Fighters

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

Aleph

Class: Fighter
Race: Half Elf

Aleph's story begins with his parents. His Mother, Malana, was a very attractive Elf of royal blood. Her kingdom, Woodspaire, was home of many of the local wood elves but one time a traveling group of goblin hunters came through the area and she met this one human, Benae, who was just a perfect match for her. He was a tall, well built, and had a tongue that could melt the hardest female heart. His words were of philosophical roots but he was not the smartest, she could tell. They fell in love and had to meet in secret for she did not know what her parents would think.

Malana's older sister did not like her and always looked for ways to get her in trouble. One day when Malana tried to lie and say she was going to the forest to gather flowers, so she could see Benae, her sister followed. Her sister saw them together and listened to them talk about how much they love one another and how much they couldn't live without each other and her sister saw a great way to get her sister in trouble and destroy her love for this human.

Malana's older sister ran home to the kingdom to tell her parents. When she told them of what she saw they seemed enraged. Malana's sister thought she was going to get her good but did not realize how good. When Malana returned home her parents were waiting. They argued over it and in the end they gave her the option to leave and be with the human, or she could stay and remain royalty and have a prosperous happy life. She did the more romantic, heart led decision and picked to leave the kingdom and be with Benae.

When they returned to Benae's home village she was not welcomed with open arms. They did how ever eventually get use to her since Benae was the best blacksmith in the whole village. They lived a semi-regular life and she learned from the other local women, the ways of the working wife. Benae felt she might not be very happy there so he tried to make her feel more at home by helping her keep some of her old customs.

As time went on she grew more and more adapted to her new life. Also she grew pregnant. When she had the little boy she was officially the settled into her new life. She helped teach the boy, Aleph who was half-elf and half-human, the ways of her people and let Benae teach him the boy things. Benae was a master of arms and a great blacksmith.

Malana was very well educated, she taught him things like reading, writing, and ideas of magic even though he was slow to pick them up. After about nine years of regular day-to-day life, Aleph was doing good enough to aid in hunts and help around his father's blacksmith shop. His mother started to grow ill. She was losing her beauty and she was not able to move. She was very young for an Elf. They sent for Cleric's from all over and no one could heal her illness.

Benae and Aleph were devastated that no one could heal Malana. It wasn't long before she fell to Tilnar's touch. Aleph wanted to be more like his mother since she died, he wanted to keep her spirit alive but just wasn't smart enough so he decided to be the best at what he was good at to make his mother proud. What he didn't know is that he was a lot like his mother and she was proud and her spirit would live on in him.

Twelve more years went on and Aleph was growing into a very admirable young man. He was now in the ranks of the goblin hunters and led small groups to hunt for food. Benae was very proud of Aleph and all his good work. Benae found himself growing older and more depressed since the passing of his wife and real reason of living besides Aleph. One morning before Aleph was going on a goblin hunt, Benae stopped him to have a talk with his son. Aleph and Benae talked about some father son stuff and Benae started to speak to him of moving on and expanding his horizons. Aleph did not want to leave at this time in his life. Benae insisted and tried to make it sound like he had to go. Benae obviously knew something no one else did.

That following morning when the village awoke, his father did not. Aleph was worried cause his father wakes up before the rest to get his shop up and going to start the day. Aleph went to wake his father to realize he was not going to wake. Aleph thought about what his father had said to him and he gathered some of the best supplies from around the smith and had the village come together to tell them what has happened. The village was sad for their losses but they respected Aleph's decision to move on.

Aleph then started out of town and on his journey that would lead him to Falcion, where you know him now.

Ariade

Class: Fighter
Race: Half Giant

The sounds of laughter woke him. Bellowing laughter, dragging him from the depths of his dreams and re-acquainting him with the cold, hard ground beneath his wet and ill-clothed body. Peculiar laughter, Rey thought. Bitter and delirious, as if oblivious to the outside world. Shivering and attempting to lie still, Rey pulled his patched cloak tightly to his body as he squirmed further into the brambles he had used for a rainy night's shelter. The laughter seemed to be everywhere at once, yet as his eyes focused in the dark he could barely discern a tall figure in the stark moonlight.

The looming figure could only be a half-giant. He seemed to be leaning back, reclining on a fallen log. The laughter abruptly stopped, and a low, base-ridden rhythmic voice spoke out into the night air.

"Ophelia, is that you? Where have you been? Come my Shieldmaiden, the battle awaits. I have felt your absence as a blade in my side."

A feeling of disquiet inhibited Rey from moving, and carefully fidgeting among the brambles he attained a more comfortable position. A scribe at heart, he carefully unwound a pouch carrying his greatest treasures: A master's delicate scribing pen, and silver ink case. Carefully spreading out a single sheet of papyrus, he focused intently on the words floating through the darkness. He shivered involuntarily at the shadow that seemed to fly across the half giant's face.

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A moment of confusion crossed Ariade's shadowed features, and a sudden haze clouded his mind. Speaking to the vision of heart's desire before him, he breathlessly said, "Ophelia, where have you been for so long? You left me, and I believe I may have gone mad. I spend my days reliving the past, when you and I used to fight as one, Ariade Blademaster and Ophelia Shieldmaiden, side by side. Ho, all is right with the world again, if you and I may be together."

Confusion tightened the half-giant's brow, and in a tight voice he continued. "But it's odd, you know, my love. I had a dream, again a dream of our battles together. You and I were surrounded by Warslaves of the gobin hordes. We had been betrayed…but by whom? It's hard for me to recall now, it has been a long time since that dream. Yet I feel as I have..been there many times. I have dreamed many dreams since you have gone."

Gazing into oblivion, Ariade spoke aloud, his voice cracking and breaking with the remembrance of a forgotten battle. "I remember being struck from a mage's blast and falling, my flesh torn asunder. On the ground the trolls leapt on me, their blades lancing my flesh as numbness crept through my fingers. I remember you coming to me, ever my savior, my heartseeker. You defended us both as Shieldmaiden, strong, proud and beautiful."

Chest heaving and hands shaking, Ariade choked out, "You fell to one knee, their blows hammering your body. Shield still raised above my broken form you fell atop me, striving to ward off, nay, absorb their hits meant for me, on your own flesh. As the cold consumed me the last thing I recall is the blood: blood of mine and blood of yours, mingling amid the cold, dead ground."

Gasping for breath with a voice breaking into delirium, "Your back! I used the last of my energy to put my arm around your back, but when I reached for you, you were riddled with too many blades. Cold protrusions, stealing you from me."

The night air rings as Ariade grips his wide-eyed head and screams, screams of a wounded, piteous beast, a beast in the claws of delirium and insanity. Shutting his eyes tightly with hands clasped over his ears, Rey struggled not to hear the tormented voice of the half-giant. The cavernous shouts penetrated Rey's weak form, waves of anguish rolling over his consciousness. As the screams died down, Rey carefully lowered his hands to hear a sorrow filled mumbling.

"Oh aye Ophelia, the madness takes me. You were stolen from this world and I am but a shadow, a walking corpse. I died that night, but yet I live on. I live in a dream, and in this dream I will seek the city of Nexus. I will seek an end to this dream amidst the last known fortification against the Goblin Horde, where I will wake once more in your arms and by your side, so that we may be together, soul and flesh."

Heaving himself up with a heavy burden, Ariade trudged away, not bothering to push away the sharp branches that must have bit his flesh. Quickly packing his tools, Rey scrambled in the darkness behind the half giant, a small shadow gazing into the torture of a heavy soul.

Atriedo

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

Hellos. Mys name is Atriedo and I's will tell yous my story.

I's was borns on the potato farm back over the other sides of the mountains and that was good. Mys dad name was Schlok, my moms name was Mooshi. I call her mom. I also used to have a mom's mom, but she died. She taughts me hows to reads, and hows to write. I's good, you thinks? So, I grew ups on the potato farm, learning to makes stuff with potatos. Mys favorite is the sugar-glazed hot potato. Here is recipe.

1 potato
5 handfuls of sugar
a hot fire

Alls you do is melt the sugar in a cup, and then poke lotso holes in em potato. Then yous dip it in the sugar, and waits till it get hard, then yous eat it. Its good.

Another good thing yous can do with potatos is to throws them at peoples. Theys only hurt alot, they no kill.

So anyways, I's lived on the potato farm. I tell yous story about one time there. Theres is a creek running over there next to the farm, and one days, this big bird floated by on it. It was a Swan. I runs out to it, and I throws a rock at it. It looks at me, and it goes, "HONK!!!!" And it flapped its wings and bobbed it's neck. It scary. Then, it chase me all day, and part of next. Moral of story is, Swans can float.

Another time, there was this guy and he comes to our house. He says, "Hello!" We looks at him, and he says, "Would you like to buy a shovel? It must be hard to plant potatos with rocks!" He had seen us planting, methinks. Then I says to hims, "What is shovel?" He says, "This is a shovel!" And he shows me this thing that is shiny and shaped like a half a potato! Schlok, he goes, "Oot! it shaped like potato!' So he buys and the man shows him how to use it. I tell yous, We can plant lots more potatos with it. Like maybe a trillion. So anyways, this guy says, "Could I trouble you fine

people for room and board?" We looks at him funny. Why he want that? So, Mom says, "Okays." She goes into the shed, and gets a board, and gives it to him. Then wes back away. He look at us funny, and goes, "A place to sleep. We says, "Why not you says sos in first place?" He made a face then. The next day, The shovel man, he says, "Well, thank you all for your kindness." We sayed "Yous Welcome," and then I starts waving. Schlok and mom start looking at me, then back at shovelman, then he look at me, Then mom and Schlok say, "Wes give you to shovelman to learn to be a shovelman. "Come back somedays. We wait for yous!" I's say, "I don't wants to bes a shovelman!" Then shovelman says, "I will show you things better than shovels!" So I think for a minute, and I says, "Okays."

It not fun being shovelman, we wandered around for a long times, selling shovels to whoever wanted ones. Not many peoples want shovels. The shovelman, He not nice. He make me carry all the shovels. They heavy.

One day, shovelman, he says to me, "Come quick, we are about to make a sale!" So, I follow him, and he takes me to a a little house with smoke coming out the chimney, and we go in, and this old lady, she says, "Do you have my shovel?" Then the shovelman gives her her shovel. He says, "Where is my money?" She says, "I decided not to pay you." He says, "Then I will take back my shovel." The lady, she looks at him, and then she starts to yell stuff at him, she say, "May you be cold as the dead!" Then the shovelman, he started shivering! Methinks shes was a witch. Then, she looks at me, I was skeered! She starts waving her arms around, and I got skeered more, so I just gave her a good one right in the noggin. She faints, and we ties her up, and we warms the shovelman up. Then, When she wakes up, she glares, and starts spitting at us. So, shovelman, he says, "I will show you what happens to witches!" Then, he picks up the shovel and starts digging a hole outside. It takes two days to finish, and the witch almosted escaped, because the ropes was frayed. But I tied her ups with more. So, when he done, the shovelman, he put her in the hole, chair and all, and she starts saying, "I'm sorry!" Then he says, "I don't believe you." So, he did some mean things to her. He threw mud on her, and put water on her, and she got really angry, and she says, "I will kill you both." This scareded me bads, and I say, "Shovelman, wes gotta go!" He laughs, and keep being mean. So I start running, I not wanna die! I run, and run, and run, and run, and I come to this place, where I not know where I was, it was a forest. I got lost, and just kept walking, and finally, I comes to a mountain. I decided to climbs the mountain, to see if I's could see.

So, I starts to climb the mountain, and Theres this cave. I's can see light at the other end, I think, it mebbe a shortcut. So, I's go in. Then all of a sudden, a big, shiny, thing came outta the wall! It says, "YOU ARE IN MY MOUNTAIN!" I scream and I run. I outta mountain. I starts climbing again, and this thing comes outta cave! I climb fast and fast and fast! Finally, I gets angry, and throws rocks at it. It falls down mountain, and I heared it go CRUNCH! CRACK! POP! and this gross wet sound there no word for. So, I's go back in cave, because, I thinks, I killed it, now I's go and get his stuff, I hungry, mebbe he got food. So, I go in cave, and where I saw him come outta wall, I's look, and there is actually a hidden door. So, I's go in, and I sees lotsa bones, and armor, and stuff, I put the armor on, and in a sack, there was this note that says,

PLEASE RETURN TO NANOC IF FOUND
INQUIRE IN FALCION, RYMEK, OR NEXUS.
$$REWARD$$

I thinks to meself, He no need this, so I go, and take sack. I climb to toppo mountain, and see a big camp so I climbs down other side and I goes down, and there was these ugly things, and one seeses me, and grunts! He picks up this big ole sword, and runs at me! I bashem in the noggin, and he drops sword. I pick up, and cut his head off! It was gross! So, I sneaked around the camp, and see they ares fighting people that looks like me. I says, hellos! They look at me, and says, "Someone help him, There is a goblin about to kill him!" So I say, "What is goblin?" They say, "look out!" Then I feels this sharp pain in my bottom, and I looks, and it is arrow! I starts crying, and run over to them. They pull it out, and heal me, and take me back to big city. It was Nexus. Then they says, "Go to Falcion, they will help you train to become a fighter." So, I's ask directions, and they show me way, and I go to Falcion and becomes a fighter, because me no knows way back to potato farm. Mebbes I find it someday.

Stories Of Mes Training

After mes get to Falcion, I's decides to becomes a fighter, becauses mes not too smarts. But not as dumb as barbarian. Sos, I gos, and I starts looking arounds. I goes to this place, called Fountain of Hope. Thats is place where everyone goses. I sees this Chest, I looks inside, and sees lotso stuff! I take it all. I starts looking around mores, and I goes north from theres, and I comes to a pawn shoppe. So, I's goes in, and I says, "Hey! Mes Atriedo, yous wants some stuff?" She looks at me, and says, "What have you got for me today?" So, I's dump out all my stuff, and she says, "What tier are you?" I says, "Me One." She looks at me, and says, "Where did you get a Steel Breastplate?" I says, "Oh, theres was a chest, and it no looks like anyones, so I takes it!" Then I grins. She leans over the counter, grabs mys ears, and says, "I don't take stolen goods. Get out of my sight!" So, I leaves. Moral of story, yous reads the proclamations and notices next to things.

Another time, I's was walking around, and by nows, I's was about three tier. I goes over to tavern, and on the way theres, I notice a hole in the rock! I's not sees before! Sos, I go in, and starts looking arounds. I about to leave, becauses it looks like nothing there, but then I sees a crack in the wall. Sos, I go in there, and I cant no go backs! I start stumbling arounds, trying to find a way out, and all of sudden, KERPLUNK! I was knee deep in a pool of water, and something was in the pool with me! I's scared! This big monster comes and trys to eats me! I runned! I was almost giving up for dead, when, I sees a light! i can no climb up to its, so I yells, and yells, and yells! Finallys, a mage, he find a barbarian, and the barbarian get rope and pull me up. That cave, I never go back in again! Except for one times, but I died thens. After thats I never goes back in.

When I's was sixth tier, I was walking arounds, minding my own businesses, when all of sudden, a big bug, it poop on me! I look ups, and sees all the bugs! Everywhere! They started landing and killing peoples! I hide in corners, because thoses bugs, they nearly kill mes with one pinch! I brain talked to someone and tolds him about the bugs, and he brain talks back, and says, "Stay there, We are coming." Soon after thats, A bunch of big strong mages and fighters and clerics, they come and kill the bugs. Then someone says, "Someone needs to clean up these streets!" So, me and a bunch of other peoples, we get the bodies, and we buries them over by the pier. If yous look close, yous can still see graves. But then, right after we finish, this guy, mes forget his name, he come and kill some of us, and try and kill me! He not finish me off thoughs. I's was too strong for him. So, they go, and they catch hims in a big forest, and I not know what happens to him after thats.

After thats, I gots to be seven tier, and I goes to Nexus.

Well one day, I's was in the Townsquare with Will, and Sevel, and mebbes Frolus, and we hears that a highwaymen killed someones! Then the person, he braintalks, and says "Highwaymen blocking Tothese Road!" So, everyone starts looking, and sure nuff, theres is highwaymen! They were tough, but a bunch of us killed them alls.

A little whiles ago, Theres was a little goblin problem in Nexus. Me, Will, and Felicity was ins the Townsquare, and we sees the goblin spys run out of the shadows! We screams, and Felicity brain-talks, and says, "Goblin Spies in Nexus!" So, I starts looking for more, and people were brain talking, and saying wheres theres was bad guys. Peoples was tellings about Elven Sniperslaves, and Ogrish Deathralls, and Goblin Warriors, and lotso others! I go out the west gate, and I run smack into four Goblin warriors! I Run back to Nexus to tell everyone, and I tells them, but theys was busy killing other stuffs. So, I helps them. First, we kills some trying to rob the jewelry store. Then, We go in bank, Because Calvin, He says, "They are in the bank!" So we go in, and There is so many! So many, that even Serge got killed! It took awhiles, and I not able to help much, but we killed them alls! They not get into the vault, even though they tries. Then, I tells them about the four warriors. We all go, and kill the warriors, then I scout some more, and I run right into a Morloch, or Warlock, or somethings like that. I's was toast. For real. he zap me good, two times! He kills me, and I angry! I comes back, and they tells me, they ran off! But, I got two good clubs out of the whole thing. Moral of story is, yous sees a Morloch, runs and gets helps!

That end of story, I tell you other stuff now.

RECIPE FOR MASHED POTATOS

One potato
A big Stick
A Pot
Salt

Put the potato in the pot, and smash it for a really long time. Then you heat it up, and put salt on it.

RECIPE FOR POTATO SALAD

Potato
Knife
Lettuce
Lard

Yous cut up potato and lettuce, and put lard on them, and eat.

RECIPE FOR TWICE BAKED POTATO

Same thing as baked potato, only bake twice as long.

POTATO LOVERS OF NEXUS

Join the Potato Lovers! It fun.

STUFF I HAVE LEARNS FOR PEOPLES IN FALCION

If yous first tier, fight in the park.
If yous two tier, fight in the sewer.
If yous three tier, fight in the cave.
If yous four tier, fight in grey building.
If yous five tier, fight in mansion.
If yous six tier, fight in mansion.
If yous seven tier, go to Nexus. It fun. Lotso peoples.

STUFF I HAVE LEARNS FOR PEOPLES NOT IN FALCION

Fight in Tothese Woods. Lotso bandits, need law enforcement. Don't use teleport devices fors fun. I's got killed one time. But if yous do use one, and yous end up in a desert, walk around untils you find the black pyramid, thens yous brain talk for help. If yous in a cave, don't moves. Just gets help.

Brost

Class: Fighter
Race: Orc

Draila looked to her husband, Beltok, right in the eyes, as he raised a knife from his side.

"How could you..." he said softly, as he quickly slashed her throat with the blackened blade. Draila had just given birth to a child. However, something seemed amiss with the newborn. Beltok brought the child to the village shamans for examination. After one intense look at the child, they revealed to Beltok the painful truth; Beltok was not the father of this child. Moreover, the baby had birth defects that brought his future into question. Faced with a motherless child who would ultimately lead an unfulfilling life, Beltok chose to expose the newborn. He climbed the mountains despite the fierce biting winds and extremely cold temperatures. At the summit, he made his prayer to Erisar, and laid a carved stone that read, "Brost Uk'Beltok, the Forbidden Child. May your life destined for suffering end so that you may sit with the Gods."

Three days later, a giant found a basket with a newborn orc in it, barely alive. Not quite sure what to do, he examined the child carefully for a while, holding it tightly to warm it, and decided to take the child with him, taking the carved stone that lay near the child. Fearing for the baby's health, the giant searched for the nearest temple so that priests could evaluate the little orc.

"How is he?" asked the blue-skinned giant, in a deep, somber voice.

"He was exposed for many days, "explained the priest, "The fact that he is still alive is a miracle in itself, in my mind. We've healed him as best we can. There is not much more we can do."

"How does his future look for him?" asked the giant.

"We can't determine that. It appears that he may have some sort of physical abnormality, but we can't really tell. I haven't dealt enough with orcs to be able to know for sure."

The giant nodded and continued on his way to Dilran, his home village. When he returned, he went to the town orphanage and put the child under its care. He left the carved stone with the caretaker and left, confident that the child would be safe.

The child's name was determined to be Brost by a foster parent at the orphanage who, by some odd coincidence, could understand the orcish written language. Although much smaller than the Storm Giants that he was surrounded by, the caretakers were amazed when he equalled or, in some cases, bettered his counterparts in certain games of strength. However, the caretakers also noted his slow mental development which worried the workers at the orphanage. Though certainly a part due to physiological differences, Brost's complete inability to grasp the language of the Traenol gradually became a greater cause for alarm. In addition, his overly rounded face which resembled an ogre more than an orc made his parents wonder whether the child was even normal.

Brost was raised by the Traenol orphanage for five years, until the village of Dilran was assaulted by the juggernaut of the Horde's armies. The outnumbered Traenol warriors fought with incredible valor and unparalleled skill, but the sheer numbers of the Goblin Army proved to be their downfall. As the warlocks began to cast anti-barrier spells in unison, the giant by the name of Havaris ran to the orphanage and mounted a winged beast, flying away to the southeast to the city of Tae'rival.

Havaris flew for many days with Brost the Orc in his arms, stopping only briefly to feed himself and to feed his young companion. The two of them reached the Crystal Mountains about a week later, to find a pair of cloud giants marching up the mountain trail. Noticing the two beasts, he attempted to travel around them, but he noticed more hostile troops all around. Havaris decided his best attempt would be to assault the pair of cloud giants. Pulling out an enormous claymore from his scabbard, he ordered his beast to fly low and accelerate as he charged the two giants. The beast let out a cry, and as he did, Havaris took a deep breath, offering a prayer to Dilanis and Tilnar, and let out his war cry, sword in hand, ready to impale. The beast swooped ever lower, and was now within ten feet of the ground as Havaris prepared his sword. The cloud giants turned quickly, to see what was behind them, and immediately Havaris swung his sword, slicing one giant's head off with one giant chop. As he passed the giants, he flipped backward, dismounting the beast and landing on his feet, about 15 feet away from the remaining Cloud Giant. He noted a pair of stripes that lay on the giant's bandolier, and immediately recognized those stripes as the mark of a leader. Havaris locked his sword, tip pointed at the giant's forehead, and immediately began running, his head moving forward like a bullet throughout his charge. He let out a long battle cry, and swung his sword backward, in a backhanded uppercut slash. The giant, still disoriented, threw his sword down as he desperately deflected the attack. The two exchanged parries and blows for several minutes. The cloud giant then caught Havaris off balance, and swung his sword brazenly for his head. Havaris instinctively put his arm up, allowing his forearm to take the brunt of the strike. Wincing once, then pulling a straight face, Havaris returned that attack with a thrust aimed for the cloud giant's abdomen. The giant dodged the blow partially, letting the blow smash through a rib, as he returned another slash across Havaris's chest. Havaris twisted his claymore, gutting the innards of

the giant, as the giant's broadsword carved an enormous wound across his chest. Havaris pulled his sword out, and thrust it once again into the dying Cloud Giant, this time in the middle of his chest. The Cloud giant fell into a heap, his translucence fading away as his life force left him. Bloody and dying, Havaris covered his wounds and returned to his beast, where the child waited, eyes wide open and in utter shock. Havaris ordered the beast up, as he slumped against it's back, searching the ground for a caravan. Several minutes later, he spotted one, and weakly ordered the beast down.

Upon landing, Havaris collapsed onto the floor, his bloodied body sprawled across the ground, as he inched toward the stopped caravan. A man stepped out of the wagon, and ran to Havaris's side, examining his wounds. To this Havaris replied, almost inaudibly, ". . . Take the orc on my beast . . . and let it go . . . He ... will ... know ... where ... to ... go ... but please ... bring Brost ... to ...safety....."

Havaris looked up to the sky, and saw a blue aura around the beast, as the man took the child. He then saw Dilanis's face looking at him, kissing his cheek and saying, "He will one day fight as you did . . . with the utmost honor." Dilanis faded from existence, as the world became black.

