

Backstory for Iluna Starborn

Iluna was found and raised by a reclusive elf cult-clan called the Dark Brothers. Their leader was an elf named Ravidus, who was a prominent figure in the cult of Razmir. However, he understood that Razmir was still only a mortal, and therefore doubted that he could prove to be the saviour of nations. So he banded together a group of cultists with the aim of seeking a higher tangible power that would grant Razmir - or someone who might take his place - the power of the gods. These cultists came to call each other brothers, and so took up the name of the Dark Brothers, for they believed the only tangible salvation that could be achieved by mortals would be achieved through gathering the fabled Shards of Darkness. Ravidus believed that if he could recover these ancient relics, Razmir's power would rival that of even the gods, but secretly he was also motivated by the allure of the power of these relics, and craved that power for his own.

Among the first to join his cause was an Elf named Daerion. He came from regions far to the north where entrances to the Darklands had once been found, and it was suspected that his heritage may have been mixed with Drow blood. This manifested in his appearance as having skin that was tinged with grey, silver-white hair, and red eyes.

It was Daerion that found Iluna that night, lost in the woods, a lonesome child, clothes in a simple white dress and carrying a small wooden harp. Who her parents had been, where she had come from, and why she was there at all were mysteries that have never been solved. Perhaps she simply was, and before that day she never had been. Regardless, Daerion took her in and sheltered her among the Brothers. By this time the brothers were more than just a handful of elven elitists, their numbers had grown and their ranks included more than just Elven males. Iluna was among those with whom she could assimilate, though the circumstances of her coming into this culture set her apart from the others.

It was recognized from the start that she had strange powers: powers to control the minds of men and women, and shape their memories. She did not understand why she had these gifts, and in truth neither did anyone else. But it didn't take long for them to find ways to use her powers for their own gain. At first, the brothers would use her to calm the minds of the listeners the brothers would evangelize to. They often made her reshape the thoughts of outsiders to make them see the error of their beliefs, and to accept the doctrines of Razmir as truth. The Brothers told her she was serving the greater good; that she was helping to educate the unlearned, and grant them the peace of mind that comes from the teachings of Razmir. They persuaded her into seeing their truth, and then led her blindly into controlling the minds of the masses, using her power to their own gains.

For Iluna, this was a peaceful time. When she was alone she would spend time wandering the fields - though never far from the camp - and gaze up into the stars. She often felt that whatever power must have granted her her gifts, it must have come from the celestial bodies. To reinforce this, the brothers named her Starborn, and claimed that she had been found on a moonless night when the stars shone more brightly than ever before. Unfortunately this was most likely just another fabrication told to her to keep her under their control.

It eventually came to pass that Daerion grew envious of Ravidus. Daerion was first drawn to the brothers in awe of the power that Ravidus commanded, for he was a powerful

speaker and could sway the hearts of men with his simple yet powerful sermons. Yet Daerion began to covet that power for his own. He sought to usurp Ravidus, and gather the Shards of Darkness for himself and with their power overthrow Ravidus. For him, he had lost sight of the glory of Razmir, and now used him only as a scapegoat for his methods of teaching. Now when he spoke of Razmir, he thought of himself, and in his mind it was he who stood as the salvation of mortal kind through control of the dark forces, which he would obtain once he combined the power of the Shards of Darkness.

Over time Daerion rose in power in the ranks of the brothers; his finding Iluna in no small way contributed to this. He took it upon himself to teach and train her in the uses of her power and she looked up to him as a sort of father, not knowing how much he abused the very power he cultivated within her. Daerion himself was a powerful summoner, as were most of the Dark Brothers, but he often proved to be a cut above his peers in this regard.

It came to pass that Daerion convinced Ravidus to let him lead a missionary expedition in the land of Taldor. Daerion secretly planned to use this opportunity to cultivate the loyalty of certain followers to himself, and then return and stage a coup. He also took Iluna with him, so that he could be free of Ravidus' supervision in her training.

