

My name is Roland, I have no last name.

I was orphaned in the Last War. My first memories are of wondering the battlefields of Cyre like an animal. Scavenging for food and water from the ruins and the dead bodies of soldiers I came across. I was apparently raised and nurtured by a band of older children that found me as a infant. We were no better than sewer rats dressed in rags and hiding in the darkness from the patrols of soldiers that killed anyone on sight.

It was during one of these forays in the battlefields that we, a group of lost boys and girls met our end we found a unit of evil forged. They were angry red eyed machines that lusted to kill all the people of the weak flesh. Warforged that have gone insane from the war. When their band came upon us it was a pure senseless slaughter. Children had their throats slit and then stuck upon pikes with signs hung on their bodies written in common "First your children then your world".

With only my instincts to guide me I ran fast with fear and sickness in my gut, I ran for my life. The Warforged on my tale was toying with me. He kept on yelling at me with a low eerie hollow voice, "I am the Lord of Blades and your flesh is weak. Come to me let me free you from your weakness".

It was then I saw her upon the hill not too far away, Shining like a beacon of silver light in the darkness. Her helmet was off her head Her hair was red fire blowing in the wind. She wore silver armor that only amplified light that surrounded her whole form. She rode a great black War horse whose hooves and eyes burned with a silver light.

She was instantly aware of my situation, "Stop monster, bring no harm on that child or I will smite you were stand, ".

There was a pause in the movement of the self proclaimed Lord of Blades, "Bahahaha, you cover yourself in metal but are just a weak fleshy creature" The laughter of the creature echoed off the shattered buildings.

Then she broke into a charge, to me it was slow, like time becoming coming to a stop. Her lance started high pointing to the sky she chanted to the Silver Flame and soon her lance was ablaze in its fury. Down came the lance pointing to the Warforged. I started to tear, the whole time I was being chased by the evil Warforged I was scared but I did not cry. Only while watching the charge of the knight with all its power does it make me cry because I know it means I will live to see another day.

Then time was catching up, because everything became fast, she sped past me, a silver streak of death Then her lance slammed into the Lord of Blades with sparks shooting into the air at the same time the screeching sound of metal upon metal could be heard.

The Lord of Blades was impaled laying motionless on the ground. I could see the other Warforged that killed the other children had started come around a half destroyed tower. She quickly turned her mount around then sped passed me again this time sweeping me

up in her arm. We rode away before the other Warforged could present a danger.

Her name was Jenna a Paladin of the Silver Flame. She was the closest thing I had to a mother. She took me back to Thrane and entered me into the Religious Military Academy of the Silver Flame. She would visit me every now and then to see how I was progressing but on my tenth birthday I got news that she died in a major military battle. She left me her symbol of the Silver Flame. To this very day I still wear it around my neck. A symbol of light and goodness and a symbol of a knight I will always strive to honor.

From the age of four I lived in Thrane in a boarding school for would be future warriors of the church. The church became my parent and family from that point on. The friars that taught us had trouble in disciplining me in the beginning. When I broke one of their many rules they could try to whip me with a short lease. I would run from them and hide from them for hours. But after the first year of that I learned it was better to take my punishment right away because if I ran from it, it would be far worse later. After a couple years of strict discipline and religious indoctrination I was finally considered a fine example of the youth of Thrane. IT was at this optimal age of seven I was sponsored to enter into the Paladin program by Mother Jenna.

The Paladin program was the toughest program to graduate from only the most finest and talented of Thrane young were entered of the program. Back then even now many thought I fell well short of having the qualities of a Paladin. But Mother Jenna had much pull with the Speaker of the Silver Flame. An my greatest wish was to emulate and make Mother Jenna proud.

The other children in the program were of noble birth and would sneer at me and showed me no fellowship of support in the program. I felt quite alone for the first time and started to feel perhaps I did not have what it takes to become a Paladin.

