Session 51

The festival has ended, around the village people are waking up groggily as they go about their day. Everyone works together to clean up after the festival and deal with the regular tasks that were put aside for the celebrations. Kiva has been reveling in her freedom at her home, mostly by not cleaning up after herself. Her lab and house as a whole gets cluttered and messy and it only takes two weeks before she sees the first racoon rummaging through the mess. She names it Oscar. She has also been skipping meals and not keeping a regular sleep schedule.

Now that Rua and Betta are married they need to find a place to live. Rua's home in the barn won't cut it anymore. He used the practice from helping Kiva fix up her house, so he is working on repairing another place for the two of them. Soren and Fio have been slowly growing closer. They were circling each other for quite a while, but now it is clear they are both interested in each other. When Fio is away on hunting trips Soren keeps an eye out for her return, always trying to be present when she returns to greet her and welcome her home. Neither of them makes any grand gestures, just spending casual time together where he tells her about the training he is receiving from Esme and she talk about her hunts and keeps educating him on tracking and other hunter skills

Esme consults the Chronicle for mentions in the past for earthquakes, birds falling and the stone glowing. She can't find anything about the birds or the stone but there are stories of a giant burrowing worm that appears every 50-60 years that rampages through the countryside before falling back asleep. Esme facepalms, there is enough going on without another threat. It has never threatened the village itself, but there are multiple accounts of people seeing it so its probably not just a myth. She then checked if any previous chroniclers had done any concentrated research on the properties of the monolith at the center of town. The records show that it is clearly from the makers, and they may have made it as a tribute to Tor as well, but nobody knows why it exists. There are some theories, such as maybe they needed a great deal of power so they attracted lightning to the area, other more religious sources say it was a temple to Tor.

Realizing she isn't going to get much more out of the chronicle she heads to Kiva's new house to get her assistance. When she arrives she looks around and sees the state of the house before turning back around, going to the public house and gets a big platter of food. She returns to Kiva's plops the food down in front of her and says "Eat." While Kiva is eating Esme catches her up on what she found, while moving around and starting to tidy up the house. She doesn't chastise Kiva, but gives her meaningful looks that she really shouldn't be the one to being the cleaning. They work together to inspect the stone, all the while Esme brings her food each day. After a few days examining the stone and the runes on it to understand how it channels the energy and how it flows through it. Clearly something is not right, but it seems the runes channel the energy below. It seems it goes deeper than just what is visible above ground. The best way for it to be sabotaged would be down wherever it is channeling the energy. She relays this to Esme, using Teeth as a metaphor. The stone has roots in the earth like teeth have roots in your mouth, and if something is

going on its likely down by the roots.

Soren and Rua see the two of them conferring and move to join them. Rua gives Kiva a box he crafted as a housewarming gift, saying its for Oscar. Esme gives Kiva a small lecture on feeding the wild animals before Soren mentions "So the stone has roots that go down into the ground. Like, next to the cistern?" Everyone looks towards the entrance of the cistern at the same time, then go to peek in. It is late summer now so the water would be at its lowest. Rua quickly goes to tell Betta where he is going before he comes back with a full pack of gear, ready for an adventure.

Soren and Kiva go around town, finding some able-bodied people to help lower them down into the cistern via rope harness, how they would do for the regular cleanings.

When they are inside light from the sun only illuminates one wall with a circle of light. Its clear that this is a crafted space, the walls are smooth and unblemished that goes down into the water and disappears. There are chiselled water level marks along the wall, and they can see the water is about 6 feet deep. Stella sends her light from her lamp to dance around the cavern so they can look around. Soren and Rua also have oil lamps to help provide illumination in the dark room. They look closely at the walls for any hidden doors or latches while trying to stay away from the water. Rua has been swinging on the rope suspended from above trying to get a closer look, but slips out of the makeshift harness and falls into the water. Instantly his vision goes black, he can't see anything but a faint shimmer of the lantern light from above. Stella guides her dancing light down to him and in his struggles he spots a circular depression in the bottom of the cistern before his vision fades to black. Soren gets everyone to link together their hands and drops down into the water to grab Rua. He pulls him out of the water and Rua's face is blue and not breathing. They holler up to the people above and they start hauling them all into the sun. Kiva immediately gets down to his side, checking for breathing and a pulse. She starts chest compressions, and after a few he starts coughing and spitting up water. Kiva turns him over to his side and after retching and coughing up a bunch of water he is mostly okay, with a hoarse throat.

After he recovers he talks about what he saw underneath the water, the circular depression set into the bottom of the cistern with runes around it. Kiva has read about swimming, but doesn't know how to do it really. They make a plan where she will hold her breath with rocks in her hands, lower her into the water with Stella's dancing light so she can inspect the circular depression in the water. The light is poor, and she is holding her breath. She is disappointed that there aren't any runes or markings for her to decipher. As she runs her hands around the edge she feels a foot square piece of stone sticking up. Knowing this is the village's water supply she doesn't mess with the apparent button. She tugs the rope twice and they pull her back up. At this point there is a crowd forming curious about what is going on. They all sigh in relief when Kiva comes up and still breathing. With nothing else interesting happening the crowd soon moves on.

Kiva and Esme go back to her place for her to consult the Mind Gem. She keeps it in an alcove, covered with a cloth curtain. Esme recommends she finds a bit more secure of a place to hide it with Foruza around. Kiva nods, then places her hands on it. She soon feels the familiar weight of the Mind Gem's mind brush up against her and asks her question "How can we access the root of the stone spire in the center of stonetop". It starts to lecture her on the architecture of a particular delving, but after a few minutes she realized it is not talking about anything related to Stonetop. It

is talking about something on the coast of the sea, and doesn't provide any useful information.

With the current ideas exhausted the group disperses for the night. Esme gets together a group meal, bringing it outside to have a group dinner/party in the warm evening air. Rua is helping out, he feels bad about nearly drowning so he helps out with serving the meal. He focuses mostly on Betta, trying to cover up his coughing and raspy voice. The glowing of the stone has been mostly ignored, at first it was worrying but eventually people just ignore it as something they can't really do anything about. During the dinner the stone's glow starts intensifying until suddenly a deafening boom of thunder as a fork of lightning leaps from the top of the stone to the next highest object, which is the thatch roof of the public house. It immediately bursts into flame! Esme acts fast

Soren finds Fio and tells her about the events of the day, saying that Rua is always getting himself into trouble. This instance isn't going to leave him with a lasting scar, but Soren is worried that one day he will get himself into trouble that he can't get away from.

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