

Entry 0

There's to be a meeting with Father and Arl Howe tomorrow. Most likely the rest of the battle plans for the south: why they opted to wait until Fergus left however is beyond me.

I must admit. I feel remiss that I'm stuck here while they're all going off to fight the darkspawn. I understand that it makes sense to leave one of the family behind. but why not send me instead? Father knows Highever like the back of his hand: I've only just started to really get a feel for our lands—beyond just reading or hearing about the people within. mind you.

I suppose it can't be helped. At least once all the official meetings are dealt with I can stop wearing these dresses...always so constricting. What I'd give to just be able to wear some pants and a tunic without it reflecting poorly on our house...

Entry 1

I can't say that I'm without reservations about what lies ahead. Many, to tell the truth. I think the reality is setting in for me: that Father and Fergus are marching off to an uncertain fate. Sure, the reports say fighting in the south is going well, but...

I shouldn't dwell on that. Nothing's set in stone, I know. Besides, I'll have much to fret over come morning no doubt: chief among them figuring out how to be 'noble' in more than appearances. Much as I enjoy the comforts of the title, upholding it? This will be my first true test. Actually leading...even if it is clerical more than anything.

At any rate, I won't spend much longer on this. I met one of Lady Landra's ladies-in-waiting earlier: a rather fetching elf named Iona. She was rather receptive during our conversation, so I don't believe either of us will be getting much sleep once she arrives. I do hope she

doesn't mind my hands getting a solid grip on those gorgeous blonde
locks...

Entry 2

I don't think I have the ability to put into words the rage, the grief I feel. Arl Howe, the traitorous bastard slaughtered my family. My people! Everyone his men came across, cut down without mercy. I watched the mangled bodies of my nephew and sister-in-law bleed out: I had to see my father's entrails just spill...

What I saw done to my family, I'll do to Howe ten times over. I want him to bleed, to howl to the air in terrible agony before I let him drain dry like he did to us. But I can't do that: not yet. My freedom is not my own any longer: as payment for escorting me to safety. Duncan the Grey Warden has conscripted me into his order.

It's infuriating: being taken ~~away~~ from where I need to be. No one is left in Highever but ~~Howe~~ and his treacherous ilk, likely terrorizing the commonfolk with wild abandon! But Fergus is to the south by now, and that's where Duncan is taking me. At the very least, I can meet with him and together, we plan our next move. If nothing else, he should hear the news from family.

By the Maker, it's just us now isn't it? We're all that's left of the Couslands. We don't even have an heir...or lands. We're just a name right now. And it's just Fergus now: Grey Wardens hold no titles or lands. What if he died too? Or Howe got to him?

If that's the case, I don't think I can obey Duncan. I don't care about the darkspawn: if I'm the only one left in the family, I have to do something about it. Father entrusted Highever's safety to me ~~before~~ Duncan pulled his 'Right of Conscription' business on me, and if it comes down to it? I'm not letting him stand in my way.

But for now...for now. I'll play along. Whatever gets me to
Fergus--or if nothing else, to a better position to plan my next move.

Entry 3

I had to take a moment. I know the battle's coming up in mere hours, but I have to try and--

He killed him. Duncan just stabbed Ser Jory in the gut, when he...

I understand why some denounce the Grey Wardens now. What they do...it's unforgivable, luring unsuspecting 'recruits' into their doom. What choice did I have? I know I can't best Duncan in a fight, so it was drinking that cursed blood or meeting the same fate as Jory.
Damn that man!

Daveth too...dead as if he drank pure poison. Why I didn't meet
-his- fate either. I don't know. And the nightmares...how do they expect
any loyalty from me? Alistair and Duncan, looking at me as if I am
one of them now! I may have drank the blood, but I'll call no Warden
my brother. As soon as this battle is over I'm finding Fergus, and then
we're figuring out how to take back Highever. Damn the Wardens and
their manipulative ilk.

Entry 4

More traitors revealed. Arl Howe was bad enough, but now? Loghain, the king's right hand man ran like a coward, leaving us all to die. If it wasn't for the intervention of that strange witch we met in the wilds, that's what would've happened.

It's just Alistair and I that survived: Duncan and damn near everyone at Ostagar died. Darkspawn are running to the north, flooding into the country now. And I'm expected to help fend off this Blight without help, save for Alistair, a self-professed 'Junior Recruit'?

Ignoring the fact I don't want any damn thing to do with the Wardens, how would this even happen? We have treaties, sure: Arl Howe and Teryn Loghain also had words of binding. Fat lot of good that did Father, and the King. As far as I'm concerned, Ferelden is in

utter turmoil. I can't be worried about the whole kingdom when my home is still under the rule of that tyrant!

That's another thought, that just crossed my mind. Fergus...he was at Ostagar, albeit scouting when the battle happened. Maybe he managed to make it out without running into the horde?

...No, that's a fool's hope. So many have died; I can't just hope he'll be around by some Maker-given miracle.

What do I do? I'm no fool; the Blight will come to Highever eventually. Even if I were to ignore all else but Arl Howe, and retake and reinforce our lands, what then? Will all die to darkspawn.

But if I accept this cursed duty...Arl Howe gets away with his massacre. I'll be ~~depending~~ him from...no. No I can't accept that. Whatever I do, if I have the chance? I'll run him through; I don't care if it's in the middle of the Denerim Market.

So it seems I've only got one path forward, at least for the time being. It's myself, Rarkov, Alistair and the daughter of that witch who saved us, Morrigan. I'm not sure how I feel about a blatant apostate traveling with us...but at least she's direct about her intentions. Bluntly so, even. Alistair? At some point I fear I'll have to confront him with my disdain for the Wardens; until then I'll just keep my distance, I suppose. At least I can trust Rarkov; that dog's likely going to be the only one I can rely on for the time being.

All this death, all this betrayal... How did everything go so wrong so quickly? It was a mere month ago, where my biggest concern was having to rehearse remarks for when the latest Bannorn complaint was going to come in Father's absence. Now I can scarcely have a free moment without this nagging thrum in my head: like a whisper that I can't quite make out. It started after the Joining, too... I'll bet it's that blood corrupting me like all the others who've fallen to the darkspawn.

He may be dead, but still: damn that Duncan for thrusting me into this. Daveth would've done fine had he survived: even Jory may have grown a spine when it counted.

Entry 5

Out of Lothering, and with two rather eclectic companions in tow—a rather airy seeming Orlesian ex-sister named Leliana, and one of the bestial men from the far north. Quin—something I believe they're called?

Both of them joined our little group due to the Blight, and our status as Grey Wardens. We even got some additional aid in Lothering from townspeople that overheard us (although that may have been in part due to us clearing out some of Loghain's rowdy men left behind to hunt for us. Good riddance to those scum).

I suppose what I'm getting at, is that it's foolish to keep resenting what I am now. If being a Grey Warden lets me gather allies like this? Perhaps those allies can be turned towards retaking Highever. Rumours abound that Arl Howe's thrown in with Loghain so in truth, it's still aiding the defense against the Blight and Loghain if focus is given to taking down Howe. And -after- my lands are secured once more and Howe's brought to justice as I see fit, then attention can be turned towards the Blight. As a bonus, by that time we'll have a secure foothold in Highever.

