Summary

When it first opened, Theramore was a booming restaurant, a full house every night. But when Jastor Gallywix began opening locations of his chain restaurant, Jaina Proudmoore needs the help of Sylvanas Windrunner, a burned out chef, if she has any hope of saving her beloved Theramore.

But will the struggle of dealing with the chef be worth it?

Notes

Rated M for later (see much later) chapter.

See the end of the work for more notes.
A Drink with the Brewmaster

The quiet ticking of a clock is the only sound that fills the once popular restaurant. When it had opened, Theramore had been the talk of the town, packed every night with reservations booked months in advance. Now, three years on, it was hanging on by a thread. All of the staff let go when the money stopped flowing and the doors barred to any clients.

A loud thud on the heavy wooden front door startled awake the only occupant, Theramore’s owner, Jaina Proudmoore. She sat up slowly, groaning at the pain in her back and pushing her long blonde hair out of her eyes. Scattered across the table were various bills and forms. With a heavy sigh, she began to collect them. “What’s the point of having a restaurant with an apartment on top of it, if I’m not even going to sleep in it?” She bemoaned quietly. A more cynical part of her mind asked what the point of owning a restaurant with no customers was but she managed to drown that voice out.

The thud came again and Jaina turned her gaze to the door. She frowned as she stood and walked over to it. “We’re closed,” she spoke loudly to be heard through the wood as she unlocked the small series of locks, “and I’m in no mood to talk to any bill collectors today.”

“What about old friends?” came a cheery voice as the door opened. Outside stood a short, round man. A full beard boarded his face and his black hair was pulled up into a bun. A mirthful smile caused her eyes to crinkle.

“Chen!” Jaina cried, throwing herself at him in a hug that he was clearly expecting as he slipped a foot back to steady himself. “It’s been way too long! When did you get back?” She asked, stepping back, holding the door open for him to enter.

“Too long indeed, Jaina.” Chen agreed, looking a little guilty, “I’ve been back a few months now, but I’ve been to busy getting the new brewery up and running to contact anyone.” He looked around, still smiling, though it did falter, just a little. “I brought some of my newest brew along with me if you wanted to try it.” He held up the bag he was carrying, “I call it ‘Fresh Start’.”

Jaina chuckled lightly as she hurried to clear off the table she had been sleeping at. “A bit early in the day to start drinking, isn’t it, Chen?” she cocked a brow at him and he raised a large hand to his chest, looking deeply offended.

“How could you say such a thing!” He gasped, “too early to be drinking?” Chen set the bag on the table and pulled out Jaina’s chair for her. He searched her face, taking note of the bags that had begun to form under her eyes and how her smile didn’t quite reach them. He nodded, “but, I believe some tea will suit us just fine.” He wandered off the server station, thankful that the placement of things hadn’t changed and set about his task.

“Back to Pandaria,” he replied, “I was needed back at the brewery. Had to make sure my niece was ready to take over for me before I moved on again.”

“You never did like staying in one place,” Jaina mused, “not like the rest of us. Putting down roots and staying still.”
He nodded, “yes, I’m more like a spider plant. I wander and spread.” he made a soft humming sound as he retrieved two cups and brought the pot over to the table, “but I believe this time I’ll stick around. I’m getting to be too old to be a wandering spirit.” Chen poured the tea, first Jainas then his own, before taking his seat. “What of the others? Where has the rest of our little commune wandered to?”

Jaina smiled as she thought back to her old Dalaran College dormmates. Though Chen had only drifted through, not actually attending, they had counted him as one of them. “They’re spread out pretty far and wide too. Though they usually come back to Lordaeron for the holidays when they can.” She gave Chen a pointed look, taking a sip of her tea. She leaned back in her chair and thought. “Vee got married and moved to Dalaran, she has children now.” She laughed at Chen's scandalized look, “I know, I wouldn't believe it either if I hadn't have been her maid of honour. Rexxar moved west, he's running a hunting reserve now. Rokhan is in politics now, of all thing,” Jaina scoffed lightly, “traveled to Zandalar to help bring more right for Troll in the north.” She paused, thinking, “Oh! Even Thrall got married!”

At this statement, Chen looked pointedly at Jainas hand, causing her to blush into her tea.

“Not me,” she muttered, “It wasn't going to work out.” she shrugged, “But Aggra, that's her name, she's perfect for him. I'm happy for them both, truly.”

Chen nodded, finishing his cup. “And no lucky man in your life?” when she shook her head he grinned, “or woman?” he laughed loudly, hand slamming down on the table when choked on her tea, “you are too uptight, Jaina! But I will take that as a no and leave it be.”

They settled into a comfortable silence, just enjoying each others company.

Finally, Chen had to ask. “Jaina, what happened here? You used to be so busy, and now,” he let his words hang over them.

Jaina sets her cup aside, staring down at the table, anger and sorrow rage through her mind. “Gallywix,” she ground out, her fists clenching. “That green little bast-” she stopped herself, taking a deep breath. “He's been opening his chains around the city. Pulled away most of my customers after my chef abandoned me.” She buried her hands in her, “at this rate, I'm going to have to shut down for good. I'll have to sell and I'll have no home and-” she jumped when she felt a pair of firm hands squeeze her shoulders, she hadn't even heard Chen get up.

“Calm yourself, Jaina,” he spoke sagely, “there is no sense getting yourself all worked up over what might happen when nothing is ever set in stone.” He removed his hands and ruffled her hair, making her feel very much like a child. “You are the cleverest person I know, Jaina. You’ll think of something, and if not, then we will just have to think of something together.” He beamed down at her as he headed for the door, “you lack something that very few young people do nowadays. The ability to give up. The Jaina Proudmoore I met all those years ago in Dalaran, she would fight and plan until she had exhausted all possible options, and then she would reach for the impossible.” Chen opened the door, looking back over his shoulder at Jaina, “I’ll be in touch. I really will this time.”

With that said, he left, leaving Jaina to her brooding.

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Stormstout Brewery stood out like a sore thumb with the harsh stone building of Lordaeron behind it. The architecture was clearly of Pandaran design, and even the surrounding property had small elements of the brewmasters heritage around it.
Standing next to her car, arms crossed over her chest, Sylvanas Windrunner couldn’t help but grin, “sentimental old fool,” she mused. Her high boots crunched loudly on the gravel driveway as she made her way to the entrance. Once inside, the strong smell of the many different brews washed over her comfortingly. Removing her sunglasses, Sylvanas cast her icy blue gaze about, taking in the storefront.

“I thought I felt a change in the wind,” came Chen’s voice as he walked out of the back, wiping his hands on a towel, “seemed to be picking up.” He beamed at her.

Sylvanas smirked, one of her fangs poking out over her lip, “hilarious as it was the first time, Stormstout,” she quipped.

He laughed loudly, the sound reverberating slightly around the room, causing Sylvanas’ long ears to twitch slightly. “I see you still haven’t learned how to properly lighten up.” Chen reached out a large hand and gripped the elves forearm as she did the same, a familiar greeting. He let go and motioned for Sylvanas to follow him into the back. “To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?”

“Can’t an old friend just want to say hello?” she responded simply as she was lead past the brewery doors and into a living area.

“Most of them, yes, but you?” Chen grinned, “you never just pop in for a chat, even when invited,” he motioned for her to sit on a small couch before plopping down next to her. “I didn’t even know you were back in town.”

Sylvanas sighed heavy and leaned back against the cushions, “no one does,” she shrugged, “I just got back. Haven’t even been to my apartment yet, not even sure if I’ll stay this time.”

“And here I thought it would be me who would be recaptured by wanderlust.” Chen leaned back as well, “tell me, where have your travels taken you this time?”

“Suramar,” Sylvanas replied, rather boastfully. Until recently, Suramar had been a hermit country, even on its own continent. But it’s new leader had ended its isolation, allowing the rest of the world to enter, other Elves most of all. “I managed to collect some things for you while I was there, perhaps you could use them in a new brew?”

“Your kindness knows no bounds, Sylvanas.” He stood and collected a few bottles off beer, handing one off to Sylvanas, “‘Fresh Start’, it's going to sell very well, I’m sure of it.”

She twisted off the cap and took a sniff, chuckling, “Mint? I never thought you to be the literal type.” The beer went down smooth, nice and light, and yes, very fresh.

They sat in comfortable silence enjoying their drinks. “Really, Sylvanas,” Chen finally spoke up, “what brings you back home?”

Sylvanas scoffed, “Home. I haven't had a home in ages. Only a place to rest my head and pile away my trinkets.” She leaned forward, swirling her beer around the bottle. “Not since I was a kid back in,” She grit her teeth.

“Quel’Thalas,” Chen finished for her, sighing as she rushed to stand up from the couch to pace around the room.

“I’m used to this feeling, Chen. Being out of place, with nowhere to go.” She bemoaned, “but I at least had a purpose, something I could find at least some joy in. Not anymore.”

That shocked Chen, his eyes widened, “cooking has lost its joy?”
Her answer was to chug back the rest of her beer, placing the empty bottle heavily on a table before the urge to hurl it across the room overcame her, “I’m burnt out, Chen.”

“Another thing to chalk up to Nomi?” Chen joked, trying to ease the sudden tension.

Despite herself, Sylvanas laughed. “No, this is the one burn that isn’t Nomi’s fault. I just feel I am without purpose,” her ears drooped slightly, “not even Undercity needs me brooding around anymore.”

“Without purpose?” Chen tilted his head up, a plan forming in his mind, “I think I may be able to help you there.” He smiled widely when Sylvanas looked at him with interest, “a friend of mine owns a restaurant. She’s fallen on some pretty hard times, I think you might be just the sort of person she needs.” He stood and bared his teeth when Sylvanas looked about to argue with him. “This is a chance to do something good, Sylvanas. Instead of rushing off to open someplace new, stay awhile and help someone else flourish for once.” When her only response was to bare her own fangs Chen nodded, relaxing, “I’ll set up a meeting. Try not to be too horrid to her.”

Sylvanas stuck he nose up, holding her hand out for another beer, “I refuse to make any promises I can’t keep.”

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The next day saw Jaina sitting back in Theramore's dining room, only with decidedly much worse company. The Elf sitting across from her was not at all who she had been expecting when Chen had called to tell her about a friend of his. “So, Sylvanas was it. You really think you can help me?”

Sylvanas tore her eyes away from the ornate anchor she had been examining to level her cold gaze on Jaina, smirked when the other woman flinched slightly. “Perhaps. The idea is intriguing,” she waved her hand flippantly, “if I were to agree to assist you in saving your little diner,” she ignored the way Jaina bristled at that, “I have a few demands.”

“Demands? This is my restaurant! Who are you to make demands?” Jaina groundout.

“The only person willing to even try and help you,” came to simple reply before she carried on. “They are very simple demands, reasonable even.” Sylvanas stood, walking around the table with her hands behind her back. “You can do as you wish with the front of house, I’m sure you’re more familiar with it, but the kitchen is to be my domain. I choose who stays and who goes and you are not to interfere. I will not change any menu items or recipes without your consent but you will at the very least hear out my suggestions.” She stopped walking when she was behind Jaina. “Anything else?”

Sylvanas grinned, fangs gleaming, ears perking up slightly, “yes, one final little thing,” she leaned over Jaina shoulder, reaching a hand out to trail her finger across the name on the menu that sat in front of Jaina, “I will be given a share in the restaurant as payment. Ten percent should do-”

“NO!” Jaina shouted. Sylvanas barely had time to move as Jaina leaped to her feet, sending her chair crashing to the ground. “Theramore is MY establishment! I will not simply hand a piece of that away to some random Elf!”

Sylvanas looked down at Jaina, unfazed, “if I am to help you, I need a reason to care about this place,” she shrugged, “having a share in it is the easiest way to accomplish that.”

“Get out,” Jaina barely managed to keep her voice steady as she pointed to the door, “Get the hell
“As you wish, Miss Proudmoore,” Sylvanas reached into the pocket of her leather jacket, pulling out a business card and placing it on the table next to the stack of bills, “in case you should change your mind.” With that, Sylvanas left, leaving Jaina to sink to the floor, exhausted.

Jaina wasn't sure how long she sat on the floor. She had spread the bills out around her so as to be able to see just how much trouble she was in. The amount of money she was losing every day was staggering. If this kept going, she would have no choice but to sell the building and lose both her pride and her home in one fell swoop. There was no way for Jaina to win, not without losing first. She fisted a hand in her hair tightly as she punched the number in her phone and waited.

“I wasn't expecting you to call so quickly, Miss Proudmoore,” Sylvanas’ voice was almost mirthful on the other end of the line and it caused Jaina to ache.

“You have a deal,” she breathed.

It was all Sylvanas needed to hear, “smart girl. You draw up the contract and get back to me. I look forward to working with you.”

Jaina wished to the gods that the feeling was mutual as she tossed her phone aside, burying her face in her knees. This deal had better be worth it.
Jaina paced around the dining room, dragging a hand through her hair. As much as it had pained her, Jaina had drawn up the contract as quickly as she could. She wanted this done and over with sooner than later, save what she could.

She whipped around when Theramore’s door opened and Sylvanas walked inside. Jaina couldn’t help but stare at her. Sylvanas was wearing a deep purple button-down shirt under her leather jacket. The shirt was tucked into a pair of sinfully tight black jeans that ended in a pair of tall leather boots.

Sylvanas smirked as she walked past Jaina to the table that had been set up for their meeting. She tossed her jacket across the back of her chair, sitting down and crossing one leg over her lap, gesturing for Jaina to join her at the table. “Shall we then?” Her smirk had only widened when she saw the effect her display had on Jaina, the younger woman was openly staring at her, mouth agape slightly. Her words seemed to shake Jaina out of the spell and she hurried to sit across from Sylvanas, who had picked up a menu, reading it with mild interest.

Jaina slid the contract across the table along with a pen, which Sylvanas ignored, instead, she took the pen before fishing a small notebook out of her jacket. “What are you doing?”

“I wish to make sure that this deal will be good for me,” Sylvanas said, “I won't sign on unless I am sure that I can revive this place. Now, how was business when you first opened?”

Jaina crossed her arms over her chest and leaned back in her chair. “Business was booming. We were always packed and I had loyal regulars.” she smiled ruefully, “there were days that we had to turn people away at the door because there was nowhere to seat them.”

Sylvanas scratched down a few notes, nodding, “What happened? Customers do not just vanish.”

“Gallywix opened one of his chains a few blocks over. Cheaper and faster service. We got a string of bad reviews and then my head chef abandoned me in favor of Gallywix and I couldn't fill the position.” Jainas shoulders sagged, “once the nonregulars stopped showing up, I started losing money. I had to let most of my staff go. We were struggling with a ghost crew for a few weeks before I had to give in and let the rest go.”

Sylvanas hummed in understanding, “typical tactics. Gallywix is so predictable,” she huffed. The elf turned her attention to the open menu, scanning the items, making a few more notes. “Did you ever go and check out the competition?”

“Once.”

“How was the food?”

Jaina shuddered, “over seasoned, no room for changes. What you saw was what you got and it was almost entirely Goblin fare.” She waved a hand in the air, “I don't understand the draw of it. It was all greasy and fried. Typical burgers with nothing special. And yet that won out over what I have to offer,” She looked down at the menu and corrected herself, “had to offer.”

“Why don't you have any Kul Tiran dishes on your menu, Miss Proudmoore?” Sylvanas asked, glancing across the table to watch Jaina’s reaction.

Jaina frowned, glaring across the table at Sylvanas. “Why would I want any Kul Tiran food
included in a menu of traditional foods of the mainland? Comfort foods. I have no time to be cramming an islands cuisine into it as well,” she shot back defensively.

“A Kul Tiran so against serving Kul Tiran food? I’m surprised.” Sylvanas laughed lightly, tilting her head to regard Jaina with an odd expression. “You’ve tried very hard to shed your accent, Miss Proudmoore, but I can still hear it. Faintly, but it's still there.” She grinned, “I’m sure no one else would be able to notice it unless they were not used to hearing it.” Sylvanas leaned forward, setting her notebook aside, “so tell me, why have you not included any of your homelands dishes in your menu?” When Jaina gave no reply, Sylvanas carried on, “one of the best ways to deal with homesickness, is through food.”

Jaina smacked her hand on the table, Sylvanas had clearly touched a nerve, “what do you know?” she snapped, looking to the contract that still sat between them. “How do I know you can even help me?” she asked, desperate to get their conversation off of her, “for all I know you can’t even cook.”

Anger flashed across Sylvanas’ face and she bared her fangs, “how dare you.” She stood, storming out of the dining room and down the small hall that led towards the kitchen, Jaina close behind her. Pulling her silvery blonde hair up into a bun, Sylvanas scanned the kitchen. Rows of prep tables, double ovens, and stovetops. At the back the walk-in fridge and freezer. Sylvanas nodded her approval, rolling up the sleeves of her shirt, revealing a few tattoos. A chef’s knife down the length of one forearm and elegant Thalassian script wrapped around the other. “Name a dish,” she demanded as she tracked down a few knives, testing the edges, ‘dull’ she thought with disappointment. She glanced over her shoulder, “a Kul Tiran one. The very first one you can think of, it will say-”

“Sailors Pie,” Jaina blurted out, surprising herself.

A strange smile played across Sylvanas’ lips, “You still have ingredients enough to make it?” Jaina’s only response was to nod and pull up a stool. “Sailors Pie it is.” She closed her eyes, quietly muttering to herself before Sylvanas became a whirlwind of activity.

She set the oven and began navigating the kitchen for the ingredients and utensils. A casserole dish and bowls, flour, potatoes, brined fish and foosaka. Adding water and some seasonings to a bowl of flour, Sylvanas kneaded them together, making a simple crust with skilled fingers. Potatoes were peeled and chopped before being tossed into a pot of boiling water to precook while she dealt with the fish. After running her hand along the brined fillets for any residual bones, the fish was chopped and added to a bowl, chopped foosaka quickly followed. A sprinkle of flour and a dash of seasoning were added before she returned to the potatoes. Once they had softened, they too joined the bowl to be mixed around before the whole mixture was added to the dish. The dough was rolled out and carefully placed over the mixture, cutting away the excess dough and using it to make a design on the top. Sylvanas carefully placed the pie into the preheated oven and leaned against the counter to wait.

They fell into an awkward silence as they waited on the pie. Neither wanted to start a conversation with the other. So they simply waited.

A heavenly smell filled the kitchen as Sylvanas pulled the pie from the oven, placing it in front of Jaina with a plate, fork and serving spoon. The crust had turned an appetizing golden brown in the oven and the design, a fish, had kept its shape perfectly. Cutting through the tender, yet crispy, crust allowed to smell to be released in full. Jaina tried to name the blend of herbs and spices she could smell as she scooped out her portion, marveling at how it didn’t just pool everywhere thanks to the thick gravy that had been formed. “Thyme?” She asked, receiving a nod in response.

Jaina lifted a forkful, making sure to get a little piece of everything, and took a bite. The effect was
immediate and she was filled with a sense of longing. The potatoes had done well to soak up the saltiness of the brine, helping to even out the flavor and the fish was tender, yet not so much so that it simply fell apart.

It tasted wonderful, like fond memories of her childhood by the sea. Of cool nights spent sailing with her father and brothers. Of everything she missed, even if she was too prideful to admit to it. It tasted like home.

She was halfway through her plate when she realized she was crying. Jaina rubbed at her eyes with the heel of her hand, but the tears wouldn’t stop. A soft sob escaped her and she looked up, waiting for Sylvanas to say something snarky, for her to mock her, only to see her smiling softly. Not a smug smile, or even a mocking one. It was gentle and understanding. Jaina watched as without a word the elf stood and left the kitchen to give Jaina some privacy.

After composing herself, Jaina returned to the dining room. Her ‘thank you’ died on her lips when she saw that the kind Sylvanas she had briefly glimpsed was gone and the smug one had returned, if the self satisfied look was anything to go by.

“So,” Sylvanas drawled, “did I prove my ability to cook to you?” She passed the contract and copy over to Jaina as she sat down, “I’ve already signed, now all that’s needed is your signature, and the deal is done.”

Jaina picked up the pen and simply stared at the contract. Once she signed, there was no going back. A piece of her restaurant, her home, would be lost to her. She was being ridiculous, she knew, but that didn’t make her feel any better.

“Of course,” Sylvanas’ voice cut through her thoughts, “you could choose not to sign. I’m a patient woman. I’ll simply wait until you’re forced to sell it all and buy it then. I might even allow you to work here, as a kindness.”

“You’re an asshole,” Jaina spat, sighing her name to both copies of the document.

“I never claimed not to be,” Sylvanas shrugged, leaning back in her chair. “I’ll need time to hire and train new kitchen staff. I know a few people who can help out the first few weeks, but I want to be fully staffed when we open.”

We, the word cut at Jaina, “I’m in the same situation. How does a month sound?”

Thinking it over, Sylvanas agreed, “that is acceptable.”

“I want the pie added to the menu,” Jaina admitted quietly.

“I thought you would.” Sylvanas stood from the table, gathering her things and her jacket. “If you’ll excuse me, Miss Proudmoore-“

“Jaina,” she interrupted, “if we’re going to be partners, you might as well start calling me by my name.”

Sylvanas grinned, “very well, Jaina. I’ll be by tomorrow to pick up my copy of the key. I do so look forward to working with you.”

Only after the sound of Sylvanas’ car disappeared into the distance did Jaina allow herself to slump back in her chair. She was already making escape plans. Jaina only needed to keep Sylvanas around until Theramore got back on its feet, and then she could look for a loophole. Someway to get the aggravating elf far away from her restaurant.
Absently, Jaina traced her finger along Sylvanas’ signature. It was elegant and the flow of the letters was eye-catching, gentle swirls and twirls so typical of elvish handwriting. “Father would have hated this,” she whispered into the silence of the restaurant, “me partnering with an elf.” She closed her eyes against the flow of painful memories, her hand instinctively clutching at the anchor pendant she wore beneath her blouse. Jaina found herself grateful that she wouldn’t have to see his disappointed face again and that thought brought fresh tears to her eyes. “I’m sorry,” she clenched her free hand over the contract, “I’m so sorry, Father.”
For Jaina, the month of preparation passed her by in a whirlwind of activity and tasks that required her constant attention. It felt like only a few days had passed between the signing of the contract and opening day.

Leaving all of the kitchen prep and the acquisition of the product to Sylvanas, Jaina busied herself with staffing the front. She needed all new servers, bartenders, and hosts. She had gotten very lucky in her search. Two of her former staff had jumped at the opportunity to return to Theramore. Her old head hostess, a Kaldorei named Pained, and one of her best servers, Kinndy Sparkshine, a gnome. Between the three of them, they had managed to clean the front top to bottom and hire all the staff they would need.

Jaina was filled with nervous anticipation, only realizing that she was trembling when Pained squeezed her shoulder.

“Calm yourself, Proudmoore,” the elf said, looking down at Jaina sternly, “you’ve done this before and it went fine.”

Jaina snorted a laugh, “yeah, until I had to close,” her shoulders slumped as she glanced up at Pained, “what if it ends up the same? What if I fail again?”

“You didn’t fail, Jaina,” came the high voice of Kinndy from where she sat on a stool by the bar, “you were cheated.”

“Something that we won’t let happen again.” Pained almost growled out the words.

Jaina was about to respond when then the front door opened. In walked the tallest elf Jaina had ever seen. She was impeccably dressed, a silky red pants suit that played off wonderfully with the dark blue tint of her skin. Her white hair was swept back into a long ponytail, giving a clear view of the elves long skyward ears and the silver earring and decorations that adorned them. She gazed around the restaurant with her pale violet eyes, a look as mild distaste clear on her face.

“Shal’dorei,” Pained murmured in Jaina ear, shoving the human forward to greet her.

Stumbling a step, Jaina brushed out a crease in her blouse, gazing up at the Shal’dorei with a polite smile. “Hello, welcome to Theramore. We aren’t quite open for service yet, but if you’d like we cou—”

“I am not here to eat at your,” The elf took another look around, “quaint establishment. I’m only here because my presence was requested.” She held her hands behind her back, nose pointed up, “please let Sylvanas know of my arrival.” Kinndy hopped down off the stool and hurried off to the kitchen, returning quickly with Sylvanas moving past her.

Sylvanas strode forward, arms wide in greeting, “Erasan, nice of Margaux to finally send the help I requested,” her smile was forced but polite. She looked striking, her black chef coat just loose enough to allow for easy movement and her platinum hair was tied up in a high bun.

“Apologizes,” Erasan gave her own polite smile, giving Sylvanas a quick kiss beside each cheek, “but after your quick departure from your stagiaire in the vineyard kitchen, she wasn’t sure if your request was serious.”

“Very serious, and it was not a quick departure, Margaux is exaggerating the facts,” Sylvanas
sniffed, “she knew I had no intention of staying once I learned what I could. I would have thought that her poor cooks would be glad to be rid of The Banshee?” She looked at Jaina when the human cleared her throat, clearly annoyed about being pushed aside. “Ah, this is Jaina Proudmoore, the owner of this fine establishment. Miss Proudmoore, Erasan, a winemaker under Margaux in the Twilight Vineyards in Suramar.” Jaina’s jaw went slack.

And Sylvanas smirked, “I take it you’ve heard of it?”

“Everyones heard of it,” Jaina snapped her jaw shut and looked back up at Erasan, “what brings you so far from home?”

“I asked her here,” Sylvanas held her hands behind her back, mirroring Erasan’s stance, “I noted that you lacked a sommelier, so I took it upon myself to find one, and who better than a Shal’dorei winemaker?”

Rage flashed over Jaina’s face, “you did what?”

“I had the connections, I assure you, you will find no one better suited,” Sylvanas barely glanced at Jaina as she turned to return to the kitchen as a few customers began to filter into Theramore, “I trust you’ll make good use of her.”

Struggling to rein in her anger, Jaina turns to attend to her customers. This was familiar to her, calming even. She floated between the tables, greeting new customers and welcoming back old ones, helping out her servers when they needed it. Slowly, her smile grew more natural and less forced, she hadn't even realized how much she had missed this.

“Welcome back Miss Proudmoore.”

“I missed this Dragonbreath Chili, Jaina! It's better than I remember!”

“We thought we’d never get to eat this again!”

“These tarts as are good as I remember, child, just like me old mother used to make.”

Jaina allowed the comments to fill her, swelling her heart. She felt better then she had in years and thought nothing could bring her down. That was, until out of the corner of her eye, she saw one of her servers skitter away from the kitchen with a look of terror. Huffing out a sigh, Jaina hurried down the short hall to the kitchen, the shouting she had been able to faintly growing louder the closer she got until she shouldered inside and froze.

Sylvanas stood at the order window, barking out the orders to her kitchen staff, a mixed bag of nearly every race in Azeroth. “Table five, two shoveltusk steaks both medium, one firecracker salmon and a sailors pie!” A hearty ‘yes chef!’ came the reply from her staff, save for the dwarf working the grill. Sylvanas slammed the order down on the counter, “What kind of weak ass response was that Brudam?” she snapped. “I gave you an order! How do you respond to your chef?”

“Yes, Chef!”

“Give me another response like that and you're gone, am I understood?”

“Yes, Chef!”

Beside her, Kinndy struggled to collect a plate of food from the high counter, “and someone get this gnome a step ladder!”
“Yes Chef!” one of the dishwashers, a troll, replied, hurrying to carry out his task.

“What are you doing!?” Jaina snapped, storming up Sylvanas, getting up in her face, “you can't talk to people like that!”

Sylvanas blinked before narrowing her eyes, “did your last head chef not speak as such?”

“He most certainly did not!”

“Ah, I see. Then he lacked the discipline required to run a proper kitchen. That's why he must have leaped at the opportunity Gallywix presented. You chose poorly, Miss Proudmoore.” Sylvanas grinned viciously as Jaina’s face flushed with rage. Sylvanas took a step back, “any well-run kitchen I have ever worked in was run in this way, and I will continue to do so. This is my brigade, my army. In here I am the general. My word is law,” she tilted her head towards the line, “isn’t that right?”

“Yes, Chef!”

With a chuckle, Sylvanas leaned close to Jaina, a few stray strands of hair framing her face, “and if you don't like how I lead my brigade, then I suggest you stay out of my kitchen.”

“The saying is ‘if you can’t stand the heat’, Syl,” a cheery pandaren laughed.

Sylvanas’ ears drooped slightly and her eye twitched, “yes, Nomi, that is indeed the saying.” She stood back when the troll returned with the step ladder, “Thank you, Othon,” she glanced back at Jaina, “we’re done here. Come back when you have an actual complaint.”

Shocked, Jaina left the kitchen, returning to the front.

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The rest of the night went far more smoothly than Jaina had hoped it would. The food came out promptly and little to no mistakes. Despite her attitude, Jaina had to admit that Sylvanas was nothing if not efficient.

Leaning back in her chair in her small office, Jaina let out a contented sigh, eyes scanning over the tallied bills that lay about her desk. Only the first day and things were already looking up. A small smile played across her lips as she stood and left her office to double check the locks on the front door. A light from the hall drew her attention to the kitchen. Walking as quietly as she could, Jaina snuck down the hall and poked her head in.

Sylvanas sat hunched over one of the prep tables, a single overhead light her only source of illumination. The order slips lined the table in patterns that Jaina couldn’t quite discern. The elf was writing in her notebook, the elvish script granting her speed to rapidly put down her thoughts and tallies. Her ears pinned back as she muttered quietly to herself in Thalassian.

As if sensing Jaina’s presence, Sylvanas sat up straighter and looked over her shoulder. “You might as well grab some food if you plan on loitering in the kitchen,” she commented blandly, gesturing towards the order window.

Sitting on the counter was a pot of leftover chili, just barely enough to fill the bowl Jaina scooped it into, though it had cooled slightly from sitting out, yet still, the smell that wafted up from it was still heavenly. A mix of various meats and spices that had Jaina’s stomach rumbling. When she turned back, Sylvanas had cleared space across from her and Jaina took the hint, sitting in the cleared space. She was about to begin eating when she noticed that Sylvanas was giving her an odd
look, staring at her. When the elves ears began to twitch subtly, Jaina waved a hand in front of her face, breaking her trance. “Are you that intent on watching me eat?”

Sylvanas coughed to distract herself, resolutely looking back at her notes, “that really depends on if you really plan on eating in your state of dress.”

Confused, Jaina looked down at her shirt and immediately felt heat rise in her cheeks. She had been alone in her office and had decided to make herself more comfortable, undoing the top few buttons of her blouse, allowing airflow to her now partially exposed chest. She hastily rebuttoned her shirt, looking sullenly at her food.

How many time could she make a fool of herself in front of her business partner? To distract herself, Jaina took a bite of the chili. It was spicy, spicier than she remembered it being, she glared at Sylvanas but continued eating. The meat was tender to the point of being cut easily with a spoon and melted in her mouth and the tomatoes added a wonderful acidity. The broth was thick and flavourful with a kick of extra taste thanks to the beer that had been used in it. Before Jaina knew, her spoon was scraping against nothing but the empty bowl and she had to desperately hold back her whine of disappointment. Her mouth was burning pleasantly from the mixture of peppers that had surely been added, reminding Jaina that she was supposed to be angry, “you changed the recipe,” she accused, anger flaring more when all Sylvanas did was to nod in agreement, “you agreed that you wouldn’t do that!”

“Verbally, yes I did do that,” the elf agreed, freeing her hair from the confines of the bun, “but not in writing and that is a fault on you, Jaina.” Sylvanas grinned wickedly, dropping the formalities she’d held up during the day. “So quick were you to make a deal with me, that you forgot to include that little detail. I can change whatever I want, and the most you can do is complain.”

Jaina wracked her brain, trying to remember every word she had put in the contract. She hadn’t included it. “What about that Shal’dorei you brought in? I know it was in the contract that the front staff were untouchable to you, you can’t hire her here.” She thrilled at her small victory but Sylvanas only smiled.

“She works for me individually, not as an employee of Theramore. I am perfectly within the bounds of our contract. Besides, she will only be here long enough to train whoever you choose to take up the position.” Sylvanas returned to her notes, “and, with my connection to the Twilight Vineyard, you have secured exclusive rights to be the only restaurant and the city to be able to serve wine from Suramar, for the time being at least.” She shrugged, “you really should be thanking me.”

Jaina stood, taking her bowl to the dish pit before storming out of the kitchen.

“Close the door on your way out,” Sylvanas called, “I’ll be here a while yet.”

Jaina slammed the door, barely resisting the urge to scream when the door simply swung back.

Day one, and she was already found Sylvanas to be rather insufferable.
A big thanks to chibikotan for proofreading this like a champ.

### Theramore: A Lone Isle in a Sea of Giants

*It saddens me to have to be critical of an underdog, to take a swing at the newest comeback story. But my reviews must be fair and impartial as they always have been. After eating several times at this quinte little eatery, both before and after its grand reopening, I can honestly say that the food is nothing to write home about. While it is indeed wonderful, and still worth going to enjoy, it still suffers from the same troubles it did before the initial close. The flavors are there, to be sure, and the portion sizes have improved recently, it still lacks one very important, some may say crucial, ingredient. A chef's passion. Overall the food is good, but without that tiny pinch, that sprinkle of passion, it will never be great. I fear that Theramore may be heading down the very same path it traveled down before. I can only hope to be proven wrong.*

**Madak**

Jaina reread the words written on the page over and over. Theramore’s first review since it had reopened two months prior, and it could hardly be considered a good one. Pulling the page from the newspaper, Jaina hurried from her office and down the hall into the kitchen. Never before had she been gladder for a slow day of business as she marched up to Sylvanas where she stood calling out the straggling orders.

“Sylvanas,” Jaina waved the page at her, “have you seen this?”

“Hard to see anything with you waving that scrap of newspaper in my face,” Sylvanas smirked tauntingly, plucking the page from Jaina’s fingers, “now, what is it you want me to look at?”

“Our first review,” Jaina leaned against the counter next to Sylvanas.

Sylvanas tilted her head, “a review has got you this upset?”

“Just read it,” Jaina huffed, waiting.

Rolling her eyes, Sylvanas turned her attention to the paper. As she read, her smirk slowly fell away. Her eyes narrowed and her ears pinned back as she crumpled the article up in her fist.

“You see why I’m upset? This could be a problem, but the way I see it--” Jaina cut herself off as Sylvanas turned and stormed around the counter to the stove. She cranked on the burner, staring into the flames as she tossed the paper into the fire, watching it burn with muted satisfaction.

“She be making me clean that,” Othon bemoaned as he came to stand beside Jaina, crossing his lanky arms over his chest.

As they watched, Sylvanas left the stove and moved to the back of the kitchen, entering the freezer and slamming the door behind her.
“Where is she going?” Jaina asked, looking at the rest of the kitchen staff in confusion.

“Tantrum hole,” came the gentle voice of the tauren in charge of the soups, “with her attitude, I’m surprised she hasn't had to use it before,” she added, pointing a ladle at Jaina, “you’ve partnered up with quite the ego, Miss Proudmoore.”

Jaina simply stared at her, “I'm sorry, did you say, tantrum hole, Kasa?” she asked slowly, almost hoping that she had heard wrong.

Othon chuckled and clapped Jaina on the back, “aye, Boss, da tantrum hole. Your old Chef never go in da tantrum hole?”

Jaina gasped and stumbled forward looking back at the staff, “I can't say that he did, but I usually avoided the kitchen back then. What's the tantrum hole?”

“The freezer,” the orcish line-cook provided, placing a bowl of chili on the order window for a waiting server.

“You can say whatever you want in there,” her human partner added.

Brudam laughed, looking over from his spot at the grill, “in the freezer, no one can hear you scream.”

Nomi looked up in contemplation as he easily flambed a noodle dish, “I thought that was space?”

A muffled scream filtered out from the freezer, effectively putting an end to playful banter. The door opened and Sylvanas hurried out, the tips of her ears red from the cold and skulked out the back door. “Nom, mind the kitchen,” Jaina called as she rushed out after Sylvanas.

Sylvanas kicked a trashcan, shouting in Thalassian, things that could only be cursing. When she noticed Jaina, she tried to force herself into a calmer state, “they must be panicking already,” she growled.

“Who?” Jaina tried to keep her voice calm.

“Who else?” Sylvanas turned to face her, “Gallywix and his other sneaky scheming goblin cohorts.” She forced a laugh, “I thought we would have at least a year before they started up their smear campaigns.”

Jaina frowned, “Sylvanas, this review isn't part of some goblin scheme, trust me, I’ve read enough of them to know. They’re ineloquent and direct, harsh and cutting.” She shook her head, “this wasn't like that at all. It was almost apologetic.” She took a step forward as Sylvanas’ ears drooped and she stared down at the pavement, “this was an actual review. True and honest.”

Sylvanas grit her teeth, “that cant be,” she ground out slowly as she began pacing, “I do not get bad reviews. MY food is impeccable! MY cooking is award winning! I've had my name in LIGHTS!”

Jaina watched her sadly, folding her arms, “Sylvanas,” she tried to interrupt the elf's rant, “Sylvanas,” she repeated louder, finally getting her attention. “Awards don't mean anything,” she said, calmly as she could, “they are a one time deal. Make one good dish, you get an award. Impress three people, you get an award. They don’t prove anything, Sylvanas. You only cook for yourself, you don’t care about what the customer wants. That may work out in whatever high brow places you’ve worked but it’s not going to work here. People aren’t cut out with cookie cutters they are all different and you need to learn to accommodate that.”
She watched as Sylvanas deflated, shoulders sloping, head hung. Jaina sighed and grabbed Sylvanas' hands, tugging gently, “come on, we need to get back inside.”

“You go,” Sylvanas pouted, trying to pull her hands free half-heartedly.

“You really think I can make sure Nomi doesn't burn down the kitchen by myself?” Jaina joked trying to make Sylvanas cheer up a bit. Finally getting her back to the kitchen, Jaina pushed her towards the line, ignoring how warm her hands felt as she walked to the kitchen door. “Pained,” she called, “mind the front for the night.”

“What are you doing, Jaina?” Sylvanas asked, still standing where Jaina has put her.

Jaina shrugged, rolling up the sleeves of her blouse, “you seemed to have lost your touch. I figure the best way to get it back is for you to actually work the line. I’ll call the orders for tonight, you just cook.”

Sylvanas managed to crack a meager smile at that, “you really think that you can command my kitchen, Jaina?”

“You seem to manage just fine,” Jaina scoffed playfully, receiving a roll of laughter from the kitchen staff as the first new order came in. She gave it a quick once-over before calling it out, “two orders of honey ginger carrots, one chimeron chop and a yak broth soup.”

“Speak up will you!” Brudam called back.

“Yes, you are far too soft-spoken,” Kasa, said with a small grin.

“You're going to try harder than that, Jaina,” Sylvanas grinned back at her. “Remember how I run things? I'm the general.”

Jaina frowned, but only for a moment before she grinned wickedly, “you want a general? I'll give you a general.” She took a deep breath and recalled the order, louder and with all the authority she could muster. “Ears up! Table two, two orders ginger carrots! One order chimeron chop and one order yak broth soup!” Silence followed as the cooks began. Jaina cleared her throat, “I can't hear you!”

Sylvanas laughed lightly and called over her shoulder, “yes Boss!” The rest of the staff chiming in.

As the night wore on, Jaina was amazed at the change she saw in Sylvanas. The tough 'general' faded to the background, and the woman with a love for cooking surfaced. She moved about her staff with grace and care, helping out wherever she was needed, even running over to the dish pit to help out Othon. When service finally ended for the night, Sylvanas was in a better mood than Jaina had ever seen.

Jaina stayed in the kitchen, helping to do much of the final tidy before moving to the front, surprised when Sylvanas followed her. They didn't speak as they moved about the dining area, making sure that everything was spotless and ready for the next day. When Jaina left to go to her office to tally the days' intake, she felt saddened when Sylvanas opted not to join her and instead hurried back to the kitchen. She had thought that they had made a breakthrough, that they'd finally stop walking on eggshells around each other, but clearly, she had been wrong. She had no idea what to think of the woman and her two sides, harsh and caring, sometimes at the same time. It was confusing at best, downright aggravating at worst. Not for the first time that night, Jaina found herself thinking back on how warm Sylvanas' hands had been in her own. She had expected them to be cold, though now she had no idea why she had thought that.
She was started by a knock on her door, spinning around to see Sylvanas with a small tray of food. “I really need to put a bell on you. You walk too quietly for your own good,” Jaina grumbled as Sylvanas entered the office, setting the tray down on a clear spot on the desk.

On the tray were two plates, each with a folded omelet. Sylvanas looked everywhere but at Jaina as she explained, “You haven't eaten all day,” she said simply, “can't have you passing out from hunger, be more work for me to do around here. So, there.” She turned to leave after grabbing her own plate.

“Sylvanas,” Jaina motioned to the other seat in her office after the woman in question turned to look at her, “why don't you stay and eat with me? Meals tend to taste better when they’re shared.” After a moments hesitation, Sylvanas silently took the proffered seat tucking into her meal. Jaina smiled slightly as she started in on her own food. Cutting through the egg revealed the inside of the omelet. Bits of meat and vegetable, most likely leftovers, had been put inside and gooey cheese spilled out from the cut to mingle with the runoff sauce from the top of the omelet. The first bite revealed a saltiness that she couldn't fully place until the second bite. Bacon. Jaina practically melted in her seat as she eagerly slid a bite of omelet through the mixture of cheese and sauce. The sauce was rich and buttery and Jaina was sure that she would have been more than willing to kill for more of it.

Just like every meal Sylvanas had made for her, Jaina found that the omelet disappeared far too fast, even the sauce had been mopped up entirely by the omelet. Hunger sated, Jaina slumped back in her chair with a contented sigh. She glanced over at Sylvanas and smiled, “thank you, I’m pretty sure I would starve if you weren't here to feed me.” She closed her eyes a moment before speaking again. “I think you should hire on an expediter, only part time, just to give yourself a chance to work the line.”

“Why would I need that?” Sylvanas asked, gathering the dishes back onto the tray, “I do the job just fine.”

“That may be, but you’re miserable,” Jaina shrugged, “and you looked, maybe not happy, but content, at least, when you were working the line today. I feel like getting to do that every so often would be good for you. Get you back in touch with people,” she paused and snorted a laugh, “and save poor Othon from having to clean questionable reviews out of another burner.”

Sylvanas mulled this over a moment as she picked up the tray, “I'll consider it.” She stopped at the open door and looked back at Jaina, “and Jaina, thank you. For today. I needed to hear that.”

Jaina watched in mute confusion as Sylvanas hurried off. Left to be alone with her thoughts, like why her heart had just skipped a beat at Sylvanas’ soft tone of voice.
Jaina awoke with a loud yawn. Blinking away the sleep from her eyes, she groaned, returning her face to her desk. She had fallen asleep in her office, again. Sitting up to stretch, she was surprised to find that a tablecloth had been draped over her back like a blanket. “I didn't grab a tablecloth,” she mumbled to herself, pulling the fabric tighter around her shoulders. She took a quick glance at her clock before getting up to head up to her apartment to get changed, keeping the tablecloth around herself.

She was halfway to the door when a sound from the kitchen caused her to freeze. It was still early, the sun only just beginning to rise fully, no one should have been in yet.

Cautiously, Jaina made her way back towards the kitchen and was only a little surprised to find Sylvanas standing at one of the prep tables.

There were a few bowls set about the table and a small stack of pie tins next to a few cartons of eggs. The elf in question had her back to the door, chopping away at something that Jaina couldn't see. She was bereft of her chefs' jacket, giving Jaina a clear view of her well-defined shoulders through the fabric of the tight t-shirt she was wearing. Her ears flicked in acknowledgment as Jaina stepped inside. “You know,” Sylvanas began not looking back, “I fail to see the point of having a restaurant with an attached apartment if you aren't even going to sleep in it.”

Jaina snorted a laugh. “I ask myself the same thing all the time,” she replied, stifling a yawn. “I made some coffee, go ahead and help yourself,” Sylvanas said, gesturing to the still hot pot of coffee sitting at the order window.

