

Long ago in a small thatch-roofed home Cronus Locke was born to a loving mother and father. The fourth of four brothers Cronus, unlike his three elder siblings, was born with a sense of adventure. When Cronus was barely a knee high his parents would find him across the village fighting off a stray dog or two. Cronus grew quickly and had dwarfed not only his brothers but his father by his fourteenth year.

On a long day, while working the fields, Cronus saw in the distance a rider bearing the banner of the Knights Templar slumped over in the saddle coming toward the village. Cronus dropped his plow and dashed toward the horsemen. A bit startled by the young man the soldier explained that he was in need of aid. His fellow knight had fallen fighting off a group of bandits and he was injured. Cronus jumped on the back of the rider's horse and navigated him through the village to where he could be helped.

Over the next few weeks Griffin, as he would come to be known, recovered in Cronus's family home. During his stay Griffin delighted Cronus with tales of his journeys ferrying pilgrims back and forth to the holy land from all over the world, fighting off bandits, and cleansing the land of the unclean. Cronus, eager to see more of the world than his family home offered his services to Griffin to pay for him. Griffin accepted Cronus as his page and, after Cronus had a few teary goodbyes with his family, the two of them departed that day for the holy land of Jerusalem.

Over the next few years Cronus grew into a man and a knight. Griffin taught Cronus how to fight, how to be chivalrous and, at the permission of his commander, knighted Cronus. As a young knight Cronus was happier than he had ever been. The long trips to far away places, the battles against the heathens, the discipline, he was in his element. The one bit of his life that saddened him in the slightest was that he found his bed was cold and lonely at night.

One day a letter came from on high, the Grand Master of Knights Templar himself. A small town, far to the north, needed to be purged off the earth. These heathens had committed atrocities against the cross that could not be forgiven. The knights were to wipe the town and its inhabitants off the face of the earth before heading to a nearby city to await orders. Without question the two knights rode off with their battalion. The knights traveled what seemed to be months.

After long days and longer nights of riding in the middle of a clearing in a forest the battalion came upon the town, only a few dozen citizens in occupance. There was a fog about the air, a sweet smell. Around the town there were trees with odd carvings and flowers. The knights could tell what was wrong and what had to be done. It was clear that this was a town of foul druids and they needed to be cleansed. The battalion set in on the people of the town devouring the town in the clatter of hoof beats and steel sinking into flesh. The people of the town were taken off guard, they had no chance.

Cronus jumped off his steed after slaughtering a few of the heathens. Flinging the door open to one of the homes of the accursed people Cronus came upon something he did not expect, a beautiful woman. The woman was barely clothed, standing in the corner of the small home. She looked up with a gaze that was curiously warm. Cronus shocked asked if she was okay, if she had been hurt. Standing, she replied she was fine and that she would do anything to not get cut down. Cronus, thinking to himself remembered his need for a woman to warm his bed, nodded his head and raised his sword to her and struck her in the temple with the pommel,

crumpling her. He threw the women over the back of his horse and rode back to the woods to await his comrades. That night Cronus learned the woman's name was Serenity. Serenity quickly took a place as a camp follower of the knights. She knew that what she was dealing with following Cronus around was much better than defying him. The battalion made their way to the city to await orders and to heal after months of hard days and harder nights.

The group of knights made their home there for many years. In this time Cronus grew to know and love Serenity. Their love for one another was strong and seemed almost magic. Nothing would come between the two and Cronus would defend Serenity's honor to the death. It seemed to be a story book ending to their life until the fateful day when the second crusade was called.

The knights took up their arms and readied themselves to take back the holy land yet again however, with their dwindling numbers they were in need of aid. Searching far and wide with their riches for mercenaries to take up the sword and aid them in capturing their home land, the first Templar State, the County of Edessa. The leader now leader of the group Count William, their former priest, struck a deal with a band of gruesome heathen Vikings. Leading the Vikings was a great Jarl, Dracon Adun. The group called themselves the Berserkers of Jomsburg. Cronus grew to know and even befriend a good many of these heathens during their travels.

The ride back south was hard and many stops were needed along the way to reinforce and gather supplies. One stop put them on a road that ran right next to the wood which housed the clearing which housed the town that Cronus and his fellow soldiers had raised so many years ago. The party made camp near the road that night, the Templar in their own devout camp and right along side the routy and rambunctious viking berserkers.

When the fires started to die that night in the camps Serenity, standing at the edge of the wood, stared into the trees. Cronus thought she was just remembering, feeling sorrow for the life she used to have. That is until she looked back at him and her eye glowed green, her voice began to sing, and he was hers. Serenity walked into the trees, her footsteps shining momentarily before they vanished from the ground. Cronus trudged along behind her into the dark wood unable to resist his loves desire for him to follow her. Cronus was bewitched by a woods nymph. He had surrendered himself. He would protect this forest and his mistress with his dying breath.

Years passed and Serenity and Cronus lived happily. Cronus defended their home, the forest, from invaders as Serenity slowly brought the forest back to life, healing it. Cronus realized he was bewitched after a few months but after abandoning his men he had no better place to go. He had the love of his life there to keep him company, woods nymph or not. They got a few things they needed by becoming traders and crafters of goods that were harvested from the land. Cronus learned to spin and weave the flax that grew in a nearby clearing and sew it into clothes that sold and traded very well when he had time to make them. He learned to use the timber from fallen trees to make furniture for his their house, which he had plenty of time to build as well. He traded for wool when he could get his hands on it and made it into warm weather clothing for himself. Serenity never seemed to need any of his wears, she always would just appear in whatever beautiful thing she felt like day by day. Cronus assumed this was part of her magic, he knew very little of the woods nymph's powers.

It took a long time but eventually Serenity grew to love Cronus and revel in his company. She had originally been summoned to this glade by the druids which used to inhabit it. She was given the duty to protect the forest and after years she had been allowed to return to it and she brought a valiant soldier back with her. The two met with people flowing in and out of the forest to trade. Serenity noticed Cronus's need for human interaction growing whenever these traders would move through the wood.

Eventually the nymph and her knight began to entertain and allow people in need of a rest to stay and revel in the beauty of their forest, safe from the dangers of the outside world. It was on such a night that they were entertaining that they came across a few old traveling friends, the Berserkers of Jomsburg. Cronus spent the night around the hearth, drinking meade and enjoying the stories that the ruffians brought to the table. Games were played, music was trumpeted loud, and good times were had by all.

The next morning while the vikings were packing up their gear to head back to the road Cronus spoke to Serenity. Cronus, ever in need of adventure saw his opportunity. He explained to Serenity that the wood was healed and in good order and there was no need to stay and watch it. Serenity protested saying she had bowed to men before and would never put her woodland free spirit through that again. Cronus reassured Serenity that he would never ask her to submit to any man. He begged that she come along for he was in love with her and wanted to spend the rest of his days with her. Serenity, not wanting to lose her love to his passion for adventure, reluctantly agreed saying she would follow him on his journey but would bend the knee from no man.

Cronus rushed to catch the berserkers as they headed off onto the trail to catch up with Dracon. When he arrived at the place where Dracon's tent had been pitched the Jarl was packing the last of his things away. Cronus explained his need to get out and see the world and begged that he be allowed to join their ranks. Dracon simply smiled and replied, "Welcome home. We've been waiting."