

# Ilyas, The Bloodstained Diva

“Halt!”

The hilt of a halberd drives into the paved stone ground.

“Only those invited are permitted to step into the manor of Drekan Varnholdt!”

“But of course.” A sultry voice responds. A slim hand, encased in a royal purple glove, fishes out a velvet envelope, presenting the opened wax seal to the guard. A name is engraved in elegant writing along the paper. “Ilyas.”

“Very well.” The guard’s posture shifts. He steps aside and pulls open the massive oak doors. Ilyas offers a polite tilt of her wide-brimmed hat, its shadow hiding her eyes. The hem of her long ball gown drifts behind her, sweeping like stage curtains across the polished stone.

The hall was already teeming with nobles and noblewomen, all intermingling amongst each other, many clutching already empty wine glasses. Around the edges of the room, fully armored guards line the wall, unmoving as if they were statues. Ilyas smoothly shuffles her way through the crowd, making her way to the back of the hall, swiping a glass of wine from a tray on the way. Hidden underneath the shadow of the second floor balcony, another guard stands.

“Has everyone arrived?” Ilyas asks.

“Yes, my lady. Everyone else has already taken positions.” The guard, Thairen, responds.

“Any sight of the target?”

“He has not made an appearance yet. Most likely waiting for the rest of the guests to arrive.”

“Very well. A drink?” She hands the glass to Thairen. As Thairen reaches for the glass, she slashes the back of his hand with a small stiletto. Tiny blood red runes begin to glow along the blade as blood flows into them.

“Was that really necessary?” Thairen sighs, shaking his head slightly.

“With how many of that damn hemomancer’s followers this took to get, of course it is. Certainly too many to leave it a mere trinket on a shelf.” She gives him a wink before turning around, waltzing back into the crowd.

The wait for the gala to truly begin was an excruciating bore. The nobles here were truly mindless, each word spoken nothing but an attempt to curry favor or boast of their own wealth, power, influence, take your pick.

She drifts through the hall, ground floor to second, quietly mapping the mansion as she goes. It was a truly massive building, yet the gala was confined solely to the grand and dining hall. Surely, then, this mansion holds many secrets that the duke didn't want escaping. Ilyas licks her lips at the thought. It wouldn't hurt to explore a bit further. She slips underneath her dress, taking out a tiny stiletto, its runes glowing a bright silver light. She holds it up the key, and the blade liquifies. She stabs the blade into the keyhole, waiting for the blade to stop glowing. As it goes, the blade solidifies again, and with a twist, the door unlocks. She slips the dagger back underneath, its blade a blade again, and continues onwards.

Most rooms she passes give no interest. Bedrooms, washrooms, studies and the like, all ornately decorated. This Drekan really liked to show off his wealth, huh.

At the end of the hallway was a room unlike any she had seen so far. The doorway was a lot less ornate than the others, hidden out of the way in a corner of the house that no one would see, let alone pay attention to. Yet Ilyas had a feeling that this was the room to be in. She unlocks the door, and as soon as it opens, has to cover her eyes. Golden light was reflecting from all around. At first, she thinks that she happened upon a bank vault, with how many gold coins littered the ground haphazardly. Duke Drekan was not some particularly important or powerful noble, his territory not any more prosperous than any other in Noxus. So where, then, did all this gold come from?

The answer was soon clear. At the very back of the room was a ritual altar, crafted from dark Noxian steel. A single glowing rune was engraved into the metal. She took one of her daggers, placing it upon the rune. In a near instant, the steel was transmuted to solid gold. She picks up the now golden dagger, giving its blade a quick bite. It was completely pure, ordinary gold. Not a trace of its original metal remained. She twirls it in her hand, watching it catch the light before slipping it back within her bodice.

*Well, that answers most of my questions.*

She keeps the room in mind as she retreats back to the hall. It wasn't the most interesting spell, but it would be a waste to leave it in the hands of a dead man. She'll have to come back for it later.

"Halt! What are you doing here?"

Ilyas whips backwards, tossing a dagger at the voice. It shoots past the guard embedding itself in the wall. The guard levels his halberd, approaching with wary steps.

"Oh, apologies, you startled me." Ilyas says in a casual, sing-song voice. "Do forgive me, dear, but I seem to have gotten lost."

"This area is off limits to guests. You shouldn't be here."

"If you want to keep someone out, then the bare minimum should be to lock the door."

The guard scowls. His grip tightens on his halberd.

