



## *So Let Her Be*

WRITTEN BY GEORGE DUDA

ONCE UPON AN ANCIENT REALM DARKNESS CLOU-  
deth the hearts of men, and evil runneth unrestrained. Dare not rest oh  
world, for she cometh, having great wrath and retribution. Altereth not  
thy path, for it shall be altered for thee. Moonlight filtered through the  
trees. Sentries milled around silently as warriors slept on the forest floor.  
“Prepare yourselves,” said Xenas, First Commander of Alosia’s all-female  
army as she awakened them. Hailing Kasa and the other commanders  
to her, she pointed through the trees at the ruling fortress of this next  
kingdom marked for conquest. “See that rise approaching the castle  
gate? Station your fighters just below it.” With darkness giving way to  
dawn, her princess warriors scurried from the forest in groups of three  
and four to take up their positions, lying in the dust out of sight of the  
lofty wall. Hours pass as the sun beat down on them. Many rolled their  
sweaty backs in the dust to protect them from the intense rays. Xenas  
surveyed her beloved warriors with a sense of pride. They were the back-  
bone of the kingdom of Alosia. Xenas was second only to their mighty  
and glorious Queen Acacia, who was the spearhead of the kingdom  
and the inspiration for all they did. The imposing fortress rose before  
them and there appeared to be movement on the wall. Kasa, her First  
Lieutenant, nudged Xenas. “I believe they’ve spotted us. What do we do  
now?” “Hold fast. I’d rather not engage them without our Queen.” The  
clang of metal rang out as the castle’s portcullis was raised. Armed enemy  
troops streamed out the gate in battle formation. “There’s our answer.

Sound the charge,” said Xenas, glancing at Kasa. Kasa blew the twisted horn and the warriors rushed forward to engage the enemy. They were outnumbered but that never deterred them. According to their custom, the commanders led the charge. Xenas hit the battle line first and sliced through the first soldiers with the fury and power she was known for. They clashed brutally as her warriors cut down the enemy. The prowess and fury of these battle-hardened females overwhelmed the enemy as heads and limbs flew and blood gushed forth. They slaughtered their front line within the first few seconds of battle and carved up the next rank as they leaped over bodies of fallen opponents. Their ferocity surprised the enemy and they fell back toward their gate with Xenas and her troops in hot pursuit. Roak, the enemy second in command, gaped as he watched the carnage from the wall. “By the gods, these women are vicious. I underestimated them. Release a volley from the archers.” “Arrows,” yelled Xenas, who always had one eye on the horizon. Her warriors raised their shields and blocked most of the arrows, but some found their mark. “Return,” she called as she waved to the Alosian archers behind the front line. They took out the bowmen on the wall with pinpoint accuracy. Roak ducked behind a battlement as his shoulder was grazed by an arrow. He peeked over the wall and addressed his captain. “We got a few. Send out two more regiments while they’re weakened.” Fresh troops stormed out the gate to assist the decimated first regiment. They clashed again and the enemy gained ground over the women and pushed them back. Xenas and Kasa fought side by side as Kasa glanced at her. “Where’s our Queen?” Xenas drove her sword through the throat of an oncoming soldier. “Detour to head off marauders.” “We need her. Getting overwhelmed.” “She should be along,” she said as she impaled another enemy soldier on her sword and they both slashed furiously at the approaching troops. For every soldier they killed, two took his place. It looked desperate. Just then, they heard thunder. Xenas glanced at Kasa. “That’s her. Split the ranks and make room.” Xenas signaled to separate and moved left with her warriors as Kasa moved right with hers, opening a wide gap between them. An unfamiliar tactic to the enemy, they rushed into the gap as if they were breaking through.

\* *George Duda* \*