

As I sit in my cold, dank room here in Undercity while awaiting my audience with the Banshee Queen, I have time to reflect and record my thoughts in my journal. Our people have lost much in the past years. While our history is known in broad outlines amongst all the educated, it is an... impersonal account. History and historians may never truly understand why we have chosen as we have. To aid in fostering such understanding amongst future generations, I put my quill to paper and record my thoughts, my deeds, and my hopes for that distant future...

*From the personal journals of Alayne, a blood elf warlock*

The air of Eversong Woods is clear now. The sun shines down through the vibrant green leaves of living trees. I see no sign of the devastation wrought by the Scourge invasion, save for the Dead Scar that cuts through from Deatholme to the remains of the Sunwell.

Or, at least, that is what I tell myself as I look around my former homeland. I see no sign of the destruction. But that is a lie. The signs are all around me and within me. How well I recall the preternatural silence that hung thick in the air as our armies advanced to meet the Scourge. Glancing around, I can see my father...

"Are you well?" one of my fellow recruits asked, shaking me from my reverie.

"I will be," I replied with a sigh, "it's just..."

"I understand," he said. "Take all the time you need." With that, he departed, striding on ahead to the spire. I remain in the shadows cast by the trees, remembering the shades of my past.

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"Take her and leave, for the love of all that is holy, Miris!" my father urged my mother in a hushed whisper. From the other room, I listened in on their conversation. My father had just returned from the war the night before. I was hoping to see him; to show him how far I'd advanced in my studies. To go down to the Park and play with him and my mother. When I tried to convince them to let us go for a picnic at breakfast, Papa smiled and sent me into the other room, saying he needed to talk about it with Mama. Since they were talking about my idea, I felt no guilt at eavesdropping on them. But why was Papa telling Mama to take me and leave? Did he not like us anymore? A sob escaped my throat before I could swallow it, betraying me to them.

"Come in here, Alayne," Mama said, giving my father a tired look. "What's the matter?" she asked me, her expression telling me that she knew the answer.

"Why do you want us to go away, Papa?" I asked with a wail. "Don't you want us to stay with you? I'll be good if you'll let me stay! I'm sorry!" the words came out in a torrent of tears and sobs. I felt strong hands lift me up from the ground and strong arms grasp me close in a hug as I cried my fear and misery out on my father's chest.

"There, there, Alayne," he said softly in a soothing tone, "I'm not mad at you. I don't want you to leave me; I want you to leave here for a little while to go someplace safer."

I lifted my head to look him in the eye. Still snuffling and hiccupping, I tried to understand this new twist about leaving home to go someplace safe. "Is home not safe?" I asked, confused. Then, seeing the flicker in his eyes, I knew. "The war's coming here, isn't it, Papa?"

With a sigh, he nodded. "But, Ranger-General Sylvanas Windrunner will be calling out the entire army of Quel'Thalas," he reassured me. "You know Lady Sylvanas, the great Alleria Windrunner's sister, don't you, Alayne?"

“Lady Sylvanas will be fighting in the war?” I said, awed. “Those Urges will never beat Sylvanas! She’s the greatest fighter ever! I told her I wanted to be just like her when I grow up. She came and talked at my school last month,” I babbled. I’d always admired Sylvanas and Alleria. They were my heroes.

“Exactly,” Papa said, smiling, after my praises trailed off. “But, Sylvanas needs everyone who’s not in the army to go somewhere else for a while. She doesn’t want there to be any chance that you or anyone else will get hurt. So, she asked us to tell you to leave when we got the chance to come back here and visit,” he said, shooting a meaningful glance at my mother. “Our friends, the humans, said we could stay with them for a little while.”

“Will you be coming too, Papa?”

“Not right away, sweetheart. I have to stay here and help Sylvanas fight those nasty ‘Urges.’ Once we’re done, I’ll come to you and Mama and we’ll come back here. I promise. Now, why don’t you go down to the Park and play a little bit? Mama and I will be down later and we’ll have a picnic.”

“Thanks, Papa!” I squealed with delight. After squeezing his neck in a happy hug, I squirmed out of his arms and raced down to the Park to pick out the best spot for a picnic. As I ran down the road, I glanced back over my shoulder. Papa stood in the doorway of our house, a sad smile on his face; as if he knew that this would be the last time he’d see home and family.

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It was raining the day that word came of my father. We’d suspected for years, my mother and I, when he never came to Menethil. News of the destruction of Quel’Thalas reached us weeks after we felt what must have been the destruction of the Sunwell. As a child, no older than seven, I did not understand the tearing sensation that seemed to rip through my soul. All I knew was that I hungered for something that I never realized was there until it wasn’t there anymore. My mother said that the cravings would pass; that we would find a way to control them. Her predictions have come true, albeit in a horrifying manner...

Weeks later, we heard tales of the battle where Sylvanas had fallen to the traitorous prince Arthas, the leader of the Scourge. Had fallen and then been brought back, enslaved in an unnatural unlife as a banshee. My mother paled when she heard this news and I screamed at the soldier that he was wrong; he was lying. Lady Sylvanas would never lose to the Scourge! For weeks afterwards, I wept and prayed that someone would come and tell us that the returning soldiers were wrong. I turned my eyes to the heavens and begged the stars to let Sylvanas herself come with my papa to Menethil and prove these humans wrong. But, if my prayers were heard, they went unanswered. Unanswered for ten long years.