One day on the expedition, as Daerion was leading a summoning ritual, more as a show of his talent than for any other purpose, a woman happened across the clearing where Daerion and his chief supporters were. Iluna sensed the woman's approach before the brothers were aware of her. Curious of this outsider, Iluna allowed her consciousness to merge with that of the woman, placing herself in a dream state as Daerion had taught her. She sensed the woman's curiosity of the group. Since she herself was curious of the woman's presence, this unity in thought brought their minds much closer than intended, and so it happened by accident that both of their minds returned to Iluna's body. Iluna had never experienced this before, but in her instinctive reaction towards the foreign presence of the woman within her own mind she put the woman to sleep and woke herself up. She saw this reaction as a grave mistake, for she had let down the safeguards of her own mind, yet in reality it could not have been more fortuitous. The woman, it turned out, had immediately been possessed by the demon that Daerion was summoning. It had leapt forth from the flames of their camp fire and entered her body at just the same moment that Iluna had pulled the woman's consciousness out of her body. By retracting the woman's mind along with her own, Iluna had actually saved her. However, In trying to return the woman's mind to her rightful body, Iluna accidentally made the woman feel more peaceful than she should have. She gave her a memory of staring up into a starry sky, which the woman interpreted as a dream upon her awakening.

As this was all happening, Daerion and his men were frantically engaging the woman's now demon-possessed body, which began to run around the clearing in a freakish, out of control manner. They were able to capture it and exorcise the demon, and after that the woman woke with Iluna's false memory of the event implanted. Daerion then explained to her the situation, but the woman only half heard what he said, believing she was only just waking from a dream. Daerion marked her too peaceful attitude and understood what Iluna must have done. He then took advantage of the situation, knowing the woman was not fully in control of her mind at the present moment. He coaxed her into consenting to sleep with him, and 9 months later she gave

birth to a son. Daerion named his half elven son Dzarra'thul, after the demon spirit that had inhabited his mother's body.

The woman stayed with the group through the course of her pregnancy. At times she felt like leaving, but when this happened, Daerion had Iluna implant false memories of contentment to sedate her and keep her cooperative. Iluna questioned these orders, but Daerion explained that the woman would be in danger if ever she left the Brothers, so she consented, believing she was doing what was best for the woman. Even after the baby was born, Daerion continued to instruct Iluna to keep the woman loyal through controlling her memories.

Iluna kept watch over the baby Dzarra as he grew. The brief connection she had shared with his mother gave her great insight into how to penetrate the mind of the boy, and as he was still an infant he was easily susceptible to her influence. Thus she saw from an early age that the boy's conscience had been severely marred by the demon's influence. His thoughts were dark and full of shadows, as if some alien force held forbearance over the development of his young mind. When Iluna told Daerion of this, seeking to find help for the boy, Daerion instead became greatly interested in her ability to penetrate the boy's mind. He instructed her to assist the shaping of the boy's thoughts and memories, not to remove the taint, but rather to cultivate it and shape it into the semblance of a normal functioning conscience. Daerion explained that to remove the demon's taint would be to kill the child, and so Iluna believed him and did as she was told. She began to reorganize the thoughts in Dzarra's mind, bringing forth thoughts of growth and weaving the darkness into the light, merging the tainted thoughts with true memories.

This process was not seamless. Though the child was young and pliable, unable to resist Iluna's influence, Iluna herself was still learning of her powers. This particular area of shaping a growing child's thoughts was new to her and she made as many errors as she made corrections. The child thus began to suffer from nightmares, and slept fitfully. This progressed to seizures and random inexplicable crying. Whenever this happened, Iluna would do what she could to remove the damaging and fearful thoughts spawned by the taint, but Daerion would tell her to bury the thoughts instead, and cover them up with false memories. Iluna pitied the boy's condition and blamed herself for it, thus she strove to carry out Daerion's instructions all the more fervently.

Still the boy's condition continued to worsen. Frustrated to the point of despair, Iluna finally began to doubt her methods, and in that doubt a new thought began to take root. She then conceived to release the boy's mother from her sedated state, and allow fate to carry on as it would. She began to realize that perhaps it was best not to keep the minds of others under her power indefinitely.

