

# Monks

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

## Ahtram

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Orc

A story you say, the story of my life. This will be interesting.

Perhaps, I should begin in the beginning. I was born into a middle class family. My father an officer of law and my mother a local seamstress. I grew up like any young child. I went to school, performed my chores and played many games. When I was around the age of 12 my father began teaching me his trade, I was amazed at the work he did for just being one person.

One fateful night a band of mercenaries came to our village seeking lodging and food. The local Inn took them in and they started to drink immediately. Often when people drink they become loud, rowdy and violent. This is exactly what happened and my father was sent to calm them down. Of course, I tagged along to observe.

My father walked into the Inn and spoke with them. The Inn became quite, an eerie quite. Time seemed to stop in its place. I blinked and it was done. A mercenary backstabbed my father in through the throat. In blind rage I attacked the man, then blackness came. There was about thirty of us, shackled and chained to a wagon. We plodded along, being pulled by the wagons movement. I heard from nearby whispering men that our village had been pillaged and everyone enslaved. All able bodied people were shackled and chained, while everyone else was killed. This is the day I became a man, no longer was I a child.

I was sold to a mage named Sityol who taught me to write, as I was to be his scribe. Sityol had many slaves; one I befriended was named Katereena. She was the handmaiden of Lady Sityol. Beauty is the only word that I could use to describe Katereena. Her and I hated being slaves, and plotted to escape to freedom. We came up with a simple plan. We would pour some sleeping potion for Sityol's laboratory into the evening dinner. While everyone slept, we would escape to freedom.

Dinner came, and everyone slumbered as we walked out of the gates of Sityol's manor. Freedom, at last, freedom.

We traveled all night until we collapsed, as I fell asleep I felt drawn to the south. I woke with the sun glistening in my eyes, while Katereena still slept. Something was wrong though, she was white

as a ghost and drenched in her own sweat. I picked her up, cradling her in my arms; I walked south searching for help. Hours passed, and Katereena's condition became worse. I began to panic, I ran as fast as I can south towards a town. My legs began to burn and my bones ached. I could not go any further. As I used my last ounce of strength to enter the gates of a small fishing village, I collapsed screaming, "Help Me!"

I woke up in a bed that smelled like lavender. Getting out of bed I noticed my clothes had been changed. I regained my thoughts and blurted "Katereena!"

"Calm down," replied an elderly voice. A man in white robes entered the rooms, with emerald blue eyes and gray hair.

"Your friend is being aided as we speak," he continued as he took a seat in the corner, never taking his eyes off of me.

"Is ... is ... is she going to live?" I asked taking my seat on the bed.

"To be honest, we do not believe so, but, she was awake earlier and asked to speak with you," the old man replied.

The old man motioned me to her room and I proceeded in, walking over to her bedside. She was so white, white as snow, and so sickly looking. I sat next her and slipped my hand into her grasp. I sat there while she slept, never letting go. In the morning she was dead.

I did not know what to do with my life now. My life revolved around Katereena so much. I roamed around the town aimlessly, for awhile, just thinking. I eventually came to a tavern and ordered a drink. I sat there drinking some ale when I heard some young men talking about an island where people train to fight a Goblin Horde in a city called Nexus. I decided with nothing else to work towards that I should make a new life in this place called Falcion.

Here I am now, on Falcion, training, living my new life as a Monk. I work towards Kuis'arden, a inner balance of myself. I hope to achieve this balance in the future, but not today, today I learn.

## **Ailmar**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Elf

My name is Ailmar Larethian. I am a monk, serving under the Monastery in the city of Nexus. Ive dedicated my life in the search for Kuisarden since I was discovered on the shores of Rymek about four decades ago. I was discovered by some traveling monks and was taken in and nurtured into health at the Monastery in Nexus. I cant recall how long it took for me to recover my health, but during that time, the monks treated me with a kindness and sincerity that patterned the care I had received from my mother, Anariel. With my noble impression of them, I did not hesitate to take upon the life of a monk when Elistan, the guild master at the time, offered an invitation for me to

join the Monastery. It has been 43 years since my initiation. I am now a respected monk of the Monastery and of Nexus. It was only days ago when the Ivory Tower had requested that a history of my life be submitted to them for archival records. At the time, I didnt feel too interested in telling my past, but I realized that I was a part of Nexus, and that leaving a piece of my past would seal my immortality, if not in the literal sense.

On the 26th day of the month of Midnight in the year 1584, I was born on a cold, winter night on an island far away from either Nexus or Falcion. My father was a noble lord who watched over the island as his duty to the Elven King. My mother, Anariel, was a beautiful elven princess from a lineage that traced back to the beginning. I realized that I wasnt the only son when I saw from my newborn eyes a pair of clear white eyes in front of me. I didnt know what it was, but I realized that I wasnt alone.

I realized that I had an older brother and his name was Kieron. As soon as I could walk on my own, we were inseparable. We would take long adventures out in the forest seeking invisible fiends and demons. I didnt like exploring the countryside, but Kieron never got bored of it, even if we had been there before. We mustve explored the whole countryside in just one month. One evening, we ran out after our dinner and ran towards the lake beside the oak tree. On our journey, we encountered a small ferocious black bear. At first, we didnt know what to do. Kieron had a wooden sword that he had been practicing with but we knew it wouldnt do much harm to the bear. We knew most bears were friendly, but this had an ominous glare to it. It swiftly lunged towards my older brother and swiped him across the chest with his heavy paw. I wasnt old enough to carry a weapon so I rushed at the bear with all my might. Surprisingly, the bear toppled backwards from the unexpected blow. I knew that I had not hurt it too bad and it would tear us apart even worse. I looked at Kieron, and saw that he was bleeding profusely. The bear had recovered his stance and slowly moved around us. We stood ready but we knew that we would not survive if we couldnt think of something. Suddenly, arrows flew swiftly into the bears head and chest. We looked behind us and saw archers from our castle with our father on his horse. Suddenly, Kieron collapsed and I grabbed him from falling. We were quickly taken back to the castle and to the healer. I was quite exhausted from the event and just lay slumped to the wall waiting for my brothers condition. After four hours, the healer came out and said that Kieron was going to be fine, other than a large scar on his chest.

That night, our father decided to do something about us after the incident. He realized that living on the island, isolated from other elvish children that we were missing out on your childhood. Plus, at the mainland, we could learn the warrior arts or something else to defend ourselves. So, he decided to send us to the mainland within a months time. The thought somewhat scared me. I wasnt ready to leave my home, which I had lived for 20 years. But, I knew my fathers word was law. So, I stayed with my brother and comforted him while he recovered from his wound.

A month flew by quickly and we found ourselves with our mother, Anariel, on a ship sailing towards the mainland. The skies were clear as we left the port and the weather seemed calm. We sailed for about two hours before it suddenly started raining. The rain started to pick up and started to come down so fast that visibility was reduced to about 2 feet. The winds at the time were also blowing like a fury. I dont know why, but at that moment, I felt the same feeling I felt when I had encountered that bear. I couldnt place it, but it was like the moment of fear, where you dont know

whats going to happen. Suddenly, the ship rocked with such a force that I was thrown off the bridge and into the cold, rushing waters. I looked up and tried to stay afloat but could not see what was happening to the ship. As the waves crashed into me, my strength faltered and I sought out some sort of flotation device. Luckily, I found a piece of barkwood that had supposedly been broken off from the ship. I held onto it with my life, not knowing what would happen to me. The storm kept up for days it seemed, and exhaustion took over me. When I woke up, I saw two people dressed in brown robes helping me up. I spoke to them in elvish, Where is my brother? My mother? They did not reply and just shook their heads. They started lifting me up and I could not resist darkness.

## **Arakis**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Drow

Arakis had been reading and writing since he was a little boy. So naturally, instead of hiring scribes, he wrote all of his letters, correspondence, books, etc. on his own. He was, after all, a monk, one of the most educated professions in the Nexus. On a typical day when he wasn't out protecting the city he loved, he could be found in the monastery, sitting at a table covered with papers, scrolls, and books, reading through all of the material slowly and carefully. He made it his duty to learn everything and anything in order to gain knowledge that he can use to save the city.

However...this day he had a different task on his mind: it was time he wrote his history down. He wanted to start writing books and publish them so his fellow heroes can read them and be inspired by his stories. Arakis figured that the best way to get people to be interested in his stories is to write the real story about his life. So he set out to write his history...and it goes something like this...

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I was born on Aalur, the seventh of the month of the Prairiefire, in the year 1,590 since the Godswar, and the year 1,173 of the empire. My mother died when I was very young from some disease or plague I believe.

My father was a well-known and wealthy merchant. Part of his job was to travel to all of the great cities of the world. So wherever he went, I went, learning along the way the lessons required to be a merchant.

One of these days when I was still very young, my father and I were walking in a forest towards what he said was the City of All Races, the Nexus. I was very excited, since I have heard about the great legends of the Nexus, that fought the Goblin Horde.

We were ambushed by a Goblin patrol. My father, who once upon a time served for the Nexus army, wielded his sword and what magical devices he had and fought the Goblins. He yelled to me to hide in the woods. I watched most of the battle, as my father tried to keep me and him alive.

Goblin after Goblin fell, some to his sword, some to his magical devices. But the alarm had been sounded and more Goblins arrived. In one last hopeless move, my father a device to momentarily blind the Goblins so he could make an escape. He yelled to me to meet him at the Nexus and he disappeared in the woods, chased by 20 or so Goblins. I ran as hard as I possibly could towards the Nexus.

After hours of running, I collapsed on the ground and slept. I didn't awake for what must of been a day. When I awoke, hungry and thirsty, I set off once again for the Nexus. That day...I found my father's body, or what was left of it, nailed to a tree. His body was torn to pieces. I cried and cried, not knowing what to do. Finally, I decided to try to reach the Nexus. I reluctantly left my father's body and continued on my journey.

Two days later, I was discovered by a group of Nexus heroes. After hearing my story, the group gave me food and water while several of them went to retrieve my father's body. When they returned, we held a funeral and buried his body outside the Western Gates.

I was practically adopted by a monk at the monk's guild. Noticing that I was very smart, could read and write, and physically strong, the old monk began to train me for life as a monk. A year or so later, he died in another invasion and the rest of the guild pretty much adopted me. I practically grew up as a monk, although I was too young to begin my formal training. Finally on my 62 birthday, I was told it was time for me to begin my real training.

I value life at all costs, but I will not hesitate to kill if it means to save the Nexus and my fellow heroes. This is my home now and I will not stop defending my city unless I am killed or the Goblins are driven off for good.

...to be continued...

## **Arlis**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Human

I was born to a wealthy and noble family of Nexus on Malkur, the twenty-ninth of the month of Midnight, in the year 1,616 since the godswar, and year 1,199 of the Empire. I am thirty- eight years old as I write this.

When I was a small boy I had nearly anything my heart desired. The best foods to eat, the best clothes, social standing (when I grew older) and servants at my every beck and call. My father promised me everything. He told me all that was his would one day be mine. This included quite a number of businesses, farms and land, not to mention the people occupying some of it. Being as any son to a father I believed every word and began to grow up in his image.

It wasn't until I was ten or eleven years old that I began to question my parents and the way we lived. I was with my mother walking through the busy market. She spent an entire morning buying

whatever pleased her eye. We were near the Town Square when it happened. A dirty old man came to her, crawling on his knees with his head bowed and hands raised up, begging for money. He said something about how hungry he was. I wasn't walking next to my mother, but a little further back. I watched him, like any other man, and my heart was filled with compassion. I wanted to help him and above all else I wanted to see my mother help. She only ignored, passing him by and leaving him to the cobbles of the street. My mother called out to me to hurry along. I crouched next to him. I pressed several gold pieces into his hand, and at that moment I was caught in a gaze of pure green. It seemed that time itself stopped. Why does he suffer like this?

Since that day I thought differently and questioned my life as it was. Both parents recognized my change, condemning it at first but soon they had to get used to it. I hated the fact that some people were less fortunate than I. I hated seeing the homeless and refugees wandering the streets with nowhere to go and no place to sleep. Several times when my parents were away I brought some of these people into my house to let them eat or bathe. On one of these occasions the two men I brought in robbed the house. As soon as I shut the door and left me to the mercy of my parents, which was hardly any. The fine silver was gone, my mother's jewels and several of my father's collectable swords. I tried to explain that if they had taken it they need it more than we. I screamed saying all that stuff did was collect dust and now they were at least feeding two hungry men or more.

By the time I was sixteen I couldn't take it anymore and devoted myself to the Monastery and ways of a Monk. Since then I've been on a journey for inner peace and enlightenment. One of the major lessons I've learned so far is that every one is looking for the same thing. Indeed, it is one shared by all sentient beings. The desire or inclination to be happy and to avoid suffering knows no boundaries. It is in our nature. As such, it needs no justification and is validated by the simple fact that we naturally and correctly want this.

## **Arwyn**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Half-Giant

I was born a simple man. The son of two half-giants who had devoted their lives to clerical duties. We lived in a small village near the city of Taerival. I grew up happily enough playing with the other children of the village. I suppose ever since I was little you could call me kind hearted. Which often I was picked on for, also being short only nine feet for my race didn't help matters. But I took everything with good stride, helping all those that needed it. I couldn't stand to see anybody or anything in pain. It became quite evident I was very passionate in anything that interested me, diving head first into my interests. When I had matured I devoted my time to studying, learning all things that I could. This is where I learned of hand-to-hand combat. I approached my father telling him of my interest. At first he was skeptical, we lived in a peaceful village. He was a wise man though and well aware of the goblins pillaging in villages all across Altin. He thought this over for some time and finally agreed it would be a useful skill to learn, thus began my training.

It was a long and slow process, for I was not well coordinated. I am patient though and after many years of practicing my training paid off. I was quicker and more agile; my blows against my practice dummy were on target more and more often.

My father watched me at times and noticed how far I had come. He knew our village was well hidden and the goblins threat was a minimal concern to us. He pulled me aside one day and suggested that I travel to the island of Falcion to further my training and aid the city of Nexus in anyway I could.

At first I was not too fond of this idea. Leaving everything I had ever known. My childhood playmates, my mother and father. I thought this over for many months and I finally agreed with my father. I packed the few possessions I owned and set out to find the isle.

I traveled many days and many nights, stumbling down along the mountain pass. I then found myself in the woods I would later know as the Eldane, and eventually I found a path that I followed. I then found myself staring at the Eastern Gates of the city of Nexus. A guardsman opened the gates for me and I walked inside.

I knew Nexus was the city of allied races, but I did not realize some of them would be so small. I had to watch my step all the way down Market Street. I quickly spotted a citizen and asked them how I was to get to the island of Falcion. She was a kind woman and she smiled as she spoke. "Well just head south to the southern gates lad, and then follow the beaten path to the sea town of Rymek, you can't miss the sloop that will take you there." I smiled politely to the woman and thanked her.

I soon found myself wondering down that beaten path and soon came to the town of Rymek, it wasn't a large town and she was right I found the sloop without any problems. Once aboard a man asked me "What guild are you hoping to join?" I quickly answered, "I shall be a monk" Once we arrived I was apprenticed and began to further my training in hand to hand combat.

## **Ba'roon**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Human

"I was born in the month of the Phoenix, to a small family in the village of Dilkstar. I spent my first few years in carefree bliss, playing with the other children in the village. I thought it would last forever." "I was wrong."

"In my sixth year, plague took our village. Only a few survived; my parents were not among them. Famine might have finished us off, were it not for the monks who came to aid us, until the nearest village could send someone. I and the others were given new homes among the village, with those who had no family of their own, being glad to take us in. Yet unlike those from my former village, I found that I was not content merely to settle into my new life, and hope for the best. I could not

forget the face of the kindly monk who had brought us fresh food, when we were still too weak to fend for ourselves, and stayed with us for those few days.

No--more than that--I wanted to be like him, and help others. Thus, I announced my intentions to my new 'parents'; that when I grew up, I was going to be a monk. They tried to dissuade me, saying that I was still distraught over the loss of my family, and when I was older, I would feel differently. But the next year, when a monk passed through on his way back from another village, and stayed the night, I still felt as strongly as I had then. So that night I said a farewell, and the next morning I asked the monk if I might accompany him. At first he said no, that it was a long journey and I should wait until I was older. But then, when he saw how adamant I was, he agreed that I could come with him, back to the Monestary."

"We travelled for almost two weeks, for the Monestary was far away, in the forest just north of the River Vadcrror. When we arrived, I was taken to the Master of the Monestary, a elderly man in a white robe. He told me that the Monastic life was not for all; he spoke of a solitary way, and said it was a path of great hardship. My faith was not shaken in the least; seeing this, he spoke no further, but instead, the monk I had come in with directed me to a small cell, where I was to spend my next ten years . . . but I get ahead of myself."

"The Monestary had a well-maintained garden that was open to the sky, though walls surrounded it, to keep the animals from eating it all up. A pair of stout wooden doors provided entrance to the fields outside, and another archway led to the Monestary proper."

"I was new to the Monestary, but I settled into my new life with the greatest of ease; there were classes to attend, and things to learn -oh, so many new, wondrous, things to learn! - I could go on forever about the time I had there . . . "

"I learned my letters there, and this opened me to the knowledge contained in books. I was taught various mental techniques, among them how to focus my memory and memorize any event for perfect recall later; how to transcend the world physical, and enter the world spiritual; and through this, how to clear my mind of all thoughts, and meditate, becoming in tune with the universe around me. I was taught the rudiments of first aid, and self-defense."

