

The Death of Peace, Part I

Baranhir always liked the Temple Gardens. Here, amongst the calm, placid water reflecting starlight and the lush, flowering vines, he felt the peace of Elune. Here, he had finally come home. Away from the Legion, Argus, the Tirisgarde... and as he turned around with two cups of freshly brewed tea in his hands, he couldn't help but smile. *Home*. Darnassus felt like home now more than ever as he handed off a cup to the blindfolded, horned night elf across from him.

"I think you'll like this one. It's a brew from Gilneas, I understand... I thought you might like something with a little more kick," the mage said as he settled down, fussing slightly with his robes.

His sister Danyra offered a wry grin. "I'm just glad to drink something that hasn't been in the vicinity of demon blood." She tasted it, and sighed contentedly. It *was* good. Natural. A tang of citrus and a hearty dash of cinnamon. It had been so long...

Her smile faded as she could feel their eyes at her back. The Sentinels, the druids, common citizens. All staring at her, judging her. They dared not say a word, but she knew what they were thinking.

Baranhir watched a particularly sour-faced Sentinel stare daggers at his sister as she passed by on patrol. Frowning, he reached out, placing his hand on Danyra's. "Hey... give them time. The last time some of these people saw you, you were days away from joining the Sentinels. They'll see you for who you really are."

Danyra scoffed. "No, they won't." The Demon Hunter felt bitter. Two sharp horns, like curved daggers, poked out of her blue hair, and two faint, hellish green pinpricks burned through her blindfold. "I did what I did... to save all of this, to save all of *them*, but they don't care. They just see..."

"Don't say it."

"A monster."

Baranhir sighed, leaning back in his seat. Tall, even for night elves, he had a dignified look. His eyes were like amber, his blue hair well groomed, and his robes ornate, softly glowing with arcane runes. "There was a time when they looked at me like that. Back when we were little, a mage would've sooner been filled with arrows than let in. I couldn't even set foot in Darnassus until the Cataclysm. They grew to accept me; our people aren't as unchanging as others think we are. And they'll grow to accept you."

Danyra took a deep breath. "I'll take your word for it." She waved it off. "Look, I'm sorry. This is the first time we've had to really... relax. We've earned it." She nodded to her brother. "Conjuror of the Tirisgarde."

Baranhir smirked, returning the nod. "Slayer of the Illidari."

Danyra chuckled, raising her cup in a toast. “To the Starstrike siblings; we’re not the heroes the Kal’dorei wanted.”

“But they’re stuck with us anyways,” Baranhir quipped, clinking his cup against his sister’s.

“Oi!” a sharply accented voice called. “You’ve started the drinking without me? I’m insulted! I even brought some genuine Gilnean Brandy.”

The brother and sister stood, and Baranhir grinned. “Ogyges!” He looked to the side, smiling wider. “And Gavrilin!”

Sir Ogyges Carwyn was a tall, well-muscled man, with a mane of black hair and a well-trimmed beard. For once, he wasn’t dressed in ornate armor and armed to the teeth, which is what Baranhir was used to, but a genteel suit, befitting a member of human nobility. Beside him was Gavrilin, a massive draenei with enough muscle packed on his mighty frame to rival a tauren. He had a heavily chiselled face, with the curious, catfish-like whiskers that characterized the Draenei hanging off his heavy jaw. Encased in a tank-like suit of baroque armor festooned with glowing blue crystals, Danyra was surprised her brother didn’t snap in half as he was hoisted off his feet, an arm twice as big as her head hugging the mage close to the huge, blue goliath.

“Little Baranhir!” the draenei chuckled deeply, his heavy chest making his breastplate creak. “Excuse my appearance. Would that I could put away the tools of war, but I only just returned from one last tour of Argus. I flew on the first hippogriff when I heard you had returned home.”

“You should’ve seen the poor creature,” Ogyges muttered, smacking Gavrilin’s wide back. “Its torso was shaped like a U.”

The draenei laughed heartily, nearly sending the Gilnean sprawling on the floor as he returned the slap on the back.

Baranhir chuckled, shaking his head. “I’m so glad to see you both.” He turned to the demon hunter. “I can finally introduce you to my family... this is my sister, Danyra.”

Danyra, however, was not smiling. The Gilnean, Ogyges- he had set something off. She sensed no demon in him, but there was something about those eyes... she knew them. From the battlefield.

