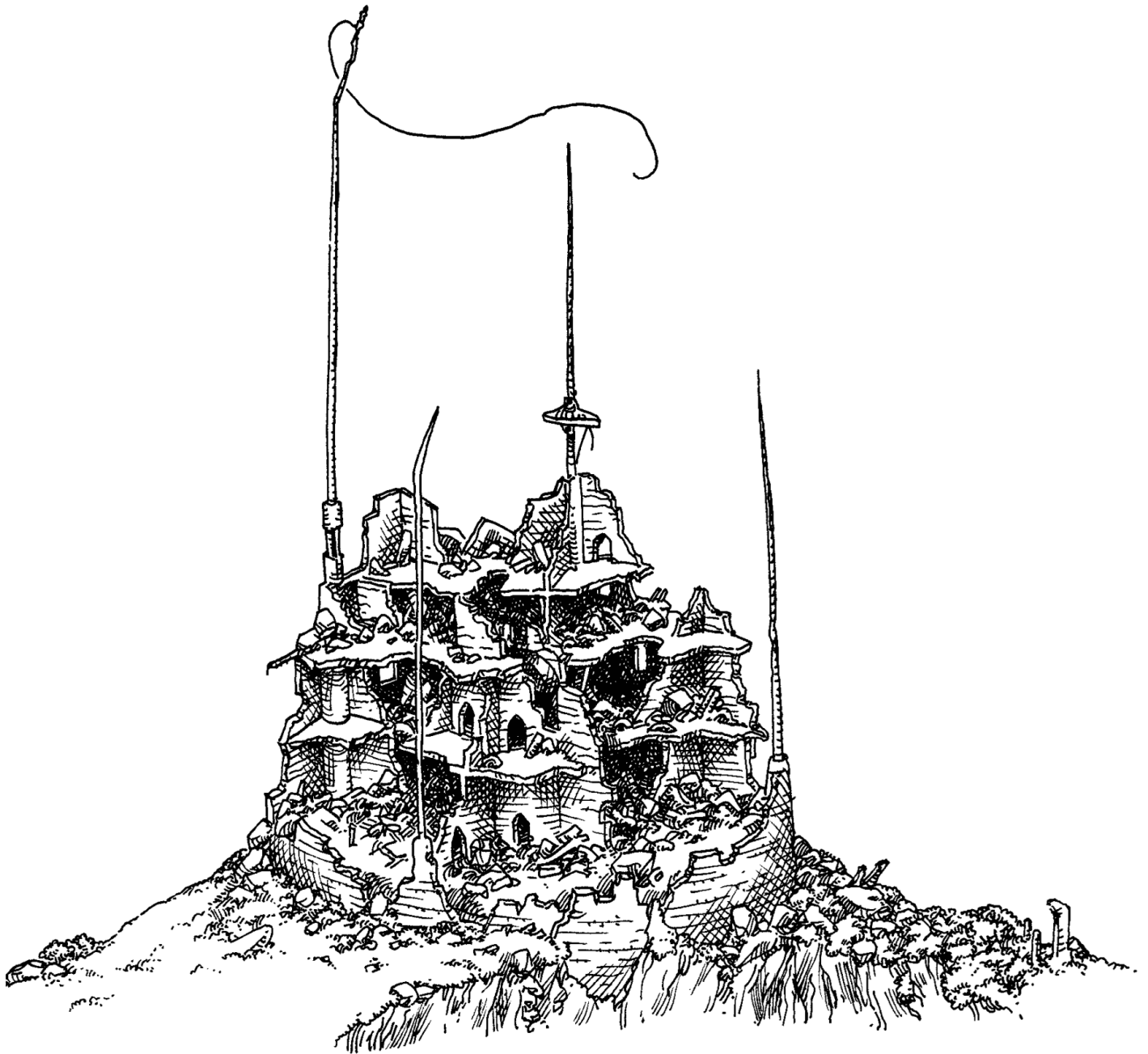
The next day is rough for Esme, she is a little old for that kind of partying and has to take a long, long bath before she feels like a person again. She learned that he spent a bunch of time with Kutha so she makes her way to him, asking what they talked about. "As you know I travelled extensively in Lygos when I was younger so we spent time talking about his homeland. He asked me about the locations of Maker Ruins in the area. Perhaps I should send him your way next time, you have been travelling a lot more recently."

Elsewhere Kiva takes out the Mind Gem, placing it on her desk and placing her hands on either sides of it. After a moment her vision blurs with a pinkish colour as the deep, atonal voice of the Gem booms in her head. "SPEAK" Kiva takes a deep breath, the alien voice sending shivers down her spine. "OK Mind Gem, who did you assist/server/work with before me?". There is a long pause, then the Gem says "REMEMBERING.....RETURN LATER." Kiva lets go and goes about her day. She checks in various times but it is not until the next day it replied "I SPENT MUCH TIME ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MAKERS, THEIR NATURE, THEIR BEHAVIOURS. NOT LONG AGO I WAS TAKEN FROM THAT PLACE AND TAKEN VERY FAR. I WAS ASKED MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RUINS, THEN I LAY IN ONE PLACE FOR SOME TIME. THEN YOU PICKED ME UP." Its voice resounds

through her head, leaving her with a nasty migraine that persists for a few days.

A few weeks pass. Kiva and Esme spend some time researching the runes required for the Aetherium Crucible. After a few days they are able to put together the detailed schematics for how to make the runes into the basin. However, through their work they find it is very detailed craftsmanship required, with the runes crafted of stones inlaid inside the stone basin. They are making progress, but there is still much work to do so Esme wants to journey to the Ruined Tower, where Kutha said aetherium is said to be found. Like he has some supernatural sense, Rua appears with his bags already packed and ready to go, eager to begin. They rally Soren, Kiva and Stella to prep for the journey, inviting Zhiwa along as well. They give

The journey is fairly straightforward, it takes them the entire day but they get to the Ruined Tower as the sun starts to set. There is an outer earthen embankment they must clamber over, the horse has some trouble but they make it no problem. There are several square miles inside this berm, and in the center there is a crater with the Ruined Tower itself. Scattered in the area before the tower are some smaller ruins, smaller in scale than the tower itself. Kiva has been this far, but she has never gotten close to the Tower itself. It gave her a weird feeling. Soren had heard stories from the Hillfolk about a fountain that lays below the ruin, and if you make a special potion from the water of this fountain you can speak to animals. A great Spirit Talker in their oral histories had this power, and they were the greatest horseman ever.



As they walk the distance from the berm to the tower the scale of it all starts to hit them. It is clearly ruined, but the size of the stone blocks and enormous beams of wood clearly indicate this

would have scraped the skies when it was whole. As they get closer Esme's steps get more and more energetic as she feels like she is working towards her goal of getting more info about the Forest Folk. As they get closer they can see a curl of smoke rising from the other side of the tower. Clearly there is someone else already here. After a quick conference they decide to find out who it is today, so they head around the back. As they get closer it is clearly a Hillfolk encampment, they can hear the horses and muted voices carrying over the grass. As they get close the sounds suddenly stop, it appears they have been spotted.

End of Session!!

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