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FOREWORD

Memories.

That's what makes World of Warcraft what it is. It's the memories we have of the moments that have made the game worth it. Of playing content with friends, failing, pushing on, and not wanting to disappoint anyone. Of screaming and laughing in voice chat while playing a battleground together. Of roleplaying characters and stories that interest us with people we share similar tastes with. Of watching a guild grow into a team of people, celebrating achievements and milestones with, and remaining friends even outside of the game.

At its heart, World of Warcraft is more than just lore, loot, ratings, and achievements. For many, it's just a game, but for many more, it's where their friends are. It's where their community is and where memories that will last a lifetime are made. Recently, Blizzard celebrated 30 years of Warcraft, and over the last several months, many people shared their favorite moments in this franchise.

This issue is dedicated to stories about the past, hopes for the future, and events that happened that inspire us further. Here's to another 30 years of Warcraft and beyond, and to those who make this game worth it.

~ REASE STONEHEART

Relaxing Day In Dornogal

Submitted by Hydra



NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

Written by Vixelda

She had woken and dressed before her companions this morning and stepped out onto the deck before the disc of the sun rose above the horizon.

The sky had been a warm, inviting tapestry of gold and bronze blending into the deep, dark blue of the night the world was slowly shrugging off. A dark shape lay ahead, the outline of unfamiliar, shadowed hills becoming larger and more distinct as the sky brightened and the ship drew nearer. She had clutched her woolen shawl closer around her shoulders as the cold sea spray misted her face and smiled, brushing the strands of hair from her face that had plastered to her skin and let herself drift away into her memories.

How long had it been since the first time she had stood on the deck of a ship, waiting for her first glimpse of unknown lands? How many times had she surveyed unfamiliar shores with an equal blend of trepidation and excitement? Her hair had been copper, not silver, when she had first sailed from her home, brimming with excitement and hope, with merely a hint of the unease and anxiety that would dog her later travels.

She was no longer that optimistic young woman, ignorant of the threats that were looming on another world, whose greatest concern was the welcome a runaway Bronzebeard would receive from the family of the Wildhammer she was running away with, but she remembered her with a wistful, longing fondness.

Her emotions as the island in front of her grew nearer were mixed. This was the land of her ancestors in front of her. She had longed to see it from the moment she had heard of its existence, but she had hoped to do so as a sightseer at her age, not as the head of a search party.

"Foolish quine," she muttered, although her expression was more that of concern and an odd sense of pride than exasperation or disdain. It was a title she had earned many times in her own youth, after all, and it was hard not to admire the courage and dedication of the young woman they were here to seek. She just had to hope that overconfident independence had not snuffed out yet another young life all too soon in this damned world. There had been too many, and she could no longer picture all those shining young faces or recall every name. Only those most dear: her husband, their son, her students. All the rest, old comrades, older friends, all blurred into one, as though her brain had ceased to make sense of the scale of the loss and collapsed it into one indistinct face.

But she was not left alone long enough in her reverie to fall into despair. A tall presence had appeared at her shoulder, and, from the silence of its approach and the slow, steady depth of the breathing above her ear, she did not need to turn to see the

face of her companion and kept watching the details fill in on the landscape ahead as she spoke. "Angarika. How did you sleep?"

The response was sharp and gruff, and the young orc packed a good deal of pride and determination into her one-word reply, "Excellently."

The dwarf smiled warmly and nodded, "And the others?"

"Asleep." there was a hint of disapproval in the orc's voice as she gave this response, and she soon spoke again. "They WILL be ready, Ma'a... Bruneiris."

The dwarf permitted herself a laugh at Angarika's reply, amused, as she always was, by the reluctance of her students to make the transition between calling her Ma'am as their schoolmistress and by her name once they had graduated and made lives of their own as adults.

Angarika was taking longer than most. Ironic, given how resistant to showing anyone any form of respect the woman had been ten years before when she had been left in her care. An angry, resentful, wild girl of ten who spoke with her fists and her teeth and covered up her grief and terror at the loss of everything she knew by relentlessly bullying her peers.

Bruneiris spared a moment of pity for their companions downstairs in the cabins, who she had every faith would be marshaled most effectively up onto deck well before they docked. Mercifully, childhood Angarika's punching, hair-pulling, and, most memorably, setting fire to the mattress beneath its sleepy occupant had matured into brusque enthusiasm and a natural aura of command that was difficult to resist.

She would have made an excellent battle-mage, and Bruneiris thanked the Titans that the budding fire-mage's dislike of the formality of Dalaran had led her instead to pursue a career in blacksmithing, which had kept her far from the doomed city on that fateful day. Bruneiris would have sworn on her life she didn't have favourites amongst her girls. She didn't. But if she did...

The hills were soon close enough to see moving specks as animals and people went about their morning, and she felt a cool absence at her shoulder as Angarika silently departed to awaken the rest of the party.

They would make their way, one by one, up onto the deck. The gnome was first, predictably. She was the oldest, and her years as a pilot for the Alliance had disciplined her to rise on time. She saluted to her old schoolmistress before running her hand through the untameable shock of blue hair that crowned her with a permanent quiff.

"Astanza..." Bruneiris began, before being cut off with an abrupt, significantly higher-pitched correction of "Riggs!" before the gnome was off to the far side of the deck, clucking over the small dirigible they had brought as their means of transport through the world beneath Dornogal; tightening nuts and bolts, oiling joints,

inspecting stitches and retying ropes which had loosened in transit. Bruneiris followed slowly behind, admiring the young gnome's efficient ministrations to the craft, before boarding and taking her seat at the rear.

Her fellow dwarf came next. The solemn, glowing eyes of the Dark Iron appearing first in the darkness of the cabin, her dark grey skin and black hair shrouded in the shadows until the woman emerged, swilling over-brewed coffee from a tankard. She lifted the container to Bruneiris and nodded her head, leaning heavily against the side of the ship and squinting against the light.

"Still nae got yer sea legs, Rionnaig?" Bruneiris softly called down to her.

The Dark Iron groaned and waved a hand dismissively. She had never liked the sunlight, Bruneiris remembered, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a sour expression on outdoor excursions, but coming to life the moment the doors were closed and the curtains drawn. It appeared that the young woman didn't like seafaring any better than sunbathing.

For now, Rionnaig slumped into a seat beside Bruneiris and looked up at the bright, blue sky with resentful distaste. Bruneiris spared the younger woman an empathetic glance and a nod. "Almost there, lass. Hauld on a wee bit longer, aye?".

It would be alright. Rionnaig would be in her element soon enough, she thought. Hopefully, given that the woman was their shaman and medic for the trip.

It was not until the ship was drawing into port that, with an exasperated "We are HERE, Izka!" the last of the party was shepherded hurriedly onto the deck and into the dirigible by an irate Angarika.

The goblin staggered as she hefted several pieces of mechanical equipment onto her back at once, in a feat of contortion that suggested she had calculated on having a few more arms than the two she had when planning the feat. Yet, she nonetheless completed the maneuver upright and managed to find the breath to speak.

"Yeah, yeah... there's a reason we used ta call you Angy, ya know? An y'ain't got no more chill since we was in school, neither!" she retorted, tucking strands of scarlet hair into her leather cap.

"Izzy! Be grateful we are on a wooden vessel." Angarika replied. "Or you would see how little chill I have!"

The women bickered, good-naturedly enough, as they took their seats, side by side, their ire with each other seemingly a mere ghost of their teenaged selves, as Izka pulled a paper bag of toffees out of her pocket and offered the orc one first. It was good that they had a harmless outlet for their anxieties, she had to admit, although Bruneiris crossed her fingers it would not flare up again like old times if their situation became more stressful. It was enough to make their pilot turn from the wheel and pay

them some attention. The gnome raised an accusatory finger at her former schoolmates and raised her voice.

“Angarika! If you dare think about setting fire to one single thing on this dirigible, I swear to Mechagon I’m gonna drop you all the way down the coreway on your head and render down the puddle at the bottom to grease her bearings!”

“Enough!” Rionnaig snapped, ending the laughter that followed, and there was an awkward silence for a moment before a bell rang, and the gnome moved to the helm to steer the dirigible off the boat and into the air.

The others sat quietly in their seats, eyes firmly on the land ahead, doing their best to avoid irritating their companion further. It would be hardest on her, of course, and they all knew it. The twins had been inseparable their entire childhood, and they could only imagine the worry Rionnaig had felt since her sister disappeared, down in the depths.

Bruneiris cast her mind back to the night the young woman had turned up at the school after dinner without warning to speak urgently to her old schoolmistress. She had been gratified, at least, that she had been the first person Rionnaig had come to when her letters to her sister began to go unanswered.

“Dinnae blame yerself, quine.” she had attempted to console her that night as they had sat in her study, the young woman sobbing “I should have been there!” over and over like it had become painfully lodged in her head.

“Ye did’nae ken what wis goin’ tae happen, lass, an’ like as not, ye could’nae have stopped it had ye been there. Ye rightly saw ‘twas beyond yer learnin’ an’ skill tae go adventurin’ in such uncharted lands, an’ ye made the wise choice tae say no.”

She had felt guilty and impotent, however, even as she spoke the words. Knowing all too well how she had felt that same pressing sense of guilt and responsibility when her son had gone missing in Northrend all those years ago. Hopefully, at least, Rionnaig would get the closure she never had and would find out, at least, what had become of her sister. Lost for words, in the end, she had pulled the younger dwarf into a rough hug, as much to her own surprise as Rionnaig's, and let the woman cry. Then, when the tears ran out, the planning began.

Angarika had, to their astonishment, been the first to answer the call to the alumni, and to volunteer. She and Mogrioda had butted heads so many times over Angarika's first year at the school - sometimes literally - it was almost a mercy there was much school left by the time Mogrioda and Rionnaig had graduated at the close of that year. Bruneiris was reminded of her relationship with her own brother and how he could terrorize her mercilessly, but the moment anyone else dared touch her, he would have moved Azeroth and the Shadowlands alike to make them pay.

Angarika and Mogrioda had been a pair of hot-headed, impulsive thorns in her side back in the day, but a pair of thorns she had treasured fiercely, as much for their

spirit as in spite of it. She was moved to see that the sense of sisterhood she had always tried to nurture amongst the student body seemed, at last, to have seeped in past their prickly demeanours, despite their best efforts to resist. Sometimes she won that battle, sometimes she lost, but in the case of this pair, she was doubly glad of that small victory. Pitting themselves against each other, the pair would have watched the world burn, it seemed, to spit in each other's eyes. With each other? She would believe the pair could move mountains.

There was precious little time for the party to explore Dornogal or to acquaint themselves with the Earthen. They rushed to obtain supplies of fresh water and food with a slight pang of regret, but they were each too aware that the longer Mogrioda spent lost in the depths, the lower their chances of finding her.

At least, the younger members of the party comforted themselves in private, when Rionnaig was out of earshot, Mogrioda had become lost in a cave system. It was, by definition, a finite environment, and with their determination, skill, and equipment, they couldn't imagine it would take too terribly long to locate her. Whether or not she was still breathing by the time they did concerned them more, but she was a Dark Iron, born to live in the dangerous, deep places of Azeroth. If anyone could handle themselves down in these depths, surely she would be that one.

With this optimism, they loaded the dirigible onto the mechanical platform they were led to and began their descent. The party found themselves lulled into silence by the rhythmic sounds of spinning cogs and the scrape of steel cables scratching over pulleys, lost in their own thoughts as they were lowered down to the bottom of the vertical, first section of the Coreway, before a resonant, dull banging noise announced the next stage of their journey, where they would have to navigate the angled passage that led on down into the Ringing Deeps.

As Riggs guided the little airship downwards, with an occasional appreciative whistle at the quantity of metal and the quality of the workmanship that had gone into the creation of the passageway, the others eventually tired of the endlessly repeating scenery and were soon becoming restless.

Izka pulled out a rough, hand-drawn map and spread it out over her knees.

"How long are we gonna be down here again?" she asked, squinting down at the paper as she squirmed uncomfortably in her seat.

"As long as it takes," was Rionnaig's weary reply before Angarika leaned forward and spoke with an air of confidence, belying the fact that she was the youngest of the party.

"We have planned for three weeks. Three caves. One week each. We start at Taelloch, here, where she was last known to be heading. We move outwards from there."

"It doesn't look too bad." the goblin replied cheerfully. "Ain't no big networks of tunnels or nothing. And she ain't hard to miss. Tall. Flamin' eyes. Flamin' hair. Flamin' loud, too, when she ain't happy."

"All are tall to you." the orc replied with a chuckle, pausing to draw the point where their search would begin on the scrap of paper. "The residents of the settlement may know where she is. We will be with them in an hour, I estimate. Then we will re-evaluate."

The conversation paused as the distinct sounds of machinery became louder, and the air in the shaft became colder, taking on a humid, earthy smell. A bluer light spilled onto the floor of the shaft beneath them, and the women unconsciously held their breath as they began to pass down beneath the last archway that would take them out into the Ringing Deeps.

As the archway rose above eye level, they let out that breath simultaneously, in a chorus of gasps. Whatever each had been expecting was a woeful preparation for the spectacle that met them now. A vast landscape stretched out in front of them, so far that the distant walls of this one, the smallest of the three caves, disappeared into the misty air.

The word 'cave' did not begin to encompass its scale. Cranes and buildings spread out in front of them, seeming miniaturized in comparison to the scale of the stalagmites and stalactites that formed massive pillars that loomed impossibly above into an arched, roofed sky high enough for birds to soar through unfettered—all around them stretched vegetation, scrambling up hills and flanking rivers. Cities and provinces could be lost here, let alone one dwarven woman. Even Bruneiris, with over a hundred years of life, warfare, and adventure behind her, was left speechless.

One minute ago, they had an achievable plan. They had confidence. Now, they found themselves in a whole new, unexpected world, and their chances of success had just sunk further into the ground than they had. The women drew closer to one another as they gaped and stared until Rionnaig spoke.

"I am your shield, and you are mine. My back to yours, we stand, we resist, we defend, we endure." She sighed and shook her head. "You know, that motto was just a thing I had to say, back in school, every morning until I could say it in my sleep, and I didn't really believe it as a child. We were just a bunch of orphans, and other rejects and strays, forced together for a few years, and that didn't feel like what family ought to be. But whatever damned bad luck once brought us together, I'm fortunate to have you now. She's out there, somewhere. She has to be. And if she's out there, there's a chance we're going to find her, so let's take it, please?"

It felt like an eternity, waiting for the others to speak, her eyes searching those of each of the others, terrified to see that moment of doubt and reluctance that would

presage surrender and retreat. Instead, each face showed her only quiet determination, as one after another nodded their head.

“Might be a needle in a haystack, yeah? But she's OUR needle, and they ain't havin' her!” pronounced Izka.

“Riggs? Set a course for Taelloch, lass.” Bruneiris said softly, followed by a grunt and an emphatic nod from Angarika.

Riggs saluted before spinning the wheel, setting off at full speed, and replying brightly, “Yes, ma'am!”. Just this once, Bruneiris let it go.

THE WOLF KNIGHT AND PIRATE PRINCESS

Written by Rease Stoneheart

"You want to run that by me again, Cu'? You did what now?" Baozhai asked, incredulous at what she heard.

Rease sat in a large chair, grinning up at her as she sat at the end of his desk. "I told you, I wrote a story! I got inspired recently and decided to try my hand at writing some of those steamy romance novels I see people carrying around all the time.

Baozhai looked at him firmly as her mouth gaped incredulously open. For a moment, she was still unsure she had heard him right. There was always a surprise with the man, but usually, those surprises came in the form of him hurting himself in spectacular - if sometimes stupid - ways or getting a lucky break that caused a windfall to land in his lap between the time's fate dropped a rock on his head. As long as she had known him, he didn't have a creative bone in his body. Unless one counted the creative ways, he seemingly failed upwardly.

"Alright, I'm willing to buy it," she said, swinging her legs slightly over the edge of the desk, sliding her fingers to several wayward coins that disappeared. "But what brought this on all of a sudden? Did you really write a whole story, or is this just some passing fancy?"

"Well, yeah!" Rease said with a laugh, leaning back in his seat with a proud grin still upon his wolfish face. His muscular arms crossed over his broad chest, and he welcomed her to look at the notebook. "Ever since my early retirement as a Commander, I figured I'd pick up a few hobbies to pass the time here and there."

"What? Drinking, flirting, and chasing every tail you see getting old or something?" Baozhai teased and leaned over the table to poke at the unopened notebook.

His grin remained, though those pointed ears atop his canid head fell slightly. "Well, I'm the one getting old, really. Figure it'll keep me out of the occasional trouble."

"Well, now you have me even more intrigued by this. Alright, Cu', why don't you show me what you wrote then? What's it all about?"

Then his grin turned from a beam to a more pleased, simple smile, and he sat further in his seat to open his book. "I think you'll be able to figure that out once I've read it to you," he said.

She watched him with a raised brow as he flipped open his notebook, revealing a myriad of notes, scribbled lines, ink smudges, and tinier text in the margins. All of it was written out in his usual blocky, poor handwriting. Baozhia smiled all the same and

reached her hand out to brush atop his mane, letting him find where he needed to start.

Leaning into her hand, he cleared his throat and began.



The Wolf Knight stood on the edge of the Azerothian Faire and looked down into the valley where it was taking place. Lights from dozens of factions, organizations, and others glittered like diamonds in the oasis while the bright sand swirled incessantly in the distance with a quiet thrum.

He didn't know why it took place in a desert that year, nor did he question it. No distance or oppressive heat could quell his desire for adventure and glory, and the sounds of merriment and merchants below the smell of food propelled his feet further as he walked to the edge of the hidden town that welcomed all.

He had come today to make his fortune as a wandering knight should. There was to be a tournament later in the week, he had heard, where the strongest in the world were said to gather and prove their might. This was an excellent chance for him to improve himself and see where he truly stood among his peers.

Each step of his pawed feet sunk him deeper into the sands, burdened further by the thick silvery steel he wore despite the oppressive sun overhead. Soon, though, he found the ground turned moist and firm, changing from sand to dirt. Then, towering buildings loomed around him as the ground changed to sun-baked stones that warmed him further with every step he took.

The faire that had been so distant now welcomed him as streaming banners of silk and hemp hung overhead, and fun and games now became a loud enough rush of noise that pained his sensitive ears. People - who looked like dots in the distance when he walked - now danced and ran around him as hundreds of conversations drowned each other out. Lovers coyly clung to one another in long lines, merchants barked their wares, bakers cooked and offered spiced sustenances, and children romped and dove between legs as they raced each other.

Deeply, the Knight inhaled all the wonders around him as he let the cooling wind blow from a nearby reservoir slightly chill him. The banners above provided a decent enough shade for now, and he debated if he should take off his armor for a more relaxing evening.

He made his way through the teeming throngs of people, sidestepping everyone in his way and politely excusing him for every bump and jostle he caused with his larger form. Among the vendors, he saw those that were hawking leather goods, exotic wares from shadowy places, meat pies and cold ale, weapons and armor of immaculate craft, music boxes and singing crystals, and magical devices whose arcane inner workings were a mystery, even to their proprietors. Everything on sale

ranged from the mysterious to the mundane, and he felt his coin purse burn in his satchel at the thought of being spent.

He chuckled as he patted his hip. Soon, he'd enjoy himself. For now, he wanted to observe the various Orcs, Humans, Elves, Goblins, Worgen, Draenei, Trolls, and Tauren mingle in kinship and rivalries. His ears tuning in to their bickering.

As he made his way up a flight of stairs that led up to a higher portion of the oasis town, he came upon a curious sight. In the middle of a crowd was an exceedingly beautiful Pandaren woman of exceptional status wearing silks and ribbons upon her copper-furred body. She was being hassled and harassed by several thugs who sought to entreat her attention but in such a crass and boorish manner. They cajoled her for her attention even as she tried to push them away and tersely tell them to leave her alone.

Yet they persisted and none of the guards who were there for security came to her help.

Seeing a woman like her being harassed rankled the Wolf Knight to his core. His ears were pinned to his wolfish head, and he bared his teeth slightly at their uncouth mannerism. He strode through the crowd, parting those who were watching in dismay.

He neared the small group of thugs, smelling sour alcohol and sweat as it wafted off of them. They were smaller than him by virtue of their race (two humans and a dwarf, respectively), and they soon were encompassed by his shadow.

"Excuse me, ma'am," the Wolf Knight said, getting her attention first. When she looked at him with curiosity, uncertain if he was here to join in their cruel revelry or not, he continued to speak in an even, commanding voice. "Are these ruffians accosting you, and would you like them to stop?"

She looked at him with bright green eyes that reflected like jade under the sun, and when she understood that he was here to help, she nodded her head once.

"Yes. I would," she said — her voice light as silk.

The Knight nodded and turned towards the three. A low growl roiled deeply in his throat. "Gentleman. I ask that you leave her alone."

"Well, Pal, I don't think that's happening," the first of them - a smelly man with matted hair and a potbelly - said as he reached for a dagger. "See, we intend to show her a very good time here. She started it by being all flirty walking by us."

"Hardly a reason to harass a poor, innocent woman," the Knight tersely replied. "I'll not repeat it."

"You gonna make us?" the dwarven man asked, spitting a glob of bruiseweed chew onto the ground.

"Yes."

Then they attacked as one. Each of them rushed the Knight, who was fully prepared for them to strike. He dodged their lunging stabs effortlessly, not even pulling out his blade as he uppercutted the first man, raked the sharp claws of his hand across the other as he grabbed and threw, and then when the third went to stroke from behind, he found that his club struck the sheath of his greatsword, shattering his weapon.

It all happened quickly, but they turned and ran with their tails between their legs. The first human grasped his bleeding shoulder where an ornate dagger was sticking out (the Knight didn't know where it came from) and cursed both him and the Pandaren woman before fleeing through the crowd.

Then, everyone clapped at the display and went about their day.

Gratefully, the Pandaren woman walked up to the Knight and swooned, placing something in her pocket. "My hero. You really are like a knight in shining armor. Please, tell me, will you accompany me through the Faire today and be my guardian in case they come back?"

Equally enamored with the woman, he lowered his guard, his hackles softened, and he smiled and offered his arm to the beautiful woman to take. "Of course, my lady. It seems that you require a Knight to protect you. Might I first inquire who you are since that is the first thing Knights always do to beautiful women such as yourself?"

"I am a Princess of a faraway kingdom." the woman purred, taking his arm in hers. "And you, now, by my royal decree, are to serve me."

"My lady, I shall. I will always-"



Baozhai interrupted Rease mid-sentence, pinching the bridge of her muzzle as she held back a sigh and a laugh at the direction the story was taking.

"Alright, alright, hold on, Cu', I know what your story is about now," she huffed, shaking her head hard enough that her ponytail smacked against her shoulders. "That is nothing like how I remember our first meeting going. None of that happened."

His ears fell atop his head, and he lowered his book to the table and sheepishly grinned at her. "Well, you know. Some of it happened like that."

