

## Crimson Backstory

**Name:** Agrisa Terasama, aka Crimson

**Species:** Half-demon, half-human shapeshifter

**Description as human:** In this form most of the time. Appears to be of Cadish ethnicity with long, braided, curly auburn hair, freckled brown skin, broad strong features, high cheek bones, a flattish nose, deep brown round eyes, and a solid, squarish build. She wears local, traditional clothes of decent-quality material in the servant fashion, so her clothing reflects that she is a high noble's servant.

**Description in 'true' form:** Crimson's true form is wiry, athletic, sinewy, with very little in the way of curves, and red skin. She has little in the way of body hair what what she has is ginger and fine. She has four black horns curling from her head, including one pair curving from the tops of her temples towards her neck, and the other pair curving from her forehead over the top of her head. Her eyes are large, pinched-oval, pupil-less and white. She has a small mouth with small teeth and pale lips, a long forked tongue, a small flat nose, and no hair on her head. Her limbs are abnormally long and her fingers are very long and elegant, and end in black talon-like nails. Her legs bend like an animal's and end with wide, black cloven hooves. She has a tail which is around three feet long and ends with a bony knob.

**Sex:** ♀

**Age:** Approximately 25

**Height:** 6ft 0in

**Siblings:** None

**Historical setting:** Medieval low fantasy

**Birth town:** Caros

### Cultural Notes

Half demons and half angels do not develop the ability to transform from their human forms to their alternate forms until they reach puberty. Prior to puberty the non-human part of the person is only able to manifest by taking over the individual's behaviour. When this happens, the ethereal side's feelings, thoughts, and behavioural patterns are imprinted onto the human side, with the imprint happening a little more each time. The risk with this is that the human side will be subsumed entirely, leaving only the ethereal's behavioural patterns. Given the very immediate quality of ethereal nature, this has a detrimental effect on the person's human-born capacity for free will.

Once the individual reaches puberty the ethereal and human personalities fuse permanently. The more times the ethereal side had imprinted on the human side in childhood, the better the fit and the greater the risk that the new half-ethereal will give into their demonic or angelic side.

Most humans wish to avoid this, and the mothers of half-ethereal children generally do their best to avoid having their children's demonic sides reveal themselves. The fewer times this happens, the poorer the fit between the ethereal psyche and the human one, so the easier the offspring's life will be after puberty.

Even in adulthood, a half-ethereal needs to remain alert to the presence of their ethereal side and maintain a contradictory nature to it, to avoid giving the ethereal the chance to activate. The imprinting continues to happen post-puberty so the stability of the individual's selfhood as a human is still at risk. Some half-angel or half-demon adults are able to avoid

turning into their alternates ever in their adult lives, so this technique is effective.

Agrisa's mother has some understanding of this and does her best to help Agrisa to subvert her demonic nature. As a result, even when Agrisa shifts she has a great degree of control over her demonic side. Post-puberty, a lot of Agrisa's human psyche remains so she continues to retain free will as much as she can, given her circumstances.

Crimson is a half-demon whose human side, Agrisa, is still relatively autonomous, although severely subdued. Agrisa was raised by a mother who understood her ethereal nature and helped her to combat it, but this made for a highly restrictive lifestyle. Crimson's first major appearance in Agrisa's teens was a horrifying surprise to her, and she experienced a short period of time feeling very lost. A local crime lord, Sable, found her before she was able to find herself, and he has had a great deal of control over her life ever since.

### **Trust & Confidence**

*(newborn)*

Agrisa was born to a seamstress, and her name translates as "Hope". Her mother, named Espe Terasama, had a patron who allowed her a decent income, so she did not particularly struggle to provide for Agrisa. She was also able to take Agrisa with her to her workplace, and this worked quite nicely as she got to keep an eye on Agrisa during her working day.

She and Agrisa lived in a room behind the patron's shop, so they did not have far to travel to get to and from work.

