

TIMBERS



Newsletter of the Timber Valley Holt

Vol. 3, No. 17

Bright Starlights, Timber Folk!

It seems that the time has finally come to do some serious talking, my friends. It has been a long while since this subject has needed discussion, but the moment has now come. The files of Timber Valley are quite low of stories ready to print. True, the Troll War segments will provide tales for a few issues, but otherwise, the future selection of material for TIMBERS looks uncertain.

Looking through the stories on hand, I have thirteen in my possession. Of these, seven are still waiting for the authors to finish their revisions. The remaining six are completed and awaiting illustrations. Three of these are related to the Troll War -- which leaves three that are ready for printing (and two of those are mine). See where we stand?

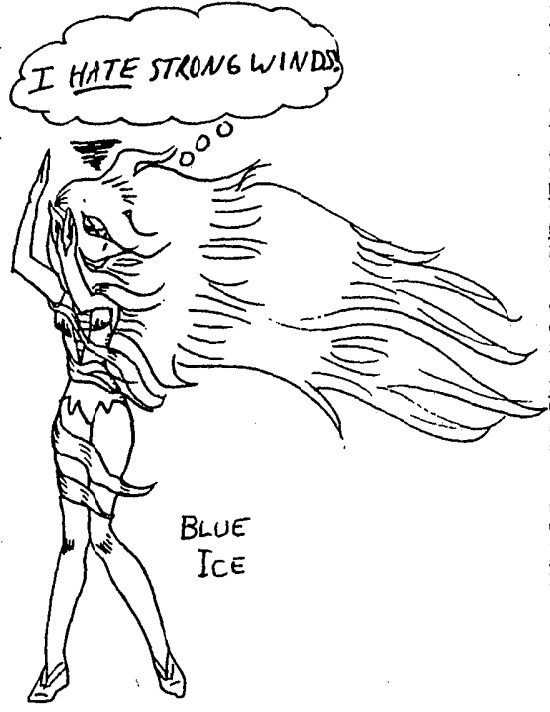
I have two requests. 1. If you have a story in my files that needs to be completed, either finish the revisions, or give me permission to drop it. 2. If you have an idea for a story, but are not a writer, contact someone who does write -- it could be that someone wants to write something, but has no story ideas. Think about it. It doesn't have to be long -- it doesn't have to be serious or dramatic.

A complete listing of the file status is on page 7. It will show you titles, chronological dates, a brief description of the story, and what kind of shape it is in. We have plenty of stories in the files if they will just be completed. Timber Valley is going strong, but we need something to print if we are to continue producing newsletters.

On the news front, Color Volume Six of ELFQUEST was made available in June. This marks the list of the series, and gives the reader their first glimpse of the final issue of Siege At Blue Mountain in color! An added treat is the short preserver graphic story, Homespun, which Wendy originally had printed in EPIC #1. Remember Malak and Selah from ElfQuest #10? This story explains why they were wrapped up in the enormous preserver cocoon. Congrats, Wendy & Richard, and thanks for the tale!

Also to hit the stands was Wendy's Beauty And The Beast from First Comics. It is a 46-page color graphic story based on the television series. It has an embossed cover and is printed in the deluxe format.

This issue, we have three stories for your reading pleasure, one of which is the first of two parts, and five (count 'em, five!) character profiles! Enjoy yourselves, and have fun!



Moongrest

★ The "Need-To-Know" Page ★

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MEMBERSHIPS: A one year's beginning membership to the Timber Valley Holt is \$8. This fee entitles the new member to four issues of TIMBERS, a membership guidebook, character sheets to fill out and return, and maps of the Timber Valley area. Renewing memberships are \$6, which covers the production and postage of the newsletters. Make check or money order cut to TR Blasingame. For your own protection, DO NOT send cash through the mail.

SASE: When writing to either Ted or Teresa, please include a stamp or Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope for a prompt reply. This enables us to respond quicker to your queries. We'd appreciate it!

EQUIPMENT USED: A Smith Corona PWP6BL word processor for the typing and storing of information. For the actual printing of the newsletter, a Kodak Ektaprint 150 Copier Duplicator was used, thanks to Neal & company at PIP Printing of Midwest City, Oklahoma.

THE GUIDEBOOK OF TIMBER VALLEY: The newly updated and revised edition of the Guidebook is finished. If your membership is paid up, then you should already have it in hand.

TIMELINE ADDITIONS: A two-page supplement of the Timeline has also been sent out to the members. Contact me if you didn't get one.

ART SUPPLEMENT: "TIMBER FOLK - A TIMBERS SPECIAL EDITION" is now available to those wanting a copy. Since only about half of the members showed interest in the project, I did not initiate a full print-run. There is only a limited amount of these 20-page booklets available, so if you want one, send \$1 to the Oklahoma address. I'll have them sent out promptly.

CHARACTER REFERENCE GUIDE: With the three above projects now out of the way, serious concentration can be placed once again on this long-overdue publication. If either Teresa or I ask specific questions concerning your character (i.e. Origin of Birth...), please answer our inquiries promptly. Failure to provide information will delay the project further and increase the chances for your character being dropped from the CR Guide.

TROLL WAR EFFECTS: The Troll War is going to cause many problems for the inhabitants of the Valley. Friends and loved ones may be killed or maimed. Friends may become enemies, and enemies may become friends. Homes may be destroyed, and so will peace of mind. When the War ends, attitudes and feelings may be changed forever. Not many will be unaffected. Keep all of these in mind, because after the conflict, you might want to consider changing things about your character. Greeneyes, for example, will be deeply affected and an outward change of behavior and clothing style for her is planned. How is your character going to handle this crisis? I'm not asking for you to send in possible changes now -- all I want you to do is think about it.

YEARNINGS III is still available from Shadow Island Graphics at 73 28th Street N.E., Cairo, Georgia 31728. Price is still \$7, which covers shipping.

ART REQUEST: This is a special request for art. Often, when printing out the pages for the newsletters, I am faced with a blank spot near the bottom of some pages. The filler art in my files, however, rarely fit these pages. It is an odd size, but I'd like to get some artwork to fit within an area 2" high by 7½" wide. This will help out greatly.



