Bards

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

Ashara

Class: Bard
Race: Human

Well, I have been outrunning a scribe for days now, and I think he is getting close to catching me, so I've decided I'll beat him to the punch. For some reason the Library of Nexus has decided they want to know what I did before I came to Nexus. So, to please them, and to give that poor, slow-running scribe a break, I will tell you, the whole, horrible truth.

Being a bard, I naturally prefer telling stories of others than about myself, especially since my past prior to Nexus is rather mundane in comparison. So consider yourselves fairly warned...

My parents, members of a the Bardic Troupe, The Marvelous Mendlers, have traveled everywhere possible around the City of All Races performing. Granted, that is not very far, so when I was accidentally conceived, it seemed natural for them to choose Nexus as the place to raise their daughter. Shortly after the Nexus Heroes freed Rymek from the clutches of the Goblin Hordes, my parents chose to retire from performing, settling in the newly restored fishing city. So there I grew up, living a rather sheltered and protected life, surrounded by fish, fishermen and endless stories of my parents' travels.

At the age of eighteen, I decided that I would use my well-practiced bardic abilities to entertain the Nexus Troops. One thing led to another, and soon I was drawn into protecting the Great City. There I met and fought alongside some of the greatest Heroes known to Nexus, such as Kalishar, Lordewok, Gifford, Renton, Tyrin, Dunsel, Ranamoth, Khadgar and of course, all those still working to protect Nexus. I have trained some of the most well-renowned bards in Nexus. I have witnessed the Births and Rebirths of the Gods Paelina, Andaras, Erisar and Dilanis and I can recall Judgements passed by Malakai and Chaos created by Novind.

Through my short life in and around Nexus, I have seen things that would horrify and amaze and I have innumerable tales to go along with each experience. However, to reveal them here would be so unfulfilling. I remain a faithful Nexusian, living with my husband, Pious and my children, Eithen and Kiara, with their grandparents nearby. So tis not far to go should you seek to hear a tale of adventure, a story of sorrow or a song of joy. And by hearing it aloud, you will be all the better....entertained.

Dragonslayer

Class: Bard
Race: Human

Recently, a Renis scribe approached me and asked if he might record my story, with particular interest in the origin of my name. It seems that since my arrival, many have wondered about how I came to be called Dragonslayer. He then told me that there are very few bards in the Nexus, and no bard has ever agreed to have their story recorded. I was honored by his request, and told him the following story of my life, explaining that this was the defining moment in my existence.

I will tell the story of my life and how I came to be known as Dragonslayer. I am new to your Nexus and hope that my skills will be of value here. All of my life, up to this point, has been spent in another city several fortnights from here. This city was known as Safehavenshire to all of it's inhabitants.

This city was guarded by a pair of white dragons, who had befriended the original inhabitants of our fair city. Yes, it is true, we lived in peaceful coexistence with a pair of dragons. They protected the city from goblins and other marauders, and we were sworn to stay away from them and their lair. Small amounts of treasure were left for them, and in return our adventurers were allowed safe passage.

My formative years were spent learning the ways of magic from my mother, Sapphire, and the skills of fighting from my father, Theseus. I spent all of my free time at our music academy, watching the performers, and learning all that they could teach me about the performing arts. Our walled city was quite safe, and the people were happy and productive. Goods made in our city were known for their beauty and lasting value. Visitors came from all over to shop in our markets and place orders with our craftsman.

My father was one of these craftsman, and had a wide ranging reputation as a maker of unrivaled armor and weapons. The adventurers of our fair city all wore some of finest armor and used the most deadly weapons ever produced, thanks to the skill of my father and the magic of my mother. Together they produced enchanted objects the likes of which had never been seen.

One morning several years ago, a warrior came to my father and attempted to commission a suit of armor made from materials he carried with him. Outside the shop, the Warrior pulled back a tarp that covered his wagon, revealing the body of a small white dragon! He wanted the scales formed into armor and a shield, and the tail made into a spear. In horror, Theseus ordered the man from the city, and had several of our adventurers accompany him to be certain that a good distance was put between the warrior and our fair city.

Several miles outside the city gates, our guardian dragons discovered the body of their offspring in the wagon. Thinking our citizens had taken part in the killing, they attacked and killed the entire party. Their mournful roars could be heard in the city, and all of the inhabitants began to arm themselves, for they knew what was coming next.

Theseus ordered me to take Sapphire and all of the women and children to a secret cave in the mountains outside the city and to remain there until we were summoned by another city dweller. Although begging to stay with the adults, I was sent away. Soon after we left the city, we heard the sounds of a pitched battle. The roars of the dragons told us that although they were obviously wounded, they were destroying our city and all of it's inhabitants.

After seeing my charges to safety, I sneaked out of the cave and made my way back to the city, not knowing that Sapphire had followed me. Arriving at what was once the east gate of the city, I gazed upon a horrific scene. The streets were littered with the dead and dying. The bodies of many citizens and one dragon were on the main street. Moving through the shadows, I made it to my fathers shop. Inside I found Theseus badly wounded, and in need of help. Summoning what magic I could, I healed him enough that he could move about.

At this point, the scribe knew that I continued this story with hatred in my heart, and sadness in my soul. To fully honor my parents, I agreed to continue.

Theseus gave me his best armor and weapons and told me to follow him out of the shop. Just then, Sapphire arrived and using all of her magic skills, cast an invisibility spell on me. Outside on the street, we came upon the other dragon, who was badly wounded. Seeing only my parents, the dragon instantly attacked them. Theseus was able to deliver a near mortal blow before he fell, mortally wounded. Sapphire was able to cast a stun spell on the dragon with her dying breath. In a rage, I was able to inflict a mortal wound on the dragon before the invisibility spell wore off.

I concluded my story by saying, The few survivors who had witnessed the death of the dragon began to call me Dragonslayer.

After bringing the women and children back to the city, the name stuck with me. I stayed in the city long enough to see the city rebuilt, but was never again happy there. Leaving on my eighteenth birthday, I wandered the countryside for many months, until I came upon the nexus.

The scribe then asked my reason for remaining in the Nexus, and wanted to know the name my parents had given me. I explained that I hope to rebuild my spirit here, and to really earn the name that I now use. My birth name no longer matters, for my parents died so that I might live. I continue to use the name Dragonslayer to more fully honor my courageous parents and the sacrifice they made that fateful day.

Fay

Class: Bard
Race: Sprite

Born and raised in the forests south of nexus and living in close proximity to a goblin-scouting base, Fay was witness to many a clash between her people and the goblins.

From the time she was old enough to understand their telling, she has always been fascinated to hear of the tales told about the heroic deeds and bravery of those that valiantly defended her home.

So persistently would she sneak from her bed at night and hide around the camp fires to hear of these tales, that her parents eventually gave up punishing her altogether.

If such a tale were in the telling then Fay would be somewhere close at hand, quiet as a mouse but wide eyed with wonder.

She quickly knew all the tales of the legendary deeds of the village hero Atziluth and swore she would one day be just like him and fight against the hordes for the glory and protection of her home and kin. As soon as she came of age, without a moments hesitation, she gathered up her savings and possessions and journeyed to falcion with dreams of joining the fighters guild and honoring the memory of her life long hero and role model, Atziluth.

However this was not to be. Upon arriving in Falcion she was totally crest fallen to hear that nobody had ever heard of her idol. not a single glint of recognition did she find in the blank unresponding eyes of those to who she would mention his name. Atziluth ! the legendary hero. bane of goblin hordes and savior of the whole forest ! but alas it was futile and before long she was overcome with disappointment and doubt.

How could this be? was he really as heroic as the legends say? did he really achieve all those wondrous things. if so surely his name would be known.

If not then how could she bring honor to such as him in a place where so many did not even care for the company of sprites let alone their history and traditions and so it was that with her bubble burst and no clear way forward she wandered the streets not having the heart or even the faith to bother approaching the guild or the trainers

Instead would waste her time and savings by moping around in the local tavern, burdening the kindly bar tender with her tales of woe and shattered dreams.

Until one day a curiously dressed figure of elven face disturbed her shrouded little world of self pity with a cheery song about the deeds of valor and courage of the participants of some battle long forgotten. This figure sang with such passion and conviction that for the first time since leaving her home, once again she felt the excitement and anticipation that she used to feel when hearing the tales of her forgotten idol.

After a long soul bearing talk with this elf, the answer struck her. She would become a Bard ! she would learn to sing and tell the stories that she so loved. If none her knew the name Atziluth now, then they soon would. Of this she would make sure. she would right this wrong and soon his name would be on the tongue of every Falcion and Nexus folk alike. So now she trains hard as bard and recites her inspiring verses to warm the hearts of the heroes of nexus and it is her ambition to one day pen the chronicles of Atziluth and have them immortalized for ever in the archives of her guild.

