

# Session 8

Return to Stonetop! Can Flossy be healed?

It is the evening, with the sun hanging low, as the party arrives back at Stonetop. Several villagers meet the group to welcome them home, the hillfolk riding in with them drawing a lot of stares. After a lull in the greetings Garnuss asks to see Flossy, telling Soren he will be his assistant. Treasa shows the way with Soren following while Eliam goes to find Kinball. Kinball arrives a little out of breath having rushed over from his work and he updates Garnuss with Flossy's state. Garnuss runs his hands over the horse and hums to himself. "I need honey, lots of it". Soren goes to the warehouse and grabs the largest jar of honey he can find. When he brings it back Garnuss sniffs it, dips a finger and tastes the honey then declares it will do. He pulls out a couple white powdery balls of some sort of fungus and starts mashing them into a large glob of honey. After a moment really mixing and working the substance into two balls, he hands one of them to Soren. "One of the these needs to in the front and one needs to go in the back." Garnuss says as Soren took the medicine. Soren takes the sticky ball hesitantly, asking if he is sure. "Well the sickness is inside, the medicine needs to get inside to do its work." With this Garnuss walks to Flossy's head and feeds her the honey-fungus mix. Soren takes a deep breath and pats Flossy's hindquarters saying "Neither of us is going to like this but I've gotta do what I've gotta do". He works his knuckle into and then slowly eases his arm in up to his elbow with the glob of honey clenched in his fist. As he got his arm all the way in Garnuss speaks up and says "And now we are even", then turns around and walks out of the barn.

Soren yells and pulls his arm out of the horse's ass leaving the possible fake medicine inside while swearing profusely. He runs to the nearest trough and starts scrubbing his arm in the water, swearing revenge against Garnuss the whole time. Treasa is barely trying and failing to contain her laughter, at this point Honoured Cutha pokes his head in the barn and asks her for a word. She steps out with him and Cutha informs her about the guest that appeared a few days before asking about her. Treasa decides to go see him immediately. Rhian opens the door immediately and motions her inside without speaking. Cutha takes his leave as Treasa recognizes Rhian, her memory fresh from the encounter with Brennan's Claws on the road. They speak for some time, Rhian informing her of what happened and the fact that Brennan wants him dead. Treasa asks why he came to her, he recalls several times they shared a sense of camaraderie and she was one of the only people who isn't out to kill him. Treasa says he can ask the villagers to hide him, but its a big ask. She warns him away from Gordin's delve, since that is where Braddach was headed on the road. Rhian tells of how he fought his way through the forest, encountering many more Crinwin than expected and he didn't much have food or water for the journey. Treasa remarks how incredible it is he is still alive, weeks travelling alone through the Great Forest is a dangerous task. Treasa successfully deduces that its not just Brennan looking for Rhian's head but the whole of Marshedge, Brennan has his fingers in so many of the city's dealings he practically controls it.

After some discussion Treasa says that if he wants to shelter in the village, but they have to at least tell the Elders of Stonetop, it wouldn't be fair to put such risk on the people here unknowingly. Rhian says that his worst-case option is to make north for Barrier Pass, or try hiding in the slums of Gordin's Delve. Even though the claws are looking there its big enough he might be able to disappear. Treasa also mentions the Hillfolk, if Rhian can ride a horse they could make him very lost indeed, though they have negative opinions of the Claws. No decision is made, but Treasa comments it is better to have a few bad options than only one. They speak more about Odin, he was always riding on Brennen's coattails. Kissing the ass of anyone bigger than him and making life hell for everyone small than him. As Brennan's power grew so did his abuses of that power. One day Odin was tormenting some bar guest who couldn't pay his tab and it was like something changed in Rhian's head, and he felt compelled to act. It was like gravity pulled his club into the back of Odin's head. Treasa muses that the world may be better without Odin, and it sounds like he did a good thing the wrong way. Throughout the conversation she has been studying him, and while she is fairly confident he is telling the truth he seems to be much more fragile than he let on. She decides to go speak to the elders and see how open they would be to the idea of harbouring a fugitive.