HE'S GRASSY
by Teresa Arellanes

It's a boy!

The joyous sending spread throughout the Holt with skyfire speed. Though it was sunhigh and storm clouds were beginning to form overhead, the Timber Folk gathered around the Father Tree to greet the newest member of the tribe. The child's father, Cliff, along with Dawnwatch and Greylock, stood at the tree's entrance. The hunter lifted his newborn son for all to see, and as the cub gave a lusty cry, the Timber Folk cheered. Elven children were rare, but what made this birth so extraordinary was the fact that the parents were unrecognized Lifemates. After the congratulations were over and his tribe folk and chief had returned to their homes, Cliff re-entered the Father Tree with Dawnwatch to give the infant to its mother, Dustwren.

"He'll grow quickly with that appetite," chuckled Dawnwatch as she glanced at the baby feeding hungrily. "Have you thought of a name to call him?" The blond midwife winked at Goldenbraid, the healer, who sat nearby. She then set about cleaning up the room, arranging some dried flowers in a newly-made vase, and placing a pitcher of cool water near Dustwren.

The new mother looked first at her Lifemate, then shook her head. "It hasn't come to us yet. He does have a leaf shaped birthmark on his left side, and I was thinking 'Leafmark' might be good--," She paused to watch Cliff's reaction; he rolled his eyes skyward, a grimace on his lean face. "But as you both can see, my lifemate isn't all that fond of the name." Her honey colored eyes twinkled merrily as she snuggled the infant closer.

"Don't worry, you'll come up with one in time. Just don't wait TOO long; we children born outside of Recognition seem to get stuck with odd nicknames until our parents make up their minds on what to call us." Goldenbraid smiled, knowing from personal experience, since she was the only other living elf born outside of Recognition in the Valley. She patted Dustwren on the shoulder and stole one more look at the child.

"Yes, as I recall, Chestnut called you 'Fuzzy' for nearly three moons," laughed Cliff as he sat on the furs near his mate, golden eyes dancing with mischief. Dawnwatch shook her head, a bemused expression on her face.

"It was 'Fluffy', and only one moon," the Healer corrected, a smile in her eyes. She lost her semi-righteous tone and all dignity when she stuck her tongue out at Cliff. Dawnwatch, still shaking her head at the madness around her, urged Goldenbraid out of the room. Then, together, they lowered the leather door flap, leaving the little family alone.

* * *

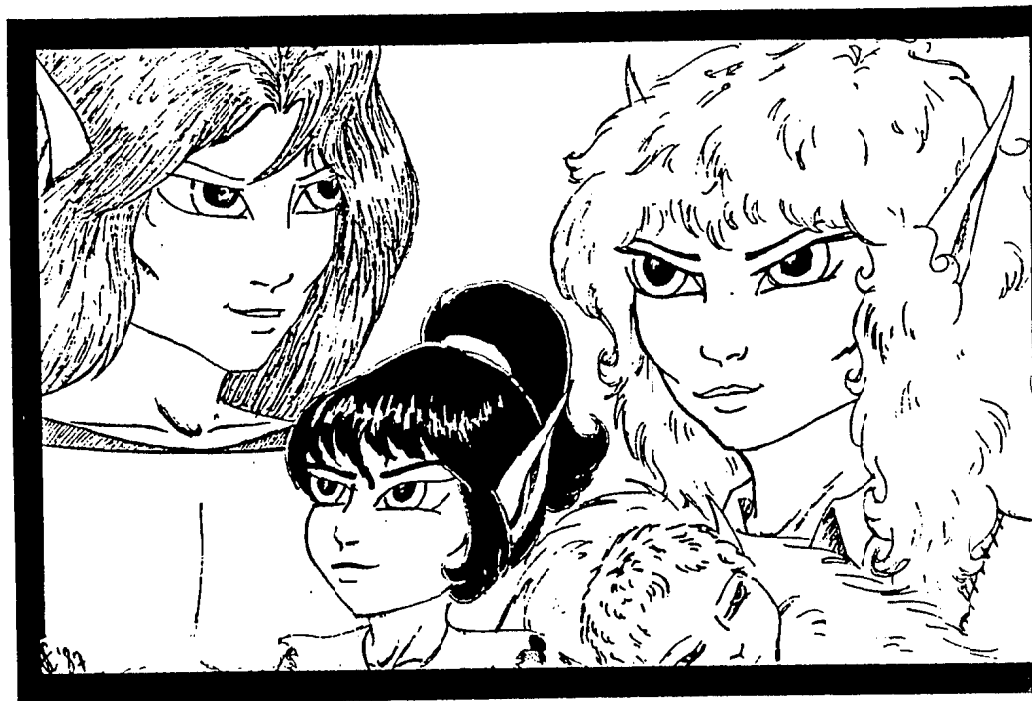
"What's his name? He looks funny. Can I hold him or will he spit up on me? When can he come and play? I promise I won't break him." A two year old Nightway stood before the fur-lined cradle near Dustwren, looking down at the fuzzy-haired pink form of the newborn. This was one of the first times he had been allowed out, and since the weather had begun to warm, it was safe to have him in the still-crisp air. Nightway's mother sat nearby, shaping a wooden web about a large ceramic water container. It was to be a Coming-Of-Life-Day gift for the treeshaper's friend, Berryscent, mother of young Redlace. Moonshine gave her daughter a reproving glance, but Dustwren laughed at the little she-cub.

"He's still too small for games right now, Nightway. Maybe in a few seasons he'll be more active, then he can be your friend and play with you," said Dustwren as she shelled nuts and smiled down at the dark-eyed child. Moonshine then interrupted by asking her soulsister what she thought of the gift, and while the two were deep in conversation, they ignored Nightway.

The little cub skipped over to a nearby snow bank and picked up a strand of dead grass. She put the end in her mouth, chewing gently on it as she walked back over to the cradle.

The infant's milk blue eyes had turned into a yellow-gold since his birth just two moons back. The she-cub tried to focus on Nightway's face as she smiled down at him. "This is grass," Nightway informed the baby. He cooed happily as she brushed the tip of it against his chubby cheek, let it blend with the pale curls on his head. Suddenly the tiny cub made a grab for the grass blade, fingers twining lightly about it. Nightway frowned. She tried to get her tasty morsel back from the babe, but he clung tighter, face screwing up and getting ready to cry. A small tug of war ensued.

