

# Mages

**Most of these histories were taken first hand while the Hero still lived. Doubtless all are long dead by now.**

## Ailan

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Unknown

Ailan was not born of normal parents, like most elves. He was born of the Elven magicks, and of the land. One day, a group of Elven sorcerers known as the Druyin gathered together. They would attempt something never accomplished before.

First, they made an elven figure out of mud and wood. Then, calling on their own magicks they tried to bring life to this figure. The first two attempts were fruitless. On the third try, they called on the magicks of the lost god of chaos, Novind. Novind was long since gone, but his magicks still had life in the realms. This third attempt was successful. The figure rose and they named him Ailan, elven for "son of magic".

Ailan lived with the Druyin for 5 years, learning the ways of the sorcerers, and learning his own strengths and weaknesses. He also learned how to gather and hunt for food, and everything else that would be needed for a solitary lifestyle. He was very successful in casting spells, because of his own internal magic. He was also very intelligent, and learned quickly.

Then, on a day exactly 5 years from his creation, the Druyin told Ailan of his charge. (The Druyin were also very able seers, and had seen the future of Ailan.) He was to travel to the Nexus and assist the rest of the races in vanquishing the goblins, and banishing them from the Nexus forever.

Ailan set off for the Nexus. Carrying only a single pack of supplies, he left the Elven homeland. His journey was not an easy one. He set sail, for some of the Elves had taken refuge on an island during the Great War. This island lies across an unnamed sea, far west of the Nexus. Ailan was travelling unmapped territory, but his magic and the stars guided him toward his destination. He fought many vile creatures along the way, and luckily the magic kept him thriving.

Finally, after an exhaustingly long journey that took almost two years, Ailan arrived in the Nexus. People were suspicious of him at first. His skin color was a darker brown than most of the elves. But the people of the Nexus were kind, and finally took him in. To this day, Ailan still fights the goblin hoards in defense of the Nexus.

# Allanon

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Sprite

A small, dark figure levitated in front of the Library. He was about 4-6 inches tall, and all his features were covered by his dark, black robes. He slowly floated towards the door and opened it. Inside, a Reni Scribe quickly ran over to the door, allowing him inside.

"Hello, I have heard that the Scribes wish to have the histories of all the adventurers in the city. Is this correct?" The Reni Scribe looked at the small, floating figure and nodded.

"I will allow my history to be revealed then. I have been recently been getting asked by many people about my past, and I'd rather them read it, than me telling it over and over." The small, dark figure raised his hands to his hood. These small, blue hands pushed the hood back. A small, blue face now looked at the Reni Scribe. The Sprite's hair was amber, but many different shades of color was in his hair. "My name is Allanon."

The Reni Scribe quickly guided Allanon into a small room filled with scrolls, pens, and other tools used by the busy Scribes. Allanon floated over to a seat near the window and sat down quietly. The Reni Scribe quickly rushed over to a desk and pulled out a scroll, pen, and ink jar.

Unrolling part of the parchment, the Scribe said, "Tell me of your early years." Allanon nodded and a sadness could be seen in his eyes.

"My family lived in a small Sprite village near the Mushroom Ring. All our houses were in trees, so we weren't easily spotted." Allanon paused for a second. "I had two great parents. My father was like a Mage, able to cast spells to help our community. He had only learned the spells from the First Tier."

"My mother was the kindest person I knew. She was very good to me, and every other person in the town." Allanon's eyes now showed deep sadness. "This happiness didn't last long. When I was about ten years old, a group of drunken Ogres happened upon our village. Not being able to climb the trees that our houses were in, they just pushed them down. Many people didn't survive to fight. Most of them died when their houses came down."

"A small group of Sprites survived. Among these Sprites was my father, mother, and me. My parents hid me near a fallen tree, so I wouldn't be spotted by the Ogres. My community fought bravely. The Ogres outnumbered us by size, strength, and number. The remaining Adults fought for hours. The Ogres quickly killed or captured any Sprites that survived the first battle."

"My parents were among the captured. The Ogres marched south west from our village, and I followed them. I hid in the trees, looking down on them when they marched. At night time, I spied on their camp while they were hiding. What I saw still gives me sadness..." Allanon looked out the window. "My parents were each held by an Ogre, their wings in the Ogres hand. They pulled the wings off of my parents, and then threw them to the ground. They did this to all the Sprites, and

left them on the ground to suffer and die."

"The Ogres left right after that incident. I quickly gathered a type of berries from the surrounding bushes. The berries I got were nicknamed "Death Berries" by our community. They are extremely poisonous and one berry can kill a Half-Giant. I gave them to each of the tortured Sprites, and they ate them. They quickly died, and didn't have to suffer anymore. I sadly watched as my parents ate the berries and died." Allanon wiped a tear from his eyes, not looking towards the Reni Scribe.

"The next morning I buried all of the Sprites that had died, and prayed over each body. After I finished burying the last Sprite, I collected some food, clothes, and anything else that I needed from my house. I then walked away from the Mushroom Ring, and south into the Eldane Forest."

"Many weeks after that evil day, I met a large human near a cottage. He wore red robes, and wore the sign of Pandora. I was fascinated by his skills in magic, and he offered to teach me some basic spells. I agreed, and studied until I learned them all. The mage, who's name I never learned, gave me blue Mage robes, and led me to his city, Nexus."

The Reni Scribe ran out of ink, and quickly ran over to the other side of the room, and hurried back with another ink jar.

"I never made any friends at first, because I was still sad and full of hate from the death of my parents. I quickly learned any new spells I received, and rose in power. When I was allowed to choose a god to follow, I chose Kyorl, Lord of Greed. I followed him, because I felt hatred to everyone. I still haven't gotten over the death of my parents, but have gotten friends."

"Recently, I have left Kyorl's church and am one of the False. I don't approve of hatred anymore, and am sickened by Kyorl's ways. I am working on getting my aura blue, so I may follow the path of enlightenment. I wish to follow Pandora, but I cannot because I am of the False. However I will live my life following her beliefs and devoting myself to aiding those in need and without hope."

The Reni Scribe quickly finished writing down what Allanon had told him, and thanked him. Allanon levitated off the chair and floated towards the door. He pulled his hood back over his head, and walked outside into the cold and dreary night.

## **Ambrosius**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Unknown

The creature's hands wove a strange pattern, his grotesque jaws moving in incantation, and the Wizard hurriedly threw up a shield, bracing for impact, as he was suddenly buffeted by the powerful magicks of the demon's spell. The sheer force of the attack threw him backwards, and pain bloomed in his shoulder as he landed on a jagged rock. When his head cleared, he looked up. The demon, apparently satisfied that its opponent was no longer a threat, had resumed the ritual.

It was in the center of the stone circle, its hideous form towering over the granite slab of the altar where a young girl, drugged and unconscious, lay chained. The beast was saying something. Lightning flashed in unsettling syncopation with its chant, throwing grim shadows on the monolithic stones, briefly revealing the crumpled and bloody forms of the deluded druids who had thought to summon the spawn of Hell. The creature lifted its sword high in the flickering light of its accompaniment, almost constant now as ritual hit its climax... The blade erupted in blue flame, falling harmlessly to the ground as the creature's anguished shriek cut the air.

"I'm not dead yet, child of Satan." The wizard slowly, painfully, stood. "And you'll not summon your Master while I still live."

The demon howled, and lightning struck, sizzling ineffectually against the wizard's renewed defense. He gestured, and there was a thunderous boom of displaced air around the creature.

The demon sneered. "I have made this world mine own, pitiful mortal. You cannot banish ME!" It laughed in malicious glee as the wizard's face fell.

The laughter suddenly stopped. The girl, now awake, was struggling wildly against her bonds. The demon looked down at her in sudden recognition. Its red eyes gleamed slyly. "But I, with your blood, can now banish YOU."

The wizard blinked, not understanding. But as the demon smiled at the girl, realization hit him with all the force of divine fury. He furiously gathered all his power in an attempt to stop what he most feared. He was too late. In the blink of an eye, the demon's hand struck downwards, imbedding in the girl's chest.

The wizard screamed. "NOOOOOOOOOO!"

Just as quickly, the demon's arm ripped free. The girl convulsed, and the light went out of her eyes, the vision of the unholy creature holding her still-beating heart aloft having been the last thing she saw. The demon smirked, licked its lips, and, as the wizard unleashed his fury, swallowed the heart whole.

Anybody who lived within a hundred miles of that enclosure would tell of a huge explosion that lit the sky and shook the earth that night, obliterating most of the great Sylvan forest, and yet, as rock, earth, tree, even the very air disintegrated around it, the demon merely smiled, completely untouched, and unperturbed. Finally, after an eternity of a few minutes, the wizard collapsed, spent.

Though nearly unconscious, the wizard, his face wet with tears, sobbed. "Nimue... Dear Nimue... my sister... go with God."

The demon laughed hysterically. "Oh, I sincerely doubt it. Her soul belongs to Satan." At this, the demon was once again consumed by spasms of mirthful laughter. When it recovered, its voice oozed with evil glee. "And the best part is, SHE'S given me the power to defeat you!"

In triumph, the demon began to chant in a strange mixture of tongues both familiar and un. Too

weak to do anything, or even to care, the wizard merely lay there, and closed his eyes.

The demon finally finished, with a flourish. "...and so, BEGONE!"

There was a flash of light, and then nothingness.

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The wizard awoke to find himself in a square, lying on the steps of a great building. It was dusk, and brilliant orange sunlight blanketed the strange and yet beautiful town. Birds chirped on the eaves of the pillared hall, rejoicing in their simple life. And, almost unwillingly, he smiled. In the distance he could see the glimmering spray of a fountain, and beyond that, what looked like an inn. He stood up, despite the protestations of his sore limbs, intent on a hot meal and mug of warm ale. As he started towards the inn, voices, drifting on the cool summer breeze caught his attention, and he looked in their direction. A group of men and women, obviously dressed for battle, but just as clearly not belonging to any army, stood off to his left. His first instinct was to be alarmed, but he soon realized from their jovial laughter and banter that these people were not dangerous, at least not to him. The group started heading East, but one man broke away and came in his direction.

The man's appearance was decidedly barbaric. He was of average height but enormous build. Muscles bulged from every part of his body, easily visible through his leather armor. He held a large spiked club over his shoulder, but not threateningly. He smiled through his bushy brown beard. "Greetings, friend. I see that you're a stranger in our land. Is there anything I can help you with?" He held out his hand. "My name is Beowulf."

The wizard took the outstretched hand and shook it.

The barbarian grinned. "Nice to meet you, what's your name?"

The wizard wracked his brain. What was his name? How had he gotten here? It had all seemed so clear a moment before. An image flashed through his mind: A pulsing, bloody heart held in the gnarled fingers of a demonic beast, the imploring look in his sister's eyes as she took her last breath. Despair overtook him, he was lost in a void of undying shame. Then, from the depths, another vision appeared: people cheering as the king rewarded him for the good deeds he had done, the pride his sister had felt, the vow he had taken to uphold justice and protect his people. He suddenly remembered all that he had stood for. What he STILL stood for. Iron resolve was born in him, and he DID remember his name. He clung to it as if it were driftwood in the roiling sea. He had rediscovered his pride.

He smiled at his new friend. "My name is Ambrosius."

## **Anwer**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:**

## Half Elf

Anwer had a rough life, He was born with a Drow father and a Human mother which of course created a problem. His family could not reside in the vein as the Drow would never approve of such a family and they would probably all be killed. Anwer's father therefore took his family to a small city he had heard of.

The city was originally named Sadrach's Keep after an orcish warlord, but a human hero named Garren had liberated it one thousand years ago and made it a place for elves and humans. The city had all kinds of mixes of elves and humans so the Drow father was welcomed and his family taken care of well. This though was not until after Anwer had felt people's stares, everyone screamed at them on the road and people attacked his father. Luckily for Anwer his father was a trained Drow warrior and could take care of the attackers preferably before anyone died, mostly disarming them. His mother, after Anwer's birth, was always weak and sick and never did much around the house, Cause of this Anwer grew up feeling strongly for his father who could do so much and adored his father's heritage, never denying his past.

Anwer's talent for magick was quickly noticed by his father who as a Drow warrior was quite adept at the arts himself, But he noticed Anwer had skill that could be far greater than his. Sadly the father also realized his son was no great fighter with a sword. But it wasn't too much of a deal for the father since in Drow civilization powerful magi are as respected as the fighters.

At the age of eleven Anwer met a half-elf named Darkiln. They met through the keep's mage tower where they both studied under an old elven wizard. They soon put their skill to use in pranks and such and were a real menace for the rest of the citizen's. Darkiln, who was close to a year older, was always the leader and acted very eagerly. His father was a mage and Darkiln often told stories of a far away city named Nexus where his father had served. Darkiln's father wasn't the smartest man though and took a loan to buy his son a robe. The loan couldn't be paid and the man who lent him the money demanded either Darkiln's life or the fathers work for fifty years. For an elf this is nothing big but Darkiln wasn't an elf and his father would be stuck for a long time. This helped the friends to get closer since Darkiln's father was away alot working. Anwer's and Darkiln's favorite joke was to cast vigor on the chickens the near sighted butcher tried to kill. He couldn't see well so he just cut them and let them bleed to death. This though didn't work when two little brats were casting Vigor on it and he started screaming and throwing chickens.

The mages kept their families living close to the keep so that they could study in the tower and therefore the part closest to the keep was named wizard walk. When the two young mages heard of the spell in Nexus they had quite the laugh. This area was also the scene of the biggest fights since the mages where honorable and kept any criminals out of the keep. With Darkiln's father working for a criminal this was all shattered and the keep was easily infested with thieves and such. At this point mages tried to battle the crimelords but could not destroy them all. In the end they had to accept that crime was a part of the town and now also the inner keep. One day the watchmen spotted a Dragon. Nobody had seen such a creature before and many amazed at its beauty and power. Anwer and Darkiln especially fell in love with the creature. The dragon was a white one and tales from faraway told of their neutrality. The citizens dared not ask it for fear of it being one of the evil ones. Anwer and Darkiln immediately took it upon themselves to meet with

the dragon and prepared for this. Sadly to their terror the Dragon was scared away by a band of Goblins lost in the woods. The city defenders swiftly dispatched these but Anwer and Darkiln grieved that day for the rest of their lives. Darkiln soon knew the truth of his father and decided to go to Nexus and train to be a better mage. He swore that when he became a Arch-Wizard he would come back and save his father. In the beginning this was just talk but Darkiln was soon making plans for his trip. Then one night he left, leaving his father, his friends and everyone else behind. Anwer continued life in the city but his attitude changed from a happy and loving individual he became resentful and angry. His mother had died two weeks before Darkiln's departure and it was said her only influence over Anwer was her kindness and love. The father being Drow didn't really strive to achieve this and took more honor and fear to him. It did work for him since he had risen to the rank of Captain in the keep guard. Anwer got into trouble more often and not anymore little pranks but real trouble he even stole from a rich nobleman to buy himself a new robe. At this point his father put an end to his son's behavior, theft was dishonorable. Anwer no longer fit in and his father told him to seek up Darkiln. Even if his father didn't like it he had to admit Anwer and Darkiln were sort of loners who only could function together. Without Darkiln around his son got into too much trouble. So Anwer made plans for his own trip to Nexus. Anwer never did leave for the city. Two days before an elven boy who had left for the city a while back returned, a large feast was held and the boy was put into the spotlight. When asked what he had seen he told everyone he was sent to the island of Falcion where he trained and where he had met Darkiln. After hearing this Anwer changed his plans, he needed to go to Falcion. When asked what he had been trained as the boy answered proudly that he was a ranger. Anwer asked the boy if he could get a map to the city of Falcion. Ten days later the Ranger gave him one to a small city that he said had a way which led to Falcion but was very secretive, and said to Anwer to watch it since the goblins were quite the enemy when you are alone. And so Anwer set off from his home city on route for Falcion the City of Apprenticeship.

Anwer started his journey one sunny afternoon. He walked a long way and finally rested in the evening finding a nice little clearing where he slept. In the middle of the night he was awakened by an angry little sprite who told him he was in their home. Anwer quickly moved seeing that the sprites where quite angry and walked around in the night a long time until he started sleeping under a tree. Just when the sun came up Anwer woke up a second time hearing noises, He found to his fear that he was sleeping ten feet from a Goblin camp and that they hadn't spotted him yet.

Scared to death Anwer quickly sneaked away and from that day he never slept on the ground again but always in a tree (Unless he is in a city). The days after were nothing special Anwer walked in the woods and met different creatures and learned many lessons. One day when he was walking he saw a Raven fly in the sky and as he looked at it while walking he didn't even notice he walked off a cliff. Luckily for him it wasn't a large drop but he rolled quite a bit and when he regained consciousness found his robe all torn and his food smashed to pieces and animals eating the leftovers. Anwer struggled in the forest cursing for a few hours until he ran into a Goblin Battlewizard. Anwer once more had the luck not to be spotted and he waited until the wizard went to sleep. Knowing this was his chance he snuck by him and when he was almost in the clear he realized the Battlewizard was at his mercy and walked over to him. He lifted up a rock and smashed the Goblin's head five times. For the first time in Anwer's life he had killed something that wasn't an animal but a real intelligent life form. Anwer quickly stole the robe and fled the scene spending that night thinking of his deed. Anwer soon got over it maybe because he had

some Drow in him but he after a while didn't care. So one day he stumbled upon a party of elves. Anwer's peculiar look made them suspicious and they captured him and put him in a large sack. The elves were from the city Talmek, a city quite close to Nexus. The elves presented the prisoner to their elders who luckily had met a Half-Drow before and explained the matter. The elves were still suspicious but the elders told them that any drow that wished to "mate" with a non-drow can't be evil. Of course there are other solutions to the whole thing but Anwer quickly noted that if anyone even hinted rape about his mother he would kill them. The elves took this for a sign of love instead of a threat and openly apologized to Anwer who confused got help to pack some food and got a new robe, and was escorted to the city of Rymek.

In Rymek Anwer got the same weird looks from his childhood and quickly asked for the way out of the city. Getting the answer that there's always the boat to Falcion he was overjoyed. Finally setting foot on Falcion after many glares and frowns from the sloopmaster Anwer set out to find Darkiln.

Anwer didn't get far for when he entered the town center placed by a Fountain he saw a mage standing talking to some other people from three or four different races. Anwer approached him and looks at him a while and asked "Darkiln?" the mage turned and screamed "Anwer!" and the reunion was a fact.

Darkiln filled Anwer in on the guild and the island rules. At the word rules they both frowned and laughed a little, Anwer was a little behind in the magic area and Darkiln told him to become his apprentice that way he could teach him a lot about spells and such that he couldn't learn until he came to Nexus. So the friend's became mentor/apprentice instead obviously putting a strain on the friendship they still remained friends. Anwer took the little island to heart and decided to stay there keeping training at a low, Darkiln on the other hand had a goal and trained on and on. After Darkiln's tragic death at the hands of the executioner for treason, Anwer lived in deep grief not wanting to believe his friend had committed treason. He followed the idea of the law being corrupt as blindly as a Cleric can follow his god. After a short while Anwer began training again and left the island which he thought had changed so much he didn't want anything to do with it anymore. Anwer is now training to achieve the tiers his friend and mentor did and also go past that accomplishment and come back to home as an Arch-Wizard.

## **Ariel**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Human

Ariel sat in the Library, facing one of the Renis scribes, her eyes clouded as memories long suppressed came flooding back. "Yes" she said. Attempting a gentle smile at the scribe, "I will tell you of my family, of my journey to Nexus, but please bear with me. This is the first time I've spoken to it in depth to anyone."

"My parents, Aldara the Mage, and Zephinus the Cleric, were both from minor noble houses in the

City of Anubis. They were both Followers of our Lady of Hope and had known each other since childhood. Their love blossomed against the disapproval of their families, whose political aspirations decreed that each should marry into stronger, wealthier families. They were kept apart during their youth but their telepathic abilities could not be controlled and so they stayed close, "talking" to each other constantly, not one thought concealed from the other. As my mother grew into young adulthood her need to be with my father became uncontrollable and she threatened to run away, to disgrace her family, to let the other noble houses know of her oppression. Eventually her family agreed to the marriage but refused her a dowry. My father cut off all contact with his family in order to marry Aldara and the wedding was held quietly, with no guests, in the family shrine.

"Neither of them wanted to stay in the City, disillusioned as they were by the political manoeuvring and backstabbing, the constant attempts for supremacy by the various noble houses of Anubis and so they left, finding the small village of Tar'ned at the foot of the Crystal Mountains. They used most of their gold to build a house in which to bring up the family they so dearly wanted. They settled into the life of the village, my father healing both the villagers and their animals; my mother teaching them basic hygiene, helping them to build barns to house their animals so they were no longer kept in the villagers' cottages; educating their children, always keeping an eye open for any signs of special talent that might be encouraged. They would both be called away occasionally to meetings of their respective Guilds, or to help beat back another Goblin invasion.

"As the years passed, they had three children, myself, my brother Algernon (who, as he grew, retained the only version of his name he could manage as a baby - Allanon), and Arianne who showed a distinct talent as a cleric whilst Algernon and I were to be sent to the nearest branch, in Anubis, of the Mages' Guild.

"We were a happy family, growing up surrounded by love and by frequent hugs and cuddles, secure within that love and within the respect and love of our villagers. There were only two problems to mar our childhood, but they were major ones. Genga, the local warlord, had always levied a tithe on the towns and villages under his protection but these tithes increased over the years, leaving my parents and our villagers on the verge of poverty. We always had enough to eat, though, which was more than many people had in those days. The other problem was the increasing number of goblin invasions and word of the destruction of many towns and villages began to filter through to us. We had been fortunate thus far though. Genga, his warriors and his bands of hired mercenaries, had managed to keep them away from us but we all knew we lived on borrowed time. A fact we didn't become aware of until much later was that Genga had hired himself a mage, a GOBLIN mage, presumably to have a foot in the goblin camp should they ever succeed in overwhelming the Realms entirely.

"One of the highlights of my childhood was my 14th birthday, the birthday on which my parents gave each of us a family signet ring - a black adamantine stone, with a copper dragon inset in the stone and with our names inscribed inside the circle of gold. My father started to tell us of the history of that ring, drawing us close within the warmth of his voice. He told us of Dal'nar Anubis, his ancestor and founder, centuries earlier, of the House of Anubis; of how, during an early goblin invasion, he went high into the Crystal Mountains in search of dragons; of how he found a group of

copper dragons and, after much eloquent pleading, persuaded them to let Cypfria, the youngest and least needed of them, to join him in battle. With the help of Cypfria the tides were turned and that particular battle was won. Dal'nar was awarded for his bravery and was given much land and the City was renamed Anubis, in his honour. The House of Anubis continued to flourish, as did the friendship between Dal'nar and Cypfria, though after Dal'nar's death her visits declined and eventually stopped and the power of the family slowly, over many many years, started to decline. Political machination became a way of life as my father's family struggled to maintain their fast dwindling power until, eventually, all that was left was the idea of power, not the reality, and the House and City of Anubis were once again regarded as of no real import in the doings of the Realms.

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"I couldn't know, on that 14th birthday, that I had only two years left with my family. During the year I was 16 I was allowed, for the first time, to accompany my father into Anubis, where a meeting of the local Guild of Clerics had been called. We stopped overnight in Starrlinden, a small town slightly less than a day's journey from my village, taking the ferry the next day in order to continue our journey. We arrived in Anubis late that day, staying with a fellow Cleric, a friend of my father's."

Ariel stands and walks to one of the embrasures, looking out over the Library garden, not wanting to turn back to face the scribe as she started, slowly at first, to continue her story, her voice no more than a whisper.

"I was taken around the City the next day, spoiled and showered with gifts by our host's wife and her family. That night, however, my father was quiet and withdrawn, a constant frown on his face, and our visit was cut short. We set off early the next morning to return to Tar'ned. He was quiet and withdrawn on that journey too. My chatter obviously annoyed him so those two days spent on the road with him were quiet and tense. I could get nothing from him except that the goblins were massing again, more powerful than ever, and that the future looked bleak. But he would tell me nothing more than that.

"There was no sign of activity in the fields as we neared the village but that didn't disturb us too much as it was late in the afternoon and the villagers would have returned to their homes. However, the first few houses we passed were empty, their doors wide open. I looked at my father, fear in my eyes. "Goblins?" "Perhaps", he said", "but there is another possibility" He would tell me no more though."

Ariel sighs deeply, still facing out towards the gardens, not seeing them, her eyes far away, full of horror and pain.

"My father would not let me go with him any further into the village but went on his own, into a horror that's stayed with me ever since. I waited for his return An hour?. Two hours? Eventually I could bear it no more and slowly made my way to the village green. What I saw there is as real to me now as if I were still standing there. The green was full of the slain bodies of our villagers, every last one laying in straight, tidy lines, all facing towards the Village Hall, their eyes fixed in

death on the last thing they saw in life ... the body of my mother, Aldara the Mage, nailed to the door of the small Hall, her hands cut off at the wrists, the only sign of life being the sun glinting on her wonderful red hair.

"My father knelt before her, keening, wailing his loss to the Gods, his mind having fled as the loss of his love, his life, cut deeply into him.

"As I watched, too numb to do anything, I saw my father take a knife from his backpack and ..."

Ariel closes her eyes for a moment, her voice stumbling slightly as she continues.

" ... used it to slice deeply into his wrists; watched him fall to his knees before my mother as his life flowed from him; watched as he died before my eyes with me too frozen, too numb to do anything. That was the moment, I think, that the red hair we had all inherited from my mother turned to the white you see before you now.

"And, to my shame, when the use of my limbs was restored to me, I fled. I ran. I left the people I loved most in all the world unburied and unhonoured. I didn't stay to look for my brother or for my sister. I just ran. Ran until I was exhausted and collapsed. I wandered for days, staying away from people, avoiding towns and villages, not caring if I lived or died. Eventually the natural healing processes took over and I started to feel stronger, to look to the future. I decided to make my way to the City of Nexus, to enter the Mages' Guild if they would have me, to honour my parents in the only way left to me, by becoming as powerful and strong a Mage as I could.

"I stole or begged on my journey for those things I needed - food, a weapon, a torn shirt or ragged pants. And so I arrived at the gates of the great City, little more than a beggar but I was admitted freely, finding a welcome beyond all I could have expected.

"A mighty mage, or so he seemed to me then, became my mentor. I met and married a wonderful man and we have adopted a son, Tralok. I've been adopted, in my turn, by many and now have sisters, brothers, nieces - a whole family, and have learned to live with what I once saw as my cowardice, although this is the first time I have spoken of it with a view to having it become public knowledge.

One thing that has teased my mind, though, since I came to Nexus and since I have fought in many battles against the Goblins, is that I've never, ever seen a raid like the one on my village, with the bodies laid like they were, unmutilated except for the death stroke. And that "other possibility" of my father's stays with me, causing me to oft wonder what he might have meant. Could it have been the Soldiers of the Holy Light perhaps? Perhaps I'll never know.

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Eventually, only a few years ago, I returned to the village of my parents, wanting in some manner to honour them but not knowing how. I stood before the Village Hall, looking at it and remembering the horror and the pain. Someone had returned to the village at some stage and buried the remains of my family and the villagers in a communal grave in the centre of the village green, and had taken the time and the trouble to erect a crude, wooden obolisk carved with the

names of those who lay below it. I stood before the Hall and found my hand reaching unprompted into my backpack, found it closing around a white rose, Pandora's White Rose, which I had carried with me ever since it had been given to me. Almost unbidden I bent to plant the rose at the door of the Hall and started chanting, using my magicks to coax the rose into life, into abundant and wild growth, watched as its tendrils started to cover the Hall, as it grew and flowered until nothing could be seen except the White Roses of Hope, their perfume like a gentle caress carried on the warm evening breeze.

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With that, Ariel turned back to the scribe, bowed slightly and walked out into the night, towards further battles and further deaths, but with her hope intact and her love for Pandora warming her heart.

## **Autumnfire**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Unknown

"The beginning is a good place to start, I suppose. As early as I can remember, my family was a band of gypsies. I know not from where I came, but I know my mother was a High Priestess and my father a General, they were both involved in the wars. They died protecting one another, from what I hear it was true love...

