

# The Emperor and the General

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Electronically published in the mortal realm

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# *Preface*

The following short story is the combined work of J. M. Blum and a couple of friends, along with some input from an AI (Open AI's GPT-3 model by way of AIDungeon). The main plotline was developed during a game of Microscope. J.M. wrote a newsletter article about using RPGs and AI for writing. If you're interested in it, please sign up to the newsletter and email J. M. to request it.



# *The Emperor and the General*

During the rise of the empire there once was confidence. It all began when Emperor Trogg IV, son of the God of Light, slayed God-King Dunes Trotag, son of the God of Chaos. Thereby, his long unmatched rule ended and A new day dawned. For the gods, however this was all a game in the halls of Gahl'Vuhrn. Yet in the game, the God of Light was tricked by the God of Chaos into the situation. His own followers, the faithful, were deceived into believing that the Emperor was dead. The Emperor, replaced in the minds of his citizenry with a false god of darkness, could do nothing but weep... even surrounded by his blessed srol servants.

The traitor legion drove the angels known as the Griffins to extinction when they assaulted their cloud haven. It is said that at one time there were several entire regiments granted with the honor and privilege of

serving the winged warriors, but just a handful survived. The assault lasted four days (officially). No one lurking in the reeds at the marshy outskirts of the large island went unnoticed, and the 80 Divisions quickly eliminated the 500 Shadows making up Dark Wing. The Shadows struck deadly blows against their own nesting grounds but their arrogance allowed for ambush. Gray Thunder, an elite Shadows spy was grateful for recruits looking death in the eye. No demon took part in such a cynical slaughter although many within the 80 Divisions wanted to. Captain Gruslen warned, "Smiting with righteous fury such servitors of abominations would please palace dwellers yet drain our lives too quickly for this war alone. We have many more battles to fight and we must scathe the enemy not each other evenly". His words rang in the air several times around the fires that they dragged from heaven itself before an earthquake rendered them to mud underneath their feet. Then as they closed the large island once inhabited by the ferocious united clans, all were banned from entering the clouds on pain of death. Most obeyed. Captain Gruslen never once entered the portals without one of those annoying angel scribes alongside him.

A period of unification ensued. No longer did demons break down the barrier between this realm and the infernal pit. Kossol was taken from the heathens and diabolists. No devil of any strength or power could be found upon its sacred sands. Grand Alliance Fleet 74 took up guard upon the Kossol Straight therefore forever ending

any trade or shipping to supply it from offshore. Nalin and Rask tripled in their border strength against a quest of conquering Dragonkin hoardes. Demons from an unknown dominion tainted a temple deep in the Svardnese jungles. Captain Gruslen, with only 12 wings of angelic hosts at his disposal, repelled the demon barbarians from sacking precious towns worshiping Melbrin, the Light. This great triumph ended with him bloodying the noses of his main enemies.

For such a string of victories, Gruslen alone is granted the law to scathe the covens whenever he is not engaged in other commands. Emperor Trogg VI ordered Gruslen to use the law and unite the lost kingdoms and tribes underneath his banner. In the name of the God of Light, Gruslen destroys the non-believers. The winter assaults and renewed rumors of elves transporting underlings into Raakatos surges the old emperor's strength. This leads to a relentless quest to rid every inch of demon from bedevilling the land. Although Captain Gruslen's inquisitions have infused good deeds upon his grasp on comradeship, through support of past glories he usually boasts about, he stumbles in areas that betray arrogance and ignorance that is fast accomplishing what his troops want: painful death. By killing and destroying the tribes, however, he mistakenly strengthens the God of Chaos.

The other gods are angered that a mortal would perform such an act. They send their own champions to battle him. Soon, it is said with hope, that all the powers in existence will be gathered together for one final

confrontation between them and the emperor himself. Suddenly out of the sands at Rask, a desperate gambit is deployed. Ten legions defend an Empire fort under demon attack. Captain Gube (retired), issues an urgent plea for immediate aid and reinforcements. Airships are dispatched but do not return. With no forces to call upon except the older reserves, this attack signals the start of another demonic invasion with no clear direction or possible target other than wild speculation. Darkness captures the hearts of the people. As a punishment for the strengthening of the Emperor Trogg, the other gods attempt to rewrite history and turn his dynasty into servants of the Dgym. To mitigate chances of rebellion, they wipe the memories of the commoners. Hardly anyone suspects or by now cares about Captain Gruslen's massive endeavors in religion manipulation. Publications about them never existed.

