

Merilinel Thynne

Female half-elf; age 28; lead vocalist; can also play the lute

You were born out of wedlock to a human noblewoman in the city of Greatmarsh; an eternal reminder of her youthful indiscretion with a visiting Elven ambassador. While many official privileges of the nobility are closed to you because of your illegitimacy, you have nevertheless been raised in considerable privilege. Like other noble children of your status, you have always been expected to serve your mother's family in a supporting capacity – but while armies and priesthoods are a popular choice of vocation, your role in life was determined long ago by the magical skill which you inherited from your distant father. Your family has spared no expense in securing you an appropriate education: since you came of age you have been studying sorcery under the supervision of Master Baldwin.

Unfortunately, you have always found these studies unspeakably dull. You have spent most of your life resenting your father for saddling you with your unwelcome gift, and your mother's family for disregarding your wishes in their eagerness to exploit it. You have often wondered what your life would have been like had you been raised among the elves, who don't consider magic extraordinary. When you were little you attempted to send several letters to the nearby elven kingdom, inquiring after your father – but your relatives soon put a stop to that, and you rapidly abandoned the fantasy that he had any interest whatsoever in your life.

Everything changed when you discovered music. A chance visit to an inn during one of your frequent escapes from Master Baldwin's tower gave you an opportunity to listen to a bardic performance. It was a revelation – you felt as if you had found a piece which you had been missing your entire life. You knew immediately that this was what your magic was for. You began to visit inns to listen to bards regularly, and it was not long before you had purchased a lute and begun to compose your own songs.

Your family was horrified when you tentatively mentioned this interest to them. Bards were common hirelings they employed for an evening's entertainment – they considered the profession beneath you, and could not see how it could possibly be of any use to them. Neither did they

approve of anything that could possibly distract you from your studies – your mother was most insistent about that.

The idea that you should abandon the only thing that had ever made you happy was unthinkable, so you put on a show of obedience for your mother and quietly continued your musical career in secret. At first you sang alone. Then, at one of your performances, you were approached by a young man called Osbert Weaver and a dwarf, Feldspar Shalecrusher. They were looking for a vocalist for a new band. Of course you agreed immediately – you were eager to expand your compositions to incorporate multiple voices and instruments. Together you found a drummer, and after much deliberation decided to call yourselves Vorpall Mace.

Despite his humble family origins, Osbert had extraordinary natural talent with the lute, and showed considerable songwriting skill of his own. Together you produced some of the best music you think you have ever written. While Feldspar was an adequate bass lutenist at best, he was really enthusiastic about being in the band. More importantly, he had a cart which you could use to transport your instruments. It was pulled by a mule named Matilda, which you all rapidly took to calling the Vorpall Mule.

It was a pity that you had such bad luck with drummers – you don't even remember that first fellow's name, since he lasted a mere two performances before being stabbed in a street brawl in a sad case of mistaken identity. Thereafter one drummer was conscripted to the city guard, one became a monk after an abrupt drunken epiphany, two succumbed to unfortunate and unlikely fatal mishaps, and two simply vanished without a trace.

Your first few performances were decidedly uninspiring, but you soon moved your way up from the dingiest inns of Greatmarsh to some that were more reputable, and it did not take long for you to start playing larger venues and touring neighbouring cities. Soon you were widely regarded to be the best band in all of Greatmarsh and its surrounds, and your performances reliably drew enormous crowds.

Your fall was as swift as your meteoric rise. Despite your success, you were struggling with several difficulties, which all came together in a perfect storm on the night of your last performance.

As Vorpall Mace became more famous, it became increasingly difficult to conceal your extracurricular activities from your family and Master Baldwin. Despite their complete lack of interest in the world in which you immersed yourself, they eventually noticed that your name was featured on posters all over the city – and Master Baldwin could only accept so many excuses to explain your prolonged absences from his tower.

The more time you spent with the band, the more you neglected your studies. Any hopes you may have had that Master Baldwin would allow you to incorporate your bardic skills into his curriculum were rapidly dashed – music, he said, was frivolous nonsense which could only pollute the purity of the sorcerous arts. Your mother was furious that you had disobeyed her, and strongly implied that if your behaviour did not change you might find yourself disinherited.

At the same time, you were navigating some complicated relationship issues within the band. You and Osbert had always had a strong bond based on your shared love of music, and in time this developed into a romantic attachment. Unfortunately, you soon discovered that music was not enough to bridge the gap between your stations. He seemed to think that someone born to the nobility could not possibly have any real problems – he didn't understand the complex web of obligation and duty in which you were trapped. Your debates often turned into arguments, and the arguments became angry. By the time of the performance you were barely on speaking terms.

Everything went wrong that night. The Vorpall Mule went lame en route, causing you to be an hour late. The magical amplification failed halfway through the performance, and the sound mage could not restore it. Your throat was hoarse from singing loudly enough to be heard. Osbert kept snapping strings on his elderly lute, which he had always refused to replace despite your offers to buy him a new one. Feldspar had eaten something that disagreed with him, and was in a foul mood the entire evening. You received lukewarm applause from a disappointed audience, and while you were packing up the cart afterwards in the pouring rain, the drummer went back into the inn to smoke his pipe and never returned.

You don't remember who started the fight, but you remember how it ended – when your throats were

raw from screaming at each other, Osbert stormed off on foot towards the dubious part of town that he called home, you hailed a coach, and Feldspar was left to push a cart full of abandoned drums back to his house, rain streaming from his beard. That was the last time that you saw either of them – until yesterday.