"From birth to the age of six, I was a part of the Carnival, and belonged to one of the few remaining Gypsy Clans. I learned some basic magick for my act, showy lights and fantastic illusions of anything I could imagine. I was popular at the time, with my act, trinkets, gadgets and charms. We were a prosperous band of carnival gypsies. A little too prosperous for some of the Goblin Warlords.

"For many months, goblin spies were in out midst. Although, it was the soldiers who would cause a few problems. I understood pain all too well, both from personal experience and what I could see.

"Eventually, the situation caught the eye of an Elven Warlord. He promised the Clan protection from the Goblins. Blindly, they took the offer, unaware that for the exchange of our safety, a few of us would have to go.

"Against my will, I was quickly placed in their stronghold. At first, I was just a servant or a page, depending on what I was required to do. Several summers passed and I lived in fear. I tried to hide my coming of age by keeping my hair short and wearing the men's clothing, for I knew my services would change once I was noticed. That day I feared the most had come and I became the Lords' favorite toy, each of them wanted "Special Favours." If I did not perform to their pleasures, they would "teach" me to be proper with them. I learned quickly to know what pleased those men as to not suffer any further.

"One of the Lords was an Adept Class Mage, who was kind in his own right. I seldom received my "lessons" with him, but he did teach me how to enhance my illusions. He was rather pleased when I produced exotic women in erotic clothing. It was relatively fun in his chambers, his excitement unsuppressed by bouncing around the illusions like a small child with a new toy." She grinned wildly.

"By this time I was 13 summers old and I looked to be 20. I had spent my extra time becoming acquainted with the underground network of servants and guards. Shameful as I was, I used myself and my body to escape their stronghold by the underground network and with the help of my illusions. I had never felt so relieved and free, but I still had a heavy heart...

"A few months passed before I stumbled upon a Secret Society of Blood Guild members. The name I am unable to disclose for fear they would find me one day and become one of their "Wells"... A name which they gave to their victims of empowerment.

"They taught me some useful magick, as well as blood magick. Basic magick, such as shielding and magickal redirection... For blood magick, I would have to drain a person of all their strength, though leaving them with enough energy to keep them alive until they were useless. While they were alive, we would take the energy of their pain from them. They would basically be tortured to the point their minds would either be broken or go numb to any kind of pain. I promptly learned to block out what I saw to keep my own sanity or I would risk becoming one of them.

"My immunity caught up with me when I was told to torture someone I knew from my early childhood. I did what I was told and after that I spent many a sleepless nights, trying to forget. I consumed a lot of energy to keep myself from dreaming. Other mages became aware of this weakness and tried to exploit it.

"The Guildmaster caught news of this and made no effort to hide my disgrace. I received my daily thrashings, it was both physical and magickal. Although, they did not take any of my energy, they still allowed me to suffer greatly.

"A few weeks went by and finally it was over. It was time for them to move on and they were going to leave me behind. I prepared myself for survival, but I realized that there was a way for me to live without having to stay there and wait for death.

"I planned to somehow change and redirect some of the gate power to my own then I would have been able to create my own spell. I used the sporadic magick that leaked from the gate itself and created my own. I am surprised it worked and I survived, but I am still unsure as to how it worked. I am even more unsure as to where the Blood Guild is now...

"I would have used a teleport spell, but it was unpredictable. I was too weak and too spent to either fend for myself in a situation of certain death or in a place I did not know. So I summoned my own gate spell and ankored it to a place I had been to before, here, in Nexus.

"Once I arrived, I knew I could start from new. In which I was reborn into my name, Autumnfire. The Night-Wolf within me died along with my past.

"This place, Nexus, is rich with life and diversity, never take it for granted... I had spent a few weeks helping out the locals and meeting new people and it was not long before I met Tyrin. He was the one who showed me a different life from the one I had known and been living. He showed me kindness and taught me how to love. It took me almost 19 years for me to learn the meaning of love..." She let a single tear roll down her cheek before continuing. "The rest I wish not to discuss..."

"I have become a new person since I have found myself here. Many things have changed since I was a small child among the gypsies... However, that is to be expected. Even though I have lost the family which I knew, I have acquired a new one..." Autumnfire smiled wickedly and got up from her seat. "There is not much else to say, I am afraid" She said as she walked away.

## **Azara**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Half Elf

My memories were happy ones. Mama was a full elf, and Daddy was a half-elf. We lived in a peaceful valley away from the villages of elves and humans who shunned them for intermarrying. We had a cottage filled with love, and I had a real bed. One night it got especially cold, and when I awoke, I was surprised to find my parents still in bed. I tried to wake them up but they stayed asleep. Then I tried harder, and when they still didn't wake I got a bad feeling deep inside. No matter what I did, I could not wake them. Then I saw these awful welts on their feet, and the bad feeling got worse. When I saw the first crawly thing come out of Daddy's boot, I ran to the kitchen and got a black frying pan. I hit the crawly thing as hard as I could but it was stronger than I thought and I was weak. I hit it again and again, and then there was more of them. I hit them and hit them and kept hitting them even long after they were all dead. I hit them till they were just dust and I could not lift the frying pan for another hit cause I was so exhausted. I found out many years later that the crawly things were called scorpions. I knew my parents were dead but I didn't know what to do. There was nobody alive in the whole valley except me.

After a few days, a horrible smell started to come from my parents room. I knew I needed to bury them, but they were too heavy for me to lift or drag. I took everything I could out of out cottage, and burned it. I cried till I was ankle deep in a puddle of my own tears. I had no place to live after that, and not much food, and it was so very cold! I used my frying pan as a shovel, and dug a small cubby right next to rock wall, and covered myself with blankets and leaves. When the food ran out, I ate berries and roots and drank water from a stream. I was always hungry, but I managed to stay alive. I was five years old, cold, hungry, and I missed my parents, and I was scared of just about everything.

One day, when I was six, I found tracks in the mud. I thought I was saved. I thought they were elves, or humans, and I followed them at a run. But when I got close to their camp I heard grunting and snorting and a lot of laughter that did not sound human or elven either. I approached more cautiously and quietly. They were goblins, and they had a human captive. They had already eaten his legs, and cut off his hands, but they were keeping him alive so their meat would stay fresh, and so they could torment him. They were forcing him to eat some stew made out of parts of his own body, and laughing at his helplessness and disgust. What could I do? I could not rescue him. I could not kill the goblins. And I could not just leave him there...like that.

I ran away quiet as a mouse. Then I got a peach from a tree I knew. Inside the peach pit is a seed that looks like an almond...except its not. I got a few of those seeds, and went back to the goblin camp at night. Then, I crept up to the captive human and put the seeds in his mouth. He looked at me, and started chewing. Those seeds are bitter as can be and deadly poison, and he knew, and kept chewing, and swallowed it all. Then he wispered thank you and told me to run away. I never knew his name.

The next year, I saw goblin tracks again, but by then, I knew what they were. I followed carefully. This time, they had killed a mountain lion. When I backtracked from where they were, I found the cougar's cub. He was just a ball of fur and fury, with tiny teeth. I could not just leave him to starve or be eaten by some bigger animal, so I sort of adopted him and named him Smoke. For the first two years, I took care of him, fed him, played with him. We were all the friends and family each-other had. After he got big and strong, he started taking care of me. One time I got my clothing caught on a gnarly bush, and Smoke faced down a full grown grizzly while I got free.

When I was thirteen, we started taking little trips to other places outside the valley. We went farther and farther away. When I was fourteen, we ran across a hunting party of true elves. I was so excited I jumped and screamed and waved! But they didn't see a happy excited girl. They saw a small elven girl screaming and waving, and a full grown cougar just a few feet away. Seconds later there were four feathers shafts in Smoke, and he was dead. I cried for a whole month after that. I refused to talk and hardly ate anything in the elven village. They were very sorry but there was nothing they could do to bring Smoke back. Eventually, I sort of forgave them. They had meant well, and it had been an honest mistake.

They taught me many things, reading, magic, manners, how to use a bow, and they enchanted my hair, so it would be emerald to match my eyes. They used to tell me I was the most beautiful girl in generations, but I always just thought they were still trying to make me feel better after what happened to Smoke.

Lots of the young elven men wanted to marry me....or something, but I could not bring myself to stay there, and when I reached eighteen, I asked them to bring me to some other place. They brought me here...to the Nexus, and now this is my home.

**Cephas**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Human

So, you want to know something of my family's background. The Vearda'lin lineage goes back centuries to the time the Daer'lin were a powerful race, or so it has been told.

It has been passed down throughout my ancestors that our family is direct descendants of Maanaa the Mistress of Magic. I have always heard these stories since I was but a small child, and I believe that these stories have led to my interest in the mystical arts.

My Father was a strong believer in the harmony of the races, but not to the point of interracial marriages. My Father's family was torn apart when his brother, Erskin, married an Orc woman, and I will always remember the sad days of Father as he talked of this. But from this marriage my cousin Sam was born and he and I remain forever bonded in our common goals. It is upon these same pages you may read of his great abilities as a Palladin of Aalynor's.

Therefore, it is of no surprise that the Human blood runs strong in my veins as it does in my brother Cad. From our early days as children Cad and I grew strong together, and we often talked late into the night of how we would both find the truth in our own ways. The truth being are we truly descendants of Maanaa.

So, Cad and I vowed to each other to one day combine the forces of our talents, his being his great skill with the bow and his uncanny ability to track the horde. Mine being the knack of combining known magic into new stronger magic that would someday serve our interest in finding the truth.

We had always heard of a secret vault where the records of Time have stored, ever since the Battle of the Gods raged throughout the Realms. Rumors have it that Plekto had discovered the records of the Daer'lin and had hidden them in a secluded vault in the mountains of the Realm. It was shortly after that Tilnar struck down Plekto and the whereabouts of this secret place have been lost forever.

It is to this great task that I commit my life, to find the hidden records of the Daer'lin and prove that my family roots go all the way to Maanaa. And as my Father always said, "There is Good in everyone", and that one day he hoped that Tilnar would again be reunited with his brother Aalynor and that Goodness and Mercy would reign over the Nexus until the end of time.

So, now I shall be about my business, to find the secret hiding place of Pleko, and it is with this hope of my Father's that something I might find in the Daer'lin records would bring my Father's wish to fruition.

## **Darkness**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

Years ago, a baby Reni was born in the deep forest beyond the Sea of Tears. The sky darkened as he was being delivered into the world. Mountains of black cloud descended, purring black rain onto the land. The occasional bolts of lightning cracked the sky momentarily before releasing their destruction upon the innocent forest. Before the baby could cry his first, a lightning bolt struck the house and set it on fire. Just as the blaze started to consume the roof, the black rain stopped, and the clouds disappeared as fast and mysterious as they came.

The neighbors raced over to put out the fire, but there was not much they could do. The baby, burnt and darkened with smoke, was the only one survived. He was given to a nearby couple, who named him Darkness to record the events of his birth.

As he grew older, Darkness became interested in the field of magic. He could often be found sitting in silent at late night, trying to focus his inner forces in ways that he was told possible. At other times, after his work on the family's farm, he pondered about the tales of the city of Nexus, from which his ancestors had arrived.

When he turned seventeen, Darkness decided to search for the mystical city. He and a number of young and curious Renis set sail on the Sea of Tears, heading north. After a year of searching, they arrived at Port city. When they heard that Nexus was just beyond the forests at the North, their joy alone gave them enough strength to continue the journey.

Arriving at Nexus the next day, they found that they were the only Renis in the city. They also found out that the Renis was thought to be destroyed. After spending time to grieve for the death of the ancient Renis, they decided to send two of them back home to inform the others. The rest of them stayed for the hope of reestablishing their present as Nexus.

At the city, Darkness found opportunities every where he went. He joined the mage guild as soon as he found it, and began to learn to use the ancient spells taught to him. As an apprentice, he walks about the city every day, cleansing the criminals off its streets. To further his experiences, he also started to go beyond the city's gates, seeking for the occasional lone goblins.

Within a week, he was appointed the title of Mage. As a mage, Darkness no longer waited for those lone goblins, but with his new found friends, he sought to push the goblins away from the perimeters of his new home city.

Then the bad news came. A shipment of Cleric supplies was hijacked. A number of Nexus's adventurers set out to recover them, and Darkness was invited to go with them. The party included the Human Nightblade Abuk, the Human Holy Warrior Bocker, the Human Mage Cephas, the Ogre Priest Devin, the Half- Elven Nightblade Garpenlov, the Gnomish Priest Gifford, the Elven Priest Lordewok, the Elven Scout Manfredorf, the Human Wizard Reverend, the Half-giant Dark Knight Wicked, and of course, Darkness himself. The God of Light, Aalynor, was also present to guide the adventurers.

Led by Lordewok, the party stepped through the Red portal that Aalynor had opened. Immediately, they could feel the pressure from the Goblin Guards and Warlocks. The group scattered to different areas, and was almost destroyed. Everyone teleported back to Nexus. For those who

could not teleport themselves, Lordewok helped them.

Regrouped in Aalynor's temple, the adventures decided that it was in their best interest to stay together and made their stand in each area. Once again, they stepped through the portal. This time, they were more successful. Room by room, they conquered the goblins until they found the supply wagon. After defeating the Goblin Commander and acquired the key to the wagon, they recovered the precious supplies.

Just as they prepared to celebrate, they heard faint Goblin laughs and painful screams echoing from the North. They realized that Kesmai, the monk in Lucis's dream, could be true, and that he could be alive. Once again, they headed north. After clearing out the goblin guards and warlocks along the way, they arrived at the source of the sounds.

In front of them was the most terrible scene they had seen. The remaining of Kesmai's body could be seen roasted on the open fire. Some part of his body was missing, as if he was eaten by the goblins. Filled with rage, the adventurers slaughtered the goblins and buried the remain of the courageous monk. With sadness, they returned to Nexus. The city welcomed them back with great awards.

For Darkness, he came back to his guild and was appointed the title of Wizard. But for him, the greatest award of all was the feeling of joy. The joy when one knows that he has served his city well.

## **Deriseus**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Dark Elf

You can almost hear Deriseus's words echo into your mind.

My name Deriseus. I'm of the Dark-Elf Breed. I have no last name. I was born then adopted into a family that could support me in Tilnars Vein. I'm sixty years old. Now that I have introduced myself. I can begin my story.....

As I set the bloodied Kleto on to a small cot in the healing hand after I teleported him from his almost certain death bed. I began healing the small boy along with the tenders of the Hand. The human boy looked at me. And asked me why I had saved him. I told him simply that I was not going to let him die. It would be rude and unkind. He smiled the best he could. And he asked me if I would tell him about myself. So I felt obliged to tell him what I could.

So I began.....

Tilnars Vein is a cruel and harsh place to live. The inhabitants for the most part follow Kyorl. And those who don't are dubbed different. And therefore are treated different. I am one of those Drow. My adopted parents were two drow with a single dream that they carried on with them. They

wanted to protect Nexus. They wanted to show themselves to be good. And in all reality they were good. So they taught me to be good.

They trained me day and night for the first 59 years of my life to become one of the Magi. They believed the only way that they could become heroic was to breed a hero. So they did their best. And from this they wrought me, the boy named Deriseus.

On my 60th birthday, I was knocked out by my parents and later told the missing parts of which would be here by Felicity. My parents had apparently taken me to a caring woman, by the name of Felicity. The woman took me and quickly did her best to transport me to Falcion without being attacked by drow.

When I awoke I was given the basic essentials needed by a mage to grow stronger and quicker. Not knowing what to do I studied the spells I was given, put on my robes, bought a small sling and some small stones, and I began to wander about Falcion. What I found was a deep dark hole. I went inside. I was immediately attacked by sewer beasts and began cutting them down with my magicks. And so began my training.

I became strong very quickly. And I did it for the most part on my own. Joining hunts when asked and taking monsters on where I could alone. I quickly became tier 4 and was ready to train to 5. But I realized I must join the mages guild to further my progress. I spoke to a man by the name of Tyne. As soon as we had met he eyed me oddly and told me that he must be careful among all drow. It was at this time I learned that my life would go on like this for the rest of my future. And I accepted this as best as I could. Fortunately Tyne believed me ready to join the guild and accepted me. Before long I took place at tier 7 and readied my things and took the sloop to Nexus.

I followed the road for a while till I came upon the gates of Nexus. I wandered about the massive city for seemingly hours. Until I came upon my guild and I met another mage. This mage's name was Zany a small sprite. Extremely funny I might add, took me for a trip around Nexus. He showed me around and I yearned to travel more. I quickly made my way to the Eastern Gate of Nexus. I opened it, turned around, closed it. And began to wander off. I traveled through a camp and through a set of badly melted boulders and I pulled my robes tighter to me and I climbed up the side of the mountain to see what I might find.

To my dismay I heard a large crash and distant cries of pain and requests for help. I rushed to see what I could and I hid behind a set of trees and looked into a small camp of soldiers. What I saw next was horrific. I saw you (Kleto). You were being attacked by a drow of all things. I couldn't believe my eyes. And then I saw you impaled on a sharpened tree stump. I hid myself as best I could and slowed my breathing till I saw the Ogres and the Drow leave the area. I feared for your life. When I had figured that the beasts were gone. I made my way over to you. I hacked at the stump until it let you free. I did my best to pull the wooden shards out of you. And then I heard a marching and the sounds of voices. With haste I casted a teleport spell on you. And then myself and came and found you and brought you here. And here we are.

From that day forward little did Kleto or I know it, but we became quite good friends. And helped each other in battle as he gained his tiers and quickly caught up and exceeded me greatly in

strength. I found Felicity soon after this and made a good friend of her. And she told me of how she travelled through the woods to save me. And I was most grateful of her.

And so I end my story here as my life continues to progress and I haven't an idea of what may become of me....

## **Deros**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Human

Once a scribe came to the Town Square in a search to write down the pasts of people in the city. He came upon a strange man sitting in the middle of the town holding a book and an Aldan staff lying down near him. The scribe looked around and noticed that this man was the only one in the square who happened not to be talking to others. The scribe shrugged and decided that it would be this man's past he would write about. He tapped the man on the shoulder and the man turned around eyeing the scribe. It was the scribe who first spoke asking "Sir I am a local scribe in this city and I would like to write down the your past for all to know." The man grumbled at first and told the scribe that he could go talk to the bartender in the local tavern, but he would not know his past. The scribe paused and then looked at the book the man was reading and thought he may have a way of finding out the man's past. The scribe tapped the man again once again and the man turned around. The man eyed the scribe and told him to leave him be, that he was studying. The scribe replied, telling the man if he cared so much about knowledge that maybe the city should have the knowledge of his past and the man thought for a few seconds and nodded and closed his book. The man yawned and began.

So what is there to say, I was born in the Crystal Mountains in a safe haven-type city called Gorik. There were a few elves, humans, hobbits, and other races that sought shelter from the goblin hordes and giants in the mountains. I, Deros Rowik, was born on Maaur, the twenty-eighth of the month of Midnight, in the year 1,632 since the Godswar, and year 1,215 of the Empire. I was a very small lad at the age of twelve and I read everything I could find in the town since I could read at age five. At age seven my parents began to notice a natural potential for knowledge I had, but they also noticed that lack of fighting with weapons and how strong I was. Since the town I lived in was made up of mostly fighters and barbarians and almost knew nothing about mages. I then later wanted to become a mage at the age of thirteen. My parents encouraged me to seek a larger more protected city that had the knowledge and books I would need to learn about the arts of magic and becoming a mage.

So at age fifteen I left the city I was born in to seek a city that I often dreamed of as "The City of Knowledge." After searching for not even a week or two I came south to the city of Nexus and was directed to the city of Falcion to begin my training as a mage. I sort of hated the city oh Falcion because of its lack of wise people so I began my training quickly in hopes of getting to the city that I knew of as "The City of Knowledge" or Nexus. Once I became of the tier that I was allowed to leave the island, I left. I first checked out the library and then the mages tower for knowledge. I

then noticed that the city lacked the only knowledge of magic that my home city knew of.

After finding this out, I left to go back to my city where I found a merchant that had a book that contained the arts of necromancy. I quickly bought the book and came back to Nexus, but upon leaving one of the people in the city chased me screaming about the book of evil and giants not far away that were traveling in the mountain heard him and attacked the city. I tried my best to protect that city but not too long into the battle I was hit and knocked into a stupor. Upon waking, I looked around my things still with me, but the city and everyone in it destroyed. Corpses lay everywhere and the buildings burned to the ground. I stayed at the city to bury every person that died there including my parents. After I paid my respects, I left back to the city of Nexus. I once thought nobody knew about the art of necromancy when I first came to the city, but upon coming I was condemned and was thought to be evil. I believe I knew very little about the black arts and after speaking with Aalynor and one of my first friends Derwyn and then talking to a man by the name of Zany I thought about it. I later gave up my studies of necromancy and found a book of the studies of Invisibility and other Illusions.

Deros then looked at the scribe and said, "That now brings us to the present, where I seek no magicks of the dark and I try to get people to not see me as evil and hope they do not condemn me for what I studied in the past." The scribe then smiled and said his thanks and walked off towards the library to leave Deros back to his studies.

## **Derwyn**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Dark Elf

I was born within the Drow caverns, Uthgarten D'wyn. I was the first male child born of Ch'tah D'wyn, a Drow priestess. It was not the fact that I was born that started the problems for my family, but that I was defective. Instead of killing me when I was born my mother decided to let me live. Drow do not possess a high birthrate and I believe that she hoped that I might benefit the family at some later date. Had she been able to foresee the future I doubt I would be here today.

I lived in the family compound for over 50 years, never venturing outside it. I had an early aptitude for magic and was tutored in the ways of magic by the wizards that served my family. Though being sent to the Sorcere would be forbidden. Likewise, a male would never be allowed inside of Arach Tilnath.

I had other brothers and sisters. Of my 2 older sisters I know little save that both were priestesses like my mother. My younger brother I never met. Shortly after my younger brother was born I had found a way to escape the compound and journey through the city. For months I wandered the shadows of the city. Watching the other Drow and wondering what it would be like to be among them. I knew that if I were caught I would be punished severely. Oh, how I longed to be able to walk freely among them. A foolish thought.

Time after time I returned to the isolation of the family compound. I was awoken one night by the

lashing of a whip. One of my sisters had been sent to fetch me for my mother. She dragged me to the family chapel. My mother sat upon her throne and gravely looked down upon me. "Why did you go into the city?" she demanded. I told her that I wanted to see the city. "Well! You were followed back! Even now the others align against us! You have doomed us all!"

It was then that the doors of the chapel burst open. Soldiers from the other houses swarmed inside our chapel. My sisters fought fiercely but were killed. Only my mother and myself were alive when it ended. As punishment for hiding me my mother was sentenced to death. My punishment was the same, for the crime of being deformed was a sentence of death as well. We were taken to the mouth of the caves and tied to stakes in the ground. Even the starlight hurt my eyes. For what seemed to be an eternity we laid there. My mother screaming at me, me shivering with fright. My secluded life had done little to prepare me for this event.

Then the most horrible sight I have ever seen appeared. At the tops of what I now know are mountains appeared the Sun. It blinded me instantly. I felt my skin warming in its light, but I did not feel the burning that I had been always told would occur should its light ever touch me. My mother immediately started frantically screaming and thrashing. She screamed for what must have been hours before she finally became silent. Eventually, I managed to slip out of my bonds and went to free my mother but it was too late. She had gone into shock and died. I buried her quickly, not wanting to be around should my people return, and fled.

For weeks I wandered through the Blackwood. Starving and cold I could just make out the lights of city in the distance. Cautiously I crept into Nexus, the City of All Races. Nexus was not at all the place I thought it would be. I had been told that it was an evil place that hated my kind, which had no other purpose than to hate. I found that people here were friendly to each other. Warily I lived in the alleys and shadows stealing food and clothes in order to survive. Eventually I found the Ivory Tower and was allowed to enter into apprenticeship there (The metallic dragons had not yet opened the doors of the island of Falcion to the apprentices). That was the beginning of my path. In Nexus I found the only true peace I have known. Here I have been accepted for who I am, not what I am, and with Tilnar beside me I am never alone. I still cannot forgive myself for the death I have caused, but perhaps Tilnar will show me mercy.

## **Drakewyn**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Human

Fire and smoke are everywhere. Another large explosion shakes the ground, and many houses are engulfed in flames, others are blown to splinters. Kerzanic and Merilan run frantically about the Woodrell household, gathering what they can of their precious belongings. Kerzanic can see the fires burning, and the explosions through the window of the kitchen. The sounds of screaming and the smell of smoke are almost overpowering. He looks to his wife, Merilan, who is tending to the baby, then he runs back to the family room, to gather his own things.

"Merilan, stay here, I'll go prepare the wagon" Kerzanic yelled, his wife nodded, and took the baby in her arms. Kerzanic, satisfied that his wife and child were safe, opened the door and darted out to the stables. He could see his corn fields starting to burn, the fire being spread from his neighbour's fields which were completely engulfed in fire. He looked to where his neighbour's house used to be, but it had been completely destroyed by an explosion. He continued on his way, taking out his two horses and preparing the harness on the wagon. The fire was hot, and his skin was beginning to burn. The whistle of balls of fire could be heard off in the distance. The council had been called many days earlier, when first signs of the mysterious cloud had appeared. The village sage warned that this cloud would spell doom for the village, and that all must depart immediately, but no one listened. If only they had known he would be right.

Kerzanic brought the horses and wagon around front, and rushed to the door to fetch his wife. He ran inside, and began calling for his wife. Merilan appeared in the doorway, holding their baby.

"We must hurry, it is getting worse, go to the wagon, I must fetch a few things first" He gestured to the open door. Merilan hesitated at first, then gave her husband a kiss and darted out the door.

"I love you" Kerzanic said, as his wife left his view. He looked about for the items he had gathered earlier. He found them, under a pile of blankets. He examined each item, determining what to bring and what not to bring. He decided to bring his staff, and a special book. He wrapped them in the blankets, and dashed madly for the door, a sense of urgency coming over him.

"Hurry honey, time is running out!" Merilan called to him. Kerzanic bolted through the door, bumping his arm on the door frame, dropping his staff. He ran to the wagon, dropped his package, then darted back to the door to fetch his staff. Just then, a massive ball of fire struck the house, and shards of wood and glass flew through the air, striking him down. The house erupted in flames, spewing fire everywhere. Kerzanic consumed by fire, combusted to ash almost instantly. The wagon escaped destruction, only to be hit by flying debris from another exploding house. Pierced through the chest by a smouldering shard of wood, Merilan falls to the ground, her body covered by debris. A neighbour, seeing the unattended wagon, darts over to see what he can do. He sees the wagon is still in good enough shape, but cannot find anyone near it, he then decides to leave with it. He gives the reins a sharp snap, and the horses speed down the road. As the wagon fades off in the distance, Merilan whispers to herself with her final breath, "take care my sweet...little... Drakewyn...".

Hurrying as fast as he can, the stranger urged the horses on, mile after mile, until the burning village was far behind. He continued on his way, north down the road for several hours, not noticing the baby hidden in the chest at the back of the wagon. Merilan, fearing that flying debris would kill him, hid the baby and Kerzanic's package in the black, wooden chest, and poked two air holes in the back with her knife. The stranger continued on till night, then made camp at the side of the road. Being an honourable man, he took only the supplies he needed for the night from the wagon, and decided to donate the rest to the needy in Nexus when he arrived. In the morning he set out again, and was making good time. He judged by the changing scenery that he was only two or three days from the city of Nexus. Thinking it was a good time to stop for lunch, he pulled the wagon over, and began preparing himself a meal. Sitting next to a hastily made fire, he went through his own belongings, stored away in his pack. He pulled out some papers, one being a map.