As clement as this was for Agrisa's mother (at least compared to some situations she could have found herself in), Agrisa herself had difficulties with this, and these difficulties stayed with her for most of her life. Her mother had to return to work very soon after giving birth, so for much of the time their symbiotic mother-daughter relationship was given secondary status to her mother's need to work.

Because her mother was so busy, Agrisa quickly learned not to expect much attention, as her mum simply couldn't spare the time. She learned that there was little point in crying to be held, so eventually she didn't cry very much at all. She never un-learned this habit and grew up as a quiet child and became a reserved adult, to the extent that in the current day she even expresses joy and laughter quietly.

To give further information about the circumstances of Agrisa's conception and gestation, her father was an incubus who took advantage of her mother. Her mother had fond memories of the conception, however, due to Agrisa's demonic paternity, her mother had reason to be concerned about how Agrisa would turn out. When Agrisa was born she felt relieved that Agrisa appeared to be a normal, human child, especially as her religious beliefs would not permit her to get rid of Agrisa if she had shown signs of being demonic like her father. However, her mother always had fears about how life would be for Agrisa. She wanted to protect her but she also quietly feared her.

### **Freedom & Self-Determination**

*(toddlerhood)*

Agrisa also had difficulties during her toddlerhood. Given that her mother was a seamstress, her mother had supplies of pins, needles, small spools of thread, and other items at home that would be dangerous to a curious toddler. Medieval homes weren't well known for their out-of-a-toddler's-reach shelf space. Therefore Agrisa's mother was forever discouraging her daughter from exploring their room too much.

Toddlers are generally very keen to establish their autonomy, as being able to choose what to do (and this is in a very literal sense. Toddlers find for the first time in their lives that they have muscular control and can consciously *choose*, where before they could not) is a big deal for them. From their perspective, they have just discovered that they are a separate entity from their mothers and can, in fact, decide to do something different from what their parents want them to do. This is such a huge discovery for a toddler that many feel crushed when their parents don't allow them to do differently. For Agrisa in particular, circumstance (i.e., lots of child-unfriendly items within easy reach at home) meant that her mother had to curtail her choices often. As a result, Agrisa began to cultivate a skill for being sneaky. In fact, as an adult she became a thief, but it was in toddlerhood that her ability to get her hands on things she wasn't meant to had its roots.

This led to a rocky relationship between mother and daughter. At around this time Agrisa began to develop blank spots in her memory, and she started to suspect that she was different from other people due to this. She feared what her mother would do if she asked her for help so instead she ran away. The fact that she didn't see her mother as a protector or comforter, and one who might be able to make everything all right, speaks volumes about the state of their relationship at this point.

All of this was compounded by the fact that their household was very pious, and that they worshipped Dobra the "Earth Father", whom it was said gave life to all that lived.

Dobra was the patron deity of Caros, the town of Agrisa's birth. Worship of Dobra included prayers of thanks every morning along with requests for a good day, giving thanks for everything that came from the earth, being resourceful, frugal and practical with all that was given, eschewing greed, being steadfast in one's faith, protecting the weak (including helping the less fortunate), acknowledging the deities of the Cerulean pantheon (the pantheon of the Cadish people, although Dobra was the most prominent of these), and partaking in an evening ritual. All devotees wore a rune inscribed with his mark as a holy symbol, and in the evening ritual the devotees placed their hands in blessed soil and then marked the rune symbol on the backs of their hands to demonstrate thanks for a good day.

As a result of Agrisa's demonic side and the pious tone of her upbringing, she generally doesn't tend towards sentimentality – which is a way of holding onto the past. Instead, she prefers to let go of connections and relationships with other people. In adulthood, Agrisa possesses a ring that belonged to her mother, but doesn't have anything else as, when she made her choice of items of her mother's to keep, she felt that nothing more was worth keeping.