Of course, this is all very far from happening. A surprisingly capable lay-sister and one foreign brute does not an army make...but the forces these Warden treaties bind may do just that. As for where to go first? That is indeed the question...it seems that Alistair's idea to go to Redcliffe for aid won't pan out. The Arl is sick, to the point that his knights are hunting for a myth to cure him. Redcliffe itself is reported to be under siege by some dark force.

However, it's the closer than any of the lands referred to by these treaties--Organnar is across the country, and so is the Circle of Mage. As for the Dalish? I've no idea where to even find them. The only elves I've ever met are the ones who came to Highever with few exceptions.

I'd ask Alistair for some insight, but he seems perfectly content to let me take the lead. I've heard of followers before, but he takes the cake. I suppose I should be thankful he's leaving the decisions up to me; at least this way I can keep my own goals in mind.

Entry 6

Redcliffe it is. It's the closest; Alistair has a connection there, and if Arl Eamon is on death's door, the sooner we make it there the sooner we can ensure we don't lose his potential support. It shouldn't take us more than a week to get there from Lotharing—assuming there are no delays. The road seems more dangerous than ever, if our experiences to Lotharing were any indication.

I will admit, it's easy to pass the time with traveling companions like these. Leliana is an evocative storyteller, if a bit ditzy, and Morrigan's direct nature is rather refreshing compared to all the veiled words and insinuations I'm used to. The downsides of being from a noble family...

The Qunari however. I can't place him yet. He calls himself 'Sten', and yet I get the feeling that isn't his true name. And while Morrigan's honesty is refreshing, his? It's downright alien. I'm not sure if he can be trusted...it's as if there's something he's hiding--or rather not hiding, but not bringing up because I haven't asked. He only ever elaborates on anything if I explicitly ask it. Maddening!

As for Alistair, I've been giving him some distance, but I should learn what I can about his relationship with Arl Eamon on the way to Redcliffe. And if nothing else, he's the only other person I know of who can explain what being a Grey Warden entails--literally, what's happening to me. I have these nightmares...visions, more like. It makes even rest something that gives me pause: I never know what terrors will invade my mind next.

Entry 7

It always seems like by the time I get to write something down, I've scarcely the time to do it. Where to begin? The part where Alustair, the goopy near-carefree Grey Warden is actually a royal bastard? In both senses: he's the bloody son of King Maric! Oh, or should I start with the fact that not only is Arl Eamon ill, but the actual risen dead are assaulting Redcliffe every night--and killing anyone who tries to leave once they're here? Ooh, or perhaps the part where it seems that Arl Howe is likely behind Arl Eamon's poisoning?!

I know the others are concerned that I'm too fired up, too angry to think straight. All I know is that we need to get in that damned castle and find Eamon. We do that, we screw up one of Howe's plans, secure an ally, and make it out of here alive. To that end, we've got to just, I don't know, somehow survive the night's assault. Us, the 'militia' (barely more than able-bodied villagers with some equipment the drunken

blacksmith put together) and what few knights returned from their quest to find the Urn of Sacred Ashes. Maker above, this almost feels worse than Ostagar.

Oh, and I had to kill a stubborn dwarf who wouldn't realize that fighting in a group is safer than hiding alone with the risen dead roaming about. Blasted fool.

Entry 8

Somehow, we survived the night. It felt like the dead would just keep coming...for every one cut down, it seemed two more appeared. I know why we did survive though: magic. Much as I might have consternation about how unrepentant Morrigan is towards magic, I can't deny her skill with it. To be able to freeze your foes from afar with a thought, or ward allies from harm...were it not for the threat of demons, I'm convinced that mages would be seen as earthly angels.

Now though, now comes the treacherous part. We can't invade the castle with the militia: they're too worn from the fighting. It's up to just us to go inside and find a solution, somehow. Should we just try to carry Eamon out? Kill any undead we see? With how many came from inside, I wonder if anyone even is alive. The blacksmith wants me to find his daughter: I'm afraid at best I might be able to bring a corpse back for him.

At any rate. I can't tarry much longer. We have no idea if the
undead might start attacking during daylight. and I don't want to risk it.

Entry 9

Maybe it would have been better if I had died at Highever, and Father survived. I've made tough decisions, but...it's one thing to know what must be done. But to carry it out?

Killing a man is one thing. Especially if he's fighting you. It's just a matter of survival: you do what you need to win, and then move on. He made his choice. But Connor? A little boy, barely even old enough to know what evil truly is? He just laid there, unconscious. There was no battle for survival there...it was just--

I don't know what it was. Isolde forgave me. Bann Teagan understood; even Alistair managed to drop the issue after confronting me. Was it right? Could it ever be right?

Right now, every time I close my eyes I see Connor's body, with his little throat slit and my bloody blade still clutched in my hand. It's not his face though. It's Owen's.

Entry 10

We've got to keep pressing on. All we've accomplished at Redcliffe is just saving one village--and not without cost at that. Arl Eamon isn't dead, but he isn't well either. If we don't save him, then all we've done thus far is for naught. At this point, all we really have is a wild goose chase: the Urn.

A note I found on one of the Arl's knights mentioned that this scholar researching the urn, Genitive wasn't at his apartment in Denerim. Still, it's the only logical place to start the search--assuming we can even get inside the city safely. I don't know how large the bounty is on Grey Wardens, but it's certainly not going to be a small one. At the very least, we'll need some disguises before even trying to walk through the gates. It's something to help take my mind off of...recent events, at least.

Entry II

I had hoped to stay incognito while in Denerim, but it seems that Arl Howe had the 'good' foresight to plaster mine and Alistair's faces all around. Fortunately, many within the city doubt Loghain's claims about the Wardens: still, I had more than a few close calls.

As written in the note I found in Lothesing, Brother Genitivi is nowhere to be found. However, his assistant Weylon had some insight as to where he may have gone: Lake Calenhad, following up on a lead with the Urn somewhere around there. He mentioned a small inn near the docks to the Circle of Magi as a good place to start: it's more than I had when I started today, so it's worth following.

Beyond that, since we'll be right there it'd be prudent to approach the Circle with our treaties. Having magic on our side will no doubt turn the tide: honestly? If we can find the Urn (somehow), mend Arl Eamon and recruit the mages? That may be enough to retake Highever by itself. How to convince Arl Eamon to focus there however...that's another hurdle to overcome.

Entry 12

It seems that every entry is somehow more unbelievable than the last. I had honestly forgotten about the search for the Urn until reading my previous one: it feels like ages have passed since. The aid of the Circle...it will not be coming. There was a revolt within their ranks: to sum up a winding, nigh-inconceivably monstrous ordeal in a few words, abominations ran amok, and there was no choice but to slay them all.

Still, it was not that clear-cut. A few mages were alive inside the tower, yet most fought us, revealing themselves as blood mages. Others fell before we could save them: some would not listen to reason and still argued that the Circle was salvagable. I have sympathy for their plight, but you simply can't take chances when corruption such as that ran so deep.

I do have a newfound respect for the torment it must be to be a mage, even a trained one. The Fade, apparently the realm we go when we dream or die...it's monstrous to the waking eye. It defies sense, defies anything resembling logic--a world driven entirely by whim, filled with demons so alien that even those who...I don't know. I really just don't know: that realm is beyond me. Were it not for the desire to free my allies and escape that madhouse, I don't know if I could have mustered the courage to try.

