

Jude Bannerman is a crook who formed during Banishment and was able to remain on Skire long enough to receive a calling before being spotted and sent to the Alter World. While on Skire, his calling came in the form of the land whispering to him to stand the test of time. With that in mind, Jude took to a more social survival strategy, convincing and retaining a pair of crooks to form a simple core Protection.

It had no name, and neither did he. Crooks had no need for names when they were little more than base animals doing as all animals did to survive. He had no concept of the self, no concept of time, no concept of community. No, the only thing he needed to do was stand the test of time, and to do that, he learned the rules of his world, and ruthlessly followed them. To the point that his cruelty had no boundaries, for as long as he provided targets for consumption, he would continue to follow his directive.

As his senses adjusted and honed in Banishment, Jude became the sort of perceptive predator that could not be easily escaped. His cluster eyes, located on his thighs, were partially obscured by the hanging folds of hardened magic, making it easier for him to keep his eyes on several targets at once without risk to all of his eyes at the same time.

He learned of crook behavior, devised plans for ambush and tracking, and consistently fed his pair of lackeys, which kept them loyal to him. On occasion, he even had to give up eating to keep his station. Though his lackeys might not have been as observant, they were huge and imposing, and that's all they needed to be. Because of this arrangement, Jude covering the weakness of brutes, he stayed safe and managed to overcome the nearly impossible challenge of surviving a hell of immaculate design.

When freedom came, his lackeys abandoned him, having known of the outside world and escaping before whatever godly force that freed them changed its mind. Jude had no recollection of his brief time in the before times, and in this loud and chaotic new world, he found himself a hovel to plot. How could he know what to expect? All these new small-things running around, some a lot more aggressive than others.

The sky, which was now a visible miasma of rapid flashing colors, offered little in the way of comfort. Jude had never seen anything quite like it before. Enormous trees made of materials he'd never seen in his life,

straight and crumbling stone paths littered with giant moving beasts with impenetrable shells and rounded limbs that crushed everything in its path: all controlled by the small-things.

They made horrible screeching sounds - the small-things - and it didn't take long for them to become hostile, growing into skeletal creatures of black and grey, with arms that emitted heat and death.

Jude slithered through the dark streets of Fever, picking off easy targets from the shadows to feed himself as he learned of the motives of the small-things. The screeching sounds they made were not just nonsense. It was a sophisticated language used to communicate a wide variety of things. Some of them used tools to tell many small-things the same thing, and their strengths lay in organizing a lot of small-things into action. As time wore on, more small-things grew into skeletal abominations.

While hiding from a raid, Jude came across a group of particularly violent small-things. They trapped him in a warehouse with the express intention of learning as much as they could about Jude and the things like Jude. La Masse was what they called their super protection, and these particular small-things were called humans, characterized by their lack of natural magic, unusually hairless body, and their proportions and orientation of parts. They were ancient animals, less in the sense of concrete age and more in the sense of a long chain of successors that built upon themselves to reach absolution. This must have been what the whispers meant.

La Masse, an extremist human supremacy group, did extract a lot of useful information out of Jude, and the weapons they had developed to slaughter the other magical creatures of Skire worked perfectly well on these new monsters living in their world. They didn't kill Jude, but they did mutilate him over the course of a few weeks. Little did they know, Jude spent that time learning for himself as well. He caught the basics of the small-thing language, and devised a plan of escape. He might not have been the strongest of his kind, but all small-things were significantly weaker before they transformed.

On the night he intended to escape, Jude miscalculated how cruel humans could be. In a way, he admired it. He'd never have thought of the things humans did to hurt other creatures. If he'd been as ruthless in

Banishment, he might not have starved as often as he did to keep his brutes satisfied. Perhaps this was just an opportunity to learn more of what it took to stand the test of time.

They strung him up with metal threads capable of containing what strength he did have. As he thrashed about, snarling and spitting, La Masse took their time to carve him up in search of the thing that could kill him easily, though they weren't able to find what they were looking for before one of their own skeletal brethren crashed through the warehouse. Jude, wounded, humiliated, and desperate, fought until his last conscious breath against another foe. He failed to kill them, or free himself, but this particular human took pity on him, and took him to an incomprehensible column where hundreds of other crooks gathered. His wounds healed for the most part, but a weakening of his magical weave in his ankle made it impossible to walk more than a few steps without help. He was on his own again.

A great battle happened here, as far as the small-things said. These monsters were not monsters at all, but people. Nobody knew where they came from, but crooks were people and they no longer needed to be exterminated. Jude, stunned by the humans changing their minds so drastically, followed their directive. He could remain in "Fever", or he could go up to "Key", but neither of these options meant anything. He was a people now, and he had a say.

So up to Key he went, on the suggestion of a particularly wellspoken human, who seemed curious in the same way La Masse was. They saw potential in him, but instead of probing him with needles and knives, they probed him with words, reaching him the rules of this new world. A strict family, but ultimately altruistic, the Bannerman Family adopted the first "crooked wormling" into their fold, and Jude was expected to behave as any Bannerman would.

It was here he was named Jude Bannerman. The Bannerman Family trained him in all things language, culture, etiquette, and law. His education was among the best money could buy for a previously uncivilized and brutish creature. Jude understood that in order to adhere to his calling, he needed to prove himself worthy of the Bannerman name, and he did exactly that, excelling in law. Often, the Bannerman Family praised his

strong sense of justice, and encouraged him to pursue his passion, so long as he conducted himself as a Bannerman should.

With the Bannerman name attached to him, Jude climbed through the justice system, rung by rung, eventually serving as a judge in the civilian courts, where he was known as a firm, but fair arbiter. It is here where his options open for him. When the final human Bannerman died, all of the Bannerman Family's estate went to Jude, and he has languished in his excessive wealth ever since. In part, the grief paralyzes him, but the Bannerman Family carries with it a heavy burden. One he has yet to properly address.

In his free time, Jude continues his pursuit of understanding the full extent of the rules of Skire. There is still so much to understand of the world, and he relishes in being able to absorb that knowledge. He recently drummed up the courage to ask to court Marlboro Marlach, "brother" of famed Dr. Henry Marlach, and Chief Detective of the 86th District.