Harpua

Class: Bard
Race: Half-Elf

"You mean I'm stuck here?" The unkempt adolescent shot a well-practiced glare of incredulity at the port master. "Aye, no-one leaves Falcion until they've completed their basic training," responded the burly seaman behind the desk. His pen paused in mid-stroke on the ledger. "Say, how did you get here if you didn't even know that..."

But by the time he looked up, Harpua was gone.

By preference, Harpua was not usually unkempt. Nor was he really as young as he appeared: he was soon approaching his twenty-fifth year. But the moderately pointed ears under his coal black mop of hair were not the only traits he had acquired from his elvish father. Enduring youth was another one. As was the lightness of step necessary to sneak onto the "refugee ship" in Rymek. Apparently, though, he hadn't inherited enough cleverness to realize he was on a ship full of adventurers-in-training.

Harpua contemplated this as he headed back toward the main gates of Falcion, cursing his doubly bad luck. Still, he reasoned, this was far preferable to a goblin popping out of a bush and chopping one's head off. Harpua shuddered at the memory of fellow refugees, friends, who had met their fate in this way. The thought alone was enough to drive a man to drink.

"Hmmm. The Sleepy Dwarf Tavern," Harpua muttered to himself as he wandered into a dead-end street.

Hours later, a bleary-eyed Harpua looked even more haggard. "Hey Doc, have you heard this one? So Trista walks into a bar..."

"I don't believe the gods would appreciate your irreverent reference to their names," cautioned Doc Daniel.

"Trista wouldn't mind at all! You know, all for a good laugh?"

"Besides, you told that one already tonight."

"Oh." Harpua paused for a moment. "Well, in that case, another stout."

"What seems to be troubling you, friend." Harpua studied the careworn face across the bar. It had been a long time since he had ever been asked that.

"Why, nothing, my good man," he lied. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, for one thing, I hate to see my brew go to waste when you can't tell your arse from your elbow. I could be serving you water now, and you wouldn't know the difference." Doc smiled kindly. "But you look troubled. Perhaps talking about your troubles with a trained professional would help."

It had been a long time, indeed.

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Rumor had it that Deyna of Talistok, a little farmtown bordering the Eldane Forest, had a thing for the taut, silky smooth bodies of elven men. Rumors turned to scandal when she married Richard the Stablemaster. Richard could claim that all the time spent around stud horses had made him more virile than ever, but the gossiping wives knew better: seven months was just too short for a healthy baby to be carried to term. In any case, the issue was quickly laid to rest, as the midwife emerged from the couple's home, wiping her hands and mournfully announcing a stillbirth.

As the town of Talistok shared the grief of young Richard and Deyna, only one man actually noticed the cliched babe in swaddling clothes, laid at the base of a tree in the middle of the wood. The man's name was Garrick the Druid, although he wasn't a druid. He just happened to like living alone in the forest.

A ex-military man with a penchant for literature, he earned his dishonorable discharge by challenging an order on moral grounds. His unprecedented actions stigmatized him, and he banished himself to the woods, away from the people that disgusted him so. But for all his uprighteousnes, education, and good intentions, Garrick had still never learned how to deal with people, let alone an abandoned bastard half-elf baby. He named the baby Harpua after the hero of an obscure ancient elven epic poem. But after the first few days, the novelty of the name had worn off, and the realities of parentage had set in. From that point on, Garrick treated Harpua as his young protege, with all the attendant expectations of the son of a man so dignified as himself.

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Harpua hated having to sneak out like this, just to get a few miserable books. Sure, Garrick had taught him to read and write well enough, and Harpua picked it up with ease. But the tomes of literature and philosophy held absolutely no interest for him. Despite Garrick's best efforts, Harpua snubbed the dusty volumes in favor of the few works of poetry and fiction he could lay his hands on. Now he was forced to resort like a common thief to skulking off to town to acquire whatever harlequin novels or bawdy comedies he could find at market. If Garrick only knew, he would have a fit. Harpua sighed as he tightened his hood around his head. Although the weather invited him to soak in the sunshine and feel the breeze through his hair, he dared not reveal his heritage with his telltale ears. Harpua had heard the local gossip, and did not want old stories resurfacing.

Talistok was a right miserable town. If it were not for the occasional merchant from Nexus. surely Harpua would lose his mind. Ah, Nexus. The mention of the city evoked images of milk and honey. The freedom, the arts, the people were all shadows in Harpua's head, but these shadows seemed much brighter than his present murky environs. Emerging from his reverie, he cursed softly and muttered to himself. He had to be back in time for his daily lessons.

Time had proved an ever-widening gap between Harpua and his surrogate father. As Harpua's half-elvish blood matured slowly, Garrick's aged quickly, making him even more churlish. Harpua had recently forsaken academic study in favor of fencing lessons, which would have suited Garrick fine if not for Harpua's novel-induced flamboyance. Garrick now chided his protege daily for his lack of

discipline.

Twenty-two years was enough. After one especially severe reprimand, Harpua stormed off, vowing to seek his fortune, and never to return.

This was ill-begotten decision for someone with such little affinity for the woods. Harpua had always refused to accompany the old man in his nature walks. And as his lessons lasted all day, it was evening when he stormed off, so inevitably he got lost on the path to town. The first night, he fended for himself alone in the forest, and awoke the next day little rested and all the worse for the wear.

Feeling dehydrated, he stumbled upon a pond in the woods. But the last thing on his mind when he bent towards the water for a drink was the water itself, but the sensual nymph bathing in it. The young elven woman looked calmly at him as he knelt before the pond. Rather than bolting in fear, she waded slowly to the opposite edge of the pond, never taking her eyes from him. She stepped ashore and deftly dressed herself. Without a word, she watched Harpua as he drank greedily from the waters that had been closer to her body as he dared wish. Then she was gone.

Harpua sprinted after her with renewed vigor. But she hadn't gone far. She sat in a tree not far into the forest, and tittered as he ran past.

"Where do you think you're going, stranger?" she mocked him, flashing an enchanting smile.

"Why, I saw a vision of beauty at the pond. About five feet tall, long violet hair, and the most mesmerizing eyes. Did you see which way she went?" Harpua replied with a grin. He gazed at the elf intently as he said this, but he was describing her from memory. Their momentary encounter was already etched into his heart.

"I believe I know a girl filling that description," the mysterious woman flirted back with a lilt. "Follow me."

Her voice was a siren's call, her words an arrow shot through his heart. Suddenly nature walks weren't so bad. Harpua began walking through the woods each day with his newfound love. Her name was Telaphthimaris, but she went by the more easily pronouncable name Tela. Her beauty was consummate, her soul angelic, and her enchantment with Harpua as complete as his for her.

They spent nearly every moment together, except for the rare occasion that her community convened for some special occasion. The local elvish community was loosely organized but tightly knit, affording little tolerance for strangers. As Tela's ward, Harpua was an grudgingly accepted guest. But with Tela's love, he knew only happiness. While she gave so much to him, all he had to offer was the spark of his wit. He delighted her with the fruits of frivolous reading, weaving magical and sometimes off-color tales. As they lay together ensconced in their own world, he would croon softly until they fell asleep in each other's arms.

But this story, like so many others in Nexus, was not fated to have a happy ending. The seeds of love had been sown in the foul quagmire of the goblin invasion. And the Hordes advanced mercilessly, each day closing in on their secluded forest. The elves knew the danger: they all

prepared sedulously for their final defensive. Tela, of course, trained alongside her clansmen, and Harpua would follow dutifully along. But it quickly became clear that despite his tight bond with Tela, he felt only the loosest affiliation with the rest of them. So while the the elven warriors patronized Harpua, and smirked occasionally at his flashy swordplay, they left him when serious business was afoot. And this suited everybody just fine.

When the day finally came, it was nothing like what anyone expected. The elves had been expecting a hurricane, and instead, a mere drizzle of goblins rained upon them. The hawk-eyed archers. picked them, off, one by one. Tela was in the second line of archers, and Harpua snuck away from the reserves to come see her, under the pretext of bringing her her lucky quiver.

"I don't have a lucky quiver," she chided playfully. But she bade him stay, and they joked merrily about their imminent victory.

And like that, it happened. Swarms of drow and trolls arose from nowhere, as revenants from the earth itself. Blades and arrows erupted everywhere, blooming like horrid crimson flowers from the bodies of elves left and right. An eerie silence belied the massacre around them. As Tela shot her arrows futilely, Harpus stood frozen. Nothing had prepared him for what he was witnessing. The martial slaves dragged his comrades down mercilessly after the initial onslaught, saving their victims for a fate similar to their own. Harpua watched his dear Tela brutally clubbed and dragged off, and he did the only thing he could. He fled.

