

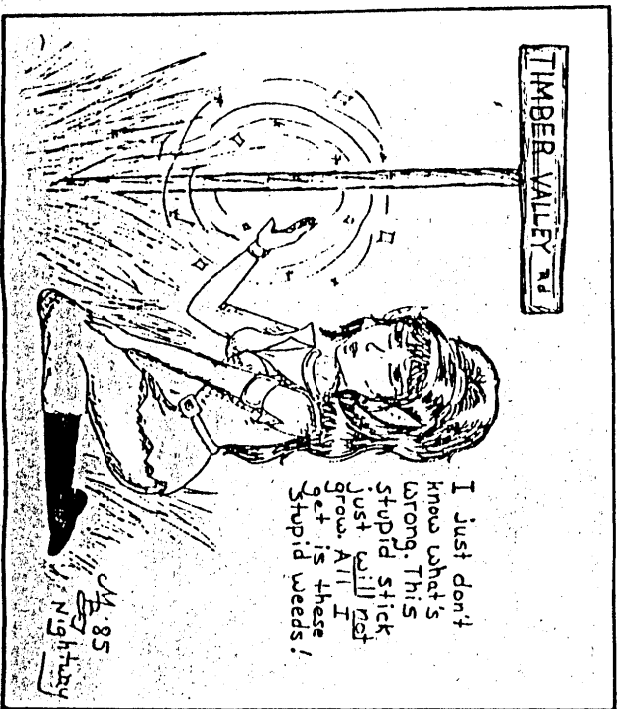
TIMBERS! 12



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FIRST CLASS

TIMBER VALLEY HOLT
c/o Joanne Papin & Ferret
2852 West Henderson
Chicago IL 60618



I just don't
know what's
wrong. This
stupid stick
just will not
grow. All I
get is these
stupid weeds!

You will be due to renew after you
receive issue # _____ of TIMBERS!

Takin' care of business...

TIMBERS!, volume 2, number 12, February 1987. Published quarterly (February, May, August, November) by Timber Valley Holt, a branch of the Nat'l ELFQUEST Fan Club. **TIMBERS!** is © copyright 1986 by Timber Valley Holt, all rights remaining with authors/artists. Material in this newsletter may not be reprinted without permission. Timber Valley Holt does not intend to supercede any previous copyrights held by Wendy & Richard Pini or WaRP Graphics, but we do intend to thank them for bringing us ELFQUEST in all its myriad forms!

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MEMBERSHIPS: A year's membership or renewal to TVH is \$6. Dues include four issues of **TIMBERS!**, updated timelines, maps of TVH area, and other goodies as we think of them. Make checks or money orders payable to Joanne Papin. For your own protection do not send cash through the mail.

BACK ISSUES: (prices include postage)

#1...50¢	#5...\$1.00	#9...\$1.00
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#4...75¢	#8...\$1.25	#12...\$1.50

HOLT GUIDE/CHARACTER REFERENCE GUIDE/& EXTENDED TIMELINE...are all in progress. The computer is here and the information is being gathered and sorted. A special mini-guide is available to members who send a SASE and ask for "The TVH Members Supplement". It includes mini-timeline, short character guide, and members address list.

MAPS...We have maps for the area. If you don't have a copy of the map set, please send a SASE and I'll send it to you.

CHARACTER INFORMATION SHEET/SUPPLEMENT... Please fill out the new CIS if you haven't already done so. If you've sent in your CIS but have had changes/additions occur since then, please use the new CIS supplement form to let me know about them. If you need more copies of the CIS or supplement form, send a SASE with your request and I'll send you some.

NOTE...A "SASE" is a Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope. I appreciate them whenever possible. Or, you could send stamps and save yourself postage on the envelope of the SASE.

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And special thanks to the collating party - Nikki Wieleba, Sandy Gillispie, and Ann Purtell

For TROLL WARS info, please check pages 21 & 27



Irony-Ferret
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DOWN IN THE VALLEY



DF 22 WT

This issue of **TIMBERS!** is late--very late--and it's all my fault. I'm sorry, I apologize, but it was unavoidable. I'll do better in future, I promise. Next issue will be a bit delayed because of how late this one is, but after that things should straighten out. (Knock on wood.) And my apologies on those of you who've been waiting for a letter from me--you should be hearing from me real soon. I've already made great inroads on my backed up correspondence--but then everybody that I answered wrote back and now I'm back where I started.

The good news is...ta da--my computer has arrived. Check out the special TVH Members Supplement included with this issue--it's the first thing off my computer for the benefit of the Holt. (And also an apology for the late newsletter...sigh.) Now that my computer has arrived, I can start coordinating all the Holt information and timelines and CISs, etc., and start working on the extended timeline, the Holt guide, and the Character Reference Guide. (Yay!) To help keep these projects as up-to-date as possible (and because this winter has not been the most organized time in my life) I've enclosed a copy of the TVH:CISupplement for each of you. If there've been any changes in your character, or any additions, since you sent in the last CIS, please fill out the update and send it in now. You need only put down the information that has changed or been added. Oh, yeah. Fill in the character's name, too.

There are two stories in this issue. First, the conclusion of "Loose Ends", and second, a story that we've been calling the prologue to the Troll Wars around here. There's also the usual features (business page, Valley Talk, and the profile), but in addition, as an extra added apology for the lateness of this issue, I've included a four-page art showcase, featuring some of the many character sketches and fillos that the members have been sending in. I hope you enjoy it. This beautiful artwork has been sitting in my file unseen for so long and I've been dying to share it with you all.

Next...we've had a membership boom! I'd like to welcome the 15 (count 'em, 15!) new members of Timber Valley Holt--Becky Slocombe, Joycelyn Poon, Lynne Joseph, Shelley Davis, Lisa Keim, Laura Lionson, Jeff Rawson, Philip Shaw, Becky Behler, William Shawcross, Ryan Galiotto, Maria Teresa Dodson, Stacy Lucas, Johannes Huber, and Dana Evans. Whew! And to thank Sharon Stanford, Stacy Lung, Ruth Clark and others for recommending IVH to them. Membership is still open, folks, at least for a while. Keep on telling your friends about us, okay? Okay!

SIEGE AT BLUE MOUNTAIN...as of today, only 2 issues are out. I gather they've chosen to go with the old quarterly format after all. I've seen some artwork from #3 and #4 and it looks like things aren't going to be any quieter for the Wolfriders for quite some time to come.

BLOOD OF TEN CHIEFS...the long-awaited short-story collection about Cutter's ancestors, came out during the Christmas season. It's not quite the ELFQUEST we're used to--there're no illustrations, for one thing--but it's proven popular. There was talk of a sequel, or even a series, to follow.

According to a recent interview (FOUR COLOR MAGAZINE, vol.1, no.4, March '87) with Richard and Wendy, they haven't given up their plans for taking ELFQUEST to animation. No solid news yet, but they're still working on it at least.

And, finally, our very own Jennifer Crosby (whose art is featured on this page) did the interior illustrations of the most recent EQ game supplement, ELF WAR. Obviously, this is a must buy!



2

3

Tying Up Loose Ends

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE... Four elves left their distant home to go exploring. After traveling for nearly a year, their camp was attacked one night by a maddened bear-creature that could Send. Only Larkspur survived the attack, using her new-found Talent of Anti-Healing. Gravely wounded, Larkspur fled with the monster in close pursuit. They soon reached the Endless Sea of Grass.

Grassy was riding his grass-eater, Charger, in the Upper World and discovered Larkspur. He brought her to Timber Valley Holt where they reached the safety of the Thorn Barrier just ahead of the bear-creature. While healing Larkspur, Goldenbraid discovered that they were half-sisters. (Her father had disappeared long ago.)

While the monster prowled outside the Barrier, the Holt elders met in the Father Tree. Rainshy disobeyed Nightstep's order to stay within the Barrier's protection and was killed by the creature. A full tribal Council was called to debate the best method of killing the demon bear. It was decided to trap the creature first in an attempt to discover why it could Send. Jasmine remembered a legend of her birth-tribe about an elf who could change into animals and had become trapped finally in the form of a wolf. The Healers agreed that this could be the answer to the demon bear's Sending. After an eight of days the trap was ready. The Holt's fastest runners led the monster in a deadly race to where the pitfall was concealed. When the trap failed to work properly, Hushleaf took a desperate change to fix it and the bear tumbled into the pit....

PART FOUR: THE BITTER END

by Joanne Papin
illustrated by Melissa Van Houten
from an original idea by Jennifer Hawthorne

DF 19 LC

"They've got him!"

A howl of triumph rose in the throats of the tribe at Freshwind's words, received directly from Nightstep at the pit trap. Silverleaf, waiting beside her sister to open a path in the Thorn Barrier, went swiftly to work. Goldenbraid and Greeneyes were the first through. Two Star, about to follow them, stopped to look at the curious faces of his gathered tribesfolk.

"I don't think we'll need all of you out there," he suggested. His unyielding tone caused many hopeful expressions to fall. "Rouge, Jasmine, and..." he looked inquiringly at Freshwind. The chief's mate indicated her son with a slight movement of her head. "And Skyflame will come now. The rest stay here."

Disappointed, those left behind returned to their hometrees or to the Council Clearing to wait. No one noticed Rosemist catch at Foxvine's arm and whisper something in his ear, and no one was there to see the two of them leave the Holt through Silverleaf's path.

* * *

Nightstep was lecturing an unrepentant-looking Hushleaf on the risks he had taken when the Healers arrived with their companions. Greeneyes immediately ran to where LongKnife stood beside the open pit, with the others who had stood watch in the treetops during the capture. All of them had had arrows trained on the bear during Windrace's passage and Hushleaf's taunting dance, but it was probable that, had they needed to loose them, one or the other of the endangered elves would have died under the monster's claws.