“Brother,” she growled, grabbing Baranhir’s wrist as she stared daggers at the fel-touched outline she knew to be Ogyges. He was hiding a hulking beast. “Get behind me.”

“What? What’s wrong?”

“One of your friends is hiding something.”

Ogyges and Gavrilin exchanged looks, shrugging to one another. Baranhir was still looking at Danyra as if she were crazy. The Demon Hunter internally rolled her eyes. When would he learn? She took matters into her own hands. Pulling out a dagger, she lunged for Ogyges, whose false human form disappeared in a puff of smoke and a beastly howl.

Danyra's attack was stopped by a huge, clawed hand, and she was now face to face with a massive worgen. He had burst out of his fine suit, a wall of muscle, fur, and teeth. His chest surged as he growled, arms tensing with powerful muscle as Ogyges held her in his grasp, nearly pulling her off her feet. As Danyra stared into his glowing blue eyes, her heart skipped a beat as she recognized him.

"Ah, blast! You see what you made me do?" Ogyges demanded in a deep, rumbling voice. "This was a new suit!"

"Danyra!" Barahir pulled her back as the beast let her go. "Ogyges is a worgen- like most of the Gilneans. He wasn't trying to hide anything."

"No, I know..." Danyra shook her head, tucking away the dagger. "I'm so sorry. It's... hard to remember, sometimes, that the fight with the Legion is, actually, over." She regarded the hulking worgen. He was more than beastly; he was almost bigger than Gavrilin as he loomed over the two night elves. She had seen him in action, and she knew just what he could do against demons. "I thought I recognized you. You fought with the Valarjar, the Titan-made warriors?"

Ogyges nodded gruffly. "So I did. I know you, too. You helped us out of a nasty bit of trouble on the Broken Shore, just before we broke their ranks at the Tomb."

Danyra grinned slightly. The battle had been bloody, but what a rush. And to see that worgen fight with ferocity and vigor to match any Illidari... "You didn't need our help."

Barahir arched his brow. She never talked like that.

Ogyges waved it off. "The Legion business needed Demon Hunters. We wouldn't have gotten as far as we did without you. Any idiot can swing a sword." The worgen sat next to Barahir, taking up a third of the table, and his chair creaking ominously.

"Won't you sit too, Gavrilin?" Danyra asked, realizing her eye had been lingering. She could only make out the general size of the worgen, but he sounded handsome. Ruggedly so.

"Bah," the draenei waved his hand. "I have broken far too many chairs woven out of twigs. I'll just, ah... find a rock, or something..."

"Well hurry up," Ogyges said, slamming a crystal decanter filled with honey-gold brandy on the table. "I didn't keep this waiting in Stormwind for two years to wait for your armor-plated arse to keep me from it. We're having a toast, to victory against the Legion. And finally, Light willing, peace, if the Horde doesn't muck it up."

"We'll just end at peace, why don't we?" Barahir said, raising a glass as Ogyges poured them out. "Let's hope this one gets us to the Lunar Festival, at least."

"To peace," Ogyges rumbled, clinking his glass.

"To peace," Gavrilin returned, after dragging over a boulder big enough for him.

"To peace, Ande'thoras-ethyl," Danyra said. She took one last glance at Ogyges, before settling on the familiar outline of her brother. Still so tall and serene, so calm and collected. *Peace*. The word rang in her ears. How long had it been since she had known it? She leaned back as the three old comrades began chattering about old times, and she let her mind wander. She couldn't discern the serene beauty of Darnassus beyond a rough sketch; she knew the water was

there, that the columns were covered in vines, and the mighty boughs of Teldrassil loomed over head. But it was all tainted with green fel, from her eyes. It was slightly bitter, but there was plenty of sweet, too. A new word entered her mind, something Baranhir talked about often, but, until now, she hadn't really felt since she left it, more than a decade ago.

Home.

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Dagaal had reason to be proud. How could he not be? The High Overlord had called *him*, the son of a butcher, a Hero of the Horde. The Warchief, cold and taciturn as she was, had called him a champion. And now, after two tours of service and fighting the Legion, he had been given command of a cohort of magic users; shaman like himself, magi, warlocks, and priests, all answering to him, for a new campaign. Oh, the warriors like Saurfang would still take center stage, but how many orcs could say that they had the honor and privilege of carrying Doomhammer itself into battle? The orc looked down at the hammer that had taken a blow to the Burning Legion, still infused with living rock and magma that glowed when he touched the handle. He was still in awe of this piece of history, this weapon that had broken the chains of slaves and forged the wastes of Kalimdor into a mighty nation.