She lowered her fingers and stared at him with an augering gaze. "As I recall, at the World's End Faire, it was you who whistled at me while I was walking by, bored. I also remember that I was the one who told you that it was rude to whistle at strangers. I'm also pretty positive that you were the one who offered to make up for it."

"Okay, aye," Rease admitted, exasperated at the truth. "But that doesn't make a fun story to read about. Plus, the Knight wouldn't do that."

"Even though this is supposed to be you and me?"

He nodded, keeping his grin.

"Fair enough, Cu'," Baozhai admitted, leaning closer with growing interest. "Alright, let's hear what happened. But please, skip all the cheesy dialogue for me?"

"Well, I won't make any promises," he replied, then winked and returned to the book to again read aloud.



After the Knight had saved the Princess, he decided that a woman of her caliber deserved to be treated the best. The Faire was opened, with many delectable choices for entertainment and revelry. What better way to show the woman a delightful time than to treat her as she deserved?

With her hooked around his offered arm, he took her to the many wonders on display that evening. Their first stop was at a place that sold fine silks and elegant dresses. Their offerings were a dazzling display that ran throughout Azeroth's different cultures and kingdoms. There were finely made Pandaren dresses with elegant symbols embroidered on the sleeves. Elven gowns that glowed and shimmered as if made with the stars themselves, dark purple skirts and vests adorned with gems in the dreanic style, and even many jewelry types that were fit for royalty.

They even visited a magical shop where many wonders were offered for sale. Quills and pens that wrote what was on the user's mind (of which the Knight wisely chose not to purchase). Gemstones that thrummed and were imbued with the ability to cast one's voice over great distances. Baubles and trinkets made of crystals and soft metals that would give luck and wisdom to whoever possessed them. Animal totems of ivory and wood carved with simple runes to confer protection.

Many places even offered plenty of food to eat. Smells that ranged from simple baked goods to spicy meats to sweet treats hung in the air, enticing the noses to follow them to their sources. The Princess and Knight laughed and smiled as they chose as many different things as they could carry on top of the treats the Knight had bought for her earlier. Meat pies, wines, delectable fried dough snacks, and sugary decadence were chosen for a simple feast later in the evening.

Then, the time of the tournament came. Warriors, Mages, Soldiers, and other Knights from around the world gathered at the outskirts of the tournament. The dust of the endless desert ground up against the springy dirt of the oasis, and the rush of the distant river was drowned by the crowd's cheers. People from all over came to cheer on lovers, friends, family, and fellows, and the thrum of excitement filled the air.

Announcements and brackets were made. It didn't matter if you wore bright silvery armor, rugged leather, wizarding robes, or came in nothing more than a smock

and a dream. On this battlefield, everyone was equal, and respect measured for those who proved themselves.

It was here that the Wolf Knight proved himself better over his rivals, waiting for his name to come in the announcements about where to go and what foe he'd fight. Each time he was called, he'd turn to the Princess with a smile and a hand reaching out towards her in offer.

He'd ask, "Would you favor me this round, my lady?"

And each time, she'd take it, kiss his knuckles, and reply in a voice full of mesmerizing mirth and a bit of a cheeky tease. "Unless your opponent defeats you."

Fueled by that, he handily won each round, not wanting to lose that blessing.

By the end of the day, the darkness of night replaced the brightness of morning. By and large, people were satisfied by the first end of a week's worth of potential fun.

The moon was high in the sky, full and bright, casting a silvery, ethereal glow upon the world below as the twinkling of the sun's reflection in the sands became replaced by lanterns and candlelight. Shops eventually closed, and the faire goers petered off as they went to their hotel rooms, taverns, camping spots, or the luckier ones teleported away.

Beneath that beautiful moon, the Knight and Princess wandered off to the reservoir and stared at the large dam that held back a lake full of cool water. The surface of that man-made lake reflected the stars and moon in the sky, while the dam itself was sturdy and made of white marble and dark granite interlocked in a dizzying pattern. The stones were cold beneath their feet (as opposed to baking from the midday sun), and over each ledge and battlement, they felt the wind rushing off the lake, over the edge where the water rushed out to the river.

With a smile, the Knight turned to the Princess and produced a gift he had purchased secretly for her earlier: a delicate rose wrought in crystal with a golden stem.

Ecstatic, the Princess gasped and took it lightly in her hands, curling her fingers gently around it. With wide, bright eyes, she looked up to the Knight and spoke, saying -



"Alright Cu', that is nowhere near what happened," Baozhai interrupted with a laugh, nearly falling back on the desk. "For starters, we didn't even meet on the first day. That tournament you wrote about happened before we even met. Plus, as I recall, I was the one that made you blow your budget!"

"Well, yeah," Rease admitted, setting the book back on the desk before turning towards her with a sly smirk on his wolfish face. "But I don't think it's very romantic to say that the Princess robbed the Knight shortly after he met her, right?"

"Hey now," she said, wiping a tear from her eye after laughing. "I didn't rob you. I bilked you. There's a difference. You could have said no."

He flicked his ears and tilted his head slightly. He couldn't disagree with that. She teased him enough, and he thought he'd see how far she'd be willing to go. Little did he know that she would have tested that thoroughly by emptying three months' worth of wages in three hours, though in the end, it did work out in his favor since she was still here and treated him on occasion instead.

"Admittedly, yes," he slowly said, but then looked back at her with that same sly smirk he always had. "But that's still not very romantic. Especially if I wrote what you really got me to buy. Plus, this way, it's even more special and romantic."

Baozhai rolled her eyes but smiled all the same. Playfully, she kicked her legs out to bap against his thigh and nudged her shoulder to his own. "I thought it was romantic how it actually went, but I won't be picky if other people read it. Come on, then! Get to the end and tell me how this story ends. You got me all interested now, so you can't leave me on a cliffhanger."

In response, Rease blew her a kiss, wagged his tail, and lifted the book once more to read. Eyeing both her and the page as he built upon the excitement, she had to bring this story to what he thought was a satisfying end.



"I'll treasure this gift, always," The Princess said.

Then the Knight reached down, gently plucking the rose from her fingers to bring it up towards her rounded ears and hair, entwining the golden stem within her silky hair and the threads of her silky headdress, where it sat perfectly.

He sighed, satisfied that she adored the gift, and turned towards the Fairgrounds as the lights and sounds in the distance reflected off the lake in a shimmering display. There was still some late-night fun to be found there, with partygoers making their own revelries well into the evening hours. Music played in lilting notes that bounced between exciting and chaotic to soft and mellow. Small puffs of smoke wafted into the darkened sky, followed by the smell of cooking meat as dozens of people sought to eat still. Shadows flitted between alleyways and along the streets, the silhouettes of people unseen and unknown walking around.

And through it all, the Knight couldn't help but grow wistful at how it all seemed to come together—a perfect evening with a beautiful woman.

"The sight of the faire certainly energizes me, and makes me want to stick to my knightly vows," the man spoke. "It's a sight to behold. Seeing everyone working together as one. Like a body, or something. You know, like a heart or some other organ, and we're trying to keep us all from not dying."

The Princess nodded with him, completely understanding that incredible metaphor and precisely what it meant since the Knight learned that from reading many books and stuff.

"I know exactly what you mean," she said, gently stepping closer towards the Knight as she entwined her arm around his own, and pressed her body to his side. "If anything, you've shown me a magical night and how amazing these things can be. I really must thank you, my Knight, for showing me a beautiful time. Alas, I've got to return to my kingdom tomorrow morning."

His ears fell atop his canid head, and he turned to look down at her with a soft frown. "I see. Will I ever see you again?"

"You just might. Nothing is ever certain in life. Plus, it's not as if I'll be gone forever," she said, turning to look up at him with eyes that caught the night sky above, reflecting their beauty. "I might even have you come to serve me in my kingdom."

Heartened, he perked his ears atop his head and swelled his chest with pride that she'd ask for his services in her honor. "You call upon me, my Princess. I shall answer the call. Will you tell me more of your kingdom then so I might know how best to serve you?"

She nodded and turned to look away from him towards the lake as small waves splashed against the marble side beneath the ledge they overlooked. "It is a magical kingdom set on the waves of the world's oceans; a great sea-based kingdom on a land made of wood, much like a great boat. Ruled by a great and powerful Queen with a fiery temper but a fair disposition toward those who earned her favor. I am her daughter, and it is my place in the kingdom to learn from her how best to serve our people. We live by traveling the ocean, making port whenever we can."

Then she turned from the water to smile at him and wink. "But I left for a bit to see the world. We made port not too far from here, and I wanted to experience life outside the kingdom."

"It sounds amazing," he airily said. "I shall endeavor to make my way there when you call upon me."

Her face faltered momentarily, and she clung tighter to his side. Her rounded ears fell slightly atop her head, threatening to drop the crystal rose while she turned from happy and sweet to somber and serene. "There is one thing that you should be aware of. The Queen will not just let anyone into the kingdom without proving themselves. You must pass several trials before she deigns you worthy enough to walk our floating city. You'll have to prove yourself first."

The Knight looked at her momentarily as he mulled these over in his mind. He was a man who had never backed down from a challenge before. All his life, he had risen to every obstacle before him with a grin and duty on his mind. Many had called upon his service from the downtrodden and poor to the mighty and powerful, and he stood up for the causes of righteousness and justice. Hearing this now, he turned towards her and slunk away from her arms but knelt to a knee, bowing his head.

"Then I shall, my Princess. I'll prove my valor and honor and pass these trials. This I swear."

For a moment, she was taken aback by his willingness to endure the trials, but soon, that forbearance faded, and delight returned. She quickly leaned forward and wrapped her arms around him in a hug, mindful of his silvery pauldrons.

"I believe you, Sir Knight," she said.

Then he rose to stand again upon his pawed feet and bowed towards her once more. His hand swept up, offering her to take it rather than his arm. "You said you leave in the morning, correct? I have a tent nearby along the river. We can enjoy a small feast if you'll spend the night with me. It's not a castle or an inn, but it is humble and comfortable."

She took his paw into her own, lifted her head, and smiled up at him as she pressed closer to his body. "It sounds perfect, my Knight. Lead your Princess to your keep?"

He offered his arm again, and she slid her hand from his to around the offered limb. Whether it was chaste or not, no one (the Queen most of all) would ever know, but they left together to indulge in discussions all night, as well as the trinkets, gifts, and food they collected. The day after would be dull for the Knight, and the faire lessened with her presence for the rest of the week, but that first night was truly magical.

The End.



Then Rease settled the book atop the desk, closed it, and turned to Baozhai with an expectant smile. "So! What did you think?"

Baozhai looked at his eagerness to please, which was written plainly on his face, and snickered in reply. Slowly, she tilted her head and murmured, biting the inside of her cheek as her shoulders swayed back and forth. The more she did that, the more he vibrated in his seat to hear her verdict.

"Honestly, I give it a B+. It was a very romantic ending, Cu', but that real night wasn't as romantic as the story was. We flirted, I robbed you blind and made out like a

bandit, and you had a hanger-on all night that wouldn't get the hint before we did make it to the dam."

His ears fell slightly, but she leaned in again and kissed the top of his head. "But you know what? A for effort and world-building. A kingdom that's just a big ship? Fancy way of saying a sailor. Plus, it was very sweet even if I wouldn't be caught dead in...whatever you had her wearing in the story."

Then she thought further and laughed. "And you didn't even get my accent right either."

"Well, it's hard to get accents down in text," he said, nodding his head before he stretched, and went to stand. "I mean, I didn't just want to say off the bat that she was a Pandaren with a dwarven accent. Let the readers infer that on their own."

"Pretty meta of you, Cu'," she murmured, watching him step away into the other room for a moment. With his back turned, she reached out, swiped the book off the desk, and pilfered it deep into her pockets alongside several coins and an unopened beer bottle—a devious smirk on her face.

A moment later, he returned, carrying two large cups of wine and an easy, laid-back grin. Stepping towards her, he offered her a glass, unknowing of the theft that had taken place.

"Sticking around tonight then, Princess? If you feel a little adventurous, we can make a few more memories for a future story."

Gladly, Baozhai took the glass and mulled over the mulled wine. Letting the sweet, warm liquid sweep against her lips as she stared at him over the edge of the glass. Her lips curled at the end of her muzzle into a devious look, and she answered him with a pleased sound.

"Sure. What do you have in mind?" she asked.

He stared at her over the rim of his cup with waggling brows, tilted his head to the door, and took a deeper drink that emptied his cup.

Whatever he had planned, she now had to figure out how she was going to sneak away this book from him. Later tonight, she planned to re-read it over and over again. Such was the cunning of a Pirate Princess, after all.

The Actual End



A BROKEN MIRROR STILL REFLECTS

*Written by Lord of Bagels
Edited by Rease Stoneheart*

Arugal. The name was carved into the stone marker of the weather-worn gravesite.

Nikodemus sat cross-legged in front of it, head bowed in contemplation. It was why he visited here: It was quiet. Peaceful. A simple grave at the foot of a dilapidated keep, on the edge of the ruins of a ravaged, burnt-out town. Pyrewood. A fitting name for the place.

It was one of the few places he felt at home, albeit a home he could scarcely recall. As the celebrations outside of the Caverns of Time way across the sea in Kalimdor continued to commemorate the past couple of decades of Azeroth's history, he found himself troubled by his own memories--or rather, the lack of them. Only fragments of his past had remained in his mind when he'd been raised into a Death Knight--flashes of being a Son of Arugal, a rabid worgen taken in by a madman who was the only one not to treat them as monsters that needed to be eradicated.

Only jagged pieces remained of that time--and only shards of fragments of the time before that. He'd found scraps and tokens that he'd used to piece some things together. An old newspaper article about a strange boy who washed up on the shores and was rescued by a young Lord Harford. Flashes of being the young lord's friend and scribe, helping him home after a party where Harford was named godfather of a friend's daughter. Him jesting that Nikodemus was 'god-uncle'. The Outbreak, where he held off feral worgen long enough for their friend and their daughter to escape.

After that, scattered fragments of his time under Arugal. These were...complicated memories. Arugal had used magic to compel the ferals to follow his commands, but still took them in. Gave them a place to live. Food to eat. The mad

ramblings of guilt, of a sense of responsibility. The break-in by the adventurers. Arugal dead, and his enchantments gone with him. The escape, freeing the others. Running. So much running. How many days? Weeks? Months, even? Maybe years. He just ran until, at last, he could run no more.

This was the last of his memories from his previous life. Or perhaps the first memories of his new life--or, unlife, as the case would be. The looming shadow of Acherus overhead. The ethereal wings of a val'kyr flying down. Offering a choice--continued existence at the cost of being a twice-turned monster forevermore. Or dark and empty oblivion.

His trials as a Death Knight, where he fought fang and claw for the scraps of unlife and power that he had been gifted--no, that he had been rewarded. And yet, even in death, he had found it difficult to find that sense of belonging. Instead, he'd only felt the sense that he'd traded one chain for another, if with a longer leash. Then...Harford. Light's Hope. Becoming a Knight of the Ebon Blade. Facing down his past in Arugal's Shade in Grizzly Hills. Accepting who he was, reconciled with what he'd become. And with that acceptance, the sense of belonging that he had sought.

As that thought crossed his mind, he ran a finger along his ear. In his human form, he had always had noticeably pointy ears. His friends had wondered if he was a half-elf, but they weren't the ears of one. And he certainly had felt human, once. At least, he'd thought. Recent encounters in Khaz Algar had shaken that thought--the Arathi had ears as he did.

He had not brought his own up to them, but their story made him wonder. Wonder if maybe he hailed from the same place originally. But what would have led him to wind up shipwrecked on the shores of Pyrewood? There were more questions than answers. Even if he was Arathi by birth, he certainly wasn't now. Not as he was. A worgen? A Death Knight? For an empire of the Light, he was the antithesis of what they stood for. Whether he was or not, it mattered little anymore. Who... WHAT he was now was what mattered.

He thought back to the campaign against Arthas. About his brethren in the Ebon Blade. About what had transpired since then. He remembered the aimless feelings that had followed--that desperate desire for a purpose.

He remembered wandering Azeroth during the Cataclysm and even taking a sojourn to Outland. Two broken worlds. A reflection of himself at the time. He worked with the Ebon Blade to end various threats, including aiding the campaign against Deathwing and the Twilight's Hammer and the conflicts with Elemental Lords across Azeroth and the Elemental Planes.

In Outland, he explored the origins of Death Knights, speaking with the ghost of Teron Gorefiend. It would not be the last time he'd talk to him--he found his gaze flitting over to look at his weapon with narrowed eyes before returning it to the grave.

The war against Garrosh that had spilled across Pandaria had been an interesting time. Being on the southern continent was undoubtedly an experience. A land where hatred, doubt, and volatile emotions were made manifest into the Sha when those emotions ran high. It was not an easy place for one with much internal strife to travel.

He'd had to fight a lot of the Sha in those days, yet fighting his own emotions had taught him much about himself. The teachings of the Pandaren people had helped him greatly on the path to accepting himself, a fact for which he was eternally grateful.

And then Garrosh had escaped to the past, to Draenor. And Nikodemus had joined the other heroes to protect Azeroth from the raging madman. Nikodemus had felt...pity, maybe? Empathy was a better term. Empathy for Garrosh, and for the struggles the orc had gone through.

In the end, Garrosh too had been someone who was dealing with internal issues regarding a sense of self and understanding. An Orc who had never truly been taught what that meant and who was trying to emulate a flawed and, ultimately, impossible image of what he thought he should be. An image that had been twisted and influenced by the perceptions of the people around him.

Looking down at his clawed hand, Nikodemus pondered what might have happened, what path he might have taken, had he followed the same route.

And yet, he hadn't. Instead, Nikodemus had chosen to protect Azeroth. To protect his home. He had proven his prowess and valor in battle and had been rewarded with a promotion to Deathlord.

He had led squads of his fellow Death knights in battle against the Legion. He had worked to mitigate the damages of the Fourth War between the Horde and Alliance. He had helped lead the charge into the Shadowlands, the realm of Death itself, and helped to conquer the machinations of the villains within.

At the very least, the years of peace after and the venture to the Dragon Isles had been a nice change of pace.

Silently, he reflected upon all that had happened in his unlife. Finding his 'god-niece.' The Worgen being accepted into the Alliance. The journeys of self-discovery across Pandaria, Draenor, and Outland. Rising through the ranks to become one of the highest-ranking members of the Ebon Blade, leading forces into battle against the Burning Legion and doing his best to mitigate the damage of the Fourth War. Venturing into the realm of Death itself. Aiding the Dragonflights in the reclamation of their home, dealing with the rise of a new threat in the Primordials, and an even bigger one in the aftermath of Neltharion's experiments. Now...Khaz Algar.

He contemplated his life, his titles, his name: Nikodemus Arugal. Deathlord of the Ebon Blade. Heir to the Curse. Lord of Bagels. A twice-turned monster, now a dark protector. A wry smile tugged at the corners of his lips as he considered how far he'd

come. His past may have been in pieces, but his present and future were opportunities to make new memories.

As images of the people he'd met and bonded with flashed through his head, he rose to his feet, pulled up his hood, and grasped the hilt of his weapon. Then, he bowed before the grave and lifted his head, standing with a renewed resolve to face the future.

The End



MEMORIES

*Written by DBSilverdragon
Edited by Rease Stoneheart*

"Why can't I remember?"

That question ran loops through the Dracthyr's mind as they sat and watched the sunset from the Ruby Life Shrine. Dragons and dracthyr flew in the clear evening sky, while the last of the sun glinted off of many scales and threw sparks of red, green, blue, bronze, and black across the sky. It gave a natural light show for everyone below, and the Dracthyr below stared at them but was focused on the question that had plagued their mind. A question that had haunted them since they were awakened again after the long sleep.

That question remained, as well as snippets of laughter, the scent of blood, battle, and more that occasionally flashed in their memories but left them without an explanation.

Slowly, they looked away from the glittering sky, down towards their own clawed hands that were devoid of color. A metallic sheen of silver captured the light as they flexed their talons. Beside them, two small blue whelps slept peacefully, napping as night came. They were currently the silver dracthyr's only companions.

Behind them, a deep, feminine voice spoke out. "I thought I would find you here."

Quickly they turned, trying not to awaken the whelps as they rushed to stand, and straightened their shoulders. Upon seeing a darker-scaled dracthyr decorated in gold and red armor, they recognized who it was, and bowed respectfully.

"Scalecommander. To what honor do I owe this visit?" the silver dracthyr stammered.

"You do not have to call me that every time," the darker-scaled dracthyr said, though a smile was evident in her tone. "Only when we're in front of all four aspects."

"Of course, Emberthal," the silver dracthyr replied with a tiny tick of a grin curling at the corner of their muzzle.

"Much better, Silveri," Emberthal said, nodding approvingly. "I find you here more and more each time you return to the isles. Why?"

Silveri shrugged her shoulders, causing her wings to shift and settle against her back again. "I guess this is what others call home."

"Yet you feel you do not belong?"

Silveri huffed and glanced to the side. "I do not know how to feel because I cannot remember. All I know is that I am different."

Emberthal raised the ridge of her brow. "How so?" she questioned.

With a wave of their taloned hands towards the other dragons and drakonids, Silveri looked back. "I do not belong to any aspect or any other dragonkin."

"Yet you are dragonkin," Emberthal replied.

When Silveri went to reply, Emberthal raised her hand, cutting the other off from continuing. "We have this conversation every time you come here."

"Then why, by all that is dark, can I not remember the past? Both ours and mine?" Silveri spoke, her wings fluttering in annoyance.

"Have you spoken with Nozdormu?"

"As well as Chromie," Silveri sighed, losing that budding agitation. "They only speak in riddles and backtracking words."

Emberthal chuckled, and a soft smile curled at the ends of her muzzle. "Yes, the bronze flight is known for such things. Never a straight answer."

It was then that Silveri chuckled as well and shook her head. "They speak as though a circle has corners."

"Careful now. You're starting to sound like them."

Silveri and Emberthal looked at each other momentarily before a deep, rumbling laugh rolled through them. The other dragonkin gave them both an odd look before continuing on their way, letting them enjoy their mirth as the two sleeping whelps slowly came to.

Then, a dwarven man nearby chuckled with them after watching them converse.

The pair of dracthyr looked over towards the grey-bearded one, sensing that someone was different about him.

"Are you dragonkin?" Silveri asked.

The Dwarven man nodded. "Aye, but it's been so long, and I barely remember this place—this home. I was a guardian of mortals until we were called back. Everything has changed, and I have lost so much. While I miss much, I do not miss my memories."

"But... they define who you are," Silveri spoke, confused.

"Aye, that's true," The dwarven-dragon admitted, stroking his beard. "But by the looks of you two, darker memories - memories that should stay dead and buried - live within you."

Then, his old eyes softened for a moment. "Sometimes it is better to create new memories. Those that have been buried have been done so for a reason."

I need to know," Silveri replied, her clawed hands clenching.

"Lass, you have several years, if not centuries, to learn about your past," the dwarven dragon said, cocking his head to one side for a moment. "Once you have your visage, I can see you delving into Azeroth's past."

