

Backstory

WARNING: The following program contains scenes of graphic violence. Viewer discretion is advised.

The Death Queen's planemeld was not entirely successful, but not entirely unsuccessful. The undead siege of Sandstone Harbor, the search for phylacteries, and even the defeat of Alison herself were suitable distractions—the connection was kept open long enough for some entities to pass through. One important **entity** slipped through unnoticed, however. An entity so ancient that Alison had no idea they existed, nor did Shogrush. An entity who was tied directly to the negative energy of the negative energy plane, and could only escape it through powerful magic forming a connection on the plane itself. An entity that the Shadowfell was created, in a time before gods, to contain. Once on the material plane it was easy to pass through a mortal's feeling of vulnerability into their weapon.

On the material plane, the holy army of Valanor fought Alison's army of undead as the Stank Bitches ascended the tower. But in one of the fights, a gnome paladin named **Oleander Oldwane** was having doubts. He used to be a throne room guard in Mississippi, before the city was returned from the Hells and he took an oath to protect people. But when he was down there, **Lord Domahas** spoke to him, offering him power if he stopped the Stank Bitches from rescuing the city. Oleander denied him at the time, but now as most of his squad was being slaughtered by zombies he heard Domahas' voice again. Offering power, in exchange for the lives of his squad mates. In that moment of doubt, that moment when Oldwane forsakes his oath and agrees to a pact with Lord Domahas, the dagger he reaches for changes. It becomes a twisted blade of bluish purple metal.

The desecrated remains of the members of Oldwane's squad, the other squads in his platoon, and many of the priests from Valanor were later found arranged in a strange pattern in the snow amongst the undead (like that spiral thing the white walkers did in *Game of Thrones*). Oldwane

himself proved harder to catch, as the ship he used to leave the battle was sunk before arriving back in Baelrum.

Oldwane was found months later by **Dea** with the assistance of Archmage **Ganneth**. He seemed different. Not only physically, being entirely skeletal at this point, but mentally—he was serious and driven by some unknown purpose. In his right hand he clutched his dagger in a tight fist. Dea, **Thalon**, **Rahim**, and **Ygrid** went to go fight/capture him. Oleander attacked, and Rahim countered by cutting off his arm holding the dagger. When he did, the skeleton immediately clattered to the ground, whatever was left of Oleander Oldwane dying with it. But the severed hand still tightly gripped the dagger, which none of the party's strength nor magic could separate it from. The dagger and skeletal forearm was brought to the vaults of Arpaton Circle of Magic for safekeeping, and Oldwane's remains were brought back to Mississippi.

The dagger and attached hand remained in Arpaton's vault for many years. It seemed to remain there untouched for years, even after it was moved with the other artifacts Dea and the other wizards took to Jixaron. It wasn't until years later, long after Dea left the plane, that the dagger in Jixaron would be revealed to have been an incredibly convincing fake. The forgery was created by the same wizard who stole the actual dagger, **Azia Tashir**.

Azia was always interested in the boundaries of the arcane, and she was always paranoid about being confronted about this, a fear perhaps stoked by her upbringing in Al-Harim. She had already moved to Thenalia (where arcane laws were much more lax) and joined Arpaton Academy as a professor, but she wanted to push the boundaries further. In her free time she perfected the art of making forgeries of magic artifacts, and over the years stole some of the most dangerous artifacts from Arpaton's vault, replacing them with her own copies, doing her own research under the noses of the other wizards without them ever knowing. One such artifact

was the dagger with a skeletal hand attached, that they called the “Oath of Oldwane”. It was a mystery to everyone in the school, which is exactly why she wanted it. As much as she studied it, however, she could never unlock its secrets. Until one day they were made clear.

Dea and many of the other wizards left for this new venture of “Jixaron”, and those who refused to go along halfway across the world were left with nothing. **Grubble**, the uneducated goblin, was named Head Archmage, and the Thenalion Empire was putting more and more pressure on the Academy, obviously looking to take over. Azia had enemies in the Empire. She would never tell anyone about it, or give any detail, but she did *not* want the Empire to take over the school. If that happened, she was sure she would be out of a job at the least, if not in prison or executed. She had a past that she wanted nothing more than to get away from, and found the relatively independent-but-powerful Arpaton Academy professor life to be exactly what she wanted. She didn’t want to give it up. She couldn’t. When panicking over what to do, the forever-tight grip of a skeletal hand holding a dagger on her desk loosened. Azia picked up the Oath of Oldwane, and saw her distorted reflection in the twisted blade.