Two months later, Harpua was still fleeing. Months of vain searching for a safe haven had accomplished naught but make him see goblins behind every bush and boulder. He trudged across barren farmland with an assortment of other refugees. There were a few elves who had escaped the butchery: Devagnithia who had to be helped to walk now, and Peilonas who had lost her graceful fingers to gangrene. There was the family from Talistok, who claimed to be the sole survivors of the town, and 'oh, won't you please take us with you? We promise we won't burden you...' But alas, no Tela. Harpua's head swam in a sea of garish purples and greens, but he knew if only he could survive one more day, he would see the stout walls of Nexus keeping the goblins at bay...

Jerkiness. As his head bounced painfully against a wooden surface, Harpua tried to regain his senses. The clopping of hooves against a pounded dirt path. The briny smell of the sea. Fuzzy warmth. Ugh, the reeking of a goat's skin. He was in a wagon, wrapped odoriferously but snugly in a the hide of a goat. Through the haze of exhaustion, he heard the word "Rymek" uttered. Aching, but safe. Yes, all would be well, he thought. If a coward such as he were safe, surely Tela would be safe as well. No form of slavery could break her indomitable will. Happily, he sunk back into a blissful dreamworld replete with flowers and birds and those trees he hated so much.

Perhaps he should have stayed in that dreamworld. The illusion of happiness is so much more convincing there.

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"Well, that's quite a story." The barkeep wiped spilled spirit off the bar, away from the encroaching slivers of dawn sunlight that filtered in through the windows. "A tale of triumph over all odds.

Seems to me you have the markings of a fine warrior. Maybe you'll find your love again, gods willing."

"Warrior? Are you crazy? I didn't spend two months desperately dodging goblins just to hand them my life on a platter!" Harpua sputtered.

Doc's expression turned stern for the first time. "If you truly believe she's still out there, how can you fear for such a small thing as your life? Or is your hope that she's alive truly a delusion you maintain, just so you can go on leading your miserable life?" Doc sighed deeply. "I do not agree with you: you are not a coward for fleeing when you did. You were captive to your instincts. But you are on Falcion now, the island for training warriors. If in your full capacity to reason, and with your oppurtunity to sally forth and reclaim what you have lost, you still cower and drown yourself in beer, then perhaps you are a coward."

Doc's challenge rang true in Harpua's soul. "You're absolutely right. I must pay pennance for my grievous errors." Harpua pounded the bar, a fire lit in his eyes to match the one in his bowels, the pounding to match the one in his head.

"That a boy!" Doc beamed in joy and pride at his contribution to the fight against the Goblin Hordes.

The following day, his resolve was tempered, but the bar tab was still there. Harpua remembered Doc Daniel's last words to him as he walked into the Apprenticing Center: "I hear they give you 250 gold marks when you sign up."

And so Nexus welcomed to its ranks a drunken, wise-cracking, guilt-ridden, love-stricken bard working to pay off a bar tab, gods help us all.

Imini

Class: Bard
Race: Half Elf

As always, Imini Vu came awake instantly. One moment she was completely oblivious, the next she was excruciatingly aware of herself and her surroundings. She had always been this way; some things didn't bear lingering through.

She levered herself up on an elbow and surveyed the quiescent form beside her. White sheets, white skin - her dusky skin looked starkly obvious against the cool white of his body, his bedding. His skin was warm, though - warmer than her own. His pale golden hair lay soft against her shoulder.

She didn't remember his name; she made a point of never remembering their names. She did remember how his piercing blue eyes had followed her, drawing her attention repeatedly to that lean, refined face in the crowd. Most of the eyes in the audience were on her mother, still graceful

and light in her movements despite the lines beginning to crease her cheeks. Only one pair of eyes noticed the young fiddler accompanying her mother's dance. There was always one pair. His invitation was a murmured compliment on her music, the brush of his fingers against her wrist - and she accepted.

The silk sheets slid luxuriously across her skin as she rose silently from the bed. She shivered in the sudden chill of air against her bare skin and dressed quickly. Turning to go, she glanced back once to make sure she'd left no trace of her presence. Ignoring the coins on the nightstand, she left, closing the heavy door softly behind her.

Walking briskly down the still-foggy cobbled streets, Imini wiped the settling dew from her eyelashes. Her step quickened as she reached the outskirts of town where her band had set up camp for the night. Though she never brought men to her own little waggon, every morning she rushed home for the little filtre she'd learned to make. No innocent child would suffer for her actions.

As always, her mother was waiting outside her own waggon. She did not ask where Imini had been; she did not have that right. Her dark face was gray with weary concern. Concern that her daughter kept trying to hurt them both. Concern that Imini had no strong ties to anyone else in the band. Concern that soon enough there would be no-one to watch for her return in the morning.

As always, Imini passed her mother and entered her own waggon without a word. Imini was paying back the both of them in coin they understood. Imini saw no point in forming any bonds that time would only break. Imini waited for and dreaded the day when her mother's one claim on her would be broken, and she would be free. She would leave the band, she already knew. She had never let them include her in the family they formed. She would not have to watch another human slowly age and sicken and die while she remained unchanged. She had that much to thank her unknown elven father for. She had that much to curse him for.

Jazzmine

Class: Bard
Race: Sprite

Oh my lets see you want to know of my past? Well I have thirteen brothers and sisters. I'm the baby of the family, most of my siblings are boys, I only have two sisters. My eldest brother Lake was like my protector. I guess you could say he raised me. I come from a very well to do family of sprites, we were the richest family in our village and my parents were always very busy, helping others and such. They had a lot of responsibilities in the village. So Lake was always around. Not that I minded. Lake is a great prankster and he would take me with him when he played his little jokes, though he made sure I acted like a proper lady in front of the towns people. Lake is a good thirty years older than me. I mean we sprites are pregnant for two years with each child, and there is twelve kids between Lake and myself. Well when I was around thirty-two my parents became ill, they were very old by now so they were confined to their bedroom. They died in their sleep holding

each other in their arms. Though I was heartbroken that my parents had died I thought it was very romantic that they had gone that way. My brother Lake became head of the house with his many responsibilities. I was becoming anxious and impatient to see new things. Many of the men in my village had their eyes on me, though if Lake had caught them he'd thump them a good one. In fact one of his friends kissed me when I was twenty and Lake beat him up. I told you my brother is very protective. My eldest sister Shelliia, Shelly to me, became very wild I would say, though I didn't know what she was doing all my siblings looked down at her, saying she was disgracing my family's name and disrespecting my parents. I guess I'm a bit naive. I was happy playing my pranks and spending as much time as I could with my brother and friends. Now don't get me wrong I love all my siblings very very much. Just Lake and I hold a very special bond. Fearing I would make some bad mistakes without his strict guidance my brother had noticed that I loved to tell stories to the children in our village. I would tell of the pranks and tricks my brother had pulled or planning to pull, or sometimes I'd make up an amusing story for them, everyonce in a while they'd hear of an adventure one of my brothers had been on. See most of the men in my family are fighters and such, very strong very swift. A few of my brothers have became thieves, though noble ones. My sisters have no profession, my other sister Rosie is happily married to a magey sprite. Shelly....well I don't know what she does. Anyway I'm getting off track, my brother noticing my love of stories, along with artistic talent, and my singing voice he went over his options. He called me to his office one day and told me that I would someday make my family proud of becoming the Lady of this house, but till I was old enough I was in jeapordy of losing my innocence and optimitism. He told me he was sending me to the city of Nexus to become a bardy. I was estatic I had always wanted to become a bardy but didn't think Lake would let me leave the house. I was quickly packed and ready to go, kissing and hugging all my siblings goodbye. Lake had arranged for a HUGE party to send me off. Everyone in the village had came, it was lovely and before it was over I was ready to go and make my family proud. Then I was off. I was quickly apprenticed in the city of Falcion with the title of jongleur. I dove into my studies, hunting and learning all I could of the bardic ways. When I had reached the third tier of my proffession I met the cutest sprite magey. He had the prettiest blue eyes and skin, even his frecklers across his face were cute, a dark blue! His hair was fire red and he had on these bright red mage robes with blue swirls topped off with a cap! He flew around the fountain of dreams happily! He was so cute! I could feel my heart thumping a mile a minute, and I'm not a shy girl. He flew right up to me and introduced himself, his name was Zany and he was a spritey magey. He began helping me learn more of my profession and even his, showing me how to make color illusions since I love colors so much. His last name is Rainbowleaf! Isn't that just cute!! Well I dove into my studies twice as hard now, not wanting to disapoint my family or my new boyfriend Zany. Soon we were engaged and I had learned enough of my profession I could leave the island of Falcion and journey into Nexus. I've been there ever since, though now I'm starting to plan my wedding, and everyone in all of Nexus is invited! If you don't mind bright colors that is.....

