

Where Once We Stood On the Shoulders of Giants, Now We Climb Anew

By James MacGeorge, for use with S. John Ross' Risus: The Anything RPG

- It has been twenty-three years since the body of Vormesh, God of Magic, fell to the Aerth, changing all of our lives forever. We still don't know who or what could have slain a God, or why, all we know is what happened next. The body was massive, miles long. The capitol of the PanHumanoid League, Stormhaven, was wiped off the map, as Vormesh's massive hand flattened it. The shockwave from his skull bouncing off of the Whitecap Mountain Range leveled the Monasticity of Ohm, home to the greatest concentration of holy men in all of Aerth. A dark bluish liquid poured from the wound in the back of the skull, filling the Sundown Valley and drowning the entire Halfling Nation in a single deluge of Godsblood. His other arm splashed into the Sea of Falling Tears, creating a tsunami last spotted headed towards the coastal port of Deepwater. A thousand stories have been told since we took refuge in the Tinker Gnome Tunnel Structure UGN 5740, those are some of the less personal, easier to relate ones. There are plenty more of children lost, families torn apart, loved ones killed in the crazy days immediately after the Descent, as it's now known. Our Tunnel Leader has encouraged us all to keep diaries, both to keep us occupied, and to serve as a reminder, so that who we were is not completely forgotten.

15 Heshuary, 345 CE – We were the lucky ones, we thought. During the Descent, mages still had their magic. It wasn't until Vormesh suffered fatal cranial trauma that the magic left the world, the power of magic bleeding out as its God did the same. I was one of the most powerful mages in the PHL. My Elvin wife, Lanifel, barely 400, and my half-human children were with me when we felt the impact. I cast a spell, the first that came to mind and teleported us all to the far side of the continent. From leagues away, we saw the body drop, shiver and remain still. We saw the cloud of dust rise up, darkening the skies. We saw the fires burning, and we thought we had witnessed the worst, but we were wrong. No longer needing to fear the sun, the Black Below is almost empty now, the Night Races at last claiming dominion over the surface lands, or what is left of them. I saw a pack of Night Elves tear my children apart, and do things to my wife that I will never forget, no matter how I wish I could. That's all I can write tonight.

21 Heshuary, 345 CE – There is no more magic. When the God of Magic passed on to wherever Gods go when they die, the ability of the mortal races to pluck and tug at the strands of reality passed along as well. Whereas once I could summon forces to alter reality at a whim, I am now simply a man with a sword and memories of meaningless worlds. After the death of my family, I spotted a large crowd, all headed in the same direction. They were traveling to the nearest entrance to the Gnomish or Dwarven areas of the Black Below. By the time we reached the gate to the Gnomish Tunnel Structures, the crowd had swelled to the thousands. Even at two abreast, they could only keep the gates open for so long, and when the Ogre Horde appeared behind the refugees, the Gnomes did their best to hold them off. In the end, though, the gates had to be shut. The screaming lasted for several hours. The Ogres beat on the doors for several days before they got tired and wandered off. We haven't seen the outside world since then. The Dwarves have gone deep, abandoning their cities close to the surface to search for their ancestral homes, available for the first time in millennia now that the Dark Races are gone. If the Elvish Nations yet live, they are trapped above, and likely fight for their survival. The Gnomes have refused to abandon their charges, though, and a new PanHumanoid League is rising in the areas under their protection, made up of the remnants of the Old World. There are members of each of the races here, even a few Halflings.

25 Heshuary, 345 CE - Organized into Tunnels, we maintain our new home, while far below, the Gnomish forges build new magic. Rather than powered by mystical forces, it is shaped by the power of steam and other gasses, and the power of ingenuity. We patrol, we build, we rebuild, we defend against the occasional incursion from the surface, and we wait. The Gnomes have begun mass producing their flint-locked projectile weapons, and Gnomish fashion has been becoming more and more popular among the general population. Top hats, pocket watches, vests with fob pockets adorn more and more as I walk my tunnel. The Descent seems to have sharpened the minds of the Tinker Gnomes. While they once had the unfocused, almost lunatic fascination with the mysteries of their craft, they are now focused, and it seems that each with each passing day brings forth a new, wondrous invention. They have accommodated our lack of infravision with an ingenious system of lights, lined together and possessing the power of lightning. It's not just their fashion catching on, it's their speech mannerisms, their fascination with geared mechanics, I've even seen several elven children shaving the front of their hairlines, mimicking the high foreheads of our Gnomish benefactors. Though the air is black with the acrid smoke from the forges below, I find myself becoming accustomed to the stench, and the soot that covers us all.

17 Uld, 345 CE – First chance to write in quite some time. Our tunnel, 5740, was invaded by a force of the un-dead when a wall crumbled, exposing a previously undiscovered structure below. Truly our land is cursed, that our magic must be taken away, but magical creatures such as the zombies that poured into our tunnel yet live. It has taken the better part of a month to clear out the tunnels, and life is slowly returning to normal. Hah. I must be assimilated – to think that huddled in a falsely lit tunnel lit by hard light candles could be normal. I find that I do not have the stomach for any more writing this night.

19 Srvil, 345 CE – The first Gnomish Automatons have reached the front lines. It turns out the un-dead we faced last month were merely a vanguard, sent to test our defenses. Rumor has it that the Dwarves, curse their beards, stirred something up in their eagerness to retake their cities. Something old, something deadly, something that hates the living. Now we are trapped, between the desolation above and the icy stillness of the tomb that awaits us below. Our Gnomish allies continue to prove themselves invaluable, however – in mere months, they have progressed farther than they had in the years previous, and while we are pressed as never before on both sides, I have faith that our determination, combined with the technological marvels offered by our Gnomish Allies shall allow us to triumph, to persevere, and perhaps even thrive!

24 Tamaroon, 346 CE – Our Campaign is over! The Lich King is dead, his hordes returned to whatever cursed netherworld they came from. His demonic backers have been given a thrashing, and we have proven that a land without magic is not defenseless. The Gnomish Automatica Division even slew a Pit Fiend, a feat I can honestly say would have proven beyond the powers of all but the most potent of sorcerers before the fall. The Gnomes have announced the establishment of the first above ground outpost, walled with lightning wire fences. I have submitted my application to be among the first garrison to be stationed at Fort Aspiration. I sleep easily this night, knowing that my future, while still uncertain, at least allows me to dream of seeing the sun once more. For the first time in ages, I feel no need to write of the past, for I look forward to the future!