

take your sword, protector of them all

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/17455535) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/17455535>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	The Adventure Zone (Podcast)
Relationships:	Julia Burnside/Magnus Burnside , Julia Burnside & Original Character(s)
Characters:	Julia Burnside , Original Characters , The Director Lucretia , Taako (The Adventure Zone) , Merle Highchurch , Keats - Character , magnus shows up for a hot minute at the end , Governor Kalen
Additional Tags:	Julia Burnside Lives , in a manner of speaking anyway , sorta an undead construct cause of a deal with a goddess of vengeance kinda thing , Julia does live and also i give her a wolf and a magic sword , and featuring some cameos from tfw , this is also for the tfw secret santa so happy , candlenights bo!
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2019-01-18 Completed: 2019-03-12 Words: 7,449 Chapters: 5/5

take your sword, protector of them all

by [everqueen](#)

Summary

Julia Waxman Burnside was supposed to die in the destruction of Raven's Roost. She, and a goddess, have other ideas.

(title from "Warrior Daughter" by Wildwood Kin)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Julia mistakes the first explosion for a cart crash.

“Baba!” she yells, leaning back from the forge and wiping the sweat from her brow. “Who let One-Eyed Hernandez drive again?”

These are the last words Julia Waxman Burnside ever says to her father.

The second explosion tears through the support columns directly under the Hammer and Tongs. Julia lurches, the forge scattering burning embers everywhere, as the whole building shakes, sways, and collapses. She leaps backwards just in time to avoid a massive beam that crashes down where she was sitting, and also just in time to fall into the crack ripped in the floor of their home.

She swears and swings her hammer as she falls, catching herself just in time on the ragged wood, an inferno raging below her, dust and heat and flames roaring upward. Her eyes widen and she hoists herself back up into the ruined workshop just in time to save her legs.

She scrambles to her feet and sprints for the door, shouldering it open just as her forge explodes, the shock wave catching her in the back and throwing her out into the street and out into chaos.

Julia crashes into the wall, the wind knocked out of her, and for a moment, the screams of her friends and neighbors, the braying of panicked animals and the rumbles of more explosions, bleed together into a cacophony of sound. She imagines, for a moment, that it’s the rebellion all over again, and puts out a hand for her husband to help her up.

Magnus, of course, isn’t there, gone to Neverwinter for his showcase.

Julia has never wanted him at her side more.

Alone, she hauls herself up with her hammer, grunting as her ribs cry out in pain, and takes another precious moment to assess the situation as the ground beneath her feet shakes and buckles.

“EVERYBODY HOLD!” she roars, voice at battle pitch.

Her friends and neighbors, their training still sharp for all it’s been months since their victory, turn and snap to attention at the familiar tone of their general’s voice.

“Julia!” her best friend, Shell, scrambles forward, their arms full of a miraculously still sleeping child. “We don’t know--”

“Kalen,” Julia growls, rising up to her full half orc height. “Shell, take the children. Tori!”

One of her lieutenants, the best glassblower in the whole damn city and currently holding up a collapsing house with Shape Water, flicks her ears back. “Right here.”

“Structural integrity?”

“Fucking bad.”

“Of course,” Julia mutters, a grin passing over her face in spite of everything. “Bo, Charm, evacuation routes C and F, *now* .”

“Yes ma’am!” Bo shouts, snapping out a sharp salute. The expert bookmaker and Charm, the best apothecary this side of the Teeth, rapidly corral the fleeing citizens as Julia turns back towards her own home. She strides forward, steady even as the ground rocks beneath her feet, fully intending to go back in for her father.

As she raises her hammer, the world goes red, heat searing across her body.

And then everything goes black.

Chapter 2

Julia wakes, which honestly is a surprise.

Everything fucking hurts.

She coughs, weakly, even that small movement sending bolts of red-tinged pain shooting through every screaming part of her body. She twitches, feeling a twisted piece of metal stuck through her hip, another punched through her arm.

She's still holding her hammer, and still breathing, so all in all Julia considers this a win.

"Fuck," she growls, coughing out more dust.

"Ohhh, very interesting," a voice drawls.

Julia whips her neck towards the voice, or tries to. In reality, she just twitches painfully, eyes darting around. After a moment, she has the strangest feeling of fog, and then she sits up without her body. She looks down, seeing a ghostly version of herself sitting half in and half out of her battered form. The chest is still moving faintly, the eyes shuttered closed.

She smiles grimly to see her ghostly form is still holding her hammer.

Julia tilts her head up now to see a woman sprawled on a nearby piece of rubble, watching her. As she looks around, rubble is *all* she sees, broken pieces of buildings, twisted metals, and shattered stone and glass everywhere she looks, a thick cloud of dust hanging over everything. Fires still rage not far from her, and she hears screams and shouts, but it's distant, muffled, as if through water.

If she looks closely, she can see blood splattering more than a few piles of debris.

She chooses, for the moment, not to look closely.

"Done?" the woman asks, a detached sort of amusement in her voice.

