

Back in August, I had the opportunity to go to the Atlanta Fantasy Fair in Georgia. Once again, I got to meet with one of the pair that started this whole EQ phenomenon, Wendy Pini. She is delightful in person and is interesting to be around. During one evening of the convention, Wendy told us (there were five of us) about upcoming projects of WaRP Graphics over dinner. What she told us then was brought out in a panel discussion later that night.

The ElfQuest animated film is in full production now with Wendy overseeing the work to make sure it's done correctly. She says that she's happy with what she's seen so far and the tentative release date for it is around either late 1988 or early 1989. Keep your eye on the television, however, for an ElfQuest Saturday morning program will start airing with the new Fall season in 1988! The stories will take place in the Forbidden Grove approximately three years after the events of ElfQuest #20, and will revolve mainly around the kids. For the stories' sake, Suntop and Ember will remain much as we last saw them and Choplicker will still be a plump little ball of fur. Don't go into a panic, though, for each episode will not be mindless drivel, but instead will serve to teach the cubs some lesson. Wendy tells us that the same animators that are working on the film will be doing the TV shows, and the same actors' voices will be used in both. This will provide continuity between the two programs.

Contacts for the various authors to work on the Blood Of Ten Chiefs anthology have been finished and the actual writing should begin soon, if not already. This should be a good one!

The convention was fun and I enjoyed every minute of it (except possibly when we got stuck on the fourth floor of the hotel for thirty minutes -- the elevator would take us no lower and the stairs were blocked). Wendy was fun to talk with and I thank her for visiting with us. Just watch out for those "Cookies Of Death", Wendy!

Well, that's my report this issue. If all goes well, we'll be back in February for our eighth issue -- two whole hands full of them!

Bright Starlights,

Mooncrest



Nightfire

TIMBERS 7

Newsletter Of The TIMBER VALLEY HOLT

CRISPY MORNINGS, TIMBER FOLK!

Three moons have come and gone since the last newsletter and another eight-and-two elves have found our valley! Leaf Fall has settled in and the White Fall season is drawing near, so welcome these into your warm hometrees and give them your most welcome howls:

Helissa "Shrike" Ackroyd-Livingston
 Terri "Arrowsong" Barnard
 Ted "Trace" Delorme
 Eileen "Wildwood" Fryer
 Yvonne "Seabreeze" Gugin
 Lauren "Windspanner" Janoff
 Maria Manemann
 Roger "Hawheart" Sorensen
 David Trimble
 Sarah "Woodblaze" Wooten

There is an important message on this issue's mailing wrap-around sheet and it should be kept with this newsletter. Please read it, for it concerns the entire holt.

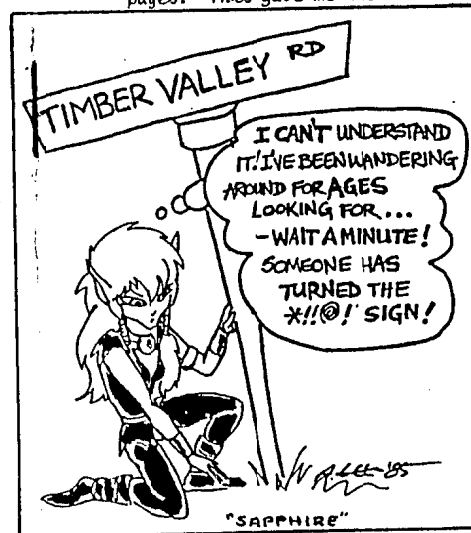
I want to express a very warm 'thank you' to Mark & Terri Barnard, who helped me out with this issue by doing the typing, paste-up and layouts of the interior pages. This gave me the time to work on a few other holt projects and to give my files a good straightening.

Within the last few moons, a problem with copyright infringements on artwork has reared its ugly head in the ElfQuest National Fan Club. As a precaution to the artists in the Timber Valley Holt, a copyright notice will be placed somewhere in each issue from now on, such as the one on page 4 of this one. This is to protect the rights of our artists toward their artwork. Because of this problem, many holt's who produce newsletters will be doing the same thing. We love our artists and mean to protect them.

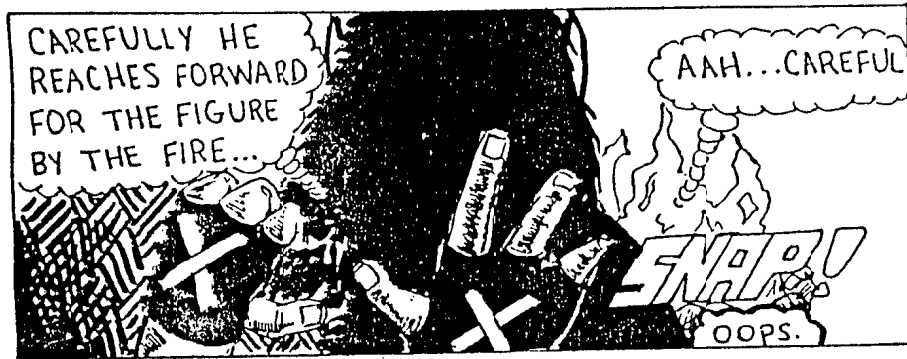
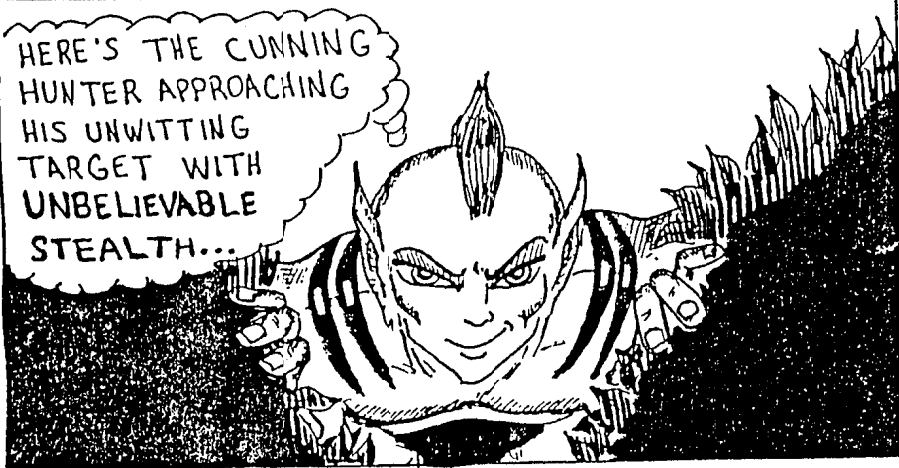
One note: LOOSE ENDS pt 3 will appear in T-8, the February '86 issue. Certain problems arose which prevented it from being printed in this issue. It will be in TIMBERS 8, so be sure to watch for it!

