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Morlindalë

Song of Illuminate Darkness

by

The One Ring



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Post Office Box 470307
San Francisco, CA 94147
<http://www.rachane.com>

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Baron of Rachane
Argyll, Scotland
United Kingdom

Introduction

Like many of my post-World War II generation in the United States, I first encountered J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* as a trio of Ballantine paperbacks in the 1960s, with gecko-eyed dragons and *origami*-belching volcanos adorning their colorful covers. [If you held the three volumes together, they formed a contiguous, if surrealistic mural.] Anyway, *LOTR* was definitely one of the works you were supposed to read for your Counterculture credentials. Bumper-stickers reading "Frodo Lives!" were very much in vogue.

It had taken *LOTR* until the '60s to really get off the ground. *The Hobbit* had appeared decades earlier, but its childlike narrative and fairytale plot suggested to the experimentally-curious that this Tolkien fellow just wrote "books for kids".

I am not ashamed to confess that my first attempt in 1967 to tackle "The Trilogy" [it was **the** Trilogy, just as San Francisco was **the** City] ended in sullen failure. Beyond Bilbo's birthday party I had absolutely no idea what was going on, and the avalanche of names, places, harkings-back, and hidden-meaningful ballads left me far past bewildered to stupefied. The paperbacks gathered some dust. Finally, tired of being snickered at in Berkeley coffeehouses, I went back to the damned thing. The first time through it, I thought I had got the gist. I read it a second time and decided it was a kind of catchy story after all. The third time through I was hooked: This was **stunning**. I had joined the ranks of Tolkien-devotees, which is to say fanatics.

The Tolkien legacy continued on past J.R.R.'s passing in 1973 with the publication of his *Silmarillion*, a detailed series of background histories by his son Christopher, and occasional spin-offs such as a record & book of songs by Donald Swann and an atlas of Middle-earth by Karen Wynn Fonstad. But it was the breathtaking series of movies 2001-3 of *LOTR* by director Peter Jackson that immortalized the work far beyond its literary enclave. I am only sorry that J.R.R. isn't around to see them himself.

After watching the second film, I decided that it would be nice to collect a One Ring. At this time, amusingly paradoxical as it is, merchandising from the Jackson movies has generated millions of “One” Rings, from the stamped-plastic to the jeweler-grade. If Sauron were looking for his Ring today, his greatest problem would be combing his way through all the copies to the **one** One!

In my personal search for a truly representative One Ring, I finally came to TolkienTown.com, an enthusiast mecca which, happily, extends well back before the film-mania to a somewhat cozier era of aficionados. They could indeed provide me a unique One Ring, exquisitely executed by Paul Badali, a Master Jeweler with a lifelong Tolkien devotion. It arrived; I admired it and put it carefully away.

And now it gets strange ...

In mid-September I happened to take out the ring and place it on my finger. I did not become invisible, but suddenly I felt a compulsion to write. And write I did, for the following week, day and night, pausing only when I removed the ring. As soon as I put it on again, I would continue.

The result was this document which follows, the *Morlindalë*.

At face value it is, well, an account of some of the events of the Tolkien “mythos” from a somewhat different perspective, indeed several of them. You may find it interesting, or perhaps shocking if you are an “orthodox” Tolkien disciple. Personally I don’t know quite what to make of it, except that I now regard that little ring from TolkienTown rather more warily. [Indeed, after the completion of the text of the *Morlindalë*, I found that while I could still handle it, I could no longer place it on my finger.]

I will say most earnestly, however, that I certainly intend no disrespect whatever to J.R.R. Tolkien’s original genius, or for that matter to the many others who have labored over the years to preserve it for future generations. Perhaps, like Frodo, I should have cast the *Morlindalë* immediately into the fire upon its completion. But, also like Frodo, I find that I cannot quite do so.

The text, which originally poured forth in an uninterrupted stream, has been annotated somewhat for the terms that might be confusing to a reader unfamiliar with the Tolkien histories.

About a month after the *Morlindalë* first appeared on the Internet, my attention was called to artwork inspired by it, from the lady artist Aldona Kalinowska. In my opinion she has captured the singular atmosphere of this text with exquisite delicacy and creativity. She has graciously granted permission for her work to be included here.

I recall that Tolkien once suggested the contemporary Mediterranean basin as the resting-place for ancient Mordor, with Sicily’s Mount Etna as the remains of Mount Doom. If anyone happens to come across an old iron box there some day, I would assuredly welcome a postcard.

Rachane
San Francisco
October 2003



*Ulbandi and Melkor
with their heralds, the Bird of Paradise and the Crow*

The First Scroll Melkor to Sauron

A swirling: impressing itself upon the thing which was to become me before it became aware that it was alien to that movement. Whence that thing came, over what moments or æons it was fashioned - these remain unknown. But from this lathe the being that is Melkor¹ was indeed formed, and finally came to know itself - myself. And as I thus came to be, I dimly perceived, about me, other swirling things that were also coming to be, though I knew not what they, or I, were. Indeed we had no form as you understand it. We were bodies of energy, of luminescence.²

Reaching out to all of us, and connecting us somehow, was that which called itself Eru Ilúvatar³, though it also had no form. It was what spoke to us together, thus seemed to us to be our creator for that reason, although later we might wonder whether the inverse were true - that Eru Ilúvatar was indeed the simultaneous, collective creation of our nascent wills, beyond our several consciousnesses.

Finally we came to be the Ainur⁴, perceiving and flowing about one another in harmonious waves, which in the *Ainulindalë*⁵ you have read as music. But it was not music as commonly known. It was far too ethereal for that. It was how we extended to one another, knew ourselves to be alike in substance and energy, yet each in some sense different.

And within the universe in which we found ourselves to exist, we saw also there to be an all-pervasive balance and symmetry, and this too we believed to be Eru Ilúvatar, his very signature. It seemed to give cohesion to all of us and harmony to our music: a supreme measure, which we acknowledged in wonder and worship.

¹ *Melkor*: “He Who Arises in Might”, first-existing and most undefined of the Ainur. In later ages of Earth, Melkor was perceived as the Egyptian Set, Greek Prometheus, Roman Lucifer, Judæo-Christian Satan. Late in the First Age of *Arda* (Earth) he was called “Morgoth” (“Black Enemy”) by Elves and Men superstitious of him, but none of his friendship or company ever used that name.

² This occurred on the date 0 of the *Annals of Valinor*, by which the time prior to the Ages of Middle-earth is measured. A Valian year is equal to ten conventional years.

³ *Eru Ilúvatar*: *Eru* “One”, *Ilúvatar* “Father of All”, the names used together [as throughout the *Morlindalë*] or separately. In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Ptah/Atum, Judæo-Christian Yahweh/God.

⁴ *Ainur*: In later ages perceived as the Egyptian *neteru*, polytheistic gods, Judæo-Christian angels. Principal among these were the *Valar*, comparable to Judæo-Christian archangels.

⁵ *Ainulindalë*: “The Music of the Ainur”, an account of the “creation” as given by the Ainur of Valinor (realm of the Valar upon Arda) to the Elf Rûmil of Tirion (the principal city of the Elves in Valinor) during the First Age.



The Coming Into Being of Melkor

And then: the pain - so sudden, so overwhelming that even now I cannot turn my mind fully upon it. I feared that I was indeed being unmade, for it rushed into me, tore into the swirling, reached into the deepest center of that which was Melkor and changed it. But I was not unmade, indeed not to appearance changed at all. But to my surprise and horror I could no longer sing with the balance of the universe, with Eru Ilúvatar. My voice, my being reached in loneliness and desperation towards him, towards the other Ainur, but instead of adding to their majesty and harmony, it seemed now only to surprise, shock, and hurt them and, through all of them, Eru Ilúvatar himself.

Can you, Sauron, begin to imagine how fearful this was: suddenly, inexplicably to have the entire universe in opposition to you? To be surrounded everywhere by its vastness, its perfection, its music, yet to be repelled by these, indeed to feel sickness at their surrounding and in-pressing. I turned and fled into the darkest voids of nonexistence, seeking sanctuary from this terror and pain, or at least blackness to soothe my sensation of them.

How long I remained there I cannot know, nor has time any meaning within the not-universe. But as great my terror, as deep my sorrow, as piercing my pain, greater still was my need to exist, to will, and to extend myself. And so eventually I returned - returned to find that in my absence the other Ainur had, whether through their decision or that of Eru Ilúvatar, fashioned a place for themselves in which to live and take physical form. This was Arda⁶, this little world.

I drew near to it, and I saw and wondered. It was a globe of blue and green and brown hue, covered about with wisps of whiteness, and everywhere it seemed a thing of great beauty. Over and around it I flew, marveling at mountains, seas, forests, rivers, fields, and the many beasts and growing things throughout them.

Finally I came to a lake in the very center of this world, and amidst the lake an island of surpassing magnificence, and there I saw to be my fellow Ainur.⁷ To touch this new world about them, they had fashioned themselves forms, also strange and beautiful. Before them I alit, so overwhelmed by this apparent genius of theirs that the pain still lancing throughout me lessened for the mere joy of such company.

One by one I saw and knew them in the forms they had fashioned for themselves. Only certain of these are of concern to my tale:

⁶ *Arda*: "The Realm", The name of the planet Earth during its First through Fourth Ages, although forgotten thereafter.

⁷ In its earliest fashioning the central landmass of Arda was gathered about a great inland sea, in which was the Isle of Almaren, taken by the Valar for their home within the world.

There was Manwë⁸, whom I remembered to be near-formed by me at the beginning. The aires of this strange new world danced about him, lighting his body with the touch and jewels of clouds, and about him were exotic and wondrous winged creatures.⁹

There was Ulmo¹⁰, whose form glistened and cascaded, awash in deep color. The many waters of Arda, I learned, were his especial domain.

There was Aulë¹¹, who appeared as the very stone and earth of Arda itself. As Ulmo with the oceans and rivers of this world, so Aulë concerned himself with the shaping of its lands. He was accompanied by the Valië¹² Yavanna¹³, who attended all of that which grew upon those lands.

There was Námo¹⁴, dark and silent, who would be concerned with the destiny and death of all races upon Arda save one¹⁵. He was accompanied by Vairë¹⁶, who foresaw, measured, and remembered those destinies.

There was Irmo¹⁷, who wrought dreams and visions, artist of beautiful gardens.

There was Tulkas¹⁸, whose interest and delight lie in destruction and war. His visage I will not here describe.

And there was Oromë, who took his pleasure in slaying of the weaker and more helpless creatures of Arda.

⁸ *Manwë*: Second-existing of the Valar, and after the Universal isolation of Melkor their chief or king. In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Horus, Greek Phœbus, Roman Apollo, Judæo-Christian Archangel Michael.

⁹ The eagles of Arda were sacred to Manwë, and his heralds. A distant future echo of this were the falcons of the Egyptian Horus.

¹⁰ *Ulmo*: In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Nun, Greek Poseidon, Roman Neptune.

¹¹ *Aulë*: In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Geb, Greek Hephæstus, Roman Vulcan.

¹² *Valië*: One of the Valar who had chosen to take female form.

¹³ *Yavanna*: In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Isis, Greek Demeter, Roman Ceres.

¹⁴ *Námo*: In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Osiris, Greek Erebus, Roman Pluto. He would be concerned with the dead beings of Arda once they began to die, and in later Valinor would delve for them the Halls of *Mandos* (“Waiting”) in the caverns of its westernmost reaches.

¹⁵ Unknown to Námo or any other of the Valar was the destiny, and existence after death, of the *Atani* (“Second People” [after the Elves]): Men.

¹⁶ *Vairë*: In later ages perceived as the Greek Moirai, Roman Parcæ: “the Fates”.

¹⁷ *Irmo*: In later ages perceived as the Greek Morpheus.

¹⁸ *Tulkas*: In later ages perceived as the Greek Aries, Roman Mars.

From their many pursuits, which I saw were each towards a part of this world, they all halted as though summoned, turned, and appeared to see me, though I had not yet presumed or even imagined to take such form as they. Indeed my alighting on Arda was not possible to see, yet it was there for all of the Valar. They gathered about me, and the harmony of their music moved about me, and formed speech to me. It said, “Melkor, why have you come to us, to this Arda which we have built?”

Never before had I spoken, or imagined such as speech, and it was long before I realized how I might answer, and in doing so gradually began to devise for myself a physical form to do so. Unlike theirs, mine was a mere æthyr that flowed and pulsed, for I knew naught else. Yet finally I was able to speak as they. “Great Valar,” I said, “I come to you as your lost brother, who alone among you was stricken with a terrible sense, that of separateness. Long have I dwelt in the outer darkness confounded by this. But I have come back, found this beautiful world of yours, seen your own beauty. Even to be in your company is a healing balm to me, wherein I may for at least a time forget my self.”

But their visages grew first troubled, then angered, and they said to me, “Look at the ground where you have alighted, look at the growing things about you. Where your touch falls, all this is disturbed, and unique change is effected. Together, in the music of Eru Ilúvatar, we have blended our voices to elaborate all of this world. Yet you, Melkor, act now to undo all of this. Leave this world, leave us; return to your darkness forever.”

To see them I had begun to fashion eyes, and into these eyes now came tears, also new to me. My affliction, it seemed, was felt not only by myself, but by those and that about me, causing a different kind of fear and hurt to them as well. They were beings of this universe and indeed, as I saw, had since given it and themselves the forms I witnessed. But I, Melkor, was a thing alien to them, to all of this. A Vala too, but as distant from all others as beyond imagination.

I said to them, “You cannot know the horrors I have endured beyond the universe. Grant me leave to remain but in the most remote fastness of this world. Even this will be of desperate comfort.”

Around me flowed their thoughts and fears, mingled now with still newer sensations to me, compassion and hatred. Confusing as these were, overwhelming them, as I now felt, was a love for one of their own kind, alien though he might be. “Go then,” they said, “to the farthest reaches of this world, where there are mountains of stone and ice, and dwell there if you will, placing your touch upon no living thing. The hand of Melkor changes all that we have wrought to strangeness beyond our wisdom and design. Only the dead stone of this Arda will not respond to you.”

Now I had close completed the fashioning of a form alike to those of the other Valar, but again of a unique essence. Their shapes, I could now see clearly, were solid and firm. But mine, which was not content to remain within the nature of Arda, glowed in and out of clearness from moment to moment. And the eyes of the other Valar, I saw, hurt to gaze upon me, for even such sight caused their sense of natural order disruption.

I bowed before them, and said, “Before I depart, is there no gift I can give also to Arda to bless it and please you?” I looked about, and saw that beyond the island upon which we rested Aulë, even as we spoke, was forging together two great suns of fire, sufficient to bring light and warmth to Arda. But as yet they rested upon its ground, and burned it.

“Here then,” I said, “receive from me two pillars of water, highest above this place, to hold these wondrous globes safe, that they may cast their radiance gently and safely.” Ulmo it was who answered me: “It is in the nature of my water to flow always beneath the air of Manwë, it cannot rise upon it.”

Then still another new sensation arose in me, which I would learn to be mirth, and I laughed. “See, my brother, how your water can be changed, yet remain the same.” I then reached into the lake, and let coldness run through my hands into the water, and before the eyes of the other Valar fashioned it once, then twice, into two pillars of ice, each one of which I set on the land beyond the lake, to the north and to the south.

“Place your suns atop these, O Aulë,” I said. “Thus may they warm this entire world, yet indeed without melting this ice, for it is the Ice of Melkor and so unlike all other.” Aulë then cast each of his suns above a pillar, whereupon it floated in perfect balance, and they were named Illuin in the north, Ormal in the south. Their light together then flowed throughout Arda, weaving throughout its forests, meadows, rivers, and seas, and causing all living, growing things to be gladdened thereby.

“Now,” I said, “I take with contentment the leave you have granted to me, and will remove to those mountains in the farthest north. Perhaps, as all of you continue to discover and refashion this world, the hand of your brother Melkor will finally not be worrisome to you.” And so I left them, Sauron, but I should have had greater care for the eyes of Manwë, who, it seemed, was not pleased that the waters of Ulmo should now have pierced through his sky.



Aulë and Melkor before Illuin and Ormal

Far to the north, it was as the other Valar had said: a darkness beyond Aulë's suns to the edge of the world, and great ranges of black rock, broken and upraised into huge mountains.¹⁹ For any but Melkor these would have been fearsome and denying, but I carried my own radiance within me, and so was not daunted. With my dreams and the touch of my hands, I wrought from this desolation a warm and comforting dwelling, which I never thought to name, but which those apart from me would later in awe and dread call Utumno, the Home of Darkness.

