



Tir Nan Beo – Cursed Lands

Tales of a Bard

Five Stones

Part of Dumnonni

<http://www.tirnanbeo.com>





Four Stones

After first coming to the lands of Tir Nan Beo, King Oswald ordered a group of scouts to learn about his neighbours and the troubles surrounding him. Among them was a bard whom he had asked to send word through other bards, traders and warbands friendly to the free races. These words are the words that came back.

Where at first we hoped to have gained allies and friends, we now know that most of these friendships were never meant to last. The Semnonnes and their terrifying rituals of human blood proved still to be just skirmishes. The Chatti just wanted to know who they were up against and the Sicambrii told us many days later that they would not accept King Oswald as dominant leader and pronounced their own king as overlord for the Ard Ri in CulHaven. Others simply showed themselves to see who this new king was and silently retreated to their own lands in the coastal areas, without any definitive answer to the demand of loyalty we put upon them. Was this whole first expedition a waste then? No, far from it. We have raised vital questions that will hopefully lead us to total dominance of this land. We know that most clans are pit against each other. It was said that there were a few alliances among the bigger clans, but these alliances were based on old friendships from people long dead. Perhaps the time has come for more diplomacy, for the use of words instead of the iron spear pointed to other men's throats. Our warriors would not agree to this, but a voice of reason might break certain mistrust more easily than an unsheathed sword... but those who are here, the warriors King Oswald gathered, have heads filled with glory, vengeance, pride and fame. I fear that the only words spoken by the bards will be about those very things. A waste, if you ask me, yet hope remains, as King Oswald has asked me, Ghodekinn, Bard of the Treverii, to travel with these scouts, to witness these events and tell about them.

But where to start? The land of Tir Nan Beo is nothing like the lands of Dumnonni, the Brigantii or the Catuvellauni. Even my own clan, the Treverii have not seen such days since we left the old world. Honour is challenged at every coming of night. Tir Nan Beo is a land in shadows. Where darkness sweeps over the woods as an illness from which you will never fully recover. Winter has passed and many a dear friend has perished under the thick layers of snow and the seemingly endless shortage of food. Though the devious Fae have been killed on the fields of Gall Heim, little has changed since. As I understand it now they had tricked the people in thinking they were local Gods. When found out, their pleas and screams filled the sky like those of a mortal man.





Curse upon curse was found in every layer of the woods. In daylight we could search for them and pray, but when darkness fell the earth itself became like a poisonous fume. Priests, healers, ovates, all were struck by this dark wyrd to which they had few defences. It sickened them, pained them, drove them mad and sometimes even killed them. What power it is, is unknown to us, yet all must take at heart that when gifted with the powers of the earth, at night you will be consumed by it. The darkness that roams this great forest of the middle lands of Tir Nan Beo seems to command the flow of everything here. How it does it we do not know, but every wyrd user I spoke to knew that there was an ancient power behind it all, a power they have not felt when outside Tir Nan Beo. It scared them, it scared me and when you are smart, it will scare you. When at night our fates are no longer our own and those gifted by earth and gods alike fall before it, then we, the simple people, must rally behind them and protect them with our last breath, until the sun returns again. I have lost one dear friend to the darkness. After many a night of fever, hallucinations and paranoia, his mind simply stopped. Never once did we see his attacker.

After seeing all this I wondered why anyone would remain here. What reason do I not see? I seem blind for them when looking. What curse could have such a hold on man and woman alike that they would sacrifice all that they were to stay with it? After many days of travel I came to the conclusion that that question was now at the heart of this quest and by answering it, I would unfold some of the legacies my King needed to know before he could save them all.

Most of the clans have travelled back to their coastal villages and farms, because few dare to stay in the woods. Semnonnes, Menapii and Bructerii are some of those who remain in the great forest, yet I have heard whispers of other clans being there. Those we do already know are the Semnonnes, ever searching for their human sacrifices, hoping to pay off the darkness with their sacrificial rites. We hear of many different tribes of Menapii all with stories of mystic beings surrounding them. We spend our nights trying to evade danger, but it seems to lurk at every corner. We sleep when the sun returns, knowing we need our strength at night. It is a constant struggle. We use as little fire as we can, hoping to avoid that what we hear around us.

Finally we found a tribe of Bructerii, a clan of honest people who were willing to grant us hospitality. In the night I was brought to Velede, a woman who was said to be an oracle. Though at first I was sceptic at best, I was mesmerized by the detail of what she knew about me. Later I heard that Velede was cherished among most of the clans and that her foretelling was so divine that some of them thought her to be Frige, or Brigit. I have seen no divinity in her doings, but admit freely that if there was divine power, I probably would not have seen it anyhow.





What I do know were the short and powerful words she spoke to me last. Words she answered upon my question on behalf of my King. She answered me this; His coming shall alter the future of this land. After that I was shown out of the hut and was again seated with my companions. The day after we saw a large warband depart from the village. When I asked where they were going I was told to mind my own business. Soon after an old woman approached me quietly and told me that they were searching for an old enemy, an enemy that had emerged once more and would affect all the lands, far beyond the borders of Tir Nan Beo. I asked her why she wanted me to know when others clearly did not and when she looked at me I saw a fear an old woman should no longer have anymore. The conversation had been noticed and suddenly our hospitality was at an end, though they did not say aloud why we were no longer welcome. I suspect my questions were enough to see me leave. I wonder though why we had to go, were they too proud to include us in their problems? Or were they honouring us by not telling us about that what seems to instil such fear in the hearts of these people? When last I looked at the village I saw the oracle Velda staring at me and when our eyes met I heard her voice say, his coming shall alter the future of this land...

After days and days we finally broke out of the forest and now reside amongst the Atribatii, a clan most interested in an alliance with the free people of Cullhaven. They have offered us food, drink and beds and it is a welcome change indeed. They have clearly suffered for a long time and it pains us to accept this food and mead, for we can see they sorely need it more than us. Yet, hospitality demands and we are sworn to obey it. I have yet to find a clan who benefits from these constant wars, this famine and this never ending darkness. Somebody must gain from it all. But that one still eludes us. Diseases have struck many of the weak, young and old and we are set outside the encampment for our own protection. With inner shame we eat what is given, because of hospitality, but it frightens us to see a clan so desperate for allies, that they would rather starve their people, than to walk away from this opportunity.

The Atribatii are traders from origin so I am told, yet I have seen little trade, besides some trinkets and wooden idols. Trade is difficult they say, for the woods take so long to cross and the coast is full of renegade warchiefs and desperate people who would do almost anything to survive. Years and years of living like this have taken its toll. People have traded kindness for survival here and I truly hope we, the free races under the banner of King Oswald, can make a difference. Why all these people stay is a mystery to me. A mystery no one seems to be able to solve as of yet. When we left I did know a few more things though. The task set upon my king is one that will take many years to accomplish and even then I doubt those years will be enough. To mend these lands we need more than just a willing heart. We need miracles, Gods, wonders and the champions, heroes and martyrs of this earth. To heal these lands we need Legends...