Nightway gave a startled squeak as the delicate blade snapped, crumbling into



brittle pieces across the infant's furs and in his hair. At the sound, Moonshine came over and picked her little daughter up, balancing the child on her hip. The cubling looked her mother in the eyes, pointed rather sheepishly to the mess, saying "It's grassy, Mother."

Dustwren immediately went to quiet her son's cries, staring at the bits of old grass in his hair. It blended perfectly, her son's pale curls and the pieces of pampas grass. Dustwren sat down on a tree root, cradling her baby to her, and started to laugh. She had thought long and hard to find a good name for her boy, then a cubling came up with one in an instant. The young mother sent quickly for her Lifemate. Cliff soon rounded an entrance from the Thorn Barrier and headed directly for his mate. He too felt the irony of the situation, the evidence all too clear before his eyes. Cliff chuckled as he beckoned Nightway to him, seeing her confused expression.

Sitting down on Cliff's lap and staring at the babe in Dustwren's arms, Nightway asked, "What's wrong? It is grassy, isn't it?" She glanced quickly at her mother then brushed at the grass in the baby's hair. She turned round, liquid black eyes on her elder, waiting, confused still.

"Yes," laughed Cliff as he hugged the little she-cub, "He's Grassy!" *



The elf's prayer

OLD ONE, tell me stories of our holt.
 WISE ONE, teach me the ways of survival.
 HIGH ONE, enlighten me as to my future.
 CHIEF, prepare me to do battle with my enemies.
 FRIEND, pass me the dreamberry wine.
 MATED ONE, give me companionship and cubs.

Nancy Strattan



Ted R Blasingame

TIMBER VALLEY HOLT STORY FILE

The following is a listing of the stories in the Timber Valley files and the conditions they are in concerning preparations for printing. If there are mistakes here, the individual authors of the tales need to contact me. This is not to put anyone one the spot, but merely a guide to show the membership what kind of shape our story status is in.

THOSE WHO ENTER--- by Ted R Blasingame. (DF-3 GT) Duster and Goldquill's disappearance into the mysterious Black Cavern. In this story, the reader learns why those who enter never return. (2 parts) Status: final draft ready for printing. Illustrations assigned to Bill Nichols.

SNOW PLAY by Ted R Blasingame. (DF2 WF) A Lifetimes story concerning the lovemating between Mooncrest and Nightway. Status: final draft completed. Illustrations unassigned.

STILL WATERS by April Lee. (DF16 LF) Sapphire gives Frost an insight to the mystery surrounding her past. Status: awaiting revisions. Illustrating assigned to April Lee.

THE TAMING by Dana Evans. (DF20 HT) Torisen captures a grasseater on the Upper World plains and patiently takes the time to befriend the creature. Status: final draft completed. Illustrations assigned to David Trimble.

SERENDIPITY by Lauren Janoff. (DF21 GT) Morningdew and Windspanner's journey to Timber Valley. Status: awaiting revisions. Illustrations unassigned.

RENEWAL by Lauren Janoff. (DF-15 GT - DF5 GT) The same story as SERENDIPITY, but a different version. Unknown to me as to which story is the most recent. Status: awaiting revisions. Illustrations unassigned.

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM by Stewart Robertson. (DF21 LF) Softwill and Thunderfoot find Morningmist near-dead at the top of Two Falls. Status: awaiting final revision. Illustrations assigned to June Robertson.

THE DECISION (Part Two) by Ted R Blasingame. (DF23 GT) Mooncrest attempts to overcome his fear of the Upper World. The Timber Folk finally learn the reasons for his adverse feelings for travelling outside the Valley. Status: final draft completed. Illustrations assigned to Valerie Bowe.

WANDERING SPIRIT by Ruth Clark. (DF24 HT) The first part of the Timber Valley Troll War. Status: final draft completed. Illustrations assigned to Karyn Ojamaa.

THE SECRET WORD by Bill Nichols. (DF24 LF) The Recognition of Rogue and Bolt. Status: awaiting final revision. Awaiting illustrations assigned to Bill Nichols.

SOMETHING LEFT BEHIND by Ruth Clark. (DF24 LF) After the War, this story picks up the remnants of what occurred in WANDERING SPIRIT. Status: final draft completed. Illustrations unassigned.

RIVER CROSSING by Linda Gerhart. (undated) Archer leads Greeneyes and Longknife on a dangerous journey to find the Black Rock Holt. Status: awaiting revisions. Illustrations unassigned.

(untitled) by Maria Manemann. (undated) A Lifetimes story concerning Winterhowl, an elf who had left Timber Valley long ago to roam the Upper World. Status: awaiting revisions. Illustrations unassigned.

[Entries listed in chronological order]

THE THING IN THE FOREST
by Nancy A Strattan

Redlace stood on the rise of the hill and looked around in all directions. If his calculations were correct, there was a spring just beyond that next hill.

He looked down at Bluesong, the female wolf who always accompanied him on his hunting expeditions. Her blue-grey fur now appeared rather scruffy looking as she had not had time to properly groom herself. All that would soon be remedied as soon as they arrived at the watering place.

It was so unusual for Redlace to be coming home empty-handed after a hunting trip. After all, he was considered to be one of Timber Valley's more experienced hunters. This time, something seemed different in the forest. Normally, anyone walking through the forest would flush out the smaller animals and send them scurrying to the safety of a hiding place. But on this day, the forest offered none of these displays of animal behavior.

Redlace thought to himself, 'If Morningglory were here, she might be able to explain this stillness...'

Redlace and Bluesong arrived at the spring. The slender elf sat down, and cupping his hands together, began drinking the cool water.

Rested and refreshed, he glanced skyward and noticed that the sun was barely touching the tops of the trees. He smiles as he thought to himself.

Hum...mid afternoon--still time to get some good hunting under my belt.'

Just then, Bluesong became very excited. Redlace knew that when she acted this way, there was a good possibility of game being nearby. The elf grabbed his longbow and hurriedly followed his wolf friend.

