

## The Origins of the Seven

*A Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* Fanfiction

Written by Olmo in July 2015 (edited in April 2020)

I write my interpretation of how the Healers – later known as the Soul Eaters – were first formed. I give some insight into each one's past and their motives, or what I feel in my gut the things to be. After the story, I explain some of my settings.

**Warning for those who haven't read the entire series:** the writing contains spoilers regarding the entire series. You will read at your own risk.

*Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* and all its contents belong to Michelle Paver.

---

They slowly formed, coming from different parts of the Forest and beyond it over one summer. No one could have guessed how diverse of a bunch they were.

xxx

*Observing as the owl, the dreadful one.*

The first Healer appeared out of nowhere, the last living member of the Clan of the Eagle Owl, one of the wisest clans to have existed. Having lost her parents shortly after birth, she could connect only with very few individuals. Her only consolation was trying to know the realm of the death in hopes of reaching out her parents. Magecraft being the only possible way for that, she dedicated herself to it, eventually becoming the clan's mage after living for twenty summers.

Her ten-summers-old nephew was buried under rocks. Unable to bear the thought of losing one of the only people she loved, she performed a forbidden ritual and brought his body back to life. At first she was glad, having seemingly saved her nephew from her parents' fate. But his mind was as blank as a cleaned bone, merely a mindless shell. Her spirits crushed and her dreams haunted by her deceased relatives' accusations, the new mage eventually let the empty corpse remain dormant.

Unfortunately, the clan was punished for their mage's crime before that, a plague wiping them all out. The mage received sickness as well and withdrew to the eastern High Mountains, expecting death. But as she waited for death in a dark cave, she only heard more and more whispers from the dead, her own end never coming. As her body decayed from the sickness yet still functioned, her mind slowly corroded because of the restless whispers, becoming pitch black and wilted.

After months of waiting for death, the mage had had enough and decided that should she still exist, she might as well do something useful. Wandering in the Mountains, she discovered in the deeper parts a red stone radiating beauty and evil. The death had told her of the Fire Opal and its terrible abilities, and she had come to the conclusion that since such a terrible thing was allowed to exist, it could be used for something, like uniting all the Clans for a greater future where there would be less death and unfairness.

The last Eagle Owl knew she couldn't appear just like that and announce her visions for two reasons. One reason was that the Fire Opal's use wouldn't be accepted immediately by the Clan Mages who feared the World Spirit's anger, and the second reason was that her sickness had altered her appearance and aura to resemble that of a corpse. Any living creature feared her instinctually. Regardless, she needed something to assist her, so she captured an eagle owl chick. By forcing it to become used to and utterly devoted to her, she slowly destroyed its own sense of self, making it a familiar reflecting her own dreadful nature. For many winters after, she performed her experiments, creating for herself concealing charms. Any other creature would see an old tall woman wearing a wooden mask representing the totem of her lost clan.

After **Eostr**a the Eagle Owl Mage was ready, she started travelling across the Forest, looking for mages who could serve as her acolytes and assist her in creating a greater future.

xxx

*Mighty as the oak, the strongest one.*

In the Deep Forest, the sanctuary of the most devoted worshippers of the Forest, Eostr visited the Oak Clan in secret and observed from afar their mage who had been active for three summers. He was a hulking bear of a man who regarded the trees as his friends, working to gain a connection with them.

He had been born nineteen summers ago as a sickly runt and received a serious blow to the head from a deer's cloven hoof. He acted violently, trying to compensate for his weak physique. After realizing that Magecraft gave you power over others, he became a mage and practiced cunningness. He started his devotion to know the mind of trees as another way to gain respect. That was the highest ambition of the Deep Forest Mages.

He also discovered from another mage secrets of enhancing one's strength. He used potions that made him bigger and stronger while doing physical work regularly, claiming that his new-found physique was the World Spirit's gift for his devotion. He killed the mage to retain her silence, making it appear like she had died in an accident. Very few dared to speak against the large and short-tempered Oak Mage who strengthened over the years. He stopped using the potions only because any further usage might have killed him.

