

Blind Lane

Written By Bartan Tirix

Screenshots and some Lore taken from Guild Wars 2; owned by Arena.Net



"It's damn cold here..." The white female grumbled, following her small familiar through the graveyard. Gazing upon the headstones, one by one to see if any of them felt familiar. Only for the servant to chirp and circle a pile of rocks. "This one? Are you certain?" Another raspy response as she read the mark. "Hmm... An unknown Charr warrior lies here. Arrived in Hoelbrak mortally wounded..." A soft purr that was nearly a whimper from the creature, getting Linet to nod softly. "Yes, I can feel it too, but I'll need proof. Let's see if we can find who found her that night."



"Distraction sent. Camo ready. As soon as that gate starts up, the only thing he and his assistant will see are a couple of muzzle flashes. Then... Darkness." She whispered into the device, taking a deep breath and squeezing the trigger halfway. "Kalla give me strength. Teach my paws to war, and my claws to fight."



"Zhaothe. Guard." The ranger commanded the wyvern, following the small raccoon to the rusty gates. "Are you sure this is where they were held? ...Hmm, tracks. Thank you. As promised... Don't eat them all at once. Winter is coming. Now to find out who was keeping them." A few chitters before the critter took off with the pouch of trail mix, getting the attention of the young dragon, but not the pursuit. Instead, a faint purr in question as Eman studied the cage. "Mmm... This is where they were held by the Separatists. Likely taken to be executed... No. One got ill. They were afraid that the sickness might spread, or possibly attract skales... They dragged them out, down to the shore there. I bet if I dive in, I'll find them-" A double take when something caught the ranger's eye, looking beyond the trees of the area to find another set of bodies. Not one of charr, but Asura. "Is that... Inquest?"



"What a dumb place to hide a hit." The charr grumbled, as she tore open the letter and examined it. "Could be stolen, discovered, or even blown down under by the damn wind..." A breath in frustration. "I recognize this name. Shouldn't be too much trouble. You refreshed, Phraxxix?" A near chirp from the raptor. "Alright, lets head out then. The sooner I get paid, the sooner you get to eat." A purr in question. "West. We're meeting up with Tobias in two days. We'll take the gate to Lion's Arch after that." A playful yelp in excitement as the theropod took off.



("You're lost.") The female voice in the charr's head grumbled.

"I am *Not* lost. I recognize that tree."

("Only because you passed it four times.")

"That would be why I remember it, yes." The revenant sighed. "...Okay, I'm lost. Will you stop looking at me like that?"

("Maybe you should ask for directions.")

"Ask what? A grub?"

("Don't be snippy with me.")

"Okay, okay. Fine. But seriously, who?"

("That Grawl over there, the one that's looking at you funny.")

"He probably is."

("It would be a good start.")

"It probably would be."

("Then why aren't you moving?")

"Because I can smell him from here."

("Is that what that is? I thought that was the smoke from the garrisons.")

"Nnnnnnope."

("...What exactly is that then?")

"You really really don't want to know- Wait. Aren't you an all-seeing dragon?"

("That I am.")

"Caaaaan you tell me the exit?"

("That I can.")

"Then-! Why-!?"

("You never asked.")

"Glint...!" Zarj whimpered in frustration. "We're never going to find him if we don't stop wasting time! -Wait! You can tell me where he is!"

("I can.")

"Sooooo-?"

("But I won't.") A sharp, disappointing whine from the large one. ("And before you start, something-")

"Needs to happen." Another sigh from the heavily armored charr. "Fair enough. Let's just focus on getting out of here first, then maybe head...?"

("Southwest.")

"...That's an odd choice of direction."

("Are you questioning me?")

"N-no ma'am!"



"Why here of all places?" A purr in question from the small servant. "Yes, I can sense it as you do, but that doesn't..." Several little chitters as they approached another grave. "Necromancer, that's easy enough to follow-... Sylvanian? She must've been one of the Nightborn then." A small grumble that was almost cute. "Whatever. She awoke from her dream in the night, 'Nightborn' is close enough. But that doesn't explain why that Charr was here, and it's a long way from Hoelbrak. Granted, I'm not complaining. I'm not very fond of the cold." A few deep, monstrous growls came from afar behind them. "Hmm... We should take a look around. After we take care of the brand."