Our trip to the Circle was not entirely fruitless however: the Templars have pledged to aid in our fights to come since we were able to help stop the threat posed by the rampaging mages. I still can't believe we actually beat them all: when we were fighting that terrible demon at the summit of the tower? Facing off after abomination after abomination, twisted from the last few mages surviving until this point? Somehow, we pulled it off.

Entry 13

More time passed than I had expected. We've got to be hurrying back to Denesum: I didn't get the chance to write about it earlier, but our lead given by Brother Genitivi's assistant turned out to bring us right to a trap laid out by some men shouting about protecting Andraste. They surely knew something about the Urn, but when the battle turned, the last survivor turned his blade on himself rather than be captured by us. All we have now is Weylon...and who knows if he's still alive? Or, if he truly is trying to aid our search. Nothing is too outlandish after what I've seen. Honestly? He could turn into a dragon and I don't believe I'd even blink.

Entry 14

I've been doing some thinking about Duncan. What kind of man he was (from what little I know), beyond my experience with him. Him taking me away from my family like that...it's not something that I think I can forgive. But at the same time, the more I learn about how implacable the darkspawn are and how much the Wardens had to sacrifice in order to actually beat them back? Much as it pains me to even write it here, I can understand why he would be such a harsh man.

Alistair said that he's originally from Highever; I suppose that makes him one of my people in a sense. Alistair wants to honor him in some way once this whole big mess is over, assuming he's still alive; if nothing else, I think it'd be good to pay respects to a Highever man who, if nothing else, did what he thought was best, for no reward. Certainly not any glory; I don't care what King Caellan spoke of, you don't find glory in battle. It's brutal, violent and a contest of pure

survival. You can enjoy it, and Maker knows I've reveled in venting stress in bloodshed as of late...but don't dress it up with tales of heroics or anything more than what it truly is.

Entry 15

As suspected. 'Weyloni' was actually not who he said he was. He shouted about being one of 'Andraste's faithful' before he attacked us when we surprised him back at Brother Genitivi's home...there was something about how he spoke though. It was as if he was ~~depending~~ Andraste, and not just echoing her name. Strange.

We at least have a lead that seems legitimate now: we found some research from Genitivi that points to a place in the Frostbacks called 'Haveni' that he believes (or at least wrote that he believed) could lead to the actual resting place of the Urn. I ask, why couldn't it have been on the western shores of Ferelden? You know, just a few days away, and not well over a week? This constant trudging to and fro... The only reason we even know Arl Eamon is still fine is because there's no news of his death. How he's managing to hold on, I've no idea.

Entry 16

Leliana has some...interesting views on religion. She may be even more devout than I, but her views are rather free-spirited, and exceptionally liberal interpretations of what constitutes fulfilling the Maker's will follows suit. Don't get me wrong, it's certainly an appealing perspective, but a bit naive in my opinion. If the Maker really wished for us to worship him in experiencing the world, why would he have abandoned us? Still, she's an easy woman to talk to. Fun, too, and just a bit of an airhead. Not a -dumb- one mind you, just a bit silly. It's endearing, honestly.

Though, if we're talking about attraction...Maker preserve me, but that swamp-witch is something else! Arrogant, but with the talent to back it up, and the contrast of her clothes, hair and skin...I never realized I had such an interest in brunettes. Plus, beyond the skin she's much more than I expected initially. I had presumed that she would, as

an apostate be against fighting her fellow mages, but if anything she seems to enjoy it. If it wasn't for her near-venal disdain for the Maker's word, I might even say we're two kindred spirits. She and I both understand survival at any cost: a lesson painfully learned for me in recent times.

Obviously these are just idle fancies: if I want companionship then I'll just stop at a brothel when we get the chance. Still, it's hard to ignore the reality that I managed to end up traveling with two beautiful women. And a handsome man too: if I were into that sort of thing, I'll be the first to admit Alistair would be quite the catch. Though I shouldn't be surprised, say what you will about King Cailan, but he was far from homely.

Entry 17

Just how far in the mountains is Haven? We've been trekking uphill for two days now, and still the path winds further. For all I know, we stumbled upon a passage through the mountains themselves! I guess if we start hearing thick accents and smelling stinky cheeses, we'll know we went too far.

Entry 18

What an ordeal. What an ordeal! Every bone, every muscle in my body aches: I feel like I've ran for days straight. It might take me the better part of an hour just to write...but through it all, we survived. Survived fighting countless fanatics who believed a high dragon, of all creatures, was Andraste risen anew. Survived said high dragon in battle by the skin of our teeth. -and- survived what came after.

It was...it was eye-opening, the whole experience. To know of magic is one thing: to understand that there are things beyond mortals is the same. But to witness it? To experience even an indirect sliver of the divine? To be entirely honest, it's shaken my faith. Not in the Maker, but the Chantry. How can we say the Maker truly turned away when what we endured exists?

I also saw Father in that ruin. There was no way it wasn't him, and yet it felt like he was from another world. There was so much I wanted to say: I wanted to fall to my knees and beg him for forgiveness. Forgiveness for failing him and Mother: for fleeing, for so many things. But we just had scarce moments to speak, and then he was gone. Gone, but having left an amulet where he stood. It's strange: it doesn't feel magical, but I can almost see people in the reflection when I look at it. Perhaps it's just my imagination, but it's comforting all the same.

Having my soul laid bare, for my and the others to see however...it's given me perspective, I believe. That, and actually finding the resting place of the Urn. Actually taking some of Andraste's remains, to heal a good man. It's a good thing for the realm: a good thing for everyone in it. Including Highever, even if indirectly.

I can't focus single-mindedly on reclaiming my lands. Not with the darkspawn running amok. They're the most important threat: they're the first domino. The -moment- the archdemon has fallen. I will raise an army of Father's surviving bannermen and tear down everything in Amaranthine that Arl Howe holds dear...but not a moment before that. Even if it means letting that worthless bastard skulk around -my- home.

So, if the ashes of Andraste hold true, and Arl Eamon is restored...we'll follow the rest of these treaties, and gather our forces. We'll still likely have to contend with Loghain's treachery first: we can't risk him attacking us while we deal with the darkspawn. What's more, we may very well need his supporters on our side. The man himself may be mad, but I can't imagine everyone follows him out of ambition. Some must simply be interested in survival above all else.

It's getting late, and we have to march as quickly as possible back to Redcliffe. I don't want to presume that the Ark will keep holding steady...and I may have to contend with another outburst from Sten if I dawdle. I swear, every interaction with him makes him seem all the more alien. What kind of man tries to mutiny in the group, then readily accepts his loss?

Entry 19

We came across a man today who I had fought beside during Ostagar. I didn't know it at the time, but he claimed to be King Carlan's second. I don't know how he survived, nor do I know why he was captured by Bann Loren. What he told us is potentially worth returning to that wretched place to confirm.

Apparently, King Carlan kept important items in a magically-sealed chest. Things like his father's blade, and royal correspondence. As Elric (the man we found) says it, this includes letters he had sent to the Empress of Orlais. Related to the Blight, perhaps?

If we can find something in those letters that might aid us, it could give Arl Eamon's push to win nobles over a huge boost. The more of them we get, the bigger our forces are against the darkspawn. Still, Ostagar is deep within darkspawn territory now. We can stay hidden, but it takes time traveling that far, that carefully.