This is partly due to the symbolism of the ring; Agrisa's mother's family had a tradition of giving a ring to the first-born with the parent's mark on it. Agrisa had been able to discard most of her mother's possessions, except for this one heirloom. This is also partly for a more practical reason: the ring has come to serve as a talisman 'anchoring' Agrisa to her human self. It reminds her who she is and where she came from, and this allows her to fight her demonic nature and keep her mind human enough to stave off her demonic

nature. Isolating the ring as the sole item she keeps from her childhood days increases its potency by forcing her to use the ring and just the ring for this.

All together, her youthful experiences shaped her to become a very controlled individual, more concerned with maintaining what she feels to be her natural place. Furthermore, as a lone child with a mother who was constantly anxious for her welfare, she missed out on some elements of learning to co-operate, as it always felt to her as if 'the other' had some complaint with her choices over how to go about things. By the time she had become an adult she preferred to work alone rather than have to deal with the stress of taking others into account.

Her early history of her mother stopping her from investigating or exploring things or playing with whatever looked like fun to play with also led Agrisa to be quite doubtful of herself. If her decisions – even quite whimsical ones – were so bad, so her logic went, how could she trust herself, especially since her mother was often very adamant, sometimes even panicky, about the potential consequences of Agrisa's actions? This problem nagged at Agrisa enough over the years that she eventually overcame it, choosing instead to be bold. Because she made such a conscious decision to test her self-doubt, she trained herself over time to become daring by most peoples' standards.

Overall however, she feels as if she is overly under control, like a coiled spring that can't relax. One of her ways of dealing with this is to become numb to the many emotions she doesn't feel she can relax enough to process and allow herself to express. Her emotions are still there, but she has perfected the art of not reaching them. As a result Agrisa feels disconnected.

### **Ambition**

*(young childhood)*

Agrisa experienced a change in her circumstances as she grew beyond toddlerhood and into young childhood. Being a little older, she was now allowed to play outside! Her mother was still over-protective, but crucially Agrisa got to meet other small children and experience a taste of something akin to easy-going social relationships. She took this opportunity to explore outside, sometimes with the other children but usually alone, and because she was unlikely to come across a seamstress' working kit outdoors, she actually got to go through the whole joyous process of exploring and discovering.

However, this didn't provide anywhere near the extent of healing that Agrisa needed, given the ways she had been limited in her personal development so far in her life. Her mother was still over-protective and watched closely, and often enough she would rush in to stop Agrisa from touching something dangerous such as a biting insect (or at least chastise her from doing so). This only served to reinforce Agrisa's toddlerhood experience that her exploration was shameful.

With all of this in effect, Agrisa never became a particularly adventurous child.

In addition to this, Agrisa had been experiencing blank spots in her memory. They didn't happen very often, but they presented themselves as patches of time that she couldn't remember. In truth, this was her demonic and human sides beginning to vie for control of her, with the demonic side occasionally taking control and her human side suppressing the memories of her actions after the event.

When her demon side took over she would do things that her human side would deem unacceptable.

Given the shame – and the anxiety induced by believing that she was somehow different from others – weighing on her shoulders, Agrisa gave in to the need for familiarity and security over the excitement of discovery, and chose to spend much of her time with her mother. She helped out in the shop as much as she could. As such, she became good at co-operating with her mother, however this did more to shape her belief that 'everybody has a place' as she was essentially playing the part of an assistant here, rather than to help her develop her skills at co-operating with others on an equal playing field.

Such was Agrisa's need for the security of remaining under her mother's proverbial wing that she didn't give much thought to her ambitions. She decided that she would be a seamstress just like her mother, and did not develop any ambitions beyond this.

### **Productivity**

*(older childhood)*

As Agrisa grew up she continued to work hard. She also became more aware of her and her mother's patron, Lura Tolerchipa, whom she began to call "Aunt". Aunt was just as keen for the pair of them to work hard as they were. As a result, they worked from sunrise to sunset and took little time for leisure, even during festive periods and holy days.

