

Hey all. Here's the next chapter of ***Death's Avenger***.

This has been edited by me with Grammarly and [Alex Crate](#). Tomon has the chapter, but hasn't talked to me this entire month... Unfortunately, that might mean bad things when it comes to Stallion of the line.

Fate Touched will be up by the end of the month, although I won't be able to send it off to an editor before then. Similarly, ATP will be posted over on fanfic late the 31st.

Chapter 12: Traveling is an Adventure

Satyrs were in no way a race, if they could even be called such, wherein organization was often found without a stronger voice, be that from the Old Gods in their jails far below to which many satyrs had given their loyalty or the Burning Legion which had created them in the first place. They did have a certain amount of hierarchy, in that individuals who could use more magic than others were always in charge, yet this was always in the same way that a bully would be in charge of a group of thugs, a thing of intimidation and roaring orders rather than thoughtful leadership and organization.

Satyrs were fearsome in battle, and understood easily enough the need to work together in battle or when working towards some set goal. Setting up camp, though, was almost always a chaotic mess.

Wrin'sauk slunk out of view of his fellows. Once out of sight, he slumped down behind a tree, using it to hide from any looking for him. He wasn't exactly the runt of the group, but Wrin'sauk certainly wasn't high up on the totem pole either, which meant he was easily pushed around by those who were. And he'd carried enough jars of water from the nearest water source for the day, in his opinion.

Sitting there, Wrin'sauk looked out over the forest, hearing the growls and shouted orders from his fellows deeper into the camp, including the deeper, magically assisted snarl of Fas Ragh, their chief.

They'd been moving slowly around the foot of Highmountain, hoping to discover a path upwards that didn't have the markings of tauren on it. The band had captured a lone tauren weeks back, and after being tortured for several days, they'd been able to discover where he'd come from: Highmountain Valley, a large, incredibly well-hidden, incredibly defensible valley high up in the mountains.

Fas Ragh knew that any attempt to invade the valley had to come from an angle that the tauren wouldn't expect. The creatures were fearsome fighters, and although they, like kaldorei and even dryads and keepers, would eventually succumb to the Satyr Curse and transform, it was hardly worth the effort if the band lost more members than they could gain further down the line.

Besides, the tauren we tortured was clear that there were thousands of them up there. Even if we somehow got in touch with every satyr on the island and pointed them in the same direction, we wouldn't have the manpower, Wrin'sauk thought, a barely contained snarl of disdain coming to his lips. But Fas Ragh thinks he needs to be doing something in order to keep his position. And he's right. Kuf As and Col Do are nipping at his heels for a reason. Before we caught that tauren, we'd been suffering a food shortage for over a year, all because he thought that the swamps we'd settled in made for a good defense against anyone finding us. Foolish! He is still spooked by memories of before.

That was a phrase the satyrs used when thinking about what few vague impressions and even fewer whole memories they had of the time from before the curse transformed their bodies into satyrs. Few among them even had those, of course. The magic that the Burning Legion's lord, the Fallen Titan Sargeras, had created was insanely powerful, changing the original satyrs on the most basic of levels, both physically and spiritually. Those that did were sometimes not quite right in the head for many other satyrs' perspectives.

But Fas Ragh was also powerful. He had killed several challengers for his position over the decades and had led the group somewhat well. It was only when he had decided to stay in the swamps for a full season that things started to turn against him.

Although, hehehehe, Fas Ragh's plan from this morning is actually better than the idea of 'scouting out' this Highmountain valley, Wrin'sauk mused leaning back against the tree and waiting for his fellows to finish setting up their new camp. Instead of attacking the tauren in their fastness, we attack that village of kaldorei that Shifkrah and his band of scouts found the other day. They did excellently to not be seen, and not to just rush in on their own to steal away some of the children they reported.

A whole village of kaldorei, with many of them showing signs of age and the elements. Few combat capable warriors among them, all of them ripe to be taken. The women to be mated until they turn, hehehe, it's been many a decade since I've sampled kaldorei flesh. The men to be turned or slain for food. Yes, yes! We could become a truly powerful band then. Not powerful enough to face the tauren, but strong enough to move elsewhere on the island, maybe draw some of the small harpy bands out there to us. Such creatures are always willing to join with us.

Satyrs were not a natural race by any means whatsoever. There were **no** female satyrs. Even if a kaldorei or Tauren woman was corrupted by the Satyr Curse, they would eventually turn into a male satyr, slower but just as surely as a man of either race. However, Satyrs could rut with any other race, even those like tauren, drogbar or even murlocs and others that kaldorei, the race the original satyrs had been transformed from, were sexually incompatible with. Thus, unless a band of satyrs was in enemy territory or knew for a fact they would be chased by a more powerful force, a group would abstain from passing on the curse or outright killing any female sentient they were able to overcome so that she could be used to bolster their numbers in other ways.

More amusingly to Wrin'sauk and others who had been able to partake of such things, the same unnatural vitality that the curse gave their race continued on into the birthing and gestation process. Wrin'sauk knew for a fact that he had come from a kaldorei woman who had birthed practically twenty other satyrs before her body began to give out, and she was finally turned into a satyr herself. Wrin'sauk had seen it for himself and knew that satyrs also grew from birth to adulthood in a year.

Yes, Wrin'sauk thought, smirking in the satyr manner as bright, fiery green flickers began around his fingers. *Attacking that town is a much better plan than trying to forge their way up the mountain. Let alone taking on a whole civilization of tauren.*

He never saw the dagger that swiftly stabbed into the side of his neck. Nor did Wrin'sauk make a sound as he expired. A dark blue hand clamped around his mouth and nose kept any noise from escaping before the dagger was pulled out and the arm wielding it latched around his waist.

Nealu crouched behind the lazy satyr he'd just killed, holding him still until his death rattles had finished. When he was certain that the satyr had finished moving, he stared around the tree into the camp that the satyrs were currently setting up. For satyrs, this meant knocking down trees to create horribly made lean-tos, setting up lots of fires and a few scattered cooking spits, on which bits of meat, cat or boar meat, if Nealu was any judge, cooked.

Watching to make certain that the creature's death hadn't been noticed, he then backed away into his original hiding position, barely a few feet away. Crouching there, he slowly prepared arrows beside him along with the bow he'd left there when he'd moved forward to remove the satyr who had almost walked over his hide a moment before.

Raising his fingers to his lips, Nealu let out a bird call, imitating one of the many finches that made their homes at the base of the mountain. Too long trills burst out from between his lips, followed by a single short one.

And then, there were snakes.

It really was that quick, and Nealu shivered a bit as he watched hundreds of snakes, who had made their way unseen into the camp, begin to make their presence known, biting and poisoning. *And I always felt as if Harry's pranks were scary. Thank goodness he never went into simply leaving snakes in anyone's bed as a prank.*

From his own ambush point high up in one of the trees near the westernmost point of the camp, Harry clenched his hands together, activating several specialized totems around the area. He had been on sight for several minutes and had more than an hour beforehand to set up his little traps all around the sight, along with a single hard point.

These first totems to activate mixed Harry's own brand of magic with that of the tauren. The offensive spell embedded in them was a Confundus that covered nearly twenty feet around the area. Even as the snakes were doing their work, many of the satyrs simply stared or lazily shifted around, not reacting to the sudden assault. Others did, and from many of them magic began to flare, as Harry hadn't been able to spread his totem everywhere throughout the camp, but they certainly confused the issue.

Moments later, three of Harry's golems appeared from out of an area covered by a Notice-Me-Not. Shifting forward, the golems paused a second later, following the orders Harry had given them. The golems drew a lot of attention from the satyrs. But they ran straight into many of the runic traps that Harry had set around the golems. Several more totems and runic traps that Harry had devised and scattered around the area also activated as the satyrs tried to either escape or spread out to find whoever was attacking them.

Several satyrs screamed as they were suddenly set on fire while others were electrocuted or frozen in place. Several were turned inside out, the result of a rather gruesome runic array that had Harry wincing a little. Other wards acted simply to turn them entirely around, shifting them back the way they'd come or causing them to lash out at whoever was nearby, which invariably was another satyr.

"Prior planning and a certain amount of sneakery, as Pathfinder Vurg would say, goes a long way to even up the odds," Harry murmured with a snort.

As the fire elemental found itself locked in battle with several magic-using satyrs, Recca attacked, dive-bombing out of the night time sky, using some of her own tools. The ever-full pouch of stones began to drop large boulders, the stones growing the instant they left the edge of the pouch. A stone the size of a tiny pebble grew to the size of a man within seconds upon leaving the reach of Recca's talon, slamming into the ground with all the force of one launched from a trebuchet. Satyrs hit by such a boulder simply ceased to exist, squished into oblivion, and even those nearby were flung into the air with cries of pain.

The satyrs attempted to strike back, but Recca zoomed back and upward away from their sickly green fireballs, dodging out of the way with ludicrous ease. Meanwhile, Davo and Nealu were firing into the camp with their arrows from opposite sides of the camp.

Recca had estimated this band had numbered upwards of two hundred, but within moments of the attack, that number had been halved. With the majority remaining concentrating on attacking the three golems as the runic arrays around them failed and the rest breaking up into small groups trying to escape the camp, Harry moved on to the second phase of the ambush.

Holding his hand out, Harry began to chant, calling on the spirits of nature to empower an area-of-effect spell. A moment later, a gigantic pillar of lightning struck from out of the clear nighttime sky, slamming into the largest group of satyrs remaining intact, centered around one larger-than-average satyr who was trying to bellow orders in their foul language. *Reminds me of the Black Tongue mentioned in that book Hermione made me read once, Fellowship of the Rings, I think it was.*

That group was fried to a being, and the golems, still acting under the orders Harry had given them before hiding them, charged forward. They could not fight nearly as well, nor would they repair themselves from any damage they took like earth elementals, but Harry had begun to experiment giving his golems long-term orders for fights like this.

Soon, they were locked in combat, and Harry sent out his magically controlled chakram. A single targeted Leviosa spell had all of the miniaturized discs flitting up from his belt. A moment later, another spell spent them flashing forward under his command, slicing, dicing, and sometimes even just floating, taking the attention of any satyr that spotted them. *Heh, those work!! I wasn't certain I would be able to keep that spell going in a fight, but the Shaman method of splitting my concentration I learned and **finally** mastered works! Thank you, Tjar!*

“Do you think I will need to get involved at all?” Quetzal asked clinically, rearing up from where he had been coiled around the tree below Harry.

“I don’t think so. Not unless you’re feeling hungry?” Harry quipped. “Although their meat isn’t all that good for you.”

“I will refrain, thank you,” Quetzal answered dryly, and if a snake could roll its eyes, he would be doing so right now at Harry’s joke. Even the snakes who could bite down on larger creatures and tear chunks off them knew not to eat the satyrs. Their meat was **horribly** corrupted.

It wasn't really a fight. It wasn't even a simple ambush. It was more a slaughter than anything, really. The satyrs never had a chance. Even if they had been able to organize a response to one portion of the attack, the rest would have hammered into them. The only things the satyrs could do anything about were the arrows from Nealu and Davo, but even then, the two experienced Seekers moved every two arrow shots. *And if I wasn't part of this assault, Versera would be.*

While Harry and the others were attacking the band of satyrs, Versera hovered well above the battlefield, her eyes lit up with a minor spell that gave her draconic eyes, which were normally not quite as good as a normal bird's, far more in terms of range. *I am impressed,* she mused as she watched the activities below.

Even a normal war-band of Unseen Path members would've been able to deal with the two hundred satyrs. After the initial attack, they would've pulled back, concentrated on picking them apart, using their ability to blend in and hide to maximum effect. At night, satyrs don't have any better night vision than tauren, and it would've been effective. But to wipe them out in a single assault? No, the Unseen Path I knew wouldn't have been able to do that, not without bringing more than a single war-band to bear, anyway. And not in so dramatic a fashion.

Versera chuckled to herself, the noise audible only to her. *While I am no Blue with an almost overwhelming fascination for all things magical, this was an impressive showing. And for all the magic being thrown around down there, all of it reeks of nature magic, blending into the background of the world save for the occasional tiny, almost imperceptible spike. I wouldn't know they were there unless I was watching closely. Amazing.*

Near the edge of the battlefield where Davo had just moved on, Versera saw a single satyr rise from where he had ostensibly been playing dead. He moved to rush out into the woods, but then stumbled, staring down at his footwear a snake had bitten it. Soon, he too was down, his body flooded with poison. "And that is particularly scary," she murmured aloud. "Not so much that example as I doubt Bluefeather would have allowed him to leave, but the earlier assault. I've never made a study of snakes, but to see so many of the small brethren on the attack like that, acting as if they were under a central command, able to fight in groups, that is most disturbing."

She circled the battlefield again a few times, as the fires below died down, and the wounded satyrs were finished off by Nealu, Harry and Davo moving forward into the wreckage of the campsite. As she did, Versera thought about what Harry had told her

about the basilisk creature, one of two inhuman creatures that Harry had somehow absorbed the essence of, remaking him into a chimera.

That wasn't a term she had never heard before, although the thing being described by it was something that she had seen occasionally during the War of the Ancients. Many of Sarger's lieutenants liked to play with life, mixing natural creatures together to create horrors. There never been a term for such before, but chimera seemed to fit well enough.

While the phoenix too was an unusual creature without a true equivalent – there were phoenixes in Azeroth, but none that had the same properties as the one from Harry's original world - Versera had been far more interested in the basilisk side of Harry's strange existence than anything else. When Harry had given Versera a brief overview of the creature and how it was created under some highly unusual circumstances, Versera hadn't taken him seriously at first. Then when it became clear Harry was serious, well, Versera had to shake her head at how strange and unusual magic had worked in Harry's old life.

She also had to remark that he should maybe keep that to himself if he ever interacted with a blue or red dragon in the future. "That kind of thing smacks too much of some of the experiments we discovered mid-ranking Burning Legion members were doing after the Well of Eternity was destroyed."

I do wonder, thinking about it now, if part of the problems that Harry's facing when it comes to connecting to his basilisk side is based on the fact that basilisks are created creatures. They are not natural snakes. They might have a few snake-like instincts, but their thought process can be very different. Thinking about it as just an overlarge, semi-intelligent snake like Quetzal or those of his race who have been impacted by overly magical environments is a mistake.

When it came to the powers of the basilisk, as Harry described them, they were a mixed bag, going from strange, or simply 'to be determined' to downright scary. The most venomous bite in Harry's world, which had been proven to be equally horrifying in this one, given how it had worked on a black dragon. Versera hadn't ever heard of Badrinath before, but he had been a dragon, and all dragons had insane levels of resistance to poisons and magic alike.

As for the eyes that could kill, there were creatures who had begun to be seen after the Troll Wars, although Azeroth 'basilisks' were lizards, not snakes. Yet if someone viewed them even through light rain, that power dissipated, doing nothing. If you viewed them through a mirror or a puddle, the same thing occurred. The basilisk's gaze, as Harry

described it, would turn someone into a statue from a glancing gaze, while a direct one would simply kill the creature meeting it's eyes.

Versera honestly doubted it would work on a dragon like herself, and she knew Harry had yet to come to grips with his basilisk side enough to call on that power. Regardless, though, it wasn't something she could test.

When it came to the creature's size, strength and magical durability, again, Versera was less concerned. Those things might've been impressive in Harry's past world, but he had yet to master his basilisk side to the point where he could transform into one or a chimeric version, and Versera felt that he would discover that the size and magical resistance at least would not seem so unusually dangerous in this world.

Yet regardless of how the basilisk's venom might be the only real threat the creature posed to a dragon like her, it's presence within his chimeric body gave Harry Potter a very odd scent. To Versera, who, as a green dragon, had a sense of smell to make even a wolf howl in envy, Harry smelled like a mix of a black dragon flight from before and after Deathwing had turned away from being the Aspect of Earth, of Earth and Death alike.

He also smells almost obnoxiously male, Versera mused, snorting, remembering her body's reaction to that scent when she first smelled it. Thank the Titans that we dragons are not simple beasts, to be ruled by our reactions to such things... and that I so quickly transformed. My kaldorei form's dullard nose helped greatly. Hah, I would pay good money to be there when he meets one of my red dragon flight cousins. Male or female, I rather think that their reactions will be hilarious. Although would it be as fun as meeting a member of the Death Flight? HAH!

Then there is his ability to speak to snakes. To make them intelligent enough to answer questions and obey orders. Truly fascinating. There are some ancient snakes out there, I know of one on another one of the Broken Isles which has ruled its territory since shortly after the Sundering. Talking to such of what he has seen or observed would be fascinating.

Fascinating was one of Versera's favorite words. It covered such a wide area and could be used in so many ways she greatly enjoyed it.

*His runes are interesting, but I am not nearly as interested in that as his physical abilities. His Phoenix form was somewhat startling to see when he showed it to me, and I could easily see why the harpies would go, what is that old kaldorei phrase, head over heels, for it? Having seen that, I am **very** interested to see what Harry looks like when he is calling on his basilisk side, once he masters it to that point anyway. Hearing Harry complain about the problem's he's been having communing with his basilisk side and truly seeing that aspect of his chimeric life as his own was fascinating!*

Seeing that the cleanup was nearly finished, Versera dove down towards the ground. As she descended in a small circle over the camp, her body glowed blue and yellow for a moment as she shrunk herself down. By the time she landed, Versera stood on her four feet with her shoulders reaching the top of the nearby tree, letting her stand taller than Quetzal unless he reared up to his full height, something both of them knew he would not do. Despite his monstrous size for his race, Quetzal still felt the awe and natural reverence for dragons and would not act so rudely in Versera's presence.

