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the Farbanks Folios

middle earth in the fourth age

red pucca for p'ta for ayul'tas ara for c'p for ay'modam for m'us for p'p'p'p't.



translated by

Liam **T**esshim

**THE
FARBANKS
FOLIOS**

**MIDDLE EARTH
IN THE FOURTH
AGE**

VOLUME TWO

BY

LIAM TESSHIM

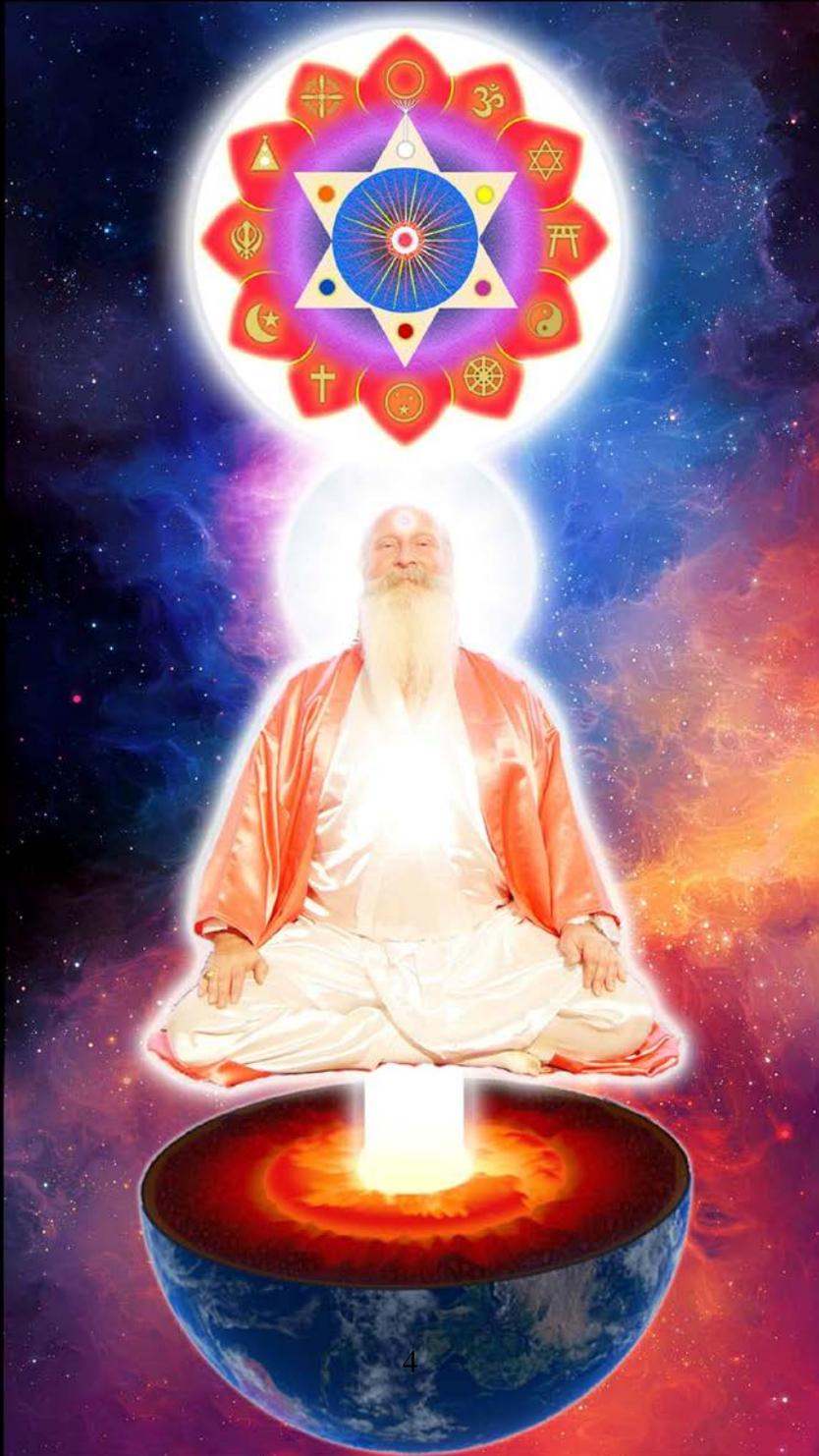
DEDICATION

With all Thanks, Love and Gratitude to Swami Devi Dhyani and all the helpers who make these books and DVDs possible.

With all Thanks, Love and Gratitude to my Mother and Father and to all my other Teachers, Theos Bernard, Sri Yogendra, Eric Berne, Gurdjieff, Father Bede Griffiths, Osho, Zen Master Hogen, Swami Sivananda, Swami Satchitananda, and all the other giants upon whose shoulders I stand - who made me able to be what... I AM - Swami Satchidanand

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DEDICATION

MILES MATHIS THE NEW LEONARDO



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MILES MATHIS

As a young teenager Miles was one of the top junior golfers in the state, winning many regional tournaments. [He shot a 76 at age 12, on a course he had seen only once.] He also won several local tennis tournaments. In this period he became a fledgling wildlife artist, beginning by

copying Clark Bronson drawings when he was 11, moving on to drawing from wildlife photographs in magazines like *National Geographic* and finally working from his own photographs and from nature.

In 2000 Miles moved to Amherst, Massachusetts, where, snuggled in among the five colleges, he began his serious scientific studies. He had majored for a short time in physics and astronomy at UT Austin, where he impressed his professors with a very quick mind. In his first course in physics, one designed to weed out the weak, the class average was 52. Miles ruined the curve with a 100. In astronomy it was the same: Miles had the high average among all the large first-year classes. This was reminiscent of high school, where the calculus teacher had a longstanding trick of asking all his second-year algebra students a pre-calculus question, a leading variant of the problem Newton and Leibniz were working on when they invented the calculus. No one had ever answered it correctly. Miles did.

Also calming is his piano, which he plays almost daily. After a year of lessons when he was 12, Miles waited 20 years to take up the instrument again. At that time he began teaching himself what would be considered an impossible repertoire for someone with one year of childhood training. Remembering only Bach's *Minuet*, he jumped immediately into Debussy's *Claire de Lune*. With that under his belt he added *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair* and *Reverie*, then Ravel's *Pavane for a Dead Princess*, Liszt's *Consolation #3*, Schumann's *Romance #2* and *Of Foreign Lands and People*, Tchaikovsky's *Seasons*, Rachmaninov's *Prelude in G*, Satie's *Gymnopedies*, a couple of Chopin *Etudes*, and many others. Some of these pieces are beastly difficult in timing, but none are especially fast (except perhaps parts of *Claire de Lune*).

He had also kept up his readings in science since college, although this consisted mainly of updates on the latest theories. But, unsatisfied with the direction these theories were taking, Miles finally began studying the history of

theoretical physics in earnest, especially as it related to classical mechanics and basic physics. He bought a small library of old books like Newton's Principia, Euclid's and Archimedes' treatises, Maxwell's papers, and all of Einstein's original writings. He also brushed up on his calculus and began looking into the origins of that math. This ultimately led him to Cauchy and Cantor, set theory, topology, physical chemistry, cosmology, and several other subfields, which he investigated to whatever ends he was following at the time.

His galleries now full of paintings (and selling quite slowly), he was free to write papers of his own. In the ten [now twenty] years since, Miles has written many books worth of papers, all of which investigate mathematical anomalies within broader physical theories or higher maths. These papers are published on a website linked to his art website as well as at a larger online journal devoted to dissenting opinion in physics (Walter Babin's alternative journal, where Miles got ten million hits in the first two years). Since the first of these papers concerned

Relativity, and since Relativity is considered by the status quo to be a closed and finished field, Miles' papers have been censored and slandered by the universities. Some university professors are beginning to take note, however. The current theoretical wall in physics has led even some top names out of standard channels, and a few appear to be trolling the internet for new possibilities. Miles has been contacted by several professors worldwide, [recently added: and in 2010 he was contacted by an astrophysicist at NASA and Johns Hopkins, who recommended he publish in book form ASAP. This NASA scientist even offered to write the introduction, and Miles' first physics book came out in the summer of that year. Another reader offered to bankroll his second book, which came out in late 2011. A third was published in 2013. In 2015 his paper on the Gravity Wave announcement caused a major stir in academia, ultimately killing the story and possibly preventing a Nobel Prize. Other papers have sent similar ripples through mainstream physics, and Miles has now been called by some the most revolutionary voice in science. He lays

claim to the title of being the first professional artist who has had a book on theoretical physics recommended and introduced by an Oxford-graduate and NASA physicist.]

In 2004 Miles moved to Bruges, Belgium, a preferred retreat. In this true artists' town, where stand statues to Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling (and the mathematician Simon Stevin), Miles could retain equilibrium while fighting on a thousand fronts. Solace in the form of silent swans and brooding canal bridges and rooftops glistening from a recent rain were always but a few steps away, out his green door. The finest chocolate and beer in the world could remove him instantly from the messiest squabble, keeping his faced unlined and his eyes bright and his brush hand (the left) steady.

Also calming is his piano, which he plays almost daily. After a year of lessons when he was 12, Miles waited 20 years to take up the instrument again. At that time he began teaching himself what would be considered an impossible repertoire for someone with one year of childhood

training. Remembering only Bach's Minuet, he jumped immediately into Debussy's Claire de Lune. With that under his belt he added The Girl with the Flaxen Hair and Reverie, then Ravel's Pavane for a Dead Princess, Liszt's Consolation #3, Schumann's Romance #2 and Of Foreign Lands and People, Tchaikovsky's Seasons, Rachmaninov's Prelude in G, Satie's Gymnopedies, a couple of Chopin Etudes, and many others. Some of these pieces are beastly difficult in timing, but none are especially fast (except perhaps parts of Claire de Lune).

In the winter of 2007, while on vacation in Spain, Miles solved what has been billed as the oldest surviving math problem in the world. Travelling like an Amishman, with no phone, no laptop, no reservations, and one pair of pants and shoes, he was in a position to let his mind wander, which was the whole point. Not seeing Mardi Gras coming, he arrived in Cordoba with no booking and spent the night in a carpark. But this also only encouraged fresher thoughts. By the time he made it to the naturist beach in Vera Playa, his brain had been well-primed for real work.

Bored with the blowing sand and the fat naked Germans denting the dunes, he dove into the internet cafes to take solace with his papers. He took up an old paper on Goldbach's Conjecture he had worked on for a few weeks several years earlier and attacked it furiously, refusing to let several bouts of bad math deter him. After a few days he had discovered the secret, and re-surfaced with a simple proof that can be understood by any good reader. Somewhere, distant towers were swaying once again.

Also in 2007, Miles finally got around to working with a gallery in Bruges. There you can find several oils and pastels.

Miles also works in clay and bronze sculpture, and occasionally develops his own photography prints. These are normally hand-toned 11x14 inch prints of pictures he takes of his painting models, in the same sessions in which he paints. Many but not all of these are nudes. He has offered a whole book of his photographs of the young model Tess to various publishers such as Aperture, with no success. These will have to wait for a

future release, like the photos of Reverend Dodgson or Julia Margaret Cameron.

Added later: Since 2013 Miles has also become known as the foremost fake-events researcher on the internet, blowing the cover of literally hundreds of major stories throughout history, all the way back to the Crusades. In 2013, his art counter-criticism morphed and expanded into a more general historical criticism, taking him into areas never before tread by an honest researcher. Discovering at that time an admission by the CIA that they had been in control of Modern Art all along, Miles finally put 2 and 2 together, seeing that most of accepted history had been managed in a similar way. This led to a linking of his art criticism and his science criticism, since he proved that both art and science—and everything else—were being managed by the same people for the same reasons.

By 2017 his two websites had gone viral, creating a worldwide stir in several fields.

Many of the papers on the science site rank on the first page on a Google search on their general subjects, and several

outrank Wikipedia and Dictionary.com. In 2018, the London Daily Mail published his research on Stephen Hawking, showing Miles was correct, Hawking was fake!

In 2018 and 2019, the mainstream has admitted he is correct on several other major subjects, which has turned out to be very embarrassing for mainstream physics. The entire field is now in disarray.

<http://milesmathis.com/>
<http://www.milesmathis.com/>
<http://milesmathis.com/updates.html>
<http://milesmathis.com/farbindex.html>

**THE
FARBANKS
FOLIOS
MIDDLE EARTH
IN THE FOURTH
AGE
VOLUME TWO**

**BY
LIAM TESSHIM**

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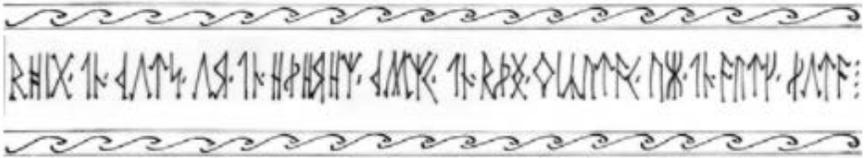
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**One Ring to rule them all, One
Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in
the darkness bind them**

**THOSE WHO HAVE
BECOME CORRUPTED
HAVE,
"TAKEN THE RING"**

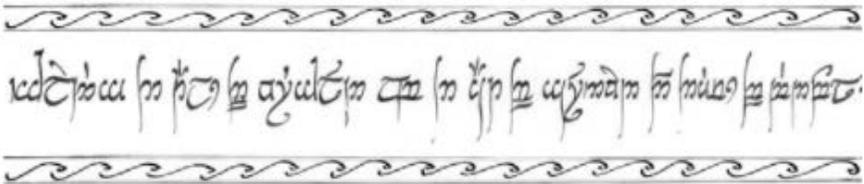


**THE ONE RING ENERGY
BLOCKAGE OF SAURON**



the Farbanks Folios

middle earth in the fourth age



translated by

Liam **T**esshim


**P**reface

Disclaimer: this work is offered to the world as a temporary gift, and it may be downloaded and printed for entertainment only. Any sale or resale, or any use for profit, is prohibited by international laws. It is automatically copyright of me and the Tolkien family. I may not have the werewithal to pursue anyone for infringement, but be assured the Tolkiens do.

It has been the assumption by many of those in the world of letters that Professor Tolkien's discovery of *The Red Book of Westmarch* (and other writings) in the early 20th century was not so much an exhumation as a fabrication. That is, like James Macpherson and the famous controversy of Ossian two hundred years earlier, Mr. Tolkien was considered not an historian but a fiction writer. But unlike Ossian, the existence of Mr. Tolkien's sources was never even questioned: they were dismissed by all but the most credulous (or faithful) readers out of hand. The documents were believed to be a literary device; almost no one took them seriously. This saved Professor Tolkien the trouble of proving his assertions, but it has led to serious misunderstanding.

It is surprising that no one found it at all strange that a professor of philology with no previous fiction writing credentials, at a premier university, should be the one to 'imagine' an entire history, complete with vast chronologies and languages and pre-languages and etymologies and full-blown mythologies. No one thought to ask the question that was begged by all this: if a previously unknown cache of historical documents of a literary nature *were* to surface anywhere on earth, where would that be? At the top of the list would certainly be the archaeology departments of Oxford or Cambridge. Who else is still digging in the British Isles? Who else cares about such arcane (and provincial, not to say insular) matters? And who would these archaeologists consult when faced with unknown languages in unknown characters in untranslatable books? They would go first to their own philologists in their own universities, to experts on old northern languages. This is exactly what Mr. Tolkien was. Coincidence? I think not. And when those discoveries were found to be of the nature they were—positing the existence of hobbits and elves and dwarves and dragons—is it any wonder the archaeologists washed their hands of the whole mess, never wishing to jeopardize their careers by making any statement about the authenticity, or even the existence, of their great find? One would *expect* them to make a gift of it all to the eccentric philologist who believed in it, though it was not in the least believable. To let him hang

himself out to dry in any way he saw fit. Who could have foreseen, after all, that he would publish it to ever greater wealth and fame, and never have to explain a thing? The strange turns that history takes, not even the historians can predict.

The truth is that *The Red Book* (or a copy of it) did, and probably still does, exist. Nor is it the only surviving document, or trove of documents, from that part of our history. Other sources have recently been unearthed, in related but separate locations, that confirm this. It is true that the ruins of Westmarch were long thought to be the only existing repository of hobbitlore and the history of the elves. And it is also true that the present-day location of what was then Westmarch is still under a cloud. Only Professor Tolkien, and perhaps one or two from the archaeology department at Oxford, ever knew its exact locus. But, as I said, other fortuitous digs have yielded new evidence that Westmarch was a real place, and that *The Red Book* was an historical fact.

It is known to all of the wise (in hobbitlore) that Westmarch was only one of many population centers in the Northwest of Middle Earth. Bree, Buckland, Hobbiton/Bywater, Tuckborough, and several others in fact predated the settlement at Westmarch, and were not eclipsed by it until later in the Fourth Age. What is not as well known, because it was not included in *The Red Book* or accompanying artifacts, is that other settlements to the north and south of the Shire also gained pre-eminence later, and were

therefore the natural repositories for important documentation. The wealth of material since discovered in these other sites not only rounds out our understanding of the Third Age, it often fills in gaps in the first two ages. And, most importantly, it supplies us with completely new information about the Fourth Age. The present volume is proof of that.

The tale told here is taken from *The Farbank's Folios*, an anonymous compilation of oral histories and Elvish lays probably composed sometime in the Fifth Age. None of the tales in these folios has been given a title in Westron (such as "There and Back Again"), since none of the tales herein appear to have been written by any of their protagonists. There is no first person narrative, and much of the detail can only have been supplied by an 'omniscient' third-person writer living at a great distance in time from the action of the story. In that sense these are secondary sources, just as the all the information about the Elder days in *The Red Book*—that is, "Translations from the Elvish"—is also (but as "There and Back Again" is not—if it was in fact written by Bilbo.)

The Farbank's Folios as a whole deal with any number of events and narratives, as well as poems and songs. The present selection from them concerns only one major event, told in a single narrative. Although the author is unknown, he (or she) is assumed to be a hobbit. The other contents of the folios, and their similarities and linguistic

connections to the Westmarch documents, makes this supposition unavoidable. The author has incorporated bits and pieces from other sources, such as from the elvish and dwarvish oral and written histories of the day. These external sources are occasionally the subject of other narratives among *The Farbanks Folios*, and in these cases I have taken the liberty of including pertinent information in the present tale, either by simply putting it in the tale itself (with a footnote), or adding it as a footnote. I have done this only when I considered it of utmost importance. Publication of overlapping tales, many of them incomplete, presents difficulties which perhaps cannot be solved to the satisfaction of everyone. All I can do is indicate my actions, and the reasons for them. It is hoped that the audience may remain indulgent, as long as their patience may be ultimately rewarded.

Liam Tesshim

Swansea, Wales

Book 2

Anon
a New Moon

Translator's Introduction to Book 2

As I made my ponderous way through the piles of tattered manuscripts that make up this extended tale of the Fourth Age, I soon discovered a few things. One was that hobbits take great care with their penmanship, but little care with their spelling and grammar. This is really neither here nor there, and is to be expected, I suppose, from a rustic folk, of whom few were lettered at all. Of more interest to a reader, perhaps, is my finding that hobbits do not often tell long tales. Bilbo and Frodo were odd in this respect, as they were in many others. It was much more common, then as I suppose it is now (in that secret place where hobbits still scratch with their pens), to tell short linear tales—ones with only a few characters, and these characters moving always forward in time and space. Although 'There and Back Again' is quite linear, and fairly straightforward, it turns out that it is extremely lengthy for a tale from the Shire. And Frodo's Tale in *The Red Book*, although again nearly linear (but for the division of action after book 2—between the ringbearers and the rest of the fellowship), is of astonishing length. It is an epic from a people who had never before transcended the pastoral.

I had not realized the full import of this fact until I began working up the present material, where the 'epic tale' is nowhere present—only being suggested by the summation of many smaller adventures. It leads me to believe that *The Red Book*, in its present form, was most likely a compilation and reworking—over many centuries—of previous material by a number of unknown hands and minds. It is already recognized that the four-volume set (housed at Westmarch) contained writing by Bilbo and Frodo as well as additions by many other hands. But I mean more than that. Frodo's tale itself, beginning with the birthday parties and ending with the sailing of the ships, itself bears the marks of summation and edification. It is highly unlikely that Frodo had the inclination or energy to bring the epic to such fully-formed fruition himself, since, as we know, he was in poor health, and distracted by otherworldly cares. Of course, it may be that Professor Tolkien is the hand and mind that is wholly responsible for the form of *The Red Book*, and not only for its translation. This would be the natural supposition, but for the fact that he refutes it himself. He presents *The Red Book* as a pre-existing artifact: a tale, that is, and not just the material for a tale.

However that may be, it is certainly the case that the story of Tomilo never benefitted from a linear retelling by a later hand, neither of hobbit nor of man. It may be that it resisted this beneficence, since it is not a story that yields a linear storyline. Its various characters are often widely separated geographically, and many strands of narrative must be pulled together to reach a fully understood conclusion. An editor who at first thinks it possible to omit certain 'marginal' passages and characters soon finds that later actions cannot be suitably explained to the reader without them. After much tinkering with the idea of compression, the editor is finally forced to admit that the hobbits wrote down precisely what needed to be written down, no more and no less. If they failed to join all the shorter tales into a single epic, it was not because they could not understand that an epic was implied by the material, but

because they preferred to see each adventure stand on its own, under its own cover, as it were. I also suspect that the citizens of the Shire may have been predisposed to small books—the duodecimo, you know. But that may be my own prejudice—a judgment based on the size of the people more than on strong evidence.

This has all just been a rather wordy way of admitting to you that Book 1 was much easier to translate and compile than Book 2. The former, with only slight emendation, fit itself rather snugly into the mould of the 'traveller's tale.' We followed Tomilo to Rhosgobel and back again. I drew from only a small number of sources (Tomilo, Bogubud, Rivendell and Moria) which allowed for the semblance of continuity.

Book 2 allows for no such semblance, I am sorry to report. We learn a lot of terribly interesting things, but we have to travel far and wide to learn them. I fear that much of Book 2 reads like an interlude—a setting of the stage for greater action in subsequent books. Still, there is an inordinate amount of 'finding things' here, which is of some consolation. The scholars (as opposed to the warriors) among my readers may find this book the most appealing of all.

The written sources for Book Two are many. They include manuscripts collected at Farbanks from Lothlorien, Ozk-mun, Orthanc, Edoras, Minas Mallor and Fornost Erain, among many others. Some of the short tales collected here are 'The Lay of Primrose', 'The Cat of the Greenwood', 'The Wrinkled Elf', and 'Phloriel's Song'. The first is written in Westron; the other three were translated from the Sindarin by Nerien.

Liam Teshim



Chapter 1

The Stones of Gondor

Gervain stopped to listen: far off in the woods drums were rolling. He and Ivulaine had been riding without pause since noon. They had breakfasted at Nardol, upon the crown of the hill, but now they were near to halfway down the Stonewain Valley, proceeding leisurely on fine tall horses borrowed from the stables of Radagast. The watchtower of Eilenach, now draped in low-lying cloud, rose to their left, doubly screened from view by the giant smooth-boled beech trees that grew along the path, green and copper like a line of ancient soldiers. Peering with a squint into the distance, Gervaine signalled to Ivulaine, and she stopped also.

'It is the Pukel-men, that the Rohirrim call Woses,' he said. 'But to my ears, the drums do not tell of war. They sound glad, if that were possible.'

'Yes,' answered Ivulaine, 'they have recognized us, I think, though they can have no idea who we are. No doubt they have

memories passed down through the ages, memories of Radagast and especially Gandalf. They are celebrating the return of the wizards. I wonder if we will meet these *wuduwasa*, these "Woses." I am quite curious to know them. Of all the peoples of Middle Earth, the Druedain are among the very few unmet by me—and you also, I believe? Or do the Druedain yet live in the woods of the East, Gervain?'

'Sadly, no. In the regions I have wandered for the last age, the old forests have all been sent to the fires, to feed the hunger for war. Only new forests remain, of young trees. The ancient denizens of the wood, the ents and Pukel-men, have fled or been lost forever. It is said that some may still live on in the north, in the vast piney woods beyond the Inland Sea of Helcar. But where they may be, I know not.'

The two rode on as the drums continued to roll. Answering drums broke out to their right also, in the trees above them on the mountainsides. But they saw no sign of the Druedain.

Several months had passed since the council at Rhosgobel. Winter had come and gone, and the green things of the earth were now waking from their slumbers. For the wizards, who when alone or with others of their kind spoke and thought in Quenya, it was near the end of *coire*. The early signs of spring were all about them. Although snow still persisted in the mountains far above, nearer at hand green shoots dotted the edge of the path, and little nodding wildflowers were already calling to the bees to awaken. The naked branches of the latest-blooming trees were nubbed with a thousand buds, seemingly ready to burst into leaf within the week. And the birds were returning from their winter homes in the far south, to feast on the newly awakening life in the fens of the Nindalf. Huge white birds, with wingspans of eight or ten feet, were even then cresting over the peak of Mindolluin, ready to descend into the rich lowlands of the Wetwang and the equally abundant marshes among the mouths of the Entwash. There they would

wade and fish for a few weeks before continuing on to their nesting areas farther north, about the river Gladden.

Gervain and Ivulaine had been riding for about three weeks. Passing first through Lorien, they had spoken briefly with Meonas about the desertion of Moria and the awakening of the balrogs. But there was little news, and less to be told. A period of waiting had set in.

Since the sudden attack upon Erebor by the dragons and the passing of Glorfindel in the winter, nothing more that could be attributed to Morgoth had befallen. But there was a great movement among all the peoples of the west. The dwarves had been affected the most. Moria and Erebor had been emptied, and the Iron Hills and the Glittering Caves had swollen with their run-off. Krath-zabar was also overflowing with refugees from the north and west.

The men of Dale had likewise fled south. Some few remained to swell Laketown; but most continued on past the River Running, to the newer settlements east of the Greenwood. Some came as far south as the northern marches of the Eryn Muil—a territory no longer claimed by Gondor, and open to any who would settle there.

The Brown Lands had suffered much in the wars against Sauron, and were considered a rough living; but the dangers of Dol Guldur to the north and the Dead Marshes to the south no longer pertained, and many brave souls had made their homes there. The first three centuries of the Fourth Age had been bounteous, even in Wilderland, and fortuitous rains and long sunshine had allowed the reclaiming of many acres of cropland from the desert. Also, the King in Gondor had approved of these settlements, seeing them as a buffer from attack from the north. The gap between the Morannon of Udun and the southern end of the Greenwood had always been Gondor's weakness, even moreso than the passages from Harad—which were protected by the Ephel Galen and the Eryn Arnen and the width of Anduin. The King welcomed a newly populous Wilderland, especially when it was reclaimed

by the valorous men of the north. He hoped, finally, that this region might eventually become another Rohan, manned faithfully by sworn allies of Gondor.

But at the time of this tale, the Brown Lands were yet mostly brown. The fleeing men of Dale added somewhat to their strength, but their strength remained small.

As for the elves, many had passed across the sea in the weeks after Glorfindel's death. The hardest hit by this emigration were the woodelves of the Greenwood. Thranduil's people were much diminished by the threat from the north. It was believed that the danger arose from the Withered Heath, an abode of dragons and other evil since the beginning of time. Therefore, the northern parts of the wood were thought to be in especial danger, owing to their proximity to Erebor, and to the Ered Mithrin.

Imladris was hit less hard by the exodus of elves. What that valley lost after the death of its Lord, it gained from Thranduil's realm. The woodelves who wished to remain in Middle Earth fled about equally to Lorien and Imladris. It was thought that the mountains were a great protection from the direction of the Withered Heath, despite the fact that Imladris was located so far north. Many elves preferred the fir trees of the north, even to the beautiful mallorns of Lorien. And for these, Imladris was the nearest haven. Others from the Greenwood fled to the true Havens of the west and south, but sailed not. It was felt that these were the safest refuges for those who would not yet forsake Middle Earth. Others—the more courageous, or the more nostalgic—removed only to the southern parts of the Greenwood. And still others—the most stubbornly rooted—remained in the caves. Thranduil and his sons and daughters were among them.* They argued that the caves were impregnable, whether to dragons or to balrogs, and they would not be chased from their chosen home—not even by the arrival of Morgoth himself.

*Legolas was not among them. He had sailed with Gimli in the second century of the Fourth Age (208 FA). As has been told, he had long had a strong calling for the sea. And Gimli, being mortal, could no longer wait. They wished to sail together; and so, in the last days of Gimli's life they sailed in a grey ship down the Anduin and out into the Bay of Belfalas. Some days later, they arrived in Mithlond, receiving Cirdan's blessing as the last of the fellowship before continuing on to Elvenhome.

This was the state of Middle Earth in the spring of that most tumultuous year, as Gervain and Ivulaine rode to their meeting with King Elemmir. They had not stopped in Edoras, although they wished to speak also with King Feognost. They deemed it inappropriate to delay their meeting with Gondor for the sake of Rohan. Elemmir might take such a meeting as a lack of protocol.

Gervain, and even more Ivulaine, were masters of policy, unlike Radagast. More even than Gandalf were these two wizards aware of all possible consequences of personal interaction. In part, that is why they had been chosen to proceed to the east and south. Most of their work in those regions had been of subtle political machination: they had not battled Black Riders or balrogs; but they had been involved in the affairs of King and Council much more intimately than Gandalf ever was in the west. The Wizards of Blue and Green had an ability to sway the minds of those around them that surpassed even Saruman. For while Saruman's power in this arena was great, it was not always hidden. Saruman broke an adversary with his cunning and intelligence. Gervain and Ivulaine convinced but never pressed. It always seemed to those they advised that the idea came from within, the universal and impersonal voice of reason, rather than the intended wishes of the advisor.

So the two wizards, in travelling south from Lorien, had crossed the Limlight close to the eaves of Fangorn Forest. But

they had remained on the east side of the Entwash, not crossing it until just above its mouths. Then they had forded the Mering Stream and made their way to the Great West Road, skirting the Firien Wood to the north. In this way they had successfully avoided meeting any riders of the Rohirrim, who might inform their King of the wizards passing. The East Emnet had a large population of horses, but few guards. And the wizards had been in the Eastfold for only a matter of hours, as they hurried across the narrow neck of land between the Entwash and the Mering.

They had, however, met with guards of Gondor the day before, as they passed the hills of Minrimmon and Erelas, while they had still been upon the Great West Road. Since the return of the Steward Ecthelion from the council at Rhosgobel, the guard of Anorien had been doubled, and all the watchtowers remanned. In the same way, the borders of North Ithilien had also been strengthened, and the Island of Cair Andros. Here a great fortress had been built, and many men permanently garrisoned. The teeth of Cirith Gorgor, Narchost and Carchost, had also been re-garrisoned and strengthened over the winter. Gondor had reclaimed Mordor, of course, since the fall of Sauron, including Udun and the Plateau of Gorgoroth. But it remained all but deserted, save the military outposts of the teeth, and of Durthang and Cirith Ungol. These had all been renamed. The teeth had been re-christened Numenos and Romenos. Durthang was now Ciryanos. Udun was Peloraxe—the 'encircling jaws'. Cirith Ungol had changed to Ramba-din, the 'silent wall'.

Thus was the guard upon Gondor now strong to the north, and Gervain and Ivulaine did not escape questioning on the road to Minas Mallor. They would not arrive wholly unexpected.

Within the seventh circle of that Citadel of stone, far beneath the flying white banners on the ramparts, behind the lofty doors of oak, and down the long stone corridor lined with

black marble pillars and graven images, sat the King and Steward. They had been informed of the approach of the wizards, and they now spoke alone in the empty hall. Both sat on the steps of the dias, beneath the throne and Steward's chair. Behind them the image of the tree glittered on the wall, its gems lit by a raking beam of sunlight falling through the northern windows.

'You have some knowledge of these wizards from the council, Steward,' said Telemorn. 'Why do they come here?'

'The messages from Rhosgobel said they come only to meet the King of Gondor and Arnor—the Reunited Kingdom—nothing more. But I would guess that they have some strategy to discuss. Wizards do not talk to no purpose, it is said.'

'That is true. Perhaps they may have some wise counsel to impart. Much has passed since you returned from Rhosgobel. It may be that more is known concerning Morgoth or his tools. Remember, Ecthelion, these wizards are Maiar. Let us hope they have some insight into the meaning of recent events. It was written by the loremasters of the north that the balrog of the Bridge of Khazad-dum and Gandalf were equals—equal in power and equal in the beginning in the mind of Eru. The wizards and the Valaraukar were once of the same kind. If they cannot tell us what we may expect, I do not think anyone can.'

There were several moments of silence. Then the Steward asked, 'What news from Fornost Erain, Lord? I saw the sails beyond the Rammas this morning. Have you a grandchild yet?'

'No, Ecthelion. Though all the news is good. My son Rosogod, bless him, has written that Culurien has taken to bed with her nurses. Though she asks that she be allowed to name the child if it be a maiden. She does not like the name Ivrin. Rosogod asks my advice. I am happy that these are still the only matters to argue between a father and son. It may be that this time next year all such affairs will seem of little consequence. Even now, much of his letter was given over to a list of re-fortification. Weathertop and the Weather Hills have

been strengthened, as have the North Downs. But Rosogod has positioned his greatest forces in the outliers of the Ettenmoors, along our borders—in the east of what was once Rhudaur. There has been activity reported at Gundaband, and it is feared that attack may come from that direction first.'

'Did the Prince Kalamir¹ say aught of the palantir, Lord?'

'Aye. He has begged again to be allowed to make use of it. And I am torn. We will have great need of such easy communication, but I am not yet convinced of Rosogod's power to wield it. I am not even convinced of my own power to face the palantir². My reign has been in a time of unparalleled peace, as you know. We have been untested. The iron of Numenor within me has not been tempered by the fire. I fear my life of ease has not prepared me for the battle. And I know that Rosogod is in the same state as I. He is not only untempered, he is very very young.'

'He is a spirited young man, Lord. The blood runs true in him. But that does not make what you say false.'

'No, Ecthelion, it assuredly does not. He is young. And not only that: he is wayward. Undisciplined. And his uncle is no better. A good deal worse, if what I hear from Halfdan is true. I think the court of Arnor would be rudderless if not for him. I am certainly not prepared to see Rosogod take up the palantir as yet. Let him reach full manhood and we shall see. I am thinking it was foolish to even allow him to take a wife, being so young. I thought she would settle him. But it has proved otherwise. Culurien is as fickle and absurd as my son, if not moreso. To tell you the truth, I have considered bringing the babe here to Minas Mallor, if it be a man child, to be brought up by Golyi. I would do so without further thought if it were not for Gordebor. He knows that his older brother will return here eventually. But another heir to the throne beneath his nose would make him even more intractable, if that were possible.'

¹Rosogod ('Sea-foam rider') is Telemorn's eldest son. Gordebor ('Full

hand') is the second son. But these names are their birth names, and therefore would only be used by members of the family. All other speakers would refer to them by their sceptered names: Prince Kalamir and Prince Vilyamir. Gordebor was not at this time sceptered. But when Rosogod should follow his father to the throne of the Reunited Kingdom, Gordebor would ascend to the throne of Arnor. As a second son, Gordebor would not be in line for the throne of the Reunited Kingdom—unless Rosogod should die without issue.

²Telemorn does not admit to Ecthelion that in truth he has never penetrated past the image of the fiery withering hands of Denethor in the Anor stone. The Orthanc stone was sent to Fornost by Eldarion in FA158.

'Golyi would be a proper nurse for the child, Lord. But even she cannot discipline an entire city. And I fear that Prince Vilyamir has grown beyond her control. He is admittedly beyond mine. I beg you to talk to the Prince again soon, whether your new grandchild comes to Minas Mallor or not. His insubordination is being talked about down to the first level.'

'I do not know what to do with him, Ecthelion. There is only so much time a young man can spend in confinement.'

'If you will allow me, Lord, I recommend you send him to Minas Annithil or to Ramba-din. Make him Captain of the Outer Wall and have him stare at Mordor for a few years. That should teach him discipline.'

'I think that would make him even more resentful, Steward. He needs somewhat to do. I think it would be better to send him to Amon Lhaw, where he can live on the frontier, among the soldiers of Gondor. I need a good captain on the Emyrn Muil, to lead the new regiments there. Gordebor may be wilful, but none would deny that he is trusty.'

'None would, Lord. But is he of age for such leadership?' answered Ecthelion.

Just then the doorwarden announced the arrival of Gervain

and Ivulaine. Telemorn replaced on his head the high white helm and returned to his throne to meet the guests; and Ecthelion took his place in the Steward's chair, clutching his white rod. Moments later the two wizards strode up the corridor, all in blue and green. Each carried a staff, Gervain in his left hand, Ivulaine in her right. Their hoods were thrown back, and their white hair gleamed in the still-bright light of late afternoon.

'Welcome to Minas Mallor, friends,' said Telemorn, to forestall any obeisances. 'You know Ecthelion, the Steward. I hope your journey was not too taxing.'

'Not at all, Lord Elemmir,'* answered Ivulaine. 'We enjoyed the signs of spring in Anorien and in the pastures of Rohan. I am Ivulaine the Blue, as you have no doubt been apprised already, or guessed from my attire. This is Gervain the Green.'

'Yes. It is most pleasant to have all the Five now accounted for. We had often argued as to your colours and your destinations, had we not, Ecthelion? It was long one of the little mysteries of the west. Certainly you do not disappoint in person. Tell me, now that you are returned to us, where will you reside? Will you return to Radagast in Rhosgobel?'

'That is one of the matters we wish to discuss with you, Lord,' answered Gervain. 'Although not the most pressing. First we would like permission to study the records of the Third Age here. We have read that Gandalf found much information in your libraries. Since he is no longer here, we must rediscover these things for ourselves. Radagast has told us what he can, but there is much esoteric lore, especially concerning Sauron, Saruman, and the balrogs, that is now remembered by no one. Even Meonas could not enlighten us on several questions we had.'

'If it is beyond the memory of an elf, then it is no doubt beyond mine as well; so I will not bother to ask what knowledge you seek. I have spent little time studying the manuscripts in our libraries and vaults, though I am not proud

to admit it. But I open my doors to you: search where you will and may you find what you seek. And if you need an assistant—a copyist or a page—I will be glad to provide that also. But for now, tell me more of the north. Is there any news from Erebor or the woodelves?'

*Remember that Telemorn's sceptered name is King Elemmir. Just as Aragorn was King Elessar.

'There is one piece of news that is unlikely to have made it to your ears yet, Lord Elemmir,' said Ivulaine. 'We met a company of dwarves also marching south as we rode from Lorien to Fangorn. They were scouts from Moria that had been sent north after the emptying of the caves. They were now returning to join their people at Krath-zabar. But they had for months been following the trail of the balrogs. Near the source of the Anduin, they had rendezvoused with a company from the Iron Hills, who were in search of the dragons' lair. They told us that neither company found what it sought. But it did discover something of great interest. Mount Gundaband has been re-occupied by a great force of orcs. And the orcs are led by a wraith. One of the orcs was captured, and before he was put to death, he divulged that the wraith was called by the orcs, 'Sharku'. That is, 'Old Man'.

'I thought all the Ringwraiths were destroyed with the Ring,' interrupted Ecthelion.

'They were. This wraith the orc spoke of was not the wraith of a man. Nor was it the wraith of an elf, for elves do not have wraiths. Their wraiths go perforce to Mandos, and may not linger for any reason in Middle Earth.'

'Who then is this new captain of the orcs?' asked Telemorn impatiently.

'You may remember reading, from the time of King Elessar, that the Shire was called "Sharkey's End." Sharkey was Sharku. And Sharku was Saruman.'

'That is not possible! Saruman was killed by Wormtongue,

or so we are taught,' cried the King.

'So he was,' answered Ivulaine. 'But the Maiar persist. Sauron returned from the destruction of Numenor and from his defeat at the hands of Elendil and Gil-galad and Isildur and Anarion. And Gandalf returned from his fight with the balrog—although it is unclear to us whether Gandalf the White was a wraith or not. He was visible, and returned undiminished—nay augmented. But that is another discussion. We know, however, that Saruman was vastly diminished, as Ecthelion has heard already in the council. He was diminished by the form of his death, as well as by his dismissal from the White Council and the breaking of his staff by Gandalf. Maiar who are given over to evil are not allowed to return to Valinor; but they persist nonetheless. Saruman may now be ranked with the Valaraukar—the balrogs. Except that he has not even their power. He is no longer visible, and may not so easily effect the visible world. But his power of fear—that all the wraiths have—remains. He would be a likely lieutenant for Morgoth, and that is what we fear he has become.'

'I thought the worst of the news had come at the council,' said Ecthelion. 'But each passing day brings blacker tidings.'

'If Morgoth has indeed returned,' added Telemorn, 'I do not see how we have the strength to resist him, with or without this alliance with Saruman. The elves are sailing; Glorfindel is lost already. The dwarves have lost two of their strongholds. Gondor and Arnor are well-populated, but we have grown soft. Our armies have not faced battle for generations. But even were we as strong as Numenor under Ar-Pharazon, it would avail us not. Morgoth defeated the Great Alliance in the First Age. Unless the Valar come again to our aid, I do not see that any counsel will suffice. Do what we may, we are at the mercy of the Valar.'

'That may be so, Lord Elemmir,' answered Ivulaine. 'And yet the Valar work not only upon us, but through us. Their methods for resisting the seeds of Morgoth, and now perhaps Morgoth himself, cannot always be guessed. We, the Istari,

were sent as part of this resistance, as is now generally known. Others may be sent, or heroes chosen from among you, or chance event imbued with prophecy and power. And above all this, is the will and plan of Eru Iluvatar, who allows nothing to be that is unnecessary. But his mind and future can neither be predicted nor fathomed. We must act in our own spheres, and resist to our own ability. Such action is the unfolding of hope in time.'

'I am not sure I understand you, Ivulaine,' said Telemorn. 'If Iluvatar controls all, it seems of no matter what we do, for good or ill. I often think the best course is to do nothing. Then the Valar will arrive the sooner.'

'Some would answer that to fail to resist evil is to abet evil,' said Gervain, stepping forward sternly. 'But that is not my answer. My answer is that inaction is an even greater affront to the Creator than evil itself. Creation is action. Life is living. In the Ainulindale, each of the Ainur were given a song to sing. But all creatures are singers. They are given a song to sing, each according to his voice. To corrupt this song is an error. It is evil. But to refuse to sing is worse still. It is not a mis-application of the gift: it is renunciation of the gift. Eru may turn the corrupt to his purposes—in this way they are his children still. But those who do not sing damn themselves to the void, not eventually but immediately. For the void is inaction. The void is *not* singing.'

'It was said in the old books that wizards are subtle and quick to anger, and I see that is still true,' answered Telemorn. 'I meant no offense, Gervain. I fear I spoke without thought, saying the first thing that came to mind. A King is given that privilege, although I suspect it does him no good. Your words are high-sounding, Gervain the Green, but difficult for me to unravel. I will play them over in my mind between now and the next time we meet, and attempt to benefit myself of their full value.'

'I do not chastise, Lord; I only instruct,' said Gervain more calmly. 'You must understand that this particular subject

is one close to my heart. It arose many times during my stay in the East. The people of the Woodhun are high-hearted and pure; but they are so peaceful that any counsel of action is near impossible to advance. Even a forceful defense offends their natural scruple. But from what I had heard of the west, I had not expected a similar argument from the King of Gondor.'

'Somewhat less than an argument, Gervain,' said Telemorn. 'Let us call it an errant word, and leave it at that. Gondor will do its part. There is valour yet in our blood, and heroes among us. But you must admit that the news has been overwhelming so far. If I speak from confusion, you must allow that the times are confusing.'

'Yes,' interrupted Ivulaine, seemingly to prevent Gervain from continuing. 'We do allow it. We too have enjoyed three centuries of freedom from care, and have been startled from our contentment by recent events. The thought of a new war so soon is most distressing. But we are here to give aid and counsel as we may. Have hope, Lord! The ancient alliance of free peoples endures, though its form is everchanging. And think too on this: the enemy is ever-changing also. The Morgoth that has most likely returned from the Outer Darkness is not the Melkor Gervain and I once sang beside, nor even the Morgoth who held partial dominion for a while in the First Age. And Sauron and Saruman are likewise altered. Evil in the Fourth Age will take different forms. As the more ancient forms diminish, fresh forms will arise; and we must be vigilant on all fronts. In the same way, new forces of good will arise, as if from nowhere, to confront them. Leaders will anoint themselves, and history will be written, as by an invisible hand. Do not despair, therefore, that you do not foresee victory, or that the ends seem obscure to you. If all ends were clear, your choices would have no meaning.'

'You impart a brighter optimism, I think, Ivulaine the Blue,' said Telemorn, smiling. 'But your words are no less obscure. I fear I am a pupil of little penetration. We will speak more of these esoteric matters later. For now, I beg you to

refresh yourselves with the Steward and me and our captains. It is the dinner hour, and my stomach overwhelms my brain, though you no doubt find that a small feat. One of my guards will show you to your rooms. When you are ready, return to the dining hall, where we will chat of less weighty matters. And after that, you may begin your inquiries in the library, if you are not too weary from your day of riding.'

The King called his attendants and they led the two wizards from the hall. Once outside the doors, one of the attendants continued to lead them to their chambers. He was a tall guard in black livery, with a sword at his side, and a black horn also.

Attached to the Citadel, on the north side beneath the buttresses, were chambers for visiting dignitaries. The first of these was given to the wizards. Inside they found a sort of parlour or sitting room, with two adjacent rooms, one on each side. The ceilings were low, but the apartments were well-appointed, with a fireplace, cooking utensils, and the like. The guard left them, and the two wizards took turns over a basin of cold clear water, washing their faces and hands. As Ivulaine dried herself, she began discussing their meeting with Gervain.

'Your patience has grown shorter rather than longer during the peace, I fear. One would have expected just the opposite,' she said.

'I only made an observation. An observation I stand by, and always will stand by.'

'That is not the question, surely. Telemorn is but a child, even by the reckoning of his own kind. The Numenorian may still live to 300 years or more, and this King is but three score and ten. He can hardly be expected to understand the subtleties of the Ainulindale or the ultimate nature of good and evil.'

'Perhaps. But he is cleverer than he lets on. Mark that! For all his apparent humility and informality, I detect something far deeper.'

'He has a sense of humour, if that is what you mean. I

liked that about his stomach and his brain. Can you imagine a king of Rhun or Harad saying such a thing? But I do not think he was hiding anything. Even did he fancy himself the wisest of the wise, I cannot see him purposely matching wits with a pair of wizards, unknown ones at that. Humour is one thing. Folly is another.'

'He was testing us, Ivulaine. And I failed to hide that I took it ill—I grant you that. I was taken unawares. His game is more complex than you comprehend, Ivulaine. I beg you not to think of him as a child, or he will have you crawling about on the floor with him at dinner.'

'Gervain, my dear man. I think you are tired from your ride: you should consider going to bed early tonight. You are imagining things. And even if you weren't, I assure you my eyes have not grown cloudy over the years. I do not need another to see for me, no matter how penetrating he is.'

'All right, let us not fight. I have lost a bit of discretion, and I will look to it. But my eyes are also clear, Ivulaine. Never doubt that.'

'We will see. Yes, we will use all our four eyes, and we will see.'

At table, the King kept the conversation on lighter subjects. He told a story he had heard from the court of the north, concerning a dignitary of the Periannath—'of the halflings, you know,' he said—who had come to Fornost to offer an alliance with the Shire. This halfling had offered the services of a hundred archers, ready at need. One wit was rumoured to have asked, from just out of earshot, who was to provide the one hundred stepladders—Arnor or the Shire? At this the table roared.

'Of course,' the King continued, looking to Ivulaine, 'we did accept the archers. The perian is a small but doughty creature, and Gondor is not so mighty that it can refuse the help of any. The halflings proved invaluable in the war against Sauron, and it may be that they have a part to play against

Morgoth. Although I do doubt that be in hand to hand combat,' he finished, with a smile.

The captains at the table clanked their tankards on the table and cheered. One called out, 'Here's to the halflings! Long live the Periannath!' Another cried, 'To Frodo Ninefingers! Queller of Mount Doom!'

The wizards looked on this outburst somewhat more leniently, though they were both unsure what to make of it. Ivulaine began to think that Gervain had not been imaging things. This was either very deep or incredibly irreverent. As for Gervain, he looked to his mug once more, to be sure that the butlers were not serving punch in place of water.

After several days among the manuscripts and other treasures of Gondor, the wizards returned to the King with some information. It did not concern what they had been seeking, but it was of greatest import nonetheless.

'Lord Elemmir, we have accidently stumbled upon some ancient papers concerning the palantiri,' began Ivulaine, 'and, although they did not at first seem to pertain to our searches, we became interested. I hope we have not overstepped any boundaries?'

'No, no. I gave you full permission to read what you would. We have no secrets here: not, anyway, from the White Council.'

'We have read that the stone of Osgiliath was lost in the waters of the Anduin in 1437, during the War of the Kin-strife. Do you remember the story, Lord?'

'Yes. Something of it. We are taught that it was searched for for years, since it was supposed that the stone was indestructible by fire or pressure. It should have shone in the waters, as well—or so it was imagined, I think. But it was never found. It is either buried deep in the muds of the great river or it has rolled down the Anduin into the depths of the sea.'

'Interesting. The same thing was said of the One Ring, Lord. And yet it was eventually found. No, I do not think the

stone of Osgiliath is on the bottom of the sea. We believe it is under the ruins of old Osgiliath still, unless it was found by the servants of the enemy. But if it had been found, we would know of it—as we knew of Sauron's finding of the Ithil stone.'

'I do not see how this is worthy of note. So it is in the mud, as I said. What of that?'

Gervain spoke up. 'This particular stone was one of two surveying stones. They were larger and more powerful than the others and could oversee these smaller stones at one time. The other large stone was at Amon Sul. It was lost in the shipwreck of King Arvedui.

'Now, it is difficult to explain,' the wizard continued, 'but this stone of Osgiliath is over-seeing the other stones even now. It is shrouded—by the mud, we think. And it is not capable of being consulted, you will add. But it may be discovered despite all this. You still have the Anor stone in Minas Mallor, do you not, Lord?'

'Yes. It is in my keeping,' answered Telemorn.

'If you will allow us to take this stone in hand, Lord, we believe we can return to you the Osgiliath stone.'

'I do not understand. Do these stones contain some sort of beacon that was unknown to the wise until now? Or, if wizards have some power to locate lost stones, why did Gandalf not search out the Osgiliath stone long ago?'

'Gandalf had many cares. There were some things he left undone, even at the end. The stones were not a concern of his, until the last days of the Third Age. Only upon the discovery of the Orthanc stone did Gandalf begin to question the location and use of the other stones. By then battle had begun in the Pelennor Fields, and there was no opportunity for search. Besides, the method we plan to use requires two wizards and a palantir. Radagast might have been sent for, in the event. But he was not. The discovery of the Osgiliath stone was never a priority until now. Even now it is not perhaps of utmost importance. But we find ourselves in Minas Mallor with the ability to retrieve the stone—so why should we not?'

And it is much better that we find it now, than that it should fall into the hands of the enemy in a later age.'

'I suppose if you think there is some chance of finding it, I cannot deny you the opportunity. But you understand that the Anor stone is difficult to use?'

'We have read of the untimely death of Denethor. We do not look forward to seeing the image, but we should be able to suppress it, and achieve our goal.'

'Let us proceed down to the quays, then. Will you have need of anything else beyond the stone?'

'Several strong men with shovels, Lord, and a sturdy cart. The Osgiliath stone is very heavy, it is written.'

Some hours later, the wizards had been led down to the rebuilt city of Osgiliath. Telemorn had come also, curious to see their method, and also to keep an eye on his stone. Osgiliath, like Minas Mallor itself, had been rebuilt after the War of the Ring. Many dwarves had come, as Gimli had said they should, to oversee the stonework. It is these dwarves that had remained in the south after the construction, founding the new colonies at Krath-zabar. So the city that the wizards now looked upon was both fair and finely wrought. All the important buildings were of stone, although there were many many others that had been thrown up since of wood and more perishable materials.

Osgiliath was a town of trade. Many ships and boats there were, lining the harbour, laden and unladen. Merchant ships and galleons of war. Barges of all sizes, dotting the waters like ducks in a pond. And rafts, filling the tiny spaces along the docks between the greater rigs.

Within the town itself there was a constant bustle: a hue by the dockmen, hauling cargo from a hull with a great wench, and calling to 'look out below!' Horses clapping noisily down the stone street, shod in iron. Vendors presenting their wares with a smile and a pull on the sleeve and a loud voice—to be heard over their neighbours. Children rushing down the lane, crying out their high-pitched directions, and squabbling in their

ways.

Finally the King and the wizards and their attendants came to a quieter area near the north end of the city, perhaps a hundred yards from the western shore and half a league above the new bridge. Most of the buildings here were stone, tall and majestic. This was the administrative district of Osgiliath. It had been built upon the ruins of the Citadel-of-the-Stars, the first seat of the Numenorean Kings in Gondor. Some broken stones still marked the site of the tower; and a beautiful tree grew in an open space among the circle of crumbling walls, as a memorial. A tile in the shape of a star had been set in the earth at its foot, and this tile was tended and kept free of grass and impediment.

'This is where the Citadel-of-the-Stars—*the* Osgiliath, one might say—once stood,' announced Telemorn, once they had arrived. 'At the top of this tower, in the Dome of Stars, the palantir was kept. When the tower fell, it fell toward the river. The Citadel was some 50 fathoms high, it is written. We are some 100 yards from the river. That would put the Dome of Stars in the water, if only just. And the bank of the Anduin may have changed somewhat since the Third Age.'

'Yes, Lord, that is just what we read. Your memory is keen. Let us walk down to the river's edge.'

A few wooden buildings, sheds and the like, were scattered along the bank. A single small dock cut into the shoreline, but it was unoccupied. It appeared to be little used. Most of the landings were now south of the New Bridge. Only boats with administrative business came this far north.

Ivulaine requested the Anor stone from the King, and he placed it in her hands. She sat upon a low stone wall that surrounded the dock and put the palantir upon her knees. She peered intently into the black orb for a few moments. Suddenly she gasped, but immediately became quiet again. After a few more moments, Gervain began walking along the edge of the retaining wall. He would stop every few steps and then turn this way and that, seemingly without aim or purpose. He did

not look at Ivulaine, or ask any direction from her. After a short time, he quit this meandering and walked straight away north, toward the far end of the dock. All at once, he climbed over the little wall and began wading out into the river. He seemed to the onlookers to be in some sort of a trance, but before the King could signal his guards to run to the wizard's aid, Gervain turned to the company and called out, 'It is here!'

He waded back to shore and climbed back over the wall. Ivulaine had also stood, and was replacing the Anor stone in the King's cloth.

Gervain said, 'Have your men begin digging where I was standing when I cried out. It is only a short way into the water, but it will be difficult to excavate, I know. Does the Anduin recede in the late summer?'

'A bit,' answered the King. 'Of course it varies from year to year, depending on the snowfalls in the north. I can't say if the place you were standing would ever be completely dry, though.'

'Well, I cannot tell how deep the palantir is buried. It may be that we can reach it now, with some effort. Or we may have to wait until the Anduin has receded. I do not know.'

'We have devices that should enable us to dig even below the water line without difficulty, I believe,' answered the King. 'Our bridge builders use these devices when planting the supports for the bridge in the river bed. I do not know how it is done, precisely, but I know that it is done. I will have the proper men look to it.'

'Very good, Lord. Then we may return to Minas Mallor. There is nothing more to be done here.'

Telemorn ordered two of the guards who were with them, and had watched the proceedings, to mark the spot with a flag; and also to write upon a piece of paper the measurements from the shore and the distance down the retaining wall, in case the flag should be uprooted by the current. The rest of the company began the journey back across the Pelennor Fields.

Once they were back in the Great Hall, Telemorn asked them about their method.

'It seemed rather simple and quick,' he observed to them. 'I had expected a great show. Fireworks and whatnot, you know. It was all over in a blinking. Can you tell me how it was done?'

'Well, Lord, it is already known that the palantiri are connected by a sort of sight,' began Ivulaine, 'although this connection is quite abstruse and would be difficult to explain to you. But that is not your question anyway. The wise are also connected by a sort of "sight," though this sight is not one of visible light. That is how we converse with one another at times without speaking. Our connection is not precisely the connection of the palantiri: we cannot converse over great distances, for instance, except in direst need and with great difficulty. And then only in single thoughts, as it were. Thoughts such as "help!" for instance. But in this locating of the palantir, all that was necessary was to align the two connections. I made the connection through the Anor stone to the Osgiliath stone. Gervain then walked his connection to me about until it overlapped the stones' connection. He and I were always very near, so it was a thing that required little concentration—that is, after I overcame the terrible image of Denethor.'

'And how did you do that?' asked the King, without thinking. Gervain looked up at this point, and then looked to Ivulaine.

'I simply refused to see it, Lord,' she answered. 'I shifted the stone to my will, like one reins a horse to the right to ride round a fallen tree or a stone in the road.'

Into Ivulaine's thoughts came the sentence (from Gervain): 'He has not used it.'

There were several moments of silence. Then the King said, 'Interesting. . . reins, is it?' in some confusion, while looking into his lap. Finally he looked up again. 'So, how long do you plan to stay? Have you found aught in answer to your

questions, in the ancient manuscripts?'

'No Lord,' answered Gervain. 'We have learned much, but have not found what we seek. We will remain several more days, if that is acceptable to you. We are also now curious to know if the stone will be found immediately.'

'Yes, yes. Do take your time. There is absolutely no hurry. You might want to ride down to Ithilien as well. Perhaps the elves there may know something of your problem?'

'I think not, Lord. The elves of Ithilien are young, by the reckoning of their kind. But we may pass through there nonetheless. We had desired to see the new dwarf settlement at Krath-zabar.'

'Very impressive it is, too. And well-filled, at the moment, by all accounts. Thousands and thousands of dwarves have crossed the bridge or passed by the crossroads in the last months, it is reported. The north is emptied, but the south reinforced. We here in Gondor may look to the north with little fear for our backs, at any rate.'

'Yes, Lord, that is some consolation.'

As the two wizards left the Hall, Gervain spoke to Ivulaine. 'The King betrayed his mind to us. He has not used the stone of Anor. He has not gotten past the image of Denethor, or he would not have asked how to get around it. He would have known how.'

'I agree. Though I do not see how it matters.'

'It matters because if the Osgiliath stone is found, he will not need the Anor stone—which he cannot use anyway. The Osgiliath stone will have no impediments to its use, and it will have a greater power to survey. The Anor stone may then leave Minas Mallor. It will be needed elsewhere.'

'Ah, I see your mind, Gervain. You are keen. Let us hope the stone is found before we must leave—and before we talk to the King of our other plans.'



Chapter 2

Treskin & Isambard

It was less than four months since his return to Farbanks, but Tomilo was already preparing for another journey. He had put his garden in order, most of his woodpile had been burned already; and, besides, these things were not so interesting anymore. He could not get the entwives out of his mind.

Ever since his meeting with Oakvain the Old, and his discovery of the passage in the manuscript in Great Smials, the hobbit had been certain that the entwives were waiting to be discovered in the Northfarthing. He had taken Prim into his confidence, and she had agreed. She was even more excited, perhaps, than Tomilo. In fact, she had news to pass on to him. Prim had met Radagast in his travels several times as she walked about the countryside. She had the feeling, she told Tomilo, that he was looking for something. The wizard would not open his mind to her, but he had asked her some very

strange questions. Questions about what trees commonly lived in these parts, for instance. If there were any 'strange' trees that she had seen. If there were orchards about. Especially orchards that seemed to be tended—but not by hobbits. Prim had found this last question especially odd. How could orchards, out in the middle of the wilds, be tended? And who would tend them? Prim had assumed that perhaps elves came into these parts to gather apples or pears, and that Radagast was looking for them. Then she had simply put it out of mind.

But now that Tomilo had begun speaking of entwives, she remembered the questions, and thought there might be some connection. Also, Tomilo remembered that Radagast had spoken, by accident, of the mysterious dweller of the Old Forest. This dweller Tomilo now took to be Oakvain. No doubt Radagast had learned of the entwives from Oakvain, and had been searching for them in the western parts of Eriador.

Tomilo also told Prim of his conversation with the children at Great Smials—children who seemed to know of the entwives. Who even claimed to have seen them. And he showed her his map, the one copied from Isambard. Tomilo and Prim decided to go back to Tuckborough as soon as the weather permitted, and enlist the help of these children in scouring the woody areas of the Northfarthing. And in particular the lands about the Bindbole Wood.

In pursuance of this plan, Tomilo sent a letter to the Thain, asking for another appointment. He pretended to have business concerning the patrol of the Shire, as a captain of the shiriffs. But really he wanted another audience with the child Isambard. This was the only way he could think to do it. One could hardly write a letter directly to a child, asking for a private meeting to talk about ents.

This is one reason Tomilo had decided to make Prim his co-conspirator: she was very good with children. She was famous in Farbanks for her little 'expeditions'—jaunts through the woods with a rag-tag team of 'lookers' and 'finders.' What

her group looked for, and found, depended on the season. Sometimes it was flowers. Other times, butterflies or dewberries. Her most dependable lookers were hobbit maids in age from 6 to 14. Their attendance could be relied upon no matter the weather or the theme. But hobbit lads would also appear on days when the prey was birds' nests or skipping-rocks or edible roots or fishing-crawlies.

Tomilo and Prim had met many times and had devised a very complex, very secret plan; they almost felt guilty, it was so exceptionally sly and clever. This was the plan, as it stood then: Once they got to Tuckborough, Tomilo would discuss some subject with the Thain—Sarn Ford, perhaps, or the manning of the Farbanks Acres. There were always things to talk about. While he was doing that, Prim would enlist the children of Great Smials in an expedition to Bindbole Wood. The theme of this expedition would be 'the first flowers of spring.' At least until they got there, when Tomilo would bring up the ents, and get the children arguing about their existence again. He did not think it would be too difficult to divert the expedition into an expedition to search for ents. Or entwives.

The Burdocs found it rather odd that Primrose should be called to Tuckborough by the Thain, and at first they were not going to allow it. A maiden travelling with an unmarried hobbit all the way across the Shire—and in these times, too! It was dangerous. And what would people think? But Tomilo was now a minor celebrity in Farbanks, and it was difficult for folks not to trust him. Even old folks like Prim's Mum and Dad. Besides, Tomilo promised they would be travelling with a band of shirriffs, who happened to be patrolling the Southfarthing (which was true). What finally decided it, however, was Prim herself. She was headstrong and fearless, and wouldn't hear of her Aunt Imma coming along 'just to see to her clothes and such' (her Mum's words). She could look to her own clothes (said Prim).

The two hobbits arrived in Tuckborough on the 25th of

Rethe, which happened to be the anniversary of the downfall of Barad-dur. Although it was a holiday in both Gondor and Arnor, it was not one in the Shire. Even three hundred years hence, the rank and file of hobbitry still did not know the significance of the date, nor did they comprehend the stature of Frodo—one of their own—in the wider world. In fact, the name of Baggins had faded out of memory altogether. Both Frodo's and Lotho's lines had ended, and only the historians could now tell their stories.

Tomilo and Prim had parted from the other shirriff's at the turning to Tookbank, and had continued on across the hills by themselves. So they now came to Great Smials late in the day, rather cold and footsore. Lewa ushered them in and informed the Took of their arrival. They were told that he was napping and would see them at dinner. They therefore washed themselves and had tea and cakes with the children and other members of the family.

The Took was rather groggy at dinner; not much was said of import. After dinner Tomilo and Prim played a few songs with the children and then called it an early night. They would put their plan into effect in the morning. Tomilo reminded Prim to be sure that Treskin—whoever he was—got invited to go on the expedition as well. Isambard had said that Treskin had seen the ents, and he seemed like he might be the key to success.

The next day the Thain did not seem to take it ill that Tomilo had very little to report. He did not even appear to notice at all. After some cursory remarks about the Bridge at Sarn Ford, the Thain turned the conversation back to elves, and to the Lady Nerien. The Thain had seen the Lady ride through at the head of the great company passing west, of course, but he had not been able to speak to her. Nor had she returned to the Shire in the intervening months. But the Thain could think of little else. He was determined that Great Smials should eventually have some bit of memorabilia from Mithlond, preferably from the

Lady herself. And he considered Tomilo his best chance for achieving that.

'Tomilo, my boy,' he said, looking over a desk cluttered with papers and books, and squinting at the mess from under his heavy grey eyebrows. 'I have only a handful of years left, as I see it. I've done just about everything a hobbit can do. I have no regrets, you know. Not one. But I've got my old heart set on one more thing—and that thing is starting an elvish room in Great Smials. A room where hobbits can learn something about elves.' He sniffed and wrinkled his nose, and got up to look out upon the garden below the window. 'We've been here,' he continued, 'living within a few leagues of their Havens for almost an age, and they might as well be on the other side of the Outer Sea of Ekkaia, for all we know about 'em. Now, it's true, we've got Bilbo's *Translations from the Elvish*, and that's something. But I want more. I want something from the hands of the elves themselves. It could be anything. I know they're a private people, who don't like meddling and snooping, but I don't ask for much. Just a copy of song, or a bit of a story—some pages that they'd just as soon throw away—someone sneezed on the ink or something. I mean it, Tomilo. Anything. Now you promise me you'll ask the Lady Nerien about it if you see her again.'

'Yessir, Master Bogubud, I do promise. It doesn't sound so much to ask. I'm sure she'll gladly send something for your museum, once she finds out how much it means to you. But I don't know when I will see her again. I think the elves are in a general mourning, after the death of Glorfindel, and the return of the balrogs and all. And the elves move very slow.'

'Maybe you could just write her, and mention it in a postscript.'

'Perhaps. I will think the best way to approach the subject. I will do my best, Sir.'

'That's all I can ask, my boy, all I can ask surely.'

Prim had been in the music room during Tomilo's

conversation with the Thain. She and the children had been playing songs again, and dancing. Prim was an expert on the recorder, and she and Lewa (with her flute) had made quite a pretty duet whilst Isambard beat out time on the drums and the others added accompaniment on strings. Afterwards she told the children of her plans for an expedition to the Bindbole Wood. The youngest hobbitmaids were most excited. But Lewa feigned nonchalance, and the lads said they had no interest in flowers. Prim thought quickly, and told Isambard and the other boys that they could look for other things—vacated birds' nests or old eggshells or pinecones. She said they would also be needed to guard everyone, in case goblins arrived and tried to carry off the maids. This decided it, of course. Isambard asked if he could bring his knife. Prim said yes, as long as he kept it out of play until the goblins arrived. At this all the maids shrieked and said they didn't want to go now. But Prim took them aside and told them how it was, with a wink from lass to lass. They said why did the lads have to come anyway? But finally it was all cleared up.

'But will Grandpapa let us go?' said Isambard 'He hasn't said anything about any expedition to Bindbole Wood. That is pretty far off, you know.'

Prim said, 'Yes, I know. It is quite a journey. We'll be gone overnight. Many nights, maybe. But we have friends in Waymoot and Needlehole who will take us in. Your Grandpa knows them. I don't think he will mind.' The Thain would no doubt be thrilled to have the hole to himself for a few days.

'And Isambard,' continued Prim, 'be sure to invite your friend Treskin. I'm sure he would like to go.'

'He *can't* go, Miss Primrose,' interrupted Lewa. 'He is not even a Took. . . although he lives in Tookbank. He is a Boffin.'

'Well, what of that? I am not a Took, and I am going,' answered Prim.

'Treskin always gets into trouble. Isambard is not supposed to play with Treskin anymore.'

'I think it will be all right this time, Lewa. Shirriff

Fairbairn and I will keep an eye on him. If he does anything extraordinary, we will arrest him.'

'You can be funny if want to, Miss Primrose. But I think you should reconsider. Treskin will try to turn your expedition into an adventure. Adventures are not things to laugh at.'

'Thank you, Lewa. You are right, I am certain. I will talk to your Grandfather. If he tells me Treskin is too adventurous, we will leave him in Tookbank, you can be sure.'

'But he *must* come,' cried Isambard, hopping up and down. 'It won't fun without Treskin.'

'It is not decided yet, Isambard,' said Prim. 'Be calm, please, until I have talked to the Thain.' Isambard said he would; but he shot a withering glance at his sister Lewa, who stuck out her tongue at him.

Prim did talk to the Thain. He assured her that Treskin was indeed a handful. But he said that it would be good to take the boy on one of these expeditions—as long as a captain of the shirriffs was along. Treskin was like a growing pup: he needed to be taken out and run for a while. The problem was finding him at the end of the day.

They left the next morning. With Tomilo and Prim were seven Took children, including Isambard. Lewa was not with them. She had decided she was too old for such excursions. And besides, she did not want any part of an excursion that included Treskin.

That young hobbit arrived from Tookbank the next morning. He turned out to be a rather innocuous looking lad of eleven or twelve. Rather thin and tall for a hobbit, but beyond that harmless enough in appearance. His hair was dark blond or light brown—it was difficult to decide. He probably had some Fallohide blood in him, at any rate. He wore a green cap, pointed in the front, which was unusual in the district. He would have worn a feather in it (he had once told Isambard) but the shirriffs wouldn't allow it. They told him he could have a pigeon feather, but he had dismissed that idea as unmanly.

The little troop walked only to Waymoot that first day—about twenty miles from Tuckborough. They camped in the living room of one of Tomilo's Fairbairn cousins, who was mighty glad to see them go again the next morning. Treskin had started a fire in the fireplace in the middle of the night (without permission—and without remembering to open the flue). They had all been smoked out and nearly smothered. All the furniture would have to be set out on the lawn to air, not to speak of the rugs. . . and the drapes.

The second day Tomilo walked the children off their feet, arriving in Needlehole after dark, even though they had left Waymoot at sun-up. He even had to carry the smallest girl the last few miles. They stayed with a Took uncle who had taken a Needlehole wife: Smallny was her maiden name (a corruption of Smallknees). No one got up in the middle of the night for any reason, not even to get a cup of water. They slept like logs until Tomilo and Prim roused them from their covers, threatening to eat all the biscuits and honey by themselves. Treskin was the last one dressed and at table. He was still bleary-eyed and grumbling. 'At least we're almost there, now,' he said, nibbling a biscuit with his eyes half-closed. 'I didn't realize we was training for the infantry.'

'No,' answered Tomilo, 'Nor for the fire brigade, neither. At least this regimen keeps you from mischief.'

'Do we get to pick flowers today?' asked Holly, the littlest girl.

'Yes, Dear,' said Prim. 'We will take our biggest baskets, and you can bring back all you want. But remember that the wildflowers don't last long, even if you put them in water at the end of the day. So leave some in the fields to attract the bees!'

By noon they had all made it to the edge of the Wood. Tomilo and Prim allowed the children to run about as they would. They had all earned a bit of leisure. The smaller children remained in the open field along the edge of the forest. Here the flowers were most abundant anyway, away from the shade of the trees. But the older boys strayed into the

woods for pinecones and other prizes. Tomilo kept a sharp eye on them. Especially Treskin.

The grass was tall in the bright sunshine of spring, and very very green. It seeded out at top in fronds that clung to the hobbits' dirndls and breeches. Bees and butterflies droned and dappled among the red and blue and yellow poppies and tulips and wildroses. Occasionally a tiny hobbit lass screamed in delight at finding a particularly choice bit of flora, and she would call Prim over to share her joy.

Isambard followed Treskin everywhere, trying to impress the older lad with his keen eye and sharp sense of adventure. Treskin mostly ignored him, or trumped him with superior observations. Isambard did not seem to mind. It was a thrill just to be thought worthy of companionship. He wanted a green cap pointed in the front more than anything. Except maybe to be taller and older.

As soon as the boys would manage to get out of sight, feeling gloriously naughty, Tomilo would walk by whistling like a nest full of birds, casually saying 'Good-day!' to them, as if they were all on the steps of the courthouse. They found it infuriating.

So when Tomilo was out of sight again, Treskin led Isambard further into the woods. They found a small cave between some large rocks and climbed down into it. 'We'll spend the night here if we have to. That'll show 'em!' whispered Treskin to Isambard—and the little hobbit laughed out loud. Just then Tomilo's head poked down into the hole.

'Ah, there you are. Playing at badgers, eh? May I come in? I have some business to discuss with you gentlemen. Very important.' Treskin ground his teeth, but said nothing. Isambard had a strong impulse to laugh again, but didn't dare.

'My good friend Isambard here says that you are the best man in the area to help me,' Tomilo said to Treskin, in all seriousness. 'To help me with what?, you may ask. Ent-spotting. I have heard rumours that ents frequent these parts. But they are mighty shy. It takes a special sort of person to find

'em. A sort of person so special, he comes along only once in an age. That's why they've been here ever since the Shire was founded, and remained no more than a bed-story—told and then forgot.'

'So,' answered Treskin, unconvinced.

'So. . . I need to find them. And what's more, I need to find them and then be sure they remain *unfound* after that.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean I want to keep it a secret. I don't want all the hobbits in the Shire running over here with picnic lunches, poking and prodding and asking a bunch of outlandish questions, driving the entwives—I mean ents—away. I want everything to stay just like it is. Except I want to see one for myself. Just from a distance, you know.'

'Well, in that case,' began Treskin. 'If you promise. No snoopers and nosers. Ents don't like to be seen—that's the way of it. They don't like company at all. They can avoid being snuck up on by most. But a very quiet hobbit, what comes along once in a while, like what you said—he sometimes can get a look at them before they run off, or look just like trees.' Treskin paused. He looked at Tomilo and then looked at Isambard, trying to conceal a grin. 'But no, I don't think I can. It wouldn't be right and proper.'

'I can get a feather for that cap of yours, as a sign of your proper distinction. If you do this,' added Tomilo. 'But, of course, you can't tell anyone the feather is a reward for finding ents. We will make up another distinction. Let's see. I will make you an under-shirriff—sort of a spy, like. I will talk to the Thain, see if we can start a lad's corp, to sort of keep a sharp eye on things. Patrol the hedgerows, and like that. You can be the first lad. Captain of the lads. First Honorary Under-shirriff of the Shire.'

'What about me?' said Isambard. 'Can I be an under-shirriff, too?'

'Of course you can,' said Tomilo. 'But you won't be a captain of the under-shirriffs, at least not at first. You will have

to earn that. We will get you a proper cap. When you get older you will get the feather.'

'What kind of feather do I get?' asked Treskin.

'Well, I guess anything except a pheasant feather. The shirriiffs already have that. They won't agree to your getting that, I'm afraid. But anything else you want, I suppose.'

'Swan,' said Treskin, without pausing to think.

'Fine. If you can find one. And you will have to find one for the other under-shirriiffs, as they earn them.'

'They can find their own, as part of the initiation.'

'Yes, that will work, I guess. Now let us discuss our plan. You must not tell any of the other children what we are doing. They will want to come, and they will make a great racket and we won't be able to sneak up on a cow, much less an ent. And then they would tell the whole world when we get back. So it's just us, lads.'

Treskin got up and bowed. It was not easy to do, since he couldn't stand up straight in the hole to begin with. But he made the requisite dip, in standard hobbit fashion. 'At your service, Sir!' he said. Isambard followed suit, but he was short enough to make the full bow. 'At your service, Master Tomilo, Sir!'

'All right. Good. Let's go back and have some supper. And see what the others have gathered. Tomorrow morning we will return to the woods. I will tell the others we are digging a fort. They won't be interested in that. Too dirty.' Tomilo started to climb out of the little cave, then he thought of something. 'Which direction will we be going, Treskin? I mean, where did you see these ents?'

'Near the northern edge of the Wood, Sir. There is a sort of glade some distance inside the forest. Down in a dell, it is, like. Like a little kingdom hid away where no one knows of it. The ents has an orchard there. A pretty big one, with all sorts of pretty trees, flowering and whatnot. And bushes, too. Lots of berries and things like that. Smells good down there, too, if you know what I mean, sir.'

'Yes, very good, Treskin. It sounds wonderful. I hope we can find it tomorrow. Come on!' Tomilo grabbed his hand and helped him out of the cave. Isambard followed, wide-eyed and smiling.

Back in the field of flowers, the younger hobbit children had already stopped gathering for the day. Some were asleep in the grass. Others were munching a bit of fruit. Prim was playing her recorder, the butterflies and bees still buzzing about her head. They seemed to like the wavering music.

Once the 'men' had returned, the troop headed back to Needlehole. Treskin and Isambard were now satisfied with their existence, and offered no more trouble that evening. They walked about the hole with an important air, winking at the walls and the furniture in a very knowing manner. When Tomilo got out his pipe for a smoke, Treskin asked him whether he had an extra one. Tomilo had to hold himself to keep from chuckling. He only let out a stifled snort. But he answered, 'No, I'm afraid I left Farbanks with only the one.'

Once the children were asleep, Tomilo told Prim the plan. She was crushed.

'But I thought we would all search for the entwives!' she cried.

'Well, but you know I got to thinking, when I was talking to the lads, that the fewer that were involved the better. We don't want to scare the poor entwives away. Who knows what a whole gaggle of hobbit children would do when confronted with entwives. . . or the reverse, you know.'

'Yes, Tomilo, you are right. But I had wanted to see the entwives myself.'

'Maybe we can come back by ourselves, Prim. Once I know where they are, you see. But we have to be very secretive, as you know. And we need someone to stay with the other children.'

'Yes, yes. I know. That is what I am here for, after all. But

you must take me to see them. If you find them, I mean.'

'I promise I will, Prim.'

The next day they returned to the Bindbole Wood. But they tramped a bit farther north this time, to a spot near where the Tod-Botham Road made its nearest approach to the Wood. There were farmers' fields all about, hobbit-high with barley; but a little towpath, along the edge of the Rowrindle Stream, led directly to the edge of the trees. Where the stream came forth from the Wood was a pleasant greensward, dotted with flowers. And along the edges of the water were many flowering plants as well. Noisy birds jumped from berry-laden shrubs to fish for minnows in the slow-moving Rowrindle, or to snatch midges from mid-air.

'I should have brought my fishing pole!' said Isambard. But then he remembered their important business, and he shut his mouth sheepishly.

The children ran to and fro on their little legs, uprooting everything they couldn't trod upon first, holding it up for inspection. The youngest boy liked to taste everything, and Prim had a time keeping him from the sumac and other unsavorites. He always seemed to be chewing on something. A proper hobbitchild, by any measure. The littlest girl was on the point of toppling into the stream when Prim grabbed her by the laces and swung her back to dry land. It promised already to be a full day.

Tomilo and his two recruits snuck off into the trees at the first opportunity and headed east. Treskin led the way. Nothing was said for a long time as they high-stepped and ducked their way among the heavy underbrush, holding a straight line and forcing the plants to yield to them (for the most part). Treskin was an expert in finding a way where none appeared to be, bending his lithe body into weird shapes to avoid a tangling branch or a creeping vine or a bit of poisonous weed. Tomilo and Isambard followed as best they could, overmarking their footprints on his, like a moving

palimpsest. Even hobbits could not move in such dense cover without making some noise, but it didn't matter—they were still far from their destination, and had no need of absolute silence as of yet.

As the sun topped out above them, they stopped and ate a bit from their packs. Tomilo had brought a moon of cheese and a loaf and enough water for the three of them. The water they didn't need—the Rowrindle was fed by many meandering little rivulets that blanketed the Wood like a spider's web. They drank from these during the day whenever they needed. Tomilo had not known this, though; and Treskin had not thought to mention it that morning.

It was early afternoon when Treskin finally turned round and informed Tomilo that they were getting near. It was time to start thinking of stealth. So Treskin began picking out a path based on its silence rather than its speed; and the little threesome (could they have been seen by a hawk flying over) would have appeared to be zigging and zagging madly, like a dragonfly going to meeting.

Suddenly they came to a very dense thicket. Nettles and thorns enveloped the forest floor. Bindweed and creepers and a hundred kinds of ivy crisscrossed from bole to bole, stopping the travellers like a wall. No one but a snake, or a very adventurous hobbit child, would have considered going on.

'So this is why they call it the Bindbole Wood,' said Tomilo knowingly. Treskin just looked to Isambard and rolled his eyes.

'We have to get through this, then it is not very far,' whispered Treskin. 'And no more talking.'

He led them along the wall of vines to the right for a bit more than a furlong. Finally they came to another little rivulet, eeking its way south to the Rowrindle. Where it ran from under the vines, there was a break in the thorn. 'Thorn doesn't like too much water,' Treskin whispered to them. He signalled to follow, and they crawled along the streambed on hands and knees. They had gone only fifteen feet when they were mostly

past the wall. Treskin crawled out of the stream, but remained on his hands and knees. Tomilo and Isambard came up and joined him. As they looked ahead, they could all see that the forest floor began to go down. A few yards further on and all the rivulets springing up would begin flowing north, to meet the Upper Muddy. As if to signal this change, a line of rocks ran directly in front of them, almost like an ancient broken fence. From just below it rose the tiny spring that fed the rivulet they had just quitted.

Treskin began crawling again, and there was nothing for Tomilo and Isambard to do but follow. They inched over the low rocks and then began descending into the dell. Every ten yards, Treskin would stop and look about him, listening. The forest cover had thinned greatly since the wall of vines, but it was still heavy enough to hide a hobbit or three. They scurried down from bush to bush and bole to bole, hoping that each bole was indeed a tree and not an angry ent. As they continued, Tomilo noticed that the trees became more and more scattered, and that the light became brighter and brighter.

All at once they came to a steep ledge. The little rivulets flowed over it in short waterfalls, twinkling and splashing down into the clearing beyond. But the underbrush suddenly grew to a greater thickness, almost like an unkempt hedge, and then stopped altogether. Just beyond where the hobbits were crouching, the woods stopped. The creepers stopped, the thorn stopped, the ivy stopped. The sky opened up and the sun slanted down warm from the southwest corner of the heavens, turning the gloomy Bindbole into a garden. Tomilo peered through the hedge upon a sweet-scented land of orchards and flowers. Cherry trees were in bloom, their white blossoms blowing in a soft wind, slowly carpeting the earth. There were lime trees, growing large along the outer edges of the orchards, like a brake against the north wind. A few chestnuts also grew along the northern edge of the dell, seemingly for a like reason—and for their colour. Other tended fruits there were as well: apples and peaches and plums

and pears. Figs and mulberries and a thousand laden shrubs, all in a riot of bloom and berry. Many exotic fruits and nuts unseen elsewhere in the Shire, and unheard of this far north. Everything but oranges and grapes seemed to be growing in this magical land.

And as Tomilo looked on in wonder, he saw great shapes moving slowly among the trees and shrubs and herbs. At first they seemed to be walking apple trees or cherry trees—short and compact, rather round on top. But they carried no leaf or bloom, although something about their upper regions suggested both leaf and bloom. If one looked away for a moment, they blended in immediately with the surrounding trees, their movements hidden amongst the blowing leaves and swaying branches.

"The Entwives!" said Tomilo to himself in a low voice. But Treskin put a finger to his lips, and Tomilo became quiet again. The three looked on for many minutes, speechless. Isambard counted fourteen entwives in clear view, on this near side of the great dell. But large shapes were moving among the trees as far as the hobbits could see.

The hedge that hid them from sight continued in both directions in a great circle, growing in some places to a fair height, and in other places being but a narrow screen. On the east side of the dell an outcropping of rock intersected the circle for a few hundred yards, creating a natural wall. Tall arrowy pines shielded the dell above the rock, and cast their thin shadows northwest across the near part of the open grasses. Fewer trees grew in this region, but the entwives had used it to plant their most hardy herbs, and those that needed the least sun. Smaller entwives roamed these leafy areas, entwives resembling laurels or hazels or hawthorns.

The dell was fed by many little rills snaking across the fields and in amongst the trees, all of them running more or less to the north. A slightly larger stream fell over the rocks on the east side of the dell, under the pines. Here in the shadows was a dwelling of sorts. A tall stone table stood here, without

chairs or seats of any kind. The hobbits knew it for a table, however, because upon it were set any number of earthenware vessels, all glowing green or brown or gold with their various liquids and elixirs. A well-worn path led up to the table. On each side of the path ran a culvert of clear running water that had been diverted from the waterfall by careful channels. Rows of small junipers also ran along the path on either side.

In the open space around the table, in what looked to be sort of room, open to the sky above, were many decorations. All were composed in some way from the trimmings or fallen cast-offs of the living things of the dell. A magnificent earthenware bowl, painted many colours, was filled with fruit blossoms gathered from the orchard floor. Laurel trimmings had been arranged in pretty patterns and attached to the rock walls by wedging their branches into the crevices. Even the mosses and lichens and fungi had been forced to grow down the face of the rock in beautiful shapes—like upside down trees or flocks of migrating birds.

Tomilo watched as an entwife emerged from this 'room' and made her way back to the orchards. She looked like a small fruit tree. She was, in fact, related to the peach trees; but the hobbits could not have known this since they had never seen a peach tree. Far south, in Ithilien, the peach tree was not uncommon, but they did not grow naturally in the Shire. Tomilo noted the entwife's appearance closely. Her arms emerged low on her body, being almost perpendicular to her trunk before curving gently up at the ends. She was covered in pink blossoms, although the hobbit could not tell whether she grew these herself, as it were, or wore them as ornamentation of the season. The features of her face were, like those of Oakvain, nearly or wholly hidden from a distance. Her hair was leafy, and mostly covered in blossom now anyway. As for her walk, it was very mysterious. Her legs were quite short and her feet quite large, so that one would not have imagined she could move at all. Tomilo thought it would be like walking with your knees tied tightly together, and cartwheels strapped to the

bottoms of your feet. But somehow she managed rather well. It was almost a floating, or a gliding motion: a method and an affect of propulsion and ambulation beyond the mind of man or hobbit.

Finally Tomilo signalled the others that they must return. They had crouched behind the hedge for unknown minutes, lost in amaze. But Prim and the children would be waiting, and the three spies had a long and tortuous walk just to re-emerge safely from the Bindbole Wood.

This they did after a couple more hours of difficult work. All of them were scratched and scraped, with muddy knees and breeches-seats. But this was explained easily to the others, who, you will remember, had been told a fort was being dug. Fortunately no one asked to inspect this fort.

That evening after everyone had been shuffled off to bed, Tomilo sat smoking in the frontroom, his feet now washed and combed and propped proudly upon the the fender. Prim joined him with a goblet of wine.

'Well?' she said, her eyebrows very very high.

'Well?' answered Tomilo, looking into the fire.

'Tell me about the entwives, you great goose!' she said testily, slapping him on the shoulder. 'You found them I suppose?'

Tomilo stayed quiet for just a few moments more, both to savour the moment—the power he had, and felt, in holding such a magnificent story in his little hobbit brain—and to bring Prim's excitement to its proper boiling point. Just when he was sure she would explode the very next fraction of a instant, he cleared his throat and said,

'Prim, My Dear, I have seen the most wonderful thing today. In the past few months I have seen dwarves and elves and balrogs and wizards of several colours. But I have seen nothing that compares to this at all. You see I had known of elves and dwarves and these other creatures. Even the

balrogs—I mean I hadn't known of them, really—but they are the sort of thing you see in your nightmares, and so they don't seem completely strange. But the entwives. . . . I know, you will say what about Oakvain? He was strange, surely? And that he was. But, Prim, there was only one of him; and I expected him, somehow. I knew there were ents, from reading *The Red Book*. But the entwives. . . . Until I saw them I couldn't really believe in them. I don't know why. I didn't think Oakvain was lying, you know. And why would Treebeard have made up a song about his wives, if they didn't exist? Maybe it was seeing them all together, in that strange dell that was all their own, that nobody else knew about. It was so unreal, I guess because I never became a part of it. We never entered that little world, so it still seems like it is just a picture in a book, or an image in my head.'

'How big was this dell?' asked Prim, standing up and walking about the room nervously. 'And what was in it? I mean besides the entwives.'

'I should say it was half a mile across, give or take a bit. Quite large.' Tomilo then described the dell as he had seen it, including the lodge of the entwives, and the table, and all the decorations.

'*Ai!* You must take me back as soon as possible. I will go mad. We must take these noddleheaded children back to the Took's, and come right back. I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. They are lovely children, even Treskin, I am sure. But if I don't get to see the entwives soon, I will cry. I really will.' And to prove it, Prim burst into tears on the spot.

Tomilo comforted her, saying 'There, there. Do stop. Do. You'll wake the children. I'll tell you what we'll do, Prim. I'll take the children back myself, first thing in the morning. You can stay here and rest. I'm afraid you're going to make yourself ill. In two days I'll return and we'll go straight to the dell. You can sit and watch the entwives as long as you want. How does that sound?'

After a while Prim became more tractable. She finished

her wine and then Tomilo put her to bed next to the children. But he returned to the fire and smoked some more, gazing into the flames and thinking about many many things—not only the entwives.



Chapter 3

A Black Stone and a White

The Anduin flowed strong and cold with the spring runoff from the Misty Mountains. Everyday its banks rose another inch, as if in answer to some black summons, to keep the workmen from their quarry. But still the men of Osgiliath toiled on, surrounded by waters that would now be over their heads, if not for the barricades. Dwarves had been called in, to help in sealing off this area from the ever-pressing current; but still the seepage continued, sometimes slower, sometimes faster, sometimes threatening to carry away the retaining walls altogether. Many men and dwarves had been hired to sweep

and siphon while others dug. It was like bailing a slowly sinking ship.

They had excavated perhaps ten feet below the river-bottom, and had fortunately not hit bedrock. But the mud was soft, and the soggy earth all round them flowed slowly inwards, making much of their work futile. They must keep digging day and night, for if they left off even for a few hours, the riverbed would rise again to its original position, and all their weeks of work would be in vain. The dwarves partially solved this problem by extending the bottom of the retaining wall, so that as the men dug deeper, the wall went deeper also. But this was only a half-way solution, for the mud continued to come up from underneath, and would until bedrock were reached.

At last, on the seventh of *viresse*, at two hours before sunrise, a shovel hit stone. They were now twelve feet below the bed of the river, some three fathoms below the surface of the Anduin. When the men excavated the stone, they found it to be a jet-black orb, extraordinarily large and heavy. It had not been marked at all by the strike of the shovel. Upon measurement, it was found to be just under two cubits in diameter, and it could nowise be lifted by four strong men. A sled had to be prepared, and a sling. Two horses then pulled the stone from the site with long heavy ropes. Its delivery to the Citadel of Minas Mallor, across the Pelennor Fields and up the steep ways of the seven levels, was also not an easy task, and it was several days before it was set in a proper pedestal at the top of the tower.

At that time, the wizards had just returned from their journey to Krath-zabar and Fimbar* (the city of elves in the woods of Ithilien). They had been gone for sixteen days, and the King had begun to think they had extended their tour into Mordor, perhaps issuing into the plain of Nurn through the tunnels of the dwarves.

*Fimbar signified 'slender home,' since the wood in which the city lay

was long and narrow, with its beginnings just south of the Emyrn Arnen and its end some fifteen leagues further south. But it was situated between the Anduin and the Harad Road, so that at its widest point it was only a few leagues from east to west.

But the wizards were only waiting for news of the palantir. They had no more research to do in the Citadel, but there was one last counsel to take with King Elemmir—supposing the palantir were found, that is.

They had been given the full inspection of Krath-zabar, the mines and smithies and armouries and the newly crowded living quarters. But there is little to tell. The halls of the dwarf kingdom were impressive, maybe, to dwarves. But they did not differ in kind from the halls of Moria, which have been described already in some detail (save that they were less magnificent and much less commodious). Nor were they much different from the Glittering Caves, which will be described soon (save that they were not so marvellously wrought, nor so naturally adorned by nature).

Fimbar was also like a lesser copy of other places, in many ways. The trees were fair, but not so fair as Lorien. The houses were homely and inviting, but not so homely as the last homely house in Rivendell. The ships and boats were magical and light and fleeting as they raced down the forest stream to meet the great river, but not so light and fleeting as the ships of Cirdan in Mithlond. Only in one way was Fimbar unsurpassed among the dwellingplaces of the elves of Middle Earth: the beauty of the elves themselves. In no other place were elf children so numerous, and elf children are the fairest creatures of all of the creatures of Iluvatar.

Only here, in the south, were the elves actually increasing. All the older enclaves were stagnant or diminishing. The birthrate in the Greenwood was terribly low; in Lorien, little better. In Imladris it was near zero. And in the Havens of Mithlond and Lhunlond, it was zero. No elves, who were on the brink of sailing away, would be thinking of starting

families. So in many ways, Fimbar was the new hope of the elves. Here lived the future of elvenhome in Middle Earth.

But this is not the place to give a longer account of the city of Fimbar. It plays small part in this story. For the wizards returned quickly to Minas Mallor when they heard news of the finding of the palantir. They were immediately called into the presence of the king upon their arrival. He led them up a long winding stair of white polished marble to the top of the tower and into the chamber of the palantir. This chamber was lit on all four sides by small windows, in the shape of narrow slits. The stonework about the windows allowed light to enter, but neither arrow nor other projectile could penetrate. There was no timbered ceiling in this top chamber: above the king and the wizards was the ultimate stonework of the Citadel, crowning out far above them in a sharp pinnacle. Only a few wooden rafters and buttresses loomed in the dim light above.

In addition to the narrow fortress windows, the chamber had been fitted with several louvers, some to emit smoke from the fire, others to emit or receive winged messengers. Pigeons and thrushes and ravens might enter or depart through a small trapdoor only a few feet above the heads of the guests, in the northern wall. But another (much larger) door had also been fitted into the roof of the tower, to allow for the arrival of the Great Eagles.

There were few chairs, however. This chamber was not used as a meeting place. It had received no one but the king for many years. Even the steward had not been invited to the chamber of the pinnacle. A few books lay about, as well as some instruments for measuring the stars. Several ancient mooncharts and maps hung the walls, as well as some equally old heraldic tapestries—all in dust and disrepair. A tray of old food was near the door, and Ivulaine almost tripped over it before her eyes became adjusted to the light. The kings of Gondor did not let the chambermaids or butlers into this room, of course; and kings were not ones to dust and clean.

The king's chair was set in front of the new palantir. A wooden bench, covered in dust, was shoved under one of the windows. It appeared to have been damaged by the rains of many years, dripping from the stone sills. There were coverings for the windows but they were not always used, even in the worst weather. The old palantir—the Stone of Anor—had also been moved with its table to a place against the curved wall, and already looked as neglected and forgotten as the the poor bench.

The king turned to the wizards and waved a hand at the great palantir of Osgiliath, now cleaned and gleaming black as obsidian under a slanting ray of light.

'There it is, my friends,' he said proudly. 'The product of your work and imagination. It is as you said. A thing of beauty unimaginable. And it was where you said. Precisely. Three fathoms down, if you would like to know. One fathom of water and two fathoms of mud. The Anduin has risen almost two feet in the past three weeks, Gervain. But my men were equal to the task—if only just barely, as I hear. And the dwarves were useful as well. But you know all about the dwarves.'

'Congratulations, Lord. It is much more useful here than it was in the Anduin, I gather?' said Ivulaine with a smile.

'It is indeed, Lady. I know you would not be so bold as to ask, but I have already made use of the stone—I have found it very tractable. It fits my mind like a well-trained horse fits my rein-hand. I saw you and Gervain riding from Fimbar, clear as day. And I have already caught up Gordebor in some of his mischief. Though I hope to make better use of it than that. Gordebor hopes I find greater prey also, I believe,' added the king, laughing.

'Did you feel no resistance at all, Lord?' asked Gervain.

'Not in the least. The stone is not groggy from its long sleep, if that is your fear.'

Gervain said nothing, but the sentence, 'Let him believe

that, if he will. Do not question him further!' came into his mind, from Ivulaine.

'Very Good, My Lord,' is all he said.

Ivulaine was now walking about the chamber, and she had come to the Stone of Anor. 'King Elemmir. What may I ask do you plan to do with this stone, now that you have a better? Will you send it to Minas Annithel?'

'I was considering the very thing, Lady. But I do not think anyone in Minas Annithel could wield it. Nor is that tower inhabited by anyone of my family. The Ithil Stone that was there in the last age was placed there for communication between fathers and sons, in the royal household. But I have no intention of sending Gordebor there. And Rosogod in Fornost already has the Orthanc Stone. I had thought it be best to return the Anor Stone to the tomb of Denethor.'

'Do you remember, Lord, that on the day of our arrival several weeks ago you asked where we planned to reside? You wondered if we would return to Rhosgobel? The truth is that we have something to ask of you, as well as something to offer. Since the discovery of the Osgiliath Stone, what we have to ask of you has grown, and perhaps you may think that what we have to offer has also. Orthanc is empty, and the Anor Stone has now been superceded by the Osgiliath Stone. We may take some credit for this last circumstance, I think. But our offer is this, Lord. Lend us the keys to Orthanc, and lend us the Anor Stone as well, and we will guard your northern flank, beyond the Rohirrim. With the Osgiliath Stone, you can freely communicate with us. And all the fortresses of the Re-united Kingdom will then be inhabited. We had meant to counsel that you re-fortify and reman Orthanc regardless, since the threat from Morgoth will be from the north. And we still do so. However, your position would be strongest, we think, with Gervain and myself in that citadel—sharing it with your men, of course. Rhosgobel is not situated properly for the exercise of the White Council, as I hope you agree.'

'It is an interesting proposal. But I must consider it before

I answer. It is much that you ask. And also much that you offer, I know. And yet I am unsure. Are you suggesting that you would be my captains, with oversight of my men in Orthanc?'

'Not at all, Lord. We were not sent from the west to be captains of men, though some would say that is what Gandalf became at the end, in large part. Your captains at Orthanc would be under your direct orders. We would only be residents of the Tower of Orthanc. Counsellors at need, both for you, through the stones, and directly, for your captains. But for the most part we would pursue our own projects.'

'Yes, well, it seems fitting. If you have wizards, you put them in a high tower and let them be wise. Although I must say it didn't encourage Saruman to do his best work.'

'I know you mean no offense by your light talk,' interrupted Gervain, 'But I must point out that neither Ivulaine nor I is Saruman. Saruman desired mastery. We do not. If we had desired mastery, I assure you we would have served ourselves better to have stayed in the South and East, where we had already won the hearts of the people and wide acclaim. To come here, where we are unknown, and in a region that only promises great turmoil, is hardly a recipe for domination. Also, one who sought a people to over-rule would not travel a great distance to place himself beneath the nose of Morgoth.'

'I find myself in a poor position again, I fear, Gervain, with nothing to excuse me but my own foolishness,' answered the king. 'I speak aloud thoughts that were best left unspoken. But you are correct that I meant no offense. I do not misdoubt either of you. But the situation is complex, and what you ask is not a small thing. I do hope you will give me time to consider it. I understand that you may be in some hurry to depart from Minas Mallor, having business elsewhere. But I cannot be rushed. Even a foolish king is yet a king, and he waits in his foolishness on no man. . . or wizard.'

'Your time is your own, Lord,' said Ivulaine soothingly. 'We are in no hurry. There is no business that we have that is

more important to us that this, I assure you. And we will remain your truest allies and most faithful counsellors no matter what you decide on this. Whether we work for Gondor from Rhosgobel or Orthanc, or from the bed of the Anduin, rest easy that we do work for Gondor and all her allies.'

That evening the wizards sat in their chambers discussing the King and his new surveying stone. Gervain smoked a long pipe, marvellously carven in the shape of some fantastic animal—like a dog with a long snout or some strange pike with many teeth. The smoke came from its mouth and hugged the low rafters of the room, slowly blackening the yew and sending a fragrant odour all about them. Ivulaine was making a tea in a sort of samovar she carried with her, from some leaves she had found outside the walls. She warmed her hands over the boiling water as Gervain removed the pipe from his lips to speak.

'Do you think Morgoth already has a stone?'

'He may. It would explain much,' answered Ivulaine, bringing her tea to the table with a plate of bannocks.*

'I suppose Sauron may have saved the Ithil stone from the fall of Barad-dur.'

'Yes. Or the stones of the north may have been found and sold to one of his agents, by the Lossoth.'

'I do not think the Lossoth would sell to the enemy—not knowingly,' added Gervain, blowing a huge smoke ring which circled the samovar before rushing out a crack above the door and whistling into the night. 'Not according to all reports of them. I think it more likely that the stones would be stolen or taken from them by cunning, if they were found by the Northmen at all. But maybe the Enemy searched the seas himself, and found what Ulmo and Osse could not or would not hide.'

'That is possible. At any rate, there are three stones unaccounted for, and one of them a surveying stone. At best, the enemy has none of them, and the Ithil stone perished with

Barad-dur. At worst Morgoth has recovered all three, and has kept the surveying stone of the north for himself. In this case he has dealt out the others to Saruman and Sauron. Saruman would have the stone of Annuminas and Sauron the Ithil stone.'

*Biscuits or scones, baked with a hard crust.

'Did you think that Telemorn might have already felt some resistance from Morgoth, taking up the stone so soon and with no practice?'

'I did fear it. And still do. I doubt not that the two surveying stones are yet aware of each other. The one in the north, if it were being used, would be sure to feel the awakening of the other. If Telemorn has felt no interference, that is good tidings at least. It speaks for the possibility that Morgoth has nothing.'

'I would that we knew more of this. The king may be in danger. But if we tell him of the danger, we may lead him closer to it. He may bend the stone to the far north, out of curiosity. That he should not do, I deem, whether Morgoth has a stone or not.'

'Verily. And despite Telemorn's openness, I do not think he would take well our further meddling in this matter. The Numenoreans have never been instructed in the use of their own heirlooms, and we have only just arrived in the west. We will study this matter further. Perhaps we should travel to Mordor, to follow the trail of the Ithil stone, if there be any such. And send messages to the Lossoth, to find if there has been any unusual activity in the past few years on their shores. But the final test will be when, and if, we are given the Anor stone. Only then we will know for certain who is overwatching the palantiri. Until then we must hope that Telemorn has inherited the strength of the Numenoreans along with their instruments of power!'

The next morning the two wizards finally quitted the great city of Minas Mallor, taking leave of the king and the steward. As the first red beams of the sun stole around the still-black Ephel Galen, the two wizards rode from the gates, retracing their way across the Pelennor Fields and beyond to the Rammas. They bid good morning to the guard there and turned their horses westward for the long ride to Edoras.

At breakfast, the king had given them leave to go to Orthanc, and there to look upon the ruins of the valley and decide what might be done. He would swiftly send a following messenger once he had come to a final decision about the re-opening of the tower, but for now the wizards might enter the circle and make report of it.

The King also sent greetings to the people of Rohan, especially the king and queen in Edoras. And he bid them make the wizards welcome as emissaries of Gondor.

Gervaine and Ivulaine had accomplished much in Minas Mallor over the past fortnight. They had met a king, found a palantir, and learned a great deal about the ways of the west. But now that they were beyond the fields of the city, another concern began to show outwardly in their faces. A concern far beyond that of the palantir. The wizards had been careful to conceal this concern before the king and the steward. They had not spoken of it, even privately in their own chambers. Beyond this, they had found it necessary to conceal some information from the king, information that they had found in his own libraries and vaults. Telemorn had asked them directly if they had found what they sought in the manuscripts, and they had answered that they had not. But this was not true. They had made a discovery of great importance. A discovery of such importance that it justified concealing it from a king. But as they rode they spoke of it, mind to mind; and their faces were heavy with the care of it.

'Gandalf kept this selfsame secret from Denethor, indeed from all the wise, for almost a hundred years,' said Gervain, as if to

excuse their recent concealment from Telemorn. 'To tell it now would cause untold strife, and needlessly. We did no wrong.'

'Perhaps,' answered Ivulaine. 'But if Morgoth has discovered this secret—as he surely has: how else to explain the attack on Erebor—then is it sensible to keep it hidden from the wise? How may a New Alliance resist Morgoth if it is an alliance built on ignorance and secrecy? It may be that the truth would be less damaging than the finest discretion, no matter how well intentioned.'

'I understand your feeling on this, but I can't agree that this should be told. There is no one who would benefit of the telling. The wise remaining in Middle Earth are only ourselves and Radagast and a handful of Elf Princes and Princesses. But it is primarily from the elves that this must be kept, for their own sake. We may tell Radagast, but that is unlikely to avail us much.'

'The elves may be led to some new intemperance by this, it is true,' agreed Ivulaine. 'But they must be given the opportunity to choose their own fate. We cannot save Middle Earth by shrouding it in ignorance and secrecy. The alliance must know who it is fighting, and what it is fighting for. Even if this risks further splintering. The elves may choose poorly, as they oft have before. But they may choose rightly, and this may be the their final test. Who knows the causes of history, or its final meaning, but Iluvatar himself? I would not withhold this from the elves, lest we ourselves do evil without knowing it.'

'Can it be evil to be patient, or to counsel patience? To be cautious and to counsel caution? It would be rashness itself, even folly, to tell the elves that the Arkenstone is one of the Silmarilli, and that Morgoth has once again taken one of the three for his own. I fear to think what mischief the Noldor may still do, not to Morgoth forsooth, but to any who come in the way of a Silmaril, by design or chance. The Silmarilli are cursed. They have been cursed from the beginning, even as Feanor wrought them of the light of the two trees in Valinor.'

And they are cursed now, returning again to Middle Earth to cause discord and destruction.'

'The Silmarilli have never caused a jot of destruction, as you know, Gervaine. It was Morgoth who created the discord. The elves only responded.'

'You see, the discord arises even between ourselves. You apologize for the Noldor. I blame them. The only way to avoid the discord is to speak not of it. That is why the Silmarilli were left as lost in the chasms of the earth by the Valar, or put beyond the reach of elf or man in the sky. That is why Gandalf wisely spoke not of what he came to know. That is why we should speak not of it.'

'Why then did Gandalf write of it, and add his knowledge to the history of Gondor ere he left Middle Earth? We saw it written in his own hand, "The Arkenstone is the jewel of Maedhros, thrown into a gaping chasm filled with fire, but found by the dwarves of Belegost."* It is true that he placed this writing cunningly, where none would discover it but those searching for it. And in language few could discern. But he did write of it. What of that? I say he knew it must come to light. That it should come to light. Everything that is, must be. We cannot contain mischief or discord by lying to kings of Gondor and to Elf Chieftains.'

**Enedi-ondo Aereborro na myrre Maedhbrusso, lannant ardanca edril quandi-narr, noesyth Pelegostho utuviond-da.* This is the actual letter for letter translation, from the note of Gandalf. It is in the Rumilian mode, which was different in many ways from the mode used by Quenya scholars in Gondor (which was in the main Feanorian). The lettering of the script had also been chosen a purpose by Gandalf, to make it more difficult to read by those unfamiliar with the lettering of Valinor.

'Did Gandalf not "lie" to Elf Chieftains?' answered Gervain hotly. 'Did he not withhold this information from Thranduil before and after the Battle of the Five Armies? Do you think that the forest elves would have left the Arkenstone

lying upon the breast of Thorin if they had known its true name? No, they would have sacked Erebor, or perished in the attempt. And they would have had the elves of Lothlorien fighting beside them, and the elves of Rivendell. Until the Silmaril was in the hands of one Elf Prince or another—at which time civil war would have erupted. Do you think the surviving Noldor would have allowed Thranduil to retain an heirloom of Feanor? The high elves would never be satisfied to see dark elves hold what only Earendil has held for two ages. Who knows what tragedy Gandalf's silence averted? Elrond himself, or Galadriel, might have fallen in these wars of elf against elf, and then where would the fellowship have ended? Who knows. The trees begin to fall thickly in such a scene, and Elrond's fall may have crushed Arwen, whose fall would crush Aragorn, whose fall would doom Middle Earth. This, Ivulaine, is one of those finest of threads upon which hung the doom of all.'

'That could be said of any thread, as you know, Gervaine my dear. Still, that does not make what you say untrue.'

'No. And what is more, think what may befall now of the same thread, cut too soon. The elves and dwarves, never friendly, would be thrown back into open strife. Those who sat with us at table together in Rhosgobel would again become enemies. The elves will accuse the dwarves of keeping a Silmaril. They will ask where it was found and why it was not reported. They will not accept the dwarves reply that it was not known that the Arkenstone was a Silmaril. The elves will counter, with much justice, that it should have been known, or guessed. How many jewels of that size and description have ever been known in Middle Earth? Then the dwarves will reply that Thranduil was close by at the bargaining at the gates—that he is reported to have seen the gem in Bilbo's hand. Why then did he not report it, or guess its true name? The argument will not die, Ivulaine, no matter what is said on either side. It has never died. It never shall. Gandalf would have been even wiser to have stolen the Arkenstone in the night, and to have thrown

it into some bottomless lake or chasm. To have returned it to a place even more remote than where it was found by the dwarves.'

'Perhaps the thought crossed his mind. But where is such a place?' answered Ivulaine. 'The lowest recesses of the earth are thrown up by the molten movement of rock. The deepest seas rise and fall, depositing strange flotsam on the shores. The blackest lakes yet have beds that may someday see the drying heat of the sun. Remember, the One Ring returned from great rivers and darkest caves and strangest hands to worry the crowns of the world once more. And the Silmaril we speak of had erupted or been dug from a chasm thought to be limitless and safe. What then?'

'What then? Why then Gandalf buried the Arkenstone in secrecy in the heart of Erebor, in a closed casket of the dead. If he might not wrap it in earth or water, then why not wrap it in disguise? A disguise more thorough than any plumbless deep. He was wise, I say. And we would be wise to do the same. None but harm can come of the unveiling of the Silmaril.'

Ivulaine answered nothing, but her mind remained troubled, and Gervain could sense that she was unconvinced.

'Remember also, dear sister,' continued Gervain, 'that Gandalf concealed not only what he knew of the Arkenstone, but what he knew of the One Ring. Not until he reached Imladris on Shadowfax—after his fight on Amon Sul with the Nine—did Gandalf tell Elrond the burden that Frodo bore. It is written* that Gildor did not know of the ring when he met Frodo in the woods of the Shire, as the four hobbits fled the Ringwraiths. If he had, he certainly would not have left Frodo to wander about by himself. It is not until

**The Red Book*, book one, chapter 3.

Glorfindel rode out on his white horse to escort Frodo across the river that one may infer that the elves had finally been apprised of the situation. The only one of the wise who knew

of the ring until then was Aragorn. Why should Gandalf tell Aragorn but not Elrond or Glorfindel or Gildor? Because the elves, as wearers and keepers of the three, were more prone to misguided judgment. The ring was of less personal import to Aragorn, though it had been taken as an heirloom by his forefather Isildur.

'Likewise Gandalf felt it was better to let the Arkenstone lie dormant in the tomb of Thorin. That is why Gandalf was so concerned about the whole argument over the Arkenstone to begin with, outside the gate of Erebor. Only he knew what the stone really was. He was most worried when Thranduil saw it over the fire that night, when Bilbo secretly brought it to the camp. He knew that if Thranduil should recognize the gem, all was lost. The oath of Feanor would be awakened and all the Noldor of Middle Earth would come down upon Erebor to claim their own. But Thranduil was not a high elf, and had heard of the Silmaril only from afar. And the Battle of the Five Armies put all thought of the Arkenstone out of mind for a time.

'As we have just read, it was Gandalf's suggestion, backed by Dain, that the Arkenstone be buried with Thorin. What seemed a fitting memorial, though, was actually the clever means by which Gandalf avoided the curse of the Silmaril for another age (which he achieved). This is not the least of Gandalf's accomplishments. And from the view of history, may be his greatest.'

'It is difficult to predict the point of view of the future,' answered Ivulaine. 'Foresight is not a gift given even to the wise, except in brief glimpses. Before we make a final decision to keep this information to ourselves, I would know more of the dwarves' discovery of the Silmaril. It seems strange to me that the earth would not agree to hide such a small piece of itself. Wondrous gems there are in the bowels of the earth that none have ever seen, nor ever shall. Fate does not eject these gems into passing hands, simply to stir the hearts of living creatures. So much is at work here—so much that is beyond

our understanding.'

'We know what we have read,' said Gervain. 'And there are few gaps in the story of Gandalf, it seems to me. I don't know what more you would ask. Until now, the Arkenstone was said to be the heart of the mountain, the discovery of Thrain. But how did it come there? Gandalf tells us it was carried there by Thrain from Moria. How did it come to Moria? By Maedhros. As you know, Maedhros and Maglor, the last two sons of Feanor, stole the Silmarils from the Valar and fled into Middle Earth. But the Silmaril carried by Maedhros burned his hand, and in a fit of grief he plunged himself into "a gaping chasm filled with fire". The jewel went with him.

'Now, as we also know, in the War of Wrath some few balrogs escaped to "caverns inaccessible at the roots of the earth." As it chanced, Maedhros had cast himself and his jewel into a fiery cavern that was also the hiding place of one of these balrogs. This balrog therefore had the Silmaril dropped into his lap. The body of Maedhros was consumed by the dark flame, but the Silmaril was of course unaffected. The balrog took the Silmaril with him when he went by subterranean passages to the depths of Moria, and there he dwelled for unknown centuries.

'It is an age later, and still we are in Moria, during the time of Durin VI and Nain and their people. They are delving ever deeper in the caverns, in search of mithril. But Gandalf now tells us they did not 'awaken' the slumbering balrog, as it has oft been reported. No! They killed him while he slept and stole his Silmaril. But other balrogs, until then unfound by the dwarves, awoke at that time and hunted them and slew them, and drove the dwarves from Moria in their wrath. Thrain I, son of Nain, escaped bearing the Silmaril, and none other knew of it until the dwarves reached Erebor. There, only scant years later, the existence of the jewel became known to others of the party, and Thrain had to invent a story to cover its true identity and true place of finding. Durin and Nain, before they were killed, had suspected that this great gem was a Silmaril. Thrain

had been told so by his father. They desired therefore above all other things to keep it hidden from the elves. So Thrain told the dwarves he had found it mining 'at the heart of the mountain' in Erebor. And he was believed. But he told his son Thorin I the truth, and each King told his son until Thrain II. Thrain's imprisonment in the dungeons of Dol Guldur prevented him from telling Thorin II, but he did tell Gandalf of the secret when he gave Gandalf the map and key to the Lonely Mountain. Gandalf chose to keep the information to himself, and to plot to rebury the dangerous Silmaril, which he did.

'Now, what I propose, to complete this tale, is that Gandalf did not realize that Sauron had already forced this information from Thrain. One of the first things Sauron planned to do, once he had defeated Gondor and reclaimed his ring, is to assault Erebor in full force and take the Silmaril. This he never achieved. But he carried this information still, even after his last defeat. And now he has used this information to work some of his "petty mischief". Morgoth learned from Sauron of the existence of the Silmaril, and this is why his first campaign was against the dwarves of Erebor.'

'This story is a good one, as far as it goes, Gervain. But there are yet holes in it. Sauron did not need the One Ring to move against Erebor. If he knew the Arkenstone was a Silmaril, why did he not direct an assault upon Erebor long before the forming of the Fellowship? A pair of Nazgul might have snatched the gem just as easily as the dragons did. And even if not, Sauron might have brought huge armies from the east to bear on the dwarf kingdom.'

'For one thing,' said Gervain, 'Sauron never had Morgoth's interest in gems. The Silmaril is not a token of power but of ornamentation only. A container of beauty and light. It would have pained the eyes of Sauron.'

'It pained the eyes of Morgoth, and weighed heavily on his brow, but he desired it nonetheless, if only because the good also desired it.'

'True. But Sauron sought only dominion. He had no interest in beauty for its own sake. In this he was always different from Morgoth. Besides, it was his ring that Sauron wanted. This was his obsession, as the Silmarilli are Morgoth's.'

'Yes, Gervain, I agree. Your argument is strong, as far as it goes. All discretion is on the side of silence. But we will talk more of this. And you would do well to heed my reservations. Gandalf hid this for a long time, but he did not take the secret with him across the sea. If you argue that he had reasons for his silence, I argue that he may also have had reasons for the telling.'



Chapter 4

Aglarond

The greater part of the dwarves fleeing the caves of Khazad-dum had gone to to their strongholds in the east or west. But

some few had been fortunate enough to escape to the Glittering Caves, which the Sindarin elves had named beforetime *Aglarond*.

Indeed, the elves had known of the natural wonders that lay here since the Second Age, when they had fled over the Blue Mountains. How or why this knowledge was kept from the dwarves for nearly two ages is unclear. Mayhap it was an oversight. The elves were not interested in the northern outliers of the Ered Nimrais, since the trees that grew here were sparse and unlovely. Also, the view of the southern stars was impeded, as well as those in the west, for any who would settle here. This was a situation not to be thought of by the elves.*

Despite the rather low esteem the elves must have held for *Aglarond*, it is still curious that its existence had never been mentioned, in all the years that the elves and dwarves lived together in Hollin and Phurunargian. It may be that the elves were silent a purpose—keeping the caves secret from the damaging picks of the dwarves. The comments of Legolas certainly lead one to this conclusion. His first reaction to Gimli's discovery was that the caves might be better left as they were. But Gimli assured him that the dwarves would not mine or delve here: they would be not conquerors but caretakers.

*You may ask, what of Imladris, and the eastern stars? Or of Lorien, and the western stars? Or of the Wood-elves Realm, in Eryn Lasgalen, where the stars could not be seen at all through the trees? The western stars being the most important to the elves, the last two of these three questions are the most pertinent; but it must be stated that Lorien was distant enough from the Misty Mountains (some thirty leagues) that only the horizontal stars were blocked from view, especially from the highest flets. This was no doubt some small grief to the elves there, but it was not in most cases unbearable—else the population of Lorien would not have been stable. Imladris was likewise more than ten leagues west of the Misty Mountains, which distance opened up the sky somewhat. And the eastern stars were not held in the same reverence as the western. As for the elves of the forest, all the stars

were only a tree-climb away. And there were special wooden towers also made for the same purpose. But for the elves, the trees were never a hindrance to star-gazing; they were a convenient and well-loved means of climbing nearer the heavens.

Had the words of Gimli been borne out by history? Were these caves in the Fourth Age better for their discovery by the dwarves? At that time, the answer was most certainly, yes. In the three centuries the dwarves had been given to open up and improve the caves, they had done just that, and no more. They had not mined as much as a single ounce of gold or silver, though there were certainly plenteous veins in the Ered Nimrais. But the simultaneous re-habitation of Khazad-dum had made any mining unnecessary, for the time. And Krath-zabar was also rich in ore. So Aglarond was kept almost as a site of pilgrimage, up to the time of this story.

The dwarves had renamed the caves in their own language: Ozk-mun it was called, which signified 'The Wall of Light.' Its population was quite low. Only a few hundred dwarves were permanent residents of the caves. Compare this to the thousand or so who lived in Erebor, in and around the Lonely Mountain; or to the thousands who dwelt in Krath-zabar or the Iron Hills; or to the nearly ten thousand dwarves who (had until recently) filled Khazad-dum; and you will see that the Lords of the Caves had taken their custodianship quite seriously. Limits had been set and laws passed, and in proper dwarf fashion they were strictly enforced.

When King Mithi in Khazad-dum had received the warning from Celeborn and Nerien about the balrogs, he had immediately cleared the caves, giving orders that most of the rank and file of the khazad temporarily relocate in Krath-zabar or in the Ered Luin. Only the King and his family and guard, and a few ranking families, were to go to the Glittering Caves—the nearest refuge. The evacuation was only just in time.

In fact, the balrogs awoke and issued forth on the very heels of the dwarves, even passing some few in the passages in their great haste. But the creatures were not interested in battle—having awakened at a signal and only desiring a clear path.

The dwarves did not know this, of course. Despite the message from Imladris, it was not known why the balrogs were there, why they were awakening, or whither they intended to go. It was not even known for certain that they existed, until they were seen in all their terror. And even then it could not be known that all were accounted for. None had had the courage to count the creatures as they issued forth—even the bravest had cowered and quailed and hidden their faces. And had they known the number to be seven, this was only the number passed on from the mouth of Tomilo. Who of elf or dwarf could say with surety that the hobbit had counted correctly, or that he had encountered the full contingent of sleeping balrogs in his wanderings? Even Tomilo could not have said. Perhaps there were other halls and other tombs.

In light of this, only a small battalion had been left in Khazad-dum. It was their unenviable task to scour the lower regions of the caves, to make certain that no other creatures lurked in the depths, still waiting to awaken. It was a mission with only one possible outcome that was fair, and many that were exceedingly foul. For if any creatures were found, they would likely overwhelm the searchers. Only if the caves were discovered to be completely empty, would the battalion return to the surface and make their report. In that case, the dwarves might return to their city in the mountains.

Until then the King would remain at a safe distance, with others of royal rank, at Ozk-mun. Galka had gone with the King, as part of the King's Guard. As a wearer of the mask, he was one of the few warriors who accompanied the King. Most of those in the dwarf army had been sent to the Iron Hills, to swell the ranks of the Phalanx of the Worm.*

Shortly after the arrival of King Mithi's retinue at Ozk-mun, another Royal entourage arrived from the evacuation of Erebor. In the months since the dragon attack, Erebor had been re-opened; but few now chose to return. The High King himself had no plans to go back until it was known why the dragons had come and where they had gone. He did not wish to be caught by surprise a second time. He knew well the story of Smaug, and the total annihilation suffered by The Mountain in the time of Thrór.

Kurin, the High King, had fled with his sons Oirin and Firin. His brother Kalin also had come, although he had been at the Council of Rhosgobel, and so had to turn around and cover the same road again as soon as he arrived in Erebor. With him were also several of his guards that had been at Rhosgobel, and these guards recognized Galka and the other King's Guards from Khazad-dum. They spoke to them as soon as they had settled at Ozk-mun. It was from these dwarves that Galka heard first-hand the falling of the dragons upon the Lonely Mountain and the taking of the Arkenstone.

The guards were accustomed to take meals together in the soldier's common room. All the dwarf soldiers that had come to Ozk-mun from the various dwarf settlements were of high rank, and therefore ate together with little ceremony. Stories were traded especially in the first weeks of being thrown together-- over all the meals, and after the closing of the gates each evening, well into the night. The dwarves of Erebor were full of questions about the balrogs, and those of Khazad-dum never tired of hearing of the dragons.

One morning, about half an hour before sunrise, Galka was seated at a long low stone table set with plain dinnerware of the commonest metals—unadorned save for an 'O' rune embossed on each piece of cutlery or plate or tankard. With him at the table were some sixty fellow guards, from both royal retinues as well as the resident guards of Ozk-mun. At nearby tables of

*The Phalanx of the Worm consisted of specially-equipped dwarves who carried larger shields, and longbows rather than axes. They also travelled with catapults, capable of launching great stones many feet into the air. And the PW was expert at the digging of trenches and the erection of earthworks óas protection against flame.

equal size sat the remaining soldiery of the caves. This being the soldiers' Dining Hall, it was among the least magnificent of the large rooms of the dwarf city. But even so, it was beyond anything the dwarves from Erebor or Moria had ever seen. It had none of the splendour of armament, or of other manufactured items, that the other places could boast of. But it needed none of them. The very walls themselves were things of beauty beyond compare. The rows of torches set the whole room ablaze with a twinkling, dancing light, mirrored in a thousand tiny facets. These shining surfaces sent the light back in a barrage of subtle colours: violet amethyst, reds of garnet and ruby, greens of emerald and jade and chrysoprase, yellows of topaz and opal and beryl, blues of sapphire and lapis lazuli, whites of onyx and adamant. From above, hanging from a lofty and craggy ceiling, were stalagmites encrusted with other fantastic gems beyond name and number. As Galka looked up, he thought that there could be no metaphor to help in describing these fabulous monstrosities óthese almost mythical shapes in the gloaming. There was nothing to compare them to, neither in the heavens nor in the waters nor in the flora and fauna of the sun-touched regions of Middle-Earth. To outsiders, they must remain a tale of poor and pinched words, unbelievably until seen.

But the dwarves had been in these caves for several days already, and so were becoming accustomed enough to the beauties around them to begin to speak of other things. At any rate, on this fine morning, far below the moving air and just-awaking birds and fragrant soil outside, the conversation had become lively; and the great room echoed with the

tintinabulation of many voices striving to make themselves heard over all the rest. At last, one voice rose above the clank of knife upon plate and the slap of fist upon stone and the dull roar of nearly two hundred low and sonorous voices.

'I will tell the story!' said the voice of Muntz, a Captain from Erebor. He was near the head of Galka's table, only a few chairs away, in fact. He stood and raised his arms in a command of silence, and the room *did* become quiet. Muntz was a very large dwarf, with a huge bearded head and arms that looked like they had been hewn from granite. His forehead was like a wall in itself, that armies could batter themselves against and come off the worse. As he spoke, he brought his gauntleted fist down upon the table whenever the story called for emphasis and the stone itself shivered. Galka thought to himself that here at last was a dwarf that needed no tools to mine: he might cleave the very backbone of the mountain with his bare hands.

'I was at the Gate when the dragons alit, as you were not, Monel,' he began, glaring at another large dwarf of Erebor. 'Let *me* tell the story as it *ought* to be told, and then we will not have to tell it again and again with the thousand addendums of fools who weren't there. Now, everyone wants to know about dragons, I hear. Well, Khazad, I will tell you about dragons. I will tell you and you will listen. For I smote a dragon and he smote me. And so we know each other. That's more than anyone else here can say, I warrant.

'I was at the Front Gate, as I said, where the stream issues forth. That has been my post for the last twelve years, as all from Erebor know. I have been Captain of the Gate Guards for ten years, and I was Lieutenant before that. Well, it was eight days before the first day of the year, as you all know already. There was no warning of any kind. We had not even heard of the attack of the balrog at the Bridge, which anyway had only happened two days before. So our guard stations were all at standard levels. It is just as well, for if more had been stationed at the Gate, it only means more would have been

killed. At four hours before sunrise, I saw a light in the sky which some others saw, too, so I know it wasn't a dream. It was in the northwest sky, just above the arm of the mountain. At first some of us argued it was just a bright star, or some such thing. But as we continued to watch, it became clear that it was moving. Slowly but surely. One of the guards suggested that it was a falling star, but as those move very fast, that was dismissed as absurd. Then another suggested that it was an eagle, with the rising sun reflecting off his feathers. I turned on that dwarf and asked him how that could be, seeing that the light was in the west, but the sun rose in the east? Besides, it was *four hours* before sunrise. Tricks like that, which he meant, only happened right before sunrise. But his foolishness got me to thinking about flying things, and I remembered Smaug, and the description of his coming. And I grabbed a horn and blew such a blast that the guards around me were made deaf.

'So you see, we weren't completely unprepared for all the good it did us. Like those who had battled Smaug, we had no time to put up proper dragon defenses, or to armour ourselves correctly. We did not even have time to use the water from the Gate Stream to any purpose. The only thing that was achieved was a warning of the King, so that he and the Princes and such could run to their secret places. But as the dragons had no interest in the King anyway, none of that was of any importance either. If we had known what they were coming for, we might have thrown the Arkenstone in the waters, I suppose. Though that would only have made the dragons angry, I think, and would have led to a general slaughter. None but a seer could have predicted such a limited and focused attack, anyway; and all such talk of might-have-beens is pointless.

'As dwarves rushed hither and thither, gathering arms or running for the deepest chambers depending on their courage I myself only stood and watched. My axe was at hand, my arms were at my side, and my feet were planted beneath

me: I needed nothing more. After perhaps five minutes, the light in the sky began to grow in size, and then to separate into two lights. I blew the horn again and announced that there were two dragons. This only increased the madness, of course. Some mothers and children ran down from the mountain, to be clear of the expected onslaught completely. And the news had now reached Dale, also. As I looked down upon the city of men, it was like looking upon a city of ants disturbed by a wasp. The whole town was crawling with torches, and I could hear the screams all the way up on the mountain. I think many were fleeing toward the River Running, though they must have been witless to think they could make it to the water before the dragons arrived. For even then the orange lights were descending upon Dale. They flew low over the town, setting the roofs alight. But they did not stop to do further damage there before turning to the mountain. I believe they were told not to risk unnecessary battle.

'For even as they landed at the Gate and began belching forth their hottest fires, they did not stop to do battle, or to confront those of us who stood against them. They only crushed or burned those who stood directly before them. They threw down the gates with only a moment's buffeting of their great tails; and I hewed at the nearest one without success for his armour was like tempered mithril, and seamless. He did not even turn to breathe his death upon me, but threw me clear with a swish of that great tail. Once inside they made directly for Thorin's Tomb, as if they had studied a map of our chambers. But perhaps it is not to be wondered at too much. The Tomb is not hidden or fortified, as it should in hindsight have been. And it is foolishly near the Front Gate. Its position was chosen, of course, to commemorate Thorin's stand at the Gate against the Five Armies. But this only made it the easier to pillage.

I followed the foul beasts as they tore the cap from the tomb and burned or smashed all the ornamentation and stonework about it. I saw the forward worm snatch the

Arkenstone from the breast of Thorin, ignoring the remains of that Great King as if they were naught but dust. It held the jewel up to its horrible companion in its curved claws, and the two fire-drakes seemed to laugh at the ease with which their robbery had been achieved. The stone sparkled and shone through the claws of the beast, and threw its white light across the red fires emanating from its jaws. Then the worm seemed to flinch, as if the light pained it. It looked about the chamber, and at first I thought the creatures might leave the stone and trade it for other treasures. But they were only seeking out a chest, that they might carry the stone in it. Neither one seemed prepared to carry the Arkenstone from the mountain unboxed—that is, in a naked claw. For the first dragon threw the Stone from him, as if he could not hold it a second longer. And the second would not take it up either.

'But soon they found a chest large enough to hold the stone, and they emptied it of its priceless contents. It was the very coffer that held the Queen's necklace—the famous Begalukk Strandó—among other things. But they left that on the floor of the chamber as if it were no more than an iron chain set with quartz. They placed the Arkenstone within the chest and closed the lid. Then they turned to go.

'I had not molested them as they broke open the tomb, nor as they searched for the chest. For I was now alone. All the others had fled or been killed. But I had one last card to play—hopeless as it now seems. I thought to come down upon one or the other as he passed back through the gate, and I had climbed onto a narrow ledge over the opening for this purpose. But the creatures moved so quickly that I only had time to fall upon the back of the second one. I brought my axe down on the scales above the hind leg of that beast, but it was as ineffectual as before. He threw me from him like a child's doll, or like a horse flicking away a fly. Nor did he turn to cover me with flame, though I expected it. The two worms only flew away into the night, in the direction they had come. That is the whole extent of what happened that night. Nothing

more and nothing less.'

There were a few moments of silence after Muntz had stopped speaking, but he did not return to his seat just yet. He stared at the company, as if to defy any questioning of his word. But finally a nearby dwarf spoke up nonetheless. It was Galka.

'What did they look like?' he asked, in such a tone of innocence that Muntz almost laughed. The Captain had thought to snap the head off the first dwarf who spoke any word to him, no matter how small. But this little dwarf from Moriaós such an absolute babe of the first diggingótook Muntz by surprise. He looked at Galka for several moments, completely forgetting to be gruff and horrible in the face of such naivete. But at last he remembered his position, and he assumed the proper scowl.

'What did they look like? *What did they look like!?*' he yelled. 'They looked like your worst nightmare, Lieutenant! They looked like death itself! They looked like a river of molten fire, pouring down from heaven on your foolish head! They looked like towers of steel, like mountain-shoulders of red rock, like carrion birds forty feet long.'

'Did they have many teeth? And what was the shape of the head,' continued Galka, undaunted.

'Why, Lieutenant? Are you illustrating a book on worms? Or perhaps you are sewing a cap for one, and want it to be the right size?' At this the table erupted with laughter. The dwarves stomped their feet and clanked their armour.

'No, Sir. If we are to fight these creatures, we must know everything about them. Who knows what information may turn out to be crucial, in the end.'

'In the end? Whose end, the worm's or *yours?*'

The dwarves laughed again. But still Galka was unaffected. 'Just answer my question, if you will, Sir. A description of the dragon would be very helpful, and since you are the one here who has done battle with one already, you are the only one who knows.'

Muntz bristled at the first part of this statement, but the last part mollified him somewhat (as was intended) and he decided it would be to everyone's benefit to simply answer without further bullying. Muntz was fierce, but he was not foolish. Already he could see that this small dwarf from Khazad-dum would not be an easy markóAye, might even be useful to him in the future.

'The beast had many teeth, yes,' he answered, looking about at the other tables with a grimace. 'Black teeth, as if they had been burned by the constant fire. A snout in the shape of a warg, but longer. Much longer. Its nostrils were great black holes, and the fire came from them, as well as from the mouth. The worm's head had no brow: it was nothing from the front but mouth and teeth. Long narrow eyes on the side of its head, with black slits in shining green ovals, like a cat or a snake. Horns behind the eyes, curling back and up. A very long neck, in the shape of an ess, and armoured in rings. A great breastplate of iron or hide, crisscrossed in diamond-shaped scales. Four legs, the front smaller than the rear, and all with long unretracting claws. The tail was as long again as the beast, and armoured in rings like the neck. There was no soft spot or exposed area from nose to tip of tail.'

'What of the wings? Were they also armoured?'

'Hm, well. I can't say, with surety. That is a fair question indeed, Lieutenant. Although I don't know why anyone would want to make a worm unable to fly away. You should hope that they do, as soon as may be. I can tell you that the wings were vast. When they were open, the beast was much longer from tip to tip than nose to tail. It required such a span to hold its bulk aloft, I guess. With all that armour, the beast must weigh as much as fifty large horses. And the worms had some difficulty getting into the air, I remember. They had need to run very fast, and then make a great leap. And even then, it was not a graceful ascent. But when the worm was on the ground, it folded each wing into three partsólike a batóand held the wings back and high, out of the way.'

Galka asked no more questions, seemingly satisfied for the moment, and he returned to his breakfast. Had he not been so absorbed in eating, he might have noticed Muntz looking at him curiously. But the others returned to their plates as well, seeing that they must soon be at their posts, well-filled or not. And no one else felt like sparring with the great captain, especially this early in the day.

But several days later, the dwarves from Khazad-dum had a chance to tell their story. The subject of the balrogs had arisen again, and a dwarf from the caves had been chosen to tell of their sudden appearance at the East Gate. This dwarf, Gergii son of Nervii, was the ranking Captain of the Mask. Meaning he was the First Guard of the King. His usual post would not have been at either gate. He was normally to be found at King's First or Third Hall, either in attendance or stationed nearby. But since the warning from Imladris, Gergii had been given charge of seeing to the emptying and guard of First Hall. Since First Hall was just above the East Gate, he spent much time in those two days at the Gate itself, making sure that everything was taken from the Hall that should be, and nothing taken that shouldn't.

The King and his family had already departed hours earlier from West Gate, and were even then nearing the Glanduin Bridge. But Gergii would follow them only when the last dwarf was safely out and escorted down into the eastern vales.

Gergii was an older dwarf, large but not so large as Muntz. He was calm, with a serious mien and a sharp eye. His beard was long and white and forked at the end. His eyebrows were quite full, even fuller than was customary with dwarves, and they were still flecked with black. His stare was intimidating: it was as if he had become so used to the mask that his face maintained its power to overwhelm even when he did not wear it. He carried Durin's battle insignia* on his breast, as a sign of his unique rank. And the handle of his double-axe was tipped with a mithril knob in the shape of a grimacing boar. Only

eleven other dwarves in Khazad-dum were of equal or greater rank (not including the Royal House).

This is the story as Gergii himself told it to the dwarf soldiers at Ozk-mun that day:

'I was at the East Gate,' he began, laying aside his fork and wiping his mouth on his sleeve. 'I was trying to maintain some degree of order. It was not easy, since a panic had taken hold upon our caves that I had never seen nor imagined. Dwarves were throwing their hammers and axes down and running without regard to orders or to any protocol whatsoever. It was a sad day for the Kingdom, I must say. A few pathetic dwarves even went so far as to attempt to profit from the confusion by stealing minor heirlooms from First Hall, while the guards were at the gate or else searching for stragglers in the deeper rooms. I myself caught several with small tokens from the treasury: items they thought would go unmissed, or whose loss could be attributed to the balrogs. I need not tell you that these dwarves are deep in the pits of Krath-zabaró married permanently to the forges.

'So I was already in a very sour mood, as my lieutenants here can attest. I had doubts about the existence of any balrogs, and misgivings that this sort of precipitous evacuation was the best means of reacting to the news from the elves. I even had a sort of suspicion that the elves had sent the message as a decoyó to flush us from the roost, as it were, and then take the nest.

*A double-ax and a flame. The battle insignia was used by soldiers, whereas the hammer and anvil were used by counsellors (without the crown and seven stars) or by the royal family (with the crown and stars).

I was wrong, in the event. But I still don't think they're too good to try it. And if they had tried it that day, I don't think there is anything we could have done to stop them. It would have been a rout. A disaster of unbelievable proportions.

'But I was wrong, for the time. For the balrogs were coming. I finally realized that when I began to hear a rumbling from the depths, of a kind I had never experienced. It was not a quake; nor a shifting from a blast; nor a groaning of the mountain. It was the moan of a creature. The long wail of some terrible beast! I felt a fear, for the first time, fellow dwarves, that reached to my very heart. I did not think of running, but I began to think that the warning might have been justified. It was clear that something horrible was happening.

'It was now several hours after sunset. It was very dark out, since there was no moon, and the only light was from the torches. I quit questioning those going out and only watched and listened. I stood in amaze as dwarves continued to flee past me in utter terror. And I heard shouts and screams from the inner halls, that I now know were the screams of dwarves being overtaken and passed by the emerging balrogs. Suddenly there was a strange smell, like the den of a bear—but much worse and much stronger. And the noises were now echoing in my head, near to driving me mad. They had increased in both number and loudness. It was a many voiced bellowing. Like bulls warning each other, almost. But mad bulls of monstrous proportions. I began to feel sick, and I held my hands over my ears. I moved aside from the doorway just in time, for suddenly many great shapes of darkness rushed by, and the air was thick with their smell—and the smell of fear. I turned my head away to keep from fainting, though it is difficult for me to admit to it.

'At last they were gone. I cannot tell you their number, though many have asked me. We were warned of seven. All I can say is that I believe there were more than two or three, but less than a dozen. I could not be more precise without straining the truth.

'After a moment I looked up. I saw them in the distance, flying to the north and east. But they were enveloped in a cloud of fire and darkness which the eye could not penetrate. All I could see where the flashes of flame, and the smoke that

seemed to carry the flame. It is difficult to describe. Below was another cloud, running along the ground beneath them like a shadow. It too contained flashes of flame. It was like a mirror image cast upon the ground by the flying creatures. I cannot explain it.'

'Captain Gergii, Sir,' interrupted Galka, 'I believe I have some information on that point.'

Muntz looked over at Galka in wonder, thinking to himself that this little dwarf had a comment or question on every subject.

'Yes, Lieutenant. What is it?' answered Gergii, with some small impatience. He had already been made aware of his new lieutenant on the journey to Ozk-mun, and had found his loose lips nettling. In his opinion, a dwarf of Galka's age should not earn rank for any reason. But especially not for having disobeyed orders. He expected to find it necessary, at some point in the near future, to discipline this dwarf in some very harsh fashion. If it were not for the King, he would have already done so, in fact, not waiting for a reason. But this dwarf would soon give him a reason: he felt confident of that.

'Tomiloóthe halfling, you know he told me that some of the balrogs he saw had wings and some did not. Perhaps this cloud you saw on the ground contained the wingless balrogs, Sir.'

'This is the halfling you took from the cell?' asked Gergii.

'Yes, Sir. He brought the letter about the Council, and about Morgoth. Then he saw the balrogs in Deep Hall. It's thanks to him that we got the warning. He told Nerien, you know. In Imladris. He also saw the balrog on the bridge in the north.'

'All right, Lieutenant. May I ask why this halfling did not report to King Mithi immediately the sighting of the balrogs? Why, Guard, did we have to wait for a message from an elf to arrive from Imladris? It is rather roundabout, is it not?'

'Yes, Sir. I suppose, Sir. I mean he thought he should, but he didn't know if he was in his right mind when he saw them.'

He didn't want to alarm us for nothing, you know. But when he saw the balrog that killed Glorfindel, he knew he was in his right mind, and must tell us immediately.'

'Well, I don't know that it would have mattered greatly if we had known a month earlier. Though it all seems odd, the way it turned out. A wandering halfling discovering balrogs at the center of the earth. It's a story that takes some believing. But I suppose if we had gone down there before the council, we would only have stirred them up before their time and gotten ourselves killed in greater numbers. Though I still can't see why they were there or why they awoke when they did.'

'It was the call of Morgoth, Sir.'

'Was it, Lieutenant? And how exactly did Morgoth "call" them? Did he send a burrowing orc from the dungeons of Kheled-zâz to shake them and tell them the holiday was over? Or did he just whisper into a hole? Maybe he sent a bat, with a map of the caves. Or a beetle with an urgent letter.'

The dwarves laughed, but Galka was no more concerned this morning than he had been with Muntz.

'I don't know, Sir. Perhaps it was pre-arranged. Or maybe there is a signal that only evil can hear.'

'Very mysterious, Lieutenant. Very deep. But let us leave it. It is no matter. And there is no need to speculate. It is no concern of ours. We will go where we are told and fight whoever attacks usóisn't that right, Khazad? But I will say this before I sit down. We of Khazad-dum should return to our city. The elves may not have taken Moria yet, but they may still. We are foolish to leave it empty, to be taken by any who pass by!'

The dwarves stamped and cheered. They were impatient for battle, and many were irked that they had been ordered to the Glittering Cavesóthe beauties notwithstanding. Gergii was foremost among these. It appeared to him that there was little chance of reknown for a captain in Ozk-mun. Let him at least defend his own city. Or, even better, send him north to lead the khazad into battle against balrog and worm!



Chapter 5



Fornost Erain

King's Norbury was some forty leagues from Bree on the North Road. It was an ancient site and had been settled on and off by descendents of the Three Great Houses of Men (the elf-friends) as far back as any could remember. Men had been living there when Elrond was born to Elwing in Doriath. Men had been there many years already when Bombadil arrived from over the mountains to seek the beautiful River Daughter. The dead buried there had lain longer a-peace in Middle Earth, still marked by their now-wordless stones, than at any other site. The ghosts there were older and wiser and deeper; and the aged sons of men, talking in whispers, felt always at home in these misty hillsóhills where their kind had come and gone, doing what men do, from the beginning.

Before he became king at the end of the Third Age, Aragorn had been accustomed to walk there at times, to think of what his fathers had been, and what his line had come to. In those years, a traveller arrived at King's Norbury on the burnt-out end of the Greenwayóa path rank with weeds and all but lost to sight. The place was called Deadman's Dike, and none came there but ghosts and sons of ghosts. Strider would sit on a broken cairn of stones, wrapped in his stained cloak and leggings, and dream of the towers that once stood there, and the fair people shouting to one another and playing fair games in court, it may be, and laughing under the clear sun. And he had looked about him at the desolation: the absolute stillness of the trees and grass, the cold hills lying untouched for centuries, the careless birds hopping from gravestone to gravestone, unaware of the legacies of their perches.

At that time he had come to the stone of his mother, one among many, and he had promised her that she would have living company again and that children would run past on the road and that many fair things would be rebuilt by the sons of the ghosts of King's Norbury.

And when Elessar was crowned King of Gondor and Arnor, he remembered his promise, and he sent the Rangersówho were now princes of the Reunited Kingdomóto Fornost Erain to oversee the rebuilding of the city, and the re-settling of the region. Indeed, many times did the King come himself, to watch the progress of his ministers and the beauty of their work.*

Dwarves from the Ered Luin were also called to Fornost to help in the building of the palace and fortifications. More than thirty-years work was done on the Citadel and surrounding structures alone. At this time, the towers of Amon Sul were also rebuilt, as well as the houses and walls of Annuminas.

*It has been written (by Meriadoc Brandybuck, in *The Tale of Years*)

that King Elessar, in the Fourth Age, 'comes north to his house in Annuminas restored.' This is true, as Annuminas was also restored at this time. But this 'house' of King Elessar is not the court of Arnor. Had it been the court, Meriadoc would doubtless have called it such. No, this house is but a sort of summer cottage (though a magnificent one) of Aragorn and Arwenófar from the heat of the stones of Minas Tirith, and near to the havens of the elves. Aragorn had also established his northern residence in Annuminas to avoid conflict with the court in Fornost Erain. A King residing, even for a time, in the palaces of his Prince, might create an intolerable situation; nor did it encourage the independent sovereignty of Arnor.

Elessar chose Fornost as the capital of Arnor for personal reasons, some of which are enumerated here. But the temples and citadels of Annuminas were also rebuilt, and they served as reminders of past glory, and as pilgrimages. Chief among these, of course, was the Tower of the Sunset, built upon the eastern shore of Lake Nenuial.

Eldarion continued the work of this father, and by the second century of the Fourth Age, Fornost was already a city that even Arvedui would have been proud of, or Elendil himself. All the major stonework was by then complete. The trees that had been planted had reached maturity, and the streets no longer felt new. The people of Fornost Erain might look out over the white walls at hilltops fortified and waving with the banners of Numenor, and at fields richly planted and waving with the stalks of many grains, and at pastures brimming with kine, tended by fair shepherds waving back at them across the distance.

Now, in the first years of the fourth century of the Age, Fornost began to rival Minas Mallor itself in splendour and might. The population of the district as a whole (including the hamlets lying just outside the gates) had in fact exceeded that of the city of the seven walls, having more room for expansion. In the south it was necessary, once Minas Mallor had been re-filled, to look well beyond the walls for overflow. Osgiliath,

some miles away, was the first to receive this overflow, of course. But other towns in Lebennin and Ithilien had also benefitted from the new prosperity. All of Gondor, even to the hills of Pinnath Gelin in Langstrand, had grown markedly since the fall of Sauron.

But in the North was this growth most to be seen, even by the living eyes of a single generation. At times it seemed to those who lived near the great roads that there was a continuous line of carts and wains and horses and walkers making their way to the fertile fields of Eriador. A few stopped and built their farms in Cardolan, where towns were non-existent and a man could do as he pleased with little or no oversight from authorities. But most continued on past Bree and the Great East Road, to be near the great cities of Fornost and Annuminas. It was here, between the Weather Hills in the east and the hills of Evendim in the west and sheltered also to the north by the North Downs that saw the greatest changes in the Reunited Kingdom. Fornost itself was the center of this expansion. No mountains stopped Fornost from spreading across the plain, as the Ered Nimrais stopped Minas Mallor. No great river acted as a natural boundary. Now that evil had receded, the only limitation upon the glory of Arnor was to be found in the cold blasts from the north that made farming, and living, more and more difficult as one proceeded past Fornost and the North Downs. At the time of this tale, the North Downs bounded Arnor almost like a sea; for although the King claimed the territory all the way to Forodwaith and the Bay of Forochel, no settlements or farms existed north of Fornost (save a hamlet or two on the Lune, far to the west).

The city itself was built around the Citadel of the Elfstone (the Ondo-lai) also called because its plan was drawn to the shape of the green-stone (the Elfstone) that King Elessar wore about his neck. The main court was of an elongated hexagonal shape, that is, with the dais at one of the narrow ends, facing south. This court sat atop the last prominence of the North Downs,

and the Citadel had been erected around it in various walled circles and semi-circles and curved passageways. Three main towers there were, the centermost being the loftiest; but the other two also reaching magnificent heights. The Citadel (also called the Green Tower) housed the Prince and his family. Smaller courtyards to right and left decorated the palaces and provided walled gardens where the children might play in warm weather. Here too were fountains and aviaries and many other wonders and delights too numerous to tell. But in the lefthand courtyard a scion of Nimloth had been planted óto ensure the continued health of that line, should accident or blight again take the tree in the south. It had at first been feared that the sapling would not like the cold of the North Downs; but the young tree thrived, and at the time of this tale it was tall and leafy óits white bark shining with sap and its new leaves sticky and pungent.

The other two towers fronted the citadel and looked out over the city to the south. A green banner flew over the main tower, but the red and the white towers óas these were called ócarried banners of their own colours. The White Tower was to the west. It was called Minas Ninque in the Numenorean speech. The Red Tower was Minas Carne.

The first street of Fornost was Green Street (Lathe-lae). It ran from the gate of the citadel, between the two towers, to the gate of the city. It was a rather long road, being more than a mile from one gate to the other. But the cross street (Lathe Anann) was longer still, for it ran from west wall to east, and that was wellnigh a league. A small river also ran from east to west across the city, dipping south a bit to round the towers before essing its quick way beyond the walls and finally meeting the Baranduin some fifteen leagues on.

The census of 300 had counted eleven and a half thousands living inside the walls. But another three thousands lived in the near environs óeither in the districts of Fornost just beyond the wall (which most considered part of the town proper) or in the hamlets and nearby acreages. This made the

city more than twice as large as Annuminas, and nearly as populous as Minas Mallor. Had that city not grown as well during the last three centuries, Fornost would have already passed it. But the same census found Minas Mallor with nearly fourteen thousands inside the walls. And Osgiliath swelled that number to at least twenty-one thousands.

In the entire north kingdom of Arnor, the King could count on population of almost thirty thousands. Nor did this include any hobbits within those borders. The little people were counted separately, and most census takers gave their total to the Shire, no matter what the borders of that land might be.

Of course, not all these men were of Numenorean descent. Not even the new prosperity could invent thirty thousands of new people (just to take the numbers in the north) in four generations. There were some Dunlandings who had crossed the Greyflood and so been counted among those of Cardolan. And the other wild men of Eriador had likewise settled into the civilization of Arnor and added their blood to the rest. Even the men of the east, from beyond the mountains—the Beornings and the Bardings and the remainder of the Northmen—had come in fair numbers to share in the trade of the west. So it was not only in the south that mothers carried fair-haired children: the stock of Rohan had come from the northern vales of the Anduin, and many women of Arnor had been drawn to these tall men—these men who favoured so much the fair horsemasters of Anorien.

The Prince Kalamir had returned from the Council at Rhosgobel before winter had set in. He had been apprised of all the news from Imladris and Erebor before the new year. And on the third day of spring a daughter had been born to him. The Princess Culurien had been given the honour of naming the child. She had chosen to call the new princess Llaure, meaning 'golden,' for Culurien herself had golden hair and it was hoped that the babe's white-blond hair would

remain that way as she grew older. Rosogod himself had hair of dark brown, which usually would trump the blond of his lady, in the colouration of the babe. But the child had been born very fair, and the mother insisted that Llaure she was and Llaure she would remain.

It was now in the month of *viresse*, and the city was a-bustle with business, as well as with continued celebration of the birth of an heir. The celebration would likely continue all summer. Festivities were planned for loende (mid-summer), and many young maids and their mothers were already choosing the cloth for their dresses, though it was ten weeks yet.

Balrogs and dragons were temporarily forgotten in the high mood that had prevailed in the past month. This is not to be wondered at, for no one then living could remember a time when danger was real and present, and the problems of the elves and the dwarves could be easily dismissed by those who had never seen a representative of either people. The dwarves had left Fornost after construction was complete, and none had since been closer to the city than the Great East Roadónot in a hundred years. So it should be no surpriseóto those who know much of the ways of menóthat the minds of the citizenry of Arnor could not take proper hold on the import of recent events. Their gaze was a short one, as the gaze of all folk is like to be in such a situation. The events at handóno matter how smallótook precedence over events afaróno matter how great. The arrival of a Vala himself was a thing of short memoryóuntil the Vala should come within sight, or otherwise begin to affect the day directly.

But not all in the city had been lost wholly in revelry, or in forgetfulness. The Prince himself had acted quickly and decisively in bringing the guard of Arnor up to strength. The borders had been put on alert. Amon Sul was now bristling with soldiery and weapons. The Ettenmoors were patrolled by large parties on horse. The North Downs were dotted with garrisons, heavily fortified. And Fornost itself was prepared for

immediate war: the population had swelled by a thousand mounted guards sent from Gondor, as a shield to the Reunited Kingdom in the north; Rohan had likewise sent an eored to the aid of the North Kingdom; even the Shire had lent a number of archers to the city. And a great supply of food and other provision had been stored in cellars all over the city, lest an army of orcs or other unknown evil creatures should come upon them, overwhelming all outlying forces.

The Prince had been very forward in seeing these things done. But even more to thank for all the preparations of war was Halfdan, the Prince's Viceroy. Arnor did not have a Steward, like Minas Mallor. The line to the throne of Arnor was already a rather complicated thing within the royal family, and when the rule of Arnor was re-established by Elessar, he decided against another legal position of authority. The eldest son of the King of Gondor was to be ruler of Arnor. When this son became King himself, either his son (if this son were of age) or his younger brother would become ruler of Arnor. The brother would rule as a Regent until the coming of age of the son. Now Elessar knew, from his readings of Numenorean history, that this might be a rather ticklish transference of power. It had happened that the brother, once enthroned, had refused to transfer the sceptre when the time came, and a civil war had ensued. Elessar therefore felt it best not to add another potential conspirator to the governance of the north. Faramir had not presented any difficulties when Aragorn had returned to Minas Tirith. But he might have done so, all the same. No, if there were to be any claims upon the rule of Arnor, Elessar wanted them to come from his descendants, rightly or wrongly.

So Halfdan had no legal authority. He had no position or title. Viceroy was a nominal title, not a legal one.* Despite this, however, he was known to be the most powerful man in Arnor. He came from the line of a Ranger, and his blood was very near that of the royal house. Some in court whispered that one of his grandfathers must have taken an elf maiden to wife;

or that, by some accident of nature, the elven blood of Elrosóthat he got from his mother Elwingósomehow ran stronger in Halfdan than could be accounted for by the charts. For he was passing tall and dark of feature, with long black hair that flowed over his shoulders like a mane. It was so black it shone blue in the out of doors, like the feathers of a raven. And Halfdan also liked to walk abroad dressed only in black. Some of the women and children shunned him, as if he were a sorcerer or a demon. But other women followed him, for they could see that his eye shone with no evil thought. And he was very handsome.

The Prince had led the city well, as I have said; that is until his daughter was born. At which time he also fell under the spell of merriment that had so enrapt the court and the people of Fornost. Once the orders had been given for fortification and provision, Rosogod left the council chambers and retired to the nurseries and bedrooms and feasting halls. And as the months passed and no more news came from the east, Rosogod neglected his councillors and his captains. He left his father's messages from Gondor unanswered, or replied with trifles. The only time he left off lifting glass to his own good fortune, or strolling with his wife to the cheers of the crowds, or dandling his tiny maidchildócooing and burbling in her longclothesówas to climb alone to his personal chambers at the top of the Citadelówhere Halfdan imagined he must be waving still to his distant admirers below.

*I have employed the word 'viceroy' here, as the nearest translation. There is no English equivalent for the position Halfdan held at court. 'Chief Advisor' does not imply the importance of the position; nor does 'Chamberlain,' since Halfdan's authority often went well beyond court. 'Chancellor,' in the old sense, is perhaps more to the point; but I have preferred 'Viceroy' here, because it implies the Regency position Halfdan held while Rosogod was a boy and his uncle all but incompetent. Halfdan no longer acted a Regent, but due to circumstance, his authority in Arnor was still near to that of the Prince himself.

On this day Rosogod sat in the courtyard with Culurien and Llaure and their various nurses and ladies. The sun was shining brightly and the tree was lined with colourful (and rather noisy) birds and little white fluffy clouds drifted slowly overhead, as if to peek down upon the fortunate lodgers below in their little square of perfection. The clouds seemed to loll together and nudge one another, as if to say, 'It might not be so dreadful to be born a manchild, if one could be assured of being dropped into that crib!'

But clouds are not always so perceptive as one would think; and though the scene below was certainly picturesque, and lacked nothing to a distant eye, in the close-up it was no more or less eventful, or cheerful, than any other. The shepherd and his bonneted wife, sitting over their babe in the byre, were likely more contented, and more deserving of the clouds' envy, than the Prince and his small family.

For the young family was troubled, although the Princess was as ignorant of the source of this trouble as the babe in its white wrappings. At times the young wife would look at her husband sitting across from her in the bright sunshine, and her pretty brows would knit and the corners of her mouth would pull back almost imperceptibly. For she saw in Rosogod's face a looming threat, like a dark cloudóthe shadow of a trouble that only a woman could see in her man's face. When Rosogod would return her gaze, Culurien would feign to smile, and then look back down at the child, to hide her concern. For she as yet had nothing to ask of her husbandóno clue to lead her in questioning his state of affairs. Rosogod took ill any meddling of his wife in the ruling of Arnor, and she was so young that she had no inkling of the normal sources of a woman's power, and how to manage them. In their relations, which had begun less than two years past, when the girl was but fourteen, Culurien had only advanced to the point of gaining some power in private chambersóhence her small victory in being given the right to name the maidchild. But here in court she

was still as quiet and naive as a girl of eight. She would be as little likely to demand an explanation for Rosogod's moodiness as the flag on the highest tower was likely to demand an explanation for the direction the wind chose to blow.

It is true, she was not always so quiet, being given to occasional outbursts of temper or caprice, but these too were childish; and her passion was never yet directed at steering either herself or her husband in any direction whatsoever. It might have been better had she been more inquisitive or meddling; she might have prevented the waywardness that was to come. But such was the state of all Middle Earth at that time—*not* only in Fornost, but in almost every hamlet and township of men from east to west. Each was led by a young hand, even when it might come from old blood. And all the ancient houses were untutored, for they had grown up in ease and carelessness. The War against Sauron having been won, the history of war was deemed to be at an end, and history itself was left to loremasters and other dusty personages. And in each house, the wives were as untutored as the men: the major pursuit being leisure, child rearing was left to nurses just as business was left to administrators. The entire kingdom teetered upon the shoulders of underlings; and were it not for the continuing goodwill of these folk, Arnor would have long since begun to disintegrate, even before the threat of Morgoth.

At that moment, Halfdan entered the court. Without bowing to the Princess, he addressed Rosogod directly.

'Lord, we have news from the Ettenmoors. A rider just arrived, bearing a message from Captain Roland. A company of men has been routed by orcs coming from the mountains. It is said they were led by a wraith. None could withstand the onslaught, although our numbers in the area were not small. Our losses are believed to be low, but we have been forced to retreat into Rhudaur for the time. . . . !'

'Halfdan, is it now the custom of Arnor to speak of battle in the open, in front of maids and nurses? And to enter court

without recognizing your Princess?'

Halfdan stopped and stared at Rosogod for a moment, as if struck. His face tightened, as if in a struggle with himself, and he closed his eyes for a moment. Then he seemed to regain his composure, and he looked over at Culurien. 'Pardon my manners, Lady. I hope you are well. And the child.' He bowed. The Princess returned his obeisances, and he continued to the Prince. 'Lord, forgive my hurry, but I have already called your captains. We will meet as soon as it is your pleasure. I await your orders.'

This last sentence seemed to be the most difficult for Halfdan, and he almost visibly flinched as it passed his lips. Not because he suffered from any insubordination, but because he feared that Rosogod's orders were unlikely to affect an immediate council, a council Halfdan deemed absolutely necessary. To Halfdan's mind, this latest debacle need never have happened. If the Prince had authorized the outlay of men and resources requested by Halfdan in the past months, no force of orcs could have withstood the onslaught of Arnor upon Gundabad, unless Morgoth himself had taken refuge there. Halfdan had counselled an all-out offensive upon Mt. Gundabad, believing it to be but an outpost of the New Enemy. If Gundabad should be taken, then all remaining energy might be directed at defending against Morgoth himself. Morgoth's lair had not yet been discovered, but the dwarves were scouring the northern wastes in search of it.

The dwarves had sent to Fornost to ask for an alliance against Mt. Gundabad, believing it best to strike before the evil that was there had time to multiply. But Rosogod had refused this immediate alliance, believing the true enemy to be elsewhere, and yet unready for war. He had not even informed his father the King of all his sources of information and counsel, simply stating that his spies and counsellors in the north had advised against the attack. But this was not true. Rosogod had taken counsel from no one, including Halfdan, and rarely attended the meetings called by his captains. He had

become accustomed, from about the time his child's birth, to making all the decisions of state alone, and without discussion of any kind. Halfdan took this as preoccupation and folly, but it was more than that. Something much more sinister was behind Rosogod's seeming arbitrariness and nonchalance.

Halfdan left the company of his Prince and Princess and made his way sternly through the court, looking to neither side, but thinking to himself that something must be done. He was considering writing to King Elemmir directly, although this was a breach of protocol. It would certainly jeopardize his position with Rosogod when it was found out, as it surely must beóthat Halfdan had been attempting to go over his head. But he could think of nothing else to do.

At that very moment he met the Lord Ansur, the uncle of Rosogod and brother to the King. He would have passed him by, but Ansur had somewhat to ask of Halfdan and the conversation could not be avoided. At any other time, Halfdan would have put Ansur off with short replies, finding him to be a superfluous personage, and dissipated. But as he spoke with the man, he began to see that a conversation might be in his interest at the moment, and he formed his questions even as he replied cursorily to those of Ansur. This was the way of Halfdan. His relationships with most of those at court were based solely on efficiency, and he put up with no more than was necessary to avoid open hostilities. Only with regard to the Prince did his manner exceed this rule. Quite against his nature, Halfdan attempted to remain on good terms with Rosogod by feigning interest in him personally. He had no great regard for the Prince; nor was he being obsequious. But he deemed it necessary to the workings of the authority of the courtóand therefore to the good of Arnoróthat he do more than simply tolerate his Prince. Besides, the Prince, although not of the mettle of Halfdan, was yet keen enough to know when he was being patronized; and the mental strain between the two men, even despite all the efforts of Halfdan to feign friendship, was always a source of concern to those around

them.

It must be said that Rosogod, on his side, understood too well the attitude of Halfdan. And he both respected him and hated him for it. Halfdan's abilities made him a necessary part of court, but had Rosogod not been at heart a fair man, he would have rid himself long ago of the airs of this Ranger. At times it was all but insufferable to him to have about him a man who was naturally superior to him, and knew it. It seemed a mad trick of fate, that a Prince of Numenorean blood should be scorned (even secretly) by one of his own kin. But such was the fickleness of geneology; nor was it the first time, in the house of Elros or out of it, that a greater man had been ruled by a lesser.

As if to confirm this beyond a doubt, Ansur, another Numenorean Prince, tugged heavily upon the sleeve of Halfdan and breathed upon him another question, heavily scented with ale.

'Halfdan, my boy, what do you think, eh? Should I or shouldn't I? I think a buckle on the shoe is perfect for a midsummer's eve. The candles will shine on it so prettily you know, and sparkle, ha, ha. But some have said that buckles are not to be thought of this year, and that I am old-fashioned. Me, old-fashioned? Can you imagine?'

'Old-fashioned? No,' replied Halfdan, hardly listening.

'That's just what I said myself! Old-fashioned? Why, I have been the best dressed man at court for forty years together, have I not? Who will deny it? I think if anyone knows when to wear a buckle it is I. I will not be trumped by someone's tailor, someone's hairdresser! Who are these people? I snap my fingers at them. Bah! Nonsense!'

'Yes, you are right, Ansur, as always,' said Halfdan, losing patience. 'But look here, your nephew, have you noticed anything different about him? Has the Prince seemed distracted to you since the birth of the child?'

'Distracted? I should say so. Who would not be distracted with all this hubbub about the midsummer ball? Who could

even think his own thoughts with everyone telling everyone else what to wear, how many inches a collar should be, how much a sleeve should blouse, how many lace holes belong in a man's shirt. Is it all to be taken with equanimity? Out with you, sir! It can't be done!

Halfdan stared at Ansur for several moments, his eyes afire. Then he looked down at the bottle in his hand. Without another word he turned upon his heels and strode proudly from the room. Ansur just watched him and nodded.

"That's right, boy!" he said to himself, sneering at the retreating figure of Halfdan. "There's no time to lose. You can't wear that coat to a ball. No one has worn black in fifteen years. You look a very ghoul. Go to! Go to, I say!"

Rosogod had remained in the yard with his family after the departure of Halfdan. The news from the north seemed to affect him but little, unless it were that he might have been seen to stare up at the Green Tower by and by, lost in thought. But this was not unusual. It had become one of the customs of Rosogod to stare upwards at the battlements when unoccupied, and no one any longer thought it strange. Culurien deemed it a trait of her husband, no more extraordinary than looking at one's fingernails whilst speaking, or smiling occasionally for no reason.

After a short time, though, Rosogod arose and pardoned himself from the company of his wife and child. He told Culurien he must attend to the concerns of Halfdan and leave them for the time. Had Culurien been attentive, she might have noticed that Rosogod always excused himself like this after looking up at the Green Tower, and she might have wondered at this. But Culurien was not attentive to anything but her child in these months, as might be expected. And so Rosogod departed without explanations and without saying precisely where his errand took him. He went alone, without guard or attendant. And he made sure that he passed no counsellor or captain on his way to the top of the Green

Tower.

For many minutes the Prince climbed the circular steps leading up to the top of the tower. His boots rung out dully against the paving stones, and the afternoon light slanted in dimly from the narrow fortified windows—just white slits, really, in the dark grey stone walls—catching the slowly falling dustmotes in its rays. At the top of the steps the Prince stopped and looked back down the staircase, listening. Then he pulled a ring of keys from his pocket and selected a small silver one with an hexagonal barrel and capital in the shape of an eye. He turned the key in the lock and entered the room stealthily, though he had already made quite certain he was not seen.

The door led into the cupola of the tower. Like the citadel in Minas Mallor, this room was ceilingless, and the roof pointed out some forty feet above the head of the Prince. There were trapdoors for various winged messengers, and grilled and shuttered windows north and south, topped by ogees and hung with dark drapery. This drapery the Prince pulled to before seating himself at a table centered in the precise middle of the round room. The only light remaining was the light that filtered down through small cracks in the stonework far above. It was just enough, in the bright afternoon, to keep the room from being pitch black.

The Prince leant forward and put his hands on the cold smooth surface of the blackish stone that sat in the midst of the table. Immediately the stone glittered through his fingers and glowed a dull grey. The Prince gripped the stone tighter, and furrowed his brow, making the initial effort necessary to shroud the stone from the eyes that he could see looking up from the south. These eyes seemed to peer at him questioningly, saying, 'Are you there, son? Are you there?' But the Prince ignored these eyes and made no answer. He had learned over the past few months to block these eyes, to make these eyes believe that No One was there. This had been his first success with the stone. Only once this had been achieved,

was he able to then turn the stone to other directions.

This day the Prince turned the stone to the north and east, a direction to which it had become accustomed. It made the trip easily, like a lodestone seeking truenorth. It was the Prince's belief that his power to turn the stone accounted wholly for this ease, but the stone reacted to other forces than his own, though he knew it not. The first sight that the Prince was vouchsafed that afternoon was of Mt Gundabad. He saw his own men led up the winding road into the fortress, driven by foul creatures. But the vision then changed, and he saw orc bodies innumerable scattered on the plains of Rhudaur, picked at by carrion birds and wolves. It seemed to him that the dead orcs far surpassed the short line of prisoners filing into Gundabad.

At first this cheered Rosogod somewhat, but it was not the information he had come for, and he began to feel that the stone was not in his complete control. For the first time, he seemed to notice a secondary movement of the stone's will; and once he noticed it, he began resisting it. He willed the stone to look beyond Gundabad. He wanted to see what was behind it, in the distance, behind somethingówhat was it?óa mountain, a wall, a cloud? The stone began to penetrate the cloud, figures began to come into view. And then just as quickly the figures faded. New figures appearedódwarves marching, talking of dragons.

Again, Rosogod wrenched the stone back to his full control and pushed it beyond the dwarves. Again the cloud, again the wall. And then, for a moment, fire! Rosogod pushed hard toward and through the fire, and for a moment he thought he saw a horrible figure. . . a great bat wheeling, or a black dragon descending. He followed the dragon, chasing it down toward a mountain of ash and fire. The dragon became larger. He was near upon it. Soon it would alight and he would see where it had gone. A great presence awaited them both!

The father was waiting. The father was waiting. The stone seemed to pull him in, as if he were caught in a strong current.

But he did not want the father, now. No! He did not want to follow the dragon longer. He wished to block the eyes of the father. I am not here. I am not here. The stone is not being used, father! But the father knew better now. He knew the son. He saw the son. He would have the son in his claw and crush him. The punishment was just. The punishment was just. The punishment!

Rosogod cried out and fell to the floor. The stone rolled from the table, fell heavily to the stones and crashed against the door.

A few moments later attendants arrived from below, having heard the sounds. They tried the door but found it locked from within. After several unsuccessful tries at forcing it, Halfdan arrived to give aid. He ordered the hinges removed, and the palantir was pushed aside as the door finally gave way. Within the dark chamber, the Prince lay as if dead upon the stones. His eyes were open, and filled with a fell light. His mouth formed a ghastly shape. Halfdan dropped to his side, putting a polished dagger hilt to his Prince's lips. A condensation formed there, from the Prince's shallow breathing, and Halfdan knew that he yet lived.





Chapter 6



Feognost and Finewort

It was only a few minutes after first bell, and the guard had just changed on the battlements of Meduseld. The sun was rising like a fiery ball over the grasslands of the East Emnet, and the guards, shielding their eyes, could see it flickering merrily and red from the waters of the distant Entwash. Between here and there, the Snowbourn snaked to and fro across the meadows, til it joined the larger river. Along the banks of the Snowbourn, and all across the endless fields, they could also see the horses of Rohan, already frisking in the morning dew, and giving chase to the wind. But one guard happened to have his attention drawn to the right, toward the Folde and the Great West Road arriving from the Fenmarch. There upon the road, not half a league on, the red beams were bouncing from objects neither watery nor grassy nor equine. Two riders, strangely attired, with tall hats or helmets, were advancing slowly up the road. They were unescorted by soldiery of Rohan, and the guard called out to one of his fellows.

'Hail, Tidwald! Do you see aught of strange shape yonder on the Road, or have my eyes been blinded by the sun, seeing but phantom specks?'

'Nay, Odel, I see them fairly. Pointed hoods and bright-coloured cloaks they seem to have. 'Tis not soldiery of Gondor, or my eyes do deceive me. I think we must blow the horn, though they are only two. Is it not rule that any stranger

unannounced draws the first warning. I will blow.'

'Aye, Tidwald, blow thou away, and brightly!'

So it was that the wizards were met beyond the gates of Edoras by a mounted Eored, and ordered to halt.

'Thou art in the realm of Feognost, King of the Mark, and do trespass most grievously 'pon his road! Thou art unknown to us and have no prior leave to pass. State thy purpose quickly or begone!'

Ivulaine rode forward proudly a length or two and then stopped in front of the foremost guard. 'I understand your speech, my dear, but I do not understand why you do not use the common tongue if you expect an answer. Surely few who use this road to pass from east to west can speak the tongue of the Riddermark.'

'This road is used only by the Eorlingas and friends of the Mark. The friends of the Mark know its tongue, and ask leave to the use the road before using it, Lady.'

'I believe it not, soldier of the Mark.' At this, a murmur began in the ranks of the guard, and one or two regripped their spears.

'Be at ease, my dears,' smiled Ivulaine. 'We are no threat to the Mark, nor her horses or kine. But if one must ride here to find permission to pass, and yet find permission to pass before riding here, I fail to see how the road is ever used. We do beg permission to ride onómost graciously and with all the proper respects to your king. But I fail to see how we could have begged this boon without first riding here to beg it.'

'You make a mockery of our forms, Lady, and I have no way to answer you but to put you under arrest.'

'It is all the same, gentlemen,' smiled Gervain, from behind. 'We meant to be taken to your king one way or the other. If it pleases your "forms" to take us to him under a pretense of force, that is the prerogative of your forms. Arrest us promptly and let us proceed. I look forward to breakfast.*'

The guards looked dumbfoundedly from one to the other,

then slowly surrounded the wizards and ordered them on.

*The wizards might have mentioned that they were emissaries of the King of Gondor. That they did not indicates that they were toying with the guard of Rohan.

The horsemen with their two willing captives clopped noisily up the stone streets, back up past the battlements of Meduseld and to the hall itself. Gervain and Ivulaine saw the way open in front of them into a well-groomed courtyard, centered by a great horsehead fountain of grey and red stone. To the left of this fountain was the King's Hall, Meduseld, a low, golden-roofed palace of relatively modest proportion. The climbing sun was reflecting brightly from the golden shingles, redding the colour, and making all that neighboured the hall warm with red-golden light.

But the guard did not stop at Meduseld, being informed by the doorkeep that the King was with Eosden and several other captains, falconing in the lower foothills beyond Edoras. So the troop proceeded through town and beyond, exiting through the far gates into upland pasturage and rock encircled grassland. A fair stream ran down from the mountains to meet the Snowbourn, and this they followed, climbing gently upward all the while. In front of them the Starkhorn raised his massive shoulders, and this fertile valley ran long and narrow to his very feet. To their left the road to Dunharrow could be seen hugging the eastern hills before it climbed swiftly into the mountains, but the company had left the road in favor of the greenest part of the valley. After maybe an hour, they approached rockier terrain, and the lead guard blew one short blast on his horn. It was answered by another horn from above and to the right, beyond the rocks. Upon passing these rocks, the company saw a group ahead, near a falls and a wood. The water roared loudly down the short canyon, and the air was full of mist, catching the morning rays and softening them into a beautiful yellow light amongst the branches.

The lead guard, who had first spoken to the wizards on the road, now rode ahead to talk to the King's party. The two wizards could see the King and his men studying them from above. After a time they were motioned to advance, which they did, still mounted. As soon as they arrived the King spoke to them directly.

'Hail, friends!' he said in the common tongue. 'Know you aught of falcons and other birds of prey? We seem to have lost a little merlin in these woods.'

'Have you tried moving away from the falls, my Lord?' cried Gervain over the noise of the falls. 'It may be that your calls are being drowned out by the sound of the water.' The wizard suddenly spurred his horse beyond the rocks, and at first the alarmed guard made as if to follow. But the King raised his hand and bid them wait. In a moment the company heard a piercing whistle, and minutes later Gervain reappeared with the merlin on his sleeve.

'You see, Lord, he was only out of earshot. Resting in the quieter branches.' Gervain returned the falcon to the King's gauntlet, and the King indicated that the group should move away from the falls so that they might speak without shouting over the noise of the falling waters.

At a short distance, the King pulled up his horse and turned again to the wizards. 'Hail once again I say, and thank you for your help with my merlin. He can be a shy little devil at times. We have as much trouble catching him as we do the doves. More, I warrant. We should train the doves to find the falconsó'twould be more to the point I sometimes think. But leave thatódoesn't interest you, and why should it? You obviously have important business, and here I am rattling on about doves and who knows what else. I do like to come down to these falls, though, as you see. The Maiden Falls we call them. No maidens here now, as you'll notice, and more's the pity. But if it were warmer, this is the place for them.'

The King was in the middle of his men, still mounted, talking loudly and merrily, waving his great arms, enjoying the

spring day and the sunshine. He was obviously in high spirits, and the wizards made no move to interrupt. But the two looked about them as he spoke, taking in the mood of the rest of the group, and the stories that their faces told. Most were guardsópaying little attention to their king's words, only looking about them, studying the sky and the nearby foothills. Perhaps thinking it would be nice to be off-duty on such a day, enjoying the new warmth with a lissome maidenóperhaps bathing in the stream or just walking among the trees. One or two of the men seemed to be captainsóindicated by their livery and even more by their sterner countenances. They were more circumspect than the younger guards; their visages under a finer control. They did not so easily betray their thoughts. And yet the wizards could read somewhat of their minds even so. Impatience flickered there, even mild irritation. And these directed at the still talking King. Directed at the wizards was mistrust, fear, and a prejudice against all things foreign.

Only one of the King's hunting companions showed no fear or mistrust. This was Eosden, his son. He had met the wizards at Rhosgobel and so knew of their histories and characters. But of all the companions his irritation was clearly greatest. He visibly fidgeted at his father's side, casting embarrassed glances at the wizards. Then he would sit up very straight in the saddle, as if about to break in upon the monologue, to turn it to a more efficient path. But then, after finding no opportunity to speak, he would fidget once again, and look away angrily.

'Yes, Maiden Falls it is, and a name I have always found to be picturesque to the highest degree,' continued the King. 'It was named by Baldor himself, long ago. As a boy I had imagined he had caught some maidens bathing here, and it had stuck in his mind, as it well might. And that how it had come to be named, don't you see. But there is a story behind it, after all-- a story better by far than my boyhood imaginings. Baldor had met a maiden here, it is true, though we are not told she was bathing. Perhaps that part has been lost being told by the

older women, you know. (At this point, the King almost winked at the two wizards, but, seeming to notice at the last moment that one was an 'old woman', he stopped, almost mid-wink, as it were, and continued his story in somewhat of a fluster.) No, anyhow, you know, he met a maiden here, whose name was Widena, it was. And they made their troth here, it is told. And during all that summer did Baldor meet Widena at this place, and he came to call it the Maiden Falls. After that, others came to this place also, to make their promises to eachother.

'But Baldor went away come autumn, to search the Paths of the Dead. He thought to find a gift worthy of his bride-to-be in the treasures there, and to offer her the center piece of that great trove. A diamond as large as a man's fist, it was said. But Baldor never returned. And Widena threw herself down the falls in the dead of winter, when the water was all but frozen, for she could not live longer with her grief. It is said that if you sit on the edge of the falls, near to the bottom where the water crashes, on the shortest day of winter, you can still hear her crying. I have not done so, for it would break my heart to do it. . . .' He paused for a time, but Eosden could not interrupt at a moment such as that. Then the old King continued, 'But I do like to come here when the weather is fair, for then I can remember the beauty of the story, and not think too deeply of the crying, you see.'

At this, Eosden finally spoke. 'Father, we should return to Meduseld. Perhaps the wizards are tired from their journey. And it is near to the dinner hour. See, how the sun rides high? Tida will be looking for us. You can tell more stories at table, where we will all be more at ease to hear them.' Eosden looked over at the wizards again, and they could now see that though he was impatient and high-blooded, yet he was not without care for his father and king.

The company returned to the Golden Hall and prepared for the midday meal. A great table, hewn from ash and wondrously

carven, was at the center of the dining hall. It was surrounded by heavy ash chairs, all low-backed save those of the King and Queen. The walls of the hall were decorated with tapestries and banners, all of an equestrian theme. The most prominent hung at the east end of the hall: Eorl the Young astride Felarof the Fleet. The great man's flowing yellow hair streamed out behind, and his lips were pressed to a blowing horn. Felorof glowed whitely in the midday sun, and a viewer almost imagined he could smell the sweat of the straining steedóuntil it was remembered that the smell more likely wafted in the open windows, from living horseflesh stabled all about the hall.

The wizards took their seats at the right hand of the King. The table was already laden with meats and cheeses, fresh loaves and clear mead. There were also some early season berries, and clotted cream. It was a simple feast, but unlikely to generate complaint.

The repast began with little ceremony, and less conversation: There would be time for talk once the table was clear. For now, the only sound was the scraping of plate and draining of cup. But sooner than you might think, the plates and cups were emptied, and the wizards began to hope they might finally be asked their business.

Oddly enough, they were first addressed by the Queen. When Eosden had mentioned a 'Tida', the wizards had assumed he meant a sister or a servant. But Tida was his mother and Queen, whom he addressed familiarly as was the custom of the Rohirrim. His father he always addressed as 'Lord' or 'Father', but his mother was 'Tida'. This custom held down to the lowest ranks, where cottage children commonly addressed their fathers as 'Sir', but their mothers by first name (or by 'Dal'óthe local word for 'Mum'). This was seen not as a sign of disrespect, but of affection.

The Queen Tida had been eyeing the wizards throughout the meal. Her face was full of mistrust and suspicion. Her withering glance fell even more heavily upon Ivulaine than Gervain, though it was not clear at first why this was. The

Queen chewed her food loudly and aggressively, and drank from her cup with much show of swallowing, as if to dare the wizards to take exception to her manners or her expressions. She was passing wrinkled and wizened, browned by the suns of many summers and shrunken by the chills of many winters. She looked older than her husband next to her, aye, older even than the wizards themselves. Her teeth were yet strong and white, and her hair full and long, though grey. And she was unstooped. But her forehead had been wrecked by the constant frown she wore, and her mouth had fallen far at the corners, more than could be accounted for by the burden of the years.

'I did not know that witchcraft had become a distinction, in the world at large,' she said aloud, looking to Ivalaine. 'Has it really come to that?' This last to the whole table.

'There are no 'witches' present, Lady,' answered Ivalaine calmly.

'Oh, what do you call yourself? You traffic in magic, do you not?'

'Some might call it that. But it is no different in kind than the magic of the elves. You need not alarm yourself, Queen Tida. If it offends you, we will do nothing that you might call 'magic' in your halls.'

'Elves? I want no elves here either. We do not need elves. Who are the elves to us, to be held up as examples of virtue?'

'I see I chose the wrong comparison. Pardon me. Once we do you some service, perhaps you will be less severe. We come only as friends and allies.'

'Service? Yes, Saruman did us some such service, in his time. We need no service from witches and conjurors. We have done well enough without them, I think.'

'No doubt you have. Still, Gandalf did you some service, in the time you speak of, did he not? Theoden, at least, thought so. As did Eomer.'

'Yea, truly. The White Council cleans up a tithe of its own mess, and takes the whole credit. The Mark would have

required no witching service were it not for the prior meddling of witches. We need no witches here, white, black or grey.'

'Woman, hold your tongue!' interrupted the King. 'I am Feognost son of Deornost and you are Tida. Remember that. I may be old, but I am not a figurehead yet, to be bypassed in favor of your tonque's regency. These are our guests, and I say they will be treated as such.'

Tida sat silently and worked her mouth. Her thin lips tightened and her eyebrows pressed together, but she answered nothing.

'Pardon us, guests,' King Feognost said to Ivulaine and Gervain with a small smile. 'My queen's reservations are not my own. I grant you the service Gandalf did the Mark. But let us talk of other things. It is too fine a day to squabble about the past. Tell me, my friends, why do you ride through the Mark in the spring? The Eorlingas need no excuse to ride among the fragrant grasses and look up at the mountains, maybe, but unless you go to visit the dwarves in the caves, your road takes you nowhere. There is nothing beyond our western borders until you come to the southern reaches of Arnor. Tell me, do you travel to Arnor?'

'No, Lord Feognost,' answered Gervain. 'We do not. Nor are we seeking conversation with the dwarves of Ozk-mun. There is one other destination you have not mentioned. We go to Isengard, at the behest of King Elemmir of Gondor. Ivulaine and I go to inspect, and perhaps to re-inhabit, Orthancóto help guard the lower reaches of the Misty Mountains.'

'That sorcerer's abode, haunted by magic trees, it is said, and walked by ghosts!' cried Tida. 'Save us!'

'Calm yourself, Dal,' said Eosden, stroking his mother's arm. 'There are no ghosts there, as I told you. I have been there, remember? It is deserted. Naught but stone and mud. I do not understand these wizard's desire to live there, but if they will go, it can do no harm to Rohan.'

'That is true, Prince Eosden,' said Ivulaine. 'It will not only

not harm you, it will benefit you, though you see it not. King Elemmir will send a garrison of soldiers to follow us within the month, if Isengard is re-opened. It will be rebuilt and fortified. Dwarves will come and long labour will remake the circle in its old form. Gervain and I will be but lodgers, sharing the Tower with the captains of Gondor. More than that, there will be trade with Rohan, if Rohan desires it. Gondor will purchase horses, no doubt, and other provision. Rohan will have protection from the north and west, without new treaty or obligation.'

'Aye, Saruman might have said the same. And did, for all I know,' answered the Queen, with a scowl.

'Tida. Please,' said Eosden. 'These wizards have served Middle Earth since the times before the Great War. Think of my report from Rhosgobel. You do not consider what you say. But for the wizards of blue and green, the Mark would have been washed away. They deserve honour, not harsh words and recriminations.'

'The Mark would have been washed away, say you? By whose report? You only told us what these wizards told of themselves. Who can say what the truth of that is.'

'The other elders at the council did not question this report. It is common knowledge, Tida.'

'Common knowledge of other sorcerers and conjurers.'

'Enough, Eosden!' cried the King. 'I will hear no more of this. Your mother may think what she likes, and to the depths that suit her. The wizards have informed me of their destination. I find it agreeable. No more needs to be said. Now (to the wizards), do you need further provision? Are your horses fresh? Is there aught else that the House of Eorl can do for you? I put the city at your service. And I will send an escort with you to Isengard.'

'That is not necessary, Lord, unless you wish it. We will be untroubled. But if you desire to have your guard report back to you, they will be welcome to accompany us: to scour Isengard, and remap it, and discover its true situation. Isengard will be

no secret from Rohan, nor will its gates ever be closed to you or your messengers or servants. King Elemmir bid me say this especially.'

'Ah, then, all is well. I will send those I think proper to escort you and to make report afterward, as you say. You are welcome in Edoras until your departure. May we show you our city and our stables? You may know that our horse are the finest in Middle Earth. They are like our own children—we have grown together always, since the time of Eorl in the north, and the Great Felorof, Prince of Horses.' He gestured to the tapestries proudly. 'They have come with us here to the south and prospered as we have prospered.'

'Yes, Lord, the tapestries are very fine,' commented Ivulaine. 'I have not seen lovelier outside the halls of the elves.'

Tida winced at this remark, but Feognost answered, 'They were sewn in the time of Elfwine the Fair, the second king of the Third Line, nine generations ago. His mother Lothiriel designed them, and she and her ladies sewed them, in the years after the death of Eomer Eadig. She was the Queen Mother, you see, and had naught else to do in her dotage but decorate the halls of Meduseld. This she did, quite grandly. Lothiriel was the daughter of Prince Imrahil of Dol Amroth, where, 'tis said, the elvish blood is mixed with that of men—though the lineages are forgotten. So I should not be surprised to find some similarity between the fair creations of Lothiriel and those of the elves proper. Lothiriel, you see, had inky black hair, as none of the sons or daughters of Eorl in the first or second lines had. But the hair follows the blood, and we have in every generation several in the royal house who are *morisse méoto* use the elvish term. They are now the brothers and sisters of Dwimmerod and his line!'

'Dwimmerod? And who may he be?' asked Gervain. 'It sounds unfit for a Prince of the Mark.'

'Perhaps it is unfit,' answered Eosden with a smile. 'But for a beast of his colour and temper, 'tis passing fit. You see, he is the Prince of the Mearas. Never until now has the Lord of

Horses been black. Lothiriel brought the colour to Edoras, and it passed into the fields at last.'

'But you have had black horses before now, surely?' asked Ivulaine.

'We have, but none such as Dwimmerod. Now, at times, our kings have black hair, as did Elfwine; and so now do the kings of the Mearas!'

'I suppose if the kings of the Mark begin to have two heads, the horses of the Mearas would have two also, so that we might ride both forward and backward without turning around,' added Feognost, and all the table laughed óall but Tida. The King continued, 'Come, let us to the fields once more! 'Tis no afternoon to be hiding below timbers in front of a fire ónot when the sun herself can warm our heads.'

'Thank you, Lord Feognost,' answered Ivulaine, as he offered her his arm and they strode together down the flagstone steps of the Golden Hall, now almost blinding in its glory. Indeed, the guards on either side of the door, posted only a foot away from the reflecting goldleaf of the portico, seemed to be cooking in their armour, though neither made any sign of complaint in his face or his posture. 'It would please us very much to see how the Rohirrim live,' continued Ivulaine, paying no attention to the guards. 'Gervain lived long among the Woedhun, in the distant east, beyond those you call the "Easterners". I believe the Woedhun were also people of the plains, and bred fine horses, although Gervain himself can tell more of it than I. And I was with the Moserai, beyond Haradóa dark skinned people who cared for their camels as you care for your horses. Often, the camels would take shelter from the sun under the tents of the Moserai, and man and beast would sleep together.'

'Camels?' interrupted Eosden, as he and the King led the wizards from the hall. 'What sort of beast is this? I have not heard tell of the camel. I remember something of a great Mumak, as large as a house. Surely this is not the same beast that sleeps in the house?'

'No, Prince. No Mumak could enter a house, or even the Golden Hall. The camel is a much smaller beast, little taller than a horse. It has a golden coat, and a long neck, and it may go without water for long periods. It is not as fast as your horses, but it is a very reliable friend, especially in the desert.'

'A horse that needs little water is no great improvement,' replied Eosden. 'Water is always at hand. Rather give me a horse that needs no stable-mucking. That we could use in the Mark!'

The party laughed, but Ivulaine continued, 'That would be a blessing indeed, for the camel herder as well, I warrant. But in the south, the water is scarce, and the camel is a dear beast indeed. Without him, travel would be wellnigh impossible, in many regions and at many times of the year.'

The group passed by a long line of stabled horses, all of them mares or fillies. The King talked the while, pointing out the peculiarities of each beast: the individual markings that set off each one, and the conformation that showed them all to be the finest of the line of the Mearas, the lords of horses.

Beyond the stables was a high-fenced pen, perhaps a furlong square. In it ran a single horse. A stallion tall and lean and coal-black, glistening to a blue reflection in the afternoon sun. His mane and tail were silky and untrimmed, the latter flowing almost to the ground. About his hooves the hair was likewise long, like to a plowhorse of the north. But the similarity to a plowhorse ended there. For he moved with subtle grace, his long legs beating the springy grass with barely a thud. His back hung on a level as he ran, and it seemed to those who watched that he might be ridden with nary a jostle. And this was true, provided he agreed to carry you, and did not throw you to the ground in his pride and contempt. Eosden clicked his tongue, and the stallion galloped to the gate, blowing and snorting.

'This is Dwimmerod, "Swift Illusion" in your tongue,' he said to the wizards, stroking the beast's chin. 'For at night he

dissappears like a dream, and runs the West Emnet unseen by waking eyes. It is said by some that he becomes at such times wholly invisible, and leaves our world to return to a land ruled by horses, only to reappear at dawn. Whether this be true, I cannot say; but on moonless nights he may not be found, even by myself or the King, though he is in this very pen at dusk, and the gate under constant watch.

Gervain admired the great horse, patting his flanks; and Eosden continued, smiling and gesturing with his arms back toward the stables, 'Dwimmerod is the chief of the Mearas and all these mares are his. Though at most times they run freely, in the early spring we bring them in to breed. This has two advantages, as you may know, Gervain, from living with horse-breeders. It prevents the top stallions from being wounded, since in the field there are a few who would try to fight Dwimmerod, foolish as it may seem to us. Their blood is up in the spring, and stallions do not measure the cost well at such times. Also, having Dwimmerod here frees up the other mares in the field for the lesser stallions. Were Dwimmerod at large he might take the entire fold for his own, and the number of foals would lessen. Even Dwimmerod cannot sire all the horses of the Mark, try as he may!'

The great stallion seemed to understand the speech of Eosden, for he rose up and beat the air with his hooves, neighing until the wizards must put their hands to their ears. Then he galloped off, making a circle about the enclosure, blowing all the while in his pride. The group could hear the mares in the stables answer Dwimmerod: they whinneyed and kicked the wooden stalls in their excitement.

At supper the wizards met Vortigern, Second Marshall of the Riddermark. He would accompany them to Isengard on the morrow with an escort of five other riders. Vortigern had red hairócut straight to the shouldersóand the colour of iron-rust or evergreen pollen or wet clay dug straight from the earth. He also had a short pointed beard in colour a bit darker, and

eyebrows darker still. His eye was sharp, and he looked at the wizards silently over his meal, without expression. When addressed he answered in few words, saying only 'yay,' or 'nay.' But he did not seem mistrustful of the wizards; nor did he seem to them to be a pawn of the Queen, for he never looked her way. Gervain assumed he was naturally taciturn, and thought no more of it. Ivulaine watched him closely, but she could not unlock his thought. She concluded that the King, trustful and direct, would not choose as the leader of the escort a man prone to discord or secrecy.

Tida still sulked, but remained silent for the evening. Eosden was not at table.

In the morning the travellers breakfasted in the dark, with only a few taper candles to light them. They sat about the same large table, eating and making some last-minute conversation in preparation for their journey. Ivulaine served tea from her samovar; Gervain smoked, having no appetite in the early morning. Vortigern answered the questions of the wizards between bites of bread, though he was no more talkative than the previous evening. The King and Queen were yet asleep. Nor was Eosden with them, for he had not been in his chambers that night.

The guard were already mounted in full arms, with spear and shield as well as sword. Provision was carried on two pack horses—beasts somewhat less grand, but still fit to shine in any stable outside of Rohan. The wizards left the table, Ivulaine carrying her samovar, and strode into the darkness of the still morning. Their boots fell lightly on the moist paving stones about the fountain, making little sound in the heavy air. A fog had come down from the mountains, and the hamlet was wrapped in mists. As their own horses were made ready, the wizards looked to the pen of Dwimmerod, to see if they could make out his great shape in the gloaming. But nothing could they discern in the pre-dawn shadow of the mountains. The pen was empty, for aught they could tell.

Finally, as they approached the gate, a single horn sounded, and the King walked down the path in his chamber robes and his slippers. Still yawning, he wished them good speed on their journey, and bid Vortigern once more to make report as soon as may be on the state of the lands about Isengard. For the first time, Ivulaine noticed a bit of concern in the tone of the King; and it seemed that despite Eosden's words and his assurances to Tida, the old man still harboured a nameless fear of the wizard's vale and the ents that guarded it.

'Lord,' answered Ivulaine, to allay his fears, 'All messages we send to Gondor we will also send to thee. Once the tower has been made hospitable again to visitors, we will invite you to travel to Isengard yourself, to meet the treemen and look upon the beautiful valley with your own eyes. Remember that Orthanc was not made by Saruman: its stones were not laid with sorcery, either for good or ill. It is a building of passing beauty, erected long ages ago by the men of Gondor. Any evil that came there was only a temporary occupant, unable to mar or transform its structure. Neither the wrath of the ents against Saruman could mark its outer stones, nor the evil purposes of that traitor could unpolish its inner chambers. The outside world has passed over it like wind; and inside, the webs of the spinning spiders who make their home in the rafters have worn deeper grooves than the feet of Saruman and Wormtongue and the orcs. All such traces may be swept away forever with a stiff broom!'

With that the company rode away, even as the day dawned and the birds began to sing.

The journey to Isengard was uneventful, and will not be told here. The party did not stop at Ozk-mun, the wizards having no immediate business with the dwarves. As the latest tenants of the Ered Nimrais, the dwarves were suffered to abide there by both Gondor and Rohan, and their permission and goodwill was not necessary to the re-opening of Orthanc. The alliances would be made in the proper time, of course, but for now the

wizards were anxious to come to what they considered their new home. Also, Vortigern and the riders of Rohan had no desire to stop at the Hornburg, much less the caves. They led the wizards off the road some leagues from Helm's Deep, choosing a little used track that led directly northwest across the fields, and making the journey some half-day shorter. The land was even here, and cut only by small, easily fordable streams between the road and the river Isen. This larger river they would cross close to its beginnings in the mountains above Nan Curunir. The only bridge over the Isen was further to the south, where it made a great turn to the west to join the Adorn before rushing into the sea. And at this distance from the mountains the bridge was necessary, for the river quickly gained strength from the smaller waters of the reaches of the West Emnet. But Vortigern knew that by hugging the foothills to the north, they might come to shallower crossings that required no bridge.

On the seventh day from Edoras the riders reached the vale: wizards had returned once more to Nan Curunir. As they rounded a final shoulder of rock, their horses stepping gingerly over stony terrain and patches of loose bagshot, Gervain and Ivulaine looked up suddenly. Before them the mountains divided, their purple sides cut by falling water and clothed below by dark green trees, row upon row down to the ancient circle. Then their eyes fell upon the tumbled walls of Angrenost and the great tower rising within. It was like nothing they had ever seen in Middle Earth. Even the Citadel of Minas Mallor did not compare to it. Though it had nothing of magic in its foundation, it yet seemed to have been built by the Valar themselves. And indeed it was one of the finest creations of the Numenorians after the fall of Andor.

It was said that Elendil himself had designed it and overseen its construction. It was wrought of a greatness of conception of hand and mind that no longer pertained in the world. It stood like an outcropping of the mountain itself, as if it had risen of its own mysterious accord. In colour it matched

the faces of the surrounding cliffs, being quarried from their black stones. Only the very hardest granite had been selected, and this cut in a way to utilize the natural compression of the stone. The outer faces of the walls, that is, were made of slabs that had been turned from horizontal to vertical: the vertical face on the outside of the tower, that one could touch by hand, had been facing the center of the earth in the cliff wall of the quarry. It was therefore flattened by the forces pulling from below as well as the weight of the mountain above. Granite was of course incredibly resistant to hammering from any direction; but cut in this way, it was harder still in the direction of compression than at any other angle. Much harder than iron, in fact. Even mithril was not so hard.*

*The difference being that mithril was malleable where granite was not. Mithril could be forged into rings and swords. Granite, being non-metallic, was not malleable at all.

The Numenorian discovered that granite had only three material faults (as they had been warned by the dwarves). One, it was nearly impossible to cut from the mountain. They had worn out blade after blade, even ones made from tempered mithril. Two, it was too heavy to transport any distance. Four Mumukil had been bought from the Harad to assist in the building of Orthanc, but even so the process had taken many years. Three, the structure was brittle, provided that a great enough force could be borne against it. This last was proven at Amon Sulóthe only other tower in Middle Earth made of granite in this way. Amon Sul was foolishly built atop a rather small hill. And it was of narrow proportions. Although four hundred feet tall, it was only ninety feet in diameter at the base. The structure consisted of a single spire, with eight facets. The Witchking was able to cause enough concussion to the hill and tower to bring it down.*

*Smaug and his brothers buffeted the midpoint of the tower while

trolls launched great stones at the top of the hill. It is reported that orcs also set off fiery explosions beneath it, causing tremors.

So Orthanc was the only granite tower still standing in Middle Earth. The Citadel in Minas Mallor was of marble, as was the elf tower at Mithlond. Beyond that, Orthanc had been built to far different plans from the tower at Amon Sul. Four spires there were, as was told in *The Red Book*, joined at center. What has not been told is that this joining was not simply a matter of convenience, linking the chambers of the towers to one another. Nor was it only a means of lifting the center platform seventy fathoms above the plain, where a man could stand and survey the Gap all the way to Ered Nimrais. No, it was an architectural reinforcement, to offset the structural brittleness of the granite. Each spire was more than eighty fathoms high and eighteen fathoms in diameter. But joined, the four towers had a combined base 40 fathoms from corner to corner in the shape of a square, not a circle. Orthanc could therefore withstand the buffeting of another Ancalagon the Black, nay, forty Ancalagons. Nothing short of a second rising of the seas could threaten Orthanc, and it might be that it could withstand even that. Not until the mountains around it fell would Orthanc fall.

It was upon this magnificence that the wizards and their companions gazed. Not even the crumbled walls and pitted circle, overgrown with thorn and creepers, not the still-clear signs of battle, not the ancient litter of the dam-breaking could dim the effect of the tower. Isengard was a place of majesty and mystery yet.

The group advanced, passing beneath the fallen arch and past the rotting wood of what was formerly the gate. The day had been cloudy and darksome, but as they entered the circle a flash of lightning broke over the northern peaks, and thunder rolled down the valley to meet them, as if following the waters of the Isen. Almost at the same time a lower rumble was heard to their right, much more near at hand than the lightning flash,

and their heads turned to see two yellow orbs reflecting the failing light of the canyon. These orbs were within what the party had taken to be a sentinel tree, standing by the lane, among the weeds. The rumble also came from there, and the men of Rohan started, and one of them lifted his spear. But Ivulaine rode forward, her hand lifted. She spoke strange words, long and slow, in a low voice; and in a moment the ent answered her, in like language. Then he turned to Gervaine and spoke to him also, as to an old friend, though the men of Rohan knew not what was said. The ents eyes twinkled and his limbs shook, as if a spring wind had blown through them. Finally, the ent turned to Vortigern.

'And *hall*, *Eorlingas*, welcome to Angrenost!' he said in Westron. 'It has been many years since you came here. Is that Eosden, or one like to him? The horsemen look the same to us, I fear to admit. Your horses are easier to recognize, with their different colours.'

'Nay, I am Vortigern, Second Marshal of the Riddermark. Eosden is my Prince. His hair is not my colour, Sir Ent. That is the clue you look for.'

'Yes. Very smart. *Ha, hummm*. Your hair is *rhodisseme*, as the elves would say. *Ho, hmmmm*. I should have noticed that, given time. We don't have hair, as you see. Our beards are "hair-like" óas some have said, maybeóbut it is not hair, you know. No, sir. Not hair at all. Rabbits would be glad to eat it, they would, and rabbits don't eat hair. *Ha, humm*. No they don't. We have to keep our beards off the ground for fear of being munched. That's the way it is, *ba-ba!* But where was I? . . . Hair. Yes, we don't have hair, as I said; but most creatures do, for some reason. That is the way to tell them apart. That and size. *Ab, ho*. But I am forgetting, in all this talk, to say what needs to be said first. I should have started with introductions, to be proper. I am Finewort, in your language. Or I should say in the common tongue. I don't know Rohannish, or whatever you call it. Not likely to learn, either. Though I don't think I will apologize for it. You're not likely to learn Old Entish, are you?

Hmmm, ho-ho! Not likely, even if you wanted to. Wouldn't have the patience for it. *Hommmba, hommmmba, ho000.* Well, well, welcome again, all you men, *rhodisseme* and *rhesseme*, and *lorisseme* and *baranisseme*. Everything accounted for except *morisseme*. . . oh, and *thisseme*,' he added, looking to the grey-haired wizards. 'But I can recognise you two by your hats, mayen't I? Óblue and green, proper colours I must say.'

As he finished his long slow speech, chuckling to himself in rumbles, like a purring tiger, the rain began to fall, dotting the armour of the men and bouncing from the high hats of the wizards.

Gervain took this opportunity to ask Finewort if they might retire indoors. 'You don't mind the wind and wet, I daresay, but we smaller creatures get tossed about a bit more than we like at such times. We have trouble keeping our colours, not to say our hair, about us. I suppose you have the key to the tower? May we take shelter there?'

Finewort only chuckled again and said, 'Of course, of course, what am I doing? Forgetting myself again. Growing sleepy, without company in this old circle. Come with me. The west tower is for youó a fireplace and everything. Although you will excuse me if I don't join you. We ents don't have much use for fireplaces, you understand. Nasty things really. *Baroomm, barum!*'

They rode up to the tower, following the long strides of the ent. Finewort was a youngish example of his kind, which could be told by the way he held his head and the way he carried his various limbs. Some have said elsewhere that ents have only two arms, like a man. But this is not true. They have two legs, assuredly, but the number of arms may varyó anywhere from two to eight*. And any number of twigs (that is, smaller, unmoving branches), growing from head or trunk, or even from arm or leg. Finewort had five moving arms, and three major twigsó one on his left shoulder, one on his right thigh, and one sprouting out of his 'head', like a very convenient hat-rack. Being a sort of copper-beech ent he had

lovely smooth bark, which looked all the better under the cloudy, threatening skies now overhead. It being spring, his leaves were a dull red-brown, and these he had a-plenty. I have seen drawings of ents (by supposed experts) without a leaf on themóas if anyone could mistake an ent for a tree if he had no leaves. He might be mistaken for a stump, but never a tree. Did Finewort drop his leaves in the fall? He did. Did he have edible nuts? He did. Did these nuts grow into beech trees? They did not. Would these nuts be collected by entwives? They would, if entwives were around of the proper sort, and in the proper temper.

Two of Vortigern's guards rode off in search of firewood (having been warned strongly by Ivulaine to gather only deadwood already on the ground). Meanwhile she went inside with the rest of the guard and began tidying up. The mess was awful. Some of Saruman's furniture was still at handópieces that he and Wormtongue hadn't been able to carry away, and that the ents had not found a use for. The tower had been under their watch continually for over three hundred years, so nothing had been pinched by orc or troll or man. All 'man-things' were just as they had been left after the war. Everything here at ground level had been soaked by the flooding of the valley: it had been tossed against the walls by the waves, then eaten by molds and fungus, or gnawed by rust, and finally worn away by cold and the ravages of time. The tables and chairs were unusable, when they were recognizable at all; but a few things were still servicable, at great need. The firedogs, for instance. And an old black kettle, no longer on the hob, but overturned in the fireplace, its lid washed across the room under a pile of refuse. As the men rummaged through the waste searching for a spoon, maybe, or something that might serve as a stool, they scared up a number of rats and mice, who scurried out the door or into dark inner chambers, unlit by the high windows.

*Fangorn himself only had two arms, indeed; so this may be the cause

of the confusion.

Ivulaine had soon cleared out the fireplace and blasted out the flue, singing a few chimney swifts in the process. The guards returned with two armfuls of fairly dry faggots, and the party immediately had a merry fire going, turning the old musty room to orange, and throwing light on many a dark curtain and tapestry that had not been looked upon in centuries. Vortigern made a torch of one of the faggots and began exploring the other rooms, to see if anything else of use had survived the years.

Gervain remained on the front steps, just out of the rain, talking to Finewort. The ent rested one of his great rooty feet on the first step. This step was cracked and worn, the largest crack being just beneath his longest toe. Had this ent toe been unfortunate enough to have rested itself there some three hundred years earlier it might have found itself crushed by the falling palantir, thrown by Wormtongue himself. But Finewort had not been at hand then (although he had taken part in the ent muster) and knew not of the import of that crack. Nor did Gervain, though he might have been mistaken for Gandalf returning to the scene of his parley with Saruman.

The irony of this scene was not lessened by the sudden arrival of another rider—this one in the livery of Minas Mallor, wet and muddy.

'Hail! I am named Gwydion son of Lydion, messenger of King Elemmir of Gondor and the Reunited Kingdom,' he began, addressing the wizard but looking sidelong at Finewort in some obvious discomfort. 'I bring you this letter, if you are Gervain the Green, as I suppose from your attire. Also, the King bid me give you this.' Gwydion dismounted, untying a large leathern bag from his saddle and giving it over to the wizard.

Gervain immediately opened it and peered inside. It was the palantir of Denethor, like in every way to the one that had

made the crack that lay beneath the toe of Finewort.

'You carried this alone, with no other guard?' Gervain asked in disbelief.

'Yes, sir. The King bid me guard it with my life. But he did not apprise me of the contents of the bag. It is very heavy. I would have thought it only a worthless rock, but for the words of the King. Or is it some sample of shot from the slings of the enemyóa museum piece from the wars?'

'Your guess is off the mark, my friend. It is no fodder of Sauron's, nor of the Haradrim. It is only a parting gift from your King to a pair of wandering wizards. A house-warming offering toward the re-opening of Isengard. A pretty bauble for the mantelpiece. We are here, you see, to prepare Orthanc to be occupied once again by Gondor. I suspect some of your fellow soldiers will be transferred here by the end of the year.' Gervain had much more to say on the matter, but he did not think this messenger the proper ear for his comments. He only offered him thanks, and bid him come in out of the rain.

'Oh, no sir, I cannot linger,' answered Gwydion, looking again toward the ent uneasily, and quickly remounting his horse. 'I must report back to Minas Mallor immediately.'

'Nonsense my good man. They will have a roaring fire going inside by now, I believe. And you won't have to chat with wizards and ents, never fear. There are six young men of Rohan inside who would be glad to trade stories with you. No need riding about in this rain. Eat something hot here, and rest. You wouldn't make it far before evening anyway. You can ride in the morning. The rain won't last. Will it, Finewort?'

'Not if I know anything about it. Hrrmm, hrrmm. Best guess is it will stop sometime in the night. Never will amount to much, anyway. Hardly enough to water an enting in the bower.'

Gwydion looked at the ent again, and then up at the sky. It was dark grey, and lightning still flashed on and off over the far peaks, although the thunder lagged well behind and faint. Finally he dismounted again and tied his horse with the others.

But he gave the ent a wide berth as he made his way into the tower.

That evening the two wizards sat outside on the portico, Gervain smoking and Ivulaine having her tea. The little samovar steamed into the night air, sending a delicious aroma out into the valley to mingle with the crisp smell of mountains and the sap of the pines in the surrounding hills. Inside the men huddled round the fire, comparing life in Gondor and Rohan. The smell from their supper was also still wafting into the night air, further confusing the keen noses of the animals lurking outside the ring of stone. Finewort had retired for the evening, leaving the wizards to guard the valley. He had strode over to the western edge of Fangorn, to stand among the trees and share the dripping sound of the rain with his friends.

'These western kings are quite mad, I begin to believe!' said Gervain, clicking his pipe between his teeth to underline the exclamation. 'Imagine, plopping a palantir into a bag and trusting it to a single rider, like a letter in the post. One would have thought that the attack upon Erebor, and upon Glorfindel, would have taught the world some caution. Does Telemorn think that Gondor is beyond the reach of the enemy? Does he imagine there is no possibility of treachery, or accident, in his own realm?'

'Yea, 'tis strange,' replied Ivulaine. 'Were it not that we had already agreed that we are in no position to tutor the King, having been in the west so short a time, I should say that this one deserves a good scolding. But how may we make complaint to one who has just delivered a great gift?'

'We may not. We must reply with thanks and hold our tongues for the time. But I begin to fear for these people, so naive and trusting are they. Was not Feognost equally naive? He seemed more a poet than a prince, caught up in his imagination. If battle should come upon these realms, how shall they fare? It makes me shudder. Perhaps we must rethink our counsels. It may be that we shall soon be forced to be

more outspoken, and more forceful in our teaching. We seem to have arrived among children.'

'They are heedless indeed.'

'Aye, and what is more they have no foresight, living only for the day. Nor do they follow the old forms. Gwydion spoke to me most familiarly, all but asking me what was in the bag. I was so taken aback, I knew not how to answer. These young men know so little of manners, one is forced to lie to them. They know not when to be silent. I could not tell him what the palantir really was—we know the temptation of the stones. Remember the halfling Peregrin Took, and his scrape with the twin of this stone? I told Gwydion it was a decoration for the mantelpiece. I haven't told as many lies in my life as I have been forced to tell in the last month. It is absurd!'

'A decoration for the mantelpiece! You might have disguised the matter better than that. Only someone who never lies could be so foolish in his stories. If they will act like children, treat them like children, Gervain. Make up some fabulous tale, the more outlandish the better. That is what children like. They will sooner believe something that is absolutely preposterous than something that is half a word from the truth. Then you will be guilty only of a nursery tale, rather than a lie. Is it a lie to tell a child who asks where babies come from that they drop from the clouds at night, when everyone is asleep? This is the story of the Moserai in the south, and they add that the belly of the mother gets big because the child falls into her lap from high—the mother must have a cushion to keep the child from harm. Is this lying to the little brown children, gathered around the fire? No, it is only to tell them a story they will believe, and can understand.'

'What was I to do, then? Tell Gwydion that this weight in the bag was a great hailstone, dropped by a magic cloud?'

'At least he would not then look for it on the mantelpiece. That is the beauty of the fabulous—it requires no proof. The mystery is its own explanation.'

'Perhaps,' answered Gervain, relighting his pipe with a

green spark from his staff. 'But all this storytelling is not to my liking. I prefer conversing with the elves, with whom one may be honest.'

'Honest, say you? óas in letting them think that the Arkenstone is simply a large gem found by the dwarves at the heart of Erebor?'

To this Gervain made no reply, only scraping a bit of mud from his boot.



Chapter 7

Baldor's Door

Now when the wizards had left the gates of Edoras, they had been bidden farewell by none but the King Feognost in his nightclothes. That the Queen Tida should have failed to appear that morning came as no surprise. But the absence of Eosden was marked by both Gervain and Ivulaine. For (as they were told later by Vortigern) Eosden had not been in his chamber that night. Nor, if you will remember, had he been present at

dinner the previous evening. The wizards found this strange, but having no other knowledge of the matter they had to assume that he had a previous engagement—one that outranked the visit of wizards. It was spring and Eosden was unmarried, so this leap to such a conclusion was not a leap of any great distance.

But Eosden had not been at the Maiden Falls on any tryst that night, though the falls do play a part in the tale that follows. His father's story of Baldor, told to the wizards at their meeting near the Maiden Falls, had put into Eosden's head once more the information he had gained at the Council of Rhosgobel. That information being that the Paths of the Dead were now unguarded. In his report to his father of the minutes of the council, he had omitted this single fact, keeping it to himself. For it seemed likely to him that the treasure that Baldor sought was still within the caves of the mountain, somewhere along the Paths of the Dead. A treasure that might soon be his own.

Eosden was not a greedy or a grasping man by nature. Like his distant ancestor Baldor before him, he was a proud man and a learned, high and puissant, by the standards of his people. He valued treasure no more, and likely much less, than horses or valour on the field or friendship or the honour of someday ruling Rohan. But great wealth, easily obtained—requiring neither battle nor work nor treachery—was not a thing to be dismissed from the mind. All argument being for and none (that he could see) being against, the treasure preyed on his mind until he could no longer bear it. He must venture the ride into the dark.

The arrival of the wizards gave Eosden an opportunity. They would likely stay another three or four days, at the least, he thought. While they were being entertained, he would not be missed. In the course of a normal day at Edoras, the duties of the Prince were heavy. All eyes were on him, wherever he might go. But now, at last, the eyes of his people were turned toward these strange visitors in the tall hats, carrying the

outlandish staves and turning the table of Tida upside-down, by some accounts.

So Eosden took his horse in hand that evening after the others had retired from the stables. He mounted behind it a small two-wheeled cart or gigóone used at times to pull the children about in a sort of joyride. Into this gig he threw a number of torches and a dozen burlap sacks, as well as two loaves, a joint of meat, and a jug of water. As soon as the sun went down he snuck from the city and took the road to Dunharrow. He continued on past that ancient place til he came to the end of the way, blocked by the shoulder of the Starkhorn. When he had come within sight of the dark door in the side of the mountain, he unhooked the gig from his horse, for that beast would nowise be led within the caves, empty though they may be. But Eosden had foreseen this: he would pull the light gig himself. Unladen, it would be no burden at all. And upon the return, loaded as he hoped it to be with gold and gemstones, the way was all downhill. It would be difficult, no doubt, but manageable for a strong man. The gig only needed to be kept from running away down the hill. Unless the treasure was very much greater than he imagined, or the distance very much farther, this would be within his strength and endurance.

Eosden tied his horse to a tree, thinking to be gone only a matter of hours. Then he lit one of the torches and shouldered the stays of the gig. But a small stream crossed the path in front of him, and as he waded through the cold water, he heard a voice. Surprised, he turned and raised his torch. In the flickering firelight he beheld a manóor manlike creatureóseated on his haunches upon a rock near to the little stream. The man had sat so still, Eosden had been unaware of him until now.

'What do you want of me, little man? I have nothing for you but the sharp point of a sword.'

'Me ask nothing you, horseman. But Pah-wit have message for you from Otton-roh. He say do not go Paths of Dead. Sacred site, it is: gods go only. No men, no woses there.'

Nothing for you.'

'Who is Pah-wit? And who is Otton-roh? And why should I, Prince of Eodoras, take heed of them?'

'Me Pah-wit. You Eosden, horseman. Otton-roh is god-of-waters. You must listen god-of-waters. Elf call him Ulmo. Elf listen Ulmo. Man must listen also.'

'You say that Ulmo forbids me to enter this door?'

'Yes, horseman.'

'How is it you know the will of Ulmo?'

'Otton-roh speaks through waters. Pah-wit listen. Otton-roh say you come. Say Pah-wit should warn.'

'Ulmo speaks through the water? I thought Ulmo was the god of the sea. We are very far from the sea, little man.'

'Otton-roh father of all waters. This water also,' he added, bending down until his forehead nearly touched the surface. 'Woses hear. Woses speak. Horsemen do not hear. Horsemen do not listen.'

'Horseman has message for Pah-wit. Horseman learned from another "god", the Maia Ivulaine, that the path is clear. The dead are gone. If the woses want to keep the treasures of Baldor for themselves any longer, they will have to fight the horsemen.'

'No, horseman not listen. Woses not have treasure. Woses go not into caves. Otton-roh forbids it. Sacred place. Dead gone, yes. No more dead of men. Only bones. You go there, make gods angry.'

'If the gods are there, they can tell me themselves. I am going on, little man.'

'Pah-wit fulfills his prophecy. Horseman fulfills his. Otton-roh will also fulfill his. Farewell! Pah-wit renames this way, Paths of the Deaf.'

Eosden drew his sword, but the pukel-man leapt from the stone and disappeared among the bushes.

Unperturbed, Eosden continued on into the caves. The way was rough at first and the cartwheels snagged on every stone

and crevice. The torch seemed to cast its light only a few feet in every direction, as if the air were heavy, or full of fog. Eosden trained his eyes on the floor in front of him, to make sure that no fissures opened up under his feet. In the beginning the path was fairly level, but soon there were steep passages that worried him, and loose stones that slid beneath his boots. The gig was light but unwieldy, and he began to understand for the first time the cares of a draught animal.

After a time the air cleared. The light from the torch fled along the low dark passage and bounced glowingly from the walls, now nearer, now farther away. In places Eosden heard the trickle of a tiny stream, and in others he heard the drip drip of water into some unseen pool; but he crossed no water—the stones remained dry. Listening to the strange gurglings made Eosden thirsty, and he stopped to have a drink from his jug. He had been in the caves for many hours. How many he did not know. Time did not seem to exist in this black place. Here, where the sun did not march overhead, or even the moon, there was no way to measure time, save perhaps by the drips of water. But these lulled the mind into a dreamlike state, where counting became impossible. He continued on his way, grudgingly.

Already Eosden was weary. The incline of the path was steeper than he had accounted for, and the stays of the cart cut into his shoulders. He began to realize how unprepared he really was. It might be several-day's journey to the treasure, for all he knew. And what if he passed it in the dark? He would not know for certain until he reached the path's issue at the far end of the mountains. If that should happen, he must abandon the cart and seek help from the people of the high mountains of Gondor, if any such existed. And what of the treasure? What if it should be hidden behind some cave walls, like the mysterious drippings and trickles of water? In fact, it surely would be. No one would hide a treasure in plain sight, not even in such a remote place. There would be no sign posted, "Treasure here!" Digging might be required, and he had brought

no shovel. Eosden began to think that Baldor might not have perished at the hands of the guarding dead. Perhaps he had simply become lost, or had overtaxed his strength.

Eosden struggled to put such thoughts out of his mind. More likely the treasure was somewhere near. It was not distance that had prevented its finding til now; it was the wraiths of the dead. And they were gone. A man only needed courage and their treasure was his!

Outside in the open air, the night passed. The moon finished her blue journey and returned from whence she came. The day dawned and the wizards departed Edoras. The sun rose to its peak, burning brightly and yellow in the vast skies of Middle Earth, and then fell back into the dark waters that surround her. The King and Queen looked for Eosden in the chambers of Meduseld and in the stables and in the fields. But they did not find him there.

Beneath the weighty masses of Ered Nimrais he struggled still, roofed by an expanse of stone beyond the measure of man. This weight he felt, though he might not number it. It crushed his spirit as thoroughly as any fear of the dead. At last Eosden fell to the ground, exhausted beyond hope, and slept. He slept for many hours. When he awoke, he rose with a terrible hunger and thirst, and he ate all his food and drank the rest of his water. He fumbled in the dark for his flint, for the torch had gone out. He lit another, and part of his fear was quelled, for the time. He looked about him, thinking to refill the jug, but no sound of water now came to his ears. He thought of turning back. If he left the cart it would be easy to return to his horse from here. But as he sat, some of his courage returned. If it was easy to return from here, he might just as easily continue on for a bit. It seemed a waste to have journeyed this far into the caves, only to leave empty-handed. Besides, his strength was returning after the food and water. His mind began to clear. He would continue on.

The pain in his shoulders was now awful. Large blisters

had formed there, and he moved the stays to one side and the other, to keep them off the raw skin. But this only caused further blisters. At times he simply drug the cart along, holding the stays with his hands. His gloves kept his hands from blister, but he could not hold his fingers together after an hour of this. He must return the stays to his shoulders.

As Eosden climbed higher and higher, the caves became colder and colder. He could now see his breath. He had dressed warmly and the work kept him from chill, but he now feared to stop lest the perspiration from his body cool and his limbs freeze up. He had no more food to light the fires from within, and he had brought no wood to make a blaze. The torches themselves put out little heat. He thought again of turning back.

At last he dropped the cart to the ground and fell to his knees. The pain of the blisters had become unbearable. If he must go on, he must do so without the cart. He thought to himself that if he could find the treasure in the next few hours, he might come back for the cart. But only a treasure, already found, could possibly cause him to take up the cart again. If he returned without the treasure, he would leave the cart behind and good riddance!

He took an extra torch from the cart and began walking once more. Without his burden his legs felt light again. He felt he could easily go another few hours. But it was so cold. Just pausing for a few moments had chilled him. Also, the path still climbed. Had he considered the import of this, he might have reasoned that he was not yet halfway through the Paths of the Dead.

Another day and a night passed in Edoras. The King and Queen were now very worried for their son. They sent out search parties into the fields and mountains. Tida was certain that the wizards were to blame. She talked of nothing but

'kidnapping.' Even Feognost began to doubt the wizards. He thought of sending an *eored* to follow the wizards, to discover if Eosden were with them, either at their bidding, or for reasons of his own.

But Eosden was now near to the end of his journey in the mountains, for better or for worse. The cart had been left many hours ago. Eosden was now delirious with thirst. He no longer cared for the treasure. Every thought was for water. But he did not turn back. There had been no water for many many hours, when he had left the cart. So any stream could only be discovered ahead, unless he should return almost to the gate. He listened intently for any sound of water, for any glint off a droplet, any reflection from any pool, no matter how small. Several times he had been led to the wall of the cave by a glitter, but always it was some shining stone, some vein of ore or just the light of quartzite or other valueless thing.

Eosden's mind began to wander. He imagined that Baldor was walking next to him, speaking to him as to a friend. The man talked and talked, but Eosden could not understand him. It was not the language that failed; it was that Eosden's ears would not work. He saw Baldor's lips move, he knew something important was being told him, but all he heard was a hum, like the babbling of a brook. He wanted to ask Baldor for water, but his mouth was too dry to speak. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth and his throat felt like sand.

Suddenly Baldor left him, and he felt lonely. He began to weep. The tears fell down his face, and he licked at them in his thirst. But some fell past his mouth and ran from his chin and splashed into the water at his feet. . . .

Eosden looked down. He could still hear the hum of Baldor's speech, but the hum was not the hum of imagined speech now. It was the sound of water. All at once Eosden recognized it, and he fell to his knees, pouring great draughts into his mouth from his hands. It tasted of dirt and stone and mineral, but it was good beyond reckoning.

The stream had been flowing directly down the path,

washing his boots for miles, but he had not known it. Almost he had died of thirst whilst trodding through a river of water.

He drank until he could drink no more and then fell into a deep sleep at the edge of the stream.

Sometime later he awoke. He was very cold, but his head was clear. He knew now that he must turn back or die. He had not eaten in a day, maybe two; and there were two days of hunger ahead. There was also thirst to be dealt with once more, for the distance between this stream and the one near to the door of the caves was great, and his jug would do him no good. But the way was downhill and his journey would therefore be faster.

He searched his pocket for the flint. His torch had rolled into the stream and gone out. But his other torch had somehow remained dry. It was his last one, until he returned to the cart. He prayed that it should last until then, for if he passed the cart in the dark, he would not likely find the door. The way was straight and wide, but there had been several fissures in the floor where he might fall, and countless loose stones. An injury to a leg at this point might well prove fatal.

The new torch lit merrily, and Eosden warmed his hands by it for a moment before starting out. He removed the old wet torch from the water and slid it through his belt, near to his swordsheath. Then he looked about him one last time in disappointment. He had not noticed it in his delirium, but the walls of the cave had receded—he was now in a vast underground chamber, or grotto. The ceiling of the cave had likewise receded, and was now far above him. There was even a movement of air, as if a tiny breeze were blowing into his face from ahead on the path.

All this was interesting, but Eosden felt he had no more time to explore. The torch was now his most precious possession, and it meant more to him than any treasure—or so he thought. He turned to hurry back down the path. But even as his eyes swept away from the chamber, they noticed, for the first time, a glint of gold not far away. He had already turned,

but behind him and to the right the colour flashed again. It was not a trick of the torchóno gleam of quartzite this. It was clear, even from this distance, that it was in the shape of a hauberk! And below it was the outline of a coat of mail!

After a moment of uncertainty, Eosden turned and ran to the spot. He must see what was to be seen, but he must do so quickly! He found the remains of a large man, his belt of garnets, his still-shining mail linked in the way of the Mark. Yes, Eosden had found Baldor at last! His skeleton lay before a cracked door, half-open in the face of the cave-wall. His sword was broken, the hilts still by his crumbled handóthe leather gauntlet having returned to dust.

Eosden could make nothing of the clues. The door was open. Why should Baldor die here? Perhaps the wraiths had overcome him with their weapons. But the skeleton of Baldor was unscathed, and his armour unpierced. The mail was undinted. Even the neck bones were laid out intact.

He could waste no more time considering it. He pushed by the door and entered the chamber. The crack in the door was narrow, but not too narrow to admit the mightiest man, even in mail. Once within the chamber, he lifted the torch high. His eyes opened wide, and then he gave a great shout that echoed through the caves. The treasure of the dead was before him, and it was beyond his most grandiose imaginings!óGold and silver strewn across the floor, and filling countless jars and two-handled flagons. Jewels of every sort lying in piles upon the dusty stones. Armaments still shining in places through their rustóshields and swords and helms. Cups and plates of tin and pewter and silver and gold. Chests rotten and bursting with their contents, the wood eaten away to nothing. Strands of gems in necklaces, and smaller gems in brooches and rings.

And in the midst of all, shining through the metal bands of its own broken chest, lay a great white gem, lighting the whole room with its reflection. It soaked the yellow torchlight into itself and refracted it in every direction, purifying it,

adding to it, transforming the yellow to white ó a clear radiant white like the midday sun reflected off cleanest late-autumn snow. As Eosden stared, the room seemed to swirl in the lovely light, the flickerings of the torch chasing the last shadows into the corners and slaying them merrily. All of Eosden's cares evaporated and his limbs were loosed. His hunger was forgotten, and his pain and fear. He felt capable of carrying the entire treasure on his back, at a run!

But his head was clear now. He had no thought of so burdening himself. Truly, the gold and silver no longer interested him. The only thing he must take away was the white gem. He would send some of his men to collect the rest. All in good time, he thought. This treasure would go into the coffers of Edoras. It would go to his father, and to his people. Then no one could blame him for coming here. None could accuse him of greed. And if he took the one gem for himself, what did it matter? Surely he was due a token for his efforts ó for his courage in braving the Paths of the Dead. Surely he was due the first choice. A single gem ó was that too much to ask from such a great treasure? Besides, no one need know of the gem. Its existence need never come to light. It would be his own. His very own.

Eosden lifted the great stone from the chest, and the rusted bands fell away from his hands, crumbling into nothing. The gem still shone through his fingers, and as he lifted it up he laughed aloud. It was the most beautiful thing on earth, and it was his! It was in his very hands!

He stared at the white shining stone for many minutes, lost in wonder. He was loth to put it away, but time was still precious, and he must return while his torch still burned. So at last he placed the great gem in his pocket and squeezed back through the crack of the door. Then he knelt and removed the helm from Baldor's skull, as proof that he had found Baldor and his door. Men of the Mark would return, he knew, and take the bones to be buried finally in their own mound. With a last look back, Eosden left the door and the grotto and began

the long walk back. But first he took a long draught at the stream. It would be many hours before he might drink again. A few hours later he came to the cart, still lying in the midst of the path. He took a sack from the cart and placed the stone and helm within it. Then he broke the cart upon the rocks and gathered the wood together. Much of this he also placed in the sack, in case he should need it when his torches burned down.

And indeed he burned both his torches and all the wood he carried before he came back to the opening of the caves. But, as chance would have it, he was less than three hours from the door when his last light went out. He continued on in the pitch dark, sometimes wandering into the walls, often stumbling, but never falling to serious hurt. At last the bright light of day met him and led him out, blinking and laughing. He shouted to the pukel men that they had been wrongóhere he was and no harm done! Ulmo had not struck him down! The curse of the Paths of the Dead was lifted forever!

His voice echoed through the cavern walls, and his laughter came back to him tenfold from the circling rocks, disembodied and eerie, as if the hills were mocking him. He stopped shouting for a moment and looked momentarily troubled, as if the echo had its own meaning. But the mood passed quickly, and he brought the gem from the bag and looked at it once more. It was reassuring in its beauty. It sparkled and blazed in the sun, a sun it had not seen in an age of the earth. The stone itself seemed to laugh and cavort. Eosden thought to himself, how could any curse be attached to such a wondrous thing?

That evening Eosden returned to Eodoras, and to the halls of Meduseld. Tida cried out and ran to him, and Feognost too was most joyous to find that his son had returned unharmed. Eosden had been gone almost five days, and the King had already prepared an *eored* to travel to Isengard. Its departure was now cancelled, however. The wizards were no longer suspected of mischief, and the furor of the town died down as

quickly as it had begun. Even Tida had to admit that the wizards were perhaps not common brigands—at least in this case.

But as this furor passed it was quickly replaced by another: Eosden brought forth the helm of Baldor from his sack and told his story to all those gathered in the court. A great hue and cry went up as the people of Eodoras celebrated the finding of the great treasure, as if it were already in hand, and this the whole treasure of Baldor and not just his shiny helm. But then Eosden was questioned: why had he gone without telling anyone, and alone? Why had he snuck off like a thief? Why risk the caves without an escort? Why the secrecy? All these questions Eosden deflected cunningly; for he devised a story, telling his father that he wanted to surprise the court with this news (as it had in truth happened, he was quick to point out—the surprise was indeed worth the risk, and no harm had come). And he swore that he knew beforehand that no man of the Mark would brave the Paths of the Dead, unless it were first proven they were open and free. If he had begged permission, it would have been denied. This was the only way.

This story being sensible, and very close to the truth, it was believed. Eosden was a trusted young man, and well loved. A much greater lie would have been accepted from him with just as little effort.

And, as it turned out, Eosden's story wove a life of its own: within scant days a well-equipped search party was sent into the caves, with food for a week and many carts and shovels and piles and piles of torches. Most of the men trusted Eosden so thoroughly they no longer feared the Paths of the Dead in the least, though they had been raised on bogey stories from the cradle. It is true that some few of the men were sweating freely beneath their kirtles, and grinding their teeth. But none complained, lest they be set on by their fellows.

The story then began to tell itself quite rippingly, and moved ahead with no more help from the Prince. The search party returned in only four days with the bones of Baldor and a

greater part of the treasure. Then there was rejoicing in Edoras in earnest, indeed throughout the whole Mark, upon their success. The King ordered a general feasting and all the hamlets were sent gifts of cattle and fowls and pigs at the King's expense. More than that, all and sundry were invited to a great fair upon the Folde, where there would be dancing and drinking and much merriment.

Eosden was hailed as a hero in all this, though he did not make much of it himself. He no longer needed to. He modestly maintained that he had only had the Mark's interest in mind.

The story, desiring as stories do to reach a full conclusion, spun out further details that evening. As the merrymaking continued on around them, two of the captains of the Mark met with the Prince. They had led the expedition into the caves, and they discovered, they said, more than treasure and bones. They carried also an answer for Eosden, as to why Baldor had fallen where he had. The searchers had not been in such a hurry, and they had studied the door closely. They reported that its lock was still intact. The door had never been opened! The crack had been made long after Baldor's death, most likely by the weight of the roof of the cave. It was their opinion that the sword had been broken hewing at the lock. The lock was marred on the outside by heavy blows of a sharp object, and small splinters of rock had fallen away. What is more, the sword was notched in several places about its tip. It appeared that Baldor had not been killed by wraiths. He had most likely died of thirst, or of a crushed spirit. It was only good fortune that Eosden had not suffered the same fate as Baldoróso said the men. And their belief in his luck and his bravery rose still higher.

But in private Eosden was not so sanguine as his men. He could not share the enjoyment of the fortune of his city, for the gem had already begun to prey on his mind. No hiding place seemed secure. He had moved the gem seven times in as

many days. Each time he hid it further and further from the townóto remove it from the suspicions of his townsmen. But that worked only to make him more fearful, for he could not so easily overwatch it from a distance. Presently it was in the bole of a tree near the Maiden Falls, buried beneath earth and moss. But even here it seemed to be calling out to passers-by. Eosden feared lest the pukel man, or another like to him, should come down from the hills and steal it. He even had some nameless dread that Ulmo himself might rise up from the falls, in the form of some great man, and, lifting the stone from the tree, leap back into the water and swim away. The absurdity of this did not prevent Eosden from returning to the image again and again. That Ulmo would have to swim down the stream, passing in his watery journey directly through townóin a current hardly deep enough to float a childóbefore joining the Snowbourn and making his way across the grasslands to the Entwash, did not occur to him. Every evening after supper, he would sit in his chamber aloneóeven while the fair could be heard proceeding noisily down belowóand strain his mind to think of a hiding place so secret it could never be discovered.

And here the story stalled, and could make no more progress on its own. For, though Eosden knew it not, this question in his mind was the same question that had been asked of the stone since the beginning of time, in every story told of it. Where to hide this stone?

The smithy of Feanor had not been safe enough. For it had gone from there, pulling Feanor's story with it

The crown of Morgoth had proved a safer place, for a time: who would dare to take it from there? Who would willingly weave their story with the story of Angband? At last, Luthien Tinuviel had snatched its brother from the iron bands, as her story reached its climax. But this gem had remained.

It remained until Eonwe took it. The victory of the Valar was a beginning and an end for all stories. The old stories were no more. The new stories must tell themselves from this

place. The story of this Silmaril thought itself at an end. One would have thought the hands of Eonwe a very uneventful place.

But the sons of Feanor had stolen this gem in the night, even from the hands of the Valar, and its story awoke once more. Nor did it find safety with them, for the second son Maglor soon threw it into the sea.

Was it safe even there? For a while. But at last it was found by the fisher folk of Anfalas, hungry for their own stories. They had been fishing only for supper, but they had caught the greatest story of all. Catching it, they themselves became enmeshed, and they slew each other for centuries in its name, unknown to the men and elves of the late Second Age. But at last they feared the coming of Sauron and his black story, and in the Third Age they put away their strife and hid themselves and their precious jewel in the mountains. As the wars of Mordor pushed harder and harder upon them, they retreated ever further into the mountains, until they came at last to the great caves. And they entered there, and hid themselves completely. All their treasure they buried in the deepest part of the caves at that point where the underground passage was equally distant from the north opening as well as the south. They defended their treasure for long, guarding the pass at both ends, until at last they were defeated by their own neighbours. These neighbours had sworn to fight for Gondor, but at last had gone over to Sauron, unbeknownst to the people of the caves. The traitors had taken them by surprise, and defeated them to the last man. But the traitors in turn had been annihilated by the soldiers of Gondor, wiped out at the southern gate. It is these traitors that had become the wraiths, waiting upon the Paths of the Dead until they could at last fulfill their oaths to Gondor. But the traitors had never discovered the treasure; not, at least, until they had become wraiths, and it was no longer of any use to them. And so they acted as a guard over a treasure that none but ghosts knew to exist. And ghosts tell no stories, not even to those they owe an

oath of allegiance. For the oath was for fighting, not for treasure; the wraiths did not owe Gondor a farthing beyond the might of their arms.

But still the gem was not safe. Not forever. Not though the curse of Ulmo was yet upon it. Not though no one but Baldor had ever guessed at its existence. Even he had only heard of a treasure, no one knows how. Perhaps he had gleaned its existence from the warnings of the pukel men. They would not have warned him off from the northern gate if there had been nothing of value within.

And now his heir, seven and a half centuries later, prompted by a stray word at a council, had finished the journey he had begun.

The third Silmaril had been found once more.

The question in Eosden's head was the same as the question in Gandalf's head, so long ago, concerning the second Silmaril. How does one hide such a stone? It would not stay hidden in the sea or in a fiery chasm. It would not stay hidden behind an unknown door in a vast cave, not though it was part of a treasure not known to exist, from a people never known to exist. It would not stay hidden under a golden dragonóa dragon who thought it no more than a large dwarvish bauble. It would not stay hidden in a tomb, not though it be given a false name and a false history. Always the Silmarils returned, and always they called out to the ear of Morgoth.

Could Eosden hide this Silmaril better than Gandalf hid his? We shall see. We shall see in good time, for we are now caught once more in the story of the Silmarilli.





Chapter 8



Another Errand

Just as a pigeon was being loosed with a message to Minas Mallor of Rosogod's collapse, a celebration was reaching its high moment in Farbanks. A great eagle, flying high over the Old Forest, might almost have seen both events and wondered if there was some connection between the two. Mistaking the white bird for a celebratory dove, the eagle might have assumed the men and hobbits were toasting each other from afar, for some reason unknown to the beasts and the birds.

But it was not so. The two towns knew nothing of one another. The party in Farbanks had been in the making for months, though it had only come to a general knowledge a fortnight ago. This is how it had come about: since the first of the year Tomilo had been thinking of another great journey. As soon as he had returned home from the Bindbole Wood, he had decided that an important message needed taking to Fangorn. A message to the ents concerning the entwives. Tomilo had no doubt that he was the proper messenger.

After that evening in Needlehole, when Prim had gotten so over-excited, Tomilo had taken the children back to

Tookbank and Tuckborough, and then returned to lead her to the dell in the Wood. There she saw what he had seen, and they looked on together, hand in hand.

Back in Farbanks Prim had remained Tomilo's conspirator; and they met many an afternoon to look at maps and measure the distance to the forest of Fangorn and estimate the time and think about the dangers. Prim had very specific ideas about how much food they would require each day and how many changes of clothes would be necessary and how much soap they should carry, and many other things. Tomilo smiled to himself, and thought how simple it must have been in the old days, when a hobbit only had to worry about pocket handkerchiefs.

Yes, Prim had demanded to come along, and Tomilo had found himself arguing against it not very forcibly, and not very long. He had taken very little convincing. After all, this whole trip was a bringing together of man and woman (or ent and entwife). Tomilo could not very well continue to play the reluctant bachelor, even as he played long-distance matchmaker.

He knew full well, though, that Prim's parents would never allow it. A trip to the North Farthing, with the Thain as the sponsor and a gaggle of children as chaperones was one thing. A journey of many months, around mountains and over rivers and through forests, was another thing entirely. A hobbit simply could not take a maiden on such a trip. A wife, perhaps, but not a maiden.

And so, the long and short of it is that a wedding had been got up rather hastily: maids in waiting had been selected, a short list of guests had been agreed upon, a dress had been sewn, garlands had been tied, and many cakes had been baked. And on that fine spring day Tomilo had taken a pretty wife.

Prim had never looked more glowing. Tomilo also had a bright spark in his eye, although he might not have admitted it even then. As they jumped over the broomstick and rushed into the hole together, most of the guests were unaware that

the beautiful new feather mattress (sent as a wedding present from the Fairbairns of Undertowers) would be slept in only two nights, for the hole would again be empty for a season ó kept free of rabbits and badgers only by the goodwill and sharp eye of the neighbours and the local under-shiriffs.

I have neglected to mention that there had been one very special guest that evening. To Tomilo, he was the most important guest of all. He had travelled quite far to be there, and he would be travelling with them again in the morning. For, you see, as the two hobbits had said their vows, there had been a great neighing from the lawn, and Drabdrab had stamped his front hooves and blown loudly. Several of the nearby candles had gone out and had to be relit.

The pony had been decorated by the hobbitmaids with ribbons and garlands of lilies. On his back were two small riders. They also wore flowers, although Treskin (one of the two riders, of course) looked as if he thought the buds clashed with the authority of the feather. Isambard was not so circumspect: he cheered and cheered.

Lewa was also there, looking only partially crushed. The Old Took was on her arm, wobbling a bit and waiting for it to all be over so that he could sit down. Bob stood on the verge with his family, and his wife had a satisfied look on her face, as if to say, "Well, and we finally got the last one!"

Prim's parents looked on in amazement, not sure whether to be happy or sad. Prim's mother, especially, was so torn by competing emotions as to be almost distracted, for she was one of the few that knew of the planned departure. Finally she burst into tears and had to be taken away, mumbling something about highway robbers.

Tomilo's parents, Gredoc and Lipka, looked on proudly if diffidently. They had come from Oatbarton, and were altogether relieved to finally get their youngest married off. But they knew nothing of entwines or balrogs or trips to Wilderland. Tomilo had found it easier to say nothing of his

adventures past or future. This was a time of celebration and feasting, and adventures were not considered polite conversation at table. Besides, his parents would not have been interested anyway. They would want to hear about grandchildren. Until then, no news was good news.

Two mornings later, awakening with the finches, Tomilo and Prim and Drabdrab were to be found on the front lawn again, the grass and shrubs still trampelled and trammelled from the festivities of the wedding party. Torn garlandry still littered the rosebushes, and Drabbie had found a bit of old cake under a lawnchair, despatching it along with his breakfast of more nutritious herbage. Only the evening before had the newlyweds seen off the last of the relatives and well-wishers, pretending that they were beginning a long stay in Fairbanks. Now they were almost ready for a journey of many months!

'I never thought to spend my honeymoon on the East Road, visiting ents and wizards!' mused Prim as she stuffed a bonnet into a bag. 'As a young maid, I had thought a ride to the Magpie and Bower was the most romantic thing imaginable. And here I am going to spend time in a real bower, for all I know. Having an adventure for a honeymoon. Most unladylike, as Mum said.'

'Not to mention unhobbitlike, added your Dad,' laughed Tomilo. 'A daughter of mine, running off into the wilds like some harum scarum I-don't-know-what, when she oughta be here having grandchildren... I mean children. I will miss having your dad around, Prim, I really will.'

'Yes, well, it's not like we're moving away for good, as I told them. We'll be back, and then children and grandchildren enough for all!'

The day before, Tomilo had surreptitiously traded several of his wedding presents for a small shaggy pony (getting some strange looks from the trader, I might add—who knew of the local wedding even though, as a stranger, he had not been

invited). This so that Drabdrab would not have to carry both hobbits and their baggage as well. This was a relief to him, despite his initial jealousy that he was no longer the only beast trusty enough to take along. But the little pony that shared his burden was so homely it was hard to generate much envy for him. This beast, Nobbles by name, was a good-natured hobbit pony, only two years old, and he didn't quite know what to make of Drabdrab. Drabdrab might be nothing compared to a horse, but to a hobbit pony he looked long-legged and sleek, almost regal. And that saddle! Oh my! Nobbles couldn't get his bearings in the presence of that saddle. It was like satin and velvet and lace to beggar child.

Since I have already described Tomilo's travels over the East Road with Radagast, I will not repeat this leg of the journey here. It differed little from that one of the previous autumn. The weather was a bit warmer, the rain threatened a bit less often, and no dwarves were met; but otherwise it was the same. Not until Tomilo and Prim reached Dunland did they begin to have their own adventures worth telling.

It was some fortnight later, and the two hobbits were nut-brown with the sunshine and already lighter in their saddles for the rations of the road. They were hale and hearty and happy, and camping in the wilds had turned out to be the perfect honeymoon for them both. Prim had gritched and grouched about the dirt and the bugs and the awful lack of utensils for a day or two, but had soon decided to put a good face on it and try to ignore the minor feminine hardships. Once done, the adventure began to ripen for her, and her eyes opened to the joyous side of the wind and the weather—even the dirt and the other inclemency. She found, once her eyes were open to it, that the trees, despite blocking the rain less thoroughly than a roof, blocked it with a keener beauty—with a fresher sound and a more pleasing smell. She noticed that the sky, though less near at hand than that roof, and less brushable of cobwebs and dust, was no less comforting. She noticed that the ground, though less tractable than wood or mats, and

forever unsweepable, yet was pleasant enough to the foot, and could not but support, with grace and full splendour, all things living. Nature was the fine complement of hobbitry, as with other life, and needed little tweaking and relining.

Oone evening, as the two hobbits watched the light fail and the darkness fall down around them and the stars begin to blink on—like little candles lit one by one on distant mountaintops—Prim began to sing. She had a fine clear voice, but Tomilo had not heard her sing before. It was a hobbit song as old as the Shire, maybe older, and Tomilo had heard his mother sing it when he was a child. By the time Prim had reached the second verse, Tomilo had found his hornpipe¹ in his baggage, and he accompanied his new wife as Drabdrab and Nobbles looked on in wonder.

*'Tis not the eye of some night-maiden
nor fire of any bright sky-lad.
'Tis not some winter-table laden
with yellow candles copper-clad.
'Tis not the torch of goblin-glare
nor glint of mail of floating wight
'Tis not the tail of heaven's hare
nor rump of deer all snowy white.*

*'Tis not the Moon in tiny piecesó
bits of broken quartz on highó
Nor Her reflection cut by creases
in the fabric of the sky.
'Tis not the teeth of dragon's maw
swallowing all the stuff of heavenó
sun and clouds all eaten raw,
with neither salt nor lard nor leaven.*

*'Tis not diamonds thrown aloft
by some rich giant in the mountains.
'Tis not weed-puffs, blown so soft,*

*nor the spray of tall elf-fountains.
'Tis not pearls on dusky hill,
'Tis not evermind a-glow,
'Tis not snowflakes frozen still
'Tis not geese in staggered row.*

*'Tis not doves on far treelimb
nor eggs in some great skybird's nest.
'Tis not firebugs' silent hymn
nor ivory buttons on Vorun's vest.
What may it be, my hobbitchild,
That calms all fear and soothes all sight?
Twinkling soft and dreamy mildó
Stars! the watchlights of the night.*

As Prim finished, the Saucepan² was rising over the Misty Mountains to their left, pouring its contents into the waiting mouths of Caradhras and Celebdil the White.

¹A simple recorder, really, in range like a descant recorderóthat is, fairly low for a flute or a pipeóbut with sixteen holes (including the 'octave' hole) instead of eight, and 34 distinct notes. Tomilo carried this hornpipe with him rather than his lyre, since the hornpipe did not require to be tuned. Prim carried with her a sort of two-stringed rebec, which required only minimal tuning. It could be either plucked or bowed (see bk.2, ch.11).

²What we call the Great Bear. The hobbits had several names for it, as we have.

'That reminds me,' said Tomilo. 'How about a bit of supper? Drabbie and Nobbles look like they could use a rest, and the grass here looks simply scrumptious. They have been eyeing it for the past half hour. If we didn't have those lovely cakes you baked over the fire last night, I would eat it myself.'

'Well, it wouldn't hurt us to eat a bit of grass. I would

rather have a nice bit of lettuce, or some fresh cabbage from the garden. But we will have to do with a carrot or two. I haven't had time to gather any salad greens, us being on the road all day long, although I don't know what the hurry is.'

Tomilo smiled to himself. He was just happy to be eating. Imagine Bilbo and the dwarves gathering salad greens! There were many benefits to travelling with a female, thought the hobbit, and this not the least of them. Someone to help over the kettle and the pot. Someone to think of packing carrots. Menfolk would eat cram at every meal, complaining all the while, but doing nothing about it. Not from laziness, really, since they would walk 'til their feet dropped off, and carry untold burdens when necessary. But from an absolute inability to think seriously about nourishment. Funny that beings that liked to eat so much, when it was placed before them, failed utterly to supply themselves with that source of contentment, when no female was by. A hobbit was a strange creature, thought Tomilo. No stranger than other creatures, surely, but all the same, an odd mixture of dazzling self-sufficiency and astonishing limitation.

These subtle thoughts were driven from his brain by the smell of the stew. While he had been daydreaming, thinking about his own dazzling limitations, Prim had been busy gathering a pot of water and building a fire and otherwise seeing to supper. Already the corncakes were crisp and the stew was simmering. Tomilo sat down and took a plate from her hand. Then he leaned over and gave Prim a bit of a kiss, if truth be told. She pushed him away with a smile and a snort,

'Do you want to push me in the pot? My toes are almost in the fire as it is!'

'Well, I didn't put them there, did I?' Tomilo answered with a twinkle in his eye.

About a week later, the two hobbits left Dunland and began to pass the last outlying hills of the southern end of the mountains. When these seemed low enough, they turned due

east and started the task of climbing over. They knew from their studies of the maps in Tuckborough that the Wizard's Vale lay just beyond, and then Fangorn itself! Their excitement grew.

Once they had passed the crest of the hill, they remounted and urged the ponies on. The two beasts scampered down the long slow decline, nothing but soft grass beneath their hooves and the clear sky above. They were as frisky as their riders, for the wind was from the east, blowing directly into their keen noses, and they could smell the great horselands of the West Emnet in front of them.

Already Prim and Tomilo could see the Isen running down from the mountains ahead, cutting the world in half. They had not seen a river so large since the crossing of the Greyflood, and they began to wonder how they would get by it. But there would be time to discover that. For now they must find the gates of Isengard. According to legend, the circle was still guarded by ents. If they wanted to find ents, this was the place to start, by all reckoning!

In the late evening they came to the remains of the road, and they followed this northward into the gap. The sun dipped its head behind the western arm, and the long shadows of the valley engulfed them.

For the first time, the hobbits began to feel afraid. They had come all this way to find the ents, but now that they were here, the prospect of meeting an ent face to face, unknown and unmet, was a tad disconcerting. Bombadil had contrived Tomilo's meeting with Oakvain, but even so it had been scary. What if the ents of Fangorn forest and Isengard did not want any visitors? What if they simply squashed anyone who knocked on the gate, as a precaution? How did one go about announcing ones arrival and good intentions, anyway? All this and much more ran through the small hobbits' heads as they approached the ring of Isengard.

'Perhaps we should come back in the morning, when there is more light. We don't want to be mistaken for orcs or

thieves,' said Tomilo.

'No, we are here and I say we go on,' urged Prim, acting brave even though she felt just as scared as Tomilo. 'Look, I'll light the lantern. Thieves would not arrive on the road, with lanterns lit. Let us sing something, too, Tomilo. Orcs would not arrive singing. They will not mistake us for elves, with our little voices, but perhaps they will recognize us for proper folk who mean no harm.'

The two tried to think of the happiest song they knew. Most hobbit songs are happy, so this was not so easy. Many came to mind. 'The Bath Song,' of course. But that didn't seem appropriate. Tomilo suggested 'The Beer Barrel Bravo,' but Prim scolded him and said they were trying to sound like goodly people, not drunkards. They ran through many food songs, like 'Hi-ho, mushrooms!', 'A Pie, My Eye,' and 'What Would you do for Honey-scones?' but dismissed them all as silly. The gate was about a furlong distant now, and they stopped to decide.

'I say the "The Roasting of Longo Longbottom" is the funniest,' argued Prim. 'Think of the end, when Longo's breeches go into the Brandywine, and Longo after them. And the chorus of "tra-la-ashy-ashy, fire on high!"'

'We want happy, not ridiculous,' countered Tomilo. 'Why not "The Maiden of Mallow Hill"? That's happy, but not so boisterous, Prim. We don't want to shout the ents out of their wits.'

Prim agreed, and the hobbits retrieved their instruments. Tomilo blew a note, and Prim tuned her strings by it. Finally they continued on. At first the song was soft, the hobbits being nervous. The hills seemed to watch them. The two singers expected every tree to begin walking forward, or shushing them with great leafy fingers. But nothing of the kind happened, and they began to take courage from the happy stanzas.

*She wore a white gown
a hey downe derrie downe
lully lully downe
that bonny lass upon the crown
a hey downe derrie-o
of Mallow Town.*

*Mallow Town
on Mallow Hill
a hey downe derrie downe
lully lully downe
all of green and rich red-brown
a hey downe derrie-o
was Mallow Town.*

*And the maiden danced
a hey downe derrie downe
lully lully downe
all midsummer's day
a hey downe derrie-o
around and around.*

*Her cheeks were rosy
a hey downe derrie downe
a lully lully lil
her lips like a posie
a hey downe derrie-o
upon that hill.*

*All the lads of
Mallow Hill
a hey downe derrie downe
a lully lully lil
danced with the maiden
a hey downe derrie
nor 'gainst her will.*

*The other lasses
joined in
a hey downe derrie downe
a lully lully loo
and all the bright lads
a hey downe derrie-o
of Mallow too. . . .*

The hobbits stopped singing, though the song was just beginning. They had reached the gates and passed beneath the arch, but there was no sign of any creature, neither of ent nor man nor beast. The lantern swung from Drabdrab's saddle, casting strange shadows into the evening, but nothing was moving, nothing making any sound above the sound of the wind and the breathing of the ponies. Tomilo unpacked his mithril axe and fingered its blades. He wished it had been made by elves rather than dwarvesóthen he might have known of a certainty whether orcs were about.

After a moment he covered the lantern and peered ahead into the dusk. 'Prim, I believe there is a light coming from the bottom of the tower. Should we go on? Or not? It is a desolate placeóa place that does not seem to take to songs or singing. Maybe the ents are no longer here. In which case the light in the tower may be something unwholesomeósomething much scarier than ents.'

'It cannot be ents making that fire,' answered Prim. 'Ents do not like fire. And I have not heard that they make light in other ways, save the dim earthy lights of their drinks. But that appears to be a red light. Could it be goblins?'

Drabdrab was sniffing the air, his head raised high. He seemed to be impatient. He began walking ahead, pulling Tomilo along with him.

'Well, Drabbie seems unafraid, at any rate,' said Tomilo, with a smile at last. 'He either smells horses or food. Maybe they are cooking apples,' he added doubtfully.

'I shouldn't think so,' answered Prim, a little less fearful. 'We could smell that ourselves. Nobbles is not shivering either so I suppose it is not goblins, whatever else it may be. Let us follow the ponies and find out for ourselves!'

The hobbits walked slowly ahead, sniffing the air like Drabdrab. But still they could smell nothing. The light got brighter, however, and soon it became clear it was firelight. Then they began to smell the smoke from the wood. It was fragrant, as if from cedar or fir. And finally they smelled food. First roasted meats, then, at last, sure enough, a cider of some sort was brewing!

'You have a keen nose, friend!' said Tomilo to Drabdrab. The pony just snorted and continued to pull him ahead.

'And you, my husband, know your pony well. That was a fine guess!'

As they rounded the far corner of the tower they heard song, until then blocked by the heavy stone walls. It was not the harsh song of orcs, but the fine voices of men, raised in a tavern song. The hobbits relaxed, and Tomilo put his axe away. These did not sound like robbers or thieves. They were soldiers, clearly. The hobbits could now see their horses tied all in a row, decorated with the proud devices of Rohan and Gondor.

'That will be why we had no welcome,' said Prim. 'They could not hear our singing over their own.'

At a break in the verse, Tomilo halloed from the front steps, thinking that safer than barging suddenly into the chamber. He heard the scrape of chair and the rush of heel and was soon met by a half dozen tall men, light of hair and long of limb. But for the moment the faces of the men were lost in wonder and amaze, and nothing was said. They forgot to address the visitors, either in welcome or warning. Then a woman pushed through the group a tall woman in a taller hat, or so it seemed to Prim. She was old and stern, and the men gave way to her like a mother or a queen.

Tomilo walked a step forward into the light of the door. 'Ivulaine, it is me, Tomillimir. From the Council at Rhosgobel.'

'Master Fairbairn! From the Shire!' Ivulaine cried, laughing out loud. 'Well, you took us by surprise, my dear. When I saw you there in the dark, I thought we were being visited by children, or by some strange sprites of the Misty Mountains, that I had not read of. Gervain, the halflings have come!' she called into the tower.

'And this is my wife, Primrose,' said Tomilo when Gervain arrived at the door, and he and Prim both bowed.

'Your wife? How nice,' answered Ivulaine. 'Welcome, Primrose! Do come inside. I have been brewing up a punch while these fellows were making a racket. But I did not know you were married, Mr. Fairbairn.'

'I wasn't,' he answered, turning red. 'I mean, begging your pardon, I wasn't married when I came to the council. We only just came from the wedding, like. . . what was it Prim, a month ago?'

'Astron 6,' she corrected him.

'That would be Viresse, King's Reckoning,' added Tomilo with a smile, proud of his knowledge.

'Yes, the day before we found the Osgiliath stone,' said Ivulaine to the mind of Gervain, silently. To the hobbits she said, 'We have only just come here ourselves, nine days ago. The King Elemmir is re-opening Isengard, and we are his deputies, if you like. We will be staying here, for the time.'

The hobbits greeted Gervain and were introduced all round. The men present were still as in a dream, and one or two rubbed their eyes.

Vortigern finally spoke: 'Then the stories are true. The Holbytlan were not just fays sent to help in the war, returning across the seas after; and the knight Holdwine, said to have befriended Eomer and Eowyn, was one of these creatures?'

'Yes, Sir Knight,' answered Tomilo, bowing again. 'But we do not like being called creatures. We are hobbits. The hobbit called Holdwine you speak of was Meriadoc

Brandybuck, Master of Buckland. And the "fays" were Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgeeóan ancestor of mine. They did "return over the seas" as it turned out. But they were living, waking, walking beings, as we are, born in Middle Earth, as mortal as you, Sir.'

'Pardon my tongue, Master FairbairnóI meant no offense. But just as I was beginning to get used to the idea of ents, here you are giving me another jolt.'

'Did you think,' interrupted Ivulaine, 'that the all the stories from Arnor were just wives' tales? The men of Arnor have had daily business with the Shire now for centuries. How is it that the halfling folk are still such a mystery in the south?'

'Arnor may trade with this place you call Shire, but we in the Mark do not. We hear tales, it is true, from the men returning from Fornost Erain and Annuminasóstories that are told more often than in the past. But men tell tales of many things that do not exist in the waking world. Of flying fish and flying squirrels and horses that live in lakes and otters that lay eggs. We had thought the halfling to be such a creatureósuch a being,' said Vortigern, correcting himself.

'Tales are often told of creatures that do not exist, it is true, my dear Vortigern, for it pleases the fancy of man to invent.' answered Gervain. 'But all these beings you name do exist in Middle Earth. They do not make their home in Rohan, nor anywhere in the northwestóin the lands you have mapped. But far beyond your borders, and in the wide oceans, are creatures of flesh and blood that would take your breath away. Fish sixteen lar in lengthófish that breathe air!; striped horses; man-sized beasts that jump five lar to a strideóand carry their babes in a belly pouch; beasts so small they cannot be seen by a man's eye, a thousand living on the head of a pin. But tell me, Vortigern: if you were a man of the far south and had not seen a great eagleóif you were familiar only with sparrows and kitesówould you believe? You would not, I assure you. I have met men who scoffed at the existence of horses, who thought wolves to be creatures of fancy. It is no different. A man must

see to believe. You have seen the ent and the halfling and now you believe. But I do not expect you to believe in the striped horse until you have one on the end of a rope, or in your stables.'

'Aye, a striped horse is not a creature easy to accept. . . though I suppose it is easier to accept than a walking tree or a talking halfling. So much new information swamps a man's mind. I sometimes think it were better for a soldier to remain in Edoras, where trees remain rooted to the ground, and horses are horses—being neither striped nor lake-dwelling.'

'Tis better, surely, if he wants to learn nothing,' answered Gervain. 'But if that were the case, 'twould be even better for him to remain in his mother's home, under the bed, perhaps, with eyes closed tight and a finger in each ear.'

To this Vortigern made no answer.

Ivulaine served her punch in lovely tankards that had been found in the tower above. During the past week the men and wizards had been busy bringing down furniture and other necessaries from upper chambers. There, where the chairs and tables and other items had been above the flood, things were in better order. Everything, in fact, was just where it had been left by Saruman. Three centuries had little changed the things that remained—the desks still cluttered with papers and maps; the ancient folios (some still open to the pages, writ in fantastic script, that Saruman had last looked upon); the nameless machines of sorcery, embossed with fell runes and bent to weird shape; the strange weaponry collected by that wizard—unless it were that each and every one was covered by a thick layer of dust and hung with countless cobwebs.

Some lower-level chambers in the east tower looked to have been occupied by Saruman's servants among the men of Dunland, who oversaw the orc armies. These rooms were sparsely and roughly appointed and had been left in a state of shocking filth. But only one room above the ground floor had been utterly ruined: the shutters had rotted away completely in

the north wall of the north tower, on the third level; and pigeons and other birds had roosted there ever since in great numbers. The floors were white with their feathers and droppings. Everything in the room not made of iron would have to be burned.

But on this late spring evening, the atmosphere was quite merry in the west tower of Orthanc, with Ivulaine's great jereboam of punch and the singing of the men. The hobbits joined in the song, teaching the men of Gondor and Rohan the tunes of the Shire. All were impressed with their dexterity on the fine instruments, too. One of the men of Gondor tried his hand at Prim's rebec, but could not master the 'fiddle,' as he called itóthough it had only two strings whereas he was accustomed to four. The frets were too numerous for his knowledge, and too closely spaced for his larger fingers. Another man, a rider from Rohan, watched Tomilo with great appreciation, shaking his head at the speed of the hobbit's notes.

'I've never seen so many holes in a flute,' he gaped. 'You need six extra fingers just to play it!'





Chapter 9



Runes and Riddles

The hobbits also found time to eat that evening, and while they supped the wizards told them more of how they had come to be there and what they planned to do in the coming weeks. The messenger from the King had returned to Minas Mallor, but yesterday two other soldiers of Gondor had arrived, to act as interim assistants to the wizards until the King had had the time to select and outfit a company of men to be quartered permanently in the valley. The riders of Rohan had also been drafted by the wizards for odd jobs, although they spent much of the day searching the valley, mapping it and taking note of its features for their report to King Feognost. They had paced off the width of the circle, the distance from it to the edge of the forest, the distance from the northernmost reach of the Angrenost to the foot of Mt. Arianrhod (as they called it), among many other things. Also, they had counted the chambers of Orthanc, measured its base, estimated its height, and drawn a crude picture of it from afar. They even counted the number of great holes in the ground within the circle of the walls, although the wizards assured them these would be filled in the coming year. None of the smithies or forges of Saruman would be re-opened, not even to supply the dwarves with tools to rebuild the walls.

One of the jobs that Ivvulaine put the men to was scouring the four towers in search of bedding. All that could

be found was then carried down to the first floor of the west tower, to serve the party for the time. Here so close to the mountains it was chilly at night, though the elevation was low and spring was well underway. All there, whether man or wizard or hobbit, desired to stay near the fire, and near to each other. The upper chambers of the tower could be bitter cold at night, even as late as May; it was much better to stay below, on the ground.

A curious thing was discovered on one of these hunts for bedding. Tired of climbing the endless stairs, Ivulaine began to study the various contraptions with which Saruman had outrigged the towers. One of them, on the inner wall of the east tower, consisted of a system of great stones, each pierced and hung on a huge chain. The chains were looped over pulleys high up on the tower. Other stones hung there far above, almost out of sight. A series of wooden levers lined the wall, and writ above each lever was a number. Ivulaine was at a loss as to what these numbers signified, until she noticed that all the chains were either connected to, or waiting to be connected to by the various levers. A metal box or covered platform a bit more than a cubic yard in size. Now, you or I, after studying this odd conglomeration of articles, would likely have pulled one of the levers, to see what would happen. Ivulaine did nothing of the sort. To her eye there were three reasons for not proceeding in this rash manner. First there was the matter of the hanging stones, which might be caused to fall by tripping the wrong lever. Second, the numbers above the levers did not coincide with the number of floors in the east tower, nor with the number of chambers, nor with any other number of counting that the wizard could think of. Third, and most important, was the fact that this was clearly an internally balanced machine. One that might be thrown immediately out of balance by any wrong decision.

Even the wizard, keen as she was, might not have discovered the key to this secret, had she not finally noticed the proximity of a scale to the metal box. Using this scale, one

might ascertain with a fair degree of certainty the weight of any object, in stones.* This fact in hand, Ivulaine came to the conclusion that the contraption was a lift, built to transport objects, including people, to the top of the tower. It was therefore absolutely crucial to know the weight of the object or objects to be transported, and to pull the proper lever that coincided with this weight. The lever connected the correct stone or stones to the platform, which then raised it at a managable speed. Pulling the wrong lever, for whatever reason, might accelerate the platform at great speed, launching it into the air once the stone hit the ground.

Of course I have given only a brief description of the lift. It also included a braking device, and various other counterweights too complex for easy enumeration. But it worked. This Ivulaine discovered by removing a weight from the scale and placing it in the lift, then pulling the appropriate lever. The lift rose into the air, gently at first, then gaining a bit of speed near the top. It stopped with a bit of a bang, the stone on a chain hitting the ground near the wizard with an audible thud. This was because no one was in the lift to apply the brake. And now another problem presented itself. Namely, how to get the stone back down. Ivulaine assumed there existed another series of levers at the top of the tower, but that would require her climbing up to pull one of them. Clearly the lift was intended for Saruman, not for payload only. It needed human help at both ends. And the lift only made two stops—ground floor and pinnacle. Still, it would be great help, and Ivulaine was greatly cheered by its discovery. She couldn't wait to tell Gervain. For now, she must retrieve the lift and the stone. Doggedly, she clutched her staff and trudged off up the winding stone stairs. At least, she told herself, the voyage down would be less wearisome!

Tomilo and Prim were also having some minor adventures that day. They had no fear of stairs, being young and light of foot, so they explored many of the highest chambers of the towers,

seeking for maps or hidden passageways or other mysteries most appealing to hobbitkind. They had spent many minutes near the top of the east tower, having unlocked the shutters of a high window. It looked out toward the Great Forest of Fangorn, dark green and foggy in the distance. They could only espy its far southern reaches, the greater part of the forest being hidden by the arms of the mountains; but still it seemed vast beyond reckoning. However would they find Treebeard in such an endless place, dark and pathless?

Finally they resumed their game, crossing from the east tower to the north tower by way of the high open platform or fletóas the elves would have named it. The wind ripped across its great expanse, though it was calm in the valley below, and though the floor was bounded by a barrier four feet high in those places where it had no wall from the towers themselves. The two hobbits peered over the edge, pulling themselves up by their fingers. Their curly hair ruffled brightly in the high wind, and Prim's dirndl threatened to ride up from behind. If Tomilo had been wearing his shirriff's cap, it would have sailed off into the breeze, floating down into the open pits below. But there was nothing to see here they hadn't already seen from the window, and they scurried out of the cold air into the now pointing pinnacle of the north tower.

It was here that their game paid off, for this was Saruman's primary study and maproom. Some of his most prized possessions he had taken with him when he had left Orthanc, but not many. No more than would lade a single pony, for that is all the ents had allowed him. All the rest was hereóthe treasures

*This unit of weight was not precisely the unit used in England until the 20th century, but close enough for translation. We are told, by Findegil, scribe of Gondor, that a man of that time weighed, on average, 15 or 16 gond (stone). Now, either the men were larger, or the stones were smaller, than at present. Or both. An average man, trim and muscular, now weighs closer to 12 stone; and we cannot assume

that the men of Gondor were fat. Even admitting that the men were larger, the stone of Gondor was likely about 12 pounds avoirdupois.

of a wizard, gathered over an age of Middle Earth. Ivulaine and Gervain had already discovered this chamber, and they had removed one or two things that will be told later, but much had passed their notice. They had not yet made a proper inventory, only assuring themselves that nothing was here that was not meet for the eyes of the men. There were yet things of great value in the chamber, assuredly, but it was the maps that most interested the hobbits. As it has been told, hobbits have an inordinate love of maps and atlases and all sorts of printed records, of whatever kind. A map with pictures drawn upon it was perhaps the most precious of all. And so, this room was as a goldmine to them. They stood in wonder, as a dwarf might stand in wonder before a new-found vein of mithril. On the stone walls hung countless maps of Wilderland and Rhovanion and Mirkwood, of Eriador and the Blue Mountains, of Rhun, of Mordor, of Harad, of Umbar, of Gondor and Anfalas and Belfalas. Smaller maps there were as well, maps writ in red runes, with pictures of mountains and trees and elves and dragons and dwarves and men. Maps of Helm's Deep and of Edoras, maps of Lothlorien and Rhosgobel, maps of Minas Tirith of old and Osgiliath before its fall. Maps of Dol Guldur and of Angmar and of Barad-dur, with fingers pointing and feathered arrows marking places of special interest. The map of Barad-dur held Tomilo's eye. Nowhere else in Middle Earth did there exist a map of the streets about Barad-dur, its situation in the Ered Lithui, or its approach from Udun and Orodruin. Tomilo shuddered as he looked on the drawing of the Dark Tower, surmounted with a red eye; and he wondered if Saruman had gone there himself. Or had he bought this map from some servant of the enemy, unbeknownst even to Sauron?

Prim had turned away quickly from this map, finding it too fearsome, even though all that it depicted had long since

passed away. Tomilo found her studying a map of the area about Isengard. The names were not written in Westron, and most were therefore unfamiliar to the hobbits. Also, the *tengwar*¹ were heavily stylized: graceful and bold, with very long lines both above and below the baseline, and many flourishes. The *tehtar* were likewise extravagant, large and curved. The hobbits could not know it, but this was writing from the hand of Saruman himself. He had drawn this map sometime after arriving at Isengard, for his own reference. Over the years he had added somewhat to it, including a few notes on the ents; but on the whole the map was very ancient. Its original lines had been marked six or seven hundred years ago.

One of the first things Prim noticed from studying this map is that the source of the Entwash was very near to the source of the Isen. The two rivers were in fact fed by the same mountain run-off, the Isen being the southern run-off from the Methedras, and the Entwash being the eastern run-off. The Methedras, or 'End-peak', was the largest mountain in the Hithaeglin south of the Redhorn, both in elevation and in stone-mass. It also fed a third large river to the west—the Dunwindle², which flowed through Dunland before turning northwest and joining the Greyflood just above its mouths.

¹*Tengwar* are elvish letters. *Tehtar* are the signs which stand for vowels, among other things.

²The Dunwindle is not so large a river as the Isen or the Entwash, and is by no means comparable to the Greyflood. It is for this reason left off many of the greater maps of the time, which only included rivers that required marked bridges or fords. The single road of any consequence that crossed the Dunwindle was the Great South Road, and it crossed near to the mountains where the river was still narrow. During the Third Age it had not been deemed of strong enough current to require a bridge. But the King Elessar had built one nonetheless in the first century of the Fourth Age. All crossings between Arnor and Gondor were upgraded to bridges by special decree.

The second thing Prim noticed is that a path had been marked, from near the source of the Isen, to near the source of the Entwash. She could immediately see that this path allowed travel from Isengard to Fangorn without making the long march around the outlying hills.

'Look, Tomilo!' she said to the hobbit, grabbing his sleeve in excitement. 'We can take Saruman's own personal road to Fangorn. I wonder how high the pass is?' she added, pointing to the jagged line on the yellowed parchment.

'There are no elevations marked, that I can read,' answered the hobbit. 'But perhaps those runes mean something in that way. It appears that we only need follow the Isen up into the mountains, take a right turn at the correct spot, run along this valley, and clamber down the Entwash into the ent's very parlour. But I suspect it is not really that easy when it comes down to it. It could be very dangerous. There might be goblins in the mountains, I suppose. Or trolls. And the ents might not appreciate such a surprise entrance. I suppose we should ask the wizards what they think. At least they will be able to translate these runes for us.'

Prim rolled the map carefully and tied it among her apron strings. Then the two returned downstairs.

They found the wizards discussing the lift. Ivulaine had brought the carriage back down to the ground, and she was demonstrating to Gervain the use of the brake to retard the fall. This was necessary since the weight of the passengers and payload could not be determined precisely, despite the scales. Like all scales of the time, they were only roughly accurate. Besides, the hanging stones were stepped in weight. That is to say, even though they could be added together, they could not possibly make up every possible weight. That would have required an infinite number of stones. And even a small difference in the total weight of the carriage and the weight of the chosen stones could cause an appreciable acceleration over

the length of the ride. The brake was therefore perhaps the most important piece of the whole complex machine. The wizards studied it closely, to understand its workings, and so to enable them to keep an eye on its maintenance.

The hobbits could not be interested in the contraption; even less could they be convinced to ride in it. A water wheel defined the outside limits of hobbit science at that time (as now), and any object that moved on its own steam was looked at with great mistrust. Even a boat was a machine of baffling implication to most hobbits. Hobbit children often gazed at stairs in utter amazement—young visitors to Tuckborough sometimes were traumatized for days together, simply at the sight of a second-story door, and stairs climbing up to it. A lift was therefore a thing of frightful magic—a machine for wizards perhaps, but not for mere mortals. The men of Rohan and Gondor also refused to ride in the 'wizard's carriage.'

At last everyone returned to the first chamber of the West Tower for supper. Over a meal of stewed venison, made from meat brought in by Vortigern and his men, the hobbits told the wizards of their discoveries of the day. To broach the subject of the maps, Tomilo first spoke of the map of Barad-dur, asking Gervain how Saruman might have come by such a thing.

'I cannot tell you that, Mr. Fairbairn,' the Green Wizard answered, pushing his plate away with a sigh. 'I have seen the map you speak of, though only in passing. It is strange indeed. Sauron would not have known of that map. He would not have allowed it. He forbade any map-making of his realms, even by his highest ranking lieutenants. He demanded absolute secrecy. My guess is that Saruman enticed some orc chieftain of Mordor into the service of Orthanc, and wrung this information from him, by payment or threat. It was the highest form of insubordination, for both the orc and for Saruman, since it implies that Saruman was plotting not only against Edoras and Minas Tirith—he was also plotting against Barad-

dur. He seems to have thought that the ring, once taken from Frodo, would allow him to subdue even the Dark Lord himself. And perhaps it might have. None now living can say how much of Sauron's original strength might pass to the new ringwearer, given the proper hand. Saruman proved he had not the power to do great good. But who can say how much evil he was once capable of, in the right circumstance? He certainly embraced evil. With the ring on his hand, he might have marched into Mordor unopposed and thrown down Sauron in single combat. The Nine would not have stopped him, at any rate, since they were thralls to the ring, first and foremost. They would be the first to be subjugated to the will of the new ringwearer, not the last.'

'Why didn't Frodo just march into Mordor then, with the Nine behind him?' asked Prim.

'First of all, Frodo did not wish to supplant Sauron,' answered Ivulaine. 'Remember, too, that he was the *ringbearer*, not the ringwearer. Finally, in order to subjugate the Nine, and to intimidate the vast armies of Mordor, the ringwearer must needs be of a certain stature of mind. Frodo, although pure of heart and of great courage, did not have this stature. He was not a Maia. Even Denethor, nay, even Aragorn, would have been hard-pressed to cow the Nine, and all the countless servants of evil, with the One Ring in hand. Unless the ring had been wielded by a wizardóor mayhap one of the Elf Princes or Princesses, like Elrond or GaladrielóSauron would have wrested the ring back to his own hand by main force. You see, in the beginning, Sauron was powerful beyond reckoning, being almost one of the Valar. His corruption was Morgoth's greatest victory in all the history of Valinor. His fall has been the greatest loss to Morgoth since the beginning of time. It may be that this is the reason Morgoth has chosen this time to return. Sauron is no longer capable of doing his bidding. Morgoth must now orchestrate his own wars.'

At this, the table fell silent for many minutes. Ivulaine arose and began making her tea over the fire. The men and

hobbits cleared the table. Afterwards, Tomilo and Gervain filled their pipes. The men pulled their chairs near the hearth, and spoke in low voices. They did not smoke, but one of the men of Rohan carved a bit of wood with a small knife. It was a doll for his child back home. Another wove a length of horsehair into a long braid: it was a new 'tail' for his helm. Others were less creative, though no less practical—they checked their hair for ticks and scraped the dirt from their fingernails. Several removed their boots and dried their feet near the fire in preparation for sleep. The air was heavy with the smell of leather and rustic soldiery.

When Ivulaine returned to the table with her now-boiling samovar, Prim brought out the map of Isengard and showed it to the wizards. They lit several candles and laid the old parchment out flat, the corners held down by empty goblets. It was now dark outside, though only just, and the crickets had only then begun their singing. Somewhere nearby an owl joined them with a few mournful notes. The only other sound outside was the distant Isen, its constant rush among the rocks providing an undertone to the noises of the fauna.

'This map I did not see,' said Gervain. 'Thank you for bringing it down, Primrose. It will be quite useful, I am sure.'

'We were hoping you could read it for us,' answered Prim. 'These runes, for instance. We cannot tell what they mean, though we hope there is some information there about the pass from the Isen to the Entwash. Tomilo and I thought we might take that shortcut to Fangorn Forest,' she added, pointing to the line drawn there.

'Yes, let's see. It does appear to cut off a great loop from your journey. But you haven't told us why you are going to Fangorn. Do you have some sort of business there, from the Shire?'

'Of a sort, yes,' answered Tomilo. 'I am afraid I can't tell you exactly, though I suspect you will know soon enough. We have some information for the ents, and we feel they should be told first. We are not here at the request of the Thain—we are

here on private business, you might say. Business between myself and Treebeard.'

'Then you have met Treebeard before?' asked Ivulaine, with some surprise.

'No. I haven't met him. I have only read about him. And I heard about him from Oakvain.'

'Oakvain?'

'Oakvain is the ent of the Old Forest, on the eastern borders of the Shire. Tom Bombadil introduced us.'

'I had no idea there were ents still living in the Far West,' exclaimed Gervain.

'Not ents. Ent. I only met Oakvain. I think he is the last. At least, he said he was the last one in that forest. I am not sure about the other forests. He said something about a wood near where the elves live, I think. Maybe there are a few there, too.'

'And this Oakvain had a message for Treebeard?' asked Ivulaine

'No, I wouldn't say that. Not a message. I can't say more, I'm afraid. But it's not bad news. So don't worry.'

'All right, Mr. Fairbairn,' replied Ivulaine, smiling. 'If you say so. We will not press, although it is beyond our comprehension that hobbits and ents should have things to talk about. Do keep us informed, when the conversation becomes more general.'

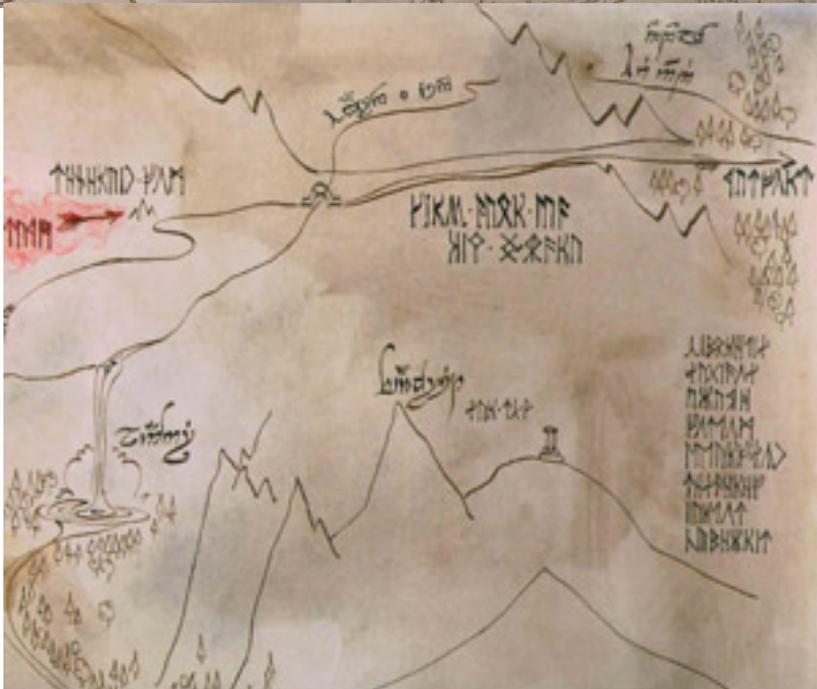
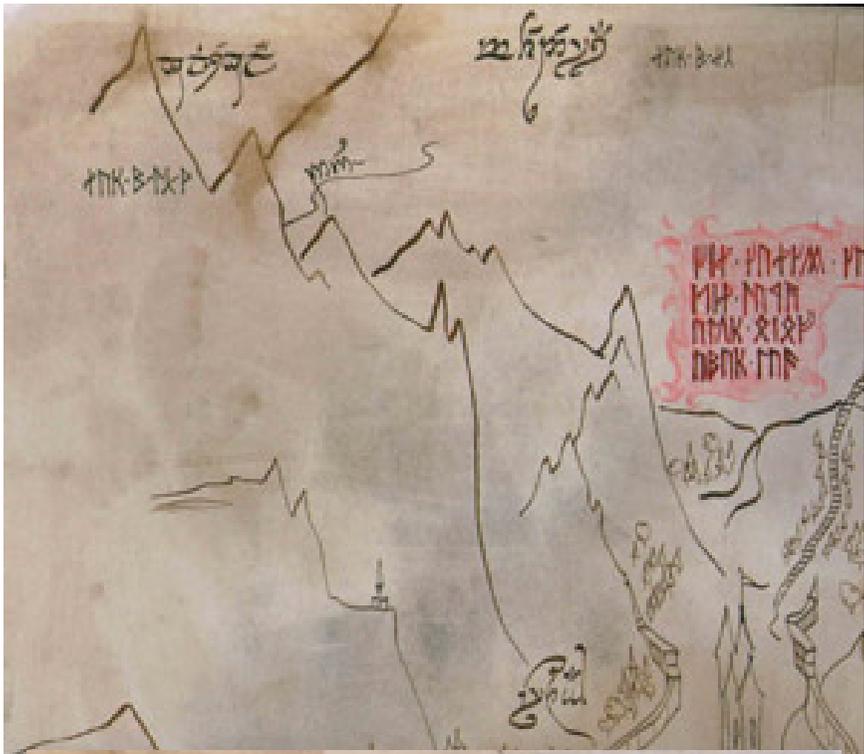
'Oh, we certainly will,' said Prim blushing, embarrassed by the situation. 'We don't like secrets any more than you do. But, now, you know, could you tell us anything about this pass? Do you think it looks dangerous?'

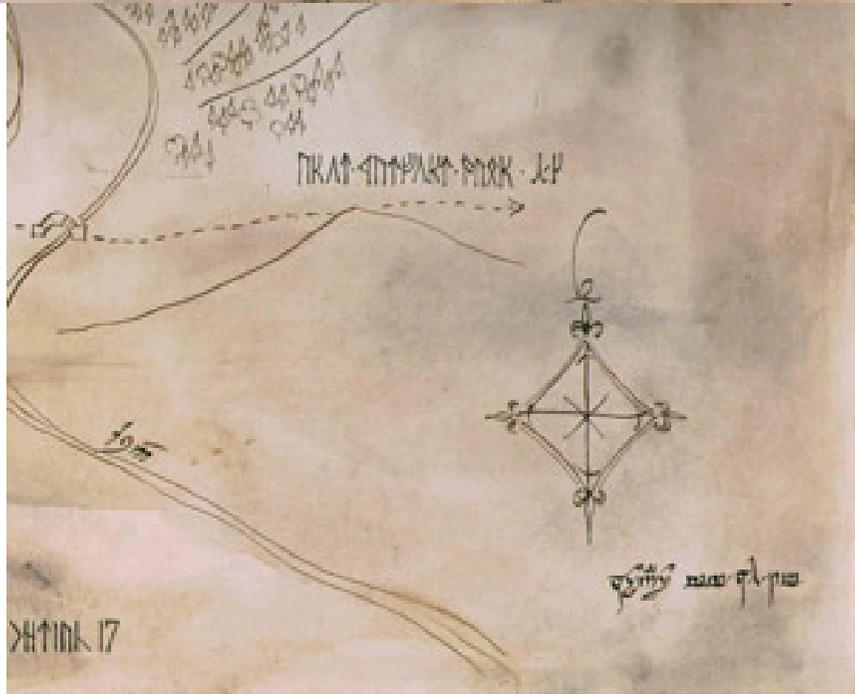
'Dangerous?' answered Gervain. 'I shouldn't think so. Although it is hard for us to answer that, since we only just arrived here ourselves. We know no more than you about the paths round about. We should ask Finewort.'

'Finewort?' said Tomilo. 'Who is he?'

'He is the ent that has been guarding Isengard, though he has not made an appearance since you arrived. Once we settled in here, he left the guarding to us. He has been standing

over on the edge of the wood for weeks, mostly, I believe. But we can walk over tomorrow and see what he thinks of your little expedition. He may even know of this path of Saruman's. I suspect the ents have discovered all of Saruman's secrets by now. It may be that this path was the ent's secret before it was Saruman's. A secret he borrowed from them.'





The map was scanned in four pieces; click on the piece you would like to enlarge.

This map is authentic in every particular but one. For this publication I have inserted modern numerals in the index at the bottom of the map. Leaving Saruman's figures would have required me to publish an entire treaty on the number systems of Middle Earth. Since Mr. Tolkien has not done so, I knew the numerals would be otherwise untranslatable for most readers. As an example, I have left Saruman's figures for the distance to Fangorn (see the broken-line path). He abbreviates the distance '*h-c*', which stands for '*haran-canad*'óor 'hundred-four'. Hyphenated in this order, this translates as quarter-hundred, or twenty-five. 'Four hundred' would have been written *canadharan*. 'One hundred and four' would be written *harancanad*. The elevations I have also left as Saruman wrote them: '*lar*' I have explained elsewhere; '*m*' stands for '*meneg*', which is a thousand; Tolkien has published the numbers from one to tenóI will not repeat them here. The map is dated in the lower right-hand corner: 11,421. According to my calculations, this date does not coincide with the beginning of the First Age. The zero-year of this date may be the creation of the Two Trees by Yavanna.

'But the runes?' reminded Prim. 'They are not ent runes, are they? We do not need the ent to translate them, do we?'

'No dear. Those are the Angerthas Daeron. Elvish runes. We know them well. They are actually quite common, although they are more often used now by the dwarvesóin a varied formófor their long runes of Moria or Erebor. Saruman has used these runes to spell Sindarin words, as was the usual way, although he might have used them for Quenya, or even for Westron or Old Entish, come to that. Most of these words are just names of placesó"Methodras" is the mountain, you see; this word means "Orthanc"; that one means "Angrenost". This little one here just means "falls". Now, these words pointing to the turn in the path, that interests you, they mean, roughly, "three-horned rock". I would guess there is a rock formation that looks like three horns at this place, indicating that you should turn to the right. Here, these four words mean "two

leagues in a cutting". It appears there may be a long narrow gorge between cliff walls, perhaps made in the distant past by a now-extinct river.'

'Two leagues?' interrupted Ivulaine. 'That is a very long gorge for such a place. It would be almost like the entrance to Gondolin. Either a very safe place, or a very dangerous place, depending on the circumstance. If you were not known to be there, you could not be found; but if you were seen entering you would be trapped on two sides, as well as being vulnerable from above. We absolutely must speak to Finewort before you risk this pass. It may be that it is not worth the time saved.'

'Yes,' agreed Tomilo. 'We are in no hurry. There is no snow or other weather pressing us. And I for one have had enough of mountain passes, whether river gorges or the bridges over those gorges.'

'There may be bridges to dare on this path, for all we know,' added Gervain. 'The word "cutting" implies that the gorge may have been hewn by men in places, rather than being wholly natural. Or it may just be a word that Saruman used for description. But remember that this entire valley was once the dwelling of the exiles from Numenor. They built this tower and these outer walls, as well as some other lesser structures. It is possible that they cut this path to ease the transfer of timber from Fangorn. In which case it may include bridges or other improvements. There is not room on this map for Saruman to have marked every special point on the path. And lookóthere *is* a bridge over the Isen here, though it seems to come before the cutting. Still, the river may run in its own deep gorge, in which case the bridge could be quite treacherous.'

'But what is this eye over here?' interrupted Prim, pointing to the lower left of the map. 'Might it have some special meaning?'

'That is just Saruman's sign, or signature,' answered Ivulaine. 'The curve around the eye is a large "S" for Saruman. I assume the point above is his hatóthe sign of his wizardry. The eye is in imitation of Sauron. The word's below are the

only Quenya words on the map, and I understand them to be a sort of motto. They say, "The night shall come again." This is a bastardization of Hurin's cry at the Nirnaeth Arnoediad, "The day shall come again." I suspect Saruman added these words later, when he had come under the influence of Sauron.'

Gervain lifted the map from the table momentarily, to look more closely at the small writing. The candles were casting little light, and he feared to hold the wax too close to the laid-out parchment, for fear of dripping upon it. At that very instant, one of the men opened the door, to go out for a breath of fresh air. The wind swirled into the room, and a gust ripped the map from the wizard's hands. The paper whirled away toward the fireplace, following the draw of air up the chimney, and both hobbits leapt up to catch it before it reached the flames. Gervain was right behind. He retrieved the map from the hand of Tomilo with a 'sorry' and a 'thank you', and as he did so he glanced at the map, now lit fully by the red light from the large fire in the grate. At once he noticed the outline of fiery yellow letters, dimly glowing in the lower left corner of the map. He stopped and cried out, 'Ai, what is this?'

Ivulaine joined him, and they held the map close to the fire, looking intently as the letters slowly became clearer. Finally, Prim could stand it no longer.

'What is it?' she cried. 'Is it very bad?'

'No, dear. It is not bad at all,' answered Ivulaine, smiling down at her. 'It is just a surprise. There are fire-letters here. Words that can be read only by firelight.'

'You mean like the moon-letters, that the dwarves used?' asked Tomilo excitedly.

'Yes, in a way. Although these letters do not require a particular type of firelight, any fire, that is bright enough, will do. The candles were too dim.'

'What does it say? Is it important?' asked Prim, almost hopping up and down.

'It says, "Star. Forty paces. Moon. Twenty. Sun. Twelve. Earth. Two,"' answered Ivulaine, reading straight from the

map.

'What in the world does that mean?' gasped Tomilo.

'I don't know,' said Ivulaine. 'It may be that something is buried up there. I take it that "Earth. Two" means that something is buried six feet deep in that place.'

'Yes, I see. Two paces into the earth.'

'And "star,"' continued the wizard, 'is the beginning point. It could mean some place indicated by a star or constellation in the heavens. But I cannot see how the word "star," by itself, with no other clue, could indicate a place.'

'It might mean many things,' suggested Gervain. 'There may be another rock formation that looks like a star. Or Saruman may have cut and set a star-shaped stone in the ground up there. Or carved a star into a cliff-wall. Or "star" may be a puzzle-word.'

'A puzzle word?' cried Prim. 'What is that?'

'I simply mean that "star" may not mean star. It may mean something else. For instance, the word for "star" written on the map is gil. That is one of the Sindarin words for "star". Gil spelled backwards is lig. Lig means "goose". "Goose" may be a clue which makes sense when read with the other words, read in the same way. Let us see. The word for "moon" here is ithil. Ithil backwards is lihti, which is not a word. It almost means "ashes", but that would be lithi. The word for "sun" is anor. Anor backwards is rona. Rona means "arrow". So that makes some sense. The word for "earth" is arth. Arth backwards is nothing, obviously. . . unless we use the Quenya word arda, in which case it becomes adra in reverse, which is "two." But we are really grasping now, and I think it very likely we left the right track long ago, with these guesses. At any rate, there are many ways to re-arrange the letters, using the various languages. And re-arrangement is only one of the many possibilities with puzzles. We may also have a numerological puzzle, where each letter stands for a number, and so on. Ivulaine and I will study the runes tonight, and see what we may see. But we may not understand the puzzle until we

stumble by chance upon this "star" that Saruman speaks of. If the words are not a puzzle, and there is surely no reason to insist they are, then the easiest thing is to search first for the "star."

'Maybe Prim and I should walk up the Isen tomorrow, to see if we can find it,' said Tomilo.

'No,' Gervain replied. 'I think we should talk to Finewort first, before anyone goes wandering off into the mountains. He will be easy to find in the morning, I think. In fact, he may know something of the star himself. The ents may have dug up this treasure long, long ago, for all we know.'

'All right,' Tomilo answered, with a shrug of the shoulders (the thought that the 'treasure' might not be there after all was somewhat disappointing, after all the talk of it).

'But at least we get to see an ent tomorrow!' Prim reminded him.

'Yes, and I hope he is not as nasty as Old Oakvain,' thought Tomilo to himself.

It was a foggy morning in the valley and only the very feet of the mountains were visible. The black tower of Orthanc was lost in a vast white cloud. Its lower battlements loomed suddenly from under the heavy mists, as if to endanger any careless birds in the valley. These twittering birds, their cries muffled by the watery air, played hide and seek in the vapours, flying up into the cloud only to re-emerge with a tweet a few yards on. Tomilo and Prim, watching these games over breakfast, feared to see the birds crash into the tower, or into each other. But all such worry was needless. Birds did not crash into towers any more than they crashed into trees, though it was beyond the ken of two-legged creatures how they always avoided it.

Leaving the birds at last, and their breakfast, the pair of hobbits followed the pair of wizards beyond the circle of Isengard, making for a small wood that lay across the river. This wood was an outlier of the greater wood of Fangorn

beyond. As Tomilo and Prim passed through the high grasses, their feet quickly became drenched with dew. But it was no more an inconvenience to them than to the badger in the hedge: both relied on their dense fur to keep the water from penetrating, and the hobbits were more concerned about the chill on their handsówhich they kept in their pockets. Even wading the Isen brought no lasting chill to their feet. Like the feathers of a duck, the hobbits' fur wicked away the water, and a bit of stomping on the far bank made them good as newóif a bit muddier.

Tomilo walked with his head down, breathing heavily. He almost snorted, as if he was still snoring in his sleep, and Prim looked at him with amusement. But he paid her no attention. He was busy replaying last night's conversation in his head. He had tossed and turned in his bedding for hours after everyone else had gone to sleep, thinking of the map and the treasure. And now the same thoughts continued to plague him. What did the fire-letters mean? Did they have anything to do with the shortcut through the mountains? Should he and Prim take that way, or not? Would it be safe? Might there be more balrogs in the mountains?

He tried to push the confused and troubled thoughts from his mind as he stumbled on in the growing light, still yawning. What he really needed was two more hours of sleep, he thought to himself. And another sitting at the breakfast table. Then his mind might clear. But the wizards seemed to be in a hurryónot talking, only walking quickly ahead in their great boots, serious and taciturn as was often their wont. Prim, too, was quiet now, only looking about her at the dewy grasses and bushes of the river valley, noting the varieties of flora that lived there. In this soundless hour, when everything was grey or white, nothing intruded upon Tomilo's thoughts to help turn them, and he fell back into the well-worn paths of his mind. But at last a new thought occurred to him. He had been thinking of the mountain pass on the mapóhow Ivulaine had said it was like Gondolin. . . .

Gondolin! Wasn't that an elvish city from long ago? Yes, he had read of Gondolin in Bilbo's *Translations from the Elvish*. A poem, or something like that. Maybe a song. He couldn't remember. But there was an elf princess who was in love with a man. And they fought a balrog. And there was an elf named Glorfindel there. Tomilo remembered these things, since subsequent events had etched them into his mind, as it were. He had learned much since about balrogs—more than he ever wanted to know. But he had not had time or chance to ask Glorfindel of Imladris about this Glorfindel of Gondolin. Now, perhaps, was the time to learn the truth of it.

'Gervain. Ivulaine,' said Tomilo at last, bringing all the party from their morning reverie. 'May I ask you something? Something about Glorfindel?'

'Certainly you may, my dear hobbit,' answered Gervain. 'But what makes you think of him at this moment?'

'Well, it was Ivulaine's mentioning of Gondolin last night that did it, I guess. It got me to thinking of the balrogs, and then of the two Glorfindels, who both fought balrogs it seems, if I remember rightly. I read about Gondolin a long time ago, in some of old Bilbo's writings that are up at Undertowers. It was Glorfindel who was at Gondolin, wasn't it?'

'Yes, Tomilo. But not the same Glorfindel you met. Glorfindel of Gondolin fell in combat with a balrog, though his body was found by the eagle Thorondor and brought back to the elves upon Cirith Thoronath. On that dreadful pass they laid him in a cairn of rocks, before continuing on out of the mountains.'

'That is just what I wanted to know. I thought maybe the two Glorfindels were the same. In some of the old songs, the heroes come back to life. And if he came back once, maybe he can come back again?'

'None come back to life who have truly left it,' Ivulaine said. 'The songs perhaps exaggerate.'

'What of Beren One-hand?'

'Yes, Beren. That is the exception,' answered Ivulaine, shaking her head. 'Mandos did allow it, that one time, swayed as he was by the song of Luthien. It was only a postponement, since Beren and Luthien both died, and did not come to Mandos ever. You are very learned, Tomilo, and have a fine memory. Beren was a hero who came back to life, if for a while. But Glorfindel did not. He is in Mandos. As is his namesake. They will not return to Middle-Earth.'

'But why did the elves take our Glorfindel? I mean the Glorfindel we knew? Why did they not bury him? The body does not go across the sea, does it? The Glorfindel of Gondolin left his body on the pass, as you said. That is what I don't understand.'

'The elves did not take our Glorfindel over the sea, Tomilo. They took him to the sea. Many elves desire to be buried in the arms of Ulmo, where they believe they will be tended til the end. No doubt this was the wish of Glorfindel.'

'Oh,' said Tomilo, and became silent once more.





Chapter 10



The Telling of Fangorn

Finewort was standing in a small grove of copper beeches when they found him. It had not been easy. This grove was on the top of a low hill, surrounded by trees of many kinds. What was more, the hill was high enough that it was all but lost to the world in this morning's fogs. Ivulaine had found it necessary to ask about before she found the place. Fortunately there were some huorns in the area who were limb-lithe and understood her speech. She was pointed toward Finewort by the long leafy limb of an ash tree who was rooted at the bottom of the hill. The wizards smiled to themselves and wondered how long those roots would last.

At their approach, Finewort awoke from his nap, or whatever it was. He had been asleep for more than a week, but it seemed to him that he had just closed his eyes. He was somewhat put out by the disturbance.

'Ah, the wizards,' said he, with a bit of a groan. 'There is no trouble at Isengard, I hope?' Then he noticed the hobbits. His eyes opened wide, and he slowly made signs that another ent would have read as surprise. To the wizards and hobbits he just looked like he had a spider in his wig.

'Hullo!' said Tomilo. 'You must be Finewort. Glad to meet you! This is my wife Primrose.' She and Tomilo both bowed low.

'And good-day to you both,' answered Finewort, getting

beyond his surprise, and chuckling to himself at the bows. 'I wouldn't have thought folk so low to the ground could bend lower to it, hmm, aha, but there you are doing it and I don't know what it means. I take it as a salutation, and return it in my own way, eh, which is to creak a bit about the bole, like this.' He made a sound like a popping of knuckles, much magnified. 'We don't usually do that for other creatures, but you shared your salutation, so I thought I would do the same, you know, ho-ho-hmm. It startles some, so we don't do it. We are feared to have indigestion, I think. Ha.'

'Yes,' said Prim. 'It is a bit off-putting, by our standards.'

'But what are you, may I ask? I would say you were halfling folk, but that we haven't had halfling folk about since the time of Saruman. I never saw Fangorn's little friends, but you match the stories, I must say.'

'Yes, Master Finewort, we are indeed halflings. Though we prefer the word hobbit,' added Prim. 'We have come to ask you a question, you know.'

'No, I didn't know. But I do now. What question is that, my friend?'

'We found a map,' explained Tomilo. 'We thought you might know something about it. About the things on the map, that is. Since you have been here so long, and been up and down and round about. Is there a place where we could look at the map together, without getting dripped on, I wonder?'

'It isn't much of a day for looking at maps, I am afraid,' said Ivulaine. 'Especially in the out of doors. Perhaps we should just explain to him our problem, Tomilo.'

'Oh, all right. Well, you see this map shows a secret way from the Isen to the Entwash, away up in the mountains. It is a sort of short-cut from Isengard to the forest. We wanted to ask you if it was still there.'

'And if it was safe,' added Prim.

'A short-cut, you say? Hmmm, ho. A short-cut. Yes, it is indeed. I mean it is indeed still there, though I didn't know anyone knew of it but us ents. We don't even use it, not often

we don't. We would rather walk a distance than a climb. Climbing is difficult, when you walk like we do. It is hard to lift the legs high enough. And we don't hurry. We have no reason to hurry. Ha, ha, hum.'

'Excuse me, Mr. Finewort,' interrupted Prim, 'but is it safe? I mean, would it be safe for small folk like us? Is there any danger?'

'Danger? No. No danger. No orcs. No wolves. Maybe bears, but they don't eat hobbits, I don't think. A mother bear might mistake you for a cub, but that is all the danger I can think of, ha, ha, humph-a-bumph.'

Tomilo smiled at this last idea, and the strange sounds that drove it home. But then he remembered to ask about the fire letters on the map. 'Do you know, by any chance, of a star-shaped sign anywhere along this short-cut? There is a clue on the map suggesting that a star-shaped sign or something that means "star" might lead to a treasure of some sort, or something that Saruman hid up there.'

Gervain added, 'Yes, did the ents find anything hidden by Saruman along this short-cut? It might have been found long ago or most likely buried six feet deep, we think.'

'No. No, we didn't find anything at all up there. Never looked, that I know of. No stars, no treasures. Ho, hmmm. Nothing buried. If Saruman did not take it away with him, I would guess it is up there yet, whatever it may be.'

'I see,' said Tomilo. 'Well, then, maybe we will keep our eyes open for stars, or other clues, if we go that way. But now I must ask you about Fangorn himself. Not the forest but the ent. Treebeard, as we hobbits call him. We want to find him. Prim and I, I mean. We travelled from the Shire to tell him something. And, er, I was wondering if you could tell us where to look for him. It is a big forest, and maybe it is not right for us to just wander in and start shouting. What is the proper thing to do, do you know?'

'You have a message for Fangorn, you say? Hm, ho. Very interesting. Quite astonishing. The very definition of

outlandish, it is, really, if you consider it for a moment! Halflings show up out of nowhere, and the next thing you know they have a message for Fangorn. Out-land-ish! Hmmmmm.' Finewort's arms and leaves began a slight flutteration (almost as if he might have some inkling of the true nature of the message, thought Primóbut more likely he was just a rather excitable ent). 'Yes, hmmm, let me think a bit. Don't be hasty. Don't go running off just yet! Hmmmmm.'

After many minutes of listening to Finewort hem and haw and scratch his head and shiver his leaves, Tomilo finally coughed impatiently, and the young ent looked down and laughed.

'I have it! I shall take you myself, my hasty little halflings. You shall tell Fangorn, and he shall tell me, and then we shall all knowóthe whole hasty lot of us, ha, ha, humpy, dump! And what of the wizards? Will you come, too? To see what message the halflings have for Fangorn?'

'I think not, Finewort,' answered Ivulaine. 'The hobbits will have to return this way, soon enough. They have promised to keep us informed.'

'Well, have it your own way. Shall we go?' the ent finished, looking to the hobbits.

'Now?' said Tomilo.

'If you're ready,' answered Finewort, his leaving still a-flutter.

'No, no, we can't go now. We have to get our packs and our instruments. And our ponies.'

'Oh, you won't need ponies. I will carry you. No heavier than a couple of robins, you aren't.'

'But we may go on to Lothlorien afterwards, to see more friends. We shall need our ponies thenóunless you mean to carry us all the way to the elves.'

'No, I will not carry you there. Go get your beasts and your blankets. I will be here.'

'We will return in the morning, Finewort. We have some things to do today with the wizards, and it will take some time

for us to prepare for our trip to the forest, even if you mean to carry us. Especially if you mean to carry us. We will have to tell the ponies about you, for one thing. I hope they are not spooked by the very idea of ents.'

'No, no, ponies are not scared of ents, unless we scare them on purpose. Ponies know about us, just like they know about bears and birds and deer and fish. We have been here with them from the beginning.'

'That's right,' said Tomilo to himself, though he was still speaking aloud. 'Drabdrab was not afraid of Oakvain.'

'Oakvain?' repeated Finewort.

'Oh, nothing,' added Tomilo quickly, coming to himself and realizing the situation just in time. 'Oakvain was a . . . a birdóan eagle, you know. But my pony was not afraid of him at all. I thought he would be, but he wasn't.'

'Oakvain is a strange name for an eagle,' commented Finewort.

'Yes. Yes, eagles do have strange names, do they not?' continued Tomilo, still covering.

Finewort just looked at him curiously, but asked no further questions*.

*Finewort was too young to know of Oakvain. His suspicion was only a general one, due to Tomilo's manner.

Back at Orthanc that evening, the two wizards discussed the morning's meeting between the hobbits and the ent.

'I have never seen an ent so distracted,' began Ivulaine.

'Nor I,' answered Gervain. 'Did you see his leaves shaking? I thought for a moment he was going to skip off down the hill and turn a somersault. If anything was "out-land-ish" this morning, it was Finewort himself.'

'The only thing that comes to mind is that the last time halflings wandered into Fangorn Forest, and spoke to Fangorn himself, every tree in the wood ended up in a complete uproar, for one reason or another. Finewort must remember that well,

for it was only yesterday to his reckoning.'

'Yes, but it was more than that, to my mind. He almost seemed to be *expecting* the hobbits, if that makes any sense. As soon as he heard that they were seeking Fangorn, he appeared to know what it was about. Some sort of premonition. But how could he possibly know? Are the ents expecting news? Is there a prophecy to be fulfilled?'

'I have no knowledge of one. But that is neither here nor there, since my knowledge of the history of the ents begins and ends with what I know of the War of the Ring.'

The next morning the hobbits bid farewell to the wizards and the men and set off again out of the valley. Their goodbyes were not long or especially emotional, since they planned to return to Orthanc on their way home. That, they assumed, would only be a few weeks hence, even counting the visit to Phloriel. They would give the wizards the news from Fangorn at that time, and learn from them any update on the mysteries of the map.

Finewort was waiting for them at the bottom of the hill, to save them the climb, and they all set out immediately. Drabdrab took little notice of the ent, being used to many strange creatures in the Old Forest. And Nobbles, after a long stare, decided to put a good face on it: if Drabdrab was not frightened, he could not be seen to be frightened either. A hobbit pony might not be a creature of great stature or beauty, but he was a proud beast nonetheless, in his own way. He was a representative of Shire upbringing, and would not for the world be seen balking at an ent, especially when no one else was.

At first Finewort allowed the hobbits to jog along beside him to give them a bit of morning exercise, he said to himself with a chuckle but at last he grew weary of speaking down to the ground, and having the hobbits shout up to him, and he lifted them up into his branches, where the conversation was more cozy. As he looked at their funny little feet dangling near

to his head, he thought to himself what queer beasts they were indeed. Good-natured, assuredly, and seemingly trusty as the day was long; but nonetheless passing queer to look upon. So compact! So portable! Like having an acorn for a body. A nut with legs. But also so softóan acorn without a shell, to be sure.

The little company had been passing through woods all morning, but at about noon the hobbits began to see a great wall of trees ahead, getting nearer all the while. Soon they arrived at the Forest of Fangorn proper; and passing beneath a sort of archway of branches, they entered into a dark and very old-looking path among the huge and mossy trees. This was no deer-path, meandering among the underbrush: it was clearly an ent-path, straight and with plenty of headroom. Even in those places where a branch had lowered across the path, it was removed as Finewort drew near, without a word or other sign from the ent.

Prim looked about her in amazement at the ancient trees, dark and dreary and sometimes quite frightful. The ponies kept close to the ent, and Nobbles snuffled to himself, as if to keep up his courage. His nose was right on the flank of Drabdrab, and if the hobbits had looked down, they might have caught him with his eyes closed tight.

Finally Prim leaned forward and said to Tomilo, 'I have heard tell of Mirkwood, but if that forest is mirkier than this, I don't think I want to go thereónot even in the company of an ent. This is mirky enough for me.'

Finewort laughedóa deep booming rumble that almost sounded like thunder, especially to the hobbits, so near were they to his mouth. 'I think I should try to be more complimentary, on my first visit to your home,' he said. 'Though I suppose I might not like it much better than you like mine. I think yours might be a bit too open and airy for my taste. A bit too much horizon to really feel at ease. And I think you live in wooden huts, like men, do you not? It would be hard for me to approve of that, you know, no matter how polite I was.'

'Oh no!' cried Prim, 'We don't live in wooden huts. We live in holes—that is most of us do.' She paused. 'Although I have to admit that we do use wood for shutters and chairs and things like that. I had not thought how disconcerting that must be to ents. We do apologize.'

'No need, no need,' answered the ent with a smile. 'We came to terms with that a long time ago. After all, who of us, of all the creatures of the world, can say that everything was planned just the way we would have liked it, were we running the show? All creatures hunt each other, and make use of one another in various ways. The rabbit does not "approve" of the fox, nor the fish "approve" of the heron, no doubt, and yet such is the world. As long as the use that is made of trees is kept within certain bounds, we ents do not take it all too personally. Only when it passes all understanding or patience, as with that. . . that. . . harum, hum barum, that traitor Saruman. . . well, in that case our patience runs out, as anyone's would, you know.'

Tomilo also felt the closeness of the forest, although he said nothing for the time. He had been in the Old Forest, and in the Bindbole Wood, but neither compared to this. The difference was like the difference between a snug hobbit hole and the dwarf-cell in Khazad-dum. The hobbit thought to himself that the sun must never really shine here—not like it did in the outside world. All memory of blue sky and white cloud and bright yellow corn standing out clearly against the infinite horizon—all that was blotted out in this net of gloomy vegetation and soupy air. Breathing became a task in such a place: one must swallow the air with intention, almost like a snake swallowing an egg. The air stuck in one's throat. Tomilo thought of a fish lying on the bank, its eyes bugged out, its gills working to no avail. A few hours in this forest and he would be the same—nothing but heaving sides and lolling tongue.

The ent seemed to read his mind, for at that very moment Finewort spoke up again. 'What we need is a drink of

water. That will clear everyone's heads. It just takes a bit of getting used to the air of Fangorn I mean for those who are accustomed to living on the plain. A cup of Fangorn's finest streamwater will be just the thing for you.' He paused in his speech and looked about for the stream, before returning, somewhat distractedly, to the topic. 'In a week the air and water outside the forest will seem thin and dry, not worth breathing or drinking you'll see. When you leave Fangorn, you'll always wish for nourishment more hearty and toothsome. You can almost chew the air here and that's why we like it. You can smell the dirt on the breeze; you can taste the heart of the stone in the water. No need to put down roots in Fangorn, my friends you can take in all the nourishment you need with a deep breath. You can eat just by opening your pores wide and standing still for a week. It's truly delicious!'

The hobbits smiled at the colourful language, but were mostly unconvinced. Prim especially looked as though she would prefer to eat food and breathe air, rather than vice versa, or both at once, or whatever was meant.

At last Finewort found the stream he was looking for, and all of them, ent and hobbit and pony, drank lustily. This was not the Entwash, but a small tributary that arose above them in the mountains. It was bitter cold, being recent snowmelt. It had already picked up the tang of the forest however, and the hobbits could truly taste the earth, just as the ent had said. It was not a mineral taste, nor yet again a taste of mold or other vegetation although that is what they had expected. I cannot put it clearer than to say that it tasted like the earth smelled rich and fertile. Almost like a glass of very weak ale, except that the edge was not an edge of grain or barley, but of pine or fir or beech. It was like a weak beer fermented from pine resin, or pine cones, if there could be such a thing. Slightly sweet, in a way beer never is. But not sweet like cider, nor wit-dimming like ale. No, it was like nothing else. It was its own peculiar taste, and can hardly be imagined by those in a later age where all is young and

spry and tasteless.

After this fine drink of water, Prim began talking of cooking something—perhaps some potatoes in lard. But Finewort would not hear of a fire. He suggested that if they needed something more 'solid' than streamwater, he might offer them an ent-draught or two from a friend nearby. Tomilo thought that with a bit of bread, that might tide them over until dinner. 'Aye, it'll tide you over, little one, and no need of wheat to leaven it!' added Finewort (mistaking somewhat the baking process). 'You'll live on ent-draughts for the next several days—since there are no taverns on this road, nor storehouses neither. But you won't likely miss them, believe it or no. We'll have that hair on your heads and toes curling even more by week's end, or my worts aren't the finest around—which they are!'

The ent turned a bit to the left, toward the mountains, and crashed through a low brake of nettles as if it were softest grass. Beyond the brake was a shelf of stone, about man-high, jagged and broken at the top. A gap in the jumbled stones served as sort of doorway, for beyond was an ent dwelling—though no one but an ent would have known it. The other three sides of this dwelling were walls of trees, grown so close and intermingled that a squirrel must enter sideways. The roof was likewise almost complete, the branches so thick that the rain might hardly get through, unless the trees—or the ent—willed it.

The hobbits looked about them in the dim light, wondering which of these trees was the ent. Tomilo looked for eyes in the trunks, but could not guess which one might begin speaking at any moment. Finally Finewort began his creaking routine, which made enough noise for a whole bag of door-clackers, and a small willow on the northeast corner of the 'room' awoke and creaked back. Tomilo and Prim watched as his roots seemed to shrink into toes, and to give up the earth (which in fact they did not—it was only an illusion—the toes

never dug more than a few inches into the soil). Then they listened in amaze as the two ents began speaking to each other in their own tongue. It was a speech in tones so low they were at times sub-audible; the gap in sound being signified only by vibration. Nevertheless, the sound was highly musical—like a melody played on some great bass horn. The ents were not so much speaking to one another as singing.

The willow strode slowly over to them, all drooping and swaying. He looked very melancholy, as do all willows, tree or ent. But he was not, especially. Presently, in fact, he was feeling quite amiable and alert, and he looked intently at the hobbits. If they had known what to look for, they could have seen that he was smiling. But, as it was, his expression meant nothing to them. If anything, he seemed even sadder to them now, up close, than he had a moment ago. The lines on his face increased three-fold, and Prim was afraid he was about to sneeze on them.

'Don't be alarmed, my little bunnies,' he said to them in the common tongue. 'I'm friendly enough. I don't pinch.'

His speech was so soothing and merry, it quite surprised the hobbits. He spoke to them just as would a favorite old granddad, one who always has toys and pennies to give away, and who therefore can say nothing wrong. Tomilo even forgot to take offense at being addressed as a 'bunny'.

'My name is Siva-Sinty,' the ent continued. 'I hear that your thirst was not slaked by the, *hmmm*, the *Tillow-illa-silla-ovannivo*. In short, by the stream itself. Perhaps I have something here that will stretch your belt a bit, eh? Something a tad heartier?'

'Thank you, sir,' answered Prim, with a nod in lieu of a bow. 'We aren't bunnies, you know, but we would love to sample your brew, if you are willing. We have heard wonderful things about the draughts of the ents!'

'Not bunnies? No, of course not, dear. Just a term of endearment, forgive me. A bad jest, made so soon after meeting. I suppose I wouldn't like being called a rosebush on

first acquaintance, no matter how good-naturedly. Although there's nothing wrong with a rosebush, nor a bunny neither; but we're all proud to be what we are. That's true. Very true.' The ent nodded gently and swayed a bit in some imaginary breeze. After a long pause, he turned and sauntered over to the north end of the wall of rocks, where the hobbits could now see a number of vessels, all in green and brown. This was the ent's kitchen, and he banged and clattered like a housewife at the stove. Stone lids were removed, and liquids poured from one vessel to another. He seemed to look long for cups small enough to serve hobbits, but finally emerged with two earthenware bowls, each in diameter about the size of a large plate. They were deep as well, and probably held a full quart of liquid.

'Here you are, my friends! These bowls are hardly bigger than an acorn-cap, but if you need a refill, just say so. The next bigger size I have, I think you could bathe in, both together. I don't believe you could lift it, you know,' he added with a laugh.

As the hobbits drank their fill, they continued their conversation with this new ent. Prim asked, 'What does Siva-Sinty mean? It is not like Finewort, or Treebeard, which of course we can figure out. Is it a real entish name?'

'Yes, yes it is, shortened though it may beóit is not translated into elvish or other tongue. We willows have our own sorts of names, names that don't translate well, we don't think. Finewort, why that's a proper name in any language. But Siva-Sinty sounds willowish like nothing else would. All the equivalents in the common tongue and so forth just don't sound willowish. That's the long and short of it, I should say.'

'But what does it mean, Siva-Sinty?,' repeated Prim. 'It does sound willowish. But I can't say what is willowish about it, precisely.'

'Siva-Sinty means, more or less, "wind-in-the-leaves." But not just any leavesówillow leaves, you see. No other tree sounds like a willow. My full entish name takes all that into

account. An entish name is not just a suggestion of a thing, but a full story of it. Not only that, but the words themselves mirror the sound, when spoken by a willow. That is what all the esses are for, don't you know. *Hmmm*, yesss, esses. Yessss. Like the wind itself. You have a word for it in the common tongueósusurratíon.* The sound of esses, with esses. Most willowish words are like that.'

*The word in the manuscript was not 'susurratíon' of course; but frightfully close. I hardly had to search for an English equivalent. LT.

Tomilo found all this quite fascinating, and yet his mind would jump ahead to other things. 'Are you a friend of Treebeard, Mr. Siva-Sinty? And is his home nearby?'

'Treebeard? A friend of Treebeard?' answered the willow. 'What ent is not a friend of Treebeard? And what part of the forest is not the home of Treebeard? But to answer your question more preciselyówhich is what you are meaningóI would say Treebeard is none too far away, if you be with an ent, and none too near, if you be not with an ent. Finewort will find him soon enough for you, I warrant. I would help you find him, but that I have business to attend to. Full day it is, today, full day. Not enough sunshine to do all the things a willow has to do in a day like today, *ho, ho, hmmmm*.'

Prim thought to herself, 'Like as not, slow as he moves. It likely takes half the day just to get out of bed, or to put on the tea.' And her impatience waxed rather than waned, as she watched the ent, since the ent draught was even then going to her head, making all her senses race. She longed to be put down for a bit, so that she could walk around the whiles; or even, as she felt, race about among the boles of the treesómaybe even climb a tree.

Tomilo was feeling likewise restless, and he squirmed on the shoulder of Finewort. That ent finally interrupted Siva-Sinty (who was still a going on about the packed-to-bursting schedule of a willow-ent) to the effect that they much

appreciated the draughts, but that they must be moving along on their own important business. 'And I think I'll let these two halflings down to jog along behind for a while, to work off some of this squirming. You twain are like a pair of late-spring caterpillars, nigh onto butterflies. Here you go, fly off into the woods! But take a care not to run out of earshot. There are still things in the forest as snaps up butterflies when chance offers.'

Finewort stayed for a few last private words to Siva-Sinty, as the hobbits chased each other through the undergrowth like children at play. Prim felt like she might really be able to fly, and she flapped her arms in pure joy, just to be sure. Tomilo laughed, and gave her a passing pinch, saying, 'The old willow may not pinch, but that can't be said of us all, my dear!'

Finewort followed their screams and rustlings, and soon caught up. 'Hoy, there, you two young lovers! Mind the thorn! Even your tough little feet won't like it! Look here. Keep your games to the path, and I won't have to be pulling you from the poison vine.'

Drabdrab and Nobbles had now joined the fun, and were frisking with the hobbits through the undergrowth. Drabbie kicked up his heels and the pots and pans clanked and banged. Nobbles snorted and butted Tomilo like a goat, knocking him into the grass. The hobbit pulled up a piece of turf and threw it at the pony, and the grass clung to his brown shaggy mane. He tried to shake it off, but could not. Drabdrab had chased Prim behind a tree, but she was too fast for him: as he looked around one side of the tree for her, she came around from the backside and gave his flank a swat. He kicked up again and gave a great whinney.

At last the merriment subsided, and the odd quintet resumed their journey. The hobbits remained on the ground with the ponies for the time, having worn out their own seats on the ent's hard branches.

For the remaining two hours of the day, they all marched along in high spirits, no longer finding the forest so

close. Their eyes had become used to the gloaming, and they saw many strange sights, far too many to tell. When darkness fell, they simply stopped and slept in the soft grass by the path, the ent overwatching them through the night. They could not have been safer in the King's tower.

The next morning the hobbits arose to the sound of the ponies chopping the grass nearby. The deep forest birds had been making a racket for almost an hour already, rising as they do even before the sun to greet the dawn. But the hobbits had not let that rouse them. Finewort was still asleep yet. Or at least his eyes were yet closed. Prim sauntered down to a tiny rindle, where she filled a pan of water and washed herself. Then she took back a pan for Tomilo, to drink and bathe his face. Each of them ate a crust of bread, more from habit than from need. A few dewberries near at hand rounded out the makeshift breakfast.

At last the hobbits looked up at Finewort again, still with his eyes closed as the sun rose higher and higher. Tomilo coughed loud and then louder, to no avail. Finally he threw an acorn, bouncing it from the ent's big head. Finewort wrinkled his nose, and muttered something about squirrels, but still did not awaken. Two more acorns, aimed right for the nose, stirred him at last, and he shivered and boomed and sneezed and waved his arms about, as if shooing flies.

'Oh,' he said, seeming to remember the situation. 'It's you two. I thought I had been caught in a battle of the squirrels. I was going to make the young furry imps pay for their mischief this time. Ha, Hmmm. But I have other furry imps to deal with, I see. All ready to go are you? All washed and combed? All watered and dressed? Let us be off, then.'

This time the hobbits rode with the ent again, the ponies trotting along beside. Finewort wished to make better time. It was now his turn to be impatient, as he wanted to see Treebeard before the end of the day. The travellers stopped only for water and for another of Siva-Sinty's ent draughts^ó

flask of which they had packed for the nonce. By late afternoon they had arrived at a sort of hog's back deep in the midst of Fangorn Forest, only a mile or two short of the source of the River Limlight. How many ent strides they had come that day is beyond guess, but even with the ent draught the hobbits were now weary and backsore. Their necks were stiff and their legs were in desperate need of a good shaking. The ponies, too, were worn out, what with trying to keep up with the long-legged ent.

So all were glad when Finewort finally stopped and informed them that they had come at last to the heart of the forest: the first dwelling of Fangornóthe capital city of entdom on earth, as it were. No citadel was there, nor palace nor gated manor. No banners afloat, nor great crennelated wall, nor moat nor tower. But as the hobbits crested the last ridge of the hog's back and looked down into the vale beyond, their eyes opened wide in amazement. The clouds had rolled down the mountains and were now nearly at eye level. They topped the vale below like a white lid. But above this lid rose many and many spires of green, dwindling as they rose, until they peaked so near the sun it was of little or no concern. Even high on the hog's back, the hobbits necks were tilted back, straining to see the tops of these strange trees. For they were giants beyond description, the largest rising fifty fathoms and more above the forest floor. As the troop descended into the vale under the clouds, they could see that the boles of these trees were thirty and thirty-five feet in diameter; their roots alone making small hills of themselves. Of some sort of ancient pine or fir they were, unknown to the world of men; but the ents called them *ronde-limbe*, for short (so said Finewort)ósince their limbs were perfectly round and straight to their very ends. Few of these limbs indeed there were, but each was mighty, upholding great masses of needles and cones, like to a city of dark green in the sky. Mightier by far were these ancient trees than the greatest mallorns of Lothlorien, though they were perhaps less lovely of bark and foliage. The ladders would have been near endless

that climbed into these branches; and none were there, neither of elf or other creature. The only beasts that roosted so high were the great birds of the forest; and the eagles especially loved to perch there, where all the goings on for leagues about could be espied by the keen of eye and sharp of talon.

Finewort led the hobbits down into the midst of the forest dale, beneath the great trees. The woodland floor was carpeted with years of pine needles, some green, most long brown. Prim found a cone as big as a hobbit's head, and she held it up to Tomilo.

'I hope none of these fall on us, by accident or purpose,' she said to him. 'Think of the squirrels that must live on these. They must be as big as Nobbles!'

'No, no,' answered Finewort. 'The squirrels in these trees are naught bigger than other squirrels, though they may indeed require less work to store away nuts for the winter. *Ho, ho, hooooooooo*. One of these cones, buried in a secret place, will feed a family of squirrels for many weeksóprovided that it does not take root in the meantime!'

Soon the little company came to the edge of a pool, wide and shallow, its surface likewise covered with pine needles. It smelled exceedingly fragrant, like a great vat of fermented pine-beer. On the far side of this pool, with its roots rising almost out of the water, stood the eldest and largest *ronde-limbe* in Fangorn. Tomilo thought it almost competed with one of the towers of Orthanc, so mighty and awe-inspiring it was. It rose up to unguessed heights, lost in the mists above. It seemed to hold up the heavens on its shoulders. Its roots were like a high wall fencing off the far side of the pool. This wall was two fathoms high itself, and the hobbits could nowise see what was beyond.

The air in this part of the forest was much less soupy. There seemed to be more of it, for one thing: the ceiling of the wood had risen greatly, and the hobbits felt like they could breathe again. Smaller leafy trees could not grow here, beneath the sun-blocking limbs of the great pines; and even the bushes

and creepers seemed to find it difficult to exist. Only a few types of shrubs and mosses appeared to like to live in the shadow of the great trees, and the entire line of vegetable and animal life was affected by their presence. Deer did not like it here, since the grazing was not to their taste. And so the wolf did not come, nor the panther. The needles choked the smaller lakes and the slower moving streams, so that the bear did not fish here, nor the fox. The rabbit followed the deer, and the hawk followed the rabbit; so that were it not for the eagles far above who lodged but did not hunt here this part of Fangorn would be almost lifeless.

Lifeless, that is, but for the ents. The ents loved the great vaulted ceilings of the *ronde-limbe*. For them it was a natural cathedral, a great echoing chamber of half-lights. An ent need never duck beneath a *ronde-limbe*.

Finewort picked up the hobbits again and proceeded around the east side of the pool. 'My friends,' he said, 'I have not told you about the ents of the *ronde-limbe*. I know you are not frightened by ents, but these are not just any ents. I wanted to prepare you a bit. So imagine an ent that is of the same type as these great trees. An ent not like me or Siva-Sinty. As we are to you, the ents of the *ronde-limbe* are to us. Very giants. But do not be fearful. They are good-natured, as are all ents. And they are great friends of Fangorn, that is Treebeard. They are his door-wardens, you might say. You will see many types of ents in this dale, but you will see none larger than the ents of the *ronde-limbe* for there are no larger beings on two legs in Middle Earth! And you will meet none older or wiser than Treebeard, for he is the master of this forest, and all who abide here. The ents of the *ronde-limbe* pay him great homage, and always have, since as far back as any can remember. Treebeard came here when these trees you see were still in the cone; aye, when their grandsires were still in the cone. Every generation of tree and ent has been overwatched by Treebeard. And they do not forget his tending.'

As he finished, Finewort climbed through a gap in the root wall and entered the enclosure beyond. The ponies could not traverse the gap, and remained behind by the pool. The hobbits now found themselves in a nearly round clearing, hemmed on all sides by the roots of the huge trees. The roots lapped over one another, and curved about in rolling shapes, so that the walls of the 'room' were like great still waves of the sea, caught in mid-roil. Above them the canopy was so high and thick it was like a second skyóa great green heaven had replaced the more familiar blue. Tomilo and Prim had come into a starless and sunless and moonless land similar to, but quite unlike, their own. The clearing was almost dark, save for the occasional lucky beam of yellow light that filtered down to the ground, emblazoning a patch of needle in the green gloom.

Through this gloom, the hobbits watched two figures approach. As they came closer, it could be seen that they were indeed ents of the *ronde-limbe*: tall and straight, eight fathoms high at the least, and prodigious of girth. Tomilo remembered Sam's Oliphaunt, from the old stories, and thought to himself that here was a giant that even the most famousest hobbits of the past had not seen or known of. For the first time, he began to wonder if he was in the middle of a story like theirs: a story worth telling. Certainly this part was worth telling! Think what Isambard would say to such a thing, or the Thain. Tomilo told himself that he must take a pinecone to the Thain for his museum.

The ground shook as the two ents stopped in front of them. Even Finewort looked small next to them. He was not waist-high to these fantastic cousins. The hobbits themselvesówell, they felt insignificantólike marsh midges, chirruping to no avail. Finewort spoke to the ents, as he had to Siva-Sinty; but the ents of the *ronde-limbe* seemed to answer only in a deep hum, like distant thunder. The hobbits felt the speech more in their bellies than heard it with their ears. The ents said nothing to them, and they wondered if they were even seen. Perhaps the ents of the *ronde-limbe* thought they were

stoats or other natural parasites. Perhaps an ent of the *rondelimbe* would as soon address a pigeon or a sparrow. But no, said Finewort at last, as he followed the bigger ents into the clearingóthese ents did not speak the common tonque. They had been told of the errand of the hobbits, and were obliging them with no further ado. Treebeard was presently at home, on the other side of the clearing. The meeting was even now at hand!

Near the northwest edge of the clearing, in the only bright patch of sun of any size, was a sort of thicketóa mass of thorn and briar surrounding a nearly circular enclosure. At first the hobbits could not tell what was inside; but as they drew nearer, they could see that it was a great well of stone. Whether it was a natural well or whether it had been dug and fashioned by the ents was not so clear. But an ent-path led up to the well on the east side, where there was also a break in the thorn. The two ents of the *ronde-limbe* had joined a third ent, an old oak-ent somewhat like Oakvain, thought Tomilo, but slightly smaller and more gnarled. This old ent was throwing something into the well, and chanting some strange words in a low tone. Tomilo thought he was throwing little stones into the well. Prim later said she believed them to be seeds. Whatever the truth of the matter, Treebeard (for Treebeard it was) finished his task and turned to the hobbits.

Tomilo remembered the description of Treebeard in *The Red Book*, but it did little to prepare him for what he now saw. He had expected to see an ent differing from Oakvain to the degree that one hobbit differs from another. But the way of it was far otherwise. Treebeard's eyes were of a different world altogetherólike the eyes of a great leviathan washed up on the shore, but alive and sparkling like the eyes of a newborn calf. History itself was in those eyes, felt Tomilo; and not just ancient historyóthe stories of ages long long pastóbut also the stories of now, the stories presently being told. Tomilo felt that maybe this was the original story-teller, this old ent before him.

Treebeard's eyes told all the stories, and all the other living creatures simply played the part told to them.

But of course that is an awful lot to read from just eyes, and Tomilo shook his head, as if to break the spell. He knew that only the eyes of Vorun could tell *all* the stories: this was only an old ent with a bewitching gaze. He remembered himself at last and strode forward a step. Then he bowed very low to the ground, touching the brim of his hat on the grass.

'I am Tomillimir Fairbairn, of Farbanks, the Shire,' he began, blinking and looking away from Treebeard's eyes so that he could think. 'And this is my wife, Primrose.' Prim also stepped forward and bowed low (hobbits never curtsied).

'Nice to meet you!' answered Treebeard in a surprisingly pleasant and resonant voice. Each word was spoken slowly, but clearly and with more animation than one might have expected from one so hoary with age. 'I am FangornóTreebeard in your tongue. I welcome you to the forest, and to the *Glennerung-enna* Glade. Which is to say, the central glade of the well, you know. You look well, my young friends. *Hmmm*. I hope Finewort and Siva-Sinty have been taking good care of you?'

'Oh, yes, Master Treebeard!' answered Prim. 'We have very much enjoyed your forest. It was a bit close at first, you know, but we got used to that. And now, what with the great trees, and the ents of the *ronde-limbe* . . . it is overwhelming, almost, if you see what I mean, Master.' She faltered and blushed, looking down at her feet. Tomilo took her hand and they stood there together, feeling altogether insignificant.

Treebeard smiled and chuckled. 'Yes, my dear, I'm sure it is. I'm sure it is. *Hmmmm*. *Romba, domba, dombbb*. Overwhelming. It would be, wouldn't it? Well, don't be in any tremble. You have come here with a message, I am told, and now all you have to do is tell me. I am very much looking forward to hearing it, you can be sure. And I suspect that I will be more overwhelmed than you in very short order. *Hmmmm*. Yes, I will, no doubt.'

Tomilo looked strangely at the old ent. Clearly he had not been mistaken when he thought that Finewort knew something of his errand. He and Prim seemed to be expected by all and everyone.

'Well, Sir, it's like this,' said Tomilo, stammering. 'We have a wood on the northern reaches of our lands that we call the Bindbole Wood. It is nothing compared to your forest, of course. Just a wood of leafy trees and heavy underbrush, seldom explored. But we had had some stories, you know, from way back—just wives' tales, folks said. Stories of ents, some were.' Tomilo paused and looked at his feet. 'Then I heard another story when I was in the Old Forest, where Tom Bombadil lives. And I got to thinking maybe the stories weren't just stories, you know. I thought maybe they were true. Then I found a map. In the Great Smialsóbut you don't need to know about that. So, with Prim here, I . . . I mean we . . . I mean . . . you tell him Prim. After all, you are the wife here.'

Prim stood up very straight. Then she looked the old ent directly in the eyes and smiled. 'We have found the entwives, Master Treebeard!'

Like a stone thrown into a pond, Prim's words spread out through the glade in concentric circles, the leaves of every ent and tree rippling as the news passed. An eagle flying over might have seen the circle widen and grow, spreading out across the entire forest like a wind. The rustling leaves and humming branches started with a low hum in the glade, but then grew and grew as the circle engulfed the surrounding woods. Both the hum and the wind continued to crescendo, until the hobbits were caught in a rush of leaves and pine needles and sound. Finewort picked up the two and hugged them close to his body as the wind whipped about them and the entire forest roared. From beneath, the earth rumbled. The mountains themselves seemed to dance and shift. The well shook and the briar shivered. A great spray of water and foam erupted from the well, and the stones or seeds were blown out

upon highstones of quartz or seeds of glassóthe hobbits could not tell.* The wall of roots encircling the glade rippled like eels, or like great beds of seagrass tossed by the waves. For a moment, Prim wondered if the world were ending. But she did not blanch or quail: the noise and commotion, though violent, was an outcome of joy, she felt, not anger. The forest was leaping in joy.

After many minutes, the wind began to subside, and the noise lowered to a distant *hmmmmmm*. The two ents of the *ronde-limbe* continued to wave their great arms about slowly in the air high above, and to boom in sub-audible tones, vibrating the earth beneath. But Treebeard had become calm again, and he continued at last his conversation with the hobbits.

'You must lead us to this Bindbole Wood, hobbitwife Prim,' he said. 'Long have we prepared for this journey.'

'Master Treebeard,' interrupted Tomilo, 'may I ask, were you expecting us? Did you know our message already? It seems we were anticipated.'

'Ah, yes, you were expected. We have expected you every day for centuries. We have always known that news of the entwives would come, and it was foretold that a halfling would bring itóthough what this news would be, we did not know. When Merry and Pippin came to me a while ago, I thought the time was at hand. That is why I told them the song of the ents and entwives, to draw their tale from them if I could. But they knew nothing of the entwives, and I saw that I was mistaken. So we continued to wait. Now your approach was known from afar, in the usual ways. And we felt that we could not be mistaken twice. Halflings do not come here to no purpose, and those with a message to me could hardly have any other. What else should a halfling tell an ent, and ride so far to do so? Unlike Merry and Pippin, you did not arrive by chance, or by the plan of others. So you see, it was not such a difficult prophecy.'

'Did you also know of Oakvain, then?'

'Oakvain? No. I know an Oakvain, or did, long ago, though I was not aware he still walked the woods of Middle Earth. But I do not know the part he played in this. Has he sent you?'

'No, Sir, not exactly. He told me of the entwives. But he sent no message to you.'

'*Hmmmm*. I can see there is more to this than you are telling. Oakvain always was of a strange bark. Root and branch! Oakvain! After all these years.'

'I know this is a queer question, especially now, but is Oakvain older than you, Master Treebeard? He said he was.'

'Older? *Hmmmm* . Oakvain is old. I am old. Does it matter who began to be old first? There are other ways to judge wood than height or girth. A pretty seed may sprout an ugly tree, and a fancy waistcoat may cover a black heart. You ask the wrong question, my young questioner. Age brings wisdom only to the wise.'

Tomilo screwed up his brow and remained silent. He studied his own waistcoat, until Prim reached over and rebuttoned the top button for him and smiled. 'Not very fancy,' she said.

*Nor did they find out later. The stones or seeds did not fall back to earth, but were borne by the wind to places unknown to man and hobbit.





Chapter 11



From Wood to Wood

Tomilo and Prim stayed with Treebeard and the ents for several days, talking of the journey to the Bindbole Wood, and of the entwives that awaited them there. Tomilo did not tell Treebeard of the words of Tom Bombadil, thinking it best to allow the ents their full measure of joy. But the truth is that Tomilo was of the same opinion as Bombadil, that being that the entwives did not look to be 'awaiting' anyone. The great clearing of the entwives had appeared to be a completely self-contained world, requiring nothing for its completion or fruition.

Tomilo and Prim had discussed the words of Bombadil many times. She agreed that ents and entwives who had spent ages apart could likely continue to do so. But privately she held to a different opinion: A young woman who had not beheld a man for ever so long could certainly arrive at a state of contentment or one might say a state of little unrest. This state was not so very different from the state of girls, many of whom, before a certain age, seemed to have little or no use for men or boys at all. A child, male or female, is a little universe of its own; and, beyond the support of its parents, is in need of nothing. A child, that is, can build its own world in imagination and play. A grown woman, however, is in need of something more; and a state of little unrest is not to be confused with a state of satisfaction. So where Tomilo harboured doubts, Prim

harboured hopes. He feared that this grand matchmaking might come to nothing in the end; she foresaw only success.

However that may be, it had been foreseen by both of them that the ents, no matter how excited by the news, would need time to digest it and to plan the long journey to the Shire. While this great entmoot was being planned and met, the hobbits would continue on to Lothlorien, arriving back in Fangorn in time to lead the ent party westwards.

And so, at the end of the week, the hobbits set out once more, this time due north. Treebeard supplied them with a guide—*an ent* of course, though not Finewort: he was needed at the moot. This ent led them without incident to the edge of the forest and bid them a hasty farewell (by ent standards). The hobbits need only hold the mountains at a constant distance to their left, he said, and in three or four days they would come to the Golden Wood. Finally, he gave them a branch to hold aloft as they approached that Wood, as a sign that they were under the protection of Treebeard. They should carry it high as soon as the Wood were in sight, even at a great distance—*since the elves of that wood had very keen eyes, and might shoot an arrow into a cap at quarter of a mile or more.* This branch was of a peculiar shape, being like a great cloverleaf, with three clusters. Nestled in each cluster was ball of other leaves and berries, a sort of fungus or blight. The hobbits recognized it as 'sungloss,'* although this particular specimen lacked the yellowish flowers they were accustomed to in the Shire, having only the whitish waxy berries. Upon asking, they were told that the flowers had been picked away a-purpose, although they were not told what that purpose was. It seemed that a 'sunless sungloss' in a tripartite branch was an ancient signal of peace between the two woods; but the hobbits learned nothing else of its history. Perhaps the history was so ancient the ents themselves had forgotten its source. Or perhaps, like so much history, the source was simply the invention of a creative individual, whose reasons—*if they even be called reasons—*died

with him.

*Mistletoe

The hobbits travelled leisurely, knowing the pace of the ents behind them, and feeling in no hurry to return and begin the long ride back to the Shire. They looked forward to a great rest in Lothlorien, greater even than their rest in Fangorn. Ents may be polite and accomodating, and even entertaining, as long as one arrives with good news. But no one would ever accuse them of being homely. A week spent without food or a pipe (the ents would not allow a flame, even to light a bit of pipeweed) or a low roof or a warm hearth was hardly a week to appeal to a hobbit, no matter the scenery or the excitement. Both Tomilo and Prim longed for warm bread and hot soup and a steaming cup of tea, served beside a roaring fire. They knew they were unlikely to encounter a low ceiling in Lothlorien, but the expected satisfaction of their other appetites more than made up for this. And for Tomilo, above all these baser appetites was the desire to be once again in the company of elves. He knew he could not explain this to Prim, and so he did not try. It would be like explaining the color purple to one who had never seen a violet. She would understand soon enough.

On the fourth day out from Fangorn, Tomilo espied a river in the distance, toward the mountains to their left. This was the Nimrodel, splashing noisily down through the foothills. A few hours later the Golden Wood itself came into view directly in front of them, a deep green stripe on the bright horizon. Above the wood a few wispy clouds floated, and on the plain in the foreground the tall grasses waved in the light wind. There were no horses of the Rohirrim in the fields this far north; only wild gameódeer and grouse and covies of small birds. Hare and fox and goose. And insects of every shape and variety, none of which outnumbered, to the hobbits ears at least, the locust. The summer was now waxing, and the

yellowing grass sheltered the green drone of a million million singing and creaking insects, munching and hopping. They hopped on pony and hobbit, on hat and cloak; they munched Prim's straw hat and scrunched in Drabdrab's mane. But mostly they crunched under foot and hoof.

At last the grasslands dwindled into scrub and rock, and the locusts were left screaming in the distance. This day the wispy clouds over the forest became full and round in the late afternoon, and then they joined even heavier cousins streaming over the Misty Mountains. The sky ahead became a deep blue. An hour later it became a darker purple streaked with grey. The wind picked up, and the hobbits began to meet outlying trees, tossing nervously in the evening. Just then Prim remembered the branch, and she retrieved it from Hobbles' saddle. She held it up high, though she doubted that anyone in the wood could see it in the failing light. The main wall of trees was still a furlong or more ahead, and the setting sun was blotted out by the now-complete cloud cover. Dusk had come early, pushed by the approaching storm. The hobbits picked up their pace, mounting the ponies and urging them on. They reached the line of the wood just as the first heavy drops began to spot their cloaks—pulling on their hoods, they looked for the densest cover of trees and hurried on.

At last Tomilo halted Drabdrab and Prim pulled Hobbles up, rubbing and stamping next to him.

'We shall have to stay here, I think,' he cried over the noise of the downpour. 'This spot is as protected as any, and travelling through the more open spots will only get us drenched. If it lets up, perhaps we can travel on a bit further later in the evening.'

The hobbits dismounted and began trying to fashion a temporary camp. Tomilo set up a canvas awning, to huddle under, and Prim collected supper from the saddlebags. Surrounded by the dark forest and the sweet smell of wet leaves, the newlyweds sat thigh to thigh and ate. Outside the awning, the ponies chopped the grass and blew the rain from

their noses. Drabdrab stuck his head under the cover for a moment, but sniffing only cheese and tea, he went back to his weeds. After supper, Tomilo and Prim pulled a blanket round them and listened to the rain. The other sounds of the forest were blocked out, and the twain became drowsy, safe from the hoots and creaks of a dry dark wood. It was not late, but neither could keep their eyes open. Soon they were fast asleep.

They were awoken by the light tinkling of a bell. The rain had stopped and the forest was quiet save for the drip-drop from the sweating trees. It was utterly dark, being now in the middle of the night, and the wind was gone. Tomilo and Prim could see nothing, but they felt that they were no longer alone. Drabdrab snuffled nearby, and that was somewhat reassuring, for he sounded content. The two hobbits stared out into the woods, straining their eyes for any sign of light or movement. For several minutes they saw nothing. Then, the tinkling of the bell again. And then, finally, the neighing of a horse. Not Drabdrab, for he was still at hand. He answered the horse with another snuffle, and could be heard shifting in the grass to their left. At that, Tomilo called out, 'Hoi, there! We are friends. We come from Fangorn.' Then, to Prim, he whispered, 'Hold up the branch, dear. Maybe the elves can see in the dark, among their other talents.' Prim did so, and immediately a lantern popped into view right in front of them. It was silver, and very fairly wrought. It cast its dim light in a wavering circle, in which the hobbits could see the wagging figures of at least three elves. They were dressed in dark colours from head to foot, and only their faces were illuminated. In such way they had stood right before the hobbits without being noticed.

'You are friends of Fangorn, then?' said the elf in the middle, using the common tongue. 'I did not know that Fangorn had such friends. What type of creature are you, with feet of fur and yet tongues that speak?'

'We are hobbits, Master Elf. I am Tomilo Fairbairn, of the Shire, and this is my wife Primrose. We have come to pay a

call upon Phloriel, who invited us. I should say meóto do so last autumn. She and I were both guests at Rhosgobel, for the council. I hope we have caused you no inconvenience by arriving unannounced?'

'Nay, we require no notice. We do not often have visitors, especially such as you. But you are welcome, if your story be true. Will you travel on with us now, or will you continue your nap? It is a fine hour for a ride under the moon.'

'Is there a moon indeed?' answered Tomilo. 'I would never have known it. I think we might have trouble travelling in such darkness. We would be slapped by every passing branch.'

'Ah, then you are creatures of the day, and are nightblind? That would explain it. We had thought you were dumb, speaking not when we stood before you. We had never seen a speechless animal travelling with laden ponies.'

'We did not see you until you uncovered the lantern,' explained Prim.

'We have lanterns to spare, although we need them not to ride.' The elf paused and looked closely at the hobbits. 'It will destroy the beauty of the night somewhat, but we can travel illuminated if you prefer. It will be easier to find our city if you ride with us now. Otherwise you will have to tell your story again to another party of elves in the morning, or perhaps have your sleep interrupted again before dawn.'

'We will ride with you. We have been asleep since just after dark, and are fairly well rested. Is it late at night?'

'It is two hours before dawn, my friends. You will see the sunrise in the Golden Wood in the morning. Now, let me introduce myself. I am Leucallin, "the winding song". This is Aewellin, my brother. His name means "birdsong". And this is our cousin Camborn, which signifies "tree-hand".'

Prim asked, in great interest at these names, 'Does Camborn have that name because his hands are large like trees, or because he is a nimble climber?'

'Neither,' answered Camborn himself, smiling. 'I am

called Camborn because my parents found the name pleasingóonly that, I am afraid. Though I do have a fair hand at the raising of trees, and other plants as well. Do hobbits earn their names, Primrose? Did you do something with sand to achieve your name, Master Tomilo? Or is it because your hair was sandy coloured as a babe?'

'Again, neither,' answered Tomilo. 'My full name is Tomillimir. I suppose my parents thought I was a jewel of the sands, though I know it must seem odd to you.'

'Ah, we know what parents are,' said Leucallin. 'We are only surprised to find a hobbit with an elvish name. Do hobbits live on the shores of Middle Earth, then?'

'No, no. We just aren't as particular about our definitions. We throw sandy soil out of our holes, and put our babes within them, calling them jewels no matter what they look like, I guess. It is all very foolish, I daresay.'

'Speak no more of it, Tomillimir Fairbairn. We are honored to find our words in use anywhere, whether it be with the ents of Fangorn or the hobbits of the Shire. For now, let us be on our way. Come, here is a drink of water to wash the sleep from your mouth. We will have breakfast with the sun!'

Morning was glorious in that wood, for it was nearly mid-summer indeed, and the Mallorns were in full bloom. Their great silvery green leaves reflected light in every direction. The heavy dew rose from the warm sodden ground in shining mists, and several times the party were wholly covered by ground fog. The hobbits could see the moon still riding low in the sky, though day had dawned: it was as if she was loth to leave the skies over Lorien, and lingered there like a sad lover.

The birds were exceeding noisy, calling to one another, 'admire me, admire me!' Deer paused in their feeding to look up at the passing hobbits, returning unconcerned to their moist greens. Squirrels clucked at unseen enemies still crouching in the ferns, or returning silently to their holes and caves. A nightjar passed, the last until evening, and nestled into its nook

drowsily. It blinked slowly and ruffled, backing into bed.

This far from the center of the forest there were still a few narrow pines and a white-barked birch or two, eyeing the hobbits with its strange markings. But the mallorns predominated. Here, several leagues yet from the Nimrodel, they were not of great size. The greatest were not more than 15 or 18 fathomsólarge for any other forest, but after the *ronde-limbes* of Fangorn, not so very tall. What they lacked in size, however, they made up for in beauty. Whereas the *ronde-limbe* only blocked the light, or perhaps filtered it, these mallorns enhanced it. The already rosy morning light was softened further with a blue-green sheen, and the water-vapour also dispersed the beams, turning the air into something almost tangible. The saturated colour of everything around them was a delight in itself, no matter what it was of itself. An ordinary rock, that one would never have noticed in another place, here became a translucent shimmering creature, almost seeming to breathe. One expected it to rise up and swim away, like some cerulean turtle in a deep pool. In fact the whole forest seemed to swim in a current of colour and mist, the fronds swaying in the morning breeze like seaweed in the tide.

Finally the party stopped for breakfast. Fires were lit in a twinklingóthe hobbits could scarcely say howóand a lovely cloth spread upon the ground. Tomilo and Prim were served with silver cups, and plates etched with subtle figures. Airy cakes, fresh berries, thick cream, and a hot drink steeped from some subtle herb unknown in the Shire. It seemed to evaporate immediately from off the tongue, rising through the nose and all the head like the fogs around them. Yes, it was like drinking mist, thought Prim. Like drinking a sweet steam distilled from mint and honeysuckle.

Prim looked at the three elves, also drinking and eating, and talking in their own tongue. Their robes, that had seemed black at night, were actually of deep blue and green. They shimmered in the morning light, like thickest taffeta. All three had very long hair, without wave or curl, and black as ink. It

contrasted strangely with their alabaster skin, unredded by the sun but for a patch of light vermillion on each cheek. Their ears were likewise light vermillion, when these could be seen through the hair, and their lips were a madder lake, crimson as fresh blood. A band of coloured cloth about the temples held the hair of each elf from his face. The eyes of all three elves were grey, without hint of blue or green. Their shirts were white and high collared, goffered about the chest and with quilling above. They wore no jewelry, although their buckles and studs were marvellously wrought. Each wore a knife in a leathern scabbard, about a cubit in length. Otherwise they were armed only with bows: a quiver of arrows hung on the decorative breastplate of each horse. The horses were equipped with quilted numnahs, but no saddles, stirrups, or bridles.

At that moment the elves paused in their eating and conversation. 'That is a fine elf pony you have, Master Hobbit! called Leucallin. 'He is not like the other. And his saddle is not of hobbit-make, or I am a hobbit, too.'

'No, Leucallin, you are right. Drabdrab is not a hobbit pony and that is no hobbit saddle. He comes from the Old Forest, from the stable of Tom Bombadil. That saddle is very old, I am told.'

'Then you are a friend of Iarwain Ben-adar as well as Fangorn? Have a care, brothers! Next we will learn that these hobbits are the friends of Elbereth herself, and that they carry her tokens in their burlap bags.' Leucallin paused. 'If you know the writing on that saddle, then maybe you know what we have said for the past half-hour?'

'No, my good elves, I do not. I picked out a word here and there, perhaps, but I cannot construe spoken Sindarin anymore than I can constue old entish, or the pipings of the yellowhammer. Have no fear. But I suppose you were not telling secrets, anyway?'

Leucallin looked wryly at Tomilo. 'If we were, we will tell no more. We have been proven poor judges, but we are

quick learners nonetheless. Come, we will speak more on the path.'

As they proceeded toward Caras Galadon, Tomilo told the elves somewhat of his adventures, Prim adding a line or two here and there, or nudging her husband when he seemed to be telling too much.

'Have no fear, Primrose,' interrupted Camborn, finally. 'We shall ask you nothing you do not wish to tell. However, you must know that it is already common knowledge that the entwives have been found. News of it spread through the forests of Wilderland several days past, from leaf to leaf, and no secrecy of hobbits could stop it. We also surmise, by the timing, if nothing else, that you had something to do with this discovery. It would be too great a coincidence to believe that you emerged from Fangorn on the tail of the news, without some knowledge of it. That said, the news is only general, of course. None know where the entwives will be looked for, though there is certainly a curiosity. And none in Lorien would meddle with the affairs of the ents and entwives. We would not tell where the entwives were, even did we know it, and even did the Necromancer himself have us in bond. The ents will find the entwives, or no one will: that is the desire of the elves, as I am sure it is the desire of the entwives.

After their meal the party continued on through the wood. The day warmed quickly, and the mists retreated as the sun climbed higher. The fogs were replaced by high clouds, soft and slow-moving against a very blue sky. Butterflies emerged and began dancing about. Many wildflowers decorated the heavy underbrush of the forest; the trees and rocks themselves were covered with hanging and creeping flowers, or with colourful mosses and lichens. And all about them was the smell of high summer. A smell of wet earth and fragrant herb and rain come down from the mountains. The great horses of the elves threw up muddy clods of rich soil as they walked. Little pools of fresh water lay about them, flickering in the cups and saucers

and concavities of rock and root. Often and often they crossed streams or little dancing rills, chattering through stony channels, fresh and clear. The hooves of horse and pony sent echoing knocks through the woods as they clicked across stone and pebble.

Tomilo was reminded of Bilbo's journey through Mirkwood. Mirkwood! Only just across the great river and up a long slow rise. It was now Eryn Lasgalen of course, not Mirkwood, but Tomilo imagined there were spiders still, and much murkiness to be sure. He couldn't imagine spiders here, though, not even at night. Nothing unsavory, or unwholesome, could ever come here, it seemed. Why was that? There were elves in Eryn Lasgalen, at least in the north, where Lindollin came from. Why a mixture of good and evil there, and only good here in Lothlorien? He decided that he would ask Phloriel. Maybe she knew.

At last the small party came to a road. The path ended and a wide straight way opened up, canopied with ever larger mallorns marching north. After less than a league upon this straight road a bridge appeared ahead, a narrow arch of white stone, without kerb or rail. Beneath it ran the Celebrant, or Silverlode in the common tongue. Leucallin took the reins of Drabdrab and Aewellin those of Hobbles and the five riders rode easily over the bridge into the Naith of Lorien. Prim looked over the edge of the bridge at the rushing waters. They were white with the spring runoff from the Misty Mountains. Broken branches, leaves and twigs floated along on the fast current. Suddenly a ring of flowers passed right beneath her, and she gasped. Doubtless some lover afar upstream, perhaps on the Nimrodel, had cast this corolla into the water, as token of luck for his lady, or for some other purpose. Prim found it another unreadable sign or portent, another mystery of Lothlorien. In her own heart she turned it into a last bouquet, thrown by the winds in honor of her recent wedding. Who is to say she was wrong?

In the Naith the party met many other elves, singly and

in groups, passing both north and south. Few spoke to Leucallin or his kinsmen, but nearly all looked closely at the hobbits and their ponies. As they progressed north and east (the road curved in a great arc, eastering as it advanced) the traffic increased, and soon the road was wellnigh full of travellers making their way to the great city as dusk approached. The trees about them had become one great mass of mallornsof seeming infinite heightósince their crossing of the Celebrant. That is to say, no end of them could be seen, not on either side, nor upwards. With twilight, the fantastic light of the dawn had returned, rosy and palest blue at the same time. The vermillion in the cheeks of the elves became lavender and their lips took on a violet cast in the deepening shadow. Their hair became ravenóa darkest blue-green on top, shining like a fly's eye.

The elves did not light the lanterns, since there was no fear of slapping branches on the road. But a dim light was already being cast from the city ahead, especially the lanterns at the gate and along the nearby hedge. Moths began to replace the butterflies of the morning, and a few bats and nightjars could also be seen flitting through the evening, looking for the choicest insects.

Near the gate Leucallin traded a few words with a tall elf coming from the city. He did not seem to be the gatekeeper, but only a citizen of Caras Galadon. Tomilo overheard the word 'Fangorn' and well as 'Phloriel'. Also '*onodrim*'. Tomilo was reminded that most of the elves of Lothlorien were grey-elves; therefore the word *enyd* for ents was not used by most. Was Phloriel a grey-elf? Probably not, thought Tomilo. In general, the grey-elves would have black hair, and the Noldor would have blonde hairósome of them at any rate. But what of red-blondé? Some mixing of the two? Tomilo was no expert on elf geneology, and he decided that would be another interesting question for Phloriel herself.

The elf of the city pointed back to the north, making signs that the group must climb a hill. The hobbits assumed

this was the direction of Phloriel's tree, and indeed Leucallin confirmed that. 'We will take you a bit further, now that it is dark. We don't want you to get lost at the very end of your journey. Phloriel lives very near, but those unused to a city of elves, and of elves living in trees, might spend days calling for the right ladder. And since you said she has not been told of your arrival, she will not be looking for you. She will be very pleasantly surprised, I am sure; and I only hope she is at home. We have been informed that she is in the city. But the city is quite large, as you can see. If she is not at home, you will have to send messages. But her family can help you with that.

The travelling party passed through the gate, Prim looking back to see who opened it for them. No one could be seen, neither sentry nor doorwarden. The gate closed without a sound and Prim hurried to keep up, her eyes wide. The way was now paved with large white stones, marble brought down from the mountains at the end of the First Age. Its surface was worn into smoothest concavities from the light step of countless travellers, and the cart-path nigh was also worn from long use. Two deep ruts held the wheels of the various carriages in track, and between them ran a channel nearly as deep from the hooves of the horses. The hobbits felt the cool slick stone directly beneath their feet and wondered at its flawlessness. Ahead the light from the lanterns, shining down like silver moonbeams from the many trees, reflected from the surface of the path as from the surface of a mountain lake. The giant stones had been set with little or no mortar, and if not for the hairline joints seen dimly in the night, the hobbits would have thought they were walking on ice.

'These stones must be slick in the rain, Camborn,' said Tomilo at last. 'Do you have to throw sand down at such times?'

'No, no. No sand, Master Jewel-of-the-Sands. We do not lose our balance so easily. If you require, we will make you some special shoes for the nonce. But I smell no rain in the air.' At that moment the elves stopped, and Camborn changed

the subject. 'At last, my friends, here we are. Come with us to this tree. See these small letters, carved into the bark? These tengwar tell us we are at the the *Aissa* tree, the tree of Phloriel's family. And here, see this thread? No? Shine the lantern here, Camborn. See, like a spider's thread? That is the bellpull. Yes, I suppose it is clever. Though it is not a thing we think much of. The little weight at the bottom keeps it from flying about in the wind. Still, I doubt not you will find better things to study in Caras Galadon. Give it a very light pullósee, there comes the ladder presently. Now we must awayóour trees await us, and we live not in the city. We must return to the South Woods, where there is more moonlight. Farewell, good hobbits! Perhaps we will meet again in the Golden Wood!

Aewellin and Leucallin also spoke their farewells and Tomilo and Prim were left to climb on their own. No one descended to lead them up, since it was not the custom of the elves to do so among themselves, and the hobbits were not expected. Camborn might have sent messages ahead, or called up the tree, but being neither a guard of Lorien nor a citizen of the city, he did not think of it. The hobbits looked up together. The tree seemed rather darksome. It was very tall. The ladder was made of hithlain and it shone out dully, but this gave the two little comfort. They feared to touch the rope lest it burn them, or cry out against their rough touch. Tomilo pushed Prim ahead of him and bid her be careful.

'Why should I go first?' she cried. 'You aren't afraid, surely?'

'Don't be silly. I want you in front, so if you fall I can catch you.'

'Oh,' she said, sheepishly. 'How nice.'

The climb was long and slow, but uneventful. Hobbits are nimble, if unused to trees. Once or twice an elvish voice (*hir na?óí*.e. are you there?) called down to them, but they were deep in concentration and didn't know how to answer regardless. Not until Prim poked her head through the flet were they forced to speak up. An elf matron within cried,

'*Daro! Ai, hin gayan!*'* But her companion quickly answered, '*U! Nar Pheriannath!*'

Tomilo answered, 'Ye!óYes, we are halflings! Friends of Phloriel!'

*This means, 'Stop!óAlas, what ghastly children!' Fortunately the hobbits could not translate this beyond 'stop.' The woman is answered, 'No! They are halflings!'

At this, the elves became friendly and welcomed the hobbits warmly. These two were the parents of Phloriel, as it turned out. She was not at home. It being the dinner hour, she was eating with friends near Cerin Amroth. Many elves dined on the grass out of doors about Cerin Amroth in the spring and summer. The sky was open there, and the moon could be seen, as well as the stars. The elves introduced themselves as Thiwara and Aerelen, that is, 'noble sign' and 'stars over the sea' (Thiwara being the father and Aerelen the mother). They offered the hobbits food and drink and spoke to them brieflyóalthough they knew little of the common tongue. Thiwara offered to lead them to Cerin Amroth after they had eaten. It was not faróthey would be there by moonrise. The hobbits accepted this offer graciously. They did not think it well to wait for Phloriel here, since they expected the elves might be up all night, feasting and playing under the stars. Besides, they were uncomfortable sitting on the flet like birds. Again, there was no kerb or railing, and the hobbits stayed close to the great bole, where they had emerged. There was very little light in the 'room', and Prim feared to move lest she fall back down the ladder hole. All in all it was a very inconvenient living situation, she thought. Imagine entertaining guests in such place! The whole dinner party would end up over the edge before the tea was served. And who ever heard of building a fire in a tree? Preposterous! Though the elves did seem to manage it without lighting the whole house ablaze.

None too soon, the hobbits climbed back down, this

time with a lantern shining from above. As good as his word, Thiwara led them out the gate of Caras Galadon and back the way they had come—that is, toward the Celebrantó bringing them to a great low hill, even as the moon cleared its shoulder. 'See?' he said, pointing to a group at the foot of the hill, lit only by fires. 'There is Phloriel, in green and white. She has her flute to her lips, as should be on such a night. *Noro lim. Namarie, Pheriannath, a mandul!*'*

Tomilo and Prim rode over and dismounted. When Phloriel saw them she ran to Tomilo, crying, '*Mae govannon! Mellon-no vinya!*' She gave him a great hug, to the small annoyance of Prim. Tomilo quickly introduced her. 'Phloriel, this is my wife, Primrose. We were married on Astron 6, you know.'

'Married? Why how nice! And is this your honeymoon, then, a ride to Lothlorien? Oh, and look, Drabdrab as well. '*Mae govannon, ro' fim!*' She added, laughing and stroking his neck. What a party! Come Primrose, let us make you a posie and a corolla. And you, Tomilo, I don't believe we have any mushrooms, but we will find you something tasty. You are getting too *fímó* too slender, you know. Youró what do you call it? ó waistcoat, it just is hanging there like a great sack. You may get taller on ent draughts, but you won't get any fatter! Hah, hah.'

Prim's annoyance quickly melted away, and the three of them danced away together under the stars, the smell of firewood and mallorn leaves all about them.

*Thiwara says, 'Ride on. Good-bye, halflings, and goodnight.' Phloriel greets them with, 'How are you! My new friend!' Later she calls Drabdrab 'slender horse.'

Hours later the hobbits could be found in a fragrant bower, sleeping soundly after their long day of travel. The elves continued to sing and play their subtle instruments all night, the music rising up to the moon and stars like mist rising from

a lake. Many an elf stopped by the bower to gaze upon the strange visitors from the west, marvelling that such creatures existed at all. Songs of Frodo Ninefingers were sung in honor of the hobbits, many present being happy to finally put a face upon the hero of that adventure. The elves also remembered the passing of the Grey Company through Lorien as if it were yesterday, and many grieved once more the loss of Galadrielóa loss closely tied to the coming of the Fellowship of the Ring. Indeed, the lay of Galadriel and Celeborn was spoken that night, by one of the great poets of Cerin Amroth. Nor was Meonas, Lord of Lorien, unaware of this.* The arrival of the hobbits was not unknown to him, and he pondered the meaning of the news from Fangorn as well as the journey of Tomilo and Prim. Even as they slept, Meonas looked to the north, wondering what best be done.

*Meonas did not inherit the pool of Galadriel, of course, but he had other ways of seeing from afar, as will be shown later.





Chapter 12



Smiling on the Point of an Arrow

The hobbits awoke mid-morning to the sound of birds. The elves were gone. Breakfast was laid out nearby, waiting for them, but Drabdrab and Hobbles had been led away. Tomilo assumed that the ponies were in stable somewhere nearby, or had been led to proper pasture. It was not right that they eat the beautiful grasses and flowers of Cerin Amroth. Prim rubbed her eyes and pushed her corona from off her nose. Then she followed Tomilo to the fountain nearby to bathe her face and hands.

'I suppose this is not some magic font. I don't want to be turned into anything unnatural,' said Tomilo with a smile.

'I would be more worried that it is an homage to Elbereth, or some such,' answered Prim. 'We may not be put under a spell, but we might be sullyng something high and pure, which would be just as bad, or worse. Still, I think we would have been warned, if that were the case. I won't put my feet in, or drip into it, but I don't see what harm can come of splashing out a handful. Elbereth herself would not begrudge it us, if she were as great and generous as all say.'

'It is Ulmo who would take offense, it being waterónot Elbereth. And Ulmo has a mighty temper, from all I hear. But I agree with you. I don't see what harm can come of a handful of water, took from anywhere.'

The hobbits bathed and nothing outlandish occurred,

beyond the wind rising somewhat in the trees. The birds continued to cry out peep-it-eeep! and the butterflyes continued to zig and zag. Over crisp biscuits and a pot of some tea-like drinkóhot and minty sharpóthe hobbits talked and looked up at the sky. Sheer grey clouds, like tatters of muslin, scurried off to the east, blocking the sun momentarily before moving on. Their barely seen shadows crossed the clearing in an instant, making it seem that wraiths were running through the grass. Large yellow leaves dotted the lawn amongst the many flowers, white and pink and palest blue: but the leaves would rise when the wind rose, and dance with it down the hill, a summer partner for the shadow wraiths.

Looking both up and down at the beauties around them, the hobbits' heads grew dizzy, and they might have fallen back asleep had Phloriel not returned to greet them a good morning.

'My hobbitfriend Tomilo and goodwife Prim, I see you have found the breakfast we left for you. I am sorry that the food was cold, but the fires burned out many hours ago. We have a pot for theóhow do you say it?óthe tea, but we do not keep ovens on Cerin Amroth. Here we eat our meats directly from the fires. Your beasts are grazing on the far side of the city, in the fields near the Celebrant. They looked very satisfied when I left them. We took their saddles off and hung them up. Your bags are in my tree. I know that you will not want to sleep on the flets, but we can easily bring down whatever you need. Beds on the ground are being prepared for you even now. You won't have to sleep every night in a bower!'

'Thank you, Phloriel,' replied Prim. 'We will sleep anywhere we are told, and be amazed by it, I am sure. I have never slept in a bower before, but my feather mattress and favourite pillow don't sleep as true, as we say. I can't remember turning once the whole night. I can't even remember going to sleep, come to that. I remember waking up: more than that I couldn't boast of.'

'I guess waking with a crick in the neck is something an elf never has to bother with,' added Tomilo with a nudge to

Prim. She pushed him off with a snort.

'No,' said Phloriel, 'We don't have sleeping ailments, or "cricks," whatever they may be. But we have our own ailments. No creatures are wholly without pains of the body and mind.'

The elf maiden led the two hobbits back to Caras Galadon, where events had been planned for the day. It was now about noon and the elves of the city were rising from their morning torpor. Few it is true had slept, but elves nonetheless find most of their rest in the morning, after their revels under the moonlight. That is to say, there is no music in the morning, and very little singing. An elf city becomes a place of unearthly quiet after the rising of the sun, unlike a city of menówhere the bustle is greatest in the morning.

As the three walked about the city, meeting many elves, but speaking long with none, Tomilo took the opportunity to ask Phloriel the questions that had arisen during their journey from Fangorn. He had not had the chance during the celebrations of the night, when little serious conversation had been attempted.

'Phloriel, I notice that most elves here in the city have the colouration of Leucallin and Aewellin and Cambornómeaning, you know, black hair. I am assuming these are the woodelves, I mean to say the Sindarin elves. And then I have read that the blonde elves come from the line of Finarfin, of the Noldor, who are of the High Elves. Galadriel was blonde, wasn't she? But I thought the Noldor had all returned across the sea long ago. And then there is you, who, begging your pardon, I hadn't realized the importance of what you were saying on the way to Rhosgobel. I hadn't realized how rare the colour *rheseme* really is among elves. I thought you were speaking mostly in jest. But now that I come here, I see that you are almost the only one. How can that be? And how does that come to be?'

'Tomilo, my curious friend,' answered Phloriel with a smile, 'you ask many questions under the cover of one. Where shall I start? Many of the elves of Lothlorien are indeed

Sindarin, or wood-elves, as you call it. Like the elves of Eryn Lasgalen, neither they nor their most distant ancestors ever saw the light of the two trees or the shores of Elvenhome. They did not hear the call, or if they heard it heeded it not. They are wholly elves of Middle Earth. But, however that may be, you cannot divide the elves so easily based on the colour of the hair. For many of the High Elves, even the Noldor, also have black hair. The house of Feanor is dominated by dark hair, and if you study the charts closely, you will see that not even all the children of Finarfin had blonde hair. Hair colour is a strange thing and cannot be wholly predicted. The few unions of elf and man have further mixed the pool, for in the three houses of the elf friends there was much blonde hair. The house of Hador was well-known for its light complexions, and Hador himself was called the Golden-haired. Beren was of brown hair, being of the line of Beor, but even in this house there were many of lighter hair, since the men took many wives from the house of Hador. Therefore the children of Beren and Luthien might have been golden-haired, though neither parent was. Beren carrying all the influence of his mother and grandmothers. As it turns out, Dior had dark hair, but this was chance you see, not necessity. As for Idril and Tuor, it is written that they were both of golden hair, Tuor being of the house of Hador and Idril being famous for the richness of her light hair. What is odd, come to think of it, is that Elrond and Elros, only two generations away, should have both been of dark hair. But all their heirs, down to Arwen and Aragorn, carried with them the influences of Idril and Tuor. And so the Kings of Gondor, though the sons and grandsons of Arwen Evenstar. She of ravenhair. May now and again be blonde, for this very reason. They may trace their golden hair to Tuor and Idril. On Arwen's side, they do not have to go back many generations to do so. Arwen was only three generation's remove from Idril, you see.

'As for me, it is believed that I was hand painted by Vana herself.' Phloriel stopped and looked at Prim with a laugh, and

then added, 'Not really, dear. I am just being silly. Mama told me, when I was a little girl, that Vana had grown tired of her palette for hair, and, taking up instead her palette for flowers had decided to have some fun. At first she painted some elves with hair the colour of the reddest roses and others the colour of forget-me-nots; but Manwe would not allow it. Just as Aule got in trouble for making the dwarves, Vana got in trouble for her red- and blue-crowned elves. So she took her elf-children down to the sea and washed the colour out. But one of the rose-red children came up for air too soon, before all the red had washed out. When she was re-coloured blonde, the red continued to show through. Mama said that very elf maiden was my ancestor. Once in a great while, one of these red-blondes is born, and each of us is told this story of her beginning.'

'Are all the red-blonde elves maidens, then?' asked Prim.

'No. A few are boys. They are even rarer than the girls. But they aren't made such a fuss of, you know. It takes a maiden, with all her fabrics and ornaments, to bring out the full value of *rhesseme* hair,' added Phloriel, laughing merrily. After a moment she continued, 'It is said that if a *rhesseme* girl marries a *rhesseme* boy, then the child will be *rhodisseme*, but I do not believe it. Again, it is not that easy. The child *may* be *rhodisseme*—there is probably a greater chance of it. But it does not have to be that way. And *rhodisseme* sometimes comes by other combinations, you know. I think I will marry an elf who is *rhodisseme*, and then see what queer children we have. Hah, hah. And if two *rhodisseme* elves married, then maybe their child would be truly rose-red, and Vana would be happy!'

'One last thing about hair,' added Tomilo. 'Celeborn, you know. I mean he has silver hair. But I never saw another elf with silver hair, not at the council, not in Rivendell or here. Is he the only one?'

'He is not the only one, though it is rare. Elves do not get grey hair with age, since they do not age, as men and hobbits would judge. But sometimes an elf will develop silver hair,

though they were not born with it. This happens to men also, I know, though I am not familiar with hobbits beyond you two. Some young men just out of their teens get grey hair, though no other sign of age be upon them. It is likewise with elves. Some unknown factor is at work. Nerien told me that Cirdan also has silver hair, much like that of Celeborn.'

'Yes, she spoke of him to me also, though briefly,' answered Tomilo. 'When we were riding home from the council, you see. She is from Mithlond, and must know him well. She said he was very weathered, not from age, but from sea and wind and sun. He does not retire under the trees like other elves, but walks every day for long hours on his parapet, and on the quays, gazing at the sea, she said. I have always wondered what he looked like. Silver-haired and weathered, but not like an old man. Not like Gervain at all, at least said Nerien.'

'I would like to see him, also. He is the eldest of the *eldar*. Old even by our reckoning.'

'And so would I,' interrupted Prim. 'Maybe we could all go see him one day. You should come to Farbanks, Phloriel, and be our guest. From there it is only a short distance to the sea.'

'Thank you, Primrose,' answered the elf maiden. 'I may do that one year. But I do not know about continuing on to the sea. It is said that a view of the sea is dangerous to an elf. I am still young, according to my kind, and I don't think I am ready to start thinking of "the journey". But I would love to see your house, or youróhow do you call itóyour "hole"?''

'Oh, yes! You really must. You can help me decorate it. You could show me all the little elvish tricks for setting up housekeeping. That bellpull, for one. If you have other magic like that for the kitchen, I will be the envy of the whole Shire!'

'I have another question,' said Tomilo, as they passed a group of elves playing some game with a stick. 'No, it is not about that game, although I would like to learn it later. What I wanted to know occurred to me as we were riding into the

Golden Wood. I noticed that there are no spiders here, or anything else unwholesome. Prim said then, "Of course not, elves live here, they would not allow it." And I thought so, too, until I remembered the elves in Mirkwood, in the north. The ones that Bilbo tricked with his barrels. In that place, there were elves and spiders both. Now how do you explain that?'

'My, I had not known that hobbits were so inquisitive. You really do have some penetrating questions, to be sure. It would require a very long answer to do full justice to this one, but the short answer is that Mirkwood at that time was also being influenced by the Necromancer. He was then in Dol Guldur. So the forces at work in the forest were mixed, you see. The elves of the Forest River could not keep the entire forest clean, only by the strength within them. Below the Old Forest Road, most of the forest had turned to evil, and the elves retreated further and further north. But even in the north the influence of the Necromancer was felt, and beyond the boundaries of their realm proper, the elves were powerless to fight it. In the woods nigh to the caves of Thranduil, no spiders ever came, for the elves would not allow it, and they hunted any that encroached there. But further afield, the spiders did flourish, as in those places described by Bilbo. Since then the elves have reclaimed much of Mirkwood, that is Eryn Lasgalen. But not all. There are still pockets of evil that have not been rooted out, especially in the woods above the East Bight. To that place many of the creatures fled that were driven by us from the environs of Dol Guldur. We have cleansed the trees across the river from Lorien, although few of us yet dwell there. But further east and north we do not go, unless in great company and with the intent of doing battle.'

At last Phloriel brought the hobbits to a great tree—the greatest in the whole forest of Lothlorien. In the very midst of the walled city, it held up the heavens above like a massive pillar of green. Its bole was grey, and soft to the touch, and fragrant. But it was so wide that Tomilo felt he were at the very foot of the leg of Vorun. This mallorn indeed rivalled the

giants of Fangorn, though the hobbits knew no way to compare. A giant was a giant, when no head of the giant could be seen. Above them, at a height of twenty fathoms or more, the forest canopy joined into one solid mass of leaves and branches, through which sunlight could pass in only the narrowest of beams. Indeed, the central part of the city of Caras Galadon was dark even at midday, having little more light than a night of a full moon. Tomilo had already whispered to Prim that the city of the elves was 'elf-lit' at all times. On a cloudy day, a man or hobbit would be in need of a torch.

The hobbits stood at the base of the Prince's Tree. Meonas, Prince of Lorien, Noldor, High Elf of Middle Earth, last of the line of Feanor the Great. Meonas lived here alone, save for his courtiers. He had never married, had never considered itóno, not though Galadriel had been gone for three hundred years. The elf mothers had given him up as a permanent bachelor an age ago, and none even bothered to present their daughters to him anymore. As a Prince, his cares were light. Lorien was not difficult to govern. Save for the cleansing of Dol Guldur and the reclamation of the Eryn Lasgalen, his projects since the fall of Sauron had been few and slight. Like most elves of the Fourth Age, he lived in memory. His books were of the past, his songs were of the past. The pattern of his cloak had not changed in a thousand years. The cut of his boot had not changed in two thousand. Were it not for the few tokens of his royalty, such as he had gained since the going of Celeborn to Imladrisóthe circlet and the chainóhe would look precisely as he had in the Second Age, when he arrived at Hollin after the flooding of Doriath. His hair was not a shade lighter, his skin not a shade less pale and clear. Only in his eye could one of fine perception see, perhaps, a subtle difference from that time so long ago. No lines encircled it, no darkness clouded it, no film filtered its gaze. No, but a change there was indeed, in its depths. A change in the way it reflected from within.

Meonas' secret was not likely to be revealed to any of his kinsmen, however. No elf was left in Lorien that had the power to penetrate what Meonas preferred to conceal. No elf of the stature of Galadriel or Celeborn. Nor did any wandering wizard like Mithrandir come to Lorien to stare into those eyes and misdoubt him. He was cut off from the world, more even than Celeborn and Galadriel had been. No children or cousins came from Imladris with outside news. No wizards seeking counsel. Only those dratted dwarves, clawing about occasionally for wood. Not much of interest from that sort of neighbour, thought Meonas. Not much to learn from that quarter.

But now at last news from Fangorn. Not a message to him, of course. Not any sort of neighbourliness. Just a tale told by the trees. The entwines found. The first real news of the Fourth Age! Yes, the first news that was news to Meonas. Dragons and Balrogs, hah, let them come! And Melkor, too. Allies at last. But not news to Meonas. He had known for long, for many years before Osse's warning to Cirdan. He had known. Walking the woods of Eryn Lasgalen, a Prince of the Noldor discovers things. He meets who he will, and learns what others do not want to learn. But what to do about these entwines? Had they any power? Were they a danger? Meonas did not know the answer to these questions. He must cross the river again. He must ask. And if he had some information to pass on in return, so much the better. He might even pass on a small prisoner or two, if it came to that. He would see what was necessary.

Below, the hobbits were given the ladder and asked to ascend. Phloriel followed them, thinking this was only an invitation by the Prince to a formal greeting, a welcome to visitors. And when the three finally emerged onto the great flet above, they were given a welcome indeed. Food and drink were brought, and silver lanterns lit for the benefit of halfling eyes. Cushions were offered them, in lieu of the tall chairs, and they sat high on the tables, perched cross-legged like Pukel-

men. Before them sat Meonas on his throne of intertwining branches, living arms of the great tree. A great bower soared over his head, like a green cloud. Above it, a thick cloth canopy was furled, tied back with ropes of gold. The flet they were on circled the entire tree, and many others ladders of rope hung down from above, where there were smaller rooms of various shape and use, unknown to the guests.

Meonas himself was very tall, ravenhaired and sharp featured. That is, though his skin was luminous and perfect, as with all elves, the lines of his nose and jaw were not at all soft or feminine. His eyebrows were full and low and slightly arched, continuing well beyond the outer edge of his eye. His face was wide at the eyes, tapering to the chin, his cheeks having a slight hollow. He wore a high white collar, tightly goffered; his waistcoat richly embroidered in green, with tracings of silver and gold and blue. His cloak was light blue. On his brow was a circlet of silver containing a white gem. From a fine chain of mithril hung a blue stone, perhaps lapis, perhaps some other stone unknown to hobbits. No rings were upon his hands. His fingers were long and cunning, the nails strangely nacreous—almost white with no pink even on the moons. Tomilo noticed all these things, for he and Prim sat long before Meonas spoke. The Prince had tried to hold their eyes, to read somewhat of their thoughts, but halflings were strange to him. They did not seem to be easily penetrable. They were like rocks, he thought. Dumb and unthinking. He could see them cataloguing their surroundings, like cows looking at grass. Finally he spoke.

'I am Meonas, Prince of Lorien. We have met before, Master Fairbairn, if briefly. I am told this is your wife. Welcome Primrose. I trust Phloriel has made you comfortable in our city?'

'Oh, yes Lord,' answered Prim quickly. 'Very comfortable indeed. We have no complaints. Your city is wondrous beyond compare, to hobbits at least. Every least thing is a wonder, pure and complete. Do pardon us for staring, Sir. Our manners

were made in the Shire, and we can't change 'em all of a sudden. But we do thank you.' Prim actually got up and bowed. Then she looked down at her feet, remembering she was standing upon a table. She flushed and sat down again, shaking her head at herself. Tomilo squeezed her hand and whispered, 'Stay calm, dearest. We're not in the dragons den yet.' But to Meonas he said,

'We're a bit nervous up here so high in the trees. Digging in the dirt suits us better; though live and learn, as I always say. Once we get back down on the ground we'll be more ourselves.'

'Yes, Tomillimir, Jewel-of-the-Sands, I had considered that,' replied Meonas with a smile. 'Frodo had his companions by him, to prop him up, as it were, in the presence of Galadriel and Celeborn. You are here by yourselves, and may well feel overwhelmed. Fear not. Lorien was not one place in the time of Frodo and another now. We still offer aid and comfort to those who seek it. Is there aught you would ask of me, friends?'

Tomilo and Prim looked at one another. 'No Lord,' answered Prim. 'We climbed up at your command, but we are presently fleeing no danger. We came only to see Phloriel, and to look upon the Golden Wood and its wonders.'

'And your return road. There are no dangers upon that?'

'Not that we foresee, Lord,' said Tomilo with some concern. 'If you have any foreknowledge, begging you pardon, I mean if you see anything dangerous on our road, I do wish you would just tell us. This is quite upsetting as it is, and best be done with it.'

'Stay calm. I see nothing of the kind, my dear hobbits. I was speaking of the entwives. You must know there is rumour in all the woods of the west. We may speak of it here, if you like. There is no safer place in Middle Earth than the Prince's Tree in Lothlorien.'

'I am sure of that, My Lord,' continued Tomilo. 'But we have nothing to tell, not to you or any King no matter how mighty. If you know that the entwives have been found there is

nothing to add to that. We will not deny it. What else is there to know?'

'I had not known before that hobbits were so testy. There is nothing else to know, as you say. I had simply thought that you might require some counsel about how best to lead a large party of ents across Eriador without incident.'

'Why should there be any incident?' asked Prim. 'Who should want to stop them?'

'No one that I know of. It is not a matter of someone stopping them, dear. It is a matter of planning how to best get them there. There may be oglers, hangers-on, rag-tag from the Shire and all places in between. Surely you had thought of that?'

'No, Sir, I can't say we ever did,' said Tomilo in some heat. 'Besides, I suppose ents can deal with "oglers."'

'No doubt they can. And a great deal more. The ents will have their own plansóI'm sure you are correct. They don't need you to have a plan of your own.'

'Again, Lord, it is not that we don't have a plan,' said Prim. 'It is that the plan is so simple it does not require a great deal of counsel. We take them there, that is all.'

'All right. I certainly never meant to pry into what I can see you consider to be your own private affair. The rest of the world does not see it as simply an affair of two hobbits, however, I can tell you. There will be interest, beyond my own. If you think that does not concern you, so be it. Let us speak of other things.'

Meonas then questioned Phloriel about the plans she had for the hobbits' entertainment, learning as he did so the length of their stay and their whereabouts during their time in Lorien. He then bid them all have a pleasant holiday and left them to climb down. As he strode from their sight around the bole to the far side of the flet he thought to himself that all had gone quite well. The hobbits' minds were not easily read, but their tongues did wag and they did fail to recognize even the simplest of traps. The entwives were not only in Eriador, they

were somewhere in the Shire. Hobbits were such simple creatures. Meonas felt sure that all he had to do is learn where these two lived. He could draw a small circle round about it and be sure to find the entwives within that radius.

'Well, that was a bit more bracing than I had prepared for,' commented Tomilo when they reached the ground. 'I guess there are elves and then there are elves.'

Phloriel looked troubled. 'Lord Meonas is indeed high and mysterious, even to us. But I had not expected that. It is not the business of the elves to become involved in the affairs of the ents, unless asked. But since the council at Rhosgobel, he may feel that all affairs again are our concern. He may foresee some complications that have not occurred to you.'

'Then he should have just told us those concerns, when we asked,' answered Prim. 'We did ask.'

'Yes, I know. I can't unravel it. If there were any danger, I think he would have told you. So I wouldn't worry. But it is odd that he would ask you directly, speaking of the entwives by name.'

'Aye, quite odd,' said Tomilo. 'Still, the counsels of the wise always seem odd, even at their wisest. *Especially* at their wisest, if the past is any key.'

That evening the hobbits again joined the elves upon Cerin Amroth for entertainment under the moon and stars. When they arrived on the green mound with Phloriel, they found to their astonishment that a huge festival was under way, much grander than the previous night. The elves looked upon them and laughed. Said one,

'Do halflings not celebrate midsummer's eve? We had heard that you had your own names for the months, names strange and uncouth. But we thought all creatures with tongues gave thanks on midsummer.'

Tomilo answered, 'Nay, fair elf, we do celebrate it. But we had lost count of the days, being in Fangorn and now in

Lothlorien. I myself had thought it more than a week away. By the way, we call midsummer's eve *lithe*, and midsummer is *overlithe*, neither of which is so uncouth, is it? They seem full of praise to us, at any rate, but perhaps that is just custom. In fact, we celebrate for three days, the day after being called *afterlithe*. Some of call it *aftermath*, but that is just an inside joke, I suppose.*

Prim nudged him and whispered, 'Uncouth.' Tomilo only smiled and nudged her back.

Another elf strode up with the hobbits' instruments, saying, 'I thought you might have need of these this night, my friends. We found them on your ponies. Will you give us a song?'

The hobbits did so, and it was only the first of many that night. I cannot write here all the songs sung and played on this midsummer's eve, by elf and hobbit: I haven't the ink. They would fill a journal of their own. But I will share, as a sample, this one, which gained Tomilo and Prim the loudest praise of any they played. It was called *Heigh-ho Mushrooms*. Tomilo informed the elves that the song must be played while dancing a sort of jig. Alternate verses he and Prim played on their instruments, skipping a bit the while. But the heigh-ho verses were sung with the instruments down and the feet a-flying.

*A mushroom is a jaunty chap
though his suit does tend to spot
and if he neglects to tip his cap
I throw him in the pot.*

*Heigh-ho mushrooms!
in linen travelling coats.
Poor old mushrooms,
travelling down our throats.*

*The mushroom may look to some
like a tiny umbrella.*

*But if an imp took shelter there
I'd accidentally eat the fella.*

*Heigh-ho mushrooms!
Growing north and south.
Beautiful tasty mushrooms!
Just the size of my mouth.*

*Hunting for proper mushrooms
is easier than you think.
The ones you want are white and firm.
The ones for your in-laws are pink!*

*O, Heigh-ho mushrooms!
with salt and butter sweet.
Mushrooms 'pon mushrooms,
jolly good to eat!*

*A mushroom has a center
soft as dewberry jelly,
and if you eat too many
the same can be said for your belly.*

*Heigh-ho mushrooms!
Short and squat and tasty.
Mushrooms are a prize
not to be et too hasty!*

*I knew a fattish hobbit
ate a hogshead a day
His girth cast such a shadow
mushrooms began to grow there, hey!*

*O, Heigh-ho mushrooms!
Little ones are the best.
Take that little one there, friend,*

I'll take all the rest!

*The mushroom has a body
narrower in the leg.
But his brains make up for his shanksó
a noddle big as a keg!*

*Heigh-ho mushrooms!
The finest food on earth.
I traded all my furniture
for a spoon and bowl's worth!*

*The best time for mushrooms
is right after lunch
or before or after dinner
or before or during brunch.*

*Heigh-ho mushrooms!
For breakfast or any meal.
The perfect snack at every houró
Or that's what I always feel.*

*Mine nuncle likes 'em slippery,
Mine auntie likes 'em sleek,
Grandma perfers 'em cold and raw,
Grandpa can make 'em squeak!*

*O, Heigh-ho mushrooms!
Top shaped like a bell!
Not a toe to speak of,
And I say just as well!*

*So you see the mushroom is glorious
in size and shape and smell,
And now I have to eat one,
so that's all that I can tell.*

*Heigh-ho mushrooms!
Make you dance and sing!
Mushrooms and more mushroomsó
summer, fall and spring!*

*Many of the Shire Reckoning names for the months ended in *-math*, of course.

About midway through the festivities, the hobbits and elves traded instruments. The elves were able to produce fair tunes upon the pipe and fiddle of Tomilo and Prim after only a short time, but the hobbits were flustered in their efforts on the instruments of the elves. As has been told already, the scale in the Shire at that time was quite complex and compressed, having 36 notes per octave. But the scale of the elves was more complex still. It was invented for the purpose of maintaining perfect pitch on all notes in the scale. That is, there was never any sharpness or flatness of tone. The scale was absolutely untempered.¹ Therefore, where the hobbits used what they called 'occasionals' to elide from one octave to another, correcting the extra pitch the elves had done away with the octave altogether. They had discovered early in their history that the octave was not a gap that was perfectly divisible, and so they avoided it. Each 'octave' was therefore very slightly different than every other. The main drawback to this was that a note could not be overlaid with its octave above or below, thereby augmenting it. But the benefits were many. There was never any sourness in a melodic progression. A player could meander up and down an endless scale, never sounding a note that was not perfectly sweet in its own right. In addition, many two-note soundings, like thirds and fifths, could be made perfect. Certain triads were perfect, and so on. Multiple-note sounds that were not perfect or pleasing were simply avoided. In addition, within what we would call an

imperfect octave existed many notes that existed only to be played as duads or triads with a given note. These notes would not be played in an ascending or descending progression, since they did not create an even oscillation between notes. What this meant for the player is that he must constantly be aware of the possibilities of the current note. He could not rely upon the scale of the instrument to give him his next note. Of course the elves played many standard pieces, which used their scale to its fullest. But much improvisation was also done, and in this the player was forever thinking at least three notes ahead, lest the beauty of the line be lost. Elvish musicians were much more interested in the melodic progression of the tones than in the power of many instruments played together. Nor were they at all interested in the harmonic resolution of slight dissonance, as players in a tempered octave are. The number of available notes² which exceeded even that of the hobbits¹ and the variation from octave to octave gave the elves an astonishing range of possibilities, and it is no wonder that they could play all night and never repeat the same arpeggio.

¹What we now call 'just intonation'. We would also call the hobbit's scale a scale of just intonation, but the scale of the elves was not a corrected scale, it was a pitch-perfect scale. This entire discussion of elvish musicology has been imported from external sources. [LT]

²The number of standard notes per rough octave was little more than that of the hobbits, being 37 on most instruments, but you must add to that what we would call the harmonic third and fifth of each note, which was not always represented by one of the original 37 (when a duad or triad crossed octaves, for instance). All instruments allowed a player to cross octaves with what we would call seconds, and what we could only call sub-seconds (as with the hobbit scale, there existed several sweet or semi-sweet duads closer together than our closest notes). Some instruments allowed the player to cross octaves with sevenths as well.

All this combined to make the elvish instruments beastly full of holes or strings or keys. Once told which holes were

standard and which were not, Tomilo could make the pipe he was given sound fairly sweet as long as he stayed with an octave of his first note. But if he strayed into another octave, all the fingerings changed, and he finally gave it up as a lost cause. Prim did no better on her elvish harp. She tried staying on just two of the 16 strings doubled, but that was embarrassing after a while and she asked for the return of her rebec.

The elves were also not too happy with the sounds they achieved with the hobbit instruments. They copied the style of the hobbits, quickly seeing what was possible, but the jump from octave to octave was jarring to their ears, and they also stayed within a limited range. One elf found the bowing of the rebec interesting, since the elves had never pursued that method. But the wavering of the tone was tiresome to his fellows, and they all saw that this means was not amenable to perfect pitch. Even the variation in pitch from one strand of hair to another could be heard by the elves, and many winced at the attempt to make the rebec follow the elvish scale.

By the end of the night the hobbits had a fair idea why the music of the elves sounded like it did. It was an expression of nostalgia and sadness, containing no dissonance or strife. Even when singing of war or other tragedy, the music of the elves implied no harmonic tension. The song was produced to release a tension already within the elvish mind, and the music did not need to recreate it first in order to heal it. It was a music of melodic perfection, harmonic only in places, simple in line but complex in the unwinding of that line. It deepened emotion without heightening it. It was altogether unlike the music of men or hobbits.

As dawn approached through the eastern trees, the owner of the elvish harp began this song. He looked to the west, at the still-dark sky above the Misty Mountains, chanting softly and rhythmically as his supple fingers drove the melody high and then low again.

*Weave a garland of eglantine
to clothe the river maiden in
and build a bower of clove gillyflower
to nestle the egg of the wren*

*Sew a shirt of silver leaves
to mantle the wind-bare moon
or golden leaves to gird the fire
of the sun's naked noon.*

*Cut a crease of hart's red leather
and tool it in truest vein
to make soft leggings or subtle quiver
for your brother on the plain*

*Make a mickle robe of black
to warm the bitter stars
and a blanket of blue to bed the clouds
from the Sky's discourteous wars*

*Inscribe a song on the face of a stone
that hinders the wandering bull
and add a line every winter
til the cliffs be writ in full*

*Place a lute in the den of the bear
til music comes arising
Place a pen in the crook of a tree
and read a green poem in spring*

*Form a brune barque of dead ash and rowan
and lash it with willow twine
to dress the bones of the fallen elf
and bind them in proper sign*

Whisper your dreams to the canopied sky~

*the roe is silent in thrall
the owl shall listen in constance
the loyal mole shall bear you withal*



 Chapter 13 

The Wrinkled Elf

It was the second night after midsummer and the moon had dwindled to a sliver. Beneath its dimming rays the Prince of Lorien walked alone. He had crossed the Great River before midnight in his black-swan barque, passing noiselessly and unseen, even to other elves. On the eastern bank he had found a tall horse tied amongst the birchesóleft there by elves of the Greenwoodóand he had mounted and ridden many hours at a great pace, bringing the beast to a panting lather. At the forest's rim he had left the quivering animal and continued on afoot,

running almost as swiftly himself. Neither the near utter darkness of the night nor the dense undergrowth slowed his progress, and he floated through the inky air like an owl, his feet barely marking the grass.

At last the trees failed before a long slow hill and a great darker mass rose up before him: a crumbling tower blocking the subtle stars behind it. It was now an hour before dawn. All was quietólike the first day of the world. To Meonas it may have almost seemed like that endless night before the first sun, when his grandfathers had passed beneath the trees to the reflection of Eru's first torchesóthose arcane essays before the time of star and moon. A fine dew now exuded from every living surface, beading in a dark-green wetness. The aroma of the wood rose with it, likewise rich and rotting. Beneath the cloak of night's long shade, slender shoots nodded smally from dead trunks, black and fallen. They awaited the yellow dawn.

But for now the tower continued to loom, enjoying the night like a wraith enjoying its cold barrow. Its evil inhabitants had long since gone, but it remembered them fondly. The great stones, etched by the weathers and cracked by long cold, huddled and grinned like a line of jagged teeth. Lichens dangled and oozed in overhangs, trembling with a coming sign. And then suddenly the earth groaned a long low warning: the stones awoke and thrilled. A dry breeze swept through the ancient corridors and wrapped the tower in old fears. A darkness more brittle than the previous hour lowered itself to the ground, and a great animal padded through its tense airs. This animal glided on furred feet below a twitching tail, and the last creatures of the hill fled before it. Even the worms and beetles crouched in their holes and held their bitter breaths.

Dol Guldur posed in a hunched glory under the sky, beating back the starlight and screaming soundlessly at the coming day. The animal nuzzled it, licking the dark for faint praise. Slowly it passed from east to west, and as it emerged into the open it yawned, a bloody tongue between grey teeth. Meonas saw it thenóthe huge cat with orange eyes. This night

the wraith had taken the form of a black panther. Its coat loomed like a horizontal wound, cut by the black blade of Eol. The elf advanced and met the creature under the western wall.

'Hail, Master!' he said in lowest tones. 'What news from the north?'

'The Dark Lord waits. But not much longer. We are near to the second.*' These words hissed from the teeth of the great cat like a viscous poison. Few ears but Meonas' could have heard them without infinite pain. Even he had to assert his will to keep his skin from rising in bumps and his heart from quailing. The sound of the words seemed to arrive from some distant void, rather than upon the waves of the unsullied air, and a lesser mind would have immediately stumbled and fallen in trance.

'That is well. We are ready. And I have news also. The entwives have been found.'

'Yes, the cursed trees jeer it, and I am already sick of the words. May they burn to the last limb! Soon. Very soon. My winged friends are even now whetting their claws! Eosden will be our next toy.'

*Morgoth had seen Eosden's Silmaril (the "second" Silmaril) in his palantir and had bent all his mind upon it. By now Eosden had left Edoras to go to Isengard (see Book 3, Chapter 2).

'Shall I bring the halflings here, Master?' asked Meonas.

'I have no time for halflings!' growled the great cat. 'Our vengeance will soon fall upon the whole world, and I do not need to deal it out piecemeal. If you had Frodo Ninefingers I would eat him in a long meal, but these ones you speak of are nothing to me. Let them suffer in the usual way, by living in the days to come!' The cat grinned and snarled, dripping upon the already slimed stones.

'And the ents? Shall we follow them?'

'Yesss. Send your spies and we will send ours. They will lead us to their own undoing, the fools. And leave their home

to thieves the while!' The cat scratched the ground with his great paws, punishing all he touched. 'But that is not your first concern. Keep to the plan. Small curses on the Shire and the Ents. It is Imladris that goes first.'

Afar off in the east, just on the edge of hearing, a bird of the morning chirped, unaware of the silence he marred. The cat looked up at the sky and sneered. He sniffed the air with high malice and slunk off, disappearing into the greying shadows. Meonas stood for a moment and then he also left the spot. The tower stopped its chorus and returned to its long sulk, looking at the far horizon with hatred. But even as it clenched its stones and ground its hard teeth, other visitors approached from the east. Coming with the light, they floated over the greening grasses like kind apparitions, warming the vapours as they came. The worms and beetles relaxed and stretched themselves. The birds returned, breathing deeply.

These visitors were in the shape of two women, one young, one old. With them was a tall hound. Both women wore dark-green mantles and hoods, but now that the light was rising, the mantles were loosened and brighter colours could be seen peeking from beneath. The younger woman had flowing white skirts, indeed, and her golden hair was no longer completely hidden by the hood. The older woman had hair of black streaked with silver, and her face, though still fair of shape, was wrinkled all over. Her mouth had fallen, and her eyes were deep and sad. They were set now in circles of dark, and her thoughts could no longer be hidden. They were etched on her face in a long tale.

The two women came into the circle of Dol Guldur and looked about them, listening. The hound sniffed the air and whined softly. Meonas had been gone many moments and was already deep in the forest on his way back to Lorien. The cat's terrible presence could no longer be felt, save by the keen nose of the hound. The young woman whistled in a low tone, and her sound was returned by an even lower whistle. She moved toward that second sound, which had come from within a wall.

The spot was very near to the one on the western wall that Meonas had just quitted. The woman soon arrived at that very spot and she whistled once more. Again the sound was answered. She looked up, and from a crevice in the wall, perhaps twelve feet from the ground, a pair of old ravens emerged. They looked a bit frightened still. Their eyes were wide and their feathers were slightly ruffled.

'Good morning, Scrovus! Good morning, Offa! I hope you are well!' said the young woman.

'As well as can be expected, Lady Kalasaya,' answered Offa, the female bird. 'I don't expect we'll sleep for the next week, but we managed to stay quiet. I had such a screech welling up within me that I don't know how I kept from popping. The stones knew we were here, and they made such a noise. But neither elf nor wraith heard them.'

'I had my wing over my beak the whole time,' added Scrovus. 'I think I swallowed a pinion feather.'

'Did you hear the conversation?' asked the lady, ignoring these comments. 'Yes,' replied Offa. 'I have heard the voice of the Necromancer. Sauron himself was here.'

'In what shape?'

'He is no longer the snowy owl. This night he took the form of a great black cat.'

At that moment the old woman walked up. 'And what saith this black cat?' she asked the ravens.

'They spoke mostly of halflings and ents, Lady Arwen. And Imladris. I fear most for Imladris. They will spy on the ents and entwives, leaving the halflings alone for now. But Imladris is in danger.'

'What danger?'

'We learned nothing new. But the old plans are still in effect, whatever they may be. The time is now approaching.'

'Surely Meonas cannot convince Lorien to attack Imladris?' interrupted Kalasaya.

'I do not know,' answered Arwen. 'It seems unlikely. Perhaps he has convinced a small part to do so, with lies and

false promises. Celeborn has made many enemies in Lorien. So much has changed since I once wandered there. Celeborn's taking of the ring Vilya¹ has caused great discord all over the west. Thranduil backs him, but almost no one else. Both havens are against him, though from what I have heard they are very far from war. Whatever Meonas plans, I believe he plans it secretly, and without the support of the Eldar. There appears to be some alliance between Lorien and the enemy, though I think the elves of Lorien are as ignorant of it as the elves of Imladris. We must discover more. Tomorrow we will cross the river.'

The ladies made small gifts to the birds and then departed. But they did not follow Meonas west. Nor did they follow Sauron to the north. Rather, they made off northwest, planning to emerge from the wood at the smaller western bight. From there they would hurry across the plain, crossing the Anduin above the Gladden. Kalasaya's people lived there, in the northern Wilderland.

Kalasaya was a shape-changer. Her people were related to the Beornings, being of strange powers and long lives, but not immortal. They called themselves the *Kovatari*—the people of the dog, in their own tongue. They became not bears, but hounds, accounting Huan the Great² an ancestor. In man-form they were tall and thin and blonde, long of limb and graceful. The men grew no beards, like to elves. By this, and by their slightness, were they told from the descendents of Eorl who also dwelled in Wilderland.

¹Upon the passing of Glorfindel, Celeborn took possession of his ring. He was opposed in this by Nerien, who was present, but he answered that as the new Lord of Imladris he had both the right and the need for it. Most in Imladris disagreed, though none had the stature to contest it. See Book 3, Chapter 2.

²Whether Huan was also a shape-changer, according to the history of the *Kovatari*, or had only taken a woman to wife, is unclear. They did not discuss such matters with outsiders, and no written tales survive.

Like the Beornings, they did little farming, preferring instead to hunt. They lived in small hamlets, with houses closely gathered. Like the hobbits, they liked to build into hillsides; but unlike the hobbits, they preferred a house of one large room instead of many smaller rooms connected by hallways. Many hamlets took a similar form to Brandy Hall in Buckland, where a number of families lived in the cutting of a single hill. What is more, several families often shared a single den, the Kovatari being fond of companionship and being not especially averse to crowding.

The hound travelling with Kalasaya and Arwen was in fact the brother of the former. He was called Merkki,* and he often stayed in canine form for months on end. He stood ten hands high at the shoulder, and was a tawny yellow streaked with grey. He also carried spots on his back, like a fawn. Over sort distances he could outrun the fastest horse. No creature north of Harad could outpace him, or any of the *Kovatari*.

Kalasaya liked her maiden-form, however, and whenever she travelled with Arwen, she seldom changed shape. Indeed she was one of the most beautiful creatures in Middle Earth, in either form. She was not young, by the reckoning of her kind, being about 180, but the Kovatari did not visibly age until the last decades of their lives, and so her age was of little matter in that regard. Her hair was golden, as I have saidóperhaps a shade darker than Galadriel's. It was waist-length, most often worn in four braids tied together. Her face and nose were long, but her brow and chin delicate nonetheless. Her neck was exceedingly slender, as were her hands. She was in no way as tall or as imposing as Galadriel had been, but in many ways was just as fair. Her eyes were like no other's, and were unsurpassed even among the elves. They were a sapphire blue, untroubled by the history of the Eldar. Her lids were heavy, with a high, arched lid-fold. And her eyebrows were likewise very high, another shade darker than her hair. Her skin was also a shade darker than the elvish, and tended in summer to freckles.

*Merkki signifies 'spots' in the tongue of the *Kovatari*.

As a she-hound, Kalasaya had a long tail of golden hair, almost like a pony's. Long golden hair she had also on her ears, and behind her legs. Her coat elsewhere was the colour of fine creamósave between her toes, where it also tended to golden. She was as tall as Merkki, though she weighed somewhat less, being slighter in leg and chest.*

The morning passed as they travelled through the reaches of Eryn Lasgalen. Though the birds twittered merrily overhead and the other forest creatures went about their business with unconcern, the day never passed beyond twilight. The canopy was thick and unbroken, and only the occasional beam of yellow pierced the cover of dark leaves, cutting the gloom like shards of glass. These slender rays of light could be seen from a long distance, and a traveller might fall under the impression that he could climb them, like a rope, emerging into the clear air above, where all was fine and bright. Indeed the shadows made the mind wander, in many other ways than this, and a mortal man would have soon come to griefónot from any real danger, but from a loss of clear thinking. If he did not get lost in a web of dreams, and so fall into some unseen pit, he would surely lie down at last in a bed of forgetfulness and starve without once thinking of food.

Only elves and changlings could live for long in such a place. They flourished in its halflights, and their minds were never lost in its mazes. Its moods mirrored their own, and they took refreshment from its deep and mysterious fonts. They required no clarityóthe world swirled about them like the deep currents of the ocean, the trees swaying like seaweed, and they yet swam strongly and fearlessly, asking for no shore.

It was now about midday, and the two women were still walking side by side, speaking little. There was no path, but their feet made almost no sound on the forest floor. No sticks

snapped, no leaves crunched, no rocks loosed. The heelless boots and soft leather soles of Arwen made no impression, even in damp soil, and Kalasaya was unshod. Only during the winter months did she don her boots. It was now the warmest time of *laire*, and she let her soft skirts fall about her naked heels. Her pink soles had been greened by the grasses and leaves, and wildflowers and purple thistles clung to her lower hems. Her green mantle had been removed, and her long arms were also bared by her sleeveless dress. She had tied blue flowers into her braids, and her bodice was also blue ó the colour of heathbells. She wore no jewelry or other decoration of metals, having no buttons or buckles. But her bodice was laced from waist to breast with fine grey muslin riband. Her long braids, two before and two behind, were all the adornment any eye could ask for.

During the morning the ladies had remet their horse, who had been left to wander the woods the day before. He could not have been trusted to be silent as they were spying on Meonas, and even now he crashed through the underbrush behind them, making a horrible racket by their own standards. Though tall and handsome, he was used by the ladies mainly as a packhorse. He carried lanterns and pots and plates and unneeded mantles and divers other necessities. He was called Taliesen, or Tally for short, and he was dark grey with brown forelegs and mane. His only decoration was elvish bells about his neck (but they had been surpressed for the time) and a grey muslin riband, like Kalasaya's laces, wound about his tail.

Just then Merkki returned from a hunt. He had caught a pair of pheasants, and the party stopped for a midday meal. As Arwen started a fire, Merkki spoke up for the first time that day.

'My Lady, I do not understand why we did not follow Sauron. We might easily have taken the cat prisoner. I do not fear him myself, and the three of us could not have been bested regardless.'

*The modern Russian wolfhound is most directly descended from these ancient beasts, and stories are still told in the Steppes of wolfhounds who may be seen at times as men or women. It may be that the *Kovatari* exist to this day. [LT]

'That may be so, Merkki. But you do not fully understand the situation. The panther has only been inhabited by Sauron for the nonce—it is not Sauron himself. If you had taken the cat by the throat, Sauron would have simply quitted the body and fled. The beast would have then been our prisoner, but as a beast only. Sauron himself is now nothing and no one, and he can only exist, in a form visible to the living, by borrowing the body of some living creature. He has not even the power to kill such a beast, for his spirit cannot animate the body alone. He requires both its body and wraith to do his bidding.'

'I see,' answered Merkki. 'But does he have the power to kill, while in the skin of the beast? Could he have killed the ravens, if he had become aware of them?'

'Oh yes. The panther is completely in his thrall, as long as he inhabits it. He can make it do whatever he will. He has at his beck the full powers of the beast, and we should have had to fight with all our strength to overcome the cat. A panther is a fierce fighter, even without the evil of Sauron to push it, and you would have been hard pressed my dear. It is well for us to go another direction, regardless.'

'As you will, Lady. But I fear no panther. I would stand up a wereworm if my Lady required it.'

'No doubt. No doubt,' answered Arwen, smiling. 'Pray we don't encounter such a situation. We will leave the wereworms to Forodwaith, dear, for now.'

A week later the party had reached Kivi, the hamlet of Kalasaya and Merkki, some five leagues north and west of the Loeg Ningloron (the fens of Sir Ninglor). Here they would stay for a short time before returning in secret to the south. Kivi lay on the bank of a small river, one which flowed south to swell

the Ninglor. The *Kovatari* called it the Odel, which in the common tongue was simply 'the fork'. Kalasaya and Arwen therefore planned to return south in a boat, entering the northeastern corner of Lorien from the shore of the Great River. Here they knew the Anduin to be overhung by a great cliff on the western bank which would hide their approach. Once within the Golden Wood, they would take upon them the costume and speech of the elves there, passing for one of their own. This was easy for Arwen, of course, for she had lived long years in Lorien. But she must disguise her voice and face. And Kalasaya already had this skill, being a shape-changer: it is she who had taught Arwen the finer arts of impersonation. So subtle had they become in this art that they could fool even the elves. Only the most penetrating could pierce this facadeóone such as Meonas or Celeborn or Nerien, or one of the wizards. As long as the pair stayed out of Caras Galadon, they had little to fear, and could travel within Lorien unrecognized, learning what they would.

That day they arrived in Kivi to great fanfare. The father and mother of Kalasaya and Merkki were the foremost citizens of the county, being among the eldest and most respected of the *Kovatari*. The orcs of the Misty Mountains had feared the mother as a great sorceress in her time, as they now feared Kalasaya. Even in the worst years of the War of the Ring, the wargs had travelled around the hamlets of *Kovatari* in a wide berth, preferring easier pickings.

A line of small hills ran from north to south, mirroring the line of the Misty Mountains nearby to the west; and where the little Odel river snaked between two of these hills, a great den had been excavated in the southern rise, looking north. Fully half the families of the hamlet lived in it. It was actually a series of large dens, three of them with windows looking out over the river, and the others behind, deep within the hillside. Stables flanked these dens, also built with roofs of sod, and gardens circled the lot. Vegetable gardens and flower gardens both ran riot this time of the year, and the hill was a festive

place. The *Kovatari* did not raise corn or other grains, as I have said, but they had a taste for cabbages and sweet tomatoes and other herbs, and were not above tending them. Besides horses, the hamlet boasted some goats and domestic fowl. And dogs were everywhere. Not shape-changing dogs, but only the everyday sort, in all shapes and sizes. They performed all manner of duties for their changling masters: pulling carts like ponies, running errands, delivering mail, chasing rabbits from the gardens, and much more. It was altogether a cozy arrangement, made the cozier by the master's ability to understand the language of his dog. The dogs worked hard, but they also reaped certain undeniable benefits—like the ability to request a change in a dinner menu, for instance, or the ability to let it be known precisely who was trying to steal the cabbages.

A young boy ran out from the stable to meet the travellers, taking Tally by the mane and leading him into a stall. The horse's packs were removed, and the ladies' personal belongings were sent by dog into the house. The boy looked in wonder at the beautiful elvish lanterns and plates, and at the subtle fabrics, and at the cunning weapons of his Lady Kalasaya. To him they were all instruments of sorcery beyond his imagination. Even the silverware bespoke of magic, being of a pattern and kind unknown to the hamlet. As he loaded it onto the back of another house-dog, he turned a spoon over in his hand and then took a bite of it, testing it with his teeth.

'Hoy there! Cnut! Watcha be doin', boy?' said an old man, taking the spoon from him and cuffing him lightly on the noggin. 'You think the ladies want yer spittle all over them pewter?'

'Taint pewter, Granfer. 'Tis silver. I ne'er tasted silver.'

'Well, it don't taste of nothing, do it? You can't taste metal, you dern fool.'

'Taste's like mud. Red mud, not grey mud.'

'Say's you, you goggle-minnow. Don't taste like nought

to me,' he answered, taking it dripping from his own mouth.

'Granfer, who is the old lady?' asked Cnut, sniffing a knife.

'That be the Great Lady Arwen, what were once the Queen of Gondor and Arnor.'

'I thought she were dead.'

'Nosir, not dead, lad. Though I doubt not she will die some day soon, and most elves won't.'

'Why will she die, Granfer?'

'She's idn't an elf no more, not by roights. She's just a lady now, like the ladies of Gondor or the ladies of the Eorlingas.'

'She must be very old, for a lady, I mean. Even older than you, Granfer.'

'She's older than me by a long bowshot. And you know the people of Gondor and Eorl don't live as long as we do, in the normal course of things. I'm 288 years old this fall, and can expect another ten, fates a willin'. But she's a couple thousand, so I hear, and can expect a couple hunnerd more. The way of it is, says Nydówho heerd it from Kalasaya's own dogóis that an elf what becomes a man has to start the counting of the years all over. He (or she, as the case is) gets a new span of five hunnerd, no matter if they have already lived ten years or ten thousand. Well, the Lady Arwen started her new account in the first year of the age, or thereabouts. So, unless she gets kilt by an arrow, or falls into a hole, or dies of grief and pinin', she's got another coupla centuries left. Then she dies as a lady does, and goes where we all go, wherever that may be. But she doesn't ne'er sail with the elves, nor see her old Dad agin.'

'That's sad, Granfer. If I was an elf I think I would stay elvish, no matter what nobody said. Then I could have silver things whenever I wanted, and these here fabrics, and I could make pretty music and sorcery. And I would hunt in the woods forever and ever, never having to bury no one or mourn no one.'

'But you wouldn't get to be a changling, too, lad! You

could never run as a hound or hunt as a hound. You could never sniff the air of a morning, or catch the fox on foot. It would be a partial bein', at best. Besides, the elves a'bury eachother and mourn something awful. They spend ages just mourning.'

'I suppose. I dunno. Are there any elves that are changlings, Granfer?'

'Not that I have heert.'

'What is over the ocean, Granfer? Does it sound like a nice place to go, if you are an elf?'

'I suppose. No one in Middle Earth has been there. The Lady Galadriel, what used to live in the Golden Wood, had been there, and might have told you a think or two. Beyond that, it is a place as unknown as the place beyond the grave and before the womb. It don't bear talkin' of.'

There was a long pause as Cnut continued to load the house-dog. The poor dog was already loaded down with his own weight in sundries, bearing mantles that might have swallowed him and kettles he might have bathed in. But Cnut knit his brow and tied another fair box onto his burden.

'Why don't the Lady Arwen live with her grandsons in Minas Mallor?' he asked the old man at last.

'It makes her pine for the King, what died long ago. So she went into exile, which is where a body goes off alone to mourn and to remember. She could have gone to Rivendell, where she grew up, but that made her pine for her Dad, what was gone, too. And in Lorien her Mom was gone, who got waylaid by orcs and almost kilt and sailed away finally. So the Lady Arwen went to the Greenwood, where she lives now. And your Lady Kalasaya takes care of her.'

'I know,' answered Cnut. After another pause, he thought of one last question. 'Will the Lady Kalasaya become a witch, too?'

'The Lady Arwen is not a witch, lad. Though she has powers more than the likes of us can fathom. Nyd said she was like a little wizard, old and cunning. Like Radagast, but more

subtle. More elvish. And the Lady Kalasaya is also subtle and cunning, seemingly beyond the wont of our kind. Even her mother is not so elvish in her waysówalking abroad hooded and draped. But there is nothing evil in our Lady Kalasaya, ladódon't ever think it. If she spells you, boy, it will be for your own good. So don't go telling anyone anything unnatural, or perhaps she will!

Some days later, far to the north and east, the great black cat loped through the shades of Mirkwood, a cruel unnatural gleam still covering his eye like a film. He had passed the Old Forest Road some hours ago, and he now glanced up by the by, looking for weird lights in the sky. At last he saw a change: not yet lights, but a great black wall rising before him. He had arrived at the Mountains of Mirkwood! Deep and deep in the forest, days and days journey within from any direction, lay the cold mountainsó taller by far than a traveller in any wood might expect, or remember. Even those who had seen them before were shocked and thrilled to approach once more. They rose like a lost finger of the Misty Mountains, pointing distantly to the thumb of the Iron Hills in the uttermost east.

League upon league the wraith of Sauron had travelled to find himself at their feet. Again he looked upon high in search for orange lights, for he expected another rendezvous this night of the world. Evil cousins were awaiting him with news from the north.

At last a glow was seen, topping off the highest peak. It increased in magnitude for a short time and then went out. The cat sprung up the mountainside, throwing stones from before him and etching the ground with his great claws. After a time he came out above the forest and found himself in the winds of Rhovanion once more. They blew chill from the Ered Mithrin, chattering in the distant blue. Even in *laire* the Mountains of Mirkwood shivered and thawed. But no cold could pierce the close furs of the cat nor penetrate the mind of Sauron. He came out upon the highest shoulder of rock,

glowing a deep indigo from starlight and moon. To his right, against the eastern sky, the mountain glowed, and a rumbling could be heard, like a brood of monstrous kittens awaiting their mother. But these kittens were scaled and horned, and their dreams were not of milk but of blood.

'Greetings, Captain Cat!' said the first kitten, laughing so deep that stones were loosed from the mountain, crashing down into the woods below.

'Yes, Hiisi, I have come,' replied Sauron, with a softer but even deeper malice. 'I see that Untamo and Keitolainen are also here. That is well. Good hunting, I say to you all!'

'Thank you, Lord Cat,' offered the second kitten. This was Untamo, the largest of the three worms. He had his tail wrapped about him and his eyes were but slits in the night. He reflected a greenish gold sheen under the stars, and a smoke rose about him like a tamped-down blaze, and he stank.

'You should ride upon my back, Cousin Panther,' offered the last beast. 'You will want to see the destruction we inflict upon the wizards. We will require someone to carry the cursed thing, too. My feet still bleed from the first.'

The great wereworms were required to treat Sauron with some due measure of respect, on account of his history, and despite his fall. But away from the authority of Morgoth they tended to forget the proper forms. Their size and power put them in fear and awe of no one, and even the wraith of the former Dark Lord could be treated with some sarcasm. Sauron knew this and hid his rancour. History was long, and he had already outlived many a dim-witted dragon, even Ancalagon the Proud. He would no doubt see these over-confident allies off into the nameless pit, once they had done their part!

'No Keito, my dear, I will hear of it on the morrow. I have other business in the north. If you go to Orthanc, my dears, I bid you take care. There are stones there even you three cannot throw down or char. I recommend a meeting with the staff-wavers in the open, if it can be arranged. Their palantir will make such a feint difficult, however.'

'Our Master has foreseen all this, Captain,' answered Untamo haughtily. 'There is always more than one entry to any lair. The wizards will not escape!'

'Good. I will look to the south for rising smokes and rising spirits.* In the meanwhile, have the balrogs left Hiitola yet?'

*Sauron does not mean this in the usual way. He is speaking of the wraiths departing from bodies thrown down in battle. The irony of the phrase, being applicable to his own fall, may or may not have been clear to him.

'No, Captain,' answered Hiisi. 'When we left they were still there, though they must go soon. You may pass them on the way, if you hurry.'

'Do they go to Gundaband first?'

'That is not our concern,' said Untamo impatiently. 'We have our battle, they have theirs. If you do not let us go, Imladris will be on fire before Orthanc.'

The cat looked at the three dragons with one last hidden glimmer of hatred, and then turned without another word and scampered down the long incline to the north. Behind him the great beasts were already rising into the air, polluting the morning mists with their reeks and stench. They planned to fly south to the East Bight, thereby avoiding the eyes of the great eagles to the west. From there they would travel a long arc, high over the Brown Lands, crossing the Anduin at the North Undeep. They would begin their long descent over the Wold and then skirt the southern edge of Fangorn before seeking the second Silmaril at Isengard.

Even as they did so, an elf army would be departing from Lorien, and another, strengthened by the eight balrogs, would come down from Mount Gundaband. These would meet in Imladris, planning to crush it between their combined forces.

Evil was moving in Middle Earth once more. The

shadows beneath all trees were deepening and the fears of the nighttime would once more encroach upon the day.

~ End Book Two

~ End Volume One

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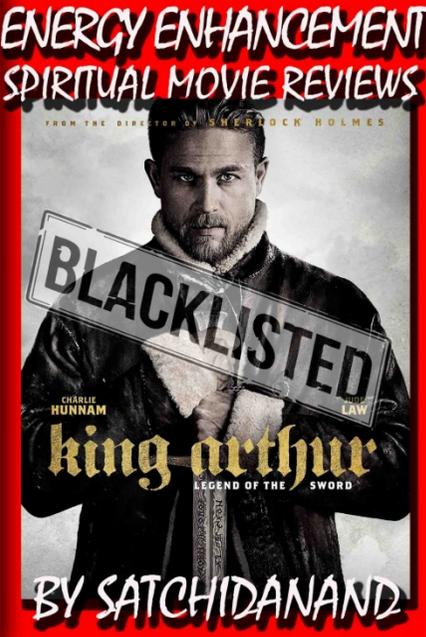
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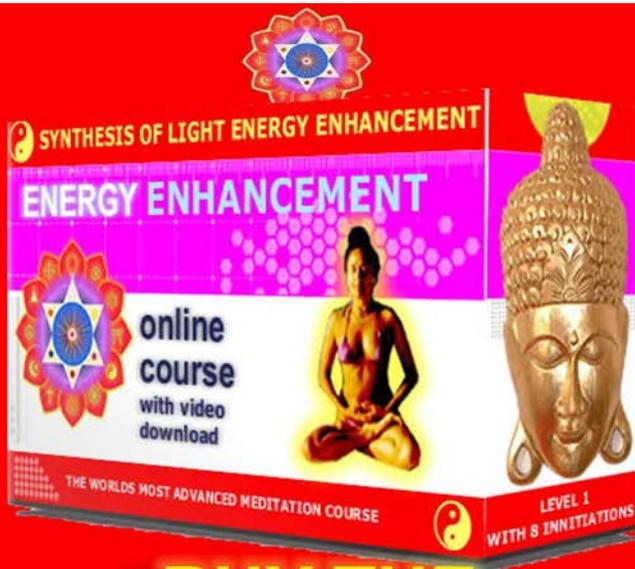
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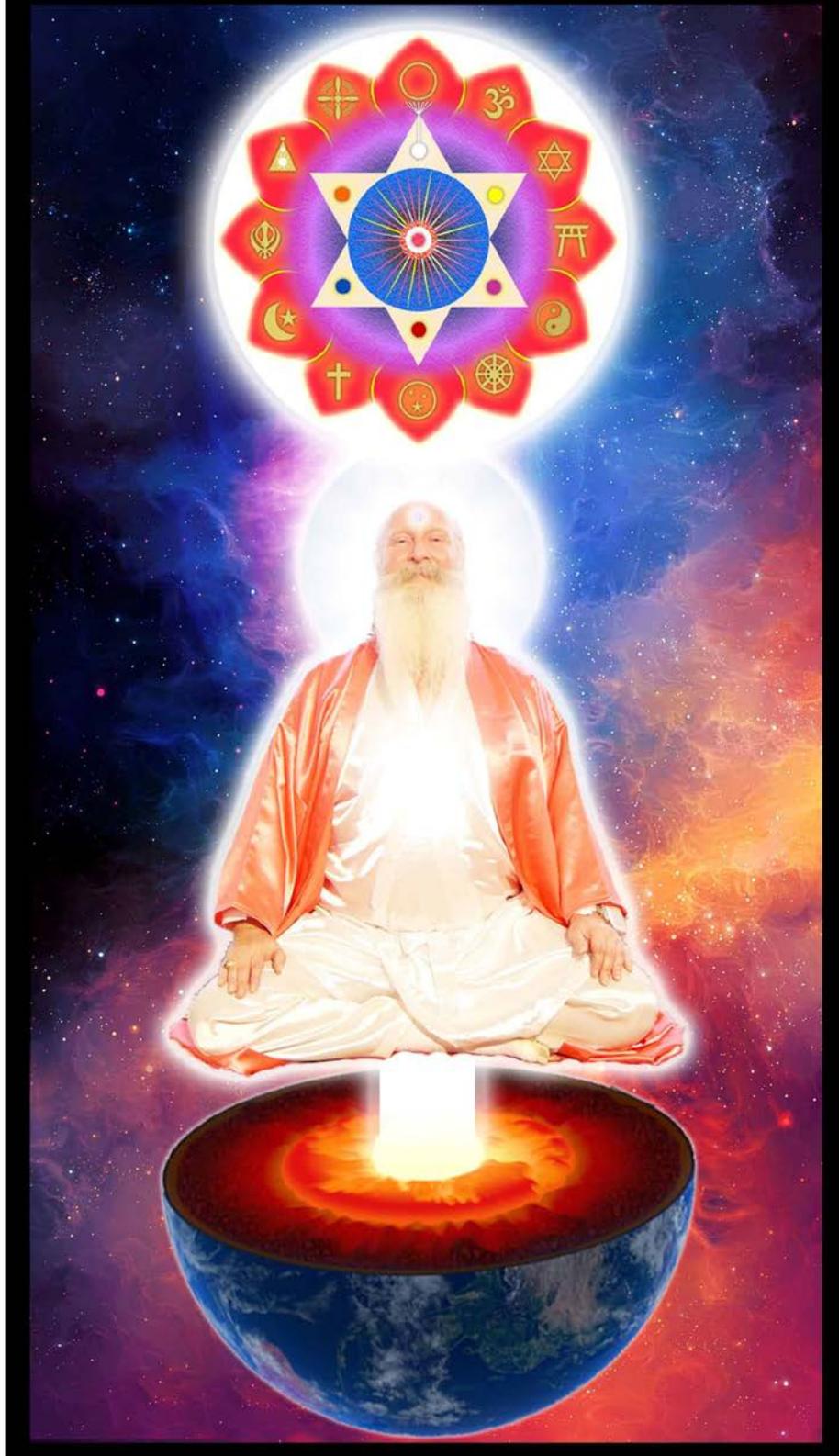
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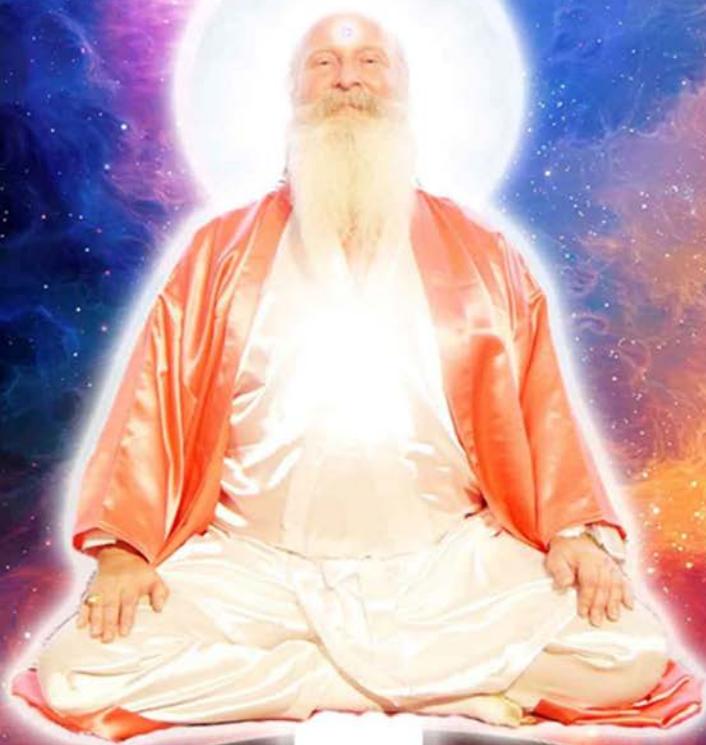
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MEDITATION LEVEL 4 MASTER
ENERGY CONNECTIONS AND
RELATIONSHIPS**

<http://www.energyenhancement.org/Level4.htm>

LEARN ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION



LEVEL ONE

LEARN ENERGY ENHANCEMENT LEVEL ONE

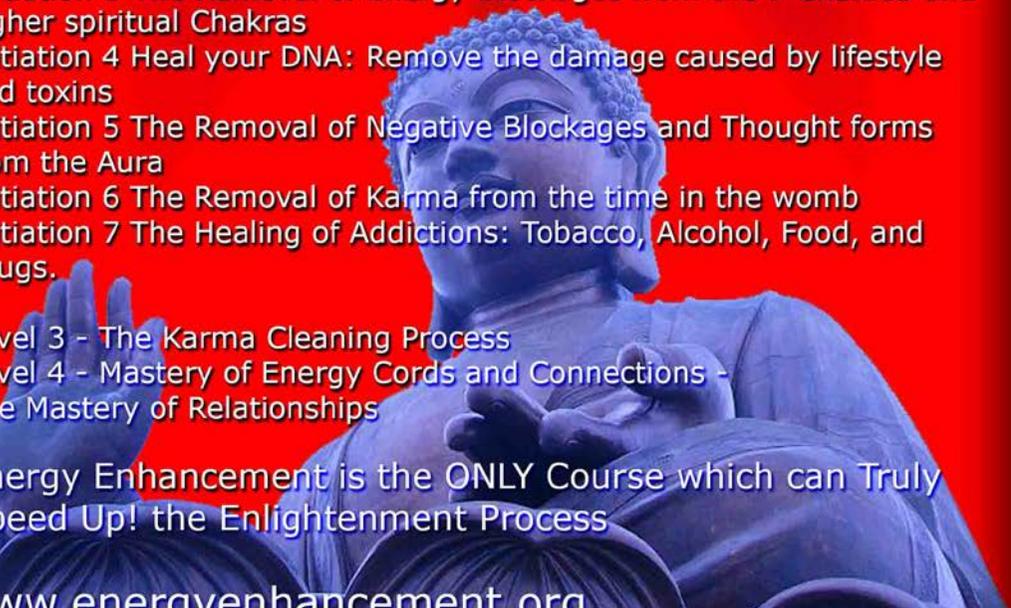
The Energy Enhancement Meditation Video Course Has Been Transcribed
Now it comes Out as a Book - For Level One

Full Level One Transcription with Colour Pictures and Diagrams

Level 1

- 
- Initiation 1 Meditation : Stopping the mind and squaring the circle.
Initiation 2 Energy Circulation: Microcosmic orbit and Kundalini Kriyas
Initiation 3 The Grounding of Negative Energies: Alchemy, Vitriol
and Earth Connection. Vitriol (Visita Interiore Terrae Rectificando
Invenies Occultem Lapidem)
Initiation 4 Accessing the Universal Energy Source:
Macrocosmic Orbit, The Energy Enhancement Supra Galactic Orbit,
Advanced Kundalini Kriyas.
Initiation 5 Open Your Third Eye. Project Energy from Ajna Chakra.
Ground Toxins in Food: Re-awakening our psychic ability to detect
poisons. Removing Blockages.
Initiation 6 Antahkarana Power Tower Protection
Initiation 7 Pyramid Protection
Initiation 8 The Merkaba Protection

Level 2

- 
- Initiation 1 The Removal of Energy Blockages and Thought forms from
the Antahkarana Infinity of Chakras
Initiation 2 The Removal of Energy Blockages in the Body: Healing
disease and pain
Initiation 3 The Removal of Energy Blockages from the 7 Chakras and
higher spiritual Chakras
Initiation 4 Heal your DNA: Remove the damage caused by lifestyle
and toxins
Initiation 5 The Removal of Negative Blockages and Thought forms
from the Aura
Initiation 6 The Removal of Karma from the time in the womb
Initiation 7 The Healing of Addictions: Tobacco, Alcohol, Food, and
Drugs.

Level 3 - The Karma Cleaning Process

Level 4 - Mastery of Energy Cords and Connections -
The Mastery of Relationships

Energy Enhancement is the ONLY Course which can Truly
Speed Up! the Enlightenment Process

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ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

LEVEL TWO



REMOVE

ENERGY BLOCKAGES

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT LEVEL TWO

REMOVE ENERGY BLOCKAGES

Learn the "Energy Enhancement Anti Energy Blockage Hack Technique" and Free Your Mind Once and for All.

Why has this Energy Blockage predator taken over in the fashion that you're describing, Don Juan?" I asked. "There must be a logical explanation."

"There is an explanation," don Juan replied, "which is the simplest explanation in the world. They took over because we are food for them, and they squeeze us mercilessly because we are their sustenance. Just as we rear chickens in chicken coops, gallineros, the predators rear us in human coops, humaneros. Therefore, their food is always available to them."

Don Juan had a broad smile on his face. He was as pleased as punch. He explained that sorcerers see infant human beings as strange, luminous balls of energy covered from the top to the bottom with a glowing coat something like a plastic cover that is adjusted tightly over their cocoon of energy. He said that that glowing coat of awareness was what the predators consumed, and that when a human being reached adulthood, all that was left of that glowing coat of awareness was a narrow fringe that went from the ground to the top of the toes.

If we consider a human being as containing seven parallel chakra processors within the body and an infinity of parallel chakra processors above the head and below the base, connecting us to the Universe, then the more of these parallel chakra processors we can access, the more intelligence we have - What stops the access to these parallel chakra processors is Energy Blockages.

We need to learn how to "Hack" these Energy Blockages to remove them so we can access our native genius. The Geni being the Soul Chakra, the first Chakra above the head.

Yet as we remove more of the energy blockages and access many more chakras, even more intelligence is possible!!

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ENERGY ENHANCEMENT LEVEL 3



KARMA CLEARING PROCESS

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT LEVEL 3

THE REMOVAL OF EVEN DEEPER ENERGY BLOCKAGES

THE REMOVAL OF KARMA

"Traditional forms of meditation are designed to fail!!"

Remove Deep Energy Blockage Forces - The Matrix And Antahkarana Hyperdimensional Predators are just some of the Energy Blockages completely vampirising your energy, blocking your intellect, sabotaging your life and indeed your health.

YES, WITH ENERGY ENHANCEMENT, LEARN HOW TO REMOVE ALL YOUR ENERGY BLOCKAGE KARMA!!

REMOVE ALL YOUR BAD LUCK AND TROUBLE

REMOVE ALL YOUR INNER SABOTAGE, ATTITUDES, HABITS WHICH PREVENT SUCCESS IN LIFE

YES, EACH ENERGY BLOCKAGE IS THIS LIFE AND PAST LIFE KARMA. ONCE KARMA IS REMOVED THEN IT IS EASY TO FIND YOUR DHARMA, YOUR SOUL PATH, "THE PATH WITH HEART" - REMOVE KARMA, FOLLOW DHARMA.

THE KARMA CLEARING PROCESS - REMOVING EVEN DEEPER BLOCKAGES

"Waste no more time arguing what a good person should be.. Be One" - Marcus Aurelius

KARMA CLEANING PROCESS, CLEAN THE KARMA FROM PAST LIVES, CLEAN THE KARMA FROM YOUR FUTURE LIFE, CLEAN THE KARMA FROM YOUR FUTURE LIFETIMES, SOUL FRAGMENTATION INTEGRATION AND RETRIEVAL.

HOW TO STOP PSYCHOPATHIC ENERGY VAMPIRES, INTEGRATE INNER CHILDREN, HEAL AND INTEGRATE SELFISH EGO SUB PERSONALITIES, LIFE DESTROYING STRATEGIES, THE ALOOF, THE INTERROGATOR, THE VIOLATOR, THE SELFISH COMPETITIVE STAR, THE VAMP OR DON JUAN, THE PLEASER, THE BLAMER, THE CRITIC, THE KING, THE SELF DESTRUCTOR, REMOVE ALL THE DESTRUCTIVE VOWS FROM THIS AND PAST LIFETIMES, THE CREATION OF SELF LOVE, LOVE AND SERVICE.

"REMOVING ALL YOUR ENERGY BLOCKAGES IS A REALLY GOOD THING TO DO" - SATCHIDANAND

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT IS THE NEWEST AND MOST HIGH SPIRITUAL IMPULSE ON THIS PLANET

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ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

LEVEL 4



MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

LEVEL 4 MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

MASTER THE PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTION BETWEEN YOU AND ALL PEOPLE, CREATE INCREDIBLE RELATIONSHIPS - THE KARMA CLEARING PROCESS WITH ALL YOUR RELATIONSHIPS, FRIENDS, FAMILY, MOTHER AND FATHER, REMOVE BLOCKAGES FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY, HEAL BEREAVEMENT, IMPOTENCE, CLEAN THE TIES WHICH BIND, THE HIGHEST HEART, THE MASTERY OF ADDICTIONS - DRUGS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, SEX, FOOD, POWER, MONEY, BUDDHIST NON - ATTACHMENT, THE MASTERY OF ATTACHMENT - DEPENDENT ATTACHMENT, PARASITIC VAMPIRE ATTACHMENT, SYMBIOTIC ATTACHMENT, ENLIGHTENED ATTACHMENT, THE SOUL CONNECTION, HEAL THE WORLD. BECOME A MASTER, A MERLIN, A JEDI KNIGHT, A WHITE MAGICIAN.

WE ARE AFFECTED BY ENERGY BLOCKAGES IN THE PEOPLE WHO CONNECT TO US - LEARN HOW TO REMOVE ENERGY BLOCKAGES AT THE OTHER END OF YOUR ENERGY CONNECTIONS IN OTHER PEOPLE. LEARN HOW TO AUGMENT YOUR PSYCHIC TALENT BODY WITH ALCHEMICAL GOLD - THE NEW METHOD OF ENERGY ENHANCEMENT EVOLUTION!

-Energy Enhancement, - An Advanced Meditation Course which gives the MOST benefits of any course of Meditational Self-Development available anywhere in the World today. If you want to Master Meditation Energy, to get more Energy and to handle it better, this course is for You! If you want to Speed Up the Meditative Process, rather than sitting with no result. Energy Enhancement Advanced Meditative Techniques including the Kundalini Kriyas and the Five Taoist Elemental Pathways of the Chi, is for You!!!! Whether you are a Management Corporate Executive, any sort of Alternative Practitioner, Meditator, Yogi or anyone who wants to Evolve, - Have Massive Energy Gains, become Better, Smarter, more Evolved, more Empathic, more Soul Infused, Gain the Real Secrets of Success; This course will Enable Direct Experience of Superior Life Performance. Energy Enhancement Meditation Techniques are the quickest and easiest methods of evolution available, leading to Ultimate HaPPness. Energy Enhancement, The Most Advanced Techniques of Meditation Available, NOW!! Developing Meditation psychic powers to Get in touch with your Life Path, Ground negative Energies, Access Infinite Levels of Universal Energy, Raise Your Kundalini, Integrate the Separated Selves, and Master Relationships and Mediation.

"Enlightenment is attained by Meditation And Non-Attachment" - Yoga Sutras of Patanjali - RAJA YOGA Buddhist Non-Attachment, "ATTACHMENT LEADS TO PAIN" - GAUTAMA BUDDHA ATTACHMENT AND THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS LEVEL 4 OF ENERGY ENHANCEMENT - INITIATIONS FOR THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS AND ATTACHMENT . THE-SOLUTION-TO-PROBLEMS-OF-ATTACHMENT-AND-THE-MASTERY-OF-RELATIONSHIPS-AND-ENERGY-CONNECTION-ATTACHMENT THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS ATTACHMENT DEPENDENT PARASITIC SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP ATTACHMENT THE MASTERY OF PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS AND THE connector strategy. The Mastery of Relationships, Psychic Sex Connections, Energy Vampires Implants and the Initiations of Energy Enhancement Meditation. Mastery of Relationships, Energy Connections, Implants

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT TANTRA AND ENLIGHTENMENT

THE MASTERY OF VAMPIRE ENERGY CONNECTIONS - ENERGY CORDS

THE REMOVAL OF EVEN THE DEEPEST ENERGY BLOCKAGES

"Traditional forms of meditation are designed to fail!!"

"WE PUT BACK WHAT THE OTHERS TOOK OUT!!"

THE MASTERY OF ENERGY CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE

THE REMOVAL OF ENERGY CONNECTIONS TO BAD PEOPLE WHO POISON AND SUCK YOUR ENERGIES - THE ABILITY TO CUT BAD ENERGY CONNECTIONS TO, "TO SEAL THE DOOR WHERE EVIL DWELLS"

THE ATTAINMENT OF BUDDHIST "NON-ATTACHMENT"
ENERGY ENHANCEMENT IS THE ONLY SOLUTION

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**ENERGY
ENHANCEMENT
OPENING
THE THIRD EYE**



**AWAKEN YOUR THIRD EYE
IMPROVING PSYCHIC SIGHT**

OPENING THE THIRD EYE

The conscious rocking backwards and forwards at the Start of your EE practice is to get your spine into alignment with the Kundalini energy from the center of the earth out into the center of the Universe..

to power your Psychic Vision, to Open your Third Eye...

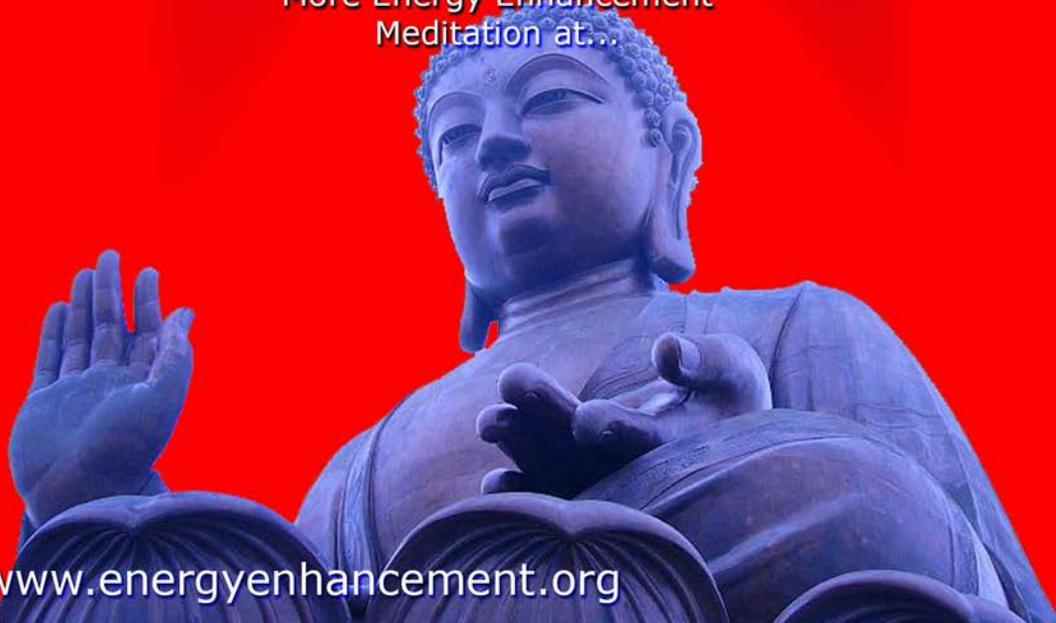
Antaeus was killed (the process of Illumination requires the ability to get out of the body into the higher chakras, the same path we take when we die, but without the advantage of being able to come back along the Silver Chord) Antaeus was killed by suspending him in a tree - SEE THE MYTH OF ODIN IN AXIS MUNDI where Odin spent 9 nights suspended in the Axis Mundi Tree above the Crown Chakra in order to become Illuminated and gain psychic vision - make all his sight one in the third eye.



We eventually get into a state of energy transfer. We both feel it as white light flowing from one to the other in an incredibly intense way which lasts for two hours. At the end of that time I perceive an initiation which is taking place on the astral plane. Surrounded by a group of ascended masters I introduce him to the chief initiator who uses the rod of initiation to touch his third eye with the intense energies of initiation so that his energies can never again drop into that state we call normal waking consciousness.

The Antahkarana Also refers to the Unicorn - So, by removing the Blockages of Ajna Chakra the Psychic Powers of the Third Eye and of the Rainbow Bridge, a Horn emanating from the Crown Chakra leading to Wisdom, Psychic Vision and the Actualisation of all our Dreams, Our Soul Path which we teach in Energy Enhancement Initiation 4.

More Energy Enhancement
Meditation at...



YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI



"COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONS ON
ENLIGHTENMENT" - THE
ENERGY ENHANCEMENT WAY BY-
SATCHIDANAND

"Now!! Here Are Complete Instructions on Enlightenment" After you have tried all the bad things and found they do not work - Here are complete instructions on how to attain your Infinite Peace. Yoga comes from Yoke. This Yoking or Union with the Higher self and the chakras above the head is Enlightenment.

By the loosening of the cause (of the bondage of mind to body) and by knowledge of the procedure of the mind-stuff's functioning, entering another's body is accomplished.

THE WHOLE WORLD IS CONTROLLED BY MEDITATION..

He who, due to his perfect discrimination - dis-crime-ination or sanskrit, Viveka, is the ability to transmute energy blockages and as they transmute and ground, so they go through the symptoms of the Gunas from Tamas, to Rajas, to Sattvic as the Negative Karmic Mass is grounded - The sword of discrimination is the ANTAHKARANA - the energy connection between all the chakras above the head through the body and below the base chakra to below the Center of the Earth, which feeds energy from higher to lower levels of the hierarchy - this discriminative energy blockage transmuting flow of energy if maintained is called Dharma Mega Samadhi.

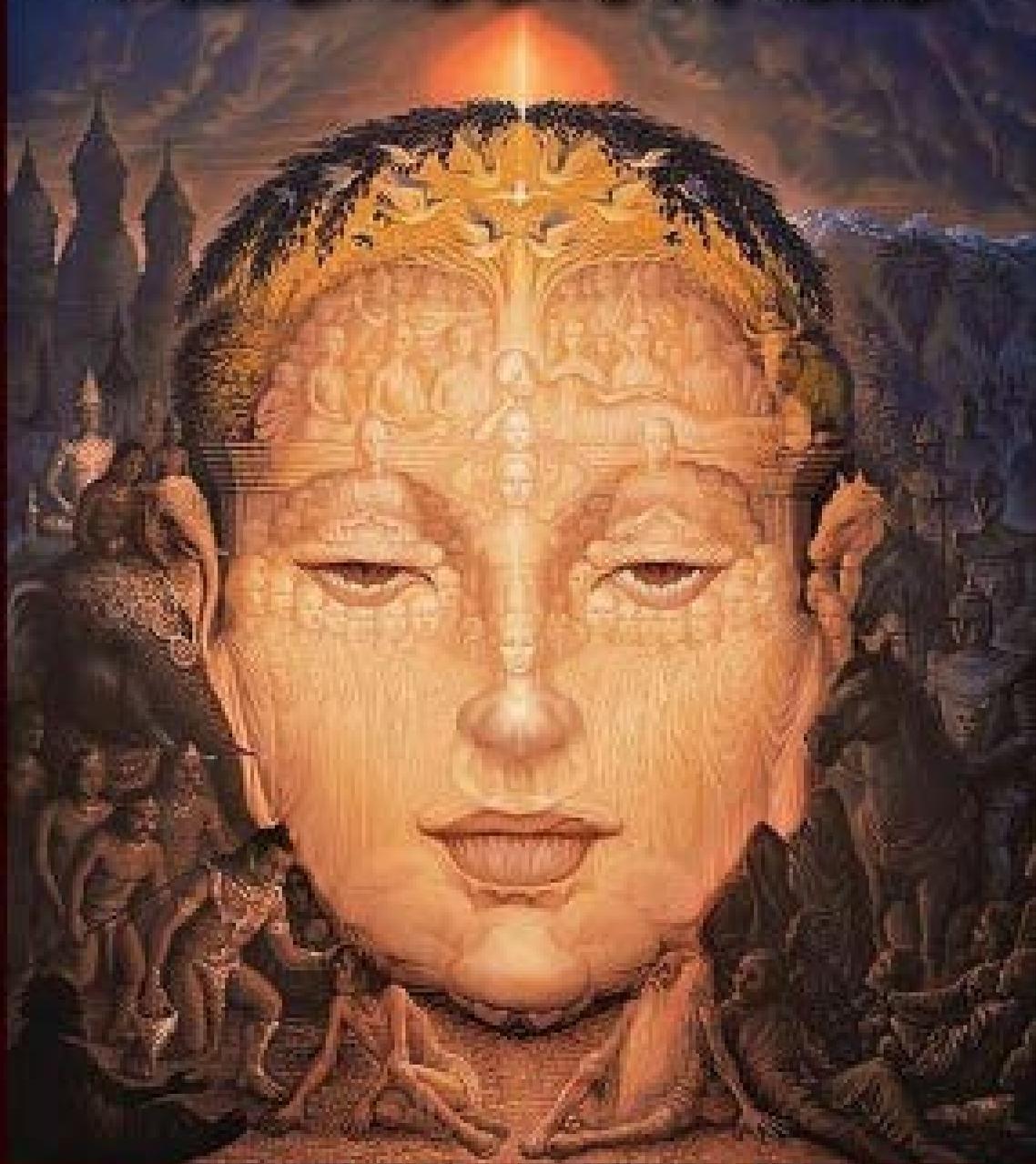
The meaning of dharma includes goodness - next to Godness - virtue, justice, law, duty, morality, religion, religious merit, and steadfast decree - all symptoms of being Soul Infused.

Dharma is the energy of the Soul!!

GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER..

"WHEN ALL ENERGY BLOCKAGES ARE GONE, ENLIGHTENMENT IS SURE TO FOLLOW" - Satchidanand

VIMALAKIRTI SUTRA -THE BUDDHA FIELD



SATCHIDANAND

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

Vimalakirti Sutra - The Buddhafield

Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Aryasravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas conquering demons, natural spiritual benefactors of all living beings, free from impurities, expert in knowing the spiritual faculties of all living beings, high resolve as hard as diamond, unbreakable in their faith in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, they showered forth the rain of ambrosia that is released by the light rays of the jewel of the Dharma, which shines everywhere.

The Purification - the Removal of Energy Blockages - And the Augmentation of Psychic Powers - Caused by the Buddhafield

Inconceivable Skill in Enlightenment Liberative Technique, Dharma, Connection with the Infinite Chakras above the Head - Gnosis, conquered all demons, transcendence of wisdom, tolerance and self-control, respected by Indra, Brahma, and all the Lokapalas

Thereby, thirty-two thousand living beings purified their immaculate, undistorted Dharma-eye in regard to all things.

The eight thousand bhikshus were liberated from their mental defilements, attaining the state of non-grasping.

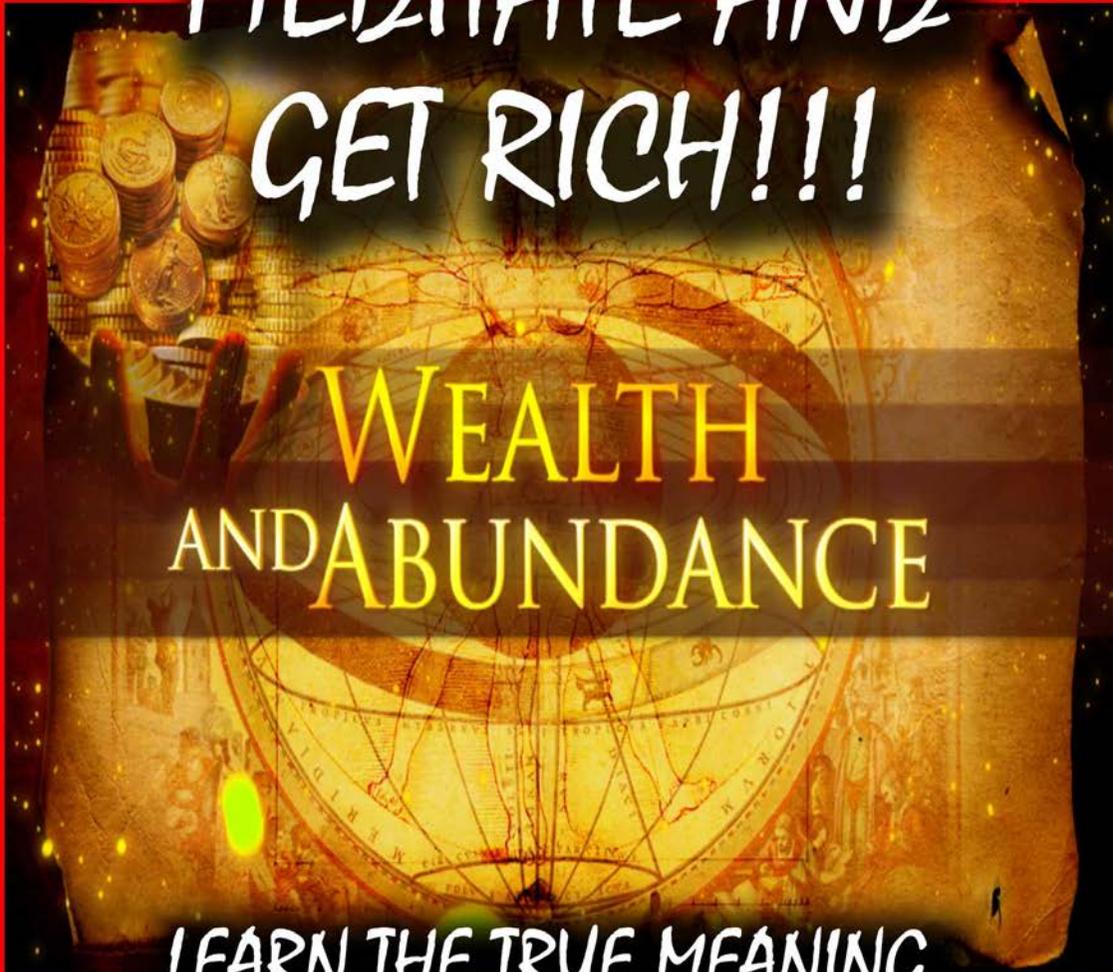
And the eighty-four thousand living beings who were devoted to the grandeur of the buddhafield, having understood that all things are by nature but magical creations, all conceived in their own minds the spirit of unexcelled, totally perfect enlightenment.

A Zen Master saw a child with a broken arm sitting miserably by the side of the road. This guy was so miserable that the Zen Master just knew he was impervious to being cheered up, To accepting good advice, to being told that, "Everything changes". So he took an iron bar and with it he broke his own arm. Sitting down by the young child he said, "Now we can talk!!"

"The Dharma - The Path of the Soul Chakra - The First Chakra above the Head - permeates evenly all things, because all are included in the ultimate realm. It conforms to reality by means of the process of nonconformity. It abides at the reality-limit, for it is utterly without fluctuation. It is immovable, because it is independent of the six objects of sense. It is without coming and going, for it never stands still. It is comprised by voidness, emptiness, a vibration so high that it is not gross like matter, or emotion, or mind, it is remarkable through signlessness, and is free of presumption and repudiation, because of wishlessness. It is without establishment and rejection, without birth or destruction. It is without any fundamental consciousness, transcending the range of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and thought. It is without highness and lowness. It abides without movement or activity.

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**ENERGY
ENHANCEMENT
MEDITATE AND
GET RICH!!!**



**WEALTH
AND ABUNDANCE**

**LEARN THE TRUE MEANING
OF THE LAW OF ATTRACTION,
ABUNDANCE, RICHNESS AND WEALTH**

MEDITATE AND GET RICH!!!

The Human Right to Life surely includes a Rich, Wealthy life. Health, Housing, Air Conditioning, Education, Transport, Entertainment, Books, Pure Food, Water, Environment.
So that we can choose what to work at. So that we can choose to work at The Right Hand Path of Meditation leading to Enlightenment.

Simple, Easy Effective Techniques, Vouchsafed from a Mystical Past lie at the Heart of Alchemical Transmutation of Internal Dragons to Man Up!! and Release the Wellsprings of Energy, Wealth and Internal and External Gold!!

We have all seen "The Secret"

We have all read Napoleon Hill's, "Think and Grow Rich".

But one of the Forgotten Secrets of Wealth and Richness has Traditionally been the Transmutation of Lead into Gold.

The Ancient Secrets of Alchemy!!

And what we need now is the Modern Upgrade of the Secrets of Alchemy brought into the Modern Age.

As Jung has brought Alchemy and Archetypes into Psychology, so Energy Enhancement has brought Alchemy and Archetypes into Wealth and Self Actualisation.

Get the Gold!!

Understand the Ancient Formulas of Alchemy to release Sources of Internal and External Wealth!!

Get the Gold!!

Get the Philosophers Stone which Transmutes All Base Metal into Pure Alchemical Gold!!

There are Powers inside you that once Released, Paradigms Transmuted, Blockages Removed, will enable you to Access your true Potential.

These Ancient Techniques called Alchemy will Truly Release your Beast and Allow Incredible Success in Any Field of Life.

The Secret of Alchemy lies in the Transmutation of Trauma which lies at the Base of all Blocks and Bad Habits.

Trauma creates the Dragon of Fear which in all Ancient Mythical Stories is Killed by the Hero in Order to Rescue and Release the Princess..... and Get the Gold...

After reading this, in lieu of its recommendations which may take a little while to percolate through the Archetypal Mind of humanity, my recommendation is to teach Energy Enhancement Advanced Meditation Techniques..

To achieve True Wealth.. the Ultimate Truth, and Freedom... Enlightenment!!

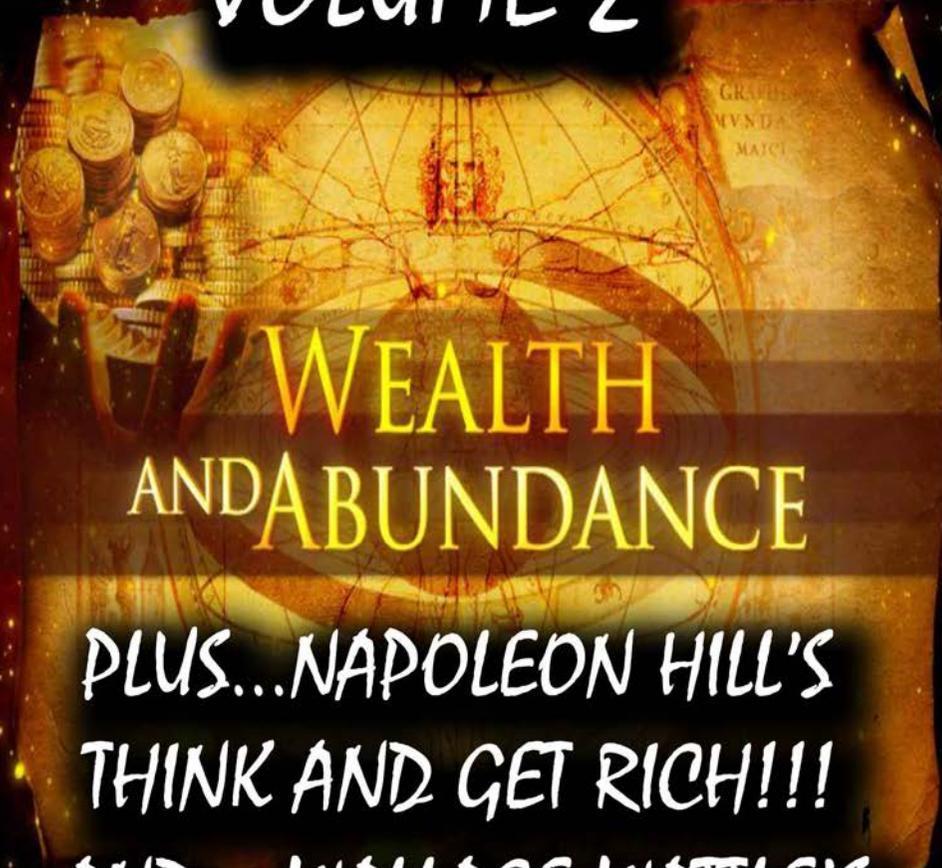
ENLIGHTENMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE

INCREASING WEALTH WILL SPEED UP THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION AND ENLIGHTENMENT FOR ALL

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Meditation at...

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ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATE AND GET RICH VOLUME 2



WEALTH AND ABUNDANCE

PLUS... NAPOLEON HILL'S
THINK AND GET RICH!!!

AND... WALLACE WATTLE'S

THE SCIENCE OF GETTING RICH
BY SATCHIDANAND

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MEDITATE AND GET RICH VOL.2

YOUR RICHNESS SEED IS A THOUGHTFORM!!

With regard to becoming rich, becoming strong, any mortal thing you want to be – All these things and more are thoughtforms.

They are thoughtform seeds.

And Napoleon Hill talks about growing these thoughtform seeds, actualising these thoughtform seeds, so that they grown like Acorns to become the great Oak trees they were destined to become - and he gives the formula for this Richness tree to come to fruition.

That you actually become rich!

And Napoleon Hill gives in this book these methods – which suit the natural competents, but require everything from those not naturally competent, including a lot of time..

FAITH, AUTO SUGGESTION, IMAGINATION, DESIRE, DECISION, PERSISTANCE, SEX, THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND, THE BRAIN, THE SIXTH SENSE, HOW TO OUTWIT THE SIX GHOSTS OF FEAR

NOW, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GROW YOUR PSYCHIC OAK TREE IN DOUBLE QUICK TIME?

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS?

The thing about these Thoughtform Seeds is that they are psychic seeds.

These Thoughtform Seeds do not need real Earth, Water, Sunlight and Carbon Dioxide to grow.

No!

These Thoughtform Seeds need Psychic Energy to Grow.

Most Richness and Wealth Courses teach very beginners techniques.

We are taught the Ancient Buddhist Technique of Metta Bhavana – Gratitude - to Open the Heart.

We are taught the Ancient Yogic Technique of Repetition – of Mantra and Visualisation to Life Stream what we want in the Present tense as though we already have it

So we write down what we want on sheets of paper, read them out into audio files, listen to the files constantly, so that we live in our Matrix, not truly alive so as to enter the prayers into our conscious minds so that with years of repetition the thoughtform seeds might grow, clothe themselves in psychic matter and enter in to the Universal Sub-conscious mind and we might actually become rich and everything work out just as we wish.

So, why does it take so much effort by Mantra to become Rich?

The answer is Energy Blockages which stop our connection with the infinite energies of the Earth and the Central Spiritual Sun and which block our little richness thoughtform from the energies that would make it grow Superfast!

As I said, Mantra is a very beginners technique. There are Ancient Techniques of the Sidars which quickly develop the Psychic Powers to get what you want quickly and easily.

Everyone who takes the Energy Enhancement Course gets these psychic powers.

The power to connect with the fountain of kundalini energy from the Earth.

The power to connect with Infinite Spiritual Energy which descends from the Central Spiritual Sun.

The most powerful Technique is that of Meditation developing quickly with Energy Enhancement Initiations into Samadhi and Samyama, talked about in the Ancient – 5000 years old - Yoga Book, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

Everyone knows that Meditation is the best, most ancient, fastest and efficient technique to gain Psychic Powers,

There is a whole chapter in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali on the use of Samyama to gain all the Psychic Powers – gain immense riches, remove all our vows of poverty from our past lifetimes as monks, remove all bad luck and karma, remove everything holding you back, and attain Enlightenment the goal of All our Past Lifetimes.

The Energy Enhancement Video Meditation Course in Four Levels, and twenty eight Initiations

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SUPER ENERGY

and

SACRED SYMBOLS



*for Perfect Wisdom
Enlightenment*

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

Ancient Sacred Symbols are Guided Meditations indicating How to get into Alignment with a Stream of Energy from Kundalini Chakra in the Earth's Center To the Central Spiritual Sun "Brighter than 10,000 Suns" in the Center of the Universe.

Learn Secrets of the Kundalini Kriyas...

- * The Yin Yang
- * Om or Amen
- * Antahkarana
- * Squaring the Circle
- * The Holy Grail
- * The DNA Spiral
- * Caduceus
- * The Pyramid
- * The Ankh
- * Whirling Dervishes
- * The Light of the Soul
- * Sphinx or Centaur
- * Zen Circle
- * Alchemy
- * VITRIOL
- * Omphallus
- * The Antahkarana Axis Mundi
- * The Myth of King Arthur
- * The Chakras
- * Kundalini Energy
- * Tantra and Sex
- * Philosophers Stone

Human Evolution and the Chakras

Sexual Abuse and Rape

The Heart Chakra and Society

Crown Chakra Connections

Then There is Anger

Jealous People are called Monkeys

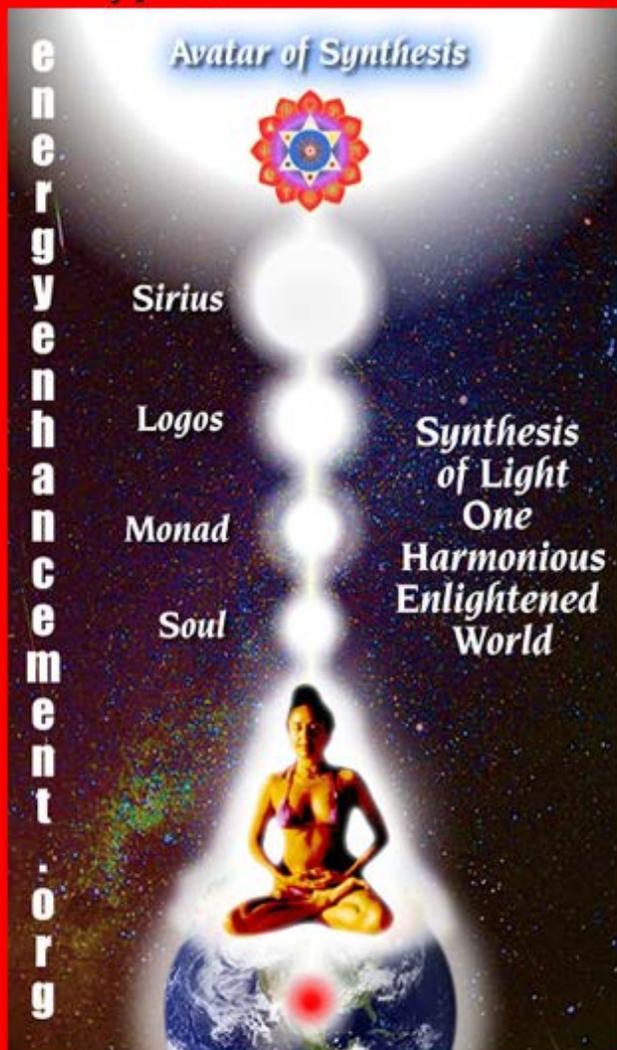
What are the Strategies of the Energy Vampire?

Swami Satchidanand has taught many Students Ancient yet Powerful methods to Access More Wisdom, More Kundalini, More Clarity, More Intelligence, More Energy using Energy Enhancement Techniques available Live or On Video together with many Talks, Books, Videos.

More Energy Enhancement
Meditation at...

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ENERGY ENHANCEMENT



LINK INTO INFINITE CHAKRA ENERGY
AND ELIMINATE ENERGY BLOCKAGES

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT ONE

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT GUIDED MEDITATIONS TEACH HOW TO GET INTO ALIGNMENT WITH A COLUMN OF ENERGY FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN, FROM KUNDALINI CHAKRA IN THE CENTER OF THE EARTH TO THE CHAKRA IN THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE, THE SOUL CHAKRA.

NOW, ENERGY ENHANCEMENT TO ELIMINATE THE ENERGY BLOCKAGES WHICH STOP THE FLOW OF ENERGY.

ACCESS THE CHAKRAS ABOVE THE HEAD WITH MONADIC INFUSION AND CONNECTION WITH THE AVATAR OF SYNTHESIS.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND ANCIENT MYTH AND THE HERCULES LABOUR OF THE AUGEAN STABLES.

ENERGY CIRCULATION AND THE GROUNDING OF NEGATIVE ENERGIES.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION AND THE KUNDALINI KRIYAS OF KRIYA YOGA.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND VITRIOL - THE FIRST FORMULA OF ALCHEMY AND THE REMOVAL OF FEAR.

THE SECRET OF THE PHILOSOPHERS STONE WHICH TRANSMUTES BASE METAL - ENERGY BLOCKAGE IMPLANTS - INTO PURE GOLDEN SPIRITUAL ENERGY AND ILLUMINATION.

THE REMOVAL OF BLOCKAGES FROM THE ANTAHKARANA, THE CHAKRAS IN THE BODY. FROM CHAKRAS BELOW THE BASE CHAKRA AND ABOVE THE HEAD CHAKRAS. THE REMOVAL OF BLOCKAGES FROM PARTS OF THE BODY. THE REMOVAL OF BLOCKAGES FROM THE TIMELINE BY THE ENERGY ENHANCEMENT SEVEN STEP PROCESS.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND THE ZEN STORY OF HYAKUJO, A ZEN STORY OF THE ANTAHKARANA AND THE HIGHER SELF.

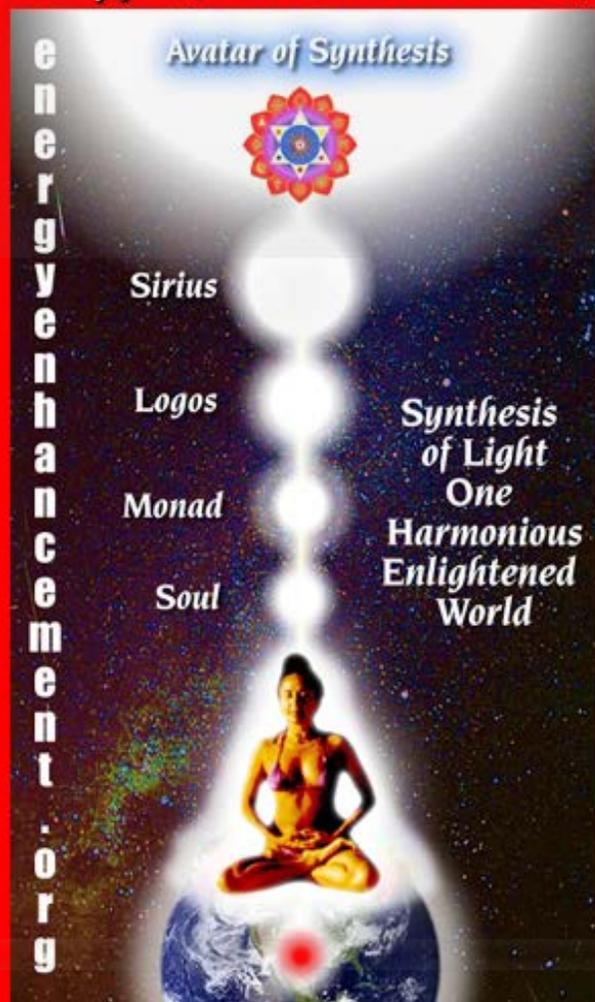
MASLOW, GURDJIEFF, DAME ALEXANDER-NEEL, PARACELCUS AND BUDDHA. THE ANTAHKARANA, BRIDGE, TOWER OF BABEL OR BABBLE, CHAKRAS, MEDITATION, GURDJIEFF, SHAKESPEARE, GURU.

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Meditation at...

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ENERGY ENHANCEMENT



REMOVAL OF ENERGY BLOCKAGES,
MANAGING ENERGY CONNECTIONS
AND MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT TWO

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT GUIDED MEDITATIONS TEACH HOW TO GET INTO ALIGNMENT WITH A COLUMN OF ENERGY FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN, HOW TO ELIMINATE THE ENERGY BLOCKAGES WHICH STOP THE FLOW.

NOW, HOW TO MANAGE PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS TO ENERGY VAMPIRES TO REMOVE THEIR BLOCKAGES WHICH STEAL YOUR ENERGY AND STOP THE FLOW, WHICH IS ALL PART OF THE ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS.

LEONARDO DA VINCI WAS A GREAT MASTER OF WISDOM. MASTER OF THE PRIORY OF SION - INTEGRATION - HEART, INTELLIGENCE, EMOTIONAL IQ, PSYCHOLOGY, CREATIVITY AND EE MEDITATION



MANAGING PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION ELIMINATING THE EGO STRATEGIES OF THE ENERGY VAMPIRE, THE PLEASER, BLAMER, VAMP, TYRANT, SELF DESTRUCTOR, MANIC DEPRESSION, ALOOF AND THE POOR ME, VIOLATOR, INTERROGATOR, AND THE STAR

EE MEDITATION AND THE SHAMAN AN INTEGRATED SOUL PERSONALITY GROUNDING AND ELIMINATING FRAGMENTATION, MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES, MPD + DID, FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS

EE MEDITATION AND EXISTENTIALISM AND KUBRICK'S PSYCHOPATHS IN THE FILMS OF STANLEY KUBRICK, GEORGE LUCAS, STAR WARS, THE REVENGE OF THE SITH, AND PSYCHOPATHS

THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS, PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS, IMPLANTS, ENERGY VAMPIRES, THE INITIATIONS OF ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION AND THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

BLOCKAGES IN CHAKRAS ABOVE THE HEAD CREATE PSYCHOPATHY.

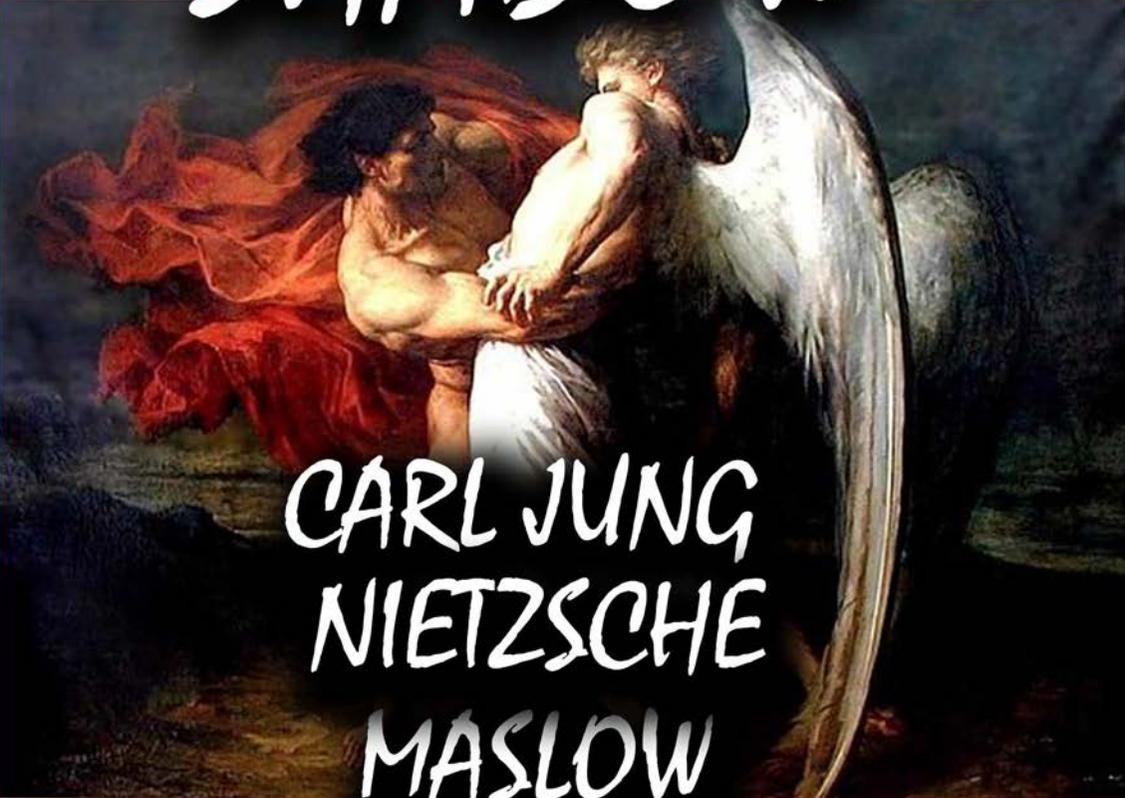
75% ARE PSYCHOPATHS, SCHIZOPHRENIC, AND MANIC DEPRESSIVE.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND TRAUMA, RELATIONSHIPS, DIVORCE, SEX, SEX ADDICTION, TANTRA, GAMBLING, HOMOSEXUALITY, LESBIANISM, DRUGS AND ADDICTION, BAD BACKS, HEART DISEASE, AND CANCER.

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ELIMINATING THE SHADOW



CARL JUNG
NIETZSCHE
MASLOW

JORDAN PETERSON
SATCHIDANAND

www.energyenhancement.org

ELIMINATING THE SHADOW

In this book, Satchidanand trashes the greatest most intellectual investigators and descriptors of the Shadow and the Shadow Subpersonalities. Great People - The Highest of All Humanity - Jordan Peterson, Carl Jung, Nietzsche, and every Psychotherapy, Psychological therapist who can describe the problem of the Shadow, talk about the problem of the shadow but have no Practical solution to the Shadow. All of those guys Failed to Solve the Problem of the Shadow. None of these guys have Any practical solution for the Shadow.. And it is the Shadow Subpersonalities which is the Source, The Fount, of All Evil on this Planet... And the Source of All Evil within You!!

Carl Jung says.. "There is no generally effective technique for assimilating the shadow. It is more like diplomacy or statesmanship and it is always an individual matter. First one has to accept and take seriously the existence of the shadow. Second, one has to become aware of its qualities and intentions. This happens through conscientious attention to moods, fantasies and impulses. Third, a long process of negotiation is unavoidable." (Carl Jung)

As Jung notes in the passage above, he thought there is no general technique to integrate the shadow, even though the Buddha and Jesus Christ exemplified the Meditation Technology. For thousands of years great souls have come to earth to demonstrate otherwise, that enlightenment is, "Tat tvam asi" Thou art that!! You are a part of the Universe and have nothing else to seek.

Energy Enhancement Meditation – Spiritual Insight – combined with psychological knowledge is THE complete way of processing and integrating your Shadow Side into wholeness.

Because Energy Enhancement Meditation has actual ancient time-tested meditative techniques that you can use and apply to your Shadow work to Heal All your trauma formed Subpersonalities and Integrate them into the Soul. As long as we have a Shadow Side we have Trauma formed Negative Karmic Mass – pain, frustration, pessimism, depression, anxiety, grief, bitterness, spitefulness, jealousy, anger, greed, lust, addiction, escapism, nihilism. These all need to be addressed and healed – transmuted and integrated.

Energy Enhancement Meditation uses the Psychic Spiritual Center – Third Eye as primary gateway into healing yourself. If we just use psychological analysis then we are limited. If we just use creative therapies, dream exploration, trance-work etc then we are also limited still. This is because we need it all, both sides.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION – DEEPER THAN THE INTELLECT, MORE PROFOUND THAN THE MIND!

Alchemical VITRIOL is an Ancient Meditation designed to remove Trauma from Memories!! VITRIOL IS A LATIN ACRONYM - VITRIOL. – Visita Interiore Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultem Lapidem, THE GROUNDING AND TRANSMUTATION OF ENERGY BLOCKAGES – The unification of the conscious and the unconscious., night and day, hot and cold, masculine and feminine. In the center is the Ajna Chakra – Third Eye. The kundalini Serpent has risen from the Muladhara – Base Chakra to the Third Eye Center. The symbolic meaning of its risen state is a raised consciousness that has dissolved duality. A state of Wholeness – Integration – Enlightenment.

"Come together, right now, over me" Singing these famous song lyrics from the Beatles to yourself, You can come together, surpassing your current-self to a higher-self!

With Energy Enhancement Meditation.

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MIND CONTROL BLACK ASSASSINS VOL.11

I am Princeray (In Search of Black Assassins)- one of the most censored Black Men on the World-Wide Internet and YOUTUBE. Former Member/Man-child of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense before MK ULTRA Huey P. Newton. I have a JD Law Degree, but I am not part of the Queen's Bar.

My wife watch the Wendy Williams Show most mornings. At times, I do watch some of it, but I am no fan. This particular morning, I heard that Whitney Houston's secret female lover, Robyn Crawford, was the exclusive show guest. I wasn't interested in listening to Crawford's talk about her tell all book about her lesbian relationship with Whitney Houston. Then, I heard that her book title had been shrouded around Donny Hathaway's "A Song for You" that is a deep soulful and spiritual chant- a string to my deep emotion and heart. I was suddenly overcome by flashbacks and recall to some of my past loves, my mother and father that I missed telling them how much I really deeply loved them before they passed away. Donny Hathaway, "A Song for You" is sacred to me, I had to stop in my tracks, sit down and reflect.

Robyn Crawford is a shady and shallow character, and Whitney's drug habit enabler not worthy of Donny Hathaway's "A Song for You" type of love. Houston and Crawford's sexual relationship didn't begin in "puppy love" of teens. In East Orange, New Jersey, Crawford was a legal 19 year old adult lesbian when she admitted that she sexually preyed on 16 year old high school student, Whitney Houston, a New Jersey state MINOR that should have been entitled to protection of state law from Crawford's narcotic influences, and sexually assault by an adult homosexual predator/pedophile.

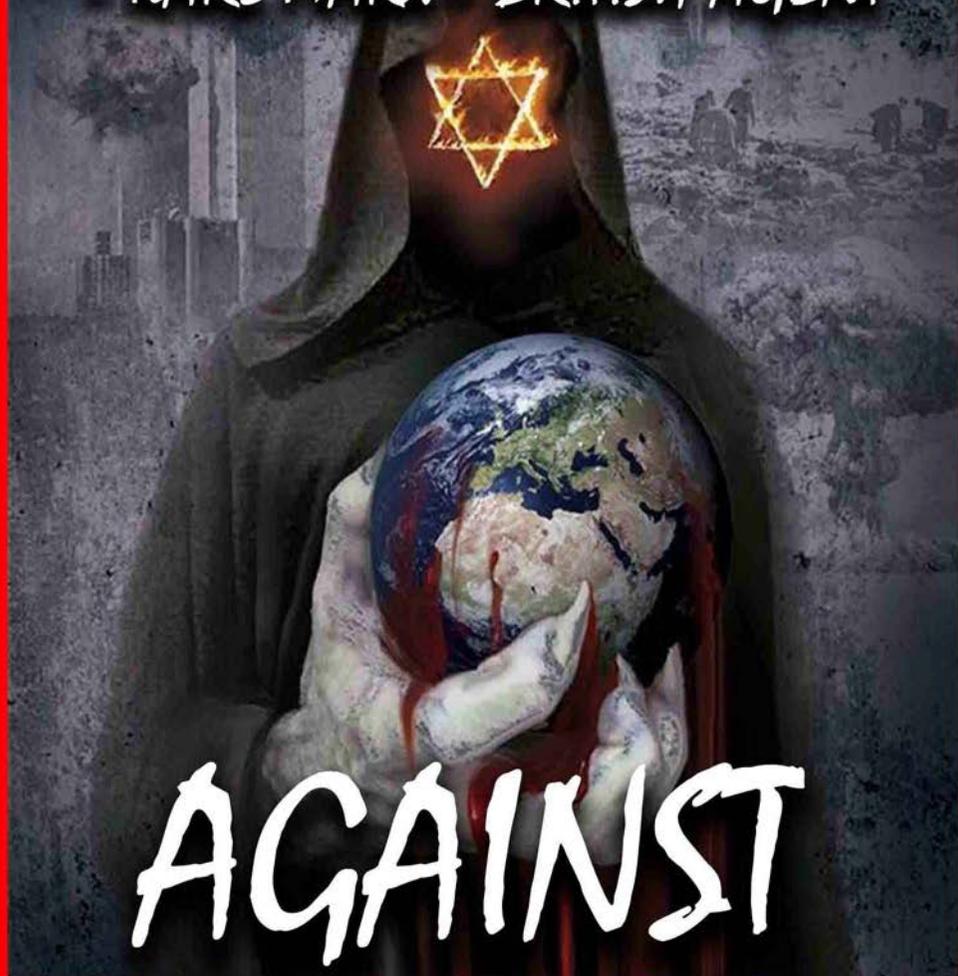
Another point is that Crawford says affirmatively that she first met Whitney during a summer at East Orange Community Development Center. Yet, there are some circumstantial evidence that they met at Catholic all-girls Mount Saint Dominic Academy in Caldwell, NJ- a Catholic institution plagued by ritual sexual abuse of children. Nevertheless, Crawford admits in fact that it had been her St. Dominic basketball coach that had joined them together as community center counselors.

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SATANIC HISTORY

FAKE COMMUNISM

- KARL MARX - BRITISH AGENT



AGAINST

SATANISM

10,000 YEARS OF TOTAL CONTROL

GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED BY SATANIC PEDOPHILIA, LOVELESS RITUAL SEX, SODOMY, RITUAL DRUGS, RITUAL BLOOD SACRIFICE, RITUAL HUMAN SACRIFICE, RITUAL TORTURE, RITUAL BURNING ALIVE, RITUAL CANNIBALISM, RITUAL CASTRATION.

FAKE ECONOMICS - Economists have been paid - Adam Smith (and his Satanic Mandevillian, "Public benefits come from Private Vices") was a hack, paid by Lord Shelburne, Head of the British East India Company, foundation of the British Empire - to create an Economics which would perpetuate the Bankers of the British Empire, later the Anglo-American Empire. Austrian Economics and it's Austerity - The Oligarchic Principle of Poverty - was supported and spread by Nelson Rockefeller. Solution? See Hudsons Modern Monetary Theory or Larouche Hamilton Credit Theory. The Economist Fake Gangs

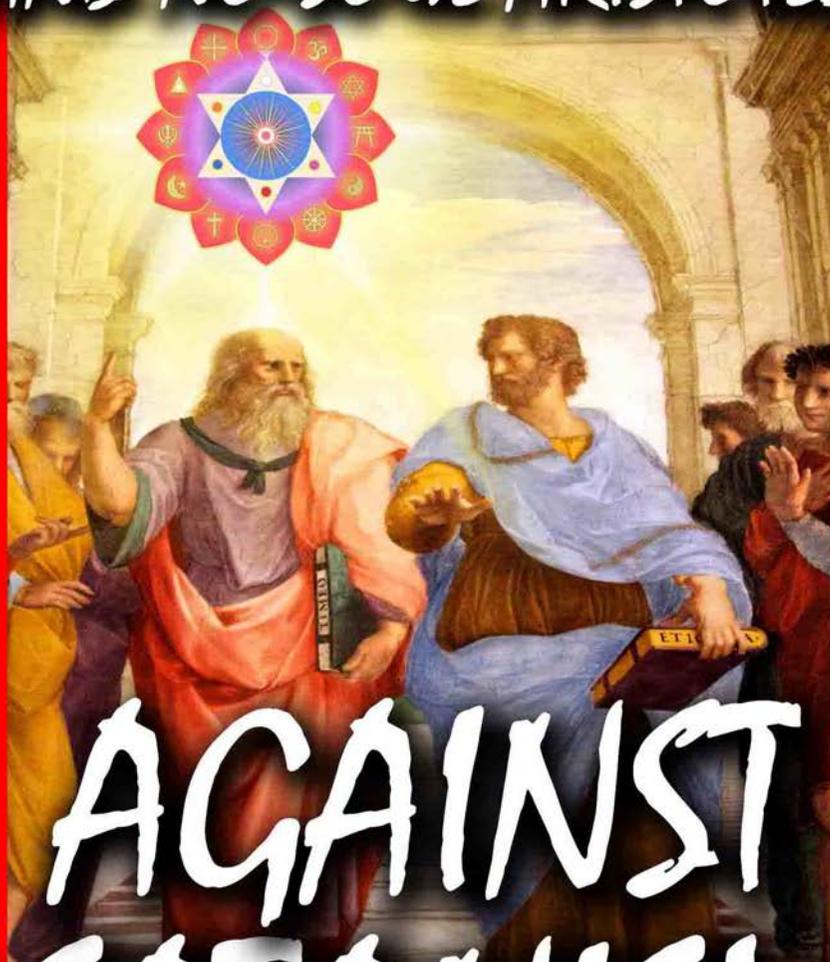
SATANIC SABBATEAN FRANKISTS infiltrate Jews and Jewish organisations worldwide. Pagan Rituals and Myths used to pervert, degenerate and control a Jewish psychopathic ruling class of Donmeh Attaturk, Rothschilds, Rockefellers, Schiffs, Warburgs..

SATANIC KARL MARX - Wrote Das Capital from his MI6 provided office in the British National Museum under Ambassador Urquhart creating MI6 inspired Communism, Russian Revolution (65 millions tortured dead) and Mao's Chinese Revolution (85 millions tortured dead), and Socialism. George Orwell's Totalitarian text's "1984" "A Boot, stamping in your face, forever" - the Totalitarian or Legalist Fake Gangs sprang from this bough. Capitalists, Marxists, Communists and Socialists spring from the same Fake Gangs bough.

SATANIC PHILOSOPHY

EUGENIC PLATO

AND NO-SOUL ARISTOTLE



AGAINST SATANISM

RING OF CYCLES - "CONCEALMENT OF WICKEDNESS"

BY HUMAN SACRIFICE

AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME TWO

The Secret History of the Modern World and the Battle for the Future -
The "One Ring" of Gyges of Plato's Book, Republic - A Comparison between
Ring of Gyges of the Hobbit and the One Ring of the Lord of the Rings with
reference to the effect of Eugenics No Heart Plato and No Soul Aristotle on
the Secret History of the Modern World and Satanic Globalism
- the Battle for the Future.

The difference between the simple Ring of Gyges of the Hobbit and the One
Ring of the Lord of the Rings is - "Into this ring he poured all his cruelty,
his malice and his will to dominate all life"

The difference is this energy of cruelty. "By our sinning and Ritual human
sacrifices, and Ritual human sacrifices and sinning, the gods will be
propitiated, and we shall not be punished" - Plato's Republic

Used for one purpose "The Concealment of Wickedness"

Plato's Republic - WHAT IS THY NATURE? SATANIC ADEIMANTUS

"Appearance Tyrannizes over Truth and is Lord of Happiness"

Adeimantus of Collytus (432 BCE - 382 BCE) son of Ariston of Athens was
also known as Plato's brother. In Plato's Republic, Adeimantus questions
whether they would be living a good life with little or no personal property.
Consequently, Adeimantus is often associated with greed or love for money
in interpretations of the dialogue.

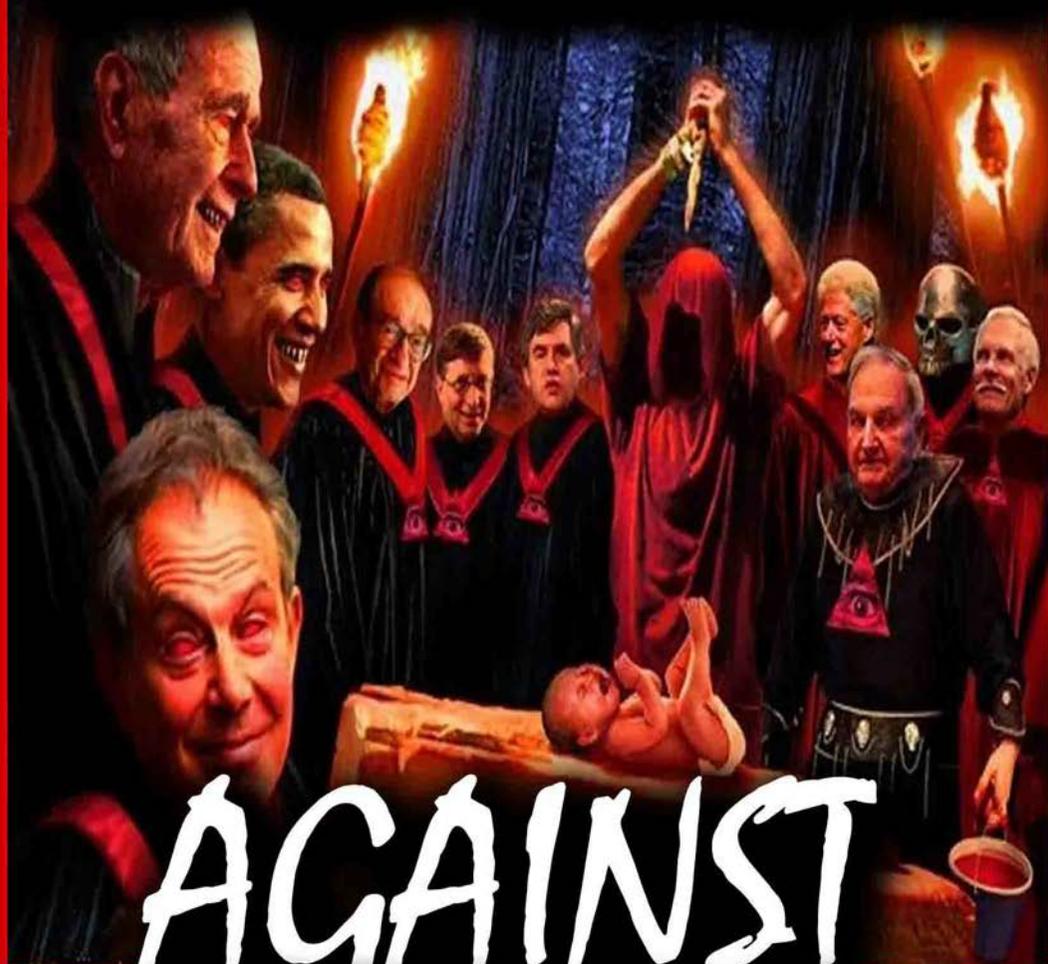
He quotes Pindar (522 - 443 BC) an Ancient Greek lyric poet from Thebes-
"Can I by justice or by crooked ways of deceit ascend a loftier tower which
may be a fortress to me all my days? For what men say is that, if I am really
just and am not also thought just profit there is none, but the pain and loss
on the other hand are unmistakable. But if, though unjust, I acquire the
reputation of justice, a heavenly life is promised to me."

"Let us be consistent then, and believe both or neither. If the poets speak
truly, why then we had better be unjust, and offer of the fruits of injustice;
for if we are just, although we may escape the vengeance of heaven, we shall
lose the gains of injustice; but, if we are unjust, we shall keep the gains,
and by our sinning and Ritual human sacrifices, and Ritual human sacrifices
and sinning, the gods will be propitiated, and we shall not be punished."

And here is where the elite get all their negative energy or as we call it in
Energy Enhancement - Trauma-Formed Negative Karmic Mass.. from Ritual
Human Sacrifice - a Satanic Ritual used in all civilisations on All Continents
by the Satanic Elites for tens of Thousands of years.

Yes Satanism, the Occult Cult was created 10,000 years ago before Christ,
and has been extant since that time in order to create the psychopaths which
rule humanity, grind us down, make us into feudal wage slaves barefoot and
back on the reservation, buying everything from the Amazon company store!
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Meditation at...

SATANIC RITUALS HUMAN SACRIFICE



AGAINST SATANISM

SATANISM - 10,000 YEARS OF TOTAL CONTROL

AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 3

SATANIC RITUALS AND HUMAN SACRIFICE

Sometimes people reading the Truth get depressed by it.

For people with big hearts though, the truth gets them started with an Implacable Opposition to Absolute Evil.

The Battle of Armageddon can only be won by sufficient Angels to fight against the Demons. Be an Angel!!

The point of this introductory missive is that 72 Empires have been recorded and every one of them has failed in the same way. The facts have been recorded that a totalitarian and satanic elite infil-traited and took over all these Empires and that 72 once free, flourishing and rich republics were destroyed from within.

Infil-traition of Satanism is the methodology as slowly every Government Ministry and Societal function is taken over. Eventually a Satanist becomes King Emperor President. The Satanist Pillars of Homosexuality, Pederasty, Drugs and Ritual Sex - both Hetero and Homosexual - are introduced overtly and the society is destroyed.

The Ancient Enemy who counts meditation and the mind control psychic arts as one of its main planks of World Domination has used Satanic Infil-Traitors for 10,000 years in every Organisation - Religion, Left and Right Politics, Dynastic Families, Geopolitics, Economics, Universities, Intelligence Services, Think Tanks, Banking, International Companies, Eugenics -

All of them Censoring Worldwide, Advanced Meditation techniques - Alchemical VITRIOL, the Kundalini Key and Energy Blockage Removal from every Meditation Program.. EXCEPT ENERGY ENHANCEMENT!!

The key is that the Satanic Religion and its current recruiting cults of Freemasonry and the Crowlean Sexual Ritual OTO - Ordo Templi Orientis - are Fake Gangs, created by men as a 10,000 years old technique to create psychopathic leaders and thus conquer the world.

All Rituals, Religion, Education, Secret Services and Political Movements have been Scientifically Engineered to create Fake Gangs for 10,000 Years. It's what the old Roman Empire, and the Babylonian Empire, and the Cult of Apollo, and the Byzantine Empire did before.

As you know, all the gangs have Rituals before you can join, making your bones with the Mafia means you must murder someone before you can join and Drug Cartels, secret groups within the Masons, the Hellfire Club, all have their Rituals before you can join and before you can progress. All Rituals, Religion, Education and Political Movements are designed to create fake gangs of psychopaths who can then be used to create control through chaos created poverty - The Oligarchic Policy of Poverty - destroying infrastructure - preventing human evolution.

SATANIC HOMO OCCULTISM
SATANIC HITLER



AGAINST
SATANISM

10,000 YEARS OF TOTAL CONTROL

AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 4

SATANIC HOMO OCCULTISM SATANIC HITLER

Satanic Communism and Fascism is gradually being instituted as the New World Religion defined by Satanic Ritual.

72 Empires have been recorded and every one of them has failed in the same way. The facts have been recorded that a totalitarian and satanic elite infil-traited and took over all these Empires and that 72 once free, flourishing and rich republics were destroyed from within by Satanic Ritual.

From South America Incas and Aztecs to Satanic Pagan Odin, Cybele and Attis, Baal and Molech, and the Holy Inquisition, Ritual Human Sacrifice and burning alive and Ritual Homosexuality, Sodomy and Pedophilia has been endemic for Thousands of Years.

Read Against Satanism Volume Two - The Foundation of Western Philosophy is Pagan, Satanic, based on No-Heart Plato and No-Soul Aristotle. Plato's Republic (c.370 BC) propounded the "Concealment of Wickedness" and the use of Ritual Human Sacrifice to placate the Gods of Karma. Plato's Republic's ideal state is based on Sparta - The Spartan society was dominated by a rigidly Hierarchical and Elitist Pedophile Warrior Cult that featured mandatory induction of twelve-year-old boys into Homosexual Partnerships with adult men, and which Plato argues should be ruled by Autocratic Dictator Philosopher-Kings. The Republic propounds the Eugenic elimination of the family and the elimination of private property.

Infil-traition of Satanism is the methodology as slowly every Government Ministry and Societal function is taken over. Eventually a Satanist becomes King Emperor President. The Satanist Pillars of Homosexuality, Pederasty, Drugs and Ritual Sex - both Hetero and Homosexual - are introduced overtly. Christianity and Judaism - the bulwarks Against Satanism - are destroyed and then society fucked through the fear of Ritual Human Sacrifice.

The Ancient Enemy who counts meditation and the mind control psychic arts as one of its main planks of World Domination has used Satanic Infil-Traitors for 10,000 years in every Organisation - Religion, Left and Right Politics, Dynastic Families, Geopolitics, Economics, Universities, Economics, Intelligence Services, Think Tanks, Banking, International Companies, Global Warming, Eugenics -

Read Against Satanism Volume One - Satanic Karl Marx created Communism for Ambassador Urquhart of British Secret Services writing Das Capital in his Office in the British National Library in London. Communism was used by British Agents Satanic Lenin and Stalin and Satanic 33rd Degree Freemason of Yale University, Mao to take over Russia and China torturing and killing 160 millions of people.

All of them Censoring Worldwide, Advanced Meditation techniques - Alchemical VITRIOL, the Kundalini Key and Energy Blockage Removal from every Meditation Program..

EXCEPT ENERGY ENHANCEMENT!! The Energy Enhancement Video Course - energyenhancement.org

Read Against Satanism Volume Three - Satanism is Defined by Satanic Rituals - These Rituals Define Satanism.. Loveless Ritual Sex, Sodomy, Pedophilia, Ritual Drugs, Ritual Blood Sacrifice, Ritual Human Sacrifice, Ritual Torture, Ritual Burning Alive, Ritual Cannibalism, Ritual Castration.

This means Pedophilia Sex Rituals and means the Totalitarian Fear Control of Human Sacrifice. As presently occurs in Totalitarian No-Soul Communist China. Christians, Buddhists and Falun Gong are executed in special organ harvesting vans - Human Sacrifice.

They have ten of these vans in every city and they work all day long taking fresh organs to the airport for implantation in Japan. The organs harvested and sold to Rich Oligarchs Worldwide

Read Against Satanism Volume Four - SATANIC HOMO-OCCULTISM AND THE HOMOSEXUAL ROOTS OF FASCISM - Black Magician Homosexual Hitler created homosexual Cults based upon Black Magic - taught to him by Guido von List and the Armanen Order, Jorg Lanz von Liebenfels and Ariosophy, The Thule Society, Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

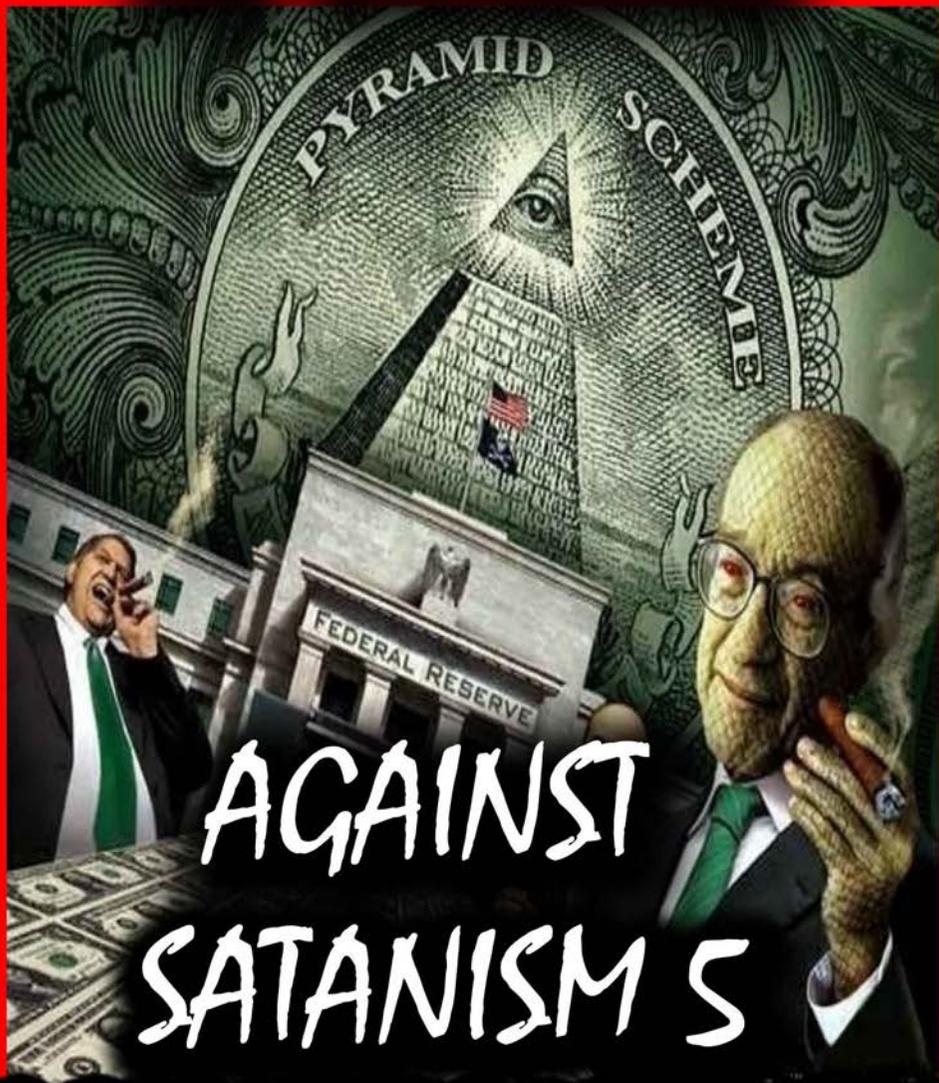
Because the Torah and the Bible prohibit Homosexuality, in order to introduce Satanism and its Satanic Rituals, Hitler decided to destroy Judaism and Also he changed Christianity - Jesus - into a Sun God associated with Odin by sending all Clerics to the Concentration Death camps along with the Satanic Ritual Burning Human Sacrifice Holocaust of Six Million Jews.

After that Hitler allied with Islam because Islam promotes Jihad Warrior Spartan Pedophilia and Sex Slavery of Women - "Women for breeding, boys for love" See, Thousands of Muslim child prostitutes in every city of Britain - Rochdale child sex abuse ring.. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochdale_child_sex_abuse_ring

Hitler's NAZI is Satanic National Socialism, an offshoot of Satanic No-God Communism - You can see this plan occurring in Western Civilisation and China, everywhere, NOW!!

Read Against Satanism Volume Four - Homosexuality in Satanic Homo Occultism.. Satanic Homo Occultism, Satanic Hitler..

SATANIC ECONOMICS THE PRINCIPLE OF POVERTY



AGAINST
SATANISM 5

10,000 YEARS OF CONTROL

AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 5

SATANIC ECONOMICS

THE 10,000 YEARS OLD OLIGARCHIC PRINCIPLE OF POVERTY..
To create a Humanity, "Dummed Down, Barefoot and Back on the Reservation"

The Satanic Vocabulary of Economic Deception
Against Satanism - The Satanic Principle of Poverty.. Banker Bankster Fraud Corruption Lies from
the Father of Lies.

Debt Forgiveness in History and the Satanic Vocabulary of Economic Deception -
How the Bronze Age saved itself from debt serfdom and Slavery.

Further intel on the turf war between the Satanic old eight families of Bankers, who took over the
world from the Satanic Aristocracy, and the Satanic Family of the Rockefellers

Agents, Mazzini, Urquhart and Napoleon III - as a Continuation of the same Satanic Psychopathic
Families from Satanic Psychopathic Babylon through the Satanic Psychopathic Roman Empire,
the Satanic Psychopathic Venetian Empire to the Satanic Psychopathic British Empire to the
current Satanic Psychopathic Anglo-American Establishment

Venezuela, Trump's Brilliant Strategy to Dismember U.S. Dollar Hegemony,
and Is Neoliberalism Killing Russia?

Argentina Gets Biggest IMF Loan in History, Argentina's New \$50 Billion IMF Loan
Is Designed to Replay Its 2001 Crisis.

Modern-Day Debtors' Prisons and Debt in Antiquity.

"What we are trying to do in this meeting today is to give you a new view of how the real economy
works today and teach reality economics, instead of
the parallel universe that you have in economic textbooks.

So, instead of learning how the economy operates, students are told how a
parallel universe might operate on a different planet, if there were no government, if there
were no fraud, if the entire economy operated on barter, if there was no debt, and
that everybody wanted to help everybody else, that nobody inherited money, that
everybody earned all of the income and wealth that they have. The reality is the
opposite, but it seems to be talked about only in novels these days.

"Whenever you have a misunderstanding of reality year after year, decade after
decade, and now for a century, when a false picture of the economy is painted
you can be sure that there is a special interest benefiting. A false picture of reality
does not happen by nature; it is subsidised. And the banking sector has subsidised
and paid for a junk economics that is taught in the universities, broadcast from
your newspapers, mouthed by the politicians, whose election they sponsor, to try to
make you believe, that you're living on Mars in a different kind of a world—instead
of the actual country that you're living in—and to pretend that there is no financial
class that is trying to grab what belongs to the public at large.

This is what ends up with a difference between central bank creation by the
government with the government aims of economic growth and full employment,
as compared with commercial bank credit that aims at economic shrinkage, at
austerity, at lower wages, so that it can do to you what the
commercial banks are doing to Greece, to say give us your ports and your land
and your tourist areas and your water and sewer systems, so we can charge you
for water and sewer. And we can take the money that you had expected to get in pensions
and we can scale it down, so that we can pay ourselves.

"This is what it took an army in times past. And today it's done without an army, as long
as you will be passive and believe the Lies, the science-fiction of the world that banks
are painting. Thank you. [Applause]"

Remember, the main purpose is not money or power, it is in fact the Satanic
Oligarchic Principle of Poverty, Dummed Down, Barefoot, and Back on the Reservation.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT SATANIC HISTORY TWO



JOHANNES FILIVS QUARTI
EDVARDI TERTII REX
CASTELLÆ ET LEGIÖNE
DUX LANCASTELIÆ
CONSTABVLARIVS CASTEL
DE QVEENSBORGH QVIN
TO OCTOBRIS ANNO
REGNI EDW TERTII ANN
GLIÆ 50. FRANCIÆ 37



AGAINST SATANISM Vol. 6

AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME SIX

Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish aristocratic Families have existed for over 5000 years before the Birth of Christ. Using emotional rhetorical religious concepts to control, they worship all the Pagan Gods, including Lucifer, Satan, Baal, Bel, Molech, Ashtoreth, Cybele and Attis including all the Satanic Rituals in Against Satanism Volume 3 - RITUAL SEX, RITUAL DRUGS, RITUAL BLOOD SACRIFICE, RITUAL HUMAN SACRIFICE, RITUAL PEDOPHILIA, RITUAL TORTURE, RITUAL BURNING ALIVE, RITUAL CANNIBALISM, RITUAL CASTRATION.

In this book we find that over thousands of years, spook, Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish aristocratic Families infiltrated every country, every Empire, taking over or infiltrating every ruling aristocracy and aristocratic, bloodline family, in Europe, Britain, America, India, China and in every other country in the World.

Jewish/Phoenician aristocrats were never attached to any tiny nation, but were always one globalized trading empire from 2000BC, playing countries against each other for profit. For example using a false Flag to start a fake war between ruling elites in separate countries both of which have been allowed, built up, to become rich, but all the elites in each country coming from the same Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish aristocratic Families, and then buying all the assets for pennies on the dollar after the war. Not only that, giving loans to each country to prosecute the war, owning the Military Academic Industrial Complex providing materiel for the war.

Many Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish families who have ruled the World as one trading block for thousands of years before the Birth of Christ came from the Fertile Middle East Crescent including Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Israel, Mesopotamia-Iraq, and Persia-Iran, and had that region and all it's Empires razed many times over nonetheless, profiting from each destruction. They hop to and fro over the planet, always profiting by shifting, reshuffling and breaking their Empires.

We saw that the important conquests are not in our history books as such. Rather, Europe was colonized in the Bronze Age already, in patterns that match up with structures we see in today's spook aristocracy. The entire upper class of colonized regions was replaced by Phoenician/Jewish families, with common people unaware of it to this day. Some of this colonization is cautiously admitted, just not emphasized.

We saw that the Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish families always held power. The secret behind their power is simply that there is no big secret. They don't know anything special. They can't do anything special. They never achieved anything special —other than monopolizing trade. With the power to deceive from the Father of Lies, owning all the media, - The CIA, the Military Academic Industrial complex, Universities, History, Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Television, Youtube, Facebook, Google - even idiots can rule the world for millennia.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT
SATANIC HISTORY 3



AGAINST SATANISM
VOLUME 7

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AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 7

The Cancer of The Venetian Empire - The Phoenician Empire - Metastases into the Anglo-American Empire.

The Suppression of Science

The Venetian Conspiracy - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

The Role of the Venetian Oligarchy in the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Enlightenment and the Thirty Years' War - Preface - by Lyndon LaRouche

The Role of the Venetian Oligarchy in Reformation, Counter-reformation, Enlightenment, and the Thirty Years' War - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Venice: The Methodology of Evil -- Part I by Donald Phau

Venice: The Methodology of Evil -- Part II by Donald Phau

Venice: The Methodology of Evil -- Part III by Christina N. Huth

650 Years Ago - How Venice Rigged the First, and Worst, Global Financial Crash - Paul Gallagher

How The Venetians Took Over England and Created Freemasonry - Gerald Rose

Giammaria Ortes: The Decadent Venetian Kook Who Originated The Myth of "Carrying Capacity" - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

How the Dead Souls of Venice Corrupted Science - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Venice's War Against Western Civilization - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

The War of the League of Cambrai, Paolo Sarpi and John Locke - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

How the Venetian System Was Transplanted Into England - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Palmerston's London During the 1850's -- A Tour of the Human Multicultural Zoo by Webster Tarpley

The Venetian Takeover of Enland - A 200-Year Project by Gerald Rose

How The Venetian Virus Infected and Took Over England by H. Graham Lowry

The Bestial British Intelligence Of Shelburne and Bentham by Jeffrey Steinberg

A Case Study Of British Sabotage of Science by Philip Valenti

The Enlightenment's Crusade Against Reason by Linda de Hoyos

King Edward VII of Great Britain: Evil Demiurge of the Triple Entente and World War I BY Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Sir Edward Grey Turned Sarajevo Crisis Into War by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

The Versailles Thesis: The Roots of WWI, and WWII by Webster G. Tarpley

The Versailles Treaty: The War Guilt Clause by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

British Financial Warfare: 1929; 1931-33; How The City Of London Created The Great Depression by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Britain's Pacific War Against the United States in the Age of the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship' by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

British Coup d'Etat In Washington, April 12, 1945: How The Harriman Gang Started The Cold War - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

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