Clerics

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

Alix

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

"Where the hell is our money?!" Alix yelled slamming a man against a wall. His gang the Red Bands had quite a reputation to live up to. Robbing travelers, loaning money to people and hurting them severely if not paid back. They were the tormentors of Whoville indeed, but Alix didn't do it without reason. His family was very poor, his father running off when he was just a ten years old he had to help support the family. Indeed this profession had its good points, but it had its bad.

"G-g-give me a-a-another m-m-m-m..." Pleaded the man. "Another what you worthless beggar!?!?!" Alix said punching the man in the face as his comrades held him up against a wall.

Blood dripped down the mans face, "A-a-another month." he screamed. Alix grinned, "Who do you think I am? hmm? I have a family to support.. mouths to feed." he continued "I have a reputation and I aint gonna let it go." At this Alix wielded a knife. The man screamed as it slit his throat and died. "Clean this up and lets go." Alix said cooly and at the end of the day he went home.

"Alix! you're home." his mother smiled, hugging him "I take it your paper editor job went well." "Oh yeah mom.. it was great." Alix once again lied the lie he had been telling for years "I wrote a column today on fox hunting." The conversation filled the room as him, his mother, two brothers and three sisters sat at the table eating. He was the oldest of course and the man of the house.

Day by day he did his job, some days worse than others. "Oh just got caught in the printing press." He would say to his mother whenever he showed up with a wound. His life had been tough indeed, but he always looked to his family for joy. Well, until one night.

Alix lay on his bed staring at the ceiling when he heard a scream. He ran to the sound and went into his little brothers room. "Freeze or the kid gets it." said a rival gang member. Alix was not so easy. He quickly picked up a chair and before the guy knew it he was whacked in the face. Alix wielded a blade killing the man.

Just then another gang member ran into the room slashing Alix's little brother in the stomach "Take that for killing him," Alix he was quick and escaped through the window.

Screams of pain echoed as Alix’s little brother bleed. His mother rushed into the room in a panic also screaming. She did what she could but it looked as though he was going to die.

Tears dripped down Alix’s face as he watched his six year old brother bleed. He wished he could do something, anything. He would have given up anything to save him. "Gods help him! help him damnit!!" he prayed. He reached out his hand "Help him gods!! help him!!!!!!!!" he prayed more. The boy screamed "HELP HIM!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" he continued to scream. "Help him damnit it!! Do something!!!!!" at this a bolt of energy shot from Alix’s hand and the screaming ceased.

From the moment of this miracle Alix decided to take up a new profession. He decided to be a cleric, and that he did.

Ashen

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

Part I

Ashen's story starts far to the northeast of Nexus, traveling with his family as they try to transport goods. Being forced away by the horde Baldryc had hoped to retreat to Nexus, moving his few remaining goods on their wagon along with his family. His dearly beloved Cynthia was afraid for the safety of her two young ones but she knew they couldn't stay with the oncoming army.

Having evaded the goblin scouts for nearly half a moon, Baldryc knew they had been overtaken by a group of goblins. Hiding and sneaking near constantly for many days had taken its toll on the parents, almost to the point of exhaustion. They discussed one night, once the boys had gone to sleep, their options and possible final measures.

Managing for the next two and a half suns to remain out of the hordes grasp, their luck was not to hold. Goblin scouts happened upon the wagon mid-morning of that day. Baldryc brought the old horse to a canter, whisking away from the scouts along the rocky trail. Careering down the path was more than the wagon could take, the spokes on a wheel splintered and sent the wagon and family into the undergrowth. As the horse came to a stop with the wagon listing to one side Baldryc helped Cynthia up and delicately supporting her in his arms. "We have no choice, there is no hope but to chance it. We just have to be close enough for what strength we have left", Baldryc informed his beloved. "But Bal, if we aren't, what will happen? We don't know even if Nexus' location stone still operates!", Cynthia replied with a worried tone. "Without the wagon we cannot outrun the scouts any longer. We must try, it's their only hope" came the soft response from Baldryc. Tearfully Cynthia picked up her youngest bundle of joy and kissed his forehead, "May the gods watch over you and Dilanis bloom in your heart. "Baldryc picked up his pride and joy, "Ashen, keep your brother safe and may Andaras guide your path." Slipping a small ring off his finger and placing it in his chubby hands. "You are the eldest of the Talari line, do us proud as a Talari only can." The guttural tones of sneaking goblins could be heard through the gentle rustle of leaves. Circling around the two parents and the remains of their wagon. Cynthia and Baldryc held their children

and chanted "Go where the winds carry thee." in unison.

White light enveloping the two boys, growing to a blinding flash, translocating them far far away. With the dimming of the white luminescence, Baldryc carefully sat his exhausted spouse on the wagon then moved to a small chest on the wagon. Fumbling with the latch he removing a small packet of cloth. Smiling to Cynthia he carefully unwrapped the bundle to reveal a sparkling red dragon scale, inscriptions upon its front and back. "But... I thought.. You didn't.. How?.. He is going to be so annoyed when he finds out Bal.", Cynthia stuttered spying the object. Baldryc smiled knowingly, "I hardly see how it matters, Cynthia Daniela Talari. I promised before we left that the horde would never have our bodies or souls and I always keep my promises to you." Taking his wife by the hand he led her up by the horse still tethered to the wagon. "Well old boy, don't worry I'm not about to let them get you either." Kissing Cynthia gently on the lips one last time he squeezed her hand and started to chant, "Be consumed by the flame that tortures souls." A small red spark appeared between the three souls, growing and changing to orange then white. Drafts of heated air tugged at Cynthia's hair as it rose up around the group. As the goblins entered the small clearing where the wagon had ended its last trip, the spark twinkled then exploded.

Searing white fire enveloped the humans holding hands gazing lost into each others souls, the old horse and the wagon, disintegrating it before time itself noticed. The goblins in the surrounding bushes and on the track were charred to ashes in the ring of fire as it burst out from its focal point.

Whether it was Aalynor's grace, Tilnar's mercy, Dilanis's love, Andaras's beauty, Trista's mischief, Pandora's hope, Erisar's hunt or Paelina's valor or sheer luck is anyone's guess. Ashen and Nehsa did arrive at their parents' desired location, much to the surprise of the aging Priestess who later helped shelter and raise them within the temple.

Part II

Ashen wasn't what you would call the most usual child, this was obvious from our first meeting. Finding the boy holding a babe in his arms, sitting next to the sapphire wasn't what I had expected going to my noon prayer. After having coaxed who he was and why he was in the temple, letting them stay within the temple seemed a simple solution. We never heard from any of his family and they both lived within the temple for all of my last years, causing their usual childish mischief and small surprises.

One of the strangest occurrences I have seen Ashen cause would have to be what we came to term his "Angel dreams". These weren't normal dreams, no child has glowed with an aura and smiled so peacefully while sleeping I assure you. From what we were able to understand he would dream of Aalynor's angels, coming down to talk to him while he slept. I merely took this as a sign of his calling and natural beliefs for Aalynor's cause, while some disagreed Ashen never cared what people thought. There was the time he came across some young wizardess in the woods, which should teach all you young females to not bathe in streams. Ashen, in one of his walks through Eldane, came across a female voice floating along the breeze down by a stream. Being a curious lad and too young to know better he set about investigating. To both their surprise he came across a lady bathing naked in the stream, the young lass in her surprise stunned him knocking the wee child unconscious. She then gathered her wits and rescued him before he drown in the reeds.

His understanding of the weave and soul was underestimated by many, but I knew the child had talent from our first lessons. Teaching the lad with the other acolytes of the temple, he was quick to grasp the concepts of life and the natural order of things. The role of the gods in our mortal lives was something he persisted in pursuing and learning more of. One thing he held high was the grace of life, maintaining that life has a natural order of birth, death, then rebirth as Aalynor found willing.

One of the saddest days I care to remember was when he left me to train upon Falcion. Setting off with his knife and shield as I handed him to the sloop master. I cried that day as if it was my own child that was going away, for Ashen was the child I never had. Shyree, Priestess of Light

Atrius

Class: Cleric
Race: Elf

Born on Tilur, the eighth of the month of the Twilight, in the year 1,587 since the Godswar, and year 1,170 of the Empire, Atrius grew up in an elven society, with no contact of wether humans or other living beings. Well, except for animals.

For twenty years Atrius, his mother, father, two older brothers and his younger sister lived peacefully in this village, until one day when a large pack of wolves invaded the village. Since most of the men were out hunting, the ones in the village were brutally slaughtered by the wolves. Atrius though, somehow managed to hide in safety. He waited there for several hours, not daring to reveal himself, in case the wolves were still there. As he heard no more outside, he dared to leave his hiding place. As he went outside, he saw the most horrifying scene of his life. All the villagers, including Atrius' family, lay scattered around the village, slain by the wolves.

Once the hunters got back, Atrius told them all about what had happened. They formed a new hunting party and went out to slay the wolves. As soon as they found the wolves, a tough battle was to take place. Atrius, who was not very skilled with weapons stayed in the background and watched. Many of his fellow villagers fell to the wolves, yet the rest of them defeated the pack. It was at this point that Atrius discovered his abilities.

As his comrades lay wounded on the ground, he felt a sudden urge of aiding them. He then slowly walked from one man to another, healing their wounds perfectly. They were all amazed by his abilities and hurried back to the village to save the ones wounded there. But Alas, it was too late.

The men and Atrius buried all the corpses and then left the village to find a new place to settle down. And so they left, packing and carrying whatever they could. Then, after many weeks of wandering, they came to a city named Taeviral. Here they settled down and Atrius began exploring the city, curious of what it was like. As he did, he fell in love with the city, due to its beautiful architecture.

A few months passed, and Atrius heard about the city of Nexus. As he wanted to leave and search for it, he was told he was not allowed entrance there until he had been trained in the city of Falcion. So, Atrius packed some of his belongings and left for Falcion to begin his training. Many months of hard training led him to finally achieve the title of Priest. As he did, he left for Nexus.

Now, many years later, he has had the time to become a Follower of Mistress Dilanis and he has also found his Love.

Cadderly

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

"A history?"

"Yes, all great heroes are asked to submit a history." the historian said.

I thought about this and thought what has the world come to? Me, Cadderly Deneir, a hero of Nexus? I couldn't help but laugh.

"So..." I started to ask, "are you saying that I'm actually considered a 'hero' of Nexus?"

The historian looked at me with a quizzical stare and said "Oh no...we were just told to record your history. I mean, face it, you're no Eleysha or Gifford."

I frowned. Great. There goes all shred of self-worth...but he does have a point.

After considering the man's words, I ask, "Where do you want me to start?"

"Well, you could just start with your early years you know, where you were born, what you're family was like?" he said.

"Ok...I was born on..." I started. As I was telling my story, I hadn't realized that I was actually babbling to the historian. I was actually exaggerating some parts and embellishing my exploits. After a good two hours, I decided to stop. I think he realized I wasn't making any sense. I think the part that made him realize this was when I said I killed two Blue Dragons single handedly and then saved Rymek from disaster. I think he may have been a bit upse,t...he left shouting curses and hurling a mug at me. I managed to duck, but the ale got on my shirt.

"How rude!" I shouted. "You know how hard it is to clean this shirt!"

It was just as well...the man had no class. As I attempted to wipe the stain from my shirt, I began to ask myself what I was doing in this shoddy little tavern. Utterly disgusted with myself and peeved by the fact that I couldn't get rid of the stain, I paid the serving wench and bolted out of the inn. I took care to hide my face...I don't know if I could survive the shame and indignity of being seen at

this disgusting little waterhole.

Once I reached the more hospitable climate of Trista's Tavern, I dug into my pack and looked for a nice clean shirt. Unfortunately, all my other shirts were being cleaned. Great…I thought…now what am I supposed to do? What will people say if they saw me with a stain? I wouldn't be able to bear the humiliation and embarrassment. But then again…I realized that people might be drunk…they wouldn't notice a little stain. But then again…what if they did…

I was a bit thirsty, so I decided to risk it. I entered the tavern. I immediately spotted an old friend, so I started to walk towards him. As I was walking, I caught sight of a ravishing young noblewoman. She saw me and smiled. I could tell she was interested. So, I ignored my friend's attempt to greet me and headed towards the beautiful blonde lady. Just before I begin my introduction, I hear a loud cough.

"Hey there Cadderly! What's that on your shirt?"

I freeze. Curse! Someone did notice! What am I going to do? I decide to act normal and turned to the speaker. Guess what? It was my old friend…or more correctly, former friend.

"Oh…hello there…if you'll excuse me, I'm a bit busy over here. And it's not a stain." I say to my 'former' friend. I turn to greet the enchanting beauty.

"Doesn't look like a stain to me!" he bellowed as he hobbled his way towards me.

"Look…" I respond, "you're obviously drunk and seeing things. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm in the middle of something."

I try to turn away, but he grabs my shirt and says, "Sure does look like a stain to me!"

Curse this drunken fool! By now, I realize that we've become the center of attention. I start hearing people whispering and I can only assume that they saw the stain. I try to ignore them and turn towards the charming young lady only to find that she too noticed the stain. I frown, bow, and rush towards the door. I've never been so embarrassed! Curse the ignoble historian!

I decide a pleasant stroll the Museum of Arts and Beauty would calm my nerves and once again put me at ease. I start to think, what if I had just told the historian the truth? If that had happened, I'd be spending the remainder of the evening in the company of a most beautiful woman. Now I'm alone and going to spend the evening viewing fascinating art pieces. Oh well…not to worry. I can be lots of fun, and who better to spend it with?

As I reach the Museum, I start to wonder, how in the world did I ever get to where I am now? Oooh…lovely piece…I must get someone to paint me a picture like that for my apartment! Anyways…back to my original thought, I wonder how my life came to this.

"Milord! Please! Open the door!" "No! I won't go! I don't want to go!" I screamed.

After several thumps to door, I realize that door could be bashed down easily. I pull a table to bar the door.

"Please milord! You're father will get angry!" a muffled voice came from behind the door.

"I don't want to go! I don't want to be a warrior!" I whined as loudly as possible.

Then all of a sudden, the door gets broken down. I try to hide under my bed, but to no avail.

"Cadderly, is this anyway a noble is supposed to act?" a grim and dour looking man asked me.

I crawl from underneath the bed and say "No father…"

I was 15 then. I hated being a noble because I had so much work to do. Everyday, one of my tutors would drill me in etiquette, swordsmanship, history, arithmetic, and so on. It was so boring! All I wanted to do was go out, meet cute girls, and play with my friends. I guess you could say I was lucky though. Since I was the youngest of 4 brothers, I knew I wasn't going to be my father's heir. So, when I failed to show promise in being a warrior, they just gave up on me. But that didn't stop them drilling me! I always thought, if I'm not good at anything, then why am I being taught these things?

On my 16th birthday, I managed to skip a tutoring session and headed for town. I was bound to get caught, so I decided to have as much fun as I could. I walked around town looking for some friends, when I met the most beautiful girl I've ever seen. She was just perfect! I knew I had to meet her. I trotted towards her, but I realized that she was busy working. Well ... she would stop for me…I mean…I was a noble and my family owned this land. I walked up to her and introduced myself. She realized who I was and immediately bowed. I asked for her name and she said it was Robyn. Wow…such a pretty name. I asked her if she was doing anything and she said no…it was interesting seeing her skip out on her chores. So we went off in search of fun, and eventually the search led us to a secluded forest. We climbed a tree and just sat there for hours, talking without a care in the world. I was in love!

After a few hours, I decided to give her a kiss. She didn't seem to resist, so I made my move. Just before I my lips would meet hers, the tree branch snapped. We fell about 12, maybe 13 feet. I landed with a groan and slowly got up. I went to see how Robyn was, but she wasn't standing. I reached for her hand, but it was cold. I went next to her and held her close. She wasn't breathing! I yelled and yelled for help, but no one was coming. I picked her up slightly and held her close. Tears started to form in my eyes.

"NOOO! Don't die! Please don't die Robyn!

I started to pray. I prayed and prayed that someone would come. But it didn't have to come to that.

While I was holding her, I felt a strange sensation throughout my entire body. I started to panic, but a soothing voice entered the back of my mind.

"Fear not…she will not die. You have a special gift Cadderly Deneir, and you will save her."

Not understanding what was going on, I let the voice guide me.

"Feel the power in your body and use it to save her!"

I had no idea what the voice was talking about, so I just decided to hold her close and kiss her forehead. At that instant, I felt an incredible rush of energy leaving me and entering Robyn. Moments later, she was awake. She asked me what was going on, and so I told her that we fell down and that she had been knocked out. I held her close as we leaned next to a tree and fell asleep.

We woke up the next morning and returned to town. I stopped by her house to apologize for her disappearance, and of course, the man had accepted. He wasn't going to get mad at the son of Lord Deneir! After dropping her off, I headed for home, wondering what had happened last night.

For the next few months, I researched all the possibilities of what had happened. None of the books my family had could explain, so I decided to talk to one of my tutors, and old sage named Mikkel. I explained what happened that day, leaving out a few minor details, and he told me what had happened.

He said, "It's called Faith Magic."

"What?" I asked incredulously.

He proceeded to explain the intricacies of faith magic and had known my potential as a priest. I asked why he never told my father, and he simply explained that Lord Deneir had no use for priests. This was a warrior household…he didn't understand magic or faith.

I realized that I had finally found something I might be good at. But I also realized that I would never be able to become a priest if I stayed here. From that moment on, I realized, what I had to do. I would head to Falcion and apprentice myself as an Acolyte. That evening, I grabbed some clothes and money and snuck out of the castle. Before I left town, I stopped by Robyn's place to see how she was. Against my better judgment, I decided to spend one more enchanting evening with her. It was a wonderful night and I'll never forget it…

"Hmm…very interesting piece." I said, as I'm viewing a new design in the new Museum. I move on to a chamber where only the faithful of the Mistress of the Arts can enter, kneel, and pray to Lady Andaras.

After my prayer, I head out only to see the same beautiful woman that was in Trista's Tavern. She appears to be wandering around, hopelessly lost. Well…is it just my luck or what? I head over to her and introduce myself.

"Hello, young and beautiful one….I am Cadderly Deneir. And you are?"

Looks like things aren't so bad after all….

Choley

Class: Cleric
Race: Half-Elf

this letter was sent to the library, a copy of the original Dear Akama,

You inquired about my past in your last letter, which I recieved some time ago. The reason my response is so late is because you caught me at an akward time in my life, but I'll get into that some other time. The other reason this is so late because I didn't know what exactly was worth writing about. There are not many events worth writing about, really. But my dear father had once said, "It doesn't matter if its an extra-oridinary event, just so long as you think its imporant." I suppose he is right, since he usually is.