Case in point, Quetzal looked over at her and bowed his head, before going back to surveying the surrounding forest. Harry and Davo simply nodded in her direction, then finished up the task of pulling out the rune stones that Harry had used in his various traps.

Once charged with more energy, the rune stone traps that Harry had created would be reusable until the stone eventually shattered or cracked. The totems would not. The powerful offensive magic in them burned the totems to ash after the spell lost power. Harry would need to carve out some more over the next few days. *Which he might have time to do given how they all decided to travel to Danaveia by ship.*

Aloud Versera said, "A very tidy battle, I was impressed," while nodding her serpentine neck towards them all one after another. "Was this the only band you spotted, Recca?"

"It was the only band of satyrs in our patrol area, and that covers a good distance for the two legs," Recca answered promptly. "Given how fast you can fly, my lady, I think you would need to push out for at least another turn of the glass away from Highmountain to cover that area than we are now."

"Ahh, yes, timekeeping. Such a magnificent concept that the kaldorei thought up," Versera chortled. "You would not believe how much trouble we dragons had with that concept when it was first created and we became aware of it through our dealings with your Empire. So odd for beings like us, who measure our lives with the same glacial pace as the trees, to consider the passage of a day needing to be broken into even smaller increments. Hah! Indeed, even you Kaldorei are so long lived that surely the passage of a single moon should be as to nothing to you."

She then sighed, her good humor disappearing for a moment. "Of course, when we were forced to deal with the violence of the War of the Ancients, keeping time, coordinating and organizing our response, such things became far more important."

The only other veteran of that war, Nealu, simply nodded while Harry, Recca and Davo exchanged glances of somber understanding. Thanks to the magic of the various tapestries, all of them were well aware of the insane level of violence and evil that the kaldorei and their allies had faced in the War of the Ancients, but even viewing those

ancient memories had nothing on having actually lived through a year of war and more than a decade of the planet itself trying to kill you as the continent came apart under you.

Deciding to move the conversation along, Harry turned to look at Nealu.

As he was the Unseen Path's expert when it came to boats and the sea, he was in charge of the mission until they landed on Kalimdor. Whether or not that meant building a ship of their own or just waiting for the trade ship had yet to be decided. *After all, if we only need to wait a few weeks for the trade ship to arrive, that makes far more sense than trying to build a ship for ourselves. Especially since 'we' would only be me, Davo and Nealu in this case.*

That issue wasn't on Harry's mind just now. "By the way, how do the village folk view the Unseen Path? Do they know of the Order at all, or is there some kind of cover story we're going to need to stick to while interacting with them?" Harry was somewhat embarrassed that that hadn't occurred to him before this, but it was a valid question. A sudden thought struck him, and his embarrassment increased. "Hell, does that village have a name? Tyrande and I passed through it so quickly that I never learned it."

Part of that was because Quetzal had made some of the local kaldorei nervous. Most of that had been because Tyrande had known then she was coming up on the time to get back to her actual work rather than travel and have 'fun' if such a term could be used for their campaign against the Frostmaul Stone Giants. *That, and besides the way the children looked at her, I could tell Tyrande wasn't all that comfortable with her reception. For someone who has been the leader of her people for more years than humanity has been using steel back on Earth, Tyrande always seemed remarkably ill at ease with it.*

Yet Nealu only shrugged. "A name, no. Not really. It is simply 'the Village of the Broken Isles. Why would we call it anything different when it's the only one? Indeed, it's the only settlement of kaldorei anywhere in the Broken Isles.'" *Unless you count ghosts, of course. But I am not going to bring that up right now.*

"As for those who live there, the villagers are singularly uninterested in whatever anyone else is doing throughout the Broken Isles. They don't question our coming and going. I am acquainted with their headman, Arnol Figtree, and with several others. You should pass unnoticed, Harry, as they will remember your passing through when you first came to the Broken Isles. None will care what you have been up to since, while, on the other hand, Versera would cause a stir in either form. I'm afraid you may want to wait elsewhere, Versera. The rest of us will pass completely unnoticed or, rather, unremarked upon. If we decide to wait for the trade ship, we will be able to do so in the village, so long as we make ourselves useful in some fashion until the routine ship arrives from Denavea."

He looked over at Davo, then Quetzal with some amusement. “I would recommend that we take up the role of hunters. Bringing in some pelts to sell to the village folk, that they can then pass on to their regular contacts in the port on the mainland will make them accept our presence even more.”

Those pelts were the only reason why there was any traffic between the Broken Isles and the kaldorei on the mainland. Even the kaldorei villagers making their home on the main island of the Broken Isles didn’t explore, or care overmuch about the past despite living in the ruins of what had once been the heavily populated center of their nation. Still, they had access to the jungle and the beasts that lived there, and, although Harry hadn’t seen them on his way through previously, several large plantations that grew fruits and spices which could not grow easily in Ashenvale.

When everyone else agreed with Nealu’s words, they slowed their travel through the jungle, hunting down a few jaguars and other beasts for their pelts. Davo even found lots of different mushrooms to sell in the village for room and board. Normally, the Unseen Path wouldn’t have done so, preferring to move through the land without leaving any trail behind. Here though, they could make an exception.

Harry had gotten used to being among the kaldorei of the Unseen Path by this point. Not one of them lacked for scars or other signs of the War of the Ancients. Despite that, all of them looked to be in the prime of their life, middle-aged without any sign of losing their strength or vitality, wrinkles, or other physical signs of aging. Just like the Kaldorei who lived in Ashenvale, they had all spent time near the Well of Eternity, or had soaked in the blessings of the Aspects on Nordrassil which permeated the ground of the Ashenvale Forest from one end to the other, whichever it truly was that gave the kaldorei their longevity.

Not so the villagers, something that was brought to Harry’s mind starkly as they moved through the farming area on the southern outskirts of the village. Every kaldorei farmer Harry could see, out during the day thanks to the fact most farms here were not diurnal, showed the signs of age. Their normally pale blue skin was darkened in the sun, they had wrinkles aplenty and several had gray hair.

Harry hadn’t been told how long a kaldorei without access to those Blessings lifespan was. But he doubted it was more than a thousand years or so. Insanely long in human terms, even compared to wizards, but still finite.

Walking past one old man shouting out orders to a pair of youngsters who were hurrying around picking at a kind of fruit that looked like the cross between a lemon and a blackberry, Harry asked, “Are children here just forced to follow in their parents footsteps

and remain here away from the source of their people's immortality? I mean, I respect their decision to remove themselves from even that touch of magic, but to force it on their kids?"

"Oh no," Nealu snorted. "We kaldorei don't show it as openly as our tauren fellows, but we, too, believe in individuals becoming independent as they become adults, and part of that is making decisions that will shape your lives going forward. Once a child here comes of age, they are given the choice to travel to the mainland to join the rest of their ~~kink~~kaldorei there, or remain with the village."

He paused thoughtfully, waving idly at a mother going by with a young child. "Most of the youngsters over the years have decided to stay. Immortality is a minor thing in comparison to living the life they wish to live, away from the rest of their folk, in a simpler environment."

"All that despite living within the examples of their ancient empire like the massive wharf that is why the village is here in the first place," Davo snorted. "They can see the price of hubris and of leaning too heavily on magic every day."

Moments later, Harry was forced to agree, despite knowing that Davo's words were a subtle dig his way when it came to his experiments with runes.

"Good grief, but this thing is impressive," Harry murmured as he walked along the edge of the wharf. "Davo's right. There really is a startling disparity between this construct and the rest of the village."

The wharf was huge, longer than the amount of land the village covered towards the jungle beyond its easternmost environs. It was ruler straight, seemingly made of a single piece of pure white marble. At intervals along its length on both sides below the waterline, there were small glowing lights that still gleamed as they had more than two decades when he first came to the island. "Almost as much as the bits of that road we fought the Fishmen on did back when we were coming back with the Spear."

"You've only traveled to Danaviea and from there to the Broken Isles, haven't you?" Nealu asked, kneeling next to Harry on the wharf with a fishing pole in one hand. Where he'd gotten the fishing pole, Harry had no idea, as his talk with the village headman hadn't taken more than a few moments. "If you travel deeper into kaldorei territory, you will be in for a treat. I remember many of the cities of our Empire, and although grand, they were also grandiose, if you take my meaning. The city of Darnassus is different. Sprawling, more natural feeling, I think, working with the branches of Nordrassil to become a true marvel."

Harry wondered if he would think the same, as he had learned time and time again that he and the kaldorei idea of anesthetics were not the same. Harry preferred straight lines and

angles, not sharp ones, but still angles, whereas the kaldorei preferred curves and working with nature. After a second, Harry shrugged that thought off, allowing his mind to go down the tangent it had just entered. “Where did the fishing rod come from? And why do you have it in the first place?”

Nealu chuckled, stuck a worm on the end of a line, and after a quick flick of his wrists, sent the fishing line out into the ocean. “Well, we have a little over two weeks before the trade ship is supposed to arrive again. Which I am quite glad for as any ship those of us with opposable thumbs could make would be far smaller and thus less seaworthy. Regardless, there’s no way to speed them up even if we wanted to, so we are forced to pass the time in other ways. What did you think we were going to be doing?”

“... You know what, that had not occurred to me. I don’t suppose I could head back to Trueshot Lodge for a bit? I still have a few experiments I want to run.”

“Once a journey is started, one should see it through,” Davo stated firmly, walking along the wharf towards the two men as they sat at the edge. Recca was flying high above them, but she had yet to set down into the village. The conversation they’d had a few days ago about how the locals would react to her keeping her away as it did Versera, although unlike Versera, Recca hadn’t simply returned to Trueshot Lodge to wait out the weeks. “That’s the tradition. Besides, we should have lovely weather for the next few days, and having some time to fish is always nice.”

Looking between the two more experienced members of the Unseen Path, Harry had to shake his head. “You know, I don’t think I thought this part of our trip entirely through. And fishing sounds incredibly boring.”

“Hahaha, but have you ever considered how good fishing can be for meditation purposes?” Davo chuckled sitting next to his human companion, sticking his legs out over the side of the wharf.

Harry had passed by several other kaldorei doing the same, and looking back towards the village he could see at least a dozen more doing the same along the shoreline. *Huh, it seems to be a mostly male thing from what I’m seeing. I wonder why.*

Davo’s words broke into Harry’s thoughts. “After all, you have tried several other meditation practices in order to get in touch with your basilisk side. Why not this one.”

“I really doubt that my basilisk side will see any interest in simply sitting around and waiting for fish to bite the hook. On the other hand, since we do have more than two weeks...”

Harry sighed, his protest leaving his body along with the noise. *Just sitting around doing nothing after the past few decades where I barely had an hour a day when there wasn’t*

some demand on my time does actually sound nice. “I don’t suppose either of you know where I can find one of those?”

OOOOOOO

Of course, their time in the village was not entirely taken up with fishing. In the morning, with the group on a ‘normal’ day/night cycle, the three of them would join Recca for training, their camp being far enough out from the village that not even the most adventurous youngster was up to finding them. By this point, Harry could hold his own in a duel with either of the others, though he rarely won in a straight up fight with Nealu, given his centuries of experience. Davo and Nealu would spend the early afternoon hunting, and then would fish for the rest of the day.

Or sleep. Harry wasn’t certain if Nealu actually felt there was any difference between those two activities.

To Harry’s surprise, he actually enjoyed fishing. Sitting, simply staring at nothing, letting his thoughts wander in and out along with the waves, disappearing into the darkness, then rising with no rhyme or reason to them was strangely quite soothing. It helped him figure out a few problems in terms of his runic creations he’d been having trouble with, one of which might allow him to create what amounted to a magical flamethrower in the future. He also came up with a few ideas for future pranks, and one future present for Tyrande during this time.

Despite that, meditating by fishing did not help him get in touch with his basilisk side, although he did feel a faint stirring from that side occasionally when he saw something moving in the water right before his lure was tugged. As if the watchful predator side of his basilisk enjoyed this kind of thing as well.

Alas for his enjoyment of the sport, Harry also started to be bothered by the seagulls after their second day in the village. Every time he stayed for more than a few hours out on the wharf, the seagulls and other birds would come down to roost all around him. That aspect of his phoenix side hadn’t gone away when he’d mastered it, something that Recca teased him constantly about whenever he met up with her along with Nealu and Davo outside of the village where they had set up a small camp for themselves.

Rather than stay in the area with them, Versera had returned to Trueshot Lodge, asking Recca to come and inform her of the ship’s arrival once the group were ready to move on. She was firm friends with Monique, and they hadn’t really had any time to talk prior to Versera joining Harry and the rest to watch their attack on the satyrs.

Yet while the predator birds, crows, ravens, owls, and so forth that Harry drew to himself were, relatively speaking, polite when they did so, the seagulls were very much not. Not a day went by that one or two of his companions or the other kaldorei from the village were splattered with their refuse.

Harry had also been a time or two, so lost in his own thoughts and meditation as he fished that he didn't notice one of them alighting on top of his head and doing its business up there.

Fun fact: seagulls do not make for good eating. Harry wasn't even able to enjoy his revenge on the bird in question as much as he had hoped.

Regardless, Harry was there fishing alongside Nealu and Davo when a ship came up over the horizon. It was the same ship that Harry Tyrande and their companions had used to travel to the islands in the first place, and Harry was happy enough with that. It meant he wouldn't have to explain who or what he was to the crew, or at least he hoped so.

Although I should have expected it, Harry reminded himself. Didn't Nealu tell us that ship, the Everswift, was the only one that plied the waters between Denavera and the Broken Isles? All the other ships stick to the shoreline. After all, it isn't as if the kaldorei have any other far flung settlements.

Even before the War of the Ancients, the Azshara Empire had not been a naval power or anything similar. Why would they be, when Kalimdor at the time had been the equivalent of Pangaea, a single giant landmass? One which they had yet to explore the majority of even at the height of their empire's power? Harry had seen an ancient map of that time, and knew that the Empire had covered just over a quarter of that ancient continent.

The majority of the ships which had survived the Sundering had been river ships which could somehow be made to work on the ocean, taking desperate refugees out from the center of their empire as that area continued to crack and break apart into the Isles it was today to the still solid fragments of the supercontinent that became their new home. When it became clear they were irreconcilable, the Highborne had been forced to build the ships they would eventually use to travel to the eastern continent. The ship that went from between the Broken Isles and Kalimdor proper was one of only four such that had remained behind, and the other three had all been sunk or lost in the ages since.

To the trio's surprise though, when the captain and the crew came down the gangplank onto the wharf's, they didn't show any surprise about Harry being there, or any interest in Harry or the tauren sitting on the wharf at all. Indeed, it seemed as if they ignored the pair entirely. Rather, two of them hurried over to some of the locals, while the unloading and loading process began immediately. The looks on the faces of the kaldorei lugging the

crates down onto the wharf had Harry's eyebrows rising, then narrowing in some concern. "Is it just me, or do they look worried?"

"They look worried," Nealu agreed, pushing himself to his feet, and tossing Harry his fishing rod just as Harry felt a tug on his line.

Two weeks worth of fishing had instilled some automatic reactions, and Harry found himself flailing with one hand to grab Nealu's tossed fishing rod, while he pulled with only one hand on the other for a second, nearly finding himself pulled off the wharf. "Gah!!"

Seeing this, Davo chuckled, set his own fishing rod aside and stood up, moving to take Nealu's fishing rod, letting Harry use both hands. Moments later, he reeled in a large grouper-like fish that had taken a bite on his fishing line.

Seeing the size of the fish, Davo's chuckling faded, and he started to scowl. Staring at the overly large fish as he helped Harry pull it up out of the water, his face shifting into a glare of annoyance and frustration. "How did that fish not break your line, Harry?"

Harry chuckled. "Heh, you've been keeping that question inside of you for a while, haven't you?"

"Yes dammit. You keep on bringing in larger fish than either Nealu or I, despite only having barely two weeks of fishing under your belt," Davo grunted. "I can pull in sharks with my own fishing gear back at Trueshot Lodge, but not with a simple fishing line like this."

"You might, if you had a wizard beside you who was willing to cast the Impervious charm on your line like he did his own. The spell doesn't last very long, particularly under actual impact or pressure, but it makes something unbreakable for a small segment of time. And if you keep renewing it while you're reeling in a fish, they can't break your line," Harry answered, grinning a little wickedly. "Now, if you had asked..."

Davo stared at him in silence, and continued to stare until Harry stood up, then, he pushed Harry's shoulder hard enough to nearly send him off the side of the wharf again. "You should be very grateful that I don't believe in handing out punishment in front of others, you cheater!"

As Harry recovered from the push, Davo moved over to listen in on the conversation that Nealu had struck up with the captain and the local headman. The captain looked over to Harry, doing a double take, then staring at him, before shrugging his shoulders, and turning back to Nealu. "As I was saying, something unusual is going on in the local area. We haven't spotted nearly as many sharks or other large predators of late, and one of my lookouts swore she saw a whale being grabbed by something. Something large that was dragged down into the water against its will."

“A giant squid then. Interesting, most of them would be further south. They don’t like being so close to the Maelstrom,” Nealu said musingly, before shrugging his shoulders. “But if it’s a giant squid, it shouldn’t be able to catch your ship in the first place unless it’s at the right place at the right time when you cross over it.”

“Maybe, maybe not. I’ve never even seen such creatures. I’d rather stay in port here for a few weeks, but I know putting forty more mouths to feed on the local villagers is too much. And there’s no guarantee that waiting would even allow this danger to pass us by in the first place,” the captain admitted. “But I will say at least two of the smaller sloops that make Danaviea their home haven’t been back for far longer than they should have been away.”