The merchant saw the pitiful, dying traenol and shrugged, taking the small orc from the best, who immediately flew away. "Hey Will, get off your lazy ass and come look at this," he gruffly called, prompting a bearded man to exit the wagon. The bearded man looked at the small orc.

"He looks kinda funny to me, wonder what's wrong with him," the bearded man said, holding his chin in contemplation. The merchant then began talking to the boy, trying to get a response.

"Hey, kid, you hear me? Answer me, boy. Damnit, I said answer me!!" the merchant called, with increasing frustration. Finally, he pulled back his hand and slapped him across the face. To this, Brost responded by glaring at the merchant, and pushing him flat on his back.

The merchant got up quickly, startled, and said to the boy, "Why you little ... I'm gonna ...!" as the bearded man held him back.

"Hey, he doesn't look too bright, but maybe we can make a little act to showcase that strength of his," said the bearded man to the merchant.

The merchant looked at Brost thoughtfully, and said, "Hmmm, that sounds good." He then picked Brost up, and carried him to the wagon.

As the two men rode to the nearest village, Rytolla, they discussed ways to exploit the child. Among other things, a way to bind the child to prevent running away was discussed. Upon arriving to the town, the two men went to the blacksmith and asked the man to make handcuffs and a steel muzzle, all connected with chains that go to a neck piece. In addition, another chain stood at the back of the neck piece, which could be tied to any object to keep him in one location. With this slave's outfit on, the two men began to test his strength by throwing heavy objects at him. The orcish boy caught each one, despite having chained hands, with relative ease. The two men then rolled a large boulder at him, which he stopped, and then, to the men's astonishment, picked up and threw back. With this simple yet astonishing show set up, the two men began to perform

shows. On their first informal show, the audience simply sat there, astonished. The two men netted a total of 5,000 gold pieces as a result of this one, informal show. The two men continued to rake in an abundance of gold as a result of their new circus slave. As the child orc's reputation grew, so did the crowds who came to see this wonder, to see if the rumors were actually true.

In the middle of one show, the two men were interrupted by a half-giant as he arose, with a deep scowl on his face.

"How much have you made off this child?" his voice boomed as he asked the question.

The bearded man replied, "Why the hell do you care? Sit back down and enjoy the show. You are disturbing the rest of the audience."

"No." the half-giant boomed with frightening conviction.

The merchant chuckled, and said, "And what are you going to do about it, kind sir?"

The half-giant gave a small smirk, and, throwing off his cloak, pulled out a sharp, blackened katana. "Do you wish to debate this further, or are we in agreement that you will stop exploiting the child and hand him over to me?"

The merchant returned his smirk with a deep scowl, and unsheathed two daggers. With the flick of a wrist, a small knife flew out of his right forearm, toward the standing half-giant. The half-giant quickly dodged the knife as he moved forward, toward the two men. The bearded man unsheathed a curved shortsword and a small knife, looking smugly at the half giant. The merchant struck first, daggers slashing opposite directions. The half-giant deflected one with his katana and disarmed the first dagger. Before the second dagger could strike, he struck the merchant with the flat of the katana blade, stunning him. He then directed his attention to the bearded man. The man went for a downward stab with the shortsword, but the half-giant effortlessly deflected the blow, and sent the shortsword flying across the village streets. He then sent a powerful kick to the man's stomach, pushing him into the ground, out of danger. The half-giant returned to the merchant, pointing the sword at his neck, and said, "Do we still have any problems?"

Not waiting for a reply, he searched the man for a key to unchain the boy. After retrieving the key, he unlocked all the boy's chains and said, "You're free. You can come with me."

While embracing the boy, the half giant unexpectedly turned and thrust behind him, piercing the chest of the retaliating merchant. He then turned back around, wiping his sword with a cloth, and resheathed it in a beautiful carved jade scabbard.

"My name is Ariade," the half-giant said softly to the trembling orc, "I will not hurt you, Brost." Ariade carried the orc on his left shoulder as he walked across the Crystal Mountains to his home, Nexus.

Carston

Class: Fighter
Race: Unknown

"Faster, boy! If you want to fight with us, you have to keep up!" Fenwick boomed at the boy, whose round babyface betrayed his body of a fully-grown human.

Carston trudged along, struggling to keep up with the rest of his cadre of trainees. His father, Wicked, watched from Fenwick's side, his shadowed face as emotionless as ever.

Only a tender child of eight years, Carston trained on the front lines, receiving a premature and gruesome lesson on the true nature of war. The green squad marched through the forest, struggling to keep up with the grueling pace that Fenwick demanded of them. As they were marching, Carston heard a faint rustling in the shrubs by his feet. Although the rustling unnerved him, he shrugged it off as a squirrel or other small forest animal as they marched their way back to the camp.

As the squad approached the camp, the group could sense the chaos that was building around them. Plumes of smoke rose from a tent. The faint sound of crashing metal emanated from the base. As the signs of a fight were more evident, Fenwick ordered his group to move as fast as possible together so they could help out at the base. Carston, who struggled with the previous pace, watched Fenwick and Wicked in awe of their ability to move so swiftly while donning a full set of armor. He gasped for air as he trudged through the muddy forest, trying desperately to maintain their pace.

When they were within one thousand yards from the camp, Fenwick halted. Carston's focus switched from Fenwick to what was in front of him. He saw a mixed squad of both drow and goblin, unsheathing their weapons and preparing for battle. Behind him, he heard loud footsteps meeting the squad's rear. Turning around, he saw another squad of goblin soldiers, walking toward their rear. Fenwick screamed, "Attack!" as the Goblin forces descended upon them. In that next instant, Wicked and Fenwick charged the Goblin soldiers, each moving with lightning speed and leaving blood and gore in their wake. Carston turned his attention to the rear, and looked in horror at the experienced Goblin soldiers attacking the timid, untrained crew that he belonged in.

Screams followed grizzly screams as more of his comrades were slain. Carston unhooked his mace from his belt, and charged one of the soldiers. Mace over head, he swung his mace downward as hard as he could over the unprepared goblin's head. He watched the brown-skinned creature crumple into the heap on the ground, and looked around him for a new target. As he met with their blazing red eyes, however, he suddenly became filled with fear. He found himself unable to think normally as they came after him like ravens. He desperately fought off their attacks with his mace, trying to keep alive.

As he walked backward, trying to get away from them, he tripped over a rock, leaving his helpless body sprawled across the ground as several angry goblins approached. He looked the goblins in their eyes, their predator's faces eagerly awaiting another victim. Then, suddenly, one by one, the goblins' faces turned from carnivorous to shock, and they fell to the floor, blood oozing from their backs. Carston looked up, and saw Wicked and Fenwick standing over him, breathing heavily. He

then stood up, and looked at the sight around him. He looked at the seven men from his squad that lay dead. Each body was replete with large, hideous wounds. One man's slash wounds were so bad that his guts leaked onto the bloodstained ground. Another man's arm lay detatched, a foot away from the rest of his blood-soaked body. Carston vomited, unable to stand the stench of death and the horrible consequences of battle.

Wicked stooped down low to enter the tent in which Fenwick was housed. Upon entering, he lowered himself to one knee to make himself comfortable with the low ceiling. He found Fenwick sitting by a table, studying reconnaissance maps and planning his troop movements. Fenwick looked up, and opened his mouth.

"You wished to speak with me, Wicked?" asked Fenwick in a stone-cold voice.

"Yes. I am sending my boy back to Nexus," replied Wicked.

"As you wish. May I inquire why?" Fenwick answered.

Wicked replied, with stern emotion, "I cannot bear to allow my son to be forced to witness the appalling aspects of war at such a young age. The last thing I wish is for our young to forget just how evil and how horrible war is. We have been fighting the goblins for such a long time, and I fear that we have forgotten how to live without fighting. On top of that, I fear for his safety out here. Not only does he have talent as a fighter, but I care for him, my son, as I would for myself. His life is equal to my own, and it would devastate me if I had to bury him. One is supposed to bury his parents, not his sons and daughters."

Fenwick listened, and replied in a less-harsh voice, "I understand your decision and the desire for his safety. I will arrange for him a place to stay in Nexus, and make certain that he continues his training there. I wish him the best of luck back home."

Wicked looked at Fenwick and gave a rare smile, as he said, "Thank you. You do not understand what your support means to me. I keep you in my prayers."

With that, he walked out of the tent.

Cole

Class: Fighter
Race: Half-Orc

He is faceless among all the other half breeds. his appearance quickly forgotten among the myriad of races and creeds in Altin. If you were to ask him his name, he would respond with simple and complete detachment one simple word, Cole. He would maintain his distance and keep his eyes averted.

But that was not always so...

Cole was born in the year 1218 of the Empire, on the 19 of the month of Wildfire. He was brought into the world by Lillian Heart, a local human healer, and Ravo Tholmsbane who spent most of his life unemployed, but aspired to be a great warrior. As you might have guessed Cole was not his given name. He was born as Kymrok Tholmsbane in Rosehelm. The first few years of Kymrok's life were uneventful, he spent it under his father's drunken tutelage, learning how to be a fighter. Spending his days watching his father hunt rats or simply practicing his parrying. Kymrok soon learned he had a natural ability with a sword and a strange natural strength.

At age nine, Kymrok began his apprenticeship with the Rosehelm bank (An attempt by his mother to keep him out of trouble). He learned slowly and after two years of miserable work, the banker announced him unfit to keep ledger there. So feeling dejected, Kymrok began spending much of his time doing nothing, simply sitting at home waiting for messages from Nexus, City of all Races, crowned jewel of Altin, the one place he had wanted to always see. So the days dragged on to months, months to years, and Kymrok woke up one day to find himself at the age of fourteen. This was a vital year for Kymrok, he had to decide his profession this year, he was becoming too old to be coddled by his mother. So one morning he set out to the local blacksmith, resigned to his fate of dreary, repetitive work. But as he was nearing the Smithy, he noticed a sudden change in the weather, the skies became a overcast full of what he knew to be thunderclouds. A steady rain began to fall and quickly became a torrent of water striking him. Kymrok became alarmed by the weather, but decided to think nothing of it, and continued to head towards his destination. As he came to the door of the blacksmith's shop, he heard the sounds that would end up changing his life forever. He opened the door and heard a huge explosion! Followed by several screams and yells that sounded vaguely like "AT ARMS!". Mr. Aneon, the Smithy, yelled for Kymrok to come inside quickly and bar the door. Kymrok did so and found himself being dragged to the cellar of the shop all the while hearing Mr. Aneon muttering "I knew those damn goblins were coming, if they had only listened ... if they only listened.". While he continued his mantra, what he had said sunk into Kymrok, the goblin hordes had found their way into Rosehelm! Suddenly Kymrok arrived at the very corner of the cellar. Mr. Aneon flipped a switch and a secret opening sprang up before Kymrok. Kymrok was quickly thrown and locked inside and could hear only the faint sounds of water running. After what could have been a minute or eternity, Kymrok heard quiet scratching above him. A sudden burst of torch light greeted his eyes as Mr. Aneon, blood running from a wound in his forehead, Took Kymrok from his hiding place. The injured Smithy told Kymrok to run home and see if his mother was still well. Kymrok, having forgotten about his mother, quickly set off towards his house. As Kymrok neared what remained of his burning home he saw what had been in his dreams since he could remember. A tall dark half-giant, Covered in head to toe in silver armor and wearing a flowing black cloak. The warrior quickly noticed Kymrok's presence and asked him if he had lived in that house. Kymrok nodded and the shining giant knelt down and told him very quietly, "you should come with me then, your parents have been slain during the goblin attack". Kymrok followed the Shimmering hero, tears flowing from his cheeks, and left Rosehelm.

They walked a day's travel and arrived at a strange sloop leading to an island Kymrok hadn't seen before. The warrior then simply said "This is Rymek, if you wish to avenge your parents' death, board that sloop to Falcion and enter the gates, they will teach you to fight". And so he did. Vowing vengeance for his parents death and promising to fulfill his dreams of becoming a fearsome warrior. He walked. Upon arriving he changed his name to Cole and quickly graduated from Falcion to become a Myrmidon. And to this day he fights for Nexus and his parents.

Decimus

Class: Fighter
Race: Half Giant

I don't remember much from the first years of my life. But at the age of 5 the elders in our little tribe started to train me in the arts of combat. The first two years I was trained as a barbarian, but the elders in our tribe said I wouldn't fit as a barbarian, because they could not sense the rage inside me. Instead they suggested I should learn the finer things in combat.

One of the drillmasters told me he knew a man that could help me with my training. So I packed my things, took my sword and walked of.

After a few days I arrived to a house, almost overrun by the wilderness surrounding it.

As I approached the front door I heard a branch snap to the left of me and a split second later I felt the tip of a blade at my throat.
- Who are you? Asked a voice coming from behind a large stone.
- I'm Decimus, I said and let my hand slowly slid towards my sword.
- What are you doing here? The voice asked.

So I explained why I was here. I felt how the sword disappeared from throat. You can guess how supprised I became when a dwarf came crawling down from the stone.

At first I had a hard time to believe that the dwarf was a master in the arts of fighting, but as the years passed my respect for the little man grew.

I stayed at the dwarf's for a long time, mostly training all the time.

One night he woke me up and told me to arm myself and then to follow him. I did as he said and we sneaked out from a hidden exit in the house. When we had found a good spot to observe I understood why he had told me to follow him.

Outside the house was a small squad of Goblins, looking interestedly at the house.

- Now it's time for you to show me what you have learned, my trainer said and handed me a human hard and a blue orb.
- In case things should go really bad, he added and smiled slightly.

I wielded my sword and walked down to the goblins. The first two goblins died after my first 5 cuts. The rest of the goblins started to surround me.

Before they had surrounded me, I charged at the goblin in front of me killing him. Quickly I sidestepped and the blow from the Goblin behind me missed. As he tried to cut me and missed he left his entire back open, and I just thrusted the sword down in his back.

The four goblins left looked at me with a little bit of fear in their eyes when suddenly one of them shouted something and the three goblins charged at me, whilst the one shouting the order tried to flee. I killed the three goblins fairly easy and tried to see where the last goblin had fled.

Then I saw something round flying towards me, it landed in front of me and I saw it was the head of a goblin. I looked at the way the head had come from and saw my teacher walking towards me, cleaning his blade. - Piece a cake, he said and went inside.

I cleaned my weapon and headed to bed.

The morning after when I woke up my teacher told me it was time for me to leave.
- Why? I asked
- The city of Nexus needs good fighters like you. But first you must prove yourself worth on a island. I shall take you there today, then leave you for your destiny.

So we went out in the woods and after 12 hours he showed me a sloop and told me to board it. I waved to him, and boarded the sloop, and the beginning of my adventures started.

/DeCiMuS Do'Gas

Doralus

Class: Fighter
Race: Half-Giant

A young reporter was sitting in the Tavern in Falcion, quietly sipping his drink. He paid little attention to the two fighters that walked in and took their seats at the bar, until they began to speak. Quietly eaves- dropping, he learned that the younger of the two was being interviewed for acceptance into the Fighters' Guild. This piqued his curiosity even more, for he had never seen this strange, wild-looking half-giant before.

After time, the two stood and shook hands, the elder seeming pleased. As he left, the reporter stood and ran to the door before the other could leave.

"Ah, hello there. I'm Stryne," he said hurriedly.

The large fighter stopped and looked down at him. "What you want?"

"I just happened to hear part of your conversation there... I'd like to talk to you and write some of it down. It sounded interesting."

The half-giant grunted and moved to leave, but Stryne reached out a hand. "I'll buy you a drink."

The larger one sighed, aggravated at being detained, but not willing to refuse a free drink. He sat down with a grunt and gruffly ordered the bartender to bring him some ale.

Stryne sat down next to him and pulled out a pad with a quill. "So, let's start over, shall we? What's your name?"

"Me Doralus," was the short, guttural reply. He was still not happy at being held up here, but he was at least enjoying his drink.

The reporter smiled and began to take fluid notes as he spoke. "I heard something about you being in a carnival. What happened?"

Doralus grunted, "Bah, start sooner dan dat. Me wander since young. Came to dis town. Dis man dere, he like me. Show me tricks."

"What kind of tricks?" Stryne asked.

"He show me throw tings in air, den catch. People watch, dey laugh and clap."

Stryne's quill didn't stop moving. "Ah, you -were- part of a circus then."

A grunt was his only reply, and Stryne chuckled at the image of this large brute being a carnival side-show.

"Were you there very long?" Stryne had to wait as Doralus ordered more ale.

"Me dere some time. Learned lots. Learn throw knives, clubs, every- ting." Doralus boasts, "Me make blade do what-ever me want!"

"Ah, I see. So what happened after that? Obviously, you are not still there."

Doralus frowns darkly, "Da goblins happen." He muttered something to himself as he took another sip of his drink. "Dey come every-where. All town, kill every-ting. Dey come to us, we try fight, but we do no-ting."

Doralus glares at nothing in particular as he finishes his second ale and slams it down on the bar. "Me try hurt dem, bash wit clubs me use. Dat no work, so use blades me prac-tice with."

Stryne just nods, writing furiously.

"Dey come anyway. Kill every-ting. Me friends yell, 'Run! Run!' so me turn, run to dem, but da goblins get dem first. Me see, den me run into woods."

At this, Stryne pipes up, "So you got away? They didn't follow you?"

Doralus grunts and nods. "Me lose dem in woods. Den me start wander again. Have one small blade, use get food," he said as he ordered yet another ale.

"So how did you end up here?"

"Me keep wander, come to dis town, Ry… ry…"

Stryne looks up from his notes, "Rymek?"

Doralus grunts and nods. "Some person dere ask help wit hunt, need food or some-ting. Me help, den dey pay me come here."

"So why are you here?"

Doralus stands and drains his ale in one gulp, then sets the empty glass on the bar with the others. "Me train. One day, pay dem back." Doralus nods to himself as he walks quickly out.

Stryne calls out for him to wait, but Doralus has already gone. He sighs, gathers his papers and stands to leave, but he is stopped by the bartender who points to the empty glasses and holds out his hand.

Dratin

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

During one cold day of winter an ogre child was born into the world. This child would leave his own people to lead others to victory. This child was Dratin, a born huntsman and leader. The story of Dratin is not to be told in its entirety for it is not completely finished or even known. Dratin was born into a wealthy family a decade or so ago. His father was a successful hunter and tradesman. His mother was given a large area of land in which the rest of the family farmed all year. Dratin's birth was widely rejoiced at first, since his mother was thought to be barren. His birth also excited Dratins father immensely. Now his father had someone to share the passion of the hunt.

In Dratin's early years were typical of any ogre child, filled with hard work and long days. He stood tall with huge forearms and bulky body. He had the ways and teaching of a leader. At the age of five Dratin went on his first real hunt. This day will live forever in the memories of Dratin as the day his father was killed. Dratin and his father were walking through the woods in search of a tiger cave. They stumbled upon a corpse of a dead unicorn. The unicorn was mutilated and covered with strange marking burnt into its flesh. Dratins father seemed very startled, most likely because he knew that no good being would ever slaughter a unicorn. Unicorns are a beautiful and elegant race, and should never be harmed. As the two ogres stared upon the unicorn's corpse a greater evil was being unleashed on a neighboring village. Dratin and his father were totally oblivious to the death and destruction that was taking place near the very place both of them grew up.

Some how a mutated beast resembling a tiger had leaped over a small barricade and was tearing a town full ogres to shreds. The beast stopped at nothing to destroy the town, even when all the warriors joined for a resistance they were all slaughtered. Mean while Dratin and his father started home to gather a scouting party to find out what killed the graceful unicorn. On the trek his father took the time to explain to his son what it meant to kill a magical creature like a unicorn and how a hunter should respect his prey. Dratin understood what his father was saying completely and agreed to protect the hunt. As they approached their town they saw a massive cloud of billowing

smoke off in the distance. Both the ogres ran home, as Dratin was preparing for danger his father was gathering a group of the best warriors and scouts. Every ogre in the town was fully armored and stood dissipate ready at their posts around the wall. Dratin was sent up to the main north wall with his father. The smoke had begun to dissipate and scouts were sent out to he village.

After four hours and no word from the scouts, two more scouts were sent out with full armor. They rushed out and ran quickly through the trees. When they were out of sight another ogre scout was sent out to check the near by forest. After a few minutes an incredibly loud sound echoed through the area, a roar that will never be forgotten. Dratin's father immediately gathered the fighters and sent out to the village. A sense of fear could be felt and seen in the eyes of the ogres. When the men were out of site Dratin sneaked out and followed the path of the fighters. As Dratin approached the village the sounds of clashing swords could be heard. Dratin quietly came to the edge of the forest where he saw the most horrible thing ever. A mound of dead ogre warriors could be seen through holes in the small fence of the smoldering town. The groups of warriors from his town were surrounding a huge tiger like beast. Left and right ogres would go flying back and slam against the ground. At the head of the assault was Dratin's father. The group of ogres were fighting their hardest and striking blows to the tiger constantly. When Dratin thought it was safe he rushed into the group. Immediately Dratin was sent flying by a blow from the tigers right claw. At the same time a left claw slashed his father. Dratin rolled right into his father who was badly injured. At that moment Dratin felt a burning desire in the pit of his stomach, a desire to destroy the beast. In one movement Dratin stood up and slashed the throat of the hulking tiger. Blood sprayed out all over him and his father.

It was over, yet the pain was horrible. The blood from tiger acted like an acid on the ogre's armor. Dratin quickly striped off his armor and rolled in the dirt. When the burning stopped he glanced over to his father who was motionless still in his armor and still on the ground. He was dead The beast was killed but at a high price half of the warriors of his town were killed along with his father. The whole village mourned the deaths and tried to get on with life. But Dratin did not go back to his normal ways. He spent many days and nights in the woods in search of what evil had killed his father. Finally Dratin decided to leave completely, so he did. He roamed the country for evidence of similar beasts.

One day he came to a destroyed village, still smoldering. The stench of a familiar beast was in the air the tiger beast. Dratin ran to the sounds of swords clashing. He came to a group of fleeing humans who were being chased by similar tiger. In one moment he stopped the fleeing people and instructed them to charge! The people were perplexed by the orders but with another booming order from Dratin the people obeyed. The people Raised up their arms and charged to the tiger. Dratin quickly barked orders to the people and unsheathed his blade. He joined in on the fight along side the humans.

After an hour of battle Dratin delivered the final blow. Many had fallen dead in the attack, but again the beast was slain. The people rejoiced greatly and that night dinned on fine grain and deer. Dratin was given a golden helm and given the name "Honorable fighter". The humans asked Dratin to stay with them and help rebuild the town, but he refused. He said, "If I am to be the leader of all races I need to go where I am needed more. I need to find where these evil tigers are coming from and lead others to victory against it. After he spent the night in the town he set out and would

never return. He journeyed to the city of nexus where he now trains and searches to destroy the evil that killed his father"

Faith

Class: Fighter
Race: Human

I arrived late at the For-Hire matches in Reymuth and had to elbow my way rudely into into a proper vantage point. The crowd pressed at me, traders seeking bodyguards, petty lordlings looking to replace slaughtered men-at-arms, mercenaries after new recruits, and pickpockets after everyone. The dusty ring lay before me, empty.

A sigh went up as the ringkeeper raised the pennants for the next match: red and black for a novice, then a long pause while he searched in his chest for the other- purple! A grizzled soldier at my side shook his head. "A Were-beast, and at full moon! We're soon to see a very stupid greenie become a very dead greenie."

"These matches aren't to the death, are they?" I asked, uncertain. Reymuth was far from home and customs diverged wildly in these desperate times.

"Try telling that to an angry Werebear." He snorted.

The Assassin emerged from the contestants' tent and dropped its purple silken cloak in a disdainful heap. I had only seen one before and not at such close range. Its size and vitality startled me, its utter, intrinsic alienness. The light which burned in those two black eyes could not in any way be human, nor the finger-long, needle-sharp fangs, at their apex now with the phase of the moon. It shrugged beneath its elaborate harness of leather and horde-jewels, rumbling ominously. "Berserker!" hissed the veteran beside me.

