

VAEOR THORNE

CHARACTER BIO

- Human Noble (blue dragon ancestor)
- 3rd-Level Draconic Sorcerer

"I live to serve our father's crown," I said, kneeling before the throne.

"Stand up, Vaelor," my older brother Caspar said in exasperation, palm to his forehead.

I stood, eyebrows furrowing. It wasn't the first time I had addressed the first prince in court, but this occasion wasn't like the others.

"There's a mage that needs hunting," Caspar said between bites of tomato. The only time an audience with my brother was available was during his dining hour.

"I will see to it," I said eagerly, ready to take on any responsibility that would prove myself in the eyes of my family. I did my best to surreptitiously hide my intentions behind a veil of earnestness.

Caspar raised a hand to quell my excitement. "You know nothing of the dangers, yet," he said, staring at me as though I were a fool.

I looked away, eyeing the ground to disguise my contempt.

"A changeling," Caspar continued. "He's waylaid two travelers on the road out of the city in separate encounters, stealing their goods and leaving them for dead. If not for our patrols finding the victims, we'd have no witnesses at all."

"Accounts from those involved, eh?" I wondered.

"Yes, they're recovering now. No need to bother them. Our clerics have gotten all the necessary information. Both attacks occurred south of the city about ten miles past the first guard station."

"I'll do everything in my power to bring the criminal to justice, Brother," I assured him.

"Yes," Caspar said, not looking me in the eye. "I'm sure you will. Begone, then."

I turned and left, hiding my discontent for the loathsome first prince under my breath.

Our castle keep bustled with activity on this day, much like all the others. Porters moved with intent to and fro, carrying papers and people about the castle to places they needed to be. It was much business as usual, as any other day.

And everywhere I looked, people averted their eyes. They knew and loved their first prince for his decisive victories on the field of battle. They knew and loved their king and their queen as a matter of course. Their second prince hadn't yet proved his worthiness.

I will prove myself this day, I vowed silently.

With purpose, I moved through the city streets past the hawkers shouting their wares at passersby.



SORCERER
CLASS SYMBOL



DRACONIC
BLOODLINE SYMBOL

"Kind day, milord," voices greeted me, and I returned their good will with nods and platitudes of my own. Most who recognized me were personable enough.

Reaching my destination, I opened the door to the Magus Infinitarium and heard a magical ring sound throughout the small shop.

Potion bottles of all colors and sizes sat on shelves next to magical contraptions and doodads of unknown make. Spears, swords, axes, and hammers lined another wall, each enchanted with various effects that added to their deadliness or aided the wielder. A few magical suits of armor and an assortment of apparel were kept on stands here and there, ready to be exchanged for exorbitant sums of gold.

The assault on the senses for one skilled in the arcane arts was apparent as soon as I crossed the threshold into the shop, taking me off guard every time. The dizziness lasted only a second, but no matter how prepared I was, my arcane perception was always overwhelmed.

"Kuhri!" I called out before seeing my friend on the far side of the room, the vertigo fading. His blue scales were hard to spot against the dim purple ambiance of the room.

"Vaelor," he said, a piece of straw in his dragonborn snout. "Nice to see you at this hour. What brings you in today?"

"I can't say hello to my friend every once in a while?" I asked coyly.

"No. You've never once been in here without wanting something," Kuhri said with a grin. "Never fear, my friend. The river always provides. What can I do for you today?"

I showed him a genuine smile. Of all the people in town, Kuhri was one I knew without a doubt I could trust to treat me as an equal.

"Remember last month when we had to track that rogue wizard down? The one who was using an illusion spell to swindle merchants?" I recalled.

"Aye, how could I forget," he said, rubbing his chin and giving a small chuckle. "Changing coppers into gold pieces. Oldest trick in the book. Like trying to pay for goods with candy coins."

"Do you still have the compass that led us to him?" I asked. "It's a changeling this time. Could look like anyone."

"I think I can conjure it for you if you need to borrow it. Tracking down another mage, are we?"

I gave him a sly smirk. "I don't think we will be. I need to handle this one myself."

"Ah," he said, understanding. "More family politics."

"If only the city guard were equipped to handle spellcasters," I mused. "One of the reasons I took it upon myself to hone my magical prowess."

"It's always been in your blood," Kuhri said, rummaging through a box in one corner. "You'd have been a fool to ignore your ancestry. Ah, here we are."

He pulled out a small device the size of a pocket watch. A compass needle in clear glass settled directly on him then spun wildly as he handed it to me.

"That'll find your mage," my friend said, casting a spell of his own. He incanted in the ancient tongue and touched my shoulder. "A spell of non-detection. It'll go haywire otherwise."

"Within fifty paces, right?" I confirmed before pocketing the compass.

