

THE DOGS OF WAR

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The Lyfeian Order attacks Borandur on their E'ataran campaign to wipe out elves. The clan of Falo and their woefully outnumbered forces stand together to meet the enemy.

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I despise war.

For the first time, I was to stand upon the battlefield as a paladin of Lyfaye. I had thought it would be a proud moment. Instead, I discovered that I had little heart for what lay before me. I would face my former kinsmen, and no glory or justice could come through the slaying of kin. How was the Light served by my taking up arms against them. . . by their deaths? The slaying of brothers does not ever benefit a people, no matter the reason or how we justify it to ourselves so we can sleep with a clear conscience. And yet, Ghostdancer and his elves were as much my kinsmen as anyone from my homeland - perhaps even more so. How could I walk away and let them face this ordeal alone? Choose either side and I betrayed kin. Choose none and I betrayed kin. . . . and something more. The Lyfeians could not be allowed to continue unchecked in their campaign to exterminate non-humans. Had I chosen to walk away from that battle, I would have betrayed my friends, myself and my beliefs. In war, people die. I do not have the power to stop war, and I can not restore life, but I can follow my faith and trust that the Lady finds a way to use me for the good of all. And so, I chose to aid Ghostdancer and Borandur.

What I would not do was join my fellow warriors on the front line. That was not my place - once, perhaps, but no longer. I knew that something else, something darker, approached with the Lyfeians and that it was my task to meet it. In a sense, we each would fight a battle the other was not prepared to face. . . .

I reined in my charger on the hilltop overlooking the marsh and took note of those gathered there - Brother Bartholomew, Stalzer, Indigo, Satyir, and Dreamsinger. Just below us on the hillside, an army, if so small a number could be called such, was arraying itself under the careful guidance of Starshadow. One hundred thirty dismounted Illyrian Knights, a full wing, formed a solid, armored center. They were sent by the brothers of my own order from their new city and were led by the first female captain of the order - Theta Tarn. The Wyvernstyke was organizing her eighty or so refugee elven Home Guard on the Illyrian right, their new halberds and shields gleaming brightly in the morning sun. Behind the Homeguard, on the slope of the hill, stood ready the True Archers - another seventy refugees following the WyvernStryke. On the left stood one hundred of Borandur's own, newly trained and unseasoned, but determined to save their home. MacDougail, his voice clear in the still air, paced their lines, bellowing orders and bolstering courage.

We would make our stand here, where a narrow track emerged from the marsh and made its way toward Borandur. The marsh on either side of the track was treacherous. Nearly everywhere, the muck was knee deep and in many places it rose to mid thigh. Between the wood on the far side of the marsh and the hill on which we stood, the track was the only relatively solid ground. I would not want to bring a force across it while opposed. Neither, we hoped, would the Lyfeians.

Somewhere on the other side of the wood dividing the marsh, Ghostdancer himself, Alandore, Aranek, and Loquitor led a vanguard comprised of two hundred Crystalmist archers - brought by Starshadow despite Ghostdancer's orders not to risk more lives in a near hopeless encounter - and another hundred or so local archers trained by Aranek. Finally, Cygnus Blue Star and Areanna Moonshadow waited on the astral plane to lend their aid against whatever inhuman Darkness accompanied our foe.

All told, we numbered just under seven hundred. The enemy descending upon us numbered four times that. . . and, according to Satyir, they had demons among them. At her husband's request, Shadesong, along with Kittarina, Whitebriar and members of Ghostdancer's household, stood guard over the Illyrian mounts behind us at the bottom of the hill. If we failed to stop the Lyfeians, the horses would be the only hope of escape for the survivors. Hopefully Whitebriar, with her skill at handling the weather, would be able to provide them with some cover.

I could not help but marvel at the dedication and loyalty of the assembled. Aside from the 200 inhabitants of Borandur, who were fighting for their homeland, no one present had a personal stake in the coming fight. Why, I was forced to ask myself, were they there? Certainly those such as myself, Stalzer, and Brother Bartholomew were acting in service to what we would term "a higher cause", but what of the others? Did they as well serve the greater good, or were they there for their friend. . . their kinsman? Some would say the answer made little difference. . . their presence was all that mattered.

I believe our reasons make all the difference. Some of the Lyfeians believed they were stamping out evil; others hated anything different from themselves. Some of our number sought to hold off evil; some sought to save their homes. I expect some saw an opportunity for renown. How many of our personal choices are dictated by what we want to be true instead of what is true?