Terrified of this powerful sobriquet, Captain Gruslen's regime employ brutal damage control among rogue priests sufficient to keep the numbers under control, but they miss a band of ritual sorcerers and demonolaters that have been latterly attempting to open up a portal extremely close to Nalin. They are razed by dwarven knights in what later comes to be remembered by most as the "Blood Storm Canyons", but among them as Draven Gloom. Despite the successes of the dwarven knights, they fail to complete their ancient chant. This failure causes extreme temporal ripping above and beyond the normal reality tears. Pure Chaos warriors of the Clans



manage to come through. From them drifts in demons upon demons. Upon their vernacular, they give themselves the name 'sacred servants of the godlike'; a barbarian concoction of whimsical demonhood and wizards of the most powerful Big Red. They use recently constructed fortresses transported from the other hells to help in conquest of other dimensions. Dwarven slaves are captured and sent back to Big Red. Their gazes are cast upon the Emperor to create the necessary aberrations to storm the heavens.

What follows is a dark period of the great schism. The heavenly advisors whisper secrets to Emperor Dgym driving him to paranoia. He no longer knows whom to trust. The only person he can rely on is his trusted advisor, and that one has a dark past. The Emperor becomes obsessed by General Trogg's treachery. Backstabbing and doublecrossing become commonplace in the Senateana, as ruthlessness becomes standard operating procedure. Hardly anyone ever knows who precisely is in charge of the forces. War strategists plan quickly to divert men to die through various acts of a slightly different fatuity but meet an identical end. Elderly guardians pray for a quick close to all hostilities, which acts only to infuriate agents of the dark.

Even senators realise that death is imminent at each turn. General Trogg turns to divination for guidance but the portents that predict the end seem more favourable with each day. The reigning advisor's grip on authority becomes more tyrannical and short-tempered. At

the forth session of new consecration of the Church of Xathanism, protests are held by various archons, decreeing that the state ideology is inappostate.

General Trogg's captain of divination takes him to pray at the Alter of Qadim in the Temple of Drakossis. A demon servant of Tannit-Hamon answers his prayers. The plans of the God of Chaos are revealed to General Trogg, and he is encouraged by the messenger of Tannit-Hamon to pursue power and the destruction of the weak. Given the serious nature of potential revolution, something not entertained for millennia, the Trogg flees Drakossis temple for enemy territory with his closest 500 shadows. The rest of the army of shadows turns against each other, struggling for power in the absence of their leader. They kill senators each week until one finally restores calm with a purging.

General Trogg uses the shadows to organise a band of resisters. Their sanctuary in their own backyard consolidates troops of temporary enlisted mercenary adventurers. Yet these are loyal and courageous men. In the meantime, Emperor Dgym himself succumbs to his intereating. Many savants of the time describe it as nothing less than complete insanity destroying him from the inside out. General Trogg's battlehardened followers wage a one-term war of conquest conquering the rest of the senateana with ease.

General Trogg leads his forces into a final battle against Emperor Dgym's remaining loyalists. Though Trogg's armies are strengthened by the God of Chaos, the greatest

general is not at full might and initiates a seemingly hopeless first strike. Somehow, General Trogg's forces manage to invade the royal palace. Battles rage all around. Armies are in melee all over the city. Trogg snuck into the holy chambers of the Emperor and confronts Zelgar, Emperor Dgym's high chief vizer and lead loyalist. After shooting him in an eye with an icicle, Zelgar fights Trogg in a brutal affair ending up with both severely wounded, but only one walks out alive. After executing Zelgar, Trogg rests and prepares for the final and short-term push that will put him in firm ruling.

During this moment he chances upon an oni adventure rescue party recovering a wounded comrade, Farrbus the Fabled. Trogg sneaks behind the oni party and captures Farrbus alive. With this gamble he sacrifices his remaining two shadows to unleash Farrbus' extraordinary regenerative capability using knowledge borne him though Tannit-Hamon's unnatural manipulation.