"I came to feel that seeking to attain understanding of the spiritual was a worthwhile goal; I felt that I could stay forever, and spend my time in contemplation of all the mysteries of the world. Oh, my desire to help was not forgotten; but there was so much to learn here, so much more to know!"

"Alas, this also was not to last."

"It was in my tenth year at the Monestary. I had found myself restless that evening, and could not sleep; so I had gone out to the garden to catch a breath of fresh air. I saw the old Master then; he was also out in the garden, and he had a worried look upon his face. I asked him, 'What dost bother thee, Master?' and he replied, 'I do not know . . . yet I feel a dread in my bones, as though something terrible were coming . . . why are you here, Ba'roon?'. I replied that I could not sleep, and had come out in the hopes that the garden might help me to relax. We might have continued this conversation further, save that we heard a noise outside, and he went to check upon it. I heard a sharp cry of pain from outside, and rushed out to see a horrible creature lowering my



Master to the ground, a sword stuck through his side. I was unable to hold back a small cry of terror; the creature, which I later came to know as a Goblin, glanced up, yelled something in that guttural tongue of its, and charged me. It did not take the time to draw its weapon from my Master's body, this alone probably saved me. I was able to knock it down easily, and then I heard the sound of footsteps. Glancing up, I saw a much larger group of Goblins approaching, attracted by the yelling. One of them in the rear was slowing down, his hands weaving in serpentine motions. There were five more of them, two like the one I had just faced, and the others looking far more formidable. I was distracted by a sharp pain in my foot; the Goblin on the ground had pulled out a dagger, and was stabbing me. I fell to the ground, as a ball of fire whizzed past my head and hit the wall in an explosion of flames. The passing heat singed my robe, and with a haste born of desperation, I hurled myself inside the doors, shutting and barring them behind me. I could hear shouting behind me, and I knew that I had only moments. My gaze darted to the large tree next to the far wall, which I had climbed up many a summer evening. Now, it seemed my most likely avenue of escape. I scampered up as quickly as I might, and dropped over the wall just as I heard the door being smashed down. Glancing around, I did not see any more of those foul monsters, though I could hear them clearly. I paused a moment in indecision, uncertain of whether I should try to sneak back inside and warn the others, or try to get away to Lagus, the nearest village. I heard voices right on the other side of the wall then, one snapping commands, and I could hear screaming from inside. That made up my mind, I was too late to do anything for my fellow monks, I had to warn the villages. I made a break for the treeline, running freely and not stopping until I was well within the trees. I stopped, slumping to the ground, my sides aching . . . I attempted to calm myself, and attain inner peace through meditation. When I was unable to do so, I bandaged my foot, and prepared to set off again. As I did so, I smelled smoke, and looking back the way I had come, I saw a sullen red glow from above the treetops. I knew with a sick certainty that the Monastery was burning. After another hour or so of running, tripping actually, through the forest, I sat down to meditate again. I was successful, and the pain in my ankle faded away. The trip to Lagus would normally have taken three days. I made it in two, by hurrying through deer trails in the forest, and not stopping to rest as often as I should have."

"I arrived in Lagus exhausted, and upon speaking to their elders, found that they already knew of the Goblins (I was then able to put a name to them) from those who had already passed this way, fleeing from the Hoarde. I was given a place to sleep for the night, and when I awoke, I looked around me to see people packing their last few belongings onto wagons, and some already moving towards the road. I was wondering what to do, when I saw a merchant struggling with a load; I helped him move it into the wagon, and in return he offered to let me ride with him a ways."

"We joined up with a larger stream of refugees heading west, and I talked with some of the troubadors . . . they spoke of a city called Nexus, where a group of people were banding together to turn back the Goblin Hoardes, and ultimately defeat them. I was inspired by their bravery, and decided to go to them, to aid in any way I could . . . "

"The bards gave me directions, and after much travel, I arrived at Nexus. Upon asking where I might help, I was told that I did not possess enough skill to fight the Goblins, but that if I wished to be taught how, the Dragons had an island called Falcion, where I could begin my training safely. I gladly accepted, and so it was that I came to Falcion, the city of apprentices."

## **Bersola**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Orc

The tavern was a damp and smokey place and as Kildrim the story teller entered he saw many shadows lurking along the walls. He had seen many men and women that had earned glory and honor in combat, but not many of them had been sitting in such a filthy place.

As he let his eyes sweep pass the men and women sitting, he saw an odd figure sitting close by the fire place. He walked close by the tall hooded man that was sitting beside a table .

As he stood close to the robed figure one of the bar keepers threw a handful of twigs at the fire wich made it light up and for a second banish the shadows. At that moment Kildrim saw the face of the man wich was sitting down at the table. He saw an face that had not been scared in battle, but the scared mind of the figure was painfully showing.

"Greetings," Killdrim said as the man noticed him.

The man shock his head and spat at the ground. He drank deeply from his mead mug and sighed.

Kildrim stared at the man and said: could I ask you a few questions?

The man looked up again and said: do as thou wish but I let thee know that fears that you hide from are not to be found here.

Kildrim did not understand much from what the man mumbled but he sat down next to him.

Are you one of the known nexus heeroes ? he asked.

I am no hero. Said the man with a proud voice. I do not seek fortune. All I seek is forgiveness. Forgiveness? Said Kildrim. Yes forgivnes said the man. I am a monk, a person seeking forgiveness for what he has done. Not all monks seek foregiveness, but I must.

Ok. Said kildrim that though that even if this man wasn't a hero atleast he could be pretty interesting to write about. The man frowned slightly and said: My name is Bersola and I was born on a little village in the south of Nexus. I was raised by my mother and father. I lived there with my sister Serenade and my two twin brothers Karan and Brokk . They were raised by my Fathers first wife.

She had died seven years before and my father that had many wives had settled with only one , my mother. We were all orcs in the village, and even so it was a peaceful and kind place. One day though, it changed. My half-uncle , my fathers first wifes brother, came to our house one day and asked If we could shelter him for a few months. My mother did not lik this idea but my father said yes. Soon after this my father was called out into battle by the village elder men. They were too

hunt down a band of rampaging bandits. My uncle was the only man in the village who staid, claiming that we was weak from illness.

After this things changed. He started beating me and my sister. Many times the beatings evolved into torture were he cut the skin in my arm and poured salt into the wounds. Although my sister and I was beaten he never touched my brothers Karan and Brokk, on the other hand he encouraged them to beat us.

One night when I could not sleep I heard noises from the kitchen. I walked out, thinking that it was my uncle who was drunk again. But as I passed the kitchen I saw a horrific sight, one that changed my life forever. I saw my uncle beating my mother with what looked like the leg of a chair. But the fact that he was beating her was not the only horrilbe thing. He was reaping her as he was beating her. I was very quiet as I stepped inside the kitchen.

Then I saw my mothers face. She was so badle beaten that she did not breath. My uncle had reaped her as she died and we had not noticed.

I grabbed a knife from the table and I stabbed my uncle in the side of the stomach. The knife was very thin, and very pointy. He screamed once as I pulled out the knife and stabbed him again, on the other side. Then he screamed no more. I entered my sisters room to tell her that mother was dead. And then I saw Karan andr Brokk reaping my sister. This time the house was filled with screaming. As Karan and Brokk lay on the ground with bloos pouring over the floor I saw that my sister was badly hurt, she did not move and she was bleeding badly. I threw her over my shoulder and I carried her out of the house. As I got to the main road I saw a man sitting on a coach. I asked the man if he knew a perosn that could help my sister. And he said that he was skilled in the arts of healing people. He took me to his cottage in the forrest and he helped my sister survive.

It took many months for my sister too become well. And I was sitting at her side the whole time. I thought many times about my future. And then the day when my sister woke up from her month long sleep. It turned out that she did not remember anything from the time before her sleep. I thanked the gods for that!

I made up a story about how my mother died in fever and that father had been killed in combat against the goblin hordes. After that I saw began wondering about my and my dear sisters future, we had no place to go and no food to eat when we got there. The man that we lived with was a kind monk. He suggested that we would travel to. Falcion and try to become Apprentices there. My sister Serenade was a happy girl that wanted to earn glory in combat, me on the other side knew wich guild I would try to join. The monks. We travelled and soon we came to Falcion were we started out training.

The hooded man sighed and waved for another ale. Kildrim had been listening closly and now he shook his head. But what about..... he began to say, but Bersola was not listening. He was staring into the fire, probaly seeing things other people could not. Kildrim shrugged and began to walk out of the tavern.

# **David**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Half Giant

David's story begins in the peaceful island village of Elderberg, located a far distance from dry land, in the Sea of Tears. It was a quiet town for the most part; the majority of Elderburg's people were simple farmers. The town saw little trouble, all manners of races lived in relative accord. The only excitement the town ever had was a yearly visit from a traveling magic show. The show was composed of wizards from all over the realms, who performed an elaborate two-day show for the townsfolk. In customary appreciation, the town council issued payment of food and supplies, gold pieces and warm wishes to the wizard's next location.

A young little mage named Qwe began to accompany the traveling show when David was also just a young lad. And though the two were different as night and day they became great friends and would have great fun in one another's company. When the traveling show was in town, David and Qwe would go off on adventures into the forest chasing and playing with all animals of the Island.

David's father Andrew never approved of David's unruly behavior while around Qwe, but since his eldest son was usually an obedient child he allowed the horseplay with no argument. Andrew was a respected council member of Elderburg, known for his wisdom and power, visibly blessed by the Traenol. As a half-giant, he was naturally protective over his diminutive wife and young children. Andrew's sons David and Thomas were good boys who were expected to be honorable to their family; especially David being the first born.

Andrew had his boys farm by day and learn by night. Their lessons were taught to them through an ancient sacred Tome of Meditation. This Tome contained not only twenty generations of family history, but also the family's collection of wisdom and stories, which were meditations on the development of inner strength. Along with the Tome's teachings, it detailed elaborate fluid body movements that toned the body and focused the mind. This family heirloom was passed down to the eldest surviving son of Andrew's clan, Andrew's family being the only surviving members of that once numerous clan.

David along with Thomas, Andrew and his mother Elizabeth lived together in happy harmony. Elizabeth had her family and her garden. The boys had their studies, chores and playmates, and Andrew had his work and meditations. They all had the pleasure of watching the traveling Magic show in which the young Qwe began to gain growing prominence, becoming one of the main attractions.

At David's 11th year, the magic show came and entertained as they did every year. David was helping to lead food and supplies on to the wizard's boat when from the dock he saw the unmistakable markings of a goblin warship. (David's studies from his family's Tome told of the brutality of Goblins and detailed the horrors they had inflicted upon his clan many generations ago.) Sprinting to the town circle, David rang the alert bell and shouted for the townspeople to prepare for invasion by goblin forces.

David ran to his home to find his mother and brother armed with kitchen knives for defense. Her voice trembling, Elizabeth spoke to David. "Go get your father, I couldn't rouse him!" David ran to his father's meditation chamber yelling, "Papa! Papa! Goblins are about to storm Elderburg, come quickly we must arm ourselves and prepare!" Andrew remained quiet; his eyes open and face expressionless breathing slowly. David pleaded, "Father hurry we must get ready!"

Andrew's eyes stayed locked in a frozen gaze as he responded calmly, "I am getting ready." After a brief pause Andrew continued, "There has been a portion of our family's teaching I have withheld from you only because of your youth. The mind exercises and body movements which you have been taught through our family's sacred Tome allows us to defeat our enemies in the field of battle."

Goblin war drums began to echo through the streets signaling that the Goblins were approaching Elderburg's beaches.

"Father!" David said worriedly, "I don't know if I can." Andrew stood up quickly, wrapped himself in a thick robe and placed his family's Tome in a pocket. Bending down on a single knee Andrew looked squarely in his firstborn's eyes, "Don't worry my son, our hands shall be our weapons and our skin shall be our armor, let your inner strength manifest itself." David nodded and swallowed deeply with fear.

A woman's scream pierced the cloud of focus Andrew had been enveloped in with his son. Alertly, Andrew stood erect at his full impressive height. The quick shuffle of goblin scout footsteps sounded outside of David's home. Andrew sprung for the door, revealing a scout whose evil grimace quickly fell from his face, turning pale in sight of the massive half-giant that stood before him.

Andrew's hands leapt into a fluid fury, which gruesomely disembodied the scout. Andrew quickly turned to David and said, "Lock the door behind me." David managed to nod in acknowledgement despite being in obvious shock to what carnage he had just witnessed. Andrew slammed the door closed and David sprinted to lock it shut. He did so and spun his back against the door, his chest heaving with quick breaths. David noticed his mother and young brother Thomas of only 5 years hidden behind the kitchen stove wielding sharp knives.

David ran to the front window when he heard the loud steps of goblin warriors approaching. He looked on in horrific awe and amazement as his father ripped through an entire legion of warriors and soldiers, dismembering the foul beasts two at a time. His father threw warriors over several yards with a single hand. David saw large battlewizards casting fantastic spells on his father, which only seemed to increase his battle fury. Giant goblin warlords began to descend on his father, and with a single stroke of his hand, Andrew laid three consecutive beasts down. Energy crackled from his hands while delivering tremendous vital blows.

But as the fighting continued, the goblins gained in number and many of the townsfolk began to drop. This farming village had had little practice in war.

David's father finished off a warlord in front of his house's door, yelling "unlock the door and let

me in!" David did as he was told and his father fell to the floor with a large battleblade stuck between his shoulders. "Father!" David shouted, falling to his knees while his mother came running with Thomas. Agonizingly turning over, Andrew pulled out his family's sacred Tome of Meditation and placed it in David's hands. Cringing, "Be strong for them." Andrew said while beholding his family. "No, no father. No!" David cried when suddenly a goblin warrior burst through the door.

"No! I hate you!" Thomas yelled as he leapt in the air, sticking his kitchen knife in the warrior's arm. The goblin growled and bashed Thomas with his blunt weapon sending him to the floor out cold. "By the gods!" Elizabeth cried out as the warrior turned and eyed her body greedily. David breathed in heavily and forced the full power of his chi energy into a single hand and lunged at the warrior, fatally wounding him. Bent over with all of his energy spent, David never felt the blunt end of a warrior's barbed spear rap him on the back of his head.

David woke many hours later, stinging and woozy in chains aboard a goblin war boat. Glancing around the ship, David noticed that the youth of Elderberg had been chained and gathered like cattle on board the ship. The youths with any size were shackled and placed by an oar to row while the younger children swung from a large metal cage above deck awaiting a more horrific fate. Large steaming pots stank of boiled flesh. "The younger the tastier!" one fat warrior belched as he stirred the unholy brew. A goblin spy noticed David angrily eyeing the pot and taunted, "oh yer the half-giant kid right?" rubbing his belly, "Don't worry boy, your little brother served us well." Hate welled up inside David. "Not as well as his frail mother served us!" laughed another spy from a distance. "I'll kill you all!" David shouted as he again slipped into unconsciousness after another jolt to the head.

A day later David awoke in a pool of dried blood. "if you're alive, get to rowing" fat goblin taskmaster boomed. David sat up dizzily and began to manipulate an oar. After regaining his wits the realization of his lost family cause him to well up with sorrow. In mid row, his family's Tome slipped from his torn shirt pocket and he picked it up and deftly tucked it away. Andrew's spirit seemed to pull David to the boat's edge. David knew his father would be proud of him as he jumped, still shackled into the icy midnight waters of the Sea of Tears. Hands and feet bound, David swam in an unknown direction into an unknown future.

After a full day at sea David had finally made it to dry land; he dragged his dehydrated body upon the shore and passed out instantly from utter exhaustion.

The thin furry Renis bent over and gave a puzzled look to David and a surprised smile flashed across his face. "David! Gods be praised! I thought you had died! Look at you, let me magically invigorate you." From his prone position, David gazed up at the silhouetted figure in the midday sun. "Qwe...is that you?" Qwe answered, "of course it is numbskull, after I saw the attack I levitated across the great expanse of the Sea of Tears. I've found a beautiful city full of adventurers, just like you and me...open to all races."

David stood and saw the great city from afar, "hat do they call it?" he asked. "It's called Nexus" Qwe responded, "but I'm thinking of calling it home." "Home?" David thought to himself, "yes a new home and a new beginning."

Holding his family's sacred histories and teachings contained in the Tome of Meditation tight in his hands, David joined Qwe in the long walk towards a new life.

## **Da'vige**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Human

I am Da'vige, a dedicated monk spending my days within the city of Nexus. This is where my story begins; with in the very wall that keeps me alive.

It all starts with my first day in nexus, I was horribly lost and even worse, wondering why I even wanted to enter this seemingly miserable city. The only thing I could think about was returning to my safe village deep in the black marsh, where my family and friends still lived. Finally after wandering the streets for a few hours I decided to venture back to my home. The streets seemed empty as I walked to the gates, then suddenly I heard a loud bell sound (a sound that chilled my heart and soul). A villager ran though the streets screaming "the hordes are coming, Crag has gone mad, help my family please!" I was totally baffled by the words of the villager, I had heard of the hordes from my grandfather some years back before he died, but I have never really seen a goblin. So I got to thinking, "maybe I could be of assistance." I sat and pondered for a bit, finally after deciding that I wouldn't be of any help I set out to the gates once more. As I reached the gates there was a group of heroes talking of battle plans and strategies, I paid no attention and walked over to open the gate, as I did so a huge ogre barbarian yelled, "No fool, you open that gate it will be the end of us!" I jumped back startled by the words of the huge creature. As I looked around confused the barbarian began to say something about giants and goblins before he could finish, a razor sharp arrow sailed over the wall and pierced right through the barbarian's armor and killed him in a instant. My heart seemed to jump out of my mouth as I ran away to find some safety, as I ran into a tavern I heard the screams of people and the sounds of panicked villagers running through the streets. I looked around and realized that the tavern was empty, not even a bar tender was to be seen, so I went and sat at a hidden table in the corner. In the corner I could not hear any sounds what so ever, so I tried to think about what I was going to do and if I should go outside.