The program was simple as it was difficult. A cleric would train us in the religious rituals we needed to know and then we would be tested by written exam. And the sergeant at arms would teach us what we needed to know for combat and we would be graduated if after passing the religious exam we could beat the sergeant at arms in one on one combat.

If you failed you could not retest, you would become disgraced and the best you could hope for was to serve as a simple soldier in Thrane's military. But for many children who failed the program it was too awful of a thing and they would often move to another country of commit suicide seeing their failure as a sigh that Silver Flame found them unworthy.

It always seemed that I was found lacking in my speed and reflexes before. The other children would mock me because I seemed to react to things so slowly. They would call me the "Turtle" usually after one sneaked behind me and another came up in front of me and pushed over knocking me to the ground. They would go "see Turtle, your always on

your back fumbling about. Why don't you quit now and save the yourself and your mother any more embarrassment.”

This problem of my reflexes and balance became a glaring issue when the sergeant at arms named Lord Fellstar was teaching us mounted combat.

“Get your lazy bodies moving maggots! You see the backpacks full of stones. Pick them up. And equip them.” Lord Fellstar howled and insulted us as he was apt to do. The backpack he told us to wear seemed to weigh more than a hundred pounds.

“You will learn how to mount a horse while heavily burdened. Common Roland pick up that pack back, My grand mother has more strength in her back than you!”

One of the my peers behind him named Belthorn giggled at me. Hearing this Lord Fellstar wheeled around and back handed Belthorn sending im scrawling to the ground.

“Belthorn you maggot who gave you permission to laugh!” the others and me shivered at Lord Fellstar's angry voice.

“No, no one sir” mumbled Belthorn

“What was that maggot, speak up or will belt whip you and send you to the clerics in a bloody mess!”

“No one sir I apologize” Yelped Belthorn

Lord Fellstar returned to the glare at the rest of us, “I will turn you maggots into men if I have to kill everyone of you to accomplish it”

I could see Belthorn behind the Lord staring at me with hatred. Belthorn was an eldest son of a prominent family in Thrane. He was strong and quick, but he lacked grace and wisdom. Belthorn saw me as a Cyrian enemy weakling. Every chance he got he would cause me misery and pain. Him and two others would often bully me at night when there was no one around. He would try to get me to kiss his feet, and to lick the end of his wooden sword that was used for sparring. I would always resist then the three of them would beat me into unconsciousness.

After we had our backpacks on we were told to each retrieve a horse from the stables and return to the field. Of course I was the slowest and the last to the stable. So I had last pick at the stable when I got there. There was only one horse there a sickly white old nag that constantly drooled. I was afraid if I had to mount this creature I would end up killing it. The horse's name was Ghost, I was not sure if it was the true name or some joke because the animal seemed barley alive.

We all lined up our horses in a perfect line under the command of Lord Fellstar. Then Bellthorn winked and nodded to one of his cronies next to me. Then while I was not

looking he reached under Ghost and loosens the strap of the horse saddle. Then Lord Fellstar hollers, "mount your horse!" then everyone at once puts their boot in the stirrup and tries swing their other boot over the horse. Everyone is successful except for me as soon as I put my boot in Ghost's stirrup and I try to swing my other boot, as it leaves the ground the stirrup give away and I fall to the ground my head slams onto the ground and I loose consciousness.

When I return from the darkness its to a world of pain as a very angry Lord Fellstar overs over me smacking me again and again. When he sees me open my eyes, " Get up Roland you are a disgrace to the Silver Flame!. Get up and tighten your saddle and next time check it before you ride it!"

I could see Bellthorn grinning at me when I get up. I walk up to Ghost and tightened the strap on the saddle then tried to mount Ghost again. This time I was much more successful. Then once again our teacher yells, "Forward" I moved the horse forward I start to lose my balance then I fall backwards on my head and everything goes dark once more. This time I have a furious Lord Fellstar shaking me in the air with both hands I wake to see him snarling at me like a rabid creature foaming at the mouth. He hisses at me, "you fail this course Roland, you have no sense of balance you will never be able to ride a horse!." He throws me to the ground. "I want you to run round this field until the sun sets. And you too Bellthorn since you love Roland so much you may join him." The grin falls from Bellthorn's face.