"Are you sure that white bear of yours is right?"

"Why else would he lead us to this cave? And don't say because it's full of other bears. They don't work that way."

"You're the wilderness expert. What did you find up river?"

"Other than its damn freezing and frozen passed the den, not much. However..." The ranger passed her an aqua breather. "Could this be hers?"

"Where did you find this?"

"There's a dredge mine underwater. If I had to guess, she collided with one of the beams there, knocked off her breather and got swept away by the currents."

"That still doesn't quite explain why she was in here."

"Well, what season did they find her?" A look in question from the necromancer. "If it was late spring-"

"Flooding?" A nod from Eman. "So, she somehow got in here, likely freezing without a way to get warm. The question is, how did she get in the water in the first place?"

"As well as how far did she travel. Even underwater, Charr don't go down that easily. What did the norn guard say about her injuries?"

"Broken ribs, several stab wounds, cuts and some kind of infection from some plant."

"Pungent Gladiolus? I found half a field underwater as well. Means she definitely went through there." Linet took a moment to ponder as the ranger grumbled and continued. "I've helped you

enough, wouldn't you say? Your target is dead, mine is only MIA." A stern look at the male charr.

"...Fine."



"That's... That's a lot of wurms."

("Yes. Yes it is. You best be careful.")

"I'm always careful."

("Not always.")

"I'm always... Trying to be careful?"

("And that always ends in failure.")

"Not helping my confidence here, Glint."

("They're just wurms, it's nothing to be afraid of.")

"Then why did you tell me to be careful?"

("Because that ice looks cracked.") Several moments of silence. ("...You didn't think of that beforehand, did you?")

"-I did...! Not, no."

("Well, go for it. You might as well make the first attack.") The Charr remained still. ("...What are you thinking about?")

"Back when you were alive, if you decided to eat one of these things, would it be considered Cannibalism?"

("No.")

"But they're Wurms."

("And I'm a Wyrms.")

"...I'm not hearing a difference." The dragon in his mind sighed in disappointment. "How much farther Southwest must we go?"

("Less west and less south. More east at this point.")

"...That's the last time I try flight."

("Don't say that. You wanted to hurry and attempt to catch up to him faster.")

"Sliding down a mountain-!" The charr nearly roared in frustration, getting the cave to rumble a bit and the stalactites above to rattle and the revenant to stand still for a few moments. Continuing in harsh whispers. "...Sliding down a mountain is not helpful!"

("You were doing fine until gravity kicked in.")



"Why did they even post you here?"

"I go where the Vigil tells me to go. It's honestly not that different from Blood." No response from the sniper. "I thought you liked this place." Barely a noise in confirmation. "...You're leaving again."

"I got another contract."

"From Ash, no doubt." The armored one half growled. "...They could really use someone like you here-"

"To be put on watchtower duty for the rest of my days. That sounds wonderful-"

"Which is better than being out on your own behind enemy lines, nearly getting yourself killed." A thick silence. "Is it so much to ask that I want you in a position where I can protect you-?"

"You don't need to." The black Charr snapped, taking a breath to calm down. "I know how to survive on my own."

"Because it's less painful if you lose yourself over another comrade, is it?" A growl from the sniper. "And what about me?"

"Since when does a Blood Legion soldier actually have feelings-?"

"Don't start with that, Iliza." The guardian said thickly. "I don't belong in the Legions any longer, not after they sent us marching to our deaths."

"I get it. You don't trust them-"

"And neither should you!"