The financial ruin that Head Archmage Grubble put the Academy into is commonly cited as one of the reasons the Arpaton Circle of Magic was vulnerable enough to be taken by the Thenalion Empire, but the Head Archmage’s lack of experience was far from the only factor. There’s the brain drain of most of the top mages leaving for Jixaron, there’s the increased competition from Meadowcraft Academy in Calvastus, there’s the changes going on in the Thenalion government, etc. But the factor that the Thenalion Empire perhaps wishes it could forget is what was briefly called the “Arpaton Massacre”, when a crazed necromancy professor named Azia Tashir seemed to snap, and started slaughtering her fellow wizards with a dagger. Nearly a quarter of professors and a third of students who were present at the Academy at the time were killed, and the perpetrator escaped the scene. It was a bloodbath, and Arpaton Circle of Magic never fully recovered from it.

Like Oldwane, Tashir also evaded capture. It was later found that she was involved in the ritual slaughter of an entire village in Tortoran, where all members of the village—men, women, children, the elderly, *everyone*—were sacrificed using the Oath of Oldwane, and their blood used in some profane ritual. The bounty the Thenalion Empire set on Azia Tashir was one of the largest the nation had set in recent years. A skeleton walking through the wastes, wielding only a dagger, soon became a legendary bounty among the region's bounty hunters. Azia managed to fight them off for years, dozens of the most experienced hunters being killed with this simple dagger, and the bounty only grew and grew. They found her to be serious and driven by some unknown purpose. Eventually a legendary bounty hunter ended up catching her off guard, shooting her shoulder and breaking off her dagger arm from the rest of her body, killing her. Her skeleton, arm and dagger included, were sent back to Thenalia in a wooden casket. A large chest full to the brim of platinum was sent back to Tortoran.

Amalica Taliandra was the youngest daughter of Almalexia Taliandra, the matriarch of the wealthy and powerful Taliandra family. She was still a child, only in her early 20s, but she was already planning for her future. Taliandra was an important family, and she intended to live up to her family name. She would go into politics, or something. Maybe she'd even lead Thenalia one day. The specifics weren't important, she was just ambitious! She was always getting involved in the family's business, unlike her mother who seemed almost ashamed of her family name lately. She was there the day the big wooden box arrived at their family estate, the one her mother had spent tens of thousands of gold on. Not only was it expensive to transport, and to have someone dig up, but a lot had to be spent to pay off the family, the local authorities, and the local press and gossips. Exhuming the grave of a former professor of Arpaton Academy was a big deal, especially when that professor went on to be a notorious serial killer. Almalexia quickly had the casket brought into her private study and locked the door behind her.

Mother had become so private over the recent years, and now she wouldn't even let Amalica see the dead body.

Amalica's curiosity simply wouldn't let her sleep until she investigated. Late at night when her mother and father, her siblings, her grandparents, all were asleep, she snuck through the family's mansion. In the darkness she crept past all their doors to her mother's private study. Even before her mother grew so reserved Amalica was never allowed in here. But now she had her own set of lockpicks, and was finally going to sate her inquisitive nature. The lock easily fell open after a few soft clicks, and the door gently welcomed Amalica inside.

She crept into what looked more like some kind of wizard's laboratory than a study, with arcane scrawlings far beyond what Amalica could understand, written on scrolls hanging all around the room. Cast off to the side was the big wooden box, now open, revealing the contents. A bed of long-dried straw, and resting on it the crumbling skeleton of a human, missing its right arm—broken at the shoulder. Cautiously approaching, Amalica peered over into the box. No arm. Looking around the room again, Amalica saw bone white over on her mother's desk, and crept over to get a closer look, careful not to step on anything that could make a sound. The skeletal hand gripped tightly a dagger made of some strange purple and blue material. Amalica had never seen anything like it. The hand and dagger were sitting on a pile of papers. A distinct-looking wolf stamp on one of them caught Amalica's eye, and she realized they were letters.

A closer look revealed a correspondence between her mother and some sort of Court. At the top of the pile was the most recent letter, a solemn demand that Almalexia execute the plan, ensure that she is the last of the Taliandra name and she will be greatly rewarded. Amalica's heart began racing. She shuffled through some other papers. Her mother had been planning it for a long time, and she was serious about it. She was going to kill the whole of the Taliandra family, Amalica included, and meet with some contact in Englara, bringing them this dagger, which Amalica suddenly found she now held in her hand. If she had picked it up subconsciously, she

soon realized why when she heard the deep *click* of the office door closing behind her.

Amalica froze as the slow footsteps approached behind her. A tense hand, shaking with anger, landed on her shoulder. As Almalexia began to speak, not even a single word left her mouth before Amalica in the blink of an eye swung around and sliced clean through her throat with the Oath of Oldwane. Almalexia grabbed at her throat as blood gurgled out, her knees buckled and she collapsed to the floor, and with a start Amalica realized what just happened.