"Close enough for a bolt of flame to singe you. Be careful, you hear?" He had a look of concern about his face.

"Don't worry, friend," I said, resolute. "I'm stronger now. I can handle any trouble that comes my way."

"I know you can," he said, seeing through my veneer of confidence. "I only hope *you* know you can."

I'd walked nearly ten miles since the first guard station just outside the city gates. The afternoon heat bit my eyes with dryness, but I pressed on along the road, compass in hand. I tapped the glass, unsure if it was working as intended.

"This is why I didn't become a soldier," I muttered, legs aching. I wiped the sweat from my brow.

Suddenly, the compass needle swerved forward and left. My eyes widened in shock at the realization that it had found something. A powerful source of magic was close by.

From the corner of my eye, I saw it rushing at me. A bolt of flame traveled through the air in an arc, growing larger as it honed in on my head. My body reacted before I knew it, ducking out of the way. The bolt sailed behind me, harmlessly impacting a tree and charring the bark.

I instinctively raised a magical barrier against further harm, cascading both hands above me in somatic reprisal at the threat.

He traipsed over in swaggering arrogance, clearly unaware of my own magical capabilities. Either that, or he outclassed me to the point where I would soon be dead. Worrying about either possibility was pointless.

Just then, something about his form caught my eye. I saw that he was human and wearing similar mage's vestments to what I chose to clad myself in, even down to the colors. As he drew closer, an ill sense began to fill my stomach.

He had the same black hair tied behind his head as me, about shoulder length. He had the same cobalt scales traveling down his neck and onto his collar as I did.

I noticed I was frozen in place as I saw the changeling's expression. It was the only thing about him that failed to mimic mine. While I held a look of astonished surprise, his face had a look of cool calm. A sneer grew along his lips, showing the same teeth as mine.

"Well, well. A princely prize," my voice came out of him as he slowly moved toward me. I was still stunned into silence, unready to confront myself. I knew I'd be facing a changeling, but I never dreamed it would have *my* face.

In my shocked dismay, I wasn't ready for him to sprint toward me. Lightning filled my foe's palm, and he grasped forward. I held out a hand to block his advance and realized the compass was still in it. Electricity filled my arm, shattering the compass glass and sending it flying to pieces before us.

The assault fractured my moment of indecisiveness, and I jumped into action. I withdrew along the dirt road, gaining what distance I could between the two of us. It was enough to evoke a blast of force that instigated a response. He raised a shield, negating my magical attack and drawing further ire from me.

"Do you always take the faces of your victims?" I spat as I refocused my magical energies.

"Of course I do!" he said, laughing hysterically. "If you'd seen the look on your face, you'd do the same."

His expression filled with some combination of mania and sadism as he incanted another spell, pulling magical power from the aether. It coalesced into a block of sharpened ice in the air in front of him.

"Little cold out here?" he sneered, eyes wide with murder.

Before he could launch the pillar of ice, I reacted with a blast of my own magical flame, channeling all of my fury into it. The spell impacted, knocking the changeling off of his feet and igniting his robe into worn, frayed tatters.

A moment of victory appeared on my face only to be quickly replaced by terror. The ice spike remained. It flew toward me at incomprehensible speed, leaving no time for me to dodge away. It pierced my shoulder, leaving me awed at the pain. Before I could scream out, the ice lance erupted, sending shrapnel into my face and neck, turning my cobalt scales red with blood.

I let out a howl of defeat as I dropped to one knee, hand on my shoulder to stymie the tide of blood that gushed forth. My breath heaved as I reeled at the pain.

I saw the changeling roll on the ground, dousing the flames in the grass. He stood slowly, haggard from my attack. His form had partially reverted. He appeared as an unnatural mixture between my human form, my draconic heritage no longer showing in him, and his own alien changeling image. His blank stare could've been interpreted as disbelief, but I knew better than to trust the emotions of one who was clearly a sociopath.

He dusted himself off and quickly reverted his projected form, morphing back into a perfect copy of me.

"My, that was some spell you hit me with," he said in my voice, coughing a smear of red down his chin. He wiped it clean with the back of his hand. "You put up more of a fight than either of the others so far. I suppose it's to be expected for one of royal blood."

"I've seen your blood," I said, still nearly dead from the wound in my shoulder and face. "Don't think for a second it compares to mine."

That elicited a hearty laugh from him. "The arrogance! I can see right through you, you know. I see you for exactly what you are. Everyone does. You're an outcast. Your family doesn't love you. No one loves you. You're a middle child neglected from birth, ever caught between an older brother burdened with leadership and the youngest, doted upon with all the love your parents never gave you. The whole kingdom sees it."

His words were hollow, a sad imitation of my own thoughts. I heard only the wind and my breath, focusing beyond the pain that ravaged me.