The bear roared and lunged upwards, trying to scale the walls of the excavation as Greeneyes peered over the edge. Trembling, the gentle Healer drew back to cling to LongKnife.

"It's alright, pretty cub,** the hunter assured his tiny lifemate. **We were very careful to make the sides too steep for him to climb or jump out. Why'd you think it took so long to dig?*" Her beautiful green eyes even larger than usual, she nodded, but she was still careful to keep behind LongKnife.

Goldenbraid moved to the edge of the pit as well. **Nightstep, we need space. Too many are crowded here, someone might accidentally fall in. And all these elves are very distracting.** Nightstep nodded at her request.

"Alright--everybody but the Healers, over here and attend me. No, LongKnife, you can stay with Greeneyes. And Jasmine, go over by Goldenbraid for now." When

the shifting was accomplished, he looked at those gathered. "Redlace and Starlight, accompany the tree-shapers back to the Holt. Tell Wavesong that I want her here. Let Freshwind know what's happened so far, and tell her we'll keep her updated." Trying to hide looked of disappointment, those named nodded and headed off. "Skyflame, I want you, Buckeye, Rouge, Ivory and Frost to start looking for our decoys. We haven't seen Windrace, Silver or Knifeblade since the bear went into the pit--I want to make sure none of them was hurt. And Dawnwatch is out there also. Well--get moving!" Finally, he turned to those still left. "Two Star, Sapphire, Silverhair...I'm going to want you here with me. We're going to have an elders council here, once Wavesong arrives and Goldenbraid reports on what she and Greeneyes have found out." They nodded and settled down to wait. Nightstep walked over to where Goldenbraid and Jasmine were explaining to Greeneyes their idea that the demon bear might be an elf somehow trapped in bear shape.

"Well, Goldenbraid, now that we have him, what are we going to do with him?" Goldenbraid flashed him an annoyed look. She did not feel this was the time for frivolous comments, especially from her chief. Nightstep shrugged, trying hard to hide a smirk, and returned to Two Star and the others. Goldenbraid's lifemate exchanged a glance of sympathy with his friend as he joined them on the ground.

"She's a little nervous," he volunteered innocently. Nightstep gave him a sour look in return.

Once Jasmine was finished telling her story to Greeneyes, Goldenbraid sent her back to Nightstep. "There's nothing you can do to help here and Nightstep might need you for something," she explained tersely. Jasmine only nodded and did as she was told.

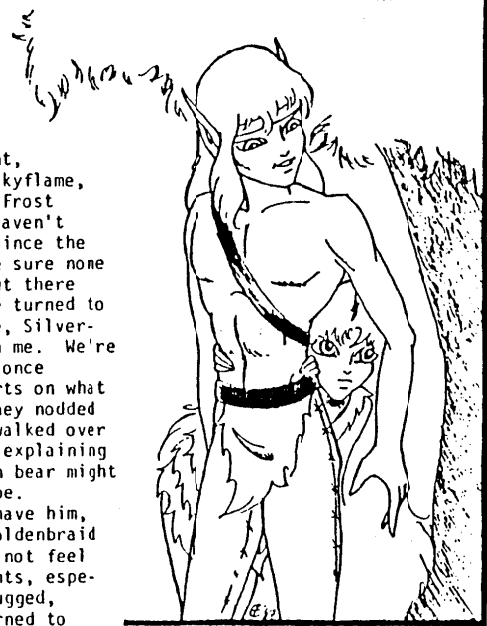
Goldenbraid met Greeneyes' eyes for a long moment. **Ready?*" she lock-sent to her fellow Healer. Reluctantly, the tiny elf nodded and reached out a hand to meet the one Goldenbraid offered. Holding each others' hand as though the physical bond would strengthen the lock-sent that bound their Talents, the two entered a healing trance together, delicately sending their combined awareness down to the trapped demon bear.

For a long time all was silent in the clearing. LongKnife, sitting beside Greeneyes with an arm around her in silent support, could see the strain on both faces. A faint sheen of sweat reflected moonlight from Goldenbraid's wide forehead and Greeneyes was trembling again. He looked down into the pit and was surprised to find the demon creature had stopped its confined pacing. Reared on its hind legs, it stared upwards toward the two Healers with him, its shaggy massive head swaying slowly from side to side in the manner of a bird hypnotized by a snake.

Abruptly the bear pulled away. With an ear-splitting roar, it crashed its massive form against the wall of the pit, causing the earth to shudder at the impact. LongKnife grabbed Goldenbraid with one arm while keeping hold of Greeneyes with the other and dragged the Healers away from the crumbling edge of the pit. Then he dropped both from his grasp and fell to his knees, his hands over his face and firm reality replaced with the madness of the bear's Sending. Though Grassy had claimed that it sent in words, it was beyond such coherence now. Instead it sent images and feelings, visions of himself and his beloved Greeneyes and all his adopted tribe, dismembered...dying...dead...carrion for the corpse-eaters. The sent illusion seemed so strong that for a moment he could feel the pain of his ravaged body, the blood leaving his veins, the air rattling dryly in his pierced lungs....

And abruptly it was over. LongKnife drew a shuddering breath and looked up to see that he had not been the only one affected by the monster's attack. Greeneyes and Goldenbraid, hands still locked together, lay on the ground only now beginning to stir. He supposed that, open to the creature as they'd been, they would have received the worst of it. He didn't want to imagine what might be worse than what he'd experienced.

"High Ones!" Nightstep, pulling himself again upright, shook his head to clear



it and gazed sharply at each of his recovering tribesmembers in turn. "That thing really can Send!"

Wavesong listened with interest as Starlight and Redlace related the details of the capture. When they reached the part about Nightstep sending them back with a request for her to join him at the pit, she sighed mightily. "I suppose it was too much to hope that you would have told me that little detail first!" she exclaimed tartly. "I'll be leaving now, Freshwind--be sure I'll see you are kept informed of what's happening out there."

Freshwind nodded. She was trying not to worry, but she didn't like not being near the action any more than the rest of the tribe did. Nightstep was counting on her to keep everyone in the Holt, though, and so she would.

"Elder!" From the shadows of the Father Tree, near where they'd been sitting, appeared Larkspur. She ran to Wavesong's side and took hold of her hands imperatively. "You must convince them to destroy this murderous thing! I know what it is--pure evil! It mustn't be allowed to kill more of our kind. Please, Elder!"

Gently, Wavesong detached herself from the girl's grip. "If it needs killing, be sure we will see to it. But an injured beast will attack because it's maddened by pain, when normally it would never do so. We must be sure."

"I am sure! Oh, don't you see--it murdered them all..." As she began to cry again, soundlessly, Sandstorm put an arm around her and led her away. They could hear her murmuring still as she left, "...murdered them all..."

"Poor cub," said Freshwind sadly. "If this doesn't end soon, it may prove too much for her."

**Even if it does end...how it ends may prove too much for her. Seeing her like this almost makes me wish we'd gone ahead

and killed the thing at once.** With that uncharacteristically bitter thought, Wavesong left to join the group at the pit.

Windrace, supported by his brother on one side and his lovemate on the other, limped into the trap clearing. "What's wrong with everybody?" he asked flippantly.

Greeneyes and Goldenbraid were sitting up again, though both looked a bit dazed. The others already in the clearing were still pale from their recent attack. Everyone felt better than they'd have believed possible only moments before. So, when Windrace's words cut suddenly into the silence of the clearing, even Nightstep jumped.

Turning to the audacious hunter with relief that he was alright, Nightstep's eyes narrowed at sight of Foxvine and Rosemist propping him up. "Are you alright?" he asked with concern. He nodded abrupt dismissal of Windrace's breezy account of a pulled muscle from running all out and looked more sharply at Foxvine and Rosemist. "I suppose you have a good excuse for not still being at the Holt." He made it a statement, not a question, and his tone was not encouraging.

Foxvine shot an accusing look at Rosemist. Pretty females--they should be exiled from Holt life. How had she convinced him to do something so likely to bring Nightstep's wrath down on his head? Unhappily, he remembered the skin of dreamberry wine that hung from his belt. That was how.

While Foxvine was hurling silent recriminations at Rosemist's pretty red-haired head, the delicate songstress smiled shyly at her chief. "No one knew if Windrace was injured, my chief," she said softly with deceptive innocence. "I was worried

about him--and so was Foxy. We knew you had captured the beast and that the danger was past...and that you had many things to concern you now. And so..."

"And so you took it upon yourselves to go searching for him," finished Nightstep dryly. Trying to keep a straight face while Rosemist used her beesweet-coated words was hard on him, almost as hard as staying angry at her. "You're right--we have many concerns right now. But I did not forget about Windrace. There are others out searching for him right now."

"Not anymore. I told 'em he was found. They're taking 'Silver and Knifeblade back to the Holt. Poor cubs are exhausted." Dawnwatch had materialized silently from the surrounding forest while Nightstep spoke.

A sudden roar from the pit, accompanied by a much milder sending than the last, turned everyone's attention to Foxvine. The dreamberry-tender was standing at the edge of the pit, calmly watching the demon bear's frantic attempts to reach him. Looking up, Foxvine was surprised and pleased to find everyone's attention on him. "He's in a foul tempter," he said softly, jerking a thumb down to indicate the bear. "Why don't you feed him some dreamberries. That's what I give Windrace when he's in a mood like this."

"And I'm very grateful to you," remarked Windrace's lovemate fervently, much to Windrace's indignation.