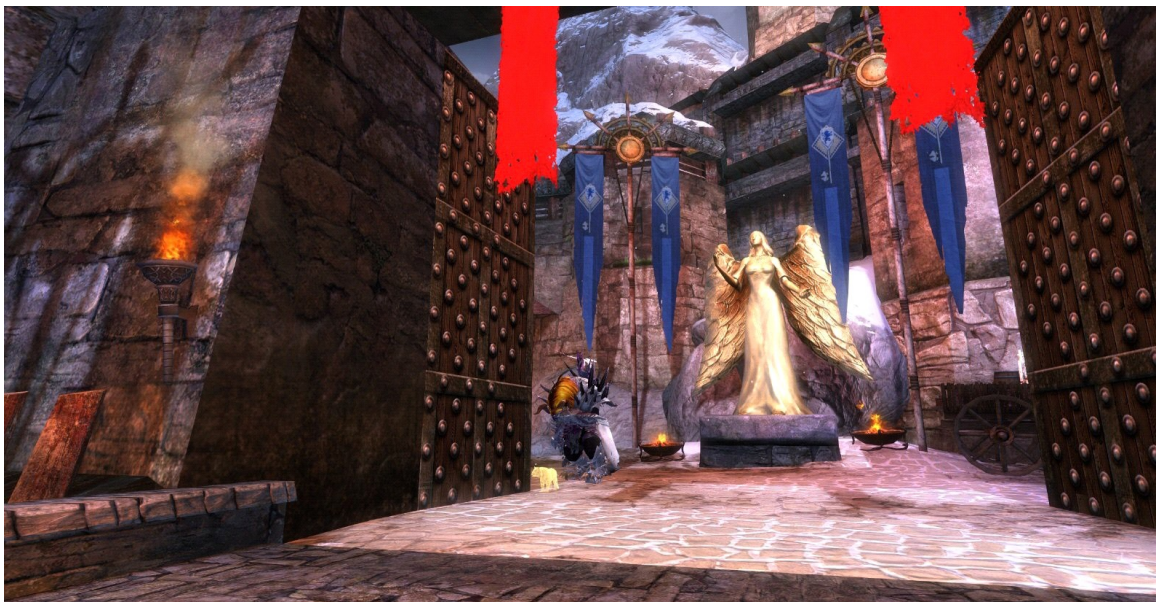
"And the Vigil is so much better!? What exactly is the difference here, Tobyas-!?"

"The difference is I'm not a Slave!!" The larger one roared, her voice carrying through the

opened air. "Everything in the Citadel is For The Legion. Work, For The Legion. Fight, For The Legion. Live For The Legion -**Breathe**, For The Legion!" No response, as the armored charr knelt down beside the black one. Holding her rather closely. "Ash didn't save you, Ilizabeth. They sent you to die, just like..." The sniper looked away.

"...I can't turn them down. If I do, they will consider me a traitor."

"So, you'll work for them. Until the day you die." No response. "Then what will I be left with?" That time, a look from the black one, and Tobyas sighed. "...Your visit wasn't supposed to be about this..."



Zarj'annan: "So, what does this tablet say?"

Priory Historian: "Oh, this one is written in New Krytan! Very exciting! You can't read it?"

Z: "I... Wouldn't have asked if I could."

PH: "Of course, of course! Let me translate it for you!"

Kalla (within Zarj's head): ("Oh, this will be good.")

PH: "THE CHARR REBELLION THE STORY OF KALLA SCORCHRAZER AND THE CHARR REBELLION"

K: ("Does she have to yell it?")

Z: "Apparently so."

PH: "AGAINST THE SHAMAN CASTE HAS BEEN MANY TIMES MOST HISTORIANS HAVE STUDIED THE BATTLE OF THE"

Z: "My ears..."

PH: "PLAINS OF GORGHEIM. AND HOW KALLAS FEMALE WARRIORS TRAINED IN SECRET FOR A GENERATION-"

Z: "Okay, okay! It's about Kalla, I got it. You could've just said so."

PH: "Oh! You've heard of Kalla Scorchrazor!?"

K: ("Yes, Zarj'annan. Have you heard of me?")

Z: "...More than I care to admit."



Linet threw a strange dust into the fire, causing it to flare up and burn white for a few moments. "There. Preparations are complete. The rest is up to you, little guy." The familiar screeches in response. A few moments later, voices of the past can be heard:

"Is that what they've been training you to do in Ash? Steal hard drinks?"

"You expect me to pay for human wine? Most of it tastes like swampwater. I'm honestly convinced that's what they're doing." A faint chuckle. "Besides, it's your last night here. You're finally out of this god forsaken swamp, and hopefully out of Kryta from here on out."

"Yes and no." A pause. "Don't give me that look. It's one last job, just security for a luxury ship as it moves down river. Still in a swamp, still in Kryta." A bit of a growl. "After that, we can go anywhere you want."