There's also another compounding factor. Morrigan had stolen away with a tome from the Circle of Mage while we were there: one she told me earlier was written by her mother. In it, Flemeth apparently details how she's lived as long as the legends say: by possessing the bodies of her own daughters. Daughters much like Morrigan. I can't fathom the type of monster that would do that to their own children... I also can't imagine why she would send Morrigan with us, or even aid us against the darkspawn. Is she just using us as pawns?

Morrigan thinks the only way to ensure her, and by extension our safety is to kill Flemeth. The way she says it: so casually, so matter-of-factly, it's like she doesn't realize that she's asking us to kill a figure straight out of myth. I told her that I'd help--it's the least I can do for all she's done for us--but I don't know what to expect--other than that she's apparently a powerful mage. Alistair was once a templar, and he's even shown me how to use some of their skills, but as Morrigan's said many times Flemeth makes a game of killing templars. If we're going to actually attempt this --and-- returning to Ostagar, we had better be prepared. Fortunately, coin shouldn't be an issue: Haven was quite lucrative in terms of powerful equipment. I'd wager...a solid hundred or so sovereigns worth easily. More than enough to stock up on supplies. Enough to make sure we don't die? Hard to say.

Entry 20

Even though we've only come across small packs of darkspawn in our effort to steer clear of the horde, it's easy to tell how befouled the land is becoming. The very air seems...dark, for lack of a better word. Thick, difficult to breathe. The grass is dying; the earth beneath crumbles and sinks like peat beneath our steps, and we've had to start carefully rationing our food due to there being less and less wildlife not showing signs of the taint. If anyone is still alive in this hellscape, I don't envy them.

Entry 21

We've passed through Lothering—or what's left of it. The only way I even recognized it was due to the Imperial Highway; not many towns are laid out around it like Lothering was. The Chantry is a charred shell; all the other buildings are completely razed. Ashes have blown around so much, it's almost like blackened snow blankets the area broken only by desiccated bone poking up from corrupt growths of twisted flesh sprouting like a mockery of fungus. It's clear that many didn't escape.

The 'good' news is that thus far in, the bulk of the horde seems to have passed us. The bad news is that means they're likely spreading throughout the bannorn now: the decentralized, self-sufficient nature of their holdings may mean the darkspawn will be slowed, but I can't count on that. The bannorn is the bulk of Ferelden; even if the borderlands survive, if we lose the center? Ferelden is nothing more than a shell. If

we weren't already halfway down to Ostagar. I'd say we turn around. I don't know if I actually would, though. Being this close... Ostagar was really where my old life died, even if I refused to accept it then. It's where so many things went wrong... I feel drawn to it. No wrongs will be righted there, but perhaps I'll quiet some part of my soul growing more agonized the longer I see this corruption. Or perhaps it's all wasted effort.

Entry 22

As expected, not many darkspawn were at Ostagar. Why? They won. The only reason to remain would be to revel in their victory. Can darkspawn even understand emotions that aren't brutal violence?

Alistair and I spent much of our time there in silence, just...taking it all in, really. I imagine he was thinking of Duncan: me? My thoughts were of Fergus. Seeing how complete a loss this was...I think I may have to accept that I'm the last of my line--and that line may not even exist, thanks to the Wardens. We forsake all ties to nobility, to titles and our old lives...what a bitter pill to swallow.

At least we got some small token of vengeance there. King Carlan's body was strung up, armor and all; we were able to give his corpse as good a send-off as we could. We also found the chest Elric mentioned: Maric's sword was fine, as were the letters within. Nothing that'd help us directly, but I believe I understand why Loghain turned traitor now. King Carlan was planning on allying with Orlais beyond the Blight. Perhaps even marrying into Celene's line. Perhaps the revelation truly drove Loghain mad?

It doesn't matter now anyway. Before we head back to the north, there's the matter of Flemeth. Morrigan is convinced that if she's with us when we engage Flemeth, she may be possessed right then and there. So, it'll just be Alistair, myself, Leliana, Rook and Sten to take on the legendary Witch of the Wilds. Two novice Wardens, a bard, a dog and a foreigner. Maker give me strength, because I doubt any legend of victory began with such a ramshackle party.

Entry 23

Another high dragon! How the blazes can an old bat like Flemeth turn into -that-? I don't know how we bested her: it was almost like she was...no, whatever her reasoning, she's dead now. I put my blade straight through her spine and felt the blood drain out. Morrigan has her mother's true grimoire now, studying it for all the secrets she may need to defend against Flemeth going forward. I'd say there's no need to worry, but she seems convinced that Flemeth can't be killed that easily. I suppose I can't really argue with the leading authority on the matter.
can I?

We're on the path out of the wilds now though, off to the main road. From there? We have two treaties left: one for the dwarves of Orgammar and one for the Dalish elves. Orgammar is easy enough to find, but far. As for the Dalish, I've heard rumors that the ones in Ferelden keep to the Breculian Forest; perhaps some of the hamlets near the forest's edge will have more insight.

Entry 24

I thought I had come to terms with being a Warden, but every time I think I can accept it, a new revelation fills me with rage--this one worst of all. Not only are we tricked into drinking what amounts to poison, plagued with nightmares all too real and thrust into a life without any connections to our previous one, what do we get in return? An early death! By blade or by the growing corruption, take your bloody pick. As Alistair put it, no Wardens live longer than three decades after their Joining, give or take a few years. So no matter what, I'll barely make it to fifty, if that long. My parents were the both of them well into their sixties and still full of life before Arl Howe's treachery: me? Dead decades sooner most like. What more can the Wardens take? Why all this sacrifice just to do something any fool with a blade and some luck can do?

The worst part is, what can I do? Before, I could at least run if I wanted. Leave, start a life anew. But now? No matter what I do, this person will kill me--or worse, pervert me into a monster like the darkspawn. I'm damned, and I didn't even know it. So many things that I could've done, so many things I could've been...and now, nothing.

Entry 25

I've had it. I'm not about to risk dying in some forgotten ruin and let revenge slip through my fingers. Arl Howe, he's the source of all this grief in my life. He slew my parents, he took our lands, he all but forced me into this wretched order: I'm through letting him prance around Denesum. I don't care if it kills me: I'm running him through. I've kept the family sword all this time for the right opportunity: I see now that I can't wait. I have to make my own chance.

Entry 26

I suppose it would be poor form to curse allies who care enough to follow me after I abandoned them. I made it a few days out from camp before Morrigan caught up with me first...I never realized how quickly she could move from her animal forms to human. Before I knew it, I couldn't move a muscle...then Alistair and the others caught up.

Alistair definitely learned much from Duncan: he had that same stern, patronly tone as he berated me. With much chagrin, I have to admit he was right--though at the time I was livid enough to strike him clear across the face as soon as Morrigan's magic wore off. I should apologize, for that if nothing else.

It pains me to know that my life has essentially been stolen.
But...the darkspawn come first. Nothing's changed except reasonings for
events that have already happened. I just have to...no. I shouldn't even
hope. I have to -forget- about Arl Howe. Focus on the treaties: focus
on the darkspawn. It's not like one recognizable Cousland could wage a
one-woman war against him and all his toadies and make it to him.
anyhow.