"Foxvine, how anybody could be such a fool as you is beyond my understanding," snapped Dawnwatch waspishly. "Why don't you take yourself and your dreamberries and--"

"It's actually not such a bad idea," interrupted Goldenbraid. Turning to Nightstep, she continued. "Jasmine was correct, my friend. This monster once was one of our kind. His mind has been twisted inside out somehow--whether by being trapped in this form or from some other cause, I cannot say. But he is afraid and injured in his mind. I think he can be healed. We might possibly even bring him back to his rightful form, given time and the blessing of the High Ones. But we must be able to touch him to do more. Perhaps Foxvine's dreamberries are the answer--or at least part of it."

Dawnwatch looked from Goldenbraid to Nightstep. "You can't possibly be serious! This is beyond belief! I--"

"Silence, Dawnwatch! I do not tell you how to assist at a birthing, do not you tell me Healers' business!" Goldenbraid seldom spoke so harshly. Dawnwatch fell instantly silent, her jaw dropping in astonishment.

"It might be best if you helped Rosemist take Windrace back to their hometree," suggested Nightstep. "Right now, Dawnwatch." Anger battled with loyalty--loyalty won and Dawnwatch moved to lend a shoulder to Windrace. There was no suggestion that the Healers spend their strength healing an injury that was painful but minor--not when they prepared for the challenge of the demon bear.

"I think you'd better stay here for now, Foxvine," Nightstep continued as Foxvine started to follow. "Jasmine, Silverhair and...LongKnife. Go with Foxvine to the dreamberry patch. Cut as many berries as you can carry and bring them here."

"No, you can't--I was just joking--the harvest is just coming ripe!" Foxvine's voice rose in a wail of anguish.

"Next time, don't be so quick with your ideas," Sapphire replied slyly. "Come along cub. No time to dawdle."

They passed Wavesong on the path as they left, Foxvine still protesting weakly. "Nightstep," Wavesong greeted her nephew fondly. "What's going on here? I just arrive at your summons and everyone else is leaving?"

"Not quite everyone else," corrected Two Star. "What took you so long?"

"Next time, make sure the messenger knows to deliver the message first, before telling the long version of the news," she replied obliquely to Nightstep. "Now, what's going on here? I promised Freshwind we'd keep her advised on what was happening."

"Hopefully Rosemist will take care of that. As for what has happened..." Swiftly Nightstep brought Wavesong up to date on the latest developments. As he



finished, Goldenbraid spoke.

"We may have a problem, Nightstep." She indicated Greeneyes with a hand gesture. Greeneyes was sitting under a tree, as far from the trapped demon bear as possible without leaving the clearing. "She's afraid of it. I don't blame her--I'm not feeling very brave right now either. And it's hard to forget what it--I mean, what he did to Larkspur and Rainshy."

"Nightstep, Larkspur is another problem." Wavesong told them of the incident that had occurred as she was leaving the Council Clearing. When she had finished, Nightstep nodded brusquely and walked over to where Greeneyes sat.

Kneeling beside her, the chief reached out and brushed the unruly over-long center curls from her eyes.

"Greeneyes," he sent gently, "if you do not wish to do this thing, you do not have to. Whatever happens, there will be no blame to you. Do you understand?" He cupped her chin with his fingers and lifted it so her eyes met his.

"I understand, my chief," she sent in her feather-soft 'voice'.

"I will be ready to do my part when LongKnife returns--with the dreamberries," she added.

"Good." Nightstep stood and rejoined the others. Wavesong and Goldenbraid were still talking about Larkspur. Goldenbraid looked worried as she leaned back against Two Star. "Whatever happens, happens," he interrupted. "It's a human's game to worry about something beforehand." Goldenbraid nodded wearily, though a frown line still creased her brow. "Greeneyes will be fine once LongKnife returns."

"She still needs him with her to feel brave," Goldenbraid commented. "Loosing their cub before it was born was very hard on her. She loves children so."

The dreamberry gatherers arrived soon after, arms laden with berry-filled branches. Foxvine didn't look quite as miserable as he had before--and his branches were noticeably less berry-laden than those of the others. Goldenbraid immediately took over at their return, ordering the berries to be thrown into the pit. "And we have to hope it--he's--hungry enough to eat them."

"What if they're poisonous to him in that form?" Greeneyes asked in sudden concern. With LongKnife back, she'd perked up considerably and was now almost back to her usual cheerful self.

"We hope they aren't," replied Goldenbraid. If possible, she now looked even more worried. "Of course, if they are, the problem is solved much more easily."

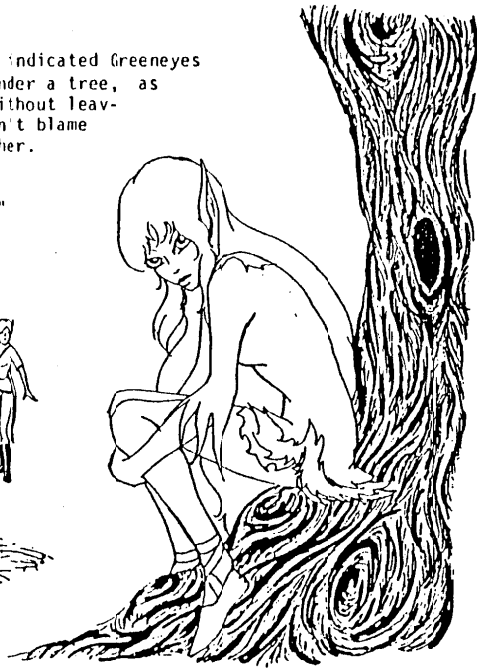
"Goldenbraid!" Greeneyes was sincerely shocked.

"Larkspur may be a stranger to the rest of you, but she is my sister," replied Goldenbraid rather fiercely. "If we help this thing, imagine how she'll feel. It killed her lover and friends, it tried to kill her. It hunted her for High Ones along know how long while she was wounded and near death, and in order to protect herself she was forced to pervert a healing gift." She stopped abruptly and closed her eyes as though in pain. "I want to help this poor cursed creature, High Ones know that. But what he did to Larkspur--and the others--and Rainshy--that's very hard to forget."

"We all feel that way," Nightstep replied. "Perhaps not as strongly for Larkspur's sake as you do, but enough. Shall we just kill this thing, old friend? If you think that is the best answer, say so and it will be done."

For the first time since arriving at the trap site, Goldenbraid smiled, feeble though it was. "You know me too well, 'old friend'," she replied. "You don't mean that for a second--you just say it to bring me to my senses. And," she straightened, pulling away from Two Star, "it has worked. Come, Greeneyes, let us get to work."

After some debate, it was decided to bring the bear-elf out of the pit, rather than chance having it awaken and attack the Healers while they were trapped with it



in the deep hole. Jasmine was sent to the Holt to fetch Smoke, an expert at making strong rope quickly, as well as several of the strongest elves in the Holt to aid in hauling the bear's bulk from the pit. She returned with Smoke and Redlace. When Nightstep asked her why Redlace instead of someone more muscular, she replied simply, "I thought a 'lifter' might be more useful than someone with only muscle power." Nightstep nodded and smiled his approval, causing her to flush becomingly.

Foxvine had been stationed at the edge of the pit to keep watch on the bear-monster. The sight of the frenzied creature trampling and crushing his dreamberries made him wince and avert his eyes. He looked back into the pit quickly when the sounds of the bear's rampage were replaced by near-silence. The creature had settled down and was ravenously stuffing pawfuls of dreamberries into its mouth. Foxvine was sure it would never stop eating, but suddenly the creature's eyes rolled back in its head as it passed out. "Thank the High Ones," he breathed almost inaudibly, for there were still untouched branches of berries piled at one corner of the pit. Quickly, he informed Nightstep of the bear's condition before it could wake and eat more, or turn over and squash the precious fruit.

Nightstep sent Redlace down with a crude sling to fasten around the monster. After much heaving and straining, greatly helped by Redlace's Talent, they got the shape-shifter out of the pit. "If I'd known we were going to do this, I might have hesitated at having the thing dug so deep!" Nightstep commented privately to Two Star, who nodded his agreement. Goldenbraid and Greeneyes settled down beside the groggy, well-secured bulk and once again entered their joined Healing trance.

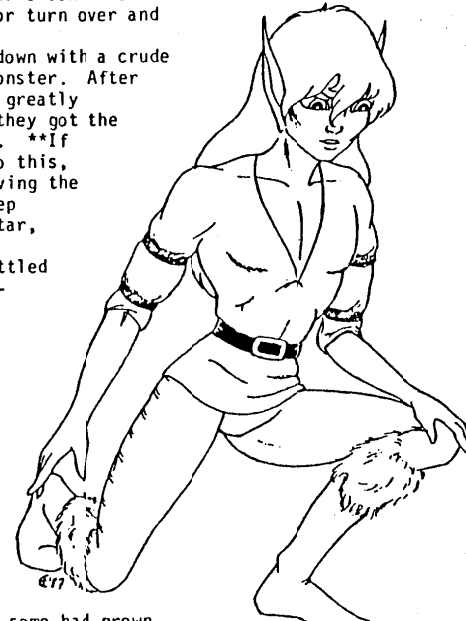
Time passed, but very slowly for the Healers. First they concentrated on the injured portions of the creature's mind. They found that somewhere far in the past, another Healer--though they would have hesitated to call him or her that--had used the talent to twist the bear-elf's mind. Some of the madness had been

directly caused by that, but some had grown out of that original injury, making it even more difficult to trace and heal. With the dreamberries influencing its system, the self-shaper was quiescent under their probing, except at one point when they accidentally brushed against the secret place where its soul name was held. The creature's agitation, more fear than anger or threats this time, made them quickly move on. Finally, they emerged from the trance, feeling drained and with many of their previous conceptions of both the bear-elf and the Healing talent changed forever.