He read the title to himself "Nexus roads. Property of Erimus". He opened it up and began to search for any signs of civilization in the area. Before he knew it he was closing his eyes, and taking a nap, just a small one Erimus told himself. He was awoken suddenly to the sound of falling feet. His eyes darted back and forth, scanning the horizon. They came to rest on a lone figure, far off in the distance. He was walking very slowly, and was holding a wooden staff. there was something peculiar about this man, Erimus thought to himself. As the man drew nearer, Erimus could begin to see more details. The staff he was holding, was truly peculiar, it was made of wood, but a strange bluish wood. The man was wearing a long grey cloak, with a hood that cast a shadow over most of his face. He had grey hair, and a long grey beard. Under his cloak he was wearing grey robes, and at his waste was tied a shimmering long sword, the hilt, also being made of the same strange blue wood, and wrapped in leather. He had a small satchel and several small pouches about his waist, and a small pack on his back, hidden under the cloak. He continued walking down the road towards the stranger. Feeling a bit alarmed, the stranger rose to his feet, and ran to fetch his dagger.

"Hello!!, can I help you?" he shouted, but the man made no sign of acknowledgement. Suddenly, the man stopped, and began waving his one free arm about, a mystical blue energy could be seen forming at the end of his hand, then he was entirely consumed by the blue energy. The stranger closed his eyes in disbelief, and when they were open again, the strange man was standing right in front of him. Erimus fell back a few steps and readied his dagger.

"Greetings, I am Wytherin, and you are?" the strange man said, leaning close to hear Erimus' response. He hesitated at first, not knowing if he could trust this magic-user. He slowly opened his mouth and spoke.

"I... I am Erimus. I come from.,,"

"Yes, yes, I know where you come from, the village of Morian, I came as soon as I saw the cloud." Wytherin said, speaking with impatience.

"How did you see the cloud? did it attack your village too?" Erimus asked, dreading to hear the news of more suffering.

"Huh?, oh no, not that, I felt that my brother was in trouble, so I used the magical weave to peer through his eyes, and I saw the cloud. Dreadful thing it was, but there is nothing we can do about it, but there is something you can do for me now." Erimus did not know whether to believe him or not, he had seen this man use magic to traverse great distances, but he was a simple man and did not know the ability this man had over the weave, or even if the weave could be used in such a way.

"How may I help you?" he asked, noticing that Wytherin had his eyes on the chest in the back of the wagon.

"I want that chest, and everything in it" he said bluntly, pointing with his staff at the chest.

"You can't have it, these were the belongings of my neighbours, and they will be donated to the needy." Erimus declared, with a boldness that surprised even him. Wytherin gave Erimus a quick

smile, then began to speak.

"These are the belongings of my brother, the wagon, the horses, all of it. My brother's. You may keep the rest, and donate it, it would do justice to his name, but that chest goes with me, and I need not explain why." Wytherin's words were final, any man foolish enough to stand up to that, deserved to be turned into a frog and squished. Erimus hesitated for a moment, then agreed to the terms. He helped Wytherin take the chest off the wagon, and they bid each other farewell.

"Be careful out there, and good luck to you" Wytherin spoke to Erimus, as he was pulling away in the wagon, with Kerzanic's remaining belongings. Wytherin turned, and examined the chest. Noticing the lock, he tapped it once with his staff which then erupted into smoke and fell off. Wytherin opened the chest, a smile fell across his face. Kerzanic picked the baby up from the chest, and held him close to his chest. He rocked him back and forth, feeling the baby's slow breathing through his arms. He spoke more arcane words, and the baby's breathing became more regular. The baby opened his eyes, and looked up into Wytherin's eyes. A feeling of peace came over him, and he went back to sleep. Wytherin set the baby back in the chest, and closed the lid. He stood, and gripping his staff tightly, he began to recite the words to his levitate spell. He directed the spell towards the chest, jumped up in the air, touched the chest, then landed softly on his feet. The chest began to rise, and Wytherin reached into his satchel and pulled out a rope, he tied it to the chest, and began the long walk back to Nexus.

Needless to say, Wytherin's adventuring days were over, he sold all his assets in Nexus, and bought a small cabin on the outskirts of a fishing village. He became adjusted to the slow life, and eventually began to grow to like his little cabin. The villagers were apprehensive of him at first, but they began to consider him one of their own, and before Wytherin knew it, he was relying on his magic less and less. He retired his staff, his magical devices and all his arcane books to his cellar, and took up the farming life. When Drakewyn was 5, Wytherin began to tutor him in the ways of magic, and try to instill in him the importance of knowledge. As time went by, Wytherin and Drakewyn grew up together, selling their crops to the villagers, and making small trips to the sister village. They would go on walks together, and Wytherin would teach Drakewyn all about nature, and about the other races as well, Wytherin even tried to teach Drakewyn the elven language, but Drakewyn was still too young. The subject of Drakewyn's parents came up often, but Wytherin was cautious of telling Drakewyn too much of their deaths. He told him only that their village had succumb to a terrible fire, and that he didn't know what happened to his parents. Drakewyn was content with that, after all, he loved his uncle, and he was a happy child.

One stormy night, when Drakewyn was 10, Wytherin sat him down, and began one of his tales of adventure.

"Have I ever told you about goblins?" Wytherin asked.

"No uncle, I don't think you have. Are they bad?" Drakewyn was honest, and wanted to hear of goblins, so he listened attentively.

"The worst there are. Once a beautiful race, they were twisted to match the evil in their hearts, and now they seek to inflict the same punishment on the rest of the races. There is a city, a city of

all races, that is far away from this place. I used to live there, but the goblins, in all their evil conquest, have laid siege to it, and it has been this way for some time now." Wytherin paused for a moment, remembering the friends he left behind. "Did you fight them?" Drakewyn asked

"Aye, I fought them, and many other evils as well." Wytherin shuddered, and a feeling of dread filled his mind. Lightning crackled outside, as the storm grew worse. Wytherin continued his tale until the storm had grown so loud he could hardly hear himself.

"I think it is time you went to bed, I will see you in the morning." Wytherin rose from his chair, and gave Drakewyn a hug. Drakewyn said goodnight, and walked down the hall to his room. He threw on his pyjamas, and went to bed.

Wytherin tended to the fire, and then went to the cellar. He fumbled through a stack of books, finally finding the one he was searching for. He looked at the title "Kerzanic's Spell Book", and gave himself a satisfied nod. He returned to the family room, and sat in his favourite chair next to the fire. He opened the book, and ran through the many pages of spells. He knew all of them, and they were pretty low calibre, but they reminded him of his brother. He got to the end, where his brother had hastily scribed a message. He read it to himself:

Dear Wytherin,

As I know you will find this book if I die, and if you are reading this, then the worst has happened to me. Know that I lived a happy life, and do not mourn me. I write this as a warning, I do not know what evil destroyed our village, but I suspect it is the work of a very powerful mage. We were both adventurers, you and I, and you know that I settled down to have a family, but it seems that some evil pursues us, even into retirement. I cannot explain it, but I have felt this evil for some time, as I am sure you must feel it too. Take care of yourself, and my wife and child. See that they are safe, and beware the evil, it will consume us all if we don't act quickly.

Sincerely, Kerzanic Woodrell

"You were more right than you knew, brother, I have felt the evil growing stronger, and I feel it getting closer and closer. I fear that I will not be able to keep my promise to protect your son, but I will try." Wytherin spoke these words softly, almost expecting his brother to hear him. He began to drift off into to sleep, but suddenly, the front door flung open and a green light shone through. An eerie green mist snaked its way along the floor. Wytherin tried to stand, but his muscles were stunned, and would not move. A harsh demonic voice whispered in his ear: "I have come for you... Wytherin...".

Drakewyn awoke to the sound of birds chirping outside his window. He rose from his bed, and opened the curtains, sun light filled his room, filling Drakewyn with a sense of peace. He dressed in his work clothes, and went in search of breakfast. He walked past his uncle's room, and saw the bed was still laid out as it was the night before, with his uncle's un-used pyjamas lying folded across the sheets.

"Uncle!" He called, but there was no answer. He searched all the rooms, but there was no sign of his uncle. The door was still locked and closed, and had not been broken. his uncle's belongings

were still as they were the night before. Drakewyn saw the open book lying on his uncle's chair, and his heart sank. He threw on his cloak, and dashed out the door in search of his uncle. He searched their property, then their fields, and even went so far as to search the woods around their house. He went to the village and began to ask questions. Amazingly, no one in the village had seen him. Drakewyn searched in vain all the places he could think of, but to no avail, his uncle was gone. Drakewyn lost hope, and returned home. He let the day waste away, and went to bed early, hoping he could sleep away this terrible nightmare. To his great chagrin, he still felt sad the next day, and the day after, and for the next week. Drakewyn moped around the house, not wanting to continue living. After a time, he began to feel better, and started to tend to the crops again, but the sad feeling never went away. Drakewyn found himself working harder and harder to keep his crops alive, it had not rained since his uncle had gone missing, which had been a month and a half ago. After two months, his crops had almost all died, and so had all the neighbours crops. They blamed him and his uncle for the drought, and they became very un-friendly towards Drakewyn. One night, an angry mob assembled outside Drakewyn's home. they forced him out, and began to beat him. Drakewyn managed to force them off of him, and escape. the mob destroyed as much of the house as they could, but did not burn it for fear of spreading fire on the dry ground. Drakewyn, ran off into the woods, where he stayed for some time, living off the land, as his uncle had shown him. He lived with the animals for several years, growing a long beard, and making friends with the regular travellers. He fashioned his clothes from the hides of animals. He grew tall and muscular, and was very adept at the hunt, and tried to use the magic his uncle had taught him to the best of his ability. At the age of 18 he set out in search of the city his uncle had mentioned, the city of Nexus.

Drakewyn encountered many perils on his journey, using his intelligence and wits to guide him out of each situation. He learned much from travellers he encountered, he was told of a place where he could learn the skills he would need to help fight the evil. He gathered as much information he could about the Island of Falcion, and when he arrived in Nexus, he gained apprenticeship, and was sent to this Island to learn.

And so ends my tale of adventure, or is it just beginning? I knew very little of this long story when I left my house, but I have managed to piece most of it together, from histories read in the library, to the distant traveller's tale. I have had many dreams and visions, where I see my uncle surrounded by that evil mist, and I still no nothing of his whereabouts, or even if he lives.

## **Dworkin**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Unknown

Dworkin's was born to two middle-aged, gnomish parents in Nexus; Felninth, his mother, is a sculptor, now blind, and living still in Nexus. His father Nornarn, a mage and inventor disappeared shortly after his birth, along with his twin brother Rowthal.

For many years, Felninth told Dworkin nothing of his father or brother, saying simply that he was

an orphan whom she had adopted as a baby and raised herself. When he was six years of age, however, he began to experience strange, paralytic dreams in which he would see himself in a mirror with a man standing behind him. The gnomes in the mirror would speak to him in a nonsense language which communicated feeling tones rather than actual information. Often these dreams were terrifying, and he would awaken from them blind and unable to move or breathe for a time. His mother, when told of the dreams simply tried to comfort him, saying it was his overactive imagination and nothing to worry about.

Dworkin grew quickly in intellect and curiosity. As he approached his 13th year, Felninth began experiencing fugue-states in which she would become incoherent and would do nothing but sculpt and babble, sometimes for two or three days on end. Though not common, these incidents frightened Dworkin and forced him to become more independent. He formed a small acting troupe with a few friends and sometimes put on plays on the stage in Nexus when it was not in use, to try earn a few coins for food. He would also find odd jobs cleaning the taverns after-hours or gathering junk for the gnomish inventors, whose work fascinated him.

On his 13th birthday, he had a fateful experience. En route to the inventors an ancient-looking gnome stepped suddenly from the shadows and yanked him into an alley. Dworkin could sense magical energies crackling within the robed and cowed gnome who stood before him. A gravelly voice spoke from with the hood.

"So, you are young Dworkin are ye then?"

The gnome cackled as Dworkin stood, terrified and still stunned by being yanked from the street. Dworkin could see the ancient hilt of a glowing dagger protruding from a scabbard at the gnome's belt, buckled with a glowing blue rune, and he shivered, his voice quaking in response.

"Yes...I am Dworkin...what do you want of me?"

"I knew your father, before he disappeared, with your brother...I assisted him in his research, many years ago now. We were lost together for a time, but in trying to escape we were separated. I made it back...he is still trying. The man in your dreams! It is he, Nornarn! Listen closely to his words and swallow your fear!"

With those words, the gnome vanished in a flash of magical light.

Dworkin was shocked. He never expected to hear anything from his father...nevermind the knowledge that somewhere he had a brother. He went directly home and confronted Felninth, who began to flatly deny that he had any knowable father, but soon broke down and told him the story that he had never heard.

"Your father was a brilliant mage, but he was also dangerous, for he cared little for the thoughts of the guild, or even for safety...he was somewhat reckless in his thirst for arcane knowledge, holding it above all other things, except perhaps his love of us...but even there, he faltered, pushing himself to the limits of his ability in seeking answers for questions sometimes best left unasked.

At the time of his disappearance he was researching spell theorems. I do not know the specifics,

but one of them involved opening a dimensional portal in order to travel quickly between two locations. The other had something to do with traveling stealthily. One night, as we slept, I believe that he accidentally caused some sort of doorway to open into which he, your brother, and his assistant were pulled. You and I were pulled halfway as well, but for some reason we did not remain there, as they did. You were but a few days old at the time. I awoke to see the whole room bathed in shivering light and half-sensed creatures. The vortice throbbled in the wall, pulling all of us into it. I have never seen nor heard from you brother or father since that night. I doubt sincerely that it was Neamythe you saw. Probably just some crazy old gnome playing a jest upon you. Feninth sighed and began to weep softly to herself."

Dworkin was filled with anger. "Why did you lie to me all these years? Why did you not tell me of my real family? All these years thinking I was alone, and outcast..."

"I am sorry, Dworkin. I know now that it was wrong, but at the time it seemed better to spare you from the pain of loss...I was younger then, and I didn't realize what I was doing...by the time I knew it was wrong...it was too late and I had to simply go along with the lie I told, hoping to protect you. I feared that one day you might find out."

"You should have told me the truth...I have lived in your lie all my life now, how will I reconcile myself with this? This gnome said that father was still alive...and my brother as well...if that is the case...then I must find them. Dworkin left the house and went down to the underground waterfall to think through the revelations of the day.

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That night, Dworkin had another of his dreaming episodes. This time, however, he was prepared...instead of fighting it, and giving in to fear, he let go completely. When he saw his father and brother his heart was filled with longing, rather than terror...and as he let go, he felt the world shift. He seemed to be traveling at terrible speed through a thick and viscous, yet invisible medium. The room shifted and twisted in his dim vision. Finally he arrived in a dream-laboratory. His father and brother stood before him, speaking again in the strange tongue of his previous dreams. They moved extremely slowly, and he realized that at least part of his trouble understanding their words was that they were slowed down. It was then he realized that his brother was many years younger than he...perhaps only five or six. His father pulled a black book from his robe and handed it to Dworkin...the book was engraved with a single glowing red rune upon its cover. Dworkin felt that he did not want the book...not a strong feeling, just a kind of resistance, very subtle, a disinterest in the book. But he accepted it and began to look at the rune on the cover. As he looked at the rune, the room began to pulse, and he felt a strange throb that matched the pulse within his body. He heard and felt a wrenching shift in the atmosphere, and awoke, sweating, in his bed, the strange black book still grasped in his damp palm.

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The book was nearly indecipherable, but Dworkin decided that he must find the secret which stole his father and brother from him. He packed his small cache of goods, bid his mother farewell, told her that he would one day return, and left for the city of Falcion, there to become an Apprentice.

When he was not studying magicks, he studied the runes in his father's book, trying to grasp the secret of their meaning and construction. One day he would bring his father and brother back....this he knew...or join them.

## **Ertai**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Human

As recorded by the scribes previous, the day of my birth was on Aalur, the seventh of the month of Wildfire in the year 1,629 since the Godswar, and year 1,212 of the empire. I am now 20 years old and write this account as an accurate record of my childhood as it truly occurred for use and study of all those interested in understanding how I've become the man I am now.

My mother was a strong woman; she was of noble blood and lived in the city of Nexus. She was graceful and elegant, was always concerned with her appearance. My mother spoiled me with knowledge. She would be at my side at all times and I would point to an object such as a butterfly and she would explain it to me. I learned how to read at a very young age as well, and she gave me many books so that I may study and succeed as a student and that I did. My mind was quick then and is quick now, almost too quick for any normal human. I was a gifted student, in more than one ways. Near the age of 6 I was playing out in a field with the family sheep.

Out of the corner of my eye I spotted something moving quick, I turned and before I could react, a gray-shape lunged towards me, it knocked me down and I felt the sharp pain as it ripped the flesh from my stomach. Without being able to think, my hands began to move in an intricate fashion, I had no idea what I was doing but something deep inside my head had taken over. I plunged my thumb into my fist, and pulled it out as the words burned into my mind and I was forced to recite them, "Fire, flicker, ignite!" From somewhere deep inside me, I felt a surge of raw uncontrolled power appear, and work its way up to my hands. Opening my hand a few flickering flames poured forth onto the wolves tender nose, and with a yelp he ran off.

I lay there, my sides burning from the wound; I looked down and saw that if the wound was not tended to soon, I would die. I struggled to rise, but found that it only send searing waves of pain though my body. Again though, I found odd words burned into my mind, trying to force their way to my lips. I was scared though; the words brought with them a feeling of power and control, but also the twinge of helplessness. Soon though, between the fiery pain in my side, and the headache the words were causing, I had no choice. I placed my hands on the wound and slowly spoke the words, "Thy energies return!"□The power this time, rather then appear deep inside me appeared in my hands, flowing from them into the wound. Slowly I felt the pain subside, and while the wound was not gone, the size had shrunk until it was no longer a deadly threat. Standing slowly I felt oddly drained, as if something inside of me was gone.

I never mentioned my powers to mom, I told her I had got the cut from a nail sticking out of the fence, I almost wish I had told her after the treatment I got. For years after words, I never felt the

burning words in my head again, though magic became my obsession. Whatever books I could get on Wizards, or their spells I hoarded. At the age of nine, I ventured into my dead father's room ... no one had been in it since his death. Slowly I crept around, never having known my father I was curious as to what time of man he was. Finally I stopped my search when I found a beautifully polished silver chest in his closet. Slowly opening it my heart raced at what I had found, sitting on robes of stunning green, was a leather bound book with a strange golden crest on it, later I would come to learn that the crest was the symbol of the mages guild of Nexus. Slowly I opening the book, I found among the first pages the spell I had used on that wolf so many years ago. Searching among the books I found what I thought were spells that would allow me to take apart cities, my mind raced thinking my father must be one of the Weavemasters of lore and isn't really dead. At that moment I heard a voice cry my name and spun around to find my mother looking at me. She quickly took me from the room, but not without taking the book with her. She sat me down, and we talked for hours about my father.

It seems he apprenticed as a mage on a place called Falcion, where they trained heroes of the realms. He had gotten to 7th tier, a rank of some importance in his guild, but he had met her. After falling in love with her, they both moved into the countryside to live a peaceful life. I told my mother about the strange words that had burned their way inside my head, and she said there was no choice but to send me to Falcion to learn to control my powers. I cried for days after this, because I didn't want to leave home. Finally a year later I was old enough to go to Falcion ... one of the earliest apprentices in the history of the guild.

Five years later, when I had finally made Mage, I was so proud, my studies had gone slow at first, working on the basics of magic rather than the combat side of it. But then as I began to pen my message home to my mother, a messenger entered my house, he spoke in quite tones, and calmly told me my mother was dead, the goblins had killed her. I sat alone in the darkness, wondering what I was to do now ...

## **Faulk**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Dark Elf

Hello, my name is Auris. I'm a scribe of Nexus' great Library, and this is my interview with Faulk, an Arch-Wizard in the Mages' Guild.

I sat down in a chair facing Faulk, and he sat down in a chair, facing me. I'd already told him that I was writing a story of his life for the Library, because some people asked about him, and, and, and ...

"I find it amusing that anyone would wish to hear about my life. I don't understand why anyone would want to use my life as 'an example'. Especially since I strongly believe that some experiences must be experienced by one's self for them to fully understand that particular thing. Anyhow, enough of my rambling."

"I never knew my parents, and since I don't know what they look like, I don't tend to think about them often. I was raised by my aunt, with her daughter, Kylia. I was brought by my aunt to her castle, not all that far west of Nexus, and that is where I was raised. I never liked that place, it was eerie. My aunt always made me do the chores and things with the other servants, babbling things about how men are inferior. Kylia was always there to help me get my chores done though, even though her mother forbade it. At first she just wanted someone to play with, since it wasn't acceptable to play with the servants' children. But as time went on, Kylia and I became nearly inseparable. She taught me how to read and write, and how to cast my first few spells. She would always slip me books she had taken from the castle's library. I spent nearly sixty years there, until one day, I decided to leave. I couldn't take the abuse anymore. Kylia refused to go with me, saying she owed it to her mother to stay there. Her mother had never failed to teach her loyalty. I begged her to come with me, but she kept declining. I headed east, passed Tilnar's Vein, and made my way north. I arrived in the small elven village of Talmat, and right off, I was rejected. A small elven boy said something about evil drow, and told me to go south to Nexus. I shrugged it off, not really caring all that much, and made my way to Nexus. I arrived in the city and heard some people talking about Juggernauts, and then heard a loud crashing sound coming from the east. A group of well armored defenders gathered and organized, then rushed eastwards. The threat was soon neutralized, as telepathic cheering soon revealed. A nice lady by the name of Ariel approached me, and was very kind to me. I found out she was a Mage in the Mages' Guild, and I asked her where I could join. She told me about the new apprenticeship island of Falcion, and took me there."

Faulk and I talked about his life afterwards, and he told me a lot. I stopped writing down after a little bit (oops), so I'll tell you what I can remember about what he said.

Faulk got married after his training on Falcion, to another mage named Kyleen. He says she was a girl that had a lot of troubles, and eventually killed herself. After that, he went and followed Kyorl, with his friend Jingle. After a while he wanted to get out, and eventually Paelina helped him, by getting his mark of Kyorl removed. Faulk went to Iona, Dilanis' emissary at that time, and after a quest to make sure he was "church material", she marked him. He later adopted a daughter, Katelyn, and proposed to another mage named Ixia, who left him. He told me some more things, but I forgot, and I told him after we finished talking that if he wanted to come back and add more, he could.

## **Fleia**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

The family chapel was perfused in the scent of fresh flowers and woodlands, but there were no

bouquets in sight. The source was the unvarnished cedar coffin by the alter, filled with irises, forget-me-nots, periwinkles and baby's breath - a flowery bed of blue and white, without an occupant.

Silently, a dignified reni entered the chapel, and approached a small brass bell used to summon the family. He paused for a moment. "Perhaps Vera foresaw this," Zordal Lem Kirarskol thought of his late wife, who, in her insanity, insisted on giving birth to four children. He remembered with slight bitterness now old, but still humiliating rumors that they worshipped Kyorl secretly. "Four children? Only 5 years apart each, my, my....," they would whisper behind his back. But Vera was dead serious, and it had nothing to do with lust. Somehow he believed her. After all, magick flowed strongly through her. Strong enough to eventually drive her insane, and literally destroy her fragile body. All the daughters inherited her magical nature as well as her sapphire eyes and amethyst hair. "Rhysa most of them all ....," he looked toward the coffin with a renewed grief. Shaking himself out of his thoughts, Zordal rang the bell once to summon his remaining daughters for the service.

Fleia Kirarskol heard the solitary bell in her sister's room in the tower, and looked up from the letter she was reading for the tenth time. She let out a silent sigh. "Time for Rhysa's funeral," she thought. Rhysa, my favorite big sister who I thought was always in control - killing herself in disappointment over a failed apprenticeship? How foolish! How wasteful! How could she be so stupid? Fleia thought with anger, feeling betrayed by her sister. She looked down at the letter in her hand. The last letter from Rhysa, brought home by a tree sprite who found it by the lake, explained very little. It was addressed to Fleia, asking her to somehow relay to all of Rhysa's friends in Falcion that she will forever remember them and pray for them. "Falcion, Nexus, her fellow apprentices," muttered Fleia. "Is that all she thought of, in her last moments? What of family, the ever mysterious magick, our peaceful valley?"

The bell sounded once again. Fleia did not feel like staring into that empty coffin, though it seemed fitting that Rhysa left no corpse behind. She was so ephemeral that one would have thought her flesh was held together only by magick. "If she was not meant to be a mage, who is?" Fleia thought. Fleia's eyes rested on Rhysa's apprentice's robe, folded neatly in the small open chest by the bed. Her mind wandered back to the day a few weeks ago when Rhysa came home unexpectedly. She stood at the door in the humble cloth robe, smiled half-heartedly and told the family that she withdrew from the apprenticeship to study and understand the mystery of the weave. Something was wrong, but no one could have foreseen this outcome. A flash of inspiration commanded her to cast aside the rich velvet robe she was wearing, and don the humble robe. In a supernatural moment, a vision appeared before her eyes - streets of Falcion, horrifying undeads, goblins pouring out of a mural, the pain of flesh seared by magical fire, fallen foes, fallen friends, a sparkling sea beyond the sandy beaches and low hanging mist, and overwhelming sense of a mission, friendship, and most of all, unredeemable disappointment at the true realization that one will never be what one wishes to be. The vividness and the intensity of the vision made Fleia stagger, and she held onto the bedpost to keep herself from falling.

After what seemed like eternity, Fleia regained her normal senses. She now understood her sister, and what was important to her. More than understand, she was now endowed with Rhysa's memory and her purpose of existence. Without hesitation, she picked up the only other item

Rhysa brought back from Falcion, her personal spellbook. "Tilnar be praised for connecting my soul with my sister's," she thought. She stepped out of the room, closed the door behind her purposefully, and descended the long spiral stairway to the chapel.

Zordal saw his youngest daughter in a rough cloth robe standing by the entrance to the chapel and frowned at the inappropriate attire. Before scolding her, however, he recognized the robe for what it was, and the look in her eyes. Dread, pride, and sadness washed over him as he realized another of his daughters was leaving the safety of the valley to dedicate herself to the cause against the threat to the realms. Her mind was closed to him, refusing to acknowledge his telepathic inquiry. "Vera, protect our child," he prayed silently to the mother of the young reni. "You knew this would happen, you should have the magick to guard her." Then he saw Fleia for what he knew would be the last time, as she glanced at the coffin, bowed silently, and receded into the shadows of the hallway. The scent of lavender lingered on just a moment longer, and she was gone.

## **Horver**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Gnome

Born in a small village in a hidden vale, many miles from Nexus, Horver grew up peacefully with his five brothers and sisters and two parents. To the gnomes of his village the war with the goblins was a troubling whisper in the wind, but nothing more. They went about their lives without concern believing themselves safe from prying eyes.

Horver, however, was different. While his family was content to work the land, become craftsmen, or tend to a household, Horver dreamt of the world beyond the vale. Sharp of mind but clumsy of body, he was not suited for a life farming or making fine crafts and he sure was not going to have any babies. For many years his inability to fit in with village and family life bothered him. To be sure, he was liked in the village, for he had a quick wit and a ready smile, but he felt that he was destined, or doomed as some in the village would say, for more.

As the years passed and village life ambled slowly by, Horver began to get restless. He had tried to apprentice several times, but those forays ended in disaster. He tried to help his father on the farm, but only succeeded in raising dead plants. Horver began to despair and spent most of his time wandering the woods around the tiny settlement.

On the eve of his twenty-sixth birthday, Horver strolled out into the woods. As he lazily wandered through the trees, Horver heard a twig snap, saw a flash of light, and heard an animal squeal in pain. Horver immediately stopped and sat down quietly beside a bush. Horver, for the first time in his life, felt a surge of fear. Nothing in his life had prepared him for strange happenings or odd noises. Horver sat as still as he could and felt his heart beating out of control, sounding to him like a smith's hammer on an anvil. As time passed, he knew that he would have to control himself if he were to remain hidden. So he slowly calmed his heart and his breathing and then jumped into the

air as a voice came from beside him.

"Good you learned to control your fear. That is your first step," said a human with a long flowing beard and a pipe puffing noxious fumes hanging from between his lips.

Horver looked at the man curiously. He had heard of these creatures, but none had ever found their way to the hidden vale. The human coolly regarded him in return, staring into his eyes as if searching.