Jazzmine Leafus soon to be Rainbowleaf

Kathryn

Class: Bard
Race: Human

" Compared with many, I have led a rather dull life. I was born in a small fishing town along the coast. I was what would you would probably call a wild child. Almost as soon as I was able to walk, I would follow my two older brothers, Luke and Mark, everywhere they went. Although they probably didn't appreciate their baby sister tagging along with them, they never sent me away, and we had many merry adventures together. One day, not long after my seventh birthday, my brothers and I were climbing trees when the branch I was sitting on broke. I fell to the ground, and broke my leg. Although the village doctor patched me up, I was confined to my bed for several months.

Looking back, this was one of the important moments in my life, because it was at this time that I discovered my talent for music. Since I could not move around, my parents gave me a tambourine to amuse myself with. It was not long after that I began to compose little songs to sing, and I played my little tambourine all the time, nearly driving my family crazy, I think.

It did not take my parents long to realize that I had some talent for music, so I did not have to go to work fishing with my father and brothers when I was older. By the time I reached the age of 17, I realized I did not have much future as a musician in my tiny village, so I set off to find my fortune elsewhere.

I reached the Island of Falcion, and soon began my training as a Bard. A few months after my arrival, I met a charming young thief named Will. We soon became fast friends, though later I got the impression we would become more. As we both progressed in our respective guilds, our friendship grew, and continued after we reached the city of Nexus. Eventually, he courted me, and professed his love for me, and soon after we became engaged. Eventually, we were wed and have made a home together. Although our lives together have not been perfect, we love each other, and that is all that is important."

Kaysa

Class: Bard
Race: Unknown

A young girl walked into the library looking around, her dark ocean blue eyes taking in everything. A middle-aged scribe approached her and smiled. "Are you a members of the bard guild?" he asked her his eyes kind yet very inquisitive. She looked at the lute in her hand then nodded, smiling bashfully. "I am" "Oh you are?!" the scribe grinned with glee and took her hand guiding her to a small dark table away from the traffic of people coming in and out. "Have you told us your story my dear?" the scribe asked as he pulled out some parchments and a quill. The girl raised an eyebrow in curiousity "My story Sir?" she asked. "Yes your story, your history how you came to be who you are, and why you are here in the city of allied races." The girl blushed "Oh no, I did not know we were suppose to do that." "Well you don't HAVE to but inquisitive minds like to know about those

that are protecting all of us." The girl tucked a strand of hair from her face and nodded, blushing more. The scribe smiled and said "Please take your time, start with your name." He smiled and dipped the quill into a vial of ink and readied his hand to begin writing. Thus the girl began.....

"My name is Kaysa Morningstar, I was born in the small village of Taeilk, it's very far from here. I have two brothers a mother and a father. We lived on the outskirts of the village and had a small farm. I was the baby of the family, my two brothers were always hard at work, helping my father for as long as I can remember. When I got older I too helped with the farm work, along with the house chores as well. I use to love to hum tunes and tell stories to my brothers when they would get the time to listen, sometimes when they didn't have the time as well." Kaysa paused a moment her eyes glistening over with the fondness of childhood memories. She took a breath and continued. "I loved to paint, when I was about seven years of age my parents got me a paint brush and a set of paints, I painted on everything I could get my hands on, the wall the door, the floor, cabinets, ect.... Then my mother pointed out that the walls and such could not be washed off, but I could. Thus began my love of body art.

My parents and brothers noticed my humming and bought me a flute, I quickly mastered the instrument and would walk all over the village playing tunes for anybody that would stop to listen. I even wrote a song for a dwarven fighter that lived in the village. Everyone encouraged me to sing, but I never would. I am much much to shy to sing infront of others. I prefer my painting to be my expression of art, I don't have to sing and nobdoy has to pay much attention to me. Soon it became evident that I was growing restless, I would take long walks, sometimes leaving at dawn and not returning to dusk. My brothers would joke to my parents that perhaps I was a wandering minstrel. My parents grinned at each other getting an idea. On one such occasion I came home shortly before supper and my parents set me down. They thought I had wonderful potential to become a bard and that I should travel all over, and head to Nexus the city of allied races. They knew of the war, though thank the Gods our village had not been invaded. They thought I could be of great help. My brothers having snuck in to hear this conversation threw a fit. Their baby sister off battling goblins and giants? Never! She was much to shy and tiny. Though I am a little over six feet in height. I calmly told my brothers that I thought it was a great idea. I loved wandering about and this would give me a chance to see new things. They still protested, swearing they'd never let me go. This went on for months. Finally they gave in, seeing as how I was determined to do this with or without their blessing, they reluctantly gave me their blessing and the next morning I was off.

It took many days for me to reach Nexus. At first I thought I was heading the wrong way and was scared I'd never see another being again, save for a few forest creatures I encountered. Then one day, in the midafternoon I saw it. Nexus, there it was I was so excited I ran as hard and as fast as I could to get there. A guardsman pulled open the massive gates for me and I hurried inside, looking around with awe. Not many people payed any heed to me. I must of looked like the country pumkin gawking around as I did. This is how I bumped into a rather large man. He huffed and looked at me "Ye must being new 'roun' 'ere" he gruffed. I nodded blushing brightly. "Well ye best be getin' to the sloop girl!" I had no idea what that man was talking about. He pointed south and shoo'd me off "Ye best run!" I ran I ran as I had never ran before, I stopped to ask a guardsman about the sloop and he pointed me to the southern gates. Once there I asked another guard and he instructed me to stay on the path to Rymek and I couldn't miss it. I nodded and he pulled the gates open for me and I ran down the path as fast as my legs would carry me. Once on board the sloop I noticed I was

surrounded by many other people all on their was to the island called Falcion. When we reached the island a trainer grabbed me and pulled me aside "You want to be a bard don't you?" he asked me. I nodded blushing as he stared at the painting on my arm. "Make em proud" he said as she pushed me inside the city. Thus I began my training and eventually my acceptance into the bards guild." Kaysa blushed as she finished her story and the scribe looked up at her. "Well told" he said as he looked over at her. "How did you get all those peircings and what of the painting on your arm?" he asked politely. Kaysa smiled and said "Well right before I left for Nexus a band of gypsies strolled into our village for a few days to rest from their travels and one of the women had a tatoo and a few hoops in her ears. The hoops really caught my attention and one night she put all these earings in my ear. She offered to do a tatoo for free, but I declined, not wanting something permanet on my body. So instead I paint my moon and star upon my arm every day, and if I get bored with it I'll just wipe it off." The scribe smiled and finished writing down her words. "Thank you very much for your time, I hope to talk to you again soon." She nodded and stood up strolling out of the library.

Lyrasel

Class: Bard
Race: Half-Elf

Lyrasel Gentarin was born in a small village near the Eldane, the youngest of five children and the only girl.

Her father had once aspired to be a bard, showing some promise in his quick grasp of spell-music. His ambitions were cut short, however, when his parents were killed in an ambush by goblins on their way to visit him in Nexus. Their only son, he returned to the farm, and married a sturdy neighborhood girl, Lianne. Despite the turmoil around them as the Horde encroached more and more toward Nexus, T'rel and Lianne raised four strapping boys in relative peace. Misfortune struck again, however, when Lianne fell ill. Despite the efforts of the local healers, she eventually succumbed to the illness, leaving T'rel alone with four boys, the oldest of them ten.

Nearly 40 years of age, he fully expected to live out his years alone, but fate (and some might say Dilanis) had other plans for him. He returned from the fields one day to find a visitor on his doorstoop, a comrade with whom he had trained on Falcion nearly 20 years earlier. The few sparks of interest that had flared between them then had been cut short by his parents' death and his decision to leave Nexus. Now retired after years of service to Nexus and the Tower, she had sought him out, not even certain if he remembered her. What had been between them once had never died, and it wasn't long before it grew, fanned undoubtedly by T'rel's loneliness and his boys' need for a mother. Within two years, Lyrasel was born to them, a tiny half-fey child with fiery curls and eyes the color of amber.

Lyrasel's childhood was marred by her sickliness. She suffered frequent attacks of fainting, and occasionally seemed to slump still further, her skin growing waxy and pale, and her breathing so shallow as to be almost non-existent. Because of these spells, her mother kept her close, knowing

that in an emergency, only quick intervention to restore her vitality would save her from dying. As she could not be always by her side, Deliasha also engaged a nurse, a dark-elf shunned by many of the neighbors. She was called Qiera, though that was only the closest surface tongues could come to pronouncing the name she was born with. An outcast from her House, in self-imposed exile to the surface, Qiera taught the young girl much of the Drow ways, imparting to her as well her wistfulness for the beauties of the world she had left behind, despite its cruelties.

