

The Shadow Peaks Campaign Introduction

The Kingdom of Calthornia has long been a prominent power in these parts. It was founded by an order of warriors known as the Knights of the Silver Blade; theirs was a pious association, committed to the worship and exultation of the great deity Athovan. Defence of the faith and the promise of salvation for all men inspired them to establish a theocratic kingdom and to expel the evil humanoids that filled the forests and preyed upon the people of the land. They campaigned for many years, driving their vile enemy before them, banishing those men who would not submit, and slaying those that would not turn from the ways of malice and corruption. After many hard deeds, the boundaries of the kingdom were established and the priests said that Athovan did not wish for further expansion. Thus was the great peace won that lasted for more than two hundred years, but the borderlands were never truly free of battles; there valiant men fought and laboured to keep their fellows safe from the many enemies that sought to end their autonomy and freedom. Nonetheless, evil came by other ways, creeping into the hearts of those who had become lax and sinful, confident in the favour of Athovan and arrogant in their prosperity.

Malefic powers covet the souls of the faithful and sinful alike; what they cannot accomplish by guile they will attempt by force. In time, the sorcerous servants of demons and dark deities once more stirred to war the beast men of the forests, and the lizard men of the swamps, summoning forth goblins and orcs from their dark holes in the fetid earth. Not content with these minions, they called upon those men, elves, and dwarves who had long since been seduced by false promises and lies. But these were as nothing next to the demonic sorceress that appeared in the north, whose name even the wise refuse to utter, for she opened a gate to the very hells and brought forth demons to swell the hosts of darkness. In the three hundred and sixty seventh year as is reckoned from the founding of Order of the Silver Blade, these hosts swept into Calthornia driving all before them. Defeat followed defeat, but the kingdom was spared hateful destruction, for success brought division amongst the enemy and they fell upon themselves. The men of Calthornia rallied and parties of brave souls sallied forth; it was one such group of warriors that closed the portal to the hells and banished the blasphemous she-demon from the world.

In the wake of that victory, the divided enemy was driven back, though the price was heavy in blood and death. Great has been the suffering and hardships endured by the people, for all manner of horrors were long inflicted upon them, but order has gradually been restored. The bitter memories of subjugation are still fresh, the ugly scars of war run deep, and though the enemy is in retreat, he is not vanquished. To the southeast, the Duke of the Talisian March has fought a long and hard campaign that only lately culminated in the destruction of a great host of goblins, men, and elves at the Battle of Black Crag, finally breaking their power there and pursuing the remnants into Talisia, a land that has perhaps never known ought but the rule of darkness. The servants and slaves of the enemy have fled south, leaving razed towns and smoking villages in their wake, though the envoys of the Talisian king remain behind to treacherously treat of peace. With the campaign thereby brought to a temporary halt, the victors have been free to enjoy the spoils, but all prepare for its renewal; gold and silver are the sinews of war, and the necessity of acquiring sufficient such means now occupies the thoughts of greater men.

Burnsby is perhaps the southernmost outpost of the Kingdom of Calthornia; originally a large Talisian hill fort, it was hastily razed and abandoned during their retreat, but its natural strategic situation recommended it to the Calthornians as an ideal site for a winter camp, and potential future strongpoint. To the north looms the ominous vastness of the Shadow Peaks mountains. Rumours abound that there is hidden there a great wealth of minerals and metals for the taking, which has both prompted the sending of men to ascertain the truth, and others to venture forth into peril of their own volition. Aside from the natural hazards of the terrain, the mountains conceal bandits, deserters and renegades, all fled to the fastness of stone to escape the advancing ducal army. The count in charge of the few thousand soldiers quartered at Burnsby is Lord Athos of Hultham, a man with many adventurers in his retinue. One such retainer is Ulius son of Larius, whose current task is to discover what has become of a survey party over late in returning from an expedition into the Shadow Peaks; he now seeks the aid of likely stalwarts from the camp to journey with him in search of these lost sheep.