Entry 27

Finding the Dalish was easier than I expected. Perhaps Leliana was right: maybe they wanted to be found? Or at least wanted to see who was poking around the forest for them. They are...unlike any other elf I've met before. I heard the stories of the Dalish, of course—but always briefly, never into any detail. There's a very isolated life, one they're not keen on sharing with outsiders. If I didn't have the whole 'Grey Warden' excuse, they may not have even let us inside their camp at all.

Of course like every other place we've gone to, they have troubles of their own. Werewolves of all things are attacking their hunters, slaughtering or even turning more with each attack. Their keeper, leader apparently, said that he simply can't spare soldiers for the Blight while that's going on, so guess who gets to go into the forest and hunt for some magical wolf he needs to cure his hunters?

Perhaps when we make it to the dwarves, it'll be as simple as
'Here. I have these treaties. They say you will aid us during a Blight.'
'Why yes, these check out. Send word to Redcliffe: we'll be on our
way!' 'Thank you Ser Dwarf!' You see how bloody easy that'd be? But
no, odds are when we get to Orgammar the damn mountain will be
falling ontop of every sick infant dwarf this side of Ferelden.

Entry 28

The Dalish may think their way is better, but from what I've seen their focus on the past is their doom. Their hunters are cleansed: but it was not without cost. The werewolves were victims in a whole mess far too complicated to retell here: in short? Zathrian went too far, and he along with many innocents had to pay for his crimes, however justified in the past. Fortunately his protegee is far more reasonable, and we have our allies in the end. Mages, or templars rather knocked out...Dalish now...that just leaves the dwarves. Oh please. Maker please just let this one be simple and straightforward...

Entry 29

We were attacked at camp last night--by darkspawn, no less. How did they sneak up on us? We had at best a few moments' notice, and then they were upon us. Shrieking, monstrously warped fiends clawing from all angles it felt like...and the visions: they were even worse than before. Does this mean the Blight is getting worse? Or are we becoming a danger to the darkspawn?

We'd better hurry to the Frostbacks. Maker knows how much longer we can keep delaying a direct battle. The darkspawn have to know that Denerim can't stop a full assault.

Entry 30

Oh, lovely! The dwarves are just as enmeshed in tragedy and strife as the rest of this Maker-forsaken land! No king! Same as Carlan and our lot--oh, oh AND they also are on the verge of civil war!

Maker give me the strength to not kick the ass of every bloody dwarf in this city until they shut up and give me my soldiers. Oh, and the sheer -stubbornness- they have...and people call -me- hardheaded!

They want a king? I'm picking the first -fucking- dwarf I see that has some authority and can speak to me with at least some attention to the darkspawn above, and going with it. I'm not here to solve problems of dwarven make: I just need them to honor the damn treaty. Apparently this 'Behleni' or whatever wants change: if that means he'll speak to me? FINE.

Entry 31

In dealing with this dwarven misadventure of politics, I'm reminded of what I almost had to do before Ard Howe butchered my family. Take over the duties as teyrn—even if only temporarily. Thinking about it now, it feels like that was truly another life, another person. I barely have the patience to deal with many of these noble dwarves: I may have turned into Old Nan after Raikov got into the larder after a week of dealing with the duties of noble leadership.

I've lost the temperament of a noble, I've lost the official right to even have land or titles...all I have left really, is my name. The last Cousland...and barely able to even recognize where I came from.

Perhaps I should give thought as to who might take over Highever
after Arl Howe's death. I do care about the people there, even if I may
do a poor job at actually leading them: perhaps someone from
Redcliffe? I know Teagan has his own duties, but it may be worth
broaching the subject. Someone will need to take over as teyrn, after
all.

Entry 32

Now I'm cleaning the gutters out from Organnari's depths--or I may as well be. Bhelen wants me to kill some thing lord for him now? Bastard probably worked with them and funds being aligned with them inconvenient now, if I had to guess. Only damn reason why I think he'll honor his word about the Blight is because it'll get him widespread appeal...and he seems to want to improve relations with the surface. Perhaps I can leverage that to get more out of him...

Entry 33

I wonder who truly has greater need of who: me, or Bhelen. Having a legion of stout dwarven soldiers, seasoned against the darkspawn will be perhaps more valuable than any other force we've gathered thus far. On the other hand, Bhelen was deadlocked against Harrowmont without my aid.

He's asking much of me this time, however. To go into the Deep Roads, the very home of all darkspawn: to find a single dwarf, lost for years in the endless tunnels. Were it not for the benefit I could provide to his claim, I'd be suspicious he just wanted me dead; instead, I truly think that we're the only people he believes can actually find this Branka woman.

Still...if we die in the Deep Roads, that's it. No one will know where we went to. Perhaps Arl Eamon will be able to convince the templars and Dalish to fight with him, but there's also Loghain to contend with.

Eamon's soldiers. Dalish archers. templar knights. That doesn't seem like a force that can push back a Blight; if it were, we may have not even needed Loghain at Ostagar. If we had mages, perhaps that'd be different...but that died along with the Circle. No, the dwarves are the lynchpin of all of this--if Eamon is forced to confront Loghain on the battlefield, then we'll need shock troops to replace his losses.

Based on Alistair and I's guessing, if we manage to complete this venture in a timely fashion it shouldn't be more than a month from start to finish. There's an amicable dwarf trader outside Orzammar's gates: I'll leave him a handsome payment with the promise of more if he delivers a message to Redcliffe after a month's time. Just in case we

die: at least then Eamon would know he's the only one who can do something about the Blight then.

Entry 34

<Below is a copy of the message written to Arl Eamon, mentioned in the previous entry.>

Arl Eamon,

I regret that I did not have more time to become acquainted with you and your house. Alistair spoke highly of you all; what I have seen myself tells me that his words are not empty.

If you're receiving this, then by all likelihood we've perished in our quest to gather forces to fight the Blight. You should have received word from the Dalish and the templars of the Circle of Mage by now; the dwarves of Orzammar are most likely not going to be among their ranks due to our failure. If you hear anything from a Fergus Cowdland, please reach out to him if you can; he's my brother, and a good man

who would no doubt aid you in securing Ferelden. There's also a merchant by the name of Levi Dryden who I've had good dealings with who has a knack for foreign trade. if you find the need.

I wish I had more to offer, but all I can say is this: The threat of the Blight is not just the darkspawn, but the archdemon leading them as well. It commands them, speaking across miles instantly to their very minds. The archdemon is the lynchpin: kill it, and the darkspawn are little more than wild beasts. Even if you must sacrifice all your men to kill it, you must.

Regards.

Randra Cousland, Grey Warden

Entry 35

So it seems that all this time, Branka's husband was mulling about Orgammar. Sure he's a drunken, lecherous, oaf of a dwarf—but he's proven invaluable in guiding us along the Deep Roads thus far. Why ignore him when it comes to someone they claim to be so important?

Plus, he's good in a fight. Frankly it's an understatement, he's a bloody terror! Just about the one thing he seems to have any competency at however...and that includes controlling his bladder. Never thought I'd be grateful for ale-stench before, but there it is. Down here though, I suppose I can't be too picky.

