

T É K U M E L T A L E S

The Order of Lazulian Slumber

by Brad Johnson

The storm clouds began to lift just as the shepherd approached the Grugánu monastery of The Order of Lazulian Slumber. The squat, black pile of stone was always a disturbing end to the trail through the surrounding peaks.

He knew this was to be his last journey to this holy place. He was too old to navigate the steep paths and ford the swift streams anymore. On this trip he had lost only three of the surefooted hmélu. Other trips had been less profitable.

He did not recognize the young acolyte that opened the gate and let him into the soaked yard. He gladly gave the animals to the priest's control. He walked up to the main building to receive his pay as he had done so many times before. This day the old paymaster was in a jovial mood. The shepherd explained that this was the final delivery that he would make and that he would be more useful spending the rest of his days working at the clanhouse of the Black Hand.

The old priest nodded and invited him into the main chamber.

"You are fortunate this eve." He exclaimed. "For tonight has been chosen for "The Unveiling of the Way" ceremony. For your long and loyal duty to the temple we shall allow you to bear witness to this great undertaking"

The shepherd was escorted to the baths, allowed to wash off the mud and then was presented with a simple black robe to wear. From there he was shown the way to the square ceremonial hall where he took a seat on the lowest dais with several other worshippers, some of which wore flame-orange robes.

An elder priest of The Black Sword of Doom began the ritual with a lesson as the musicians began to play.

"In the days of the Fisherman Kings, when Vimúhla ruled alone, our Lord Ksárul made himself known to humanity. He brought stability to the land ravaged by fire. He offered hope to those who believed that the Flame Lord offered them little to believe other than total destruction. Great conflicts occurred between the followers of the two great gods. Neither was effective in replacing the other. Eventually a pact was made between the two. Vimúhla was promised the destruction of the cosmos and Ksárul was guaranteed the remains. The Blaze Contained believed that nothing would be left after His cleansing and thought the upstart Lord of Secrets full of hubris to claim the remaining oblivion."

"As time passed, other gods unveiled themselves when they saw the balance that had been brought about by the two great gods. Eventually their own feeble attempts attracted a smattering of weak worshippers throughout the land. During this period of relative peace, our Master proclaimed that through his studies of the gathered knowledge of his worshippers he had discovered the true ending of time. He further announced that to finish his studies he must take to sleep and plot the path to this discovered ending."

"The mighty Vimúhla was outraged that the end of time had been foretold by another and not by him. The other gods feared an end to the soft worship they had discovered here and they all began to plot against the Rebel of the Gods."

"Hrü'ü struck first by taking back the Chariot of the Gods as our Master journeyed to his place of planned repose. Stranded upon the Dórmoron Plain He decided to finish his task there and began to sleep. The fearful gods began to battle with Him to keep him awake. The struggles were tremendous with great losses to both sides. Suddenly, the other gods paused to gather for on final assault. Our Master took this time to begin his hibernation. Realizing their failure, the lesser gods convinced the Flame Lord to join with them to place barriers around our Master to ensure that He does not wake and announce the end of time. Vimúhla agreed in order to have control over when all would cease to be. " The music stopped.

"Since that time our order has searched for the way to break those seals. Every year we present our findings to Lord Grugánu through this ceremony and are rewarded for our progress."

"From here the elders shall proceed to The Citadel of the Twelve Pylons of Ta'lár to complete the ceremony with the demon Qu'ú, the Substance of Chiténg and the Essence of Grugánu. And perhaps with The Knower of Spell's guidance we shall awaken the Doomed Prince to fulfill his destiny."

As the shepherd watched mesmerized, a gate opened on the far wall and a light poured forth onto the audience. The now standing priests walked into the glare single file. When the last one entered, the gate slowly closed. The remaining worshippers sat for a time and thought about what they had seen, and learned. The trip back down the mountain would be comfortable with this knowledge.

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