For the past few months you have barely left your tower. You have applied yourself to your studies, trying to placate your mother and your teacher, and trying to ignore the unhappiness gnawing at your heart. You heard from well-meaning friends that Osbert was pursuing a solo career, and playing for wealthy patrons.

Yesterday you were awoken in the early hours of the morning by someone throwing stones at your window. It was Feldspar, who had braved several layers of protection around the tower to tell you that he wanted to re-form Vorpall Mace and compete at the Battle of the Bards – a prestigious contest which is run every five years outside the city of Whitecrest. He said that he had already persuaded Osbert, and that he had found a new drummer. All that they needed was you.

You refused at first – after what had happened, you thought you were done forever with Osbert and Vorpall Mace, and you knew that this could be your last chance to get back into your mother's good graces. Feldspar knew exactly how to change your mind, however – he needed only to show you the poster for the contest, which listed all the bands which had been confirmed as attending. Of course all the usual suspects were there, but your eye was drawn immediately to the name of your nemesis: Adamantium.

The professional rivalry between Vorpall Mace and Adamantium is notorious, but for you this is also a deeply personal feud. A few years ago, to your great regret, you were briefly romantically entangled with Adamantium's frontman, Reginald Sable. At first it appeared that you had a lot in common – as a tiefling, Reginald explored many themes of identity and heritage in his own music. Soon, however, you realised that beneath a thin veneer of depth and wisdom Adamantium's lyrics were mostly trite and uninspired, and that Reginald himself was insufferably arrogant and pretentious. You broke it off after a particularly heated argument about the relative merits of your compositions. You have no doubt that Vorpall

Mace's dissolution gave him immense personal satisfaction – there is no other band that comes close to challenging Adamantium's musical supremacy.

It galls you to imagine that those talentless hacks could win the contest by default because you didn't show up. You cannot allow that to happen. Tonight Feldspar and the rest of Vorpall Mace are coming to help you sneak out of the tower. You don't know how you will explain yourself when you get back, but this is something that you must do.

Your fellow band members:

Osbert Weaver: a self-taught lutenist and singer. He is incredibly talented. You briefly had a relationship with him, but it ended very badly – something that you often regret. You both dread and long to see him again. He has previously supplemented his income with all kinds of poorly paid menial jobs, often foolishly risking damage to his hands. You hope that his new-found solo success has put an end to that.

Feldspar Shalecrusher: a dwarf. He works for a jeweller during the day. He plays the bass lute and is a great fan of bardic music, which is quite unusual for a dwarf. Before Vorpall Mace he was in several other bands which broke up – you think that he has taken your falling-out the hardest.

Rosalind Mott: your new drummer. You have never met her – according to Feldspar she is a merchant's daughter. She also sounds terribly young, but you suspect that she is all that Feldspar could find at such short notice. You hope that she will last longer than Vorpall Mace's previous drummers.

Equipment

Small suitcase: Mostly fine clothing.

Lute: A fine instrument.

Money: 200 GP (pocket money from the last few months that you haven't had the opportunity to spend).

Merilinel Thynne

6th level Bard

Race: Half Elf

Hit Points: 26

Alignment: Neutral Good

Base Attack Bonus: +4

Stats

Strength: 10 (+0)

Dexterity: 14 (+2)

Constitution: 12 (+1)

Intelligence: 15 (+2)

Wisdom: 15 (+2)

Charisma: 17 (+3)

Saving Throws

Fortitude: +3

Reflex: +7

Will: +11

Combat

Initiative: +2

Melee attack: +4

Ranged attack: +6

Armour class: 12

Skills

Concentration: +6

Diplomacy: +9

Handle animal: +5

Heal: +4

Hide: +6

Knowledge (Arcana): +5

Knowledge (History): +4

Knowledge (Local): +5

Listen: +3

Move silently: +6

Perform: +15

Ride: +3

Search: +6

Spellcraft: +7

Spot: +8

Survival: +4

Swim: +2

Use magic device: +6

Feats

Iron will: +2 to will save (already included).

Skill focus (Perform): +3 to Perform (already included).

Stealthy: +2 to Hide and Move Silently (already included).

Proficiencies: Armour (light), Shield, Simple weapon.

Class features

Bardic knowledge: Make a check at +8 to see if you know something about an important person, item or place.

Bardic music: 6 times a day, use your music to produce magical effects on people around you or yourself.

Bardic music effects

Fascinate: Make a Perform check to cause someone to be fascinated by you.

Suggestion: Make a magical suggestion to someone you have fascinated.

Inspire competence: Give someone else a +2 bonus to a skill check.

Countersong: Make a Perform check to counter a magical effect that depends on sound.

Inspire courage: Inspire courage in anyone who can hear you.

Bard spells

Spells per day

2nd level: 2

1st level: 3

0th level: 3

2nd Level

Cat's Grace: +4 to Dex for 6 min.

Eagle's Splendor: +4 to Cha for 6 min.

Enthrall: Captivate all within 160 ft.

1st Level

Disguise Self: Change your appearance.

Feather Fall: Fall like a feather.

Obscure Object: Mask object against scrying.

Ventriloquism: Throw voice for 6 min.

0th Level

Dancing Lights: Create lights.

Light: Object shines like a torch.

Lullaby: Make subject drowsy: -5 to Spot and Listen checks; -2 to Will saves against sleep.

Message: Whispered conversation at distance.

Read Magic: Read scrolls and spellbooks.

Summon Instrument: Summon one instrument of your choice.