Jaina poured herself a mug, adding a few heaping spoons of sugar and some cream. “Why are you here so early?” Jaina asked, taking a sip of her coffee and sighing quietly in delight.

“I’m always here this early,” Sylvanas replied as she began cracking the eggs into one of the bowls, adding a bit of salt and pepper before beating them with a healthy amount of cream, “you're usually just too asleep to notice. I do try to make a bit of noise to wake you up,” she admitted, “lest any of the staff come in to find their boss snoring at her desk.”

Jaina blushed at the remark, “Well, I thank you for looking out for my image.” she mulled over her thoughts as she leaned back against the counter, “protecting my image aside, why do you come in so early?”

“For this,” Sylvanas shrugged as she spread out the pie tins, partially baked crusts already inside, and began to sprinkle cheese and chopped up meat and vegetables into the bottoms. “I try to make a staff meal every morning, usually with whatever is left over from the day before.” She poured the egg mixture carefully into each tin, “I like to make sure that the staff has something to eat in the morning. People tend to work better when they aren't hungry and it helps to lighten the mood. Today it's quiche.”

Jaina simply stared at Sylvanas as she placed the quiches into the oven, “you care about that?”

“Of course I do,” Sylvanas turned to glare at Jaina, clearly offended as she crossed her arms, “why wouldn’t I?”

“Because you’re, well, you,” Jaina set her mug down. “You’ve shown very little care to anyone.”
“I feed you, don’t I?” Sylvanas shrugged as she began to tidy up her station, “so what's the
difference between me feeding you and me feeding the rest of the staff?”

Jaina looked away, feeling scolded, “fair point,” she admitted quietly. She made her way through
the kitchen and out the back door. Round the side of the building were the stairs that led up to her
apartment. She took them two at a time, quickly letting herself into her flat.

The apartment was on the small side, but it had enough room to store all of her books and she
really only needed the one bedroom. She didn't bother turning on any lights as she crossed the
living room and into her washroom, leaving the tablecloth on the back of her couch to be dealt with
later. By the time she was finished showering and getting dressed, the smell of quiche had
managed to fill her whole apartment, drawing Jaina back down to the kitchen.

There were five quiches in total, more than enough to feed all the staff. Sitting next to them was a
plate with a sizeable portion. Jaina raised her brow at Sylvanas as she picked up the plate and
collected a fork. “If I didn't know any better, I would say that you're trying to fatten me up,” she
accused, light-heartedly.

Sylvanas smirked slightly, “you could stand to put on a few pounds,” she teased, sitting down to
eat her own portion.

Jaina scoffed as she took her place across from her at the prep table, “and what about you? I've
always been told to never trust a skinny chef.”

“I work out,” Sylvanas replied flatly, “someone has to be able to carry this establishment.”

Jaina couldn't help but laugh at that, surprised as she was. Here she was, eating breakfast with
Sylvanas, joking with her! It was strange with how often they were at odds with each other. When
she finally got her laughter under control, she turned her attention to her food. Jaina cut off a piece
with her fork and marveled at how soft it was, despite the filling. She savored the first bite. The
egg was light and fluffy, and the cheese had melted across the tender crust in a pleasantly uneven
manner, making each bite a surprise, cheese in one and none in another, providing a nice contrast.
Savory pieces of ham mixed with sweet roasted peppers and small pieces of broccoli. When her
plate was clean she looked up to see Sylvanas giving her an odd look, “what?”

Sylvanas tapped the corner of her own mouth before reaching across the table to wipe a crumb of
crust away from the corner of Jainas mouth with her thumb. The elf didn't seem to think anything
of the action but Jaina blushed deeply, pulling her head back and away from Sylvanas reach.

“Oh well ain't dat just da sweetest little ting,” came Othon's teasing voice from behind them,
shattering the atmosphere of the kitchen and dragging them both back to reality. “If you had just
been wanting some private time wit da Boss, Chef, ya coulda just taken her to da market. Stead O
making me do it for ya.” he laughed loudly, setting the bags of fresh bread he was carrying down
on the counter.

Jaina stood quickly, nearly knocking over her stool and hurried for the door to the front, “I should
start getting everything ready outside,” she said in a rush. Even down the hall, she could hear
Sylvanas berating the troll, though she couldn’t make out the words.

Jaina made a point of avoiding the kitchen for the better part of the day, the tension was almost as
unbearable as the rather smug look the Othon gave her any time she went back. She instead busied
herself with helping her servers. One of them had called in sick, and with the dinner rush in full
swing, waiting tables was a welcome distraction from the thoughts that tumbled around her mind.
"Excuse me," an older Kaldorei called her over to his table.

“Yes, sir, is there something you need?” Jaina asked.

He gestured towards the salmon on his plate, “yes, my salmon seems to be undercooked. Would you mind having the kitchen making a new one?”

Putting on her best customer service face, Jaina picked up the plate, “of course sir, just a moment.” She made her way back into the kitchen and almost left immediately when she saw that Sylvanas was working the line, but she couldn’t just ignore the complaint. “Sylvanas,” she cleared her throat, setting the plate in the order window, “the customer says his salmon is undercooked.” She watched as her ears twitched in irritation as she took the plate, sampling the salmon herself.

“This is cooked perfectly, any more and it’ll dry out,” Sylvanas glared lightly at Jaina.

Jaina sighed, “just make a fresh one and cook it a little more.” She waited at the window while Sylvanas recooked the fish before taking it back out. “There you are, sir.”

The kaldorei took a bite, chewing it over thoughtfully before shaking his head, “still undercooked.”

Suppressing a sigh, Jaina returned to the kitchen, “still undercooked,” She repeated the elf’s words.

This time, Sylvanas’ ears pinned back. “Does he want salmon jerky?” she snapped, “because I’ll give him salmon jerky.”

“Just cook the damn fish, Sylvanas,” Jaina groaned, just barely suppressing the urge to smack her forehead against the counter.

This time, when Jaina took it out, even she knew that it would be overcooked to the point that no amount of sauce could ever hope to salvage it into something even close to appetizing. She set the plate down and took a step back.

Taking a large bite, the Kaldorei sighed, handing the plate back to Jaina.

Jaina’s jaw tensed in irritation as she took the plate, “I’ll be back.”

“Cook it right this time,” he called to her back.

Jaina nearly slammed the plate onto the counter, “he says it’s still not cooked enough.”

Silently, Sylvanas took the plate. She looked the food over with disapproval before handing it to Nomi, “burn it.” she said coldly.

Silence fell over the kitchen as Nomi took the plate. “Syl, you sure about that?”

Sylvanas rounded on him then, “Burn it!” she snapped.

Nomi tossed everything on the plate into a frying pan and cranked the heat. All work stopped as the staff watched as the contents of the pan darkened steadily before finally bursting into flames, charring the food to near coals. It was only then that Sylvanas stepped in, turning the burner off and sliding a lid over the pan to snuff out the flames. She dumped the still smoldering mess of what was once food carelessly on to the plate and headed towards the door.

“Sylvanas,” Jaina grabbed to the taller woman’s arm, pulling her to a halt, “you can’t take that out to them!”
Sylvanas looked to the kitchen door before slowly turning her gaze back to Jaina, “can't I?” she asked calmly as she pulled her arm free and left for the dining room. Stopping next to the table, Sylvanas dropped the plate in front of the Kaldorei, cutting off his conversation with his companion, “your salmon, sir,” she drawled, leaning close to him, “fully cooked, I assure you.”

The Kaldorei looked up at her in shock, “this is not what I asked for!”

“Isn’t it? Four times you complained that it wasn't cooked enough. Four times you wasted my time,” Sylvanas smiled with all the false sincerity she could muster, “clearly it is now cooked perfectly for your distinguished tastes. I dare say it couldn’t possibly get anymore cooked than this, would you not agree?”

“This is outrageous!” he snapped as she stood, glaring down at Sylvanas, “you really expect me to eat that?”

“Eat it?” Sylvanas shook her head, “no, I expect you to learn from this, sir. There is only so much that we can do to accommodate people such as yourself, and when you waste my time with outrageous demands, I will not complacently accept them.” In a huff, the Kaldorei left, his companion quick on his heels. “Have a nice day,” Sylvanas called. She was about to return to the kitchen when Jaina grabbed her ear with a deceptively strong hand and dragged her into her office, slamming the door behind them. When she was released, Sylvanas put distance between them, her ears pinning back reflexively, the tips turning red, “never grab my ear again!” she snapped.

“Did you learn nothing from that review, Sylvanas?” Jaina snapped right back, ignoring her as she got up in her space. “Did our talk go right out the other ear? You can’t treat people like that!”

“What did you expect me to do Jaina? Keep wasting time and product on a customer that was clearly never going to accept what we gave him?” Sylvanas huffed, “there is only so much I can do.”

“At the very least you could pretend to care about what they want,” Jaina sighed as she sat in her chair turning her back to Sylvanas.

“You still think I don't care?” Sylvanas asked. When Jaina didn't answer, she turned, throwing open the door and making her way back to the kitchen without another word.

Jaina’s head was pounding as she put her forehead to the cool wood of her desk, “that woman is going to be the death of me,” she grumbled. The phone rang and for a moment Jaina considered just letting it ring. Relenting to the insistent tone, Jaina picked it up. “Hello, thank you for calling Theramore, Jaina Proudmoore speaking.”

“Ah, hello Miss Proudmoore,” the caller spoke with a kind voice and an accent that Jaina couldn't quite place, “My name is Mialaada, I was wondering if you were still hiring.”

“unfortunately I’m fully stuffed for servers.” A thought occurred to her then and a wicked smile played across her lips, “do you happen to have any kitchen experience?”

“Ahh! I do indeed,” Mialaada replied, “I actually used to be a baker back in my home country.”

“Perfect, that is absolutely perfect,” Jaina leaned back in her chair, “I believe that I have the perfect job for you. Pop in with a resume and we’ll talk more about it.”

“Oh thank you Miss Proudmoore, I look forward to meeting you.”

“And I you,” Jaina replied as she hung up the phone. Truly, she did look forward to meeting the
woman who had called, but more than that, she looked forward to the payback she would get against Sylvanas.
A Flakey Surprise

Sylvanas grumbled as she walked in through Theramore’s back door. Othon had called her earlier to let her know that he was unable to go to the market for the daily bread as he usually did, citing car troubles. Reluctantly, Sylvanas was forced to go herself. It had put her behind her in her personal schedule but she was determined not to let her frustration show, lest it bring down morale.

She paused as she went to hang up her coat in the small back room between the kitchen and the back door. Something was different. Her ears twitched at the sound of gentle humming and she finally noticed that the kitchen lights were on. No one was supposed to be here this early save for Jaina or herself. Forgoing her chef's coat, Sylvanas pulled open a drawer as quietly as she could, pulling out one of the spare knives she kept there. Crouching low, Sylvanas crept into the kitchen proper, her ears flicked back. She poked her head around the side of the row of ovens and blinked in confusion, her body relaxing slightly.

A Draenei woman was pulling bread from one of the ovens. She was dressed simply and had flour flecked across her pale blue skin, indicating that she had been baking for a while. Cautiously, Sylvanas stood up, trying to make herself look intimidating to the much taller woman, “what are you doing in my kitchen?” Sylvanas snapped, keeping the knife hidden behind her back.

The Draenei jumped, startled, nearly dropping the tray she had been holding. She managed to set it down and held a hand to her now racing heart, turning her horned head to look at Sylvanas, “you startled me terribly,” she scolded.

Sylvanas’ furrowed her brows, baring her fangs in a small show of intimidation, “What are you doing in my kitchen?” she repeated, her voice firmer.

“I am, baking.” She gestured to the tray as she stared at Sylvanas. Her eyes widened, “Oh! Oh, you must be the chef, yes?” The Draenei pulled off her oven mitts and held her hand out to Sylvanas, “my name is Milaada, I am your new baker. I look forward to working with you.” Milaada smiled brightly.

“You’re what?” Sylvanas’ went blank as she forced herself to calmly set the knife on the counter. Unfazed by the fact that Sylvanas had been wielding a knife, Milaada tilted her head, “your new baker.” She frowned, “did Miss Proudmoore not inform you? She hired me a few days ago.”

Sylvanas’ eye twitched and her ears flicked back slightly, “Jaina did what?”

“Hired me,” Milaada repeated, “she said that you were having trouble filling the position so she decided to—“

Sylvanas didn’t stay to listen to the rest of what Milaada had to say. Turning in her heel, Sylvanas marched from the kitchen and out into the hall. “Jaina!” She roared, throwing open the door to her office, only to find that the woman she had expected to scare awake was not there. Her ears swiveled at the sound of a cup clinking out in the dining area and she steered her warpath towards it.

Jaina was standing at the bar, calmly drinking a mug of steaming coffee. She looked up from her phone when she saw Sylvanas enter, smiling sweetly, “good morning, Sylvanas.”

“Don’t ‘good morning, me, Jaina,” Sylvanas snapped, slamming her hands down on the counter. “Why is there a Draenei in my kitchen claiming she works here?”
“Because she does,” Jaina replied simply, “I hired her.”

“You did what?” Sylvanas jabbed her finger at Jaina's chest, “we had a deal, Jaina. I leave the front alone and you leave the kitchen alone.”

“A deal,” Jaina began, brushing her hand away, “that you already decided to ignore when you brought in Erasan.” Jaina set her coffee aside and leaned across the counter to get in Sylvanas’ space, “I noticed that you lacked a baker and took it upon myself to fill the position.” Her smile only widened into a grin as she continued, “you really should be thanking me. I managed to hire a rather well off Draenei baker. Besides, I’m perfectly within the confines of our contract. Milaada works for me personally, not Theramore itself.” Jaina threw Sylvanas’ words back at her with a honey-sweet voice and a challenging look. Jaina had rehearsed this fight over and over in her head since she had hired Milaada. She had thought of every harsh thing Sylvanas could throw at her and had thought up the perfect rebuttal for every single one. This was not a fight Jaina was going to lose and she was looking forward to knocking the chef down a peg.

Jaina expected rage and fury, curses to be hurled at her, but it never came, and what happened instead was the one thing that Jaina had not anticipated.

Sylvanas tried to keep her face serious, but her lips twitched upwards into a smile. She snorted, trying to keep herself in control but it couldn’t be stopped. Sylvanas laughed. It was a full body laugh that had her doubling over the counter, her shoulders shaking.

After the shock passed, Jaina joined in with her laughter. It felt good to laugh fully again.

Sylvanas rubbed the mirthful tears from her face and smiled at Jaina, “you clever bitch. I haven't met many people brave enough to pull that kind of thing with me, it’s good to know that you really do have a backbone after all.”

“Thank you, I think,” Jaina gave her a lopsided smile. “You're really not angry?”

“Oh, don't get me wrong, I am furious and I will get you for this,” Sylvanas corrected, “but I respect what you did.” She stepped back, motioning for Jaina to follow her, “come and introduce me to my new baker.”

When they got into the kitchen, Milaada was just finishing up. She had cleaned down all of the counters had set all the bread and the few pastries on the rack to cool. She smiled at them as they entered, “I am just finishing the bake,” she informed them, clasping her hands in front of herself.

“Great work, Milaada. It smells wonderful in here,” Jaina complimented her. “I understand that proper introductions have yet to be made. Sylvanas, this is Milaada, she’ll be doing the daily bake from now on. Milaada this is--”

“Sylvanas Windrunner,” Sylvanas reached out her hand for Milaada to shake, “I apologize for my reaction. I’m not entirely keen on surprises, but I look forward to working with you. How did you get all of this done so quickly?”

“I have been making preparations in my own kitchen so that you could serve the bread sooner,” Milaada explained a bit shyly.

“Well, your work paid off. Keep it up,” Sylvanas inclined her head to the taller woman.

“Thank you, Chef Sylvanas, I look forward to working here. I will see you tomorrow, yes?” With that Milaada gathered her coat and left for the day.
“What… What did you say your last name was?” Jaina asked quietly while Sylvanas collected a few croissants for them to sample.

“You signed a partnership with me and you don't even know my name?” Sylvanas raised an eyebrow at her, “you're making me rethink calling you clever.”

Jaina flushed as she took the proffered croissants, “I was preoccupied with saving Theramore,” she defended herself, “I didn't think to ask and I can't really read your handwriting.”

Sylvanas snorted at that, “you’re lucky I'm here to keep you from signing more questionable contracts with strangers than. It's Windrunner.”

“That's what I thought you said,” Jaina murmured.

“Anything wrong with that?”

“No! No nothing wrong. Just an interesting name it, that's all. Doesn't seem very common.”

Humming in agreement, Sylvanas took a bite of the still warm croissant. Her ears flicked back and leaned back against the table she had been standing near. She could practically sense the care that had gone into the base dough of the croissant. It was flaky and soft, melting in her mouth so much that she barely needed to chew. With every bite, the buttery flavor seemed to be enhanced. Her mind raced with ideas as she ate two more of the delectable buns. Daily butter flavors to complement and enhance the fresh baked goods, seasonal variants.

Beside her, Jaina laughed, “I take it you approve of my hire?”

“Indeed I do,” Sylvanas confirmed, reaching for another, only to have her hand slapped away.

“Those are for the customers,” Jaina chided, “if you want more you’ll have to talk to Milaada about making extra.”

“Perhaps I will,” Sylvanas mused. Her ears twitched at the sound of the back door opening. “Staff arriving.” Jainas smiled as she left the kitchen.

Sylvanas glared at the troll and the dwarf that entered the kitchen, “I wasn't expecting you till later, Othon. I thought said you were having car troubles?”

“Aye, dat I did, Chef, dat I did,” Othon agreed, “I just not be saying whos car. Da Boss called me last night, said she had a surprise for ya. Dat I had to be making an excuse not to be buying bread.” He tilted his head back and inhaled deeply, “it smells like her plan worked,” he laughed loudly.

Sylvanas grabbed hold of one of her tusks, pulling him down to eyes level, “you knew about this?” When the trolls only response was to laugh harder, she pushed him back, glaring at the kitchen door. “That clever bitch.” Sylvanas was definitely getting her back for this.
Muffin Makes Two

Sylvanas knew the forest behind her childhood home like the back of her hand. Many a weekend she had spent camping and exploring with her sisters and hunting with her father. It had always been her safe haven, the place she could go when she needed to get away from the world and just be herself without her mother breathing down her neck. The forest had molded her, helped to make her into the woman she became.

The forest she walked through now was not that forest. It was wrong in so many ways. The trees were gnarled and twisted, their bark blackened and the leaves rotted around their roots. The path she walked was foreign to her but in the far distance, she could see the lights of her house. She had to get home, she was in danger and if she could only get home she would be safe. Brambles clawed at her legs and with every step sunk deeper into the muck hidden beneath the leaves.

Whispers began to raise up around her. She couldn't pick out any individual words or voices as they all spoke at once. The leaves began to shift together into the forms of mangled bodies that grabbed at her savagely, trying to drag her down with them. With a sharp cry, Sylvanas fell to the ground, choking on the rot that filled her mouth. The whispers rose in volume and began to speak with more power, “disgraceful,” they wailed, “why can't you just be like her!?” Sylvanas struggled to drag herself away, the house in the distance was getting steadily closer, warm light filtering out from the open door inviting her closer. “You have to set the example! Be the model! A pillar of the family!”

With a shout, Sylvanas broke free from the hands and stumbled to her feet. She ran as quickly as the cloying muck would allow towards the door, the bodies crawled after her relentlessly. Sylvanas could feel the gentle warmth and was about to step over the threshold, only for a twisting shadow to block out the light. “Selfish girl,” the shadow breathed, “broken little thing.” The shadow grew and twisted, blocking the door entirely, “you are no longer welcome here. Get out.” The voice warped horrifically and it roared, “GET OUT!” The power behind it knocked Sylvanas back into the waiting arms of the rotting bodies. They caught her and pulled her down into the muck. It filled her mouth and blocked her nose, choking her as she was pulled down and away from the warmth of the house.

She closed her eyes against the pressure and when she opened them again she was standing in a street. Shadowy figures twisted around her, laughing and geering. Sylvanas lashed out at them, as they drew closer, holding her in place. Pain lanced through her stomach and she looked down slowly to see a knife digging into her stomach. A sharp cry left her mouth as it twisted, dragging itself through her abdomen.

A scream tore from Sylvanas’ throat as she jolted up from her mattress. Sylvanas struggled with her sweat-dampened sheets and sat up as lighting briefly illuminated her sparsely furnished room. The sound of the pouring rain and thunder were nearly loud enough to drown out the sound of her heaving breaths. Sylvanas grit her teeth and drew her knees up to her chest, wrapping an arm tightly around them while she yanked harshly at her hair with her free hand. Any amount of pain helped to prove that she was indeed awake and safe yet her racing heart refused to relent to the calm she was trying to force upon herself. The phantom pain in her abdomen that flared violently wasn’t helping either.

Sylvanas dragged herself off her mattress and onto the floor to stand on shaky legs. She stumbled to her dresser, ripping open one of the drawers to find a pair of track pants. Sylvanas needed to rid herself of the panicked energy that filled her. She needed to move. Had to run. She dressed quickly
and rushed from her apartment, pulling on a sweater and barely managing to lock the door.

She cleared the stairs three at time as she made her way down to the front entrance and out into the early morning. She barely made it three feet out into the rain before she was soaked through from the downpour. Uncaring of her own discomfort, Sylvanas took off running through the storm.

Sylvanas ran with no real destination in mind, but she wasn’t surprised when her feet carried her to the massive park near the center of the city. Lightning flashed overhead as she bolted along the tree-lined pathways. Her legs screamed and her lungs burned but still, Sylvanas ran on. She lost her footing after a bright flash of lightning momentarily blinded her and went crashing to the pavement. Her knee hit hard and Sylvanas let out a sharp cry of pain.

Sylvanas didn’t bother getting up. She curled up as tightly as she could, gritting her teeth against the emotions that swelled up. All of her energy was gone, burned away by her run and then flushed away by the rain, leaving her empty. She shivered in the rain and struggled to care about the cold that was seeping into her bones. With more effort than it should have taken, Sylvanas got to her feet, wrapping her arms around herself and continued limping down the path. She knew that towards the center of the park was a tunnel that she could take shelter in and that was where she went.

Once inside, Sylvanas slid down the wall and pushed her soaked hair out of her eyes and let her head bump back against the wall. She glanced back out at the rain, her ears drooping. She was cold and wet and felt empty. While her mind was a tad bit clearer now, she found herself infinitely thankful that Jaina had insisted and closing Theramore on the slowest day of the week. Even more thankful for her luck that that day happened to be today. She knew that she wouldn’t have been able to work today.

Sylvanas was ready to wait out the storm when her ears twitched at a faint sound. She looked down the tunnel towards the source and stood to move closer. The further she went the louder it got until she could actually make it out clearly. Small desperate meows filtered up from a grate.

Getting down on her side, Sylvanas squeezed her arm into the grate, wincing when she felt claws dig through her sweater. With effort, she managed to scruff it and pull it up. The cat she managed to pull free was filthy and small. It tucked its stumpy tail between its legs and mewled loudly.

Sylvanas gave a small smile, “you look almost as pathetic as I feel.” She held the cat close, chuckling softly as it scrambled to try and get into her sweater. She helped it out and stood, “I guess I should get you somewhere warm.”

Sylvanas took the cat back to her apartment. Not worrying about her soaked state, she placed the cat in her kitchen sink and gave it a bath. As she washed away the mud and dust, the cat's pattern became clear, a lovely mottled grey pattern with dark grey streaks under brilliant green eyes. She dried it off, wrapping it up in a towel and placing it on the floor.

The cat cared for, Sylvanas moved to her room, stripping off her soaked clothing as she went. She redressed and a pair of flannel pants and a loose tank top before wrapping her hair up in a towel and stripping the sheets from her mattress. Soft meows had her hurrying back to the open kitchen, bending down to scratch the cat behind its ears, earning her a series of soft purrs. “I bet you’re hungry, aren’t you?”

She gathered some eggs and a container of leftover rice from the fridge. Sylvanas scrambles the eggs plain and set some aside with a bit of the rice, pouring the rest of the rice in with the eggs to fry with some hot sauce. She picked up the two plates and sat down on the floor and set the plain eggs down for the cat, who rushed over and began to greedily eat. It was simple food, far more so
than what she would normally make for herself, but it was early, and she wasn’t really hungry, only eating to replace the energy she had wasted.

When she was done, Sylvanas stretched out on the floor, laying on her back. She chuckled as the cat curled up on her chest, purring loudly as she scratched its fluffy head, “I guess you’re going to need a name, won’t you little one?” Sylvanas mused. “Forsaken? Hmm no. Teddy? Grim or Graves?” She pursed her lips in thought, “Kel?” She laughed when the cat growled at that name, it’s little stumpy wagging angrily. She smiled softly, rubbing his ears, “no, no they don’t really suit you, do they,” she tapped its nose, smiling wider, “Muffin.”

Holding Muffin close, Sylvanas sat up and looked around her living room. Her life was packed away in boxes as it had been since she began renting the apartment five years ago. She had rarely stayed in town long so the only furniture she owned was her dresser and her mattress.

She stood and walked over to a stack of boxes, brushing some of the dust off as Muffin climbed up onto her shoulder.

“I guess I’ll have to start actually moving in,” Sylvanas mused, leaning her head against Muffin, “can’t keep being a drifter if I plan on keeping you around.”

Muffin meowed loudly as if in response to her statement and snuggled more comfortably against her neck, falling asleep soundly.
“Chef! Chef!” Kinndy sounded rather panicked as she hurried up the step ladder that had become a permanent fixture for her.

Sylvanas looked down at her, “what is it, Miss Sparkshine? We’re rather busy right now and I have been banned from dealing with customer complaints. Go and bother Jaina.”

“Jaina is the problem,” Kinndy hurried on. When Sylvanas simply raised an eyebrow she doubled back, “well not a problem. That is to say, she isn't doing anything really, but at the same time, that's just it. She can't do anything but she's trying really hard and-”

“Spit it out, Miss Sparkshine,” Sylvanas sighed, suppressing the smile that caused her lips to twitch. Loath as she was to admit it, the young gnome had grown on her. She was bright and open to criticism and an oddly dry sense of humor that Sylvanas could easily relate to.

“Jaina's sick,” Kinndy finally informed her after having he rambling cut off.

Sylvanas nearly dropped the garnish she had been placing as she turned to fully look at Kinndy, “sick as in upstairs or-”

“Pained has been trying to get her to leave for almost an hour,” Kinndy explained, “she refused and has been swaying a bit but we managed to get her to stay in her office. We’re out of options.”

Frowning, Sylvanas called to Othon, “let the part-timer handle the dishes, Othon, take over expediting!” Sylvanas didn't wait for him to wash up and hurried to the office. She could already hear Jaina and Pained arguing before she pushed open the door. Sylvanas had never seen the kaldorei so happy to see her.

Jaina sat in her chair with Pained standing worriedly by the desk. Jaina was pale, her eyes glassy, “you went and got Sylvanas?” Jaina snapped at Kinndy, who was hiding behind the aforementioned elf. Jaina stood quickly, too quickly, as she swayed and fell forward.

Sylvanas rushed forward, catching her easily. She wrapped her arms around Jaina and gently eased her back down into the chair, “it's a good thing they did,” Sylvanas chided. She brushed the human's sweaty forehead, leaning down to press her lips to clammy skin. Her brow furrowed as she stood back up, ignoring how Jaina’s cheeks flushed, “you’re burning up. Why didn't you just stay home?”

Jaina looked between the three women and then down at her faintly shaking hands, “thought I’d be fine.”

“Clearly you thought wrong,” Sylvanas huffed, “I’ll give you two choices. You can either willingly let me take up to your apartment, or I am forcibly taking you to the hospital.” Jaina didn't respond verbally, only looked down and held up her hand, silently for aide. Sylvanas took her hand and helped her up, holding her close. “Pained, can you hold down the fort until I return?”

“Of course, Chef.”

Sylvana quickly led Jaina through the kitchen and out the back door. Round the side and up the stairs. She took Jainas key and let them in. “let us get you into something more comfortable.”

Jaina struggled then, “I can get changed myself,” snapped, drawing a snort from Sylvanas.
“I’m sure you can, but let’s not add a concussion to your illness.” Slowly, she lowered Jaina to the bed. “Pajamas?” She moved to the dresser, opening the indicated drawer, plucking out an oversized sleep shirt and a pair of flannel pants. When she turned, she saw Jaina fumbling with the buttons of her blouse. Not unkindly, Sylvanas pulled her hands away and undoing them herself.

“You must think I’m pathetic,” Jaina grumbled as she allowed Sylvanas to undress her.

“On the contrary. Arms up,” Sylvanas pulled the shirt over her head, “I think you are incredibly determined. Brilliant in your hiring and upkeep. You care so much for Theramore and your staff.” she snorted lightly, removing her pants and helping her into the pajama pants, “and you are easily flustered.”

Jaina flushed with embarrassment, “it's hard not to be when an ass of a woman is kissing your forehead and undressing you!”

Sylvanas chuckled as she helped Jaina to her feet, “I apologize that quel’dorei do not share the holdups you humans do.” She eased Jaina down onto the couch and made her way into the kitchen area. Sylvanas rummaged through the cupboards and fridge, scoffing at how empty they were. She turned to Jaina, her stern look softening when she saw that the younger woman had curled up on the couch, “on an extreme diet, Jaina?”

Jaina managed a small smile, “don’t need to cook for myself when you seem so determined to feed me,” she looked away, a tad embarrassed, “and I’m a terrible cook.”

“You own a restaurant yet you can’t cook?” Sylvanas laughed. “Stay put, I'll be right back.” She ran back down to the kitchen, ignoring the questioning looks of the kitchen staff as she gathered spices and a few liters of chicken stock before returning to Jaina’s apartment. Sylvanas tossed her jacket over the back of kitchen chair and getting a pot ready with the chicken stock. She added the spices slowly, allowing them time to steep in the simmering stock. Cinnamon, cumin, turmeric, ginger, garlic, and honey.

Slowly the smell of the spices began to permeate the living room and Jaina perked up on the couch, “what are you making?”

Sylvanas was quite a moment as she stirred the soup. “My mother used to make this for me when I was sick,” she responded quietly, “whenever one of us got sick, she would make a big pot of soup. Noodles and meat for anyone not sick, straight broth for whoever was.” she smiled, “she always seemed to know someone was sick even before they did and would get started right away. The best get well soup in the world.”

After ladling some into a bowl Sylvanas crossed to the couch and held it out for Jaina, frowning with concern when she noticed her shaking hands. She sighed through her nose and settled on the couch next to Jaina. She scooped up a spoonful and held it out for Jaina to eat. She rolled her eyes when Jaina recoiled, “if you wish to wear your soup, then, by all means, try and feed yourself.”

Jaina pouted before relenting, allowing Sylvanas to feed her. Even after the first spoon, Jaina could feel the warmth of the spices filling her, trampling her fever. The honey soothed her throat, the garlic and ginger clearing her foggy mind.

“Why didn't you just stay home, Jaina?” Sylvanas asked.

“Theramore needs me. I can't just stay home because of this little flu,” Jaina huffed.

Sylvanas shook her head, setting aside the empty bowl, “not like this it doesn't. Do you really think
I demand a share of the restaurant just to be an ass? Because I could? I told you, I needed a reason to care, and I do. You don't have to take care of everything yourself. Do you not trust me, Jaina? Trust that I can look after things? That I’m not going to try and swipe it from you?”

Jaina looks down forlornly, “I’m sorry, Sylvanas. It’s just—”

“You’re used having to look after it all on your own. I understand that.” Sylvanas helped her back to her bedroom and absently tucked her into her bed. “Let me take care of it for a few days. Till you’re well. Can you do that?” She watched Jaina nod tiredly. “Good. I’ll pop back up later. If your fever hasn’t broken, I’m taking you to the hospital, understand?” Sylvanas waited for Jainas response, only to hear the soft snores, signaling that she had fallen asleep. Quietly as she could, Sylvanas collected her jacket and left Jainas apartment.

“How is she?” Kasa asked, bowing her horned head to meet Sylvanas’ eyes.

“Sleeping now,” Sylvanas replied, leaving her jacket in the back room in favor of the blazer that she kept stored there. “Can you and Nomi take care of the kitchen for a few days?”

Kasa nodded, “of course, chef. You know you can count on us.”

Sylvanas thumped her on the shoulder and made her way to the front.

“Where’s Jaina?” Pained asked, arms crossed.

“Sleeping. She’ll be out for a few days, so I’ll be running double duty till she's better.” Sylvanas replied dryly.

Pained snorted, “you ever work the front before, chef?”

“A few times, years ago. It isn't that hard, I’m sure I’ll manage.”

Nearly laughing at that, Pained called out to two of the servers, “Eza, Himmu;” a dwarf and a Tauren made their way over to the two elves. She smirked, “the head chef thinks our jobs are easy. Put her through the wringer.”

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When Jaina finally woke up, the sun had long since set. She carefully slipped out of bed, thrilling when she was able to stand up on her own, “Sylvanas wasn't kidding about that soup,” she mused. Worry nagged at her thoughts and caused her to pull on a warm robe and slip into some comfortable shoes to go and check on Theramore.

As she entered the kitchen she was surprised to see how spotless it was. Moving past the closed door of the office proved the dining room to be in a similar state. Finally, she went to her office, opening the door and stepping inside. Jaina cleared her throat, “I think this is the cleanest Theramore has been since we opened.”

Sylvanas jumped slightly, her ears twitching as she looked away from the order forms she was filling out. “What are you doing up and about?”

“I just wanted to check on things,” Jaina replied, pulling her robe closer, “and to say I'm sorry.”

“Never apologize for being sick. It happens just trust that I will look after things until you’re better.” Sylvanas grinned tiredly, “I not going to run Theramore into the ground while you’re recovering. I promise.” She stood and gently placed the back of her fingers against Jaina cheek,
nodding in approval, “your fevers broke. But get some more rest. I don't want to see you down here until you’re better.”

“All right,” Jaina relented, stepping out of the office, “take good care of it while I’m out. And, thank you for the soup.” With that, Jaina hurried out to return to her bed.
Rest for Me, Rest for You

Jaina was out of work for three days, and by the end, she felt like she was going mad. She wasn't used to just lazing around her apartment. Or lazing around in general, is she was being honest. There had always been something to do. To plan or organize, paperwork to do. Sylvanas had taken all of that from her and ordered her to rest. So she had spent the better part of her short sick leave in bed, catching up on some reading.

Though, she was hardly able to concentrate on the words on the pages. Jainas mind, the treacherous thing that it was, kept drifting back to Sylvanas. The elf had hardly left her alone, not that Jaina had minded. Every night Sylvanas had popped up to her apartment to check in on her, make sure she was actually resting, and to bring her food. Simple enough fair, light meals that held no threat of upsetting her stomach. She could have sent anyone, but Sylvanas insisted on doing it herself.

Peaceful as her time off had been, she had been overjoyed when her stress-induced flu finally cleared. Jaina took a glance at herself in the tall mirror in her room and found herself smiling. She blushed lightly and rubbed the smile off of her face harshly with her hands. She was happy to get back to work. That was all. Nothing more. She certainly wasn't looking forward to being able to spend more time around Sylvanas, not at all. Jaina groaned and let her forehead tap against the mirror. “Get a hold of yourself, Proudmoore,” Jaina chastised herself, “she's just your business partner.” She sighed, “your business partner who has no problems undressing you and kissing your head.” With gritted teeth, Jaina stepped away from the mirror and finished dressing. They were going to have harsh words about the proper ways of checking someone's temperature.

Hurrying down the stairs, Jaina let herself into the back of the kitchen. The smell of fresh bread was strong and Jainas stomach rumbled at the prospect of solid foods. She shook her head. Anger first, then food. She was confused when she entered the kitchen proper to see that only half of the lights were on. Sylvanas usually turned them all on as soon as she got in if Milaada hadn't already.

She rounded the ovens and found the Draenei in question carefully placing hot trays on the cooling rack. Milaada looked at her and raise a finger to her lips after removing the oven mitts. Confused, Jaina complied and walked over to her. “What's going on, Milaada? Where is Sylvanas?” she asked quietly.

Milaada pointed to the prep tables and the elf slumped over one of them on a stool, sound asleep. “She slept here?” Jaina asked, glancing back at Milaada, “and didn't wake up at all with you baking?”

“Chef Windrunner has been working very hard,” Milaada smiled, “she has beaten me here every day that you have been out, but this is the first time I have caught her sleeping.” She crossed her arms over her chest. “I’m sure she has been home at least once, but I guess exhaustion finally caught up with her. She is almost as bad as you with how hard she works.”

“Thank you, Milaada,” Jaina looked down, feeling scolded, “I’ll look after her from here.”

“See that you do,” Milaada smiled fondly, giving Jaina shoulder a small squeeze, “and I’m glad that you are feeling better, Miss Proudmoore.”

Jaina waited until she was sure that Milaada had left before she approached Sylvanas. Whatever anger she had felt melted away as she came to stand next to the stool. The older woman looked so
small in her sleep, her face buried in her arms and her ears drooped back. Notes littered the table, written in Sylvanas’ elegant handwriting. Common mingled with Thalassian as if she couldn't make up her mind in which language she’d rather write in. From what she could make out, they seemed to be ideas for new dishes or ways to improve old ones, “no rest for the wicked I see?” Jaina mused quietly.

She considered letting Sylvanas stay and sleep, but knowing her, if any of the staff saw her, she would be furious. Gently as she could, Jaina shook her shoulder, “Sylvanas, wake up. Come on, now.”

Sylvanas stirred, lifting her head and staring at Jaina with bleary eyes, “Jaina?” She blinked, her ears slowly becoming more alert, “what are you doing down here? It's the middle of the night?”

Jaina couldn't help but smile at that, “it's six in the morning. You fell asleep.” she went about tidying up the table as Sylvanas fully awoke. “Take the day, Sylvanas.”

“I can't just take the day;” Sylvanas struggled to suppress a yawn.

Jaina chuckled, “you managed on your own for three days without burning the place down. I’m sure I can manage one just fine. Go home and sleep.”

Sylvanas thought it over before sighing heavily, “all right, you win. One day. Tell Othon to let the part-timers take care of the dish for the day,” she collected her notes and stood. She passed by Othon and Nomi on her way out.

Othon watched her leave, exchanging a quick greeting before he gave Jaina a questioning look, “where the Chef be off too so early?” he asked.

“Home,” Jaina shrugged, “at least she better be going home.”

“Why is she going home? We haven't even opened yet?” Nomi asked.

“I told her too. She needed the day off,” she smiled at the two, “she said that you are to run expediting today, Othon.” Jaina tilted her head at the shocked looks they were giving her, “what?”

“She actually listened and went home?” Nomi asked in shock, “with no fuss at all?”

“Yes, is that really so hard to believe?”

“Yes.” came the unison reply. “You not be knowing her for long, Boss, but the da Chef, she don't take days off lest she has to,” Othon carried on.

Jaina tried not to think too hard on that, changing the subject, “why does she leave you in charge, Othon? She left you in charge when she took me home as well. I thought that Nomi was the sous?”

“I can cook,” Nomi answered, “and keep the peace and delegate, but I am not so good at leading.”

“Aye,” Othon grinned, his lips curling around his tusks as he knuckled the shorter man's head, “Nomi is too soft to take charge, so she leaves the dirty work to me.”

Jaina smiled at that, “well, I’m glad she has such reliable staff. Keep up the good work.” She made for her office. Sylvanas had tidied it up in her absence. All of her documents had been organized and filed away and her desk had been polished. She turned her head at the said of the front door being unlocked and made her way out to the bar to greet Pained. “Good morning,” she smiled at her old friend as she set about turning on the lights for open.
Pained offered her a nod and a thin smile of her own, “morning, Jaina. Feeling better, I hope?”

“Much better. And very glad to see that she and Sylvanas didn’t come to blows,” Jaina joked as she started up the coffee machine.

Pained hummed at that, “she did surprisingly well. I didn't expect her to deal well with customers. After her little stunt with the salmon.” Pained glanced at her, “I was expecting to have to chance that runty quel’dorei back to the kitchen,” she snorted a small laugh at the look of warning Jaina shot her, “old habits. Our people have never really got along. But, apparently, under all her shouting, she has the ability to actually care about the customers want and needs,” she grinned, flashing her fangs, “after I had Eza and Himmu put her through her paces. Humble her a bit.”

Jaina hummed at that as she poured them each a mug of coffee, dumping sugar into her own, “well, let us hope she keeps that attitude when she comes back.”

“Back from where?” Pained asked.

“Home, I gave her the day off. It was the least I could do after how helpful she’s been. Dealing with me while I was sick.”

Pained gave her an odd look that she quickly hid with a sip of her black coffee, “excuse me a moment,” she set down her mug and moved past Jaina and went to the kitchen.

Jaina watched her leave curiously but thought nothing of it as she finished her coffee, waiting on the rest of the staff to come in.

The day was busy and Jaina spent the day assisting her wait staff. She had to take frequent breaks to catch her breath, her lungs burning slightly from the aftermath of her flu but she persevered through it, determined to prove her wellness to her staff.

As the day wound down, Nomi made his way to the front. “Tea, Jaina?” he offered as the staff cleaned up for the night. He clasped his hands in front of himself and smiled kindly at her.

Jaina glanced at her staff before nodding, “just promise not to burn it?”

Nomi laughed boisterously, “if there is one thing I would never burn, it is tea, it is a Pandarens pride.” He looked out at the dining room, “tea?” he called, waiting for affirmation before he went about preparing it. The spicy smell of ginger and sweet smells of lemon and honey wafted up from the kettle as the tea steeped. He had Kinndy go and fetch kitchen staff to come and join them.

They came with the leftover bread and pastries and Jaina watched in open confusion as all the staff settled down at the tables as Nomi and Kinny served the tea and passed around the bread. “What is going on?” Jaina asked as Nomi handed her a cup of tea.

“Evening cooldown,” Nomi answered simply, “Sylvanas suggested it after the wait staff humbled her,” he smiled, “she thought that, maybe, the front and back staff should mingle. Help with relations.”

Jaina hummed at that and silently sipped at her tea, watching the staff eat. After they had all finished, the cups and plates were washed and put away and Jaina bid the staff goodnight as they left. She was in her office when she heard the front door open. She expected one of the staff, coming back to collect something forgotten and had come back to retrieve it. She was surprised to see Sylvanas standing by the door, almost nervously, holding a Tupperware container. Jaina narrowed her eyes at her, her lips twitching with a smile, “I thought I told you to go home?”
“I did,” Sylvanas nodded.

“And to sleep?” Jaina did smile then.

“I did sleep,” Sylvanas shrugged, “a bit.” she held out the Tupperware, “I figured that I should make sure you had something to eat.”

Jaina took the container, opening it at the counter. Inside were several small fried cakes, still hot. Her gaze flicked to Sylvanas as she picked one up.

“Crab,” Sylvanas answered the unasked question, “a little something I’ve been playing with.”

With a nod, Jaina took a small bite. The outside of crisp from the pan while the inside was still soft. The flakes of meat were sweet and seasoned with mild spices that left a lingering heat.

Sylvanas smiled as Jaina ate, “I take it you forgot to eat today?”

Jaina flushed as she stopped herself from practically inhaling the crabcakes. “It was a bit busy today. I didn't really have time.”

“I’m sorry, I should have stayed,” Sylvanas’ ears twitched.

“No! Light no, Sylvanas you earned your day off. I should be apologizing for making you work so hard,” Jaina rushed.

“It seems we are at an impasse, then,” Sylvanas plucked one of the cakes out and ate it slowly, “truce?”

“Truce,” Jaina agreed.

They shared the crab cakes, quietly enjoying each other's company. “Thank you again,” Jaina broke the silence, “for taking charge down here while I was out. And for your tea idea. It was good to see everyone eating together. Almost like a family. It was nice.”

“That's what a restaurant should be, Jaina,” Sylvanas looked serious, “a family. We look after each other.”

