

Valandrian Legends:

The Hero in Silver

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Elysaer sat on the mountains and looked over the plains below. A massive campsite had formed over the span of many weeks, the rumors of a new champion spreading like wildfire through the Dustwind Forest and Syllian Plains. Farmers, refugees, and nobles alike flocked to the new town, eager to meet the man leading a revolution.

The stars were just beginning to shine overhead as the young night sky blackened. No clouds were seen on the horizon; the breeze blew calm and cool across the open plains. The two moons shone overhead, their red and blue glows casting a purple aura over the land. Looking up she wondered if her gods were still watching, or if they were trapped in their own quarrels again. They would have marveled at the inspiration a single man could achieve.

As Elysaer sat watching the world below, a dark figure appeared in the night sky. Great wings of shadow blocked out the blue moon as it dove into the mountain range. She felt the worry and heard the whispers rise up the mountains from the camp below as some humans noticed the flying creature. However, when it became clear it would not bother their camps, they returned to their nightly activity, the dragon forgotten.

The dragon pulled up from its dive suddenly and disappeared behind the mountain. On the other side, it was not a dragon but a lady, clad in bronze dress with copper hair, that strode forward. She appeared to all onlookers to be human, though her skin had a feint glow unnatural to any mortal. Her eyes were a golden hew, but otherwise, she appeared completely normal.

“Silver Lady,” the woman spoke as she stepped forward and bowed in her customary greeting.

“Good evening to you, Lysanaeria,” Elysaer rose from her seat as she spoke and turned to greet her visitor. “It has been many years since I last saw you in this part of the world.”

“Indeed, this is true,” Lysanaeria replied as she strode forward to embrace Elysaer with a hug. “Much has changed since we last spoke.”

“Much indeed,” Elysaer nodded. “Please, tell me what news you bring.”

Elysaer turned her hands about and conjured up a table. It was a round glass table with thin wire legs she once saw in the court of elves; two matching chairs of the same style appeared beside it. Atop the table was a set of teacups, an herbal remedy already brewed in the conjured kettle. Elysaer tipped her head and the kettle served itself; the two recently poured cups drifted upward to greet the two women as they sat to speak.

“I do not bring good news, if that is what you so wish to hear,” Lysanaeria said between sips of tea. “The merfolk that once inhabited the southern coast have been dispersed. A great magical serge emitted from the planar gateway and suddenly exploded, taking the entire city with it.”

“That’s incredible,” Elysaer gasped. “Tell me, was the gateway unstable?”

“It had been corrupted. There was a ritual being conducted to open a path for Hil’locktra’ha’ghar and his elemental creatures, but the spell was broken before they could succeed,” Lysanaeria explained. “I believe that much unstable power caused such destruction.”

“This is truly fascinating,” Elysaer said with genuine interest. “Tell me, is the muse still hording her people on the mountains then?”

“Yes, and they are now unopposed with the falling of the merfolk. I’m sure she’ll be trouble soon. It may be time for you to intervene...”

“Well, while I appreciate your faith in my abilities, this is one squabble I will not be a part of,” Elysaer smiled and turned to the plains and the growing army below. “I have matters here that I must see to.”

“But m’lady, surely you understand how dire the situation is,” Lysanaeria begged. “It may well be beyond my own abilities to conduct combat with a demigod!”

“Do not worry. You will not have to face combat with the demigod. No, the time for people of our kind is coming to an end. We are no longer active members of this world, as Aelandria suggested may come to pass. It is time for mortals to take matters into their own hands.”

“What of the muse then? What of the bay area? Surely there is still magic that can be harnessed in those waters.”

“There is, but that is for heroes of this world to conquer,” Elysaer dismissed Lysanaeria’s begging. “As I have said, my place is here, with the young army that lays below. History is being written, and I intend to watch it unfold.”

“Will you intervene here then? Will you stand and choose a side, despite our oath of neutrality?”

“Lysanaeria, you know I took no such oath,” Elysaer placed her teacup down and walked to the edge of the mountain as she spoke. She recalled her conversation with the goddess. She remembered her plans, and the duty that was bestowed upon the ancient Silver Lady. “My oaths are to Aelandria and her creations. I believe her champion has finally come, and I intend to see that he succeeds.”

“I understand,” Lysanaeria said with a sigh. “So, then it is true then? You honestly believe he is going to finally unite them?”

“I know he will.” A frown passed over Elysaer’s face as she said those words, and she turned to Lysanaeria with sorrow in her eyes. “I also know he will perish. I cannot see why, or by who’s hand, but the treachery will come. I may yet need your services before this is all done.”