The winding trails were making it difficult for Redlace to keep pace with Bluesong. But, he was able to follow her by listening to her yips. Then he spotted his wolf-friend near Rock Span.

Bluesong was yipping frantically. Redlace discovered that she had cornered a small Human girl-cub. He attempted to call Bluesong away from the child. He greatly distrusted Humans and he did not want Bluesong hurt.

But the wolf was not paying attention to him. Redlace moved in closer and discovered a rattlesnake laying in a rock crevice. Cautiously, he picked up a large rock and slowly moved toward the rattler.



Redlace was momentarily mesmerized by the snake, but this hold on him did not last.

He stood barely three hand-lengths away from the snake. Raising the rock above his head, he skillfully threw it directly onto the rattler's head.

Redlace examined the dead snake before skinning it. When he finished with that task, he remembered the Human cub.

The child huddled in the same place where Bluesong had found her. She was a child of medium build, with dark eyes and raven-black hair. About her, there seemed to be a look of sadness and hardship. Redlace decided he was going to try to befriend her with his smile. Not knowing the language of her people would present him a problem, but there were other ways of communication rather than by spoken words. Redlace now pointed at himself and in his elven tongue said his name.

The child looked at him, shaking her head, letting him know that she did not understand him. But the look of fear had gone from her eyes. He then pointed at Bluesong and said her name. The child stared at the wolf and then turned her gaze back to Redlace before letting a smile escape from her mouth.

Motioning for her to follow him, Redlace slowly guided her back to the spring, where he would attempt to clean up her scratches and bruises--if she allowed him to touch her.

At the spring, Redlace pointed at the ground and the child took the hint and obediently sat down. Then, taking off his tunic and dampening a corner of it, he leaned over and tried to wash the child's face. But, she pulled away from him.

Okay, he would have to try something else to gain her acceptance of him. But what could he do that a Human could not?

It came to him. He could use his levitating skills and perhaps move a rock or some other object. In the past, he'd found that he could lift objects only as big as he was or smaller; otherwise, he was tapped of all strength.

He concentrated--attempting to move a small rock which lay beside them. There...he'd found the stone. Slowly, his mind lifted it up and brought it closer to them.

The girl-cub's eyes told the whole story. She was totally fascinated by Redlace's magic, and allowed him to wash her face and clean the rest of her bruises.

Looking at the child and wondering what to do with her, Redlace was in a quandary. Her people were probably out looking for her and if he was found with her, he would be killed or tortured. Yet, she was too young to be left in the woods alone. He would have to risk taking her home.

As they walked along, Redlace again pointed at himself and repeated his name several times aloud to the child. Then pointing at her, he motioned for her to respond. She smiled at him and replied with a word which sounded like "Arath".

Suddenly, a small rodent scurried across their path. Before Redlace could move, the child had pulled a slingshot from her pocket and had skillfully fired off a volley. It was not clear to him why there were no small animals on the trail--this girl cub had scared them all into hiding with her weapon!

Redlace was angry and his gaze told her that her action was unappreciated. Then he yanked the slingshot out of her hands and proceeded to pull it apart.

Redlace held Arath firmly and then pointed in the direction of the Human settlement. Saying the elven words for "go" and "home", he again motioned for her to follow him.

Bluesong looked at her friend uneasily. She had sensed that he was going to take the Human cub home to her people. Redlace caught her thoughts and sent his own message of 'not to worry' back to her.

Then, the three of them began walking toward the Human village.

END

ART CREDITS

Mark Barnard: Pg 8 (Redlace).

Valerie Bowe: Pg 15 (Mooncrest, Bushtrail). Pg 16 (Nightway).

Pg 18 (Nightway, Nightstep). Pg 19 (from top to bottom:

Grassy, Wildwood, Mooncrest, Nightway).

Julie C. Dick: Pg 1 (Blue Ice).

Mary Lopez: Pg 11 (Redthorn).

Maria Manemann: Pg 10 (Archer).

Bill Nichols: Pg 2 (Rogue, Silverhair, Mooncrest).

Pg 13 (Silverhair). Pg 20 (Season).

Terrie Smith: Pg 14 (Spitcuri).

Frank Strom: Pg 12 (Season).

Melissa Van Houten: Pg 5 (Moonshine, Nightway, Dustwren,

Grassy).

Janice Stett: Pg 6 (calligraphy for An Elf's Prayer).

ELF NAME: Archer
 GENDER: Male
 MATE: --
 FATHER: Stonefire.
 MOTHER: Cloudwisp.
 SIBLINGS: --
 CHILDREN: --
 OTHER RELATIONS: --
 ANIMAL FRIEND: Shadowheart, male wolf,
 black with blue grey eyes & white tipped
 tail.

DF DATE BORN: 5 LF
 ORIGIN OF BIRTH: Black Rock Holt.
 DF DATE OF ARRIVAL IN VALLEY: 20 WF
 EYES: Amber
 HAIR: Black, straight and flowing free to
 waist.
 HEIGHT: 3'7"
 TALENT (POWER): Airwalking (gliding).
 WEAPONS USED: Recurve bow & quiver of
 black & white feathered arrows. Silver
 twin-edged short sword with black leather
 bound hilt. Sheath is black with silver
 trimmings.

SKILLS: Archery, hunting, arrow-making.
 JEWELRY: --

CLOTHING: Tan short-sleeved V-neck tunic with
 criss-cross lace across chest. Soft green-
 dyed leather breeches with flared legs
 and cross stitch lace up sides. Tan
 moccasin-type boots (pants cover boot
 tops). Green belt which also holds
 sword sheath.