“Well, regardless, we can help you deal with this creature whatever the danger is. You will find myself and Davo both incredibly capable, not to mention our companion, who you know.” Nealu himself had never met this particular captain before. He’d not so much come to the Broken Isles as simply remained in the area after the Sundering had subsided. Before the war he’d made his living as a seaman and riverboat-man.

The captain frowned, but glancing at Harry, eventually nodded. While Nealu carried himself like an experienced warrior, and certainly had the scars to prove he was a veteran of the War of the Ancients, that was a far cry from being capable of fighting something the size of a giant squid or octopus, which could grow to the size they would dwarf his vessel or any other that rode the waves. Harry’s magic, on the other hand, which the captain well remembered despite it having been decades ago, could turn the tide of such a fight. “If Harry is with you, I’ll trust his abilities. I still remember Lady Whisperwind explaining that his magic was different from the Arcane that the Highborne used, and thus could be trusted.”

Harry nodded. “I’ve got several spells that could be used to see off any kind of sea monster. So long as I can see it anyway.” While his area of effect spells only needed to be cast into an area, such as during the fight with the satyrs and the massive lightning strike that he had learned from the druid school among the tauren, most of his spells still needed line of sight.

The captain nodded, and with renewed energy and confidence that they would be able to make it back to their home port, the work was done quickly by his crew and the locals. That afternoon, the ship left with the tide, and Nealu, Davo, and Harry were boarded.

As soon as they were away from the wharf, Nealu turned to the captain. “Captain, we have two other passengers that will be coming aboard. Do not be alarmed by their presence, and I will explain once they have arrived.”

At that, the other kaldorei, whose name was Pardo Seagaze, looked between Nealu and the others, then back to the wharf they just left behind. "As I'm already putting up with having a tauren and Harry aboard, I don't suppose two more passengers will bother me. But where exactly will they be coming from? Don't tell me they'll be swimming out..."

A call from above interrupted him, a lilting song note that drew the attention of everyone there straight up. Even the man in the crow's nest hadn't been looking up into the air. Normally he would have, but the lack of large sharks and other predators had spooked him to the extent he had only been concentrating on the ocean, watching for any telltale signs of large-scale movement there.

Now, he stared up as a harpy flew down towards the ship. Alone harpy wouldn't be a threat to the ship even if she used Fel or Tainted magic, so the man calmly pulled out a bow and arrow set, rather than shouting the alarm, wondering idly where the call had come from.

Only as the harpy drew close did he understand that the song note had come from her as she held the ship once more. "Hello! Friendly harpy here. I know that might seem odd, but it is the truth. I'm going to board your ship now by landing on your mast. Please do not try to shoot me. You'd miss, and I'd be annoyed."

Recca wasn't honestly all that talkative unless she really knew the individual in question. Yet while she would normally have preferred to have Harry or one of the others speak for her, she'd been warned before this several times to be on her best behavior when dealing with the ship's crew.

While the man in the Crows Nest was somewhat incensed at the idea that he'd miss, the rest of the crew who had heard that follow-on shout simply stared upwards in shock. "How, how, it is known that the harpies were intelligent back in the time of the war of the ancients, but no one has been able to communicate with them! Even back then, communication was hard with the harpies because of their voice, and that was before their deity died, and so many turned to the Fel for magic. What is this?"

"Rather, what magic is this," one of the other sailors rejoined, looking over at Harry speculatively. "Why do I think, Harry, that this has something to do with you? Just like those toilet bowls that teleport the refuse away we bought the last time we were on the island."

"Because I am the source of all things unusual but not dangerous that you have run into in the past?" Harry shrugged. "Or that you can recognize a pattern. One of the two."

Some chuckles, and Recca alighted peaceably on the mast next to the Crows Nest, nodding affably at the man there who slowly put his bow and arrow down. "Hello. I'm one

of Harry's companions. Don't worry. I'll keep myself out of sight when we reach the mainland for a bit until we're away from your so-called civilized territories. It is just that getting there from here would be far harder on my wings than I want to put up with."

Recca knew that other harpies had been able to make the flight from the mainland to the Broken Isles, but she wasn't nearly as willing to make that attempt herself. It seemed very much an all-or-nothing thing, and she wasn't willing to go down that road unless she had to.

"I, well, you're welcome, I suppose, miss," the kaldorei on duty in the crow's nest replied, addressing the harpy as he would a kaldorei woman. Because even wearing a blouse that covered everything it needed to, it was **very** obvious that Recca was a woman. *I've seen harpies before, but when I have, I never had the chance to just look at them and realize how good-looking they are,* the man thought in some wonder.

"Thank you." With that, Recca dropped down to the main deck, landing lightly and folding her wings in once more, nodding her head politely to the captain. "Versera is on her way and should be here soon," she reported to Harry and the others. "I traveled back home the moment I saw the ship in the distance."

That Recca would have done so long before the ship came in view of those on the ground did not need to be said. More importantly, even when interacting with people like the villagers, the secret of the Unseen Path's existence and their lodge needed to be kept, something Recca's wording was meant to hide. This wasn't just because most members agreed that secrecy was important if they had to deal with a large-scale threat to the world again, but also because of the Oaths that Harry and the others had taken.

Besides his first Oath Tattoo, Harry now had three others scattered over his body. One was on his shoulder, a spiral pattern that looked like a tornado seen from above, an Oath he had given about a specific secret the Unseen Path had discovered about Sargerias, the Mad Titan. Two more feather-like general Oath Tattoos marked his back, visible signs of his word of honor that he would keep the secrets of the Order. *Although, honestly, thinking about them now, I'd wager most would look at the feather tattoos on my back and forearm and think they were simply a strange sign of my phoenix side.*

With a shake of his head, Harry came back to the here and now with some difficulty. *Huh... I've really been having trouble with idle thoughts these past few weeks. Is it a side effect of letting my mind wander so much while fishing, or is this a sign I need to redo my Occlumentic Realm again?*

"Versera? Is this another harpy? And I would like to know something of the story behind how you moved from traveling with Lady Whisperwind to traveling with another kaldorei, a

harpy, and a tauren. You, I gather, would be from Highmountain Valley, good tauren. Yet where a warrior of Nealu's caliber came from, I do not know," the captain confessed. "In fact, if I was going to see you in anyone's company, Harry, I would've assumed it would be Sylina Sungaze, given how she and that ranger she was apprenticed to traveled aboard my ship to the Broken Isles barely a few years after I dropped you off. And that ranger is certainly not Nealu here."

"You can remember Sylina and Narvae Feltstep enough to know Nealu isn't him?" Harry quipped.

"Bah, it was only a few decades ago," the captain waved that off as if it was nothing, which, for a kaldorei, it was. "I don't transport many passengers, hardly any, and they stick in my mind."

"Well, regardless, no, Versera isn't another harpy. And while I'm willing to share the story of some of how I met Recca, realize that there are a few secrets I can't share," Harry stated firmly, with Davo and Nealu nodding wordless agreement.

The captain frowned at that and was about to ask once more if their second companion was going to somehow make it out to the ship by swimming when the lookout shouted down at them. He had been thoroughly spooked by one aerial visitor, and had taken to watching above as well as around the ship. And kaldorei eyes were just as good as the allies of elves in fantasy back in Harry's old world, even during the day. "Dragon! High in the sky, color unknown! It's making its way towards us."

"What!? One of the Dragon Flights? Not a wyvern or manticores?" The captain shouted back, not so much asking for clarification as simple incredulity. Dragons were very, very rarely seen in Ashenvale Forrest, and those that were there were Green Flight and asleep, their minds completely focused on the Emerald Dream and the war going on there alongside the druids of the Cenarion Circle. They were not alive, moving, and more importantly, flying directly toward his ship.

Thankfully, though, the dragon coming towards them was quickly identified as a green as well, which had the captain breathing in a sigh of relief, before turning a glare Harry's way. He was not at all amused by the smirk on the 'human's' face, or that of his companions. "Warning me would've been nice," he growled.

Harry shrugged unconcerned, and the captain growled again, before turning his attention up to the dragon as it came closer to his vessel. Soon, it was directly above the Everswift circling around for a few moments. "Greetings," Versera boomed, her voice loud but decidedly feminine despite the volume. "If I could ask every male among you to look down, I will soon be able to speak with you in person rather than from a distance like this."

“What does she mean by that?” The captain asked, still staring upward even as the green dragon began to sparkle with the blue and yellow magical energy.

Nealu gently reached across and pushed at the back of the captain’s head until he was looking down. “She’s going to transform. But apparently transforming into a kaldorei form and transfiguring clothing to match is a bit beyond Versera’s skill at transformation. So unless you wish to incur the ire of a green dragoness, I suggest...”

“Understood. And thank you,” the captain stated firmly, staring down at his ship until he received the all-clear from one of the women among his crew.

Unlike among his own folk, no kind of superstition about women aboard ships had ever developed on Azeroth. At least not among kaldorei. And Harry had seen many a woman warrior among the vrykul warband decades back when they had retrieved the Spear of the Wild Gods.

Although, Harry was thankful to see that he wasn’t the only one who reacted with shock gazes at Versera’s appearance. Versera did not, to put it mildly, look-like a normal-looking one. The term short stack seemed to fit Versera entirely too well in Harry’s mind, and despite having been around her for the better part of two days before they started their journey out of the mountains, Harry couldn’t begrudge Pardo for looking.

I for certain am looking. Ooof. Coming or going, there is a lot of bouncing to enjoy. Hah! He thought, biting back a self-depreciating snicker. *And here I thought once I was in my forties I’d not have to worry about controlling my libido so much. Nope.* It took a second for Harry to pull his attention away from Versera’s bits.

Despite ogling the short, green-skinned woman’s chest for just a bit longer than was acceptable, the captain retained his manners. “Be welcome aboard my ship, Eldest.”

This was a kaldorei address they used when speaking to an adult member of one of the Dragon flights to whom one hadn’t been formally introduced. Not only was it almost certainly going to be true, but most could also not tell the gender of a dragon until they spoke. Even after you knew the gender of a dragon, though, being respectful to dragons was simply the way of wisdom for all beings in the world who were at all flammable or squishy.

“Thank you for your hospitality. Normally, I would simply fly over to Kalimdor. But as I wish to actually travel with my companions for a time, I understand that you are already aware of the interesting nature of Harry Potter? I decided to journey with them aboard your ship. Do you require payment in some fashion?” Versera said, her tone far more stilted and formal than they had been when interacting with the Unseen Path.

To this, Nealu explained how they might run into trouble along the way in the form of a giant squid. To which Versera grinned, some of her formality falling away. “Excellent. Squid meat is surprisingly tasty and good for the jaw muscles.”

Harry blinked in surprise, while Davo and Recca both looked a little intrigued. Nealu on the other hand gagged. When asked why, he explained, “young squid or small types of squid are indeed something of a delicacy in a few fishing villages I’ve been to. However giant squid are a different thing entirely. I have never heard of anyone being forced to eat flesh taken from one such as that and enjoying it. And no, Harry, how well it was cooked does not matter. It’s simply too tough, and far too oily tasting apparently.”

“Well, hopefully Versera will be able to have her delicacy, and the rest of us won’t have to help her eat it,” he drawled. *Although I do know some tricks to solve those problems. Could be interesting to try in the future.*

“That isn’t the hope we should be clinging to,” Nealu snorted as he shook his head at Harry’s words, while the captain, at the wheel nearby, nodded firm agreement as Nealu went on. “True luck will mean that the giant squid has moved on, or if it’s still in these waters it will somehow sense that we are transporting a dragon and will thus not come after us.”

Davo and Harry exchanged glances while Recca snickered, and eventually, Harry spoke up, sighing faintly. “I am afraid, Captain, that it is supremely doubtful we will get so lucky. Specifically because my luck doesn’t work like that.”

Versera and Pardo stared at him incredulously, but after a few moments contemplation, Nealu had to nod his head. He had heard a lot about Harry’s past over the past few decades, and his luck did indeed seem incredible, both good and bad.

Yet, as the ship sailed away from the Broken Isles, Harry’s luck didn’t seem to be drawing any further trouble to them. They were hit by a short squall right as they left the main island behind them, but otherwise, the ship just plowed on, the crew working the sails and the wheel expertly, with at least a third of the crew on duty at all times.

However, on the third night, after the last island had disappeared behind them, the downside of Harry’s luck came home to roost. Over that time, Harry, Versera and Nealu had begun to make themselves useful around the ship while Davo got over a bout of seasickness. True to her words back when this trip had been proposed, Versera knew her way around a ship and seemed to be just as at home on the ship as Nealu.

That day and even a large portion of the night was filled with the normal ship routine. Nealu was the last of the passengers to take to his bunk deep in the night. He and Harry had been

up and helping most of the day. Like the villagers, the nature of their vocation meant the kaldorei aboard kept to a diurnal rather than being nocturnal like the rest of their people.

That night, the man on duty in the crow's nest scowled, staring out over the horizon. The sky had been clear up to that point, but coming from the west, the clouds had begun to blot out the stars. *Not good.* "Storm coming! I can see it on the horizon! It might be a big one."

That was enough for the officer of the watch to get most of the crew out of their hammocks and back onto the main deck. The mainsail was soon only at half mast, with the secondary masts fully furled. Not even a half turn of the glass later, the storm struck, heavy winds accompanied by even heavier rainfall, making visibility practically zero.

Quickly, the captain was summoned up at that point. While his guests were still in their bunks, Pardo made the decision to fully furl the sails. With the winds as contrary and changing as they were in the storm, they ran the risk of having them ripped apart. It was better to lose headway than to be in danger of losing the sails or the rigging entirely. In this case, the wind would push them south of their normal course back to Danaveia, but as long as they could see the stars and had a sextant, they could still find their course.

Two turns of the glass later, the storm was still going on. Yet Pardo was pleased with how well they were dealing with it. The storm was heavy but not dangerous to a ship the size of the *Everswift*.

Suddenly, the ship lurched unnaturally. It was not as if the ship had hit a wave at the wrong angle, but as if they had hit something solid.

There was a booming noise from below. This was followed by a sailor on duty in the hold shouting, "We struck something, or something struck us amidships! We're taking on water, captain."

"Ship's carpenter to the hull!" The captain responded promptly before ordering still more of the sailors to be roused from their bunks and sent into the hold. At the same time, that blow had roused Harry and the other guests aboard the ship.

With Harry in the lead, the group rushed out onto the deck, where instantly, Harry, Davo, and Recca started to lose their footing. Claws were no good on slick surfaces, and Recca found herself falling to the side, slamming her wing hard down onto the deck, then nearly being flipped entirely onto her head a moment later as the ship bucked and heaved below her. One of the sailors reached out, grabbing her by the talon and tying her in place, while Davo clung grimly onto the hatch leading down into the ship. Nealu was able to keep his footing and raced forward toward the wheel where Pardo was standing.

For his part, Harry had fallen flat on his face but pushed himself to his feet quickly, casting a spell on his feet that would allow them to stick to the ground, keeping himself upright with difficulty. “Captain! What was th--?”

Harry’s answer came before he could finish speaking in the form of several giant tentacles reaching up from the water to crash down onto the ship from all around it. Thanks to a spell that had given him the eyes of an owl, Harry was able to see one of them directly above him just as it crashed through one of the parallel bits of wood connected to the mast, whose name Harry hadn’t learned yet. Instantly, he lashed out with a spell up into the darkness, a Bombarda spell, one of his tried and true spells, although even as that spell struck, another summoned up his chakram from his belt, sending them spinning around him and then up into the night towards another descending tentacle.

A second later, his first spell struck, doing nothing, not even slowing the tentacle as it crashed down onto the ship, wrapping it up and cracking several of the planks that made up the main deck. A second later, Harry had to duck aside from a small tentacle that was about to crash down on him, his chakram having bounced off of it in many cases and in others, simply sticking into it without doing much damage.

“What the hell!? That spell had more than enough power to shatter a rock column that size into pieces. It’s got magical resistance?!” Harry growled from his knees, slashing out with several cutting spells to minimal effect. Even the so-called Dark Cutting spell, the Sectumsempra, did nothing.

“That is not something I want to hear right now!” Davo shouted. He had rushed out of his room armed with only his long-range weapon, an automatic assumption that he was now cursing. His longbow, which was easily the size of Harry, was in one hand along with three arrows to match. Releasing his grip on the hatch, he took barely a second to shoot up towards another descending tentacle just before it crashed into the ship. His arrows bounced off, and Davo cursed. “Nealu! I need to go get my war staff!”

“Go! And grab my sword too,” Nealu shouted, slamming a lit torch into the top of a tentacle. It had slammed down in front of him, crushing a seaman under it, and it and the six or seven tentacles that had wrapped around the ship began to constrict, threatening to crush it.

Seeing that his offensive spells weren’t doing anything, Harry changed tactics. A moment later, several totems were flung from one of his bottomless pouches. Rejuvenation and energy totems slammed down and scattered around the shift in between the tentacles, though one of them smacked off a roiling tentacle out into the darkness beyond the ship.

Harry also slammed his hand down onto the ship, grunting with effort as he cast an Impervious charm on the whole ship.

Knowing that it wouldn't last longer than a minute, Harry sent a Thunderbolt spell towards one of the tentacles. That, at last, elicited a response. That tentacle spasmed, and there was a sound from somewhere as if something in the water had warbled in pain. That tentacle and one behind Harry shifted, shifting sideways along the ship toward him, But Harry leaped into the air, transforming into his half-phoenix form in seconds, evading them and another two tentacles with difficulty.

Once in the air, he saw Recca nearby, lashing out with her claws at a tentacle, dodging another, trying to smack her out of the sky. "Ohn'ahra blast it! I'm not doing anything here!"