Amalica began to hyperventilate. She was a murderer, guilty of matricide. She had killed her own squad leader. No, her mother. What? Why did she think that? She was in her mother's private study with Almalexia's blood on her hands. Or was it that bounty hunter's blood, pouring through her hands into the sand? No! She was Amalica Taliandra. Wasn't she? She held her head in her hands, but didn't let go of the dagger. She was a novice illusionist, trying desperately to remember the incantation for Silent Image before the crazed professor Misty Steps in front of her and stabs wildly. She felt like she was going to throw up. She was a sea captain, gurgling as the sea water mixed with his own blood after the skeleton ran by, cutting his throat. She was a necromancer from Al-Harim and later Arpaton, sacrificing cultists over some octahedral obelisk. She was a priest of Waukeen, who lost his husband when Sandstone Harbor was attacked and went to Valanor to join the fight, being stabbed in the gut by a gnome with a skeletal arm. No! She was AMALICA TALIANDRA. She was both sides of every death dealt by this weapon. She was every final moment of pure agony of every victim. She was the embodiment of death itself, of the finality of all things. She was the end.

By the time Amalica came back to her senses, she was sitting alone in the mansion's central parlor, her body exhausted, drenched in blood. Several mutilated corpses were strewn about the room, including her father and two of her brothers, in barely-recognizable states. Things were silent except for the persistent dripping of blood somewhere in one of the many halls. She

was the only living creature remaining in the family's sprawling mansion. As her heartbeat slowed, and the initial shock of her surroundings passed, Amalica looked to her hand. It was fiercely gripping the hilt of the dagger, tight to the point that she could see the bones in her hand through the skin. She sat there in silence, with a blank expression, for a long time. What else was there to do? There was nothing left. Her life, her family, her future, it was all over. She was the last of the Taliandra name.

She wandered through the halls of the estate, examining the scene of the massacre, making her way back to where it started—Almalexia's private study. Amalica looked again at the pile of letters on her mother's desk. Englara, Burning Pass region. Burning Ghouls Tavern, "shot of Ghouls, stronger than a Wolf". Wiped from the minds of all. Amalica's actions didn't feel like her own, nor did her thoughts. She read the paper. She got up. She moved, leaving the family estate, walking in the direction of Englara. Did she want to join up with these people who wanted her own mother to kill her? Not really. But her mind was beyond "want" by this point. Her ambition was dead, replaced by *something else*. She was serious and driven by some unknown purpose. Not by her own mind, but by something in her hand.

Misc

The motives of the “Oath of Oldwane”, or whatever Shadowfell entity it actually is, are intentionally left vague. That’s the warlock patron, so its wants and actions are left up to the DM. It has the ability to take control of the wielder’s mind when they are particularly vulnerable, and slowly over time corrupt the wielder’s mind to be its own. Amalica at this point is like 50% corrupted, so I’ll be acting as Amalica but having lost it a bit, as the DM I want you to take control some times and tell me what Amalica would be thinking based on what the Oath of Oldwane wants.

The only remaining member of the Taliandra family is Amalica’s brother, Aelinthaldarn Taliandra, who was away studying at Jixaron at the time Aelinthaldarn Taliandra is described in *Lamni Armorpha Backstory* (he dies 1788 ADW) and his daughter, Avalyn Taliandra, is in [New Jixaron Archmagi](#). So if this family becomes important, Avalyn is the only heir. At this point Aelinthaldarn is presumed dead, though, so the Court of Wolves believes Amalica is the last living Taliandra.

Oath of Oldwane

Weapon (hunting knife), rare (requires attunement by a Hexblade)

This large knife has a jagged blade made of an otherworldly purple material, and a skull in its black hilt.

You gain a +X bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon, where X is the number of times you've attacked this turn. (*Your first attack has +1, second attack has +2, etc.*)

Improved Critical. The number you need to roll a Critical Hit while attacking is reduced by 1. This effect can stack.

Soul Siphon. When you land a critical hit or kill a creature with the Oath of Oldwane, part of that creature's soul is absorbed into the weapon. When you do, you immediately make an additional melee attack against a creature within range. For the rest of the turn, the number you need to roll a Critical Hit while attacking is further reduced by 1. This effect can stack.

Glamour. You can cast *disguise self* at will, without expending a spell slot. When you do or when you change your appearance in any other way, you can not change the appearance of the Oath of Oldwane.

Curse. When you attune to this weapon, your body dies. Over the next year, your body decomposes until it is fully skeletal. The longer you remain attuned, the more the Oath of Oldwane has control over your mind. You can not willingly unattune to this weapon, and can not let go of it. This weapon loses the *thrown* property.