“Well, the bay area should be safe for a little while...”

“Thank you Lysanaeria,” Elysaer bowed. “I appreciate your presence. There is darkness on these plains, a sleeping curse older than you or I. If it should awaken...”

“I understand.”

“Good,” Elysaer nodded. “Do not despair, we have years yet before such tragedy should befall us. There is a disturbance in arcane flow. Off to the south, something big is moving. Can I trust you with such duty?”

“Of course, Silver Lady,” Lysanaeria bowed.

Without another word, she walked to the edge of the mountain and leapt. As she fell in the air, she transformed back into her natural form and flew off, her wings carrying her high as she travelled south.

Elysaer watched her go, then turned her attention back to the army. She was greatly looking forward to meeting the supposed human champion, the one named Anduin.

Lysanaeria did not have to go far to locate the disturbance.

She flew high and set out immediately, her vision unimpaired for miles with such clear weather. She cast a spell over her form and faded to near invisibility in the night. The light of the moons shrouded her in a shield of arcane armor as she whisked through the air.

At first, nothing seemed out of place. The air remained unchanged; the plains below natural. Her eyes saw nothing but the human travelers heading north to meet their new champion. Yet as she continued south, the signs of trouble began to appear. The air grew warmer, shafts of smoke slowly rising off in the distance. Below the human's demeanor began to change. She could feel fear following them, the occasional cries of loss and mourning meeting the dragon's ears.

She doubled her efforts and shot forward. She lowered her altitude, riding the wind that moved south and carried her ever faster. She cast searching spells out in a wide radius, until they hit something dark off to the southwest. She arched her wings and flew towards the source, moving too fast for many of the mortals below to notice. The source of the dark energy slowly began to take form, a dark mass in the distance coming into focus...

Her flight ended abruptly in shock. The mass belonged to an army of demons. Some flew over the army, watching for new prey; some were armed with wicked black weapons and armor; some emanated an aura of fiendish magic reaching out to detect observers.

Observers like Lysanaeria.

She turned as quickly as her dragon form would allow to warn Elysaer. She acted not a moment too soon, for a long blast of chaotic fires hurled through the air, just missing her as she flew out of range. She sped north, carrying the message of doom as quickly as her wings allowed.

Suddenly, the victory for the human champion did not seem so certain.

The humans below began to march. Their tents were pitched and at their lead strode forth their new champion, Anduin of the Syllian Plains. His armor gleamed silver and green after its recent polishing. He carried a sword and shield, both simple and plain things.

He was a curious fellow, Elysaer thought. Staring at the man he seemed rather unremarkable. He sported an average face and stood at an average height. His strength was not legendary; neither was his athleticism. Yet somehow, he rallied a people that had, as far as she observed, shown no signs of rebellion, content to exist as insignificant players on the continent. But seeing the numbers marching south, it was hard to deny humans possessed a certain strength in numbers and would be a formidable foe, should Anduin maintain his rule.

Elysaer was so fixated with the humans' march, she did not see the bronze dragon as it flew at blistering speeds over the horizon. The dragon landed and shifted to her human form, charging into a full sprint. She stopped just before barreling through the Silver Lady, bowing low as she struggled to regain her breath.

"Lysanaeria?" Elysaer asked as she realized her companion had returned. "Tell me, quickly, what news? You seem frantic, and I assume there are dark tidings you carry."

"Demons, lady," Lysanaeria gasped. "Thousands and thousands of them! There are some equipped with weapons of war, others with terrible, terrible magic! The humans are marching right towards them!"

"How long before they arrive?" Elysaer inquired. "Tell me, how long before battle begins?"

Before Elysaer finished her question, an explosion echoed over the plains. Far off in the distance, a pillar of black smoke began to rise, blocking the sun. The humans were quick to react and formed ranks as an army of fel imps, flying low over the ground, assaulted their soldiers.

Bombs of fire and smoke were dropped from the air, creating chaos. Yet Anduin managed to rally his men, directing a flurry of arrows and javelins that forced the imps into a hasty retreat.

“I assume this was only the advance force,” Elysaer stated.

“Yes, they are only the scouts,” Lysanaeria confirmed. “There are much greater foes on the horizon. Tell me lady, what are we to do?”

“Unfortunately, we obey our doctrine for now,” Elysaer replied. “We remain humble observers. No warriors have come and requested our aid or make us an ally.”

“But will you step in?”

Elysaer looked over the armies. She looked to the man leading them, his inspiration quelling the fear spreading through so many hearts. She had grown fond of these humans, if only from a distance. To see them fall in battle so abruptly... she dared not think of such things.