The begining of my life was at sea, born onto my father's boat, which he called Life Lover. My mother didn't want to raise me, a lot of people said she suffered from insanity and was an unfit mother anyhow. She was an elf, a high elf, and had met my father at a port. They had been together only long enough to get married before she disappeared. He had told me she was thrown from the ship during a storm and they could not find her. I guess he didn't want me to worry about suffering the insanity she suffered.

My father was a wonderful man, he raised me the best way he could. He was a human and captain of his own ship. That was all he had ever wanted in his life. I became a member of his crew when I was old enough, but we argued all the time because he didn't think I should grow up in that enviroment. He thought I should learn to become a proper woman, and sent me to school when I was 14 years old. During the summers I would sail with him and the rest of the year I sat in classrooms. Now that I look back on it, sending me to school was the only bad decision my dad had ever made. But he had the right intentions I suppose.

Five years later I graduated, majoring in clerical magics. One of my teachers had pushed me to study that, saying "Ladies should avoid fighting in battles, but if you are going to participate in them then you should be there to aid the wounded." In the end it worked out, I didn't mind learning magics and I loved the field tests. They would put us together with a few hired swordsmen and a few angry tigers. We were given missile weapons, but I bugged the teacher till she gave me a club. That was the only thing I will ever admit to enjoying about that school. And I did very well, learning how to attack while making sure everyone else was allright.

Anyway, after graduation I went travelling. I saw my father very little, but when we did see each other he was always very pround of me. I'm not sure why, since I lived my life camping out in the woods and hunting wolves and bears. I guess he just was happy I was alive and safe for the most part. I learned a bit about hunting, and improved my healing skills a little. Well, one day my old club broke in half and I went to Nexus city for the first time to see if it was any cheaper on weapons. When I first entered the place there was a large group of people standing around yelling about attacks on their city. I guess you know how it went from there. I joined the clerics guild, since healing was my only real skill, and was sent to falcion to work on my abilites.

Well, I'll tell you the rest when you visit. Get my father to bring you over, I haven't seen him in a long time now. And take care of yourself.

Sincerely with love, Choley

Dahlia

Class: Cleric
Race: Elf

::(One)::==========

Dahlia had been born to a peasant family in the west of Altin, among the hills of Thornto, and she had spent her earliest years footloose in the wild places around her hamlets osier shacks. The animals had danced for her then in the moonlight, and a God had spoken to her at twilight of her future. No one else in the area could see or hear them, and she had been too young then to think that this was strange. A messenger had arrived in the village where Dahlia had lived for the last thirty years of her life; raising her children, healing the sick, and guiding her husband. The messenger had handed the village’s leader the roll of vellum which had been written on handsomely in the language of the Elves. Several villages near to the western Seas had been burned to the ground. No survivors remained, and only a field of ash was left as a remnant of the battle. The people nearby feared for their lives, and were calling for help from any who were brave enough to destroy whatever force that had been consuming the other hamlets. Over the next few days, the parchment and its plea for help made its way into the hands of Dahlia. She knew not whatshe should do, and so sought council with her Lord. Later that night, Dahlia turned her back on where her husband and children lay asleep, and spoke out for the God she had dedicated her life to. A darkly gleaming voice announced itself from outside the buddingrose garden. Dahlia retreated through the lane poplars to the lily pond, following the source. Leaning over the black water, she saw reflected in its rimpled surface a tall, young man with the blackest hair and long, tapered eyes that shone dark as a raven’s breast. He wore the opulent garments of a mortal nobleman: green linen tunic embroidered with flowerets of gold, brown leather leggings, and clumsy black boots. She recognizedhim at once as Erisar, Lord of the Battle and Hunt. Insects dimpled the surface of the lily pond as frenzied as rain, and Erisar, like a figure from a redundant dream, appeared as young and mirthful as she herself did. A faithful call echoed through her body, and she knew at once what the God was asking. A stick cracked behind her, and she turned around to see the cause of the disturbance. A young fawn stumbled from the bushes and stood with big, flickering eyes; its earsaimed forward like satellites. She cast a backward glance to the lily pond. The God was gone, and a toad peeked at her from under agreen coverlet of pond froth.

::(Two)::==========

Cissa and Gareth had left the huts already and gone down to the river to spear for fish. They stood on their reflections in the shallows among ghostly boughs, ragged curtains of moss, and luminous egrets. Fish lit the black waters with glints and shimmers like stellar atmospheres, and at first the

boys ignored theirmother's call. Dahlia waded toward them until the pulse of the river knocked at her knees and her voice easily penetratedthe green gloom. "I am called away. "The youngest, Gareth, splashed closer and plunged his spear into the mud so that he could grasp for hismother.

"Who calls you away, Mother?"

"It is a fateful call, child."

He bowed his noble head, and his brindled hair shone like the current in the river. She cosseted him, andwhen he looked up, his pale eyes shone with sorrow.

"It's Battle." Cissa knows. He pushed his spear into the mud and slogged to Dahlia's side.

She nodded and put her green-robed arms about her boys. Gareth pressed his face to Dahlia's shoulder."Are you going to die, Mother?"

She kissed his brow, feeling as though her heart had been thrown into the depth of a pool, and the waves were closing around the dream that was her life. "We all die, Gareth. How we live is what truly matters.You know that."

"I believe he means to ask if you are coming back to us." Cissa said, and swallowed. She met the dread in his eyes with a steady calm.

"I don't know," she answered, and kept all her grief coiled tightly between her ribs. "That is why I have come to say good-bye."

"Mother, let us go with you," Gareth pleaded. "We are old enough for battle now. We will protect you."

Dahlia took his chin in her hand and spoke to the back of his eyes. "This is my own battle, Gareth. Soon enough, you will have your battles to fight. And then, you must be as brave as I must be now. Help me to do what I must by promising me that you will be brave and strong in your love of your home no matterwhat happens to me."

Then she looked to her eldest, and spoke, "Remember, Cissa, all I have taught you means nothing if you forget your limits." She stepped back from them, and her slender pale hands retreated from touching them to cover her breasts. "In my heart I carry the memory of you both. In your hearts, carry me. Look for methere."

In a steep meadow above the river, a goblin weavemaster waited for Dahlia. As he paced through the rye and the bushes of purple mallow and orange daises overflowing in late, rough-headed blooms, he dragged a blooded dwarf after him. It would have to eat soon, but before he would bother with that he wanted to be done with the priestess. She and her husband had the power to undo all his troops had worked so hard at doing, and he would not stand by and watch his forces be embarrassed by an army of elves. Dahlia ascended the hillside through marigolds and eyebrights from the river gorge, continuing passed the small dwarf and its master. Magic turned like smoke in her, folding into itself and pushing out, growing stronger with her fear that she will never see her

children again. In the secret place of her core, Dahlia suddenly sensed the presence of the weavemaster and whirled about to face the creek and her children. The goblin pulled a blanket of magic over him into the shape of the children’s mother and followed the small path down to the riverbank, over the sun-stained slopes to the large boulders around the nucleus of the creek. Dahlia's body had frozen; the dwarf loomed near to her, keeping her at bay from screaming for her children. The voices of her happy sons shriveled to screams as silver flames engulfed first Cissa, then Gareth. The two brothers collapsed, their flesh boiling from their bones. The world whirlled around Dahlia’s essence, and she dropped to the grass-covered hill in an instant.

Through the murky vision of her eyes, Dahlia saw a strong, blurred arm reach for her neck; and in the same instant, it disappeared, leaving a warm pain like nettlepricks in her neck. Her arms dartted up and clasped a throat band in the same instant that the spectral bone face of the blooded dwarf veered toward her, its spidery fingers already finding agonizing entrances into her skin.

Dahlia felt as fluid as poured water as prayer chants echoed through her mind. She called out for her Lord to take her soul and return herchildren to their lives, yet no answer was heard. She stood up, her mind still covered in a thick blanket of fog. Her brow wore a stamp of determination as her body was guided up the hill, away from the corpses of her children. The skin of her face shone with the gift of blood that the dwarf had left untouched. Firepoints glinted in her sight and shadows stiffened before her. She continued up and over the hill; her whole body shook to the bone as the images of what she’d seen permeated her mind. Her body finally gave up and she slipped to the ground.

Her head began to pound and her flesh felt slick and feverish. With one final breath, her mind gave up the struggle and she blacked out. Images swirled in a pool of despair within her intellect, calling forth the face of Erisar and the feelings of love her children filled her with. Her husband’s strong arms gripped her with a powerful embrace, bringingher senses back to life and awakening her mind.

::(Three)::==========

Atop the torched hills that peered down toward the village and the rocky coast, Aelle sat atop his formidable warhorse. Each charred tree of the seared forest around him stood erect, like a scaly stylus, against a sky swept raw and blue by the previous day’s storm. The ground, still faintly breathing vapors, hissed as his men drew up behind, and a smoldering stink of blackened scog tainted the air.

All the creatures of the forest were gone except for the crows perched on the flame-frayed boughs like living pieces of the dead landscape. They silently surveyed the infernal waste with him, and watched the world veer away to its rocky margins and to the shining surmise of the sea. He gazed beyond the crisped ash parapets to the sea, wondering when the next wave of invaders would arrive and if he would prove strong and able enough to withstand them. The chemical music of autumn filled the summer air, and sparks like faeries spun through the slant afternoon light. An august presence of leafsmoke and frosty emptiness lingered in the air, drifting east from the seas. Through the brume, he spied what had stampeded an entire village. A veritable behemoth walked

the earth.

It was a cancerous thing - spraddle-legged, imperfect, and malformed, its huge, tuberous shape hung with flesh like leper-rags: swinging and slobbering its misshapen head on a delirious neck of parasitical lace, the lumbering thing emerged from behind the hills big and warty-shouldered as the hills themselves.

"What abomination is this?" Bedevere yelled, his big horse sidestepped and rolled his eyes like a paradedancer.

"It’s a dragon made of cold fire!" a nearby wizard declared. "The goblins have created and provoked it!"

Aelle sat enthralled with fright. The dragon’s breath wheezed smoke from a face like an earth-fetus, brow lobes cankerous, peeling away in fleshy tatters where the skin had split and pink bone shone among fungoid scabs and horned growths. Eyes colorless as phlegm glared from the torn and grotesquely swollen head in a rage of agony as the beast shambled, moaning through the scalding sunlight.

"Daylight burns its hide!" Bedevere called out. "The dragon suffers under the sun!"Bedevere gawked in horror at the leviathan’s warped stride, its bedrock claws plowed the ruined fields witheach step. "Are there more upon the land?"

With a bone-jerking blast, the answer came: The dragon’s gruesome face unflanged a jaw that opened deep as a cliff into a gorge of teeth and blue-hot fire jetted from its maw.

The blaze consumed half a dozen sheep and left oozing twists of black bone in a pool of melted earth that bubbled like tar. It’s hunched shoulders unfurled to spiked wings, and tattered membranes between pinions of varnished bone snapped like whips in the updraft of its broad span. The vortex it spun toppled the running villagers.

Aelle reached for a burlap sack upon Bedevere’s jittery horse and unwrapped his sword. Its star blue blade mirrored the cindered world around them cold and clear as the cognizance ofa vigilant mind.

"What are you doing?" Bedevere gnashed, pulling with his one arm to hold his massive horse steady. "The risk is too great! Sheathe your weapon and let us flee from here, Aelle!"

"This is the evil that infests our countryside," Aelle said, taking the shield in his left hand. "This is what my Lord brought me here to confront. Now I will fight it."

"Not now, Aelle!" A soldier flung a terrified look to where the colossus bellowed, peering through the steam of its own smoldering flesh for its prey. "You must direct your warriors."

Aelle swung his palfrey around, aimed her to charge and rode off. The wizard nudged the mule out of the open into a field of gray winter grass and dragged the struggling Bedevere after him. From that partial cover, they stared transfixed at Aelle, who rode full tilt over the ashen terrain, kicking

up clouds behind him. In his right hand, his sword spun, flashing stars of sunlight through the sulfur smoke.

Bedevere stabbed his saber into the ground and leaned on its hilt, heart thick in his throat, mouth agape.

The dragon had spotted the charging horse and swung its obscene head toward the shouting rider and hisbright sword.

Aelle pulled Straif up short and stood the palfrey on her hind legs, sword swinging over his head.

With a bellow, the dragon veered toward him, yellow steam wafting off its saurian hulk. The villagers fallen in its shadow scrambled to their feet and ran off wildly.

The gills of the dragon’s rib cage pulsed in rhythm to its roaring stride as it descended on Aelle. The man lied flat over his steed, and the wizard, who had lifted himself to his knees atop his mule, stood straight up, and said in a voice barely audible in the shuddering air, "He’s talking to her! What in Erisar’s mercy is hesaying to her?"

"What?" Bedevere croaked. "What is he doing?"

"He’s talking to his horse!" The wizard wanted to turn away. His heart pumped in its darkness anddrummed in his head.

The jet of blue fire from the dragon’s maw blasted the air like a stroke of lightning. Bedevere shouted withalarm.

"Aelle!" Bedevere cried when he saw Aelle atop Straif lunging through the dragonsmoke.

The wizard blinked. The palfrey had listened to the man! She had not panicked under the blows of heat and bone-shaking thunder, nor under the stink - the lung-sore stink of the monster. With dazzling speed, Straif carried Aelle beneath the flame swath and between the dragon’s massive claws. His sword winked like a star as the man swung it upward into the torn leather breast of the creature.

A scream ripped to the horizons, and the gigantic beast staggered upright, its cable-thick tendons stretched to their twisted limits. With one heaving throe, the dragon tore into gusty auroras and vanished. From over the creases of earthen hills, the goblin hoard spilled into the valley, weapons raised and warflags flying. Bedevere shouted out the command to charge and the elven army rushed toward the enemies overthe cindered lands.

::(Four)::==========

Dahlia slunk onward, belly against the ground, to her horse shadowed against the broken yolk of the sun. She rode over sun-torn hills and finally arrived at the basin where the troops last were. The confusion of the ensuing battle engulfed Dahlia. It had already begun, and without the proper blessings of Erisar she was stunned at the very real abandonment of her faith by her husband. The

sepia battlefield before her glowed with eerie, muffled lights and smoky flares. Renewed sounds of struggle resounded dully through her head, and a strong voice shouted from the deep, encouraging her to ride on. She rode through the phantom landscape with her sword braced against her pommel ready to swing right or gouge left. Before her she saw the veiled wagon of her fellow priestesses and aimed her horse for the surrey. The women saw her approach and when she arrived, they pulled Dahlia from her steed like a wet rag and carried her into the carriage to drape her over a bed. She glowed pale as a candle. The charred pain of her children’s deaths crisped in her, and she sensed within her womb for the lifeforce of her new babe to ensure its safety.

"I must know, Dahlia." A young priestess spoke softly to her ear, awaiting the nod from the woman. She placed her fingertips on Dahlia’s wrist, and detected a slicing whine in the wind that seemed to whistle from low in her pelvis. "You bleed!" she cried in alarm. A subtle flex of her iris told her she knew.

"Can we save the baby?" The young girl asked the other healers and took Dahlia’s chill hand in her own. She shook her weary head and watched her through narrow, tired eyes. The inexperienced cleric’s eyes shimmered with silver. Dahlia gripped the woman’s forearm and pulled strongly enough on her body to pull her down on the bed beside her. She spoke to her mind with images of the battlefield; charcoal scrawls of pyre smoke revealed her husband, Aelle, sitting in the mud, whole yet hollow-eyed. "He suffers." The priestesses in the room nodded silently to each other and rushed from the carriage, leaving but twonurses with Dahlia. Aelle remained on a knoll over the battlefield. He stared up at the lovely darting of birds and at the fields of death on all sides. The whistle of fate threaded his heart. Aelle, dazed speechless, mute, dreambound, could not seem to focus his will long enough to pray and could feel his life seeping from the deep wound in his chest. His eyes slowly closed, and the image of his wife flashed momentarily before his heart slowed its rhythm and gradually stopped. The priestesses lead him away, shaking with misery to have found him dead and shivering dreadfully at the sight of him covered in gore with eyes so glazed they looked likemuddy jewels. Dahlia crouched alone in one corner of the carriage, pressed up against the wall with her knees tucked under her chin. The Priestess who had stayed behind to care for her had long ago left after relieving the knotted, searing pain in Dahlia’s stomach. Tears flowed freely down her face, attesting to the pain she feltfor the losses she suffered in just one day. The priestesses sent out to retrieve Aelle gradually returned to the sheet-covered surrey to tell Dahlia the news. Many wrung their hands nervously, eyes glued to the floor as one of the older women began to speak. The look on their faces told Dahlia everything she needed to know, and she knew the words would be too much for her to bear that day. Before another word could be uttered by the other women, Dahlia’s hands wrapped around a small, sapphire orb and she disappeared from sight. When she finally woke from sleep, Dahlia found herself in a small, well-kept park beside a fountain. Large oaks towered over her and the fountain, allowing only thin slants of light through their branches. As her tear-stained eyes finally focused in the cloudy light, she was able to make out the figures pressed into the fountain’s metallic side. The two Brothers smiled down at her from their perch over the water. Dahlia’s heart softened its beating as she realized she would be safe there.

Ellwynn

Class: Cleric
Race: Elf

In the days preceding The Rejoining, a rumbling was heard throughout the passageways of Tilnar's Vein. It was a time of turmoil for all of elvenkind, namely the Dark Elf, traitors to the Sylvan, and the possessors of the Dark magics. Turmoil caused by Kyorl's new found following ... the disdain of the Woodland brothers ... and the concern of the lost souls that could neither accept the future Kyorl offered, nor lose hope in the dream of returning to the ways of the Light (Elves). The "Grey" Elves know there destiny and hope to move quickly to defend there interest in the murky depths of "Tilnar's Vein."

Standing watch in the swirling mist, Domaline wondered what was held in store on such a distinct evening. Distinct in the fact that, the battle lines seem drawn. The priests of Tilnar feel that the news cannot be avoided. If the reports are true, then this night cannot pass quietly. It seems that the temple of Kyorl has been destroyed, and the ranks of the Drow following Kyorl seem to grow. It is to be the beginning of the end for may this eve.

As a scout of those who have called themselves "Grey", Domaline stands watch over one of the many secret passages that have been built to protect the rear portion of Tilnar's Vein. This is not a surprise, many in the community knew it would come to this eventually. " It is a wonder, these passages have not been found, it is hard to believe we could have out smarted the Drow so easily ... to gain control of the rear of the caverns and push the evil Drow out ... It cannot fail." gloats Domaline.

Domaline shivers as he is aroused to the sound of battle horns, explosions, and the clanging of cold elveN metal. "It cannot be ... how ... I have never ..." In a flash of fire, Domaline realizes that he has dozed, missing the enemy scouts, and even the first line of attackers. The fire was that of a Mage in rear lines of the aggressing Drow. Quick to consider his plight, Domaline realizes that he is considered dead ... A scout behind enemy lines.

