

In the northern reaches of Greyhawk, just beyond the Vesve forest lies the territory of the Wolf Nomads. These tribes of warriors are known for their affinity for different sorts of wolves. In the case of Zan's tribe, it was the Dire Wolf.

Growing up in the tribe was simple for Zan Hawkligh.

He was unusually large, easily towering 2 heads above the other youths his age.

He took to his training as a warrior with earnest, and showed great potential to one day be one of the mightiest warriors his tribe had ever known.

Except Zan had a secret.

In the culture of the nomads, each warrior must capture a wild wolf cub as a rite of manhood, raising it to be his companion. From a young age, the young to-be warriors were taught how to deal with these creatures in every way.

They learned the proper way to train them, to create a rapport with them, and even to care for them.

They practiced these skills on the wolves belonging to the established warriors of the tribe.

The young warriors would often talk about the special connection they felt with the beasts that they cared for, and how they could feel a connection to these great animals.

Even though they were not bonded with these wolves, they could feel a small part of the connection that these wolves had with their companion.

All of them, that is, except for Zan. He didn't feel any such connection with these particular animals.

He learned his lessons well, and could easily groom and handle every beast they had in their care.

Even the most domesticated of the Wolf Nomad's wolves would still not tolerate most people. Some of the fledgling warriors had to stick to certain beasts only, as some of the beasts would as readily snack on them versus let themselves be cared for by them.

Each of the beasts, however, accepted Zan's smooth and comfortable demeanor and he was the only one among the Raknir tribe who could be trusted among any of them without concern.

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Even Bloodmaw, the largest Dire Wolf in the tribe and companion to their chieftain, would accept Zan with ease while none others besides Riffuk himself (Chieftain) could even get close to him.

But all the while, Zan never felt this seemingly "magical" connection with these animals. Yes, he was comfortable with them and had great skill working with them, but never felt any kind of real connection.

In his 16th year, as is customary with his people, he was sent off into the lands to find his own companion. He had 10 days to find, trap, and bring home a young dire wolf he would call friend and companion for all his days. It was a time Zan had been dreading, but he could do nothing to avoid it.

On the day of ascension (as it was called by his people) the adulthood ceremony commenced. Zan and 6 other youths of age walked out of the summer encampment of their people to begin their journey unto adulthood.

Over the next several days, the other young warriors followed in Zan's wake. He was the strongest and most skilled, even better than many of the adult warriors, and they wanted to witness what was sure to be a story for the ages. But each time Zan tracked and located a new dire wolf, he would pass it by and allow one of the other warriors to claim it. He was looking for a connection that just would not seem to expose itself.

9 days passed and while Zan has successfully tracked down more than 20 different potential companions, he had not yet found one that appealed to him. His companions had all taken their own wolves and returned home days ago, and yet he had none.

His journey brought him into the Sepia Uplands and yet he continued on. Looking for something that it seemed did not exist. The hours turned into days. The days turned into weeks. The weeks turned into months. He was well beyond the time that he was to find his companion and join the other true warriors

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of his tribe, but could not... would not return empty handed.
He lived off the land, ever moving and searching.
He left the cold north and made his way south around the Vesve forest.
He shied away from populated towns and civilizations and chose to live alone in the wilds.
He had left the area where dire wolves were indigenous, but he didn't care.
What he was looking for could not be found behind him.

Over the next several years, Zan travelled around aimlessly until he found himself at the city of Greyhawk. He got over his fear of civilization and while he did not fit in with these people, he was able to move among them. He found a job helping out in a local pawnshop, and would occasionally venture out of Greyhawk in search of adventure.

The halfling that owned the Pawnshop was a generous employer and Zan was happy working in the shop, regardless of the disgusting looks he would get from the patrons. Alton, the owner, had his own companions that he would go off adventuring with.
Thorán, priest of Athena, was a surly dwarf, and looked as if he could chew up and spit out the silver hammer that hung from his belt.
The human Kalen was even larger than Zan, and well on his way to becoming a well-renown warrior.
He looked as if he could defend the city Greyhawk from hordes of attackers by himself.
Alton, well, Zan couldn't tell just how Alton fit into this group, but by the way he was regarded by Thorán and Kalen, he was treated as an equal companion.
While he didn't see what Alton brought to the table, he didn't doubt that he brought something of worth to their group.
The occasional overheard whispers from patrons gave birth to Zan's suspicions of Alton's skill, but he chose to keep it to himself.

Even then, living in the city of Greyhawk, sleeping and working in a pawnshop, Zan felt a yearning he couldn't make go away. He would often spend time outside the city in the wild, searching for what might fill the void he felt in his soul.

Occasionally, Alton and his group would take on additional hires to go on adventures. Zan would always volunteer, looking for a distraction and get his mind off of the empty feeling that threatened to consume his sanity.

It was on one of these adventures that his life changed. On the way home from defending a

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young king, the whole party awoke to find themselves in a dark strange land. They spent the next several months in the dark realm of Ravenloft trying to survive and somehow find their way back home.

On one dark and gloomy day, they came upon a strange scene.

Before them were 3 wolves, angrily circling and biting at a much larger wolf that was for some reason not moving, just standing still and defending the ground he stood on.

A sudden flash of anger and violence washed right through Zan, and before he knew it he found himself rushing down and into the fray. His companions joined him as he went directly to the large wolf, a dire wolf, and put his hands on its head. A

rush of emotion flowed into him, nothing like he had ever felt before.

He could feel the anger emanating from his wolf as it... as HE faced off against the 3 other wolves.

He also felt the nagging frustration as it couldn't move because it was stuck.

Looking down, Zan saw the bear trap tight around its ankle, explaining why it wasn't moving to better defend itself.

Zan, joined by his companions, killed the three attacking wolves, trusting in Zan when he told them not to harm the dire wolf. This beast was magnificent, clearly the largest dire wolf he had ever seen.

And the feeling it gave off. He knew immediately that this very wolf had always been meant to be his companion.

So far from home, in another world even, here was the companion he had been looking for his whole life.

The bond grew between Zan and his new companion, Thanatos, and they eventually found themselves back in the world of Greyhawk. Zan spent nearly all of his time outside the city now, as he would not think to try and bring a 12 foot dire wolf into the city.

He spent his time with Thanatos, using the skills he learned as a child, training him and honing the bond they shared.

Eventually Thanatos would accept him as a rider, but there was much training and practice to come before that could happen.

Zan Hawkligh could finally return home, but he had not yet seen enough of the world and wanted to see more. Home would always be there.