"He does make a good point," Emberthal commented, running a talon on her chin. "You can always speak with the Explorers League. I'm sure they would be happy to have you aboard. Besides, you may discover more about our pasts and your own when you learn more about Azeroth."

Silveri nodded, letting her wings settle against her back as she bowed briefly toward the dwarven dragon. "Thank you, elder one, for your insight."

He cheerfully laughed, deep and throaty. "Lass, I've not been called that before. Thank you for the compliment."

Emberthal then walked towards Silveri, placing her hand against the other's shoulder. "I hear the ones to speak to are Toddy Whiskers and Nalaidea Rivergleam, both of whom are over at the Dragonscale Base Camp not too far from here."

"Then that is where I will start," Silveri simply said.

Maybe we'll meet you at the tavern below the Shrine next time," Emberthal said, patting Silveri's shoulder again.

Then Silveri smirked as she stepped back. "Only if you buy the first round."

"Deal," the Scalecommander said, stepping back before she launched herself into the sky, wings flapping mightily.

As Silveri watched her go, she turned to the dwarven dragon with a smile and a wave and then launched herself away as well, leaving behind him and the two whelps that kept her company when she was lost in thought.



"Duck!" someone yelled over the sounds of others at the base camp.

Without a thought, Silveri did just that, only to have an overly ripe banana strike at the tree beside her with a sickening, splattering smack followed by an angry chitter.

"Don't you mind that little beastie. He does that to just about anyone," another dwarf - this time with a blue mohawk and sideburns - said, coming up to Silveri to welcome her. "What can I be doin for you today, dragonkin?"

Silveri shifted into her visage form with horns and hair that matched her scales. The dwarf clapped excitedly, watching as she did so.

"Oh! This is better. An actual dracthyr. Well, now I've got so many questions!"

Silveri stood there, dumbfounded by the statement. "I... um, I'm here to speak with Todd Whiskers or Nalaeida Rivergleam. I -" she said and then found her voice. "I'm here to offer my services to help."

The dwarf smiled and motioned for Silver to follow. Then, she let out a sharp two-note whistle before she guided the silvery dracthyr to a large tent that smelled of the forest in the center of the makeshift camp.

"I really hate it when you do that," replied a sin'dorei woman in a dusky, sultry voice.

"Now, now Nadi," the dwarf laughed. "We have a dragon guest who wants to join us."

"... As well as the nickname, Toddy," the elven woman replied in mild humor but no anger.

Silver stood there, dumbfounded as she listened to the banter between them. Confused about who they were. "Um... you two are-?"

The dwarf gave a bow. "Toddy Whiskers at yer service." Toddy nodded over towards the blood elf. "And Naleidea Rivergleam."

"Pleasure to make your acquaintance, dragonkin." Naleidea bowed slightly.

"What can we be doin' for ya?"

"I want to help find...memories...artifacts." Silveri flinched inwardly as to how weak her voice sounded to her ears.

"You have come to the right place." Toddy laughed once again, clapping Silveri on her upper arm. Only nodding when the dracthyr did not flinch. "It is what we specialize in."

"Be it Azeroth's or one's own memories or artifacts," Naleidea added.

Silveri, for once since her awakening, felt a weight off her shoulders. If she could not find what she was searching for on her own, she now had others who understood what she felt. It was the first time she felt as though she belonged.

The End

THE MERABLE REPORTS

Written by Merable
Organized by Rease Stoneheart

Note: This is but a small collection of reports and journal entries detailing the long career of Dame Merable Dawspark, Argent Crusader. The reports and journal entries below have been released or allowed to be shown as they are of a confidential nature.

Report One: Meeting With Merable Dawspark

Kings Calendar Year 31: Summer



Report: I met with the Gnome Death Knight Merable Dawspark from the Ebon Blade earlier today. Surprisingly, she wasn't as armored as I expected the Death Knights to be, but instead had on an Argent Crusader uniform. She also wore a clean and pressed Argent Crusader tabard, as if freshly laundered.

We had a chat in the office after she introduced herself. She explained that she sought to join the Argent Crusade - namely my unit - because she wanted to help and thought we could use her abilities and training to add to our own. According to her, she had been helping in the Plaguelands for some time, attacking any scourge remnants she could find, and she felt that our mission could benefit one another. I admit I was a little uncertain of her motives since we rarely had Death Knights join our ranks, and those that have joined in the past tended to leave because their methods were a little... extreme for what we needed.

However, she was friendly, and I didn't want to turn away someone who seemed as eager as her. It's our duty to uphold our ideals, the words of the Highlord, and what we stand for, so I accepted her into our ranks. It was an easy enough decision, as she had told me she had come to know several other Crusaders in my unit, and their suggestion led to her joining us—another point for vouching for her.

Once that was finished, we went to the exercise yard where I gauged her abilities and training to ensure we correctly geared her. Despite her size - being around 3 feet and 5 inches - she is remarkably strong and was able to easily cut through several logs with a training sword (me not wanting to risk her rune blade). Not only that, but she is also durable, able to withstand weights being placed on her, and, of course, her stamina is endless as she doesn't need to breathe as living beings do. She informed me she didn't need to sleep as well.

She'll be an excellent fit for this unit as she is amiable, approachable, and respectful of those around her. Ability-wise, she's strong; personality-wise, she has a kind disposition. We'll see how she does on assignments.

~ *COMMANDER REASE STONEHEART*

Report Two: On My True Allegiance

Kings Calendar Year 32, Spring



Report: Went to the meeting with the Argent Onslaught. With the Demons invading Azeroth and our home in danger, I must stay focused on my duties. However... Something terrible happened. The order I was in, the Ebon Blade, committed a heinous crime: They attacked Light's Hope Chapel. Our brothers and sisters have fallen defending the Highlord's body. Have they forgotten what happened and how we were free? Unthinkable.

I walked up to them, putting my blade on the ground, and they could have easily killed me. If they considered me a threat, it is best to put me down. But... they didn't. No one in that room doubted me. I... can hardly believe it. They encouraged me to keep going. I... was at a loss for words. All I could say was, "Thank you."

I can't fail them. Tirion Fordring gave us a chance to fight for what's right. The order didn't doubt who I was. I will not fail them. Even should the other members of the Ebon Blade hunt me, I don't care. They are dead to me for what they did and will pay. I will fight for the Argents and my sister. If they want to stoop that low, so be it. But I will never betray them again. This rogue of the Ebon Blade did not forget what the Argents did and would rather die than betray them.

~ *Merable Dawnspark*

Third Report: The Miracle

Kings Calendar Year 32, Winter



Report: I... can hardly remember what happened after that fight. We were held down in the steps of one of the points on Argus. These demons were everywhere. Light bless me for the others granting me this runeblade and using it against these Demons. But... I knew one day, the resources would be depleted. The runes ran out, and the machine pounded everyone. I channeled the Light within me and used the bombs to halt the monstrosity. It... was agonizing. My very body was burning, but the Light was with me. Painful but... hopeful. Ostentus, the blade that has been with me these past few months, helped me channel the Light into the bomb and used my Mechanostrider to crash into the machine. I was knocked out, but... we lived. The Light was really in

me for the first time in a very long time. It will be painful, but I will carry on this burden and for the sins I have committed if it means to protect those I hold dear.

~ **Merable Dawnspark**

Update Report: Where I am

Kings Calendar Year 39, Summer



Thinking back on everything that happened: With the Scourge, Demons, and the very afterlife, it was a huge struggle. Light has granted me a second chance to live. I may not have the same capabilities, but the strength continues. I have more reasons to live and fight harder now. I have a lovely wife waiting for me. Kinndy, my dear partner, I know I worry you too much about what I do, but I do fight. For you, my sister, and my brothers and sisters of the order. It is why I still go out on patrol, carrying the same runeblade that was given to me by the church with a few modifications. I no longer need it but still use it to bring justice.

So much has happened. There is so much to see, but one thing is for certain: I'll keep fighting. I'll keep learning. I won't let the demons of my past haunt me. I have helped to surpass it, and I'm very grateful. To you all, I'll keep going. Ostentus and I will keep fighting. This Argent soldier still has tricks up her sleeves and will carry on the banner. Rest well, Tirion. Your legacy will still live on all of us.

~ **Merable Dawnspark**

JOURNAL ENTRY OF REASE STONEHEART

Met up with Dame Dawnspark today, surprisingly. I admit I haven't seen her since my retirement as Commander in the last few years, but it was still lovely to have bumped into her in Stormwind. Surprisingly, of all places, it was at the Argent Embassy—the one right next to city hall and the Cathedral.

Even more surprisingly, we were both going in to collect our pensions. It seems we get our mail from Hearthglen at the same place instead of mailing it directly to us. I didn't ask why, but I assumed her reasons differed greatly from mine.

We talked a bit about what we were up to—mainly about the differences in our lives compared to when we were more active in the Argent Crusade from around the Broken Shore all the way to the opening of the Dragon Isles. For her now, life had settled down quite a bit. Married, helping out with engineering technologies for the Alliance and whoever else hires her, and the occasional work that pays the bills.

Standard things for aging Knights like us. Though in a heavily diminished role, she still works for the Argent Crusade.

Different compared to myself. Despite getting older, I still travel extensively, help where practicable, offer consultation whenever possible, and use my sword for whatever righteous cause needs it. It's not really mercenarial since all I ever ask is for the repair of my equipment, food, and a place to sleep.

Still, it was quite a nice chat, reminiscing on some of the better campaigns and missions we had been on, laughing about some of the antics that many who fought with us had done. It was nice to catch up since I hadn't seen many other Argents lately. Less of the ones we fought beside. Hopefully, we can catch up later on or maybe bring a few others we haven't seen in some time. It's just nice to know that her life is going well. Out of all the Argents I've commanded, she is undoubtedly one who deserves happiness the most.

*~Rease: **KC 43, Autumn***



THIRST

Written by Sanguinia

"Are you deaf, old man?"

The clamor of pewter on wood fell silent as the orc who had slapped away Burrash Palehorn's goblet loomed over him. The young fool was flanked by a friend who was not as bold but did his best to pretend.

"This tavern has no place for your kind! Leave on your hooves or on your back!"

Burrash eased his hand leftward to where he'd rested his war totem. The two orcs tensed... and then the hand passed the battle-hardened wood and grabbed a ceramic cup from the neighboring table. The two trolls sitting there decided the theft was not worth debating and fled. Burrash drank without even glancing up at the two ruffians. It was tea. What a pleasant surprise.

The first orc's fury surged at this dismissal. "You *mock* me?! I won't take such dishonor from filth like you!"

Burrash rose, looming a good foot-and-a-half over the two youths. Violet robes shifted around his powerful frame, his eyes hidden by a beaten old straw hat. The first orc was too angry to feel fear, but his friend stepped back.

"On my hooves, then," Burrash said. Without another word, he slung the totem onto his back, brushed past the two troublemakers, and made his way down the stairs. The first orc seethed, but the second started whispering frantically. Neither followed.

Burrash exited the Broken Tusk and walked past Grommash Hold. Ignoring the bustling activity of Orgrimmar's busiest market, he contemplated the name of the fortress and, on a whim, decided to walk toward the stone ramp that would take him

to the city's second level. It was hard to believe it had been decades since he'd first walked that path...



"Surely the beast couldn't have been this big," Burrash wondered aloud as he squinted at the remains of Mannoroth the Destructor.

"Open your eyes, whelp!" snapped a passing city guard. He gestured emphatically at the tree that had been used as a makeshift effigy. "The skull and tusks are solid bone, not some cobbled-together fake. Besides, have you ever even seen a Pit Lord? I sure as hell did during the Third War. Old Mannoroth was quite a specimen. He'd eat you for breakfast and pick his teeth with your horns!" The orc puffed out his chest as he glared up at the young shaman, no doubt hoping a little intimidation would make up for the difference in their height. Against a youth who had only just left Mulgore, it was working.

"I meant no disrespect! It's just... hard to believe two warriors could strike down such a monster without help, even if one of them is the Warchief."

"HA!" Burrash ignored the flecks of spittle. "Thrall is a great warrior, boy, but he barely laid a finger on this bastard. He told us so himself. That demon was felled by *one* warrior, the mighty Grom Hellscream! You want to be a Farseer someday, don't you? Here's some wisdom to start your journey: never underestimate an orc!" His lecture delivered, the guard continued on his way, chuckling to himself with every step.

The young Tauren was glad to have his coal-black fur as he felt blood rushing to his face. Embarrassment at being dressed down by a veteran was not something a shaman should broadcast to the world. After all, when his training was done, he would be a conduit for the awesome power of the four elements.

Tiring of the desert sun, Burrash made his way into the cool shade of the Drag. As he passed the shops and towers, he waved to his fellow Tauren, who gladly returned the courtesy. It was exciting to be far from home, exploring new places in an era of peace and prosperity for the tribes. There was always something new to see... like that tunnel he walked by every day.



The locals never looked at it unless they were sneering. The guards acted like it wasn't there. Burrash couldn't help but wonder exactly what was down there. Perhaps a peek wouldn't hurt?



"You needn't lodge me, Miwana. All I want is a quiet drink."

He could sense the innkeeper's nervousness. He knew she was glancing at the nearby bonfire, one of two in the Valley of Wisdom that the shamans tended day and night. Communal fires were important to the Tauren. They were symbols of unity tracing back to their most ancient history. The Cloudsong tribe cited this fact when they ordered that these two flames in Orgrimmar never be allowed to go out

It was one of their first commands when taking the mantle of shamanic leadership. After Magatha Grimtotem's coup had nearly wiped out the Skychasers, the smaller tribe had struggled to find their footing in a position they'd never planned to hold. Garrosh Hellscream's part in that tragedy was well known, as he'd been manipulated into becoming the weapon that murdered Cairne Bloodhoof, but his regime would assert rule over the Horde regardless of the mistake. The Cloudsong Farseers wanted a sense of stability in the wake of this tumult, and what better gesture than to assure their people that they would always have a safe place to rest in the faction capital?

Garrosh was happy to play along with their edict. When he gifted the Tauren the Valley of Wisdom, home of the original Grommash Hold and the monument to his father's greatest victory, the Cloudsong elders had called it an honor. Burrash remembered seeing the narrow entrances, the lack of a direct route out of the city, how it could be bombarded from the new towers on the plateaus above, and calling it a cage.

"Burrash... I can't. Please don't ask me.

"I already have. The answer is yours to give."

Burrash could feel the gaze of Sagorne Creststrider, the Tauren's senior-most trainer of shaman in Orgrimmar. It wasn't surprising. He hadn't tried to hide it when he walked down the path, and the elements would have whispered of his presence even if he had. Still, those eyes made Miwana's reply inevitable.

"It's just... the Highmountain! Yes. There are more in Orgrimmar every day. They won't accept you being here, and I can't afford to alienate their business. But I have vouchers! Perhaps you could drink in the Valley of Spirits, near the Embassy? The Trolls remember your service to Vol'jin during the rebellion. They'd be glad to host you."

Burrash offered a curt bow. "We shall meet again." Among the Tauren, it was a common farewell. He took increasing pleasure knowing that, these days, it evoked dread when he used it on his kin.

Creststrider's eyes followed him as he strode down the path toward the Drag. Burrash felt more stares from Braves convinced he would cause trouble at any moment and apprentice hunters who broke into whispers as he passed. He also took note of two unusual sets of eyes. They belonged to an angry young orc and the friend trying to get him to stop following an old Tauren.

Burrash hooves soon carried him to the entrance of the Cleft of Shadows. He stopped at the cavern's mouth and rested his hand on a simple stone plaque that had been placed there. His fingers traced the Orcish letters:

*In this dark cleft, the true shadows of
madness and vengeance took hold, and many
faithful Orgrimmar citizens lost their lives.
Let us never forget the lessons that were
learned in the siege of Orgrimmar.
Apart, we will fall. Together, we are Horde.*

"Together, indeed." He walked on.



"I am crippled by age, and blinded by things I would rather not discuss. Surely an old orc like me has no business with you, shaman."

Burrash would not have used the phrase "crippled by age," to describe the venerable figure seated on the ground in front of him. His name was Cazul, and despite the dark of the Cleft of Shadows, Burrash could see that his weathered body still rippled with muscle. His white hair was gathered tightly into a warrior's tail, and the braids of his beard were tidy despite the blind eyes he'd hidden behind a ragged red cloth. The orc seemed ready to humble a thousand young Tauren should their words displease him, regardless of how calm his voice might sound.

"You rest a good distance from the tent your kin have erected, elder. Are you part of this... Darkfire Enclave, or are you not?" Burrash asked.

"I claimed this patch of earth to rest my weary bones before Thrall even finished the city's walls. I'm far too old to care what anyone does around me while I'm occupying it."

"Not even if they are warlocks toying with the powers that enslaved your people? That seems an unwise position for any orc, regardless of age."

The old man sneered. "If you came down here to spit on other orcs in my presence, go back to wherever you came from. I've few enough years left that I won't waste time indulging a preening child."

Burrash blinked in surprise. It hadn't been his intent to insult anyone... but reflecting on his words, it was hard to see how they wouldn't be insulting, at least to a warlock. He'd implicitly characterized them as foolish and dangerous. But surely, his words were kinder things to call them than malicious and power-hungry. All warlocks had to fall into one of those two groups.

"I apologize. I did not come down here to spit on anyone. I'm merely... curious. What could compel them to seek a power that has wrought so much havoc among your clans? It has only been a few years since Hellscream freed you from the curse of demonic blood. Are they so eager to throw themselves back into the embrace of evil?"

The elderly orc did something unexpected, then: he shook his head. "You're a shaman, alright. Did anyone ever tell you how Hellscream set us free, boy?"

"He was a great warrior. He slew the Pit Lord Mannoroth."

The disgust in the orc's sigh made Burrash's skin crawl. "*How* did he slay Mannoroth?"

"I... don't know."

"There was fel in his blood. Demonic power pumping through his veins. The elements and Doomhammer's legacy both failed Thrall. The fel did not fail Hellscream."

Burrash's eyes went wide. "You lie!"

"What is Cairne Bloodhoof teaching the young fools coming out of Thunder Bluff? Do you know nothing of the Third War? Do you not know that Hellscream gave into temptation and drank deep of demon's blood? The same power that killed the demigod Cenarius was in his axe arm when he swung Gorehowl at our slavemaster. That was how he triumphed."

Burrash didn't want to listen to this. He *wouldn't* listen. He departed without a word, thinking he would hear laughter trailing after him. Instead, all he heard was another disgusted sigh.



The old Tauren couldn't wait any longer. He gave into temptation and drank deep. The tea was excellent. It still burned his tongue.

As he chugged from a skin of water to soothe the pain, Burrash felt a shadow on his back. The young orc had returned, his anxious friend still at his side. "Did you think you were allowed to drink at the Wyvern's Tail just because I wasn't here? How many times do I have to teach you this lesson?"

Burrash sipped his tea, more slowly this time. It spilled all over his robes when he felt an armored boot stomp on his spine.

"They say Garrosh Hellscream made many mistakes as Warchief. I say his biggest was not butchering the lot of your kind while he had the chance! Now, LEAVE THIS CITY OR DIE!"

Burrash didn't move. "Kill an old man in cold blood? You're rather young to spend the rest of your life as a prison laborer."

"Judging by the looks those other Tauren gave you in the Valley of Wisdom, I don't think anyone would look twice if I cut your head off. But if you're so worried about my future, then I shall simply kill you in a manner that the law permits. I, Droch Ironlock, challenge you to Mak'gora!"

Burrash let out a disgusted sigh and felt the urge to ask what Thrall was teaching the young fools coming out of Orgrimmar. Even the most hot-headed imbecile knew not to invoke a duel of honor so thoughtlessly. Droch had nothing to gain from the challenge except an excuse to take a life, which he'd been idiotic enough to broadcast to a room full of people. If he lost, his name would be ridiculed for a generation. If he won, his honor would be tainted by the abuse of a sacred cultural tradition. The young orc had likely ruined his future because he couldn't leave someone he disliked in peace.

Burrash could save the fool by walking away from the challenge. It would mean dishonor, but that was nothing to him. But where would the fun be in that?

The Tauren rose, forcing Droch to stumble back into his companion's pale, shaking grasp. That one clearly hadn't believed his friend would issue the challenge. So much for that. "State your terms," Burrash rumbled.

"One weapon only, and no magic!"

"Done."



Miwani set a plate of food down in front of Burrash. The cheering and singing still echoed through the canyons. Garrosh Hellscream was gone. Orgrimmar was free. It was a night of celebration. Burrash's eyes were cold, and he stared at nothing as his mind churned.

"You can't blame yourself," the innkeeper said as he ignored the meal. "Even Thrall could not call the elements in that horrid pit."

"I know."

She started sweeping. "Besides, we won, didn't we? And you did your part. All those caravans through the Barrens you protected, all those Kor'kron you fended off, all the prisoners you helped free..."

"I know."

She stopped sweeping. "If you know, then why are you being so gloomy?"

"Because he told me this would happen."

The broom hit the floor. "You promised Master Creststrider you'd stop visiting the Cleft of Shadows."

"Old Cazul was right about everything, Miwana! He told me the elements were fickle, that they would abandon me when I needed them most because our way is to ask from them rather than to take. I should have studied with the Taunka like I planned!"

The innkeeper fell to her knees and grabbed Burrash's arms in a surprisingly powerful grip. "The power of Decay is not the answer! You can't let that demon worshiper corrupt your thoughts like this!"

The shaman rose from his table, pulling free of her. He looked across the room at his freshly carved war totem. Warchief Vol'jin had blessed it after the presentation. High Chief Baine had given a speech, calling Burrash's decision to throw himself against the Kor'kron legions despite his calls to the elements going unanswered the bravest thing he'd ever seen. They'd both said the totem would honor "courage befitting a Chieftain of the Tauren."

"You are right, Miwana. Decay is not the answer. The elements are not the answer. If they were, the Farseers would have seen Garrosh's treachery coming instead of forgiving him. They would have never taken this Valley, this... *bribe*, and forgotten that he murdered High Chief Cairne until their skins were on the line."

Burrash shouldered his totem and stepped into the dark. Most didn't notice him; they were too engrossed in their drink and happiness. Miwani called out as she watched him march straight into the Drag, knowing where he was going.



The sound of steel striking wood sang against the walls of the Valley of Honor. Burrash's totem was made from acacia. The tree had come from the heart of the old Barrens hunting grounds. It wasn't the rarest material he could have requested, but it was dense and durable. It wouldn't yield to metal easily.

Burrash thought he'd taken the measure of this angry child in the tavern, but he approached the duel cautiously anyway, holding the pillar in front of his body like a shield and staying on the defensive. It took only a few blows to confirm his suspicion: Droch Ironlock was a novice. He likely wasn't even a blooded warrior. He was probably some merchant's son who'd bought an axe and trained on the weekends to impress women. He'd believed his youth and a few lessons would be sufficient for slaughtering an old bull.