My eyes felt heavy as I sat at the table and I closed them for a minute so I could regain my train of thought.

I must have fallen asleep because when I woke I couldn't see a thing, a chill ran through my body as a realized that I was not in the safe corner of the tavern but I was leaned up against a wall of the town hall. I slowly stood up, my knees gave in and I fell to the ground. I sighed and tried once again to stand, after a minute or so I finally got to up on my feet. As I started to walk to the east a

sudden surge of screams and yelling echoed in my ears, my knees began to weaken again. I began to run as fast as I could, frantically searching for a place to hide. After running for a while I came to an intricate footbridge, I quickly rushed across it and found myself before a great temple. My heart felt a rush of warmth as I walked through the archway leading into the temple, the beauty amazed me and felt a sense of love flow through my body.

The sounds of yelling and crying stopped as I walked to a pond in the middle of a large garden. I removed my sandals and dipped my sore feet into the refreshing water. I felt enlightened with thoughts of love and peace go through my mind. My worries melted away when a voice of great elegance began to speak to me from within the pond, "Do not worry, I will be here with you" the voice said. I asked "who are you, where are you?"

The voice replied "I am the Goddess of Love, I am here with you as long as you believe."

Startled at the fact that a deity was speaking to me and comforting me I asked "what is happening out there, why did I wake up at the town hall and not at the table?"

The voice replied once again "The horde and cloud giants are attacking the city, I brought you to the town square because the tavern was being burnt down by goblin mutants."

I then asked, "Has my village been attacked by the hordes?"

I heard a sigh then she said "I am sorry to tell you but your family, friends, and even your female friend have been killed by goblin mutants"

I broke down and cried for a good hour before I spoke to her again, I asked "will you be my , will you be my new family, can I become a follower of you?"

She said "I will love you forever Da'vige, I brought you here to tell you to become a monk, go into training, find enlightenment, when you have done this I will take you into my family and care for you as if you were my child." While smiling I said "thank you , I will do as you wish." With those last words I stood up, put my sandals on and walked to the city of Falcion, where I would start my training as a monk and find my way to enlightenment. It's been a year since that has happened, I have become a monk, I have gone into training, I have achieved enlightenment, now I am preparing myself to join the church of love. I wait for Dilanis's decision should come from Lyrasel any month now. I stay on task and I wait for that great day when I am marked as a follower of Dilanis. My story starts within the walls of nexus hopefully my life ends in the service of Dilanis.

## **Desdecardo**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Unknown

The youth sighed. Smoke rose from the charred buildings of his once-beautiful city. Where once birds had sung, only moans of mourning and pain cracked the stillness of yet another sunless day.



Even the earth was gray, scarred with battle and death. Looming on the horizon stood a mountain, black as night. All around it, in testament to the upheaval of its birth, were cracks in the earth, abysmal chasms, and great gushing fountains of magma, which flowed copiously into a river that ringed the rocky peak. At its summit, barely discernible through a veil of mist, sat a palace, where lived the ruler - and cause - of this forsaken kingdom. Veins of black ran through its blood-red marble, coiling up and around a monolithic spire that culminated at a wickedly sharp point. It seemed to stab the very heart of Heaven.

"Depressing, isn't it?"

The youth started, and quickly spun around. "Oh, it's just you, Drusus." He let out a long breath. "You startled me."

Drusus chuckled softly, gesturing at the window. "That sight is enough to put anyone on edge." He was a short man, and wide, though his girth in no way precluded his graceful, silent movement. His hair, matching almost exactly the drab brown of his robe, was cut in a bowl-like ring around his head, and two heavy-lidded, friendly green eyes studied the scene before him with dismay and, though buried deeply, fear.

"Drusus, is there something wrong?"

The portly monk snorted. "You mean other than THAT?" He flapped a hand at the landscape, as if trying, and failing, to dismiss it. Then his form seemed to collapse in upon itself. With a tear in his eye, he smiled ruefully. "You truly are wise for one of your years, Gaius. You're right, there's something I'm not telling you." Drusus took a deep breath. "The monastery's defenses are collapsing. I fear we will not last the night."

\* \* \*

The whole monastery was still. A palpable hush pervaded the stone halls, the occasional stirrings of their uneasy defenders its only interruption. The air was charged with expectancy, awaiting the inevitable with such a longing dread that, when it came, it would seem almost a relief in comparison.

BOOM!

Gaius let out a breath he had not known he was holding as the courtyard below erupted into a flurry of activity. A mob of robed figures hurried to brace the gate, which, Thank the Light, for the present remained intact.

BOOOOM!

Soul-rending howls pierced the night and, despite themselves, the defenders hesitated as timbers groaned under the weight of renewed assault.

CRACK!

A hail of splinters exploded into the yard, throwing the monks back. Men scurried to regain their positions, even as the cloud cleared, revealing the crumpled forms of many who would not rise again.

CREEAAK!

Bolts and hinges snapped. Over the walls, a strange, abhorrent chant rose to a fevered pitch, and an unholy red glow suffused the gate, which seemed to warp convexly inward.

Almost unconsciously, Gaius turned from the window. 'To hell with Drusus, I've got to do what I can to help,' he thought. The chant grew louder, and the stone corridors began to tremble with the thunder of daemonic voices. He broke into a run. As he rushed down the stairs, taking them two-by-two, an eerie silence suddenly descended, and the clash of desperate fighting ensued. His fear receded, and his blood sang with the promise of battle.

Gaius rounded a corner, into the courtyard, into chaos. Men screamed. They were being pushed back; they were dying. In the gate's stead, a wall of flame now filled the archway, from which a hoard of demons relentlessly poured. It seemed a portal to Hell.

Impulsively, he leapt into the fray.

\* \* \*

Moments stretched to hours as the battle raged on. Years of conditioning took over, all thoughts and fears forgotten, swept away. Gaius danced in and out, helping his comrades wherever he could. Another demon fell. Breathless, soaked in sweat and blood, he turned to face his next foe... and saw a large, heavily muscled creature bearing down on him. Their eyes locked, and the demon rushed forward, screaming a challenge.

The attack came very quickly. The demon's sword was a blur, but so was Gaius, dodging only split-seconds before the deadly blade sliced the air. He was hard-pressed, and weary, but the demon grew impatient. It howled in frustration, lashing out with tremendous force. Gaius evaded, and stepped in. He delivered a stunning blow to the demon's chest, gratified by the sound of cracking ribs. Just as quickly, he stepped away. The demon shrieked in agony, then paused, eyes narrowing as it reassessed its puny adversary. The assault resumed, furious, though guarded. Attack flowed into attack, and Gaius tired quickly. Finally, the demon scored a glancing blow, throwing him off-balance. Abruptly its other claw shot out and closed around his neck. It held its sword aloft. Gaius muttered a silent prayer, awaiting the coup-de-grace, the deathblow...

Suddenly, the demon's chest cavity exploded, showering him with its putrid innards. Its eyes opened wide, dimming, as it released him and collapsed in a heap. A familiar figure stood over the devastated corpse, arms crossed.

"Gaius! I told you to remain in your room!"

An iron grip seized him. He was dragged a safe distance from the fighting, and dropped unceremoniously against a monastery wall.

Drusus leaned over his protege, inspecting his wounds. "You'll live. Most of that blood isn't yours." He knitted his brows. "But that demon almost did you in.. You should have obeyed me! Why, I have half a mind to kill you myself, after the scare you just - "

A screeching demon ran towards them, brandishing its weapon.

Drusus held up a finger. "Hold that thought."

He spun around, and the demon was upon him. Its first slash bit only air. Drusus snorted. He darted in, and touched the creature. It erupted, a bloody mist and a sharpened scimitar its only legacy.

He turned back to Gaius. "There isn't much time. You have to go. Now, there're food and provisions waiting - "

"But - "

"Dammit boy, let me finish! Our lines are breached; I don't have time for this!" Drusus paused, composed himself. "Now, all you'll need is waiting in the secret passage behind the chapel altar. Remember, push the bottom, center stone." His expression softened. "Gaius, I know you want to help, but you'll do far more good if you escape, and live. It's imperative that you survive, and yes..." He sighed. "Avenge us when the time comes. We've failed. Only one hope remains. Find the old king's wizard. He's the only one who has a chance of stopping them now."

There were so many questions Gaius wanted to ask, but the words caught in his throat. He sobbed. "Drusus, I..."

Drusus embraced his adopted son, comforting the youth and, at the same time, concealing his own welling tears. As with all such things, the moment all-too-quickly passed. The sinister demon chant began again. Drusus stepped back.

"And now you must go... my son." He smiled sadly. "I'm so proud of you. Go. Do what we could not."

A wail of tortured souls echoed through the yard, throbbing in the very marrow of Gaius' bones, and they both turned. A gigantic, robed demon came barreling through the flames, mounted atop what could only be described as a dragon. It rode through the defenders, leaving a wake of burnt and trampled corpses.

"GO! There's not a moment to lose!" And with that, he was gone, sprinting away to face the demon wizard.

Gaius stifled another sob, and started running. He didn't look back.

\* \* \*

The traveler stood on a rise, overlooking the valley that once had been his home. He shook his head. Weeks had passed into months, and yet the smoke still rose.

He shifted his gaze. He focused all his hatred, all his scorn, at the menacing black mountain. "I have no home because of you. I have no life because of you. Do you hear me? I WILL HAVE VENGEANCE! I swear it on my own blood." He grasped his dagger. Swiftly, savagely, he slashed his forearm. He kissed the dripping blade, then hurled it into the valley. "I will hunt you down. I am he who has no home. I am the nameless one. I am DESDECARDO, the disinherited, and I WILL return!" With that, he turned away, and began his journey... to the Great Sylvan Forest.

\* \* \*

He came to a huge crater. The trees - leafless, lifeless husks for the past couple of miles - went right up to the edge, and he had almost fallen in. He smiled for the first time in months. This was his quarry's handiwork. He was on the right track.

Slowly, cautiously, he eased down the crater's wall, his dexterity allowing him to choose his own pace, despite the dearth of hand- and foot-holds. Practicing his meditation techniques, he let his mind go blank. Before he knew it, he had reached the point at which the ground evened out. Imagining hosts of demon corpses, whistling a merry tune, he set off toward the center.

Hours later, he arrived at his intended destination. A group of small boulders strewn around an overturned stone altar were all that greeted him, lying in the exact center of the crater. He fought off despair. He didn't know what he had expected, but surely, something more than this? He fell to his knees and prayed for guidance.

His eyes snapped open. He felt... something. A presence. His gaze swept the rubble, and lighted upon a metallic object. He crept towards it slowly, suspiciously. Tentatively, he reached for the sword. Warm to the touch. Impulsively, he grabbed it.

Images flashed through his mind. Rain. Wind. Lightning. Struggle. Pain. And then, serenity. Confidence. Competence. He abruptly stood, and leapt to the altar, a man possessed. With all his strength, and maybe something else as well, he righted the altar. Taking a deep breath, he drove the sword into its center, and the earth trembled.

Suddenly, a bolt of pure blue light shot from the hilt of the sword, and a doorway opened, through which the thread unerringly flew. A trail of energy, leading the way. He approached the portal, at least, that was what he thought it was. It emitted a silvery light, entralling him, drawing him closer. At last, he was poised on the edge, excitement and apprehension warring within him. The doorway flickered, as if in doubt. He glanced back at the strange sword, at the ribbon of energy urging him on.

He chuckled. "Well, I guess I have no choice." He closed his eyes, and stepped through.....

Into a whole new world.

\*\*\*\*\*

Desdecardo awoke suddenly, his heart pounding, and resolved to kill the next Archivist who approached him about his story.

## **Dre**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Dwarf

One day, Dre was found laying in the forest by a monk from a Monastery nearby. He had serious injuries to both his head and body. The monk brought him to the Monastery and began treating his wounds. Once Dre woke up, he did not remember a single thing about what had happened. The monk who had found and treated him said the he could stay and begin training as a monk. And so he did.

After a few years, Dre left the Monastery to find a city named Falcion. When he got there, he asked the Guardsman if he had come to the right place. The Guardsman nodded and smiled in reply. A couple of years of training in both fighting, meditating and healing others, Dre had earned the title of Immaculate within the Guild of the Monks. Here, his journey to Nexus began.

Once in Nexus, he got to know many new people, and meet some that he already knew from his training in Falcion. Here, Dre has seen many things happen. He has seen both the goblins, the dragons and the giants attempting to crush the city, all failing to do so since the forces of Nexus wouldn't let this happen.

People have asked Dre of his past, and to this he always replies, "I have no idea of where I come from, I do not know either of my parent's names, nor do I know if I have any brothers or sisters."

## **Elistan**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Human

The nervous scribe stepped onto the monastery's ground and immediately felt calm and inner peace surround him. He inhaled deeply to smell the clean air so different from the sometimes-foul air in the city. He had never been to the monastery before. This would be the first time he interviewed a monk. The wind blew softly around his hair. He heard a slight rustle of leaves and turned to admire the many beautiful trees and flowers that surrounded him in the garden. The sound of bird song from the trees filled his ears. He smiled and felt much more relaxed as he stepped up to the entrance of the monastery.

He had come to interview a promising monk who had shown much dedication in the work to free of the Nexus from the threat goblin hordes. He was one of the scribes who's mission was to record the history of all those who sought to banish the goblins from the lands.

When he stepped inside he immediately noticed a difference from outside. Here the walls had no decorations of beauty but the feeling of calm strength was still there. There was almost no sound around him and he felt a bit embarrassed as his steps echoed in the corridors, disturbing the peace. He went in search for the monk and soon found him in one of the meditation chambers. He saw that the monk was deep in trance and settled down to wait. I was in deep meditation when the scribe entered the premises and had freed my soul from the bonds of the body I immediately felt his presence and purpose and followed him until he found my body. I decided he would get his interview. I opened my eyes.

"You want an interview with me?" I asked. "Yes, yes I do. But how did you know?" he answered. "When your soul is traveling outside the body the world appears much clearer than it would otherwise. Emotions, purposes, all can be read as simple as a book if you know how." I said and smiled. "I see." he said with an expression that clearly said that he didn't. "But could you tell me of yourself, your history as you remember it?" he asked. "And also how it comes that you follow Pandora" he amended. I nodded.

"My story is not one filled with glory as you may think but instead of pain and suffering, as you will come to understand. I come from a large island far away from these coasts where it is even fewer people than here, and much more sparsely populated. The climate is harsher and the family means everything. One depends heavily on each other and to betray ones trust is among the worst thing one can do. I lived in a small village by the coast. The village relied mostly on its fishing and some hunting for food. We had little farmland because we lived in rocky terrain. My childhood was an easy one though I had to help as much as I could with day to day work. The goblins had not yet arrived in full strength then so except from an occasional lone goblin or wild bear everything was peaceful. I was first trained as a warrior because of my great stamina and endurance, and I have to add, my lack of wit. (This is not meant as an insult to the fighter or barbarian classes). I was pretty easygoing these days and I mostly took the days as they came. I also was very found of ale and beer. When I was about 16 years old the pressure of the goblins suddenly increased. It was no longer safe to walk to far from the village when it was dark and we begun to keep watch during nighttime. After a time we began to live with the constant threat. I was put on guard on several occasions but nothing ever happened. After a while I too began to lessen my watchfulness. One night I brought some beer with me as company and I fell asleep."

"The first thing I heard when I woke up was the screams of my friends as goblins poured into the

village. I rushed up, hastily put on my helmet and grabbed my sword and shield. In the streets fighting erupted everywhere and women and children ran around in panic as goblins invaded their homes. I spotted a goblin grunt chasing a woman with her baby in her arms. I ran forward to fight the goblin but I was still groggy from the beer so I never saw the goblin that came from behind.

Suddenly my head exploded with pain and everything went black. The goblins must have thought I was dead because I woke up again. I was the only one that did. Everywhere I looked was death and almost all buildings were burned to the ground. Then it went up for me what I had done. I had failed my village when it needed me the most and the shame was almost more than I could bear. The whole day I went around the village and buried as many as I could. At the end of the day I had made up my mind, my death would not help anyone. To die would be easy and I decided that my punishment would be to live. I swore to never again be drunk or anyway out of my senses and I looked around in the village to see what was left. I found a small boat that still could float and set sail. I wanted to be as far away from the burned village as I could.

After many days I saw land. I must have had a stroke of luck because I soon saw a city in the distance. I sailed towards it and left my boat on the beach to rot a short distance from the city. The large city walls overwhelmed me at first. I had never seen a city before much less a large one as this. I had arrived to the city of Nexus."