Eostr came to the large and proud Oak Mage in secret. She told him surprisingly accurate observations of his ambitions, deeds and capabilities. The Oak Mage recognized the old woman as a kindred spirit, and she offered him to join her in an ambitious endeavour: uniting all the Clans so that there would be more opportunities for power. It didn't take long for the Oak Mage to make his decision.

The second Healer to appear, **Thiazzi**, stayed with his Clan and waited instructions from his new partner while Eostr continued her searches.

xxx

*Curious as the otter, the insightful one.*

Eostr wandered south from Lake Axehead, home of the cheerful Otter Clan. She found herself spying on a man who was thirty summers old. This man had been curious since his youth, never

settling for hunting in the lake. He travelled beyond it in every four directions, visiting the High Mountains, the Far North, and the Sea.

For years he travelled, discovering many secrets. It was rumored that he once saved the life of one of the Hidden People, creatures forbidden to appear to others. Intrigued by the Hidden People, the man tried to gain their secrets. He slowly gained insight into them. They helped him make new discoveries in exchange for retaining their enigma and secrets from spreading out.

The man also received skill in Magecraft from the Hidden People. Eventually, his clan's mage suddenly died without a successor. With no other candidates, the wandering Otter man, who had lived for twenty summers, was made the new mage. His position demanding his presence with the clan, the new Otter Mage had to quieten his adventurous nature. Two summers later, he was blessed with a happy son.

Eostra could see that the Otter Mage knew many secret things and had to temper his soul of a wanderer for the sake of his clan and family. Taking him by surprise, she revealed to him that she was able to unravel his nature with her intuition. Appeasing him, she said that she would keep what he was doing a secret in exchange for something: she wanted to help all the Clans, but needed someone to assist her, someone as knowledgeable as the Otter Mage. Intrigued by this, the Otter Mage agreed.

The third Healer, **Narrander**, stayed for a while with his Clan. A month later, Eostra summoned him and Thiazzi on a spot mostly used for clan meetings. Together swearing to help all the Clans in the Forest and beyond, they tattooed on their breastbones a black three-pronged fork used to retrieve lost souls. The Healers had made themselves known.

xxx

*Sleek as the seal, the cunning one.*

After several weeks of travelling throughout the Clans and helping the sick and the possessed, the three Healers were approached by a man in his mid-twenties. This man was from the proud Seal Clan, yet he had travelled across the southern Forest for nearly ten summers. Since youth, he had dedicated to becoming a mage and gain power to fulfill his visions of improvement. Alas, his efforts had been ignored in favor of a more "grounded" apprentice. The man secluded himself, brooding in bitter defeat, away from the Clans. But he never lost his ambitions, and he saw his chance in the Healers.

The man presented himself to the three Healers, flattering them greatly. While Eostra could tell that this was no Clan Mage, he had vision and skill. He could surely help their cause. The fourth Healer, **Tennis**, was ordained, though he presented himself as the Seal Mage, his tribe remaining ignorant as long as it was remaining with the Sea Mother.

xxx

*Wise as the wolf, the willful one.*

Tennis suggested to his fellow Healers that a certain mage he knew might be eager to help them. He happened to be Tennis' younger brother by two years who was christened as a member of the very nomadic Wolf Clan. He had been as interested in Magecraft as his elder brother, though he was

more interested about knowing the ways of the prey, hunters and trees rather than power. He was so willful that he was next to impossible to be swayed when he set his mind on something.

At the age of nine summers, when he started his apprenticeship in Magecraft, he wanted to become his clan totem even for a while. For the next six winters he endured remedies, fasts and trances despite the discouraging of his best friend from the Raven Clan and his beloved from the Red Deer Clan. Finally, in the seventh winter, he spirit walked into a wolf for several heartbeats and considered himself to be the most happy man alive. His clan seeing this as the sign, the young apprentice was appointed as the new Wolf Mage.

