

# Shadowlanders' Hope

By Hollow the Wild Were

Everything changed when the war started.

We are the nomads, gypsies —travelers, traders and merchants. A people made up of humans, elves, dwarves, that choose not to live in the mountains and caves of the Darklands and others that share a common bond, we are born Lycans — shape shifters. When a child is born among any of the peoples of Runelore and it becomes apparent at a young age that they are Lycan they are brought to us to be raised as one of our family. We are many, the avians, the sea dwellers, the mammals, the reptilians, as many as the mind can imagine. We have no quarrel with anyone because we come from all over and are made up of all the peoples of Runlore.

Our way of life meant being ever on the move and we loved it that way. Once we roamed the whole of Runelore — from the cooler Mountains of the South to the sunny warm forest of the north; from the Mistalean Ocean to the West to the Tasian Ocean to the East. The beauty of the continent in all its forms from dessert to ocean was ours to enjoy when the urge to travel took us.

But the war took that from us.

We do not know who started the war as no Shadowlanders were there and both the Brightlanders and the Darklanders have their own view of what happened. We do know that as the war raged we tried to remain neutral. Our trading depended on it. We made bargains with both sides and were always forthcoming with the fact that we traded with not only both sides of the war but with all other peoples of the lands, the orcs, trolls, dragons, anyone and everyone. This was accepted by both sides since all their attention was focused on each other and each needed what we supplied.

Despite all our efforts many of us died from simply being caught in the crossfire and trading became more and more difficult as one by one the tribes fell to the undead under the control of Balen the Necromancer. The Anas fell, the Cron fell, the Wardoves fell and with each one we were pushed out of the south and out of the north. We congregated around the area of Shykia in the center of Runelore where the clans gathered once a year to visit and celebrate. Trying to avoid the war many of the other peoples of Runlore were pushed to the middle of the land also.

When the fabled Mantisaw fell we know we had to do something or there would be no one left to trade with and we ourselves would be no more. We sent messengers to the two sides and arranged a meeting. By that time the Darklanders had broken from the Necromancer and were hungry for the freedom and home they had fought so hard for and the Brightlanders were desperate to stop the slaughter of their people.

Representing Princess Brightmoon and the Navarro was Stillwind, Brightmoon's protector, totally devoted to her and the second greatest warrior ever known among the Navarro. Only Ursala himself was greater. Stillwind would seem to appear from nowhere and he fires a bow with the speed of light in a never ending hail of arrows.

Accompanying him was the great Namari wolf Silent Thunder. Believed to be an ancestral spirit wolf, he is as silent and as deadly as Stillwind.

The Darklanders sent Octultus of the Vampires, one of the Five Rulers of the Darklands as their representative. He was the only undead to break the domination of the Necromancer twice and led the undead rebellion against his evil. He alone fought the Necromancer while his newly freed army fought the Necromancer's army until all that remained was, rubble, debris and destruction and the victorious undead. He was accompanied by his wife the beautiful Kervein, a powerful and dangerous mage in her own right.

Accompanied by the powerful Leasha, a priestess and mage of Shaelaryn the goddess of the Lycans I, Hollow the wild were, mediated the meeting. By spells cast by Leasha, everyone told the truth and each side felt despair that all the destruction and loss of life was caused by misunderstanding. At the same time some hurts would not die and both sides still looked at each other with some amount of distrust. But an accord was reached. The Darklanders had the south and the Brightlanders had the North. We Shadowlanders held the center and we allowed passage of both sides through the Shadowlands for trade and commerce. In return we were given free access to both the Brightlands and Darklands and given armed escorts so that we may ply our trade to both sides.

It is an uneasy truce, but at least there is no war. We have hope here in the Shadowlands. We believe that one day we will roam the whole of Runelore, unimpeded, again.