As he slowly creeps from his station, he slowly heads for the surface. "It is my only hope at this point." Domaline shudders. At the first joining tunnel, Domaline is met by a group of patrolling Drow. Bolting, Domaline gains a quick step on the now pursuing patrol. Turning a number of dark corners, he directly enters the grasp of a Dark robed gentleman. " Going somewhere?" stated the robed figure. " I suggest that you follow me."

Stepping through an invisible entrance, Domaline follows the robed figure. "Quickly boy, the fight goes badly and the priests wish to close the passages to the lower realms." Dumbfounded, Domaline mumbles "Who are you?" (Silence) " Quickly boy, we have no time!" In the next instant, the figure has disappeared in the swirling smoke. Following to the best of his ability, Domaline swiftly navigates the haze yet, he can see no more than a swirl of smoke and the sounds of a swishing robe. Even his infra-vision seems to be little help ... everything seems to appear hazy. "This must be a line of defense that the priests have created ..." ponders Domaline.

As this warped sense of reality snaps back into focus, Domaline looks across a large chamber ... a Hall?, Tomb?, Temple? ... a Temple! ... deeply buried in the deepest reaches of the Vein .....

Stepping out on to the marble lined floors, the echo is deafening.

No sooner than Domaline can marvel at the existence of such a work of beauty, shots ring out throughout the temple. The sanctuary is alive with the sound of arrow flight, shot, and magic auras. Snapping back to grim reality ... Domaline notices that the robed figure has cleared two thirds of the Temple. He yells back: "Hurry boy, your life depends on it!"

As Domaline clears the first quarter of the temple, a deafening rumble is heard throughout. A large stone slab seems to glow, slowly sliding toward a small passage as the last of Tilnar's faithful pass through. As Domaline reaches the passage the boulder nearly covers the entrance. Amidst the commotion, the robed elder has turned back to make certain the young scout will reach the gate in time. As Domaline reaches the robed figure, he catches a glance of the hooded man's face, in horror he sees himself, only older and very concerned ... time seems to slow as the truth becomes obvious. Domaline stumbles as a fiery pain rips through his side and knocks him forward. As his chest slides across the polished floor, the scout feels a second burst of fire as an arrow pierces his thigh, dragging across the marble, scraping and opening the wound further. As Domaline looks up, he sees the opening about to close ... only to feel to large hands drag him forward ... then an explosion, and darkness ...

Awakened, by a shooting pain and the smell of death, Domaline looks up seeing a glimmer of light. The rest of the surrounding chamber is full of rubble, death and thick impenetrable rock. Following the rubble upward, there seems to be an escape. But for now ... Darkness

Slipping, for the third and final time, Domaline screams in agony. Having scaled half the distance, only to fall, leaves Domaline tried and his thoughts cloudy. In the moments before his next departure, Domaline looks to the light, in its midst, riding a sunbeam, his sees a pixie-like creature, fair in feature, and light in contrast with this darkest hell. "I hear your screams and it disturbs me, I feel your pain ... as do all who have passed on to Brother Tilnar, yet you continue to survive..." "Take hope young man, for through perseverance and desire you will succeed." As the vision left him, again darkness consumed him...

As the last five feet haunted him, he could feel the teasing of the cool evening. Strength at an end, Domaline gritted his teeth and pulled until, at last, he breathed the fresh air of the forest surrounding him. He laughed to himself, as an owl called for its mate, and the stars swirled ... again darkness consumed him ... Waking, Domaline finds himself in a room ... heavily bandaged, and sore. He is looked after by a young Elven healer. She goes on to introduce herself as the village healer, having studied in a distant village in the Northern reaches of the Eldane. Domaline, curious for knowledge outside of the world he knew, occupies much of this healers time. Being that there ages are similar, they seem to find the company comforting. As the weeks pass, Domaline becomes attached to Geylwynn's company.

As history suggests, this small community, shuns Domaline, eventually withdrawing courtesy, and suggesting that he move on. In addition, Geylwynn is found to be pregnant and follows Domaline, in search of a fulfilling life. These two find each other to be fascinating, and live together, forming a small hunting and trapping community deep within the Eldane. Domaline and Geylwynn have two boys and continue to work on there family as the small community begins to grow as misfits and

the exiled are taken in, in an effort to give them some self worth.

The story tells of Geylwynn's devotion to the spreading of Hope throughout the community. Through action and deed, Geylwynn assists any person who asks for help. No request was usually denied.

As fall approached, Domaline wished to take a load of Furs into town. Convincing his dearest Geylwynn that the trip was safe, they departed for Nexus. With the two young boys in tow ... both yet nursing, they traveled south east to the town of Nexus. Within two days of Nexus ... the two met a band of battle worn soldiers. Geylwynn, to stubborn to think better, stopped and agreed to assist the band in there time of need. The party was worn, having lost a healer, and two warriors in there hasty retreat. It seems that the lands surrounding Nexus have been under siege by groups of marauding Goblins. As night fell, all would be lost...

Both Domaline and Geylwynn where found dead ... the band of soldiers dead ... and the only reason the story can be told, is that rumor has it ... A wizen old man in a dark robe carried one soldier to Nexus, and a Basket containing two young boys...

As for one of the boys ... Ellwynn, remembers little of the fateful night. Ellwynn was raised in the chapels, workhouses, and back alleys of Falcion. Running from merchant stand to merchant stand, stealing a dinner where he could. However, as a young adept, Ellwynn has little memory of his ancestry, save for a tattered leather gipser that contains his belongings ... a small dagger, a rabbits foot, and a small bronze medallion that reads ... "May Pandora Light Your Way..Hope Guide Your Journey" Geylwynn and Dormaline

Epiphany

Class: Cleric
Race: Sprite

Strolling into the tavern with a great big grin Epiphany flits over to the table where the researcher is sitting and makes herself comfortable on the bench.

"Hi! I was told you want to know where I comes from." She winks happily and sets back to tell her tale.

"Well lessee. Well I don't remember too much of some things. My daddy was a healer type like me and I didn’t have any brothers or sisters cuz my mommy passed away". Frowning slightly she continues, "my mommy was beautiful but she got real sick and my daddy tried and tried but he couldn’t fix her. It made both of us really sad when she died. Daddy went into his bedroom and didn't come out for days!. I did all the things around the house and tried to be brave for my father. He might have been older then me but he needed me to keep him going." Giving an affirmative nod she crosses her legs and continues, "one day I decided to go get my daddy some flowers, there was a big, big field just outside of our house and until then I was never allowed to go because my dad said I was too young. But with him in bed and all I thought I was big enough so I left early one

morning and snuck out to the field" A soft smile spread across her face as she twists a strand of hair around her finger "it was so nice that day, the flowers were so pretty and smelt so good! I think I wandered too far though, I remember some big things running up behind me and laughing. I got grabbed up by one of them and they smelt just horrible! They were very rough too. I tried to fight them away but I was too weak". Frowning again she looks down at her toes concentrating. "They hurt me, I don't remember much after I got grabbed but I do remember waking up. I was in a dark foresty place and I could hardly move. My wing was in a lot of pain and I didn't have any powers to heal myself like my daddy could. I used all the energy I had to climb up into a tree cuz I was worried those things would come back and hurt me again. I fell asleep in that tree and stayed there for a couple days. I ate the fruit from the trees and drank the morning dew to help me get energy back".She looks up from her toes and smiles brightly "that's how I met Quasinart!." Grinning happily "he was traveling away from his hometown and practiced some magicks on the tree I was in, it kinda hurt when I fell out but I was so happy to see someone nice! He took pity on me because I was lost and let me join him. We walked forever; on our journey Quasinart helped me develop my healing magicks. When we arrived in Nexus we decided that I could get someone to help me find my home from there and kinda split ways." Idly picking at a spot on her dress she continues "I really wanted someone to take me home so I searched high and low. That's when I met Avanis. He was a healy type and he helped me learn more magicks and he showed me what good we do in Nexus helping all the big guys fight the monsters that threaten everyone. He also took me home to see my father, but I had decided that I had to stay in Nexus and do all the good things I can do. The powers my daddy passed on to me may not have helped my mother but they have helped many people in the city and I am very proud of that! My father was very happy for me and he wished me luck in the big city. I go back and visit him often just to make sure he is doing okay and that he is eating right. But I know my spot is in Nexus helping all the people I can!" Giving one last bright smile she winks "that's my story, it's not much but it's the truth." Shrugging a bit she flits out of the tavern.

Firsban

Class: Cleric
Race: Dwarf

Firsban was born in a small home just outside of the Nexus. His father was a proud warrior, from a long line of warriors. Firsban, however turned out to be somewhat of a disapointment. Realizing that his calling was not that of a fighter at an early age, Firsban spend most of his time reading, writing or praying - praying mostly to the Goddess he felt closest too - Pandora. When he tryed to explain to his parents he wanted to follow a God other than Erisar, and do something other than join the city guard, they were out- raged. His father forbid that any son of his was gonna disgrace the family tradition, and not become a mighty warrior. So Firsban trained for many years as a fighter, under his father's watchful eye, but at night, he would still read about the Church of Hope and offer prayers to Pandora. Over the next few years, his father became very ill, the healing herbs and medicines seemed to do no good. So the family sent Firsban into the big city of the Nexus to find someone to help, perhaps one of those Clerics. As he wandered up and down the streets, he came upon the Church of Hope. He found an ancient old man inside, and asked him to come to his

house with him, to see if he could help his ailing father.

When the returned to the house, the old man moved with the urgency of someone half his age, with a skill and knowledge that dazed the young Firsban. After examining Firsban's father, and saying a long prayer to his Goddess, the old man stood, laided his hands on the sick man. A soft glow enveloped the old cleric, then it slowly spread to the sick old dwarf. The grey cleric smiled, wiped a bit of sweat off his forehead, bowed deeply, and walked out the door. At that same moment, Firsban's father's fever broke, and the color began to return to his cheeks. Seeing what great miracles the people of faith can perform, Firsban asked his father once again to let him follow his calling as a Cleric, his father, having just come close to death, and perhaps still a little groggy, gave him permission.

So Firsban packed his bags, and started of towards Rymek, to find that sloop he had heard of.

Freuden

Class: Cleric
Race: Half Elf

Excerpts from Freuden's journal, lost somewhere on his journey

I have never kept a journal before, and I am excited about this one. Maybe someday, when I finally complete my training and leave this accursed place, I can look back on this and smile. Ah, but I am getting ahead of myself... perhaps I should start at the beginning.

My name is Freuden, and my first memories were of a small grass hut in the farming community of Salshire. My parents were both farmers, though my father had the additional duty of archiving all town records and accounts. Growing up, I realized that I was... different. I was not like my parents, nor was I anything like our neighbors. My parents (bless their souls) would deflect my ceaseless questions, telling me instead to concentrate more on the historical documents my father kept as part of his job. (When I was young, it was my delight to sort through and organize these documents. It was through my constant contact with these papers that I eventually taught myself to read.)

Over time, however, my parents finally decided to tell me the truth - I was not their son. They had found me as a baby lying in a small bed of grass on the edge of one of their fields. It was then that I realized why I was different. The entire population of Salshire was exclusively human, and I was a combination of...elf... and human? This was almost too much for my young mind to comprehend. After hearing my parent's story, I immediately went to the hut's only mirror and followed the lines of my ears with my finger, perhaps truly noticing them for the first time. Ah, for the age of innocence!

I was never able to discover anything about my elvish heritage. Despite that fact that the only culture I knew anything about was human, I could not establish a rapport with any of the townspeople. They never had much contact with "outsiders", as they sometimes referred to me,

and they shunned me everywhere I went. My parents seemed to support me, of course, but even they did not choose to stand up to the entire town. Because of this attitude, I spent much of my time indoors, poring over the endless papers my father kept.

One day, (by the Gods, I will never forget that day!), I came across a very old packet of sheets bound together. As I leafed through them, I saw that these papers were nothing like the boring account records I had come across before. This packet was a journal kept by Lirdac, a healer from this very town!

I was so mesmerized by this story that I read it from beginning to end without stopping, then read it again immediately after that. Lirdac described a place called Nexus, so called because it is the "focus point" or "center" of All Races. He also described the arts of healing in full detail, how to focus the power of the mind to aid the body's natural rejuvenation. I was fascinated. For the first time, I found that I could help others. I thought that maybe if I learned the clerical arts, those around me wouldn't turn me away everywhere I went. And so I began to train myself, slowly, over a long period of time, using Lirdac's narrative as a guide.

And so that brings me to where I am now. Over the past several years, this desire within me has become a passion. I feel that I am ready to get out, to see this wondrous city! I feel like I can save the whole world, if I can only get to it!

sigh I am finally on the road. Last night, while everybody was sleeping, I packed what few belongings I had and set off in the direction (as I could best determine from Lirdac's notes) of Nexus. In one way, I feel sad to leave my parents, but I know that they will secretely be relieved that I am gone. It is time for them to get on with their lives, as it is time for me to get on with mine.

Galvin

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

In the small mountain hold of Killek, hard times indeed had fallen. The village was constantly raided by goblins, trolls, whatever was hungry. The only thing that saved them from occupation by the goblins was that they had nothing of value to offer. And so they tried to survive, using the nearby caves for shelter and protection when necessary. One such cave was used to tend the wounded, and was all too full of late. Little Galvin spent much time in that cave. He had a knack for tending the wounded, becoming quite adept at not only bandaging wounds, but at finding herbs and roots to be used as salves.

One day, after a raid, Galvin was helping bandage some wounds when an old man he had never seen walked into the cave. Galvin was too busy tending the many wounded to notice that the man was watching him. Galvin felt a hand on his shoulder then, and thought he saw a flash of light, but when he turned, the old man was gone. With more wounded coming in, Galvin quickly forgot the incident.

As the years passed, and Galvin became a young man of 12, he returned to Killek from picking some roots, and noticed several fires in the village. Fearing another raid, he rushed to the caves to help. He found his mother in one of the cots, badly injured. He rushed to her side, past the villagers who tried to stop him. Her wounds were too deep they told him, she would not last long. Galvin cried out that he must save her, and acted on instinct, lowering his head he put his hands upon his mothers, as he raised his head, his body was wrapped in white light.

The villagers quickly stepped back, taken totally by surprise and in some fright and alarm. As they watched, the aura of light spread from Galvin to encompass his mother, where the light touched, open wounds were closed, bruises disappeared. As the light faded and his mother breathed with much greater ease, Galvin pondered what had happened. somehow, *he* had done that! He had reached inside himself and managed to pull that power from some inner resource. No, he corrected himself, he channeled the power, but the power was not his alone. That lay somewhere to the east, and he had to find it's source!

As he thought on it, Galvin was more and more convinced he had felt something similar before, then suddenly a memory from years ago returned to him, of an Old Man and a flash of light. That was it! The light, the touch of the light felt just the same, but who was the man? All he knew was that he was drawn to find the source, drawn to the east, and he must go find his destiny.

The next day Galvin prepared to leave. There was little opposition, for even though his mother was almost completely recovered, the villagers still feared him, and now kept a respectful distance from him whenever he walked about. He gave his farewells to his mother, and set off east. How he made it he would never know, he had narrowly avoided the goblin patrols time and time again. But lately he felt he was getting closer to what he was looking for. And then he came upon the walled city. As he watched from a safe hiding place, a large band of goblins approached the gates, which appeared to shimmer. The goblins tried to smash the gates, tearing at them, throwing magic in the form of fire and ice upon them, but to no avail, the gates held. Eventually, the band gave up, and walked back the way they had came. Galvin approached the gates, wondering how he would ever get inside, but surprisingly the gates posed no barrier to him, and he walked inside the city. Galvin walked about for a time, in wonderment as he passed people of races he had only heard of in story, there went a dwarf for certain, and there was surely an elf. He stopped after awhile, realizing he knew not where to go, when a man approached him...

Galvin smiled as the man, no, not fully a man he realized, noting the pointed ears, approached. "Hello," the man smiled, "My name is Naranek, you appear to be new to the Nexus, may I help you?"

Naranek showed Galvin all the wonders of the Nexus. When they entered Aalynor's Temple, Galvin stopped still. This was it! This was the source of the power he had channeled! Naranek had trouble getting Galvin out of the temple to continue his tour of Nexus. When they finished the tour of the Cleric's Guild, Galvin had made his decision. He would join that Guild, and he would learn to use his gift to the fullest, for the cause here was just and right. In time, he was sure he would follow Aalynor, as he knew that somehow he had always followed the path of the light, and that he was somehow empowered by it.

Time passed quickly, Galvin gained stature at a fast rate, his healing abilities becoming known through the city. Always Galvin turned to the church of Aalynor for support and comfort. And when he felt he was worthy, Galvin approached Vesper, the Child of the light, to petition to follow Aalynor. Galvin felt his greatest honor is his life, when Vesper informed him he was accepted, and placed the mark of Aalynor upon him. Now he felt he truly belonged here. This was truly his destiny.

Gifford

Class: Cleric
Race: Gnome

Gifford the gnome was a insatiably curious little fellow as all gnomes tend to be. When he was but a child he would tend to wander far afield from his home in the gnomish village of Korg in the slate mountains. He would collect specimens of rock, insects, and even small animals. He did this in an effort to understand how they were put together and how they worked.

Naturally, after he had been about this kind of business for some time he discovered that he really did understand the forces of life to some small extent. He began to strike out farther and farther on his hikes trying to find creatures who were hurt. Quite often when he found one who was hurt in some small way he learned that he could nurse it back to health. As time passed he found that his ability to heal creatures became more and more powerful and he could nurse back to health creatures that were much more damaged than even he thought he could manage. Unfortunately, this drive to heal and this curiosity got young Gifford into trouble.

One afternoon Gifford was far from his home and quite busy tending to the wounds of a rabbit who had been slashed by the claws of a fox. The rabbit had escaped from the fox, but was very badly hurt. While he was about this intensive study of the rabbit Gifford was oblivious to anything else going on around him. A group of ugly creatures he had heard of called goblins surrounded him and began slapping young Gifford about! Gifford was terrified at this treatment. He begged for his life. He noticed that one of the creatures was wounded. He offered to try and help the creature if the group would let him go home afterwards. One of the goblins who spoke a bit of Gifford's language shrugged and indicated that the gnome could try. Gifford laid his hands upon the arm of the goblin who was hurt. The slash was long but not too deep and it had barely begun to scab over. The young gnome tossed some herbs into a pot of water and kindled a fire under it. When the water was warm he bathed the wound in water containing the healing juice of the herbs. Then Gifford bound the wound in strips of cloth from his pack.

After a few hours Gifford removed the cloth and the goblins could see that the wound had healed cleanly. The goblins became very excited at this and grabbed up young Gifford. They started shouting and gesticulating at each other exclaiming at this feat of minor healing.