The practical upshot of this was that Agrisa never really learned how to relax. Others, even in adulthood, who tried to engage her in some kind of fun or relaxing activity often found themselves rebuffed. Often however, Agrisa simply let it be known by unspoken means that she had no time for fun, and the people who wanted to find a playmate would intuit that they should go elsewhere. The truth was, Agrisa felt awkward about relaxation and play, so although she became aware that others would be having fun without her, she would often convince herself that she was the better person for being more disciplined in keeping to her work.

This explanation didn't always convince her, but without the skills even to know how to enjoy relaxation, much less to know how to put herself into a situation where she could practice relaxing or having fun with others, how could she ever gain the right kinds of connections to get the chance to practice this important skill?

For Agrisa, home and school were the same place. Her mother taught her the accepted moral code of the town, and continued to teach her more seamstressing skills. As her skills improved, Agrisa began to develop a sense of what it means to co-operate with others towards a goal as an equal (or at least a near-equal).

Agrisa's economic position was that of a poor girl, and it would be expected for her to continue to work hard for the entirety of her life. Sometimes she fantasised about what it would be like to be rich, and to have others making things for her instead of the other way around, but she didn't consider this a realistic possibility.

Her mother had a motto: "Work hard and die knowing you have done what you could," and as time went by it became increasingly clear to Agrisa that it had been inherited from Aunt.

## **Child to Adult Transition** (adolescence)

By the time Agrisa became a teenager she had all but lost her will to venture out and discover life for herself. For her, her mother, Aunt, and the shop were her sense of stability, sameness, and continuity. She was not truly happy, but as a younger teenager the restrictive quality of her situation was better than the risks she associated with venturing beyond, so she settled for it. She even convinced herself that she was happy. She felt needed by her mother, Aunt, and their customers, so she felt that she had a place there.

Other people came into the shop on occasion so these people played a small part in providing Agrisa with some social interaction, although it was only very surface level. Because she did not develop a sense of intimacy with new people, she did not develop the skills to interact on a deeper, more meaningful level, and this led Agrisa to have difficulties with relationship-forming later as an adult. Like most adults, in older life it was simply expected of her to have developed those skills, so the fact that she did not have them was not often forgiven, nor were learning opportunities given with understanding and patience.

It didn't help that the townsfolk of her childhood often seemed to like her to start with, even though her mother would try to protect her from anticipated harm. However the older she got, the harsher people became towards her. In time it became obvious enough to Agrisa that people would speak behind her back, and against her mother too. The population of Caros had very strict ideas about marriage and morality, and as Agrisa's mother had no husband, they were harsh in their assessment of her. Agrisa's increasingly common blank spots (and the moments of demonic activity that occurred during these times, unbeknownst to her) only compounded this, as her questionable behaviour during her demonic bouts were seen as evidence of a bad upbringing, which in turn the townsfolk blamed on Agrisa's mother.

Aunt was the only resident of the town to defend Agrisa and her mother, and it is only thanks to this that Agrisa and her mother found their life in the town possible.

This only served to discourage Agrisa further from seeking companionship outside of the shop. In time, Agrisa developed an aversion to leaving the shop at all, and only did so when it was necessary. Her mother and Aunt became her stability, the people who provided her with a sense of continuity and sameness as she grew from a girl into a young woman.

Her memory became more and more spotty as she approached puberty.

When Agrisa was thirteen she got involved in an unpleasant incident that changed her life permanently. Four local boys tried to hurt her but she blanked out, and when she came to, found that they were gone. Later they attempted to corner her in retaliation for her fighting back. As they went to deliver their attack she blanked again. When she regained awareness she was in pain, bleeding, and outside of the town walls. On further inspection he found that her hands were a different colour and her legs had changed shape.

Agrisa could hear shouts and screams inside the town, so she ran, and then flew, away.