Julia refocuses on her, raising her eyebrows. The woman is elven, maybe, or was once, her build sleek and lithe. She's dressed in elegant black, with a subtle but intricate silver pattern of interlocking knives along the hem of her pants. She has a sharp undercut, the rest of her curly black hair in a fierce mohawk. Her eyes stand out against her cool brown skin, pure silver, no pupil.

"Valia," Julia says, her grip tightening on her hammer.

"Yes," the goddess says. She sits up from where she was reclining against the rubble, pupiless eyes on Julia. "And *you* are Julia, and you are very, very angry."

Julia growls again as the reality of what just happened crashes in on her. "Yes."

“Very good,” the goddess says, a smile curving her violently red lips. Julia sees a flash of fang in that smile, and finds herself, very distantly, afraid.

“Am I still alive?” she asks, glancing down at her body.

“Oh, technically,” Valia says carelessly. “Not for very much longer though.”

“I can’t die!” Julia snaps, slamming one spectral fist against the ground. “There are people trapped, and my husband--” she stops, stricken, at the thought of Magnus, and then her expression darkens. “Kalen has to pay for this!”

“That *is* what I thought,” the goddess says, her smile widening. “You want to take your vengeance on Kalen, do you not?”

“Of course,” Julia growls. “But Raven’s Roost, the people, my friends... what if he comes back *again* and tries to hurt them?”

“Oh, very good,” Valia purrs. “Very good indeed. Well, Julia Waxman Burnside, I think we can, perhaps, come to an arrangement.” She turns her head to the side, her silver eyes betraying amusement and a sort of fierceness, as something rips through the fabric of space. “Right on time.”

Julia watches, brow creasing, as a young elven boy steps through from nothing. He’s wearing a neat black suit, his brown eyes cheerful in his dark face, dreads tied back in a neat ponytail. He carries a sharp, sharp scythe. He smiles as he looks between Julia and the goddess.

“Hello!” he says brightly. “I’m Keats, ward of the Raven Queen!”

“Julia,” Julia says. She makes to rise and finds that she can, although the movement leaves her body behind. She grimaces at that but grips her hammer anyway, watching this strange child.

“Julia Waxman Burnside, yes!” Keats says cheerfully. “I know exactly who you are.” He turns his head to smile at Valia. “And Lady Valia, of course. My queen says hello, and asks, and I quote, ‘what exactly in all nine hells do you think you’re doing?’”

“This one is mine,” Valia says smoothly, eyebrows arching. “She would have her vengeance.”

“You’d have to talk to Lady Istus about all that,” Keats says with a smile, a small scroll popping into existence next to his head and unrolling itself. “But it looks to me that her soul is supposed to come right in to the Astral Plane, care of my queen.”

“Her cause is just,” Valia says, eyebrows raising still higher. “I will take her as my paladin.”

“Don’t I--” Julia starts, ghostly mouth going dry as both the child Reaper and the goddess turn their eyes on her. She clears her throat and starts again. “Don’t I get a say in all this?”

Keats grins. “Of course!” he says. “You’re supposed to come with me to the Astral Plane, cause that’s what happens when you, ya know, die, but Lady Valia here is offering you a deal.”

“What are the terms of this deal?” Julia says, resting her hammer on the ground and settling her hands on top of the handle, watching the goddess warily.

“You become my paladin,” Valia says. “I construct you a new body, given that,” she nods at Julia’s crumpled form. “Has reached its end. You remain on this plane until your vengeance is fulfilled.”

“What about my husband?”

Valia shrugs. “I have no need for him.”

“I do! What about when he comes home? Will I get to see him?”

“You won’t be able to leave Raven’s Roost,” Keats interrupts, shrugging when Julia turns sharp eyes on him. “Sorry, but in situations like this, everything’s got hard, *hard* limits. Dunno if you would even be able to talk to him, actually, even if he does come back. And you gotta do what Lady Valia says.”

“Indeed,” the goddess agrees, nodding. “You will have the duty of protection, for those who pass through this area or remain in the town, and the duty to strike down those who would take advantage of such a situation. And in return,” she smiles, spreading her hands wide in front of her. A glowing silver sword manifests, lying against her palms, the edge wickedly sharp. “You will get your chance for vengeance.”

Julia hesitates, eyes flicking towards Keats for a moment.

“Or you come to the Astral Plane now,” Keats fills in. “And get reunited with your husband when he dies.”

Julia returns her attention to the glowing silver blade that the goddess is offering her. After a long, long moment, she shifts her hammer to her left hand and takes the sword, fingers wrapping tight along the hilt.

In an instant, she feels what seems like liquid fire racing through her semi-corporeal veins, a gasp forcing itself out of her throat. A change spreads through her, her ghostly form solidifying into a real body, her original one shivering into dust. Her new body is much the same, although as she straightens and catches a glimpse of herself in the shine of Keats’s scythe, she sees that her eyes are now a vibrant, glowing silver.

“Rise, Julia Waxman Burnside, paladin of Lady Valia of the Hunt, goddess of vengeance,” Keats intones, his voice strangely formal, reverberating with a power that isn’t his. “May your quest for vengeance be fulfilled.”

