

TOLRI

CHARACTER BIO

- Shifter Werebeast (Gray Wolf)
- Bard of the Roads
- Alignment: Chaotic Good with neutral tendencies
- Motivations: Independence, freedom, understanding

THE FOREST

“Weak cub! The forest will eat you if you don’t eat it!”

Vig never struck me. At least not physically. He beat all the children down through his power over us. Words were his strength.

It was a harsh lesson in our youth. One that I’d guess I learned differently from the others. He wanted to instill a survival sense in us. That “kill or be killed” attitude that the pack thrived on, whether we liked it or not.

Instead, the lesson I learned was never to question him aloud. I made the mistake exactly once, on my seventh naming day.

“But Elder Vig, why can’t we make music after the sun falls? The Border Forest is just as dangerous while it’s above the trees as below, isn’t it?”

“You unfurred fool!” he admonished, bearing his fangs. “You will die like your parents if you don’t do what I say. That is why.”

After that, I refused to speak to him unless absolutely necessary.

Elder Tonn was different. She showed us the way through tender mercy instead of callous cruelty. With her guidance and songs, the children of Vargreni learned to control the werebeast within through focus and purpose.

She showed us that through music, we could feel the forest’s heart and channel our fury into calm. Tonn was able to make bird calls with her mouth that could still even the fiercest emotion.

In her chords and melodies, I could find my focus as I felt their power. In harmony with wild tree thrushes and wolf howls, I sang along and found purpose in the beauty. The woods calmed me. I felt the inner rage of my bestial blood quieted by the overwhelming power of song.

A month after my sixteenth naming day, that power would be tested.

“Tolri, please assist Vig with preparations for the evening ritual,” Elder Tonn instructed.

I nodded reluctantly and smiled. She knew my way and didn’t question it. Tonn loved me like a daughter.

Pacing toward the ritual den, I dreaded any interaction with the old wolf. His claws were as sharp as his words, and he could cut equally deep with both. Avoiding conversation was the best way to avoid trouble with him.



WEREWOLF GIRL
DISSUNDER (DEVIANTART)

“There you are, late as ever,” he said as I approached. “Fetch water from the well. Two buckets should suffice. And if I hear nothing in reply, I’ll slice you ear to ear, girl.”

I hesitated, wondering if he’d follow through on his threat.

“Yes... Yes, sir,” I managed to stutter out.

“Good cub. Go,” he ordered with a toothy grin.

I followed the path to the well on the outskirts of the village. The sun had already gone beyond the trees, but it still lit the sky.

A sense of dread came over me as I walked.

“Orcs!” A voice screamed from the watchtower.

My eyes went wide as my feet stilled. I couldn’t budge for the fear.

It wasn’t the first time orcs had attacked our village to raid for loot and meat, but each time we had lost people. They came with blades of metal and arrows of fire. Guards and cubs alike were fair game to them.

“What are you doing, fool?” a voice behind me shouted. “Get to the den or die!”

Vig was already sprinting toward them on all fours, his powerful arms changing. He could control his transformation at will, something most of the others couldn’t fathom.

I backed away slowly as an arrow, lit with flame, careened into the tree past me. It missed my face by a hair.

A pair of orcs the size of grown oak trees beared down on me from thirty strides. They hacked at branches with vicious axes that could hew me in two.

I scrambled away, desperate for an out. I could hide behind in the bushes, but that wouldn’t shield me from a quick death.

I felt the changes before I knew what was happening. My arms and legs bulged and thickened. The hair on my human-like body grew thick and my torso elongated, sending me through waves of horrifying pain as everything stretched. My nose turned into snout and my ears grew longer. I heard my bones crunch as they thickened and lengthened to support my new mass.

My claws grew into deadly scythes, and before I could control them, I saw orc blood on their tips. I'd impaled one of the orcs through the stomach and tossed him over my shoulder before I knew what was happening.

I breathed heavily, guttural growls escaping my throat.

The other orc stared me down. He still towered over me by two feet, but that didn't stop his face from contorting into fear. He lurched forward to strike me down. I grabbed his axe and broke the haft, slicing his windpipe and relishing in the blood that spewed forth as he writhed on the ground.

In my furor, I felt another presence approach.

"Good cub," the voice said.

I didn't understand the words. They were foreign, like a wolf's cry. It meant something to the one who howled, but not to me. It was only the sound of a predator in the night.

I leaped up and tore into the creature's mid section. Ferocious as a blood moon, I ripped and tore until the body was still. Its blood pumped, and I drank until I could get no more. It tasted wrong, but that didn't stop me.

