

# Tales of Azeroth

## The Veovis Legacy

*By Florian "Mystler" Meißner*

The sun above the ruins of old Silvermoon was approaching the horizon rather quickly, as the day faded into the night. The empty streets lay silent except for a series of muffled steps. A slender, cloaked figure moved through the shadows of the ruined city. Unperturbed by the stench the Scourge had left behind when it lay waste this part of Silvermoon, the unknown visitor crept from building to building until they suddenly halted in front of what looked like a medium-sized residence of a middle class high elven family. The utter silence was disturbing. After all the time since the Third War and much effort to rebuild the many districts of Silvermoon, areas near the so-called "Scar" where the undead had advanced towards the Sunwell were completely lifeless. From their pocket, the silhouette produced a small object and looked at it. It was a ruby. The subtle, red glow was barely noticeable. A delicate, thin gold chain was threaded through a hole on one end, turning the jewel into an elegant necklace.

Enclosing it in their right hand, the figure entered the building. Although the furniture was widely scattered around the place, it was still obvious this was once a comfortable dwelling. If someone would care to replace or repair all of the damage, it could even be restored to the state it was in years ago. Slowly, the intruder strode through the rooms, examining them quite thoroughly. When they reached a staircase, they climbed up to the second floor. There, one room in particular seemed to draw the figure's attention. It was a small chamber, containing only a few shelves, a cupboard, and a bed perfectly sized for children. At the far end there was an ornate window overlooking a plaza. In the center of the plaza, there were shattered parts of a small fountain. The trees that once decorated the corners between the streets had been dead for a long time. What was once a nice view now verged on eerie, especially at the brink of night. Approaching the window, the cloaked guest paused, a sudden current of memories crashing into their mind, taking them back to a time many years ago.

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She knew something was wrong as soon as the screaming started. She also knew the cause: her father had said that Silvermoon would be safe and, even in the worst case scenario, the undead wouldn't reach the capital anytime soon. He had been wrong. Alarea didn't know how the Scourge had gotten here so quickly, but obviously the rangers had failed to hold them back. And now, she could hear high elves suffering for that miscalculation. She jumped up from her bed, where she had been lying and reading a school book mere seconds ago, and hurried to the window. The fountain plaza was full of people running in arbitrary directions. In the rush, some even tripped

and fell, just to get back up and continue running. Downstairs, she could hear her mother starting a heated discussion with her two sisters. However, Alarea was too paralyzed by the panic outside. The screams grew louder and came closer by the minute.

Then, for the first time in her life, she saw an undead with her own eyes. A group of a few rotting creatures entered the plaza, trying to grab and tear through anyone in their way. Some of them showed distinct high elven features like the typical long, pointy ears or stumps thereof. Others looked rather primitive and must have been humans from the south before they were reanimated as soldiers for the Scourge. One unlucky high elf was caught by a ghoul. He struggled to get away from its grip, but it was too strong. Another ghoul joined his comrade and began clawing at the elf, tearing one of his arms off in the process. The cry of agony sent a shiver down Alarea's spine.

Suddenly, a crackling bolt of energy crashed into one of the undead, slamming it back into a nearby wall, immobilizing it. Her mother ran into view, a staff in her left hand, sending another bolt towards the second creature still holding the helpless elf. As it hit, the ghoul was blasted apart, catapulting some of its bones a few meters away. The high elf toppled down and, freed from the undead's grasp, he tried to crawl away. Most people had cleared the plaza by now and were headed to find safer places. This gave her mother more room to dispatch the other approaching zombies. One of the ghouls had separated from the others and started chewing on the elf's lost arm. She conjured a ball of fire, launching it towards the creature and scorching both, ghoul and arm, on impact. From her right, a group of three more ghouls charged at her. Mumbling unrecognizable words, she cast another spell. In front of the ghouls, a burning circle formed and started expanding. The flames grew bigger and bigger until they consumed all of the ghouls charging into the wall of fire.