Julia looks up, meeting the eyes of her new goddess.

And she grins.

Chapter 3

Her legend grows, as the years pass.

She stalks the now-empty ruins of her former home, watching the stars pass by above. She ignores the flashes of memory that come and go, whispering that there's something big she's missing, that there's so much she's forgotten. She ignores them because they are irrelevant to her purpose.

The coward Kalen does not come to Raven's Roost again.

Nor does her husband.

So Julia waits.

She is patient.

Kalen does not come, but others do, roving bands that make to set up a base among the ruins, or pass too close with caravans of captured people. She can't go very far past the boundaries of the city, but plenty far enough to strike fear into their hearts just as easily as her silver sword strikes their heads from her shoulders. Her now-blessed hammer matches it, swing for swing.

She steps in when a woman she recognizes runs past, hunted by one such group.

"Kara," she says, casually blocking the crossbow bolt flying towards the woman's back. "Are you alright?"

"Who-- Julia?"

"Yes," Julia says, swinging her hammer at the nearest bandit, sending him flying off his horse.

"What-- your eyes...."

"It's a long story," she says with a shrug.

It's not really that long of a story, but she tells it anyway after she finishes off the brigands. Julia and the master crocheter exchange news over a simple stew. Kara seems uncomfortable amid the rubble, drawing her shawl closer around her shoulders even as she eats. She listens wide-eyed to Julia's account of the meeting with the goddess and the reaper, her eyes flicking back and forth between Julia's eyes and her sword.

Kara doesn't stay long, but then, no one does. Julia paces the ruins of Raven's Roost alone, wondering when Magnus or Kalen will return.

And she waits.

She catches sight of the floating moon base after a few years of this, her eyebrows raising, before she lets out a sharp bark of laughter. If her husband is anywhere, he would be there.

So she waits.

She waits with renewed cheer, occasionally reconstructing parts of her forge, just to have something to do. The young-old reaper, Keats, pops by sometimes, he claims for the sake of the lemons that grow wild near the ruins, but that claim is belied by his stories of her friends, those lost during the explosions and those still alive.

At one point, after Julia had watched the fake moon turn and fly off in an entirely different direction from its usual orbit, the now-familiar sound of a rift opening draws her attention. But instead of Keats stepping through, an adult man with an incredibly handsome face and tired red eyes emerges. She watches him warily, leaning slightly on her hammer, her sword in her other hand.

“Julia Waxman Burnsidess?”

“That’s me,” Julia says, straightening. “You’re another reaper.”

“Oh. Yes, you’ve met Keats. My name is Kravitz.”

“Is the Raven Queen trying to break our deal?” Julia asks, suspicious.

“What?” Kravitz’s eyebrows raise. He looks genuinely surprised, caught off guard. “No, of course not. My queen wouldn’t interfere with a deal made by another goddess.”

“Then why are you here?”

“Your husband asked me to deliver a message.”

“Magnus?” Julia says, surging forward. “Where is he? Is he okay?”

Kravitz’s eyes widen and he backs up. “Whoa! He’s fine! I mean, he’s still a death criminal and all--”

“He’s a what?”

“He died nineteen times!”

“ *When* ?”

“That’s what I want to know!”

“I don’t remember Mags ever dying,” Julia says, squinting at Kravitz.

“Yeah, well, we made a deal,” Kravitz grumbles.

“Does he know I’m alive?”

“You’re not, technically,” Kravitz says. “You’re a construct, like me.”

“I am not!”

“Well your body is!”

Julia growls and raises her hammer. Kravitz takes another step back, one hand on his scythe, the other raising placatingly.

“Okay, okay! Sorry! It’s just been,” he sighs. “It’s been a long night, okay? He just wanted me to tell you that he loves you.”

Julia lowers the hammer. “Oh.”

Kravitz eyes her warily. “You’re not gonna hit me with that thing?”

“Can you tell him I’m alive?”

“No! I’m not a messenger! I’m a reaper!”

“You just delivered a message to me!”

“It was part of our deal!”

“You’re lying,” Julia says, but she doesn’t raise the hammer again. Instead, she’s smiling fondly, thinking of Magnus. “You just did it to be kind.” She looks up again to see Kravitz looking distinctly uncomfortable, and now she’s grinning. “Come back and visit with Keats sometime.”

Kravitz just stares at her, bemused, before tearing open a rift with his scythe. “Uh, yeah, maybe,” he says. “Uh, bye!”

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

After one particularly bad battle, where it took all Julia had to free the caged children and slay the slavers, she stands a tired guard around the makeshift camp, listening with half an ear to the quiet murmurings of the mothers to their children. A small sound to her left has Julia bringing her sword and hammer up at once, eyes fierce on the woods.

Her goddess steps out.

“Julia,” she says, that same detached amusement in her voice.

“Valia,” Julia returns, lowering her weapons just a little. “A little warning?”

“I let you hear me approach,” the goddess says, her smile widening. “That is a warning. You have done well.”

“Not well enough,” Julia snaps back, her exhaustion overriding her common sense. “I haven’t seen Kalen or any of his men, or Magnus. He thinks I’m dead!”

