

**The Fall
of
Lungbarrow**

By James Hornby



The Fall of Lungbarrow

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James Hornby

A violent breeze whipped about the valley. Dionus pulled his long robes tight around him, wishing he'd have dressed a little more sensibly for the trek across the wilderness. As always, his people's tradition carried more weight across the ages than common sense.

In the far distance, beyond the fields of emerald-petaled flowers, Mount Lung dominated the skyline, its three peaks beckoning him towards it like a taloned hand, despite his best intentions.

He'd always found the place ominous, an omen of darker times to come. Indeed, he recalled his own journey to its Plutarch peak, where the Kingmaker imparted her own cryptic prophecy to him on the night he was granted his timeship. The memory made him shiver, and he swore then he would never return.

And return he would not. He averted his gaze from the triune colossus, reminding himself of his reason for traversing this desolate place, and how long a journey he still had ahead of him.

Though as he tried to alter his path towards the Inland Sea, the mountain found another way of drawing him back.

The wind picked up, even harder now. The blast came so hard that the skin on his cheeks began to ripple. Curiosity got the better of him, and he turned his head back to the jagged blot of white on the horizon.

But it wasn't all white. Something large and black was sliding down the mountainside, kicking up a trail of grey in its wake. Dionus could only stare in disbelief. The object plummeted at a rate of knots, before it crashed into the base of the mountain, leaving little more than a pile of rubble.

"Lungbarrow..." Dionus whispered, as the wind whipped the word from his lips, and carried back across the valley to the Time City.

He felt his heart sink. The fall of a House was no small affair. Whatever happened there was significant, and on this planet little that happened was significant. He was lucky to have seen it, as the events would no doubt be shrouded in mystery once the authorities arrived. He recalled the same happening to the House of Marnal after its Kirthriarch went missing, its Loomlings absorbed into higher House without a further word spoken.

"Change is definitely on its way," Dionus said with a sigh.

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"You're just imagining it," said his mother, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. He nuzzled against it, soaking in her warmth as if for the first time in centuries. All the while, his eyes lay fixed upon Lungbarrow, shattered at the base of the mountain.

"Should we go and help them?" Dionus asked. He knew what his instincts were telling him, but the decision wasn't his to make.

His mother shook her head. "I'm sure there are far more important players than ourselves involved in what's happening there. Now come on, Casmus won't be happy if we don't return by Sunsbreak tomorrow. You remember what happened last time you disappointed him..."

Dionus winced at the memory, and spared a thought for Lungbarrow's own Kithriarch, hoping they weren't caught up in the House's fall.

Reluctantly, Dionus followed his mother away from the fallen House. As they went, he uttered a silent prayer for Lungbarrow, hoping one day it would get its chance to rise from ruin.

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