"You fight like a coward, Tauren! Stop hiding behind that thing as if you were a human with a tower shield, and take a swing!" Droch employed his weapon wildly, gouging splinters out of the totem with every strike. He was at least smart enough to try and get around the impediment rather than go through it. Burrash was still wearing only his robes and the beaten old straw hat, which meant his arms were unprotected. If one of those attacks found flesh, it would easily take the limb. Fortunately, Burrash had no problem anticipating every strike. Whenever the boy thought he had an opening, his axe only found more wood.

Droch's rage grew, and his patience wore thin. He struck harder, more vigorously. Burrash stepped back with every blow, giving ground that his foe was happy to claim. By this point, a crowd had gathered and started cheering the two fighters on. A Mak'gora in the streets was not a common sight. Goblins attempted to take bets, which earned them glares from the orcs. They were already unhappy that a fool was using a sacred battle rite as a tool for murder, especially against a Tauren. The memory of Garrosh's dishonor was still potent. A few times, a Tauren approached to see what the commotion was. Some left immediately, while others stayed to see if Burrash Palehorn would finally stop haunting the streets of Orgrimmar.

Swing. Block. Swing. Block. On and on it went. The boy had stamina; that much couldn't be denied. Most warriors would be a panting, sweating mess after this much fruitless exertion, but he was still going strong. Some effort on Burrash's part would be necessary to move things along.

Without warning, the Tauren met the boy's axe without a backstep, holding his ground against the attack. Droch had fallen so far into the rhythm of his swings that he stumbled forward, his balance completely ruined. Once he was stumbling, Burrash stomped his left hoof onto the boy's steel-toed boot with all his weight. The metal bent, bones fractured, and Droch screamed in agony.

That sound was cut off when the short end of the war totem hammered the boy's center of mass, forcing all the air from his lungs and sending him reeling. The broken foot couldn't catch the fall. In a blink, Droch was on his back.

Using both hands, Burrash hoisted the war totem from the base and brought three-quarters of its weight down on the fallen orc's axe arm. There was no scream this time.

The cheering audience fell silent. Burrash picked up his weapon and stood it up next to him as blood and gore dripped down its carvings. A mess of pulped meat and viscera formed a totem-shaped imprint on the ground next to the young orc's body. The onlookers couldn't tell, but Droch was already dead. The shock and trauma of the blow had stopped his heart.

Burrash had only moments before someone found the courage to approach and realize the fight was over. He raised his hand, and tendrils of violet magic poured out

of his fingers. They drilled into Droch's flesh as an unearthly wail seemed to fill the air. In his other hand, a simple sphere of crystal began to appear. A word began slithering through the crowd: Warlock.

"Y-YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE, DEMON LOVER!" Droch's friend charged toward Burrash with a dagger in hand. He couldn't have picked a worse time to find his courage. Fortunately, someone else was watching, and before he got anywhere near his target, a cord of woven leather appeared across the young idiot's throat. A lithe, feminine figure bloomed into existence, her body pressed against her victim's back as she held her weapon tight against his windpipe. The succubus took the opportunity to taunt her captive. "Naughty boy. Don't bother my master while he's working. He's a sweet old man, but his spells take a little time to get warmed up, you know?"

The appearance of a demon in the streets of Orgrimmar changed the tone of the situation dramatically. Hands found their way to weapons. Eyes hardened. Burrash completed his Soul Stone, and before anyone else could act, he shattered it. In an instant, Droch went from dead silent to coughing violently as his lungs fought to draw in air.

Everyone froze. The resurrected orc looked at his ruined arm and then up into Burrash's face. Two milky-white orbs stared back at him from under the old straw hat.

Quietly, so only the boy could hear, the warlock said, "The next time you rage at the thought of scum like me walking your streets, remember this moment. Remember how easily I took your life. Remember how I gave it back. Remember how it feels to be at someone's mercy and know I will never experience that feeling again. That is what it means to have power."

Burrash could sense Droch's eyes on his back as he shouldered his totem and walked away. Fiervina released the boy's fearful friend and returned to the safety of her invisibility spell, offering her master a disappearing smirk, which he pointedly ignored. The lad rushed to Droch's side, sniveling with joy that they had both somehow survived.

As the crowd parted around him, Burrash could already hear what he'd hoped to hear: "Coward." "Cheater." "The rules said no magic!" "He was already winning, and he did it anyway." "What else do you expect from a warlock?" "What would you expect from Burrash Palehorn, the shame of Thunder Bluff?"

No one would remember that Droch Ironlock lost a Mak'gora or even that he had disgraced himself by provoking the fight in the first place. If the fool had two brain cells, perhaps he would learn something from that. If not, he'd be someone else's problem tomorrow.



Around twenty minutes later, Burrash sat across from old Cazul in the Cleft of Shadows, waiting on a teapot.

"That hat is ridiculous," the elder warlock said.

"Whoever told you that blindfold made you look imposing was really banking on your lack of sight to make some coin," Burrash replied.

"Are you ever going to stop using ten words when two will suffice?"

"I doubt it."

"That was a test. You were supposed to say 'no.'"

"Indeed."

After another minute, the tea reached a boil, and Cazul poured. He drank his almost instantly, which made Burrash's tongue hurt. "When will the fel burn hot enough inside me that I can do that?"

"That's not the fel. You're just soft, which is why you were fool enough to start out as a shaman. It's also why you helped that stupid boy who wanted to kill you."

"I helped the boy because I had the power to help him. The only purpose of power is to give its wielder the right to decide how it will be used. That was your first lesson."

The orc smirked. "It was." He hoisted his teacup. "To Grom Hellscream, the warrior who fathered a generation of warlocks who will never kneel."

Burrash raised his own. "To Grom. May he run with the spirits... and may his son's name remain a curse while we carry his legacy."

They both drank.

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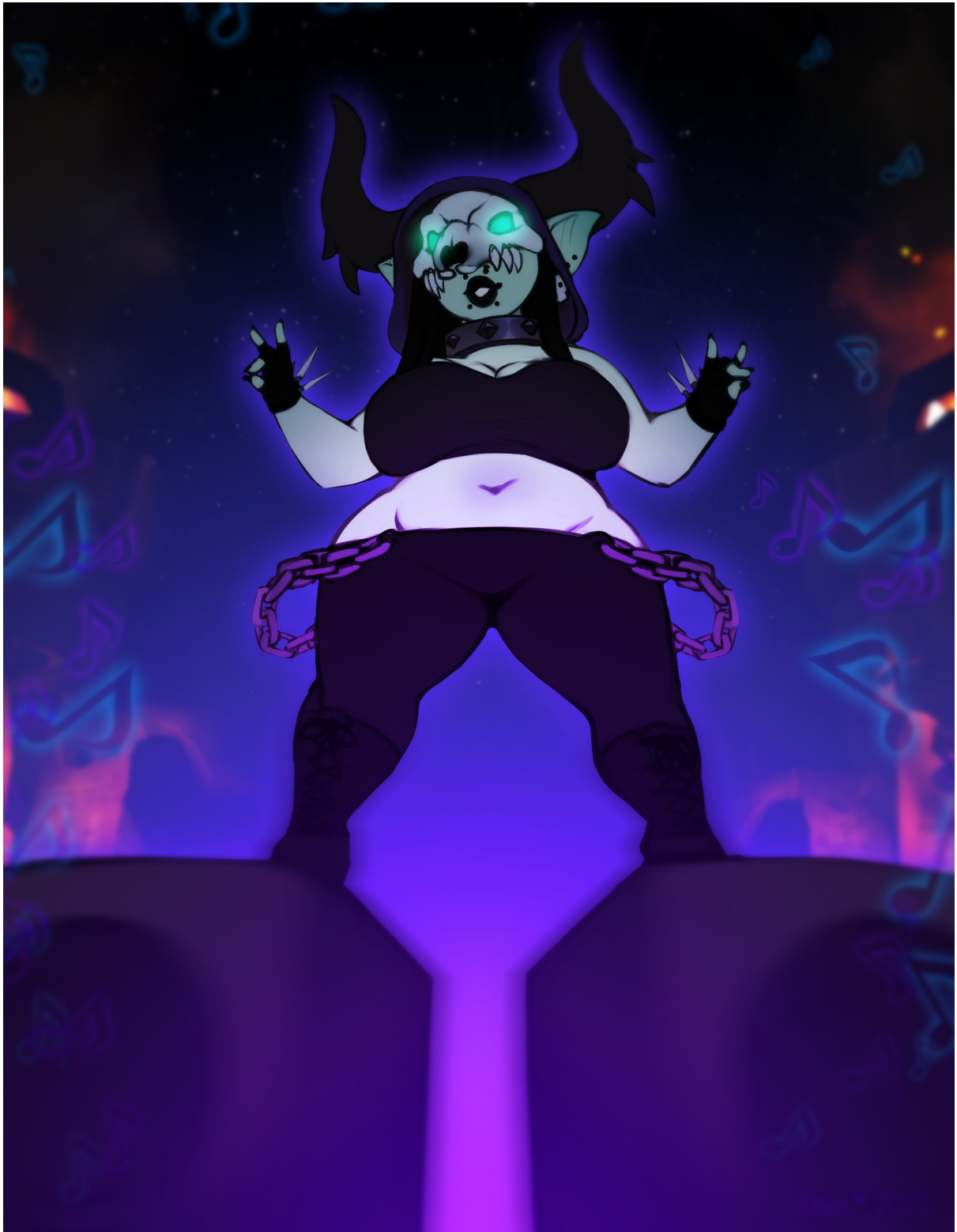
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Written by Neruma
Organized by Rease Stoneheart



Dark Mistress of the Rave

Submitted by Reva



Baozhai and Stoneheart - Hallows End Swap
Submitted by Holn AKA A Lotta People, Drawn by Palehorn Tea



Saleros Profile Image
Submitted by Hydra,
Drawn by xHyperwolfx



Ysera the Awakened
Drawn by Tiffany "Foxy" Fox

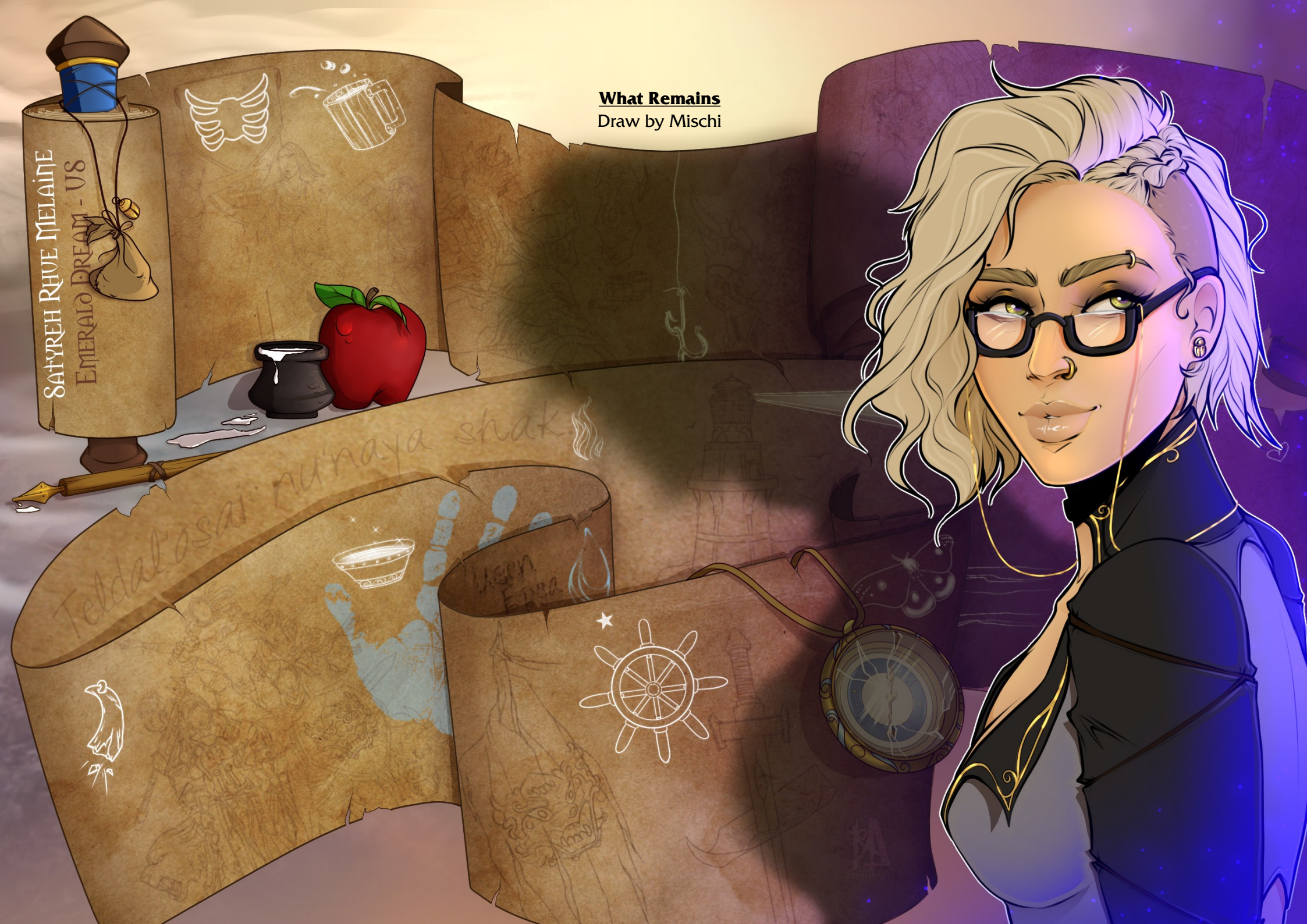


Vii and Fuin at the Wonderlight Ball
Submitted by Holn AKA A Lotta People
Drawn by Palehorn Tea

Welcome to the Wandering Isles
Drawn by Tiffany "Foxy" Fox



What Remains
Draw by Mischi





Agree to Disagree
Submitted by Wildheart



Kappu's After Nap Surprise

Submitted by Reva



Kisara and Dia

Submitted by Holn AKA A Lotta People
Drawn by Palehorn Tea



**The Last Dance of the
Wonderlight Ball**

Drawn by Vixelda



Saleros the Technomage

Submitted by Hydra, Drawn by Knightmagi



High Elf Priest

Drawn by Crossworlds Art



The Pandaren Trio - Rajei, Lei Li, and Baozhai

Submitted by Holn AKA A Lotta People, Drawn by Palehorn Tea

Rease as a Sugar Cookie

Drawn from a base by Rease Stoneheart
Created By Reva



The Light Shall Prevail

Submitted by J.S

Rendered by Elwynn PC



MOTHERHOOD FROM A BYGONE ERA

*Written by Shalaine Belford
Edited by Rease Stoneheart*

Shalaine sat at the edge of the bed and looked down at her feet.

She was tired in a way where thoughts wouldn't come, try as she might. Every churn of her brain to something semblance more than empty tiredness did little to stoke her imagination in a way to bring her out of her dreary fugue. Instead of losing herself inwardly, all she could do was keep herself grounded with the things she sensed outside of her mind.

The trickle of sweat as it raced down the curve of her spine or along her brow to saltily burn into her eyes. The tightness of her muscles along her hips and lower back. The smell of perfume atop the sour stench of body odor, covered in dusty silks and laundry that needed cleaning. The sounds of a bell in the distance ringing in the afternoon.

All of it kept her tethered to the current rather than drifting away to dreams or fatigue, even though she was told that she needed to rest. She was tired and sick, and her body hurt. Had she been a lesser woman, she would have gladly taken the excuse to do nothing but slip into the blankets behind her and the nothingness of empty sleep.

Yet that wasn't her way and never was. Shalaine was a woman who possessed the drive to keep moving forward, and even now, all she could feel was a sense of accomplishment that did much to dull the pain she was experiencing. Out of everything she had gone through, she had endured perhaps one of the hardest trials of her life—something far harder on her than any physical training she endured to attain her knighthood.

Motherhood. Something more fulfilling in a way, at least, that was what she was told it would be like.

For now, she was conflicted about whether that was true. For months, she had been told that once the child arrived, her cold exterior would melt, and it would change her for the better. She had been told that it was instinctual for women to lose themselves in their maternity.

For months, she prepared, aloof and indifferent to what was expected of her to continue her family line in a time of relative peace. There were no wars to fight, no monsters to defeat, save for the Orcs that still wandered in Lordearon's woods, and nothing but political games for gains. It was a calculated move to create heirs despite her relatively young age, or so she told herself.

The entire nine months prior had been nothing but preparations with little thought to the moment the child would come. Even as she swelled with the baby in her, her legs became just as puffy, and morning sickness came suddenly.

Even now, she couldn't remember much of the last two days. Only that her water broke, her body painfully contracted, the nurses, healers, and doctors that were on call rushed, and she was in a whirlwind of misery and blood the likes she hadn't endured ever in her life. She remembered uncharacteristically screaming at one point while she was delirious with pain and drugs, and for the life of her, she couldn't remember what she was yelling for or to whom.

It mattered little, she figured.

Eventually, the creak of a door and the padding of heels on smooth wooden floors alerted her that she wasn't long for loneliness. Shalaine turned her harsh glare in time to see a nurse come in with a small tray of heated, mulled wine. The spices filled the air, and Shalaine's stomach tightened with queasiness and hunger.

Surprised that her Mistress was awake already, the nurse nearly dropped her tray from startlement, but gathered herself and rushed to Shalaine's side.

"Dame Belford, you shouldn't be up alright," she quietly said, setting the warm goblet aside before taking the woman's shoulder.

Shrugging her off, Shalaine waved her hand. "I'm fine. I'd rather be up and conscious than just lay about all day."

"But the Doctor..." the nurse started to say. "Your body needs rest after such a harrowing ordeal. You went through a very rough birth and lost a lot of blood."

Shalaine turned her head to stare behind her at the sheets, noting for the first time how much different the bedding was compared to what she usually rested in. Her nose crinkled, realizing now what part of that sour smell was (which did little to quell her stomach's churning).

"And yet, I live," she replied. "What of my child?"

Shalaine turned and harshly stared at the nurse, who released her from her grip and stood back to smooth her apron. The nurse's eyes widened, but a smile told her everything and alleviated Shalaine's fears and concerns.

"Your child is fine, Dame Belford. Right now, they're resting in the nursery and are being looked after by the staff. The healers and doctors are there too, waiting for you, but they weren't expecting you for another few hours to a full afternoon. Not till you adequately rested."

Shalaine didn't wait to hear the rest of the nurse's words. Hearing that the child was resting and looked after, she tightened her robe to keep her modesty intact, rose on uneven, unsteady feet, and walked towards the hallway.

"D-Dame Belford!" The nurse called out, but was ignored.

Pressing her hands to the white wood of her chambers, Shalaine mustered what strength remained in her, and fought through the pain as she shoved the doors wide to leave. Golden light spilled into the hallway from large windows to her left, while a plush carpet of cotton and wool muffled her steps as she walked straight through to where the nursery was. Several attendants and servants watched her as she left but bowed their heads and let her pass.

Thankfully, she didn't have far to go. Several doors down, beside her office, was where she had placed the nursery. It was an unused storage room, so it made sense to use it for a better purpose.

She entered as quietly but unobtrusively as she could. There was silence inside the simple, colorful room as silks and cotton and a well-made crib draped in cloth settled in the back of the small room. Toys of all kinds for when the child got older were scattered around, and a skylight above provided the needed warming light to keep the room comfortable.

There, the child was held in the arms of a wet nurse feeding her, with one of the doctors and a priest discussing what the household staff needed to do next.

As soon as they saw Shalaine enter, the doctor stammered - much as the nurse had done before - and walked up to take her shoulder - much as the nurse had also done before.

"Dame Belford, you mustn't be out of bed," he tutted, crossed but respectful. "Your body needs time to recover."

"Yes, that is what your nurse had said," Shalaine replied, voice as unyielding as stone. "Yet there will be plenty of time to rest when I'm dead, Doctor. I've come to ask if there were any complications I should be made aware of."

She was tired and still in pain and sickness, yet she squared her shoulders taut. The length of hair she layered down her shoulders and back. Every bit the graceful noblewoman she wore as a mask and showed to the world. She stared at the doctor, who wilted beneath her gaze as his demeanor of professionalism changed to that of the servant he was.

"Well, no. Not for the child," he said, wiping his hand along his balding pate. "In fact, she's very hungry right now, much as we expected. The complications came from you, hence our worry. But you gave birth to a healthy baby girl."

Shalaine stared at him and visibly relaxed at the news before turning to the wet nurse again. The nurse stared back at her with lowered eyes and a slight simpering smile. The baby—Shalaine's little girl—pressed to her breast, eating as the doctor had said.

"Good," Shalaine said but then found herself speaking softly in a voice that felt unnatural to her usual edge. "May I see her then?"

The doctor nervously coughed and guided his Mistress to the wetnurse, who offered the baby for Shalaine to take and then stood up to be replaced on the warm bench.

The moment she took hold of her baby and held her in her arms, a flood of emotions crept up into her. Her heart - often so cold and harsh, layered in armor - melted as her churning stomach softened to soothing warmth. Butterflies tickled in excitement along her abdomen, and Shalaine lightly squawked to speak but stopped when she noticed her mask was slipping. For a second, she needed to regain her composure as she icily glared at the other two.

"Thank you. Leave me for now. I wish to have a moment with my newborn daughter."

"Of course, Dame Belford. We'll be outside the door if you have need of us. Take all the time you need," the doctor replied, gathering the wetnurse and priest with him before they left and closed the door behind them.

The room was silent as a church on a midday afternoon, save for the scuffle of distant feet and work through the stone walls that echoed and hummed.

Once more, Shalaine's maternal instincts took over, and tears hotly tinged the corner of her eyes. She had to brace herself to prevent herself from crying in happiness more than she already had. The news was good, even if it came at the cost of weeks or months of her own recovery.

Gently, she stroked her fingers through her newborn's dark hair as the child fell asleep without a fuss. The sight was far more tender than she had envisioned, and Shalaine deeply cursed herself for how her instincts would take over being correct. For months, she wanted to distance herself from these emotions and told herself over and over again that it was simply practical. She needed an heir or three to carry her legacy and the Belford name.

Now? She didn't care about that at all.

"Oh, my daughter, I am so sorry," she gently said. "You've been born into a harsh world that only knows war and suffering. There is no softness here. In time, you'll have to be strong."

The baby didn't reply but breathed deeply in dreams, and Shalaine lifted her to kiss her cheeks as she continued to whisper. "But don't you worry. I'm your mother, and I'll be there to guide you. I'm certain you have a destiny waiting for you now, and whatever comes, I'll be there with you."

Then she started to hum, cycling through the lullabies her nannies had sung to her as a child. "I wish it was a gentler world," she said.

Then, she hugged her baby close, brought her to her chest, and started to sing one of her favorite songs that always comforted her in the darkest of times.

*"Oh, sleep, little dreamer, so safe in my arms
The knight guards your slumber, and protects you from harm..."*



*"...The winds sing their whispers, the stars light their way
Our brave knight will guide you till dawn meets the day."*

Dame Shalaine Belford stared at the top of her manor as she stood in front of the iron-wrought doors marking the entrance through the gardens. The top of the third-story house stood out against the black sky, and distant peals of thunder rolled off the ocean.