“In a manner of speaking, you are,” Valia says, unbothered. “The would-be dictator will return. He is hearing the stories. But not yet.”

“Then when?”

“Something is coming first,” Valia says. “Something that even the gods do not understand. I would have you live through it, my paladin.”

“What are you--”

“With that in mind,” Valia interrupts. She makes a gesture and a fuck-off huge black and silver wolf appears next to her. It easily comes up to Julia’s waist, no easy feat considering her height, and has the same silvery eyes. It pads towards her silently, tail tagging just a little.

“Holy shit,” Julia breathes, staring down at it.

“A companion, to help in your mission.”

“Well,” Julia says, burying her hand in the thick fur of the wolf’s neck, amazed at how far her fingers sink into it. “We always wanted a dog.”

The goddess laughs. “It is a wolf.”

“Close enough,” Julia says, focused on the wolf. The next time she looks up, the goddess is gone, but the wolf remains. “Okay,” she whispers. “I’ll name you Steven.”

The legends spread, after that, of the woman with eyes and wolf of silver, armed with sword and hammer.

Raiding parties and adventurers start avoiding the ruins.

Not far enough, but they try.

Others come, some returning, some new, who fear their pursuers more than they do Kalen's wrath.

And slowly, Julia isn't alone anymore.

But still, she waits.

--

She's not alone when the apocalypse happens.

She wields her hammer and her blade, striking true even at enemies she can't see. She roars orders, just like the rebellion, just like the last day of Raven's Roost, a new weakness in her arms and stride from the lack of her goddess. She kicks up dust, throws paint, anything to outline their invisible foes. It helps, but it's not enough.

They lose people, before the Story. Before the Song.

But after, as they fight on against the Hunger, Julia laughs, slicing through the monsters with ease. "That fucking explains the death count!" she yells to Bo.

"What are you talking about?" Bo yells back, kicking a black opal soldier away from Julia's back.

"My husband! That's how he had nineteen deaths!"

"I can't believe you married an alien," Shell deadpans as they fire off arrows into the horde.

"Can't you?" Julia grins.

She, and Steven the wolf, and all the rest of the small community rebuilding itself in the ruins of Raven's Roost, fight on.

And they win.

just a heads up, next chapter doubles the length of this entire fic but it just ended up that way. that's why this update is pretty short

thanks i love you bye!

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

fair warning, this chapter doubles the length of this whole fic and also contains a conversation between Julia and Magnus. not trying to spoil my own fic but it's something to be aware of!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The first scouts come not long after the Day of Story and Song.

Julia is on patrol, as she usually is, when she catches sight of a unfortunately familiar face in the trees, a spy Magnus had caught during the rebellion. He had gotten away, after everything, in the same escape plan as Kalen himself.

He doesn't get away this time.

But he isn't the only one.

Julia, paladin and direct construct of a goddess as she is, can only be in one place at one time. There are other reports of men spying on their small community, disguised among the ruins, and she readies them for an attack.

"Petty," Julia snorts to a newcomer as she sharpens her divine sword.

"Who?" the woman asks, golden eyes sharp in the depths of her hood. A red maple staff rests across her knees.

"Kalen," Julia snarls the name, lip curling in disgust. "Who else? The only reason he destroyed Raven's Roost in the first place is because we won. And now that people are starting to come back? Now that he knows Magnus is a hero *and* an alien? Well, of course he would want to destroy us again."

"I..." the woman hesitates. "I'm very sorry."

Julia eyes her, noting the hood still up, and smiles. "I recognize you."

The woman draws back. "What?"

"Your eyes, at least," Julia says. "You were at our wedding."

The woman shrinks back still more. "I didn't... I wasn't trying to intrude--"

"It's only right," Julia says, still smiling, although she looks back down at her blade and continues to sharpen it. "That at least some of his family was there. Lucretia."

The woman freezes, her eyes hard and sharp, before she laughs ruefully and tosses back her hood. She's older, much older than she should be, not the tired young woman Julia remembers from one of the happiest days of her life, but it's Lucretia, all the same. One of the seven saviors of the multiverse smiles across the fire at Julia. "You're much more perceptive than your husband."

Julia chuckles. "You know he needs glasses, right?"

Lucretia blinks. "Mother *fucker*."

Julia chuckles again before sobering, leaning forward. "Does he know I'm alive? Does he know about Kalen?"

Lucretia hesitates and then sighs, laying out the whole Wonderland story that Merle had told her, late one night, over many, many glasses of wine. Julia's hands tighten on her weapons, until even the hilt of her divine sword creaks in protest. When she lifts her fingers, there are indents left in the grip.

"So," Lucretia finishes. "Merle and... and Taako are on their way. We've been... we knew Kalen would be coming here, now that there are people returning, and they at least made a promise. I just happened to be closer."

"Do they know you're here?"

"Merle does. Taako should, but I don't know if he listens to anything in relation to me anymore."

"This have something to do with the reason why my husband didn't remember he was an interdimensional alien on the run from a force of cosmic destruction?"

"...yes."

