



Taroskarla



The Song of the Far Place



The Quest of Odayla

The Journey of the Far Walkers

The Quest of the Animal Twins



By John Hughes

I am Erissa Walk In Rain, called Theyadotter. I have made the Walking Journey, and I have returned. I have seen the sacred mountains. I am no longer a child, you must listen to my voice. As a sign of my second birth, and because it is now my right, I will tell you of the TarosKarla, the story of who we are and how we came to be.

I call upon the Guardians of the Six Directions to awaken, to hold the space between them for my tale. I call upon the Talking God to fill me with his power. I ask the Lady of Inspiration to sit within me and share the sacred words. May the Gift of the White Owl awaken within me.

*I speak of the time
when the False Sun cursed the sky;
The time when
the tribes were split and broken;
The time when
the Animal Twins set forth;
The time when
the hero paths were forged.*



In the Dance and Drum Time, our fastness was part of Vidblain, the Wide Dark, the eternal forest. There the father trees reached to touch the Skydome itself, and their twisting roots sheltered many peoples. In Vidblain dwelt all the wilderness powers, including the Element Children and the animal tribes of Hykim and Mikyh. The Element Children warred against each other incessantly, as they still do to this day. Sky River Titan fought and defeated the fire gods, and he forced their tribe south to the Golden Sharl Plain. Ball Lightning loved Thunderbolt, and so forsook her own tribe to serve the Storm King, the Lord of All. Since then, the forces of fire have been weak in our land, though the Volcano Tongues still defend many of our highest mountains.

When Death came into the world, Odayla Orlanthson came to Vidblain with the new power. Obeying the wisdom of the Lady of the Wild, his mother and wife (we are all initiates here — I may speak of such a secret thing), Odayla danced the first hunting dance for the animal tribes, teaching them the harmony of life and death.

When Chaos threatened the World, Odayla drew the surviving tribes about him. When storm gods and dragons and animal heroes died fighting the Unlife, when mountains were levelled and the eternal gors laid waste, when the last sanctuaries were violated and the survivors could neither still their tears nor mourn for dead kin, it was then that Odayla danced the Great Dance.

First he listened to the wisdom of his mother, and called forth the Animal Powers. Then he made the Walking Journey, and found the Gifting Way. From the Four Stream Voices, Turtle and Teal and Otter and River Eagle, he learned the secrets of earth and air and water. In facing Deep Snow he conquered pain and found the cloak called Persistence. In raiding with his storm kin he won the spear called Courage. In assisting Hard Earth he won the Three Feathers of Vision. Even Darkness helped him, for in aiding Troll Mother he learned how to call the power that hides in shadow.

It was then that Odayla made the Three Element Dance, binding the depleted tribes of Vidblain together in common cause against the armies of Chaos. Spirits and elementals and humans and animals all made ceremony together, each claiming their part in the great battle, and each choosing as their own holy places and homelands set apart. None would be greater or less, for all were bound into the Harmony that comes out of Death. Only the fire tribe and the dragon kin did not join the Dance, and only they kept themselves apart.

Later, when the hero armies of Uzkind came out of the north, the powers of Darkness also entered into the Three Element Dance. Though the shadows deepened and the cold became more intense, the land was strengthened. It was the power of the Dance that assisted the forces of lifekind when all became one in the final battle. That moment, called I Fought We One, did not persist, but the Three Element Dance continues. It was the power of the Dance that finally buried Chaos beneath Snakepipe Hollow, and the power of the Dance that keeps it there still.

After the Dawn, it was the spirit of the Dance that infused the Council of Friends when it first arose in Dragon Pass. However Odayla and all that he wrought were forgotten by the earth-reapers, and the Council fell into war and worse as it sought to create a god. The land was cursed again by suffering as Arkat Chaosbane fought the Deceiver.

The stars changed, though the mountains did not move. A new power raised itself above the eternal gors. The Youf, called by some the Empire of the Wyrms Friends, made pact with the dragon tribe to build mighty steads of stone. They did not know Odayla, nor did they respect the ways of the Wilderness Mother. The Youf twisted the sacred myths, creating the half-beasts, and they weakened the power of the Dance by the mockery of their Waltzing and Hunting Bands.

Such blasphemy could not survive. First the dragonewts and the Uz stole the wyter of the Youf, and their empire collapsed into a hundred soulless parts. Then the True Golden Horde came out of the west to enslave the survivors. But when the Horde threatened the nest cities of the dragonewts, the true dragons came to defend their lesser kin.