OTHER INFORMATION: Archer is from the same Holt as Greeneyes. As with all of
 their people, he is small and does not speak aloud, using sending for sole
 communication. His own trait, he has the inability to get names straight, usually
 getting only a portion right. It's an annoying habit to those around him, but
 he's never gotten over it. He likes to spend a lot of time in the trees.
 Although he has full use of his talent, he doesn't like to use it -- he is afraid
 of heights! He will, however, just float several inches off the ground when just
 "sitting" around in a group or talking with a friend. His mostly serious-minded
 and his humor is a bit dry, but he is not arrogant. Even in sending, he is a
 quiet person, spending his thoughts on observation of others. He does have an eye
 for detail and can describe something accurately a moon or so after he'd seen it.
 Dreamberries are an escape for him, but he doesn't go out of his way to get
 sloshed on them (though it does happen from time to time...) He likes females
 quite a lot, but doesn't usually flirt. In his observation of others, someone may
 notice that his eyes tend to linger on the females and a light smile may be on his
 lips. His eyes hold many expressions and his moods are reflected in them even
 more so than in facial expressions or actions. He is the son of Stonefire, who
 was Greeneyes' best friend at Black Rock. Like his father, he has a wandering and
 somewhat of an adventurous spirit. He went on many varied excursions, accompanied
 only by Pebble, a preserver who had, more or less, adopted him while he was a
 child. He and Pebble made many short trips away from their Holt, but they always
 returned. Then, in a random moment, he decided to travel out farther than he'd
 ever gone before; he wanted to see new things and new lands. When he left his
 home, the tiny Pebble elected to go on with him, intent on preventing another dear
 thing from leaving it as Greeneyes had long ago. When he and Pebble arrived
 at Timber Valley, the reunion was rather uncertain, as Greeneyes became afraid of
 him, though she didn't know why. She does want to be friends with him, but is
 unsure of his personality. At the reunion, Pebble was torn between its previous
 loyalty to Greeneyes and its present claim to Archer. Its loyalty to Greeneyes
 won out, but it has decided to adopt the entire Holt under its "protection".
 Archer doesn't seem concerned that the preserver has changed its loyalties, but he
 and Pebble do go out on private hunts into the Valley together.

CREATIVE CONTROL: Linda Gerhart



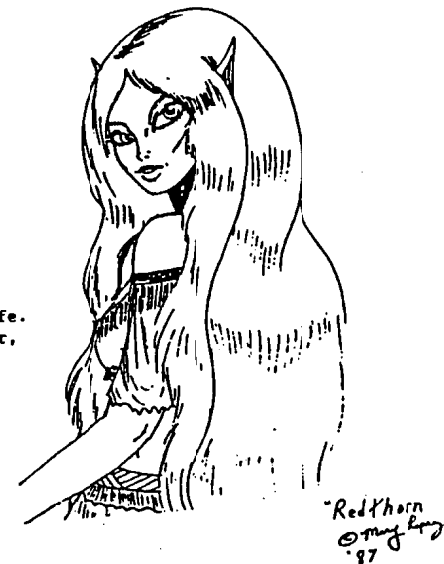
ELF NAME: Redthorn
 GENDER: Female
 MATE: --
 FATHER: Snowhair (d)
 MOTHER: Mimosa (d)
 SIBLINGS: --
 CHILDREN: --
 OTHER RELATIONS: --
 ANIMAL FRIEND: Starwatcher, female silver-
 grey wolf.

DF DATE BORN: -4 GT
 ORIGIN OF BIRTH: Timber Valley
 DF DATE OF ARRIVAL IN VALLEY: --
 EYES: Green and almond shaped.
 HAIR: White, passing shoulders, sometimes
 worn in two topknots held with two bands.
 HEIGHT: 3'10"
 TALENT (POWER): --
 WEAPONS USED: Bow & arrows. A hunting knife.
 SKILLS: Gardening, sewing, running, tracker,
 average huntress.

JEWELRY: A troll-forged blue metal neck
 ring adorned with a white bird feather.
 CLOTHING: Changes, but usually stays with
 variations of grey and white.

OTHER INFORMATION: She got her name from
 her love for red roses. She is terrified
 of the deep part of the river, because of
 her near-drowning in the Death Flood when
 she was very young. Her parents did not
 survive that disaster. She will only go
 in where the water is shallow. Redthorn
 has a bubbly personality and is very cheerful. She likes everybody. She likes to
 help out in tending the Holt's garden, and has become good friends with
 Silverleaf, Nightway, and Wildwood because of it. She will get very upset if any
 of the "green growing things" wilts and dies before its time. Likes to "talk"
 to the plants. She is fond of dreamberries and the wine made from them, but doesn't
 overindulge. She thinks preservers are cute, but they can be a nuisance. She's
 an average huntress and tracker, and she also likes to run. She and Whirlwind
 often challenge each other to races. She is very agile. She is curious about the
 Humans in the Valley, but is rather wary of them. The Trolls simply amuse her,
 especially Thunderfoot.

CREATIVE CONTROL: Mary Lopez



ELF NAME: Season
 GENDER: Male
 MATE: None, but looking.
 FATHER: Twill
 MOTHER: Dawnwatch
 SIBLINGS: Softwill,
 sister.

OTHER RELATIONS:

Wavesong, grandmother.
 ANIMAL FRIEND: Greysoft,
 male wolf with grey fur.

DF DATE BORN: -2 GT
 ORIGIN OF BIRTH: Timber Valley
 EYES: Pale blue
 HAIR: Blonde, slightly wavy
 & curly, falls around shoulders.

HEIGHT: 4'0"

TALENT (POWER): --

WEAPONS USED: Spear, short sword, sling & rocks, bow & arrow.

SKILLS: Hunter, tracker, potter, gambler, a bit of a swashbuckler.

CLOTHING: Blue short sleeved shirt with fringe trim. Grey buckskin pants with fringe trim. Moccasin boots with fringe. Dark grey belt with silver buckle. pants are tucked into boots.

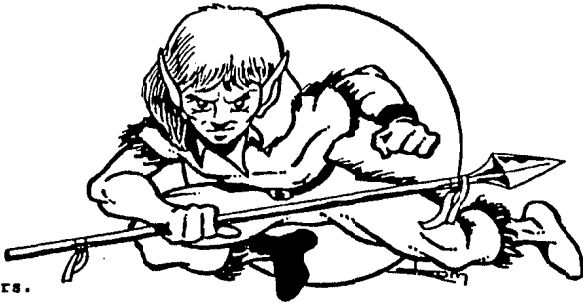
OTHER INFORMATION: Season is a talented archer and hunter, and is rather mature for his age (though he does occasionally backslide into juvenile behavior). He is quite capable of handling responsibility and is developing qualities that could one day label him as a leader-type. He is very independent and like to wander the Valley on his own, sometimes spending a night or two out in the open with no company save his wolf. He is quick with his mind, intelligent, curious, and highly perceptive. He's likely to see things others may miss. When meeting strange elves, he tends to go on first impressions, and is often accurate in his appraisals of others. His instincts are good, and he relies on them.

