Kragor Grimstride

I am Kragor Grimstride, orphan of Bladegarden. My parents were proud orcs of the Righteous Brand, fallen heroes who died defending our city's walls. But hushed whispers in the alleys hinted at a darker truth— betrayal, or sacrifices made in shadows. At five years old, none of that mattered. Only the gnawing emptiness of my belly and the cold stone streets that became my home.

I was never as strong or clever as the tyrannical bullies who ruled the streets. By deception, speed, stealth, and a silver tongue I survived until adulthood. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to be taken under the wing by a grizzled, retired veteran who had learned the art of tattooing while on tour near Xhorhas. He taught me the skill, and I scrapped together a few coppers as an apprentice. But my designs... they were never truly my own. Sometimes I would take up the needle, and my hands would move with a will I did not recognize, etching abstract, strange, and unsettling glyphs. Other than myself, they interested only a few mages, those who saw something beyond the ink on skin, something that mirrored the unsettling stirrings already taking root in my own mind. My mentor, Dagmuk, who taught me how to manifest these designs on my skin and others', often said I had a "touch for the unseen." He couldn't have known how literal that would become.

Even as I navigated the tangible threats of Bladegarden and the daily grind of survival, a far more insidious struggle began to unfold in the dark expanse of my unconscious mind. I don't know why, or how, but some presence... some thing... from outside our realm began whispering in my dreams— discordant, incomprehensible words, and images of impossible geometries. For months these dreams plagued me, a subtle, creeping insinuation into the corners of my mind. The murmurs were vague at first, then became persistent, a distant echo of a vast, alien hunger stirring far beyond my comprehension.

My darkest hour arrived one night. After earning a decent sum from tattooing a wizard, I boasted about my newfound wealth, unaware that Brother Theron and his Tuskbreakers were watching. These thugs had terrorized downtrodden orcs like me for years. I was caught off guard and struggled to fend them off, but the blows rained down, each one a hammer against my fading strength. Blood filled my mouth. The world tilted into darkness. Feeble and desperate, despising the weakness that had always plagued me, my will to live burned hotter than ever. Then the whispers exploded into a roar inside my skull— an ancient will offering power beyond imagining. I screamed and I surrendered. Eldritch energy surged through my veins; my eyes bled black. The tattooed glyphs on my arms burned with a cold light. Muscles tensed unnaturally; power crackled at my fingertips. I didn't just fight back—I unleashed a storm. I obliterated one of the thugs and sent the others scattering into the night, their screams echoing my own.

Since then dream visions continued to haunt my slumber and reveal the depth of my awakened abilities. With my war hammer raised and eldritch energy crackling at my fingertips, I fought against the street tyrants at every opportunity, protecting those they sought to exploit.

Gradually, the chaos of my dreams began to coalesce into a chilling clarity— a command, stark and undeniable, and a promise of greater power. "Go north. Cross the frozen north. To Eiselcross." The purpose remained a shrouded mystery, yet a strange, cold resolve settled deep within me. I would follow.

When I went to give Dagmuk my farewell, he was gone and his shop was empty, abandoned. His tools were scattered like forgotten

memories. A scorched parchment bore one of my glyphs. An unspoken message? A warning? I felt a pang of loss for the only person who believed in me.

I hit the road with a cover story. A Righteous Brand veteran now seeking his own fortune was a tale that opened purses and secured passage. Merchants, traders, wandering groups paid for my protection, though my true purpose was survival. Traveling alone meant certain death. Joining caravans and groups was a matter of strategic necessity.

Nights were the hardest— when the cold bit through my cloak and the whispers in my mind grew louder, reminding me I was no mere soldier. Dangerous encounters were rare, but not nonexistent. Most challenges I met with a growl and a bluff, my war hammer a sufficient deterrent. But there were moments when mere brute force wouldn't suffice— moments when I felt the cold breath of death on my neck. It was then, when my instincts screamed that head-smashing is not enough, I would unleash the alien power within me, breaking the careful illusion of a simple veteran soldier. The reactions were always the same: a mix of shock, fear, and a quick retreat as they recognized I was something else entirely. They would scatter, leaving me to continue my calculated journey, the whispers in my mind a constant companion.

