

SPRING//GOLDHELM

Exhausted and emotionally worn after sharing so much of their backstories, the Wayless make their way back out into the streets of Goldhelm towards the Dwarven Temple in order to speak with Riswynn Onyxgale. As they leave, Vasira uses her new Hat of Disguise to turn herself into a red-headed human with curly hair, but after catching her reflection, adds in a face full of acne while laughing to herself as she leaves out the door of the Pewterpail Estate...

Still soggy, Vasira drips her way out the door as the Wayless tiredly make their way back into the rest of the city. Various badger-drawn carts roll through the streets as people make their way back home at the end of the work day.¹ More carts pass The Party until they make their way to the main metropolitan area where the lift system of the mountainous layers runs on its hydro-powered cogs. The Dwarven Temple looms nearby, made again of rough uncut stone with the inside looking like a geode

Inside the Temple

As The Party slowly turn and take in the inner structure of the cathedral sized temple, a young teen acolyte comes up and asks what they can do to help. After Phoebe asks if Riswynn is still around, he leads the group off to the side and down a hallway of offices until they reach Riswynn's. The Sage turns and invites everyone to have a seat

Riswynn: *Oh. Many guests. Many non dwarven guests. What can I do for you?*

Phoebe: *Well...Um...We were directed to you by Anbera Pewterpail. She thought you could-that you'd have insight on the situation with all the um, unpleasantness with the Tinpick's a couple months back?*

Riswynn, remembering: *'Unpleasantness' it certainly was. I have many opinions. Is there any specific insight you'd like to know rather than the current affairs?*

Phoebe: *We're here because...it's a very long story but the short version is that we have reason to believe that the um- one of the exiled clan members may be planning to take revenge against Tarvok and that revenge could affect Goldhelm as a whole. So we are looking to get to the bottom of what really happen to divert any violence that may be moving this way*

Riswynn: *That's a lot*

Phoebe: *I did say it was a long story*

Phoebe continues on to regale the story of how the Wayless have ended up in Goldhelm on behalf of the Tinpicks, glancing only over the Marthos cult, and Riswynn's eyes grow even wider. They express gratitude in the warning of the undead army and explain that while the official stance of the Mountain Sages is of course neutral, internally there is much debate.² While everyone agrees

¹ As they pass the spot where the assassin dropped down, Elska very pointedly does not slow or stop to pay attention to the withered stone off to the side

² Who knew they would have their own Hatch Act

that the elements are out of balance (no thanks to Tarvok...) the debate remains in what should be done. Some believe that nature will right itself in time, while others, including Riswyn, believe that sometimes nature needs a little push. After bringing up concerns about the journal, they also explain that the Tinpick's exile (and justification) is truly unprecedented. The dwarf who authenticated it is an amateur historian named Oskar, but that he has never had any formal training to hone his hobby. Having him be the one to authenticate and put a seal on the journal was certainly an interesting choice that has caused some controversy among some of the scholastics within the city.³ Continuing to professionally explain that Oskar is...passable... at his hobby, Riswynn also explains just *why* no one has spoken up or out about the exile. To have called Oskars work out like that would be viewed as an insult that could be punishable with a duel to the death. They also echo what Ora had said- that people were not going to stand up to the injustice because of how involved a process it would become.

Vasira, gleefully: This is such an interesting conversation

Siggy: Do we think he's in what's-his-faces pocket?

Riswynn: They are financially connected. You'd be hard pressed to find a shopkeeper who doesn't have connections to Tarvok... We don't get involved because we are scholars, not investigators

Siggy, almost bitterly: Right. That's our job. I'm just trying to connect the dots

Riswynn recommends speaking to Oskar before anyone else and provides directions to the upper mining layer where his shop is located and suggests that the Wayless could also speak with a fellow Mountain Sage, and the recluse of all recluses, Rurik Frost-Thorn. Phoebe asks where this journal that was found might be located and they tell the group to check out that the administrative center up on the functionary layer before escorting everyone out of the Dwarven Temple and asking to be kept updated on any new information

Trade Layer

Phoebe begins to work on summarizing their meeting in 25 words or less to cast Sending on Berry to loop her in on the investigation while the rest of the Wayless try to come up with a plan for how they are going to approach talking with Oskar without alerting him to their investigation of Tarvok. Eventually they all agree on Elska pulling out a family heirloom ring that her dwarven dad gave her to get it authenticated in order to get a baseline on Oskar's skills. After some debate about who should go in the shop with her, its decided that Phoebe will accompany her inside while Vasira, Siggy, and Harlow stay out front

Phoebe: I mean Vasira, you speak dwarven?