The whole time Kiva and Rua have been eavesdropping on the conversation! They climbed up onto the old shingle roof, enough of the tiles have fallen or cracked so they can hear well enough the conversation being held inside. As the details unfold they look at each other in awe, Kiva realizing that Treasa has a lot more strength and experience than she previously thought. Rua is growing more and more appreciative for Treasa, his suspicions about the elders have him worried that they might just turn Rhian in for the reward money. While perched on the roof Rua spots Betta walking nearby with Stephan with a bundle of flowers in her arms, he looks happy but she seems like she is not having a good time. Kiva sees them as well and she recognizes the courting rituals with Stefan likely having given her those flowers. Betta is smiling along, responding to his jokes but she can tell the smile doesn't reach her eyes. Rua immediately scrambles down from the roof, careless of the noise he is making. He thinks that Betta has moved on and is dating Stefan now and he wants to confront her right away. Hearing the noise on the roof Rhian immediately grabs his club and starts looking up at the roof in panic. Treasa quickly calms him down, saying she knows who that is, or its just one of the village kids. As Treasa steps out she sees Rua approach Betta and Stefan. Rua starts yelling, asking Betta what's going on and asking Stefan what he is doing here. Stefan is confused, and Betta tries to push Rua away but he insists to know what is going on. Betta finally sighs and says "Its my mother, its always my mother. Lets talk about this tomorrow OK?". Rua apologizes for causing a scene and says it has been crazy days, learning about Treasa and the bandits. "Wait, bandits?" Stefan asks, "I don't know what you are talking about, we should keep walking." As they leave Stefan looks thoughtful while Betta glances over her shoulder back at Rua. Rua gives her a half wave, then turns to Kiva and asks her if he messed that up. Kiva replies that she doesn't know much about love, but he spoke from the heart and that is what counts.

Treasa is frozen in the doorway of the house, trying to remain inconspicuous and not be seen listening in to this delicate conversation. Unfortunately Rhian calls out from inside the house "Hey, are they still there? Did you talk to them?" and he walks outside, looking around. Hearing his voice, Rua freezes and turns around slowly. Seeing the two of the adults standing outside of the house Rua waves awkwardly "Hi Treasa....". This finally breaks the dam of mirth Treasa was holding in and breaks down in laughter, falling to one knee just absolutely boiling over with laughs,

tears starting to stream down her face. She hasn't laughed this hard in a long time, certainly not in front of the villagers. Rua and Kiva look at Rhian and smile awkwardly introducing themselves. Rhian introduces himself as Willem and offers to tell them some stories if they visit him. Rua steps closer and whispers "Can you tell us stories about Treasa as a bandit?" At this Rhian looks to Treasa who is finally bringing her laughter under control. She replies "I think some stories may be told, but I would be in your debt if you could keep what you know to yourselves for now, at least until I can talk to the elders." Rua nods, then asks Treasa if she has ever been in love, and how did she know for sure? Treasa replies it was a long time ago, and you don't really know for sure until it is gone and you realize what you have missed.

Stella is spending her evening in the orphanage, helping out the young children. However she is still feeling the after-effects of her attempt to heal Mad Gethin and the faces of the children are all blurring together and has trouble telling them apart. The kids seem to know there is something going on, they keep asking her if she is ok and holding her hand or patting her arm. At one point she finds herself sitting at the table, feeling like she is looking at the room from very far away. Granny Eadna taps on the door and asks Stella if she is feeling OK to meet someone. Stella stammers for a moment and says yes, she is feeling just fine. Eadna walks in with a chair and Lowik comes in behind her wearing her spirit-talker robes. Lowik sits down and introduces herself, saying that her master says it is important to learn from other cultures and wants to know what it is like being a Lightbringer for the village. Stella stares at the table for a long moment, but when she looks at Lowik she gets hit with a wave of synesthesia, smelling damp earth and fresh grass, with the patterns of horses running along the wall behind her and a shimmering halo around her head. Lowik seems concerned at the long pause and asks if Stella is feeling alright. Stella waves off her concerns and prompts to ask whatever she needs. Lowik asks "What does your tribe do when one of your spirit-talkers goes bad? We have an obligation to help our people, but what happens when a spirit-talker only thinks about their own power?" Stella feels the room darken, and an angry conversation in some unknown language is heard under Lowik's voice. Stella is barely able to pay attention to the conversation, mumbling her response "I don't really know, I haven't studied that far back, you should talk to the Chronicler, Old Esme." Lowik replies that she has been told about Esme and will seek her out as well, but suddenly her brows furrow and she reaches across and grabs Stella's hand. Stella suddenly feels like Lowik is the only real thing in the room as her perception of everything else fades, leaving Lowik the last solid thing in the world. She startles a bit and Lowik apologizes for her presumptuousness and shows herself out, saying she will come back another time. After a few minutes Stella stands up and begins wandering the village, ending up at the Public House.