Jaina nodded at that, mulling it over as Sylvanas left. That's all it was then, Sylvanas just taking care of her new family, her business partner.
It was a busy evening. Sylvanas snapped out orders rapidly, servers came and went like a carousel, food leaving, empty plates and more bills returning. “Three orders of firecracker salmon, each with rice cakes and one order of Westfall stew!”

“Yes, chef!”

She looked over her shoulder to the server that had just come in, “get Eza in here, now! Table sevens order has been sitting here waiting!”

“Yes, chef,” she passed off her bill and scurried back out the door before Sylvanas’ anger could be turned on her.

Not long after, one of the newest servers returned to the kitchen with an untouched plate of food. Sylvanas looked from the food to the young girl, Bell, her memory provided, and back to the food. “What is this, Bell?”

“Customer says he won't eat it,” Bell said, setting the plate down carefully, tucking her hands behind her back.

Sylvanas tilted her head as she examined the plate. Her eyes narrowed, “they didn't even touch it. How could they possibly know if something is wrong with it?”

Bell looked away, her eyes darting briefly to Tora, “they, um,” she swallowed hard, “they said that they refused to eat anything made by,” she looked down, suddenly ashamed, “I'm really not comfortable using the phrase that they used but it was a derogatory term for an Orc.”

Silence fell over the kitchen. All cooking stopped as everyone turned to look at Sylvanas. The high elf was trembling, her ears pinned back. Nomi cautiously made his way towards her, his hands held out in a calming manner, “Sylv, lets deal with this calmly, rationally. Let us not cause a bigger scene than-”

He was cut off as Sylvanas shoved past the server, nearly knocking the poor girl down. Behind her she could hear the kitchen staff scrambling to follow after her, shouting her name. She was all but deaf to them as she made her way out of the kitchen and into the dining room. Her ears twitched at the sound of shouting and she picked up her pace as she rounded the corner into the dining room.

Jaina stood toe-to-toe with the customer in question. She glared up at him, angry as Sylvanas was. “I have every right to choose what has a hand in making my food,” the human man growled down at Jaina, puffing out his chest in a show of aggression, “and I will not eat anything that one of those beasts has touched!”

“And I have the right to refuse service to pig-headed Gilneans! Not get out of my restaurant!” Jaina snapped back, pointing to the door with a shaking hand, “get out now before I call the police!”

The man scoffed, “are you really going to stand there and take the side of those Light forsaken Fel-Munchers?”

“Of course I am! Tora and Crelos are twice the people you are! Now get out!”

“Those fucking fel-munchers are nowhere near being people! Animals the lot of them!”
Sylvanas watched as Jaina’s fist tightened and her arm twitched in the tell-tale signs of someone preparing to strike. She rushed forward and grabbed Jaina’s arm in a bruising grip and pulled her back. When Jaina began to struggle, Sylvanas wrapped her other arm around her to hold her in place. She bared her fangs, “Sir, I highly suggest that you leave.” She looked over to where Pained had stopped mid-step when Sylvanas had stepped in. “Cops. Now!” she growled out.

Behind her, the rest of the kitchen staff filed out of the back to see what was happening. All activity in Theramore had stopped. No one moved, all eyes were on the three of them. Jaina’s struggling had stopped and Sylvanas allowed her grip to relax. A poor decision.

The Gilnean man snorted in disgust, “and here comes the rest of your menagerie. If I had wanted to go to a zoo, I would have gone to Suramar!”

Jaina jumped at that and Sylvanas pulled her back again, “Jaina, rise to it. Let the cops deal with this asshole if he doesn't leave.”

“Aye, listen to your Feral, Girl,” the man spat.

Sylvanas went slack for a moment but that was all Jaina needed. Jaina lunged out of Sylvanas’ grip towards the man. Time seemed to slow. Her fist slammed into the man’s jaw with a resounding crack. The man staggered back a step before falling back on his ass, clutching at his jaw. She made to continue her assault before Sylvanas finally caught up with what had happened and hurried after her. She picked Jaina up, slinging her over her shoulder, ignoring the way that Jaina punched at her back in her anger. Jaina screamed curses at the man as Sylvanas carried her back. Words in every language that came to her mind flew wildly from her mouth as she screamed obscenities.

“Get him the fuck out of here!” Sylvanas shouted, her voice just barely louder than Jaina’s before she made her way to the office. She all but tossed Jaina into her chair. “Stay,” she ground out as she slammed the door. When she got back to the dining room, the cops had arrived and she went to greet them. “Evening, officers,” She smoothed her hair back before shaking hands.

“Care to explain what happened here, ma’am?”

“Customer dispute that gone wrong,” Sylvanas shrugged, “the Gentlemen refused to leave and had some very choice words about my staff.” The officer nodded, making a few notes. Sylvanas’ ears flicked back a moment, “is he pressing any charges?”

“No,” The officer shook his head, “my guess is he is a bit too embarrassed, but I would suggest offering to cover any medical expenses.”

Sylvanas agreed and bid the officers goodbye. She turned to examine the dining room. Many of the customers had simply paid their bills and left in a hurry. Sylvanas could say she blamed them, she probably would have done the same. She paused at the door to the office, listening intently to the faint sniffing she heard inside. She frowned and went into the kitchen. “Tora still here?”

“No, Chef,” Kasa responded, “she was pretty upset, so Nomi sent her home.”

“Good. I’m glad for that.” She looked through the day's pastries and plucked out a few rylak claws. Without another word she left the kitchen and knocked on the office door. “Jaina,” Sylvanas knocked twice before opening the door. The sight that greeted her made her heart stutter. Jaina looked a mess. She sat on the chair, her knees tucked up against her chest, her right hand cradled against her chest. She had her chin rested on her knees and her eyes were misty.

Sylvanas set the pastries on the desk and propped herself against it after closing the door. “You’re
very lucky that Gilneans are so prideful, Jaina,” she said softly, “otherwise you'd be heading downtown in cuffs.” She allowed herself a small smile, “but I have to admire that right hook of yours. I’m pretty sure they could hear the sound of his jaw cracking all the way in Stormwind.”

Jaina didn't laugh. She wanted to, but she couldn't. Instead, a small sob broke from her throat. All of the anger and adrenaline that had fueled her left in a rush and the stress fell heavily down on her. She cried, great heaving sobs. She wasn't sure how long she cried, but Sylvanas stood by all the while.

Her eyes were closed, ears pinned back. Sylvanas waited until the sobs faded to small hiccups before she looked down at Jaina. She sighed through her nose and kneeled down in front of Jaina and held out her hand, “let me check your wrist.” She pressed gently as the joint, watching Jaina for signs of pain. “Sprained,” she rooted through the first aid kit for the cold pack, pressing it to Jaina’s wrist. “You really shouldn't have hit him, Jaina.”

“I know,” Jaina replied quietly, “why aren't you angry?”

“You think I’m not angry?” Sylvanas’ eyes narrowed as she pulled out a bandage, “I’m furious. But we can only afford for one of us to lash out while the other has to try and stay calm.”

“I’m sorry,” Jaina winced as Sylvanas wrapped her wrist up tightly to keep it steady.

“Don't be. You did what you felt, never apologize for that,” Sylvanas stood slowly, “but, why did you fly off the handle?”

Jaina cast her gaze away, “he reminded me of my father,” her voice was hardly above a whisper, “he had the same views as that Gilnean. Just as vocal about it too.” she closed her eyes tightly, “I guess I’m still rather upset about it. It’s what put a rift between us before he—” a new sob rose in her throat and she clamped a hand over her mouth to stop it.

Sylvanas frowned and squeezed Jaina’s knee before she stood up. “Eat your snack and take it easy. Looks like we will be closing early tonight.” She left before Jaina had a chance to say anything in reply.

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There was no after shift tea that night. The staff was all on edge and anxious to get home and Jaina let them go as soon as the minimum cleaning was done. She hadn't seen Sylvanas at all the rest of the evening and worry ate at her. As soon as she locked the front door, Jaina made a beeline for the kitchen. “Sylvanas!” She called out, only to find the kitchen empty.

Sitting on one of the prep tables was a plate of food. Upon inspection, Jaina it to be several slices of roasted pork with some form of fruit that Jaina couldn’t name and a heaping amount of mashed potatoes. Judging but the cutlery left behind, Jaina guesses that it had been left for her.

She started with the fruit. The small bite-sized pieces of fruit seemed to have been simmered and were sweet and juicy. The warm tastes of cinnamon mixed with the juice in a delightful way. Jaina moves into the roast. It reminded her of the dishes she had eaten back home in Kul Tiras. There was a crust on the outside of the slices that had helped keep all of the natural juices of the pork inside, resulting in incredibly tender cuts of meat. There was a slight spice to the meat, not overpowering by any means, but enough that she could feel the extra heat it provided.

Trying the fruit and the pork together provided her with a whole new taste experience. The sweetness of the fruit and the savouriness of the meat melded wonderfully. Jaina found herself
mashing up the fruit to use as a topping for the pork.

When Jaina finished her meal, she washed her dishes by hand and sighed. She had been hoping to see Sylvanas and thank her for her help. Not wanting to hang out in the empty restaurant, Jaina headed out the back only to startled once she got outside.

Sylvanas stood leaning against her car. Her hair was down and she had her face turned to the sky, eyes closed. She had her leather jacket undone despite the chill early autumn air. Her ears perked up when she heard Jaina approach.

“Sylvanas?” Jaina asked quietly as she came to stop in front of the elf, “are you okay?”

Sylvanas cracked open her steely blue eyes to look down at Jaina, “I’m fine,” her voice was oddly quiet. She shifted against her car, standing up straighter, “did you enjoy your supper?”

Jaina nodded, “it was amazing, Sylvanas.”

“It’s a Gilnean dish with an orcish twist,” Sylvanas said, rather smugly, “a petty jab at our rude friend's expense.”

“I want it on the menu,” Jaina ground out, “as soon as you can manage it.”

Sylvanas smirked, flashing her fangs, “I’ll have it added by the end of the week.”

Jaina nodded and gave Sylvanas a pat on the arm, “thank you, for today. For stopping me,” she looked away, ashamed, “I don’t really know what I would have done if you hadn’t.”

“Best not dwell on,” came Sylvanas’ quiet response, “but I feel that this is the sort of problem that, if it were to occur again, we should deal with together.”

“Agreed,” Jaina sighed. She was exhausted, “goodnight, Sylvanas.”

“See you tomorrow, Jaina.”
Ranger and the Mage

Jaina pulled at the robes she was wearing as she got out of Chen's car. She shivered slightly in the chilly wind as she gazed up at the tall walls that closed off the courtyard of the old castle from the public. Chen had managed to get tickets to the most exclusive Hallows End party in the capital, the Castle Ball. She had come dressed as a mage, light purple fabric made up her robes, a thicker silvery fabric giving the appearance of pauldrons.

Chen locked the doors, placing a fur-trimmed rice hat on his head. He was dressed in the traditional clothes of the monks in his homeland. He caught Jaina’s eye and smiled, “Comfortable, practical and the best part,” he patted the sides of his pants, “deep pockets. The food at these events is usually too good to enjoy just here.”

Jaina laughed and gently shoved him, “do you ever think of anything other than food?”

Chen mulled the question over before nodding, “I also think of brew,” he laughed and dodged away when Jaina took a swing at him.

Jaina laughed again as she leaned against him, “how did you manage to even get passes?”

“Perks of supplying all of the beer being served,” Chen pulled the passes out of his shirt, “and this will give the two of you a chance to mingle and gain the interest of the upper class. Maybe get some new clientele? Or some investors even.”

Jaina nodded in agreement. Her smile fell when she realized what he had said, “wait, the two of us?”

“Good evening, Stormstout. Jaina,” Sylvanas drawled as she walked up behind them, allowing her boots to sound against the pavement.

Jaina felt her throat go dry when she turned to look at Sylvanas.

Tight leather pants, elegant knee-high boots, a tight shirt that clung to her toned stomach under the chest plate of the costume armor she wore. A hooded cloak completed her costume. Jaina shifted slightly and shook her head. “What are you doing here, Sylvanas?”

Sylvanas arched an elegant brow, “Chen invited me.” She brushed past Jaina, taking a pass from Chen as she went, her ears flicking back.

Chen pulled Jaina along, pushing her gently against Slyvanas, “keep her company. She doesn't do well in situations like this.”

The party was already in full swing when they entered. People of all races danced and mingled and at the back stood the towering Wickerman. Sylvanas looked tense, eyes darting about. She turned to talk to Chen quietly, only to see him rushing off into the crowd.

Sylvanas snorted out a laugh, crossing her arms, “well, off he goes. I pity the poor soul he gets a hold of. I’m sure he’ll make a killing off of this party.”

“Yeah, even when I was in college he was always trying to sell us his new brews, or trying to get us involved in a scheme,” Jaina smiled fondly as she and Sylvanas wove their way through the sea of bodies. “How did you and Chen meet?”
Sylvanas was quiet, unconsciously drifting closer to Jaina. “He found me when I was up in Northrend,” she began, “I was in a bad sort and he took me in and helped me out. Took me back to Pandaria with him. I owe him everything.”

Unsure of how to respond, Jaina allowed Sylvanas to lead them around to the long tables covered in food. Fancy little sandwiches, stuffed mushrooms, cakes and bread, and more food than Jaina could name. Her stomach rumbled loudly and she cast Sylvanas and gave her an accusatory look, “you didn’t make me any dinner tonight.”

Sylvanas chuckled, “do you rely on me for food so much?” she smiled, “I knew that Chen invited you, he was quite intent on me knowing you were coming.” She began to fill up a small plate for herself, nudging Jaina to do the same, “so I saw little need in feeding you, knowing there would be plenty to eat here.”

Jaina struggled to hide her look of disappointment as she filled her plate. She took a good amount of the mushrooms, taking no time in popping one of the bite-sized mushrooms into her mouth. There was a light crunch from the breadcrumbs on top and the sausage stuffing was slight. Jaina could faintly taste the warmth of ginger on the second one. “You’re not going to do that thing that chefs like to do where you verbally rip apart this food?” Jaina asked, quirking a brow.

“Why would I rip apart my own food?” Sylvanas asked, completely serious.

Jaina paused mid-bite, “what do you mean, your own food?”

“My recipes,” came Sylvanas’ simple reply, “made by my company.” She pointed to the small sign posted above the table. ‘Catering by Dark Lady Foods inc’ it read. “I don’t work there anymore, but I started it and still take my share and keep up with the menus so, my food,” she explained when Jaina continued to simply stare at her.

“You’re a restaurateur,” Jaina finally said. So many things made sense now.

Sylvanas laughed, “did you think I was joking about having my name in lights?”

“Honestly, I just thought you were being dramatic,” Jaina grinned. She nudged Sylvanas gently with her shoulder and laughed lightly at the offended look that was shot at her. When her laughter died down, Jaina flagged down one of the wandering attendants to take their plates. “Have you ever been to a Hallows End party, Sylvanas?”

“Why do you ask?”

“You just looked rather uncomfortable when we walked in,” Jaina shrugged.

Sylvanas’ ears flicked back, “no, I haven’t. It isn’t a celebrated holiday in Quel’thalus,” she started, “and the last time I was in a human city during Hallows End my participation in the festivities was illegal.” She glanced at Jaina shocked face and smiled thinly, “Gilneas. I was trying to establish a restaurant but the people there are too stubborn. Practically ran me out of town.”

Jaina looked down, “that’s terrible.” They fell into silence. Jaina perked up when she heard the music shift to an upbeat shanty tune. “Can you dance?”

Sylvanas blinked at her in confusion, “I beg your pardon?”

“I asked you if you can dance, Sylvanas,” Jaina beamed up at her.

Sylvanas snorted, “I’m an elf, of course, I can dance.”
Jaina grabbed her hand tightly and dragged her over to the established dance floor in front of the wicker man. She held on to both of the taller elf’s hands as she led them into a steady rhythm. Hip to hip, turn. They turned slowly, palm to palm and Jaina felt delighted when she saw Sylvanas finally relax and allow herself to dance more freely. They twirled in with the other dancers, steadily picking up speed.

Jaina didn’t notice the shift in the lead until Sylvanas spun her out towards the bandstand with an impish grin, pulling her back so close they danced nearly chest to chest. She blushed vividly at the closeness but allowed Sylvanas to continue twirling them around on light feet.

Sylvanas bubbled with laughter as she spun Jaina out again, her cloak flowing out behind her for a moment, “am I too much to handle, Jaina?”

Jainas eyes narrowed in determination as she was pulled back in, “not even close.” She almost regretted her words as Sylvanas easily lifted her into the air, spinning a moment before bringing her back down into another swirl. Faster and faster they danced as the music rose to a crescendo. Jainas world tilted harshly as, all in a few movements, Sylvanas placed her hand on the small of Jainas back and dipped her. They stayed frozen like that, Sylvanas easily supporting Jainas weight and their faces just inches apart. Jaina struggled to catch her breath as Sylvanas eased her back up and gently tucked a loose strand of hair behind Jainas ear with a fond smile that Jaina almost missed as she turned to applaud the band.

Jaina tried to chalk her flushed face up to the exhausting dance, but she couldn’t deny to herself how nice it had felt to be in Sylvanas’ arms. To still be in her arms, Jaina thought as Sylvanas pulled her close.

Her attention was pulled towards the wicker man as the parties sponsor began to speak into a microphone. “People of Lordaeron! Friends and colleagues old and new! Your attention if you please!” He began, easily silencing all other chatter. “As you all know, Hallows End is a celebration of transition and of change. But that does not mean that it is a time to mourn or to grieve that which has been lost to us. No, this eve is a chance to mock the fearsome, to gaze upon the twisted and grim unknown and laugh! It is a time to celebrate friends old and new. To look to the future paths we may walk together.”

He turned slightly and pointed up to the wicker man, “as you all stand here before me, I implore you to cast your burdens behind me. Let this wicker man embody your fears, your troubles. With turmoil as tinder, let it blaze! May it temper us against what tomorrow may bring,” he stepped away, “Torch ready! Let the flames fly!”

Jaina watched as flames engulfed the Wickerman. Tears misted her vision as she remembered the Wickerman burnings in Drustvar with her family. Better times long vast.

“Jaina,” Sylvanas leaned her head down next to Jainas, “what are those people over there doing?”

Attendants had collected the first of the ash from the fire into bowls and began dispersing them among the crowd. Jaina waited until they had each been given a small handful of ash to explain. “We use the ashes to mask our faces so that the negative energy we cast away can't find it's way back to us,” she explained softly as she used her free hand to smear a line of ash across her nose, cheek to cheek and another one from under her nose to her chin. “It's silly and you don't have to.” When she looked over, Sylvanas had already smeared the ash in lines under her eyes.

“If I’m going to be involved, I might as go all the way, right?” Sylvanas offered her a crooked smile, “but I think I’m all partied out. Let's find Chen and get you home.”
After a half hour of searching, they were forced to give up as the rest of the revelers began to leave. “Come on,” Sylvanas looped her arm with Jaina’s and gently pulled her outside, “I’ll walk you home.” About halfway back to Theramore, Sylvanas noticed Jaina shivering. With a small sigh, she pulled off her cloak and draped it around Jaina’s shoulders. “Can’t have you getting sick again, now can I?” she teased.

“Thank you,” Jaina muttered, pulling the cloak tighter and inhaled deeply. The cloak smelt of spices.

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“You know, you’re more than welcome to stay the night, Sylvanas,” Jaina offered as she stood in the doorway of her apartment. “It’s no trouble.”

Sylvanas smiled and shook her head, “that’s alright, Jaina. I don’t want to be a bother.” She held out her hand for her cloak. Chuckling when she saw Jaina try to subtly smell it as she gave it back. She put it on with a flourish and bowed dramatically. “I’ll see you later, Jaina.”

“Yeah, Later.” Jaina closed the door and leaned against it, sliding down until she was sitting on the floor. She could still smell the spiced scent of the cloak and found herself wishing the smell would never leave her.
Sylvanas stood at Theramore’s bar, hands clasped behind her back. She watched as the staff scurried about the dining room to set the tables and prepare the buffet area for Theramore’s first Pilgrim’s Bounty feast. Everyone, even Jaina, had been surprised when she had suggested it, but they were all quick to sign on.

Most of the meal was already cooking. Turkeys had been in the ovens since the afternoon and Milaada had made all of the desserts early in the morning. Chen had shown up, bringing with him two kegs of his ‘fresh start’ brew.

She strolled out into the dining area and cleared his throat, “dinner shall be brought out soon. There are just a few things that need to be finished, if any of the front staff would like to volunteer to help, I would be glad for it.”

Kinndy jumped down from the chair she had been standing in and hurried over, “I would love to help! I’ve never done kitchen work before.”

Sylvanas chuckled as she waved for her staff to follow her as well, “I always love an eager student.” She grabbed the stepladder and set it down in front of the stovetops, “I’m going to have you do the carrots.” She moves to the fridge and returned with a large bin of sliced parboiled carrots.

Kinndy blinked in surprise, “been busy, Chef?”

“To feed today, greedy little bastards,” Sylvanas grinned when Kinndy laughed. She pulled a well-worn notebook, flipping to the recipe they would use. “I’ll show you the first batch, and then let you try one.”

She tossed butter into the pan, allowing it to melt before adding a portion of the carrots and a swirl of soy sauce. She cooked them until they began to brown before adding in honey and ginger, stirring them until they were evenly coated in the resulting glaze. Once they were done, Sylvanas turned back to Kinndy, “think you can handle that, Miss Sparkshine?”

“Yes, Chef,” Kinndy responded quickly, giving Sylvanas a little mock salute. She quickly tied back her pink hair and set to work.

“Good. Call me if you need me.” Sylvanas roamed the kitchen, helping out where she was needed and bringing the food that was finished out into the dining room. When she returned to the kitchen, Sylvanas could smell something burning and hurried over to Kinndy, “everything okay?”

Kinndy looked at her nervously, and then to the burnt mass of carrots stuck in the pan, “I’m not entirely sure what happened,” she said quietly. A lot of the staff had stopped to see what Sylvanas was going to do. The high elf was well known for her temper and she rarely tolerated slip ups.

Sylvanas hummed in thought as she looked everything over, “did you follow the recipe?”

“To the letter,” Kinndy replied in a rush, “or at least I thought I did.”

“Did you stir them continuously?” Sylvanas asked with a tilt of her head.

“I-” Kinndys nose scrunched in thought, “no I didn’t,” she admitted, shoulders sagging.
“Ah,” Sylvanas gently squeezed her shoulder, “no harm done, Kinndy. Worse things could have happened. Try again, and this time make sure you stir it constantly after you add the honey.”

The second batch turned out almost perfect. The carrots well on the way, Sylvanas helped take the rest of the food out before finally bringing out the carrots.

Jaina clapped her hands together to get everyone's attention, “if everyone wants to go ahead and fill a plate and sit down, we can get started.”

“I think,” Chen spoke up as he sat down with his over-full plate, “that the owners should sit right at the head of the table.” He looked down the table to where Othon and Pained sat and gave them a small grin.

Jaina blushed lightly as she sat down to Sylvanas’ left. All the staff had squeezed in close around the tables they had pushed together and Jaina had to make a concious effort not to brush against Sylvanas when she moved. She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and cleared her thought, “thank you all for joining us today. Before we eat, I would like to go around the table and give everyone a chance to say what they are thankful for.”

“I’m thankful for the chance to work in such a homey kitchen,” Nomi spoke up with his us usual smile.

“I am thankful for Jaina giving me this opportunity,” chimed in one of the servers, a human named Bell.

“Aye, thank you to Jaina for the job,” agreed Eza.

“To Jaina for standing up for me,” Tora said quietly, smiling up at Jaina.

“Well I am thankful for Sylvanas stepping in to help Jaina keep Theramore open,” Kinndy beamed, just barely stopped herself from jumping onto her chair.

Pained nodded, raising her glass, “to the Quel’dorei, without whom none of us would be here.”

The cheers with picked up by the rest of the staff and Sylvanas sank down in her chair, her cheeks flushed and her ears drooped and tinted red. “Thank you all. I am thankful to Jaina, for agreeing to let an ass like me be her partner in business.”

Jaina smiled fondly and gently nudged Sylvanas with her elbow, “you’re the ass that saved mine, so I’m thankful for you as well.”

Milaada smiled as she rose from her seat, “while I am aware that we all follow different creeds, I would like if we all bowed our heads in prayer, and give thanks to our dieties.” A murmur of agreement and heads were bowed in silent prayer. “For the Light,” Milaada finished, her words echoed by everyone.


“The Celestials,” chimed Chen and Nomi.

“The Earth Mother,” added Kasa and Himmu.

“By the Elements,” Grunted Tora.

“For Elune,” Pained nodded towards Sylvanas.
Sylvanas offered her a small smile and bowed her head, “and Belore.”

“To the Tides,” Jaina finished, clapping her hands, “let's eat!”

It was a well and proper feast. Roasted turkeys, crispy golden brown skin, not a single one dry. Candied sweet potatoes, roasted in savory spices and brown sugar as regular roasted potatoes. Green beans tossed in garlic butter. Freshly baked buns and the carrots that Kinndy had made.

The conversation around the table was kept quiet as everyone ate their fill, going back for more until there was little left before descending upon the desserts. Pumpkin and pecan pies that were gone faster than the food was.

Together, they all gathered up the dishes and cleaned down for the night. The whole time, Chen kept finding reasons to keep Jaina and Sylvanas close together.

Chen managed to corral them into the back room behind the kitchen to divvy up the leftovers, leaving them alone in comfortable silence.

“Sylvanas,” Jaina spoke up eventually, “what happened to the audit?”

“What audit?” Sylvanas asked, not looking up from her task.

“For the food for the party,” Jaina said slowly, “I need to make sure that all the money is accounted for.”

Sylvanas wrapped and labeled another dish, setting it aside with the others, “ah. Yes, well there isn't one. I didn't use the company money. I paid for it out of my own pocket.”

Jaina turned fully to look at her, “I still need the audit, Sylvanas. How else are you supposed to be reimbursed?”

Sylvanas sighed through her nose and waved the notion away, “I refuse to take any money from Theramore for what was a gift to you and the rest of the staff.”

Jaina frowned and bit her lip. Without another thought, Jaina pulled Sylvanas into a tight hug, “thank you so much, Sylvanas! You have improved so much around here and if it weren't for you, I don't know what I would have done. So thank you so very much. For everything.”

Sylvanas stood stiffly in Jaina’s arms, her eyes wide with shock. Slowly she raised her arms and wrapped them around Jaina to return the hug softly. “You’re welcome, Jaina.” She closed her eyes, a small smile creeping over face, “and thank you.”
Jaina looked herself over in her bathroom mirror. She straightened out the creases in her deep blue dress. It was a simple thing, not overly fancy but nice enough for dinner at a nice restaurant. She touched up her hair, making sure that the subtle waves she had curled into it were going to stay for the night and nodded to herself, satisfied.

It was the eve of Winterveil. They had closed the restaurant early and sent everyone home for the holidays. The plan was to remain closed until the new year and Jaina was surprised to find herself excited about that. Theramore was doing well enough now that they could afford to be closed for the next week and a half and Jaina was overjoyed.

Checking the time, Jaina hastily picked up a small wrapped gift and hurried out of her apartment and down to the small employee parking lot. She stopped in her tracks when she saw that her car was not the only one there. She tilted her head in confusion, “Sylvanas?” She walked up to the window, checking to see if she was in her car before heading to the backdoor, quietly letting herself back into Theramore.

Sylvanas sat at one of the prep tables in the dimly lit kitchen, a drink in her hand while she idly scrolled through her phone. Her ear flicked in Jaina’s direction when she approached. She turned her head and looked Jaina up and down slowly, “Going on a date, Jaina?” She raised a brow at her, a small smirk playing across her lips.

Jaina blushed and ducked her head, waving the comment away, “a date? No. No not a date. Chen's Winterveil party with some of my college friends.” She looked back at Sylvanas, nervously toying with the gift, “are you not going, Sylvanas?”

Sylvanas shook head, taking a deep sip from her drink, “no, I’m not.”

Jaina frowned at that, “did Chen not invite you? That doesn't seem like him.”

“No, he invited me.” Sylvanas glanced at Jaina then, “I told him exactly where he could shove his invitation.”

Jaina laughed lightly at that, smiling fondly, “what are your Winterveil plans?”

Sylvanas shrugger and lifted her near-empty glass, swirling the amber liquid around, “finishing off my drink, going home and watching some tacky Winterveil movies with another drink and going to bed.”

“Alone?” Jaina asked, her brow furrowing.

“Well, that was the plan, yes,” Sylvanas offered her an easy grin before slamming back the rest of her drink.

Jaina frowned deeply, meeting Sylvanas’ gaze easily, “no one should be alone on Winterveil, Sylvanas. It's a time for family and friends. Simple togetherness.”

“Hasn't stopped me from spending it alone for years,” Sylvanas stated simply as she stood. She took her glass to the bar and cleaned it, fully expecting Jaina to leave. She was surprised when she returned to the kitchen to find that Jaina hadn't moved at all.

“I know you keep a nice shirt in the back,” Jaina started as soon as Sylvanas returned to the
kitchen, “go and put it on.”

Sylvanas blinked, “why would I do that to go home?”

Jaina rolled her eyes, “because you aren't going home. You are going to spend Wintervail Eve with me and Chen whether you like it or not.” Her voice was strong and firm. She marched to the back, scooping up Sylvanas’ car keys, “I’ll be waiting for you in your car.”

“Let me get this straight, you are ordering me to go to a party with you, and I have to drive?” Sylvanas asked with a snort, “getting to be a bit bossy, aren't you Jaina?” She gave no further argument as she changed out of her chef jacket and met Jaina in her car.

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It had begun to snow on the drive out to Stormstout Brewery and by the time they arrived snow had already covered the gravel drive. Jaina got out and breathed in deeply, filling her lungs with the crisp clean air, “he picked a perfect location to build, didn't he?”

Sylvanas simply nodded, flicking up the collar of her winter coat, “indeed he did,” her ears pinned back against the chill wind that blew across the open area, “but I would much prefer to admire it in a warmer season, if you don't mind, Jaina.”

Jaina chuckled as the pair hurried towards the door, “how is it that I was colder than you were walking back to Theramore after the Hallows End party?” She watched the way Sylvanas’ ears twitched, her eyes widening slightly, “you were cold!”

Before Sylvanas could reply, Chen opened brewery door, “Jaina! You finally made it!” he pulled the younger woman into a tight hug, rocking her side to side, not missing the way that Sylvanas tensed at the action. He smiled widely as he released Jaina and made to do the same to Sylvanas.

“You hug me, Stormstout, and I break your arm,” Sylvanas threatened.

Jaina sighed, gripping Sylvanas’ shoulder gently, leading her further inside towards the sound of voices, Chen smiling behind her. “Be nice, Sylvanas,” Jaina hissed as they entered the cozy living space.

“Jaina!” came the call of the people already gathered in the room.

Jaina smiled fondly as she stepped away from Sylvanas and into the warm embraces that awaited her. “Oh! Sylvanas, these are my friends from college.” She pointed them out each individually. She pointed first to the largest of the three orcs that retook their seats. He had a yellow tinge to his skin, strongly built and wore a necklace of polished fangs over an ill-fitted dress shirt, “this is Rexxar.” After a shaking of hands and Jaina moved on to the finely dressed troll, his whitening chair braided down his back, “and Rohkan.”

Sylvanas clasped Rohkans arm in a firm grip, “to think that Jaina knows such a famous person. A colleague of ours speaks very highly of you. Improving Troll rights, helping settle tensions between the remaining clans? Wonderful work.”

Rohkan grinned around his tusks, “it be good to know that word of me work be spreading far.”

Jaina waited until Rohkan had sat back down to introduce the last two orcs, “and lastly, Thrall and his wife Aggralan.”

“Please, just Aggra,” the brown-skinned orc corrected kindly.
Beside her, Thrall beamed, standing up and envelop Sylvanas’ hands in his own large ones, “you must be Sylvanas! Jaina has told up all about you!”

Sylvanas blinked slowly, her jaw going slack as she glanced at Jaina, “you talk about me?”

“Talk about you?” Chen laughed as he finally joined them, “it’s hard to get her to stop talking about you.” That drew a laugh from everyone.

“Now that we are all here, how about we finish the preparation of our meal?” Rexxar asked, “I managed to bring over some wonderful pieces of chimaerok loins.”

“This sounds like a wonderful way for you to show off, Sylvanas,” Chen beamed, thumping the elf on the back.

Sylvanas narrowed her eyes, “you didn’t invite me just so I could cook for you, did you Stormstout?”

“Of course not,” Chen beamed, already leading Sylvanas towards the kitchen, “that is just a happy bonus.”

With a roll of her eyes, Sylvanas pushed up her sleeves and set to work. She carefully unwrapped the chimaerok loins from the butcher's paper and sliced them into even sized chops. After rooting around through Chen’s cupboards, she rubbed the chops with a mixture of spices and curry paste. Cumin, paprika, cinnamon, and nutmeg with just a sprinkling of chili flakes. She would have preferred to marinate the chops, but time wouldn’t allow it. After hearing some oil in a large pan, she cooked the chops.

The strong smell of spices and frying meat drew an audience to the kitchen door and Sylvanas couldn’t be bothered to try and hide her self satisfied smirk as she plated the finished chops with the seasoned rice that Chen had made for a side and a healthy serving of vegetables.

Standing over to the side, Sylvanas motioned to the food, “well don’t just stand there. Come and get your food.” She had to jump aside as the men rushed in and took their plates.

“Savages,” Sylvanas grumbled, handing Jaina and Aggra their plates.

“Sylvanas, be nice,” Jaina chided as they took their seats in two fold up chairs.

For a long while, there was no talking only eating. Sylvanas couldn’t help but laugh when Rexxar and Chen nearly started a fistfight over the last chop. Aggra has to be the adult, cutting the chop and giving them each a swift cuff to the ear.

Once all the food had been cleared away, Chen brought out the small pile of gifts, setting them out on the table, “I think it’s time for white elek,” he grinned.

Jaina frowned and glanced at Sylvanas, “I forgot, Sylvanas doesn't have a gift I just kind of dragged her here.”

“Nothing to worry about,” Chen patted one of the gifts, “I got an extra one. I had a feeling that the reclusive elf would end up coming,” he winked at Jaina.

They drew numbers from a hat, picking a gift in the order they drew. When it was Sylvanas’ turn she carefully picked up the gift that Jaina had brought, ignoring the look that Chen gave her. After all the gifts had been picked they were allowed to open them. Jaina got a lovely traditional tea set, while Chen got a ridiculous singing fish. Rexxar a box full of tiny rubber ducks that he declared
Sylvanas opened her gift last. She carefully pulled at the seams of the paper, neatly opening the gift to reveal a small decorative box. She lifted the lid, eyes widening slightly as she pulled out its contents. A long knit scarf of alternating shades of green. She ran her thumb along it, admiring the work that had been put into it as it was clearly homemade. Small mistakes here and there have it a homey look and Sylvanas couldn’t help but hold it close.

Chen smiled as he watched his friend. She had had the same look the first time she had spent Winterveil with him and his niece in Pandaria. He clapped his hands as she stood, “I have another gift for everyone,” he walked off to the brewery proper, returning with a case of brew. “I had the idea for this series of brews when Sylvanas came bag. She gave me a bundle of plants and fruits from Suramar and I figured that a drink made from them might remind a Shal’dorei of home. So,” he passed out the bottles, “I present my ‘Welcome Home’ brew series. Made with ingredients straight from the local lands.”

Rohkan and the orcs were overjoyed.

Jaina opened hers and took a small sip, closing her eyes at the taste. Ravenberries and honey. She wiped at her eyes as she took another sip. She was pulled out of her reverence by the sound of a bottle being slammed down on the table, her eyes snapping open. ‘Quel’Thalas Summer’ was printed on the label, accompanied by a blazing phoenix.

Sylvanas stood from her chair, her hands trembling slightly, she clenched her fists to try and stop them, “excuse me,” she murmured before hurrying off to the back door, slamming it behind her.

Silence fell over the room. Jaina looked up at Chen who only offered her a small sad smile and inclined his head towards where Sylvanas had stormed off. “I’ll go and check on her,” she said as she pulled on her coat, grabbing Sylvanas’. She made sure to close the back quietly once she got outside. Sylvanas had wandered out into the backyard and now stood in the snow, staring up at the dark sky, she shoulders shaking. Jainas boots crunched softly in the snow as she approached.

Sylvanas didn't acknowledge her as Jaina carefully draped the coat around her shoulders. She continued idly fiddling with her necklace, rubbing her thumb along the blue stone on the chain while she fruitlessly tried to blink back tears. “It's hard, thinking about home,” Sylvanas stated quietly, “isn't it Jaina?” her ears drooped low, reddened by the cold, “much as we may miss it, there can be things, thought or memories that keep us away.”

Jaina nodded when Sylvanas fell silents and simply stood next to her, trying to think of a way to comfort her. “You know, the biggest ass I have ever met once told me that food is the best way to deal with homesickness,” she smiled, leaned against Sylvanas slightly, “and they were right. It did help to ease the ache.”

Sylvanas merely hummed, her eyes flicking towards Jaina, “what do you think of them now? Knowing they were right?”

Jaina laughed, “oh, for sure they are still an ass, but I’ve come to learn that they have a good heart.” She slowly took Sylvanas’ hand in her own and gave it a small squeeze, “add a Thalassian dish to the menu.”

They stayed outside until Sylvanas was properly shivering and Jaina had to drag her back. The party had resumed in their absence and stronger alcohols had made an appearance. “Have fun with your friends, Jaina,” Sylvanas insisted, giving Jaina a small shove into the room, chuckling when
she as immediately handed a drink and pulled into a light-hearted conversation.

“She’s something else isn't she?” Chen asked, coming to stand with Sylvanas, handing her a drink.

“Yeah,” the elf agreed easily with a fond smile, “I’ve never met anyone like her. Someone so
determined and kind. Pasiant enough to put up with me,” she elbowed Chen, “and you.”

“One of a kind, that girl,” he sighed contentedly, “I did the right thing, sending you to help her. It
has been ages since I’ve seen her this happy and that's all thanks to you.”

Sylvanas nearly spat out her drink at that, “me? Make her happy? I’m not sure if you’ve ever talked
to me but I don't do well at making people happy.”

Chen snorted, “lie to yourself all you want Sylvanas, but you are a far better person than you give
yourself credit for.”

Sylvanas gave him no response. He didn't need one. That thought had already been planted in her
head months ago, the first time she had cooked for Jaina. The open emotion she had shown, the joy
and sadness she had instilled in the human. It had made her heart sore.

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“Are you sure that you don't want to just stay the night here?” Chen asked as he helped Sylvanas
load a drunken Jaina into the car, “there more than enough room.”

Sylvanas shook her head, adjusting her new scarf, “thank you Chen, but I would rather get her
home before the roads get blocked with all this snow.”

Chen nodded and pulled Sylvanas into a brief hug, “happy Winterveil, Sylvanas.” he was shocked
when she actually returned the hug, if only for a moment before pulling away.

“You too, Chen,” Sylvanas climbed into her car and carefully drove off down the country road.

It took far longer to get back to Theramore with the heavy snowfall and Jaina had fallen asleep.
Careful not to wake her, Sylvanas dug Jainas key out of her pocket and hurried up and opened the
door. When she came back down, Jaina was awake and looking around in confusion, “hey,” she
offered, helping Jaina out and up into her apartment.

They stumbled back into Jainas bedroom. Sylvanas eased Jaina down and helped her out of her
dress and into the pajamas that had been laying on her bed. Jaina could hardly keep her eyes open
and offered no complaints to the process, even as Sylvanas gently tucked her into her bed. For all
Jaina knew this was a dream, but not one that she would ever wish to end. A glass of water was
placed on her nightstand, “thank you,” Jaina mumbled tiredly, “you’re more than welcome to stay
the night, Sylvanas.”

“I think I’ll take you up on that offer this time,” Sylvans replied, even as Jaina’s eyes fell shut.

“Happy Winterveil, Jaina.”

“Appy Winterveil, Sylvanas.”
A Little Spice

Jaina awoke with a tired groan. She forced her eyes to stay shut as she burrowed further into the warmth and comfort of her bed. Her throat was dry and she finally poked her head out from under the thick pile of blankets to blink about the grey light of her room. Pushing herself up, Jaina picked up the glass of water on her bedside table, downing it quickly, relishing in the relief it brought her.

Her nose scrunched in thought as she sat in bed, staring up at her ceiling. Sleep and a light headache fogged her memory of how she had ended in her bed. She vaguely remembered being loaded into a car and being tucked into bed but no details. The lack of memory should have worried her, despite having only been with friends, but she found her self smiling as she flopped back against her pillows.

Her plan of going back to sleep was derailed when a warm smell reached her. Coffee. That had her sitting up fast enough to have her head spinning. Jaina shuffled slowly from her room to investigate.

Sylvanas stood at her kitchen counter, humming a quiet tune to herself while she beat something in a bowl. Jainas eyes trailed over her slowly. Up the work pants, she must have slept into the smooth, toned expanse of her back and the tattoos that adorned in and her sides. A large gilded phoenix dominated her right shoulder, its wings stretched high and it's head proud. Over her left side, an intricate design in light purple that Jaina recognized as a rune.

Apron straps were the only thing blocking her otherwise clear view. Jaina blinked once. Sylvanas was wearing an apron. She blinked again, her face heating up. Sylvanas was only wearing an apron. Her mind slowly caught up with her eyes as she made a small choked noise as the residual fog of sleep fled her mind, allowing her to realize that Sylvanas was indeed shirtless.

Sylvanas' ears swiveled back at the sound Jaina made, “finally awake?” She half turned to look at Jaina, “there’s coffee in the pot if you want some.”

Jaina’s face became impossibly red from the new sight that greeted her. The apron was loose. Loose enough that Jaina was given a clear view of the curved side of Sylvanas’ breast, the peak thankfully covered by the fabric of the apron.

Watching her a moment, Sylvanas smirked, “see something you like, Jaina?”

“Yes,” Jaina responded automatically. Her eyes widened and she clamped a hand over her mouth. “I mean no! I mean they are very nice, not that I was looking, so no I didn’t but I did and—“ Jaina was still staring. She flicked her gaze up, suddenly finding the ceiling of her apartment very interesting. “Why aren’t you wearing a shirt?”

Sylvanas hummed, turning to face Jaina fully, “It wasn’t comfortable to sleep in so I slept without it. I forgot how prudish you humans can be so I didn’t even think of just putting it back on.”

Jaina rubbed at her cheeks and turned around, “do you want to borrow one of my shirts? It’s way too early to be wearing a dress shirt.”

“If you wouldn’t mind, that would be wonderful,” Sylvanas agreed. She waited for Jaina to return with a t-shirt. She looked at it and snorted, “you still play battle pets?”

“Hey! It is a solid and fun game,” Jaina defended, tossing the shirt at Sylvanas. Her blush returned in force when Sylvanas began taking the apron off. Jaina quickly turned away, huffing when
Sylvanas laughed at her.

“Alright, I’m decent.” Sylvanas chuckled when Jaina peeked over her shoulder before turning around.

Jaina coughed nervously and stood next to Sylvanas, “so, what are you making?”

“Well, after raiding your cupboards, I found that you actually have the kitchen basics now, good job,” she added milk into the eggs she had been beating along with a dash of cinnamon and nutmeg as a dollop of syrup. “So I’m making us some Suramar toast.”

After waiting for the pan to heat up, Sylvanas dipped sliced of bread into the egg mixture and fried them until the edges were golden and crispy. She plated them with icing sugar and syrup.

“This doesn't seem like the sort of thing that the shal’dorei would make,” Jaina commented, melting into her seat at the first bite. The outside gave a subtle crunch while the inside of the bread was made soft from the mix. The added spices gave a gentle warmth that married perfectly with the sweetness of the syrup.

Sylvanas smiled, “it's actually a thalassian dish. A quiet jab at the Nightborne.” They ate in a comfortable silence. “I’ll have to stay until the plows make it through. I hope that’s okay.”