She didn't have much time to catch her breath, as a much larger creature arrived with another group of ghouls. It was a disgusting abomination: a creature consisting of several humanoid corpses sewn together into a giant patchwork of flesh and animated to fight for the Scourge. In its left hand it held a chained hook, while in its right hand, it wielded an axe already slick with blood. Next to it, a huge arachnoid beast moved towards her mother, a being from a race later known as Nerubians. The ghouls and the abomination mindlessly and wildly charged into battle, while the Nerubian, on the other hand, had circled around her, trying to get to a strategic position for a flank attack. With another spell, she formed an icy barrier to block the charging wave of undead. She entered a defensive stance and focused on the Nerubian. Using her staff, she blocked a series of blows by the Nerubian's claws. A loud bang could be heard and cracks appeared on the ice wall as the abomination slammed its enormous body mass into it. For now, it held, and Alarea's mother continued fighting the Nerubian. The arachnoid creature began to get frustrated and increased both speed and power of its attacks. The ice barrier then shattered into pieces; the colossal abomination had broken through the barrier with the second body slam, much to her surprise. As she parried another attack by the Nerubian, she accumulated even more arcane energies and channeled them into a shockwave which hit all of the undead. While he ghouls

were blasted away, the abomination and the Nerubian recovered all too quickly. With a small arcane bolt, she blasted away the chained hook the abomination had nearly used to impale her. Unfortunately, the attack had left her flank open to its axe, which it swung, slicing her side open. A deep gash began filling with blood instantly. Falling to the ground and despite the intense pain, she tried another spell. Two icy spikes shot from the ground beneath her enemies. One impaled the Abomination, boring through the entirety of its body, including its head. The other one missed its target by mere inches, with the Nerubian counter-attacking almost immediately. By raising the staff, she managed to fend off a slash by one of the Nerubian's claws, but the creature had overwhelmed her injured mother. Another sharp claw pierced through her chest like a sword. Almost casually, the creature shook her bleeding, dead body off, leaving it for the ghouls to feast upon.

Alarea felt the urge to throw up when her big sister yanked her around.

"Come on, we have to run!", she yelled.

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"I spoke to one of the guards", her sister said. "No sign of father. He is in one of the missing ranger regiments."

"I'm sure he'll be back", her younger sister replied.

The other did not answer and just smiled sadly. Alarea bit her tongue. Her little sibling's naivete was remarkable, but her hope was most likely misplaced. Alarea had seen the Scourge dispatch everyone in the way. Their sudden invasion made it unlikely for her father to have survived. Besides, her father would probably rather die trying to defend their homeland than flee like a coward. Just like her mother, who had fought to buy them some time. Ironically, due to Alarea's paralysis when she had observed the battle from her window, their gain was minor. And now both were dead, and she had to accept that, no matter how hard it was for a twelve year old girl.

Alarea had to get some fresh air and left their provisional tent. Outside, there was hectic bustle, but compared to the last few days, it was almost quiet. She looked up. In the distance she could still see a few shrieking gargoyles, the flying bat-like creatures of the Scourge, circling above Silvermoon. It was obvious that the main force of the Scourge was retreating. She had heard that they came for the Sunwell and they must have found it. Some in the camp believed they lost their connection to the Sunwell. Alarea wasn't sure. The last few days had turned her feelings into a playball of emotions. She couldn't even imagine what normal felt like, anymore.

But they had been lucky, too. The Scourge's advance, while surprising, had not been fast enough to stop their escape from Silvermoon that day. Through the backdoor of their family residence, they had escaped and made their way as far away as they could. Fortunately, they had managed to avoid any encounters with the undead. Not far from the city, they had soon encountered more escapees. Together, they had reached a group of refugees fortifying a camp for the many fleeing high elves. It was good, as participating in setting up tents and preparing food from emergency provisions, a task

considered adequate for children by the adults, had helped occupy their minds for a time.

The nights were still horrible though. In her dreams, she could see her mother being stabbed over and over again. At first, she had to throw up when she remembered these events. By now, she had hardened as the image was anchored deeply in her head, a haunting part of her very being.

Just like her anger against the Scourge; because of them, they were stuck in this place. Because of them, they had lost everything they had. Because of them, both their parents were dead.

The high elves had stood no chance against the invasion. But Alarea was determined. One day, she would meet them again. One day, Arthas and his undead would pay for what they had done.

Her big sister joined her in front of their small tent. A worried look on her face.

“What did you really see that day?”, she asked.

“I already told you. I saw them kill Mother”, Alarea replied.

“Yes, I know. But that’s *all* you told me.”

In the shadow of the tent, Alarea could see her little sister eavesdropping on their conversation.

“That’s all I’m going to tell you. I see no reason to disturb you with the details. I’m just glad you got us out of there alive.”

“Fine.”, her sister gave up. “But if you want to talk, I’ll always be there for you.” She turned towards the tent. “Both of you.”

