

THE TURNING OF THE YEAR

“Now shorter, colder grow the days;
And snow in flurries round us plays.
As herds depart – not one beast stays –
We too must tread the ancient ways,”
Exhorted Hadragum the Seer.
Southward they went towards the shore.
Where kindred clans would meet once more,
Assembling on the plain before
They marked the turning of the year.

“There’s many a mammoth roams the plain;
The hunting will be good again;
The waves their plenitude maintain
Whereof a harvest we’ll obtain,”
Reflected Hadragum the Seer.
He thought of winters that had been.
Through winters good and winters lean,
Protected e’er by powers unseen,
They’d passed the turning of each year.

“Oh spirits blest, oh powers benign,
Our lives to you we now assign.
From forces evil and malign
Defend us by your might divine!”
So prayed old Hadragum the Seer.
Yet even while the seer was praying,
Came rumours dire, their dread conveying,
And spread among the peoples, saying
“Beware the turning of the year”.

Some clans bore tales of aliens fell
Who, tall and slim and agile, dwell,
Some said, in southern lands. From hell,
Said others, do they come. “Oh, tell
Us, tell us, Hadragum, our Seer!”
They cried. “Whence come they here? And why?
And are these fearsome creatures nigh?
And shall they, setting all awry,
Profane the turning of the year?”

Perturbed and troubled was his mind
Which must his body leave behind
And, by no carnal sense confined,
Enter the Spirit Realm to find
The truth for Hadragum the Seer.
The sage began his sacred dance;
His folk kept time with frenzied chants
Until he sank into a trance
Before the turning of the year.

The chanting ceased; all movement froze
As from his body comatose
A voice both loud and clear arose:
“Pay heed, and learn! For I disclose
The truth,” said Hadragum the Seer.
“For I have seen deep mysteries
And looked through years and centuries.
But first know with good auguries
You’ll greet the turning of this year.”

“The creatures tall that cause you dread
Are not from hell, as some have said,
But from the southlands they have spread
And are but men of flesh. So shed
Your fears,” said Hadragum the Seer.
“For we are many, they still few.
Nor are they nigh. Take heart! Eschew
All cares and doubts; let joy ensue
To cheer the turning of the year.”

The clansmen heard this with delight.
And put aside their former fright.
“We’ll greet,” they said, “Midwinter Night
With carefree mirth round fires bright.”
“But wait!” cried Hadragum the Seer,
“The fate that does our race concern
Have I received and in my turn
Pass onto you for you to learn
Before the turning of this year.”

“E’en as the centuries roll by
So shall the tall men multiply;
And all the lands that round us lie
These men will one day occupy.
And they,” said Hadragum the Seer,
“With better weapons shall find food
Enough and think our people crude
And let us be, and not preclude
Our marking ev’ry turning year.”

“And while these centuries unfold,
The Age of Ice shall lose its hold
And slowly pass away; less cold
Shall be the lands. And now, behold,
I tell,” said Hadragum the Seer,
“A mystery: our race of men
Shall slowly pass from this word’s ken
And with the spirits dwell till when
Shall cease all turnings of the year.”

“But here the tall men, though they’ll fight
For ever ’mongst themselves and blight
The very earth, yet shall their might
Increase and they will think it right
To exploit,” sighed Hadragum the Seer,
“All that the land and sea produce;
Nor shall the air escape abuse
From vapors foul which they’ll set loose
From many burnings ev’ry year.”

“They’ll arrogate the title ‘wise,’
And cunning things shall they devise
To travel in and fetch supplies
O’er lands and seas; e’en through the skies
They’ll fly,” said Hadragum the Seer.
“Dread weapons too shall they contrive
To kill by thousands; yet they’ll thrive
And multiply and ever strive
To sate their yearnings ev’ry year.”

“And more and more shall they consume;
and nature’s secrets they’ll presume
To know; nor heed the threats that loom,
For pride and greed shall seal their doom.
Too late,” said Hadragum the Seer,
“Some will give warning of their fate;
But still they will prevaricate;
And lost in selfish pleasure sate
Themselves each turning of the year.”

“But then shall come that awesome day
When all creation’s vast array
Shall melt into a cosmic fray
Consumed by fire and pass away.
Behold!” cried Hadragum the Seer,
“For now I see a new creation –
For heaven and earth regeneration, –
And no more hell. Such consolation
Be yours this turning of the year.”

“For then both wolf and bison graze
Together; mountain lion plays
With children who, unharmed, do gaze
On deer and bear nearby. Always
At peace,” said Hadragum the Seer,
“Shall we and tall folk live. No harm
Nor hurt shall be – no fear, alarm
Nor death – but gentleness and charm,
With no more turnings of the year.”

“So brighten up the longest night
With solstice fires set alight.
And let them symbols be whose sight
Shall mind you of that fire whose might
Shall end,” said Hadragum the Seer,
“This universe; and make anew
Both heaven and earth. So bid adieu
The year that’s been. Look forward through,
Beyond the turning of this year.”

Thus spoke the seer, and silence reigned.
Then he awoke and though still drained
Addressed his folk: "Now go, sustained
By faith and hope that's sure, not feigned."
They lauded Hadragum their Seer
And went their ways, their minds held fast
With thoughts profound. The weeks soon passed
Till Solstice Eve arrived at last
To mark the turning of the year

Then fires burning far and wide
Lit up Midwinter's night beside
The shore; and thus the old year died.
And with the turning of the tide
The life of Hadragum the Seer
Began to ebb and gently glide
Into the Spirit Realm to abide
Until the Day he'd prophesied
Before the turning of that year.

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