

Nemaia T'yaal-Shaalgoth UI-Eichaira **Backstory**

Name: Usually just called Nemaia

Species: Tiefling

Description: Ashen skin, pale yellow eyes, long black hair that's occasionally messy

Sex: ♀

Age: 29

Height: 5ft 11in

Weight: 150lbs

Siblings: No blood siblings but grew up in an orphanage with capacity for 20 to 40 other children ranging from infants to age 17.

Nemaia is a *Dungeons and Dragons* character. She grew up in a bustling orphanage and had to look out for herself. Moving on to live on the streets, her skills of going unseen and fighting for her supper helped her to get by. While generally keeping her distance, she can get along with others who are in similarly impoverished situations; however, woe betide you if you show signs of arrogance or greed!

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Through no fault of her own, Nemaia was born into controversy.

Her mother was an elven wizard, while her father was the son of a puritanical clerical family. Both were scholars in a duchy's court who offered insight and invention of the magical sort whenever asked, and both were financially well-off. Her mother's interest in arcana and magic led her to discover a first-hand way to further her knowledge and power: other-worldly patronage. However, this came at a price: her unborn child would have to bear the burden of her desires.

Nemaia's birth prompted a long, bitter, and abusive disagreement between her parents and extended family (primarily the father's, given their moralistic attitudes) over the question of what to do with the child. It should be said that her parents' relationship was already beginning to come apart by the time she was born, and Nemaia's birth compounded the problems between them. Her father's family wished for Nemaia to be destroyed. Her mother's family were concerned about the ethics of Nemaia's very existence, but withheld from commenting as far as they were able, believing that it was not their place to voice their opinions about the situation.

The problems that Nemaia unintentionally caused her parents led her mother to fail to attach securely to her. From the beginning, she saw her daughter as something of a hot potato. Nemaia picked up on this anxiety and an ultimate lack of warmth towards her, and as a result Nemaia developed a certain emotional toughness from the beginning.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

The difficult nature of the situation prompted Nemaia's mother to leave the city of Nemaia's

birth with Nemaia in tow when she was a little over 2 years old. The maternal grandparents offered her and Nemaia sanctuary in a port-side market city, and mother and child stayed there for a year. Her parents had business interests there so this was a convenient move for them, allowing them to stay for as long as needed. Although the city was naturally multicultural as a result of being a port city and therefore potentially a good place for a tiefling to grow up, this was only a passing consideration for Nemaia's mother and her family.

Nemaia's father was vaguely aware that his wife, Nemaia, and her family had eloped, but did not know where to. Nemaia's mother had never been entirely open with him about the nature of her blood relatives or how they were employed. She had already recognised the potential risk of the conflict that this would inspire.

A year later, the mother decided to take Nemaia to an orphanage. While on the face of it this seems a dangerous situation to put her daughter into, she chose this specific orphanage because the knights generally placed an emphasis on a different set of deities and tenets to the more aggressively moralistic religious faith of Nemaia's father and his family. The knights' focus favoured entities who ruled over the domains of good fortune, life, and wisdom; Nemaia's father's family on the other hand favoured deities that symbolised purity, chastity, and justice.

The orphanage his mother had chosen was run by a religious order of knights as a charitable outreach project. Overall they had sufficient financial and material support to run the orphanage, however their funding was not secure or continuous, and it was not uncommon for supplies and finances to run short. Most of the staffing of the orphanage was done by the clerics themselves, however they were unaccustomed to working with children. In practice, with them essentially being professional soldiers, they were indifferent at best with the children. A few were verbally and physically abusive to the older orphans. However, the more scholarly knights tried to be kinder than this.

The older children had the option of becoming members of the order, however some did not, and a child generally aged out of the system between the ages of 16 and 17.

Nemaia was three or four years old when she was left at the orphanage. Her mother made a small contribution to the orphanage for taking her in, but she left no items for Nemaia herself.

Nemaia's mother notified Nemaia's father of what she had done, and when she did, he was furious. His religious order, and that of the knights, had suffered a long-standing and bitter schism. To him, his own child being raised by the knights was like being spat upon. Given that the culture in which he and his wife lived was a generally patriarchal one, he also lived with an assumption that he was the head of the family and that any final decisions pertaining to his family would be his to make.

At the time Nemaia was left at the orphanage there were around twenty children there. Given the city's status as a port city, the general population was quite multicultural and multispecies, and as a result so was the population of the orphanage itself. Around half were human. There were a few elves, one or two dwarves, a couple of halflings, a tobaxi, and a half-orc. Nemaia was the only tiefling.