“...I still don't believe it,” a deep, eerily echoing voice declared behind him.

Dagaal turned to face a hulking, broad-shouldered orc. His skin seemed slightly off, and his eyes glowed an ice-cold blue. He was early. Dagaal cleared his throat, standing tall and puffing out his muscular chest, a hand nervously touching the red crest of hair on his head.

“Uncle.”

The two orcs regarded one another. They had been exchanging letters ever since the Cataclysm, but their duties to the Horde had always carried them to different parts of the world. It was a shock to find out his Uncle Kasolum, struck down in service to his people, had risen again, at the hands of the Lich King.

“Dag,” Kasolum gave a tight and painfully quick grin across his tusks, cutting the space between them and clapping his hands on Dagaal's thickly roped, powerful arms. “Look at you. You're bigger than your father was at your age.” He punched his nephew's shoulder. “What do they feed you young pups these days, ogre meat?”

Dagaal's smile was slightly strained; his uncle's hands were cold to the touch, and he could feel the elements tremor around him. As a Death Knight, he just wasn't natural. Still... this was all the family he had left in the world. And when he had been alive, he had been like a second father. Maybe he still was. “They had me work as an army cook for years, but then the elements spoke to me, I started training, and...” He lifted his beefy arm, flexing it to show off years of hard work. “The results speak for themselves.”

Kasolum grunted, patting the peak of his bicep almost critically. The Death Knight was roughly an even match for his nephew in terms of raw strength and brawn, but with his years of

experience, the smart money would be on the older orc. He looked back at the Doomhammer, with a look on his face close to reverence. "As I said, I couldn't believe it when you wrote me. My brother's son, carrying Doomhammer into battle." He clapped Dagaal on his broad shoulders. "Nothing would have made him more proud. Your father, you know. And your mother." He forced a smile again, but it didn't take long to be genuine. "The Spirits know I am."

Dagaal grinned, and, bracing the cold, wrapped his arms around Kasolum's thick waist. Kasolum was caught off guard by the embrace, but, slowly, returned it. It lasted all of a few seconds before the Death Knight gruffly pushed Dagaal off, clearing his throat. "You must have questions."

"We've traded letters for years, uncle," the shaman offered his elder a seat. "You already told me about your death in Naxxramas."

"And you told me about your father's death to a quilboar ambush."

"And mother's death in the cataclysm."

The two orcs fell silent. Dagaal looked at his uncle, at his leonine mane of black hair, now brittle with age and the frost that clung to his skin. He still saw his father's face in him, Kasolum and Kurgat had been so close. "If... you need a place to stay, uncle..."

"That's kind," Kasolum cut him off abruptly. "But I dwell with my brothers on Acherus."

"Right. Of course."

The older orc scoffed, thumping his fist against the table. "Enough of this. Dagaal, you were the son I never had. I'm proud of you, boy. And I want to be a part of your life again. I've been bound to duty to one warchief or another, then the Lich King and the Ebon Blade- but an orc, even an undead one, thinks of his family. And you're all I've got left."

"And you fear I won't accept you. You're afraid of that," Dagaal concluded.

Kasolum shot up, bearing his tusks and fangs. "I am *not* afraid!" He shouted, startling the shaman. He sank back down into his seat, his voice growing soft. "I only... I would *understand* if you would rather mourn the orc I used to be."

Dagaal was quiet for a moment, then grasped Kasolum's hand in a warrior's grip. "The elements quaked when you entered my home. They rang in me ear that you were unnatural. But I still see the orc who taught me how to swing an axe... and never yelled at me when I didn't prove very good at it. You helped us build this house. Uncle, you will always have a home here. And I will always be glad of your company and counsel."

Kasolum smiled, real and genuine, as he clasped his other hand over Dagaal's. "Bin mog g'thazag cha. You may not need my protection, from what I've heard, but you can always count on my blades."

Dagaal brightened. "Maybe you can test that sooner than later. I haven't had time to tell you about my new assignment. High Overlord Saurfang has given me an entire cohort. We're marching to Silithus, and I'd love to have you with us."

“*Silithus?*” Kasolum made a face. “By the spirits, why would you want to go to that sand-blasted wasteland? If you want to stare at that blasted sword, I could just smack you in the head with my hilt and save you the trip and the suffering.”

