Session 49 - Wrapping up at the Broken Tower

The party is standing at the crater next to the tower. It is late afternoon, the sun is at the edge of the horizon. Esme says that, depending on how fancy the sword is, she might label Rua a Hero of Stonetop. Rua is embarrassed by this, saying he doesn't really feel like he should just be labelled a hero, that is something people should determine for themselves. Soren joins in and says "How many scars do you have?" Rua looks down and says "I have a bunch now." Soren nods and says "And each one of those scars was earned in the defence of others. You deserve to be called a hero for sure." Esme

Ilar greets us "I am glad you have returned, you have a visitor." The group all looks at each other and shrug, saying "Lead on." Ilar leads them to the main campfire and find Fio sitting next to it. "Fio! Its wonderful to see you!" Soren calls out. Rua adds "Is everything okay?" Fio nods, "Yes, everything is fine. The elders sent me to check in, you have been gone for some time and they are getting worried. Both the Judge and her apprentice away has them nervous." "Well, things are going pretty well overall in our explorations. In fact, we should be finished up tomorrow and we can go back together!" Fio nods and says, "Yes, I should be able to stay the night here. I don't relish going back over the plains during the night." Soren is happy about this, he is about to start describing their adventure when Rua pipes up and says "Soren was incredibly, super brave and inspiring the whole time. He even killed one of the horrors all by himself!" Soren tries to wave him off saying "It was a team effort, really." Esme shakes her head and says "The team killed one of them, you killed the other yourself." Fio is skeptical and asks to hear more. Soren is about to start explaining when she cuts him off "Not you, I want to you hear it from the others." He sputters to silence, stunned speechless by her comments.

Esme then goes on to tell the story, trying to talk up Soren without being too obvious about it. Fio is wary of her, she has watched Esme meddle in the affairs of many people in Stonetop over the years and she doesn't know what is truth and what is embellishment, but listens raptly all the same. The camp listens attentively, and they add on the warnings about the insectoid Horrors within the tower. It is certain that none of them will be venturing into the tower to prove themselves. Esme also tells Ilar about the weakness the Horrors have for bronze, though the hillfolk had to leave many of their possessions behind so they don't have much.

After the sun has set and they have eaten, Soren invites Fio to walk with him under the stars. They walk together under the stars, speaking of small things at first. "I am sorry about the others, the past few days have been exciting and they got a little carried away. If you want, I can tell you the truth about our time here. No embellishments, no aggrandizement." Fio agrees, she is interested in what they have been up to. Soren tells her the full story, leaving nothing out and keeping his promise not to exaggerate things. When he gets to the auditorium and the basin of sand he

pauses before forging ahead. He tells about how he left Stonetop young and by the time he came back his parents had died of the red fever. He doesn't really remember their faces, and tried to use the basin to remind himself but it only reflects inner thoughts so he has lost the images of their faces forever. Tears fill his eyes as he tells the story, and Fio reaches out and takes his hand, then leans in to kiss him. He returns the kiss and squeezes her hand, then lead her toward a piece of rubble perfect for sitting. They keep each other company under the stars, watching shooting stars fly by and making up stories of where they are from. Eventually they head back to the camp, holding hands the whole way.

The next morning they go back to the tower, finding the sword in the great hall on the ground floor. It is an incredibly well crafted bronze sword, one long curved edge with runes along the spine. Rua steps forward to pick it up, calling out a "thank you" to the empty halls. He holds it up for Kiva to inspect as she is instantly curious about the runes. A few minutes studying them and she nods, saying they are reinforcement runes. This makes sense, bronze is a weaker metal than iron so they will help it keep its edge. They wrap the sword in a blanket and Esme explains to Fio the story they will use to cover up how they got it. Its an incredibly fancy sword, they have to have a story to explain it or people will ask questions.

They check in with the Badger Paw tribe on their way out, reaffirming the invitation for them to visit during the Midsummer festival. Ilar says she wishes they had a parting gift, but Soren shakes his head saying their hospitality was already a great gift. Ilar is grateful for his graciousness and they part on good terms. On the way back Soren is pitching different names for his sword, it has bathed in the boiling blood of an insectoid Horror. It deserves a name. After some deliberation he settles on The Solstice Sting.