“Of course,” Jaina gathered the plates while Sylvanas made herself comfortable on the couch. “I wouldn't want you driving anywhere with the roads like that.” After finishing the dishes, Jaina joined her, handing her a fresh mug of coffee. Jaina fiddled with her mug, “so, what are all your tattoos?”

Sylvanas glanced at her out of the corner of her eye, “which ones, Jaina? Not sure if you’ve noticed, but I have a lot.”

Jaina thought a moment before touching the elvish writing that wrapped around her wrist, “what does this say?”

Sylvanas hummed in thought, “in common it says ‘O' children of the blood, by the light of the sun’. It's an old Thalassian phrase.”

“And, the rune on your side?” Jaina tilted her head.

“It’s a Shal’dorei protection rune,” Sylvanas explained, “I got it when I was working in Suramar. To keep me safe from harm.”

Jaina looked down into her coffee, “and the Phoenix?” When Sylvanas didn't answer, Jaina glanced at her. The elf had hunched in on herself, ears pinned back. “You don't have to answer, but, why don’t you want to go back to Quel' thalas?”

Sylvanas clenched her teeth, tightening her grip on her mug, “You first, why won’t you go back to Kul Tiras?”

Jaina leaned back against the couch, staring up at the ceiling again, “my father died in a car crash in my first year of college,” she sighed, “I blame myself, so do my family. We had gotten into a fight about the company I was keeping. My father was, rather set in his ways. He stormed out, had too much to drink and crashed his car into the lake. No one in her family tried to contact her after the funeral so I just stayed away.” Jaina blinked back the few tears that misted her eyes. “Your turn.”
Sylvanas sighed through her nose and set her mug down, “I was kicked out of my family home when I was seventeen for getting into too many fights. They were mostly defending my family name, shutting up people trying to talk down to us. Ended up homeless in Silvermoon. Kept on fighting and picked the wrong fight, got stabbed. Nearly died in those streets.” Sylvanas hung her head, “I miss them, my family, but I can't bring myself to go back.”

Without a word, Jaina gathered Sylvanas into her arms, holding her close, “I’m sorry you had to go through all that.”

Sylvanas relaxed into the hug, “why do you keep hugging me?”

“Does it make you uncomfortable?” Jaina made to let go, only to have Sylvanas pull her back against her.

“No, it’s actually the most I’ve been hugged since I got kicked out.”

“Then I promise to make up for that,” Jaina said softly as she let her go.

They settled into a comfortable silence, flicking through various sites on their phones while waiting for the plows. Eventually, Jaina cozied down on the couch, resting her head on Sylvanas’ lap, humming contently when Sylvanas began to run her fingers through her hair absenty. Setting her phone down, Jaina closed her eyes and enjoyed the feeling. She shifted up on her elbows, her eyes cracking open. Her breath stilted when she noticed just how close their faces were. If Jaina leaned forward just a little further she could--

The sound of a plow driving by had Sylvanas standing without a word, nearly dumping Jaina onto the floor. “I should go.” She hurried bundle herself back up in her coat and scarf.

“No, I’ll be fine. I’ll see you later, Jaina.” Sylvanas paused at the door, “thank you for letting me stay the night. And Happy Winterveil.”

Jaina sat on the floor, staring at the door for a long time, her heart pounding wildly. She was left with swirling thoughts and a fluttering in her stomach. “Shit.” She ground her forehead with the heel of her hand. “Shit.”

Sylvanas tossed her keys into the small bowl she now kept on a table by her door. She groaned loudly and crossed the living room and flopped down on her couch. Her mood couldn't stay sour when a soft weight settled on her stomach, “Hello, Muffin. Sorry, I’m late.” She scratched absently at his ears, “I spent the night at Jaina’s. I went to Chen’s party with her and had to drive her home.”

Muffin let out a small meow and flopped down more comfortably against her, “we had a lovely breakfast, but I think I made her really uncomfortable which I didn't mean to do.” Muffin purred, poking at her nose. “What am I going to do Muffin? This is new to me. I want to see her all the time and keep her happy and safe. I want to… Shit. Shit shit shit. That’s what this is, isn’t it? Shit.”
Festival in the Field

The New Years festival in Lordaeron was one of the most anticipated events of the year. Food stalls and vendors formed streets and alleys inside of the large fairgrounds, while activities and live music and entertainment bordered the edges. It was the first year that Theramore had a stall. Every year previous the chef would go on about how much of a waste of time it was. Sylvanas, by contrast, outright refused to not have a stall.

And so it was that Jaina and Sylvanas found themselves manning their stall with a rotation of staff. Things were tense between them, to say the least. Neither willing to look at the other, let alone try and start conversations. Jaina’s only saving grace was that Chen had managed to grab the stall next to theirs.

“Awfully quiet over here,” Chen quipped as he leaned over his counter to look at Jaina.

With a quick look into the back to make sure that Sylvanas was busy, Jaina did the same, “things have been,” she scrunched up her nose in thought, “tense.”

Chen frowned at that, “and here I thought the two of you were getting close.”

“So did I,” Jaina admitted quietly, “but she won't even talk to me. I think I may have messed up whatever friendship we had.”

“She won't talk to you, but have you tried talking to her?” Chen asked, already knowing the answer even before Jaina looked away. He chuckled, munching idly on one of the hand pies that Jaina had passed over to him. “Friendships are a two-way street, Jaina. You both need to try and work through whatever it is that is coming between you.”

Jaina worried her bottom lip between her teeth, “but what if I don't know how to work through it?”

Whatever Chen was going to say in response was cut off by the arrival of Nomi and Kinndy. “Jaina!” Nomi beamed as he reached the counter, “have you been enjoying the festival?”

“We just came back from seeing one of the band,” Kinndy started, “turns out, I'm really into folk music.”

Jaina shook her head, “no, I haven't. Sylvanas and I have been minding the stand all day.”

“Well, that just won't do!” Nomi hurried to the back of the stand, “Sylv!” he grabbed the elf and dragged her out of the stall while Kinndy gentle shoved Jaina out.

“We’ll take over for the rest of the night,” Kinndy assured them. “You two go and enjoy the rest of the festival.”

“No buts,” Nomi interjected when Sylvanas opened her mouth to protest, “it's a festival, try and have a good time.”

Looking thoroughly scolded, Sylvanas turned on her heel and marched off, Jaina trailing after her. They walked silently through the streets. Sylvanas’ ears were pinned back, twitching slightly at times. She burrowed her face deeper into her scarf and picked up her pace.

Jaina was about to give up as they circled around to the outside when she saw the large ice rink that had been set up. She let out an excited gasp and grabbed Sylvanas’ arm, tugging at her until
she relented and followed Jaina over to the rental desk. “I haven’t skated in ages!” She didn’t think it was possible for Sylvanas’ ears to droop any lower but she somehow managed it. “It’ll be fun,” she assured her.

“Clearly, you and I have very different ideas on what fun is,” Sylvanas grumbled even as she took the proffered skates. Glancing over at Jaina caused any resolve she had to reject the idea to vanish. Jaina was staring at her with a pout that would put puppies to shame. With an exaggerated sigh, Sylvanas turned and skulked over to one of the benches next to the ice. She made quick work of changing into the skates, not wanting her feet to get colder then they had to.

Sylvanas stood slowly, watching as Jaina stepped onto the near empty ice and slid around gracefully like she had been born to skate. Jaina twisted and turned as she went around the rink. The elf couldn't stop the fond smile from replacing the frown that she had worn all day.

Coming to a stop, Jaina quirked a brow, “you know, the point of skating is to actually get on the ice, right?”

Sylvanas swallow hard and glared at the ice as she carefully stepped onto it. She slid forward on trembling legs, arms stretched out like wings. Sylvanas made it all of two feet on the ice before her feet betrayed her. One of her legs slid forward far to quickly and all at once she found herself landing harshly on the ice.

Jaina’s laugh filled the air as she carefully skated to Sylvanas’ side, I thought elves were supposed to be graceful?” she managed to say between laughs.

“That is when we are on solid ground, not strapped to daggers!” Sylvanas snapped as she struggled to get up.

Jaina laughed more as she positioned herself in front of Sylvanas, offering her hands, “grab my arms and I’ll pull you up.” Once Sylvanas had a good hold, Jaina tugged, heaving the down elf back up into her unsteady feet.

“Okay, I think I’m done,” Sylvanas declared sulkily. She made to pull away, only for Jaina to grin wickedly and grab her wrists tighter. Her ears pinned back, “Jaina?” And then Jaina began to skate slowly backward. “Jaina!” Sylvanas let out an undignified squeak as she was pulled along.

Seeing the genuine fear and panic in Sylvanas’ eyes, Jaina gaze softened, “you’re all right, Sylvanas,” she gave her wrists a light squeeze, “I won’t let you fall.”

And she didn’t. Jaina leads them slowly around the rink, talking Sylvanas through the motions of skating. “Keep the blades planted, don’t try and walk. Slide a foot forward, angle it and gently push.” She beamed when Sylvanas began to skate more confidently. Jaina slowly released Sylvanas’ arms, laughing when she desperately grabbed her hands.

“Don’t you dare let go of me, Jaina!” Sylvanas threatened, relaxing when Jaina simply turned and linked her arm with Sylvanas’.

“Better?”

Sylvanas nodded, concentrating fiercely on not falling down. They skated awhile longer until Sylvanas began to grumble about her sore ankles, letting Jaina lead her back over to the bench where they had left their boots. Sylvanas’ ears flicked back while she pulled off her skates, “I’m sorry if I made you feel uncomfortable,” she said softly, “that really wasn’t my intention,” she scrunched her nose in thought, “not that I had any intentions I just—“
Jaina cut her off by pulling her into a hug. She released her with a soft smile, “no harm done, Sylvanas.” She stood, collecting their skates, “I’m starving, let’s get some food.”

“I saw a Pandaran stall not too far from the rink,” Sylvanas offered, following Jaina, “they were selling peanut chicken.”

Jaina gave a hum of agreement and lead the way over to the stall. Even three stalls down, the enticing aroma of the traditional foods wafting from the Pandaran stall made Jaina’s mouth water. She stood by while Sylvanas stepped forward to order their food. Her jaw dropped slightly when the elf ordered in, as far as she could tell, perfect Pandaran. She laughed and joked with the woman behind the counter, before nodding her head towards Jaina and paying. “I didn’t know you could speak Pandaran,” Jaina said, taking her container of skewers from Sylvanas. She snorted when she saw that hers had nearly twice as many as Sylvanas’.

Sylvanas merely shrugged, taking a bite out of one of her skewers, “I assumed that you hadn’t been eating much since Winterveil, what with me not around to feed you, so she gave you some extra,” she explained before answering Jaina, “I picked up a few phrases when I lived in Pandaria with Chen.”

Jaina looked at her skeptically, “that seems like more than a few phrases.” She rolled her eyes when Sylvanas’ only response was to look pointedly at her untouched chicken. Jaina hummed in delight at the first bite. The chicken was tender and juicy, the charring from the grill only adding to the hint of ginger and soy that it had no doubt been marinaded in. And the sauce, Jaina nearly moaned as she took a bite coated thickly in the peanut sauce. It was rich and creamy, with a hint of spice. Thick enough that it clung to the chicken, yet still thin enough that if she wasn’t careful, drips of it would run down her chin. Jaina chased such a drip with a quick swipe of her tongue. She savored each piece to it’s fullest, dipping the bitten pieces of chicken into the remaining sauce. Jaina even used the accompanying snap pea to scoop up the rest.

Her meal done, Jaina turned her gaze to Sylvanas’ remaining piece. As she made to snatch it, Sylvanas stepped away, making a show of eating the last of the chicken, “you’re horrid.”

Sylvanas simply smirked, “flattery will get you nowhere.”

Contently full of chicken, the pair leisurely strolled among the stalls, talking of nothing that mattered. The weather. How good it would be to finally get back to work. New menu ideas that Sylvanas wanted to try. Sylvanas stopped suddenly, causing Jaina to bump into her. Her ears pointed straight up, quivering ever so slightly before she darted through the crowd to the stall that had caught her eye.

With a look of confusion, Jaina followed after her. The stall was nothing special, to Jaina. A simple wooden hut with a trough full of snow below the open window. “Snow Candy?” Jaina read the sign skeptically.

Sylvanas was practically vibrating next to her, “I haven't had this since I was a kid!”

Jaina watched as the older Quel’Dorei running the stall poured hot syrup onto the snow, rolling it onto sticks to pass out to the children who had just bought some. “I don't see what's so special about this, Sylvanas. It's just snow and syrup.”

Sylvanas looked like Jaina had personally offended her, “‘just’ snow and syrup? Jaina it is one of the very few things that makes winter tolerable.”

Jaina chuckled at that and stepped forward, “two please.” She took the candies, handing one off to
Sylvanas and the two continued their stroll. Out of the corner of her eye, she watched Sylvanas eat. Smiled and the delight that showed clearly on her face. “Do all elves have insatiable sweet teeth, or just you?”

“I do not have a sweet tooth,” Sylvanas scoffed, throwing her stick into a trash bin.

Jaina laughed at that, “Sylvanas, I watched to drown a croissant in honey once. I’m pretty sure that all your teeth are sweet.” She fished her phone out of her pocket to check the time, “almost midnight.” Jaina grabbed Sylvanas’ hand and began to lead her through the crowds, “I know a great place to watch the fireworks.” She led Sylvanas away for the festival proper and into the snow-covered field, up a small hill. From their vantage, they had a clear view of the bright clear sky.

They were silent while they stood huddled together against the slight wind. Below them, the rest of the crowd began the countdown.

10…

“You know, Jaina,” Sylvanas spoke quietly.

9…

“This has been the best new years.”

8…

“I usually hate it.”

7…

“But I had a great night.”

6…

“Even the skating.”

5…

“Thank you for putting up with me.”

4…

“And just know,”

3…

“That there is no one else,”

2…

“I would rather spend new years with.”

1!!!

“HAPPY NEW YEAR!” The massive cheer from below was extremely loud, even from their distance, dying out as the fireworks began.
Jaina openly stared at Sylvanas, unable to think of a response. She glanced at the rosy tips of her chilled ears, and the broad smile she wore before her gaze landed on Sylvanas’ eyes. The fireworks reflected clear in those steely blue eyes, making them appear to glow. Brilliant blue and striking green, to soft gold and burning crimson. Her stomach did flips and she moved on instinct.

She reached out and tugged at Sylvanas’ scarf, getting her to turn. She ran her thumb over the green yarn, remember how hard she had worked on it. It hadn't escaped her how Sylvanas had purposely chosen the gift that she had brought to Chens. A lot of things hadn't escaped her. Sylvanas’ insistence on feeding her. The special smile that she seemed to reserve for her and her alone. How she would go out of her way to make sure that Jaina was taken care of. So many things that had made Jaina blush with what she had assumed was embarrassment. Gods she was a fool.

Carefully, Jaina grabbed hold of the scarf with her other hand as well and used it to pull Sylvanas down the few inches to her face, and kissed her softly. Sylvanas tensed at the contact but soon found herself relaxing, those striking eyes falling closed as she slowly wrapped her arms around Jaina waist, pulling her close while she returned the kiss.

It was slow and gentle. A kiss that spoke more clearly than any words ever could and Jaina found herself melting into it. For a moment, the world was simple. It was only the two of them, the soft snow, and the fire in the sky.

All too quickly, the rest of the world flooded back. The fireworks had ended and the crowd applauded. Sylvanas took a few steps back. The darkness of the night shrouded her face from view and as Jaina opened her mouth to say her name, she turned on her heel and hurried away back down the hill.

Jaina watched her go in silence. She brought a trembling hand to her lips. Gods, she could still feel the warmth of Sylvanas’ lips against her own. Her stomach did flips and she wrapped her free arm around herself and shivered. Her mind was warring with itself, equal parts elated and horrified. “What have I done.”
Quick little edit here, I'll prolly go back and make a proper link later but; The biggest shout out to slackergami over on tumblr for their amazing art!


http://slackergami.tumblr.com/post/182421419925/from-a-sylvaina-fic-that-i-really-like-table-for

Hop on over and show them some love!

“It was only a kiss,” Jaina told herself for what had to be the thousandth time since New Years. She hadn't seen or heard from Sylvanas since the kiss. Not for lack of trying. Jaina had sent her a text every day with no response. She had thought that might have helped to keep her mind away from the kiss, Sylvanas clearly ignoring her.

But Sylvanas had kissed her back. Jaina brought a finger to her lips, another new habit. Sylvanas HAD kissed her back, she hadn't imagined that. She had kissed her and held her close, tight, protectively. Jaina could still feel the ghost of Sylvanas’ hands upon her back, like a brand. No, not like a brand, More like the soft touch of a summer breeze. And her lips? Soft and pliant, smooth like a tide tumbled stone. But Sylvanas had run off. She had kissed Jaina back and then taken off like an angry cat.

Jaina groaned in exasperation, rubbing her hands over her face. “We are adults! Not nervous teenagers,” she grumbled into her silent apartment. She stood straighter, tilting her chin up, “and we are going to have an adult conversation about this!”

Putting on the shirt she found, marched her way out of her apartment and down into the kitchen. Pausing for just a moment in the backroom, Jaina squared her shouldered and entered the kitchen. “Sylvanas!” she called. No response. “Sylvanas, really, come on,” Jaina sighed as she rounded the stoves. She fully expected Sylvanas to be brooding away at one of the prep tables, only to find Milaada alone in the kitchen.

“Good morning, Miss Proudmoore,” Milaada smiled softly, “how were your holidays?”

Jaina leaned to the side to peer around the Draenei to make sure that Sylvanas wasn't hiding behind her. “They were good, but I’m glad to be back,” she frowned, “is Sylvanas not here yet?”

Milaada shook her head, pulling a tray of buns from the oven, “no, I haven’t seen Chef Windrunner yet.”

Jaina worried her hands together, frowning deeply, “that isn’t like her at all.”

“Maybe the snow has delayed her,” Milaada offered.

“Yes,” Jaina nodded, “yes that must be it. Thank you. Thank you,” she turned quickly and made
for her office.

She reorganized her desk twice and tapped through the same emails while she waited. Every new set of footsteps had her jumping out of her chair and poking her head out into the hall, hoping to see Sylvanas. Each time she had to force down her disappointment and worry, returning to pretending to get work down.

Twenty minutes into the lunch service, Jaina heard the back door slam. Carefully, she made her way to the kitchen door and glanced through the small window. Sylvanas stood at the order window a moment, looking over the orders before she began to shout them out. The staff looked shocked. Sylvanas hadn’t spoken that harshly in months, she had calmed to a tone that bordered on being almost polite.

Jaina winced in sympathy and backed away from the door. Any and all thoughts of having an adult conversation with the chef fled her mind in a rush. She knew from long-suffering experience that Sylvanas did a poor job of holding rational conversations when she was angry.

Giving up, Jaina quickly out of a calm face and made her way to the front. She pointedly ignored the questioning look Pained gave her and settled into working the bar.

Come the dinner service, Sylvanas’ mood had not improved in the slightest. Jaina his at the front. Refusing to go anywhere near the kitchen. With an exaggerated sigh, Pained grabbed her arm and dragged her to her office before continuing to the kitchen.

Jaina could here her and Sylvanas shouting for but a moment before Pained returned with Othon in close behind. “Sit,” Pained left no room for argument as Jaina took her seat, nodding for Othon to close the door.

“Alright,” Othon started, crossing his arms, “what happen between da two o ya?”

“I beg your pardon?” Jainas eyes narrowed slightly.

“You am da Chef,” he continued. “Tings ad been goin so well. Da two o ya was so close.” Othon and Pained shared a look before he added, “and I’ll admit, da two o us was so close ta winning da pool.”

“Pool? What pool,” Jaina ground out.

Pained rolled her eyes and shoved Othon aside, “Chen’s romance pool,” she stayed with a shrug as if it was the most normal thing in the world.

Jaina blinked, her jaw working slowly before she found her voice, “so let me get this straight. You’ve been betting money on me?”

“Of course, the two of you getting together was just a matter of time with how she fawns over you. So we figured that we might as well make some money,” Pained carried on, “I had two bets, she’d kiss you, you’d panic and slap her. And that you two would get together within the year.”

Jaina stared at the two in shock, “how many of the staff are in on this?”

“All of them,” came their unison reply.

Jaina flushes crimson, “even Kinndy?”

“Kinndy had two-hundred dollars on you two banging before you even started dating,” Pained
replied flatly.

“What about Milaada? Surely Milaada hasn’t—“

“Milaada jumped at da incentive to get da two o ya togtha,” Othon cut her off, “she be tinkling dat you two make a cute couple.” He chuckled when Jaina buried her face in her hands. “Da two o ya work great togtha, you can’t be denyin dat. An I saw ya at de festival. Ya was so close. So I be askin ya again, what happen?”

“I kissed her,” Jaina grumbled into her hands, “I kissed her and then she just took off.” She looked up, eyes pleading, “why would she do that?”

Othon’s shoulders slumped and he rubbed at the back of his neck. “Ah,” he sighed, “I had a feelin she might pull dis. Sylvanas is well,” he twirled his hand, searching for the word, “Sylvanas. She has trouble dealin wit certain tings. Namely her emotions. I be sure ya noticed dat much.”

He grabbed her shoulders, shaking her slightly to get her to look at him, “listen, Sylvanas is stubborn. Ya gotta fix dis, Jaina.”

“For your bet?” Jaina sneered.

Othon shrugged, “aye, for da bet. But more den dat, ya gotta fix dis for ya happiness. Both o ya.”

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Jaina waited until closing time to even consider talking to Sylvanas. The staff were all starting to head out for the night, opting to use the front door to avoid Sylvanas. They each wished Jaina good luck as they passed which did precious little to settle her nerves.

Jaina paced up and down the hall, mentally preparing herself. With a deep breath, Jaina pushed open the door and entered the kitchen.

Sylvanas stood with her back to the door. Her ears were pinned back as she worked away at some last minute prep. She moved her knife with rapid precision, making quick work of the onion she was slicing.

“Sylvanas,” Jaina said, loud enough to be heard over the furious chopping. She watched the subtle twitch of an ear, the telltale sign that she had been heard, but was now being ignored. “Sylvanas listen to me,” a hint of irritation in her voice. She waited, tapping her foot until one of Sylvanas ears perked up. “I want to talk about that kiss.”

Sylvanas didn’t stop her work when she replied, “why?”

Jaina bristled, “because we are adults and shouldn’t be taking our problems out on our staff!”

“No,” Sylvanas stabbed the tip of her knife into the cutting board and spun around to level her gaze at Jaina, “no, why did you kiss me?” Her ears twitched nervously and her brow furrowed.

Jaina stared at her, observing her body language closely before she responded. “Because I wanted to. It felt right. I still think it felt right.”

Sylvanas’ ears drooped slightly, her hard glare faltering, “so you only wanted me?”

“Yes,” Jaina said quickly. She watched as Sylvanas seemed to deflate. She shook her head, “yes but, no. Sylvanas what are you talking about?”
“No one JUST kisses me without wanting something,” Sylvanas snapped, “and never like that. Always hungry and passionate with the promise of pleasure,” she ignored how Jaina blushed, crossing her arms.

Jaina blinked in confusion, “you’ve never been kissed, just to be kissed?”

Sylvanas shook her head, curling into herself, “no, never.” Her ears pressed back against her skull, “I don’t know how to feel about this Jaina,” she admitted quietly. “I don’t know how to feel about this Jaina. I don’t know what we,” she pointed between them, “are supposed to be. Are we just business partners? Friends? I don’t know. I’ve never felt like this like I’m melting from the inside. I’ve never wanted to be around someone as much as I do you, I’ve never been,” her voice trailed off.

“In a relationship,” Jaina finished for her. She was surprised. How could such a kind beautiful women have managed to stay single? How had no one jumped at the chance to be with her, not just physically? Jaina took a few steps forward, “Well I have, and I can help you figure out that melting feeling,” Jaina offered. “Would it help to know that, I really like you? Like really really like you. That I think I e liked you for months. That I think you are a wonderful, strong caring woman and I adore spending time with you. I would like to spend more time with you.”

Sylvanas backed herself up into the table when Jaina crowded into her space. She absently thumbed at the material of the shirt Jaina was wearing to distract herself, “You’re wearing my shirt,” she observed quietly.

Jaina looked down at the shirt and hummed, “so I am. I didn’t even notice.” She looked up at Sylvanas, smiling softly, “And how does that make you feel?”

“Happy?” Sylvanas’ ears twitched slightly as she thought, holding the shirt a little tighter, “possessive?”

Jaina smiled a little more, “well I kissed you because you make me happy, ass that you are, you make me so happy. And I think, I make you happy, too.” She ran her hand along Sylvanas’ arm in a soothing way, “new things can be scary, believe me, I know, but that doesn’t mean that you have to literally run away from them. No matter what has happened, you are allowed to be happy Sylvanas.”

Sylvanas’ eyes narrowed as she rolled Jainas words through her head. Her ears fell back as she relaxed while she lightly tugged at the shirt.

“What are you thinking now, Sylvanas?” Jaina asked quietly.

“I’m thinking that I want to try and be happy,” came her reply.

Jaina leaned closer, “then go ahead.”

Sylvanas brought one of her hands up to gently hold Jaina’s chin, tilting her face up to lean down to kiss Jaina. It was a soft meeting of lips, slow and languid. Sylvanas allowed her eyes to slid closed, pulling Jaina just a little closer after releasing her chin. When Jaina brought a hand up to cup her cheek, Sylvanas found herself leaning into her palm.

Jaina was the first to lean back the kiss. She ran her thumb along Sylvanas’ cheekbone soothingly before wrapping her arms around her, resting her head against the taller woman's shoulder. “How was that? No expectation, just a kiss. Didn’t have to mean anything,” Jaina asked.

Sylvanas was quiet for a moment, enjoying the feeling of having Jaina so close, “but what if I want
“it to?” she swallowed hard, “what if I want us to be more than just business partners.” Her words were quiet, like she was afraid of Jainas possible rejects, despite her earlier words.

Jaina chuckled lightly and hugged Sylvanas tighter, “then I suppose that we want the same thing.” She leaned back to kiss Sylvanas again, just a light peck, but that little action caused a smile to stretch across her face and Jaina couldn’t help but kiss her a third time. “I think I can get used to this,” Jaina sighed, returning her head to Sylvanas’ shoulder.

“Me too,” Sylvanas said softly, nuzzling her nose into Jaina’s hair, “me too.”
It had been a few weeks since Jaina had cornered Sylvanas, made her face her feelings, but it had been wonderful. Jaina had taken every opportunity she could to kiss her new girlfriend. She nearly danced her chair at that thought. Sylvanas was her girlfriend. They were dating. She could kiss her as much as she wanted, whenever she wanted, and she could.

Sylvanas was opening up more and more. Everyday Sylvanas would find reasons to come and see Jaina. Just to hug her or be near her. Rarely did Sylvanas kiss Jaina, but when she did, Jaina felt like the luckiest woman on Azeroth. Each little show of affection was like a treasured gift.

But today was different. Jaina hadn’t see Sylvanas all day. When she had tried to go and say good morning, she was met by Othon quickly ushering her out of the kitchen from which she was barred for the day.

Jaina slumped back in her chair running her fingers through her bangs with a sigh. She couldn't figure out what she had done to push Sylvanas away. It had been eating away at her all day. She hadn’t been too needy, had she? Was she being too affectionate for Sylvanas to handle? Was she not affectionate enough?

Huffing out a sigh, Jaina clicked open the reservations on her computer. Love is in the Air was a week away and Jaina had been looking over the reservations almost obsessively. Booked solid the entire day. Jaina was overwhelmed. Theramore had never been booked solid. Jaina knew that she should be happy, overjoyed even. She was, really she was. This was a good thing, an amazing thing. It meant that Theramore was thriving. And Jaina was happy, but her mind was stuck on Sylvanas and her distance.

Jaina was pulled from her thoughts by a booming voice calling her name. Jaina’s face paled. Chen. She knocked her chair to the ground as she rushed to the door to lock it. But not fast enough as the door flew open and Chen barreled his way in.

“Jaina!” Chen easily picked her up in a crushing bear-hug. He shook her and laughed, the joyful sound booming in her ears, “congratulations on finally getting together!” He laughed again as he set her down, “I will admit, you two had me worried but-- ow!” he rubbed at his shoulder where Jaina had just punched him, “violence, Jaina? I think I’ve changed my mind. She’s a bad influence on you.”

Jaina couldn't help the laugh that bubbled forth as she punched his shoulder again, “you bet money on us!”

Chen grinned and halfhearted knocked her fist aside as she took another light swing, “I did no such thing. your staff did,” he tapped a hand to his chest, “I was merely the go-between. The bookie, I think you call it.” He smiled and picked up Jaina's chair and taking a seat. “So,” he started when Jaina took the other seat, “how has it been?”

“Good,” Jaina smiled fondly, “it's good. She's good. Great even.”

Chen glanced at the still open screen and blinked in shock, “wow, you're really picking up.”

Jaina nodded, “it's all thanks to Sylvanas. She’s really turned everything around.”

“I wouldn’t say that she is the only reason,” Chen crossed his arms and tilted his head, “sure, her food brings them in. But you are the face of Theramore. The people know you. They come for
you.”

Jaina hummed at that, “I suppose,” the thought hadn't occurred to her, that customers would come for any reason other than the food. She leaned back, feeling oddly lighter. “How about you? How is the brewery going?”

“Better than I had dreamed,” Chen grinned, “I’ve had to hire on more staff. Brews going out the door almost faster than I can brew it.” He hummed, “but I’m getting that itch again.”

Jaina smiled softly, “need to start traveling again?”

“Aye, it's something that Sylvanas and I have in common. The wanderlust,” Chen replied. His face softened when he noticed how Jaina seemed to deflate at his words, “but I think you have really settled her down. She seems happy here with you.”

Jaina tucked her head down and smiled bashfully, “thank you.” She cleared her throat, “where do you think you’ll go?”

“Suramar. Since Sylvanas talked it up so much, I want to see what all the fuss is about,” He smiled, “I can afford to take a vacation now that I have a few apprentices under my wing.” He paused and looked up at the clock, blinking in shock again, “is that the time?” He gave another great booming laugh, “I should be going. I told my apprentice I would only be gone a short while.”

Jaina laughed with him, “you’re terrible Chen.”

“The worst,” he agreed, giving Jaina another hug, “don't work yourselves too hard.”

“Same to you,” Jaina smiled, walking him to the door.

Jaina helped close down for the night, helping with the evening tea. She locked the door after the last waitress left, leaned her forehead against the cool glass. She sighed through her nose and turned and marched her way into the kitchen. She crossed her arms as she watched Sylvanas whip around the kitchen in a whirlwind of activity. “Is my banishment over?” Jaina asked, struggling to keep the hint of amusement out of her voice.

Sylvanas froze and looked over her shoulder, a delighted grin on her face, “Sorry I got inspiration and couldn’t have you distracting me.”

Jaina cocked a brow as Sylvanas walked over to her, “and how exactly do I do that?” She blinked in surprise when the elf leaned down and kissed her.

“Because every time I see you I just want to kiss you,” Sylvanas replied softly.

Jaina blushed, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, “so, what did you get inspiration for?”

“The set menu for Love is in the Air,” Sylvanas replied as she hurried over to the prep table she had been using.

“That’s great, wait,” Jaina looked at her skeptically, “you told me you had that menu planned out months ago!”

“I lied,” Sylvanas laughed lightly, turning back to Jaina, “I had other things on my mind,” she grinned.

Jaina sighed lightly, shaking her head, “Alright, what is it?” She let out a startled sound as she
struggled to catch the small object that Sylvanas tossed at her without a word of warning. After giving her girlfriend a glare, Jaina looked down at her hands to find—a chocolate?

“A symphony of chocolate,” Sylvanas announced in a dramatic flare of her hands.

Jaina snorted a laugh, “I thought you didn’t have a sweet tooth?”

Sylvanas gave Jaina her best pout, popping her own chocolate into her mouth, “chocolate can be savory as well as sweet,” she reasoned simply, “if you know what you’re doing.” She hastily cleared off the table as she continued, “I just finished finalizing the recipes and I need someone to try them, and who better than my girlfriend.” Sylvanas froze, a small stack of papers in her hands. Her ears flicked back, shaking slightly with nerves. “Is that okay, that I call you that?” She asked, those same nerves clear in her voice.

Jaina smiled, her cheeks flushing, “that’s what I am, aren’t I?” She walked over to the table and took her seat, “I’ve been calling you that.”

Her words seemed to relax Sylvanas, her ears peeking back up, “yeah,” she placed a light kiss on the younger woman’s cheek and hurried off to bring the first course over.

“It all starts with a salad,” Sylvanas explained, placing the plate down in front of Jaina, “a simple baby green salad topped with chopped strawberries and a crumble of feta cheese, served with a healthy drizzle of chocolate balsamic vinaigrette.”

Jaina stared down at the plate before her in amazement. The greens her fresh and vibrant, playing well with the bright red of the berries, and the vinaigrette looked more like a chocolate sauce than a salad dressing. She made sure to get a little bit of everything in the first bite. It was a burst of flavors, all melding together. The saltiness of the feta played well with the sweetness as the strawberries and the dressing. Jaina let out a delighted hum as she set aside her fork, her plate clear.

“Maybe a few more strawberries?” Jaina suggested, “there didn't seem to be enough.”

Sylvanas gave a nod of understanding before heading to the stove. Jaina watched as she fried what looked like a little packet in butter before plating it with a sauce and returning to the table. Jaina eyed the dark brown pasta skeptically, “and what is this?”

“Chocolate ravioli,” Sylvanas answered, “not enough cocoa powder to overpower it, but enough to lend the slight bitterness to the dish.”

“Ground zucchini with breadcrumbs. And before you ask, the sauce is just a simple bechamel.”

Jaina swirled half the ravioli through the sauce and took a bite. Where the chocolate was the star in the salad, it acted in a supporting role for the pasta. The taste was there, but barely. Enough that she could taste it, pleasantly, but not enough that she would be able to place it had she not known it was there. The zucchini filling carried the dish. It had been seasoned wonderfully and carried with it a spiciness that was quickly soothed by the creamy bechamel sauce. Everything balanced together perfectly and Jaina couldn't stop the glare that she sent at Sylvanas, “why is there only one?”

Sylvanas chuckled, “because that is only course two. There's still and the main dish to come.” Replacing Jainas plate with a new one, Sylvanas explained, “for the main course, we will be serving coffee and chocolate braised short ribs, served atop a bed of mushroom and pumpkin risotto, A staple in the more southern parts of Quel’thalas.”
Jaina set the pair of ribs, coated thickly in the sauce of reduced braising liquid, aside in favor of starting with the risotto. The rice was rich and creamy, interspersed with the sauteed mushroom, adding a variation to the texture. The pumpkin taste was strong, yet mellowed by the accompanying herbs and became something entirely different when she mixed in some of the runoff sauce from the ribs. The sauce was just thick enough to blend perfectly with the consistency of the risotto without thinning it out and added a delightful level of sweetness. Finally, the risotto gone save for a few stray pieces of rice that refused to get onto her fork, Jaina went for the ribs. They were so tender that they all but fell off the bone. Tender and bursting with flavor, the coffee and chocolate having soaked deep into the meat during the cooking, lent to what had to be the best ribs Jaina had ever had. When she was done, she valiantly went back for the rice stragglers, drawing a deep laugh from Sylvanas.

“Well now, I hope you saved room for dessert?” She grinned at the way Jaina’s face lit up as she placed before her a single tart. “A dark chocolate mousse tart with a topping of drunken strawberry sauce?”

“Drunken?” Jaina tore her eyes away from the tart.

Sylvanas nodded, “the strawberries were poached in red wine. Then I allowed them to reduce before pureeing the berries and finishing it with a bit more wine.”

With a brief nod of understanding, Jaina tucked in, cutting out a piece. She did her best to savor it. To let the flavors sing across her tongue. She had never had a dessert made by Sylvanas, and Jaina quickly decided that that was a good thing. It was sinfully delicious. The mousse was light and fluffy, yet stable enough to hold the thick sauce on top of it without it being squished out of the cut crust. The crust was tender, yet firm with just a light sweetness to it. The mousse, clearly the focal point, carried the bitter-sweet richness of the chocolate to new heights, and Jaina had to eat a few spoons of it on its own, just to get the full taste. The strawberry sauce was thick and bursting with flavor. The wine wasn’t overpowering and lent a sort of warmth the whole dessert.

Jaina stopped short of licking her plate clean, before taking a quick glance at Sylvanas. Best she know well and truly what she was getting into well ahead, and Jaina was nothing, if not a lover of food. She picked up the plate and polished it with long licks, making sure that nothing was left behind.

Sylvanas’ gaze burned into Jaina as she watched the display. She waited as Jaina took her dishes to the pit, tilting her head when she returned, “you have some chocolate on your lips,” she said softly, placing her hands on either side of Jaina, effectively pinning her to the edge of the table, “let me that that for you.” She kissed Jaina then, softly at first, ears perking at the soft Jaina made when she ran her tongue along her bottom lip, collecting the chocolate there before pressing more firmly against her lips.

Jaina responded in kind, opening her lips to Sylvanas’ advances, whimpering into the kiss as it deepened. Her eyes shut against the feeling, her face flushing, her arms wrapped around Sylvanas’ neck. Sylvanas’ tongue explored her mouth languidly, swirling around her tongue until Jaina responded with equal enthusiasm.

Tilting her head back, Jaina gasped for air, her mind hazy. She bit her lip to hold back the small moan that threatened to fall from her kiss-swollen lips as Sylvanas nipped and kissed her way along her jaw and down her neck. Warm hands pulled her shirt from her pants, sliding under the fabric, burning their way up her sides slowly, cupping the swell her breasts.

Jaina’s eyes shot open, her body freezing. “Stop,” her voice caught in her throat, “Sylvanas stop!” She shoved at her ducking her head down and squeezing her eyes shut against the tears that were
burning at them, “I cant. I’m sorry. I can't.”

Sylvanas pulled her hands away as fast as she could. She watched with mounting worry as Jaina seemed to shut down. “Jaina?” she kept her voice soft, yet letting her worry read clear, “Jaina, can you look at me?”

When Jaina opened her eyes, she expected to be met with veiled anger, or disappointment, But all she was met with, was concern.

Sylvanas reached out hesitantly before thinking better of the action and letting her hand fall to her side, “I'm sorry, Jaina. I didn't know this would be too soon and I--”

“Stop,” Jaina cut her off, her eyes darting to the side as she wrapped her arms around herself, “it's just me. If you want to we can.” She made to start undoing her shirt, gasping when Sylvanas grabbed her hands to stop her.

“No, not if you aren’t ready,” Sylvanas’ voice was firm, leaving no room for argument, “I may be new to this, but I know that just because I would like something, doesn't mean that you have to give it to me.” She let her voice get softer, running her thumb soothingly over Jaina’ knuckles, “we’ll slow down, Jaina, as slow as you need.”

That was enough to break Jaina. She clung desperately to Sylvanas, burying her face against her neck. Her body shook with silent sobs and she clung even tighter when Sylvanas responded by wrapping her arms around Jaina. Holding her close.

Sylvanas ran her fingers slowly through Jainas hair, rocking them gently. Only when Jaina seemed to calm down, did Sylvanas speak, trying to keep her voice as soft as possible, “what do you want right now, Jaina?”

“I think,” Jaina leaned back, rubbing at her eyes, “I just want to go to bed.”

Sylvanas nodded in understanding, “Alright. go on, I’ll finish closing and I’ll see you in the morning.”

At that, Jaina clung to Sylvanas tighter. “Don’t go,” she begged, “I… I want you to stay. I just want to be held, if you wouldn’t mind.”

“I can do that,” Sylvanas assured her. They finished the close as quickly as they could before making their way up to Jainas apartment.

Jaina found an old pair of pajamas for Sylvanas and changed in her room. When she came out, Sylvanas was setting up the couch. She shifted from foot to foot, “I, kind of meant in my bed.”

Sylvanas furrowed her brow but followed Jaina regardless. She was careful as she slid into bed behind Jaina, cautiously wrapping her arm around Jainas stomach, “is this okay?”

Jaina nodded, pressing herself closer to Sylvanas, “yeah.”

“What was her name?” Sylvanas asked when sleep wouldn’t take her.

Jaina let out a small laugh, “Arthas.”

Sylvanas blinked, “oh, sorry. And… he made you think this way? That you had to—“

“Yes.”
A long silence followed. Sylvanas held Jaina tighter, anger crept into her voice, “Did he hurt you?”

Jaina shook her head, “not in the way that you’re thinking.” She worried her lip between her teeth, threading her fingers with Sylvanas’, “he pressured me to “put out” and then dumped me when I did.” She took a breath, might as well go keep going, “Kalec was better, he was kind, but he got tired of waiting. And Thrall and I just were t a good fit.”

“Thrall?” Sylvanas balked.

Jaina chuckled, rolling over to snuggle closer to the elf, “jealous?” She teased, trying to lighten the mood.

Sylvanas’ response was to hold her tighter, nuzzling her face in Jainas hair, “not in the slightest.”

Sylvanas smothered a yawn in Jainas hair, “Jaina, If I ever do anything that you aren’t comfortable with, I want you to tell me right away. Okay? I want to be good too you. The best. But you need to help me. I don’t want to be another name on your list of bad ex’s.”

Jaina tilted her head and kissed Sylvanas softly, “Just you saying that already excludes you from that list.”
Stay for Dinner?

“Fall in,” Sylvanas called to the staff from where she stood next to Jaina in Theramore’s dining room. She looked every part a general. Her jacket was immaculate as always and hugged her body comfortable as she stood with her back straight, arms held behind her back. “Today is the busiest day of the year for any restaurant. It is even more important, as I am sure that it will be the busiest day in Theramore’s life. We have to be ready for anything. Any problems or complaints must be dealt with swiftly and calmly,” her words drew an eye roll from Jaina. “Stick to your stations and your areas and everything will run smoothly.”

She turned her attention to the hosts, “we are to accept no walk-ins, under any circumstances. Even if a reservation is late, or there is a cancelation. Am I clear?”

“Yes, chef!”

With a nod, the staff split to their sections. Sylvanas paused on her way to the kitchen to give Jaina a chaste kiss on the cheek, her authoritative persona melting away for but a moment, “you’ve got this, Jaina. Take a breath.”

Jaina nodded as Sylvanas hurried off to the kitchen. Adjusting her blouse, Jaina did just that and took a deep breath. She could hear the first of the customers waiting just outside the door. They hadn’t even opened yet and already people were nearly crowding the door, anxious to get inside.

With one final calming breath, that last moment of peace Jaina would have that day, Jaina unlocked the door, and let in the hungry customers.

It really was the busiest day that Theramore had ever had. Couples filed in and out in an orderly fashion. They were seated and fed, and out the door with only moments to clean before the next couple was lead in. The smoothness was due in no small part to Sylvanas’ set menu. With no choice, the customers merely had to state to their server when they were ready to begin their starter and the rest was near automatic.

It was busy work. Exhausting, even. But Jaina felt a lightness that she hadn't felt in years. She was prosperous. They were prosperous. Throughout the day she found her eyes drawn almost magnetically to the kitchen where Sylvanas was no doubt putting her staff through their paces. Yet, no shouting could be heard. It was almost eerily silent, save for the sound of the door.

Several times, Jaina had to catch herself from wandering down the hall and into the kitchen. Just to see how things could be running so smoothly, yet so quietly. But each time she managed to stop herself with the thought of whatever spell having fallen over the kitchen would be broken by her intrusion. No, Jaina just had to keep her curiosity in check and ask questions when she got the chance.

Love is in the Air went by in a whirlwind. Before Jaina really knew what was going on, the last of the customers were making their way out the door. Jaina all but slammed the door behind them, locking it just as quickly, lest they try to come back for more. Exhausted, Jaina allowed herself to slid down the door to rest on the floor.