Launching a fireball at another hovering tentacle only to see it do nothing but push the tentacle back, Harry shook his head. "Where are your talon blades?!"

"You think I can walk on wood with those things?" Recca shrieked back, sounding almost as if the Songbird spell was wearing off such was her frustration. "I took them off and put them in my pouch! Which, if you have to ask, is in my damn cabin!"

Down below, Quetzal coiled around one of the tentacles, biting hard, trying to tear off chunks with his mouth and not exactly succeeding. While he could sink his fangs into the insanely tough blubber of the tentacle, he wasn't strong enough to tear out chunks. It was enough, though, to make one of the tentacles attacking the ship twitch sideways, trying to wrap the snake up in turn. His quills launched out as the crew began to try and cut into it and others, with scant success, to both the crew's efforts and his quills. Quetzal simply couldn't launch them with enough momentum to penetrate the blubber of the tentacles very far.

However, for some reason, three of the tentacles trying to crush the ship rose to join the others in the air, trying to bat Harry and Recca out of the sky. Why that was, Harry didn't know, but it proved to be a mistake.

One tentacle had moved to block the hatch after Davo had rushed back down into the ship. With it gone, he charged out onto the deck, war staff in one hand and Nealu's moon glaive in his other hand. "Nealu!"

At his friend's roar, Nealu looked up from where he had pulled an injured sailor into cover. Leaping upward, he grabbed the hurled moon glaive out of the air, grinning viciously as he felt the familiar weight in his hand.

His double-sided war staff gleaming with bright red energy, Davo charged forward, swinging at the nearest tentacle, hacking into it with a sound like ‘splurt’ mixed with someone chopping into wood. Blood spurted, and all of the visible tentacles twitched.

Davo roared in delight while the smell of seared flesh filled the air. “Yes, that’s what we need!” he shouted, slamming his war staff’s axe head down again and again, freezing small slivers of blubber or cutting through it with heat. The heat runes made his blade almost act like a low-powered plasma torch and worked far better than the cold blade, but both seemed to do quite well.

Nealu’s regular kaldorei triple-sided moon glaive sliced into the creature, its edges made supernaturally sharp and cutting thanks to Harry’s rune work. This let Nealu cut nearly through the smaller tentacle he had targeted, but it didn’t seem to cause as much pain as Davo’s weapon, which was causing most of the tentacles to twitch and a loud bubbling roar to come from below the ship.

As that roar bubbled up to be audible on the ship from well below it in the water, Versera came out on deck from one of the secondary hatches. Much to the too-short-to-be-believable transformed kaldorei’s chagrin, she’d discovered a propensity to be extremely hard to wake up once on the ship. For some reason, the motion of the ocean worked against her ability to wake up. This had opened her up to no end of teasing from Harry and the others, including some of the crew as they became more comfortable around her.

Now with a target to take out her embarrassment on, Versera actually began to grin as ferociously as Nealu had a moment before.

At the back of the ship, the creature’s main body reared up out of the water. It was wider and longer than the *Everswift* by a wide margin, the tentacles even longer. To those kaldorei who saw it come up out of the waves, that size alone was alarming, but Versera saw large segments of its skin gleaming with the light of the moons above, almost as if portions of it were metal.

This observation barely registered to the furious green dragon, though, as she opened her mouth. Far wider than any kaldorei should have been able to, in point of fact, her mouth almost distending like that of a small snake about to swallow a large rat whole. If anyone had been in a position to look into her mouth, they would have seen a tiny light appear there before a massive fireball flashed out from her mouth, slamming into the creature.

The fireball caught the creature at the front of it, for want of a better term, where the tentacles began right behind its head. Hotter and stronger than even Harry’s fireballs, this hit caused real damage, boiling and searing large swaths of skin, and the creature

screached, the sound echoing, almost as if it came from several mouths, before it dove back down, while still more tentacles rose out of the water.

“Oh no, you don’t!!” Versera snarled, her features shifting as she moved to transform into her draconic form.

Harry wasn’t certain how good a dragon could fight underwater. *Given her apparent love of sailing, I suppose she’s swum in both her forms, but it still seems a bit dangerous to me.* For his part, though, Harry had other means to hurt this thing. *If you’re magically resistant, let’s see how you do against poison!*

With that, Harry dove back down to the deck just as a slowly transforming Versera was smashed backward off of the aft of the ship with a squawk of outrage into one of the masts, which shattered under the impact. She didn’t seem injured, though, so Harry ignored that. Back into his fully human body, Harry reached into his special expanded pouch, where he kept only the sword of Gryffindor.

Unfortunately, Harry’s attempt to pull it out was interrupted. A tentacle slammed into him from behind, wrapping around Harry even as the impact knocked the sword out of his grasp before he had pulled fully out of the pouch. The magic of the pouch pulled it back in, yet Harry found himself lifted into the air and then pulled overboard along with several kaldorei.

Two of them were already dead, having been crushed by the tentacles, and now Harry groaned in pain as the tentacle began to do the same to him in midair. Harry, however, had not only his armor on but something else to call upon at need. Even as that armor began to crack and groan at the pressure being exerted on it, Harry closed his eyes for a brief second, concentrating on his chimeric abilities.

He reached not to his phoenix side but to the basilisk. *I’ve already seen my phoenix fire can’t do anything to this creature, blast it all, and I can all too well remember the panic I felt when it seemed as if I was going to drown before I could get airborne.*

Within one moment in the next, Harry was covered from head to toe in scales, his eyes gleaming as they shifted into reptilian orbs. He stared down into the ocean but couldn’t see the creature attacking them, as it had retreated deeper under the waves from Versera’s attack. Yet the scales helped him against the constricting nature of the creature’s attack, and a moment later, he breathed in deeply as he found himself being pulled down into the water.

Harry began to thrash, but he couldn't break the grip the creature had on him, and he, along with several others, began to be pulled down even deeper into the water. *Can't break free, can't use spells, none of them strong enough to get through!*

Realizing that Harry only had one recourse, he tried again to stare through the murky gloom of the water toward the creature, but that darkness continued to work as a shield to protect it from the magic of his eyes even as he approached what was probably the main body of the creature. Harry couldn't call on the full debilitating nature of the basilisk gaze yet, but he knew that his glare had worked occasionally during sparring matches to freeze his opponent for a few seconds.

Yet Harry had one other aspect of the basilisk form that he could call on: its venom. With a desperate lunge forward, Harry brought his mouth down onto a portion of the squid's tentacle, biting hard into it as his venom glands went to work. He could feel the venom building up first in his body, then excised out through his teeth deep into the creature, an incredibly disturbing feeling that, Harry realized, might be part of why he still had so many issues with his basilisk side. There were so many different things about being a basilisk that humans simply could not grasp.

The bite of the basilisk was among the deadliest things known to the magical world back in Harry's old world, and it had proven deadly against the black dragon he, Tyrande, and the tauren had fought in the drogbar cavern. Similarly, this giant squid creature didn't seem to have any immunity to it, although it took a few moments for the poison to travel from its tentacle into the main body. When it did, the creature spasmed, its grip on Harry loosening as the creature seemed to lose control of its limbs.

Harry took his chance, kicking out of the grip and swimming as hard as he could upwards, biting his lip to keep from trying to breathe in the water.

By the time he emerged, he was nearly completely out of the air, shouting and breathing in with a gasp of air that must've sounded like a whale had just burst out of the water. "Man overboard!" he gasped, trying to raise his hands out of the water, trying to do anything, before finding a rope tied around one of his arms. The seamen began to haul him towards the ship through the water, and Harry stared around, seeing other clumps of things in the night, which he could make out only because of his partial transformation at the moment, the transformation having replaced his earlier spell. Dozens of tentacle bits floated on the water, hacked and slashed, burned and seared off by the efforts of his fellows and the crew before being pushed overboard.

Before Harry was halfway back to the ship, he saw a Recca in the air flying towards him. He tread water for a second, holding up his hands into the air, and her talons clasped around

his forearms. A single flap of her wings pulled him out of the water, and then she was away, flying them back towards the ship. "Are you all right, Harry? You are one of only five that we've been able to pull back towards the ship after they were yanked overboard. The crew's lost twelve men ~~dead~~ so far, and it would have been worse if not for your totems."

"Dammit! I was afraid of that. We severely underestimated what that giant squid thing would be able to do," Harry grumbled. "Bloody magical resistance."

He repeated this moments later to the captain as he was dropped down to the main deck, apologizing profusely and giving the man his condolences for the crew's losses.

Davo and Nealu were already there, but Versera was nowhere in sight. Not until a moment later, when she plunked down onto the deck nearby, completely naked. Evidently, Versera had dived into the water and then transformed back before climbing aboard. A small part of Harry's mind wondered how she had climbed the side of the ship in her kaldorei body, but the majority of his mind was trying to sear what he was seeing of Versera into his mind, much like everyone else around her beyond Davo.

Versera's breasts were not huge in terms of Tauren and maybe not some Kaldorei women, but they were far, **far** larger than Sylina's, and on her short frame, ~~they looked far larger~~. They were also fuller, drooping under their own weight in a way that made them even more tantalizing for some reason. Capped with nipples so green they looked black in the light of the torches, the two swaying orbs were mesmerizing not only to Harry but every man who was looking at her and even some of the women.

Her hips were wide, too, something Harry had known about before, but seeing her naked brought it back into stark reality. Thick thighs that looked both powerful and soft enough to rest your head on. A trim, fit stomach but with no visible muscles. And finally, her small pussy stood out starkly, a darker green than the rest of her skin, while a small tuft of even lighter green hair was shaved (or perhaps imagined into being) in a neat triangle.

When he noticed where he was staring, Harry finally remembered he was not supposed to be a horny teenager, a mental trap that the kaldorei around him had also fallen into, possibly because of the exotic nature of Versera's form, or just simple shock. Regardless, Harry stepped forward, pulling his cloak off his shoulders and dropping on top of Versera's head. "You might want to cover up, shorty stuff," he quipped weakly, trying hard to keep his flush from showing in the lanternlight.

Versera had shown a distinct amount of body consciousness before this and now blinked, nodding as she pulled Harry's cloak over her head and down to cover her body with several feet to spare at her feet. She looked up at Harry, shivering a bit as she took in his transformed body, the scales still showing on his arms even as he started to change back,

very thankful that the storm had killed all sense of smell beyond the rain itself. *Damn, but he looks quite... handsome, I suppose, with those little scales showing all over his face.* “*Ahem, um thanks, Harry. But, um, look at this.”

With that, she tossed down what looked like some kind of metallic plate, gleaming in the light of the torches. “That was no ordinary giant squid, blast it all. That was a kraken.”

Not noticing Versera’s reaction to his current form Harry looked down at the metal plate, pushing through his still-aroused thoughts at her form away to try and remember what he had learned of these creatures in the library at Trueshot Lodge. This world had records of such, even as Harry’s old world did, although Harry knew that there were significant differences between what this world called squids and what his own world called giant squids. For one thing, rather than the beaks that giant squids had back home, or at least, so Harry thought he remembered from pictures he’d seen in a few fantasy novels, the creatures on this world had swirling sawblade-like mouths that didn’t just devour what they ate, but minced it at the same time.

Krakens were different. They were giant squids that had somehow been exposed to Fel magic during the Sundering and had been changed thusly. They were tougher, much of their skin being somehow transmuted into metal, and were also far more intelligent. They didn’t just have two eyes, but many smaller eyes and smaller mouths around their main body, hence why the creature’s shriek from earlier had seemed to be coming from multiple speakers. “Are you saying that it timed that attack to coincide with the storm?”

“Probably not. It’s probably been simply following the storm along, taking advantage of it. We would’ve spotted signs of it following us before this and trying to predict our course after the storm caught us would have been impossible. Giant squids’ eyesight is routinely quite bad, and to see something on the surface, it would have needed to be close to the surface in the first place. It would be different if it was hunting us deep in the water, where its sensitive tentacles would be able to feel our vibrations, but up here, that’s muted,” Nealu interjected his town professional despite also having some trouble tearing his eyes away from the incredibly short but well-formed body of the transformed dragoness.

This wasn’t the first kraken he’d run into, although before, he’d gone hunting them with a band of ten Unseen Path members, whereas this time, he’d been on the receiving end of an ambush. *Which wasn’t nearly as nice,* he reflected as he turned away from Versera to look at the captain. “We will need to be on the lookout for more if their population has exploded to the point they’ve moved this far away from the Maelstrom. But for now, lets get to repairing the ship. Captain?”

Davo and the others turned back to their work, helping with the wounded for now until Harry's regeneration totems could work on their wounds. Meanwhile, Harry had volunteered to use his repair spells to help wherever he could. They wouldn't be able to replace any chunks of the ship that had been torn away entirely, but cracks in the outer hull and even the one mast that had been shattered and remained aboard the ship could be repaired.

Hours later, the work was done, and the ship dropped anchor for the night, letting the slowly dissipating storm wash over it now. Work was still ongoing in the hold, where some small cracks had gone unnoticed by the carpenters, busy as they were with larger issues. Much of the ship's comestibles had been ruined, and they would need to live off fish until they made port in Danaviea.

More importantly, the crew had five bodies to consign to the deep. Seven of the crew had gone missing and were almost certainly dead, their bodies sinking into the waves already. There would need to be a small ceremony tomorrow night for the dead before the ship moved on.

As day broke, Versera found herself back in her room. In one hand, she held the metal scale she had torn off of the body of the kraken before it sunk out of her reach. She stared at it thoughtfully, then toward the outer bulkhead, frowning.

Is this just a coincidence? Or something more? Creatures like the krakens don't venture very far from the Maelstrom normally. They get enough to eat there from one another and other larger sea-going animals. Admittedly, this isn't the first case I've heard about a kraken being sighted away from the Maelstrom. My brother spoke of seeing vrykul battling one a few centuries back near those islands closer to the new continent to the east. And who knows how many have made their way south? Heh, who even knows anything about south below the equator anyway? Still... the timing is odd, as is it being in this area of the ocean. But... why, and how... and...

Snorting, Versera shook her head. *No. One coincidence does not make a pattern. One of the old ones can't be stirring to the extent of being able to direct such a creature, not one of such size. We would've seen signs of their presence weakening before this. Right? But then again, maybe someone has, and the word hasn't spread yet?*

Concerned thoughts racing through her brain, Versera leaned back, her stomach rumbling at her, and not in a bad way this time. She resolutely stood up, hoping to find something to eat. *For now, there's nothing I can do about it, but it is something to be aware of in the future. Ysera might be busy with the Emerald Dream alongside many of my fellow greens,*

but that doesn't mean we should be unaware of the physical world. And just because it is peaceful now doesn't mean we should stop communicating with the other flights.

OOOOOOO

Tyrande's joy and delight at being away from the burden of leadership had ended when they got to Danaviea, where they began to plan out their excursion. A messenger had been sent ahead of them, but while that had been supposed to let the locals begin to organize the expedition to Northrend, it also meant that the locals had been ready and happy to welcome Tyrande formally in her position as high priestess of Elune and the leader of their people. That had been beyond tedious, and it'd taken a solid night to convince the locals that, just as she had been on her last visit here, she did not want them to go out of their way for her, nor did she care whatsoever about being treated as most of them seemed to think her position demanded.

Luckily, the locals had gotten the point eventually. With Shandris taking over the local Sentinel garrison for the moment, Tyrande and the rest of their party found themselves ensconced in guest rooms within, where, thankfully, she learned that the locals had already begun the work of gathering supplies, and vetting their ship captains for a trip along the coastline heading northward.

It would have to be along the coastline because none of the ship captains they had surveyed were willing to head out into the deep ocean and then northward. All of them agreed that hugging the coastline was the thing to do up until they got to the northern tip of Kalimdor, where they would then be able to strike straight north. The seas would be choppy, but the journey would be far shorter, and the ocean wasn't anywhere near as deep there.

Unfortunately, the ship that Tyrande and Harry had taken to the broken Isles was actually out visiting those islands now. That was a pity in Tyrande's mind. Captain Seagaze had impressed her with his professionalism, and, considering how willing he was to take up that route more often than many of the other captains who traded with the village there, it also showed more willingness to brave the deeper oceans than most of his fellows.

Tyrande did not blame any of the ship captains for being less than enthusiastic about venturing too far from the shore, of course. While their ships were built for the deep ocean, they had rarely been used for such. Exploring beyond their borders had never been something the kaldorei had ever gone into, even back during the time of the Azshara Empire, only spreading out gradually.

Beyond vetting the ship captains for their opinions on the journey and the supplies, the locals had also gone through their archives and brought together all of the maps of the coastline and the ocean that they had.

Mapmaking among the kaldorei was a highly respected, extremely detail-oriented profession. It had been that even before the Sundering, but during the Sundering and after, the respect that mapmakers gained had grown tremendously.

One thing that many young kaldorei, who had yet to study the history of the event, and indeed many adult kaldorei who had not lived through those times, often neglected to understand was that the Sundering was **not** a single event. It had been started by a single event, of course: when Malfurion went through with his plan to destroy the Well of Eternity and, thus, the portal that had brought the Burning Legion to their world. That act had sunk a gigantic trunk of the supercontinent centered on the capital city of Zin-Azshari into the ocean, cracking the rest of the supercontinent like an eggshell.

But when something like that occurred it did not simply happen and then suddenly end. The reverberations of that destruction, the earthquakes, the floods, the slow shifting of the now multiple continents, all of that had happened over a hundred years. A hundred years of scrambling, hasty planning, mass migrations, internal strife, and more. Many historians looking back at that time wondered if the war or the migration to what had then been called New Kalimdor had been harder.