He's somewhat impulsive, but restrains himself fairly well. He likes riddles, puzzles, and games of all kinds; he gambles a great deal, but prefers to do so with Elves, rather than Trolls. Season loves a challenge above all things, and Trolls are easy to beat (in his opinion). He tackles anything he tries with total absorption and stays with it until he has mastered it; it is this trait that has helped make him an excellent archer. Being a perfectionist, he tends to be critical of others, a characteristic that has earned him trouble in the past and has contributed to the distance between himself and his older sister, Softwill. His mother and grandmother scold him for this, but he just shrugs them off. Season is an active and physical Elf who loves to rough-house. He can out-wrestle most of those in the Holt. He likes dreamberries and does crazy stunts while under their influence. He's a bit of a swashbuckler, who's likely to come swinging down from a tree on a vine, letting go and executing a somersault before landing. This trait has made him best friends with Skyflame, also a swashbuckler and action lover.

When he is upset, he ignores whomever has upset him. His anger shows itself mostly in icy silences and dagger-sharp glares. The influx of new, unattached females has engaged his interest, although he hasn't settled on anyone particular yet for his undivided attention. He has become something of a gallant flirt, and gets glared at by Windrice for competing with him.

Season admires his father's rockshaping talent and hopes to possess it someday. When he was younger, he watched his father shaping and began fooling with clay, trying to emulate Twill's talent. He is now a fair potter, and makes clay plates and jugs for the Holt on boring winter nights. He also shares his father's attitude toward Humans. He believes that the two tribes should learn to get along with one another, instead of the endless feud that has gone on ever since the Elves first descended into the Valley. He won't go out of his way to hurt a Human, but would rather like to try to understand them. Because of this way of thinking, some of the Timber Folk think him as a bit odd.

CREATIVE CONTROL: Timber Valley Non-Persona Character.



ELF NAME: Silverhair
 GENDER: Male
 MATE: Dewdrop, Recognized Lifemate. (d)
 FATHER: Rainer (d)
 MOTHER: Blueraven (d)
 SISTER: --
 BROTHER: --

CHILDREN: Trilight (m). Mooncrest (m).

OTHER RELATIONS: --

DF DATE BORN: -317 WF

ORIGIN OF BIRTH: Timber Valley

EYES: Grey

HAIR: Silver-grey, straight and free-flowing to waist.

HEIGHT: 4'2"

TALENT (POWER): --

WEAPONS USED: Battle axe, long single-edged sword. For hunting: snares, traps, bow, (most weapons handy).

SKILLS: Hunter, scout, teacher, wood-carver, musician (pipe).

JEWELRY: Tear-shaped milky opal, worn on a thin silver chain at neck. (It was Dewdrop's).

CLOTHING: (Warm weather): Thin green shirt w/open collar and short sleeves. Pale red vest. Green pants w/reddish fur trim, tucked into black moccasin boots. White belt with black metal buckle. (Cold weather): All clothes are white and made of thick material and no adornments: long sleeved shirt, pants, fur boots, hooded fur-lined cloak and mittens.

OTHER INFORMATION: Silverhair is one of the Holt's better hunters. Because of this, he is the one most often chosen to teach children hunting skills. He is an excellent instructor, neither too soft or too harsh, and his students are among the better hunters of the Holt. Even the adults will come to him if they need to improve their weapons-craft or wish to learn how to use a new type of weapon. There is no hunting tool Silverhair is not at least proficient with, and with his favorite weapons, the axe and sword, he is quite deadly. Although basically a hunter-elf, Silverhair also has a gentler, creative side. This shows up in his woodcarving, a hobby he enjoys immensely and is quite good at. He will make wonderfully intricate statuettes or small, useful items, like hide scrapers and little boxes. He never asks for items in exchange for his work -- all his creations are freely given, as he considers having them appreciated as payment enough. The exception to this is where the trolls are concerned; they like his carved trinkets and will often trade for them at a good value. Music also appeals to Silverhair. He likes to listen to it, and has a beautifully carved wooden pipe that he plays with considerable skill. Soft, sad songs are his favorites, because music is always linked to the memory of his dead lifemate. Silverhair used to have a beautiful singing voice that Dewdrop loved to hear, but since her death at the hands of humans, he has not spoken or sung, communicating only by Sending. Silverhair is eternally tolerant of the behavior of cubs, but frowns on foolish behavior from adults. He does not partake of dreamberries or wine, and is made uncomfortable by change. He is a fairly serious fellow, but lightens up when with his sons. He is also considered an Elder of the native Timber Folk.

CREATIVE CONTROL: Timber Valley Non-Persona Character



TROLL NAME: Spitcurl
 RACE: Troll
 GENDER: Female
 MATE: None, but has an eye on Dripstone.
 FATHER: Grubmoss, King of the Trolls
 MOTHER: Stenchella
 SIBLINGS: --
 OTHER RELATIONS: --
 DF DATE BOEN: -76
 ORIGIN OF BIRTH: Timber Valley Troll Kingdom.
 EYES:
 HAIR: Medium brown, short, tight curls. Always has one curl plastered in the middle of her forehead.
 MARKS/SCARS: Has a wart above upper lip, right side, below nostril. Blackens it with coal dust so it looks like a beauty mark.
 REIGHT: 3'2"
 WEAPONS USED: --
 SKILLS: Is being trained to cook, care for children. Her real talent is flirting.
 JEWELRY: --
 CLOTHING: A toga-like dress, deep purple in color. Always slips off her shoulder. Has a black cord belt cinching it at waist.
 OTHER INFORMATION: Spitcurl is sick of cooking and caring for little screaming mumps. She plans to catch the eye of a well-placed male who can give her some luxury. She is just coming of an age to be noticed. May envy female elves when she learns of their equality with males. She's turned on by big noses, as well as wealth and power. She has a habit of licking her palm and plastering the curl onto her forehead. She hides her cunning and ambition behind her flirting and flattery. She is truly vain, spoiled and pampered. She's never seen a Human, knowing about them only through tales, which usually scare her. She thinks Preservers are only make-believe. She has developed a fondness for troll-made wine, especially if it happens to be of the dreamberry variety. She'll steal a swig whenever she can. She is King Grubmoss' joy, and can usually sweet-talk him into most things.