Released of her mental captivity, the boy's mother hatched a plan to steal her son away from the Brothers. One night, she fled the camp, taking the boy with her. She made for the capital city, hoping there to find a cure for her son's condition, which she wrongly believed was a disease. Iluna was aware of this the moment they left, and secretly sympathized, so she did not say anything nor interfere in any way.

When Daerion found out his wife had deserted him and taken his child with her, he was furious. He blamed Iluna for the not alerting him, and for allowing the two to escape. It was then she realized that Daerion did not care for the Child's well-being, nor had he ever. In fact, neither

did he care about her own well-being. He had used her like a tool to influence the minds of those around them to keep them under his control, and now in his rage it seemed he was ready to discard her. So she fled the camp. She ran blindly at first and then when she had run far enough she traced a path in the stars and began to follow them.

The stars guided her to a great forest. When she reached its skirts she hesitated, then plunged inward. Through the canopy she caught glimpses of the stars and they continued to guide her deeper, until she came to an old hut. Here the stars stopped and so she knocked on the door. Inside was the old hermit Farlan, who took her in and gave her a place to sleep. When she slept that night she dreamed of a great owl who would guide her through the forest to an old grove.

The next morning when she woke, Farlan was gone. She was greeted instead by a large bear. When she probed its mind she found a calm, intelligent demeanour within, and memories of the Druid, though it was not he. The bear guided her through the forest to an old willow, bowed and withered. On one of the boughs perched a huge owl, twice the size of herself. She recognized the owl from her dream. The owl spoke to her, revealing himself as the Druid Farlan in animal form. He explained that he had been watching her for some time as she resided with the Dark Brothers at their camp not far from the forest, and that fate and Desna, the goddess of the stars, had guided her footsteps, both before and unto this day. She was marked by the stars above, and they had guided her to him. Now it was his turn to serve as her guide and interpreter.

Farlan showed her how the goddess Desna had played a part in granting Iluna her powers, and revealed to her how the goddess desired to commune with her. However, under Daerion's guidance, Iluna had been trained to close her mind to external influences, and thus had shut the goddess out. Now that this truth was revealed to her, Iluna's eyes were opened to the dreamworld and she began to dream once more in her sleep, something which had not happened to her since she was but a child. At first her dreams were vague; she saw blurred images of the same things over and over. She saw the faces of a boy and a man, and a silhouette in a dim alley. She asked Farlan what these images meant, and more importantly why these were the only images being shown to her. Farlan surmised that the reason she couldn't see past these images was because they were tied to something in her past that was keeping her from moving forward. As to who the persons in her dreams were, Farlan could only suggest that she ask Desna to reveal their identities the next time she dreamt of them.

She had the same dream that night. This time, when the faces were shown to her she concentrated hard on their image and asked Desna to reveal who they were. To her surprise, she got an answer, though it was just as enigmatic as the images had been. The images were of a son, a father, and the shadow of fate. Instantly, she recognized the face of the boy as the grown version of Dzarra, who was but a babe still, and the man as Daerion. Though which of them was the man in the alley she could not tell.

She woke then and found the hut empty. She raced through the forest and found Farlan and his bear companion standing on the path which she now led from the forest to the great city of Oppara. The old man leaned heavily on his staff, a cool wind ruffling his robes. He was staring out at the great expanse of land that lay between the forest and the city, when she ran up behind him. She told him about the dream and how she had learned who the faces were and

how she understood now what the obstacle separating her from the connection to the dream world was. But when she got to the part about the man in the alley, the shadow of fate, she relayed how she did not understand who this man was or how he fit into the dream. Farlan took this all in in silence. He did not speak until she had finished and even then he waited for a good while before he replied. He did not know who the third man was, he said, but he knew where to find that alley. With that he began walking down the road, out of the trees, his bear close at his heels, leaving his forest home behind him. Iluna thought about this for a moment, then ran to catch up.