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No matter what the Scourge did to Silvermoon, the evening sun of the Eversong Woods was still one of the most beautiful sights in the Kingdom of Quel’Thalas. It was a symbol of hope and Alarea tried to enjoy it as she was wandering through the refuge. From the medical tent, sounds of pain from injured refugees echoed around. The medics had to work day and night to keep up with the incoming stream of survivors. A few priests and mages did their best to mend wounds and comfort the poor souls.

Alarea was glad about how they had been welcomed at the camp. While some adults treated the children without respect, even blaming them for taking away precious space, most of them were very kind. Almost everyone had lost someone here. In times of need, the high elves stuck together. There were even talks about setting up a temporary school for the kids. She didn’t spend much time with other children though. They were all busy with their own problems. Those who still had a family couldn’t know what she felt like anyway.

“Alarea!”, her little sister called out to her from behind. “Are you going for a walk again?”

Alarea turned. “Yes, I am.”

“Great”, she said and handed her an item. It was her ruby necklace, or rather the jewel that was left of it. “My necklace got broken during our escape from the city. Do you think you can find someone to string it again?”

“Hmm... I don’t know. I can try to fix it.”

“Thank you. I’m going to help sis with whatever she is doing over at the command tent.”, she said and ran off.

Alarea laughed. Since Mother had died, her older sister was taking on more and more responsibility. She did her best, as their mother had done, and she was a valued help for the refugee camp administration. Alarea was sure that this was her way of coping with the catastrophe. She slipped her sister’s necklace into her pocket and continued on her walk.

She usually walked through the camp in the evening, but never had she walked as far as today. Not much was going on near the western end. Two hooded elves were leaving the refuge as she came around. At a table, four elves were playing a game of cards. She watched them silently for a while. It was clear they mostly played to pass the time, their enjoyment hampered by recent events.

From one of the tents, another hooded figure emerged, heading towards the forest outside the camp. Alarea frowned. Where did people go to so late? And why were they cloaked?

Her curiosity aroused, she looked around. Nobody gave her any attention. Keeping a certain distance, she set out to follow the mysterious elf.

She had completely lost her sense of direction by the time they had made their way through the forest and arrived at a clearing. About a dozen elves had already gathered and were involved in an agitated discussion. At the far end of the glade, there was a carriage capable of transporting a handful of people, ready to depart. In front of it, an old, scarred, white-haired elf stood silently, two blades on his back, his arms crossed, completely unimpressed by what was happening. Alarea guessed he was the bodyguard for the tall gentleman next to him, who seemed to be the initiator of this secret gathering. He was wearing expensive leather armor and wielded expertly smithed weapons.

Carefully, Alarea tiptoed into the shadows of a tree surrounded with a bush. It had the perfect shape; adults would be far too big to hide in the place and nobody would expect a child to be there.

As the elf she had been following joined the group, the tall elf stepped forward and the discussion died away.

“Nice to see that many of you followed my call and came here today”, he opened. “You all know what this meeting is about. The undead invaded our lands, destroying huge parts of Silvermoon and the forests of Quel’Thalas. Thousands of innocents died due to an army led by a human maniac.”

There were mumbles of agreement from the audience.

“But this was not the first time an enemy stood on our doorstep. Not long ago, Doomhammer’s Orcs of the Horde and Zul’Jin’s Amani Trolls burned their way through high elven territory. Back then, our military was able to fend them off thanks to the

help of the humans. But still, far too many died, and I intend to do my best not to let that happen again.”

Some elves nodded their agreement, while others seemed to have doubts about how he would do that.

“How, you wonder? The rangers and mages may do their best to protect our kingdom, but I think it is wrong to simply wait until evil finds us. We have to destroy it before it becomes a threat. Before people like Arthas or Doomhammer amass legions of warriors. And we have to take the fight back to them. What do you think the Scourge came for? Just the Sunwell? For now, their main force withdrew back behind human borders, but they will come back even stronger.”

Worried looks exchanged between the attending people.

“This is why I asked you here, tonight”, he continued. “I want to create an army - an army of deadly assassins. I want to train you to be shadows of justice. Hitting fast and hitting hard where it hurts the most. Infiltrating the enemy and thwarting their plans before it is too late. I want to create a network of spies all over the world that is capable of understanding and stopping unknown, rising powers.

“This is your chance to join me, and it is your only chance. This carriage will take us to a hidden base of operations, this very night. But remember, you will be shadows. All your ties to this life will be lost. You may never see your friends and family again, for you will be nameless agents that cannot be known or we’ll lose our advantage.

“So if you decide to come with me, this is the time to step forward.”

