

Session 7

The expedition arrives at Titan Bones!

As the group reaches the foot of Titan Bones they are tired after the day's events. Soren wants to push on to get to the peak of the hill before night falls, but Kiva is very tired so they decide to make camp at the final circle at the bottom of the hill. They setup camp quickly, falling into the same patterns as the previous night. They go to bed quickly, setting a watch. Later in the night when Kiva is on watch she notices some lights bobbing in the distance over the grasses. She wakes up Rua, who is next on the watch rotation, and asks if he can see them as well. He can see them as well, and recognizes them as the Nosgalau spirit they encountered years ago on their trip to the Stone Organ. They decide to stay awake together and keep an eye on the spirit, ready to wake the others if it gets closer. However, it keeps its distance and so nothing of note happens.

Dawn breaks and they strike camp, but it is soon clear that the weather is changing with heavy clouds rolling in. They decide to take the cart a short ways along the path before splitting the wood into five bundles for each of them to carry. Treasa is worried that the cart will get stuck in the mud if it starts raining so they plan to come back and bring the rest of the supplies after carrying the wood up Titan Bones. It takes about an hour to hike with the heavy load, its a steep trail but not very long. When they reach the top they see the flatlands spread out around them, rolling grasses on the 3 sides, and to the south the plains give way to the beginnings of the Steplands. They take a moment to savour the view while Soren warns not to get too close to the edge. Rua, obviously, takes this as a challenge and gets as close to the edge as he can while enjoying the view. He spots some travellers on the road, a small group in the north apparently coming from Gordin's Delve and a larger group from the south with some horses. The wind move across the grass in waves, but there are places where it doesn't follow the same patterns. It must be wildlife, a good reminder that its is dangerous away from the roads.

Rua relays his findings to the group and Soren makes sure that Treasa doesn't go back for the cart alone, and Rua volunteers to go along. Soren, Kiva and Eliam get busy setting the signal fire, trying to get it large and established before the impending rain arrives. As they work the rain slowly approaches from the western mountains, they grey haze slowly swallowing the landscape as it creeps east. Treasa and Rua arrive back at the summit after their long struggle with the cart. They spend the hours tending the fire as it blazes hungrily, and just before noon the travellers from the north arrive at the bottom of Titan Bones. They point up at the fire and Rua waves back, but soon they continue their journey after gathering water from the well.

Meanwhile at Stonetop, Stella is performing her least favourite of her official duties, leading the weekly rites at the Pavilion of the Gods. It is a long tradition that the Lightbearer leads the ceremonies and Stella feels obligated to perform the rites as her predecessors did. Not everyone is

present, but the majority of the town makes an appearance at least once a month to make some small offerings to each of the four gods. This week it is a small crowd as the village is busy with the spring planting, those not present either working or bone tired from their labours. Kinball is present, he leaves some fruits and a bowl of grains in front of the shrine to Helior. He approaches Stella after the service ends and thanks her for her help treating Flossy. He is looking a lot better than she was before. He takes some of the food and places it before the shrine to Tor as well, praying for the same return of Eliam. He spends some more time chatting with Stella, speaking about how he misses Eliam and he is not often out of the town.

They are interrupted by Mad Gethin tugging on Stella's sleeve. He asks her for a blessing, speaking very quickly with his eyes shifting around. "I feel its coming back, its been some time but I think its getting worse and I would like Helior's help with dealing with it." Stella asks him what is troubling him and Gethin gets a little awkward. "The madness, the shifting colours and swirls, it was gone for a while but it is coming back." He goes on about how he thinks he will be getting better but then there are times when he has to ask people if they are real or not. Stella thinks back on her knowledge of Helior's teachings, wracking her brain for whatever assistance she is able to provide Gethin. It is not traditionally the realm of Helior, but she conceives a plan to give him with one of the relics of Helior she has and sit with him in meditation under the open sky on the edge of the cliffs overlooking the forest. Gethin agrees, ready to try anything to keep the madness at bay.