She had already stepped from the tent and stood cloakless, deathly still in the arena. Once I had laid eyes on her I could not look away. It was not her tall, whipcord-muscled body clad in supple leather which held me, nor the eyes that glowed with fever blue behind the traditional mask. I had no time to search my feeling as the ringkeeper held up his hand for bids. The crowd rustled restively despite the low minimum.

"What's wrong? Why don't they offer?" I asked the solder.

"Not daft, you know," he answered. "What commoner would work with a Were-beast that can't be blood bound to him? And as for that crazy greenie-girl, even if she isn't dead or crippled afterwards, she's just proving she has no sense."

"Maybe she's very good-"

"Or very desperate." He turned his shoulder to me in disgust and made off through the throng.

The ring keeper still called for more bids, all well below my purse. I raised my hand. "win or lose?"

"Both," I said. My neighbors stared openly at me. All the "win" bids were for the Were-creature, but I wanted the option if she survived.

She turned to look at me for a fleeting moment as she took her place in the ring center. In those burning azure eyes I saw, or perhaps I only imagined I saw, such relentless will that I did not know if I wished her victory or the peace of death more.

"Weapons?" called the ringkeeper

"Tangles" I called

"No, bare hands!" roared the others. They surged like a many-headed, ever-hungry beast lusting for blood.

The Werebear stepped to its place, dwarfing her by two heads' span. I winced, wishing I had not bid and could leave now. The ringkeeper clanged his gong and it was too late.

The Werebear snarled, its huge muscles rippling beneath its pearlescent fur as it settled into a stance and raised its joint-sundering arms.

She was instantly a blur of movement, slamming aside one heavy arm as her other hand sped upward, angling sharply toward the vulnerable base of the creature's throat. In the blink of an eye, her boot had swept its feet from under it, her fingers digging deep into the vital reflex point. The Werebear went down, coughing and spitting in outrage, rolling heavily to break her hold by its sheer mass. The crowd grew suddenly, horribly quiet.

The Werebear heaved itself to its knees, but she had already spun behind it to land an explosive kick on the side of its heavy-boned skull. Another sweeping step took her directly in back of the creature, a knee between its scapulae driving it forward to its face in the dust. On a man it would have worked, but Werebears are not so easily stunned, and it caught itself with one forepaw, recovered, and leapt directly to its feet.

I saw her eyes flash grim as she circled it, looking for another opening. Enraged, it would not stop for mere pain now. She would have to disable or kill it, or she would not leave the ring alive.

The Werebear closed with alarming, dazzling speed, swinging a punch like a mallet at her head, impossible to block in its utter power. She curled in a circle toward it, seizing the Werebear by the neck as if they were dancing partners, and spiraling it away and downward along the arc of its own momentum. The great beast staggered, clawing at her and knocking her to her knees. It reached for her as she threw her weight on her hands, lashing out with one booted foot.

The Werebear howled and fell back. She scrambled to her feet and backed off, taut and alert. Whether by luck or art, she had surely stunned it, for it lay grunting and pawing its eyes in the gray dust.

The ringkeeper came out and counted the full five which declared her a winner, while the crowd muttered, cheated of its death. I went around to the pursekeeper's stand behind the tent and put down the hiring fee.

She came, bearing the traditional long knife and a small leather pack, which she set at my feet as she put her mark on the deed of release. For a moment it seemed she was about to write her name, which of course a mercenary for hire could not do, but then she made a clumsy, ordinary bird-mark, the novice sign, and turned back to me. She was still wearing her contestant's mask, The pursekeeper motioned for it; they did not give away anything.

She untied the mask, still fixing me with her searing blue gaze. Her face resembled her body, strong, functional, hinting at a bitter, uncompromising spirit. She touched me, disturbed me in ways I could not name.

"Name?" I asked, a little too brusquely.

"Faith. And I serve?" Her voice was of medium pitch, as pure as a bell.

"I'm Eddard and you're for my master, not me."

"Well," she said, picked up her pack and followed me to the inn. She was easily as tall as I and her easy, swinging stride more than matched mine.

I wanted to ask what had driven her to accept challenge of the masterless werebear, but custom forbade. The rules of For-Hire meant that she had sworn that she was free and without blood-price on her head; that was all an employer was entitled to know. But where had she learned to fight like that? Not in any backwoods garrison I knew of. I had heard drinking tales of knights but they were all of the old, old royal blood. When we stepped through the open portal of the inn, doubt assailed me for the first time, An unknown greenie, fierce though she might be, was not what my master had in mind. We needed dependable protection until we could reach the sanctuary of Nexus. Why had I even bid on such an unrealistic choice? I had been better educated than most men-at-arms and did not believe in witches, but there was something about her that caught at me, compelled me, almost gave me hope in these darkest of days.

We climbed the narrow wooden stairs back to the small private rooms. I opened the door and went in first. He lay on the rude bed, my dear lord, his eyes were still eagle bright.

"Eddard," he said, motioning me foreword. "What fortune?"

I stepped to his side and bowed. Faith moved in her long powerful stride to the bedside, her eyes darkening to mystery in the ill-lit room. Slowly she went down on one knee as was proper, but with such grace and strength that the gesture was no obeisance, but a courtesy.

"This is all you could get!" stormed my lord.

I trembled a little, but not from fear of him. His wounds in the last terrible siege has cost him dear, and he could not afford the luxury of unnecessary anger. "She bested a Werebear," I protested.

He hauled himself up on his one good shoulder and glared at her from beneath wild, bushy eyebrows. "Did she?"

She stirred, a flicker of quiet power beneath her smooth, unreadable surface. He lowered his eyes. "She'll do for now."

She touched her fingertips to her lips and forehead in the formal gesture." My lord Bardon.

"Eddard-"

"My lord, I swear I didn't tell her!"

She brushed my protests aside and stood. "My lord, as I am now your shield arm, I must tell you that Reymuth is not safe for you. You are a marked man, and the Goblin King's troops are but a day's march away."

"Child, how came you to know who I am, and such news of the horde?"

She shook her head proudly, as if her hair were loose and not tightly bound beneath a tooled leather cap. "I am no child!"

Lord Bardon's voice deepened into the kindly stern tones I had obeyed and respected all my years. "I am your master, child, and you are whatever I choose to call you. Or did you shame your bond oath when you obeyed and respected all my years. "I am your master, child, and you are whatever I choose to call you. Or did you shame your bond oath when you vowed service at the For-Hire meet?"

"My lord." Faith bit back a reply and bowed her head, trembling a little. "I have seen your-likeness before, and heard of the siege and fall of Bardon Tower. As for the rest, it is rumor, but from a source I trust."

I dropped to my knees beside him. "We dare not risk a longer stay, lord. Another day will not see you stronger, and we must not get cut off from the passage."

He drew in his breath, gathering the rags of his once-massive strength, and sent me down to pay our accounts and have our mounts made ready. We took the traders gate from the town, mostly deserted in the late of the day, A pair of cutpurses leapt out at us as we neared the northern forest, but Faith beat them off with her long knife with easy competence. My lord smiled as she came trotting back to us after chasing them into a darkening corpse. I drew an easier breath, knowing that he was pleased.

"We will not camp tonight, but backtrack along the suns' path," he said.

I began to protest, but Faith silenced me, saying, "You yourself said it, Eddard. There is only more peril in delay. Our mounts are still fresh, and once we find the entry point we can relax a little, Until then we must push on."

We went on through the deepening forest, Faith leading the way with a small torch, then my lord Bardon slumping in weakness in his saddle, and I at the rear. Leaves of a thousand dead seasons muffled the hoof beats of our mounts, and I startles more than once at the innocent sound of a wakeful night creature. Once Faith drew us to an abrupt halt , motioning for silence and shielding the light of her torch, listening intently.

It seemed like a dream, following her through the night, keeping the brilliance of her beacon ever before my eyes, following her….Although I was worried for my lord and his deep unhealed wounds, and frightened lest an errant sound signal the dreaded Goblin King's troops, there was such comfort in Faith's strength and certainty that the distance passed quickly.

She drew us to a halt and extinguished the stub of her torch. Above the choppy trees, the stars glimmered in their slow circling dance. A milky veil tinged the east, and the jagged peeks of the crystal mountains loomed in front of us. It was nearly dawn.

"We are almost there," she said quietly. "Can you smell it?"

"I thought only those-" I began.

"Hush!" said lord Bardon. "lead on, child. These old bones are ready for a rest."

I caught the ghost of her smile in the faint half-light. She turned her mount, doubling back the way that we had come… And suddenly the emerald gossamer of an entrance to the passage surrounded us with its brilliant light. Lord Bardon slipped from his saddle with a cry of relief, for the remaining path through the Crystal Mountains was distinct, unique, and untraceable. We need fear no pursuit now, not until we arrived at Nexus.

I lept from the back of my mount and went to see him, leaving Faith to attend the beasts. She accepted the task without complaint and soon joined us with the food bags and waterskin.

"I gave our mounts a measure of meal," she said, drawing a small knife to slice a round of hard cheese for my lord. "They will have to wait to forage; what grows beneath their feet looks like grass but has no knife to slice a round of hard cheese for my lord. "They will have to wait to forage; what grows beneath their feet looks like grass but has no sustenance." I took the slivers of cheese and chunk of bread from her and fed him with small bites and sips until he drifted off into exhausted sleep. I looked down at his face, etched sharply in the flickering light of the torch. Gray , like a secret silent enemy, had invaded his hair and beard since the wanton destruction of our home.

"Damn the Goblin king and all his henchmen!" I muttered in sudden protective anger. Faith, sitting cross-legged apart from me, looked up, her eyes glittering like some strange gemstones. "It is a tragedy when so many good men must suffer," she said.

"Tragedy!" I spat, keeping my voice low so as not to disturb him. "It's evil, all of it, from the bloodthirsty demon himself to his demented lust for power. He's been seizing one kingdom after another until there's no stopping his terrorist reign."

"The bloodshed is wrong, I agree, I cannot stomach it any more than you can. I condemn it, but-but not the dream of uniting the whole land. We were once one, you know, in the golden ages, when many marvelous things happened, when men could live in peace with their neighbors without constant, bickering warfare."

"It's a man's right to defend his own,' I retorted. "Through law and justice, not indiscriminate pillage that starts an endless blood-feud, amongst the races," she answered me, the light in her eyes flashing with inner fire."

"Who are you to mouth such highborn philosophy?" I drew back a little at her intensity. She had accepted the challenge of a Werebear, after all; she might be capable of anything....

"I am-" She cut herself off abruptly, and the flame in her deep blue eyes smoldered down under tight control. "I am only one who is tired of slaughter. At the hands of each petty lordling or the Goblin warhounds, it does not matter. People die and their dreams die, too."

"Dreams!" I cried, the vision of Bardon Tower crumbling into burning rubble rising before my mind's eye. "What could you know of lost dreams?"

"Because I too have a dream, a dream of a land united in peace, a dream of people living their lives in harmony and good will."

"Then you had best slit your own throat now and hope to see it in Tilnar's realm, for you won't find such a fantasy at the hands of the Goblin King." I snapped, all the bitterness of my lord's ruin and our exile of terror welling up in me. I drew my cloak around my shoulders and turned my back to her. I did not want to hear her next whispered words, although they were meant only for herself.

"I will see it."

She was still sitting guard duty when my lord awoke, wan but refreshed. We mounted still-hungry beasts and traveled on through the flickering light. I only know that we went on for sometime until Lord Bardon signaled us to halt.

"The City of All Races" he whispered, "We are on the threshold." He looked to Faith and she nodded.

"I should go first, my lord," she said politely.

She turned her mount, leading us again in the backtracking maneuver which opened the portal of the strange pathway. Suddenly a normal yellow light flooded our senses. I raised a hand to shield my watering eyes and peer about us.

We stood at the edge of a grove of trees just outside the borders of Nexus. Across a gently rolling, grassy slope I could see the Barrier-shielded walls of the sanctuary. The road before us lay open, inviting. I urged my mount foreword.

Faith raised a cautionary hand and drew her long knife.

"This is the most dangerous part," she warned. "We must ride prepared."

We spurred our beasts into a ground-covering trot, scanning the surroundings for ambush cover. I heard my lord cry out as his mount stumbled and recovered, jarring him cruelly. My nerves tightened with fear and I glanced up at Faith, riding at our head as if she were born to it.

We came down one hill and across the flat expanse at its base, seeing the rocks and bushes which had been hidden from our sight before. The shelter of the sanctuary grew ever closer, the open gates holding welcoming arms to us.

The howl of a battle-pitched Mercenary Captain shattered our hopes as we drew almost within reach of our goal. My heart stilled within me as I saw them pound toward us from around the walls; at their head a trollish captain bearing the sash of the royal house-hold guards. We pulled our mounts to a halt.

Faith whipped around to face us. "I'll go first first and draw them, " she shouted in the oncoming din. "Eddard, take Lord Bardon around to right to the eastern gate. Do not stop for me!"

"Are you crazy?" I shouted back. My mount began to plunge about under me with excitement. They were almost upon us. I could see the gleam of the sword the man bore, the black light in his eyes as he bore down the last slope.

"Do it!" She commanded, and the regal authority in her voice shocked both of us into obedience, swinging our mounts into a hard gallop as she had directed.

At first I could hear only the pounding of my animal's hooves above the pounding of my heart, my eyes fixed on my dear lord who clung grimly to his saddle. Suddenly, I heard her voice rising like a paean above the tumult, shouting, singing, chanting the wild words a battle prayer to lord of Dawn in the ancient tongue. My head throbbed with the sound of them, my heart catching in my throat at their beauty and power.

We were almost at the gates. I slashed at the rump of my lord's mount with my riding whip, sending it frenzied across the threshold to safety, and reigned my own beast to a halt. Looking back, I saw her sitting tall as a goddess on her prancing steed, one arm flung wide as the giant man snarled before her. The soldiers milled in confusion, keeping their distance. I drew in my breath to call to her, but the echoes of her command held my tongue.

Slowly, incredibly, the Troll bent to his knees before her, dipping his massive, terrible head.

She urged her mount to the kneeling Troll, speaking him in a voice too low for me to hear. I saw a flicker of gentleness light her face for a moment as she laid one hand on his shaggy skull.

I trembled on my snorting, nervous mount as Faith came toward me, the mercenarys quiet and obedient at her heels. The captain of the soldiers herded his men into a semblance of order, waiting, watching.

A movement at the gates demanded my attention; my lord Bardon stood there on foot, supported by two of the kind, simple folk of Nexus who offered anonymity and sanctuary to all who fled there. His eyes glittered, fierce as a hawk's as she brought her mount to a halt before us. She slipped from her saddle.

'My lord, I must stay,' she said in a low voice, "It must begin here, the hope of all the realms lies here, and from here it must spread. I have completed my charge to escort you here. I beg you to release me from your service."

"Child," he said softly, and reached out to sweep her leather cap from her bowed head. The knots had loosened in our last flight and it came away easily, revealing hair which was dull, dyed black everywhere except the roots, where the pure, iridescent silver of the imperial blood shone like moonlight.

She smiled fleetingly, her gaze meeting his, "I had feared you would recognize me from your time in my father's court."

"You were younger then. My lady Faithula, and your brother-"

"My brother serves the Goblin King now!" she cried with sudden anger. "And in their quest for power, they are tearing this land apart, slaughtering leaders and innocent folk alike. I left his bloody court when I would no longer be party to it, I-" She paused, hands resting on the hilt of her long knife, tears luminous in her eyes, "I thought I could carve out a world for myself, for my own dreams, beginning as a mercenary…. …Now I see that my selfishness will achieve nothing, I realize that my duty is to serve all those that live in these realms, because I choose to make it so. You and your dear lord have shown me another way to rule, by inspiring love instead of terror; love that is not learnt by a single example but by constant reminder. "

"What will you do, lady?"

"I will make a stand here, and I shall return to our land But not to support his bloody throne; only to rule in his stead," The azure fire in her eyes leapt high, challenging the light from her silvery hair. "That's suicide!" I sputtered, my tongue finally having regained its wits. "you'll never be able to wrest power from him."

"I will not contest them by force of arms, but by force of right," she said quietly. "The gods will show us a way if we have faith. Now take your lord to a place where you both can rest"

I smiled and I turned to help my lord to the rest of Nexus, In my memory her blue eyes and silver hair shone, piercing me to the core, tugging at my soul to be gone and at her side.

Frolus

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

In the depths of the Crystal Mountains lived a small nomadic tribe of barbarians. This tribe of barbarians was composed of nothing but ogres and all of the ogres trained much like the guild of barbarians in Neuxs. By the ogre tribal leader Frouk and his wife Lusia, Frolus was brought into Altin.

Growing up, Frolus did not have many friends because he was not interested in the skills of the barbarians and could not use his madness as strength. In the tribe Frolus, like every other ogre child, was forced to train as a barbarian. At the age of three Frolus, his family, and the whole tribe was attacked by goblins. His father, mother, and most of the tribe were killed, with just a few including Frolus imprisoned.

In the goblin imprisonment camp Frolus spent five years of his life. At age eight Frolus was at an age for an ogre in the camp to be able to fight in the battle ring. In the camp the goblins would have two prisoners fight to the death. These battles were made to control the overcrowding in the camp.

Frolus being very young choose a steel sword as a weapon when he was first made to battle. His first opponent was a half-giant with a name he did not know of. Frolus did not want to battle anyone but was forced to or he and his opponent would both be slain if they did not. Frolus won the first battle. During his three other battles that he won, passed three years, which was one year each battle.

Frolus, before going back to his cell got a thief there to steal weapons from the battle ring and supplied the many prisoners. When it was time for the prisoners to get locked in their cells for the night, Frolus and the other prisoners attacked the camp and escaped.

Frolus did not know that he had one hour to run from the camp, for the goblins had send a scout to run to another camp to get other goblins to track and kill him and the other escaped prisoners. While walking away Frolus was met by the trackers and he ran as fast as he could south of the Crystal Mountains.

Frolus, after running for two hours came exhausted and fell at the west gates of Nexus. He was then met by a cleric of nexus and was healed. Frolus searched around Nexus for some time and decided that Nexus was the place for him. He was then sent to Falcion for his training in hopes to one day be able to train in Nexus.

Since Frolus was trained in the goblin camps in pure fighting skills he decided to join the fighters guild that was offered to him in Falcion. He was skilled at the basic skills of fighting already so he quickly trained in the guild and was out of Falcion in just one week.

Frolus now trains in Nexus hoping one day he and the rest of Nexus will be able to rid Altin of the goblin imprisonment camps and avenge his mother's and father's deaths.

Garender

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

Garender started life in a small village on a secluded island. He was born to the leader of the village and grew under his tutelage into a fine young lad. His father was the greatest Warlord the villagers had ever known, and much was expected of young Garender. He was like any kid though and would skip out on his training sessions sometimes to sneak off down to the beach to be with the young ladies. One day during one of these excursions he and his lady friend came across something they had never seen before...it was the corpse of an elf. Though, they had never seen such a thing, as the only other inhabitants of the island were a savage group of trolls who lived on the other side of it. He immediately got his father and the town council had a meeting. The decision of the council was to investigate where the elf had come from, and Garender was volunteered by his father to lead the expedition off the island. A ship was built in no time. Before leaving, Garender's father gave him his blade, he told him, "I wish for you to wield this as well as I by the time you return." and with that he gave him a Warlord's Katana, which his father had found on a ship that had washed up on the shore.

And so Garender departed, heading for who knows where. After many days of travel a storm caught the ship. Seeking shelter from the storm, they made an emergency landing on a nearby island. As they trudged through the jungle looking for food, they came across a mob of beasts the likes which they had never seen. He was later to find out these beasts went by the name of Bugbears. They attacked him and his comrades. The ogres scattered and were picked off one by one. A few ogres made it back to the ship and they lifted anchor and left with another group of ogres, including Garender, stranded on the beach. Garender was much faster than most his comrades and outran the Bugbears as they swarmed onto the beach in hot pursuit of the ogres. Luckily for Garender, he found a Row Boat hidden in the reeds and used it to escape...but his friends were not as lucky.

He had no oars, so he drifted on the sea for quite some time. He nearly starved to death. He was so famished that he passed out and when he awoke he was surrounded by strange people in white robes, which he later found to be the clerics of the Healing Hand. They had found him on the shore of Falcion and revived him. And so he began training in the city of Falcion as a member of the fighter's guild. After much hard work, the trainer on Falcion told him, "You have learned all you can from me, it is time for you to go elsewhere." and so Garender took the Transport sloop over to Nexus for the first time...

When he reached Nexus he was overwhelmed by the diversity of people and the size of the city itself. It took a while, but eventually he made some friends and was proceding with his training very nicely...until two tragedies befell the two best friends he had made at the time. One committed suicide and the other followed Kyorl. He was devastated by the losses and decided he wanted to leave Nexus.

He hired a crew in Rymek and sailed for home...but when he got there he was not happy with what he found. A Goblin Pirate ship had followed the retreating ship of his comrades from after the Bugbear encounter. The Goblins had ravaged the island. They had killed or enslaved half of his people. He found that some ogres had even betrayed us, one of which was Garender's sister. His

father was leading a small rebel force against them and he was quick to join his father in battle against the menace.

The battle was long and hard. Many were killed on both sides. At one point in the fight Garender's father was fighting off half a dozen Blademasters. One struck a blow through his father's leg and leveled him to the ground. In a desperation attempt, Garender parried the blow of the Goblin Striker he had been fighting and struck a lethal blow to the neck of the Goblin Blademaster that had felled his father. As his father lie there, Garender's sister appeared. She tried to slay there father, but Garender did not allow it. He didn't have time to parry the blow off is father, so instead he took the blow, and it tore through his ribs. At the same time he landed a blow through his sister's collar all the way down to her sternum. As they both lay there on the ground awaiting death, she looked over at him and said, "Oh Garender, what have I done...I'm so sorry..." and he forgave her just as her eyes rolled back into her head and she was gone.

The ogres barely won that battle, and the Goblins fled the island with many ogreish and trollish slaves still in there possession. The village was decimated, there was almost nothing left. Garender's father got an infection from the wound and died soon after. But before he did, he did two things, he told Garender to leave the island and start a new life somewhere else and that he was proud of how he handled his sword in battle. Garender buried his loved ones, his father, sister, and the sweetheart he had left behind but couldn't save.

With that he returned to Nexus, the wound in his torso nearly killing him as he managed to drag himself back to Town Square where several clerics worked to heal his wound. After a long state of depression, Garender came to and started training once again. He continues to this day to defend his adopted home of Nexus.

Groth

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

In our lives there are many paths we take, some we choose others it seems we are forced towards. I remember when I was a child the path that started me on my journey that brought me to the island of Falcion.

As a child of no more than 8 years I used to wander the land with what I guess you could call my clan though we went by no name, we lived in caves or whatever shelter was around. We took what we needed and what we wanted from villages and travelers we came upon, in the process usually slaughtering the people.

One day I was out wandering around with two others in search of any signs of adventurers to slaughter and loot, when in the distance we saw 3 scrawny little creatures. Grins came across our faces as we broke into a run each looking to be the first to kill one. They had also seen us though, and two of them sprinted away while the other took up behind a nearby boulder to hamper us with his crossbow. To my left one of my clansmen took a bolt in his leg and stumbled slightly but kept

moving on. I chuckled to myself and brought my makeshift club back and then let it fly through the air towards the creature. The club smashed into the boulder nowhere near the little thing and as I cursed my aim, the others had all but closed in on the little archer. I started to walk over knowing by the time I got there the creature would be dead.

After looting the body we dragged it back to our cave to show the others. A few stared blankly at it, some I could tell recognized what it was and then I heard Etrius the oldest among us and our leader if you will, growl out the word "Goblin." I could not help but laugh as I said, "This is goblin? This what be killing all in its way?"

Speech as for most of us was not my specialty. Etrius growled again and I shut my mouth. "This is just scout, worthless. There be more around, lots." Then he asked us "This was only one you are seeing?" We told him of the two that had fled and I thought I caught a glimpse of fear in his dark eyes. He told us all to gather our things and that we were to be off away from this place and we all did as he said.