Seeing the extent of the Deep Roads, all the darkspawn that surely constantly threaten Orgammar really only confirms that my efforts here aren't wasted: if I can secure the allegiance of their warriors against the Blight we just might have a real chance. If this is what they deal with all the time? I can only imagine what it might be like to behold a whole company of dwarven warriors.

Entry 36

During our search, I found an old page from a book that Oghren translated as a journal, from Carudin no less. A paragon of legend, he's heralded as having been the creator of all golems. In this journal entry however, he reveals the truth of their creation.

Every golem was once a dwarf. Once a living, breathing person who was put through unimaginable torment, melted and reforged into an immortal armor. Why then have none of them spoken? Have they all been driven mad? Do they hope I kill them quickly?

As it was written, the golems were first made to combat the darkspawn. How many atrocities have been committed in the name of fighting these unholy fiends? How much better might our world become if they all are finally slain?

Entry 37

Even sitting here, trying to write about what I've seen with my waking eyes is difficult to do. Imagine a river, but instead of water it's darkspawn stretching back as far as the eye can see. Thousands of torches setting this river aflame, and overhead? A creature akin to a waking nightmare: a dragon that grew twisted and sickened from the taint. The archdemon.

To any fools who still may doubt the Blight, I'd ask them come down here and see what I saw. If even that single swath of darkspawn marched on Denerim right now? It'd be a flattened ruin. Numbers alone won't save us: we'll have to do...I don't know. We have to do something, but we can't simply beat back that many darkspawn, not without some kind of miracle.

We have found dwarves at least, albeit none who know anything of Branka's current whereabouts. They're members of the Legion of the Dead: a group of so-called casteless who live in the Deep Roads, constantly fighting darkspawn with nothing to look forward to but death in battle. Yet here they stand, fighting on for people who barely even think of them as they go about their days, dwelling on unimportant politicking--and without the advantages being a Grey Warden can offer. Truly, I'm humbled in their presence. Would that they'd be coming to the surface to fend off the Blight. Perhaps if we survive the Deep Roads, I can try to convince them once more?

Entry 38

<This entry looks as if it was torn out of the journal, then placed back in. The edges seem as if they've been crumpled and pinched.>

How? How do I even describe what I saw? What I-

It...worse than I even could have imagined. What mockeries of life the darkspawn are! Death is a mercy compared to enduring their presence, their corruption. I think at last. I begin to understand the Wardens. If this is what the darkspawn truly are, what they do to us then I see now why some will consider any path to victory. Ripping souls to shove in suits of stone, sacrificing lives not given freely, consorting with demons for wretched magic...it all pales in comparison to what the world may be like if the Blight isn't stopped. Even Ard Howe's cruel madness is but a shadow compared to this unspeakable horror.

And above it all. Branka apparently left her comrades to endure this fate--all for the Anvil. Bhelen told me before I left that if I felt it better for his chances to let Branka remain in the Deep Roads. His reasons were selfish and petty, but...after seeing this? We may be of a mind.

Entry 39

I'm reminded of what the Revered Mother said to me, back in Lothering when I asked for her to release Sten into my custody. 'His next victims may count you or me among their ranks.'

Sten has proven loyal and a good fighter to have at my back, but...what I've done today will leave me with blood on my hands: blood that I may not want. It's too late to turn back, though. Branka has her precious Anvil. Bhelen has his precious crown, and I will have more golems and dwarves to fight the darkspawn with. They will be a great force: one that may turn the tide. I hope they do: for their sake and my own.

If only the virtuous go to the Maker's side, then it seems my eternity will be one of oblivion and torment. At the very least, let me survive long enough to kill the man who ripped my life away from me, and the monster ushering in all this chaos.

Entry 40

This far, the only dwarf I've met with any appeal is the drunken sot traveling with us now. For all his abrasive, simple-minded boorishness, Oghren is refreshing in the sense that he doesn't have that stuffy dwarven obsession with appearances and tradition above all else, even good sense. That, and he's a true genius when it comes to the battlefield: the strangest part? He just gets angry and lets it propel him to such a level of viciousness! I had to train for years to keep my inner rage in check, since it made me clumsy and impulsive. How does he manage to let it fly like that and still fight so well?

Entry 41

I opted to talk with Oghren about his fighting style after writing my last entry, and he agreed to show me the general approach of berserkers—how he fights, and that whole tradition. It's not unlike the Ash Warriors...but the key is not just being mad, but being so furious, so enraged that you go straight for killing. No sense, no logic, just brutal instinct and a desire to kill. The secret is finding something that can get you to that level of rage, so you can do it on the fly.

I thought I had the perfect thing: Arl Howe, and what he did to me, to my family. But it just makes me rage—at him: not at anything that moves against me like what Oghren can do. What else could piss me off more than that traitor?

Entry 42

How long has it been since I've spent the night with another? Maker. I think it was back at Highever, with Iona. Maker accept her at your side. Nearly a year since that night...

Well, the streak is broken now. I...did not really think that Morrigan was interested in me like ~~this~~, to tell the truth. Honestly, at the time I thought some of her remarks were just her usual teasing. Don't get me wrong, this is, well, quite the welcome revelation, but I just wasn't really expecting her to walk up and flirt so brazenly.

What a time, though...I just about blew my mind out through my loins. Partly due to just how much stress I've been building, but...well, she certainly knew what to do. Really though, I wonder what brought this on?

I suppose I shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth. I never thought I'd fall for a mage, let alone one with such a different outlook as her, but I'm...well I'm glad my interest wasn't one-sided. With all that's happened, I just never really dwelled on the concept of 'us' more than in our conversations, in the moment.

I certainly am not about to have this just be a one-time thing, however. Fortunately, she was far from in disagreement with that notion. Maker, she seemed to ~~enjoy~~ the idea of me being a Warden during it...hopefully she doesn't ask me to wear my armor or anything. I'd rather not announce to the whole camp what's going on during the act!

Entry 43

Maybe a good lay was what I needed after all. Laying there last night, it clicked: what really will piss me off. More than betrayal, more than loss or anything like that--it's the bloody darkspawn. Thinking about what they've done, what had to happen to women to make them--their entire existence is a perpetual atrocity. From birth to death, every single part of them is anathema. Just the fact they still exist, when you --really-- think about it...oh, it just makes me want to strike the ground in rage.

Today was the first time I felt what Oghren speaks about: that battle-rage, where you just lose control of your senses and want to --kill--. I'm glad he's as good a fighter as he is: I had to be wrangled by Alistair to get me off of him! He took it well though: and offered some advice on how to get my rage in check on my own. It'll take some practice, but...things like the weight of my sword, or even my aches and

pains just vanished in that moment. I see why berserkers fight as they do: it's like fighting without fear of exhaustion or injury. What's to stop you if you fight like nothing else matters but vanquishing your opponent?

This has been quite the enlightening trek to Redcliffe. I'm almost remiss to arrive, but this wasn't a vacation--just the last leg of a journey that never should've happened, but must happen. Dwarves and golems have been pledged to battle the Blight; there are no more allies to call upon now. Just some loose ends to tie up to the east...

Entry 44

For some reason, I thought that when we set out to Denerim with Arl Eamon, it'd be more, I don't know...impressive. There's no reason it would be: it just felt like this event that was building up, but all we're doing is traveling in more comfort (and company) than usual. I suppose that makes sense: this isn't the main event after all.