For the first time since they had opened in the morning, Theramore was silent. But that silence didn't last long as the tired waitstaff erupted into celebratory cheers. Jaina couldn’t help but join them as Erasan helped her back to her feet. “Kinndy, go and get the kitchen staff,” she grinned, “I think that this calls for some champagne.”
Jaina and Erasan made quick work of opening a few bottles of champagne as the kitchen staff tiredly filed in. Sylvanas came and stood beside her, just close enough for their hands to touch. Jaina sighed through her nose and wrapped her arm around the taller woman's waist, pulling their bodies flush together.

She gratefully accepted the glass of champagne that Erasan handed her, raising it in a toast. “Today went far smoother than I could have ever hoped it to. And it is thanks to all of you. I couldn't ever ask for a better team. So all work so hard to make Theramore the best that it can be and for that, I thank you all.”

“I've made sure that there was enough left over for you all to have a portion of tonight's meal,” Sylvanas added, “so go and eat. You're all more than earned it.”

Sylvanas and Jaina passed on the food, opting instead to get right to cleaning the kitchen while the staff ate their meal. Jaina was distracted while they worked away at the dishes. Aside from the one kiss on her cheek, Sylvanas had pulled away nearly all contact with Jaina. Wouldn’t kiss her, wouldn't her. Jaina had to initiate all contact.

More than a few time while they cleaned the kitchen, Sylvanas would flinch away after accidentally brushing against Jaina. It hurt Jaina, but she understood her change in attitude perfectly. Sylvanas was just being cautious. Afraid to take things to far. To push Jaina to much.

The final clean was expedited once the staff had finished their meals and crowded into the kitchen to help. When Jaina returned to the kitchen, Sylvanas was standing by the dish pit. Her arms her crossed tightly over her chest, eyes cast down, ears twitching nervously. “Sylvanas?” Jaina approached her slowly, “is everything okay?”

“Yes,” Sylvanas’ voice was quiet and she tapped her fingers absently against her arm. Her ears flicked back and she glanced at Jaina, “I was just wondering. Would you like to come over for dinner? Maybe a movie?” Sylvanas’ ears pinned back even further as her eyes snapped up to meet Jaina, “but if you don't have to if you don't want to. I just mean that it would be nice to cook for you in a more intimate setting.” Sylvanas’ eyes widened and she tried to shrink back against the sink, “not… not intimate like that! Just… home cooking, at a proper table. It would be nice to hang around outside of Theramore and--”

Sylvanas’ rant was cut off by Jaina placing a gentle hand on the back of the elf's neck to pull her down into a kiss. Jaina smiled against her lips, scratching her nails lightly against the base of Sylvanas’ skull to help calm her, “that sounds wonderful. Let me go and get changed and we can head out, okay?” She waited for Sylvanas to nod in agreement before making her way to her apartment.

When Jaina came back down, Sylvanas was waiting in her car. She looked nervous. Slumped down in her seat, one ear flicked back. “So, where too?” she asked as she buckled herself in.

“Across town,” Sylvanas replied, starting up her car. She gave an apologetic look to Jaina, “it might be a very late dinner.”

“Nothing to be sorry for,” Jaina assured her. She grinned, “besides, I’d be lying if I said I wasn't curious about what your apartment looks like.”

They drove in silence, only broken by Jaina humming along quietly to the radio. She kept a watchful eye on Sylvanas, making sure that she seemed to be actually okay with bringing Jaina into her home.
She parked in the small lot and let Jaina into the building, leading her up to her apartment on the top floor. “Make yourself at home,” Sylvanas shrugged off her coat as she let Jaina inside and made her way to her room, “I'm going to get changed, and then I’ll get started on dinner.”

“Okay,” Jaina called back as the bedroom door closed.

Kicking off her boots, Jaina walked further into the apartment, taking it all in. The living room was an open concept, attached directly to the kitchen, with a kitchen table serving as a divider between the two spaces. The walls had been painted a soft grey, that matched well with the exposed brick wall that held the living room window. A couch, a few shelves full of awards and little trinkets and large tv. It all screamed of someone who preferred a minimalistic lifestyle, the exact opposite of Jainas apartment. Made her look like a packrat by comparison.

She turned quickly when Sylvanas returned to the kitchen dressed in comfortable jeans and a loose tank top. “So,” Jaina started as she came to sit at the table, “what’s for dinner?”

Picking through her fridge, Sylvanas replied, “I was thinking garlic bread and chicken parm.” She gathered all her ingredients and beat a bowl of eggs.

“Garlic for a first date? Quite the risky move, don’t you think?” Jaina teased.

Sylvanas nearly dropped the package of chicken she was holding, “you agree? This is a date?”

Jaina laughed, “well it is, isn’t it? A nice quiet first date;”

“Yeah,” Sylvanas nodded, sounding relieved, “I suppose it is.” She butterflied four chicken breasts, slicing out a small portion of each to set aside. She stuffed each with a mixture of cheese and spinach, closing them with toothpicks. Each one was dipped in flour, then the eggs, then breadcrumbs, before being placed in a skillet of hot oil.

They were fried on both sides until they were nice and golden before Sylvanas put a scoop of sauce onto each and covered them in the more of the cheese before placing the whole skillet in the oven to bake.

Jaina’s attention was pulled from Sylvanas preparing the garlic bread by a soft meowing from the hallway. She cranes her neck to see as the meow came again. Standing at the end of the hall was Muffin. He stared at Jaina with his green eyes, wide, ears up and alert. “I didn’t know you had a cat,” Jaina commented.

“Really?” Sylvanas looked over her shoulder at Jaina, “I talk about him all the time. That’s Muffin.”

Jaina couldn’t help herself, she threw her head back and laughed. “Oh! Tides, that makes so much more sense! I thought you were just really passionate about baked goods!”

As her laughter petered out, Jaina crouched down in the floor facing Muffin. She reached out her hand, rubbing her fingers together while making little clicking sounds with her tongue.

Sylvanas chuckled, “don’t worry too much if he didn’t come right to you. Muffin isn’t a big fan of strangers.”

Almost as if in challenge of his person’s words, Muffin ran to Jaina. He bumped his head excitedly against her hand, his stumpy little tail practically vibrating in delight. Muffin purred loudly as Jaina happily rubbed at his ears.
“Well, I’ll be,” Sylvanas smiles as she pulled the food out, “guess that means I have to keep you around.”

Jaina grinned back at her as she took the little plate of plain chicken Sylvanas handed to her, “seems like it,” she placed the plate down for Muffin and took her seat at the table, “wouldn’t want to break the little guy's heart.”

She looked down at the plate that Sylvanas set in front of her and inhaled the strong smells of garlic and parmesan. “This smells amazing, Sylvanas,” Jaina complimented with a fond smile before she began to eat. Jaina started with a large piece of garlic bread on the side of her plate. Sylvanas had tossed the rest of the cheese onto the bread before toasting them in the oven. She bit into with a loud crunch. The flavor of garlic washed over Jainas tongue with the after taste of the warm butter that held it. It was salty from the cheese and Jaina had to force herself to set it down, lest she eat it all and have nothing to mop up the sauce with.

Across from her, Sylvanas laughed, “do you want me to give you and the garlic bread some alone time?” she teased lightly. She motioned to Jainas chicken with her knife, “hurry up before the crust gets too soggy.”

The chicken still made a soft crunch when Jaina cut a piece from it. The tomato sauce had soaked into the top of the crust, leading to a variety of textures with the first bite. The chicken was tender and juicy, protected by the crust and the spinach and cheese inside had cooked into a creamy filling. The acidity of the sauce balanced out the strong flavors of the different cheeses perfectly, rounding the whole dish into a perfect array of flavor.

Jainas fork clattered to her empty plate when she was finished and she leaned back with a contented sigh, “that was so good.”

“I know,” Sylvanas picked up Jainas plate and deposited it in the sink, “did you save room for dessert?”

Jaina perked up at that, “there's more?”

“It’s nothing special,” Sylvanas shrugged, preparing two small plates and popping them in the microwave, “just a little something I had left over.” She pulled a container out of the freezer and placed a scoop of ice cream on top of each warm confection before giving Jaina her plate.

“A brownie?” Jaina cut into the chocolatey square, dipping it in the surprisingly soft vanilla ice cream.

“A red bean brownie,” Sylvanas corrected, “makes you feel like you're being healthy because there is a bean in it.”

At the first bite, Jaina nearly fainted over the table. She had thought that the chocolate in the tart had been to die for, but it didn't even begin to hold a candle to what had appeared to be a humble brownie. It was by far the gooiest, chocolatey-est, richest brownie Jaina had ever had. With the ice cream slowly melting over it, it only became softer. And the ice cream! Smooth and creamy, nothing like the usual store bought carton. Jaina looked at Sylvanas almost reverently, “did you make this ice cream?”

“Oh course I did,” Sylvanas smiled proudly as she cleared the table. “Do you mind setting up a movie while I clean up?”

“Where I’m from, we go by the rule of whoever doesn't cook has to clean,” Jaina offered.
“You’re a guest, Jaina,” Sylvanas pointed out, “I’m not going to make you clean. Just pick a good movie.”

“Alright,” Jaina relented and walked over to the couch to start up Netflix. When she sat down, she couldn't help but notice the elf's laptop open on the coffee table. She tapped the mouse to exit the screen saver and snorted a laugh at the searches that had been left open in her browser. Date ideas. Food for a date. How to date.

“What are you snickering at?” Sylvanas asked as she walked over. When she saw her laptop, she flushed in embarrassment and her ears pinned back. “You weren't supposed to see that,” Sylvanas said as she sat on the opposite end of the couch.

“I think it sweet,” Jaina told her as Muffin curled up in her lap, “that you are trying so much.”

As the movie went on, a silly buddy cop movie starring a troll and a gnome, Jaina slowly scooted her way closer to Sylvanas until she was snuggled into her side. Sylvanas went stiff, ears twitching until she finally relaxed, wrapping her arm around Jaina and pulling her just a little closer.

As the credits rolled, Sylvanas checked her phone and was shocked to see how late it was. “I guess I should be getting you home, shouldn't I?”

“Oh,” Jaina started as she carefully removed Muffin from her lap, “I could just stay the night?”

Sylvanas’ face was a blank mask but her twitching ears gave away her slight worry, “you sure, Jaina? I can drive you home it’s no problem.”

“I want to stay, if that's okay with you,” Jaina gave Sylvanas’ hand a gentle squeeze, “you’ve been distant this past week, I want to show you that we’re okay. That I’m okay.”

“Okay,” Sylvanas nodded, “okay. Let me find you some pajamas.” They changed separately again, Sylvanas tugging on Jainas Battle Pets shirt just as the younger woman walked back into Sylvanas’ room dressed in a pair of the elfs overly long pajama pants and a t-shirt.

“You still have my shirt?” Jaina blinked in shock.

“Of course I do,” Sylvanas shrugged, “I wear it as a sleep shirt.” Her ears twitched, “does that bother you?”

Jaina shook her head and gathered the taller woman into a tight hug, “it makes me really happy,” she said through a yawn.

Sylvanas chuckled softly, “and here I thought you were supposed to be the sophisticated one.

Jaina crawled under the deep purple comforter, pressing herself back against Sylvanas when she felt her get in behind her. An excited meow announced Muffins arrival in the room and Jaina laughed tiredly when he curled up against her stomach.

“Traitor,” Sylvanas grumbled, burying her face in Jaina’s hair.

“All of your furniture looks so new,” Jaina said through a suppressed yawn.

“That's because it is,” Sylvanas admitted, “I was traveling so much that I just never bothered to furnish the place. I wasn’t even sure if I would stay this time.”

“What changed your mind?”
“You did, Jaina.”

Jaina snuggled deeper into the blankets and threaded her fingers with Sylvanas’ where they rested over her stomach, “I don’t want you to drift away from me, okay? I told you I would tell you if you went too far, and I meant it, so please, don’t be afraid to hold me.”

Sylvanas pulled Jaina closer and nodded against her neck. “I’ll try, for you.”
“You want to go camping?” Sylvanas asked incredulously as she stared down at Jaina, ears twitching back subtly.

Jaina smiled brightly, “of course. We’ve been working so hard, we deserve a couple of days to ourselves and I’m sure Pained and Nomi can handle things on their own for a day.” She wrapped her arms around Sylvanas and pulled her close, her smile widening when she felt the elf’s hands snake around her waist, “it’s warming up and all the snows all gone so why not?”

Sylvanas made a show of seeming to think about it, but Jaina could tell that she loved the thought. “I suppose we could spare a day if we go up on our closed day.”

Jaina chuckled and held her tighter, “so thoughtful. It’ll be fun.”

And so it was that Jaina found herself seated next to Sylvanas in her loaded car on their way to Silverpine Forest. They spoke little as they left the cityscape behind, but it was a comfortable silence. Sylvanas didn't even seem to mind when Jaina nodded off, lulled to sleep by the easy driving and Sylvanas softly humming along to the radio.

She woke up when the car began to roll to a stop. Jaina sat up in her seat and rubbed at her eyes and bit back a yawn. They came to a stop next to a small wooden hut with a large sign that read ‘Silverpine National Park’. They didn't have to wait long before a short Quel’dorei woman in a Rangers uniform. Jaina felt a twinge of jealousy when Sylvanas seemed to perk up at the sight of the woman, relaxing when the two of them lapsed into a quick, easy conversation in Thalassian.

Sylvanas filled out the form that was handed to her and was given a tag and a flag for their site before driving off into the park.

They drove deep into the park, passing a few signs warning of hunting areas. Sylvanas pulled into one of the sites at the end of the allotted campsites. Sylvanas barely got her car in park before she all but threw herself out of the car. She walked to the center of the clearing that was their camp and simply stood there. She closed her eyes and took a deep breathe, breathing in the scent of the forest.

Jaina smiled as she leaned against the car, “you really like it out here, don't you?”

“Of course I do,” Sylvanas replied, ears twitching at sounds that Jaina couldn’t hear, “I’m an elf. The forest is in my blood.”

Jaina shook her head and laughed when Sylvanas flopped down into the grass, “well when the forest child wants to help her unload the car, you let me know.”

With a light grumble, Sylvanas helped Jaina remove the camp supplies from the trunk and set up their simple little tent. “Did you ever camp when you were a kid, Jaina?” She asked as they pulled the tarp over the top.

Jaina nodded, “I used to go all the time with… with my father,” her voice was quiet but she shook the memory off quickly. “I have a brother so, he took me everywhere that he took them. Camping or sailing, usually both.” She finished hammering the last tarp peg with a grunt. “What about you?” Sylvanas fell silent, her ears pinning back, clearly showing the distress that she managed to keep from her face. “You don't have to tell me if it too hard for you to talk about. I know you--”

“No,” Sylvanas shook her head as she set about digging up their firepit, “we’re dating. I should be
able to tell you about myself, right? Bit by bit?"

Sylvanas rocked back on her heels to sit down, staring up at the canopy of trees, “when I was a kid, I was almost always camping. My father was a very prim man, the stay at home dad, so it was my mother would always spirit us away into the woods. She loved taking us out there, even if we were just little shits,” that drew a laugh from Jaina, “she taught us everything about survival. Hunting, navigation, how to make a shelter. My mother wanted to make sure that we grew up to be as at home in the forest as she was. She was a ranger, a proper one was worked with our army. She kept the forests safe and flourishing until--” she cut herself off when Jaina wrapped her arms around her tightly from behind, burying her face against her neck.

“It’s okay, Sylvanas,” Jaina assured her, “you don’t have to me anymore. I didn't mean to upset you.” She listened intently as Sylvanas choked back a small sob, leaning back against Jaina.

“Thank you,” Sylvanas shifted so that she could wrap her arm around Jaina. “Let's finish setting up.”

“I’ll gather some firewood,” Jaina offered, giving Sylvanas space she needed. She walked down the path that led from the back of their site, further into the woods. The gentle sound of birdsong could be heard all around and Jaina allowed it to wash over her, calming her.

Finding wood for the fire was easy. The winter had been harsh and blustery and had knocked many sizable branched and sticks loose. Before long, Jaina was struggling her the large bundle in her arms, lamenting that she hadn't thought to bring along twine to tie the bundle together to make her life easier.

When she made her way back, she was treated to the sight of Sylvanas carefully stringing a bow. “What are you doing?” she asked as she placed the sticks down.

“What does it look like?” Sylvanas smirked. She could practically hear Jaina roll her eyes. With a small chuckle, she relented, “I figured, since we are out in the forest, I would catch our dinner tonight.”

With a tilt of her head, Jaina asked, “but, I didn’t think anything was in season right now?”

“And you would be correct,” Sylvanas confirmed, slinging her bow across her back next to a shoulder pack and belting a closed quiver to her hip, “but there are a few very old Lordaeron treatise laws that allow the elves of Quel’thalas to hunt in its forests.” She stood, stretching out her arms, “we aren’t allowed to hunt for sport, only food, and we have to use a bow, no rifles. And if we intend to hunt, we have to let the local rangers know so that they can inform anyone else in the park.”

Sylvanas handed Jaina a pouch to put on her own belt, “have you ever foraged before?”

“Once or twice, but only in Kul Tiras,” Jaina admitted as she attached the pouch to her belt. She took Sylvanas’ hand in her own, threading their fingers together, “but I’m sure that you'll be able to help me out.”

They wandered comfortably through the forest, enjoying the sounds of life and each others company. They stopped here and there to pluck berries or pick at plants.

Jaina wasn’t sure how long they trekked through the forest. Her feet were sore, her legs ached, but looking at how happy Sylvanas was made it worth it.

The sky was growing orange with the setting sun when Sylvanas suddenly froze. Her ears perked
up, swiveling slightly as she unslung her bow. “Stay here,” her voice was low as she seemed to vanish into the underbrush.

Jaina waited in silence for Sylvanas to return. Going ever more uneasy with each passing minute, she shifted her weight from foot to foot. “Jaina,” she heard Sylvanas call her and rushed towards the sound of her voice. When she came upon Sylvanas, she was crouched next to the body of a rabbit. She watched as, after saying something is softly spoken Thalassian, Sylvanas quickly field dressed the rabbit, packing it away in an airtight bag.

“What was that?” Jaina asked as Sylvanas stood, “what did you say?”

“I was giving thanks, to the rabbit,” Sylvanas said as she adjusted her pack, “for being our supper.”

“Could you teach me?” Jaina smiled. She listened intently as Sylvanas repeated the phrase, going back and forth until Jaina could say it perfectly.

It was getting well and truly dark by the time they made it back to their camp. Jaina got the fire going while Sylvanas prepared their meal. She had to laugh at the amount of cooking equipment Sylvanas had brought, “you are the only person I know who travels with half a kitchen in toe.”

Sylvanas huffed indignantly, “would you prefer unseasoned roasted rabbit?”

Jaina only laughed more as she came to sit next to Sylvanas to watch her work. Sylvanas ground the ground cherries and crowberries into a paste with a bit of peppergrass and coated the pieces of rabbit in it. She then shifted the fire to dig some of the coals to the edge and placed the skillet of rabbit onto them.

With the rabbit cooking, Sylvanas turned her attention to the small portion of ramps they had found. She washed them well with some of the water they had brought with them before sprinkling them with salt. Skewered in metal sticks, Sylvanas set them to roast over the coals.

Carefully as she could, Sylvanas removed the skillet and plated the rabbit and ramps on tin plates, handing Jaina hers before plating her own and tucking in. Jaina started with the ramps. The onion flavor was mild and enjoyable, and they were tender from the gentle roasting. Jaina’s knife cut through the rabbit easily, the slow frying and the berries granting the meat a juiciness that it normally would have. It was sweet. It was sour. It was gone. Jaina stared at Sylvanas with a look of deep betrayal as she tossed her bones into the fire, “how dare you make me something so good that I can only eat out here.”

Sylvanas grinned as she packed away the dirty dishes, locking them away in the car to be washed on their return. “How else am I supposed to get you to suggest camping again than to bribe you with food?” she teased as she sat down sat to Jaina, pulling her close to her side. Far off in the distance, a wolf howled. Jaina jumped at the sound, moving closer to Sylvanas. When the howl came again, answered by another wolf, Sylvanas tilted her head back and began to quietly sing.

Smiling sheepishly, Sylvanas explained, “my mother always told us, when we were young, that when you hear the wolves howling, they are inviting you to sing with them.” When she started singing again, she raised her voice, allowing her song to carry into the trees.

On a whim, Sylvanas jumped to her feet, pulling a rather confused Jaina up with her. Before she could even begin to ask though, Sylvanas pulled her close and began to lead them in a dance around the dying fire, singing all the way.
Jaina nearly collapsed against Sylvanas when their dance finally ended, breathlessly laughing. She was about to speak when a loud yawn interrupted her. She stared at Sylvanas before laughing harder, “good to see I’m not the only one whos tired.”

“Hush, you,” Sylvanas chided lightly, as she stepped back to deal with the fire, now nothing but smoldering coals. The fire safely dealt with, they retired to the tent. Once inside though, Sylvanas froze up.

Jaina looked at her in the dim light of their little lamp, “what's wrong?”

“Nothing,” Sylvanas replied, a bit too quickly. With a sigh, she added, “it's just, we have to get changed, and we only have the one tent and--”

Jaina smiled fondly and silenced the elf with a light kiss, “you can turn around if that makes you feel better.” Jaina did exactly that, turning around before pulling her shirt off. She could practically feel Sylvanas staring at her, so she chanced a glance over her shoulder and added, “but it isn't anything you haven't already seen, you did help me get changed when I was sick, and Tides know I’ve seen quite a bit of you.” She kept her voice light and teasing and was glad to see that it had the desired effect when Sylvanas snorted a laugh and turned around to get changed herself.

The night air was growing chilly and the two were quick to snuggle close in the pile of blankets on the air mattress. Jaina could still hear the wolves, the loud chirping of so many crickets and the occasional owl. “We should go camping more often.”

“We really should,” Sylvanas replied, slipping into sleep.

*** *** *** ***

Jaina awoke in the dead of night. Beside her, Sylvanas lay whimpering quietly in her sleep as she lightly tossed about. The elf and shaking and sweating and Jaina felt her heart ache. She shook her gently by the shoulder, “Sylvanas? Sylvanas wake up.”

Sylvanas eye snapped and she sat up, only stopped from tumbling from the air mattress by Jainas arms wrapping around her shoulders to pull her close. Sylvanas’ ears were pinned back almost flat against her skull. Her heart was pounding. Her head was spinning. Jaina was humming softly and rocking them gently.

“You're okay,” Jaina soothed, running her hands through her hair, “it was only a dream, you're okay.” She placed a gentle kiss to Sylvanas’ temple as she began to calm down. “Do you often get nightmares?” Jaina kept her voice soft.

“Often enough,” Sylvanas leaned into Jainas embrace as she was lowered back to the mattress.

“You haven't had them any of the other times we’ve shared a bed,” Jaina pulled Sylvanas a little closer, “what do you think triggered this one?”

Sylvanas winced and buried her face into Jaina’s neck, “probably talking about my mother.”

Jaina nodded, rubbing Sylvanas’ back as she tried to lull her back to sleep, “I’m sorry that I helped to dredge those memories up. And anytime you get them, no matter where I am. I want you to wake me up. Shake me, call me. Whatever. No matter the hour. Okay?”

“Okay.”

*** *** *** ***
When Jaina next woke up, she was alone in the early morning. The sun was barely up and the tent was slightly open. Curiosity and concern filled Jaina as she wrapped herself in a blanket and stepped outside.

Mist swirled gently around the clearing of their campsite, the sun glittering off of it. Sylvanas was crouched next to the firepit, still as a statue, her ears up and alert. One ear swiveled back at Jaina and she made a motion for her to come over quietly. Once Jaina was by her side, Sylvanas pointed to the trees at the edge of the clearing.

There, standing just inside the treeline, was a deer and her two small fawns, ethereal in the mist. They watched them for a long time until the deer decided that they were no threat and wandered back into the forest.

Jaina was slack-jawed as she turned to face Sylvanas, “that was the most magical thing I have ever seen.”

Sylvanas smiled, wrapping her arm around Jaina, “you know, you’re right. We really should go camping more often.”
Jaina twisted her hair up into an elegant bun atop her head, pinning it in place. As an afterthought, she pulled a few strands loose to fall and frame her face. She turned to the side to look herself over in the mirror, fighting with her dress. It was long and elegant. The silky blue fabric hugs her hips and chest, just enough to show off her curves, but not flaunt them. Her shoulders were bare save for the simple braided straps that held the dress up, the neck swooped down to tease a hint of cleavage. The silver of her anchor pendant gleamed from its place atop her chest.

Nervously, Jaina adjusted her dress again. She didn’t know why she was nervous. They were just going on a date. Jaina had been on plenty of dates. But none with Sylvanas, least not out of the comfort of their apartments.

Maybe it was because, even though the age had been Jainas idea, Sylvanas had insisted on picking the restaurant. Her reasoning had been typical Sylvanas. Did Jaina really want to risk having to sit around listening to Sylvanas complain about the food? By the Tide she didn’t so she had relented. No doubt Sylvanas had picked the fanciest place in town. Someplace Jaina knew she wouldn’t be highbrow enough to fit in.

Jaina was pulled from her rather morose thoughts by the sound of Sylvanas’ car pulling in. Sparing herself one final look over in the mirror, she made her way to the door and went outside to greet her.

To say that Jaina wasn’t ready for the sight that greeted her would have been an understatement. Sylvanas was wearing a slim fit black blazer over that silky purple dress shirt. Tight dress pants and those ever-present boots, polished to a shine. She wore her silver-blonde hair down, and the light breeze caused it to flow around her.

“You look beautiful, Jaina,” Sylvanas complimented, drawing Jainas attention to the grin she wore.

Jaina cleared her throat and walked down the stairs to meet her, “you don’t look so bad yourself,” Jaina took Sylvanas’ proffered hand, squeezing it slightly before lacing their fingers together. Jaina gave her an easy smile, leaning into her side, “would you stop being so secretive and tell me where it is that we are eating?”

“The best place in town,” Sylvanas said, rather nonchalantly, “I happen to know the owners and was able to swing us a more private reservation.” She kept her face neutral as she led them around the side of Theramore, much to Jainas confusion.

It wasn’t until Sylvanas produced her key to the front that Jaina clued in. She threw her head back and laughed, the delighted sound causing Sylvanas’ ears to perk up. “You are an absolute ass!”

Her laughter was infectious and Sylvanas joined in as she ushered Jaina inside. “I told you, the best place in town, where I won’t complain.” She pulled out Jaina’s seat and kissed her cheek when she sat down. Her ears flicked back, “I hope this okay. I mean, if it’s not that fine. There's still time for us to go somewhere else on a real date. Like you wanted. I just wanted to spoil you, even if it was your idea, and this is the only way I know how and--”

Jaina took her hand in her own and squeezed it gently, “this is perfect, Sylvanas. Perfectly you.”
She rubbed the back of her hand with her thumbs, “I know this can be hard for you,” she smiled, “but I promise you, you're doing great.”

Sylvanas calmed at her words and pulled Jaina’s hands up to brush a kiss against her knuckles. “Thank you. Next time, I promise I’ll let us go out somewhere.” She turned and walked into the kitchen, returning with a large tray of covered plates, setting it on a nearby table.

Jaina eyed the tray with open curiosity, “when did you have time to make all this?”

“I’ve, actually bee here most of the day,” Sylvanas admitted sheepishly, “I had to stay very quiet so that you wouldn't catch on. And I parked around the corner so you wouldn't see my car.”

“Plans for your plans,” Jaina laughed again, sobering as Sylvanas set the first dish in front of her, seating herself across the table. Jaina stirred the orange soup about her bowl, breathing in the rich aroma.

“Roasted red pepper and tomato,” Sylvanas answered Jaina’s unspoken question, “with just a bit of basil.”

Jaina blew carefully and sipped at the first spoonful. It had been pureed until it was perfectly smooth. The red pepper was the leading flavor, it's sweetness shining through the acidity of the tomatoes, with just a hint of a surprisingly pleasant char taste from the roasting. She dutifully sopped up the remaining soup, before letting out a contented sigh.

She grinned, taking a sip from her wine, “you know, you are ruining other restaurants for me, right?”

“How do you know that that isn't part of my plan?” Sylvanas teased, standing to clear the soup bowls, “feed you food so good you couldn’t possibly leave?”

“Well,” Jaina said, “if that's the plan than it certainly is working.” She sat up straighter as the main course was set in front of her. A stuffed chicken breast, golden brown, next to was looked like an egg, “what have you made here?”

“Chicken with rice and egg,” Sylvanas said, sitting down to start eating herself.

Jaina stared at the plate in confusion. She could clearly see the chicken, and the egg seemed to be of an odd texture. But where was the rice?

Sylvanas snorted a laugh, “eating it would solve mysteries faster.”

In a moment of petulance, Jaina stuck her tongue out at the elf before doing just that. She started with the ‘egg’, which wasn’t egg at all, but mashed potatoes and puréed squash plated to look like an egg. It was as clever as it was tasty. The potatoes were smooth from the cream and butter that had been mixed into them, and the squash was sweet like sugar and carried a hint of cinnamon. She could have eaten a bowl of just the mash on its own, but the chicken called to her.

The skin was as crispy as it looked, crackling pleasantly as Jaina cut through it. The rice mystery was solved as soon as she cut a piece off to eat. A rich, creamy risotto spilled from inside the chicken and the cabbage that was also inside. And not just the risotto, fluffy egg as well. The risotto itself held juicy pieces of ground chicken and caramelized sweet onions that melted in her mouth. The whole dish just fit so well together, that when she was done, Jaina could only stare at Sylvanas, “how?”

With a find smile, Sylvanas explained, “that was my father's special dish. I’ve had to change a few
things, I never figured out how to make it just like him,” she snorted a small laugh as she cleared their plates, “he was really bad at writing down most of his recipes exactly. But I don’t think mine falls too short of the original.”

“It was amazing, Sylvanas,” Jaina beamed at her.

“Thank you. Ready for more?”

Jaina hummed in thought, “I’m pretty full.”

“Not even enough room for,” Sylvanas paused, looking over her shoulder at Jaina and raising an eyebrow, “dessert?”

“Dessert?” Jaina perked up, “you didn’t say you had made dessert.”

Sylvanas scoffed in mock offense, “why Jaina, you wound me! Of course, I made dessert!” With a dramatic flourish, Sylvanas removed the lid on the final plate. Neatly stacked on the plate, was a pile of little light green macaroons. The plate was set in the middle of the table where they could both reach and Sylvanas plucked up the first one. “Pistachio,” she explained simply before taking a bite of the confection.

Jaina took one for herself, silently marveling at just how light it was. The macaroon itself was airy and full of pistachio flavor, with vanilla cream in the middle. She couldn’t stop at just one, or even two. Jaina ate more than half the plate herself, not that Sylvanas minded.

While Sylvanas took all of the dishes back to the kitchen to wash them, Jaina busied herself cleaning the table. Sylvanas had been so good to her. Calm and patient. Jaina couldn’t have stopped her smile if she had wanted to. To think, it had been almost a year, and Sylvanas had changed so much. Still an ass, but she was also one of the sweetest people Jaina had ever met.

She was pulled from her thoughts by the feeling of Sylvanas wrapping her arms around Jaina’s waist, settling her hands on her stomach. She rested her chin on Jaina’s shoulder and rocked them lightly, “What are you thinking about?”

Jaina leaned back against Sylvanas, “You.” She bit her lip lightly in thought before she brought her hands to rest over Sylvanas’, “and, I was thinking, that I’ve had my dessert, maybe you would like yours?” Jaina instantly wished she could snatch the words back. That had to have been the stupidest thing she had ever said, and judging by the way Sylvanas froze behind her, she agreed.

“Are you sure?” Sylvanas’ ears pinned back and she tried to pull her hands away.

Jaina tightened her grip, slowly dragging Sylvanas’ hands up to her breasts, leaning more fully against the elf, “Yes, I’m sure.” She let out a small gasp as Sylvanas began to gently massage her breasts, softly kissing along her neck. At the first hard brush of a thumb over her now straining nipple, Jaina practically melted into Sylvanas, letting out small breathy moans as Sylvanas continued to fondle her, gently. Oh so gently.

Sylvanas spun Jaina around, capturing her lips in a heated kiss. Her hands slide down to Jaina’s ass, kneading at the pliant flesh before hoisting her up to sit her on the table, Jaina clinging to her shoulders. Running her tongue along Jainas lower lip, Sylvanas silently asked for permission that was eagerly granted by Jaina parting her lips to deepen the kiss.

With a tender hand, Sylvanas pushed Jaina back to lay against the table. She broke away from the kiss to lightly nip and suck along Jainas clavicle. One hand returned to Jainas chest, thumb circling a straining peak hidden beneath Jainas’s dress, while the other reached low. Gathering up the fabric,
Sylvanas slowly raised it. She got it as far as the middle of Jainas thighs before the other woman seemed to come to her senses and stopped her with a gentle hand.

“What are you doing?” Jaina asked breathlessly as she sat up. She had to grab Sylvanas to stop the elf from pulling fully away from her as she continued, “This is where we eat.”

The slight worry that Jaina’s words had caused melted away and Sylvanas’ ears swiveled forward as she grinned, “That was my plan, yes.”

If Jaina hadn’t been blushing before, she certainly was now. Even so, she laughed at the ridiculousness of it. She pulled Sylvanas back for a kiss, softer but with no less passion, while Sylvanas’ fingers played at her hips, “My apartment is just upstairs.”

With a chuckle, Sylvanas stepped back so that Jaina could get up, only for Jaina to grab the lapel of her blazer and dragged her out the back. All the way Up to her apartment they paused to exchanged hurried kisses.

When they finally made it up into Jaina’s apartment, they barely managed to get the door closed before Sylvanas pinned Jaina to the wall. She ran her hands slowly up Jaina’s sides, gently kissing at her jaw, hands coming back up to cup her breasts again, “Okay?”

Jaina nodded, pressing her chest out into Sylvanas’ touch, “Okay.” Soft moans fell from Jaina’s lips as Sylvanas continued her ministrations, gingerly squeezing her breasts.

Sylvanas moved one of her hands to Jainas back, fingering the zipper of her dress, “May I?”

“Please,” Jaina’s voice was quiet.

With the dress loosened, Sylvanas carefully brushed the straps off of her shoulders, allowing the fabric to pool around Jaina’s waist. She pressed a thigh between Jaina’s legs to stop the dress from falling all the way. Sylvanas lightly bit and sucked at the newly exposed skin, delicately dragging her fangs across the top of Jaina’s breasts while she fiddled with her bra, “And this too?”

Jaina only had to nod and the garment was gone. Sylvanas’ hands were everywhere. Slowly trailing along her ribs and across her stomach before she finally brought them up to cup Jaina’s bare breasts. She hefted them, feeling the weight. Jaina tried to subdue her moans as Sylvanas pinched and rubbed at her nipples. Tried to control her breathing as the elf trailed burning hot kisses from her mouth and along her jaw, sucking freely at her neck.

She tried to stay composed, but the moment Sylvanas sucked one of her nipples into her mouth, Jaina released a low groan, her hips jerking once against Sylvanas’ thigh, drawing a louder moan from her. She gripped Sylvanas’ shoulders tightly, forcing herself to be still as her body continued to shudder, “Sorry,” she husked out.

Sylvanas released Jaina and gave the stiff bud a quick lap with her tongue before looking at Jaina with furrowed brows, “Sorry?” she tilted her head, her slightly reddened ears twitching, “Sorry for what? Enjoying yourself?” She shifted her thigh to press more firmly against Jaina’s center and gripped her hips with both hands. Slowly, making sure to watch Jaina closely, Sylvanas began to guide Jaina to thrust herself against her thigh. She captured Jainas mouth in a kiss, swallowing her moans. “That’s the point isn’t it?” she asked as she returned her attention to the as of yet unattended nipple, “To enjoy it?”

Sylvanas was right, of course. Deep down, Jaina knew this. But nagging thoughts and voices tried to claw their way to the forefront of her mind. The feeling of teeth gently scraping across her nipple...
did quick work of banishing those thoughts and Jaina took control, freely rolling her hips down onto Sylvanas’ sturdy thigh. It didn't take long. Between her own wildly bucking hips, and Sylvanas’ skillful mouth and hands, Jaina came with a low moan. Her hips shuddered to a halt and she dug her fingers harshly into Sylvanas’ shoulders. She was even more thankful for the presence of that thigh as her knees shook and she slid down the wall to rest more fully on it while she struggled to catch her breath.

Sylvanas slowly kissed her way up along Jainas throat before taking her lips in a slow languid kiss. “How was that?” She breathed against her lips.

“Good,” Jaina shifted slightly to support her own weight, “So good.” She tugged at Sylvanas’ blazer until the elf relented and allowed to slide down her arms and fall to the floor. “My bed, now.” Her voice was urgent as she pulled Sylvanas into another heated kiss, “Please.”

Sylvanas pulled back, searching Jainas eyes, her ears lowered, “Are you sure?”

“Tides, yes, Sylvanas.”

Taking a step back, Sylvanas allowed Jainas dress to fall the rest of the way before following her to the bedroom. She watched as Jaina laid back on the bed, her face and chest flushed a glowing red. With careful, measured movements, Sylvanas crawled up over Jaina, straddling her hips.

Once more, Sylvanas trailed her fingers over Jaina, keeping her touch featherlight. Her ears flicked forward at the sound of Jaina whimpering and she smiled softly, “Look at you,” her thumbs ghosted around Jainas nipples, drawing more gasps from the woman below her, “Beautiful. Simply beautiful.”

Jaina tugged lightly at Sylvanas’ shirt, “Take it off,” she demanded, voice thick with emotion

Sylvanas sat up, resting more fully on Jainas hips. She made a show of slowly removing her shirt. Button by button, starting at the top. The shirt was lost to the far corners of Jaina's room and her bra quickly followed. “Better?” She tilted her head, grinning when Jaina nodded.

Happy with Jaina’s state, Sylvanas removed herself from her lap. She scraped her nails along Jaina’s hips, dipping them just inside the band of her panties. She looked at Jaina then, her face more serious than it had ever been. “Are you still with me, Jaina? I need you to listen to me, okay?” she waited until Jaina nodded to continue. “If I do anything you are uncomfortable with, anything at all, I need to know that you will tell me and I will stop. Promise me, Jaina.” She dug her fingers into Jainas hip when she just nodded again, “I need to hear you say it.”

Jaina took a deep breath to steady her voice, “I promise, Sylvanas. I’ll tell you. Now, please! Please just touch me.”

With Jainas promise in mind, Sylvanas rid her of her panties and slipped comfortably between her legs. She kissed her way up the inside of Jainas thigh, pausing to bite and suck little marks into the pale skin, getting close to where Jaina wanted her, before switching to her other leg to repeat the treatment. She had to wrap her arms under Jaina’s legs to grab her desperately bucking hips, bringing them under control. Her ears perked up sharply at the sound of Jaina’s whines and only then did she relent. Bringing her face near Jainas center, she gently blew a hot breath over her swollen clit, drawing a yelp of surprise from the human.

Jaina pushed herself up on her elbows to look down at Sylvanas, “What are you doing?”

Sylvanas cocked a brow at her and smiled, rubbing her cheek against Jainas thigh, “You offered
me dessert, so I plan on having my dessert.” She drew her tongue slowly through Jaina’s folds in a harsh lap up to circle around her clit, reveling in the ungraceful moan the single action drew from her, encouraging Sylvanas on. Every broad lap and prod had Jaina moaning and writhing. Drawing her tongue and languid circles, Sylvanas chanced a look up at Jaina.

She was a mess. Sweat beading on her forehead, her eyes half-lidded. Jaina clung to the sheets, her arms twitching like she wanted something more. Sylvanas drew a finger through Jaina’s folds, bringing it up to take over for her tongue. “What do you want, Jaina?”

“I want,” Jaina’s head rolled back against the pillows and she groaned when Sylvanas lowered her working finger to slide between her folds, “Yes, please yes!” Her back arched when Sylvanas brought her tongue back to her clit to while her finger curled and thrust inside of her. “I want to touch you,” her hands gripped the sheets tighter. She felt Sylvanas nod against her and her hands flew to her hair, gripping it and pulling her closer.

Every moan was an utterance of Sylvanas’ name as Jaina’s hips canted in tandem with her thrusting finger. Jaina’s hand grabbed Sylvanas’ ear, drawing a low groan from the elf as she redoubled her efforts.

Jaina’s eyes squeezed shut as the pressure that had been building was released, “Sylvanas!” she moaned loudly, her hips once more shuddering to a halt.

Sylvanas helped her ride out the vestiges of her orgasm before removing her finger. She nosed her way through the blonde curls atop her mound before slowly kissing her was up Jaina’s stomach, nuzzling against her warm skin to wipe her face. She frowned slightly when she got to Jaina’s face. Tears streamed her cheeks and Sylvanas wipes them away with gentle strokes of her thumbs before kissing her. “Are you alright?” She murmured against her lips, “Was that too much? Did I go too far?”

Jaina ducked her head, pressing her face into the crook of Sylvanas’ shoulder, wrapping her arms around her to hold her close. “I’m alright,” she held her tighter, “and you were perfect. Thank you.” Jaina fell silent, enjoying the elf’s weight against her before she spoke again, “Sorry about your ear. I know you told me not to because you don’t like it.”

Sylvanas chuckled as she rolled onto her side, “That’s not it at all, I like it very much, my ears are,” she paused to think of the word, “sensitive.”

That got Jaina’s attention, “Really?” She sat up slightly and stroked her fingers along the edge, drawing a shudder and a sigh from Sylvanas.

Boldly, Jaina pushed Sylvanas onto her back. She bit the edge of the ear closest to her, running her tongue along its length, while she cupped Sylvanas breasts.

Sylvanas gasped loudly, grabbing Jaina’s arm to still her movements, “You don’t have to. I’m fine.”

Jaina simply smiled, “I know,” she spoke quietly, “I want to.” She sat up and rid Sylvanas of the last of her pants and underwear before taking a moment to admire the sight before her. Two arrows were tattooed across her collar bones, one of which passed over a faint circular scar. As her gaze lowered, Jaina frowned. She brushed her fingers along the jagged scar on her stomach before leaning down to press her lips against it.

Jaina lifted Sylvanas’ leg up onto her hip while she pushed the other one aside, opening Sylvanas to her. She ran her fingers through the wetness she found, trailing her fingers around the elf’s clit. She leaned down, once more capturing Sylvanas’ ear with her mouth and nip at it.
“Jaina,” Sylvanas gasped her name out as a plea, her nails digging into her back.

It was a plea that Jaina was all too willing to answer as she slowly slid two fingers inside of the elf, curling them up slightly as she began to thrust them. She had to keep a firm hold of Sylvanas’ undulating hips to help guide her along her fingers.

Sylvanas came with a loud moan, her fingers clawing at Jaina’s back as she shook. Bonelessly, she sunk into the mattress, barely registering Jaina snuggling up against her until a soft kiss with placed against her lips. Sylvanas let out a pleased hum as Jaina managed to pull the blanket over them, dragging them to the other side of the bed.

“Thank you,” Jaina tucked her head comfortably onto Sylvanas’ shoulder. She closed her eyes, humming contentedly as Sylvanas freed her hair from what remained of her bun. The sound of Sylvanas’ heart was the perfect lullaby and Jaina soon found herself drifting to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

The main course was my take on the "chicken and rice bowl with egg" from Shokugeki no Soma
The Little Things

Chapter Notes

Hey, Gayrunner, you gave me an idea months ago. A through away joke idea. Well guess what? I REMEMBER IT!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jaina was the first to wake up. A fact that couldn’t have made it happier. Only in sleep did Sylvanas ever look this relaxed and it was a rare sight for Jaina, the elf usually rising with the sun.

She was still nestled against Sylvanas’ shoulder. At some point in the night, Sylvanas had wrapped her arms around Jaina to hold her closer. It made Jaina feel safe, having those strong arms holding her.