Gifford protested that the goblin had said he could go home after healing the wound. The goblins however ignored him and kept arguing. The upshot was that the goblins took Gifford with them

when they left the mountains. Eventually they came to a large goblin settlement named fango.

In fango, the largest of the goblins brought Gifford to a place where even larger goblins worked in a large building pounding and shaping metals about a large fire pit. Gifford's captor spoke at great length with the largest of the goblins in what gifford learned was called a smithy. The two goblins argued for a long time. Eventually, however, the largest goblin nodded and pulled out some shiny metal coins and gave them to the gnomes captor. At this point Gifford's captor left the building chuckling.

Gifford was shocked! He must have been sold. Gifford didn't understand why a goblin would sell him to another goblin. The large goblin whose name appeared to be gorf poked Gifford and pointed to another of the goblins. That goblin had a bad burn that must have come from the fire ore one of the hot pieces of metal.

Gifford sighed. Obviously, the large goblin had bought him to work as a healer. The young gnome brought out his herbs and set to work.

The goblins kept Gifford supplied with herbs for his healing and fed him but the goblins were very clumsy. They tended to burn themselves quite often. Gifford began to despair. He always had hope however that he could some day escape.

As gifford learned the goblin language, he heard about their god called Novind. Gifford thought this was some kind of deity associated with the power of chaos. This being the only deity young Gifford knew about he began to learn more about the power of chaos. He discovered as he thought upon chaos that his healing ability became more powerful.

At first, this delighted gifford. Then it began to frighten him. Was he becoming too much like the goblins for whom he was a slave? Gifford resolved to find a way for chaos to work for him. He speculated that if he could learn about chaos that he could also learn about how to minimize chaos. He meditated upon the nature of chaos for long hours in the forge when his healing was not required. He discovered that he really could begin to understand the disorder in the injuries he tended and minimize the chaotic quality of them and thus heal them.

Hope began to spring up in Gifford's heart at this discovery. If he could improve his ability to heal by understanding chaos then maybe he could find a way to escape from captivity also. Gifford began to hope more and more that it might be possible for him to escape. He found that like his study of chaos that when Gifford felt especially hopeful that his healing abilities became magically stronger.

Gifford decided to abandon the power of chaos and focus only on the hope of escape. As he did this he found that his healing abilities became stronger and stronger.

Night after night Gifford slept dreaming of hope. Doves came to him in his dreams and spoke to him of hope. Gifford was delighted at this. He was delighted, yet he was becoming a very powerful healer through thinking of the power of hope all the time. Gifford didn't know if he should be using this wonderful hopeful gift to be healing people who had enslaved him. Gifford wanted to heal other beings like himself who would appreciate what he could do and also had hope rather than

chaos in their hearts.

Finally, one evening after gifford had been locked in his bare room he began to pray that hope would allow him to heal nice people rather than nasty people. For hours and hours he prayed to be allowed to use his gifts in the service of whatever power that there might be that guided hope. A dove appeared before Gifford and sang to him. Gifford's heart was filled with joy! Could it be? Could it be?! Could he escape this place and join with others who also had this dream within their hearts? Gifford began to speak to the dove concerning his dreams and his prayer. "I want to find a place where I can use these extraordinary gifts to heal to help people to fight against despair which is the enemy of all." At this, the dove began to shine. It shone brightly and even more brightly! The dove flew to the wall and a shining door appeared before it and it flew into the light.

Gifford rejoiced! Had his prayer been answered? He dove through the light and found himself in a lovely room! He found himself before a huge marble fountain with two statues of youths frolicking in the water. Gifford felt wonderfully at peace with himself and able to pursue his dream!

Hellfire

Class: Cleric
Race: Reni

Hellfire sat in his small room at the back of Madame Despana's, the month of Twilight was upon Nexus, rain pummeled the roof above him, and he quietly marked another birthday.

He sat with a pen and parchment gathering dust before him. Slowly but surely, his hand moved toward the pen. Grasping it in sweat covered hands, Hellfire dipped the pen in his ink well and began to compose a letter 11 years overdue.

****

Dearest Parents,

I hope this letter finds you well. Although it has been almost twelve years since we spoke last I still think of you often and of our last painful, angry parting...

****

As he writes, Hellfire begins to wander back through time in his memories to his childhood. Born over one hundred years ago, he was still born too late. What once would have been a lifetime spent in peaceful study and contemplation, has turned into a lifetime filled with war and destruction. The reni, once pacifists, had learned to fight and kill and no renies learned that lesson better than his parents.

Once upon a time his parents had been no more hostile than any other reni. That all changed one fateful day three centuries ago. Drakan and Sinead were both wizards and had one child, a boy

named Safus. Children being rare in a species so long lived, Safus was doted upon. He became Drakan's and Sinead's world. For nearly fifty years they nurtured and taught Safus preparing him to be a wizard such as themselves. Then the goblins came... They attacked the Reni killing, maiming, and torturing all those they could find.

Drakan and Sinead went to help with the defense of the village. The fight was long and vicious. Eventually the goblins were driven back. When they returned to their home, they noticed the door slightly ajar. Fearing the worst they rushed in and were greeted with a grusome spectacle. While the main goblin forces had attacked the village from the front, assassins of hate had snuck into the houses of the reni killing all the children they could find. Safus was found... His body was nailed to the wall and his mouth had been filled with his own heart. A message on the wall proclaimed, "Death to the reni!"

Drakan and Sinead were driven mad with grief and vowed revenge. While strong wizards both, they knew that they lacked the strength and training to take that revenge themselves. They decided that night to try and have another child. One that might grow to be the wizard they couldn't be. One that might wreak havoc upon the goblin hoarde. For two centuries they tried....

****

A lightning bolt lit up the room where Hellfire was writing and he looked up for a moment before continuing his letter. "....learned much in Nexus and yes I am doing my part to help defeat the goblins. I know you probably still resent the way I have chosen to do it...."

****

After two hundred years, Drakan and Sinead finally conceive. Once again Sinead gave birth to a boy and like before he became their world. This time, however, things were different. Interested only in their plans for revenge, the baby was tutored only in the destructive uses of magic. He was given a name to reflect their desire to see destruction visited upon the goblins. He was called Hellfire after a powerful and ancient spell. Hellfire learned his lessons well. He learned to abhor the goblins and to want their extinction. He took readily to the magic. He learned to control it quite well, but Sinead and Drakan noticed that his spells weren't as strong as they might like. His magic seemed to fight the destruction. It mattered not to them, he was young and they would forge him into a weapon.

Ninety years passed and Hellfire grew and learned. He learned the basics of magic and how to use missle weapons. He was taught goblin tactics and how to defeat them. He studied everything his parents deemed necessary to make him a weapon of destruction. However, despite their best efforts, Hellfire studied something not on their agenda....the girl next door.

Born ten years after him, Chalsua had been a constant fixture in his life. As he sat in his room studying day after day, he saw her going with her mother to run errands, working in her family garden, reading books, or just sitting outside enjoying the weather. She was the most beautiful creature in his world and Hellfire fell in love. He frequently dreamed of meeting her and even asked his parents one day if it would be ok. Afraid that he would lose focus they forbade it.

Not one to give up easily, Hellfire decided one day to practice his fledgling ability to send messages mentally. As he sat at his desk pretending to read an ancient text on the effects and applications of various potions, he watched for Chalsua. Eventually she came outside to work on the garden. As she was weeding, Hellfire concentrated on her and tried to project his mind to hers. He eventually made contact, startling her. After her initial shock, she recovered and discovered that she could send back. From that day forward they talked daily. Through these conversations Hellfire discovered that there was more to life than destruction and the goblins. Chalsua talked to him of philosophy, of religion and the gods, of poetry, of the beautiful uses of magic, and of love. After several months of talking, they decided to risk a face to face meeting.

They decided to meet on the night of the New Year festival when all the village would be gathered and even Hellfire would be allowed to leave his house. On the night of the festival, Hellfire contrived to separate himself from his parents in the crowd. Sneaking quietly to the edge of the village he met Chalsua in the light of the full moon. Trying to reduce the risk of getting caught, the two young reni snuck off into the surrounding country- side. They walked and talked for what seemed hours, absorbed completely in each other. A loud noise startled them from their revelry and they looked up to find themselves in an ancient cemetary, confronted by a Tel'ri'vak.

The Tel'ri'vak lunged forward attacking them. Hellfire and Chalsua turned to run, but she tripped on a fallen grave stone. Hellfire quickly helped her too her feet, but he was not quick enough...The Tel'ri'vak managed to infect Chalsua with a disease. With Chalsua already feeling the effects of the virus, the two young reni stumbled back to town, deperate to get her some help. Halfway back to town Chalsua failed. She could walk no further she needed healed. Hellfire gently laid her down on the road and tried to comfort her. As she began to fade, Hellfire saw a light down the trail and called out for help.

What Hellfire thought might be Chalua's salvation was his parents out looking for their wayward son. They were wizards Hellfire thought surely they can help her. Sinead and Drakan rushed forward and looked upon the fallen girl. Hellfire begged them to help her, but alas, they could not do a thing. They had spent so many years learning how to use magic to destroy, they had forgotten how to heal. Chalsua died soon after her head cradled in Hellfire's lap.....

****

A noise from the room above startled Hellfire from his remembrance and begins once again to concentrate on the letter. "My mistress Pandora has recently appointed me as an emissary for her church, this position will allow me to help more people and guide young clerics in the arts of healing..." Once again Hellfire drifted off to a time past...

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After that fateful night things were never the same for Hellfire, he began to resent his parents. Their focus on destructive magic had cost him the life of someone he loved. On his hundredth birthday, Hellfire informed his parents that he would be going to Nexus to become a cleric's apprentice. His parents were shocked and outraged by his seeming betrayal. They alternating begged him to stay and threatened to keep him there. Hellfire stood steadfast before them saying

that as a healer he would be able to help the forces of Nexus defeat the goblins. His parents would hear none of it and told him to just leave and never come back....

So the next day Hellfire woke early and left for Falcion to start a new life.

****

Hellfire stopped writing and listened the rain had stopped. He checked his water clock and found that it was past midnight and the eleven year anniversary of the day he left home. He looked back to the parchment in front of him and finished the letter.

"I hope that time has softened your view towards me and that we can once again talk and be a family. May Pandora's Hope be with you both.

With Love
Hellfire, High Priest of Pandora,
Harbinger of Hope,
and loving son."

Jocelyn

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

Jocelyn shifts, clearly impatient, as she glances at the pile of paperwork that she could've taken care of an hour ago had the scribe not shown up.

The scribe looks up from his notes and speaks. "I gather that your parents sent you to Falcion because of your lack of discipline."

Jocelyn rolls her eyes, starts to respond, and then seems to change her mind. "Let me ask you a question. For the past hour I've been trying to figure out exactly what your job is. Are you here to irritate me with your miserable attempts to analyze my life? Or is your goal simply to waste my time? Or are you attempting to somehow supplement your boring existence by conjuring up some grand tale about my life that doesn't really exist?"

Realizing that her paperwork is a lost cause, Jocelyn pushes it away and stares at the scribe. "I have answered your questions as simply as possible. Yet, amazingly, you're still here. You seem to be waiting for me to tell you that at some point I lost my entire family in some tragic battle, or a village burned down, or I was captured by goblins at a very young age. If that's what you're looking for, you came to the wrong person. I lived a happy, peaceful life, on a boat, with a mother and father and no siblings. I was mischievous, worried my mother constantly, and entertained my father with my antics. All in all, I had fun, and I enjoy the opportunity to take occasional trips with them now."

Jocelyn stands and brushes herself off. As she hands water to one of the warriors that guard Lord Erisar's courtyard, she continues. "During the time you've sat here attempting to fabricate some great story about my life, I've received several telepathic questions from heroes with valid concerns. One hero has a question about our quest to close the portal in the goblin camp that I am organizing. Another has concerns about the letter the Council recently received from the Elders of Rymek. A potential follower is waiting to offer me a report about his quest. A fellow church member would like to discuss a new Code of Conduct that we are drafting. And that," Jocelyn points to the paperwork that she abandoned, "is far more important than this nonsensical conversation we are having."

Jocelyn holds her hands out gesturing to Lord Erisar's courtyard and the castle. "This is my life. Serving Lord Erisar. It's as simple and as complicated as that. It's what is important to me, and it's what I enjoy doing. I am an emissary of Lord Erisar's great church. And I am a huntress. If you would like to write about any of the things I just mentioned, then you have a story. If you would like to discuss battle tactics, you are in the right place. If you need me to prepare a group for battle or lead the group in a hunt, you are talking to the right woman. I do not speak baby talk to children, I do not lavish the weak spirited with hugs and gentle words, and I do not take hours away from the duties my Lord has assigned to me to sit wistfully dreaming of the past. I enjoyed it, it is over, and now I have responsibilities to take care of."

Jocelyn walks over and picks up her paperwork. Just before she disappears behind the doors of the castle she turns and says, "You know, if you wanted to talk to a starry eyed woman with a burning desire to tell stories about the past and nothing but time on her hands, you should've met with my mother. I'm sure she would be delighted to talk for hours about something really meaningful." Jocelyn smirks and continues. "Like the one time she actually managed to get me to sit still long enough to put ribbons in my hair, how adorable I was when she was finished, and how quickly I tore then out of my hair the minute she left the deck to cook dinner." With a sarcastic grin, Jocelyn turns and walks into her office, leaving the scribe speechless.

Lance

Class: Cleric
Race: Not known

After a very long day fighting her way through the crowded streets of al'Oronta, Lillia was weary, yet she could not sleep. She tossed and turned in the small bed built into the back of her wagon, listening to the pots and pans banging together as the wind rocked her small, ever mobile home. Why had she decided to become a merchant? She should have listened to her mother. She would have enjoyed following her mother's healing crafts, helping adventurers that wandered into their small village, as well as keeping the population of the village safe from the disease that plagued the land....

But that is not what was bothering her. She was too intelligent to lie to herself. Much as her mother did not approve, Lillia did enjoy her life. She enjoyed seeing new people and new places, and she

was still able to make use of her healing talents fairly often. She really did love her life. No, that was not what was bothering her... She could not quite put her finger on it!

Just then, Lillia's concentration was temporarily diverted by a sound from the other bed. She got up, walking over to the small cot where her older son, Lance lay. Lance was young by elvin standards, yet he was wise for his age, and beginning to grow into a man. It seems that the healing tradition of her family had found its strength in her young son, and she was often surprised by both his power, and his abilities. As she bent down to see what was troubling the lad, she noticed the look on his face. He was dreaming again, and Lillia wondered what about now. She did not understand why her son was plagued by these dreams, but they often scared her, especially when they came true. She reached down, shaking Lance awake.

"Where is he!? Where is he!?", Lance screamed. It took several moments before he realized it was a dream and noticed that he was in his mother's arms. He pulled himself away, not wanting the comforting touch... He had great love for his mother, yet this did not seem the time for her comfort. He had never had a dream that real or that intense. Usually his dreams were vague, cast in mist and shadow, and yet they often came true. He had no doubt in his mind that this one would come true, and it was not the time for his mother's warm and tender touch. He would have to be the man, now... He would have to be the one to comfort her. Rhidak, his father was dead... it was as certain to him as if he had seen the body. He had to break it to her.

As Lance looked into his mother's eyes, he felt as weak as if he had spent the entire day pulling this wagon by himself. His stomach churned, and he felt as though he would faint. How could he tell this woman he loved so much that her husband was dead? How could he tell her that her husband had not been at the tavern, but rather fighting off the goblins from the city walls? He just did not have the strength to break her heart... not yet. He had to think, to find the right words. It was not a task he looked forward to.

Lillia looked down at her son, wondering what was troubling him so greatly, and why he would not tell her. She knew it must be important by the look on his face, but she knew better than to try to pry it out of him. Lance had his father's stubborn will, yet he would tell her when he felt ready. She just had to wait.

As Lance started to get up, he told his mother that he had to get some air. He started donning his clothes, just slowly enough to keep from making his mother worry, yet not at all dawdling. He could see in her eyes that something was bothering his mother. Perhaps she had a feeling that Rhidak was gone. Perhaps she just saw the turmoil in his own young eyes. In either case, he knew that he would have to break the news soon, but he needed to think.

As Lance left the small wagon they called their home, he tried his best to prevent the door from squeaking. His mother would worry enough, no need to wake the baby. However, as he walked away from the wagon, he heard a cry, muffled and tiny. Perhaps comforting his little brother would keep his mother from worrying as much. Perhaps the sweet, innocent look in Jaquar's eyes would comfort his mother before she even knew why she needed comforting.

Lance wandered the streets for hours, wondering how he would break the news to his mother... wondering what he would do with his life, and grieving the death of his beloved father. He vowed that night that he would make the goblins pay for what they had done to his family. He reached into his pouch, turning the magic token his father had given him. He knew what it was for... and he knew that he would be using it soon. It gave him some comfort that he would be able to avenge his father's death, but there was no wisdom to be found that would help him comfort his mother.

Just then, Lance was brought out of his inner struggle by an outer one that was much more immediate. He was nearing the city wall of al'Oronta, and he started to hear screams. Several villagers were running past him, away from the city wall, their eyes full of fear. He could not quite tell what was going on, but he felt a feeling in his gut, one of sheer terror. Something was very wrong, something perhaps greater than even the death of his father.

As he approached the city walls, he stopped one of the fleeing villagers just long enough to ask what was going on.... "The goblin hordes have broken through the Northern Gate! The guards say the Eastern gate is about to go as well!" the young woman said as she fled in terror. It was then that Lance's heart began to leap in his chest. The death of his father had been such a terrible event that he forgot the goblins for a moment! His family was near the Eastern gate... he just had to help them before he lost them, too!

Lance could not believe his fear as he ran back toward the wagon. He was not fearful for himself, but for his mother and baby brother.... 'How could I have been so stupid!?', he thought 'To fear telling my mother of Rhidak's death to the point that I forgot the danger to her and Jaquar?' He ran as fast as he could, his heart pounding against his chest, his lungs burning with the cold night air, his eyes watering from the smoke of the city, and of the fires starting all around him. He had to save them... he just HAD TO!

It was then that a large Ogre man ran past, perhaps running to save his family as well, perhaps running to help in the battle, perhaps just running. Lance barely had time to see his face as he was plowed over by the massive body. The chaos of the city had prevented the man from seeing the small elf. It seemed like time slowed down to a crawl as Lance started to fall. The man had not meant to push him, he had not even seen him, but that did not negate the effect of his skull hitting the paving stones of the city streets.

Lance awoke to the smell of smoke and death. As his vision cleared, he noticed that he had a headache beyond belief. Casting the only healing spell he could in his condition, he finally was able to stand. He began to swagger toward the place where his mother had parked the wagon the night before, barely aware of the burned buildings and dying people all around him. He had to save his magic for his family... no time to help those around him, nor even himself. He had to find them, he had to find them. He tried his best to hurry, but he was in bad shape, and barely able to walk. He saw a little girl wandering before him, and a thought registered in the back of his mind... where is HER mother? He tried to talk to the girl, but she ran away, crying. Perhaps he was a scary sight.