It was the Dragonkill. The Ghost Making. The dragons killed every human in Dragon Pass. The smell of burning flesh carried across the entire world. In the aftermath, our land was reviled, feared, shunned. It became the Haunted Land, and none of the human tribe would dwell here. The Pass was left to the animal and spirit tribes, to the dragonewts, the half-beasts and to the ghosts of the suffering dead.

The ruins of the Youf litter our land still, but they have nothing that we want.

The long seasons turned, though the mountains did not move. A tainted Goddess arose in the North, challenging the rightful King of the Middle Air. The armies of the Red Moon spread southward, driving our ancestors before them.

So it was that Arim the Pauper first entered the Haunted Land, and there courted the heropriestess Sorana Tor. From that union came the Tarsh tribe, and from the tribe grew the Kingdom.

So it was also that Taros RidgeLeaper, with his sons Vantar and Tovar and their many companions, entered the Sharl Plains, finding the overgrown ruins of a Youfish stead of stone. It was there that they first saw the Vision of the False Sun, and it was there that the traitor Vantar Tarosson first plotted treachery against his kin.

Vantar quarrelled there with Taros his father, and the clan was sundered. The RidgeLeaper led his people and herds north, seeking hills like those of his childhood in far Bilini. Vantar and his followers remained behind, content to build and farm upon the open plain.

At the Three-Eyed Beast Battle, Vantar and his thanes drove away the half-beasts that dwelt within the ruined city. To mark his victory, Vantar re-dedicated the Blue Fire Temple that was its heart. The spirits of Alda Chur stirred from their ancient sleep, and the False Sun lusted after our land once more.

The fire worshippers and the earth-reapers toil on the southern plain still, but they have nothing that we want.

Taros and his companions continued north into the hills of the true country, raising their stead amidst the ruins of an ancient Youfish hill-fort. Ironspike was the spirit there, and Ironspike is the spirit there still. But the Far Walkers were troubled by dreams and visions, and after a score of seasons the second son rose against the father. Tovar the Hungry quarrelled with the RidgeLeaper, and their angry words split the stead. Taros took his wives and youngest children into the western hills. He cut a stead tree at Lagerwater, on the shores of the icy lake called Lagertarn. Tovar cut his own stead tree at Piddledown to the south of Ironspike. Ironspike remained as shelter to all, ruled by the wisdom of Theya Mist Eye.

With the toiling of the seasons came children, and herds, and good hunting and a measure of peace. The oldest of the Far Walkers joined their ancestors, and the youngest embraced in marriage. Karli the wife of Tovar brought forth twins after great travail, and those blessed ones we call Ky Lyrna Hazel-Gift and Gylanth Lynx-Eye.

But the ambitions of Taros RidgeLeaper were many, and his dreams were haunted by the Vision of the False Sun. As his years and power grew, so did the lusting in his heart. Taros broke the pacts made with the Wild Immortals, he captured and abused many ancient spirits, and he imprisoned the Otter Sons in a deep pit beneath Lagerwater Stead. Fearful of the awakening greatness in his twin grandchildren, the RidgeLeaper forced Tovar to bring them to Lagerwater for fostering.

Now when Taros enslaved the Ice Daughter of the Mountain Stream, the land would bear his crimes no more. The Element Children and the animal tribes roused themselves for war. We call this time the Tearing Claw Season. The elder tribes of gors and gallt turned against the intruders with claw and beak and tooth. Ironspike was buried beneath black snow. The herds of Piddledown were swallowed by the Hungry Earth.

For a third time, child turned against father. When Dahud Tarosdotter helped the Otter Sons escape from her father's grasp, they called upon the Stream Mother to drown Lagerwater beneath the ancient lake.

Of all the Far Walkers, only a few survived to teach us the terrible lesson of the Tearing Claw Season. The animal tribes cut them, the element tribes bruised them, the Wild Immortals touched their souls with madness. Taros RidgeLeaper did not die: to this day he is trapped inside his stead beneath the waters of Lagertarn. (This is true, for I have stood by the shore and heard his screams out of the icy depths.) But Tovar died, and Dahud, and all of their thanes and companions. At Lagerwater, only the twins escaped, for they saved themselves from drowning in an upturned jar. They remained beneath the waves until the Tearing Claw Season was done, fed by the Otter Sons and strengthened by the songs of the youngest streamdaughters.