She could hear Sylvanas snoring faintly. Just the tiniest of sounds, but it was more than enough to bring a tender smile to Jainas face.

Jainas hand trailed absently across Sylvanas’ stomach beneath the blanket, pausing when she reached the scar. Her smile faulted. Sylvanas had helped her so much, changed her life, even. To think, that had whoever done this, attacked her so viciously, been a little more savage, Jaina never would have met her.

Jaina was startled from her thoughts by the feeling of Sylvanas gently rubbing her back, “morning,” the elf mumbled sleepily, ducking her head to kiss the top of Jaina’s head.

“Sorry,” Jaina said, turning more against Sylvanas, “I didn't mean to wake you.”

“'M a light sleeper,” Sylvanas replied. She fell quiet, her hand continuing to rub soothing circles on Jaina’s back. When Sylvanas was more awake she spoke again, “are you alright, Jaina?”

Jaina didn't need her to specify what she had meant. She knew. Jaina managed to snuggle, tilting her head up to kiss Sylvanas’ jaw, “I’m perfect.” Her stomach rumbled loudly and Jaina laughed, “perfect, but hungry.”

“I’ll make you breakfast,” Sylvanas offered with a smile.

Jaina hummed, “that would be lovely.”

Sylvanas chuckled and patted Jainas back, “you have to let me get up, Jaina.”

With a great deal of reluctance, Jaina rolled over, allowing Sylvanas to get up. She did nothing to disguise her gaze as she shifted up on her elbows to watch Sylvanas stretch, running her fingers through her mussed hair. Her eyes roved over the view she was afforded, drinking in the sight of toned muscles, the light flex of her shoulders as she stretched again.

As Jainas gaze fell to Sylvanas’ shapely ass, she froze and snorted out a laugh, covering her mouth with her hand to stifle the sound.

Sylvanas’ ears twitched back at the sound and she looked at Jaina over her shoulder, “what is it?”
Jaina gave up on containing her amusement and threw her head back to howl with laughter, “is that a head of lettuce on your ass?”

Sure enough, tattooed on Sylvanas’ right cheek, was a tattoo of a realistic head of iceberg lettuce.

Sylvanas turned red with embarrassment up to the tips of her now drooping ears. She quickly covered the tattoo with a hand and spun to face Jaina, the action only causing her to laugh more. “I was very drunk!” Sylvanas defended weakly.

When Jaina’s laughter finally petered out, she wiped the mirthful tears in her eyes away and looked back at Sylvanas, her smile faltering at the stern expression she wore. “Sylvanas?”

“You know my dark secret now,” Sylvanas’ voice was low as she stalked her way back towards the bed, “so I’m afraid I can’t let to leave this room.” With surprising grace, Sylvanas hopped onto the bed, pinning Jaina down by straddling her legs.

For a brief moment, Jaina’s eyes filled with fear. She opened her mouth to speak only for a surprised shriek to pass her lips instead as Sylvanas began to tickle her relentlessly. She laughed helplessly as she tried to get away, slapping lightly at Sylvanas’ shoulders.

When she finally relented, Sylvanas buried her face against the warmth of Jaina’s stomach, smothering her own laughter. “Are you always this ridiculous after sex?” Jaina asked breathlessly as she ran her fingers through Sylvanas’ wild hair.

“No,” Sylvanas admitted quietly, pulling herself up along Jaina’s body to kiss her, “must be you.”

Jaina managed to free herself from beneath Sylvanas and retreated to the door, a fond smile playing across her lips. “Go raid the kitchen and make us some food while I have a shower.”

Sylvanas smirked up at Jaina, “sure you don’t want me to join you?” She asked, waggling her eyebrows suggestively, an action made all the more ridiculous by their length.

Jaina only response was to ball up a sweater and throw it at Sylvanas’ face. “Ass,” she said with a chuckle as she walked to the washroom, fully aware of Sylvanas’ lingering stare.

Jaina stepped into the steaming water of her shower and let her head rest against the cool tiles, letting out a pleased sigh.

For the first time that morning, Jaina took a good look at herself, trailing her fingers along the marks that Sylvanas had left on her. In the past, seeing the bites that speckled her chest and thighs would have distressed her to no end. She would have been a wreck. But knowing that it had been Sylvanas who had marked her, and so tenderly at that, made Jaina’s heart swell.

She washed quickly, lathering herself in her favored lavender body wash. With a groan, Jaina set about the arduous task of washing her hair. The thick locks took long enough to soak, longer still to get a good wash done.

With her shower finished, Jaina stepped out and wrapped herself in a towel. She poked her head out, frowning when she didn’t see Sylvanas. “What’s taking her so long?” She wondered aloud as she went back to her room to get ready.

Jaina dressed quickly, buttoning up her shirt as she went into the kitchen, where Sylvanas had returned to start in breakfast.

Sylvanas was wearing her old Dalaran University hoodie and a pair of ratty old jeans and Jaina had
forgotten she even owned. For a brief moment, Jaina was felt jealous that even dressed down as she was, Sylvanas was still striking to look at. But she pushed that thought away as quickly as it rose. Sylvanas was hers to look at, and she looked distressed.

Sylvanas’ ears were drooping and she looked to be thoroughly embarrassed. Before Jaina could even begin to ask what was wrong, Sylvanas spoke. “Milaada saw me go in,” she looked at Jaina almost desperately, “she was already in. Had been for a while. She told us to take our time and then she winked at me!” She turned to face Jaina. “Do you understand? Milaada, sweet, old Milaada, winked. At. Me!”

Jaina could only smile in response to her outburst and rubbed her shoulder soothingly. “It’s only Milaada, don’t worry” she kissed her cheek before resting her chin on the taller woman’s shoulder to look down at what Sylvanas was doing, “now tell me, what are you making for me today?”

“Crepes,” Sylvanas seemed to lighten up as she finished the batter. Sylvanas carefully measured and poured the batter into the hot pan, swirling it around to make a thin layer, flipping it when the first side was done to cook the other before stacking them on a plate.

Once Sylvanas was finished, she carefully rolled the crepes, dividing them between the two plates and piped each full with a chocolate whipped cream and some berries. She squeezed a lemon wedge over each plate to add a bit of tartness.

Sylvanas looked over to where Jaina had sat with a mug of coffee and grinned. “Jaina, hey Jaina,” she waited until Jaina looked up at her to finish the plating. Sylvanas took a pinch of casting sugar in her hand and held it up near her face. Making direct eye contact with Jaina, Sylvanas sprinkled the sugar onto the crepes flourishing her fingers when she was done.

Jaina nearly snorted her coffee out her nose at the display. She glared lightly at Sylvanas as she sat, taking her plate from her before carefully taking another sip of her coffee. At Sylvanas’ insistence, Jaina had stopped putting so much sugar in her coffee and had changed to usually cheap grind for a fresher roast and she found herself enjoying her morning beverage all the more for it.

Jaina looked down at the crepes with unbridled interest. She had had crepes before, but never at home, always at a restaurant. The crepes themselves were the thinnest Jaina had ever seen, while still appearing to be fluffy, and were a light golden color. The lemon juice and sugar gave them a glowing appearance and the slight heat of them had begun to melt the whipped cream.

Not wanting them to get soggy, Jaina cut off a sizable bite and began to eat. Tides, they were as fluffy as they looked. The slight crisp too the edges helped to break up the overall softness in a pleasant way and every berry was like an extra burst of flavor.

As Jaina swiped up the residual whipped cream with her remaining piece of crepe, she decided that chocolate whipped cream would have to become a permanent feature in her fridge.

Sylvanas stood and cleared the table, moving to do the dishes only to be gently nudged aside by Jaina checking her with her hip.

Jaina smiled and took the sponge Sylvanas had picked up away from her, “go have a shower and fix your hair.” She leaned up and gave Sylvanas a light peck on the cheek, “lest someone more embarrassing sees you.” The dishes didn't take very long to finish. Sylvanas had the good habit of setting all of her cooking vessels and bowl to soak, so by the time Jaina got to them they were easy enough to clean.

With the dishes done, Jaina set about the slightly more important task of collecting all of their
clothes. Her dress and bra were first, Jaina snatched it up from where it had been left by the door. Was that really as far inside as they had made it? She shook her head and carried on, singing softly to herself. An old shanty that she used to sing with her brothers.

Her panties were in her dresser, and Sylvanas’ shirt had somehow managed to get on top of the lap in the far corner. How that had happened, Jaina would never know.

Jaina chewed at her lip as she eyed her bed before she stripped the sheets and tossed them into her hamper. She would remake her bed when they got off work.

“‘You have a lovely singing voice.’”

Jaina jumped at the sound of Sylvanas’ voice, nearly dropping Sylvanas underwear, “you scared...me,” her voice trailed off when she turned to see Sylvanas leaning against the doorframe in naught but a towel.

Sylvanas shifted slightly, her ears perking up, “we won't be going in to work at all if you keep looking at me like that,” she tried to keep her voice light and teasing.

Flushing brightly, Jaina pulled out from clothes for Sylvanas from the stash that they had decided to keep at Jainas apartment before hurrying out of her room.

Sylvanas followed softly after, pulling her hair up into a bun. She paused when she saw Jaina waiting for her on the couch. “You didn't have to wait for me, you know,” she said as Jaina stood, “you could have just gone down.”

“I know,” Jaina gave her another quick kiss before the two went out and down the back door, “I wanted too.”

The kitchen was quiet. Suspiciously quiet. Sylvanas’ ears pinned back as they rounded the ovens and saw exactly why. All of the staff stood clustered by the prep tables, with Othon and Kinndy front and center, Kinndy standing on her step ladder to help him hold up a cake.

‘Congratz on the Sex!’ it read in messy pink frosting. The gathered staff cheered loudly at the arrival of the couple.

Mortified, Jaina hid her face against Sylvanas’ shoulder, “I take back what I said about it being only Milaada.”

“Don't worry, I'll make them pay for this,” Sylvanas promised quietly. Despite her threat, Sylvanas smiled. “Double cleaning for everyone!” Sylvanas snapped, “I want this place sparkling before anyone goes home tonight!” Her order was met with a mixture of groans and laughter.

Jaina laughed lightly, removing her face from the safety of Sylvanas’ shoulder, “you're terrible.”

“Oh yes,” Sylvanas agreed, “the absolute worst.”

“No, not the worst,” Jaina disagreed as she turned to face the staff, “triple cleaning! I want all the glass and silverware to shine like diamonds!”

“Harsh, Jaina,” Sylvanas snaked an arm around her waist.

“I learned from the best,” Jaina leaned against her as she watched the staff divvy up the cake, “the very best.”
Chapter End Notes

Did you remember?
It might start to get a little bit angsty here. The plot demands it for forward momentum.

Theramore was in the midst of celebration. It had been a year since it’s reopening. A year since Sylvanas had swooped into Jainas life and turned her fortunes around. She didn’t know what she would have done if the elf hadn’t have stepped in. Where would she have gone? Kul Tiras hadn’t been home for nearly a decade, and she had no one left in Dalaran. Theramore was her home.

But she didn’t have to worry about that. Not anymore. Theramore was thriving and Jaina couldn’t have been happier as she drifted from table to table greeting the customers throughout the day.

“You’ve done so well for yourself, Miss Proudmoore,” an elderly gnome commented as she passed. One of her regulars.

Jaina smiled fondly, “thank you,” she started, “but I really can’t take all the credit. It’s my head chef who’s the real hero here.”

As if summoned by her title, Sylvanas swept her way out of the kitchen with a tray of samples. “A new dish, in celebration of a prosperous year,” she explained to the Taurin at the table she had stopped at. “A new fusion dish of Kul Tiran and Thalassian cuisine.” Sylvanas glanced at Jaina, baring her fangs in a grin, “I still like to surprise you.” Her ears twitched as she held out the plate towards Jaina expectantly.

Jaina felt as if all eyes were on her as she picked up the little sample plate and fork. Sitting down at one of the few empty tables, Jaina examined the food, trying to determine what it was before trying it. The meat of the dish was salmon, that much she was sure of. Salmon wrapped in a soft dough with rice packed in around the fish.

At the first bite, Jaina was in heaven. It was everything that she had come to expect of Sylvanas’ cooking and more. It tasted of her childhood, and the future she had made for herself all at once.

The salmon was tender and flakey, cradled softly within the fluffy rice, with its rich Thalassian seasoning. The bun on the outside did more than just contain the food, it added a light buttery reprieve from all of the rich flavors within. The slight crunch confused Jaina, if only for a moment. She looked at what remained of her sample curiously, only to see that contained between the bun and the rice, was a thin green pastry.

“Crepe, made with spinach in the batter,” Sylvanas provided when she returned to Jainas side. Her tray had been cleared. Seeing the owner enjoy a dish had further spurred the diners interests and Sylvanas had been quickly cleared out.

“Spinach,” Jaina had never been a fan of spinach, but the remaining bit of crepe out to eat on its own, Jaina swore she could be converted to its side.

Taking the empty plate to pass off to Kinndy, Sylvanas leaned down and kissed Jainas cheek,
drawing small ‘aws’ from the closer diners. Her ears flicked back and she observed Jaina’s flushed face worriedly, “was that okay?”

“No,” Jaina responded simply. Before Sylvanas could say anything, Jaina lightly grabbed the front of her chef’s jacket and pulled her down for a proper kiss. The resulting laughter from both staff and diners alike had Sylvanas rushing back to the kitchen as if a lynx were at her heels.

Yes, things really had turned around in a year.

The day went by wonderfully. The staff was more efficient than they had ever been and Jaina hadn't received a single complaint. Though, whether that was truthful or just people not wanting to bring Jaina out of her high, she didn't care. Jaina was overjoyed with her good fortunes.

As the day was winding down, Jaina made her way to the kitchen, seeking out Sylvanas. “Can you come up front for a minute?” she asked when she spotted the elf, “I have something for you.”

“A gift?” Sylvanas asked, tilted her head in confusion as Jaina took her hand, lacing their fingers together to lead her up to the front.

“And a thank you,” Jaina smiled softly as she stepped away to reach below the front counter. She pulled out a finely crafted wooden box and held it out to Sylvanas, “for everything that you've done for me.”

Curious, Sylvanas took the box. Pulling the lid off, she started speaking, “you really didn't have to get--” she cut herself off when she saw what lay in the box, her ears falling flat.

Laying inside the box, nestled in the protective padding was a chefs knife. The blade was beautifully patterned and even at a glance, Sylvanas could tell that it had been made from Dwarven steel. The handle was made of smooth stained wood and was extremely comfortable in her hand when she carefully removed it from the box to examine it closer, turning it over in her hands.

Sylvanas ran her thumb over the surprisingly detailed etching at the heel of the blade. An eagle carrying a little anchor.

“Jaina I,” Sylvanas swallowed thickly, “I can't accept this.”

Jaina gave her a small smile, “you have to. You deserve it, Sylvanas.”

Setting the knife aside, Sylvanas pulled Jaina into a tight hug. She ducked her head to bury her face against Jainas shoulder. “Thank you, Jaina. Thank you so much,” Sylvanas murmured against her.

Their moment was interrupted by the sound of the door slamming open, causing them to jump apart. A dark shadow fell across the entryway as two musclebound orcs shoved their way inside.

Jaina watched as they stepped aside to allow a third person to walk in. She looked down slowly until her eyes fell on the goblin that stood between them. Even dressed in the tailored suit that he looked like he had been stuffed into, he looked sleazy.

“Gallywix,” Jaina all but spat his name out.

Gallywix clapped his hands loudly, the multitude of gaudy gold rings he wore clinking together. “Well look who managed to claw their way out of the pit I dug for them!” He forced a smile that didn’t quite reach his beady eyes, “It's getting really aggravating. And now look at how successful you are! And that, that is really REALLY pissing me off.”
Gallywix stepped further into Theramore, grinning up at Jaina, “I worked so hard, paying people to run you out, and then you just get better.” He tapped his cane on the floor in agitation, “And So I fly all the way out here to find out HOW and who do I see here?” Gallywix finally turned his attention to Sylvanas, “Sylvanas Windrunner.”

Sylvanas bared her fangs in a smile, “hello Jastor.” She kept her voice sweet, “how have you been since I bought out that place you tried to open in Ironforge?”

The goblins face twisted in anger, if only for a moment, before the smile was back, “that place was a dive anyways. Water under the bridge,” he sniffed, “I’m doing much better now. Not like you.” Gallywix laughed boisterously, “A failing diner? Oh, how the mighty have fallen. I’ll tell you what, Windrunner, come and work for me. A big famous restaurant and all the money you could ever need. Just walk away from here and let me deal with this dump.”

Sylvanas’ ears tilted back slowly as she approached Gallywix, crouching down to be at his level. “I would sooner give up cooking than work for scum like you,” she kept her voice sickeningly sweet as she leaned closer to speak into his ear, “now get the fuck out of my restaurant before I’m forced to have you removed.”

Gallywix took a step back, nearly bumping into one of the orcs he had brought with him. “You’ll pay for this!” he shouted, pointing his cane between Jaina and Sylvanas, “both of you will pay for this! No one says no to Jastor Gallywix! NO ONE!”

Sylvanas flinched slightly when the door slammed, ears flicking back at the sound. Standing slowly, Sylvanas gathered a shaking Jaina into her arms. She tried to calm the other woman’s rage with a soothing hand on her back.

“Nomi,” Sylvanas called, “I need you to contact my friend in Stormwind. You know that one. Tell her I have a job for her here, an urgent one.” When Nomi’s only response was to give her a doubtful look, she added, “tell her I’ll pay her very well. She’ll jump at that.”

Once Nomi had rushed off to do as she had asked, Sylvanas lead Jaina into the kitchen. “Go home, Jaina,” Sylvanas urged, “take the rest of the night and tomorrow to relax. I’ll take care of everything. I promise.”

“All right,” Jaina drew in a deep breath, trying to quell her anger, “all right I’ll go. Thank you again, Sylvanas.”

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Jaina did not relax. Her anger faded to worry, and the worry to full-on stress. She barely slept and was infinitely grateful for the extra day off. It was late in the morning when Jaina finally managed to drag herself out of bed. The promise of coffee was a good motivator.

She was about halfway through her first cup when a knock sounded on her door. When the knock came again, Jaina stood from the couch and made her way to the door, opening it cautiously.

The sight that greeted her drew a scream from her throat.
“Vereesa!” Jaina couldn't contain her excited shriek as she launched herself out the door and into the waiting arms of the short elf. Years of knowing Jaina had left Vereesa more than prepared to catch Jaina without falling back down the stairs.

Jaina rocked them back and forth, laughing as she dragged Vereesa into her apartment.

“What are you even doing here? I thought it was too far to travel without the boys?” Jaina asked once she had calmed down, “not that I’m not happy to see you. It's been years.”

Vereesa plopped down on the couch, propping her feet up while she beamed at Jaina, “Rhonin finally got a job in Dalaran so we moved back. I told him that the first thing we were doing once we got settled was coming to see you,” she spread her hands, “so here I am.”

Jaina settled down next to her, leaning against Vereesa before handing her a mug of coffee.

Vereesa took a grateful sip and leaned further back into the couch. She let out a small hum and smiled, “good to see that you finally graduated from drinking that crap we drank in college and learned what good coffee tastes like.” Vereesa barked out a laugh at Jainas look of indignation. “But really,” Vereesa took a deep breath to quell her laughter, “I’m so glad to see that you’ve been doing so well. I haven't heard much from you lately,” Vereesas ears flicked back, “I was getting worried.”

“I’m sorry,” Jaina sighed, “I’ve been really busy. But Theramore in thriving now thanks to my new chef.”

Ears perked, Vereesa shifted to be able to look at Jaina, “new chef?” she raised an elegant silver brow.

Jaina nodded, cradling her mug, “well, chef and business partner and,” she blushed and tried to hide in her mug.

Vereesa knew that look well, after living with Jaina before. She nudged Jaina with her shoulder, “is he good to you? Because you know that I will frame him and take him out if he isn't.”

“She's wonderful,” Jaina replied softly.

“She?” Vereesas brows rose and she smirked devilishly at Jaina, “why Jaina Proudmoore you are just full of surprises,” she teased. “Can I meet her?” Vereesa asked, unable to keep the excitement from her voice, “do I get to see the woman who is stealing so much of my best friends time?”

Jaina wanted nothing more than to say yes. To drag Vereesa down to the kitchen and reunite her and Sylvanas. But she remembered all too well the pained looks that she had seen on both of their faces when talking about their fractured family and simply shrugged. “She’s antisocial,” not a total lie, “so maybe we can ease her into a meeting.”

As they sat finishing their coffees, Jaina couldn’t help but wonder at how she managed to not see the similarities between the sister when she had met Sylvanas. They had the same steel blue eyes. The same crooked smile. In the way, they held themselves, how they could both command a room. So similar, and yet so different. Jaina felt a pang in her heart for how close the two of them must have been growing up.
When Jaina looked over, Vereesa was looking back at her with a mischievous glint in her eyes, “if I can't meet your mystery woman, can I at least try her cooking?”

“Do you plan on paying this time?” Jaina teased, drawing a laugh from the elf. She smiled at the sound, nearly the same laugh as well.

“Of course not,” Vereesa countered, “but Rhonin will. He’s hanging out in our hotel room with the boys and I’m sure he is dying to get them outside. We can make this into a big family meal so that they can see you too.” Vereesa reached out and gave Jaina’s leg a squeeze, “they miss you almost as much as I do.”

“Of course,” Jaina responded almost instantly, “that sounds wonderful.”

They waited outside for Rhonin and the boys to arrive, talking happily about Vereesa's new position as an officer in Dalaran's guard.

Rhonin's car barely came to a full stop before the back door opened and the two little half-elves all but flew out of the car and raced towards Jaina, “Aunty Jaina!” they cried in unison.

Laughing, Jaina knelt down quickly to catch them in her arms. She held them close, pressing kisses into their fiery hair. “Giramar,” an extra kiss to his head, “Galadin,” another to his, “have you two been behaving for your parents?”

“Yes,” they both clearly lied.

Rhonin snorted, crossing his arms as Jaina stood, “if I hadn't have been there when they were born I would swear they were actually just very small trolls.” His words earned him a quick smack from his wife that he laughed off as he pulled Jaina into a hug, “it's good to see you, Jaina.”

“You too, Rhonin,” Jaina stepped back and smiled fondly at the family. The twins took her hands and pulled her through Theramore doors, talking excitedly about their new school. Jaina couldn't help but wonder if they would love their actual aunt as much as they did her.

Pained sat them near the front window, leaving a pot of tea for them, leaving after Jaina quietly thanked her.

Looking through the menu, Vereesa let out a small squeak of excitement, “you serve honey bread?”

Jaina nodded, “it's a rather new addition to the menu. It's the only baked good that the head chef makes.”

Vereesa scoffed, doing her best to reign in her excitement, ear flicking with mild irritation, “good for her, I’m sure it's great, but it can’t possibly compare to Elven made honey bread.”

“Shes Quel’dorei,” Jaina said evenly, sipping at her tea.

Vereesa’s ears quivered with her renewed excitement. She barely gave Himmu time to greet them before she blurted out, “five orders of honey bread.”

Once the server had left, Rhonin let out the laugh he had been holding in, “seems that you and I have similar tastes in women,” he teased.

Jaina nearly choked on her tea as Vereesa joined her husband in the howls of laughter that took over them.
The honey bread was just as Jaina remembered it from when Sylvanas had pitched it to her after New Years. The small beehive-shaped coils of bread were incredibly sweet, having been soaked in honey. Inside the coil was a filling of jam, strawberry today.

Jaina had marveled at this the first time. She had asked Sylvanas how she had got the jam inside without any of it leaking out. To which the elf had grinned mischievously and answered a family secret.

Oh no.

Jaina realized her mistake too late and was too slow to stop her friend.

Vereesa nearly knocked the table over along with her chair as she stood and made her way determinedly to the kitchen. Her ears were pinned back and her fangs bared in a display that was terrifying despite her short stature.

Even from the dining room, Jaina could clearly hear the angrily shouted Thalassian. “SYLVANAS!” That one word had Jaina running. She dodged around startled servers as the shouting grew louder.

Jaina wasn’t entirely sure what she had been expecting when she burst into the kitchen. It certainly wasn’t seeing Kasa and Tora holding back a crazed Vereesa. The orc and Taurin were struggling to hold the little elf back as she screamed at Sylvanas’ retreating form.

Jaina stood in front of Vereesa as her screams turned into sobs. “You can let her go now,” she told the two women, catching her friend as she fell forward to cry against Jaina’s shoulder. Jaina led her slowly into the office, sitting the now sniffling elf down.

“How could you, Jaina?” Vereesa finally spoke as her tears subsided and anger took the place of her sorrow, “how could you not tell me?!”

Jaina couldn’t bear to look at her friend as she leaned against her desk, folding her arms, “I wanted to tell you, but there never seemed to be a good time.”

“Belore!” Vereesa snapped, digging her hands into the arms of the chair, “damn it Jaina, she’s my sister! There never would have been a good time!”

“I’m sorry,” Jaina ran a hand through her hair, “I really didn’t mean to keep this from either of you but I can’t change that now. What I can do is help the two of you deal with it.” Jaina finally turned her head to meet Vereesa’s eyes, “there’s a little coffee shop just down the street that she likes to brood in. Get her ginger snaps, they're--”

“Her favorite,” Vereesa finished for her.

“I’ll keep Rhonin and the twins out of trouble,” Jaina offered when Vereesa still looked unsure.

That seemed to be all Vereesa needed to hear before to have her rushing out of the office and out the door.

*** *** *** ***

Sylvanas sat in her usual booth in the far corner of the little shop staring into her mug, one hand buried in her hair. Her ears pinned back slowly when she saw Vereesa take the seat across from her, sliding a little clamshell container of ginger snaps across the table as a peace offering. “You always were following me around, Little Moon,” Sylvanas ground out the nickname mockingly,
“except when it mattered most.”

Vereesa flinched at her sister's tone, her ear drooping, “I was just a kid, Sylv. You can't really blame me for wanting to stay where I knew I would have a roof? Food?”

“Yes. Yes I can,” Sylvanas looked up at Vereesa then, baring her fangs, “I needed someone, ANYONE to stand up to them! To stand by my side and you did nothing! You stood by while they cast me out! Do you have any idea how hard I had it? What I had to endure because of our family and that bastard she brought home with her!?”

Vereesa wilted, staring down at the table, “I was scared, Sylv, I didn't want them to turn on me too. I was just a kid.” She was shaking now, “we tried to find you. All of us did. After All--” Vereesa quickly cut herself off at the death glare that Sylvanas shot her, “after she realized what she had done, the three of us went searching for you. We looked everywhere and asked everyone but you were just gone! I thought you had DIED Sylvanas!”

She was crying again. “For years I thought you were dead. Then, suddenly, your name starts popping up in the news and I tried to hunt you down but…”

“But I kept moving around,” Sylvanas supplied. She leaned back in her seat, closing her eyes tightly, “maybe this is why. Maybe I just didn't want to deal with this.

Silence fell over the booth, save for Vereesas quiet sobs.

Sylvanas’ heart twisted painfully at the sounds of her baby sister crying. Without a word she stood and sat down heavily next to Vereesa, lifting her arm. No words needed to pass between them for Vereesa to understand what was being offered. Vereesa clung to Sylvanas, muffling her sobs against her sister's shoulder.

Slowly, Sylvanas wrapped her arms around Vereesa, threading her fingers through her hair like their mother used to when any of them were upset. Like Sylvanas had down in her stead when she was away, and after she had died. It was odd, how natural it all still felt, even after all the time that had passed.

“Jaina never mentioned that she knew you,” Vereesa mumbled against Sylvanas’ now damp shoulder when she had calmed.

Sylvanas snorted, “it would seem that we at least have that in common.”

With a laugh, Vereesa extracted herself from Sylvanas’ arms to take one of the snaps, only for Sylvanas to pluck it out of her hand.

“Older sister gets first pick.”

“You’re as bad as my boys,” Vereesa chuckled.

Sylvanas almost dropped the snap as she stared at Vereesa, “your... boys?”


“Sons?” Sylvanas felt as if all the air had been knocked from her lungs, “you have children, and I wasn't there to help you through that.”

“I still had Lireth around to help out,” Vereesa offered.
“Knowing that our baby brother was more help than I was doesn't make it any better,” Sylvanas groaned. She rubbed her hands through her hair to grasp at her own ears, a habit that Jaina had been struggling to break her from. “Belore, I spent so long being angry that I never thought about what I was missing,” Sylvanas lowered her gaze, “you must think e a monster.”

Vereesa merely smiled, “I could never think that of you, Sylv. Her smile grew, “would you like to meet them? Your nephews?”

Sylvanas perked up at that, “can I?”

“Of course you can.”

Sylvanas paid for her coffee, leaving a sizable tip for the staff before leaving with Vereesa. Sylvanas stopped when she saw Jaina lead two small half-elves out of Theramore.

Vereesa shot her a reassuring smile and moved to kneel in front of her children, “boys, this is your Aunt Sylvanas,” she explained, pointing back to her nervous sister. She chuckled at the boy's awestruck faces, “why don't you say hello in a proper Windrunner fashion, Hmm?”

They hesitated for only a moment before launching themselves at Sylvanas. Sylvanas’ ears pinned back as she struggled to catch the airborne children, but she manages, settling one twin upon each of her hips. She listened intently to their chatter, nodding all the while.

Vereesa stood and checked a dopey looking Jaina with her hip, “thanks for dating my sister. “I never would have found her otherwise.”

Jaina blushed brightly, ducking her head, “you're welcome?”

“But promise me that you don't have any other surprises for me,” Vereesa grinned.

“Promise. She’s the last one.”
It was Sylvanas’ day off. She should have spent it running errands or doing chores that she didn’t have time for during the rest of the week. But nothing had needed to be done. For the first time in months, Sylvanas found herself with an abundance of free time. It was a fact that would have delighted the elf if only Jaina had shared in her good luck. Her girlfriend had been busy all day and that left Sylvanas to be one of her least favorite things. Bored.

Boredom had never suited Sylvanas, yet today it lulled her into a laze. She had finally made good use of her perfectly placed couch, set in such a way that the late rays of the sun soaked into the fabric making for the perfect place to nap. And nap she did. She had spent the whole afternoon dozing in the sun with Muffin. But now she was awake and once again bored.

She lounged on her couch, one leg swung over the back while she absently rubbed Muffin’s ears. Sylvanas held her phone above her while she flicked through the streams sent by the cameras that she had installed after Gallywix’s threat. Jaina had hated the idea but knew that it was best to play it safe.

Sylvanas’ stomach rumbled loudly, reminding her that she had hardly eaten all day. She hummed in thought, Jaina hadn’t been over for dinner in a while and it seemed like as good an excuse as any to get to see her. Sylvanas’ ears twitched back as an idea occurred to her and she fired off a text to Jaina.

‘Hey Jaina. What are you up to right now?’

‘Just got back from meeting with that new supplier you told me about.’

‘Oh? That took longer than I thought it would.’

‘I know! He just kept trying to tell me stories about his ancestors! Like, Sir! I am just trying to buy some fish!’

‘Haha. Yeah, he gets like that. You hungry?’

‘Starving! I haven’t eaten all day!’

‘Want to come over for dinner?’

‘Sure, what are you making?’
Jaina let herself into Sylvanas’ apartment with the key she had been given. She barely got her shoes off before letting out a started sound as Sylvanas pulled her into a lingering kiss that Jaina gladly melted into.

“I missed you,” Sylvanas smiled against her lips.

Jaina laughed as she stepped out of her arms, “I just saw you last night.” She walked in further to greet Muffin who had been meowing loudly from the arm of the couch, demanding Jaina’s attention. She scooped him up, holding the purring bundle close as she gave him scritches.

“So,” Jaina started as she placed Muffin back on the couch, “what are you making me?”

“Nothing,” Sylvanas grinned widely, flashing her fangs. Steely eyes gleaming with mischief.

“Nothing?” Jaina repeating, raising a brow, “but you asked me over for dinner.”

“I did, but I’m not the one making it,” Sylvanas’ ears slanted back, “you are.”

Jaina paled, “I really don’t think that is a good idea, Sylvanas.” She crossed her arms, turning slightly away from her girlfriend, “I’m serious. I can and have burned water before.”

Snorting a laugh, Sylvanas wrapped her arms around Jaina, pulling her back to her own chest, “come on, there has to be something you can make. How did you not starve in university?”

“Oven-baked chips and fish sticks,” Jaina admitted quietly.

Sylvanas let go of Jaina quickly. Her ears pinned back and her face screwed up in a mixture of confusion and disgust, pulling a laugh from Jaina. “Fish sticks?” she repeated, “There is nothing even remotely stick shaped about fish.”

“And chickens don’t have fingers but that’s still a food,” Jaina smirked as she poked Sylvanas in the chest, “don’t go knocking the one thing I can make when I KNOW that hidden in the back of your freezer is a box of those awful pizza pocket things.”

“You win this round, Proudmoore,” Sylvanas grumbled as Jaina kissed her cheek.

“I win most rounds,” the human replied with a laugh.

“True, but we’ll see if that will remain true,” Sylvanas snarked, good-naturedly, “I’ll teach you something simple.”

Jaina joined Sylvanas by the counter and watched her pull out ingredients with mounting confusion. Bacon, potatoes, onions, mushrooms, butter and a bottle of wine. She frowned, “alright, what in Azeroth am I making?”

“Pork roast,” Sylvanas said, gesturing to the spread on the counter as if it was obvious.

Jaina’s frown deepened, “where’s the pork?”

“The bacon,” Sylvanas patted the pack of meat.

“But you said we were making a pork roast,” Jaina snipped. Sylvanas was messing with her. She
had to be, “all I see are potatoes.”

“Right you are,” Sylvanas grinned, handing Jaina a peeler, “so let's get peeling so we can get them steaming.” Between the two of them, they had the potatoes peeled in no time. Sylvanas pulled one of her personal knives from the drawer in which she kept them, flipping it in the air and catching it by the handle with ease. She smiled placing it on the cutting board for Jaina.

“I really don't think this is a good idea,” Jaina glanced at Sylvanas before picking up the knife, “I'm terrible at prep work.”

Sylvanas moved behind Jaina, holding her hand that held the knife, “part of that might be how you hold it.” She adjusted Jaina's grip so that she was pinching the blade between her thumb and forefinger, while the rest held the handle. “The blade is heavy,” she explained, “if you just hold the handle, you don't have total control over that weight. But if you hold the blade, you have direct control of the blade. It will only go where you want it to.”

With her other hand, Sylvanas took hold of Jaina free hand, curling her fingers into a paw, “and don't forget to make your lynx paw. It'll keep your fingers safe and help with your grip.”

Jaina laughed as she allowed Sylvanas to move her hands. For the first few Potatoes, Sylvanas guided her hands. Leading her through the cuts carefully, allowing Jaina to get a feel of the knife before removing her hands to let Jaina work. It took her far longer than it would have if Sylvanas had done it herself. The cuts rough and uneven, but Sylvanas smiled proudly all the same as she scooped the pieces into the steam basket.

The onions came next. Sylvanas showed her how to dice half of it, before returning the knife to Jaina, “don't worry about getting them done swiftly. Focus on the sizing and getting them as close a possible and then work on the mushrooms.” She sliced the onion lengthwise, and then carefully widthwise through the layers before slowly dicing it before handing the knife back to Jaina to finish the job.

With the onions and mushrooms sweated, and the potatoes cooled, Jaina and Sylvanas mashed the steamed potatoes and mixed in the mushrooms and onions before forming them all into a loaf and wrapping it in layers of bacon. “Does it look more like a roast now?” Sylvanas asked.

“A little. I guess,” Jaina shrugged as she poured half of the bottle of wine into a saucepan as she was instructed, “I still don't understand how this will taste anything like a pork roast. It's just potatoes.”

“Patience,” Sylvanas grinned, turning on the burner, “and focus on the sauce. We're looking for it to reduce by nearly half before we add the butter, so keep an eye on it and stir it often.”

Jaina was hyper-focused on her task as Sylvanas wandered back to laze with Muffin on the couch. It was slow going. Jaina didn't trust herself enough to be able to control the sauce at a higher eat so she kept the flame low. Finally, the sauce was reduced and Jaina whisked in the butter, allowing it to melt before calling Sylvanas over nervously. She watched as the elf tasted the sauce and gasped in shock as she was pulled into a sudden kiss.

“I'll make a chef out of you yet, Jaina,” Sylvanas pressed their foreheads together, “and then you'll be too good for fish sticks.”

Jaina laughed cheerily and she stepped back to let Sylvanas pull the finished roast from the oven. Jaina had to admit, it did smell like a pork roast. When it was sliced, Jaina could see that the juice and fat from the thick cut bacon had soaked into the potatoes. She sat down with her plate, the
slices covered with a generous portion of the sauce she had made and tucked in before Sylvanas even had a chance to sit down.

Sylvanas was right. It really was a pork roast. The potatoes had soaked up the flavor of the bacon, giving the whole dish a truly meaty taste, and the wine sauce only helped to enhance it.

There were no leftovers. Jaina and Sylvanas each ate their fill until the roast was not but a delicious memory. Bellies full, the pair retired to the couch, Jaina stretched out on top of Sylvanas, her head resting against the elf’s chest.

Jaina absently traced the lines of Sylvanas’ tattoos. “Did they hurt?” she asked.

“Of course they did,” Sylvanas chuckled, nails scratching against Jaina’s back, “but the tolerance to pain is subjective.”

Jaina nodded, “I’ve been thinking about getting one,” she pressed her face more against Sylvanas and smiled, “Theramore’s anchor.”

“Well, if you do decide to get one,” Sylvanas smiled, tilting her head to place a kiss into Jaina’s hair, “I’d be more than happy to go with you.”

“Thank you,” Jaina said before sitting up rather suddenly to fish her phone out of her pocket. “Is that the time?” She scrambled off the couch and gathered her sweater, “I have to go.”

Sylvanas sat up and pouted, “you could always stay the night,” she offered.

“I would love to, but I can’t,” Jaina sighed as she pulled on her sweater, “but I have to be up early to go and pick up Chen from the airport and I need my sleep.”

“You could still stay,” Sylvanas made her pout bigger.

Jaina rolled her eyes, “And end up late to get him because you, my dear, cuddle like a bear.” Returning to the couch, Jaina leaned down to give Sylvanas a lingering kiss, “I’ll see you in the morning.” She paused at the door to give Muffin a goodbye scratch, “and I will see you later, Muffin.”

Once Jaina was gone, Muffin hopped into Sylvanas’ lap with a loud meow.

“Right,” Sylvanas scooped him up, heading for her bedroom, “we might as well get some sleep too, eh bud?”

*** *** *** ***

It was early in the morning, Sylvanas was dragged from a fitful sleep by the sound of her phone ringing near her ears. Answering it, she grumbled, “hello?”

“Sylvanas!” Nomi’s panicked voice sounded from the other end.

“Nomi? What do you want,” Sylvanas sighed, pulling her phone away from her ear to check the time, “it’s 3 in the morning.”

“It’s on fire Sylvanas!” Nomi all but shouted into the phone, an oddity for the usually calm man. Sylvanas snorted, “from you, I’m not surprised. Somethings always--”

“Theramore! Theramore’s on fire!”
So many of you called this so long ago. I mean, just look at the name of the restaurant.
All I Had

Chapter Summary

Still a bit angsty.

Sylvanas had never driven so fast in her life. She’s never had a reason to go racing through the city until now. The lights around her were a blur and she leaned on her horn at every intersection she came to. She would not be stopping. Nothing and no one would get in her way of getting to Jaina as fast as she possibly could.

A horn was blared at Sylvanas as she ran yet another red light, by she hardly heard it.

She had to get to Theramore. To Jaina. Had to make sure that Jaina was okay. She had to be okay. Sylvanas’ grip on her steering wheel turned white and she ground her teeth. If Jaina wasn’t, it would be all her fault. She should have been more instant that Jaina stay the night. That she wouldn’t be a bother and let her sleep and leave when she had to in the morning. But Sylvanas hadn’t. She had let her leave and now she could be—

No. Jaina was fine. She got out. Had to have.

The tires of Sylvanas’ car squealed loudly as she slammed on her breaks to avoid hitting the patrol car that blocked the road. She didn’t worry about grabbing her keys or even turning off her car, Sylvanas simply threw the door open and scrambled out.

The sky was orange from the blaze, smoke curling high into the sky. Her heart stuttered as she took off at a sprint towards Theramore. The closer she got, the more people she had to dodge or tackle to keep her straight shot.

Gawkers. Sylvanas had to consciously suppress the urge to snap and snark at them for having the nerve to turn this horror into a spectacle. The entertainment for the night.

She must have looked insane enough without the snarling. Dressed in not but her sleep shorts and a tank top, a flannel tossed on and left open, fluttering about along with her wild mane of hair.

“Jaina!” Sylvanas called, shoving a man aside, “JAINA!”

Sylvanas looked about wildly, searching desperately for a flash of Jaina’s golden hair.

“Windrunner!” A voice called.

Sylvanas’ ears flicked towards the sound of the name and turned quickly to find a small group of Theramore’s employees. Pained, Nomi, Othon, and Kinndy all stood at the wooden barricades that kept the crowd separated from the firefighters. She grabbed pained roughly by the front of her shirt, pulling her down to her height. “Where is she!??” Sylvanas demanded, her voice trembling slightly, “where is Jaina!?”

“She wasn't answering her phone,” Pained replied, gently removing the shorter elf’s fists from her shirt, “we assumed that she was with you like she usually is.” Her long blue ears slowly pinned back. “But… if Jaina isn't with you than…”
Sylvanas followed her gaze towards the flames that had engulfed the ground floor, just beginning to be seen from the apartment above. Fear seized her heart in a vice. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see Kinndy flagging down an officer. Nomi was shouting at someone over the phone in Pandaren. No one was paying attention to the horrified high elf. Without a second thought, Sylvanas vaulted herself over the wooden barricade and began running towards the blaze. People were shouting her name, but they were mere background noise to the roar of the flames.

She rounded the side and took the steps up to Jaina’s apartment two at a time. The heat was unbearable but Sylvanas would not be deterred. She threw her shoulder into the door. Again and again, until the damaged wood gave way and she tumbled into the burning building.

Smoke threatened to choke her and she coughed against it as she stood, squinting against the heat of the flames. “Jaina!” She called out, coughing as more smoke filled her lungs the further she ventured.

Embers burned holes through her clothes, burning her skin and her ears flicked continuously as the heat burned them, but she persisted. She didn't have to stumble far before she found Jaina.

The human was crumpled on the ground unmoving and Sylvanas feared the worst. She jumped at the sound of wood popping and splintering, more embers and fresh flames spewing up around them. Ripping off her flannel, Sylvanas bundled Jaina up in the shirt to protect her prone form as best she could before picking her up and struggling back out the door.

“Help!” Sylvanas stumbled toward the emergency workers, her eyes wide and fearful. “Someone help her!”

She had to force herself not to fight with the orcish paramedic that gingerly took Jaina from her arms. The same restraint did could not, however, be applied to the auburn-haired elf that began trying to assess her burn. “Don't touch me!” she snarled, baring her fangs defensively and the elf raised her hands submissively, “nobody is to touch me until I know that she is--” her voice broke and Sylvanas had to bite her lip to hold back the sob that threatened to break free.

“Alright,” The paramedic spoke calmly, “she'll be okay. Trust me.” With that, she turned and hurried to help her partner.

Sylvanas paced nearby. Stalking the length of the ambulance swallowed with worry. Her ears perked up at the sound of Jaina gasping for air and she was by her side in an instant. Sylvanas grabbed Jaina’s hand, drawing the younger woman's attention to her. “You're okay,” she tried to keep her voice steady, “Jaina, you're okay now. You're safe.”

Her words seemed to calm Jaina as she was loaded into the back of the ambulance. But that shattered Sylvanas facade, “where are you taking her?”

“The hospital,” the elfen paramedic replied, “she isn't out of the woods yet. Neither are you.” she motioned to the back, “get in so we can have someone look at those burns of yours.”