"And damn well stay there?"

"Away from everything. Away from the Vigil. Away from the Legions. Away from Cheap Wine."

"You're going to miss it."

"And you're going to miss assassinating people." A grumble in response. "...But the important thing is; I won't miss you."

"...You're going soft, Toby."

"Shut up and drink."

"...You're making me soft too." No response for several moments, as a bottle was passed.

"What do... Nevermind."

"Out with it, sourpuss."

"What do you think about having a cub?" A long pause.

"...No more wine for you."

"Shut up."

"And we're going to need a male for that, you know-"

"Stop talking." A pair of chuckles. "I mean, raising one." Another long silence. "Stop looking at me like that-"

"Outside a Farhar? You *have* been hanging around humans too long-"

"I'm serious."

"...You've already found one."

"Hey! You Two! Get outta here-!"

The necromancer looked over the flames, almost picturing the two sitting by the fire before getting up and likely clobbering whoever disturbed their moment. "Ship...?" She whispered, soon raising a small fiend. "Take this messaged to Eman."



"This looks like the place. Quite a bit off course from where they were supposed to have gone." The ranger half grumbled, scouting the area carefully while on the griffon. "Looks abandoned, and picked clean by pirates. But I'll need a closer look to determine it's age-" The large avian suddenly faced about and cooed, getting Eman's attention. "What is it? ...Over there?" He dismounted the large bird and cautiously approached, only to find the remains of several bodies. "...Asuran. Weeks old. But this emblem... Inquest? Just like by the Separatists..." The ranger picked up a device not far from them. "...I detest technology..."



The charr ranger walked into the house, barely getting the attention of the Asuran guard. "Well, it seems that pirates are getting brave enough to just walk into this place."

"I'm not a pirate." Eman grumbled at him.

"With hair like that, it's hard to believe." A bit of a growl from the ranger. "If you're looking for an audience with Master Wrelk, I'm afraid he's not seeing anyone today."

"That's what you said an hour ago."

"Then why are you back here?"

"Because I took care of your 'Pirate Problem' and now I want answers."

"As I stated, Master Wrelk-

"Not from him." A noise in question from the asura. "From you." The charr pulled out the device he found. "What can you tell me about this?" Vejj studied it with a bit of caution, making a few grunts of discomfort. "You don't know what it is?"

"I'm going to go out on a limb here and just guess that because I am an Asura, you expect me to be skilled with all technology I cross?" The ranger just stared boorishly at him for a few moments, ears spaded. "Your silence speaks volumes."

"Considering you mistook me for a corsair today, **Twice**, be thankful that Silence is the only thing I am giving you."

"And I'm giving you some advice before someone gets hurt or loses an eye: see a cosmetologist." A growl from the larger one.

"Can you tell me what this does or not?"

"I can, yes. But I don't know if I should. This seems like something that should be taken to the Lion Guard. If not..."

"Why." It was barely a question. "I know it's from the Inquest."

"Then you know why I'm being so cautious." The charr stared him down in silence, causing Vejj to sigh. "It's... Tracking something."

"What."

"That I can't tell you. But... With a bit of work, I can give you locations of the most recent pings."

"Do it."



"So." Linet started, as the ranger exited out of the cave. Nearly surprising him as the

necromancer rested in the grass, enjoying the evening. "What did you find?"

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm following footprints, as you are. Just in different methods." A long silence as they stared into each other's eyes, Eman looking for some sort of motivation. "We want the same thing here."

"We're not partners."

"I know that-"

"And I can't trust you."

"Because of who I'm working for?" Another silence. "Who do you think hired me?" No response, just the stare from those blue eyes of the male's. "I'll say it again, we're looking for the same person-"

"No, we're not."

"And you're running out of leads." A faint growl from the ranger as Linet sat up. "I'm willing to share my information with you if you're willing to do the same."

"For what purpose?"

"To stop a weapon from existing. That's purpose enough." No response for several moments as he looked back towards the cave. "This is bigger than you and your pride, old ranger."

A half heated exhale. "...It lead to a stream within it."