Four weeks of winding roads and vicious winds carried me from Bladegarden, through Nogvugrot, Rexxentrum, and Yrrosa. Icehaven finally emerged from the Zemni Fields like a promise. Once I arrived, I made bargain with the first captain who would take me. The rest you know, as we all met on board the *Frostwind* on our way to Palebank Village.

Appearance

From the journal of a traveler, name unknown, recovered from a windswept road north of Saltwallow Bog:

Of all the strange and disquieting souls one is fated to meet upon the winding roads of this world, few have etched themselves into my memory with such unnerving clarity as this singular orc. To look upon him is to read a page torn from two different books, one a gutter-dweller's grimy chapbook, the other a tome bound in the skin of something that fell from the stars.

He calls himself Kragor Grimstride, a name

that tastes of iron and long marches, and he wears the part with a practiced ease. The bearing of a soldier is there, in the straightness of his spine and the way his hand rests near the haft of a war hammer that seems, upon closer inspection, a trifle too heavy for him. He is an orc, yes— the mottled, greenish-gray skin, the dark architecture of his bones, the twin tusks jutting like broken daggers from his lower lip all attest to that. He wore no mustache, but thick sideburns descended to a dark beard that framed a jaw of resolute strength. He is a tower of a man, tall enough to cast a long shadow even in this wan light.

Yet, the illusion of the common sell-sword frays at the edges. Where one expects a bulwark of muscle, a physique hewn from granite, there is instead a certain wiry tension. He lacks the brutish mass of his kin; he is built not like a battering ram, but like a coiled whip, all lean sinew and a predator's deceptive grace. His strength is not in the breadth of his shoulders, but in the quick, assessing flick of his gaze and the low, persuasive timbre of his voice. He has survived not by breaking skulls, but by turning heads and twisting words— a truth that clings to him more closely than the worn leather of his armor.

His face is a study in contradictions. The long, jet-black hair, drawn back in a severe topknot, speaks of discipline. But his eyes… his eyes are where the true madness begins to leak through. They are not the simple, brutish black or bloodshot red of his race. They are the color of a winter sea beneath a sky of impossible clarity, a startling aquamarine. And within that startling blue, flecks of gold drift like motes of dust in a sunbeam— or, if one stares too long, like the shattered script of some forgotten, cosmic alphabet. There is an unnerving depth there, a sense that one is not looking *at* his eyes, but *through* them, into a gulf of chilling, silent space.

And then, there are the tattoos.

They are not the proud clan-marks or crude battle-scrawls of a typical orc warrior. These are things of a different order entirely. They coil around his arms and spill across his collarbones, a filigree of stark black ink upon gray-green skin. At a glance, they might seem abstract, but to the discerning eye— or to the mind already teetering on the edge of certain esoteric truths— they are a disease made manifest in ink. They are a brand of unhallowed calligraphy.

There are no dragons, no skulls, no symbols of martial pride. There are only glyphs of a maddening, alien geometry. Spirals that seem to pull the eye into a lightless void. Angles that meet in ways that make the head ache. Lines that weave into patterns that suggest the skeletal framework of things that should not exist. They are not merely on his skin; they seem a part of it, and in the shifting light of the campfire, they sometimes appear to writhe, to shift their configuration ever so slightly when you are not looking directly at them. They whisper of a pact made not in blood, but in the currency of sanity itself.

He stands there, a charlatan of the mundane, his simple story a threadbare cloak thrown over a form scribbled with the signature of a lunatic god. He is an orphan, a veteran, a survivor. But he is also a vessel, a canvas for an artist whose studio is the void between worlds. One looks at Kragor Grimstride and sees a down-on-his-luck orc seeking his fortune, but one also feels an inexplicable chill, the same disquiet one feels when hearing a melody that is almost beautiful, but for a single, recurring, discordant note that promises only chaos and the dark.

Bonds

- **Vargun the Steadfast**: Father. Righteous Brand veteran. Circumstances of death unknown.
- **Ursa Rune-sight**: Mother. Righteous Brand veteran. Circumstances of death unknown.
- **Dagmuk Rift-hand**: Mentor and tattooist. Righteous Brand veteran who served on the border near Xhorhas. Mysteriously

disappeared after Kragor was summoned north by his patron.