A movement out upon the marsh caught my eye. I looked up and realized that most of the elven van was already out of the wood and moving quickly towards our lines along paths that only they could see. I was chagrined that I had not noticed sooner and grateful that they were on our side.

I dismounted. My horse whuffed and pranced nervously, feeling the tension in the air and eager for battle. I rubbed his nose.

"Sorry, old friend," I said softly. "Not this time." I turned him around and slapped his haunches, sending him back down the hill behind me. He would know where to go.

The elves soon reached our lines and took up positions behind the front. The Crystalmist archers, commanded by Loquitor, split into two groups and took up positions behind the Illyrian Knights. Aranek and Borandur's archers settled in on the left. Ghostdancer moved quickly to the hilltop, pausing to offer encouragement to his men. I looked over at him questioningly.

"We are sorely outnumbered, brother," he stated flatly, "and they are well armed. They have few archers, but more than enough foot. . . and they have cavalry; we can't let the horse get around to our flanks. We saw no sign of demons."

"Alandore?" I asked.

"He and a small company are keeping track of our 'guests'. . . lest they do something unexpected."

I nodded.

Ghostdancer stood and stared out over the gathering for a moment. . . . “I have to get back to the front,” he said. “Take care, brother.” He clapped me on the shoulder and hurried down towards his men. Starshadow joined him en route.

“Maybe he no see them, but they’re there,” came a voice from beside me.

I looked over at Satyir. I knew he was referring to the demons. “I know.”

“Jou jest point zem out to me, Mr. Paladin, and I will take care of zem, jes?”

I smiled and nodded. “Don’t worry, I’ll be sure to point them out.”

Suddenly a group of a dozen or so elves burst from the wood, running hard. I recognized Alandore at the rear. He always seemed to be nearest danger. The Lyfeians wouldn’t be far behind.

Moments later, a great commotion arose from the trees as flocks of birds took wing from their branches. The Lyfeian army was in the wood. I realized then why the arrival of the elves had caught me by surprise. They disturbed nothing in their passing. They were part of their surroundings, and the creatures of the woods recognized them as belonging. Not so with the clumsy Lyfeians - a point I would have to address with my own brother knights.

Alandore gained the foot of the slope and, joined by Sadosed, took up position at the head of the WyvernStryke’s Home Guard. He would command the right flank. The WyvernStryke in turn joined me on the hill.

At the same time, Dreamsinger and Brother Bartholomew took their leave of us and moved to their chosen posts. Dreamsinger positioned himself behind the Illyrian Knights. Brother Bartholomew hurried down the hillside and vanished into a grove of river birch and water oaks to the left of the Borandur contingent.

In short order, from the wood emerged the ranks of the Lyfeian army. They advanced towards us, fresh despite the hardships I knew them to have endured. Brother Bartholomew and his brother druids had slowed them with their druid magic, and the elves’ nightly raids on their camps and incessant harrying of their column had taken their toll, both in stamina and in numbers. Even so, they numbered nearly three thousand.

Surprised to find their quarry reinforced and arrayed for battle, they nevertheless halted and disposed themselves in fighting order on the boggy ground. They had been well trained. They moved with calm, ordered precision - drawing up ranks, creating a mighty juggernaut out of thousands of tiny pieces.

They outnumbered us, but I did not envy their position in the marsh. The ribbon of solid ground on which they stood did not allow them to deploy their full might, and they were forced to draw up their battle line in three deep columns, one behind the other. Despite their numbers, with no room to maneuver, they would not fare well.

Those of us still on the hilltop watched the first clash in silence. The Lyfeians threw themselves at our lines amidst a hail of elven arrows and met the Illyrians in a crash of steel. Our lines held, and the elven archers rained death into their flanks and rear.

Their own arches sought to maneuver into the marsh on our right to get a more favorable shot, but the deep mud slowed them and their bows had not the range of elven ash. Half of them fell without ever firing a shot. The rest managed to get close enough to Alandore and the Home Guard to threaten them with their iron tipped shafts, but Alandore refused to be drawn onto the treacherous ground. Instead, they took shelter behind their shields and let the True Archers do their work. Soon, not a single Lyfeian archer stood in the marsh.