It looked like a storm was snaking its way from the horizon line like an unfurling carpet being laid out. Such was how it was in Lordearon now, at least since the scourging. Not that it mattered to Shalaine anymore since the dark, overcast skies and dreary somberness of daylight reminded her of the changes that had come to Lordearon in the last twenty years.

Ignoring the distant show and unfeeling of the cold that it brought, she stared once more at the doors in front of her and pressed on, creaking the rusted iron out as she entered through the garden of dull roses and ferns, and made her way inside her home.

Within, the servants watched her as she entered—alone now without her bodyguards—but quickly returned to their duties. Those who weren't mindless undead bowed their heads respectfully to their Mistress and quietly shuffled away from her sight.

It darkly amused her how they prostrated about like scared beasts whenever she roamed her home. She knew that her sharp, saronite armor and the glowing fel of energy off her sword made an imposing sight, but she had always been fair to those in her service.

Even without the violence other nobility who reclaimed their titles were known for (her being one of the more... lenient... of the type), they still showed deference to her. Especially with the knowledge of what she'd give should they earn her favor - having recently left several other servants with a gift who did well at the local tavern in town.

It mattered little to Shalaine. They did good work regardless of their awe. The entry foyer of her estate showed their impeccable skill when it came to cleaning as ancient wood was smoothly cleaned, carpets freshly brushed and free of debris, and artworks, statuary, and even candles renewed to give her estate a homey comfort that was desperately needed even in the land of the dead. The only caveat was the forsaken architecture that crossed over entryways, in the nooks and crannies of each room, and the dozens and dozens of memento mori worked into stone and metal.

Sauntering in, she allowed the servants who manned the door to close it behind her as she made her way up the grand staircase at the front of the house, towards the 'living' quarter of her home—walking by others who bowed and gave her a berth to let her pass. The soft carpeting beneath her feet dulled the sound of metal boots.

Everything was as it should have been, and Shalaine liked it: quiet but with an air of sophistication that reflected her status both in life and death.

Soon, she turned down the hallway leading to her office and chambers. Large, clean glass windows as tall as a Tauren stood up towards the ceiling, showing her the distant harbor, coming storm, and town below. The night was quickly approaching, casting everything into a pallor of darkness.

For a moment, she looked at the ocean but continued on, knowing that she had an appointment to keep. However, she stopped again at an open door and turned to stare into the room several doors from the hallway's entrance.

Unlike many of the estate's rooms, this one was kept untouched. It was a nursery with peeling paint on the walls, a skylight that reflected the sunless sky, and an empty, rotting crib covered in moldy, moth-eaten drapes. Toys never played with were strewn around the room, covered in a layer of dust as thick as her finger. A bench—unused in ages—sat in the back, forgotten.

*"Oh, sleep, little dreamer, let peace fill your heart,
The knight's love surrounds you, though you're worlds apart.. "*

Shalaine's eyes softened for a moment, and the remnants of a song filled her memories. It was only for a second, but it was a second longer than she wished, and she hardened what remained of her black heart again. There was no room for sentimentality or remembrance of old things.

She then entered her study. Books, notes, stacks of papers, and more lined her desk and bookshelves, and a bone chandelier gently swung overhead, casting long shadows along the walls.

A lone, dark-robed figure—another Forsaken by their skinny, hunched-over appearance—stood completely enshrouded, save for the soft, hellish glow of dull

yellow eyes from beneath the edge of their hood. As Shalaine entered the room, they bowed respectfully.

"Dame Shalaine Belford," they rasped meekly. "I had been waiting for your arrival."

"This had better be worth my time. I've had to leave an important event I had been looking forward to all evening." Shalaine sneered beneath her faceplate. "And I'm not fond of being interrupted when I enjoy my work."

The figure flinched as if struck, and quickly clasped their hands together. "I assure you, my Mistress, this information I bring to you is of importance. I come bearing news, as well as other bits of tidings that you've wanted for some time now."

Shalaine raised her brow but let the figure brown-nose a little bit more.

"Here, here. I left the information upon your desk," it said, extending a long, skeletal hand over a bundle of notes tied with a ribbon. "I, your humble servant, wanted to remain behind to explain what I found."

Shalaine walked around her desk, undid the thread knot, and eyed the paperwork beneath her. With a flick of her fingers, she opened one and read the contents within, though she didn't get quite far till she saw what she wanted at the top of the page.

Her glowing eyes stared at the words indelled in ink and then flicked up to meet the informant's gaze. "You found her?"

The robed informant nodded its head.

A smile curled at the end of Shalaine's lips. Then, a warmth she hadn't felt in decades tickled her undead belly, flaring out to her rib cage before it instantly snuffed itself out. Those maternal instincts kicked in again, reminding her of a bygone era that had no right to return but one that Shalaine wanted as a tether to that day.

*"...The heavens keep watch, and the night softly sings,
Of brave knights and bright stars, and the joy morning brings. "*

PART 1: IN THE HOUSE OF THE UNWORTHY

*Written by Pangle
Edited by Rease Stoneheart*

NOTE: *This is part 1 of an ongoing series being developed that is NSFW. This is a SFW portion meant to be shared. If you're interested in reading it further, please follow the Author only if you're 18+*

Everything stank like hell. It didn't matter what it was in this pit, as all the world's filth seemed to run as deep as the earth itself. From the ceiling to the floor and even into the hearts and souls of the people in this place, the stink bubbled forth like a rot that infested everything in its wake. Everything within the confines of the Stockades just seemed to be plastered with this corruption to the point that honest people would retch whenever they passed within the walls.

Not that they ever did, of course. Good, honest people never came here; if they did, they weren't good and honest.

Yet for those who were lost inside, the smell and the corruption that stained them were only mild comparatively, and the more they welcomed sin and dishonesty, the more the scent became nothing more than a nuisance.

At least, that's how it was said by those who spoke with a poetic flourish. Those people described the Stockades with inglorious details, even if their actions were no better than the rest of the rabble inside.

This was how Bandana Cliff was first introduced to the Stockades upon arriving at this hellish prison many years ago. The rumors he had heard and the horrors of those who survived within its walls paled in comparison to the reality of what it really was. Depravity, lawlessness, and wickedness ran rife within this horrible prison - those parts of the rumors and tales were true - but it was so much worse than he ever expected it.

After all, how could the truth of what happens within this place ever live up to the tall tales that drunks and criminals swapped between their cups and drugs while those who lived through it would rather forget? Those who survived wanted to live on. The violence within was enough to harden the heart and empty the mind of even the most blase criminal. The constant violent reprisals did more to cure criminality than any judge and reform ever could.

War and death might have reigned in Azeroth's many battles between the Alliance and Horde and the constant wars that erupted, but here, within what was supposed to be gleaming white walls, it was simply a way of life.

In fact, Bandana himself had to shank a person once or twice in the last month alone for nothing more than a handful of copper coins and an extra meal. Even though that was small potatoes compared to the things he did outside of prison - such as attackin a man for gold, tying a rope around a man's throat and kicking a horse into a full run, or blowing up a merchant cart for things he didn't need or want. Despite all the things he had done, though, he was still by far the gentlest of the criminals here, as there were others whose actions chilled even him to his core.

For now, Bandana chose to forget all that and banish those thoughts. He wanted to relax and felt he had earned a momentary reprieve from reality. Ignoring his thoughts of the Stockades and all the other horrible things that happened, he closed his eyes and leaned back against the cool wall behind him. The sticky moistness seeped down along his shoulders, wetting his burlap prison uniform till he felt cold, but he ignored the discomfort for now and let his mind wander a bit more.

The burning cigarette he still had in his hand was enough warmth for now, even if it was mild compared to the thick, frozen stone behind him. The smell of the burning peacebloom was enough to put his mind at ease a little bit more, and he carried his thoughts as far as he could take them away from the people and hardships around him. He cared little for their plights since he was in just as much of the quagmire they were in, and instead let the burning floral essence rejuvenate him a little bit more that the years here had rubbed away.

It was a peace that he hadn't felt in quite some time. In fact, the taste of the cigarette was better than rich food and fine wines. Not that he had it in the last five or six years he had been here. No, when it came to cigarettes, there was something in the way the plant's chemicals just filled with a mild sense of euphoria that brought him back to the days of his youth and the vibrancy that came with it. He hadn't felt like a young lad in years, and when he smoked peacebloom like this, it filled him with the sense of a promised future.

As he continued to smoke with his eyes closed, he felt the hotness of the ash cloud around his brow like a crown, and it helped to hide away the ugliness around him. It was a welcomed, if temporary, indulgence from his incarceration.

Unfortunately, it was all just momentary. Yet it was a moment worth all the favors exchanged to have these cigarettes smuggled in. They weren't the best tasting in the world, at least compared to what he could get on the outside, but they were worth every bit of damnation and reckoning he'd have to face later to have them. After all, his choices were limited, and he was just glad that he wasn't the one who bled for them.

For now, some other jerk suffered, and he got a treat. He just wanted to smoke and not care about anything anymore. He wanted to be left to his thoughts and take his attention away from the exercise yard where the dregs of the Stockades were constantly yelling, screaming, cursing, and clashing. The prison would be there when

he returned from his little daydreaming trip. He just wanted to go home to simpler, better times.

Simpler, better times that were anywhere but here. Even before he started on his criminal past, before his Dad belted him and broke a tooth, his Mom spit and cursed at him, and an older kid nearly killed him for a treat. Before, he took a sharp bit of metal for the first time and made someone bleed when he found out he was big enough to easily hurt people. Before he first robbed someone. Back in Westfall, after it lost its title as the breadbasket of Stormwind, it became a poverty-stricken land where happy people grew lean and mean.

It's funny that even when people resorted to eating mud to fill their bellies with something, there was long waving golden grass on the hills, shorelines full of lapping waves and driftwood, and glittering waters full of fish if you avoided the murlocs. Even townships still had plots full of potatoes, corn, and more. Westfall had blue skies and dirt but not much more.

Why did it fall? Hell, he was too stupid to know. But yet, it was home, and it was Westfall that he missed the second most. The first most was the fertile hills, dips, and curves of a beautiful woman.

Draenei women, to be more specific.

Light above and all around, Bandana loved how the Draenei women looked. They were alien enough compared to the other races of Azeroth but were so gorgeous that their quality was hard to surpass. Even the Elves, in their longevity and grace, didn't compare to the way those azure goddesses were. Tall, clean skin that ran the gamut from purple to light blue, cloven hooves at the end of long, slender legs, and a whip-like tail. He felt like he could look at hundreds of them all day long.

All he wanted to do right now was think about seeing one again. There was one he saw in Stormwind when he was on the outside once, and soon, his mind started to think about-

"Bandana!" came a loud growl above him that was so fierce and guttural that it broke him out of his deep daydreaming revelries back to the current reality.

With a jolt, he shifted on his spot and dug his shoulders into the mortar work behind him hard enough to scratch through the sweat-stiffed burlap. He nearly lost control of the burning cigarette between his lips before he sat up with a sputter, coughing out plumes of sweet-smelling smoke from his lungs.

Then he opened his eyes after tears stung in their corners and looked up with a sour expression and grumbled coughs to get the last of the inhaled smoke from his throat.

Bandana stared up into the angry, annoyed gazes of the other inmates he was forced to call 'friends,' or what reasonably passed for friends in one of the worst prisons in Azeroth.

He first stared at the angry, yellowed eyes of the large Ogre named Kurg, whose potato-shaped features on his chubby, ugly face contorted to annoyance. Then he looked to the sharp, red stare of Dhugvald the Outlandish - an older Orc with a light, greasy pompadour, mottled green skin, and a face covered in faded paint along his cheeks and jowls. Bright and colorful - given the monikor he went by - but just as ugly to Bandana as any other orc was.

Then he stared at the third man of the group, a wall-eyed, hyena-shaped transient Gnoll named Nerglan whose shifty gaze, dull complexion, and even duller, creepy breathing gave him a less-than-intelligent demeanor.

Each of them—or at least Kurg and Dhugvald; Bandana wasn't sure about Nerglan—stared at him expectantly with an irked expression. For a moment, Bandana forgot where he was and what he was doing before he cleared his head from the relaxing touch of the peacebloom and remembered that he had promised them each a cigarette earlier.

So he cleared his throat from the earlier coughs and felt the phlegmy film that covered his adam's apple clear up before he sat up to spit the burnt remainder of his cigarette onto the dirty floor. With a crick of aging bones and uncoiled muscles, he sat up against the wall further to a more comfortable position and looked down at the box he had fisted in his large, veiny hand.

"Yeah, yeah. I hear you. Hold your horses, Kurg. You'll get a cig. I was testing the damned things and making sure they were the real deal, unlike last time," Bandana grumbled back as he flipped the small box open to reveal four remaining cigarettes inside. Suddenly, large hands and a paw reached out, fumbling to the open carton as each man took one for himself. In the end, only one remained for Bandana: a small price to pay for their temporary loyalty.

"About damn time," Dhugvald said as he held onto the small, thin cigarette up to his comically fat lips.

Then he flicked his fingers with a harsh snap until a small green flame lit at the end of his thumb, and he brought it up to his lips to light his treat. "You couldn't take your nap until after you handed them out? You really thought we were interested in watching you sleep or something?"

With disdain - and a tiny fear that they somehow knew what he was thinking - Bandana looked at the Orc with weary contempt. Soon, he tired of seeing the man's stare and looked to the swirling vortex of dark runes that danced beneath the faded paint on his cheeks, and hardened his gaze.

For now, he had to maintain his position as leader of this small group without showcasing any anger or annoyance. He knew that showing any weakness would spell his doom, and they'd turn on him in a heartbeat.

"Yeah, well, stop being an impatient ass and watching me like a creep," Bandana tersely replied. "I just told you to give me a damn moment to test them out. If they were poisoned like last time, you'd have been the first to gag and choke on the floor, being annoying to everyone else as you painfully died."

Dhugvald pinched his face and narrowed his eyes but bit his tongue. With that argument out of the way, Kurg shifted down to settle between the other three and overshadowed the rest beneath his larger, even flabbier (yet impossibly strong) frame. He waved his large hand for the Orc to share the magical flame and, eventually, bent down enough to light his diminutive cigarette. Each thickly-haired slab of fat wiggled grotesquely as he did so to the point that Bandana had to look away for fear of losing his lunch.

"Liar," Kurg said after a few puffs of his small cigarette. "Even I know you're lying. You could have given Nerglan his cig if you wanted to test them out. I don't even think he has the intelligence to know if he was poisoned or not."

"Why Nerglan?" whined the scrappy, dirty Gnoll as he placed his cigarette between his broken, cracked teeth in his canid maw. "What Nerglan do? Nerglan didn't do anything!"

With a sigh, Bandana rolled his eyes and let the other three argue for a time as he slumped back against the bodily warmed stone behind him. Adjusting his eyes, he rubbed his dirty fingers across his brows and tried vainly to retain some of the good feelings he had moments ago and return to the land of.

Though even the memory of Draenei women couldn't bring him back. Better for it anyway, he reasoned as he shifted again to get comfortable. It was better to keep his wits now that the other three were paid off. Kurg, Dhugvald, and Nergland weren't precisely what Bandana would call good, honest people after all. Hell, they were barely people by human standards. Their loyalty was only given because of promises made, threats leveraged, and mutual blood spilled. Plus, the promises made when they left the Stockades together as free men and were able to travel Azeroth again.

For now, he turned his attention away from his argumentative gang to the Prison Yard itself and what was going on now that he was fully awake and alert. Bandana reached up with a hand and scratched his dirty nails beneath the scarred outline of an older tattoo that had been ripped and pulled from his flesh. The memory of it was painful, though his receding hairline and the thinning strands of darker hair that muddied back on his skull was more painful to him.

The yard itself was larger than it needed to be, which, as far as Bandana knew, was a good thing. It was expansive, rectangular, and situated in a courtyard outside

the City Gates closest to the Castle. With a view of the mountains and the smell of the ocean in the air, all three of these hinted that escape was impossible, though the guards that patrolled the walls said otherwise. If one were to escape, they'd be sniped by a bullet or spell or have to climb up to freedom or swim to it.

The only other direction was Elwynn's endless forest, and good luck not getting eaten by wolves, bears, Gnolls, or worse.

Though it wasn't impossible. Some people had escaped the Stockades years before, but Bandana was sure that was only because they were political prisoners, and none of his little gang had any backing from any major factions.

All around him, the older white stones spoke of beauty in their craftsmanship but were now marred with grime, dirt, and time and forgotten by years of abuse and neglect. Blood, muck, and more clung to the mortar between the stones, and their once pristine beauty was now lost through degradation.

It wasn't hard to see why as Bandana eyed the yard and the crowd that was forced to spend their time out here under the sun. Different sections of the yard were cordoned off by various gangs and their rivalries and play at power, and it was packed full of people of other races. The guards might have been comparatively light in numbers, but the people within were almost legion.

How strange that just several years ago, maybe five gangs controlled the whole yard, and people had enough room to stretch out a little bit. Back then, the yard was mostly grass and packed dirt, with only a few dozen guards watching the whole thing with itchy fingers and a reason to use their batons.

Now? In those intervening years, more and more people were pushed into the Stockades. The grass was gone and all stamped out, the packed dirt had turned to mud, and the whole place stank of sour body odor and unwashed ass.

Not to mention, people were now more prone to violence as tempers often flared and fights broke out. What had been five gangs turned to ten, then fifteen, and now roughly forty gangs controlled the yard in a strange confederation of alliances and threats. Bandana's gang being one of them. Blood ran as freely as insults, and everyone sought to be at the top of the pile to be in some measure of control.

Slowly, Bandana turned his eyes to look at today's battle lines and tried to guess who would be the first to swing at someone. There were the Gnolls of Elwynn, who claimed a small area in the back and were the remnants of those captured alongside Hogger years ago. Once, they had been one of the most ferocious gangs but now reduced to scrawny, gangly flea-bitten mongrels who lost most of their pride. Though not enough not to kick Nerglan out of their pack for reasons Nerglan never spoke of.

Then there were the War Criminals and Penal Fodder, who strangely had a mutual respect for one another. The War Criminals were those the Alliance captured, and the Penal Fodder would be conscripted at a moment's notice to fight and bring in

more War Criminals in time. Each was a disposable tool from the Fourth War and one of the few people with combat training. They occupied what used to be the exercise portion of the yard but lost the use of the exercise equipment when they used them as weapons against the other inmates.

One of the last groups that had been there for as long as Bandana knew were the Duskwood Packs that stalked along the edges of the courtyard with glowing eyes and half-feral manners. They were the remnants of Worgens that gave into the curse rather than retain their humanity and acted more like beasts than men. They - like the gnolls - were half starved and mangy and were just as vicious but thought they were better.

There were other gangs that made up the political atmosphere within the Stockades, but Bandana didn't want to spend his day worrying about them all when the major ones were who he tended to avoid.

At least with the smaller gangs like his own outfit, no one had the numbers to go out with a full-on war. Minor beatings, stabbings, and assaults were more commonplace, and it wasn't like he could avoid someone's anger if they wanted to take a swing at him.

Plus, most of them were like his own: Small groups huddled together for protection and specialized in their own way. Loyalty was tenuous at best, as people switched camps all the time. Unlike the ones he noted, these smaller groups were less organized but made planning easier. Plus, it kept betrayals and backstabbing to a minimum, even though it did happen enough that even Bandana prepared for the inevitable change from the other three around him.

Beside him, Kurg hotly exhaled as he finished off the last of his cigarette and slumped back against the wall as well. Bandana eyed the large Gorian-descended Ogre and remembered why he needed to have the man in his pocket. He was large. Even though he looked like a loaf of jiggly lard, Kurg was muscular beneath the fat and far brighter than most Ogres of his kind. Unlike others, he wasn't a simple-minded buffoon. The way he had explained it, as a descendant of the Gorian empire, he had the potential for cunning that was just as powerful as his biceps.

And Bandana knew it. He'd seen him crush a skull in his hand as one would crush a grape.

Letting him rest so the Peacebloom could have its full effect on the Ogre, Bandana turned to look at the second of his posse from the corner of his eyes.

Dhugvald the Outlandish. For the life of him, Bandana couldn't figure out what the reason was for why he kept the Orc around and wanted his loyalty. The man was shorter than a typical orc and wasn't as powerful or brawny as his people were. In fact, Bandana was sure even Orc women were more muscular than him.

Yet... he did have something Bandana had never seen an Orc do before: magic. He witnessed the man flex his magical might several times - not counting moments ago when he lit his cigarette - and had even seen him light a man on fire when he threatened to break his face. Dhugvald claimed he was a wizard of some renown among the Horde, and Bandana was certain that was a lie but never questioned it. He pissed him off constantly, and he knew that one day Dhugvald would stab him in the back, but also knew he needed him in his pocket for now.

Then there was Nerglan the Snaggleclub. Bandana couldn't tell whether to pity the little bastard or be disgusted by him. Nerglan was a runty, tiny Gnoll who was as stupid as he was ugly with broken teeth, bald patches where dark gray and black dotted fur should have been, and a clubbed ear.

Bandana watched him as Nerglan also leaned back against the wall, but instead of smoking his peacebloom cig, was chewing on it as thick globs of slobber ran from his black lips into his chin. His eyes were glazed over, with a wall-eyed expression looking dimly aware of his surroundings.

Bandana had no idea how the hell he survived as long as he did, and the only reason he kept him aware was less from kindness and more because the Gnoll was desperate enough for a pack that he let them abuse and bully him at their whim.

Useless, but a pawn that was desperate.

Kurg and Dhugvald continued their argument as Nerglan more or less was in his own little world. Perking, Bandana listened in and was glad it was just another pithy display of conflicting intelligence. For now, he didn't want to interrupt them and was happy to let them get their aggression out.

After all, he needed them for when they all got out of here. He had a plan set up, and it was simple enough: Get out to Westfall once they'd been kicked out of Stormwind, get away from the warring factions that wanted them dead, get in contact with his old Defias contacts (provided they were still alive), and then get to Kalimdor. Possibly in Ratchet or Gadgetzan or someplace the Goblin cartels controlled. Dhugvald said he had 'friends' that could help them. A mage's circle, he called it, and one who paid their muscle in gold.

It didn't sound like a bad gig and was the biggest reason Bandana put up with Dhugvald. Even if the Orc screwed him over, the Goblin ports were still good for shady business.

Between highwaymen and wizards, it was a solid enough plan with wiggle room. Something to cling to for when he got the hell out of here. All he needed was to survive, and a few peacebloom cigarettes and prison hooch to secure that survival was a good enough price.

Though Dhugvalds' grating laugh was enough to annoy Bandana out of his current daydream again, and grate on his nerves. Each chuckle was enough to send his skin crawling.

"Heh. Look at them squirming like ants out there. Every day, this place gets filled up more than before, and each day, we send more to the grinder. Yet they keep sending in more to replace them. It keeps up like this; there's going to be a massive riot, and maybe that's just what we need here. A little bit of chaos, a little bit of blood spilled, and maybe we can clear some room in here. Take a few guards with us," he chuckled.