"Oh please, do relax. I mean no harm!" She sashays towards the guard, her eyes never leaving his. Her fingers reach to cup the guard's chin. "I do hope you'll keep this incident between us..."

The guard gulps, his fingers flexing on the halberd, unsure of whether he should let her go or not. He's not given the opportunity to choose. In the next instant, he drops the halberd, a spectral dagger identical to the one she threw stabs through his chest. He turns backwards, an ephemeral, nearly transparent spectre of the women before him stabs behind him. The clone winks and blows a kiss before vanishing, returning back to a dagger before it clatters to the floor. The guard collapses to the ground, the last thing he sees is Ilyas walking away, not even giving him a second glance.

As Ilyas walks away, she brushes her hand against the front of the dress. Luckily, no blood splattered on her. That'd certainly be a pain to try and explain away.

By the time Ilyas returns to the hall, the main event had already begun. Drekan Varnholdt stood in the center of the room, a spotlight shining on him. As his speech draws to a close, the band starts to play, and the nobles all start to mingle once again, some even beginning a dance. She makes her way to Thauran, tapping his wrist thrice before waltzing back into the crowd.

The show has begun.

It didn't take long to catch the haughty duke's attention. A smile here, a flash of leg there. Like most nobles, he was a lech that bit any bait attractive enough.

"Why hello there," he mused. His pathetic attempt at suave elicited a smirk from Ilyas' lips, which he took to mean a success. His last mistake. He holds out his hand with a bow, offering a dance to the lady. Which she gracefully accepts.

He led her to the center of the dance floor, the crowd parting as if the spotlight still followed him. Music swelled, and they moved in practiced time. He was competent. She was flawless.

"I don't believe I've had the pleasure to make acquaintances." he smiles, hand resting just a touch too possessively at her waist. "May I have your name, my lady?"

"Ilyas. I'm well acquainted with your name, though, Duke Drekan."

"How fortuitous to catch the eye of such a beauty."

"More than you know."

They continue their dance in graceful silence. As the music rises, so does the intensity of Drekan's steps, and at the climax, he gives Ilyas a spin, leaning down for a tight lips. Ilyas's face moves closer in response, stopping inches short.

*Shick.*

Duke Drekan Varnholdt's eyes widen in shock as he feels a small blade cut across his throat. He stumbles backwards, his hands clutching his neck as he starts to drown in his own blood.

A collective gasp. Then chaos.

Guards surged forward — the overeager ones died first.

Two of them pushed past the crowd, blades drawn, bellowing orders. Neither made it three steps. Two slender stilettos pierced their helms cleanly. They fall like broken marionettes.

From the crowd, two of Ilyas' blades slipped back into motion, their noble disguises already discarded, replaced by the poise of killers. No grandstanding. No hesitation.

Ilyas was already moving — gliding through the stunned throng toward the stairwell. A path cleared before her like a current parting around a rock.

Thuauren stampedes his way through as well, cutting apart any and all unsuspecting guards before they could rush to get a grasp of the situation.

The four of them regroup at the stairwell, boots pounding up the marble steps.

"Boss," one of the blades huffed, "shouldn't we be heading for the exit? Why're we—"

"Don't you think a job well done deserves a reward?" Ilyas replied, already turning the corner. "Surely you wouldn't want to leave empty-handed?"

The three behind her groaned in near-perfect unison.

The three let out a sigh, yet continue onward. How many missions have gotten derailed due to her obsession with pointless spells?

Ilyas leads her crew to the boundless golden room, even as Drekan's remaining guards remain hot on their heels.

"Watch out - tripping hazard!" She leaps over the corpse of the guard she had slain earlier, quickly snatching up the dagger she had left behind. The other two do the same. Thuauren scoops up the corpse, before hurling it back at the pursuing guards, knocking the first few to the ground.

"Strike!" One of the blades shouts.

“Keep moving.” A curt reply from Thairen.

Ilyas slows to a halt before the unsuspecting wooden door, waiting for her crew to catch up.  
“Boss... what behind this door could possibly be-”

The blade’s words stop in his throat as Ilyas slowly opens the door, golden light flooding all their visions. Before Ilyas could give the order, her three followers rush forward, stuffing any coin they can grab into any loose pockets they have.

Ilyas couldn’t care less about the gold, moving swiftly to the altar. She moved to it in long, purposeful strides, drawing the largest dagger at her side — a heavy, obsidian-edged blade inscribed with faint runes. She pressed it against the glowing symbol etched into the altar’s metal.

The gold light dimmed.