“Only time will tell...”

It was midday when the full extent of the armies met. Elysaer watched overhead as the demons charged forward, a chaotic cloud of shadow and fire swarming their adversaries. Standing before them, the humans held firm. Those with spears took up their defensive positions, archers loosed arrows as the demons came in range, and standing ahead of them all, the lone figure of Anduin. Whether bravery or stupidity Elysaer could not tell, yet he stood defiant before the mass that approached, his great sword readied.

Within minutes of the first lines meeting, the battlefield was thrown into chaos. Demons broke through the initial ranks and poured over the human soldiers before being slain. Humans abandoned their defensive lines as the onslaught continued, taking up swords and fighting in a melee as desperation and adrenaline fueled their fight.

At this initial phase, Elysaer thought they may stand a chance. They were numerous and while they suffered tremendous losses, they slew a tremendous number of demons. Anduin was most impressive. He stood in the center of the chaos surrounded by piles of fallen demon corpses, the smoke from their bodies rising around him. The steam filtered the sunlight, making the champion appear almost magical as he continued his dance, one fluid strike after another.

Unfortunately, the humans had one major weakness: magic.

Living as farmers or isolated in their small castles, humans rarely sought to learn magic. There were some among the ranks, low class wizards, who dabbled in the art, but none powerful enough to withstand the talents of a demon, let alone an entire army.

Those attuned to hellish magic unleashed a volley of Elemenial flames upon the gathered men. The fires were black and purple, taking the shape of fallen meteors, as they rained down upon the human forces. Those killed in the initial blast were the lucky ones. As the meteors exploded, their fire leapt outwards, slowly vaporizing the flesh of any unfortunate enough to be in its path. Some humans tried protecting themselves with shields; others cast force fields around them and their allies. All these efforts were in vain, as none were strong enough to resist such power.

Within minutes, the humans were defeated. They were forced into a broken retreat, fear overcoming those still standing. The demons continued to cut down the humans as they turned to run, many of them leaving their comrades behind in a desperate attempt at self-preservation. Elysaer watched in horror as the slaughter raged on, her heart crushed to see the forces routed.

Yet one man continued to give her hope. Anduin still stood, battling through the chaos despite his wounds. His sword was stained black, the tip shattered. His armor was covered in the black blood of demons. Corpses of his enemies and allies lay scattered about as countless foes

continued to lash out at the human. He was surrounded, cut-off from any who could give him aid. His demise seemed imminent, and yet his ferocity never waned. By some miracle, or perhaps by divine intervention, the blasts of fire never targeted the man. But his strength was failing, and Elysaer knew he would soon fall.

In that moment, she knew she had to act.

A flash of silver and white light radiated across the battlefield, burning any demon standing within it. Anduin himself was blinded for a moment as the light surrounded him. As quickly as it appeared, the light vanished. Standing at the center of it stood a female warrior equipped with glowing silver armor that radiated light. Great wings spread from her back as a holy aura surrounded her. Her hands spread to either side as light formed two mystical weapons. In her left hand she held a great spear, in her right a glowing longsword.

After a moment of pause, one demon rushed the newcomer. The strange warrior moved faster than any mortal could, her spear lashing out, slaying the demon instantly. The demon cried out briefly as its body disintegrated, turning to wisps of shadow that disappeared in a ball of light.

She turned her attention to the nearest group of demons. She approached them slowly, her weapons held wide as the light spread ahead of her. Some of the demons, after witnessing the fate of their comrade, broke and ran. Most, however, were enraged and snarled, visceral shrieks breaking through their lips as they rushed the warrior.

Her weapons appeared invisible to the naked eye as they sped from one demon to the next. Clouds of smoke burst into the air as her light spread across the battlefield. She remained unharmed throughout the fight, not a single demon drawing near enough to land a blow.

Anduin watched in awe as the strange warrior strode across the battlefield. Hope returned to his heart as new courage coursed through him. He charged after the warrior as he raced to continue the fight against the dark horde. Stepping into the light, he felt invigorated, new focus and clarity flooding over his body. The first demon he met fell easily to his blade, as did the next. Their movements seemed slower if that were possible. They moved in patterns, each strike an easy prediction for the man as he dodged and counterattacked, hacking his way to stand near the warrior.

“Thank you, friend,” he yelled out as they continued their fight. “But this fight will not matter if we cannot defeat the flame casters!”