As he neared the commerce district, he began to hurry, not quite able to run, but staggering faster and faster. Broken and half-burned wagons lined the streets, their owners devastated by the loss. Fewer owners staggered about than there were wagons... Tthe attack must have been fierce and

swift. As he neared the wagon he had called home for as long as he could remember, his subconscious noticed that two of the wheels were broken, and the wagon was badly damaged, yet his conscious mind had only one goal. He pried open the door, hoping to find his mother alive and well. What he found tore a hole deep in his soul. His mother lay on the floor of the wagon, surrounded by blood. He hurried to her, hoping to find her well enough that he could heal her, but it was too late. She was not dead yet, but every spell he poured into her failed. Every effort he tried to mend her wounds was hopeless. She was in a state of delirium, crying out the names of his father and brother, more concerned for their wellbeing than her own. She looked into Lance's eyes, tears rolling down her face, and cried out one last time for Jaquar.

Lance looked down at the corpse of his beloved mother, crying. He had not found his brother in the wagon, and did not know where he was. He could still feel his life force, so he knew he was well, but Jaquar was no where to be found.

Lance began to wander the city, looking for his baby brother... the only one that remained of his beloved family. He talked to everyone he found, but no one had seen the young elvin boy. He began to lose hope, when he found Gariak, an old human bard who had been a family friend, often traveling with them from city to city. Gariak did not know where his brother was, but he had seen him. He knew that Jaquar was alive and well. It was not enough to compensate the loss of his parents, but it did bring warmth to Lance's heart.

Lance spent the next two months in the city, looking for a sign of his brother. He heard stories that the elvin boy had been rescued by a human woman, yet she was no where to be found. He mourned the loss of his mother and father, but more than anything, he wanted to find his brother. Jaquar was all that remained of his family, and he had to find him. Lance followed every shadow of a shadow of a clue, and yet came up empty-handed. He could not find a trace of the human woman that had rescued his brother, yet he felt in his heart that Jaquar was alive.

It was three months to the day from the raid that had killed his mother and father when Lance came wearily back to the room over the smithy he had been calling home. The blacksmith and his wife, having known his parents well, had been kind to him since their death, putting a pallet in this storeroom for him to sleep, and not charging him anything for his stay. They were a sweet couple, and Lance was very grateful for their hospitality. His supply of gold, which he had taken from the wagon before it was chopped up for firewood, was quickly dwindling. He did not know how much longer he could spend looking for his brother at this rate.

Lance disrobed and headed off to bed. He had spent the entire day seeking out his young sibling, and though not manual labor, it was an exhausting task. He made a small prayer as he drifted off to sleep that his brother was still well, and that he would find him soon.

Lance had not dreamed at all since that fateful night, so he was surprised to find himself in dream. A thought floated on the edge of his mind that he should not realize the fact that he was in a dream, let alone be surprised by it. He looked around, and found that he was surrounded in a white mist, which had no beginning, nor no end. His entire surroundings glowed with a mysterious light that seemed to have no source. He began to realize that this was no ordinary dream. Suddenly, a soft, yet powerful, female voice seemed to come out of nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

The voice seemed comforting, and filled him with love and hope. "Lance, son of Rhidak, you have come to me in hope that you find your lost brother, Jaquar.", the voice said, ringing in his soul "He is alive and well, and you need not worry. The stories that he has been adopted by a human woman are true, and you should not concern yourself with his wellbeing. He will be raised well, and you will meet him again one day. Look no further for your brother, he will find you when it is time. Make your way to the wandering city. Claim your place in the ranks against evil. One day, you will be reunited with your brother, but the time has come for you to follow your fate. Have Hope."

Lance awoke early the next morning, knowing what he had to do. He dressed quickly, and sat on the small chair by his pallet, not quite ready to give up the search for his brother. However, the pull of the dream the night before was stronger than anything he had felt before in his life. He took the magic token out of his pouch, thinking of his father as he handled it. It was time. As Lance concentrated, he channeled a small spark of power into the small coin, part of him hoping it did not work. He was not ready to give up his three-months search, yet he felt the pull of destiny at his soul. He closed his eyes and said the magic chant. Suddenly, he heard the sound of running water. As he looked around, he found himself at the Fountain of Dreams. It was time to meet his destiny.

Lasher

Class: Cleric
Race: Reni

It all started a very long time ago.... a young reni stood amongst his peers, a bright smile upon his face. They were debating the tenants of wizardry versus the power of following a diety. Lasher really did not care for either at the time and stated his case... "Why not just live your own life, power in itself does not make a person, so why worry about such issues.." Grimroth turns to him with a sneer on his face, "Always like you to take no side Lasher, you were always a coward. I myself think the power from within is greater than any given to you by a diety. Magery is the way I shall go." Of course another reni piped in, Halworth turns and just smiles, "The power of a diety given unto another will always outstrip that of within. No power in all of Altin can compare, nor the ecstacy of giving ones heart and soul to a diety".

Lasher just listens as one after another, the reni's in his group try to make thier point, yet Lasher was not moved at all by any of thier oratory and decided to take a walk. He turned to his friends, "I can not say one or the other is better, but I know my path, and it will be one of love and happiness, I care not for power and what it brings" Of course, as Lasher was leaving, Grimroth pipes in, "Of course Lasher our little pansy, go on your way now, and leave your betters to our discourse". Most in the group just ignored Grimroth's comments, but some nodded and that upset Lasher to no avail as he walked away.

He walked through the town, then outside the walls and out into the wilderness, where he sat beneath an oak, older then any he had ever seen before. Lasher starting to think on what he really wante d to do with his life, soon it was going to be time for the choosing, where those of his age were chosen for apprenticeships and he had no idea what he wanted to do. Soon he was nodding

off beneath the tree, a gentle spring breeze blowing through his hair, cooling his body. Dreams came and went, none worth mentioning, when he was suddenly awaken by bell tolls from the city. He woke up quickly and turned towards the north where the city stood. Gongs and bells of all sorts were tolling like he had never heard before. Lasher thought to himself, "What can it be, an attack... no not out here, we are too secluded, it can not be". But, he rose and started to run towards the city as fast as he could.

Lasher ran until he was gasping for breath, and then he walked, always moving towards the town. The skyline started to fill with smoke and Lasher began to worry, a boost of adreniline flowing through his body, he launched himself towards town. He arrived to something he would never believe in all his nightmares, everwhere he looked were dead bodies littering the streets and buildings... Of the attackers nothing could be seen, Lasher heard moaning everywhere, but of sounds of fighting..... nothing. He looked around for anyone he could help, but could find only the dead, until.....

He arrived where his friends were talking when he had left, and low and behold, someone was breathing..... Grimroth. Lasher gently bends over to aid his companion, even though Grimroth always was the one to tease Lasher. As he bent over, Grimroth's hands grabbed onto Lasher's shirt, "Help me, please... help me....." he gasped out. Lasher had no idea what to do, when a feeling came about him and he spread out his hands, touching Grimroth on the forehead.... "Thy energies return!" he chanted, and as the power flowed out of him, Grimoth started to revive, it was then that Lasher awoke under the tree as if nothing had happened.

He shook the wariness out of his head and quickly turned towards town, nothing had changed at all, besides the hour of course. No bells tolled and no gongs rang. Lasher stood and began his long trek back towards town. His eyes looked about him in a totally new life. Spring seemed more vibrant, the animals, the flowers, the grass and the trees all seemed.... more alive. His step was more lively and he seemed to walk on the wind towards his home with a realization in his mind now what he wanted for the rest of his life.

Time turned and months passed, Lasher and his friends became busier trying to persuade those of the professions they had chosen to pick them as apprentices, but Lasher did it in a way not all the others did... Everyday he went out into the fields and sat under that tree, and everyday he dreamed something different. Some were useful and others distressful, but everything he had learned from that tree had meaning. Then the fateful day came and all gathered in the center of town for the naming.

One name after another were called off of the rolls, and one by one his friends walked off with the one who would apprentice them for the next 50 years of their lives. Lasher though was not called, knowing that the best spots were always called out last, he was enlivened by the thought he may be picked by a Patriarch or even the Head Minister himself of a chosen faith. Then he heard his name, only 2 others stood beside him, Grimroth and Halworth. Lasher started to walk forward as he was presented to..... Theologion, head of the city hand...

Lasher did not know what to think.... could this be his purpose in life, he followed Theologion and spoke not a word, but his mind wandered a mile a minute. He knew he wanted to help others, but

Theologion was an administrator and Lasher had decided under that tree that he would follow his heart and pledge himself to a specific goddess on day. He even knew when the day would come from the dreams under the tree, but was this how it would all begin?

He worked tireless hours with scribes and bookkeeps, dignitaries and heads of the churches. Lasher woke before the sun came up, and went to sleep well past sundown each day, tirelessly he worked, but he knew something was wrong... One day Theologion came to him, "Lasher" he said in his bubblebee tone, "you progress in your studies rapidly, better then any other I have ever seen, but I sense something wrong in you son..". Lasher did not know what to say and just looked up at Theologion as his head lowered a fraction, "I can not tell what it is Master, but I just feel like there is something calling to me...". At this Theologion just grinned as he asked me a question that sent me rocking, "Son, have you been to the great tree to the south?". Again Lasher was fumbletongued, "Master, I have spent all my free time resting under the tree..". Theologion just smiled widely, "And what son, did the tree have to tell you?". Lasher just shook his head, "Master, it told me things I could not fathum, but I know this, I am not meant for this, there is a calling from the south and I feel if I do not go, something dreaded may happen" At this Theologion just nodded and rang a bell, and in came Trinbar, Theologion's son. "Is everything ready Trinbar?" Theologion asked. To this Trinbar just nodded and in appeared a porter with many packed bags, which he dropped at Lasher's feet. "Lasher, your calling has come, to fail it will be your death, to pass the test of that is to come, will make you happier in life then you can ever feel elsewhere. It has only happened but few times before in the life of this town that another has had the callling, and each who decided to ignore the call died soon thereafter of unknown reasons.." To this Lasher nodded, his head lowering slowly, he then smiled, hugged Theologion and Trinbar, picked up the bags and never turned back.

Many months he traveled, in realitive safety, until one day he arrived in a town named Rymek. The quaint little village seemed homey to him, though he felt a pull towards the water. He walked through the town towards a sloop and looked into a deep mist upon the water. Taking out the last bits of gold he possessed he payed the sloop master, and ended upon Falcion.....

Meridia

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

The painting draws you nearer and nearer with it's fine detail, nearly begging you to study it more carefully. It's subjects seem to veritably breathe and blink with every brush stroke. Set in the grand foyer of a manor, high painted ceilings, crystal chandeliers, and white marble floors only add to the dramatics of this piece. One could imagine walking across the entry, listening to the eerie echoes of your footsteps bouncing off the muraled and shadowy walls. After admiring the outer regions, your attention is drawn to the unusual number of characters actually standing in the foyer. Piling through the great oak doors is a fleet of elven sentry, each wearing a bright and colorful uniform, gripping their sheathed swords with fixed eyes. Peeking through the hall doors with wide and frightened expressions are human servants, maids and butlers, all wearing spotless black and

white suits and dresses, some carrying dusters and cloths while others hold silver trays.

A human man with raven hair stands in the midst of the sentry, slightly bent by the weight of the elves. His arms have been pulled and held behind his back by a thick white cord. He looks out with a tired but arrogant expression at a young girl before him.

The grim mood of the painting changes as you examine the child, who's light blonde curls fall around the shoulders of the pink frilly dress she wears. Her bright cerulean eyes sparkle with anticipation as she reaches out to touch an elf kneeling before her. Her tiny fingers have grabbed hold of the elf's nose and he is laughing at her. A sickly pale woman stands off in a darkened corner with a drawn expression, as if she is going to collapse. Both of her hands hold her face and partially shield her eyes from the scene before her, but an elderly lady with silvered hair sits beside her, leaning into the light. She looks at the child with a warm expression and smiles.

In the bottom left hand corner is a flighty signature written in royal blue naming the artist as Meridia Faith Alexander, Child of the Arts of Andaras.

Milead

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

For Milead, life at home was always a constant challenge to prove his worth. He was the middle child of seven children, and the 'odd' one, when compared to the others. He was born into a tribe of warriors that was proud of its colorful history, full of battle honors, successful campaigns, and decorated heroes. His father, Freedin, was no exception. He had earned his title as chief of the tribe because of the bravery he showed in the latest campaign. Though it was one of many, this particular one was important because he had managed to lead his small army to victory against a violent breed of cave trolls that threatened the tribe. Again, this would be no important thing, except for the fact that the entire tribe consisted of only humans. However, during that bloody battle, he was bit and infected with some sort of disease. It was known to be a fatal disease, but somehow, he managed to live, though he never recovered his full strength. Freedin spent his remaining years teaching the ways of the warrior to his children, and anyone else, who sought his guidance.

This tribe, Angeloss, was civilized, but was still a fierce society. They believed in the existence of the Gods, but they chose not to tamper with the Weave in any way and went against the ways of magick. This had not always been; According to their history, the last known paladin in their tribe was said to have lived 300 years ago. Historians contribute the decline and fall of paladins in Angeloss to 'the day and age'. It was said they were jealous of the stronger warriors and concentrated more and more on strengthening themselves physically, ignoring their faith and church duties. And it is known that when you ignore your faith, your faith ignores you, and they quickly found that they could no longer reach the weave through the aid of their Lord. So instead, the tribe turned to science and practical medicine. Even though it was less effective, it served their

purposes and sometimes saved lives where magick would have failed. This is not to say magick does not exist within the Angeloss tribe. Every generation, a new shaman is born. They don't possess the skill to fight as well as the others, and are generally weak since birth, but their clerical powers are highly advanced.

This was Milead's case. He was weak from birth, and always last to finish in training. However, a new shaman had already been born a couple of years earlier and was training under the aged priest, who would soon die. The fact that Milead also showed no talent for magick and that only one shaman could be born per generation led to the assumption that he was simply a lazy child. Of course, his father would not have this and made a personal vow to whip his boy into shape, even if it killed either of them. So Milead went under rigorous training. He had heart; there was no doubt about that. He pushed himself nearly as hard as his father did. But he always fell short of his father's expectations in any form of combat, stamina training, and speed. But he made up for this by excelling in his more academic lessons. His knowledge of first aid was impeccable and his craftsmanship was superb. Of course, to actually forge a weapon took him much longer than the others, since he had trouble swinging the hammer, but they always turned out much stronger and sharper. This did please Freedin, but he still wasn't satisfied completely with Milead, so the harsh training continued.

It wasn't until Milead was fourteen, a late age to show signs of new ability, that he finally felt a higher connection. He couldn't describe it, it was just as if his eyes had been closed for so long, and his eyelids were finally beginning to flutter. He was instructed to go visit the young priestess, the new shaman of the Angeloss. While she did recognize the signs, and could sense his power, she couldn't help him much beyond that. And the old priest had died a couple years ago, leaving Milead with few options. Training under a rookie shaman who barely understood her own power would do him no good, and training to be a warrior may very well lead to an early grave. And he was too proud to be treated like an old veteran and taken care of for the rest of his days during his youth. His father, after giving it some thought, finally suggested something out of the ordinary. He should go to the distant Falcion, the island of apprentices. It was only odd, because this had never been done before. The people of Angeloss had always done well for themselves and never even had to speak to other societies, much less ask for help. But he could see no other option, and also saw it as a good opportunity. The stubborn cloud of pride had lifted from the eyes of Freedin in his old age, and did what he thought best for his unique son. He had all the potential to be a great cleric, and the basic knowledge of a fine warrior. While he could never be a paladin who has a grasp on both worlds, Freedin made sure to let Milead know that because of the effort he put into the work, despite his weaknesses, he was very proud of his son. He honestly felt like he had accomplished the vow he made ten years before.

Milead, never having been the emotionally attached type, left early the next morning with a nod and simple good bye to his father and the rest of his family that were awake for either training, or to see him off. And so, began his quest.

Naranek

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

Tresell`enda walked in the Sylvan Forests of her people, gathering herbs, and plants, for her healing spells. She was the Spelldancer of the small Elven town of Shi`Linette, and her life was devoted to healing, and helping others. It was a life that she was happy with, and her rewards were the thanks of her people, all the reward that she ever needed. She stepped off a small deer trail, and headed deeper into the cool Forrest. She spied a rare flower, in bloom, that carried immense healing potential, if properly prepared, and headed for it, with a small grin spreading over her delicate features. Her Crystal green eyes registered, first shock, then fear, at what greeted them. A man lay near the flower, in the deep undergrowth, with a large red stain covering his side. A broken spear tip protruded from the center of the stain. She immediately went to work, Incanting her most potent healing spells, and she put her many questions to the back of her mind, for the moment, however one lingered in her thoughts . . .what was this person?

The mans eyes shone with wonder, as he gazed out, over the small town of the elves. Never before had he seen such beauty, such balance with nature. It brought a smile to the rangers face. All he could remember was running from an incredibly large group of Goblins . . .a sharp burst of pain . . .then looking into a pair of crystal green eyes, the likes of which he had never before seen, as far as he could remember (which was not much.) Only a slight tenderness lay in his side, and from the wound which he had, that was a small price to pay for his life. The small town was governed by a group, called the elders. Elders the man thought with a laugh, the youngest one was 400 years old! They were quite reluctant to allow the man to stay, even until he had healed, But, Tresell`enda had argued on his behalf. The elders were still reluctant, but they could not dismiss the spelldancers wishes. Few of the elves in Shi`Linette even bothered to talk to the strange human, but the few that did, found him to be quite interesting. Tresell`enda came out, and laughed slightly, at seeing his face so full of wonder. In that moment, the spelldancer felt something she had never before felt in her 235 years of life, a stirring deep within herself. A thought came unbidden to her mind, Love? Could I actually be falling in love with this man?

The child looked around the village with wondering Crystal green eyes, one of the traits that he had received from his mother. He had often played this game that his father called Hide and Seek. The elves laughed lightly at the young boys searching. The elves loved this child, so few were born in the village, and his mixed heritage did not even cross their minds. His father had found a place in the hearts of the elves as well. He never could remember his past, and only few things before Tresell`enda had rescued him. He had no name, and the elves observed him, trying to find the right thing to call him. Shinecto was what he was named, the translation was akin to Dream Searcher. The boy ran forward, and climbed up a tree, to tag his fathers leg, and giggling, jump down.