We had made our way from the cave each carrying all we could and as night fell we set up a camp area to rest and were to be off at first light. I had drawn one of the last watches and so I gladly went to sleep. I was later awoken by shouts of warning and cries to arms. As I jumped up and scrambled for a blade I heard 3 thunks, I looked over to see Gwylum, a fierce warrior standing looking down at 3 arrows deeply embedded in his chest. Another rain of arrows came down, some finding marks but most falling harmlessly into the ground and then in the distance form the dark stepped an innumerable amount of these creatures that were goblins. We were pitifully outnumbered and I recall looking around and thinking to myself that this is a good a night as any to die. They stood in ranks the first bunch seemed very anxious, this was obviously there young soldiers, behind them stood the more impressive warriors and behind them still concealed in the night was another dark presence that could not be seen. One of the younger goblins started to laugh and to my side I saw Etrius pull out an axe and let it fly through the night air. The laughing goblin's head snapped back violently and then he fell first to his knees and then to the ground to lie dead, face down in his own blood with his skull split open. There were shouts from all about as the young soldiers charged in, and so it began.

These poor soldiers were not skilled at all. The first to me swung high, I easily dodged and slammed the hilt of my blade into his face. I heard the crunch of bone as he staggered backwards, as he was blinded by pain I brought my blade about and embedded it deep into the side of his neck. I pulled by blade back as his head sickly hung to one side and turned to the next soldier that was coming at me. He came in with an overhead chop and I brought my sword up to block it. As our blades met I looked into his cold eyes and smiled as I picked my foot up and brought it down delivering a crushing kick to the side of his knee easily breaking his leg. As he fell to the ground I circled behind him and drove my blade through his back as I felt the bite of steel on my side. The battle with the soldiers raged on for many minutes and then with most of their fodder lying dead on the ground the larger warriors started to step forward. I took the time to glance around and saw Gwylum with 3 broken shafts still in his chest breaking the neck of the last soldier in his hands. I laughed to myself "too stubborn to die that one." We had not gone without our losses and among the dead soldiers lay a good couple of my clansmen.

The warriors advanced slowly, and we could tell no foolish mistakes were to be made by these ones. Then for some reason the stopped their advance and for a second I thought the gods had smiled upon my clansmen and myself. That though did not last long though as from the night emerged the dark presence that I had felt. This goblin wore no regular armor but instead a robe and held a staff in his hand. I heard someone behind me say the words "Magic Man" and it was at that moment I knew all was lost. Gwylum who had been too stubborn to die before had no choice but to succumb as blades of ice burst out from within his body, to the left of him another fell to the ground in spasms as bolts of lightning racked his body. Chaos ensued and a few of the warriors began their advance again.

I gripped by sword tightly as I watched them advance and then ready to meet my death in battle I charged forward as my clansmen did the same. I swung down with all my might at the first warrior I came upon, he brought his sword up to block my strike but his blade shattered under the strength of my blow and my blade continued down deep into his body. As I tried to free my weapon, I caught a glimpse of a warrior advancing on me. I turned in time to see her attempt to relieve my body of the burden of head. I flung my head to the left as the blade whizzed by taking off the top half of my right ear. Already off balance I expected the ending blow to come but it never did and as I looked back I saw the warrior impaled on Etrius' massive sword, the goblins legs dangling a good foot off the ground. Many of my clansmen had already fallen and soon enough we would all be dead. Far off to the right horrible screams could be heard as an ogre's body was consumed by flames, Etrius then looked to me and said "We must flee and get revenge another day." He shoved an old sack into my arms that bared the symbol of unbalanced scales and said, "You fought good, but go now. I will save as many as can" I started to protest but before I could speak a word he held up some strange device and then the whole battle field was gone, I was standing in some strange forest.

I had no idea as to what happened and started to yell out for any of my clansmen looking around desperately. I yelled out for Etrius to bring me back that I would die with them on the battlefield, no answers came to me but I continued to yell. Soon the blood loss began to take its toll and no longer able to stand I collapsed to the ground. It was then a human male ran right by me then turned around and came back to stand next to me. I growled a lunged for him and soon found myself unable to move any of my muscles, more magic? I growled and cursed at the lone man who just stood there and looked at me. While I was unable to move he started to mutter words under his breath and as I near glared a hole through his head I could feel my wounds starting to repair themselves. "I am no cleric but I what little I can do to help you I will." he said, "My name is Khalil. I have not seen you about before. Are new around here young one?" Still unable to move I spat out a few more colorful words at this man who was trying to help me. He then sat down and said "I have all day young one, and can keep you from moving as long as I like." Hours later having listened to him talk and talk and talk about nothing at all I asked, "Where am I? How come you not kill me yet?" He then told me much about where I was and that I could stay with him and the few others he had taken in. Completely lost and confused I followed him, and we went to the island I found out to be Falcion.

I passed most of my time on the island alone and up until recently spent much of my time in nexus alone, learning from this adopted family I had come across and studying the way of weapons. Many mistakes were made and I am sure I will make many more in the future. My past is my past and there is much I have not said and will not say, I committed many unspeakable acts before my

arrival and acceptance into Falcion and have worked hard to become what I am today. Since my arrival I have learned much including the ability to read, write and speak, though a hint of my old broken speech is still present at times. I have learned for the most part the difference between foolishness and bravery along with the difference between wisdom and cowardice. Upon my formal acceptance into the Fighter's Guild I have tried to become more active with people of nexus and of Falcion for the betterment of my guild, though I still do not care to be around many people. I will continue to do my best to uphold my Guild's honor, and will fight until the day I die or until I need to no more.

Jennikki

Class: Fighter
Race: Half-Elf

Jennikki was raised by her mother in the town of Talmet. Her mother had two elven children as well, but their father had been killed by goblins just before they were born. Her mother, being lonely and poor, met a human ranger who used to come to Talmet for supplies and they fell in love and had a child, Jennikki. She loved her father very much, because he was the only one who really loved her, because she was a half breed in a society of elves. Even her half brothers despised her and the only times she could feel safe and comfortable was alone with her father.

When she was 15 years old she witnessed her father being killed by a wolf and she mourned him for years. With her father dead her brothers began to bully her even more and she became aggressive, and often had to defend herself physically. After a fight with them she had to leave the village for good. She left for Nexus where she accepted any work she could find to earn a living on her own, she served drinks in taverns, worked in the stables and in shoppes and stores. At the age of 21 she decided that she was getting nowhere in life and that there must be a purpose for her, and enlisted in the fighter's guild and went to Falcion for her training. The aggression that her brothers created in her would now be turned into an asset, and she soon learned control and self discipline.

With no friends or family to spend her time with she spent her time fighting and training and soon learned how to use a sword and shield. After a couple of months on the island she met her first love, a fighter by the name of Caliban. He was lonely and had gone through so much hard times, and for the first time since her father died, Jennikki felt needed and loved. But Caliban disappeared and she never saw him again, but he had inspired her with hope because now she knew that she may some day be loved again and that all was not lost when she lost her father.

The day came when she completed her training and she was a Myrmidon of the fighters guild. She got ready to leave for Nexus again, but was told that during her time on the island, the fishing village of Rymek had been besieged and there was no way to reach Nexus at the time. She contacted an Arch Wizard who told her that the best, and only way to reach Nexus at the moment was to use a magical spell called teleport. Slightly worried, but determined to reach Nexus, she tried it. Disoriented and dizzy, she found herself facing a band of goblin warriors and two huge

shadowy figures that looked like giants but larger and blurry. Exhausted and wounded, she managed to flee into the woods, to heal her wounds and rest. With directions from a ranger from Nexus she reached the town and was at last safe. It did not take long before a group of heroes set out to rid the roads of alchemist forces and requested her help, and soon the fighting began and it continued every day for as long as she stayed in Nexus. Goblins, werebeasts, wolves and such were common opponents, and as she grew stronger, bugbears, cavebears and necromancers made excellent challenges. Obviously talented, it did not take her long to advance to a prominent rank in the guild and her name is now inscribed into the Roll of Honor in the fighters guild and she has been dubbed a guild elder by her acting guildmaster, Wolf-biter the Champion.

Kleto

Class: Fighter
Race: Human

The earth shook underneath his feet. The soldiers feet marched all about him. He knew he shouldn't be in this open area but he smelled food. That was for sure. Quickly he turned around only to find a massive object careening down upon his small body.

Lerti heard a distinct crunching underneath his foot. Looking down he found the remains of a rather large ant. Grimacing over how he would get this off his boots he walked over to his troops. "Listen up! We have scouts reporting the movements of the Clansogres. I will not lie to you recruits, this fort will be hard pressed to stand against them. That’s why I need you all to fight with all we have taught you thus far! Sure, you have not finished your training but I have seen some of you perform incredible feats! Now I demand that you not falter under this siege. This is what makes us Champions!"

To that there was only silence. A few of the soldiers passed out, from all of the tension and fear. Standing in the back of the formation was a young human by the name of Kleto. He stood grinning at his elderly drillmaster. For all the times he hated the man, this was his time to prove that he was better than his fellows. With feet spaced apart he looked quite the warrior. With his battle sword in hand he felt certain he could take on all the Clansogre himself. A siren sounded within the fort. With a smirk he rushed off to his battle position, at the gate.

Sweat beaded his forehead. "I thought they were supposed to be here hours ago!"’Kleto grumbled underneath his breath. Reaching down he grabbed a rag and wiped his forehead. It was the heat of the afternoon. A low rumbling came from the north. Quickly he tensed his muscles. There was no clerical outpost here. If he died, that was it. Removing his blade from its sheathe he quickly had it in front of him. Holding his breath he readied for the impact of the Ogres.

Before him the gates were ripped open, charging through were dozens of Ogres all carrying clubs the size of humans. Quickly Kleto rushed towards his prey. Finding an Ogre that had turned his back he quickly spun and plunged his blade deep into the massive back of the berserker. Falling to his knees instantly Kleto hacked at the Ogres knee, disabling his victim.

Jumping up from his kill, he had no time to savour the moment. Immediately attacking an Ogre with a good friend of his, Kyoto. The half giant quickly sliced through the Ogre's arm cutting him down. Glancing at Kleto, he grinned and they both charged the Ogre Chieftan.

Looking around the fort Detin surmised that he would easily win this battle. The ramshackle building had cluttered the Crystal mountains far too long. Quickly dispatching all the pitiful fledgling soldiers in his way he made way toward the Drillmaster of this pitiful post.

Coming upon the chieftan Kyoto and Kleto were astonished to find the Ogre clutching the bloody head of the ancient drillmaster Lerti savagely ripped from his still warm body. Scanning the ogre for any weak spots the two soldiers quickly went about their futile task. Kyoto took the front of the assault, it made sense since he was so much bigger than his friend. Parrying the Ogre for all he was worth Kyoto held him at bay, while Kleto made his way to the Ogre's backside. He knew he would only get one strike at his enemy, before the monster was upon him. Hefting his bastard sword over his right shoulder Kleto charged forward letting out a thunderous warcry! Heaving his sword up he managed to clip the Chieftan's lower back. With a gasp of pain, Detin threw his arms in the air quickly seizing his assailant by the throat. Swinging his club in a direct path for the human's body, Detin lurched as he felt the cold bite of steel.. within his gut. Looking down he found the half giant on one knee with a battle blade poised in his powerful arms. Dropping the human instantly Detin pawed at his killer with his hands, as if flailing for a fly. Blood spewed out of the Ogre's mouth as he called out his last orders.

"By Kyorl's fury, kill these basta...rd..s.." Detin cried, as he fell to the ground atop Kyoto.

Kleto quickly glanced at Kyoto who was chuckling, yelling for him to get this monstrosity off of him. Kleto ran over to his friend and started to heave at his torso, to no avail. Quickly grabbing the Ogre's twitching foot, Kleto pulled with all his might, but it would not budge. Glancing up at Kyoto he saw the half-giant grin to himself.. That was the last time he saw Kyoto's friendly face. Blood spattered onto his face along with bone fragments cutting into his face. Wiping the mess from his eyes he could not believe what he saw. His friend was no more. He felt himself choke on tears instantly. A surge of pain split his skull, as he felt a warm liquid cover his scalp.

A putrid smell waft over the place where he lay. Opening his eyes he saw a whole company of Ogres sitting around him. There was no where to go. He could do nothing. A grunt could be heard among them. "Whats we do with’em?"

"He killeds our battlemaster, he deserve terrible death."

An intelligent voice was heard over the group. "Fools, I will show you a most terrible way to do away with the fellow and alas, he will not die for weeks, but writhe in pain while the birds pluck at his innards."

This seemed to be just what the Ogres wanted. Not wanting anything of the sort, Kleto quickly stumbled from his place of rest. Slowly fumbling through the camp he tried to be quiet but nothing could have stopped the noise.

"Confusion of mind, and blast of body." was all Kleto heard. Struggling to turn his eyes towards the group. He found that he could only make out a figure. The Ogres were upon him in an instant restraining him while the figure stepped into the light. What seemed like elven features were present.

"Well, hello fool. You were quite foolish to have lived through that battle. You have murdered their Battlemaster. Quite a foolish thing indeed seeing how you were so easily caught. Anyhow, and don't take this personal, you will die a cruel death. I do believe it will be quite hilarious indeed."

With a cruel chuckle he turned his back upon the human.

"Urhm, Astaroths whats we dos?"

"Leave that to me, just knock him out."

Into the darkness Kleto came yet again. Who was this Astaroth? Why was he helping the Ogres?! What in the name of Altin!

"Aaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!!"

Kleto gasped his breaths coming in ragged succession. The pain was excruciating. Straining to look up he saw that a stick was sticking through his stomach. Tears wet his face in the heat of the day. He turned his head looking down, Kleto could see that he had been pierced by a small tree, sharpened to a point. There was no more bleeding, his wounds had been healed with the tree jutting through his abdomen. Kleto clutched for his weapon, anything to end the pain, but even that was taken from him. He could not even end his life. He flailed his arms in a helpless manner causing him pain from which there was no respite… He passed out yet again.

Overlooking a ridge in the Crystal Mountains was a Drow. Peering over the edge he saw an oddity in the midst of some bushes. Squinting to see he could make out the faint outline of a person. Quickly he made his way down the ridge. From afar anyone could have mistaken this for a dead tree. But upon closer inspection Deriseus found that a human had been placed upon this small tree in an absolutely cruel form of torture. The man had passed out as anyone would have under that pain. Coming to the tree he saw that no vital organs had been punctured. Touching the human's neck he found the man to still be alive. Smiling at such news he spoke a few words and the limbs of the man lift level with his torso. Taking out a small blade he cut away at the small tree, breaking it free from the root he lifted the man from his supposed deathbed and quickly pulled the rest of the tree from his stomach. Lifting the human's arms Deriseus grunted, "Now let's take you somewhere safe, and you'll tell me of what happened to you child.”

With that Deriseus chanted, "Go where the winds carry thee."

Krono

Class: Fighter
Race: Human

Krono spent his earlier years in a small town, Aldonica. His household consisted of his father, Relam, his mother, Talissa, and his sister Myra. Krono was your typical small child, running rampant around the town and getting into trouble here and there. When Krono reached the age of 11, his father felt it time that Krono learn the art of swordplay. Relam trained young Krono vigorously for years and gave him little time to do much, other than train. During his free time, he would play with the other town children, causing mischief and whatnot. As he aged, he reached that point in a young man's life, and he became fond of his sister's friend Aylaa, and began to spend his free moments with her. He even mustered enough courage to skip some of his father's lessons to run off with Aylaa. Now, almost a full fledged man, Relam felt that there was little more Krono could learn from him, and had the town blacksmith forge Krono a sword of his own. His life seemed perfect, for he was now a skilled swordsman, and his feelings for Aylaa had blossomed into what he thought was love.

Weeks went by and Krono had been taken in as an apprentice for the town smithy. One day, after working for only a couple of hours, the smithy gave Krono the rest of the day off. Krono rushed home to eat, and then planned to go spend some time with Aylaa. When he arrived home, he found his father speaking with the Queen of Cigam herself. Krono, interested in the conversation, eavesdropped for the remainder of it. When the queen left, Krono's father summoned him. "Son, the queen had come to personally request that I be one of the Elite Guard. I have accepted and we shall be relocating to the kingdom in the early morn." Mixed feelings overwhelmed Krono, for new life would be exciting, especially living in the kingdom, but he would be leaving Aylaa behind.

The next morn, an hour or so before it was time for Krono to leave, he decided to spend his remaining time with Aylaa. The two went deep into the woods to spend their last moments of intimacy in peace. When they reached a nearby clearing, sounds of dreadful screams and wails of suffering filled their ears. They quickly turned back and headed to town, and when they arrived, they saw strange, hideous creatures they had never seen before. The hoarde of creatures were slaughtering the inhabitants of Aldonica and pillaging the town. Krono quickly drew his katana and began slaying the humanoid creatures. He guarded Aylaa till they arrived at her house and he told her to get her club and join him. He then saw his father slaying the creatures near a mysterious yellow opening in the air. He was quick to aid his father at his side, and the two battled the creatures as they stormed out of the yellow opening. "Go see if your mother and Myra are alright, many of the creatures slipped by me when I was baffled at what was going on. I'll hold them off here" his father said ecstatically. Krono, heeding his father's command, rushed to his house, slaying a creature here and there as he passed them. Wasting no time, he kicked down the door only to find his sister mutilated on the ground and one of the strange creatures holding a blade to his mother's throat. Krono screamed with rage and charged the hideous being, but it swiftly got behind Talissa, keeping the blade to her neck. The creature opened his mouth and began to speak, "Another move, and this woman receives the same fate as that girl." Krono looked astonished "You can talk?" The creature snickered and swiftly dashed out of the house, still holding his mother captive. Krono quickly chased after them, only to see the creature jump through the yellow opening with his mother. As Krono ran toward the opening, it disappeared without a trace. He looked around only to find bodies of villagers and the strange creatures covering the ground. He

saw Aylaa kneeling beside one of the corpses and as he neared it, he realized it was his father. Devastated at the death of his father and sister, and the abduction of his mother, Krono knelt beside his slain father, and wept for many hours, Aylaa at his side, offering whatever comfort she could.

As Krono finally began to calm, he and Aylaa heard a strange noise. As he stood to search around, the yellow opening appeared again, and a dozen of the creatures emerged from the gash in the air. Seeing the creatures he drew his katana and went into a ballistic rage, giving the damn creatures only seconds to live. After he slew the last of them, he turned to Aylaa, then to the opening, and back to Aylaa. She took his hand into her own, and nodded her head slowly, and they both walked into the yellow opening, and disappeared. The two were quickly spit out of the opening and as they looked around, they realized they were in a foreign area. They analyzed their surroundings, only to see trees and forest floor. The two walked for a short time before coming to a city, the city of Falcion. As they entered the city, the two encountered many things they had not seen before, such as elves, ogres, trolls, renis and half-giants. Among these they also found other humans, which was relieving to them. As they spoke with the inhabitants, they were informed that the creatures that had destroyed Aldonica were known as goblins. Krono, eager to find his mother, if still alive, and to avenge the deaths of his father and sister, joined the fighters guild and began new training in Falcion. Krono's new life has yet to unfold.

Lanaya

Class: Fighter
Race: Elf

With a blink she looks up from polishing her armor, "You want to know my past hmm?" A soft smile breaks her face, "Alright i'll tell you what I can remember."

I grew up in a small village, about twenty adults and five children including me, I was the only girl in the village. My father was a woodworker, he made many beautiful and wonderful things, one of the things he made was a toy sword, he gave that to me just as a joke of a gift, but it turned to be a lot more.

I loved that sword, it was special to me, even though it was made of wood, to me it was a real sword. Hours upon hours I would practice and play with that sword. I loved it, the weight, the way of swinging. Soon though it became time that my parents wanted to look to find me a husband, I was still very young, but they wanted to marry me off early so that I would be happy or some such. But I was happy with my blade, the boys of the village would have nothing to do with me because well, they were afraid of someone that could beat them with a sword I suppose, never thought much about it.

But soon I began to feel like I was a disappointment to my parents, which made me feel bad. We got word of a war being fought in a far off city, and that they were in need of any who were willing

to help, I told my parents this is where I would go, and well as you see I am here now ... this is my home, and I will always fight to protect it.

Much has happened since I first came around, and I have acquired many wonderful friends and even family members. Most of my past, like many of my years here, I have lost to my memory, unable to remember much at all. I am sorry if my past story was not much for you to enscribe, but I hope it will help.

Licede

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

Fifteen years ago on Ruvur, the twenty-second of the month of the Twilight, in the year 1,637 since the Godswar, and year 1,220 of the Empire a young warrior from a great line of warrior blood was born. Young Licede Maximus Corwin was born, his name meaning brave one. He lived 3 happy years with his family. Even at this young age he mimicked his fathers hopes and dreams. His father, a noble warrior, taught him ancient values.

One night in his village, Ofike, to the south of our great stronghold, his father awoke with a piercing cry, for his heart had been pierced by the knife of his beloved wife, Licede's mother, Gena. She had been spying for the goblins for 1 year now, and was maddened with the power of dark sorcery. But she could not end the blood line with Licede's death, for when she stood over his innocence, knife in hand, she felt a moment of weakness.

In that split second the child was whisked away by Rolend, the trusted advisor to the family and powerful weavemaster. Wizard walk was his tool, and he sacrificed himself in this great drain of power for the sake of Licede, leaving him with only a magic medallion, passed down through centuries. The amulet was crested with a dragon. The edges glow in his times of need, protecting his soul. They flair with a mighty aura and the burning prophecy that the Corwin blood line would one day take part in leading the alliance against massive hoards.

Lost without Rolend to guide him, Wizard Walk could not be understood or controlled. He fell to a different world. He met a nameless warrior who he somehow knew. This warrior nourished his skills and taught him to fight with all weapons. His world was training, but he could see into our realm. He longed for a different kind of companionship. His blade sung and arrows flew with wildfire, but he lacked a certain magic.

One day he saw through his one-way curtain between worlds, a beautiful women named Kura. He plead with his master to go and see the world, woo this ogre, who was sheer beauty in his eyes. His master reluctantly let him go.

His master sent him back through a portal to the crystal mountains, but his power had grown and his presence was sensed by the dark powers. The alchemists disguised themselves as beggars and villagers. They brought him to a long sleep with powerful draughts. They infused his blood with the

rich blood of black dragons. They hoped they could possess his soul and bind his life-force to the dark side of the weave. His amulet glowed like fire and purified the blood in his body. The searing heat of the amulet burnt a dragon emblem into his chest linking him to the prophecy. When he awoke his essence had not been turned; His body and heart had been strengthened by the blood under guide of the amulet.

He then over through the alchemist that was contorting his being. He ran for days and lived off the land and the wild creatures that inhabited it. He finally came to his destination, a small town called Hida. Exhausted by the travel he was brought in by Martin, a young warrior of similar age to Licede. Martin brought Licede to Falcion where he quickly advanced in rank with his power and training. Licede won his love. His blade protected them, yet his hatred for the goblins and the evil heart that possessed his mother drove him further to seek revenge.

Lisaninizi

Class: Fighter
Race: Reni

Resting her hands softly on her belly, she dreams. Though she faces the clear night through her window, her eyes are enormous, dark, and softly unfocused. Her pupils drown most of her iris, but for a thin rim of gold. Though the night breeze is chill, she makes no move to either close the window or move away. A secretive smile dawns on her face as she cups a hand gently against her abdomen.

She remembers Dr. Fillis, so brilliant she thought the force of his eyes must burn her. She remembers his soft voice, his soft hands, the compelling power of his gaze. She was sixth sub-assistant to his junior associate and the idea that she could help him with his work thrilled her. Dr. Keyrine Fillis had made Yerris-fulln famous with his research on sub-theoretical chant manipulation in areas of low ether concentration. To help him concentrate, to help him focus - this was a great work.