The sound of a bird gave me pause. Sweet melody ran through my mind like a morning jay's call.

My eyes blurred and my muscles untensed. I felt the pain subside as my bones shrank and my body returned to normal. The taste of blood turned foul as my senses stilled.

Overwhelmed, I broke down in tears, cradling my knees. A gentle claw touched my shoulder.

"Rest, child," Tonn's gentle voice said. "Be at ease."

My consciousness faded. Night passed, but when morning arrived I knew what came with it.

"By our laws, you are banished from Vargreni, a murderer of kin," Elder Tonn announced in front of the other children. "Though your actions were of the beast within, that beast is now fed and will feed again. The road is your home, now."

I nodded and smiled.

WHITEHORN

"That one over there. She looks weak enough," the drunkard said. "Beat Brimley somehow, but he's always been a wimp."

I looked up from my watery ale and met eyes with the fool, placing a gold coin on the table. He grinned and put his own gold piece next to it. I held a finger up and grabbed my lute.

"A song to celebrate my victory?" he goaded. I played a brief little introductory tune, strumming the strings

with vigor as I felt a power within me grow.

We placed elbows on the table and grasped hands, my claw much smaller in his human grip. He counted to three and instantly, his shoulder was dislocated.

I grinned back and took his money, finishing my song with a flourish.

"Damned bards," he cursed, walking back to his table and hiding his suffering behind bravado.

I tipped the bartender and made my way back to the inn for the evening. The sun was behind the mountain, but it still lit the twilight sky above Whitehorn outside the Border Forest.

An eerie memory returned from years before.

"Orc raiding party!" a guard yelled from the city wall.

Again, I thought, closing my eyes. *If I stay within the walls this time, I'll be fine.*

I ran for cover as enflamed arrows bounced off stone buildings, setting fire to the cloth and wood below. Shouts of battle echoed in the near distance as a small legion of orcs fell upon the city gate.

I hid, waiting for the battle's end. It wasn't my fight. I'd learned on the road these past years that a battle avoided was a battle won.

And yet, some battles hunt you down.

They marched past the gate guards, cutting down anyone foolish enough to still be in the streets. Those who put up a fight met a swift end, and those who didn't were met with cruelty only an orc could muster.

Sidled up to the inn, the entrance was twenty feet away from me but surrounded by orcs trying to barge in. I could hear the voices of all within, terrified.

I could leave. I could get away now, I thought to myself, before breaking out in a laugh. *Who am I kidding? My stuff's in there. I can't hit the road without my pack.*

The moon rose, a crescent on the horizon.

I shifted, having had plenty of time to learn control since that day in the village.

The changes hit me, as always. But this time, instead of bestial fury, I was met with calm. The music within focused me. Gave me purpose. A melody in the beast's mind followed the keen awareness of my inner predator.

And that predator hungered.

I leaped into the first orc I saw. His body, though larger than mine, was thrown aside like a rag doll.

They came at me and were met by a howl that shook the night. I knew it would give them pause, and in their fear, I tore them limb from limb as their dark blood wet the earth.

Guards came to help, but they stayed away, afraid of this creature of the night.

My fur bristled as I slew the final orc. I howled at the moon before smiling a toothy grin and winking at the guards.

The battle was over, and with it, my transformation. I channeled the music through my mind that calmed my spirit and triggered my soul's relinquishment. My fur turned back to skin, and my eyes lost their ferocity.

Their golden hue in the torchlight told the guards that I was me, not some monster that threatened them.

"Miss, that was, um..." The lead guard trailed off. "That was some display. We're grateful for the assist." I nodded and smiled.

A woman in the inn was still frantic and hysterical. I saw her pointing at me through the open doorway.

"Demon! Demon! Kill it!" she screamed. I sighed, knowing full well where this was going.

I locked eyes with the guards as their faces turned to annoyed compliance.

"Let me grab my stuff," I said quietly, knowing it wasn't their fault. If the city guard'd had their way, I'd be celebrated as a hero. Though I'd saved the lives of everyone in the inn, some people just couldn't get past their own fears.

A guard accompanied me upstairs, thanking me again when we were alone. I gave him a small laugh and a look of understanding, and I was escorted out of town and into the night.

I knew the toll I'd pay, but I gladly paid it. After all, the road was my true home.

TOLRI'S TALE

A gray wolf shifter who lost her parents before she knew them, Tolri found herself in the village of Vargreni within the Border Forest northwest of the Moonsea. There, she lived under the authority of two diametrically opposed elders.