CREATIVE CONTROL: Lirida Woeltjen



DF 23 (GT)

THE DECISION
 Part One
 by Ted R Blasingame

Mooncrest's leg muscles were getting sore from the long walk up the inclining path, so he stopped to rest a moment and sat down next to the rock wall. Bushtrail quietly laid at his side, placing his furry head in the elf's lap. Mooncrest smiled at the aged wolf, stroking the thick fur.

"*You don't have to go with me, old friend,*" he sent when their eyes met, **This journey's mine.** The wolf's reply was only in fragments and feelings but the general message was that he would remain with the elf.

Mooncrest smiled and hugged his cherished friend lovingly, a single tear tracing its way down his cheek. He looked back across the moonlit Valley and sighed heavily; it was still as beautiful and inviting as it had been throughout his life. The cool, lush forest called to him in a sweet voice; a voice that beckoned to his heart. He almost decided to change his mind...

"No," he said to himself, "The decision was mine." He and Bushtrail stood and prepared to continue up Sheercliff Pass -- they were already over halfway up the steep path. Mooncrest gazed up at the top and shuddered. Up to now he'd been okay. The trip across the Valley from the Holt and up the Pass wasn't so bad -- mainly because he was deliberately not thinking about his destination, just on the travelling. But now it hit him. He was purposely and willingly going outside the Valley and into the Upper World.

The obsession within him was still there -- he could feel it pounding in his breast, but he had cause now to overcome it and go on. When a good enough reason existed, anyone could conquer any fear -- or so he wanted to believe. He was convinced he had a reason good enough.

As far as he knew, no one besides Nightway was aware he was headed out of Timber Valley; no one would have believed it had they known. He'd left the Holt alone with Bushtrail about the same time the hunting party had gone out, and as far as anyone was concerned, he'd just gone out on a personal hunt.

Lost in deep thought, he didn't notice how much walking he had done, but when he finally topped Sheercliff Pass and faced the Sea of Grass, he became acutely aware of his position. It started to grip him at once. The fear. His breathing quickened as he confronted it. Here he was, about to exchange the familiarity and protection of the forest for the unknown and vast openness of the Upper World. Bushtrail sensed his fear and drew up close to butt his head on the elf's leg gently. Mooncrest knelt down next to his loyal friend and embraced him. With a tremendous effort, he managed to get his breathing back to normal. Seeing a lone tree off to the right, he hurried to it and sat against its firm trunk.



"I have to do it..." he whispered to himself, "I have to do it..." Slowly, he rose to his feet and looked back out over the plains. He quickly sat down again. It was too open -- no protection anywhere. In the crescent moons' light, no details other than a few trees like the one he clung to were visible.

Mooncrest tried to think rationally. He remembered many stories the wanderers had told the native Timber Folk of the Upper World. According to those tales, a Great Wood lay sun-up from the Valley. He would have to travel around the Valley first and then follow the sun's rise across the grass. At least he could reach the comfort of the trees again in a few days. Perhaps...just perhaps he could survive the openness for that long. Perhaps.

Although he'd reached that conclusion, he still couldn't muster up the effort to get going again. The morning sun's glow was just barely beginning to show above the horizon on the opposite side of the Valley. He had already travelled most of the night just to get here from the Holt, so he needed sleep now. He decided the next leg of the trip would begin with the next night.

Bushtail was already nosing the pack of provisions Mooncrest slung over his back, ready for rest himself. Smiling, Mooncrest took the pack and opened it. The makeshift tent he removed would work well with this tree and shade them from the sun. Once the shelter was set up, the pack revealed dried meat and nuts which served as their meal. The water was shared freely, knowing it could be refilled as they crossed the Upper World's part of the Blue River. With their hunger satisfied, both elf and wolf settled in for sleep under the cloudy morning sky. Hopefully, Mooncrest thought wistfully, he could forget about his deep-rooted fear of the Upper World to sleep peacefully.



As the sun rose and crossed the sky, Nightway tossed and turned in her bed fitfully. She sat up amongst the furs, unable to sleep. Her lifemate hadn't returned from his private excursion. It was often Mooncrest's nature to go off alone into the forest, whether to hunt, spy on the Humans, or swim in the lake, and he often stayed away most of the night, but usually returned to the Holt as soon as the sun peeked into the Valley.

This time, he'd told her of something he had to do, and that he might be away a couple eight-of-days. She knew his reason and intent, and wanted to go with him. But, he convinced her to stay and made her promise to keep his whereabouts to herself. What he had to do was for him alone and he wanted no one else to know what he was up to. Though he'd only been gone all night and half the day, the dark haired treeshaper couldn't help but worry.

Nightway tried to return to sleep, but it was useless. A grey dread overshadowed her emotions, which kept her alert. Any movement outside was cause for her to rush to the window to greet her lifemate, but all in vain. With a heavy heart, she returned to the furs and closed her eyes.

Mooncrest was awakened by rain pelting the tent and the rumble of thunder. He rolled over and peered out into the evening sky, darkened with thick clouds. He muttered to himself and sat up in a cross-legged position. Bushtail's eyes followed his movements and Mooncrest could feel a tremble go through his furry friend with each peal of thunder.

As he watched, a blue-white finger of skyfire streaked across the sky, lighting up the entire region and ending with a loud strike to a nearby tree. He jumped involuntarily at the close crack and immediately thought of Nightway. She would be hiding under the furs, wishing he were there. He wished he were there too. She disliked thunderstorms as much as he disliked the Upper World. They terrified her.

As the dark-headed hunter sat staring into the storm, he began to question his reason for being there. It was widely known that he had a mad obsession against going outside the Valley. They knew he'd argue with anyone at any time if the subject came up. He was stubborn on that topic, though no one actually knew the reason.

Mooncrest drew his knees to his chest, wrapped his arms around them and buried his face. He didn't know if it would work or even if he could stand it, but he knew he had to try. Already he could feel his insides knotting up, much like the time when he'd been forced up here by the flood many years ago.