I did well for every class except horse riding. More than anything I wanted to be a Paladin. At night when everyone else slept I would sneak out and pull Ghost out of the stable and try to ride him around the field for several hours. Most of the time I would fall off. But after months of trying I could finally get up the nerve to gallop. More than any other horse I would use Ghost, even though he was old and slow. He understood me. It almost seemed he would compensate for my lack of balance by shifting slightly constantly to keep me in balance.

The years passed and I grew stronger and more confident. Unknown to everyone I became a very good rider.

Then the day came when I heard about Mother Jenna's death. I was sparring with another student with a wooden sword and shield. When a Cleric approached me. He talked to me to the side and tole me, "I have sad news for you Jenna Adrisico your mother has died in combat" tears start to well up in my eyes, "do not cry for her she died honorably defending Thrane and the church. She is with the Silver Flame now."

"How did she die?" I ask fighting not to cry.

"That is not important. You should go to your room and pray to the Silver Flame to give you strength." He responded with the common church dismissal of the war.

"TELL ME HOW SHE DIED!" I screamed to a superior for the first time in my life. I

gripped the cleric's arm I could tell it was hurting him.

“Boy you will release that cleric or I beat you until you beg for mercy,” Lord Fellstar threatened. The cleric waved his hand to the Lord in a sign he should leave me alone and that he was alright.

“If you must know she was defending our border from the undead legion of Karnath. The battle was won but then the twisted Karnns necromancers raised the dead at her feet. They pulled her from her horse. She tried to fight them off but she was overwhelmed by sheer numbers. By the time her soldiers could get to her it was too late. Grant yourself lucky if you should graduate as a Paladin and be able to die in glorious combat for the Silver Flame.” The cleric's tone had become scornful to me.

“Sooner than you think cleric! I will become a Paladin sooner than you think!” Replied. The whole time my eyes would drift to the direction on the horizon where Karnath was. I then stomped off to my room.

I was only ten years old. Most of us students of the Paladin program did not dare to try to graduate the program until our sixteenth birthday. And many yet did not even try instead they would transfer to the cleric program which was all written examination in order to graduate. But none dared to try to beat Lord Fellstar in hand to hand combat at the age of ten. The fight was not to the death but it was until one combatant yielded to the other. Lord Fellstar was strong and a clever fighter. But he could be beat if the youth was quicker and if his faith in The Silver Flame was strong enough.

I wanted to avenge my Mother's death. I wanted to be a Paladin as soon as possible. So as soon as the sun broke the horizon I walked out to the cottage that Lord Fellstar lived in while he was training military students.

“My time has come! I challenge Lord Fellstar for the right to be a Paladin of the Silver Flame!” I cried this out so it could be heard easily by everyone within 200 feet.

A tired, sleepy Lord Fellstar walked out of the cottage, “Boy I will whip you for waking me at this hour today. I do not know what type of insanity has filled your head but I suggest to you return to your room and wait there until I am ready to punish you.”

“I am not insane. It is my right to demand this from you, or do you already yield old man?” I stood there, mocking him, wanting to provoke him into the test..

“Boy you know what you ask?” the Lord questioned. I nodded.

“Then be it! I have been looking forward to this day. You have been a waste of my time. I will do you a favor and kill you in combat that way you will not have to kill yourself after you fail.” The Lord was no longer angry, as if all his yelling at the students was nothing more than an act. Instead he looked proud and sad like fighting me was dirty work which must be done.

“We shall meet at noon out in the field. You may choose one weapon from the armory. I will choose one weapon as well.” The Lord promptly turned around and walked back into his home.

