

Rise of the Undaunted

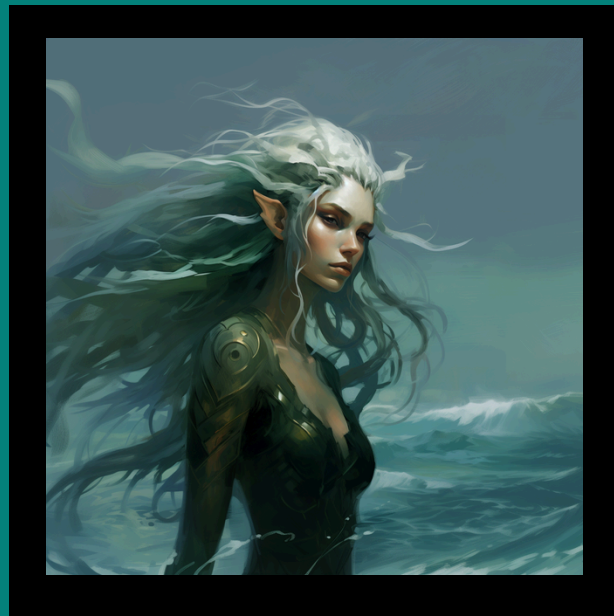
"The strongest souls are like the sea—ever moving, ever changing, yet always unbroken. The tide may pull them low, storms may batter their shores, but each time, they rise again, shaped by every wave, stronger for the waters they have endured."

— **Chronicles of Anduin: The Teachings of the Tide**

Date: Year 21 After Sundering (AS)

Location: The Hallowed Grove, Domain of the Skycity Mistfall
East of the Twin Cities, Verdant Greenlands Region

Dramatis Vitae Anduin: Lanalee Corallean



It all happened in an instant.

Lanalee Corallean awoke to her father's voice shouting her name, his words sharp but trembling with a fear she had never heard before. The sounds of screams, cries and the clash of steel filled the air "Run, Lan!" he cried, pressing her dagger into her hand. The next thing she knew, she was tearing through the forsaken forest, her heart pounding like war drums in her chest. Each breath came sharp and ragged as she darted between the trees, the snarls of her pursuers growing louder with each passing moment.

They were under attack, and she fled, behind her, the sounds of combat faded, replaced by the cruel laughter of those chasing her. They were men, orcs, and elves alike—bandits, twisted by desperation and hunger. Their laughter rang out, cruel and taunting, the sound of predators toying with their prey.

Despite the darkness, she could see well enough, the night sky was alight with chaos. The Arcane Storm churned overhead, a roiling vortex of mana-fuelled fury. Its colors bled into the sky, casting the forest in hues of sickly cyan and violet. Lightning forked through the churning clouds, carving jagged bolts of energy that twisted and pulsed, as if alive with some malevolent will. Each flash illuminated the warped patterns of the trees around her, making the forest itself seem to mock her desperation.

Her teal skin, once luminous with the glow of Laantis, now seemed muted beneath the storm's unnatural light. Strands of her sea-moss green hair whipped across her face, shimmering faintly even as they tangled in the wind. Her bright cyan eyes, usually glowing with calm serenity, were now wide with terror, flickering between fear and resolve. She clutched her cloak tighter around her shoulders as she ran, its sharkskin trim catching the faint flashes of lightning in the distance. Her coral dagger slapped against her hip with every frantic step.

Lanalee's legs burned, her breaths coming in sharp, ragged gasps as she tore through the tangled undergrowth. She ran with all her might, but she was an elf-kin of the sea, she was far from the waters of Laantis and her beloved coral caves and knew full well she could never outrun them. The snarls of her pursuers closed in, their cruel laughter echoing like wolves circling their prey. She tripped, her knees striking the forest floor hard, when a familiar, heart-stopping cry cut through the chaos. Her Waterhorse, burst from the shadows, its bioluminescent mane a streak of silver light in the suffocating dark. It reared, letting out a defiant neigh that sent the bandits' jeers faltering, and lowered its head toward her. "Tidecaller!" Lanalee scrambled to her feet, clutching at its mane as it urged her up with a firm nudge. Without hesitation, she threw herself onto its back, gripping tightly moving at a speed that left the trees blurring past them.

But the bandits pressed on. Their shouts rang out, sharp commands rising above the pounding of hooves. Arrows hissed through the air, thudding into the trees just inches from Lanalee's head. She leaned low over the Tidecaller's neck, her heart hammering as she whispered, "Currents guide us..."

A sharp, sickening thud shattered the air. The Tidecaller's stride broke, its powerful legs faltering as the spear struck deep into its flank. Lanalee cried out, her fingers slipping from its mane as the creature stumbled and collapsed, throwing her into the dirt. Pain seared through her as she rolled onto her side, her heart pounding as the bandits' shouts grew closer."