"Thought so," Julia says. She stares at Lucretia, hands still firm on her weapons. "Can you fight?"

Lucretia smiles, wearily. "Yes."

"With your staff?"

"I mean, I also have a gun."

"A what?"

"Never mind."

Julia eyes her for a moment before smiling. "Be prepared for an attack," she says, rising from her seat by the fire and whistling once. Steven the wolf melts out of the mix of moonlight and shadow to pad up to her side. To Lucretia's credit, she doesn't flinch, only blinking once when the wolf looks at her, silver eyes meeting gold.

Julia is right.

The attack comes at the zenith of the new moon, when the sky is darkest and the clouds cover the stars. The attackers, however, were not anticipating Julia's dark vision, or, for that matter, for Lucretia to be a particular threat.

This, of course, is a mistake.

The first wave attempts to sneak into the camp, spreading out to flank the medical tent and the children's tent. They creep, knives out, only to run into Steven the wolf, who alerts Julia with a casual howl before leaping into the fray. He's already torn out three throats by the time she arrives, slicing through them with her sword and crushing others with her hammer.

They make quick work of them, but the second wave is already flooding through the main entrance.

Julia sprints back, Steven the wolf at her heels, springing through the rubble from the first destruction with the ease of long practice. She arrives just in time to see Lucretia laying waste to three men with a sweep of her red maple staff, moving with much more ease than any of their enemies expect, given her age. She glances up and smiles as she drives her staff into the gut of an attacking man, not bothering to even give him her full attention.

"Drove back the first wave?"

"Of course," Julia says. "At your six."

"Thanks," Lucretia says casually, swiping her staff backwards without looking. "Two men at your nine."

Julia turns on her heel, already swinging, her sword hammer combo making quick work of the two approaching. She backs towards Lucretia, Steven the wolf twisting through the enemies around them.

At one point, Lucretia beats back three men at once with her staff and then yanks a small metal object from her belt and just fucking shoots the man charging her with a sound like thunder. She tucks it away again as the back of the man's head explodes, smiling in a satisfied sort of way at Julia's shock.

They fight on, long past the time where Julia's original body would have gotten exhausted. Even without a goddess's help, Lucretia doesn't complain, her speed and skill unflagging.

They accumulate quite the mound of dead or dying men around them by the time the flow of attackers eases, the sky lightening in the east. Julia leans tiredly on her hammer, watching the concerned movements of her people as they care for the wounded and try to figure out what to do with the bodies.

"Think that was the worst of it?" Lucretia asks, joining her at the edge of the camp. There's exhaustion in the lines of her wrinkled face, in the way she holds her staff, but she stands tall still, as she must have during their century-long journey.

Julia shakes her head. “No,” she says, burying one hand in Steven’s fur. “No, he’s still coming.”

“Speaking of people arriving,” Lucretia says, nodding towards the entrance to camp.

Julia looks to see a skinny elf who looks as if a closet might have exploded on him, covered in glitter and an impractical amount of sequins, next to a crunchy dwarf with a wooden arm and only one eye who seems to have strolled directly off the beach despite Raven’s Roost being miles from any major body of water. They’re bickering in the way that Magnus and Steven used to do, in the way that means they love each other deeply and truly, and take the piss out of each other at every opportunity.

“Taako and Merle?” Julia guesses.

“Who else?” Lucretia deadpans.

Julia swings her hammer over her shoulder and strides towards the entrance, Steven the wolf at her side, Lucretia following more than a little reluctantly. The elf sees her first, elbowing the dwarf in the head. His eyes are much sharper than his appearance would suggest, although at the moment he’s just staring in shock.

“Uh, hail and well met,” the elf says, taking in her eyes and her wolf and her blessed weapons with wide eyes. There’s an easy smile on his lips that becomes more strained as she watches him make the logical conclusions based on her presence. “You must be Julia?”

“Taako,” Julia says, nodding to him and noting his lip curling as he notices Lucretia.

“Oh shit,” the dwarf says. “This is Maggie’s girl? I thought she was dead!”

“Merle,” Julia says, looking down at him.

“Uh, that’s *Earl* Merle, thank you!”

“Who let that happen?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” the dwarf splutters as Taako laughs.

“You’re here because of Kalen?” Julia asks, smiling but getting to the point nevertheless.

“Yeah, there was--” Taako starts, smile melting away.

“Lucretia explained Wonderland to me,” Julia says. “And why Magnus doesn’t remember. Does he know I’m alive?”

“Fuck, *we* didn’t even know you were alive,” Taako says. “Shit, we gotta tell him.”

“After Kalen is dead,” Julia says, ignoring the twinge in her gut at what happens once her mission is complete. “If I understand correctly, he wouldn’t be able to understand who... killed me. I don’t want him hurt.”

Taako's eyes are narrowed. He pointedly does not look in Lucretia's direction as he says "We can't make that decision for him."

"You're not," Julia says flatly. "I am. Tell him when Kalen is dead."

Taako and Merle exchange a significant look, filled with a history that Julia neither knows nor cares how to read. She might have, before the explosions, before her father's death and the destruction of her home, but now? With her mission and her constructed body and the fact that she hasn't seen her husband in almost a decade? No. She has the focus for one thing, and it approaches.

