

ZILFRYN ETTERIL

Male drow; age 132; exiled assassin; Merilinel's devoted consort

You were born in Vharlinthzhillar, a Drow metropolis; the son of a respected and prosperous noble family, House Belaerran. Like all the other children in your cohort you were initially given basic magical training, but it rapidly became apparent that your middling skill in magic was not worth cultivating. Thereafter you began to study the fighting arts, and eventually entered the ranks of the Matriarch's elite squad of guards and assassins.

You excelled at your duties – your name was feared throughout the city, and you developed a reputation for both skill and tenacity. You learned to anticipate the wishes of your Matriarch and her inner circle, helpfully taking care of many minor tasks before your superiors even had to instruct you to do so. Unfortunately, on one occasion you did your job a little too well.

Your Matriarch had much cause to complain about one of your neighbours, the Matriarch of the up-and-coming House Velcharyn. She had become increasingly bold in her attacks on your family's holdings and resources, to the point of transgressing the rules of propriety which held the city's fragile ruling alliance together. When you overheard your Matriarch describing the younger woman as a feral animal which needed to be dealt with decisively, you took it upon yourself to deal with her. Decisively.

Alas, you soon realised that not every secret desire is politically expedient. While your Matriarch was privately pleased to be rid of her ambitious rival, she could not publically condone such a brazen assassination of a noblewoman, even one from a minor house. You were thus exiled from the city, with a dozen Velcharyn assassins snapping at your heels – the new Velcharyn Matriarch may have been just as grateful for her abrupt promotion, but she had to keep up appearances.

Cut adrift from your former life, you wandered through the Underdark for about a year – but the price on your head was a tiresome distraction which made it difficult for you to settle anywhere. You made your way to the surface in the hopes of putting more distance between yourself and your past – emerging in Deepfort, the old trading outpost on the outskirts of the recently established Harmonious Kingdom. Although even the aboveground city had a substantial Drow

presence, it was much further removed from the political concerns of the Drow heartland.

Here you found work as a mercenary, and one of your most regular customers was the local chapter of the Resistance. Not everyone was pleased with the Harmonious Ruler's new world order, and Deepfort in particular was a hotbed of dissent and a notorious hive of renegade underground musicians. The maze of literal underground passages which perforated the Old Town provided a wealth of escape routes and hiding places. The locals smuggled unlicensed instruments, sheet music and recordings; and organised illicit gigs in secret locations. Defying the Priests of Harmony and their Sonic Legion was a hazardous business – your services were in high demand.

This is how you met Merilinel Thynne, the lead vocalist of Vorpall Mace, the famous band who tried and failed to prevent the Harmonious Ruler's rise. She and the rest of her band formed the core leadership of the local Resistance chapter, and used their bardic magic to launch strikes against the Harmonious Ruler's forces in the area. You were immediately drawn to her intelligence and beauty – she exemplified all the best qualities of a ruler, and your admiration for her and your desire to serve a worthy Matriarch are what led you to keep accepting work from the Resistance even when the pay was abysmal.

Guided by Merilinel's capable hand, the Resistance gained several important victories, and it appeared that they were on the verge of seizing control of the entire city. Then Merilinel committed all her forces to a bold attack on Deepfort's Church of Harmony, intending to drive out its priesthood, destroy its instruments and declare Deepfort a free city – but upon arriving discovered that she had been led into a trap. Waiting for her inside was none other than Reginald Sable, lead vocalist of Vorpall Mace's musical nemesis Adamantium, and one of the Harmonious Ruler's most feared lieutenants. He was armed, as always, with a magical theorbo – one of the legendary instruments used to bring about the new order.

In the ensuing battle the Resistance suffered catastrophic losses and was forced to flee. In the confusion, Reginald's forces captured Osbert, Merilinel's beloved consort and the father of her only daughter. It was soon announced that he was to be executed in the town square the following day. Merilinel insisted on a rescue attempt, despite the risks, and you were compelled to assist her.

