

Thyme

The Bard, Alicia Gwynbledd

Birth

Alicia was born in the port town of Arsmeril to her parents; her Elven father Iorveth Gwynbledd, and her Human mother Dania. Raised by Elves in the traditional Elven way, Alicia had access to some of the greatest tuition in the land.

Renowned for their art and beauty, the Elves were hard but fair in their lessons. Elves would spend many years perfecting a single song before moving onto the next, as is the way of those who have all the time in the world to practice.

As a Half-Elf, Alicia was not so patient. Her Human and Elven sides often clashed. She had the grace of an Elf, but the stamina of a Human; the wanderlust of a Human, but the patience of an Elf.

Iorveth knew that one day Alicia would be unable to restrain herself from leaving Arsmeril, ahead of her Elven peers, and seeing the world. As such he did what he could to prepare her. Instead of taking widely versed lessons in many topics, Alicia was instead tutored in the arts, and the knowledge of the world that she not only craved, but would also keep her alive.

Seeing how she cared little for the martial practices, Alicia was taught enough to defend herself, but spent much of her time deep in tomes of knowledge. Poetry and song filled her evenings, ancient tales of evil spirits, great Kings, and the glory of war.

Life against War

Word reached Arsmeril of a great conflict within the forest, one that had left many wounded and in need of care. A battle was being fought, one that drew every Elf in the area. Rumour spoke of an ancient Green Dragon, but it was only ever spoken of in whispered tones.

Seeing her chance, Alicia travelled with Iorveth to Crying Leaf. The Elves had established a base of operations near there, though only Elves would have ever known about it, hidden in the forest as it was.

Alicia received many stern gazes as she approached the camp with her father, and soon she found out why – and why she would never be able to recount what she had seen to anyone.

For an entire month a battle was waged in the forest. Streams of Elves, marching to the front and limping back, passed through the camp every day.

Iorveth forbade her from leaving the camp – especially from following the soldiers to the front. Instead Alicia was tasked with assisting the support staff at the camp, tending to the wounded soldiers.

She quickly realised how little she knew of combat, and of the wounds it caused. Under the expert guidance of the Elven Clerics Alicia learned more about medicine in that month than she had in a year of study.

She found her music had a positive effect on the wounded, and on the camp in general. Morale always seemed higher whenever she or one of the other Elves performed a ballad or melody.

The Clerics told her of the ability of music and song on the sick and hopeless. She had stories from the Elves; A song can break a person's heart, inspire them to greatness, or even that the right song at the right time could stop a war.

The battle came to a climax, spelling the end of the month she had spent in the camp. She knew it was the end, for every soldier – wounded or not, left the camp and marched forward to battle. She and a handful of other non-combatants were left to await their return.

And return they did. Bloody, beaten, and raw. Some walked in and quietly sat beneath the trees. Others limped, even more carried in by weary hands. Even more never returned.

Despite the sudden quantity of Elves, the camp was deathly silent. An aura of sombre despair hung over the entire area, though Alicia barely had time to think about it as she worked with the Clerics, desperately trying to heal those who could still survive their wounds.

As the dawn came, so did the wounded cease coming. Those that would live were alive; those that would die were dead.

Carefully, Alicia placed Iorveth's hand over his chest. The dead were ceremoniously placed upon the Earth, bound back to nature by its merest touch. Rows of proud Elven faces hung, caked with blood and dirt.

Uncertain feelings chaotically whirled around in Alicia's head. She knew for what he- they, had died. But the stories were wrong. Unable to contain the emotion, Alicia began to sing, subconsciously strumming her lute in a woeful, remorseful melody; loaded with so much pain and sadness that even the trees seemed to sag.

The emotions spent, the absence of her song was filled with silence. She stared down at Iorveth, brushing the side of his face one last time.

"So much for the glory of war."

Life on the Road

With her father dead, Alicia decided that she would leave Arsmeril and begin a new life. Her mother would be well looked after by the Elves and her friends.

Starting with the local tavern, Thyme began to perform professionally – at first within Arsmeril, but soon on shorter expeditions to nearby towns and villages.

Thyme soon became known as the 'Sombre Songstress', performing melodies that soothed more than excited. Temples and other places of healing called upon her services, calming and tending not with bandages and cloth, but with music and song.

A few years passed before Thyme decided to leave Arsmeril proper. She would venture south along the coast, travelling from city to city with only her knowledge and possessions to guide her.

Far to the south lay the town of Sandport. As good a destination as any, and perhaps somewhere, the right person, at the right time, could hear about the glory of war.