To amuse his daughter during the long periods that her illness kept her indoors, T'rel often sang to her, delighting in her quick ear for a tune, a trait evident when she was as young as two. Her earliest instruments were such common things as spoons and pots, sticks to tap together, a jingling bell. When she was about three, Deliasha followed the sound of delighted crowing into the sleeping room one day to find young Lyra on the floor, her father's tempo drums before her, delightedly dancing a ball of light around the room. Faced with this evidence of her talent, T'rel shaped and strung a small lute and began teaching her to play a few simple tunes.

The attention and favor showered on her by her parents met with deep resentment by her brothers, though they were careful to hide it in their presence. They hid their little cruelties behind a veil of pretended affection, sharp pinches when no one was looking, a grip that was almost bone-crushingly tight when they held her hand on walks, tickling her till she nearly passed out from breathlessness and terror. As she grew older, their attentions grew darker and more cruel, bordering on sadistic tortures that often started with tickling. She learned very young not to accuse them, her earliest attempts at telling met with reassurances that her brothers loved her, admonishments to them to be more gentle, and worse cruelties when they got her alone again. Instead, she learned to retreat inside herself, building a wall of defense around her secret. The abuse eventually dwindled and stopped altogether as her brothers reached adulthood and was never mentioned between them again.

When she reached 21, her father declared it was time she thought of marrying. She argued against it, but he was adamant that he wished to see her happily married and settled before he died. Unable to change his mind, and faced with her brothers' gleeful procession of suitors (musclebound boneheads she called them), she made her plans, and one night slipped away to Falcion, where she hoped that polishing and training her skills would allow her to make her own choices in life.

Rayven

Class: Bard
Race: Human

Where shall I begin? Perhaps with my birth...

I was born to Anandra and Rhodry Krahn in the city of Ceor, a three week trip north of here. My parents owned a clothing shop, and we never lacked anything we needed. Not to say that we were wealthy ... we just weren't destitute like some families I knew. My father wasn't overly religious, but my mother was a very pious woman, almost to the point where it was a fault.

There wasn't much to call a school in the town, and most of what I learned was from people walking outside the shop and in the taverns. Still, it was just more than enough to get me through life. I was a loud, bubbly child full of energy. I had little tact to speak of, but it improved some as I grew. My brother, on the other hand, was a very serious boy, quiet, and skilled with numbers. He did most of the accounts for our shop. I drew customers into the shop by standing on the small porch and singing and dancing.

This was my life until I reached the age of fifteen, and my first real love interest entered my life. His name was Michael, and his family came here because their old town was suffering a terrible drought. We had terrific times, and soon became engaged. It was one of the high points of my life thusfar, until the day it came to a shattering end. I awoke one morning just like every other day, and saw a note pinned to my door:

"Rayven, I fear our time together has grown stale. Perhaps it is time to explore new possibilities. This is not the way I expected my life to turn out, and I desire something better. Farewell."

No one in the town had seen him, or my best friend Jaquelyn since the day before. I remember spending days on end alone in my room, crying my eyes dry. My heart wrenched and banged inside it's tin cage, waiting to be let out.

On top of all this, people in the town were starting to talk of a goblin horde. I paid no attention to it; I had "more important" things to worry about. Still the rumors persisted, and did not die off like most rumors do.

"... moving nearer," people were saying. My father took their chatter to heart, just as other people were starting to do. I saw at least a dozen of my friends sent off to other cities by parents trying to protect them.

Then it was my turn.

My brother was sent off to a city to the west of Ceon, called Defalk, and I was sent to Falcion. I heard later that both cities were hit, and I know not what happened to my family. I pray to all the Gods that they are safe.

And so it was that Rayven came to Falcion. I stay here and train to honor my parents, be they dead or alive, and my sweet brother, and also in hopes that one day I will come across Michael and Jaquelyn again ... perhaps they are destitute. No, that is not my wish for them. I only hope that they receive the same treatment that they give to others. And that, I suppose, is my story.

Sincerity

Class: Bard
Race: Human

When I was very young, I lived in a little village, far away from Nexus, with my parents and siblings. There was much love in our family, and we were happy. My parents were great scholars and apparently the trend passed on. My brothers and sisters all were very intelligent. I, however, was never very smart, so I always felt like the odd ball. My parents were concerned about my future. Without their intelligence, they didn't know what I would become. I never worried about it though. I was carefree and happy. I enjoyed being outside around nature and witnessing the gifts of all the gods.

Then, one terrible night, our village was invaded by goblins. My family and many others were killed. For some reason, they spared me. Maybe it was because I was just a child. To this day, I don't know how or why I'm alive, but I am thankful for it. The goblins captured me and burned the village. They took me to a tall, lonely mountain. It was very dark and damp. I remember feeling very scared and alone. We entered a cave, and continued further and further into the heart of the mountain. Finally we reached a large, open room lit with torches. I was taken into a dungeon, and locked in a cell.

For the first time since the invasion, I cried. Tears streamed down my face as I realized how hopeless my situation was. I was alone in a goblin mountain. Lost, and alone. My family was dead. My home was ruined. Then, the gods looked down on me with pity and blessed me with a very special gift. They gave me the gift of song. Without their gift, I doubt I could have survived. Whenever I was sad or alone, I sang to myself, and everything seemed better. I sung of happy things that once had been, and of what I would do when I escaped. I would escape, I assured myself. Some how, some way.

Each day, I was brought a meal by one of the goblins. Being of different races and cultures, we couldn't communicate with each other, but we became friends. (Being alone made me desperate for a friend or comforting face.) When the goblin would bring my food, he would stay and listen to me sing. Of course, he didn't know what I was singing about, but he seemed to like listening to my voice. He realized how special it was, how unearthly it was. My voice eventually entered his heart, and he felt sorry for me. In the middle of the night, he quietly unlocked my door and woke me. I almost let out a scream, but he covered my mouth, muffling it. He led me out of the dungeon and through the mountain to the cave where we entered. Then he left me.

All I knew to do was run. I ran all night. I had no where to go. All I had to do was get away from that evil mountain. As it began to turn light in the morning, I fell, exhausted, and slept. When I awoke, I saw a little dove beside me, singing happily. It spread its wings and slowly began to fly away, as if beckoning me to come. There was something about the dove, an aura about it, that caused me to follow. I followed it for many miles. Whenever I stopped to rest, it rested with me. One day we reached a city, full of young people like myself. The dove left me, and with it left my gift of song. I didn't mind though, for I no longer needed my voice to survive. I had found a city where I could continue life where I had left off, long ago.

As I was starting to make new friends and adjusting to being around other people, I met Koto. Koto was a wonderful musician, and helped me to find my niche in life. He taught me about life, love, and music. With his help, I learned how to sing. Although I no longer had a voice from the gods, through training, I improved and began to compose my own songs. After a while, Koto and I became very close, and he adopted me as a daughter. I have finally found happiness. I once again

have a family, a home, and friends.

Solik

Class: Bard
Race: Unknown

The man grabbed his child into his arms and rushed him into the cellar, oblivious to the sounds of battle raging about him. The sounds of death increased as the villagers fought for their lives.

"Solik, listen to me," the man began. "I want you to stay here, okay? Don't leave the cellar until I come to get you, okay?" The boy nodded. The man gave him a quick hug, lifted his sword, and ran back out to the battle raging outside. The boy was confused. Why were those ugly green things coming into the village? The boy huddled in the darkness and began to whimper softly. He wished his daddy would come back.

* * *

The small group looked in awe at the destruction around them. Bodies of slain townsfolk littered the road, and blood was splattered on the buildings. Orc bodies lay slain as well, but not nearly as many as the humans. The mother put her hands over the little boy's eyes. The father rode in the lead, sword drawn. They rode cautiously into the city. None of the three spoke a word as they continued. Not a sound was to be heard, except for the occasional door slamming shut in the fierce wind. Suddenly, they heard small cries coming from a house off to the side of the road. The man climbed off his horse and cautiously crept into the house.

The man looked around the house. The place was in disarray. Shattered dishes and broken furnitue lie scattered about the room. He heard the crying again. It came from the other side of the door. He slowly eased the door open. Standing on the other side was a small elvish boy, no more than a few years old. He cringed in fright from the man. The man sheathed his sword and spoke softly to the young boy. He grabbed him up in his arms and rushed outside.

The woman gasped softly at the sight of the boy, and placed him in her lap beside her own son.

"Let's get out of here," the man said, mounting his horse. "We don't want to stay here any longer than we have to." They quickly rode off down the road. Little trace was left of their passing. The wind whispered quietly through the remains of the dead city.

* * *

He was raised as a brother to Jurri Nightwind in the small, quiet town of Kalahad. He kept his own name, Dryden, rather than adopting the name of his new family. As he grew, he began to seek for more and more knowledge about the war of the gods and of the goblin raids. He began travelling the world as a bard alongside his brother Jurri. His travels led him to the city of Nexus, just before its seige. He hopes here to find the answers to the questions he seeks.