“You haven’t heard?” Dagaal grinned, ushering his uncle close. “Word is, a Night Elf fleet is sailing for Silithus, and Saurfang is moving to meet them. It will be a glorious battle.”

“And you want me to ride with your cohort?”

“Saurfang wants us to accompany the vanguard.”

Kasolum studied his nephew’s face. “You tire of peace already?”

Dagaal blinked. “Isn’t this what you, father, and mother wanted for me? I’ve served the Horde faithfully in Draenor, Pandaria, and I helped bring down the very Legion that enthralled and corrupted our people. Now, we’re fighting for a better future. I... thought you’d be pleased.”

The older orc paused, then smiled again. “Of course I am.” He stood, clapping Dagaal’s wide, rolling shoulder. “Let’s do what your father and I used to do before we went out on a hunt.”

“What’s that?”

“First, we pay our respects to our ancestors, and pray they will bless us in the coming fight. Then, we prepare our warpaint. Finally,” Kasolum grinned, ribbing his nephew. “We drink until we can’t see straight.”

Dagaal chuckled, following his uncle out. It wasn’t until their third round of drinks that the shaman realized trying to drink an orc under the table that no longer had a beating heart was not his smartest plan.

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“That little Danyra couldn’t take her eyes off you, you know.” Gavrilin said, smirking over his shoulder. He and Ogyges were sharing a room in Baranhir’s home, at the mage’s insistence. It was a modest, but well-appointed house, and Baranhir had used his magic to enlarge one of the beds for the titanic draenei’s comfort.

“She nearly tried to take my head off, Gav, that hardly qualifies as doe-eyed,” the worgen, now returned to his human form, replied as he splashed some water on his face.

“Oh, trust me, I know a look when I see it,” the draenei was now shirtless, idly flexing an arm in the mirror, watching his bicep bulge. For a holy warrior dedicated to the light, he had no small amount of vanity. “You once gave such a look to me,” he sauntered over to Ogyges, smacking the worgen on the rear.

“A younger, more foolish me,” Ogyges replied icily, clearing his throat. “It’s a good thing paladins don’t have to take vows of chastity, or you would’ve been drummed out before the Exodar crashed.”

“Ouch,” Gavrilin chuckled. “Come, my friend. I mean it. We may not have worked out, but that does not mean I do not wish you happiness, eh?”

The worgen gave a wry smile, patting the draenei's thick chest fondly. "Yes, I know. She is a... fierce warrior, I must give her that." He looked up at Gavrilin. "You really think she likes me?"

"You find it so surprising? You are a handsome man, my friend. And, she's a night elf... you know she likes beasts."

Ogyges stifled a chuckle as he elbowed the draenei. "You're incorrigible! Do the Naaru know you carry on like that?"

"I am a Vindicator, my friend." Gavrilin struck a pose, tensing his thickly built arms and puffing out his chest. "My life is dedicated to upholding valor, compassion, and honor. Nowhere in my vows does it say I can't have *fun*." He tousled Ogyges' hair with another chuckle before striding out into the common room of the house.

Baranhir was sitting by a window, nursing another cup of tea. He seemed lost in thought for a moment until Gavrilin cleared his throat. The mage turned, then gasped. "Oh, by Elune, you're... you don't have a shirt on, Gavrilin."

"I know. Lovely sight, isn't it?" the draenei chuckled, sitting next to the night elf.

Baranhir shook his head. "Glad to see you're at home, at least."

"Your hospitality is most appreciated, my friend. Thank you for the adjustments to the bed, too... I was afraid I'd be sleeping with my hooves dangling over the edge." Gavrilin studied the mage. "Are you alright? You seem far away."

"Do I? I'm sorry." Baranhir shook his head. "I suppose I'm just thinking about the future. I think I'll resign any commissions I have with the Alliance military... I'd like to stay in one place, for once. Some of the Highborne mages are asking me to help them with research. Actually studying, just for the sake of knowledge, and not because I need to find some hidden artifact to save the world... it's a nice change of pace."

"Mm, not for me." Gavrilin thumped his fist on the table. "There are still many, many demons that need to be put on the business end of my blade. I had almost thought... maybe, one day, one could return to Argus, but after seeing it..." his smile slipped. "Well. I suppose Azeroth really is my home, now."

"It's not so bad a place," Baranhir grinned.

"Indeed, it is not."