Anyhoo, it is now time to enter into the valley of timbers. . .

Mooncrest



"SAPPHIRE"



LIFETIMES

by Bill Nichols

DF 18 (LF)

It felt good just being alive. Today was one of those days when the breeze bites sweetly in your lungs, inflating you with the wind's own breath. No humidity today, just the clear air and the last rays of sunlight shining over the walls of Timber Valley.

Beneath his bare feet, Rogue stared at the soft dirt and activity of the ants scurrying around his toes. The tiny workers were already swarming over the leftovers of his meal, rinds and bones alike, carrying the food back to their colony, to their tiny holt.

Rogue stretched out on the grass and dirt of the little clearing, thinking how different his life would have been had he not found this valley and the elves within it. More important was his decision to stay in Timber Valley. His life **WOULD** have been different, all right, had he been stupid enough to leave.

He had friends now. Rogue of the black spear, Rogue the loner had friends. Mooncrest he liked, in a mischief-loving way, since the two had begun a long-running series of practical jokes, first on each other, then on other members of the tribe.

There were exceptions, of course. Nightstep was one. Two Star was usually another. Twice the elder had caught them before they even had a chance to do anything.

He'd say, "Forget it, lads; I'm on to you."

'The third time's the charm' was the saying. Or maybe they wouldn't try for Two Star; he had a temper, he did, one that took a while to cool off.

Besides, there were easier targets.

Was it raining?

Nope. It was only a few drops sprinkled on his face from...?

Near him in the clearing sat a wolf cub, its head tilted, staring at him with deep green eyes. Something began to tug at his memory. The cub's fur was sandy brown, just like...

Pouncer's. It could have been his dead bond-wolf as a cub, except for the black fur on the tips of its ears and its tail. Rogue spoke softly, beckoning the cub closer. Slowly, the cub approached and played with Rogue's outstretched hand, licking it and taking in the elf's scent.

Nuzzling the cub, Rogue caught a scent in the fur and managed to separate it from the others; it was the spoor of Mooncrest. Rogue leaped to his feet, the cub in his arms. If this was another of Mooncrest's practical jokes...

The cool breeze brought him no clues; Mooncrest had to be downwind of the clearing. Then, before he started off to search, a voice came from above. Mooncrest's voice.

"His name's Pathdancer," he called down.

"What's the joke?" asked Rogue. He could imagine his friend's mischievous grin somewhere above in the leafy boughs.

"No joke," Mooncrest answered, descending a tree downwind, "He's yours, if you want him. Of course, if you don't..."

"Hold on. What are you giving him to me for?"

"Do you have a wolf-friend?"

"No."

"Reason enough," Mooncrest said, scratching the cub behind the ears. "Two Star and I found him and we both thought it would be a nice thing to do, especially since I'm involved and am usually the butt of your little jokes."

"Hey, I'm not the only one. Just last moon, you...!" Mooncrest raised his hand to silence his friend.

"No need to rehash the tawdry details of my own exploits. The point is, I'm making amends now. Of course, if you don't want him..."

"Hold on. Why should I believe you?"

"Want me to send it?" Mooncrest answered evenly. They both knew it was impossible to lie when sending.

"No. No, I trust you," Rogue said gripping the shoulder of his friend.

"Thank you, and Two Star."

"Nothing to it. I'll let the two of you get acquainted. See you back at the holt, Rogue." Mooncrest was almost out of sight when Rogue called to him.

"What's the deal with sprinkling water on my face?"

"What water?" Mooncrest yelled back, all innocence. "You'd better ask your cub there; he took a HEALTHY drink from Minnowbrook before I brought him here." Then, he was gone.

Rogue stood confused, until suddenly he was aware of wetness running down the front of his leathers. The cub in his arms just licked his face and nipped playfully at his ear.

"Oh Mooncrest, I'll get you for this. C'mon, Pathdancer, let's clean up the mess YOU made." Rogue and his cub left for the holt and the stream running through it.

Behind him somewhere, a mischievous grin broke out into howling laughter as Mooncrest plugged the waterskin he had concealed and sprinkled a handful of water playfully into the air.

ART CREDITS

- * MARK BARNARD: "Thunderhawk" pg. 10, "Nightway" pg. 13.
- * JENNIFER CROSSBY: "Hatfeather" pg. 15.
- * JENNIFER HAWTHORNE: "'Exile" pg. 5.
- * APRIL LEE: "TVRS Cartoon" pg. 1.
- * JENNIFER HAWTHORNE: pg. 8.
- * BILL NICHOLS: "One Night" pg. 2.
- * MELISSA VAN HOUTEN: "Wolf" pg. 9.
- * NI KI WIELEBA: "Ferret" pg. 11, "Ferret and Nightstep" pg. 17, "Night-fire" pg. 20.

TIMBERS #7, November 1985 --- The newsletter of the Timber Valley Holt, P.O. Box 50186, Midwest City, Oklahoma. 73140 Membership: \$5.00 per year. Published four times a year (February, May, August, November). TIMBERS copyright 1985. All rights reverting back to the authors and artists after printing. Elfquest and the characters therein are trademarks of WARP Graphics, and are used with permission.



JAH '85

EXILE DF 9 (GT)

The sounds of quarrelling filtered up to Ivory's tree, and she grimaced disgustedly. Would her brother never use any sanity at all? Blackfire had even summoned the Glacier People from their distant home in the Frozen Lands in an attempt to start a war with the humans. The sounds of arguing could be heard all over the village. Ivory sighed and climbed down, pausing to pat Dusty on the head as she passed, and then continued to the clearing, a short distance away.

Blackfire was arguing with the tall, ancient Elder, Frostblade, chief for many turns of the Glacier People. They all turned to look up when she entered the entered the area. Little Star, Blackfire's mate, looked tired and strained as Ivory sat beside her.

"Truly he will destroy us all, if they listen to him," she whispered to Ivory. Ivory snorted and shook her head.

"I doubt Frostblade will approve. But that thrice-cursed son of his would, if he were Chief." was Ivory's reply. Blizzard was, indeed, bad news to all her people. How could she suspect he would be the cause of her life's greatest change? Little Star nodded agreement, twisting her long red hair in one hand absently, her freckled face worried.

"Well, sister, how is it you are so late to this council? You knew very well when we were to meet." Blackfire's tone was annoyed. Ivory only half smiled, noting that Frostblade's face was bored, and most of the others seemed uninterested in Blackfire's rantings.