³ After subduing a cough, Harlow's (Raiddy's) voice is just a bit off, prompting Siggy to question when Harlow become southern

*Vasira: Actually, I don't speak it anymore... But Amminia Flowstra does!*⁴

Together they step onto one of the 'down' lifts and begin to travel through the various layers to reach the mining layer. Each carved out layer is about 3-4 stories high before the lift passes through a solid chunk of supportive stone and down into the next layer. The Craft Layer has a busy central hub as well as some larger estates. The Forge Layer is much more spread out and sprawling due to the need for vent shafts that lead back up to the surface. The Furnace Layer is also spread out with the need for vent shafts and the sheer size of the various smithing and smelting that is done there. The Farm Layers are built differently with the oldest ones at the top growing various mushrooms and other crops to the size of trees, whereas the lower layers host smaller crops. Below the Farm Layers are the Slum Layers which house many miners and farmers who cannot afford to live higher up. The homes are very ramshackle and or built together with refuse from mushroom stalks, debris, and even wood. Here the lift does not stop and people have to jump on or off to catch a ride. Eventually the lift comes to the first layers of the Mining Layer and begins to stop again at each floor. The Party departs on that first floor where there are clusters of mining and administrative offices scattered about, as well as some various vendors providing goods and food to the area. *Phoebe sends Berry a message via Sending: "Emissary Onyxgale warned of threat; they'll strengthen defenses. Headed to Mining Layers to investigate Tarvok's authenticator of journal. Journal in administrative center in Functionary Layer."* Finally The Party finds themselves in front of Oskar's shop.

Vasira: I'd like to wait outside, I could not help but cause trouble if I went in

Harlow: That's probably better so we don't raise too much attention

Elska: So you're all staying here?

Siggy: Also, Phoebe has Sending if you run into any problems

Phoebe: In theory you'll all be close enough to hear us scream

Inside Oskar's Shop

Shop is a generous word for the space. It's very cramped inside and Oskar stands at one end of a stone cutting saw. He is bald, with a rock-dust stained beard that reaches below the belt. On the other side is a female dwarf who is clearly struggling with the physical labor she is helping with. She has red hair tied back and is not nearly as stained as Oskar's hair is. As the blondes enter, Oskar looks up confused, and asks what the fuck non-dwarves could possibly want with him. Phoebe looks around the room, leaning into the wide-eyed tourist look.⁵ Elska pulls out her ring and explains in Dwarvish that she was curious to learn more about it and when she had been

⁴ The name of her disguised self

⁵ *Perception Check: 14.* She notices that the red-headed assistant seems to be relishing in this break she has been given. She is very sweaty and is watching the exchange carefully

asking around when Oskar's name had been dropped.⁶ Incredulously Oskar asks Elska to confirm her claim before calling her out saying that clearly she is driving at something and she should just spit it out and the two argue back and forth for a moment

Outside Oskar's Shop

Outside the shop, the 3 others wait in varying degrees of concern and boredom. Vasira has found a reflective surface and countries to frizz up the hair, darken the eye bags, increase the ance, etc on her disguise while just laughing darkly and gleefully to herself. Harlow keeps shifting their attention between Vasira's nonsense and the door to the shopfront and feels very much like they have gotten stuck minding the younger siblings. Siggy is just straight up ignoring Vasira, leaving her to live her best life, and is keeping their ears on what is going on inside

Inside Oskar's Shop

Back inside, Elska finally caves, turns to Phoebe and explains in Common that the ruse is up, and that they may as well come clean and just ask about the information Willow wants.⁷ Phoebe then explains that the two of them had heard about the trouble happening in the mines lately and were just looking for some more information. Oskar still doesn't buy it, asking if a 'Gunther' put the girls up to this and he and Elska get more and more animated in arguing with each other.⁸

Outside Oskar's Shop

Still waiting, the 3 outside watch a badger drawn wagon pull up and a nicely dressed stereotypical looking dwarf step down. He asks if the remainder of the party is Oskar's new hired help and gets some differing reactions.⁹ More dwarves plus a Bugbear step out of the wagon

Harlow: Do you think maybe the Knights would have interest in the journal? I don't know?

?: Are you Oskar's new hired help?

Vasira nods vigorously

Harlow: Who's Oskar?

Siggy: Do you need us to go? We can just skedaddle...

?: That's not what Tarvok wants

⁶ **Deception Check: 9.** She pulled out a ring set in silver with a semi-precious stone inside. She's got many other things on her brain during the exchange and pulling out metal to show the stonemason was not a concerning thought

⁷ **Insight Check: Elska 24 and Phoebe 13.** Both notice that both dwarves can understand Common and are on edge about the lying

⁸ **As they get more and more exasperated with each other, Elska notices the assistant gripping her blade tighter and tighter, so Elska steps protectively more in front of Phoebe and gets ready to grab her own daggers**

⁹ **Insight Check: 23.** Do they care about their job? They are dressed very well and seem to care about their position and involvement

*Vasira: Do you even know who I am?! I am Amminia Flowstra of the Flowstra Merchant Empire!*¹⁰

*Harlow: I'm just here as her bodyguard*¹¹

*Siggy, **thinking to themselves**: If I were to climb up and jump off the roof, would that kill me?*
No? Fuck.

?: Guess we'll just have to ransom you then!

Harlow punches the driver with an unarmed attack right in the face

Vasira screams

Inside Oskar's Shop

During their exasperated arguing, Elska starts discounting Oskar's skill and intelligence and both she and Phoebe begin to make their way to the door to leave. They both feel fear when they hear Vasira scream and plan to turn back to Oskar to ask him what was going on, but when they turn, they find that the shop assistant has grabbed Oskar by the back and now has her blade now firmly pressed against Oskar's throat and the 2 women separate and prepare for their own encounter.

Elska: Oh, now this is interesting

¹⁰ Performance Check: 10

¹¹ Deception Check: 20