I knew before I even woke up that morning that the weapon I would choose was Ghost. Lord Fellstar thought I could not ride a horse so he would not be prepared for me to attack him with a horse.

So at noon I trotted out to the field astride Ghost. Lord Fellstar was standing there already. Armed with a simple staff, “I cannot believe my eyes? Is that Roland the Turtle on top a horse. Boy you are truly...”

Before he could finish his sentence I spurred Ghost into a charge straight into a charge for Lord Fellstar. He was looking at me expecting me to fall. He had a hard time trying to understand the phenomena occurring before his eyes. It was the chance I needed. Ghost charged straight for him not faltering a step. Then the horse slammed into Lord Fellstar knocking him to the ground. The Lord could not get back up he was too busy trying to fend off Ghosts hooves as it tried to pound him. Several times the hooves made contact on the Lord severely wounding him. Finally Lord Fellstar swung the staff around making contact with Ghosts leg. I heard the crack of bone as the old mares leg was broken. The horse fell upon Lord Fellstar. Knocking the staff out of his hand. I tumbled off the the saddle. I was able to duck and roll away from Ghost. But Lord Fellstar became pinned under the large horse. It gave me the time I needed to reach the staff. Lord Fellstar had just got from underneath the horse when I came around and slammed the staff into his side. This knocked all the air out of him. He rolled to his back stunned. I then brought it over my head in the air to slam it down upon Lord Fellstar's head to break it open.

He brought his hand up and screamed, “I yield!” I paused but my blood was thick with fury and he could tell, “I yield to thee Paladin of the Silver Flame, I ask for mercy. I am your humble servant Fellstar!” This cry for mercy caused me to slowly lower the staff. I backed away from Fellstar. He then passed out.

I had to kill Ghost. This act gave me a cold realization that sometimes in order to serve the Silver Flame I might not only have to sacrifice my self but those who I love as well.

The next day I was given Splintmail armor, a horse, a shield, a sword, and a lance. I was told to report to Lord Drisnol. He lead a calvary unit near the Cyran and Thrane border. I wanted to fight Karrns not Cyrans but I knew I would have to earn my right to do that.

For awhile I was treated not better than a squire or stable boy. Not too many solders could take a 10 year old Paladin seriously. The unit saw little action since it was mostly set up to patrol the border and report any enemy movements or invasions.

After ten years I slowly earned the respect of my fellow solders and officers. They would still call me Turtle out of jest and fellowship so I did not mind it. Finally Lord Drisnol was relocated and I was promoted to command of the calvary detachment. I did not

allow my men to call me Lord since I was not from one of the Thrane noble houses. If they wanted to show respect they could call me by my proper military title Captain Roland.

Finally I had a chance to fight on the front lines against Karrns. The city of Shadukar had been held by the Karrns for some time. I was given orders to assist the tenth legion to clear undead troops that were patrolling outside the city perimeter making sieging the city difficult.

We fought all day. We had many casualties, my own unit was cut in half, and I had several severe wounds. But at sunset we seemed to have taken control of the field. There were several hundred living Karrns troops to deal with. And one of them was a Bone Knight. I had my eyes trained on him. I wanted to slay him in the name of the Silver Flame and to my Mother Jenna.

The living troops seemed to be in a defensive location. They were using dead bodies as a defensive walls. For that reason my unit was asked to spear head the assault. We were to charge over the bodies braking up the defenders formation and archers on the other side long enough for the foot troops to come in and clean up.

“Forward slow trot” I yelled my troops moves out slowly “wide line tight, and double time” My troop speard out into a line but the ranks were tight nearly shoulder to shoulder. Then I saw the Bone Knight top the corpses. The arrogant blasphemer was taunting us. “Forward Charge” The calvary burst forward. We came to the pile of corpses. Then the Bone Knight raised his fist into the air. Before we could respond, pikes hundreds of pikes shot out from underneath corpses. The clever Karrns had what undead they had left crawl underneath the lifeless bodies and had them ready with pikes when the order was given. My unit was slaughtered. Screaming horses and men could be heard for far around. Several pikes impaled both my horse and me. We lay there convulsing our blood sinking into the earth turning the soil black with gore.