In that youth of Arda, O Sauron, time had no meaning, and whether it were one or an hundred or many thousands of your years I could not say; but it did seem that Arda was, and always would be a place of exquisite nature, that is to say many balances throughout which the other Valar had conceived and maintained. Only above all this floated Illuin and Ormal, the suns upon the ice which was not in accord with this nature, the Ice of Melkor, which was near to their heat yet melted not.

And that, to the hurt of that infant world, was their undoing. They were, not only by their unnature but by their ceaseless, overbearing presence, a reproach to all the other works of the Valar. Thus, then, did Manwë finally call upon Oromë to strike them down.

Of all the Valar, Oromë was the most repugnant to my thoughts. He created not; he roamed the lands of Arda to destroy living things wantonly; he called this "hunting". This he did unceasingly and relentlessly: not because he needed food, for the Ainur need none; not to redress wrong, because the beasts and beings he would slay knew naught of it; yet still was their blood sacrificed to Oromë. Far stronger was he than any of his victims, yet beasts he also trained to rip and tear their hunted fellows, for naught but again his cruel pleasure. Yet for all this he was honored among the Valar of Almaren, to whom he fed the dead flesh and cold blood of his kills in ghastly banquets.

Now it was to Oromë that Manwë came especial, whereupon Oromë undertook his most thorough hunts for the most extravagant of all his banquets, wherein the slain among each and every creature then of Arda was given to the Valar of Almaren. And as they ate this flesh and drank this blood, blinded by redness in eye as well as mouth, Oromë retired in secret to the pillars of the suns and broke them, that the spells of Melkor which had upheld them were undone.

Down the suns fell, beneath each now a vast wave of meltwater from its broken pillar. So hard did these waters, and the suns after them, strike Arda that all of its lands, save only the mountains of Utumno at the uttermost north, were torn and ruined. From beneath the lands upsurged hidden waters, to create great oceans.

¹⁹ In earliest Arda, the only extreme geographic feature other than the central lake and island was a range of mountains at the northern extreme, the *Ered Engrin* ("Iron Mountains").

Within the lands between them were now only two vast craters where the suns had struck, later to fill with water and become the seas of Helcar and Ringol.²⁰

The Valar of Almaren, themselves immune from this calamity across their world, were told by Manwë that it was I, Melkor, who had destroyed the pillars of the suns in envy of the beauty of their work throughout Arda. But of those words of Manwë, O Sauron, I heard nothing. Why my spells had failed I could not guess, and even feared they had finally weakened through some unforeseen fault of mine.

But now the Valar of Almaren, seeing their wondrous works torn and broken about them, held me to blame for it all, and cursed me with whole and hateful hearts. Know, O Sauron, that when the Valar wish their thoughts known to all their kind, it is so. And thus I knew whatever favor I might have found with them to be forever lost. I was again, as I had been in the not-universe, alone.

Their Almaren deep-buried beneath the lands of the new-erupted Endor²¹, its Valar went hence to the western precipice of Arda, where they upraised yet another land²² for themselves, a mountain-ringed plain which they named Valinor²³. It was vastly alien to the rest of Arda, for the Valar forewent there their vigilance regarding natural law as decreed by Eru Ilúvatar. In Valinor no life of this world, once created, could ever die. There distance was without meaning. There all manner of light, darkness, sound, silence, warmth, cold, was only as ordered by each Vala from moment to moment. It was the result of their distress, and it was a madness to behold, were there any to do so. But as yet in Valinor were only the Valar themselves, and they did not care.

Endor and its encompassing oceans the Valar neglected for long ages, leaving them to whatever of Eru Ilúvatar's natural law still clung to them. And the only Vala to see this, Sauron, was Melkor. From Utumno I came; alone I walked throughout Endor, then, and saw its floods and volcanos subside into rivers, lakes, great ranges of mountains. From the new earth grew trees and fields of grass and grain. From the mud and the sea-sands came small creatures, who became larger and more curiously-formed ones. And all, ever, within what I still saw to be the balance ordered by Eru Ilúvatar. Except still, O Sauron, for myself.

²⁰ Date: The Valian year 500.

²¹ *Endor*: "Middle-earth", from the First through the Fourth Ages of Arda, the largest and most central continent extending from the northern pole into the southern hemisphere of the planet. It was bounded on the west by the *Belegaer* ("Sundering Seas"), and on the east by the East Sea.

²² *Aman*: "Blessed", a continent at the extreme west of Arda, extending from the *Helcaraxë*, an ice-bridge to Endor at the northern pole, into the southern hemisphere. Unlike the substance of Endor, which preexisted the Valar on Arda, Aman was conceived and sustained solely by the collective wills of the Valar residing there.

²³ *Valinor*: "Land of the Valar", that part of Aman to the west of the coastal *Pelóri* mountain ranges and to the east of the *Ekkaia* ("Encircling Sea") around the known extremes of Arda.

I came to realize that, whether by will or by constraint greater than his, Eru Ilúvatar could create and maintain only according to balance. Every force had its counter, every thing brought into being an opposite non-being, every uplifted mountain an abyss from which it had come. Creatures, assembled from the dust, would finally dissemble again to it. Turn your eyes to the sea upon the shore, Sauron, and in its waves which come and go, come and go, you see the law of Endor, ever as it was and shall be.

Overlooking this Arda that had now come to be, I supposed it henceforth to remain thus. But I did not know all the designs of Eru Ilúvatar. On one of my travels across the reaches of Endor, I saw the faintest of movements beside one of its darkened seas - for all the world save Valinor knew only starlight in those times.²⁴ Coming closer, I saw that emerging from seeming nothingness were beings like to the shapes taken by the Valar, save smaller and firmer in their bodies. Common to all of these new creatures was fine beauty of form and feature, and an awareness more than the beasts but less than the Ainur in their eyes.

I knew it not at that time, Sauron, but these were the first of what the Valar would call the Children of Ilúvatar, the Thoughtforms of Arda, or as they would call themselves, the Quendi²⁵.

I paused to marvel at these pretty little creatures, who to my first glance seemed as innocent and guileless as the rest of Endor about them. I passed then among their gatherings, to them naught but the whisper of a breeze, and then - and then, O Sauron, I looked full into their eyes and saw therein the same rages of desire and hatred that had bewildered my sight before the Valar of Almaren. And I knew, with a terrible instance, that such had been no accident afflicting the Valar, or these new creatures of Arda, but were rather again the deliberate design of Eru Ilúvatar. It was meant that the Ainur should contest among themselves, these new creatures also. Why Eru Ilúvatar should have ordained this I could not guess, and still now it remains a mystery and a sadness to me.

But next, considering these creatures who had emerged so finely from Arda, a dread crept over me. For I now knew what underlay Arda. Nothing could emerge from it without compensation. What, then, compensated these fair Quendi? I saw nothing else beside them. Had Eru Ilúvatar, in this new race of beings, finally broken his own law for this world? So it at first seemed to be.

Alas, O Sauron, it was indeed not to be. For each of the Quendi, created in beauty and acuteness of mind under the starlit fields and forests beside the icemelt of Illuin, now the Sea of Helcar, there also was, deep in the caverns and nether-realms of Endor, formed against the selfsame elements, an opposing creature of crude

²⁴ Date: The Valian year 2000.

²⁵ *Quendi*: "Speakers", the all-encompassing name for the race of Elves throughout Arda.

visage and confused mind. These unfortunate beings, accorded the same immortality as the Quendi, were doomed to endure it in dullness, pain, fear, and finally hatred as they discovered that all of Arda loathed them as fully as it admired the Quendi.

And there must have been some deepfelt awareness among the Quendi that their own exquisite life was paid for by the misery of their counterparts, for the Quendi turned savagely and mercilessly upon them wherever they found them.²⁶ *Yrch*, or Vileness, the Quendi called them in contempt. The creatures, uncomprehending, supposed it their true name, which in their broken speech, came to be *Uruk* or, commonly throughout Middle-earth, *Orc*.

The Orcs not discovered and slain by the Quendi hid themselves in the most barren and desolate reaches of Endor, for only there could they hope for the least measure of safety from the Quendi. In such places it was that I found them, for I pitied them and resolved to offer them such sanctuary and comfort as I might. At first, knowing only the Quendi, they supposed me to be only another, greater of these their tormenters and slayers. So I coarsened my form towards theirs, whereupon they crawled out from their holes and caves to tremble and weep at my feet. Gently I would raise them up and take them with me to Utumno. Therein the Quendi never dared venture, and the Orcs knew themselves finally to be safe.

Indeed, for I had not supposed them able of it, the Orcs set about the working of Utumno into a far-flung dwelling of light, warmth, and comfort. It was no easy task, for the mountains were deep and rough-hewn, but after long ages and labors it became a good home for them. So we lived for long ages of Arda, and troubled not the councils of Valinor. And then, after my long endurance of loneliness and exile from my own kind, a most wondrous thing happened.

As I walked out into the forests before the mountains one night, my gaze was drawn upward, to the starry expanse above. I had given little thought to it before; my concerns had been so necessarily upon Arda. But now I was transfixed by the majesty of the universe beyond its small circles. I lay down. The glade about me was utterly silent. I sent my wish out to those stars then, Sauron. If whatever fashioned me as I am cares a little for its work, send me also a companion. Exhausted then, I fell into sleep.

²⁶ In the *Silmarillion* of the Elves the race of Orcs was alleged to have been bred by Melkor from captured and tortured Elves. Thus could the Elves pretend that their own existence did not have such a dark and tragic mirror-consequence in Middle-earth, but their obsessive hatred and hunting of Orcs suggests that this attempted self-deception was ultimately in vain.

Morning came to Arda. I awoke - and saw asleep beside me the most beautiful being I could ever have imagined. A Valië she was, of delicate ivory with hair dark as the evening sky. Then she opened her eyes, and in them, O Sauron, were the stars that had heard my wish. Ulbandi was her name ... Ulbandi.²⁷

What may I say of her to you? If love came as a pleasure and diversion to the Valar of Valinor, to me it was as the ending of great and deep pain, a new life at which I clutched in scarce-believing desperation. My existence, heretofore only an endless, meaningless curse to me, now looked forward to each new moment, as long as Ulbandi could savor it with me. Throughout all that I have ever been, since the beginning of time unto its end, I have truly lived only as with her: Ulbandi, Valië of the Stars.

And in our folly that we could hope to live as other beings on Arda, we even dared to conceive a son²⁸, whom we named Kosomot *Valarauko*, for he was the child of the universe that is not. Swift and strong he grew, a being neither wholly of the Valar nor wholly of Arda, but indeed, as deemed Ulbandi and I, the better of both.

The Orcs loved him even more than they did me, for part of Kosomot drew from their own world, and he adventured far throughout Endor in search of their kin as yet unrescued to Utumno. To the Quendi he soon became an avenger feared even beyond Melkor, for it had been my wish only to turn them aside from Orcs they hunted. But then Kosomot saw what the Quendi did to their unfortunate prey, a terrible passion seized upon him, and thereafter no Quendi saw him but perished in the dark fire of his countenance. In fear of him, not knowing what he was or whence he came, they called him *Balrog*, Death Fire.

Far away in Valinor the Valar conceived also of their unions, again of beings part of the Ainur, part of Arda: these they named *Maiar*, Twilight Valar. From Manwë and Varda came Ilmarë and Eönwë and Olórin²⁹, from Ulmo and Nienna Ossë and Uinen, from Irmo and Estë came Melian, from Oromë and Vána came Alatar, from

²⁷ *Ulbandi*: Valië, bride of Melkor and Queen of Utumno. In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Nephthys, Greek Persephone, Roman Proserpina. She is only briefly mentioned by Tolkien, as in an unpublished list of Valar mentioned in Christopher Tolkien (Ed.), *The Book of Lost Tales 1*, page 98.

²⁸ The son of Melkor and Ulbandi: In later ages perceived as the Egyptian Anubis.

²⁹ *Olórin*: Ainurean name of the Maia later called by the Elves *Mithrandir*, and by the later beings of Middle-earth Gandalf the Grey [Wizard].

Námo and Vairë came Pallando³⁰, and from Aulë and Yavanna, Curumo³¹ and Aiwendil³² and, Sauron³³, your own self.

Beyond this the tale, should you desire to tell it, if any will ever hear it, falls to you, O Sauron. A small truth amidst great mists it may be, yet I am content only to know that it exists, perhaps a little past our own brief breath in this small world.

³⁰ *Alatar* and *Pallando*: Ainurean names of the Maiar unnamed by the Elves, and known by the later beings of Middle-earth as “the Blue Wizards” because of their close company and close-hued robes, though those of Alatar were sea-colored, while those of Pallando a midnight shade as befitting Mandos. In TA 2851 they were sent secretly by the White Council of *Istari* (“Wizards”) to Mordor to find the One Ring and slay Sauron. Alatar was there slain by the Nazgûl, and Pallando imprisoned in Barad-dûr until March 8, TA 3019, when he was brought forth to receive and hear the first five scrolls of that which would become the *Morlindalë*. The next three scrolls Pallando heard and spoke on March 24, TA 3019. Pallando wrote the ninth and final scroll himself on an unknown date, apparently in mid-TA 3020.

³¹ *Curumo*: Ainurean name of the Maia later called by the Elves *Curunír*, and by the later beings of Middle-earth Saruman the White [Wizard].

³² *Aiwendil*: Ainurean name of the Maia, unnamed by the Elves, called by the later beings of Middle-earth Radagast the Brown [Wizard].

³³ *Sauron*: Ainurean name of the Maia later called by the Elves *Gorthaur*, and by the later beings of Middle-earth the Dark Lord and the Great Eye. The Lord of the Rings.



Ulbandi, Valië of the Stars and Queen of Utumno

The Second Scroll Sauron to Pallando

Our brother Alatar is vanished from this world upon which we Maiar have so slight a grasp. You wonder, doubtless, that I still allow it to you who also came to Mordor seeking my death. Well then, Pallando, it is my purpose to entrust to you not only this first scroll of Melkor you have been given to read, but others to be written as spoken to you, and also this other of the words of Melkor. For despite all that I do now, and the vast armies that I command, I believe that my life, which has survived so much peril these long Ages of Arda, is now at its greatest and perhaps final risk.

Should I fail, I have chosen you, my brother Maia, to judge whether these accounts shall survive to be known by any other, in this Age of Arda or beyond. I will not entreat that they do. Either what they contain and mean will itself inspire you with this trust, or it is best that they also perish and be utterly forgotten.

Thus first I gave you to read that scroll, upon which I myself, when I still could take form, inscribed the words of Melkor to me, spoken in Utumno when I arrived there and sought his tutelage. Then I set that scroll aside, and for many years nigh forgot it, as I deemed it of little need: Melkor would live forever, and Utumno would remain his palace inviolate. How could I foresee what doom would come to both? It is now of that doom I wish to speak, even as the scribe attending us records these words.

I need speak little to you of our awakening among the Valar of Valinor. We were Not, and then we Were, and of an instant we knew those Valar who had breathed life into us and given us also our grasp upon the world of Arda.

In the dawn of my life I knew the company and teaching of Aulë and Yavanna. You will say that you know these as well as I, Aulë having knowledge of all the substances of this world, and Yavanna of the trees and their companions growing to life from it. Would, O Pallando, that this have been all: then perhaps much of what has since come to pass would not indeed have done so.

Aulë instructed me that deep within the seemingly dead things of which Arda is made there is secretly great power, indeed the very energy of the universe itself. He taught me its containment in matter as well as its unleashing in many ways, from the minute to the galactic. I remember him placing within my hand a small rock. With this, he said to me, you could destroy the universe.



Sauron and Olórin in the Gardens of Mûruran

Shaken in this knowledge, I turned to Yavanna. Surely in her realms of gentle quiet and beauty there were no such hidden terrors. But Yavanna bade me look closely into her creations, and so I saw that what had seemed so peaceful from a distance was an terrifying struggle for life by beings denied all but the most meager means to continue it. They could not move, they could not see or hear, they could not speak. Each might be in a forest of his kind, yet know nothing but that he might be utterly alone. If torn from the earth, he could not cry out, beg for mercy. He could only die, that also slowly and silently, while not a single other being on Arda took the merest notice.

Confronted with this world of horrors, I turned away from these two Valar of its affliction, but whence might I go? I knew not if I could even exist apart from their desire. Of my two fellow Maiar, Curumo and Aiwendil, I despaired: Curumo had learned the same of Aulë yet only shared his passion, while Aiwendil had seen no farther into Yavanna's designs than their pleasant surface.

To the farthest reaches of Valinor I journeyed, coming at last to the gardens of Lórien in which Irmo grants relief and forgetfulness in dreams. And almost I accepted this escape. But as I sought a slumber from which I might never again awake, I was halted by the most beloved of my fellow Maiar, Olórin. Manwë, to whom nothing in Valinor is ever hidden, had seen my terrors and sent Olórin to tend to them.

Ah, Pallando! In all that has come between us in the long years since, can you scarce imagine the deep comfort I took from Olórin's arrival and counsel? Though a Maia of Manwë and Varda, he had oft sought wisdom from the patience and compassion of Nienna, and in Lórien from the healing and rest of Estë, who had given to him the grey-hued raiment he wore thereafter in her honor. So the hand that reached out to me was, of all those in Valinor, the most dear.

Together we walked then, among the gardens of Murmuran and beside the lake of Lorellin. I told to Olórin the horrors of Aulë and Yavanna. For a long time he remained gravely silent, and I saw his gaze being drawn towards far-off Taniquetil, on whose high peak Manwë dwelt in his great hall Ilmarin. When my friend turned again to me, Pallando, I of a sudden knew that he was no longer there, that from his eyes now came the seeing of Manwë himself. I threw myself upon the ground in awe and dread.

"Sauron," said Olórin's voice, as from a distance, "Did you suppose all on Arda, or elsewhere, to exist for its own pleasure or benefit? Were all that you see as fair allowed to be thus without penalty, then this world would not grow, not change, not accord the Valar the interest which our own perfection and endurance deny to us. Arda was not fashioned by Eru Ilúvatar for itself or its creatures: that is only their simple, pitiful illusion. No, Sauron, this world was made for the Ainur - we

Valar, you Maiar - to sustain ourselves. Therefore did Aulë reveal to you the forces held imprisoned in the very soil and stone of this place, therefore did Yavanna disclose to you the endless agony within every single growing thing here, no matter its beauty to others. These things you were told because you must know what it is to be of the Ainur: that you take the greater pride in your power because of all about you that can never share of it. Rise now, go, and think upon this truth imparted to you.”

Then again did I feel the hands of Olórin raising me, and when I saw his face, it was once more that of my own friend. He nodded slowly, averting his gaze from me. “Yes, what you have heard here have I as well, and Curumo too, but I think as yet none other among the Maiar. Why the Valar have chosen the three of us for this I do not know, but I fear not for our benefit nor that of Arda beyond Valinor.”

“What of Curumo?” I said. “He has said naught of this to me.”

“He was the first among the Maiar to be so tested by the Valar,” said Olórin, leading me again along the shore of Lorellin. “Unlike yourself, he took delight in such knowledge, holding it to exalt the Maiar all the more closely to the Valar. I was the next, but I remained silent and judged these things not. While I cannot deny their truth, and even our own dependence upon it, I am deep troubled by it. Is this then the doom of the Ainur: to know of their fortune by the misfortune of other creatures? What is the nature of Eru Ilúvatar that he should conceive this, cause it to be, insist that it continue everlastingly?”

“If the Valar found you less apt than Curumo,” I said, “in me they have erred more profoundly, for I will have no part in such foulness. If it mean my extinction by the Valar who embodied me as I am, so that shall be.”

Olórin said, “I think it will not be so simple, for you or for the Valar. Do you imagine they knew so little of you before choosing you for this passage? Or of Curumo, or myself? No, a venture lies before each of us after such knowledge. We shall enjoy neither rest nor release, of that at least I am certain. I do not even know whether our own affection, now so dear to us both, will in the mists of the future withstand it.”

“Of all else in Valinor,” I answered, “our friendship is the most sacred to me. In this moment let it stand as a beacon of assurance to us both. Denied the good we supposed to be shared with us, we must then inspire it with our own will, not for sake of Vala or Maia, but indeed for its own.”

O Pallando, even now, after all these long years, the darkness and the pain that have been our cruel destiny, still can I reach back in my thought to that moment by the Lake of Lorellin. And I wonder, shall Olórin and I ever meet again there? Or

am I but a fool to cling even so slightly to such a fragile dream?

And so I returned to the city of Valmar, before which stood the Great Court of my Valar Aulë and Yavanna. By chance they were then within the city walls, but Curumo was there to greet me. “I know of your insolence to our Lord and Lady, Sauron,” he said. “As you fled to Lórien, it was doubtless to seek the counsel of that wanderer in dreams, Olórin. Did he give you the sense to return to seek pardon for your actions?”

“Speak not ill of Olórin,” I said, “for you know nothing of him. As for me, I have indeed thought deeply upon the words and the workings of the Valar during my journey. I know they are not for my heart, nor my hands. And I have also remembered, Curumo, that not all of the Valar own to such affliction of Arda. There is one other. If he stands apart from Valinor in all else, perhaps too in this.”

Curumo stared at me in amazement. “Fool you were, Sauron, yet never would I have believed you to fall into so rash and deadly a madness. Utter not his name in Valmar, and in this I counsel you earnestly: Do not foreswear your allegiance to Aulë, for your very existence into the far future of Valinor rests only upon his leave.”

“So would it be if I remained here,” I said, “but I shall not. Hence to Endor I go, to seek audience of Melkor. How shall he receive a Maia from Valinor, of Aulë? Shall he slay me? Shall he teach me? When I stand before him, I will certainly find that out. If I am to be slain, then Valinor will surely forget me. But what if I am to be taught, Curumo? What then? Perchance Valinor will not forget me. And before I bid you farewell, I have words of warning for you too. Too much you welcomed the hidden horrors of the Valar, O my brother. There is evil in your heart, I deem, if not in your visage, and it will bring you to ruin if you nurture it. We may have been given the sight of Valar, Curumo, but we are still but Maiar and so can be sought out by the vengeance of Arda as Valar cannot be. Remember, and beware.”

And I turned from him and was gone.

As you well know, distances to the Ainur are naught unless we wish them to be. From Lórien to Valmar I had indeed desired there to be a long journey, for I needed to reflect well upon my encounter with Olórin. But now I sought no such dalliance: straightway to Endor I determined myself - through the Calaciryá³⁴, across the Belegaer, to Endor, where I finally set foot in a field of tall grass close by a stand of trees.

³⁴ *Calaciryá*: “Path of Light”, a narrow valley from the east coast of Aman to inland Valinor, between the northern and southern ranges of the coastal mountains (the *Pelóri*).

And oh! Pallando, the sensation of it! Again I scarce need recall it to you, also Maia, but only to assure you of my surprise. Valinor had been bound together solely by the imagination of its Valar: It was as solid as they wished it to be, as fickle also with their mood. But Endor - ah, it was its own land, unchanging save by the natural cycles of the elements. I knelt and grasped a bit of earth; it remained in my hand, soft and damp. It was a wonder and a puzzle. Had the Valar essayed this? Or was it a mystery beyond them, of Eru Ilúvatar himself?

My fascination was interrupted, however, by the sight of some commotion away by the trees. I came closer to investigate. I deemed it at first a game between some tall, fair folk and a lesser number of shorter and less-favored ones. But then I saw that it was no mere chase for sport, because as the taller ones came up to the others, they slew them without hesitation or mercy. As I wondered at this, unseen by any of them, the sky suddenly darkened by the farthest edge of the wood, and then out of it, as lightning from a cloud, came such a being as I had never before imagined. It was, as I would learn, a Valarauko: indeed that very first, Kosomot, of whom you have read in the words of Melkor.

Into the thick of the fray he strode, and the fair warriors quailed as he towered above them, wreathed in fire and thunder. A long, liquid bolt of lightning lashed out from him again and again, slicing through the Quendi - for such they were - as a whip of flame. Not long did the survivors stand against such a fearsome weapon; they turned, scattered in panic, disappeared into the trees. Their once-prey, a company of Orcs and their families, cowered at the feet of the Valarauko. But he appeared to speak gently to them, and gestured them towards the north, whereupon they resumed their journey.

But the Valarauko did not accompany them. Instead he turned towards me, and seemed to see me clearly, though the Quendi and Orcs had not. In a few of his great strides he had reached me, glared at my still-shimmering form. "A Maia," he said. "A Maia from Aman. What means your presence here in Endor? Do you aid these Quendi in the harm they seek to visit upon the Orcs? Speak quickly and truly."

Thinking it prudent first to form myself before this strange being, whom I now sensed also to be of the Maiar, I gave myself a semblance as I had preferred in Valinor, neither arrogant nor humble, but modest and calm of mien. "I am indeed a Maia, Sauron of the House of Aulë in Valmar; but I am here by no will other than my own, and for no purpose other than my own, which is to seek counsel from the Vala Melkor. If you would hinder me, be warned that it may not prove so easy as with them." And I gestured at the stillsmoking bodies of the Quendi scattered across the field.

The Valarauko gave a short, amused laugh, but I sensed that the death which had stood close by me, my brave words notwithstanding, had now departed. “Well met, then, my brother Sauron. Fortune has favored you, for in all of Endor you have chanced to meet Kosomot, Maia of Melkor. And I will take you to his house at Utumno, where you may present yourself and seek your boon.”

Little of Endor need I say to you, Pallando, for once again you have surely seen it yourself. But imagine my first seeing of its real distances, its true climates, its firm mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes. Though Kosomot and I traveled at great speed, as Maiar may through any medium, still did it take us a very long time to reach the northmost ends of Endor, overreached by the Ered Engrin³⁵ before the final desolation of Dor Daidelos³⁶.

But as we approached the mountains I saw nothing. I had thought that Melkor, of whom I had heard so ill in Valinor, would have raised about himself some imposing fortress. Kosomot, seeing my bewilderment, laughed again. “Utumno lies beneath us, within the mountains. It is no redoubt against a siege, but a peaceful dwelling for Melkor and those he shelters. Whom is he to fear? The Quendi never dare to come hither, and the Valar of Aman care nothing for Endor or its creatures. Valinor is their sole interest in Arda, and behind its Pelóri they remain.”

Down into Utumno Kosomot took me then, and I wondered, Pallando, at its marvelous tunnels and caverns, all splendid with light and warmth, with comfort and care for those who lived there, these dark, ugly Orcs. Although the Valarauko spoke not, it was my first lesson that fair appearances may mislead as to the character behind them, as also with fell visage. Here we were greeted warmly by the Orcs, who evidently held Kosomot in their highest affection; his fearsome form troubled them no more than theirs did him. Myself they regarded with obvious curiosity, as they had never before seen a Maia other than my guide.

Finally we entered a hall larger and more imposing than the others, which he told me the Orcs of this place had wished to build for Melkor. And there, across it, sat talking with several of them what at first seemed only an exceptionally large - and profoundly ugly - Orc, but which I instantly sensed to be a Vala. He turned then towards me, and I abased myself before him as before the Valar of Valinor.

But he raised me to my feet, and stood looking curiously at me. I felt his eyes, the like of which I had never before encountered, reach through me to the core of my being. “So, Sauron,” he said, “it was time for you to come here. Yes, I had foreseen it, even from your dawning. The beings, thoughts of all the Maiar are

³⁵ *Ered Engrin*: “Iron Mountains”, the range across the northern extreme of Endor, beneath which Melkor and the first Orcs built Utumno, and then Sauron the stronghold of Angband. It was one of the only features of Arda to survive the downfall of the sun-pillars Illuin and Ormal.

³⁶ *Dor Daidelos*: “The Regions of Everlasting Cold”, the north polar ice of Arda.

never far from the Valar. I knew that you would respond as you did to Aulë and Yavanna; I know of your counsels with Olórin and Curumo; I told Kosomot to watch for you - which is fortunate, else he might have mistaken you for a large, slow warrior of the Quendi.” He smiled, then, if that hideous Orc-face could be said to manage such.

“But then - ” I said, and he nodded. “Yes, Aulë and Yavanna knew also that you would seek me, as did Manwë when he spoke with you through Olórin. But I myself am no Maia, but Vala. They knew not how I would welcome you, or to what purpose my welcome might lead you. Speak, then, O Maia; what do you seek of Melkor?”

“Against the serene, unending bliss of the Ainur on Arda,” I said, “I see brief, bitter, and toilsome life for all other creatures here of Eru Ilúvatar. Manwë has said to me that this is a gift to the Ainur, that they are the more aware of their power and glory as the first and greatest of Eru Ilúvatar’s creations. What does Melkor say of this?”

“Alone of the Valar I question the purpose and will of Eru Ilúvatar,” Melkor answered. “Alone of the Valar do I exist apart from him, hence can do so. And so I tell you this: He is not cruel, any more than he is benevolent. He is a force of indifference and hazard in this universe, and what appears here upon Arda is the result of that and no more. That is the truth and the curse of this world: that it is bereft of purpose. It is merely here, and it continues as its patterns, and accident, and the force of contesting wills press it. Finally, as all energy upon it is drawn inexorably out into the cosmos from whence it was fashioned, it will fade, grow cold, and go out.”

“How then can you, who see this, endure it, O Melkor?” I asked. “Why linger in this terrible place? Why do you not return to the great spaces beyond, that such sad troubles dwindle to nothingness in the distance?”

The Vala stood then, took my arm, and bade me keep silence. Back through the halls and caverns of Utumno he guided me, the Orcs and other strange beings bowing to him as we passed. Finally we stood at the Gate of Utumno, looking out over the starlit sky of Endor. He swept his hand across it that I should attend, then spoke again: “O Sauron, if Endor has no purpose, it is I - we - who can give it. If untended it knows only struggle and death, we can teach it pleasure and rest, if only a little, despite them. If it would by itself only slowly decline, we can see it marshal its energies to rise now in power, then in artistry, and still again in love. Each of these may be bought only by its opposite, so its misfortunes shall also grow and ebb in currents and waves. But from all of this we shall raise its creatures beyond themselves as fashioned by Eru Ilúvatar and the Valar; and some of them, perhaps, beyond the Ainur themselves.”

Again Melkor turned to me, and in the darkness his eyes burned into mine that I was no longer of a certain where Sauron ended and Melkor began. Now his voice seemed to flow through and around me. “You, Sauron, shall learn more from me than any Maia has of any Vala. But a time may come when Melkor shall no longer be, yet you shall remain, to preserve this wisdom, and indeed to uplift it beyond the Maiar, perhaps beyond even the Valar. In these journeys shall you know ecstasy unequalled in Endor, and anger and pain to shatter and mock it. But this does Melkor promise you, that none shall live with your intensity, with your perception of all thoughts and wills, and most of all with your Eye.”

A strength and fierce joy arose within me then, O Pallando, and in truth these have never left me since that moment. They shall be with me to my death, if death greet me, and perhaps even beyond, if by them I send even death away.

And so I became a Maia of Melkor, and learned of him, and of Kosomot also of other Valaraukar, and of Dragons, and of Wolves, and of other wondrous and weird creatures sheltered by Utumno. In time I gained respect and affection of these nigh to that in which they held Melkor himself. A neighboring and guardian fortress to Utumno I raised, Angband. Less open and inviting it was, for I was not as confident as Melkor, or perhaps only as I supposed him to be. Yet even so I conceived Angband only to secure against the Quendi; in my folly I had never imagined it would face a far greater threat.

Of these next happenings I learned only many years later, Pallando. It transpired that the Valar of Aman desired the Quendi to quit Endor and dwell amongst themselves in Valinor.³⁷ Why the Valar sought this has remained a mystery. The Quendi, as Melkor has said, were created of the natural substance of Endor: from it they came, of it they were a part, into it they would finally return. Ever-renewed life they drew from it; deprived of this, like a plant uprooted from the earth, they would wither and fade, finally to become as dust in the wind. Still did the Valar desire them to come to Valinor, where their lives would be sustained not by nourishment from the rivers and forests, but only through the enchantments that rendered all of Aman unchanging and all within it sheltered strangely from death.

Oromë it was who brought word of the Quendi to the other Valar of Aman. Alone of them he would visit Endor, to pursue and slay its living things for his amusement and sport. On one of these adventures of blood, terror, and death, he rode to the Sea of Helcar, formed by the meltwaters of Illuin, for it always pleased him to gaze upon the ruin that had been his secret handiwork. Passing thus close to Cuiviénen³⁸, he chanced to see dwellings of the Quendi, and came curiously in to meet with them. Thus he learned of their dawning, and of their hunting of yet

³⁷ Date: Valian year 2000.

³⁸ *Cuiviénen*: “Water of Awakening”, the far-eastern coast of the Sea of Helcar, upon which the Elves of Middle-earth first awakened in the Valian year 2000.

another race of beings, the Orcs, and of great monsters, which they called Balrogs, who came between them and these their prey. Oromë listened, and then removed himself instantly to Valinor, where he told these things to the other Valar in council.

Manwë decided then that the Quendi should come to Aman to become vassals and students of the Valar and the Maiar, but he knew not what to do about the Orcs and Balrogs. "From what the Quendi say of their appearance, they must be evil and monstrous things indeed, deserving of our destruction. But why would Eru Ilúvatar allow such beings in Arda? I fear because they are not of him, but instead of none other than Melkor, who lives indeed in the northern wastes of Endor from which these Balrogs are said to come." Then Manwë summoned before him Tulkas.

Of all the Valar, Pallando, Tulkas was the most fell. Above the rest of them he towered, a dark, red-pulsing, glittering horror of sinew and claw, the mere sight of whom inspired terror beyond all nightmare. Even the other Valar fell back before him, when he would come among them, and this they sought as little as they dared. Tulkas existed not only to bring about devastation and death, but to drink deeply of these things that they might course eternally through his veins, screaming.

So Tulkas came before Manwë, and the sight of Manwë also was averse from him, but the voice of Manwë did come, and it said, "You must hence to Endor, to the mountains at its north extreme, there to find Melkor and all that hold with him." Manwë said naught about what Tulkas should do there, for he knew that Tulkas never came, and never found, but to tear from the very fabric of this universe.

What happened then I tell only because it must be told. Tulkas came to Angband and destroyed it utterly. Most of our dwellers perished, but not before their lives were sucked in to that of Tulkas, thereafter to serve in lingering torment. Only a few escaped, among them Sauron, and we fled mindlessly before the onslaught of Tulkas, into the farthest reaches of Endor.

Tulkas, however, did not pursue us, but turned instead to Utumno, and of the devastation he wrought there I cannot bring myself to describe. Scarce of its people remained alive, with only a few who could rise through the air - dragons and Valaraukar - finding escape. Tulkas came finally to the halls of Melkor, and before his very eyes utterly consumed Ulbandi, the first of the Valar ever to be Unmade. Tulkas cast down the stricken Melkor then, but brought him alive back to Valinor, where he was thrown before the feet of Manwë at Máhanaxar³⁹. The Valar heeded

³⁹ *Máhanaxar*: A circular court between the western Golden Gates of the city of Valmar and the *Ezellohar*, the slight hill upon which the Two Trees stood. Within the court were the thrones of the fourteen Valar of Aman, of which two - those of Námo and Nienna - have never been used. The *Máhanaxar* was known to the Elves as the Ring of Doom, as it was from it that the Valar issued their decrees and judgments to the Maiar and Eldar.

him not, then, but cast him into the nighted prison of Mandos, there to abide alone in foulest darkness for three entire Valian Ages⁴⁰ .

What passed next in Aman and Endor I cannot say of my own knowledge, though the Quendi have rendered an account of it in their *Silmarillion*. The Valar led some⁴¹ , but not all⁴² of them from Endor to Aman, and of the Quendi who came, some surrendered themselves utterly to the Valar⁴³ , a greater number paid homage to them but kept to their own community⁴⁴ , and still others⁴⁵ arrived in Aman, yet finally feared to pass through the Calacirya into the enchanted realm beyond: they settled on the shores beyond the Pelóri.

In the ruins of Endor spared by Tulkas, few living beings remained: only the remnants who had survived the horror of Angband and Utumno, and, in far-eastern Cuiviénen, those of the Quendi who had rejected the summons of the Valar to Aman. It was a grim, fearful time across the broken and blasted lands, nor could we know that Tulkas would not return on some terrible day, to finish his evil work and destroy Endor utterly.

⁴⁰ 300 Valian years, or 3,000 conventional years.

⁴¹ The Elves who migrated to Aman were known as the *Eldar* (“Stellar Ones”).

⁴² The Elves who remained in Cuiviénen were known as the *Avari* (“Unwilling Ones”).

⁴³ Of the Eldar the *Vanyar* (“Fair Ones”).

⁴⁴ Of the Eldar the *Noldor* (“Knowing Ones”).

⁴⁵ Of the Eldar the *Lindar* (“Singing Ones”), called by the others the *Teleri* (“Following Ones”).



Tulkas and Ubandi

The Third Scroll Melkor to Sauron

Now that we have built this new fortress of Thangorodrim⁴⁶ and sheltered our surviving peoples therein, Sauron, I must no longer delay to tell you of my return to Endor, for I darethink not long shall we enjoy respite here.

When again the gates of Mandos opened for me, I hardly knew myself still to be. Within Mandos there is no light, no sound, no motion, no other thing at all. Imprisoned there, I slowly began to unform, until I was but a mere thought that clung only to itself. It was this fragile wisp that the Valar found when finally they chose to release me, and they laughed as they sent it drifting back to Máhanaxar.

It was many of their days before I could come to know myself, and still more before I could regather my form about me. But these things I resolved to do, and finally the Melkor of old stood again before Manwë and the others of the Valar. Last of all to return was my mind, and fortunate was it so, else had the Valar seen into it, they surely would have returned me to Mandos, there finally to perish.

I was allowed now to dwell and walk among the Valar and their Maiar and Quendi vassals. I wondered at this mercy, but then realized that the Valar dare not slay one of their own kind before the many lesser beings about them. The killing of Ulbandi by Tulkas had brought to all of them a fear previously unknown: that they were not, after all, beyond all limitation and destruction. This they kept secret from their vassals, for the fate of Ulbandi had been witnessed by myself alone.

O Sauron! Better the Valar had cried their secrets to all the peoples of Valinor than they had left the one Melkor alive to know and remember the truth! I forgot not my dearest Ulbandi, nor the many of my friends and families who had perished hideously in Angband and Utumno. As I departed from Máhanaxar, my mind came finally to its whole, and I resolved then a full vengeance upon all of them: all the Valar, their Maiar, their Quendi. I would rend their cherished paradise of Valinor to its heart even as they had Endor, and I would make them so fear the name of Melkor that never again would they dare even to utter it.

I looked about me at this place. As I had first seen when taken from Mandos, it was no longer overreached by the starlit sky of the rest of Arda, but was wonderfully bright, recalling in this almost the suns of Aulë atop my lost pillars of Illuin and Ormal. I sought this light, and found it to come from two great trees, Telperion and Laurelin, grown by the Valië Yavanna. These were the wonder and marvel of all

⁴⁶ *Thangorodrim*: A new stronghold of Melkor, at the south-base of the Ered Engrin, created beneath three volcanos activated by Tulkas' annihilation of Utumno and Angband.

Valinor, whereto all came to bathe in their radiance.

But with my eyes, the eyes only of Melkor, seeing beyond those of all other Valar, I entered into Telperion and Laurelin, seeking their very souls. Do you remember the terrible truth revealed to you by the same Yavanna, O Sauron: that there is a price for all life born of Arda, in absolute balance to its presence and strength? Into the hearts of Telperion and Laurelin I went, past the beauty and radiance of their shells, and therein I found indeed that truth of Yavanna. Conjured by the Valar to serve outwardly as they did, within their silent, imprisoned selves Telperion and Laurelin suffered agonizing torment from the continuous, endless draining of their life into the relentless light and warmth demanded of them. Far worse was this even than my own imprisonment in Mandos, wherein at least I had descended into dreamless sleep. I withdrew from the two trees in cold horror.

As for the Quendi vassals of the Valar, I saw them to hold themselves into three keepings, which they named the Vanyar, the Noldor, and the Teleri. The Vanyar were those who had utterly surrendered themselves to the Valar and Maiar, and I saw them only as mindless, heedless servants of these Ainur. The Teleri I saw not, for I was not permitted by the Valar to venture beyond the Pelóri to the shores where they dwelt. But the Noldor, I soon perceived, were a people deeply troubled. They welcomed the warmth, beauty, brilliance, and safety of Valinor, but they remained nonetheless creatures of the substances of Endor, called always back to them and weakened the more as they remained far distant from them. Aman was and remains only an illusion given focus by the joined wills of the Valar. Therefore these children of Endor declined slowly into weakness and listlessness amidst their glorious new home, but knew not why this should be so.

While I had little love for the Quendi, recalling all too keenly their hunting of the weak and helpless Orcs in Endor, still I found intolerable their condemnation to slow but inexorable exhaustion in this place so alien to them. They should not be here; their place was in Endor, where perhaps they could finally come to live in peace and harmony with its other creatures.

But I soon learned that none among the Noldor retained anymore the strength of will to leave Valinor. They were enthralled to it only little less than the Vanyar, who had fully and finally succumbed to its embrace. I despaired of the Noldor then, thinking them a doomed people. But then I chanced to meet their Prince Fëanor.

Indeed Fëanor was as enchanted by Valinor as the other Noldor, but unlike them he possessed a great skill to work the elements of Endor brought as playthings to Valinor by the Ainur. Pretty jewels did he fashion from dull rocks, even only for pleasure and present. And so an idea began to shape itself before me. I led then Fëanor to Telperion and Laurelin in their ever-radiant beauty. "Think, O Prince," I

said, “of the jewels you could create if you could but capture within them the light of these trees.” And to Telperion and Laurelin I also whispered: that if they would but heed Melkor now, their suffering might soon come to a merciful end.

Then I held aloft before them three small stones which I had taken from the refuse of Endor allowed to the Noldor, and before us Telperion and Laurelin sent together their light into each in turn. I handed then the dull stones to Fëanor. “Work these now with all the skill you can summon,” I said, “and behold the Silmarilli that come forth from within them.”

I left Fëanor to this work, the far end of which I could see better than he.

And yet again, Sauron, I thought upon the curse of Yavanna. Telperion and Laurelin were not mere images dreamed by the Valar; they were living creatures, like the Quendi, of the substance of Endor, fashioned into these their fair forms by the arts of Yavanna. Then whence came the light they then gave? There must, I reasoned, somewhere else in Aman be a withdrawing of that same light, an equally-endless, aching consume to balance the two trees and feed them. At first I wondered of Mandos, but dismissed it, for it was clearly an illusion of Valinor.

I sought the memories of Yavanna, then, and discovered that to create the two trees she had taken two small sprigs of wood from Endor to commence them. And upon one of the sprigs had been resting a tiny spider, which Yavanna also brought back with her to Aman. As her spells wrought the sprigs into the two gigantic trees, flowing forth light, they acted also upon the little spider, and it also grew with the trees. As they were cursed with an endless need to give light, so the spider was cursed to demand it. And that, Sauron, was the origin of Ungoliant.

Yavanna upraised her trees near to Valmar, but Ungoliant she banished to the most distant reaches of Aman in the south, where this unhappy creature lived in anguish and hunger equal to those of the trees to which she was eternally enslaved, as they to her. The Valar rejoiced in Telperion and Laurelin, but Ungoliant they abandoned from their thoughts, and for all the ages of Valinor she suffered in the vast caverns of the Hyarmentir⁴⁷, alone, forgotten, and knowing not why she had come to this terrible torment.

Southward I journeyed, through Yavanna’s Pastures, through Oromë’s Woods, to the Hyarmentir. And therein, after long searching, I found Ungoliant. Great in size though she was, the poor creature cowered before me, seeing me only as yet another of those beings who had caused her such misery, and doubtless fearing some new pain to be inflicted upon her. I comforted her then, and promised her that her long and dreadful ordeal would soon be at an end.

⁴⁷ *Hyarmentir*: The high mountain at the southern extreme of the Pelóri.

It was a time of festival in Valinor, when all the Valar and their vassal Maiar and Quendi traveled to the palace of Manwë upon Taniquetil for revelry and orgy. Valmar stood empty, and beyond it the two trees upon the hill of Ezollahar. There I now came, bringing with me Ungoliant. Between the trees we were now, and the tension between them and Ungoliant, barely endurable at the far distances decreed by Yavanna, was now beyond bearing. Neither trees nor spiders can give voice, else such a scream would have come from the three of them to terrify all of Arda.

And so, Sauron, I stretched forth my will as the first and most potent of the Valar, and shattered the binding spells of Yavanna, and brought Ungoliant to each Telperion and Laurelin, and as she touched them, their light flowed softly back into her, and her darkness softly into them. Their torments drained away, and from each came a silent prayer to me for the mercy I had brought to them. And then I looked at the ground before me, and there rested upon it only two little sprigs together with a tiny spider. Carefully I lifted these to my breast, where I sheltered them. To Endor I would take them, to their home, where at last they could grow and live as they had been meant to do.

But I had more to do ere I quit this cursed land for Endor. Valinor was now plunged into darkness, bereft of the light of the trees, and back to Valmar from Taniquetil came the surprised and bewildered Valar. Through the Golden Gates they ran, only to see an empty hill where the trees had stood. I watched them, curious of their sentiment. And I saw only anger that their light had gone from them, nothing more. I turned my face from them in disgust.

Prince Fëanor had now finished his Silmarils, and as the Valar gathered in their Máhanaxar to wonder of their next course, he arrived in the Circle with them. As I had supposed, they blazed with the captured light from the vanished trees. While they did not reach all of Valinor as had the trees, they did indeed light the city of Valmar, and for this Manwë now demanded them of their creator.

But I had chosen Fëanor well. Of all the Noldor he had retained the most of his will, and the threat to wrest the greatest jewels of his artistry from him wrenched him finally free from his thralldom to the Ainur. He stood before Manwë and refused him the Silmarils, then turned from the thrones of the Valar and went forth to his home at Formenos. And there Melkor awaited him.

There lives not one of the Quendi to withstand the Eye of Melkor, and so Fëanor stood helpless as I took the Silmarils from him. I stretched out my hand to the east. "There, Prince Fëanor, lies Endor, the true home of your people. Alone you had lost the strength of will to lead them hence, but these three little jewels you will now seek unceasingly, exhorting the Noldor to attend you. To Endor I shall take these gems. Follow and free your people from living death in this place." Then I turned away from him, to quit forever the evil-cursed dream-realm of Valinor.



Melkor, after his injury by Fulkas and imprisonment in Mandos, cradles Telperion, Laurelin, and Ungoliant as the spells of Yavanna dissolve into mist.

The Fourth Scroll Sauron to Pallando

Melkor returned to Endor to consider the rebuilding of Utumno, but found it utterly in ruin. Nor could he bear to unearth the hall wherein he had witnessed the death of his beloved Ulbandi. Instead he wished to build an even stronger fastness, so anchored to the depths of Arda that, were Tulkas to threaten it, the Valar would risk all the world in catastrophe, even to Aman itself. And so we built Thangorodrim above the remains of Angband.

As for the Silmarils, Pallando, I am amused that the Quendi have spun such fables about them in their *Silmarillion*. Melkor was said to covet them greedily, and to be burned by them for his theft of them from Fëanor. I saw them, and like Melkor handled them with no pain whatever, nor did he regard them as aught but a means to force the Noldor free from their enthrallment to the Ainur of Valinor and see them return to Endor, which of course is what transpired. But no, that is not quite true: He also saw in them a memory and memento of those three unhappy creatures, Telperion, Laurelin, and Ungoliant, whom he had rescued from their living deaths in accursed Valinor.

Indeed soon after Melkor returned to Endor, he bade Kosomot and myself accompany him to a secluded grove in the Woods of Núath, far from Thangorodrim so as to be safe from any threat that might come against it. Melkor knelt, then, and from his breast drew two small sprigs, to one of which, as he showed us carefully, clung a tiny spider. The sprigs he then gently planted in the rich soil of Endor, and as we prepared to depart, we could see the spider beginning to weave its little web between their sprouting branches. Melkor took off his crown with the three Silmarils then, and held it for a moment before the spider, which paused in its work and bowed to him, then went back to its weaving.

I shall not weary you with the story of the Noldor's return to Endor, which they recorded in their *Silmarillion*. It was a long, sad tale of murder, treachery, suffering, and war among themselves, so near to their exhaustion in Endor as to pose no threat to Thangorodrim. Melkor sought several times, both openly and by secret influence, to guide them to peace, but all these efforts met with failure. Then the later Children of Eru Ilúvatar awoke in Endor, the Atani⁴⁸, and these in their turn made war against the Quendi until both were close to their extinction. Only then, when Eärendil, a child of both their races, sailed in despair to Valinor to beg the Valar to save them, did Manwë elect to come again to Endor.

⁴⁸ *Atani*: "The Second People" [after the Elves], also *Edain*: the race of Men.

Manwë's intent was both boon to the Quendi and Atani, and doom to Thangorodrim. He proposed to assault the fortress of Melkor such that we would be forced to venture forth against him, whereupon he would admonish both the Quendi and the Atani that the Valar faced defeat, and Endor destruction with them, unless they joined their strength to that of Valinor. It was simple, practical, and tragically effective. Thangorodrim was breached and destroyed, and Melkor once again captured. This time he was not taken to Mandos, but removed from Arda to that not-universe in which he had first come into being. To the Valar of Aman, and indeed to almost all of those who had survived the devastation of Thangorodrim, it seemed that Melkor was beyond the dead, forever.

O Pallando, attend most carefully to what I now tell you.

As the final assault on Thangorodrim began, Melkor drew me aside, and bade me follow him down a secret way to the deepest caverns of the Ered Engrin. Finally he halted. He turned to me. "Sauron, Thangorodrim is lost, and I am to be cast from Arda, even from the universe in which it exists, never to return. This I see from Manwë's thoughts, though I deem him too intent on his attack now to see mine. Or yours, great Maia and beloved friend. You must survive to bring to Endor, and to any of our peoples who survive, the wisdom and understanding that only the kin of Melkor have come to know, and should ever be free to know. Remain in this secret place now, and let the storm above pass by you. When it is over, and if aught remains of Endor thereafter, come up to it, and return life to it as best you may. Perhaps with the beyond-death of Melkor, the Valar of Arda will finally quit Endor forever."

He would then have left me to return to the battle above, but I delayed him.

"O Melkor, if this indeed be your fate, so let me offer now to you this hope, that perchance may be to you as that which you brought to the creatures of the Silmarils. A Maia of Melkor I am now, but once was I a Maia of Aulë, and deep secrets I know of the bindings of Arda." I drew forth a small vial, then a sharp blade. "Three rays of light you used to create the Silmarils. Three drops of your blood, then, give to me now. Through my arts, in which I may evoke the very soul of this world, I shall bring any surviving peoples here to me through rings of power, taught and gifted to them by me. But all this, as well as it may serve them, but prepares the way for a final ring, a One Ring to bring and command them all. Yet even in this is it not fulfilled, for when it is forged, into it shall I let fall those three drops. Then, O Melkor, once it has gathered all the others to itself and thus completed union with the soul of Arda, it shall reach out and find you, draw you then back to this universe, this world, which then may finally be a peaceful and beautiful place."

Without a word he bared his arm to me, and I drew lightly across it with the dagger. Three drops of blood I caught in the vial. But as I was about to close it, three more drops fell into it. I looked up then, and saw that they were his tears - the only ones, Pallando, I had ever seen from his eyes, despite the many sorrows visited upon him.

Melkor left me then, and I have never seen him again since that parting.

Now, O my brother Pallando, you alone other than Sauron know the true secret of the One Ring: why it came to be, and why I desire so to find it. I leave you now: Think well and with care upon all that you have learned here.

The Fifth Scroll King Angmar to Pallando⁴⁹

Blue Wizard, I am asked by Sauron to tell you of such matters of the Second Age of Arda as bear upon the quest he has set before you. Fear me not; the terror of my presence is only for those of Middle-earth who stand between my company and the return of the One Ring.

It is known to you that the Second Age commenced upon the fall of Thangorodrim and the destruction of western Beleriand, whereafter only this lesser land of Middle-earth remained above the waters of Belegaer.⁵⁰ Further that in the thirty-second year of that Age, in compense for the service of Men in the assault against Melkor, the Valar of Aman raised from the depths of Belegaer an island for them, Andor⁵¹, whereupon they created the kingdom of Númenor. Further that Númenor endured and prospered for over three thousands of years⁵² and twenty-five ruling kings and queens. Further that during the reign of the last and greatest king, Ar-Pharazôn, Númenor sent a fleet of invasion to Middle-earth, which it had for many years raided and pillaged. It was the wish of Ar-Pharazôn to finally conquer all this land, henceforth to be of the Empire of Númenor.

Middle-earth at the beginning of the Second Age was a broken and stricken land. Its surviving peoples were few, scattered, and exhausted of war and terror. For five hundred years Sauron wandered among these, carefully imparting to them crafts to better their lives. Wary he was of giving knowledge beyond their wisdom to use it safely and to the healing of all of Middle-earth, which had suffered so grievously throughout the First Age. As Manwë sent his Maia Eönwë often to search for Sauron, for he had not been found at Thangorodrim, Sauron put aside his true name, and was called by dwellers in this land Annatar⁵³, Father of Gifts.

⁴⁹ *King Angmar*: In the beginning of the Third Age he and the other eight bearers of the Nine Rings gathered to them many faithful survivors of the Downfall of Númenor who had escaped to Eriador. They founded a city, *Carn Dûm* ("Red Darkness") at the northwest joining of the *Ered Mithrin* (Grey Mountains) and the *Hithaeglir* (Misty Mountains), which became known as *Angmar* ("House of Iron"). Soon that name was given to its fearsome "witch-king" as well. He was also known as the *Herumorgul* ("Lord of the Black Arts") and First among the *Nazgûl* or *Úlairi*, the "Ring-Sorcerers", called by later beings of Middle-earth "Ringwraiths".

⁵⁰ *Belegaer*, "the Sundering Seas", west of Middle-earth, east of Aman. During the Second Age Belegaer remained "unbent", thus all ships could travel across its entire span between the two great lands.

⁵¹ *Andor*, "Land of Gift", also known as *Elenna* ("Starwards"), *Anadûne* ("Westernesse"), and in the speech of the High Elves *Númenóre*.

⁵² Númenor's history dates from the coronation of its first king, Elros Tar-Minyatur, in the city of Armenelos, SA 32, to its destruction by Eru Ilúvatar in SA 3319, or 3,287 years in the measure of Middle-earth.

⁵³ From the Quenya *anna* (gift, as in *Yavanna*) and *atar* (father, as in *Ilúvatar*).

But by the six hundredth year the ships of Númenor finally reached Middle-earth, first in seeming friendship, but then to take for themselves land and outposts along its coasts. Those who had lived there fled ever inland to escape this new peril. Counsel of Annatar they sought, but he knew of the might of Númenor, and of the power of the Valar underlying it. He dreaded a third return of the Valar, for he feared that Middle-earth, broken as it twice was, could not survive again. So Annatar advised all who came to him to quit Eriador and the south-western coastlands, and flee into the east behind the Hithaeglr⁵⁴, for he reasoned that the seafaring Númenoreans would have neither the resources nor the will to venture that far inland, and over such mountains. For hundreds more of years this counsel was well-given, for although the Númenoreans ever increased their raids and their outposts along the coast, still they remained west of the Hithaeglr.

Annatar, weary of his tasks and ever-fearful of the hunts of the Maiar for Sauron, searched also for a refuge, a place so barren and forsaken that none would ever think to search there. Crossing eastward the River Anduin in the thousandth year⁵⁵, he came upon the Ephel Dúath⁵⁶, and found beyond them the desert which you and I still see beyond this Tower. At its center a great volcano⁵⁷, perhaps the most violent in all of Arda, and therein the reason for the desolation of the surrounding land: it was completely covered in black rock and ash from the fires of that mountain. *Mordor*, Annatar named it then, the Black Land. And in this terrible place, he dared hope, he could finally find escape from those who hunted him.

But beyond Mordor, beyond the western mountains, the power and greed of Númenor continued to grow, and Annatar knew that it would not be content with the coasts, but would extend ever further to the inlands, and finally through what is now called the Gap of Rohan to all the lands of the Anduin. He deemed therefore to travel westward again⁵⁸ to the strongest realms of the Elves and Dwarves yet remaining, to encourage in them sufficient defense to discourage Númenor. To the Elven-King Gil-galad in Lindon he went first, but in his pride and blindness Gil-galad refused even an audience to such a humble teacher of arts and crafts. Annatar fared no better with his kin Galadriel and Celeborn, who could see no further than their petty quarrels with the Dwarves of Khazad-dûm.

⁵⁴ *Hithaeglr*: “Misty Peaks”, the central mountain-range running north-south through Middle-earth, bounded at the north by the *Ered Mithrin* (“Grey Mountains”), and at the south by the Gap of Rohan.

⁵⁵ The year SA 1000.

⁵⁶ *Ephel Dúath*, “Mountains of Shadow”, the range forming the western and southern borders of Mordor, and connecting at its northwest corner with the *Ered Lithui* (“Ash Mountains”) which formed its northern border.

⁵⁷ *Orodruin* (“Mountain of Red Flame”), from the Quenya *orod* (mountain) and *ruin* or *rúnya* (‘red flame’), known to the later beings of the Third Age as “Mount Doom”.

⁵⁸ In the year SA 1200.

In despair Annatar turned away towards Mordor, but one Elf from the court of Ost-in-Edhil came after him and begged that he come to Eregion, a realm of Elves beyond the West Gate of Khazad-dûm⁵⁹. Celebrimbor⁶⁰ was his name, and of all the Elves in Middle-earth he came nearest to saving his entire race from the extinction now close before them, though then he knew it not. “I am neither king nor warrior,” he said, “but as yourself merely an artist and sculptor of fine metals and gems for both their usefulness and beauty. Little strength have these hands of mine, perhaps, but may their skill in some small way help to save my people?”

Annatar gazed at this slight Elf with wry bemusement for a moment, then, of a sudden, respect. He grasped Celebrimbor’s hands in his own, felt them, felt the genius within them. “Yes!” he said then. “Where force of arms falters at need, a more subtle mastery may yet prevail. Let us hence to your home, O worthy Elf; and if you have friends among the Dwarves who also have such hands, summon them too, for I will impart to you skills beyond your dreams!”

That teaching was neither easy nor brief, Blue Wizard. Three hundred years it demanded, and only then were the smiths of Celebrimbor and Narvi ready for their work: They fashioned under the guiding of Annatar seven rings woven about with magic and spells. “These,” said Annatar to Narvi, “take into Khazad-dûm to the greatest of your lords. Trifling gifts they may seem, yet will they enable their wearers to see the dangers before all Dwarves of Middle-earth, and in alliance with other such rings, prevail against them.”

Nine more rings did they then forge, also enchanted through many days and nights of song and touch, and these Annatar took to himself. “Neither Elves nor Dwarves may visit the Men for whom these are destined,” he said, “for they dwell in far-off Númenor itself. If that realm is not to destroy yours, it must come about by wisdom and sight among their greatest as well as your own. I myself must find the way to gift them, and so I shall.”

Then Narvi departed with his seven rings, and Annatar made ready to leave with his nine. “But,” said Celebrimbor, “what then of the Elves? Are we not to join in this great quest? Have I learned and labored these hundreds of years only to see my own kind abandoned?”

⁵⁹ The West Gate of *Khazad-dûm* (“Moria”), famous in *The Lord of the Rings* for the Fellowship’s entrance, bore the inscription *Im Narvi haiun echant: Celebrimbor o Eregion teithant i thiw hin* (“I, Narvi, made them. Celebrimbor of Eregion inscribed them.”).

⁶⁰ Celebrimbor, (“The Silver-Handed One”), son of Curufin, the fifth son of Fëanor. Of all the Elven-smiths he was closest in friendship to the Dwarves of *Khazad-dûm*, hence his work with their own greatest artist, Narvi, upon its West Gate.

Annatar smiled. “No, Celebrimbor. For it is to you, most noble Elf, that I have given full measure of my skill in this craft. Three rings are you to make now, for the greatest of your race. The Quendi are not like all the other beings of Middle-earth: Your life and strength spring from the very heart of Arda itself. You are indeed the spirits of all that makes this world a thing of beauty and delight within the universe. Such rings wrought for you, therefore, can never be touched by others. From their creation to their end, they must grace Elven-hands alone.”⁶¹

“But surely you, O my teacher Annatar -” “No, not even I may lay hand upon them, or gather the strange and rare things from which you bring them to life, or sing about them the Songs of Power I have taught you, beyond all others, these many years. These rings you alone, O Celebrimbor, must make. Fail not! Or despite all the strength of the Nine and the Seven, the Quendi shall surely disappear from Middle-earth.”

The Elf quailed. “Who are you to see such visions? How is it that you can teach to me such magic, O aged one?”

“Ask all else of me, dear Elf, but allow me to leave you now, nameless as when you first saw me three hundreds of years ago. Hear only these words, nor forget them in this your greatest work:

“*Narya* is the first Elven-ring to be named: The Life of Fire.
Nenya is the second Elven-ring to be named: The Life of Water.
Vilya is the third Elven-ring to be named: The Life of Air.

“It is with these three wonders, O Elf, that Arda gives all life to her children. It was by them that the Quendi were first awakened in ancient Cuiviénen. They alone, and together, can now save you. Therefore fashion the Three with reverence, and entrust them as they themselves dream to you. Begin then; this greatest of all the quests of the Quendi is the Doom of Celebrimbor.”

Annatar departed then, and the Elf began the task fated to him. Ninety years he wrought them, journeyed to the far-reaches of Middle-earth for the one stone that each demanded of him, evoked from each its secret fire, and throughout the spell-songs taught him by Annatar, and in the magic of their creation by the very rings themselves, he found in each the form it desired and fashioned it into the life of Arda.

⁶¹ Despite this admonition, Círdan would later give the Red Ring, *Narya*, to Gandalf the Grey, who was not an Elf but a Maia. Either Sauron’s statement to Celebrimbor was merely to ensure that the Three would be safeguarded by the Elves, or *Narya* lost some or all of its power when given to Gandalf.

Then, as though within a vision, Celebrimbor took each to its intended bearer: Narya to Círdan in Mithlond⁶², Narya to Galadriel in Lórien, Vilya to Gil-galad in Lindon. Each wondered at this strange gift, yet accepted it without hesitation or question. Then each of the Three, upon its chosen hand, spoke to its bearer of its secret magics.

Four hundreds of years Annatar had dwelled in Eregion, teaching the Rings to Celebrimbor and Narvi. Now he came at last home to Mordor, but his own work was not yet complete. The greatest and most wondrous doom of his life appeared now before him.

There, to Orodruin he went. From here you can see the glow from its close side, and that is Sammath Naur⁶³. Within one can gaze down into the very heart of Arda itself. And for what he now set to do, Sauron - for in this place his true name was laid bare - was so summoned.

Here in this place the power and presence of Arda reigned, to the eclipse of all who lived above, upon, or under it. It flowed and pulsed and surged, consuming all else in liquid fire. Only the crags of Orodruin, hardened through unnumbered years, could withstand it. Here Sauron stood, and upheld one last ring, which he himself had wrought in secret throughout all the years in Eregion, weaving into it the spellsongs of all of the Nine and Seven rings, and those of the Three finally taught to Celebrimbor. A simple circle of gold was this last ring, unsculptured and unjeweled. It rested now in the hand of its maker, cold and lifeless.

Sauron drew then from his breast a small vial, opened it with great care, and allowed that which it held to fall upon the ring, into which it was slowly absorbed. And now the ring was no longer dead. It began to glow, dimly at first, then ever more brightly until the light from it danced with that of the molten blood of Arda. Then Sauron began to sing his final spell:

“Into this Ring infused with the essence of Melkor, I summon the lifebreath of Arda, that by its nourishment the Ring may become a gateway. Then shall Melkor return from the æthyrs of lost time and unmeasured space to this true time, this true place. A Vala within the circles of Eru Ilúvatar shall he then be again, yet still Melkor Isolate, his flesh of the very flesh of Arda, his blood this blood of Arda, his eternity that of all throughout Eä which in this place is Arda. So I, Sauron, sing this. So, O Arda, hear it, and accept then this One Ring.”

⁶² *Mithlond*, where the river *Lhûn* or *Lune* meets the Gulf of *Lune* between the *Ered Luin* (“Blue Mountains”) of westernmost Eriador, known to the later beings of the Third Age as the “Grey Havens”.

⁶³ *Sammath Naur*, (“Chambers of Fire”), known to the later beings of the Third Age as the Crack of Doom.



Ardagarneya: The Life of Earth, Blood, and Tears

Sauron then cast the ring into the heart of the seething furnace before him. And watched.

From the vast depths of the pit before him, a column of liquid fire began to emerge. Higher and higher, through the gaping chasms of Orodruin it rose, coiling in and around itself, sending out jets of spectral brilliance as glorious heralds of its ascent. Up towards the jagged stone upon which Sauron stood it came, and now he saw within it the ring. A thing of solid metal no longer, it danced and sang amidst the magnificent flames about it, merging into them, gliding back into itself; and about it blazing waves of light and music which reached finally a crescendo of such intensity and ecstasy that Sauron fell before it, senseless.

How long he remained thus he did not know, but awakened to find the column of fire returned to its depths, and the ring on the smoldering stone before him. It crackled and hummed with life, and through it rippled radiant tongues of fire. Sauron held it up then, and enchanted to it the culmination of its spellsong:

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

As he uttered each word, the deep flames within the ring rose to receive it, wreathing it into glowing letters upon its surface, and finally running without and within its entire form. Then the ring gradually faded and cooled, until it was again but a simple circle of gold, resting quietly within Sauron's hand.

He returned then to his home, whose humble foundations underlie this tower we of his company would later build for him above it: Barad-dûr.

Sauron, however, did not then put on the One Ring. He knew that if all the rings were to blend their powers to bring sympathy and peace to Middle-earth, they must all be in the possession of their destined Bearers. And as yet the Nine remained ungiven. To no lesser Men of Middle-earth did Sauron intend them, but for the Masters of Westeros themselves: the Lords of the seven Lands of Númenor, the High Priest of the Meneltarma⁶⁴, and the High King of them all.

For sixteen hundreds of years did Sauron await his time.⁶⁵ Hard were these years in Middle-earth, for its nations fought unceasingly among themselves, hating and fearing one another for their differences in appearance, culture, and manner. And ever more often came the raiding-ships from Númenor, extending their force along all the coasts, and soon all under the rule of two great harbors and fortresses,

⁶⁴ *Meneltarma*: The highest mountain of Númenor, sacred to Eru Ilúvatar. After the Downfall, only its peak remained above the waves of the Belegaer.

⁶⁵ From SA 1600, when the One Ring was forged, to 3261, when King Ar-Pharazôn finally landed in Middle-earth at Umbar.

Pelargir, at the mouth of the River Anduin⁶⁶ and Umbar, further south along the coast of Harad.⁶⁷

Only Mordor, protected by its mountains and by ever-increasing numbers of the children and grand-children of those who had survived the downfall of Utumno, Angband, and Thangorodrim, remained safe and apart from these punishing wars. But even for that Sauron was cursed by those without, for they blamed him as the engineer of their strife, if only because he and his folk lived seemingly so secure from it.

Finally, as Sauron knew must come, a Númenorean king embarked for Middle-earth with the greatest fleet ever to venture from that island, for the purpose not only of finally conquering all of the western lands from the Belegaer to the Anduin, but of storming Mordor itself. That king was Ar-Pharazôn the Golden, and he landed his great army at Umbar, intending to sweep through Mordor from its unprotected east, then to march through all of Middle-earth to the northernmost Númenorean outpost by the Gulf of Lune. An entire year did Ar-Pharazôn encamp at Umbar, gathering and preparing his forces for this most devastating of all wars upon Middle-earth.

From Mordor Sauron watched, and when he saw that Ar-Pharazôn had begun to move his vanguards through the desert of Harad towards Khand⁶⁸ in the east, he brought his own forces secretly through the Cirith Morgul⁶⁹, then swiftly southward through Ithilien⁷⁰ and Harondor to strike at the Númenoreans' unguarded flank. There by the River Harnen Sauron's army, by advantage of surprise and speed, fought Ar-Pharazôn's to a standstill. Yet Sauron knew that this was but a brief respite, ere the entire Númenorean army could finally turn back upon him. At the extent of his success, therefore, he sued for treaty.

⁶⁶ Pelargir was founded in SA 2280, but continued to grow in power and reach until the downfall of Númenor in 3319. Thereafter it was taken by those exiles faithless to the King, led by Elendil, who from it founded the realm of Gondor. In the earliest years of the Third Age the Númenorean faithful from Umbar, who sought to retain their seafaring mastery, bitterly contested Pelargir from the increasingly land-living Gondoreans. The precarious situation of this seaport finally led Gondor to move its throne upriver to a new city, Osgiliath.

⁶⁷ Umbar was also founded in SA 2280, and was the chief city of the Númenorean Faithful after the destruction of that island.

⁶⁸ *Khand*: The greatest desert of Middle-earth, to the east and south of Mordor.

⁶⁹ *Cirith Morgul*: "Pass of Sorcery", through the mid-point of the Ephel Dúath mountains along Mordor's western border, from the Plateau of Gorgoroth to Ithilien. The fortress-city of Minas Ithil was built at its western end. Adjacent to it was the much smaller and more precarious pass of Cirith Ungol ("Pass of the Spider"), through which Hobbits Frodo Baggins and Sam Gamgee would enter Mordor in TA 3019.

⁷⁰ *Ithilien*: The lowlands between the river Anduin on the west and the Ephel Dúath mountains (marking Mordor's western boundary) on the east.

Ar-Pharazôn came himself then, curious to see this strange being about whom he had heard such sinister rumor, and who had done such damage to his vast army with such a smaller one. He found Sauron not, as he had expected, an arrogant and cruel slavemaster, but in appearance a slight Man of calm and dignified bearing.

“Great King,” said Sauron, bowing before him, “You have seen that Mordor can defend itself well beyond its mountains, and even more so from behind them. You are an island people and do not know the perils and ordeal of the vast Khand desert, nor of the ash-covered plains of Nurn within Mordor. Strong as it is, your army would fall to exhaustion before even drawing near to Gorgoroth, from which I could easily vanquish its remnants. Let me rather propose this: that the armies of Mordor shall withdraw into its borders, pledging never again to assail any holding of Númenor in Middle-earth. And as surety for this, I shall surrender myself to you as hostage, for as long as you may desire it.”

Ar-Pharazôn’s plan of conquest had turned upon his first conquering Mordor, so that it could not be a threat behind him as he advanced northwestward through Middle-earth. He saw now that he could not succeed, but should instead remove to Númenor, there to consider more carefully such a venture. Perhaps, he thought, this singular Man standing before him could even counsel him to that end. Perhaps of him could be sought even a deeper counsel, one which he dared not seek of even his own court.

“Lord Sauron,” he replied, “You are wise in both your command of arms and your desire to prevent their use. From Númenor we have seen Middle-earth endlessly torn by wars not showing this wisdom, and we had thought now to bring them finally to an end, if only by our greater strength. But I sense in you knowledge of how such peace may come about otherwise, and a fool I should be to disdain it. I accept your offer, and your valiant army may return to its home without fear or threat. We shall then return to Númenor for our deliberation, and indeed the Lord Sauron shall sail with us, not as a hostage but as an honored guest of my house.”

Thus it was that Sauron journeyed to Númenor, taking with him only nine jeweled rings. The One he left secure in Barad-dûr, for it was to be awakened only when all the others were received and alive, and then when it was itself aligned to Orodruin, the source of its strength.

I often wonder, Blue Wizard, at how little of Númenor was known either to the Ainur in Valinor or to the several races and realms of Middle-earth. Had it been otherwise, that island might still be above the waves of the Belegaer today, nor Beleriand itself broken. The Men of Númenor had, in their three thousands of years as a culture, grown beyond the Men, Elves, Dwarves, and other beings here, and indeed beyond also the Valar in Aman themselves.

Before you disbelieve, for I see that you would, remember that the Elves, beautiful of form and immortal upon Arda as they may be, are yet thus bounded in their existence. As for the Valar, while they may bend and hurt this world mightily, still dare they not but as allowed by Eru Ilúvatar, to whose mindless, changeless service they are eternally enthralled, save only one.

But we Dúnedain - for indeed I am Númenorean - discovered that, though our lives be limited on this world, neither are our bodies entwined with it as the Elves and Dwarves. We Men are not thus imprisoned to it, but by our will may continue beyond it through all dimensions and distances of the universe. Nor are our minds condemned never to venture beyond that of Eru Ilúvatar, as are those of the Ainur - save only one. Indeed, Blue Wizard, as you are of the Maiar, I speak here beyond your own ability to comprehend. But this that you cannot understand is the Gift and Doom of Men, and that is what Númenor learned, and that is why the Valar feared, and destroyed, Númenor.

It began during the reign of Tar-Meneldur⁷¹. He looked not to counsels of men, nor to fear of the Valar, nor to worship of Eru Ilúvatar for the truth, but rather sought it in Eä⁷² itself. A tower taller even than Barad-dûr he caused to be built in the Forostar⁷³, atop its highest mountain Sorontil, and from its heights studied the positions, relations, and movement of the firmament. After years of measurement, comparison, and reflection, he came to the understanding that Eru Ilúvatar was not indeed All, and that some things fashioned and ordered by him were also not entirely full-known to him.

Such discoveries Tar-Meneldur dared not voice openly, but wrote them instead in his own scrolls, which none but his successors might read. And for several reigns thereafter those scrolls slept in the vaults of the kings in Armenelos⁷⁴. They were discovered indeed only by Ar-Inziladûn⁷⁵, who was searching the reasons for what he saw as increasing restlessness of the Númenoreans under the laws of the Valar and the lore-teachings of the Elves. He feared not only the rebellion of his own people if such energies could not be turned to the good, but also estrangement from the Elves, to whom he as his forefathers looked for the wisest of teaching and counsel. But most deeply he feared that the Valar, seeing such passions arising within this vassal realm of theirs, would finally take terrible retribution against it. In this Ar-Inziladûn was indeed far-sighted.

⁷¹ *Tar-Meneldur*: SA 543-942, the fifth King of Númenor, called *Elentirno* (“Star-Seer”). Númenoreans, and particularly the royal line (descended from Elros son of Eärendil), had life-spans many times those of Men of later Ages of Arda.

⁷² *Eä*: The universe of positive existence.

⁷³ *Forostar*: The northern peninsula of Númenor.

⁷⁴ *Armenelos*: The royal city of Númenor, located on a hill to the east of the Meneltarma, in the Arandor (“King’s Land”) region.

⁷⁵ *Ar-Inziladûn*: SA 3035-3255, the 24th King of Númenor, called [*Tar-*] *Palantir* (“Far-Seer”).

What Ar-Inziladûn learned from the scrolls of Tar-Meneldur alarmed him deeply: that the behavior of his people was no mere failure of teaching or order, but rather of the innermost essence of Menkind, a wildness and ambition beyond all the laws, and all the other beings, of Arda. That the Valar had not yet punished Númenor he also understood, for this strange element in Men was beyond even their comprehension. Its symptoms, of course, were not; so Ar-Inziladûn knew that Númenor's safety was in ever more imminent peril.

Near to his own death, he considered his only child, the Princess Zimraphel. He had raised her, as himself, to love and to adhere with the greatest conscience to the ways of the Valar and Elves. As queen she would certainly continue this, perhaps to the appeasement of those beings, yet inevitably to the dissolution of Númenor into anarchy by a force in the souls of its people of which they were not even aware. This Ar-Inziladûn could not countenance without his dying effort to avert it.

He summoned then to him his nephew Pharazôn, whom he judged ablemost in mind and strongest of will, and revealed to him the scrolls of Tar-Meneldur. "You may not seek refuge in our ancient laws," said the King. "Despite my daughter's claim, you must take the throne for yourself, and from it attain for Númenor both release from its soul-prison and safety from Valinor. Against these tasks your own life, as mine, is forfeit. You may be remembered as the greatest of the kings, or as the most reviled. Banish that from your thought. Swear to me, on the hilt of *Aranrûth*⁷⁶, that you will do this, and save Númenor from its greatest peril."

And that, Blue Wizard, was why Ar-Pharazôn determined to conquer all of Middle-earth. For Númenor to have remained fixed upon itself, he deemed, would have torn it asunder. It seemed to him that the invasion of all of Middle-earth might expend these energies that he still sought fully to comprehend, as well to bring a final peace to that distant land so sorely in need of it. We shall never know whether that was a decision of wisdom or folly, because Ar-Pharazôn's invasion was postponed upon his meeting with Sauron.

Upon their arrival in Númenor, Ar-Pharazôn watched curiously and carefully the manner of his strange new guest. Sauron, he deduced, had some interest in this land which he did not as yet divulge. Over the years he visited with each of the eight of the king's Council: the Lords of the seven Lands and the High Priest of the Meneltarma. But he seemed unconcerned with their power or wealth; his interest was only in their character and strength of will.

⁷⁶ *Aranrûth*: The sword of the throne of Númenor, originally of Elwë, Elven-King of the Lindar in Beleriand. Elwë was the only being of Arda ever to marry one of the Ainur, the Maia Melian, who created and enchanted *Aranrûth*. After Elwë was slain in Menegroth by the Dwarves, *Aranrûth* passed to Dior, son of Beren and Luthien, and upon his death to his daughter Elwing, who married Eärendil. She then gave it to her son Elros upon his becoming the first king (Tar-Minyatur) of Númenor in SA 32.

Finally Ar-Pharazôn decided to press this mystery. He called his Council together, and brought Sauron before it.⁷⁷ Each then told of the visits paid, and questions put to him, and remarkably they were much the same. “Well then, Lord Sauron,” said the king. “Here we had thought Númenor to make use of you, but it is you who seem to intend Númenor to your ends. Pray tell us what they are.”

Sauron said, “O King, for many years Númenor was known to Middle-earth only as a threat to what of life still clung to it, and so I concerned myself only with lessening that threat. Peace I wished to bring to both our lands. Thus I awaited your coming, and thus I sought to return here with you.

“But I see now that there is a danger greater to Númenor than even to Middle-earth. Here the race of Men is most awakened, and so its life beyond this world has begun to shine forth. This you have seen only as a strange unrest within your people. But soon, if not yet, it shall become apparent to the Elves of Middle-earth, and so thereafter to the Valar. They will not look upon this with favor.”

“By what sight,” said Gothmog⁷⁸, the High Priest of the Meneltarma, “do you claim to see this higher awakening of Men so clearly, when you are but one of us yourself?”

“Indeed I am not a Man,” answered Sauron, “but only appear one: I am a Maia. But fear not, for my allegiance is not to Valinor. I live alone in Middle-earth.”

Gothmog then arose and turned to Ar-Pharazôn. “O King, I fear we are in greater danger than if all the Valar were here present. This Sauron, whom we thought simply a rogue chieftain of Men in Middle-earth, cannot be other than that Maia, whom the Elves called Gorthaur⁷⁹, rumored to have escaped the ruin of Thangorodrim. He is a Maia of none other than Morgoth⁸⁰.”

“Is this so?” Ar-Pharazôn said to Sauron. “Morgoth, as we have learned from the Elves, was the most terrible and monstrous enemy of not only the Valar, but of Eru Ilúvatar himself. Are you indeed the emissary of this greatest of all evils?”

⁷⁷ This took place in SA 3310. Sauron had now been resident in Númenor for 48 years.

⁷⁸ *Gothmog*: The only one of the Nazgûl named in Tolkien. Curiously, he shared his name with a Balrog of the First Age, Sauron’s captain at Angband.

⁷⁹ *Gorthaur*: “The Cruel”, curse-name given to Sauron by the Elves of Beleriand during the First Age.

⁸⁰ *Morgoth*: “The Black Enemy”, curse-name given to Melkor by Fëanor upon his taking of the Silmarils in Valinor. It was commonly used by the Elves of Beleriand during the First Age.

“Evil is Melkor, evil am I his Maia,” said Sauron, “only if that same fire that burns now within each of you is evil. Melkor’s evil was his awareness of isolation from all else about him, and his wish and will to act with that perfect freedom. For that and that alone was he feared and rejected by the other Valar; for that also I sought him and swore myself to him. And now, in the High Men of Númenor, I see it once again awakened: this time in creatures born of Arda rather than of the spaces beyond it. That is what the Valar will soon know. That is why they will seek to destroy Númenor as they did Utumno, Angband, and Thangorodrim, leaving only lesser, unawakened Men in Middle-earth to remain their vassals. Ar-Pharazôn, my Lords, I need not argue this truth, only utter it; each of you sees it as clearly, as inescapably for himself.”

“It seems, O Maia,” said Gothmog, “that Númenor is just as inescapably fated for destruction. If we do nothing, we simply postpone the wrath of Valinor against us. But what other course can be considered? Surely you do not suggest that we rise against the Valar. We are a strong nation, and a valiant one; nevertheless we are but Men and cannot hope to contend against the Ainur.”

“I will now answer the question earlier put to me,” said Sauron. “I came here thinking only of Middle-earth, but now I have concern for Númenor as well. A great spell I wrought against this moment, but I think it may now be put to even greater test.” He then took and laid before each of them the Nine Rings. “Into these rings, fashioned over hundreds of years in Eregion, is the power to order your own thought to its greatest perfection and power, and to extend this to those of your kind about you. But these nine are only a part of the magic. Seven of their kind are held by the Dwarf-Lords of Middle-earth, and three by the greatest of the High-Elves. And beyond all of these there is yet another ring, which I myself shall put on; and by it all the power of all the rings shall come together in the greatest focus of will ever brought to bear within this world. Shall Valinor stand against that? I cannot be certain. But I think very well not. And that is what Sauron offers to you. I can do no more.”

There was a long silence in the chamber of the Council then. Finally Ar-Pharazôn arose. He said, “Of this doom I was warned by Ar-Inziladûn upon his death-bed. He learned of it in the scrolls of his forefather Tar-Meneldur. I swore then upon this sword Aranrûth that I would defend Númenor to my death, and so I shall. If there is indeed a chance to stand against the Valar, it is, I deem, before us in these rings. Therefore I shall accept this one and such destiny as it bestows. If each of you, my Lords, will join with me in this, I will speak this oath to you: that if we succeed, glory upon us all; but if we fail, upon my crown alone shall it be.” He then took up the ring before him and placed it upon his finger.

Silently, each of the eight Lords of Númenor did likewise.

Sauron bowed then to them. “Then I must quit Númenor for Middle-earth and the One Ring within Barad-dûr, so that it may awaken all the Three, the Seven, and these Nine. For this greater task of the Rings, further spells must I bring to the One. Nine more years this will take, and so you must prepare Númenor to invade Valinor at that time. And know, O King,” he said, turning to Ar-Pharazôn, “that as you have sworn your life to this, so shall I myself. For to attempt this thing, the Rings must no longer reach only into the essence of the races of Arda, but into that of the Ainur. For that they must draw upon the life-force of one such, and against all of Valinor there is only myself. My existence upon Arda is therefore to be drawn into the One Ring. If our quest fails, I know not whether any part of me shall survive, but if so, I think never again one that may walk upon this world.”

Of what came to pass in that ninth year⁸¹, Blue Wizard, you, as a Maia of Valinor, know a part but again not all. Sauron took the One Ring again to Orodruin, and this time allowed his own soul to pass into it. The Númenoreans completed their greatest of fleets, and embarked their entire army to Aman. In this they prevailed, as Sauron foresaw, only through the combined power of the Rings. The island of Erresea⁸² they took, then the Calacirya, then the Elven-city of Tirion on Túna⁸³. Before them lay only Valmar itself, and Ar-Pharazôn dared hope that the next day he might be able to treat the safety of Númenor from the Valar themselves.

Until now the Valar had known nothing of the Rings. Upon hearing from Amandil, a Númenorean who had sailed to Aman to warn them of the invasion fleet, they had thought simply to sink it at sea. To their surprise they were unable to do so, nor thwart the landing at Erresea, nor again the march through the Calacirya to Tirion. In the Ring of Doom they gathered then in great alarm.

It was the Maia Curumo who came before them then. “Lords, this danger comes not from Númenor but from Middle-earth beyond. I am told by Elves recently arrived among us that under the guidance of a stranger named Annatar, they made three rings of astonishing power. Their teacher can only be Sauron, who learned such craft in the house of Aulë. If the wearers of those three rings can be made to remove them, their spell upon the Númenoreans may be lifted, and you can then destroy them, and their island, if that is your wish.”

Thereupon Manwë called to him all of the eagles that are his eyes throughout Arda, and sent them flying to Middle-earth, to the realms of the Elves there. Círdan they found in Mithlond, wearing the ring *Narya*. Galadriel they found in Lórien,

⁸¹ SA 3319.

⁸² *Erresea*: An island just off the east coast of Aman, opposite the Calacirya pass, inhabited only by Elves from Beleriand. Its principal city was Avalónnë, on its southern shore, whose lights had occasionally been visible from the western coast of Númenor.

⁸³ *Tirion*: Principal city of the Noldor in Valinor, atop the plateau Túna. Tirion had originally been named Kôr, and was perhaps the ancient inspiration for that city of H. Rider Haggard’s *She*.

wearing the ring *Nenya*. And Gil-galad they found in Lindon, wearing the ring *Vilya*. “It is the command of Manwë,” they said, “that you put off these rings instantly, else never again shall Elf be welcomed in Valinor.”

Upon the removal of the Three, the spell of the All was broken. Then arose the Valar in their wrath, and of an instant annihilated the entire army and fleet of Númenor. Then did Ulmo and Ossë sink all of Númenor beneath the Belegaer in a single day, so that all but a very few perished.

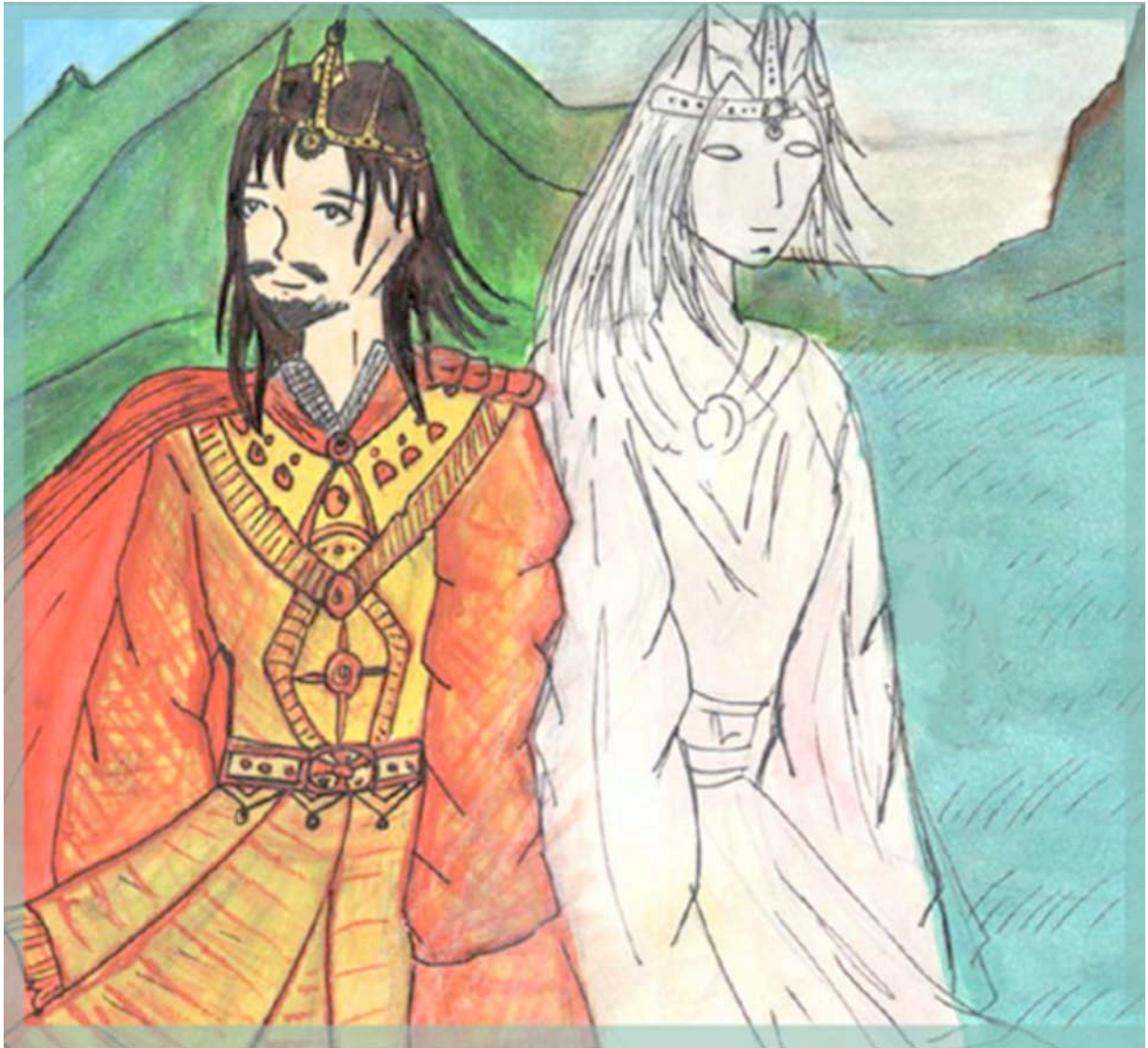
But nine of those who had set foot in Valinor did not wholly perish, for they were wearing the Nine Rings. Unlike anything else in Arda they became, for their Rings wove for them bodies of magic, through which they could still touch this world, if only as through a dream. And out of Aman the Nine Rings drew them, across the Belegaer, over the ruin of Númenor, across Middle-earth, to the One Ring, here, at Barad-dûr.

But as those of the Nine had lost forever their substance of Arda, so the withdrawing of the Three and the attack of the Valar upon the Nine had come back as well to the One. Sauron was torn from his body also into one only of magic, while his earthly form vanished into nothingness just as had those of the Nine.

And so, Blue Wizard, that is how I came to be what I am, this Wraith before you. My name? I failed in the trust given to me, and so I swore thereafter to remain nameless. Yet here is still my sword, Aranrûth: thus you may know who once I was.

Now I will leave you. Sauron sends me to Minas Tirith⁸⁴, there to contest yet another alliance of enemies who would again invade and destroy Mordor. I do not ask you to wish me well in this; whether I succeed or fail, it is merely more pain, more suffering, more death among Orcs, Men, Elves alike. It will only be well when I finally see an end of it, or it of me.

⁸⁴ To the Battle of the Pelennor Fields, where he who had once been Ar-Pharazôn the Golden, the last and greatest king of Númenor, was slain by Éowyn, Princess and Shieldmaiden of Rohan, on TA 3019, the Ides of March.



*Ar-Pharazôn the Golden, High King of Númenor,
before and after the invasion of Valinor*

The Sixth Scroll Sauron to Pallando

I see you have much to think on, my Brother. These are not the accounts you have heard from the Ainur, from the Elves? Then you must judge where the truth is to be found. But our time grows sudden, for even now the army of King Elessar⁸⁵ marches north through Ithilien towards the Morannon⁸⁶. Ar-Pharazôn, for I am now free to speak his true name, is finally at rest, though I fear no grave or monument will these invaders grant to even the few fragments that remained of his misfortuned life. In token of his triumph Elessar has sent me this [Sauron upholds the sword Aranrûth], though I daresay he would not had he recognized it. Well, perhaps I may return it to him in a better day.

An hundred years after the Downfall of Númenor⁸⁷, Mordor was besieged by the armies of the Elven-King Gil-galad⁸⁸ and the Man-King Elendil⁸⁹. Both kings I slew on Dagorlad⁹⁰, but then Isildur Elendil's son cut the One Ring from me, and the shape it had fashioned for my body fell to nothingness.

I then remember naught until I awakened again to see the nine Úlairi standing before me. We were, I learned, in the ruins of an ancient, abandoned castle in Eryn

⁸⁵ *Elessar*: “Elfstone”, the throne-name given by Olórin to Aragorn, 39th Heir of Isildur, the elder son of Elendil, who fled Númenor to the east upon the departure of its fleet to the west. Elendil was the son of Amandil, the last Lord of Andúnië, a city within the Land of Andustar that maintained the worship of the Valar and the primacy of the Elf-teachings until the Downfall. Upon arrival in Middle-earth, Elendil and his sons founded the exile realms of Arnor and Gondor. Although Aragorn was of the Arnorean line, he claimed the vacant kingship of Gondor through his direct descent from Elendil. The original Elfstone was a green jewel with healing powers, made in the First Age Elven-city of Gondolin for the daughter of Idril Turgon, who gave it to her son Eärendil.

⁸⁶ *Morannon*: “The Black Gate”, the outer northwestern gate to Mordor, positioned in the pass of Cirith Gorgor at the joining of the Ephel Dúath and the [northern boundary] Ered Lithui mountains. Behind the Morannon lay the extinct volcanic crater of Udûn, then the inner gate of Carach Angren (“Jaws of Iron”) in the pass of Isenmouthe, which in turn led to the Plateau of Gorgoroth (“Terror”), on which were located both Orodruin and Barad-dûr.

⁸⁷ Actually SA 3434, 115 years after the destruction of Númenor.

⁸⁸ *Gil-galad*: High King of the Noldor in Middle-earth in the Second Age, with his seat at Lindon in Eriador. Upon his slaying by Sauron, Elrond took from him and kept the Blue Ring Vilya, but in the same moment [unsuccessfully] counseled Isildur to destroy the One Ring. Had Elrond agreed to also destroy Vilya, it is possible that Isildur would have accepted his counsel.

⁸⁹ *Elendil*: Escaped with his two sons Isildur and Anárion from dying Númenor, and founded the exile kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor in Middle-earth.

⁹⁰ *Dagorlad*: “Battle Plain”, the lowlands before the Morannon.

Galen⁹¹, and after two thousands of years⁹² I had finally been returned through the power of their Nine Rings, which together were able to lend me the merest shadow of a semblance.

It had been a further time of sorrow for Middle-earth. There had been almost continuous warfare among its many inhabitants of all its races - and within them, as in the wars between Gondor and Harad. Also had the survivors been devastated by a great plague, worst in Gondor and Rhovanion⁹³, wherein over half their peoples had lost their lives.⁹⁴ The kingdoms of Angmar and Arnor had destroyed one another⁹⁵, and the Nazgûl had retreated to Mordor.

As for Mordor itself, while it had been spared the plague because of its arid climate, its surviving inhabitants had been no less afflicted, because the kings of the west had sealed its borders, dooming those within to near-starvation. Only by desperate raiding expeditions over the pass at Cirith Ungol, and by long caravans through the desert of Khand to northeastern Harad, whose rulers bore little love for Gondor, did they manage to endure at all. Finally, perceiving Gondor to be seriously weakened by both the plague and the cost of its valiant but pointless expedition to avenge Arnor, the Nazgûl seized Minas Ithil.⁹⁶ Thereafter Mordor's captive people could once again provide fully for their families and homes.

⁹¹ This was the unnamed ruin later to be rebuilt and known as Dol Guldur ("Mountaintop Tower of Sorcery"), on a crag within the forest of Eryn Galen ("Greenwood the Great"), a forest east of the the Hithaeglir between Eriador and Wilderland. In the Third Age "Mirkwood" had become feared and shunned for its strange occurrences by the later beings of Middle-earth. It was for that reason that the Nazgûl chose it as a refuge for their efforts to return Sauron to life. King Angmar first occupied it in TA 1100, but it was not until 2060 that all of the Nazgûl were able to convene there to unite the power of their Rings.

⁹² The year was now TA 2060, as the Third Age dates from the slaying of Sauron by Isildur in SA 3441, the end of the Second Age.

⁹³ *Rhovanion*: "Wilderland", originally referring generally to the sparsely-populated area of Middle-earth to the northeast of the Hithaeglir, this name at the time of the Alliance against Mordor had been taken by a small kingdom of Northmen (lesser Men, native to Middle-earth), loosely allied with Gondor.

⁹⁴ The "Great Plague" of TA 1636-7 affected almost all of Middle-earth save Lindon, northern Wilderland, and Mordor. Osgiliath suffered so many deaths that it was abandoned, and the throne of Gondor removed to Minas Anor.

⁹⁵ Angmar and Arnor had been at constant war TA 1409-1974, when King Angmar captured the Arnorean seat at Fornost and brought an end to Arnor. The following year, however, Eärnur, the 33rd and last king of Gondor, landed at Lindon and defeated Angmar at the Battle of Fornost. Yet Eärnur had not the strength to hold the north, so it was left realmless, with only scattered independent settlements of various races. Of the Dúnedain, only a few remained to combat the worst dangers; they were popularly known as the "Rangers", and their leader was called "Strider" (in actuality Aragorn).

⁹⁶ The Nazgûl conquered Minas Ithil ("Tower of the Moon"), the fortified city established by Gondor to close the pass of Cirith Ungol, in TA 2002. While the Nazgûl themselves did not rename it, in Gondor it was now called Minas Morgul ("Tower of Sorcery"). Simultaneously Minas Anor was renamed Minas Tirith ("Tower of Guard").

For yet another thousand of years I remained in Dol Guldur, too weak and unbodied to leave its shelter. Even the chance ray of sunlight would leave me a scattered, broken thing across the cold flagstones. The Nazgûl went then in search of the other Rings. Over the years they found all of the Seven, and brought them to me for my life and warmth. The Three, unworn by their bearers, they could not find. As for the One, its fate after Isildur's seizure of it remained a mystery. The Orcs who had later slain him in the Gladden Fields had there found no sign of it.⁹⁷ We knew only that somewhere the One still existed, else not only Sauron but the Nazgûl themselves, also kept half-alive by the power of the All Rings, would disappear, finally and utterly.

Yet, an thousand of years before I returned in Dol Guldur, you, Pallando, and your fellow Istari⁹⁸ had come to Middle-earth. You have thus far sat silent; tell me now of that, for even as these shadows lengthen I am curious.

⁹⁷ In TA 2 Isildur and his three sons were slain by Orcs in ambush at the Gladden Fields, located at the meeting of the Anduin and Gladden rivers, east of the Hithaeglin and approximately halfway between Lórien in the south and the Old Forest Road from Imladris to Greenwood in the north. The One Ring slipped from Isildur's hand while he was trying to escape, whereupon he was slain by the Orcs. The Ring was lost in the depths of the Anduin, where it would be found by Déagol the Stoor (a branch of the Hobbit race) in TA 2463. Déagol was immediately murdered by his brother Sméagol (Gollum), who fled with it to the Hithaeglin, where he would keep it for almost five hundred more years, until it was found by Bilbo Baggins, a Hobbit of the Shire, in TA 2941.

⁹⁸ *Istari*: The five Maiar chosen by the Valar to go to Middle-earth in the Third Age to hunt and destroy any influence of Sauron. In Middle-earth they were known as "wizards", and together as the White Council. They were: Curumo (Saruman), Olórin (Gandalf), Aiwendil (Radagast), Alatar, and Pallando.

The Seventh Scroll Pallando to Sauron

If you wish to know of the Istari, O Sauron, I must speak first to you of a council of the Valar at Máhanaxar in the thousandth year of this Age.⁹⁹ Manwë himself summoned it, and called for several of the Maiar to be sent to Endor, there to resist any of the Nazgûl who had survived and to prevent them from returning you to life, if such could be done. For even now the Valar knew not the power of the Rings, or even how many they might be beyond the Nine, the Three, and the One.

Curumo came forward himself, with the approval of his Vala Aulë, as did Alatar with that of Oromë. The rest did not rise of their own accord, but were chosen and ordered to do so by their Valar: Aiwendil by Yavanna, myself by Námo, and finally Olórin by Manwë. Olórin was particularly loath to go, preferring his dreamwalks amidst the gardens of Lórien. But Varda herself commanded him to go, and he bowed assent - though not, apparently, to the liking of Curumo, who recalled well Olórin's once-friendship with you. Perhaps it was for that very reason that Manwë and Varda chose him - to exploit that bond or finally to break it.

When first we five arrived in Endor, it was decided that we would scatter to seek out the extent of our task, then meet in the years to come to decide upon any concert of action. And so we departed: Curumo to the near-south, Aiwendil to the near-east, Alatar to the far-south, Olórin to the near-north, and myself to the far-north. We would not meet all together again for over an thousand of years.¹⁰⁰

There is only one other mention of interest to you, though I am certain you know of its effect by now. We landed at Mithlond, for we came by ship, in the forms of Men, so that none would know us to be Maiar. Yet Círdan, who greeted us, knew us instantly for what we truly were, for he was the bearer of, if not permitted to put on Narya. He looked upon each of us carefully, and then, perhaps with thoughts not unlike those of Manwë and Varda, brought out the Ring and gave it to Olórin. He set it immediately upon his finger, whereupon it vanished from our sight.

Yet I now know that it was the Red Ring which guided Olórin finally to Dol Guldur within the fastness of Greenwood.¹⁰¹ There he later said that he found naught but an empty ruin. The Nazgûl were then away in Minas Morgul, and he did not discover the hidden chamber wherein your shade struggled to form itself.

⁹⁹ Actually TA 1100, in direct response to suspicion by the Ainur of Valinor that at least one of the Nazgûl had survived in Middle-earth and taken refuge at Dol Guldur.

¹⁰⁰ The Council of the Istari ("Wizards"), or "White Council" as it was known in Middle-earth, did not meet again for over thirteen hundred years.

¹⁰¹ In TA 2063.

Yet Narya troubled him, and so it was not his last visit to that place.

When the White Council met again¹⁰², we knew of our quest only that the Nazgûl had all come to Minas Morgul, but that of Sauron there was still no sign. Alatar said that as the Nazgûl were all gathered together, we should attack and destroy them, “for they are surely Sauron’s only means of returning to Middle-earth, if indeed that is possible”. Curumo rebuked him: “If they are, then they may already have done so. If we destroy them now, we lose any hope that they will lead us to him. We must wait, and watch closely. Therefore to the east I propose that you and Pallando go, to Cirith Morgul, there to keep that watch upon Minas Morgul. Should you see any sign of Sauron, send word to me and we shall meet again.”

Four hundreds of years passed without that sign. Alatar and I saw only the Nazgûl and their minions in that haunted city. When the Council was finally assembled once more¹⁰³, it was by the summons of Olórin. He had found you at last, he claimed, and in that same Dol Guldur he had thought a mere ruin eight hundreds of years before. And of that encounter you must know better than I.

To the Council Olórin now urged swift action. You lived but were too weak to resist; the Nazgûl we five Maiar could easily overcome. But once again Curumo demurred. “We have learned that it is the power of the Rings that has given them life, even if only its shadow. Destroy them now without destroying the Rings and they will but come again, and again. Much have I learned of those Rings in Eregion and Khazad-dûm since last we met. Twenty of them there are: the Nine of the Nazgûl, Seven of the Dwarves - all of which now recovered by the Nazgûl - the Three of the Elves of which custody we know, and the One, of which we know nothing. That must now be our quest: We must find the One, and before the Nine do. If they bring it to Sauron, who knows what catastrophe shall befall the world?”

Again we went our several ways, but now Alatar and I resolved to go not to Minas Morgul but into Mordor itself. Our watch would be upon Orodruin and the ruins of Barad-dûr, where, if the One Ring were found, news of it would surely come.

There is nothing else to tell to you, Sauron. On that dark day when the Nine returned to Orodruin, they cast Alatar into the Crack of Doom, which devoured his essence even as its raw strength was then returned to your shade, standing above it in the Sammath Naur.¹⁰⁴ You then found me at Barad-dûr, and here I have remained your prisoner since.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² In TA 2463.

¹⁰³ In TA 2851.

¹⁰⁴ In TA 2942.

¹⁰⁵ As this scroll dates to TA 3019, Pallando was a prisoner within Barad-dûr for 77 years.

The Eighth Scroll Sauron to Pallando

After these scores of years your remorse and hatred concerning the death of Alatar remain clear and present between us. I will not seek to dissuade you of these, even though your purpose here was to slay me. Consider only that if I prevail now, as the life-essence of this Maia has made possible, the Middle-earth, even all of Arda, that we know may be preserved into a wondrous future. If I fail, it shall fade into far less than that. Is the life of Alatar dearly bought then? No less than my own, for it rests in the same balance.

Now I would speak to you of Olórin's second visit to Dol Guldur, for I see that he did not reveal it to you or your fellow Istari.

I remember it well, these many years later.

After eight hundreds of years secluded in Dol Guldur, I was finally able to maintain my shadow-form, through the combined strength of the Nine and the Seven Rings - and, I supposed, the One Ring, even at its unknown distance. I could now feel the warmth of the Sun again, smell at least fleeting of the fragrances of Greenwood beyond - ah, Pallando! can you imagine how hungry I was for even such meager crumbs of life? The day came when I could finally walk upon the grass again, even caress a doe and her fawn who had wandered up to me: merely to touch their soft fur, with hands still so fragile as to withstand only a press as gentle as that of a breeze, brought tears to eyes which I had not thought yet capable of them.

The two Nazgûl attending to me were then away within the walls of the tower, for certainly the deer would have shied from their presence. But of a sudden the animals ran off into the forest, more by surprise, I think, than fear. I turned about to see what had startled them. It was an old Man, grey-clad, walking up the slope of the hill towards me. He leaned heavily upon a weathered staff of wood.

Were there Men or Elves to see us, they might have wondered that two such alien creatures should have known each other instantly. But as you are aware, Pallando, we Maiar are known to one another not by appearance, which we - at least when alive - may alter as we will, but by that which is deepest within ourselves. I was nonetheless greatly surprised, for I had never thought to see Olórin beyond the gardens and groves of Valinor.

And I surmise that he for his part was shocked to see what Sauron had become: little more than an ill-formed spectre adrift in the air before him. Between us, before either spoke a word, was a deep sadness for the misfortunes that had brought ourselves, and so many about us, to this tragic moment.

Olórin spoke first, and his voice, also the voice of an old Man, was soft and gentle. “Sauron,” he said, “Can you hear me? See me? Speak to me?”

“Yes, old friend,” I answered. “But perhaps not touch you, nor should you me. I fear I am not yet strong enough for that. Come, let us walk together in these woods as we did so long ago in Lórien. Tell me why you have come here, why now you have sought me.”

He turned his gaze from me, looked down. “I am here in Middle-earth at the command of Manwë. So are four others of the Maiar. We are to seek you and make a final end of you.”

“I supposed as much,” I said. “I am the last flicker in Arda of the Dark Flame of Melkor.¹⁰⁶ That is not to be endured by the Ainur of Eru Ilúvatar, even so faintly. Well then, your task is not a great one, for the merest wave of your finger will suffice to scatter me to these winds.”

I held up my ghostly hand before him. “Nigh an thousand years it has taken me to crawl only this far back from death. If I am to return to its embrace, it would but end uncounted thousands of years of loneliness and pain. And for what? For only a dream, that what Melkor saw within himself, what he awakened in some others of us, might become the true and most sublime reality of Eä. Gone the endless wheel of Eru Ilúvatar to which all life is chained; in its place the lights of the stars themselves. Had I never looked into the eyes of Melkor, O Olórin, I should be still as you: hale, life-warm, beloved of the Valar. Slay me indeed, dear Maia: from you it will come as a merciful grace.”

He looked at me then, and tears filled his eyes. A long moment passed; the sounds of the wood ceased, even the breeze failed. Then the eyes closed. “No,” he said finally, quietly. “This shall not be the day of your death. Not here in this beautiful place. And not - never! - by my own hand.” Now he looked at me full. “That dream of yours, Sauron, elusive and hopeless as it seems now, is beyond my measure to end. Perhaps it is indeed destined to prevail, even, I say to you, beyond your own passage into the night. Perhaps it is, after all, the future and fulfillment of Eä. Here, now, we cannot know.

¹⁰⁶ The Dark Flame: *Udûn*, the animating essence or spirit of Melkor which made him isolate and distinct from all else in *Eä*, and which he imparted to all who possessed its potential within them, even did they not gaze upon his face, as with the Men of Númenor.

“But I shall give it such chance as I may. I shall leave you unharmed, and such powers as watch upon the both of us shall decide whether I have chosen aright, or whether death should bring us together again. Let us speak no more of this. We shall, if you will, walk a little further together in this tranquil wood; and for this brief time at least the cares of Arda may leave us in peace. Now, dear Sauron, can you take my hand?”

I reached out to him, and he clasped it ever so gently. We walked together silently then, as we once had in far-off Lórien. After a time, without a further word to me, he turned away and strode back down the hillside, once more only an old Man with a staff.

As for Curumo, you and I both know now that he was driven only by lust of the One Ring for himself. Would that his folly - for despite his hopes he never could have mastered it; it would have consumed him as surely as that Halfling¹⁰⁷ - have affected him alone. But instead tyranny at Isengard, posturing at Orthanc, and that witless, futile assault against Helm’s Deep. What possibly could he have thought to accomplish, other than to unite Men, Elves, and even Ents to his own destruction? Better the Valar should never have sent any of you than to have included him, least of all as your leader.

And so what is to happen now? There shall be still another battle, here before the Morannon, tomorrow. It is but more folly in this useless, senseless war, and my only hope is that perhaps it shall be the very last one, for I see naught else beyond in Middle-earth to follow upon it. I am heartsick of war, Pallando: It corrects nothing, and it serves only its continuation, again and again, until all of Arda shall finally be dead, a charred, silent hulk eternally adrift in the universe.

Had I only the One Ring, how many maimings and deaths could I now prevent? And those before Minas Tirith, and Helm’s Deep, and countless lesser - except to those slain of them - battles? But I do not have the Ring - I do not know where it is - and so tomorrow before the Morannon Arda will die a little more.

There is only the slim hope that, once this Elessar sees the might of the armies of Mordor tomorrow, he shall surrender and sue for peace. But no, he has come too far, spilled too much blood for that. Worse, I see in him again, undimmed, that spirit of the High Men of Númenor, that will never allow itself to be quenched except in death. And now he has reawakened that spirit in Gondor, and so they will all die. Worse still, O Pallando, it is that very spirit infused of Melkor that should never, never be bent to such terrible ends.

¹⁰⁷ Sauron is speaking here of Sméagol/Gollum. As yet he knew nothing of the possession of the One Ring by Frodo Baggins.

Has he - have I - been at the last the instruments only of the wanton lust of Eru Ilúvatar for this? The curse of Sauron upon Eru then, Great Evil of the Universe, that if not in these Ages of Arda, still in some distant, better time you shall finally be cast beyond it, your hate thereafter to consume only yourself.

Leave me now, Pallando. Take these scrolls with you. Despite my armies at the Morannon, I feel Death standing close by me, why I know not. But if it be so, I wish to spend this night at peace, thinking back upon those few moments of my life when it was a wondrous and sacred awareness to me.

The Ninth Scroll Pallando

It is now a year since Sauron the Maia spoke his last words to me. I have come back from the desert of Khand, where I have lived alone, considering all that I have heard, to the ruins of Barad-dûr. It is cold and dark here now, and across Gorgoroth Orodruin is also silent and dead.

I have decided what I shall do, but first it remains to write this final scroll, for what reader in some distant future, perhaps when all this shall seem no more than some quaint myth of antiquity, I leave it to the mists of Arda to decide.

Sauron perished that next day. Sméagol the Halfling seized the One Ring from Frodo Baggins and fell with it into the Crack of Doom. Its song-spells were unwoven then, as were all those of the other Rings embraced by it, and Arda took back the core-fire which had given it the life-force of this world. Orodruin fell in upon itself, and the Crack of Doom was sealed. Gazing out toward the dying mountain, I saw the eight Nazgûl, flying desperately toward the Sammath Naur, dissolve into nothingness before it, a blinding flash upon each of their hands. I did not have to look at the Seven kept in the vaults of Barad-dûr; I knew their fate was the same.

I went to the pinnacle of Barad-dûr then, to that secret ærie from which Sauron told me he used to reach up to the stars. There I found only his empty robes, crumpled upon the cold stone.

I was of course free to leave Mordor, return to the west, to Olórin, even to Valinor and my once-home in the Hall of Námo before nighted Mandos. But I could not, at least not yet. So I went instead to the east, out into the Khand beyond Mordor, and there made my dwelling.

From passing caravans I heard news of Middle-earth: how King Elessar had reunited all of the old realms of the Númenorean exiles and those of most native-peoples near to them, how the last of the Elves were leaving the Grey Havens for Valinor, which itself had been withdrawn from the paths of all others. All seemed peaceful and prosperous.

But I saw also that the magic had gone from Arda. It was now only an ordinary world, populated by ordinary beings, Men and animal. Never again upon it would there be a place for Rings of Power.

The Three had survived the unmaking of the One, I learned, but only as mere jeweled dead things themselves. Olórin, Galadriel, and Elrond took them to Valinor, where soon they too will fall to dust, forgotten relics of a forgotten time.

And that is the ending of this, the Song of Illuminate Darkness. These scrolls I, Pallando the Blue, last of the Istari in Middle-earth, shall place now into a box of iron, and cast it into the cold depths of Orodruin. There may it rest until some new day, when the lands change yet again, and a passing traveler may chance upon it. Then perhaps these tales may awaken new readers, and the dreams of Melkor and Sauron live again, to their blessing and glory throughout the universe.

ἠῶν



A Walk in the Woods