

VALLIANA KNOMAN

STALWART ARBALEST, HOLDER OF THE LINE

Born in Elysus to her parents Karen and Eren Knoman, Valliana was raised far from any danger or conflict. Her father a simple fletcher, her mother a temple acolyte, it was presumed that she too would enter the service of the temple, however Valliana had set her sights much further afield.

Ever since she was a child, Valliana had dreamt of seeing the great Adamantine Wall to the north. In games and play she would hold the line against monstrous attackers, driving them back into the frozen north.

Coming of age, she enlisted into the military. Using what she learned from her father, she joined a unit of crossbowmen and began her career as an arbalester.

Moving from town guard, to caravan escort, to castle watch, Valliana slowly but surely earned her way further and further north, until the time finally came for her to be sent to the wall.

Turning now from her father's teachings to her mother's, she found herself in high demand from soldier and quartermaster alike – there is always another bow to the fixed, arrows to fletch, injuries to tend, wounds to stitch.

Her assignment to the wall went from dream to reality, and from reality to nightmare. She had heard the stories written in books, passed down from person to person. Taking them for glorified, exaggerated tales meant to scare children, she had never paid them much heed. Now she would learn the truth of what lies beyond the wall.

The ever present cold, the ever lingering sense of danger, the ever watching eyes just beyond the creeping mist. Slowly they began to worm their way into her mind. After two years at the wall, Valliana began to understand why no person is ever stationed there for longer than they must.

Service fulfilled, Valliana was to be reassigned inland – away from the wall. Unexpectedly she felt relief at the prospect. The dream had been realised, it was time to leave.

On her final night watching the walls, they were once again set upon by the monstrosities that lurk beyond.

A dense fog descended upon the ramparts, thicker and more unnatural than any she had seen thus far. Sounds, noises, echoes, began to pierce through the veil. Tensed, crossbow in hand, Valliana fell back on her training. She knew where she had to be, what she had to do, and those around her that she could rely upon.

Spinning, she was the first to react to the sudden cry of pain. One of the other defenders lay on his back, a decrepit beast upon him, tearing blood and flesh.

Teeth grit she levelled the crossbow at the beast and pulled the trigger. The string snapped like a thread in her mind, and suddenly the veil lifted.

The man turned, startled by the sound of her crossbow in the silent night. Voices began to call, hailing for a report on the disturbance.

Agast, Valliana turned in disbelief. The north was empty of any fog or monster. Looking down at her crossbow, she had pulled the trigger aimed directly at her comrade – yet he was not dead.

The bolt rested still in its groove, split perfectly down the middle by the string. She knew it was impossible. There was no way a bolt could split like that. Removing it from the groove, it came freely.

More voices called out, concern growing over the noise and the silence. Valliana turned again, staring out over the snow. For a moment, she glimpsed a figure bathed in an ethereal blue glow, but it vanished just as suddenly as it had appeared.

Later, on the road west, she took the head of that fateful bolt and fashioned it into an amulet. A reminder of something she could not fathom. She knew not what it was, but somehow knew it was connected to the mist, to the figure... or had she simply lost her mind?

For now, she was content to assume her new role guarding the western coast. For now, she was content to be away from the north. For now, she was eager to be away from her dreams.