

The Truth, Once and For all

An old farmhouse perched atop a rocky hill somewhere in the countryside outside Gilneas. It rained and rained, nearly washing away the muddy hoofprints they had tracked to get there, but as Lula and Alaina stood outside battered by the elements they knew they had reached their destination.

After for long years of waiting, Alaina would finally tear the answers from her Father. Why had he left her without a word? What could have been more important than her?

She kicked the door off its hinges and saw him standing over an old chest- still dressed in his old armour, his greying hair swept aside. He turned as he saw her. Could he still not face her, even now?

"Well?" She asked. "Aren't you going to say anything?"

He stood coldly, clutching an old photo frame in his hands.

"Talk to me!" she shouted, wrestling his shoulders so that he had no choice but to face her eye to eye.

"I have nothing to say to you."

"What, why?" She pushed him away. "I have waited four years for an answer. I demand one. I am tired of you running away from me."

"You do not understand. I told you that I would come back."

"How would I understand?" She cried. "You didn't tell me! For Ember's sake, just talk to me. For once! What do I have to do to make you talk to me like I'm your own daughter?"

His brows furrowed. He choked out his words weakly.

"I must go."

Alaina grabbed him by the shoulders and slammed him against the wall, causing the whole house to rattle.

"Tell me why you left! Tell me now, if you ever... if you ever fucking cared about me!" Tears welled up in her eyes.

"I do care... I always did, Alaina."

She kicked out a chair for him to sit down in. "Then talk."

Alaina listened and held Lula tightly, knowing at least her affection came openly and unreservedly.

Father breathed shakily and finally, finally, explained himself.

"Years ago, before Kul Tiras isolated itself, I travelled around the Eastern Kingdoms widely. At one time, I found myself in Gilneas, at this farm. Bandits had attacked it. I fought them off, and found the farm's owner- a woman.

Her name was Mina Ulston.

Her husband had died protecting her, and she was horribly traumatised. I nursed her back to health, and spent much time with her. Eventually we fell in love.

But she was with child, from her husband. Later that year her child was born. I stayed with her, and we moved to Corlain when Kul Tiras closed off. But one night, I saw her by the docks. She didn't listen to me as I called out and... damnit! I let her go. I saw the ship sail towards Gilneas. That was the last time I saw her.

That was the last time I saw your Mother, Alaina.

I made an Oath I would find her. And I am so close."

Alaina grit her teeth. "So this whole time, you have been looking for my mother and you didn't tell me?

You said we would find her together. I thought you had given up on this- it had been years!"

"I am not your true Father, Alaina. He died Long ago. But you deserve to have a Mother who -is- yours. Wouldn't that make you happy?"

"It would make me happy, but not at the loss of you!" She snapped.

"You would not have to trade me either! When I find her, we can live together. That is all I wanted, Alaina."

Alaina felt a pit in her heart that this conversation only grew, and Lula could see it too. Whatever Alaina's words were, whatever she wanted to say, Lula said it for her.

"That's it? You... your daughter finally tracks you down after you've been gone all this time and... you... cling to the excuse that you were searching for her mother this... entire time? Like... like that makes it okay? Like... that's justified?"

"Has Alaina ever told you the story of the Knight and His Lady?" Father asked. "How when His Lady were lost, he would stop at nothing to find her- even if it meant conquering Death itself?

If Alaina were gone, would you ever stop looking for her?"

Lula looked at Alaina with a sad smile. "If it meant abandoning our child... no, because I know that would be the last thing she would want me to do. What I would do? If I was a decorated knight, with an estate, money, and a reputation? I would gather all of my resources and put them towards finding her. I would hire others to find her. I would pay every coin I had to people to find her. And she would have been found. And I would be waiting for her at home, looking after our child, making sure she's safe and cared for.

Lula's tears finally broke.

"I wouldn't put my PRIDE and my own personal desire to be THE ONE TO DO IT in front of my young child who NEEDED ME."

Father shook his head. "Alaina was not a child. She was an adult. And Alaina did not need me. She needed her Mother."

"If she was an adult then why didn't you take her with you?" Lula screamed. "Why didn't you at least tell her? Even if she was left behind she would have eventually understood. You just said nothing, left her with nothing but hope, hope that her Father hadn't abandoned her and would be home 'ONE DAY'? Do you have ANY idea how that feels?"

Lula poured out every tear that she could "She needed you. She needed the one she looked up to, and... and..."

Father sat there, trying his best to cry. But he didn't know how.

Alaina rubbed Lula's arms and finally had the courage to say what she needed to, as well.

"I was sixteen when you went to Boralus with the others. You never heard about this- because you never gave me the chance to tell you. So let me tell you about Drustvar.

I fought in a guerilla war against dark magic as a teenager. I saw my countrymen fight and die, slain in front of my own eyes. It was not glorious. I did not go there to fight great battles, knowing my home is comfortably safe. We fought for survival.

Every day was worse than the last. I saw my allies carried off into the night. I saw their jaws, their arms, their minds stuffed and sewn together with the dessicated limbs of pigs or crows, wings horrifically fused on so they could fly or fingers so they could cast spells.

I saw the gentle creatures of the forest maddened and blighted, spitting pus and covered in rot attack us as we passed through the woods.

I fought living, nightmarish trees with deer skulls for heads that rattled and screamed in the most horrible ways.

I saw my best friend die in front of me. I was mind controlled, and they made me kill him.

And the one thing that kept me together, through all of that? That I would get to go home and find you again.

Because you and the others were waiting for me.

I was an adult. But I needed you."

Alaina turned away and glanced at him over her shoulder.

"I'll help you find her, only if it helps you finally release yourself from this damned quest of yours. I'm tired of not having a father, as bad as he may be at it."

She left the house and found somewhere to cry.