

# The Battle of Daranak's Flight

*In the fall of 598, after the razing of Helmwood, Sir Jarvis Longshadow and Sir Anselm Poleho led a two-pronged offensive against the Dark Horde supply lines in the area. The efforts of the two strike forces helped the Royal Army of Dyllaria to successfully defeat the forces of the Arch-Lich Daranak, one of the Dark Horde's most capable generals. Sir Jarvis was able to successfully return his troops intact to the safety of the Dwarven lines, but Daranak's fleeing army caught Sir Anselm's force out in the open. Treachery had led to the compromise of the small cavern complex occupied by Sir Anselm and his men, and they were forced to try and make their way back behind enemy lines. The following is a bard's tale constructed from the accounts of many eyewitnesses. It has been written by Durin Flann.*

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Sir Anselm stood in the field weighing his options. His force had spent the better part of the day harassing the Dark Horde's supply lines with great success. Dinen Davere, Vala Gurth, and the drake scavenger Ember stood nearby, but many of the volunteers that were under Sir Anselm's command had already deserted. Most of them lost heart when their hiding place had been discovered. Sir Jarvis would not know where the group had gone and Sir Anselm was in a strange land. The company had fought well together, but time was running short.

As Sir Anselm stood in thought, one of his scouts broke from the trees and into the clearing. It was the lizardman Noitauk and he was running.

"What is it?" asked Sir Anselm.

"A forsss of many undead. Looksss like sseveral hundred," replied Noitauk. "They're right on top of usss."

Sir Anselm knew that this would happen. They had left hiding and were forced into the open behind enemy lines. It was only a matter of time until they were seen by the Dark Horde's scouts and attacked. He had expected some warning though. Apparently the group of undead had moved swiftly to get into position. Sir Anselm feared the worst as he called for everyone to be ready and form a line.

"What sshould we do?" asked Noitauk as the first wave of undead broke through the trees and into the clearing.

"We stand and fight," came Sir Anselm's reply.

The half-light of dusk served to mask the undead's approach effectively. There were several powerful undead in the group that swept into the clearing, but Sir Anselm was unaware. He bravely stood and defended the ground that had once belonged to his lord. His charge was to stay at his post until he received word from Sir Jarvis, and that he would do. He gripped his sword with both hands and prepared for the coming attack.

The crash of undead and dark beings shredded the defenders' line. Sir Anselm stood and held his ground for as long as he could, his blade flashing brightly against the glow of magic that surrounded him. His mighty blows bit into the abominations that stood before him, but he was soon overwhelmed. Vala tried to use his magic to stem the tide of attackers and reach the fallen Anselm, but soon he was a casualty as well. The two fell within feet of each other, each fighting against the Dark Horde to the last.

Seeing the horde of undead shatter the front line of defenders, the remaining freedom fighters broke and fled. Many of them sought to hide in the darkness of the forest while others simply ran for their lives. Any that were caught were brutally run down by the Dark Horde troops. The efforts of valiant healers saved many lives, but the battle was hopelessly lost and those that were recovered had no choice but to flee. Eventually the undead force dominated the field and not a single living being stood in opposition to them.

The route was complete and Daranak's eyes burned brightly as he surveyed the battlefield with satisfaction. As his hollow gaze fell upon the bodies of the two valiant heroes he paused and conjured his magic. The lifeless forms of Sir Anselm and Vala arose at the command of their lord and master. Seeing the two standing among his undead troops filled the arch-lich with a twisted type of joy and his bellowing laughter rang through the foothills.

The day had fallen to the undead and to the power of Daranak, one of the Overlord's most powerful generals. The few remaining members of Sir Anselm's force watched helplessly from their hiding places as the undead army left the field. Among the misshapen forms were a pair of Dyllaria's most promising young defenders, a grisly testimony to the power of the Dark Horde. Beaten and demoralized, the leaderless forces of good made their way back to the safety of the Dwarven lines, each sensing that this was only the beginning of the death and disappointment that this war was sure to bring.

A few miles away the bodies of Sir Anselm and Vala began to crumble as the magic that sustained them faded. As the two fell to dust Daranak's hideous laughter once again filled the lands. As if in reply to the arch-lich's delight, a chill wind blew down from the hills. The swirling breeze scattered the remains of the two heroes, wiping away their material existence and cleansing the Horde's lands of the final remnants of the feeble enemy force. Daranak watched as the last bits of dust scattered into the wind. Then, without a sound The Ancient One turned and continued his march toward the Horde outpost at Helmwood.