The Bone Knight came over to me and took off his helmet. It was Bellthorn! A much older and scarred Bellthorn but it was him. “Poor Roland, I will never understand why they made you a Paladin and not me? You are so weak, see how your whole life was a waste. But you will make a good undead solder, much better dead then when you were alive. I will let you find wisdom in your folly and leave you here to die slowly. Farewell Turtle.”

The traitor could not graduate as a Paladin so he defected to the Karrns. But now I was doomed I started to pray to the Silver Flame to take my life quickly and to destroy my bones so it could not be raised as an undead in the Karrn military. With my prayer I started to fade in the night. I think I was asleep, because I saw a bright light suddenly near me. It was Mother Jenna, in all her splendor and glory mounted upon her midnight steed, she smiled at me, “Get up child, it is not time to sleep yet, there is still much work to do” I could not look at her any longer the light around her was too bright. I turned away. I could feel the warmth of the light wash over my whole body. I wanted to turn

back to her and say how much I loved her. So when I fought to open my eyes and stare into the light what I saw was the sun breaking over the horizon. I thought the sun rise was Mother Jenna, but it was just the sun. Then I understood the miracle somehow I survived the whole night. Some Thrane troops found me and carried me away to Flame Keep. There I was nursed and healed. They told me about the Day of Mourning and that the leaders of the five nations were meeting in Thronehold discussing peace.

I told a cleric about what happened that morning. He told me that the Silver Flame had shown me a sign. This news got all the way back to the Speaker of the Flame. I was asked to meet with her. I spoke with her at length about many things over many weeks. We became friends and she enjoyed talking to me because I was too simple for politics and spoke like a child about simple things like wanting to see the world and all its many wonders.

“Roland obvious you were meant to do great things that’s why the Silver Flame did not take you that night.” She told me

“I don’t know that my lady, Turtles are hard to kill” She started to giggle at me then stopped quickly afraid a cardinal or guard might notice.

“Roland I cannot see the world, because I cannot leave Flame Keep and the Silver Flame. But you can, I will make you a pilgrim and send you forth into the world.”

“Does not my lady think I would better serve here in Thrane helping to rebuild and defend against any future aggression from the other nations?” I asked fearing that I would become lost without direction if I should leave Thrane.

“No, you will leave and have many grand adventures, then you will come back here and tell me all about them. What better way to show the world what Thrane stands for and that we mean only peace and goodwill in the name of The Silver Flame to everyone. That is an order from the Silver Flame to my lips. From this point on you will be a pilgrim of the Silver Flame. Your quest is to save innocents and fight evil. Simple enough command to understand my most favorite turtle?” She asked both commanding and with a smile.

“Yes my Lady”

“Then kneel Paladin!” Her voice suddenly shifted away from being a child to something terrifying and otherworldly. You could hear the Silver Flame now only. She unsheathed my sword and brought it down on my shoulder first my left then my right.

“By the Silver Flame you are made a Pilgrim and dubbed a Knight of the Silver Flame” The doors to her chamber opened and some guards peaked in to witness the impromptu ceremony. But all of Flame Keep could hear the voice of the Silver Flame as it echoed off its halls and archways.

“Raise Sir Roland, go out into the world and spread the light of the Silver Flame where you go!”

“Yes my lady” I bowed one last time then walked out. As I left Flame Keep I saw the slack jawed expressions of the Cardinals and Templars that knew me since I was a child. These same servants of the Silver Flame once would laugh and gossip about the turtle boy who wanted to become a Paladin. Now they could say nothing as they watched me leave Flame Keep not only a Paladin but also personally knighted and given rights to be a pilgrim by the Speaker of the Silver Flame herself.