



## *Cold Vengeance*

*Written by A Den of Wolves(@DenofWolves7)*

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The snow crunched under hoof as Fredreich made his way through the chilling gale that buffeted against him and his steed. The undead horse made no motions to stop, or even delay, against the cold; it had no need for such things. Whatever discomfort the chill would have brought the beast of burden had died off long ago with its life; an existence that was ended alongside its master in these very mountains. It was a home coming of sorts; a revisit to the place where both of them had transcended from their lives as mortals and later were found and brought into the embrace of undeath.

Fredreich peered across the snow-laden foothills of Alterac. So many years ago, he had been on this very road. His ears could hear the echoing clamor of battle across the snow-crept mountains; the calls of war and thunder of warriors. His eyes scanned the horizon, a littering of forgotten glories filled the mountain. A dilapidated scout tower, the tattered remains of an orange banner, bearing the mark of the Alterac falcon. Fredreich trotted his steed closer, his lichflame eyes affixed on the cloth as it rippled against the cold as he passed by. Just as with him and his horse, the kingdom that banner once so proudly represented had died here. The smattering of remnant forces that remained were nothing more than embittered former noblemen and their indentured underlings. Nothing worth significant note.

Their cause of death had been a heinous crime. Treason, a word so bitter and cold that it made Alterac akin to the deserts of Tanaris in comparison. It had

spelled the death for all three parties in this land, all because of the vainglorious aspirations of a King who had grown tired of being considered one of the smallest of humanity's children. Chided by the fact that the only smaller nation, Dalaran, still had outdone the achievements of Alterac. Chafed by the reminder that Lordaeron, the formerly indomitable kingdom of the Light, lay to the north, with the wolves of Gilneas and the wardrums of Stromgarde nipping at Alterac's heels at every turn.

They had taken the first hand that had come to them to raise them from their station. A green and bespoiled hand that brought with it war and destruction, yet Alterac embraced it as if a brother had come to take them up from their squalor. Even if the creature that had offered them glories held a war axe in the other; ready to strike at every alliance and pact Alterac had previously made. Their king had believed sacrificing his kingdom's honor would be worth the price. He was wrong, and his people paid for his mistake in blood.

His horse's mane billowed softly in the breeze, the man raising from his stupor of pondering the fall of a pitiful kingdom to look upon the majesty of its ruins. Ogres littered the countryside, a fitting new denizen. Once allies of Alterac's orcish benefactors, they now bowed to no master and held no allegiance to the Horde. Instead, the once proud Alterac City was now their citadel. Even then, it was nothing more than a wartorn hellscape; a few of the same banners he'd spied upon the tower clinging to the vestiges of what little remained of that lost nation.

In spite of this, he drove his horse onward. This decrepit citadel was not his destination.

Perhaps when air still filled his lungs without the tattered decay of death upon them; he would have held different feelings of seeing this place in such ruin. He had fallen here, precise to the day, many years prior. His pride had led him to lead a charge well beyond his station, leading to both his and his steed's death. Even in death, the memory was bitter.

Pride was an insidious thing, able to topple both knights and kingdoms. The ramifications of his death was felt both instantly, in that his brother marched alone, without either of his siblings at his side, and afar. And though it

took years, his hubris finally manifested in his resurrection as an undead; dubbed Lord Nightfall by his new masters. This Scourge, true to its name, ravaged the kingdoms of the North. This proud knight of Gilneas had become the enemy of life, and in that service, had killed scores upon scores of noble defenders. And from those scores of bodies came new monstrosities; repeating the cycle that started in his case with a foolhardy charge in the snow.

His horse came to a stop at last, the creature showing some modicum of discomfort for their origin point. He patted the undead beast, cooing into its ears softly as he dismounted; knowing exactly why the beast had begun to fret. Drawing his runeblade, the man rose the weapon high; aimed out towards the frigid wastes as he took in a solitary deep breath. Energy began to swirl around the runes upon his weapon, *Darkbeast*, swelling with energy as a gust of wind began to extoll from the blade's epicenter. Snow that had blanketed the area began to wash away from him, years upon years of frost shot away by the gale that ripped against the normally powerful mountainside winds.

The faintest imprints could be made upon the snow; the magic re-interpreting the steps of those who had once walked here. The imprint began to take shape; that of a fallen horse, and a frame of a man crushed beneath it. A second swirled none-too-far away; diminutive in its stature, the frame of a dwarf. Fredreich took in another deep breath as he steadied his mind, this was the falling place of his comrade Buriden; raised into the same fate of undeath as he was. More patterns began to erupt from the snow, a doppled and messy smattering of treads. The grinding wheels of the meat wagon that had been brought forth to haul their carcasses. Steps followed alongside them, soft in their footfalls but imprinted into the land as his magic unraveled the disproportions in the snow. Acolytes; traitors to the living who had willingly served the Scourge in its insidious Cult of the Damned. Even as the scene took shape before him, none of these trails were what interested the Death Knight; instead, it was the final frame within the ice that he'd found solace with.

Unlike the others, this one had scattered off to the wayside. Slurred steps, ill placed in pattern, led up the hillside where the knight and his companion had died; off the path where the Acolytes had performed their dark harvest. Following them, they ended abruptly near one of the rocky-rises that led to a mountain proper. Once more erupting a brief gale of energy from his blade, the

man's sunken lips curled for the briefest of moments. An orc, still laden in armor from the Second War, laid partially decayed against the side of the mountain. His eyes were long-since frozen over, and the source of his death could still be found, embedded into his neck.

Darkbeast feasted on the orc's flesh for but a moment as Fredreich drove the runeblade into the dead man's back; the energy that had been harnessed within the necrotic Saronite weapon unleashed. Dancing runes erupted across the green beast's chilled hide; warmth returning to it from the sheer might being exuded. Long frozen bones began to creak and crack against the winds; moving as the creature rose, emaciated and dilapidated. Fredreich drew back his blade from the now risen undead, who proceeded to kneel before him. Finally, a voice croaked out of its frame; a single word from its lips. "M-Mas...ter..."

The orcish ghoul's voice rasped and struggled as Fredreich held his hand out to the creature. Dominated by the knight's will, the ghoul ripped the dagger from its neck, handing the chill-gored blade to the knight. A wolfhead upon the pommel, Fredreich wiped the blade against the orc's dilapidated fur armor; taking from it some of its frozen gore before sheathing it into a perfectly fitted leather scabbard held upon his belt. "Come, my old friend. There is work to be done."

Treading down to his horse, Fredreich mounted the creature, dissipating his new servant to the Shadowlands as he made back down the way he had come. It had been many years in the making, but he had finally decided to wreak some form of vengeance upon the cretin that had ended his life. Of the three men that died on that mountain, only the orc aggressor had rested in the afterlife. No more was that the case, damned to the same accursed existance as the two brave soldiers of the Alliance and the noble steed that had fallen here.

As he made his way down the mountain, the valley in which he had rested was over taken by the gales once again; leaving nothing but frost in its wake.