Stancyl

Class: Bard
Race: Hobbit

As per the request of some of my friends and aquaintances, I will tell my story. It's neither terribly exciting nor romantic. There is no danger or lost love. To tell the absolute truth i have led a very unexciting life thus far, but that is not the point. The point is I am here to tell a story. And so here it is.

There is a small hobbit village, not far from here. The hobbit name for it is Long-grass, though i don't know the common name for it. I don't suggest trying to find it either. The hobbits there are not very social to outsiders and you'd probably pass right by without seeing them once. Anyways, that is where I am from.

Born there to Dotey and Bronter Wornshoes. I was raised on basic principles. Be kind to others, share and share alike, etc. But there was one rule I could never abide to. As I stated most hobbits there stayed away form outsiders. I, on the other hand, would go out of my way to speak to them and listen to stories of far off places. Of heroic battles, and wondrous magic. I was scolded for my attitude many times.

I spent most of my time, when not being scolded or talking to strangers, in a small copse of trees a little ways from my village. There, on an old tree stump, I would think of the stories and wish I could go off with the travelers and live those stories. I have a small book where I would make drawings from my imagination. I do not consider myself an artist, but those drawings were half of what brought me to this part of the lands. The other half showed up on a cold winter morning.

It had snowed heavily the night before and most hobbits were staying inside next to a warm fire, smoking from pipes or eating warm stew. I, as I usually did, could be found trudging through the snow towards the copse of trees. When the sun hit the copse at noon, especially when it snowed, it shone like the brightest diamonds. It always reminded me of the stories of dwarven treasure and the like. Suddenly, as I reached the trees, I heard a noise. But noise is an insult to what I heard. It was music! The most beautiful music i had ever heard! I began walking, entranced by the sound, towards the road where I spyed a young human, dressed in light bright clothes. I was sure he must have been freezing, but he danced along, playing the song and singing as if it were a sunny spring day. I ran over to him, and he paused, to my dismay.

"Please do not stop!" I cried, to which he only smiled. "A hobbit?" He said, raising an eyebrow and smiling. "Don't hobbits usually avoid travelers?" I stamped my foot at this. "Never again!" I cried, "Never again, if you will only play that song again!" He smiled at me and began playing and dancing as before, but this time I joined him, dancing and jumping as I had never done before. Later that day, when the man had left I began my preperations. I had never felt such joy as when the man played and I was determined to do as the man did. To sing and play, and to stir the hearts of all with song. I told my parents of this, expecting more scolding, but they only nodded. My father

dug out an old travelworn backpack that had belonged to my grandfather, a great traveler among hobbits. I left the very next day for Falcion, hoping to find the song I was meant for and the story of my life.

So there you have it. The life of Stancyl Wornshoes, summed up in a few paragraphs. Its been a good life so far, and I hope there are many more years to follow. May we all have a good day, good night, and whatever may follow!

Tanson

Class: Bard
Race: Human

Far to the south of Nexus lay a secluded island called Feldaire. Feldaire was home to the human kingdom of Gertran'dal. These humans were rather eccentric by Altin's human standards, but the people had remained happy for generations. The kingdom had just crowned a new king, a young man by the name of Carlian. King Carlian had a passionate love for music, and, upon his coronation, held auditions for positions as the King's personal musicians. As word of this audition reached the far corners of this island, people with a wide range of musical skills came to the King's castle to participate in this audition. The new king was present for the audition, and listened to all the auditioners display their talents. Unfortunately, the majority of the players disgusted the discriminating king. Having spent a long day listening to minimally skilled musicians, the king grew weary, and considered cutting the audition short.

"Your majesty, I have heard great things about this next player. Please see it fit to listen to him." One of the king's advisors pleaded with him to listen to one more musician.

Carlian sighed. "All right. He will be the final one. It has been a long day, and I do not wish to listen to more people make a mockery of music."

As Carlian motioned for the next musician, an extremely young child of no more than fifteen winters came before the king. He was dressed in scraggly clothes, but carried a beautiful lyre. Carlian muttered as he flashed a mild glare at his advisor.

"Please hear him through," the advisor asked, "He is truly a wonder."

The child bowed to the king, and awaited for permission to begin playing. "You may begin," the king stated, rather inattentively, as the child nodded.

The child looked at his lyre, and began strumming with an ease not seen in players twice his age. The gentle sound that emanated from the lyre quickly grabbed the attention of the king, who looked at the seemingly insignificant child with newfound respect and shock. After strumming for a short time, the child began singing. Though his children's voice had not yet attained the deep undertones of a grown man's voice, it resonated powerfully throughout the room, entrancing everyone who had the pleasure of hearing. When his piece was completed, his audience, still

mesmerized by his music, was completely silent. After several moments of utter silence, the king finally spoke.

"Your music is unlike anything I've ever heard in my life. What is your name, son?"

The child replied, "I am Tanson, your majesty."

The king nodded. "Very well, Tanson. I extend to you an offer to play on my court."

Tanson smiled. "Thank you for the kind offer. I accept."

Tanson returned to his dwelling in the castle after a long day of playing his lyre. It had been three years since he first agreed to play for the King, and he was beginning to tire of it. He put himself into bed, and began pondering his various options.

The next morning, Tanson went to the King and asked him to be released from his duies. The king, however, loved his music too much, and vehemently rejected his request. Tanson, upset but unwilling to give up, began to think of other ways to get out. He quickly learned the inner workings of the castle, and began to steal small bits of gold coin. He created a secret compartment underneath the wooden floorboards, where he began to stash away his gold. After six long months of stashing gold, he dressed himself in a robe, and walked discreetly to the docks. Once there, he approached an old man sitting by a desk.

"Could I procure a list of outgoing ships in the next week?" asked Tanson.

The foreman grunted and shrugged. "Here." He threw a wooden binder at him. Tanson nodded.

"Thank you, sir." Tanson flipped through the book. He saw that most ships were heading to the nearby island of Verrath. He shook his had; that island was far too close for his tastes. As he continued to flip through the dock schedule, one listing caught his eye; "The Windrider, leaving 23rd Blossoms, for the port of Rymek. Captain: Elias Garamoor. Docked at pier 3." Tanson had never heard of Rymek before. He gave the book back to the foreman, thanking him, and walked outside, to pier 3. Spotting a man walking out of the boat docked there, Tanson raced to catch up to him.

"Sir, may I speak to your ship's captain please?" Tanson said, hoping for a favorable response.

The man shrugged, and said, "I am the ship's captain. What do you want, boy?"

"I require passage on your ship, to . . . Rymek. Would it be possible for me to acquire passage to Rymek via your ship?" Tanson hoped he sounded convincing.

The man shrugged. "Four thousand gold for passage on my ship."

Tanson winced slightly, and nodded. "I have it."

The man looked at Tanson incredulously, and nodded. "We'll keep some extra food for you, but bring your own as well, as well as anything else you would require. Your own drink would be advisable as well."

Tanson nodded. "When do you leave?"

The man replied, "Tomorrow, at the crack of dawn. Bring your money then.

If you're late we're not waiting for you.

Tanson nodded. "I shall be there. What was your name, sir?"

The man replied, "I am Captain Elias Garamoor. Yours?"

"I am Tanson." Tanson bowed and returned to the castle.

Tanson pulled all his belongings and placed them inside a large cloth backpack. He placed his gold in a medium sized pouch, and placed it securely inside his backpack, and fastened the backpack tight. In his hand he carried some climbing rope. He tiptoed out of his room, and onto the castle courtyard. He quickly ran to a section of wall. Throwing the hooked rope over the high wall, he began scaling the wall, taking care to be extra silent. He made one quick look as he climbed halfway up. Eventaully, he reached the top of the wall. He carefully held onto the top of the wall from his precarious position as he rearranged the hook so he could descend. He climbed down the wall, trying as hard as possible to make no noise. Once he was safely on the ground, surrounded by bushes, he retracted the climbing rope, and wound it around his arm. Looking around once again, he began running for the docks. Once at the dock, he spotted the captain and walked toward him. "Hello, Captain Garamoor." Tanson bowed before him as the man greeted him cordially.

"Do you have what I asked for?" the captain asked.

Tanson pulled a fairly large pouch of gold from his backpack, and handed it to the captain. The captain smiled, bobbed the heavy-looking pouch a few times, and nodded. "Welcome to the Windrider. If the weather cooperates, it will be a two week journey." Tanson nodded. "Our crew is in place. We depart in fifteen minutes."