"Any word on that?" Merle asks finally.

"He's on his way," Lucretia says. "Avi's been keeping an eye on their movements from the moon base. He's got a small army, but," she shrugs. "We've faced worse."

"And why are *you* here?" Taako asks, disgust clear in his voice, ignoring Merle and Julia staring at him.

Lucretia draws back, guilt and shame passing over her features before her face hardens. "You're not the only one who cares about Magnus," she says tightly.

"What makes you think--"

"Shut up," Julia interrupts.

All three heads snap towards her, shock open on Taako's and Lucretia's faces, a delighted grin growing on Merle's. Julia leans on her hammer, meeting each of their eyes individually, before she speaks again.

"I don't particularly care about your baggage at the moment," she says. "Work it out on your own time. Fighting when we're under threat will just put everyone at risk."

For a moment she thinks Taako is going to draw on her, but after a long moment, he snorts, crossing his arms. "Fine," he says. "I guess Mags wasn't the only one leading the rebellion, huh?"

Julia smiles. "Of course not."

"I like this one," Merle chuckles. "Hey, you got more injured?"

"Do you even remember how to heal, old man?"

Lucretia laughs, but softly, as Merle splutters again. "Alright, wise guy," he grumbles.

Julia's smile grows as she shows Merle to the medical tent, watching as his crotchety exterior softens when faced with a wounded mother still watching over her children from the cot. Fortunately Taako and Lucretia at least know enough to not work near each other. Lucretia focuses on building up the defenses of the makeshift camp while Taako runs the survivors through spellcasting practice.

Kalen is cowardly. Julia knows this. She also knows that Kalen, as a human, doesn't have night vision, and so they are fresh and ready when his army shows up the next day.

He's not on the front lines, of course, he never was during the rebellion, but she still gets more than a little satisfaction out of seeing his hired muscle crash face first into Lucretia's barrier. Powerful as the woman is, she can't just keep the remains of Raven's Roost in a perpetual bubble, so at the peak of their enemies' confusion, Julia nods for her to drop it. As she does, their right flank surges forward, led by Taako astride a rainbow-horned binicorn with an extremely chill voice.

Their charge throws the enemy into further confusion as Julia, leading the bulk of their forces, rushes through the entrance to the camp, engaging the front lines.

She loses track of Lucretia and Taako as she cuts through the hired mercenaries, although Merle keeps popping up nearby, the weathered pages of a bible glowing with divine light as he summons flocks of angels and follows that up with a cheerful swing of his war hammer. At one point Julia is dueling two men at once, back bent almost parallel to the ground as she blocks a strike that drives towards her throat, her arm bleeding from a dagger slash. She feels a wave of divine warmth flow through her veins, bringing with it the scent of sun-warmed dirt and green sap instead of the usual sharp crispness of moonlight on snow. Renewed, she slashes through one and crushes the other with her hammer. She looks up, unassailed for the moment, to see Merle grinning at her, wooden arm alight with golden power.

"How ya doin, kid?" he asks, as if they were meeting at a coffee shop instead of a battlefield.

"Not bad," Julia returns his smile. "You?"

"Pan almighty, my back hurts. Need any healing?"

"No," Julia says, watching as a silvery fluid fills the formerly bleeding slash on her arm, closing up the wound. "Save it for the others."

"If you ever wanna hear the word of Pan, I got a few chick tracts--"

Julia laughs and swings back into the fight, a new smile on her face. The flow of battle brings her towards where Taako led his charge. She watches almost absently, embroiled in her own fight, as the elf fires off spells with an air of carelessness. She sucks in a breath as a flaming arrow strikes down his mount, the elf flung to his knees as the binicorn disappears, but just as a sword swings down towards him, it's blocked by a red maple staff.

Lucretia is there, catching the sword and throwing the enemy back without looking at Taako, giving him a chance to get to his feet. He mutters something to her, too quietly for Julia to hear, but whatever it was, it's enough to bring a sharp smile to Lucretia's face as she goes back to back with the elf. Taako flourishes his glaive, calling some insult to the men surrounding them, while Lucretia just snorts and knocks several of them back with a movement that's entirely too casual for how high level that spell was.

Julia has enough time for a smile about it before her attention is retaken by the enemies in front of her.

They fight, as the day wears on, the army of mercenaries growing more and more wary, and vaguely more clever. Eventually, Julia, tired of this, raises her voice to battle pitch and roars “KALEN!”

This, coupled with a few well-placed spells from all three members of her husband’s family fighting with her, silences the battlefield, all eyes turning first to her, and then towards the hastily established camp of Kalen’s forces.

For a few long moments, there’s no response. She grips her weapons, watching intently, as a horse approaches, a familiar, hated silhouette atop it. The silver fire of her goddess burns hot in her not-quite-real veins as Kalen rides into the camp, that stupid badly forged blood-red armor still bright and shiny. She feels the eyes of Lucretia, Taako, and Merle as her would-be murderer dismounts and saunters forward.