My mother and I were preparing supper when we heard a knock at the door. Dusting the flour off her hands, Mama went to answer it. When she didn’t return immediately, I put down the potatoes I’d been cutting and walked into the main room to see who it was. My father’s captain stood in the entryway, a sympathetic look on his face. My mother, her back facing him, her eyes wide with disbelief, her arms locked around herself, stood rocking, chewing her thumb knuckle, staring at the floor. Captain Remar glanced over at me, his expression softening. “Little Alayne,” he said sadly. “You’ve grown up these past few years.”

“Mama?” I asked, my mouth suddenly dry. My mother didn’t seem to hear me. Casting a confused and frightened look at the captain, I walked over to my mother. “Mama?”

“He’s dead!” she screamed. “He’s not coming for us!” With that, she collapsed to the floor, tearing at her face and sobbing. Horror-stricken, I stared at the captain for answers.

“I am so sorry,” he said, kneeling down to pick my mother up from the floor. “Sergeant Tal’ar fell to the Scourge while defending the Sunwell. From the few survivors who managed to flee, he fought bravely to the end, taking many of the enemy with him.”

I nodded, bewildered. Motioning for him to carry my mother to her room, I felt numb, remembering that he had promised to return to us...

The next morning, Captain Remar returned to our house, asking if there was anything he could do for us before he left.

“What is there left to fight for?” my mother asked morosely, her gaze unfocused and her eyes puffy and red from weeping.

“Our homeland,” he said. “Prince Kael’Thas has sent orders for all loyal to the cause to do what they can to rebuild our homeland. The Scourge menace is largely gone, the few who remain confined by our forces and unable to wreck havoc. I know that you and Alayne have been waiting here for Tal’ar, Miris, but there’s no reason for you to stay here just because he’s gone.”

“Home,” Mama mumbled. “We are home.”

Captain Remar bowed to my mother, turned on his heel, and left. I sat down on the couch beside her, taking her hands in my own. “Mama,” I said.

“We’re not going back, Alayne,” she snapped, focusing her eyes and glaring at me. “We will stay here in Menethil.” Her eyes lost their focus. “We told him we’d be here. He’ll come for us. Any day now...”

My mother died a few weeks later. Her body lies sleeping beneath the ground in Menethil Harbor. She never lost faith that my father would return for us. I guess, in a way, he did. Her funeral was short; we did not have many friends among our neighbors in Menethil. The few who came to the burial departed shortly after, leaving me alone in our home with my thoughts. Tears of grief and anger trickled down my cheeks. I had known, deep in my soul, that my father was dead these many years. My grief was for him. My mother had abandoned me here amongst these humans, these people who could never understand our losses. She had run from life into death as fast as she could, leaving me here. My anger was for her.

Weeks passed. My anger faded into a mournful melancholy. I made desultory attempts to return to my studies of the arcane. Still, the magic would not work for me as it once had. The deep and seemingly infinite spring from which my soul had channeled its power had long been destroyed and, as yet, nothing had replaced it. Each time, before I began to try to rediscover what was missing, I prayed desperately to the Light to help me be the person I had been born to be. As ever, my prayers went unanswered.

One evening, little over a month after my mother’s funeral, a soft tapping on the door startled me from my studies. Wiping my bitter tears of frustration away, I hurried to the door to deal with whatever well-wisher had shown up. Accustomed to having to look down to humans, I was forced to raise my gaze to meet the eyes of this visitor. He was one of my own people, though I did not recognize him. Clothed in blood-red robes with a small, ceremonial dagger belted at his waist, there was something fel, though compelling, about this strange man.

“Who are you, sir?” I asked, a tremor in my voice.

“I am Jez’ral. I have been travelling through these lands, gathering in recruits to return to Quel’Thalas. I understand that Captain Remar has been here before, bringing word of your father’s death. He reported to me that your mother needed convincing,” the man said in a brisk, but not unkind tone.

“My mother has been dead for some little time now. I am alone,” I responded, casting my gaze to the ground so he wouldn’t see the tears surging from my eyes.

“I am sorry to hear that. How did she die?”

“Of grief over my father,” I replied.

“Again, I am sorry for your loss. I had come here hoping to convince you and your mother to return to Quel’Thalas. However, I would not want to intrude on your grief,” he said gently, turning to leave.

“No. Please, come in,” I said, gesturing for him to enter. I took his ornate travelling cloak and hung it by the fire. Motioning for him to be seated, I quickly began gathering up my spell books, hastily arranging them out of sight.

“What are you studying?” he asked politely. “Ah, the arcane arts. You are a mage, then, I presume?”

“I was once a promising mage but the Sunwell...”

“I see. And, in all these years, you’ve found nothing to replace it?”

“No, sir. I have not,” I said, bringing a pause of several moments to the conversation.

“Have you considered returning to Quel’Thalas yourself? You could resume your studies there; perhaps lend your energies to helping us completely eradicate the remaining Scourge pests polluting our lands? Prince Kael’Thas will remember those who serve our people well and faithfully. Of that, I can assure you.”

“I would like nothing better than to return with you; to help to cleanse our homeland and rebuild it in all its glory. But since the destruction of the Sunwell, my magic...”

Jez’ral smiled at me. “We’ve found other sources other than the Sunwell.”

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And so, that was how I came to find myself on Sunstrider Isle. My past was dead and buried with my parents. Attired in the robes of a novice warlock, I shut my mind to the whisperings of the past and strode headlong into the future.