Despite the Lyfeian numbers, the rain of arrows quickly took its toll and the Lyfeian line, while able to hold its ground, could not drive us back and collapse our defense. In truth, we had the easier fight, for we did not seek to advance, only to hold our ground so that the archers could even the odds.

In an attempt to break the stalemate at the front, the Lyfeians' rearmost column turned into the marsh on our left and maneuvered around the grove, putting it between them and our bows. Ghostdancer and Starshadow, anticipating these tactics, were already wheeling the left flank to meet them on the other side of the wood.

The Lyfeians advanced along the edge of the grove. They were hampered by the boggy ground and the feathered shafts from Borandur's archers, but they nevertheless pressed forward and hit our left with nearly seven times their number. The line buckled beneath the Lyfeian onslaught, but the Baron of Borandur and the King of Crystalmist held it firm, seemingly from their strength of will alone. They would not be able to do so for long.

Suddenly, a portion of the grove immediately to Ghostdancer's right shuddered. I thought the trees were toppling, felled by someone or something within the grove, but as I watched, a dozen mighty trees lifted their roots from the mire and lumbered towards the Lyfeians. Branch-arms reached down among their ranks to pluck up victims and dash them to the earth or crush them in woody claws. Brother Bartholomew was hard at work.

All around, the Lyfeians were taking heavy casualties, but showed no sign of yielding. Indeed they fought as if possessed, consumed by their hatred for the fey before them. . . .

The thought prickled something within me. I had been steadily growing more uneasy as the battle progressed. At first, I had attributed it to the unpleasant nature of the battle, but then I realized that I was being warned. A shadow, barely perceptible in the bright mid-morning sun lay over the battlefield, and all those upon it, like a shroud. I glanced up at the sky, looking for clouds, but there were none. I hurriedly scanned the battlefield and soon found what I was looking for - twelve knights at the rear of the second Lyfeian column, sheathed from head to toe in full plate armor and riding massive war horses. They looked like knights, but no Lyfeian knight would sit at the rear of a column. About *them* the shadow was heaviest. As I watched, one of them moved off toward where Ghostdancer and the druid-summoned trees battled on the left flank.

I had found my demons. Now all I had to do was unmask them, and I needed to do so quickly. I started out over the battlefield, not knowing what I would do, seeking a solution as I went. And then I heard a voice, singing strong and clear above the clash of weapons. . . Dreamsinger! He stood where the fighting was fiercest. He raised not a blade to meet the foe, but his voice. His presence and stirring song held firm the line more surely than any breastwork. Around him the shadow did not lie. The Darkness could find no purchase in a soul that sought, not to strike down enemies, but to lift up friends.

I raced down the hill to Dreamsinger's side and told him of my need. He immediately took up a different melody and sang a spellsong of "true-seeing". Those near us who paid heed to his words, the WyvernStryke, Alandore and the refugee elven Homeguard, and those from the hill top who had followed me - Indigo, Satyir and Stalzer - saw the demon-knights for what they were. Their presence would not go unchallenged.

The demons, sensing the nature of Dreamsinger's words, immediately moved towards us. We spread out behind the Illyrian line. The melee before us slowed the black knights. One leveled his blade and a bolt of red flame leapt out searing through Lyfeian and Illyrian ranks. Another one

unleashed fire at Dreamsinger, who dodged, never faltering in his song. The flames struck the ground where he had stood, gouging a small crater in the earth.

The fighting nearby slowed as everyone paused to search out the source of the fire-bolts. As they did, Dreamsinger's song focused them and opened their eyes to the truth. The Lyfeians, confused by demons in their midst, lost their momentum and slowly began to give ground.

I ran to aid Dreamsinger as another fire-bolt lanced towards him, catching him in the shoulder. He fell swathed in flame, but his song had done its work; the demons had exposed themselves. Stalzer reached the fallen bard's side before I did and brought all his substantial power to bear to keep Dreamsinger from leaving the world of the living. Indigo was beside him as well, searching in his bag of mysteries for something to aid us.

More bolts of fire arced toward the bard and cleric. I interposed myself in their path and raised a hand. The fire stuck me and splashed harmlessly away. I lifted my other hand and blue fire roared forth and raked the demons, turning one to ash. Then Satyir leapt out in front of me, hands on his hips defiantly, staring down the dark-spawn. Several of the demons, recognizing him as a guardian of the astral paths, screamed and rushed towards him, barbed blades flickering with fire. Suddenly he faded from view, disappearing into the astral plane where the mages waited. Four of the demons vanished after him. I was so startled, I was barely able to ward off a second wave of demon-fire.