“There she is!” he proclaims, that same simmering ugliness, that *entitlement*, apparent in every fucking word. “The little general!”

Julia, standing 7’5, looks down at him with disgust. “You’re wearing heels.”

This draws a low rumble of laughter from the watching combatants, while Kalen splutters in rage, his beady eyes squinting angrily through his helmet. He snarls and draws that some gaudy sword he had as governor, barely used except for the more dramatic executions.

Julia snorts without moving, watching him contemptuously.

“I’ll admit, I don’t understand how you survived,” Kalen says, punctuating the words with an experimental jab of his sword, his words still carrying that undercurrent of rage but on the surface, at least, amused. “But I’ve come to fix that.”

Julia raises her hammer and her sword. “Fight me then.”

At that, she notices Lucretia, Taako, and Merle all exchanging glances, but thankfully none of them say anything. Kalen, unfortunately, does not follow their lead.

“Oh, I think that’s hardly fair,” he laughs, the sound hollow. “After all, you’re *just* a mortal woman.”

Julia blinks her silver eyes once, slowly, feeling the bitter warmth of Valia’s magic and her own desire for vengeance humming through her. “Coward.”

Kalen’s false smile disappears. “What did you say to me?”

Julia smiles, grim and satisfied, tasting his rage and the undercurrent of fear on the back of her tongue. “You heard me. Coward.”

He snarls again, moving forward. Julia raises her sword and hammer, exhaustion disappearing. This is her purpose, this is why she’s still here, after losing everything. He approaches, spewing some other random bullshit that Julia doesn’t bother to listen to. She instead waits, watching the tremble in the blade.

All else disappears, from the aches of her wounds to the eyes on them.

Julia, as she has for seven long years, waits.

And then she is no longer waiting.

Julia is fighting.

A parry here, a dodge there, and then a swift swipe of her silver sword and Kalen's head is flying off his shoulders.

And Julia swings her hammer, slamming the head into the dust at her feet.

Julia is no longer waiting.

She stands in front of the man who tormented them all for so long, and watches his body thump into the dirt, blood spilling over the rubble left from his own attack, and feels very little.

"Holy shit," is the first words she hears, spoken, unsurprisingly, by Taako.

She looks around, slowly. It hasn't much registered with the rest of them that Kalen is dead, but then, she's not sure if it's registered with her, either. As she looks, the murmuring in the crowd grows to cheers crashing over the stunned silence of the remaining enemies. Those men see their leader dead and they run, none of the celebrants bothering to give chase.

There is still work to be done, wounded to care for, bodies to bury -- or burn -- but Julia feels a tug in her gut that means that others are going to have to do that work instead.

"He's dead," Lucretia breathes, eyes flicking between the body and Julia.

"No wonder Maggie loves her so much," Merle says approvingly, already walking towards a group of wounded women sitting wearily on the ground.

"Magnus," Julia whispers, staggering back. As she does, leaning on her hammer for support, she hears the familiar sound of a rift tearing open nearby.

"Babe-- wait, you're not Kravitz," comes Taako's accusing voice. "I dunno who you are, kid, but we're all good here."

"Not exactly," Keats's voice says as Lucretia's gentle hands guide Julia to sit on a chunk of rubble. "Julia's job is done! She got her vengeance!"

"Yes," comes Valia's voice, and her goddess is just there, reclining on the rubble next to her, solid silver eyes watching. "Our deal is complete."

"That's not fair," Taako protests, sharp and angry. "She still needs to see Magnus!"

Lucretia says nothing, aside from a jump and a curse when Valia appeared, but she's eyeing the goddess and the reaper warily, hand tight on her staff.

Merle wanders back over, hearing Taako, and grins when he sees Valia. “Let me handle this.”

“Oh gods,” Lucretia deadpans, pulling a laugh out of Julia.

“No, no, shut the fuck up,” Taako says, but Merle is already winking at Valia. Maybe. It’s hard to tell with only the one eye.

“Hey there,” he says. “Name’s Merle, *Earl* Merle Highchurch. How ya doin?”

“I know of you, Merle Highchurch,” Valia says. “Pan has spoken of you.”

“Ha! I bet he has,” Merle returns, still grinning. “So, what’s all this about a deal?”

“We made it when Raven’s Roost was attacked,” Julia says, rubbing at her temples. She feels... gray, and foggy, and somehow more alive than she has since the bombing. “Valia made me a new body and let me stay and protect Raven’s Roost, and in return, I got to kill Kalen.”

“Okay, okay, sure,” Taako says. “But she’s still got to see Magnus! I mean, that’s only fair, right?”

“I have no use for Magnus Burnsides,” Valia says. “Our deal is complete.”

“Give her more time,” Lucretia says, rising to her feet, her knuckles bloodless with how hard she’s gripping her staff. “She-- they both deserve to at least say goodbye.”

Valia raises an eyebrow at Lucretia, and then glances at Keats. “What say you, little one? Would your queen allow this?”

“I mean,” Keats says, twirling his scythe absently. “She *does* have a soft spot for the birds... hey, Taako?”