"And? You found something?" A bit of a grumble from him. "Familiars are wonderful allies. Though they're not the best when it comes to details. Out with it." A near growl that time as Eman pulled out something wrapped in a cloth, tossing it to her half hazardly. "...A broken rifle barrel?"

"Yes... I used to make them." A look in question from Linet. "Ones from those materials... Years ago."

"How many years?"

"Twenty, at least. Back then we had different methods than what we do now."

"So, you're saying this is an old model? Then why the hell does it look like it was made a month ago?"

"You tell me." He growled in response, crossing his arms. "What are you searching for, exactly?"



"I'm searching for," Linet continued. "what happened to the Fate of a soldier." That stare from the blue eyes didn't let up. "That other location you checked out before this one-" A low growl from Eman, but she paid no mind to it. "Where was it?"

"I have the feeling you already know."

"Not specifically. I know what I felt was in the south of Kessex Hills."

"What do you mean: felt?" Her red discs looked at the ranger for a few moments and she took a deep breath.

"There's a reason why they hired a Necromancer for this job, Eman. We're the closest ones to the Mists without having to completely pass through it."

"Meaning what." It was barely a question.

"What do you think was on that ship, ranger? And why would the Inquest be searching for it?" No response as those blue eyes attempted to stare the answer out of her. "There's a lot more to the world than what our senses tell us. A lot more to the design of how things are woven-"

"The Eternal Alchemy?"

"...That's one term for it. It's more than just an Asuran Religion, you know. And a hell of a lot more complex."

"Where are you going with this?"

"How do they put it...?" Her familiar chirped a bit. "Yes... That's it: Fate can't be tempted. It's part of the Eternal Alchemy, just like everything else. Days pass, the cogs turn, the future comes, Eman." No response. "But what if it was able to be tempted? Manipulated or tampered with?"

"Linet..." He growled. "What was on that ship." Another demand, getting her a bit cross.

"I won't tell you that, because I don't want to be here for another ten years **Explaining** it to you." She growled, getting one in response. "Long story short, something beyond Cursed. Something the Inquest believes can change Fate."

"...But it can't." Several moments of silence as the two stared thickly at each other. "A thing like that can't exist."

"Shouldn't exist." A bit of worry was seen in those blue eyes. "But it doesn't change Fate, Eman. It consumes it."

"What does that even mean?" The necromancer took a breath and laid back down. "Linet-"

"What did you find in Kessex?" A stare from the ranger.

"...I found a glove. Straps were ripped, likely cut from something."

"And it wasn't there long." A bit of a growl from him. "A week or two?"

"Something like that."

"And what was so special about said glove?"

"...It's from Ash Legion. Designed for a Marksman."

"Or in this case, a Sniper." The necromancer looked at Eman again. "Now, who do you think is in possession of such a thing that can rip through the Mists?" A long silence before he worryingly exhaled.

"I need to report this." The ranger eventually stated, getting Linet to sit up in the grassy fields of Harathi. Her growl nearly echoing through the night. "She needs to know-"

"It's better that the Legions don't know about this-"

"I don't work for the legions-"

"Or anyone else for that matter!" The two stared at each other intently. "The less people know about this, the better. Otherwise we might have panic in the ranks, and the last thing we need is for someone to forcefully **Make** this assassin into a threat." A grumble in response as Eman crossed his arms. "Who do you work for." No response, but those blue eyes looked towards the west a bit. "It's better that we do not keep secrets from each other, Eman." A long stare, then the male charr sighed.



...She came to me. Found me on the tail end of a hunt. Said she was searching for me for quite a while. Charr. Heavily armored, but no emblem to be found on her suit. She wasn't Vigil, Lion Guard, or Legion, as far as I could tell... Mercenary, maybe. "I've been looking for you for some time, old ranger." She said, getting off of what appeared to be a Branded... Theropod of sorts- And before you start, I'll get to that.

"What for?" I nearly growled at her. I'm not going to lie, the Branded get under my fur. And I'm pretty sure she could tell that. "That thing can't be trusted."

"At ease, he's not going to hurt you."

"And why's that."

"Let me introduce myself, I am Caondrai. This is Phraxxix. He's tamed, don't worry-"

"The Branded **can't** be tamed." I grumbled, but the creature didn't seem to be hostile in the slightest. "Where did you get that?"