Danyra was out at the balcony, just feeling the cool night air on her face, and listening to the sounds of Darnassus. Out by the Temple of Elune, she could hear the Priestess singing a hymn. It shook her to the core. It had been so long since she had heard a simple song of praise, a thing of beauty for beauty's sake.

"Ahem."

Danyra turned around, her hand on the hilt of a dagger, but the outline etched in fel told her it was Ogyges.

"I'm sorry- I didn't mean to startle you," the Gilnean man held up his hands.

“Oh...” Danyra cleared her throat, turning away to hide the slightest hint of blush. “No, no, you’re fine. I am sorry for this morning.”

“I was about to turn in for the night... but that’s always difficult for me, in Darnassus. I always feel like if the rest of the city is up, I ought to be, too. I love visiting- my aunt and uncle help out at the Howling Oak- but if I stay too long, I’m not able to sleep properly for days.” Ogyges chuckled. “Though it is a beautiful city, all the same.”

Danyra grinned softly. “It is.”

Ogyges joined her on the balcony, leaning on the rail. “What are the Demon Hunters planning to do, now that the Legion is defeated?”

“Oh, there’s still many demons out there... but with Lord Illidan gone, the Illidari are looking to me and a few others for answers. I don’t know if I have any for them. I don’t even know what I’m going to do.”

“How do you feel about the Alliance, now that you know your people are dedicated to it?” Ogyges asked.

“The division between the Horde and Alliance seemed stupid to me... but I remember how much I hated the Horde, when they killed Cenarius. And I had no idea about their invasion into Ashenvale, their bombing of Theramore...”

“Or the Invasion of Gilneas,” Ogyges muttered darkly.

“Right. Of course.” Danyra sighed. “I never visited Gilneas. What is it like?”

“Oh, gloomy. Rainy. Utterly depressing,” Ogyges quipped. “But there was always a bleak sort of beauty to it. My father loved taking me on walks through the moors, just outside Gilneas City. There are deep, ancient forests and dramatic mountains. It’s the type of country that wears you down, shows you the sort of man you really are. I miss it, every day. But I’m grateful to the Night Elves, for taking us in.”

Danyra frowned slightly. “I admit, I’m a little jealous. My people treat you with more affection than they do me.”

“If it helps, you should have seen the nasty looks Stormwind gave us. King Varian looked fit to set the hounds on us when we arrived.” Ogyges made a face. “My first campaign with the Alliance was quite a good bit of grunt work; they stationed me in Northrend, of all places. A miserable six months of swatting down giant spiders and ghouls. They needed time, but now? The Alliance has been there for me, and for all Gilneas. They’ll be there for you, too.”

Danyra laughed. “Are you recruiting me for the 7th Legion, or something?”

Ogyges shook his head. “Perish the thought. Not that I wouldn’t mind seeing more of you. I’d always be happy to have someone like you at my back.”

There was a lull as the two stared out over Darnassus. Danyra rested her hand on Ogyges’. “It is a beautiful place, isn’t it?”

The worgen arched his eyes, but moved to hold her hand. “It is.”

The warhorns blared across the Barrens as Kasolum and Dagaal rode out to meet the shaman's cohort. The older orc marvelled at the army before him; it spread out like a flood of red and black, smothering the dusty plains. Every Horde race was present, from his own brothers and sisters to the refined Blood Elves and undead Forsaken. Dagaal was right; this would be a battle to remember.

"Everyone! At attention!" A deep, rumbling voice barked at Dagaal's approach. "The Centurion's here!"

Kasolum and Dagaal came before a hulking mass of shaggy brown fur. A huge tauren, with a bow taller than either of them and a spear even taller strapped to his back, loomed in front of them. With arms like tree trunks, he clapped Dagaal on the back. "About time you got here! The Overlord's preparing a big speech before we head out."

Dagaal stood firm as the tauren enveloped him. "Atar! Uncle, this is my second, Ataran. Atar, this is my uncle, Kasolum."

The huge tauren regarded the orc, lowering his long, ivory horns before offering his hand. "Sir! Dagaal's mentioned you. You're a veteran of the three wars, aren't you?"

Kasolum nodded gruffly, but shook his hand. "I am, and I believe he's mentioned you. You're the Hunter who helped him out of a scrape in Draenor, aren't you?"

Ataran grinned wide, thumping his massive chest. "I've helped him out of more scrapes than that. Little guy would be lost without me." He said, tousling the orc's hair.