A stupid question, in Tyrande's opinion and that of any who had fought during that war. Regardless, Tyrande knew such reactions from Azeroth as a whole would've gone on for even longer if not for the Dragon Aspects and demigods like Cenarius taking a hand in trying to mitigate the damage done to the world as a whole. They bled off much of the energy released into the world by the destruction of the Well of Eternity, keeping the weather from being damaged overmuch and hastening the movement of what they called 'the solid plates of the world, resting on the 'magma heart' a term that no kaldorei had ever heard before.

Northrend had not been an entirely separate continent when Andrassil had been planted. Yes, the temperature, the geography, and so forth had always been different that far north of Zin-Azshari and the center of the Azshara Empire simply because of how cold it was. But it had once been a part of Kalimdor and had retained a connection via a land bridge for several thousand years after the Sundering had begun to subside, which had connected the largest chunk of the supercontinent with the smaller, northern one.

That was how several kaldorei settlements had first survived and then grown up there. The Highborne in their forest of Moonsong was only one of several. This was how Fandral

Staghelm had been able to plant the second World Tree there, as well as a third over on the third continent to the east of the Broken Isles, the continent where the Highborne had retreated to.

All of that, Tyrande had known intellectually before coming to the port town. What she had not understood truly was how much time had passed and how different the shoreline of Kalimdor had become in the ages since the Sundering. Something she confided to Shandris over their lunch on the first night of their stay in the port town. “I was too busy with our people, with mapping out the area of Ashenvale Forest that our people were going to live in, the creation of Nordrassil, and then everything else after to realize how few mapmakers had taken up the task of creating navigational maps, let alone were concentrating their work on our new shores. The lack we are seeing now is highly annoying.”

“It isn’t so much that we are lacking in navigational maps, it’s just that the quality isn’t what we are used to seeing in maps about Ashenvale,” Shandris demurred, shaking her head. “We can’t exactly blame the sailors and other such folk for the fact that they concentrated on what they needed to know rather than on exploration beyond their normal environment.”

“True enough. But it is going to make the going treacherous after a certain point. I don’t like that at all. Especially this talk of, what did that one sailor we interviewed this morning call it, Jagged Teeth Shoals? He did not sound very optimistic about the captains’ plans for us to travel through them regardless.”

Shandris shrugged. “Shoals of Jagged Teeth. I’m uncertain if that is the actual name for them or simply a description. Either way, it certainly doesn’t sound good, no. But if none of them are willing to push off further into the deeper ocean, we will have to take our chances.”

Tyrande sighed, nodded, and then looked over at Fandral, where he was sitting at another table, using it as a desk much like Tyrande and Shandris were their own. He had become somewhat withdrawn and annoyed for some reason since they’d reached Danavia and the look he gave her now was full of annoyance and almost but not quite scornful enough for her to call him out on it. “Fandral, how are the Druids of the Talon doing in their self-appointed task?”

“Finally deigning to speak to me again? You’ve been oh so busy with many of the locals, and their falling over one another for you, I had thought you’d forgotten that means my fellows were here in the first place.” Fandral snorted.

Shandris let loose a sound that sounded almost as if it should have come from one of their companions, moving to stand up but stopped as Tyrande touched her hand gently. She smiled dryly over at Archdruid Staghelm, shaking her head. "If you are concerned that I will get a big head over such things, then you truly have no understanding of my personality despite the thousands of years we've worked together. Veneration is only the just due of Elune. Respect I will take, but I have no desire to partake in the trappings of authority or power more than I must."

Something passed over Fandral's face then, a look she couldn't quite decipher. It was almost self-deprecating, but not quite, and almost angry, avaricious almost before smoothing out, and he snorted. "Forgive me for my ill humor," he said, giving a perfunctory apology, but Tyrande would take such a victory when she could. "It has much to do with how little progress my own Druids of the Claw have to report about our progress in communing with the animals of the depths. The Druids of the Talon are having better luck at calling upon the spirits of fish hawks, however. They should be ready for the journey in three or four days."

One of the first things that the expedition learned upon arriving in the port was that three ships hadn't returned to port in the time frame they should have. Another ship going north, one of the ones that had agreed to transport their force, had returned, but damaged, and with several losses among the crew. It turned out that a colony of Murlocs had moved into the area. If that was what had caused the three missing ships to be unable to return to port was a debate, but it was something the expedition would need to take into account going forward.

Kaldorei Druids could call upon the spirits of animals in order to transform themselves into those animals. The Druids of the Claw transformed themselves into bears primarily, although many also took other forms as well: giant otters, stags, squirrels, and so forth to do different tasks or to at least partake in different abilities of the animals in question. A bear was good for helping with anything that needed strength, such as combat or helping to lug things around, as had been the case during the meeting with the ruling council several weeks back. And to move swiftly through the forest, they took the forms of stags or deer.

The Druids of the Talon transformed primarily into birds. Ravens were a particular favorite of such because of how good their eyes were and how they blended into the darkness of night so easily. However, ravens were not the strongest of long-term flyers. And while out to sea, where they would need to act on a diurnal cycle, better eyesight and an ability to stay up in the air might well be necessary to help them look out for trouble. Whereas

underwater forms, like sharks or such, would be far more useful than bears in dealing with Murlocs or other more monstrous threats.

“I believe that the Druids of the Claw are all having the same problem: fish minds are nothing like animal minds. For one thing they are far stupider,” Fandral explained, his lips quirking in a rare showing of humor. “I believe that rather than trying to transform into beasts that are identical to normal beasts as we have always done, we will need to create overarching aquatic forms for ourselves, take aspects of different underwater lifeforms and take those aspects to create a new whole via Nature Magic. That is going to be much harder, but it is still possible.”

“Good enough. And you still agree it is necessary?” Fandral nodded firmly. If they were going to face a threat while out on the ocean, there was no way the druids would be willing to fight with only their Nature Magic spells or regular weapons. To do so would let the Sentinels take the fore in any fight, and that pricked his pride too much to allow.

Tyrande looked at her adopted daughter. “Shandris, were you able to procure the services of a mapmaker?”

“I was able to find five that were willing to travel with us. Four apprentices, and one journeyman,” Shandris reported, looking between the two leaders for second before shaking her head, keeping it to herself that all five were convinced that aiding Tyrande and Staghelm would be good for their careers going forward, and were just as certain that so many fighters would be able to protect them on the journey. “Unfortunately, the local Master Mapmaker was on one of the ships that hasn’t returned to port in the time it should have. He and two up-and-coming apprentices are presumed lost along with the rest of the crew of that vessel and the others that haven’t returned.”

Fandral frowned, leaning forward and placing his elbow on the table so that he could rest his heavily bearded chin on his fist, any hint of enmity towards Tyrande gone for a moment. Regardless of the differences between them and the very obvious fact that Fandral felt that Cenarion Circle rather than the Church of Elune should be the primary source of authority among their people, he took his duties to their people seriously. “The Fishmen are going to be a major issue in the future unless we can prune back their numbers and do so decisively enough they never return. It would not take much effort from such monsters to turn several leagues of shoreline on these maps into deadly disasters for any but the wariest.”

“True,” Shandris agreed. “The last time I had anything to do with the ocean was when we were coming back from having to burn Vordrassil to the ground in order to try and mitigate the damage corruption was causing. The ruins of the escarpment that had for so many ages connected Northrend to Kalimdor was deadly to be certain, and I will remember how

helpless I felt as a simple passenger forced to allow others to deal with the threats at hand. The idea of fighting aboard a ship against monsters coming from the ocean is a worrisome one.”

“I too remember how unseemly it felt to be so helpless when dealing with wind and wave, rock and reef,” Tyrande agreed while Fandral simply grunted his own response to that one.

“Exactly. My Sentinels have been working on new tactics and weapons in order to defend ships from such threats. It isn’t going as quickly as I hoped, as the Sentinel garrison here hasn’t considered such before, but these weapons, the billhooks, we’ve been working with are promising. That and archery, of course. I don’t want to etch it in stone, but we should be ready to go in around a week.”

“I think we’ll also go with your idea of bringing along a quarter of the Sentinels here to add to our number. Pick out the men and women you want and work them into your training,” Tyrande ordered. “I also think you should emphasize working as a single unit rather than individuals in your training. The closed confines of a ship’s deck will limit what we can do.”

Shandris nodded firmly, and the conversation turned back to the maps, with Fandral only interjecting thoughts here and there, recommending a Druid of the Talon to work with the mapmakers, before turning back to his own thoughts about what the new ‘aquatic form’ of the Druids of the Claw should take, and what animals they should look at for inspiration for the various parts.

The preparations continued for some time, with Shandris vetting many of the sentinels here for their knowledge of the ocean, fighting on ships and so forth. Fandral and the Druids of the claw continued to try to call on the spirits of fish and sharks, with scant success, while the Druids of the Talon continued their own training. Meanwhile, Tyrande handled the logistics side of things.

Four days later, Tyrande and Shandris were walking together side-by-side along with their companions down to the fish market. Beyond the training regime that Shandris had come up with to prepare her Sentinels for ship battles, their sides of the preparation were pretty much complete. Loading had begun that night on the two ships that they would be taking North. The Druids were still hard at work with their new forms, but most of the Druids of the Talon had succeeded in transfiguring their bodies into the form of Seahawks, although they hadn’t been able to sustain the forms for very long yet. And the less said about the aquatic form the Druids of the Claw were working on, the better.

At the moment, the two women were simply enjoying the night’s caress, wondering what they should have for breakfast, setting aside the concerns of the journey to come for a moment. However, their moment of peace was interrupted by the tolling of a series of bells

in the distance. Bells were only used among kaldorei to signal danger or strange events, and instantly, the two kaldorei women and their companions broke into a sprint, heading through the town to the docks. With all the talk they'd had over the past few days of dangers out to sea, that simply seemed natural to them.

However, the bells were cut off, replaced by a horn. This was normally a sign of the danger passing, although the specifics of the long blast followed by five shorter ones was a signal that Tyrande had not heard before. "I wonder what is going on," Tyrande mused, slowing her rapid pace quickly. She looked over at one of the locals who had been staring towards the docks himself, asking politely what the dual signal meant.

"The bells are what we designed to warn if there was danger coming from the ocean, although I've only rarely heard them used, and mostly for when ships come back with visible damage," the local, a fruit seller, explained. "The horn is signaling a ship returning unlooked for, Lady Whisperwind, one that's taken some severe damage, hence the number of shorter notes. It might be the *Everswift*, judging by the timing. It's only less than a week overdue, and the timing of the trip to and from the Broken Isles is always hard."

"Thank you." Convinced now that the port wasn't in any danger, Tyrande and Shandris continued on their way down towards the docks at an even more leisurely pace, arriving just as the ship in question did indeed pulled up to the wharf. As it did though, Tyrande stared in some chagrin. The ship was missing two of its masts, and large swaths of its gunwales, the protective barriers around the main deck were also gone, while other segments seemed to not match the original, a clear sign they had been replaced aboard ship.

As they drew closer, *Shy-RotamSherry* began to sniff the air, letting loose a little mule of confusion. "There are scents on the wind. Strange scents I know, but from where..." She murmured.

Shandris's companion moved forward, while Tyrande, Shandris and her companion followed. It was only as they began to walk along the actual wharf out to the ship that *Shy-RotamSherry* realized precisely why the strange overpowering smell of snake was so familiar to her. She began to bound ahead of Tyrande, a happy yowl on her lips.

For a moment, Tyrande frowned, wondering what had caused her companion to rush ahead of them like that, then looked at the ship in some speculation, a small smile appearing on her lips as her ears began to waggle in joy. "Truly? Am I so blessed as to meet again a friend unlooked for?"

"Mother?" Shandris asked, looking at her in some confusion.

Tyrande sent a startlingly warm smile her daughter's way, then hurried after [Shy-RotamSherry](#), bowing her head in apology to a few kaldorei that had been jostled by the large frostsaber as Sherry went past them. "Come and see for yourself," she called over her shoulder, her ears still wiggling in delight. "I think I have some friends aboard that ship, and one in particular is someone you have been dying to meet."

There was only one individual that Tyrande had met in the past hundred years that Shandris had professed any desire to meet herself. After a second realizing that, she smiled too, and began walking quickly after her mother, eager to meet the mysterious Harry Potter.

Quetzal, Harry, and their companions were just coming down the gangplank by the time Sherry reached them, yowling happily "Quetzal, Harry! You are here! You both look older and bigger!" she growled, leaping up onto Harry, licking nuzzling her large head against his, her weight pressing into his shoulders from her paws.

"Ack, so have you, judging by how heavy you are," Harry grunted, shaking his head. "Get down, or I won't have hands free to give you scratches." When [Shy-Rotamsherry](#) obeyed and began to rub her head against his chest, Harry put action to words, using both hands to scratch at the top of her head and ears before he looked up, his eyes widening as he consciously realized what Shy-Rotam's presence meant.

Tyrande spotted him before he spotted her, her ears standing straight up for a moment in surprise, one eyebrow doing the same. *My word, has it truly been that long since I met Harry?*

A kaldorei lifespan was usually measured in terms of hundreds. It took a kaldorei two hundred years or so to go from being a baby to being physically an adult, but mentally more of a teenager, to use a term that Tyrande had learned from Harry. It would take another fifty to a hundred years or so to fully mature, and it was assumed another fifty years after that for a kaldorei to truly come to grips with what he or she wanted to become, to figure out what they wanted from life.

Most of the physical changes would occur in those first hundred years, gradually. A kaldorei mother who went away for a year wouldn't see many changes in her child, but if they were gone for ten or more, that would be a different thing.

So, in a way, seeing how Harry had changed wasn't all that surprising. It was just the amount of change, as there was now no hint of Harry the youth as there would have been if he was a kaldorei.

In the decades spent with the Unseen Path, Harry had gone from a powerfully built young man to a robust, incredibly fit-looking middle-aged man. His shoulders were far broader

than she would've ever expected, his skin tanned, his waist trim and fit. It was the same kind of build Sentinels routinely developed in the course of training, heavy upper body muscles, but coupling that with quickness of body and feet. His hair fell to his shoulders, looking particularly shaggy to Tyrande's eyes, and his voice was also deeper as he spoke to Shy-Rotam, although at least looking at him, Tyrande expected that.

What hadn't changed was those bright emerald eyes or the ready grin directly underneath them, which he turned towards Tyrande's direction, having spotted her now through the crowd.

Okay. I thought being with Sylina and being around Versera over the past few weeks would have inured me to pretty women. Nope, very no. Or it could be just Tyrande that's so beautiful. She looks just like she did when we first met after having saved the tribe of frostsabers from those unnatural giants.

Tyrande smiled back, her ears up and down again, a clear sign of her happiness despite her face and body language not giving away how happy she was to see him. Harry though, could see it, she could tell, and she raised a hand in greeting, clasping forearms with him. "Hello Harry Potter, I see we meet again."

"We do indeed, Lady Tyrande, although... I am wondering what brings you to this port specifically. You weren't going to be going over to the Broken Isles, were you? I'm afraid Captain Seagaze's ship isn't going to be ready for that journey for a while, so you'll have to find another ship. We ran into a spot of bother on the way."

"Spot of bother,' he says. As if we were just dealing with flies trying to get into our stew, or some of our supplies going bad," a tauren chortled as he moved up beside Harry, dwarfing the human man for all that he had grown far taller in the times since Tyrande last seen him. She now only needed to look down a little bit to look him in the eyes, but the tauren she had to look up to.

The captain seemed to agree with the Tauren, bowing his head reverently toward Tyrande before glaring at Harry. "If a kraken coming at us unaware is what you call a spot of bother I would hate to see what you would call actual trouble."

"Sorry, I didn't mean to make light of your losses, Pardo, it's just that downplaying danger is somewhat ingrained into my personality. My folk would call it having a stiff upper lip to make light of such troubles," Harry answered with a shrug and a wince.

This seemed to satisfy the captain. "Well, regardless, I think you were right that day you came aboard about your luck. And while I won't downplay the importance of luck, I think you can find another captain to take you back to the Broken Isles or wherever in the

future.” With that, Pardo waved them off and turned back to his crew, bellowing orders to his men.

Tyrande looked after the man thoughtfully, then turned to look at Harry, an ear standing straight up in query. “A kraken? I think, Shandris, we have just figured out what another source of the troubles plaguing ships in the area.”

“Wait, what? Another source? I hope you’re not saying there’s more than one of those creatures around. Fighting a monster like that that can keep its main body away from the fighting was surprisingly difficult,” Quetzal grumbled.

“Harry, this is my daughter, Shandris Feathermoon. Shandris, this is Harry Potter,” Tyrandey said, frowning a little bit as a kaldorei came up off of the ship. He was obviously not one of the ship’s crew, as this man was armed and armored in the fashion of armor that sentinels wore on a day-to-day basis, coupled with a moon glaive on his back along with a bow and quiver of arrows. He was also heavily scarred, a veteran of the War of the Ancients if Tyrande was any judge, even if she did not know the man himself.

Behind him, however, came a being whose appearance was so highly unusual that even Tyrande and Shandris’s habitual self-control left them. Their mouths dropped open as their ears flattened to the sides of their heads in surprise, eyes going wide. Nor were they alone in this. Practically every person on the wharf who was looking at the ship was the same.

The short, green-skinned woman with the overly full proportions bounced up to them, then gave the pair a wink before an unseen wind seemed to build up around her as her eyes shifted to look almost like that of a reptile’s. As the woman’s aura hit them, neither Shandris nor Tyrande saw a strangely short kaldorei woman. Rather, they saw a green dragon crouching there.