So it was that when the birth season came, two naked children walked from the shores of Lagerwater into the embrace of the eternal gors. They trusted to the wisdom of the Lady of the Wild, and she called animal guides to protect them. Together they found the hidden paths first travelled by Odayla, together they made the Walking Journey, and together they found the Gifting Way. For seven years they danced the Three Element Dance, rebinding their tribe to the ancient pact. For seven years, in seven shapes, they tracked the gors and gallt of the Far Place. Each year they clothed themselves in a new body: each year they took a different animal form and shape. Jumping mouse they were, and bearded raven; water wolf and horned boar, pronghorn and cave bear and great white deer. They ate plant roots and carrion, they hunted for hot blood, they soared the air, they swam the rivers and they dug deep burrows against the death-chill of dark season. Each year they mated together, and each year they produced a single female offspring, no sooner born than sacrificed upon the wild altars of earth and air and water and darkness.

Now for seven years the twins bore their sorrows, and each year they obeyed the ancient call, enacting again the Three Element Dance. In the seventh year, they took upon themselves the form of white deer. As Ky Lyrna laboured to bring forth a single fawn, and as Gylanth fought with hooves and antlers to protect his mate from devouring wolves, the Lady of the Wild came to them on Hard Edge Mountain. Her message was a glad one: their seventh child would live, and she would return to the surviving Far Walkers as Herald of the Covenant. The twins had woven the ancient rope, they had danced the timeless dance, they had reformed the bonds that Odayla Orlanthson laid down before the return of the sun.

The First Herald returned to the shattered steads, and she called the Far Walkers together by the shores of Lagertarn. Densesros the Blade came, and Lanolf Uzfriend, and Jaskor Dark Earth, and Harla Day of Life, and Danwyr Thrice-Moved, and Orla Deepmind, and Karli Ever-Strong with all her offspring. They brought with them their thanes and godis and cattle folk and stickpickers. The steadless ones came, for even then the hunting folk had made the

wilderness their hearth. Of all the children of Taros and his companions, only the Alda-Churi did not come, for the children of Vantar had formed their own tribe, and the farmers of the fire-plain feared the storm-seeded hills.

At Lagertarn the Three Element Dance was brought to the children and blood and clan of Taros RidgeLeaper. One land again became one blood. Wild Immortals and Animal Powers and Storm Warriors came when summoned by the Herald, and they all attested to the power of Odayla's Gift. At Lagertarn, the youngest tribe of the Far Place — the man tribe — bound itself once again to the Three Element Dance. At Lagertarn too the clans were apportioned, and territories set to hunt and to herd, to farm the earth and to gather the gifts of the wilderness. The ancient lands were marked and set apart, places where the Far Walkers would not go, lands and holy places for the animal tribes and the spirit folk who cling to secret ways. All were bound anew in the sacred harmony that springs from life and from death.

The Animal Twins did not return to their birth kin. To this day they remain in the eternal gors, each year taking a new animal form, each year giving birth to a new Herald, forever renewing the ties of common blood. Through all the years that have passed, through kinstrife and invasion and suffering and defeat, this holy bond has sustained us. There is nothing else that we need.

The traders of the Red Moon come with their trinkets and their coins, but they have nothing that we want.

In Alda Chur, Harvar Ironfist dreams of power and kingship in his high tower, but he has nothing that we want.

I am Erissa Walk In Rain, and now my story is done.



The Power of TarosKarla

What was the exact status of the Animal Twins founding myth in those terrible years following the Righteous Wind? While obviously central to the Odaylan hunting and trapping clans of north and west Far Point, and revered by most Orlanthe, the cycle was simply irrelevant to the dominant solar clans of the Sharl Plains. They had their own version of the Founding Tales.



TarosKarla served as a justification for the mythic ascendancy of the wild hill clans against the overwhelming military and social power of the Vantaros and Princeros tribes, and the dominant solar clans of the Tovtaros. Demoralised, hunted, and surrounded on all sides by enemies, the Bluefoot Orlanthe looked to their myths for strength and inspiration in the long and bitter battle. TarosKarla provided both comfort and promise.

And when the woman called Cradledaughter came out of the south at the bequest of her Vingan queen, seeking to revive the ancient cult of Orlanthe Dragonfriend, the myth of the Animal Twins underwent a profound and startling transformation. But that tale, so central to our understanding of the Prince called Argrath, must be told another time...



For additional Orlanthe and Far Place background, as well as a treasure trove of articles, sources, play aids and links for **Glorantha** and **Hero Wars**, visit the official Issaries site at <http://www.glorantha.com/>.

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