The young boy (for he was that to the elves. His age was about that of a teenager, much younger by elven standards, and older by human standards,) chanted slightly, and placed his hands, that were glowing blue upon the elfs arm. The burn seemed to withdraw, and then vanish. He smiled to the Elder, as he looked up. "You are finding your powers, little one," said the Elder, as he pat the boy on the head. The boy mentally sighed . . .will they never stop calling him little one? The Elder left the small room, and talked to Shinecto, who was waiting outside. The young boy rolled his

eyes, and looked at the shelves of ingredients. He, or rather, his mother was running low on some special spices. He decided to go out, and gather them, that night.

Naranek (elven for child of hope) plucked a small Fire Lilly, and placed it gently in his pouch. He looked up, suddenly, feeling something was wrong. His pointed ears pricked, trying to hear. His almond shaped eyes scanned the forest, then it came to him . . .the village. Smoke rose up in the air, and he heard the alarm go up. His home was under attack! He started for the village, quickly. Hiding behind a bush, he saw Creatures, overrunning the village. The creatures matched his fathers description of Goblins. He heard the screams of his friends as the creatures swept through the village like a plague. As the alarm was answered by nearby villages, the air was soon filled with arrows, each striking a Goblin target. The Elven bows sung loudly, in defense of their wielders. He saw his father run out of his small house. Immediately, 5 Goblins jumped upon him, stabbing . . .laughing . . . His mother let out a scream, and ran to the pile of creatures, her hands glowing a fierce red. Many goblins died at her hands, before she was run through with a short sword. Tears ran down the half-elfs cheeks. He turned, and ran heavily, through the forest.

He was running for his life, 7 Goblins chased after him, two wore robes, and the rest had armor. His legs burned with the strain, and he had no idea where he was running to, but still he ran. In the distance, he spotted lights . . .a city, perhaps. He now had a goal, and ran all the faster, his lithe body sprinting at its fastest. He felt a stab of pain at his back, and went rolling forward. He was looking into a starry sky, wondering how he had gotten on his back, when a putrid face was looking into his own. "Grik Talla!" One of the robed creatures came up, and said in a gutteral voice, "he wants gold, I would give it to him, if I were you." The Creature atop him ripped his pouches away, and tore them open. So many spices, and herbs . . . but not a single coin. The creature stood, and raised a large Battle axe, poised above Naraneks head . . .What a curious expression thought the boy, perhaps glee? The goblin dropped forward, and the boy rolled to the side. He saw a clothyard shaft sticking out of its back. The Goblins looked to this new threat, and the boy was up and running.

Naranek stumbled through the Gate, bloody and bruised. His robes hung at his sides in tatters, and he wandered through the city, seeing only a haze of images. He walked through an archway, and saw a large temple. The feeling of hope entered him, and he walked into the temple. He soon stood before a statue that seemed to be looking into his soul. He lay down, and wept, for how long he had no idea. When he awoke, he found himself looking into eyes so beautiful, his breath caught in his throat. It seemed as though the statue had come to life, and stood above him, he knew he must be delusional. His wounds were healed, at least, his physical ones. He sat up, and looked around. He was alone, in the temple, but felt that this place was where he belonged. He felt as though he was not alone, and never would be again.

Nathalie

Class: Cleric
Race: Reni

As I look up in the sky I notice that the sun is covered in dark clouds. At this sigh I sigh and thinks about birds in the sky, and the sun standing high shining down on my beloved city, Nexus. Is I am daydreaming a scribe approaches me.

- Hello, My name is Delron, and I am a scribe.
- Hello Delron, says I.
- Are you Nathalie, the priestess and follower of Aalynor?
- Yes I am.
- Would you like to tell me your life story to me? He asks
- Why would you want to know that? I reply
- I want to write it down and put it in out library here in Nexus.

Me having nothing else to do agrees to tell him the story, and we walks off to Tristas tavern.

When we enter I order a meal, and sits down with the scribe at the other side of the table.

- Want something to drink? I ask the scribe.
- No please, I would just like to hear the story, he says and gets ready with the quill.
- Ok, here we go, I say and starts:

I was born in a village pretty far from Nexus. I had 2 older sisters and 1 older brother. My mother was a cleric also, although we did not call it cleric in out village. My father had just left us, just before my mother got pregnant with me. When I asked my mother where he had gone, I never got a straight reply, only lose answers. I was not very old, and did not think much of that. The years passed and we lived happy in out village. When I was about 50 I discovered that I had in some strange way, the ability to heal people, and my mother taught me one of the simplest spells she knew, namely Vigor.

When I had learned that spell good, my mother started to take me with her when she healed persons. And there I learned about how to cure different sicknesses, infections, poison and other things. When I noticed that my mother had two ways of dealing with it I asked how she did it.

- My daughter, she said, yet you are to young to learn these spells.
- Ok, I said, and walked of to the patients a bit sad.

Many more years passed and when I turned 100 there was a huge party to honor me, the daughter of the healer. There I found a boy, Elision, whom I fell in love with. Later that year we got married and I moved into his house. But then disaster struck out hometown.

It was a later night, and me and Elision where cuddling in our bed when we heard a frightening battle cry, and suddenly a big thunderstorm came rolling over our town. Elision jumped out of out bed, took his staff, told me to stay inside and ran out. Of course I didn't do as he told me, and got dressed and ran out. I wish I had never done that. On the streets there were goblins running around, killing everything they saw. Then I heard a great noise, and I saw as the earth rose and trapped several goblins inside and then closed itself, trapping the goblins. Then I heard a familiar voice.

When I turned around I saw Elision dressed in his robe, but there was something special about him now. The air around him was sparkling with raw power. He waved his hands in front of him, chanting and released lightning that struck down in the goblins. And next to him was an old man standing, with long white beard, and age was hard to tell. I had never seen the old man before, but if Elision's spells were hard, this old man's were even harder. Goblins melded as they had been consumed by inner fire, the ground started to shake under others shaking them to death.

Great thunderbolts landed on other goblins. The fight continued for what for me felt like hours, but might only have been 5 minutes. Then suddenly the old man fell over, with a big arrow stuck in his back. Elision lost some of his concentration as he looked over at the old man and a goblin came up to him and raised his sword. I can remember myself yelling at my husband, but he did not have the time to avoid the blow that came at him. The sword from the goblin entered in his left shoulder and exited on the right side of his body, and my husband was cut in to pieces. I was stunned, but my mother came out and dragged me into a house, and showed me place where I could hide. I can say this, I was not in the mood to hide, but my mother forced me into it and told me to stay foot and be quiet. Then she left outside.

Many hours later I started to smell smoke, and I started to have problem breathing, so I sneaked outside buy saw no goblin. What I saw was even worse. The whole town was putted on fire.

I ran to my house, but the house was already full of flames. Then I turned my face to the place where my husband was killed, and saw him laying there, in to pieces. I walked over to his body and kneeled. Then I burst out in tears. I don't know for how long I cried, but it was early in the morning when I stood up and took a look around. Since we lived not far from the ocean, I grabbed my husband's body and dragged it to the shore.

- Rest well my loved, I said and let the body float away in the water.

I did not return to my hometown again, but set of following the beach a long way. Many days later, when I reached a small village, I was nearly exhausted from lack off food and totally heartbroken. An elven child saw me, and screamed for the guards to come. The guards came and helped me to get to a tavern, and the tavern owner gave me food and his wife helped me up to a room where I could sleep until I was better.

I did not do much else then sleep, but it was long. When I finally woke up, I started to cry again. When I had stopped to cry I walked down the stairs and started to talk to the Tavern owner. He told me that this was the small fishing village named Rymek. He gave me a short story about the town.

He told me about Nexus, the training Island Flacion, the hordes. I asked where I might find this island and the man showed me a sloop which I boarded. He took me to a fountain, where he loosed ma and said

- This is where your training begins. If you want revenge on the goblins you must starts here. Learn, learn, and when you think you are full of knowledge, learn some more.
I bowed before the man, and looked around.

I wiped some tears of my chin, and then I looked at the scribe.

- Is this enough?
- Yes, he said, that was a touching story.

I shrugged and stood up and walked out of the door.

Ochoski

Class: Cleric
Race: Drow

Many people have told their story, their story of how they came to be. I wish to keep my story to myself, as I am not an open person. Yet, many people ask about my life. Here is the story of my life, to all those curious individuals.

I am a drow, as many can see. I was born to parents unknown to me, deserted in a forest as a baby, to fend for myself. Fortunately, for me, I was found by an elderly human by the name of Reginald Ochoski. As I was nameless, I was given the name Ochoski, the last name of my caretaker.

Reginald is a good man, a healer by trade. He taught me many things about life, healing and many other studies. He wanted to fill my mind with knowledge, so I can see the world as a whole.

We lived in a cabin, isolated from most people. A few travellers dropped by occasionally, mostly the shopkeeper from the nearby village to deliver supplies.

My daily activities included my chores, my studies and my training. Every morning we would milk or cow named Martha. Tend to our garden, where we grew our herbs and vegetables. We also worked on any other things that needed to be tended to in the forest.

After lunch I would study mathematics, religion, history and many other studies. Reginald made sure that I would have a complete education.

During the evening, I would train in the healing arts of herbalism. I learned ways to heal with herbs found in the forest and our garden. I also learned some basic combat skills. I did not understand at the time why I trained to fight, but I do now.

I did this the majority of my life. I aged, and grew older, I became an adult and eventually, I grew tiresome and bored of my life. I achieved all that I could achieve under the guidance of Reginald. Reginald, most likely sensed this feeling in me and spoke to me about a place named Falcion.

I do not believe I have to tell you the story of the purpose of Falcion, because chances are, you already know about Falcion or shortly will. He also told me this was the only place I could further my abilities.

Obviously, I decided to come to Falcion to train. Reginald supplied me with some rations, some gold marks and a map to Falcion.

The next morning I said my goodbye and set out on my journey to Falcion.

Here is my life, they way I want it to be heard. Please do not ask for more information, this is all I am willing to share.

Signed, Ochoski, the Drow.

Orthae

Class: Cleric
Race: Drow

Tilnar’s Vein, home of the dark, and most fiendish of beings. Buried under thousands of tons of rock, these beings live in the depths of the mountains.

Two rancorous houses ruled with a tyranny so violent that none speak their names free of fear. De’ramour, the house of malevolence and Bathoney, the house of the blade.

Both equally ruthless and powerful, their blood feud has existed since the first great schism. The house of Bathoney was led by a succubus of a house matron. The deeds of Ell’ Saba Bathoney reflect well the cruel precepts of her following.

Their house is located upon an island in an underground lake. This lake is circled by sheer rock walls except for a small inlet where the drow land there boats. From here they would have to trek for two days through rough trails between rock cliffs, water traps and sinkholes to reach the battle ground to siege the other house.

Ell’ Saba was known as the felated whore, diva and temptress. One of her many "partners" was a drow known as Melange. He was a powerful sorcerer, possessing rare innate abilities to manipulate magic and bend it to his twisted whim. After three years of the matron’s favour and many bloody battles, a male was born of Ell’ Saba’s rotten womb. As an infant, he remained unnamed as he was born with an oddity. Alone amongst his brethren, this boy was born albino. His searing red eyes would randomly flash with spite and radiated the power his soul aura. Serving in the drow fashion, the boy labored daily to please the females of the house.

As the young male matured, the matron fell to a great illness that no one within the house could heal. The house healers tried for days to no avail. Her death bed was set and she rested thereupon listening to the grim news of great wars lost as armies lacked her guidance. Without direction the young male went to his mother’s side. He whispered ancient words he had not previously known into her fevered ear. The magical words he spoke and soon after forgot. After this had been done Saba grew cold and warmed to perfect health. The boy was then named Orthae, which in the drow tongue of his house; skilled aid, or great healer. Unknown of his full powers the boy grew and

continued to serve the lady heads under a hated watch from the male portion of the house. Orthae was tormented, ridiculed and harassed every hour because of the great favor shown him by the women, and having been born with such power.

Upon the shores, Orthae stood and watched over the serenity of the water for sometime. Often he would do this, to escape for a moment the world he lived in. He would often wander up and down the shores, but on this occasion something life changing happened. He found upon the shores a small crystal. Not knowing exactly what it was he hid it in his uniform until he could further study it. That eve, he hid the rock within his room. After attempting to sleep he searched for the stone to examine it. This rush of excitement had never filled his heart before. Feeling the rock, it was almost mud like in texture; it also seemed to be squishy. Little did Orthae know that within his own quarters was another of his siblings, Denothnor, hidden, watching his every move.

Once Orthae went soundly back to sleep, Denothnor slipped out of the room and began to walk down the halls. He came to an elder male’s dorm. Knocking upon the door he then related what he saw Orthae do. The elder seemed lost in thought for a moment, and then stormed out of his room. Particularly powerful was this elder male, a special method of torture he used. To bind pain, and cowards in a visual form to ones very soul. Opening his eyes, Orthae noticed someone standing over him. Words were beginning formed from this figures mouth, but nothing was making any sense, until the person produced the stone of which Orthae had coveted. Dragged from his place of slumber, the elder took the young one in front of the Matron of the house. She was awaken and brought out to her throne. Remaining silent, with his head bowed Orthae stood before her, knowing all to well what would become of this. "Why had you hoarded this item from your family boy?" spoke the Lady. Silence filled the air. "Speak boy, you know of the rules, you know you were commanded to bring anything found before the elders of our house. Speak!" the Old Man said. Orthae remained silent, this time raising his head to stare the lady in the eye. Lady Saba spoke "You disgrace me, you’ve done a great deed before, but now that is forgotten. You are no longer one welcomed in this house!" She spoke to the Elder in whispers for a moment. "Boy, for your treachery and show of Treason you are hereby to be tormented and marked for the rest of your days!" the Elder spoke with a grimacing yet sadistic smile on his face. The young drow continued to stare the Lady in the face, with his eyes flaring full of rage and hate, for he did not expect to live long after this.

During his time in the lab of Unkom’lon many slaves had passed on giving in to the fierce torture. Scarred were his hands, to wound him from ever using them to cast spells. Marred was his face, so that no women could love him, and bound to his soul was an ever burning and toiling mist. The mist marked him as a traitor, so that if he were to hide, he’d be found, and killed. 20 years he spent in the torture labs until he was summoned before the lady. She looked upon him, broken, scarred, and marked for death. She showed pity then, in a rare moment of weakness for his behalf. "You may take your rock, we’ve studied it and it is nothing of worth!" she threw the stone at him. Orthae picked it up then he stared at her. "You’re still silent? Well we’ll see" she now turned to the guards, "Let him go ashore, see how he fares in the heat of battle with nothing but his silence to guard him!" snickering the guards did as they were told. Showing no concern Orthae followed in silence having no need of restraint. Ever staring at the stone, he stepped into a small boat that would bare him across to the main land. Both guards watched him carefully. Eyeing the Stone, Orthae fingered it carefully, detecting some hidden power within it. He summoned it up then, in a

blinding fashion! The guards shielded there eyes, as the oarsmen jumped into the frigid waters. Urged with some dark power the device activated

"The Gods Rescue Thee!"

Lying naked and unconscious before the Altar of Twilight. Priests came to his aid. They clothed him in a dark garb. Orthae covered his eyes; the pain of the dim candle light seared him like nothing else. Remaining within the confines of his mind, he asked where he was. "Welcome to the Cathedral of Twilight" spoke the voice of a priest.

Pious

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

As Pious was born in the Nexus, the historians have maintained his life story since his birth. Born out of wedlock to one of Madam Despana's Strumpets, his father unknown, Pious was abandoned at the door of the clerical sanctuary soon after birth. Unable to ignore the poor child's cry, the clerics took him in eventually becoming quite fond of the boy. They raised him to follow their profession, instilling in him a tremendous amount of piety. Pious learned at an early age that healers must devote themselves to their craft, for good healers were lifesavers in times of battle.

As soon as he was old enough, the clerics began to take Pious along on adventures, teaching him to concentrate on healing the adventurers, and ignoring all else. At first Pious would attempt to join the fight,casting what few offensive spells he could, leaving the healing to others. However, he soon learned the errors of his ways.

In a furious battle, his mentor was suddenly attacked, and badly wounded. The task of healing not only his teacher, but also all of the adventuring party, now fell upon Pious. Turning his attention to the most seriously injured, Pious began healing them. In his foolishness, he did not stop casting offensive spells on the enemy. As the battle wore on, his mentor, seriously wounded, screamed for help. Turning toward his beloved friend, Pious attempted to heal him, discovering too late that he had used all of his magic.

Fearing for the life of his mentor, Pious forgot all else. He dragged his wounded friend out of harms way, and returned to the battle. The enemy was all but dead, and the adventurers were calling for a healer, so that they could finish the attack. Unable to use his magic abilities, all Pious could offer them was a few magical blue orbs, so that they could heal themselves. Finishing the battle without the help of a healer did not please the adventurers, and Pious could not hide his shame. Though the battle was eventually won, and none of the adventurers were killed, Pious knew he had failed in his duties. Picking up his friend, he carried him back to the clerical sanctuary, so that he could be cared for.

He knew that excuses were pointless, and his shame was great. All of the clerics gathered around to hear what had happened, and Pious explained what had gone wrong. All of his "family" nodded

their heads knowingly, and allowed Pious to continue his training. They explained that it would be some time before he was allowed to go on another adventure, as he needed to learn much about responsibility first.

Time passed quickly for the devout cleric. He immersed himself in his studies, learning all of the healing spells he could. He never forgot the lessons of that day, and knew he had nearly cost several adventurers their lives. He spent his days wandering about the city, healing newcomers in their inevitable battles with criminals, madmen, and spies. He became known as a healer of great talent, though he had yet to accompany adventurers on another mission of importance and difficulty. Several years passed, and the goblins had begun to mass outside the gates of the city. Suddenly the call went out! A party was forming, as a white dragon, several giants, and battleslaves had been spotted just outside the east gates. All clerics that were available would be needed, and Pious was determined to redeem himself. The party formed in Aaylnor's Temple, and was soon marching toward the gate. There were many good clerics in attendance, and all prayed for a successful mission. Outside the gate, the first enemy the party came upon was a white dragon. The attack was quick, and the clerics kept everyone alive. The dragon soon fell, and the party was victorious, though just a little too sure of themselves. As they headed east, they ran into strong opposition. Rounding a bend, the party was ambushed by several fire giants and battleslaves. Changing tactics, they all focused their attention on one member of the party. Despite the best efforts of the clerics, Aragon was slain. His death shocked the party, and caused them great anger. They attacked with fury, and soon the entire enemy force lay slain.

Pious performed his duties that day as best he could, the loss of Aragon saddened him, but he had tried his best. The sheer force of the attack had been too much to overcome. Back at the clerical sanctuary, his mentors explained that it was impossible to prevent all deaths in battle. In recognition of the fact that pious had learned his lessons well, it was decided that he would be allowed to join in future adventures.

HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Pious continues to heal adventurers as of this writing, and still spends many days helping newcomers to our fair city make a name for themselves. His healing spells keep them alive as they fight the everyday enemies, which the skilled adventurers have no time for.