Ever since his mentor Dagmuk disappeared, Kragor has no one. He bitterly holds on to what little memory of his parents he has. He treasures the only keepsake left to him: a chipped amulet featuring the symbol of Kord.

IDEALS

For Kragor Grimstride, faith is not a whispered prayer in a sanctioned temple; it is a pragmatic code forged in the shadow of his parents' dual legacies and hammered into shape on the unforgiving anvil of the streets. Having been orphaned and left to fend for himself after their mysterious end, Kragor is a survivor first and foremost. He views the divine not as beings demanding worship, but as philosophies to be utilized— a collection of tools for navigating a broken world. His True Neutral alignment is born from this harsh education, for his life has taught him the equal utility of both law and chaos. He doesn't believe in gods; he believes in results.

Both his parents were decorated veterans of the Righteous Brand. His father honored Bahamut with the straightforward piety of a loyal soldier, instilling in Kragor a respect for the Platinum Dragon as the symbol of his family's noble purpose: be the bulwark for the vulnerable, bring justice where there is none, and act with honor. Kragor witnessed the opposite in the alleys of Bladegarden— the strong preying on the weak— and clings to the ideal of protection his parents fought for. A silent nod to a carving of the Platinum Dragon on a barracks wall is not an act of worship, but a solemn vow to memory of his parents.

Yet, Kragor has no patience for the rigid laws and hierarchies of the Empire that ultimately failed to protect him. This defiant streak was nurtured by his mother. A decorated soldier herself, she walked a more dangerous path, secretly revering Kord within an underground community. From her, Kragor learned the core tenets of the Stormlord: the necessity of personal might and the virtue of self-reliance. His mother's faith, forbidden by the Empire, represented the untamed orcish spirit— a chaotic but vital force required to break the chains of oppression. It taught him from his earliest days that true strength often operates outside the sanction of the law. After being orphaned and thrust onto the merciless streets, he grasped this truth in his bones.

This upbringing placed Kragor at the center of a fundamental conflict. The same Empire that had blessed his parents with status and meaning also forced his mother to practice her faith in secret and failed to protect him from falling into destitution. His hatred of rigid, authoritarian structures stems not from ideology, but from witnessing firsthand how his family was forced to live within such contradictions daily. When coupled with the brutality he later suffered from street predators, this forged a fierce opposition to tyranny.

His warlock pact is the ultimate and most logical expression of this philosophy. When he needed power to survive and to fight back, he didn't turn to prayer— not to his father's sanctioned god nor his mother's forbidden one. He made a deal. He weclomed a patron who could provide him with tangible tools— pact magic and eldritch invocations— to achieve his goals. Bahamut and Kord are not gods to be worshipped, but names for the two essential instruments he inherited and now wields to enforce his code: the righteous conviction that bullies need crushing, backed by the power and will to be the hammer.

Philosophical Component	Textual Evidence	Ethical Axis Indication (Law/Chaos)	Moral Axis Indication (Good/Evil)
Core Motivation	"fierce opposition to tyranny," "be the bulwark for the vulnerable, bring justice where there is none"	The goal of establishing justice can be Lawful, but opposing tyranny is often a Chaotic act. The motivation itself is ethically ambiguous.	Unambiguously Good. This mirrors ideals of protecting the innocent and fighting for the greater good.
View of Societal Law	"no patience for the rigid laws and hierarchies of the Empire," which "ultimately failed to protect him"	Strongly Chaotic. This is a clear rejection of established, legitimate authority based on personal experience of its failure and hypocrisy.	Neutral. The rejection is based on efficacy and personal grievance, not an abstract moral judgment on the nature of law itself.
View of Personal Code	"a pragmatic code forged... on the unforgiving anvil of the streets," a "solemn vow to memory of his parents"	Strongly Lawful. He adheres to an unwavering, internally consistent code inherited from his family. This is the definition of a personal code superseding societal law.	Neutral. The code is about "results" and "crushing bullies." This lacks the compassionate, merciful element of a truly Good philosophy, focusing instead on a rigid, retributive form of justice.
Methodology	"He made	Neutral.	Neutral.