In its place, the blade drank in a pitch-black glow, the arcane energy unspooling from the rune in threads of shadow, curling and carving themselves into the steel.

“How long is that gonna take?” Thairen lets out a shout, slamming his halberd at the waves of guards over and over again.

“Just a little longer, dear, nothing you can’t handle!”

Thairen grits his teeth, repeatedly beating back the slowing waves of guards. Though the door made it hard for the guards to enter, it also reduced the room he had to swing his halberd. Eventually, a single blade snuck through his defense, embedding itself in his chest.

With a shout, Thairen stumbles backwards, and the guards rush through. The other two blades strikethrough, falling guard after guard.

“Time to escape, dears!” Ilyas fetches two matching daggers from her bodice, their enchanted blades glowing a matching light blue. They fly through the air, colliding right before the wall. The two blades burst in a shining glow, opening a massive hole in the wall. The guards recoil from the explosion and Ilyas leaps through, followed by the two blades dragging Thairen along. As soon as they land, Ilyas retrieves the blade with blood red runes, stabbing it into Thairen’s shoulder. He lets out a shout of pain, but it soon disappears as the blood empties from the blade, filling and remaking Thairen’s wounded body.

“See? Nothing you can’t handle, dear.”

Thairen lets out a wounded groan, still lying on the ground. “Never doing that again.”

“Oh please, you don’t mean that.”

The next day, Ilyas and her hired hands went their separate ways. It wasn't goodbye. Not truly.

As long as Noxus had nobles to topple and secrets to steal, Ilyas would have work—and they would always find their way back to her blade.

That evening, she lay in bed, the moonlight tracing soft lines across her skin.

In her hand, she turned the now golden obsidian dagger slowly, admiring the way it caught the light.

She pressed it to a silver coin on the bedside table.

In an instant, the metal shimmered and shifted—  
Silver became gold.

A breeze drifted through the open window.

A single black envelope fluttered in, landing gently at her side.

Its wax seal bore only one mark:  
A single petal of a black rose.

# Anorthosite, the Height of Civilization

Join in chorus: sea and sky,  
The sun above, the sand nearby.  
Sing Ne'Zuk's name, the peerless one,  
The God-Warrior, second to none.

He faced the Void, that endless blight,  
Whose hunger drowned the stars in night,  
That broke Shurima's golden crown  
And cast its shining glories down.

In Ixtal's deep and verdant maze,  
He labored long through nights and days.  
"I'll forge a weapon born of stone,  
To meet the dark and stand alone."

From living rock, he drew its frame,  
And carved in it the planet's flame.  
Its spires rose tall, its walls stood wide,  
A world of stone with wrath inside.

Behold the Monolith! So vast—  
Its might outshone the mages' past.  
No bastion born of flesh and steel,  
But stone and soul and storm-made will.

A citadel in skies it flew,  
Its veins alight with lava's hue.  
It drank the storms and rode the air,  
A god-machine of purest prayer.

The stars looked down with silver eyes,  
And blessed its flight through ruined skies.  
It sang in winds and thunder's hymn,  
And made the Void's fate dark and grim.

Then war began, a clash of years—  
A war to break the world with spears.  
Each rift it closed, each beast it broke,  
With fire and stone and lightning's stroke.

But battles carved its body bare,  
The Void found cracks and whispered there.

Its mighty breath began to slow,  
Its wounds too vast to stem the flow.

Yet still it fought, though spires fell,  
Though stone was scorched by void-born spell.  
It cleft the Earth in final flight,  
A sky-borne blade of wrath and light.

And stones fell down like burning rain,  
As silence swept the ash and plain.  
The war was lost—save one who rose,  
From shattered rock and sky-born throes.

Hail Great Ne'Zuk, the peerless one  
The God-Warrior second to none  
He joined the sea, the sky, the sun—  
The sand, the stone—forever one.

For though beneath the world he lies,  
His spirit stirs the mountain's cries.  
And in his name, we rise and run—  
To reach the heights of civilization



# Uana, Demon of Love

"Are you okay, beloved?"

Uana knelt beside the rickety bed, pulling the blanket over Irene's chest. Irene lets out a small sigh as a cold wet rag was laid upon her forehead. Uana brushed a loose strand of hair from Irene's forehead. She turned back, a long, inhuman arm reaching for a small bowl of soup.

"I-I am fine, dear." Irene coughed, her arms struggling to hold her weight as she sat up on the bed.