Ever so quietly the man said, "Horver, I sense some potential in you. If you stay in the village for much longer though I fear the potential will go unrealized."

Horver stared incredulously at the man and stammered, "Who are you? How did you know my name? And potential for what?"

The man let out a chuckle and puffed once again on his pipe, the smoke gathering around his feet.

"Who I am is simple, I am Psion. How I know your name is a trade secret. And as for your potential, you my dear gnome have the potential to become a wizard. Not so great a wizard as I, but a wizard nevertheless," explained the wizard with a wink.

The befuddled gnome sat in silence for some time and then began to protest.

"Me a wizard, I think not. I am a gnome of the hidden vale and we do not have wizards here"

"True, you do not have wizards here. You must travel to Nexus for training."

"But gnomes do not leave their towns," explained Horver quite confidently.

"Some do. In fact I know one myself. A priestess by the name of Verdis."

"You lie, no gnome would go to Nexus. It is too dangerous for people such as us. We must remain hidden."

"Believe what you may, but some gnomes do go off for training and to fight in the war. The people of your village have lived a sheltered life for too long. The war worsens and will come here in time, if all people don't do their parts. And your part my dear gnome is to become a wizard. You have three years to make a decision before your potential withers away."

The wizard, now towering above Horver, abruptly turned and walked away. As he disappeared from sight he mumbled a chant causing a deer carcass to float behind him.

For many months Horver wandered the village in a daze. Even more distant to those around him than usual. He debated what the wizard said in his mind many times, eventually deciding that he had been lied to for that was safer and easier to believe.

Two and half years passed and Horver was still liked in the village, but still had not found his

calling. People worried about him. His family sent for his Aunt Gerdie, a wise woman from the neighboring village. She spent many hours talking with Horver about his life and what he wanted. Eventually, Horver, who until this time had kept it secret, told Gerdie about his encounter with Psion.

Gerdie listened carefully and then told Horver that she had heard of this Verdis and that what Psion had said was most probably true. Horver sat in shocked silence, absorbing this new information. Slowly as he searched his heart Horver realized the truth of his soul. He would be a wizard and he would go to Nexus.

That very night Horver packed his meager belongings and headed out of the vale. He traveled for many weeks eventually arriving in Nexus. Two days short of his three year deadline, Horver began his training.

## **Irwas**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Elf

Unlike most mages, Irwas comes from a poor and not so educated family. This sounds very strange, as most mages' education is based on their families. Anyways, to start with his family, they used to live in Rymek, as his father was a fisherman. His mother had died a few days after Irwas was born, when Goblin forces came from the sea and attacked the village of Rymek. From then the family consisted of only 3 members, his father, himself and his older brother, who died some years later.

As they are elves, their origination comes from the Eldane Forest, but his great grandfather moved to Rymek to find better living conditions. However, they suffered from poverty. His great grandfather was an educated man indeed, so was his grandfather. He had studied in Nexus, as well as the University, and he had mastered the art of magics. However, due to their living conditions, his son wasn't able to have a normal education. Luckily, he lived enough to teach Irwas many simple spells. He saved money to be able to send Irwas to Nexus and then to Falcion, so that he could have a proper education as a mage.

From Irwas' childhood, it seemed that he was a very intelligent boy. He read a lot and could solve mathematic and scientific problems in no time. However, due to their living conditions, Irwas grew up in a quite hostile environment. So, in spite of spending his time learning in school, he preferred to walk around the streets with his gang and fight against others to take their money. Even though he was weak (as he was an elf), he was very smart and defeated his enemies not by simply fighting, but playing smart tricks on them and making traps. By the age of 17, he was already very experienced with weapons and basic spells.

His grandfather, being afraid that Irwas wouldn't become a mage as he didn't spend time studying, sent him to Nexus (that was before Falcion was created). Irwas was 18 when that happened. However, he was stubborn enough not to change his behaviour in Nexus either. He found new

gangs and continued fighting on the streets and stealing. In the underground of Nexus, he was most admired for his high intelligence and his ability to trick the opponents.

But his life was to change soon, as he met the man who would change his point of view and way of living. It was Hjmik (it is pronounced as Hajmik). He was an experienced Half-Giantish warrior, who was famous for his victories against the Hill Giants, outside the West Gates of Nexus. Just for the record, please note that he suicided quite a short time ago.

Anyways, he taught Irwas the basic fighting techniques and how to use sharp and missile weapons. He found scrolls for him to study and provided him shelter. As soon as Falcion was created, he and Irwas' grandfather found money for Irwas to go to Falcion and have a proper training as a mage.

He never involved in any gangs there and he tried to study indeed. He learned many spells and soon got to the 2nd tier of his Guild. He developed into a polite and funny gentleman (as well as a quite handsome elf). He made new friends there and supported them.

Now, he has completed his education in Falcion and is allowed to travel again to Nexus and Rymek. It is said that he lives somewhere in Rymek, with some friends.

## **Kalishar**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Dark Elf

Kalishar eased his weary body down onto the barstool, the mages guild had asked him to talk to the scribe, and that was the only reason he was here. Looking almost as tired than he felt, he ordered a cup of choco juice, no alcohol for him today.

When the scribe came in, he found Kalishar sitting off in the corner by himself, the way most mages seemed to live. Sitting down he pulled out his quill and parchment, and prepared to write the history of the mage some were saying would be the next leader of the mages guild.

"The early part of my life is no business of yours", began Kalishar, "I will keep that secret until I die. Suffice it to say, I had an easy childhood, unlike your human mages. The story you shall hear begins after I had decided to come onto the surface."

"Many was the day I spent awake, gazing at you humans, wishing I could have been born one of you, short lived, and ignorant of the greater plan. I decided that my place was no longer below the ground, but instead among you. I crafted a spell that would allow me, or any of my kind to withstand the suns rays. At first it only worked for short periods, but gradually I began to improve on it, and now am able to stand in the sun, without cover for as long as I wish. That was my first experience with the protective magics I have learned to craft with such expertise."

"when I was able to stand being in the sun for long periods of time, I began my trek to this fair city,

it seemed the melting pot, where all were equal, and no-one need be ashamed of his past. Unfortunately I was one of the first Dark Elves to arrive in Nexus, and the population was to treat me as a novelty. Everywhere I walked I was stared at, not easily accepted anywhere except in the mages guild, they did not judge me by my skin, but by my ability. Ability I had in great supply even back then, I proved it by demonstrating my spell, I showed the effects of the sun on me, and then what the spell did for me. I was accepted instantly, and one of the senior mages made the spell have a permanent affect on me."

"After time, the citizens of Nexus grew used to me, and even began to appreciate my cruel sense of humor, I grew to make some good friends here, mostly with the followers of the Dark Lord Tilnar, for they were closest to my nature when I arrived. Over time, my aura has shifted from red to blue, for I have no interest in following the ways of my people. As my nature has shifted, so have my interests, the people here have shown me that self-interest does not have to be the only motivating force, and I feel I have learned that lesson well."

"From time to time I get asked if I would like to join one of the religious cults in Nexus, my answer has always been, and always will be NO. I have seen what the anger of a god can do to his follower, and what they require you to do, it does not interest me."

"Now I suppose you want to know what possessed me to try to cast the spell of Town Shield, the spell that cost Lord Fariol his life. Well, that goes back to when I first came to Nexus, Lord Fariol was the one who inspected me for the guild, and the one who first made the effort to treat me as a person, rather than a curiosity. Over time I grew close to Fariol, came to regard him as an uncle. His death has caused me great personal grief, so when I had the chance to finish what he started, I took it. I also look at what I did as saving the town that has given me so much over the years, and the best chance I was likely to have to show how I have changed."

"That is all I have to tell you, anything else you want to know, you will not be told." With that pronouncement, Kalishar picked up his cup of choco juice, and went to a new table to rid himself of the feeling he had told too much.

## **Mishra**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Human

"Mishra!", the arch wizard roared, "Put that down now!". The young apprentice sighed and put the wand back on its shelf, and went back to her desk.

"How many times have I told you to leave things alone in my laboratory?", the wizard asked.

"I am sorry, Master.", she replied with a weak, trembling voice. The wizard sighed, shook his head, and went back to his work. The girl sat down and resumed reading a great tome, occasionally gazing around the laboratory and its many magical devices and experiments.

Mishra had lived in the tower since she was born, more than eighteen years now, but each day there was something new to attract her curiosity, and draw her attention away from her chores and studies.

The book, "The workings and nature of the weave", was thick and heavy, written by her master decades ago, and contained vast knowledge of how to cast and create spells. She had read it many times before, but each time there was something new to comprehend, or a new way to comprehend it. "Amazing..", she thought, and sank deep into the text.

"Now where did I put it..?", muttered the wizard from behind the shelves. Staring at Mishra with his red, drowish eyes he asked, "Mishra, you wouldn't know where my darkstone transmogrator is, would you? Or has it vanished into thin air?"

Glancing down at the desk in the corner, where she left it last time she used it, she replied, "No, master.. perhaps you forgot to put it back in its place..?", and swallowed.

"Fantastic.. fabulous..", he muttered and walked off. Feeling guilty once again, Mishra sighed and decided to take her reading to the library instead.

The next day as she was sweeping the laboratory floor, the arch wizard approached her, "Mishra, so many years have you been my apprentice, but there are things you never learn..", he took a deep breath and continued, "..I am about to begin a major experiment, and I can no longer have you here disrupting me with your curiosity and disobedience." He walked over to a window and looked out across the ocean, "I am sending you away for a time, you will learn and study on your own from now, on a far away island."

He studied her for a while and continued, "This was not my wish.. but it will do you good. Perhaps one day you will return wiser than myself.. it is my hope.", he sighed and quietly looked out across the vast ocean. "Pack your bag, girl, you will be leaving early tomorrow."

No ships had ever passed by before, but this day a small sailing vessel anchored up and a row boat approached the tower. Mishra and the wizard walked down the winding stairs and she boarded the boat. Not much was said before she was on her way and the wizard returned to his library.

He sat down on a chair by the window and watched the ship disappear beyond the horizon. Glancing up towards a painting on the wall he thought to himself, "My love.. perhaps if you had still been here this would not have to happen.." The painting was old and dusty, a young beautiful human lady smiling down at the wizard. "Perhaps I have failed you perhaps not.. but I trust our daughter shall be safe.." His usually expressionless, drowish face now looked troubled and concerned as he silently went back to his work.

## **Myrn**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:**

Half-elf

Myrn woke up yawning and looking around him. They were still sleeping. He was born in a noble family, A drow house with much power and many enemies.

Myrn though was pretty sheltered from this. He was studying magic. The fighting was left for his elder brothers. Myrn shared this shelter with one other brother. His name was Elgghinn and he was Myrn's favorite brother. The two had the chores of magic and assassination their father gave his sons paths at birth. Due to his elder brother's job. Elgghinn spent alot of time sneaking around home. The other brothers were out campaigning so Myrn and Elgghinn spent a lot of time together. The day came when Myrn's brothers went to Nexus, their father believing that they would become better at fighting. Myrn never understood what his father wanted with his sons and why their paths were already chosen by him, But some grand scheme it was. So one day all of his brothers had gone. Myrn alone was left behind.

The days went along slowly. Myrn felt bad for he could learn no more.

The day when Myrn heard he was going to Nexus he was overwhelmed with joy. His brothers awaited him and he was going to meet with them in Nexus finally.

He packed his things and early one morning left the Vein. Myrn's travels to Rymek was easy, He followed a road to Nexus and then went southwards. Myrn there took the sloop to Falcion and began training. He struggles to become a good mage and seeks his brothers, already having found his assassin brother.

## **Quasinart**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Elf

Not sure what he was doing in the forest, Quasinart decided to practice his manipulation of the weave. Sitting on a stump, he opens his spellbook. Deciding on 'hurt', he looks around quickly for a target. Spying a small raccoon in the trees, he focuses his energies. "Breeze, be gentle no more," he chants. Looking startled, the raccoon races under a small bush. Quasinart mutters to himself, and starts walking towards home. In the small human village of Silladel, there is a turmoil brewing. The townsfolk have discovered that a family has been raising one not of their own. In the town meeting that was called, the outcome of this crime will be determined. The family in question has been harboring an elf that it had found alone in the woods. Not only is the elf not human, but it also seems that it has an affinity for the arts. Being very resistant to change, and afraid of the unknown, the townsfolk are asking that the family be exiled from the village.

As Quasinar approaches the streets of the village he grew up in, he notices that something is not quite right. There is very little activity on the streets, though the suns are high in the sky. With great trepidation, Quasinar walks into the village. Walking through the empty streets, he hears faint talking from farther down the road, near the town hall.

Walking around the building, he sneaks a look into the side window. The sight inside is not one he was expecting to see. His parents are sitting on a stand facing the front, at which sits a panel of elderly looking men. Straining, he can just make out the conversation going on inside. He quickly grasps the significance what the people are talking about. The entire village is gathered here, talking about him! He listens in for a while before realizing what must happen. Hurrying home, thoughts run through his head. Where will he go? What will he do?

The fate of the family has been decided. They were given two options: Leave the village with the elf, or force the elf to leave the village alone. They must decide what they will do before the suns rise the next day. With heads hung low, they head home. Walking through the door, they were greeted with a surprise. All of Quasinar's things were gone, and there was a note on the table.

Dear Family, I overheard what transpired at the town hall. Rather than burden your lives any further, I will depart now, and take care of myself. I thank you deeply for hosting me, these past eight months. I have learned a great deal, and will strive to be as good as you have taught me. Please forgive me for causing strife in your lives. I will keep in touch. Indebted for life, Quasinar

Walking through the forest, Quasinar comes to a clearing with a lone tree in the center. With a fit of frustration and anger, he unleashes a fierce fireball on the tree. Shaking the tree, a sprite falls to the ground. Surprised, he walks over to the injured sprite. She has a broken wing, but otherwise seems unhurt. Feeling pity for the small creature, Quasinar offers his help. She is lost, and scared. Quasinar offers to help her find her home. After many small adventures, they reach a large city called Nexus. They decide that this would be the perfect place for Epiphany the sprite to find someone to lead her home, and for Quasinar to find himself.

The rest is history.

## **Quigby**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Elf

Quigby Limbdancer was born to two great noble elven warriors. His father and mother, Danner and Luna, were masters of the blade, moving as one with their weapons. The only child of these two warriors, great things were expected of Quigby. Unfortunately, the thin child born to them seemed to have inherited little of his parents innate talents with the blade. At an early age, Quigby was sent to the finest blademasters who could be found. Invariably, his tutelage would be quite short. Finally, his parents had to accept that the life of a warrior was not to be for their son. This being the case, Quigby was sent to religious training so that he might learn the ways of the gods and

bring healing to other warriors in battle. This short, but extremely frustrating time for his parents, ended in Quigby being banned from a monastery and two temples. Finally, Luna and Danner decided that Quigby was to be sent to his great grandsire, Reluran to learn the ways of magic.

His great grandsire had studied the weave and all its intricacies for quite some time. To him, the weave's powers were to be harnessed only through force of will by following strict guidelines. Quigby entered this man's life like a tornado. The easiest of spells were difficult for young Quigby, the difficult theorems bored him, yet, much to the chagrin of his grandsire, Quigby showed an amazing talent for manipulating the weave in an unorthodox manner. Instead of following the rigorous methods of his teacher, Quigby was fast and free with his use of magic, undaunted by the inherent dangers. Strangely enough, though his mistakes were great and often explosive, Quigby seemed to always make it through unscathed; something his grandsire attributed it to the gods mercy upon fools. Though their methods were different, grandson and great-grandfather grew close. Recognizing that Quigby could not learn and achieve his full potential under him, Reluran sent Quigby to Falcion, so that he could learn through action instead of study.

Armed with several wagons of clothes, a portion of his inheritance, and his immutable attitude, Quigby arrived at Falcion, ready to show all exactly how magic should be practiced. Since then, he has served as a scribe, avoided being mana-burned for insubordination, found adventure at every corner, and learned quite a bit about magic. Though those are other stories.

## **Reed**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

"Hello, I am a reporter for the nexus newspaper" the man continued "oh my name is not important for this story is about another. It all started the month of Prairiefire when I was asked, by my superiors, to find a hero and to write a story on him or her. I of course accepted knowing that it was my job and I ventured out into the streets of Nexus. I walked in to the town square where I spotted a reni not talking to anyone, but instead sitting quietly and alone puffing a long, well-crafted heartwood pipe. After looking at him I paid no more attention to him and looked around at the many others talking about adventure, danger and other interesting things. The reni remained silent until a man from the crowd shouted "this is a horrible weapon it is dirty and looks rusted!, don't you agree with me Reed?" the man said towards the reni smoking a pipe. The reni, apparently named Reed, looked up and said to him "The appreciation of a gift should not be valued on the worth of the gift, but the kindness of the giver" the crowd drew silent, watching him and for a moment seemed to be in complete awe. I quickly rushed over to him saying "Hello my name is Jim I am doing a report for the Nexus Chronicle and an interesting fellow like you would suit the job." Reed looked up to me, chuckled and said "Me? interesting I believe you are mistaken, but if that is what you wish I will cooperate." I then led Reed to a tavern to talk about his life."

"We quickly found a table and I bought Reed a pint of ale. He sat there sipping his drink and smoking his pipe saying nothing. I finally broke the silence "So, Reed tell me about your life, your

family, where you come from etc." He stared at me deeply as if he could see through me, into my thoughts. I was sitting there waiting patiently for him to speak thinking to myself "Gosh hurry up you fool" and right before I got up and left he began, "I shall go at my own pace for I came here on request and I am most definitely not a fool." My mouth dropped open and I could think of nothing to say. He puffed his pipe and blew a smoke ring "I am from a town of Reni far to the east, beyond the desert. I can not reveal its name for I promised I would never do so". He puffed his pipe "My family is large, but my immediate family is not, I am an only child but I have many cousins, nephews and nieces." He sipped his ale and began again "Before I began my adventure to Nexus I was the town historian, there is always one at our town a wise fellow.... he had just passed away Rues was his name, one of the wisest people I will ever know." He stared at me puffing his pipe and sipping his ale from time to time and I could think of nothing else to say. "Not as interesting as you would of guessed I see!" he laughed to himself. I knew he was hiding much of his life story, but why hide it I was not bad and he must of known it. I muttered "Are you a mind reader?" he laughed and responded "I wish I possessed the power and concentration skills to become one." I wanted to ask him what he meant but I knew it would only lead me to some hollow mysterious answer."

"He asked me "Is there anything else that you wish to ask?" I thought and thought and thought but nothing I knew to ask. Besides I had asked all the questions I usually do and they usually lead me to enough information to write a book. He then said "I take it you answered my question in silencer therefore a no... farewell my friend!" and he walked out. I looked down at my note pad and grumbled in seeing that I had only had the words: big family, only child, far east hidden village, historian. I sighed to myself "what a waste of time." I knew this Reni must of had an interesting story but he gave his advice and knowledge thoughtfully and it was assembled in little puzzles left for your mind to figure out. This Wizard was truly mysterious....."

## **Renton**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

I used to sit at a quiet little corner table in Kalim's ( you know the one) and read a book. Sipping coffee or whiskey depending on my mood; watching the people; pondering. I still do sometimes. I would see the scribes to talk to some of our more prominent citizens. Harried, their arms full of hastily wrapped up scrolls, quills behind their ears, they reminded me of myself in the way that they so clearly loved knowledge. But at the same time, I felt akin to the people they were coming to speak with: strong and full of self- confidence. So, I was a little surprised, but quite pleased, when one of the scribes came up to me at my table one day and asked if he could speak to me about where I came from and why I was here.

I asked him his name (Leopold) and told him that I would be more than happy to speak with him. "Sit down," I encouraged him, "and I will answer any questions you may have". But as he sat and rolled out a fresh scroll on the table, dipping his quill in the ever present ink jar, I noticed how red and bloodshot his eyes were and how he was clearly fighting off sleep.

"Leopold, friend," I told him. "Why don't you go home to your family and get some sleep. I can write this and deliver it to you tomorrow morning".

Leopold thanked me graciously as he collected his belongings, dropping a number of quills on the floor when he bent over to bow. "No need for that, " I said with a smile, shooing him away. "Head off now and rest". Leopold bowed again, backing away, before turning and hurrying to the door, clearly relieved. And I found myself in the curious position of being an autobio -grapher. I called the waitress over and ordered some more whiskey to prepare myself for the task ahead...

Contrary to popular mythology, the Renis have not been wiped from the face of the realms. However, we have lost touch with the remainder of society. I grew up in a small village, over the mountains, where my family and a few others had been living for centuries. There were other Renis villages in the area, but we hardly ever traveled more than a few miles from our own homes. We had become more simple folk than our ancestors: farmers and such. I, however, was a little different. As I grew into adulthood, it became clear that I was a throwback to an earlier time, for my mind soared with strange and obtuse thoughts. I even knew a little magic and was able to entertain my brothers and sisters to no end with tricks of the mind and of the eye.

So it was decided, upon my eighteenth birthday, that I should follow in the path of my forebears and go away to the University in order to expand my knowledge. I packed my clothes and a few choice books in a small nap sack. My mother prepared some food for me. I said my good byes with a tier and a hug and headed out.

I was to walk to the next village and meet an old Renis there who supposedly knew the way though the mountains. He himself was too old to travel with me, but he had prepared me maps and detailed instructions. As I shook his hand and bid him goodbye, he reminded me to be careful and to always travel south, always south. I'm not going to lie to you and say my journey was easy. I walked for three weeks before I began to see signs of civilization, and even then I still had another two weeks to go. The people I passed seemed quite shocked to see me, even frightened, and I realized it had been a number of years since a member of my race had been seen walking amongst them. On the whole, though the journey was a very positive experience (except for that night, early on when I fell asleep in a Nightwraith's Cave, but that is a story for another time). I learned to fend for myself and deal with the hardships of the road. I learned to sense danger and how to avoid it. And, I learned, when necessary, to fight. I knew that I had only just scratched the surface of these skills, but I remain to this day appreciative of the lessons learned on my journey.

So at long last I arrived in the Nexus, eager to begin my studies. I searched the entire town, however and discovered no University. What had happened to it? (I told you we were out of touch). I spent a great deal of time in the Library, reading up on the past. I spoke with scribes and adventurers alike. Yes, there had been a University, but it had been a part of the old city. It now lay in ruins, buried somewhere beneath my very feet.. For a number of days, I did not know what I

was going to do. I wandered the streets, defending myself when necessary. I went to the library and read, but the knowledge contained within the books seemed paltry compared to what could be learned in the halls of the University. I went on like this until I could stand it no longer. One day, I followed a group of adventurers under the city, sneaking behind them. I knew that I could very likely get killed, for I was not very strong, but I had to find the university. And, I did. And it was glorious. I would spend hours there, sitting in a corner, reading by the light of a single candle while others would occasionally fight around me. Eventually, I began taking scrolls and books out with me, reading them in the more comfortable surroundings of Kalim's or the Unicorn. And my thirst for knowledge grew.

But all of this I did with no other purpose than to serve my own thirsts and desires. Deep down, I knew this was wrong. I would soon have experiences, however, that would set me straight and give me a renewed sense of Hope. During my first festival in the Nexus, I met Pandora who, like the other deities, was walking amongst us. Through her, I was able to see that my knowledge and power could be channeled for a greater good than my own. In her was the perfect expression of what is right with knowledge. During that week, I also saw what can happen to knowledge if it becomes corrupted. As I saw the look of madness in Arskol's eyes, crouching in the tower of the Library while the other gods battled him, I became even more certain that his was not the path I wanted to take and that Pandora's was. I pledged myself to her wholeheartedly.

So we reach the present. And I sit here in Kalim's, writing. When I am done I will go out and walk the streets, talking to my friends, helping those who need it. I know that there is still much more to be learned and I feel confident that I will use that knowledge as Pandora would wish me to. Hope to you all, and Leopold, if you are reading this, I hope that you have slept well.

## **Scorpio**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Humann

It was a regular day in Kalim's Tavern, where citizens of Nexus were sitting and relaxing after another fight against Goblins. Everyone was talking about their victories and losses, strange encounters, and they were so deeply into the conversations, that no one even noticed the Reni Scribe, who wandered into the Tavern, looking for another story. He spotted a tall man with blond hair, who wore golden robes with a strange symbol on them.....a symbol of a scorpion. Scribe got a little closer to the man, and whispered something into his ear, and then went to the far corner of tavern. The man stood up, and said:" Excuse me, brothers, I have to do something important.", and joined Scribe.

"Who are you and what do you want from me?" the man said to Scribe. "Excuse me for interrupting, sir, but i am looking for stories of lives of Nexus citizens, for a collection that we put together in the Library. I was just wondering if you could answer a couple of questions for me...", said Scribe and got a sheet of paper and a pen out of his bag. "You want the story of my life, stranger? OK, then you shall hear it" , the man smiled and took another drink out of his glass.

"My name is Scorpio, and i was born in Rymek....you know, a small village on the Sea of Tears...My father was a fisherman, his father was a fisherman, so they wanted me to be a fisherman too. One can say, that i wasn't very happy about their choice..i mean, being a fisherman was fine, but i wanted more in my life than just going fishing every day to feed my family. But I had no choice, so i had to go and help my father. Being at sea was very interesting, and very dangerous. Several times I saw Sirens, swimming in waves and waving us. It was a very dangerous life, and I started to like it. But, suddenly everything ended. The war came to our peaceful village. First the sky turned dark, like the gods became angry at each other, and then goblins came. We managed to maintain the perimeter of our village, so they never were able to get inside, but outside the village was very dangerous, and only the bravest were going to Nexus through Torthese forest.

One night, when i was almost 18, I woke up because of sounds of thunderstrikes and flashes of lightnings. I looked out the window and saw something very unusual.....not very far from the village , lightnings were flashing, and just above one place, like there was a giant blacksmith there. I couldn't resist. I got up, put on my armor and took my weapons and sneaked out the door. It was raining, the sky was the darkest ever. As I was closing to the place where I saw lightnings, I started hearing war screams of goblins and I thought: "This is it. It was a trap, I am dead now."" Scorpio took one more drink, tossed the empty bottle away and yelled : "Bartender, one more bottle here!".

"I didn't want to die without a fight", Scorpio continued," so I decided to get get a little closer and see, who were against me. As I stepped into the small wooden area, I saw a man, wearing red robes, surrounded by 5 or 6 goblin warriors. I thought : " This is it! This is the chance I was waiting for! No more fishing!", and I went into battle. The man looked around and said : "Thank you , stranger. Together we may have a chance to survive". The battle was long and very hard. I fought goblin soldiers before, but warriors were much, much harder to kill. Several times I was close to death, and only spells, that the man was casting at me, kept me alive. There was just one warrior left, and I thought that it was all over, when goblin made a vital strike on the man. I killed warrior, but man was lying on the ground, almost dead. He said: "Thank you for your help, stranger. You saved my life. But I still need your help. Can you please take me to your home and let me heal up?"

I lifted him up and carried to the Rymek. As I was closing to the my house, I saw an awful picture. Something , that looked like a skeleton, sneaked from my house towards an old galleon on the pier. I ran into the house and realized that my father and mother were murdered in sleep. I didn't know who was it, but I had a pretty good idea about it.

I buried my father in the Sea of Tears, like he always wanted. The Wizard, that I saved, was getting better and better. One day he said to me: " I want to thank you, Scorpio, for saving my life. But I don't know how to do it. So I will give you an advise. Go to the city of Nexus, don't stay here. Being a fisherman is not for you. You deserve much more in your life, than that. I can feel the strength of

mage in you. One day you will be a great mage. Go to the city , and find the mage tower. It's on the intersection of Market and Pine streets. Join the guild. One day you will be a great mage. And now, I must go. There is still a lot of goblins around the city, and we have to stop them". So he went away and disappeared. I never saw him in my life after that. I decided to trust him and went to the city of nexus as soon as I could. Finding the tower was easy, and soon I wore Blue robes of apprentice. Many years went by from that moment. But I was not able to find out, who that man was, and what happened to him. But I intend to do so."