Tenris approached his long-estranged brother and charmed him with the Healers' noble intentions. The benevolent Wolf Mage soon made up his mind, ignoring the suspicions about such a band appearing just like that, the suspicions expressed by his best friend and his beloved who had become his mate. The fifth Healer received his fork tattoo, with Eostra having sensed his unblossomed wisdom and desire for spreading goodness.

xxx

*Swift as the bat, the twisted one.*

A month later, the Healers heard of a misfortune. The Deep Forest had lost its prey, and the Clans were starving. The five Healers arrived quickly to perform the rituals meant to appease the World Spirit. While helping the careful Bat Clan, their mage was nowhere in sight. Sensing something distressing, Eostra sent the Wolf Mage to find the Bat Mage while the other Healers tended to the clan.

The Wolf Mage travelled to the southern Deep Forest until he entered a cave where he saw a woman about twenty-two summers old with a ceremonial knife pressed against her heart, the death marks painted on her, and poison situated next to her. The Wolf Mage recognized her as the Bat Mage.

This woman had been born with an ailment that while cured, had left her with a stocky build and bent legs. She had been viewed with suspicion by almost all her clanmates for her first winters, even as she worked with her legs so that she could move without difficulties. Deciding that perhaps Magecraft could help her lessening the prejudices, she learned quickly everything with her quick mind from her aunt who was the Bat Mage at the time. Finding out that she could enchant small animals with her wit and make them obey her, she honed this skill until she could use a living bat instead of a pelt as her totem. She gained much respect and replaced her aunt as the Bat Mage after living for eighteen summers.

However, the new mage felt incomplete until another outsider, an enigmatic man from the Lynx Clan, visited the Bat Clan. They became mates, and the Bat Mage had a son. She felt herself more content than in years. But then the prey vanished, and she – or any other Deep Forest Mage – couldn't find a ritual to rectify that. Her mate died while trying to find prey, and her son starved. Feeling herself a failure both towards her clan and beloved ones, she withdrew to join her son.

As she was about to fulfill her plans, though, the knife and the poison were teared from her by the Wolf Mage who demanded to hear her reasons to abandon her clan like this. After hearing her out, he recommended for her to prevent more untimely death as a Healer. He brought her before the others, and Eostra decided that desperate ones can do amazing things and joined in the Wolf Mage's

proposition: no more unfair divide of the prey and premature death. And so the sixth Healer, **Nef**, was welcomed.

xxx

*Subtle as the snake, the seducer.*

The news of the Healers' deeds spread across the Clans, making most lose their suspicions and hail them as heroes. The news also reached the ears of a twenty-one summers old woman who was the mate of a Raven man, the brother of the Wolf Mage's best friend who had become the Raven Clan Chief.

This woman had never known her parents from the knowledgeable Viper Clan, having been discovered and raised by the down-to-earth Willow Clan. She found herself to be without connection to the Clan that had raised her. When she was seven summers old, she met an exiled Viper who had practiced Magecraft. He taught her everything he knew – never telling his reasons for this – before going on his way.

Fascinated by the possibilities of herbs and remedies, the girl took secret lessons from here and there, sporting over time the facade of a beautiful but ordinary woman. Then she met the Raven Clan and to secure her future, she became the mate of one of the stronger men of the clan. But even then, she felt that she could do more than remain as a mere clanswoman and mother. Shortly after her son's birth, she was approached by a viper that looked her in a way that made her feel some familiarity. It led her to deduce that her true soul clan was that of the Viper.

When the woman heard about the Healers, she decided that she could gain something more from them. She coldly abandoned the mate she had never loved and the son she viewed as a burden. She adopted the façade of **Seshru**, the Viper Mage. While Eostra could sense her lying, she decided that the woman's extensive knowledge about herbs and remedies, along with her willingness to abandon her ties for something greater, would be useful. And so, the seventh Healer was born.

xxx

The seven Healers continued growing their influence over time. Eostra was satisfied with her acolytes, so she decided to move further. Gathering them in a secret cave, she finally cast away her concealed appearance, much to the others' horror. Then she showed them the Fire Opal, explaining that over time, she had secretly united the mana of the seven of them, making them all bound to each other through their tattoos. But Eostra had the strongest grip.

