

The Fall of the Elves

It was an earlier age, long ago, the Age of the Elf. In this Golden Age, clans of Elves built mighty cities with great magic and developed a culture of beauty and grace. But in this golden apple the worm of envy festered.

This clan built a wonder, then that clan topped it, then another achieved even greater feats. At first, all appeared wonderful as each clan applauded the advances of all the others, but deep in their hearts a darkness was growing. Eventually, it was not so easy to trump the last advance, and an elf here and there began to work, behind the scenes to diminish the wonders of other clans. Then the whispers and secret plotting became more open and more direct, and eventually wars broke out among the great clans...and a few, dark of heart, found beauty in this evil. Evil begets evil.

Sharing the world with the elfish clans were the equally old and mighty race, the dwarves, and the primitive humans. The dwarves, were then as now, tied to their hill and mountain homes, and seldom trod among the other races. In their own way the Dwarves had their own Golden Age as they built mighty underground cities, citadels and tunnels connecting the underground passages that form a network in "the world below." But because the Elves seldom came to the underground world, and the Dwarves seldom came into the Elves above ground world the two great races seldom interacted. The Humans, primitive nomads that followed herds of animals on the southern and eastern plains were of little concern to either of the great races, not even when they began to settle and form towns and cities, not even when they began to learn the rudiments of metal shaping from watching the Dwarves and magic from the Elves. Perhaps the primitiveness, the naivety, is what saved the Humans when the holocaust came, but it didn't save them from what came after.

The Elvin Wars raged for centuries, growing from small brushfires, no more than duels really, to large wars where thousands of Elves died. This was unacceptable! And so the Elves took the first step toward the end...they raised the monsters! First there were Kobolds, raised from cur dogs, raised with magic to work as slaves in fields and fodder in the wars. Then there were Goblins, raised from some sort of bug, no more intelligent or powerful than the Kobolds, but who bred like...will like bugs! Then there were the Hobgoblins, the Orcs, the Ogres, and all manner of monster were raised as slaves and soulless fodder to be thrown against each other on fields of battle. This evil corrupted the Elves even more than the envy that had started all of this many centuries earlier. Oh, their slaves kept the Elves safe from the worst of the battles, and maintained their comfort in their increasingly corrupt and decadent cities, but in exchange they were losing their very souls.

The wars of the Elves were watched with some concern by the other true races, the Dwarves and the Humans. Oh, the Dwarves worried about the wars of the crazy Elves that were going on around and above them, but only rarely did their monstrous creatures get out of hand and bother them, so most of the time they ignored them. This would prove to be a mistake for which they would pay. The Humans worried even more than the Dwarves, as they didn't have nearly the power and knew their puny cities and towns could be destroyed with hardly a second thought if the Elvin clans so chose, and the Elvin monsters often slipped their leash and attacked human nomads and settlements in the south doing great damage each time. Still the humans could do nothing about this, as they simply lacked the means to intervene in the doings of the mighty Elves. But they could have prepared for what was to come...if they had known, but they didn't. The end came more suddenly than anyone could have imagined.

The Elvin Clans had reached another stalemate. All sides of the multi sided war had reached a point where they had the same monsters, the same magic, the same intelligence, and...unfortunately...the same level of corruption and evil. And dark wizards of all sides took the next step at the same time and learned to bring pieces of the sun down to earth. Above glittering golden cities fireballs miles across

suddenly blossomed. Over the great citadels and camps of the Elvin armies more fireballs bloomed. In the madness, the Elvin wizards cast their terrible magic upon even the Dwarves, that had never attacked any of them, but now were foreseen as a future enemies... a self fulfilling prophecy as it turned out. The Humans suffered only a little from these cataclysms, but in their aftermath as the gods finally turned their backs upon the world, and the time of darkness and cold descended upon the land, they suffered as much as any. More, did the Humans suffer, perhaps, because most of the Elves and Dwarves were past caring about anything ever again.

And then began, The Age of the Monster!

The Dark Times

For many years the sun never shined down again and darkness covered the land. The tears of the gods fell to earth as acid stripping leaves from trees and poisoning any who walked abroad. Sickness, disease and starvation stalked the land bringing death quickly for the lucky and with terrible slowness for the unlucky. Finally, the sun gathered enough fire to shine again, and the rains of death relented, but for the humans the worse was still to come.