Scorpio layed back on his chair, and finished his bottle." Well, stranger, if you have any other questions, ask them now." Scribe stood up and said : " No, sir. I'm sorry for interrupting your little party. But that was very interesting story. I have to go now, but I'll make sure it will get to library." Scribe bowed and disappeared in clouds of smoke. Scorpio stood up, looked at the half empty bottle, tossed it into trash and walked out of tavern. He had to get some sleep, because next day was supposed to be even harder than any others, because goblins were seen right outside eastern gates. The time has came for him to do what a long time ago strange Wizard did: go and fight for Nexus.

## Se'mur

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

I grew up in a fairly normal family, on the island of Ruvur, born the first of the month of the dragon. I lived with my parents, Richard and Ulanda for the better part of my life, they offered me everything I could ever want or need, though we were no richer than the slightly lesser person. They worked hard to give me a life of my own, I greatly appreciate their efforts and will forever be indebted to them. They allowed me to pursue any dream that I could imagine, forbade me only of following the god of Kyorl, one they dispised greatly.

I searched constantly for something that could hold my interest, something to keep me occupied, but nothing could sooth the hunger I had inside for something unknown to even myself. I held few jobs, and always had my nose buried in a book, in constant thought and wonderment at the things that had happened in history, and the things that happened the present day. I often fantasized that I could become a hero, such as the ones in some of the books I read. I would picture myself as a warrior, fighting the devious goblin hordes and saving the day. Where I grew up, magick was not known well, at least not to myself nor my family. We lived in a secluded cabin miles away from most of society.

I held a job at a local tavern in a small town near to us, where adventurers and explorers often passed through. One day I overheard rumors of the townfolk about a follower of Kyorl, an assassin, that had supposedly slain a man of great wealth and power. I went about my business cleaning up and serving the few that happened to wander into the tavern, mostly all very drunk, then went home where I slept the rest of the day away.

That night I had a strange nightmare. I envisioned a peculiar man. He wore black torn robes, and he whispered strange words to me. His words I mostly do not remember, the ones I do I do not understand, and to this day I don't know of the language they were spoken in. He called forth creatures from the ground, ones long since dead, ones that shrieked in the blackness of the void I seemed to hurl through. His face I could not make out, his eyes glowed red as he pointed the crooked silver staff towards me, and spoke a word that I did understand. "You." His voice was deep and raspy, and terrified me.

I awoke from my dream soaked in sweat, and sitting upright from my pillow. Frantically I searched the room, and when I found nothing out of the ordinary, I pushed the nightmare to the back of my mind and soon forgot about it. I fell back into a deep sleep, and slept the rest of the night.

The next day I traveled to the tavern, happily going about my business, for that day was the day I would be paid, and I could buy the new book that I had wanted so much. Late in the day, a man walked into the tavern that looked strikingly familiar. He wore black robes, the hood covering most of his face, only his large white nose descending into view. It finally hit me as I was serving him some Blackroot Tea, that he was the figure I saw in my dreams. As it hit me, a slight smile crossed his lips, as if he knew. There was a moment of silence as I stood awestruck, and he said "This is the best tea that I have had in years." I finally sputtered my thanks and walked away, but I was soon sitting in front of him, holding a conversation of small talk about the town. His face I can't remember, and that's what strikes me as strange. I vaguely remember most of his words, at least, the important ones.

There was something about him, something...fulfilling. It was like this was where I was supposed to be, and I knew it, I could feel it...something inside me. We finally got around to the talk of magick, and I became very curious. He showed me a book, one that I believe now to have contained ancient incantations, ones written in the same language I believe him to have spoke to me in my dream. He suddenly became very cautious, and stuffed the black book back into his pouch to his side, and told me to meet him outside of the tavern late that night. He also told me that my parents could not know where I was going, or what I was doing. Of course I objected at first, but before I had time he was gone. A fleet of guardsmen arrived soon after he had vanished, and quired me as to his whereabouts. I felt compelled to tell them that I had never seen him before, but if I did, I would let them know. The leader took his men off in a huff of disbelief.

That night I met the man outside of the tavern. The rain pounded, and the storm outside raged, blowing the sign to the tavern in the wind. We rode horse-back, and we talked of magick now and then. He said that I must train hard if I ever wanted to truly understand why he had come for me, and said that I must practice in the art of what was called a mage. He took me to the island of apprenticeship, Falcion, and said that someday we would meet again in the town of Nexus.

To this day I await his return, until then, I am in constant searching of his whereabouts. Someday, I hope to find that man, and ask him all the questions that have been bottled up inside for so many years. That day will be of great consequence to the rest of my life, I'm sure of it. And that is why I am here, in Nexus, to learn what I can so that I may understand why I was called upon.

# Silvereye

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

Years I've been trying to write this, but have been unsuccessful to put my history down on parchment due to the pains I've endured when I think of my past. I have lived a life of tragedy, where no exit could be found to escape what seemed like a death of starvation, and loneliness. I would like to thank Elayna for helping me tell my past without being saddened as I usually did. This is the story of Silvereye Kornelius Paleo.

I was born on Maaur in the month of Wildfire in the year 1,537 since the Godswar in Nexus. My parents, whose names were Palin and Kalina, were poor merchants who sold goods acquired at Tiger's Trading Shop. From what I know of, they had no relatives in Nexus. I was the second generation of Paleos in the City of All Races.

We lived on a carpet on Market Street, just a little bit west of the Town Square. We ate food given to us by a guy who owned a tavern near by (I don't know the name of the person, or the tavern ). I had a brother, maybe two (I'll explain it later). His name was Tarnash. He wanted to be a warrior, which was unusual for a Reni. He, like most big brothers, liked to pick on me. He was also an excellent salesman. And that was my everyday life for 11 years, just regular selling stuff to people on the streets.

When I turned 11, Nexus was attacked by goblins. Screams could be heard a mile away as people ran to their homes in fear from the hoards. My brother, who was nearing 17 years old, defended the city with my father. My mother and I hid behind the newspaper stand, which would become the main place of hiding for us for 15 more years. Fortunately, the goblins had not broken into the city this time.

My father returned, a body in his arms. It was my brother, blood smeared all over his face. The look of horror was a basic way to describe his face. A giant wound could be seen on his leg, and one was on his shoulder. He had died when three goblins came at him when he was alone. They used him for target practice with their spears.

Deep sadness made my mother not eat for days. When she finally did eat something, it turned out it was moldy bread with a bottle of Dwarven Ale. My dad stopped working for several days due to the shock of having one less son.

Years and years went by, and I finally turned 26. I awoke on an early morning to find my father and mother missing. I figured that they went to get more stuff to sell at the pawnshop, so I waited and snacked on some food ... Days passed, and still no parents returned. Had they abandoned me? I refused to believe so. I searched around for weeks, but no sign of my mother or father.

I wish it had stayed that way, for what I saw on the 17th of the month of Twilight has haunted me

for over 80 years. I was walking around at dark, and came into a back alley. I saw a body on the ground, and quick rushed over to see if someone had a heart attack or something. I looked at the person. It was a lady ... A Reni lady ... I turned her over, to see the pendant I had given her for her 250th birthday, a truly happy day in her life. But that wasn't all I saw ... Guts and blood hung out of her chest, daggers had been stuck into her forehead and legs. I could only stand to look at my mother's wounds once before I vomited continuously and ran down the alleyway.

I tried to give my mother a proper burial, but due to the poorness of me, she had to be buried in the ground outside the south gate, instead of a graveyard where she would have liked to be, where she still is today.

When I was around 110, I was apprenticed in Falcion to become a mage. It was there that I learned how to shoot a longbow, cast spells, and most of all, make friends. I met tons of new people, just being apprenticed themselves.

It wasn't soon, and I had achieved the 7th tier and could go to Nexus. I met a whole bunch of people who were described to me by young men in taverns as heroes. I also met one very interesting and funny person, who is in the Barbarians Guild, named Ork. He considered me his lovable pet, and decided to keep me so I wouldn't run away. It was probably the funniest experience I've ever encountered in my life.

One day, I was checking the post office in Nexus for any letters that I may have, and the postmaster handed me an unusual one. With no return address or name, it described to me that I have a brother, and he is it. I have not confirmed that this is true, and have not been encountered by anyone who fits this person's description. I hope to find out if this letter is of the truth or not, but until then, I have something to look forward to.

I have only started living my life to the fullest, after so much sadness and pain in my life that has haunted me throughout the years. Hopefully, I will become as happy as these fine heroes that walk through the world every day, looking for action and adventure. And some laughs along the way would be great too. Until then, I'll just fight proudly, for I am a citizen of the City of All Races.

## **Sinister**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

In the farthest reaches of the North, far beyond the habitable reaches of the Nymarian waste, a frigid gust strengthened in a swirl of snowflakes. It gained speed and direction as it surged through a great crevasse that severed one of the massive ice flows. Whipping along the frozen tundra, it fled the dominion of ice, and speedily moved towards a warmer clime. When the great Crystal Mountains reared up before the gale, it climbed quickly to their lofty heights. Great Snow Eagles gathered their young under wing as the freezing blast ruffled feathers and chilled blood. Up the gale climbed until it swirled through the parapets of the Great Ice Castle that stood at the apex of Elaria, the greatest of the Crystal Mountains. Through the portcullis and down the merciless face of

Elaria the polar blast soared, into the reaches of the vast Eldane below.

Selanu perched like a falcon on a stout branch jutting out of an ancient oak tree. Her keen eyes followed the doe below predatorily. She reflected on the beauty of the creature and recited a silent prayer of thanks to Erisar, the Lord of the Hunt, for her stroke of luck in making such a find. In one silent motion she nocked an arrow and drew the feathers to her cheek. At the instant of her release, a frigid blast of wind tore the very leaves from the tree around her and nearly sent her tumbling from the oak. She uttered a quiet curse as the arrow took the doe in the midsection instead of the heart. With a high pitched whistle it bounded off into the wilderness. Selanu sighed deeply and pulled her rabbit fur cloak closer about her shoulders to ward off the wintry breeze. There was nothing to do now but begin the tracking. Dropping nimbly from the tree, she strode the fifty paces to where the doe last stood. She sat down on her heels and fingered a few drops of the warm blood lying upon the new fallen leaves. Hazel eyes followed the line of the spoor as she raised her head slowly. Running appeared to be effortless grace as she dashed off into the morning.

Faran Dobir mopped his brow with a dirty rag and squinted his azure eyes as the sun crept higher into the morning sky. The relentless heat that was characteristic of the harvest season sat heavily upon the land. The merchant pulled his wide-brimmed hat down a bit lower and loosened a button on his white linen shirt pondering the thought that no Reni should be out in weather such as this. Half a day of travel would bring him to the eastern gates of the City of All Races, and more importantly, within reach of a glass of chilled Icewine at Trista's tavern. The latter thought brought a lopsided smile to his weather beaten face. Cursing the light coat of fur that was characteristic to his race, he slapped the reins against his two packhorses and stared off down the road.

Faran shrieked a wordless cry as the brush to his left exploded in a chaos of multicolored leaves. He managed to stand on the seat of his cart and face his assailant moments before an attack struck him in the center of his chest. The force of the blow hurtled him from the cart and he landed violently on his back. Startled by the sudden noise and ensuing confusion, the two packhorses pulling the cart reared up and tore off down the hard-pack road, pulling their burden in a flight driven by panic. The attacker dashed off into the hedges on the opposite side of the road and the sounds of its flight quickly faded. Rolling to his stomach, Faran slowly breathed out a long moan of agony. The cloud of dust caused by the tumult had nearly settled and the noises of the surrounding forest began to return to normal. Pushing his hands down into the dust, he drew himself to his knees and began to take stock of his situation. His white linen shirt was spattered with red stains and covered in brown dust. Alarmed, buttons flew as he tore open the front of his shirt searching for the source of the bleeding. A cursory inspection showed that the blood spots covering the shirt did not originate from his body. 'Perhaps from poor Bonnie or Tag,' he thought glumly. Faran brought a hand to his brow to shade his eyes from the relentless sun as they searched for his team and cart. As he cast them up the road, they came to rest on first his hat, then his equine charges. They stood a mere 200 paces away, happily chewing on the dry grass that lined the sides of the road. He barked out half a laugh that degenerated into a coughing fit when a sharp, frigid wind swirled dust up from the road. Shivering and cursing the freakish weather, the Reni stood up and began to make his way to the cart.

The doe paused in an effort to gather her remaining energies. Huge brown eyes rolled with

dimming vision, stopping for merely a moment on the tall furry creature bending down to retrieve something before continuing on its journey. With a dash she was off despite short breaths becoming shorter while tired muscles gave their final efforts at flight. Finally the doe's foreleg crashed into a fallen branch sending her tumbling down a steep embankment. She came to rest at the bottom of a gully with the broken shaft of an arrow protruding upwards from a bloody wound in her stomach. A valiant effort to regain her feet failed miserably and she crashed back to her bed of leaves, body wracked with spasms. A feeble whistle and sputter of blood from her throat marked the end of her efforts. As her skyward eye glazed over, it was fixed on a black vulture circling high above.

When Faran arrived at his cart, he cast his glance in every direction for several moments, searching for signs of observation. When he felt comfortable, he slid a board from underneath his seat and plunged his arm into the resulting hole. His face visibly relaxed and he pulled a silver box from the opening. With a second glance over each shoulder, Faran opened the box for a brief moment and eyed the contents. The box contained several hundred thousand gold pieces worth of blackwood lotus extract, a high profitable, dangerous, and illegal drug. Faran glanced at the sun and cursed with the knowledge that he was already late for the meeting with his contact at Madame Despana's. There would be no time for a drink at Trista's tavern now. Faran quickly placed the box back into its hiding place and carefully slid the board back into place. Placing a hand on the front wagon wheel, he vaulted into his seat. There would be time enough, and gold, for all the wine he wanted later. This was the sale that was going to finally make him a rich Reni. With a snap of the reins, the cart lurched forward.

Selanu quietly slipped from the brush lining the road while her eyes searched for signs of danger. Casting her glance upwards, she marked the black vultures she had seen through the forest canopy a few minutes earlier. 'Who could have imagined the doe would have such strength,' she mused. She had been tracking the doe for the entire morning and sweat beaded on her brow from the long journey. An expert eye watched the vultures and judged her quarry was very near. She paused a moment to take a draught from her waterskin and reflect on the journey. Her elven village of Talmat was much too far to carry her quarry to now. The City of All Races was much closer. She would have to carry the deerskin and whatever else she could manage and trade it there. With a sigh of resignation, Selanu melted back into the forest in the direction of the vultures.

Faran reined in Bonnie and Tag with a look of trepidation. The walls of the City of All Races loomed high above him even though he stopped a good hundred paces from the gate. The remaining space was filled with all manner of covered wagons and carriages waiting to enter the bustling city. Faran hopped down from his cart and called the attention of a caravan guard lounging against the wagon in front of him, 'Ho there, good man. What is the meaning of this delay?' The caravan guard spit into the dust and loosened his sword in his scabbard as he turned to and walked over to Faran. 'Seems the guards have caught wind of some'tin,' the guard spat out. 'I hear it told they be search'in every wagon com'in from the East. What sort of wares do you be bring'in to the City?' The caravan guard drew himself up to his full height in an effort to look into the back of Faran's cart over the raised seat. 'Oh, just some feed for the stables,' Faran quickly answered. 'Nothing the city guard would be interested in I'm sure.' The caravan guard nodded and sunk back down to his heels. 'Well I'm sure ye have nothing to fear then,' the caravan guard sneered, 'The last bloke who was caught with contraband stills a hang'in from the city walls.' The caravan guard then turned

away and pointed upwards on his way back to his wagon. Faran followed his finger up to a place high on the wall where ... something ... was suspended by a length of thick rope. It was difficult to make out because of the multitude of carrion birds tearing pieces of flesh from their perches upon it. Faran weakly sat back upon his cart and stared forward into whatever destiny awaited him.

'Something has to be done about him,' Fariol stated firmly, 'Something has to be done ... and soon.' Thelia's eyes followed the Master of the Ivory Tower as he paced along the railing on the balcony outside of his office. Her mission from the wizards' guild of Tholm had taken an unexpected twist, and not for the better. Fariol stopped his pacing and placed both his hands onto the gilded balustrade, leaning outward to survey the City of All Races under the afternoon sun. 'His black tower is a boil on the southern half of the realms,' Fariol spat, 'A boil it seems that I am going to have to personally lance.' Thelia sighed softly and moved to Fariol's side, placing her left hand over his right as she took a position next to him. Softly she said, 'Do not let your temper get the better of you Tower Master. He has grown quite powerful ...' Thelia drew in her breath for the inevitable outburst her next statement would cause, ' ... perhaps even more powerful than you. A direct confrontation may not be your wisest course of action.' She felt Fariol quickly tense, but his reaction was far from what she expected. Fariol sighed and spoke quietly, 'Your counsel is wise as usual Mistress of Tholm, but the time has come for action.' Fariol turned towards Thelia and pulled her to face him with each of his hands on her shoulders. He looked deep into her eyes and spoke to her on her intimate telepathic mode. 'What are we to do my love?' Thelia sighed and rested her head against Fariol's chest as she replied, 'Whatever must be done, we can do it together.' Fariol gathered her into a tender embrace just as a frigid blast sent his cloak flapping like a flag in the wind. They lingered in one another's arms for several minutes, drawing strength from the warmth of their bodies. Reluctantly, Fariol stepped back and looked once again into Thelia's eyes. Composing himself, he spoke solemnly, 'The time has come.' The Master of the Ivory Tower turned and strode back into his office. 'Guards!' Fariol barked. A moment later two guardsman brandishing halberds rushed into Fariol's office. After ascertaining that the Tower Master was in no immediate danger, the two guards dropped to their knees and spoke in unison, 'How may we serve you milord?' Fariol's stare was far off as he commanded, 'I want the city guard and auxiliaries assembled immediately. We march on the Tower of Sar'Mordal at dawn.'

The city guardsman raised his hand and motioned Faran to bring his cart up to the gate. With a light shake of the reins, he set his cart in motion and prayed that the turmoil in his stomach did not show on his face. 'Whoa there!' the guardsman barked. Faran reined in Bonnie and Tag bringing the cart to a halt. One guardsman grabbed the reins from Faran and another began to question him, 'What is your business in the City of All Races merchant?' 'I'm bringing in some feed for Sharma's Stables,' Faran answered quickly. Sweat beaded on his forehead and ran down his temple as the guardsman held his gaze for a moment. The guardsman then moved to the rear of his cart and began poking through the feed sacks. 'Merchant! Come here!' the guardsman barked from the rear of the cart. Faran slipped from his seat onto the flat stones that paved the road just outside of the gate and sauntered to the rear of his cart. 'Yes sir?' he asked innocently. The guard looked at him suspiciously and asked, 'These sacks bear the mark of a granary just outside of Tholm. What profit did you expect to gain by carrying them halfway across the realms?' 'I was able to purchase them at a discount in Rosehelm,' Faran explained attempting to be convincing, 'A young lass named Maeve sold them to me at Tyler's Trading post.' The guardsman looked at Faran skeptically for a moment before saying, 'I wasn't aware that Tyler's traded in grain.' He whirled to

his right and called out, 'Sergeant Diggs, come have a look at this cart.' Faran took an unconscious step back as his nerves frayed to the very edge. Eyes darting right and left, he searched for a means of egress. Finally, he settled back in a balanced stance and eased his short sword in its scabbard. If they were going to take him, he was going to make it as difficult as possible. Sergeant Diggs was a mountain of a man, with shoulders half again as broad as the guardsman. Diggs lumbered over to the cart, turned to the guardsman and snapped, 'Ruthio, what's going on here?' Ruthio spoke to Diggs at length when finally Diggs turned to Faran and demanded, 'Something is not on the level here Dobir. Come out with it now and it will go easier on you. If not ... ' Diggs glanced upward, pausing menacingly. Faran, still clinging to hope, stuttered, 'I ... I don't know what your talking about sir.' Diggs grunted and stalked off towards the front of the cart. He arrived at the front and began to poke about around the seat. Faran hovered on the edge of panic. If the guardsman found the silver box, what would he do? Even if he managed to escape, the loss of the box meant his life was forfeit. If the city guard didn't kill him, the Brotherhood of the Night surely would. As thoughts tumbled through Faran's head, the Sergeant's keen eye picked out a loose board beneath the seat. Diggs exclaimed, 'Ho ho. What do we have here?' Faran tensed as Diggs reached for the board, his right hand slowly moving towards the short sword at his side. The moment Diggs touched the board, the clanging sound of bells filled the square inside of the gate. Diggs paused for a moment eyeing the board before turning towards Ruthio and shouting, 'That's a general alert corporal, form up the ranks!' Diggs glanced at Faran and spat, 'Move this piece of junk out from under my gates,' and proceeded to run towards the open door of the guardhouse. Faran nearly crumpled with relief but managed to weakly make his way up into the seat of his cart. With a slap of the reins he proceeded westerly down Market Street.

The cords that bound Sharana's hands to the altar had finally cut deep enough into her wrists so that her blood was flowing freely. For the hundredth time that day she reached out to the weave trying to feel any shred of energy, and for the hundredth time she failed. She craned her neck to stare at the statue placed a single pace above her head, a statue that eerily bore her exact likeness. The altar she had been placed on was constructed of smooth obsidian. It was formed into the shape of a rectangular block a single pace high, the surface only broken by tie downs at the top and bottom and a shallow bowl with a small channel leading off the edge in the middle, just under Sharana's midsection. To the immediate left and right of her head were two pulsing red crystals fixed atop golden staffs two paces high. The altar was located on the top of the Tower of Sar'Mordal and a chilling breeze from the Sea of Tears brought goose bumps to Sharana's skin, but she did not notice. Her eyes were fixed on the hooded figures emerging from the stairwell that ended several paces below her feet. A voice emanated from one of the hoods, 'Well good evening Sharana. I hope you find my hospitality up to your expectations.' Sharana strained against her bonds as she spat out, 'Devin Nightsong, you are a disgusting waste of lifeforce. The Ivory Tower will not stand for this. You and yours will be echoes in the hall of time soon enough.' The Lord of Sar'Mordal laughed mirthfully in a deep voice before replying, 'One would expect that a person in your position would act a bit more cordial. No matter, soon enough you'll learn some respect.' Devin pulled back his hood then turned to his companion and spoke softly, 'Anor, prepare the Spires of Golgolith please.' Sharana watched, paralyzed by fear, as Anor moved to her side carrying an ancient leather-bound case. 'N ... no,' Sharana whimpered, 'Please Devin ... I'll swear allegiance ... I'll do-' Sharana's pleas were cut short as Devin smashed a backhand across her face sending two of her teeth flying. 'Silence bitch!' he roared, 'The time for your babbling has come to an end!' Devin seized Sharana's chin in one hand while withdrawing a vial containing a glowing

blue liquid from the folds of his robes with the other. 'This elixir will prevent you from slipping into unconsciousness under any circumstances,' Devin boasted, 'I'm sure you wouldn't want to miss your last few minutes in corporeal form.' Devin poured the contents of the vial down Sharana's throat, heedless of the gurgling blood caused by his blow. His reverie was disrupted by Anor's voice, 'Lord Nightsong, the Spires are prepared.' 'Excellent,' replied Devin, 'Let me inspect them.' Devin moved around to the side of the altar on which the channel terminated. Just below the channel was positioned a mithril bowl supported by three mithril spires. The spires had three sides each and stood nearly as high as the altar itself. Both the spires and the bowl had inlaid arcane symbols covering their visible surfaces. Devin carefully inspected their positioning before turning back to Anor. 'The dagger please,' Devin commanded. Anor placed a wickedly curved dagger in Devin's hand as he strode to the side of the altar opposite the spires. In a peculiar moment of tenderness, Devin brushed a strand of hair from Sharana's face. His face then hardened and using the dagger, he slashed her robes open from the neck to the hem. Devin then held the dagger above his head with both hands and began an incantation in the ancient tongue of the Daer'lin while Sharana lay naked, writhing and whimpering upon the altar. The timber of Devin's voice seemed to grow deeper and permeate the air surrounding the top of the tower. Anor looked down at the spires and took a step back as they began to glow and pulse in rhythm with Devin's chanting. As the chanting reached a crescendo, a bolt of lightning split the evening sky and struck the dagger held aloft in Devin's hands. The thunder dissipated and was replaced by a loud humming emanating from the Spires of Golgolith. Sharana's flesh sizzled as Devin brought the white-hot blade of the dagger down and placed it against the far side of her stomach. Devin's lips curved into a wicked smile as he looked into Sharana's eyes and spoke, 'Now Sharana, you will know agony.' He then inserted the dagger two inches into her side, and began to cut horizontally across her stomach. Sharana's eyes bulged in her head and her shrieks filled the evening air, each louder than the previous one. When Devin had finished his cut across her stomach, he thrust his hand into her body cavity, tearing her intestines out and holding them aloft. Sharana looked up at her bowels in Devin's hand and uttered a scream so full of terror and pain, it caused Devin to burst out in maniacal laughter. Anor stood by watching silently with a fervent gleam in his eyes. During the disembowelment, Sharana's lifeblood had been steadily running down the channel carved into the altar and filling the bowl placed atop the Spires of Golgolith. An eerie mist had formed within the bowl accompanied by an increasing keen sound in the air. Devin finally took notice of the sound and threw Sharana's entrails down upon her chest. He raised both his arms into the air and shouted, 'Makvoth! Telranoth! Sar'Goranoth!' The mist began to swirl and rise from the bowl, slowly taking a humanoid shape. Devin smiled as the mist congealed into a Soulwraith, the very scourge of all living things. 'Makvoth!' Devin barked, 'Perform the transfer!' The Soulwraith named Makvoth looked at Devin distastefully before replying in a gravelly voice, 'As you command Keeper of Golgolith.' Makvoth then reached out and placed its right hand upon Sharana's forehead and its left hand upon the statue just above her. A new torment was inflicted upon Sharana through her haze of excruciating pain. As the very fiber of her soul was being extracted from her, she fought a desperate battle to retain her unity of self. The Soulwraith looked on dispassionately as the soft flesh beneath its fingers gave way. It completely ignored the spurts of blood that jettisoned from the holes its fingers bore into the life form's skull and unerringly continued with its one purpose, the complete distillation of life force from the body it inhabits. Sharana futilely held fast to her last thread of life for a moment before it was torn from her. A last deafening wail from the convulsing body upon the altar faded into the normal sounds of nighttime. With a wave of his hand Devin dissipated the Soulwraith and turned to regard what remained of Sharana. Her cool blue eyes,

once the color of the sea, had now turned completely black and lifeless. Devin grunted and spoke to Anor, 'Step back please Anor.' Anor quickly obeyed by taking several paces back from the altar. Devin took two steps backward and began incanting words of power. He brought his hands in front of him with a clap and all that remained of Sharana burst into flame. Her remains burned bright and hot for several moments before the flames vanished into the night air. Devin strode over to the statue and began to examine it. Grasping hold of the weave, he mentally probed the soul that was now bound within its substance. Devin smiled and whispered, 'What have you to say about respect now my dear Sharana?' Listening carefully, a low moan could be detected at the edge of consciousness. Devin stepped back and smiled while issuing commands to Anor, 'Anor, place the Spires of Golgolith back into my study and put this statue into its position in the hall of conquest please.' Anor quickly replied, 'As you command Lord Nightsong.' He paused a moment before speaking again, 'Lord Nightsong, may I ask you a question?' 'Certainly Anor.' Devin replied as he paused at the top of the stairwell, 'What is it?' Anor spoke quietly, 'My studies have shown that a mere drop of blood is all that is required by the Spires of Golgolith to perform the summoning, am I incorrect?' A wicked smile crossed Devin's face as he replied, 'No Anor, you are absolutely correct. But I do have a flair for theatrics, don't you think?' Anor smiled weakly as he replied, 'Yes milord, you certainly do.'