“Uh, *yeah*, the one and only,” Taako scoffs, hand tight on his glaive. “What’s up, little man?”

“Call your husband,” Keats says cheerfully. “My queen likes him to make the deals when it comes to, ya know, the birds.”

“Who are the birds?” Merle asks.

Taako smacks his face and pulls out his stone as Julia stares into space, hands still at her temples.

“Julia?” Lucretia asks carefully. “Are you... alright?”

Julia takes a few shaky breaths, long-dormant tears starting in her eyes. They burn. “It’s been a long time,” she says quietly, aware of Valia’s eyes on her. “Since the bombing, I’ve only felt... anger, and pain, and... determination. And now,” she looks up, smiling at Lucretia, and laughs. “I want to see Magnus so badly!”

“You might not have time for that,” Keats says, and he sounds genuinely regretful.

He's also right. Julia looks down and notes with a jolt that she can see straight through her hands to the ground below. Lucretia's hand on her shoulder falls through for an instant before she takes it away. The emotions keep coming, waves of misery and vindication and joy, but her constructed body weakens.

"This isn't *fair* !" Taako insists, waiting as his stone rings. "We're the most powerful people in every plane, we should be able to do *something* !"

Julia laughs again, drawing everyone's attention, as she drags her hands down her tear-streaked face. Merle looks concerned, drawing closer to her, his hand glowing with healing light.

"Julia?" Lucretia asks again. "What can we do?"

"Nothing, it's just," Julia shakes her head. "I'm so glad he had you all!"

This prompts another round of concerned looks between the three of them and Keats, although Valia simply watches Julia, silver eyes inscrutable.

"Okay, I could uh, Channel Divinity and try and keep her here?" Merle suggests.

"Or call Barry?" Lucretia says. "He might know how to hold a soul to the Prime Material Plane."

"Please don't make the necromancer do more necromancy," Keats says cheerfully. "My queen *does* like him, but that shit still don't fly!"

Lucretia blinks at the pint-sized reaper, having apparently forgotten he was there.

Taako meanwhile is arguing into his stone, presumably talking to Kravitz, but he pauses when Julia rises. Her silver sword disappears from her hand, reappearing across Valia's lap before it disappears for good. Steven the wolf nuzzles Julia's hand one last time and then pads back to Valia's side, melting back into moonlight and shadow that persists for a brief moment before it too vanishes in the afternoon sun.

Julia, growing more transparent, holds out a hand towards Taako. "Can I use your stone?"

Taako, sharp eyes on her, hangs up on Kravitz mid-sentence and taps in another number before passing it over. Someone, maybe Valia, maybe the goddess of fate, allows Julia's increasingly spectral form to take hold of the stone.

After a long few moments, and even longer seven years, Julia hears her husband's voice.

"Taako? Hey, what's up!"

There are dogs barking in the background, and what sounds like a little boy's voice, laughing. Julia can't speak for a moment, all air driven from her lungs.

"Taako? You there? I'm mid-training session!"

Julia gathers herself, rubbing absently at the tears, and speaks. “Magnus?”

Silence, deafening, on the other end of the line, and then, choked and wet: “Julia?”

Julia laughs, a little. “Hi baby.”

“How-- Jules, oh my gods, how--”

“I don’t have a lot of time,” Julia says, her voice shaking. “I love you, Magnus, I love you so much. You know that, right?” The gentleness is a relief, after so long spent sharp and hard.

Magnus is crying, sobbing really, and Julia hears, distantly, concerned dog barks and the voice of the little boy, asking “Sir? Sir are you alright?”

Julia speaks again, feeling her ties to the Prime Material Plane fade even more. “I’m sorry we never got a real chance together, baby, but live, okay? You have so many people who love you. Have a long, *beautiful* life.”

“Julia,” Magnus chokes out. “Julia, I’m so sorry I wasn’t there--”

“Hey,” Julia interrupts, gently. “It’s okay. It’s okay, Magnus. I love you.”

“I love you, Jules.”

The stone falls.

Julia looks back up, smiling gently at Lucretia, who has her hands over her mouth, tears brimming in her eyes; at Taako, grim-faced and hurting behind the mask; at Merle, who is openly crying and smiling back. She nods at Valia, who nods back, a satisfied smile creasing the goddess’s face before she disappears.

And finally, Julia looks to Keats, who is tucking away a black handkerchief. He smiles at her and holds out one small hand. “Are you ready?”

Julia takes a deep breath that she no longer needs. “I’m ready.”

She takes Keats’s hand and they walk together through the rift.

On an island in the Astral Sea, as she has for so long, Julia waits.

She builds, as she does, and greets the ones who come through after her.

And then, after a long, long time, Julia doesn’t have to wait anymore.

thanks for reading, i love magnulia come yell with me about them and taz in general
@everqueen12

comments/kudos? hell yeah

thanks i love you bye!

End Notes

happy candlenights bo sorry this is so fucking late!! i technically do some hits but it'll be fine

don't really have much else to say i guess?? check out me screaming about taz and occasionally posting more taz writing on tumblr at everqueen12

thanks i love you bye!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!