"I've heard this argument before. You know MY answers," was her only reply. Blackfire glared at her, but there were a few snickers from around the room. Abruptly, Frostblade stood up and addressed Blackfire and his people. "It is late, my friends. We gain nothing by this arguing. I say we break this up for some wine and food and rest," the tall chief said. There were murmurs of approval from all around, and Blackfire found himself obliged to comply. He glared at Ivory, who shrugged.

It's not MY fault, she thought to herself. Wishing to avoid an unpleasant confrontation, Ivory decided to return to her tree. No one would miss her presence after the dreamberries were passed around a few times. As she headed through the grass back to her treehome, she felt a definite presence following her. Now WHAT? she wondered as she strode along. Who would have the nerve to follow her? Her temper was a well known fact all over the village. Few would try to press their luck by annoying her any more than they would her brother.

"I take it you are not joining the party?" said a familiar, oily voice. Blizzard, Frostblade's son, had followed her, curse him! Ivory turned to face him, her hand casually touching her sword hilt. Blizzard noticed the slight motion, but did not remark on it. Ivory frowned.

"No, I am not. I'm tired. I've just returned from a hunt, and I would like to rest--ALONE," she said sharply. The blond elf smirked at her, but there was little humor in his ice-blue eyes as he approached, bold as the great cats his people rode. Ivory's eyes narrowed as he drew close. Abruptly, Blizzard's left hand shot forward and seized her arm roughly, and attempted to draw her close to him. Ivory was astonished, and struggled hard to reach her sword with her free hand.

"What's the matter, little she-wolf? Don't you like being near a real warrior? I would make you a good mate." Blizzard said. Ivory's eyes shot wide open at that remark, and with a swift notion she kicked Blizzard's left shin hard enough to

topple him, freeing her arms. She drew her sword in less than a heartbeat and stuck it to her enemy's chest, daring him to rise and give her reason to kill him. The pale-skinned elf looked at her, first in astonishment, then cold fury.

"You'll be sorry you EVER crossed me, you daughter of a sick wolf," he snarled, backing away. He rose, and turned to leave, his eyes hard and cruel. Ivory felt a cold chill run through her. There would indeed be trouble because of him, she knew. Much trouble. Shaking more than she thought, she withdrew inside and sat upon her furs, burying her face in her hands, tossing her battered old hat across the room and then laying down. How she hated that miserable, cold-eyed beast. He had always been an annoyance to her, just because her brother was chief. Blizzard was always seeking ways to manipulate people.

Trouble arrived earlier than expected. A little later, Blackfire appeared at the entrance to her tree. His face was angry, his eyes bright and cheeks red. He did not even announce his presence, but strode right in. Ivory sighed, and turned to face her brother. He was alone.

"I've just been informed you nearly killed Blizzard. What has gotten into you?" His anger was evident, although he kept his voice level. Ivory stood silently. She was as tall as he, and they stared eye to eye for a long moment. The black-haired Chieftain crossed his arms and spoke again. "Well! What have you to say? There are a lot of very unhappy and angry folk out there." He stood there, staring at her, and Ivory finally shifted uncomfortably under his gaze.

"You know well how I feel about that slime bag," she replied in her calmest tones. Blackfire nearly exploded. "You COULD have been a little more polite, blast it! High Ones know we need their help, and you just blew it for us!" He was nearly screaming.

"Help for what? To get ourselves all slaughtered in some half mad war against the entire human tribe? Surely you are not so mad as to think you could actually WIN?" Her voice was contemptuous, as she gave words to her feelings about the whole matter. Blackfire's control left him, and before she could move, he had struck her with the back of his hand, knocking her down, and bloodying her lip. Shocked surprise kept her from launching herself at him as she wiped her stinging face with one hand.

"How dare you strike me?!" I've always spoken my mind to you and you know that!" she asked him, her face hard. Blackfire bristled.

"This was different! Frostblade and Blizzard are our allies! You insulted Blizzard and his father both with your actions! How is that supposed to help our standing with them now?" Blackfire was so angry, he was not making sense to Ivory. She could only gaze at the angry elf and wonder if this maddened figure was really her brother, or some nightmare she was having. If so, she wanted to wake up. But Blackfire spoke again. "I cannot have dissension among my people. I want you gone by next moonrise. And I mean GONE," he said coldly, and Ivory could scarcely believe he'd said it. Before she could respond, he turned and was gone. Ivory sat back against the wall, stunned and horrified. Not even when Blackfire had sent his eldest son away had she been so stricken.

Silence had fallen over the village. After a short while, Little Star came to the tree, her eyes red and her face pale. Apparently Blackfire had told the tribe of his command. Ivory beckoned her brother's mate to sit and they quietly sat together.

"This is madness," Little Star said, her voice shaky. "He cannot do this--not to you! His sister!" Ivory shrugged.

"Well, he has done it, and frankly, I don't know why I couldn't have seen it coming--we're so alike, and yet so different. He has so much hate inside him." Ivory answered slowly.

"Where will you go?" asked Little Star sadly. She knew there could be no changing her mate's mind. Ivory gestured out to the vast forest around them, her eyes scanning the trees and sky.

"Out there, I know there are others like us. I'll find others to start over with. I'll be alright, don't worry. You never worried when I wandered before."

"This is different!" the red-haired she-elf replied, her face distressed and her voice cracking. They had always been friends. Ivory would miss her most of all. Ivory touched her friend's arm and then hugged her.

"Perhaps, someday we'll see each other again. You'd best go now--if he finds you have come here, he'll be furious." Ivory said, trying to smile. Little Star nodded and turned to leave. **We WILL miss you, you know. Take care of yourself** Little Star's sending struck Ivory deep, and she nodded, unable to say more. Then she was alone once more. Silently she gathered up a few things, and then she called to her wolf-friend, Dusty, and rode out. No one noted her leaving.

The days passed into weeks. Ivory enjoyed the solitude of the forest, and did not rush herself to get to her unknown destination. She avoided the human camps and kept to herself, hunting and wandering. Several moons passed, and she was very far from Bittercreek. She had deliberately avoided going in the direction of the Citadel in the Frozen Land, Frostblade's home, and travelled in the opposite direction, into forests even the most far-ranging of her people had not travelled.

One afternoon, after crossing a large flowing grass plain, she found herself overlooking a small valley, with trees and a river--peaceful and tempting. Tired, she decided to ride down and camp for a few days. After a short search, she decided to sleep under some trees, hidden in some brush from view. She fell asleep quickly.

