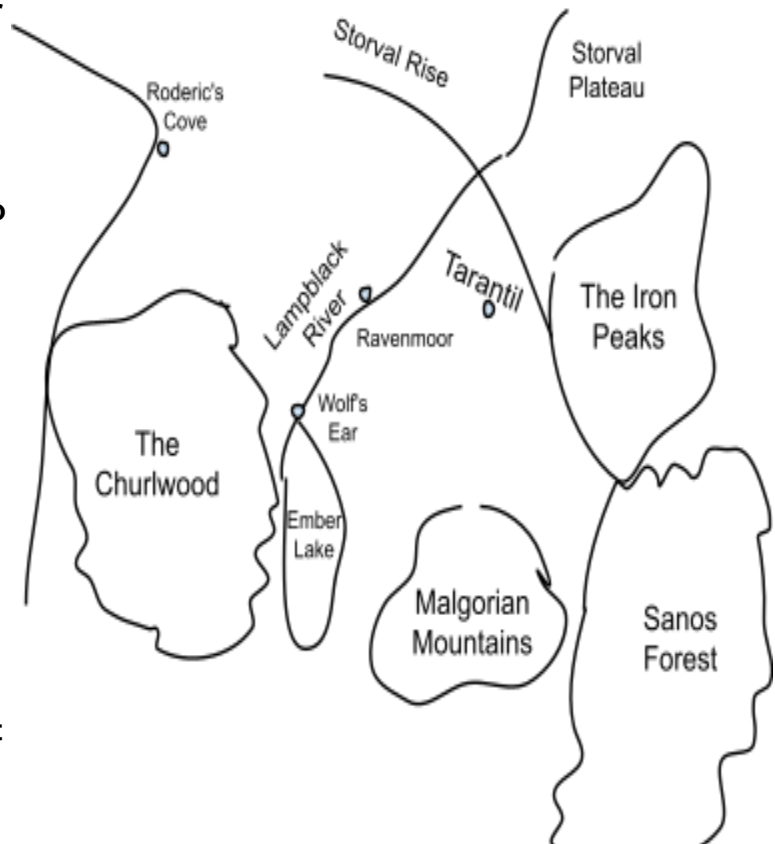


Many years ago, a much younger Kallin set out from the small hamlet of Tarantil. His mother had recently died and he had been asked to leave the village by the town elders. They had told him that 'his kind' was not welcome, but for the life of him, Kallin was not sure if they referred to his Orc or Shoanti heritage. Oh well, he would have no problem leaving this place. Before he left, he sought out the spirit of his mother and gave her one last goodbye. She told him she was happy that he was leaving the small, intolerant town and that she knew he was destined for great things out in the world.

He shouldered his pack and meager belongings, hefted his favorite walking stick and headed out of town, not once looking back over his shoulder toward the town that was happy to see him go. He had no idea where he was going, so he headed south and west out of town. He had very little knowledge of the lands around him, though he had heard of the names of a few nearby villages, Ravenmoor, Wolf's Ear, both along the Lampblack River, and further on to the west, Roderic's Cove. He knew of the Storval Plateau, to the north, from where his mother's people were from, and had heard many whispered tales of the Sanos Forest to the south east. This forest was supposed to be the home of many Gnomes and hid strange and magical dangers. Though many folk spoke of the Sanos, no one could say they had ever delved into its depths. There was also the matter of the two mountain ranges that lay near the Sanos Forest, the Iron Peaks and the Malgorian Mountains, both know to be the homes of dangerous giants, ogres and other creatures.



At the very least, he knew that Ravenmoor, the closest settlement, was about a days walk from Tarantil, if he chose to go that way.

Kallin's mother used to tell him tales of the Gnomes of Sanos Forest. The magical mystical adventures of the children lost to the forest being helped (or captured, depending on the tale) by gnomes. They were always some of his favorite stories as a child. Something of the child rises in him and he finds his feet heading south east out of Tarantil.

The Half-Orc's walk was unproductive for most of the day, at one point, he spies a rider off to the south, but he is heading to the west and does not appear to see Kallin. He keeps altering his course to a more southerly direction as the sharp foothills of the Iron Peaks spread out from the base of the old mountain chain. By days end, he has left the grassy plains of the Lampblack River and entered the rugged hills nestled between two mountain ranges. He sets up a crude camp near the base of the Mountains. The dark line of the Sanos Forest can be seen up ahead, though many more miles, and much too far to walk before the light completely disappeared. Kallin took note of how the nearby mountain tops still shone in the fading sun though the fiery orb had been lost from sight for over an hour.

Sitting over his small fire tucked back between two lightly wooded hills, Kallin pulled his meager blanket over him. It was much cooler up here near the mountains than he was used to down on the plains. As he drifted off to sleep, he was startled by the sounds of several screaming voices coming from nearby. Grabbing his staff and climbing a nearby hill, Kallin sees several faintly glowing forms rushing down toward him from the slopes of the Iron Peaks to the north. As they approach, he is sure that they are spirits of a young Human man and woman.

Kallin steps out in front of the rushing forms waving his hands, He yells, "Wait, I want to talk to you!"

They run right past him, screaming, taking no notice.

Since they paid him no mind, Kallin turns around to see what is making them run.

As they move off into the night, Kallin waits to see what was chasing them, but nothing comes. The night takes on an eerie silence. Curious, but unable to do much else, Kallin turns back to his campfire, though he remains vigilant.

The young Shaman's vigilance pays off, for not more than an hour later, the same two spirits appear and come rushing down the hill. This time, Kallin makes sure to put himself in their direct path. He holds up his arms and waves to them, telling them he wants to help.

The two spirits stop, they appear to be wounded, and are breathing heavily and look scared out of their wits. "What, who are you? Where did you come from?" the male queries Kallin. The girl, barely a woman, begins to cry and pull on the arm of the male, also barely a man, "Come now, Nar, we must hurry. Those Ogres are bound to catch us if he tarry too long." The young man, Nar, replies, "Yes, my dearest Tilda, but this kind soul says he can help us." They both turn to look at Kallin, a worried look of desperation in their eyes. "Can you save us from the Ogres?" they plead.