Sweeping down from the north came hordes of Monsters! All manner of creature with no thought in their heads but to destroy, maim, kill. The shattered Humans retreated before these hordes pushed back, and back, and back until their backs were against the southern sea. There most died...horribly! A few escaped across the southern seas to islands. A few more held their own within the Shield of the Gods. A few more held the long finger stopping the monstrous hordes at the knuckle. When the monsters could push no further, only a scattered few Humans survived, and of the Elves and Dwarves nothing was known for a millennia.

This was the Age of the Monster, and these creations of magic, cruel and evil roamed at will across almost all the world. Kingdoms of Goblins, Orcs and Ogres rose and fell in wars with each other and with the remaining humans whom they all blamed for their creation just as much as they blamed the Elves and the Dwarves. Some Humans tried to reason with these monsters...it wasn't Humans that created you or who called down the sun to burn and twist you into even more horrible beings...but who can reason with an Orc? And reasonable men simply became meat. Only the stubborn, the strong, and the very lucky managed to survive.

Luckily, they never learned to sail the seas in ships, or they might have destroyed the last of the human refuges. Without the islands off the southern coasts of the world there would have been no reserves to take up the places on the finger and behind the Shield Wall holding the Monsters out of the last mainland enclaves the humans had. Without the sailors and people of the islands, there would have been no colonists to settle along the coast, after the time of the monster began to wane.

As time past, the number and power of Humans began to grow again, and the monsters began to be pushed back. Fewer threw themselves against the Shield and the Finger as the years past. Fewer still broke through into the enclaves, and even those were more easily expelled. Behind the Shield of the Gods and the Finger's Knuckle the Humans began to feel safe, they began to lose their awe of the Monsters, and they began to plan their return to their old lands.

The Humans began their counter attack. First small colonies were established along the southern and southwestern coasts. Some were destroyed, but more survived, and those that survived expanded out from the coast. Armies sallied out from the enclaves, reducing and driving the Monstrous hordes back. It took centuries, but slowly the humans fought their way inland and northward across the southern plains.

The Time of Men!

Finally, today, there are no Kingdoms of Monsters in the south. Yes, isolated monsters, even the occasional goblin or orcish clan raids or passes through, causing trouble, but they are driven off. Kingdoms of Man control the entire southern region, kingdoms ruled by men of strength and war, and so the humans fight petty wars among themselves in the south. But there is still the north!

There are still many, many monsters. Clans, Kingdoms, Hordes, awful and evil monsters crawl above and below the lands beyond the Lake of Steam. Along the southern border of the Lake of Steam is the Border Kingdom. This kingdom grew from a colony at the coast and has expanded along the southern and western edge of the Lake. A few colonies have been set up across the lake on the northern coast. While most humans are busy with their lives in the south, those up here are still fighting monsters, still pushing them back toward the graves of the Elves from which they came. Men and women with adventurous spirits and those seeking the knowledge and power that can be taken from the ruins of the ancient age ply the waters of the Lake and walk the trails around and north from there.

There are more dangers from monsters here, as well as from human outcasts and bandits. Explorers here need to be quick with a bow, skilled with a sword, strong of spirit and adapts of power magic to survive. The men and women of the Border Kingdom consider themselves to be the cutting edge of humanity, and good that they do, for today, they are on the cutting edge of the Human's slow northward advance.

What of the Elves and Dwarves?

Well, the Dwarves still live in their underground and mountain homes, though there are many, many fewer of them now than in previous ages. The Dwarves blame the Elves for all their troubles, as they should, and still prefer to keep to themselves. Of the humans, they think little, but worry that they might grow so strong that they will succumb to the same evil that consumed the Elves.

The Elves are mostly gone. Never will a Human see an Elf walking down a city street. There are still a few, say some, who live deep within the sacred forests. These few have sought to atone for their sins before their gods for ages and in doing so have become almost ethereal beings of magic. It is said that they are at one with the Fey. All we know of the Elf now come from stories told the occasional Wizard, or Wizard's companion, who has come upon them while on a Staff quest deep in the forests. Most humans fear and hate them, no one understands them, and most hope that the stories are simply that...stories with no merit...for most Humans, and most Dwarves for that matter, would prefer that the Elves all be dead and buried with their ancient evils.