Rapheous

Class: Cleric
Race: Half-Elf

Rapheous walks into the hallway of the Nexus Library, he pauses for a moment looking about, before spotting a scribe walking past with an armful of scrolls. Motioning the young man towards him, he simply says, "I've come to give the tale of my past."

The scribe looks at him for a moment, then nods, "We are always pleased to hear of our heroes exploits."

"Bah, I'm no hero, I just do my job."

"Of course, of course, they all say that, well some anyway", the scribe responds, before directing Rapheous to a small room. The scribe briefly disappears, returning without the scrolls, but armed with quill, ink and paper.

"Now, in your own words, and take your time", says the scribe as he sits down.

"I was born in an elven village quite some distance from Nexus, the result of a human soldier taking advantage of a young elf maid."

Rapheous grimaces slightly before carrying on, "It quickly became apparent that I was not of pure elven blood, and soon after my 5th birthday, mother and I were exiled from the village. After two days walking, we stumbled across an abandoned cottage, and for the next 10 years this became our home. Whilst life was hard we survived, and we were happy.

Mother had an interest in herbs, and found all sorts of uses for them, from helping to heal cuts, to easing head pains and settling upset stomachs. As I grew up, she passed the knowledge on to me.

One day, not long after my 15th birthday, I returned home from collecting herbs, to find the cottage a burnt out shell, mother dead inside. Holding her in my arms, I felt helpless, no herb in the world could save her now. I buried her in the shade of a large oak tree that grew nearby, tears obscuring my vision as I whispered a few words to say goodbye.

Looking at the cottage again, I realised that the fire had been caused by someone or something of evil intent, and the helplessness welled up inside me once more. What would I do if they returned? Putting my hopes into a few leaves and grasses did not seem to be an option. With everything in the cottage destroyed, I simply walked away, with just the clothes on my back.

I walked without purpose or direction for days, relying on my herb lore to keep me alive, eating the berries and grasses that I recognised as edible.

I was amazed one morning when I found a road cutting across the countryside in a north/south direction. Shrugging my shoulders, figuring one way was a good as another I headed south, thinking that at least the road must lead somewhere.

That somewhere turned out to be a village called Rymek, which stank of fish, and there were people everywhere! I stared, wide eyed with amazement, seeing people of all shapes and sizes walk past me, going about their business. I kept walking through the village and the smell of fish got stronger and stronger, and then my vision was filled with the sea. I must have been starting at it for quite a while, when a voice brought me back to my senses asking, "Well, ye been staring at that bit o' water fer an hour or more, so ye obviously want to cross over to Falcion, so come on board laddie, and hurry up as I haven't got all day."

Blinking I nodded absently to the man who had spoken, and walked onto the floating thing, wondering what it was that mother had said they were called. Made of wood, the thing was packed with people, all seemingly headed to this place called Falcion.

Things seemed to happen very quickly when more land suddenly appeared out of the mist that had surrounded us. Everyone got off, and we soon found ourselves waiting to walk through some tall gates. I waited in line, having got nothing better to do, trying to attract as little attention as possible.

Eventually I was at the front of the line, and a rough looking, short man with a large red beard asked, "What do you want to be then eh?"

"Be? I don't know what you mean", I responded.

"Another with no clue as to what he's doing eh? What are you good at then? Anything?"

"Herbs are all I know", I simply replied.

"Herbs..alright, how's about trying out as a cleric? What do ya think? Yes of course, cleric it is". With that he propelled me through the gates, before turning back to the line of people behind me and shouting, "Next!"

The scribe looks up, waiting to see it there is any more, then puts his quill down. "An interesting tale sir, but might I ask one question?"

Blinking, his thoughts seemingly still in the past, Rapheous nods.

"Well, and pardon me for intruding, but I can see how you became a cleric and all, but..", he pauses and then glances meaningfully at the shackle on Rapheous" finger.

"Oh, your wondering how I decided I wanted to became a follower of Mistress Paelina?

My training as a cleric quickly made me realise that magic was a far more powerful force than using simple herbs, and that the healing that could be accomplished was often nothing short of miraculous. Having decided that becoming a cleric was the right choice for me, I focused on my training, determined to save as many from death as possible.

My decision on faith was one that I did not make lightly nor quickly, based on researching the ideals of those followers I could speak to."

The cleric pauses, glancing at the scribe," Perhaps we should leave the reason why I chose the religious path that I did for another time."

The scribe sighs and then nods, "Very well. Thank you for your time. Hopefully the next time will not be too far away." Rapheous smiles and nods, "Thank you for listening. May Honor guide your actions."

With that Rapheous bows and walks off.

Soh

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

To know the story of Soh, (or as he is properly known Pachelbel-Soh) one must first know the story of his father, Pachelbel-Vivaldi. When Vivaldi was just a boy living in the northern plains town of Travato, his people were hit by the ferocious eastern plague. Everyone in Travato and the surrounding region perished, except the little Vivaldi. In later years, when he thought about it, he assumed he'd been protected from the virus by divine providence. During the outbreak of the plague, his innocent life force must have won favor with the then tortured mind of Tilnar. He could think of no other reason.

Orphaned in a deserted land, Vivaldi had no where to turn and no one to help him. Tearfully he buried the remains of his family and placed grave markers in their remembrance. Standing on his village's high ground, Vivaldi breathed deeply and absorbed the decimated scene. He tightened the straps on his bulging backpack and headed toward an unknown future.

Packing as many supplies as his small shoulders could bear, he went out into the dark wilderness. Vivaldi matured much on his long lonesome journey. Through the blessings of Tilnar, he began to develop a sixth sense of nature, a familiarity with the healing arts. In his travels he learned the secrets of how to resist poisons and diseases. Using natural herbs for healing and nourishment became an everyday activity which he soon grew proficient in.

One late night, while dosing by a small fire, an extraordinary event occurred which forever embedded itself in to Vivaldi's memory. When sleep had nearly overtaken him, he was troubled as the moon slowly began to turn color, swirling black and blood red. Standing up tall trying to gather his senses, he rubbed his eyes. "This can't be happening," he thought to himself as the twilight sky turned deep violet. Suddenly the small fire which Vivaldi had burning began to grow in intensity rapidly. Magical energy crackled loudly causing Vivaldi jump back in alarm, the flames grew to the towering height of the mighty oaks around him. He hid in fear and awe as a midnight black shape rose from the flames casting an eerie silhouette against the changed moon. "A gryphon?" he asked himself, having been daydreaming that very day of them. "How could that be?"

An enchanting moan howled from within the flames causing the earth itself to rumble. A divine darkfire consumed and blessed Vivaldi, placing him into a deep sleep. Awaking what seemed days later, he recalled the wonders which had happened to him at his small fire. Vivaldi had learned much about the Lord of Death and his symbols during the plague. Many of Vivaldi's fellow villagers had vainly sacrificed their children in bizarre rituals to appease Tilnar; better they thought then letting them endure the awful plague. Prayer became part of Vivaldi's daily routine in order to calm his fear and awe brought by the power and twisted madness of Tilnar.

After surviving on his own in the wilderness for nearly four years, Vivaldi came upon a hidden valley deep within the northern Crystal Mountains. Between the sheer rock faces rested a peaceful village of the name Toffle. The elders welcomed Vivaldi with open arms and he quickly gained the reputation of resident medicine man. Surrounded by bountiful soils and fatted calves, he gained a

tremendous amount of weight within his first few years out of the wilderness. His belly size came to symbolize his triumph over past hardships, and wisdom as a healer. His body as well as his daily prayers began to change after settling in Toffle. While he used to pray out of fear, he now prayed out of devotion. His prowess with healing herbs was used to cure the sick, and his prayers to a true deity gave him supernatural insight into many things.

As young men do, Vivaldi eventually came to take a wife. Customarily taking her husband's name she became formally known as Pachelbela-Mia. Mia was a well-learned and well-bred woman who became the light of Vivaldi's life. However, she was uninterested in his religion, the thought of praying to the Lord of Death frankly scared her. Mia and Vivaldi's years were many and they were well advanced in age when they gave birth to a giggly fat baby, named Soh. From an early age, Vivaldi tutored Soh in the ways of the healing arts and the beliefs he held. As young as the age of eight, the townsfolk of Toffle began consulting Soh for healing knowledge and prophecies. He enjoyed his responsibilities and his legacy, which he was responsible for carrying on. His knowledge and belly began to grow in size, mimicking the appearance of his father. Entering the sunset of his life, Vivaldi shied away from the everyday needs of the townspeople, leaving Soh as replacement medicine man. Thanks to his father's teachings, Soh's abilities blossomed and his reputation helped make a name for Toffle in the surrounding region, which ultimately served to be its downfall.

The strategic location of Toffle eventually caught the attention of high ranking goblin officials located in the east, because of the famed rotund medicine man. From scouting reports, they gleaned that it would be the optimal command post for their northern army because of its hidden valley and strategic defensive position. It was Soh's 13th birthday when the goblins decided to make their move.

The townsfolk of Toffle were going about their daily business when goblin warlords created a giant rockslide, brutally smashing two thirds of the people and their homes. The initial rumbling caused Soh to jump to his feet alertly and rush his aging parents to the cellar. From inside the moist earth they heard the bloodcurdling screams of crushed villagers. Soh cursed himself, knowing that they been attacked only because his notoriety had spread the word of his hidden town.

Leaving through a secret tunnel way, Soh led his terrified mother and father to a secluded home in the Eldane Forest, where they reside to this day. Vivaldi's faith in his God and his son continue to remain unwavering. Soh chose a life in Nexus so that he would never again bring atrocities to those around him, and so that he may one day seek retribution upon his Goblin enemies. When arriving in Nexus, his life force instinctively sought out Tilnar's famed church. His father's and his path continue to follow the guide of Lord Tilnar. On occasion, Soh travels to his parent's cottage where they greet him with warm butterbread and warm hearts.

Summerlinn

Class: Cleric
Race: Sprite

"Sprite arrive, and bring excitement."
One moment Summerlinn was practicing her flying, frowning intently as she beat her wings vigorously off-rhythm, the next she was in a dark cave, surrounded by looming, ugly monsters. Momentarily night-blind after the sun-dappled green afternoon she'd just been in, the huge shadows around her seemed horrible and threatening. She screamed and flew straight into a wall.

"Thy energies return!"
Their faces were no less hideous when they hovered less than a foot away from her own. Dark faces, dark eyes, and monstrous tusks jutting out of hard mouths. She squirmed frantically to get away, but only managed to get dust all over herself. A horrible rumbling noise came from one of them, then spread to the others. They bared their vicious teeth at her, and after a moment of frozen fear, she realized that they were smiling and... laughing.

She forced herself to smile back tentatively, hoping to keep them laughing. One of them rumbled to another in a thick, snarly accent, "See, she's alright."

Then, en masse, the lot of them left the cave, leaving her alone in the dark. She stood up groggily and fanned the dirt off her wings, feeling horribly alone in the cavernous darkness. They charged back into the cave in such a fierce rush that she cowered, hoping she would not be crushed.

There was a moment of silence. When she looked up, the monsters all had strange expressions on their faces that she couldn't interpret. One of them finally said hesitantly, "Why is she still here?"

Well, if they wanted to get rid of her, she'd be glad to oblige. She searched her land-sense for home... and there was nothing there. She searched again, looking for that line of green welcome that always rested with cool comfort in the back of her mind, no matter how far she'd gone exploring. It wasn't there - this land was barren.

She closed off awareness of the confused murmurs around her, focusing on her search. Yes, there was life here. Shy, hesitant clumps of life that clung tenuously to the sparse earth or huddled furtively in the shelter of cracked rocks. But none of it pointed her way home.

She felt faint. What fearful place had she come to, that she could not find her way back home? When would she see her mother, her father again? Would they be able to find her in such bleakness? She opened her eyes as wide as she could, trying to hold in the tears. Even so, tiny sprite tears spilled down her cheeks. At some point she had crouched down, hugging her knees to her chest. Now she pressed her forehead to her knees and tried to stifle the sobs that racked her body.

Something brushed against her back gently and oh so carefully, not even crumpling her limp wings. She wiped her eyes hard with the heels of her palms and looked up. One of them was smiling at her, extending a huge calloused hand. The smile looked odd. Summerlinn realized it was because this friendly stranger was trying to cover its tusks with its upper lip, perhaps to seem less intimidating. This surprised her enough to attempt a sniffly smile.

The stranger shuffled a little closer, hunched in an uncomfortable- looking position to get down to Summerlinn's level. It rumbled, "Don't be afraid. You can live with me until we can find your home.

I have a little girl, Danika,, who I think will like you very much. Maybe you will like her, too?"

Tentatively, ready to snatch her hand back instantly, Summerlinn laid it into the hugely gnarled one. The stranger didn't even close that massive hand, but just lifted up. Almost magically, Summerlinn followed it up into the air, suspended from the hand, wings limp with wonder.

Taringail

Class: Cleric
Race: Elf

(Taringail cleans the paperwork from his desk and lays his journal before him. He tips a waxed feather with ink and begins writing in fine elven penmanship.)

Panur, Prairiefire 14th, 1347 WE/IY 958.

It is not often that I address matters of my history upon the pages of this journal. To be an elf with honesty, I rarely think of my own past. It is now that I will terminate this shadow and devote my ink to remembrance.

My memories of the settlement, Voronwerea, are scattered and confused. Whenever I attempt to map the geography of the area, it is only my home that I remember. High in the oaks of the this nameless forest sat the house in which I was raised. I remember the lack of pleasantries and decorations. Everything was made of wood - the furniture, the dinner plates... everything. My father, a faithful Amandil of the Daer'lin Goddess Pandora, was strict in his parenting. I remember he would awaken my mother and I everyday before sunrise for worship. He would have us all kneel on the front porch to watch the rising of the sun. The height of our home allowed the most breathtaking of views. Writing this, I feel chills throughout my body. It was such a wonderful sight. I remember we would chant, over and over, "Today is the Day of Hope. Today is the Day of Hope". I embraced Hope. At even my young age, the beauty of Hope was known to my soul. Tears of joy lined my eyes those mornings on the porch. Hope is the fire in us all.

After worship, my mother would begin her work about the house and my father would walk me to church. It was there that I was educated. My father always insisted on my education. Even on Dilur, Aalur, and Tilur he had my eyes attending a book. I never realized it, but my father never taught me of the world outside of Voronwerea. He kept me ignorant of Altin's realities. I know now he was tailoring me to one day take his place and run the settlements only church. With his harsh molding of my character, I no doubt would have done a fine job.

The hand that created my innocence also destroyed it. I can remember the evening clearly. My mother had supper set, my father was in his room to change out of his robes. My mother and I were standing next to our dining chairs, awaiting my father to enter so we may sit and begin prayer. When my father entered, my mothers face paled. In his clenched fists was a piece of paper. "How dare you," he yelled, "Selling Pandora's Gift for money! Money! You are the foul wench of Sin and Lie!" I remember the look in his eyes when he became too angry to speak. I remember blood

and tears mixing on the floor while my mother was beaten. I was so confused, so lost. I knew only that I could run from this nightmare. And I did. I ran all night and all morning - my back to the rising sun.

For many years I wandered from town to town. Drunk was I every night. I gambled, I stole, I committed the Sins my father insisted I fear. I was a lost soul.. I had no direction, no purpose, no Hope. All who tried to befriend me I cast away. All those who showed me love saw only my back in return. It was the lowest point of my life.

When the Goblin force was no longer avoidable, I followed the masses into Nexus for refuge. I remember I was seeking shelter from a storm the eve Trelek found me. To this day, I am amazed he recognized the son of one of his pupils. He picked me up and brought me to the Temple of Hope, where he immediately began destroying the masks I had created over my years of despair. Trelek is very important to me. Without him, I would have never found myself and my Faith. He showed me I am capable of accomplishing anything. He returned to me the great Hope I had once felt on a porch high in the oak trees.

Perhaps one day I will try to locate Voronwerea, or perhaps one day it will reveal itself to me. Whichever the case, I will never return to the despair I once had. To Pandora and Her Church, to my family, to my friends, I now dedicate my life.

Faith in another begins with Faith in ones self.

Tiras

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

Autobiographical History
Tiras D'Borhannia - Priest of Paelina, Protector of Nexus.

My story, in my own opinion, is not one to make the history books, nor one to strike awe into the minds of its readers, but as it has been requested, so shall I provide.

I was born into a wealthy Highborn house in the City of All Races, Nexus by name. I was raised in the life of a noble, learning their ways and preparing to one day take over my father's holdings. Mine was a life filled with comfort, with many servants to do the minor housekeeping labor, thus leaving me to learn the art of politics and intrigue that makes up the game that nobles play to increase their assets. Needless to say, my way of life did not lend itself to battle experience, and I was in fact so sheltered from the outside world that I was under the false impression that battle was something that only occurred in stories and such that were read to children. Because of this, my first encounter with such things was quite a traumatic experience to say the least.

I recall a sunny day.... I had left my parents home to simply stroll the streets. Where I was planning to go I do not recall, only that there was a commotion about the entire city with men and women

hurrying from one gate to another. Stepping to one side of the street to avoid being trampled while I watched, I quietly took note of the party before me. Some wore heavy sets of armor, while others walking cautiously behind simply wore robes and carried ornately engraved books, while still others blended into the shadows as they walked so that they were almost lost to the eye even as I looked directly at them. After a moment of quick discussion one of the larger members of the party called an order and the others fell easily into formation as they hurried off toward the eastern gate.

Frowning to myself with my curiosity peaked, I followed along behind to discover what the commotion was about. What I saw would change my life forever...

As I slipped outside the gate I could only stare in horror at the scene before me. Blood splattered the ground thick enough to be stand in the soaked soil. Foul creatures attacked with cunning, and valiant warriors, powerful magi, and priests dressed in white robes assisted. The blood was terrible.. Arms were rent from sockets, knees shattered, swords ran through armor like a knife through butter. Unable to bear the scene any longer I left into the gates once again heading for my home.. running the whole way..

The months that followed were haunted by nightmares of death and gore. I could not look at even a servant in my own hold without seeing him in my mind's eye being torn limb from limb. After a time my own anger began to grow. I had been held, protected against the truth of the city in which I was living. I was gaining from the blood, sweat, and tears of those fighting for my freedom, and I was in turn giving nothing back in return. There was no honor in the life that I lived. I had a duty to this city to protect it with my life as so many had before me.

It was at this time that I visited the city of Falcion for the first time. Trainers there worked with me day and night to help me determine how I could best be used in the defense. The ways of battle came quickly to me. I was a hard worker, and even though I received no joy from the killing, the necessity in weapon use was clearly evident.