The last golden red and yellow rays of sunset were disappearing behind the flat roofed houses of Hammer Street when Faran brought his cart to a halt. Wagon ruts lined the road and the people in the area seemed to be going about their business under a haze of oppression. On the right stood the busy doorway that led to Madam Despana's brothel, his final destination. Faran hopped down from the cart and tied Bonnie and Tag's reins to a nearby hitching post, he did not expect to be there long. Eyeing the closest wayfarers with caution, he slid the board from underneath his seat and snatched the silver box from its hiding place. Faran turned his attention to the doorway and his mind was filled with trepidation. The Brotherhood of the Night were not individuals to be trifled with. Their underground network had a hand in the majority of nefarious activities occurring in the City of All Races and they counted amongst their members all manner of renowned cutthroats and thugs. Faran was more likely to be killed and robbed than paid for services rendered. 'Great reward is not gained without great risk,' he mused to himself and proceeded to climb up the short set of stairs that led to the door. Gilded chandeliers lined the ceiling dimly lighting the interior of the brothel and adding a smoky haze to the dark recesses of the main room. Musky scents permeated Faran's nose as he waded through the Strumpets searching for Madam Despana. A crystalline voice behind Faran caught his attention and caused him to whirl around, 'What can I do for you?' 'Madam Despana I presume,' Faran managed to cough out as his eyes drank in the sight of her voluptuous body thinly covered in a white dress. 'Why yes I am,' she teased with a bat of her lashes, 'Can I interest you in some of our ... services?' 'Perhaps later,' Faran managed weakly as he attempted to mentally cool the heated blood in his veins, 'I am looking for ... Silthar. Do you know where I might find him?' Madam Despana's visage visibly darkened at the mention of a member of the Brotherhood of the Night. 'I might,' Despana said coolly, 'What is your name?' 'My name is Faran' he replied with a measure of strength returning to his voice. Despana nodded curtly, turned on her heel, and proceeded through a hanging silk curtain in the rear of the room. Faran could not tear his eyes from her supple form as she strode away. Finally, he managed to move to the side of the room that was dominated by a short bar and a shorter dwarven bartender. Despana returned just as he managed to get a mug of ale. 'He wishes to see you in a private chamber,' Despana announced and then glanced down at his full mug of ale before adding,

'Immediately.' Faran gave his mug a look of longing before snatching up his silver box from the bar and stepping in behind Despana. She led him through the curtains and down a short hallway before they stopped at an unobtrusive door. 'Through there.' Despana whispered quietly and returned the way they had come. Faran took a deep breath, opened the door, and stepped inside. The moment his eyes adjusted to the dim light, Faran was able to see a slender man seated behind a table directly ahead of him with a stocky fellow standing to the man's left. The walls of the small room were decorated with polished shields and a low bed was pushed aside into the corner. Faran held back a smirk as he eyed the shields and internally contemplated about how they presumably afforded a better view to the participants in the lewd activities that occurred in the room. The slender man spoke first in a low, snake like voice, 'You are Faran Dobir?' Faran paused a moment considering the man in front of him before replying, 'I am, and I suppose you are Silthar' The slender man nodded and Faran continued, 'I have brought what you seek, and it was not easy. Show me the gold.' Silthar smiled and said, 'Certainly you cannot expect me to give you gold without allowing me to inspect my purchase first.' Faran shrugged, stepped forward, and placed the silver box on the table before Silthar. Silthar carefully opened the box and a broad smile crossed his face. He then slipped a dagger from his belt and prodded at the contents for a moment before looking over to his stocky companion and saying, 'The gold please' The stocky man walked to the corner of the room behind and to the right of Faran. With a grunt he lifted a large chest, placed it on the table in front of Faran, then stepped away. Silthar motioned Faran to have a look inside the chest. Faran unlocked the dual clasps on the front of the chest and threw the lid back. Before him shined more gold than he had seen in his 203 years of life. Faran picked up a gold piece and looked up to speak but was struck silent by the strange look on Silthar's face. His eyes went wide as he glanced behind Silthar and saw in a shield the reflection of the stocky man with a crossbow aimed at his back. Reacting instantly, Faran dropped to a knee and drew a dagger from his ankle sheath just as a crossbow bolt hissed over his head. Faran threw the dagger, taking the stocky man in the throat. Drawing his short sword, he then whirled to face Silthar only to find him lying on his back, clawing at the crossbow bolt protruding from his eye. Faran took a deep breath as he turned around. The stocky man was seated against the wall, clutching his throat and making gurgling sounds. He walked over and plunged his sword into the stocky man's breast, quickly ending his struggles. After wiping his sword off on the stocky man's cloak, he sheathed it, and turned back towards the chest. Considering the scene, Faran realized his life at this point could be measured in minutes. When the Brotherhood of the Night discovered what had transpired, if he remained in the City of All Races he was as good as dead. He slammed the lid down on the chest and hefted it up onto his shoulder. Quickly he made his way back into the main room of Madam Despana's brothel. With his free hand, Faran flipped the gold piece he had picked up earlier to Madam Despana and rushed out the front door.

Captain Varak held up his hand and the long winding column of soldiers came to a halt. Traversing the cliffs of Rymek had been difficult, but assaulting the tower that filled his vision infused him with a feeling of hopelessness. The tower rose 100 paces into the sky causing Varak to crane his neck from his position at the edge of an ancient forest to view its heights. From the end of the forest, a great field of sea grass dominated the terrain before the tower for a distance of 500 paces. Varak frowned as he viewed the approach to the tower that offered little or no cover for his men. His scouting reports offered nothing in the way of encouragement either. Apparently there was no visible entrance to the tower around its base and its extreme height made any attempt at scaling difficult at best. Varak turned his head to the right as Fariol and Thelia rode up beside him

mounted on identical white Nymarian thoroughbreds. Fariol spoke first, 'Captain Varak, what is your appraisal of the situation?' Varak frowned and his eyes moved from Fariol to the tower before he began to speak, 'Give me a week and our engineers may be able to develop some siege engines from the surrounding trees capable of doing some damage.' Fariol turned his attention to Thelia and she raised an eyebrow in reply to his glance. 'Varak,' Fariol said calmly, his gaze still fixed on Thelia, 'You have one hour to array your men in battle formation. Thelia and I will provide the means to enter the tower when the time comes. To tarry here longer would be suicide, see to your men.' Only a small part of the turmoil Varak was feeling entered his voice when he replied, 'As you command Towermaster.' As he turned and began barking orders, he couldn't shake the feeling that no matter what Fariol promised, death was at hand.

The Lord of Sar'Mordal rubbed his chin as he sat in his study, staring into a farseeing crystal and considering his situation. Fariol acting so quickly was completely unexpected. He had thought he would have time to complete the creation of the thirteen statues necessary to link his lifeforce to the weave, rendering him practically invincible. He would have laughed at Fariol and his ragtag band then. He was not laughing now, for he only possessed twelve statues. Normally Fariol would be more than his match in power, but he possessed a trump card, the Staff of Aidnartim. A powerful wizard created the Staff in an age far past. Aidnartim specialized in linking the powers of many wizards and wizardesses together in order to perform great works of magic no single wizard could perform alone. The Art was thought lost long ago but twenty years of searching had brought the staff within his grasp. With the staff he could use the powers of the souls he imprisoned in the statues to augment his own. Eventually he would have used the staff to complete his binding to the weave that would place undreamed of power in the hands of a mortal. But now Fariol jeopardized all of his plans, something would have to be done about him. Anor broke his reverie as he quietly knocked, entered the study, and spoke, 'Lord Nightsong ...' Devin cut him off saying quietly, 'I know Anor, please send for Krystana and Hatrayhu. I will meet them in the hall of conquest.' Anor lifted his eyes in surprise and queried, 'The hall of conquest my Lord?' Devin's reply came in the form of a distracted wave of his hand. He did not see Anor quietly back out of his study with a look of trepidation on his face. His attention was fixed on the array of forces displayed to him from within the crystal. Devin rubbed his chin again and considered. When he finally stood, he carefully placed the crystal back into its velvet-lined case. His face revealed grim determination as he whirled and strode out the door.

Varak reveled in the calm confidence that filled him before a great battle. He surveyed the deployment of his troops with a practiced eye. All was nearly in readiness. Twenty thousand men lined the edge of the forest, their attention collectively fixed on the Black Tower at the far end of a sea of grass. Sergeant Diggs broke Varak's reverie when he spoke quietly, 'The forces are arrayed as you requested Captain.' Varak replied, 'Very good Diggs, return to your company and await the signal' Diggs clapped his hand to his chest and quickly returned to his men. Varak paused for a moment before he lowered his head to the page beside him, 'Phoerum, take word to Fariol, all is in readiness.' The page nodded quickly and sprinted through the ranks behind him. A short time later, Fariol's approach was heralded by the creaking of armor as the ranks separated to allow his mount to pass to the front. He reined his stallion in next to Varak's and surveyed the assembled army. Thelia joined Fariol in the van and he acknowledged her with a slight nod. Varak addressed Fariol formally, 'Towermaster, the might of the City of All Races stands ready to defend her honor.' Fariol kept his gaze fixed on the Black Tower as he spoke softly, 'Signal the advance.' Varak

paused for a moment before querying, 'The night comes milord, should we not wait until dawn for an assault?' Varak shrunk back as Fariol fixed him with a gaze, fire burning in the depths of his eyes. He spoke firmly, 'We assault now because we likely would not survive the night, do you understand?' Varak was visibly shaken as he stammered out, 'Y .. yes milord.' He then motioned to a flagman in front of him. The flagman waved his flag, a slash of red set on a field of blue, three times back and forth before dropping it straight down. Several identical flags along the length of the ranks mirrored his movements quickly. As the army surged forward in the direction of the Black Tower, Fariol spurred his stallion and spoke to Thelia on her intimate telepathic mode, 'It begins.' Her reply turned into a whimper when her eyes fell upon a lone figure standing atop the tower, its silhouette clear against the setting sun.

The Lord of Sar'Mordal leaned against a crenellation of the Black Tower as he surveyed the advancing forces. The vast army spread along the grassy plain steadily moved towards the tower unopposed. 'We will just have to see to that.' he brooded to himself. His lips curled into a lopsided smile as he stepped back, raised the Staff of Aidnartim, and began to chant. Dark tendrils began to swirl around his outstretched staff as Devin's voice increased in intensity. In moments the tendrils gathered into a giant writhing ball of darkness that stood suspended in the air above him, steadily growing as the chanting surged to a crescendo. With a final guttural sentence, Devin swung his staff downward and pointed it at the field before the arrayed forces of the City of All Races. The giant pulsing ball of darkness raced towards the field in front of the progressing army. Seconds before it smashed into the ground, it seemed to come unraveled with tendrils shooting in every direction. Moments later an earsplitting scream issued from the grass directly in front of the startled men. Others soon joined it. The wails gained in intensity and numbers until the unholy chorus caused the soldiers to cover their ears in pain. The foremost soldiers began to shout and point as movement could be seen in the grass before them. Suddenly thousands of dark forms with piercing red eyes appeared in the waning light of sunset. When the screaming reached a climax, the dark forms began to advance on the faltering army. Devin leaned against the tower wall and breathed heavily from his effort. When he turned his attention to the field again, the broken advance forced a smile from his strained features. 'Now let them taste the power of Sar'Mordal.' he spat as the two opposing forces collided together.

Diggs was rocked back on his heels by a blow that shattered the front of his breastplate. Gaining his senses, he was barely able to parry the thrust that the beast of darkness aimed for his heart. Spinning in a full turn, he slashed his sword with all his might into the foul beast's neck. The beast convulsed as its head separated from its body. Diggs grimaced as the force of the blow caused his arm to go numb. His grimace turned to wide-eyed surprise as the numbness crept up his arm and halfway across his chest. Ruthio came to his Sergeant's aid and deflected a blow aimed for his head. 'Sergeant! Get behind me!' Ruthio exclaimed as he engaged two of the foul beasts. He staggered back behind Ruthio and took a moment to catch his breath. Looking around the field of battle he saw a score of his comrades being torn to pieces and fed upon by various horrors. A high-pitched scream caused Diggs to whirl around and Ruthio's viscera splattered his face as a beast ripped him in half. 'We are being annihilated ... ' Diggs considered despondently as he threw himself back into the fray.

Fariol frowned deeply as the losses quickly mounted. He had hoped the assembled army would be able to repel the defenses of Sar'Mordal conventionally but the battle was quickly turning to rout.

With a sigh at having to tip his hand early he contacted Sabsean, a High Priest of Aalynor, the Lord of the Light: 'Come.' Two hundred mounted Paladins and Priests of various sects burst from the trees and came thundering across the grassy plain. From his position atop the Black Tower, Devin raised an eyebrow as the new force rumbled towards the sagging armies of the City of All Races. Raising the Staff of Aidnartim to the sky, he quickly incanted a spell and then leveled the point of the staff at the charging reinforcements. A huge column of flame leapt from the staff and burned a hole in the ranks of the cavalry. In moments the flames died revealing the charred bodies of a score of Priests, Priestesses, Paladins and their mounts. As Devin raised the staff again Fariol shot a knowing look to Thelia. Holding Thelia's gaze he sent: 'We must try Thelia or they will all perish' Thelia returned his look with one of trepidation: 'As you wish. Be it our death or salvation.' Fariol and Thelia then opened themselves up to the weave and began to chant in unison. Fariol gathered as many threads as sanity allowed and began to weave them into a magical barrier. Thelia wound her lifeforce into a single sinuous thread and interwove herself into the fabric of Fariol's barrier, allowing him to expand and reinforce it exponentially. Fariol continued to extend his barrier outward, drawing every last shred of magickal energy his overtaxed mind could muster. Thelia sat rigid on her horse, sweat pouring down her face while she struggled to hold her lifeforce together as it was stretched to the very limit. Soon the barrier stood shimmering over the entire field of battle. Feeling that Thelia was waning, Fariol quickly set the weave of the barrier and concentrated what little remained of his magickal energies to augment her self-awareness as she tried to extract her lifeforce from the magickal barrier. They both cried out and collapsed on their horses after their combined ditch efforts allowed Thelia to return her soul to its corporeal form.

Devin brought his staff down and once again the column of flame surged from the tip. It raced across the distance to the armies of the City of All Races only to slam into Fariol and Thelia's barrier and be dispersed. Frowning, Devin knew the barrier would turn the tide of battle. Helpless, he watched as the holy forces of Light disintegrated his beasts and wraiths. Testing the magical weave, he found no path of egress. Fariol and Thelia's efforts had prevented him from flying upon the magical winds. Though he knew his army was defeated, he was not yet ready to retreat from the field. Eyeing the barrier, he leaned upon his staff and reflected, 'What a waste of talent.' He sighed deeply as the faith of the assembled Paladins and Priests turned the last of his unholy host to dust. Knowing he had but a few moments to put his affairs in order, he calmly walked past the Black Altar, down the stairs, and into the depths of Sar'Mordal.

Krystana Nightsong jumped as Devin threw back the doors that led into the hall of Conquest. Noting his haggard look, Krystana asked quietly, 'Is everything alright dearest?' Devin replied, 'Yes my love, everything will be quite fine. I am a little concerned however. We have some unpleasant visitors. I wish to place an amulet of protection around little Hatrayhu's neck, may I see him for a moment?' Krystana held out their son and Devin took him into his arms. He moved to the middle of the room, directly in the center of twelve statues that circled the perimeter. The small child watched Devin quietly with fiery red eyes. Devin met his son's gaze for a moment before lifting Hatrayhu aloft and chanting softly. Responding to his words of power, the statues began to shimmer with light and Hatrayhu became surrounded by a dark nimbus of blackfire. In a moment it was finished and Devin lowered his son, cradling him in his arms. Looking into his son's blackened eyes, he whispered, 'The legacy will continue. Krystana spoke out, 'What my love?' 'Nothing dearest.' he replied as he closed Hatrayhu's eyelids, walked over to Krystana, and handed her the seemingly sleeping child. She fingered the amulet that was now hanging from an adamantine chain

from her child's neck. 'This will protect him?' she queried. Devin replied, 'It certainly will dearest. Please wait for me atop the tower while I go greet our guests.' Krystana nodded slowly, preceded Devin out the doors, and climbed the stairs to the uppermost reaches of Sar'Mordal.

The remainder of the army of the City of All Races circled the Tower of Sar'Mordal in a defensive position. Fariol stood before the Black Tower with an expression of frustration fixed upon his face. Thelia watched his growing anger and tried to soothe him, 'Patience, you will find the way in. Do not let anger cloud your mind.' Fariol sent back, 'Each moment we spend out here is another moment he has to prepare. Aalynor only knows what kind of horrors will greet us when we finally gain entrance.' Suddenly, several guardsmen yelled out, 'Hold!' and Thelia turned to see a young elven maiden ringed by swords pointed at her breast. Selanu cleared her throat and spoke quietly, 'I wish to speak with the Towermaster of the City of All Races.' Fariol broke off his gaze from the Black Tower and sighed, 'What can I do for you ...?' Selanu filled in, 'Selanu ... I sense elven magicks around this Tower and I believe I may be able to help you gain entrance if you wish it.' Fariol said incredulously, 'Elven? I would have been the last to suspect they would have a hand in the creation of this blight on the Southern realms.' Selanu replied quietly, 'It was not such long ago. Will you accept my assistance?' Fariol nodded and motioned for the guard to release her. Selanu slipped up to the wall of the tower, placed her hands on it, and closed her eyes. Her lips moved silently for a time before she spoke a single barely audible word. The world turned around Selanu, Fariol, and their nearest companions as the waning sound of a thunderclap echoed in their ears. In the blink of an eye they stood in a sumptuous room facing two jeweled thrones. Seated to the right was Devin Nightsong, Lord of Sar'Mordal. At his left hand stood his assistant Anor. Devin spoke first, 'Greetings Fariol, greetings Thelia. I suppose you haven't dropped by for dinner.' Fariol curled his lip and growled, 'Nightsong, enough foolishness, your time is at an end. Prepare to be judged by Lord Tilnar.' Devin, Anor, Fariol, and Thelia immediately chanted spells and attacked. Devin's spell was the first to make contact as it ripped into Fariol's chest, knocking him back into Thelia. Anor's spell struck a Guardsman and giant shards of ice ripped him to shreds from the inside out. Thelia's spell descended upon Anor and he issued a pitiful scream as his flesh rotted off his body, leaving only a skeleton of bleached bones to crumple to the floor. Fariol's spell flew towards Devin but his enhanced senses allowed him to dodge its effects. Devin's eyes glowed with fire as he realized he might be able to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. He raised his staff and began to chant when the shaft of an arrow sprouted from his eye, knocking him backwards into a seated position on the throne. Selanu lowered her bow, keeping an eye on Devin's twitching body until it became still. Thelia quickly applied a healing balm to Fariol's chest and restored him to health. Fariol then untangled himself from Thelia and stood on shaky legs. 'We owe you a debt of thanks Selanu,' Fariol spoke seriously. Selanu looked around warily and shuddered as she spoke, 'Any person would have done the same. I trailed your army from the City of All Races and watched the battle from the forest. I am just glad I could take a part in the ending of this evil.' Fariol nodded gravely and stated, 'Lets find a way out of this accursed tower.'

From the lofty heights of the Black Tower, the Lady of Sar'Mordal looked out upon the carnage of the recent battle. Clutching her son to her chest, Krystana whispered, 'What terrible thing has occurred this night ... ' In the dim light, she could make out bodies littering the field before the tower as far as the edge of the forest. The sickly sweet smell of burning flesh wafted on the sea breeze up to the heights where she observed the massacre. The moans of dying men intermixed to form a pitiful choir of suffering. She shuddered and held her son closer to her breast, tucking in

his swaddling clothes. Krystana's breath caught when she brushed against her son's arm as she placed the wrappings about him. Hatrayhu's arm was freezing cold. Quickly she knelt down and placed him on the stones of the tower, unwrapping his coverings so that she could inspect him. His skin had assumed a deathly pallor and his body was freezing. Krystana began frantically rubbing his limbs and screamed out for help, 'Devin help! Oh please Devin help me!' She lifted Hatrayhu's eyelids and froze in astonishment. His eyes had turned completely black, staring lifelessly out of the sockets in his head. Krystana put both her hands to her mouth and trembled for a moment before her shriek tore through the starry dusk, 'Nooooo!' Staggering back, she slammed into one of the crenellations at the top of the tower and sagged into a seated position. 'Devin please ... Devin,' she sobbed as the tears flowed freely down her cheeks. Her whimpering was broken by the sound of Thelia's voice, 'Devin is dead.' Krystana's eyes went wide as she looked up to where Thelia stood at the top of the stairs. 'You lie!' she spat, 'I don't believe you.' Fariol stepped up the stairs and walked out to stand next to Thelia. 'Do you believe this?' Fariol said firmly as he pulled the severed head of Devin Nightsong from a black velvet sack and held it aloft. The horror that gripped Krystana's heart was clearly painted on her face as she lurched to her feet and stumbled with her arms outstretched towards Fariol and the remains of her husband. Her progress was stopped when her foot ran against something on the ground. She cast her gaze downward in a trance like state and it came to rest upon the lifeless body of her son. The excruciating anguish coursed through every fiber of Krystana's body until she could take it no longer. Choking on halting sobs, she bent down and picked up his body. Thelia began to take a step but Fariol restrained her with his free hand. In a daze, Krystana staggered onto the edge of the tower. Turning, she stared into her husband's lifeless eyes for a moment before hurling herself off. A long, thin scream escaped her throat throughout her fall until the bodies of her and Hatrayhu smashed into the ground. Thelia turned to Fariol with a pained look on her face. He spoke quietly, 'It was for the best beloved. The line of Sar'Mordal must be ended here.' Thelia sighed and pressed herself to Fariol's chest. 'As you say,' she whispered and stared through teary vision out into the starry night.

The soldiers dragging bodies to the funeral pyres leapt aside as a screaming woman fell from the heavens and crashed into the ground beside them. A soldier spat, 'By Tilnar's Fist! Can you believe that Lemja?' Lemja paused a moment, then laughed in reply, 'What I can't believe is that she didn't fall on your head.' The group of soldiers exchanged a strained laugh and set about their gruesome task. Lemja sauntered over to the fallen woman and kicked her shattered body over. Underneath her he was surprised to see the crushed body of a small child. He noticed a glint of metal and his eyes shone brightly with greed. Reaching down, he attempted to tear the necklace from its position around the child's throat. A solid yank failed to snap the slender chain and instead flipped the ragged body of the child over. Lemja cursed and drew his short sword. After a couple of hacks he managed to decapitate the child and free the amulet. A barking voice from behind him caused Lemja to jump. He palmed the amulet and whirled around as Diggs snapped, 'What, you didn't think he was dead enough son!?! Stop loafing and get those bodies on the pyre!' Lemja stammered out, 'Y..yes sir!' He turned to the bodies and slipped the amulet into his tunic. There wasn't time for a good look, but he was certain the amulet would bring him more than a few gold pieces in Rymek. That knowledge brought a smile to his face and set a spring in his step as he dragged the bodies of the Lady of Sar'Mordal and her headless son towards the burning pyre.

Faran reined Bonnie and Tag in just as the rising sun made its way above the Sea of Tears. His perilous flight from the City of All Races had continued unceasing throughout the night, but with

the docks of Rymek in view, he felt safe enough to rest for a moment. He eased the cart down the main thoroughfare and came to a stop before a salty inn. The smell of ale from the High Seas Inn and Tavern could clearly be discerned from the street. Sounds of revelry blasted from the interior each time a pair of drunken soldiers burst through the swinging doors leading to the common room. Faran hopped down from his cart, and handed his reins and a pair of silver coins to a dirty stable hand. The boy looked at the coins in shocked surprise before Faran rounded on him, drew up to his considerable height, and fixed him with a stern look, 'I trust the silver will be enough to see my horses and cart safely to the rear of the inn. If some of my goods were damaged or missing when I returned, I would be most displeased.' The stable boy shrunk and stammered out, 'Th..thank you kind sir, I'll look after 'em as if they were my very own.' Satisfied, Faran broke into a smile and replied, 'I trust you will.' With a pat on the young lad's head, Faran wheeled from the stablehand and marched along the front of the High Seas Inn until he stepped in front of the swinging doors. The smell of ale and the sounds of merrymaking drew him as a moth is drawn to a flame.

The inside of the High Seas Inn and Tavern was lit by mirrored lamps hung on iron chains from the ceiling beams. They did little to light the blackened walls stained by generations of smoke and grime. Faran sat down at a heavy oak table next to three men playing at dice who were dressed alike in leather jerkins. The men stopped their game and looked up when he turned and yelled out to the nearest serving wench for a mug of ale. Turning his head back to the table, he was met by three pairs of eyes coolly considering him. Faran met the stares and returned his attention to the barmaid, 'And a round for my three friends here as well.' When he faced the men again, their features were fixed in toothy smiles. One of the men extended his hand and spoke, 'Welcome stranger. My name is Caeron. I'm a soldier with the auxiliaries of the City of All Races. We are newly returned from a great battle.' Faran contemplated the men before replying, 'My name is Faran Dobir. I'm a merchant from Tholm passing through on my way to the isle of Miraden. It would be my pleasure to buy you a few rounds in appreciation for your defense of our freedom.' The faces of the men brightened and Caeron fixed him with a considering look, 'It seems you have done well for yourself to be throwing silver around so carelessly. Perhaps you would like to join us in a game of dice?' Faran chuckled with the knowledge that these men had no idea what they were getting themselves into. He was raised on dice and games of chance and his luck was uncanny to be modest. He grinned as he dug his purse out and replied, 'I would be honored.'

From the bow of the Osprey, Faran closed his eyes as he leaned into the salt air streaming through his tawny mane. On his way home, he had expected his thoughts to be filled with images of his family. Instead, the previous night's revelry filled his daydreams. The night had proven profitable although he hadn't intended to put himself in mortal danger again. His luck had proven itself over the duration of the evening, almost to his detriment. During the course of their gaming, one of the soldiers had put an amulet in the pot as collateral and seemed particularly upset when the dice didn't go his way. So upset in fact he had drawn his sword and his two companions were barely able to contain him before he thrust it in Faran's direction. Shaking his head, he reached into his pouch and retrieved the amulet. Held up to the morning sun the amulet glistened in kaleidoscopic silver and gold. The perimeter of the teardrop shaped amulet was finely worked with arcane symbols while the center was dominated by a deep black gem that seemed to suck the very light from the sun. An adamantine chain looped through the top of the teardrop with the ends terminating in a delicately fashioned clasp. It was a thing of forbidding beauty and Faran shivered

as his eyes passed over it. With a minute twist, Faran separated the two halves of the clasp and held the ends of the chain in between the thumb and forefinger of each of his hands. He slowly reached around the back of his neck and reattached the two halves of the clasp. At once the world fell apart around him. He held the railing in a death grip though he could not see it. His vision had gone black and every fiber of his body screamed agony. He tried to cry out and remove the amulet but found his voice was as paralyzed as his body. The overwhelming pain compelled him to flee from the source, to do anything to cease his endless anguish. His grip loosened and he first felt himself falling, then drifting outward towards the promise of freedom from his suffering. He strained to reach his new goal and the pain increased to a climax. Then as suddenly as it began, the pain ended. He perceived himself to be floating in a black pool of nothingness. Panic began to overwhelm him as he searched for a sign of anything in his personal void. Far off, a point of light appeared. It grew in size and speed as it approached him. A moment before it overtook him, it stopped and hovered before him. Massive, the light stretched to the limit of his vision though it drifted a mere foot from him. He felt warmth coming from the light, and realized that he was growing increasingly cold. He reached for the light, touched it, and was gone.