Nodding dumbly, Sylvanas did as she was told and climbed into the back, retaking Jaines hand as soon as she could. She wasn't about to let her out of her sight.

Sylvanas would never be able to thank Othon enough. After the ambulance had left, the troll had gone searching for Sylvanas’ car, driving it all the way to the hospital for her. He had made it there just as the two were being released. He dropped her own coat over Sylvanas fleshly bandaged
shoulders and slipped her phone and keys into her pocket before pulling the elf into a short hug. “Dat was a mighty stupid ting ya did, Chef,” he grunted as he let her go. He glanced down at Jaina, his shoulders drooping at how lost she looked. “But all be glad ya did. Get her home. We’ll be waitin for your call.”

Mumbling out a thank you, Sylvanas led Jaina to her car.

The drive to Sylvanas’ apartment was silent and it was late morning by the time they got inside.

Sylvanas carefully helped Jaina undress in the washroom, tossing her ruined clothes into a corner and wrapping her in a fluffy towel while she ran a bath for her. Once the tub was full, she helped Jaina lower herself into the warm water, letting her relax somewhat before beginning the long process of washing all of the soot and ash from her body and out of her hair.

By the time that Sylvanas washed all of the ash away, the water had turned and inky black. She had to drain and fill the tub another two time before Jaina was finally clean and ready to be wrapped up once more in the towel. Sylvanas dried Jaina hair quickly, running her fingers through the damp locks before pulling her up to lead her to the bedroom.

She helped the human into a pair of worn pajama pants and an oversized shirt before piling all of the pillows up against the headboard.

“Thank you,” Jaina managed to mutter as she climbed into bed, her hand automatically reaching out to pet Muffin as he jumped onto the bed.

Sylvanas ears flicked back at how raspy Jaina voice sounded. “I know you hate sleeping on your back,” Sylvanas said, trying to distract herself while she tucked the blanket around Jainas legs, “but the doctor says you have to so that you can breath easier.”

She pushed Jainas hair up out of her face, trailing her fingers across her cheek in a soft caress before resting them along Jainas pulse point. Closing her eyes, Sylvanas allowed herself to simply feel and steady beating of Jainas heart. Each pump and steadfast reassurance. Jaina was alive.

“I’ll make you some food,” Sylvanas offered. Not waiting for a response, she went to the kitchen and raided her fridge and cupboard. “Mac and cheese,” she said to herself, “filling and easy on a sore throat.” She set the water to boil, adding the noodles before starting on the sauce.

Her legs felt weak and Sylvanas had to lean forward and grip the counter for support. The last traces of adrenaline finally left her system, leaving Sylvanas trembling against the swell of emotion that she could no longer easily shove aside. Her ears pinned back and she grit her teeth, digging her fangs into her lip as she willed herself not to cry.

Sylvanas couldn’t break down. Not now. Not when Jaina needed her to be strong.

Pressing the swell back, Sylvanas carried on. The milk was simmering nicely and she slowly stirred in a blend of cheese. Cheddar and mozzarella with a heaping spoonful of cream cheese. Once it was all melted, she added it into the drained noodles and filled a bowl for Jaina.

“It's all gone, isn’t it?” Jaina asked quietly when Sylvanas entered.

Sylvanas set the bowl on the bedside table and kneeled down, taking Jainas hand in her own. “Yes. It’s all gone,” her eyes hardened slightly, “but we won’t let him get away with this.”

Jaina wasn’t listening, “my home,” she breathed, red-rimmed eyes watering, “all of my books. My things.”
“They can all be replaced,” Sylvanas assured her, “I’ll help you. You know I will.”

Jaina shook as anger boiled up inside her. She glared at Sylvanas and snapped out, “Theramore was ALL I had!” The effort forced her to dissolve into a fit of hacking coughs.

Sylvanas wilted at Jaina’s words, her ears drooping low. She felt as if a dagger had been plunged into her heart. “Yes,” Sylvanas struggled to keep her voice even, “of course it was. But, I almost lost you. Do you know how scared I was? Do you even care?”

Jaina was still coughing as Sylvanas stood. Her eyes burned. “Eat your food, Jaina,” Sylvanas forced all emotion from her voice and she got dressed. Grabbing a duffle bag, Sylvanas haphazardly stuffed a few changes of clothes and her laptop inside. Sylvanas glances at Jaina, noting the angry tears that run down her face while she ate slowly with none of her usual enthusiasm.

Looking away, Sylvanas pulled on a hoodie, tucking her ears into the slits in the hood as she pulled it up. “I have some business to take care of. Meetings with the detectives in charge. Someone will be by later to check on you.” She didn’t bother checking to see if Jaina had heard her or not, she simply grabbed her keys and left.

Sylvanas only made it as far as the driver seat of her car before she broke. Sobs wracked her body as she pressed her forehead against the steering wheel. Was she nothing? Had it all been a lie?

“No,” Sylvanas rubbed at her eyes roughly with the heel of her hand. Jaina had been speaking from pain.

It was up to Sylvanas to mend what she could. She owed that much to Jaina, at least. Even if, in the end, Jaina decides to cast her aside.
Jaina opened her eyes blearily, squinting against the light that filtered in through the curtains. Her head hurt, and her chest ached. For a moment, her mind was blank. Slowly, memories began to filter in. Heat. Smoke. Flames. Pain. Fire. Her hands flew to her neck, desperately seeking out the chain around her neck. She only relaxed when her fingers followed the links down to grasp at the anchor. With a relieved sigh, Jaina leaned back against the mound of pillows.

The apartment was silent save for the soft ticking of the clock in the living room and Muffins soft snore next to her. “Sylvanas?” Jaina tried to call out, wincing at the painful crack in her voice. When no reply came, Jaina struggled out of bed, standing slowly on unsteady feet.

Wrapping the blanket tightly around herself, Jaina shuffled her way down the hall and into the kitchen fully expecting to find Sylvanas seated at the table. Only, she wasn’t there. Further shuffling explorations showed, that Sylvanas wasn’t anywhere in the apartment.

Returning to the kitchen, Jaina noticed bags sitting on the table. New clothes, and a phone. Jaina frowned, moving one of the bags aside to reveal a note.

*I figured that you would want to have some clothes of your own, and maybe a phone. It’s all set up for you, took a long while to convince the guys at the store that I wasn’t trying to steal your information. You should probably call my sister. She’s been trying to get a hold of you since we got out of the hospital but I refused to wake you.*

*There’s some food in the fridge, I made enough to last about a week. So don’t forget to feed yourself, and Muffin too. I’ll be back when I can.*

*Sylvanas.*

Jainas heart sank as she read and reread the note. Where could Sylvanas have gone? Why would she have left Jaina all alone? Especially after what had happened.

The sound of Muffins soft meows drew Jaina from her thoughts. “I bet you’re hungry, eh?” She kneeled down to scratch his ears before scouring the kitchen for his food. Jaina found it in a bin in the small pantry cupboard and filled the little plate on the floor with a scoop of kibbles. “Sorry, Muffin. No fancy food today. I don’t think she would really appreciate me giving you food poisoning.” She found herself smiling at the little snort the cat made before he tuck into his breakfast.

For herself, Jaina made a couple of pieces of toast with peanut butter and honey. She didn’t really feel like she could stomach anything more than that. She couldn’t help but laugh, forcing herself into a fit of coughing. Even for something as simple as bread, Sylvanas had shown a splash of culinary flare. No simple pre-sliced white bread could be found in her kitchen. Only fresh artisanal bread, made with oats and honey. It was good. Really good. Even toasted it stayed soft and easy to chew, gentle on Jainas still raw throat.
Jaina nearly dropped her plate when a knock sounded at the door. She stood there, heart racing when it sounded again.

“Jaina?” Chen called from the other side, “Are you awake?”

She carefully placed her plate in the sink and took a calming breath. It was only Chen. No one was coming for her. Chen! Jaina rushed to the door, choking back a cough as she pulled it open. “Chen, I’m so sorry that I--”

Her apology was cut off when she was pulled down into a tight hug. Calloused fingers wound their way into her hair, pressing her head firmly against Chen's shoulder. “Thank the Celestials! You're all right!” Chen rumbled, holding her as close as he could without hurting her. “When Nomi called me and told me what had happened I had feared the worst,” he admitted quietly as Jaina pulled him inside to close the door. Taking a step back, Chen looked her over with a critical eye, “but you seem unharmed?”

“Not completely,” Jaina touched the side of her head, tracing over the lump that graced the side of her head. She frowned slightly, furrowing her brow, “I don't really remember what happened, but I think Sylvanas pulled me out.” She sat down on the couch, graciously accepting the thermos of tea that Chen pulled out of her bag as he sat next to her.

“She did,” Chen confirmed as Jaina sipped on the soothing tea, “Nomi told me that she was like a woman possessed. We’re all lucky that we didn't lose you both.” Chen looked down solemnly, only looking up when Jaina gave her arm a soft squeeze, “where is she anyway? I didn't think she would want to leave your side.”

Jaina looked struck, “you mean, she didn't send you?” Chen shook his head. “You don't know where she either?”

“No,” Chen frowned deeply, “I simply came over as soon as I could.”

Nearly spilling her tea, Jaina stood up and grabbed the note from the table and handed it to Chen. He read it, then reread it, “why would she choose now to take off?”

“I hurt her,” Jaina sighed, sitting down heavily, hanging her head and squeezing her eyes shut at the memory, “maybe that just made her see me. Really see me. What if she realized that she was only with me, putting up with me, because of Theramore?” Jaina dragged her fingers through her hair, “she said herself that she has never really done relationships… and now Theramore is gone… she has no reason to stay.”

Chen grabbed her shoulders then, turning the distraught woman to face him. “Jaina,” Chen began softly, wiping a tear from her cheek, “if you really think that then you don’t know her as well as you think. I know that you have been hurt and used before, Jaina, believe me. I know. But you have to remember that not everyone is out to get you. Sylvanas is one of those people. She cares. She cares so much. She risked her life to save you, Jaina, and I can guarantee that she didn’t do that because of Theramore.”

“Thank you,” Jaina spoke quietly, rubbing at her eyes. Chen's phone rang and Jaina waved him off to answer it.

It was a short call, and Chen shot her a sheepish smile when he hung up, “that was my apprentice. I’m needed back at the brewery.”

Jaina nodded, “I understand, go on. Thank you again.” She saw him out and locked the door. Jaina
was dizzy and sore. She picked up her new phone and lay down on the couch, with Muffin curled up against her side.

The phone had been loaded up with numbers and a few apps. All of the staff and Vereesa’s numbers were there, but Jaina frowned when she didn’t find Sylvanas’ number. Rolling her eyes, Jaina punched the number in from memory and waited. The phone rang and rand and Jaina waited with mounting worry. No was no answer, and the machine picked up, asking her to leave a message. Taking a shuddering breath, Jaina did just that.

“Hey, Sylvanas. It’s Jaina. I was just wondering where you are and when you think you’ll be back. I’m worried and I really just want you here. I’m sure whatever it is you’re doing can wait just a bit. I need to make sure that you’re okay. That we are okay. I--” Jaina cut herself off, “I’ll see you soon. Please.”

A fit of coughs racked Jaina’s body as she hung up the phone. Muffin meowed softly, pawing at her face. “I’m okay, Bud,” Jaina wheezed, running her fingers through his silky fur. Thumbing through her contacts, Jaina called Vereesa.

The phone barely had time to ring before Vereesa answered. “Jaina!” It was the only thing that Jaina could make out as her friend dissolved into panicked, rapid Thalassian.

Despite herself, Jaina chuckled softly, the laugh turning into fresh coughs. “I’m all right, Vereesa, but please, my Thalassian isn’t very good.”

Her words seemed to break Vereesa from her panic, if her lapse into Common was any indication, “I am so so SO glad that you’re alive,” she sounded like she had been crying. “I was going to rush back to see you but… your boys.”

Jaina smiled softly, “I understand. You can't just leave them.”

“I’ll come and visit you as soon as I can get the time, I promise.” Vereesa paused, “where are you staying right now?”

“Sylvanas’ apartment,” Muffin interrupted her with a loud meow, “with Muffin.”

Vereesa laughed, a sweet high sound, “hi there, Muffin. Are you taking good care of Jaina?”

Muffin gave another meow and it was Jaina’s turn to laugh, “he hasn't left my side.” Jaina worried her lip between her teeth, “Sylvanas didn't happen to tell you where she went, did she?”

Vereesa was silent for a long moment, “no. She called me to let me know you were all right and that she would be busy but… I have no idea where she would have gone.” She sighed, a weariness sinking into her voice, “A few months of reconnecting isn’t enough to bring us as close as we were. You probably know her better than I do now.”

Jaina rubbed at her eyes, pressing the heel of her hand into one of them as she drew in an unsteady breath, “I fucked up, Vereesa. I think I really fucked up and I might have really lost everything.”

“Well, I did say that you know her better,” Vereesa offered, “Do you think she would just leave for good?”

“No,” Jaina said after a long pause, she sat up on the couch, “No she’s the type to face things head on. She’ll be back, I just have to be ready to try and piece things back together.” Her conviction faulted as she coughed again.
“Take care of yourself, Jaina,” Vereesa huffed. Jaina could hear the fondness in her voice, “and by Belore, remember to text me. You’ve started getting really bad at that.”

“I promise I will,” Jaina could hear the boys in the background and smiled, “go and round up your little trolls. I’ll text you later.”

Jaina glanced at the time, her eyes widened in shock. It was midafternoon the day AFTER the fire. Had she really slept that long? She struggled back off the couch and grabbed the bags, heading back to Sylvanas’ bedroom with Muffin at her heels.

The bags had the basics. Socks, undergarments, a pair of jeans, a few shirts and a sweater. Jaina dressed in the jeans but left the shirts alone, opting instead to wear one of Sylvanas’. She pulled the shirt up over her nose and breathed deeply. The gentle smell of lavender wafted over her, calming her and hurting her in equal measures.

Jaina jumped at the sound of a knock on the door. She walked to it slowly, peering out the peephole. Othon and Kinndy stood outside and Jaina quickly let them in. Kinndy rushed forward to hug her legs tightly while Othon scooped up Muffin to stop him from running out. “I didn't expect almost dying would make me so popular,” Jaina said wryly after Kinndy let her go.

Othon frowned, “ya shouldn’t be makin joke bout dat. We was all worried.” His voice was lower than Jaina had ever heard it, “we saw da fire. We saw da destruction. We almost lost both o’ ya.”

Jaina flinched and looked away, unable to meet his gaze. “You saw it?”

“Yeah, we were there shortly after the fire crews showed up,” Kinndy replied.

“Take me to Theramore,” Jaina demanded quietly.

Kinndy froze, her ever-present smile falling from her face, “I really don’t think that’s a good idea Jaina.”

“Please,” Jaina looked between Kinndy and Othon, “I need to see it and I know that no one else will take me.”

Othon looked at Jaina intensely before sighing heavily, “ya make it real hard ta say no to ya.” He looked down to Kinndy, “Pained be dere right now, yeah?”

“Yeah,” Kinndy deflated, “she's going to be really mad if we take Jaina there.”

“Both o’ dem will be, but what can we do?” Othon shot Jaina a knowing smile, “if we don't take her dere, she’ll find her own way. Best get a coat, Jaina. It’s chilly.”

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Theramore was but a skeleton of what it once. Burnt out and crumbling. Everything that she had worked to build, turned to ash and ruin.

Jaina hugged herself, pulling Sylvanas’ leather jacket tighter around herself. “It really is all gone,” Jaina breathed out, “what am I supposed to do now?”

“Do what you always do, Jaina,” Kinndy tried her best to smile up at Jaina, “push forward.”

Jaina was about to reply when out of the corner of her eye she spotted a pair of goblins enter the ruins. “What are THEY doing here?” she spat out.
Pained gripped Jaina’s shoulder tightly, “they are demolition experts, Jaina,” the elf informed her sternly, “they were called in to help the investigated discern the cause of the fire.”

Forcing her anger down, Jaina leaned against Pained, “I’m sorry. That was really rude of me.”

“You be hurtin, Jaina,” Othon said, “you be allowed these little outbursts.”

Jaina nodded, returning her gaze to the smoldering ruins. “I almost died,” her voice was quiet, “I almost died,” she repeated herself. The shudder that ran through her had nothing to do with the chill in the air.

“Jaina Proudmoore?” a large Taurin pulled Jaina from her thoughts, extending her hand to her, “Inspector Fargame.

Jaina shook his hand as firmly as she could, “find anything yet?”

Fargame shook his massive head, keeping mindful of his antlers, “No, but the goblins just arrived, so we’ll know more soon.”

She nodded, “did anything survive?”

“No,” Fargame paused, “well one thing. Let me clear it with my superiors.” Fargame walked over to a Dwarvish office. They spoke quietly before the Dwarf finally handed over a small wrapped bundle that Fargame returned to Jaina.

The wooden handle had burned away but the blade of the knife she had gifted to Sylvanas survived. “Dwarven steel,” Jaina mused. She wiped the soot off of the engraving, running her thumb over the eagle engraving. “Thank you,” Jaina said to no one in particular, “thank you so much.”
It had been a week since Sylvanas had up and left. A whole week of no contact or even a sighting. Jaina had hardly slept, so sick with worry. The rotation of Theramore had helped to alleviate her growing loneliness at least. But only a little. Her mind always wandered back to Sylvanas, no matter how pleasant her company was. She couldn't help but wonder when, or if she would be back. More importantly, if there was any chance of saving what they had had.

Jaina sighed heavily as she placed a pan on the stove before rooting through the fridge for what was left of Sylvanas' fancy cheese. The bread was buttered and placed into the now hot pan to brown while she layered the cheese on to it. After placing the other buttered slice on top, Jaina carefully flipped it, doing a small victory dance when she managed not to lose any of the cheese.

Grilled cheese. Almost impossible to ruin. It was one of the very few things that Jaina could actually make and had always been her go to when fish sticks just didn't cut it. Though, she normally just used single slice processed cheese.

She had only just removed it from the pan when Muffin began to meow and desperately scratch at the door. The doorknob jiggled, and the sound of the locks sliding free was almost deafening in the absence of any other sound. Jaina didn't know what to expect as the door began to open. She held the spatula like a bat, ready to defend herself. But there was no need for her alarm as Sylvanas walked into the apartment, gently nudging Muffin away with her foot.

“Sylvanas,” Jaina breathed out, lowering the spatula slightly, “you came back.”

“Of course I did,” Sylvanas said, look anywhere but at Jaina, “it's my apartment.” Her steely eyes moved to the spatula, “unless of course, you plan on beating me back out the door with that.”

Putting down the spatula, Jaina walked over to Sylvanas. She wanted nothing more than to pull Sylvanas into a fierce hug. But she hesitated, unsure if the elf would allow it. Jaina forced her arms to be still at her side and she tilted her chin up. “I was really worried about you,” she started, “I tried calling you but you wouldn't answer.”

Sylvanas shrugged, “I had to hand my phone and laptop over to the investigation team so that they could access the camera logs.”

“The cameras,” Jaina gasped. She had completely forgotten about them.

“I told you, he won't get away with this.”

Jaina nodded, taking a really good look at Sylvanas. She looked terrible. Her clothes her rumpled, her ears drooping slightly with exhaustion, the skin of them red from burns. Dark circles could be seen clearly under the elf's eyes, and if for nothing else than those, Jaina knew that Sylvanas had been having just as hard a time a she had been.
Jaina moved closer to Sylvanas, only for her to take a step back, keeping just out of reach. She tried not to let her hurt show as she held out her arms, “Can I hug you?” Baby steps. Jaina waited for Sylvanas to nod her ascent before pulling her close. She must have squeezed Sylvanas too tightly for the elf flinched in pain. Jaina stepped back quickly, “what's wrong?”

“Messed up my shoulder pretty bad busting into your apartment,” Sylvanas supplied.

“I’m sorry,” Jaina forced the tremor from her voice, “I’m so, so sorry.”

Sylvanas shrugged and walked past Jaina as she pulled off her sweater. “Make me one of whatever it is you're eating,” Sylvanas instructed as she wandered into the washroom, “I’m starving.”

Jaina did as she was asked, making another grilled cheese, a touch nervously, for Sylvanas while the other woman showered. While she waited, Jaina tucked into her own sandwich. The soft bread gave way to wonderfully melted cheese, that stretched between her mouth and the sandwich with every bite. It was full of sharp cheese flavors, but with how Jaina had placed the cheese, the flavors didn't get all melded together and instead highlighted with every bite.

When Sylvanas came back out, she sat heavily across from Jaina, eyeing the food in confusion. “I thought you couldn't cook?” she asked as she started eating. Her ear relaxed slowly, raising from their droop to a more comfortably neutral position.

“I can't,” Jaina said with a very small smile, “but I’ve been teaching myself.”

Sylvanas hummed at that, finishing half her sandwich, “Didn't I leave you with food?”

A small smile crept onto Jainas face, “You left me with really good food and I have no self-control, I ate it all pretty quickly.”

Sylvanas hummed at that, finishing her bite before speaking, “I’ll make a note to leave subpar food for you the next time I leave.”

“Yes,” Jaina said with a very small smile, “but I’ve been teaching myself.”

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“Yes,” Jaina said with a very small smile, “but I’ve been teaching myself.”

Sylvanas shrugged, finishing her sandwich, “Don't make you subpar food?”

Jaina shook her head, “No, don't leave me again, I can't even say how worried I was,” she reached across the table to cover Sylvanas’ hand with her own, “how much I missed you.” When Sylvanas gave no response, Jaina sighed and pulled her hand back, “where have you been staying?”

Sylvanas was silent for a long while before finally saying, “my car.”

Jaina was horrified, “you couldn't have stayed with anyone? Chen? Erasan? Anyone?”

Sylvanas shrugged, finishing her sandwich, “I didn't want to be a bother.”

“Why didn't you just stay here?” Jaina asked, “I mean this is your apartment.”

“You seemed like you needed space,” Sylvanas said, watching as Jaina deflated. She got up then, pulling on her boots and grabbing her jacket, “come on, Jaina. We’re going for a drive.”

They drove in awkward silence. The tall building of the capital city fell away and her replaced with scant houses before transitioning into a smaller city. Jaina shifted uncomfortably in her seat as she looked around at the many dilapidated building they drove by. “Where are we, Sylvanas?” Jaina
“Brill,” came Sylvanas’ simple response, “I’m not surprised you don’t know it, it’s not a very well off city.” She pulled into the parking lot of one of the only building they had passed they seemed to have been kept in good repair. A diner, with a large purple neon sign that read, The Undercity. “Sylvanas held the door open for Jaina before stepping inside herself. She didn't wait for the hostess, she wasn't here to eat. She began weaving her way through the servers, Jaina close behind, and towards the kitchen. When she threw open the door, all activity stopped. Her eyes scanned over the cooks critically before narrowing, “where is the chef?”

A woman with lanky blonde hair walked around the line and over to them. “Aint you a sight for sore eyes,” she rasped, “couldn't have called ahead instead of coming in here and scaring the cooks half to death?”

Sylvanas’ ears twitched in a sign of amusement, “not my style.”

The woman laughed and pulled Sylvanas into a short hug before stepping back, “it's good to see you, Sylvanas.”

“You too, Lilian,” Sylvanas smiled fondly.

The woman, Lilian, looked around Sylvanas to catch a glimpse of Jaina, stand halfway behind her, “and whom might this be then? A new sheep to the flock?”

Sylvanas looked over her shoulder at Jaina, “I suppose in a way she is.”

“Ah,” Lilian smiled, “welcome to the Forsaken, then.”

“Forsaken?” Jaina finally spoke up.

“People who have been cast aside or otherwise have nowhere else to go,” Lilian explained.

Sylvanas opened her mouth to say something when one of the servers brushed past her to collect a plate. “Whos that?”

“Amalia Stone,” Lilian said with a small, almost nervous, cough, “shes new… and my girlfriend.”

“Girlfriend?” Sylvanas’ eyes narrowed, as she turned to follow Amalia back to the dining room, “put Jaina to work, show her the ropes,” with that, Sylvanas was gone.

Lilian laughed loudly, “oh Amalia is going to regret choosing me.” She turned her attention back to Jaina, “you know how to cook?”

“A little,” Jaina drew out her response, wincing slightly, “not enough for me to be left in a kitchen.”

“Sylvanas really knows how to pick them,” Lilian said, shaking her head fondly. “Come on then, I’ll get you prepping vegetables,” she paused, “you can do that, right?”

“Yes,” Jaina said, maybe a little too quickly as she washed her hands and followed Lilian over to the table.

As it turned out, Jaina was quite good at juliennning vegetables and Lilian left her to her task, only returning to the table to drop off more produce. Her curiosity got the better of her eventually though, and Lilian leaned against the table, folding her arms comfortably over her chest. “So,” she
started, “where did she pick you up?”

Jaina nearly cut her finger in her surprise. Slowly, she placed the knife aside and dropped the finished carrot in with the rest. “Um,” she blushed lightly, “we’re dating,” her brow furrowed, “I think.”

“You think?” Lilian gave her a questioning look.

“It's,” Jaina waved her hand like she was trying to pull the right word out of the air, “complicated,” she finished.

“Funny,” Lilian shrugged, “shes never brought a girl around her before.”

“Where is ‘here’, exactly?” Jaina turned her lean her own hip on the table.

“You mean The Undercity?” Lilian clarified, “it's where Sylvanas brings all of her strays.” She couldn't help but smile at Jaina’s confusion, “shes picked most of us up off the streets for one reason or another, brought us all here to her restaurant. Taught us all the ins and outs of fine dining, paid us more than we deserve, charges way less than she should.”

Jaina frowned in further confusion, “but, what about all the revenue she must be losing?”

Lilian shook her head, “Nah, shes never been one to care about money,” Lilian began, “shes got enough of that from her other ventures that she doesn't really have to worry.” Looking at Jaina from the corner of her eye, she continued, “shes about people. And from the way she paraded you here, I think she's more of a you person.”

They were interrupted when Sylvanas returned with Amalia, who looked thoroughly chastised. Lilian barked out a laugh, “what happened? You give her the ‘intentions with my daughter speech’?”

“Yes,” Sylvanas replied simply. She relaxed slightly as she glanced about, “glad to see that you haven't run the place into the ground while I’ve been away.”

“You wouldn't have to worry so much if you weren't so busy running away,” Lilian accused, though not harshly, as she pulled Amalia to her side.

“Not running away, running another place,” Sylvanas smirked.

Jaina looked between them before finally speaking up, “I think I want to go home, now.”

Sylvanas’ ears drooped and she nodded, “right, let's go, then.”

“Thank you for putting me back on track,” Jaina said quietly to Lilian before following Sylvanas.

“Don't be stranger,” Lilian called after them.

“We won't,” Jaina called back before ducking out the door. Sylvanas was almost at her car and Jaina had to jog to catch up, the effort caused her lungs to burn slightly.

“So,” Sylvanas’ voice was low, a calmness forced into it, “where is home now? Chen's? Dalaran? I’m sure my sister would put you up until you find a place.”

“I was thinking your apartment,” Jaina said like it was the most obvious thing in the world. She watched as Sylvanas went rigid and continued, “if that's all right with you.”
Syliras’ ears pinned back slightly, “is that where you feel most at home now?”

“Only if we’re okay,” Jaina’s voice was soft as she threaded her fingers with Syliras’ “are we okay?”

Syliras’ ears relaxed and she held Jaina’s hand tighter, almost desperately, “yeah, we’re okay.”
It was early in the afternoon when Sylvanas excitedly pulled Jaina out of the apartment to take her for a drive. The whole drive, Jaina held onto Sylvanas’ hand. They were good now. Really good. Better than they had been before.

They had settled in nicely to their new living arrangement. It was almost natural, the easy routine they had fallen into. Jaina would make breakfast, they would lounge or head out to check with the investigators, or make trips out to The Undercity.

“You never did tell me where we’re going today,” Jaina pulled her eyes away from the passing city to look at Sylvanas.

Sylvanas grinned like a cat, “it’s a surprise.”

“You know I don't like surprises, Sylvanas,” Jaina said, her tone slightly scolding.

“I promise that it's a good surprise,” Sylvanas pouted.

Jaina made a show of thinking that over seriously before cracking a smile, “well, I guess we are already in the car. One little surprise won't hurt.”

The grin came back with a vengeance as Sylvanas glanced over at Jaina, “that's the spirit.”

They came to a stop at the edge of a large empty lot overlooking the lake. The bright sun hit the water in a way that made it glitter like the most perfect of sapphires. Jaina stepped out of the car and walked towards the center of the lot. “Where are we?” she asked, turning slowly. On either side lay squat buildings, little shops, and diners. “What is this?”

Sylvanas shrugged, coming to stand next to Jaina. “Whatever you want it to be,” she said simply.

Jaina looked at her sternly at that, “Sylvanas, what did you do?”

“Nothing that I wouldn’t have done eventually anyway,” Sylvanas kept her voice level.

“It would be lying,” Sylvanas turned to face Jaina, “all of the zoning has been done, and the deeds were drawn up. This whole lot is mine, and I'm giving it to you t rebuild.” Jaina made to protest but Sylvanas stopped her. She held Jinas hands in her own, rubbing her thumbs along the backs of them, “Until the investigation is complete, you can’t rebuild. I know that the waiting it stifling you so I am giving you another option. From the ground up. Here.”

Jaina shook her head, “Sylvanas, the insurance won't cover all this.”

Sylvanas gave Jaina a fanged grin, “Then I guess you'll just have to let us help you.”

Jaina blinked, stepping back in confusion, “us?”

Sylvanas reached into her pocket to pull out her phone. They weren't alone on the lot for long after she had fired off a message. Two food trucks and a large van eased their way around the corner and onto the lot followed by a crowd of people.

The staff of Theramore and Lilian, Vereesa, all of her regulars. Even who old professor, Modera,
was in the crowd. Sylvanas’ eyes scanned over everyone and she frowned, her ears pinning back. She muttered something quietly to herself, but Jaina was into much shock to be able to hear it.

“What are you doing here?” Jaina asked as Vereesa pulled both her and Sylvanas into a hug.

“I told you I would come and see you as soon as I could,” Vereesa explained.

“And I told you to call me if you ever needed anything,” Modera scolded Jaina lightly, a fond smile upon her face.

Jaina was tearing up as she looked to the staff, “what about all of you?” she asked, “don't any of you work today?”

“Hard to go to work when your place of employment burned down,” Pained said flatly.

“But… what about your new jobs?” Jaina didn't understand.

“None of us took one,” Othon shrugged.

“I tried to go back to Suramar but your lackeys wouldn't let me,” Erasans voice was irritated, but the slight twitch of the shal’dorei’s lips betrayed what would have been a fond smile.

“We’ve had to beat back the poachers almost constantly,” Kinndy explained.

Jaina laughed, “now why in the world would you do that?”

“Because Theramore was our home, this is our family,” Nomi spoke up, gesturing to the others, “and you don’t abandon family.”

The door of one of the food trucks opened and a man stepped out. He was tall and impeccably dressed with his dark brown hair smoothed back and his beard neatly trimmed. “I hate to ruin this very touching moment,” the man spoke up as he approached Sylvanas, “but if you plan on starting your little fundraiser on time, we really should get set up.”

Sylvanas groaned, her shoulders sagging in exasperation, “you really know how to ruin a moment.”

The man snorted, “clearing ruining moments is why you left me in charge of your catering company.”

With a roll of her eyes, Sylvanas began introductions for Jaina, “Jaina this is Nathanos, manager of Dark Lady catering, Nathanos, Jaina, owner of Theramore.”

“Charmed,” Nathanos said, eyeing Jaina before turning his attention back to Sylvanas, “might I begin set up so that I may distance myself from your pet project?”

Sylvanas bared in fangs in a snarl, “just do your job, Marris!” She watched Nathanos give her a mock bow before stalking off to oversee the set up of a few tents, tables, little cooking stations.

“Pay him no mind,” Sylvanas spoke softly, hugging Jaina back to her chest, kissing her shoulder, “if you think I’m an ass than the depths of his assholery would astound you.”

Jaina laughed, leaning back against Sylvanas, “if even you think he is an ass, why do you keep him around?”

“Same reason I keep Lilian around, well, maybe a little different,” Sylvanas replied with a shrug,
“He was one of the first people I brought to the Undercity, and one the first who earned his place at one of my other ventures.”

Jaina nodded her understanding and watched the setup. It was very efficient, already most of the tents were up and the propane tanks and generators had all been rolled out. “How exactly is this to be a fundraiser?” she asked, turning her head so that she could see Sylvanas from the corner of her eye.

“I’m supplying all of the food, so all of the money goes straight to Theramore,” Sylvanas explained, “it’s set up as a pay what you can or want. No set prices.”

Jaina was about to say something more when she spotted a stage being set up, “whats with the stage?”

“Hmm?” Sylvanas looked around Jaina’s head to the stage, “for the cooking contest.”

“Cooking contest?” Jaina repeated, “why would you plan that?”

Sylvanas’ arms tightened around Jaina and she hid her face in Jaina’s loose hair, “I need to show him that we won’t be beaten down. That I won’t stand for what he did. So I challenged one of his chefs.”

“Which chef?” Jaina asked, her voice low.

“Don’t worry about it, Jaina,” Sylvanas stepped back away from her. “I’m going to go and help with the rest of the setup, why don’t you go and find my sister? She was quite adamant about spending time with you.”

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The fundraiser was a huge success. It was busy, why busier than Jaina ever would have guessed it would be. She kept her eye on the donation jars, watching them steadily fill. Every time one was filled, Lilian would seal it and stash it safely in the van.

Jaina was touched. She had no idea that so many people would care. That they would want to see Theramore reborn almost as much as she did.

Sylvanas had been drifting between the tents, helping out where she needed the whole time, leaving Jaina in Vereesa’s company. Jaina smiled over at her friend, “I’m really glad that you’re here. But I’ve been wondering how you got here so quickly.”

Vereesa looked away sheepily, her ears flicking back, “Sylvanas has had this planned for a while now. She made me promise not to tell you.”

Jaina laughed, “such a loyal sister.”

“I’m trying to be,” Vereesa replied.

Their easy banter was cut by Nathanos climbing up onto the stage with a megaphone, “if I could have your attention. The challenged chef has arrived and the cooking contest will begin.”

Jaina and Vereesa quickly made their way to the front as the crowds began to drift over. Sylvanas was already on the stage, pulling her hair up into a bun. The other chef stepped up onto the stage and Jaina’s breath caught in her throat. Anger flared up in her as she watched the other elven chef take up his position.
Sylvanas looked him up and down in distaste. “You used to be her head chef?” she scoffed, “I’m a bit less insulted by her initial reaction to me now, Aethas Sunreaver.”

The chef, Aethas, was tall, dressed in a red jacket with a laughing cartoon goblin face embroidered on the sleeve. His auburn hair was pulled back in a ponytail leaving a few stray hairs to frame his face in a way that could only have been deliberate. “You must be Sylvanas,” he sneered, “the old goblin had quite a few choices words about you. How selfless of you to drag that failing dump from the mud for nothing.”

“Did better than you ever could,” Sylvanas snapped back, “how do goblin boots taste?”

Aethas gasped in mock offense, “so crass, Chef Windrunner.”

Nathanos put himself between the two elves, giving them each a hard look. “I trust you both know the dish?”

“Veal parm,” Aethas provides with a grin, “my old specialty.”

“And have you agreed on the judges?” Nathanos continued.

“We have,” Sylvanas began, “Miss Proudmoore, Erasan and the critic, Madak.”

The three names judges made their way to the little table that had been set up for them. The contest began before they had even sat down. Both chefs were whirlwinds of activity. Jaina’s eyes were almost magnetically drawn to Sylvanas. The way she smiled, ever so slightly while she worked, how fluid and natural her movements were. A stark opposite to how Aethas was working. A stern expression and military precision.

Soon enough, both chefs had finished and two plates lay neatly before each judge. Aethas’ was plated perfectly, every item neatly arranged on the plate, while Sylvanas’ looked more rustic by no less appetizing.

“Gentlemen first, I think,” Madak said standing on her chair to pull the plate closer.

Jaina did the same. The veal was good. But nothing special. It tasted like it was made because it had to be. Hardly enough seasoning, the sauce made quickly. It was a way of cooking that Jaina recognized as how Sylvanas used to cook.

Jaina still finished her portion before moving on to Sylvanas’. The difference was striking. The veal was more tender and tasted faintly of onion. The sauce was richer and even the crust was less soggy. She had used a blend of cheeses, the sharp flavors mingling wonderfully with the acidity of the tomato sauce.

The winner was clear, even before the three of them marked down their choices, rating each dish on taste and presentation.

Madak motioned for Nathanos to hand her the megaphone and climbed up onto the table. “The winner is Chef Windrunner!” She called out in her slightly squeaky voice.

“What?!” Aethas stormed towards the table, “how could she have possibly have beaten me?”

Madak narrowed her beady eyes at him, “you give cooking a bad name,” she snipped, “I became a critic for a reason, and it was to do my part to teach slimy bastards like you their place.” Madak then looked to Sylvanas and smiled, “it is good to see you are back in the swing of things.” She hopped off the table and towards the crowd, “I look forward to eating at Theramore when you two
reopen,” she called back before vanishing into the crowd. Aethas didn’t stay much longer, stalking off to where ever he had parked.

Jaina rounded the table to stand in front of Sylvanas, “of all the selfish, arrogant, self-serving things you could have done! You challenged my old chef? You are without a doubt the biggest ass I have ever met.” She flares up at Sylvanas sternly for but a moment before pulling her down into a slow languid kiss. A kiss, which Sylvanas was all too happy to return.

A cough behind them startled the pair apart. Erasan smiled boredly, “Oh don't let me intrude on you two and your moment.” she drawled, “but I would like to remind you that you have set up a family-friendly event.”

Sylvanas blushed brightly and grabbed Jaina hand, pulling her off the stage and behind one of her food trucks. Her ears pinned back as she ducked her head, “I know this isn't how you would have liked to have done this on your own but, I think this will be good for you. You can design it however you want, but I just want you to promise me you won't put an apartment on it, Sylvanas looked at Jaina then, “ I can't go through that again. I cant, Jaina.”

Jaina cupped Sylvanas’ face, rubbing her thumbs along her cheekbones. With a fond smile, Jaina pressed their foreheads together, “I promise.”
The months seemed to fly by, and before Jaina knew it, Theramore stood proudly on the once empty lot. She couldn’t help but feel a swell of pride every time she looked at it. This was hers. Truly hers.

Jaina had been involved with the rebuilding every step of the way. She had drawn up the rough plans for the build team, making sure that she would have it just how she wanted. From the tall windows all throughout the dining area, to the sizeable outdoor patio. She had even managed to talk them into building her a small tower, stylized like a lighthouse, for her office. A small space all her own with a breathtaking view of the lake.

Once the structure had been built, Jaina had no shortage of volunteers to help with the painting and carpeting. Vibrant greens and silver toned greys. Jaina had picked them on instinct, and only realized after, with a slight pang, that she had chosen to decorate in Kul Tiran colours. She didn’t have time to dwell on the deep ache that settled in her heart, she couldn’t allow herself the time.

It had been a busy morning. The tables had finally arrived and Jaina had been kept busy directing them to the positions she wanted them. With that done, Jaina made for the tower to check on Sylvanas.

Jaina took the stairs two at a time, and quickly made her way to the top. She pushed open the door and stopped in her tracks. The view was amazing. Floor to ceiling windows gave a perfect view of the lake, and from this high up, the noonday sun turned it to crystal. She was never going to get tired of it.

Tearing her eyes away from the window, Jaina allowed her eyes to settle on Sylvanas. The elf sat hunched over the large mahogany desk, typing away on the laptop that she had open next to her notebook. Sylvanas had been translating all of Theramore's recipes back into Common, and if her mumbled flow of disgruntled Thalassian was anything to go by, it was slow work.

“That’s what you get for leaving the only copies written in Common in the kitchen,” Jaina laughed lightly, as she rounded the desk. She only laughed harder when Sylvanas responded by mocking her. “How very mature of you,” Jaina teased as she rubbed at Sylvanas shoulders, “how far have you gotten?”

“I've only just finished the appetizers,” Sylvanas groaned.

Jaina winced in sympathy, leaning down to press a kiss into Sylvanas’ hair, “you should take a break, everyone else is. I’ll go and make you some tea.”

Jaina hurried back down the stairs and out to the bar. Sifting through the various boxes of tea, Jaina selected a simple herbal tea, one of Sylvanas’ favourites, and set the kettle. After filling the teapot, she arranged the pot and two cup on a tray with a small packet of biscuits and carefully picked it up.
to take back to Sylvanas.

“Hello, Jaina,” a woman's voice sounded from behind her.

The tea tray Jaina was carrying clattered to the floor, accompanied swiftly by the sound of porcelain shattering. Tea spilled out across the floor, slipping through the shards of the tea cups. It had been years since Jaina had heard that voice but she would never have forgotten it. Heart pounding, Jaina turned to face the owner of the voice. The woman stood with her hands clasped behind her back, dressed in an impeccable pants suit with her steel grey hair pulled up into a severe bun. “Mother?” Jaina struggled to keep the slight tremble from her voice.

That seemed to be all the invitation Katherine Proudmoore needed to step further into Theramore. Her hard eyes scanned over every inch before finally settling back on Jaina. “So,” she began, “this is where my wayward daughter has holed herself up. Such a quaint little establishment”

The sound of chairs moving drew both of their attention to the staff. All of them had stood up and were quickly moving in around Jaina. “Is there a problem here?” Pained asked, moving to stand at Jaina’s side.

Katherine eyed the staff cautiously, “what a loyal crew you have found yourself.” She stood up straighter, tilting her head back, “No need to worry, I was merely here to see if my daughter would be kind enough the show her mother a nice place for a cup of tea, and maybe have a little talk.”

Jaina nodded numbly, taking a step forward, “there is a little bisto, down the street, they make a pretty good cuppa.” Jaina stood a little straighter, tilting her chin back as she brushed past her mother.

The walk down to the bisto was tense and silent. Neither woman was willing to speak first, which for Jaina was equal parts blessing and curse. She didn't think she was ready to speak to her mother, but the silence gave her mind time to wander. What had driven her mother to travel all the way to Lordaeron? And why now? It had been fifteen years since they had last spoken face to face and it unnerved Jaina to no end that she was here now.

She should have been happy, Jaina knew that. But she couldn’t help but wonder if she had some kind of alterior motive to this visit. She had to t, didn't she? No. Jaina steeled herself as she opened the door and ushered her mother in. Her mother was here for a reason, that was for sure, but that didn't mean it was a sinister one.

Katherine past Jaina when the door was held open for her and entered the small bistro. She eyed the menu board skeptically before turning to Jaina, “I’ll trust you to order, daughter.”

“Right,” Jaina stepped up and tried to smile at the night elf behind the counter, though she knew it came out more as a grimace, “two chai teas and two bagels.”

“ Toasted with cheese?” the night elf asked, brushing her bangs out of his face as he punched in the order.

“Please,” Jaina responded. Jaina tried to look anywhere but at her mother. She felt so underdressed next to her, what with her ripped jeans and borrowed tank top, her hair pulled up into a messy bun. She was so focused on not focusing on her mother, that the barista actually startled her when he handed her their order.

“Thank you,” Jaina managed, leading Katherine back outside to the small outdoor seating just out of the door.
After a few sips of her tea, Jaina finally started to relax. The rich spices of the tea had always helped Jaina calm down and now she was ready to praise it straight back to its source. Setting the tea aside, Jaina took a bite from her bagel. Soft and lightly toasted, the cream cheese had a delightful tang. It served well to make Jaina forget that she hadn't eaten all day. When she looked up from her bagel, it was to find her mother staring at her oddly.

“Look at you. You've grown up so much,” Katherines voice held a fondness in it that Jaina didn't think she had ever heard before, “I hardly recognise you.”