"These winters keep getting colder. Drink, it'll warm you." Irene nodded, leaning forward as Uana tilted the spoon to her lips. She tilted her head up, allowing Uana to press the wooden spoon against her lips. She closed her eyes as the warm liquid passed her lips. The room was silent as Irene drank.

When she finished, Uana set the bowl on the table. She slowly stood, crouched slightly so that her head did not hit the ceiling of the poor shack they called home. She turned, moving slowly so that the wood did not creak from her languid movements.

"It's getting late, where are you going?"

"The village may have the medicine you need."

"Even if you make it, they won't sell it to you, you know." Uana didn't respond. Indeed, if they didn't accept one of their own like Irene, for some *thing* like Uana, a warm welcome was a far fetch.

"Targon's winters are cold, the nights more so. Why don't you join me in bed instead?"

"I am inhuman, I have no need for sleep."

Irene let out a soft laugh, the wet rag slightly sliding off her forehead.

"Perhaps, but I'd feel better with you next to me."

Uana was silent for a moment, before kneeling back to the bed. She takes Irene's hand in her own.

"Very well."

What is love?

Love is a hand, held close to warm the heart.

The winters on Targon are harsh, but they give way to gentle spring. Of course, nothing is truly gentle even upon the base of the mountain, and there was much work to be done. The soil was wet with freshly melted snow, leaving behind ripe, fertile soil with which crops may grow. Their garden was small, but for only one mouth to feed, it was enough. Uana did not need food, for love alone would sustain her. Irene watched as Uana's many arms dug up the dirt, flinging soil into the air. During their first year together, Uana had torn apart the earth with such ferocity that the barren stone of the mountain had been unearthed, but now? The gentleness as restraint seemed as though she were an entirely different creature. A soft breeze blew, stirring the white veil that always covered Uana's face. She perked up, only to lean back in disappointment as Uana caught the fabric between her fingers, settling the veil back to its place.

"We have been together many years, yet I still haven't even a glimpse of your face."

"Apologies, but—"

"Yes, yes, I understand. But no matter what you look like, it'd be impossible for me to hate it."

"I know, but... I'm not ready yet."

"Then I'll keep waiting, until one day you may be."

Uana nodded, before stepping back. She watched as Irene sowed the toiled soil with seeds that would soon blossom to tall stalks of gold in just a few months' time. She watched as Irene stood, stretching her back as she wiped the sweat that glistened under the golden sun. Irene couldn't see her eyes, but she felt Uana's stare, responding only with a wide grin.

"I'll be off, then." Uana shifted her gaze away.

"Flustered, hm?" Irene's grin only widened. She stopped Uana as she turned away. "Before you go, can you do the thing?"

Uana nodded. She held out a left hand, a small ring glistening on her finger. With the shimmer of magic, a beautiful bow appeared, decorated in flowers unlike any that Irene had seen before.

"That never gets old, no matter how many times I see it."

"I'm glad to hear."

With that, Uana turned to the forest. She would return with a feast fit for a queen, and Uana had never failed a hunt.

That night, Uana returned, a small boar hanging from a hand. The stars were already out, their celestial eyes shining upon Irene as she waited for Uana's return.

"Welcome back."

Uana handed the boar to Irene. Though she was powerful, Irene held the hands precise enough to clean and prepare the animal. No matter how often Uana watched, she could never replicate her skills.

They sat around a fire on the cliff's edge, looking beyond as the boar roasted in a fire behind them. They watched the small fires below them, listening to the raucous cheers from Irene's old home. A festival to celebrate the oncoming spring, and the passing of winter. In the center of the village, a massive bonfire roars, its flame licking the sky.

"Do you wish you could join them?" Uana asked.

Irene only shook her head. Even if it was where she was born, this was her home now. Uana took Irene's hand on her own. "Your magic, can I see it again?"

Irene held out her hand. Concentration straining her face, she pours her mana into her palm. From it bloomed a small, faint duskpetal. Uana held the delicate flower between her fingers. The flower, glowing in the moonlight, a symbol of the Lunari. Not very welcome in a village devoted to the sun. Uana drew her bow, knocking the flower at the tip of her arrow. She lets the arrow loose, soaring into the air. In a shower of dust, the arrow bursts. The dust of the petal caught the silver moonlight, an explosion of silver that outshone even the golden fires below. Irene's breath caught in her throat as moonlight drifted down, the fireworks fading into the night.

"Wow, t-that was--"

What is love?

Love is like the silver light of the moon that soothes the soul.