Waves crashed over the few jagged rocks that jutted up through a sandy beach on the island of Falcion. A lonely fisherman threw out his line as the rising sun set the horizon afire in red and orange blazes of color. A short distance down the beach the dawn light brought a mass of seaweed into view. Situated near one of the rocks, the seaweed demanded little of the fisherman's attention until it stood up. With a cry of surprise, the fisherman fell off his low wooden chair and clawed for the stout cudgel tucked in his belt. The seaweed shook itself and revealed a soaked furry creature. After its efforts, the creature wavered for a moment, then with a moan fell to its knees. The fisherman stood up warily, cudgel in hand, and cautiously approached. When he neared the pathetic form, he could see the creature was one of the furry peaceable beings seen often in the port of Rymek. Emboldened by the identification, the fisherman knelt beside the creature and queried, 'Hey there fella, are you alright?' The creature opened its eyes and the fisherman stumbled back a foot as the fiery red orbs fixed him with a stare. The creature mumbled, 'I ... I don't know ...' The fisherman returned to the furry being's side and extended a hand saying, 'Here, let me help you up.' The furry creature considered the fisherman for a moment before taking his hand and slowly rising to his feet. It leaned heavily on the fisherman as it tried to stand up straight. After a few minutes, the fisherman stepped away from the creature and looked it over. It was covered in scrapes and several wounds bled through its golden brown fur. 'We need to get you to a healer.' The fisherman stated flatly. He measured the creature for a moment more with his gaze before speaking again, 'I am called Grenwal Haversham. What might your name be?' The creature looked thoroughly confused before stuttering, 'N ... name?' Grenwal chuckled replying, 'Yes your name. What do your people call you?' The creature creased its brow in concentration for a moment. Obviously exasperated, it said quietly, 'I'm not sure ...' The creature looked down and its eyes widened in surprise when they came to rest on a teardrop shaped patch of fur that was burned off its chest. On the exposed skin was a picture of a black tower over which hung a dagger with two snakes twisted around the blade. On the hilt of the dagger was engraved a single word, 'Sinister'. The creature examined the marking with fascination until Grenwal's incredulous reply broke its reverie, 'Your not sure!?' The creature responded softly, 'I guess ... I guess its ... Sinister.' Grenwal nodded in satisfaction and declared, 'Well then Sinister, lets get you back to town where someone can have a look at those wounds.' Sinister nodded weakly and draped his arm around the fisherman's neck. Grenwal stopped to pick up his rod and they both hobbled off down the

beach.

## **Sintar**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Elf

Rather than take up the time of the scribes, I shall endeavor to write up a satisfactory manuscript to record a glimpse of the person I am and how I have come to this point in my life. As I sit herein Pandora's Temple reflecting on my life, it seems strange. I am still in the dawn of my life, but I shall do my best. If you are seeking a fantastic or wild tale, or expecting a great tragedy, then I warn you to look elsewhere. If you read about my life with such an expectation, you will be disappointed.

My given name is actually Elemmiir Val'nomin. I am the 3rd and youngest child of Thorondil and Melyana Val'nomin. I was born in the City of Talmet on the tenth of the month of Twilight, in the 1,592nd year since the Godswar, and the 1,175th year of the Empire. While I will always consider myself from Talmet, I actually grew up in a cottage in the woods near the village.

My father has served Talmet for many years, beginning as a sentry, and currently serving as a village scout. He is well known for his skills as a hunter and tracker, and is quite adept with both bow and blade. My Father taught me to love the woods. I always enjoyed his lessons, however I think I frustrated him many times when he took my brother and I hunting. I was always more interested in discerning the reason for things, than I was in the hunt. More than once, I scared off our quarry asking a question, much to the consternation of my Father. But he always encouraged my interest in learning. No one could ask for a better Father. He taught me love and respect for others, the importance of family, the nobility of service, and a sense of personal honor.

My Mother is an adept healer, and she too aids those in Talmet in times of need. Using a combination of herbs, potions and minor faith magic, she was more than able to handle the cuts and scrapes we found ourselves with when I was growing up. She is also an accomplished musician, and plays both Lyre and Lute. She taught me to play, but I never will play as well as she does. More importantly, she taught me about the beauty and joy of the simple things of life. I have never met a more caring, compassionate woman, and I pray that some portion of that compassion has taken root in my life.

My oldest sibling is my sister, Alfarin Corthindil. She learned the ways of healing from my mother, and is now married to the older brother of one of my closest friends. My brother Aiohtar is following in the footsteps of my father, and serves as a sentry in Talmet.

I have many warm and wonderful memories of growing up. It was not until I went to Falcion that I truly understood how blessed I have been. Almost every evening, the family would gather for the evening meal, discussing the day's affairs. Then we would sit by the fire and enjoy dessert. My Mother would play music, songs would be sung, stories told and games played. As I think back, I can almost smell the fresh baked goods. Especially the berry cobbler, which was my favorite. I

could go on with pages of anecdotal stories, but I shall spare you, the reader, such torment. Needless to say, all in all, I had a wonderful life.

In addition to my immediate family, I have several aunts, uncles and associated cousins, as well as my Mother's parents whom I love dearly. I have many good friends as well. But I do not believe anyone has had more of an impact on my life than Vardaestela Val'nomin.

My Grandma Varda lives in a cottage not far from my family home, and I spent many hours with her, often doing simple things. Gathering berries, baking, or just watching her paint while she would tell me stories. She is quite an amazing artist, and many times I followed her into the woods, while she painted the flora and fauna of the Eldane. I would question her for hours on things, such as History, Lore and Pandora. When I was but 12 years old she took to calling me her "Little Sintar". I loved to read, and she had many interesting books. From time to time she would take me to people she knew, who would share their knowledge or a manuscript. In time, the name Sintar was what most everyone was calling me. All, but my mother, have referred to me by that name for decades.

It was my Grandmother who most encouraged my love for Pandora as well. Stories of her love for the elves, how her heart was nearly broken at the deaths of innocents, and her tears shed at the creation of the Drow. Yet even with all of that, her Hope remained and led to the rebuilding of Nexus and the alliance that is our best Hope to protect against the Horde. And with the ascension of Kyorl, and the draw of the Void, Hope is our best defense against them as well. I will forever be grateful for the encouragement my Grandmother gave me. She taught me to seek knowledge. More importantly, she taught me to seek Hope, no matter the person or situation. Her quiet grace, pride in her Elven heritage and great faith in Pandora have impacted my life in a dramatic way. I pray that I will be able to be worthy of her faith in me.

As you may have guessed by now, faith in Pandora has been an important part of my life as far back as I can remember. In fact, my parents first met

at a Hope's Hour celebration, and were married two years later to the day. They celebrated their 125th anniversary just last year. I remember each year on the first Panur of Blossoms, we would gather together with family and friends and honor our Mistress in a celebration of Hope. It was a time of great joy, and I looked forward to it with great anticipation. It was a Hope's Hour celebration that first brought me to Nexus as well. It was the 100th anniversary of my parents, and we came to celebrate at the Temple. I was amazed at the beauty of the temple. I felt such a sense of tranquility and peace there.

It was after that visit, that the idea of coming to Nexus first entered my mind. Whether it was a whisper of a temple dove or the opportunity to study I will never be sure. But many years went by, and I enjoyed my simple life in Talmet. Several years later, the time to me seek my own path grew near. Thoughts of coming to Nexus, seeking knowledge and serving Pandora grew stronger. I spent many hours talking with my Grandmother, and later my parents. But what was I to study? I learned of my choices and set out to decide what I was best suited to do.

After many weeks, I had narrowed the choices to mage, cleric or bard. But my musical abilities

seemed too weak to seriously pursue the bardic profession. And while cleric would have made a good choice, I decided to apply as a mage. I think it was for a variety of reasons. I would still wield basic healing and protection abilities in honor of my mother, yet a powerful offensive ability to defend people, in honor of my Father. Of course it also lent itself toward my nature as a seeker of knowledge. My family supported my decision, and after a wonderful send off, I slung my backpack over my shoulder and headed south toward Rymek.

I took to my studies quickly, enjoying the work, as well as aiding others. While I was unable to leave the training island for sometime, I enjoyed getting away into the park and the wooded areas surrounding the city. I have learned from many while I was on the island. Those such as Danilo, Rapheous, Therise, Lyrasel and Sincerity saw fit to come to the island and share both their wit and wisdom. And of course the resident bard Lathet was always willing to spin a tale or sing a song.

After many months I was accepted into the Ivory Tower, and continued to work hard, training to the 9th tier. As my training on the island came close to completion I spoke with Danilo about offering myself in service to Pandora. He encouraged me greatly, and assured me that I could begin the process upon my completion of my training on Falcion. Yet something held me back. Whether it was a need to learn more about myself, my faith or my relation to others is not clear to me. I just knew it was not yet time to leave. I spent more than 2 years on the island. Honing my skills, learning what I could, and helping others along the way. Perhaps it was the voice of my Mistress Pandora, guiding me to a fuller maturity. I do know the time was well spent.

I also learned of the Guild of Knowledge, and sought out Faulk about the Guild. The work that had been done to restore the Guild, as well as the tenets that guide it impressed me. It was something to which I was gladly willing to offer my support. After working with Faulk and proving my commitment I was accepted into the Guild. I am proud of my commitment to preserve and record knowledge in all its forms.

Some 3 years ago, the fateful day arrived. Somehow I knew my time on the island was complete. Perhaps I had waited too long, for the trainers saw fit to pass me from 9th to 11th tier, believing I had proven myself. It was then that I began my full service to Nexus, and on a path to serve Pandora.

With both my vocation and avocation firmly in place, I had one more goal to make my life complete. Since the day I left the island, I have had many opportunities to serve and to learn. Be it battles against the Void, Were-creatures or the Horde or seeking and recording knowledge I have found along the way, I have worked hard to fulfill my commitments. But none were more important than proving myself worthy to Mistress Pandora.

My faith to her is not an issue. Even if I were never marked as a follower, I would have happily served her in any way I could. Both through prayer and through action I tried to live my life in a way that would honor her. I would offer words of encouragement to those I thought would need them. I would often bring loads of items to Falcion to aid new trainees, offering advice and help where I could. As I waited, I knew that either way, my life was rewarding.

One day as I was sitting in Town Square, sharing news and chatting with those assembled. Out of

the corner of my eye, I saw a white feather floating down out of the sky. I was almost transfixed as it wafted down out of the sky and landed at my feet. Many things blow through the square from time to time, yet the feather was so clean and unblemished, I somehow knew it was something special. It landed and was clearly pointing southeast toward Pandora's Temple. I gathered my things, and excused myself as I headed toward the Temple. As I stood before her Shrine, a voice told me to head toward the private room behind the curtain south of the fountain. Pandora appeared before me. I was in awe. I had never felt so many things at once. Adoration, trepidation, reverence, adoration, love and a sense of inadequacy rose up within me. But all was displaced as a sense of Hope and peace washed over me. Our talk was a private matter, but I will never forget the way I felt as her love washed over me and she welcomed me to her Church.

While I am still young, and the road ahead of me is long, it is with a cheerful heart I look forward to what lies ahead. I do not know where it will take me, but with Hope in my heart, and knowledge to guide me, I am sure it will be an adventure.

## **Skylark**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Sprite

Greetings! I am Yeet (Please don't make fun of my name, it disturbs me, and I'm far too weak to do anything about it.). I'm a bard in the great city of Nexus - born and raised-but it's not my story I want to talk about. You see, I love to talk, and more so to other people than myself. When I get going, I rarely stop, in fact, there was one time that I... Bad Yeet! Bad! Ok, so getting back to my story again, I like to ask people about themselves, and sometimes they get off talking like you wouldn't believe! My mother said I had an enchantment born about me, that causes people to open up to me, but I don't know about that, my mom always was a weird sort, even for a hobbit... er, so back to my story.

Just the other day, I was at Trista's Tavern (Finest in all Nexus! Unless you're closer to Kalim's at the time.) and I met a sprite by the name of Skylark. Silly little name if you were to ask me (which most people in their right minds wouldn't) but most sprites have an active tendency towards silliness anyway, or at least such has been my observation.

Well I got to talking with this Skylark lass, and she had the most interesting things to say! The bulk of which I couldn't possibly fit into this little message I'm writing to your fine library, but I thought perhaps you might be interested in some of the details about her past.

Anyway, I'll try and relay all that she told me, to the best of my recollection....

There's a little known sprite town by the name of Cloudfae that resides in a hill next to a marsh no one's heard of. It is in this town that the leaders (the king and queen if you wish to give them titles, but they rarely use them) decided to get married. Mostly just to prevent a little sprite uprising, and really having little or nothing to do with liking each other. There was a rift forming among the people of Cloudfae, and those who lived inside the hill, were becoming hostile with

those who lived outside the hill (have you ever heard such a silly thing?). Anyway, the respective leaders of both looked upon their people with sadness. They were grieved that such anger could be arisen over nothing at all, and agreed to put a stop to it by way of a marriage.

As luck would have it, their plan worked. Having seen the new king and queen manage to overcome any differences they had, the sprites of Cloudfae quit their petty squabbling, and made chipper happy friends again.

Now for a good long time, things were just so-so with the king and queen. Neither one really disliked the other, but unfortunately, neither one really liked the other either. As time progressed though, they were forced to do more and more things together (in a stately sort of way) and found that they really adored each other's company. As luck would have it, they even soon found that they adored each other. Within a couple years, they were madly in love, and to top it all off, they were already married!

It was of this love, that only 5 years after the emergency marriage, King Nippit of Cloudfae, and Queen Taliee of Cloudfae, found that the queen was pregnant (sorry if you don't know where babies come from, but I'm not putting that in this story!).

Tension was high on the day of the birth, and the whole tiny city held its breath as the first of two twins (Isn't it odd how twins always come in two's? I always found it odd...) was born. The parents were overjoyed, and placed the name of Skylark on her then and there. But all was not well with the queen... Although the first child had come with ease, the second was causing more pain than expected to Taliee.

And so it was that on that fateful day, Queen Taliee passed away. Born to her beloved husband, and king of Cloudfae, were two daughters. Skylark the first, and the second bearing the name of Sorrow... for his grief would allow no other name to spill from the king's lips.

Despite the grief of Nippit, he soon was overcome with the blessing of his two daughters, and returned at least partially to his happy-go-lucky spritely self. Skylark and Sorrow were raised in a city that loved them, and by a father that cherished them, but they were also a curious lot. Perhaps it was because they had no mother to teach them of caution, or perhaps it was because their magics were proclaimed as the strongest in all Cloudfae, or perhaps it was... just because, but one fine day, two decades after their births, Skylark and Sorrow set out in search of a wondrous city that they knew only by name and reputation.

The gods only know where all they went in the years beforehand, searching for this city, but in the end, the twins came to the Nexus, the city of all races, and were welcomed as kindly as if it were their hometown, and so they decided to stay.

Do they have some higher purpose for being here? Will they ever return to Cloudfae? Does Skylark drink funny green water? Far be it for this lowly bard to say, but they certainly are cute.

Well, I hope you find some use for this tale in your great library sirs, and I'm off to Kalim's, because it's just a hair closer from your door!

# Starla

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Elf

Once, I lived happily in an elven village, safely hidden by magics from the goblins for centuries. It seems long ago now, and strangely too as if it was only yesterday. I was out in the forest, playing hide and seek with a deer. When I returned, I found to my horror that death and destruction had descended upon my village. Frantically, I searched for my family. I found them in pieces, so mangled and dismembered that I could only identify them from the shreds of clothing they wore. I found no survivors, not even children or pets. There was blood everywhere, a sea of blood. I must have been in shock for quite some time, lost and alone, just kneeling there in all that blood, overcome by pain and memories.

When I regained some sense of myself and reality, it was night. I thought my mother would be worried or upset that I was so late, but then I remembered. I tried to wash away the blood with a river of tears, but nothing will ever wash it away.

Eventually, I decided I couldn't leave them like that, food for the carrion-eaters. I tried to bury them, but there were so many, and the roots were impenetrable. So, I built funeral pyres and set about the gruesome chore of collecting the bodies and the pieces of the bodies of those I had known and loved all my life. It took me close to two months. It was a nightmare. There was nothing to eat. Even had there been food, I would not have dared eat. I retched my insides raw. It did not take long before the corpses began to bloat and rot. There were maggots and flies, and that incredible ceaseless stench. At some time during this odious task, it finally pierced my misery that there were no enemy corpses, none at all. I searched in earnest then for evidence of who or what had done this. There was not a trace. There were no lost or broken weapons or pieces of armor, and no tracks in the soft red mud except my own. I thought then, perhaps it might have been a dragon wing, but there were no scorch-marks on the corpses or on the ground or trees. When the last great pyre was lit, I whispered a prayer to Tilnar for those departed and left Thara-lin for the last time. I trudged dazed and desperately weak from hunger along the eastern path, and then I saw the grave. A solitary grave had rested beneath the great oak since long before I was born, but now it was all dug up, empty, no remains, no bones, no tracks.

I wandered toward the Nexus then. Our people have known of this place for ages, and I did not know where else to go. As I walked, I thought of what little I knew of that empty, gaping grave from the tales I had heard. It was the grave of a cougar, the only friend of a lost, homeless girl, slain in a tragic misunderstanding long ago. She was said to have been the most beautiful female seen in centuries, possibly ever. Our mages gave her magical, emerald hair that matched her eyes. She never told us her name, but I found her here anyway. I now know her name is Azara. Her adopted sister Oradea who knows of such things, believes some dark force may have possessed the spirit of the dead cougar and may yet hunt me. She crafted a talisman for my protection.

Horrible things seem to happen to most who befriend me. The mages I trained with suicided when

the weave shifted. Sasha met a final death. Dhamon was marked false. Jewel is but a memory. Oradea's village is besieged. She has left on a perilous sea voyage, seeking to aid them. Azara's brother, Naranek sacrificed himself to destroy an evil, monstrous beast. Now, I fear the friendship of others lest they too come to harm.

I have met one here that I might care to love, but he cares not for me it seems. Perhaps that is best.

I search for some reason my existence should continue. Mostly, I do it to deny whatever seeks to destroy me, whatever it was that ravaged Thara-lin.

## **Talomar**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

Talomar sat huddled on the steps of the town square, shivering uncontrollably. The brisk, icy winds of winter thrashed against his frail, trembling body. His half-shut, weary eyes started to shift hypnotically, as if under a trance.

"Please, Talomar, stay. I do not want to lose you as well." A female renis grabbed Talomar's slender arm, though his resolve made it seem merely like a token gesture.

"I will return, Mother, when my studies at the university are complete." Talomar shrugged the mother off as he boarded a boat. The renis woman gazed at the boat as it moved away from the pier, her eyes filled with sadness.

Talomar disembarked from the boat. He saw a sign that read, "Welcome to Rymek." He nodded and headed north, to the city of Nexus.

"The university is WHAT?!" Talomar looked at the man incredulously.

"It's been many, many, many years since the university has been in operation. Only the Gods know how many buildings have been built on top of its remains." The man's nonchalant look was in sharp contrast to the enraged Talomar.

"Well, tell me Master Fariol is still in the city, something!"

The man stared blankly at Talomar. "Fariol's been dead for about 30 years."

Talomar replied with strange agitation, "Well who is this famed Tower's master?!"

The man replied, "It is Thelia, an elven weavemistress... from Tholm. Mayhaps you've heard of her?"

Talimar scratched his head a moment, and nodded slowly. "The name sounds familiar. Perhaps you might know how I can study within the confines of that tower?"

The man looked back blankly. "Try going to the tower." The man pointed down Market Street. "Walk down that way, and turn right at the intersection, you should be able to see it."

Talimar nodded slowly, and began walking.

As Talomar shivered away in the biting cold, a tall human walked over to him, placing a blanket around his shoulders. Talomar looked up and offered a weak smile. The man began singing a song. The man's lyre burned brightly, warmth emanating from it. Pulling the blanket around him tightly, Talomar took in the warmth from the magically glowing lyre as his shivering gradually came to a stop.

## **Tif'eret**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

In the midst of my life's journey, I went astray from the straight road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood. I never saw so drear, so rank, so arduous a wilderness. Its very memory gives a shape to fear. How I came to it I cannot rightly say, so drugged and loose with sleep had I become when I first wandered there from the True Way. But at the far end of that valley of evil, whose maze had sapped my very heart with fear, I found myself before a little hill and lifted my eyes. Its shoulders glowed already with the sweet rays of sunlight, its feet still wrapped in the cool mist of night. The sight strengthened me against the fright whose agony had wracked the lake of my heart through all the terrors of that piteous previous journey. Just as a swimmer, who with his last breath flounders ashore from perilous seas, might turn to memorize the wide water of his death, so did I turn, my soul still fugitive from death's surviving image, to stare down that pass that none has ever left alive. And there I lay until the racing of my heart slowed to a pace more amenable to the climb ahead. Recalling my classical education, I took a moment to tie a loose thread from the hem of my cloak around a tree trunk. Then, picking off the earth a stout fallen branch, I proceeded to climb, one footfall above the other, towards the crown.

As I neared the summit, I entered a small clearing. A boy, young and petulant, sat on a flat stone in its center petting a hyena standing beside him, his finger wrapping around a tuft of brown fur in the creature's hackles. A blood red python lay coiled at their feet. The boy reached into his pocket and the hyena cackled in anticipation. With a cold smile, the boy fed something, it was hard to see what, to his pet. I looked closer as the hyena chewed. I looked at my hands, first the right then the left. I felt no pain or remorse, but I knew what the hyena was eating. I looked again at the empty space on each hand where once there was a finger. The boy grinned again and fed the hyena his second treat. I stepped forward, but the beast would not let me pass, standing so as to block my every turn. I wavered back, and still the beast pursued, forcing himself against me bit by bit till I slid back into the sunless wood. There, I felt a strange sensation around my bare feet and, looking

down, realized that I had stepped directly into the coil of the python.

The snake began to slowly wrap itself around me, and as I felt my soul's ruin, a presence gathered before me in the discolored air: the figure of one who seemed hoarse from a long silence, hoary headed and long of face. He was reni like my ancestors and his fur was the color of gold and his eyes the deepest blue of night. He held his hand out for mine, and as I reached to grab it, I noticed the hyena descending quickly upon us. Without fear, I clasped his hand and he pulled me from the python's grip. It was almost as if I passed right through the snake's coils. A fog that had been building descended upon the wood. The boy and his pets still lay along my original path, but the reni showed me a route to the summit that appeared out of the primordial ether, and we walked the Wizard's Walk along it.

On the crest of the hill stood a great oak tree under which sat the entrance to a cave. The mouth of the cave was not dark, yet it had darkness to it. The air there seemed to shimmer and glow despite the lack of light. The reni pointed to the cave.

"I must travel through there," he said. "You may follow if you wish, but first, I ask only that you read this."

He handed me a rolled parchment.

"I cannot say that one path is better or easier than the other. Each has its rewards. Each has its challenges. The choice is yours to make."

With that, he stepped into the shimmering darkness, leaving me holding the parchment alone, the wind blowing strongly through the leaves of the oak. I watched as the reni receded into the depths of the cave. As he moved further away, his form seemed to shift and I saw him take on a kaleidoscope of personas, some of men, some of women, some of whom I recognized, and some whose aura blinded any chance at recognition. As the figure slipped away into the nothingness of the cave, I turned my attention to the parchment. It was made from cobwebs woven together by a subtle, delicate magic that you could feel flowing from it. This is what it said.

Greetings from yourself. Actually, I should say greetings from that which was yourself, for that which was is never exactly the same as that which is. If you are reading this, then I can only assume that you have died and your soul has been released. Do not worry, this is a good thing and is all a part of my plan. The first part actually. The shock of death does strange things to the memory. In time, as you became accustomed to your new state of being, all of what I am about to say would become evident to you. That is time, however, that we do not have. I will therefore try and spell things out as clearly, but as succinctly as possible. All of what you have just gone through and what you will soon go through arises from a rather difficult situation that I have found myself in. My body had become an experimental vessel for the ancient wyrm Inferno. This was not a mutually beneficial relationship and thus not entirely desirable for yours truly. When first Inferno began to assert his will over my body, I could not stop him. I was drugged and weakened and the dragon was far more powerful than I was. I found myself relegated to the deepest, smallest, and most secure recesses of my mind. Out of necessity, out of my need to not be erased from existence, came the plan. It was rather simple in nature. But, it was not something I could even

think of attempting until the day that the wand appeared. Maana's wand. Inferno was using it, among other things, to aid his transformation. Contact with the god's power, even as remote as mine, lead to a clearing of my thoughts, a greater understanding, and out of this clarity, an idea gradually formed. First, I had to devise a way to kill myself, to dispose of the body in which my soul was now trapped (given the fact that you are reading this letter, I assume I was successful). Second, I had to find a way back. I worked in dreams, exerting subtle influence over those around me. My weapons were silence, exile, and cunning. While I could not assert direct change, I could influence. I could not plant a seed, but I could water a plant that was already there. Hence, I focused what I could of my will on Astaroth and the jealousy that I knew to live with him always. Inferno was slowly teaching him to use Maana's wand. I looked into Astaroth's eyes and I knew he longed to possess the power of the wand fully. He felt that Inferno was holding him back. I also saw glimpses of hatred, despite the fact that he tried to hide them, when he looked at me: the body of his former enemy transformed into such a powerful creature. I wove Astaroth's feelings while he slept. I let him know that I still existed, that I was waiting, biding my time, until the day I could destroy him with my newfound powers. I cultured his jealousy and hatred. I watered the garden of his mind. I pushed him closer and closer to the breaking point. This was the manner in which I hoped to kill myself. To drive Astaroth into such a rage that he would murder me, destroying this body, and setting me free. I can only smile now at the anger that Inferno must have felt as he sensed the body, and that part of himself that he had put in it, destroyed. The second part of the plan took a bit more thought. When my soul was released, what kind of power would I have? What kind of influence could I exert? I assumed that, once dead, I would not have the ability to simply will myself back. It became evident that I would have to arrange for my reincarnation in the mortal plane. I had to find a way to reach from this world into the spirit world. Again, I turned to Astaroth. In his dreams, I saw him standing over my dead body, a look of triumph on his face. He turned to darksilver pedestal in the center of the room and picked up the wand, caressing it, feeling its power. Here, in this vision of the future, I saw my chance. I slowly began to weave a spell. It was not a big spell at all, for such a thing I could not accomplish. It was small and inconspicuous. Drawing on my research in the alteration of size, I sought to devise a way to expand magic beyond its intent. I surmised that, given a powerful enough spell, a small push could set the magic avalanching beyond what the caster had originally intended. It was this kind of push that I wove with the magic of the wand. I sought to compliment its power so as to more effectively hide my efforts. So we reach the point at which you now stand. If my spell works, time itself will be altered and you will have the opportunity to go back. Despite all of my efforts in this realm, I cannot make you return if you do not want to. The choice remains yours and I respect whichever direction you choose. -Renton

As I folded the parchment, I felt a slight tug at my neck. My cloak, its thread now run out along the length of my journey, was slowly reweaving itself before my eyes. I picked up the thread, a bit in each hand, and pulled it taut. If I broke the string, I could sever the connection to what I once was and step into the shimmering cave. While I longed to see what lay beyond, I knew that I could not, and I dropped the thread, allowing it to weave back into place. I began to retrace my steps, pulled by the reforming cloak, pulled by the weaving of the spell. I walked back through the clearing and saw the python lying dead on the ground. I walked back through the woods until I reached the tree around which I had tied the end of the thread and watched as the knot became untied and the cloak became whole.

For a moment, and I am not certain how long this moment lasted, there was nothing, an absence of all things. Darkness. Then, a flash of blinding light and I was drawn into it. Through it. I took a deep breath and felt air in my lungs. I opened my eyes. The reni midwife looked at me with surprise, for I did not cry. Something felt different. This was not the body I remembered. I looked at the reni who had given birth to me and the face was not the face I expected, not the face of my mother. I held up my hands and examined the smooth, empty space on each where a finger should have been, symbols of what I left behind on this long, strange journey. I would have to contemplate in further detail later why my original body was not returned to me. Perhaps only the soul is immortal, and only the soul could be affected by Astaroth's misshapen magic. I looked again at the woman who was now my mother and smiled. She smiled back, with love, but also with a look of slight fear and uncertainty, at the strange child that had just come from her womb. I heard a man's voice from the other side of the room. It was the voice of my father. He spoke one word.

## Tyne

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Human

\*Written with fine script on a long parchment\*

For months I've set aside the ordeal of making public events of my life. It is a difficult thing to sit down and write a brief record of the events that have taken place over a 23 year period, 18 of which I have clear recollection. But I will record vital this information not because I was asked by a scribe, but to fulfill an obligation to recorded history, my posterity and most important, myself. As an old man with a rotting mind I know I would rather read of myself above any other in the realms.