While they were gone Waldo got caught sleeping watch by Cutha and Cutha really reamed him out for it, and he had to do a bunch of hard labour to make it up. The Stone in the centre of the village has started to glow even during the day, the runes carved into it that normally only glow when struck by lightning are glowing constantly now. During midsummer a legend of Aratis is always told, about how she sang the first song. The song lasted all year, and is so complex that nobody can really hold the entire thing

A few weeks pass and Corradin is a day late getting back. He is an experienced hunter, but its unusual for him to not make it back, they don't range all that far from the village. He may be getting older, nearing the end of his hunting days but is a font of knowledge on the profession. He staggers in at noon of the next day, crossing the stream calling for help from the bottom of the stairs. Stella is currently visiting Esme in the chronicle and hear him calling and they rush outside. They find him lying with his back against the bluff and one of his legs looks fucked up. There are bony spurs sticking out of his leg below the knee and Stella immediately rushes forward, inspecting the infection. This is clearly the bone elk sickness they encountered last year so she casts around to find a dry stick. She tears some fabric from her sleeve, wrapping it around the stick and lights it with a hushed word. While she prepares Helior's healing light Esme starts to tie a tight bandage on his thigh well above the visible spurs, cutting off blood flow as best she can and already thinking about going inside and getting her sword to amputate his leg if needed.

Stella empowers the flame, pouring as much of Helior's warmth as she can into it before bringing to his leg, aiming to burn out the magical infection and heal whatever injury remains. The light of the sun flickers against his leg giving him a paradoxically cooling but warming feeling. The severity of the infection causes his skin to itch terribly, but the bone spurs desiccate one by one and fall off his leg leaving gaping holes in his skin. Stella can feel the magical infection fighting her attempt to heal him, ultimately unsuccessfully as they fall out but even with her best efforts he is going to need continued care to fully recover. At some point during the operation Corradin passes out from the sensation. Others from the village have arrived at the scene and they work together to carry him up the stairs to the village, taking him to Honoured Dove for more mundane healing.

After a couple hours Dove comes out and says that he is awake and stable now, if they want to talk to him. "You did good work here Stella." Esme nods and says "Indeed, we are very lucky to have you." Stella doesn't respond directly to this, so they all head inside to talk to Corradin. "I got bit by some fox. Well it looked like a fox, it was all spikey. I was making camp and it walked into the fire, bold as brass. It didn't seem scared of me at all, it just walked up and bit me! That was about a days travel north of here. I cleaned the wound, bound it up and didn't think it was such a big deal but the next morning it was burning like a bastard. So I decided to pack up early and head back, and I don't mind telling you that was the most pain I have ever been in. Then the bones started coming out of my leg and I really don't know how I made it back here". Rua punches him lightly on the shoulder "You are tough! that is incredible." "I used to be tough, but my hunting days may be over" He looks down ruefully at his leg. Esme nods and says they will find some way for him to contribute "You can be a watchman, can't be worse on Waldo" That gets a chuckle from everyone in the room.

The group is worried about this new sign of the bone rot close to the village, though its not the first. Rua is sure to talk to all the hunters, letting them know about the bone rot and if they see an animal with bone spurs they should run away immediately. Don't engage with them unless its absolutely necessary. If they do get bitten or scraped by one of them to immediately seek assistance, magic healing from Stella, or scrape any wound clean of potential taint.

Foruza left the village after the spring fair, buying some road provisions from the public house before leaving. He comes back a few weeks later dusty from the road and Esme studies him to see if she can tell what he was up to. Foruza is great at putting up a front so she can't get much from him, but can tell he isn't hiding anything with illusion and doesn't feel any taint of chaos on him. She knows that Doole spirits are associated with Doole trees, trees that have grown where death has occurred. However, these types of spirits are not related to the Things Below or anything chaotic, but are a more natural expression of death.

Jhiwa sees Foruza in the public house that night and is visibly weirded out by him. He goes to talk to him at some point and they chat in the Lygosi tongue. Jhiwa seems guarded but friendly, and after a brief chat ends the conversation. Foruza leaves after some time and Jhiwa came back into the public house and joined Stella and Esme. "You have a very interesting clientele here." "Who is he to you?" Stella asks him. "You seem to get all kinds of people here." Esme says "He is much less welcome than you, there is much suspicion around him." "You are wise to do so. They symbol he wears, the three bronze suns, belongs to an organization that is proscribed in my country. They have been banished and driven out, but knowledge about why is not widely known. They did

something to offend the Viziers and were swiftly declared a public menace and driven out. I imagine here he thinks he can wear the signs of his allegiance openly but he would face consequences if he did that down south.

Esme inquires into if the Viziers of Lygos would take issue with Stonetop serving a member of this order. Jhiwa nods, saying that if news were to make it south then they may investigate. "But I have no way of sending the information south. I intend to return once my task is completed." Esme asks again what the errand is about. Jhiwa pulls out a delicate mother-of-pearl box. "It contains the ashes of my friend ... He saved my life once, and when he was grievously wounded he asked me to take his remains to his homeland in Barrier Pass." The next day Esme is able to convince the village to lend Jhiwa one of their horses for the journey north. Its midsummer, the plowing is one and the horses won't be needed to haul carts until autumn so its not a big sell.

End of Session!

Revision #1
Created 31 October 2026 01:40:05 by Garettv2_Bigger_Bolder_Badder
Updated 31 October 2026 04:19:14 by Garettv2_Bigger_Bolder_Badder