"Hey!" Dagaal tugged on the elements, sending a small spark up the tauren's hand. He looked fearsome in his armor; a crown of molten rocks hovered above his fiery red mohawk, and his shoulder plates were living rock and magma chained together. It was only the power of his magic that kept it from searing his skin, or the blood red tabard across his vast torso, emblazoned with the symbol of the Horde. "I'm your Centurion now, so you do that again, I'll have you on latrine duty all the way to Silithus."

"I'd like to see you try," Ataran chuckled.

"I'll help him, if it comes to that," a silky smooth voice declared. Brushing past Kasolum, a blood elf stepped forward. She was a model of elegance and grace, dressed in a dark purple robe that accentuated her toned physique, her hand wrapped around a dark red scepter. Her strawberry blonde hair was done up in an elaborate bun and crowned with a tiara that glowed faintly with a dark energy. Kasolum narrowed his eyes slightly; a warlock.

The blood elf had draped herself on Dagaal's shoulder, leaning in to kiss him on the cheek, which made the Death Knight arch his brow.

"Ah-ha, yes," Dagaal was grinning goofily at the kiss, but then straightened up as his uncle's gaze fell on him. "This is Sevilla, uncle. She and I... well, we-we know each other."

"We call it a courtship back in Quel'thalas, my dear," Sevilla said in a sultry voice, running a hand over his bare, thickly muscled arm.

"Sevilla!" Dagaal chuckled nervously.

“You seek to make this warlock your mate?” Kasolum asked cautiously.

“*Uncle!*”

Sevilla stepped forward, gracefully bowing her head. “I’ve known Dagaal for years, sir. I admire his *vast* strength and power. But he is also a gracious man, and I, in turn, enjoy his company and do what I can to please him... that is, to make him happy.”

“They can’t keep their hands off each other,” Ataran clarified, earning a spike of earth lifting out of the ground and hitting him in the back. “*Hey!*”

Dagaal glared daggers at the tauren before he cleared his throat. “Uncle, Sevilla and I are together, but we’re not at the point where we would be mates.”

Kasolum nodded gruffly, as he usually did. His nephew’s love life wasn’t a concern... at this moment. He made a note to keep an eye on Sevilla. “Far be it from me to keep you from... having fun, nephew.” He looked to both the blood elf and the tauren. “I’ll be joining you as an auxiliary. I wasn’t assigned to this campaign, but I’ve sworn to fight at my nephew’s side.”

“So... I’m still your second, right?” Ataran asked.

Dagaal sighed. “Yes. For now.”

The orc shaman shouted orders, and Sevilla and Ataran got the rest to fall in line. Dagaal’s cohort boasted orc and troll shaman, tauren druids and hunters, a few goblin and blood elf mages, forsaken warlocks, and even a handful of pandaren. All the magical might of the Horde, packed together in a single unit.

As his soldiers stood at attention, Dagaal craned his neck to the front, where Overlord Saurfang, aside his mighty warg, was making a speech. All at once, Dagaal, Ataran, and Sevilla looked to one another as the leader of the orcs made his grand announcement: they were not marching to Silithus at all. The army was headed to conquer the Night Elf nation, all of it, in a glorious conquest.

“He *can’t* be serious,” Ataran muttered, eyes wide.

Sevilla chuckled, nudging Dagaal. “Well... this got interesting.”

The shaman turned to his uncle. “You fought the Night Elves, back in the Third War. Looks like your aid just became indispensable,” Dagaal smiled. “I’m glad you’ll be with us.”

Kasolum gave a smile that never quite reached his eyes.

Saurfang’s generals barked orders to their units, and the army began to march. As Dagaal mounted his own warg, the Overlord himself approached. The old orc still cut an imposing figure; still a powerful warrior of the Horde. He nodded to Dagaal. “Throm-Ka, Centurion. After your actions on Pandaria and in the fight with the Legion, I know you to be an orc of honor, and I wish to deliver your orders personally. Your men suit you?”

Dagaal saluted, pounding his fist against his chest. “They do, sir, thank you. We’re ready to bring honor to the Horde.”

Saurfang gave a slight smile, then his eyes fell on Kasolum; the old orc was frowning again. “I know that face.”

“We fought in the Third War, Overlord,” Kasolum bowed his head, but his face was set. He looked like he knew trouble would be coming. “At Mount Hyjal. I served under you until I was sent to a mission in Naxxramas.”