The Eagle Owl Mage's personality had decayed more over time. While she still wanted to unite the Clans for a better future, she had come to believe that fear was the only way to do that. The Clans could submit only out of fear of the demons the Fire Opal could control. But first, Eostra had to make his six disbelieving acolytes submit.

She brought before them an outcast she had captured. She released a terrifying scream that made the man's souls leave his body. With her trident, she caught the souls, and her acolytes could feel how she swallowed the souls, draining them of power, and spitting them out, empty as a carved bone. The Eagle Owl Mage was so cold that she did all this without remorse. Then she demanded obedience from her acolytes.

Thiazzi, Tenris and Seshru agreed to follow, both out of fear and their own grown ambitions. Nef was also fearful, but she had grown cynical about peaceful approach and felt that Eostra's way would be the only way for a better future. Narrander and the Wolf Mage were both regretful of their gullibility and reluctant to comply. Eostra reminded them how far they had come already. After tasting dark Magecraft, they wouldn't be accepted back easily.

Narrander stubbornly refused to give in and stormed off. No arguing would change his mind. The Wolf Mage admitted the logic of Eostra's words, but he also started leaving. But then, Tenris spoke out, telling his brother that his mate wouldn't survive with him being branded as an outcast, especially when she had started expecting nearly a month ago. The willful mage had to comply.

Eostra reached Narik, son of Narrander, before he did. Being told that his only child would suffer if he left the Healers, he reluctantly returned. Gathered again, the Healers decided that the path of pacifying approach was over.

They reappeared in a clan meeting, proclaimed their true intentions, and threatened that anyone who dared to resist them would meet their end. Eostra ate the souls of several men who attempted to attack. Everyone knew of the threats of Thiazzi's strength, Seshru's poisons, the tokoroths created by Tenris, Narrander's connection to the Hidden People, the little animals enhanced by Nef, and the Wolf Mage's ability to spirit walk. All resistance was driven back for now.

In order to make their victory final, the Soul Eaters travelled to a hill in the borders of the Deep Forest that served as a prison for demons. But no one could have guessed what a blow the former Healers would receive.

## **The End**

---

There you have it. I hope I didn't bore you, but I had to let some of my feelings out.

I described the Healers unevenly because the same was done in the books. Of Tenris there was the least to tell because his story was more or less fully told in *Spirit Walker*.

About Eostra: I feel that she became what she's presented as in the series due to the dark arts slowly corroding her personality. Secrets of the dead are something no human is supposed to know of, probably for being too much for one human mind to handle. The corruption would be heavier for an orphan who could form bonds with only few people. And being responsible for her entire clan's eradication, combined with the surrounding world's rejection, would be a last straw for anyone. I think that she abandoned all well-intentioned goals after the Great Fire.

About Thiazzi's physique: I think that Thiazzi could have used something resembling steroids to enhance his physique. A sudden growth in strength would probably make such an insecure man a bully who has never learned to control his strength. He, Seshru and Tenris strike to me as those kinds of people who are simply more inclined for self-serving interests than the others.

Seshru may not have been considered an official member of the Viper Clan, but she *is* in many ways like the totem in question. And Nef could have received twisted legs due to an accident, but I go on with a sickness similar to Pycnodysostosis.

Narrander is probably the oldest Soul Eater alongside Eostra. His connection to the Hidden People would have helped him to survive over ten years in his mind-shattered state.

About Torak's father spirit walking: the Wolf Clan Chief Maheegun says in *Outcast* that Torak's father could turn into a wolf for a short while. In *Spirit Walker*, Tenris tells Torak about a mage who tried to spirit walk for six years until he finally succeeded. After meeting Fin-Kedinn for the first time when he was the nine years old, Torak's father became the Wolf Mage in the following seventh year. Coincidence? (Note: I know now that in the English book, Torak's father became the Wolf Mage eleven years after first meeting Fin-Kedinn. In the version written in my native Finnish, however, it's seven instead of eleven years.)

Five of the lines summarizing the Soul Eaters are directly borrowed from *Ghost Hunter*. Eostra and Narrander's descriptions are purely my own invention. However, I didn't have the courage to invent a name for Torak's father.