Tyrande got over her surprise quickly, bowing from the waist to the polymorphed dragoness. “Eldest, welcome. Your presence here is a surprise but a pleasant one. Will you be staying here long? And is your arrival with Harry and his companions a coincidence, or are you counted among that number?”

“At present, I am counted among that number. I am Versera, and I belong to the same group as they do, you see, and I am interested in traveling south as Harry is currently,” Versera stated obliquely. Even a dragoness like her was constrained by the Oaths of the Unseen Path.

Tyrande nodded, understanding what Versera wasn’t saying. Tyrande only had a vague understanding of how the Unseen Path organized itself, but she wasn’t about to argue with a dragon on so small a matter. Instead she simply smiled over at Harry. “I take it that you

followed my suggestion then on finding a group that might welcome you and give you goals for the future, so to speak?”

“You might say that, although first impressions hadn’t been all that positive,” Harry joked, elbowing the tauren in the side, to which he laughed, and slapped Harry’s back so hard that it would’ve sent a normal kaldorei man stumbling. Harry simply grunted a bit under the impact.

Smirking slightly at that, Tyrande turned away, gesturing Harry and his fellows to follow her. “Come, let us get out of these good folks way, and you can explain to us about this kraken. It has apparently been causing trouble along the coastline along with expanded shoals of Murlocs. And if there is another kraken out there, I need to be aware of what can and cannot work against them.”

“Poison,” everyone there, the sailors and the members of the unseen path alike said, deadpan, looking at Harry, who smirked back at them.

Tyrande laughed at that, reflecting that yes, that had been somewhat of a silly question. She had seen Harry use the Sword of Gryffindor to poison a Black Dragon, after all. Any lesser creature would succumb to the same, obviously. “Yes, well, specifics would be nice.”

By the time they reached the garrison where the rest of Tyrande’s party was staying, Fandral and the druids with him had learned of the unusual arrivals, as had Shandris’ Sentinels. They were there in the courtyard when Tyrande led Harry and his companions into it, and bowed towards the green skinned transformed Dragoness. “Eldest, your presence here honors us. It has been several centuries since I last conversed with a green dragon outside of the Emerald Dream,” Fandral intoned.

“Fandral, correct? I believe you worked with one of my sisters, Sorestrera ages past. She has become the chief gardener of the world tree on Azeroth,” Versera answered, nodding her head in turn, inadvertently causing both Fandral to smile and Tyrande to twitch. “I understand from Tyrande that you are heading south to the burnt out remnants of Vordrassil?”

“We are. We have seen signs of further corruption in the form of saronite deposits coming up from the ground, and I feel the need to create still more world trees in order to combat such,” Fandral answered proudly, straightening his back noticeably, even as internally he frowned at the fact that the trees he’d already attempted to morph into world trees needed someone to watch over them.

For some reason, the man struck Harry as more than a tad bit arrogant, with just a hint of peacock to him. Yet he wasn't about to underestimate the man just because of that.

Fandral went on, assuming that the green dragon was the leader of the strange group, trying hard not to let his eyes drift to the strangely pale, somewhat short being that stood beside Tyrande. He knew that had to be the friend that she had made on her sabbatical, the mysterious Harry Potter, yet wasn't certain what to make of him. He looked like a diseased vrykul, but obviously there was more to him. "Might I ask what brings you to our lands? And are you intending to stay and join Ysera and your brethren in the Emerald dream?"

"I am not. In fact, I am not even going to be travelling further into Ashenvale's depths. Rather, Harry and the rest of my companions and I will be heading south. Either overland or by sea, we have yet to discern which would be best just yet."

Or by air, Harry mentally added, his lips working just a little bit. Davo had unilaterally vetoed any such idea before this. He was not a member of the Sky Horn tribe, and thus was incredibly uncomfortable without his hooves set on solid ground. But if they couldn't find a ship willing to take them or build one they could all crew on their own, then the air might be their best option unless they wanted to take months or even years to travel southward.

This surprised Fandral, but he nodded, and then finally turned his attention to Harry, frowning a little. "And you would be the strange Harry Potter. We have heard next to nothing about you beyond what you and Lady Whisperwind did together and that has only fueled the fires of imagination within both myself and others."

Harry shrugged. "That would be by Tyrande's choice. She believed then, and probably still does, that my being too open with my abilities would be less than helpful in allowing me to move among kaldorei society."

"And you have a desire to do so? Then being open about your abilities to at least a certain extent is necessary. I can feel the Nature Magic in you, as well as Arcane. And while I am willing to respect Lady Whisperwind words on your intentions and character, if you truly can use both nature magic and arcane, then you fall squarely under my purview as the leader of the Cenarion Circle," Fandral stated firmly, stepping forward aggressively. "Danger can come from the Arcane even when those using it have no wish to become such, and we must be certain you pose no threat."

"I fall under no person's control other than myself and those I willingly answer to," Harry stated firmly. "Which does not include you or your circle. If I was going to stay within Ashenvale, I suppose I would be willing to follow the leadership of Shan'do Cenarius, as I

know him and have learned from him in the past. I haven't done either of those with you. And your automatic distrust of all things arcane does not speak well of you."

"You would not say that if you had seen the dangers that the Arcane brought down upon our people!" Another druid said, having stiffened and then begun to scowl angrily when Fandral had mentioned the word Arcane. Indeed, many of the watching Sentinels that had come with their group from Darnassus and druids had reacted much the same, stiffening, staring, suspicion rising as weapons were grasped.

"Truly. We must understand where your Arcane energy came from in order to even consider trusting you to not abuse it," Fandral said, shaking his head. "And your dropping of Shan'do Cenarius' name does not help here. Even my fellow druids have occasionally fallen to the temptation of using Arcane, Fel or Tainted magic in the past few thousand years. Such did ruinous damage to the forest and to their fellow kaldorei before being stopped."

"Enough. Fandral, you hit on why I was so reluctant to share specifics about Harry before this. I knew our people would not react well to the idea of an arcane user among us. But Harry's magic is nothing like that of the Highborne. He needs no external source of energy, and whereas their abilities shout in the world, as I understand it, Harry's magic whispers. Moreover, he is a friend of mine and will be treated as such. Am I understood?" Tyrande growled.

"... Your word is not enough in this case," Fandral said after seeming to take a few moments to deliberate. He didn't seem to have anything particularly out for Harry, although Harry wasn't certain of that. There was a certain gleam in his eye as he stared at Harry, then from him to Tyrande, that Harry couldn't quite get a read on.

Fandral gestured around him at his fellow Druids and the sentinels, who, besides Shandris, was also looking at Harry. Even Shandris looked a little leery once the term Arcane had begun to be bruited about. "Arcane style magic did far too much damage to our people, can be blamed for far too much, to be trusted so easily. We must know more."

"Then will you take my word?" Versera asked, stepping forward, allowing a bit of her draconic side out in her tone, her aura flaring around her strange body.

In turn, Harry felt his basilisk side rearing up a little at the back of his mind. It was as if Versera's draconic side called out to his basilisk side, and not in a friendly manner either. Rather, it felt as if his basilisk side wanted to challenge Versera, to defeat and dominate her in combat. A feeling of needing to prove his superiority, enough to make Harry twitch, a visible sign of his internal struggle, although none of the people around him noticed.

“I, as a member of the Emerald Flight, vouch for Harry Potter both his personality, and his Arcana. I have seen him use it several times on this journey, both in battling satyrs and a kraken on the ocean. His arcane powers come from within, no exterior source, as Tyrande told you a moment before. Even knowing what to look for, I can **barely** feel his magic spells. There is no danger of Harry Potter attracting the attention of either the Burning Legion, or any foes already existing on Azeroth.” Even a dragon was leery of naming one of the Old Gods specifically. “That is all there is to it. Let it lie, or else you will have trouble with me.”

Fandral held up a hand yet two of the druids still growled, their forms beginning to shift into bears. A bark of command from him stopped that motion, and he shook his head. “I... Will take your words for it. For now.”

This caused several protests from his younger druids. Fandral’s near bestial growl drowned them out, and as Harry and those with him watched, Fandral gestured to his druids to follow him as he led the way to another corner of the garrison’s courtyard, remonstrating with them in no uncertain terms.

Roused from her own worries about the Arcane, Shandris also brought her Sentinels to task, which was much easier than bringing the druids to heal.

Watching this, Tyrande was a little annoyed, and a good deal startled. Fandral and two of the other druids, both veterans of the war of the ancients seemed willing to take her word and a Green Dragon’s alongside Shan’do Cenarius’ apparent endorsement at face value. But the youngsters, they showed more unreasoning anger and hatred for the Arcane than they should have given the fact that they lacked any personal experience with such.

Blast it all, I have been so busy fixing other social issues that have crept into our society since the Sundering, that I did not think to look at that aspect of what we were teaching the young about the Arcane and why the Highborne were exiled. That needs to stop, just like the gender disparity and the lack of civilian leadership at the upper echelons of our society I was dealing with, Tyrande thought.

Luckily, the Sentinels at least were easy to bring around. Not only did Berena and Tyrande comment on the fact that it was Harry’s spells which allowed their partners to speak to them and vice versa, but the Sentinels were a true military. Tyrande was its commander-in-chief and Shandris was its field general, and Shandris had given them their orders. The Sentinels would obey, the division in their ranks that Harry had noticed when they first walked into the courtyard disappearing.

Many of the younger druids still growled and clambered for Harry to prove that his arcane power somehow was different, and Harry did so in is typical Harry fashion, hitting a few of

the maturing charms, then using the translation spell on several of the Sentinels companions, finishing the task of getting them on his side quickly. The social tenant of Arcane being bad could not last long against being able to actually have conversations with their beloved companions.

Yet many of the druids still glared at Harry even as Tyrande put a stop to the proceedings more than an hour and a half later. Tyrande led Harry through the garrison up to the garrisons rooftop, which had several small awnings spread out in different areas, as well as a central communal cooking area, complete with fire pit and grill and a few tables that seemed set out for various types of games. Harry laughed quietly as he looked at it, then back at Tyrande one eyebrow rising. "I think you had some ulterior motives in bringing me up here."

Tyrande laughed, shaking her head, and Shandris looked at her mother in some amusement. This was the same woman that Shandris had seen while they had been traveling through the forest away from the capital. This was the same woman that Shandris saw when they were sparring, or when they were alone in the temple, surrounded only by other sisters of Elune. *So, she trusts Harry that much, does she?*

Musing on that was perhaps why Shandris missed the next comment from Tyrande only paying attention to what the woman was saying a few moments later. At which point her attention centered on Tyrande's words very quickly indeed. "...Sad to hear that you and Sylina were not able to make a permanent relationship out of your mutual interest in one another. Such is life, however, and I hope that it did not put you off looking for a more permanent relationship. Indeed, I wonder if you and my daughter here might get along. She too has gone through several relationships, and I think it might be good for both of you if—"

"Mother!" It was quite rude in kaldorei society for someone to interrupt someone else while they were speaking, especially if the one doing the interrupting was younger or related to the original speaker. But Shandris felt this one was justified. "I do not need your help in matchmaking! This is no offense to you Harry, but I hardly know you more than as a mysterious friend my mother made on her sabbatical. Further, I would rather like to stare up into a man's eyes rather than nearly down to my chest whenever I need to talk to a lover," Shandris said, shaking her head, and showing the first sign of humor that Harry had seen from her since they had met a few hours ago.

"I will have you know I'm quite tall for my race at the moment. It comes from all of the Nature Magic I've used," Harry retorted.

This was actually quite true. In his past life, Harry had been a respectable but not amazing five feet ten inches. Back when he had been with Tyrande, he's been around five feet tall,

already taller and stronger than he'd been at that age the first time. At present, he was pushing nearly seven feet. Nature Magic had not only allowed his body to reach a level of athleticism that few back on earth would've been able to match even with lifetime's worth of training, but it also made him grow far taller to go with that strength.

This was something Harry had been only vaguely aware of during his teenage years among the tauren at first, since everyone around him was so much taller. But he had become quite aware of when he began to hit his final growth spurt during his time with the Sky Horn tribe. *Frankly, if not for that growth, I might well have been reluctant to become friends with benefits with Sylina. And of all the small things that drove us out of the relationship, my height was certainly not one of them.*

"What? If your race is so short, how can any of you get anything done?" Shandris teased.

"Now, now, one taunt about my height was fine, don't beat a dead rabbit with it." Rolling his eyes as Shandris snorted at the euphemism, which wasn't a kaldorei saying but was quite understandable, Harry looked over at Tyrande. "You never responded to my own tease about having an ulterior motive to bring me up here, so should I take it that I was on target?"

"If your hands need something to do while we talked, preparing a meal would be a most satisfactory use of your time, would it not?" Tyrande answered obliquely, her ears twitching in what Harry had learned was minor embarrassment, a strange waving motion about halfway out from her head, before stilling quickly.

With a chuckle, Harry moved over to the fire pit, pulling out his tent from his backpack to the shock and surprise of both Tyrande and Shandris. Shandris in fact moved to grab her moon glaive as the yurt appeared, but paused as Tyrande spoke up. "Hah, I see that your armor and that belt of yours is not the only new items you've gained over the past few decades."

"It isn't. And sorry, but I keep most of my spices and cooking equipment in here rather than its own dedicated pouch. I might have to change that going forward," Harry remarked, frowning a little. *Yes, definitely time to redo my Occlumentic Realm. If I'm having trouble thinking of such small things and having trouble organizing my thoughts at all, it is definitely time. Damn, I thought that back before we left the Broken Isles, and it's only now occurring to me again, yes, it's overdue.*

Filing that thought away to come back to later, Harry came back out of the yurt, piling up his cooking equipment to one side, before taking his yurt apart quickly, with Shandris moving forward to help.

By the time they were finished, Davo, Nealu, and several Druids had joined them along with a few of the local Sentinels, including a face Harry recognized with some difficulty as that of Berena Snowglare. Many of them looked confused as to where the cooking equipment had come from, Davo and Nealu smiled, with Davo asking, "Can I request something other than fish, Harry? We've been eating nothing but fish for days now."

"If someone can go into town and buy some meat and vegetables," Harry said, tapping a finger thoughtfully against the scar on his forehead. "I'll make up a list."

"You're a cook as well as an Arcanist?" Fandral Staghelm murmured, staring at Harry thoughtfully.

Harry didn't quite like that look, it was as if the man thought Harry was a puzzle he had to solve or, in some way, fit into his own worldview. *Or perhaps his plans.* It wasn't a nice look, but it wasn't a look that Harry could take much umbrage with at the moment. *But why am I getting the impression that this man knows precisely where that particular line is? He's giving me more of an ambitious politician vibe than I've ever had from anyone I've met in this world. Hah, how odd that two kaldorei with such similar first names are so very different. I couldn't imagine Fandal giving me anything like that kind of feeling, that crazy bastard.*

Despite these inner thoughts, Harry kept his face bland as he nodded to Fandral and the younger Druids, who were still glaring at Harry suspiciously. "I am indeed. Although we'll seem to need some chairs or something out here."

With a look, Shandris sent several of the local Sentinels back down into the garrison, and by the time they came back, Berena and one of the other local Sentinels had been sent off to purchase the foodstuffs Harry requested. With that done, and with his equipment laid out, Harry settled down into a lotus position, ignoring the chairs for now as he looked around at the others.

With a smile, Tyrande did the same around a yard across from him, leaving room around them for a few others, who settled down in the same position. "I see that not only have you added to your equipment and your time with the Tauren, but you have adopted some of their ways. Sitting around in a circle like this is something that the tauren are well known for when discussing things, while it is not something my own people do. We prefer half circles, with the individual speaking standing up."

"I lived among the Highmountain tauren for more than four years, I suppose there has been some cross-cultural flow," Harry smiled faintly. "For now though, and not to say that I am anything but happy to see you, but why are you here? Your daughter was even asking

questions about fighting out at sea. Were you here to investigate these attacks or deal with the Murlocs Lady Shandris mentioned on the docks?”

“Truly. Unless something truly auspicious has occurred among the kaldorei society, you are the leader of the kaldorei people Lady Whisperwind, and Arch Druid Staghelm is... well known as the head of the Canarian Circle,” Nealu said. *That is the nicest way I can say that he makes a point of making certain everyone knows he, as the only Arch Druid among the waking world is the head of his order and thus far more important than the absent Malfurion,* Nealu thought, scowling internally.

Nealu had the displeasure of making Fandral’s acquaintance several times, particularly in the War of the Satyrs. He was competent, and a good leader, but arrogant and caustic, dismissive of rangers like Nealu. *And judging from the earlier moment, all that’s changed in the ages since is that he’s better at not showing his arrogance.*

“And yet you all are the ones traveling with a green dragon,” Tyrande rejoined. “Surely that is even more confusing than my being here in Danaviea.”

“That’s easy. I’m along for simple curiosity’s sake,” Versera stated, once more losing a large portion of her earlier formality now that introductions had been made. “I’m also a mapmaker of some excellence, and our little group discussed the fact that there aren’t actually any maps of Southern Kalimdor’s shoreline. We’ve got a few maps of the interior of the continent thanks to the tauren tribes that live on the plains there. None that reach the coasts, let alone further south. We don’t even know the full shape of Kalimdor, really. When it comes down to it, we actually don’t know as much about this continent as we do the Broken Isles.”

That was the literal truth when it came to the Unseen Path. While several islands among the archipelago weren’t as detailed in terms of their interior, their shores and their positions in relation to one another were well detailed in various maps in the library at Trueshot Lodge. Whereas, when it came to areas beyond a certain point southward for Kalimdor, the maps just... ended. That point as a lot further southward for the Unseen Path than it was for the kaldorei, but even so. And their navigational oceanic maps weren’t actually all that better.

