

Since I love the concept of dealing with the devil, all characters meet because of the trouble they got themselves into (or out of) by signing the hellish contract – and soon they find out they're all part of an elaborate Devils' Ploy.

### **The Assassination of Tyr God of Justice by Coward Harmon Oniv**

I shouldn't play favourites with my characters but I admit – I do have a weakness for people hiding behind masks.

In the case of sorcerer Harmon, only one of his eyes is visible. It's pale blue, clear and vulnerable while he keeps the rest of his body is carefully hidden. He claims he suffers from a disease eating away at him but it's clear you have to earn his trust to learn the truth.

And when you do, it turns out Harmon is on a dishonourable quest to kill Tyr, God of Justice. He doesn't have anything against him, personally – it's just that the hellish deal Harmon made forces him to do that.

Harmon used to be part of the adventuring guild, leading rich and curious through ancient ruins or caves full of nature's wonders. During these escapades, some accidents often happened – some fatal, some just traumatic, yet always ending with the guild's monetary gain. Harmon's job was to lead the clients into carefully crafted traps, but he never had to raise his hand on anyone, keeping his conscience light as a feather. Technically speaking.

The devil that took interest in him, observed Harmon for a long time, his disgust with him only growing. That disgust transformed into a curse that started to devastate Harmon's body – one more accident was another scratch on his skin, deep and never healing, resembling scratches that are sometimes found on the inside of the coffins' leads.

Harmon's body soon became one open wound that he hid with layers of clothing, finally leaving only his right eye unscathed. He desperately searched for the cure until it came to him – in the form of the devil. Not hiding his disdain for the sorcerer, he proposed a deal – killing of Tyr, God of Justice, and through it – ultimate humiliation and betrayal of the last remnants of conscience Harmon made such good job of silencing. In exchange – his body back.

To the devil's grim satisfaction, Harmon set out on a quest immediately, pushing any doubts he might have, aside.

### **The Way In**

Kiraam is an elf coming from a faraway land full of sand, sunshine and heat. Growing up on the city streets, his only chance of living a better life was joining Lady of the Riches monastery. Most of the monks in her service travel the world, helping people and sharing all the coin they earn with less fortunate. And that – especially travelling part – was Kiraam's dream.

He took the devil's deal when he was barely a child. He got help to get into the monastery and then during his training. In fact, he became one of the best apprentices – and the best apprentices are not wasted on travelling. They gain the privilege of being locked up in the monastery for the rest of their lives and entering the state of hundreds-years-long meditation during which they absorb Lady of the Riches' wisdom. This is the fate that Kiraam's superiors want for him and this is the fate the devil wanted for him all along.

So just before his initiation ceremony, Kiraam escapes, straining his relationship not only with his devilish mentor but also monks who gave him home and are determined to find him before Kiraam shares monastery's secrets with unauthorized ears.

### **Fern Flower**

One of my favorite Slavic legends is the one about fern flower and in my favourite version of it the flower makes all the wishes come true, as long as they are selfish. The moment you use the flower to help your friends and family – its magic disappears.

This is the deal Xephyra made with her patron. Sickly tiefling girl living in poverty got the attention of the devil, refusing her offers of power and prowess many times. But burden on Xephyra's shoulders grew heavier and heavier as her family grew poorer, sicker and more and more hopeless. Xephyra finally broke, becoming a mighty warlock who could make an astonishing living for herself – but not for her family, forcing her to leave it in despair and looking for a way around the conditions of the devil's deal.

### **Picture of Mo Aniel**

Olthar comes from a long, ancient line of gnome warriors and he himself received elite military training – much to his dismay. Olthar is an artistic type dabbling in painting, fixated on old lore of

Hellis. Once, after finishing a portrait based on his historic research, its model appeared in front of Olthar, flattered by his attention. She offered an elated discussion and praise that Olthar revelled in, soon becoming closer friends with the devil herself.

Despite Olthar's wisdom, his emotions clouded his vision and he let the devil become his most trusted friend. She listened to his struggles with family legacy and offered help when he was supposed to be sent on the front of bloody, senseless war. She promised him freedom from his family's wishes and distressed Olthar accepted. In exchange, she just wanted one portrait of herself presented to her on every full moon. She sketched the contract, reading it aloud to her naïve friend while he was already on his way to the front.

When he was suddenly allowed to go back home, he found his family gone. There was no sign of them and the next time Olthar's devil friend appeared, it was for her monthly portrait and vicious mockery session. Now Olthar tries to find his way into Hells to save his family or get revenge – hoping every portrait brings him closer to his goal.

### **More Lasting Than Bronze**

Artistic alias "Bulette" is really perfect for this drow bard – she comes from the Underdark, you'll hear her before you see her and you will feel the ground shake when she gets on stage. Bard's life is really simple – you just travel from tavern to tavern, singing, dancing, playing the lute and hoping for your big break.

That last part is particularly easy if you have a deal with the devil telling you where to go, what to sing, who to entertain and how.

It gets even easier but a little disturbing when you find out your voice has an ability to enchant people. Very much not figuratively.

It gets even easier and even more disturbing when you find out you cannot be killed. No swords, no arrows, no fireballs can hurt you.

It gets very difficult and very disturbing when you realise the devil has some much bigger, sinister plans for you. So you embark on a journey with lute on your back and song on your lips to figure out your place in the Devils' Ploy.