"It's too bad. I can see you were here specifically to hunt me, so you're not carrying any goods or coin worth taking," he gloated. "At least I can rid the kingdom of another spoiled royal manling, caught playing above his class. What a little fool, believing you could take me on alone."

I focused still, only on my breath.

The changeling moved as close as he dared, seeing that I was helpless before him. He drew within three paces.

"Your body won't rot out here in the sun for long, *prince*," he crowed. "I'm sure someone will find it shortly."

He raised a hand filled with frost and aimed it directly at my forehead. A killing blow.

Generations of royal ancestry fused with dragon's blood culminated in this moment.

"Goodbye, sweet prin—"

I exhaled a blast of lightning from my mouth directly into his chest that sent him flying back ten paces, sprawled across the road on his back. His chest cavity was opened to the air. I could smell his roasted flesh, still sparking from the electricity.

From the ground, I heard him gasp his final breath through lungs that were too damaged to function. His

body reverted to its natural form in front of me. He'd never harm another traveler on the road again.

I took a moment to compose myself, thinking back on the fight. I was injured, but it wasn't enough to see me to my grave just yet. A small bit of respite was all I needed.

Would this be enough? I asked myself. *Will they finally accept me?*

I had survived. I had tested myself against a superior foe, and I saw his body on the ground before me. I lived, and he didn't.

Standing, I walked slowly to the changeling's body to ensure that he wouldn't spring back to life.

I rummaged through the corpse for anything that might be of use in the pending investigation. I found a few trinkets and baubles from previous victims. I found identification papers listing a name, Reol Neril. It was likely as not that that was an alias, especially for one who steals identities so freely.

A handwritten note caught my eye.

Blackwater Cove

Strange disappearances

The sea is the key

I eyed the note curiously. It represented another test. Another chance to prove myself. Whether I had proven myself to my family was now irrelevant. I felt a growing need to prove myself to the one whose opinion of me mattered the most. To myself.

But first, a few days of rest.



CHANGELING
SORCERER
KAPPAZAP (DISPLATE)

VAELOR THORNE'S TALE

Vaelor's story centers around a need to prove himself to those around him. He believes himself to be treated as somewhat of an outcast, having few interpersonal relationships aside from a close adventuring partner in Kuhri, the shopkeep from the first part of the story. Whether his belief is just in his head or if there's any factual truth to it, this is the way he's been approaching life for as long as he can remember, and his family's royal responsibilities and the distance between him and his older brother Caspar reinforce this belief.

He's taken to honing his magical prowess throughout the past few years, training his sorcerous abilities as a magical adept. He has an affinity for the arcane arts that works well with his noble upbringing in a family that focuses primarily on martial excellence as a matter of royal decorum. As such, he's sort of pigeon-holed himself into being the black sheep of the family. It's because of this that he and his older brother are at odds.

Regardless, the public sees him as the princely figure he is, and he knows that not everyone can be pleased. Vaelor does his best to appear "royal" as he was trained, but in this story, he sees through the false platitudes that others would bring upon him. Vaelor is highly charismatic, and he uses his personality and skills to get ahead in places where his royal heritage and nobility fall short, such as beyond the borders of their small kingdom.

Vaelor hasn't traveled beyond those borders often in life, and once he finds the spark of interest in adventuring, he'll likely find himself at odds with the way he's been treated growing up once he finds himself in the real world. If his composure breaks and he slips into the role of the haughty noble, he might find that he's treated with as much as disdain as is warranted. He might use his royal ancestry to his advantage, attracting those who would align themselves with the power that comes naturally with royalty. However, if he instead prefers to hide his royal blood and succeed on his own merits, he might find that his allies come to respect him for the practical gifts he can bring instead of the societal ones, and he might be able to form the true kinship that he's been longing for his entire life.

Kuhri, whose name is taken from the Draconic word for River, is a loyal friend who's seen first hand the kind of ally that Vaelor can be in their earlier adventures together. Should he return in your campaign, he'll prove a valuable companion and give aid however he can (with the exception of free items from his shop – he's a merchant, after all!). As for the foe that Vaelor took down at the end of this story, it's possible that the changeling wasn't acting alone. He may have had an accomplice, or he might return via some necromantic fashion to further torture our prince from beyond the grave. Reol was imagined as a cruel person whose manipulation is designed to disarm opponents, and it might be interesting to have your DM bring him back for a second round.

Where Vaelor goes from here, he now has a reason to strike out for himself away from his family. It's important to him that he finds it within himself to overcome any challenges going forward, especially those within Blackwater Cove where he's headed next. Hopefully he can find a good balance between proving that he's capable himself and understanding that being part of a team is essential to victory.

ICE KNIFE
XANATHAR'S GUIDE
TO EVERYTHING