"He's not mine." A made a noise in question. "You are Eman, right? Eman Ssel? Legendary Tracker?"

"I'm not sure if I should answer that."

"I want to hire you. I'm looking for someone."

"Who?" Caondrai looked over at the Branded creature.

"His owner." My stare of disapproval didn't lift. "I was doing a protection job in Soren Draa. Nothing special, just some extra security for some short-stick, when this thing came out of the bushes and scared the pants out of every asuran in a two mile radius. Nearly causing Rata Sum

to be completely locked down."

"...But it was searching for you. Why."

"Because I met him and his owner..." She took a breath in almost remorse, studying Phraxxix for a moment before returning her gaze towards me, a thick anger in her eyes. "I met her... Twenty years ago. When I was nothing but a street cub- and he hasn't aged a god damn day!" All I could do was stare at her. "I was told that you were the best tracker when it came to finding someone. Days, weeks, months-years! You could find it. And before you jump to conclusions, I don't need a Detective! I- ...I need to know if Iliza is still alive. As well as..."

"Tobias..." Linet stated. "Iliza and Tobias... They were going to adopt a cub, or at least wanted to..." A faint growl left the male. "What did you do after? Where did you start looking for her?" Eman faintly grumbled as he thought back.



"I followed the Branded's tracks up the river a ways. Ended up on a beach where there was signs of a struggle. A few bodies of Inquest around, but there was a lab nearby. I thought nothing of it at the time..." A breath from him as he turned to look south. "After seeing the same armors, the same equipment that I found near that shipwreck in Bloodtide... As well as in Ascalon a while back..." Linet's movements got his attention, watching her slowly get up and approach him.

"...What are your instincts telling you?" Though the blue stare was quite stable, there was a hint of worry beneath them. "No matter how far-fetched, let's hear it." A few moments of study as he took a deep breath.

"...They each had their last job. I'm not sure how well Iliza's went, but there's a lot of Pirates down in Bloodtide. It wouldn't take much word of mouth for them to seize a luxury ship. Let alone kidnap those on board and hold them for an extra ransom."

"And Tobyas?"

"...Slain perhaps. I never found any sign of her body anywhere, but I know Blood Legion. They wouldn't damn well give up until they were drained of every drop. There's a reason why you don't hear stories of Charr being raped, it's just that damn much easier to kill them and get the trouble over with." A nod from the female, taking no offense at the statement. "If I were Iliza... A contract assassin that just found out..."

"You'd clean up the very coast yourself by eliminating every pirate in sight. Odds are taking on too much and likely getting flanked in the fight."

"Attempting to hide out where they kept such a 'Treasure' and..." A gesture towards Linet. "You know more about it than I do."

"It would eat her Fate, so to speak." A snout toss from the male, getting her to growl at him. "What."

"That statement makes no sense."

"It makes no sense to someone who doesn't understand how Fate works." A grumble in response. "Think of it as a path in life. Your future. If you are Fateless... In Theory, it's possible to alter your path. Possibly within a fraction of a second-" A double take at Eman's strange stare, like a sudden realization. "...Why are you looking at me like that?"

"...What about someone else's?" A noise in question. "Another person's Fate. Would they be able to change that too?"

"Not without consequence-"

"But she wouldn't know that." Another stare into the south, more towards the east this time. "...Tobyas' body was never found. We're just assuming because it's been twenty years and it's decayed." A hard tap against his arm, gesturing him to get on with it. "That norn who found that Charr's body, the one who died near Hoelbrak... What color did she say her fur was?"

"Black and grey. The same as Iliza's coat."

"Did you check the grave-?" A sharp growl from Linet.

"You do not disturb the dead, Eman-"

"Did You Or Did You Not?" He nearly roared, receiving another growl from her.

"I felt the signal, so to speak. The scent of the Mists within it. I didn't have to Check the grave to

see if it was her-

"And what if Iliza..." He trailed off, taking a breath and looking at the device he found. "This thing is tracking signals- The Inquest were tracking Her signals. Ones that are just scattered across Tyria." At stare at the necromancer. "What if she's been Blinking... Not in different locations-

"But different... Times?" Linet pondered. "Twenty years... And not aging a day."