Due to my smaller build, the life of a warrior was obviously not the path to take. Instead, my abilities quickly grew in the arts of healing. The reason for my affinity toward this art was not immediately apparent, but my trainers surmised that it could be that my dislike for killing may be dissuaded somewhat if I were able to heal as well. Whatever the reasoning for my ability, my life as a cleric began and such has it been to this day. At this time I am currently a proud follower of Lady Paelina and I strive to act in an honorable manner in all that I do.

Tyran

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

As chronicled by Christados of Lebo, "The Chronicles of the Krieger Empire"

.....had it not been for Artix's personal request that Tyran, an old reni cleric among humans, accompany what the Khan had said in their private conversations to be a "testosterone based

group of over zealous Krieger who suffered from invulnerability syndrome", he would have walked from the room on the very mention of the histories relating to Drakath and his vampire minions. This vehement fear of the undead which made "Preacher" Tyran so irrational stemmed from back when Tyran was a child, before he had even envisioned himself as a servant of Krieger. Long before a freak mistake of identity took him from his true love and his friends, to a realm called Nexus.

He had been different back then, been unafraid. He had laughed along with a group of his other reni friends when one of the younger children had dared another to enter the forest bordering the small village he had grown up in. Located on the brink of Lidrak Ka-lith, the village was home to small reni families who made their living on hunting and trapping business the forest animals of the region could provide. Since before he could remember, the elder folk of the village had told stories and legends about the mysterious powers of the forest, claiming it to be haunted by spirits of dead warriors who had died in wars long past. Tyran had never seen anything which might support these tall tales and he had often laughed when the other children told him spooky stories in the attempt to frighten him. Other children were not as brave as he however, and it was in light of this that he had smiled and leaned back against a willow tree as his friends dared one of their own to enter the woods and bring back the bark of the spruce trees which were known to grow inside it's confines.

The child was one year younger than Tyran's age of ten but nearly as tall. He laughed back nervously at his friends, accepted the bet and started towards the edge of trees as the late afternoon sun began to set behind them. He stopped suddenly when a little girl shouted out in a taunt. "Remember, moonlit night... spooks delight!" She quoted, pointing up at the rising moon as it began its nightly climb into the top of the sky. The pressured boy stopped but did not look back and Tyran could remember seeing his shoulders rise and fall, as if he were looking for the courage that a deep breath could offer. The boy entered the forest cautiously, looking back one final time at his friends who sat there watching him. Then with a sigh, he plunged into its depths.

He had been gone for over an hour when most of the children either had gotten bored with waiting or were called home by parents. Tyran had remained, however. Worried that his friend may have gotten lost and feeling partly guilty for allowing the dare to occur, he decided to peek into the woods and search. The evergreens, which sheltered the inner forest, were hard to circumvent without climbing and catching his leggings on several thorn bushes which surrounded them, but after he had braved a few cuts and scratches he managed to break it's borders. The forest was silent and cold and there was no light except the pale moonbeams which; managed to penetrate the frightening canopy above, dancing in and out of the shadows their absence caused.

He was about to call for his friend but hesitated, worried more about what attention he might draw to himself. He didn't believe in the ghosts, but he was worried about more realistic monsters like bears or wolves. Doing his best to silently step through the underbrush, he lost track of the time he had spent looking. It had been at least an hour, that much he was sure of, when he recalled stepping around a large spruce tree and into a clearing, bringing him into contact with the nightmare vision which he would remember for the rest of his life.

As his vision adjusted to the darkness, he could make out a shadow bent over on the other side of the clearing. As it became clearer, he drew a deep breath in terror. The pale moonlight reflected off

a body; which had been horribly mutilated beyond recognition, so much in fact, that the only way Tyran knew it had been his friend was because, at his feet was one of the boy's sandals, bent and cracked. As he crouched silently and picked up the shoe, he realized the ghoulish form over the boy's carcass was feeding on it. He fell back in a sudden onslaught of nausea and terror, slipping on some moss and crashing in leaves. The ghoul stood up instantly and turned to Tyran with rotting eyes full of hunger. With amazing speed, the creature bounded towards him with glowing yellow claws outstretched.

It had bridged the distance between them in a matter of seconds and Tyran raised his hands over his head in panic, staring with panic into the eyes of his attacker. As he waited in horror for the beast to rip his flesh to shreds, there was a massive flash of bright white light blinding him instantly. An agonizing screech from the creature caused him to cover his ears in fright to shut out the noise and he found himself joining in with a scream of his own. As his lungs propelled the last of the air from his body, he opened his eyes to see the thing crumpled at his feet.

In a panic, he turned and bolted, reaching the edge of the clearing before coming to a stop. He slowly looked over his shoulder seeing that the ghoul had remained unmoving where it fell. Through the scarce light he approached it, ignoring the scream of warning his mind continued to pound him with. When he reached the thing, he placed his foot on it's shoulder and shoved it slightly. To his amazement, the form crumpled into nothing but a pile of dust which a small breeze had already begun to scatter. Confused and terrified at the events, he turned and fled from the woods.

The next day hunters from the village had followed Tyran in the safety of the sunlight and collected his friends body for burial. Tyran had related his story to the priest in the village who had listened with intense interest, particularly when it came to the part on the destruction of the ghoul. According to the priest, the ten year old Tyran had managed to destroy the undead creature in a way similar to that done by the highest clerics in the church's order. The trauma of the event combined with the release of such power had left the young boy's eyes devoid of pupils, a phenomena which the priest had mentioned he had seen only once before. Besides the unique eyes which were noticed everywhere he went, Tyran was haunted by dreams of the occurrence continuously, both when sleeping and when awake.

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"C'mon, Tyran." The voice came from Thrawn and snapped the cleric out of his daydream as he realized he had been left behind and in the dark as the others squeezed through the opening. He could see the torch light beyond the collapsed rock, flickering as whispers of conversation reached his ears. He slipped inside the crevice.....

Velshari

Class: Cleric
Race: Human

The history of Velshari is actually a very unremarkable one. He was born on a small farm, only a short ride from the famed city of Nexus. Velshari managed to excel in all that he tried, despite a crippled leg at birth, due to hard work and determination. Always greeting visitors with a warm crooked smile, he became known for his abilities with medicine and healing. As the war with the goblins began to draw nearer to the farm, weary travelers would appear at their doorstep looking to have their stomachs filled and their wounds tended. It was during one of these instances that a certain priest came upon the farm with one of the hunting parties. The priest, Darshantis by name, saw the boy and was extremely impressed with his natural talents and decided to stay on at the farm. For a time, perhaps three months.. maybe four, the kind priest trained the boy in the ways of healing.

Several months passed after Darshantis' leaving and the battle continued to rage closer. Velshari's parents finally decided that it was the time to collect all of their precious belongings and move inside the protective walls of the city. Velshari, already forced to leave his home, made it known to his family his desire to move on to Falcion to continue his training as a cleric.

Upon reaching Falcion, Velshari worked hard and after many long months attained the Priesthood status. Fighting along side the heroes and overcomming his disability with enough success that many failed to even notice it, he worked up in the ranks and began to strive for other things in addition to his training. The first of his loyalties fell to his chosen deity, Andaras. Velshari had spent countless hours at the farm humming melodies to himself as he worked, and drawing small pictures in the sand as he would sit at the river admiring a sunset. Because of this love for art and beauty he could do nothing but strive to bring it to touch everyone's lives. Another drive that pushed the young man would be his endless quest for knowledge. After meeting and speaking to Derwyn, Guildmaster of the Guild of Knowledge, Velshari joined the group, and as always before in his life he excelled, soon becoming one of the Head Trainers for the guild.

Presently Velshari works to become High Priest in his church and hopes one day to become one of the chosen followers of Andaras. His crooked smile and sometimes sarcastic remarks brighten the day of many a weary traveler.

Verdis

Class: Cleric
Race: Gnome

Gnomes are known to be inventive, and Verdis's father certainly was. He was a typical gnomish engineer, constantly designing and testing the most strange looking devides for purposes that he never fully explained to anyone. Or maybe he couldn't, given that he never quite knew what he was going for. The only atypical thing about him was that some of his contraptions actually worked. Verdis' mother, a merry woman with a gift of great ale making, was so impressed by this that she asked him to marry her, contrary to the custom of men asking women to marry. One of his successful inventions was an invisibility device. Inexplicably, the device captured the magical forces and cloaked items attached to its 'outlet.' It worked very well - in fact, it worked too well that

he could not find the prototype machine ever again when he mistakenly turned on the machine with the outlet attached to itself. He was delighted, then was concerned. What if this invention fell into the wrong hands? Less battle-like than dwarfs and less nimble than hobbits, gnomish people were already devastated by the invading goblins. It was unquestionable that soon the horde will show up at this small village, and they may take the device! But he loved his contraptions too much to destroy them. He decided to take the invention, leave the village, and, making the most of the invis device, hide out in the woods with his family. Hiding the whole village was impossible, but maybe he can hide a small cottage and its yard. When they left the village, the villagers could hear loud creaking noises of a wagon pulling heavy loads, but could see no wagon in sight.

Verdis doesn't remember the old village. She was still a suckling when the family left. She grew up lacking nothing, with loving parents in a house and a lovely yard hidden from the world. Her father eventually devised a partial neutralizer of the 'cloaker' so that if she wandered outside the cloaked area, she could still find her house. But he admonished her not to wander much. She didn't mind. She wasn't adventurous, and was quite content to stay close to the comfort of home. Every night, her mother would pray to the goddess Trista, thanking her for the good fortune and the wonderful ale she allowed to brew. If Verdis got sick, which wasn't rare, her mother would feed her the smoothest gnomish ale, saying a little prayer to Trista. Verdis loved the soothing and blissful feeling prayers brought within her, and would soon start praying together with her mother.

All of this protected happiness ended one day unexpectedly. Verdis was about twelve, a kind, precocious child with a quick mind but with no athletic abilities. Short even for a gnome, she had hair of warm brown shade and dark brown eyes that twinkled out of her round face. She was clumsy, stumbling occasionally just by walking. She was cautious, never venturing far from home. One afternoon, she walked down the familiar path to a flower patch, the 'neutralizer' hanging from her neck and a goatskin filled with her mother's nourishing ale slung across her shoulder. The woods were strangely quiet. Verdis thought she heard a wimpering sound. Peering through the undergrowth, she saw a fawn trembling. "Shhhh, it's all right," she said as she reached to the fawn. Just then, its eyes grew wide with fear, and it sprang up, trying to run away. A second later, with a deadly swooshing sound, a handaxe flew over Verdis' head and struck the fawn dead. Filled with horror, Verdis spun around to run, only to fall flat on her face.

Scrambling to her feet, she found herself staring right into a blood-stained armor. She looked up trembling, and her fear-filled eyes met evil, leering eyes set in a strange, twisted face of a ... "person." It took her no time to realize this was a goblin she had read about. Every strand of hair stood on her body, and she ran away screaming a thin scream.

She hadn't gone too far before she realized with relief that the goblin was not chasing her. She stopped and looked back. Through the trees she saw the goblin scout still standing in the same spot, fiddling with something in his hands. The 'neutralizer!' She must have dropped it when she fell, and now the goblin had it! Her eyes filled with tears. Without the 'neutralizer,' she wouldn't be able to find and get into the house. Then a horrifying thought struck her. The goblin would be able to see her house!! And he'll kill her parents! She had to do something! Without thinking, she grabbed a stone and threw at the goblin, yelling "here, here!"

Verdis immediately regretted her action, as the scout turned and started toward her. She threw another stone, now trying to chase him away. "Go away! Leave us alone!" The scout leered, delighted to have found another toy to torment. That fawn died too easily. This gnome might be more entertaining, he thought. Verdis ran as fast as she could now, which wasn't very fast. The scout shot a couple of arrows, but thanks to her small size, they zipped right by her. Or was he just enjoying her fear? Running out of her breath, she tried to hide by jumping into the bush; unexpectedly, she found herself tumbling down a slope.

All scratched and bruised, Verdis lay hidden. She was lost and weary. She'd lost the neutralizer. Her parents and the lovely home was in danger. What should she do? Then she noticed that she still had the goatskin. Saying a prayer to Trista, she took a little sip. Instead of making her feel better, the ale made her miss the warm, safe home so badly that she started to cry. A shadow stepped in. She heard a resonant voice chant, "Thy energies return!" and her tiredness magically disappeared. Looking up, she saw a pleasant face of a tall stranger. This looks like a... human! The human made motion to keep quiet and follow him. Instinctively trusting him, Verdis followed the stranger deeper into the woods.

Out of immediate danger, the human coaxed out of her what had happened. He seemed thoughtful. As the evening fell, he told her she should come with him for now, and led her to an encampment. Verdis gasped as she stepped into the small clearing lit by torches and magical light; many different races, from tiny sprites to half-giants, were there, atmosphere tense with an anticipation of a battle. The human went to an important looking mage (she must be an elf, Verdis thought) and seemed to be talking about Verdis. The mage nodded and announced to the defenders that a goblin scout got hold of an interesting item, and now there was no chance that the band of goblins they spotted would pull back. We must attack now before more goblins show up, she said. Immediately the warriors prepared for the battle. Battlecries rising, the defenders rushed into the woods to destroy the goblins.

Verdis shook in fear. She heard in the distance clashing of swords, and magic-filled air made her skin prickle. She smelled blood. She cowered and hugged herself and sobbed. Please, I want to go home! She desparately prayed to Trista. She didn't know how long she stayed like that, when the wounded started coming back into the camp. Those with enough energy cast healing spells and went back into the battle. Some were too tired and just lay there, bleeding or poisoned. A tall elf with blue skin and red eyes in a clerical robe would run back and help those badly hurt, before going back into the melee, to be on hand to heal the warriors. The casualty mounted. The dark elf looked harried and tired. He noticed Verdis standing and yelled at her: "Don't just stand there, come here and help me!" Snapping out of her state of shock, Verdis ran to the cleric's side and tried to help tend the wounded. Not knowing any healing magic, she did the only thing she knew; she fed a warrior her mother's ale, as she prayed for Trista's help and mercy. The wounded orc smiled at Verdis. "That was the best ale I've ever tasted," he muttered.

Verdis did what she could assisting the cleric, bandaging and helping the wounded for what seemed like an eternity. Then finally, the battle was over and the weary defenders came back to the camp, happy that no one died and the goblins were decimated. The cleric, finding a little break, apologized to Verdis for snapping at her. "I"m sorry, little gnome, I know you know nothing about the battle and nothing about healing. But I needed every little help I could use. There aren't

enough clerics as we need." Just then, the human who helped Verdis in the woods stepped up. "Is this what you lost?" He was holding the 'neutralizer.' Verdis jumped with joy. "Yes!" He handed her the gadget. Verdis's heart sank. The neutralizer was slashed neatly in half. She let out a sigh, which trembled into sobbing. She'll probably never be able to go home now. A kindly hand fell on her shoulder. Verdis didn't look up. A voice said, "you can come with us back to Nexus. We'll think of a way to get you home." The cleric lifted her chin gently. "Little gnome, would you like to come with me and stay in the clerical temple? You seem to have the aptitude for healing, and your parents taught you well to be pious. If you wish, I will teach you the art of healing." Verdis was quiet now. Something told her that her life just started, away from her safe home, from her parents. She thought of them and how they must be worried. Her heart ached. But then, she realized that her parents were safe, if only for now. She wiped her tears. "Please take me to Nexus." She seemed to suddenly mature a year or two as she curtsied formally to the defenders. "I am called Verdis. Please take me as your student so that I may be of help some day soon: I want to be a healer."

Zharina

Class: Cleric
Race: Reni

I was on my way back to my home village, not so long ago. The healer there had taken sick and they were unable to heal him. They lived far to the west of Nexus and their isolation had cut them off from most outside help. My mother had sent word to me and I dropped everything to go help. While I made the journey, I thought often of the family I had left 10 years previous and my heart fluttered at the thought of seeing them again.

Upon my arrival, I rushed to the healer's home to diagnose him. He was afflicted with a slow-acting poison that had taken him to death's door. Because of my many experiences in Nexus, it was simple to make an antidote and bring him back to health. Shortly after, I made the trip to my family's cottage across the village. My heart pounded and my breaths came quick. As I walked to the porch I could smell my mother's scented candles burning and I was overcome with a rush of childhood memories... helping my mother at her chandlery...my always-smiling, but rarely-present merchant father...my innocent baby sister... I found myself staring at the front door. I gathered myself together and knocked. All my composure left me when I saw who answered my knock. I gaped at a mirror image of myself!

"Krenna?"

"Zharina!" I hugged my sister tightly. She was so much taller!

"I can't believe how much you've changed!"

"You should talk." She smiled playfully at me. "Please come in."

As I stepped in, I heard a voice from the kitchen, "Who is it dear?"

"It's Zharina!" my sister yelled back.

The house was just as I remembered it. A sense of well-being filled me. My mother hurried in and we embraced. As I looked at them, it struck me that we looked like three versions of the same person. "I'm working at my candles, you can help Kren mix herbs for the scents." That was my mother in a nutshell, never idle and always efficient.

"Is dad around?" I asked.

"Sorry dear, you missed him by a couple weeks."

The three of us talked and made candles late into the evening. Finally I retired to my sister's room. Mine had been converted into a storeroom. My mother didn't even waste space. Krenna told me of her desire to become a scribe and asked me to tell her my reason for leaving.

"It was a difficult decision, but it was something I had to do. Mother always said I acted more like dad, though I look like her. I've always remembered dad's stories of far-off places and finally I decided I had to see what was out there for myself or forever dream of what I did not have..."

"So where have you been all this time?" She asked.

"In the far east, I've found a great city where all the races of the realms dwell. They are constantly at war to defend the city from the goblin hoardes.."

"The what?"

I sighed. "I forget how secluded our village is. The goblins are a twisted race, in body and soul, and seek to destroy or control everything."

A look of horror passed over my sister's face.

"Heroes and heroines have journeyed from across the lands to protect this great city. I myself have taken a vow to aid them in any way I can. That is why I became a healer."

She fixed me with her eyes. "Will you take me there?"

At first I was going to refuse, but the look in her eyes showed that she would not be dissuaded. And it would be better if she came with me, than if she wandered off alone as I had foolishly done.

"Okay."

We left three days later despite my mother's best arguments. We were fortunate enough to get there unmolested by goblins. Of course, the first place I took her was the library. She was in awe. "I've never seen so much knowledge in one place!"

We spent most of the day there. In the evening of her first day in Nexus, she handed me a scroll.

"What's this?" I asked.

"Well, I saw all the stories of those brave adventurers and I wondered if you might submit this, my first work."

"Of course I will, but what is it?"

"It's your story."

It was one of those rare times when I couldn't say anything. I was shocked and touched at the same time.

"Thank you Krenna." She smiled and nodded.

The next morning I took two scrolls to the library. One was written by my sister and the other by me, the previous night. It was a request for apprenticeship for my sister.

-Note by Senior Scribe Horush: I have taken young Krenna as my apprentice and she promises to be a most excellent scribe.

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