She saw Tidecaller collapse, its luminous mane dimming like a dying star. Its cyan eyes, wide with pain but unflinching, locked onto hers for the briefest of moments—a flicker of understanding, of apology, before its chest stilled with a shuddering breath. "No," Lanalee whispered, her voice trembling as fury filled tears blurred her vision. Crawling to its side, she clutched at the creature's mane, its glow fading beneath her touch. Her fingers, trembling, traced its smooth, silken coat, but the warmth was already leaving.

The forest seemed to close in around her, each twisted root and gnarled branch an obstacle in her desperate flight. Behind her, the bandits' voices grew louder, their shouts echoing through the trees. At their head, a towering brute of a man—a scarred elf-kin with a sneer carved into his face—strode forward with the confidence of a predator that knew its prey had nowhere left to run.

"Nowhere left to run, little sea-elf," he snarled, holding out a hand as though beckoning a child. "Come—let me show you how fragile your kind really are."

A touch unbalanced from the fall, Lanalee rose as the storm's light danced across her face, her luminous eyes catching the maelstrom ahead. The sea had always been her sanctuary, its depths a place of peace and safety. But here, far from home, the storm was no calm current to guide her—it was a wild, ravenous thing. And yet, something inside her refused to break.

The brute's sneer deepened as he mistook her pause for surrender, stepping forward with deliberate menace. Lanalee froze as the brute's shadow loomed over her, his sneer cutting through the chaos of the storm. Her hand rested on the hilt of her dagger, trembling, frozen by the weight of her fear and the certainty that she did not want to kill. But the storm was closing in, and her hesitation might cost her everything.

But Lanalee turned to face him, her hand tightening around the hilt of her dagger. The polished coral blade remained sheathed, but her grip steadied her trembling fingers and her other hand rose to the turquoise gem that hung about her neck. She felt the weight of her fear, sharp and undeniable, and was sick with worry for her father and friends thinking the worst, yet she also felt the faint pull of something else—a distant echo, a lulling call, like the currents she had always known.

She glanced over her shoulder, staring long to the darkened storm of cyan and violet and for a moment, the forest seemed to hold its breath. "Fragile in form, perhaps," she said, her voice lilting and quiet, yet unwavering. Her words carried the rhythm of the tides, as though spoken in harmony with the storm. "But we are water and wind, and none can hold back the tide."

She turned from him then, stepping toward the roiling heart of the Arcane Storm. "I will not be afraid," she whispered, as the winds pulled at her, threads of her cloak swirling like dark wings. The glow of the storm reflected in her eyes as she let it swallow her whole.

Her pursuers lunged to follow, but a mana-charged lightning struck the ground between them and the Arcane Storm roared to life. The air was torn asunder, and shapes moved within the chaos—storm-stalkers, wraiths woven of malevolence and madness, emerged like fractured spectres. Lanalee held her breath, their forms defied reason, their shrills of malice and hate haunting, they were shifting and jagged, glowing eyes burning with a hunger that knew no mercy.

The bandits turned to fight, their weapons raised in panicked defiance. But they were no match for the storm-stalkers. The air filled with screams as the creatures tore through them, their claws rending flesh and their movements a blur of eldritch wrath. The forest became a cacophony of death—blades clashed, voices rose and fell in agony, and the storm raged on, merciless and unrelenting.

Lanalee stood at the edge of the maelstrom, her sea-moss cloak billowing, her luminous eyes aglow alongside her pendant—an anchor against the chaos. The storm’s mana brushed against her skin like ice and fire, filling her senses with a power as old as the oceans themselves, but darker, twisted. She closed her eyes, focused on the water and the wind, steadying her breath, and let the storm rage around her. “Water and Wind” she repeated, channeling what she could from the elemental currents within, even here beyond the seas reach, she could sense the lay lines of the waters power leagues beneath the earth, she could the wind and the rain in the storm, almost trapped unwillingly by the arcane malevolence.

She could feel storms fury, its chaos, but she did not flinch. She did not yield. She thought only of the seas, of home, of the water, winds and the tides. Her soul, gentle yet resolute, stood unshaken in the face of near-certain annihilation. When the storm’s wrath finally ebbed and the unnatural light began to fade, Lanalee opened her eyes. The forest was silent once more, save for the soft crackle of dissipating mana. The ground was littered with the broken bodies of those who had sought to claim her. She stood alone, a solitary figure amid the devastation, her dagger resting at her side, unsheathed and untouched, her eyes burning bright and fierce, with undimmed resolve—undaunted.



Thank you for exploring the Rise of the Undaunted. Hope this chapter has ignited your imagination and inspired your own journey in Kinslayers: Fall of the Arcane Storms.

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Vlaan

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