The execution was heavily guarded. You had barely any personnel left, and no real plan. When it became

clear that you could not hope to reach Osbert and extract him alive, Merilinel desperately gambled on an experimental bardic spell, intending to turn Osbert into a being of pure sound and reconstitute him into human form once he was safe.

Something went terribly wrong with the spell. You don't know enough about magic to have an explanation, but you know that Merilinel's singing voice was ripped from her and merged with Osbert's sonic form to create some kind of monstrous creature. It tore through the crowd as it fled, possessing people at random and using them as mouthpieces for a cacophonous and of course illegal song, leaving them either insane or dead. You barely escaped to safety in the chaos.

After this devastating failure, Merilinel was inconsolable. She seemed to abandon all hope that the Resistance could recover from its defeat, and found the city where Osbert had died a constant, unbearable reminder of her private grief. The sound monster continued to haunt the city, enraging the priests and eluding capture, using its unfortunate hosts to sing protest songs in a disturbingly familiar voice. The locals had taken to calling it the Whistler, for the high-pitched shriek that warned of its approach.

Despite the entreaties of the surviving members of Vorpall Mace, Merilinel decided to leave Deepfort with her child and go into hiding in the countryside under an assumed name. Of course you went with her – your primary loyalty had never been to the Resistance's cause, and you could not possibly leave her to fend for herself, knowing how badly her bardic abilities had been reduced.

You posed as a married couple travelling together as you made your way to the rural outskirts of the kingdom. Merilinel named herself Serinde, and she and her daughter Evelyn adopted your pseudonymous family name, according to surface conventions. Eventually you settled on an abandoned farm in the small village of Stonebridge, where Merilinel posed as a weaver and you as a hunter. You transferred your fighting skills to game, and she her much diminished non-musical magical talents to the spinning and weaving of wool.

Merilinel's time away from Deepfort seemed to do her good, despite the constant background level of risk. She quietly practiced her magic, finding workarounds to help her deal with the parts of her ability that were irreparably damaged. She made new connections in the village, knowing well that you needed to be on good terms with your neighbours in order to survive.

She projected an aura of bland normalcy, expertly blending into the local population, playing up your cover story of a harmless, boring refugee family seeking a quiet life. Your cover story soon developed into a genuine relationship.

You doted on Evelyn, Merilinel's heir, as if she were your own child – and she grew closer to you as her relationship to her mother became more strained. Merilinel had by necessity been absent for much of her early childhood, and as Evelyn grew up in Stonebridge she asked many questions about her past and her father which Merilinel considered either too painful or too dangerous to answer.

When Evelyn first manifested magical abilities, Merilinel was dismayed. By this time, the Priests of Harmony had become diligent in removing young bards from their families at the earliest sign of their potential, to be raised and indoctrinated by the Church from the youngest possible age. The Church's agents were everywhere, and even in your sleepy village neighbours reported neighbours for minor infractions to curry favour.

A magical talent cannot be eradicated from a child, but it can be moulded or stifled. Merilinel ruthlessly discouraged Evelyn from any form of musical expression, despite her interest – something which drove a further wedge between them. You don't know what she could have become in a different world, but in yours Evelyn began to channel her magic in safer directions, towards sorcery. You were able to help her start on this path by recalling your early lessons.

You have also taught Evelyn some basic fighting skills – you have a responsibility to ensure that she can defend herself. She has shown more promise with the bow than with the sword – somewhat to your relief – and has become a keen shot. She has often joined you on your hunts, although recently she has seemed more preoccupied with her magical self-study.

From her oblique questioning you suspect that she has been working on some kind of project; one that she is disinclined to tell her mother about – but just as you have kept Merilinel's secrets from Evelyn for years, you feel obligated to keep Evelyn's secrets from Merilinel. You have navigated this kind of delicate conflict of interest many times before in your old life.