Two Star and LongKnife had remained by their lifemates' sides throughout the time they spent in their trance. Now they helped their mates to drink from water skins, then Two Star ordered some food brought. Nightstep patiently waited until the glazed look had left the eyes of both Healers, then he asked what they had found.

"It was horrible--someone did this to him--" began Greeneyes.

"No, that's not totally true," corrected Goldenbraid. "He took the bear-shape willingly...and he could never have been easy to live with, he is far too proud." Here she shared a secret look with Two Star, remembering the stormy beginnings of their lifemating. "But that natural tendency was cruelly exploited by someone who wanted to turn him into a killer. He will always be difficult, but if we can help him regain his original shape, perhaps there is a chance." Quickly, she added some more details



of what they had found, concluding with, "He is very weak from lack of food and rest. We seem to have driven him almost as hard as he has driven us. He's going to need food when he regains consciousness, something light for an empty stomach, but enough to restore his strength somewhat. Two Star, my love, I have shown you--"

The elder nodded. "I'll take Sapphire and Wavesong with me to find what you want." Suiting actions to words, he turned and headed into the woods, Sapphire and Wavesong following.

"Always the ladies!" she admonished with a gentle smile. "I don't want to stop now and Greeneyes agrees," her co-Healer nodded vehemently, "that it's better to know right away if we can help him regain his proper shape. The waiting might undo some of the work we've already done." **Greeneyes,** she lock-sent abruptly, noticing how the tiny elf was struggling against a yawn, **Are you sure you're able to continue?*

Oh, yes. I want to know if we can do it too. And besides, she reached out to again take Goldenbraid's hand, **We can always sleep later. We've eaten and rested--please let's continue.**

Goldenbraid nodded and drew a deep breath. **I wonder what he's going to look like as an elf?*

she open-sent to those gathered around before sinking back into the Healing trance.

This time the onlookers could see that something was happening. The bear's outline shimmered and shifted, the hair on its hide seeming to disappear back into its skin, and the bear bulk slowly but steadily shrinking. It took only a fraction of the time that the first part of the healing had required, but Two Star, Wavesong and Sapphire were still back in plenty of time to see the end. In between one eye-blink and the next, the bear shape was gone and in the place where it had lain was a tall, painfully thin male elf, his pearly white skin a sharp contrast for the glossy raver-black of his straight, calf-length hair.

"A High One!" exclaimed Redlace in astonishment. "No, I don't think so, youngster," replied Two Star, but he wasn't as certain as he sounded.

"No, not a High One," said Goldenbraid in an exhausted voice from her place beside the once-bear. "But very close to them, I think. This elf must have been old before any of us were born." Two Star moved over to where she slumped, concerned over the weakness of her voice.

LongKnife said quietly, "My chief, Greeneyes is asleep. I think she's alright other than that."

"She is," answered Goldenbraid. "She did the bulk of the work just now. She has a...talent, related to Healing, that I don't have. I think it's what turned the trick just now." She barely finished her sentence before she too was asleep.

Two Star turned to Nightstep. "I think we should move everyone back to the Holt. Perhaps to the Father Tree?"

Nightstep tore his fascinated gaze from the unconscious form of the bear-elf. "Of course. You're right. I think we have enough here to carry everything back, including the herbs you've gathered. And perhaps we could form a litter from the sling we used to take him out of the pit..."

Just about the whole tribe was waiting for them by the time they emerged from the Thorn Barrier. Excited shouts and questions that tumbled over each other filled the early morning, but not even the noise disturbed the two Healers and their patient as they were carried past the crowd toward the Father Tree.

"What's wrong with Greeneyes?" "And Goldenbraid?" "Where's the bear monster?" "What happened to him?" "Who's that?" "They've got a stranger with them!" "Another stranger!" And so it went.

Nightstep was the last to emerge from the thorns. He held up his hands for silence and was



almost knocked over when a white-haired fury just his own height ran up and threw her arms around him. After having fiercely hugged her mate, Freshwind pulled back and mock-punched him in the ribs. **Is this how you keep me 'informed', Fuli?*

**Next time--if there is a next time and I sincerely hope there won't be--next time I am going with you! Two Star or Wavesong can be the stay-behind then!*

Nightstep caught Freshwind's fists in his hands. **Truly, I am sorry, Noai,** he replied, continuing the lock-sent. **But, truth be known, we were a trifle busy.**

"I'll just bet you were," she whispered. "Just wait till I've talked to Two Star!" Nightstep winced almost invisibly, but Freshwind caught it and smiled knowingly.

The startled Timber Folk watched while their chief and his mate went through with this usually private ritual of greeting. It was strange to see Nightstep so playful, especially during such a time of emergency.

Nightstep turned his attention back to the tribe. "Now...to answer your questions. Goldenbraid and Greeneyes are simply tired from performing a very difficult Healing. The bear monster is gone, never to return" (I hope) "And the stranger is--"

"It's him, isn't it." Larkspur spoke from the edge of the crowd. "I can see that it's him. How can you--it isn't right!" She spun and ran, disappearing through the trees in the direction of Goldenbraid and Two Star's hometree.

Murmurs again ran through the gathered tribesmembers. "What did she mean--"

Nightstep spoke over the crowd. "The 'stranger' is the bear monster. He was an elf trapped in bear form. It drove him mad." The details could wait till everyone was calmer. "Our Healers were able to restore him. When they have rested and wake up, we'll know more. Until then, we have the White Time to prepare for--everyone must have a dozen tasks each. Unders:ood?"

Like the magic of the High Ones, Nightstep's words caused the crowd to disperse. Relieved, he turned to Freshwind. **I wish we could return to our hometree...but there's still things to attend to. Coming with?*

**Try to stop me!*

Two Star found Larkspur pacing back and forth in the confined space of his hometree's main chamber. **Hello there, cub. Would you like to talk about it?*

**Talk? What good would that do? Would it bring back Lightfoot, Darkstar or Cedar? Would it destroy the thing that killed them? Would it make any of you change your minds about that thing?*

Two Star considered carefully before answering. **No, I don't suppose it would do any of those things. But it might help you to accept what has happened.**

**Why should I accept it! Am I any more unreasonable than your friend Silverhair? Just because his lifemate was killed, years ago, he won't speak out loud. Is that reasonable? Why should I be any more reasonable?*

"Because the only one you are hurting is yourself. It isn't wrong to have survived--it just...happened." Larkspur continued to glare at him with her eyes that looked so much like Goldenbraid's. "After the Death Flood, it took a long time for all of us to adjust. So many died...we all wondered why we had survived. But...it was as it was, could not be changed. And so we learned to go on."

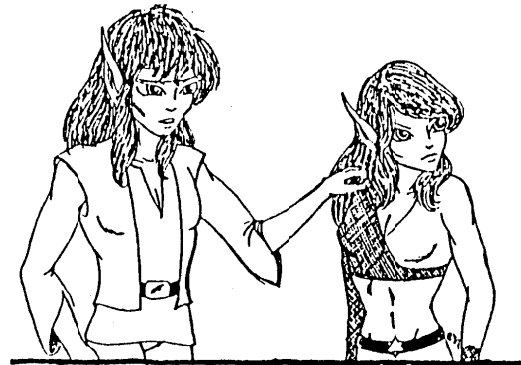
"The thing that killed my friends--and your tribefriend--is still alive. That could be changed!"

"And what good would revenge do? Would taking his life bring them back? No, of course not. Answering evil with evil is never a true answer. But perhaps Goldenbraid and Greeneyes have been able to salvage some good, if they have truly succeeded in healing--"

"That monster!" interjected Larkspur defiantly. But Two Star only nodded. "Yes. That monster."

Goldenbraid sat back among the furs of the sleeping chamber she was sharing with Greeneyes in the Father Tree. **Such luxury,** she commented lightly to the little Healer. **We should overdo ourselves more often!*

**Not if it always hurts this much!*



still curled up in the sleeping furs and had yet to open her eyes, though she was as awake as Goldenbraid.

"**Stop being lazy and sit up. It's laying in the same position for so long that's gotten to you. And these berries are really quite good,**" she added temptingly.

"**All right! Pass me that bowl--I'm hungry too!**" With a chuckle, Goldenbraid pushed the bowl over.

"And how are my two lovely patients this fine dusk?" Trilight entered the sleeping chamber. He did not have the healing talent, but he was the finest non-magical healer in the Holt and Goldenbraid's best pupil.

"We're just fine," answered Goldenbraid contentedly.

"**Did we really sleep through the whole day?**" asked Greeneyes wonderingly.

"Yes, you did. And I hope you really meant that about being fine, Goldenbraid."

Suddenly Trilight looked worried.

"What's wrong?" Both Healers sat up abruptly.

"It's the...we can't keep calling him the demon bear or the monster, I guess. He hasn't woken yet--I can't get any food into him."

"**Trilight, after you were so against us helping him, you've been caring for him? I'm proud of you!**" Goldenbraid lock-sent.

As Trilight blushed, Greeneyes demanded, "**What did you say--it's not fair to 'talk' so I can't hear!**"

Aloud Trilight answered, "What sort of healer turns his back on someone who's ill? But I'm really worried about this."

"I'll go take a look at him. It's probably nothing, he just needs a little push to come back out..." Goldenbraid wrapped one of the fur coverings around herself and followed Trilight out of the room.

"**Wait for me!**" Greeneyes scrambled to follow, the fur she had chosen to wrap around herself trailing to the floor and tripping her as she walked.