The warrior turned briefly to regard the human, impressed that he managed to keep pace with her. He was full of surprises. As she looked at him, he pointed with his blade. Following his gaze, she saw the demons casting the Elemenyal fires, all standing in a tight group surrounded by massive brutes armed with black steel.

Under the helmet, the warrior smiled, knowing just how easy they were making it.

She lifted her spear, reversing her grip as it changed form into a glowing javelin. A blue light surrounded the weapon, its magical energy radiating so heavily, Anduin felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end. With a mighty throw, the warrior launched the weapon at the ring of demons. As the weapon flew, its material form seemed to vanish entirely, consumed by a blue flame that grew in intensity as it approached its target.

A few demons noticed the projectile and tried to break its trajectory. They placed barriers in its path, blasted elements around it, and even tried thwarting it with magic of their own. Yet the projectile held true to its course. It broke through the lines of demons and exploded.

Suddenly, the entire world was cast in blue as a monstrous ball of flames erupted. In an instant, the demons, the guards, and everything within the explosion, vaporized. The flames continued their ascension, flying furiously across the plains. Anduin was in awe by the display of magic, until he realized he too would soon be in its line of fire. He accepted fate as it came barreling towards him, knowing he was powerless.

Yet, as the flames drew near, they slowed, then vanished entirely. Where the flames once stood was now a massive crater of dirt and scorched earth. There were no signs of demons or the army that once lay before them. All that was left was a silver spear, its point stuck in the earth.

Any of the remaining horde dispersed, fear overtaking them as they fled. Anduin relaxed his arm and sheathed his weapon, collapsing to his knees as exhaustion finally overtook him. As he knelt, he watched the magical warrior walk into the crater to retrieve her weapon. The wings were no longer spread wide, yet even from afar, he could feel the woman's power.

"Wait, please. Just one moment, champion." He forced himself to his feet and walked forward towards the woman, calling out to her.

To his surprise, the woman stopped. Her weapons changed to clouds of strange blue fog that blew away in the breeze as he approached. Her armor glowed for a moment before the helmet vanished in a similar cloud of magic. Anduin was surprised to see an elf. Her face seemed pristine, with straight, long hair of silver falling behind her and swaying in a breeze that was not there.

"Hello, Anduin," the woman greeted him. Her voice was a like a sweet song, welcoming and pleasant. "I am glad to see you have survived your first real test."

“You and I both know I have you to thank for such a fate,” the man replied. He fell to one knee as he did, bowing his head to her. “I am forever in your debt, as are those soldiers who managed to escape.”

“Strange,” the woman said as she stared over him. “You do not feel resentment towards them abandoning you on the battlefield?”

“They are farmers,” the man spoke, still kneeling before her. “I cannot expect such men to stand proud when faced with spawns of hell.”

“Hmmm, you truly are a special one,” the woman mused. “No wonder so many have flocked to your call.”

“Truth be told, it was not my call that brought them,” he said. “There is another who called them. I am merely the one they chose to trust their lives with. I intend to make good on their trust, though I could not have done that without your heroism today.”

“No, death certainly was destined for you,” the woman replied. “I apologize if I interfered with fate, for it is not usually my place to do so.”

“Your words are mystery,” Anduin laughed as he stood up. “You know my name. You fight with powers beyond any I’ve seen. And you speak of fate and intervention. You must not be mortal, though I don’t believe you’re a god.”

“You’re perceptive.”

“In any case, this battle was a loss before you came,” Anduin’s voice was soft as he turned around the battlefield. “My men are not ready for the life of real soldiers, let alone the life of creating a kingdom. We are not strong enough to stand on our own.”

“I don’t know who you serve, nor where you’re from, or even what you are, really,” he turned to the woman as he spoke and reached his hand. “But I’d be honored if you could stay by my side just a little longer. I could use someone of your knowledge aiding us.”

“You are not intimidated then?” she asked. “You are not afraid of the power? What if I should turn on you and decide you are an enemy of Valandria?”

“If you decide so, then I likely deserve it,” Anduin said. “But you helped me today. Surely you see we have something worth fighting for. Please, I am asking for your aid.”

The woman reached out her armored hand and grasped Anduin’s, a smile crossing her face as she did.

“I have long yearned for your kind to call my aid to your cause,” she said. “I would be honored to join forces with such a curious individual as yourself.”

“Thank you,” Anduin gave a slight bow as he spoke. “Before we return to my men, however, I must ask. Since you know my name already, it seems proper I should know yours.”

“My name is longer than most mortals can pronounce,” the woman said. “I am known by some as the Evening Star, to others Aelandria’s Ward, and to a select few, the Silver Lady.

“But you may call me Elysaer.”