You wish that you could have the same easy friendship with your son, Amalar, who was born two years after your arrival in Stonebridge. You don't quite know how to talk to the boy – nothing that you know about a young drow man's upbringing is relevant to your life on the surface. In addition to this, he exhibits a strong

bardic talent which has resisted all of Merilinel's best efforts to suppress it. From an early age he has spent most of his time with his mother, learning how to control his abilities and to conceal them from the watchful eye of the local priest.

It worries you that you know your son so little, but at least he appears to get on well with his sister, despite the age gap between them. She has been better positioned to watch over him when they interact with the other young people of the village. It has concerned you that he stands out so much from the others – a half-drow in a mostly human village – but Evelyn has told you that he is well-liked, and that he is careful to keep his magical talent under wraps.

Another secret you have kept from the children is that Merilinel has been practicing with her lute – keeping her skill honed in case it is needed. Every few nights since a few years after Amalar's birth she has gone alone into the forest, summoned the instrument and played it – the rest of the time it lies in an underground cache buried beneath the shed, together with your good sword, armour, and all the other incriminating supplies you brought with you from Deepfort.

The life you have now is not one that you could ever have predicted, but one which is precious to you. You love your family, and you will do anything to protect them. For all these years you have enjoyed your quiet, uncomplicated existence here in Stonebridge, but you have always known that it was only a matter of time before trouble came to find you.

Trouble arrived in the village earlier this evening, in the form of a squad of city priests, including several bards. They went straight to the church and have been holed up inside with Lambert, the local priest, ever since. What could they be talking about?

Lambert is a rather weak-willed man with absolutely no magical ability and no particular ambition to be noticed in the Church's hierarchy – which is one of the reasons that you picked Stonebridge as your home. Although he has dutifully observed all of his priestly duties, you have never considered him a significant threat. Today, however, the threat level has escalated considerably. If he suspects anything about your family, you doubt that he would have the courage to lie to protect you.

You don't want to alarm the children, but you and Merilinel have had a few hushed discussions about what to do if the priests come for you. The two of you planned for this eventuality years ago. You intend to gather supplies, including the contents of your emergency cache under the shed, and flee into the

forest on foot, heading for Deepfort. From the sporadic and propaganda-laden news reports you have received, you know that the Resistance is still active there – they are certain to help Merilinel if she returns. Your own status is more uncertain – even in Deepfort you had to fend off the occasional inept assassination attempt. You are not without family contacts, however – and perhaps after all this time you are no longer as rewarding a target.

Deepfort is a week's travel away, and you would be travelling mostly cross-country, avoiding settlements and roads as much as possible. You'd need to re-supply at least once, which you could probably do at the Elderflower – a well-appointed inn nestled in a small valley that lies well off the major roads to Deepfort. Merilinel knows the owner – they have helped each other a few times in the past.

But perhaps you're just being paranoid, and the priests will leave tomorrow without causing any trouble. For now you're putting on a brave face while Merilinel calls the family to dinner.

Your family

Serinde: actually Merilinel Thynne, the former lead vocalist of Vorpall Mace. She lost her voice and her previous consort in a series of failed Resistance missions in Deepfort. You consider her to be the Matriarch of your very small house, and you are utterly loyal to her.

Evelyn: Merilinel's daughter, whom you love like your own child. She has a difficult relationship with her mother. You hope that they can resolve their differences.

Amalar: Merilinel's son, and yours. He is far closer to his mother than he is to you, and you don't quite know how to be a father to him.

People you know

Rosalind Mott: the last drummer of Vorpall Mace, and the de facto leader of the Resistance when last you saw her. She runs an illegal nightclub called Club Spectre, and is strongly connected both to legitimate merchants and to organised crime.

Feldspar Shalecrusher: the bass lutenist of Vorpall Mace. He vanished without a trace during the failed attack on the Church of Harmony in Deepfort.

The Whistler: formerly Osbert Weaver, the lead lutenist of Vorpall Mace, and Evelyn's father. He was transformed into a fell sound-creature by Merilinel's

spell in a botched rescue attempt.