The children were generally cooperative in helping to keep the orphanage running smoothly. They inevitably had painful histories of their own (such as abandonment issues

or unresolved traumas), but the culture of the orphanage was one of cooperation and of seeing the best in the other person. As a result of this, Nemaia found that, despite being in a very new and strange environment, she suddenly had plenty of new 'brothers' and 'sisters' to help comfort her and help her settle in. This is not to say that her care was flawless, or that she knew how to accept emotional warmth; between the ineptitude of the clerics (along with their belief that Nemaia's pedigree made her a lost cause) and the traumas that the other orphans were managing largely on their own, she did not have much opportunity to heal, only to learn how to maintain a coping strategy that worked well enough from one moment to the next.

Nemaia's coping strategy included holding on to anything that she could, whether it was a possession that she could keep in perpetuity (like a cuddly toy) or a share of food. The orphanage could be a chaotic place where nothing stayed the same for very long, so the only stability she could get was in the certainty that she could look after herself. With love and affection in short supply, she tried to forget any awareness that she had ever had of these feelings, and came to see physical possessions as the only things worth having.

Ambition *(young childhood)*

As she grew a little bit older Nemaia became quite energetic. She sometimes played and wrestled with the other children of her age, and she began to develop a few friendships. She preferred other 'misfit' children.

The most long-lasting of her friendships was with the half-orc, Gimash. He was three or four years older than Nemaia.

Usually she was served as much food as anybody else at mealtimes. However, the person who was serving meals changed every week and some of the caretakers could be discriminatory against her and give her less. Over time she learned to recognise when she was being given less and to argue to get her share. As time went by she learned the best way to argue for this. Threatening or name-calling would not help her, but being 'the squeaky wheel' often worked better. At times, the supply of food could genuinely run short when a shipment was delayed or lost, however these incidents were not frequent. This is something that Nemaia learned to recognise, and in time she learned to spot the difference between herself being purposefully shorted, or everybody's meals being rationed until the next shipment came in.

Sometimes she would steal to get the extra that she felt she should have, and this sometimes led to being scolded by the orphanage's caretakers.

With all of this chaos and discrimination, Nemaia became prone to outbursts of anger. At this age that generally meant throwing toys, utensils, and anything else she could get her hands on.

Nemaia tried being friendly with the other children but her energy levels, combined with her keen eye for perceived discrimination, meant that she often ended up pushing their buttons to the point that they didn't want to be friends with her any more. Nemaia came to respond to real or imagined discrimination so naturally that she would turn with little apparent provocation and then expect the friendship to immediately return to normal, and she could play quite roughly, sometimes biting, scratching, and hair-pulling during

wrestling games. Occasionally Gimash would take her to one side to keep her from causing too much harm when this happened.

The orphanage staff generally treated her as a nuisance. Her 'squeaky wheel' tactics, plus her very keen eagerness to fight against any discrimination she perceived from others, was less impressive to the clerics of the orphanage than it might be to the average civilian, so she often butted heads with her carers.

Life was chaotic enough for Nemaia that she didn't have much in the way of life ambitions, even childish or fanciful ones. For her, life was about overcoming boredom, hunger, or thirst, so any 'ambitions', if they can still be called that, were short-term by nature and about the fulfilment of a hand to mouth existence.

Productivity

(older childhood)

Most children - those who still lived with their parents and who enjoyed an affluent enough lifestyle - would begin their schooling at this age. The orphans however, didn't have this luxury. The staff running the school had enough to do with ensuring that the children were adequately fed and clothed, that any injuries were promptly taken care of. The orphanage had a skeleton crew, and occasionally this would be temporarily added to when the order had less business than usual to attend to, but this situation was not regular.

The order taught the children to read and write but not much more than this. They didn't have any holy books, but there were a few fables and myths associated with the deities they worshipped. Occasionally they would herd the children into a reading session to help keep them quiet.

Nemaia continued to steal from the other orphans, and managed to get quite good at doing this discretely. It didn't go unnoticed that items went missing, but over time she got good enough at it that stolen items were rarely attributed to her.

Occasionally a member of the orphanage's staff would go into the public areas of the city. When they did, they offered the children of age 11 and upwards the chance to come with them. This was considered a treat, so due to Nemaia's frequent misbehaviour she was rarely offered the chance. As a result she only went outside of the orphanage a handful of times.