Sometimes, watching him furrow his brow at a particularly difficult schematic, or stretching his shoulders after a long day, she wished for more. Even as she went to him, to offer him comfort, release, she treasured different hopes in her heart. When she felt life begin to grow within her, she thought the Gods had given her a chance.

Her hand reaches into the air over her shoulder, stroking hair that is no longer there. She sees it still, luxuriant sweeps of darkly glimmering sapphire. Her hair had swept smoothly to the small of her back, clinging to her sleek aqua fur. She had been considered beautiful. She drops her hand back to her lap.

She remembers the way men had looked at her. How they had vied for her attention. And she remembers the way sad Dr. Kurrint had stared at her for so long before speaking... before... before... She had thought that he meant ask her out. She had thought he was evaluating the morality of her position as his patient. But that was before...

For a moment, she almost remembers something very sad. She almost remembers his hesitant words as he explained how she had lost the baby. How, sometimes, under stressful conditions, a child could be re-absorbed by its mother. How she was devouring her own child. She almost remembers something beyond bearing.

She turns her back. She closes her eyes. Her body has not moved, but it is just that, a body. Sometimes she goes somewhere else, and no-one can find her. There is a mirror on the wall above her bed, containing a gaunt reni with dull, matted fur and jagged-shorn hair. A fly lands on her cheek, resting near her eye like a tear, but she does not twitch.

There is a little light in those eyes, still. One day they may open again, and see what must be done.

Magmus

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

The many stories of Magmus are occasionally conflicting, but always horrific. I, Ts'okn the scribe, have chronicled Magmus' past from the many stories told of him and have found the following to be, if nothing else, the best attempt made thus far to chronicle this Ogre's checkered past:

It is said that his origins lay in the northern Crystal Mountains. Though little is known about actual his birth place, it is known that along with the many other unlucky races whom have toiled at the hands of the goblin horde, Magmus too grew up knowing only a life of slavery.

Because of his apparent size and strength, even at a young age, Magmus was assigned to tasks normally saved for beasts of burden - which he soon became. From dawn to dusk, his hands and feet were shackled together. By night, he was chained to a large stone wall, spending many a cold night bare to harsh elements.

Magmus came to know years of being forced to plow fields and turn millstones, his strength harnessed to feed the hungry masses of the goblin horde. After many years of whippings, wound saltings and inadequate shelter, Magmus had finally reached a time when he could escape. Metals had come to be in short supply and was needed by the Goblins for weapons and armor among the many implements of war. The chains used to subdue Magmus were melted down for stock, and his restraints were replaced by hemp rope.

When this change was made, Magmus effortlessly cast off the ropes with a flex of his thick, rugged musculature. Grabbing the head of his sleeping Goblin taskmaster, he twisted it off like a mushroom cap, releasing it from the limp body. He is often found carrying this very skull present day.

The details of Magmus' history become increasingly vague after his escape from the goblin labor camps. He apparently spent many years alone, wandering in the wilderness, taming his ravenous proclivities on stray sheep and cattle.

It seems from most accounts that Magmus has an almost instinctual urge for combat, a bloodlust far beyond even the most fearsome of his race. Perhaps his years of torture and slavery are responsible for this, perhaps not, his words are few and often in discernible.

In my evaluation I have found Magmus to be more of a beast than a 'person'. His sheer physical strength has come to both respected and feared because it is accompanied by organizational and strategic combat skills. For a seemingly simple minded beast, he is extraordinarily resourceful, able to live for several suns with naught food nor water. His close friends are few, as he often may not at first remember them. This trait has made him an almost perpetual rogue, like a boulder rolling in its own direction on a seemingly predetermined course.

Mandela

Class: Fighter
Race: Elf

Name? asked the corporal at the desk. Mandela Quilin'siir, corporal, I answered. Quilin'siir ... not on the list of Inheritors of the Blood, is it? No sir, I'm not aristocracy, sir. Not among the High Class, either, murmured the corporal, sifting through lists of names. No, sir, I replied, wondering what he was driving at. Well, he declared, you've no title and no real money. Infantry, for you. Sign this form, then report to the Quartermaster. Yes, corporal, I replied, taking up the quill ...

I sat on the ground around one of the Double Blue Regiment's watch fires, looking out over the field the Third Flag was camped alongside, and cleaning the grit off of my pike. The fires of the encamped army spread around like a reflection of the sky, each star a burning spot of flame in the dark ground. The lines spread for almost a mile and a half down the plain, at Irith Sol. I could see the rest of the Nineteenth Infantry, also the Third Elite Bows, the Eleventh Mounted Dragoons ... half of the Elvish Third Flag forces, making ready on the eve of battle. Looking across the plain, I could just make out the glocks' camps as well, like some sort of seething, firelit anthill. My army and theirs sat in the darkness that night, and watched each other.

Excuse me, ma'am. I looked up, it was Arcis, my corporal, wearing his standard-issue drab green uniform, and a smile. Battle group assignments are in. We're with the Greys and the Treble Greens, with some lovelys from the Third Elite Bows. Lieutenant Durbin requests that we brief our squads and get them armed, the convoy just pulled in. Good old Arcis, always on top of things. You get worn down after thirteen years out in the muck, but he had only been out for five, and was still full of patriotism and excitement, a little kid still playing soldier. I got up, straightened out my uniform, and started off to take care of my squad.

We were up before the suns the next morning, forming up the lines. Lieutenant Durbin, our commanding officer, was out being pretty as we got our pikes and knives ready, wearing his gold braid like some sort of visiting General. He was thrilled over being given a regiment from the Elite Bows as support for our Double Blue Regiment, normally we got Standard Bows, if we got anything at all. I took my colors pike off the stack, and lashed the battle flag to it. The Color Sergeant has to

keep the squads together in the fray, and I was a Color Sergeant. My rank privilege, apparently, was getting a flimsy toy of a colors pike, longer and lighter for carrying a flag, instead of a nice heavy battle pike like everyone else.

Corporal Arcis and Lance Corporal Felliwit got the squad into the forward line, as I checked with the Field Sergeants on either side to make sure they had their men together. My flag group was running in front this morning ... first in, last out, and nothing needed to be left to chance. Across the plain, the glocks had their lines formed, big and black, waiting for us. We took the charge at a full run, pikes down, careening across the plain like demons, our lines and the glocks' dashing madly towards each other, until the final, inevitable crash together.

It was the standard hell for a while, every man Jack fighting to keep alive ... either you killed the glocks, or they killed you, and if you died, that was it. You were bagged, tagged, and sent home to your mother in a big wooden box, fit only for worm food at the down-six. I kept the flag up until about fifty percent of my squad of twenty was downed, and then started using the pike as the good Lord Erisar intended it. It didn't last long, without the metal sheathing of a battle pike, some glock chopped it in half in fairly short order. I gave him the end with the point on it as a present for his liver, and almost grabbed his pike instead (I have never yet used my general-issue combat knife). That was when the horror beast showed up.

By horror beast, I mean only a glock larger than your standard infantryman. Every so often, you'd meet one out in the field, trying to mince you up better than the standard piker. This one was one of the trained warriors, all in black armor and leather. I had seven out of my squad left, and it didn't look good. Apparently it didn't look good to Lieutenant Durbin, either, because he told his regiment of archers to open fire. The only problem was that my squad was still in the thick of it.

Warbows are not discriminating about who they put holes into, and the arrows mostly don't stop until they hit the ground, they'll go through three or four bodies, given the opportunity. What was left of the three squads in my flag group ended up being torn apart. I didn't have a weapon to worry about, and managed to get all the way under my shield, there are advantages to being smaller than most. When the arrows stopped coming, everyone that was still alive got up and ran. There were three of us left.

Felliwit died later that night, unable to breathe with his lungs full of blood. Arcis lost his right leg, which had been so completely torn apart by nine separate arrows that the medics gave up on it and just lopped it off. I was ready to kill, and people knew it. Durbin had opened fire on his own men, like an incompetent, or like we were some kind of trash, which I suppose we were. Still, we're there for the glocks to kill in massive amounts, not to be torn up by our own. I had been in the hospital tent for two days and a half when the aide-de-camp showed up. He handed me a new uniform and a wheelbarrow full of excuses.

This isn't my uniform, I told the aide, looking at it. This is a dress uniform, and it has five stripes on it. That's Master Sergeant, you blithering fool. I'm a Color Sergeant, and what I need is a combat uniform. The aide looked a trifle afraid for a moment or two, before beginning his practiced speech. Er ... ma'am ... it is my happy privilege to inform you that Lieutenant Durbin has promoted you to the rank of Master Sergeant, and that you will be moved into the Quartermaster Corps immediately

for administrative ... That was when I blew up on him ... Durbin was going to give me some presents and try to appease me. I snatched the uniform, threw it on, and started off for Durbin's tent in a blind fury, knocking the aide over a table as he tried to stop me.

Ah, Master Sergeant Quilin'siir, Durbin said with a self-satisfied smile and a wink as I entered the tent he had his office in. I've heard they're putting you in for the Valor Cross, even, and I have to say that ... You slime, I said, my tone in itself making him stop his happy small talk. I'm sure I beg your pardon, he said uneasily, looking rather confused. You, I said, killed my men. You are a gold-braided two-starred piece of undercooked glock flesh. Now, now, my dear, you see ... were the last words out of his mouth before I hit him. I will take the credit for breaking his nose, but I maintain that it is his fault about the concussion he gave himself for foolishly falling onto the corner of a desk. I left the Nineteenth Infantry that very day, before my court-martial and execution could take place, and before any more ineptitude or apathy killed more of my men.

Markham

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

"Markham!" screeched a woman. "Coming," roared Markham as he emerged from a bush. "It's 'bout time you got here," said the woman. "I's sorries mothers," replied Markham. "Are you ready?" she asked and Markham nodded in response. His mother nodded and threw a sheathed katana to him, "It's swords day." Markham caught the weapon with a growl and nodded.

As far back as Markham can recall every day has been rigorous training and weapon wielding. His father was one of the leaders in the Warjin tribe and his mother resides as the chemist of the tribe with the title of "War Maiden." They were well known throughout the tribe as adroit and proficient warriors. Through this reason is why Markham trained himself. Markham was partially forced in the early beginning, but ended up enjoying the time he spent training and never missed a chance to compare himself with others, especially his father. Markham resembled his father in many aspects, but he lacked the intelligence his father was known for.

The daily rituals Markham underwent were always the same and coordinated precisely with the commanding general of the tribe, General Cosell. He was more or less the biggest ugliest ogre of the tribe. He was cruel and hostile to everyone of the tribe except for Markham. He always enjoyed his time with Markham and wished to handle his tribe training and recruitment.

As Markham exited the door he arrived to a crowded street full of people with different racial backgrounds. At this point in his time he was about used to the racial differences, but many of his peers and loved ones coped with it differently. As he left the steps of the blacksmith shop he was bombarded by a crowd of salesman.

"Yus cummings?" growled Cosell. Markham laughed and ran to the man nodding leaving the salesmen befuddled by his disappearance. "I's redies," replied Markham gripping the katana sheath. Corsell patted his back and said, "Yus gon r-" just as he started his sentence a blood

curdling scream emitted a few hundred yards in front of them. A dark red giant appeared in front of them and as Cosell began to walk back they encountered two more giants except these two were dark tanned and light blue. Cosell signaled to the gateguard. A loud rumbling bell rang throughout the city. The gates were immediately opened and people began evacuating. The tribe was gathered in many squadrons over the city. The giants began attacking the buildings and Cosell summoned Markham, his father and mother to dispose of the red giant.

"Nos runs in and attaks Mark," grunted Cosell. Cosell ran behind the giant and slashed it viciously in the back. Markham nodded to his father as they both leaped at the giant. Markham stabbed the giant and his father left but a graze. Markham struggled to remove the katana, but it was lodged inbetween the giants ribcage and collarbone. The giant howled in pain and knocked Markham clean into a wall. The yelping giant wrenched the katana from himself and darted toward the edge of the city backhanding any obstacles from his way. "Get wolves," roared Cosell. Immediately two immensely large wolves ran to his side. "Mark! Yus cums wif mes, " declared Cosell. Markham leaped onto the wolf placing himself behind Cosell. He strapped his arms around Cosell and grunted. The wolf dashed off following the scent of the giant. Following them was his parents.

On and on they went following the giant until thud! A tree trunk landed a blow to Cosell's chest knocking him and Markham off. Markham flew back and tripped the second wolf sending his parents off also. Cosell growled and grabbed his sword. "Yus okies?" he asked looking between the three. All of them nodded in unison returning to their feet. "Who ther?" snarled Cosell.

At this question a hoarde of goblins armed with tree trunks emerged from the forest. Cosell growled, "Arm yuselfs. Mark taks left arms, Sergeant yous taks right sides, I's will taks frunt." At this order they ran to the position as the goblins marched toward them bearing their teeth. "Kemis! Cums back hers!" yelled Cosell. Markham's mother placed herself in between the three. A boulder was thrown at her and she barely dodged it as she stepped back. The rocks gave way under her feet. She stumbled forward and looked behind her. Below her was the ocean breaking against a nearby reef.

The goblins charged and the three of them fought: slash, stab, slash. The bloodshed kept growing, as did the goblins. Markham's mother knelt down and began chanting prayers. Four goblins charged Markham's father. The man growled and fought for his life. The goblins clawed and bit and finally overthrew his father. No one was aware of his casualty as he died silently. Once they were sure he was dead they moved towards the kneeling woman. One claw-bearing strike to her neck left her decapitated. Cosell growled at Markham and said, "Gos jumps!" Markham shook his head furiously Cosell lunged at Markham and threw him over the cliff. As he watched Markham struggle to maintain his composure he was bashed instantly unconscious by the goblins. Markham hit the water and fell unconscious as water slowly covered his body.

He drifted through the endless sea unconscious as waves rippled over him. He coughed and sputtered water out of his lungs one lonely evening as he came to his sense.

Markham rubbed his head with a dismissive grunt, "Ughs mes heds hurts. .whers am I's?". He growled and looked around maintaining his head afloat. He slowly swam to a small beach and removed his dripping clothing. He wrung it out and placed it back on. He searched the area for

people and growled. He walked forward a few fields and finally came upon a beach hut. He looked around and finally heaved a deep breath and walked towards the hut. He yelled, "Hullos?" and a young human lady emerged with a gaping mouth, "Are you alright my dear." Markham just shrugged and asked, "Wher's mes ats?" The lady standing there with an astonished look and said, "Why your at Rymec silly, where did you think you were?" Markham just shrugged and said, "Mes gos homs from hers?" The lady said, "Where is your home at?" "I's no nos," replied the ogre. The lady sighed and said, "I do not know then, but by the looks of you, I'd say you could live her with no trouble." Markham eyed her and shrugged, "Mes wunts gos homs to keel dos goblins." He growled and the lady stumbled back in fear, "Well if it's goblins you wish to kill this area has a goblin problem that you could take care of." The lady summoned an a man with a letter and said, "Give this to the one in the city looking for men to fight." The archer nodded and left immediately.

For the next few days Markham stayed with the lady and became good friends with her. Her name was Shikara. On the fifth day a man came to the hut. He was carrying a parchment and quill and looked at Shikara, "Is this the man you were speaking of?" She nodded and said, "Indeed this is Markham, he wishes to return home, but lacks the knowledge of it's whereabouts, and he has some grudge against the goblins from what I've heard. So sir, if you do see his predicament, he would be of great assistance to this army."

The man nodded, "Well I'm sure Fenwick would love his company upon the field, but he would have to undergo some training upon the island." The woman nodded, "Well whatever it is, I'm sure he'll do it." Markham just nodded looking off into nowhere. "Well I'm sure we can send him tomorrow," said the man. So the night before Shikara cooked him a fine meal and said, "So before you get all famous and well known come back and see me please. I'd love to see how you turned out." Markham just shrugged at this kind statement and said, "Mes dos."

Markham awoke the following morning to the man banging upon his chest. Markham just growled and said, "stups." "It's time to wake up sunshine, now get on the boat before I whip you to submission. Markham just laughed and rolled over. A few moments later, CRACK! Markham jumped to his feet rubbing his back, "Mes gos," he growled. He boarded the boat and leaned over the railing slowly closing his eyes as he drifted back to sleep.

Merca

Class: Fighter
Race: Troll

Merca was born on Panur, the ninth of Midnight, in the year 1,629 since the Godwar, and year 1,212 of the Empire, in a small desert tribe. Living his life out as any normal troll, he spent the time learning to survive in the desert and tending goat herds. An only child, his father taught him what he knew, the use of weapons to fend off rogue scorpions and lizards.

Tending the herds was a menial and boring task for Merca. Guiding the goats around the hostile creature and sleeping with them at night. The only benefit seen to his young mind was the

wyverns, sometimes raiding the herds for food. Wyvern hunting was among his favorite pastimes, relishing the challenge of tracking and slaying these beasts.

Different areas of the desert hold different threats, to be treated in different ways. The oasis located towards the southwestern edge was one to handle with care. With water nymphs inhabiting the area getting the goats in there thrice a week for water ending up being a continual challenge.

Traversing across all areas of the heated sands, the young troll found something many had forgotten. On one of his common forays into the forbidden areas of the pyramids, he came upon an ancient relic. Carrying it to this day, the magic container once gifted to Ta'Urag, the Honored Battler by Vrackon.

In the last year before the goblins found and enslaved the tribe, Merca came upon a scouting party. Leading the scouts was a giant talking wyvern, holding the goblins under its sway with fear, its ebony black scales and sizzling saliva filled jaws. Using the tricks of the desert Merca removed the goblins one by one, until there was only the wyvern left.

Being young and foolish Merca tackled the wyvern head on, challenging it to a battle on a sandy desert plain. Coming down to all fours, the reptile eyed him in contempt for daring challenge him. As as the battle started, Merca knew he had met his match, this wyvern was far superior to any he had fought before, using both cunning and magic.

In the end luck alone saved him, his foe disturbing a giant scorpion sleeping under the sands. Enraged at getting woken on, the scorpion drove the beast driving off to the north. Merca did not escape his foolhardy thrashing unscathed, the dragon scarring him badly. Its scar tinged from the green saliva, runs from his left ear across the front of his face down to his shoulder.

Later, to the horror of the camp, the goblins returned enforce to enslave the trolls. Being outnumbered and out skilled, the trolls never stood a chance. Merca was out scouting the red lizards, incase they were looking to hunt the herd again. Returning to find the goblin warparty throughout the burning tents, his tribe enslaved and society gone. He had no option but to venture west, surrounded by impenetrable obstacle all on other sides.

From there Merca found Rosehelm and came upon Nexus, City of All Races. Still at a loss what to do now his tribe has gone, he has made the city his home at least temporarily. Having no fondness for the goblins, holding and using his bitterness against them for destroying his life. Living now to slay the giant wyvern, learning from the Fighters Guild how to combat its claw, breath and magic.

Minsc

Class: Fighter
Race: Human

Born into a comfortable lifestyle, Minsc was bound for greatness from the moment he stepped into the world. His father was the chief advisor to the Mayor, an old man who has lived as a rule over

the small town for all of his life. His mother was a young woman that was recently married to his father, after the devastating loss of his wife, who died suddenly in the night.

As a child, Minsc spent most of his time in the presence of the local militia, fascinated by the training the soldiers underwent. With all of his time spent watching the soldiers, he started to get informal training from the soldiers during their spare time. After a while the generals took note of this, and found out who this child was. Once finding out he was the son of the Kings advisor, they began to train him in the arts of strategy and leadership.

Minsc proved to have a natural affinity for battle, and gifted in the ways of leadership. By his early teens Minsc was already in command of a small division of new recruits, and was settling skirmishes along the border. Even though he was younger by sometimes decades, his troops always gave him the respect they would any skilled leader. By his second year in command he was at such high respect that he was assigned the leader of the entire militia squad, second in command only to his father and the Mayor. Proving himself over and over, Minsc never lost a battle.

After a particular bloody and long battle, the town signed a peace treaty, throwing the city into a time of calm and relaxation. Taking advantage of this, Minsc decided to leave the city to further his training as a warrior, and a leader. He decided to go to travel the world in search of an army worthy of his skills. A few months into his travel, Minsc heard from a local drunkard, who seemed to be an x-soldier, that there was a large city that was under attack by the goblin hordes. After further inquiry, Minsc learned the location of the city, and how to get accepted into apprenticship.

Leaving immediateley for the long journey ahead of him, Minsc set out into the world alone, with only his wits and his sword, in hopes of finding this rumor to be true...

Nertz

Class: Fighter
Race: Unknown

Bursting into Trista's Tavern, Nertz greeted all her friends as they pushed bottle upon bottle of spirits into her arms. After downing one bottle, warmly hugging friends and lewdly kissing others, she started on another bottle and made her way over to a shady table in the corner.

"Allistar, how are you doing this evening?" she asked

The scribe turned and saw a warm, loving smile on Nertz's face, yet her eyes had a haunted look to them, unable to hide the horrors they have witnessed. "I am faring well. You appear to be haveing quite a nice time."

"Yes...well...after a hard day's killing, one has to unwind." Nertz turned leaned back in her chair and put her feet up on the table.

"So, I assume by your presence that The Archivist told you I was here to collect the story of your life in Nexus." Allistar rolled out his sheets and inked his quill.

"Yes, I got his message. I hope you don't mind my current condition, but it shall probably make the tale come easier."

"As long as it does not make the story more interesting", Allistar sneered.

"I fear there is no room for embellishment, as it is not a life to be proud of."

Nertz polished off the bottle and started on the next.

"My father was known as Zahnithar, one of the few drow elves who chose not to walk in the shadow, even going as far as to swear off his natural magical abilities, lest he be tempted. As a farmer before the hordes came, he lived a quiet, happy life in fields outside Nexus. He strived to help those in need and often had very little left for himself. Commonly tagged as caring and generous, he was well liked by a majority of the populace. During the first goblin attacks, his farm and lands were destroyed, so he retreated to dwell within Nexus as a produce merchant, again living a relatively quiet life. It was not so happy as before, as he was constantly tortured by the cries and torment of those returning from battle, badly wounded. He broke his promise to himself and started using his magical abilities to heal those he could, spending any extra time at the University studying to improve his spellcasting abilities."

While the pen flew furiously over the parchment, Nertz took a long drink to loosen her toungue, and to give the scribe a chance to catch up.

"After a particulary bloody battle, he was frantically patch-healing people with low-level spells so as to keep as many from dying as he could before he had to stop and recover his magical power. A team of clerics did the more complete healing behind him, praising his help in keeping the defenders of Nexus alive long enough for them to get to them. Many still died, however, and he fell into a deep, deep depression. Just as he was seriously contemplating suicide, a voice came to him: it was Tilnar, apparently during one of his more tender moments. He, from what my father told me, actually thanked him for keeping so many from entering his realm before their time. He asked my father to continue his work, and that he would see to his happiness. Then father awakened, as if from a dream, and was presented with the last survivor off the field by the now-exhausted clerics: Nert, a human barbarian. She was very close to death, yet through the horrific wounds and blood my father somehow fell instantly in love with her. Attempting to do the best healing he could, he was surprised at how completely he managed the spell. A few weeks later, they were married. He often told me he thought Tilnar had given him some extra ability and Nert as thanks for his efforts. I've often heard of Tilnar granting powers, but never mates."

Nertz chuckled a little and took another long pull off the bottle.

"Ah, parents...who knows the truth of the legends they tell of themselves. Now..."

One more sip.

"My mother was a completely different person! How she and father ever got along I'll never know. Maybe it had to do with her belief in Dilanis. She always told me that she was raised to believe that the more people believed in and prayed to Dilanis, the stronger her shade would become in Tilnar's realm. She even believed that if enough people prayed at once, that Dilanis would actually become resurrected from the very love she represented. Bah!"

Slumping back in the chair, Nertz takes yet another drink.

"She was a barbarian. Very good at damaging things. She was kinda chunky by human standards, but I guess with all those muscles, she really couldn't help it. Father used to tell me that between his slender elven form and her muscular form that I turned out pretty good. Some others tell me they agree."

Drunken giggles.

"Anyway...back to my tale..."

Allistar looked up, peering over his glasses, "So far I've heard almost nothing about you...just your parents. I am here to get your story, not your entire geneological history."

Glaring back, Nertz stated coldly, "It is very hard to understand me without understanding *who* I came from as well as *where*. I will get to myself in good time."

Another sip, and a suddenly relaxed posture.

"Ok...mother...She was one of the finest barbarians in the land, coming from far north in the mountains. Her build made many wonder if she were a small giant! She had an affinity for causing the shortest, least-painful deaths she could in battle. As one of the few remaining followers of the now-dead Dilanis, she professed love and understanding to all she met...even as she bashed them. I think she would have made a good follower for Trista, as well, as she enjoyed spirits every chance she got."

Nertz opened the next bottle, and began to reduce its contents.

"Guess THAT'S definitely a trait I inherited, huh? Anyway...she came to Nexus to help defend it against the goblin hoardes. She often led the groups that ventured outside the gates, usually coming back battered, but still alive and with plenty of loot. At the beginning of the month of darkness, she rallied with one of the largest forces ever brought to bear against the goblins. As luck would have it, the goblins had assembled their largest force that same day. Many bloody smaller battles occured in the whole of this battle, and mother was in the group against the Dragons. She could not do much but break their toes, but it was enough of a distraction to let the mages practice their deadly craft successfully. Battered and near death, she was the last one brought off the field. Apparently, she was under a dragon corpse, and was discovered by a thief searching for dropped goods. Once she was brought back to town, the clerical team had already exhausted their powers and feared they could do nothing for her. An uncharacteristically kind drow elf had cast a detraumatize spell upon her so well, that she never even bore a scar from that battle. She was so taken by his kindness, even after she had slain so many of his kind in defense of Nexus, that she

fell instantly in love with him. At least, that's what she says...I still think the gods must have had some hand in it, no two people that different fall for each other on sight!"

Allistar continued writing as Nertz tossed empty bottles into the air as practice targets for some of the more enebriated mages.

"Ok, now we finally come to me..."

Nertz opened the last bottle in her posession.

"I was born some time after the month of darkness, and my parents were a very happy couple. In their haste -- I was born between battles -- they named me Nertzanalina, a twisted, poorly thought-out combination of their names."

"It's about time", Allistar muttered under his breath.

"Oh, I loved them and my name...I didn't know any better, but that whole thing is just too hard to pronounce when you're drunk. Anyway...during slower times, father would teach me how to barter with the shop owners, so as to fetch the best price possible for an item sold. He also taught me some of his healing skills. I'm not very good at healing, but it has saved my life and others at opportune times. Mother would take me out hunting, and back when the Wildlife Preserve was still overpopulated, she would teach me how to hide and strike out, surprising an intended prey. When battles raged, they would put me in the care of Delepidous, their mutual friend at the Fighter's Guild. As a child, it was frightening to witness so many battles going on in one place. Once I realized they were all practice, it became exciting to watch as heros honed their skills. Delepidous would even train me on days when the Guild was near empty, and I began my journey as a fighter."

The last drop goes down.

"One day, a goblin batallion broke through the city gates and made their way into town square. All three of us happened to be at father's stand that day, and mother immediately joined others there in the defense. Father rushed in in an attempt to keep mother alive. The battle raged on for several minutes when a group of goblin assassins appeared. One assassin, who was much larger and better equipped than the rest motioned for the entire group to attack mother. Mother was mercilessly slashed with poisoned weapons repeatedly, and father, in a frenzied panic to save mother, was grabbed by a goblin warrior and thrown. He landed squarely on the chest of the large assassin, striking a rather intricate-looking bone amulet, and disappeared. No one has seen or heard from him to this day. Mother died within minutes as all the other healers in town were busy healing others in other parts of the city."

Tears begin to fill Nertz's eyes.

"I was about 15 then...you know...just starting to 'fill out'. A pair of soldiers bound me and took me to their camp. I was raped repeatedly. In the morning, they 'presented' me to a high-ranking battlewizard in exchange for enchanting all their armor and weapons. He treated me well enough for a goblin, I guess, but I was expected to 'perform' each and every night. The bastard even presented me as a party favor to higher ranking officers, even the ones they consider female..."

"We can continue this some other time if you wish", the scribe said, noticing a black rage burning in her eyes.

"No," she said, calming down, "I want to get all of this out of my soul...it's been eating away at me for years, now."

"Very well, but stop anytime you wish."

Another bottle materializes before Nertz. She turned and waved in thanks to a friend, skillfully faking a smile.

"As I got older, the battlewizard began to cast spells on me. I noticed that my adolescent skin would clear with each spell. I guess he liked young girls and wanted to keep me that way.. One day, he and a group of warlocks he had shared me with incanted a spell together and blasted me with a magic so painful, I shall never forget as I can still feel it -- to some degree -- to this day. I asked him what I did to deserve such torture, and he stated that it was not torture, but that he was preserving my youth forever. If I were a vain person, it would still not have been worth that amount of consuming pain."

The black fire raged again.

"One day, he was playing card games with some drow that were temporarily stationed at the camp. He bet me to a high-ranking officer and lost. The officer must have seen the drow parentage in me, for after that, I was taken to an obviously rich house of drow, and was given to a royal warrior who had just lost his wife in battle. The customs and expectations of dark-elven wifehood were flogged into me. Again, I was to 'perform' on command. I bore a son, who I have not seen but for the few seconds after he arrived into this world. He was taken away, and I was told that he was full drow, and that he should never have to suffer the shame of a half-breed mother. Apparently, he was raised by a surrogate family."

Tears streamed down Nertz's face as she guzzled more liquor. Allistar continued writing, his own eyes beginning to tear up.

"An apparently high-level exploration team from Nexus stumbled onto the drow house, and proceeded to eliminate the family. In the skirmish, I escaped to the woods and hid, moving by night, until I found the western gates of Nexus and returned. Since then, I have defended Nexus, and trained at the Fighter's Guild. Delepidous had long since died, but there were some there that remembered me and welcomed me into the guild. They were so aged by then, I barely recognized any of them. I don't know if it's my elven parentage or the spell blast that has preserved my youthful appearance, but I do notice that I don't seem to age like any of the other races here."

Nertz's pained expression faded, and the black rage was replaced with diamond-blue joy.

"The male fighters don't like to practice with me much, I guess because I have this strange knack of starting my battles with a bash between the legs with a sharp or thrust weapon. I don't know why I do that, I just do. I had and have many a good friend here. I am even engaged to a fine mage, ya know!"

She flashed her ring to the scribe.

"We had children, and then he disappeared. I dearly hope that he has not been killed!"

The haunted pain returned to her eyes.

"I would very much like to find out what happened to my son and my fiance, and maybe teach my son to be as kind and good as his grandfather, and to unite him with his sisters. I would also like to know what happened to my father, and whether or not he is still around."

"Perhaps you shall." Allistar reached across the table and took her hand. "Many wonders exist in Nexus, and even the dead have been known to come back a time or two."

Nertz hugged the scribe, tears forming again, got up, and left the tavern.

Olven

Class: Fighter
Race: Human

I was born in a small little village a long way from Nexus. The village was a quiet place and everybody was good to each other. My father, Kurik was a farmer that had retired from the armed forces. He started to teach me the basic skills of fighting at a very young age.

My mother, Lillian, was a typical small town person. She was nice and polite to everybody, both those who lived in our town and to visitors.

The years slowly passed in the town and I helped my parents out on the farm. When I was 14 years old I met a girl named Micelle and we fell in love. About 3 months after we met we got married. Then, one month after we got married something happened.

It was a cloudy day when two men came riding up to our house and wanted to speak to my father. Father had a short talk with the men's then returned to the house. He went straight up to the attic without saying a word. When he returned he was dressed in a black splintmail armor, mithril leggings and sleeves. By his side hang a big sword and around his neck he has a silver colored cloak.

He ordered me to go saddle his horse while he spoke to my mother. 10 minutes later he came out and sat up on his horse and looked straight in my eyes.

- I must leave now, my son. Now you must take care of your mother and your wife.

Then he turned his horse, nodded at the men and they rode of. Life continued after my father had left, and me, my wife and my mother kept the farm in a good state.

One morning when I was lying in my bed, my wife came in the room and laid down next to me.

- Olven, my love. She said. I have something wonderful to tell you.

- What, what? I asked curiously.

- I'm pregnant!, she exclaimed.

I was a bit stunned for a while when her words while through my brain. Then I started to laugh and we hugged for a long time.

A week later, at my 16th birthday, my mother came up to me and said that she needed some stuff from a town that was about 2 days of riding from here. So I saddled my horse, kissed my wife and rode off. I got to the town, bought the stuff and went back.

When I was about 2000 meters from my hometown I saw that something was burning. I rode as fast as I could to the town and saw something horrible. The whole town was burnt to the ground. I jumped down from my horse and ran to my house. There I saw my mother and wife sitting and holding each others hands, all bloody with a big sword trough their bodyies. I just ran back to my horse mounted it and just rode. I rode, rode and rode until I came to a small village named Rymek.

There I boarded a sloop and cane to some island. I walked up to the gates and asked a guardsman if they had any tavern with strong ale and some place to sleep. He showed me one and I bought a room there. Just as the guard was about to leave I asked him:

- What place is this?

- Its Falcion, the guard replied and walked out in the night.

Schoddo

Class: Fighter
Race: Human

"Sir?"

Commander Frederick Rhuskias turned in his chair to look at me. The light cast by the hooded lantern on his desk did little to illuminate the office, and yet I could clearly see the fatigue in my father's eyes. When he was facing me, I stood rigid and saluted. He nodded. "At ease, son," he told me. I relaxed my shoulders. The commander sat back, taking in a deep breath and crossing his hands over his lap. "What can I do for you, Schoddo?" he asked with a smile.

"I wish to give my report now, sir," I told him.

"Aye," he replied, with a wave of his hand. "Go on, then."

"My scouts have returned, sir. A goblin encampment was found forty miles south of Knoll's Meadow in the Mythwood, sir." As father listened, he looked towards the ground with a knit brow, pondering as I reported to him.

"How many were they?" he asked.

"There were reported to be over three thousand, sir."

"Three thousand..." he repeated to himself, thinking it over.

"Apparently they were putting a lot of effort into keeping their campsite concealed, sir."

He nodded. "Aye. I'd wager they're setting up for an ambush on Jostforth, then."

"They have been awfully quiet these past few years, sir," I added.

The commander then stood up. "Schoddo, return to your platoon's barracks and await my command. I am going to see the king and tell him of this predicament."

"Aye sir," I gave in reply. I turned to go, but I felt my father's hand touch my shoulder before I went. "Schoddo," he said, his voice more relaxed.

I turned to look at him. "Yes, sir?"

His voice was earnest but warm. "It is most likely that we will be going to war. That said I want you to prepare yourself, not only with your armor but with your heart as well. The goblins are a formidable enemy and it will take more than a swift blade to bring them to their knees."

I nodded in reply, and felt an involuntary smile form on my face. The expression of determination and courage that resided in my dad's perpetually youthful face would make you believe in hope even if losing was inevitable. With that, he stood up and dismissed me.

Surely enough, after hearing of the goblins and consulting with his advisors, King Karnad, the ruler over our city Jostforth, issued orders to the Dragoons to go to war. A group of scouts was sent to the encampment, and soon after they came back with the goblin's strategy. Apparently, they were to leave in a tenday towards Jostforth. Given that, my father ordered that my, Captain Hergiut's, and Captain Bontrew's men leave in a tenday to meet the goblins. Calculating their pace, we would intercept them at Knoll's Meadow within the course of five days, granted we made camp and rested every night. The days leading up to the day we were to leave were filled with both anticipation and cheer. When ten days had finally come up, there was a great celebration, and with hearts heavy but proud, the Dragoons rode off, thus embarking on the journey to finally eliminate the Goblins and the threat they imposed. On the third night en route Knoll's Meadow, I couldn't sleep and so began to stroll around the camp in assistance of the guard. As I walked by a part of the defenses, I noticed that one of my Dragoons, an introvert by the name of Paldur, had disappeared from his post. I notified a guard that I was going to search for the truant, and left the camp. After about fifteen minutes of searching, I came upon a figure bathing in a lake amidst the moon's reflection. On the banks lay Paldur's armor and tunic, so I presumed him to be the one bathing; however,

upon further inspection, I discovered that the bathing figure was no man. It was a woman!

The moment that this dawned on me, she became aware of my presence, and darted to the clothing lying on the bank. I leapt into the water and grabbed her arm as she ran past. She squirmed vigorously, but I kept my grasp. Giving her slender naked body a quick look over, it became apparent to me why Paldur never bathed with the rest of the Dragoons. I gritted my teeth and spoke to her, keeping my voice low but firm. "What the hell are you doing here? Are you trying to get yourself killed? It's dangerous around here!" I said to her.

The woman cowered as I spoke, her jaw quivering nervously and her eyes squinting pleadingly. I shook her arm to encourage her, but she only scrunched her face harder. I allowed in a moment of hesitation in the shaking, and we both stood motionless, her face turned away and my hand tightly on her arm. The authority I felt began to swell in my gut, making me feel about twenty feet taller. As I wallowed in my little ego-trip, though, she turned to me, and the expression on her face now was not that of fear as it had been just a second earlier, but of ferocity; and, before I knew what was happening, she kicked me in the gut, stunning me and throwing me into the shallow water on my back. I shook my head and lifted myself to try to regain my composure, only to be met at the neck by the point of the woman's gisarme, held steadily and confidently above my skin. Suddenly I felt like a halfling under the blade of a hungry ogre. Despite her nakedness, this mysterious woman stood with the posture of a warrior. A flame of courage and fearlessness flickered in her eye and her hand gripped her sword adeptly and without trouble.

The woman caught the pleading expression on my face, and withdrew her sword. I stood up and brushed myself off. After I was reoriented, she grabbed my arm.

"Schoddo. You speak of this to no one, you hear?" she said sternly, keeping her voice low.

I furrowed my brow. "Who are you? Why did you do this?" I inquired of the woman.

After a moment, she sighed. "In due time, Schoddo, I will tell you. But a battle awaits us, come the morn following the next, and we must put this behind us. And again," she raised her sword again, "no squealing."

I nodded in agreement, and climbed onto the bank. The woman, after pulling on her armor and again looking like a man, followed me out of the forest and back to the camp.

In the nights after that, Paldur and I would go on nightly excursions and talk to each other. We told each other of our families, our goals, and ourselves. Within this period, she answered the questions I had asked her on the night we met. Her real name was Rosilia Gartan. She came from a small, isolated village deep within the forests to the far west. She and her people lived peacefully hunting and foraging their food, until they were ambushed one day by a small band of goblin shock-troopers. The village's people took up arms, but their primitive spears and arrows were no match for the cruel swords of the goblins, and the village was soon destroyed, it's buildings burnt to the ground and it's people killed. One girl managed to escape armed, however. This girl was Rosilia. She was thirteen years old at the time, and from then forward she swore vengeance on the goblins. Two years later, after she had perfected her fighting skills, she attempted to insinuate the goblin forces from within. After she was caught and she only narrowly escaped, though, she decided she

couldn't serve as a one-woman army. She entered the city of Jostforth to renew herself and her equipment after the diversion, and while at a local tavern heard word of the Dragoons going off to war with the goblin hordes. The opportunity of fulfilling vengeance once again became possible to her. The only problem, however, was that only men were allowed into the Dragoons. So, naturally she did the only thing she could do: she bought a concealing outfit from the local tailor with what little gold she had, and enlisted in the Dragoons as a man named Paldur.

Finally, the day of the battle came. I awoke to the camp in a buzz, everyone running to and fro in preparation. After shoving down a quick breakfast, I equipped my horse and myself and assembled with the rest of the men in front of the camp. My father stepped in front of his men, and called everyone to attention. My heart swelled with pride at the sight of him. He was clad from head to toe in magnificently forged adamant armor. Despite the cloudy sky, his armor glinted radiantly as if the sun were shining right over him. His great stallion Firehair was also wearing adamant, with plates of it under his saddle and on the bridal over his head. Father removed his helm allowing his red hair to fall out and flow in the wind. With his crystal lance in his hand and the courageous expression on his face, he almost resembled a god. When all was silent, he spoke.

"Men!" he cried. "Today we go to war with the Goblin Hordes! They have threatened our people and our livelihood ever since the war of the Gods. We cannot go on without disposing of this threat, so we must now gallop in battle against them. It is unfortunate that blood must be drawn to settle this conflict but they have refused diplomacy, so inevitably we must clash blades with their warriors. So, my men, as we ride to the meadow and meet the formidable goblins, hold your heads high and carry the banners of Jostforth with pride, and we shall stand over the corpses of our enemies valiantly, not only for ourselves, but for our people!" With that, he raised his golden trumpet to his lips and let out a blast that echoed through the lands. All of the hundreds of Dragoons raised their weapons and cheered, "Long live Jostforth! Long live Jostforth!" I looked over at Rosilia (clad still as a man) and she too was cheering loudly. Our hearts joyous despite the fate approaching, the Dragoons rode off to Knoll's Meadow.

When we arrived at Knoll's Meadow, the goblins' army was assembled on the opposite side of the field as if they had been expecting us. Despite their bewilderment at this, though, the men each assembled within their platoons behind the commander quickly and without problem. There was an ominous pause as the Dragoons stood on the crest of the hill overlooking the meadow and scanning the enemy. All that was heard was the whistle of the wind passing through the trees and sweeping the armor of our men. Clouds covered the sky, and the wind became stronger. Without a word, Father raised his lance into the air, and the banners were raised in each platoon. Then, the archers stepped forward and let assail a wave of arrows into the goblins' forces. Then, Father gave a great cry, and led everyone in a frontal attack on the goblins as they defended themselves from the arrow assault. It was truly a spectacle, every Dragoon racing forward on their steeds, intent on only one thing: killing as many goblins as possible.

Fortunately, our strategy of striking when the goblins focused on the arrows worked. We caught the goblins off-guard, thus reducing their defense and making them twice as vulnerable to our attacks. However, some goblins were quick enough to erect pikes as we attacked. My steed was, unfortunately one of the horses caught and killed by a pike. Acting as quickly as I could, I tossed away my lance, jumped forward over the mane of my steed, and drew my bastard sword from my

belt. I slashed as I landed, successfully killing two goblins in the process. From there, the battle raged horribly, all sense of unity or order lost as every man fought by his own accord. Father caught many a goblin upon his lance as he leapt through the battle. I saw Rosilia, who's horse had also been taken by a pike, in battle with two large goblin troopers. One got a successful slash at her from behind with his axe in her helm. Fortunately, the helm absorbed the entire hit, which destroyed the helm but left Rosilia unhurt. The helm then split in two, falling off of her head and allowing her golden hair to flow out and over her shoulders. The goblins stood bewildered, at which point Rosilia impaled the goblin behind her with her spear, caught his axe as he fell, and swiftly beheaded the goblin in front of her with it.

The battle lasted for hours. During the fight, the clouds darkened and rain poured down, washing our blood from our wounds and rusting our swords. The goblins were stronger than we had anticipated, and many of our men were killed alongside theirs. In fact, by the time the few goblins left retreated with their tails between their legs, all that was left of the Dragoons were me, Rosilia, Father, and forty one other Dragoons. Everyone was wounded, and several had lost arms and legs. Only seven horses were still alive, and these horses were used to carry the wounded back to the camp.

For two weeks we stayed at the camp, however this time we were twice as vigilant, given our weakness from the battle. We had won, and yet our losses still lay heavy on our hearts. The amputees soon bled to death, leaving our company with even less than before; however, those without permanent injuries were soon back on their feet and able again to carry their swords. Those who were not healing or being healed assisted my father and I digging a mass grave and burying our dead brothers. After all had been buried and a ceremony was held, we packed up camp and headed home.

When we approached Jostforth, we heard great commotion from within the walls. We expected it to be from a celebration to commemorate our victory, but as we neared the gates, we saw what the activity really was about: the goblins had invaded the city. I stood gawking at the city in shock. Then, I buried my face in my hands. "Of course! The goblins attacked the meadow to lure us away as they claimed the city! How could I have been so stupid?" I wailed. My father rode up beside me, and lifted my face to look at him. "Schoddo!" he commanded. "Our city is under attack! This is no time to be scolding yourself!" Wiping away my tears, I nodded, and we led the Dragoons into the city.

The city was in shambles. Every building was either burnt to the ground or burning. The dead citizens covered the streets, and blood covered the ground. Goblins swarmed through every which way, either torching the buildings or murdering the townspeople. The guards tried desperately to hold them off but the goblins' number was too great. The Dragoons immediately poured into the city and began disposing of the goblins. Father turned to Rosilia and I and yelled, "Schoddo, you check the upper city for survivors, and Rosilia, you check the lower city! I'll be holding off their champions in the town square!" With that, he rode off. Rosilia turned to me. "Good luck," she whispered. She removed my helm, kissed my quickly on the cheek, and rode off to fulfill her duty. I stood swooning for several seconds, but I quickly snapped out of it and galloped swiftly off to the upper city.

The upper city was a wreck. Dead bodies lay scattered atop each other amidst the charred buildings, though none were currently burning. Evidently, the goblins had eliminated of this sector first. After a thorough check of the area, I sped back to the lower city. Contrary to the upper sector, fire blazed fresh here, and goblins were all over the place. When I found Rosilia she was in a fight with a shocktrooper who was holding two children hostage. I galloped up behind the trooper and disposed of his head. Rosilia flashed a smile to me as she lifted the children onto her horse. Farther down the street, I spotted several Dragoons fighting a band of scouts they had caught sneaking through the alleys. I galloped in to assist them. I beheaded an assassin that was trying to backstab a Dragoon who was fending off two other scouts. When I wasn't looking, however, a deathguard cast a blindness spell on me, and a battlemage used telekinesis to throw me off my mount. As I lay stunned from the fall and shaking my head blindly, I felt the body of a goblin lean over me. He giggled maliciously, and I thought I was going to pass out from the rancid breath he omitted from his lips. Suddenly, I heard a staccato squeal as a warm fluid splashed onto my face, and the weight of his body toppled onto me. The body was lifted from me, and a hot liquid was poured into my eyes. It stung like hell, and I screamed in pain, but afterward I noticed my eyesight had come back. Before I could thank the Dragoon who had done this, he became occupied with several more goblins. After we had slain these goblins, Rosilia, myself, and the other Dragoons near us went to the town square.

The town square was a center of activity. Amidst twenty mounted goblin champions, all wielding great hammers and spears was my father on his faithful stallion Firehair. He leapt to and fro, jousting the champions one by one with his mighty lance. The Dragoons joined the fight, finishing off the jousted champions and helping slay those still on their mounts. As we fought, we warded the champions away from the square and into the streets. Suddenly, the goblins stopped fighting and looked skyward. In the sky, looming over the city was a behemoth black dragon. He spread his massive wings and blanketed the night sky. He was truly a spectacle to behold. The dragon let out a mighty roar that shook the ground beneath our feet. As we continued battling the goblins, he let forth a great belch of fire upon my father. Father held forth his shield, though, and the flames split wielding him no harm. The dragon then swooped down at Father and took him and his horse in his mouth. He then flew high into the sky over the city. The dragon swallowed Firehair whole, but Father was able to scramble out of the dragon's mouth before he could be swallowed as well. He climbed onto the dragon's head and stabbed him in the eye with his lance. The dragon tossed his head, bellowing an earth-shattering scream as black blood squirted out of his eye. Father was knocked off of his feet but grasped the dragon's fangs before he fell. He then climbed into the dragon's mouth and stood the lance upright in it's mouth before it could close on him. This angered the dragon greatly. As Father unsheathed his sword and started slashing away at the dragon's mouth, he let forth a great flame that engulfed my father whole. When the flames settled, the dragon spat out the ashes that had once been the great Commander Frederick Rhuskias, leader of the Dragoons of Jostforth, and my father. The warrior that had looked like a god on his mighty stallion just two weeks earlier had now been transformed to a mere pile of ashes before my very eyes.

I slew the champion with whom I was combating and sprinted to the square, looking up at the mighty black dragon as it levitated in the sky above me. I picked up a spear from the ground, and in a rage blinded by tears and hatred, I threw the spear with a sudden onslaught of strength aimed directly at the dragon's heart. The spear hit right in the dragon's chest. The dragon let out another

great scream of angquish that echoed across Altin, and fell in a limp spiral to the ground. I fled the square just as the dragon hit the square. The drop shook the entire city, causing several buildings to collapse and knocking every Dragoon, horse and goblin off his feet. The goblins then grabbed all the surviving townspeople and fled the city before the Dragoons were able to regain their composure again. I then fell to my knees and sobbed. Whether it was for my father, my city, or the slain Dragoons, I don't know. Whatever it was, though, my crying didn't cease, not for the hour after the dragon's demise that we stayed in the city gathering supplies, not for the ride southward toward the goblin encampment, and not for the time that it took to set up camp with our feeble equipment. And, by the red eyes of Rosilia and the whimpers I heard throughout the night from the other men, I could tell that I was not the only one who cried myself to sleep that night.

The next morning, the nine remaining Dragoons, Rosilia and I sat around a small bonfire tending to our ruined armor and broken weapons and eating a meager breakfast of cornmeal. We had just finished burying all over our dead citizens and Dragoons, and spirits were not high. One man, a captain by the name of Hergiut, spoke to break the pending silence.

"The mighty city of Jostforth is now a ruin, our people have been decimated and taken hostage, and us still remaining are left with broken equipment and meager supplies," he said quietly. "Now, all that is left for us to do is sit back and slowly wither away into Void." He then buried his face in his hands and wept. The other men also began to murmur and weep to themselves at this somber revelation. I could almost feel the hope leave these men and escape us under our feet. I looked over at Rosilia. The expression on her face wasn't one of sadness, though, but one of anger at the crying men. Suddenly she stood up, dropping her breastplate on the ground. All the men stopped and looked up at her. "Look at all of you!" she cried. "You call yourselves men?" She motioned an arm to scan the camp. "So what if we lost all but two of our horses? So what if all we have for cover are rags atop sticks? So what if our food will only last us a day or two? This situation is something at which peasants and noblemen cry at, not warriors! We are Dragoons! Our city must be avenged, so avenge it we must. If that means that we have to fight the goblins with clubs of wood and stones, then we will do just that! We can survive this, men. How can we give up with a vengeance unfulfilled?" She stuck her hand out, and suddenly pushed the side of her knife against her palm. Her eyes darted up and she looked from man to man. "Take your blades men, and swear on your blood that we will avenge our people!" she commanded. I stood up, and the rest of the men followed. I withdraw my knife and pressed the blade against my palm. Raising my hands into the air, I cried, "Long live Jostforth!" and with that sliced deftly, drawing a stream of blood out of my hand. Rosilia smiled at me, and raised her hands. "Long live Jostforth!" she cried, and she too cut her hand. The rest of the men then did the same, and together our fists rose into the sky, blood dripping freely into the bonfire below us. Then, with hope anew shimmering in our eyes, we set to work preparing ourselves for what was to come.

I was sixteen at the time, and for the next year we survived as nomads. We hunted with self-fashioned bows and spears. We foraged any fruits we could find. Our mail soon broke, so the hides we wrapped ourselves in became our armor. Having to hunt for our food built our battle skills three times as much as they ever did when I trained in the city, so our little traveling band of warriors became quite the formidable bunch. Our original plan was to travel southward and insinuate the goblin forces within their encampment, but as we soon found out, they had left the camp in the Mythwood and gone back to their kingdom. So, without any knowledge of where to go, we began to

wander the lands, searching for any information on the goblins' location.

Rosilia and I together were accepted as the leaders of the new Dragoons, without any prejudice from the men about Rosilia being a woman. As we traveled, Rosilia and I fell in love with each other. At the end of the year, I couldn't take my temptation any longer, and I asked her to marry me. She accepted almost immediately, and we promised that the next city we came to, we would have a priest marry us.

Unfortunately, this day never came. The following week, goblin troopers ambushed our camp. We were able to hold them off for a while, but their numbers grew to almost four times that of ours. I couldn't remember much of the battle, though, because as I was fending off several shocktroopers, one snuck up from behind me and knocked me unconscious with a sap. When I reawakened, I lay in the ruins of our camp, with all the rest of the men sprawled dead around me. Apparently the goblins had thought they killed me, so left me in the camp. Then, I noticed something: Rosilia wasn't among the dead men. Had the goblins taken her back with them? My ears picked up a bit of noise from outside the camp. I peered out, and I saw that a few goblins were still making their way away from the camp. I grabbed my spear and followed them, keeping to the shadows.

The goblin camp was in some great ceremony when I snuck in. All the goblins were in a circle around some a bonfire, and eerie chanting arose from the circle. I climbed a tree to get a better look at what was going on. To my horror, in the center of the circle, atop an altar in front of the bonfire was Rosilia, naked and wriggling desperately. A chieftain, adorned in a huge, ugly headdress, was holding onto her with one hand and grasping a large bone knife in the other. An evil laugh came from his lips as she screamed. She turned her head to look desperately around, and she spotted me in the tree. Suddenly, all around me seemed to disappear, and it was just Rosilia and I in an empty, white void. She looked at me, her eyes in a swoon, and whispered with the last of her strength, "Schoddo...avenge my people, avenge Jostforth, and most of all avenge the Dragoons...I wish I could be there with you, but it seems all so futile now...don't lose hope, even without me Schoddo..." I pleaded with her, begging her not to go, but she pressed a finger to my lips. "Don't speak, Schoddo... Fate has a funny way of...doing things. If this is how she wants it, then this is how it will be... Schoddo, go and bring vengeance to the goblins...and know always...that I love you." With that, she sputtered, her eyes rolled back into her head, and she keeled over dead. The void disappeared, and once again goblins surrounded Rosilia as her naked body rolled onto the ground, blood pulsating from her throat. Warm tears flowed down my face, and my mind became a cyclone of thoughts. My fury overcame me, and I lost all conscious control of myself. I gripped my spear and, with a great cry, leapt from the tree and down upon the chieftain, impaling him on my spear. The goblins started running to and fro in their confusion. I impaled one goblin from behind and stole his scimitar as he fell. I then chased every goblin and beheaded each one by one. Their blood splattered on my face, and I enjoyed it. I truly felt I had succumbed to insanity, but I didn't care. I didn't stop until every goblin was dead. One last goblin that was left broke my scimitar with his axe, but when he saw the fury in my eyes after he did so, he started to flee. I grabbed a staff as I ran and stuck in front of the goblin, tripping him flat on his face. I caught his axe as he fell, stood over him, and hacked like I madman, not satisfied until he was a bloody mess. My anger then left me, and I dropped the axe, huffing my breath. I then ran over to Rosilia's body on the altar. I lifted the body, and shook her as if trying to wake her. After I was sure that she was indeed dead, I placed my cheek against hers, and wept.

Snow began to fall from the sky, covering the bodies of the goblins and their camp. The world was silent, cold, and cruel. Every friend and family that I had ever had was dead, and now the one who I was supposed to spend the rest of my life with lay cold and lifeless in my hands. I stood up, and was about to shove the chieftain's knife into my chest and end it all, when I remembered Rosilia's words: "Avenge my people, avenge Jostforth, and avenge the Dragoons..." She was right. I was the only survivor of it all, so now it was my duty and mine alone to bring vengeance for everyone slain. I couldn't kill myself with so much to still do. The dagger fell from my shivering hands, and, with a heavy heart, I salvaged materials from the mess around me. The only usable weapon I found was a shoddy lead flail, and I was not able to disengage any of the armor from the bodies of the goblins. So, with a crappy weapon and only rags covering my hide, I left the camp with no certainty whatsoever of what was to become of me.

That was on the twenty-eighth of Icedrake in the year 1626 since the Godswar, my seventeenth birthday. A year later on the same date, I arrived in the city of Nexus after much aimless wandering. I heard of the contempt for goblins they had there as well, and so I decided to join their forces and help them in their fight. I enlisted in the fighter's guild, and was sent to Falcion for my training. I became learned in many things, telepathy probably being the most prominent. My life once again was back on track.

When I entered this city, I planned to use it solely for bringing revenge to the goblins. However, as I became more and more attached to the city, it became more than a flunky. It became my home, and its citizens, my friends. Many of my better friends (Bomp included) committed suicide while in the city, but my obligation to the city is what sort of kept me from killing myself as well. But now here I am, with not only reprisal to meet, but also a city and a people to protect as well.

Siegfried

Class: Fighter
Race: Half-Giant

Fatherly figures were missing in Siegfried's life. His father was a Sergeant in the war away from the East Gates. His father's name was Dallien and his mother's name was Mayana. They met in the harbor of Rymek. There they spent many dates eating, and finally his father proposed to her and she accepted.

Later on after the wedding Dallien had to do an exploration mission for Nexus. He had to head down in the underworld where he found the perfect place for a house. He brought Mayana down to see the spot and she approved of the location. Dallien then started building the house and made it into a three-roomed house. Then in a few years a child would bless them by the name of Siegfried Kashanu. Fenwick called Dallien into war when Siegfried was two.

His mother got frustrated because the war was going on for ages. She finally gave up, turned to Siegfried and said "I a™m sorry son, but I€am going to have to leave your father and you because well ... I cannot live like this supporting such a big boy. I hope you can understand...". She then

took her stuff and left the house. This is the only thing Siegfried could remember his parents telling him besides the mail he was receiving from his father.

Siegfried then decided to train his strengths and weaknesses so he could join his father in the war. Siegfried met many friends in his journeys, but one stood out. Her name was Lanya. They became close friends and finally he proposed to her. She accepted with a warm smile and joyful hug, but a few years later she left without a note or a goodbye. This was a major crisis for Siegfried. He started moping around the city of Nexus until he met Gryphon one day. His father told him about Gryphon and the Goodman that he is through the mail he was receiving. Gryphon gave him a mentorish speech, which shook Siegfried mentally. Siegfried then met up with Rhelton who joins him in journey for power. Rhelton was like Siegfried in many ways except for the fact that he was not going to join the army at war instead he was going to avenge his parents deaths. Siegfried invites Rhelton to stay with him in his house, which Rhelton honorably accepts, and their they make strategic plans to find and slay some big beasts to enable them to train, thus able to take their place in Nexus more quickly. They end up being welcomed into the city of Nexus as citizens and honored.

Starfire

Class: Fighter
Race: Human

There once was a small and peaceful island in the Sea of Tears called Cleaos. Cleaosinhabitants believed in communication, and fighting was abolished before anyone of them could remembered. They did not follow any god since they were afraid that the gods enemy would send his followers to attack them. Trading was their way to survive, and it kept them neutral in the wars between the good and evil. They lived as merchants, and that was all that they will ever be.

Then, one day, a child was born with the symbol of the Fighter guild on the back of the babys neck. The whole island was shocked and thought it was an omen that this child bears the symbol of what they hated most. The child's parents treated him well, because they thought of him as being the protector of the island, but the rest of the inhabitants treat him lower than dirt. They pushed him around and he always get the hardest task available.

The child hated his tasks, but he always did them to show to the rest of the inhabitants that he deserved some respect. Little that he know that the hard tasks that he performed made him better, stronger, and tougher than the rest of the island's inhabitants. The work put him in physical shape to be a fighter like he was meant to be. So the child grew up to be bigger, stronger, and he was hated even more.

One day, on the child's 16th birthday, the child walking to the his hide out by the shores to get a little rest, and be left alone by the rest of the inhabitants, he found a man laying on the beach, unconscious. His wounds were severe, but the child manages to bandaged the stranger's wounds and brought the man into his hide out safely. He brought the stranger food and water each day.

Two days later, the stranger rise from his deep sleep and saw the young child that saved him. At first, through his week eyes, the man thought he saw a guardian smiling above him, but as his vision got better, he saw the rough face of the young child and he said, "Starfire," and then the man lost conscious again. The child thought the man was talking to him and thought it as strange, but it was the first time that the child got called by something not along the line of dirtball, he even kind of like the name, better than the one his parents gave him, which reminds him of the island and its inhabitants. Therefor, the child adopts it as his own name.

When the man was strong enough to speak, he told Starfire his story and how he ended up on Cleaos. He was a fighter from the nexus who had wondered away with a from the city to scout the area south of the Nexus. He came upon a large party of goblins and ran for his life. He managed to make it to the waters and swim away. He had heard of an island of peaceful people nearby, and although they did not like fighters, it was his best shot. He managed to reach the shores of the island, but he was too tired and injured so he passed out. He did not know the fate of his companion, Starfire, and the reason he said Starfire when he came out of his coma was that the child reminds him of his companion who also was a fighter.

Hearing his story, Starfire asked him about the Nexus itself, and what it was like. The man answered with great pride and said that the Nexus was a place of peace, where all classes were treated equally and although it have its problems, the Nexus was the center of the known world. Starfire listened closely imagining how one day he would be able to live normally, among people who could appreciates him.

After thanking Starfire carefully, the fighter walked out of the room hoping to find a way back to the Nexus. Just when he passed Starfire, for the first time, he noticed the symbol of the Fighter guild on the back of Starfires neck. So, he decided to stay and teach Starfire the way of the fighter guild.

After two years of vigorous training, Starfire was ready to become a true fighter on his 18th birthday. By this time, the island have hated him so much plotted a way to get him off of the island to save them from chaos that they thought Starfire was going to bring. They set up a meeting, in which they asked Starfire to help them by representing the island and go to the port at the Sea of Tears and tell the mayor that they are willing to make a deal for a very large trade. At first, Starfire was reluctant to leave his family, but when his mentor, the fighter reveal his feelings of wanting to go home, Starfire finally decided to help his mentor and took the task.

As soon as he and his mentor got on the ship, the island started to party and celebrate what they had accomplished. Little did they know that the goblins have learned that the only ones capable of fighting have left, and the goblins have begun to board the island. By the time they realize that the goblins were present, it was too late, mass murder was in progress.

On his ship, Starfire noticed a strange figures on the shores of Cleaos and pointed it out to his mentor. They immediately turned around, and head back for the island. By the time they got to the goblins, they discovered that only a few goblins remain, the rest had took off with all the goods of the island. The remaining goblins stayed to kill the rest of the inhabitants. Together, Starfire and his mentor killed the remaining goblins one by one. Starfire and his mentor rushed back to his

home to check on Starfires parents. They stood in front of the door and saw the bodies in front on the house. Starfire checked each and everyone of the bodies and did not find his parents.

Then suddenly, a goblin assassin stepped out of the shadows behind the mentor and backstabbed him. The mentor let out a loud cry as he sinks to his knees, but he managed to pull out a wand a zapped the goblin with a large fireball. Starfire jumped up, grabbed the sword that his mentor drop, bashed the assassin to the ground and then he swung a full swing at the goblin and hit him in the lower abdomen. The goblin responded by slashing his knife pass Starfires arms, letting knife to taste the young fighters blood. Starfire grabbed the sword with his other hand and slashed the assassin across the face. The goblin let out a terrible scream and fell to his knees. Starfire quickly finished the goblin up with a cut across the assassins neck. The head of the goblin fell down on to the floor beside his body. Starfire quickly tried to bandage the mentor, but the mentor stopped him. "It is too late for me," he said, "the Nexus is your only hope." With that, the mentor eyes closed and he died. Starfire closed his eyes for a few seconds and remained silenced, he sighed and then stood up and continue to search for his parents. They were laying on the ground by the sofa in his house, dead. Starfire walked out of the house with a determined look on his face. He picked up his mentor and put him in a boat, then he took all he could get off of the goblins, and he got into the boat himself. He was determined to get to the Nexus and return the mentor to his home.

"The island got what they deserved, all their goods were gone, they will suffer for their mistakes," Starfire thought as he dock his ship into the bay. He made his way through many goblins and finally reached the Nexus. In here, he would be treated equally, and so in the Nexus, he remained ever since. He helped fought off the goblin hoards that plague the city, he done many deeds, and although he faced many hardships, the Nexus was closest thing to a home that he knows. He follows the tradition of not following a god, but not because he was afraid, because he kills anything hostile, but some hostile creatures are good, and some are evil. His alignment keep changing back and forth, and the gods would not accept him as their follower. He never returned to Cleaos again, he did not know what happens to his people, and he did not care. He try to forget everything that happened before his arrival at the Nexus.

Stomre

Class: Fighter
Race: Troll

The darkness cleared from her eyes, and she was able to look around. The last she remembered was her mother putting her into the secret floor area and then something knocking her head. Stomre shook the dreariness from her throbbing head. She studied her surroundings. The area looked familiar in the gloom. This was still the secret area she was put into. Visions flashed in her head and she once again lived the horror of what took place before she was knocked out.

Her family lived in the foot-hills of the Crystal Mountains, though over- run many years before, they refused to leave their home. Her parents', Toran and Gruna, generations had all come from the

same area and as one might note, trolls are stubborn to make even a dwarf seem easy to please. Her family lived in a small alcove and was sheltered by tall pine trees. The reason the goblins did not see the tiny moot in the first place was the small patch of pines.

Stomre's family lived with two other families in the alcove and enjoyed the peace of each others' company in the time of darkness for the Crystal Mountain Moot which was over-run by the goblin hoardes. They staged skirmishes daily to keep the goblins in disorder and to take any needed supplies the goblins carried. On this day however a goblin party made up of two strikers and three scouts tracked the trolls back to their tiny moot and later brought down an ambush to end the trolls' habitation of the alcove. Stomre was now at the age of ten and could hold her own when her brothers tried to gang up on her though she never dreamed she would have to grow up so soon. She first saw the goblins when they attacked and was able to sound an alarm. However, the mature trolls were battle weary and most were slaughtered in such a swift manner Stomre's mother was barely able to grab Stomre and bring her to safety. And as she was closing the chamber Stomre was in, a great amount of the stone wall broke lose, from an explosion, and struck her mother down and knocked the trapdoor down upon Stomre's head.

Stomre managed to open the trapdoor and her nostrils were filled with stench and she quickly became nauseated and vomitted many times before able to continue her way to the outside. The sun had just risen over the horizon when she fianlly made her journey to the outside. There she saw many horrors which made her make cry many a tear. Her mother and father as well as the others had been quartered. Their heads were put up on voulges to be an example of the power of the hoardes.

She took the rest of the day amassing the bodies into a great pile. Then she gathered together a number of supplies she would need for the journey to Nexus. She knew she would find help there, and possibly make her way into a guild so she could get the training she needed to get back at the goblins.

When she was ready to go she lit the bodies afire and made her way up the hill to skirt the rim. She knew the fire would attract attention and maybe her parents would protect her once more as she started her journey. With her family lost, she needed new hope and the journey might give her something to keep her mind off her misfortunes. But one day she would return to the alcove and reclaim her right to grounds which her family lived in for so long. She swore this upon her familie's honor.

Upon arriving in Nexus Stomre quickly found her mark in the fighter's guild. She practiced everyday on the pole weapon, the same which her parents were slayed with. The weapons would be a constant drive and reminder of what the goblins took from her. The training took a good seven years. And not long after she entered to town of Falcion to complete her basics in weaponry did she find another goal in her life. The need to reproduce, to procreate and bring many fine trolls up into the world to populate the land which would be hers one day again. The land which would be free for all trolls to come and live in peace under their own will.

Stomre found the name Drizzlegore to be the possible entity who killed her family. She made friends with a sea sprite named Alura who told her of Zindra and Zindra's ever going struggle to

find Drizzlegore. It was Alura who showed Stomre the wonderful scents of honeysuckle and who showed her how to keep herself to be attractive to trolls. Stomre hopes to be part of the sisterhood which Alura is part of as well as her friend Zindra.

And yet in the back of her mind she still has flashbacks of the horrors which overtook her so many years ago. Stomre tried to get away from the world when she goes into one her depression fits. She will sometimes go to great lengths to fight by herself so as not to hurt anyone who might be her friend. She values her friends over anything else, after all, they are her family.

Sulak

Class: Fighter
Race: Orc

Looking up from his writing, Sulak notices the tent flap pushed aside by a Rasha'an's hand. His eyes narrow slightly as he looks the thin scribe up and down. Placing the quill back in the ink jar he sprinkles some sand atop his writing to prevent smudging. Rolling up the parchment, he drops some red wax from a candle on the edge, and seals it with the signet of the Ka'ol Rasha. He then hands it to the attendant waiting for the scroll. With a quick wish of fair travels he sends the messenger off. His task at hand completed, he turns to the patiently waiting scribe.

"I suppose you are here to take down my history then?" he asks only slightly annoyed at the interruption in his daily routine. Standing up he motions for the scribe to take a seat. Walking to a desk in the corner of the small tent, he pours two glasses of chilled fruit punch. Returning he hands one cup to the scribe and takes a sip from his other. Leaning against his desk his gaze settles once more on the woman who has come for his interview. Young, she could not have been any older then himself, a mere 20 years of age, prime of life by human standards, well into being middle-aged by orcish. Dressed simply, she hooked a lock of brown hair behind her ear while looking down at her notepad.

Eventually she looks up at him. "I am Breandra, I am the scribe appointed to recording your history. It seems my superiors like having me interview your kind." Grinning to herself she flips open her notepad and gazes up at Sulak, which he patiently returns in kind.

In time Breandra asks, "Well, are you going to start talking, or must I return empty handed? I'm sure those above me would not be happy, and thus, nor would I, so if you would please, start at your leisure." She then places a piece of wood sharpened at the end to the paper and waits.

Muttering to himself, Sulak walks around the desk back to his chair and sits down. "I had thought you usually asked the questions you wanted to know, rather then the vague 'Tell me your life' routine." Leaning back in his chair, he takes a sip of his punch and waits for a reply.

"I found out the hard way it's better to think carefully before questioning someone, you may end up spoiling it all if you don't think before you act. Now, Since you seem to not exactly be the talkative type, I'll ask-you answer. Simple enough." With that she pulls out a separate sheet of paper with

some writing on. Noticing Sulak's inquisitive look she quips, "Standard issue questions. Birthplace, parents, name, age, etc. etc...

"So first, your name?"

"Sulak," he evenly replies.

Coolly lifting an eyebrow she asks, "Just Sulak, nothing else?"

"Unless you want my title as well."

"That will be fine."

"Sulak, Knight of the Ka'ol Rasha"

"Thank you," jotting this down she looks up again. "Okay, age?"

"20 years old."

"Place of birth?"

"I wouldn't know."

Startled slightly, her eyes are drawn up from the paper at the orc before. "Why do you say that?" she inquires of him.

"Because I don't know. Simple as that. Can't answer a question I don't know the answer to," taking another draw of his punch, he calmly watches the scribe, wondering at her calm demeanor and seeing if he could rise her ire. A thing he did every now and then with people he just met, a testing of sort, seeing how well a person can control there emotions, in control of yourself lies power, or so Sulak thought.

"Well, if you could explain this to me maybe? Why don't you know your place of origin?"

"I washed up on shore of Falcion maybe 5 years ago. All I had was a piece of paper with writing on it that told me my name, an empty scabbard on my back, and a pouch with a bit of money in it. I shook myself off and walked forward. No clue of my past or what have you, I just went forward." Shrugging to himself Sulak stood once more to refill his cup. Motioning to Breandra to see if she wanted a refill she shook her head and motioned to her still nearly full cup.

"Well then," she said, "I suppose I can rule out knowledge of parents or family members." Quickly writing in her notebook, she suddenly made a vexed sound after a loud snapping noise reached Sulak's ears. Turning to look at her, he saw that the tip of her stick of wood had broken.

"Would you like to use my quill and ink to continue?" he asked her as politely as possible, trying to keep annoyance from being kept from his forms out of his voice. He HAD agreed to do this interview, if grudgingly.

Nodding she accepts gracefully the ink well and the crow feather quill. Applying it to paper once more she continues scribbling notes, this time accompanied by a loud scratching noise of the quill pressing against the paper.