Olothril Belaerran: the ranking representative of your former house in Deepfort; a first cousin of the Matriarch. She runs Nimrothvel, an expensive restaurant and hotel for visiting drow dignitaries, and is generally well-disposed towards you.

Chassrith Velcharyn: the ranking representative of House Velcharyn in Deepfort; a minor textile saleswoman. She has tried to have you killed several times, which doesn't necessarily mean that she dislikes you.

Equipment

Adamantine sword: a finely crafted longsword which has been with you since your days in the underdark.

Adamantine armour: an intricately constructed, flexible chain shirt.

Zilfryn Etteril

1st level Sorcerer, 18th level Fighter

Race: Drow **Hit Points:** 130

Alignment: Neutral **Base Attack**

Bonus: +18 / +13 / +8 / +3

Stats

Strength: 15 (+2) **Dexterity:** 19

(+4) **Constitution:** 13 (+1)

Intelligence: 16 (+3) **Wisdom:** 12

(+1) **Charisma:** 12 (+1)

Saving Throws

Fortitude: +11 **Reflex:** +11 **Will:** +8

Combat

Initiative: +8 **Melee attack:** +20 / +15 / +10 / +5 **Ranged attack:** +21 / +16 / +11 / +6 **Armour class (AC):** 14

With adamantine longsword and armour:

Longsword attack: +23 / +18 / +13 / +8 **Longsword damage:** 1d8+6 **Critical Threat Range:** 17-20 **Adamantine chain shirt AC:** 18 **Damage Reduction:** 1/-

The adamantine chain shirt also fits Evelyn. It provides +4 AC and 1/- damage reduction.

Skills

Bluff: +7 **Climb:** +12

Concentration: +9 **Handle**

animal: +9 **Intimidate:** +14 **Jump:**

+12 **Listen:** +7 **Move Silently:** +8

Ride: +12 **Search:** +5 **Spellcraft:**

+7 **Spot:** +6 **Survival:** +7 **Swim:**

+10

Feats

Blind-fight: You know how to fight in melee without being able to see your foes or the surrounding terrain.

Combat Expertise: You can

subtract up to -5 from your attack to add up to +5 to your AC.

Improved Disarm: +4 on attacks to disarm opponents and you do not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Improved Feint: You can feint (a bluff check) as a move action (instead of standard action).

Improved Trip: +4 bonus on your strength check to trip someone and you do not provoke an attack of opportunity. If you trip an opponent, you may immediately make a free attack at the same attack bonus as you used for the trip. To trip an opponent make a base melee touch attack followed by an opposed strength check.

Combat Reflexes: You may make 5 attacks of opportunity each round, instead of 1.

Dodge: +1 AC against a selected opponent.

Mobility: +4 AC against attack of opportunity caused by moving towards or away from opponents.

Spring Attack: You may move both before and after your attack. This does not provoke attacks of opportunity from defenders you attack.

Improved Initiative: +4 to initiative (already included).

Lightning Reflexes: +2 to reflex saving throws (already included).

Quick Draw: You may draw a weapon as free action.

You Really, Really Know How To Use A Longsword: With a longsword you have +2 to all attacks, +4 to all damage and your critical threat range is 17-20 (all already included; the individual feats are Improved Critical, Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, Greater Weapon Focus, Greater Weapon Specialization).

Race features

Darkvision: Can see 120ft in absolute darkness.

Spell-like abilities: Dancing Lights, Darkness, Faerie Fire once/day each.

Light Blindness: Abrupt exposure to bright light blinds you for one round.

Class features

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Unless a weapon or piece of armour is particularly odd, you know how to use it.

Bonus Feats: You know how to do lots of things with weapons.

Sorcerer spells

1st Level (4 per day)

Feather Fall: Objects or creatures fall slowly. **Expeditious Retreat:** You move 30ft per round faster.

0th Level (5 per day)

Detect Magic: Detects spells and magic items within 60ft. **Detect Poison:** Detects poison in one creature or small object. **Message:** Whispered conversation at a distance. **Prestidigitation:** Performs minor tricks.