She'd been asleep only a short time when she heard voices nearby. Abruptly, several strange elves appeared in view. She sat up to watch them. Dusty looked up, but did not bother to rise at the non-threatening smell of fellow elves. HE was somewhat on the lazy side, anyway. The elves wandered closer, chattering amiably among themselves and seemed to be very relaxed. They had not noticed her--yet. Ivory was not sure she wanted to be noticed. One of them, a brown-haired male elf, wandered close to her hiding place, and she stood up, her sword in front of her defensively. There was a momentary silence. Then, the elf she was confronting spoke, extending his hands out in a friendly gesture, palms up.

Whoa, friend! We mean you no harm! You needn't be alarmed. sent the brown-haired elf. The others watched curiously as Ivory slowly lowered her weapon and relaxed. **Who are you? ** the stranger sent again.

"I am Ivory." she replied shortly, still a little suspicious of the strangers.

"I'm Mooncrest. These are my friends, LongKnife, Greeneyes and Frost. Are you hungry? Come with us, for we can help you." said the stranger.

Ivory approached him slowly, then sheathed her sword and sighed.

"Yes, I am hungry, uh-Mooncrest. It's been a long journey. Where are we? This place is so nice, and peaceful." answered Ivory.

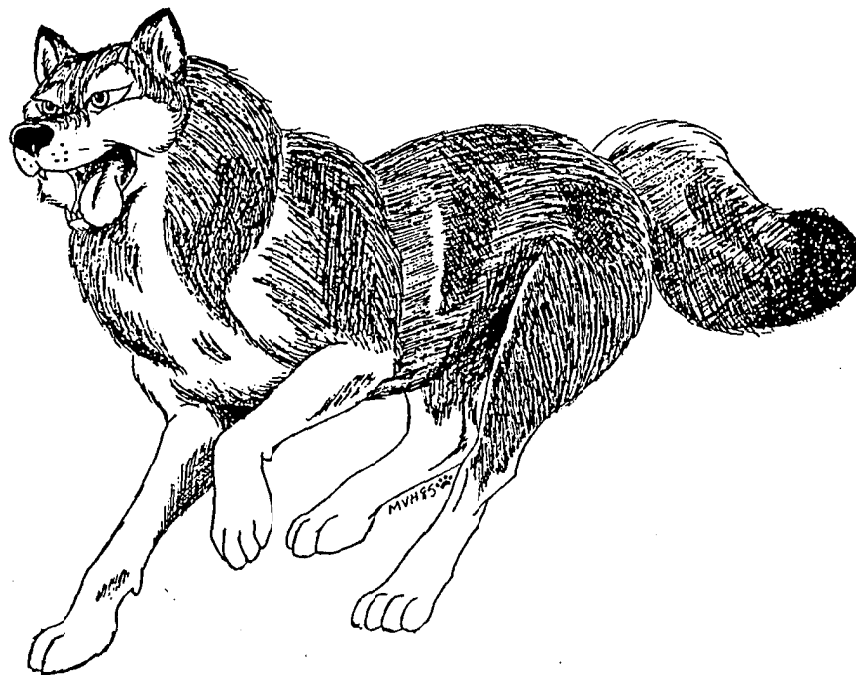
"We call it: Timber Valley, and it's our home. Do you have a home, Ivory?" Mooncrest asked calmly. "We would be glad to let you remain with us."

"I have no home. This seems like a very good place to see and explore. Yes, I will stay."

She glanced at the others, and they all nodded in agreement. LongKnife and Greeneyes smiled at her, and Frost watched her, quietly.

Ivory picked up her belongings--what few she'd brought--and with a slight summons to Dusty, followed her new friends off through the valley forest. At last they had found a place to settle, she thought, even if only for a while. But something told her she would be here a long, long time. Perhaps even have a few adventures, she thought--who knows?

Q



As of this issue, all inquiries on membership renewal should be sent to:

Joanne Papin
2852 W. Henderson
Chicago, Il. 60618

Timber Folk

Mark Barnard

Timber Folk

Joanne Papin

Name: Thunderhawk
Soul Name: Keem
Gender: Male
Lovemates: Gem-In-The-Mist, Arrowsong
Animal Friend: --
Father: Kestrel
Mother: Palemoon
Brother: Tempest
Eyes: Violet
Hair: Black, flowing to his waist in back and held back from his forehead by a blue metal headband set with a triangular red stone.

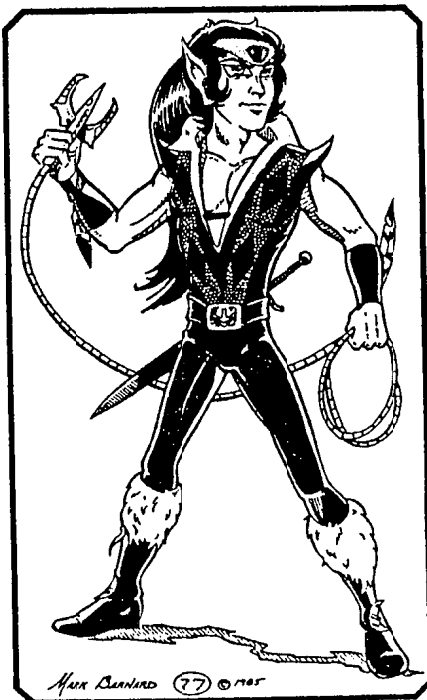
Height: 4'5"
Arrival Date: DF 6
Date Born: Unknown. Young adult.
Talent: Glider

Weapons Used: Three-tined grapnel and casting line. Will use a longsword when fighting on the ground.

Clothing: One-piece black outfit with a worked blue "vee" down the chest to his waist. High black boots with white fur cuffs and silver crescents mounted on the ankles. Black leather wristbands with hawk feathers mounted on their outer sides. Occasionally wears a thick black sword belt with a heavy silver buckle. Sword hangs across back of belt to keep it out of the way during flight.

Jewelry: Headband, boot crescents.
Other Information: Extremely sure of himself, Thunderhawk glories in his limited powers of flight. Occasionally arrogant toward the land-locked elves of the holt, he immediately regrets his thoughtlessness and tries to compensate by helping where he can. Desperately afraid of having his freedom to leave when he wishes taken from him. Placed in a cage by humans, Thunderhawk will quickly enter a state of unreasoning panic and eventually become completely disoriented. For this reason, he is always cautious of human traps. Captures several times during his aerial wanderings, he has been tortured by his captors and bears a grudge against humans.

NOTE: Slightly stronger than most elves, he can not carry the weight of a full-grown elf more than a few yards, should the need arise.