"At first I just wandered the streets and marveled that so many people could live together in such a small space but I soon became familiar with the layout of the city. I tried many different occupations but didn't find any that suited me. I was still in pain from my loss and after a few days when my money was gone I decided to seek solitude in the monastery. I was welcome there to rest and get something to eat and there I found a different style of living. I decided to try to get peace for my tormented soul and asked the monks if I could become one of them. They said that the life of a monk was a hard one but I could join them if I wished. The following weeks were full of exercises to cleanse my body and I had much practice in meditation. After about a month I was given my monk robe and I had become one of them. Time passed by and with it my inner peace and self-respect grew. I was also trained in the difficult art of hand-to-hand combat and soon became proficient at it. Though I was content at the monastery I also heard of the problems in the world outside and I decided to try and help with my limited knowledge as much as I could. By that time I had turned 18. At first my opponents were limited to thieves and criminals within the city-walls but after a time when I had found some friends we could travel outside the city to fight an occasional goblin spy and thereby disturbing their flow of information about the city and its defenses.

After a year I had become an experienced fighter and often went alone outside the city to fight. It was during that time I had my first meeting with Pandora, the goddess of hope."

"She came to me in a dream and explained to me how I could remedy my failure in my childhood and further help Nexus. I was overwhelmed by her presence and amazed that she would talk to me when I clearly was unworthy. I was to seek out new and inexperienced men and women who would like to fight the goblin menace and help them survive until they were fit to continue on their own. Many weeks did I spend on this and many a fighter and mage did I help until one day when I again hear the voice of the goddess. She spoke to me directly in my mind and commended

me for my work, she said that if I wished I could become one of her followers and continue to serve her. My heart was filled with joy and I immediately accepted. I was given a new robe that shone with holy light and inspired hope in those nearby. It was the happiest day of my life, at last I had found a new purpose in life in service of my mistress. One whom I would gladly die for."

"That is my story", I said. "Was there anything else you wanted to know?" I asked. "Yes it was very interesting but it is enough" said the scribe who had run out of paper. I nodded and went back to my meditation.

The scribe went slowly out from the monastery trying hard to remember the end of the story as he walked towards the library.

## **Exie**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Drow

I suppose it would make sense to start from the beginning when recounting one's history to another. But then again, I have never been one for logical sequence. I have always found it better to start where you are and not where you were. Having said that, let me tell you a short tale of a young drow named Exicenturi M'al De'senseus, better know to most as Exie--me.

I have studied within the monastery for three years now. I am quite pleased with the direction my path has turned since I initially arrived at Falcion. My life would be most different were it not for the intervention of Hope and happenstance. As it is now, I am seeking my personal balance while seeking to bring enlightenment to those around me.

But as I said, if it were not for chance my life would be quite different. I am the third, and last, born in the House of De'senseus. My mother, the Matriarch of the House, sent me to Nexus to seek out my sister, Izra, and my brother, Danton. Mother was far more concerned with the whereabouts of Izra than with the welfare of my brother and myself, as she was to be the next Matriarch in the House. I was far too young to remember Izra, as she left home when I was but 17 years old. But I recall vividly Danton. He and I were trained to be Izra's well-keepers. It was our charge to ensure that no evil befell her and to ensure that she would one day take her place at the head of the House.

Izra, according to Danton, was a free spirit and left home to seek out her own path. Mother promptly sent Danton to follow her and to keep her safe until the day she would assume the leadership for which she was destined. Meanwhile, with my siblings gone, mother focused her attention on me. perhaps it would be more accurate to say she focused her attention on my training to serve in the House as a Keeper, a guard. Years passed slowly and there was precious little word from either of my siblings. Her years overtook her and Mother fell ill--deathly ill. I was sent to find Izra myself and to bring her to our home where she would take her place as Matriarch.

As I searched Altin to find either of my siblings, their trail went cold at the City of All Races--Nexus.



I searched diligently to locate either of them. I found Danton. More precisely, I found Danton's grave marker. Upon seeking any that knew of Izra I was met by a Wizardress of great power named Starla. She assured me that she was a friend to Izra and that like Danton, she too was dead. I was tormented within at the thought of returning home with such news, for it was not uncommon for my race to kill the messenger that brought ill tidings. Instead, I stayed at Falcion and searched for the inner courage needed to fulfill my duty. A monk named Zonk happened by one day and noted my distraught appearance. He told me of balance, of inner peace, and of Kuis'arden. I was drawn to the idea and immediately sought to join the ranks of the monastery.

From my training I have gained much peace and have since returned to my House and told of the news I had found. As I had assumed I was attacked and the family sought to end my life. My mother had pronounced prior to my arrival that should there be no rightful heir to the head of the House, then all of the House were to be destroyed. I barely escaped with my life and returned to Nexus to resume my training alongside my new family. I live by the tenets of Pandora, though I have not been marked by my Mistress. It is my desire that my actions will draw her attention to me rather than a personal plea to her emissary. I will seek my balance and peace and Hope to someday know the real equilibrium of Kuis'arden.

## **Fao**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Human

Miua Astis founded the village where Fao grew up. He was a common villager whose village was destroyed and was forced to retreat into the wilderness for shelter. In the many years that went by in the wilderness Miua found that nature was a caring and supportive nurturer who took care of its inhabitants. He grew fond of being with animals and rejoicing with them for the love of life. He wrote many of his learnings down. As time would go by travelers would wonder by every so often. Miua would feed them and teach them his learnings if they were interested and some found them very interesting and wanted to know this life and be one and feel the love nature had to offer them. They were not very religious except for their love of Nature. As more time went by more people came and more people stayed. Which was about when Fao came along. Miua and one of his Brothers of Nature were in the woods looking for materials when they heard something. Something they had not heard in a long time. As they investigated they found a baby boy. He was wrapped in a giant leaf and laying on a flat stone in the middle of an opening in the forest. They knew nothing of leaf and its origin for none of them had never seen a leaf of that type. They also wondered what type of parent would just leave a child in the forest alone like this, for it could have been eaten or attacked by something. They looked around for a woman or parent of some sort for the child. No one was around. They thought it would be best to take the child back to the village and cloth and feed him. They knew something must be special with the young one. They named him Fao Astis. Fao meaning special one in their native tongue and Astis after the founder of their beloved leader. They loved the child as if he were their own. They saw him as a gift to them for there love and respect to nature.

Time went on and Fao grew up. About the time Fao was six they had the village mostly constructed and all the villagers were healthy. Nature had just treated them very well and gave them everything they needed. Fao learned a lot about how everything worked everyday. He had to meditate and pray to nature with Miua and the rest of the villagers everyday. He felt like something was missing though. He saw how well nature treated them and how much it loved them and how it worked, or so he thought. He had ideas that he could not talk about cause he would be considered a threat. He had thoughts of there being greater forces. Things that were stronger and more knowledgeable than Nature. Nature would be like a by-product of these other powers. He felt like something had to make Nature and had to make life and all other aspects of their lives. He was right, but there was nothing he could do. He saw things to happen in the future and saw that if the villagers didn't do something that they all could be in for hard times. He was too afraid to say anything though. So he ignored them and went on as everyone else did.

Years passed and the coldest winter hit that none of them could have ever expected. Fao was scared and remember all that he had thought about in the past. He wondered if it was time to tell them what he thought. Would they listen to him or just shun him and maybe outcast him for being a heretic or something. Fao knew they would never judge him that hard. They would discard his thoughts and tell him he is just young and when he grows up he will see what they do and all its importance. He also knew they were wrong, something inside of him assured him of that. He went to tell the villagers and Miua as they were meeting to discuss how to work the harvesting this winter and keep wood for fire and warmth and everything. Miua was going over how it would work and Fao stood up and tried to get permission to speak. Miua did not look interested in hearing what he had to say at the time cause he was frustrated about the weather and felt that nature was letting them down and that some of them might not make it through the winter. Fao had a sudden burst of courage and had to tell everyone. Fao stood up and demanded attention. Miua was shocked and demanded that Fao speak and say why he is being so disobedient. Fao told the villagers and Miua of his thoughts and that they were wrong and nature is not the biggest and most powerful being. Miua and the villagers were outraged at his thoughts. Fa'so worst feared almost seemed to be coming true. In his fear of being unloved and unwanted and outcast he ran to his place of rest and hid and cried until Miua finished the meeting and apologized for Fao and he came to Fao's room and tried to talk to him. Miua walked into the room and saw Fao crawled into the corner scared that Miua was going hurt him or something. Miua said to Fao, "why are you afraid. Have I ever hurt you? Have I ever not given you the full opportunity to explain yourself? I am sorry for how I acted and for how the villagers acted but your words were strong and not something to be joked with."

Fao Looked up at Miua and wiped tears from his eyes, "I am sorry but I feel this way and I am not joking. I feel we are wrong and there is a greater force. Can you tell me who made the forest and the animals? Who made us? Who made me?"

Miua Sighed and wished he had a rock solid answer for Fao but just told him that Nature gives us the gifts of Life and the forests and everything around us and that it is unquestionable and unanswerable about where it came from. Fao wasn't satisfied and told Miua of his inner feelings. Miua did not like what Fao had to say for it laid false to all that he had philosophized and all that he made their beliefs on. Fao raised his arm to wipe his eyes again and his sleeve fell down showing his forearm. Miua saw a mark on his arm that he had not seen before. It looked just like

the leaf that Fao was wrapped in when he was a baby. Miua grabbed Fao's arm and asked where did that come from and Fao told him that it had appeared awhile back and he thought it would go away but it didn't and that it didn't bother him so he didn't want to tell anybody. Miua was puzzled. Miua started to wonder how special Fao was. He started to think back about how Fao came along and how smart and how well behaved and just how special Fao has been. Fao was scared when he saw how concerned Miua was. Fao asked Miua if he was ok and what is wrong. Miua looked at Fao and decided to tell him the story of where he came from and how they knew nothing about him. Fao wondered if maybe there was something inside of him telling him these truths. He thought he might be part of the truths, but he knew if he was something that special he would know more and understand more. He still felt like he had something he is meant to do and something that he needs to do. He wanted to know this very bad and it ate at him. Miua said, "maybe you know something we don't or maybe this is all a big accident. What ever it is we will move with caution and make decisions carefully. The times ahead are hard and will be very difficult."

Fao agreed and Miua went to tell the villagers. Miua met with all the villagers again and told them about what is going on. Many of the villagers were angered and upset. They thought of how much time they had spent there peacefully and in tune with nature and now you are saying it is wrong. They were very confused and many of them not angered but just lost. Everything they knew they gave up once for this and now they are going to have to do it again. Enough Villagers were angered or lost enough to leave and try to survive the winter looking for new settlement. The others stayed not knowing whether they will stay when the weather gets better or not. Fao and Miua were growing closer together and despite all that was going on felt everything would be ok.

Then one day out of the dead cold came an army of angry green creatures that attacked and killed most of the villagers that stayed behind and did not leave. Fao was not allowed to go out he stayed in a stronghold to stay safe. Many Villagers retreated into the stronghold for safety too. They were stuck inside for quite awhile. It seemed like the green men would never leave. Finally it seemed as if they had moved on. There were many dead villagers all over the place. Fao was shocked and felt an uneasy sense he hadn't felt before. He saw friends and fellow brothers of nature who he loved as much as fathers, brothers, uncles, and best friends just laying dead all over the place. Despite this hard tragic event Fao felt that hate would not solve it and he helped clean the place and give proper ceremonies to all the departed. While cleaning however he found whom he would consider the most important person in his life, Miua, lying on the ground. He played dead even though a goblin had removed a leg of his to eat. Fao had never felt so angry before in his life but knew that hate and anger would not fix what is wrong. Fao assisted Miua and tried to aid him and heal his wounds but they were just too great. Miua said in his last breaths to Fao, "The creatures that killed our brethren and myself were evil and possessed. They deserve death. However when many animals and other creatures of nature attack, it is because of instinct and they may feel threatened. They should not be killed unless it is for self-survival. Then you must use the entire creature you can to the best of its use and give it proper ceremonies and thank the creature for its sacrifice and aid. It is the honorable thing to do." Fao agreed to do this and when Miua faded away Fao gave him his respects and the village had a special ceremony for him. The village elders of their current situation told Fao on supplies and how the winter has made it next to impossible to get the supplies needed. Fao then volunteers to travel to find supplies and help. The villagers assumed since he is so young and in the best health out all the villagers that had been through such a tragedy that Fao was the best candidate to go. The villagers and Fao

gathered some supplies and rations for his journey and he said his good byes and went to the grave of Miua and told him of what he is doing and that he will revenge his death someday. Fao started then on his journey.

Fao walked through the forest for many days and saw many things he had never seen before. Anytime he came across something that seemed to be threatening to him he ran and would rather find help then die. Fao was rather untrained in fighting and self-defense. Fao being about twelve at the time noticed the animals and how they interacted and how they seem to stalk and fight for there food. After traveling for about two weeks time Fao ran out of supplies. He watched the animals more and more and wondered how they learned to hunt so well. Hunger started to set in and he was getting weaker and could not journey as far in a day as he used to, due to lack of rations. Every time he rested he saw the animals and how they hunted. Fao started to think of Miua and how said not to attack animals and other creatures of nature for they go on instinct and fear of dying to survive. Well Fao was hungry and has fear of dying so he decided to use animal instincts to survive. He waited patiently in a tree like a jaguar and waited for a deer or something wonder by. As he waiting for a while he finally saw a rather large reptile start to move its way slowly across the path. Fao was scared of it cause he had never seen such a creature and did not know what it was capable of, but he was hungry and was going to go on instinct to survive and to survive you must eat. So Fao pounced out of the tree landing on the Reptile's back and strikes at the top of the head of the reptile rendering it unconscious. Fao did not feel very good about it but he knew it would fill his stomach and ease his pain and rejuvenate his energies. Fao used rocks to sharpen sticks to hold the Retile over a fire to cook it. It was the first thing Fao had ever killed and the first time he had tried to cook something. The hide of the retile was very tough and took along time to start to cook and when it was done Fao was able to rip a piece off and start to consume the creature. It tasted rancid and smelt the same but it was food all the same. Fao took what little left he had and striped from the bones and placed it in his sack. He took the teeth form the creature and the bones and made utensils out of them. Fao started back on his journey.

While walking further his stomach started to bother him and his head started to feel funny. He wondered if maybe the creature had been poisonous and he got afraid and started to look around for some different plants that Miua had shown him that can cure poisons but he could not find any. He tried to relax and keep faith and moved forward on his journey but he had lost his direction and his thoughts became clouded and he could not think or see straight. Fao feel to the ground and passed out.

Fao came too awoke under a large tree and when he moved forward he saw an opening in the trees and went towards it he looked in the sky and saw huge reptiles flying overhead, now he knows them as Dragons. He was very afraid and started to run for shelter in a cave or someplace. He ran for what seem to be forever. He dodged small trees and rocks on the floor of the forest and saw all different types of animals just staring at him as he ran by them in a flash. He finally stopped at a large tree and tried to catch his breath. He stayed for a moment and then he heard something like flapping large leather sheets in the air. Fao turned to look behind the tree to see if anything was there and then he felt the ground rumble. He was very afraid and decided to run away. When he turned around and took off running. He ran into what seemed to be a large tree, he fell to the ground and when he looked up to see what he hit he saw a large White Dragon. Then he fainted and when he awoke he was at the gate to Falcion. Inside Falcion he has found much of

what he has believed to see when he was a young child. He has also found more about the Gods he had thought of and has found a strong connection to the God called Aalynor, for he is the creator and giver of life and is the symbol of good.

## **Goove**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Dark Elf

Born in the small dark-elf village of Alluvia to a poor carpenter, Goove didn't have much to look forward to, just a life of struggles; struggling to earn money, struggling to earn respect, struggling to live a life of his own. Only knowing one trade, he took a job as an apprentice under his father. If anyone has ever tried building something, they know what happens when something goes wrong.  
@#%@\$!!! \$#@%#!!! @#\$@#\$!!!

On a bright, spring day, the town elder was in need of patchwork on his roof. Goove's father, Hubro, swamped already and in need of a rest sends Goove to work on the elder's roof. While working on the oaken roof, he smashes his thumb. "Mother @#\$@!!! Stupid @#\$#@%!!! God @#\$%@!!!" Needless to say, this brought some attention. One of the onlookers of this vulgar tantrum happened to be the elder's adolescent daughter. "What do you think you're doing up there," she yelled at him. "You're disgracing this home! Come down here at once!" Goove, realizing he just might be in trouble, decides to do as she says. She beckons for Goove to follow her into the elder's home. Upon coming into the house, Goove notices some strange things. First of all, there was no sign of the elder's daughter; second, there was no elder. Upon further investigation, he noticed a candle's flame burning from within an adjacent room. As he drudges on, he notices the smell of fruit emanating from the room. As he opens the door, he witnesses the most beautiful sight that any dark-elf has ever seen. This young, beautiful female has disrobed to total nudity. Knowing that this spells trouble for anyone, Goove tries to escape. However, this young lady's spell apparently knew no bounds. Goove can not leave and is talked into the lady's bed. Goove inbal vith xuil LIL jalil.

After a while, the elder's daughter became seen less and less outside her home. Goove wondered what had happened to this beautiful creature he had been with. One couldn't help but hear the rumors around town that she had been killed, and that she had been kidnapped, and that the elder had been abusing her. Goove could take no more and went to the elder's home. He was met with silence when entreating entrance. He took his liberty and went into the house. Upon entering he hears screaming coming from the young beauty's bedroom. He peeks in the door and sees the elder screaming mercilessly at his daughter. The main gist of his rantings were something like, "Who is it?! Who did this?! He will die!" It didn't take Goove long to find out what was going on here. The elder said, "The carpenter's son? What do you mean? Not Goove! Cinalus, get in here!" From the shadows, another dark-elf came into view. He said in his quiet, raspy voice, "Yes sir? What is your bidding?"