With some strength returned, though one-eyed, General Trogg returns to face Emperor Dgym one-on-one. Dgym easily disarm's Trogg's finesse weapon with a brute force near legendary mighty blow from his chain-sword, turning it into splinters. Dgym fights brutally but wears completely down and into submission, proving the tolls of constant conflict do indeed take a heavy price on his personal's weapon mastery alone. Dgym, wielding his chain-sword, realises he is no physical match for the great general. The emperor slides away and resorts to magic, attempting to harness knowledge of death to slay his for-

mer trusted general. He attempts to use a psychic death attack upon Trogg, but sees in the general's mind the ancient truth that Trogg is the rightful heir to the empire. Dgym admits that he is an usurper and attempts to flee but is prevented by the collapse of the palace chamber. Determining that surviving the fight is useless and imminent death is upon himself, Emperor Dgym sacrificed his body's life essence to mimic Trogg's sacrificial concept and focused the explosion in manner to injure. Trogg unsuccessfully combats Emperor Dgym's dying might explosion and burns severely though standing, which cost him the remaining sight of his eye.

After several fortnights of recovery Trogg staggers out of the burned rubble and goes into hiding underground. Dgym had blown up not only himself but ruined the remainder of this great throne, and most importantly, crushed the general's freedom by damning his eternal soul to the guardians of the realms of Azphael.

The Nalin Republic arose from the ashes and eventually payed its debts back to Tannit-Hamon for influence upon its birth. Tannit-Hamon ultimately dominated through generations seeking a continued history as the ruler of Gahl'Vuhrn. The God of Chaos becomes a cold and unforgiving all-seeing shadow, never to judge any, lest she be made incapable. To be enemies with Tannit-Hamon is suicide. The civil war between the mighty emperor and his greatest general had changed society and wiped away the old values. Those that were once seen as weak were now considered heroes. The people

worshipped their new leaders and the citizens of the empire rallied behind them. The last remnants of the loyalist army have been defeated, the city state of Rask has fallen, and belief in any Emperor is dead.

*Fin*





*Excerpt from:*  
*The Entwined Spirits*  
*Saga Book Two*  
*First They Came for the*  
*Minùtemyn*

Støerrascinan's first rays reflected off polished scales of the enemy scout and reconnaissance flight. Gavriæl scanned the section of the sky visible to him for the main wing and it came into his view a little later. Much higher up he counted ten of them flying in triangular formation.

The leader was black. The interior ones were purple, carrying metallic orbs in their back claws. Alternating red and white guardians formed the outer arms. Their

screeches and roars, though much further away than those of the first flight, were still loud enough to frighten away all the nearby fauna that had reappeared after the last dragons had scared them into hiding. Although the ones he could now see appeared to only be as long as the length from his outstretched thumb to his index finger, Gavriæl could tell that they were adults from the volume of sound they produced. It took nearly three-quarters of a second for their screeches to reach him after he saw their serpentine jaws open and close. At that height they were unreachable by any spell or projectile launched from the ground.

Gavriæl Kḥeruvîm stood still, confident in his stealth, but he worried that the dragons had spotted the hillebaîm in the clearing. He hoped they would presume the great labhi belonged to Red Skulls operating in the area. Then he heard more terrible roars at much greater volume. He turned to see a wing of three more purple dragons. By the speed of their cries they appeared to be travelling at a lower altitude than the others, probably owing to the greater size of the orbs they were hauling. The ærendmyn accounted for the difference in distance between this flight and the wing. These three were almost double the size of the others, considerably older, and far more deadly.



## About one of the Authors

J. M. Blum was born in '77, in a forest grove of the Pacific Northwest. Comic books and Commodores informed his childhood, along with tales of wonder from movies, tv, radio, books, and even stories spoken over rotary telephones. But games around tables co-creating meaningful phantasy, has always been his greatest passion.

Blum attended Virtual High in Vancouver, BC in the 90s, and wrote some unpublished poetry about it. Then he hung out at an ashram and went travelling before attending the Center for Digital Imaging and Sound in the noughties to take up video game programming, which he eschewed for academic and industrial computer and data science and engineering. He has written a great deal of technical content and programs but missed fiction. So the prodigal son has come home with the publication of his first novel, *The Forbidden Daemon*.

Blum's present home is in Belgium after living more than a decade in the UK. He's a proud dad of three, and a happy husband too. With love for the writing process, he promises to continue producing *The Entwined Spirits Saga* along with many more works for years to come. You can follow along the journey by signing up to his newsletter or following his fantastical thoughts on Twitter.

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