Bandana tried to ignore the Orc's words. It was a topic he had brought up repeatedly, and Bandana wasn't keen to rehash it for the twentieth time this week alone. He knew what Dhugvald was trying to do: show off his intelligence and cunning to the others since the Orc thought he should be the one in charge. The first time, it was interesting to discuss, but now? It was the same conversation every time.

Not taking the hint, Dhugvald continued with another abrasive laugh. "Five coppers from one of you lot says that by the end of the week, there will be another prison riot and they'll bring in the reserve infantry to quell it."

"Dhug, you don't even have five coppers to spare," Bandana finally relented and retorted. "It's a fool's bet anyway. Even Nerglan can tell as much that'll happen, and he's as stupid as a used chamber pot and twice as smelly."

Nerglan blinked slowly, one eye at a time, as the shredded peacebloom and spit dribbled down to his scraggly fur. "What? What Nerglan do?" he yapped.

"See?" Bandana sneered.

Dhugvald huffed and sneered back enough that the muscles of his cheeks creased the paint on his face. "You're just upset that I know more than you do, Cliff. You always think you've got your pulse on the rumors. That's fine, though; you can be jealous of my intelligence all you want. I know you constantly try to measure up to it anyway. But I happen to know when, where, and how this riot will happen. You're right; it was a fool's bet, and I wanted to see if you were a fool enough to take it."

"You're full of shit as usual," Bandana spat in reply, trying to remember not to let his temper get the best of him. "Who the hell would even talk to you? We're the only dumbasses in here willing to put up with you."

That only encouraged the Orc to further mocking laughter, though he turned to stare at the crowd again as he asked. "Plenty of people do when you're not around. Am I full of shit?"

Bandana knew better than to rise to that bait and be proven wrong. Annoyed, he looked away, wanting to end the argument on his own terms.

He disliked the man but knew well enough that Dhugvald took pleasure in mockery and belittlement when he knew he could get away with it. When he didn't have an ace up his sleeve, he was mealy and weasley. So if he was being condescending now and goading arguments between them all (aside from Nerglan, who was too stupid to argue), then he must have something.

And he couldn't risk losing his footing as the leader to prove him wrong.

"Fine. Let's say I believe you, then. Just tell us when and where later so we don't have too many ears on us. I don't want any of us catching shiv-flu, if you know what I mean. I'd rather be out of the area when it goes down."

Just as he said that the sound of shouting men—coupled with dulled thuds, groans, and pained yelling—echoed off the walls of the yard as a flurry of activity picked up in a cacophony of violence and mayhem.

Instantly, Bandana went on high alert, practically jumping up from where he had sat to look around. Men who had been creeping, walking, and stalking the outer edges of the yard moments ago suddenly brawled, pulling hidden weapons and unleashing unbidden spells. The smell of smoke and blood hung in the air, along with the sounds of screaming and yelling.

Bandana pressed back against the wall behind him as his comrades joined him in standing. Kurg's large fat body provided most of the protection while Nerglan cringed, yipped, and bared his teeth while Dhugvald maniacally laughed.

"Maybe you should have taken that bet, Cliff," Kurg said with a growing, nasty smirk. "Looks like Dhugvald was wrong about the timing. Would have gotten yourself some copper."

"Yeah, except he doesn't have any money," Bandana agreed, but knew the bet was worthless as he eyed the annoyed Orc beside him. "I say we scatter out of here before we catch some iron, though."

No sooner had he said that than Nerglan yammered in a brutish language and lunged out to join the fray. Bandana grabbed him by the scruff of his collar and angrily threw him back against the wall.

"Light be damned, are you stupid?" Bandana yelled angrily at the Gnoll. "You go out there and start a scrap with someone, and they'll want to come our way thinking we're a part of it. Just hold your damn horses. We're getting out of here and laying low till it passes. There's no sense in getting into something we can't win," he growled.

Nerglan gulped and nodded as the human cowed him. "Nerglan will be good."

"Finally, someone says something smart," Bandana concluded, trying to find a way out of the crowd towards the exits. Only several doors came in and out, and the guards had them shut, not wanting the convicts to escape back to their cell blocks.

That was how they conducted their surprise 'inspections' for contraband and let the inmates play after all.

Yet the closed doors suddenly opened, and a group of armed guards with batons and shields entered in formation, adding their yells to the fighting men of the courtyard. Their demands were blatantly ignored by several of the inmates - a human and a Worgen - stabbing each other in the center.

It only added more to the mayhem, but Bandana saw they had a way out.

"Over there! To the blocks!" he called, just as everyone else who wanted to avoid the scuffle had done. Instantly, it was a flight to the exits as other gangs - including an elven man whom Bandana swore as his rival - raced to the doors to be first as every single person running by took a club to the back side of their heads before racing past a boy in blue.

They were all pressed practically nut to butt as Bandana tried to stay with the other three. Kurg parted the smaller prisoners like a boulder in the sea, holding Nerglan by the scruff of his neck as the chattering, screaming Gnoll flailed. Dhugvald - with a fresh bruise where a baton bopped his skull - gritted hard till his tusks dug into his face. Bandana quickly raced past him, feeling even more bodies press around him till he felt himself choking as several burly Dwarves nearly tripped him up.

"Cliff!" Kurg yelled and reached back with his other hand to the man. Bandana reached out, took hold of his wrist with both hands, and was lifted off of his feet above the screaming masses below.

For a second, he wobbled as he dug his heels into the Ogre's hip, nearly falling back before he found his footing. Yet not without a cost: The box with his last peacebloom cigarette he was saving fell, landed, and was trampled by the masses.

Bandana's face fell, and then he loudly cursed before he clambered up to Kurg's shoulder to sit. He looked around, trying to find the last member of their group. "Dammit, where's Dhugvald?"

"Probably dead," Kurg replied with a snort. "Last I saw him, a group of dwarves knocked him down and stomped all over him."

Just as he said that, an angry scream yelled behind them, and a plume of green fire and smoke erupted amongst yelling dwarves and fighting guards. The sound of metal beating muscle and the smell of acrid electricity hung in the air as orcish curses rang out.

"He'll be fine," Bandana said, turning to see that they were getting closer to the exits now that the guards had everything under control.

Then, he saw that the crowd of angry prisoners had moved to a crawl. He managed to get through the door one at a time as the guards checked each one for

contraband and hidden weapons. No one knew who started the fight, though Bandana had his guesses.

With an afforded chance to relax, he sighed and looked up at the sky above. He thought it was criminal that so much ugliness had to happen beneath a beautiful blue sky. With everything drab below, he forgot that such beauty could even exist outside of here.

Overlooking the courtyard and connected to the Castle in the distance was a large, looming tower of white stone whose shadow fell with authority over the stockades. The blue banners of the Alliance fluttered with the light breeze and carried with it salt and - if Bandana strained himself enough - the smell of bakeries in the trade district.

On some small level, he hoped someone was in there, looking down on them all. Maybe they could see what happened under their watch and take some measure of pity on the wretches they kept confined.

Though Bandana knew they probably didn't. All nobles were the same in the end. More than likely, they were looking down at them and laughing their heads off at the show they got.

Bandana leaned back on Kurg's shoulder and flipped off the tower and whoever was looking down at them as they exited the door and straight back into the cell block with a guard yelling, smacking him harshly on the shoulder with his baton to get him off of Kurg.

Knowing better than to fight back, Bandana bit his tongue to keep himself from causing more trouble, and just leapt down to the stone floor and led his small group back into the darkness they deserved. Dhugvald joined soon after, covered in muddy footprints along his back and a ripped-up prison jumpsuit.

No one said anything else. There wasn't much else to say now that their day had been ruined. Tonight, Bandana would try to think of draenei women, long fields of golden wheat, and delicious peaceblooms again to keep him going a bit longer.

Hopefully, something changed soon before he went mad in here.

PRICE OF PROTECTION

Written by Harutho Oxenhead

A flurry of feathers and talons slashed in front of Se'tak.

He dodged them, leaping back as the talons raked through his long fur, barely missing his skin. He lashed back at the harpy in front of him, felling her with a connected attack of his own.

As the harpy fell with a guttural shriek, he looked around himself. Tents were on fire, sending ash into the gently falling snow before dropping back down, making the snowfall betray them. Tribemates screamed around him as they tried their hardest to evade or attack the harpies that invaded their home. All around them, warriors fought the front line back, holding the brunt of the assault so the other taurens could have a way to escape the battle.

Elders, calves, injured, or the sick and infirmed mattered little to the monsters as they flung hexes and curses into the crowd of fleeing people.

La'leina, his mate, was with those on the front line. She strained as she tried to push back the assailants with what little remained of her weapons. Her broken spear laid on the ground, now abandoned, and she sparred with a large harpy in front of her with just her fists. She let out a flurry of blows against her foe, striking the base of the harpy's wings and causing the foe to fall, where another tauren warrior stabbed his spear into her throat to silence her.

Turning, La'leina stared at Se'tak, who looked at her in horror. The heat of battle had stopped her from noticing that she had deep gashes across her abdomen. Crimson blood stained the fabric of her tunic, and her shaggy fur was matted in the gore. In the heat of battle, it was hard to tell how injured she was, but she turned back to the advancing lines of flying harpies and pressed on. Quickly, he moved to her side to join her.

"Here, honey," he growled, reaching into his hip pouch and procuring a small healing poultice. "This will help you keep going."

She took the jar but didn't use it, and Se'tak pointed to her quickly bleeding belly.

"I'm fine. The adrenaline will keep me going for a bi-" she tersely replied before she saw the look on his face. "... Fine. I know you'll worry otherwise, and we can't afford your attention elsewhere."

She retreated as Se'tak took a defensive position, and he watched over both her as the circling harpies prepared for another attack.

He turned to look at the wall of feathers as the harpies prepared another attack. One harpy took the place of her fallen sisters, landing with a hellish screech. Reaching down to his pouch again, he took a small seed, thrust it beneath the layer of snow beneath his hoof, and muttered a prayer to the Earthmother. Suddenly, the seed - empowered by his druidic magic - took root in the frozen dirt and exploded around his fingers. A tangled mass of thorny vines sprouted around him, shooting at the harpy and entangling her as his tribemates moved in to spear her down immediately. Her shrieks were cut short as the vines moved to their next victim.

Se'tak focused the magic in the vines, four more being ensnared and cut down before the magic in the vines subsided, and the plants withered and died as quickly as they sprang to life. More screeches echoed off the high peaks around him as the harpies' indignant rage screamed from the backlines.

"Cursed WRETCHES!" One harpy shrieked from the back. The sea of feathers parted, revealing the witch-mother in all her horrid glory as she hovered in the air, adorned in bone and moss. "You will pay dearly for what you've done!"

Before Se'tak could respond or formulate a plan, a bolt of scarlet and violet energy shot toward him. His body locked up as he felt pain surge through his side. He yelped in pain as he realized that La'leina, his beloved, had knocked him out of the way. She now stood line for the spell, as it slammed into her exposed wound..

She yowled in pain and crumpled into a heap in the snow among the bodies and broken weapons. Clutching her stomach, she curled inwardly, frozen, unmoving, with a grimace on her face.

"No!" Se'tak yelled in horror as he realized what happened. He watched her lay there on the ground, and suddenly something within him snapped.

He started to see red. He looked to the line of harpies that cackled menacingly behind him. Anger, hatred, and rage filled his heart toward those who hurt his tribe, his family, and his love.

He growled in a voice that wasn't purely his own but that of the ursine protector he had come to know through his druidic studies. The bear within him demanded to be unleashed, and he let it take control. He charged towards the harpies, changing with each step until eventually his hands—changed into large claws—ripped into their soft flesh.

Spells were knocked aside, bouncing off his now thickened hide as he cut his way through the line of feathery fiends who had so callously invaded his home and destroyed their celebrations. His focus was on the witch-mother herself, and they were folding in to obscure and protect her. Let them hide her, he raged in thought! He'd blast through the flock like a smith's hammer in the snow.

Seeing him rush directly for her, the witch-mother tried to get more altitude to put distance between her and the now raging druid, but it was too little too late. He

reached up, grabbed her taloned foot, and then, with a mighty flex, slammed her down to the earth till her body loudly crunched on snow and rock. Despite the wind knocked out of her, she tried to get off another spell.

Se'tak made sure she never would again as he crushed her skull beneath his claws.

The flock quickly dissipated once their leader stained the snow crimson red where she laid. Those of the tribe who could still fight quickly leapt in to cull their numbers before they got too far. Se'tak took his fury into the feathers around him and went to work. The bear - now in control - roared in rage as he killed one after another and the harpies were laid low.

Red was all he could see. Fur, feather, talon, spear, hoof, horn, and wing roiled together, and all that was left was his La'leina—hunched over, with pain frozen on her face. She was all that he saw as his claws lashed out to those around him. Time and time again, pain shot across his body, but he ignored it.

He worked his way through whoever was left, trying to get to her side and protect her even as the other tauren finished off the rest with spears and axes.

Slashing his way through whoever got in his way, he made his way to his love. She lay there, motionless on the ground, still curled up in pain. Blood pooled into the surrounding area. Se'tak the bear took a defensive stance, protecting her body with his own as figures still came trying to get to them and his life. No one would break his will; none would harm his La'leina now.

What felt like an eternity had eventually passed. The foes that assaulted them thinned or fled into the sky. In his raging state, he couldn't tell how the rest of the tribe was doing, and deeply, he didn't care. All that mattered at that moment was his love and ensuring she was protected. Though with no foe to fight, the rage eventually subsided.

A quick breath and the red in his eyes faded.

With another breath, he saw the destroyed tents around him. Some were still burning, and the decorations that marked the festival had turned to cinders.

Another breath. Bodies scattered around him - Tauren and harpy alike - and most unmoving.

He breathed in again. La'leina under him.

Then he inhaled, exhaled, and his body shuddered as Se'tak's vision cleared, and he returned from the bear's rage to the mind of the mortal tauren.

Looking down, he quickly checked on her and found his beloved still breathed. Though, she was paralyzed with pain as she laid there beneath his furry bulk. In front of them was the blood-streaked body of his brother, who fought as bravely as he could alongside them.

"Se'tu," Se'tak growled, and as he went to rush to his side as well, his tribemates surrounded him with spears leveled, waiting to see if he was still a threat or had calmed down.

Fear gripped his chest. He looked again at his brother, gashes across his body that were a little too thick to be a harpy's talons. What had he done? The bear retreated from his soul - claws covered in blood that he was now questioning were harpies or his brothers. The bear left him empty and confused as he returned to complete control of his body. As the fur shifted along his body and his muscles faded to their normal form, he stood up, fighting past the spears.

"Se'tu!" he screamed again.

He shot upright in bed, fully alert and drenched in sweat.

La'leia was sitting up in the bed beside him. Apparently he had already woken her up.

"Again?" she gently asked.

"Yes,"

THE WHITE LADY

Written by Rudhredion Nightstone

On the moonlit shore of the Isle of Blackwake, Rudhredion moved silently.

His footfalls were muffled by the thick, wet sand beneath his feet. As a practitioner of the shadowy arts, he was accustomed to the twilight hour where mortal eyes failed, yet he saw clearer than others would. Earlier, an urgent message had been delivered to his private comm while he was at the Rusty Nail, and he stepped out to answer it.

Now, dressed in his most recognizable set of clothing—a detective trench coat, unbuttoned shirt, tie, and slacks—he was ready for work. Even in something as innocent-looking as he was, he still cut an imposing spectral figure against the island's peaceful scenery, even though the Isle of Blackwake was anything but peaceful.

For weeks, tales of male sailors disappearing had rippled through the taverns, with whispered rumors of a "Woman in White" haunting the shores. One by one, these men were lured from their ships under the veil of night, never to return. Most dismissed these disappearances as the unfortunate accidents of drunken sailors wandering too close to the dangerous tides. But the locals—the ones who remembered the legends—knew better.

Rudhredion's investigation into this eventually led to the edge of the island's shore, where the restless spirit was said to appear. The message he had received earlier came from a local merchant who claimed to have seen the ghastly apparition before they ran away.

He gazed out over the rolling waves, inhaling the salt-laden air, his mind tracing the threads of the shadowy curse that had come to lay over the isle. Through his studies as an occultist and attunement to magic, he could sense an unnatural presence lingering in the air.

The woman in white wasn't merely a vengeful ghost; her grief and bitterness had festered in death, evolving into something far more malevolent.

Drawing a smooth black stone from his robes, Rudhredion whispered an incantation and channeled words that would bring things to light (in a manner of speaking). Flickering threads of shadow coiled from his hand, wreathing the stone in a pulsing violet light.

"Pelako ameso yobe Eleggua imbone ukuchila panshita," he murmured, a magical phrase commanding the spirit to reveal itself as his eyes narrowed and the Elf fixed his gaze on the beach ahead.

For a moment, there was nothing but the sound of waves.

Then, from the corner of his eye, he saw her. A wisp of ethereal light coalesced near the water's edge, gradually forming the outline of a woman. She wore a flowing and tattered gown, like some pale shroud around her lifeless form. Her face was beautiful but twisted in grief and rage.

She turned toward him, her hollow eyes meeting his, a flicker of recognition darkening them as though she sensed his purpose.

Rudhredion took a step forward, like a hunter approaching dangerous prey. Earlier, he had done his research into the island's history, having an idea of what happened to the missing sailors. Thanks to the locals and the history they shared in the tavern, he recognized who the spirit was.

"You were known as Liadrana when you lived," he intoned, his voice carrying over the soft crash of the waves. "A woman of the seas, betrayed by love and cast aside by the man who pledged his heart to you. You sought escape in death but found only vengeance in the beyond."

The spirit recoiled, a glimmer of pain flashing across her features before her expression hardened into fury. "They all lie, and they all leave," she whispered, her voice soft yet carrying an edge of chilling finality. "Why should they find peace when I cannot?"

With a flick of his wrist, Rudhredion cast a barrier of Void energy around him, creating a shimmering field of inky darkness. He knew he'd need all the protection he could muster since Liadrana had claimed enough lives to accumulate strength far beyond an ordinary vengeful spirit.

"The sailors you've taken—do they satisfy your vengeance?" he asked, his tone unyielding but tinged with compassion. He needed to learn what bound her to the mortal realm; for that, he had to understand her pain.

The woman in white drifted closer, the spectral form hovering mere inches from the ground. "They remind me of him. Of the betrayal, of the promises broken. They cheat on those they had made promises to. So I give them the punishment that he deserved, that they deserve," she spat, her voice rising into a howl as the waves crashed violently around them.

Remembering his lessons and knowledge of the occult, Rudhredion traced sigils in the air, creating fel flames that made a binding charm to contain her rage.

"You're tethered here by your anguish, Liadrana, but this path brings you no closer to peace. You are only ensnaring yourself in these same chains."

Her form flickered, the rage in her eyes wavering. For a brief moment, she looked almost human, her expression softening as the memories of her former life rose unbidden. "He left me for another... all I had was a promise, broken as if it were nothing. And then... I was nothing."

Rudhredion seized on this moment of clarity. "Release your torment," he said, his voice soothing, almost like a lullaby. "There is still a way to find peace, but not through vengeance. The Shadow Lands are vast; in it, even a soul as troubled as yours can find solace."

Liadrana seemed to falter, her spectral form dimming as though struggling against an invisible tide. Yet the darkness in her eyes fought back, and a last surge of anger flared as she raised her claw-like hands toward him. "They deserve to suffer!" she screamed, striking down at him.

She hit true, and he felt searing pain burn across his shoulder as hot red blood stained his shoulder. Her strike had connected with him, leaving spectral wounds that ran deep. His focus did not waiver, however, as the Elf pulled out his strongest playing card to use against her.

"Did your children deserve to suffer?" He asked accusingly, now causing her rage to subside momentarily.

The spirit wavered, as if reminded of what she had done. Rudhredion knew the end of that sordid tale; how, in her rage and depression, she took her life at sea, as well as that of her two small children. The look of fear on her face turned to that of grief as the memories of her act came back.

"Give this up; go and see your children, " he offered her, once more signaling that this was over and that peace was an option for her.

While she was distracted, he spoke a final incantation. He unleashed a torrent of Void energy, not to banish her but to envelop her spirit in a cocoon of shadow, drawing her rage into the abyss itself. Slowly, her form dissipated, her features softening as she gazed at him with a mixture of anger and sorrow.

Then, with a faint sigh, Liadrana faded entirely, and the beach fell silent except for the ocean's waves.

Exhausted, Rudhredion fell to his knees and exhaled, allowing the Void's grip on him to loosen. He had freed her, but her story and her tragedy lingered in his mind as another sad tale woven into the dark fabric of his life's work.

Now the Void whispered in his mind; the consequences of relying on it so heavily this evening, telling him terrible things, both false and true. He ignored it, pushing the whispers aside as he stood in the sands and looked across the ocean. The horizon tinged with the faintest hint of the coming dawn.

As he turned to leave, he couldn't shake the feeling that her sorrow, her story of betrayal and loneliness, had reached something deeper within him. Such was the burden of the life he chose—bound to the darkness as he fought to remain on the path of serving others, not himself. One day, though, be it the use of Fel or the Void, someone would claim him just as he had claimed the woman in white.



BURIED

Written by Eluvianna

Eluvianna was shaking, detached, and approaching mental severance.

Her expression carried an unfamiliar distance, framed by once soft waves now heavy with dark, wet sediment, matting the strands. Ribbons of brown sludge pathed across her chest, a tar of the pallor.

Cormac sensed the schism, but his hand considered a rough strip of cloth—ripped from some long-forgotten thing.

His eyes followed a thick smear of grime along her cheek, blackening across her lips as though it had been spat out. He winced—a quiet spasm in the throat—the sight itself became a taste. The cloth hung useless in his hand, a gesture that felt entirely worthless.

She closed her eyes, fingers wavering as they touched the damp skin. Her breath attempting to steady. She tried to clear her throat, something lodged deep brought an obstructed scrag.

She coughed once, then harder, her body twisting over her knees as she forced the breath out, finally spitting a gritty mass of mud onto the rough wooden floor.

He guided shoulders back into the chair, giving a gentle squeeze before his hands disconnected. She leaned back heavily, eyes closing as she tilted her face upward. He watched, assessing the motion, almost unrecognizable in his concern.

“And this not be the first time.” He knew the words were unhelpful, but was trying to reach her. One day he might.

Eyes still closed, her brow lifted in resignation. “No—but never buried alive.” She forced a smile, attempting levity. Then a sharp jolt forward with another cough.

He scoffed, pulling a chair opposite her. Moving a hand to grasp at her arm both in a measure of comfort and caution.

His voice low. "One day we won't find you."

Eyes squinting hard, her lips pursed in some deep purpose. The words came through a tense jaw. "Caution left me long ago. This is nothing."