I returned fire for fire and another demon fell. Their attention was now firmly rooted on me. I raced toward them, unsheathing my battle wing. Blue fire danced along the edge of the blade. Indigo and the WyvernStryke were beside me. Indigo wielded a glowing glaive he had retrieved from his trove, and the WyvernStryke moved almost too fast for the eye to follow, appearing wherever she was needed, wherever we were exposed.

Two more demons fell, one to my own blade and one to Indigo's. Then a demon-blade caught the stocky elf in the side, slicing through his mail to the flesh and bone beneath. Indigo crumpled into the blood-reddened muck. I tried to reach him, but could barely fend off the remaining three demons.

Suddenly, the shadow around us darkened. A roar rose up from the Lyfeian army and they threw themselves back into the fight with a renewed fervor. Our forces responded with equal ferocity. Even some of the archers threw down their bows and rushed into the fray. I was separated from the demons for a moment and took advantage of the respite to aid my fallen friend. I quickly found Indigo and, with the WyvernStryke's assistance, dragged him to the edge of the marsh. We were met by Stalzer and Loquitor who took the mortally wounded elf from us.

As they were carrying him up the bank, a bolt of demon-fire lanced into Loquitor's back and he fell to the ground. All around me, my friends were falling. I whirled around in rage and blindly sent blue fire arcing out into the melee. Realizing what I had just done, I froze.

Never had I felt so enraged. I stepped back from the melee and looked around me. The battlefield had grown almost as dark as night though it was still midmorning, and an icy chill seeped from the ground into my legs. Stalzer was nearby, working frantically to save our friends. He looked worriedly at me. He too saw the darkness - the shadow - though I suspect no others did.

Most of the archers had taken up their blades and joined the fight. Alandore and the Home Guard had charged into the marsh, toward the Lyfeian's exposed left flank, but he would be grievously outnumbered and separated from the main body - what was left of it. The scent of wood smoke entered my nose, and I belatedly remembered the demon who had ridden towards Ghostdancer's wing. I looked to our left; Brother Bartholomew's trees and the grove into which he had disappeared were burning. I could only hope the druid had somehow gotten free. As I watched,

Ghostdancer and Starshadow brought down the demon, but the Lyfeian column was driving back the elves of Borandur, rolling our left in towards our center.

I had known that a darkness rode with the Lyfeian army, and when I saw the demons, I had thought it my task to see them brought down releasing their hold on the Lyfeians. I had thought to triumphantly plant Light's banner in the heart of Darkness, demonstrating to all the power of the Lady. I realize now that I had fallen prey to my own hopes and fears, and worse. . . my own hatred for the Darkness.

Demons are fell foes and certainly tools of the Dark One. I think too that they are misunderstood, and that misunderstanding leads to deadly underestimation. They do not seek to conquer or plunder. They do not even destroy simply for the sake of destroying. While they serve the Darkness, they do so for their own reasons - for power. They rode onto the battlefield for one purpose. . . to feed. . . not on flesh, but on the fear and suffering that abound in war and saturate the air as blood does the earth. They deal out death and destruction only because of the terror they awaken in men's souls.

I have seen more than anyone's fair share of death by the blade, and never have I seen it come upon one with peace and contentment. That day in the marshes below Borandur was no different. Farm boys wielding weapons for perhaps their first time fell screaming for their mothers. Fathers pulled sons from the mire only to have them cut out of their arms. Battle hardened warriors died with a curse for their enemy upon their lips and regret in their hearts. Heroes plowed through the fear to aid their friends, but felt it no less and felt just as readily the hard edge of a blade and the pain of lost chances. No less horrifying is the paralyzing terror and grief experienced by the mothers and wives who afterwards would crawl through the cold mud, seeking their sons and husbands who did not return home.

It is from this terror that demons draw power, and upon the battlefield they could pick their meat, as dogs, fresh from the bone. But the demons were not the true enemy that day. They were merely tools of something darker. . . anchors for something that did not wholly exist on this, or any plane. . . and that Darkness fed on something else. . .