The storm's vicious wind howled violently as the ship buckled under the force of the waves. Water flew over the sides of the ship and slammed onto the deck. Tanson stood on the stairwell connecting the decks below. He tightly held onto the railing as he watched the ship take nature's beating. A powerful gust of wind swept across the ship, and the wooden mast snapped off like a twig, crashing into the ocean. A bolt of lightning crashed down upon the remains of the mast, maiming the remains of the mast and igniting a large fire. Tanson found another member of the crew, who grabbed him frantically and took him to a small boat. Another crew member was waiting at the boat, and the three of them helped move the boat in position to be lowered into the water. They entered the boat and cut the string that bound the small emergency boat to the doomed ship. The boat fell onto the water, but lurched violently with the waves and the impact of the fall. The small boat got shoved around like a toy as the three of them hung on for dear life. A fierce gust of wind lifted the boat off the water and caused it to flip over completely. Tanson heard screams

amidst the wind, thunder, and loud patter of rainfall, as the other two crew members were swept away. Tanson continued to hold onto the boat, fighting the wind and the waves trying to drag him into the sea. After what seemed like an eternity, the winds began to calm. The once-violent waves became more docile, and the loud beating of rain became a soft pattering. Tanson managed to flip the boat right side up, and climbed inside. He dried his clothes off and sighed. Tanson looked up; the skies were clear. It had been three days since the ship had been destroyed. Although he had just woken up, he had no energy. He gazed toward the sun. Its rays seemed to slowly drain Tanson of his energy. Shaking his head in an attempt to remain awake, he tried to get up, but found he was too weak to move.

"Rest . . ." he thought. "Rest sounds good . . ." Tanson closed his eyes.

A Rymekian fisherman looked out on the beach and noticed something strange; an unmanned boat was rocking back and forth calmly, at the edge of the shore.

He walked to the boat in curiosity. Upon reaching the boat, he looked inside and felt his mouth drop. The gaunt body of a human lay inside the small boat. He touched the skin; it radiated the slightest bit of warmth. He touched the left side of the man's neck; the fisherman could feel the faintest of pulses. Looking at the man once again, the fisherman put his tackle box and his pole down and hefted the man in his arms. He walked to Rymek's town center, and shouted for help. Several men responded to the plea for help, but upon examining him, all agreed that he needed to go to the Healing Hand in Falcion. One man procured a stretcher, and lay the body on the stretcher. Someone then wrapped the man in several blankets. The fisherman and one other man carried the stretcher to the Transport Sloop, where, after paying the fare, boarded the ship. Upon the ship's arrival on the island of Falcion, the two men quickly walked north up the path and through the city gates. The two men lay the stretcher in front of the healing hand, and entered the wooden building.

"Anyone, please come out and help!" one of the men shouted. Within several seconds of his call, two acolytes came out of their chambers and nodded.

"What is the problem, sirs?" asked one of the acolytes.

"We found an unconscious man in a boat, on the shore. He seems to be alive, but barely."

The acolyte nodded. "We will do what we can for him. Where is he?"

The fisherman responded, "Outside, by the door."

The two acolytes nodded and walked outside to retrieve the man.

"Ah, so you're awake, son." Nathen looked at the young man, whose eyes had opened for the first time in perhaps a week. The young man looked around. Looking fairly confused, he meekly asked, "What is this?"

Nathen smiled and said, "This is the tabernacle of the Healing Hand. "You were badly hurt. We found you on a small boat on our shores."

Tanson's eyes seemed to light up upon the mention of a boat. "Boat . . . Windrider? Where is the Windrider?"

Nathen looked at Tanson quizzically, and said, "I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't know what it is you speak of."

The man sighed and nodded, as if he had something to say but didn't have the energy to say it.

"What is your name, son?" the high priest asked.

"N-name? Oh, I'm . . . T-Tanson."

"Ah, Tanson. Welcome to Falcion, Tanson."

"Falcion . . ." Tanson trailed off into sleep once again.

It took another week for Tanson to have the energy in him to begin walking. Even then, he was extremely unsteady in his steps. However, Nathen felt that the Healing Hand could do no more for him, and that the rest of his rehabilitation would need to be done outside his sanctuary. Because Tanson often spoke of a Lyre, Nathen suggested that he go to the bard's guild. Tanson, completely untrained in the arts of combat, had difficulty mastering even the basics of swordplay, and, as such, encountered some difficulty in his training. However, as he regained his strength, the concepts of warfare quickly became apparent to him, and he was able complete his training. His strength returned to him, he walked out of the gates of Falcion in full vigor, and smiled at the guards that patrolled the Sloop as he entered on his way to Nexus.

Tanson looked at a golden lyre behind the counter of Kalim's bar. The beautiful lyre sat on a velvet pillow, on a polished oaken stand.

"Interested in that lyre, eh?" Kalim asked Tanson.

Tanson continued to look at the lyre, not seeming to pay attention to Kalim's words.

Kalim scratched his head and said to Tanson, "Hey there! What's gotcha in such a daze?"

Tanson quickly dropped from his trance and looked at Kalim. "Oh, I was just looking at your lyre. It's a beautiful thing. Might I look at it for a moment?"

Kalim pondered for a moment. "I usually don't let people look at it, but since you're an aspiring musician, I'll grant you an exception."

Tanson smiled. Kalim handed the lyre to him with two hands. "Be gentle with it. Instruments of that quality you only come across once in a lifetime."

Tanson nodded. He took the lyre and gripped it with a familiarity that shocked even himself. He then curiously plucked the strings of the lyre. Thinking for a moment, he began playing a simple tune, before stopping abruptly.

"Mind if I play something on here?"

Kalim shrugged. "I suppose so. You seem adept enough at it."

Tanson smiled and nodded. He looked at the lyre carefully, and began strumming. Kalim watched with awe as Tanson played the lyre with skill well beyond his short years. As he played, a crowd gathered around Tanson, each person entranced by the gentle plucking of the strings. As Tanson's piece came to a close, a tall, beautiful elven woman with a black and red cloak around her stepped toward Tanson, away from the crowd. The woman kissed Tanson on each cheek, and placed a jeweled pin of a musical note on Tanson's lapel.

"I have never had the pleasure of hearing such a magnificent performance in my life. You are truly the fairest of Muses. May Andaras continue to pour Her blessings upon you."

Torak

Class: Bard
Race: Dwarf

"Ye did what?!"

Torak tried to look away, but all he succeeded in doing was meeting the eyes of his mother, besides his quite angry father.

"Ye be lookin at me when ah be talkin ta ye!" The dwarfs face was flushed beneath his beard. Torak looked back to his father, and met his eyes. "tell me what ye done."

"The master forger already be tellin . . ."

"Ah said, ye be tellin me what ye done."

Torak mumbled something into his neatly trimmed beard, the bane of his fathers exhistance. Many times Torak had heard his fathers lectures about how a beard was something that needed to be grown to its fullest; had put up with his brothers snickering; his mothers patient goading, but he would not grow his beard out.

"Speak up Torak!"

"Ah said ah burned tha Forge!!" Torak yelled. Berrits mustache bristled, as he glared at his impudent son. "Ah tol ye ah no wanted ta go in there in tha fist place, ah did. All ah be wantin . . ."

"Yer no gonna be singin, an that bein that!" The Master Forger, standing behind Torak looked about the dwelling place of the Battleforgers. A nice sized hearth sat in the far wall, with many weapons above it. The Battleforgers had always been a distinguished family, throughout the history of the mountain city of Tagin.

"Berrit, now ye calm down. Tha damage no bein as bad as it sound. In tha morn, ye be seein nay a scorch mark," the Master Forger said, slowly.

Berrit glanced briefly at the Master Forger, then returned his glare at his son. "What ye be thinkin? What be goin on in that head o yers?" Torak returned his fathers glare, with one of his own. He then turned, went to his room, and slammed the door; immediately he opened it a crack, to listen.

The master forger sighed slightly, and patted Berrit on the shoulder. "What he be thinkin?" Berrit asked no one in particular. He turned to look at the hearth. "He be singin in that festival, an he do be good, but ifin he be havin his way, he woul put a flute along side our kins weapons. A flute sittin by Tivins Mithrill battle-axe," He sounded indignant at the thought.

"Berrit, ifin ah remember me history correctly, an ah no sayin that ah do, but ah seem ta remember that durin tha war o races, eery group o dwarves that be afightin had a person that sang the war chants, an ifin they be singin in their heart, those songs coul make the enemy turn tail, an run lak a dragon tryin ta git back ta its treasure after hearin someone be steelin it," the Master Forger said. "An while ah be rememberin, ah think that one o the Battleforgers was one o the great warrior bards . . .but ah coul be mistaken."

Torak wanted to hail the Master Forger as king, right then and there. He had never heard anyone make his father eat his own words. Wellin, at least ah have someone on me side.

Enirra looked at the Master Forger. "Ifin Torak be hearin that, he neer let go o this crazy idea. We no hae had a bard among our peoples fer a very long time, an it ould break is lil heart." She looked back to her husband "but it bein his choice Berrit."