I wonder what will happen in Denerim? Before, we've snuck in and kept to ourselves. Arl Eamon's estate there is smack dab in the middle of the market however, so I wouldn't be surprised if we had catapults already lined up to knock the walls down. For all our anxiety though, Alistair seems to be feeling it the most. Poor man is practically cracking from the pressure: though, who could blame him? He's to be the new king, if Eamon gets his way.

I see the logic of course, but it doesn't make it any stranger I imagine. Ignoring the problems of Wardens having no claim to titles. Alistair just never cared much about his lineage--as he himself has said. Hell, he only told me when we were -arriving- at Redcliffe for the first time, just because it could come up eventually.

I suppose all there is left to do is prepare. Alistair for confronting the reality of royalty, and myself, two fold. Preparing to face down Loghain and ensure he can do no more damage to the nation...and finally closing the worst chapter of my life. I'm not letting him get away any longer.

Entry 45

I need to remember to thank Oghren for training me in harnessing my inner rage--and learning how to keep it in check. Were it not for his talents passed to me, I would've lost control the moment that filthy pile of shit Howe dared speak to me. I had no idea Loghain --and-- that traitor would come right to Eamon's doorstep when we arrived...I wasn't anywhere near prepared.

The scum, both of them had the audacity to try and spin their lies to me. They knew, I know they knew I didn't believe them. They just think they're untouchable; that they can lord over all of us how they've won. We'll see how cocky Howe is when I've shoved my gauntlet down his throat and pulled that treasonous tongue out from his worthless skull. He's going to suffer; he's going to beg for mercy that he showed no one. Even if I have to get Morrigan to mend his flesh to prolong

his agony. I won't let him get a quick death. If I could get my hands on that bastard's family I'd make them all watch while I did it.

Eamon wants me to get a feel for the nobles, specifically their leanings in the meantime. Cowsland name and all that. I've waited nearly a year: I can last a little while longer. Besides, I should find out all I can about Howe's schedule. I don't care who's guarding him--if they try to stop me, they die. But, the less I have to kill to get to him, the quicker I can make him beg for death...

Entry 46

The Maker smiles on me indeed: I barely had gotten back from sniffing around the Gnawed Noble when one of Eamon's servants came to get me. Queen Anora's handmaiden was with him, telling us that Ash Howe's locked the queen up in 'his' estate! A valid reason to go straight to his territory, so quickly? I'll have to try and hide my gun on the way there. Granted, I don't trust Anora much at all, but if this is a trap of hers, or some trick? Howe will surely be there either way. I don't intend to let him live the next time I see him, no matter what happens.

Entry 47

It doesn't feel real: it's finally over. Not the Blight, not yet: but Howe's betrayal has been repaid. Until the very end, he never changed: every inch the worthless scum he had shown himself to be at Highever. I can close my eyes and see every thing that happened: how his eyes went wide when my sword broke armor and skin, slicing through his wasted entrails: how he coughed blood up only to use his last breaths for insults: how all my rage, all my drive to see the deed done faded along with his life. At the end, it was just me, my allies and corpses. He was gone: just the body there remained.

He did deserve more. One death wasn't enough: were I a necromancer, I'd kill him again and again. He doesn't deserve rest: I only wish that I could've made his family suffer as mine has. I hope his wretched son and whore of a wife get the news and feel half the agony I did.

That wench following Loghain around like a lost puppy showed up too: I'll grant that she had some skill. Were it a fair fight, I may have lost. Thankfully, I gave up fool notions like that long ago and Morrigan's magic tipped the scales in our favor. That's one more of the coward's lackeys taken care of, at least.

Entry 48

Are there no depths to Loghain's madness? He even sold out citizens of Denerim--to the Tevinters, no less! By the cartload he allowed them to take elves, even letting those heretics spread plague in the Alienage to accomplish it! In less than a year he's truly managed to corrupt Ferelden, perhaps nearly as bad as it was under Orlesian rule. This man shouldn't even be elder of a village, let alone regent!

We'll be confronting him soon enough, if everything else has fallen into place. Howe's dead, we have mounds of evidence against him and noble allies to boot. All that's left is to go to the Landsmeet--and hope Anora proves trustworthy. She's far too keen a politician to be trusted outright.

Entry 49

I wrote it so recently, but it bears repeating: it doesn't feel real. Normally, when you hear about things like a new king being crowned, or a duel to decide a kingdom's fate, it's a story. Or it's far away, a story by any other name. Not something you live: not something you decide.

I got what I wanted: a duel with the man who betrayed his country, who betrayed us all. Right after a melee broke out when our noble support wasn't quite enough to reject Loghain's claim, naturally. My rage kept my hand steady, but even amid that some part of me was quaking in my boots. The Hero of River Dane, a man who exemplified the Ferelden spirit at one time facing off against -me-! If I lost, I'd die. Alistair would die--hell, we'd all die. Ferelden would have no Wardens but Riordan perhaps, and the darkspawn would wash over our corpses. That was the hardest I ever fought... I truly don't know how I

managed to win. It feels wrong to chalk it up to skill, but I suppose I'm a better fighter than I know.

There was no sparing that man after what he did however. Perhaps it would've been a more prudent move: Riordan even suggested putting him through the Joining. True, it may kill him painfully, and Riordan seemed insistent on having as many Wardens as possible...but I refuse to share the same affiliation as that traitor. He should die reviled for his last acts, not given a chance at redemption. And so he did, at Alistair's hand. I got my vengeance with Howe, and Alistair was far more wounded by Duncan's loss than I. It felt right to give him that.

Anora, naturally did not take it well. Nor did she enjoy losing her throne to Alistair, but she can rot for all I care. I knew she couldn't be trusted; and now it's settled. Alistair is king, and we can finally focus our attention towards the Blight. All this work, just to finally start killing darkspawn again. Maker above!

I've no idea how good a king Alistair will be, to tell the truth. He wants to be a good one, and for all his whining he isn't shying away from it. Plus, his speech wasn't too bad. I suppose even if he is a bit of an oaf as king, it's better than none at all--and none can doubt his efforts for his country, especially after we defeat this Blight. We will do it: I haven't sacrificed all that I have just to let the darkspawn win after all. Whatever it takes, the archdemon will die by our hand. Or hell, the court jester's hand--as long as it dies, it dies.

Entry 50

I find myself growing truly fond of Morrigan. Beyond her gorgeous looks: now that this great weight of revenge has been lifted I feel like I can actually think about the possibility of what may come after the Blight. Alistair being king (and my promise to aid him in that!). my companions and their lives...and what Morrigan may wish to get up to after it's all over.

I doubt she'll desire to stay in Denerim. Perhaps I can convince her to stay for at time at least, while I make sure that Alistair won't explode from the stress of ruling right off the bat. I won't count on that though: part of what draws me to her is that fierce independence she has.

I'm thankful that fate led us to meet. I know she'd never admit it, and would probably mock me for writing this, but I think some part of her feels the same. No, I know it. Tonight she gave me a gift--a ring, enchanted to track the wearer at all times. Certainly not the sort of thing you give someone you don't care about...and I do feel the same way.

In all my life, I never thought I'd grow to care for, perhaps even love an apostate. I always saw myself falling for a buxom elf, truthfully. But looks are only part of the puzzle, and life has a funny way of working out, doesn't it? I shouldn't spend more time daydreaming however; we still have to actually win -and- survive against the archdemon.