The self-shaper lay deathly still in another of the small upper sleeping chambers of the Father Tree. Deep blue shadows showed under his eyes and his cheeks were sunken below strongly jutting cheekbones. His skin was clammy to Goldenbraid's touch and upon feeling it she sucked her breath in sharply.

"Trilight, quickly, run and warm some water. Put the herbs that Two Star gathered into the water as it boils--fast as you can!"

"**What is it?*" Greeneries perched on a ledge at the side of the room.

"He's in shock. He hasn't eaten anything for a full change of the Greater Moon except that thunder-runner four nights ago and the dreamberries last night. Too many dreamberries can kill even an elf, though we'd have a hard time convincing Foxvine of that. And on top of all this, think of the drain the Healing made on him--and the change in shape and size. We have to save him--if we don't, Trilight may blame himself and I won't have that happen."

Once again the Healers poured their Talent into the bear-elf. When Trilight arrived with the warm liquid Goldenbraid had ordered, he found the Healers both unaware of his presence. Soon, however, Goldenbraid emerged from her healing trance, followed closely by Greeneyes.

"Ah, good. You have it." Goldenbraid focused on Trilight with a smile. "He should be coming around any time now..." She trailed off to watch the bear-elf.

"**How is he doing?*" Freshwind had arrived in the chamber's doorway soundlessly. Trilight backed out to make room for her inside.

"If he wakes up and drinks some of this, he'll probably be fine. If he doesn't wake--he probably won't. Ever."

"Oh." Freshwind pondered Goldenbraid's words for a moment, then reached out and gently shook his shoulder. His body yielded easily to her touch, no resistance in it at all. "Come on, Bearwalker. Wake up!"

"**What did you call him?*" asked Greeneyes curiously.

"Oh--just something I started calling him during the time I was one of the decoys."

"**Look!**" Greeneyes returned their attention to the bed.

The elf's eyes had opened. They were a pale yellow color and held bewilderment in their depths. His eyes turned to Freshwind and he squinted trying to focus.

"Wh-whitewing?" His voice was deep and low, harsh from lack of use--or from repeated



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roaring. "No. Not Whitewing..." He turned his head restlessly.

"You're at Timber Valley Holt," Freshwind said softly. "My name is Freshwind, and these are our Healers, Goldenbraid and Greeneyes."

"Healers..." His eyes closed, then opened wide again. Looking wildly around the room, he sent powerfully, "**Mother! Moonhart! Save me...**" Before any of the three could react to that, his look calmed again. "No...foolish...that was long ago." He looked at Freshwind again, but more focused this time. "You look familiar," he said in a quite different tone. "I seem to remember trying to kill you."

The Healers both gasped, but Freshwind only nodded calmly. "Yes, several times. You almost got me once, too."

"...with claws," he continued as though he hadn't heard her. Suddenly wild again, he pulled his hands from under the furs and brought them up to his face. For long moments he stared at the long-fingered elven hands. "How did you do this?" he demanded of Freshwind. "How did you--no. It was you. Both of you!" A strange mixture of emotions passed across his face as he looked between the two Healers. Fear, anger, hope...suddenly all overwhelmed by fear. "I--" A wracking cough took hold of him, staking his gaunt form till it seemed it would come apart. When the coughing spasm had passed, Goldenbraid raised his head with one hand, the bowl of broth held to his lips with her other.

"Drink this," she commanded. Warily he sipped at first, but soon he had taken the bowl in his own hands and greedily emptied it.

"More!" The bowl emptied, he held it imperiously toward Goldenbraid.

"Not just yet. Let that settle first." She lock-sent to Greeneyes and Freshwind, "**I think I can safely say that he's going to be just fine.**" A sending with the power of Rogue's spear battered against her lock-send.

"**Don't do that!**" he commanded. Goldenbraid looked stunned, but Greeneyes laughed.

"**I know exactly how you feel!**" she exclaimed impulsively.

The yellow of his eyes deepening, he looked with strange intensity at Greeneyes. "**You have a beautiful 'voice',**" he sent surprisingly. Greeneyes just stared at him and blushed.

"Do you have a name?" Freshwind asked suddenly.

Beneath the furs, his body tensed. He looked at her warily. "Yes, I have a name," he answered tightly.

"What is it?"

"You--" He broke off, searching her face intently with his eyes. Freshwind felt an odd touch against her mind, not quite sending, but not unpleasant. Suddenly, he relaxed. "You name me," he requested.

"Alright...Bearwalker." Freshwind exchanged smiles with him.

"Do you think that's wise?" asked Goldenbraid. "It might keep alive too many memories, if he stays."

"Then let it. Memories are to be lived with."

"If I stay...stay where?" Bearwalked interrupted their exchange.

Freshwind looked at him speculatively. "I think it's time and past for you to talk with Nightstep."

* * *

Goldenbraid and Greeneyes left when Nightstep arrived, but Freshwind stayed. The chief took one look at his mate's determined face and didn't even bother to argue.

"His name is Bearwalker,"

Freshwind announced into the growing silence of the room. Both males continued to regard each other as though about to begin a fight for territorial dominance. "Stop this. Bearwalker! Nightstep!"

Reluctantly, Bearwalker turned his gaze from Nightstep. "Anything for the one who has named me," he said huskily. Nightstep's eyes narrowed, but he also nodded to his mate.

"Of course. What are your plans now...er...Bearwalker?"

"Plans? I have no plans. I did not realize you would allow me to make...plans." His eyes turned downward. "My memories of



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the past are fuzzy--your Healers say it will be that way for a time--but I do remember...I have spilled the blood of your tribe. What is your price for that?"

The rivalry that had flared between them now forgotten, Nightstep answered with honest puzzlement, "What price? I don't understand."

"Won't you ask a life for a life?" Bearwalker asked, his eyes raising to meet Nightstep's. "Though I'm somehow certain that there was more than one..."

Nightstep stroked his chin consideringly as he pondered the self-shaper's words. "No. I don't think that is necessary. The debt belonged to the demon bear--it paid with its life. My Healers tell me that it won't be back--what do you say?"

"It won't be back...not of my doing, at least," he replied honestly.

"Good enough for now. Your plans?"

"But I..." he threw back his head, eyes closed tight in pain. "My family, providing any still live, would not welcome my return." He lowered his head, eyes again meeting Nightstep's. "I'm sure you can imagine why." The chief nodded. "What else is there to do. I suppose I'll pick a direction and start walking."

"You could--" Suddenly uncertain, Freshwind stopped and looked from Nightstep to Bearwalker.

Drawing a bracing breath, Nightstep said indulgently, "Go ahead, say it."

"Well...you could stay here. In Timber Valley. In the Holt?" she ended on a question, looking at Nightstep.

"I don't know if that would be fair to those that the bear attacked," her mate said thoughtfully.

"But..."

"No." Bearwalker interrupted. "Thank you, lady, but I think I have an idea of the size of your community, from what little I remember from before. I would not be happy among so many...others." He paused, then continued. "However, I would not mind staying in the Valley, at least for a time. If that is alright with you?" He looked at Nightstep.

"Leave us, beloved," Nightstep lock-sent to Freshwind and this time Bearwalker did not protest. Freshwind looked searchingly at Nightstep, then reluctantly nodded, her jaw tightening in unspoken protest as she turned and left the room.

No one ever learned exactly what passed between Nightstep and Bearwalker then. But when Nightstep left the sleeping chamber, it had been decided that Bearwalker would remain in the Father Tree until completely recovered from his illness and the ordeal of the healing, but would then leave the Thorn Barrier-enclosed Holt and find a cave at the far end of the Valley for his home. Both seemed satisfied with these plans and if anyone else had an objection, it was not voiced at that time.

"Do you have to leave?" Goldenbraid asked forlornly as she watched Larkspur packing her bags. The younger elf paused, then nodded. "Because of Bearwalker?"

"Because of a lot of things," replied Larkspur. "But, yes, mostly because of...him." She still refused to give him any name.

"But he's almost well, he'll be leaving the Holt any day now."

"But not the Valley. He'll still be there, at the far end. And I'll know it, and he'll know it, and someday.... No, it's better that I leave. Grassy and Wildwood have found me a strong pony--I mean, grass-eater. Wildwood and Redthorn have made me stout leather clothes and Frairie Fire and Dawnwatch have made me strong bags to carry extra clothes and supplies in. Nightway has shaped me a new bow and Sapphire has shaped some strong arrowheads. You've given me a supply of healing herbs and Two Star and Sandstorm have managed to get together a pack of supplies that will last me for several weeks before I'll even have to think about hunting if I don't want to. I'll be fine."

Goldenbraid listened in silence until Larkspur had finished. "I'll miss you, my new sister."

"Oh--and how I shall miss you--and the opportunity to know you and your tribe!" Suddenly Larkspur could not keep up her indifferent front any longer. Turning, she hugged Goldenbraid as hard as she could. "Perhaps someday I shall be able to return here," she sent to show her sincerity. "Once time has put some distance between me and...what happened. But

for now, I cannot stay."

"Please, change your mind about one little thing. Let me go with you as far as Sheercliff Pass? You can tell me a little more about the time you knew our father--and I can tell you about when I knew him."

"But...alright. Just that far."

"Just that far," Goldenbraid agreed, smiling to hide her tears.