A small squeal greeted Uana as she returned from another hunt. She found Irene kneeling, a small blue flame surrounding her body. Uana was quick to draw her bow, but Irene held out a hand.

"Look at this!" Irene held out a small creature, who gave a tilted look of confusion towards Uana. A baby Whiteflame with a golden scar running down its chest.

"I think this little guy was abandoned by its parents. We should take care of it, what do you think?"

"If you want to." Uana only responded with a curt reply. She slowly approached the Whiteflame, but it let out a startled cry, circling behind Irene as Uana approached. It let out a little scream when Uana tried to get closer still. Only until Uana backed away did it finally stop.

"I guess it doesn't really like you, hmm?" Irene let out a disappointed sigh. If Uana cared one way or the other, she didn't show.

"But we can't exactly leave it on its own... I know! We can build it a little shack over there —" Irene motioned towards a clearing near the cliff's edge. "-- it can stay there until it gets all better!"

"If you want." Uana gave the prize of her hunt to Irene before returning back to the forest. A small shack would require materials, and with nothing better to do, Uana went to go gather them. Before the end of the day, Uana dropped off a myriad of sticks, logs and stones with which Irene could make a cozy little shack to shelter the small Whiteflame.

The days passed, and Uana would watch as Irene raised the tiny Whiteflame. As befitting of a dragon, it'd devour every piece of meat that Irene fed it. After every meal, it'd belch a small flame which never failed to elicit a small laugh from Irene. Yet no matter how many times Uana attempted, it'd never accept a single scrap from her. Where it'd chase and play with Irene nonstop, Uana got nothing but growls and roars. Even so, Uana didn't mind. Irene was having fun, and that's what mattered.

What is love?

Love is like laughter, lifting the spirits of those around it.

Autumn at the base of Targon was like Autumn anywhere else. The leaves on the trees would glow with crisp red and yellow. So vibrant, yet it couldn't hide the red glow of roaring flames. The day had started like any other. Uana went off to hunt while Irene tended to the young Whiteflame. Its wounds had almost fully healed, leaving Irene in high hopes. Yet Uana returned only the scorched remains of their shack collapsing in on itself. The small shack that housed the Whiteflame was empty. In the sky, two draconic silhouettes, one dwarfing the other, disappeared among the clouds that circled the mountain. "Irene?" Uana called out, tearing apart the brittle wood with her many hands. A small cough was her answer. "Irene!" Digging apart the rubble, she found Irene half buried beneath the ash and charcoal that she used to call a bed. Her entire body was covered in serious burns, so burnt that it was a miracle Irene was still alive, let alone able to breath. Uana let out a small sigh of relief. Irene couldn't die yet.

"What happened?" Uana asked.

"I-I suppose—" Irene coughed, her throat screaming in pain. "The Whiteflame's parents hadn't abandoned it after all."

Uana clutched at Irene's delicate body, unsure of what to do. There was no soup or wet rag that could save Irene. Irene's fingers reached up, brushing against Uana's veil.

"Uana... can I ask a favor?"

Uana nodded.

"Can I... look under your veil?" Uana froze, unsure of how to respond. "I don't think I'll have another chance." The moment of deliberation was short. Seeing Irene's life fade right before her eyes, Uana lowered her face. Irene brushed the veil to the side, her eyes widening before letting out a smile.

"Jeez, why were you hiding it for so long? You're not ugly in the slightest."

No one knew what Irene saw beneath Uana's veil. Not even Uana herself. Perhaps Uana never lifted her veil, Irene only seeing an illusion that she conjured. Perhaps she truly did see what laid underneath, and simply didn't mind. Or, perhaps Irene's eyes simply could no longer see. In the end, it didn't really matter.

"I love you, Uana."

"I love you too."

Irene leaned forward, her lips pursed. Uana responded in kind, two of her arms lifting Irene up. Their lips never touched. Uana never had any lips to begin with. The moment Irene touched the empty void under Uana's veil, she ceased to be, erased from the world.

Uana stood up, a gangly height that easily doubled the height of Irene's old shack. She turned away from the cliff, from the shack, from the singed clothes that were all that remained of Irene. No longer was she draped in the clothes that Irene had painstakingly woven for her. She returned back to the forest, disappearing amongst the foliage and falling leaves. Targon's Peak was unforgiving. There's be many venturers, lost and alone. Travelers who tried and failed to seek the love of the celestials. Their gods did not love them. But Uana would. And they would love Uana, as they did their gods.

For in the end—

What is love?

Love is but a warm meal to sate her hunger.