"Well, what drove you to join the ranks of apprentices on Falcion. I'm sure you could have done something else. Surely a life less demanding then this one, or maybe a life more pleasant." Her poise was once more regained. She wouldn't slip again, of that she was positive. So what if this rather tall man seemed to be peeling her skull back with his intense brown eyes. She would not loose her decorum again.

Turning slightly so his side face her, he looked out of a makeshift window of the tent. "I wasn't quite sure of that myself really. I figured maybe I'd have better luck finding out my past by taking part in something that was surely a large part of the future. Besides, I heard of the terror and horror the hoards have brought upon so much of the world. I've done what I can to help ease that some," his eye's crept their way back to hers, and with a grin he added, "That and I love the sword. More then anything I can think of."

Blinking, Breandra bites her lower lip thinking quickly, writes something on her notepad then looks up once more. "What do you mean 'the sword'? And what about it is so great that it is a driving factor in your life?"

Chuckling slightly to himself, a deep rumbling in his baritone chest, Sulak shakes his head as he sits down again. For such a large man, and in a considerably small tent, he paced enough and made quite a good amount of use of the space it did offer. "Well by 'the sword'," the quotes were audible, "I mean, using the sword." Seeing her frown, he shakes his head. "No, no, no. Not for killing or anything like that. Using the sword properly, is like an art form. Watch the goblin blademasters, or even Gryphon. They do things with the sword that are unheard of. It is like a dance when two masters duel, though an often deadly dance. Still, it is beautiful, and using the sword is being one with it, with life. When you are with the sword, you are aware of all. Time slows." With a brilliant light in his eyes, Sulak shrugs as he leans back, slightly perturbed by his failure to articulate well enough the glory of what he felt.

"I practice with the sword daily. Every chance I get when I'm not fighting the hoards with nexus of with the Ka'ol Rasha, or whatever I may have to be occupied with at the time. It is one of the few things in this life that bring me pleasure." Blinking suddenly, as if just realizing he had said so much he took a long swallow from his goblet. Sighing, he leans back in his chair once more and carefully scrutinizes the young woman before him. Head down with a lock of hair fallen forward unnoticed, she furiously worked the quill at the paper, writing all down that she thought would be of need later. Quite an attractive woman.

Shocked by his own thoughts, Sulak shakes his head and takes another deep drag of his punch. Thinking about a woman's looks when he was busy with other matters. A woman who was here merely to record at that! Foolish at best. Berating himself, he calmly waited for her to finish and to ask her next question.

At last nodding her satisfaction she looks up and says lightly, "Maybe I was wrong about you not being the talkative type." Grinning mischievously, she flipped to the next page. "Well, we're on current times now it seems. Aren't you relieved?" the last added as she heard his deep sigh. "What about the Ka'ol Rasha? How did you come to join them and tell me a little bit about a life as a 'Rasha'an'."

Nodding to himself, Sulak started to speak once more. "Well, I heard of Fflarn's attempt to gather warrior who would die to protect others at all costs. Apparently it was a remaking of some old orcish group he had heard of while young or some such, called the Ka'ol Rasha, or Red Shield, though, I'm sure you know this already, considering you interviewed him." Grinning at the quick flash of shock on her face, he decided not to let her know he had asked for her in specific if he was to agree to be interviewed. "As I was saying, I went to him. I considered myself here to defend the people, and if it helped find my past in the process all the merrier. Besides I felt as if I should belong to something more. Something more then just a guild of fighters. Fflarn offered me that chance." Shrugging as if that was just an average, every-day thing, to talk of offering one's self to death on an regular basis.

"But, life as a Rasha'an is hard. It's quite fulfilling, but hard. There is no true command or lead. Ideas are proposed and listened to. Bad ones rejected, good ones accepted and implemented when possible. Of course, there is some, well, "reverence" to those who would be considered the modern "elders" of the Shield." Scoffing to himself to show how much he might have appreciated any of this "reverence" he buried his face in his punch cup.

"And of your future? What do you plan to do from here? Any hopes? Dreams? Wishes? Anything you wish to record for future generations to know?"

"I plan to fight. Until my last breath and until I have saved everyone I can. My hopes and dreams are my own to keep I think, but it is probably fairly obvious I wish to regain my lost past." Leaning forward to emphasize his point, Sulak says in a mild, yet deep and penetrating voice, "As for future generations, study the past. Don't repeat the same mistakes we did. If there will even be a future generation to receive this. By the gods, I hope there will be."

Leaning back once more, he smiles warmly at Breandra, his tusks no longer an unsettling sight to her. "Well, I think that about wraps it up."

Breandra nods agreement and gathers up her things. "Thank you for your time Knight of the Red Shield. We will record your story to the best of our ability. If lucky, we may even post it for others to read in the library." Flashing him a brilliant smile of straight, white teeth, she turns and leaves out the tent flap that was opened by a Rasha'an for her once more.

Sulak was left gazing at the tent flap for quite a while after Breandra's departure. Quite an attractive woman indeed, and smart. Definitely smart. Shaking his head ruefully, he grins at himself and his foolishness to believe that a young girl such as her would ever find interest in an orc like him. Sulak firms himself and gets back to writing placement of troops around the city. With Fflarn absent it seemed as if his workload was doubled. A trouble, but a necessary one that had to be done. In time a squire came in and lit some candles, Sulak never even noticed the difference.

Uthar

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

-This large scroll has not been written by Uthar but does not contain the name of its author-

The scroll reads:

Uthar refuses to tell anyone where he was born or the names of his parents, he believes in doing so he would be endangering their home and lives. He also keeps his family name a closely guarded secret. The only item perhaps hinting at his origin is a tarnished silver signet ring, which never leaves his person. What Uthar shares about his history is expressed in a factual and very to the point manner. Uthar has an obvious distrust in complex words. He no doubt understands a large number of complex words perfectly and has an unthinkably quick intellect (Which he generally conceals) considering his race but operates on the pretence that people who use nothing but large words generally seek only to hide their truths, camouflaging them among their lengthy explanations and complicated vocabulary.

Uthar had originally planned to become a Ranger. He had spent his life living outdoors and had no plans to live anywhere else. He understood nature; he experienced nothing but pure reality each and every day. His remarkable ability with blades is obviously due to the unparalleled expertise of the weapon trainers and tutors provided by the Guild of Fighters, of which he belongs. However Uthar believes Nature was his chief tutor. Uthar mimics the actions of great predators and spends a great deal of time examining their behaviour and hunting strategies. Uthar made his decision to join the Fighters guild instead of the Guild of Rangers a single month after he arrived in Falcion.

Uthar trusts very few people, as his contact with others prior to his formal alliance with the good races of Altin was fairly limited. The people he associates with have generally proved themselves to him as true friends, sound logical thinkers, or outstanding tactical warriors. Uthar despises stupidity and ignorance and will mark any man or woman guilty of such things as he feels is appropriate.

Uthar plans to live out the remainder of his live in much the same way as he has thus far. Protecting and learning from nature, and using his abilities to protect the good folk of Altin as he swore to do.

Uthril

Class: Fighter
Race: Half-Giant

Some days I wake up and am amazed at my surroundings. A pike in one hand, who knew me to be a fighter? Why, a few years ago when I was merely ten years of age a typical day for me would

include exploring a little farther than my mother would wish for me to and climbing trees. During the weeks of festival, singing and dancing reigned at our small mountain hideaway. No night would be complete without a few hours of stargazing before I went to bed. It was one of those nights. The kind that rounds off a perfect day. The twilight was coming down upon us like a languid caress and I had ventured farther than I had ever before. Just then, the wind suddenly became still. I felt my heart sink a bit with no apparent reason. My pulse began to race and I jumped off my stargazing tree and ran home. I came home to find a sinister looking goblin who had come upon our village. He carried no weapons at all and was swarthed in robes of jet black. Suddenly, I saw the earth rip open like a like ripe tomato. A half-giant stood up, missing an arm and walking with one leg too short and a limp. Many more soon arose and I was confused and afraid. What I saw next still wrenches my heart to this day. I drew closer in curiousity to the misfigured man and locked eyes. He was my grandfather! The terror to see a noble man brough to unrest from his grave was almost too much and I fell back. The goblin walked up to him and spit in his face. 'What have we here? A crippled soldier in my army. Frail half-giant bodies can never be resurrected properly. Begone!' and with a wave of his hand, the body collapsed to the floor, wrenching. I ran as fast as my legs could carry me into the darkness of the forest. Upon the top of the highest tree I could find, I looked at my village and saw untrained half-giants fight in vain with tree limbs and rocks. Women screaming and young children being dismembered. I looked past the village and saw my first glimpse of goblins, alchemists, and horrific dragons. It continued and the forest was drawn back as the goblins advanced. Young and afraid, I turned to Lord Erisar. I had no home, I knew it was time for me to join civilization. I walked for many days before coming to a boot upon a great lake. I asked where the toughest of soldiers must train to fight the Goblins and I was pointed towards Kragesh and the Island of Falcion. I have trained myself beyond anything I thought my body could endure. As my training continued, I spoke to Minsc whose words were so true it was frighening. Only when the Peace is restored shall my homeland be restored from the deadly grip of the goblin armies. I shall then go home and retire in peace. Until then, I carry my pike, hoping one day to bring some vengeance upon the killers of my people.

Valas

Class: Fighter
Race: Drow

Several years have come and gone since the young Valas stood, with ready blade, among the twenty of his streeahk. They had been sent by the matron of their minor house on a mission of revenge to which they were bound by magic and honour. These faceless men were prepared to administer dark justice upon defilers of a promising wizardress of their house. This would be done in secret as noone knew the other's identity and they were bound to this secrecy by magicks that would ruin their mind should they attempt to administer information of importance.

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"udos z'klaen vharcan l'streea d'udossta ilharn" the dark priestess of Kyorl had told the young Valas after these spells had been woven.

Valas, who had been kneeling with hands outstretched before his person, rose as she nodded then said, "ilharess, sil'in vlos orn stain ussta rahi"

The laughter of the dark priestess echoed through the hall as she motioned for her aid to deliver a gift to this precious soldier. He was not only a young man of promise, but her eldest male child. The wizardress servant handed Valas robes of darkleather that were line with strange pouches that contained plates of mithril. Honoured, Valas accepted this gift and was dismissed allowing the next to enter.

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As he journeyed to what would likely be his death he thought little of his matron's favour. Now it meant nothing. It was expected that he should die in this battle the same as his companions whos faces he did not even see. All in this streeahk wore enchanted masks of horrible crimson. Knowing nothing of the abilities of his companions, Valas had great concern for the success of his mission. He must draw the blood of many nobles or his death would mean nothing. Having no comfort in the abilities of his companions Valas took comfort in his own. Much training had been offered him and many trials had he overcome, even before his fifty-eighth year. When he took his first steps he was given a rune-crusted dagger of mithril which would be his companion for life. As a child it served as a toy upon which he would cut himself only to be tended to by the house's one healer but as a young man it would serve as a lone companion, a means of expression. Valas expressed his desires with it, embraced it and loved the power that it gave him.

As he dashed with his death-bound companions he touched this same dagger which was sheathed on his forearm, hidden by the sleeve of his robes. Comfort swept over him and his focus was restored, he would exact the revenge that his dark honour demanded.

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The group had covered a great distance with impressive speed and set themselves near the compound watching from afar. At the northern gates of the house compound an army of slaves and warriors far greater than Valas had yet seen. The slaves were great in number and were an impressive sight in such a mass. The army seemed prepared to engage another house in battle so it was decided that they should wait untill they leave the city guarded with fewer troops. For three weeks the group waited patiently. They avoided all contact with scouts and vanguards so as to avoid the need to cut them down and alert the enemy of their prescence. In the obvious state of alarm the group had chosen to take no chances. There must be no forewarning of possible assassination strikes. Valas quickly grew tired of hiding in the treacherous terrain of the underdark and waited anxiously that he might end this torture. On the 23rd day of their watch the army marched forward out of the city only hours after the arrival of a prisoner envoy. The time had come, they would now make their move. Silently the twenty males snuck to the southern wall and with grappling hooks and rope climbed up to the battlement.

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One of the twenty raised his hand after they ascended to the top of the battlement by use of rope and grapple. With a fiery voice he whispered, "faerl kulggen inbal tlus t'larryo udos z'klaen jresh

wund draa d'lil akh."

They understood immediately that to insure maximum penalty was delt to their foes they must split into two groups. Without another word they did so and linked their minds together that they might communicate amongst each other freely. The streets were empty save it be a few unsuspecting guards who who were cut down without disturbance. It was soon discovered that there was a great meeting in a black cathedral that was central to the city. Two of the drow circled the cathedral and scouted several guardsmen which guarded a steel enforced wooden door which was the main entrance. They also found that there was a niche through which they could fit through. The first group saluted their comrades and positioned themselves outside the line of the guardsmen's sight as the second group which included Valas through a hook which secured itself upon the ledge. Valas was the first to climb up and he poked his head in seeing a loft upon which the ten could stand. He watched as the others ascended into position.

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Watching from the loft Valas counted an audience of what he thought to be approximately seventy drow. There were some men among them but most were women. As he waited he watched a priestess of great social stature who stood before an alter. She spoke out to the crowd with a powerful voice and held above her a dagger. Upon the alter was a woman who lied naked and dead, victim of vile ritualistic sacrifice. The ten of Valas' group were in position with grapples as a crashing sound of the door raised the alarm of those within the cathedral. The doors burst open and many of the warriors charged out preceeding the descent of the streeahk that had been ready upon the loft. Valas held his dagger between his teeth and grabbed hold of his rope with gloved hands, threw it down and began his descent into the madness of the melee.

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As Valas descended the rope his boot met the face of a drow caught off guard. Taking his precious dagger which he held in his teeth he drove the killing blow into his enemy's skull. The ring of swords being drawn was matched by the drawing of his own sword which he wielded in his other hand. There was much opportunity for destruction as it seemed that the finest of the enemy's warriors had charged out of the temple, leaving their high priestess with few guards.

Valas screamed, "ultrinnan t'yin streea" as he parried the blow of a warrioress' blade and spun around plunging his dagger into her back. His dagger struck hard and pierced her ribs and cut into her heart killing her.

Freed from his opponent he jumped upon a pew and examined his situation. The sturdy door was already captured and barricaded by several weapons. It had cost one of his companions his life. His corpse lied dead on the stone floor with several arrows stuck into his chest. The eight others had seen great success and were standing in the midst of several corpses. Finally his gaze turned to the the priestess. She stood before the alter waiting, her face cool and extremely calm. She watched as her soldiers were overcome by the force of the interlopers.

To his surprise the wind was knocked from Valas' lungs as an enemy lunged at him throwing him forward. She landed with a harsh crack as her face slammed against the back of the pew knocking

her to the floor in a heap but Valas was quicker and managed to twist in the air, his shoulder striking the beautiful hardwood bench. Immediately an new enemy was upon him wielding a massive axe. Rolling off of the seat of the bench and under the pew ahead of him he narrowly escaped a killing blow from the axe which splintered the wood. These splinters cut Valas' face but did not sway his focus. He swung his foot out and kicked the feet from under his opponent then rose with great speed delivering a harsh blow to her shoulder. Her life ended having been given the honour of reading the runes of Valas' dagger as he shoved it through her eye.

All that remained were four others and their attention was focused now upon the priestess who had watched as her servants were slain. Valas turned away momentarily as a loud crashing sound echoed through the temple with deafening sound. He then turned back to his friends inclining his head with a nod then sneered at the priestess. Her response was to pull a venomous dagger from a sheath on her belt and begin her walk forward to engage the five. Valas, awed by this display of valour raised his blade in a salute and led the charge.

The priestess parried the first strike of Valas and landed her foot in his mid-section. Her balance shifted as she spun around connecting her fist with the face of another while sweeping her free and cutting another across the throat. A sword was driven through her side and she screamed out smashing Valas once more with her fist swung so fast it seemed a blur and without pause she drove her dagger into the heart of yet another of his companions. Valas seeing her back exposed shoved the point of his sword through her neck severing the head.

In the fury of the melee Valas did not notice that the banging had ceased. All was silent as Valas removed his mask and looked into the unmasked face of the last of his brothers in arms. A smile creased the face of his friend as he raised his hand showing a small cut from the dagger. Within moments he too fell to the floor cold and dead.

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As he approached the alter he beheld for the first time the woman that lied dead upon it. It was his matron and mother lying naked thereon. She had suffered the final humilation of being a sacrifice to the demon. Without care for his life he took time and honoured his house matron by dressing her naked body with the blood of the priestess who had sacrificed her.

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It had been so long.. Why had noone come?

Inching towards the door Valas listened carefully. The reason noone had come was clear and the clangs of steel upon steel. He heard the screams of kobolds and drow battle cries and sang as music to his ears. No longer was he bound by his promise, he had done enough and his matron was dead upon an alter which he had stood with reverence before. Taking the rope he climbed up onto the loft where he made his escape out the window from where he came. On the streets slaves were fighting their masters and Valas escaped by scaling the south wall.

Having achieved his escape in the confusion, he left immediately to the city where he sold his service as a mercenary to a group of underground merchants. Rumour had drawn him to this group

because of rumours of their dealings with surface dwellers. They were accurate and Valas left them not long after to travel to the city of Nexus.

For less then a year Valas wandered the surface wondering. He escaped death so narrowly and truly felt that there was reason he was spared. When he first entered the city of Falcion he mumbled under his breath, "usstan z'klaen inbal tlus tai'luen whol natha sanrr"

That assertion still echos through this warriors mind today. The mystery he seeks even still.

Veryn

Class: Fighter
Race: Unknown

The sun shines on the little secluded valley by its inhabitants named the Valley of Valor. Birds sing and diffrent animals run around. Human children run in the woods of the valley playing with the animals and enjoying the day. Suddenly a great shadow goes over the valley. The children run towards the Keep. They all knew what it was, A red dragon. They had heard the stories of the two previous ones who had found their valley.

A great battle ensued with the keep's defenders rushing out to slay the dragon or atleast keep it from attacking the children. The dragon who had decided to scorch the valley did not get far in his job before the troops arrived. All the children had fled to the keep but one. Young Veryn age nine saw the whole battle from away. His interest was foremost his father who was fighting. But Veryn fell in love with the beautiful and fierce creature as he looked at it. Thoughts of respect and power filled his head. Already sure that he would be what his father always referred to as, "Us grunts" Veryn know knew he had to work hard to be as powerful and respected as the dragon. The last red dragon that had come was slain by a party where Veryn's grandfather served. And so he was extreamly proud of seeing his own father do the same feat. And what was most impressive was that no matter how many spells the mages cast or how much the archers shot the dragon cast healing spells and continued to attack. The clerics kept the group alive but they weren't sure for how long they would be able to do so. And then tragedy struck. The baron of the keep's nephew was hit with the dragon's large claw right through the armor and into the heart slaying him immediately. The entire group was shocked and stood still for a small while, All but one. Veryn's father now had his chance he ran as fast has he could and thrust his sword up the belly of the dragon hitting between the scales he destroyed some vital organs and with a lethal blow slew the dragon.

Veryn was happy but sad. The slain hero was his old sword teacher and a very loved man. After the dragon's death the corpse of Illoran (which was the name of the man) was burnt and the baron threw a celebration in his honor. During this feast Veryn's father spoke to all. He asked that people not refer to him as a hero, for he had failed to kill the dragon without losses. He explained to the people that it sadly and luckily was the slaying of Illoran that gave him the oppurtunity to slay the dragon and that Illoran deserved the praises. For this noble deed Veryn's father was promoted to

Captain of the Honor Guard. And against his wishes celebrated even more (Ah the rough life of a hero). Veryn was after all this a very split person. He was moved up two classes in the fighters school, not because his father was a captain but because he was so skilled. Reason he was not moved up more was because his father actually taught his current class in many things.

Veryn also learned from scribes the origin of the valley name. According to their history the humans who now inhabited this place had decended from the cliffs upon a Gnoll Stronghold and crushed them in battle. During the battle so many deeds of valor were done the conquerors had no other name to call it.

As the years passed the Keep fell into grief the baron's son died. Slain by a wolf in his sleep. The baron after this went mad. Some say he threw his wife out of the window but to the public it was treated like suicide. The baron became a cruel man. Taxing the few peasants high he tortured them if they didn't pay. Even the citizens of the keep felt the touch of his iron hand.

Then one day Veryn and his father walked into the throne room just to see the baron cutting the head off his own brother. Veryn's father drew his sword and engaged the baron. Clearly the baron was mad. But the baron was a good swordsman and the fight was even. Then Veryn drew his dagger and in a swift stab put it in the throat of the baron. That night they left the keep claiming that the keep was filled with too much blood. Most of the citizens did leave towards a city named Nexus. The ones who stayed were probably slain since the ones who migrated saw the keep burst into flames from a distance. On the way towards Nexus Veryn was sent towards the island of Falcion with others to complete their training. Veryn's father two days after arriving in Nexus wandered into a clearing east of the city and was slain by a druid who thought it was another Thief or Barbarian come to prey on his kin.

For this Veryn resents Druids much. One could say he despised them so much they would probably not live in his sight if he didn't have the duty to Nexus to stop him.

Wolf-biter

Class: Fighter
Race: Ogre

As a young ogre, I spent many of my days wandering the foothills at the base of the Crystal Mountains alone. This particular day I'd returned to watch some of the wild animals that also called the hills home. A female wolf had taken up home in one of the burrows along the hill, and was teaching her pups the way of chasing rabbits. The small cubs seemed playful, and I thought as I watched them, I'd go join the frolicing in the soft turf. I had never been near wolves before, and much to my surprise, the mother was not happy to have this huge ogre amonst her cubs. She layed into me with fang and claw and I grabbed at her while she snapped at my hands and arms. We fell over in a pile, fur and ogre hair flying, I did the only thing I could think of, and sunk my own teeth into her tail. Perhaps a taste of her own treatment would even the score. The wolf yelped and released the hold on me, leaping away and glaring back. She charged again, fangs flashing and

took hold of my arm, near the bicep. The front claws flailed at my face, I pounded at her with my fists, but she wouldn’t let go of the arm. A paw slashed near my chin, and I grabbed it, gnarling I bit down hard near her leg joint. This time, she let go for good, and ran to the burrow, her pups in tow.

When I returned to the village, my ogre-mum asked why I was torn and bleeding so. When I finished my tail, she laughed and sayd, "Thats my little ogre...he’s a wolf-biter." After that everyone in the village started calling me Wolf-biter.

As I grew older, I noticed our village would bring back smaller things that looked near like ogres to eat. I learned they were called elfers. Some of them were bigger, and had nasty tasting fur, and others were very small, not even a meal. I didn’t think much of it until one was brought back alive. I was told to kill it, and skin it for supper. When I took the elfer behind our shelter, to kill it, it talked to me. It said, "Please don’t do this, we are a peaceful people. Similar to you ogres, and I have a small boy and girl just like you.... please let me go..." I felt sorry for the little elfer..and realized we were doing bad things by hunting them. I let the elfer go, and when the rest of the tribe found out, they tried to kill me. I ran and ran, and only got away by diving into the river.

I woke up on a beach, and could only see water for a long ways. I smashed one of the crabs on the beach to eat, since I was hungry. Later, I wandered down the beach, and ran into some others, they looked like elfers, but when I called them that they sayd they were hhhmans. *shrug* They looked like elfers to me, they were bound for a place called Falcion, and invited me to come with. There I learned I was well suited with a club, and began studying the arts of a fighter. The trainer was hard on me, he’d make me walk on logs, pick up heavy stones, eat terrible tasting things, onece he even made me sit with the priest for a few hours. (It seemed like a big waste of time.)

Eventually, I ended up in Nexus, and had many adventures with the elfers there. I even learned the difference between elfers and hhmans and renis. One winter evening, I saw some mouses near the town square, they looked all cold and sickly. I dropped some bread for them, and soon one of them climbed up my arm and rested on my shoulder, nuzzling my ear. His whiskers tickled, and when I set him down..he climbed right back up. I guess he liked me. He became my best friend, and would talk to me in his squeeky micer voice. His name was Cheesehead.....I can tell you about him some other time....but he was a brave micer to the end.

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