"Not even the Branded live that long."

"What does this have to do with her grave?"

"If Iliza could take her mount with her through the Mists, odds are she could take others too." A stare from those red discs. "History never found Tobias' body. If Iliza wanted to hide it for safe keeping. A place cold and would likely remain mostly preserved-

"You've got to be kidding me...!!" Linet growled, covering her eyes with a paw.

"It would be..."



The ranger looked over the watered area carefully, finding the usual signs of struggle. A few dead asura that only seemed to be downed an hour or so ago. Yet, what equipment they had left was dated several weeks back. "...So, she jumped about twenty years in the future. That's where the Inquest detected the spikes of energy... Likely seeing a pattern or perhaps sending out several squads in various locations to find her..." He knelt down, finding a few scraps of a brown coat. "...Leather. Krytan. They engaged... Likely trying to take the power or whatever by force. Ended up getting sucked into whatever holes she made."

Another look over the dead bodies. "All Iliza was doing was defending herself. Likely still in the mindset of revenge, something I..." A sigh from him as the red wyvern whimpered at the Charr. Pawing at his pantleg and getting a comforting pet in return. "I'm alright-" The two's attention suddenly went sharply behind them, the smaller dragon releasing a faint hiss when they detected motion. Something heavy... Bipedal... Casually walking, then a sigh behind some rocks.

"Never trust directions from a frog... I know what they're called, you don't need to tell me... I'm taking Kalla's side on this one, they still smell bad which means they give horrible advice." The small wyvern just looked at its master in question, only for Eman to lightly shrug at him but still remain cautious. "Now how are we going to get down? -And don't say Fly... Because I can't quite get the flapping motion right and everytime I attempt it, I fall like a rock... Thank you for that Kalla, you are just lovely. Couldn't you be a little more sensitive like Glint?" A heavily armored charr walked out from behind the boulders, overlooking the view and what lied below the cliffs.

"Hmm?" The strange male turned about and looked directly at the ranger standing higher up. His long golden mane flowing with the breeze as the two just stared at each other. "...Oh. Funny meeting you here of all places... No, no. The... Fro- Hylek! I was going to say Hylek, are still terrible at directions, and I'm beginning to think you are as well." A noise in question from Eman. "N-not you. Just..." Zarj'annan grumbled, holding his paw over his eyes. "Give me a minute."

Several moments of awkward silences and grunts from the heavily armored one before he spoke up again. "Minx'... Please. S-sorry! I didn't mean to call you a- I just mean, Females just seemed so strange of a word-"

"Are you okay." Eman grumbled, getting a bit impatient, yet concerned.

"I'm fine. Just... So much yelling..." Zarj lifted up his other paw, taking a few breaths. "Are you done? ...But I already apologized... Okay, can we just discuss this later? Y'know, in private, and not in front of the ranger?" A snort from the... 'Sane' Charr, getting the strange one to look at him for a moment. Then the ranger sighed in slight frustration.

"Let me guess... You know who I am, what I've done, what I'm currently investigating, and why I'm here." Zarj almost whimpered, rubbing the back of his mane. "And you're not going to tell me who you are-"

"O-oh, me? I'm just RIPD; a Rift Warden." The ranger raised an eyebrow at him. "T-think of it as... An officer of the law, buuuut in the Mists." That stare continued. "...You've heard of the Mists, right? -Please tell me you've heard of the Mists."

"I have. Can't say I've been there."

"It's not the greatest place. Think of it like... A very foggy Lion's Arch." A stare of puzzlement.

"...So, crowded?"

"And a shortage of chairs, yes." The strange charr awkwardly grumbled, looking off to the side. His ears flicking from time to time.

"And you're hearing voices... Some sort of radio transmitter or whatever?"

"Y-you could say that. But that's... Going to take too long to explain. I'm here because of-"

"Ilizabeth." A slight whimper from Zarj. "I know." Eman took a breath, looking off into the swampy landscape of Sparkfly Fen. "I know how much of a threat she could possibly cause."

"A... Portion of it, at least." The strange one sighed a bit. "Listen, Eman. I'm here to protect you-"

"No." The ranger stated sharply, getting the Rift Warden to double take.