EXCERPT FROM: **"AN IDIOT'S BRIEF GUIDE TO 30 YEARS OF** **WARCRAFT LORE"**

Written by Alnarra

NOTE: *This is an excerpt from a larger Nonfiction Guide. While the project isn't done yet, it is included because we believe in uplifting all writers, both Fiction and Nonfiction.*

OLD GODS AND THEIR MINIONS

C'Thun - One big old nasty eyeball and an old god. C'Thun was one of the original 4 (maybe) old gods who ruled Azeroth during the age of the black empire. They are said to be responsible for the creation of the Qiraji. Imprisoned in the Temple of Ahn'Qiraj after the titan constructs started winning the war to bring order to Azeroth, subsequently reawakened or stirred from their slumber a few times only to be slain some really brave adventurers (like about 40 of them give or take).

Yogg-Saron - They are the lucid dream, The monster in your nightmares, The Fiend of 1000 faces. Yogg-Saron was tainting the emerald dream and world trees with his blood (Saronite) long before Azeroth's heroes had even been born. Imprisoned in Ulduar this old god was a former ruler during the black empire and is responsible for the corruption of countless keepers including Loken, Freya, Hodir, Mimiron, and Thorim. When Cho'Gall weakened the chains which bound him he began to truly escape until some adventurers came along and put the kibosh on that plan.

N'Zoth - After Y'Shaarj was ripped out of the planet, N'Zoth was one of the first old gods imprisoned, deep beneath the waves. From their prison they were behind the corruption of Neltharion turning the dragon aspect into Deathwing. It was N'Zoth who convinced Queen Azshara to sign a pact turning the Highborne into Naga. It was at N'Zoth's word that the elementals began a combined attack across Azeroth as Deathwing brought about the cataclysm. It would be N'Zoth who corrupted the Kul Tiran Tide sages. Even after adventurers used the heart of Azeroth and Forge of Origination to destroy N'Zoth there are some who are convinced this master of deceit is not dead.

Y'Shaarj - Not imprisoned but ripped from Azeroth by the Titans, it's heart would be sealed in a vault below the Vale of Eternal Blossoms. It's lingering presence would attract a group of Aqir, warping them into the mantid. Upon Y'Shaarj's death the 7 sha were spread across the lands of Pandaria (Anger, Hatred, Violence, Fear, Doubt, and Despair).

Xal'atath - The Harbinger of the Void, Xal'atath was imprisoned at some point during the height of the black empire inside a blade which would find itself passed down to a number of users. It would be used by the jungle troll Zan'do to resurrect Kith'ix who would wage war upon the trolls and whose corpse would serve as the foundation as the city of Zul'Aman. It would later be passed down to Modgud Thaurissan during the war of the three hammers resulting in the curse across all of Grim Batol. It would be used by the High Priest of the Netherlight temple during the legion invasion and some of its power siphoned off to stop the sword of Sargeras corrupting effect on Silithus.

Finally, during the 4th war, Xal'atath would inhabit the body of a dead High Elf, Inanis, going on to further plots and plans during the war within. It is interesting as the Locus Walker, an ethereal was very clear about having seen Xal'atath before on his own world.

WORLD SOULS

Azeroth - The soul of the place where all of this is taking place, and apparently one of if not the biggest world souls, hence why everything seems to be going directly to crap all the time here as all the cosmic forces wish to claim it for themselves.

Argus - World soul of the world the Draenei / Eredar would evolve and flourish on. Argus was tortured by the burning legion and used as a method of reanimating the legion's soldiers outside of the twisting nether. Upon death the world soul was flung at and broke the arbiter in the Shadowlands.

KEEPERS AND KEY CONSTRUCTS

Tyr - Imbued with the courage and strength of Aggramar, Tyr was one of the great warriors constructed by the Pantheon for the war with the old gods using a massive hammer in battle. He is responsible for uplifting the proto-dragons into the modern day dragon aspects. It is implied that Galakrond who he would later help the aspects slay was in some ways an experiment of his doing. During the battle Galakrond made off with his hand and so Tyr replaced it with a silver one. Once the dragons were uplifted, he also went about creating the Refti

When Loken fell to the corruption of Yogg-Saron Tyr had a hunch it had occurred and had gone into hiding. When the Winterskorn war started they popped out for a bit to help. After the war he decided it was probably best to go deal with Loken himself, going to steal the disc of Norgannon. In a panic once the disk was stolen Loken sent Kith'ix (whom Xal'atath had helped resurrect) and Zakajz the corrupter to take him down

Tyr was killed at Tyr's fall, though later resurrected in the dragon isles thanks in no small part to a relic he left with the dragons in case of his death. He is without a doubt the inspiration for most of the human paladin orders.

Freya - A watcher in Ulduar, she along with Archaedas would go on to defeat Therazane the stone mother. She played SOME part in the emerald dream being in the shape it is today, though it's not clear if she's responsible for weaving it into existence or simply stumbling into it and reordering it. Her work in bringing about life on Azeroth resulted in locations like the Un'goro crater, Sholazar, and the Vale of Eternal blossoms.

Freya also looked after many of the wild gods the druids would go on to worship, namely Ursoc, Ursol and Ashamane. As the August Celestials were also gifted her staff, Fu Zan, there's little doubt she played some part in their lives as well.

Hodir - Another watcher of Ulduar, and functionally the patron of the Frost Giants. During the war with the old gods He, Ra, and Thorim would go on to challenge Al'Akir the Windlord. He was captured and stuffed in Ulduar being corrupted by Yogg Saron until adventurers beat some sense into him. After invasion during Legion he resides in the Skyhold.

Loken - Created during the war with the old gods and going on to help Mimiron during the battle with Neptulon the Tidehunter. He'd go on to have an affair with Sif, a Vrykul woman who was the wife of Thorim. Terrified someone might find out about the affair, Yogg-Saron was able to corrupt the titan keeper. He would go on to turn Thorim against the Frost Giants, kill Mimiron and imprison Freya and Hodir. He then went on to convince Helya to seal Odyn in the halls of valor using the same magic that had been used to seal Ragnaros in the Firelands. In doing so Loken became the Prime Designate of Azeroth and chief Jailer of Yogg Saron.

He would use the forge of wills located in Ulduar to start creating an army of Titan-forged, not knowing Yogg-Saron had implanted the curse of flesh in in the forge. When Tyr came to investigate, he sent the C'Thraxxi generals after him. When Thorim was keyed in by adventurers that Loken had been behind things, he went on to capture him as well and took his proto-drake Veranus and turned her into Razorscale.

Mimiron - Another of Ulduar's keepers, Mimiron is the creator of the Mechagnomes who thanks to the curse of flesh would go on to become the gnomes. He is also responsible for giving Kaja'mite to the primitive species that would go on to become the goblins. After being killed by Loken, his Mechagnome servants went about rebuilding his body and placing his soul inside.

Odyn - The initial Prime Designate of Azeroth, father to Helya, and creator of the Valarjar. Odin was the keeper most in opposition to empowering the dragon aspects believing that only titan forged should be trusted to watch over Azeroth. After they were empowered, he pulled a big "Taking my ball and going home" taking his section of Ulduar and chucking it into the sky, creating the halls of Valor.

While stewing in the Halls of valor, he agreed to sacrifice his eye to the Loa Mueh'zala, a servant of the Jailer, so that he could peer into the shadowlands, seeing the Kyrian

and being struck with inspiration. The Vrykul and Helya were none too fond of the idea of grabbing souls from the Shadowlands to turn into Val'kyr, and so... Odyn used Helya and turned her into the first Val'kyr and then proceeded to lie to everyone about how that had happened.

Irritated at having been used as a test subject Helya used the magic to lock away the elementals to also lock away Odyn in the halls of valor. It wasn't until the legion landed and began their invasion for the third time that using the disguise of Havi that he started providing assistance, and finally freed from the Halls of Valor once Helya was defeated. He's a HUGE fan of tests of strength.... like a huge fan.

Ra - Tasked with taking care of the Forge of Origination to Azeroth's south, Ra is the creator of the Mogu. Ra was the first of the keepers to realize that Sargeras had slain the other titans, and upon realizing this went to seal himself in a vault in the Vale of Eternal Blossoms in despair. It was there that after the curse of flesh and a few thousand years the Mogu Lei Shen would find him, get frustrated that he appeared to have fallen into depression, and then went on to bind him in chains and steal his power. It wasn't until the Zandalari trolls resurrected Lei Shen years later that anyone would realize that Ra was being stored in the basement.

Once freed, he'd go on to continue to stew in his depression until N'Zoth was freed by Azshara. Though it took some convincing, he showed the adventurers where the Engine of Nalak'sha was at so it could be used to power the forge of origination to kill N'Zoth. In preparing for that weapon, when an attack on the Chamber of the Heart by N'Zoth occurred, Ra sacrificed himself to halt the attack, taken and corrupted by N'Zoth he was put to rest in Ny'alotha.

Thorim - Brother of Loken, and another keeper in Ulduar. After Loken and Sif, where in Loken killed Sif to keep the affair a secret, Thorim was convinced it was the Storm Giants who killed Sif and fell into a great depression. He would go on to be captured and stuffed in Ulduar until adventurers beat some sense into him. Hati was his pet wolf.

Helya - Adopted daughter of Odyn, she's not technically a keeper but simply a titan forged. During the war with the black empire, it was Helya and Ra who created the Elemental Planes of Azeroth to act as prisons to the elemental Lords (The Firelands, Skywall, Abyssal Maw, and Deepholm). When she didn't quite go along with the plan Odyn had to turn Vrykul into Val'kyr he shattered her form and turned her spirit into the first one.

No fan of this particular arrangement she went on to lock Odyn in the halls of Valor and started creating her own army with the souls of the Vrykul, turning them into Kvaldir. At some point during this time Mueh'zala made a visit so that Helya would ally with the jailer. When Sylvanas, who had also made a pact with the Jailer after falling off Icecrown dropped by to pick up one of Helya's artifacts, the soul cage, to bind the current leader of the Val'kyr Eyir, Helya reluctantly agreed.

She was also keeping Illidan Stormrage's soul stored away in Helheim at the request of Guldan after making off with it from the vault of the wardens. It was shortly after this that Odyn, enraged at what she had been doing with Valarjar, sent in a part of adventurers to kill her. But when you make a deal with beings in the shadowlands death isn't so simple

She shows up again in the Maw where she was managing the Mawsworn, where in the Primus confronted her and banished her back to the realm of Helheim.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

MOTHER - (Matron of Tenacity, herald of Endless research) She is the titan watcher responsible for maintaining the Titan research facility of Uldir, where the experiments upon old god samples were being conducted, to the point where they had managed to create their own little old god G'huun. Once G'huun was defeated, she aids in helping Magni in the chamber of the heart.

Algalon the Observer - Referred to as a Constellar, Algalon was a failsafe measure left in place to watch Azeroth and if at any point the old god's corruption had managed to go too far, was under orders to use the Forge of Origination to completely reoriginate Azeroth (read: destroy all life). Upon the death of the Prime Designate he was summoned and concluded that indeed the planet was right infested with Old Corruption. Luckily, he is convinced that if his math were as flawed as his combat skills, it might not be the best course of action.

Archaedas - The actual builder behind a number of Titan structures including the Old God's prisons and the Chamber of the Heart. He would also be responsible for the creation of something called "The Manifold" which the titans had used to investigate the world soul in greater depth. He would help Tyr make off with the disk of Norgannon. He would go on to keep this disk safe in the Halls of the titan facility Uldaman.

Koranos – The watcher in the Dragonflight trailer who had apparently been tasked along with all the other watchers on the Dragon Isle, turning the beacon of Tyrhold back on. Problematically, he was at the time the only watcher left alive.

ELEMENTAL LORDS

Ragnaros - The Firelord, who fight the invading black empire old gods, only to be made a servant, then to fight the keeper invaders only to be banished to the Firelands. From there he would get into a fight with Thunderaan, prince of air, consuming most of his essence and splitting the rest with his lieutenants. Trapped there in the Firelands it wasn't until the war of the three hammers when the Dark Iron Dwarves, desperate to win summoned Ragnaros, only to find themselves enslaved to him for the next few hundred years, that was until Moira used some politicking to have him banished back to the Firelands.

Of course, once Deathwing shattered the seal between the elemental planes and the physical realm, Ragnaros launched an attack on Mount Hyjal with every intention to burn Nordrassil down for good this time. But the Firelord is pushed back, and the Cenarion Circle manages to confront and kill him within the Firelands, ending him for good.

Al'Akir - The lord of wind banished like the rest to the elemental plane after the fall of the Black Empire. Al'Akir was one of Deathwing's staunchest supporters when he mentioned a plan to invade the physical realm. Unfortunately for Al'Akir adventurers came to the Throne of the four winds, well within the Skywall to slay him for good.

Neptulon - The lord of water, who like the rest was banished; however, when Deathwing approached him with the idea of invading, he was indeed not cool with that idea, and so the Naga and Faceless ones under the order of N'Zoth set about capturing him. After being rescued by adventurers Neptulon actually seems pretty willing to help and sends forces to assist during the legion invasion as well as taking down Azshara.

Therazane - The lord of earth, also known as the Earthmother, who unlike the rest of the elemental lords, had her realm directly affected by Deathwing breaking out and was none too much of a fan of his nonsense. Though she wasn't a huge fan of mortals for killing her daughter Princess Theradras in Maraudon, she could see their usefulness in cleaning out the Twilight hammer that was infesting her realm. She too continues to assist the adventurers going forward.

Thunderaan - Consumed by Ragnaros for his delicious essence and, what was left of him was split between two of Ragnaros lieutenants... until they were killed by adventurers who putting the pieces back together swiftly killed Thunderaan yet again to make off with his sword, the Windfury. It wasn't until a legion invasion when the Earthen ring decided to resurrect Thunderaan to try and settle the Skywall which had fallen into chaos with Al'Akir out of the picture.

Smolderon - Promoted to Firelord after Ragnaros bit it and a bit of help from the Earthen ring in slaying his primary competitor for the spot, Pyroth. He seemed willing to assist in the repelling of the legion if only because a demon, Barastagax the Flamecleaver, was using the power of the Firelands for himself and that wasn't going to fly.

He then decided Fyrakk was a better ticket when he showed up with a plan to burn down Amirdrassil, going on to attack the adventures with the very sword he'd been given by them. The battle went as expected as Fyrakk had no intention at all of helping him out of his pickle. It's not clear if he's actually dead or not as he wasn't slain in the Firelands themselves.

DRAGON ASPECTS

Neltharion - The Earth-warder, and the dragon who would go on to become Deathwing or Xaxas, leader of the black Dragonflight. Neltharion appeared to basically love science (or maybe just black dragons in general do, they all seem to set up labs of some sort). Clutchmate to the primal incarnate Iridikron he was lifted into aspecthood with all the rest after defeating Galakrond. From here he would serve out his role as earth-warder building mountains, rivers, and secret underground labs.

As he could sense a war between the aspects and the incarnates was coming, he began creating an army of Dracthyr that he could control with a titan artifact called the Oathbinder, though Raszageath destroyed the artifact when she attacked Neltharion and his army at the Reach. So, he gave into the whispers of the old gods and used the void to win the fight. This battle would lead into the War of the Scaleborn.

At the brink of sealing Iridikron away, it was clear that on his own Neltharion was no match for the incarnate and once again he gave into the power of the void to defeat him. With the corruption growing he would only fall further and further into madness before the voices convinced him to create the Dragon soul, a weapon which he would turn upon his best friend and leader of the blue Dragonflight, Malygos, wiping out nearly the entire flight.

After managing to lose the Dragon soul, he decided to take a long nap, only to be roused by the opening of the Dark portal and the magic surge it sent over the land. He would take on the guise of a noble in the first war, downplaying the orc attack to Lordaeron so they wouldn't intervene. He spent time with the orcs and convinced the leader of the Dragonmaw clan that they should go fetch the Dragon Soul for him stored under Redridge mountain.

Once the power of the Dragon soul was in the orcs hands, they swiftly enslaved Alexstrasza and her brood. But as the horde lost their war and were forced back through the dark portal exchanging black dragons for safe passage to Draenor. There in Gorgrond he'd get in a tussle with Gruul and the Gronn, ending up in a situation where he was injured and needed to retreat. Back on Azeroth he proceeded to fake his own death and assumed a role as Lord Daval Prestor in Lordaeron.

There he would politic his way around trying to convince the kingdoms of man to attack Dalaran. He also tried to convince the Dragonmaw orcs to move Alexstrasza out of Grim Batol so he could have easier access to her eggs; however, this backfired, and he ended up with the dragon soul being destroyed, and all four of the remaining dragon aspects hot on his heels. So, he shuffled off to hide in Deepholm.

It was from here he would burst forth causing all the things that came with the cataclysm and his final demise at the hands of the very dragon soul he had crafted.

Alexstrasza – The Life-Binder and Dragon queen. She is the only living sibling to Ysera. Like Neltharion, Alexstrasza started life as a Proto-drake who was taught to hunt by her cousin the proto-drake Fyrakk. After proving herself in front of Tyr in attacking Galakrond, she was uplifted as the Aspect of Life. She would also find herself embroiled in the War of the Scaleborn, where she would find herself confronting one of her best friends, Vyranoth, over her choice to place proto-drake eggs into order infused waters to mutate them.

An act that was done to ensure that their numbers during the war were closer, enraged Vyranoth, and would drive her to become the final primal incarnate. After the incarnates were sealed in the vault of the incarnates she would go on to continue her work, assisting the Kaldorei during the first legion invasion. Tricked by Neltharion she would donate her power to the dragon soul. After the war resolved she'd be one of the dragons who would help bless the acorn from the mother tree G'hanir so that it may grow into the first world tree, Nordrassil.

When the second war broke out some 10,000 years later, it was Alexstrasza who was drawn to investigate. There she was captured with the dragon soul, taken to Grim Batol, and forced to breed so that the Dragonmaw may have an army of whelps, drakes, and dragons. Any red dragon that dared get out of line would result in Alexstrasza being injured or tortured. Arguably Alexstrasza's torture, forced breeding, and resulting despair are one of the franchise's darkest moments.

Thanks to Deathwing's miscalculations, she was able to escape, but not before her mate of nearly 20,000+ years, Tyranastrasz was killed. After this imprisonment the dragon queen hid herself away from the world healing both physically and mentally. When asked to bless the World Tree Teldrassil, she refused.

It wouldn't be until the nexus wars and wars with the scourge where she would reemerge, going to cover the battlefield in cleansing flame that would keep Bolvar Fordragon alive but burned at the Wrathgate. She would be the one to end Malygos with the aid of adventurers and end the Nexus Wars. Then after the War against the nightmare she and Ysera were finally convinced to bless Teldrassil.

During the Cataclysm, after the Twilight's Hammer came to the dragon Sanctums to corrupt their eggs, and Korialstrasz, Alexstrasza's consort, was forced to destroy not only himself but them as well, it drove her into an even greater depression. She would fly to Desolace, sitting and waiting for death to take her. It would take Thrall revealing why Korialstrasz had done what he did for her to come to, eventually joining the other Dragon Aspects to put down Neltharion once and for all.

Though she played her part in various conflicts, it would not be until the dragon isles reopened that she once again assumed her role as queen of dragons, helping to restore the various Oathstones, confronting the returned primal incarnates, and tending to the various dragon eggs. She would be a key figure in ending the dragonkin rebellion.

She would go on to approach and convince Vyranoth to break her ranks with the Primal incarnates and to defend Amirdrassil.

Malygos – The Aspect of Magic, and leader of the blue Dragonflight. Like the rest of the aspects, he proved himself against Galakrond, assisted in the Winterskorn War, and moved on to the War of the Ancients. Of course, it was during the war of the Ancients Malygos would watch his greatest love and entire flight all but obliterated by Deathwing's actions. After the War of the Ancients, Malygos would be driven to depression and madness, sealing himself away in the frozen north.

It would not be until Alexstrasza was freed from Grim Batol and the dragon soul shattered that he would have his powers and even a shred of hope returned to him. But it would not be until the blue drake Tyrygosa brought back Netherwing Drakes from outlands who had decided to attack the blue Dragonflight, only to find themselves hoovered up as a great remedy for Malygos madness.

Free of his insanity he quickly realized mortals were not using Magic for anything good, started the Nexus wars, and would of course meet his end at the eye of Eternity. His essence finally put to rest in the veiled Ossuary with the essence of Sindragosa by his side during the events of Dragonflight.

Nozdormu – The aspect of time, and he would go on to become the leader of the infinite flight in an alternate timeline. Also lifted like the rest he was granted power over time. During the war with the Ancients, he was notably absent, having been sucked into a temporal anomaly by the old gods, though when he was free, he assisted in blessing Nordrassil, and being the key ingredient to Nordrassil ensuring Night Elven immortality.

Nozdormu is often off and away in the timeways, rarely coming out. As such, the interest of the bronze Dragonflight are usually represented by other bronze dragons, spending a great deal of time (haha, time) trying to unravel the mystery of the infinite Dragonflight and trying to determine how to stop himself from becoming its leader. An issue that would come up when the decision was made to go back in time to grab the dragon soul when it "vanished" in the war of the Ancients. To do this they would have to kill Murozond, Nozdormu from the future.

It wouldn't be until the events of Dragonflight and the restoration of the Bronze Oathstone as well as the return of a vision that Aman'thul had left for him that could ultimately avoid his fate as Murozond. It was also during this time that he would make amends with the Infinite Dragonflight, at least convincing some of them to rejoin the bronze.

Ysera – The Aspect of the Dream and the Dreamer. Like the rest, she assisted with bringing down Galakrond and in the Winterskorn war. Ysera was the one to come up with the idea of a visage form so that the aspects could talk with a group of trolls that

were settling on the waking shores. She would become the foster mother to Cenarius, teaching and guiding him.

Ysera was perhaps the closest to the night elves and their wild gods due in no small part to her ties with the Emerald Dream. When Malorne was killed during the War of the Ancients it sent Ysera into a rage killing countless demons. It was she that granted the Kaldorei druids the ability to more easily commune with the dream, and it would be Ysera who upon learning that the trolls were getting ready to summon Hakkar would sink their temple in the swamp of sorrows.

After the Dragon soul was destroyed at the battle for Grim Batol, she realized that the emerald nightmare was creeping into the dream and would join Malfurion and Cenarius in attempting to battle it. During the War of the Nightmare, she would become trapped in the dream and only freed after her consort Eranikus sacrificed himself.

She would assist the other aspects in taking down Deathwing, though later would find herself at the receiving end of a corrupted tear of Elune shaped bullet during the third legion invasion. The resulting corruption would drive her to madness, forcing Tyrande to take her down. It was in Ardenweald that the Winter Queen personally intervened to restore Ysera, calling her “Elune’s pet”, binding her to the Shadowlands.

She grew terrified that Elune’s power would ultimately kill Tyrande and worked to find previous Night Warriors to determine how best to reverse the effects. With the Green Dragonflight having been passed to her daughter, Merithra, she temporarily returned to the world of the living to help with healing damage that had been done to the dream. Once she was confident that Amirdrassil had blossomed and was safe, she returned to Ardenweald.