Jaina was thankful that she had set her tea aside as her hands tightened into fists in her lap. Anger rise up in her like bile, “and whos fault is that?” Jaina snapped, “who sent me away to Lordaeron when I was just a child?

“You know why we did that, Jaina,” Katherine sighed, “it was either the boarding school or the naval school with your brother, we both know you wouldn't have been happy there.”

That did nothing to appease Jaina, “You could have come to get me when either of you were done your tours! You could have brought me home!” Her eyes were burning, “Or at least come to see me! You both just LEFT me there!”

“a decision that I have regretted everyday for the past fifteen years,” Katherine finally set her tea aside, “but I thought I was doing what was best for you. That school was one of the best in the country, and you were doing so well, and then you got asked to stay for their senior classes and I couldn't possibly take you away,” she closed her eyes then, “I know I should have come to see you, maybe things would have turned out better if I had, but I knew that if I did I wouldn’t be able to leave you there again.”

A heaviness settled in Katherine’s shoulders and she sighed deeply, “there is so much of your life that I have missed, being so wrapped up in my own work and then my own grief,” she looked past Jaina, “I loved your father. Losing him tore me apart and I took it out on you.” A look of pain flashed across Katherine’s face before she schooled her features back to neutrality, “But then I learn that I could have lost you forever and I realized, that I have been a terrible mother.”

Slowly, as is she was afraid to frighten Jaina away, Katherine reached across the small table and cupped her daughters face in her hand, “And if you would allow me, I would like to try and correct that. Forgive me, Jaina, for the hurt I’ve caused you.”

Jaina made a small noise in the back of her throat, not unlike a whimper, and leaned into her mother's hand. “One simple gesture can’t undo so many years,”Jaina said, “but it's a start.”

She closed her eyes tightly, “I’ve missed you so much. I didn't even realize how much until right now. I just--“ Jaina cut herself off as a small sob burst from her.

Without a second thought, Katherine stood and rounded the table. Kneeling down next to Jainas seat, she hesitated, only for a moment, before pulling Jaina into her arms. She let out a sigh of relief when Jaina responded by clinging to her tightly. “It’s alright, Jaina,” Katherine soothed, rubbing her her daughters back, “I’m here now. I’m here.”

They stayed like that for a long while. Katherine was content to simply hold her daughter while Jaina clung to her tightly, tears spilling from her eyes, dampening her mothers jacket. Not that Katherine cared. She separated herself stand up, wiping at her own face, “come on, lets get you back.”

The walk back was far less awkward. Jaina animatedly about her plans for Theramore once it was
reopened.

All talk died, however, once they walked through the door. Sylvanas stood stiffly at the bar, standing further at attention when she saw Katherine.

Katherine cocked a brow at the display, "I take it that you are the one who has been calling me everyday for two months?"

Sylvanas ignored Jaina’s look of shock and nodded, "yes ma’am."

"And you opened this new location with my daughter?" Katherine questioned further.

"Yes ma’am," Sylvanas responded again.

Katherine stood straighter, trying to look down her nose at the elf, "And what is the nature of your relationship with my daughter?"

"Mother!" Jaina hissed in shock.

"I’m her girlfriend," Sylvanas replied flatly.

"Sylvanas!" Jaina wanted to sink into the floor. She was sure that if she stood in the center of her office than it really could have been used as a lighthouse with how brightly she was blushing.

Sylvanas ignored her discomfort entirely as she carried on, "that means that it is my duty to make sure she is happy." Her eyes narrowed dangerously and her ears quickly flicked back, "and to keep away anyone who might threaten her happiness."

"I want only what is best for my daughter, glanced st Jaina, even if what’s best for her, is me leaving," Katherine stated.

A heavy silence fell between them. Sylvanas looked to Jaina, who simply squeezed her hand and gave her a small nod. That was more than enough for the elf. She extended her hand to Katherine in a proper greeting, "Sylvanas Windrunner."

Katherine relaxed as she shook Sylvanas’ hand, "Katherine Proudmoore." With that, Katherine shrugged out of her jacket, draping it across the bar. "Now, what can I do to help?"

“All of the cookware still needs to be washed and stored,” Sylvanas offered, “talk to Othon, in the kitchen, he’ll put you to work.”

Sylvanas waited until after Katherine had disappeared into the kitchen to turn to Jaina. She took her hands and brought them up to her lips, kissing her knuckles, “are you okay?”

“You called my mother,” Jaina breathes out.

“I did,” Sylvanas places another kiss to her knuckles.

“You called her a lot.”

Sylvanas chuckled at that, "yes, I did."

“Why?” Jaina asked, “I’m not upset, I just need to know why you would do that.”

Sylvanas’ ears fell back and she looked away, “you still have your mother, Jaina,” she started, “I thought, after what had happened, it would be good to have her back in your life, in whatever form
to choose.” She looked back to Jaina, “I’m sorry if I over stepped but I—“

Jaina cut her off with a soft kiss. “Thank you. Thank you for everything,” she wrapped her arms around Sylvanas tightly, holding her as close as she could. “Tides, what have I done in life to wind up with you?”

Sylvanas chuckled. “just got lucky, I suppose.”

Jaina smiles into her shoulder, “yes, that must be it. I must be the luckiest woman in the world.”
Jaina stood up in her office, gazing out the window. Down on the street below, a long line of customers stretched out, excitedly waiting for the door to open once more. It was amazing. Jaina had never seen so many people queued up for a restaurant and that made her nervous if only a little.

“There’s so many of them,” Jaina breathed out a nervous laugh.

From behind her, Sylvanas wrapped her arms around Jaina’s waist, holding her close, “it’s a good thing that we hired on more staff than, isn't it?” Sylvanas smiled and kissed Jaina’s temple lightly, her ears laying back contently, “It’s going to be fine. Better than fine,” she assured her, “You’ve done this twice now, I’d say you’re an expert.”

Jaina wilted at that, “and failed twice. What if I fail again?”

Sylvanas turned Jaina around to face her quickly, tilting her chin up until she could look Jaina in the eye, “You haven’t failed before and you won’t now. You were sabotaged but that won’t happen again,” Sylvanas’ eyes hardened, “I won’t let it happen.” She relaxed once more when Jaina reached to stroke a hand through her hair. She took hold of Jaina’s hand gently and kissed it, “let’s not keep them waiting any longer than we already have.”

They descended the stairs together, stopping to exchange quick kisses before parting ways. Jaina made her way to the front and stood next to Pained, hands clasped tightly behind her back.

Pained looked down at Jaina with a small grin, “nervous?” she asked.

Jaina chanced a glance up at her friend, “extremely. Did you see that line outside?”

“How could I not?” Pained stood just a little straighter, “I’ve been keeping them in line.”

Jaina couldn’t help but laugh at that. When her laughter died off, Jaina chanced a glance at the clock. “It’s time,” Jaina took a deep breath and nodded towards his other hosts, “open the doors.”

Jaina was incredibly thankful for all the new staff as they helped to usher in the seemingly endless train of customers, quickly filling up all of the tables, both indoor and out. Jaina helped out where she was needed. Greeting customers as they came in. Seating them and taking orders. Even helping out Erasan, whom she had hired on as a full staff member.

It was all going too smoothly. Jaina had time to allow her mind to wander. She thought back to the last time she had done this. The nervousness and excitement she had felt when she had been able to finally reopen Theramore. Jaina felt that now, amplified tenfold. It was the same as before, and yet so different. So much had changed since then, most of all Sylvanas.

She had thought the elf cruel and selfish. An absolute terror in the kitchen and a major thorn in Jaina’s side. Jaina had very nearly hated her. But slowly, she was able to peel back the curtain and see the sweet, caring woman beneath the tough exterior.

Jaina took a plate of dishes back to the kitchen. She smiled as she watched Sylvanas in the kitchen. She moved from station to station in a flurry of activity, helping everyone out where she was needed, barking out instructions when she had to. Jaina smiled, feeling warmth bloom in her chest. Jaina loves Sylvanas. The realization struck her so suddenly that she almost dropped her tray.
Sylvanas was at her side with almost frightening speed. She took the tray from Jaina, looking at her with deep concern, “are you all right, Jaina? You look pale.”

Jaina blinked, “yes, I'm fine. Must be all of the excitement,” she waved a hand dismissively.

Sylvanas searched Jaina’s face, her ears pinning back as she ducked her head to kiss the corner of Jaina’s mouth, “go and take a rest.” She turned and shouted something in rapid Thalassian to her new line cook and returned to Jaina with a bowl of food. Flat noodles, topped with strips of beef and a rich smell sauce, “get some food in you.” She smiled, baring a fang at Jaina before kissing the top of her head, “I know you were too nervous to eat breakfast and that can't be helping you.”

Jaina blushed brightly and took a step back, “thank you.” She all back ran back up the stairs to her office, just barely managing to not slam the door. She sat heavily in her chair and looked down at the food.

Jaina swirled it around the bowl, making sure to coat all of the noodles evenly in the sauce. She stabbed up alone piece of beef first and nearly moaned at that first bite. The beef was so tender it practically melted in her mouth. In her next bite, she made sure to get a good amount of the pasta. Tender with a slight bite and even smothered as it was in the sauce Jaina could tell that the pasta was homemade. And the sauce! Tides below the sauce! Jaina have happily eaten just a bowl of the sauce. It was indeed rich, clinging to the noodles heavily so that very little was left in the bottom of the bowl when she was done. With her food finished, Jaina knew she should have been heading back down to help once more, but she was far too lost in her own thoughts to manage to be even remotely helpful.

Jaina loved Sylvanas. Loves her more than she had ever loved anyone. When had that started? Jaina couldn't pin that down. Was it after the fire? Or maybe the anniversary? Had the elf stolen her heart even before that? That had to have been it. With every kind word and simply little gesture, Jaina had fallen for her. But now, worry began to creep into her heart, worry that threatened to blossom into dread. She loved Sylvanas, but did Sylvanas love her?

Jaina couldn't allow herself the time to dwell on those thoughts. She stood and hurried back down into the restaurant. Passing her bowl off to a server to take into the kitchen, Jaina took a deep breath and went back to work.

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For the rest of the day, Jaina couldn't get that thought out of her head. She did her best not to let her inner turmoil show, but she still avoided the kitchen as much she could. She could talk to Sylvanas later, at home.

On her break, Kinndy hurried over to the bar, where Jaina was helping out Erasan. “Did you and Sylvanas have a fight?” She asked she pulled herself up onto the stool that was always there for her.

Jaina smiled off Kinndys concern as she handed off a drink to another server, “no, Kinndy, we didn't have a fight. We’re fine.”

Kinndy frowned, “then why have you been avoiding the kitchen?”

Her smile faltered, “just, got a lot on my mind,” Jaina replied.

“Personal or interpersonal?” Erasan interjected coolly, shaking another drink. When Jaina made to object, the Nightborne carried on, “if it is personal, then might I suggest not dwelling on it right
this moment? Your odd mood seems to be worrying about the customers.” She glanced at Kinndy when the gnome nodded in reluctant agreement. “And if it is interpersonal, Erasan leans down into her space,” Erasan leaned closer to Jaina, “go and talk to Sylvanas.”

Jaina was angered by her words, but she forced herself to be calm. She knew that blunt as Erasan was, she was right. She had to talk to Sylvanas about this. Jaina was just about to go and pull Sylvanas away from the line when Chen came barreling towards her.

Despite being shorter than Jaina, Chen managed to pick her up and spin her around in excitement. “Jaina! I knew you could do it!” Setting her down gently, Chen looked around Theramores interior, “Just look at this! I'm starting to think that I should have let you design my brewery!”

Jaina couldn't help but laugh as she pulled Chen into a more subdued hug, “and you have the worst timing, as always.” Stepping back, Jaina shoved a clean cloth into his hand, while she went back to making drinks. “If you're going to invite yourself behind the bar, you might as well be helpful while we chat.

With a chuckle, Chen began to polish glasses. “You've done well, Jaina, really well. Everyone here looks so happy,” he glanced at her from the corner of his eye, “you look happy. Happier than I’ve seen you in years. Then even a year ago.”

“I am, Chen,” Jaina spoke quietly. “I never would have imagined all this,” she admitted, Theramore is better than before, my family is back in my life and Sylvanas, Tides, Sylvanas has just been perfect.”

Chen chuckled at that, “ah, the joys of young love.”

He smiled fondly when Jaina ducked her head, blushing as she passed a drink off to a server. “Yeah,” Jaina said softly, “young love.”

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The last customer had barely made it out the door before Erasan was handing Jaina a bottle of wine, “a new Suramar red. It is faintly fruity and is perfect with desserts or celebrations.”

Jaina smiled crookedly as she uncorked the first bottle and began filling glasses that were quickly passed out. “You all did wonderful tonight. I couldn't ask for a better crew,” Jaina raised her own glass to the sound of cheering. “I'll go and see if I can convince the kitchen staff to whip us up some dinner.” She grabbed another bottle and a tray of glasses and made her way to the kitchen.

“Compliments from the front,” Jaina called out, easily getting all of their attention as she opened and poured the second bottle. She set a glass down next to Sylvanas while she took a sip of her own. Oh, it was fruity. She took another sip, trying to place just what the fruit was before turning her attention back to Sylvanas, kissing her cheek. “Would you mind making us all some dinner?” Jaina asked softly.

“Already on it,” came Sylvanas’ equally soft reply as she pointed to a row of unfinished pizza’s, “I just need to finish cutting up the toppings and then they'll be ready to cook. I figured, since I don't really know all of the new front staff, pizza would be a pretty safe bet.

Jaina nearly melted at her consideration. Leaning her head against Sylvans’ shoulder she mumbled, “Tides, I love you.”

Sylvanas’ hand slipped and she knicked her finger, just barely. She pulled her hand back with a hiss and her ears pinned back.
Jaina was quick to grab her hand to examine the cut. It didn't seem overly deep, but it was still bleeding and needed to her taken care of. “Nomi,” Jaina called, pulling a still shocked Sylvanas away from the table, “finish and tidy up,” she ordered as she all but dragged Sylvanas to the first aid kit in the small back room. Sitting down next to Sylvanas at the little test table, Jaina began the process of cleaning and bandaging the cut.

“What did you say?” Sylvanas finally managed to speak up, looking at Jaina with wide eyes.

“What did I say?” Jaina repeated. She frowned, shifting uncomfortably, “I said that it isn't that bad.”

“No no, before that,” Sylvanas insisted

Jaina swallowed hard and sat back in her seat, forcing herself to look at Sylvanas nervously, “I said that I love you.” There, it was out now. There was no sense dreading over it Sylvanas’ but still Jaina waited with bated breath.

Slowly, a smile spread across Sylvanas’ face, her ears raising. She cupped her uninjured hand around the back of Jainas neck and pulled her in for a kiss. She peppered Jainas face with small kisses, her ear twitching faintly. She only stopped her assault of kisses when Jaina lightly pushed her back. “I love you too, Jaina. With all my heart.”

Jaina felt as if a weight had been lifted off of her. She leaned across the space between them and hugged Sylvanas as tightly as she could, burying her face in the crook of Sylvanas’ neck.

Out of the corner of her eye, Jaina could see that all of the staff had gathered in the kitchen. She spotted money being passed to a very smug looking Erasan and huffed a small laugh. Jaina would give them hell for betting on her love life again later. New as it was, the patio could always be scrubbed. But later. Right now, all Jaina wanted to do was bask in the warm feeling of Sylvanas’ love.
In the Tower and Below

Chapter Summary

slightly NSFW

Theramore has only been reopened for a week and it was already doing better than before. They had opted to stick with the schedule of the old location and as such, Theramore was closed for the day. It was Jaina and Sylvanas one day off and rather than relaxing at home, simply enjoying each others company, the two found themselves holed up in the tower office steadily working their way through paperwork that had piled up.

It was boring and tedious work, but being together made it far more enjoyable. Or, as enjoyable as it could be. Jaina leaned back and let out a long drawn out sigh, “at this rate, we’d be better off hiring an accountant, rather than do it all ourselves.

Sylvanas nodded in agreement, “it would be nice to not spend our day off doing more work,” she flipped a page and looked at the numbers printed on it, “we could certainly afford it.” She glanced up to see Jaina idly scratching at her new tattoo through her blouse, “You need to stop scratching or it won't heal right,” she chided.

“I can't just ignore it,” Jaina whined.

Sylvanas stood up with a huff, “let's take a break then. I think I’ve got a surprise that will help get your mind off of your tattoo.”

Jaina perked up at that, “a surprise, you say?”

“It's a good one, I promise,” Sylvanas leaned down to give Jaina a lingering kiss, “I'll just go and get it finished.”

Jaina was absolutely giddy with excitement. She sat on the edge of the desk, undid the top buttons of her blouse and reclined slightly back on the desk. As an afterthought, she pulled her hair out of her braid and fanned it out alluringly. Then, she waited for Sylvanas to return with her surprise. She waited and waited and waited. She was just about to give up when Sylvanas returned with two plates of food.

They stared at each other for a long moment before bursting into laughter. Sylvanas barely managed to set the plates down without dropping them before she pulled Jaina close, muffling her laughter in Jainas hair. “What did you think the surprise was?” Sylvanas asked once she stopped laughing.

“Honestly?” Jaina wiped mirthful tears from her eyes, “not food, clearly.” She watched as Sylvanas pulled her chair to the other side of the desk and slid a plate of food over to Jaina. It seemed to be some kind of dessert, chunks of bread cooked in custard. The top was golden brown and looked to be a bit crunchy. A drizzle of chocolate sauce completed the dish. “So what is this?” Jaina asked, “Something new for the menu?”

Sylvanas shook her head, “no, I made this just for us. We serve it at the Undercity all the time.
since it's a perfect way to use up leftover bread, but this batch of bread pudding, I made it just for us to share.” She was quiet for a moment, “it used to be my favorite dessert when I was a kid.”

Jaina looked a bit taken aback but a smile slowly spread across her face, “have I told you that I love you?”

“Hmm,” Sylvanas looked up in thought, her ears angling forward, “Hmm you might have mentioned it a few times, eat up before it gets cold.”

Jaina didn't have to be told twice and she tucked in. The middle of the pudding, despite being made from bread, was creamy and almost melted in her mouth. It wasn't overly sweet and tasted of light spices, like an autumn pie. A bite with the chocolate provided an entirely different taste experience. The richness of the chocolate sauce adding an extra level of the body to the pudding. Jaina saved the crunchy looking top for last and was pleased to find that it was delightfully crunchy, a welcome change from the otherwise soft pudding.

Jaina’s fork hit her empty plate with a clink and she leaned back in her chair, “you sure you aren't trying to fatten me up?” she teased.

Sylvanas tilted her head, her eyes falling to Jainas still slightly exposed chest while her ears pointed straight up, “if you're that concerned I can think of at least one good way to burn off that pudding.” Pushing her chair back, Sylvanas patted her lap.

Jaina rounded the table to straddle Sylvanas’ lap, shifting slightly to get more comfortable. “ Am I too heavy?” Jaina asked, a little self-consciously. She kissed Jaina languidly, squeezing and kneading at the pliant flesh in her hands.

“Not in the least,” Sylvanas cupped Jainas ass and pulled her that much closer.

Jaina groaned into the kiss before pulling back to catch her breath. She smirked against Sylvanas’ lips, “well now I’m positive that you're trying to fatten me up, with how much you seem to like my ass.”

Chuckling, Sylvanas nipped at the younger woman's jaw, giving her ass a hearty squeeze, “you’ve caught me and revealed my diabolical plan. What do you plan to do about it?”

Jaina pressed Sylvanas more fully to the back of the chair and leaned close. Slowly, she drew her tongue up along one of the elfs long ears, drawing a shudder from Sylvanas.

Growing bolder, Jaina slid a hand under Sylvanas’ shirt and up to cup one of her breasts, massaging it over her bra. Jainas two-pronged assault drew out soft whimpers and whines from Sylvanas that only served to spur her on.

She froze before pulling off Sylvanas’ shirt. Faintly, Jaina could hear someone knocking on the restaurant door. Curious, Jaina got up off of Sylvanas’ lap and looked out the window only to see a cop car parked in their parking lot. “Why is this a cop here?” She asked quietly.

Joining her at the window, Sylvanas' ears drooped low, “any chance that we can just pretend that we aren't here and ignore them??

Jaina gave Sylvanas’ arm a sympathetic pat, “no love, I’m pretty sure they have already seen our car.” With a very pouty elf behind her, Jaina made her a way back downstairs, using the time to make herself look more presentable.

Jaina couldn't stop the smile that spread across her face when she opened the door, “ Inspector
Fargame. What brings you here? I thought the team wasn't supposed to talk about the investigation with us?” She asked.

“That was when it was ongoing, which it no longer is,” Fargame looked between the two shocked faces and shuffled her hooves awkwardly, “might I come in so that we may discuss this while sitting down?” He had to turn his head sideways to be able to fit through the door with his antlers. Once he was inside, Jaina all but ran to the bar to make three cups of tea.

“You said that the investigation was over, so can I assume that you've come to tell us the outcome?” Sylvanas began as Jaina set the teacups down on the table.

Fargame nodded soundly as he sipped at his tea. He looked to Jaina, “this is really quick good, thank you miss proudmoore.” Once he had finished his tea, Fargame began speaking again, “We managed to get a confession, once we leaked images of the arsonist and that we were looking into this as a possible attempted murder, well people were quick to give him up.”

Jaina didn't even bother to try and hide her shocked expression, “You actually got him?”

“Well, we are still waiting on him to be sent back to Lordaeron but yes” Fargame explained, “we got him.”

“Finally, Gallywix will get his,” Sylvanas stated in triumph.

“Gallywix?” Fargame questioned, pulling them out of their elation, “Oh, no, while we are still looking into any possible connection there, the arsonist doesn't seem to have any proper connection to him.” He pulled out a small notebook, fligging through the pages, “a mister Norris Fark. Records say that the two of you have a prior history with him.”


Jaina glanced at her worriedly before extending her hand to Fargame, “thank you for coming to tell us personally, I do hope to see you here again.”

Seeing the dismissal for what it was, Fargame stood and inclined his head to them, “I thank you for your hospitality. I promise to bring the team to eat here sometime.”

They sat in silence for what felt like a long time after Inspector Fargame had left.

Sylvanas stood so suddenly that her chair went tumbling backward onto the floor. “That bastard!” she snapped, “I almost lost you because of one narrow-minded Gilnean!” She began pacing to try and calm herself, muttering in furious Thalassian.

Jaina managed to catch her wrist and pulled her close, “but you didn't. You didn't Sylv I’m still here.” She took Sylvanas’ hand and placed it over her heart, “m right here, and I’m not going anywhere. They caught him and he is going to pay for what she did.”

Sylvanas nodded as she seemed to deflate before Jainas eyes and pulled her to herself in a tight hug, hiding her face once more in Jainas hair.

“We don't have to worry anymore,” Jaina said as to rubbing circles on Sylvanas’ back. “It's finally over.”
Sylvanas ascended the steps to the office quickly, eager to get back to the kitchen to help with the
tail end of the dinner service and get home. Yet other matters had called her away and now she
needed to see Jaina. “Jaina,” she started as she opened the door, “Kasa told me that the accountant
was here and I just wanted to--” her voice trailed off when she noticed that Jaina was not in the
office.

Cautiously, Sylvanas stepped further into the office, casting her gaze about. “Jaina?” The sound of
the door closing had her spinning back around and the sight that greeted her caused her ears to pin
back as she bared her fangs.

Another elf leaning against the wall with her arms crossed in faked relaxation. Her golden hair was
pulled up into a messy bun with a thin braid trailing down behind one of her tapered ears.

“Alleria,” Sylvanas ground out.

Stepping away from the wall, Alleria walked closer to Sylvanas, only for the younger elf to dodge
away from her, back towards the door.

“Get out,” Sylvanas snarled, “get the fuck out of my restaurant!”

Alleria merely cocked a brow at the display, crossing her arms once more and tilting her head to the
side, “you seem to be blocking the exit, Lady Moon.”

“Don’t call me that!” Sylvanas snapped as she tried to open the door. Tried, being the optimal word
as it didn't budge in the least. She tried harder, yanking wildly on the knob. “Jaina! Jaina open this
door right now! I know you’re out there!” Sylvanas gave a kick to the unyielding wood of the door,
“JAINA!” when no response came, Sylvanas stalked over to the windows, keeping as much space
between Alleria and herself as she could.

“I just want to talk,” Alleria tried as she watched Sylvanas press at the window pane.

Sylvanas hardly spared her a glance, “you and I have nothing to talk about.”

Alleria let out an exasperated sigh, “must you still be like this after all these years?”

“Like what?” Sylvanas gave up on the window and turned to face her sister, “You said you wanted
to talk to spit it out.”

“Like a spoiled little brat!” Alleria snapped back. “Is that what you think?” cool anger rose in Sylvanas’ voice, “that I was being a spoiled brat?”

“No, I misspoke,” Alleria kept her voice level, “Selfish would be a more apt word.”

Sylvanas’ eyes hardened, “is that what you wanted to say to me? That you thought I was being
selfish? You, who only came back to her family because you had to? Who was to busy galavanting
around the world with your bastard husband that you couldn't even attend our parents funeral!?”
She was shouting now, but she didn't care. She had spent so long letting her anger fester that she
couldn't have contained it now if she had wanted to.

“That isn't fair and you know it, Sylvanas!” Alleria snapped back with equal ferocity, “Turalyon
and I were off in Draenor! How did you expect us to be able to make it in time for a rushed service? You're lucky I came back at all or that I even stayed with how ungrateful you were!"

“We didn't ask for you and your good for nothing Light preaching husband to come and save us!” Sylvanas shoved Alleria back, “I was doing a perfectly good job taking care of Vereesa and Lirath on my own!”

Alleria shoved her back with equal force, “you were only seventeen! They would have separated all of you and then what would you have done? I was the one that kept us together!”

“Together?” Sylvanas seethed, “together!? You kicked me out! You abandoned me!”

Alleria rose to meet Sylvanas’ anger head on, getting in her face, “what choice did you give us?! How many times did you think we could bail you out after you got cuffed for brawling? How many nights did you think we could stand when you didn’t come home, wondering if you were dead?”

Sylvanas scoffed, taking a step back “so your solution was to send me away so that you would have to think about it? So that I wasn’t your problem anymore?”

“That isn't what I meant and you know it,” Alleria replied, her ears flicking back.

“Isn't it?” Sylvanas slowly paced around Alleria, “How nice must it have been to know that you and that bastard could pretend to have your happy little life once the family problem was dealt with? You must have all slept better nothing that I wouldn’t be coming back. And you know what? You almost got exactly what you feared.”

Alleria blinked in confusion, “what are you talking about?”

Sylvanas stopped just behind Alleria. When she next spoke, her voice was dangerously low, “you tossed me aside for fear that if I died it would be on your conscious well guess what, I almost did die in the streets of Silvermoon, and you never would have known.”

Sylvanas thought that she wanted to hurt Alleria, but when her big sister turned to face her, the stricken look on her face made Sylvanas want to snatch her words back.

“I didn't know,” Alleria breathed out, the anger leaving her so suddenly she nearly felt dizzy, “Belore, Sylvanas, I didn't know! We looked for you! Once I realized what I had done Vereesa and I looked for you!” She reached out to Sylvanas, but let her hand fall when she stepped away, “But you were gone, and Turalyon… he convinced me to give up, that you must have gone to live with one of your friends… I had assumed Velonara.”

Sylvanas shrugged, her own rage petering out uselessly, “I tried, but her parents didn’t want me either. No one did, it seems.”

A heavy silence hung around them awkwardly. Without the anger to direct them and distract them, they didn't know where they stood with each other. It was Alleria who finally broke it, “why didn't you come home?” she asked.

“Turalyon, mostly,” Sylvanas shrugged, “I’m not sure if you ever noticed, but he hated me.”

Alleria looked away, guilt heavy in her eyes, “I did notice, but I was so wrapped up in him that I didn’t care.”

It was Sylvanas’ turn to look struck, “I did try to go back. When they let me out of the hospital, I
hitchhiked all the way from Silvermoon. But when I got home… it was to see a strange family living there. The neighbors said you had all packed up and left and no one could tell me where, so I have up. Went off and did my own thing.”

“And what a thing you did,” Alleria allowed herself a small smile, “I looked up everything you did before I came. I’m so proud of you, Sylvanas.”

Sylvanas snorted, “I don’t need your pride, not anymore. I don’t need anyone’s approval except my own.”

“What about Jainas?” Alleria had meant it as a joke. A light jab at her little sister like she used to take when they were both so much younger.

Sylvanas did not take it well. “Don’t you talk about her,” she snarled, baring her fangs defensively, “Jaina is the best thing to have happened to me in a very long time and I will not let you and him spoil that.”

“Just me now, actually,” Alleria interjected, “We’re divorced. Shortly after the move. I guess you could say I could finally see through the haze to see what was important. I took Vereesa Lirath and my son and we left. I just wish I had done it sooner.”

“You and me both,” Sylvanas commented, “he was a menace.”

Alleria merely nodded in agreement, “he was. But, for a time he was good to me and that blinded me.”

The sound of the door opening drew both of their attention. Cautiously, Vereesa eased her way into the office, her head low and her ears pinned back. She offered them a forced smile and raised a paper bag, “I brought food?”

Sylvanas sighed heavily through her nose, “Vereesa, I should have known this was your doing,” irritation was clear in her voice.

“Don't you start yelling at her now, Sylvanas,” Alleria warned.

“I would never yell at her,” Sylvanas defended quickly.

“You yelled at me last week over the phone for not getting the twins a puppy,” Vereesa said dryly.

“They have been very good and deserve a puppy,” Sylvanas retorted.

“Being good doesn’t equal puppy!” Vereesa groaned and walked past them to sit heavily on the couch that was set off to the side of the office, “We aren’t here to talk about a puppy. I told Alleria that I had found you and she wanted to see you. So yes, I locked you in the office, and yes I roped Jaina into it. But, wouldn’t it be nice to at least try and be a family again?” Vereesa looked between her sisters, her eyes pleading.

Sylvanas broke first and sat down on one side of Vereesa, while Alleria followed and sat on her other side. “What did you bring us?” Sylvanas asked, staring at the bag with open curiosity.

“Cinnamon rolls, from that little shop in Dalaran that Mom used to take us to whenever we went there.” Two sets of ears perked up as Vereesa handed them each a roll.

There were certain foods that Sylvanas had always been particular about eating, cinnamon rolls were just one of those foods. While her sisters were content to simply bite into the treats, Sylvanas
carefully unrolled hers, eating it as it unraveled. These rolls, were just how Sylvanas remembered them.

The dough was dense enough to support itself and the weight of the hefty helping of glaze, yet not dense enough to be a chore to eat. It wasn't overly sweet, leaving most of the work to the glaze, yet managing to not be bland on its own. The cinnamon filling clung to the pastry in such a way that none of it was lost. Before Sylvanas knew what had happened, the roll was gone, leaving her with nothing but childhood memories. Trips with her mother to Dalaran. Running around the market place with her sisters and Lirath.

Beside her, Vereesa let out a small, almost imperceptible, sob. Both her and Alleria moved her comfort her and their eyes met.

Sylvanas brow furrowed as she drew her fingers through Vereesa’s hair, “we can't be like we once were, I don’t think I could let you that close to my heart again… but… I think I would like to try and let you be back in my life.”

Alleria gave her a small smile, “I’d like that.”

*** *** *** ***

Theramore had closed and Jaina sat at a corner table with her new accountant going over the numbers. Jaina had been skeptical when Vereesa had recommended her little brother for the job, but Jaina had to admit that Lirath was doing a wonderful job. It helped that Sylvanas wasn't there trying to correct things that weren't wrong over her shoulder.

Jaina glanced up at the ceiling, “they’re being pretty quiet up there now. I guess they must have worked it out.”

“Or they've managed to kill each other,” Lirath joked blandly in a way that sounded so much like Sylvanas. He leaned back in his chair and adjusted his wireframe glasses, “It’s honestly a miracle any of them lived this long.”

Jaina laughed, “how is it that you are so cool-headed?”

“I take after our father, and growing up with those three? I had to be cool-headed, made it easier to get away with mischief,” Lirath explained with a gleam in his eye. He looked back down to his notes and nodded to himself, “well, everything seems in order, this had to have been my easiest consultation yet, I look forward to working with you Jaina.”

“Likewise,” Jaina smiled as they stood, “now that the business is out of the way, let’s go and make sure your sisters haven’t destroyed my office.”

When they opened the office door, it was to find the three sisters huddled up together on the couch. Lirath didn't even break his stride. He just strode into the office and flopped down across his sister's laps to a small chorus of ‘oof’.

“Hey, Li,” Sylvanas smiled warmly, “you've gotten big.”

“I wasn't that small the last time you saw me, Syl,” Lirath grumbled as he got comfier. “try not to be gone so long again, okay?”

“I'm not going anywhere, Li, I promise.” Sylvanas looked at Jaina, who was still standing in the doorway and patted the space next to herself, “come on, Jaina. Join the pile.”
Jaina sat hesitantly with her legs over the top of Liraths. No sooner had she sat down did Sylvanas pull her flush against her side so that Jaina could rest her head on her chest.

“I’m going to get you back for your hand in this,” Sylvanas threatened softly.

Jaina chuckled, “you keep saying that yet you’ve yet to live up to your words.”

“Give it time,” Sylvanas said, “Give it time, maybe I’m playing the long game?”

“Maybe,” Jaina sat up just enough to kiss Sylvanas’ jaw, “but I doubt it.”
It had been a slow day at Theramore. Slow enough that with Pained's new promotion to manager, Jaina had been able to go home early. It was a new occurrence, her new found free time, but Jaina relished it. After so many years struggling to keep Theramore afloat, she took every moment that she was able to relax as confirmation. Confirmation that she had made it, that she didn't have to worry anymore.

Today, Jaina was lazing in the apartment, reclined comfortably on across the couch. She casually flicked through several news feeds. She didn't really know how to feel about the headlines she saw. Jaina had finally got what she had wanted, just not in the way she had expected. Gallywix had been arrested for tax fraud.

Jaina had thought that she would be happier. The man that had nearly destroyed her, who had threatened her. Who, even now, was still under investigation for his possible hand in the fire, was finally getting exactly what he deserved.

To be sure, Jaina was happy. Just not nearly as happy as she thought she would be. She had so much good in her life now. Now, where once the goblin had been an infected thorn in her side, he was merely a hair caught in her eye, easily blown away.

Even with all the good, there were still nights when Jaina would wake in a cold sweat, ready to bolt from their apartment. But they were few and far between now, and Sylvanas was always there with soft words and soothing touches.

It was a two-way street, as Jaina did the same for Sylvanas, but with a bit more frequency. Apparently, getting back in touch with her family had down little to quell her own nightmares.

And if it happened to be both of them? Well, Muffin was more than willing to help them both out.

Speaking of.

Jaina sat up and looked over the back of the couch at the sound of a muffled meow. “Hey, Bub,” Jaina smiled at the cat. She frowned when she saw something glittering in his mouth, “what have you got there?” When she got up to investigate, Muffin took off.

The cat was fast, and Jaina chased him worriedly back and forth across the apartment. Finally, she managed to corner him in the bedroom closet. She kneeled down and held out her hand, waiting expectantly. Finally, Muffin opened his mouth and allow the small band of silver to fall into Jainas hand.

In her shock, Jaina nearly dropped it. It was a ring. Her hands shook as she ran her thumb along with the band, feeling the stones set into it. “Where did you find this?” Jaina didn't expect an answer but she didn't falter when Muffin trotted over to Sylvanas’ jacket and the open box that lay beneath it. Wiping her eyes, Jaina gingerly placed the ring back into the box and the box back into her pocket.

Sylvanas was going to propose. Jaina choked back a tearful sob as she wiped at her eyes. She already knew what her answer would be when she finally did ask. But she knew that she couldn't let Sylvanas know that she knew. Happy as they'll both be, it could easily put a damper on the
“Play it cool, Proudmoore,” Jaina told herself as she went back to the living room to wait for Sylvanas.

When Sylvanas finally got home, playing it cool was no longer the top item in Jainas mind. She pulled Sylvanas into a slow lingering kiss before she even had a chance to close the door. Sylvanas blinked in confusion as she took a step back, “what was that for?”

“Just missed you,” Jaina smiled, pressing another kiss to the corner of Sylvanas’ jaw, “and love you. That's all.”

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Jaina tried to be patient. She really did.

They went of frequent dates. Well, as frequent as they could. Dinner and movies long walks in the park. Jaina was jumpy. Every move that could have possibly been perceived as Sylvanas proposing had Jaina getting emotional.

On one of their walks, Sylvanas kneeled down to tie up her boot. Jaina was nearly in tears, holding her hands up to her mouth. This was it, she had thought, it was happening.

Sylvanas looked up at Jaina, a smirk briefly gracing her lips and her ears twitching in clear amusement, “I really need to start tying my boots up a little better, don't I?” She stood and placed Jainas hand on her arm. She gave Jainas face a critical glance, “are you okay? Your eyes look a little red.”

Jaina pointed her nose up and proceeded to lead Sylvanas back down the path, “I’m fine. Perfectly fine.”

*** *** *** ***

Jaina decided to take things into her own hands. Clearly, Sylvanas was just going to keep dragging her feet on the whole proposal thing, so Jaina was going to have to take the lead.

She went down to one of the local jewelry stores one morning while on a quick break from work. She scanned along with the cases filled with the finest silver and gold, worrying her bottom lip between her teeth. The ring had to be perfect, just as lovely as the one that Sylvanas had got for her.

“Can I help you with anything, miss?” an Orcish worker asked as he walked up to Jainas side.

“No I..” Jaina looked down, sighing in defeat, “yeah, I could use some help.”

The orc chuckled softly, “might I ask whom you're looking for?”

“My girlfriend,” Jaina replied quickly. She was taken to a smaller cade, tucked away in the corner that Jaina hadn't noticed. She hardly started looking before her eyes lit up. There, sitting slightly on its own, was an elegant ring of silver. It was made of finely braided silver with tiny leaf details. She could see Sylvanas wearing it already.

“She must be someone very special,” the orc commented, smiling around his tusks.

“She really is,” Jaina agreed.

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It was about a week after buying the ring that Jaina began to pull her plan into action. “We should go out to dinner,” Jaina stated, looking over to where Sylvanas had flopped down in the armchair.

Sylvanas’ ears slanted back in amusement, “we go out to dinner every night.”

Jaina tossed a pillow across the room, which the elf easily caught. “That's not what I meant and you know it.”

“All right, “ Sylvanas chuckled, “where do you want to go?”

“There is a place downtown I've been wanting to try out and I may have already made the reservation,” Jaina said, keeping her voice as level as she could.

“Sounds more like you are telling me than asking me,” Sylvanas commented.

“Maybe I am,” Jaina shrugged. She looked at Sylvanas pleadingly, “so will you go?”

Sylvanas stood from her chair elegantly and crossed over to Jaina, leaning down to kiss her forehead, “Who am I to shoot down an offer to dinner from a beautiful woman? Of course, I’ll go to dinner with you Jaina.”

It wasn’t often that they ate somewhere where they could dress to impress. Sylvanas looked wonderful in the purple dress shirt that she so often favored, and Jaina elegant in her pearlescent blouse. The restaurant they went to was rather, upscale. Tall windows and a fancy looking awning, even the valet was looked to be dressed to impress.

When they went inside, Jaina quickly approached the podium where the metre de stood. “I have a reservation,” Jaina started, “table for two, for Jaina Proudmoore?”

“All!” The Draenei at the podium nodded, “we’ve been expecting you, Miss Proudmoore. Right, this way.” He led them to an intimate booth in a far corner of the restaurant, placing down their menus as they sat, “your waiter will be just a moment.”

Almost as soon as they set the menus down, the waiter appeared, “are we ready to order?”

Jaina shared a look with Sylvanas and nodded, “yes, two orders of spaghetti carbonara and a slice of your chocolate cake to share.”

“And a bottle of your finest red,” Sylvanas added. After the waiter returned with their wine, Sylvanas looked back to Jaina, eyebrows raising slightly while her ears perked up, "you really picked a fancy place, didn't you?"

“Well,” Jaina shrugged, laughing a touch nervously, “I couldn't just take my girlfriend to a rundown Kul Tiran style pub could I?”

“Of course you could,” Sylvanas replied, her face completely serious, “You could have taken me anywhere and I would have been happy, just being with you.”

Jaina smiled into her wine, “I’ll have to keep that in mind.”

Sylvanas perked up when their food arrived. It smelt heavenly and was plated perfectly. “Why don't you let me prepare food like this?” Sylvanas asked with a pout, twirling the pasta onto her fork.

“We would have to jack the prices up to high and you know it,” Jaina chided, “just eat your food.”
The pasta tasted just as good as it was plated. Cooked to utter perfection, it still had a slight bite to it. The parmesan was sharp, its flavor dancing with that of the garlic. Jaina had to struggle not to laugh. Why were they always eating garlic?

If just the pasta was heavenly than the cake carried the two of them to a whole other plain. It was just sweet enough. Rich and moist, with hardly a crumb falling away when either of them scooped a bite off.

Jaina couldn't help her nerves as she ate. Her leg bouncing nervously beneath the leg. With every bite, they stepped closer and closer to Jaina finishing her plan.

When they finished eating, Jaina reached across the table for Sylvanas hand, twining their fingers together. “We've been together for a while now, haven't we?” she asked, her voice just loud enough to be heard over the din of the restaurant. She didn't trust it to be any louder.

“Going on two years now,” Sylvanas agreed, “longer if you count our partnership.”

“I would,” Jaina nodded, “I do. You walking into Theramore that day was the best thing that has ever happened to me. YOU are the best thing that has ever happened to me. Aggravating as you can be, you still are the best thing that's happened to me. You have given me so much. My family, our family. Theramore. Everything I have I have because of you. I wish there was something I could do to repay you for every kindness you've done for me. But nothing I could ever give you would be enough. Nothing except my love.”

Sylvanas smiled, bringing Jaina's knuckles to her lips, “You've already given me that, Jaina, and you have mine.”

Jaina nodded, swallowing hard. Carefully, Jaina slipped from her seat and kneeled down next to Sylvanas. She took her hands, running her thumbs over the backs of them as she looked up to meet her gaze. Jaina could see tears misting the elf's eyes as her ears laid back, patching Jaina's own watery smile. With a trembling hand, Jaina reaches into her pocket and pulled out the ring. The look of shock on Sylvanas' face caused her to laugh, breaking down a tension that had started to build, “you took to long.”

“How'd you know?” Sylvanas asked with a laugh of her own.

Jaina grinned, “You have a very nosy cat.”

“Of course,” Sylvanas snorted, “the little snitch.”

They shared a laugh at that and Jaina took the time to wipe the tears from her eyes. “So,” Jaina cleared her throat, holding the ring of Sylvanas' finger, “Sylvanas Windrunner, will you marry me?”

Sylvanas nodded, reaching into her pocket with her free hand to pull out her own ring, “of course I will.” Jaina slid the ring onto the elf's finger, and Sylvanas did the same before pulling Jaina back into the booth to kiss her. Jaina broke free from the kiss to hide her face against Sylvanas' neck. Sobs of elation and relief shook her body while Sylvanas ran her fingers through her hair, whispering soft words in Thalassian.

She grinned toothily when Jaina finally pulled away from her neck, “told you I play the long game.”

Jaina snorted, “you're such an ass.”
“Mmhmm,” Sylvanas agreed, “I’m your ass now.”

“Now and always,” Jaina smiled softly, “I love you, Sylvanas.”

“I love you too, Jaina,” Sylvanas tilted her head towards the door, “do you want to go home?”
When Jaina nodded, Sylvanas held up her hand to flag down their Waiter.

“Check, please?”

Chapter End Notes

That's it. Its finished. Thank you so much to everyone who followed along with this. It really has been a ride. I may come back to this with little one shots here and there, but for the most part, this is the end.
Thank you all again so much and I really hope you all enjoyed it.

End Notes

character tags and tags in general are subject to be changed and added upon.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!