Some of the elves still had reservations. Whether they didn’t want to let go of their lives or whether they doubted the idea or both, Alarea didn’t know. One finally stepped forward, and a handful of others followed.

Alarea had listened to the speech with excitement. For some reason, it had touched her heart. Was this what she was longing for? Was this her opportunity to sate her anger at the Scourge? Maybe she could become a proficient fighter and remove threats before they reached innocents. And maybe she could kill Arthas herself.

Still, there was the matter of her sisters. The tall man had said she couldn’t see them again. It made sense. What would they think if they knew she had left them just to become a deadly killer? No, instead, she would restart her life, leaving them behind with the loss of three family members. Her thoughts raced and her emotions battled as she tried to make a decision. They would certainly live on without her, she realized. No doubt, her older sister would do her best to care for her younger one. She would even have one mouth less to feed. So in the end, it all came down to one final question: whether Alarea could handle her *own* conscience for leaving them in the dark.

Taking a deep breath, she emerged from her hiding spot. “I want to join you”, she announced.

The audience was caught off guard at her unexpected appearance. A few of them gave her a consternated look, others laughed mockingly.

“What are you doing here, child?”, the leader asked. “Did you get lost? Get back to the camp!”

“I want to join you”, she repeated confidently.

“Kid, I am here to recruit people and train them for combat. Go back to the camp and play or do whatever you do. Don’t you have family there?”

“No, I have no family”, she lied.

The other sighed, kneeling down before her. “Listen, I am looking for strong fighters, not a child that hasn’t even seen a real battle before, and surely should never have to see one. What I talked about is a dangerous life.”

Alarea stepped over and kicked him hard in his groin. “You also talked about hitting hard where it hurts the most.”

Laughs sounded from the elves that were watching the scene while the man she had kicked doubled over and groaned in pain.

She felt somewhat liberated. She had put all of her anger and frustration into it. It was good to vent some steam.

Suppressing his pain, the leader slowly got back up, shaking his head. “No way! I am not going to train you. I am not going to...”

The old elf she had earlier assumed to be his bodyguard interrupted. “I will train her”, he said. “She seems to be a cunning girl. The fact that she came here and listened in on the meeting without *anyone* here noticing proves it. Besides, she is young and may be a quick learner. I am willing to train her.”

Alarea blinked. She was just as surprised as anyone else to see the old elf interfering. Then pride swelled in her chest. She knew that this was the right decision. She would be eager to learn and train hard, in order to strike back at the undead and avenge her parents when the time would come. For the first time since the fall of Silvermoon, she felt that she finally had found purpose in her life again.

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Her consciousness returned from her mind’s excursion into the past. Alarea was still standing at the window of her old room. This was where it all began. The events she had just remembered had shaped her into the person she was now. Indeed, she had trained hard. She had taken out many enemies threatening Azeroth over the last few years. Ironically, the idea of “being a shadow” turned out to be quite ambiguous. Of course, she was unseen and efficient when she executed a mission, but she also had to maintain a public image. Along her journeys, she had helped many factions in Azeroth and Outland. She had joined up with other brave heroes to defeat foes like the mighty Deathwing. Or the Lich King. As she had promised so long ago, she had even gotten her revenge on Arthas; her parents could now rest in peace. She had even traveled back in time and led a small garrison in an alternate timeline of Draenor. Yes, she could safely say that she had won friends out there.

However, in all those years and after all that traveling, she had never returned to this place before, and she had never contacted her sisters. Although some of her friends knew her true identity, she couldn’t bear to find and approach her siblings. For all she knew, they thought she was dead, which was probably for the best. Otherwise, they might forever hate her for leaving them alone.

Alarea turned, left her old room and entered her little sister's room. She looked at the necklace she was still holding tightly in her hand. Mother once gave it to her sister. The ruby symbolized the red hair that all of the children of the Veovis family had. All that time, Alarea had carried it around with her as a memento of her old life. She had repaired it with a beautiful golden chain. Now she was going to return it - symbolically. She could not give it to her sister, but she could put it where it belonged. On the desk, the jewelry stand was still where she remembered it. Carefully, she placed the necklace on it. With that, Alarea left the residence with a happy smile on her face.

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Eireenia ran past the rangers in the training room, her priest's robe not at all slowing her down. She flung the door open as she reached the office and barely managed to halt in front of the desk. Silvarea jumped from her chair, startled by Eireenia's rushed entrance.

"What can I do for you, little sister?", she asked.

Eireenia placed a ruby necklace on the desk and her sister's eyes widened.

"It's Alarea! She's still alive."

**THE END**