I am familiar with the battle rush - the energy and excitement that come over a warrior facing an enemy, especially when the cause is seemingly just. I am familiar, too, with the sense of strength and invincibility that comes with the donning of armor and buckling on of sword. I know the feel of raw power that comes from thundering toward the enemy on two thousand pounds of horse and steel. I have heard the shriek of lance upon metal and the splintering crack of shields and felt the resultant satisfaction as the enemy line collapses.

This is the food that was sought that day. This. . . Thing, this. . . Darkness fed, not on fear, but on the enmity and hatred between foes, the desire to kill and destroy. The shadow was the true enemy. It was a mouth through which the Darkness fed. The Darkness in turn offered power, for which it demanded more food. And we eagerly served it a meal and allowed it to fuel the malice we offered. I could feel it crawling through us, seeking and encouraging the hatred buried within. It had found a hold in our hearts, and we were now its anchors, aiding the demons. Our efforts to bring down the demons had divided us and weakened me, and I had not even met the real foe...

I could not fight this battle unaided. I emptied my mind of hatred and vengeance disguised as false ideals of justice and knelt on the ground, reaching within for a weapon with which to battle this foe around me. The WyvernStryke immediately rushed to my side, thinking at first something was wrong, but quickly realizing I was fighting a new battle and stood so as to ward me. I called upon Lyfaye to release what She had bound within me that I might free everyone, Illyrian, Lyfeian, and fey, from the shadow which sought to enslave us all.

White heat burned behind my eyes and searing fire raced down my spine. Blue flames flickered along my arms and licked across the ground around us. Suddenly, a column of blue fire rose from

the ground around me. The Wyvernstryke stayed her ground within its perimeter. The flame enveloped us, rising upward in a swirling firestorm.

I could feel the shadow being drawn off the field. The demons broke free from the melee and rushed towards us, but as they approached, tongues of fire reached out and incinerated them. The shadow swirled around me, black claws reaching out to drag me with it to its foul demesne. I had no strength left to fight it, but Falana was beside me, bright blade cutting me free. The shadow vanished with a piercing shriek and a rush of wind. The fire fell away and I collapsed onto the ground.

The battle still raged. The shadow was gone, but the Lyfeians would not give up their hatred of the fey. They would see us destroyed. As if to confirm my suspicions, I heard, above the clash of weapons, the thunder of hooves. . . the Lyfeian cavalry. I tried to rise but got no further than my knees before my vision blurred and I felt consciousness slipping from me. . . I had fought my battle. I had to trust in my friends to fight theirs. I prayed that Ghostdancer and Starshadow could get those remaining to the horses and safety. . . and fell back to the ground.

* * *

As I fought my way back to consciousness, I realized I was lying in a bed. I opened my eyes. Everything appeared as a blur and my head pounded but I could just make out a figure standing over me.

“Where am I?” I managed to croak. “What happened?”

“Jou no listen to Satyir, is what happened” a voice scolded. “Jou no point zem out.”

I closed my eyes.

When I awoke again later, my head didn't hurt as much and I could see better. The WyvernStryke sat in high-backed chair next to my bed. I asked her what had happened and she filled me in on the events after I lost consciousness - nearly three days ago. . . .

When I fell, the Lyfeians had been battering us. Our left wing was being rolled back. Alandore and the Home Guard were mired in the marsh on the right, holding their ground, but unable to press their attack or fall back. It was at that moment that Shadesong had ridden over the hill with Kittarina, Rahne and a handful of Ghostdancer's household staff, leading the one hundred and thirty riderless Illyrian mounts (the thundering hooves I had believed to be Lyfeian cavalry). They crashed into the flank of the Lyfeian column that was crushing Ghostdancer and Starshadow. The battle trained mounts new well enough to fight and though they did little real damage, the sudden “cavalry” charge threw the isolated column into a panic and they fled, many into the flaming trees.

Ghostdancer promptly turned the remainder of the left flank and charged into the Lyfeian center from the right. The sudden attack drew the pressure off of Alandore, who, instead of retreating launched a counter charge into the Lyfeians left. Starshadow later swore he could hear the cry of “Tir Thalor!!” from the other side of the battlefield.

The Illyrians, led by the wounded, but still fighting Theta Tarn, and augmented by the armed Crystalmist Archers, drove forward. The Lyfeian front was thrown back into their second column who had been unable to maneuver in the marsh and had taken the brunt of the archers' volleys. A fresh hail of arrows descended upon them as the True Archers moved from behind Alandore and loosed their shafts.