Entry 51

Just when I thought I was done with betrayals. I get one that may as well have torn my heart out. Just when you think you know someone, when you think finally you can ~~hope~~...she just tells you that all this time, the feelings have just been 'unexpected but welcome'. From the very beginning, all that witch wanted was the archdemon's soul. How long did she know a Warden ~~has~~ to die to kill it? I ~~trusted~~ her! If she had told me, I would've believed her! Now? She's...all those times we fought together, the times we ~~spent~~ together...

I feel like I'm back all those months ago, fleeing Highever with nothing but what I could carry and not knowing or even caring what the next day may bring. I'm a fool, a fool who thought I could trust her. Damn her, damn the mages, damn it all!

One of us has to die. Her ritual surely was poison: why else would she hide such a 'good' option until the very end? So one of us must die to kill the archdemon, to stop this Blight. It seems a small price to pay, doesn't it? One life, to save the world?

Riordan said he will be the one to deal the final blow if possible.
But if not...

Entry 52

If you take my entries as being weekly, it would've been one year exact. How fun. The most complete record I've made of my life, all neatly tied up in the end to be read as a weekly digest.

We're about to set out for Denerim now: the darkspawn have made their move and the city won't survive if we don't begin marching there immediately. Templars, Dalish, dwarves, golems and men: these are the tools with which we'll simply buy time until we can slay the archdemon.

And by we, I mean me--if Riordan cannot. He made a good case for being the one to do it: he is the eldest, and is near the end of his life thanks to the taint regardless. But if he does not survive...

Alistair is the king now. What's more, he's my friend. He and Leliana are the only two people I have left who I can truly trust, and Alistair is the only other person I know who actually understands...all of this. Me, what it is to be a Warden. -loss-...he's my brother, as much as Fergus was. I can't let him throw his life away.

I'm the last living member of a dead noble house. I have no one else important in my life, and I do not think I could even live a normal life after all this I've endured. I never wanted to be a Warden; Maker. I never wanted to even leave Highever. I was happy there; looking back, I really did have a good life. Heh, all twenty two years of it. I'm practically an elder, aren't I?

I suppose this will be the last thing I ever write. if fate plays out as I expect it to. Farewell, journal. You've been a valuable companion to let me get my thoughts out...perhaps you'll be able to share my experiences with others in time. I'll be leaving this--along with some letters for certain people--in Eamon's study. He'll find it eventually. no doubt.

Dear Alistair.

I suppose by the time you're reading this you're wearing fine velvet robes or whatever poncey stuff royalty wears. yes? You've probably had your coronation by now as well. I had such a speech planned: you would've probably wanted to knock my lights out by the end of it.

I know that none of this played out as you wanted. The Blight. Duncan. your new duties...but just remember. that being a Warden is about serving the greater good. You taught me that: when I wanted to abandon it all and fall into misery. you brought me out of that more than anyone else. Even if you're sitting around in meetings most days. it's still serving. You know what chaos Ferelden fell into without someone to rally around: that someone is you now. It doesn't matter whether or not you're the perfect king--as long as you do what you think is right. people will respect you. And those who respect you will follow you.

I'm sorry I can't be there to help you like I promised. but I couldn't let you die. Not after all you did for me: for being there in some of my darkest moments. I know you would've done the same in a heartbeat...so that's why I had to act first. Be well. and may the Maker watch over you.

Dear Leliana.

I never thought I'd be able to be friends with someone who so clearly loved Orlais and its customs, but here we are. Easy to talk to, so much fun to spend time with--and the stories! I wish I could've heard more.

Your past may be troubled, but I know that you have good, loyal friends around even still. Alistair will always be there if you need, and if by some miracle my brother yet lives, all you need to tell him is that you're a friend of me and he'll move mountains for you. And if not? It's the trait about you I loved most, Leliana: your strength. To come from such a dark, lonely spot and remake yourself as the woman you are now...I don't think I could've done the same. To tell the truth...I was having many doubts about my ability to live a normal life after the Blight ended. Morrigan's betrayal...it took me by surprise.

I hope that you get many more stories to tell. Leliana--ones of your own. that may even exceed the legend you've been a part of. It's not every day you can say you stopped a Blight after all! May the Maker watch over you. and may you have a long. and happy life.

Dear Oghren.

I know we didn't really get a chance to know each other that well, but I wanted to say thank you. sincerely thank you for all you've done. Aiding us in the Deep Roads, fighting with us to the very end--and teaching me one of the most gruesomely satisfying ways to fight I've ever seen! You have no idea how much frustration I've been able to work out thanks to that: you really are a prodigy in a fight. I don't know how you can be so piss-drunk and fight so well, but if it works, it works right?

Just try to not overdo it -too- much. Beneath all the 'youi' charm, I think you're a good sort. The surface might have a lot of opportunity for a man like you (and if you ever want to have fun with Alistair, put a bucket on your head and wrap a drape around your waist and do your worst templar impression. He'll crack!)

May your ancestors watch over you. and if they won't then the Maker
will.

Morrigan.

I have every reason to believe you'll not get this, or if you do you'll just toss it aside. You seem very good at doing that sort of thing.

Know that I'm having no second thoughts about my decision. Also, know that it was your abundance of caution above sense that led to this outcome. You spring a revelation like that on me on the eve of battle? I trusted you, Morrigan. I loved you, and had you told me of this ritual before? I would have listened. I would have believed you--and in time, I may have even accepted it when the time came.

Instead, you got nothing but wasted time. Perhaps you felt the same heartbreak I did. It doesn't really matter now though, does it? You'll continue on, working towards your own ends while living apart from all others...in that regard, you truly are your mother's daughter.

Without your aid, I would've never made it as far as I did. For that, I thank you. I would say 'Maker watch over you' but I know you would just laugh. Instead, I'll simply say good luck. With who you are, you're going to need it.

Dear Fergus.

In the off chance the Cowlands are -not- actually dead and gone. I just want to say first that I'm sorry. So, so sorry. I was there that night: I didn't save anyone. Not Oren, not Father or Mother. I was busy fucking some elf and sleeping to hear the screams at first: you may blame me for the loss of our family. I know I have.

You may be contacted by some people: a woman named Leliana, the now-King of Ferelden, and a rather boorish dwarf named Oghren. They are some who fought with me during the Blight, and they're all true friends. If there's ever anything you need from them, I know they'll be able to help.

As for the crimes against our family, know that Arl Howe didn't get away with it. I made him suffer for what he did, for all the atrocities he committed. I only wish I could have taken more of his that he held dear, if such a man even had such attachments. It won't bring our family back, but frankly? It felt good to do. I just wish you were there to share in the satisfaction.

I never thought our lives would turn out like this, elder brother. Me, a Grey Warden who's helped to decide the fate of our kingdom. You, at -least- Teyrn of Highever. Possibly even more lands? Amaranthine and Gwaren are bereft of leadership, and you would make a fine lord...

Whatever you decide, I know you'll do well. Between the two of us, you're the better Cousland--and the better person. With all I've seen, all I've done I don't think I could rule fairly. For as many demons as I've fought, the ones within me are the worst of all.

Take care, Fergus. And may the Maker watch over you.