This was the first time Agrisa had truly failed to resist her demonic side, and on this occasion her demon side imprinted strongly on her human side. From here onwards she

had to put most of her energy into resisting her demonic side. Ultimately she retained control, but this is only because of the work her mother had done to protect her.

Other half-demons were able to detect each other when the target's demon side took control, and this was how Sable located Agrisa.

Sable took Agrisa in when she needed it most, and for a while it seemed as though he would be her saviour: teaching her what it meant to be a demon, offering her shelter in the large city in which he lived, introducing her to his social group, and emotionally and materially sustaining her.

Sable was her first and only intimate partner.

However, it slowly became clear that he was not the life-raft she believed him to be. He gaslit, obligated, and guilted her until she felt she couldn't leave him. He became jealous and possessive. His friends were not people she felt comfortable being around, and couldn't really be called the cream of society.

Like Agrisa's mother, Sable had a motto of his own: "Born poor, die poor, unless you take what could have been yours."

One side effect of becoming a demon was that Agrisa developed the ability to turn invisible. Some people, especially as teenagers, wish they could become invisible, since being seen when they are at their own vulnerable can be unbearable. Agrisa discovered that she could do so, but Sable didn't like it when she did so she quickly learned not to exploit this ability. As an adult she still doesn't do it very often.

### **Closeness in Relationships**

*(young adulthood)*

Agrisa remained with Sable for a long time. She made friends with one of his associates, named Thurginn, who became her confidant. She actively enjoyed his company and sought it out when she had the opportunity. However, both of them made sure to keep their friendship secret as they knew that Sable would disapprove – and when he disapproved, he could be dangerous.

Agrisa works as a thief, second story person, and burglar, in a gang for Sable and does so with a surprising amount of enthusiasm given her ongoing struggle to resist her demonic side, especially given her overall unenthusiastic temperament, as impressing Sable with her ability to get things done is her chief way of appeasing him. She also works closely with a team of 'enforcers' who can intervene if she finds herself in difficulties.

Although she does have sex with Sable, neither of them are particularly interested in carnal pleasure so they have only done so a few times. Even when they do, Agrisa finds the mood strained, as Sable tends to use sex as a manipulation tool.

Agrisa does not consider herself starved of intimacy, however this appears to be a position of "I didn't need intimacy anyway" because she has experienced so little of it without some kind of ominous influence intruding from one direction or another. She has needed to do this for so long that she has effectively convinced herself that she doesn't need it. In addition to this, she has developed many emotional self-sufficiency skills that mean that

she can maintain herself without much genuine intimacy.

She also feels a daily pull to give into her demonic nature and resists it. This adds to the already numerous daily pressures that prevent her from being able to explore the possibility of life as a carefree individual.

### **Passing on Responsibilities**

*(older adulthood)*

Agrisa does not believe she will survive this long, as her career in an underground city gang is inherently dangerous. The gang specialises in thuggery and burglary, and she is very aware of how deadly this could become if she has a moment of bad luck.

She does not have any children and will not have any. This is mainly due to her ongoing struggle to maintain her psychological integrity (as she understands that children would be demanding), and partly to avoid having children around as a distraction (Sable doesn't like it when she is distracted). It is also true that half-ethereals find it difficult to reproduce, but given her fundamental lack of willingness to have children this is a minor influence on her childfree status.

Overall, she does not feel that she has anything of great value to pass on to the next generation.

### **End of Life**

*(old age)*

Agrisa welcomes the idea of the end of her life as she feels that it will all finally be over. She fantasises about seeing her mother again, however she is unsure whether her mother is alive or dead. Sable tells her that she is dead, however Agrisa is aware that he could be lying. At the time of writing she has not been able to find out for herself.

### **Credits**

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*Based on theory by:*

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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Want to organise your updates and talk with me about integrating them into your character? Email me on [thecharacterconsultancy@gmail.com](mailto:thecharacterconsultancy@gmail.com) and I will be happy to help you!

~Hayley, The Character Consultancy