BEARWALKER

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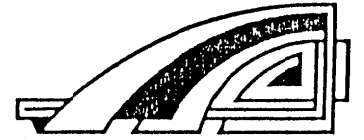
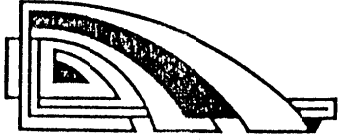
Profiles



WOODBLAZE...Wanderer; exiled from home tribe because of then-uncontrollable Fire-Starting talent; found new tribe, Recognized there, but left before birth of daughter, Oriole; met Shrike and traveled with her till finding Timber Valley. Playful, happy, very loyal, level-headed in emergency, subtly sarcastic sense of humor, shy, sometimes quiet and reclusive, fears rejection because of past. Distrusts and dislikes humans; indifferent to trolls; doesn't know Preservers; likes dreamberries in moderation; diurnal. Terrible cook, hunter, pottery-maker, sews and embroiders, learning weapon-making from Shrike. Bow/arrow; loaners from Shrike. Pants are rust-colored, shirt is cream, both are lavishly embroidered; wears gold earrings, bracelets, and neckchains of troll-make. She and Shrike are soul sisters. SOUL NAME...Brahma; MAGIC...Sending, Animal Bonding, Fire-Starting; BIRTHDATE...DF -203; ARRIVAL DATE...DF 20 HS; TREEHOME...#28; SEX...female; HT...3'10"; BLD...slender but strong-boned; SKINTONE...suntanned; EYES...hazel brown, big and bright; HAIR...brown w/red highlights, frizzy/kinky, shoulder-length, bangs over headband; ANIMAL FRIEND...Scampnut (squirrel); LOVEMATE...Jag; DAUGHTER...Oriole; FAMILY...estranged CREATIVE CONTROL...Sarah Wooten

ORIOLE - Wanderer; born and raised by mother, Woodblaze, without a tribe; befriended Shrike; has settled happily at Timber Valley Holt. Cheerful, optimistic, fun-loving, openly trusting, very secure, very innocent and naive. Humans are her only fear; doesn't know trolls; doesn't know Preservers; curious about dreamberries but hasn't tried them; diurnal. Naturally good cook, learning fighting and weapon-making from Shrike and sewing/embroidery and pottery from mother. At present, her only weapon is throwing rocks. She prefers bright colors for her clothing, purple shirt and pink skirt with embroidery like her mother. She is very friendly and loyal; very close to her mother; soul sister to Shrike. SOUL NAME...Leeral; MAGIC...Sending, Animal Bonding; BIRTHDATE...DF 12; ARRIVAL DATE...DF 20 HS; TREEHOME...#28; SEX...female; HT...3'2" (and growing); BLD...still has some baby fat; SKINTONE...pale; EYES...soft blue-grey, wide and bright; HAIR...black, bangs, curly, short sides, longer in back; ANIMAL FRIEND...Dapple (rabbit); MOTHER...WOODBLAZE; FAMILY...estranged CREATIVE CONTROL...Sarah Wooten

SHRIKE...Wanderer; left home holt DF -246 to explore local troll caverns, stayed 200 years, learned metal forging there; left after about 200 years, met and befriended Oriole and Woodblaze, traveling with them till they found Timber Valley. Tends to be quiet; serious to point of grimness, stubborn, bad-mannered, bad-tempered, cynical; but also loyal, sociable, and willing to learn--her bad traits can be traced to time spent in troll caverns; near-berserker. Distrusts humans; has grudging respect for trolls and much knowledge of their ways; doesn't know Preservers; will not touch dreamberries, preferring to keep clear-headed; has severe agoraphobia. Warrior, metal-worker, good at fading into shadows. Prefers weapons that stab, a walking arsenal, carries longsword, shortsword, daggers, bow/arrows, etc. Clothing is grey with black boots; wears hooded cloak in winter. Her closest/longest-time friends are her tree-mates, Woodblaze and Oriole (they are soul-sisters); other friends include Windspanner and Moraingdew. SOUL NAME...Iela; MAGIC...Sending, Animal Bonding; BIRTHDATE...DF -258 WT; ARRIVAL DATE...DF 20 HT; TREEHOME...#28; SEX...female; HT...4'0"; BLD...slender, very muscular arms; SKINTONE...peaches-and-cream; EYES...steel grey; HAIR...dk smokey grey w/white streaks at sides, very long, worn in two "french" braids; ANIMAL FRIEND...Steelbender (coyote/unbonded); LOVEMATE...Rogue; FAMILY...back at home tribe CREATIVE CONTROL...Melissa Ackroyd-Livingston



Met by Moonlight

by Nikki Wieleba
illustrated by April Lee

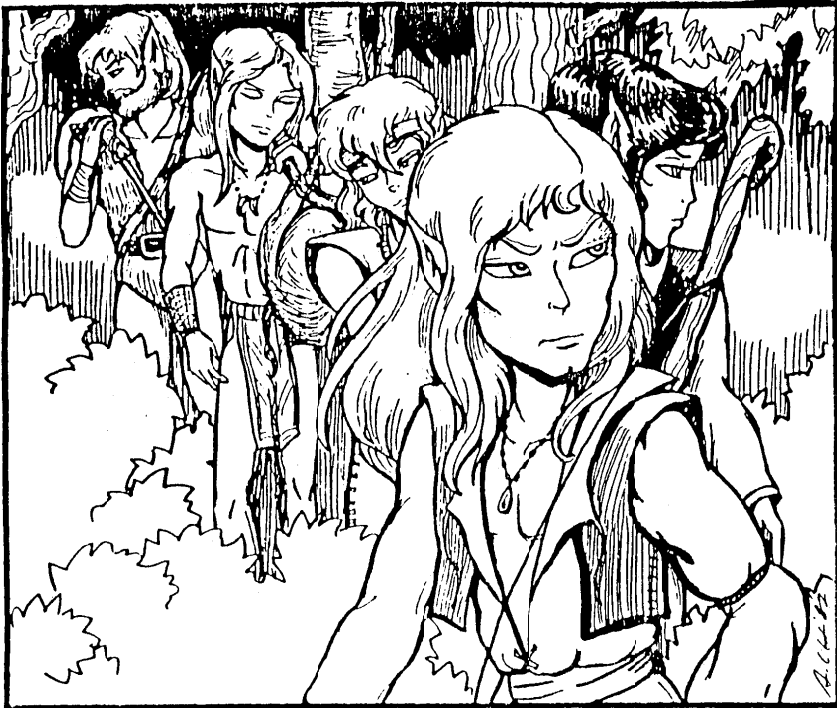
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A cool mid-night breeze rustled through the newleaf grasses and whispered on across the far-reaching plainslands, setting young leaves aflutter in the woods at their edge. The evening's dew gave the air a dampness, but also a freshness that was quite welcome. Elfin feet made dark prints in the water-laden grass as the hunting party made its way toward valley and halt, burdened by a good night's catch. Their stealthy footsteps were soundless as they made less noise than the wind in their passing.

Moving in single file in the wan evening light, the group spread out over the length of a spear's throw from Silverhair, who took the lead, to Big Axe who guarded the rear. Frost followed in the older elf's steps and Nightfire and Skyflame were in the middle, a pole with a fat boar tied to it balanced on their shoulders so they shared its not inconsiderable weight.

Silverhair turned his face to the breeze and inhaled deeply of the night scents, his booted feet carrying him homeward. He remained alert, his sharp hearing tuned to sounds beyond the quiet ones his companions made. Nothing. Nothing but the wind and the normal night sounds of insects. In the distance ahead of and behind them he knew Smoking and Palemoon ranged, able guards of a sort, the wolves' movement even quieter than the elves'. The wind brought the sound of a grasseater's whinny--likely Nightfire or Skyflame's hoofed mount, loosed after the hunt.

Yes, the hunt had gone well this night and the wolves and grasseaters had gotten on rather better than he had hoped. This harmony brought new ideas of how to hunt in the Upper World successfully. What the grasseaters lacked in stealth they made up for in speed and camouflage. They were not predators and an elf on their back could come closer to potential prey without spooking it than an elf on wolfback. It



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was mostly the younger elves like the two who accompanied him who took easily to this new style of hunting. Perhaps if someone were to provide an example to encourage the older valley elves....

A short warning yip from Smoking drew Silverhair from his thoughts and he stopped in his tracks, tense with expectation. He instinctively reached out to his wolf friend to learn the danger, but instead was beckoned by sensations of urgency and need.

"*Skyflame, call your wolf and continue on to the Holt with Nightfire; Big Axe, you and Frost come with me,*" he ordered soundlessly after quickly considering the wisdom of breaking up their small group. There was no danger, though. Only a need for quick action and he would not need to delay the arrival of food for the Holt.

The two chosen elves followed the hunter's lead, Big Axe unslinging his namesake from his back, for Silverhair had not explained what it was they went to face. Smoking met them just before they reached their destination, nosing his bond brother anxiously. Stroking his wolf's broad head, Silverhair cautiously approached the find. Though they were not directly downwind, the elves identified the scent at this colse range: troll.

He (she?) sat hunkered over in the damp grass, swathed in bulky woven cloth and animal skins, clutching a staff that seemed to be meant for walking more than fighting. A gleam of eyes flashed from the shadows of the troll's woven cowl and he pulled himself to his feet slowly--almost painfully--using the staff.

"Elves..." the troll rasped in a voice that made Silverhair doubt his original conclusion--that this was a male troll. "Have you water...shelter from the day's light?" It was a plea, but not one that could be considered actual pleading from the tone.

"Both, in our valley," Big Axe answered when Silverhair remained silent--as was his habit. Frost also stubbornly held her tongue, watching the troll closely with a frown on her lips. "But where is your tribe? How--why are you joureying here in the open?"

"Gone. I have no place else I can go."

There was an odd inflection in the troll's voice that the stocky hunter could not identify. Perhaps it was sorrow, and because of it he did not pry farther. He well knew some wounds were best left untouched.