All his life, he'd felt comfortable and secure in the forest of Timber Valley. He lived, loved and grew up there, enjoying life and always trying to live it to its fullest. One time when he'd been only seven years of age, he had gone off in search of his soul name and had found it while at the base of Sheercliff Pass. At the time, he'd been overjoyed so he climbed the pass to see what he could see. Upon mounting the top and seeing the rolling fields of grass, the vast openness and only a minute number of trees, the young Mooncrest had stiffened in fright.

Never before had the child of the forest been so exposed without protection -- no place to run, and nowhere to hide. At that moment, he'd vowed that he would never set foot out there, nor allow anyone else to suffer that fate. But, now, he was here.

He had a great fear of wide open spaces -- one that ripened, hardened and expanded over the years. Mooncrest realized that it was a silly thing to fear, now that he'd passed those childhood years far behind, but it was too deep-rooted into his being to just shrug off as though it never existed.

It was only two nights ago that he and Ferret had another of their famous arguments. She insisted that the hunting trips outside the Valley walls were beneficial to the tribe, while he argued that Timber Valley had recovered enough from the Death Flood that the hunters no longer needed to visit the Upper World.

During this argument, Jasmine joined in and took up sides with Ferret, saying that he was as hard-headed as any troll could possibly be. What should it matter that the hunters sought their game in the Valley or the Upper World? Maybe he should go with them some time and find out for himself just what benefits can be had, she had suggested rather loudly.

Knowing the conversation was going nowhere, not to mention the fact that he was bright red with anger and feeling like he was going to explode, Mooncrest had stomped off to his tree to sulk. For two nights after the incident, that last statement haunted him. Though they couldn't know why he refused to leave the Valley, it was something he couldn't overcome. Or could he?

That same stubborn streak that fueled his arguments, now lit a fire under a new determination. He would go out into the Sea of Grass, and conquer his own fear. The plan was to cross it to the Great Woods and then return. Simple, right?

* * *

Chief Nightstep rubbed his chin as he listened to the reports from his people. No one had seen any sign of Mooncrest or Bushtail for four nights. Redlace had found signs that the wayward elf had been by the Pass, but the trail was lost there. No one even bothered to entertain the idea that he'd gone up the Pass, for they knew there was no way possible that he'd go THERE. Some suggested that he'd probably finally been caught by the Tall Ones and tossed into their sacrificial pit. As Nightstep was preparing to send out search parties, Nightway struggled with the conflicts deep within her. She had vowed not to reveal her lifemate's plan, but she couldn't allow the hunters to waste time looking for him when she knew they'd never search in the right place. In silence, she agonized as she tried to think of a way to prevent this foolishness.

Nightstep looked at the crowd of hunters gathered in the Council Clearing and was mentally choosing party members for the searches. He shook his head to clear his thoughts, as if it would help. Had it been someone else who frequently stayed away for long periods of time, they wouldn't have bothered with the searches. However, Mooncrest never stayed away more than a day when alone, so they knew he must be in trouble. Nightstep was about to choose Longknife, Redlace and Rogue to sneak over into the Tall Ones' territory to check out the sacrificial pit, when Nightway called to him silently.

My Chief, she sent timidly, **Please stop the searches. They aren't necessary.**

Nightstep looked up sharply and saw her sitting alone in the thick grass beside the Minnowbrook. He sent to the two parties that had just left and told them to wait a moment. He walked over and stopped when he stood in front of her. "What are you talking about, Nightway?"

She stared at the tiny fish swimming in the water and whispered, "I know where Mooncrest is."

"Where?"

Nightway tossed a couple of pebbles into the brook and shook her head. "I can't tell you, but it isn't necessary to send people looking for him."

Already on edge, the chief was getting irritable. "Why can't you tell me, cub?" he said a little strongly, "What's he gone off and done?" He had visions of the prankster pulling his stunts on the humans and starting a war, or some other such action that would put the tribe in danger.

However, all the treeshaper would tell him was that he was off taking care of business of his own. Nightstep didn't like it because he knew she was deliberately keeping something from him. Gently, but firmly, he pulled her up so that she stood in front of him. He did not release his grip on her arms. His eyes darkened as he stared at her in a challenge. "Where is he!?" he demanded.

His statement had been in a loud voice that drew the attentions of the hunters and other folk. Nightway closed her eyes and yelled just as loudly, "I CAN'T TELL YOU!" and with a strength neither she nor Nightstep knew she had, Nightway wrenched free of her chief's hold and ran across the Holt toward her tree.

"Nightway!" Nightstep yelled, beginning to follow her. However, Wavesong stepped in front of him and blocked his path.

"Let her be, nephew." Nightstep stooped and glared at her. He was usually an easy-going leader, but he would not tolerate someone who openly defied an order from their chief. Wavesong's will was just as strong as Nightstep's, and presently he turned away and looked at the hunters.

"The search parties are cancelled until Nightway decides she wants to cooperate and tell us where her lifemate is. Go about your own tasks now."

He turned back to stare at Wavesong. When Chief Greylock had died in strangleweed years ago, she had been the natural choice to take her brother's place as Chieftess of the Timber Folk. However, she had seen leadership qualities in Greylock's son, so she refused the responsibility and let him take the position. However, he often relied upon her counsel, and sometimes she gave it when he didn't ask for it. This was such a time. Though Nightstep was angered, he decided Wavesong may have a valid reason for letting the matter slide this time. Forcing an answer out of the treeshaper was not the answer. When Nightstep's expression softened somewhat, Wavesong put a hand on his shoulder.

"I'll try to see if we can find a way to coax her to tell us where Mooncrest has gone and why. Agreed?" she asked.

Nightstep sighed heavily and nodded his head. "Agreed. But, I want to know the reason immediately when you find out. Agreed?"

"Agreed."

As Wavesong walked towards the treeshaper's hometree, Nightstep headed for the Father Tree. Off to the side, Regue had watched the entire exchange silently. He was forming a plan of his own. He believed he had come to know Mooncrest better in recent years than those who had grown up with him and thought he had an inkling of where the missing elf had gone.

(To Be Continued)