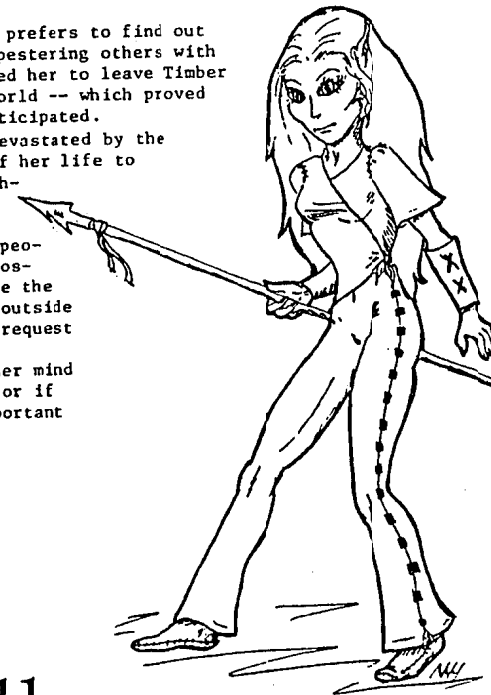
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Name: Ferret
Soul Name: --
Gender: Female
Life/Lovemate: --
Animal Friend: "Deerstalker," large greyish-tan male wolf.
Father: --
Mother: --
Other Relatives: --
Eyes: Green
Hair: Straight and honey-blond. Worn loose or in a braid that reaches below her waist.

Height: 4'1"
Date Born: DF -49 (WT)
Skills: Trapper/hunter. Excellent survival skills.
Weapons Used: Fights with a spear or dagger. Hunts with a bow or uses snares.

Clothing: Green leather wraparound blouse with loose, three-quarter sleeves. Tan leather pants with brown lacings. Tan ankle boots. Tan armbands with brown lacings cover her lower arms from wrist to elbow. In cold weather adds a bulky fur overcoat with a hood and gloves.

Jewelry: --
Other Information: Extremely curious, but prefers to find out things by herself, rather than pestering others with her questions. This curiosity led her to leave Timber Valley to explore the outside world -- which proved far less exciting than she'd anticipated. Horrified to return to a holt devastated by the Flood, she has dedicated much of her life to helping the survivors. Her youthful rebelliousness has largely vanished, to be replaced by a strong sense of loyalty to her people and her chief. While it's possible that she would again leave the holt for a return visit to the outside lands, it would only be at the request of the chief or elders. Strong-willed, and will speak her mind if she disagrees with another, or if she feels she has something important to contribute.



11

The T. Valley Mythos:

by Teresa Arellanes

THE POWER (GT -14)

She watched patiently, an amused smile on her lips, waiting for a lesson to be learned. The student was a child, her child, Nightway; the teacher, a seed to a flowering plant.

Moonshine watched her five-turn-old daughter plant the seed within the moist dark ground, pat some rich smelling earth over it, and the seed was done. The little she-cub looked up at her mother, dark eyes seeking approval.

As her mother nodded satisfaction, Nightway pranced about, squealing with delight since her task had been completed successfully. Moonshine, after flipping her raven-colored hair out of the way, beckoned Nightway over, and the cub quickly settled down in her mother's lap.

"Couldn't you help it along a little, Mother?" the child asked. "A muddy little mound looks so sad when I could have a pretty red flower instead!" Nightway put on her most appealing smile, one that usually got her what she wanted; even Chief Greylock could not long withstand her winsome ways. The only one who could was her own mother.

"No child. It is not the Way of the Forest to cheat nature so. It is not needed for your flower to be born just now, cubling," Moonshine's melodious voice whispered in the child's ear. She felt Nightway stiffen, knew instinctively that a tiny lower lip protruded in a pout. Moonshine rolled her eyes skywards, bracing herself for the tantrum and battle of wills that would follow.

It was then that Splitpath appeared through a passage in the Thorn Barrier. One look at his lifemate's resigned face and he knew there was trouble. He could smell it as if it were an approaching storm, and he always knew when one of those was abrew. "So?" he said, already knowing the answer to the unvoiced question.

Moonshine gave her lifemate a pointed stare. He watched as she sucked in her cheeks and pursed her lips, glancing down her snin nose at the child before her. Then the tree-shaper sighed, eyes closed, and shook her head negatively. **She will not listen,** Moonshine sent privately to Splitpath.

The weather-sensitive elven tracker looked down at his tense little daughter, and she in turn regarded him. Her eyes glared balefully at him from under dark grey bangs; fists clenched, the child continued her pout undaunted.

Out from under his own salt and pepper colored bangs, Splitpath's eyes twinkled merrily. The elven father chuckled as he beckoned his little she-cub to him, arms open wide to embrace her in a bear hug. She came slowly, accepting the hug, and responding with a playful pull at his soft, full beard. "So?" he repeated to the child.

"I want a flower. I want a flower now!" Nightway told her father.

In one quick movement Splitpath picked a puffball and presented it to the child on his knee. Nightway glanced first at her mother, then, looking into her father's midnight blue eyes, blew the puffball to bits. "I want MY flower," she corrected.

"Ah!" nodded Splitpath, as if that explained everything. "And you shall have it...when the season turns."

"But I want it NOW!" Nightway cried, clutching her father's vest in her tiny fists and trying to shake some sense into him, emphasizing the point.