“...Kasolum.” Saurfang’s jaw tightened. “You were dead.”

“I came back, sir.”

“As a Death Knight,” the Overlord growled.

Sensing trouble, Dagaal spoke up. “My Overlord, Kasolum is my uncle. We’ve been in correspondence since the Cataclysm. He’s sworn to fight for me, and I wished to fight with family at my side.”

Saurfang gave Kasolum a withering look before turning back to Dagaal. “Very well. I trust your discretion, Centurion. You are being sent to secure Stardust Spire. It’s been strengthened with gnomish constructs and Night Elven mages. It controls the road into Stonetalon Mountains, and I am sending reinforcements to rendezvous with you from Krom’gar. Once you meet with their Overlord, you are to join them and a small part of your forces, and meet with me at Zoram’gar. Understood?”

“Yes, sir!” Dagaal declared. “Lok’tar ogar!”

Saurfang nodded approvingly. “Lok’tar ogar!”

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Ogyges and Danyra were spending more and more time together. It had been three days, with Ogyges meeting with old friends and relatives in the Howling Oak, and Danyra being reacquainted with Teldrassil.

“The city’s grown so much since I was here last,” Danyra murmured. “The stones for the temple were just being laid. It’s... amazing to think it’s now such a proud city.” She drifted a little closer to the worgen. They had made a daily ritual out of wandering around the Temple Gardens; they had both agreed it was their favorite place.

“I first came here as a refugee,” Ogyges said, picking up a smooth stone and skipping it across the placid water. “This will never be Gilneas, but I’ll always be grateful to the Night Elves for trying to make my people feel at home.” He looked over to Danyra. “We’ve both been... changed, because of what happened to our people. I really would like you to see the rest of the Alliance... I’ll be heading back to Stormwind City shortly, my mother’s side of the family has a house there.”

“You’re not tired of military life?” Danyra asked.

“I’ll be tired of it when Gilneas is at last free. I’ve heard about 7th Legion operations, but... the damnable blight.” He shook his head. “When my King, or maybe his daughter, if it takes that long, gives the word, I’ll be the first to answer the call. I won’t rest until I can take my own children on a walk through the moors.”

Danyra grabbed his hand again. “You would’ve made a great Demon Hunter,” she grinned. “We spent so much of our lives fighting for our own home. We gave everything for it. If anyone can understand what you’re feeling, it’s me.” She shook her head. “I’m sorry, it’s just... I’ve not met many humans like you, Ogyges Carwyn.”

“I like to think I’m an exceptional person,” Ogyges grinned, slowly cutting the space between them. “You have a... fierce beauty to you, Danyra. Like a nightsaber, sleek, but powerful.” He lost his nerve, there. “I, ah... forgive me if I’m being too forward.”

“Your ferocity isn’t too bad either, you know,” Danyra giggled, teasing Ogyges’ trimmed beard. “So... we’re both ferocious. I’ve got a demon within, you’ve got an inner beast. What might I have to do to get that inner beast out?”

Ogyges chuckled, but a deep growl was sneaking into his voice. “You ask nicely.”

Danyra teased his cheek, then planted a kiss there. “Please?”

The worgen began his transformation, his face morphing into that of a noble wolf, his body expanding as he wrapped his powerful arms around the night elf and dipped Danyra, returning the kiss. “Now... you mentioned a demon within?”

Baranhir was lost in his work, grinning infectiously. Here, in the small Highborne enclave near the Temple of the Moon, he felt entirely at ease. Pouring over ancient texts of Highborne magic, the mages were trying to correlate what they had learned about teleportation networks with what adventurers had seen in Suramar, after the ancient city had rejoined the world.

“Master Mordent, do we have that text by Prince Tortheldrin, the one about transference?” He called out to the Enclave’s leader.

The mage’s work was halted, however, as Gavrilin came lumbering in the room. The draenei was geared to the teeth again, the hilt of the fabled sword, Ashbringer, poking over his shoulder. The hulking paladin paused, catching his breath.

“Baranhir! My friend!” he called out. “I came as soon as I was able! My people may still be drained from the fight with the Legion, but I’ve gathered a few other Vindicators who still have the will to fight. They’re on the way to help. The Night Elves will not stand alone, not this day.”

Baranhir exchanged looks with the other mages in the room. “Gavrilin, what are you talking about?”

The large paladin scanned the room. “My friend... you have not heard? The Horde have invaded. They’re already as far as Astranaar!”