While Elder Tonn taught peace, love, and understanding through music to the children of the village, Elder Vig taught merciless cruelty and survival of the fittest. Through their differing views, they hoped to give the children a complete view of nature's wonder as they live in harmony with the forest.

Tolri's an independent spirit whose wolf blood runs deep. She's happy to be part of a pack, but she prefers to hunt alone, as it were, given her sordid history within the Border Forest. She learned her skills on her own with the road as her companion, and as such she took the road into her being. She never attended a true college, so she prefers to call herself a simple Bard of the Road.

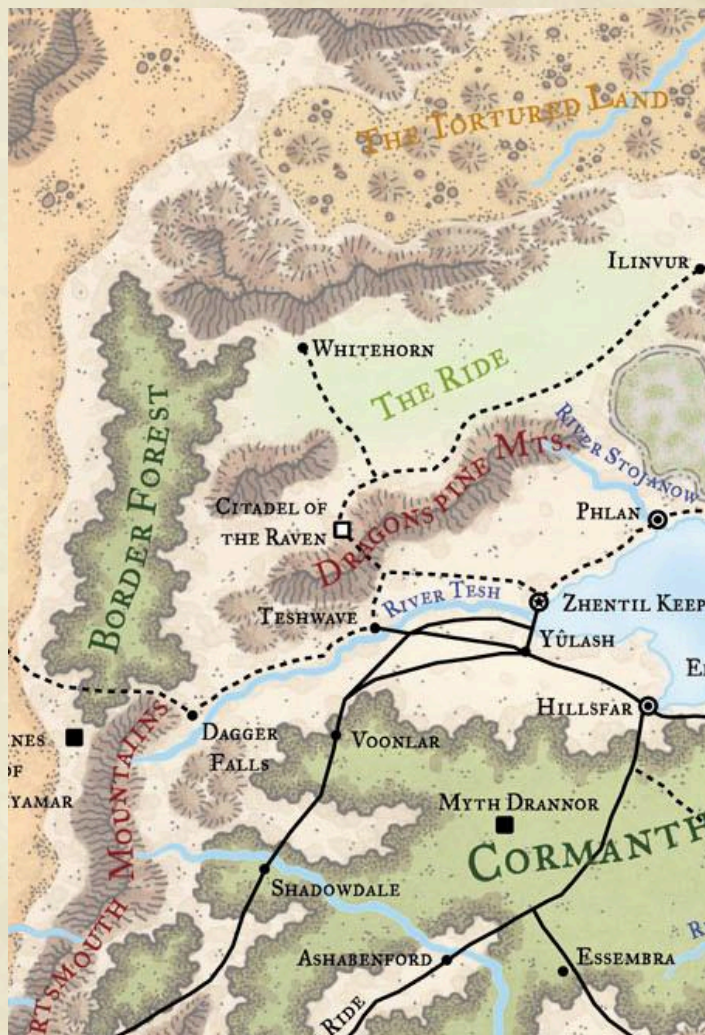
Tolri naturally took to Tonn's teachings over Vig's abuse, and because of that, she learned her moral compass at a very young age. The freedom of the woods taught her independence, and so she embodies Chaotic Good. While this story does take place in her past, any number events could've happened between then and now to explain any differences in her ethics and morality for your campaign. I could see her giving into her bestial side and drifting toward Chaotic Neutral, especially if she's keen on harming innocent people to get her way. Alternatively, if she takes to the structured life of working with an adventuring party instead of alone, she might tend toward Neutral Good or True

Neutral, appreciating the social dynamics of people who understand her.

While Tolri was ritualistically banned from her village as an adolescent, there's no reason to believe they harbor animosity toward her. It might simply be a rite of passage, and all shifters from there are expected to be exiled eventually for giving into their bestial nature. The ones that maintain their discipline go on to be elders, and the ones that don't could return one day to visit or set down roots. It's left open enough that however you plan to integrate the town into a campaign, it should work well.

It's also possible that Tonn could return in the form of an ally in the future, or even as an enemy if she made a dark turn herself. Perhaps a lifetime of watching cubs fall to the blood curse could lead to her losing perspective and taking a more violent path, or maybe she'll maintain her leadership role in the village and continue teaching the ways of control and focus to the young ones there.

Either way, Tolri has a bright future in Faerûn. Hopefully she can maintain her control and become a hero of legend among the most famous bards in history.



THE BORDER FOREST
AND WHITEHORN

FORGOTTEN REALMS CAMPAIGN SETTING

TOLRI
WRITTEN BY JOE CLIFTON