"You can come with us if you like. We can provide shelter and food for now. Perhaps we can do more for you later." Big Axe motioned broadly toward the valley and Silverhair turned to lead the way once more, his hand resting comfortably on Smoking's shoulder. He tried to conquer his unease at bringing this stranger into the Holt. Hadn't they done it countless times in the past since the flood with strange elves? And Thunderfoot often came into the Thorn Barrier to visit his elven friends, so there would be no problem with the tribe.

"*I see you don't like it, either,*" Frost sent as she fell in step beside him. The hunter made no comment. It was well known how the young woman disliked trolls. She could be prejudiced beyond the unease and be unable to catch the subtle sings that he himself could not quite put a name to.

"*Well, the sooner we take that one to the troll den where she belongs, the

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better.**

Why did the thought not give him any relief?



The commotion their arrival caused was short-lived as the sun was beginning to rise and the tribe settled for the day. Most elves did not linger, but Shrike, Knifeblade, Silverhair, Nightstep and Wavesong stayed to learn what they could from this strange troll. With grudging hesitance their uneasy guest spun them a tale of rumbling, shaking stone, collapsed corridors and panicked flight to the surface world. She had set out from the ruin that had been her home, a sole survivor, to pit herself against a world she was unskilled for. The deepest shadows had provided her some shelter by day from human predators and she had fled rights from the four-legged ones. The hunting party's discovery of her had been chance for she did not know where she was or how far she had come.

Silverhair watched the play of sympathetic expressions across the faces of his tribekin as Catgut (as she called herself) relayed her tale. This still did not set right with him, but the reactions of his chief and friends set him more at ease.

The small meeting dissolved into individual and random questioning on both sides as the elves helpfully told Catgut about the trolls that lived under their valley. Of course, it would be the perfect place for her to go. King Grubmoss would certainly welcome the wanderer.

Evenfell ducked in a moment to eye the trolless' bundled form distrustfully before claiming her love, Knifeblade, gently but insistently. Nightfire also drew Woodwreath in to get a look at the excitement he had missed after the hunting party had split. Woodwreath anxiously herded her three friends out into the sunlight and away.

This did not escape Nightstep's watchful eye--nor did Silverhair's strange behavior.

**What is it? he asked silently while Shrike was holding Catgut's attention.

Nothing I can name, came Silverhair's answer, which was also open to Wavesong, who glanced his way in concern. **I think it is best we take her to Grubmoss tonight. Frost is right--the sooner she is with her own kind, the better off we will all be.**

Nightstep nodded agreement, and so it was settled.

Four elves escorted Catgut to the trolls' outer door and introduced her to Wormhold the Doorkeeper who agreed to take her to Grubmoss.

Rogue stood with Silverhair as the portal closed soundlessly, the two of them speculating on how soon Grubmoss would notice if the maid were comely or not. As they turned to go, Rogue commented with wrinkled nose on acquired tastes, which gave

the two of them a new if not better direction for their conversation. Still, Silverhair gave Rogue a doubtful glance as they joined Trace and Bin Axe farther down the trail. They gathered their wolf friends and traveled at their normal pace back to the Holt. Dawn found them again safe in the Holt and returning to their homes--trees to and with mates, pleased with a job well done.

Silverhair reported that things had gone well, but he faltered at the end, uncertain if he should offer an incident that had disturbed him.

When we were on the trail, he explained when the chief insisted, **Catgut stumbled on a root and I reached out to steady her. My hand--** He paused, at a loss for words. **What I touched was solid--metal. I think she was wearing armor of some sort.**

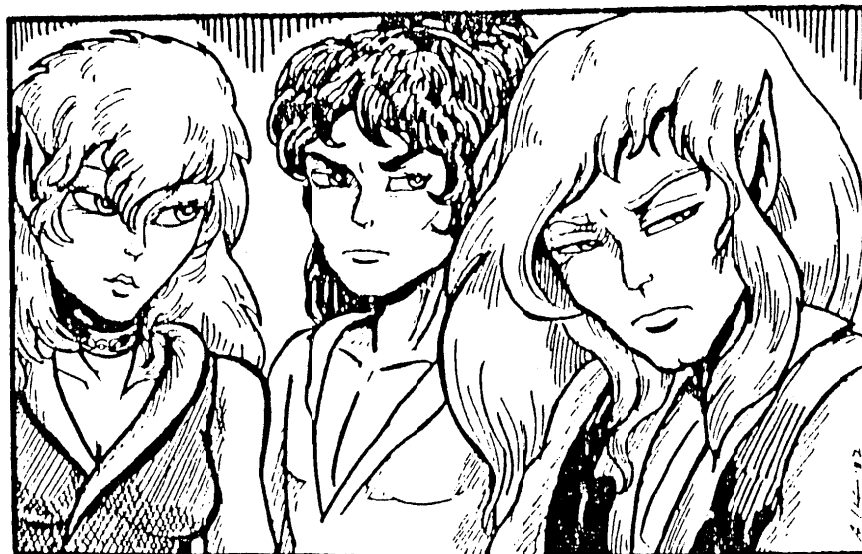
No wonder she had such a heaviness about her movements, Freshwind mused. "Strange that she would carry it all that way, though."

"Strange...but not uncommon for trolls to hold onto such things as precious. What else, my friend?" Again Nightstep encouraged him.

Nothing. Only that. Now that he had "said" it, it sounded foolish to him. **I imagine too much from so little,** he admitted sheepishly. **There is no need to worry now. She is where she belongs and I think she'll do well enough for herself.**

Nightstep nodded, knowing this to be true. Shrike had also commented on how intelligent Catgut had been, considering how little she spoke. Where had she come from? he wondered, gazing toward the sheer valley wall in the distance, where the door that led into the troll realm was concealed. And what had she been to her tribe? They might never know, now.

(Only the beginning....)



EDITOR'S NOTE...To find out more about Catgut and how she fits in with the trolls of Timber Valley, watch for upcoming installments of TROLL WARS. And remember, it's never too late to get involved in the creative end of Timber Valley's TROLL WARS! Just send a Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope with TROLL WARS written on the front to the Holt address. Whether you're interested in writing an installment, illustrating a section, or just getting your elf involved, you can still SASE for the up-coming TROLL WARS information flier. (You might even get a sneak peek at what the future holds for Timber Valley Holt!)

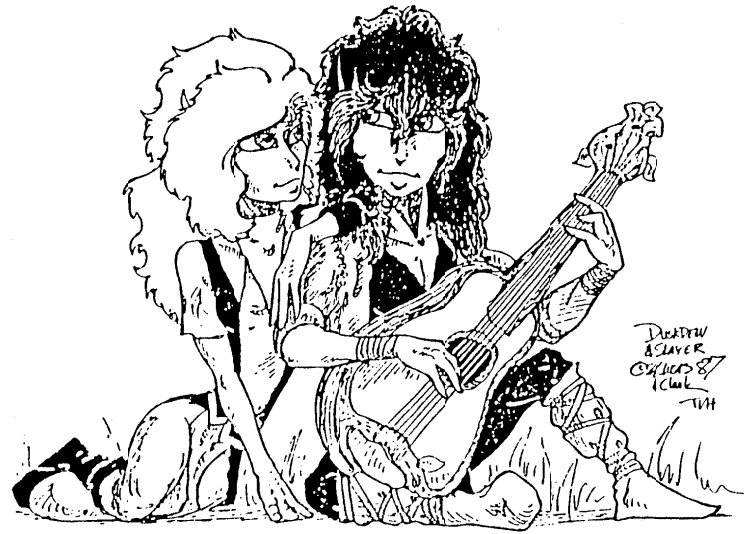
Oh, one other thing...we need human and troll characters for TROLL WARS. Though we have to limit each member's number of elves, I doubt we'll ever need to limit human or troll characters. And it'll make things more interesting if we know some of the individuals involved! Elf-lovers, elf-haters, undecideds...get creating. (And don't forget to tell us about 'em!)

VALLEY EGUES

FEEL LIKE IT
 David Trumble 8/84 @ 25 Paper



ROGUE J 86



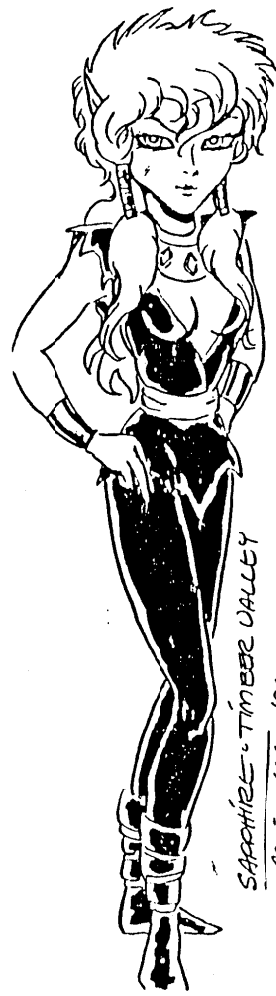
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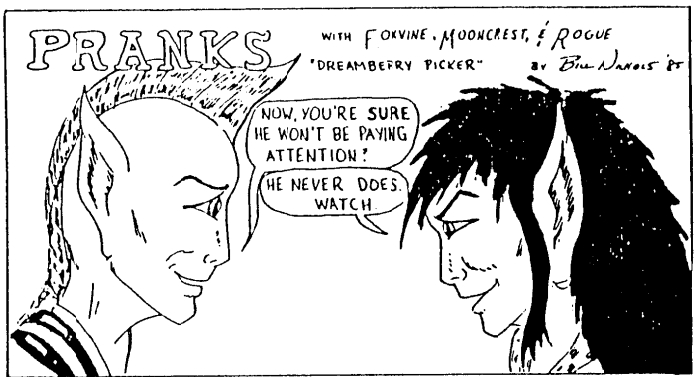
"Redthorn" © nmg Lopez 87