They arrive at the cliff, and Stella brings out the relic. It is a depiction of the sun wrought from gold, with rings of halos surrounding the central symbol of Helior. As she hands it to Gethin she experiences a vivid memory that isn't hers, handing the same amulet to a young woman and telling her it will keep her safe. She directs Gethin to hold the amulet in his lap facing the sky and she slowly performs an invocation, calling the warmth of the sun to suffuse them and add Helior's power to the meditation. She asks him to follow her motions as she closes her eyes, whispering passages of prayer. As she prays she can feel Gethin's presence beside her even without looking. She feels Helior's power start to flow through her and into the spirit of Gethin beside her. At first the flow of energy is easy and she feels like it is going to well, but quickly the energy hits a wall, like there is something in his mind that is not of his mind that rejects her power. It feels like a barrier of swirling colours and sensations, she tries to push through it but it snaps back and her mind is filled with the same visions. After some unknown amount time Stella opens her eyes and she can see Gethin highlighted by the bright colours, with snake-like streams in the edges of her vision and the chaos gives her a headache. Gethin speaks up, "Wow, I feel much better! Thank you for your work, you did an excellent job!" He pats Stella on the head and walks away chuckling to himself. After he leaves she stands up unsteadily and gathers the relic and lantern. The relic is the same shiny, golden trinket but she can feel it is empty inside, like the essence of the amulet is washed out. She puts the amulet away and falls into bed at Granny Eadna's trying to sleep while staring at the ceiling swirling above her.

At Titan Bones the fire has been burning for four hours, Soren is tending the flames and watching the trail for any approachers. He spots a group of riders coming across the grasslands. He alerts the others, and Rua is surprised thinking they would spend days waiting. Soren cautions him, saying this might not be Garnuss, but hopefully they will be able to lead us in the right direction. It is tradition to meet at the circle in the road, so the group gathers the trade supplies and starts the trek down the hill, leaving Eliam at the peak to keep tending the fire in case this is not the group

we are looking for. Treasa prepares a note, writing "Attacked by bandits at Titan's Bones. Will Fight." and attaching it to Eysa's leg in preparation for the worst. The riders are still a couple hours away so the party takes their time, moving the bags of potatoes, barley and carrots to the Maker's Road. The wait is boring, some magpies try to peck at the bags of vegetables but Treasa stands by them intimidatingly to keep them away. At some point she swears their caws say "Selfish!" as the magpie's settle into the grasses near the circle.

The clattering of hooves on the road heralds the arrival of the riders, a woman is leading them bearing her yellow-tipped spear high as a standard. "For what reason have you summoned us?" she demands. Soren greets them, saying "We came to trade for your services, but first we must speak of a more serious matter for I have grave news to bring." He turns to grab the sack holding the horse blanket salvaged from the skirmish, but one of the riders urges his mount forward and pulls his sun hat back and recognizes Soren. It is Garnuss, and he speaks in shock "Well, I never thought I would see you again. How did you survive in the Steplands on your own?" Soren replied "With some luck, skill and the grace of the Gods I was kept safe in my travels. I hope my past actions do not colour our deals today." He goes on to inform them about the skirmish they found, and how he gave the warriors proper rites and covered them in earth to anchor their spirits and usher them through the final door.

Garnuss listens to his story and responds "I feared as much. We have been out looking for a patrol that went missing and I am seeking the spirits for guidance to find them." The woman at the lead cuts in "Garnuss! These are strangers, don't reveal our business!" Garnuss says its fine, he knows Soren from long ago and he already knows some of the details. The woman snorts, then asks Soren to state what business he has. Soren tells her about Flossy, how he has been sick and our healers have eased his suffering a bit but have been unable to banish the illness. He offers potatoes, barley and carrots as treats for the horses, pulling a few of the carrots out and handing them to Blej as a goodwill gesture. The riders take some time to discuss, and Soren mentions to his group that the fact they haven't refused outright is a good sign. Kiva asks about his history with the Yellow-Spear tribe, how he was initially welcomed and met this beautiful girl, Regan, and they started spending a lot of time together. However, it soon became clear it was expected he would marry her according to their customs and join the tribe and this went against all of Soren's instincts. One night he cut the tethers of their prized horses and scattered them through the camp to cause chaos while he snuck away, and they definitely would not look favourable on him for doing so.

