

Valliana Quel'delar

Ranger, Outcast

Backstory

It was necessary.

The village of Delar was formed by the union of three smaller Elven tribes – Quel, Dan, and Zen. In the spirit of peace and union, they all adopted the suffix 'Delar'.

As is the way of the Elves, they were graceful and respectful of nature's will. Beast and animal alike were given reverence, but none more so than the symbol of their village; the great guardians of the jungle, the hippogriff.

Like many of their kin, they lived in the vast jungles on the border of the Arut Shan mountains, and beyond that an endless desert that stretched to the horizon. All manner of creatures would find their way into the jungle, most of which would end up as prey for the mighty hippogriff.

One of the Delar travelled with speed toward a noise; a beast roaring in distress and anger. As he arrived in the clearing the cause of the noise became apparent; a mighty beast, still gripped in the bloodlust of combat, bleeding from several deadly wounds, was preparing to strike its latest prey.

It was necessary. The decision was instant. His injuries were rough and torn, made by crude weapons or claws instead of the refined bronze of Elven blades. Two of the Delar, caught off-guard by the sudden attack, or the one life of the beast. A single arrow was all it took to bring low the injured hippogriff.

Bringing the two Delar safely back to the village, along with news of the hippogriff, the man was met with a sudden, palpable silence. He did not stop, simply nodding in acceptance. Nobody had to tell him to go; he knew their laws and their ways. He had slain a revered creature, and there was only one punishment.

Taking but a few possessions and his bow, Valliana Quel'delar left Delar. Strapped to his bow was a single hippogriff feather, a reminder of the past, and of his exile.

Valliana and the Book at the Slithering Hills

Despite its name, the Slithering Hills were completely devoid of snakes. The name came instead from their unusual nature to rise and fall throughout the month, no hill ever remaining still for longer than a few days.

Since entering exile, Valliana had headed out into the Arut Shan mountains, using his knowledge of monsters to patrol the land and help those he encountered.

Despite rumours of world serpents and dangerous magics in the hills, some people still entered them; often the foolish and the young. The constantly twisting terrain made it a common occurrence for people to get lost or go missing in the hills. So it was when Valliana encountered a human woman, Triss, wandering through the hills searching for her lost son.

She was weak, clearly having walked for hours only to become as lost as her child. With his natural feel for the land, Valliana guided her through the hills with his companion, Wol, flying overhead.

Following the wise owl, they travelled deep into the Slithering Hills, but what he found was not a child, but a strange tome atop a pedestal of stone. Curious, Valliana flicked the cover open to read the first page, but as he did so the ground began to slip, the hills violently changing and warping beneath their feet.

Tossed off their feet, Valliana barely had time to grab on to Triss. Rippling and warping, the ground moved, throwing them both back away from the pedestal.

The danger rising, Valliana knew he had to take action or they'd both end up crushed or swallowed by the earth. Releasing Triss, he allowed the ground to throw him high up into the air.

The sun shone brightly above, the rapidly passing air catching his face and hair. So far up off the ground, he wondered for a moment if this is what it felt like to fly, to be a bird in the sky. Somewhere down below Triss screamed in fear, panicked by the earth and his sudden flight. Wol soared alongside him, screeching in protest.

Valliana reached the peak of his ascent, arrow nocked, longbow drawn. One arrow. One heartbeat. One chance. He arced around, turning from the sky to the ground. Beneath him the book was as a statue in a fountain of chaos. Breathe, and release.

He opened his eyes. The sun was almost gone, the ground cool beneath his feet. An owl screeched in his ear, a woman's voice saying... something, the crying of a child.

Painfully, Valliana sat up. He hadn't fallen far from the pedestal, a single arrow piercing deep into and through the book. Looking around it was clear that these hills would slither no more.

With the child found and safe, he searched the pedestal. The book was completely blank, its magic seemingly broken. As he turned the last few pages Valliana found a recess carved into the paper, carefully containing a silver spoon, simply engraved with the letter 'M'.

Valliana and the Warlock out of Kandraderu

Valliana spent little time in the mountains. While dangerous, his true prey lay further to the west, out beyond Arut Shan in the endless deserts.

Years went by as Valliana journeyed and ventured through the hot sands; a far shot from the jungles of his youth. The creatures did not have a single source, rather drifting from far borders or seeming to rise from beneath the sands.

Rumours began to emerge of a powerful mage summoning deformed, monstrous beings, and unleashing them upon the land. Following the hear-say and half-truths, Valliana struck out into the desert.

Deep within those burning sands he came to a camp; a gnarled, burnt husk of civilisation. Trunks of twisted wood rose out of the sand, intertwined to form a single hellish shelter. Several dark figures stalked the perimeter, the sand gleaming and shiny in their wake.

Taken aback, Valliana was forced to retreat. These were indeed monsters, but they were not monstrosities – they were demons!

While he was certain that his bow would harm the demons, there were simply too many to take on alone. Writing a note, Valliana sent Wol flying back towards the nearest village. It would likely take days for Wol to fly and return with help.

Unwilling to simply wait and do nothing, Valliana decided to sneak into the camp and find out what he could. A certain darkness seemed to hang over the entire area, getting deeper as he worked past the patrolling demons and into the shelter.

Inside stood a single robed and hooded figure, arms stretched out into the air, back turned, focusing on some manner of ritual. Behind the figure on an ornate table was drawn an intricate chalk ritual circle, two gems placed to either side and an idol of gold placed in the centre.

Deciding against confronting the robed figure, Valliana snuck closer to the table, one eye on the chanting figure, the other on the ritual table.

"...shakhbūr durb burzum, bagva gimbish. Thrak ufum funda Oilang. Durbizish funda Kandraderu!"

The figure chanted in some black tongue of a forsaken land, a ritual to bring forth some manner of foul unnatural demon, no doubt.

In one quick sweep, Valliana grabbed the gems and the idol from the table. A crackle of snapping energy filled the shelter, the ground shuddering as if with anger. Spinning, the chanting was replaced with shouting in that same black tongue:

"Thrakizish golug! Dūmpuga!"

Already running, the words echoed after Valliana, the demons roused into a furious chase. For several hours they pursued him across the desert, the demons never seeming to slow or grow weary. Valliana dared not slow or halt, determination driving him to keep ahead of them by a mere dune.

As the sun began setting and the chase drew toward a foreseeable end, a dark group appeared on the horizon ahead. Whether friend or foe, Valliana had no choice but to push forward for as long as he could.

His legs finally giving out, Valliana tumbled down one final dune, rolling to a halt at the bottom. He could hear the sound of the demons approaching, and all he could do was try to muster the strength to draw his bow.

Breaching the crest of the dune like dark ships, the demons charged down the sandy hill. Behind, a frenzied cry broke out as several tribesmen engaged the demons in a frenzy, forcing them to halt and eventually retreat. Fluttering down, Wol screeched at Valliana, probably calling him something derisive and foolish.

The ritual interrupted, and the demons driven back into the desert, the dark words of that robed figure echoed across the sands. Words without meaning, but loaded with dark intent. Unseen eyes narrowing in anger.