Shandris chuckled dryly. “We’ve been having similar issues since we arrived here and began to plan out our trip north in earnest. Nautical maps seem to be few and far between, and not at all detailed as the ones we are used to seeing for Ashenvale. I don’t suppose you do commissions, Lady Versera?”

“Versera,” the polymorphed dragoness stated firmly. “I’m only formal with strangers and members of other dragon flights. And not at the moment. I might do so in the future. I like

mapmaking, it's fun and it is incredibly detail-oriented work. But at present, I am already going with Harry southward. That way we both are able to satisfy our curiosity."

"Although if your mission to the north is important enough, our trip south can be delayed. We're not under any kind of time crunch," Harry demurred.

Tyrande smiled, and not just because of Harry's willingness to chip in with whatever problem Tyrande was here to deal with. She could almost feel the confusion and interest coming from Fandral, as well as many of his younger druids. Apparently, although he was one of the few aware of the Unseen Path in her government, Fandral had yet to understand that it had been the Unseen Path which had brought these four together, and it amused her to let him flounder for a moment. "And with that, I think we should indeed exchange reasons for our being here in Danaviea."

"Before that though, could I ask a question?" One of the Druids of the Talon interjected, his tone thoughtful, although his eyes were narrowed, his ears pointing forward and to the side aggressively as he glanced between Harry and the others who had arrived in the port with him. "I was practicing my new seahawk form when you came over the horizon, and I could have sworn that I saw a harpy take off from your ship."

"What?! They are in league with harpies?" One of the other druids said, growling the words as he glared at Harry, pushing himself up from his chair as many of the Sentinels did the same, reaching for weapons.

None who had been here in Danaviea when Harry had passed through before, though, Tyrande noticed. *Regardless, it seems as if distrust and even hatred for the Arcane has become too institutionalized among my folks. Yet another social battle I will have to fight. Drat*, Tyrande thought to herself. *And I thought I was done with such things once I made certain the growing dichotomy between the sexes was reversed.*

"Er, technically speaking, we are. But it isn't what you think," Davo said, holding up a hand and forestalling any words from Harry. He felt it would be better if this came from him rather than the known Arcane user.

As he thought, doing so calmed much of the anger that the Druids Fandral had brought onto the rooftop with him, something Nealu noticed from where he sat next to his friend. *I wonder now, did he bring them along because he was afraid of being outnumbered up here? Quite likely.*

"You see, at one point a few decades back, we were on a mission to wipe out a harpy flock, only to discover that there were actually internal divisions within that flock. And one group was quite different, led by a matriarch who..." Davo's voice rolled out in an attention

grabbing cadence, showing the tauren oral tradition. He first gave a background of the harpies, then the mission, never stating the term the Unseen Path or calling his friends Seekers. He simply made it seem as if Nealu and the other kaldorei with them were a small community like the villagers of the unnamed town, living on their own elsewhere in the Broken Isles.

Despite that, Fandral's narrowed eyes told the watching Tyrande that he had finally made the connection there and how he gazed at Harry's forearm, seeing the tattoo there for what it was.

Davo then began to detail the battle and the subsequent interaction with Matriarch Cassandra. From there, he talked about how Harry had been able to use a spell to give the harpies magnificent voices rather than the horrible screeching voices they'd had previously and what a major change that made in how easy it was to interact with the flock. "Since then, Matriarch Cassandra Moonflight and her daughter Maria have changed how their folk live in various other ways, as well as learning how to interact with those of us who go on the ground without

"Truly?" Tyrande murmured, her gleaming eyes narrowed in intrigue. "I well remember interacting with several harpies during the War of the Ancients. I didn't have much to do with them, admittedly, but we did occasionally have to coordinate attacks or defensive battles with Aviana's folk against the Burning Legion. It was difficult even then when we were on the same side to interact with them. Their voices and, not to put too fine a point on it, some of them were also quite smelly, were enough to drive most away. And afterward..."

"Even as the aftereffects of the Sundering continued to ravage the continent, the harpies began to reach out to the Fel, joining up with the bands of satyrs and even searching out the Taint of the Old Gods. Believe me, I know. I was part of several battles against such harpies during the exodus away from our former heartland and then afterward," Nealu stated, shaking his head. "But the ladies of Matriarch Moonflight's flock are different."

"They are, truly. Not only can you talk with any of them without feeling as if your ears are going to start bleeding, but Cassandra's ladies are actually cleaner and calmer than any harpy I ever interacted with," Versera added. "I found Maria, Cassandra's oldest daughter, quite intelligent and well-read. They lack actual books, but she certainly enjoyed reading what books she could get her hands-er, talons, on. And if that isn't a sign of civilized behavior, I don't know what is."

"And yet, they will still have an urge, a desire to seek out sources of Arcane energy to use and manipulate in order to fill the void that the death of their mother, Aviana, left in them," the same thoughtful young druid as before stated, frowning and reaching up to push his

hair back, revealing a nasty scar above one ear, possibly from a harpy talon. “I can see how changing their voices and so forth can allow you to interact with them, but surely, that basic... necessity, I suppose, is the proper term... surely that not going away.”

“That, too, has been dealt with, although that is not our secret to tell. Suffice it to say that I, a green dragon, declare that the harpies of the Moonflight Flock only use Nature Magic,” Versera said firmly. “Suffice it to say, however, that matriarch Cassandra’s family is very, very different than a harpy flock you’ve ever seen before.”

In speaking up like that, she made it seem as if she had been involved in that, something that Tyrande noticed, realizing quickly it had also been deliberate. However, she didn’t say anything. It really wasn’t any of her business, and if the Unseen Path were willing to work with the harpies, that was more than enough for her. *Truly, if this flock is able to, I suppose the term is convert their people to whatever new source of energy they have, that can be only a good thing for Ashenvale and indeed Kalimdor as a whole.*

“We will have to take your word for it, but where is this harpy that you traveled with now?” Fandral demanded.

While not liking his tone, Nealu still answered. “She agreed to keep her distance until we leave the port again, either on land or by ocean. Judging by what we heard down at the docks though, it’s almost certain that we will be traveling over land. You all have commissioned a few ships already, and the *Everswift* needs weeks of repair.”

“And why--?” Stag came began only to be interrupted by Harry speaking up for the first time since Davo had begun his tale.

“I think actually it’s time that you and Tyrande tell us why you two leaders of the kaldorei people are out here at what even I know is a somewhat distant, semi-unimportant town to the rest of your folk. You’ve mentioned going north, and yet you’re not going over land. That tells me either you are traveling quite a ways north and need to do so quickly, although even that doesn’t sound right, or you’re going to Northrend. Which is it?”

“Northrend,” Tyrande admitted, holding up a hand when Fandral made to protest. “It is true that it is our turn to share. And besides...” She smirked, her ears suddenly raising up above her head, then flapping out sideways to the fullest extent they would, a clear sign of good humor and joy. “I believe I hear the Sentinels returning with the ingredients Harry requested. We can talk as Harry toils.”

Harry laughed quietly at that, moving over to the fire pit as a few local sentinels came out onto the roof. As he moved, Harry made a point of surreptitiously examining the faces of the kaldorei around him, noting that very few of them seemed to object to Tyrande’s easy-

going manner, reflecting internally that the idea of a leader of a nation being so cavalier with someone not of her own people back home would've seemed highly unusual. Among the kaldorei though, it did not seem as if anyone was going to object to Harry and Tyrande's friendship. *Nor for propriety's sake, at least.*

The information Tyrande imparted about the saronite deposits and Fandral's possible solution for it grabbed the attention of every member of the Unseen Path who listened intently, even warily. The Taint of the Old Gods was one of the things the Unseen Path had been created to help contain and it sounded as if, unseen by any, the Old God corruption of the world beyond their prisons was becoming more prevalent.

When Tyrande finished explaining, Versera began to question Tyrande first, then Nealu began to question Fandral, picturing in his mind where the druids had discovered such a large amount of saronite, frowning thoughtfully as he did. It sounded familiar oddly enough, although the place certainly was distinctive. *A large copse of trees in an otherwise rocky area, where the bones of the earth had somehow jutted up, yes, I have been to that place.*

One of the druids who had actually been involved in securing the chunk of saronite described a strange natural formation of stone that had been hollowed out along its center by some long ago dried up river. In Nealu's memory, the river was there, flowing through that now-strange stone, having worn it away over centuries. "That is... Interesting, and familiar," he admitted aloud. "But I would need to consult with my friends back on the Broken Isles to figure out where the familiarity comes from."

"So you are going to Northrend to examine the remnants of Vordrassil. But you haven't seen any more signs of corruption other than pockets of saronite?" Versera asked, frowning as her thoughts several days ago about the origin of the kraken came back to her.

"Beyond the chunk of saronite we destroyed and the dragon turtles that had been infected by it, no. But this was the largest vein we've seen in several thousand years. And this was happening in Ashenvale, where Nordrassil is. Who knows what is going on elsewhere in the world. We know that distance is a scant defense against those trapped below. We **have** to be aware of what is going on beyond our borders," Fandral stated firmly.

While Harry agreed with that sentiment, for some reason, Fandral was still rubbing him the wrong way. *He's worried sure, he's not faking that. But Fandral's also using this to push himself into further prominence.*

So he said nothing, simply listening as he continued to cook, moving on from the main dish as it simmered lightly on the grill to the side dishes. But there was one thing he did have to say. "You've only been talking about going to Northrend, and I know from Versera that

there is another world tree being tended to by Emerald flight on Azeroth. I assume they'll be aware of any sign of corrupting elements, but what about opening communications with the Highborne to do the same elsewhere on the eastern continent?"

Tyrande winced as Fandral, several of his Druids, many of the sentinels, and even Shandris voiced instant objections to that idea. As their shouts subsided, she shook her head. "I am afraid, Harry, that there are far too many of us who remember that it was the Highborne who brought down the Burning Legion on us, that it was the Highborne who created the disaster of Moonsong and the giant magical storm that threatened all of Ashenvale from their incessant need, their driving madness for sources of Arcane energy," Tyrande said.

She went on, looking around at the druids and sentinels around them, her tone firm.

"Although that is a gross generality, and I well understand that individual Highborne were just as adamant about fighting the Burning Legion as myself and Malfurion were, that doesn't mean that any of us would be willing to open up communications with them right now. Moreover, it would take two to communicate, and I rather doubt that you would be able to discover anyone among the Highborne willing to do so."

Harry had to reluctantly agree to that one as Nealu and Davo hid grimaces. While he and Lathariel weren't close, he had spent several decades around the Quel'thalasi ranger. He well understood that most of his folk had willingly decided to start forgetting the fact that they had ever been a part of a greater elven society, while others, those in the know still, had changed that history to the point where, in a few thousand years, the High Elves would firmly believe that the rest of their race had betrayed them, had ostracized and thrown them out because of fear.

He honestly wasn't certain which was worse, the willful decision to start forgetting their origins or the darker, self-important and willful blindness of the rest.

"And really, outside our immediate environment, my flight might not be on the lookout for such at all, to say nothing of the other aspects. We've all drifted apart in the past few thousand years, unfortunately. I think that I am going to need to get in touch with one of my sisters..." Versera mused, frowning. "If only we had figured out a way of long-distance communication like those magnificent message tubes of yours, Harry. This doesn't seem immediately important enough to pull me away from you, as I doubt I'll be able to find you again, but I have to wonder if any of my flight, or that of any of the other Aspects, have made a study of saronite specifically."

Doing so would be incredibly dangerous, even to dragons, of course. It was the Old Gods who had corrupted Deathwing and through him, his entire flight. *But when you see a*

building wave on the horizon that may or may not be a tsunami and decide not to investigate because it is dangerous, well, that is not the path of wisdom.

“I’m sorry, message tubes?” Tyrande asked, one eyebrow and one ear rising in interrogative question, as a small smile appeared on her face. “What are these, Harry?”

“I actually have one for you, Tyrande. Message tubes are a runic device I came up with a few decades back, and have since perfected.” He waved a hand to Davo, who willingly moved over to one of their larger bags. Reaching inside, he pulled out a message tube, one of three examples of the tubes they had with them.

Under the suddenly watchful, distrusting gazes of the younger groups of sentinels and druids, he explained how they worked, then pointed to a few new features Harry had added over the past few decades. Two wit, the fact that the message tubes could all be paired together, and the user could choose where to send a message via a metal plaque that wrapped around the tube.

On the small metal plaque were etched a few different markers. There weren’t many, on the tubes the members of the Unseen Path had brought with them. These had been crafted by Harry to give to Tyrande and Cenarius in order to let them communicate with one another, the Highmountain chieftain and Trueshot Lodge, but there was room for more, and those markers could be anything. “They just need to match what is on the paired message tubes. Make certain they match completely, then put your finger on any one of these markers. You’ll then send a message to that specific tube.”

Examining the tube closely, Tyrande paused, staring at the small flowing image of a moon paired with the kaldorei word for beauty. Considering the others were easy enough to figure out, a small mountain range, an eye with small talons around it, and an image of an antlered face, this had to be the image Harry had devised for her. *That’s surprisingly sweet of him*, she thought, smiling faintly.

Over her shoulder, Fandral stared at the device thoughtfully. There had been magical means of communication, magic mirrors, magic messenger birds, and so forth during the Azshari Empire, but they’d mostly been toys of the Highborne, not something used in everyday life by most of the kaldorei unless they could pay for it. And while the kaldorei population now wasn’t nearly as dispersed, or anywhere near as large, as back then, such a device still had tremendous uses. Especially militarily.

That was something Shandris also grasped quickly. “I don’t suppose you would be willing to sell a few of those message tubes to us?” Shandris asked, her hands subconsciously making small grasping motions. She was still quite leery about the Arcane in general, but she’d been willing to take her mother’s word on Harry before this, and seeing something as

amazing as this message tube she was willing to set aside any lingering doubts right now. “And what would you want in trade for, say, twenty of these?”

“I was able to teach a few fellows how to do these message tubes to precisely get out of mass production back on the Broken Isles,” Harry laughed. “I much prefer experimenting then repeating the same creations one after another. But I’m certain that something can be worked out in the future.”

“When we are done in Northrend, I might make that my priority going forward unless we have discovered more trouble there,” Shandris announced firmly. “Patrols being able to communicate with one another over long distances, being able to coordinate movements of troops through Ashenvale to deal with any outbreaks of satyrs or harpy trouble, or even just natural disasters would be a tremendous boon.”

There had been a natural disaster nearly a decade back that had wiped out a small village to the far west of Darnassus. Even though Cenarius had been aware of it almost before it began, it still took him time to both send aid and to send word to the rest of the kaldorei community that some of their own needed help. By the time they arrived, it was already too late to save most of the villagers.

“For you, I will give a special price,” Harry answered quickly, making his voice almost into a singsong, like one of the hucksters down on the market. This caused several laughs from his listeners, and he turned away from the food, holding out the first place to Tyrande. “If you go to the Broken Isles in the future, the Highmountain High Chief will know how to get in touch with those who are able to create message tubes. And with that, food is on.”

Despite the seriousness of why Fandral, Tyrande and their group were heading north, the food Harry prepared made the air on the rooftop almost festive. While it was composed of ingredients and spices that all of them had been at least somewhat familiar with before this, Harry’s method of cooking was entirely different from that of most kaldorei, and the spicy Asian-style duck went over a treat with everyone there.

It also seemed to signify the end of the serious discussions for the night. Everyone broke off away from the main cookfire, settling into small groups around the roof, enjoying the food and their own small discussions, setting aside thoughts of the future and concerns about Harry for now. Moving to a corner, Harry settled down there on a chair, putting his meal down on the buttress to one side as he took a sip from a cordial that one of the Sentinels had bought in town.

To his surprise, Berena did not come over to ask about Sylina. She seemed far more interested in the food than anything else, and Harry wondered if she had moved on from

Sylina in the past twenty years. *Or could it be a kaldorei thing, to not dwell on past romantic entanglements? Given their lifespan that kind of thinking actually makes a lot of sense.*

After a few moments, Tyrande sat down next to him, smiling at him faintly. “You know, when I first saw you, I was somewhat astonished at how much you had changed. It is nice to see that at least your skill at cooking has not changed at all, or if it has, it has certainly been for the better.”

“What, you don’t think that my growing up was for the better? Personally, I think that my form right now is quite nice. I never, well you know how young I was when I died in my old world the first time. So being middle-aged is quite an experience.” Harry said, shrugging.

“Oh, but you were so cute before,” Tyrande stated, smirking a little and unwilling to have a serious conversation right now.

Sensing that, Harry grinned over at her, and asked, “So, oh mighty leader of the kaldorei, what does the High Priestess of the moon goddess do for fun most days?”

“Spar with my daughter mostly. I was getting beaten by her more often than not for several years after I returned, but over the past two decades, I’ve more than evened the score,” Tyrande said, laughing a little wickedly.

“I heard that, mother,” Shandris growled from nearby, where she and one of the local sentinels had sat down together. What they were talking about Harry didn’t know, although they had sat down at one of the tables that was marked by the Elvish strategy game of some kind. “And I will have you know that officially our score is one hundred and ninety-five bouts to one hundred and sixty in my favor this year!”

“But last year, it was one hundred and ninety-two bouts to ninety-nine in mine. And the year before that and the year before that I was above two hundred wins,” Tyrande rejoined. “Your footwork has gotten markedly better than my own in the past year, true. Yet exactly how long do you think it will take for me to learn those leg sweeps and knee jabs that you’ve begun to incorporate into your style into my own?”