"Pardon me, but I'm pretty sure I just heard a-"

"No."

"Y-yeah, yeah. Okay. I did hear a..." Another paw over his eyes. "What-?"

"I'll handle this myself."

"Eman-"

"I'm not here to hunt her. She's not a target, she's not a prey to me. She's not my enemy, my fugitive, nor a criminal. I'm only after one answer: whether or not Iliza is alive. That's all."

"...She might not see it that way, especially if you're tailing her." A calm breath as the ranger closed his eyes.

"...I know."

"And you're willing to risk...?" No response. "Eman, take it from someone who took this place for granted. Overstay your welcome here. Don't-"

"No one lives forever, Warden."

Distraction sent.



Eman walked up to the pond, unusually finding nothing in the area that had a spike of such energy recorded. Kneeling down towards the strangely cleared waters as his companion took a drink, letting the old charr ranger stare back at him through the moonlight's reflection. Lost for several long moments in the blue discs that rippled with a hardened pain of the past.

But those ears flicked, getting the wyvern's to do the same and nearly hiss before the ranger's strong paw was placed on the back of Zhailthe's neck. "Don't. Move." He commanded in a harsh whisper, nearly making the dragon whimper. Feeling the intense primal urges of being watched behind them... Being targeted.



"I know what you are." The ranger said, not looking up from the water. "I know what you've become over the years. Something... Unnatural. Something that others stated shouldn't even exist... We're not that much different. Different still, yes, but at the same time, we're similar... A shard of the same broken mirror."

Silence fell over the forest as that threat didn't lift. "So take it from someone who feels the same loss. Revenge is an endless wheel that clouds your mind. The Vengeance will never stop. If it's not those who took out the ones you cared about, it's their comrades. If it's not their comrades, it's the ones closest to them. Once they're dealt with, you'll find a way to blame your own allies. Your own command. You'll want to *punish every one* of those who sent you out into that **damn** purple dirt to die-!"

A whimper from the wyvern interrupted Eman, letting him take a heavy breath. "...Maybe your story is different, but the feelings are mutual... Listen to someone who went down the wrong path. Who wasted so much of their time, effort, and youth tearing the enemy apart. Expecting that someday it would heal those wounds." Another deep breath. "...I'm not here to hunt you down. I'm not here to stop or end you. I'm only here to answer one question: Are You Alive?"

The dense forest echoed with ambiance. "But that's a question you eventually have to ask yourself. Iliza, unlike me, you have somebody waiting for you. Wanting to see you again..." No response, and the ranger closed his eyes. "Your loss is heavy, I can empathize. But I know this

path you take too well... It's hard to forgive and forget, but you will find peace if you do. Especially with the aid of another."

A very long silence with a heavy tension filled the air, silencing everything as if the ranger was deaf. Eventually feeling that aim release and barely whisper harshly into the air. "*I can't stop...*" It sank the tacker's heart. "*I won't stop... Not until she breathes again...*"

"Then you know how this will end." Eman took a breath. "You already know that they're after you. You already know the damages you are causing everytime you run from them." Silence. "...That damage would only increase once you save her, only because you know you will never be able to keep her safe-" That threat returned, nearly getting the wyvern beside the ranger to hiss and be held down again. Taking a few moments to breathe. "...I don't know that much about what you're capable of, Iliza. I don't know the damage it causes, but I know it exists... Don't... Don't ruin the lives of the entire planet to save-"

"*Do Not Say Her Name.*" Another long silence as the aim didn't let up.

"...You have someone waiting for you. Someone that is currently still alive and able to help you through it-"

"*You're Lying-!*"

"Because she's been dealing with the same loss for the past twenty years!" The ranger felt a stall from the threat, opening his eyes and nearly looking at the shadow hiding in the corner of his vision. "She's still alive, Iliza. Caondrai is still alive. And you know...!" He looked up at the black fog, catching a glimpse of a violet iris within. "You know where she will be." A long stare before the threat lowered once more, and soon the fog dissipated. Leaving nothing behind as if she was never there. With a heavy sigh, Eman looked back at his own reflection once more...

*From The Heaven Of Together, To The Earth Of Alone
Change Your World Before It Kills You*