Child to Adult Transition

(adolescence)

Gimash aged out of the orphanage when Nemaia was around 12, and found work in a quarry.

When Nemaia was 13 she was expelled from the orphanage after getting into a heated fist fight with another juvenile after being called a "bull" on account of her horns. After this, she began to live on the streets.

The civil government of the city was not known for its kindness or provision of resources to the homeless. City and private guards all had free reign to harass or detain the poor,

regardless of whether or not they had committed any offences. Shopkeepers were on the whole kinder and more sympathetic, although these too could very much be a mixed bag. One of the pressures that led to the city being less kindly disposed towards the destitute (and more specifically, the destitutes' needs) was the imposition of extortionary taxes and rents by the cabal that ran the city-state. As a result, merchants jealously guarded their money and goodwill had less of a place in a merchant's business.

Nemaia did not take much of an interest in the politics behind this situation, partly due to her skills as a thief. The way she saw it, if she could steal what she needed then the city's political situation was more or less irrelevant. She did however find the overall experience of homelessness unpleasant and uncomfortable. However chaotic and emotionally barren the orphanage had been, she had at least had a bed, companionship of a sort, and a roof over her head.

Nemaia mainly provided for herself via petty thievery and begging. This was enough for her to get by and she did not extend her efforts beyond getting what she needed. However, she did not feel inclined to develop her skills or to steal more than she needed at any given time.

This was partly due to the sensibilities of the money-orientated people of the city, of which she was well aware: a thief could incur the wrath of a merchant's hired guards. Taking a few gold coins from a merchant or money-changer's table here and there when they were not looking was easy enough, as this would not be noticed until the merchant reconciled their books later.

In addition to this, despite her felt need to provide for herself she was loath to take too much from any person. She felt comfortable with skimming enough money from a well-to-do to buy bread or cheese, and she had no problem with throwing hot ash in the face of a guard to get away, but taking an entire working man's pay for the day or week felt unjust to her.

There was a hodgepodge of gangs in the city, with each being based in a different district of the city. However, they were not thoroughly organised and none had any formal boundaries of operation, so none were entrepreneurial enough to try exploiting somebody like Nemaia. Eventually Nemaia joined one of the gangs operating out of the harbour.

Nemaia developed a social circle of sorts, though not a close one. This social circle included some of the other local paupers, along with members of the harbour gang she joined. However, her social skills were quite stunted by this point (particularly when it came to developing deeper, more intimate or deeply trusting friendships.), and she had difficulty with trusting others on a more formal, businesslike basis too. She was capable cooperating when needed - indeed, cooperation had been a vital part of the running of the orphanage so she had seen it modelled enough times for her to copy, but she found it difficult to trust that the other person would adequately have her back, so she felt reluctant to invest much in cooperation.

When she was 15 or 16 she became capable of casting magic, as befit her heritage as a tiefling. Occasionally she would see a "magician" performer (usually a sorcerer) in the street perform tricks for tips, and eventually she decided to try the same type of performance herself. Although she was not particularly talented she eventually reached a point where she could cast the simple cantrip Thaumaturgy. The extent of her magical ability beyond that for many years was the ability to create small clouds of ashes and

embers.

When Nemaia was around 16 or 17 she and Gimash became reacquainted when they simultaneously found themselves in jail, with Nemaia having gotten into a street brawl with a heckler and Gimash having gotten steaming drunk and made a nuisance of himself in a tavern after a particularly demanding two weeks at the quarry. This prompted them to establish where they could each find the other, and after they were released they met up from time to time to chat. Gimash would also spot Nemaia a few coppers or a silver coin at these times, if he had anything to spare.

Closeness in Relationships

(young adulthood)

By the time Nemaia reached her late teens and early twenties she had begun to occasionally seek employment outside of thievery. This was prompted by an acquaintance showing her how to sew and mend her own garments. She found this difficult, but eventually she got good enough at it to make a small amount of money or barter for goods when she felt like it.

Socially, Nemaia is generally amiable with other people of similarly low social status, although she can be generally sarcastic and rude. Her relationships have a 'pot-luck' quality to them and are overall quite casual. She rarely develops closer intimacy with others, whether platonic, romantic, or sexual.

She has a particular bitterness towards authority figures and richer people who are not willing to share their fortune, and is generally derisive and snide towards such people.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

Nemaia hasn't reached this life stage yet.

End of Life

(old age)

Nemaia hasn't reached this life stage yet.

Credits

Based on theory by:

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

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy