

The Tale of Beren and Lúthien

*being a prose adaptation of the Lay Of Leithian
supplemented by The Quenta Silmarillion
and also drawing from The Tale of Tinúviel, The Quenta Noldorinwa,
The Annals of Aman, The Grey Annals, and The Lord of the Rings.*

Among the tales of sorrow and ruin that come down to us from the darkness of the Elder Days there are yet some that are fair in memory, in which amid weeping there is a sound of music, and amid the tears joy, and under the shadow of death light that endures. And of these histories most fair still in the ears of the Elves is the Tale of Beren and Lúthien; for it is sad and joyous, and touches upon mysteries, and it is not ended. Of their lives was made the Lay of Leithian, Release from Bondage, which is the longest save one of the songs concerning the world of old; but here the tale is told without song.

The King of Doriath

A king there was in days of old: his power was reared in cavern's shade ere Men yet walked upon the mould; his hand was over glen and glade. His crown was wrought of silver grey, his mantle green, his steel lances long and keen. Ere moon was made or sun was wrought, the starlight was caught in his shining shield.

In after-days, when from Valinor the Elven-hosts returned in might to the shore of Middle-earth, and banners flew and beacons burned, when kings of Eldamar went by in strength of war beneath the sky, then still his silver trumpets thrilled in strong challenge beneath the stars, when sun was young and moon was new.

Afar then in Beleriand, in Doriath's enchanted land, King Thingol sat on guarded throne in many-pillared halls of stone, and wielded might and glory and wealth untold. There were laid in hoard beryl, pearl, and pale opal, and metal wrought like fishes' mail, buckler and corset, axe and sword, and gleaming spears. All these he had and counted small; for dearer than all wealth in hall, and fairer than are born of Men, he had a daughter, Lúthien.

Such lissom limbs no more shall run on the green earth beneath the sun; so fair a maid no more shall be from dawn to dusk, from sun to sea. Her robe was blue as summer skies, but grey as evening were her eyes; her mantle sewn with fair golden lilies, but dark as shadow was her hair. Her feet were light and swift as bird on wing, her laughter merry as the spring: the slender willow, the bowing reed, the fragrance of a flowering mead, the light upon the leaves of trees, the voice of water; more than these were her beauty and blissfulness, her glory and her loveliness.

She dwelt in the enchanted land while Elven-might yet held in hand the woven woods of Doriath: none ever found the path unbidden, none dared pass the forest-eaves, or stir the listening leaves with tongue of fleet hounds a-hunting, with horse or horn, or mortal feet. To North there lay a land of dread, Nan Dungortheb, where all ways were dead in hills of shadow, bleak and cold; beyond was Taur-nu-Fuin's grim fastness, where Deadly Nightshade lurked and lay, where sun was sick and moon was dim. To South the wide earth unexplored; to West the ancient Ocean roared, unsailed and shoreless, wide and wild; to East the mountains of the outer world were piled in peaks of blue, in silence folded, mist-enfurled, beyond the tangled woodland shade, thorn and thicket, grove and glade, whose brooding boughs hung with magic were ancient when the world was young.

Thus Thingol abode as king in his many tall and torchlit dolven halls, the Thousand Caverns of Menegroth. Lord of the forest and the fell, the king of beech and oak and elm, and sharp was his sword and high his helm. To him there led no mortal road. Beside him sat his deathless queen, fair Melian; who wove unseen nets of enchantment round his throne, and spells were laid on tree and stone.

When leaves were long and grass was green, when finch and mavis sang their song, there under bough and under sun, in shadow and in light, would run fair Lúthien the Elven-maid, dancing in dell and grassy glade. When sky was clear and stars were keen, as daylight melted into eve, then Daeron with his lean fingers would weave a trembling sweet music on flutes of silver, thin and clear, warbling wild, for love of Lúthien, the maiden dear, Thingol's Elven child. There was mirth and bright voices; there eve was peace and morn was light; there jewel gleamed, and wan silver and red gold shone on white fingers. And elanor and niphredil still bloomed unfading in the grass, while the endless years of Elven-land rolled over far Beleriand.

Until befell a day of doom, as still the Elven-harpers tell.

The King of Angband

Far in the Northern hills of stone, in caverns black there was a throne, encircled by flame that winds of ice with moaning sound made flare and flicker. There the dark smoke rose in coiling columns to choke the breath of life, and there all those who strayed by doom beneath that ghastly shade would creep lost to hopeless death in deep and gasping sunless dungeons, where evil things crouched.

There sat a king, most dark and fell of all that dwell under heaven. More ancient was Morgoth than earth or sea, than moon or star; mightier far in abysmal mind than the thought of Eldar or Men, and wrought of strength primeval. Ere the stone was hewn to build the world, alone he walked in darkness, a power that dwelt apart, fierce and dire, burned by fire even as he wielded it. He it was that laid in black ruin the Blessed Realm, and then fled back to Middle-earth to build anew beneath the peaks of Thangorodrim mansions filled with misbegotten slaves of hate. Death's shadow brooded at his gate. He armed his hosts with spears of steel and brands of iron, and at their heel the wolf walked and the serpent crept with lidless eyes. Now forth they leapt, his ruinous legions,

kindling war in field and frith and hoar woodland. They bore their black banners where the golden elanor had long gleamed amid the grass. Where finch had sung and harpers had wrung their silver harps, now the dark ravens wheeled and cried amid the reek; and far and wide the swords of Morgoth dripped with red above the hewn and trampled dead. Slowly his shadow like a cloud rolled from the North, and his vengeance fell with fire and sword on the proud that would not yield; to death or thralldom all things he doomed: the Northern land lay cowed beneath his ghastly hand.

The Man Barahir

But still there lived in cold hiding a son of Bëor, Barahir the bold. Bereaved of land and shorn of lordship, who once was born a prince of Men, now lurked an outlaw and lay in the hard heath and grey woodland. Barahir would not forsake Dorthonion, and there Morgoth pursued him to the death, until at last there remained to him only twelve companions, still faithful when all hope was spent. Their names are yet remembered in Elven-song, though the years are long since doughty Dagnir and Ragnor, Radhruin, Dairuin and Gildor, Gorlim the Unhappy, and Urthel, and Arthad and Hathaldir fell; since the black shaft with venomous wound took Belegund and Baragund, the mighty sons of Bregolas; since he whose doom and deeds surpass all tales of Men was laid on bier: fair Beren, son of Barahir.

For these it was, the chosen men of Bëor's house, who in the fen of reedy Serech stood at bay about King Finrod Felagund in the day of his defeat, and with their swords thus saved the fairest of all the Elven-lords; and his love they earned. And he escaping south established Nargothrond his mighty realm, where still he wore his crowned helm. But they rode to their northern homeland, dauntless and few, and there abode unconquered still, defying fate, and pursued by Morgoth's sleepless hate.

There they wrought such deeds of daring that soon the hunters that sought them fled at rumour of their coming. Though a price was set on each head to match the weregild of a king, no soldier could bring even news to Morgoth of their hidden lair. For where the brown and bare highland arose above the darkling pines of steep Dorthonion to the snows and barren mountain-winds, there lay a lake of water, Tarn Aeluin, clear and blue by day, and by night a mirror of dark glass for the stars of Elbereth that pass above the world into the West. All that land was pathless and untamed, for even in the days of the Long Peace none had dwelt there. But the waters of Tarn Aeluin were held in reverence, for it was said that Melian herself had hallowed that water in days of old. Still that place was blest: no shadow of Morgoth and no evil thing yet came thither. A whispering ring of slender birches silver-grey stooped on its margin, round it lay a lonely moor, and the bare bones of ancient Earth like standing stones thrust through the heather and the whin. There under the grey stones by houseless Aeluin the hunted lord and faithful men made their den. But the rumour of the deeds of Barahir and his companions went far and wide; and Morgoth commanded Sauron to find them and destroy them.

Gorlim the Unhappy

Of these, Gorlim the Unhappy, son of Angrim, as the tales tell, was one most fierce and hopeless. While the fortune of his life was fair, he took to wife the white maiden Eilinel, and dear love they had ere evil befell. He rode to war upon the marches; but returned from war to find his fields and homestead plundered and forsaken, empty amid the leafless wood. And Eilinel, white Eilinel, was taken thither none could tell, to death or thralldom far away. Black was the shadow of that day forever on his heart, and doubt still gnawed him as he went about in wilderness wandering, or at night oft sleepless, thinking that she might have fled into the woods ere evil came: she was not dead, she lived, she would return again to seek him, and would deem him slain. Therefore at whiles he left the lair, and secretly, alone, would dare peril and come at night to his old house that still stood, broken and cold, without fire or light, amid the fields and woods he had once possessed; and naught would he gain but grief renewed, watching and waiting there in vain.

In vain, or worse --- for Morgoth had many spies, many lurking eyes well used to pierce the deepest dark; and Gorlim's coming they would mark and report. There came a day of autumn when once more Gorlim crept that way, down the deserted weedy lane at dusk of evening, sad with rain and cold whining wind. Lo! amazed he saw a light at window fluttering in the night; and drawing warily near, between hope and sudden fear, he looked within. Eilinel! Though changed she was, he knew her well. She was worn with grief and hunger, her tresses tangled, raiment torn; her gentle eyes were dim with tears as soft she wept: "Gorlim, Gorlim! Thou canst not have forsaken me. Then slain, alas! slain thou must be! And I must linger alone, cold and loveless as barren stone!"

One cry he gave --- and then the light blew out, and in the wind of night wolves howled; and on his shoulder fell suddenly heavy gripping hands. Thus Gorlim was ensnared. There Morgoth's servants caught him fast, and he was cruelly bound and brought to Sauron, captain of the host, the lord of werewolf and ghost, most foul and fell of all who knelt at Morgoth's throne. In might he dwelt on Tol-in-Gaurhoth, but now had ridden with strength abroad, bidden by Morgoth to find the rebel Barahir. Sauron sat near in dark encampment, and thither the butchers dragged their prey. There now Gorlim lay in anguish, with bond on neck, on hand and foot. To bitter torment he was put to break his will, and constrain him to buy with treason end of pain. But naught to them would he reveal of Barahir, nor break the seal of faith that was laid on his tongue; until at last a pause was made, and one came softly to his stake, a darkling form that stooped and spoke to him of Eilinel his wife.

"Wouldst thou," he said, "forsake thy life, who with few words might win release for her and thee, and go in peace and dwell together far from war, friends of the King? What wouldst thou more?"

And Gorlim, now long worn with pain, yearning to see his wife again (whom he thought was also caught in Sauron's net and made captive), allowed the thought to grow, and faltered in his troth. Then straight, half willing and half loath, they brought him to the seat of stone where Sauron sat. He stood alone before that dark and dreadful face; and Sauron said, "Come, base mortal! What do I hear? That thou wouldst dare barter with me? Well, speak fair! What is thy price?"

And Gorlim bowed his head low, and with great woe, word on slow word, at last implored that merciless and faithless lord that he might depart free, and again might find Eilinel the White, and dwell with her, and cease from war against the King. He craved no more.

Then Sauron smiled, and said, "Thou thrall! The price thou asketh is but small for treachery and shame so great! I grant it surely! Well, I wait: Come! Speak now swiftly and speak true!"

Then Gorlim wavered, and he half drew back; but Sauron's daunting eye held him there, and he dared not lie. As he began, so must he wend from first false step to faithless end; he must answer all as he could, betray his lord and brotherhood, and cease, and fall upon his face.

Then Sauron laughed aloud, and he mocked Gorlim: "Thou base, thou cringing worm! Stand up and hear me! And now drink the cup that I have sweetly blent for thee! Thou fool: a phantom thou didst see that I, I Sauron, made to snare thy lovesick wits. Naught else was there. 'Tis cold to wed with Sauron's wraiths! Thy Eilinel! She is long since dead, dead, food of worms less low than thou. And yet thy boon I grant thee: to Eilinel thou shalt go and be set free of my service, and lie in her bed, no more to know of war --- or manhood. Have thy pay!"

And they then dragged Gorlim away and cruelly slew him; and at last in the dank mould cast his body, where Eilinel long since had lain in the burned woods, slain by butchers. Thus Gorlim died an evil death, and cursed himself with dying breath. And Barahir at last was caught in Morgoth's snare; for set at naught by treason was the ancient grace that long guarded that lonely place, Tarn Aeluin. Now were laid bare all secret paths and the hidden lair, and Morgoth drew his net about it. Dark now from the North blew the cloud; the cold winds of autumn hissed in the heather, and Ailuin's mournful water lay sad and grey.

Beren son of Barahir

Then said Barahir: "Son Beren, thou knowest the rumour that we hear of strength from Tol-in-Gaurhoth that is sent against us; and our food nigh well spent. On thee the lot falls by our law to go forth now alone to draw what help thou canst from the hidden few that feed us still; and to spy upon the ways of the enemy to learn what is new. Good fortune go with thee! In speed return, for grudgingly we spare thee from our brotherhood, so small: and Gorlim in the wood is long astray or dead. Farewell!"

As Beren went, that word still resounded in his heart like a knell, the last of his father that he heard. Through moor and fen, by tree and briar, he wandered far afield. He saw the fire of Sauron's camp, he heard the howl of hunting Orc and wolf. And turning back, for long was the way, he lay benighted in the forest. In weariness he then must sleep, fain to creep into a badger-hole, and yet he heard (or dreamed) a marching legion nearby go with clink of mail and clash of shields up towards the stony mountain-fields. He slipped down into darkness then, until, as a drowning man strives gasping upwards, it seemed to him he rose through slime to the brim of a sullen pool beneath dead trees. Their livid boughs trembled in a cold breeze, and their black leaves stirred: each leaf a black and croaking bird, whose beak let fall a gout of blood. An unseen web entwined him, hand and limb. He shuddered, struggling thence to crawl through winding weeds. Worn out, he lay and shivered upon the rim of stagnant pool. There he saw a shadow that quivered far out upon the water, a faint and grey form gliding across the dreary silent lake.

Slowly it came to him, and softly, sadly, spoke: "Gorlim I was, but now a wraith of defeated will, broken faith, traitor betrayed. Go! Stay not here! Awake, son of Barahir, and haste! For Morgoth's fingers close upon thy father's throat; he knows your secret trysts, your paths, your hidden lair." Then he revealed the devil's snare in which he fell, and failed; and last, begging forgiveness, wept, and passed out into darkness.

Beren woke, and leapt up as one filled by sudden stroke with fire of anger. He seized his bow and sword, and like the roe he sped hotfoot over rock and heath before the dawn. Ere day was dead he came to Aeluin, as the red sun sank westward in flame. But Tarn Aeluin was red with blood, and red were the stones and trampled mud. His heart afire with burning flame, he came at last where his father Barahir lay; he came too late. Black in the birches and alder-trees sat the raven and the carrion crow, and croaked in mockery; wet were their nebs, and dark the meat that dripped beneath their gripping feet.

There Beren in haste laid his father's bones beneath a cairn of stones. No graven rune nor word he wrote over Barahir; but thrice he smote the topmost stone, and thrice he cried his name.

"Thy death I will avenge," he vowed. "Yea, though my fate should lead at last to Angband's gate."

And then he turned, and did not weep; too dark was his heart, too deep the wound. Out into the night, as cold as stone, loveless, friendless, he strode alone.

He had no need of hunter's lore to find the trail. With little heed his ruthless foe, secure and proud, marched away north with loud blowing of brazen horns to greet their lord, trampling the earth with grinding feet. Behind them, bold but wary, went Beren, swift as hound on scent. Over fen and field and mountain he followed, until beside a darkling well, where Rivil rises from the fell to flow down into Serech's reeds, he found the slayers, his foe. From hiding on the near hillside he marked them all: though less than feared, too many for his sword and bow to slay alone. Then, crawling low as snake in heath, he crept nearer. And because of his woodcraft he came near to their fire unseen. There many slept, weary with marching; but captains, sprawling on the grass, drank and let pass their booty from hand to hand, grudging each small thing raped from the dead bodies. One held up the hand of Barahir that he had cut off as a token for Sauron that their mission was fulfilled; and the ring of Felagund was on that hand; and laughed and made boast of his deeds.

"Now, mates," he cried, "here's mine! And I'll not be denied, though few be like it in the land. For it was wrenched from the hand of that same Barahir I slew, the robber-knave. If tales be true, he had it of some Elvish-lord, for the rogue-service of his sword. No help it gave him --- he's dead. They are perilous, Elvish-rings, 'tis said; still for the gold I'll keep it, yea and so eke out my niggard pay. Old Sauron bade me bring it back, and yet, methinks, he has no lack of weightier treasures in his hoard: the greater the lord the greedier! So mark ye, mates, ye all shall swear the hand of Barahir was bare!"

And as he spoke an arrow sped from behind tree, and choking, he fell forward, crumpled dead with barb in throat; with leering face he smote the earth.

Forth then, as grim wolfhound, there leapt Beren among them. Two he swept aside with sword; caught up the ring; slew one who grasped him; with a spring passed back into shadow, and fled before their yells of wrath and dread of ambush rang in the valley.

Then after him like wolves they sprang, howling and cursing, gnashing teeth, hewing and bursting through the heath, shooting wild arrows, sheaf on sheaf, at trembling shade or shaking leaf.

In fateful hour was Beren born: he laughed at dart and wailing horn; fleetest of foot of living men, tireless on fell and light on fen, elf-wise in the wood, he passed away, lost in rock and thorn, defended by his grey hauberk made of Dwarvish craft in Nogrod, where hammers rang in cavern's shade.

Thereafter for four years more Beren wandered still upon Dorthonion, a solitary outlaw; but he became the friend of birds and beasts, and they aided him, and did not betray him, and from that time forth he ate no flesh nor slew any living thing that was not in the service of Morgoth. Beren was renowned as fearless: folk would speak his name, foretelling that his after-fame would pass even golden Hador or Barahir and Bregolas. But now sorrow wrought his heart to fierce despair and robbed his life of sweetness. No more he fought in hope of life or joy or praise, but seeking to use his days only that Morgoth should feel deep the sting of his avenging steel, ere death he found and end of pain: his only fear was thralldom's chain.

Danger he sought and death pursued, and thus escaped the doom he wooed, and wrought alone deeds of breathless daring, of which the rumour brought hope to many a broken man. They whispered, "Beren!", and began to whet swords in secret, and oft by shrouded hearths at evening they would sing soft of Beren's bow, of Dagmor his sword: how he would go silent to camps and slay the chief, or trapped in his hiding would past belief slip away, and under night by mist or moon, or by the light of open day would come again. Of hunters hunted they sang, of slayers slain, of Gorgol the Butcher hewn, of ambush at Ladros, fire in Drûn, of thirty dead in one battle, of wolves that yelped like curs and fled, yea, of Sauron himself with wound in hand.

Thus Beren alone filled all that land with fear and death for Morgoth's folk. His comrades were the beech and oak who failed him not; and wary things with fur and fell and feathered wings watched over his ways, his faithful friends that wandered silent or dwelt alone in hill and wild and waste of stone.

The Flight of Beren

Yet an outlaw seldom ends well; and Morgoth was a king more strong than all the world has since recorded in song. At length Morgoth set a price on his head no less than the price upon the head of Fingon, High King of the Noldor. Dark athwart the land reached out the shadow of his hand, at each recoil returned again; for one foe slain two more were sent. But the Orcs fled rather at the rumour of Beren's approach than sought him out. Therefore an army was sent against him under the command of Sauron; and Sauron brought werewolves, fell beasts inhabited by dreadful spirits that he had imprisoned in their bodies. All that land was now become filled with evil, and all clean things were departing from it. New hope was cowed, all rebels killed, quenched were the fires, the songs were stilled, tree felled, heath burned, and through the waste marched the black host of Orcs in haste.

Almost they closed their ring of steel round Beren; hard upon his heel now trod their spies. Within their hedge, shorn of all aid, upon the edge of death he stood and knew that he must die at last, or flee the land of Barahir, his land beloved. Beneath a heap of nameless stones beside the mere must crumble those once mighty bones, forsaken by both son and kin, bewailed by reeds of Aeluin.

In winter's night he left behind the houseless North, and stealing forth he passed the leaguer of his watchful foe: a shadow on the snow, a swirl of wind, and he was gone, never again to look upon the ruin of Dorthonion, Tarn Aeluin and its wan water. No more shall hidden bowstring sing, no more his shaven arrows wing, no more his hunted head shall lie upon the heath beneath the sky. The moon that looked amid the mist upon the pines, the wind that hissed among the heath and the fern, found him no more. The Northern stars, that Varda Elbereth lit in ages long gone, whose silver fire in frosty airs Men of old named the Burning Briar, were set behind his back, and shone over land forsaken; lake and darkened hill, fen and mountain rill: he was gone.

Southward he turned, and away south his long and lonely journey lay, while ever loomed before his path the dreadful peaks of Ered Gorgoroth, the Mountains of Terror. Their northern slopes were filled with woe and evil. Never yet had foot of man most bold trod those steep and cold mountains, nor climbed upon their sudden brink; whence, sickened, eyes must turn and shrink to see their southward cliffs fall sheer in rocky pinnacle and pier down into shadows that were laid before the Sun and Moon were made. But out away beyond the ken of searching eyes and mortal sight, from dizzy towers that pierced the sky where only eagles lived and cried, the eagle's eye might see afar, grey and gleaming, as sheen on water under star, the borders of the Elven-land, Beleriand. There it was put into his heart that he would go down into Doriath, the Hidden Kingdom, where no mortal foot had yet trodden.

Terrible was his southward journey. Sheer were the precipices of Ered Gorgoroth, and beneath their feet were shadows that were laid before the raising of the Moon. Beyond lay the wilderness of Nan Dungortheb, where the sorcery of Sauron and the power of Melian came together, and horror and madness walked. In valleys woven with deceit and washed with bitter-sweet waters, dark magic lurked in gulf and glen. There spiders of the fell race of Ungoliant abode, spinning their unseen webs in which all living things were ensnared; and monsters wandered there that were born in the long dark before the Sun, hunting silently with many eyes. No food for Elves or Men was there in that haunted land, but death only. That journey is not accounted least among the great deeds of Beren, but he spoke of it to no one after, lest the horror return into his mind; and none knew how he found a way, and so came by paths that no Man nor Elf else ever dared to tread to the borders of Doriath. And he passed through the mazes that Melian wove about the kingdom of Thingol, for a great doom lay upon him.

King Thingol and Melian the Maia

There long, long ago in Elder-days, ere voice was heard or ways were trod, before the Sun and Moon were lit to sail above the world, when shaggy woods first unfurled, and shadowy shapes did stare and roam beneath the dark and starry dome that hung above the dawns of Middle-earth, stood Nan Elmoth wood, the haunt of silent shadows in starlit dusk. In Elder-days that long are gone, a light amid the shadows shone, a voice was heard in the silence: the sudden singing of a bird, the first to sing in mortal lands. There the Lady Melian came, and dark and long lay her tresses beneath her silver girdle-seat and down unto her silver feet. The nightingales she

brought with her, to whom she herself taught their song, who had sung sweet upon her gleaming hands in the immortal lands.

Melian was a Maia, of the race of the Valar. She dwelt in the gardens of Lórien, and among all his people there were none more beautiful than Melian, nor more skilled in songs of enchantment. It is told that the Valar would leave their works, and the birds of Valinor their mirth, that the bells of Valmar were silent and the fountains ceased to flow, when at the mingling of the lights Melian sang in Lórien.

Thence on a time, wandering wayward from Lórien, she dared to climb the everlasting mountain-wall of Valinor, at whose feet fall the surges of the Shadowy Sea. Out away she then went free, returning no more to gardens of the Valar, but on mortal shore she strayed, and she wandered in the wooded places of the world, a glimmer ere dawn, singing her spells from glade to glade. Nightingales went with her and often sang about her, and there she filled the silence of Middle-earth before the dawn with her voice and the voices of her birds. It was the song of these birds that smote the ear of Elwë Singollo, leader of that tribe of the Eldar that were the Teleri, as he fared with his companions behind the horse of Oromë. A bird trilled in dim Nan Elmoth wood, and Elwë stood amazed to listen. Ilúvatar had set a seed of music in the hearts of all that kindred, and it blossomed after very wondrously; but now the song of Melian's nightingales was the most beautiful music that Elwë had ever heard, and he strayed aside from the host, for a moment as he thought, seeking in the dark trees whence it might come.

Then far away he heard a voice more fair than fairest bird, a remote voice as crystal clear of note as a thread of silver glass. He thought no more of folk and kin, no more he recked of errand that the Eldar brought from far away Cuiviénen, of lands beyond the Seas. Forgetting all, drawn only by that distant call, till he stood deep in dim Nan Elmoth wood, lost and beyond recall.

And there he saw her standing beneath the stars, fair and fey, Melian the grey Lady, as silent as the windless trees, standing with a white mist about her, and in her face the light of remote Lórien glimmered in the night. No word she spoke; but pace by pace, a halting shadow, towards her walked the silver-mantled king, tall Elwë Singollo. In the ring of waiting trees he took her hand, and straightway a spell was laid on him. One moment face to face they stood alone beneath the wheeling sky, while starlit years on earth went by, and in Nan Elmoth wood the young trees grew dark and tall. The murmuring seas rose and fell on the shore, and he heeded no more Ulmo's horn. Thus began the love of Elwë Greymantle and Melian of Valinor.

But long his people sought their lord in vain, till at length Ulmo called again, and then in grief they followed Oromë and marched away, leaving the woods. They passed to grey havens upon the western shore, the last long shore of mortal lands, and thence were borne beyond the Sea to Aman, the Blessed Realm, to dwell by evergreen Ezelohar in Valinor, in Eldamar. But Elwë, enchanted still, stayed one moment to hearken to the thrill of that sweet singing in the trees. And has been said, it was not a moment he hearkened, but many years.

Thus Elwë sailed not on the seas to Valinor, but dwelt amid the land of trees, and divine Melian he loved, whose voice was potent as the wine the Valar drink in golden halls where flower blooms and fountain falls. But when she sang it was a spell, and no flower stirred nor fountain fell. Though Elwë had greatly desired to see again the light of the Trees, in the face of Melian the fair he beheld the Light of Aman as in an unclouded mirror, and in that light he was content. He came forth from Nan Elmoth with Melian, and they dwelt thereafter in the woods in the midst of that land. Then his folk gathered about him in joy; and they were amazed, for fair and noble as he had been, now he appeared as it were a lord of the Maiar, tallest of all the Children of Ilúvatar, his hair as grey silver, and his eyes like unto stars. Elu Thingol he was called in the tongue of his people, King Greymantle, and Melian was his Queen, wiser than any daughter of Middle-earth. Thus they long lived as king and queen, and Doriath was filled with song. And all the Elves that missed their way, and never found the western bay, the gleaming walls of their long home by the grey seas and the white foam, who never trod the golden land where stand the towers of the Valar, all these were gathered in their realm beneath the beech and oak and elm.

Lúthien Tinúviel

In later days, when Morgoth fled from wrath and raised once more his head and iron crown, and fortified anew his mighty seat, founded beneath the smoking mountain's feet, then slowly dread and darkness grew; the Shadow of the North would hold in thrall all the folk of Middle-earth. The lords of Men he brought to knee, and assailed with ever-mounting war the kingdoms of the Exiled Kings. They dwelt in their last havens by the shore, or defended strongholds walled with fear upon his drear borders, till each one fell.

Yet beyond his will there still reigned in Doriath the Grey King and immortal Queen. Hidden was Thingol's dwelling from the vision and knowledge of Morgoth by the magics of Melian, and she wove spells about the paths thereto that none but the Eldar might tread them easily, and so was the king secured from all dangers save it be treachery alone. No evil was seen in their realm; no power could yet surpass their might. There still was laughter and green grass, there leaves were lit by the white sun, and many marvels were begun. There went now in the Guarded Realm beneath the beech, beneath the elm, there ran lightfoot now on the green, the daughter of the king and queen. In sunshine and in sheen of moon, with silken robe and silver shoon, the daughter of the deathless queen now danced on the undying green in the glades beside Esgalduin. Half Elven-fair and half divine, born of Arda's eldest children in beauty of their Elven-morn, and only child descended from divine race who began before the world of Elf and Man, ordained by birth to walk in raiment of the Earth.

Far beyond the bounds of Arda still shone the Legions, star on star, memorials of their long labour, achievement of Vision and of Song. And when beneath their ancient light was cloudless night on Middle-earth below, music in Doriath awoke; and there beneath the branching oak, or seated on the brown beech-leaves, Daeron the dark with ferny crown played on his pipes of Elvish art, unbearable by mortal heart. No other player has there been, no other lips or fingers seen so skilled, 'tis said in Elven-lore, save Maglor son of Fëanor, forgotten harper, doomed singer, who was young when Laurelin yet bloomed, but who passed to endless lamentation and in the tombless sea was cast.

But Daeron in his heart's delight yet lived and played by starlit night; until befell one summer-eve, as still the Elven harpers tell. Merrily then his piping trilled. Upon a lawn the grass was soft, the wind was stilled, the twilight lingered grey and cool in

shadow-shapes upon the pool, standing still beneath the boughs of sleeping trees. About their knees a mist of hemlocks glimmered pale and faint, and ghostly moths with tiny eyes of fiery light went to and fro on frail lace-wings. Beside the mere, quickening, rippling, rising clear the piping called.

Then forth she came, as sheer and sudden as a flame of peerless white cleaving the shadows, leaving her maiden-bower on white feet. And as when summer stars arise radiant into darkened skies, her living light on all was cast in fleeting silver as she passed. There now she stepped in Elven pace, bending and swaying in her grace; then began to dance, to dance: in mazes ran bewildering, and a mist of white was wreathed about her whirling flight; nor may any see such liting save be it only in the gardens of Valinor where Nessa dances on the lawns of never-fading green. Wind-ripples on the water flashed, and trembling leaf and flower were plashed with diamond-dews, as ever fleet and fleeter went her wingéd feet. Her long hair as a cloud was streaming about her uplifted gleaming arms, as slow and white above the trees arose the Moon, in glory of the plenilune, and on the open glade its serene and clear light was laid.

Then suddenly her feet were stilled, and through the woven wood there thrilled, half wordless, half in Elven-tongue, her voice upraised in blissful song, that she once learned of nightingales and in her living joy had turned to heart-enthraling loveliness, unmarred, immortal, sorrowless:

“Ir Ithil ammen Eruchín menel-vîr síla díriel si loth a galadh lasto dîn! A Hîr Annûn gilthoniel, le linnon im Tinúviel!”	The Father raised the moon and the white-shining infinite heavens and the blossoms here beneath the leaves of the trees! O Queen of the West who kindled the stars, I sing to you here like a nightingale!
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O Elven-fairest Lúthien, what wonder moved thy dances then? What doom of enchanted Elvenesse did thy voice possess that night? Such marvel there no more shall be on Middle-earth or West beyond the sea, at dusk or dawn, by night or noon, or beneath the mirror of the moon! On Neldoreth was laid a spell; the piping fell into silence, for Daeron cast his flute away and it lay unheeded on the grass. Bound in wonder he stood as stone, heart-broken in the listening wood. And still she sang above the night, as light returning into light, upsoaring from the world below.

Beren first sees Lúthien

When suddenly there came a slow, dull tread of heavy feet on leaves; and from the darkness on the eaves of the bright glade a shape came out with hands agrope, as if in doubt or blind. And as it passed stumbling under the moon, cast a shadow, bended and darkling. Then from on high, as lark falls headlong from the sky, the song of Lúthien fell and ceased.

But Daeron, released from the spell, awoke to fear, and cried in woe: “Flee Lúthien, ah Lúthien, go! An evil walks in the wood! Away!” Then forth he fled in his dismay, ever calling her to follow him, until far off his cry was dim: “Ah flee, ah flee now, Lúthien!”

But silent she stood in the glen, unmoved, who had never known fear, alone as slender moonlit flower, white and windless, waiting; and in her upturned face was a shining light.

And this it was that Beren heard, and this he saw, enchanted dumb, yet filled with fire of such a wonder and desire that all his mortal mind was dim. Her magic bound and fettered him, and faint he leaned against a tree. Gaunt he was, forwandered, wayworn, his body sick and heart gone cold, grey in his hair, his youth turned old; for those that tread that lonely way pay a price of woe and anguish. And now his heart was healed with a new life and slain with new pain. He gazed, and as he gazed her hair within its cloudy web did snare the silver moonbeams sifting white between the leaves; and glinting bright, the tremulous starlight of the skies was caught and mirrored in her eyes.

Then all his journey’s lonely fare --- the hunger and the haggard care, the awful mountain’s stones he stained with blood of weary feet, and gained only a land of ghosts and imprisoned fear in dark sheer ravines, where mighty spiders wove their webs, old foul creatures with birdlike nebs that span their traps in dizzy air, and filled it with clinging black despair, and the sucked bones lay white on the dank stones beneath --- now all these horrors faded from mind like a cloud. He heard no more the waters falling loud from pine-clad heights, those grey and frore waters that bittersweet he drank and filled his mind with madness --- all was stilled. He recked not now the burning road, the demented paths where he strode endlessly, and ever new horizons stretched before his view, as each blue ridge was climbed with bleeding feet, and down he went to meet in battle with creatures old and strong and monsters in the dark, and long, long watches in the haunted night while evil shapes with baleful light in clustered eyes did crawl and snuff beneath his tree --- he deemed the price not half-enough to come at last when day had passed to that pale moon, to those clear stars of Elvenesse, the hearts-ease and the loveliness.

Lo! forgetting all, he was drawn unheeding toward the glimmering lawn by love and wonder that compelled his feet from hiding. So slender was she and so fair that at length he stood heedlessly in the open to better gaze upon her. Music welled within his heart, and songs unmade on themes unthought-of moved and swayed his soul with sweetness. Out he came, a shadow in the moon’s pale flame.

“Flee, Lúthien! Lúthien!” Daeron called again from hiding. “A stranger walks the woods! Away!”

But Lúthien wondering stayed. Fear she had never felt or known; till fear seized her then, all alone, seeing that shape with shagged hair and long shadow that halted there. Then sudden she vanished like a dream in dark oblivion, a gleam of hurrying clouds, for she leapt among the tall hemlocks, and crept under a mighty plant with leaves all long and dark, whose stem upheld in sheaves a hundred fair umbels. And her bare white arms and shoulders, her raiment pale, and the wild white roses glimmering in her hair; all lay like spattered hoar moonlight in gleaming pools upon the floor.

Then he stared, wild, bound in dumbness, at silent trees, deserted ground. He blindly groped across the glade to the dark trees’

encircling shade, and while she watched with veiled eyes, suddenly did he lay his hand upon her slender arm beneath the leaves; and with a cry she started away from him and flitted as fast as she could in the wan light, in and about the tree-trunks and the hemlock-stalks. Like startled moth from deathlike sleep in sunless nook or deep bushes she darted swift, and to and fro with the cunning that Elvish dancers know, about the trunks of trees she twined a fantastic path. Far behind, enchanted, wildered and forlorn, Beren came blundering, bruised and torn. He followed swiftly, yet not swiftly enough, for in the end she escaped him. Esgalduin the Elven-stream, in which the stars gleam amid tree-shadows, flowed strong before his feet. Some secret way she found, and fleet passed over and reached the dwellings of her father, and was seen no more, and left him forsaken on the shore; nor did she dance alone in the woods for many a day after.

“Darkly the sundering flood rolls past! To this my long way comes at last --- a hunger and a loneliness, enchanted waters pitiless.”

Beren wanders in Doriath

Beren would not leave those places, hoping to see that fair Elven maiden dance yet again, and he wandered in the wood searching for Lúthien. In his heart he called her Tinúviel, that signifies Nightingale, daughter of the twilight, for he knew no other name for her. By dawn and dusk he sought her, but ever more hopefully when the moon shone bright. A summer waned, an autumn glowed, and Beren abode in the woods, as wild and wary as a faun that wakes sudden at rustling dawn, and flits from shade to shade, and flees the brightness of the sun, yet sees all stealthy movements in the wood. He heard the murmurous warmth in good weather, the hum of many wings, the call of many a bird, the pattering fall of sudden rain upon the trees, the windy tide in leafy seas, the creaking of the boughs. But not the song of sweetest bird brought joy or comfort to his heart, a wanderer dumb who dwelt apart; who sought unceasing and in vain to hear and see those things again: a song more fair than nightingale, a wonder in the pale moonlight.

An autumn waned, a winter laid the withered leaves in grove and shade; the bare beeches were gaunt and grey, and their red leaves lay beneath them. From cavern pale the moist moon eyed the white mists that arose from earth to hide the morrow's sun, and dripped from each twig's tip all the grey day. By dawn and dusk he sought her still, by noon and night in chill valleys, nor heard a sound but the slow beat of his own feet on sodden leaves.

The wind of winter sounded his horn; the misty veil was rent and torn. The wind died, and the starry choirs in the silent sky leaped to fires, whose light came bitter-cold and sheer through domes of frozen clear crystal.

At last one night he saw a sparkle through the darkling trees, a piercing glint of light; and there she danced all alone upon a treeless knoll, and Daeron was not there. Her blue mantle with white jewels caught all the rays of frosted light. She shone with cold and wintry flame, as she came dancing down the hill and passed his silent watchful gaze, a glimmer as of stars ablaze. And snowdrops sprang beneath her feet; and one late bird, sudden and sweet, shrilled as she wayward passed along. A frozen brook awoke and laughed to bubbling song; but Beren stood still bound enchanted in the wood; a chain was upon his limbs. Her starlight faded and the night closed over the glimmering white snowdrops.

Thereafter, often and oft on moonlit night, he saw far off on a green hillock the Elven-sheen of shining limb and bright jewel; and once more Daeron's pipe awoke, and soft she sang as once before. Then nigh he stole beneath the trees, and heartache mingled with hearts-ease. Indeed for long Lúthien knew of his coming and feigned otherwise, and for long her fear had departed by reason of the wistful hunger of his face lit by the moonlight; and she saw that he was kind and in love with her beautiful dancing.

The Love of Beren and Lúthien

A night there was when winter died; then all alone she sang and danced until the dawn of spring. Keen, heart-piercing was her song as the song of the lark that rises from the gates of night and pours its voice among the dying stars, seeing the sun beyond the walls of the world; and the song of Lúthien released the bonds of winter. Then the spell of silence fell from Beren, and he woke to sweet madness and brave despair. He flung his arms to the night air, and out he danced unheeding, fleet, with enchanted feet. He sped towards the green hillock, the lissom limbs, the dancing sheen; he leapt upon the hill to fill his arms with loveliness. Yet his arms were empty, and she fled away, away her white feet sped. But as she went he swiftly came and called her with the tender name of nightingales in Elvish tongue, that all the woods now sudden rung:

“Tinúviel! Tinúviel!”

And clear as a bell was his voice; its echoes wove a binding spell:

“Tinúviel! Tinúviel!”

Such love and longing filled his voice, one moment she stood; fear was stilled. One moment only; like a flame he leaped towards her as she stayed, and caught and kissed that Elven maid. But as she looked on him, doom fell upon her, and she loved him. As love woke there in sweet surprise, the starlight trembled in her eyes; yet she slipped from his arms and vanished from his sight even as the day was breaking.

Ah Lúthien! Ah Lúthien! more fair than any child of Men, O! loveliest maid of Elvenesse, what madness did now possess thee! Ah! lissom limbs and shadowy hair and chaplet of white snowdrops; O! starry diadem and white hands beneath the pale moonlight!

He lay upon the leafy mould, as one slain at once by bliss and grief, his face upon earth's cold bosom, a-swoon in overwhelming bliss, enchanted of an Elvish kiss, seeing within his darkened eyes the light that dies for no darkness, the loveliness that doth not fade, though all be laid cold in ashes. Then folded in the mists of sleep he sank into deep abysses, drowned in an overwhelming grief for parting after meeting brief. A shadow and a fair fragrance lingered, and waned, and was not there. The daylight found him cold and alone, his heart forsaken and barren.

“Where art thou gone?” he rose and cried. “The day is bare, the sunlight dark, and the air cold! Tinúviel, where went thy feet? O wayward star! O maiden sweet! O flower of Elvenesse all too fair for mortal heart! The woods are bare! Ere spring was born, the

spring hath died!”

And wandering in path and mind, he groped as one gone sudden blind, who seeks to grasp with faltering hands the light hidden in more than night. And thus in anguish Beren paid for that great doom laid upon him, the deathless love of Lúthien, too fair for love of mortal Men; and in his doom was Lúthien snared. The deathless shared in his dying; and Fate forged them a binding chain of living love and mortal pain; and her anguish was greater than any other of the Eldalië has known.

Beyond his hope her feet returned at eve where he sat in darkness, when in the sky there burned the flame of stars; and in her eyes there trembled the starlight of the skies, and from her hair fell the fragrance of Elven-flowers in Elven-dell. Thus Lúthien, whom no pursuit, no snare, no dart that hunters shoot, might hope to win or hold, she came at the sweet calling of her name. And thus long ago in the Hidden Kingdom her slender hand was linked in his, in far Beleriand; in hour enchanted did her arms go about his neck, and gently down she drew to rest his weary head upon her breast.

A! Lúthien, Tinúviel, why wentest thou to darkling dell, with shining eyes and dancing pace, the twilight glimmering in thy face? Each day before the end of eve she sought her lover, nor would leave him until the stars were dimmed and day came glimmering eastward silver-grey. Then trembling-veiled she would appear and dance before him, half in fear; there flitting just before his feet she gently chided with sweet laughter:

“Come! dance now, Beren, dance with me! For I would fain see thy dancing. Come! thou must woo with nimbler feet than those who walk where mountains meet the bitter skies beyond this realm of marvelous moonlit beech and elm.”

In Doriath long ago Beren learned to know new art and lore; his limbs were freed; his eyes alight, kindled with a new enchanted sight; and attuned to her dancing feet his feet went dancing free and fleet. His laughter welled as from a spring of music, and his voice would sing as voices of those in Doriath, where floor and path are paved with flowers. The year thus rolled on to summer, from spring to a summertime of gold; and no others of the Children of Ilúvatar have had joy so great, though the time was brief.

Daeron betrays Lúthien

But Daeron the minstrel also loved Lúthien, and he espied her meetings with Beren. Fleeting fast their short hour flew, while Daeron watched with fiery eyes, haunting the gloom of tangled trees all day, until at night he saw in the fickle moon their moving feet, two lovers linked in sweet dancing, two shadows shimmering on the green where had been maid dancing lonely.

And he cried aloud in the bitterness of his heart: “Hateful is now become the land that I loved, and the trees misshapen. May fear and silence seize on thee! My flute shall fall from idle hand; no more shall music be here heard. Let all voices fail in Doriath, and in every dale and upon every hill let the trees stand silent!”

It seemed a hush and a great stillness had fallen upon the waiting woodland air; and often murmured Thingol’s folk in wonder, and to their king they spoke:

“Who hath wrought this spell of silence? What web hath caught Daeron’s music? It seems the very birds sing low; Esgalduin doth flow murmurless, the leaves scarce whisper on the trees, and soundless beat the wings of bees!”

This Lúthien heard, and unseen there the queen saw her sudden glances. But Thingol marveled, and he sent for Daeron the piper, ere he went and sat upon his mounded seat --- his grassy throne by the grey feet of the Queen of Birches, Hirilorn, upon whose triple piers were borne the mightiest vault of leaf and bough from the world’s beginning until now. She stood above Esgalduin’s shore, where long slopes fell beside the guarded gates, the stark portals of the dark and echoing Thousand Caverns.

There Thingol sat and heard no sound save far off footsteps on the ground; no flute, no voice, no song of bird, no choirs of windy leaves stirred there; and Daeron coming spoke no word, silent amid the woodland folk.

Then Thingol said, “O Daeron fair, thou master of all rare musics, O Daeron wise, who with wary ears and watchful eyes doth ever heed and understand all that passes in this land, what omen doth this silence bear? What summons do the woodlands wait, what horn afar upon the air? Mayhap the Lord Oromë, the forest-god, from his gate and tree-propped halls, rides his great wild stallion golden-shod amid the trumpets’ loud tempest, amid his green-clad hunters proud, leaving his divine deer and firths and emerald forests? Some faint sign of his great onset may have come upon the Western winds, and dumb the woods now listen for a chase that here once more shall race thundering beneath the shade of mortal trees. Would it were so! An age now hath gone by since Nahar trod this earth, and Oromë hath not left the Lands of Ease since Morgoth did wage evil wars, since ruin fell upon the North, and the unhappy Noldor, rebel lords of Eldamar, wandered forth. But if not he, who or what comes?”

And Daeron answered, “He cometh not! No feet divine shall leave that shore, where roar the Outer Seas’ last surges, till many things be come to pass, and many evils wrought. Alas! the guest is here. The woods are still, but wait not; for a marvel holds them chill at the strange deeds they see, though king sees not --- yet queen maybe can guess, and maiden doubtless knows. Where one went lonely two now go!”

“Whither thy riddle points is plain,” the king said in anger, “but deign to make it plainer! Who is he that earns my wrath? How walks he free within my woods amid my folk, a stranger to both beech and oak?”

But Daeron looked on Lúthien and faltered, seeing his disgrace, and would he had not spoken then. No more would he speak that day, though Thingol’s face was grey with wrath. Then Lúthien stepped lightly forth.

“Far in the mountain-leaguered North, my father,” said she, “lies the land that groans beneath King Morgoth’s hand. Thence came one hither, bent and worn in wars and travail, who had sworn undying hatred of that king; the last of Bëor’s sons, they sing, and even hither far and deep within thy woods the echoes creep through the wild mountain-passes cold --- the last of Bëor’s house to hold a sword unconquered, neck unbowed, a heart uncowed by evil power. No evil needst thou think or fear of Beren son of Barahir! If aught thou hast to say to him, then swear to hurt not flesh nor limb, and I will lead him to thy hall, a son of kings, no mortal thrall.”

The King was filled with anger, for Lúthien he loved above all things, setting her above all the princes of the Elves; whereas mortal Men he did not even take into his service. Long King Thingol looked upon her while hand nor foot nor tongue did stir; and

Melian, silent, unamazed, gazed on Lúthien and Thingol.

"No blade nor chain shall mar his limbs," the king then swore. "He wanders far, and news, mayhap, he hath for me, and words maybe I have for him!"

Now Thingol bade them all depart, save Daeron, whom he called: "What art, what wizardry of Northern mist hath this ill-comer brought us? List! Tonight go thou by secret path, who knoweth all wide Doriath, and watch that Lúthien --- daughter mine, what madness doth entwine thy heart, what web from Morgoth's dreadful halls hath caught thy feet and enthralls thee --- watch that she not bid this Beren flee back whence he came. I would see him! Take with thee woodland wise archers. Let naught beguile your hearts or eyes!"

Beren comes before Thingol

Thus Daeron heavyhearted did, and the woods were filled with hidden watchers to lay hands on him and lead him to Menegroth as a malefactor; yet needless, for Lúthien that night led Beren by the golden light of mounting moon unto the shore and bridge before her father's door; and the silent white light looked within the waiting portals yawning dim.

Downward with gentle hand she led through corridors whose turns were lit by lanterns hung or flames from torches that were flung on the cold stone floor. Then sudden, deep beneath the earth the silences were shaken and the rocks were ringing with silver mirth; the birds of Melian were singing; and the ways of shadow spread wide as into arched halls she led Beren in wonder. There a light, like day immortal and like night of stars unclouded, shone and gleamed. A vault of topless trees it seemed, whose trunks of carven stone stood there like towers of an enchanted wood for ever fast bound in magic, bearing a roof whose branches wound in endless tracery of green, lit by some leaf-imprisoned sheen of moon and sun, and wrought of gems, and each leaf hung on golden stems.

Lo! there amid immortal flowers in shining bowers the nightingales sang over the head of Melian, while water for ever dripped and ran from fountains in the rocky floor. There Thingol sat. His crown of green and silver he wore, and round his chair stood a host in fair gleaming armour. Lúthien herself led Beren before the throne of Thingol, as if he were an honoured guest.

Then Thingol looked upon Beren in scorn and anger; but Melian was silent. Beren looked upon the ground, for Melian's gaze had sought his face, and dazed in that place he drooped; and when the king spake deep and slow: "Who are thou that stumblest hither as a thief? Know that none unbidden seek this throne or ever leave these halls of stone!" no word he answered, being filled with dread, for the splendour of Menegroth and the majesty of Thingol were very great.

But Lúthien answered in his stead, "Behold, my father, one who came pursued by hatred like a flame! Lo! Beren son of Barahir, lord of Men, mighty foe of Morgoth, the tale of whose deeds is become a song even among the Elves! What need hath he to fear thy wrath, foe of our foes, without a friend, whose knees do not bend to Morgoth? Be thou not harsh with him, unless thou desirest to see thy daughter Tinúviel weep, for more wonder has he at my dancing than any I have known."

"Let Beren answer!" Thingol said. "What wouldst thou here? What led thy wandering feet hither, O mortal wild, and for what cause hast thou left thine own land to enter this, which is forbidden to such as thee? How hast thou beguiled Lúthien or darest thou to walk this wood unasked, in secret? It were best declare now good reason if thou may, or never again see light of day!"

Then Beren looked in Lúthien's eyes and saw a light of starry skies, and thence to Melian's face his gaze was slowly drawn. So great was the amazed joy of Beren's heart when Lúthien spoke thus for him to her father that his courage rose within him. As from a dumb maze of wonder he woke; his heart burst apart the bonds of wonder and filled with the fearless pride of old; in his glanced now gleamed a cold anger.

"My feet hath fate led bleeding, O king," he said, "here over the mountains, through perils such as few even among the Elves would dare, and what I sought not I have found; it is love hath bound me here. Thy dearest treasure I desire; neither rock nor steel nor the fires of Morgoth nor all the power of Elvenesse shall keep that gem I would possess. For it is above all gold and silver, and beyond all jewels. For fairer than are born to Men a daughter hast thou: Lúthien."

Silence then fell upon the hall, they all stood there like graven stone, astounded and afraid; save one who cast her eyes aground, and one who laughed with bitter sound. Pale Daeron the piper leant there against a pillar. His frail fingers touched a flute that whispered not; his eyes were dark and hot was his heart.

"Death is the guerdon thou hast earned, O baseborn mortal," said Thingol, "who hast learned in Morgoth's realm to spy and lurk like Orcs and thralls that do his evil work!"

"Death!" echoed Daeron, fierce and low; but Lúthien, trembling, gasped in woe.

"And death," said Thingol, "thou shouldst taste, had I not sworn an oath in haste that blade nor chain should mar thy flesh. Yet captive thou shalt be, bound by never a bar, unchained, unfettered, in lightless labyrinth that coils endlessly about my halls, by magic bewildered and enwound; there wandering in hopelessness thou shalt learn the power of Elvenesse!"

"That may not be!" Lo! Beren spoke, and coldly broke through the king's words. "What are thy mazes but a chain wherein the blind captive is slain? Twist not thy oaths, O Elvish king, like faithless Morgoth! By this ring --- the token of a lasting bond that Finrod Felagund of Nargothrond once swore in love to Barahir, who sheltered him with shield and spear and saved him from pursuing foe on Northern battlefields long ago --- death thou canst give unearned to me, but names I will not take from thee of baseborn, spy, or Morgoth's thrall! My house has not earned such names from any Elf, be he king or no. Are these the ways of Thingol's hall?"

Proud were the words, and all there turned to see the green jewels that burned in Beren's ring, for he held it aloft. These the Noldor in Valinor had set as emerald eyes of twined serpents that met beneath a golden crown of flowers, that one upheld and one devoured: the badge that Finarfin made of yore and Finrod his son now bore.

Thingol's anger was chilled, but little less, and he possessed dark thoughts; though Melian the pale leant to his side and whispered, "O king, forgo thy pride! Such is my counsel. Not by thee shall Beren be slain, for far and free from these deep halls his fate doth lead, yet wound with thine. O king, take heed!"

But Thingol looked in silence upon Lúthien. "Fairest of Elves!" his heart within him thought. "Unhappy Men, children of little lords and brief kings, mortal and frail, these fading things, shall they then look with love on thee and yet live?"

"I see thy ring, son of Barahir," he said, "and I perceive that thou art proud and deem thyself mighty! But to win the child of Thingol and Melian a father's deeds to another prince shall not avail, nor thy proud words. See now! A treasure dear I too desire, but rock and steel and the fires of Morgoth do keep the jewel I would possess from all the powers of Elvenesse. Yet I hear thee say bonds like these affright thee not. Now go thy way! Bring to me in thy hand one shining Silmaril from Morgoth's crown; then, if she will, may Lúthien set her hand in thine; then thou shalt have this jewel of mine; and though the fate of Arda lie within the Silmarils, yet thou shall hold me generous."

Beren begins the Quest of the Silmaril

Thus he wrought the doom of Doriath, and was ensnared within the curse of Mandos. And those that heard these words perceived that Thingol would save his oath, and yet send Beren to his death; for they knew that not all the power of the Noldor, before the Siege was broken, had availed even to see from afar the shining Silmarils of Fëanor.

For Fëanor's gems, the peerless Silmarils, had wide renown in song over land and sea. Three alone he made and kindled slow in the land of the Valar long ago. Fëanor was the mightiest of all the Noldor in skill of word and of hand, the most subtle in mind; his spirit burned as a flame. Seldom were the hands and mind of Fëanor at rest, driven by the fire of his own heart only, working ever swiftly and alone. Being come to his full might, he pondered how the light of the Trees, the glory of the Blessed Realm, might be preserved imperishable. Thus he began a long and secret labour, and he summoned all his lore, and his power, and his subtle skill; and at the end he made the Silmarils. As three great jewels they were in form, and a living fire burned within them that was blended of the light of the Two Trees of Valinor.

All who dwelt in Aman were filled with wonder and delight at the work of Fëanor. And Varda hallowed the Silmarils; and Mandos foretold that the fates of Arda, earth, sea, and air, lay locked within them; and there in Valinor they shone of their own radiance like the marvelous stars of Varda, while Telperion flowered and Laurelin's bloom yet lit the land beyond the shore where roared the Shadowy Seas' last surges; ere Morgoth stole them and the Noldor seeking their glory left their homes, ere sorrows fell on Elves and Men, ere Fëanor's sons in madness swore their dreadful oath.

But now their beauty was seen no more, save shining clear in Morgoth's vast and drear dungeons. His iron crown they adorned, and gleamed above Orcs and forlorn slaves, treasured in Angband above all wealth; and neither might nor stealth could touch them, nor even gaze too long upon their magic. Everlasting gates and unassailable walls and Balrogs were about them, and the dark majesty of Morgoth; and throng upon throng of Orcs with reddened scimitars encircled him who wore them now amidst his thralls.

Then Beren in bitterness laughed, and said:

"For little price do Elven-kings sell their daughters --- for gems and things made of gold and by craft! If such thy will, Thingol, thy bidding I will now fulfill. On Beren son of Barahir thou hast not looked the last, and when we meet again my hand shall hold a Silmaril from the Iron Crown. Farewell, Tinúviel, starlit maiden! Ere the pale winter pass snow-laden, I will return. Not to buy thee with any jewel in Elvenesse, but to find my love in loveliness, a flower that grows beneath the sky."

Bowing before Melian and the king he turned, and thrust aside the ring of guards about him, and departed from Menegroth alone, and his footsteps faded one by one in the dark corridors.

"A guileful oath thou sworest, father!" said Lúthien, and welling tears sprang in her eyes, and hideous fears clutched at her heart. "Thou hast now doomed his flesh to both blade and chain in Morgoth's deep entombed dungeons."

All looked away, and later remembered the sad day whereafter Lúthien sang no more. Then clear in the silence rang the cold words of Melian:

"Counsel cunning-wise, O king!" she said. "Yet if mine eyes lose not their power, it were well for thee that Beren failed his errantry. Well for thee, but for thy child a dark doom and a wandering wild. And now is Doriath drawn within the fate of a mightier realm."

"I sell not to Elves or Men those whom I love," said Thingol, "whom above all things I cherish; and if hope or fear there were that Beren should ever living fare to Menegroth once more, he should not ever have seen the air or light of heaven's stars again, though I had sworn it."

But Melian smiled, and there was pain in her eyes as of far knowledge; for such is the sorrow of the wise. But Lúthien was silent, and from that hour she sang not again in Doriath.

The Sorrow of Lúthien

So the days drew on from that mournful day; the curse of silence lay no more upon Doriath, though Daeron's flute and Lúthien's singing were both mute. The soft murmurs awoke once more about the woods, the waters roared past the great gates of Thingol's halls; but no dancing step of Lúthien fell upon turf or leaf. For where Beren once stumbled, bruised and torn, with longing on him like a dream, where Beren had sat by the shrouded stream Esgalduin the dark and strong, she now sat forlorn and mourned in a low song:

"Endless roll the waters past! To this my love hath come at last, enchanted waters pitiless, a heartache and a loneliness."

The summer turned. In tall branches she heard the pattering raindrops fall, the windy tide in leafy seas, the creaking of the countless trees; and longed unceasing and in vain to hear one calling once again the tender name that nightingales were called of old:

"Tinúviel! Tinúviel!" The memory was like a knell, a faint and far-off tolling bell. "Tinúviel! Tinúviel!"

She would not now dance when Beren was fled to the evil halls of Morgoth and maybe already had perished. So bitter did this thought become at last that Lúthien went to her mother, for to her father she dared not go nor even suffer him to see her weep.

“O mother Melian, tell to me some part of what thy dark eyes see! Tell of thy magic where his feet are wandering! What foes him meet? O mother, tell me, lives he still, treading the desert and the hill? Do sun and moon shine above him, do the rains fall on him, mother mine?”

“Nay, Lúthien, my child, I fear he lives indeed in bondage drear. Sauron the Lord of Wolves hath dark prisons, cruel chains and stark enchantments; there in the dungeons of Tol-in-Gaurhoth, trapped and bound and languishing, Beren now dreams that thou dost sing.”

“Then I alone must go to him and dare the dread in dim dungeons; for none there be that will aid him in all the world, save Elven-maid whose only skill were joy and song, and both have failed and long left her.”

Then nought said Melian thereto, though wild the words. Lúthien wept anew, and ran through the woods like a hunted deer, with hair streaming and eyes of fear. She found Daeron silently sitting with ferny crown on brown birch-leaves. She cast herself on the earth at his side.

“O Daeron, Daeron,” she cried, “pity now my tears for our old days’ sake! Make me a music for heart’s ache, for heart’s despair, and for heart’s dread, for light gone dark and laughter dead!”

“But for music dead there is no note,” Daeron answered, and at his throat his fingers clutched. Yet his pipe he took, and sadly trembling the music shook; and all things stayed while that piping went wailing in the hollows; and they listened intent, their business and mirth, their hearts’ gladness and the light of earth forgotten; and bird-voices failed while Daeron’s flute wailed in Doriath.

Lúthien wept not for very pain, and when he ceased she spoke again: “My friend, I have a need of friends, as he who wends a long dark journey and fears the road, yet dare not turn and look back where the candles burn in windows he has left. The night in front, he doubts to find the light that far beyond the hills he seeks.”

And thus of Melian’s words she spoke, and of her doom and her desire to climb the mountains, and dare the fire and ruin of the Northern realm where magic foundered and grew dim, a maiden without helm or sword or strength of hardy limb. His aid she sought to guide her forth and find the pathways to the North, if he would not for love of her go by her side a wanderer.

“Wherefore,” said he, “should Daeron go into direst peril for the sake of mortal who did steal his laughter and joy? No love I feel for Beren son of Barahir, nor weep for him in dungeons drear, who in this wood have heavy and dark chains enow. But thee, I vow I will defend from fell perils and deadly wandering.”

No more they spoke that day, and Lúthien perceived not his meaning. Sorrowfully she thanked him, and left him there. A tree she climbed, till the bright air above the woods blew her dark hair; and straining afar her eyes could view the outline, grey and faint and low, of dizzy towers, the southern faces of the Mountains of Terror mounting sheer in rocky pinnacle and pier, pale and cold; and wide rolled the lands before them.

Thingol restrains Lúthien

But straightaway Daeron sought the king and told him his daughter’s pondering, and how her madness might lead her to ruin, unless the king gave heed. Thingol was wroth, and yet amazed; in wonder and half fear he gazed on Daeron, and said: “True hast thou been. Now ever shall be love between us while Doriath lasts; within this realm thou art a prince of beech and elm!”

He sent for Lúthien, and said: “Wherefore, O maiden of mine, does thou not put this folly away from thee, and seek to do my bidding? O maiden, what hath led thee to ponder madness and despair, to wander to ruin, and to fare from Doriath against my will, stealing into the emptiness outside like a wild thing men would kill?”

“Thy wisdom, father,” she replied; nor would she promise to forget, nor would she vow for love or threat to forsake her folly, and meek in Doriath to seek her father’s will. This only she vowed, if go she must, that none but herself would she now trust; would persuade no folk of her father to break his will or lend her aid; if go she must, she would go alone, and friendless dare the walls of stone.

Then was her father mightily angry, and beneath his anger not a little amazed and afraid, for he loved Tinúviel.; therefore Thingol took counsel to guard and keep his most dear. He would not bind in deep intertwined caverns sweet Lúthien, his lovely maid, who ever must look upon the sky and see the sun and moon go by, lest she fail and fade. But above the portals of his cavernous hall was a steep slope falling to the river, and there grew mighty beeches; and one there was that was named Hírilorn, the Queen of Trees, for she was very mighty, the greatest of all the trees in the Forest of Neldoreth. So deeply cloven was her bole that it seemed as if three shafts sprang from the ground together; and they were of like size, round and straight, unbroken by branch or twig for a very great height, until aloft in a greener glimmer, distant, soft, the mightiest vault of leaf and bough from the world’s beginning until now was flung above Esgalduin’s shores and the long slopes to Thingol’s doors. Grey was the rind of her tall pillars and silken-smooth, and far and small to squirrel’s eyes were those who walked at her grey feet.

Now Thingol made men reach as far as their longest ladders in that great strange tree, and there to build an airy house; and as he willed a little dwelling of fair wood was made, and veiled in leaves it stood above the first branches. That house had three corners and three windows faint to see in each wall, and was upborne by three shafts of Hírilorn standing in the corners.

There Lúthien was bidden to dwell, until she would consent to be wise and the spell of madness left her. Up the long ladders she climbed to her new home among the leaves, among the birds; she sang no song, she spoke no words. Glimmering white in the tree she rose, and they heard her close her little door. The ladders were taken from beneath, and no more might her feet tread Esgalduin’s shore.

Thither at whiles they climbed and brought all things she needed or besought, and then descending again take away the ladders; but the King promised death to any whoso would dare leave a ladder, or creeping there by stealth should set one by the tree at night. A guard was held from dusk to light about the grey feet of Hírilorn and forlorn Lúthien in prison.

Yet came Daeron often thither, grieving at what he had brought to pass, and stood leaning against a grey tree-root, and made melodies upon his flute in sorrow for the captive of the wood. Lúthien would stare from her windows and see him piping far under

there, and she forgave his betraying word for the music and grief she heard; and only Daeron would she let set foot across her threshold. Yet long the hours when she must sit and see the sunbeams dance and flit in beechen leaves, or watch the stars on clear nights peep between the bars of beechen branches.

Lúthien escapes

And one night just ere the changing of the light a dream there came, from the Valar maybe, or the magic of Melian. She dreamed that she heard Beren's voice call over hill and fell: "Tinúviel! Tinúviel!" And her heart answered: "Let me be gone to seek him whom no others think upon!" She woke and saw the pale moonlight through the slim leaves. It trembled frail upon her arms, as these she spread; and there in longing bowed her head and yearned for freedom and escape.

Now Lúthien doth shaped her counsel; and Melian's daughter knew many things of deep lore, yea, magics more than Elven-maidens that glint and shimmer in the glades then or now know. She pondered long, while the moon sank and faded, and the starlight shrank, and the dawn opened. At last a smile on her face flickered. She mused a while, and watched the morning sunlight grow, then called to those that walked below. And when one climbed to her she prayed that he would wade in the dark pools of cold Esgalduin, to draw for her the clearest water, cold and sheer.

"At middle night," she said, "in a bowl of white silver it must be drawn and brought to me silently, with no word spoken."

Another she begged to bring her wine in a jar of gold where flowers twine --- "and singing let him come to me at high noon, singing merrily."

Again she spoke: "Now go, I pray, to Melian the queen, and say: 'thy daughter in her bower watches many a weary hour slow passing; a spinning wheel she begs thee send.'"

Then Daeron she called: "I prithee, good friend, climb up and talk to Lúthien!" And sitting at her window, she said: "My Daeron, thou hast craft, beside thy music, to fashion with cunning many a shaft and many a tool of carven wood. It were good if thou wouldst make a little loom to stand in the corner of my room. My idle fingers would spin and weave a pattern of colours, of morn and eve, of sun and moon, and changing light amid the bright waving beech-leaves."

This Daeron did, and then asked her: "O Lúthien, O Lúthien, what wilt thou weave? What wilt thou spin?"

"A marvelous thread," she answered, "and wind therein a potent magic, and a spell I will weave within my web that Angband nor the powers of dread shall break."

Then Daeron wondered, but he spoke no word to Thingol, though his heart feared the dark purpose of her art.

And Lúthien now was left alone. She put forth her arts of enchantment. A magic song unknown to Men she sang, and singing mingled the wine with water three times nine; and as in golden jar they lay, she sang a song of growth and day; and as they lay in silver white, another song she sang, of night and darkness without end, of height uplifted to the stars, and flight and freedom. And all names of things tallest and longest on earth she sang: the locks of the Longbeard Dwarves; the tail of Draugluin the pale werewolf; the body of Glaurung the great snake; the vast upsoaring peaks that quaked above the fires of Angband's gloom, the chain Angainor wrought of steel and torment by the Valar for Morgoth. Names she sought, and sang of Glend the sword of Nan; of Gilim the giant of Eruman; and last and longest she then named the endless hair of Uinen, the Lady of the Sea, that lies through all the waters under skies.

Then did Lúthien lave her head with the mingled water and wine, and as she did so she sang a third song, a theme of uttermost sleep and slumbering, profound and fathomless and dark as her shadowy hair was dark --- and each thread was more slender and more fine than threads of twilight that entwine in filmy web the fading grass and closing flowers as day doth pass. Now long and longer grew her hair, and fell to her feet, and wandered there on the ground like pools of shadow. Then Lúthien was very pleased, and, drowned in a slumber, lay upon her bed and slept, till morning crept thin and faint through the windows.

And then she woke, and the room was filled as with a smoke and with an evening mist, and deep she lay thereunder drowsed in sleep. Behold! her hair trailed from windows in morning airs, and darkly blew waving about the grey pillars of Hírilorn at break of day. Then groping with difficulty she found her little shears, and cut the hair about her ears, and close she cropped it to her head, enchanted tresses, thread by thread. Thereafter they grew slow once more, yet darker than their wont before.

And now was her labour but begun: long was she spinning; and though with Elvish skill she wrought, long was her weaving. And did any sought to call her, crying from below, she bid them begone, saying: "Nothing I need. Go! I would keep my bed; only sleep I now desire, who waking weep."

Then Daeron feared, and in amaze he called from under, but three days she answered not. Now of that cloudy hair she wove a web like misty air of moonless night, and thereof made a robe as fluttering-dark as shade beneath great trees: a magic dress that was all drenched with drowsiness, enchanted with a mightier spell even than that raiment that her mother Melian had worn and danced in long ago in that dell wherein of yore did Thingol roam beneath the dark and starry dome that hung above the dawning world before the Sun arose. And now this robe Lúthien furled round her, a dark robe that wrapped her beauty like a shadow and veiled her shimmering white garments; her blue mantle with jewels bright like crystal stars, the gold lilies were wrapped and hid; and down there rolled dim dreams and faint oblivious sleep falling about her, to softly creep through all the air. Then swift she took the unused threads; of these she made a slender rope of twisted strands, yet long and stout; and with her hands she made it fast unto the shaft of Hírilorn.

Now, all her craft and labour ended, she looked forth from her little window westward to the river. Already the sunlight in the trees was drooping red, and as she saw dusk come softly along the ground below she murmured a song soft and slow. Now chanting clearer she cast down her long hair from the window so that its slumbrous mist now swung and swayed above her guards. Their talking stayed, they listened to her voice and fell suddenly beneath a binding spell into a fathomless sleep.

Now clad as in a cloud of darkness she hung; now down her roped hair she swung as light as a squirrel. And away, away, she danced to the bridge, and before the bridge wards could cry out she was among them dancing; and as the hem of her black robe

touched them they fell asleep; and Lúthien, shrouded in her shadowy cloak, fled very far away as fast as her dancing feet would flit; and who could say what paths she took, whose fleet Elvish feet a-dancing made no impress?

The Noldor in Beleriand

When Morgoth in that day of doom had slain the two Trees and filled the shining land of Valinor with gloom, there Fëanor and his sons then swore upon the hill of tower-crowned Túna the mighty oath that still wrought wars and sorrows in the world. From darkling seas the fogs unfurled their blinding shadows grey and cold where Laurelin had once bloomed with gold and Telperion bore its silver flowers. The mists were mantled round the towers of the Elves' white city by the sea. There countless torches did fitfully start and twinkle, as the Noldor were gathered to their fading homes, and thronged the long and winding stair that led to the wide echoing square.

There Fëanor mourned his divine jewels, the Silmarils he made. A great host harkened deathly still as his wild and potent words filled them like wine. But all he said both wild and wise, half truth and half the fruit of lies that Morgoth sowed in Valinor, is recorded in other songs and other lore. He bade them flee from lands divine, to cross the sea, the pathless plains, the perilous shores where ice-infested water roared; to follow Morgoth to the unlit Outer Lands, leaving their dwellings and olden mirth; to go back to Middle-earth, to wars and weeping.

Then Fëanor swore a terrible oath, and many quailed to hear the dread words; and there the seven sons of Fëanor leapt straightway to his side and joined their hands in vows, swearing beneath the stars of Heaven, by Varda the Holy that wrought them and bore them, each fraught with radiance, and set them in the deeps to flame. They swore an oath which none shall break, and none should take, by the name even of Ilúvatar, calling the Everlasting Dark upon them if they kept it not. They named Taniquetil's holy height, whereon are built the timeless halls of Manwë, Lord of the Valar. Who calls these names in witness may not break his oath, though earth and heaven shake, and it shall pursue oathkeeper and oathbreaker to the world's end. Curufin, Celegorm, Amrod and Amras were there, and dark Caranthir, and tall Maedhros, and Maglor the mighty, who like the sea with deep voice mournfully sings yet.

"Be he friend or foe, or defiled seed of Morgoth Bauglir, or mortal child that in after days on earth shall dwell, no law, nor love, nor league of Angband, nor might of Vala, nor moveless fate shall defend him from wrath and hate of Fëanor's sons, who takes or steals or finding keeps the Silmarils, the thrice-enchanted globes of light that shine until the final night."

This tale tells not of the wars and wanderings of the Noldor. Far from their homes they fought and laboured in the North. Fingon daring alone went forth and sought for Maedhros where he hung; in terrible torment he swung, his wrist in band of forged steel, from a sheer precipice where the dizzy senses reel staring down from Thangorodrim's stony crown. Elves yet sing the song of Fingon, captain of armies, Noldorin king, who fell at last in flame of swords beneath his blue and silver banners. They sing how he set Maedhros free and stayed the feud that slumbered yet between the proud children of Finwë. Now joined once more they hemmed in great Morgoth, and their host beleaguered Angband, till they boasted no Orc nor demon ever dare break their league or fare past them.

Then days of solace woke beneath the new-lit Sun, and mirth was heard in Middle-earth where Men, a young race, spread and wandered. That was the time that songs do call the Siege of Angband, when the Noldorin swords like a wall fenced the lands from Morgoth's ruin; a time of birth, of blossoming, of flowers, of growth. But still there held the deathless Oath, and still the Silmarils were deep in Angband's darkly-dolven keep.

An end there came, when fortune turned, and flames of Morgoth's vengeance burned, and all the might which he in secret prepared in his fastness flared and poured across the Plain of Ard-galen; and the Mountains of Iron belched forth fires of many poisonous hues. Thus Ard-galen perished, and fire devoured its grasses; and it became a burned and desolate waste, full of choking dust, barren and lifeless. Many of the Noldor perished in that burning, who were caught by the running flame and could not fly to the hills. In the front of that fire came Glaurung the Golden, father of dragons, in his full might; and in his train were Balrogs, and behind them came the black armies of the Orcs in multitudes such as the Noldor had never before seen or imagined.

Morgoth broke the leaguer of Angband; in fire and smoke his enemies were scattered and sundered one from another, and the Orcs slew until the blood dripped like dew from each cruel and crooked blade. The sons of Finarfin bore most heavily the brunt of the assault, and of Finrod's four children there were slain Angrod and proud Aegnor. Beside them fell Bregolas lord of the house of Bëor, and a great part of the warriors of that people. But Barahir the brother of Bregolas was in the fighting further westward, near to the Pass of Sirion. There King Finrod, hastening from the south, was cut off from his people and surrounded with small company in the Fen of Serech. And he would have been slain or taken, but Barahir, with shield and men, with mighty spear, came to the aid of wounded Finrod, and made a wall of spears about him; and they cut their way out of the battle with great loss. Escaping to the fen, they bound their troth, and Finrod deeply swore an oath of friendship to his kin and seed, of love and succour in time of need. And in token of his vow he gave to Barahir his ring, an heirloom of his house.

Then Finrod and Orodreth gathered the remnant of their men, their maidens and their fair children; and forsaking war they made their lair and cavernous hold far in the south, and that stronghold was called Nargothrond. On Narog's towering bank its mouth was opened, which they hid and veiled; and mighty doors, vast and grim, they built by dim overshadowed trees, that stood unassailed till Túrin's day. In that labour Finrod was aided by the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains, and in that time was made for him the Nauglamír, the Necklace of the Dwarves, most renowned of their works of the Elder Days. There in Nargothrond Finrod made his home with many of his people, and he was named in the tongue of the Dwarves Felagund, Hewer of Caves; and that name he bore thereafter until his end. And with them there dwelt a long time Curufin and Celegorm; and a mighty folk grew neath their hands in Nargothrond's secret halls and lands.

Beren comes to Nargothrond

Thus Felagund still reigned in Nargothrond, a hidden king whose bond was sworn to Barahir the bold. And now through cold forests Beren his son wandered alone as in a dream. Nights of deep despondency were his; hunger and thirst too tortured him often; but the voice of Lúthien pleading with Thingol echoed in his heart, and at night time it seemed to him that his heart heard her sometimes weeping softly for him far away in the woodlands of her home. He followed Esgalduin's dark and shrouded stream, till its waters were joined to Sirion, hoar Sirion, pale silver water, wide and free, rolling to the sea in splendour.

Now Beren came unto the pools, wide shallow meres where Sirion cooled his gathered tide beneath the stars, ere chafed and Sundered by the bars of reedy banks he fed and drenched a mighty fen, then plunged into vast chasms underground with great noise, where his way wound for many miles.

Aelin-Uial, the Twilight Meres, the Elves then named those great wide waters, grey as tears. Through driving rain from thence across Talath Dirnen, the Guarded Plain, Beren saw the highlands of Taur-en-Faroth, the Hills of the Hunters, with bare tops bitten bleak and raw by western winds. But in the mist of streaming rains that flashed and hissed into the meres, he knew there lay beneath those hills the cloven way of Narog, and the watchful halls of Felagund beside the falls of Ringil tumbling from the wold. And being destitute, without hope or counsel, he turned his feet thither.

An everlasting and unceasing watch they held, the Noldor of renowned Nargothrond, and every hill was tower-crowned, where sleepless wardens peered and gazed, guarding the plain and all the ways between Narog swift and Sirion pale; and archers, whose sure and deadly arrows never failed, there ranged the woods and fields, and nothing crept hither against their will.

Yet now Beren thrust into that land, and ere he had come far upon his road, they were aware of him, and his death was nigh. But knowing his danger he held aloft the gleaming ring of Felagund in hand; and though he saw no living thing, because of the stealth of the hunters, he felt that he was watched, and cried often aloud: "Here comes no wandering Orc or spy, but Beren son of Barahir, who once to Felagund was dear. I am Beren son of Barahir, friend of Felagund. Take me to the King!"

So ere he reached the eastward shore of Narog, that foamed and roared over boulders black, those archers green came round him and commanded him to halt. When the ring was seen they bowed before him, though his plight was poor and beggarly, wild and wayworn. Then they led him northward, going by night lest their paths should be revealed. For at that time no ford nor bridge was built where Narog poured in a torrent before the gates of Nargothrond; no friend nor foe might pass beyond. To northward, where that young stream yet flowed more slender, below the tongue of foam-splashed land that Gínglith pens when her brief torrent ends and joins the Narog; there the flood was less and they waded. Thence they made a swift journey to Nargothrond's sheer terraces and dim gigantic palaces.

They came beneath a sickle moon to doors there, darkly hung and hewn with posts and lintels of ponderous stone and huge timbers. Now the gates were thrown open, and they strode in to where King Finrod Felagund abode on throne; and Felagund knew him, needing no ring to remind him of the kin of Bëor and Barahir. Fair were the words of Nargothrond's king to Beren, and his wandering and all his feuds and bitter wars were soon recounted. Behind closed doors they sat, while Beren told his tale of Doriath; and words failed him and he wept when recalling Lúthien dancing fair with wild roses in her hair, remembering her Elven voice that rang while stars in twilight hung round her, and their joy together. He spoke of Thingol's marvelous halls, lit by enchantment, where fountains fall and the nightingale sings to Melian and her king. He told of the quest that Thingol in scorn laid upon him; how for love of maid more fair than ever was born to Men, of Lúthien Tinúviel, he must essay the burning waste and doubtless taste torment and death.

The Oath of Felagund

This Felagund heard in wonder and disquiet, and at last in heaviness of heart spoke this word: "It is plain that Thingol doth desire thy death; but it seems that this doom goes beyond his purpose, and that the Oath of Fëanor is again at work. All know the everlasting fire of those enchanted jewels is cursed with an oath of endless woe, and he that even names them in desire moves a great power from slumber; and the sons of Fëanor alone by right are lords and masters of their light and would lay all the Elf-kingdoms in ruin rather than suffer any other than themselves to win or possess a Silmaril, for the Oath drives them. Thingol cannot hope to keep this gem within his hoard, nor is he lord of all the folk of Elvenesse. And yet thou sayest for nothing less can thy return to Doriath be purchased? Many a dreadful path in sooth lies before thy feet; and Morgoth would hunt after thee with an untiring hate, as I know well. Fëanor's sons would, if they could, slay thee ere ever thou reached his wood or laid in Thingol's lap that fire, or gained at least thy sweet desire. Lo! Celegorm and Curufin dwell here within this very realm; and even though I, Finarfin's son, am King, they have won a mighty power and lead many of their own folk. Friendship to me in every need they have yet shown, but I fear much that to Beren son of Barahir they will show neither mercy nor love, if once thy dreadful quest they know. Yet my own oath holds; and thus we are all ensnared."

True words he spoke. For when Felagund told this thing to all his people, and spoke of the oath to Barahir, how that mortal shield and spear had saved them from Morgoth and from woe on northern battlefields long ago, then many were kindled in their hearts once more to battle. But there started up from amid the throng, loudly crying for hearing, one with flaming eyes, proud Celegorm, with gleaming hair and shining sword. Then all stared upon his stern unyielding face, and a great hush fell upon that place.

"Be he friend or foe, or wild demon of Morgoth, Elf or mortal child, or any that here on Middle-earth may dwell, or any other living thing in Arda, neither law, nor love, nor league of Angband, nor might of Valar, nor binding spell, shall defend him from fell hatred of Fëanor's sons, whoso take or steal or finding keep a Silmaril. These, our thrice enchanted jewels bright, we alone do claim by right, until the world ends."

Many other wild and potent words he spoke, and as before in Tirion upon Tûna his father's voice awoke their hearts to fire, so now dark fear and brooding ire he cast on them, foreboding war of friend with friend. Their minds imagined red pools lying about the dead in Nargothrond, if Nargothrond's host went with Beren; or haply battle, ruin, and woe in Doriath where great Thingol reigned, if

he gained Fëanor's fatal jewel. And even such as were most true to Felagund did rue his oath, and thought with terror and despair of seeking Morgoth in his lair with force or guile.

This Curufin, when his brother had ceased, began to impress more upon their minds, more softly but with no less power; and such a spell he bound on them that never again until the time of Túrin would the Noldor of Nargothrond in array of open battle go to war. With secrecy, ambush, spies, and lore of wizardry, with silent leaguer of wild things wary and watchful, of phantom hunters, venomed darts, and unseen stealthy creeping arts, with remorseless hatred that followed its prey with padding feet of velvet out of sight and slew unawares at night: thus they defended Nargothrond, and forgot their kin and solemn bond for dread of Morgoth that the art of Curufin set within their hearts. Thus they fell from the valour and freedom of the Elves of old, and their land was darkened.

So they would not, on that angry day, obey their lord King Finrod Felagund, but murmured sullenly that neither Finarfin nor yet his son were as the Valar to command them, and they turned their faces from him. But the curse of Mandos came upon the brothers, and dark thoughts arose in their hearts, thinking to send forth Felagund alone to his death, and to usurp, it might be, the throne of Nargothrond; for they were of the eldest line of the princes of the Noldor.

Then Felagund, seeing that he was forsaken, took off his crown, the silver helm of Nargothrond, and cast it down at his feet.

"Your oaths of faith to me ye may break," he cried, "but I must keep my bond, and here forsake kingdom. Yet if there be any on whom the shadow of our curse has not yet fallen, if hearts here were that did not quake, or that to Finarfin's son were true, then I at least should find a few to go with me, and not go hence like a poor rejected beggar, enduring scorn, turned from my gates to leave my town, my people, and my realm and crown!"

Hearing these words there swiftly stood beside him ten tried warriors, good men of his house who had ever fought wherever his banners had been brought. One, the chief of them who was named Edrahil, stooped and lifted up his crown, and said: "O king, to leave this town is now our fate, but not to lose thy rightful lordship. For thou remain my king, and theirs, whatever betide. Thou shalt choose one to be steward in thy stead."

Then Felagund set the crown of Nargothrond upon the head of Orodreth: "Brother mine, till I return this crown is thine."

But Celegorm said: "Know this: thy going is vain; for could ye achieve this quest it would avail nothing. Neither thee nor this Man should we suffer to keep or to give a Silmaril of Fëanor. Against thee would come all the brethren to slay thee rather. And should Thingol gain it, then we would burn Doriath or die in the attempt. For we have sworn our Oath."

"I also have sworn an oath," said Felagund, "and I seek no release from it. Save thine own, until thou knowest more. But this I will say to thee, Celegorm the fell, by the sight that is given me in this hour, that neither thou nor any son of Fëanor shall regain the Silmarils ever unto world's end. And this that we now seek shall come indeed, but never to your hands. Nay, your oath shall devour you, and deliver to other keeping the bride-price of Lúthien."

Then Celegorm and Curufin would say no more, but they smiled and turned away from the halls.

The Quest of Beren and Felagund

Thus twelve alone ventured forth from Nargothrond on an evening of autumn, and to the North they turned their silent secret way, and vanished in the fading day. No trumpet sounded, no voice sang, as robed in mail of cunning rings now blackened dark, with grey helmets and sombre cloaks, they stole away. They followed Narog's leaping course till they found his source in the Falls of Ivrin: the flickering falls, whose sheer freshets fill a glimmering, glassy-clear goblet with crystal waters that shake and quiver down from Ivrin's lake, from Ivrin's mere that dimly mirrors the pallid faces, bare and grim, of Shadowy Mountains beneath the moon.

Now far beyond the realm immune from Orc and demon and the dread of Morgoth's might their ways had led. In woods overshadowed by the heights they watched and waited many nights; till on a time when hurrying cloud shrouded moon and stars, and winds of autumn's wild beginnings sighed in the boughs, and leaves went spinning down the dark eddies rustling soft, they heard a murmur hoarsely waft from afar; now louder coming a croaking laughter. Now they heard the drumming of hideous stamping feet that tramp the weary earth. Then they saw many a lamp of sullen red draw near, swinging, and glistening on spear and scimitar. There hidden nigh they saw a band of Orcs go by, with goblin-faces swart and foul. Bats were about them, and the ghostly forsaken night-bird, the owl, cried from trees above.

The voices died, the laughter, like clash of stone and steel, passed and faded. At their heel the Elves and Beren crept more softly than foxes stealing through croft in search of prey. Thus to the camp lit by flickering fire and lamp they stole, and counted full thirty Orcs sitting there in the red flare of burning wood. Without a sound, they one by one stood silent round, each in the shadow of a tree; each slowly, grimly, secretly bent then his bow and drew the string.

Hark! how they sudden twang and sing, when Felagund let forth a cry; and twelve Orcs sudden fell and died. Then, casting their bows, they leaped forth. Out their bright swords, and swift their blows! The stricken Orcs now shrieked and yelled, as lost things deep in lightless torments. There was battle beneath the trees, bitter and swift, but no Orc fled. There that wandering band left their lives and no more stained the sorrowing land with rape and murder.

Yet the Elves there sang no song of joy or triumph over wrong. They were in sore peril, for they knew so small an Orc-band never went to war alone. Swiftly they drew off the raiment and cast the corpses in a pit. This desperate counsel the wit of Felagund devised for them: as Orcs he disguised his comrades.

They took the poisoned spears, the bows of horn, the crooked swords their foes had borne; and loathing each clad himself in the foul and sad raiment of Angband. They smeared their fair hands and faces with dark pigment; they shore the matted hair all lank and black from goblin head, and joined it thread by thread with Elvish skill. As each one leered dismayed at each, about his ears he hung it, shuddering.

Then Felagund sung a spell of changing and shifting shape; their ears grew hideous, and their mouths started agape, and each tooth became like a fang, as slowly he sang. Their Elvish raiment they hid, and one by one they hid behind a foul and goblin thing that once was Elven-fair and king.

Thus disguised they came far upon their northward road; and Orcs they met who passed, nor did their going let, but hailed them in greeting; and they grew more bold as the long miles rolled past. At length they came with weary feet beyond Beleriand. They found the fleet young waters, rippling and silver-pale, of Sirion hurrying through that vale where Taur-nu-Fuin, Deadly Night, the trackless forest's pine-clad height, falls dark and forbidding slowly down upon the east, while westward frown the northward-bending grey mountains, Ered Wethrin, and bar the westering light of day.

The Isle of Sauron

An isled hill stood there alone amid the valley, like a vast stone rolled from the mountains when giants in tumult hurtled past. Around its feet the river looped, a stream divided, that had scooped the hanging edges into caves. There Sirion's waves shuddered briefly, and ran to other shores more clean. An Elven watchtower it had been, and strong it was, and still was fair; but now it stared grim with menace one way to pale Beleriand, the other to that mournful land beyond the valley's northern mouth. Thence could be glimpsed the fields of drouth, the dusty dunes, the wide desert Anfauglith; and further could be descried the brooding cloud that hangs and lowers on Thangorodrim's thunderous towers.

Now in that hill was the abode of one most evil; and he watched with sleepless eyes of flame the road that came thither from Beleriand. Men called him Sauron, and beneath his rod in after days they bowed to him as a god and made his ghastly temples. Not yet adored by enthralled Men, now he was Morgoth's mightiest lord, master of wolves, whose shivering howl forever echoed in the hills, and did weave and wield foul enchantments and dark sigaldry. In glamoury that necromancer held his hosts of phantoms and wandering ghosts, of misbegotten and spell-wronged monsters that thronged about him, working his dark and vile bidding: the werewolves of the Wizard's Isle.

From Sauron their coming was not hid; and though they slid beneath the eaves of the forest's gloomy-hanging boughs, he saw them afar and roused his wolves.

"Go! Fetch me those sneaking Orcs," he said, "that fare thus strangely, as if in dread, and do not come, as all Orcs are commanded, to bring me news of all their deeds." From his tower he gazed, waiting till they were brought, and in him grew suspicion and a brooding thought.

Now ringed about with wolves they stood and feared their doom. Alas! the land of Narog left behind! Foreboding evil weighed their minds, as downcast, halting, they crossed the stony bridge of woe to Wizard's Isle, and to the throne there fashioned of blood-darkened stone.

"Where have ye been? What have ye seen?"

"In Elvenesse: there we have been; and tears and distress, the fire blowing and the blood flowing: these we have seen. Thirty we slew, and their bodies we threw in a dark pit. The ravens sit and the owl cries where our swath lies."

"Come, tell me true, O Morgoth's thralls, what then in Elvenesse befalls? What of Nargothrond? Who reigneth there? Into that realm did your feet dare?"

"Only its borders did we dare. There reigns the fair King Felagund."

"Then heard ye not that he is gone, that Celegorm sits upon his throne?"

"That is not true! If he is gone, then Orodreth sits upon his throne."

"Sharp are your ears. Swift have they got tidings of realms ye entered not! What are your names, O spearmen bold? Ye have not told who is your captain."

"Nereb and Dungalef and ten warriors; so we are called, and dark our den under the mountains. Over the waste we march on an errand of need and haste. Boldog the captain awaits us there, where fires flare from under smoke."

"Boldog, I heard, was lately slain, warring on the borders of that domain where Robber Thingol and outlaw folk cringe and crawl beneath elm and oak in drear Doriath. Have ye not heard, then, of that pretty fay, of Lúthien? Little Lúthien! Her body is fair, very white and fair. Morgoth would possess her in his lair. Boldog he sent, but Boldog was slain. Strange ye were not in Boldog's train. Nereb looks fierce, his frown is grim. What troubles him? Why laughs he not to think of his lord crushing a maiden in his hoard, that what once was clean should be foul, that dark should be where light has been? Whom do ye serve, Light or Mirk? Who is the maker of mightiest work? Who is the king of earthly kings, the greatest giver of gold and rings? Who is the master of the wide earth? Who despoiled the greedy Valar of their mirth? Repeat your vows, Orcs of Morgoth Bauglir! Do not bend your brows! Death to light, to law, to love! Cursed be moon and stars above! May darkness everlasting old that waits outside in surges cold drown Manwë, Varda, and the sun! May all in hatred be begun, and all in evil ended be, in the moaning of the endless Sea!"

But no true Man nor Elf would ever speak that blasphemy, and Beren muttered, "Who is Sauron to hinder work that is to do? Him we serve not, nor to him owe obeisance, and now we would go."

Sauron laughed: "Patience! Not very long shall ye abide. But first a song I will sing to you, to ears intent."

Then he bent upon them his flaming eyes, and black darkness fell round them all. Only they saw as through a pall of eddying smoke those profound eyes, in which their senses choked and drowned. He chanted a song of wizardry, of piercing, opening, of treachery, revealing, uncovering, betraying.

Then suddenly Felagund, swaying there, sang in answer a song of staying, resisting, battling against power, of secrets kept, strength like a tower, and trust unbroken, freedom, escape, of changing and of shifting shape, of snares eluded, broken traps, the prison opening, the chain that snaps.

Thus befell the contest of Sauron and Felagund which is renowned. Backwards and forwards swayed their song. Reeling and foundering, as ever more strong Sauron's chanting swelled, Felagund fought, and all the magic and might of Elvenesse he brought into his words. Softly in the gloom they heard the birds singing afar in Nargothrond, and the sighing of the sea beyond the western world, on sand of pearls in Elvenhome.

Then the gloom gathered: darkness growing in Valinor, the red blood flowing beside the sea, where the Noldor slew the

Foamriders, and stealing drew their white ships with their white sails from lamplit havens. The wind wailed. The wolf howled. The ravens fled. The ice muttered in the mouths of the sea. The sad captives in Angband mourned. Thunder rumbled, the fires burned, a vast smoke gushed out, a roar --- and Felagund swooned and fell upon the floor before the throne.

Then Sauron stripped from them their disguise. Behold! they were in their own fair shape, fair-skinned, bright-eyed. No longer their mouths gaped Orc-like; and now they stood betrayed into the wizard's hand, naked and afraid. Thus they came to unhappy woe, to dungeons that no hope or glimmer know. Where chained in chains that eat the flesh, and woven in webs of strangling mesh, they lay forgotten, in despair.

Yet not all unavailing were the spells of Felagund; for though their kinds were revealed Sauron knew neither their names nor their purpose. Much he pondered and bethought these, and sought them in their woeful chains, and threatened all with dreadful death if one would not reveal this knowledge. Wolves should come and devour them slowly, one by one, before the others' eyes, and last should one alone be left aghast; then hung in a place of horror, with anguish should his limbs be wrung, in the bowels of the earth should he be slowly, endlessly, cruelly, put to woe and torment, till he declared all.

Even as Sauron threatened, so it fared. From time to time in the eyeless dark two eyes would grow, and they would hark to frightful cries, and then a sound of rending, a slavering on the ground, and they would smell blood flowing. But none would yield, and none would tell, and none betrayed their lord, and Sauron could not learn the errand upon which they went.

Huan the Hound

Hounds there were in Valinor, with silver collars. There in the green forests did go hart and boar, the fox and hare and nimble roe. Oromë was the lord divine of all those woods. The potent wine went in his halls and hunting song. The Noldor long named him anew Tauros, the Vala whose horns did blow over the mountains long ago; who alone of the Valar loved the world before the banners of Moon and Sun were unfurled; and shod with gold were his great horses. He possessed hounds untold of immortal race, baying in the woods beyond the West: grey and limber, black and strong, white with long silken coats, brown and brindled, swift and true as an arrow from a bow of yew; their voices like the deep-toned bells that ring in Valimar's citadels, their eyes like living jewels, their teeth like ruel-bone. As sword from sheath they flashed and fled from leash to scent for Oromë's joy and merriment.

In Oromë's friths and green pastures Huan had once been a young whelp. He grew the swiftest of the swift, and Oromë gave him as a gift to Celegorm, who loved to follow the horn of the great Vala over hill and hollow. Alone of hounds of the Land of Light, Huan stayed beside his master when the sons of Fëanor took to flight and came to the North; and thus he too came under the doom of woe set upon the Noldor. He shared every raid and wild foray, and into mortal battle dared. Often he saved his Noldorin lord from Orc and wolf and leaping sword. A wolf-hound, tireless, grey and fierce he grew; his gleaming eyes would pierce all shadows and all mist, he found the moons-old scent through fen and bent, through rustling leaves and dusty sand; he knew all paths of wide Beleriand. But wolves, he loved them best; he loved to find their throats and wrest their snarling lives and evil breath. The packs of Sauron feared him as death. No wizardry, nor spell, nor dart, nor venom brewed of devil's art, had ever harmed him; for his fate was foretold. Yet he feared little that doom decreed and known to all: that he should fall before the mightiest wolf alone that was ever whelped in cave of stone.

Hark! afar in Nargothrond, far over Sirion and beyond, there are dim cries and horns blowing, and barking hounds going through the trees. The hunt is up, the woods are stirred. Celegorm and Curufin have loosed their dogs. With merry din they mounted ere the sun arose, and took their spears and their bows. The wolves of Sauron have of late dared both far and wide into the Elf-lands. Their eyes have glared by night across the roaring stream of Narog. Does their master dream perchance of plots and deep counsels, of secrets the Elf-lords keep, of movement in the Elvish realm, and errands under beech and elm?

Curufin spoke: "Good brother mine, I like it not. What dark design doth this portend? We must swiftly end these evil things their wanderings! And more, it would please my heart full well to hunt a while and to fell wolves." And then he leaned and whispered low that Orodreth was a slow dullard; long time it was since the king had gone, and rumour or tidings there came none. "At least thy profit it would be to know whether he is dead or free; to gather thy men and thy array. Thou wilt say 'I go to hunt,' and men will think that ever thou heedest the good of Nargothrond. But in the wood things may be learned; and if by grace, by some blind fortune he retrace his mad footsteps, and if he bear a Silmaril --- I need declare no more in words. But one by right is thine (and ours), the jewel of light; another may be won: a throne. Our house doth own the eldest blood."

Celegorm listened. Nought he said, but he led forth a mighty host; and Huan leaped at the glad sounds, the chief and captain of his hounds. Three days they rode by holt and hill to hunt and kill the wolves of Sauron, and many a head and fell of grey they took; and drove many away, till nigh to the borders in the West of Doriath they rested a while.

The Capture of Lúthien

Now when the escape of Lúthien reached the ears of Thingol, great was his mingled grief and wrath, and all the deep places of his court were in uproar, and all the woods ringed with the search, but Lúthien was already far away dancing madly through the dark woods. Yet ere long as she went forward a sudden dread overtook her at the thought of what she had dared and what lay before. Then did she turn back for a while, and she wept; but the Valar set a new hope in her heart, so that she pressed on once more.

There were dim cries and horns blowing, and barking dogs going through the woods. The hunt was up. The woods were stirred, and there fled one like a startled bird, and fear was in her dancing feet. She knew not who did beat the woods. Far from her home, forwandered, pale, she flitted ghostlike through the vale. Ever her heart bade her up and on, but her limbs were worn, her eyes were wan.

The eyes of Huan saw a shade wavering, darting down a glade, like a mist of evening snared by daylight under the trees and hastening fearfully away. He bayed, and sprang with sinewy limb to chase the strange and dim shy thing. On terror's wings, like a

butterfly pursued by a sweeping bird on high, she fluttered hither, darted here, now poised, now flying through the air --- in vain, for nothing could escape the sight and scent of Huan. At last against a tree she leaned and panted. Up he leaped. No word of magic gasped with woe, no Elvish mystery did she know or had entwined in dark raiment availed against that stark hunter, whose old immortal race no spells could ever turn or bind. Huan alone that she ever met she never set in enchantment nor bound with spells. But loveliness and gentle voice and pale distress, and eyes like starlight dimmed with tears, tamed him that fears no monster nor death.

Lightly he lifted her, and lightly he bore his trembling burden. Never before had Celegorm beheld such prey: "What hast thou brought, say good Huan! Dark-elvish maid, or wraith, or fay? We came not today to hunt such."

"Tis Lúthien of Doriath," the maiden spoke. "A wandering path far from the Wood-elves' sunny glades she sadly winds, where courage fades and hope grows faint."

And as she spoke, down she let slip her shadowy cloak, and there she stood in silver and white. Her starry jewels twinkled bright in the risen sun like morning dew; the gold lilies on blue mantle gleamed and glistened. Who could gaze upon that fair face without amaze? Long did Celegorm look and stare. The perfume of her flower-twined hair, her lissom limbs, her Elvish face, smote to his heart; and he stood enchained in that place.

"O maiden royal, O maiden fair," said Celegorm, gazing upon her Elvish form, "wherefore in toil and lonesome journey dost thou go? What dread tidings of war and woe have betide in Doriath? Come tell! For fortune hath guided thee well; thou hast found friends."

In his heart he thought he knew in part her unsaid tale, but nought she read of guile upon his smiling face.

"Who are ye then, that follow the lordly chase in this perilous wood?" she asked; and seeming-good answer they gave.

"Thy servants, sweet lady, lords of Nargothrond greet thee, and beg that thou wouldst go with them back to their hills, forgetting woe a season, seeking hope and rest. And now were best to hear thy tale."

So Lúthien told of Beren's deeds in northern lands, how fate led him to Doriath, of Thingol's ire, the dreadful errand that her sire decreed for Beren. No sign nor word gave the brothers that aught they heard touched near them. She told lightly of her escape and the marvelous mantle she did shape; but her words failed recalling sunlight in the vale, moonlight, starlight in Doriath, ere Beren took the perilous path.

"Need, too, my lords, there is of haste! No time to waste in ease and rest. For days are gone now since the queen, Melian whose heart hath keen vision, looking afar said to me in fear that Beren lived in drear bondage. The Lord of Wolves hath dark prisons, cruel and stark chains and enchantments, and there doth Beren lie, entrapped and languishing --- if direr thing hath not brought death or wish for death."

To Celegorm, apart and low, Curufin said: "Now we win news of Felagund, and now we know wherefore Sauron's creatures go prowling." And other whispered counsels he spoke, and showed him what answer he should make.

"Lady," said Celegorm, "thou seest we go a-hunting roaming beast, and though our host is great and bold, it is ill prepared to assault the wizard's hold and island fortress. Deem not our hearts or wills at fault. Lo! here we now forsake our chase and take our swiftest road home, there to devise counsel and aid for Beren that lies in anguish."

Lúthien in Nargothrond

To Nargothrond they bore Lúthien, whose heart misgave her sore. She feared delay; each moment pressed upon her spirit, yet she guessed they rode not as swiftly as they might. Ahead leaped Huan day and night, and ever looking back his thought was troubled. What his master sought, and why he rode not like the fire, why Celegorm looked with hot desire upon Lúthien, he pondered deep, and felt some evil shadow of ancient curse creep over Elvenesse. His heart was torn for the distress of bold Beren, and Lúthien dear, and Felagund who knew no fear.

In Nargothrond the torches flared, and feast and music were prepared. Lúthien feasted not, but wept; for they held her fast and took away her cloak, and she was not permitted to pass the gates or to speak with any save the brothers, Celegorm and Curufin. Her ways were trammelled; closely kept she might not fly. Her magic cloak was hidden, and no prayer she spoke was heeded, nor did her eager questions find answer. Out of mind, it seemed, were those afar that pined in anguish and blind dungeons, in prison and in misery.

Too late she knew their treachery. It was not hid in Nargothrond that Fëanor's sons held her in bond, who heeded Beren not, and had little cause to wrest from Sauron the king they loved not and whose quest had roused from sleep in their breast old vows of hatred. Orodreth knew the dark purpose they would pursue: to leave King Felagund to die, and to keep Lúthien and force Thingol to give her hand to Celegorm, and with King Thingol's blood ally the house of Fëanor by force or treaty. Thus they would advance their power, and become the mightiest of the princes of the Noldor. And they did not purpose to seek the Silmarils by craft or war, or to suffer any others to do so, until they had all the might of the Elf-kingdoms under their hands. But Orodreth had no power to stay their course, for the brothers had yet all his folk under their yoke, and all yet listened to their word. No man heard Orodreth's counsel; their shame they crushed, and would not heed the tale of Felagund's dire need.

But Huan the hound was true of heart, and the love of Lúthien had fallen upon him in the first hour of their meeting; and he grieved at her captivity. Therefore he came often to her chamber. At Lúthien's feet there day by day, and at night beside her couch, would stay Huan the hound of Nargothrond; and words she spoke to him, soft and fond: "O Huan, Huan, swiftest hound that ever ran on mortal ground, what evil doth thy lords possess, to heed no tears nor my distress? Once Barahir all men above good hounds did cherish and did love; once Beren, when he, outlaw wild, wandered forth in the friendless North, had friends unfailing among things with fur and fell and feathered wings, and among the spirits that, in stone in mountains of old and wastes alone, still dwell. But now nor Elf nor Man, none save the child of Melian, remembers him who Morgoth fought and never was brought to base thralldom."

Nought said Huan; but Celegorm thereafter never might win near to Lúthien, nor touch that maid's hand, but shrank afraid from Huan's fangs.

Then on a night when autumn damp was swathed about the glimmering lamp of the wan moon, and fitful stars were seen flying

between the bars of racing cloud, when winter's horn already wound in forlorn trees, lo! Huan was gone. Then Lúthien lay fearing new wrong; till just ere day, when all is dead and breathless still, and shapeless fears fill the sleepless, a shadow came along the wall. Then something let there fall beside her couch her magic cloak. Trembling she saw the great hound crouch beside her, and heard a deep voice swell as a far slow bell from a tower.

Thus Huan spoke, who never before had uttered words, and did but twice more speak in Elven tongue again: "Lady beloved, whom all Men, whom Elvenesse, and whom all things with fur and fell and feathered wings should serve and love --- arise! away! Put on thy cloak! Before the day comes over Nargothrond we fly to Northern perils, thou and I!"

And ere he ceased he wrought counsel for achievement of the thing they sought. There Lúthien listened in amaze, and gazed softly upon Huan. She cast her arms about his neck in friendship that should last to death.

The Death of Felagund

In Wizard's Isle two comrades still lay forgot, and stared blank-eyed at endless night, enmeshed and tortured in that cold grot, doorless, without light. Now they were alone. The others lived no more, but bare their broken bones would lie and tell how ten had served their master well.

Then Beren said to Felagund: "Twere little loss if I were dead, and I am minded to tell all, and thus, perchance, to loose thy life from this dark hell. I set thee free from thine oath, for more hast thou endured for me than ever was earned."

"Ah! Beren, Beren, hast not learned that promises of Morgoth's folk are frail as breath. From this dark yoke of pain shall neither ever go with Sauron's consent, whether he learn our names or no. Nay more, I think, yet deeper of torment we should drink, knew he that Felagund and son of Barahir were captive here, and even worse if he should know the dreadful errand we did go."

A devil's laugh they heard ringing within their pit. "True, true the word I hear you speak," a voice then said. "Twere little loss if he were dead, the mortal outlaw. But the king, the Elf undying, may endure many a thing no Man could suffer. Perchance, when thy folk learn what these walls immure of dreadful anguish, they will yearn to ransom their king with gold and gem and high hearts cowed; or maybe Celegorm the proud will deem a rival's prison cheap, and himself will keep crown and gold. Perchance, the errand I shall know, ere all is done, that ye did go. The wolf is hungry, the hour is nigh; no more need Beren wait to die."

The slow time passed. Then in the gloom there glowed two eyes. Beren saw his doom, silent, as he strained his bonds beyond his mortal might enchained.

Lo! sudden there was a rending sound of chains that parted and unwound, of meshes broken. Felagund put forth all his power, and burst his bonds. Forth there leaped upon the wolfish thing that crept in shadow faithful Felagund, careless of fang or venomous wound. There in the dark they wrestled slow, remorseless, snarling, to and fro, teeth in flesh, gripe on throat, fingers locked in shaggy coat. Beren lying there heard the werewolf gasping, dying. Then a voice he heard:

"Farewell! On earth I need no longer dwell, friend and comrade, bold Beren. My heart is burst, my limbs are cold. Here all my power I have spent to break my bonds, and dreadful rent of poisoned teeth is in my breast. I now must go to my long rest in timeless halls beyond the seas and the Mountains of Aman, beneath Taniquetil where drink the Valar, where the light falls upon the shining sea, there beyond the shore of Eldamar to dwell in memory for ever more. It may be that we shall not meet a second time in death or life, for the fates of our kindred are apart; yet perchance even that sorrow shall in the end be healed. Farewell!"

He died then in the dark, in Tol-in-Gaurhoth, whose great tower he himself had built. Thus King Finrod Felagund, fairest and most beloved of the children of Finarfin and the house of Finwë, redeemed his oath, as the Elvish harpers yet sing.

The Rescue of Beren

Beren sank down now into a darkness of sorrow and despair. There he lay, waiting for footsteps, a voice, for doom. His grief had no tear, his despair had no horror nor fear. Slow and unbroken around him crept silences, more profound than the tombs of long-forgotten kings, beneath years and sands uncounted laid on biers and buried everlasting-deep.

In that hour Lúthien and Huan came to the bridge that led to Sauron's isle, and she sang a song that no walls of stone could hinder. The silences were sudden shivered to silver fragments. Faint there quivered a voice in song that pierced with light walls of rock, enchanted hill, bar and lock, and powers of darkness. Then Beren awoke from his darkness, and he thought he dreamed. He felt about him the soft night of many stars, and in the air were rustlings and a rare perfume. The nightingales were in the trees, slim fingers seized flute and viol beneath the moon; and one more fair than all there be or ever were danced alone in shimmering raiment upon a lonely knoll of stone.

Then in his dream it seemed he sang in answer a song of challenge that he had made in praise of the Seven Stars, the Sickle of the Valar, and loud and fierce rang his chanting, old songs of battle in the North, of breathless deeds, of marching forth to dare uncounted odds and break great powers, and shake strong walls and towers. And over all the silver fire that Men named the Burning Briar, the Seven Stars that Varda set about the North as a sign for the fall of Morgoth, were burning yet, a light in darkness, hope in woe, the vast emblem of Morgoth's foe.

Whispering low Lúthien spoke thus: "Huan, Huan! I hear a song welling far under, far but strong, a song that Beren bore aloft. I hear his voice, I have heard it oft in dream and wandering."

On the bridge of woe, wrapped in mantle at dead of night, she sat and sang then a song of greater power; and the towers of Sauron trembled. The Wizard's Isle, to its height and to its depth, rock upon rock and pile upon pile, trembling echoed. The werewolves howled, and Huan lay hidden and growled, listening watchful in the dark, waiting for battle cruel and stark.

Sauron heard that voice, and sudden stood in his high tower, wrapped in his cloak and sable hood. He listened long, and smiled hearing her voice, for he knew it was the daughter of Melian, and he knew that Elvish song. The fame of the beauty of Lúthien and the wonder of her song had long gone forth from Doriath. "A! little Lúthien! What brought the foolish fly to web unsought? Morgoth! a

great and rich reward thou wilt owe to me when to thy hoard this jewel is added.” Down he went and sent forth his messenger, a wolf to the bridge.

Still Lúthien sang. A creeping shape with blood-red tongue and jaws agape stole on the bridge; but she sang on with trembling limbs and wide eyes. The creeping shape leaped to her side, and gasped, and sudden fell and died.

And still they came, still one by one, and each was seized; one by one Huan took them by the throat and slew them. And there were none returned with padding feet to tell that a fierce and fell shadow lurked at the bridge’s end, and that below the shuddering waters flow loathing over the grey corpses Huan killed.

A mightier shadow slowly filled the narrow bridge, a slaving hate, an awful werewolf, old in evil, fierce and great: pale Draugluin, the abhorred old grey lord and sire of werewolves and beasts of Angband, that fed on flesh of Man and Elf beneath the chair of Sauron himself. No more in silence did they fight. Howling and baying smote the night, and the battle of Huan and Draugluin was long and fierce. Yet at length Draugluin escaped, and the werewolf fled yammering to die back by the chair where he had fed.

“Huan is there!” he gasped and died, and Sauron was filled with wrath and pride. Now Sauron knew well, as did all in that land, the fate that was decreed for the hound of Valinor, and it came into his thought that he himself would accomplish it. “Before the mightiest he shall fall, before the mightiest wolf of all,” so he now thought, and thought he knew how long-spoken fate should come true.

Huan and Lúthien overcome Sauron

Now there came slowly forth and glared into the night a shape long-haired, dank with poison, with awful eyes, wolfish, ravenous; but there lay a light therein more cruel and dread than ever wolfish eyes had. More huge were its limbs, its jaws more wide, its fangs more gleaming-sharp, and dyed with venom, torment, and with death. The deadly vapour of its breath swept on before it. Swooning died the song of Lúthien, and her eyes were dimmed and darkened with a fear, cold and poisonous and drear.

Thus came Sauron, as werewolf more great than ever was seen from Angband’s gate to the burning south, than ever lurked in mortal lands or worked murder; and he came forth to win the passage of the bridge. Sudden he sprang, and so great was the horror of his approach that Huan leaped aside in shadow. On he swept to Lúthien lying in swooning faint. To her drowsing senses came the taint of his foul breathing, and she stirred. Dizzily she spoke a whispered word, she cast a fold of her dark cloak before his eyes, and her mantle brushed across his face. He stumbled staggering in his pace, for a fleeting drowsiness came upon him. Out leaped Huan. Back he sprang. There befell the battle of Huan and Wolf-Sauron. Beneath the stars there rang the shuddering cry of hunting wolves at bay, the tongue of hounds that slay fearless; and the watchers on the walls of Ered Wethrin across the valley heard it afar and were dismayed. Backward and forward they leaped and ran, fainting to flee, and round they spun, and bit and grappled, and fell and rose. But no wizardry or spell, neither fang nor venom, nor devil’s art nor beast strength, could overthrow or harm Huan, that hound that once hunted hart and boar in Valinor.

Then suddenly Huan held and threw his ghastly foe and pinned him down; his throat he rent, choking his life. But not so it ends. From shape to shape, from wolf to worm, from monster to his own demon form, Sauron changed; but that desperate grip he could not shake, nor from it slip without forsaking his body utterly. The foul spirit of evil well nigh strayed shuddering from its dark house, when Lúthien rose and came to him and shivering looked upon his throes.

“O demon dark, O phantom vile of foulness wrought, of lies and guile, here thou shalt die, thy spirit to roam back to thy master’s home to endure his scorn and fury. Thee he will immerse in the bowels of groaning earth, and in a hole everlasting thy naked soul shall wail and gibber, pierced by his eyes --- this shall be, unless thou render the keys of thy black fortress to me, and thou reveal the spell that bindeth stone to stone, and speak the words of opening.”

With shuddering and gasping breath Sauron spoke, and yielded as he must, and vanquished betrayed his master’s trust. And Lúthien took the mastery of the isle and all that was there; and Huan released him. And immediately a vampire shape with vast pinions leaped screeching from the ground and passed, great as a dark cloud across the moon, its dark blood dripping on the trees; and Huan saw beneath him a lifeless wolfish corpse --- for Sauron had flown to Taur-nu-Fuin, to build there a new throne and darker stronghold.

Lo! by the bridge a gleam of light, like stars descended from the night to burn and tremble here below. There did Lúthien throw her arms wide, and call aloud with voice, as clear as still at whiles may mortal hear long Elvish trumpets echo over the hill, when all the world is still. The dawn peered over the wan mountains, their grey silent heads looked thereon. The hill trembled; and the spell was loosed that bound stone to stone, the citadel crumbled, and all its towers fell; the rocks yawned and the bridge broke, and Sirion spumed in sudden smoke. The gates were thrown down, and the walls opened, and the pits laid bare; out there crept pale forms, ragged as from sleep, crawling and shielding blinded eyes: the thralls and captives in fear and surprise, beyond all hope, set free to light from dolour long in clinging night.

Like ghosts the hooting owls were seen flying in the dawn, and unclean bats went skimming dark through the cold airs, shrieking thinly, to find new lairs in Taur-nu-Fuin’s dread branches. The wolves whimpering and yammering fled like dusky shadows. The captives came and wept and shrilled their piteous cries of thanks and praise. But Lúthien stayed anxious-gazing. Beren came not. At length she said, “Huan, Huan, must we then find him whom we sought among the dead, for love of whom we toiled and fought?”

Then side by side, from stone to stone over Sirion they climbed. They found him alone, unmoving, who mourned by Felagund. So deep was his anguish that he lay still, and never turned to see what feet drew halting nigh. Then thinking him already dead she put her arms about him.

“A! Beren, Beren!” came her cry, “too late have I found thee? Alas! that here upon the ground the noblest of the noble race thy anguish doth embrace in vain! Alas! that we should meet in tears, who once found meeting passing sweet!”

Such love and longing filled her voice, he raised his eyes, his mourning stilled, and felt his heart new-turned to flame for her that came to him through peril. “O Lúthien, O Lúthien, more fair than any child of Men, O loveliest maid of Elvenesse, what might of love did thee possess to bring thee here to terror’s lair! O lissom limbs and shadowy hair, O flower-entwined brows so white, O

slender hands in this new light!"

And they looked again upon one another; and the day rising over the dark hills shone upon them.

Celegorm and Curufin are sent from Nargothrond

Songs, sung by harpers long years ago in old forgotten Elven tongues, have recalled how Lúthien and Beren strayed by the river banks in the vale of Sirion. Many a glade they filled with joy, and there their feet passed by lightly, and days were sweet. Though winter hunted through the wood, it hurt them not, for flowers still lingered where she stood. Tinúviel! Tinúviel! The birds were unafraid to dwell and sing beneath the peaks of snow where Beren and Lúthien went.

From Sirion's Isle they passed away; but alone on the hill-top one might find a green grave, and a set stone, and there lie the white bones of fair Finrod Felagund, fairest of all the princes of the Elves, son of Finarfin --- unless that land is changed and gone, or fountered in unfathomed seas. But Felagund walks and laughs with Finarfin his father beneath the trees of Eldamar in the light of the Blessed Realm, and comes no more to this grey world of war and tears.

He came no more to Nargothrond, but thither ran swiftly the fame of their dead king and his great deed, of Sauron overthrown, of the breaking of the towers of stone. For many Elves now came home at last, who long ago passed to shadow, prisoners in the isle of Sauron. And like a shadow had returned Huan the hound to Celegorm, though he earned scant praise or thanks from his wroth master. Loyal and faithful he was, though he was loath, and their love was less than before. There now arose a growing storm, and a clamour of many loud voices filled the halls of Nargothrond, that vainly Celegorm would have stilled. There men bewailed Felagund their fallen king, crying that a maiden dared that thing which sons of Fëanor would not do; but many perceived that it was treachery rather than fear that had guided Celegorm and Curufin.

"Let us slay these faithless untrue lords!" the fickle folk, whom Celegorm had cowed and who would not ride with Felagund, now loudly cried. "Why lurk they here? What will they do, but bring Finarfin's kin to naught, treacherous unsought cuckoo-guests? Away with them!"

But Orodreth spoke wise and slow: "Beware, lest ye bring woe and wickedness to worse! Finrod is fallen. The kingdom is now mine alone. But even as he would speak, I now command you. I will not allow in Nargothrond the ancient curse to work from evil unto worse evil. With tears for Finrod weep repentant! Keep swords for Morgoth! No kindred blood shall here be shed. But neither bread nor rest shall these brethren find herein, who have set at nought the house of Finarfin. Let them be sought, unarmed to stand before me! Go. Show the courtesy of Finrod!"

They were brought. Celegorm stood scornful, unbowed and unashamed. In his eye there flamed a light of proud anger and menace. At his side was Curufin, silent and wary, with hand on haft of his long knife. He smiled with his thin crafty mouth, and then he laughed.

"Well?" said he. "Why didst thou call for us, Sir Steward? In thy hall we are not wont to stand. Come, speak, if aught of us thou hast to seek!"

Cold words Orodreth answered slow: "Before the king ye stand. But know, of you he seeks for naught. His will ye come to hear, and to fulfill. Be gone forever --- ere the day shall fall into the sea. Your way shall never more lead you hither, nor any son of Fëanor; nor ever after shall be bond of love between your house and Nargothrond."

"We will remember it," they said, and turned upon their heels. They saddled their horses, trussed their gear, and went with hound and bow and spear, alone; for none of all the folk would follow them, for all perceived that the curse lay heavily upon the brothers, and that evil followed them. No word they spoke, but sounded horns and rode like fire, and went away in dire anger, like wind at end of stormy day. Northward they rode, for they intended in their haste to pass through Dimbar, and along the north marches of Doriath, seeking the swiftest road to Himring, where Maedhros their brother dwelt.

Lúthien pleads with Beren

The wanderers Beren and Lúthien came now into the Forest of Brethil and were drawing nigh towards Doriath. Though bare the bough, though cold the wind, and grey the grasses through which the chill hiss of winter passed, and brief was day, they sang beneath the frosty sky, clear and high uplifted over them. They came to Mindeb's narrow stream that came leaping down, swift and bright, from the northern hills to Neldoreth, with noise among the brown boulders, but fell into sudden silence and gleamed by the western borders where the guarding spells of Melian begin to fence in King Thingol's land, and strangers step to wind bewildered in their webs.

There now they stayed; for a sad silence fell sudden upon Beren. Unheeded long, at last he heard too well the warning of his heart:

"Alas, Tinúviel," he said, "this road no further can we tread together, no more hand in hand can we journey into the Elven-land. Here we part and our brief song together ends, and each wends sundered ways!"

"Why part we here? What dost thou say, just at the dawn of a brighter day?"

"For thou art come safe to the borderlands, over which in the keeping of Melian's hands thou wilt walk at ease and find thy home and well-loved trees."

"My heart is glad when it sees far off the fair grey trees of Doriath uprising inviolate. Yet my heart did hate Doriath, and my feet forsook Doriath, my home, my kin. I would not look on grass nor leaf there evermore without thee by me. Dark is the shore of Esgalduin the deep and strong! Why there alone must I sit hopeless by endless waters rolling past, forsaking song, and gaze at pitiless waters in heartache and loneliness?"

"For never more to Doriath can Beren find the winding path, though Thingol allowed or willed it; for to thy father there I vowed to not come back save to fulfill the quest of the shining Silmaril, and win by valour my desire. 'Nor rock nor steel nor

Morgoth's fire, nor all the powers of Elvenesse, shall keep the gem I would possess': thus I swore once of Lúthien, more fair than any child of Men. My word alas! I must keep, though sorrow pierce and parting grieve; and not the first of men who must weep for oath sworn in pride and anger. Too brief the meeting, brief the morn, too soon comes the night when we must part! All oaths are for breaking of the heart, with shame denied, with anguish kept. Ah! would that I now slept unknown with Barahir beneath the stone, and thou wert still dancing alone, unmarred, immortal, sorrowless, singing in joy of Elvenesse!"

"That may not be. For bonds there are stronger than stone or iron bar, more strong than proudly spoken oath. Have I not plighted thee my troth? Hath love no pride nor honour then? Or dost thou deem Lúthien so frail of purpose, so light of love? By stars of Elbereth above! If thou wilt here forsake my hand, and leave me to take lonely paths, then Lúthien will not go home, but will roam weeping in the woods, nor heed peril, nor know laughter. And if she may not go by thee, against thy will she will pursue thy desperate feet, until they meet, Beren and Lúthien, and beyond all hope love once more on earth or on the shadowy shore."

"Nay, Lúthien," he said, shuddering, "most brave of heart, thou makest it more hard to part. Thy love drew me from bondage drear, but never shall thy most blissful light be led to that outer fear, that darkest mansion of all dread. Never! Never!"

The Attack upon Beren and Lúthien

But even as she pleaded in his arms, a sound came like a hurrying storm. The hooves of horses dinned loud upon the earth. There Curufin and Celegorm rode up in sudden tumult like the wind. In rage and haste northward they had madly raced the path between Doriath and the deadly dark entwined shadows of Taur-nu-Fuin. That was their most swift road to where their kin abode in the east, where Himring's watchful hill hung tall and still over Aglon's gorge.

They saw the wanderers and knew them from afar. With a shout straight on them swung their hurrying rout, as if to rend the lovers beneath maddened hooves and end their love. But as they came the horses swerved, with nostrils wide and proud necks curved; Curufin, stooping, with mighty arm did throw Lúthien to saddlebow, and laughed. Too soon; for there Beren gave a spring, fiercer than tawny lion-king maddened with arrows' barbed smart, greater than any horned hart that hounded to a gulf leaps over, and with a roar leaped on Curufin. Round his neck his arms entwined, and all to wreck both horse and rider fell to ground; and there they fought without a sound. Lúthien was flung aside and lay dazed in the grass, beneath bare branches and the sky. The Elf felt Beren's grim fingers close on his throat and strangle him, and his eyes did start out, and gasping from his mouth hung his tongue.

Up rode Celegorm with his spear, and bitter death was near Beren. With Elvish steel he was nigh being slain, whom Lúthien won from hopeless chain. But in that hour Huan forsook the service of Celegorm, and sudden sprang baying before his master's face, with fang white-gleaming and bristling hair, as if he did stare on wolf or boar.

The horse in terror leaped aside, and Celegorm cried in anger: "Curse thee, thou baseborn dog, to dare bare teeth against thy master!" But no dog nor horse nor rider bold would venture near the cold anger of mighty Huan fierce at bay. Red were his jaws. They shrank away, and fearful eyed him from afar: no sword nor knife, nor scimitar, no dart of bow, nor cast of spear, master nor man did Huan fear.

There Curufin would have left his life, had not Lúthien stayed that strife. Waking she rose, and standing distressed at Beren's side, softly cried: "Forbear thy anger now, my lord! nor do the work of abhorred Orc. For foes there be of Elvenesse unnumbered, and they grow not less, while here we war distraught by ancient curse, and all the world decays and crumbles to worse. Make thy peace!"

Then Beren did release Curufin; but took his horse and mail, and took his gleaming pale knife, Angrist, wrought of steel, hanging sheathless. No flesh that point had pierced could leeches ever heal; for long ago the Dwarves made it, singing slow enchantments, where their hammers fell ringing like bells in Nogrod. Iron it cleft as tender green wood, and sundered mail like woolen weft. But other hands now held its haft; its master lay felled by mortal.

Beren uplifted him, flung him far, and cried with stinging tongue: "Begone! thou renegade and fool, and let thy lust cool in exile! Arise and go, and work no more like Morgoth's slaves or cursed Orc; and deal, proud son of Fëanor, in deeds more proud than heretofore! Thy horse I keep for the service of Lúthien, and it may be accounted happy to be free of such a master." Then Beren led Lúthien away, while Huan still stood there at bay.

"Farewell," cried Celegorm the fair. "Far get you gone! Go hence unto a swift and bitter death. And better were to die forehungered in the waste than to taste the wrath of Fëanor's sons, that may yet reach over dale and hill. No gem, nor maid, nor Silmaril, shall ever lie long in thy grasp! We curse thee under cloud and sky, we curse thee from rising unto sleep! Farewell!"

He leaped swift from horse, lifted his brother from the ground, and made then as if to ride away. But Curufin, being filled with shame and malice, strung then Celegorm's bow of yew bound with gold wire, and shooting he sent a shaft, a Dwarvish and cruelly hooked dart, as they went hand in hand heedless; and the arrow was aimed at Lúthien. They never turned nor looked backward. Loud bayed Huan, and leaping caught the speeding arrow. Quick as thought another followed, deadly singing; but Beren had turned, and springing sudden defended Lúthien with his breast. Deep in flesh sank the dart to rest. He fell to earth.

They rode away, and laughing left him as he lay; yet Huan pursued the sons of Fëanor and they fled, spurred like wind in fear and dread of Huan's red anger. Though Curufin laughed with bruised mouth, yet later was tale and rumour of that dastard shaft, and Men remembered at the Marching Forth, and its hatred helped Morgoth's will. Thereafter never hound was whelped would follow horn of Celegorm or Curufin. Though in strife and storm, though all their house went down in red ruin, thereafter Huan no more laid his head at that lord's feet, but followed Lúthien, brave and fleet.

The Healing of Beren

Now she sank weeping at the side of Beren, and sought to stem the tide of welling blood that flowed there fast. She cast the raiment from his breast, from shoulder plucked the arrow keen; she washed his wound clean with tears. Then Huan came and bore a leaf, chief of all the herbs of healing, that grew evergreen in woodland glade there with broad and hoary blade. The powers of all

grasses Huan knew, who widely pursued forest-paths. Therewith he swiftly allayed the smart, while Lúthien murmuring in the shade wove over him the staunching song, that Elvish wives long years had sung in those sad lives of war and weapons.

The shadows fell from mountains grim. Then sprang about the darkened North the Sickle of the Valar, and there each star in stony night stared radiant, glistening cold and white. But on the ground there was a glow, a spark of red leaping below: under woven boughs beside a fire of crackling wood and sputtering briar Beren lay in deep drowsing, walking and wandering in sleep. Bending watchful over him a maiden awakes. She slakes his thirst, caresses his brow, and softly croons a song more potent than hath been writ in runes or leeches' lore. Slowly flit the nightly watches; the misty grey morning crawled from dusk to the reluctant day. And by her arts and by her love she healed him.

Then Beren woke and opened eyes, and rose and cried: "Beneath other skies, in lands more awful and unknown, I wandered long, methought, alone to the deep shadow where the dead dwell; but ever a voice that I know well, like bells, like viols, like harps, like birds, like music moving without words, called me, called me through the night, enchanted drew me back to the light! Healed the wound, assuaged the pain! Now we are come to morn again, new journeys once more lead us on --- to perils whence life may be won, hardly for Beren; and for thee I see a waiting in the wood, beneath the trees of Doriath, while ever down my path follow the echoes of thine Elvish song, where hills are haggard and roads are long."

"Nay, now no more we have for foe dark Morgoth only, but in woe, in wars and feuds of Elvenesse thy quest is bound; and death, no less, for thee and me; for bold Huan the end of doom foretold of yore --- all this I bode shall follow swift, if thou go on. Thy hand shall never lift and lay in Thingol's lap the dire and flaming jewel, Fëanor's fire. Never! Why then go? Why turn we not from fear and woe to walk beneath the roofless trees, with all the world as home, over mountains, beside the seas, in the sunlight, in the breeze?"

Thus long they spoke with heavy hearts; yet not all her Elvish arts, nor lissom limbs, nor shining eyes as tremulous stars in rainy skies, nor tender lips, nor enchanted voice, bent his purpose or swayed his choice. Never would he fare to Doriath save to leave her there guarded fast; never to Nargothrond would go with her, lest there came war and woe; and never would suffer her to wander in the untrod world, worn, unshod, roofless and restless, whom he drew with love from the hidden realms she knew.

"For Morgoth's power is now awake; already hill and dale doth shake, the hunt is up, the prey is wild: a maiden lost, an Elven child. Now Orcs and phantoms prowl and peer from tree to tree, and fill each shade and hollow with fear. Thee they seek! At thought thereof my hope grows weak, my heart is chilled. I curse mine oath! I curse the fate that joined us both and snared thy feet in my sad doom of flight and wandering in the gloom! Now let us haste, and ere the day be fallen, take our swiftest way, till over the marches of thy land we stand beneath the beech and oak in Doriath, fair Doriath, whither no evil finds the path, powerless to pass the listening leaves that droop upon those forest-eaves."

Then she seeming bent to his will. Swiftly to Doriath they went, and crossed its borders. There they stayed resting in deep and mossy glade; there they lay sheltered from the wind under mighty silken-skinned beeches; and sang of love that still shall be, though Middle-earth be foundered under sea, and sundered here forever more, shall meet upon the Western shore.

One morning as she lay asleep upon the moss, as though the day were too bitter for gentle flower to open in a sunless hour, Beren arose and kissed her hair, and wept, and softly left her there.

"Good Huan," said he, "Guard her well! In leafless field no asphodel, in thorny thicket never a rose so frail and fragrant blows. Guard her from wind and frost, and hide from hands that seize and cast aside; keep her from wandering and woe, for pride and fate now make me go."

Then in great anguish he departed while she yet slept upon the grass. He took horse and rode away, nor dared to turn; but all that day with heart as stone he hastened forth, and took the paths toward the North.

Beren reaches Anfauglith

Once a plain was spread wide and smooth, where King Fingolfin proudly led his silver armies on the green, his horses white, his lances keen; his tall helms were hewn of steel, his shields were shining as the moon. There trumpets sang both loud and long, and challenge rang unto the cloud that lay on Morgoth's northern tower, while Morgoth waited his hour.

At dead of night, in winter lying cold and white, rivers of fire burst forth upon the plain, and high the red was mirrored in the sky. From Hithlum's halls they saw the fire, the steam and smoke leap up in spire on spire, till the stars were choked in vast confusion. And so it passed, the mighty field, and turned to dust, to drifting sand and yellow rust, to thirsty dunes where many bones lay broken among barren stones. Anfauglith, the Gasping Dust, they ever after named it, and Dor-nu-Faughlith, Land under Choking Ash, accursed waste, the raven-haunted roofless grave of many fair and brave. Thereon the stony slopes looked forth from Taur-nu-Fuin falling north, from somber pines with vast pinions, black-plumed and drear, as many a mast of sable-shrouded ships of death wafted slow on a ghostly breath.

Thence grim Beren now gazed out across the dunes and shifting drought, and saw afar the frowning towers where thunderous Thangorodrim lowered. The hungry horse stood drooping there, proud Noldorin steed. It feared the wood, and upon the ghostly haunted plain no horse would ever stride again.

"Good steed of ill master," Beren said, "farewell now here! Lift up thy head and get thee gone to Sirion's vale, back as we came, past the pale island where Sauron once reigned, to waters sweet and grasses long about thy feet. And if thou no more find Curufin, grieve not! Leave now dread and servitude and run free upon the grass in the lands of Sirion. Go wander free with hart and hind, leaving work and war, and dream thee back in Valinor, whence of old came thy mighty race, from Oromë's mountain-fenced chase."

There Beren sat still, and being now alone and upon the threshold of the final peril he made the Song of Parting, in praise of Lúthien and the lights of heaven for he believed he must now say farewell to both love and light. And he sang, and loud his lonely singing rang. Though Orc should hear, or wolf a-prowl, or any of the foul creatures that slunk and stared within a shade of Taur-nu-

Fuin, nought he cared, who now took leave of light and day, grim-hearted, bitter, fierce and fey.

“Farewell now here, ye leaves of trees,
your music in the morning breeze!
Farewell now blade and bloom and grass
that see the changing seasons pass;
ye waters murmuring over stone,
and silent meres that stand alone!
Farewell now mountain, vale, and plain!
Farewell now wind and frost and rain,
and mist and cloud, and heaven’s air;
ye star and moon so blinding-fair
that shall still look down from the sky
on the wide earth, though Beren die ---
though Beren die not, and yet deep,
deep, whence comes of those that weep
no dreadful echo, lie and choke
in everlasting dark and smoke.
Farewell sweet earth and northern sky,
for ever blest, since here did lie,
and here with lissom limbs did run
beneath the Moon, beneath the Sun,
Lúthien Tinúviel,
more fair than mortal tongue can tell.
Though all to ruin fell the world,
and were dissolved and backward hurled
unmade into the old abyss,
yet were its making good, for this ---
the dawn, the dusk, the earth, the sea ---
that Lúthien for a time should be.”

His blade he lifted high in hand, challenging, and stood alone before the threat of Morgoth’s power; and dauntless cursed him, hall and tower, overshadowing hand and grinding foot; then turned to stride forth down the slope, and looked for no escape, abandoning fear, forsaking hope.

Huan leads the Quest

“A, Beren, Beren!” came a sound, “almost too late have I found thee! O proud and fearless hand and heart, not yet farewell, not yet we part! Not thus do those of Elven race forsake the love that they embrace. A love is mine, as great a power as thine, to shake the gate and tower of death with challenge weak and frail that yet endures, and will not fail nor yield, unvanquished were it hurled beneath the foundations of the world. Beloved fool! To seek escape from such pursuit; in might so weak to trust not, thinking it well to save from love thy loved, who sooner welcomes torment and grave than to languish in guard of kind intent, barred, wingless and helpless to aid him for whose support her love was made!”

Thus came back to him Lúthien, through the woods unlooked for: they met beyond the ways of Men; stood upon the brink of terror between the desert and the wood. He looked on her, her lifted face beneath his in sweet embrace.

“Thrice now I curse mine oath to Thingol,” he said, “that hath led thee under shadow of Morgoth, and I would that he had slain me in Menegroth. But where is Huan, where the hound to whom I trusted, whom I bound by love of thee to keep thee well from deadly wandering?”

“I know not! But good Huan’s heart is wiser, kinder than thou art, grim lord, more open unto prayer! Yet long and long I pleaded there, until he brought me, as I would, upon thy trail. A good palfrey would Huan make, of flowing pace: thou wouldst have laughed to see us race like fire, as Orc on werewolf ride, night after night through fen and mire, through waste and wood! But when I heard thy singing clear, he set me down, and sped away, but what he would I cannot say.”

They knew ere long, for Huan came, his great breath panting, eyes like flame, in fear lest some hunting evil took her whom he forsook to aid ere he was nigh. Long he had pondered in his heart what counsel he would devise for the lightening of the peril of these two whom he loved. Now there he laid before their feet two grisly shapes, as dark as shade, that he had won from that tall isle in Sirion: a huge wolflame, the werewolf cloak of Draugluin --- its savage fell was long and matted, dark the spell that drenched the dreadful coat and skin. The other was a bat-like garb, the bat-fell of Thuringwethil, messenger of Sauron. She was wont to fly to Angband in vampire’s form with mighty fingered wings, a barb like iron nail at each joint’s end --- such wings as their dark cloud extend against the moon, when in the sky from Deadly Nightshade fly screeching Sauron’s messengers.

“What hast thou brought, good Huan?” said Beren. “What thy hidden thought? What need here in the waste of trophy of prowess and strong deed, when Sauron thou vanquished?”

Thus Beren spoke, and once more words woke in Huan: his voice was like the deep-toned bells that ring in Valimar’s citadels:

“From the shadow of death thou can no longer save Lúthien, for by her love she is now subject to it. Of one fair gem thou must

be thief, Morgoth's or Thingol's: thou must here choose twixt love and oath! If thee are still loath to break vow, then Lúthien must either die alone, or defy death with thee, marching beside thee on your fate that before you lies hidden in wait. Hopeless the quest, but not yet mad, unless thou, Beren, run thus clad in mortal raiment, mortal hue, witless and redeless, to woo death. Lo! good was Felagund's device, but may be bettered, if ye will dare to take Huan's advice, and will swift make a hideous change to forms most cursed, foul and vile, of werewolf of the Wizard's Isle, of monstrous bat's fell with ghostly claw-like wings. To such dark straits, alas!, are ye I love now brought, for whom I fought. Nor further with you can I go --- whoever did know a great hound stride to Angband's grinning gates in friendship at a werewolf's side? Yet my heart tells me that what ye find there at the gate, it will be my fate myself to see, though to that door my feet shall bear me nevermore. Darkened is hope and dimmed my eyes, I see not clear what lies further; yet maybe backwards leads your path beyond all hope to Doriath, and thither, perchance, we three shall wend and meet again before the end."

They stood and marveled thus to hear his mighty tongue so deep and clear; then sudden he vanished from their sight, even at the onset of night. Then Beren perceived that Lúthien could not be divided from the doom that lay upon them both, and he sought no longer to dissuade her. They then took Huan's dreadful counsel, and forsook their own gracious forms; prepared to robe themselves, shuddering, in werewolf fell and bat-like wing. With Elvish magic Lúthien wrought a strong defense, lest foul raiment fraught with evil drive their hearts to dreadful madness; and there with Elvish arts she wrought a binding power, singing until the midnight hour.

Swift as he wore the wolfish coat, Beren lay slaving on the forest floor, red-tongued and hungry; but there lay a pain and longing in his eyes, a look of horror as he saw a bat-like form crawl to its knees and drag its creased and creaking wings. Then, howling under moon, he sprang fourfooted, swift, from stone to stone, from hill to plain --- but not alone: a dark shape skimmed down the hill and fluttered wheeling over him.

Beren and Lúthien cross Anfauglith

Ashes and dust and thirsty dune, withered and dry beneath the moon, under the cold and shifting air, sifting and sighing, bleak and bare; that land was built of blistered stones and gasping sands, of splintered bones, over which now slunk a hellish shape with powdered fell and hanging tongue. Many parching leagues still lay before when sickly day crept back once more; many choking miles yet stretched ahead when shivering night once more was spread with doubtful shadow and ghostly sound that hissed and passed over dune and mound. A second morning struggled in cloud and reek, when stumbling, blind and weak, a wolfish shape came staggering forth and reached the foothills of the North; upon its back there lay folded a crumpled thing that blinked at day.

The rocks were reared like bony teeth, and claws that grasped from opened sheath, on either side of the mournful road that led onward to that abode far up within the dark Mountain, with tunnels drear and stark portals. They crept within a scowling shade, and cowering laid themselves down darkly. Long they lurked there beside the path, and shivered, dreaming of Doriath, of laughter and music and clean air, birds singing fair in fluttered leaves. They woke, and felt the trembling sound, the beating echo shake beneath them far underground, the rumour of Morgoth's vast forges; and aghast they heard the tramp of stony feet that shod with iron went down that street: the Orcs went forth to rape and war, and Balrog captains marched before.

They stirred, and stepped forth under cloud and shade at eve, and no more stayed: as dark things bent on errand up the long slopes they went in haste. Ever the sheer cliffs rose beside and stood as embattled walls, where birds of carrion sat and cried with fell voices, and chasms black and smoking yawned, whence writhing serpent-shapes were spawned; until at last in that huge gloom, heavy as overhanging doom, that weighs like thunder on the mountain Thangorodrim's root, they came, as to a sombre court walled with great towers, fort on fort of embattled cliffs, to that last great abysmal plain that opens before the final topless wall of Morgoth Bauglir's immeasurable hall, whereunder looming awful waits the gigantic shadow of his gates.

The Death of Fingolfin

In that vast shadow once of yore stood Fingolfin: he bore his shield with field of heaven's blue and star of crystal shining pale afar. For as has been told, there came a time of winter, when Morgoth suddenly sent forth great rivers of flame that ran down swifter than Balrogs from Thangorodrim, and poured over all the plain. Thus began the Dagor Bragollach, the Battle of Sudden Flame. Many of the stoutest of the foes of Morgoth were destroyed in the first days of the war, bewildered and dispersed and unable to muster their strength. Thus ended the Siege of Angband; and the foes of Morgoth were scattered and sundered one from another. Then Fingolfin beheld the utter ruin of the Noldor, and the defeat beyond redress of all their houses. In overmastering wrath and desperate hate he mounted upon Rochallor his great horse and rode forth alone, and none might restrain him. He passed over Dor-nu-Fauglith like a wind amid the dust, and all that beheld his onset fled in amaze, thinking that Oromë himself was come: for a great madness of rage was upon him, so that his eyes shone like the eyes of the Valar. Thus he came to Angband and smote upon that gate, the High King of the Noldor, standing alone, while endless fortresses of stone engulfed the thin and clear keen ringing of silver horn on green baldric. Dauntless Fingolfin cried his hopeless challenge there, and his voice came keen and clear down into the depths of Angband:

"Come, open wide your ghastly brazen doors, dark king! Come forth, thou whom earth and heaven abhors! Come forth, O monstrous craven lord, and fight with thine own hand and sword, thou wielder of hosts of banded thralls, thou tyrant leaguered with strong walls, thou foe of Valar and Elves! I wait thee here. Come! Show thy face!"

And Morgoth came. For the last time in those great wars he dared to climb from subterranean throne, the rumour of his feet a sound of rumbling earthquake underground. Black-armoured, towering, iron-crowned, he issued forth; his mighty shield, a vast unblazoned sable field, cast a shadow like a thundercloud; and over the gleaming king it bowed, as like a mace he hurled aloft Grond, that huge hammer of the underworld. Like a thunderbolt it tumbled down, clanging to ground, and crumbled the rocks beneath it; smoke upstarted, a pit yawned, and a fire darted.

Fingolfin then sprang aside, like a shooting light beneath a cloud, a stab of white, and drew Ringil that glimmered cold and blue

like ice, his sword devised of Elvish skill to pierce the flesh with deadly chill. With seven wounds it rent his foe, and seven mighty cries of anguish and woe rang in the mountains, and the earth quaked, and Angband's trembling armies shook and fell upon their faces in dismay. But at last the King grew weary, and Morgoth bore down his mighty shield upon him.

Thrice was Fingolfin beaten to his knees with great blows, thrice he rose still leaping up beneath the cloud, to hold aloft his proud, star-shining, stricken shield, his sundered helm, that no dark nor night could overwhelm, till all the earth was burst and rent in pits about him. He was spent. His feet stumbled. He fell to wreck upon the ground, and on his neck a foot like rooted hill was set, and he was crushed --- not conquered yet; one last despairing stroke he gave: pale Ringil clove the mighty foot, and black the blood gushed in a flood as from smoking fount and filled the pits of Grond.

Thus died Fingolfin, High King of the Noldor, most proud and valiant of the Elven-kings of old. Great Morgoth went for ever halt from that stroke; but the king he broke, and would have hewn and thrown mangled to devouring wolves. Lo! from throne that Manwë bade him build on high on unscaled peak beneath the sky, to watch Morgoth, Thorondor the King of Eagles stooped and smote Morgoth with rending beak of gold; then up did float on pinions thirty fathoms wide, bearing away the mighty Elven king. And where the mountains make a ring far to the south about that plain where secret Gondolin did reign, at great height upon a dizzy white snowcap he laid the mighty dead in mounded cairn on the mountain's head. Never Orc nor demon ever after dared climb that pass, over which there stared Fingolfin's high and holy tomb, till Gondolin's appointed doom. No laughing Orcs would after boast of the duel at the gates of Angband; neither do the Elves sing of it, for their sorrow is too deep. Yet the tale is remembered still --- when the mighty king was laid in a high sad barrow, for Thorondor, Eagle of the sky, brought and told the dreadful tidings to mourning Elvenes of old.

The Wolf Carcharoth

Thus Morgoth Bauglir earned the furrowed scar that doth mar his dark countenance, and thus he gained his limping gate; but ever afterward he reigned profound upon his hidden throne; and thunderous paced his halls of stone, building slow there his vast design to confine the world in thralldom. Wielder of armies, lord of woe, no rest he now gave slave or foe. He thrice increased his watch and ward, his spies were sent from West to East, and tidings brought from all the North: who fought, who fell, who ventured forth, who wrought in secret, who had hoard; if maid were fair or lord were proud; well nigh all things he knew, well nigh all hearts enmeshed in evil arts.

Doriath only, beyond the veil woven by Melian, no assail could hurt or enter; only dim rumour of things passing there came to him. A loud rumour and clear tidings of other movements near and far among his foes, and threat of war from the seven sons of Fëanor, from Nargothrond, from Fingon still gathering his armies under hill and tree in Hithlum's shade; these daily came. Morgoth grew afraid once more amidst his power; renown of Beren vexed his ears, and down the aisled forests there was heard great Huan baying.

Then came word most passing strange, of Lúthien wild-wandering by wood and glen, and he long weighed Thingol's purpose, and wondered, thinking of that maid so fair, so frail. A dire captain, Boldog, he sent with sword and fire to Doriath's march. But battle fell sudden upon him; never one of Boldog's host returned to tell news, and Thingol humbled Morgoth's boast. Then his heart burned with doubt and wrath: new tidings of dismay he learned, how Sauron was overthrown and his strong isle broken and plundered, how with guile his foes now beset guile; and spies he feared, till each Orc was half suspect to his eyes. Still ever down the aisled forests came renown of baying Huan, hound of war that the Valar unleashed in Valinor.

Then Morgoth bethought of Huan's long-rumoured fate, and in dark he wrought. He had fierce hunger-haunted packs that were clad in wolfish form and flesh, but did hold dire demon spirits; and ever their wild voices rolled and roused endless snarling echoes in cave and mountain where they housed. From these he chose a whelp and fed with his own hand on fairest flesh of Elves and Men; till huge he grew and could no more creep in his den, but would lie and glare by the chair of Morgoth, nor suffer Balrog, Orc, nor beast to touch him. Many a ghastly feast he held beneath that awful throne, rending flesh and gnawing bone. Then deep enchantment fell upon him, the anguish and power of Angband, and he became filled with a devouring spirit, tormented and strong; more great and terrible he became than any beast of wood or cave, than any beast of all Middle-earth that ever befell in any time, with fire-red eyes and jaws aflame, with breath like vapours of the grave, surpassing all his race and kin, the ghastly tribe of Draugluin.

The songs of the Elves name him Carcharoth, the Red Maw, and Anfauglir, the Jaws of Thirst. Not yet came he ravening, disastrous, from the gates of Angband. There he waited sleepless; his red eyes smouldered in the gloom where those great portals loomed threatening, his teeth were bared, his jaws were wide; and none walked, nor crept, nor glided, nor thrust with power past his menace to enter Morgoth's vast dungeon.

Lúthien overcomes Carcharoth

Now lo! Before his watchful eyes he decried a far slinking shape that crawled into the frowning plain and halted to gaze, then on again came stalking near, a haggard wolfish shape, wayworn, with jaws agape; and over it in wide rings a reeling bat-like shadow slowly winged. Such shapes were oft seen to roam there, this land their native haunt and home; and yet his mood was filled with strange unease and doubt, and boding thoughts seized him, for news had long been brought to Angband that Draugluin was dead.

"What grievous terror, what dread guard hath Morgoth set to wait, and barred his doors against all entering feet? Long ways we have come to meet at last the very maw of death that opens between us and our quest! Yet hopes we never had. No turning back!" Thus Beren spoke, as in his track he halted and with werewolf eyes saw afar the horror that lay there. Then onward desperate he passed, skirting the vast yawning black pits, where King Fingolfin fell ruinous, alone before the gates of Angband.

Before those gates they stood alone, while Carcharoth in doubtful mood denied them entry; and glowered upon them, and snarling spoke, and woke echoes in the arches: "Hail! Draugluin, my kindred's lord! 'Tis very long since hitherward thou camest. Yea,

'tis passing strange to see thee now: a grievous change is on thee, lord, who once so dire, so dauntless, and as fleet as fire, ran over wild and waste, but now with weariness must bend and bow! 'Tis hard to find the struggling breath when Huan's teeth as sharp as death have rent the throat! What rare fortune brings thee living back here to fare --- if Draugluin thou art? Come near! I would know more, and see thee clear."

"Who art thou, hungry upstart whelp, to bar my ways whom thou shouldst help? I fare with hasty tidings new to Morgoth from forest-haunting Sauron. Aside! For I must in; or go and swift tell below my coming!"

Then up slowly stood that door-ward, eyes shining grim with evil mood, uneasy growling: "Draugluin, if such thou be, now enter in! But what is this that crawls beside, slinking as if it would hide beneath thee? Though winged creatures unnumbered pass here to and fro, all I know. I know not this. Stay, vampire, stay! I like not thy kin nor thee. Come, thou winged vermin, say what sneaking errand thee doth bring to the king! Small matter, I doubt not, if thou stay or enter, or if in my play I crush thee like a fly on wall, or bite thy wings and let thee crawl."

Huge-stalking, noisome, he came close with menace, scenting something strange in the air about them. In Beren's eyes there gleamed a flame; the hair upon his neck uprose. Naught may enclose the fair fragrance, the odour of immortal flowers that glitter in everlasting spring beneath silver showers in the grass in Valinor. Wherever Tinúviel did pass, such air there went. No dark disguise, enchanted to cheat the eyes, could keep its sudden sweetness from that foul devil-sharpened scent, if those nostrils drew near snuffling in doubt. This Beren knew; he prepared for battle and death upon the brink of Angband.

There those dreadful shapes stared threatening, in hatred both, false Draugluin and Carcharoth, when lo! a marvel to behold: some power, descended from old, from race divine beyond the West, sudden possessed Lúthien like inner fire. She flung aside the dark vampire, and like a lark cleaving through night to dawn she sprang, while sheer, heart-piercing, rang her silver voice, as those long trumpets keen thrilling, unbearable, unseen, in the cold aisles of morn. Her cloak, by white hands woven, she swept across those awful eyes, falling from lifted arms, like a smoke, as she stepped forth, small before the might of Carcharoth, yet radiant and terrible, all-bewildering, all-enthraling, all-enfolding, a shadow and a mist of dreams, wherein entangled starlight gleams.

"Sleep, O unhappy, tortured thrall! Thou woe-begotten, fail and fall down, down from anguish, hatred and pain, from lust, from hunger, bond and chain, to that oblivion, dark and deep, the well, the lightless pit of sleep! For one brief hour escape the net, forget the dreadful doom of life!"

His eyes were quenched, his limbs were loosed; he fell like running steer that noosed and tripped goes crashing to the ground. Deathless, moveless, outstretched he lay without a sound, as lightning stroke had felled a huge overshadowing oak.

Beren and Lúthien enter Angband

Then Beren and Lúthien went through the Gate; and together wrought the greatest deed that has been dared by Elves and Men. They went alone into the vast and echoing gloom, more dreadful than many-tunneled tomb, and down awful corridors and labyrinthine stairs that wind to a dark enshrined menace; down to the mountain's profound roots, devoured, tormented, bored and ground by seething vermin spawned of stone, down to the depths. They saw behind the arch of twilight shade recede and dwindling fade; the thunderous forges' rumour grew, a burning wind there roaring blew foul vapours up from gaping holes. There stood huge shapes like enormous carven trolls hewn of blasted rock to forms that mock mortal likeness; monstrous and menacing, entombed, at every turn they loomed silent in fitful glares that leaped and died. There hammers clanged, and tongues there cried with sound like smitten stone; there faint voices of captives put to pain wailed from far under, called and failed amid the iron clink of chain. Loud rose a din of hoarse laughter, self-loathing yet without remorse; loud came a harsh and fierce singing, like swords of terror to pierce souls. Red was the glare through open doors of firelight mirrored on brazen floors, and up climbed the towering arches to glooms unguessed, to vaulted dome swathed in wavering smokes and steams stabbed with flickering lightning-gleams.

They stumbling came to the seat of Morgoth in his nethermost hall, where he held dreadful feast and drank the blood of beast and lives of Men, that was upheld by horror, lit by fire, and filled with weapons of death and torment. Their eyes were dazed with smoke and flame. The pillars, reared like monstrous shores to bear earth's overwhelming floors, were devil-carven, shaped with skill such as fill unholy dreams: they towered like trees into the air, whose trunks are rooted in despair, whose shade is death, whose fruit is bane, whose boughs writhe in pain like serpents. Beneath them stood Morgoth's sable-armoured horde, ranged with spear and sword: the fire on blade and boss of shield was red as blood on stricken field. Beneath a monstrous column loomed the throne and hideous footstool of Morgoth, and the doomed and dying gasped upon the floor. About him sat his awful thanes, the Balrog-lords with fiery manes, red-handed, mouthed with fangs of steel; devouring wolves were crouched at heel. And over the hellish host there shone with a cold radiance, clear and wan, the Silmarils, the gems of fate, imprisoned in the crown of hate.

Lo! Through the dread grinning portals a sudden shadow swooped and fled; and Beren gasped --- he lay alone, with crawling belly on the stone: a silent bat-winged form flew where the huge pillared branches grew, amid the smokes and mounting steams. And, as on the margin of dark dreams a dim-felt unseen shadow grows to vast cloud of unease, and nameless foreboded woes roll like doom upon the soul, so in that gloom the voices fell, and many-eyed laughter died slow to silence. A nameless doubt, a shapeless fear, had entered into their drear caverns, and grew and towered above them, cowed, hearing in heart the loud trumpets of forgotten Valar.

Lúthien overcomes Morgoth

Morgoth spoke and thunderous broke the silence: "Shadow, descend! And do not think to cheat mine eyes! In vain to shrink from thy Lord's gaze, or seek to hide. My will by none may be defied. Neither hope nor escape doth here await those that pass my gate unbidden. Descend! ere anger blast thy wing, thou foolish, frail, bat-shaped thing, and yet not bat within! Come down!"

Beren saw the shadow fall reluctantly, slow-wheeling over his iron crown, shivering and small, and droop before the hideous throne, a weak and trembling thing, alone. And as thereon great Morgoth bent his darkling gaze, he went shuddering, belly to earth,

the cold sweat dank upon his fell, and crawling shrank beneath the darkness of that seat, beneath the shadow of those feet.

Tinúviel spoke, a shrill thin sound, piercing those profound silences: "A lawful errand brought me here; from Sauron's dark mansions have I sought, from Taur-nu-Fuin's shade I fare to stand before thy mighty chair!"

"Thy name, thou shrieking waif, thy name! Tidings enough from Sauron there came but short while since. What would he now? Why send such a messenger as thou?"

"Thuringwethil I am, who cast a shadow over the aghast face of the sallow moon in the doomed land of shivering Beleriand."

"Liar thou art, who shalt not weave deceit before mine eyes. Now leave thy form and raiment false, and stand revealed, and delivered to my hand!"

There came a slow and shuddering change: the dark and strange bat-like raiment was loosed, and slowly shrank and fell quivering. Lúthien was stripped of her disguise and stood revealed by the will of Morgoth, and he bent his gaze upon her. About her slender shoulders hung her shadowy hair, and round her clung her dark garment, where glimmered the pale starlight caught in magic veil. Dim dreams and faint oblivious sleep fell softly thence, in deep dungeons an odour stole of Elven-flowers from Elven-dells where silver showers drip softly through the evening air; and round there crawled with greedy stare dark shapes of snuffling dread hunger.

But Lúthien was not daunted by his eyes; and she named her own name and offered her service to sing before him, after the manner of a minstrel. Then, with arms upraised and drooping head, softly she began to sing a theme of sleep and slumbering, wandering, woven with deeper spell than wherewith Melian did once fill the twilight in ancient dells, profound, and fathomless, and still. The fires of Angband flared and died, smouldered into darkness; through the wide and hollow halls there rolled unfurled the shadows of the underworld. All movement stayed, and all sound ceased, save vaporous breath of Orc and beast. One fire in darkness still abode: the lidless eyes of Morgoth glowed; one sound broke the breathing silence: the mirthless voice of Morgoth spoke:

"So Lúthien, so Lúthien, a liar like all Elves and Men! Yet welcome, welcome, to my hall! I have a use for every thrall. What news of shy Thingol, lurking in his hole like a timid vole? What fresh folly is in his mind, who cannot keep his offspring from straying thus blind, or can devise no better counsel for his spies?"

She wavered, and stayed her song. "The road," she said, "was wild and long, but Thingol sent me not, nor knows what way his rebellious daughter goes. Yet every road and path will lead Northward at last, and here of need I trembling come with humble brow, and here before thy throne I bow; for Lúthien hath many arts for sweet solace of kingly hearts."

"And here of need thou shalt remain now, Lúthien, in joy or pain --- or pain, the fitting doom for all, for rebel, thief, and upstart thrall. Why should ye not share in our fate of woe and travail? Or should I spare breaking torment to slender and frail limb? Of what avail here dost thou deem thy babbling song and foolish laughter? Minstrels strong are at my call. Yet I will give a brief respite, a while to live, a little while, though purchased dear, to Lúthien the fair and clear, a pretty toy for idle hour. In slothful gardens many a flower like thee the amorous Valar are used to kiss honey-sweet, and cast then bruised, their fragrance losing, under feet. But here we seldom find such sweet amid our labours long and hard, debarred from idleness. And who would not taste the honey-sweet lying to lips, or crush with feet the soft cool tissue of pale flowers, easing like Valar the dragging hours? A! Curse the Valar! O hunger dire, O blinding thirst's unending fire! One moment shall ye cease, and slake your sting with morsel I here take!"

In his eyes the fire was fanned to flame, and he stretched forth his brazen hand. Lúthien as shadow shrank aside.

"Not thus, O king!" she cried, "Not thus do great lords harken to humble boon! For every minstrel hath his tune; and some are strong and some are soft, and each would bear his song aloft, and each a little while be heard, though rude the note and light the word. But Lúthien hath cunning arts for solace sweet of kingly hearts. Now hearken!"

And her wings she then caught deftly up, and swift as thought slipped from his grasp; and wheeling round, fluttering before his eyes, she wound a maze-winged dance, and sped about his iron-crowned head. Round the hall she fared, magically beautiful as only Tinúviel ever was. Then Morgoth looking upon her beauty conceived in his thought an evil lust, and a design more dark than any that had yet come into his heart since he fled from Valinor. Thus was he beguiled by his own malice, for he watched her, leaving her free for a while, and taking secret pleasure in his thought.

Then began Lúthien to dance a yet swifter dance before his eyes. Suddenly her song began anew; and soft came her voice, dropping like a dew down from on high in that domed hall, bewildering, magical, and grew to silver-murmuring streams falling pale in dark pools of dreams. She sang in a voice very low and wonderful a song which Melian had taught her long ago, a song that the maidens sang beneath the cypresses of the gardens of Lórien when Laurelin the Tree of Gold had waned and Telperion was gleaming. The voices of nightingales were in it, and many subtle odours seemed to fill the air of that noisome place as she trod the floor lightly as a feather in the wind. She let her flying raiment sweep, enmeshed with woven spells of sleep, as round the dark void she ranged and reeled. From wall to wall she turned and wheeled in dance such as never before, nor since that day, Elf nor fay devised. Swifter than swallow, more silken-soft than flittermouse in dying light round darkened house, more strange and fair than sylphine maidens of the air whose wings in rhythmic movement beat and fall in Varda Elbereth's heavenly hall. Now she was at Morgoth's side, now before him, now behind, and her misty draperies touched his face and waved before his eyes.

And the folk that sat about the walls or stood in that place were whelmed one by one in sleep, falling down into deep dreams of all their ill hearts desired. Down crumpled Orcs, and proud Balrogs; all eyes were quenched, all heads were bowed; the fires of heart and maw were stilled, and ever like a bird she thrilled in enchanted-borne ecstasy above a lightless forlorn world. All eyes were quenched, save those that glared in Morgoth's lowering brows, and stared round in slowly wandering wonder, and slow were bound in enchantment. Their will wavered, and their fire failed; and a blindness came upon him, as his eyes roamed to and fro, seeking her.

And as they paled beneath his brows, the Silmarils in the crown on Morgoth's head, that in the reek had dwindled, like stars were kindled with living light, waxing bright, and blazed forth suddenly with a radiance of white flame, escaping upwards to shine clear, glistening marvelous in heaven's mines. And the burden of that crown and of the jewels bowed down his head, as though the world were set upon it, laden with a weight of care, of fear, and of desire, that even the will of Morgoth could not support.

Then Lúthien catching up her winged robe sprang into the air, and her voice came dropping down like rain into pools, profound

and dark. She cast her cloak before his eyes, and set upon him a dream, dark as the Outer Void where once he walked alone.

Suddenly he fell, down, down upon the floor of Angband; like mountain-top beneath a cloud the shoulders foundered, the vast form crashed, as huge cliffs in overwhelming storm slide and fall in ruin: and hurled like thunder from his throne Morgoth lay prone in his hall. His iron crown there rolled echoing from his head upon the ground.

Suddenly Lúthien ceased. In the hall no sound was heard save of slumbrous breath, and a silence grew as deep as were the heart of Arda asleep.

Beren regains a Silmaril

All things were still. Beneath the vast and empty throne the adders lay like twisted stone; the wolves were strewn like foul corpses; and there as a dead beast lay Beren deep in swoon: no thought, no dream nor blind shadow, moved in the darkness of his mind.

But Lúthien touching him with her hand aroused him: "Come forth, come forth! The hour hath knelled, and Angband's mighty lord is felled! Awake, awake! For we two meet alone before the awful seat."

This voice came down into the deep where he lay drowned in wells of sleep; a hand flower-soft and flower-cool passed over his face, and the still pool of slumber quivered. His mind then leaped up to waking; forth he crept. He flung aside the wolfish fell and sprang unto his feet, and staring wide amid the soundless gloom he gasped as one living shut in tomb. There to his side he felt her shrink, felt Lúthien now shivering sink, her strength and magic dimmed and spent, and his arms went swift about her.

Before his feet he amazed saw the gems of Fëanor, that blazed with white fire glistening in the crown of Morgoth's might, now fallen down. He found no strength to move that vast helm of iron, and thence he strove with mad fingers to wrest the guerdon of their hopeless quest; till in his heart there fell the thought of that cold morn whereon he fought with Curufin. Then from his belt he drew the sheathless knife Angrist, and knelt and tried its hard edge, bitter cold, over which songs of Dwarvish armourers had rolled, singing slow to hammer-music, long ago in Nogrod.

It clove iron as tender wood, and it rove mail as woof of loom. It bit through and sundered the claws of iron that held the gem as though they were naught but brittle nails on a dead hand. Behold! the hope of Elvenesse, the fire of Fëanor, light of morn before the sun and moon were born; thus at last out of bondage it passed from iron to mortal hand. There Beren stood. The Silmaril he clasped and held, and the pure radiance slowly welled glowing red through the clenched flesh, and his hand became as a shining lamp; but the jewel suffered his touch and hurt him not. Desire then smote his heart to go beyond his vow, to dare their doom and bear from the deeps of Angband all three immortal gems, and save the Elven-light from Morgoth's grave.

Again he stooped and strove afresh to free one more of the three holy jewels that Fëanor wrought of yore; the knife clove through band and claw of iron. But round the Silmarils a dark fate was woven: they were meshed in hate, and not yet come was their doomed hour, when wrested from the fallen power of Morgoth in a ruined world, regained and lost, they should be hurled into fiery gulf and groundless sea, beyond recall. The Dwarvish steel of cunning blade, made by smiths of Nogrod, snapped; then ringing sharp and clear it sprang in twain, and like a spear or errant shaft it grazed Morgoth's sleeping head, and dazed their hearts with quaking fear. For Morgoth groaned with voice entombed, like a penned and bound wind that moaned in hollow caverns, as though ill thoughts disturbed his dreams, and a black look came across his sleeping face. There came a breath; a gasping sound moved through the halls, as Orc and beast turned in their dreams of hideous feast; in uneasy sleep Balrogs stirred, and far above was faintly heard an echo that rolled in tunnels, a long and cold wolfish howling.

Beren and Lúthien face Carcharoth

Then terror fell upon Beren and Lúthien, and together they fled up through the dark and echoing gloom, as ghosts from many-tunneled tomb, up from the mountains' roots and the vast underground menace, their limbs quake with deadly fear, terror in eyes, and dread in ear, heedless and without disguise, desiring only to see the light once more. At last far away before them they saw a glimmer, faint and grey, a ghostly light, the wraith of day that fell shivering down from the mighty archway of the Gate. Then hope awoke. The doors were open, the gates were wide --- and behold! there did a new horror wait. Upon the threshold, watchful, dire, his eyes new-kindled with dull fire, Carcharoth towered now in wrath, a bidding doom. His jaws were gaping like a tomb, his teeth were bare, his tongue aflame; aroused he watched that no one came, no flitting shade nor hunted shape seeking to escape from Angband. Now what guile or might could thrust past that guard from death into the light?

He heard afar their hurrying feet, and snuffed a strange and sweet odour; he smelled their coming long before they marked the threat waiting at the door. He stretched his limbs and shook off sleep, then stood at gaze. As they sped he sprang upon them with sudden leap, and his howling rang in the arches. His onset came too swift for thought, too swift for any spell to tame; and Lúthien was spent, and she had not time nor strength to quell the wolf.

Beren desperate then thrust Lúthien aside, and strode forth to bar the road, unarmed, defenceless, to defend Tinúviel until the end. With left hand he caught at the hairy throat, with right hand he smote at the eyes --- his right hand, from which the radiance welled from the blazing Silmaril he clasped. Carcharoth halted and for a moment was afraid.

"Get thee gone, and fly!" cried Beren; "for here is a fire that shall consume thee, and all evil things."

But Carcharoth looked upon that holy jewel and was not daunted; and the devouring spirit within him awoke. There flashed the fangs of Carcharoth as gleam of swords in fire, and crashed together like a trap, that tore the hand from the wrist, and shore through brittle bone and sinew, devouring the frail mortal flesh; and engulfed the holy jewel's sheen in that cruel unclean mouth. Against the wall then Beren reeled in great agony, but still with his left hand he sought to shield fair Lúthien, who cried aloud to see his pain; and down she bowed, sinking to the ground in fear and anguish.

Yet even as they expected to feel the teeth of the Wolf a new thing strange and terrible came to pass. Behold! now that Silmaril

blazed with a white and hidden fire of its own nature and was possessed of a fierce and holy power --- for did it not come from Valinor and the Blessed Realm, being fashioned before evil came there; and it doth not tolerate the touch of evil flesh or of unholy hand. Now came it into the foul body of Carcharoth, and swiftly all his inwards were filled with a flame of anguish, and the Silmaril seared his accursed flesh; and that beast fled howling before them, and the walls of the valley of the Gate echoed with the clamour of his torment. So terrible did he become in his madness that all the creatures of Morgoth that abode in that valley, or were upon any of the roads that led hither, fled far away; for he slew all living things that stood in his path, and burst from the North with ruin upon the world. Of all the terrors that came ever into Beleriand ere Angband's fall the raging madness of Carcharoth was the most dreadful; for the power of the Silmaril was hidden within him.

The Eagles rescue Beren and Lúthien

Now Beren lay in a swoon within the perilous Gate, and death drew nigh him, for there was venom on the fangs of the wolf. Lúthien wept over the maimed arm of Beren, kissing it often, and with her lips drew out the venom, and she put forth her failing power to staunch the hideous wound. But behind her in the depths of Angband the rumour grew of great wrath aroused. The hosts of Morgoth were awakened.

Thus the quest of the Silmaril was like to have ended in ruin and despair; but in that hour above the wall of the valley three mighty birds appeared, flying northward with wings swifter than the wind. Among all birds and beasts the wandering and need of Beren had been noised, and Huan himself had bidden all things watch, that they might bring him aid. High above the realm of Morgoth Thorondor soared with his mightiest vassals, wide-winged Lhandroval and Gwaihir the lord of storm, and seeing now the madness of the Wolf and Beren's fall they came swiftly down, even as the powers of Angband were released from the toils of sleep.

Then they lifted up Beren and Lúthien from the earth, and bore them aloft into the clouds. Below them suddenly thunder rolled, lightnings leaped upward, and the mountains quaked. Fire and smoke belched forth from Thangorodrim, and flaming bolts were hurled afar, falling ruinous upon the lands; and the Noldor in Hithlum trembled. But Thorondor took his way far above the earth, seeking the high roads of heaven, where the sun daylong shines unveiled and the moon walks amid the cloudless stars. Thus they passed swiftly over Dor-nu-Fauglith, and over Taur-nu-Fuin, and came above the hidden valley of Tumladen. No cloud nor mist lay there, and looking down Lúthien saw far below, as a white light starting from a green jewel, the radiance of Gondolin the fair where Turgon dwelt. But she wept, for she thought Beren would surely die; he spoke no word, nor opened his eyes, and knew thereafter nothing of his flight. But it is said in song that Lúthien's tears falling from on high as she passed over Gondolin came like silver raindrops on the plain; and there a fountain sprang to life: Eithel Nínui, the Fountain of Tinúviel. And at last the Eagles set them down upon the borders of Doriath; and they were come to that same dell whence Beren had stolen in despair and left Lúthien asleep.

There the Eagles laid her at Beren's side and returned to the peaks of Crissaegrim and their high eyries; but Huan came to her, and together they tended Beren, even as before when she healed him of the wound that Curufin gave him. But this wound was fell and poisonous. Long Beren lay, and his spirit wandered upon the dark borders of death, knowing ever an anguish that pursued him from dream to dream. Then suddenly, when her hope was almost spent, he woke again, and looked up, and saw leaves against the sky; and he heard beneath the leaves singing soft and slow beside him Lúthien Tinúviel. And it was spring again.

Thereafter Beren was named Erchamion, which is the One-handed; and suffering was graven on his face. But at last he was drawn back to life by the love of Lúthien, and he arose, and together they walked in the woods once more. And they did not hasten from that place, for it seemed fair to them. Lúthien indeed was willing to wander in the wild without returning, forgetting house and people and all the glory of the Elf-kingdoms, and for a time Beren was content; but he could not for long forget his oath to return to Menegroth, nor would he withhold Lúthien from Thingol for ever. For he held by the law of Men, deeming it perilous to set at naught the will of the father, save at the last need; and it seemed also to him unfit that one so royal and fair as Lúthien should live always in the woods, as the rude hunters among Men, without home or honour or the fair things which are the delight of the queens of the Eldalië. Therefore after a while he persuaded her, and their footsteps forsook the houseless lands; and he passed into Doriath, leading Lúthien home. So their doom willed it.

Beren and Lúthien return to Doriath

Upon Doriath evil days had fallen. Grief and silence had come upon all its people when Lúthien was lost. Long they sought for her in vain. And it is told that in that time Daeron the minstrel of Thingol strayed from the land, and was seen no more. He it was that made music for the dance and song of Lúthien, before Beren came to Doriath; and he had loved her, and set all his thought of her in his music. But seeking for Lúthien in despair he wandered upon strange paths, and passing over the mountains he came into the East of Middle-earth, where for many ages he made lament beside dark waters for Lúthien, daughter of Thingol, most beautiful of all living things.

In that time Thingol turned to Melian; but now she withheld her counsel from him, saying that the doom he had devised must work to its appointed end, and that he must wait upon time. But Thingol learned that Lúthien had journeyed far from Doriath, for messages came secretly from Celegorm, as has been told, saying that Felagund was dead, and Beren was dead, but Lúthien was in Nargothrond, and that Celegorm would wed her. Then Thingol was wrathful, and he sent forth spies, thinking to make war upon Nargothrond; and thus he learned that Lúthien was again fled, and that Celegorm and Curufin were driven from Nargothrond. Then his counsel was in doubt, for he had not the strength to assail the seven sons of Fëanor; but he sent messengers to Himring to summon their aid in seeking for Lúthien, since Celegorm had not sent her to the house of her father, nor had he kept her safely.

But in the north of his realm his messengers met with a peril sudden and unlooked for: the onslaught of Carcharoth, the Wolf of Angband. In his madness he had run ravaging from the north, and passing at length over Taur-nu-Fuin upon its eastern side he came down from the sources of Esgalduin like a destroying fire. Nothing hindered him, and the might of Melian upon the borders of the

land stayed him not; for fate drove him, and the power of the Silmaril that he bore to his torment. Thus he burst into the inviolate woods of Doriath, and all fled away in fear. Alone of the messengers Mablung, chief captain of the King, escaped, and he brought the dread tidings to Thingol.

Even in that dark hour Beren and Lúthien returned, hastening from the west, and the news of their coming went before them like a sound of music borne by the wind into dark houses where men sit sorrowful. They came at last to the gates of Menegroth, and a great host followed them, and already to the Elves it seemed that the evil was at an end now that Tinúviel was come back among them unharmed. Then Beren led Lúthien before the throne of Thingol her father; and he looked in wonder upon Beren, whom he had thought dead; but he loved him not, because of the woes that he had wrought upon Doriath. But Beren knelt before him, and said: "I return according to my word. I am come now to claim my own."

And Thingol answered: "Didst thou not say that thou wouldst not return to me save with a jewel from the crown of Morgoth? What of thy quest, and of thy vow?"

"It is fulfilled," said Beren. "Even now a Silmaril is in my hand."

Then Thingol said: "Show it to me!"

But Beren said: "That I cannot do." And Beren put forth his left hand, slowly opening its fingers; but it was empty. Then he held up his right arm, and from that hour he named himself Camlost, the Empty-handed.

Then Thingol's mood was softened; and Beren sat before his throne upon the left, and Lúthien upon the right, and they told all the tale of the Quest, while all there listened and were filled with amazement. And it seemed to Thingol that this Man was unlike all other mortal Men, and among the great in Arda; and he marveled at the love that had awakened in the heart of Lúthien as a thing new and strange so that she had done deeds greater and more daring than any of the warriors of his folk; and he perceived that their doom might not be withstood by any power of the world. Therefore at the last he yielded his will, and Beren took the hand of Lúthien before the throne of her father, and thus they were betrothed.

The Hunting of Carcharoth

But now a shadow fell upon the joy of Doriath at the return of Lúthien the fair; for learning of the cause of the madness of Carcharoth the people grew the more afraid, perceiving that his danger was fraught with dreadful power because of the holy jewel, and hardly might be overthrown. And Beren, hearing of the onslaught of the Wolf, understood that the Quest was not yet fulfilled.

Therefore, since daily Carcharoth drew nearer to Menegroth, they prepared the Hunting of the Wolf; of all pursuits of beasts whereof tales tell the most perilous, for only those who had seen knew how fearsome was that beast, nigh as large as a horse among Men, and so great was the ardour of his breath that it scorched whatsoever it touched. To that chase went Huan the Hound of Valinor, and Mablung of the Heavy hand, and Beleg Strongbow, and Beren Erchamion, and Thingol King of Doriath. They rode forth in the morning and passed over the River Esgalduin; but Lúthien remained behind at the gates of Menegroth. A dark shadow fell upon her and it seemed to her that the sun had sickened and turned black.

The hunters turned east and north, and followed the course of the river, and at many places its banks were new-trampled and torn and the water of the pools that lay about it was fouled as though some beasts possessed of madness had rolled and fought there not long before. They came at last upon Carcharoth the Wolf in a dark valley, down the northern side whereof Esgalduin fell in a torrent over steep falls. At the foot of the falls Carcharoth drank to ease his consuming thirst, with bloodshot eyes and tongue lolling out, and he howled, and thus they were aware of him. But he, espying their approach, rushed not suddenly to attack them. It may be that the devil's cunning of his heart awoke, being for a moment eased of his pain by the sweet waters of Esgalduin; and even as they rode towards him he slunk aside into a deep brake, and there lay hid. But they set a guard all about that place, and waited as the early night wore away and the shadows grew long in the forest.

Beren stood beside Thingol, and suddenly they were aware that Huan had left their side. Then a great baying awoke in the thicket; for Huan becoming impatient and desiring to look upon this wolf had gone in alone to dislodge him. But Carcharoth avoided him; then lo! the brushwood cracked and saplings snapped as the terror drew near, and a great form loomed in the wavering moonlight. Bursting from the thorns the beast straightaway swerved towards them, and foam was dripping from his jaws and a red light shining from his eyes, and his face was marred with mingled terror and wrath. No sooner did he leave the trees than Huan rushed upon him fearless of heart, but he with a mighty leap sprang right over that great hound, for all his fury was kindled suddenly against Beren whom he recognised, and to his dark mind it seemed that there was the cause of all his agony. Swiftly Beren strode before him with a spear, but Carcharoth swept it aside and felled him, biting at his breast. In that moment Huan leaped from the thicket upon the back of the Wolf, and they fell together fighting bitterly; and no battle of wolf and hound has been like to it, for in the baying of Huan was heard the voice of the horns of Oromë and the wrath of the Valar, but in the howls of Carcharoth was the hate of Morgoth and malice more cruel than teeth of steel; and the rocks were rent by their clamour and fell from on high and choked the falls of Esgalduin. There they fought to the death; but Thingol gave no heed, for he knelt by Beren, seeing that he was sorely hurt.

Huan in that hour slew Carcharoth, and his evil spirit gushed forth and sped howling faintly as it fared over the dark hills; but there in the woven woods of Doriath Huan's own doom long spoken was fulfilled, and he was wounded mortally, and the venom of Morgoth entered into him. Then he came, and falling beside Beren spoke for the third time with words; and he bade Beren farewell before he died. Beren spoke not, but laid his hand upon the head of the hound, and so they parted.

Mablung and Beleg came hastening to the King's aid, but when they looked upon what was done they cast aside their spears and wept. Then Mablung took a knife and ripped up the belly of the Wolf; and within he was wellnigh all consumed as with a fire, but the hand of Beren that held the jewel was yet incorrupt. But when Mablung reached forth to touch it, the hand was no more, and the Silmaril lay there unveiled, and the light of it filled the shadows of the forest all about them. Then quickly and in fear Mablung took it and set it in Beren's living hand; and Beren was aroused by the touch of the Silmaril, and held it aloft, and bade Thingol receive it.

“Now is the Quest achieved,” he said, “and my doom full-wrought”; and he spoke no more.

Now they raised Beren gently up and tended him and washed him, and he breathed, but he spoke not nor opened his eyes. They bore Beren Camlost son of Barahir back through the woodlands as softly as might be upon a bier of branches, with Huan the wolfhound at his side. Night fell ere they returned to Menegroth, and Beren had not moved nor spoken. At the feet of Hírilorn the great beech Lúthien, awaiting them in great distress, met them walking slow, and some bore torches beside the bier. There she set her arms about Beren, and wept and kissed him, bidding him farewell, and said, “Await me beyond the Western Sea.” And he awoke and knew her, and he looked upon her eyes ere the spirit left him, and he died in the arms of Tinúviel. But the starlight was quenched and darkness had fallen even upon Lúthien Tinúviel. Thus ended the Quest of the Silmaril; but the Lay of Leithian, Release from Bondage, does not end.

The Choices of Lúthien

For the spirit of Beren at her bidding tarried in the halls of Mandos, unwilling to leave the world, until Lúthien came to say her last farewell upon the dim shores of the Outer Sea, whence Men that die set out never to return. But the spirit of Lúthien fell down into darkness, crushed with sorrow and finding no comfort or light in all the world; and at the last it fled from Middle-earth, and her body lay like a white flower that is suddenly cut off and lies for a while unwithered in the grass.

Then a winter, as it were the hoar age of mortal Men, fell upon Thingol. But Lúthien came to the halls of Mandos, where are the appointed places of the Eldalië, beyond the mansions of the West upon the confines of the world. There those that wait sit in the shadow of their thought. But her beauty was more than their beauty, and her sorrow deeper than their sorrows; and she knelt before Mandos and sang to him.

The song of Lúthien before Mandos was the song most fair that ever in words was woven, and the song most sorrowful that ever the world shall hear. Unchanged, imperishable, it is sung still in Valinor beyond the hearing of the world, and listening the Valar are grieved. For Lúthien wove two themes of words, of the sorrow of the Eldar and the grief of Men, of the Two Kindreds that were made by Ilúvatar to dwell in Arda, the Kingdom of Earth amid the innumerable stars. And as she knelt before him her tears fell upon his feet like rain upon the stones; and Mandos was moved to pity, who never before was so moved, nor has been since.

Therefore he summoned Beren, and even as Lúthien had spoken in the hour of his death they met again beyond the Western Sea. But Mandos had no power to withhold the spirits of Men that were dead within the confines of the world, after their time of waiting; nor could he change the fates of the Children of Ilúvatar. He went therefore to Manwë, Lord of the Valar, who governed the world under the hand of Ilúvatar; and Manwë sought counsel in his inmost thought, where the will of Ilúvatar was revealed.

These were the choices that he gave to Lúthien. Because she was the daughter of Melian, and because of her labours and her sorrows, she should be released from Mandos, and go to Valimar, there to dwell until the world’s end among the Valar, forgetting all griefs that her life had known. Thither Beren could not come. For it was not permitted to the Valar to withhold death from him, which is the gift of Ilúvatar to Men. But the other choice was this: that she might return to Middle-earth, and take with her Beren, there to dwell again, but without certitude of life or joy. Then she would become mortal, and subject to a second death, even as he; and ere long she would leave the world forever, and her beauty become only a memory in song.

This doom she chose, forsaking the Blessed Realm, and putting aside all claim to kinship with those that dwell there; that thus whatever grief might lie in wait, the fates of Beren and Lúthien might be joined, and their paths lead together beyond the confines of the world. So it was that Lúthien Tinúviel alone of the Eldalië has died indeed, and left the world long ago, and they have lost her whom they most loved.

It is said that Beren and Lúthien returned to the northern lands of Middle-earth, and dwelt together for a time as living man and woman; and they took up again their mortal form in Doriath. Those that saw them were both glad and fearful; and Lúthien went to Menegroth and healed the winter of Thingol with the touch of her hand. But Melian looked in her eyes and read the doom that was written there, and turned away; for she knew that a parting beyond the end of the world had come between them, and no grief of loss has been heavier than the grief of Melian the Maia in that hour. Then Beren and Lúthien went forth alone, fearing neither thirst nor hunger; and they passed the River Gelion into Ossiriand, and dwelt there in Tol Galen, the Green Isle, in the midst of the River Adurant, until all tidings of them ceased; and no mortal man spoke ever again with Beren son of Barahir. The Eldar afterwards called that country Dor Firn-i-Guinar, the Land of the Dead that Live; and there was born Dior Aranel the beautiful, who was after known as Dior Eluchíl, which is Thingol’s Heir.

The Necklace of the Dwarves

In The Silmarillion is told the tale of Húrin Thalion and his son Túrin Turambar, and how through great deeds and the tragic workings of fate was the Nauglamír, the Necklace of the Dwarves, brought from Nargothrond into the keeping of King Thingol in Menegroth. In those days the Dwarves still came on their journeys into Beleriand from their mansions in Ered Lindon, and passing over Gelion they travelled the ancient road to Doriath; for their skill in the working of metal and stone was very great, and there was much need of their craft in the halls of Menegroth. It came into Thingol’s mind that the Nauglamír should be remade, and in it should be set the Silmaril. For as the years passed Thingol’s thought turned unceasingly to the jewel of Fëanor, and became bound to it, and he liked not to let it rest even behind the doors of his inmost treasury; and he was minded now to bear it with him always, waking and sleeping.

At that very time great craftsmen of Nogrod were lately come into Doriath; and the King therefore summoning them declared his desire, that if their skill were great enough they should remake the Nauglamír, and in it set the Silmaril. Then the Dwarves looked upon the work of their fathers, and they beheld with great wonder the shining jewel of Fëanor; and they were filled with a great lust to

possess them, and carry them off to their far homes in the mountains. But they dissembled their mind, and consented to the task.

Long was their labour; and Thingol went down alone to their deep smithies, and sat ever among them as they worked. In time his desire was achieved, and the greatest of the works of Elves and Dwarves were brought together and made one; and its beauty was very great, for now the countless jewels of the Nauglamír did reflect and cast abroad in marvelous hues the light of the Silmaril amidmost. Then Thingol, being alone among them, made to take it up and clasp it about his neck; but the Dwarves in that moment withheld it from him, and demanded that he yield it up to them, saying: "By what right does the Elven-king lay claim to the Nauglamír, that was made by our fathers for Finrod Felagund who is dead?"

But Thingol perceived their hearts, and in his wrath and pride he gave no heed to his peril, but spoke to them in scorn, saying: "How do ye of uncouth race dare to demand aught of me, Elu Thingol, Lord of Beleriand, whose life began by the waters of Cuiviénen years uncounted ere the fathers of the stunted people awoke?"

And standing tall and proud among them he bade them with shameful words be gone unrequited out of Doriath. Then the lust of the Dwarves was kindled to rage by the words of the King; and they rose up about him, and laid hands upon him, and slew him as he stood. So died in the deep places of Menegroth Elwë Singollo, King of Doriath, who alone of all the Children of Ilúvatar was joined with one of the Ainur; and he who, alone of the Forsaken Elves, had seen the light of the Trees of Valinor, with his last sight gazed upon the Silmaril.

Then the Dwarves taking the Nauglamír passed out of Menegroth and fled eastward. But tidings went swiftly through the forest, and they were pursued to the death as they sought the eastward road; and the Nauglamír was retaken, and brought back in bitter grief to Melian the Queen. Yet two there were of the slayers of Thingol who escaped from the pursuit, and returned at last to their city far off in the Blue Mountains; and there in Nogrod they told somewhat of all that had befallen, saying that the Dwarves were slain in Doriath by command of the Elven-king, who thus would cheat them of their reward. Then great was the wrath and lamentation of the Dwarves, and they tore their beards and wailed; and they sat taking thought for vengeance; and ere long a great host came forth from Nogrod, and marched westward through Beleriand.

Upon Doriath a heavy change had fallen. Melian sat long in silence beside Thingol the King, and her thought passed back into the starlit years and to their first meeting among the nightingales of Nan Elmoth in ages past. Melian was of the divine race of the Valar, and she was a Maia of great power and wisdom; but for love of Elwë Singollo she took upon herself the form of the Elder Children of Ilúvatar. In that form she bore to him Lúthien Tinúviel; and in that form she gained a power over the substance of Arda. But now Thingol lay dead, and his spirit had passed to the halls of Mandos; and with his death a change came also upon Melian. Thus it came to pass that her power was withdrawn in that time from the forests of Neldoreth, and Esgalduin the enchanted river spoke with a different voice, and Doriath lay open to its enemies.

Thereafter Melian spoke to none save Mablung only, bidding him take heed to the Silmaril, and to send word speedily to Beren and Lúthien in Ossiriand; and she vanished out of Middle-earth, and passed to the land of the Valar beyond the western sea, to muse upon her sorrows in the gardens of Lórien, whence she came, and this tale speaks of her no more.

Thus it was that the host of the Naugrim passed unhindered into the woods of Doriath, and entered into Menegroth; and there befell a thing most grievous among the sorrowful deeds of the Elder Days. For there was battle in the Thousand Caves, and many Elves and Dwarves were slain; and it has not been forgotten. There fell Mablung of the Heavy Hand before the doors of the treasury wherein lay the Nauglamír; and the halls of Thingol were ransacked and plundered, and the Silmaril was taken.

At that time Beren and Lúthien yet dwelt in Tol Galen in the River Adurant. Now word went swiftly among the Elves of Ossiriand that a great host of Dwarves bearing gear of war had come down out of the mountains. These tidings came soon to Beren and Lúthien; and in that time also a messenger came to them out of Doriath telling of what had befallen there. Then Beren arose and left Tol Galen, and summoning to him Dior his son they went north; and with them went many of the Green-elves of Ossiriand. Thus it came to pass that the Dwarves of Nogrod, returning from Menegroth, were assailed by unseen enemies; for as they climbed up Gelion's banks burdened with the spoils of Doriath, suddenly all the woods were filled with the sound of Elven-horns, and shafts sped upon them from every side.

In that battle Beren fought his last fight, and himself slew the Lord of Nogrod, and wrested from him the Necklace of the Dwarves. Then Beren looked in wonder on the selfsame jewel of Fëanor that he had cut from Morgoth's iron crown, now shining set amid the gold and gems by the cunning of the Dwarves; and he washed it clean in the waters of the river. And when all was finished the treasure of Doriath was drowned in the river; but Beren took the Nauglamír and returned to Tol Galen. Little did it ease the grief of Lúthien to learn that the Lord of Nogrod was slain and many Dwarves beside; but it is sung that Lúthien wearing that necklace and that immortal jewel was the vision of greatest beauty and glory that has ever been outside the realm of Valinor; and for a little while the Land of the Dead that Live became like a vision of the land of the Valar, and no place has been since so fair, so fruitful, or so filled with light.

The Departure of Beren and Lúthien

Now Dior Thingol's heir bade farewell to Beren and Lúthien, and departing with Nimloth his wife he came to Menegroth, and abode there; and with them went their young sons Eluréd and Elurín, and Elwing their daughter. Then the Sindar received them with joy, and they arose from the darkness of their grief for fallen kin and King and for the departure of Melian; and Dior Eluchil set himself to raise anew the glory of the kingdom of Doriath.

There came a night of autumn, and when it grew late, one came and smote upon the doors of Menegroth, demanding admittance to the King. He was a lord of the Green-elves hastening from Ossiriand, and the door-wards brought him to where Dior sat alone in his chamber; and there in silence he gave to the King a coffer, and took his leave. But in that coffer lay the Necklace of the

Dwarves, wherein was set the Silmaril; and Dior looking upon it knew it for a sign that Beren Erchamion and Lúthien Tinúviel had died indeed, and gone where go the race of Men to a fate beyond the world. Long did Dior gaze upon the Silmaril, which his father and mother had brought beyond hope out of the terror of Morgoth; and his grief was great that death had come upon them so soon. But the wise have said that the Silmaril hastened their end; for the flame of the beauty of Lúthien as she wore it was too bright for mortal lands. None saw Beren or Lúthien leave the world, or marked where at last their bodies lay. Yet in the choice of Lúthien the two Kindreds have been joined; and she is the forerunner of many in whom the Eldar see yet, though all the world is changed, the likeness of Lúthien the beloved, whom they have lost.