Merithra – Daughter of Ysera, and current holder of “The Dreamer” title. Merithra had been active even as far back as the War of the Shifting sands, being one of the dragons that had come to help end the war. Upon her mother’s death during the invasion of the legion she was promoted as the de facto leader of the green Dragonflight. She now sits with the other five aspects tending to the duties that Ysera once held.

Kalecgos – Current Aspect of the Blue Dragonflight, Kalecgos is probably most well known for being the only dragon to fall in love with a puddle (He dated the Sunwell for a little while in her human form). He would protect Anveena (the Sunwell) until she was captured by Kil’jaeden during the events of the Burning Crusade. He found himself possessed by a dreadlord, unable to act.

Kalec was one of the blue Dragonflight not entirely on board with Malygos’ plan to kill all the mages during the Nexus War. During the Cataclysm the title of “New Leader of the Dragonflight” came down to him and a dragon named Arygos, who had asked for Deathwing’s help to win the title. You can guess how that went for Arygos.

While the leader of the Blue Dragonflight, he was the one that had the focusing iris moved (resulting in it subsequently being stolen). To help find the Iris, he traveled to Theramore and He and Jaina became... good friends.

The Aspects had planned on breaking up the Wyrmmrest accord after they gave their powers to the Dragon soul, but Kalec managed to attach himself to the Spark of Tyr, an artifact giving him vision of the past. When he finally managed to pry the thing off, he convinced the other dragons that maybe even if they weren't aspects they could still help.

After Theramore exploded and Garrosh was put on Trial, Kalec decided he couldn't handle Jaina's anger and the two of them called it off, though in exchange for a dead relationship, he did get her spot on the Council of Six in Dalaran. (Alright she left Dalaran for different reasons, he just happened to be the best candidate).

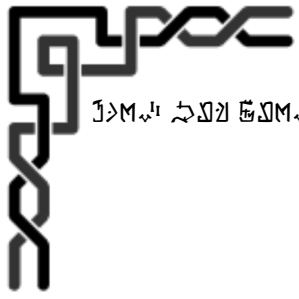
Of course, once the Dragon Isle reappeared, Kalec decided it was probably a good time to start putting the whole family back together. And so, with the aid of a simulacrum of Sindragosa he started to call the blue dragons back to the Isle to start rebuilding the flight.

Ebyssian – Crouching Moose, Hidden dragon. He's probably better known by the name "Ebonhorn" as he was hiding out in Highmountain for thousands of years, one of the only uncorrupted Black Dragons living on Azeroth. This was in part because Huln Highmountain had used the Hammer of Khaz'goroth (one of the pillars of creation) to cleanse his egg.

He had watched over the Highmountain until being discovered during the events of the third legion invasion. During the Highmountain's invitation to join the horde, the Old God's did try to start corrupting the black dragon, the ritual responsible was luckily stopped.

Upon traveling to the Dragon Isles, Ebyssian would get involved in the family drama (which apparently isn't uncommon for black dragons as it turns out). Sabellian and Wrathion fight it out but of course Ebyssian is the most even minded of the lizards and takes the throne.

NOTE: *If you would like to see more, please follow Alnarra at their links included in the credits section below.*

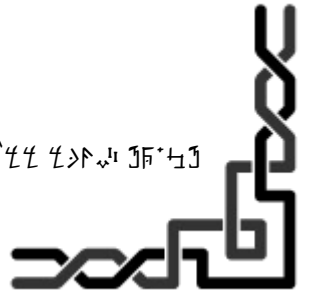


Scenes of Azeroth

Scenes of Azeroth

SCENES OF AZEROTH

Scenes of Azeroth



Scenes of Azeroth



Baozhai Relaxing
Submitted by Holn AKA A Lotta People



**Yui and the Fall
of Dalaran**
Submitted by
Lord of Bagels



Escape from Dalaran
Submitted by Lord of Bagels



Stoneheart and Vixelda in the Azure Span
Submitted by Vixelda



Hallows End Rave
Submitted by Reva



Winters Marketplace
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Surviving

Submitted by Lord of Bagels



Reminiscing of the Old Days

Submitted by Sal

NOTE - Part of a Machinima Video Series (More Info Below!)



HOLY MOLEY
Submitted by Rease Stoneheart



Dangers of the Battlefield
Submitted by Rease Stoneheart



Remembering What Once, And What Is
Submitted by LordofBagels



Rave in the Grave
Submitted by Reva



A Coalition Meeting
Submitted by Rease Stoneheart

CREDITS

World of Warcraft inspires many talented, creative people, and I am blown away by those who submit their Art, Writing, Screenshots, and time to this project. It is incredible to see how everyone comes together and gets so enthusiastic to share, ask, give, and receive feedback and grow as artists and creatives.

I want to thank everyone below personally, as well as those who have helped with this Issues organization, asset creation, editing, feedback, and sharing it among their friends, guilds, and other places. This would not have been as amazing and fun to read without your support, excitement, and contributions.

Here are all of the people who made this an amazing Issue.

Alnarra - Writer

Alnarra is a roleplayer in the Warcraft community for upwards of 15 years, having spent time in various guilds and organizations. They are a Cybersecurity Specialist by trade and can often be spotted on their singular druid, Alnarra-Moon Guard during their off hours. If you're interested in learning more about the wily druidess you can see it all at <https://alnarrarp.blogspot.com/>

Bjorn Candleman - Screenshots

Me am Bjorn, just a worg who likes sharing candles and smiles. I also make silly little meme videos that I post on twitter <https://x.com/Bjorncandleman>

Crossworlds- Artist, Layout

Crossworlds is a layout artist and is happy to help in the Season of Changes. They currently actively RP on Moon Guard and enjoy drawing, music, and the occasional RP shenanigans. For commissions, please see <https://crossworldsart.carrd.co/>

DBSilverdragon - Writer

Known to most simply as Silver. When not exploring the wilds of Azeroth or Valheim, I can be found sitting in front of a keyboard retelling the adventures of my characters, or even in front of my art tablet, doodling away as I learn. You can find me at [DBsilverdragon on X](#) or [DBsilverdragon](#) on Bluesky

Eluvianna - Writer, Artist

Eluvianna is an artist, writer, pin designer, Oasis community lead, roleplayer, and Void Elf VTuber. She loves dark fantasy, badass line art, Eldritch horror, and tragic stories. She frequently shares her process and collaborates with folks who appreciate the comfy side of chaos. Her current project, Umbral is all about the origins of her void elf character that started everything she's working on. | <https://elu.art/>

Harutho Oxenhead - Writer

Harutho Oxenhead (Haru) has been roleplaying in many forms for years. He started on Moon Guard for 8 years. He's run and played in games with D&D, WoD, ROOT, and a created system by a friend over the years, and loves doing it so much, it's part of his job. He's written much, having worked on his colligate literary magazine and has completed NaNoWriMo. When not creating stories, he loves to play WoW and cross stitch with his wife. You can find him on X as [@oxenhead](#) and [@haruoxenhead](#) on BlueSky or at community events in game (as Se'tak or Harutho - mostly)

Holn AKA "ALottaPeople" - Donated Art

Holn, AKA "A Lotta People," is an avid World of Warcraft Roleplayer who spends their time bouncing between the content and roleplay side of Moonguard. They have been roleplaying in Warcraft for seven years and are passionate about storytelling and crafting characters with varied personalities. It's often joked that they're roughly 60% of the Horde population, with some believing that to be true. Currently, they're preparing for the next Warcraft expansion and trying to figure out how to level their army of alts. You can find them at <https://bsky.app/profile/drbarber.bsky.social>

Hydra - Screenshots

Hydra is an imaginative worldbuilder and friendly roleplayer in World of Warcraft and other games. He spends a lot of time Worldbuilding and writing while playing games and roleplaying with friends. He desires to find more friendly folks to roleplay with in WoW and other games or on Discord.

J.S - Donated Art

J.S. is an avid fan of gaming from a young age and has always loved the fantasy genre. A big time lover of lore of games, J.S. began seriously RPing in World of Warcraft since WoD, but has played since Wrath, and his first foray into RP was actually in Guild Wars 2. J.S. also enjoys practicing writing, art and gaming in all games across all platforms. J.S. owes a lot to Rease who has been a great help in fleshing out RP characters and being a writing mentor.

Lord of Bagels - Writer, Screenshots

Lord of Bagels is a neurodivergent writer who aspires to create amazing worlds for people to enjoy. With an excellent grasp of storytelling, lore, and an endless ocean of creativity, they find pleasure in roleplaying on World of Warcraft and meeting new, interesting, and exciting people to help improve their skills. While not widely active or known, you can usually see him bouncing around on various characters, having fun, and enjoying the game.

Merable - Writer

I'm Merable. I'm a streamer that does rank content and occasionally plays casual games. I've been studying in the university for the masters program in Computer engineering. You can find me on Twitch under [merable08](#) if you want entertainment!

Neruma - Writer

Neruma is a roleplayer with several years of experience on both Moon Guard and Wyrmmrest Accord. A writer, as well as an artist, they're an exceptionally skilled individual who is always fun to have around, whether being creative or just playing World of Warcraft. Currently, they're working on improving their skill in both Writing and Drawing, and you can find them on their Twitter at https://x.com/Neruma_art, as well as the various links in their pinned comment.

Mischi - Artist

I'm Mischi, a full-time, freelance artist currently working on a series of coloring books featuring strong women in fantasy, creating story dice and working on commissions. I began playing and RPing in Warcraft on Emerald Dream in 2007 with my main Ret Pally, Satyreh. While I still play, I haven't played much in recent years. But the memories of weaving stories with friends, family, foes and random encounters, and PVP victories and defeats in the open world, battlegrounds and arenas, are still so strong! I will always love WoW and the time I've spent in Azeroth. You can find me and my work at [mischi.art](#) or on [@MischiArt](#) on socials

Pangle - Writer

Pangle is a long time veteran Roleplayer of World of Warcraft, having dabbled in other games along the way. Though has gained a sort of title as the "Mythical Goblin Cryptid" for being present often OOCly but rarely seen ICly due to scheduling conflicts. A self described amateur writer, he's loved getting ideas out as best as he can for many years. Slowly he's building up a few fantasy projects. He'll have his official Patreon and Ream set up soon!

Rease Stoneheart - Writer, Screenshots, Editor

Rease is an experienced Roleplayer who has been a part of the Warcraft Roleplay Community for ten years with no signs of slowing down. A writer who loves Fantasy, Horror, Sci-fi, and more, he's often bouncing between Azeroth and the created worlds of his original novels. Currently, he's working on his debut Novel Series "*Hearts of Stone in a City of Gold*" alongside the Warcraft Fanzine and other projects. You can find him at <https://linktr.ee/reasesoffice> for all that he's involved with.

Reva - Artist, Screenshots

Reva is an Artist, avid roleplayer, and in-game event organizer who has been playing World of Warcraft for 15 years while roleplaying for 6 years. She's a fan of drawing, gaming, collecting bones, fishing and hunting, and currently is running a Discord Server - The Wyvern's Tale - with her best friend where they catalogue Warcraft lore in an effort to help other roleplayers develop their characters and RP. A cryptid of sorts, you may be able to find her on Moon Guard hanging out on one of her many alts. You can find more of her art on her X and Instagram at <https://x.com/pastelpygmy> and <https://www.instagram.com/PastelPygmy>

Ruhredion Nightstone - Writer

Ruhredion Nighstone is a Void Elf Occultist and Archeologist on the Moon Guard (A) server. He can also be spotted moonlighting as a bartender at the Rusty Nail Tavern every Tuesday Night on the Isle of Blackwake (Tol Barad proxy) His player can be found on [Bluesky](#) or discord at [TheCosmicDrake](#). Profile art by: [Instagram \(@colochirus.art\)](#)

Sal - Animation, Screenshots

Sal has been in the WoW role-playing business since Shadowlands, completely fell in love with it and never regretted taking it up. Occasional writer, huge Vulpera lover, but most importantly, he's a graphic designer, a 3D artist, and a self-learning 3D animator and a character rigger. In his free time, he develops his skills via courses and working in Blender with his WoW characters he loves, occasionally some friends' characters, too, making silly animations. All of his links can be found on: [Sal's commissions](#)

Sanguinia - Writer

Sanguinia is a lifetime enjoyer of genre fiction in all its myriad flavors, from the bookshelf to the tabletop to the screen. Warcraft is just one of his many passions in the realm of fantasy, though it holds a special place in his heart. In addition to enjoying nerd ephemera as a member of the audience, he also loves to engage with it as a writer and critic, creating fiction, analyses and indulging in roleplaying for many beloved universes. His current big project is a weekly series of essays critiquing and commenting on Final Fantasy XIV. You can follow his work on

<https://ko-fi.com/sanguinequest>, <https://bsky.app/profile/sanguinel.p.bsky.social>, or, if you're truly desperate, <https://twitter.com/SanguiniaLP>.

Shalaine Belford - Writer

Shalaine is a veteran Roleplayer from even before Vanilla Warcraft, enjoying RP maps on both WC3 and SC. He's been working on a number of projects, most of which aren't at a stage in development where they can be named, but rest assured he has the community well in thought.

Tiffany "Foxy" Fox - Artist

Tiffany "Foxy" Fox is a misplaced Irish lesbian fae who lives in the Northeast US with her partner, two rescue cats and guinea pigs. Artist, cosplayer, streamer, obscure metal and gothic music fan, ren faire fan, all round nerd, and World of Warcraft Night Elf druid since Vanilla! You can find out more about them at their website <https://www.studiokitsune.com/>

Vixelda - Writer, Artist, Screenshots

Vixelda is an artist, writer, photographer, and overall creative soul with a passion for anything artistic that allows her to work with her hands and imagination. Her inspirations mainly come from the Scottish Highlands, where she currently lives. She is also a roleplayer who has been roleplaying on the Moon Guard server for several years as of this writing and is presently planning many more adventures both in real life and in Azeroth. You can find her at <https://x.com/vixelda>

Wolfsong Wildheart - Artist

Wolfsong Wildheart is an artist, role player, and amateur streamer who has been roleplaying in World of Warcraft for eighteen years and has a lifelong passion for the arts. Currently, she owns a dog grooming business. She balances her time between her passions, business, and hobbies while entertaining her friends and having adventures with her husband, both in real life and Azeroth. You can find her artwork and information on her streams at <https://x.com/wildheartwolfs1>

Additional Thanks

The above aren't the only people that deserve to be credited. I want to also extend the credits to the following people who had their Art, Writing, Screenshots, or Other donated by submitters or were otherwise referenced in Art and Stories. Even though they didn't submit direct, they still contributed in otherways and deserve to be recognized.

- **Aevra**
- **Colochirus Art** - <https://www.instagram.com/colochirus.art>
- **Elwynn PC** - <https://x.com/elwynnpc> (**NOTE:** Possible NSFW Content)
- **Feyawen** - [Donated Fonts](#)
- **Knightsmagi** - <https://knightsmagi.carrd.co/>
- **Lei-Li**
- **Palehorn Tea** - <https://x.com/PalehornTea>
- **Oasis In Azeroth Podcast** - <https://x.com/OasisInAzeroth>
- **Raijei**
- **RetPallyjill** - <https://www.youtube.com/@Retnoob>
- **Talakjin**
- **xHyperwolfx** - <https://x.com/xhyperwolfx>

I want to thank you, the readers, one final time. This project wouldn't continue without people who enjoy Warcraft in all its content. This Issue had been entirely about memories and remembering the long history of this game and the friends we've made along the way. I hope you've seen a story, art piece, or screenshot you fell in love with, and found a new favorite Writer or Artist to follow. I and others can't wait to see you in the next Issue!

FURTHER READING

Expanded Fanzine Information

Luckily, there are plenty of other Fanzine projects to read! What makes Warcraft special for many people is the memories we have of it, hence why this issue's theme has been all about memories and remembering the best parts of this franchise.

This fanzine is just one small part of the whole, and you can find an almost unlimited number of stories to read on Twitter, Bluesky, Discord, Tumblr, Reddit, and other websites devoted to fan fiction. Over the last 20 years, it almost seems like there's an endless amount of stuff to read. The best part? Nothing is stopping you from creating something for others to enjoy as well. In fact, some writers in this very issue wrote for the first time.

For more reading that you can dive into, check out the following projects that are either ongoing or complete but still fun to read! There's something for everyone, and you might find a new favorite.

If you're interested in World of Warcraft Roleplay and wondering how to get started - or even tips and tricks for improving your RP experience - then you should check out the link below for the "World of Warcraft Roleplaying Guidebook."

[WORLD OF WARCRAFT Roleplay Guidebook](#)

If you'd like to see the art, screenshots, and more that were in this Fanzine, please follow the galleries below to see what you're missing in this version!

[WORLD OF WARCRAFT Fanzine Issue #2 Art Gallery](#)

[WORLD OF WARCRAFT Fanzine Issue #2 Screenshot Gallery](#)

For past issues of the "World of Warcraft Fanzine", please follow the links below for past issues! Every former issue is packed full of additional artwork, stories, screenshots, easter eggs (in the full .pdf versions only) and more. Each with additional links to their Art and Screenshot Galleries

[Fanzine Issue #0: Proof of Concept](#)

[Fanzine Issue #1: Season of Changes](#)

FURTHER READING

Additional Fanzine Projects

Of course, what sort of community project would this be if we didn't include links to all the other outstanding projects out there that the community has created? The following links are all other fanzine projects that have been made are either completed or currently ongoing and are looking for submissions. If you're a creative type who draws, writes, or anything else, you should absolutely reach out if they're open for submissions!

[Orctales](#)

If you love everything Orc related, then you'll absolutely love Orctales. It's a collection of amazing stories about Orc culture, adventure, heroism, villainy, and is all about the multi-faceted sides of what makes Warcraft Orcs the most unique take on this classic fantasy race.

[Artists of Azeroth](#)

"*Artists of Azeroth*" is an amazing zine full of art that was made for artists by artists! While currently, the project isn't continuing, you can still read past issues and see all of the amazing, detailed works that were produced for it. As well as follow any artists whose work captivates you.

[Elven Historical Chronicle](#)

"*Elven Historical Chronicle*" is a fanzine that's entirely devoted to chronicling both canon lore and player-driven narratives across the Elven Roleplay communities. It's a fantastic resource for people who enjoy Elven lore and RP, and it uniquely fits many different narratives, all in three amazing packages. As of this writing, a third edition is being worked on!

[Interlude: Stories of Azeroth](#)

"Interlude: Stories of Azeroth" is an amazing collection of comics from all sorts of talented artists. What sets this fanzine project apart is that it's more than just a story compilation since it collects stories and art and molds them together in a way that's fun and easy to read whenever. Half the fun of this project is going back to see all the detailed stories!

For now, that's about it for other collected Fanzine projects, but it is not all that's available. In fact if you know of any more, feel free to contact [Rease Stoneheart](#) to see about getting it in future issues! The more projects that become known, and lifted up, the higher the tide will be for everyone.

FURTHER LISTENING

Don't think that Writing and Art are the only ways to enjoy Warcraft. In fact, there's a whole ecosystem of content creators that have created content without lifting a pencil or written a word. There are dozens of Podcasts, countless streams, and hundreds of musicians who have created something for fans to enjoy.

The below mentioned creators are just a small sample of what's out there for you to discover. Hopefullt you give them a listen in the background the next time you're having epic adventures in Azeroth.

Oasis In Azeroth

If you're a laid-back player of WoW, then Oasis in Azeroth is the perfect thing to listen to! They're a monthly podcast that hosts community based events (such as Raid Farming, Contests, and more) and are laid back and fun to listen to. Topics range from Lore, Curret Expansion, Game Mechanics, and more and are great background listening while grinding for gear and more.

RetNoob / RetPallyjil

If you're looking for someone who knows how to make fun music, and has been doing it for a long time, then RetNoob has you covered. Not only does she know how to rock out (Seriously, check her playlists on her YouTube channel for some of the best dungeon delving music), but she makes funny videos in between all her bombastic music. This is one music creator you don't want to miss out on if you're a fan of rock, loud vocals, and music that'll amp you up and get you excited.

FURTHER WATCHING

Machinima's, Cinematics, and other types of videos have long been a staple of Warcraft Fan created content for years, ever since the beginning when people dabbled with emerging video-making technologies to create memes, show off their PvP or Raiding Prowess, or just show off in general.

That's a tradition that has not died down at all. In fact, it's only improved as widely available video editing software became better, the techniques improved and streamlined, and many creators work and learn from one another. Overall, fan videos have never been better, and they're only getting a lot better, with some of the best even being hired by Blizzard themselves!

Here are a few samples of the many amazing creators that are out there.



[IRONROTH: EPISODE 1 - TIMES CHANGE](#)

Ironroth is an amazing AU project led by the talented Sir Thompshire that chronicles a version of Azeroth that failed at the Siege of Orgrimmar. Following the Siege, it details the lives of many of the surviving lore characters as they struggle to live in a darker, grimmer world than the one we know. A lot of current things are being developed for it, so this is one project you should keep an eye on!





REMINISCING OF THE OLD DAYS

This is an amazing, heartfelt little clip done by the talented Sal that does an excellent job of pulling at your heartstrings and fulfilling the theme of “Memories”. This one is sure to leave many people with a tear in their eye, and for those that Roleplay, even thinking about how their own characters have developed and changed over the years.



KOSH'HARG WITH THE BLADESNAWS

An amazing Machinima created by the talented Ban'orak set in the Orc Heritage Questline, and the first Kosh'harg ever to take place in Durotar. It truly encapsulate what makes Orcs so amazing, and on top of that, Ban'orak has a knack for story telling, in depth analysis of storylines, and a slew of other amazing videos talking about World of Warcraft's lore and direction. A content creator who has something for everyone!

IBELIN'S MEMORY

Deeply Missed, Never Forgotten

Recently, Blizzard and Netflix released the documentary "*The Remarkable Life of Ibelin*," which chronicles Mats "Ibelin" Steen's life as he dealt with Duchenne and lived a full life in World of Warcraft even as his condition worsened.

At its core, the Documentary is more than about Ibelin's life and death. It is also about how impactful the game world and its community can be, how we leave a mark in each other's lives, and our importance to one another even when we don't think we've mattered.

In the Documentary, Ibelin is shown to be a complex person despite his illness. He is kind, considerate, helpful, and someone many people leaned on for support. That is the true essence of our connections to one another at the end. Despite our faults, we can still care deeply for one another no matter what.

After all, those are the things that we take with us when our time is over—not our gear, transmogs, achievements, or anything like that. Years after his death, many of Ibelin's friends still think of him fondly, and his memorial in-game has served as a place of remembrance for them and now other people throughout the world.

Unfortunately, as the Documentary showed, Ibelin's life was tragically cut short, and there are many people like him who suffer from the same disease. If you would like to donate to charity to help another person suffering from Duchenne and make a difference in someone's life, please feel free to donate directly at the link below. Sadly, the Revan pack from the Blizzard Store is unavailable at this time, but hopefully, it will return one day.

[HTTPS://CUREDUCHENNE.ORG/](https://cureduchenne.org/)

Deeply Missed, Never Forgotten



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