"No while he be livin here, it not. He gonna be back at tha forges in tha mornin, with yer permission, Master Forger." The Master Forger looked at Berrit, and Enirra. He sighed slightly, but nodded. "wellin, that be settlin that. Thank ye fer comin Master Forger, Torak no be setting fire ta yer forges gain, be surein bout that."

Torak closed the door, his mind made up.

The halls were quiet, and empty, except for a set of footfalls, echoing lightly off the stone walls. Torak had a backpack on, and was walking the halls quickly, and as quietly as possible. He rounded a corner, and bumped into the Master Forger. Both took a step back, and looked at the other.

"An werein ye be off ta at this hour?" The master Forger looked at Torak, took in his backpack, and traveling clothes.

"Ah bein off . . .ta tha forges, ta be seein if . . .ifin ah cin help with the . . .repairs."

"Ah be thinkin the forgers not be wantin yer help fer a while, not til they be forgettin yer accident." The Master Forger grinned into his beard as Torak tried to think of something to say. "Now ah be knowin yeve no intention o headin back in the forges . . ." Torak seemed almost panicked, but the Master Forger raised a hand to forestall any denials, or panicked words. "Wat ye be wantin me ta tell yer kin? Where ye be headin ta, or do ye know yet?"

Torak looked up at the Master Forger, his eyes wide in shock. "Ye know?"

"Oh aye. Yer father be havin a will o granite, and ye no be bendin yerself. Ah knew ye were listenin from yer room, twas why I said what ah did. Ye have a talent Torak, unlike ah hae seen, or heard, in hundreds o years. Ye need ta follow yer heart, an yer heart be tellin ye ta leave. Bein there anathin ye want me ta tell yer kin?"

Torak looked at the floor. "There be nothin that ah hae no said already." The Master Forger nodded slightly. Torak turned to leave, and the older dwarf stopped Torak with a hand on his shoulder. The Master Forger fished about in his puches, and pulled out a medallion.

Made of Mithrill, it glistened in the torchlight as he handed it to Torak. "It bein tha symbol o the Dwarven Bards o old. Ye be wearin that when ye go ta battle, an be singin tha Dwarven battle songs, and chants, it be bringin some luck. Ah made it tha day after ah hear ye sing. Somehow ah new, one way o another, ye woul be usin it."

Torak took the medallion with close to awe on his face. "Ah . . .thank ye. It bein tha best thin ah eer seen come out o yer forge," Torak looked up, as he realised what he had said "no offense, Master Forger, ye be makin great weapons, an armor, an . . ." Torak was prepared for the Dwarf to take the medallion back, for the insult he had just given, but all he did was chuckle.

"Yed best be headin off now, ah kept ye long nough. Goo journey young bard, make us proud." Torak turned, and headed off through the halls, to the great doors of Tagin, and to the surface. The Master Forger looked off toward where Torak had disappeared in the halls. "Sing with pride, young one, ye carry a grea burden on yer shoulders. Ifin ye only knew . . ." his whisper was swallowed by the shadows of the halls as the Master Forger, the leader of the Priests of the fallen goddess Twilia (though few indeed knew that) turned, and headed off to his room.

Torak walked the streets of the strange town, with eyes filled with wonder. He spoke to himself in Dwarven, and got more than one strange look from a few people. "Such tall buildings, and above ground . . ." he shook his head in wonder. He walked the streets, looking, trying not to gawk. He ran into a woman, with green hair, Green hair?! He looked up at her. This was obviously an Elf. Such a thin creature, it seemed to Torak she would fall over on the spot, and be too weak to get back up. Far from falling over, she bowed to him.

"Greetins to ye mistress." Torak remembered from his lessons that Elves were a strange lot, but being polite was something he had no trouble with. She smiled to him, and flowers burst into the air. Torak stumbled back with eyes wide. The woman named Azara, showed him the town, and to Toraks astonishment, there was a Bards Guild! A guild for people like him! The green haired elf gave him some money, and sent him off to learn songs he had never even heard of.

Such a strange, and wonderful place, this Nexus. Torak made his way to a tavern. He looked around, and smiled. It felt nice in this place, it felt right. He saw people with instruments walking around. Shrugging, he took out an instrument he had bought, and started practicing his songs, which he had just learned. Torak felt the medallion in his pocket as he sang, and he smiled. He would not wear that medallion until, as the Master Forger had told him, he sang a Dwarven battle chant, or song. In his mind, that would be when he earned the right to wear such an honorable

symbol of his people.

Wolfmoon

Class: Bard
Race: Drow

The Drow child looked up at his albino mother, clinging to her in confusion and terror, "Why are they doing this?" he asked his mother, as human bandits made their way around town, burning and slaughtering all they found, except the children.

The pale woman took her son in the very back of their house. There, she crouched in front of him, and both their crimson eyes met, "Rrehmlinh, those men out there are going to take you away from me, promise me you will not die, you must live through all of what their slavemasters will do!"

"...I don't un...understand..." he said as tears began to flow down his dark blue face.

"There's no time to explain! You must make it out of the human slave camps, then find your way to Nexus, that is where your destiny lies." Rrehmlinh's mother closed her eyes and wrapper her arms around him.

"But when will I see you again? You have to come with me mother! Nexus is too far away for me to go alone!" Rrehmlinh exclaimed, his voice high pitched from panic.

"You will make it. I know you will, you're as stubborn as your father." she breathed, "After your destiny has been fulfilled, then we will be together."

The Drow mother clasped her hands together around Rrehmlinh as the hinges of her door came crashing down. The humans pried the boy from his mother, tied him by his wrists and took him away. Then they turned to the pale Drow.

The city's foundations were burnt and destroyed. But a single tree stood behind a medium sized house. Rrehmlinh dangled off one of the thick branches of the massive tree, his wrists bound by rope that hung from the branch. He swung there motionless. All he could do was stare at the charred bones of his mother, lying in a pile of ashes and what was left of wood in the house.

The sun had settled in hours ago and the human bandits had already set up camp and celebrated over their victory, drunk of course. While Rrehmlinh continued to stare expressionless at his crumbled home, a faint tune caught his ears. For the first time in hours, he flinched. The tune was the same his mother used to sing to him. All this was too much for the boy. He looked back down at his crippled home, and the corpse of his mother was gone!

A few pulls and wiggles and Rrehmlinh was down on the ground, hidden, and already following the soft, soothing melody that made him want to curl up beside his mother and fall asleep, not worrying about anything at all. Once he snuck out of the ruined city and into the forest

surrounding, it was full sprint running and nothing less.

It seemed as if he ran for hours upon hours. Rrehmlinh ran past exhaustion and fatigue. It did not matter to him, he wasn't aware of anything but the tune slowly getting closer and closer. Soon he was out of the forest and came upon a high cliff, overlooking a vast water mound. At the bottom, the tune's source was coming from somewhere down there. Suddenly the boy felt dizzy, his exhaustion catching up to him as he fell off the cliff. When he hit the water below, everything went black.

Opening his eyes, Rrehmlinh tried to regain his knowledge of where he was. But all he could remember was what happened to his people and mother. He couldn't even remember his name. The boy suddenly realized where he was. He looked around the cave den he was in and the pack of wolves surrounding him. It was terribly cold out and the body heat they put off kept the Drow warm so he decided to stay where he was. The alpha female wolf was the closest to him. So close, her fur brushed against him. Being this close to the first wild animal he'd ever seen made him more than a little uneasy but once the female wolf looked at him, stared, and went back to sleep, his nerves calmed slightly. Enough to let him rest.

The first few days were very complicated. Rrehmlinh stayed with the pack, they seemed to not act any differently with him around. In a dream, the alpha female came to him, "We knew you were coming." she said to him.

"But how?" he asked back.

"That is not important now. You will stay here with us until we have taught you everything you need to know about how to survive in the world." she explained. "This is the only way I can communicate with you and I am the only one here that can do it. We will protect you, teach you how to defend yourself, to hunt, fish, and to teach you things about nature."

After that night, Rrehmlinh would go out every night on the cliff outside the den and would lie beside the alpha female and they would stare at the stars and the moon. He would sing songs that came to his mind, mainly the one his mother used to sing to him and together the Drow and the wolf would fall asleep.

A few years went by, the young Drow learned many things living with the wolves and now it was time that he explored the world, to go find his destiny. Rrehmlinh gathered the supplies he would need, and said his goodbyes. By this time, all the wolves had grown to love him. But the alpha female was still closest to him.

He departed then and traveled to many cities, learning of the world, of the different races that inhabited it. Along the way he made his money singing and entertaining in taverns. Then leaving before anyone could talk to him.

Rrehmlinh finally made his way to Falcion. After exploring the main roads, he went to sell a few things at the pawn shop. The woman at the counter, Latashia said to him, "You look like a new face, who might you be?"

It had been forever since anyone referred to him by name. He had forgotten his Drow name years ago. He paused and thought for a moment, then replied, "The name's Wolfmoon."

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