

RIAH TARTESH

CHARACTER BIO

- Air Genasi
- Twilight Cleric of Selûne
- Alignment: Chaotic Good with social tendencies

"Twins?" Hovnar questioned the head cleric of his temple. "I have no wife and no home, and you expect me to take on two war orphans?"

"Selûne expects it, my son." The old man's decision was final. "You have seen enough of battle, and She feels your weariness. You are ordered to retire your mace and take up this holy pledge in the Moonmaiden's name."

Hovnar knelt and took me into his arms. I giggled and cooed as a toddler does, pulling on his beard with my small fingers. My small voice carried through the great cathedral like an echoing mountain pass.

He placed a hand on the amulet around my neck, a curious bauble made of silver. Concentric lines swirled toward the middle, but it was only half of the whole. My brother wore the other piece.

"Do they have names?" he asked.

"Their Calishite mother died with their names on her lips. Riah," the priest said, pointing at me in Hovnar's arms, "and Hawa."

"Then it shall be done," our new father said with sincerity. He took my brother in his other arm and left the temple, bound for a small village near Neverwinter that would soon become the only home I ever knew.

"Father! Hawa!" I called, returning from the woods beyond the village bounds.

"Riah," Father said, smiling in his kind way. "Your brother here was just making amends for accidentally breaking our moon altar again. Ten lashes in the village square ought to please the Moonmaiden, eh?"

I gave him a quizzical look, glancing at the altar in the setting sun and knowing full well that Selûne prohibited such frivolous punishment. "You do have a habit of making bad jokes, Father."

"The Tears of Selûne weep at your sense of humor. Or lack thereof," he grinned. "Has anyone ever told you you're too serious for someone your age?"

Hawa knelt on the ground outside our home nailing a piece of wood to the base of the altar while Father propped it up. "It wasn't my fault this time," my brother said. "Look at the black mold on the base."

"Color of the Dark Goddess herself," Father agreed. "I'll build us a new one when when we can make a trip to the Moonwood next tenday. Say, what's that in your hand, girl?"

I showed them the small gem I'd found, a dull black stone. Smooth to the touch, except for some dirt.



CLERIC OF SELÛNE
TAKEMI ART (INSTAGRAM)

"It was sitting under a bush. Someone must've dropped it," I explained.

"Salvage rights," Father said, inspecting it as his face turned dour. He looked as though he were shrugging off a strange feeling. "Your brother would know more about rocks than either of us. His head's full of them."

"Give it here," Hawa said, reaching up. He examined it, brushing off a layer of caked mud. He grabbed Father's old warhammer from the nearby tool shed and gently pounded the stone to test it. "Obsidian or onyx. Odd that it's not chipped. It'll probably fetch a good price at the miner's exchange."

"Tomorrow," Father said. "The full moon is rising soon, and we have a ceremony to prepare for. Get washed up, both of you."

"Yes, father," we said in near unison.

Hawa hesitantly placed the stone on the table next to the altar, eyeing it with curiosity. His gaze lingered on it too long.

"We should hurry," I told him. "It's already sunset."

"Right," Hawa said, still looking at the stone. "It's beautiful, isn't it?"

Something in his voice bothered me, but I had more important things to worry about than youthful avarice.

Outside, the wind picked up, swaying my amulet in the breeze. I tucked it under my shirt to keep it safe. Looking behind, I saw Hawa's half of the amulet making the same motions.

"That's all we have to remember our mother by," I told him as we walked. "Treat it with more care."

Hawa was silent. Practically brooding. Nothing like his usual, jovial self.

I wonder what's come over him? I thought to myself.

The two of us drew water from the well and blessed it with silver dust, chanting the appropriate orison. We dragged the bucket to the altar behind our home and washed our hands and bare feet, slipping on our sandals carved from the shadowtop trees of the Moonwood. Father did the same and joined us.

The moon rose, nearly full.

"Relax, son," he said to Hawa, worry smearing his face. "What's bothering you? You were fine all day until you saw that rock."

Hawa grumbled, refusing to take his eyes off the stone. A darkness had seeded itself there, and I could see in plainly in the moonlight.

"Something's not right," I said, reaching for the stone.

"No!" he growled, slapping my hand away from it. He grabbed the black rock greedily and held it like a precious possession, looking at us both with a mix of envy and fear.

Father held both of his hands up. "Hawa, son, give that to me. Now."

Hawa shook his head and an unnatural sound grew from his throat. His eyes darkened further, turning from white to black.

"It's cursed!" I yelled as Father tackled him to the ground.

We both struggled to rip the stone from Hawa's hands, but some supernatural strength filled his arms as his muscles bulged. He overpowered both of us.

With stone in hand, he stood. A black light escaped my brother's fist as he raised it, and with a single punch he laid our father out cold on the ground.

A deep, savage smile curled his lips.

"The filth must be scattered like the moonlight," he said with utter cruelty, staring me down. "The moon witch's faithful must repent for their sins against the night."

He turned his back as I stood in stunned silence, my eyes wavering in disbelief. With both hands, he picked up our wooden altar and smashed it against the wall of our cabin, shattering both.

Hawa turned to me, dark murder in his eyes. I saw him under the light of the full moon as it darkened above. It wasn't a cloud that shaded our Lady's light, but some dark force beyond my understanding.

"The faithless must die," he threatened, hands bracing to wring my neck.

Lady of Silver, grant me courage and strength, I prayed.

Father's warhammer drew my eye in the dark, its iron glinting off of what little starlight there was. I dove for it as Hawa reached for me, my legs barely outstretching his corrupted grasp.

The symbols of Selûne etched up the haft mustered the power of Selûne as I felt the divine weave coalesce.

"Atone," I said to the demon inside Hawa, heeding the hammer's power. Instead of her presence, I felt a void.

A twisted laugh escaped my brother's maw. "Your moon witch cannot help you now."

Fear overtook me as Hawa marched forward, slowly. He seemed to relish every moment of my panic as I scrambled across the ground.

Please, help me! I prayed further. *Anyone!*

A cold wind picked up, blowing leaves from their branches. It gave Hawa pause.

"This cursed wind howls," he said with a voice not his own. Beyond it, inside it, I could hear a woman's voice layered, tangling his words with malice. He looked around desperately for the source of the wind.

I pulled the amulet from my tunic and saw it glow a tender silver, my brother's necklace shining in tandem. It hurled itself about my neck in the ferocious storm.

"What is this power compared to a god?" Hawa cried, looking at the necklace in fear.

It enwreathed his neck, choking him. His hands kept it from blocking his breath, but still he struggled against some unknown force.

The moon appeared in all our Lady's salvation, glowing in the night sky behind my brother.

"Flee," I told the demon within Hawa, channeling the Moonmaiden's power.

He shook horrifically, resisting the urge to follow my sacred command. His body warped and twisted beyond its means as the magic overtook him, the creature inside clawing deeply. Black smoke bled from his nose and mouth as dark laughter took over.

"We're one, now," he said in the woman's cursed voice. He soared into the sky, some unseen force pulling him into the darkness of night.

"Father!" I called to him on the ground. His face was bleeding and blackened from the blow. He stirred as I shook his shoulder, hugging him.

"Where?" he managed to get out before pain took over.

"We need to save him," I said after explaining everything. "He's her prisoner."

"Then we follow," Father said. "Wherever he might be."

AMULET OF WINDS

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a Genasi)

This amulet, granted at birth, is a reminder of the wearer's distinguished parentage. The pattern indicates that this item is missing its other half, which may be combined to increase this item's power in unexpected ways.

While attuned to this item, the wearer knows the *gust* spell and can cast it using Wisdom as their ability score.