The Hillfolk spend some time discussing, with Blej getting increasingly animated and angry in her gestures. Eventually they come back to the party and Blej says they agree to the deal. Garnuss and his apprentice Lowik will accompany the party back to Stonetop, but she expects them back here in 10 days. Soren thanks her graciously and promises to keep them safe. Blej looks down on him from her tall horse and says "I will hold you to that. If they should come to harm, we will take the price of their lives from you." With that, the Hillfolk ride off to the north to inspect the scene of the fight where their companions perished. Soren waves up to Eliam, signalling they are done and he should put out the fire and come down with the cart.

Garnuss looks dismissively at Soren and says "I did not expect to be travelling with you again. To be honest I often thought about taking one of your fingers in repayment." Soren laughs nervously

and says that it has been many years, he has found his people and isn't the same thoughtless kid that he once was. Garnuss glares at him for an uncomfortably long time in silence, then suddenly a smile breaks out on his face. "It has been a long time, and to be truthful it has made for an excellent story!" Soren pulls a skin of whiskey out of his pack and offers to share a drink with him while he tells how the story unfolded after he left. They spend some time catching up while waiting for Eliam to come down the hill and the awkwardness is banished. Garnuss talks about how Regan found a partner from the Badger Paws tribe, a strong warrior. He cautions Soren that while the rest of the tribe may have moved on from what he did, Regan's father will not forgive him and he should be cautious if they should ever meet again. Soren thanks him for his warning, recognizing the wisdom in his words.

As Eliam arrives the clouds break and the rain that was threatening all morning starts pouring on their heads. They start moving north along the Maker's road and it is a wet and dreary journey. The night is spent in misery, the rain precluding any fire for warmth or cooking. The group huddles under tarps of leather through the night and when dawn breaks it is a weary party that sets back out on the road. At some point Lowik speaks up "Riders. South." and the party turns to see a group of armed and armoured riders approaching. As the slower party they move to the side of the road to make way. When they get within bowshot the rider at the lead raises his hand in greeting and they move into single-file to pass. As they move past, one of the riders looks startled as he sees Treasa and calls out her name. "I thought you went through door years ago!" Kiva pipes up "Not our Treasa!". "Indeed" Replies Treasa, "I have not had a talk with the lady yet and hopefully not for some time. It has been a long time since I have seen you, Braddach."

Braddach pulls out a piece of paper and says that he has business with all travellers on the road, showing her a charcoal sketch of a man with a noticeable scar on the side of his face. "I know you recognize him, Rhian is wanted for the murder of Odin. There is a purse of silver for anyone who turns him in." Treasa remembers both Rhian and Odin. She had shown Rhian the ropes when he initially joined the Claws and his scar is easily recognizable. Odin was an ornery man, always ready to belittle and mock anyone he wasn't required to be nice to. It did not surprise her that the two of them came to conflict. Braddach continues, saying that they have riders on all of the roads looking for him, Rhian split pretty quick and they are moving with speed to find him. Gordin's Delve is their next stop.

After they ride away Soren asks Treasa how she knows the riders. She tells a little bit about her past with Brennen's Claws, and that she is very happy to not be with them anymore. Garnuss speaks up, Rhian would not find any shelter with the Hillfolk, they know of the Claws and would not treat him kindly. The rest of the journey back to Stonetop is a wet and boring affair, and as they approach the village a bell tolls signalling the village to their arrival. Treasa is pleased by this, glad that whoever is on duty in the watchtower is not sleeping on the job.

End of Session!

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