"Search out the one they call Goove. He is the son of the town carpenter and he has stolen my

daughter's maidenhood. He must pay for this. Go! Now! Goove must not live!"

Upon hearing this Goove burst into the room, knocked out the elder, and said, "I love you, young maiden. We shall be together someday." He turns to say something to the assassin, but he is no longer there. "My dear, I must take my leave. But, I shall return someday to take you as my wife."

"I will wait for you Goove. I love you."

As Goove retreats from the house, he feels a tremendous heat from behind him. He turns around to view the elder's house consumed by flames. Goove breaks down into tears as he sees his hopes and dreams going up into flames with the house. As he peers towards the house, he sees the elder's assassin Cinalus emerging from the flames. The two stare at each other for what seems like an eternity. Finally breaking the stillness was a simple gesture, the finger across the throat. Goove knew now that he was a marked man.

Driven mad by the death of his love, Goove wanders the land finally ending up working at a warehouse in Rymek. He was a hard worker, but he could never be happy in his life until he felt some closure on the subject of losing his love. It was a day just like any other when Goove heard some voices outside the warehouse. He walked outside to investigate. It was then that he saw the same dark-elf assassin that ruined his life. Cinalus and his horde charged Goove and before he knew it he was laying on his back staring up at Cinalus. The group was laughing as Cinalus playfully threw knives around Goove's throat. Cinalus in his same raspy voice said, "Well, enough fun for now. It's time to finish this weak pathetic fool." Just as he raised the knife above his head, he was met with a hand on his wrist.

This wiry dark-elf says to Cinalus, "What seems to be your problem? Looks like you have a bit of an advantage over this young man. Why don't you just leave him alone?"

Cinalus says, "And just who might you be Mr. Monk?"

"My name is Kalindro. And I suggest you leave now."

"Over my dead body. Why don't you make me leave?"

Cinalus jerks free from Kalindro's grasp and tries to shove Kalindro, but is met with a right hook to the face. Seeing this, the rest of Cinalus' group takes off, but not Cinalus. "I dare you to try that one more time," says Cinalus to Kalindro. Kalindro responds, "I suggest you leave sir." Cinalus again attacks Kalindro only this time with one of his knives. Kalindro meets the charge with a sidestep and a flip. Overcome by his own surprising strength, Kalindro brings an elbow down to Cinalus' chest, but accidentally hits his throat, crushing his voice box.

Kalindro says to Goove, "Come young man. We must leave before we are in trouble." Goove, still a little groggy, follows this man who has saved his life. Goove follows Kalindro into the monastery in Nexus. Here Kalindro says to Goove, "Are you okay, young man? You seemed to have taken quite a beating." Goove says, "That was an assassin that was sent to kill me, for having relations with the daughter of the elder of my hometown. His name is Cinalus. He burned the elder's house as I fled, killing the love of my life. And now, I will not rest until he is burning in Kyorl's furnace."

"Goove, you must not hold a grudge. Please allow me to teach you in the ways of my guild. Your anger inside will subside, and you will learn to forgive. Here in this monastery, you shall study and soon, you will be unable to retain anger for anyone."

Goove, very grateful to the creature who had just saved his life, said, "Yes sir, I shall. You are my savior and the gods have bestowed a second chance upon me and I shall use my life to help others who have not had the chance to turn their life around. Thank you, my mentor and savior. I shall follow you and the ways of your guild."

And thus, the days of Goove's new life had begun. He now roams the realms, looking to help anyone in need of help, even at the expense of his own health. Goove keeps all kinds of devices that can help anyone in need and is always ready with a resist spell and a smile.

## **Guld**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Half Giant

"Greetings", a scribe said. "I have been following you around the town lately, hoping to find you available for a conversation. It has been quite interesting to see some of your adventures, even only a few. You know, you remind me of someone...at least I can guess who. I was the one to document his story as well. Tell me about yourself....why are you here?"

"I keep no secret of who I am and where I come from. Anyone who cares to ask me will get an answer. I spent my young years in training school, with three of my friends. It was a private school, led by a mage, who wished to teach his way of life and war to those able to understand it. I am not sure why he chose us, monks, perhaps of what he saw in his own stepson Muaddib, who was his first student. Ryn and Arshes were other two, and I came to school last, and now I am the only one left.

Training was tough. Any sort of training...wishing to better oneself and grow wiser and stronger is a path not everyone can take. We had it even harder. Constant magical training...I failed at that, it seems, as I am about as bad a spellcaster as I can be, my master would not have liked it, constant physical training, running in the mountains and forests, growing endure. It seems the physical training was sort of a way to wash out those who he felt would not be able to complete his school. Those who made it were marked with the school tattoo...from that day on there was no turning back, they had their destiny pre-laid for them. I did not mind much, I accepted it, and have worn it

proudly ever since.

Then came lessons in tactics. Master has been a known leader among citizens, and over the time has compiled a rather extensive collection of strategy guidelines. We were forced to memorize it, and simulate our own little wars to sharpen skills. Even if on paper, they were quite challenging. My master believed in open-field battling, and therefore I was not taught the art of stealthy wars. I have learned that skill at the monestary in Nexus...quite interesting art, I must add. I am not quite good at it, but I get by.

Four of us that were left after masters death have left the school. It is now nothing but a ruin deep in the forest, hidden away from others by the vines we have camouflaged it with. We went through the library and equipment, picking out those items we would need. I chose only one thing, this notebook. I felt that none of textbooks were needed for me anymore, but rather I wanted some real life experiences with knowledge I know. So I took this book...it is like a diary, describing what went on where, when, and how it went. It also has information on common places in Nexus, and a little portion of it is dedicated to description of some of the most vicious creatures in the Realm.

The fate of the other three brothers is not known to me clearly, but I know that they are all gone now. One died heartbroken and disillusioned, he lost his true way...others have never made it off the island of Falcion. Sad, but not surprising. I have found real life to be quite different...and much harder than what we have learned in school. But I found my way...even though people tend to disagree with me. Just recently I had quite a conversation with Anterio and Sulak...they did not share my views. But nevertheless, I keep on following my way, knowing that at the end enlightenment awaits me.

As for why am I here...I'm here to protect the good name of my master, and continue his work. Good men are hard to find nowadays, and hopefully one day I will be recognised as one, and start training my own apprentices as well. Hardship builds strength, and that is a good way."

## **Kendrick**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Dark Elf

As a young child Ishnick was very rambunctious. His parents would just leave him by himself to go consult with the other elves. During this time period Ishnick would either meditate or practice fighting skills that he had seen in an earlier time period. His parents disapproved with fighting, but how else was he supposed to defend himself from the goblins passing by? Many times goblins would ride on wolves and steal his gold, until one day when the goblins stole his gold they threatened his entire races life.



Ishnick knew that he would have to learn to defend himself so he traveled to Nexus. Upon arriving at Nexus Ishnick saw a man of mystery fighting little goblin spies that kept trying to sneak in. This man was quite strong and of great size. The spies stood no chance and as soon as the spies were dead the robed man set out at walking pace with his arms folded inside the sleeves of his robes.

Even at the unknown warriors walking pace Ishnick had to run just to keep up. The warrior then entered a Monastery and Ishnick followed silently. The warrior turned around peered into the shadows and a rumbling voice echoed throughout the room "I knew you were following me and I was wondering, is there any particular reason?" Ishnick hearing this stumbled out of the shadows looking scared and asked in a squeaky voice "I was just wondering what art you studied and if I could possibly learn it also?"

Then the warrior explained his name, which was Arwyn, and the art of being a monk. Ishnick drawn into the entire idea of being part of the Monastery. Arwyn then taught him the ways of the monk and Ishnick changed his name for the guild. He would now be known as Kendrick the Monk of Nexus.

Kendrick walked home one night after a meditation and found his home burnt to the ground. He felt rage circulate his blood stream and as soon as he arrived he left at a galloping pace. He ran to Arwyn and Arwyn then noticing his rage explained to him the ways of the goblins and then sent him to Falcion Island to help harness his rage and learn what the Monastery stands for.

## **Khurl**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Troll

A small human boy, no more than ten years old, walks up to a strange looking man with forest green skin. The man has a single, sharpened horn protruding from a head of glistening silver hair. The boy looks at the man strangely, and asks, "Where is your home?" The man looks back at the boy, holding back a scowl and forcing a smile.

"Is it of your concern, boy?"

The boy looks into the ground contritely. "I . . . was only curious . . ."

The man sighs lightly. "I grew up in Dra'kanal."

A confused look forms on the boy's face as he ponders the response for a moment. "Where's that?"

The man replies, "It is far from here, child."

The boy's confused look does not go away as he asks, somewhat meekly,

"Then why are you so far from home?"

A weary sigh falls upon the man's face. "I was kicked out."

The child's eyes open wide, showing an air of disbelief. "Kicked out of your home? My mommy says that if I'm really, really bad then she'll kick me out of my home. Were you bad?"

The man lets forth a deep, rumbling chuckle and the first semblance of a smile touches his face. "Some people think I was."

The child nods, seemingly in understanding. "Do you think you were bad?"

The man ceases his chuckling, and responds in a somber tone, "I don't know."

Another confused look forms on the child's face as his eyebrows furrow in thought. "What did you do that was bad?"

Continuing the somber tone, the man replies, "I had a disagreement with my family."

Frowning, the boy asks, "A fight with your family? That's bad. What did you fight about?"

The man sighs lightly as he speaks. "My family wanted to slay a city of ice faeries."

"Faeries?" The boy furrows his eyebrows. "What're they?"

A trace of a smile comes off the man's lips. "Have you seen a sprite?"

The boy's eyes light up in delight. "Sprites? They're so cute and fun!"

The smile on the man's face widens slightly. "Faeries are much like sprites. These ice faeries are pale blue, and live in the mountains."

The boy's face nods vigorously, then frowns suddenly. "Did your family attack them?"

"No, they did not."

The boy smiles as he says, "Oh, that's good. How did you stop them?"

The man hesitates.

The boy frowns and begins to look toward the ground. "If you don't wanna tell . . ."

The man cuts him off. "If you wish to know, I will tell you, child."

The boy nodded.

"I killed my family."

An audible gasp comes from the boy's mouth as he stares at the man in shock. "You . . . killed . . .?"

The man nods.

"To stop them from killing the faeries?"

The man shakes his head.

The boy frowns. "Then why?"

"Rage."

The boy's frown becomes deeper. "You killed them just because you were mad?"

The man nods. "A troll's blood burns as hot as coal. And every moment of my life is spent taming it."

The boy looks carefully at the man. "You're a troll?"

The man nods. "Aye."

The boy's eyes focus on the man's head. "Why are you missing a horn?"

The man touches his one, sharpened horn. "The horn I cut off is for my exile. The horn that I have left represents my hope that one day, I can return to my home."

The boy smiles. "I hope you return one day too."

The troll's face goes into a deep hearty smile for a precious moment before fading away. He looks up and peers at the horizon, where the twin suns are falling from the sky. He turns his head back at the boy, his long, silver hair swinging into his face. "It's getting late, child. Perhaps you should head home."

The boy nods, and walks down Market Street as the troll's jet-black eyes gaze at the boy's back. As the boy fades from view, the troll walks to the Temple of Pandora and resumes his meditation.

## **Killian**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Unknown

OK, a little story of my life as it has been.

Now let's start where all histories start...with a beginning.

I was born on Aalur, the sixteenth of the month of the Phoenix. When I was just born I was left to a

monastery at the side of a big mountain. So I never got to know my mother and my father. When I was 2 years old the headman of the monks in that monastery started to train me to become a monk.

We had long lessons about the history of the realms, the Gods, The war. We trained unarmed combat. My master said that combat is the last way out of everything, And if there is a way to get out without to fight, take it.

When I was 18 years my master sent me out with a message to another monastery. It took me about 3 weeks to deliver it and to get back. When I got back the whole monastery was burnt down! All of my brothers was dead, except my master. He had sustained bad wounds and didn't have much time left. He told me that they had been attacked buy a pack of Goblins. I was of course furious, but my master calmed me down and told me that I was on my own now.

He said that I was a good student and that he was pleased with me, but my training was far from completed.

Then he died ...

I buried all my fellow monks and packed a bag with food and a clean robe and set of to continue my training at some other place.

I walked around in the world for 7 months or more, until I came to a monastery with a very old master. He found me when he was out on one of his daily walk and took me to the monastery and gave me food and a place to sleep. This place was not so big and there were only me, my master and 2 other monks in it.

Here I continued my training and learned much of the life of other animals and living things. And how to respect them and not attack them, if not in self-defense. I stayed here for 20 years training and studying. Then one day the master came in to my room and said that I had learned all I could learn from him and told me that it was time for me to go out in the world and use my gained skills.

So I packed my bag again and went out in the world.

I walked around for a week and came to some water. I bought a small boat and started to row. When I had been rowing for a while a thick mist came over me, and I was lost on the sea. After a while a bumped in to some big rocks at a shore. I jumped out of my boat and looked around.

I saw some walls or what it was a bit in on the island. I went towards the walls and came to a gate. Unfortunately it was closed. I knocked on the gate and a guardsmen came and opened it.

-Hello, I said. Can you tell me where I am?

- You have come to a city called Falcion. If you would like to stay here and train up you skills you are welcome. But if you ever break the rules of this place, you will be killed.

- What rules I asked.

The guardsman gave me a book and said:

- Read this book before you decide if you want to stay here or go on.

- OK, I said and took the book.

I read the book and decided to stay, at least for a while.

And that's where I am now ... a while is not to end yet, and won't be for a long time.

## **Kolran**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Orc

Ok, I got a request from a scribe to write down my history. But since I am only 14 years old, I don't have that much to write about, but here it comes:

I have no memories of my mother, nor father. I was raised by monks in a monastery pretty far from Nexus. I was told by the head of the monastery that I was found out in the woods by some roaming monks. When they first told me that I felt anger against my mother and father for abandoning me, but the monk's taught me that anger only leads to more anger. So, in my heart, I forgave my parents. The years moved on, and the monks taught me how life for a monk is, and I felt that this was my place in the world. Late one winter, when I was 12 year's old, a disaster struck our monastery, after a monk had gone completely mad. He took a torch and threw it into our master's bedroom, burning the poor man alive. After that, we all wanted that man dead. But one man, an old monk and an old friend of our dead master reminded us that revenge is not the way of monks. Forgiveness comes before revenge, he said.

So life slowly moved on, with the old man as a new master of the monastery.

When I reached the age of 13 my master wanted me to go out and see the world and to show people the way of monks. But before he could let me out in the crazy world, he taught me how to defend myself. I learned how to fight with my bare hands. And late one summer, early in the morning my master came to me, saying it was time for me to leave. So I took my old bag, hugged my master and walked off in the cold.

I walked through the country, passing several villages, where I was warmly welcomed and I felt that this was a country I would like to live in. And one day, when snow was falling on me, I came to a big gate. I saw a guardsman up on the wall and asked him what city this was.

- Nexus, the guard replied.
- Oh, I said. May I enter this town?
- Of course the guard said.

I entered the city and saw a monk and asked after the way to the monastery. The monk motioned for me to follow him and so I did. I entered the monastery, and saw a half giant monk standing there. I asked what his name was.

- Kroch , he said.
- I am Kolran, a newly arrived monk.
- Hello, the half giant said.
- I would like to join the monks guild here in Nexus, I said.
- I can not accept you just yet, Kolran. First you must train at our training island called Falcion.
- Oh, and how can I find to this Falcion, I asked.
- I'll show you, he said.

I started to follow him, and we walked of. We walked on a well walked path, more like a road, until we came to a bridge. Kroch pointed at a cave and said:

- Watch out here. At least at the night. Evil things come here during night.
- Ok, I said

We continued walking until we came to a village.

- This is Rymek, Said Kroch

We walked until we came to a sloop.

- Board this and start your training.
- Ok, I said and boarded the sloop.

And that is how I ended up here. And I ain't done, not yet.

Kolran Ko'wol

## **Koovoon**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Human

Koovoon grew up in an average-sized cottage in the Crystal Mountains north of Nexus. He was born a midget, just like his parents. Without any civilization close to the cottage, there was no one to criticize the family for their size, enabling Koovoon to grow up in a peaceful environment. His parents, Margaret and Vincent Sabi, were both clerics, learning their powers from books they acquired on their journeys, and worshiped the Mistress Pandora. They planned to teach their child

the ways of a cleric, but decided that Koovoon should choose his own profession. He ventured out into the mountains and often spent whole nights outside. At the age of 10, his parents started to notice a pact between him and the animals in the mountains. He seemed to be getting in touch with his surroundings, so they introduced him to the profession of a monk. After studying the guild for 8 years, he finally decided to venture into Falcion and start his life as a monk. That's where his journey started...

## **Marcellus**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Reni

I was raised among mages, which made me unusual: I was the only person on the island who was not a mage, and that made me a novelty. Here was a reni for you: look at him, he's short, he's heavy, he has a reasonable amount of physical strength, and he can't cast magic to save his life. Suffice it to say that I was a novelty, and that I was a popular novelty.

Perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself, though. I was, and assumably still am, as I have no direct proof that my parents are dead, the eldest son of seven born to Ignacius Caecilius and his wife Maravela. Ignacius, in turn, was the son of the great arcanochemist Hypolius Caecilius of the Tholmic University, before the War of the Races. Hypolius was descended in a right line from the Second Superior Minister of the Renis Conclave of 117, the renowned lord and bureaucrat Remius Caecilius. However, we need have little traffic with Remius; our concern is primarily with the actions of Hypolius at the time of the War of the Races.

Hypolius, being an astute observer, saw the way the wind was blowing in the months before the full-blown beginning of the war. Realizing that his people, the pacifistic Renis, were more suited to scholarship than war, he feared that his race would be decimated or driven into extinction by any armed conflict between the races of the Realm. The Ba'hat Massacre, in which the Renis township of Ba'hat was ravaged by a clan of hostile ogres, resulting in the deaths of five thousands and a half of Renis, confirmed Hypolius' fears.

Gathering together his family and several colleagues from the University, Hypolius secured the use of a merchant vessel, and set sail southwards into the Sea of Tears. The very next evening, though Hypolius and his comrades never learned of it, the offices of the Department of Arcanoscience at the University were burned, and the residences of the professors and their families were also set to the torch, taking the lives of all those inside. At least nine of the finest minds in the field of Arcane Magic were lost that night, and the department was functionally shattered.

The vessel of Hypolius sailed for near fifteen-score days, before supplies began to run low, and they sought land. The land came in the form of an island, uninhabited, of about thirty thousand acres, one of the hundreds of small islands that are scattered throughout the width and breadth of the Sea of Tears. Hypolius' ship landed on this island, and the voyagers gave it the name Icaria. For the next several centuries, the Renis rebuilt their society, unconcerned with the affairs of the

mainland, and resolved not to return.

I was born on Icaria, the son, as I have said, of Ignacius, who was the son of Hypolius. I was different than anything they had seen before, a veritable freak of nature. I was, to be frank, large. This was shocking to the Renis society, as they were all about two and three-quarters to three meters tall, and built like rails. I was about two and a half meters, and was bulky, at least in comparison. I have seen, now having lived twelve winters on the mainland, that I am not really that largely built, but on an island of renis, I was massive.

However, that would not have been noticed as much if I had had even the smallest scrap of aptitude for the magic arts. I did not. Whilst my peers were quickly gaining mastery of the lesser spells of attack and defense, I was still trying to master the spell to cure poisoning, which they all had been casting practically since infancy. I carried a lantern when it was dark, which caused everyone to laugh excessively; they all used that magical light which I at the time was too inept to cast.

Let it be said in my defense that I was not stupid, by any stretch of the imagination. I was just not a mage; the only person who was not a mage among a population of thousands. It caused me near-immeasurable strife as I grew up to be the most inept student of magic that had ever been seen in my country. However, this ostracism and ridicule would not last as long as I thought, for circumstances transpired which threw me bodily from the isolated world of Icaria and across the sea.

On the third of the Month of the Icedrake, in the one thousand, one hundred and second year of the Empire, the Master Scryer of the community announced that he had felt the presence of a hostile force, far away, but moving closer. Readiness was doubled, and lookouts were posted, scanning the interminable blue expanse of sea the clock round. Six tense days passed.

On the ninth, the lookouts on the Lesser Southwestern Spur reported the sighting of several dark specks on the horizon. The lookouts estimated their position to be about three hundred leagues to the south of Icaria. Readiness was trebled, doors were locked and bolted, and citizens went about in groups of three or four.

By the fifteenth, the specks were identifiable as ships, square-rigged, and of a hull configuration unknown to anyone on Icaria. It was by now certain that these ships were inbound to the island. The Master Scryer confirmed that they represented the force he had perceived twelve days earlier.



The ships landed on the seventeenth. Their crews were heavily armed specimens of a creature I had never before seen the like of; I now suspect that they were trolls or ogres of a sort, massive and swarthy. In any case, the Scryer had not been mistaken about their intentions. The raiders shot down the diplomatic party sent to meet them, and proceeded to begin a search of the island for the rest of us. The Executive Council of Icaria chose to test the strength of these newcomers, and a regiment of the island's finest war mages were despatched to meet the raiding party. Our war party took ninety-five percent casualties; only one battle mage of the twenty returned to the Prime City, heavily wounded. He was recognized as the commander of the battle wizards, the Lord Archmage Markovis, and he cried out as he staggered bleeding into the city: "Run."

We ran. Some ran towards the enemy, hoping to overcome them with numbers, and some ran away from the enemy, as Markovis had assumably meant. I would have been one of the former, but my plans were arrested when my father Ignacius put my youngest brother, Adalus, in my arms, gave me the charge of his second son, my brother whom I called, in unorthodox fashion, Norm, and ordered me to take my the family's skiff and flee. I complied, and set sail within half an hour. Looking over my shoulder, I saw fire and lightning flying from Icaria, and a thick haze of black smoke rising over the island. I sailed onwards.

Winds were favorable, and on the eighth of the month of Prariefire, I saw dead ahead of my vessel the form of an island. A dense fog was rolling in, but I held the ship to her course. At about half past midnight, the skiff ran aground on the island, shattering itself against the rocks. I cursed myself and the fog, but thanked the Gods that my brothers and I had both survived the voyage and the wreck. It was my birthday, but it slipped my mind at the time.

You may have guessed that the island was Falcion, and that the fog which caused the wreck of my ship was the same enchanted mist which still protects the island from its enemies. I still do not know what befell my father on Icaria, or any of the rest of my people, nor is it likely that I will ever find out. That island is lost to the world now, and I suspect that my grandfather Hypolius, though he is dead, would have been appreciative of that.

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Marcellus' step spoke determination as he walked towards Trista's under the semi-darkness of an overcast sky. Threading his way through the morning crowds of Market Street, he turned off onto Pine at the first possible opportunity, his long legs covering yards at a stride and his face a mask of emotionless stone.

Stepping through the double doors of the tavern, he looked around, still moving like a man obsessed. Trelaurn could be heard in the stockroom, a gentle clinking of bottles and glasses, and a tuneless singing of nonsense words. The bar-room was empty, and quiet hung in the air, almost tangible. With one swift movement, Marcellus opened the trapdoor to the wine cellar, and stepped down inside. The clock was striking two hours past sunrise; it was the seventeenth of Dawn.

In the dimness of the altar room in the wine cellar, Marcellus finished his quick descent of the stairs, and dropped his gear at the foot of the staircase. "I need it not where I am going," he said quietly to himself, and strode purposefully into the center of the room. Standing in front of Trista's

altar, the Overturned Winecask in the middle of the cellar, he stretched his arms wide; the flames of the candles wavered, and began to flicker and dance madly.

"I have done evil," Marcellus said, his voice like the toll of a leaden bell. "I have been evil. I will be evil and defiled no more. May the grace of my lady Trista preserve me." His chi began to rise, as if in fury, radiating from his hands as if for an imminent Touch of Death, but the touch never came. The raw chi began to spread along his outstretched arms, arcing across his body like lightning. Marcellus' jaw locked, his face betraying no thought or emotion, his control holding, as the brilliance of his free-flowing life's energy lit the room with a silent explosion of whiteness.

Flung into the air, Marcellus' body was hurled across the room by an unseen force, landing in a heap behind some stacked crates and casks. Lying on the floor without motion, his pulse coming only faintly and far apart, his eyes closed, Marcellus faded into the grey shadows behind the crates. The candles flickered, guttered, and went out.

As if loaded with springs, Marcellus' eyes flicked open in the darkness, a motion which seemed oddly devoid of a snap or a pop to signify its occurrence. Gradually fading in out of the darkness, familiar shapes began to take form: bottles, winecasks, a outlined square of light in the ceiling, shining thinly and yellowly through the blackness. Turning his head, with a protesting creak from his neck, Marcellus slowly looked about the room, recollecting, placing things. Slowly, and to nobody in particular, the words came out of his mouth, dry and hoarse: "I know this place...I know this place. Trista's...I'm back at Trista's."

Looking about the altar chamber of Trista's Temple, the memories began coming back, first a slow trickle, then increasing to a cascading outpouring of thoughts, events, and people, and finally an uncertainty: "How long...and how far?" the question came, unbidden. The darkness afforded the monk no response, and the stream of ideas continued to flow unchecked, a lifetime of experience coming back to a returned traveller.

Frowning slightly, Marcellus forced his joints to move again, grinding them out of a peculiar stiffness and back into motion. Each movement grating like stone on stone, he pushed himself to a stand, swaying unsteadily with disorientation and weakness. Straining, Marcellus began to crawl up the spiraling staircase towards the outlined square of light.

Trelaurn whirled around startledly, dropping a pewter tankard with a crash, as a dust-covered, cobwebbed form veritably flopped out of the trap-door from the wine-cellar. "What's all this?" he inquired gruffly of it, moving cautiously a bit closer. Rolling the inert form over slightly, he fished around in the tattered shroud of cloth wrapped about it, and finally pulled out a small silver pocket flask. Eyes widening in surprise, Trelaurn took another look at the pile, and at the flask, the Seal of Trista shining on it above a row of small script letters...the mass of dust and cobwebs had discernible limbs, a torso, some sort of a head, even. Taking one more look at the flask and the inert body, Trelaurn cried out in utter shock as the circumstances clicked in his head: "Marc, lad! What's happened ta ye?"

"We'd thought ye were lost, laddie," explained the gruff old bartender, as the cerulean-robed clerics of the Healing Hand glided about the pallet on which Marcellus lay. "Nobody had seen hide

nor hair of ye for a month or more, and we were just about ta send fer..."

"Trelaurn," Marcellus interrupted quickly, "what's the date?"

"Why, the 30th of Torrents, 1546, to be sure, lad," the barkeep replied, puzzled.

"Only a double-score of days, then...I had thought years, decades even...but it's only scarcely months..."

"What are ye talkin' about, lad? An' why were ye down in the cellar, and all befouled with cobwebs and dust and rotted cloth, what's more, for a month and more?"

"I was meditating, Trelaurn...at least, that's what I started by doing...then I wasn't so sure, really. The rest just sort of came to me...the idea just sprung into my head, of a sudden. And then...well, it was just right, and wrong, and there was a flash, I don't know. But it seemed like so long, and yet..."

"Ah, but I've seen that mediatin' afore. The monks just kind of do their bit, and there they are, all fresh as new, and whatnot. Ye must've done a powerful lot of freshening-up in a treble fortnight, I'd say."

"It didn't feel that short, or long, for that matter...I could almost swear I was down there for Trista only knows how long, seconds or centuries, and I couldn't remember a thing, until..."

"If I hadn't seen ya but a month or so ago, me dear, I would also swear that ye had been gone hundreds of years. Just ta look at ye..."

The thought hadn't occurred to Marcellus to look at himself, ever since he had blacked out after the grueling upward climb into the tavern, ever since he had been put into the care of the Healing Hand. Now looking at himself, the change in his aspect lent all credibility to Trelaurn's comment. His fur, once a dazzling sapphire blue, was faded to a neutral white, as was the silver of his hair and beard, which had grown to a startling length. He felt lighter, frailer; indeed, almost as if a strong light would shine right through him. How had this happened, and when had the time elapsed to cause such changes?

"Well, I'll be damned, old fellow," said Marcellus in quiet amazement. "I look...and feel...hundreds of years older...but when..."

Trelaurn's voice grew a little deeper, and more matter-of-fact: the voice of the experienced old bartender giving advice. "Now, laddie, as I'm sure I've told ye before, ye monks are takin' marvelous chances, what with philosophizin' and alignin' and whatever else ye do with the universe and all. Now, from what I gather from ye, ye've been doin' some powerful heavy thinkin', an' then ye had an accident of sorts. An', even if an old humble barkeep like me don't understand much o' these things, there ain't but only so much time in the present, an' mistakes with th' universe ain't no trifling matter."

"And so," Marcellus started in, picking up the thread, "I must have had something happen down in

that cellar, but I'll be dipped in molasses if I know what it was. Something happened to wear me out like this, while the rest of you spent a month or two wondering where I was, but the Divine Brothers themselves probably only know what exactly it was that happened, and I doubt if they'd be forthcoming. Not very good, perhaps, and maybe full of holes, but the explanation fits...not knowing exactly what happened, it's the best I'm likely to get."

"I'd always said ye were a smart lad, Marc me dear," said the old barkeep with a grin, "and that if there were anythin' ta be figured, ye'd figure it somehow. Ye spin me poor old head, laddie, but ye make sense doin' it, or at least close enough for me. Now, the thing which strikes me as bein' important now is what ye were doin', wherever ye were, or how ye call it."

Marcellus took a deep breath, and said to his old friend, "I think I've done it, old chap, I really think I have. This old head of mine is clear now, clearer than I ever thought it could be, and I feel...well, lighter of heart, than I did."

"How do ye mean, me lad...ye were always a jolly chap, afore ye left...or whatever ye've done."

"Except I was a killer...I had the blood of thousands on my hands and on my soul. I killed them, Trelaurn, I killed them for my own ambition and avarice."

"Now, not so harshly with yerself. Ye done what ye had to do."

"No, I did what I wanted, to try to live up to the standards I let others set for me. I was a guilty one, no doubt. But it's all made up, now, old chap, I'm cleansed of those crimes. But I've paid for it...paid for it dearly. Look at me...look at what I was, and look at who I am now."

"Aye, lad, ye're lackin' a bit of the fortitude ye had afore, I must say. But, it were always the inside that mattered in the countin', an' yer inside is a fair sight better than it were, I can tell."

"Thank you, old friend," Marcellus said, with a bit of a smile. "I needed to hear that, after all I've given up, that it was worth it after all."

"I'm yer barkeep. That's my job, lad," said the old bartender gruffly as he started for the door of the Hand. "Ye get well, now, ye hear?"

With a smile for his old friend, Marcellus watched Trelaurn trudge out the door and back towards Trista's. Closing his eyes, he slept for the first time in months.

The sun shone warmly down on Nexus as Marcellus prepared to leave the custody of the Healing Hand; the cerulean-robed priests had finally determined to let him go on his way, after healing him back from the very edge of death. Marcellus' appearance was greatly improved from the day he had been admitted, but he yet retained the aspect and physique of a reni of several centuries age, which was decidedly odd, considering that the change took mere months to elapse. Leaning on a mahogany walking-stick, he motioned away the priests and started off, heading back to Trista's.

# **Martax**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Half Orc

Grael looked up at the seemingly endless sea of gray clouds and sighed. It had been raining for days now and there was no end of it in sight. He and his companions were cold, tired, and in a foul mood. Traveling in these mountains was risky at the best of times, under the current conditions it was nearly suicidal. But, winter was fast approaching, and the travelers had far to go yet.

"Perhaps some entertainment tonight would help the men." , he whispered to himself. They always enjoyed his "Life Songs", maybe he should sing one this evening. He was reluctant though, the magic always left him drained and weary, it was a very strong spell.

Looking back at his men, he sighed again, "Looks like I am in for a long night.", he mumbled.

\* \* \* \*

The magic coursing through his veins, Grael scanned the landscape hundreds of leagues from their campsite, looking for the glow of life. Quickly scanning and discarding more than he could count. Finally he found a suitable one, the light strong and unwavering, bright amidst the surrounding darkness. He gently probed the light with his mind, picking up surface thoughts, emotions and strong memory paths. Swiftly Grael explored the paths, not intruding where he met resistance. He was not here to learn everything about this person, only enough to form a general story of his life, so that he might relay it to his companions. When he was finished, he released the magic, allowing the mana to flow away from him. As his vision returned to normal, he looked around him at his men and smiled, " I have an interesting one tonight my friends." " He is a half-orc named Martax, and this is his story.

\* \* \*\*

Where he came from and who his parents might have been is a mystery that he has never found the answer to. He was found as an infant by a kind young widow woman named, Leera. Her husband and infant son were both dead, taken by the fever which had struck the summer before. To her the child was surely a gift from the gods.

Martax grew up quickly in that small cottage outside of Gevron village, and Leera taught him the value of kindness and generosity. But all the while, she kept him a secret from the villagers who already shunned her. The village folk believed her to be cursed, hated by the gods. All the proof was there; she had lost her only family to a sickness which had not struck any other family in the community. And they watched as her crops withered and died in the fields, another sign that the gods were unhappy with her, never mind that with her family dead there was not enough help for her to harvest it. So Leera kept him a secret, knowing that she would be hated and feared for raising such a monstrosity. Orcs were the enemies of her people, raiding and burning homes each year, demanding tribute in exchange for mercy.

When Martax was nine summers old things changed. A new farmer settled in a field only a short distance from Leera's holdings, and made it known to her that he would have her for a wife. She refused, and continued to do so for nearly a year. Finally the man had heard it enough, and forced his way into her cottage, his intentions obvious. He attacked Leera, and threw her to the floor. Suddenly he heard a growl of rage and turned in time to see the young boy racing across the cottage, straight at him. He had just enough time to begin laughing before the boy crashed into him with amazing strength, and they both went smashing through the back wall of the dwelling. Martax got up off of the man, and looked down. A narrow board jutted up from the man's chest, just below his ribcage, and he was not moving. Hearing sobbing coming from the house he turned and went back through the hole in the wall. " It's okay, Momma. He won't hurt you no more."