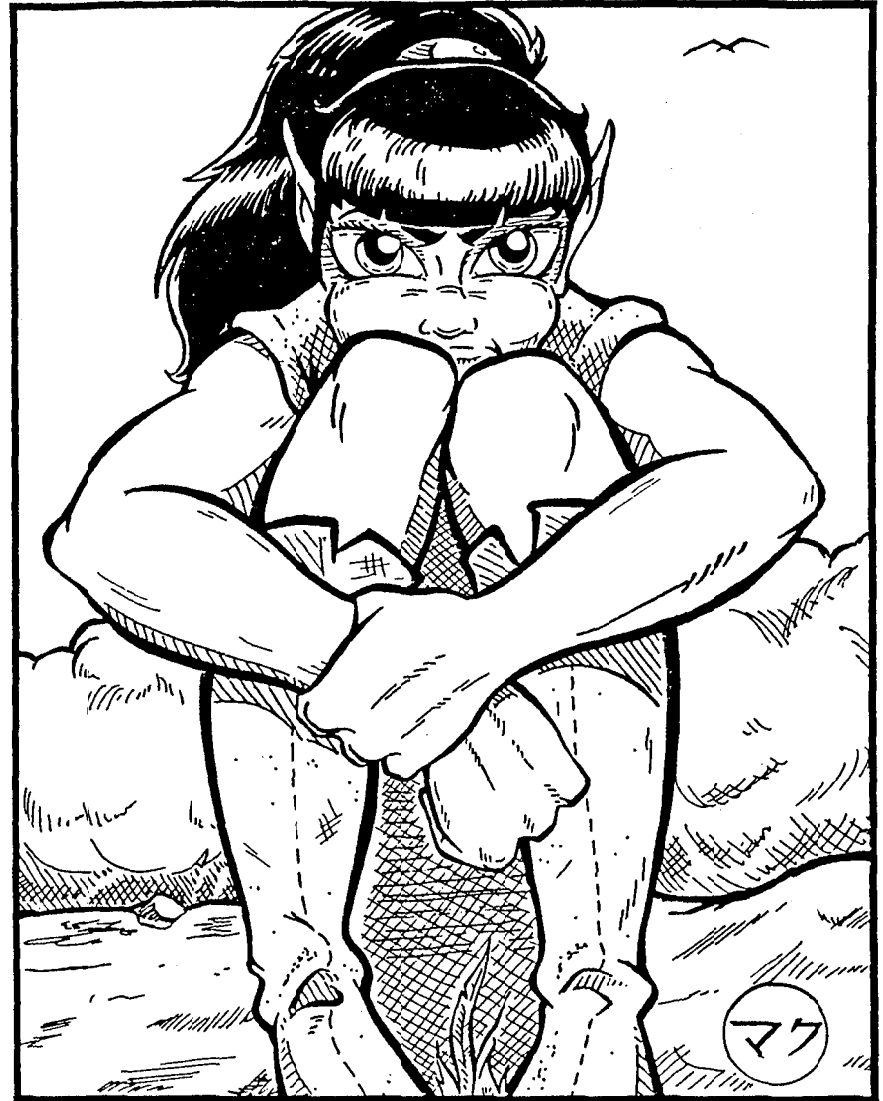
"What you want and what you get are two different things, Nightway. Would you have your mother help the seed you planted grow, just so you could kill it?"

Gently Splitpath took the child's hands from his vest, held them in his own strong ones.

"Kill it?" questioned the little girl.

"Would you not pick it the instant it was ready? To take it from its mother plant which gives it life, just to wear it in your hair? It is not our Way to take life needlessly, cubling. Do you understand the lesson your mother and I are trying to teach you?" Splitpath pressed his advantage, his centuries of experience and wisdom backing him.

Nightway hung her head ashamed, her impatience all but washed away by her father's gentle admonishment. She nodded her head, completely sure that this would be the longest season ever!



As fate would have it, the seed which Nightway had planted did not come to life. It was a constant irritation to the child who had waited so long, so patiently for her prize. She watched it all the time, unaware that she was being observed also.

Moonshine had company while she kept an eye on her daughter; her soul-sister Dustwren had taken an interest, since her child, Grassy, was only two turns younger than Nightway.

"How can she sit so still, sunheight after sunheight?" asked Dustwren, sitting on the root of a tree and mending one of her son's tunics.

"It's called being stubborn," chuckled Moonshine. "She thinks if she glares at it long enough it will grow!"

Meanwhile, Grassy tried to console his friend. "Aw! Poor Ni'way." His little hand reached out and patted her softly on the shoulder. "I'll share my berries wifya ifya smile." Grassy offered the morsels to Nightway, a blush of embarrassed shyness creeping to his face. Nightway grinned immediately and pulled Grassy down beside her, and then helped him eat the berries he had offered. The little girl then noticed Mooncrest leaning against a nearby tree. The angular youth grinned and shook his head sadly.

"It'll never grow," he commented.

"What makes you so smart, Mooncrest?!" demanded the girl, black eyes snapping in anger.

"Everyone knows it's dead, Nightway," said the youth as he examined the end of his sword, avoiding her gaze.

"Who says?!" Her voice had risen an octave or two and gained her mother's attention. Mooncrest's simple shrug spoke for itself, and sent Nightway into a frenzy of action.

"I'll show you!" Nightway clenched her fists, eyes focused on the spot where she knew her little seed to be. She found her awareness sinking into the seed, and was startled to find it was singing to her, a trembling voice that made her heart ache.

Moonshine watched her child closely. She could feel that the tree shaping talent was in use, tentative, but strong. **Gently, Nightway. Use the power slowly; not all lives life at such a frenzied pace as you** she sent as way of encouragement to the cub.

Nightway vaguely heard her mother's sending, but it gave her hope. She reached out slowly with her mind and tried to force her will on the seed, to make it blossom forth. The seed stirred slightly, its song a little bit stronger. A deeper voice joined in then, and the cub realized that it was the holt's Father Tree, its ancient song showing her the way to make the seed sprout, dazzle the eye with brilliant color, and make it heartier than its fellows around it. The littlest tree-shaper followed along, adding her own mental embellishments.

Grassy's voice broke her trance as he squealed, "Look, Ni'way! Lookit your pretty flower!" Nightway slumped against the other cubling, exhausted. Mooncrest grinned at her, and shrugged, retracting his earlier statement. Splitpath beamed at her as he knelt to examine the new plant, but it was Moonshine's knowing smile that made Nightway feel proud.

Splitpath picked Nightway up, her limbs relaxed, and eyes drooping. "My flower," the littlest tree-shaper murmured. Once in her sleepfurs, tucked in and ready for some much deserved sleep, the cub asked her mother, "Do you hear the forest sing too?"

"Yes, pretty cub. The Father Tree sings the song of the land, and we echo it when we use the power to change the shape of things, or increase the rate of growth." Moonshine explained, as she adjusted the furs around Nightway. She then went to stand by her lifemate. Nightway's eyes slowly closed, a smile on her face.

Your flower will be there for you tomorrow, and always, now that you have the power, cubling. the lifemates sent together. They then lowered the dark, rough-weave curtain to Nightway's room, and left the littlest tree-shaper to her dreams.

Timber Folk

Jennifer Crosby

Name: Hatfeather (nicknamed "Twitter" because she whistles so much)
Soul Name: Jehn
Gender: Female
Life/Lovemate:
Animal Friend: "Shadowpacer," a large black and grey wolf with a light grey face.

Father: Treebeard

Mother: Fairhand

Sister: --

Brother: Twig (nissing)

Other Relations: --

Eyes: Large and deep purple

Hair: Flaming red and uncontrollably wavy. Worn parted to the side.

Height: 3'8"

Date Born: DF -32

Skills: Running, jumping, hunting, snowball throwing, fighting, story-telling, whistling.

Talent: Extremely powerful sender (can stun an opponent into unconsciousness if angered).

