

Stormlight Blackpelt

Stormlight Blackpelt was born to a family of primitive Wayfarers. Primitive Wayfarers strive to live simple lives in small self-sufficient communities. Each community of Primitive Wayfarers has their own ideas about what "simple" means. The spectrum ranges from living like tree-dwellers on one end to almost indistinguishable from modern yinrih on the other.

Stormlight's family lived in a more strict community. They didn't live in trees, but they avoided the use of electricity and the hearthkeeper leading the community tended a bonfire rather than a star hearth.

They also practiced natural brooding, meaning womb-nests are placed somewhere cool and dry rather than being encapsulated in an incubator. While the kits were gestating, a plague struck the community, killing a large percentage of its members, including all but one sire and one dam in Stormlight's childermoot. Among the kits only Stormlight survived to hatch.

The community disbanded after the plague. Some members joined other Primitive Wayfarer communities, but Stormlight's family left altogether and rejoined mainstream society. His sire and dam had a hard time adjusting to modern life, and carried the pain brought on by losing all but one of their kits and the rest of their childermoot in one fell swoop. Stormlight also carried this sadness with him. He would see his peers playing with their litter mates and mourn the siblings he never knew. His parents were overprotective of their son, and this made it hard for him to make friends. It's a minor taboo in some yinrih cultures for a single sire and dam to form a childermoot, and even though they didn't start out that way, Stormlight was teased by other pups who thought he was inbred*.

Stormlight's misfortune attracted the attention of another pup in the local lighthouse. Just as he did with his sister and Pascal, Lodestar came to Stormlight's defense whenever he was harassed by his peers, and the four pups formed a tight circle of friends.

Stormlight was fascinated by the ansible network from puppyhood, and it was a no-brainer for him to become a Farspeaker when he came of age. However, he was conscious about the depersonalizing effects that online culture had on society. As awed as he was with the body of the noosphere, he harbored some guilt that he was perpetuating this spiral of loneliness. That being said, the network is a tool, and its up to its users whether it's used for good or evil.

Stormlight and his friends were evacuated prior to the glassing of their little dwarf planet home by the Partisans. They met Tod during the evacuation and quickly integrated him into the group.

Stormlight holds the honor of being the yinrih to make First Contact with a human. As a farspeaker, he was in charge of the Dewfall's communication system, and found Bob's CQ while searching for a way to contact the sophonts on the planet below. There are a few reasons why he seized on Morse code as the method of choice:

- it's not an analog voice signal, meaning you don't have to understand the language.
- It's also not a digital signal, meaning you don't have to decode anything.
- The Continuous Wave modulation used to send Morse is very easy to generate compared to other emission types.
- Since Bob was using a straight key (the old timey telegraph keys you see in Westerns and Civil War documentaries) Stormlight picked up on the subtle variation in timing resulting from manual sending--what hams call a person's "fist"--and was able to piece together that a warm body was forming the signal rather than a computer.
- Calling CQ is a very repetitious process, and Stormlight's "contact" involved spamming "CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ" over and over again. When Bob responds with frustrated bewilderment, the missionaries interpret this as a successful communication and land near the source of Bob's signal.

Stormlight becomes very interested in this primitive wireless communication system, assuming it to be part of the body of humanity's noosphere. Bob offers to host him, and he wastes no time joining the local ham club, along with Tod, as can be seen by one of my previous stories.

*The size of a childermoot is a question of good vs better. You can have a perfectly healthy litter with a single sire and dam, but the preference is for higher genetic diversity.

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