Leera buried the body that night and made Martax swear that he would never hurt another person again. " You are strong, son. And soon you will be stronger than most men, so must use care when dealing with other people, or this kind of thing will keep happening."

Three more years passed in relative peace before tragedy struck again. The orcs returned and were unhappy with the tribute given to them by the settlement. They began burning homes, and killing everyone insight. Being on the edge of the village, Leera was able to escape into the woods with Martax, but not before she was struck by a stray arrow shot. She died several hours later, leaving Martax alone in the wilderness once again.

\* \* \* \*

Martax buried his mother the next day, a single tear running down his cheek. All he could remember were his mother's dying words. " Remember son, even when you think you have lost everything, there are people who have less. Those are the ones you should help."

Martax wandered into the village later that day, carrying nothing but a loaf of bread and a carving knife that he had found next to a dead butcher. The settlement was a complete loss, buildings burnt to the ground, bodies lying where they had fallen. Looking around him, Martax made a vow to himself, " I shall never be a victim like this." Then he quickly added, " And neither shall those who I care for."

\* \* \* \*

Martax lived by himself for over a year wandering the land, avoiding contact with humans, surviving by eating the plants that Leera had shown him. But one cold winter day his life changed forever. It started with the howling. He had heard wolves many times and had learned how to avoid the roving packs in the forest, but these sounded different. Taunting, menacing. Against his better judgment he decided to check it out. Several minutes later he crested a rise, and looking below him he was stopped cold. There were six wolves below, and they were huge, much larger than any he had seen before, and in the center of them was an elderly man. The man appeared to be reaching for a travel pack that lay several yards off to his side. He was wounded, badly from what Martax could tell, but that was not what caught his attention most. Lying beside the old man were the bodies of three more wolves " Surely this old man had not defeated those beasts?" Martax knew he had to help but was not able to think of how to do it. Then he spotted a tree off to

his right, it had been hit by lightning and was split nearly in two, one half hanging over the slope directly above the biggest grouping of wolves.

Martax knew he was strong, Leera had always warned him about that, and he was much stronger now. " Time to see if I am strong enough." , he thought. He swiftly ran to the tree and, placing his back against the upright portion of it, began pushing with his feet. With an incredibly loud "crack!" the broken trunk snapped off and the immense tree careened down the slope. One of the wolves turned at the sound and managed to avoid the falling tree, two others were not so lucky. With a sickening crunch the tree landed on them, crushing them to the ground. Meanwhile, Martax had not sat idly and watched, he ran down the slope behind the falling tree and jumped onto the third wolf, brandishing his knife. The knife sunk deeply into the wolf's side before snapping off at the handle, and Martax was thrown from it's back as it yelped and jumped away. The wolves had seen enough, following the wounded leader they all ran off into the forest, disappearing quickly in the faint dusk light. Martax approached the old man carefully, watching for the wolves, should they decide to return. The old man turned his head towards Martax and he saw his face for the first time, his eyes were a milky white color. " You are blind?" , asked Martax. The old man cackled, " Well of course I am young one, and if you don't mind, could you hand me that pack over yonder?" Grabbing the pack, Martax moved to the man's side, " Here you go, " old one" . Are you alright?" The man began digging through the pack and soon produced a beautiful blue orb, shining brightly in the gloomy light. Suddenly the orb flashed brilliantly then faded to a dull gray, " Hmph, last charge." The old man tossed the orb over his shoulder then stood up and began walking off. " Well, are you coming or not?" , the man called over his shoulder. Scratching his head, Martax shrugged, then picked up the orb and quickly chased after the man.

\* \* \* \*

Grael looked around the fire at his men, all of them watching him intently. " Well, as it turns out, that old man was a monk, an ancient master who had founded his own monastery far out in the wildlands. He taught Martax many things, including a form of fighting that uses only bare hands and feet to inflict incredible damage. He taught him how to focus his inner power, his chi, and use it to produce magical effects. Though Martax's heritage makes it very difficult for him to concentrate properly. And, perhaps the most important thing he taught him, the one thing Martax carries with him to this very day, is this " Live life. Do not read about it, or hear about it. Live it. Life teaches us more than any book, or any story, but you must live it yourself." Smiling, Grael continued," A worthy lesson. His master died a few years after bringing Martax to the monastery, and Martax left shortly after that. He traveled for some time before hearing of a place in need of good warriors, willing to protect a city under siege. For him it seemed as if his entire life had led him to this moment, had prepared him for the day when he would be called to defend others. He immediately began searching for this besieged city, and eventually found it. He is there to this day, battling in defense of the innocent, helping those who have less than he does."

" And this city? What city is it, Grael?" asked one of his men. Smiling sadly Grael looked at him, "Why it is the very city we search for. The city we were sent to in search of aid. It is Nexus."

" That was a very touching story." Startled, Grael looked about in the darkness, trying to see who had spoken. Nothing. Nothing but trees and darkness. The voice spoke again, " Too bad it is the

last you will ever hear." Then a shout, " Kill them!!"

## **Muaddib**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Human

One day a group of adventurers was once again fighting goblins outside the East gates of City of Nexus. The battle was going well, several Firegiants and Warlords were already dead, when someone noticed some strange movements in the nearby bushes. Moments later, a young man, bleeding freely, crawled out of Eldane forest, trying to ask for help. One of the group's clerics used her special abilities to heal the stranger, who immediately engaged in battle against goblins with a fury never seen before. He did not use any weapons, just his bare hands, but the goblins were dropping dead one after another from his hits.

After the battle was over, the adventurers looked at the stranger, wondering who he might be. He said that his name was Muaddib and asked them where he was. He was told that he was standing by the walls of Nexus, city of all Races. After Muaddib heard the name of the city he kneeled and prayed. "Thank you, My Love, for guiding me to the right place.", he said.

The adventurers finished the battle, clearing the Processional way from goblin troops and proceeded back inside the city walls to rest and prepare for another battle. While sitting in Trista's tavern, the adventurers started talking to Muaddib, asking him about his past and where he came from. Muaddib sat back, rubbing his sore fists, and started his story:

"I lived in a desert all my life. I was a member of a small tribe that lived in the desert. We were proud warriors, fearless in battle....we were..until those monsters came. They looked almost like those I saw you fighting. Just bigger. All my people were killed in that bloody battle. We did not even get a chance to come close enough to those things to fight them. What a bunch of afraid animals they were. And my wife, my beautiful wife..."

His voice went down to whisper, tears coming down his face, as his hand was holding a small heart-shaped amulet, made of some metal, that looked like platinum. But seconds later he gained complete control over his feelings and continued:

"Only me and my brother escaped. We did not know what to do, but we had heard old people in our tribe talking about some large city located far away west of our lands, so we decided to go west. For that we had to cross the desert which we lived in, but nobody had ever done it before. We walked across the desert for days, with no food or water. We were ready to give up, but we saw a water surface far away on the horizon. That was the most beautiful sight i have ever seen. As we came closer, we realized there was no way across, because the bridge over the river was destroyed. Green-blue waters were moving so fast, we did not know if we could get across as neither of us could swim. We had to go and find some small trees, break them down with our bare hands and make something like a boat. As we tried to cross the river, our boat started filling up with water and soon turned upside down. I tried to save my brother, but he went under water so



fast, that i could not help him. I managed to drag myself out of the water and fell asleep right there, on the bank of the river.

I woke up because I heard people talking nearby. I was in a small house, in bed. As soon as I was able to walk, I continued my trip to the city to the west, which, as I found out was called Nexus. I was warned that roads were taken over by some race called goblins, who did not let anyone through without killing them. So I walked across the plains until I saw forest to the north. I started walking towards it, but I had to cross the road, and that is when I was seen by goblins. I tried running away, and managed to dive into bushes before they could kill me. Then I heard some voices, and sounds of battle. That is when I found you.

I dont know what to do. I have no place to go. I have nobody. What should I do?"

The adventurers looked at each other. "You were good at fighting, but you have to learn our ways, ways of Nexus. If you want to stay here, you have to go to Falcion, small town on the island. All our young people live and train there. Once you are qualified to leave Falcion, you will come back to Nexus to live and fight with us."

And so, next day a young man, named Muaddib, entered the gates of Falcion. As he walked the streets, he looked up and saw shadows of huge creatures, flying up high and heard the voice that said : " Welcome, Muaddib. Let Falcion be your home".

## **Oradea**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Half Elf

"Now Krenna the Monks are a strange lot, strange, and quite interesting. When you go to the monastery, ask for Oradea, one of the monks will show you the way." The Master Scribe gave Krenna a scroll, an inkwell, and a quill.

Krenna Headed off through the city, and eventually got to the monastery.

Monks walked about, some spoke, but most were quiet. "um, pardon me, could you direct me to Oradea?" This to a monk who came up to her, and smiled. The monk said "Of course. Please, follow me."

The monk lead Krenna to the garden in the monastery. A beautiful place, in and of itself, that almost took the young scribes breath away. The monk who had lead her, turned, and walked back the way he had come. Looking around, Krenna noticed two people, one sat atop a huge white boulder, with her eyes closed, and a look of peace on her face. The other, sat in-front of the boulder, with his back resting against it, with a similar expression on his face. The scribe recognized the second as Elistan, guildmaster of the monks. The scribe opened her mouth to speak, and Elistan said, without opening his eyes, or moving so much as a muscle "Yes, she is Oradea, and we have been expecting you."

Krennas mouth nearly dropped open, but the Master Scribe had warned her.

Elistan opened his eyes, and smiled. He stood up and tapped the woman on the leg. Oradea opened her eyes, and looked around curiously. She noticed the scribe standing, and smiled warmly. "Oradea? Hello, my name is Krenna, I am here to take down your history" she gestured to her scroll.

Oradea smiled again, turned to Elistan, and moved her hands in a flurry of motion. Elistan turned to the Scribe and said "Oradea says that it is nice to meet you, and she would be happy to share her past with you." Krenna looked confusedly at Elistan, then to Oradea. "She is a deaf mute. She has taught me her sign-language. That was what she was doing when she moved her hands."

"Ahhhhhh, I see. How does she know what I am saying?" Oradea pointed to her eyes, and then to Krennas lips. "Oh, you can read lips, I see. Well, shall we get started?"

"My story starts on another land, far across the ocean, and with gnomes.

When I was a baby, my parents abandoned me, for what reason, I do not know," Elistan translated for Oradea. "If not for a small band of traveling gnomes that found me, I would have died. They took me in. Some of them thought it a strange thing to take in a child, but one of the gnomes would hear none of it, and took me with her. Her name is Lillian.

"When I was about 9, and had not said a word, a few of the gnomes were convinced that I was just plain stupid. I remember one time, one of those gnomes was arguing with Lillian, and he had placed some of his plans down. I went over to look at them, and added a few things. Just some minor little additions. He was furious, but after his initial tirade, he looked at the additions I had made, and tried them out. It made the thing work, though I still do not know what it was supposed to do.

"This was when I started learning to read lips, and to write notes when I wanted to be understood. It was hard to learn so fast, but I managed. When I was about 12, I went off on my own, I know, young, but I wanted to get away, for some reason. I headed out onto the plains, with just a little bit of food and a waterskin. I had figured that I would be able to find some water, if I ran out, but those plains are quite desolate, not a desert, but close.

"When I was near exhaustion, and out of food and water for a day past, an old man found me. He approached me slowly, and spoke a language that I had never seen before. He had a small leather

shield with a pattern on it, and some feathers in his hair, I did not know what to make of him! He figured out that I could not understand him because I am deaf, and showed me where to find some water, and food. Quite easy if you know what to look for.

"He took me to his tribe. They were an interesting people. He took me in, and taught me some gestures which I picked up fast. They were used by the hunters of the tribe when they needed to be quiet. We expanded on it, and created our own language of sorts. When we could communicate he told me a story that was very interesting. It turns out that the day he found me, he was visited by a spirit, and told to go out onto the plains, for what reason, he had no idea. Fandellon, the old man, is a Spirit Warrior, and it was not unknown for a spirit to come to him for some reason or another. If he had not found me when he did, I would have walked right into a clan war that was raging just a mile away from where he found me, so either I am very lucky, or the spirits are looking out for me . . .but that is another story.

"After a few years, I was adopted into the tribe, and Fandellon trained me for years to be a Spirit Warrior. I know many things, but I am not as good as he, not by a long shot. Well, They became my people and I would have loved to stay there forever.

"One day, though, I was struck by a need, I have no other way to communicate it, a need to go somewhere. When I approached Fandellon, he seemed to know. That was when he gave me this clasp I wear in my hair. He never told me what the rune on it means, and it was one I never learned. Well, I headed off toward a coastal town, and bought passage on a ship for some work. I could climb the netting faster than the sailors could, and it got more than one hot under the collar. I found my way to Rymek on that ship, and then to the Nexus, where I am now. I have a new master," Oradea smiled at Elistan, and continued signing "friends, and a home."

Elistan smiled at Krenna and said "Well, that is her story. I hope it was not very confusing, for me talking for her that is."

"Not at all, not at all. It was an interesting experience, to say the least. I will be heading off to the library now, so I can catalog this history scroll with the other ones of the adventurers, and residents of the Nexus. Thank you both for your time."

Oradea smiled and signed again to Elistan. "She said that you are welcome, and thanks for taking her past down, even though it was a little dull."

Krenna laughed. "No not dull, quite interesting in fact. I would like to talk to you about this other land some time in the future in fact."

Oradea smiled again. Elistan said "Well, thank you for coming, can you find your way out, or would you like me to show you the way?"

"Oh, I can manage, thank you."

As Krenna turned to walk away, the two monks sat back down to meditate.

## **Sage**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Human

I was born on Tilur, the seventeenth of the month of the Twilight, in the year 1,624 since the Godswar, and year 1,207 of the Empire. My name was Gwydion Wyndorf. My mother died in birth, and I never knew her. My father, on the other hand, hated me for this. When my mother Nancy Wyndorf died it drove my father to insanity, and hatred. He raised me well enough, but when I reached the age of five or so he could no longer take care of himself. So I did. I tended to him as best I could. Try as I might, he died eventually, two days after my seventh birthday. We had always lived as hermits. In a small hut in the forrest. I myself had never ventured more than ten miles away from it. I never felt the need to do so. The forrest was comforting and home to me, but after the death of my father I grew quite lonely. I had always noticed the odd sounds in the night, some of odd birds, some of tree branches moving in no wind and once an odd humming. I never pondered much of these sounds, because they had always been there, but one day I wished to investigate. I began to walk into the forrest along my normal path. All was normal until the forrest grew quiet. It was no normal thing. It was dead silence. No wind, bird calls or even the sound of leaves falling. I looked to my left, and I thought I saw something. I looked further down, and I saw a magnificent black bird. It's feathers were jet black, and its flight was smooth and noiseless. I attempted to sneak up on it to get a better look, but it merely flew further into the forrest. After a bit more searching I found it again. Attempting to get closer failed, and it disappeared into the forrest once more. Again and again I found it, following it. Until I became quite lost. I knew the forrest well for I had lived in it all my life, but as I peered around nothing looked familiar. I attempted to back track, but as I did things seemed as if they changed. Trees and rocks seemed to be in different places than before. The forrest once again drew quiet. It was getting dark, and I grew fearful. I climbed a tree to see if I could spot a way out, but when I did I realized that I had gone quite further into the forrest than intended. I began to panic. I had never gone this far away from home in my life. I ran through the forrest looking for a way out. Then the bird appeared again. Angered and frustrated I yelled "What do you want from me?! Leading me into the forrest! Getting me lost! Are you trying to get me killed!!!!" The bird merely disappeared flying into the darkness. A voice came from the trees "Ah so you're the one I have been hearing for five years and smelling for two." It startled me much and I ran into a tree in my fear. The voice chuckled. Another voice came from the trees "I say we kill him. Look at all the branches and twigs he's snapped. He's clearly trespassing." Gathering my wits a bit more I realized running in the darkness was no use so I remained quiet. The voices began chattering to each other in some language that sounded remarkably like animals. "Kaetta did a good job in getting the poor boy lost. We should at least feed him." said the first voice. The second voice chuckled, and from the trees emerged two men, dressed in clothes of forrest colors. The first man carrying the black bird I had seen said in a calming voice "I am sorry about your father. We'll take you back to a safe place, and get you some warm food. Any ways I am Falling-Rock and this here is my friend Wolf-Friend." I was quite confused as to how these people knew of my father. "I am Gwy.." I began, but was quickly cut off. "Gwydion Wyndorf. Yes we know" stated Wolf-Friend. I merely shrugged and before long I was walking with the two through the forrest. Falling-Rock was definitely the older of the

two, and the nicer. We entered a clearing "So where are you taking me?" I asked, but there was only silence. "Well?" I asked again. I turned to look at the two, but they were gone. I stood alone in the middle of the clearing. I looked in all directions, nothing to be seen except trees, darkness and more darkness. Then as I was about to turn back to look for Falling-Rock and Wolf-Friend bird calls came from all directions within the trees. A camp fire began to burn violently from the north. Then another from the south. Then west, east until I was completely surrounded by the campfires. Amongst the light came many men, women and children dressed in forrest clothing. Amongst them I noticed Falling-Rock and Wolf-Friend. Then a very old man stepped forward, a crown of leaves and flowers resting upon his head. He turned to Falling-Rock looking quite angry. "Let me explain... He was lost in the woods, and his father just..." The old man looked up and interrupted "You brought this boy into our village? Without counsel?" Falling-Rock looked up "H-he was lost..." The old man looked quite angry now peering at the bird on Falling-Rock's shoulder. "Kaetta how dare you lead this boy to us!" The bird chirped at the man. "He followed you?! You could of easily lost him! You lead him here!" the man yelled "Kill the boy immediately. We can not reveal our village to him. He must die." I began to shake in fear as the people surrounded me. A knife held high in a man's hand. "Wait!" yelled Falling-Rock. Everyone looked at him. "He is young and trainable. We could raise him as a druid." At this the old man turned around eying me over. He began pondering. "If we are to bring him up as a druid he must hold the name of one." Everyone in the audience drew quiet. "Rise boy." So I did. "Your birth name is Gwydion Wyndorf is it not?" I nodded, to scared to speak. "Your new name is Sage-Hunter you are to live as a druid. Or you could die. What is your choice?" He eyed me. "L-live" I stuttered. "Very well. I am Redhawk the High Druid of these lands. If you are to dwell here all decisions of this village must be decided through our grand council." I nodded not knowing what to say, and was led to a tree by Falling-Rock. "Well?" I said as he pointed towards the tree. He chuckled "Oh I forgot you don't live like a druid." He kicked aside a few weeds at the base of the tree, and pointed in. "That's where you'll live from now on." I gulped. "Oh don't worry. It's nice once you get inside. I'll be in that one." He pointed to a tree. I nodded again climbing into the hole as he pushed the weed door closed. There was a candle burning, and as I looked around I noticed all the basic things needed for a cosey little house. There was a bed, and many herbs hanging from the ceiling. I blew out the candle and tried to sleep. Over the next seven years I was raised as a druid. Until I set off on my own. I reached the city of Talmat after many a month, and they directed me towards the City of all Races. From there I ventured to Falcion to begin training. I had always been taught to fight without the corruption of weapons so I trained as a monk and here I am today."