With the third column in rout, the woods to their right ablaze and arrows raining upon them anew, the second column fell back towards the relative safety of the woods behind them.

The Lyfeian commander, upon seeing his demoralized troops retreating ran after them ordering them back into the fight, railing that the “demon damned fey” be driven back into the dark shadows that spawned them. He was actually having marginal success until he turned and found himself face to face with the Baron of Borandur. Starshadow swears that the baron looked at the Lyfeian commander and said, “It is you who are damned, my friend,” and split him from helm to crotch with a single blow.

With their commander dead, the rest of the Lyfeian army lost all heart for the fight and fled towards the woods. The remainder of Ghostdancer’s wing and the Illyrians gave chase to ensure that they found their way out of the valley. Alandore and MacDougail followed more cautiously, keeping their wing in ranks.

The Lyfeian heavy cavalry chose that moment to make their appearance, charging out of the wood into the now disorganized Borandur/Illyrian contingent who collapsed beneath the charge, scattering into the marsh.

The Lyfeian charge carried them all the way through and into the waiting halberds of Alandore and the Home Guard. The cavalry charge broke against their blades and fell back on itself. They tried to regroup for a second charge, but the elven archers who had scattered into the marsh quickly regained their composure and began felling the unsupported knights. Soon the Lyfeian lances were in rout. . . .

We won the battle for Borandur that day, or so it would appear. But the souls of those who fought and those who fell weigh heavily on me. All who stood upon the battlefield were there at the call of others - the Illyrians at my behest, the men and women of Borandur at Ghostdancer’s. The western elves were there at the WyvernStryke’s call and the archers of Crystalmist followed Starshadow. Even the Lyfeian soldiers were there by the order of their marshall. Five people sent hundreds to their deaths and risked hundreds more.

I know those lives weigh on Ghostdancer as well, which is in part why I can stand beside him in good conscience. He does not take war lightly, and he knows how much has already been lost when a warrior takes up his blade. Honor has no place on the battlefield. It forfeits to horror. . . and glory is nothing but a rationalization of that horror.

Most warriors justify their actions in battle by saying they were following orders. Most commanders pass the blame by saying their enemies made it necessary. No one acknowledges the truth behind the surge of power they feel at the vanquishing of a foe - the power of destroying a life bestowed by the Lady, the power of suffering that reaches beyond the battlefield to the mothers and lovers of the fallen, the power of fear that one gains through skill of arms and numbers slain. Not so unlike a demon is the battle hero.

By seeking rationalizations, everyone on the battlefield gives up the only things they ever truly had control of. . . their actions and their ethics. In doing so, they leave themselves open to control by the Darkness. We can not afford to take war lightly, especially those of us who call on others to fight, for when the battle is done, we must look at what we have wrought and ask ourselves if it was worth it.

I ask myself that now. Was it worth it? Barely a handful of Borandur’s people survived. Many of our friends nearly died - would have, were it not for the battlefield ministrations of Stalzer and other courageous souls. The Lyfeians have barely been scratched, and the Darkness was strengthened by our struggle. The gains of war never seem worth the costs.

No longer am I certain of who the enemy is, where he stands, or how to defeat him. The demons were merely an anchor for the Darkness, and the shadow its mouth. The Lyfeians were its tools and we ourselves fed it power. Which

do I fight? The true enemy never shows itself. I can destroy its tools and close its doors, but I cannot destroy It, for It is a part of all of us. It is manifest in our negative expressions. Hate and anger are powerful weapons, but they cannot be controlled, and when there is no enemy at which to direct them, they turn on, and devour their wielder. We must be vigilant of our thoughts and feelings and guard our actions and words lest the Darkness within us gain power over us and use us to destroy what the Lady has made.

A war is coming to these lands, not because my former kinsman seek to conquer new land, not because a "holy crusade" seeks to stamp out the "godless fey", but for the sake of war itself. . . to feed the Darkness. It is a war that cannot be won, for the victors come to serve the Darkness.

This same war destroyed my own homeland, and I would not see the same happen here, in my new home. We must not fight this war. To do so feeds the Darkness and jeopardizes our souls. And yet, to not fight means to lose our homes, our lives, and all we know. I do not know how to prevent it. I do not know how to fight it. I must place myself in the hands of the Lady pray that She finds a way to use me to light the dark night that approaches.

~Galatyne Knightwyng