Weapons Used: Bow. Short sword called "Swiftsilver."

Clothing: Dark green form-fitting jumpsuit. Light green vest with hood to hide her outrageous hair.

Jewelry: Two jade earring loops worn in her right ear, fancy belt buckle.

Other Information: Very social and a consummate flirt. Likes to tell stories. A whistler: anytime, anyplace, any chance she gets. An excellent huntress and warrior. Has a very fiery temper, so please DON'T get her angry!



The T. Valley Mythos:

by Joanne Papin

SCENES OF DEPARTURE (DF -3 WT)

Ferret slid out the entryway of her treehome and landed lightly upon the forest floor. The morning air had been turned a misty gold color by the newly risen sun, but she paid no heed, for the sight was familiar to her. Stretching and stamping her feet to relieve sleep cramps, she was unaware of someone approaching until he spoke.

"You didn't join the hunting party last night, why?" Nightstep raised a dark heavy eyebrow enquiringly.

Ferret jumped at the unexpected voice. "My chief, I would not have expected you to be out past sun-up," she said, trying to sound casual.

"I try not to be predictable," he answered dryly. "My question?"

Ferret did not meet his eyes. One hand nervously began to fuss with the ends of her thick plait of blond hair. Nightstep, recognizing these signs to mean that the young elf was contemplating something he wouldn't approve of, waited. With a deep breath, Ferret answered in a rush, "I had to be up late to check my trap line. Fussing with it during the night only scares away the game."

"U-huh," Nightstep observed her from narrowed eyes. "Is that the only reason?"

"Of cour-" Ferret stopped herself. Rebellious she might sometimes be, but she would never actually lie to her chief. "No, there's another," she admitted, her voice barely audible. "I had another quarrel with Mooncrest. He was on the hunt."

"About the usual?" The dark-haired elder did not bother to hide the impatience in his voice. Ferret was obsessively curious about everything, but recently her curiosity had begun to turn to the Upper World outside Timber Valley. None of her tribefolk could understand why she would want to wander outside, but Mooncrest felt more strongly about it than most. During the last season, the disagreements had begun to become most unpleasant, and Nightstep was losing his tolerance for Ferret's point of view.

Her eyes studying the ground between them, Ferret nodded almost guiltily. Her teeth gnawing at her lower lip, she waited for Nightstep's reprimand.

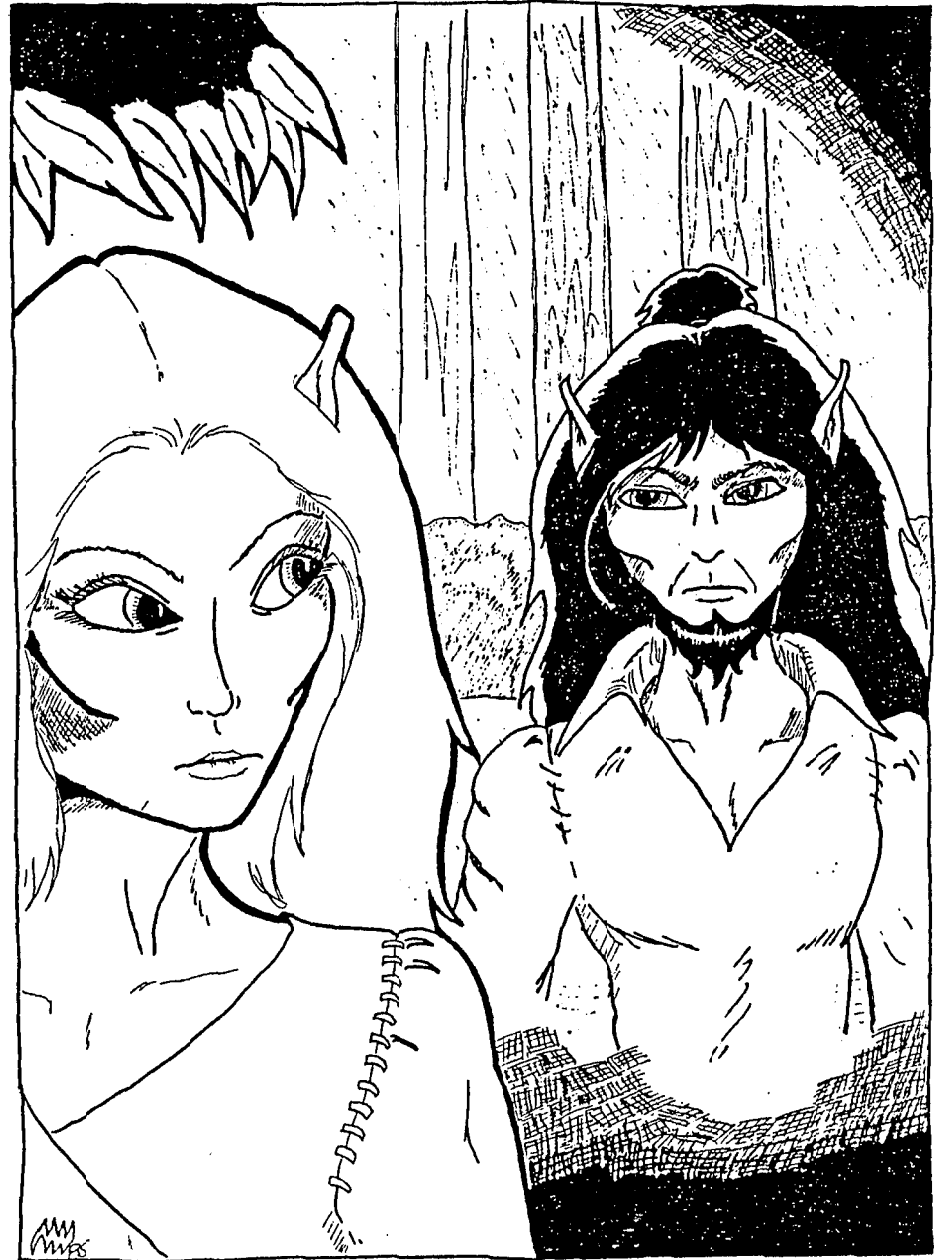
But all the chief said was, "See to your traps." Turning, he walked toward his own hometree.

Once Ferret had finished checking her trap line, removing the small game she had caught and resetting the snares, she settled down on the cold ground and began the messy job of skinning her catch. Meat was placed in a carrying bag and viscera in a small pile to one side. Soon she was occupied with scraping the skins clean.

As she worked, Ferret sent a wordless call to her young wolf-friend. It was quickly answered and the huge beast happily disposed of her catch's viscera in three large gulps before settling down behind her for warmth that was welcome to both.