My name in full is Tyne Aurus Masler, a Wizard trained on Falcion and in the Tower of Nexus. I write this account on Aalur the twelfth, and the month is Chrysalis.

I was born the thirteenth of the month of Wildfire as first son to a successful merchant of Nexus. My father would trade goods with such places as Rymek, Talmet, and Rosehelm. I was told, when I was a child, that he would lead the caravans himself with but a few hirelings to aid him. My mother spoke of his proficiency with a blade and how impressive a warrior he had become after serving in the Nexus Guard. When told of these things, I would look at my fat, lazy father and wonder if they were true.

By the time I was three years old my father's business had grown such that he did not have to travel. He grew lazy, fat, and old very quickly. At this time he was 45 years old and my mother 28. The attention of my parents was upon me solely. I was taught at a young age to read and write with a fine hand. Books were made readily available that I would be able to study and understand the harsh activity that surrounded my world. I rarely left my home being far too afraid to risk being hurt at this point in my life, but a desire to explore burned within me since the day I was born.

At the age of 5 my mother taught me proper etiquette. She had felt it important for me to act like a noble, speak like a noble, and even walk as she felt a noble would. I heard say that she herself had traces of blood within her.. it mattered little to me. I was her puppet and showpiece. At this young age I felt as though something was missing in me. I had read about the gods and prayed to all, save one, as directed by my mother and found it did nothing to fill what was missing inside of me. It was not until the age of twelve that I had found my true calling and gift in sorcery.

My mother had given birth to another by the name of Fhyn. He was far different from I. We were for the most part kept separate. He would spend much time with my father and I would be kept by my mother. At family dinners I would look across the table and see my own brother and think him a stranger. While I was quiet, he was loud, amiable, and the life of any gathering. I envied him for that- it was not until later that I found that he also envied me for my knowledge and the attention our mother gave me. At the age of 14 I had been fed up with my lot in life and he soon found out and attempted to aid me in my plight..

It was a Ruvur, probably in the month of Midnight. I remember it being fall, so I am fairly sure it was Midnight. Regardless, this was the first time my brother took me out to meet some of his friends. We left during the late evening to several taverns, and finally Trista's, where I met several people with whom I've been acquainted since. I had the time of my life that night and many nights after. A rebellious spirit grew within me. I would openly defy my mother and father daily. I would make a fool of myself in front of my mother's guests. I would no longer be their puppet to show off. I went so far as to pierce a gold ring threw the centre of my bottom lip. I did this at the age of 16; an act that angered my mother so much as to silence her for weeks. Throughout this madness I continued to study. My mind thirsts for knowledge and craves it. As I grew older I also began to work with the weave. Performing simple tricks and learning to draw from it under the guidance of a man I met during one of my tavern escapades.

The circumstances by which I left my home to Falcion are something I will not record at this time. However, if you ask, and you are a beautiful woman, I will probably tell you. (I am of course kidding, I am very approachable) I will end my account here and I will write further as I feel it necessary.

Final notes: My parents have remained nameless because it would cramp my hand to write them down. I still have a deep dislike for them for reasons unrecorded here. I will not be a subject to their manipulation any longer.

Tyne Aurus Masler.

## Wilem

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Reni

Wilem was born in the town of Lomak, in the south. Lomak was a trading port, a primarily human

town, with ships passing through frequently, trading their wares. Into this port ventured Katori and Madelna, a pair of Reni travelers, recently wed. They planned a short stay in Lomak, since the human population here did not particularly like other races and merely tolerated them to trade with.

A couple days after their arrival however, Madelna told Katori of a new life growing inside her. Katori was thrilled, but they both decided that Madelna should not travel further with child. Katori and Madelna had one child before, a daughter, who was stolen from them when she was but a month old.

Thus, Katori went out in Lomak to seek employment, and was refused everywhere! However, Katori was a very resourceful and intelligent man, and saw an opportunity here. Using his savings, he opened an Import-Export Company. The business was shunned by the human populace at first, however Katori used his keen business sense to get more and more business from the traders, and eventually, while people complained about the Reni, they started using his business nonetheless, greed giving way to hatred.

Wilem was born several months later, and for the next few years, things were good. The Reni family stayed mostly to themselves, and Wilem turned out to be an exceptionally intelligent child, even for a Reni. She learned under Madelna's capable tutelage. The child had fiery red hair, and an equally fiery spirit, loving every new thing she was introduced to. By the time she was seven however, she was becoming frustrated with the lack of contact with others. Madelna tried to shield the child from the racial slurs of the human children.

At about this time, a representative of the Chioma family came to visit Katori. The Chioma family was a poor excuse for a Thieves Guild in Lomak. The Chioma had no sense of honor or fair judgment, and treated those who displeased them harshly. Witnesses seldom survived long enough to attest to anything a Chioma had done, and on the rare occasions they did, justice was never served. The Chioma representative explained the concept of "protection money" to Katori, who promptly refused, having never experience this sort of thing before. The next day, Katori walked into his offices to find them trashed. He went to the authorities, who laughed at him, having no sympathy for the Reni. Katori resolved not to give into the Chioma, and told the authorities this, and that he would be taking his family and leaving Lomak. When Katori returned home, he saw his wife, Madelna, lying on the floor. As he rushed into the room, something struck him on the back of the head and he fell beside his wife in a crumpled heap.

Wilem was brought out of her room by one of the strangers who had come to visit her mother, she cried out, her parents were tied into chairs before her. The stranger held his hand over Wilem's mouth and forced her to watch as her parents were tortured, then killed. Wilem was shattered, she was taken into the service of the Chioma, her spirit, and her body on occasion, beaten. She was a very intelligent girl, and quickly learned how to behave to avoid the beatings. The Chioma became very impressed with her, they never needed to repeat anything to her, and she carried out her tasks diligently. Wilem was 12 the first time she was ordered to work at the brothel house, she nearly died that night, and ended up severely beaten. From that point on, she tried very hard to avoid being used in that way again, and a lot of the time she was successful, but some of the time she was not. Her love of life and fiery spirit were defeated, and she did not care about living

anymore.

The war of the races had begun by now, and a sizable group of goblins attacked Lomak, carving a path of destruction as they swarmed through the town. At this time, Wilem was with one of the elder Chioma brothers who had taken a liking to her. Distracted, the Chioma got up to go to the window and see what was going on. Wilem pulled a dagger from underneath the pillow and when the Chioma turned back to her, plunged it into his chest, and squealed with delight as she watched the light fade from his eyes. She ran then, not expecting to make it far, but not caring.

Surprisingly, she made it to the street, and watched as a group of goblins approached her, swords drawn, and Wilem expected to die. A ball of fire erupted among the Goblins, throwing pieces of them along the street. Wilem looked around to see a tall man in sigiled robes behind her, and watched as he sent a bolt of lightning down the street to scatter another group of Goblins. Wilem was intrigued, and tried to repeat what the man had done, managing only to give herself a small shock. Wilem was intrigued, but disappointed. The man however, watched her and saw the enormous potential in this small, nearly naked child. She had watched him cast one spell and then managed to do some small magic afterwards. More goblins approached and the man held Wilem's hand and gestured and suddenly they were in another place. Dracus accepted Wilem as his pupil. She was very eager to learn, some of the old Wilem re-emerging, and she learned quickly. Wilem had developed into a very attractive young woman, and Dracus, while not being an evil man, was not really good either. Wilem very much wanted to learn, and paid the price Dracus required of her for training and protection. Travelers told Wilem one day of the Nexus. A place where races lived in harmony, where she could continue her studies unharassed. She told Dracus she wanted to leave, to go there, having learned the necessities of magic. In a gesture which surprised Wilem very much Dracus agreed to let her go. He gave her some gold marks, kissed her gently, and stepped back and gestured.

The next thing Wilem knew, she was standing in another town. She watched in awe as a Human and what she could only believe was an Elf walked by together. Wilem was still a shambles however, her zest for life was gone, all faith in others destroyed. However, she found friends here, men who fought beside her, healed and protected her without asking anything in return! She found the teachings of Pandora, which gave her Hope, but most importantly she found Trista! Among the followers of Trista she regained her zest for life. Slowly, she began to like herself again, to trust others, and to enjoy life and what it had to offer. With her friends help, she advanced and joined the Mages Guild. She quickly advanced in the ranks of the guild. As soon as she was able, she pledged her allegiance to Trista, who accepted her and greatly enriched her life. She also had the joyous occasion of finding her long lost sister, who now went by the name of Ecips, who had also become a mage. Those who meet Wilem now would not suspect that this cheerful, vibrant person could ever have had such a horrible past, and that is just fine by Wilem!

## **Xugosin**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Unknown

I was born on Malkur, the second month of Twilight in the year 1,590 since the Godswar, and year 1,173 of the Empire. I was born of a loving home, riches, all you could want. Until that one day... the Hordes attacked my home, ravaged my mother, sister, and slit my father's throat in front of me. I watched him drown in his own blood, while those demented creatures cackled in pride. I was taken into captivity, and made a slave, dragging stones of tremendous weight over logs, to build outstanding forts. The Goblin SlaveMasters continued the pace of the slaves with the crack of their thick leathery whips. Many years as a kid, I grew up as a slave from the age of twenty, as the years went by, I was beaten, slashed, and punished for my attempts for a free life. For fifteen years I lived a life of harsh, and cruel torment. I could stand it no more! I knew it was times to make my well-earned departure.

Years of planning, I came up with so many plans, but all of them had flaws, that would mean certain death if I were to attempt an escape then. A heavy sigh exhaled from my chest and a disappointment settled upon my heart. Until that day I knew that Pandora's smile shone upon me. A break in the clouds, and a lightning storm stirred amongst the blackened heavens, which covered the huge fortress. Though amazing of nature's beauty, it did not seem of nature at all. Then... BOOM! Yelling and screaming could be heard all over the camp. The prison cells awakened with life, and the seemingly lifeless bodies rose, and grabbed bars of the cell with curiosity. I stirred in my cell, looking every way I could, and then a silence broke... Then it happened...

A horrible death cry came from a Goblin Shocktrooper, as he fell from the high walls of the fort, in front of me. The pitiful Goblin had arrows and scorched marks all over him, he reeked of burning flesh, which is a foul awful smell one never forgets. I looked into his eyes, and grinned with lust as I watched the pitiful Goblin's life drain out of him. Snapping out of my state of lust, I acted quickly. I aroused the slaves to take arms. The death of the 'trooper raised the moral of us tormented ones one-hundred fold, and all that was on our mind was... Freedom.

We took the cloak of the fallen goblin, and others reached for his pike. We gathered the two and made our escape, by wrapping the cloak around the iron bars, and twisted with all our aroused strength to bend the bars just enough for a quick escape to the open. The slaves broke down the door, running over the Goblin guards, killing them as they trampled towards the exit. I peered outside, and saw the huge wooden-metal gates were burning and smashed to pieces. Amongst the fighting and crowd were different faces, some covered by heavy armor. Half-giants, Ogres, Elven, and Sprites banded together, to siege the fortress. The slaves also helped, throwing themselves in front of the strangers, to take the lethal blows the Goblins were intending to do on them. It was sickening...but the price of Freedom was at their fingertips, and would not escape them for a last time.

As I looked around, to avoid the people and Goblins in combat, I saw an opportunity; so I began to run for the gate to make my escape. As I was about to leave this blasted hellhole, from no where, five Goblin-Wolfriders appear, pikes equipped and very angry. They began to advance through the door, and all I could do is sit there, backing up in a fear. I scooted across the ground, my hand brushing against a wood staff buried in the soil. I grasped it and stood my ground. I know I stood no chance against them, but I did not want to stand and be slain pointlessly, I would go down fighting, like I've been. My frail body, beaten, and starved of nutrients, made a stance, and shaking fear. My palms sweating, and my brow dripping of sweat. Two 'riders charge at full speed;

pikes raised, and ready to impale me. I waited, as they charged, when I thought it was the best opportunity, I took a swing. As I hit the Wolfrider, I was sent back from a discharge of tremendous energy. I have never felt such power. A crackling could be heard amongst the air, as some stranger began to sing some sort of a magical song. She grinned, and continued to play her harp with passion. The 'riders turned and charged towards her. She did but smile at them with no sense of fear. The riders rode with rage, and dismounted from their charging wolves, pikes pointed towards the woman's chest. Then a figure flew in from the sky, and planted himself in front of her, hands raised, with frowned brows.

The man in mystical robes screamed with rage, "Ions, energy, storm...discharge!"

The air crackled, like burning coals. POP! POP! POP! CRACKLE! ringing in your ears, as lightning bolts discharged from the man's palms, striking the riders in mid-flight sending them back to their fellow riders, knocking them off their wolves, into the crowd of slaves waiting for them on the ground. I watched in amazement at the man's outstanding power. I got up, to thank the man, and I hear a howling. I turned quickly, and in slow motion saw this huge wolf, teeth bearing, leaped into the air, ready to pounce on me, and rip at my jugular.

With a quick motion of a hand and quick words, "Thy flesh ignites with magical flames," the man once again saved me. The wolf's fur, and skin, bursts into flames, and a loud screeching sound came from the fried hound, as it fell on top of me. The flames quickly extinguish, but the corpse was still hot. I quickly pushed it off. I crawled over to the man, and stayed behind him for the remainder of the time. His lady friend began to tend to my wounds, and she had a relaxing look in her eyes, that help settle my nerves a bit. The man looked on as he saw his friends were in combat, flying off blasting those in trouble of being hit in the back.

The siege lasted for two hours, and the remaining forces of Goblins were driven back into the cover of the forest. Many lay dead amongst the once proud Goblin Fortress, a few friends of the strangers, many of the Goblins, and the majority of the slaves. The strangers gathered 'round and checked each other of their condition. The strangers, gathered the remaining slaves, and gave them enough bread, cheese and water, and camped there for the night. The next day, the strangers began to make their trip back to their home city and beckoned the slaves to follow them back. We had nothing to return to, so we did so. A week's journey and most of the slaves were lost to poor health, or age. The strangers mourned for them, burying the fallen as they continued to travel.

After a week's worth of traveling, the strangers finally reached their destination. They called it Nexus The City of All Races. As they said, it wasn't a lie, roaming along the streets, children of all races, played with each other. The strangers raised their arms, welcoming home again. The man and his lady friend showed me to their small home on the other side of the City, in the Boarding House. When we arrived, and went to their room, they opened the door, they weren't too proud of it, for it was small and cramped, but it was heavenly. It had a bed, something I had not slept in for the longest time. They offered me to rest up, and the man said he would come back for me. I did so, and slept for three days straight.

After sleeping for the longest time, the man finally came back for me, and took me to a place to

grab a bite to eat. I was starved, when we arrived, he asked for a buffet meal, and the best of the house. The owner did so, and I ate and drank to my heart's content. After eating, the man took me on a tour of the fair city of Nexus. He showed me around and showed me the many Guilds of recruiting of fair citizens, who chose and went to an island, called Falcion. He told me this place, called Falcion, is where people trained for many months, and are recruited into the Guilds we see here in Nexus. Though each individual trained for a specific guild they liked of their liking. After a while, when the trainers thought it was the Falcionite's time, the Falcionite would have to ask of any individual in Nexus for approval into the Guild of that individual. He went on about it, and showed me his Guild. A beautiful Ivory Tower shone with radiant magical light. He took me in, and showed me the place. I was amazed, and never seen something so beautiful. I stepped inside, and felt magical breezes sweep all over my body invigorating my senses. He showed me around, and taught me the essence of soulmagic being in every being, and how he could manipulate something called the Weave to do his desired command, like controlling the elements. After hearing his stories, I began to do research myself in the libraries of the city, about magicks.

I spent most of my years, doing odd jobs in Nexus, but always kept my head in a book, always on a subject concerning magicks and its working. I learned many things about resistances, weaknesses, and strengths of a sorcerer. My passion grew for magicks, and I began to learn more and more. After so many years of learning how the Weave worked. I finally began to understand. My fascination of Black Magicks was my biggest thing. I read so much of the inner workings and how Astaroth came into possession of such spells as Mana-drain and Vampirism. The man, who saved me, noticed that I was venturing into dangerous territory, and stopped me one day, to follow him to a clearing in a meadow in the forest to the east of Nexus.

He said, "I noticed you've been studying about soulmagic, and how the weave works, but your lust to learn of Black, and draconic magicks is dangerous if you do not have the proper training."

"Well, you know of great knowledge, teach me about what you know," I replied.

The man paced back and forth, pondering, then stopped to nod, "Alright, I will."

We began to with the basic elements, Fire, Water, Earth, and Air. He told me to know of black magic, and possess it with greatness you must know and control the elements of Fire and Air, with ease. I listened to his teachings closely, but did not limit myself to just the Fire and Air elements, but immersed myself in other elements, just not as greatly.

Thus began my training, for many years. That was twenty-seven years ago when I began, then finally my apprenticeship into the Island of Falcion at a prime age of sixty-two, where I could continue and learn more of this magic through life, as I help defend the fair city, called Nexus, City of All Races.

**Zany**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Sprite

I have been asked by a few people about my background. Things like where I am from and why I am in Nexus. I have only recently been approached by a scholar from the library asking for a written piece on my background answering those questions. So I have written a brief explanation of where I am from and how I got to be here. Provided this isn't a full explanation of my life. Just a brief of the key points that most people are interested in.

The beginning, well as many could guess, I was born. My parents said I was the cutest little thing. As if we sprites aren't cute enough. Well anyways my parents are Acentrial and Lunis Rainbowleaf. My actual name is Zanifics Rainbowleaf. Everybody just called me Zany, cuter anyways. I lived in our village for nearly 30 years. Growing up, playing games, exploring the woods.

Life was not all fun and games though for the village. There were a few threats that were very unfriendly to sprites nearby in and out of the forest. We of course learned how to protect ourselves. My own parents were quite skilled. The biggest problem was the goblins in the area. They would on occasion let loose their slaves to go on a rampage in the forest killing whatever they came across. For the most part this wasn't a problem, they never came close to our village. They had help in that department though. It was that one fateful time they did stumble upon our trees and realized what they were that I will always remember.

The slaves and goblins with them for the fun of it quickly starting burning things down. We did the only thing we could do. Leave and leave fast. I went with them of course. As we were flying between the trees we were ambushed by a couple troll stealthslaves. I got separated from the group, I'll be honest I ran like a coward in the clearest direction.

It would be years before I would see my parents again, but that is another story, one which happened after I came to Nexus. After the ambush I hid for the rest of the day and the next went back to the remains of the village. It was burnt badly and nobody was around. After exploring I had no idea what to do. So I went exploring, for anybody. After about a week I ran into a human man. Told him my story and he basically took me to Nexus. Took a few weeks to travel over the Crystal Mountains. That is basically how I ended up here.

I know it's nothing too grand or out of the ordinary. Though most would consider me as a sprite very out of the ordinary. Where I come from most of us are like that. Fun loving yet deal with what needs to be done before it's too late. If anybody wants to know more they are free to ask me myself.

## **Zenga**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Sprite

Memtrok, a Reni Scribe, walked into the Ivory Tower, headquarters of the Nexus's Mage Guild. The Mage Guild had requested for a Reni Scribe to come. Memtrok got the call.

Memtrok went up the stairs and walked to Room #11 and knocked on the door. A voice from inside the room said come in and Memtrok opened the door.

Standing inside the room when Memtrok walked in was an elf wearing Mage Robes. Memtrok instantly recognized the elf, it was Zenga, a very powerful mage. Zenga told Memtrok to come in and take a seat in a chair that was about to fall apart from so much use. Zenga sat in another chair, which was in the same shape.

Memtrok looked at Zenga. Zenga was one of the strongest mages he ever saw. Huge muscles could be seen bulging out of the baggy robe he wore. His arms were covered with scars, probably from all of the battles he must have fought against the Goblins. His face had a very young look on it. And his eyes, Memtrok never saw anything like them. Glowing in a light blue color, Zenga could instantly make anyone's eyes look at his.

Then Zenga said, "I am sorry the Guild called you so quickly. The Goblins are advancing again on the city and in great numbers. I wanted you to interview me so you can make my history. I want other people to know about my life in case this is my final battle." Memtrok nodded, too shocked to say anything. Zenga, personally asking me to interview him! Wait until the other scribes hear about this!

"Z-Zenga, this is a great honor. Are you sure?" said Memtrok finally. "Yes, I am sure. I suggest you get a lot of paper to write this stuff down on. I have a lot of things to say." said Zenga.

Memtrok got his bag and took out some paper and quills. Zenga got up while Memtrok was getting ready and got a drink that he bought from Trista's tavern. When he got back, Memtrok was ready to begin.

"Ok, well where do I begin?" asked Zenga. "How about your early years?" said Memtrok. "I guess that is a good place to start." Zenga said, then he looked out of his window, overlooking the entire city. Memtrok noticed that the blue glow of his eyes seemed to flicker.

Finally Zenga said, "Well my early years was very painful. I was born as the son of the King and Queen of Hanstroc, a elven kingdom well north of Elven City. Hanstroc had been in peace for 500 years. Even the oldest of the elders hadn't been alive during the last war. Even so, my parents made sure that the army was the best in the known land." Zenga again looked at his window and seemed to drift off out of reality. Memtrok waited patiently for him to continue.

"I was the first son of my parents and was the heir to the throne. I was treated by the servants of my parents like a king, even better than one. My parents had been the rulers of the kingdom for 250 years, the most ever by a king and queen of our kingdom. But they were getting old and wanted me to be prepared in case I had to rule the kingdom at a young age." said Zenga.

"My father said I was capable of becoming the king when I was 4 years old, meaning I could rule from that age on if something happened to my parents." Zenga said. Then Zenga paused and

looked at the window again. Memtrok realized that Zenga was getting to a difficult part of his life story. Zenga took another drink and then started to talk again.

"When I was 9, the Goblins invaded Hanstroc. The border outposts of the kingdom reported that the Goblins were headed in the direction of the capital, which was named Hanstroc too. That was the last word anybody ever heard from those outposts. My parents gave the order to have the people of the kingdom brought into the capital, for a final stand." said Zenga, with his voice getting weaker everytime he talked.

"A month after the invasion began, the Goblins reached the walls of the capital. My father's army was the strongest known army in the world, but the Goblins were the first army in thousands of years to even give a challenge to my father's army, so it was going to be a very bloody battle. Just about everyone in the city was given weapons, even the young ones and the elders were given weapons. My father gave me an elven bow and a dagger." said Zenga, then he closed his eyes, his face in pain.

Finally, after a long time, Zenga started to talk again. "My father's army stopped every charge the Goblins did for 2 months. Thousands of my father's men and the enemies died. My father's army lived up to it's reputation. But the Goblins didn't give up, plus they had reinforcements. My father sent Rock Birds to the neighboring kingdom's requesting aid. No one came. My father believed that the Goblins must of taken them out." then Zenga closed his eyes again and tears started to come out of them. "Then one day, the Goblins broke through the walls. My father's army was torn to pieces. Every person in my father's kingdom fought all day to try to drive the Goblins back. The Goblins managed to capture the entire city except the royal palace, where the remaining people of Hanstroc stood their ground. My father and mother decided to fight too, they would die instead of living instead of their people."

Zenga stopped and tears continued to come from his eyes. "Right before my parents went into battle, my father gave me a device and said, 'This is a teleport device Zenga. Use it if the Goblins break into the palace. The device was made by a mage visiting this city on a trip years ago. The mage said that this device would send the user to a safe place in the event of it's use. I have kept this device safe for years, hoping I wouldn't need to use it. You must take a chance. If my kingdom falls, you will be the last survivor, the last one who knows about the Goblins.' My father then got some papers from his pocket and said, 'Give these papers to the leader of the safe place you will go to, if the device works. They will talk about this kingdom and they will show what worked and didn't work against the goblins. Hopefully, these papers will give others a better chance to survive. Now I have to go. Good bye my son.' Then my father left after giving me a hug. My mother cried and kissed me forever, then sounds of the Goblins advancing were heard and she left."

Zenga again stopped and closed his eyes then said, "The Goblins were held back for another day, the remaining people throwing back every attack by the Goblins. The next day, the Goblins attacked, but weren't stopped this time. Everyone in my father's kingdom died. While I watched from a window, I saw my father and mother fighting until they were covered up by the Goblins. Then I used the device."

Zenga then said, "The device teleported me to a big ivory tower. I went inside, somehow being

told by someone to go inside. I wondered around until I found an unlocked door and went inside of it. The room was full of scrolls and books. A desk was at the back of the room and an old man with robes on sat at it. He motioned me to come forward. So I did."

Zenga then said, "The old man revealed to me that he was the mage that gave the teleport device to my father. He said that the gods of the land told him one night in his dreams to do it, so he did. He said now he understands why. The only reason, he said, that this would happen is because you have some role in saving the Nexus. I then asked what was the Nexus. He said that the Nexus was the city of all races and one of the only remaining cities not taken over by the Goblins. I was shocked that he thought I was one of the saviors of this city. He said that he will begin to train me the magicks of the land, to get me ready for the day I have to help save the Nexus. I agreed, having no thoughts other than to seek revenge against the Goblins."

Zenga took a deep breath then said, "I trained for years, the old man continued to have me practice spells even though I already mastered them. One day, he said, I will thank him for all of this training. I continued to practice with him until I was 19 years old, when something happened that changed my life forever."

Zenga said after a deep breath, " The Goblins mounted a huge attack on the city. The old man (I never did learn his name), ran to help stop the invasion. Then a huge flash of light came from the gates and the whole world went dark. Then a spirit appeared before me, it took a minute before I could recognize it. It was my master, the old man. The old man said that his time has come, I have to take his place in the world. He said that I will become a very powerful mage, even more powerful than him. He said goodbye and then left in a puff of smoke."

"Now I am fighting the Goblins, using my magic and my personal charge to avenge my parents death and the fall of Hanstroc. Recently, I became a follower of hope, hoping to give hope to other victims and the fighters that keep the city safe for all that live in it." Zenga said.

"Some of the adventurers in the city continue to say that I am going to become a very powerful mage, perhaps the most powerful mage in history. I don't believe I will be that powerful, although I have seen how powerful my magic has already become." said Zenga.

"I am getting told by telepathy that the Goblins are attacking again, please excuse me. I have told everything that I want known." said Zenga, who then grabbed his weapons, backpack, and robes and left quickly.

## **Zerlin**

**Class:** Mage

**Race:** Elf

Born Thalion, Drau for Dauntless, Zerlin's father was a brilliant elven strategist, while his mother was a cleric for the band of elves. He grew up in a small village named Black Hill. The village had been named this because it sat at the base of a hill charred many times by the storm dragons that

attacked years ago. His village was one at war with the neighboring bands of elves, and many battles did he watch while growing up in Black Hill.

When he was 7, a party of elves who had been warring over Tilnar's ascension with his own, attacked the tribe. Young Thalion watched the battle from a safe hiding spot in the roof of his father's house. The battle caused many casualties on both sides, but then Draugdae, the village's leader of hunts, attacked his father and killed him with one arrow through the neck. Thalion's mother unable to contain herself ran to his side, and even as she was attempting to resurrect him, another arrow hit its mark and his mother fell dead at his father's side.

After the battle, Thalion saw Draugdae embrace Eladamri, the lord of the light elves. Thalion was consumed with rage at the betrayal of Draugdae. This elf had been his teacher in the ways of the woods, and had been his father's friend. The rage burned in Thalion and he prayed. Prayed for an answer to why Draugdae did this, then prayed for an answer of how; how he would kill him. Thalion burned his parents' bodies as they were a symbol to him of friendship and joy. He would no longer feel joy, only the darkness that now plagued him.

He roamed the forest when a wandering hermit, a human mage named Liam, found him and took him in. Thalion never spoke to the mage. Liam taught him many things and when he thought Thalion was ready, he sent him out into the world of the Nexus with a new name, Zerlin. Zerlin spoke no words, but Liam knew he had a burning hole inside him. Zerlin Rage would have his revenge. Zerlin Rage would overcome.

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