Back at the barn Soren has finally scrubbed his arm clean to his satisfaction when he realizes that everyone is gone. He goes back in the barn and Kinball is there with the horses and Soren asks him where Garnuss went. Kinball directs him to the Public House and Soren stomps out to confront him while Kinball is left behind chuckling. Soren arrives at the Public House and scans the room. He sees Stella sitting to the side, but is focused on Garnuss who is sitting at a table with a couple of the older villagers who apparently are already familiar with him. Soren walks right up and starts accusing him of just coming to the village to fuck with Soren and not actually helping Flossy. Garnuss tries to mollify him a bit, saying the fungus is a known method for treating infection, and the horse was already mostly healed so it should be enough. Soren says that Stella did most of the work, motioning over to her, but if it really does help Flossy get better then he will let it go. Soren

sighs and says he needs a drink. Garnuss invites him to join the table, and Soren accepts but decides to go get some stronger stuff from his sill. Before leaving he goes to talk to Stella because he noticed she didn't react at all when he mentioned her. Stella is fairly unresponsive, giving small one word responses. Soren can tell something is not right, but Stella is not opening up so he encourages her to talk to someone if not him, and at the very least get some rest. He leave to get the whiskey, but lets her know she can join them for some drinks if she wants.

When he gets to his still he finds Rua and Kiva chatting and playing a card game while sipping on some pilfered glasses. They stop talking instantly, looking guiltily at him and he pauses, clearly there is something going on here. He presses them to tell him about whats going on, something juicy is going on and he wants in on the mischief. They are evasive and don't say much, but mention Treasa and her history with the Claws. Soren files that info away for later, but grabs a small barrel he keeps around for test brews and leaves to go back to the Public House, calling over his shoulder for them to not drink all his booze. As he gets back to the table Garnuss apologizes honestly, he didn't come here just to mess with Soren. It was just convenient for him to get a prank in at the same time. They pour glasses of Soren's latest brew and start drinking and passing the time. Soren brings up the skirmish they encountered on the way to Titan Bones, there was something wrong with how none of the proper rites were followed and the dead were strewn carelessly on the ground. He asks if there is something going on with the Yellow Spear tribe that they should know about. Garnuss sighs and tells about how a spirit-talker from a nearby tribe has become a Hdour, more focused on power than communing with the spirits and helping his fellows. He has been gathering followers at Three Coven Lake and it is very close to the Yellow Spears territory. The scouting party had been gone too long, so they had already been out looking for them when they saw the signal fire at Titan Bones and decided to come investigate. Soren shakes his head at the bad news, someone meddling with spirits and not paying them the proper respect could bring something up from the depths to terrorize the world. Garnuss agrees, but states that its a Hillfolk problem and it will be solved by the Hillfolk.

Stella is loosely paying attention, she can see some sort of dark aura around Garnuss, and it seems to recede slightly as he takes sips of his drink. Seeing this she gets up and approaches the table, standing next to it staring at the whiskey. Soren sees her and pours her a glass, inviting her to sit down and join them at the table, introducing her to Garnuss. She immediately takes a gulp and pauses like she expects something to happen...Garnuss speaks up, remarking how he is impressed that she is dealing with her curse so well. Soren is shocked at this, looking to Stella and asking how she got cursed. She slowly starts telling how she wanted to help Mad Gethin but struggles to speak in cohesive sentences. At a certain point Garnuss says "Oh to hell with this" and reaches into one of his many pouches then reaches across and smears a symbol on Stella's forehead. She feels the madness recede from her mind, not completely but pushed to the side for now. "If I didn't do that it would take all night to hear this story." he continues. Stella is grateful to him, he goes on to say that she doesn't know what she doesn't know, and if she doesn't understand right now what that means she will learn in time. With this Stella puts her glass down and excuses herself from the table.

End of Session!

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Revision #3

Created 2 July 2025 01:58:14 by Garrett

Updated 20 June 2026 04:11:08 by Garrettv2\_Bigger\_Bolder\_Badder