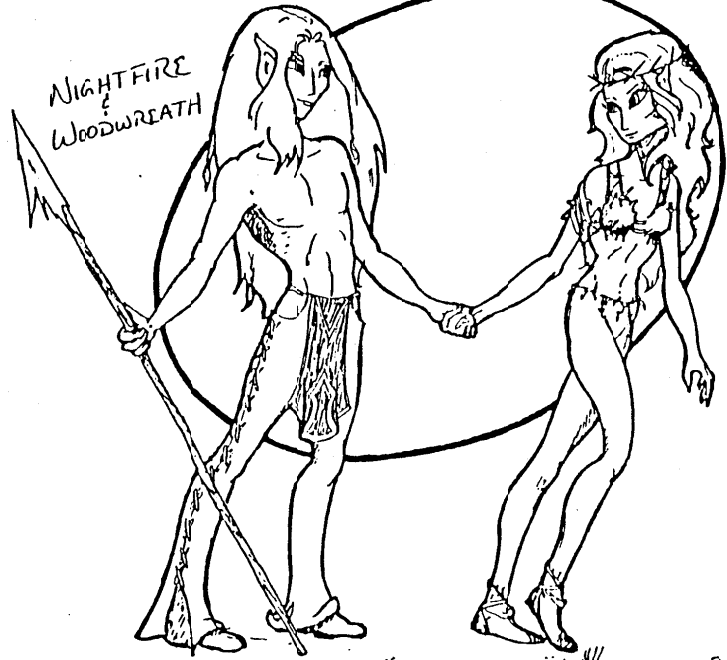


FAIRY, FERRET and Woodcutter
 8/84



SAPPHIRE - TIMBER VALLEY
 April 1986





Ivory & Dusty



Woodwraith & Hatfeather

© S. LING



24



25

Recently, several members have pointed out to me that I've been forgetting to identify the characters portrayed in the artwork of TIMBERS! Therefore, this is a special "who's who index" to the last few newsletters...starting with this issue. (NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, characters are listed from left to right.)

TIMBERS! 12...Cover/Foxvine and Windrace in the Holt's dreamberry patch waiting for the spring thaw; "Loose Ends" part 4, page 5/Longknife & Greeneyes; page 6/Wavesong & Larkspur; page 7/Foxvine, Windrace & Rosemist; page 8/Greeneyes (foreground), Nightstep & Goldenbraid (background); page 9/Foxvine; page 10/Nightstep & Freshwind; page 11/Two Star & Larkspur; page 12/Bearwalker; page 13/Nightstep & Bearwalker; page 14/Goldenbraid & Larkspur; "I'll let by Moonlight" page 18/Silverhair, Frost, Skyflame, Nightfire, Big Axe (listed from front to back); page 19/Silverhair, Catgut & Smokering (wolf); page 20/Nightfire, Woodwreath, Knifeblade, Wavesong & Catgut; page 21/Freshwind, Nightstep & Silverhair (other illos are labeled)

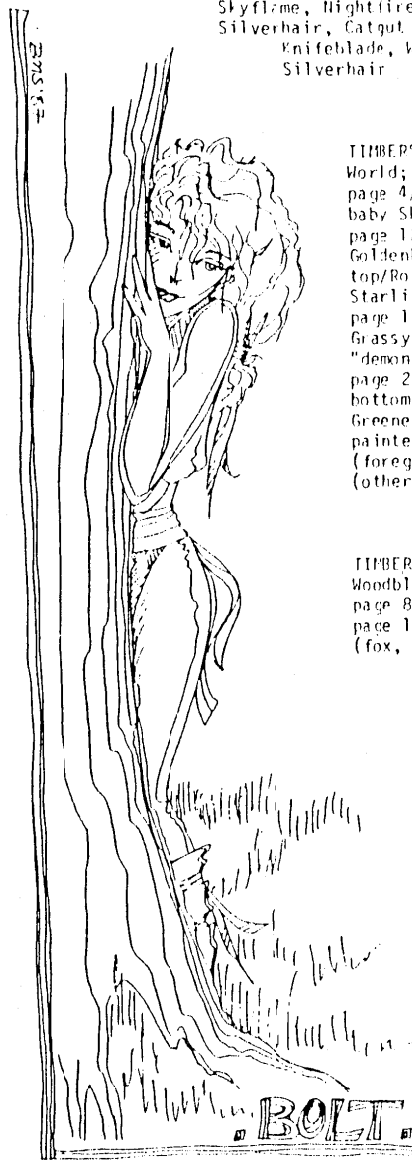
TIMBERS! 11... Cover/Nightfire and hawk in the Upper World; page 2/Mooncrest, Rogue & Pebble (Preserver); page 4/Nightstep; page 5/Wavesong; page 6/Freshwind & baby Skyflame; page 7/Skyflame and Nightstep; page 12 top/Larkspur & "demon bear"; page 12 bottom/Goldenbraid; page 13/Two Star; page 14/Rogue; page 15 top/Rogue & Goldenbraid; page 15 bottom/Buckeye & Starlight; page 16/Ferret; page 17 top/Mooncrest; page 17 bottom/Jasmine, Freshwind & Nightstep; page 18/Grassy & Charger (pony); page 19 top/Knifeblade & "demon bear"; page 19 bottom/Nightstep & Two Star; page 20 top/Windrace; page 20 bottom/Hushleaf; page 21 bottom/Hushleaf; page 22 top/Nightway, Wildwood, Duskdew, Greeneyes, Ferret & Woodwreath ("Ferret gets her portrait painted"); page 22 bottom/Jasmine, Rogue & Greeneyes (foreground), Mooncrest (background); page 23/Smoke (other illos are labeled)

TIMBERS! 10...Cover/Wildwood; page 3/Ferret; page 4/Woodblaze, Oriole & Shrike; page 6/Hatfeather & Big Axe; page 8/Shrike; page 9/Hatfeather and wolf, Oriole; page 11 top/Oriole; page 13 top/Duskdew and Snowtail (fox, mislabeled "Suntop"); back cover/Smoke & Starlight (other illos are labeled)

TIMBERS! 9...Cover/Mooncrest; page 4/Starlight & Smoke (sleeping); page 5/Smoke; page 6 top/Starlight; page 6 bottom/Smoke; page 7 top/Smoke & Starlight; page 8 bottom/Longknife & Greeneyes; page 10/Goldenbraid, Mooncrest & Hatfeather; back cover/Ferret & Trace (other illos are labeled)

Let me know if you want a list of who's who in the newsletter illustrations before TIMBERS! 9.

Submissions of stories and "filler" art are always welcome. Story length is from one page on up. Artwork can be of any size, but for standard/regular sizes, check out the new TVH Members Supplement.



VALLEY TALK



TEA 1/87

WILDWOOD

TROLL WARS...for those of you who've sent in a SASE, don't worry. I haven't mailed the flier out yet, so you haven't missed anything. (The same unavoidable stuff that's delayed this newsletter so long also delayed that.) It will be going out soon. I have SASEs right now from: Terri Barnard, Lauren Janoff, Stacy Lucas, Ruth Clark, Ted Blasingame (he sent 2!), April Lee, Cyndy Haywood, and Melody Luke. If your name isn't on that list and you sent in a SASE, are you sure you wrote "TROLL WARS" on the outside? There's still plenty of time (even after the flier goes out) to get yourself/your elf involved by the way. Just send me a SASE and/or at least what your elf will be doing (or not doing) during the TROLL WARS.

For a quick review of the TROLL WARS premise, check out "Valley Talk" in issue #10 of TIMBERS! And for more information, check out page 21 of this issue.

TVH WANT ADS...for more information about a character, or for the name/address of who to contact, check out the TVH Members Supplement included with this issue. And remember, just because a character isn't specifically listed in the "Want Ads" doesn't mean that they're not interested in finding family/friends/lovmates/etc, just that they weren't listed this time around. If somebody looks interesting, write and ask about it.

WANTED/FAMILY...for the following natives...Bolt (Becky Slocombe); Blackarrow (Shelley Davis) and her sister Flicker (Lynne Joseph); Charmer (Becky Behler); Jag (Melissa Ackroyd-Livingston; Redthorn (Mary Lopez); Brightstar (Joycelyn Poon)

WANTED/FRIENDS...Charmer (Becky Behler/note--Charmer is approximate 13 years old); Archer (Linda Gerhart); Brightstar (Joycelyn Poon); Redthorn (Mary Lopez); Jag (Melissa Ackroyd-Livingston); Flicker (Lynne Joseph); and just about everybody else!

WANTED/LOVEMATES...Windspanner & Morningdew (Lauren Joseph); Redthorn (Mary Lopez); Tempest (Karyn Ojanaa); Whirlwind (Alan Gillispie); Slayer (Stacy Lucas)

FOUND...LOVEMATES - Jag and Woodblaze; Grassy and Wildwood; Woodwreath and Nightfire; Farlance and Ivory; Starlight and Foxvine; Starlight and Buckeye; Smoke and Hatfeather; Quicksilver and Hatfeather; Slayer and Duskdew; among others. Please note that not all lovmatings are exclusive, some who have lovmates are still interested in "playing the field". Also Redlace and Rainforest.

RECOGNITIONS...Mooncrest and Wildwood

If you want your character listed in the "Want Ads" let me know. (Sorry about anybody I've forgotten--remind me and I'll put them in next time.)

Nobody's perfect...already I've found at least one typo in the TVH Members Supplement, first edition. (Which has, of course, already been printed, so I can't correct it!) Windspanner is incorrectly listed as a native of TVH. She is a wanderer. Please let me know about any others that I missed.