The scribe looked up "Eh. Thank you this will be posted at the library" and headed off.

## **Shaan-mina**

**Class:** Monks

**Race:** Human

Seeking to protect their newborn child from the dangers of the world, Shaan-mina's parents gave her to a monastery that only trained women. The order of flowers was a monastery in the wilderness.

When she attained the age of 18 years, she would have to accomplish a quest for the monastery to earn the title that would grant her freedom from her monastery's bonds. The title was identical for each monk as it represented its spiritual and physical training. The women had the option, when they accomplished that quest, to leave and return to the monastery at will. Free from their bonds, they would have to learn from themselves the way to enhance their skills and souls. It was Shaan-mina's will to leave that place and search the world for many of her older friends that had already left the monastery to follow their own path. Strangely, from the two dozens of monks that left in the past four years, just two had returned to pay them a visit and share the wisdom from their tales.

At the same time she feared to leave the safety of the order, she knew she would have to overcome it in order to learn new things about the life outside the walls. After days of meditation, something curious occurred... while entranced, her body went numb and she strangely lost her perception of reality...She felt asleep, a deep sleep...like those we can't say if it is really a dream or not...

She was there, at the monastery, ready to depart to go after adventures. She roamed unspeakable dark lands until she arrived in a misty land, a valley of tall grass and icy winds. She entered the valley marching through the grass for hours until she found a cliff. As she looked down, white mists swirled with fury. A hundred of yards in front of her, laid the other side of cliff, where the grass had a heavenly green color and some small fragile flowers could be seen. Curiosity filled her wishes. She had to do it; she had to pick at least one flower. As she gathered all her inner-strength, she could already feel her body as light as dust being carried by the winds. She ran as fast as she could and jumped, but she only managed to leap a distance of fifty yards...she began to fall...an endless fall to the unknown. Terror gripped her mind, a nightmare so strong, tears started to fall down her cheeks. She couldn't believe it would be the end of her life. Nothing could be seen in the mists that now engulfed her, a silent prayer came to her lips, born not of fear but from purity of soul and body. And the dream answered her prayers...She was snapped by the claws of a metallic dragon, flying upwards: a scaly giant creature, icy to the touch. It saved her life, landing safely on the side of the cliff she wanted to arrive.

Inside her mind, she heard the roaring voice of the dragon: "Begone!". Startled and confused, she decided it would be wise to obey the Dragon's will. As she was leaving, a shadow darkened her vision suddenly, another dragon flew past her high in the sky. She turned to see where it was heading and she saw the previous dragon racing directly towards the new-comer, a terrible fight started. Scales flew through the air as claws and teeth sank into the chair of both dragons. She ran for hours then, terrified, crossing some woods. Then she arrived to a walled city, many guards standing armed near the gates...she kept the image of that city on her mind...a beautiful city that sheltered many persons of many races....Nexus.

Her mind cleared and she woke with a violent shake. Shee looked around and touched the floor and her legs to make sure she wasn't in a dream anymore. Something caught her attention while

looking at the ground, she rubbed her eyes with her sleeves and her sight focused on a single flower placed there. The flower that grew around the temple, flowers of beauty, simplicity and surrounded by a mysterious glow. The same glow that many older sisters had in their left hands.

A voice from the door just behind surprised her:

“Shaan-Mina, would you join me for a walk?”

As she turned to face the voice she saw the oldest of her sisters, a kind person and apparently fragile old woman, yet precise and deadly using her fighting technique, that woman with an astonishing clarity of mind was capable to talk about the many subjects that were part of the life and experience.

“Yes sister, I would accept your invitation” as Shaan-Mina replied to her older sister, she picked the flower with her left hand and she moved to her side, beginning to walk with her into the garden of the monastery.

“Shaan-Mina you meditated for a long time...”

Ashamed, Shaan-Mina replied that while meditating, she felt asleep and had a dream.

With a giggle the old woman began to share with her the wisdom gained over the years...

“Mina, our spiritual training emphasizes the simultaneous development of mind and body as a path to understanding and enlightenment. Perfection lies in the ultimate control of control of own spirit – achieving harmony between mind and body. Meditation is a way to attune ourselves with reality and nature. Though dreams are a reality our minds are sometimes capable to understand, I would say that the dreams are the reality experienced by our very soul. Your “dream” Shaan-Mina, lasted for three full days...Three days that your soul lived in its own reality, a sign that you’ve found your chi. The chi for us is a way to control the inner-strength gathered and empowered by our souls. Our souls and bodies are capable to harmonize themselves with nature and with that is born the chi. Mina, reality is like an apple divided in two halves. One half where our mind and bodies are active and the other half where souls are also active. Chi binds the two halves together. So there is no shame in dreaming as it is part of the reality of your soul. Now you will have to make your chi stronger and learn to use it....now go, have some meal.”

As Shaan-mina understood the concepts of the explanation and left the company of her older sister, he spent another three months training extensively and meditating about the ways of the soul, nature and chi. Finally, the day came when she understood how to focus her chi and a silver brilliance appeared on her left hand. The flowers around the temple affected in some magical way the chi and the bodies of the monks at the monastery...a secret yet unsolved, but a power which the monks learned in their paths to control and use.

Shaan-Mina received her title of Silver Lotus as the quest to be completed was exactly that one, finding the chi within herself. It was the same quest for everyone...

Escorted by her elder sister, Shaan-Mina was guided to Falcion to continue her trainings by her

own. As she saw her sister going away, a piece of her heart shed to pieces but she understood that it was her fate to search for the answers to the questions that filled her thoughts. In Falcion, she made some friends and tested many times her fighting skills. She learned that the city she once saw in a dream was close to Falcion and once she had finished her trainings on the island, she would manage to see that city for real.

She joined the Monk's Guild and trained hard, soon she was allowed to leave the training island. Then the day came when she arrived at the city as in her dream...She now has Nexus for her home. Word came to her that her temple was completely destroyed by unknown forces and she now seeks to protect this glorious city from possible harms, especially by trying to persuade the opponents to leave and if the diplomatic ways are not effective she would use her fighting skills to honor to teachings of her elder sister that always tried to follow the path of peace rather than choose violence.

The philosophical doctrine taught at the monastery of the flowers valued life but valued also the order of nature. The sisters killed not only to defend themselves from eventual threats, but they also hunted down creatures of the wilderness to train their skills and use their hides, bones and eventually eat their meat. The fighting style of the order would be considered very exotic by common standards but to those that live in the jungle, they would seem inspired in the many creatures that roam these lands: Tigers, elephants and snakes. The fighting style developed by the monastery tried to copy the speed of the Tiger, the strength of the Elephant and the precision of the snakes. Though these are the physical attributes that the monks of the order of the flowers tried to master: Speed-Strength-Precision, Shaan-Mina seems far from their mastery and maybe even to reach that perfection as she seemingly has chosen different attributes to guide her in stress situations where the fighting is needed: The wits of the tiger, the stubbornness of the elephant and the cold blood of the Snake.

Yet as she always says: "Simple and kind words may be stronger than fists..."

## **Tyris**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Elf

Ever since I can remember, we had no real home, my mother and I. We always fled from the goblins, concealing ourselves in the woods whenever they were near. We roamed constantly, never staying in one area for more than a month or so. She raised me well, as well as any roaming woman could, teaching me righteousness and all other virtues that construct a good person. A most well educated woman she was, as I've yet to meet anyone that could speak Drow, Sylvan, and the common tongue. She opted to teach me the common tongue only, as it was easier to learn, so she said.

I was young when she taught me the arts that allowed her to move with unbelievable balance and grace, even for a Sylvan. It was a means of self-defence, and as I learned more and more, she



taught me things that were the heart and soul of this graceful art. I learned the mind-calming and body-tingling ability of meditating. We'd spend hours upon hours meditating and harnessing chi. Half of my times awake, I'd be in a unifying state with the universe. I scarcely ate because of my ailment, but my meditation seemed to fill my stomach.

During one of our meditation sessions, some goblin raiders attacked us and we had no choice but to fight. I rose to battle, fear in my heart. I easily eluded two raiders and struck down another. As I turned to glance at my mother, she was warding off a dozen or so of the vile creatures, easily evading their attacks, and felling them one by one. She battled so gracefully, moving so swiftly the raiders were unable to touch her. As more and more came, she seemed to move faster and faster. The raiders didn't approach me at all, they flocked to her, most of them angry that they had been struck down. They started to swarm her, but I could do nothing except stand in awe of the speed with which she moved and the knowledge of where to strike her enemies. They continued to strive to strike her, but more gracefully than the fairest seabird, she eluded them.

Our foes became too much for her, but still I stood, petrified because of the pale blue aura that enveloped her. The odd, illuminating barrier warded the enemy's blows, and their weapons and fists could not penetrate it. She commanded me to flee, to flee and not worry of her. I could not leave her, my mother, my blood. I started toward the group of goblins, but she yelled, commanded me to leave, to save my life and not worry of her. The barrier wore off and she fainted, the goblins mutilating her body. Terror filled my being, and I ran as fast as my thin legs could carry me and I sought out the woods.

I stayed in the woods for weeks, lamenting my mother's death and I wept constantly. I finally found the strength to wander, but my mind never strayed from her, never abandoning thoughts of her. I wandered for two years, evading the cursed creatures that took my mother's precious life. Finally stumbling upon the city walls of Nexus, I took refuge in the city. Rapidly I gained information about the city and I became curious of the monks guild, as it sounded very similar to my mother's teachings. I was advised to travel to Falcion if I wanted to be apprenticed. I obliged and travelled to the City of Apprentices. Entering the pavillion, I spoke with the representative of the Monastery and told him my story. He looked at me with curiosity and asked me if I'd do a session with him. I gladly accepted the invitation and after the session, he was greatly impressed and said I had the ability equal to one in their guild of the eighth tier. I agreed to join the Monastery, hoping to find some peace, and began my first days as a high ranked apprentice.

## **Zonk**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Half Giant

All times and ages used in this document are related in human terms so everyone has the same reference of time.

I (Zonk) was born into upper class society. My father was the mayor of our hometown mainly

because we were the wealthiest people around. My mother was a loving and a devoted wife. The first eight years of my life were really great. Living life in a wealthy family can really distort your opinion of life and I was no exception. I thought everyone loved me for who I was. Later on I found out it was just because of my family's money.

My parents truly loved me and overly protected me from the harsh realities of life until one fateful day when the wonderful life of eight years came crashing. A big mean greedy red dragon came and spoiled everything. It demanded a tribute every year or it would burn down the city. It gave my dad, the mayor, one month to raise the money. My dad knew we had enough money to pay this year's tribute, but also knew that eventually the money would run out and we would be burned anyway. So he decided to send runners throughout the country to solicit mercenaries to come and slay the dragon. This seemed the most cost effective solution.

Several days before the return of the dragon a tough looking group of mercenaries showed up and gave a good price to rid us of the dragon. They demanded payment up front because they said they needed to purchase equipment. Well, of course they did not spend the money on equipment. Instead they spent all their time partying and drinking. They turned very evil when drunk and went around raping the women and young girls and robbing the town of most of its wealth. When the dragon came they were too drunk to put up an effective fight and either died or ran away. The dragon was real mad about the whole situation and killed both my mother and father. It also burned down our house and destroyed all our possessions.

The town would have nothing to do with me as a poor orphan. Most of the people spat upon me and called me bad names. They did this because they suffered at the hands of the bad men that my father hired. A reasonably nice cleric said it would be better for me if I left and went to an orphanage he had heard about.

We set out in a cart and arrived there after a week's travel. A large abbot that looked at me strangely met us. He told the cleric that he would gladly take me in. Once he took me inside he locked the door and said that his word here was like the word of God and must be obeyed. He said that he has the ear of a god and if I didn't do what I was told, I would be killed. This scared me greatly. My father had warned me that gods at times might be very harsh.

The next seven years of my life were a living hell. It turns out the abbot was an evil child abuser that had a demon he could summon. This demon was the god he referred to. Being children we didn't know the difference. He would have the demon watch and make scary noises while abusing us.

One night seven years after being brought there I finally got up the nerve to escape. A boy I knew was killed by the demon because he was getting too old. I knew this fate was in store for me soon, so I just left. He said he would send the god/demon after us if we did, but I must have gotten lucky and avoided it.

After wandering aimlessly for several weeks I happened upon a monastery of kindly monks. They didn't speak much but their action spoke loudly. They took me in and thereafter began my career as a monk.

Self-reflection: Because of the way the towns people and the evil abbot treated me, I have a real phobia about close personal contact with people. I mistrust their outward emotions as covering some internal evil desire. I know this is not always the case, but irrational fear still drives me. Also because of years of fear and torment by the abbot's god/demon I truly have a phobia about gods and the speaking of their names.

## **Zorak**

**Class:** Monk

**Race:** Dwarf

Jaccobe approaches Zorak with the task of recording his history. " May I bother you to document your life?". Zorak say " Ya but I too dumb to do it good". Jaccobe says " No problem, I can get Vesper to help us". Jaccobe then proceeds to record the following history with the aid of mind probing spells from Vesper.

Zorak was born and raised in a small Dwarven village on the far northern coast. He led a normal life until the day a Goblin horde arrived. The Goblins slew all the adults in the village. Then they played a game with the children. The game entailed throwing them off a cliff into the rocky surf. The Goblin who threw the farthest was to be the winner. Zorak hit his head on a rock when he landed in the surf. This causes major brain damage and makes the next sequence of events foggy. Something or someone saved him as he was drowning. It may have been a dolphin or it may have been a mermaid. Whoever or whatever it was brought him to a small coastal village to be healed.

This village had only a minor healer. His powers could only save Zorak's life and not really heal him entirely. This caused him to be a little messed up. First his head has a permanent dent in it. Second his mental capacity is diminished, leaving him quite stupid. Third his emotional growth has been stunted. He will forever act as a juvenile. Lastly he has a huge phobia to water. He will not drink it or bathe in it, causing a hygiene problem.

The healer and the village where poor and couldn't really afford to take care of Zorak. So he was taken to Nexus and given a job in a brothel. Here he could work for his room and board. Zorak lived there for ten years. He was a hard worker and easily made friends with everyone there. There was only one small problem though, his hygiene. They made him stand out back in the alley whenever there wasn't any work to do. After spending a lot of time in the alley, Zorak picked up an unusual habit. He found a way of focusing his mind by staring into the sky. This allowed him to have an out of body sensation. While in this trance like state, Zorak would unconsciously catch flies and eat them. This weird trait lead to the next step in his life.

One day Elistan, a monk of high reputé, passed by the alley and noticed Zorak in his trance. His

catching of flies showed a high dexterity, and his trance showed potential for meditation. Elistan convinced Zorak to come with him to the monastery to try out the lifestyle of a monk. Zorak found the monks to be peaceful and kind, so decided to stay. His combat skills rapidly blossomed. His magic skills where something else though. It took many long years of hard mental work to become even a poor spell caster. The lifestyle of a monk in the monastery was simple and peaceful. Zorak would have liked to stay there forever, but couldn't because of one small problem, his hygiene. After a couple years, Zorak learned the technique of meditation. As he became more skilled in it, he started to do it more often. He would sit in the Mediation Room for hours on end and stare out the window in a trance. The monks where very tolerant of this for a long time, but his smell was so bad that the younger monks began having problems meditating. So even though he kept the room remarkably clear of flies, the head trainer suggested that Zorak make his way in the world.

So with a childish twinkle in his eye, and yesterdays dinner in his beard, Zorak went out to meet the world as a monk. So beware to all that would attack creatures he perceives as non-hostile, and beware anyone standing down wind.

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