Shandris laughed at that, the two women exchanging bright smiles as Harry watched, a faint smile on his own. Seeing Tyrande interact with her daughter like this was incredibly nice, and he knew instinctively that Tyrande **needed** time with her daughter like this. Time to just let her hair down so to speak, far more than she had ever allotted for in her time as leader of her people and high priestess of the moon goddess. *One sabbatical every three hundred years is clearly not enough, and it's nice to see that Tyrande's figured that out.*

A cough from her fellow sentinel drew Shandris’s attention back to her, while Tyrande turned back to Harry. The two of them talked for some time about the Broken Isles, about

what Harry had seen, about his time with the Tauren. Tyrande was astonished to hear of the Sky Horn Tribe and the giant eagles, never having dealt with the aerial arm of Huhn's forces during the war. She was also enthusiastic about the idea that they were building an actual city, a capital for their sprawling valley, and mused aloud about sending some kind of gift to the Highmountain Tauren. But what could she give that would be for their entire people was in question.

However, she did gratefully accept ownership of one of the message tubes that would allow her to send a message to the current high chief, with Harry showing her what marker on the metal plaque she needed to touch in order to send it to that specific destination. That this inadvertently showed that Tyrande was right in terms of the symbol that had decided to use for her was something she didn't comment on. It was a quite sweet gesture, after all.

In return, Tyrande told Harry what she had been up to, which wasn't nearly as interesting to either of them frankly, even if Tyrande was quite proud of her social and political achievements. In turn, Harry was proud of the work she'd been doing, respecting both it and the fact that leading like that did not come naturally to Tyrande. Something that, although he didn't quite put into words, Tyrande picked up on which had her small smile widen noticeably from its normal small, subtle one.

The only time her story had Harry chuckling was when she relayed stories about several of the younger sisters and brothers of the priesthood and a few mishaps that had occurred as more brothers began to join the church of Elune. "I doubt there will ever be true parity in numbers in those who are called to serve Elune, but it has certainly been amusing to watch the sisters welcome their new brothers."

In contrast, Harry nearly had Tyrande, in gales of laughter several times despite the self-control of her face and body language that Tyrande, like most kaldorei after a certain age, began to cultivate. She particularly enjoyed hearing about Harry's friends among the tauren and the mishaps Harry had run into with his attempts to summon elementals.

Harry still couldn't summon an earth or water elemental to save his life, thanks to how heavily his soul leaned towards wind. Even making his contract with Tricky and his second Fire Elemental, Tildoc, had been hard because of that. The story about how he had developed the runic toilet array was also fascinating, and Tyrande reflected that it might well become another source of resources for the Unseen Path if they could figure out how to sell them to the kaldorei.

The kaldorei knew about indoor plumbing and so forth, of course, and in Darnassus, the druids had been able to help shape Nordrassil to a certain degree in order to make room

for such in large portions of the city in the form of comparatively tiny runnels for plumbing. But there are still areas where they hadn't been able to do so due to structural issues. Perhaps ten out of every thirty houses didn't have indoor plumbing, and elsewhere, towns and villages away from the world tree would also be very interested in such things.

Their discussion lasted hours, with most of the others on the roof coming and going, Berena and one of the locals cooking another small meal several hours later, and Harry coking a second meal hours after that. Eventually, with dawn on the horizon, most of the party began to head indoors. All of them, even the druids who had been most leery of Harry, smiled and thanked him for the meals, almost all of their concerns about his arcane magic gone.

Such is the way of things, Tyrande thought sardonically as she watched this. *Gross generalities usually do not survive meeting an individual who breaks the archetype.*

Soon, Harry and Tyrande were alone on the roof, and the conversation turned a little more serious. With Tyrande in the know about the Unseen Path, Harry could tell her more about the Unseen Path that he could not in front of the larger crowd thanks to his oaths. Although even Tyrande didn't know all of the secrets of the Unseen Path, and Harry wasn't going to share them all. He was able to share some of his more esoteric experiments with runes, and more about his personal training. This led to him explaining about his First Journey and why they were heading south, following his visions of three volcanoes on a shoreline.

"Honestly though, your mission to the north seems far more important. I'm wondering if we should put off my first adventure for now, and all of us go with you and your party north," Harry murmured.

"I do believe that your companions, Davo and Nealu, are already going to go with us, going from the conversations I overheard tonight. I do not think that you need to go out of your way for this, Harry," Tyrande demurred, shaking her head. A feeling had been welling up inside of her throughout Harry's tale of those three mountains, diffuse, but there. She wasn't certain if it was a whisper from her goddess, losing the ability to speak more directly to her now that the sun was rising, or her own instincts. But something about Harry's mission to the south was important. She couldn't put it into words, but it was there.

She said so aloud, and Harry blinked, frowning and confusion, before shrugging. "Well, that's certainly interesting, but no offense, without something more concrete, it just feels like woman's intuition. And while I won't say anything about woman's intuition one way or the other, I like my head where it is, I still think your mission sounds more important. More importantly, perhaps, it might be more fraught as well. There's the Murlocs you'll have to

contend with, and then what you'll find in Northrend. I've met the vrykul now, and I know they can be tough to deal with."

Tyrande raised a wintry eyebrow at that, her ears twitching first upright, then slightly forward mock-aggressively. "Strange, I didn't think I would need to explain to you that I am not in need of someone protecting me, Harry. Not after our campaign in the Frostfang Mountains or the battle with that black dragon who was attempting to start a war between the drogbar and the tauren."

"No you're not, but surely having more companions to stand beside you would be better," Harry answered simply, shrugging his shoulders as if he truly did not have any concern for her life, only that his magic could make things easier.

The simple nature of that response, the confidence that Harry was able to put into those words had Tyrande smiling, and actually flushing a little in a way the small marker he'd come up to signify Tyrande had not. *It is always odd how few of my people remember that I fought on the front lines of the War of the Ancients, and the War of the Satyrs afterward. When they look at me, they see the High Priestess of Elune and forgot the warrior. Harry sees both.* And his confidence in her abilities, not just there, but when it came to leadership and everything else, was gratifying.

"True. Yet let me commune with Elune when the moon is once more in the sky. Perhaps I can give you something more than just my female intuition to be leery of," she chortled.

Harry nodded equitably. "That's fine. But for now, I'm going to go see Recca, and make sure that she found a place to hide out for a bit." A thought struck him then, and once more, he made certain to remind himself to redo his Occlumentic Realm. "In fact, I think I will take my yurt out to her. She can live in it for a while. It's got enough runic defenses that few of your people will be able to find it even if they go looking. It won't fool someone like Cenarius or his children, but it should be able to hide her from anything else."

"That sounds like a good idea." Tyrande watched as Harry moved away from her, grabbing up a pack, settling it onto his back. She continued to watch as Harry began to change, his arms and legs shifting, becoming wings and talons, looking indeed like a male version of a harpy. Tyrande reached forward, rubbing her fingers along Harry's feathers, shivering a bit at how soft they felt. "That is fascinating Harry."

"Oh, don't you start using that word too. Versera uses the term 'fascinating' at least ten or twelve times a day!" Harry laughed, then patted his chest with one of his wings, slowly disappearing to Tyrande's eyes.

She shook her head slightly, listening as she heard the wind rustled through fingers, the faint crackle of fire, then he was in the air, heading off somewhere. “I wonder how he is going to find Recca while still remaining that invisible to my folk?” She shrugged that thought off, though, pushing to her feet and heading inside. It’d been a most boisterous night, and she wanted to get some rest before communing with her goddess.

OOOOOOO

Harry spent most of the day with Recca, talking about their plans going forward, Tyrande, and what her own plans were. As a member of the Unseen Path, Recca was also somewhat worried about saronite showing up as it was, but when told that Nealu and Davo were going to go with Tyrande’s group northward, that was enough for her.

Setting that aside, Recca spent a good portion of the day flirting with Harry. Unlike the twins, she mostly did so for fun, having learned long since that Harry just wasn’t interested in harpies. Their lack of legs was a major turn off for him, as well as the lack of hands. But playing around with him like this was always fun, especially when he flirted back.

Beyond that, Harry meditated the day away at the entrance to his yurt. The problem with having a fully realized Occlumentic realm, one that was designed to grow with him as he matured, learned or evolved, was that occasionally bits of memory or new thoughts became stuck in places they weren’t supposed to. This, in particular, happened when memories moved from short-term to long-term memory and when instincts and desires were impacted by his basilisk or phoenix sides. Worse, Harry realized it had been more than a year since he’d last meditated on just his Occlumentic Realm and not his chimera side in total or something similar.

That night, feeling mentally refreshed and focused in a way he hadn’t been for several months, Harry returned to the garrison’s rooftop, where he found Tyrande already kneeling in prayer, her head bowed. Elune and Blue Child were both high in the sky, and Tyrande was already communing with her goddess.

Seeing that, Harry tried to land lightly so as to not rouse her, but she spoke even as he began to transform back to his normal body. “Fandral and many of the others were quite annoyed when they discovered that you had gone off during the day. Some of the goodwill you earned with your food last night has seemingly faded, but Versera and your companions sat on such as much as they could.

“Considering how little I might have to do with your folks going forward, I am ambivalent about the reactions to me. So long as you and those I’m actually friends with understand that my arcane magic is nothing to fear, I’m fine with the rest looking at me so suspiciously,” Harry answered with a shrug. “I don’t even resent it, really.”

“That is a mature response that matches your apparent age now, Harry, something that I was afraid I would never see from you,” Tyrande teased lightly before closing her eyes again.

Harry remained there, watching her for several moments before the door onto the roof opened, and Shandris stepped out, followed by one of her Sentinels and Nealu. They all paused as they saw Tyrande there, her head bowed, and Harry standing nearby, before waving Harry over to them. Shandris reported much the same thing her mother had said a moment ago, before adding that several of her own sentinels had also been a little bemused how quickly Harry had been able to leave the premises without anyone knowing.

“Just don’t make too big a point of that type of magic for a bit, would you?” she whispered, having kept her voice low so as to not distract Tyrande while they’d been speaking. “It’s liable to make several people who are already somewhat paranoid about arcane magic even more so.”

“And there goes my idea for pranking all of you when you go to bed in the morning,” Harry snorted, shaking his head. “Don’t worry, I can control my base urges.” *And I won’t even mention the various spells on the yurt that are currently helping Recca hide out.*

“I could say something about how often you stare at Versera’s transformed form that give that statement the lie it is, but I will refrain,” Nealu taunted, before going on more seriously, asking Harry if he’d had any thoughts about their journey going forward. He hinted heavily that he was going to be going with Tyrande northward. The Sentinels and Druids would accept a ranger like him going along with them, especially one who knew a lot about ships, the sea, and so forth. While the captain and crews of the ships they’d commissioned to take them north were good at their craft, they weren’t warriors. Not even one of them was a veteran of the War of the Ancients, or had ever been a Sentinel. And none of the Sentinels and druids had ever had to fight on a ship before, either.

Harry nodded that, and explained his conversation with Tyrande the evening before. Tyrande had not shared that with anyone else, and Shandris stiffened a bit, hearing that her mother felt that something might be going on in the south as well. It was almost enough to make her think that Fandral had a point about needing to understand what was going on beyond their borders. But only almost. Agreeing with that man on anything was enough to irritate her, let alone something as important as that.

Then again, with the communication tubes that Harry provided, and the remit of the Unseen Path, we could have that, couldn’t we? That, and greater communication with the Aspects would probably solve most of our troubles in that area.

Her attention shifted to her mother when Tyrande gasped. There was no blinding flash of moonlight streaming down onto her, no massive sign of her goddess's favor as there had been when Harry saw Tyrande call upon the moon goddess in the past. Rather, she simply stiffened, and then, from under her eyes, pure white light began to appear stronger and brighter than normal.

Yet despite that being almost subtle as such things went, every sentinel on the roof and in the garrison below went to their knees, bowing their heads in prayer, feeling the attention of their goddess nearby. Even a few of the druids did, while the others simply watched on, and, unseen by any, Fandral scowled in anger.

Tyrande did not bow her head any further. She was already on her knees, head bent in supplication. Nor could she have concentrated on her physical body long enough to do so. Instead, her mind was lost in swirling imagery. At first, it was about her own journey north. Cold, vrykul, coldness, and large burnt tree trunk the size of several city blocks from one end to the other, followed by a sound like a howl in the wind.

Then there came a sight that caused Tyrande's heart to stop for a moment. Strange bipedal creatures, the likes of which she had never actually seen in real life, although she had seen their like in man a history book back before the War of the Ancients. Taller than a kaldorei, and spindly, as if none of them were able to put on large muscles, but spare and fit of frame. Green skinned, with large tusks jutting up from their mouths. Primitive looking, with equally primitive looking axes and spears. The beings were first covered in furs, hiding in the snow, blending in and ambushing someone or something.

Then, the image shifted. The furs went away, revealing nothing but loincloths in the heat of the sun, while in the background, three smoking mountains of different sizes ~~spewed~~~~spumed~~ fire. Instead of waiting in ambush, these beings seemed to be setting up some kind of ceremony or something. And then that image faded, it was replaced by a kaldorei. His features were obscured, as was the majority of his body. What was important was how the kaldorei in the image was raising a horn to his lips, announcing his presence to the world. Only, as darkness encroached, it was clear from the feeling of the image that he was not getting the response he was looking for. Instead of calling friends to them, he had simply drawn enemies down on himself.

Tyrande wasn't certain what to make of that last image, but she could feel the danger in that call as well as the danger of what the trolls were up to both south and north. Tyrande also knew that the image of the three volcanoes was where Harry was heading towards. So there was indeed a reason for him to head southward rather than journey to the north with her.

If Tyrande had been a human, perhaps, like many an oracle over the centuries back on Earth, Tyrande might have complained bitterly about what all those images meant. What specifically was the threat. But Tyrande was not human. And she had spent at least a few thousand years longer than the Wizarding World had existed being a priestess of Elune. She was simply thankful for any direction her goddess could give her. It was up to mortal men and women to have the discerning capacity to understand what was being shown.

Similarly, when, after several more moments of prayer in thanks for Elun's attention Tyrande explained what she had seen to those who had gathered, none of the other kaldorei seemed put out by it. Rather, they were deeply concerned. Because the images of the beings could only be describing one being: trolls.

To say that the kaldorei had a bad history with the trolls was an understatement of epic proportions. Indeed, it was in fighting the old troll empire that drew the kaldorei tribes together, creating an empire of their own. And, although few kaldorei who remembered that time today would be willing to admit it, it had been the Arcane magic the Highborne had gleaned from the Well of Eternity that allowed them to win that war. Eventually after a series of dozens of wars, the trolls had been driven away from the surging kaldorei empire. The last trolls in central Kalimdor had been wiped out centuries before the War of the Ancients.

Although now that Elune had brought them to the fore of Tyrande's mind, she had no idea if there had been troll clans of nations outside the Azshara Empire's borders. For all that the kaldorei knew that trolls were bad news and an enemy race, they'd not been seen for more than a hundred years before the Burning Legion appeared. None alive now remembered the Troll Wars, and if there had been any records or anything about smaller troll nations out there, it had not survived the Sundering or the mad exodus that followed.

"Again, we lack information," Fandral grumbled. "We need to start expanding as a people! Who knows what these trolls are up to."

"Our people do not spread out naturally very quickly, Fandral, as you well know," Tyrande shot back. *That sounds all too like we would be conquering the rest of the world to my mind.*

"Communication with the other flights needs to be a priority going forward, drat it," Versera grumbled. "After we're done figuring out what these trolls are up to and how to stop them, I will go to seek out representatives of the Red, Green and Bronze flights."

Before Fandral and Tyrande could devolve into a full argument, Harry cleared his throat loudly. "Regardless, it appears as if Tyrande's right. My mission to the south has suddenly become more important. Worse, we might be working under some kind of time limit.

“I think we should be moving on quickly,” Nealu agreed. He wasn’t old enough to remember the Troll Wars, no one in the Unseen Path was. But portions of the library in Trueshot Lodge had been built on the remnants of others before it, and within those, there was some talk of the trolls. Of the trolls, and the ‘loa’ their equivalent of gods. Something about the image that Tyrande spoke about, called to Nealu’s memory.

“Actually, I don’t think you and Davo should go.” Versera startled Nealu out of his thoughts, gesturing upwards before Nealu or Davo could protest. “After all, if there is something going on in the South that might be time sensitive, there’s only one way to go. And that’s airborne. You two also might be needed in the north, too.”

“You wouldn’t mind Recca and I resting occasionally on your back for long stretches of time? With my magic, I’ll be able to keep up with you, but Recca might not be able to, no matter how I try to help her along,” Harry warned.

Versera shrugged, really, really wishing that a blue was there, or perhaps a bronze? Someone who would be able to explain what the trolls might be up to. But even a green dragon like her wasn’t going to argue with a goddess if the goddess in question was willing to tell you there might be danger afoot.

“I’d be more than happy to. Although,” and here she grinned suddenly at Harry, her teeth far more pointed than a normal kaldorei would’ve been. “If you think you can keep up with me in the air, I’m looking forward to you putting your wings where your mouth has gotten you, Harry.”

“Challenge accepted,” Harry answered with a grin. He’d spent as much time as he could over the past few decades in the air, and had worked out enough that he could stay in the air for days on end. Nor was speed going to be an issue thanks to some spells he’d created in that same time frame.

“In that case, I suggest you start gathering food and so forth tonight and plan your route south, Harry. I have a feeling that it is going to be quite an interesting one. As for me and my own expedition, we will sail with the morning tide,” Tyrande decided. “And we still have some preparations to do. Let us be about it, ladies and gentlemen.”

End Chapter