"Ah, Deerstalker, you've gotten so big," Ferret murmured absently, as she secured the clean skins to the side of the meat bag. "You're practically full..." Her voice trailed off as she stood beside her wolf-friend. He was more than full grown, only a hand's width shorter than Riftweed, the pack leader. Her eyes widened as she wondered how his growth had escaped her notice until this moment.

With an economy of movement, Ferret swung to Deerstalker's broad back, the meat bag and skins over her shoulder. **Let us go exploring, my big friend,** she sent to the greyish-tan wolf, knowing that he would understand only a small portion of her meaning.



It was midday by the time Ferret and Deerstalker arrived at the spot where Sheercliff Pass wound tortuously up the wall of the valley. Remaining in the shelter of the forest, Ferret cautiously dismounted from her wolf and moved forward to study the Pass. Her gaze traveled up the cliff walls to where the Upper World waited.

She could almost feel a non-existent pull from that other, outside place. What was it like out there? Stories from out of the holt's past had described the outside world as huge and filled with danger. But the oldest stories told of wonders out there as well. Were the trees different colors? And what about the game? Were there really other elf tribes still living out there? And what about the humans and trolls? Were they the same or different...more hostile or more friendly? How could the rest of her tribe not wonder about these things--why didn't they understand?

With a sigh filled with impossible yearnings, Ferret turned to rejoin Deerstalker and begin the long journey back to the holt. Someday, she vowed fiercely to herself, someday she would answer these questions.

* * * * *

(DF -2 GT)

Back stiff and face in an expression of uncharacteristic anger, Mooncrest looked down at his tribe-sister. "You are a fool," he said, his voice sharp and barely kept from a shout.

Ferret continued to work the bit of gut into thread for sewing tight seams. Not looking up, she commented blandly, "I have no idea what you're talking about, Moon."

"Yes, you do. You know very well what I mean." His voice dropped to a whispered hiss. "This idiotic desire to leave the Valley. You'll get yourself killed and more after you searching for you." A movement caught his eye and the usually fun-loving elf looked up to see his lovermate watching him.

Seeing that she had caught Mooncrest's eye, Newfur smiled at him wryly and shook her head. While he puzzled over this, she winked and started to walk away, casting a seductive glance over her shoulder toward him.

Mooncrest grinned after her. Glancing down again at Ferret, his grin faded into a scowl. "I'm through trying to talk sense into you. Let someone else try. I'm sick of it." He moved away in pursuit of Newfur.

* * * * *

Ferret approached the small group of elders cautiously. It wasn't that they would not welcome her normally, for this was no special meeting, just a gathering of friends. What made her cautious was uncertainty of the reception her request would receive from her chief. She waited for a pause in the conversation before speaking.

"Nightstep, may I speak with you? Privately?" The chief looked up curiously at the young huntress. What he saw in her eyes made his own narrow.

"If you will excuse me, my friends?" he said casually, standing. A general consent, filled with curious glances and unspoken questions, followed him and Ferret as they walked away from the circle.

"What is it, young one?" Not another fight with Mooncrest?" His tone was stern, but not forbidding, as he waited for Ferret to speak.

"No, my chief...well, perhaps the same fight," she said confusedly. Nightstep nodded, knowing what she meant. "But that's not what I wanted to talk to you about." She breathed deeply and took the plunge. "I would like to leave the Valley--go exploring a ways." She rushed ahead, not allowing Nightstep to comment. "My wolf--Deerstalker--is full grown, so I won't be alone. I know how to hunt and trap and...fight if necessary. And I know enough to avoid a fight if I can. I can skin and prepare a hide if my boots or clothing need repair. And I've learned a lot about herbs from the gardeners. I won't expect anyone to follow me or come to my rescue and there are plenty of other hunters in the tribe.

so I won't be missed. And it's not as though none of our people have ever left the Valley before..." Having run out of words, Ferret fell silent, looking at her chief beseechingly.

For a long time the bearded elder was silent, looking considerably at Ferret, before he replied. "Any member of the tribe would be missed--even you." At the gently teasing tone Nightstep used, Ferret's eyes widened with sudden hope. "I can't be happy that you wish to leave us."

"Only for a time. I will come back in a few seasons' turnings." Hastily she sought to reassure him. Honesty bade her finish, "If I am able." Her eyes dropped as she admitted the danger she asked to go into.

Nightstep exhaled harshly, turning half away from Ferret. "You bring this up to me rather abruptly," he commented.

"I know...but it has been in my mind for many cycles of the moons, as you must know."

"If I forbid this?" He turned back, cupping her chin in his hand to force her gaze up to meet his.

"Then, I...don't go." The chief saw a visible struggle in Ferret's eyes as she whispered her reply. "But I shall always regret not going," she continued, her voice regaining its strength. "And someday, I shall go. But I wish to go now, with your blessing."

Silence surrounded the two as they continued to stare into each other's eyes. There was stern authority and a touch of the anger of helplessness in the dark brown eyes of the chief; Ferret's green gaze held supplication and a faint light of rebellion.

Nightstep allowed his hand to drop from Ferret's chin. A heartbeat later, her gaze dropped from his. **Does this mean so much to you, then?** he sent fiercely.

Yes

"When do you leave?" he asked in an almost normal tone.

"Tonight," she replied instantly, then glancing up, blushed.

"I'm glad I will be giving you permission, then. If you had left in defiance of my commands, you might not have found a welcome upon your return." His tone let her know that he had recognized her immediate reply for what it was--she had decided to leave this night, whatever his reply had been. It also told her that he would forget this disrespect--and perhaps eventually forgive it as well. Without acknowledging this mutual understanding, she nodded.

"I thought to leave immediately, then. No long leave-takings--and no more arguments. Is that alright?"

"Probably for the best. You have no words for your family?"

"No. They know how I feel." She paused for a moment. "Goodbye, my chief. Until my return..." She started to walk off, then turned and threw her arms around him, hugging him fiercely. He returned the hug, then allowed her to move quickly away.

Nightstep returned to his friends' circle slowly.

* * * * *

Ferret stopped only long enough to retrieve the carefully stuffed backpack she had hidden beneath a bush before she headed out of the Timber Folk's home territory and towards Sheercliff Pass. As she ran, she sent her call to Deerstalker. When he had caught up to her, she stopped only long enough to climb aboard and then they were hurrying toward the Pass again.

It was the wind, from Deerstalker's speed, that caused her eyes to tear. And their hurry had nothing to do with a fear she might change her mind about leaving...

(TO BE CONTINUED)